

Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2008

Tantallon Castle: Archaeological monitoring, April & May 2008

HS PIC Index number: 90295
Project code: HSCO-90295-2008-01



1 August 2008
Kirkdale Archaeology

<u>Site</u>	Tantallon Castle
<u>N.G.R</u>	NT 5958 8502
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological monitoring
<u>Project code</u>	HSCO-90295-2008-01

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1.0 SUMMARY

A watching brief was maintained at Tantallon Castle during the replacement of a section of cliff top fence to the N of the E tower. Part of a sandstone wall was revealed just north of the excavated postholes. This abutted the surviving portion of the east wall of the east tower and was thought likely to be a retaining wall. It was not fully excavated and its exact date remains uncertain.

2.0 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 Tantallon Castle during the replacement of a section of cliff top fence to the N of the E tower. The work was carried out by MCU personnel and fencing contractors.

The work took place on 30 April and 1 May 2008.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

Work commenced with the removal of turf and topsoil **001** which surrounded the six stumps of the old fence. This revealed the six irregular concrete bases **002** holding the fence in place. The concrete base and corner post in posthole 1 were left in place to attach the new section of fence to. The concrete base and post stumps in postholes 2 to 6 were levered out of the original cuts **003** revealing a mixed deposit of dark brown sandy silt **004** with patches of pale mortar, charcoal flecks and oyster shell from 150 mm deep under topsoil **001** to the base of the postholes, and was not fully excavated. Posthole 7 was excavated through turf and topsoil **001** and dark brown sandy silt **004** next to the surviving portion of the E wall of the E tower **007**. The S edges of post holes 6 and 7 were formed by current cobbled and concrete surface **006** indicating that the cobbles were in place when the fence was erected.

In postholes 3 to 7 the S edge of a WNW to ESE aligned wall **005** was revealed along the N edge of the post holes. The N face of wall **005** could be seen from the N; the wall, c 600 mm thick, was a combination of sandstone rubble and bedrock, and abutted the surviving portion of the E wall of the E tower **007**, following the current cliff edge. The fencing contractors modified the base of the new fence posts in

postholes 5 and 6 to avoid damaging wall 005.

MCU personnel removed three stubs of old fencing socketed into the mortar of the surviving portion of the E wall of the E tower 007.

4.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS

The wall revealed in postholes 3 to 7 (005) and visible from the N is most likely a retaining wall along the NE edge of the cliff added to stabilise the cliff edge at some time following the collapse of the N side of the E tower. Early OS maps from 1854 to 1908 do not show enough detail to show the wall but a plan of the castle from 1924 (RCAHMS SC 800161) indicates that the wall was in place at this time. The wall may turn and continue to the N along the cliff edge underneath a prominent bank along the cliff edge, although a turn was not shown on the 1924 plan and the bank may be a separate clifftop boundary or may contain an older unrelated wall.

A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

No	Description
001	Turf and dark brown silty topsoil 100mm-150mm deep.
002	Remains of previous fence including stump of metal fence post bedded in lump of concrete, under 001.
003	Cut through 004 for previous fence, sub-square cuts, filled with 002.
004	Mixed deposit dark brown sandy silt with patches of pale mortar, charcoal flecks and oyster shells. From 150mm deep to the base of the post holes, not fully excavated.
005	S edge of a wall/revetment running long the N edge of the cliff abutting remains of E wall of E tower (007).
006	Cobble surface bedded in concrete to the S edge of post hole 6 and post hole 7.
007	Remains of E wall of E tower.

A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS

No	Type	Description	Scale
1	Plan	Location plan.	NTS

A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

#	Description	From	Date
S1050541	Pre-ex shot showing the stubs of old fencing to be removed, also marking the position of the new post holes.	SE	30/04/08
S1050542	Pre-ex shot showing the stubs of old fencing to be removed, also marking the position of the new post holes.	W	30/04/08
S1050545	Working shot showing the removal of the old fence posts.	W	30/04/08
S1050553	General shot showing the remains of the fence bedded in the surviving masonry of the E wall of the E tower.	W	01/05/08
S1050555	Working shot during excavation.	E	01/05/08
S1050556	Working shot showing the removal of the remains of the fence bedded in the surviving masonry of the E wall of the E tower.	SW	01/05/08

