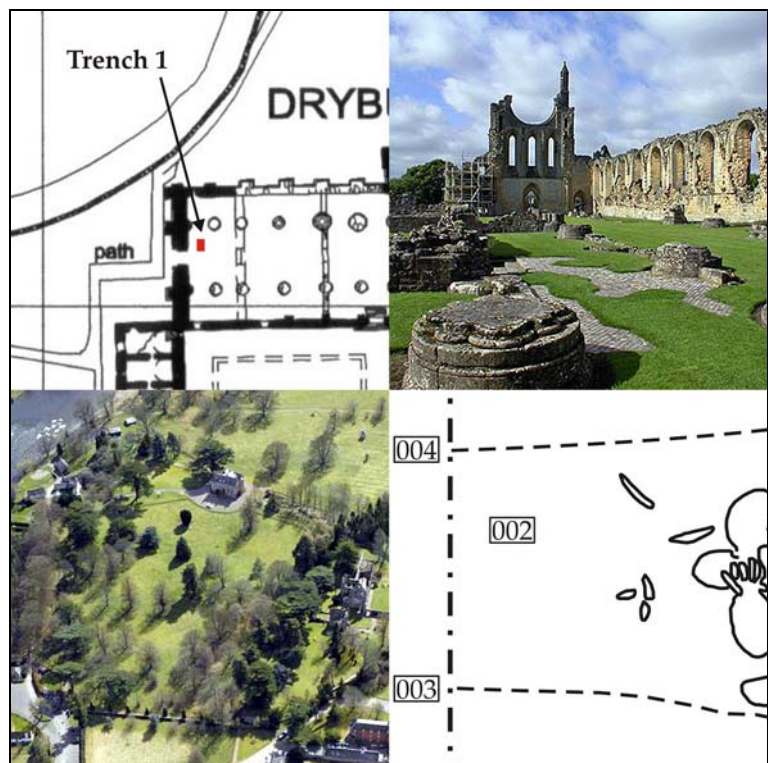


Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2008

Dryburgh Abbey: Archaeological monitoring of minor excavations, May 2008

HS PIC Index number: 90103
Project code: HSCO-90103-2008-01



22 September 2008
Kirkdale Archaeology

<u>Site</u>	Dryburgh Abbey
<u>N.G.R</u>	NT 5901 3173 / NT 5912 3170
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological monitoring of minor excavations
<u>Project code</u>	HSCO-90103-2008-01

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SUMMARY

Three small trenches were excavated at Dryburgh Abbey, one just inside the nave near the west door (NT 5912 3170) and two at the far west end of the Abbey grounds, near the River Tweed (NT 5901 3173).

The two trenches in the grounds were for the relocation of a bench, while the trench in the nave was a shallow excavation to allow the placement of slabs in an area of erosion next to a notice board. There was nothing of significance seen in the first two, but in the nave trench, human remains were found. This burial had been disturbed previously, but both sides of a pelvis in good condition and traces of the coccyx and the base of the spine were still in situ. Bones found in overlying deposits were replaced and the trench backfilled.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake watching briefs during the excavation of three small trenches at Dryburgh Abbey, one just inside the nave near the west door and two at the far west end of the Abbey grounds, near the River Tweed.

The two trenches in the grounds were for the relocation of a bench, while the trench in the nave was a shallow excavation to allow the placement of slabs to prevent erosion of the ground surface next to a notice board.

The work was undertaken on 15 May 2008.

2.0 EXCAVATION ACCOUNT

2.1 Trench 1 (Nave, NGR NT 5912 3170)

The trench measured 1.60 m N-S and 1.00 m E-W. A depth of 100 mm of turf and topsoil, **101**, was removed over the whole trench.

Running E-W through the centre of the trench there was a deposit of light-mid brown sandy silt, **104**. The S limit of the grave cut, **102**, was fairly well seen but at the N side (**103**), grave fill **104** was difficult to distinguish from **101**.

Within **104** human remains **105** were seen, comprising both sides of a pelvis in good condition and traces of the coccyx and the base of the spine. Further bones,

including some fingers, were recovered during the excavation and re-interred.

2.2 Trenches 2& 3

These trenches were for the bases of the legs of a bench and each measured 750 mm N-S, 150 mm E-W and 200 mm in depth. They were sited to the W of the Abbey, on the slope of the W end of the bank to the S of the ditch, c 16 m from the W terminal.

In Trench 2, the turf and mid brown silty clay topsoil, **201**, measured 70 mm in depth. In the S 150 mm of the trench, below **201**, **203** was a 30 mm thick band of pale grey mortar. Below **201** and **203**, and seen throughout the trench, **202** was a deposit of compact red brown sand and rounded gravel. Up to 130 mm of **202** was excavated but this deposit was not bottomed.

