

***Discovery and Excavation in Scotland – OASIS-type Form (2006)***

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Orkney Islands
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Noltland Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	HSCO-90231-2013-01; HSCO-90231-2013-02; HSCO-90231-2013-03
<b>PARISH:</b>	Westray
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Andrew Hollinrake, Graeme Wilson
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kirkdale Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Geophysical survey; Minor excavation; Watching brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	HY44NW 1
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Tower House
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	HY 4289 4872; HY 4290 4872;
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	30 January 2012
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	12 June 2013
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	<p>Minor excavations were carried out in the walled enclosure just NW of the castle in advance of work to install a new car park and improve access (HY 4289 4872). These main works were followed by a smaller area of excavation following the demolition of part of the boundary wall along the west perimeter of the ground surrounding the Castle (HY 4291 4872).</p> <p>In the main area of excavation, the findings indicate that a complex of structural remains survive within the proposed development area. These comprise two or more phases of construction and include at least three buildings and associated features and deposits. No dating evidence or material suitable for sampling was found in association with any of the structures. The later structural remains do not appear on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1882/3, although an irregularity in the alignment of the road in this vicinity may be a relic of the former presence of one of the structure. This indicates that the structure had gone out of use and its remnants buried at some time before this date. In view of the fact that the multiple floorings found inside the structure indicate that it is likely to have been in use over an extended duration, it is possible that the earlier remains, represented by two other structures seen, may be of considerable age. An area of wall for example is comparable in its robustness and scale to the range of buildings attached to the S side of Noltland Castle, which date to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.</p> <p>There was nothing of archaeological significance revealed by the small excavation on the other side of the boundary wall (HY 4291 4872).</p>
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Historic Scotland
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	4, Western Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5QF
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*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland – OASIS-type Form (2006)*

<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS
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**HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE  
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2013**

**Noltland Castle • Excavations • February 2013**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90231**

**SITE:** Noltland Castle, Westray, Orkney Islands

**N.G.R.:** HY 429 487

**DESCRIPTION:** Excavation of trenches to assess the impact of a new car park and associated access upgrade

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90231-2013-01

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**F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 3**

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to assess the archaeological potential of an area immediately NW of Noltland Castle in advance of a new car park and associated access upgrade. The area comprises a roughly square walled enclosure with a narrow strip immediately to the S. (Fig. 1).

The archaeological response comprised of the archaeological test trenching of the proposed car park area with reference to the results of a recent geophysical survey.



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the location of Noltland Castle and the area of works.  
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## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Noltland Castle is situated to the W of Pierowall on the island of Westray. It is a 'Z-plan' castle constructed from 1560 onwards. Now roofless, it consists of an oblong main building containing a hall and chamber above a vaulted kitchen and cellarage. Square towers project from the SW and NE corners of the main building. Although the main building of the castle was designed to have three upper storeys, only the NE tower and the adjoining chamber block of the main building appear ever to have been completed. These are finished with corbelled parapets and cylindrical turrets, within which rise the crow-stepped gables of the high-pitched roofs. The main building has seventy-one gun-loops, arranged in tiers. On the S side of the castle stand the S wall and footings of a range of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings both inside and outside a courtyard.

Until recently Jo Ben's early account of Orkney, which refers to '*an excellent fortalice or castle not yet finished*' dated to 1529, lead to suggestions that there was an earlier castle on this site. However, recent research by James M Irvine suggests that Jo Ben is in fact the Rev. John Bonner from North Ronaldsay, writing in 1592. Construction begins in several intermittent stages from around 1560. Sir Gilbert Balfour, its builder, played an important and somewhat colourful role in the political affairs of Scotland and Sweden at this time. His decision to build his fortified home in Westray is likely to have been influenced by a need to make himself less obvious on grounds of personal safety. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a Range was added to the S and enclosed in a courtyard. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century further structures were erected outwith the E and W walls.

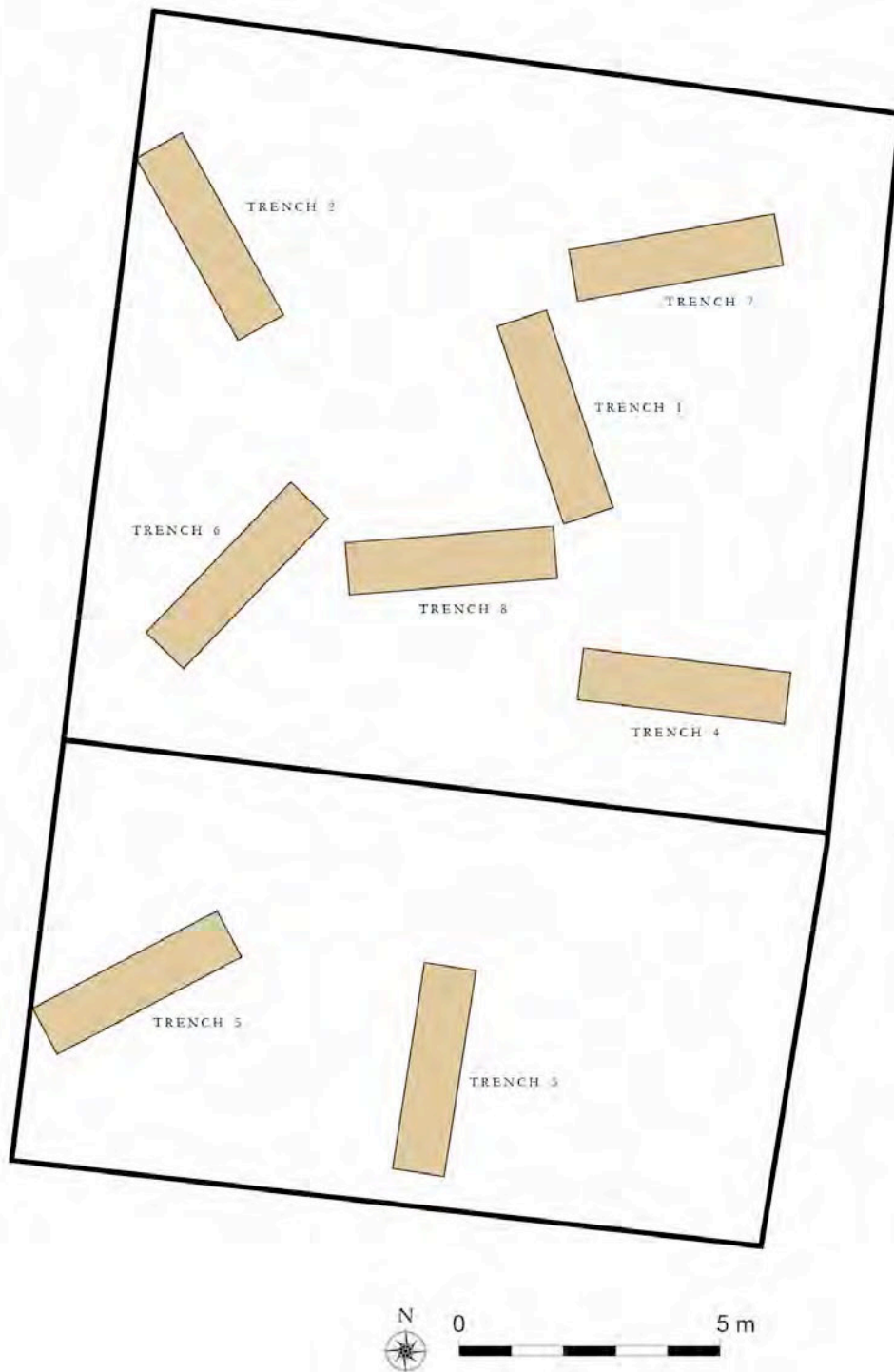
## **DESCRIPTION**

A sample size of 10% of the proposed car park was examined during this evaluation. The area under investigation is not scheduled. This work took place in advance of development. The size and location of the trenches was determined by the results of the geophysical survey, targeting geophysical anomalies and apparent blank areas.

Turf and topsoil were stripped by hand. Excavation proceeded to the depth required for the new car park base, *i.e.* 500mm, or, where shallower, to the top of the first archaeological layer.

Structural remains of unknown archaeological potential were discovered within the depth required for the new car park in Trenches 1, 4, 6 and 8. These remains were not removed or further investigated pending advice from Historic Scotland.

A more detailed account of the findings of excavation is provided below.



**Figure 2:** Plan showing the trench locations.

The trenching scheme is shown on Fig. 2 and corresponds with that submitted as part of the planning application. The trenches provide a sample size of approximately 10%. All trenches were excavated by hand.

#### **TRENCH ONE**

**Purpose:** To test a modern spread identified by geophysical survey

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.62m. Structural remains of unknown archaeological potential were identified within this trench. These comprised a 1.65m segment of drystone walling and associated rough stone surfaces. Further assessment is required in order to more fully characterise these remains. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

#### **TRENCH TWO**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent blank area

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. A rough stone surface was identified towards the base of this trench. Associated finds included 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics, together with animal bone. It is conjectured that these remains are associated with crofting activity and that they are of minimal archaeological potential. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base, however, and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

#### **TRENCH THREE**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent high resistance anomaly.

This trench measured 4.3m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. The high resistance anomaly indicated by geophysical survey was found to result from the presence of bedrock at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.5m of the ground surface. Traces of a rough stone surface were identified to the S end of this trench. These were associated with 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and shards of bottle glass. At the N end of the trench, spreads of redeposited natural glacial till and partially articulated sheep bones are suggestive of a modern animal burial. Again, it is thought that these remains are associated with crofting activity and that they are of minimal archaeological potential. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

#### **TRENCH FOUR**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent high resistance anomaly.

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. Structural remains of unknown archaeological potential were identified within this trench. These comprised a 1.1m segment of drystone walling and associated rough stone surfaces. Further assessment is required in order to more fully characterise these remains. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.



**Plate 1:** The work in progress, showing trenches 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 open.

#### **TRENCH FIVE**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent blank area.

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. Two stony spreads were identified within this trench. Both were associated with finds of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century bottle glass and china; shell and animal bone was also present. It is thought that these remains are associated with crofting activity and that they are of minimal archaeological potential. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

#### **TRENCH SIX**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent blank area

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m to investigate an apparent blank area inside the walled garden. A rough stone surface was identified towards the base of this trench. Associated finds include animal bone. It is conjectured that these remains are associated with crofting activity that they are of minimal archaeological potential. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development. A fragment of a larger sandstone slab was partially exposed beneath the stone spread in the SW corner of the trench. This may represent an earlier feature, possibly of archaeological interest. Lying at a depth of some 0.45m below the present ground surface, this stone and any surviving deposits associated with it are likely to be disturbed or significantly altered by the proposed development.





