

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

Updated on 15/06/2007

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Midlothian
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Crichton Castle
PROJECT CODE:	HSCO-90084-2013-02
PARISH:	CRICHTON
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Paul Fox
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kirkdale Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NT36SE 7.00
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NT 3803 6113
START DATE (this season)	27 November 2012
END DATE (this season)	27 November 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during excavations to allow the installation of a new gate through the surrounding fence to the E of the Castle. The removal of an existing signpost just SW of the gate was also monitored. Six small trenches were excavated, revealing nothing of archaeological significance.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Scotland
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HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2012

Crichton Castle • Watching Brief • November 2012

HS PIC Index Number: 90084

SITE: Crichton Castle

N.G.R.: NT 3803 6113

DESCRIPTION: Watching Brief during the excavation of trenches related to the
installation of a new gate

PROJECT CODE: HSCO-90084-2012-02

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DECEMBER 2012

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC Call-Off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to monitor the excavation of six small trenches just outside Crichton Castle (Fig.1). The Castle is a dramatic ruin situated at the top of a steep glen carrying the Tyne Water, in Midlothian. The site is a suite of buildings of varying ages; with a tower in its NE corner of late fourteenth century date and later ranges built up around this.

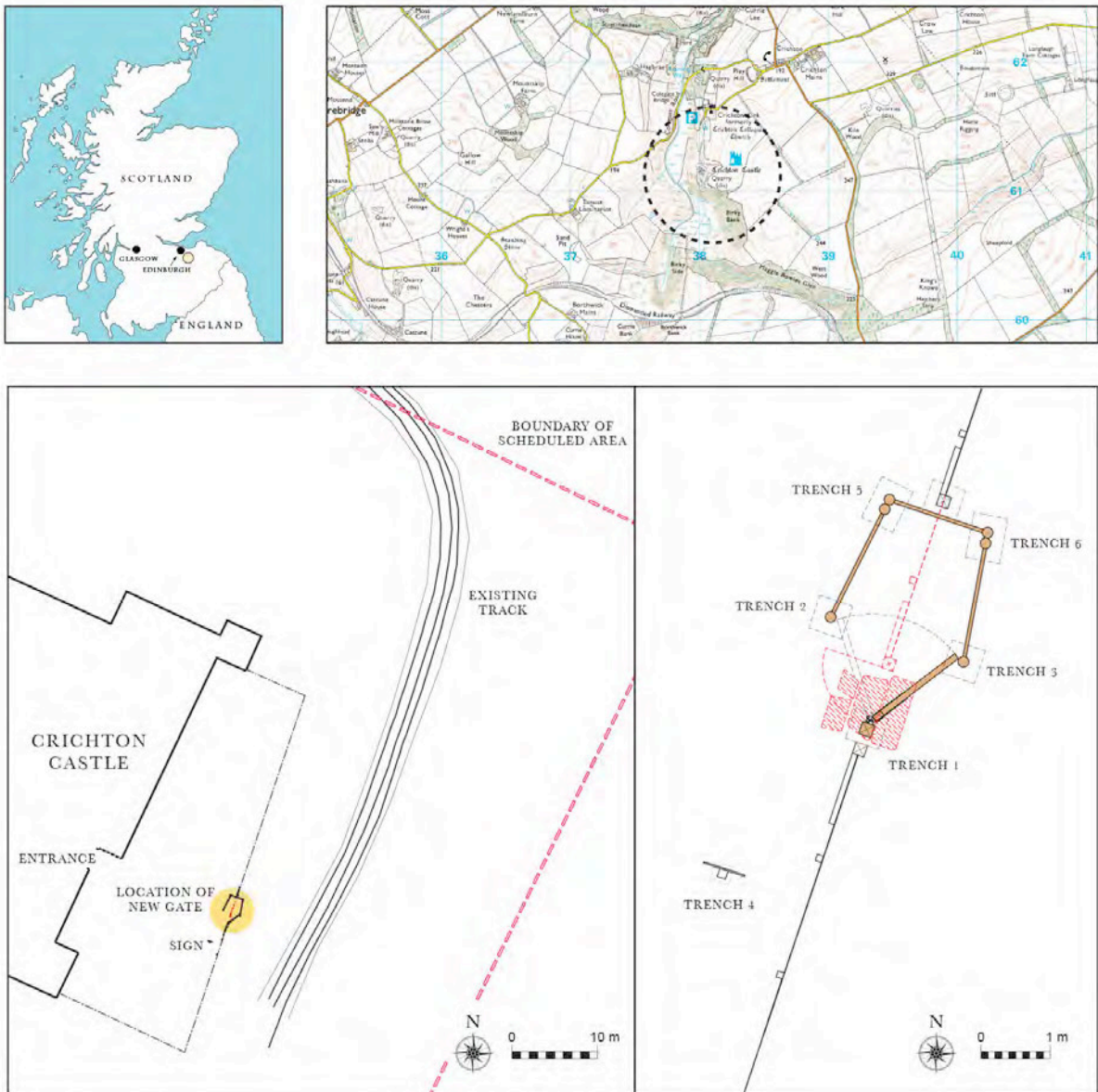


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of Crichton Castle, and the site of the present works

The installation of a new gate through the surrounding fence led to the current project. The fence lies to the E of the Castle, enclosing a small area of flat grassland, with its entrance in front of the castle gate. The removal of an existing signpost just SW of the gate was also monitored.

