

**Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2007**

Corgarff Castle
Archaeological monitoring,
December 2007

**HS PIC Index number: 90080
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**March 2008
Kirkdale Archaeology**

<u>Site</u>	Corgarff Castle
<u>N.G.R</u>	NJ254086
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological monitoring
<u>Project code</u>	HSCO-90080-2007-01

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Summary: A watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a small trench against the exterior southwest corner of the curtain wall at Corgarff Castle. The purpose of the excavation was to locate the inlet for the castle well shown on an 18th-century plan. There was no evidence found of the inlet but the excavation did reveal the foundations of the southwest corner of the 18th-century star shaped curtain wall. Photographs show that some of this wall was rebuilt in the 1960s but it became clear that the southwest corner of the curtain is of 18th-century build.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a short period of archaeological monitoring at Corgarff Castle during the excavation of a small trench against the exterior of the SW curtain wall. The purpose of the excavation was to locate the inlet for the castle well shown on an 18th-century plan of the castle, in order that it might be followed to the SW where it is suspected that a portion of the inlet has collapsed due to heavy vehicle traffic, leaving a waterlogged dip in the ground.

The work took place on 11/12/07.

2.0 EXCAVATION ACCOUNT

Work commenced with the removal of turf and topsoil **101** against the exterior SW curtain wall **103**, initially from an area 850mm N-S by 1.00m N-S. Beneath c 30-50mm of black peaty topsoil, was approximately 250mm of dark brown earth filled with slate and granite rubble **102**. Lack of voiding between the rubble suggested that this was not a rubble fill above a stone built inlet; the lower ground level inside the curtain wall suggested that the inlet was likely to be at least 600mm lower. **102** was removed to reveal the top of foundations **104** stepped out approximately 300mm to the S under curtain wall **103**. To the S of the foundations under **102**, was a yellow gritty deposit **105**, cut to the N by the construction cut **106** for foundations **103**. Yellow grit **105** was removed to reveal two courses of foundations **104**, bonded with pale lime mortar, ending approximately 650mm below ground level. Clean yellow

sand **106**, was revealed beneath approximately 400mm of yellow grit **105**, also running under foundations **104**. Yellow sand **106** covered the base of the trench to the S of foundations **104**, to a depth of 800mm, it was not fully excavated. There was no evidence of a cut through the sand for the inlet, so the trench was extended slightly to the E and W to a total length of 1950mm in case the inlet sat just outside the trench. The extension of the trench revealed the same sequence of contexts in both directions with no evidence of the inlet. The final dimensions of the trench were 1950mm E-W by 850mm N-W by 800mm deep. A second trench had been suggested to search for the outlet of the castle well, but since the first excavation did not locate the inlet, no further excavation was carried out at this time.

3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS

The 18th-century plan showing the location of the inlet of the castle well clearly shows the inlet passing through or under the SW corner of the curtain wall to the W of the W most musket slot. Photographs show that some of this wall was rebuilt in the 1960s but it is clear, both from the photographs taken at the time and from the excavation, that the SW corner of the curtain is original 18th-century build and so this does not account for the lack of inlet. If the inlet exists, the SW corner of the curtain remains the most viable location for it to pass under or through the curtain wall because the SW corner of the curtain points uphill whereas to the N and E of this point the land slopes down away from the castle. It is possible that the 18th-century plan was not accurate and that the inlet may be found either side of the marked location to the N or the E of the SW corner. However it is also possible that the well gathered precipitation, possibly channelled from the cobbles in the courtyard, therefore not requiring an inlet. Certainly there is no evidence of an inlet inside the exposed upper section of the well, though some of it has almost certainly been rebuilt and the well has been filled with gravel obscuring the lower build.

A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

#	Description
101	Turf and peaty black topsoil.
102	Layer of slate and granite in dark brown soil matrix
103	Curtain wall, obscured by harling and paint.
104	Foundations under 103 , 2 courses of stone blocks bonded with lime mortar.
105	Orange/yellow gritty deposit containing some angular stones, cut by 106 . (Natural).
106	Cut through 105 at N side for foundation trench containing 104 .
107	Clean yellow sand deposit under 105 . (Natural).