In Trench 3, there was a depth of 80 mm of turf and mid brown silty clay topsoil, **301**. Sealed by **301**, **302** was a deposit of compact red brown sand and rounded gravel. 120 mm of **302** was removed but it continued below the excavated level.

3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Trench 1

005 is an *in situ* burial and when it was found the excavation was abandoned and the trench backfilled. The bones recovered during excavation were replaced. The excavation which must have taken place for the original insertion of the notice board immediately to the N of the trench seems likely to have removed at least one of the legs of this burial, unless it had been disturbed at an earlier date. Below the excavated level and to the S of the trench it is likely that much of the upper part of the body is intact. However, since the remains are so close to the surface it seems unlikely that the skull, which usually sits slightly higher than the rest of the skeleton, is intact.

It was surprising to find a burial so close to the surface. Perhaps there has been landscaping of this area that has seen the ground level lowered.

3.3 Trenches 2& 3

The main deposit seen (**202** & **302**) may have been re-deposited subsoil, perhaps up-

cast from the digging of the ditch. There seems to have been little or no activity in this area, other than tree planting, since this material was deposited. It is also possible that this whole side of the ditch has been landscaped to provide a good viewpoint to look out over the river.

A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench 1	
101	Turf and topsoil
102	S edge of grave cut
103	N edge of grave cut
104	Fill of grave
105	Human remains
Trench 2	
201	Turf and topsoil
202	Compact red brown sand and rounded gravel
203	Pale grey mortar
Trench 3	
301	Turf and topsoil
302	Compact red brown sand and rounded gravel

A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS

No	Type	Trench	Description	Scale	Date
1	Plan	1	Plan of Trench 1	1:20	15/05/08

A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

#	Description	From	Date
1	Location of trench 1	W	15/05/08
2	Detail of pelvis in trench 1.	W	15/05/08
3	Detail of pelvis in trench 1.	E	15/05/08
4	Location of trenches 2 and 3.	E	15/05/08
5	Detail of trench 2.	W	15/05/08
6	Location of trenches 2 and 3.	W	15/05/08

