

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	East Lothian
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Tantallon Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90295-2015-01
PARISH:	North Berwick
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Gordon Ewart
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NT58NE 5.00
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NT 5952 8497; NT 5959 8493; NT 5964 8503
START DATE (this season)	20 July 2015
END DATE (this season)	20 July 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 installation of new signage and replacement of interpretation panels. Surfaces of anthropomorphic origin were revealed in the trenches at NT 5952 8497 and NT 5964 8503. These were not excavated and were left undisturbed. There were no other 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**

Tantallon Castle • Watching Brief • July 2015

HS PIC Index Number: 90295

SITE: Tantallon Castle, East Lothian.

N.G.R.: NT 5952 8497; NT 5959 8493; NT 5964 8503

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the installation of new signage, along with the replacement of some older interpretation panels.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90295-2015-01

CONTENTS:

Introduction.....	1
Description.....	2
Conclusions.....	6
List of Contexts.....	7
List of Drawings.....	7
List of Digital Photographs.....	8
List of Finds.....	8



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AUGUST 2015

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Tantallon Castle, during the installation of new signage and the replacement of some out-dated and/or faded interpretation panels. The new signage entailed three areas of ground disturbance for the lecterns panels, TAN2 (Trench 1), TAN3 (Trench 2) and TAN8¹ (Trench 3). These panels were located within the Outer Defences, towards the western side of the Outer Close, and towards the eastern corner of the Inner Close respectively (Fig. 1).

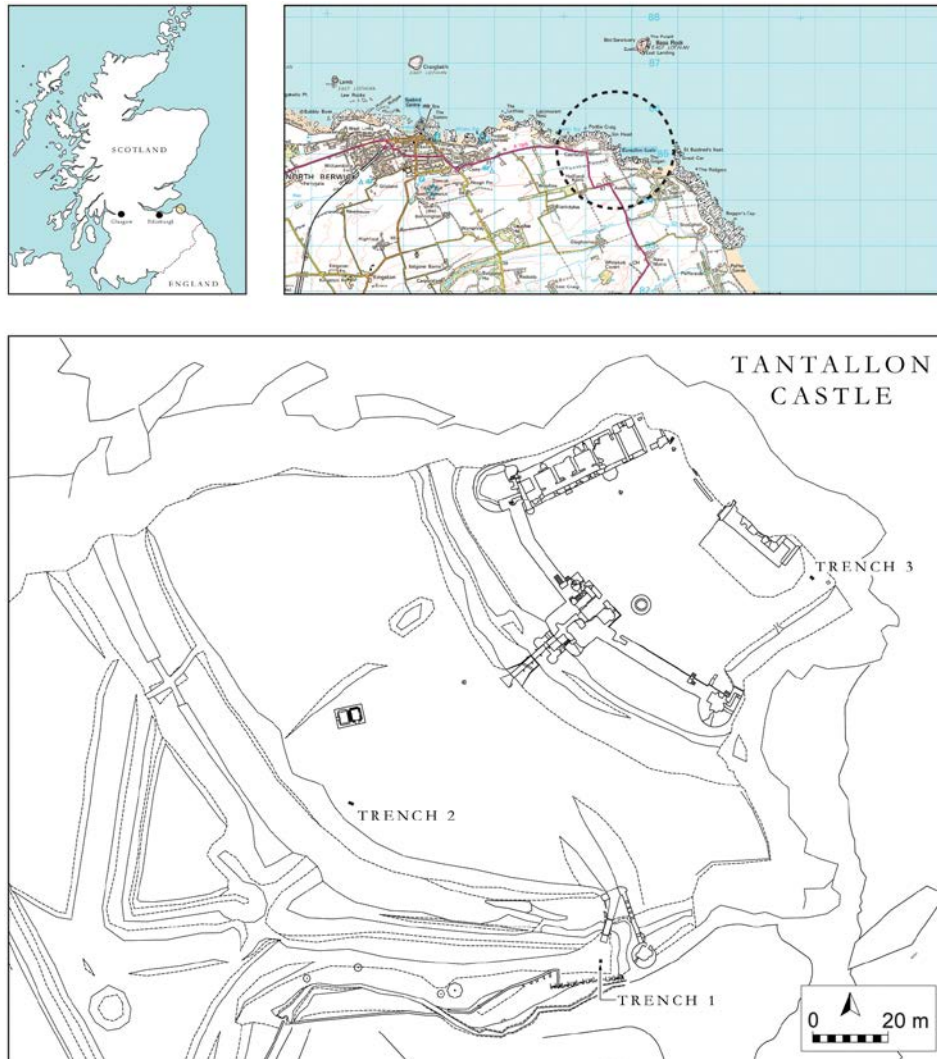


Figure 1: Plan showing the general locations of the three trenches.