#	Description	From	Date
S1050559	Working shot showing removal of old fence from post hole 6, showing adaptation to the bas of the post.	SW	01/05/08
S1050561	General shot showing the N face of wall 005.	N	01/05/08
S1050564	General shot showing the site of the excavation, the N face of wall 005 and the surviving portion of the E wall of the E tower.	N	01/05/08
S1050568	General shot showing what could be a continuation of wall 005 to the N.	S	01/05/08
S1050589	Working shot showing positioning of the new fence.	W	01/05/08
S1050590	Shot showing the surviving section of the E wall of the E tower following the removal of the stubs of the old fence.	W	01/05/08
S1050593	Shot showing post holes from 1, 2, 3 and 4 from W-E.	W	01/05/08
S1050595	Post hole 1.	SW	01/05/08
S1050594	Post hole 2	SW	01/05/08
S1050596	Post hole 3 showing S face of wall 005.	SW	01/05/08
S1050597	Post hole 4 showing S face of wall 005.	SW	01/05/08
S1050598	Post hole 4 showing S face of wall 005.	S	01/05/08
S1050599	Post hole 5 showing S face of wall 005.	SW	01/05/08
S1050600	Post hole 6 showing S face of wall 005.	SW	01/05/08
S1050601	Post hole 6 showing S face of wall 005.	S	01/05/08
S1050602	Working shot showing the excavation of post hole 7.	W	01/05/08
S1050604	Post hole 7 showing S face of wall 005.	W	01/05/08
S1050607	Post hole 7 showing S face of wall 005.	W	01/05/08
S1050608	Post hole 7 and post hole 6 showing S face of wall 005.	N	01/05/08

