

Archaeological watching brief, Enoch Castle, Durisdeer, Dumfries and Galloway

March 2016



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Services

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, ENOCH CASTLE, DURISDEER, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

NGR: NS 879 009

DGC HER: MDG 210

CANMORE ID: 46374

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Dumfries and Galloway Council archaeologist requested an archaeological watching brief in advance of access track and top soiling operations associated with tree felling at Enoch Castle, Durisdeer

1.2 Buccleuch Estates engaged John Pickin Archaeology and Heritage to undertake the watching brief.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Enoch Castle is a well-preserved motte and bailey earthwork situated in a naturally strong defensive position between the Carron Water and the Column Burn (Figs. 1 and 2). The earthworks comprise a flat topped motte, 38m x 44m with a wide rock-cut ditch to the south and east. To the north a 15m wide gully separates the motte from an outwork or bailey, 40m x 50m, which is cut at its northern end by the line of the A702. At the time of the watching brief much of the site was within a mature conifer plantation.

2.2 Little is known about the castle's history but its comparatively large size and strategic location controlling access to the Dalveen Pass indicates that it may have been one of the more important military sites in Nithsdale. Blind Harry's 'Wallace', written during the fifteenth century, records the capture by Wallace of Enoch Castle 1297 and a twelfth or thirteenth century date for the original castle is quite possible. At some point in the sixteenth century a stone 'mansion house' was built on the site of the medieval castle by the Menzies family who held the barony of Enoch and there is a documentary account from 1526 of an attempt by Thomas Douglas of Drumlanrig to take the 'House of Enoch' (Reid 1923: 160). In 1703-04 the barony of Enoch was sold to the duke of Queensberry, the 'mansion house' was demolished and the stones used to build a manse at Enoch and part of the park wall at Drumlanrig.

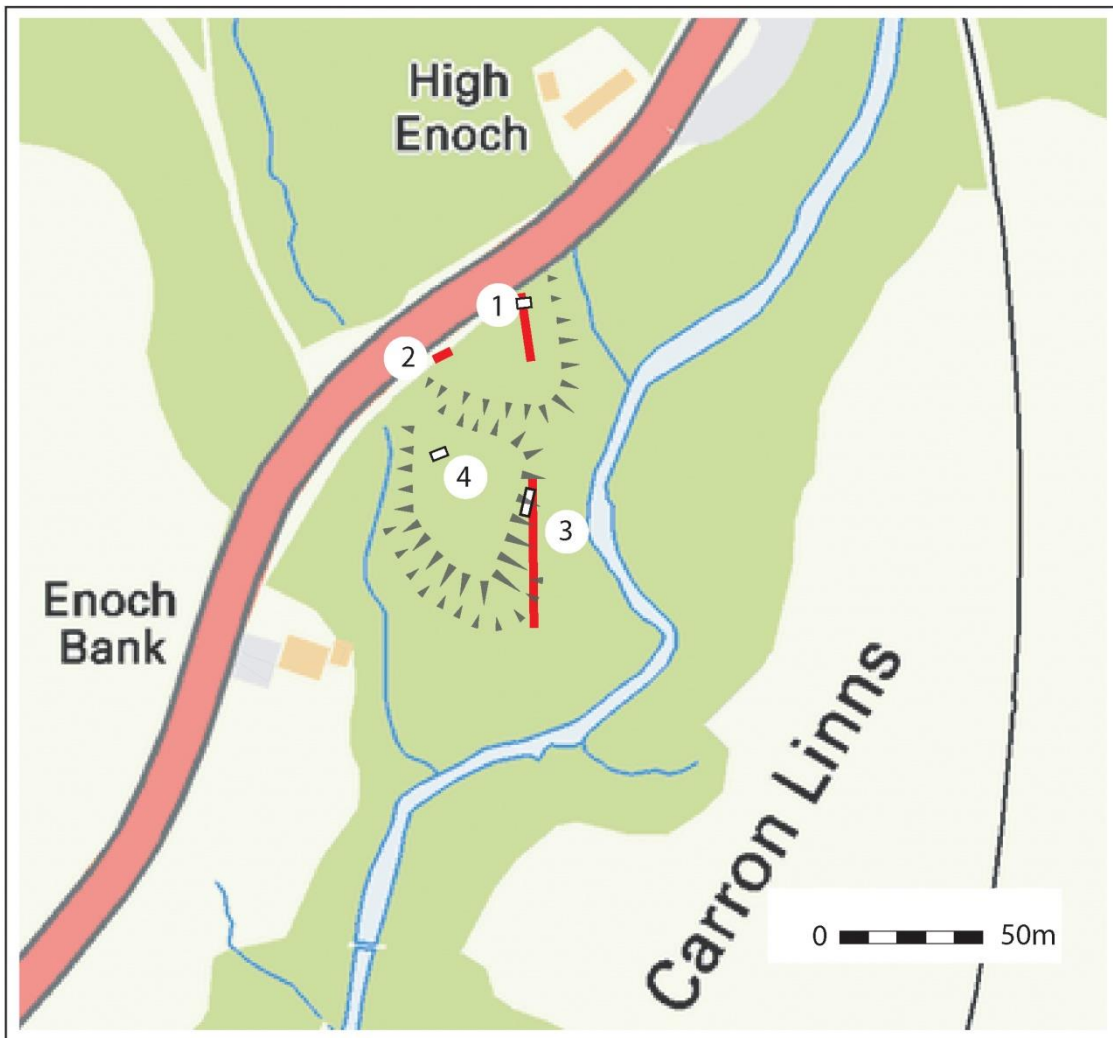
2.3 The site was investigated in 1930 by members of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society. Limited excavation on the north side of the motte mound revealed:

