

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll and Bute
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Iona Abbey
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90351-2015-02
PARISH:	KILFINICHEN AND KILVICKEON
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	John Godbert
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NM22SE 5 (Iona Abbey)
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Abbey
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NM 2859 2456; NM 2870 2446
START DATE (this season)	1 September 2015
END DATE (this season)	1 September 2015
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the removal of two existing gates, and the excavation of trenches to receive the foundations of replacement gates. 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 2015/2016**

Iona Abbey • Watching Brief • August 2015

HS PIC Index Number: 90351

SITE: Iona Abbey, Iona.

N.G.R.: NM 2859 2456; NM 2870 2446

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the removal of two existing gates, and the excavation of trenches to receive the foundations of replacement ones.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90351-2015-02

CONTENTS:	Introduction.....	1
	Description.....	2
	Conclusions.....	5
	List of Contexts.....	7
	List of Drawings.....	7
	List of Digital Photographs.....	7



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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the removal of two old gates, and the installation of two replacement ones at Iona Abbey, Iona (Fig. 1).

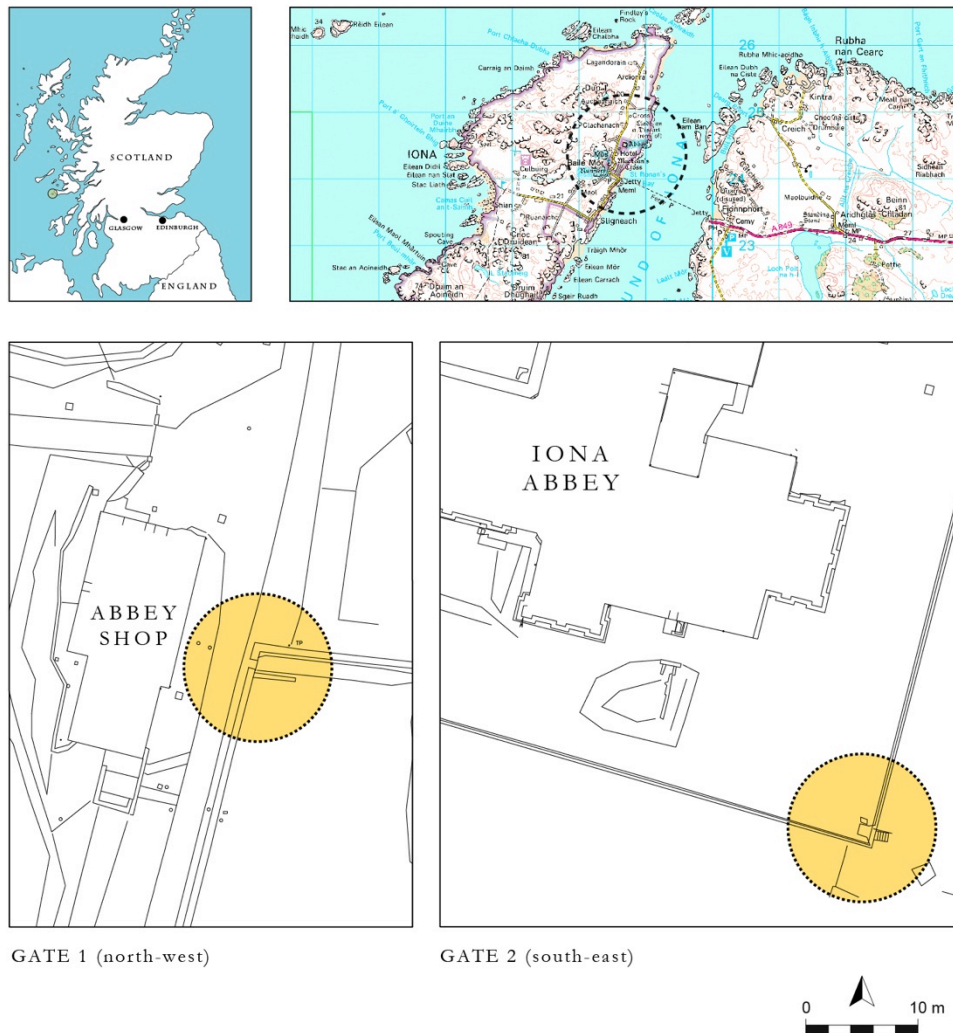


Figure 1: Plan showing the general locations of the two gates.
Mapping © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2015. Licence number 100036933.

Excavation was undertaken by hand, by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 1st September, 2015.