**Plate 1:** Post-excavation photograph of Trench 1.

#### **TRENCH SEVEN**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent blank area

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. A rough stone surface was identified at a depth of some 0.3m below the modern ground surface. Associated finds include 19th – early 20th century ceramics and animal bone. It is conjectured that these remains are associated with crofting activity that they are of minimal archaeological potential. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base, however, and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

#### **TRENCH EIGHT**

**Purpose:** To test an apparent high resistance anomaly

This trench measured 4m by 1m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. Structural remains of unknown archaeological potential were identified within this trench. These comprised a 1.3m segment of drystone walling and associated rough stone surfaces. Further assessment is required in order to more fully characterise these remains. They lie within the depth required for the new car park base and would be entirely removed or substantially altered by the proposed development.

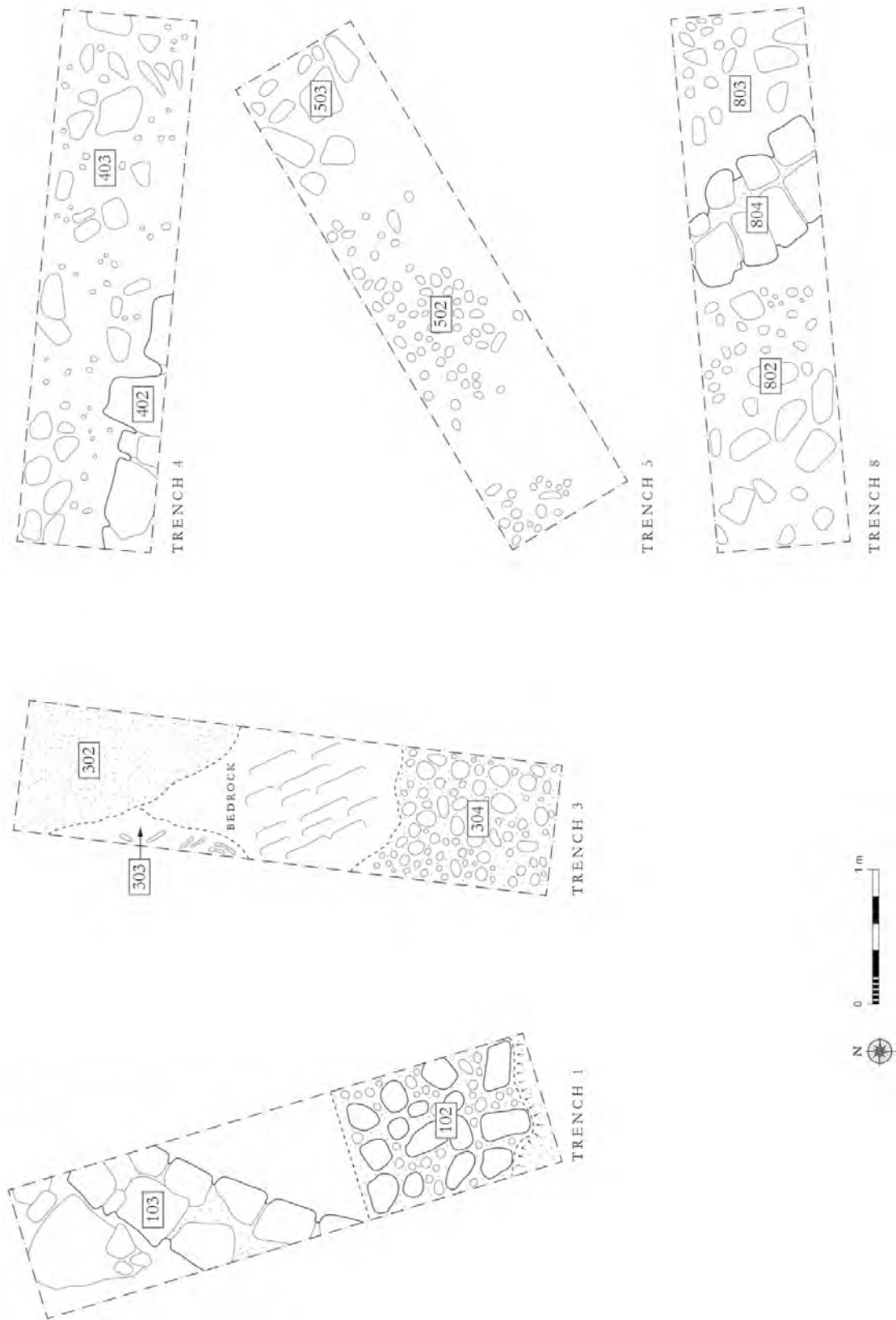


Figure 3: Post-excitation trench plans for trenches 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8.

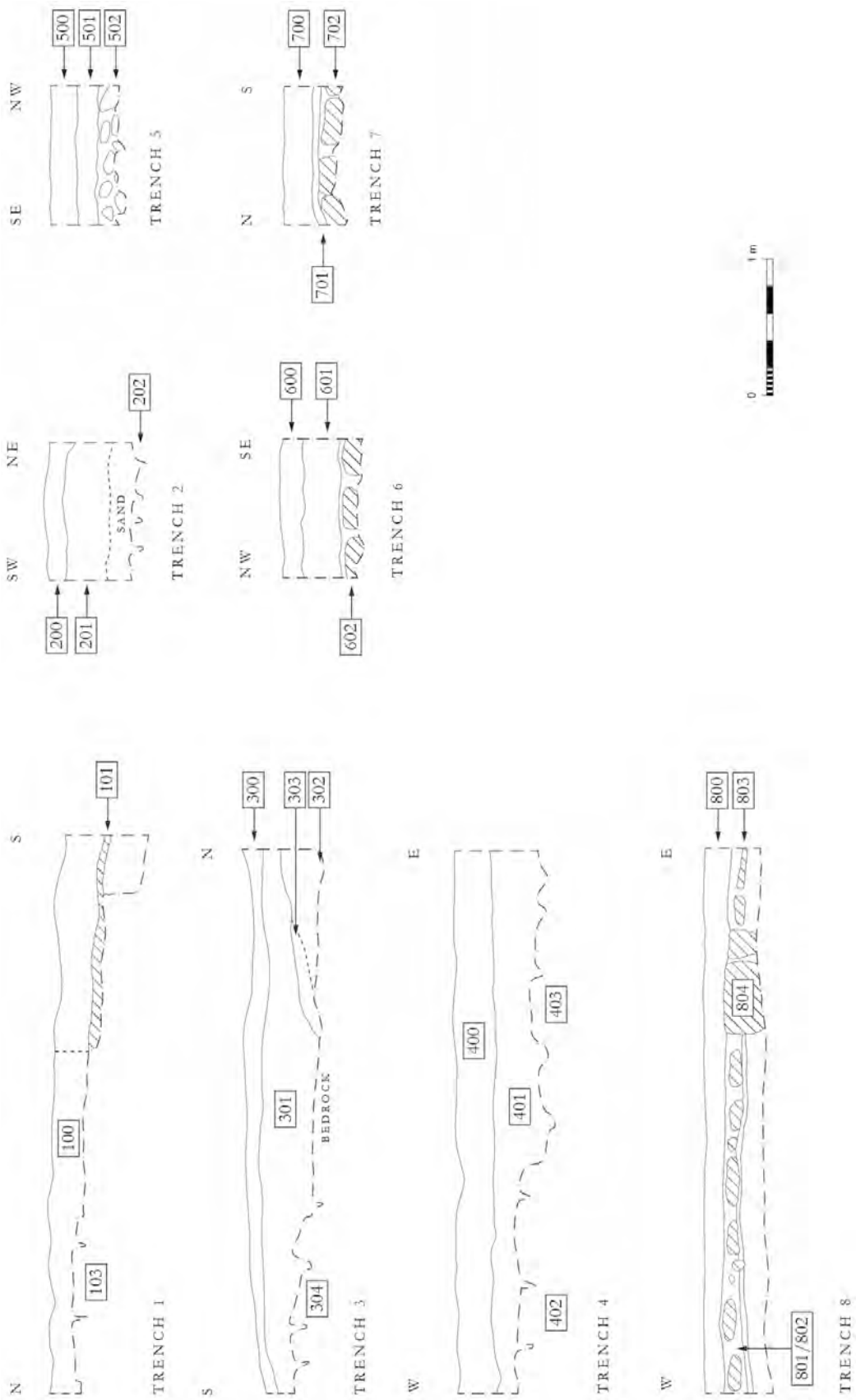


Figure 4: Sections from trenches 1 to 8.



**Plate 3:** Post-excavation photograph of Trench 8.

### **POROSITY TESTS**

Three additional test pits were excavated to record the ground conditions to assist in the construction of the car park. It was intended that the pits should be excavated to a depth of 0.6m, but in the event, natural bedrock was exposed in two of the pits before this depth was achieved.

#### **Trench A (342887 1048700; HS Ref: PT 1)**

A test pit measuring 0.45m by 0.40m was excavated to a depth of 0.5m. It exposed a mid-brown sandy silt loam topsoil (0.2m) covering a grey-brown firm sandy loam subsoil (0.25m). Below this, a thin layer of glacial till (0.05m) of orange-grey glacial till covered the bedrock flagstone.

#### **Trench B (342896 1048699; HS Ref: PT 2)**

A 0.4m by 0.4m pit was manually excavated to a depth of 0.35m. The deposits exposed in section comprised of a mid-brown sandy silt loam topsoil (0.15m) covering a stony surface of probable artificial origin (0.15m). Basal deposits comprised of a thin spread of pale orange glacial till (0.05m) which covered the bedrock flagstone.

**Trench C (342894 1048715; HS Ref: PT 3)**

A test pit measuring 0.5m by 0.5m was cut to a depth of 0.68m. The upper deposit comprised of a mid-brown sandy silt loam topsoil (0.15m). This covered a concentration of stone of probable artificial origin and its dark grey-brown sandy silt matrix (0.45m). The latter covered the bedrock flagstone; no glacial till was present here.

**REINSTATEMENT**

The trenches and porosity test pits were backfilled on completion of recording.

**C O N C L U S I O N S**

The findings of this work indicate that the proposed development area contains buried remains. These comprise (i) surfaces of probable recent date, associated with crofting activity and (ii) structural remains of unknown date. The latter include three segments of walling and possibly associated stone surfaces. These features are concentrated to the centre and SE part of the walled garden (Trenches 1, 4, 8 and 6). They did not appear to belong to a single building and may represent more than one construction. The archaeological potential of these remains is currently unknown and further work will be required to characterise and record them. They will be substantially affected by the proposed ground works.

The identification of bedrock at depths of between 0.3m and 0.7m across the site and the lack of any artefacts of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century origin within the excavated trenches suggests that substantial undetected archaeological remains are unlikely to be present within the proposed development area.

