

**Castle Semple House, Lochwinnoch:  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Data Structure Report

by Douglas Gordon

issued 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009



**Rathmell**  
Archaeology Ltd

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Signed .....

Date .....

In keeping with the procedure of Rathmell Archaeology Limited this document and its findings have been reviewed and agreed by an appropriate colleague:

Checked .....

Date .....

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## Overview

1. This Data Structure Report is for a programme of archaeological work required by Mr Walker in respect to the construction of a new retaining wall at Castle Semple House, Lochwinnoch. The archaeological works were designed to mitigate the impact on the archaeological remains along the line of the retaining wall.
2. Renfrewshire Council required an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken (Planning Permission Ref: 06/1169/LB; Condition: 2). The West of Scotland Archaeology Service who advises Renfrewshire Council on archaeological matters provided guidance on the structure of archaeological works required on this site during development works.
3. This archaeological monitoring was intended to minimise the impact of the development upon any archaeology present. Rathmell Archaeology Ltd has been appointed to act with regard to the archaeological issue by Mr Walker. The project works described below have been designed to comply with the identified requirements of Renfrewshire Council.

## Archaeological and Historical Background

4. Castle Semple House was built in 1735 for Col. William MacDowell, who had the original Castleton House demolished. The new Castle Semple was an elaborate gothic mansion which became renowned for its extensive gardens which formed the centrepiece of the 900 acre (364 ha) estate. It burned down in 1924 and the ruins were finally demolished in 1960. The billiard room and stables wing have been re-roofed and are used as farm buildings. Impressive gate-arches and a small temple folly on a knoll to the northern end of the loch are all that remains of the estate.

*The mansion house called "Castle Semple" was built in 1735 on the site of Castle Tower (a misnomer for Castleton, according to local information in 1856), which is described by Crawford in 1710 as consisting of a large court, part of which seemed to be very ancient building (OPS 1851). According to Gardner, Castleton was built in 1492-3 or shortly after, but Millar states that it was built about 1550, as a successor to Elliston Castle (NS35NE 1). Its foundations were exposed in 1836 when digging drains about Castle Semple (New Statistical Account {NSA} 1845).*

Source: RCAHMS, Canmore 42330 Site Number NS36SE 9.0

5. It is thought that the pre-eighteenth century use of the Castle Semple was as the seat of the local feudal lord with foundations of this earlier building noted in the nineteenth century during drainage work. There is the potential that the foundations for the retaining wall may expose elements of the pre-eighteenth century structures. As the layout, extent, and character of the pre-1735 building complex is unknown, any information about this which could be derived from fresh groundworks in the area will substantially increase our understanding of this important archaeological site.



Figure 1a: Detail from Roys' Military Survey of Scotland (1747-55)

