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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract Threave Castle, Dumfries & Galloway (PIC217)

Signage Lectern Removal, Watching Brief and
Survey of Badger Damage, February 2019
Report No. HES-PIC217-2019-01

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Commissioned by	Historic Environment Scotland
Date issued	June 2019
Version	1
Grid Ref	NX 73913 62284 (centred)
Oasis No.	Cfaarcha1-356197
PIC No.	PIC217
CFA Report No.	3838
HES Report No.	HES-PIC217-2019-01

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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract

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CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Working Methods	4
3.	Archaeological Results	5
4.	Conclusion	6

Appendices

1.	Photographic Register	7
2.	Discovery and Excavation in Scotland	8

Illustrations (bound at rear)

Fig. 1	Site location and location of lectern stones and areas of badger damage
Fig. 2	Pre-excavation shot lectern stones with badger scrape damage
Fig. 3	Post-excavation shot of lectern stones
Fig. 4	Badger damage along the southern edge of the castle complex
Fig. 5	Badger scrape with faeces on the grass area in front of the castle
Fig. 6	Badger scrape damage within ditch feature in front of the castle
Fig. 7	Badger burrow and spoil heap and faeces at temporary cabins
Fig. 8	Badger burrow and scrape damage at western wall of tower
Fig. 9	Detail of burrow showing bedding material
Fig. 10	Test burrows and spoil heap within bank
Fig. 11	Test burrows and spoil heap within bank

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

A Watching Brief and Survey was undertaken in February 2019 at Threave Castle, Dunfries and Galloway (NGR: NX 73913 62284), a Property in Care (PIC217) in the ownership of Historic Environment Scotland, during the removal of old signage lecterns. Recently, at least one badger has taken residence on Threave Island and a survey of the damage being caused was also requested while an archaeologist was in attendance (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland as part of the Minor Archaeological Services Call-off Contract.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the watching brief, dated 2nd October 2018, was produced by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA). The WSI was designed to fulfil the terms of the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and was agreed with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in advance of the work taking place.

1.2 Background

The monument comprises the remains of the 14th century tower house and later artillery defences at Threave Castle, surviving as earthworks, as substantial stone structures, and as buried archaeology, together with an area defined by the outer defences.

The site is located on an island in the River Dee. In medieval times the access was by boat from the W side into the harbour at the base of the tower, with alternative access by means of a hidden causeway at the S end of the island. The river level was higher in medieval times, when only the S third of the island would have been habitable. It is likely that the island was occupied as a fortress of the Lords of Galloway from the 11th century. Some of the stone structures and ditches, revealed in the 1970s excavations, appeared to pre-date the Douglas occupation. The form of any earlier fortifications is unknown.

This is one of the earliest tower houses, built by Archibald Douglas 'the Grim', soon after his elevation to the lordship in 1369. The site is dominated by the great tower, 5 storeys high, which stood to a height of 30m with walls 3m thick. A wet ditch, fed from the river, surrounded the tower. Beyond this was an outer enclosure; part of this area was excavated in 1974-78, when considerable additional accommodation was revealed. These included two substantial masonry ranges, likely to have been 2 storeys in height, which alone would have provided an additional 600sq m of living space. One of these ranges would have been the great hall, while the other is likely to have contained lodgings and a chapel. The rest of the small island is likely to have contained other buildings, mostly workshops and storehouses. Some of these are visible as low earthworks.

Threave witnessed the downfall of the house of the powerful Black Douglas at the hands of James II in the summer of 1455. The tower house is enclosed by an innovative freestanding artillery wall, built by the Douglasses in the middle of the 15th century. In its developed form, as it survives today, it comprised two stone walls, wrapped around the tower house, with three circular gun towers. The surviving gun

defences are likely to date from the later 15th century, built to replace the original that would have been badly damaged in the siege.

Following the siege, the castle and the Lordship was annexed to the Crown until its abandonment in 1640, following a siege by a covenanting force. Minor works to the tower house were carried out in the early 19th century to enable the incarceration of French PoWs. The property came into care in 1913, and conservation work began soon after, including the rebuilding of the stone vault in the tower house.

The site has the potential to provide data on the initial development and form of such castles. The outer ward has provided important archaeological information regarding the infrastructure of such residences, notably the remains of domestic and ancillary ranges, and has the potential to further inform this understanding. Moreover, Threave has informed an understanding of the development of artillery defences, where added to earlier castles. Threave was successfully adapted to serve the needs of gunpowder artillery and firearms, and in doing so was one of the first purpose-built gun defences constructed in Britain.

1.4 Objectives

The objective of this programme of archaeological work was:

- To provide a watching brief during all ground breaking works undertaken for the removal of signage lecterns
- To record and survey any damage being caused by recent badger activity
- To mitigate the effects of construction on any archaeological deposits or features identified through their excavation and recording and produce a report on them.

