

Archaeological Watching Brief

Stobhall Castle, Perth and Kinross



Stobhall Castle looking East from the other side of the River Tay



2nd November 2018

Introduction (Illus 1)

This programme of archaeological watching briefs at Stobhall Castle, Perth and Kinross was carried out for Mr Paul Strachan to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development, as noted by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust in the Terms of Reference to Planning Application 17/01992/FLL, dated 24th January 2018 and Listed Building Applications 17/02021/LBC and 18/00767/LBC. This work was carried out by the author on 18th, 19th, 22nd June and 11th, 12th and 17th September 2018 (site code STB01). Weather conditions were generally very dry over both periods.

Archaeological Background (Illus 2 and 3)

Historic records suggest that the promontory at Stobhall has been in use since at least the 1300's and it is likely that a form of defensive settlement existed here prior to this. The castle of Stobhall comprises four buildings (the tower-house -built early in the 17th century, a chapel block-containing a chapel and dwelling house, built in the late 16th century, and a laundry block and another domestic range, both later buildings) all within an irregular courtyard wall (Illus 3). The archaeological potential for recovery of deposits that pre-date these buildings was unknown as no archaeological investigation had taken place previously at Stobhall. However, it has been suggested that Stobhall succeeded Castle Hill, a medieval defensive site north of Cargill, as the local seat of power.

Watching Brief (Illus 4 to 15)

Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust requested that an archaeological watching brief be carried out on all below ground excavations associated with the construction of a new link between the laundry and tower house and the removal of the larder on the North side of the laundry.

New link corridor between laundry and tower house (Area A) (Illus 5 to 12)

The removal of stone cobbles and slabs by mini excavator in the open area between the laundry and tower house was monitored. The cobbles and slabs (100) were 0.07m deep and overlay a dark grey brown sandy clay (101). 101 was excavated to a new formation level of 0.40m below the original cobbled surface. The foundations for the tower house were exposed (102) and these were comprised of large rounded boulders bonded with a red brown clay (Illus 5). A similar foundation was also exposed for the laundry building (103) (Illus 6). The only finds recovered from 101 were pieces of fired clay field drain of a late 19th c / early 20th c date. These excavations also exposed a concrete lined pipe box (104) which ran East to meet another concrete lined pipe box (105) running between the laundry building and the tower house. Both pipe boxes were removed in order to relay the service pipes. The removal of pipe box 105 which ran into the tower house exposed an ornate arched doorway (106) leading into the lower sub-basement level of the chapel (Illus 7 to 9). There were no finds from the excavation of the pipe boxes.

A new doorway measuring 1.90m by 0.80m was cut into the South wall of the laundry building and this exposed a wall core comprised of rounded stones bonded with an orange brown clay (107) (Illus

10 and 11). The pipe box (105) continued into the laundry building through the foundation course of the wall. There were no finds.

Demolition of larder against North wall of laundry (Area B) (Illus 13 to 15)

The larder building was seen to be butted against the North wall of the laundry building. The formation level for the proposed new conservatory area lay at a depth of 0.40m below the existing concrete floor (200) of the larder building. The concrete floor (200) was 0.20m thick and overlay a thick orange brown clay with stones and mortar flecks (201). The top and edge of a different wall foundation (202) was exposed running North under the riverside wall for a length of 2.7m. There were no finds.

Interpretation

Of most interest in this monitoring exercise is the arched doorway (106) that was exposed leading into the lower sub-basement level of the chapel. It was obvious that the tower house had been built partly over this doorway indicating that the chapel is the earliest building in this part of the castle complex. All of the other deposits exposed and excavated would appear to be of early modern date, the demolished larder building was quite clearly of a recent date.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Paul Strachan for his interest in this monitoring exercise and acknowledge the hard work and good humour of the site contractors from HH Construction Ltd.

Context List

Area A- New Link between laundry and tower house

100- Cobbles and stone slabs

101- Dark grey brown sandy clay

102- Rounded boulders bonded with red brown clay (Tower House foundations)

103- Rounded boulders bonded with red brown clay (Laundry foundations)

