

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

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Argyll and Bute
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Rothesay Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	HSCO-90252-2013-01
<b>PARISH:</b>	Rothesay
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	David Murray
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kirkdale Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Minor excavation and watching brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NS06SE 3
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Castle
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NS 0878 6458
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	27 June 2013
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	27 June 2013
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was maintained during the minor excavation of two trenches to allow the installation of new signs. One replaced an existing sign on the flat top of the moat embankment E of the Ticket Office, while a new sign was to be installed within the castle courtyard. Two other small test trenches were opened within the courtyard to test the depth of topsoil.</p> <p>The areas exposed revealed that there are intact archaeological horizons within the courtyard 280mm below the current ground surface. Although the levelling material above the <i>in situ</i> archaeological deposits appears have been introduced in modern times, the imported material appeared to contain material of much older date.</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
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	g_ewart@hotmail.com
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

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

**Rothesay Castle • Excavation • June 2013**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90252**

**SITE:** Rothesay Castle, Rothesay, Isle of Bute

**N.G.R.:** NS 0878 6458

**DESCRIPTION:** Excavation of two trenches to house new signage and two test trenches to characterise ground make-up

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90252-2013-01

**CONTENTS:**

Introduction.....	1
Description.....	2
Conclusions.....	5
List of Contexts.....	6
List of Drawings.....	6
List of Digital Photographs.....	6
List of Small Finds.....	7



4 Western Terrace, Murrayfield, Edinburgh EH12 5QF

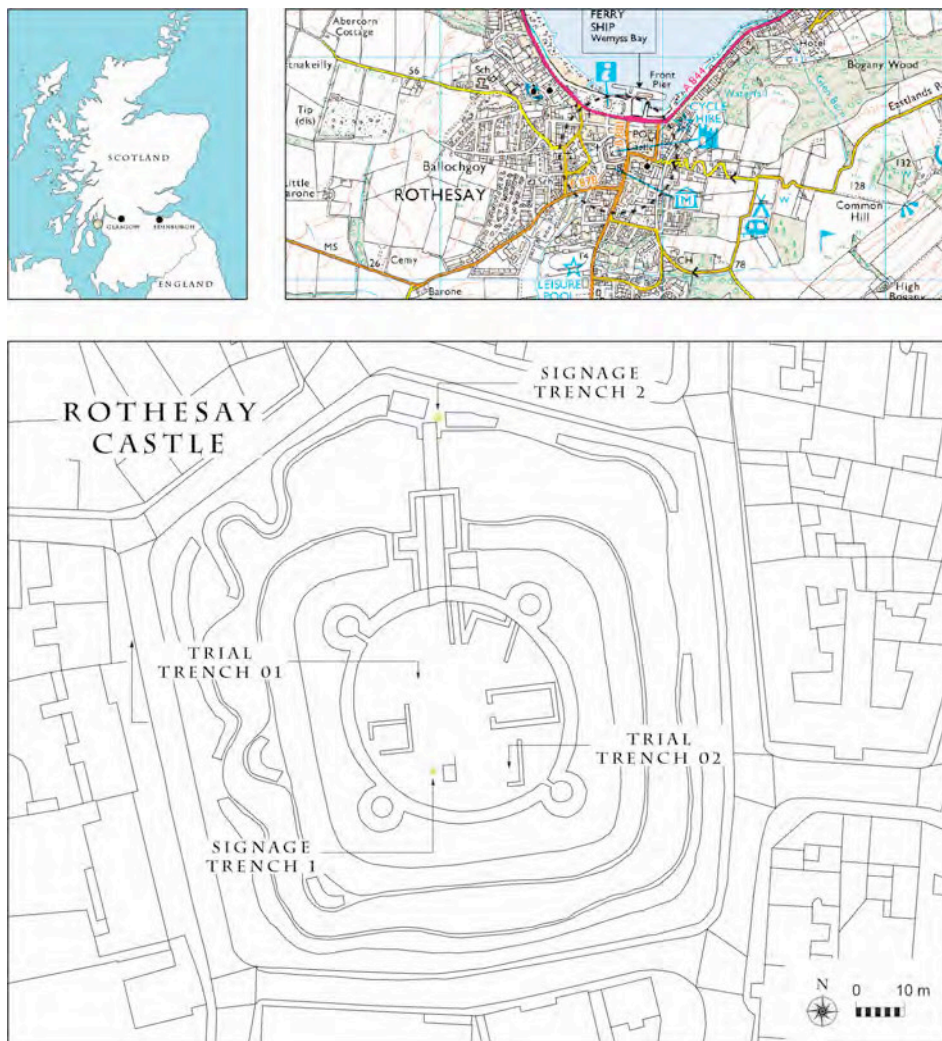
JULY 2013

## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of two trenches to house new signage at Rothesay Castle (Fig.1). Sign ROT 1 was intended to replace an existing sign on the flat top of the moat embankment E of the Ticket Office, while sign ROT 3 was new, to be located within the castle.

