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Properties in Care  
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**Carlungie Souterrain**

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Watching Brief

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**Site** CARLUNGIE SOUTERRAIN

**N.G.R** NO 5111 3597

**Project Description** WATCHING BRIEF

**Project Code** HSCO-90059-2008-01

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Historic Scotland asked Kirkdale Archaeology to monitor some repairs necessary at Carlungie Souterrain. The site was excavated by F T Wainwright in the 1950's, revealing a complex suite of below ground features, and placed in care. For the purposes of this account there are two main passages, here labelled Souterrain 1 and Souterrain 2.

Souterrain 1 is the narrower and shorter of the two, typically 400- 500 mm wide following a sinuous course, but N- S for much of its length. Its side walls are formed by drystone walling up to 1.1 m high. At its S end Souterrain 2 crosses it E- W, the side walls of Souterrain 2 seem to block the course of Souterrain 1, implying that it is later.

Souterrain 2 is much larger, typically 1 m wide, and 400 mm deeper than Souterrain 1. Its shape is closer to the familiar 'banana' shape of many of these features, although two side chambers/ entrances feed off it. Its style of construction is also very different, with massive often rounded boulders forming the base course, and smaller drystone walling filling the gaps between these, and continuing up above them. Its floor is paved, often with very large slabs, which can be seen to post date the side walls.

The area requiring work was part of the E side wall of Souterrain 1, just N of where Souterrain 2 crosses it. A short stretch of this wall had fallen, blocking the passage and this was to be removed, and the wall replaced.

## 2 EXCAVATIONS

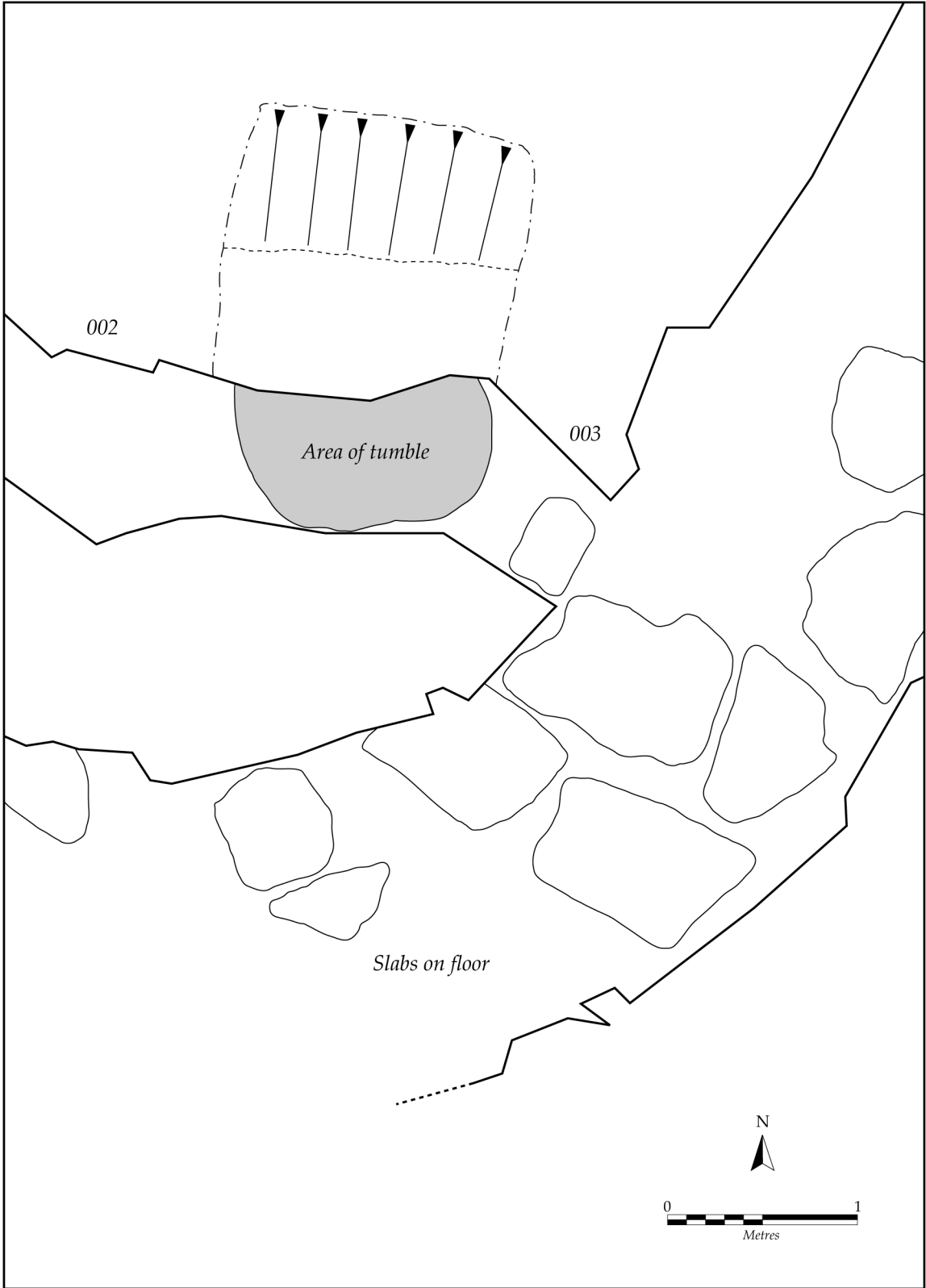
The plan was to remove the rubble from the corridor, keeping it to one side to reuse where possible. An area roughly 1.5 m square was then opened up behind (to the E of) the wall, with the W 650 mm taken down to the bottom of the wall, beyond this it was to slope up to the edge of the excavation. Concrete could be seen in the build of the wall and this point, and the MCU were certain that this area had already fallen and been rebuilt.