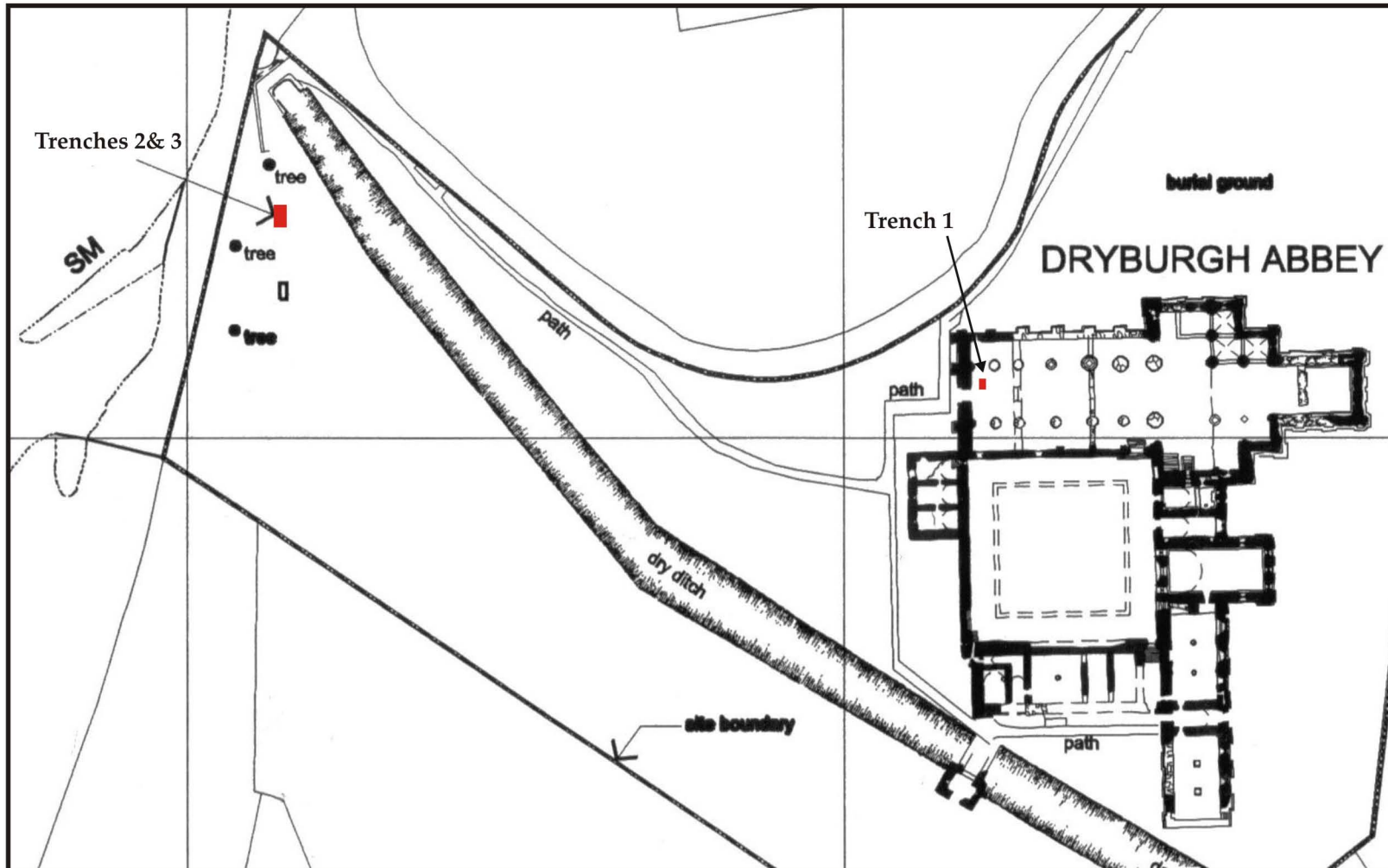
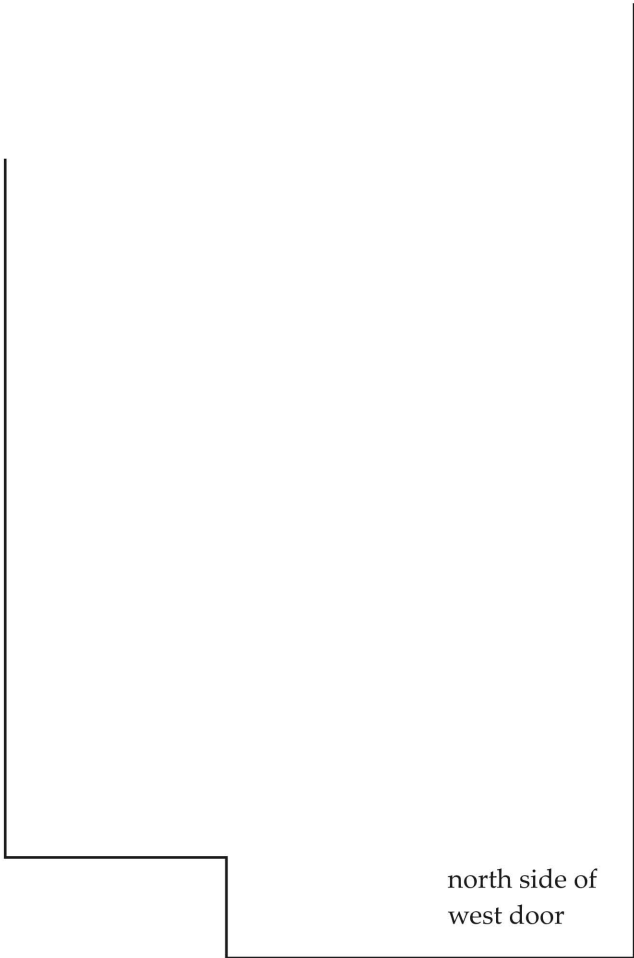
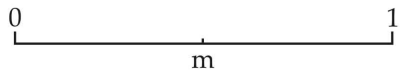


Fig. 1 : Plan showing location of works



north side of west door

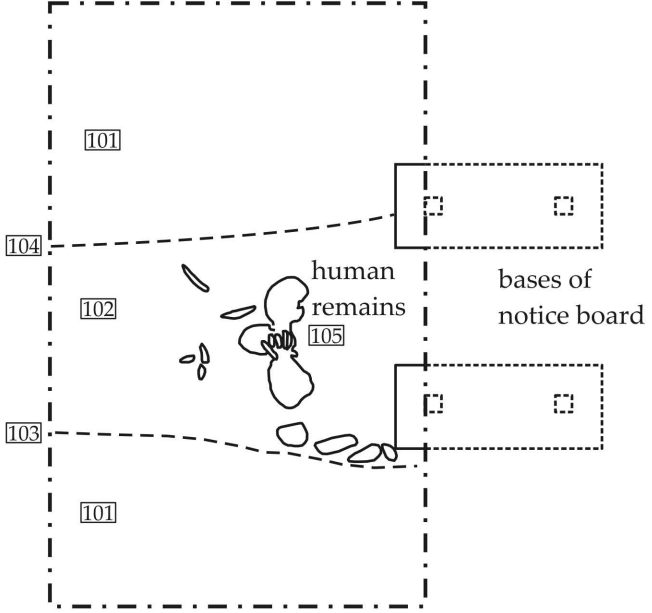


Fig. 2 : Plan showing Trench 1 after excavation