'... an unmistakeable stretch of wall, which we bared for a length of about twenty feet and to a depth of three feet, when we came on the foundations. The stone-work revealed was devoid of any distinctive feature, but ... is probably to be assigned to the 16th century.' (Taylor 1932: 29).

This is the only record of previous archaeological work at the castle.



*Fig 1. Location of Enoch Castle.
Contains Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright and database 2016.*



*Fig 2. Enoch Castle showing watching brief Areas 1-4.
Contains Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright and database 2016.*

2.4 The castle is named and depicted on a number of early maps including Pont (before 1614), Gordon (1644) and Blaeu (1664) but is not shown on the early nineteenth century county maps such as Ainslie (1821) or John Thompson (1828); this suggests that the site's relative importance was forgotten soon after demolition in the 1700s. Both the motte mound and outwork/bailey are shown on the First Edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1861 (Dumfriesshire, Sheet XXII) and marked as 'Site of Enoch Castle.'

3 PROJECT WORKS

3.1 The watching brief was carried out on 2 and 3 March 2016. Three areas – Areas 1, 2 and 3 - were machine excavated and all ground disturbance was monitored for archaeological features and deposits. Archaeological features were recorded but not excavated.

3.2 A flat-bladed bucket was used to remove the top soil in Area 1 and a toothed bucket used in Areas 2 and 3. The trees in all three areas had already been felled but site operations required that the stumps and roots had to be removed as well; subsoil disturbance could not be avoided during stump removal.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Area 1 (NS 87912 00926 – 87905 00951) (Figs. 3-4)

4.1.1 Area 1 was a 30.5m x 6m trench, aligned north-west – south-east, excavated from the roadside hedge-line into the northern section of the bailey or outwork to create a trackway. The top soil was stripped and the subsoil surface exposed. After recording this area was backfilled with gravel to form a hard standing surface.

4.1.2 In much of the trench a black, humic topsoil (004), some 25cm – 35cm deep, overlay a compact orange gravel deposit with occasional rounded cobbles. This deposit (001) was featureless and is assumed to be natural in origin.

4.1.3 At the far north-west end of the trench the natural deposit 001 was cut by a linear feature (005) filled with grey clay, charcoal and sandstone fragments (003). Within or abutting this feature was a short length of wall core (002) composed of rough-cut red sandstone with a grey-white mortar matrix (002). The wall was 0.80m wide and had an excavated length of 1.30m.

