

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Aberdeenshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Huntly Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90165-2014-04
PARISH:	Huntly
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NJ54SW 9
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
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NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NJ 5321 4084
START DATE (this season)	4 December 2014
END DATE (this season)	4 December 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the excavation of test trenches in the area to the north of the castle bailey in order to locate the best position for a new septic tank serving the castle's public toilets. There were no finds or features of archaeological significance.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2014/2015**

Huntly Castle • Excavation • December 2014

HS PIC Index Number: 90165

SITE: Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire

N.G.R.: NJ 5321 4084

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of test trenches in the area to the north of the castle bailey in order to locate the best position for a new septic tank serving the castle's public toilets.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90165-2014-04

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DECEMBER 2014

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked monitor the excavation of six test trenches in order to determine the most suitable location for a new septic tank serving the castle's public toilets (Figure 1). The trenches were located to the north of the modern road, on the wooded slopes leading down to the south bank of the River Deveron¹.

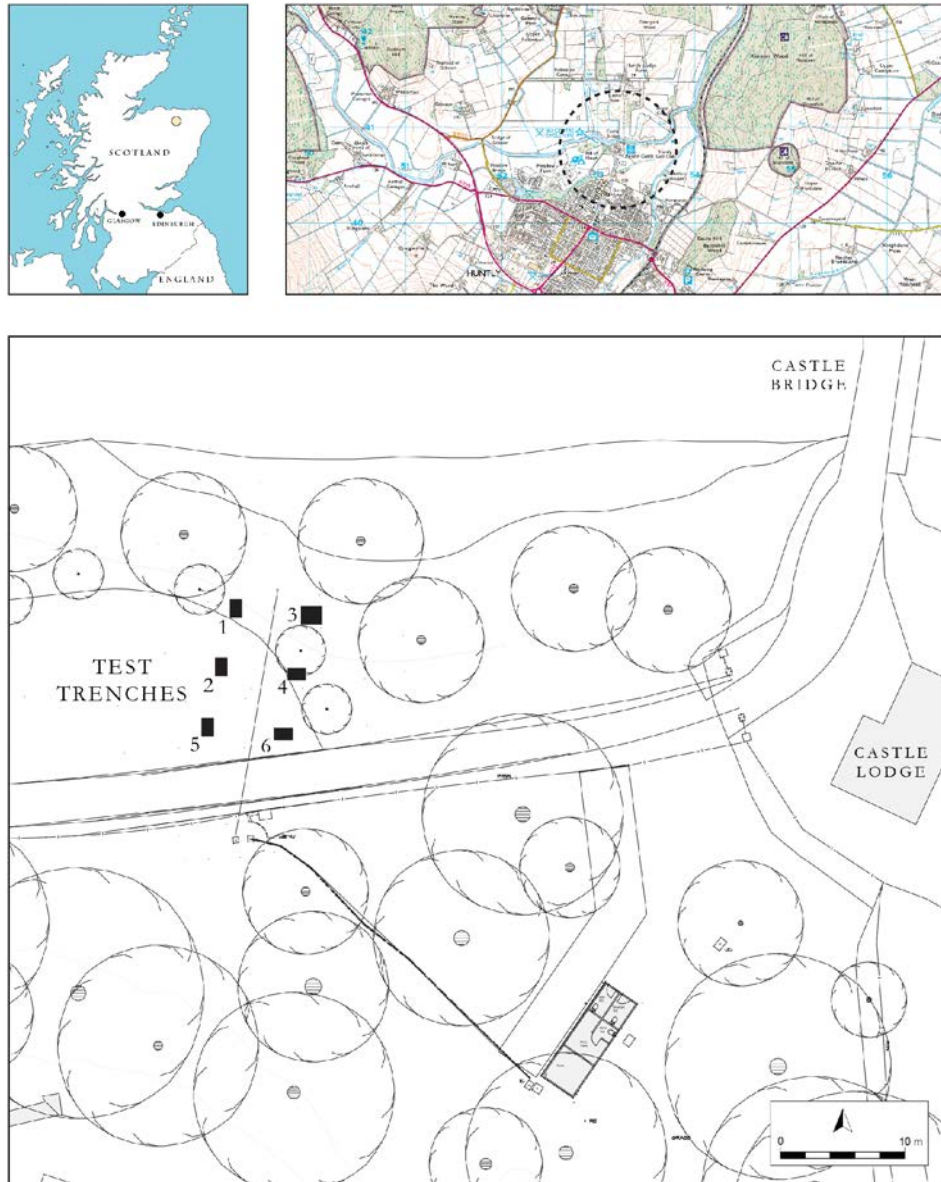


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the test trenches.

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¹ The trench plan brought by the MCU differed slightly in the arrangement and numbering of the trenches as set out in the WSI; the configuration brought by the MCU was used in order to ensure that the field notes tallied.

Although the area to be investigated lay outwith the official scheduled area, it was considered to have archaeological potential due to its proximity to the structures forming the north part of the castle enclosure and bailey.

