

NUMC12



EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY, MERCHISTON CAMPUS

*Results of an Archaeological Evaluation
and Watching Brief*

for Edinburgh Napier University

December 2012



HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd



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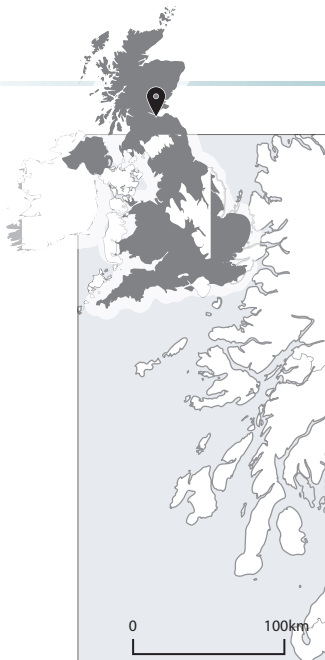


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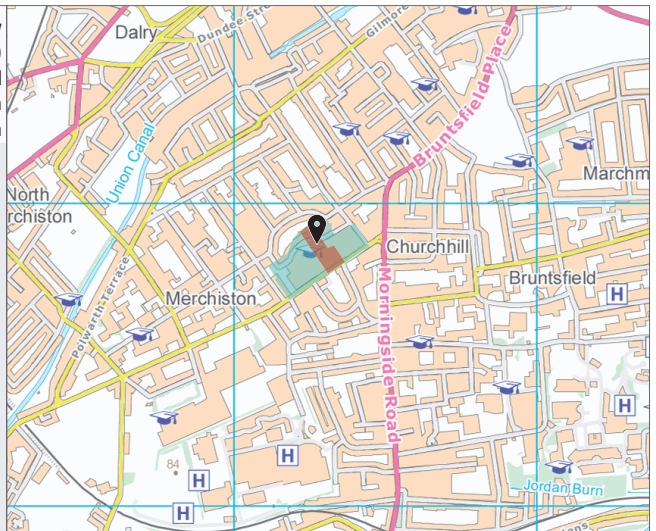
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Napier University
(Merchiston Campus)
Colinton Rd
Edinburgh
Midlothian



0 100km

324200

324300

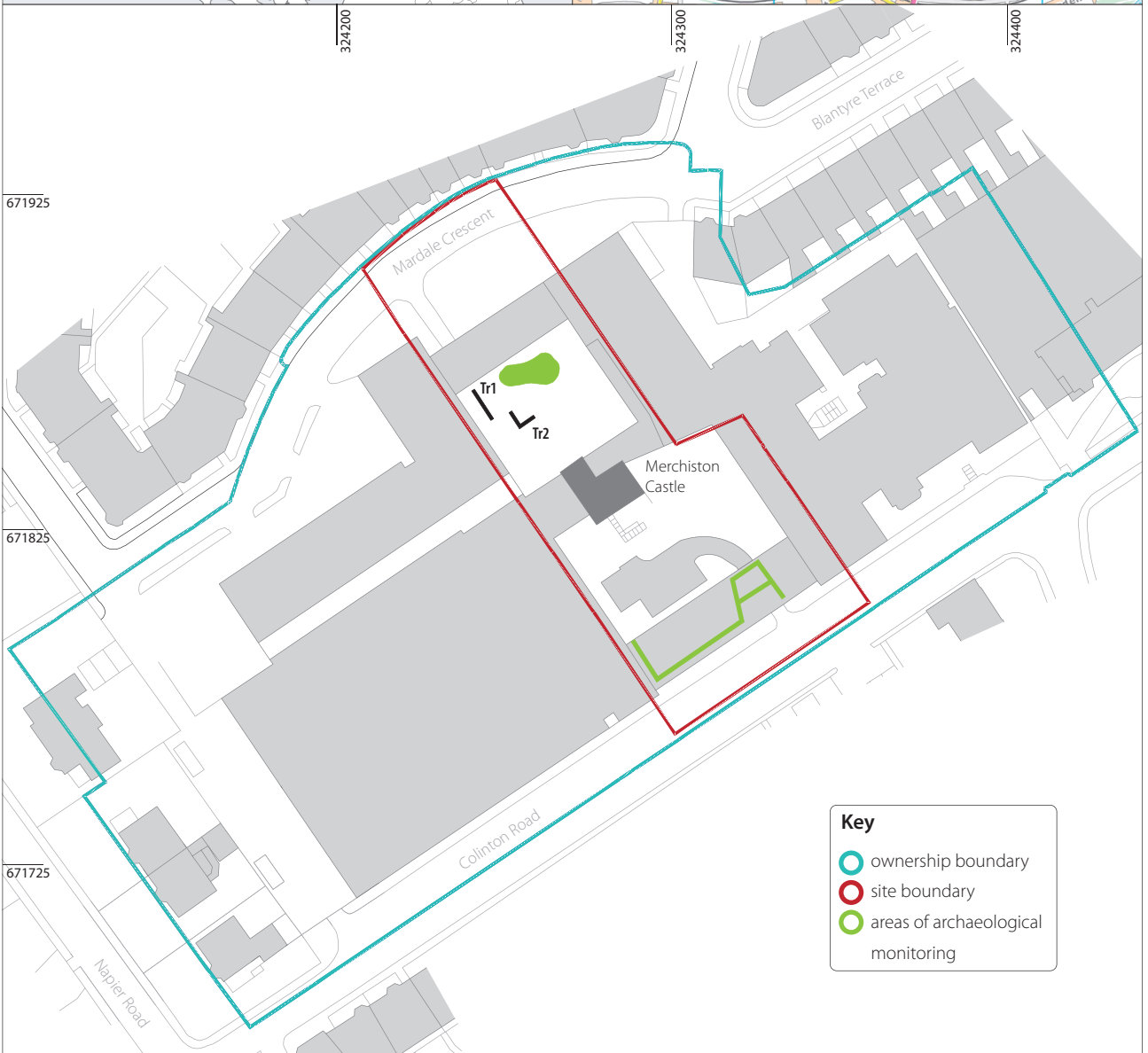
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viii