The footprints of both trenches were somewhat larger than those normally associated with this size of sign in case any archaeological deposits were revealed, in which case there would be ample room to work and investigate further.

Two other small test trenches were opened within the courtyard to test the depth of topsoil. The two test trenches were to be excavated by Kirkdale Archaeology, while the two larger signage trenches were to be excavated by the Historic Scotland staff under archaeological supervision. Upon initial inspection however, it was decided that the courtyard trench for ROT 3 was in too sensitive an area, and would therefore be excavated by Kirkdale Archaeology.



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the location of Rothesay Castle and the area of works.  
Inset No. 2 © Crown copyright. All rights reserved 2013. Licence number 100036933.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **Test Trench 1**

Test Trench 1 was located 2.4m E of the circular stone setting of the well. The trench measured 30cm NW/SE x 30cm NE/SW. The 12cm thick turf and mid-brown silty topsoil lay over a compact layer of sub-rounded pebbles, sub-angular slate and schist pieces, and fragments of red sandstone in a matrix of moderately compact mid-brown silt. As there were no finds to indicate that the layer was modern, the excavation was halted at this depth.

### **Test Trench 2**

Test trench 2 was located within a structure represented by an 'L-shaped' masonry wall, to the S of the Chapel. The N and NE parts of this structure have an external chamfered base course which is missing on the masonry to the S, suggesting that the structure may be two-phase. The protruding section of masonry on the E side is likely to represent the base of a buttress, suggesting that the structure was more than a single storey in height.

Test Trench 2 measured 30cm NW/SE x 30cm NE/SW, and was located 3m NW of the internal SE corner of the building. The 10cm thick turf and mid-brown silty topsoil lay over a compact layer of sub-rounded pebbles, sub-angular slate and schist pieces, and fragments of red sandstone in a matrix of moderately compact mid-brown silt. As there were no finds to indicate that the layer was modern, the excavation was halted at this depth.

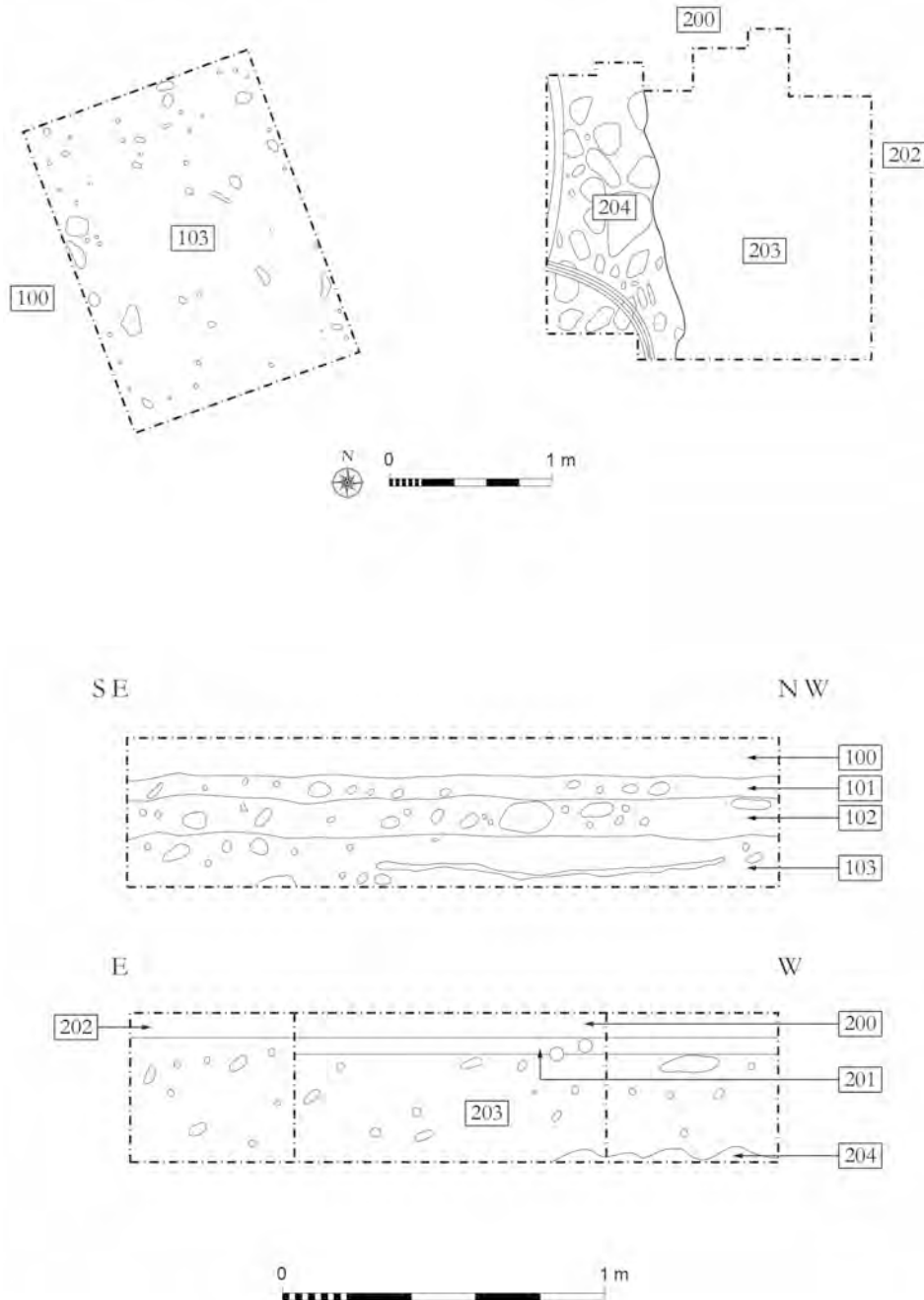
### **Signage Trench 1** (for sign ROT 3)