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Two existing panels were removed, one towards the northern corner of the Inner Close and another on the eastern side of the entrance to the Midtower. The removal of these signs was monitored and no archaeological deposits were disturbed.

¹ Historic Scotland references.

The excavations were undertaken by hand, by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 20th of July. 2015.

D E S C R I P T I O N

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the edge of the Outer Defences to the south of the gate along the access path. This location is part of an earthwork pathway **003**, leading to the bridge **004** over the ravine **005**, through a sandstone entranceway and to the north of the river **011**. The cut for the trench, **027**, measured 1.03m N/S x 0.81m E/W x 0.44m deep.

Within the area opened for the sign only two stratigraphic layers were revealed. The top layer, **001**, was comprised of turf and dark grey/brown sandy topsoil to a depth of 0.1m. The lower deposit, **002**, was a mid-greyish/brown loose silty-sandy soil containing some small and medium red and grey sandstone fragments (c.10cm x 15cm x 8cm), along with fragments of the local green conglomerate stone and a few small river pebbles. The material of **002** was relatively homogenous and turf-like with some possible flecks of charcoal.



Plate 1: Post-excitation view of Trench 1.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located towards the western edge of the Outer Close **026**. When the cut **029** for the trench was made, a strip of electric cable warning tape, **022**, was located 0.2m below the surface and 0.12m from the western edge of the trench. The trench was therefore extended 0.35m to the east to avoid the services. Overall the final trench measured 1.45m NW/SE x 0.78m NE/SW x 0.45m deep, with a 0.3m strip along the western edge to a depth of 0.2m.

Within the trench, **020** was a turf and dark brown silty-sandy topsoil \approx 0.1m deep. Immediately below was deposit **021**, a sandy silty clean brown soil 0.15m in depth, which carried the electric cable warning tape **022**. No cut was visible around the location of the warning tape and **021**. Beneath **021** was a silty clay rich brown/grey soil **023** with frequent stone inclusions (red/pink sandstone fragments). This stony layer may be related to the anthropomorphic surfaces found below and included animal bone. With the partial removal of **023** the base of the excavated area was revealed. Towards the northeast corner of the trench was a collection of black, charcoal-like material (0.43m x 0.2m in plan, broadly triangular in shape) with a stony layer extending from amongst the charcoal towards the southeast corner. This surface, **024**, seems likely to be anthropomorphic in origin and may be related to some of the stony material of **023** above; it was suitably protected with a semi-permeable membrane sheet prior to the insertion of the lectern panel.



Plate 2: Post-excitation view of Trench 2.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located towards the eastern corner of the Inner Close, **017**, placed to the southwest of the observation telescope **016**, and to the east of a stone wall foundation **015**, which makes up part of the sea gate.

Within the trench cut **028**, the turf and topsoil **012** were removed to expose the layers below. The topsoil was a dark loose sandy brown soil and extended to a depth of 0.15m. Below the layer of turf lay **013**, a band of dark brown silty soil with a large collection of pebbles and stony inclusions ranging from 4 – 6cm deep. This in turn lay over **014**, a mixed brown/orange clay rich soil with small fragments of red sandstone and natural green conglomerate stone, c.0.25m in depth. The bottom of the cut did not reach the base of this stratigraphic layer; finds including animal bones and clay pipe stem were found within **014**.



Plate 3: Post-excavation view of Trench 3.

Removal of Older Interpretation Panels

Following the excavation of the three trenches, two older freestanding interpretation panels were removed. The first was located towards the northeast corner of the inner courtyard (**017**). The panel was sitting directly in the soil with no concrete base. It was removed and no archaeological deposits were disturbed. Following removal, the soil was reinstated to seal the shallow hole.

The second sign was located towards the east side of the bridge leading into the Midtower. The turf was cut away to reveal the concrete slab below the signpost. No archaeological deposits were disturbed.