104- Concrete lined pipe box

105- Concrete lined pipe box

106- Arched doorway

Area B- Larder Demolition

200- Concrete floor

201- Orange brown clay with stones and mortar flecks

202- Abraded green sandstones bonded with white mortar

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth and Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Stobhall Castle
PROJECT CODE:	STB01
PARISH:	Cargill
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Derek Hall
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Derek Hall, archaeologist and ceramic specialist
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	NO13SW 6
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Tower house, chapel
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NO 13208 34371
START DATE	18 th June 2018
END DATE	17 th September 2018
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological watching brief was carried out on works associated with the construction of a new passageway between the laundry and lower floor of the tower house and the demolition of a larder on the North side of the laundry. Limited evidence was recovered for the nature of the foundations of the tower house and an ornate arched doorway was exposed which the tower house has been built against. This doorway leads into the lower floor of the chapel and indicates that the tower house has been built against the North side of the pre-existing chapel.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Paul Strachan
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	N/A
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	NRHE (National Record of the Historic Environment)
EMAIL ADDRESS:	Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk

Illustration List

Illustration 1- Site Location (red circle) (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2018. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100060449)

Illustration 2- Stobhall Castle as shown on William Roy's 'Military Survey of Scotland', 1747-55 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illustration 3- Stobhall Castle on First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1867 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illustration 4- Location of monitored areas (red) and positions of recorded features (based on architect's plan) Scale 1:100

Illustration 5- Lower foundations for tower house (context 102) looking West

Illustration 6- Lower foundations for laundry building (Context 103) looking North

Illustration 7- Arched doorway (Context 106) into Chapel building looking South

Illustration 8- Arched doorway (Context 106) into Chapel building looking North

Illustration 9- Arched doorway into Chapel looking South Scale 1:10

Illustration 10- New doorway into Laundry looking North East

Illustration 11- Exposed wall core for South wall of Laundry building looking North

Illustration 12- new covered walkway in place looking North East

Illustration 13- Laundry building from the North in 1938 prior to later construction of larder and connecting passage with Dower House (to the left) (from Shrines and Homes of Scotland by Sir John Stirling Maxwell (1937))

Illustration 14- Larder in process of demolition looking South

Illustration 15- Exposed wall face of Northern side of laundry building after demolition of larder. Wall foundation 202 visible below riverside wall to right of scale (black arrows)