It is recommended that a further programme of pre-development excavation is undertaken and that this is specifically targeted to investigate the structural remains seen in Trenches 1, 4, 8 and 6.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Trench	Description
100	1	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.1m to 0.25m in depth.
101	1	A thin layer of windblown sand occurred immediately below the topsoil. This was most visible at the south end of the trench. It varied in thickness, to a maximum of 0.1m.
102	1	A spread of angular and sub angular stone in a sandy silt matrix. Located to south side of wall 103 and possibly associated with it. The average stone size is 0.2m x 0.25m x 0.05m. This deposit was up to 0.3m deep.
103	1	A 1.65m segment of drystone walling extended NE/ SW across the trench. It was 0.5m wide, on average, and constructed from angular field stone. It was faced on both sides. The average stone size is 0.3m x 0.25m x 0.08m. The height of the wall could not be ascertained without recourse to excavation.
104	1	The underlying bedrock surface was glimpsed at a depth of 0.62m at the south end of the trench. It was comprised of smooth, level flagstone.
200	2	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.15m to 0.20m in depth.
201	2	A layer of windblown sand occurred below the modern subsoil. It varied in thickness between 0.15m and 0.2m. It may be associated with a severe weather event recounted by local people from the 1950's, when it is said that sand also banked up against the walls of the castle and surrounding buildings and houses.
202	2	A firm, compact stony surface lay beneath the sand, forming the lowest deposit seen in this trench. It comprised of angular and sub angular stones in a sandy silt matrix. The stones measured up to 0.3m x 0.2m x 0.05m. A small quantity of 19th – early 20th century ceramics, together with some animal bone, was recovered from this deposit.
300	3	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% - 15% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.15m to 0.20m in depth.
301	3	This firm and homogenous mid grey-brown sandy silt was, on average, 0.3m in thickness.
302	3	A spread of mixed orange-brown glacial till at the north end of this trench is interpreted as redeposited natural. It appeared to be associated with the excavation of a burial pit for a sheep, which was found nearby (see Context 303).
303	3	Part of the skeleton of a sheep was uncovered at the north end of this trench. The remains were largely articulated. The skeleton lay mainly outside the trench and was not removed; it appeared to be of recent origin.
304	3	A compact spread of stone found at the south end of this trench is interpreted as a rough surface. It lay 0.25m below the present ground surface and was composed of angular and sub angular stone of average size 0.17m x 0.11m x 0.02m.
400	4	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% - 15% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.15m to 0.20m in depth.

Number	Trench	Description
401	4	This firm and homogenous mid grey-brown sandy silt was between 0.2m and 0.3m in thickness.
402	4	A 1.1m long segment of drystone walling extended across the trench on an approximately E/W alignment. It lay largely outside the trench and the full width was not exposed. It was constructed from angular field stone and was roughly faced. The upper surface lay 0.4m below the modern ground surface.
403	4	A spread of stone surrounding the wall (402) is interpreted as a rough surface. It lay 0.5m below the present ground surface and was composed of angular and sub angular stone of average size 0.2m x 0.1m x 0.02m. The upper surface was uneven, with some larger flagstone present at a lower level.
500	5	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% small sub angular stones. It was 0.20m deep, on average.
501	5	This firm and homogenous mid grey-brown sandy silt was between 0.2m and 0.3m in thickness. The boundary between topsoil and subsoil was diffuse and light in colour, suggesting that a layer of windblown sand had intervened here, although it was no longer separately visible.
502	5	A loose spread of small angular stone lay within the subsoil towards the centre of the trench. This may represent natural sorting rather than an artificial construction. The average stone size was 0.1m x 0.07m x 0.02m.
503	5	A second stony spread occurred at the south end of the trench. This was composed of slightly larger stones than 502 (0.15m x 0.12m x 0.02m). The upper surface of this spread lay some 0.3m below the present ground surface. Fragments of modern bottle glass and some animal bone were found in association with it. This deposit covered glacial till.
600	6	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% - 15% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.15m to 0.20m in depth.
601	6	This firm and homogenous mid grey-brown sandy silt was between 0.25m and 0.35m in thickness.
602	6	A rough stone surface lay 0.4m below the present ground surface and was composed of angular and sub angular stone of average size 0.2m x 0.1m x 0.05m. Fragments of modern ceramic, animal bone and shell were found in association.
603	6	A larger, cracked flagstone seen underlying this surface at the south west corner of the trench may represent an earlier feature. It is of unknown date and potential. It lay at a depth of 0.45m below the present ground surface.
700	7	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% - 15% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.2m to 0.25m in depth.
701	7	A thin layer of sterile, white windblown sand was present beneath the topsoil. It was some 0.05m thick, on average. As seen in Trench 2 (201) and elsewhere on the site, this deposit may be associated with a severe weather event which is said to have occurred during the 1950's.
702	7	A stony spread lay between 0.3m and 0.35m below the ground surface and comprised of angular and sub angular stone in a subsoil matrix. It contained 19th – early 20th century ceramics and animal

Number	Trench	Description
		bone and is thought to represent an artificial surface, associated with recent crofting activity in the area. It varied between 0.1m and 0.2m in thickness.
800	8	Firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil with well-developed turf. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% - 15% small sub angular stones. It was 0.15m deep, on average.
801	8	This firm and homogenous mid grey-brown sandy silt was generally 0.1m in thickness.
802	8	A spread of angular and sub angular stone in a variety of sizes abutted the west side of the wall (804). It contained 19th – early 20th century ceramics and animal bone and is interpreted as a roughly constructed surface.
803	8	A second stony spread occurred to the east side of the wall (804). This was associated with a grey sandy silt matrix from which no datable artefacts were recovered.
804	8	A segment of drystone walling extended across the trench for 1.3m. It was aligned NW/SE and lay some 0.2m below the ground surface. It was constructed from angular field stone and was 0.4m or a single stone in width. It was roughly faced on both sides.

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Trench 1, post-excavation	1:20
2	Section	Trench 1, W-facing	1:20
3	Plan	Trench 3, post-excavation	1:20
4	Section	Trench 3, E-facing	1:20
5	Plan	Trench 4, post-excavation	1:20
6	Section	Trench 4, S-facing	1:20
7	Plan	Trench 5, post-excavation	1:20
8	Section	Trench 5, S-facing	1:20
9	Plan	Trench 8, post-excavation	1:20
10	Section	Trench 8, S-facing	1:20
11	Section	Trench 6, S-facing	1:20
12	Section	Trench 7, S-facing	1:20
13	Section	Trench A, W-facing	NTS
14	Section	Trench B, W-facing	NTS
15	Section	Trench C, W-facing	NTS

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	The site from the castle	SE	07/02/2013
2	The site and farmhouse	SE	07/02/2013
3	The site and farmhouse, trenching in progress	SE	07/02/2013
4	Trenching in progress	SE	07/02/2013
5	Entrance to walled garden from public road	E	01/02/2013
6	Walled garden and castle	W	01/02/2013
7	Walled garden entrance and public road	E	01/02/2013
8	Eastern boundary wall of walled garden	NE	01/02/2013
9	Walled garden and farmhouse	S	01/02/2013
10	Trench 1	NW	07/02/2013
11	Trench 1	NW	03/02/2013



No.	Description	From	Date
12	Trench 1	NW	03/02/2013
13	Trench 1	SE	03/02/2013
14	Trench 1	SE	03/02/2013
15	Trench 1	E	03/02/2013
16	Trench 1	W	03/02/2013
17	Trench 1	W	03/02/2013
18	Trench 1	W	03/02/2013
19	Trench 1	W	03/02/2013
20	Trench 1	N	03/02/2013
21	Trench 2	SE	03/02/2013
22	Trench 2	SE	03/02/2013
23	Trench 2	NW	03/02/2013
24	Trench 2	NW	03/02/2013
25	Trench 2	NW	03/02/2013
26	Trench 2	NW	03/02/2013
27	Trench 2	E	03/02/2013
28	Trench 2	E	03/02/2013
29	Trench 2	NE	03/02/2013
30	Trench 2	SW	03/02/2013
31	Trench 2	SW	03/02/2013
32	Trench 2	SW	03/02/2013
33	Trench 2, stone surface	SW	03/02/2013
34	Trench 2, stone surface	SW	03/02/2013
35	Trench 6	NE	03/02/2013
36	Trench 6	NE	03/02/2013
37	Trench 6	SW	03/02/2013
38	Trench 6	SW	03/02/2013
39	Trench 6	SW	03/02/2013
40	Trench 6	NW	03/02/2013
41	Trench 6	NW	03/02/2013
42	Trench 7	W	04/02/2013
43	Trench 7	W	04/02/2013
44	Trench 7	W	04/02/2013
45	Trench 7	E	04/02/2013
46	Trench 7	E	04/02/2013
47	Trench 8	W	04/02/2013
48	Trench 8	W	04/02/2013
49	Trench 8	W	04/02/2013
50	Trench 8	N	04/02/2013
51	Trench 8	N	04/02/2013
52	Trench 8	W	04/02/2013
53	Trench 8	W	04/02/2013
54	Trench 4	W	04/02/2013
55	Trench 4	W	04/02/2013
56	Trench 4	W	04/02/2013
57	Trench 4	W	04/02/2013
58	Trench 4	E	04/02/2013
59	Trench 4	E	04/02/2013
60	Trench 4	E	04/02/2013
61	Trench 5	S	04/02/2013
62	Trench 5	S	04/02/2013
63	Trench 5	S	04/02/2013
64	Trench 5	W	04/02/2013
65	Trench 5	W	04/02/2013

No.	Description	From	Date
66	Trench 5	W	04/02/2013
67	Trench 5	E	04/02/2013
68	Trench 5	E	04/02/2013
69	Trench 3	N	05/02/2013
70	Trench 3	N	07/02/2013
71	Trench 3, N end	W	05/02/2013
72	Trench 3, sheep bone in section	W	05/02/2013
73	Trench 3, S end	W	05/02/2013
74	Trench 3	S	07/02/2013
75	Trench 3	S	07/02/2013
76	Trench 3	S	07/02/2013
77	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
78	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
79	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
80	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
81	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
82	Porosity Test, Trench A	N/A	05/02/2013
83	Porosity Test, Trench A	NW	05/02/2013
84	Porosity Test, Trench A	NW	05/02/2013
85	Porosity Test, Trench B	N/A	05/02/2013
86	Porosity Test, Trench B	N/A	05/02/2013
87	Porosity Test, Trench B	N/A	05/02/2013
88	Porosity Test, Trench B	N/A	05/02/2013
89	Porosity Test, Trench B	W	05/02/2013
90	Porosity Test, Trench B	W	05/02/2013
91	Porosity Test, Trench C	N/A	05/02/2013
92	Porosity Test, Trench C	N/A	05/02/2013
93	Porosity Test, Trench C	N/A	05/02/2013
94	Porosity Test, Trench C	N/A	05/02/2013
95	Porosity Test, Trench C	N/A	05/02/2013