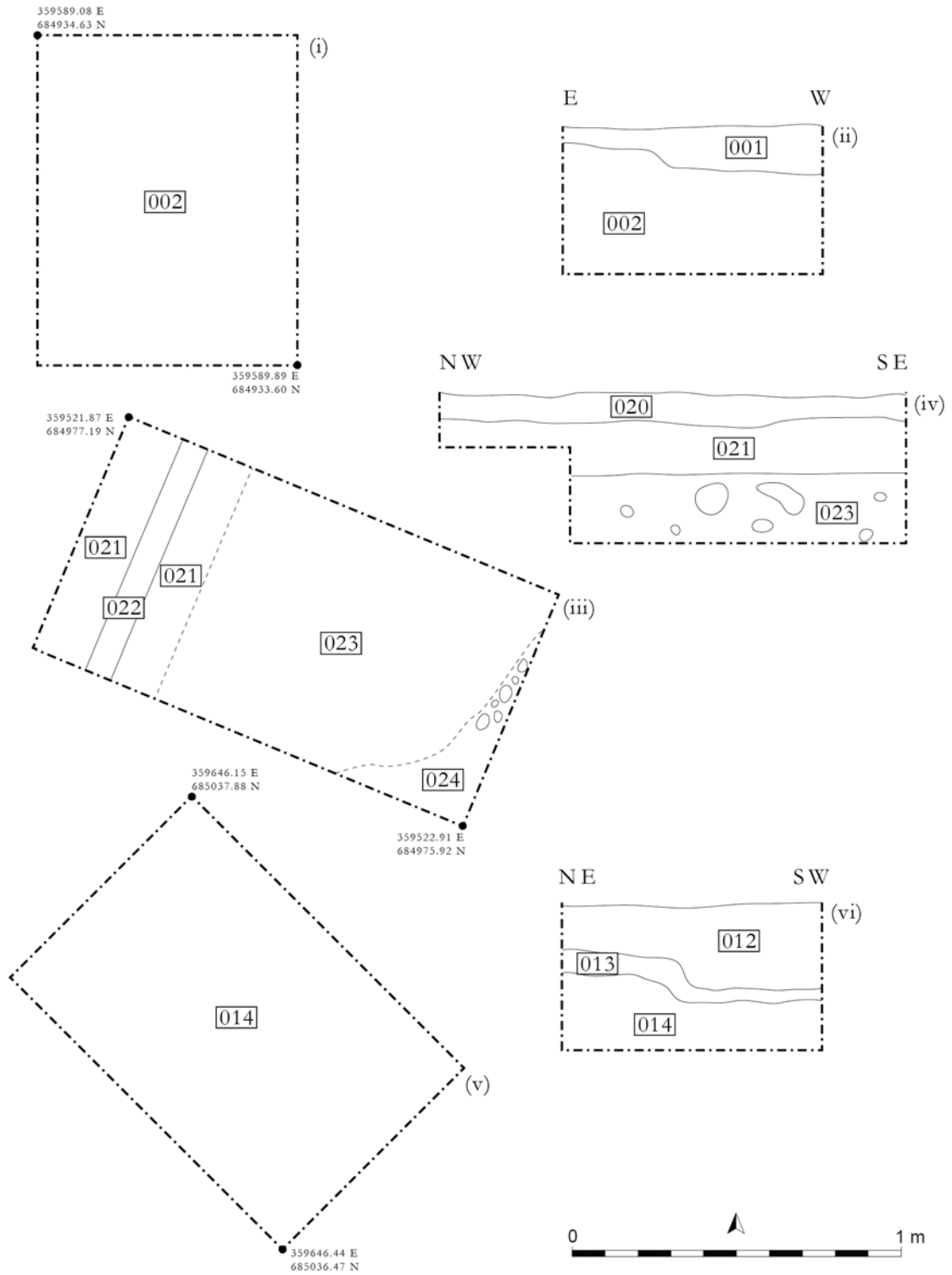


Figure 2: i) Post-excavation plan of Trench 1; ii) N-facing section in Trench 1; iii) Post-excavation plan of Trench 2; iv) SW-facing section in Trench 2; v) Post-excavation plan of Trench 3; and, vi) NW-facing section in Trench 3.

CONCLUSIONS

Towards the bottom of **029** (Trench 2) a small part of a surface with anthropomorphic origins was revealed. This surface was covered and protected prior to the installation of the sign. While Trench 3 revealed no structural remains, finds suggest the lowest stratigraphic layer **014** is of archaeological interest.

