

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	West Lothian
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Torphichen Preceptory
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90305-2015-01
PARISH:	Torphichen
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS97SE 7
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Preceptory
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NS 9685 7252
START DATE (this season)	19 March 2015
END DATE (this season)	20 March 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 three trenches to house new signage at Torphichen Preceptory. Nothing of archaeological interest was recovered during the works, with the trenches indicating that the area has been subject to modern landscaping.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Kirkdale Archaeology, 4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh, EH12 5QF
EMAIL ADDRESS:	g_ewart@hotmail.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2015/2016**

Torphichen Preceptory • Watching Brief • March 2015

HS PIC Index Number: 90305

SITE: Torphichen Preceptory, Torphichen, West Lothian.

N.G.R.: NS 9685 7252

DESCRIPTION: Archaeological watching brief during the removal of an existing entrance pole sign, and the excavation of three trenches to house new signage.

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90305-2015-01

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4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF

JUNE 2015

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of three trenches to house new signage at Torphichen Preceptory near Bathgate in West Lothian. The sign in Trench 1 would replace an existing pole sign on the north side of the path at the entrance gate, the one in Trench 2 was located on the grass on the south side of the path to the south-west of the flag pole outside the Custodian's hut, while the sign in Trench 3 was located on the eastern side of the path to the south-east of the Custodian's hut (see Figure 1).

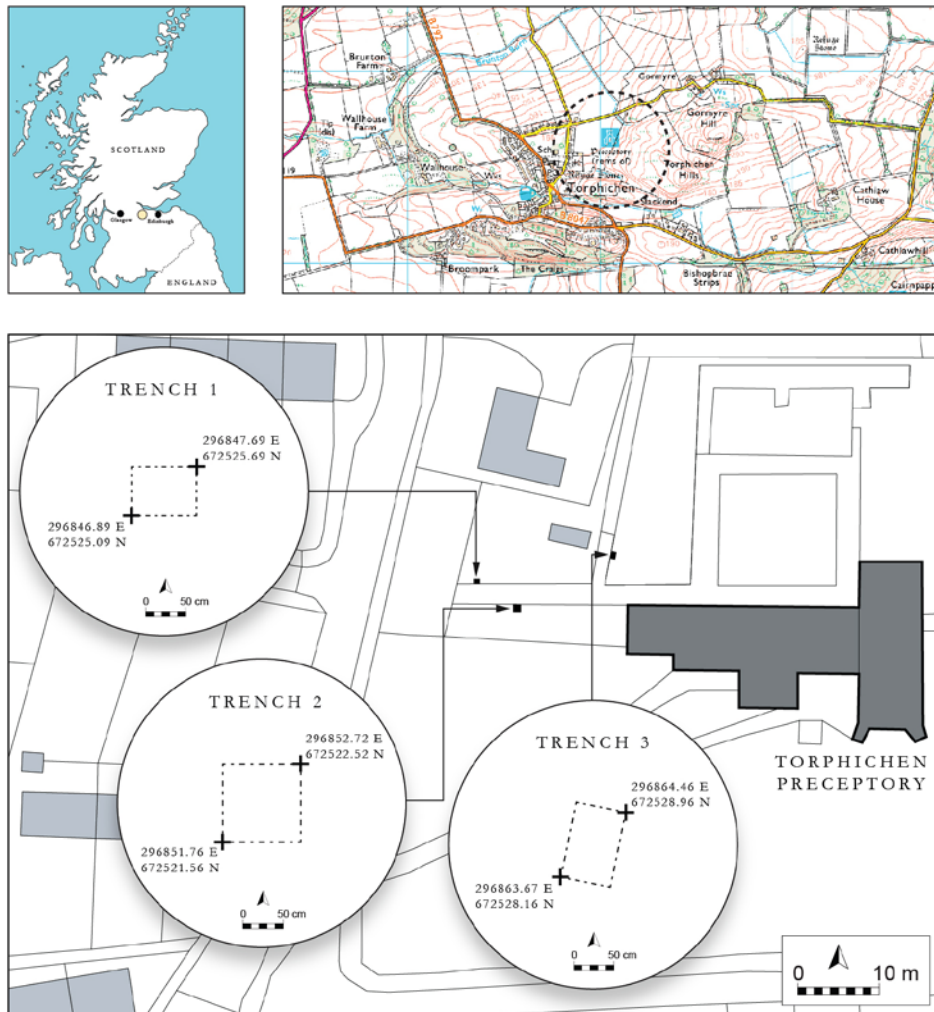


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the three trenches.

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The trenches were excavated by hand, by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and the work was carried out on 19th and 20th March, 2015.

DESCRIPTION

Trench 1

The sign intended for Trench 1 would replace an existing pole sign on the north side of the path at the entrance gate to the church yard. The existing sign was partially excavated then 'rocked' out as it had a sizeable concrete base. The resultant trench measured 0.6m N/S x 0.8m E/W x 0.6m deep. Its south-western edge was located 2m east of the north side of the main entrance gate on the north side of the main path to the church. The turf **101** was 13cm deep and overlay a layer of mid-brown silty garden soil **102** flecked with charcoal. The trench was levelled with excavated soil to provide the required depth of 0.25m.