DESCRIPTION

Gate 1

Gate 1 was located to the north-west of the site, and consisted of a single swing gate supported on a hinge-post at one side, and a locking-post at the other. The gate was removed from the hinge-post, and the concrete settings for the posts were broken up, and both posts removed.

Trench 1

This was located on the southern side of the path. Beneath the 7.5cm thick layer of turf and topsoil, **100**, a layer of concrete, **101**, extended to a depth of 0.32m. Beneath this, a silty mid-brown deposit **102**, 0.12m thick, containing concrete fragments and small rounded stones was visible. Nothing of archaeological interest was revealed, and the finished trench measured 0.64m N/S x 0.66m E/W x 0.44m deep.

Trench 2

This was located on the northern side of the path. Beneath the 7.5cm thick layer of turf and topsoil, **200**, a layer of concrete, **201**, extended to a depth of 0.28m. Below this was context **202**, some 0.2m thick, containing an assorted array of rubble containing brick fragments, large angular stones, occasional pieces of modern wire and fragments of broken ceramic pipe. An old, broken ceramic pipe **204**, 0.11m in diameter, was visible in the E-facing section. Below this was the natural gravel, **203**, a thickness of 0.05m of which was excavated before the required trench depth was reached. Nothing of archaeological interest was revealed, and the irregularly sized finished trench measured a maximum of 0.4m N/S x 0.4m E/W x 0.53m deep.



Plates 1 and 2: Trench 1, post-excavation photo (left), and Trench 2, post-excavation photo.

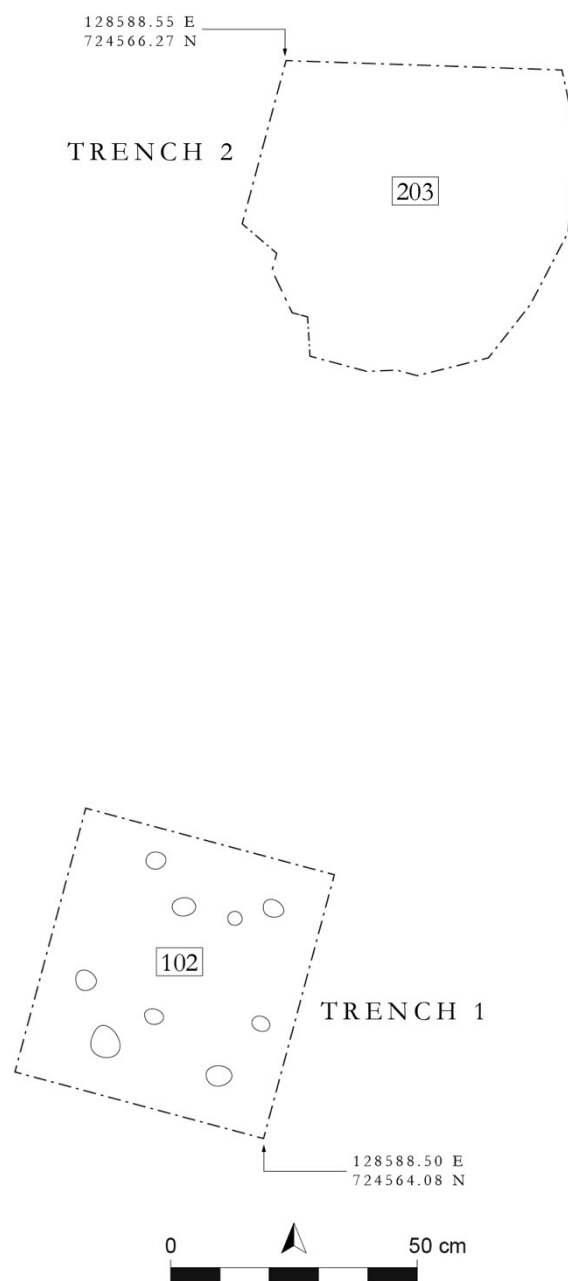


Figure 2: Post-excavation plan of trenches 1 and 2.

Gate 2

Gate 2 was located to the south-east of the site, and consisted of a single swing gate supported on a hinge-post at one side, and a locking-post at the other. The gate was removed from the hinge-post, and the accompanying wooden framework dismantled.