Key

-  ownership boundary
-  site boundary
-  areas of archaeological monitoring

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Scale 1:2,000 @ A4



0 100m

Illus 1
Site location

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY, MERCHISTON CAMPUS

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Edinburgh Napier University to undertake a programme of archaeological works at the Merchiston campus of Edinburgh Napier University. The works were designed in response to a planning condition in advance of the redevelopment of the campus. The work comprised an evaluation followed by targeted monitoring of ground works carried out across the site. Two trenches were excavated in the northern courtyard, immediately north of the 15th century Merchiston Tower, the remains of which are form a centrepiece for the campus. No archaeologically significant remains were encountered in these trenches. The subsequent monitoring works recorded a series of modern deposits with no significant archaeological remains or artefacts identified. It is considered that any surviving structural or negative features were likely to have been removed during the construction of the campus in the 1960s.

1

1. INTRODUCTION

An application for development (Planning Application ref.11/03453/FUL) by Edinburgh Napier University (the client), for construction of new music facilities, a new Main Entrance and a Multi-use space at Edinburgh Napier University Merchiston Campus has been granted by the City of Edinburgh Council (the LPA). Planning permission was granted in accordance with the terms of the application and subject to conditions.

A condition relating to archaeology states: *No development shall take place on the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.*

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Edinburgh Napier University to undertake a programme of archaeological work comprising trial trenching followed by targeted monitoring of ground works at the Merchiston campus (*Illus 1*; NT 24245 71822). The works were designed in response to the planning condition set by City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service in advance of the redevelopment of the campus.

Initial works comprised the excavation of two trenches in the northern courtyard (*Illus 1*), just north of the 15th century Merchiston Tower, which is preserved as a centrepiece for the

campus. The potential for archaeological remains was considered moderate due to the proximity of the development to the tower; however it was likely that there was a substantial degree of truncation during the construction of the campus in the 1960s. The archaeological evaluation was intended to provide further information concerning the archaeological potential of the area in order to mitigate any adverse affects the development may have.

Following the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken of the southern courtyard area a watching brief was required on areas of site where it was not possible to evaluate. This document details the methodology and results of both the evaluation and the subsequent monitoring of ground works.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The site is located at Colinton Road, Merchiston forming the Merchiston campus of Edinburgh Napier University (NGR: NT 24270 71802). The proposed development area is currently used as open space within the university grounds.

The site lies around 52m OD and is underlain by glacial till deposits, which are Devensian in origin (British Geological Survey website; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).



2.2 Historical background

The development area is centred on courtyards north and south of the historic 15th century Merchiston Tower (NMR: NT27SW 13.0). The tower is a category A Listed building (HB 26828) which was incorporated into the design of the campus in the 1960s. Therefore there was the potential for remains relating to the medieval period to survive in the areas of the development not covered by the evaluation.

The lands surrounding the tower were acquired in 1438 by Alexander Napier, the first Laird of Merchiston, and remained in the Napier family for most of the following five centuries (Armet & Harris 1962).