The trenches were excavated initially with a mechanical digger and then, where necessary, manually by the MCU under archaeological supervision.

The work was carried out on 4th December, 2014.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 1m E/W x 1.50m N/S x 0.85m deep. A c.10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **101** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **102**, c.20cm thick. Context **101** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **103**, c.26cm thick. The natural below was composed of a compact layer (c.30cm thick) of yellowish-grey sandy clay **104** containing large sub-rounded boulders which cleared onto the bedrock **105** below.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 1m E/W x 1.50m N/S x 1.10m deep. A c.10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **201** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **202**, c.28cm thick. Context **201** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **203**, c.40cm thick. The natural below was composed of a compact layer (c.30cm thick) of yellowish-grey sandy clay **204** containing large sub-rounded boulders which cleared onto the bedrock **205** below.

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 1.70m E/W x 1.5m N/S x 1.8m deep. A c.10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **301** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **302**, c.28cm thick. Context **301** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **303**, c.50cm thick. The natural below was composed of a compact layer of yellowish-grey sandy clay **304** containing large sub-rounded boulders, at least 90cm thick. Some 60cm of this was exposed in the trench base; a further *sondage* of c.30cm depth failed to reveal signs of bedrock below.

Trench 4

Trench 4 measured 1.50m E/W x 1m N/S x 1.6m deep. A c.10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **401** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **402**, c.34cm thick. Context **401** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **403**, c.45cm thick. The natural

below was composed of a compact layer of yellowish-grey sandy clay **404** (at least 68cm thick) containing large sub-rounded boulders; bedrock was not encountered.