Plate 1: The existing pole sign at the Trench 1 location during removal.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 0.94m N/S x 0.94m E/W x 0.35m deep¹. The western side of Trench 2 was located 7.45m east of the south side of the main entrance gate on the south side of the main path to the church. The turf and mid-brown silty stony topsoil **201** was 0.16m – 0.20m deep and had been introduced (probably at some point in the late 19th/20th century) to cap a mixed levelling layer **202** of partially voided angular rubble mixed with silt flecked with charcoal; this layer was only partially excavated to a depth of 0.15m. The finds from both of these layers (bottle glass/transfer printed pottery/barbed wire) indicated the date suggested above, with layer **202** representing a levelling layer used to landscape the approach to the church.

¹ The drawing which had been provided to the MCU did not indicate which direction the sign was to face, so as a result the original size of 0.94m x 0.61m was expanded to 0.94m x 0.94m in order that the sign could be accommodated no matter what its orientation.

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 0.94m N/S x 0.62m E/W x 0.35m deep. Its southern edge was located 3.3m north of the angle of the grassed area south of the main path to the church. The turf and mid-brown silty stony topsoil **301** was 0.2m deep and had been introduced (probably at some point in the late 19th/20th century) to cap a mixed levelling layer **302** of silt flecked with charcoal and mortar containing angular pieces of sandstone and pieces of slate; again, it was only necessary to partially excavate this layer, to a depth of 0.15m. The modern finds (bottle glass/transfer printed pottery/barbed wire) from both of these layers indicated the date suggested above, with layer **302** representing a levelling layer consisting of a large amount of demolition debris.

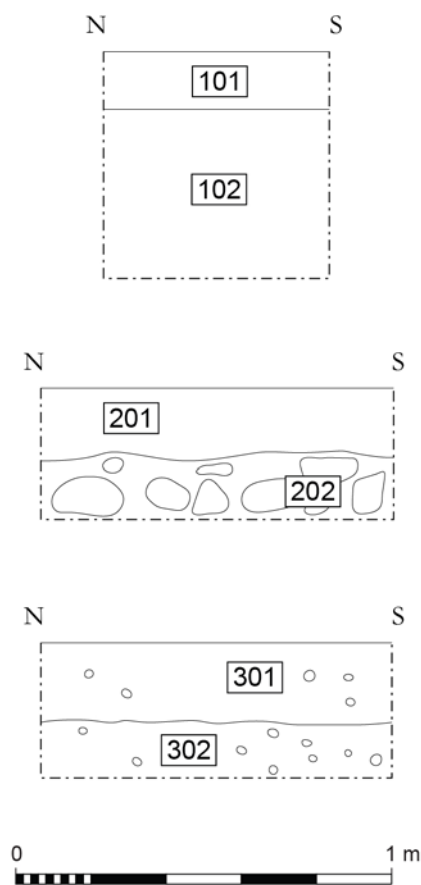


Figure 2: S-facing sections of trenches 1 (top), 2 (centre) and 3.

CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological interest was recovered during the works, with the trenches indicating that the area has been subject to modern landscaping. However, *in-situ* archaeological deposits could still survive at greater depths, so it is recommended that any further ground-breaking activities be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No	Description
101	Trench 1, turf.
102	Trench 1, mid-brown silty garden soil flecked with charcoal.
201	Trench 2, turf and mid-brown silty stony topsoil.
202	Trench 2, mixed levelling layer of partially voided angular rubble mixed with silt flecked with charcoal.
301	Trench 3, turf and mid-brown silty stony topsoil.
302	Trench 3, mixed levelling layer of silt flecked with charcoal and mortar containing angular pieces of sandstone and pieces of slate.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location of all three trenches.	1:50
1	Section	S-facing, of all three trenches.	1:20

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Preceptory, church and cloister.	NW	19/03/2015
2	Pre-excavation shot showing the location of Trench 3.	W	19/03/2015
3	Pre-excavation shot showing the location of Trench 3.	S	19/03/2015
4	Work in progress, Trench 3.	SW	19/03/2015
5	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3, W-facing section.	W	19/03/2015
6	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3, W-facing section.	W	19/03/2015
7	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3.	W	19/03/2015
8	Post-excavation shot of Trench 3.	S	19/03/2015
9	Existing pole sign at Trench 1.	SW	19/03/2015
10	Existing pole sign at Trench 1.	W	19/03/2015
11	Existing pole sign at Trench 1 (removed).	SW	19/03/2015
12	Existing pole sign at Trench 1 (removed).	S	19/03/2015
13	Pre-excavation shot showing the location of Trench 2.	NE	20/03/2015
14	Pre-excavation shot showing the location of Trench 2.	W	20/03/2015
15	Pre-excavation shot showing the location of Trench 2.	SW	20/03/2015
16	Work in progress, Trench 2.	W	20/03/2015
17	Work in progress, Trench 2.	NW	20/03/2015
18	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	W	20/03/2015
19	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	N	20/03/2015
20	Post-excavation shot of Trench 2.	S	20/03/2015