Trench 3

This was located to the north. Following the removal of the 5cm thick turf and topsoil **300**, the hinge-post was revealed to be sitting atop a layer of regularly arranged red bricks, **301**, one course thick (0.1m). Beneath this was **302**, a 0.18m thick layer of dark, stone-free material containing mortar fragments. This in turn lay over **303**, a 0.13m thick layer of loosely packed mortar fragments. The finished trench measured 0.43m N/S x 0.43m E/W x 0.46m deep.

Trench 4

This was located to the south. Following the removal of the 6cm thick turf and topsoil **400**, the locking-post was revealed to be sitting within **401**, a 0.35m thick deposit similar in nature to **302** - i.e. a layer of dark, stone-free material containing mortar fragments. Within **401**, was a 5cm (on average) thick lens of clean sand, **402**. Nothing of archaeological interest was revealed, and the finished trench measured 0.43m N/S x 0.43m E/W x 0.41m deep.



Plates 3 and 4: Trench 3, post-excavation photo (left), and Trench 4, post-excavation photo.

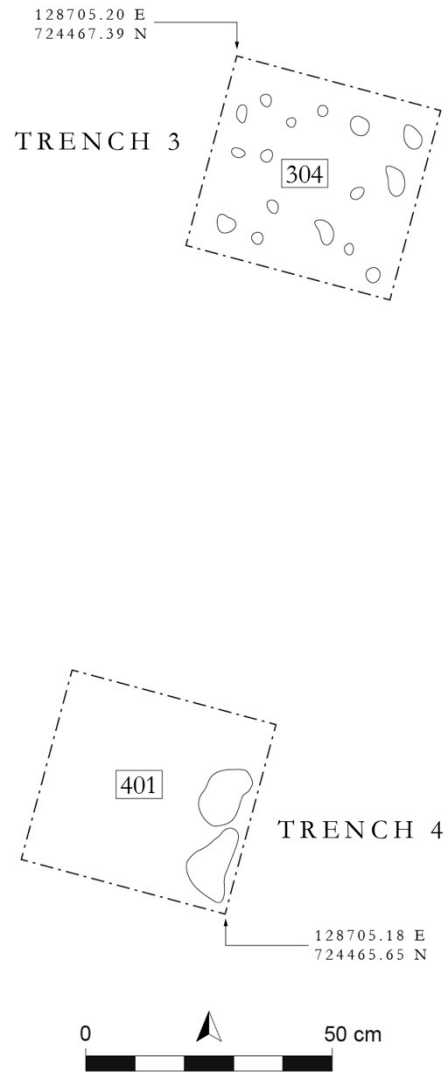


Figure 3: Post-excavation plan of trenches 3 and 4.

CONCLUSIONS

Other than the layer of red bricks (**301**) encountered in Trench 3 (possibly part of a larger arrangement), little of archaeological interest was revealed. Within trenches 3 and 4, the deposits probably indicate an episode of levelling, possibly during the 1930s restoration works.

Clearly the site remains of high archaeological potential and similar ground-breaking works should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