Merchiston Castle was probably built as a country house, but its strategic position and the turbulent political situation required it to be heavily fortified - with some walls as much as six feet thick - and it was frequently under siege. During restoration in the 1960s a twenty-six pound cannon-ball was found embedded in the Tower, this is thought to date from the struggle in 1572 between Mary, Queen of Scots, and supporters of her son, James VI. In 1659, the tower was sold to Ninian Lewis, in whose family it remained until 1729, when it was sold to the governors of George Watson's Hospital. The tower was reacquired by the Napier of Merchiston family when Francis Napier bought it in 1752 (*ibid*).

In 1772, a year before the sixth Lord's death, the Tower was sold to a relative, Charles Hope-Weir. He sold it in 1775 to Robert Turner, a lawyer, who in turn sold it in 1785 to Robert Blair, a professor of astronomy at Edinburgh University. The Napier family again came into possession of Merchiston Tower in 1818, when it was purchased by William Napier, 9th Lord Napier. By 1833, Lord Napier let the Tower to Charles Chalmers, who founded the Merchiston Castle School. It was sold outright to the school in 1914 by The Honourable John Scott Napier, fourteenth Laird of Merchiston. The school vacated the building in 1930, moving to a site some three miles away.

The property passed first to The Merchant Company in 1930, and then to the Edinburgh City Council in 1935, and remained unoccupied (except for war service) until 1956 when it was suggested as the centerpiece of a new technical college. Restoration work began in 1958, highlights of which were the discovery of the entrance drawbridge and the preservation of an original seventeenth century plaster ceiling.

The Tower is an interesting and elaborate example of the Medieval tower house, being built on the familiar 'L' plan with a wing projecting to the north. It was originally vaulted at the second floor and the roof. Among several remarkable features is the unusual elaboration of the main entrance, which is at second

Illus 2

View of the Trench 1 from the S

Illus 3

View of the Trench 2 from the S

Illus 4

Detail of the Trench 2 section from the E



Illus 5

General view of the raised garden area from the N

3

floor level in the south front. The tall shallow recess in which the doorway is set undoubtedly housed a drawbridge which must have rested upon an outwork some 14 feet above ground level and 10 feet from the Tower (MacGibbon and Ross 1887; Historic Scotland listing descriptions).

Shortly after being let to Merchiston Castle School it was considerably altered with the addition of a castellated Gothic-style two-story extension and a basement, which has since been removed. Napier University has taken out large sections of wall on the northern extension to accommodate a corridor which runs through the Castle to other campus buildings.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site and determine the location, character, extent and quality of any archaeological remains identified within it
- to determine the likely impact of the development on any such remains and to inform the scope of any required mitigation measures

The watching brief was designed to mitigate any adverse impacts on sub-surface remains of archaeological interest.

The resulting archive will be organised and deposited in the NMRS; to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for the public

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Trial trenching

The courtyard was paved with concrete monoblock, which was lifted and stacked by hand along the length of each trench, with the aid of a 5-tonne mini-excavator. The trenches were excavated by machine using a flat bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision down to geological subsoil.

4.2 Archaeological monitoring

Due to access limitations it was not possible to evaluate the full extent of the development area; therefore a programme of archaeological monitoring was agreed with the Council Archaeologist for those areas of site not subject to evaluation. The monitoring strategy was undertaken in order to provide



Illus 6 ►

View of the ground reduction works of the garden area from the W

information on any previously unrecorded features of archaeological interest in a relatively unobtrusive manner. It did not involve major interruption to the work programme.

4.3 Recording

All recording was undertaken according to IfA standards and guidance. All contexts were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record cards. Trenches were planned at 1:50. The site has been related to the National Grid. Black and White print, colour slide and digital photographs were taken and recorded in a photographic register. Record shots of archaeological contexts included a metric scale. Site registers can be found in Appendix 1.

A summary report has been prepared for submission to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES) a copy of which is found in Appendix 2 and the project has also been recorded on the OASIS database (OASIS ref: headland1-135647).



5.2 Monitoring results

The development required the ground level to be reduced in two separate areas along with a number of drainage trenches to be excavated. To the north of Merchiston Tower within an open courtyard a raised figure of eight shaped garden area approximately 11m x 7m was to be removed. The feature was constructed of a 1 m high brick wall enclosing two large tree stumps within a raised grassed garden (Illus 5). The excavations revealed 1.2m of modern re-deposited garden soil with heavy tree root bioturbation and occasional brick and tile fragments of 20th century origin (Illus 6). This material continued below the modern ground level without archaeologically significant deposits or geological subsoil being exposed.