A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS

No	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Plan showing the position of the trench on the curtain wall.	NTS

A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

#	Description	From	Date
3028	Pre-ex shot.	S	11/12/07
3030	General shot showing de-turfing.	SE	11/12/07
3031	Stone/slate layer 102.	S	11/12/07
3032	Stone/slate layer 102.	S	11/12/07
3033	Stone/slate layer 102 removed, showing top of foundations 104 and orange grit 105.	S	11/12/07
3034	Stone/slate layer 102 removed, showing top of foundations 104 and orange grit 105.	S	11/12/07
3035	Stone/slate layer 102 removed, showing top of foundations 104 and orange grit 105.	S	11/12/07
3038	Natural sand 107 in the base of the trench with a animal burrow full of orange grit 105.	E	11/12/07
3039	Natural sand 107 in the base of the trench with a animal burrow full of orange grit 105 after some of the grit has been removed to reveal 107 at the base.	E	11/12/07
3040	Slight extension of the trench to the E.	W	11/12/07

#	Description	From	Date
3042	General shot of the trench near completion.	W	11/12/07
3044	General shot of the trench near completion.	E	11/12/07
3045	Excavation complete.	W	11/12/07
3046	Excavation complete.	SW	11/12/07
3048	W section of the trench.	E	11/12/07
3050	S section of the trench.	NE	11/12/07
3051	Excavation complete.	E	11/12/07
3052	Excavation complete.	W	11/12/07
3053	Excavation complete.	W	11/12/07
3056	Excavation complete.	NW	11/12/07
3057	General shot showing location of excavation.	WSW	11/12/07
3058	Trench backfilled and re-turfed.	WSW	11/12/07
3059	Trench backfilled and re-turfed.	S	11/12/07