Signage Trench 1 was located on the S side of the courtyard and was set slightly off-centre to the W. The trench measured 2m NW/SE x 1.5m NE/SW.

The 12cm thick turf and mid-brown silty topsoil **100** lay over a compact layer of sub-rounded pebbles, sub-angular slate and schist pieces and fragments of red sandstone in a matrix of moderately compact mid-brown silt **102**. This was a 6cm thick bedding layer for the turf and it contained pieces of corroded iron, a roof slate and part of a modern glass stem. A further layer of modern landscaping/levelling lay below, as indicated by the artefacts found within it. Layer **103** consisted of small sized sub-angular and sub-rounded stones, including slate, schist and red sandstone, within a charcoal-flecked matrix of mid-brown silty clay. The layer varied in thickness from 10cm - 12cm and contained a mixture of modern and historic artefacts. Clearly this layer was formed via the (presumably) modern disturbance of an historic horizon (hence the mixture of artefacts).

Below **103** was a compact layer formed by multiple tips of material **104** representing a process of historic levelling. The laminations of these separate dumps could clearly be seen in plan and section during

excavation. These included dumps of silt with broken clasts of clay within, mortar spreads with broken sandstone fragments, layers of silt thick with soot and charcoal, and general mixed dumps of sand, silt, mortar and sub-angular and sub-rounded stones. There were no modern finds within this layer. This, coupled with the compaction of the fills suggests that this represents an episode of (historic) levelling.



**Figure 2:** Clockwise, from top-left: Post-excavation plan of Signage Trench 1; Post-excavation plan of Signage Trench 2; NE-facing section in Signage Trench 1; N-facing section in Signage Trench 2

Excavation of the trench was halted at a depth of 46cm as stipulated on the drawing provided by Historic Scotland. Layer **104** was therefore partially excavated to a depth of 18cm.

**Signage Trench 2** (for sign ROT 1)

Signage Trench 2 was located on the flat top of the moat embankment E of the Ticket Office at the entrance to the castle drawbridge. The trench measured 2m E/W x 1.5m N/S x 0.46m deep. An area of sandstone paving slabs **200** incorporating an existing information board had to be removed before excavation could begin.



**Plate 1:** Signage Trench 2, from the N

The slabs and bedding sand **201** accounted for the first 15cm depth of the excavation. To the E, a 50cm wide strip of turf **202** some 10cm thick had to be removed. Thereafter, the fill to the required depth was a moderately compact layer of dark brown silt **203** containing a mixture of modern and historic artefacts.

The ceramic assemblage was again a mixture of modern transfer-printed wares and green-glazed pottery. Within **203**, three service cables were exposed. When the required depth was achieved, a layer of voided rubble **204** was found in the western 60cm - 70cm of the trench. It is possible that this represents the backfill of the excavation for the current S drawbridge abutment. Within the rubble was a possible fragment of a sandstone spout (Plate 2).