The relationship between 002 and 003 could not be established but it is possible that feature 005 and fill 003 are part of a robber trench associated with the demolition and removal of wall 002. Wall 002 was aligned with a low north-east – south-west earthwork bank on the west side of the trench. This bank is discontinuous but appears to enclose the west, south and east sides of the bailey.

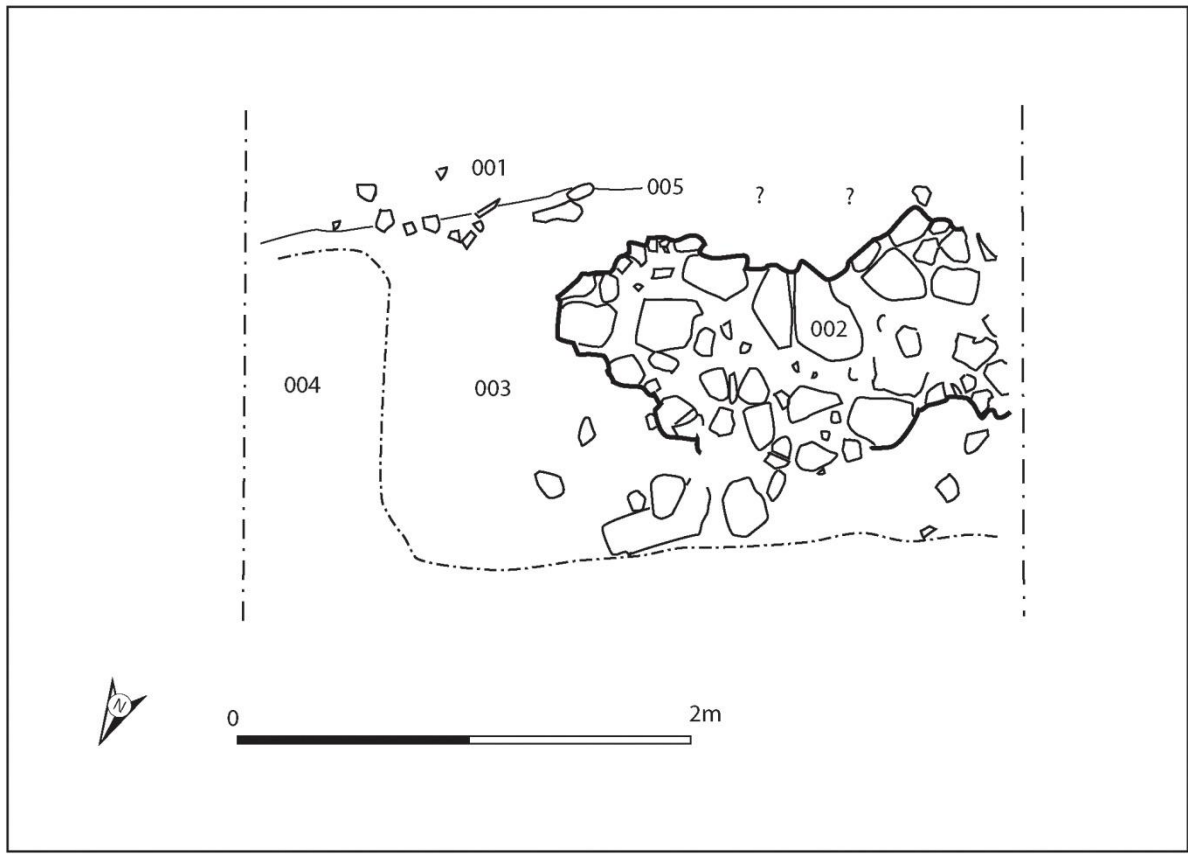


Fig 3. Plan of wall core 002 and associated features in Area 1.



Fig 4. Area 1, wall core 002. View from NW.

4.2 Area 2 (NS 28877 60955 – 87884 60951) (Fig.5)

4.2.1 A machine cutting some 7m long was excavated against the north-east outer slope of the bailey to create a roadside loading area. This part of the site appears to have been previously disturbed, possibly for an access track.