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

**Noltland Castle • Excavation • March 2013**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90231**

**SITE:** Noltland Castle, Westray, Orkney Islands

**N.G.R.:** HY 429 487

**DESCRIPTION:** Excavation ahead of the construction of a new car park and associated access upgrade

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90231-2013-02

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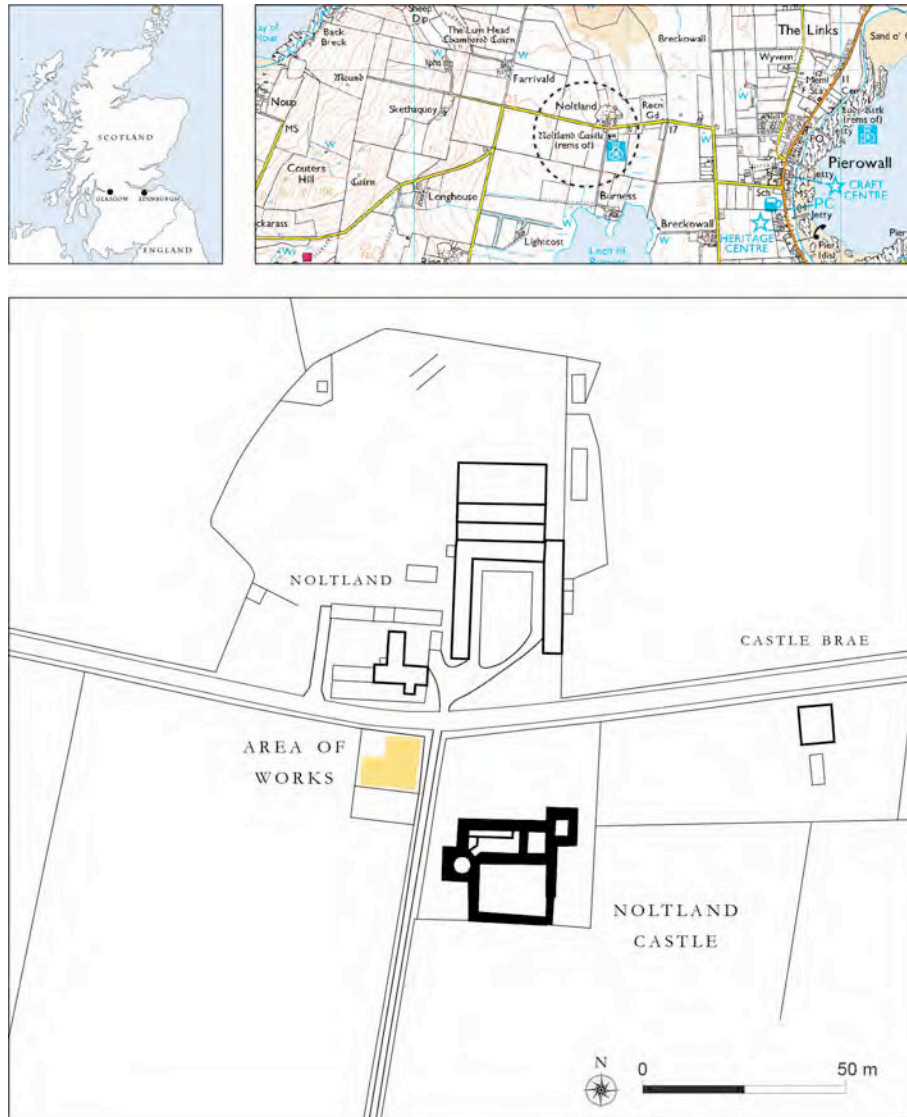


4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF

JUNE 2013

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to excavate an area immediately NW of Noltland Castle in advance of a new car park and associated access upgrade. The area comprised an irregularly shaped trench within a broadly square, walled enclosure (Fig.1).



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the location of Noltland Castle and the area of works  
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The excavation investigated some 67% of the proposed development area, centred on the location of the remains previously identified during test pitting (*see* HSCO-90231-2013-01). The overburden of topsoil and later surfaces were removed by machine, under archaeological supervision, and the area subsequently cleaned by hand to expose a series of structural features. These comprised walls, surfaces, floors, a drain and soil deposits. They are interpreted as potentially representing three buildings (Structures A, B and C), belonging to at least two structural phases. These features were recorded, photographed and drawn. A

limited amount of further investigation (the partial excavation of the floor within Structure A and a *sondage* across the drain) was undertaken to investigate key features in more detail. The structural remains were not removed.

Following the excavation, an archaeological watching brief was conducted while topsoil was removed from the remainder of the development area. No features or deposits of interest were encountered during this work. A geotextile membrane was then laid over the ground surface, covering all of the deposits. A layer of clean sand was laid above this. The design of the car park has been amended to ensure that the remains are not further disturbed and that they are safeguarded for the future.

The work took place in March 2013.

## **D E S C R I P T I O N**

At the time of excavation, the proposed development site comprised a square enclosure, with dry stone walls surrounding the E, S and W sides, together with a strip of land adjacent to its S side. It was covered with a well-developed turf and was used as occasional grazing for young animals / garden ground since at least the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The excavation trench measured 15m x 15m and took in approximately 80% of the area of the walled enclosure. No excavation was undertaken in the strip of land outside the S side of this enclosure.

The work commenced with the mechanical removal of topsoil and subsoil (**100** and **101**) under archaeological supervision. This exposed a series of structural features. None of these features were fully exposed or removed, although sufficient evidence was found to indicate that they represent at least two separate phases of construction. These are described below.

### **Phase 1: Early Constructions**

Traces of earlier deposits and structural remains, probably representing a building (Structure B) were glimpsed beneath the Phase 2 remains. Since the Phase 2 remains were not excavated or removed, it was not possible to expose these features in any detail. Observation was therefore limited and the interpretations made are necessarily provisional.

A fragment of stone walling (**118**) exposed beneath Structure A apparently belonged to a building of earlier date. The approximately 4m long segment protruded from beneath the floor of Structure A, to the SW side of the building. It was not fully exposed and its width could not be determined. It extended on an E/W alignment and was partly overlain by the Structure A wall **115**. It is likely to have been truncated by the drain (*see* Phase 2, below). It is conjectured that this wall may represent one side of a building. This

has been provisionally labelled as 'Structure B'. It is possible that this fragment of walling was reused as part of an entrance feature within Structure A (*see* Phase 2, below).



**Plate 1:** An early view of the excavation

Nearby, but not necessarily associated with wall **118**, a second built feature (**123**) extended on a N/S alignment. Very little of this structure was uncovered, although it could be traced as a topographical feature. It is estimated to extend for at least 6m. Its location, and the fact that it also underlay Structure A, may suggest that this feature is associated with Structure B.

Towards the S side of the excavation trench, a succession of deposits were uncovered. None of these were fully exposed or excavated. The latest (**107**) comprised a mid-brown sandy loam. It formed the ground surface into which the drain had been cut and onto which Structure A had been built (*see* Phase 2, below). It contained *c.*20% small angular stones and some animal bone. It covered an undulating layer of clean, white windblown sand (**108**). This, in turn, covered a stony deposit (**109**). Context **109** was up to 0.15m deep.

Beneath **109**, a series of constructions were partially exposed. These appeared to be of contemporary date and to represent a building, provisionally labelled 'Structure C'. Since it lay beneath the ground surface upon which Structure A was built (**107**), it seems likely that Structure C represents an earlier phase of construction. The relation of Structure C to Structure B is unknown, however.

The features collectively grouped as Structure C comprise two walls (**111** and **113**), two flagstone surfaces (**110** and **112**) and a spread of rubble **114**. A 2.7m long segment of the most substantial wall (**113**) was exposed. This well-built wall extended on a NW/SE alignment. There were topographic indications that it

continued SE for a further 3.5m – 4m below the level reached by excavation. It was built from a mixture of quarried stone and fieldstone and was founded on a basal plinth that survived to a height of approximately 0.25m. It varied between 0.75m and 0.9m in width. There was no evidence for the use of clay bonding, plaster or render in association with this feature.



**Plate 2:** A later view of the work

A rubble spread (114) was uncovered on the N side of wall 113. The origin of this material is unclear: it may represent more recent disturbance.

To the S side of wall 113, two fragments of flagstone paving were found in association with a possible internal wall base. One of the flagged surfaces (112) was closely butted up against the face of wall 113. The most complete of the large flags measured some 0.8m x 0.8m in plan but the majority had been smashed into small fragments. The condition of these stones may be indicative of an act of deliberate demolition rather than the gradual decay of the building. From the limited investigation possible within this structure, it appeared that the floor was comprised of two or perhaps three separate layers of flagstones, suggesting that it had been repaired over its lifetime.

A poorly preserved structure (111) lay to the S of the flagged surface 112. It was comprised of a setting of faced stone. It may represent part of an internal partition or a more general feature, but too little of it was exposed to determine anything of its function with certainty.

A second area of flagstones (110) was identified within Structure C. This lay to the E side of wall 111 and probably represents a continuation of surface 112. These flagstones were also neatly laid. They had been

smashed *in situ* and it was impossible to determine the original size of any of the individual stones. At least two layers of paving were in evidence here.



Plate 3: Details of the wall 113 and paved area to the S (112)

### **Phase 2: Late Constructions**

The late constructions included a rectilinear building (Structure A), a covered external drain and a metallised surface.

Structure A lay towards the northern half of the trench. Parts of the N and S sides of the building were exposed, but the E and W sides were not observed. The portion exposed within the trench measured approximately 6.1m E/W by 5.2m N/S.

It is likely that the original western side would have stood within the excavated area, but it appears not to have survived and may have been deliberately removed. The eastern side projected beyond the walled enclosure and into an area now occupied by a farm access track. It is not known if further remains of the building survive beneath the track, although the likelihood is that any remains in this area would have been disturbed, if not removed, during the creation and subsequent use of the track.

The surviving segment of the N wall of Structure A (**116**) measured 6.1m long x 0.6m wide. It had been reduced to its basal course (0.15m - 0.2m high), and was of double-faced construction with a rubble and clay core, and appears to have been clay-bonded. The exterior face was constructed from larger stones, with examples measuring 0.6m x 0.3m x 0.2m and 0.45m x 0.6m x 0.15m. The interior face utilised smaller stone, the average size being 0.3m x 0.2m x 0.15m. The interior face retained traces of a gritty, cream coloured plaster.



The surviving segment of the S wall (**115**) measured 4.8m long x 0.7m wide. It was of similar construction to the N wall and, again, retained traces of plaster on its interior face. It was reduced to a single course, 0.15m – 0.2m in height.



**Plate 4:** View of the central part of the trench showing the drain 103, walling 116, 117 *etc.*

A wall (**117**) extended across the western side of Structure A. This appears to have formed either an internal partition within the building or a secondary addition to it. At its N end, this wall was keyed into wall **116**. No traces of plaster were noted in association with this wall. That it did not form the original W side of the building was evidenced by the fact that wall **116** projected beyond it. Wall **117** extended for 1.6m and was 0.5m wide. It was constructed from stones of average size, typically 0.3m x 0.3m x 0.1m, which were smaller than those used in walls **115** and **116**. Between the southern end of wall **117** and the S wall of the building there was a 2.1m gap. The presence of a doorway here is suggested by a post-setting (**119**). This stood at the centre of the gap and may have held a doorpost. The cut was set into deposits underlying the floor of the building. It measured 0.1m x 0.2m (E/W) and was lined with stone. Traces of an earlier wall (*see* **118**, Phase 1) were also present in this area, and it is possible that parts of it had been repurposed in the creation of an entrance feature. Since the walls had subsequently been reduced to their foundations however, it was not possible to formulate a more detailed reconstruction.