The area of collapse was some 1.5 m long at the top and 1 m at the base of the wall. Soil deposits behind this had slumped forward, destroying their archaeological integrity. Intact deposits were encountered further back in the form of topsoil **F001** over **F006**, compact reddish- brown coarse sand full of rounded stones of all sizes.

At the N limit of the trench, where it reached the edge of the area of collapse, **F002** the E wall of Souterrain 1 could be seen in section. It stood 1.1 m high, c. 15 'courses', and was a single stone thick, with a vertical W face and irregular E face. Against its E side a cut, **F005** could be seen through **F006** to take **F002**. This ran the height of the wall and was steep sided, 300 mm wide at the top and 150 mm at the base. Its fill **F004** was a mix of loose pale grey silt and small to medium rounded stones with some charcoal throughout. A sample of **F004** was retained.

At the S end of the trench where **F003**, the N wall of Souterrain 2 ran across Souterrain 1 a similar cut **F008**, filled by **F007** could be seen for **F003**. The wall and the trench ran at an awkward angle here, making his feature hard to see, but it seemed to be 700 mm wide at the top and 500 at the base, and at least 850 mm deep.

Within the main area of the trench these cuts were destroyed, indicating that they were not significantly deeper than the side walls. The relationship between **F005** and **F008** is also unknown, although the relationships between the walls they contain certainly suggest that **F008** should be later.



**Figure 1: Plan of excavation**

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

This small scale watching brief has demonstrated the survival of archaeological deposits at Carlungie Souterrain. Although excavated in the 1950's the retention of masonry for display to the public means that deposits may well survive elsewhere behind the souterrain walls. In particular these deposits are of relevance when considering the construction of these structures, rather than simply their use and abandonment.

The two cuts noted were presumably construction trenches for the two souterrains, dug through the natural fluvo- glacial deposits. In both cases narrow cuts were dug against the back of where the walls were to go. Presumably the full profile of these would incorporate the width of the souterrain, indicating the excavation of a narrow trench, and then it's' lining by walling as the construction method.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

Context no.	Description
001	Topsoil
002	E wall of Souterrain 1
003	N wall of Souterrain 2
004	Fill of F005
005	Cut for F002
006	Natural sand and gravel
007	Fill of F008
008	Cut for F003

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Frame	Description	Taken from	Date
001	Work starting	W	17/03/ 08
002	Work starting	S	17/03/ 08
003	Wall F002, to N of trench	SW	17/03/ 08
004	Wall F003, to NW of trench	S	17/03/ 08
005	Work in progress	N	17/03/ 08
006	Work in progress	SE	17/03/ 08
007	Work in progress	SW	17/03/ 08
008- 010	Cut F005, wall F002	S	17/03/ 08
011- 014	Cut F008, wall F003	NW	17/03/ 08
015	Cut F005	SW	17/03/ 08
016	Trench as finished	W	17/03/ 08