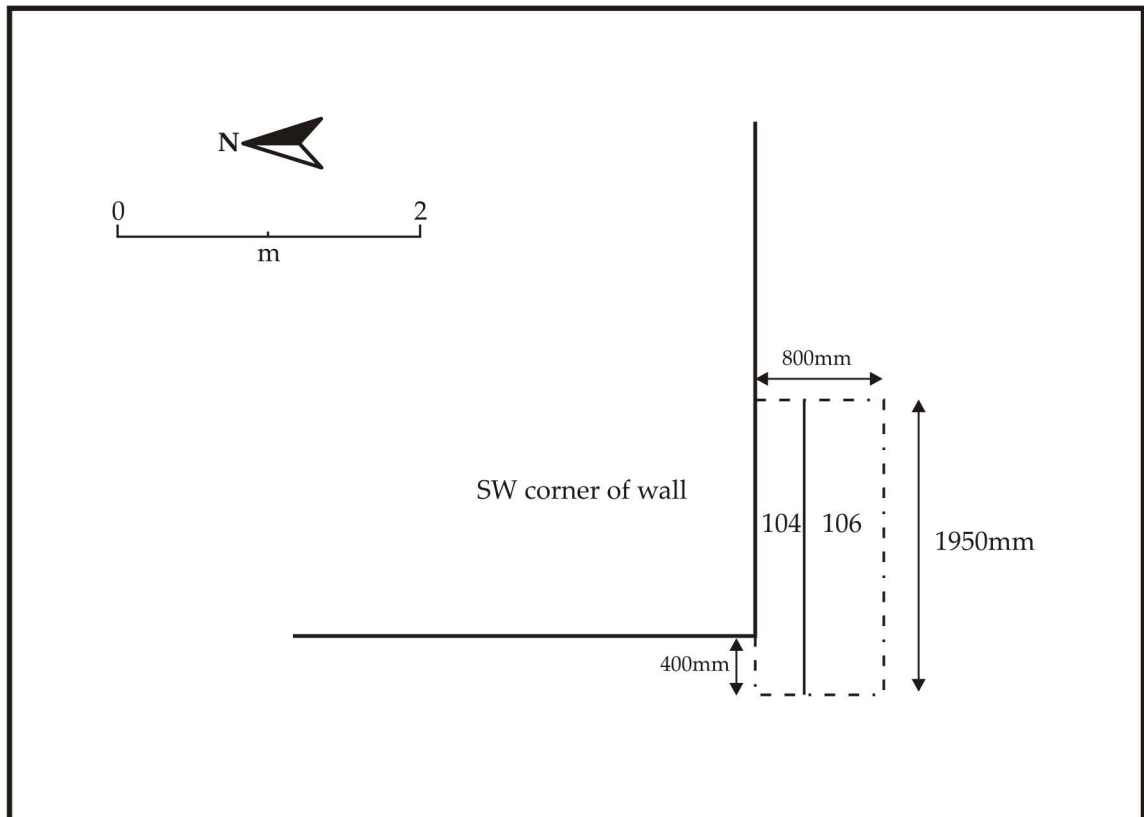
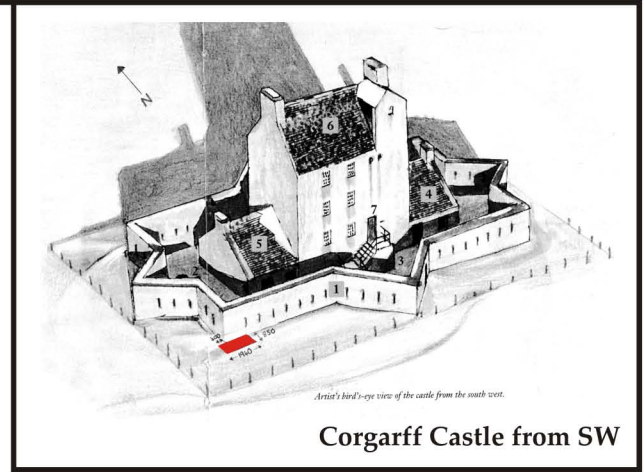
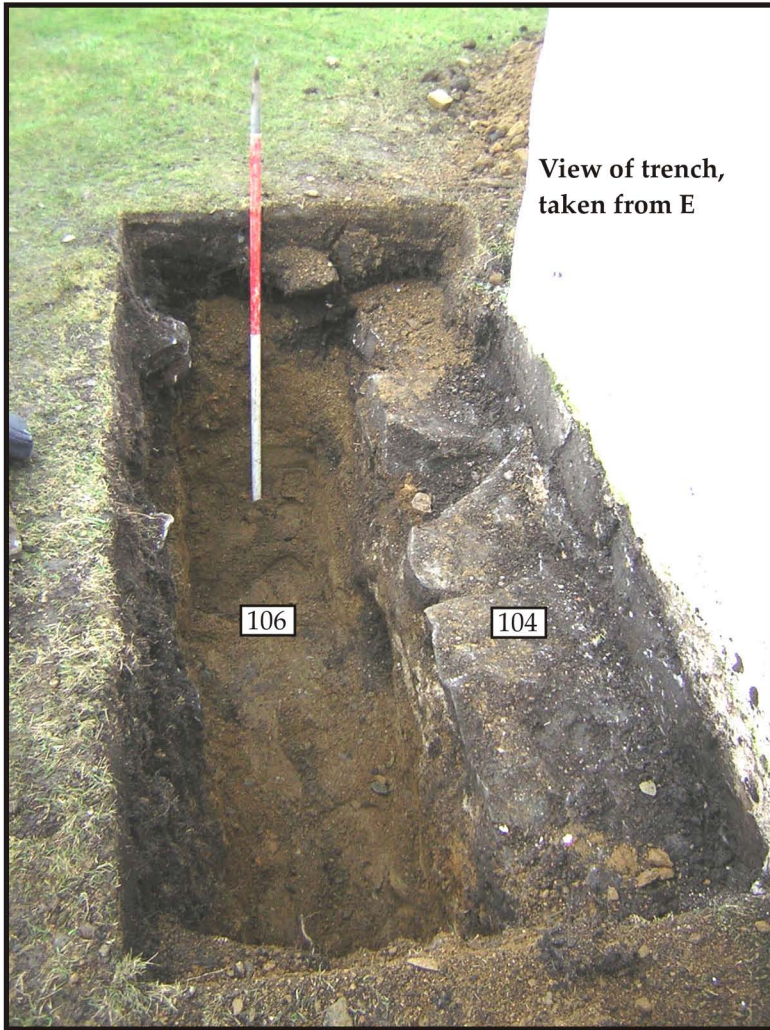


Fig. 1 : Plan showing location of excavation