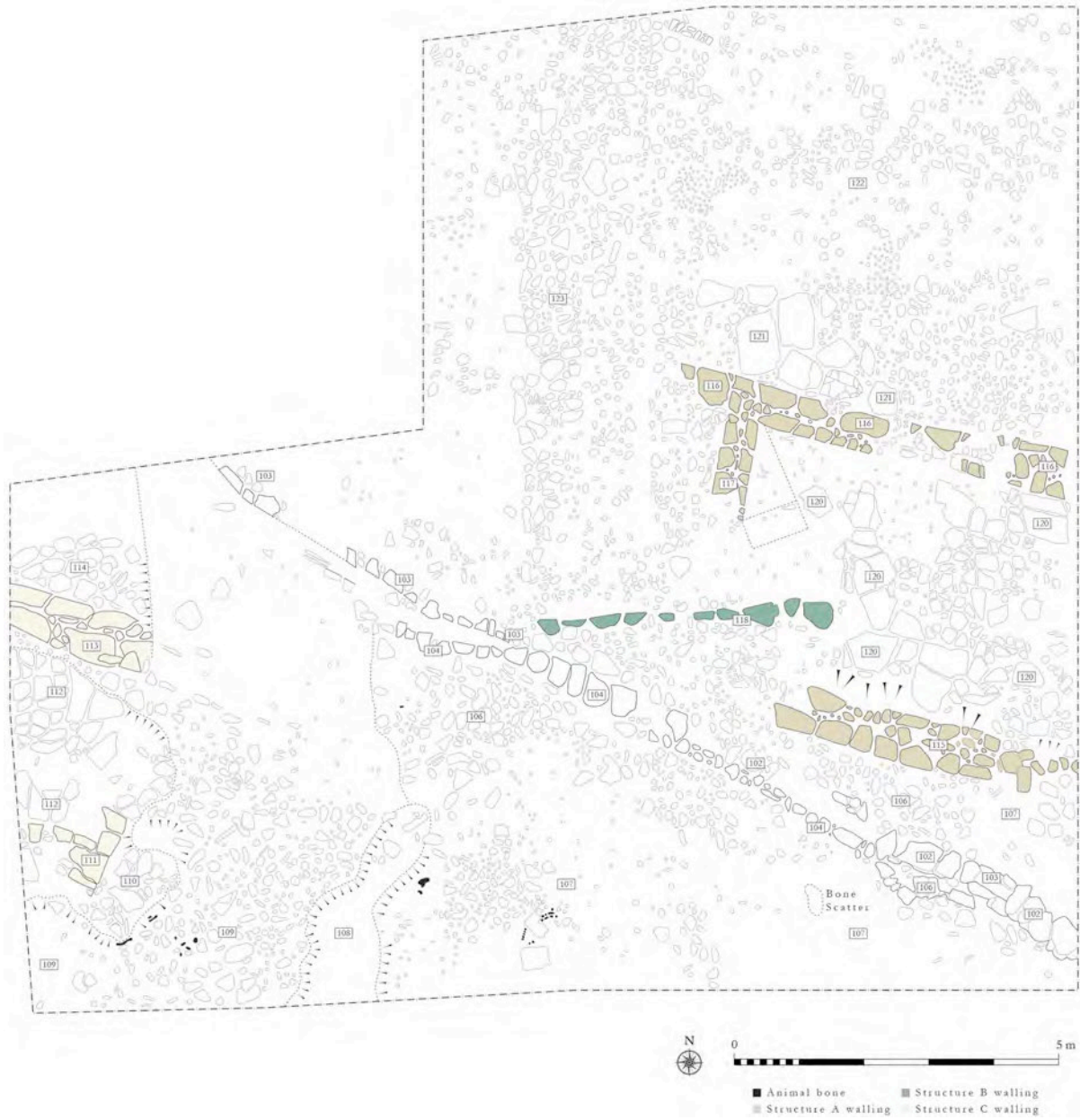


Figure 2: Post-excavation plan of the trench

The remnants of a flagged floor survived within Structure A (120). This surface was exposed directly beneath the subsoil (101) and no associated accumulations survived. The largest and best-preserved flagstones occurred to the periphery of the interior, whereas those in the central floor area were smaller and more damaged. The larger slabs measured in the region of 0.6m x 1m x 0.03m and had originally been neatly laid and closely fitted together. The differential survival of the flagstones may result from greater traffic and, thereby, more wear and tear to the centre of the building. Alternatively, it might be conjectured that the flags survived better where they were founded on top of the walls of an earlier building, (see Phase 1, above). An exploratory *sondage* (measuring 1m wide) was cut across the width of the interior to investigate the nature of the subfloor deposits (Fig. 3). This revealed that the flagged floor had been bonded with clay. Towards the centre of the building at least three consecutive layers of stone were in evidence, indicating that the floor had been repaired during its lifetime.



Plate 5: Surfaces 121 and 122

A stony surface containing a group of ten or so large flat slabs (121) surrounded the northern exterior of Structure A. The largest of the slabs measured 0.9m x 0.6m by 0.04m. This surface extended northwards where it melded into a metallised track (122). The track, which was not fully uncovered, appeared to be aligned E/W and is likely to extend beyond the walled enclosure and, possibly, beneath the modern road. It was at least 5m wide (N/S). The surface of the track was very compact and stony. It comprised fist-sized and smaller angular stones in a matrix of sandy silt soil. There was no evidence of a kerb or edge to this feature. Irregular linear depressions in this surface may represent ruts caused by the traffic of cart wheels.

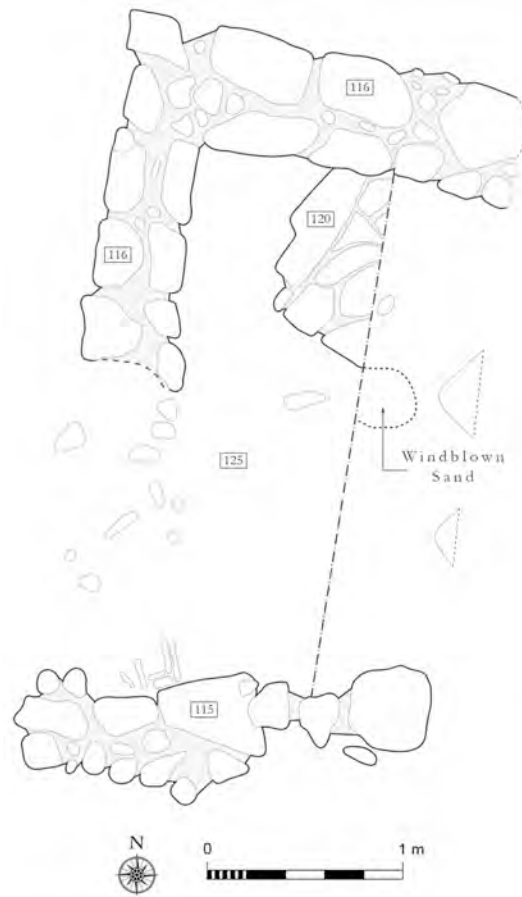
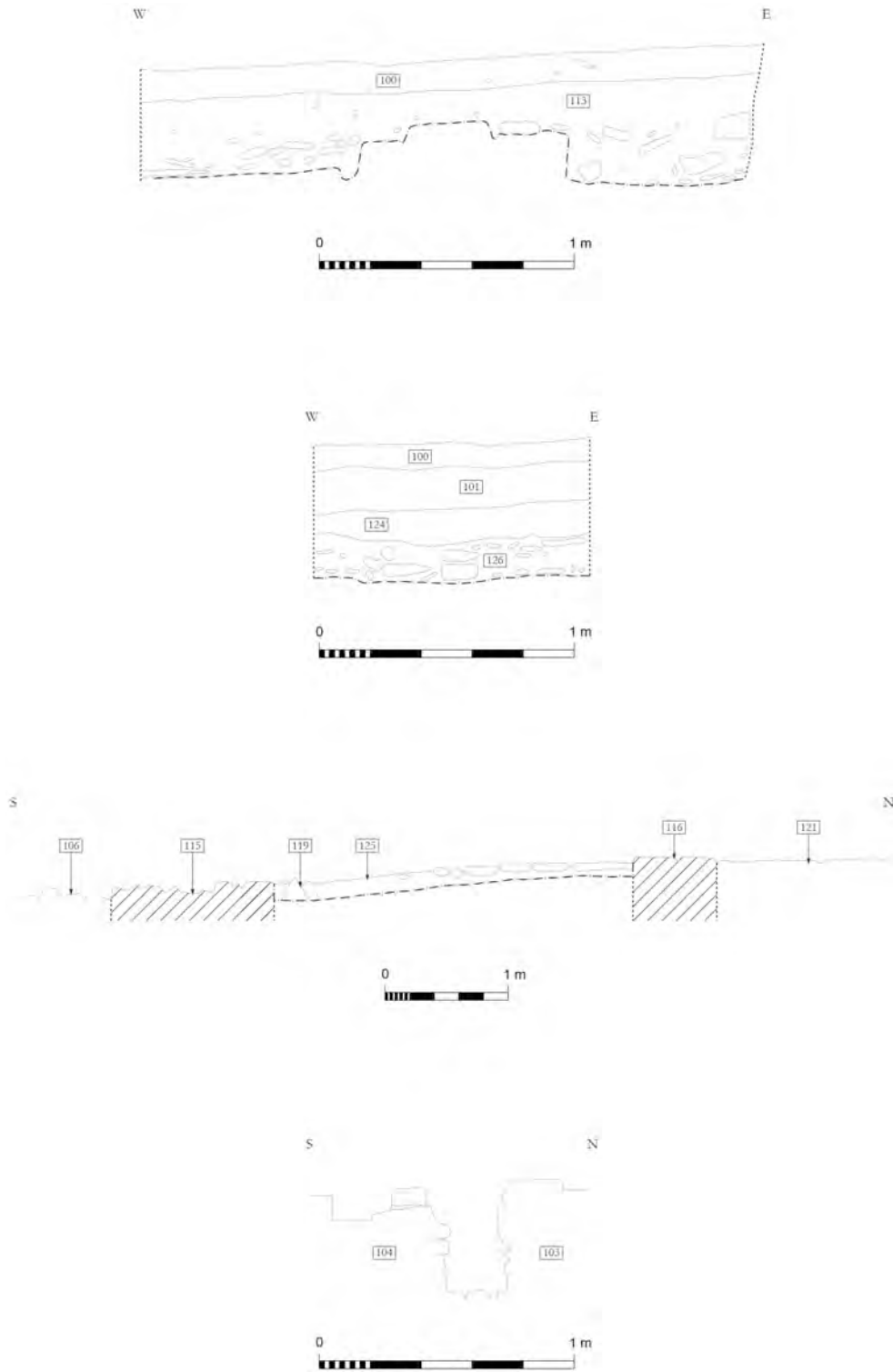


Figure 3: Sondage across Structure A

To the S of the excavation area, a linear feature was exposed which extended along the exterior of Structure A before curving to the NW. It was identified as a drain (124). The correspondence of this feature with the wall of Structure A, in combination with the finding that it had been constructed over the same ground surface, indicated that the two were likely to be of contemporary date. The drain could be traced for some 15.4m across the site. The internal cavity varied in width from 0.2m to 0.3m and was up to 0.35m deep. It was lined and capped with stone. The sides and base of the drain (103 and 104) were lined with a combination of rounded beach stones and angular rubble. The individual stones did not always overlap and there were occasional gaps. The upper part of the drain was covered with capstones (102). These survived best in the SE section. The capstones were generally comprised of flattish fieldstones. They varied considerably in size, on average measuring 0.3m x 0.4m x 0.04m. A *sondage* was cut to investigate the fills of the drain. This indicated that the drain had been deliberately infilled with stone (105). The stones were mostly thin flag fragments and elongated fieldstones, which had been set upright and at slanting angles within the cavity, presumably to stop the cavity from becoming blocked with silt. Some silty soil deposits had subsequently percolated into the drain, covering the upper part of the stones.