D E S C R I P T I O N

Trench 1 was excavated against the NE side of the SW post of the extant gate. This was a large squared timber, separated from its partner to the NE by a gap of 0.9m, with an area of rough paving (**101**) between them. Work started with the removal of this paving over an area of 1.2m by 0.75m; this incorporated two squared flagstones, with the remaining material made up of smaller sandstone fragments. This revealed that both existing fence posts were set in large (roughly 0.5m square and 0.25m thick) concrete pads.

Trench 1 measured some 0.3m square, and was excavated between these two existing concrete pads. The upper deposit, **106**, proved to be reddish brown silty clay very rich in sandstone fragments. Context **106** was 0.25m thick and post-dated the concrete pads on either side. Below this soft, degraded sandstone **107** was excavated to a depth of 0.35m.

Trench 2 was excavated 1m to the N of Trench 1, and measured 0.3m square and reached a depth of 0.55m. Here 0.1m of mid-brown silty clay topsoil **200** sealed **201** below, a sandstone rich reddish brown silty clay deposit 0.25m thick. Below this, **202** was degraded reddish sandstone.

Trench 3 was excavated roughly 1m E of Trench 1. The sequence of topsoil (**300**) over stone rich silty clay (**301**) over degraded bedrock (**302**) was repeated. Trench 3 measured 0.25m square and reached a depth of 0.55m.

Trench 4 was dug to extract the existing signpost, just to the SW of the gate. Here a depth of only 0.15m was reached, at this point it was realised that the post was also set in a substantial concrete base (**401**), and a decision was made to simply saw off the wooden post at this juncture.

Trench 5 was excavated 2.2m N of Trench 1, and again topsoil (500) sealed a deposit (501) of reddish brown silty clay full of sandstone fragments. Only in this trench were flecks and small chunks of mortar noted within this deposit. Below deposit 501 degraded sandstone bedrock 502 was encountered. This trench measured 0.75m SE to NW by 0.35m NE to SW, and reached a depth of 0.6m.

Trench 6 was located 0.6m to the SE of Trench 5 and measured 0.7m SE to NW by 0.35m NE to SW, with a depth of 0.6m. Here again topsoil 600 lay over a 0.25m thickness of sandstone rich silty clay 601, which in turn lay over bedrock 602.

C O N C L U S I O N S

All but Trench 4 produced a similar sequence, with typically a 0.25m thickness of sandstone rich silty clay over bedrock. Trench 4 simply exposed the concrete base of the modern sign, and in Trench 1 this deposit overlay concrete footings for posts.

This could represent a natural deposit, with the reddish brown colour of the soil matrix and the sandstone fragments within it denoting an ultimate derivation from the local sandstone. Certainly in all cases this deposit simply overlay degraded bedrock. Alternatively it could be an archaeological layer, perhaps deliberately laid as hard standing near the entrance to the castle, or a rubble layer relating to either construction or demolition work at the site. The relative scarcity of mortar indicates that a demolition deposit is unlikely, but debris from construction work is not impossible.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench 1

Context no.	Description
100	Topsoil
101	Existing paving
102	Fill of 103
103	Cut for fence post on SW side of existing gate
104	Fill of 104
105	Cut for fence post on NE side of existing gate
106	Reddish brown silty clay rich in sandstone fragments
107	Bedrock

Trench 2

Context no.	Description
200	Topsoil
201	Reddish brown silty clay rich in sandstone fragments
202	Bedrock

Trench 3

Context no.	Description
300	Topsoil
301	Reddish brown silty clay rich in sandstone fragments
302	Bedrock

Trench 4

Context no.	Description
400	Topsoil
401	Fill of 402
402	Cut for existing signpost

Trench 5

Context no.	Description
500	Topsoil
501	Reddish brown silty clay rich in sandstone fragments
502	Bedrock

Trench 6

Context no.	Description
600	Topsoil
601	Reddish brown silty clay rich in sandstone fragments
602	Bedrock

LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	Existing gate prior to excavation	SE	27/11/2012
02	Existing gate prior to excavation	SE	27/11/2012
03	Work started on Trench 1	NW	27/11/2012
04	Work started on Trench 1	N	27/11/2012
05	Trench 2 as finished	N	27/11/2012
06	Trench 2 as finished	N	27/11/2012
07	General shot of castle	SE	27/11/2012
08	General shot of castle	S	27/11/2012
09	General shot, work in progress	S	27/11/2012
10	General shot, work in progress	S	27/11/2012
11	General shot, work in progress	NW	27/11/2012
12	General shot, work in progress	NW	27/11/2012
13	New gate being installed	S	27/11/2012