4.2.2 A north-west facing section was exposed with a maximum height of 1.3m. A black humic topsoil overlay a natural deposit of orange-pink clay which contained concentrations of rounded cobbles towards the west. No archaeological features were observed.



Fig 5. Area 2 after scrub clearance and before machine excavation.

4.3 Area 3 (NS 87910 00881-87915 00844) (Figs. 6-12)

4.3.1 Area 3 was a machine trench, approximately 55m long, cut diagonally down the east side of the motte mound. The excavation consisted of the removal of material from the east slope and re-depositing it to create a benched access track. Some of the excavated material was also re-deposited in the gully at the south-east base of the motte mound to build a causeway for the track.

4.3.2 The only archaeological feature in Area 3 was a 5.8m length of stone walling exposed on the top north-east corner of the motte mound. It comprised a stretch of rough dressed facing stone (020), four courses high in grey sandstone, with a rubble wall core of decomposed red sandstone in a mortar matrix (021). The inner or west facing side of the wall was constructed with rough dressed red sandstone blocks (022). At no point was the full width of the wall exposed but projecting the outer faces of 020 and 022 indicates a probable width of 1.50m. The exposed wall section had a maximum height of 1.00m. The wall appears

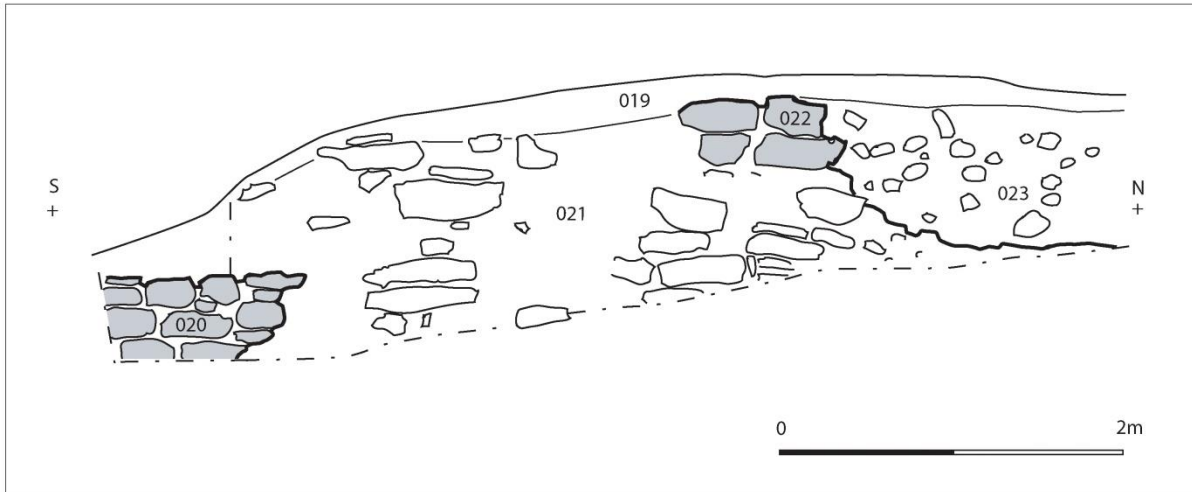


Fig 6. Area 3, east facing section of enclosure wall



Fig 7. Enclosure wall from NE showing facing stones 020 and wall core 021.

to be associated with a low, discontinuous earthwork bank which encircles the top of the mound.

4.3.3 Towards the south, the inner face of wall 022 rested against a compact deposit of brown gravel with occasional pebbles (024). The relationship between the wall and 024 could not be established but the gravel is either a natural deposit cut into by the wall or, less likely, the fill from the wall's construction trench.