**Figure 4:** From top: 1) S-facing section at W of trench #1; 2) S-facing section at W of trench #2; 3) Profile through Structure A; 4) Profile through the drain

Towards the western end of its exposed extent, the drain curved towards the N. It is conjectured that this deviation may have been necessitated by the presence of an obstacle, such as a built feature, perhaps associated with Structure B (*see* Phase 1, above)

A patchy, rough stony surface (**106**) extended alongside both sides of the drain. It was comprised of angular stone and rubble in a silty soil matrix. It was not fully exposed but, where most visible, was upwards of 2m in width. It would appear to represent an external yard or roughly surfaced area, probably contemporary in date with both the drain and Structure A.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of this excavation indicate that a complex of structural remains survive within the proposed development area. These comprise two or more phases of construction and include at least three buildings and associated features and deposits. No dating evidence or material suitable for sampling was found in association with any of the structures.

The Phase 2 (late) structural remains do not appear on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1882/3, although an irregularity in the alignment of the road in this vicinity may be a relic of the former presence of Structure A. This indicates that Structure A had gone out of use and its remnants buried at some time before this date. In view of the fact that the multiple floorings found inside Structure A indicate that it is likely to have been in use over an extended duration, it is possible that the earlier remains, represented by Structures B and C, may be of considerable age. Wall **113**, for example, is comparable in its robustness and scale to the range of buildings attached to the S side of Noltland Castle, which date to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
100	A firm mid-brown sandy silt topsoil covered the surface of the proposed development area. It was mechanically removed from the area of the excavation trench under archaeological supervision. It contained worms and roots, large sand grains and c.10% small sub angular stones. It varied from 0.1m to 0.25m in depth.
101	A pale buff-brown sandy silt subsoil lay beneath the topsoil. It varied from 0.15m to 0.35m in depth. Windblown sand formed a substantial constituent of this soil. In places, the sand was visible as a separate layer. The upper part of this layer was mechanically removed under archaeological supervision; the lower part was removed by hand.
102 103 104 105 124	A drain extended parallel to the southern exterior of Structure A before curving away to the NW. It was constructed over the same ground surface as Structure A and is likely to be of contemporary date. It was visible over a distance of 15.4m. The internal cavity varied in width from 0.2m to 0.3m and was up to 0.35m deep. The sides and base of the drain (103 and 104) were lined with a combination of rounded beach stones and angular rubble. The individual stones did not always overlap and there were occasional gaps. The upper part of the drain was covered with capstones (102). These survived best on the SE section. The capstones were generally comprised of flattish fieldstones. They varied considerably in size, on average measuring 0.3m x 0.4m x 0.04m. The fill comprised thin flag fragments and elongated field stones (105), which had deliberately been set upright and at slanting angles within the cavity to prevent it becoming blocked. Some silt deposits were found in the upper part of the fill.
106	A patchy, rough, stony surface extended alongside both sides of the drain. It was comprised of angular stone and rubble in a silty soil matrix. It was upwards of 2m in width. It would appear to represent an external yard or roughly surfaced area, probably contemporary in date with the drain and with Structure A.
107	A mid-brown sandy loam. It formed the ground surface into which the drain had been cut and onto which Structure A had been built. It contained c.20% small angular stones and some animal bone. It overlay 108.
108	An undulating layer of clean, white windblown sand. It lay under 107, and over 109.
109	A stony spread up to 0.15m deep. It lay under 108, and over the remains of Structure C.
110	A neatly laid flagstone surface associated with Structure C. This lay to the E side of wall 111 and probably represents a continuation of surface 112. The flagstones had been smashed <i>in situ</i> and at least two layers of paving were in evidence, indicating that repairs had been carried out during its lifetime.
111	A structure found within Structure C. It was comprised of a setting of faced stone, possibly representing part of an internal partition or feature.
112	A flagstone surface associated with Structure C, butting up against the face of wall 113. The largest surviving flag measured some 0.8m x 0.8m but most had been broken <i>in situ</i> into small fragments. It was comprised of two or three separate layer of flagstones, suggesting repairs during its lifetime.
113	A 2.7m long segment of well-built wall (aligned NW/SE). Topographic indications suggest that it may extend for a further 3.5m – 4m to the SE. Built from a mixture of quarried stone and fieldstone, it was founded on a basal plinth and survived to a height of some 0.25m. It varied between 0.75m and 0.9m in width. There was no evidence for the use of clay bonding, plaster or render in association with this wall. Part of Structure C.
114	A rubble spread found on the N side of wall 113. The origin of this material is unclear: it may represent more recent disturbance.
115	A 4.8m long segment of the S wall of Structure A. This was 0.7m wide and had been reduced to a single course, 0.15m – 0.2m in height. It was of double-faced construction with a rubble and clay core, and appears to have been clay-bonded. It had traces of plaster on its interior face.

No.	Description
116	A 6.1m long segment of the N wall of Structure A. This was 0.6m wide and had been reduced to its basal course (0.15m - 0.2m high). It was of double-faced construction with a rubble and clay core and appears to have been clay-bonded. The exterior face was constructed from larger stones, with examples measuring 0.6m x 0.3m x 0.2m and 0.45m x 0.6m x 0.15m. The interior face utilised smaller stone, the average size being 0.3m x 0.2m x 0.15m. The interior face retained traces of a gritty, cream coloured plaster.
117	A wall (aligned E/W) forming part of Structure A. This may have been an internal or, alternatively, a secondary addition to close off the western end of the building. It was keyed into wall 116. There were no traces of plaster noted. It extended for 1.6m and was 0.5m wide. It was constructed from stones of average size: 0.3m x 0.3m x 0.1m. A 2.1m gap at its S end may have held a doorway.
118	A 4m long fragment of stone walling (aligned E/W) exposed beneath Structure A. Its width could not be determined. It was probably truncated by the drain (124 <i>etc.</i> ) It may represent one side of a building - Structure B. This wall may have been reused as part of an entrance feature within Structure A.
119	A post setting, at the centre of the gap between the end of wall 117 and wall 115 in Structure A. It may have held a doorpost. The cut was set into deposits underlying the floor of the building. It measured 0.1m by 0.2m (E/W) and was lined with stone.
120	The remnants of a flagged floor were found within Structure A. The largest and best-preserved flagstones occurred to the periphery of the interior, whereas those in the central floor area were smaller and more damaged. The larger slabs measured in the region of 0.6m x 1m x 0.03m and had originally been neatly laid and closely fitted together. They were bonded with clay. Towards the centre of the building at least three consecutive layers of stone were in evidence, indicating that the floor had been repaired during its lifetime.
121	A stony surface including a group of ten or so large flat slabs laid to the northern exterior of Structure A. The largest of the slabs measured 0.9m x 0.6m by 0.04m. This surface extended northwards where it melded into a metalled track 122.
122	A metalled track, at least 5m wide, which lay to the N side of Structure A and which extended beyond the northern limits of the excavation trench. The surface is very compact and stony, comprised of fist-sized and smaller angular stone in a matrix of sandy silt soil. Irregular linear depressions in this surface may be cart wheel ruts.
123	A probable wall that underlies Structure A (aligned N/S) is estimated to extend for at least 6m. Its location may suggest that it is associated with Structure B.
124	White sand layer.
125	A mid brown sandy clay. Partially excavated. Covered by flags 120, seen in <i>sondage</i> dug in interior of Structure A.
126	A mid brown, sandy clay subsoil indistinguishable from 101 except in the SW corner of the trench where a layer of clean white sand (124) overlies it and separates it from 101.

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale	Date
1	Plan	NE corner of trench	1:20	19/3/13
2	Plan	SE corner of trench	1:20	19/3/13
3	Plan	W side of trench	1:20	19/3/13
4	Section	S-facing, at W of trench	1:10	20/3/13
5	Section	S-facing, at W of trench	1:10	20/3/13
6	Plan	<i>Sondage</i> across Structure A	1:20	20/3/13
7	Profile	Across Structure A	1:20	21/3/13
8	Profile	Across drain	1:10	22/3/13
9	Plan	NW corner of trench	1:20	20/3/13



**LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Work in progress, view from castle wall	SE	05/03/2013
2	<i>As above</i>	SE	05/03/2013
3	<i>As above</i>	SE	05/03/2013
4	<i>As above</i>	SE	05/03/2013
5	<i>As above</i>	SE	05/03/2013
6	<i>As above</i>	SE	05/03/2013
7	General view of N boundary wall	NW	12/03/2013
8	Collage of N elevation of N boundary wall, including details of wall at entrance gate. Moving from W to E	N	12/03/2013
9	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
10	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
11	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
12	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
13	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
14	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
15	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
16	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
17	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
18	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
19	Work in progress. View of site with the Castle in the background	NW	12/03/2013
20	<i>As above</i>	NW	12/03/2013
21	<i>As above</i>	NW	12/03/2013
22	General view of the E boundary wall	N	12/03/2013
23	Collage of E-facing elevation of the E boundary wall. Moving from N to S	E	12/03/2013
24	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
25	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
26	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
27	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
28	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
29	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
30	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
31	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
32	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
33	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
34	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
35	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
36	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
37	General view of the E boundary wall	S	12/03/2013
38	General view of the S boundary wall	S	12/03/2013
39	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
40	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
41	Collage of S-facing elevation of S boundary wall. Moving from E to W	S	12/03/2013
42	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
43	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
44	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
45	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
46	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
47	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
48	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013