The removal of the two older interpretation panels caused no impact to archaeological deposits, and no further work was needed.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No	Description
001	The top turf layer, a root filled dark grey/brown sandy soil and the grass above.
002	Mid-greyish/brown loose silty-sandy subsoil below 001 within Trench 1. Inclusions of some small and medium red and grey sandstone (c.10cm x 15cm x 8cm), local green conglomerate stone, and river pebbles. The Trench 1 cut goes into this layer, but not to the bottom. Material is homogenous and turf-like with some possible charcoal/coal inclusions.
003*	The entrance approach path past where Trench 1 was located.
004*	Bridge to enter the castle's Outer Close from 003.
005*	Ravine of the Outer Ditch between 003 and the Outer Gate bridged by 004.
006*	Path past the bridge through the Outer Gate.
007*	West side of Outer Gate.
008*	Fortified bank west of the Outer Gate entrance.
009*	Wall to the east of the Outer Gate entrance.
010*	Tower at the southern end of 009.
011*	River to the south of 003 and 009.
012	Turf and dark brown loose sandy topsoil over Trench 3. Approximately 0.15m deep.
013	Band of small pebble-filled stony layer c.5cm deep.
014	Mixed brown/orange clay rich soil with small pieces of sandstone (red) and natural green conglomerate stone. Bone and clay pipe found. Approximately 0.25m deep.
015*	Rock wall to the west of TAN8; part of the sea gate.
016*	Observation point northeast of TAN8.
017*	Rolling grassy field of the inner close, within which Trench 3 was located.
018*	Uncultivated cliff edge beyond the fence.
019*	Modern fence.
020	Turf and dark brown silty sandy top soil over Trench 2. Approximately 0.1m deep.
021	Sandy silty brown clean soil below 020.
022	Electrical cable warning plastic, 0.2m below the ground surface within Trench 2. Approximately 0.12m from the original western edge of the cut for Trench 2.
023	Clay-silt dark brown-grey soil with lots of stone inclusions (sandstone red/pink). May be disturbed and related to the surface appearing to the east.
024	Surface towards the western corner of the bottom of Trench 2. Distinguished by a black charcoal material (0.43m x 0.2m, triangular shape) towards the southeast and, a stony layer towards the northeast corner.
025*	Dovecot.
026*	Grass field of the Outer Close between 008 and the castle.
027	Cut for Trench 1: 1.03m x 0.81m x 0.44m deep.
028	Cut for Trench 3: 1.01m x 0.8m x 0.45m deep.
029	Cut for Trench 2: 1.45m x 0.75m x 0.45m deep.

*indicates a context number ascribed to a standing building component or other noteworthy feature utilised to situate the geographical location of the fieldwork.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Section	Trench 1, N-facing.	1:20
2	Plan	Location of Trench 1.	NTS
3	Section	Trench 3, NW-facing.	1:20
4	Plan	Location of Trench 3.	NTS
5	Plan	Post-excavation, Trench 2.	1:20
6	Section	Trench 2, SW-facing.	1:20
7	Plan	Location of Trench 2.	NTS

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	W	20/07/15
2	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	N	20/07/15
3	N-facing section of Trench 1.	N	20/07/15
4	N-facing section of Trench 1.	N	20/07/15
5	Post-excavation shot of Trench 1.	N	20/07/15
6	Trench 1.	N	20/07/15
7	NW-facing section of Trench 3.	NW	20/07/15
8	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3.	SE	20/07/15
9	Area around Trench 3.	SW	20/07/15
10	Area around Trench 3.	SW	20/07/15
11	Area around Trench 3.	SW	20/07/15
12	Trench 2, turf removed.	NE	20/07/15
13	Partial removal of 021 showing 022 caution tape in Trench 2.	NE	20/07/15
14	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	NE	20/07/15
15	SW-facing section of Trench 2.	SW	20/07/15
16	Overview of area of Trench 2.	NE	20/07/15
17	Post-removal of sign in northeastern corner of the Inner Courtyard.	SW	20/07/15
18	Removal of turf around the base of the sign adjacent to the bridge leading into the Midtower.	W	20/07/15
19	Bone finds from context 014.	N/A	22/07/15
20	Clay pipe from context 023.	N/A	22/07/15
21	Bone finds from context 023.	N/A	22/07/15
22	Pre-excavation shot of Trench 1.	W	20/07/15

LIST OF FINDS

No.	Context	Material	Description
SF001	014	Clay Pipe	21 fragments of animal bone. These include one intermediate BOS phalanx, one CAPRA/OVIS distal tibia, one likely BOS molar fragment, one heavily heat affected mammal bone fragment (white in colour), two CAPRA/OVIS molars, one AVES vertebrae, one AVES sacrum, one fragment of a large mammal long bone, one fragment of mammal skull, 11 fragments of unidentified animal bone. The bone is badly preserved, fragmental and fairly fragile.
SF002	014	Bone	Two fragments of clay pipe stem. One is 27mm long and 9mm in diameter, the second is 41mm long and 7mm in diameter.
SF003	023	Bone	Five degraded sheep molars with some alveolus still attached.