4.3.4 Deposit 024 and wall face 022 were both sealed by a 0.80m deep layer of loose black soil with large cobbles and occasional blocks of angular (building?) stone (023); this layer had been heavily disturbed by tree roots and contained a small deposit of animal

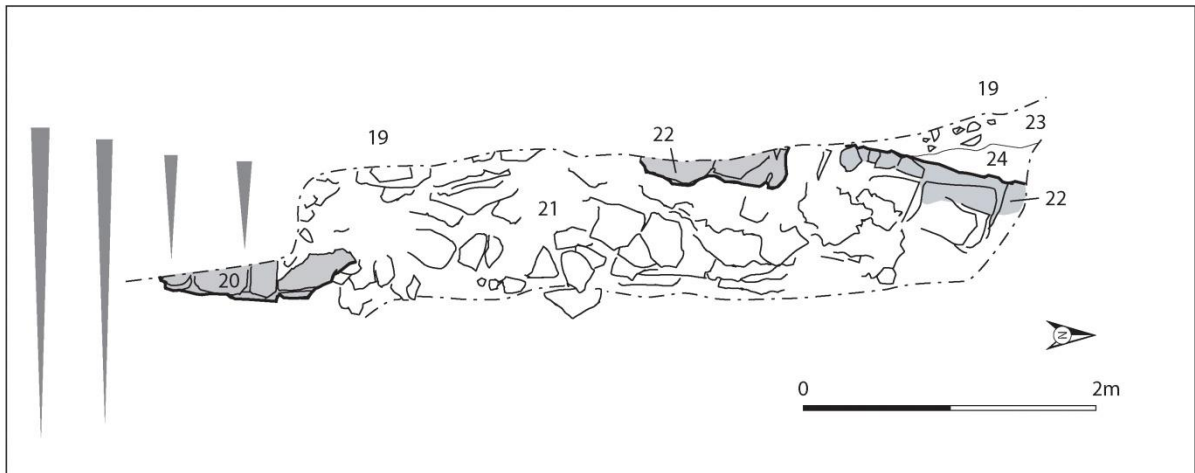


Fig 8. Area 3, plan of enclosure wall.



Fig 9. Enclosure wall from SE.



Fig 10. Deposit 023 from E.

bones (probably sheep or goat) at its base. Layer 023 and the top of the wall core wall were covered by a loose, root-disturbed top soil deposit (019) around 0.20m deep.

4.3.5 Within the surface top soil close to the north end of the wall was a large architectural fragment of dressed, compact grey sandstone (Figs. 11 and 12). It has a curving profile with a chamfered inner edge and an irregularly cut channel or slot; it is 110cm long. It may be part of a window or door surround or possibly part of a well head. The chamfered detail indicates a probable date within the sixteenth century.

4.3.6 The east slope exposed further south along the machine cut was composed of a loose red-orange sandy soil. This deposit, which had been extensively disturbed by root action, was assumed to be natural.

4.4 Area 4 (NS 87888 00897) (Fig. 13)

4.4.1 Part of a stone wall core was exposed by machine tracks on the north-west top edge of the motte mound. The section was 1m long and approximately 0.5m wide and comprised



Fig 11. Architectural fragment from Area 3.