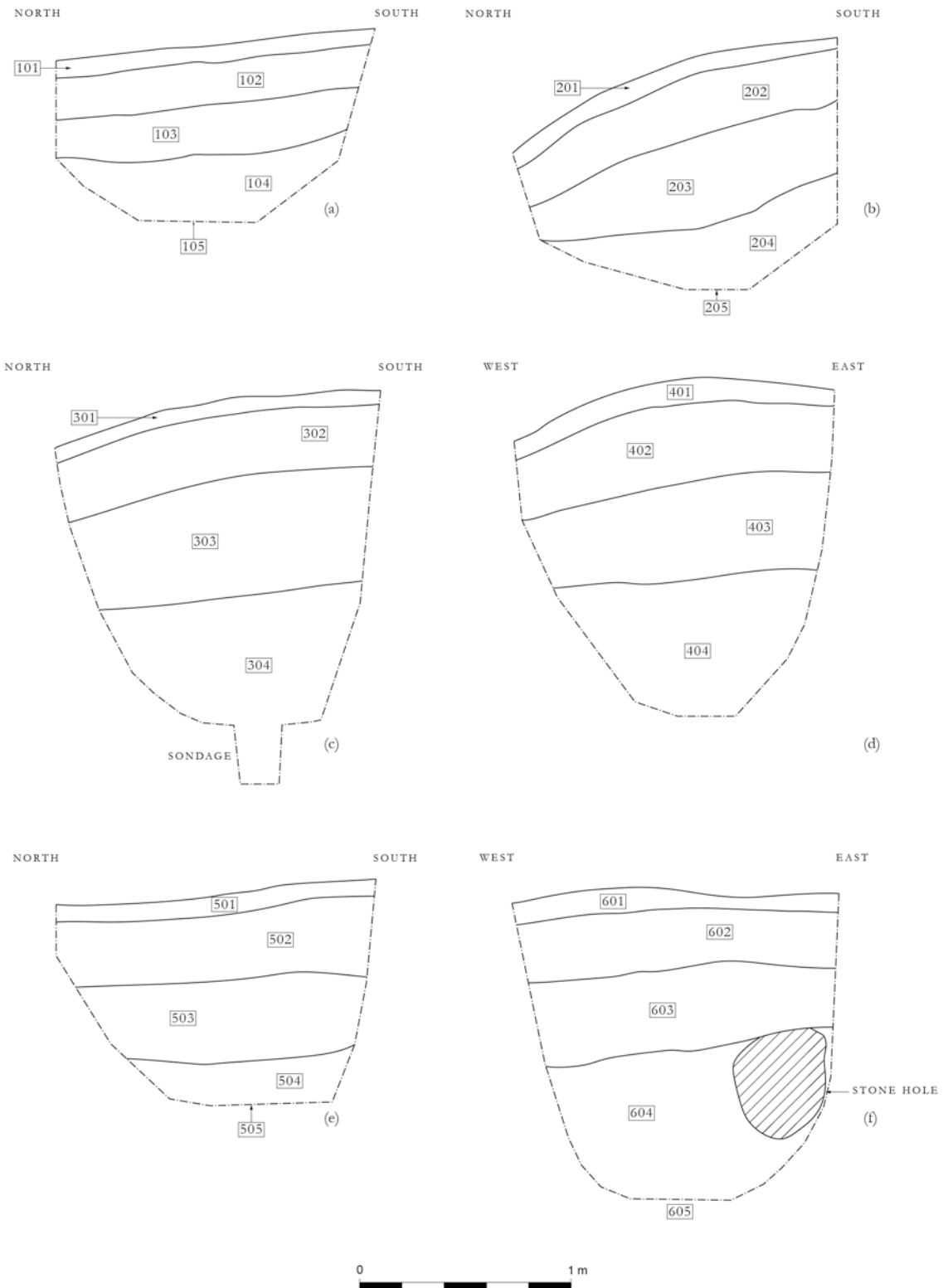


Figure 2: Post-excavation sections from the six trenches: (a) west-facing, Trench 1; (b) west-facing, Trench 2; (c) west-facing, Trench 3; (d) south-facing, Trench 4; (e) west-facing, Trench 5, and (d) south-facing, Trench 6.

Trench 5

Trench 5 measured 1m E/W x 1.50m N/S x 1m deep. A \approx 10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **501** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **502**, \approx 30cm thick. Context **501** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **503**, \approx 36cm thick. The natural below **503** was composed of a compact layer (\approx 20cm thick) of yellowish-grey sandy clay **504** containing large sub-rounded boulders which cleared onto the bedrock **505** below.



Plate 1: Trench 5, west-facing section.

Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 1.50m E/W x 1m N/S x 1.50m deep. A \approx 10cm thick covering of leaf mulch **601** lay over a moderately compact layer of mid-brown silty topsoil **602**, \approx 28cm thick. Context **601** was heavily cut through by tree roots. This bedded onto a greyish brown clay subsoil **603**, \approx 50cm thick. The natural below was composed of a compact layer (\approx 70cm thick) of yellowish-grey sandy clay **604** containing large sub-rounded boulders which cleared onto the bedrock **605** below.

CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological interest was recovered during the test trenching and the fills were noticeably clean and free of any artefacts. However, the location of the test trenches is close enough to the northern structures of the castle to warrant monitoring during future ground-breaking works in this locale.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench	Context	Description
1	101	Leaf mulch.
1	102	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
1	103	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
1	104	Yellowish grey sandy-clay natural containing large sub-rounded boulders.
1	105	Bedrock.
2	201	Leaf mulch.
2	202	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
2	203	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
2	204	Yellowish grey sandy-clay natural containing large sub-rounded boulders.
2	205	Bedrock.
3	301	Leaf mulch.
3	302	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
3	303	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
3	304	Yellowish grey sandy-clay subsoil containing large sub-rounded boulders.
4	401	Leaf mulch.
4	402	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
4	403	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
4	404	Yellowish grey sandy-clay subsoil containing large sub-rounded boulders.
5	501	Leaf mulch.
5	502	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
5	503	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
5	504	Yellowish grey sandy-clay natural containing large sub-rounded boulders.
5	505	Bedrock.
6	601	Leaf mulch.
6	602	Mid-brown silty topsoil with sub-rounded stones.
6	603	Greyish brown clay subsoil.
6	604	Yellowish grey sandy-clay natural containing large sub-rounded boulders.
6	605	Bedrock.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Trench	Type	Description	Scale
1	1	Section	West-facing.	1:20
2	2	Section	West-facing.	1:20
3	3	Section	West-facing.	1:20
4	4	Section	South-facing.	1:20
5	5	Section	West-facing.	1:20
6	6	Section	South-facing.	1:20

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Pre-excavation shot.	S	04/12/2014
2	Pre-excavation shot.	NW	04/12/2014
3	Pre-excavation shot.	N	04/12/2014
4	Pre-excavation shot.	SW	04/12/2014
5	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	N	04/12/2014
6	W-facing section of Trench 1.	W	04/12/2014
7	Backfilling in progress.	N	04/12/2014
8	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 2.	N	04/12/2014

No.	Description	From	Date
9	W-facing section of Trench 2.	W	04/12/2014
10	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 5.	N	04/12/2014
11	W-facing section of Trench 5.	W	04/12/2014
12	Backfilling in progress.	N	04/12/2014
13	Excavating Trench 3.	SW	04/12/2014
14	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 3.	N	04/12/2014
15	W-facing section of Trench 3.	W	04/12/2014
16	Backfilling in progress.	SW	04/12/2014
18	Trenching location from castle bailey.	SW	04/12/2014
17	Trenching location shot.	SE	04/12/2014
19	Trenching location, castle bailey and road.	E	04/12/2014
20	S-facing section of Trench 4.	S	04/12/2014
21	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 4.	W	04/12/2014
22	Backfilling in progress.	N	04/12/2014
23	Backfilling in progress.	NW	04/12/2014
24	River and bridge.	SW	04/12/2014
25	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 6.	E	04/12/2014
26	N-facing section of Trench 6.	N	04/12/2014
27	Trenches as backfilled.	S	04/12/2014