

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Stirling
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Cambuskenneth Abbey
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90055-2013-01
PARISH:	Stirling
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
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SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Abbey
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START DATE (this season)	30 April 2013
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PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a trench to install the base for a new sign.</p> <p>Upper deposits and the finds found within them suggested that they comprise made ground of imported material. More interesting is the discrete layer of clay below, which has been deliberately deposited, possibly related to the installation of the graveyard behind which sits at a higher level than the bank, in turn higher than the soft deposits which currently cover the floor of the Nave. It is also worth noting that clay linings are also used in garden <i>parterres</i>.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
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ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2013**

Cambuskenneth Abbey • Monitoring • April 2013

HS PIC Index Number: 90055

SITE: Cambuskenneth Abbey, Stirlingshire

N.G.R.: NS 809 939

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during excavation of a trench to install new signage at
Cambuskenneth Abbey

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90055-2013-01

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Cambuskenneth Abbey in Stirlingshire during the excavation of a trench to install a new signage base (Fig.1).

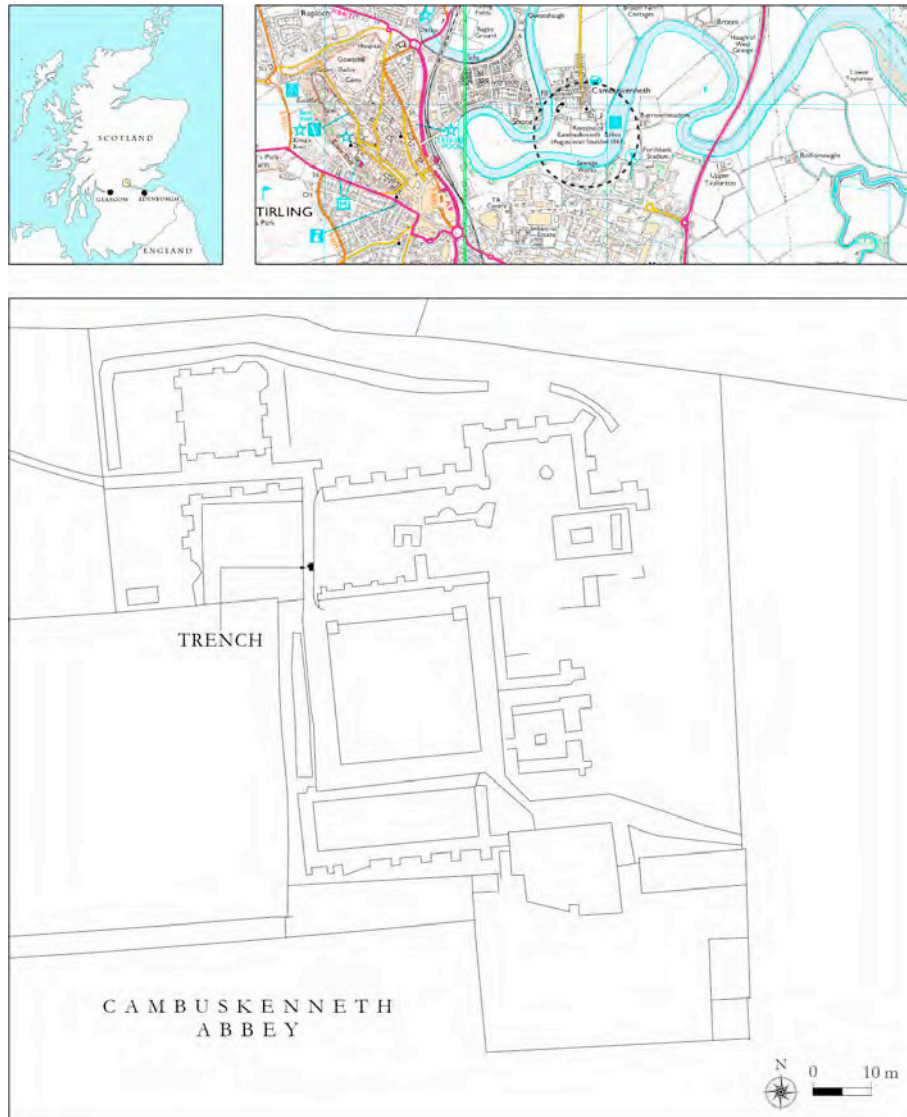


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Cambuskenneth Abbey and the area of works
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The remains of the Abbey Church consist of a reduced wall line at foundation level with the moulded arch of the W door still *in situ*. The W door does not sit centrally within the W wall of the nave but is offset to the S. It is now incorporated as the doorway into a graveyard of potentially late 18th/19th century date. The graveyard occupies the area of the western half of the nave and is surrounded by a low masonry wall surmounted by a metal fence. The new information panel was to be placed on a low bank immediately to the E of the eastern wall of the graveyard in a direct line back from the W door, so that

visitors could stand behind it while facing into the E portion of the nave, with views to the choir, transepts and the Victorian tomb of James III and Margaret of Denmark.

William Mackison traced the footings of the Cloistral Range and Abbey Church during excavations in 1864. These were left exposed, and falling ground levels around the site may indicate the extent of the excavations. As such, the area of bank chosen to house the new information panel was considered to be of high archaeological potential.

The work was carried out by Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision, and took place on 30th April 2013.

DESCRIPTION

The trench was located on the grassy bank immediately E of the eastern wall of the graveyard. The bank itself is flat topped (although made uneven by stones protruding from its surface) and measures 1.40m W/E. To the E is a scarp 0.9m wide, which drops to the grassed area of the nave, a fall of around 0.5m.