2. WORKING METHODS

CFA follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidelines as appropriate.

2.1 Watching brief

There were no in situ lecterns at the time of the watching brief. Twelve rectangular stone slabs, previously forming the standing platform for the lecterns, were removed from the turf. These were in two groups of three slabs and a single group of six slabs. The slabs were removed by hand or by placing a spade under a corner to lever the slab upright (Figs. 2 and 3).

The slabs' positions were surveyed using industry standard electronic surveying equipment.

2.2 Badger damage survey

The main areas of damage caused by the badger were surveyed and photographed. Numerous individual small feeding scrapes and areas of faeces were not surveyed.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 Watching brief

The work required the monitoring of the removal of stone slabs from the area around the eastern and southern sides of the castle.

The slabs were in two groups of three slabs and a single group of six slabs. The slabs were of roughly similar size and shape, approximately 0.55m by 0.3m and 0.08m thick and were set within the turf and topsoil. Only one the groups appeared to have a small amount of levelling sand placed under them.

No archaeological features or deposits were noted under the slabs and the depth of excavation did not penetrate any further than topsoil.

3.2 Badger damage survey

The mown, fenced area surrounding the castle was walked over by the archaeologist.

The damage fell into two categories: scraping damage to the topsoil and turf, and burrowing.

The areas of scraping damage caused by the badger were spread across the entire site and these were either individual scrapes into the turf and topsoil or were large areas of extensive scraping disturbance (Figs.4-6). These large areas were mainly on the west side of the castle tower and also in the grass area to the south and east of the castle.

The burrowing damage had caused numerous holes and their resulting spoil heaps. Two of these were deemed to be occupation burrows by the ecologist from Scottish Natural Heritage. One was under the temporary cabins and sheds to the south of the castle complex (Fig. 7), and the other was at the base of the western tower wall (Fig. 8). The hole at the temporary cabins has a large spoil heap in front of it and a number of faeces-filled latrine pits around the entrance. The other was at a ground level opening within the tower western wall. In front of the opening was a pile of bedding material (Fig. 9).

The remaining holes were test burrow holes, 0.25m to 0.45m deep, and were dug along the eastern and northern side of the embankment that runs around the east and north side of the castle complex (Figs. 10-11).

4. CONCLUSION

An archaeological watching brief and survey was carried out at Threave Castle in order to monitor the removal of stone slabs below previously removed signage lecterns and to survey the damage being caused to the site by a badger.

No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief.

The survey shows that the badger has caused damage to the turf and topsoil around the site and has dug two burrows and a number of test burrows across the site.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Record for the Historic Environment (NRHE) and copies of reports will be lodged with Dumfries and Galloway Council Sites and Monuments Record.

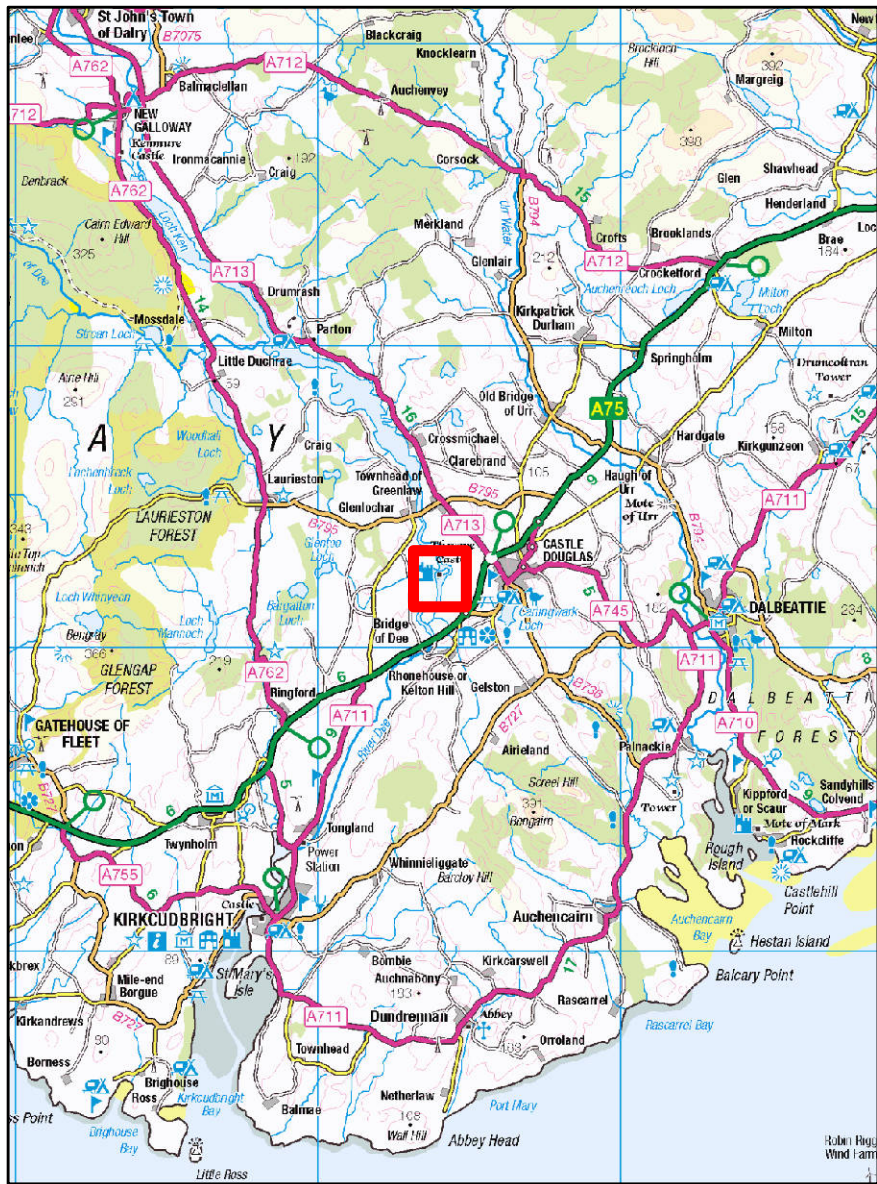
A summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 2) and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