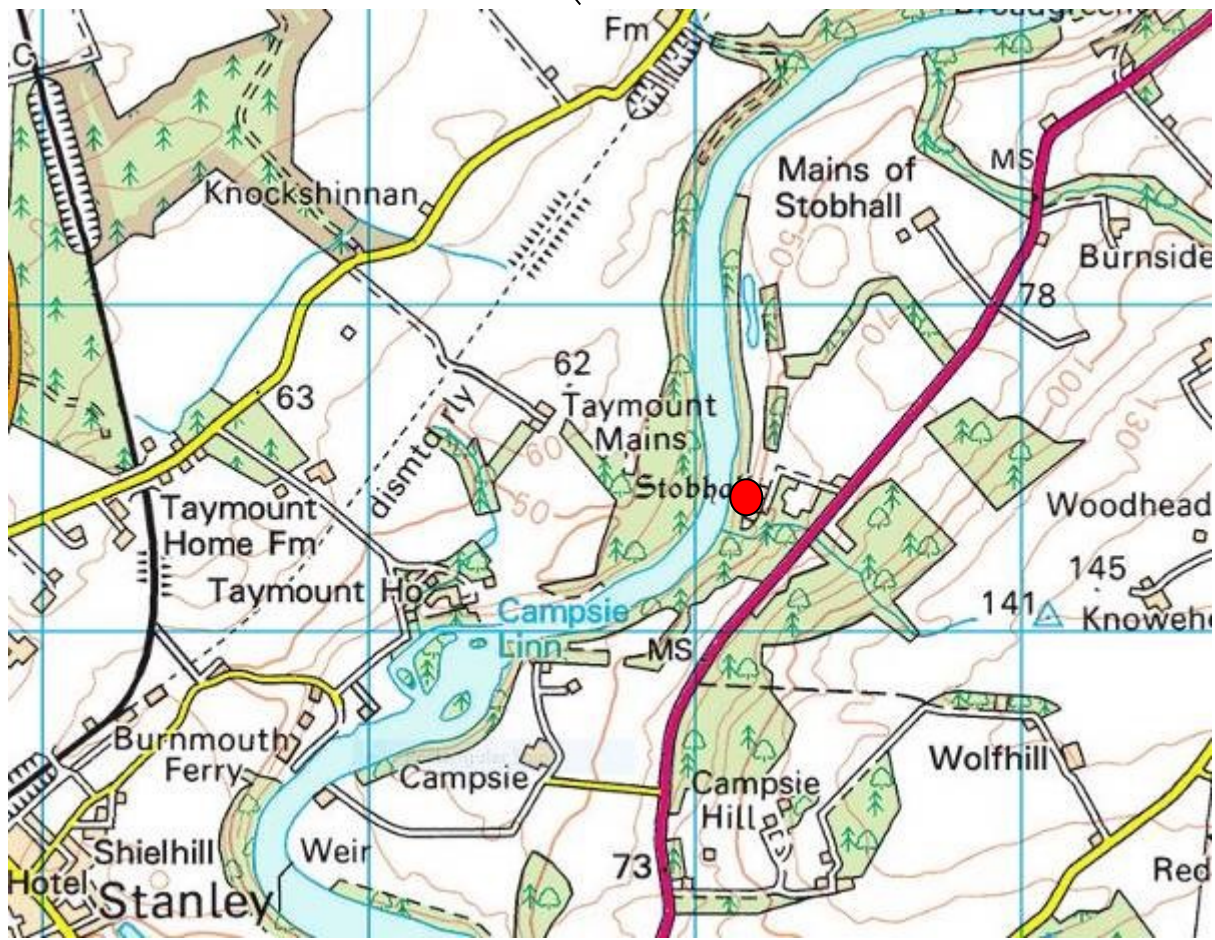


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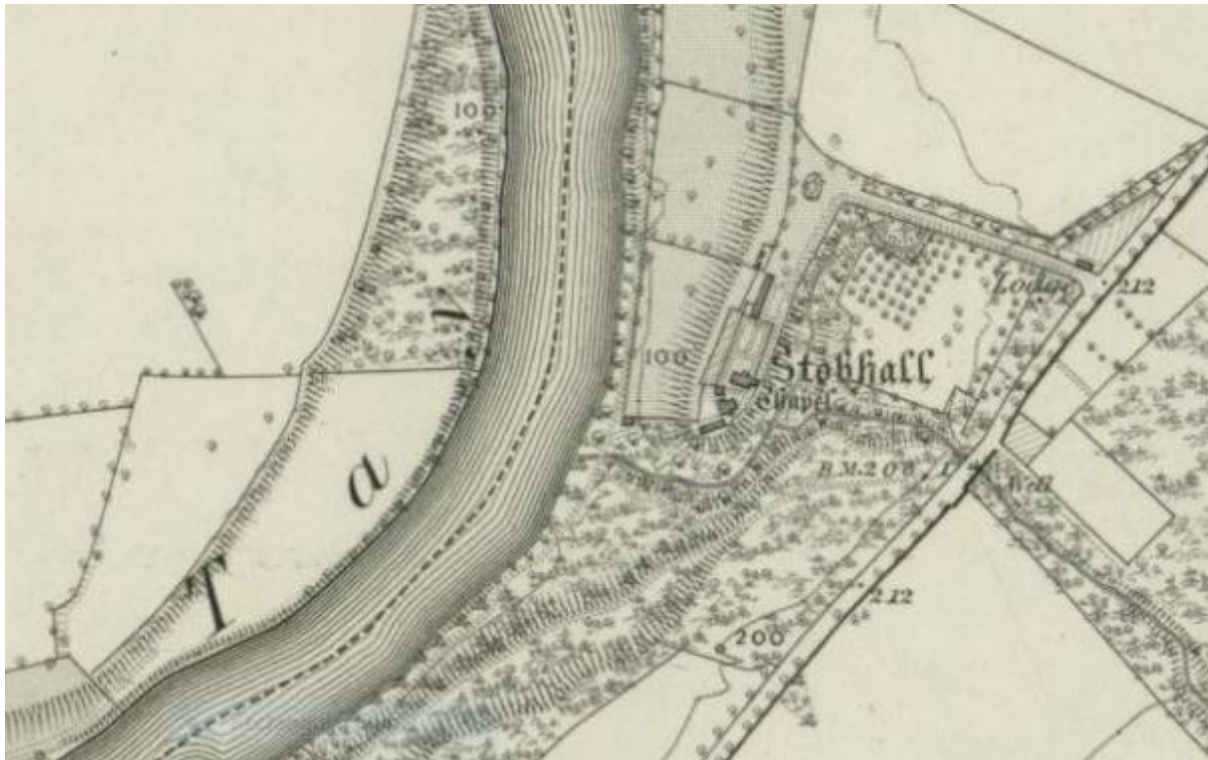


Illustration 3- Stobhall Castle on First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1867 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)



Illustration 5- Lower foundations for tower house (context 102) looking West



Illustration 6- Lower foundations for laundry building (Context 103) looking North



