

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	North Ayrshire
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Kilwinning Abbey
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90187-2015-01
PARISH:	Kilwinning
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS34SW 6
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Abbey
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 3031 4328
START DATE (this season)	20 April 2015
END DATE (this season)	20 April 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 excavation of a trench to house new steps leading from the cloister to the south into the south aisle of the abbey nave to the north, via the eastern processional doorway. An <i>in situ</i> surface of sandstone slabs of unknown date, 90mm below the current ground level, was revealed, and left undisturbed.
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**

Kilwinning Abbey • Watching Brief • April 2015

HS PIC Index Number: 90187

SITE: Kilwinning Abbey, Kilwinning, North Ayrshire.

N.G.R.: NS 302 432

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a trench to house two new stone steps within the eastern processional doorway.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90187-2015-01

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JUNE 2015

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Kilwinning Abbey, North Ayrshire, during the excavation of a trench to house new steps leading from the cloister to the south into the south aisle of the abbey nave to the north, via the eastern processional doorway (Figure 1). This entailed the removal of an existing set of wooden-edged stairs (secured by wooden uprights) filled with re-deposited silt and topped with gravel.

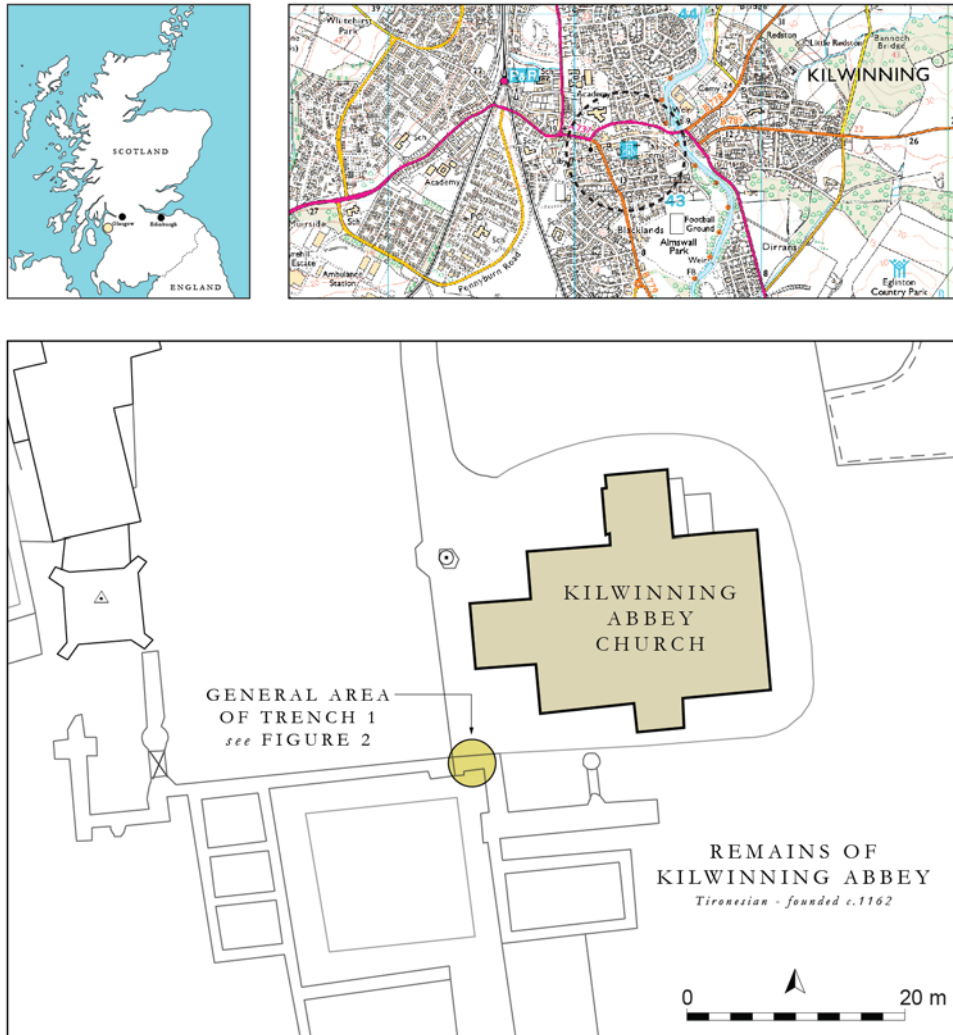


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Trench 1.

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The trench was excavated by hand, by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work was carried out on 20th April, 2015.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

The gravel on the existing steps was raked off and the wooden edging and buried uprights removed. A compact upper surface **100** of gravel in cement, 0.12m thick, was removed to reveal a moderately compact layer **101** of infill consisting of Type 1 gravel and gritty silt containing modern bottle glass and pieces of composition brick (not retained). In the southern portion of the trench, this cleared onto an *in-situ* surface **103** of flat sandstone slabs (up to 0.6m E/W x 0.36m N/S) and sandstone fragments in a compact matrix of light brown silty clay flecked with charcoal (at a depth of 0.09m below the current ground level).

It appeared that this layer had been truncated by a rough (modern) SE/NW cut **102** which had been backfilled by **101**. Due to the presence of potential *in-situ* archaeological deposits (**103**), the Historic Scotland staff excavating the trench were content to work with this level to ensure that the surface was not disturbed, and terram was applied over the surface before the steps were installed. To the north, where the path was raised, the trench reached a depth of 0.25m. To the east, a depth of 0.4m was achieved due to the accumulation of imported material to the north-east of the doorway. As completed, the trench measured up to 2.05m E/W x 0.65m N/S. No artefacts were recovered which could provide a date for the historic surface encountered.