Photo No.	Summary description of subject	Facing
1	Badger burrowing damage in front of temporary site huts	E
2	Badger scrape damage to are NW of the huts	SE
3	Badger scrape damage to grass area	N
4	Badger scrape damage along southern fence line	W
5	Badger scrape in grass area with faeces	W
6	Badger scrape damage to grass and pre-ex of stone lectern	NW
7	Badger scrape damage to grass area in front of castle	W
8	Badger scrape damage to grass area in front of castle next to public information board	W
9	Post-ex of stone removal	SE
10	Badger scrape within shallow ditch feature in grass area	SE
11	General shot of scrape damage within ditch feature	NE
12	Badger test burrow excavations within surrounding bank	SW
13	Detail of damage to bank	SW
14	Badger test burrow excavations within surrounding bank	SW
15	Badger test burrow excavations within surrounding bank	W
16	Badger test burrow excavations within surrounding bank	W
17	Badger scrape damage at west side of tower	E
18	Badger scrape damage at west side of tower	E
19	Detail of badger burrow at the base of wall showing bedding material	E
20	General shot of damage to area at the base of west side of tower	N
21	Badger scrape damage in area of south-west corner of tower	N
22	Pre-ex of lectern stones with badger scrape damage	S
23	Post-ex of stone removal	S
24	Pre-ex of stones to be removed	S

APPENDIX 2: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Dumfries and Galloway
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Threave Castle
PROJECT CODE:	MINA76
PARISH:	Balmaghie
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Graeme Carruthers
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief and Survey
NMRS NO(S):	X76SW 7
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Artillery Fortification (15th Century), Castle (Medieval), Harbour (Period Unassigned)
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NX 73913 62284
START DATE (this season)	February 2019
END DATE (this season)	February 2019
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief and survey was carried out at Threave Castle in order to monitor the removal of lectern stones and to survey the damage being caused by badgers living on the island. No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief. The survey showed that the badger has caused damage to the turf and topsoil around the site and has dug two burrows and a number of test burrows across the site.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ.
EMAIL ADDRESS:	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited with NRHE, reports lodged with Dumfries & Galloway Council SMR.



(remains of)

Key:

- PIC Boundary
- Badger Damaged area
- Signage Lectern removed



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Title:
 Site location and location of lectern stones and areas of badger damage

Project:
 Minor Archaeological Services
 Call-Off Contract: Threave Castle,
 Dumfries & Galloway (PIC217)
 Signage Lectern Removal;
 Watching Brief and Survey of
 Badger Damage

Client:
 Historic Environment Scotland

Scale at A3:
 1:400

Drawn by: SW	Checked by: MJ	Date: 18/06/2019
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Report No: 3838	Fig. No: 1
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Fig. 2: Pre-excitation shot lectern stones with badger scrape damage



Fig. 3: Post-excitation shot of lectern stones

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 Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract: Threave Castle, Dumfries & Galloway (PIC217);
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		Report No: 3838		Fig. No: 2 - 3



Fig. 4: Badger damage along the southern edge of the castle complex



Fig. 5: Badger scrape with faeces on the grass area in front of the castle

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Fig. 6: Badger scrape damage within ditch feature in front of the castle



Fig. 7: Badger burrow and spoil heap and faeces at temporary cabins

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Fig. 8: Badger burrow and scrape damage at western wall of tower



Fig. 9: Detail of burrow showing bedding material

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Fig. 10: Test burrows and spoil heap within bank



Fig. 11: Test burrows and spoil heap within bank

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