No.	Description	From	Date
49	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
50	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
51	General view of the W boundary wall	S	12/03/2013
52	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
53	Collage of W-facing elevation of W boundary wall. Moving from S to N	W	12/03/2013
54	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
55	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
56	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
57	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
58	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
59	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
60	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
61	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
62	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
63	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
64	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
65	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
66	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
67	General view from Castle wall	SE	12/03/2013
68	<i>As above</i>	SE	12/03/2013
69	<i>As above</i>	SE	12/03/2013
70	<i>As above</i>	SE	12/03/2013
71	<i>As above</i>	SE	12/03/2013
72	<i>As above</i>	SE	12/03/2013
73	General view of the S-facing elevation of the N boundary wall	S	12/03/2013
74	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
75	Collage of the S-facing elevation of the N boundary wall. Moving from W to E	S	12/03/2013
76	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
77	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
78	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
79	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
80	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
81	<i>As above</i>	S	12/03/2013
82	General view of the W-facing elevation of the E boundary wall.	W	12/03/2013
83	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
84	Collage of the W-facing elevation of the E boundary wall. Moving from N to S	W	12/03/2013
85	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
86	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
87	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
88	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
89	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
90	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
91	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
92	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
93	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
94	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
95	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
96	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
97	<i>As above</i>	W	12/03/2013
98	General view of the N-facing elevation of the S boundary wall	N	12/03/2013

No.	Description	From	Date
99	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
100	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
101	Collage of the N-facing elevation of the S boundary wall. Moving from E to W	N	12/03/2013
102	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
103	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
104	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
105	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
106	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
107	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
108	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
109	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
110	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
111	<i>As above</i>	N	12/03/2013
112	General view of the E-facing elevation of the W boundary wall.	E	12/03/2013
113	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
114	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
115	Collage of the E-facing elevation of the W boundary wall. Moving from S to N	E	12/03/2013
116	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
117	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
118	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
119	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
120	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
121	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
122	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
123	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
124	<i>As above</i>	E	12/03/2013
125	SW corner of the trench showing wall 113, drain 103 <i>etc.</i>	N	15/03/2013
126	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
127	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
128	Details of the wall 113 and paved area to the S (112)	NW	15/03/2013
129	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
130	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
131	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
132	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
133	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
134	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
135	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
136	<i>As above</i>	E	15/03/2013
137	View of the central part of the trench showing the drain 103, walling 116, 117 <i>etc.</i>	NW	15/03/2013
138	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
139	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
140	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
141	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
142	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
143	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
144	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
145	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
146	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
147	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
148	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013

No.	Description	From	Date
149	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
150	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
151	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
152	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
153	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
154	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
155	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
156	<i>As above</i>	NW	15/03/2013
157	Details of walls 116 and 117	W	15/03/2013
158	<i>As above</i>	W	15/03/2013
159	Detail of the drain 103	W	15/03/2013
160	<i>As above</i>	W	15/03/2013
161	<i>As above</i>	W	15/03/2013
162	Detail of the early wall 118	W	15/03/2013
163	Surfaces 121 and 122	N	15/03/2013
164	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
165	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
166	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
167	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
168	<i>As above</i>	N	15/03/2013
169	Structure A	E	15/03/2013
170	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
171	General view of the trench from the Castle	SE	15/03/2013
172	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
173	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
174	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
175	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
176	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
177	<i>As above</i>	SE	15/03/2013
178	View of <i>sondage</i> at the W end of the interior of Structure A	SE	19/03/2013
179	<i>As above</i>	SE	19/03/2013
180	<i>As above</i>	S	19/03/2013
181	<i>As above</i>	SE	19/03/2013
182	<i>As above</i>	E	19/03/2013
183	<i>As above</i>	N	19/03/2013
184	Work in progress shot of slot across drain 103	NW	21/03/2013
185	<i>As above</i>	NW	21/03/2013
186	<i>As above</i>	NW	21/03/2013
187	<i>As above</i>	NW	21/03/2013
188	<i>As above</i>	NW	21/03/2013
189	<i>As above</i>	NW	21/03/2013
190	Details of section at W corner of trench prior to recording	NW	21/03/2013
191	<i>As above</i>	N	21/03/2013
192	<i>As above</i>	E	21/03/2013
193	<i>As above</i>	N	21/03/2013
194	Slot across drain 103	SW	21/03/2013
195	<i>As above</i>	SW	21/03/2013
196	Wall 113, Structure C, and section	SE	22/03/2013
197	<i>As above</i>	SE	22/03/2013
198	<i>As above</i>	E	22/03/2013
199	<i>As above</i>	E	22/03/2013
200	Wall 113 and paved area 112 (Structure C)	S	22/03/2013
201	<i>As above</i>	NW	22/03/2013

No.	Description	From	Date
202	<i>As above</i>	NW	22/03/2013
203	Slot across drain 103, with drain in background	NW	22/03/2013
204	<i>As above</i>	NW	22/03/2013
205	Structure B wall (118) exposed within <i>sondage</i>	W	22/03/2013
206	<i>As above</i>	W	22/03/2013
207	<i>As above</i>	W	22/03/2013
208	<i>As above</i>	W	22/03/2013
209	<i>As above</i>	E	22/03/2013
210	Watching brief: paved surface exposed upon removal of turf and topsoil in the SE corner	W	26/03/2013
211	<i>As above</i>	NW	26/03/2013
212	<i>As above</i>	NW	26/03/2013
213	<i>As above</i>	NW	26/03/2013
214	<i>As above</i>	S	26/03/2013
215	<i>As above</i>	S	26/03/2013

# HISTORIC SCOTLAND PROPERTIES IN CARE MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2013

**Noltland Castle • Excavation • June 2013**

**HS PIC Index number: 90231**

**Project code: HSCO-90231-2013-03**

<b>SITE :</b>	Noltland Castle, Westray, Orkney	
<b>N.G.R. :</b>	HY 4291 4872	
<b>DESCRIPTION :</b>	Archaeological monitoring of minor excavation	
<b>PROJECT CODE :</b>	HSCO-90231-2013-03	
<b>CONTENTS :</b>	Summary	1
	1.0 Introduction	1
	2.0 Description	1
	3.0 Interpretation and observations	4
	A1.0 Appendix 1: List of contexts	6
	A2.0 Appendix 2: List of photographs	6



4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF

**DECEMBER 2013**

*SUMMARY: A watching brief was maintained at Noltland Castle, Westray, Orkney (HY 4291 4872) during the demolition of part of the boundary wall along the west perimeter of the castle grounds, and the subsequent excavation of a small trench to allow the installation of posts for a new entrance gate. Nothing of archaeological importance was noted.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

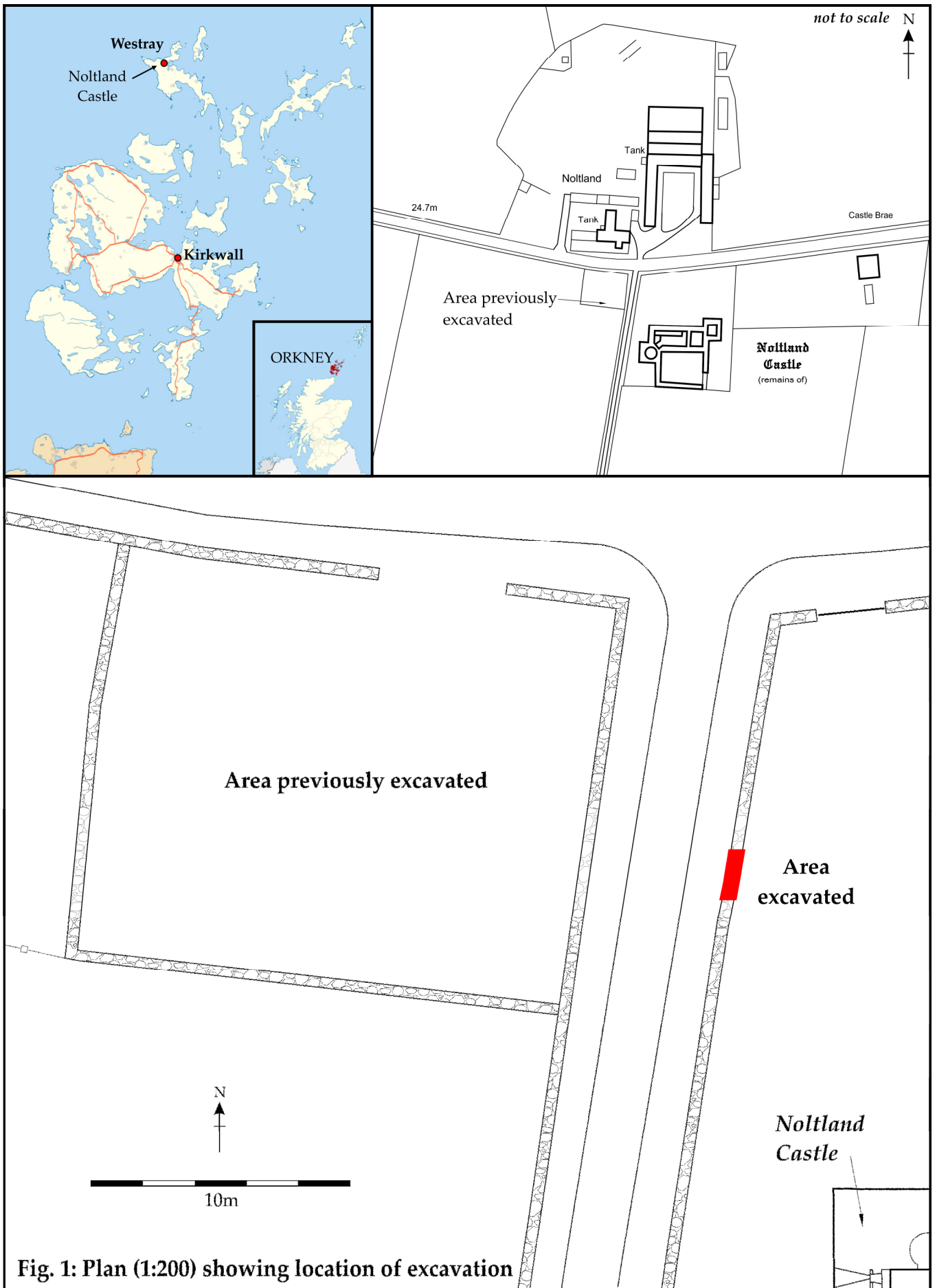
Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Noltland Castle, Westray, Orkney (HY 4291 4872). Part of the perimeter wall to the northwest of the castle was to be demolished to allow a new entrance to be installed. This followed a larger-scale programme of works earlier in 2013 in a small, enclosed area on the other side of an existing track to the west, where excavations were carried out to determine the extent and nature of remains where a new car park was being installed (see Kirkdale reports HSCO-90231-2013-01 and HSCO-90231-2013-02). Structures were seen within the small, walled enclosure where a new car park was to be created, but there was no dating evidence. However, it was thought likely that these structures were of a similar date to comparable structures added to the south side of the castle during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The works covered by this report were carried out within a few metres of the structures seen earlier in the year so it was thought possible that the demolition of part of the wall on the east side of the track and the excavation down to natural deposits might reveal more structural remains.