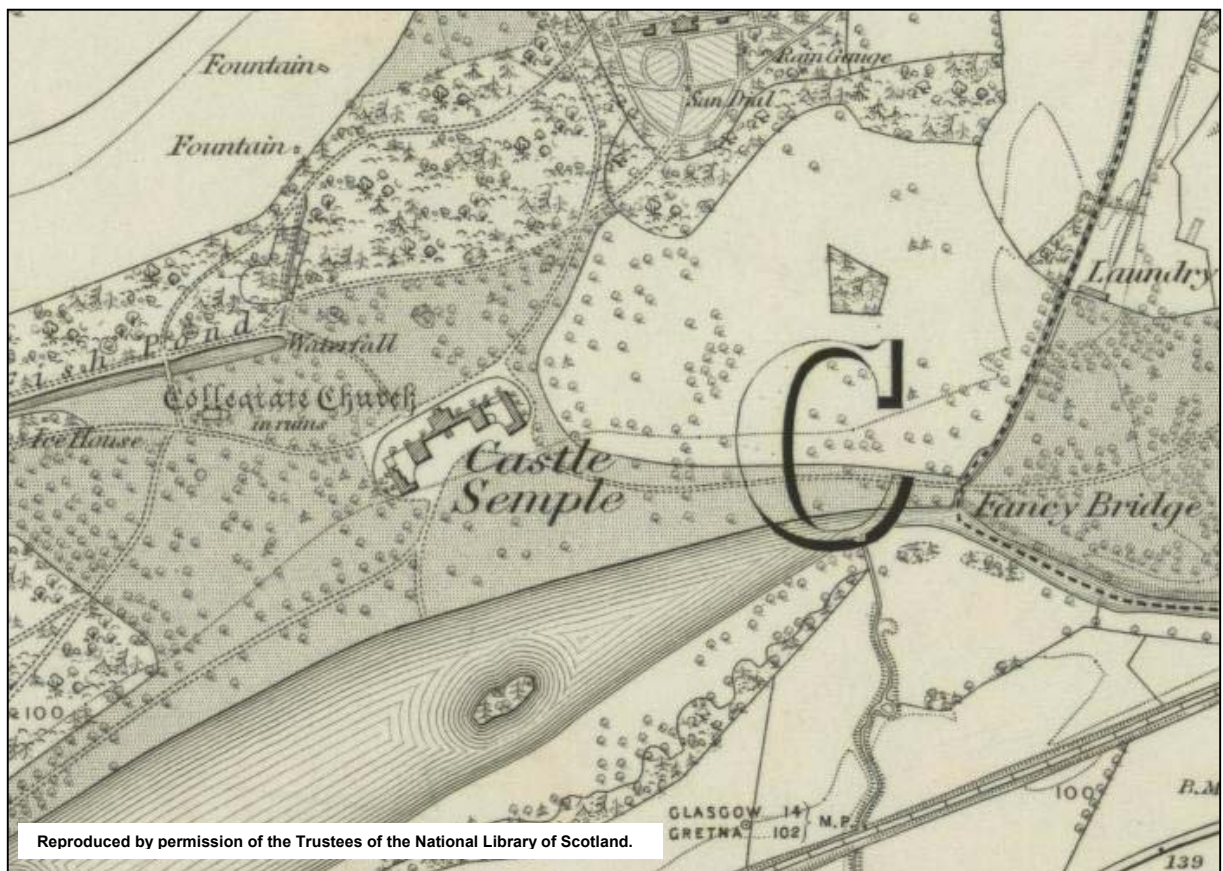


Figure 1b: Detail from 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey (1857)





Figure 2a: West section of the foundation trench



Figure 2b: East section of the foundation trench

## Project Works

6. The works comprised the archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the foundation trench for a wall through a potentially archaeologically sensitive area. The excavation of the line was undertaken by hand utilising a jackhammer to break through hard standing. The initial 15 to 20m of the foundation trench had been excavated prior to an archaeologist being on site. Though after examination no archaeological deposit appeared to have been disturbed.
7. All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

## Findings

8. The foundation trench excavated was 38.5m long with a 6m break three quarters of the way along on the eastern end. The trench measured 600mm and from 50mm to 120mm in depth. Within the base of the trench, four strata were evident; at the western end of the trench for approximately 2.5m bedrock (102) was exposed, then about 3m of a hard packed mid brown clay (103) followed by a dark brown and black mixed silt clay (104) with inclusions of charcoal, cinder, Ceramic Building Material, slat glazed pottery and animal bone (sheep). After the break in the trench a mid brown gravelly silt (105) was evident in the base of the trench.
9. No significant archaeology or evidence of structural remains was uncovered within the trench.

## Discussion

10. The monitoring works failed to reveal any significant archaeology, of greatest relative interest was context (104) which appears to be a midden deposit that has been hard packed for hard standing, the salt glaze pottery observed was a sherd from a waste water pipe, which in conjunction with the CBM found date the layer to within the past two hundred years.

## Recommendations

11. The archaeological monitoring failed to identify any significant archaeological features or artefacts within the development area. Consequently, we recommend that no further archaeological works are appropriate.
12. The appropriateness and acceptability of our recommendations rest with Renfrewshire Council and their advisors, West of Scotland Archaeology Service.

## Conclusion

13. A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken on behalf of Mr C Walker in respect to the construction of a new retaining wall at Castle Semple House, Lochwinnoch. The monitored works consisted of the digging of a foundation trench for the new wall that measured approximately 40m long, 600mm wide and from 50mm to 120mm in depth. Modern detritus of ceramic building material, a sherd of pottery and animal bone were observed within the trench. The monitoring failed to observe any significant archaeology as such we have therefore recommended that no further works are appropriate.