The trench was intended to measure 1m N/S x 0.6m E/W, with its E edge at the top of the scarp, however it needed to be enlarged slightly (see below). The final depth reached was 0.46m.

Upon removal of the turf **101** (0.1m thick), the stone base of a metal fence upright was exposed. The truncated rectangular-section iron upright was visible set into the stone. To the S was another one, which had been built into the side of the processional doorway leading from the cloister to the nave. To the N, another was set into the ground at the end of the bank. The stone base was bedded at a depth of 0.16m. Its removal meant the widening of part of the western portion of the trench, a further 0.34m N/S x 0.2m E/W. The stone base appeared to be set within (as opposed to cut through) a made-up compact mixed fill **102** of mid-brown silt with clay clasts, medium sized pieces of un-dressed sandstone (<20cm) and finds including two sherds of possibly medieval pottery, three sherds of modern white-glazed pottery, oyster shells, a piece of ceramic field tile and clear and coloured bottle glass shards. There was also a small quantity of disarticulated bone that was not diagnostic enough to be confidently identified. This made-up layer was 0.24m thick and cleared onto a compact mottled layer of compact grey clay **103**, some 8cm thick containing small (<5cm) pieces of sandstone and a further quantity of disarticulated bone. There were no other finds within this layer. The clay cleared on to a further layer of compact mixed gritty mid-brown silt and clay **104** although this layer was only exposed by 4cm until the required depth was achieved. There were no finds recovered from this layer, although a small additional excavation was carried out against the N section so that the bone from **102** and **103** could be re-buried.

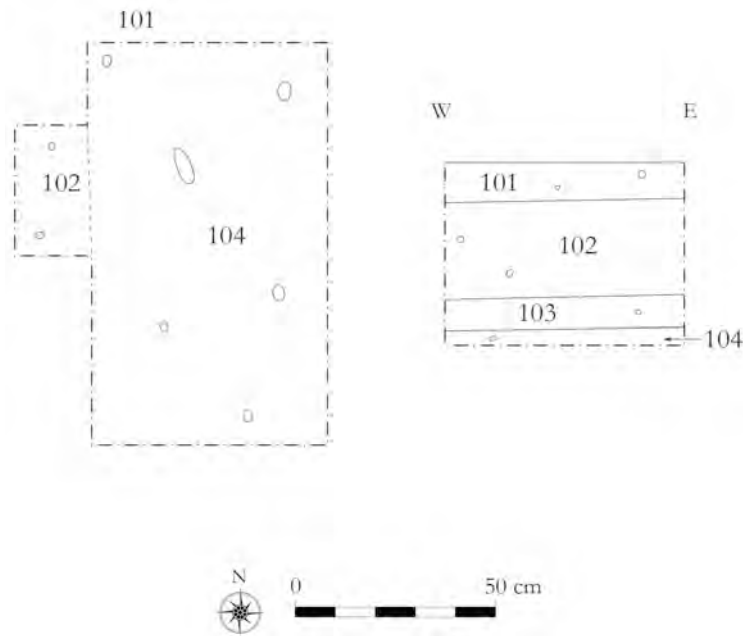


Figure 2: Post-excavation plan of the trench (left) and S-facing section

CONCLUSIONS

The mixed deposit **102**, coupled with the variable date of the objects found within it, show that this is an area of made ground which has recycled material from elsewhere. More interesting is the discreet layer of clay **103** below, which has been deliberately deposited. It could only be examined within the confines of the trench, but the emplacement of clay is usually associated with an intention to seal a particular surface. It is possibly related to the installation of the graveyard behind which sits at a higher level than the bank, which is in turn higher than the soft deposits which currently cover the floor of the Nave. Clay linings are also used in garden *parterres*. Any further opportunity to examine these layers during future ground-breaking works would be beneficial to our understanding of the site, and thus such works should be similarly accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.



Plate 1: Post-excavation shot of the trench from the E

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Description
101	Turf
102	Made-up layer of mixed mid-brown silty topsoil with clay clasts, sandstone pieces and mixed artefacts
103	Layer of compact grey clay with sandstone pieces and disarticulated bone
104	Partially exposed layer of compact mixed gritty mid-brown silt and clay

LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location plan of trench	1: 100
2	Plan	S-facing section	1: 20
3	Plan	Post-excavation plan of trench	1: 20

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	The bell tower	SE	30/4/2013
2	The W nave door, graveyard wall, scarp and bank	E	30/4/2013
3	The graveyard wall, scarp, bank and processional doorway	NE	30/4/2013
4	The graveyard wall, scarp, bank and processional doorway	SE	30/4/2013
5	The W nave door and graveyard	W	30/4/2013
6	View of the church foundations from the bell tower	NW	30/4/2013
7	Pre-excavation shot of the trench location	E	30/4/2013
8	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright	S	30/4/2013
9	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright	E	30/4/2013
10	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright	N	30/4/2013
11	Stone base removed	E	30/4/2013
12	Trench after removal of 102	E	30/4/2013
13	Trench after removal of 102	E	30/4/2013
14	Post-excavation shot of trench	S	30/4/2013
15	W-facing section of trench	W	30/4/2013
16	W-facing section of trench	W	30/4/2013
17	N-facing section of trench	N	30/4/2013
18	Post-excavation shot of trench	E	30/4/2013
19	Post-excavation shot of trench	NE	30/4/2013
20	Bone from layer 103	N/A	30/4/2013
21	Bone from layer 102	N/A	30/4/2013
22	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright at processional doorway	N	30/4/2013
23	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright at processional doorway	S	30/4/2013
24	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright at N end of bank	N	30/4/2013
25	Stone base and truncated metal fence upright at N end of bank	N	30/4/2013