Plate 2: The possible sandstone spout from 204

## CONCLUSIONS

Clearly there are intact archaeological horizons within the courtyard of Rothesay Castle. Signage Trench 1 showed that the top of this horizon occurs at a depth of 28cm - 30cm below the current ground surface. The modern levelling above the *in situ* archaeological deposits appears to be recycling, containing historic material, and thus of interest in and of itself. It is therefore recommended that any future ground-breaking work that extends below the level of the bedding layer for the turf (c.15cm depth), should be considered to have a high archaeological potential, and ought to be subject to archaeological monitoring.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

Number	Description
100	Turf and mid-brown silty topsoil
101	Compact turf bedding layer of sub-rounded pebbles, sub-angular slate and schist pieces with fragments of red sandstone in a matrix of moderately compact mid-brown silt
102	Mixed modern levelling layer of mid-brown silty clay with numerous inclusions
103	Compact historic levelling layer comprising multiple mixed dumps of material
200	Sandstone paving slabs
201	Bedding sand for 200
202	Turf
203	Dark brown silt 203 containing a mixture of modern and historic artefacts
204	Layer of voided rubble

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Post-excavation plan of Signage Trench 1	1:20
2	Section	NE-facing section of Signage Trench 1	1:20
3	Plan	Post-excavation plan of Signage Trench 2	1:20
4	Section	N-facing section of Signage Trench 2	1:20

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	NW	27/06/2013
2	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	NE	27/06/2013
3	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	N	27/06/2013
4	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	W	27/06/2013
5	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	S	27/06/2013
6	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	N	27/06/2013
7	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	E	27/06/2013
8	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	NW	27/06/2013
9	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	NW	27/06/2013
10	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	NE	27/06/2013
11	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	SE	27/06/2013
12	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	SW	27/06/2013
13	Test Trench 2 location shot	NW	27/06/2013
14	Test Trench 1 location shot	SE	27/06/2013
15	General view of courtyard and Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	NE	27/06/2013
16	General view of courtyard and Signage Trench 1 (ROT 3)	N	27/06/2013
17	Post-excavation shot of Signage Trench 2 (ROT 1)	NE	27/06/2013
18	Gatehouse tower and bridge	NE	27/06/2013
19	Possible stone spout fragment	N/A	27/06/2013
20	Possible stone spout fragment	N/A	27/06/2013



## LIST OF SMALL FINDS

Number	Context	Quantity	Description
1	101	1	Roof slate
2	101	2	Pieces of corroded iron
3	101	1	Clear glass stem sherd
4	102	1	Ceramic tobacco pipe bowl with ship in sail and anchor decoration
5	102	1	Rim sherd of transfer printed ceramic
6	102	3	Clear glass body sherds
7	102	1	Bottle stopper impressed with MCEWAN 52 EDINBURGH
8	102	3	Green glazed ceramic body sherds
9	102	2	Unglazed ceramic body sherds
10	102	1	Ceramic body sherd with traces of orangey green glaze
11	102	1	Smooth green glass body sherd
12	102	1	Copper? (corroded green) pin with a flared sub-rounded end
13	103	8	Green glazed ceramic body sherds, creamy fabric to exterior, black fabric to un-glazed interior
14	103	1	Ceramic body sherd with creamy white slip to exterior and buff fabric and slip to interior
15	103	3	Orangey green glazed ceramic body sherds with light orange brown fabric
16	103	1	Green glazed ceramic body sherd with inner and outer buff fabric and black core fabric
17	203	3	Green glass body sherds
18	203	1	Piece of lead?
19	203	2	Undecorated cream glazed ceramic rim sherds
20	203	1	Undecorated cream glazed ceramic body sherd
21	203	7	Transfer printed ceramic body sherds
22	203	1	Transfer printed ceramic rim sherd
23	203	1	Painted ceramic rim sherd
24	203	1	Light brown glazed ceramic base sherd
25	203	1	Unglazed ceramic body sherd
26	203	1	Ceramic body sherd green glazed to interior and exterior with black core fabric in between
27	203	1	Ceramic rim sherd a rough-surfaced dark green glaze to interior and exterior over a single orange fabric
28	203	1	Piece of corroded iron
29	203	1	Animal tooth
30	203	1	Well worn molar (possibly human)
31	203	1	Shard bone
32	204	1	Fragment of a sandstone spout