4 5. RESULTS

5.1 Trial trenching

Trench 1 (10.5m x 1m, Illus 2) Trench 1 was located in the north-western corner of the courtyard, running north south. Excavation revealed a reddish brown stone rich clay/silt subsoil at a depth of 0.75m. Cut into this along the length of the trench was a shallow concrete foundation, with a somewhat domed profile and a return at each end. A small sondage at the southern end of the trench revealed the foundation cut to be 0.2m–0.3m thick. The subsoil became sand and stone rich with depth. Sealing the foundations were layers of compacted building rubble, coarse sandy gravel and levelling sand for the paving.

Trench 2 (10.5m x 1m, Illus 3) Trench 2 was located 6m east of Trench 1, forming an L shape around a modern perspex smoking shelter. Excavation revealed a similar clay/silt subsoil to that recorded in Trench 1 at a depth of 0.5m–0.75m (Illus 4). Two shallow cuts (up to 0.2m) were encountered; these were filled with coarse stony rubble. A layer of similar rubble overlaid the whole trench, sealed in turn by coarse gravel and levelling sand.

The two trial trenches identified that no archaeological remains survived within the area of trial trenching and that no further work was required in those areas.

Illus 7 ►

Detail of the pipe trench to the N of the tower



◀ **Illus 8**

View of the ground reduction to the N of the tower

To the south of Merchiston Tower and below a modern raised corridor that formed part of the 1960s campus a series of drainage trenches and ground reduction was undertaken. The area had been covered in a concrete and stone surface as part of the original campus development. The trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m revealing multiple layers of made ground (*Illus 7*). Only a small part of this area was reduced in level and did not expose the geological subsoil (*Illus 8*).

No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were recorded during the archaeological monitoring.

6. DISCUSSION

The evaluation and monitoring revealed no remains of archaeological significance despite the proximity to Merchiston Tower. It appears that the construction of the university buildings during the 1960s entirely truncated away any remains relating to the medieval castle

7. BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Armet, H & Harris, S 1962 'The Tower of Merchiston', *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Vol. 31.

IfA *Standards and Guidance for archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised October 2008).

MacGibbon, D & Ross, T 1887 *Castellated And Domestic Architecture Of Scotland*, vol III, pp 263–8.

SPP: Scottish Planning Policy (February 2010; <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/0>).



8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Shot	Facing	Description
001	–	ID shot
002	S	Trench 1 – Cobbles removed
003	N	Trench 1 – Record shot
004	S	Trench 1 – Record shot
005	S	Trench 1 – Section of sondage
006	S	Trench 2 – Northern arm
007	W	Trench 2 – Northern arm, section and rubble filled cut
008	W	Trench 2 – Eastern arm
009	N	Trench 2 – Eastern arm, section and rubble filled cut
010	S	General shot
011	SW	General shot
012	SE	General shot
013	NE	General shot
014	NW	General shot
015	N	General shot
016	–	ID shot
017	E	General shot of raised garden area
018	SW	General shot of raised garden area
019	E	Working shot
020	E	View of section through garden area
021	SE	View of garden area with the tree stump removed
022	–	ID shot
023	S	Excavated pipe trench
024	E	Section of pipe trench
025	N	Shot of Merchiston castle
026	W	Trench section showing re-deposited loam over concrete and rubble
027	N	Construction work in N area showing excavation section
028	N	General view of North area
029	–	ID shot
030	SW	Trench section showing re-deposited loam over concrete
031	SE	General shot of works in South area
032	S	Trench section showing cobbling

Appendix 2 Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Edinburgh Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Napier University, Merchiston Campus, Edinburgh; Results of an Archaeological evaluation and watching brief
PROJECT CODE:	NUMC12-001
PARISH:	Edinburgh
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Jürgen van Wessel & Donald Wilson
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Headland Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Trial Trenching and monitoring
NMRS NO(S):	NT27SW 13.00
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Adjacent to Tower House
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR	NT 24245 71822
START DATE (this season)	28 th March 2012
END DATE (this season)	8 th August 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Edinburgh Napier University to undertake a programme of archaeological works at the Merchiston campus of Edinburgh Napier University. The work comprised an evaluation followed by monitoring of all ground works carried out across the site. Two trenches were excavated in the northern courtyard, just north of the 15 th century Merchiston Tower, which remains preserved as a centrepiece for the campus. No archaeologically significant remains were encountered in these trenches. The subsequent monitoring works recorded a series of modern deposits with no significant archaeological remains or artefacts identified
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited at RCAHMS. Reports to be deposited at RCAHMS and CECAS.
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Edinburgh Napier University
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Headland Archaeology Ltd, 13 Jane St, Edinburgh. EH6 5HE
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