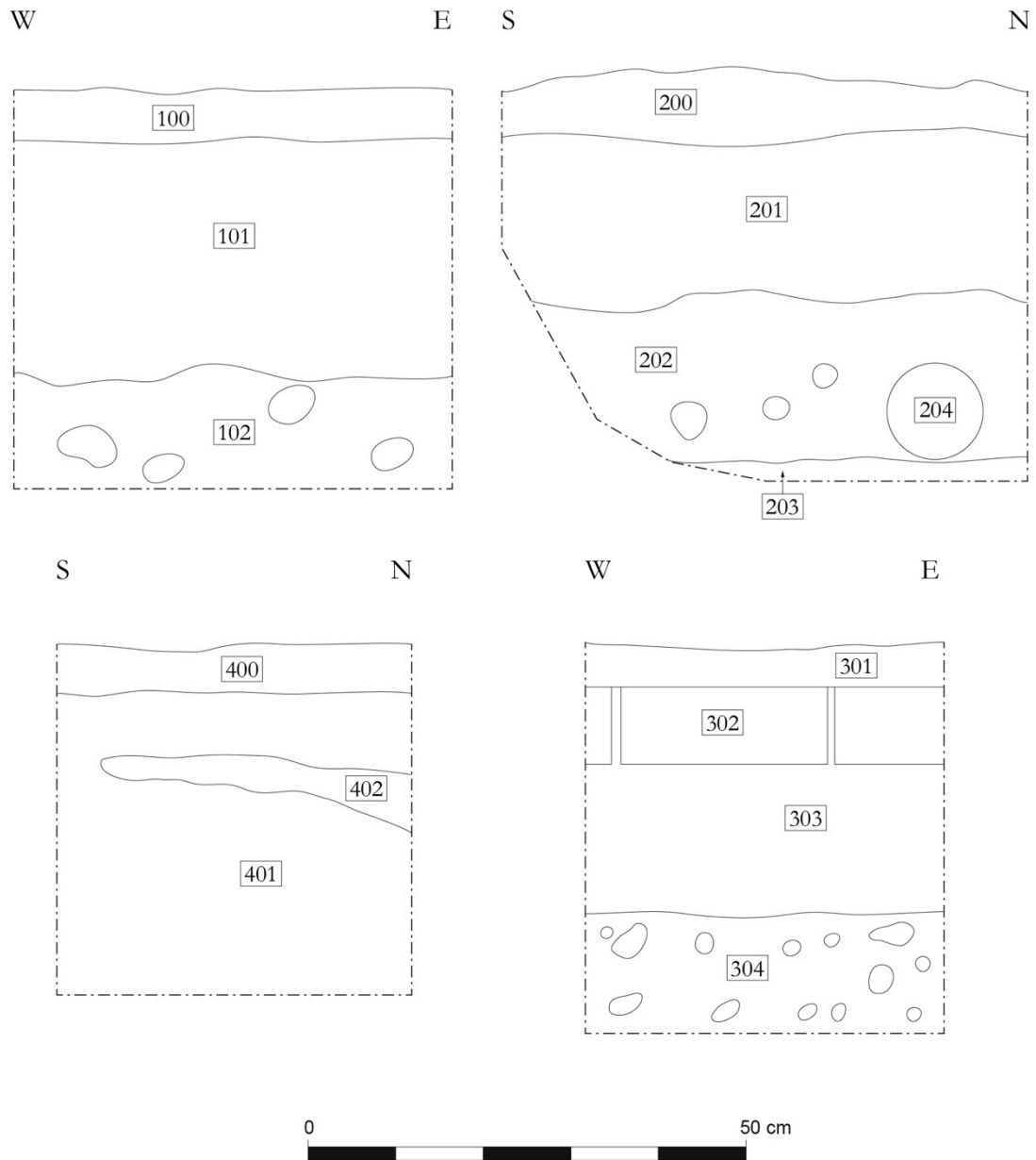


Figure 4: Clockwise, from top-left: Trench 1, S-facing section; Trench 2, E-facing section; Trench 3, S-facing section, and Trench 4, E-facing section.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench	Context	Description
1	100	Turf and topsoil.
1	101	Concrete.
1	102	Silty mid-brown deposit containing concrete fragments and small rounded stones.
2	200	Turf and topsoil.
2	201	Concrete.
2	202	Rubble layer containing brick fragments, large angular stones, occasional pieces of modern wire and fragments of broken ceramic pipe.
2	203	Natural gravel.
3	300	Turf and topsoil.
3	301	Layer of regularly arranged red bricks.
3	302	Dark, stone-free material containing mortar fragments.
3	303	A layer of loosely packed mortar fragments.
4	400	Turf and topsoil.
4	401	A layer of dark, stone-free material containing mortar fragments.
4	402	Lens of clean sand.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location of trenches.	1:100
2	Plan	Trench 1, post-excavation.	1:20
3	Plan	Trench 2, post-excavation.	1:20
4	Plan	Trench 3, post-excavation.	1:20
5	Plan	Trench 4, post-excavation.	1:20
6	Section	Trench 1, S-facing.	1:10
7	Section	Trench 2, E-facing.	1:10
8	Section	Trench 3, S-facing.	1:10
9	Section	Trench 4, E-facing.	1:10

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trenches 1 and 2, pre-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
2	Trench 1, post-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
3	Trench 1, post-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
4	Trench 1, post-excavation.	N	01/09/2015
5	Trench 2, after removal of concrete 201.	E	01/09/2015
6	Trench 2, work in progress.	E	01/09/2015
7	Trench 2, post-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
8	Trenches 3 and 4, pre-excavation.	NW	01/09/2015
9	Trenches 3 and 4, pre-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
10	Trench 3, layer of red bricks 301.	W	01/09/2015
11	Trench 3, post-excavation.	S	01/09/2015
12	Trench 3, general view.	W	01/09/2015
13	Trench 3, post-excavation.	N	01/09/2015
14	Trench 4, post-excavation.	E	01/09/2015
15	Trench 4, post-excavation.	W	01/09/2015