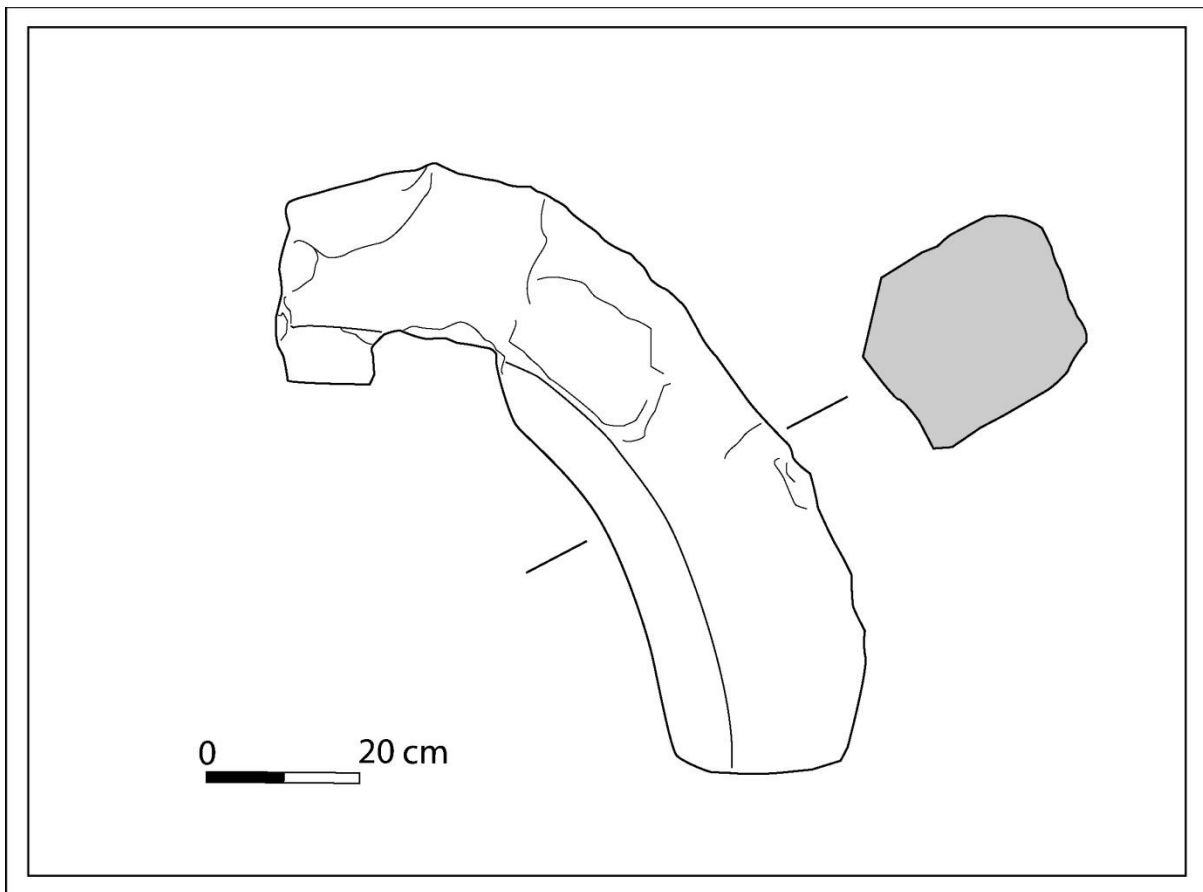


Fig 12. Measured sketch of architectural fragment from Area 3.

red and blue-grey sandstone in a mortar. No facing stones were exposed. The wall section – which was photographed but not planned - appears to be associated with the same low earthwork bank observed in Area 3. It is also likely that this and the wall feature in Area 3 are part of the same stone enclosure located in 1930s on the northern edge of the motte (see 2.3 above).



Fig 13. Area 4, wall core exposed by machine tracks.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Archaeological features were revealed during ground works in Areas 1 and 3 and exposed by machine tracks in Area 4.

5.2 The short stretch of walling in Area 1 appears to be the core – or possibly the foundations – of a partly robbed stone wall which on earthwork evidence once enclosed the west, south and east sides of the castle's bailey.

5.4 The more substantial stretch of walling in Area 3 and the short section in Area 4 appear to have formed parts of a similar enclosure wall surrounding the top of the motte mound. All three wall sections share a similar construction style – red sandstone in a mortar core – and are likely to be contemporary. The large architectural fragment from Area 3 is probably sixteenth century in date and must relate to the late medieval 'mansion house' which was demolished in the early 1700s. It is probable that the two enclosure walls belong to the same building.

5.5 The current watching brief has demonstrated that the footings of late medieval stone enclosure walls survive on both the motte and the bailey at Enoch Castle. No archaeological

features were observed within the two enclosures but evidence may survive beyond the limited excavation trenches.

6 REFERENCES

Reid, R C. (1923) The Baronies of Enoch and Durisdeer,, *Trans Dumfriesshire Galloway Natur Hist Antiq Soc*, 3rd, vol. 8, 1920-1, 153-71.

Taylor, T L. (1932) An interim report on the excavations at Enoch Castle, *Trans Dumfriesshire Galloway Natur Hist Antiq Soc*, 3rd, vol. 17, 1930-1, 28-33.