Plate 1: Post-excitation view of the trench showing slabs 103, from the south.

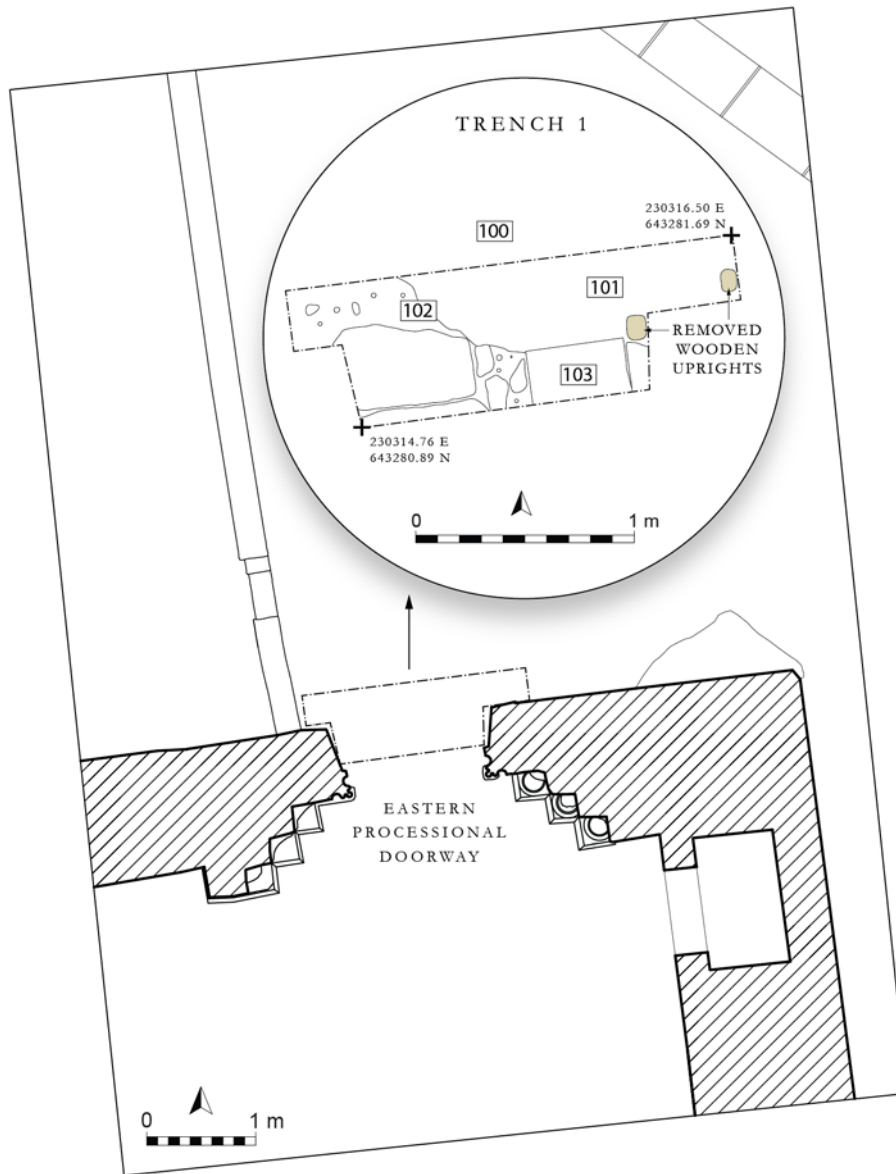


Figure 2: Post-excavation plan of Trench 1.

CONCLUSIONS

A 0.05m wide edging around the reveals of the doorway specified in the step design meant that the exact relationship between the surface **103** and the doorway could not be confirmed, but the surface was recorded in plan and preserved *in-situ*. The surface has at least the potential to be contemporary with the doorway but could also relate to a foundation course associated with the steps that were known to have sat here in the late 19th century. The area still retains high archaeological potential and it is therefore recommended that any further ground-breaking activities be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No	Description
100	Layer of gravel in cement (bedding for path gravel).
101	Infill of cut 102 consisting of Type 1 gravel and gritty silt.
102	Rough, modern SE/NW cut through 103.
103	Surface of flat sandstone slabs and sandstone pieces in a compact matrix of light brown silty clay flecked with charcoal.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Trench 1, post-excavation.	1:20

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	South transept gable and the eastern processional doorway.	S	20/04/2015
2	Eastern processional doorway.	S	20/04/2015
3	Moulded bases of the eastern processional doorway with wood and gravel steps.	SE	20/04/2015
4	Existing steps and the eastern processional doorway from inside the abbey nave.	N	20/04/2015
5	Existing steps and the eastern processional doorway from inside the abbey nave.	NE	20/04/2015
6	Moulded west reveal of the eastern processional doorway.	E	20/04/2015
7	Post-excavation shot of the trench and slabs 103.	N	20/04/2015
8	Post-excavation shot of the trench and slabs 103.	W	20/04/2015
9	Post-excavation shot of the trench and slabs 103.	E	20/04/2015
10	Post-excavation shot of the trench and slabs 103.	S	20/04/2015
11	Post-excavation shot of the trench and slabs 103.	S	20/04/2015
12	Post-excavation shot of the S-facing trench section.	S	20/04/2015
13	Post-excavation shot of the W-facing trench section.	W	20/04/2015