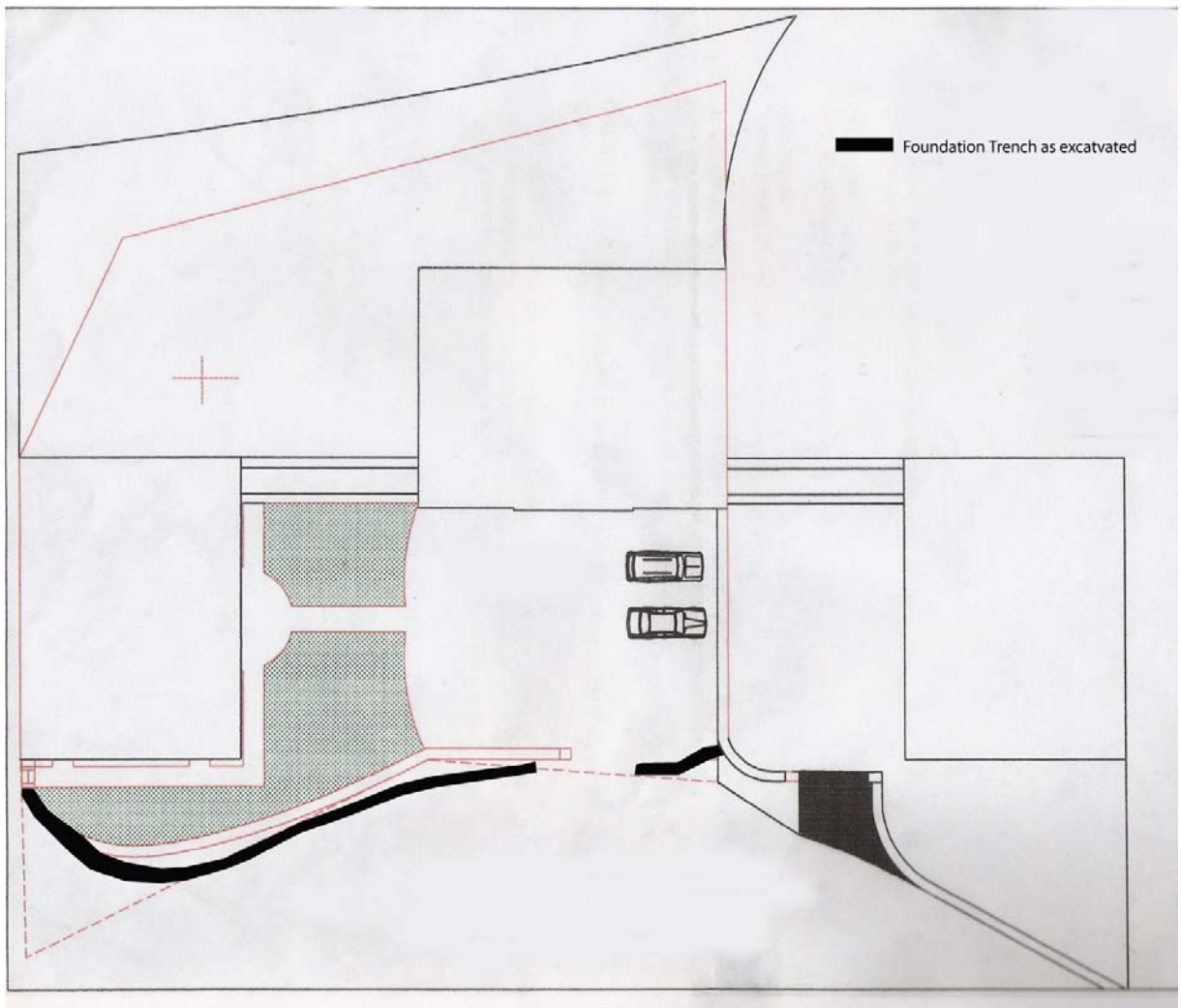


Figure 3: Plan of Foundation Trench as Monitored



## References

### *Documentary*

Smith, R	1834-45	'Parish of Lochwinnoch' Statistical Accounts of Scotland Vol. 7
Scot Gov	1994	SPP23 Planning and the Historic Environment.
SOEnv	1994	Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology, Scottish Office Environmental Department.

### *Cartographic*

Roy, W	1747-55	Military Survey of Scotland
Ordnance Survey	1857	1 <sup>st</sup> edition map 1:10560

## Appendix 1: Registers

14. Within this appendix are all registers pertaining to works on-site regardless of the process by which that information was gathered (e.g. evaluation or strip, map & sample).

### *Context Register*

Context No.	Area/ Trench	Type	Description	Interpretation
001			Grey Gravel	Road covering
002			Grey stone	Bedrock
003			Mid Brown Clay	Subsoil
004			Dark Brown and Black silty clay with inclusions of charcoal, cinder, CBM and animal bone	Dumped midden material for hard standing

### *Photographic Register*

Image No.	Print		Description	From	Date
	Film No.	Neg. No.			
001	1	1	Beginning of trench	S	03/06/09
002	1	2	General of beginning of trench	E	03/06/09
003	1	3	General	SW	03/06/09
004	1	4	Finished west section of foundation trench	ENE	03/06/09
005	1	5	Finished east section of foundation trench	SW	03/06/09
006	1	6	General shot of east section	S	03/06/09
007	1	7	General Shot of West Section	E	03/06/09

## Appendix 2: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Renfrewshire
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Castle Semple, Lochwinnoch
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	09032
<b>PARISH:</b>	Lochwinnoch
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Douglas Gordon
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Rathmell Archaeology Limited
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Monitoring
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	None
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	None
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NS 3739 6007
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2009
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2009
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (may include information from other fields)	A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken on behalf of Mr C Walker in respect to the construction of a new retaining wall at Castle Semple House, Lochwinnoch. The monitored works consisted of the digging of a foundation trench for the new wall that measured approximately 40m long, 600mm wide and from 50mm to 120mm in depth. Modern detritus of ceramic building material, a sherd of pottery and animal bone were observed within the trench. The monitoring failed to observe any significant archaeology as such we have therefore recommended that no further works are appropriate.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Mr C Walker
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Unit 8 Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6PU
<b>E MAIL:</b>	contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Report to West of Scotland Archaeology Service and archive to National Monuments Record of Scotland.

## Contact Details

16. Rathmell Archaeology can be contacted at our Registered Office or through the web:

Rathmell Archaeology Ltd	<a href="http://www.rathmell-arch.co.uk">www.rathmell-arch.co.uk</a>
Unit 8 Ashgrove Workshops	
Kilwinning	t.: 01294 542848
Ayrshire	f.: 01294 542849
KA13 6PU	e.: <a href="mailto:contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk">contact@rathmell-arch.co.uk</a>

17. West of Scotland Archaeology Service can be contacted through the details noted below:

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Charing Cross Complex	
20 India Street	t.: 01412878330
Glasgow	f.: 01412879529
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