

# Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT  
TO  
TAYMOUTH CASTLE LTD  
AND  
TAYMOUTH ESTATES LTD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
AT  
TAYMOUTH CASTLE  
MAY 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of archaeological watching briefs undertaken within the grounds of Taymouth Castle, Kenmore, Perthshire in May 2012.

Perth & Kinross Council has granted planning consent to Taymouth Castle Estate Ltd to erect a large number of new properties, including residential holiday accommodation and leisure facilities, within the grounds of the castle (Planning Reference number 11/00533/FLM). One of the conditions attached to that consent is that archaeological evaluations be carried out in advance of the construction of the new properties and watching briefs carried out during the excavation of new roads and service trenches.

The castle estate is considered archaeologically sensitive. As well as Taymouth Castle and its predecessor (see below), it contains remnants of the castle's designed landscape including parts of its gardens and associated structures some of which have been located by means of aerial photography to the east, south and west of the castle.

Scotia Archaeology forwarded a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), archaeological advisors to Perth & Kinross Council, outlining a programme of works in response to requirements set out in PKHT's Terms of Reference. It was decided at an early stage that the evaluation should be tailored so that the actual sites of individual buildings would be fully excavated archaeologically rather than opening exploratory trenches throughout the castle grounds.

The first archaeological investigations took place between 28 March and 2 April 2012 when a watching brief was conducted during the removal of overburden for the construction of Road 13, towards the south side of the castle grounds, and following soil-stripping for a contractor's compound in its south-west corner. Several features of archaeological interest were uncovered during the latter operation. A report of these investigations was forwarded to the client and PKHT.

Further watching briefs were carried out between 25 and 29 May 2012 when small trenches were excavated for the bases of new electricity sub-stations at three locations within the castle grounds and a long service trench dug between the castle and a footbridge, known as the Chinese Bridge, which crosses the River Tay to its north. These excavations were monitored by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology.

## THE SITE

The extant Taymouth Castle dates from 1806-10 but is thought to include part of the earlier Balloch Castle, built in 1550 and extended by William Adam in c1733. Aerial photography has identified remnants of the Taymouth Castle's designed landscape including parts of its gardens and associated structures. As well as features contemporary with the occupation of the two castles, it is believed that the grounds may well contain remnants of hitherto undiscovered prehistoric sites and perhaps those of post-medieval settlements on the lower slopes of Strath Tay. Two standing stones (NN74NE 3) are located at NN 7926 4668 at Newhall, towards the north-east corner of the castle grounds. A little further north, just outside the boundary of the estate at NN 7975 4726, stands the Croftmoraig stone circle (NN74NE 12). There are numerous other prehistoric sites as well as ones of early historic and later dates within a short distance of Kenmore, particularly around Dull and in Glen Lyon.

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## THE WATCHING BRIEFS

Trenches for the three electricity sub-stations were excavated on 25 May and the long service trench on 28 and 29 May 2012.

### Sub-station 1

The site of Sub-station 1 is located at NN 77693 45479, between the base of a large, wooded glacial mound at the head of Loch Tay and a gravel road leading to the contractor's compound excavated on an earlier occasion. The trench for the sub-station measured 4m square and was excavated to a depth of 0.5m at its east end, adjacent to the road, deepening to 1.3m on its west as the ground sloped upwards onto the glacial mound.

Topsoil was 0.25m deep and comprised pale brown, sandy loam with some gravel and small stones as well as roots from the many rhododendron bushes which cover the lower parts of the mound. The topsoil gave directly onto very compact glacial till of yellow sand, gravel, pebbles and occasional boulders. No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered and no artefacts retrieved from the trench.

### Sub-station 2

The trench for this feature was located at NN 79094 46634, on steeply-sloping, wooded ground towards the south-east corner of the castle grounds. It measured 4m square and was excavated to a depth of 1.3m during monitoring. Topsoil, comprising 0.2m of pale, grey-brown loam overlay hard-packed, glacially deposited sand and gravel with bedrock protruding through it in places. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in this trench.

### Sub-station 3

The trench for Sub-station 3 was located in a level, wooded area on the east side of the golf course, at NN 78377 45722, and measured 4m square. Red-brown topsoil, 0.5m deep, overlay red-brown silt, gravel and pebbles of glacial origin. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in this trench.

### Service trench

A trench to accommodate several services was excavated between the Chinese Bridge and the courtyard to the rear of the castle. The bridge (NN74NE 14.02) is centred on NN 7825 4671 and was built before 1754 using wooden spans but rebuilt early in the 19th century as a three-arched, cast iron structure with piers and abutments of rubble construction. It is currently under repair.

Excavation began approximately 50m south-east of the bridge, at NN 78291 46667. From that point it ran south-eastwards in a near-straight line for some 200m as far as NN 78432 46543, to the immediate north of the castle. It had been intended to monitor trenching as far as an electricity sub-station whose concrete base already stood in a courtyard within the re-entrant angle between the main castle block and its east wing. However, it was clear that the area between the trench end and the sub-station had been disturbed on several occasions in the recent past, in particular when the base of the sub-station was constructed and when an

extensive sewerage system was inserted for the castle. As a consequence, the watching brief was terminated at this point.

The trench measured 1.4m wide and was 0.8m deep at the bridge end, increasing to 1.3m near the castle. It ran through several areas which had been disturbed in the recent past, cutting across remnants of brick and concrete structures and through debris resulting from remedial work within the castle and its grounds. Where there had been little or no disturbance, the topsoil was 0.2-0.4m deep and gave onto glacial sand, gravel, pebbles and boulders. No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within this trench and no artefacts predating the late 19th century retrieved from it.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological interest was found during the investigations described above although the potential for significant discoveries to be made within the castle grounds remains high, as was demonstrated during excavations at the site of the contractor's compound in March 2012.

The WSI for archaeological investigations at Taymouth Castle included a plan showing the proposed layout of evaluation trenches to the immediate north of the castle and within the nearby courtyard. The latter (Area 1B in the plan accompanying the WSI) already contained the concrete base of an electricity sub-station and a recently-inserted sewerage system. Clearly, these structures have caused severe disruption to parts of this yard and it is a matter of speculation whether anything of archaeological significance still survives in this section of the site.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs described below form part of the project archive and are included only in digital copies of this report.

The prefix TMC12-2 is used in the list of photographs

- 1 The trench for Sub-station 1, viewed from the east
- 2 The trench for Sub-station 2, viewed from the north-west
- 3 The trench for Sub-station 2, viewed from the north-east
- 4 The trench for Sub-station 3, viewed from the north-east
- 5 The trench for Sub-station 3, viewed from the south-east
- 6 The Chinese Bridge, viewed from the south-west
- 7 The Chinese Bridge, viewed from the south-east
- 8-9 The service trench during excavation, viewed from the north-west
- 10 The north-west end of the service trench, viewed from the south-east
- 11 View to the south-east along the service trench from NN 78332 46632
- 12 The service trench near completion, viewed from the south-east
- 13 View to the north-west from the end of the service trench, at NN 78432 46543
- 14-15 Views into the courtyard to the rear of the castle, through an area already disturbed on several occasions