7 APPENDIX 1 - Record Summaries

Area 1

001	Orange gravel with occasional cobbles; probably natural. Cut by 005.
002	Wall core of rough-cut red sandstone and occasional water-rolled cobbles with mortar matrix in matrix core. Contiguous with 003?
003	Grey clay with charcoal smears and occasional sandstone fragments. Fills 005 and contiguous with 002.
004	Top soil.
005	Linear feature cutting 001 and filled by 003. Not excavated.

Area 3

019	Top soil.
020	Section of wall facing, four courses high constructed with dressed blocks of grey sandstone. 1.20m long x 0.50m high. Rests against wall core 21.
021	Wall core of decomposed red sandstone in mortar matrix. Mortar and stone lenses slope to S suggesting slump or collapse. 5.20m x 1m.
022	Rough-dressed blocks of red sandstone forming inner face to core 021. Cuts (?) 024 and sealed by 023.
023	Loose black soil, much root disturbance, with large cobbles and occasional stone blocks. Deposit of animal bones at base. 0.80m deep. Sealed by top soil (019) and seals 022 and 024.
024	Brown gravel with small rounded pebbles; probably natural. Sealed by 023 and cut (?) by 022.

8 APPENDIX 2 - Finds

Area	Context	Description
3	Top soil	Architectural fragment, grey sandstone, L 110 cm; W 30 cm; T 30 cm. Curved profile with chamfered inner edge and irregular cut channel.
3	023	X3 pieces of animal bone (prob. sheep/goat)

9 APPENDIX 3 – Site Photographs (digital images in site archive)

Area 1

Photo no.	Description	Taken from	Date
EC1.1	Pre-excavation	S	02.03.2016
EC1.2	Machining, wall core 002 right foreground	S	“
EC1.3	Wall core 002	W	“
EC1.4	Wall core 002	S	“
EC1.5	Vertical view 002, 003 and 001	-	“

Area 2

Photo no.	Description	Taken from	Date
EC2.1	Area 2 after scrub clearance and before machine excavation	NW	02.03.2016

Area 3

Photo no.	Description	Taken from	Date
EC 3.1	General view of motte top, pre-excavation.	NW	02.03.2016
EC 3.2	Machining top (N end) of Area 3.	N	
EC 3.3	Bottom (S end) of Area 3 trench.	S	
EC3.4	Detail of architectural fragment	-	
EC3.5	Wall face 020 and core 021	E	
EC3.6	Wall face 020 and core 021	NE	
EC3.7	Wall core 021 and fill 023	E	
EC3.8	020, 021, 022 and 023	SE	
EC3.9	Central section of Area 3 trench showing sandy subsoil on slope	SE	
EC3.10	Features 020, 021, 022, 023 and 024	N	
EC3.11	Detail of 023	E	
EC3.12	Wall core 21, inner wall 022, 023 and natural 024	N	

Area 4

Photo no.	Description	Taken from	Date
EC4.1	Wall core exposed by machine tracks	N	02.03.2016

10 APPENDIX 4 – Entry for Discovery & Excavation in Scotland 2016

Local authority: Dumfries and Galloway

Parish: Durisdeer

Site name: Enoch Castle

Name of contributor: John Pickin

Type of project: watching brief

Name of organisation:

NGR: NS 8788 0088

Report: A watching brief was undertaken during the construction of access tracks associated with the clear felling of a mature conifer plantation on the castle site. A short length of stone enclosure wall was found on the northern edge of the bailey. A 6m section of stone wall was also exposed on the north-east corner of the motte and a large architectural stone fragment, possibly a window or door surround, was recovered from top soil deposits in the same area. The fragment is probably sixteenth century in date and it is likely that it and the two enclosure walls relate to a late medieval building which is known to have been constructed on the site of the earlier timber castle. No internal features were observed in either the mote or bailey.

Location of report: DGC HER; RCAHMS

Funder: Buccleuch Estates

Contact details of organisation: High Weirston House, Leswalt, Stranraer DG9 0RQ