The work was carried out on 12 June 2013.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

A 1.70m wide section of the west perimeter wall had been removed prior to monitoring, starting 8.85m south of the inside elevation of the junction of the west and north perimeter walls. The masonry was of drystone construction, randomly coursed with a mixture of thin sandstone slabs and larger, sandstone blocks. The masonry exposed was not recorded in detail but was photographed.



**Fig. 1: Plan (1:200) showing location of excavation**



The drystone wall (003) had a maximum width of 600mm at its base and a maximum height of 1.22m above the existing ground surface level on the east side of the wall. The east facing elevation had a near vertical face, while the west had a slightly angled, sloping face, with a higher ground surface level which was much overgrown, in contrast to the level, well-tended grass within the castle perimeter.

Excavation was then carried out to determine the nature of the deposits. Up to 400mm of turf and topsoil (001) was removed from the west side of the wall. This was fairly loose, mid-brown, stony, clayey soil. On the east side, the turf (002) was firmer, dark brown, sandy loam up to 120mm thick, just below which an electrical cable in armoured sheathing (007) ran north-south c 200mm east of the wall.

Below topsoil 001 on the east side was 004, a 200-250mm thick layer of loose, dark grey-brown, sandy, silty clay, banked up against, and mingling with the masonry of the east side of the wall.

Seen on both sides of the wall (sealed by 004 to the west and by 001 to the east) was a firmer, darker layer of sandy, clayey silt, 005, with abundant charcoal flecks, a few fragments of heat-affected stone and a small fragment of animal bone. This layer had a maximum depth of 340mm and below it was the smooth, level surface of the flagstone bedrock, at c 420mm below the existing ground surface level on the west side of the wall.



*Plate 1: Excavated area, looking east.*

### **3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS**

It was established by excavating down to the bedrock that there were no finds or structures of archaeological significance that would be affected by the further excavation of deep postholes for the new gate.

It seems likely that even the charcoal-rich and clearly artificial layer **005** may have been deposited relatively recently as part of landscaping, and almost certain that much of it had been disturbed and redeposited, not only during the construction - or remodelling - of the drystone wall, but also by the insertion of the electrical cable.

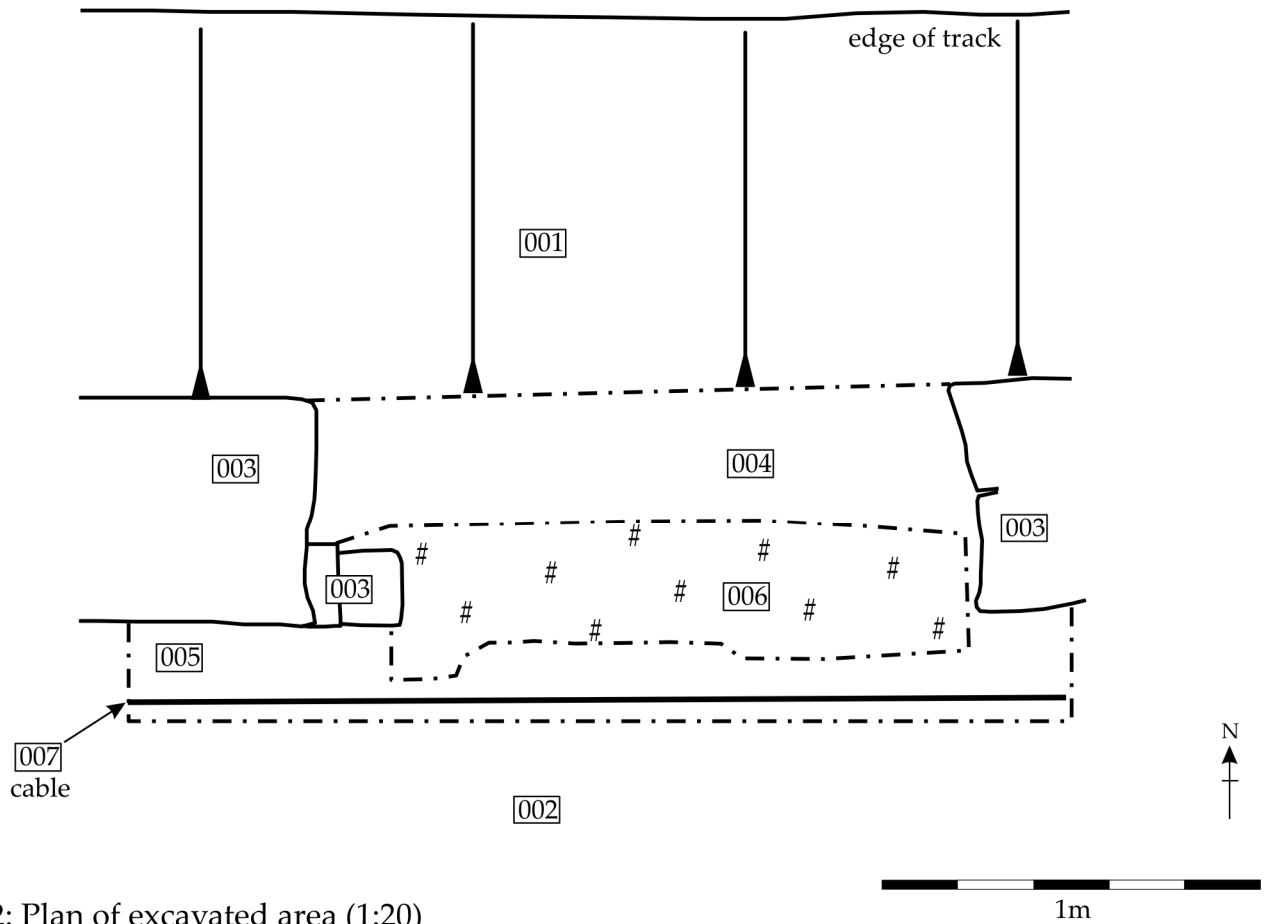


Fig. 2: Plan of excavated area (1:20)

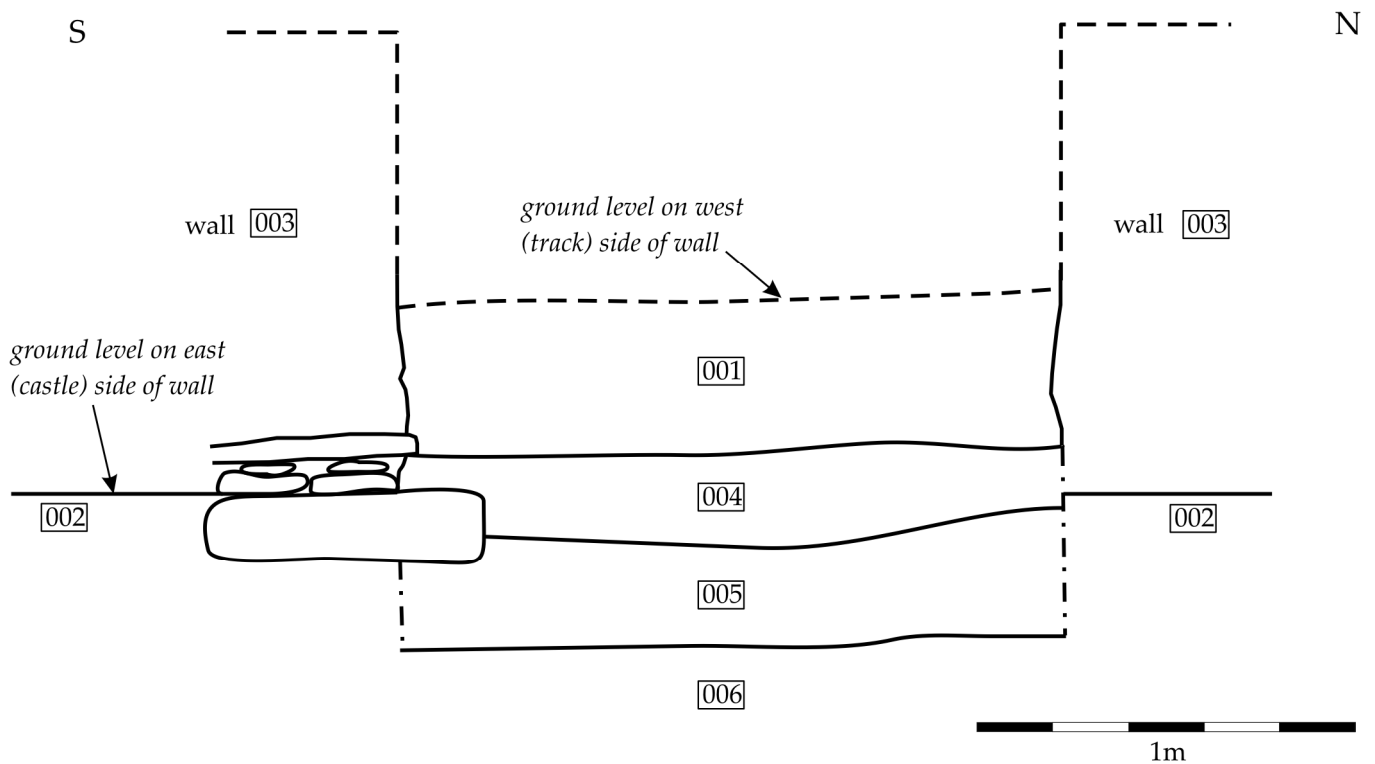


Fig. 3: East facing section of excavation (1:20)

## A1.0

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

No.	Description
001	Turf and topsoil. Fairly loose, mid-brown, stony, clayey soil with abundant small stone fragments. Up to 400mm thick.
002	Turf to east of wall 003. Firm, dark brown, sandy loam up to 120mm thick
003	Drystone wall running N-S. Maximum width of 600mm at its base and a maximum height of 1.22m above the existing ground surface level on the east side of the wall.
004	200-250mm thick layer of loose, dark grey-brown, sandy , silty clay, banked up against, and mingling with the masonry of the east side of the wall.
005	Firmer, darker brown sandy, clayey silt. Abundant charcoal flecks, a few fragments of heat-affected stone and a small fragment of animal bone. Maximum depth of 340mm.
006	Flagstone bedrock, level flagstone.
007	Electrical cable c 25mm diameter, armoured/plastic sheathing.

## A2.0

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
01	General view showing demolished section of wall, before excavation.	E	12/6/2013
02	General view showing demolished section of wall, before excavation.	SE	12/6/2013
03	General view showing demolished section of wall, before excavation.	SE	12/6/2013
04	General view showing demolished section of wall, before excavation.	SE	12/6/2013
05	General view, east facing section post-excavation	E	12/6/2013
06	East facing section post-excavation	E	12/6/2013
07	East facing section post-excavation	E	12/6/2013
08	East facing section post-excavation	E	12/6/2013
09	General view, post-excavation	N	12/6/2013
10	General view, post-excavation	N	12/6/2013
11	General view, post-excavation	N	12/6/2013
12	Plan view, post-excavation	E	12/6/2013
13	General view, post-excavation	N	12/6/2013
14	General view, post-excavation	N	12/6/2013