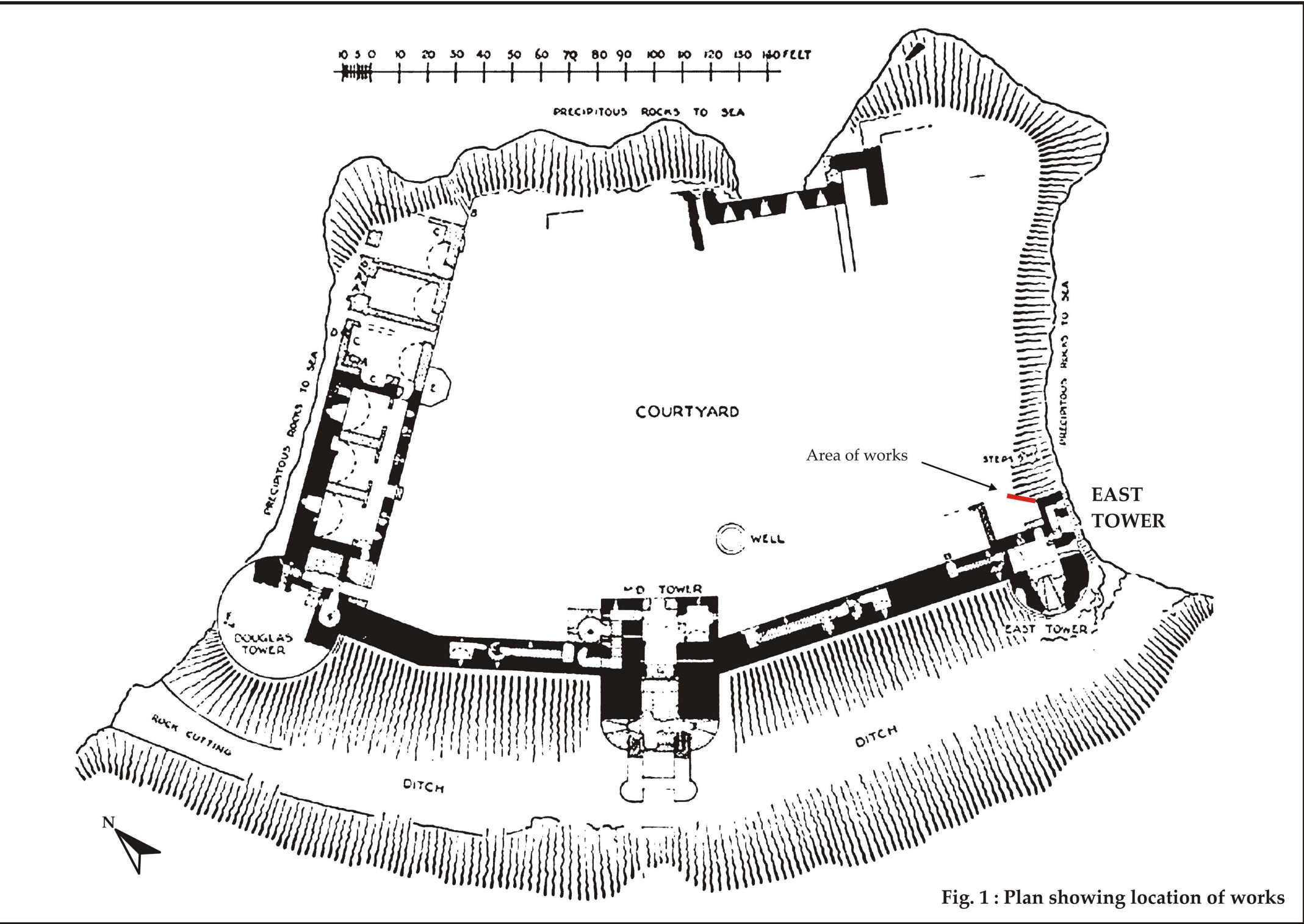


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of works

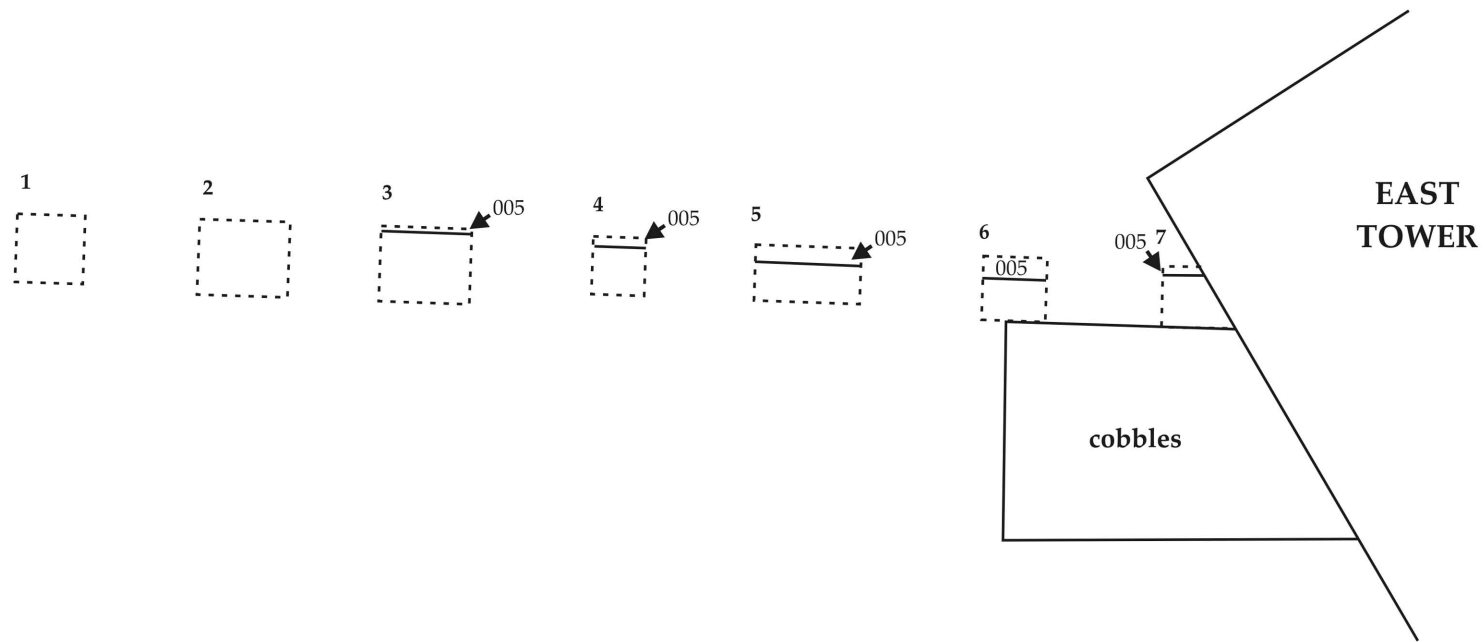


Fig. 2 : Plan (1:50) showing location of postholes 1-7 inc.