Illustration 7- Arched doorway (Context 106) into Chapel building looking South



Illustration 8- Arched doorway (Context 106) into Chapel building looking North

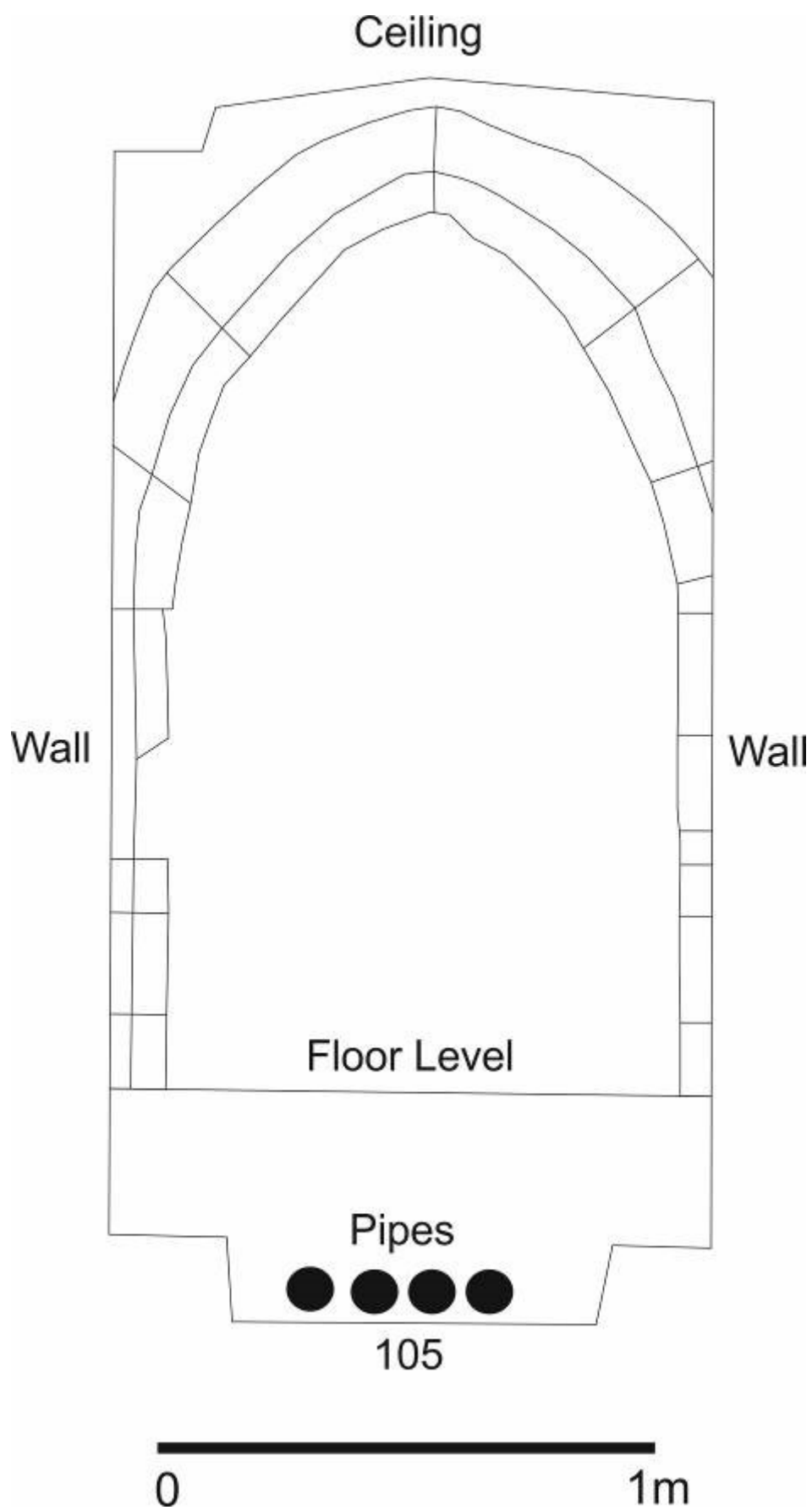


Illustration 9- Arched doorway into Chapel looking South Scale 1:10



Illustration 10- New doorway into Laundry looking North East



Illustration 11- Exposed wall core for South wall of Laundry building looking North



Illustration 12- new covered walkway in place looking North East



Illustration 13- Laundry building from the North in 1938 prior to later construction of larder and connecting passage with Dower House (to the left) (from *Shrines and Homes of Scotland* by Sir John Stirling Maxwell (1937))



Illustration 14- Larder in process of demolition looking South

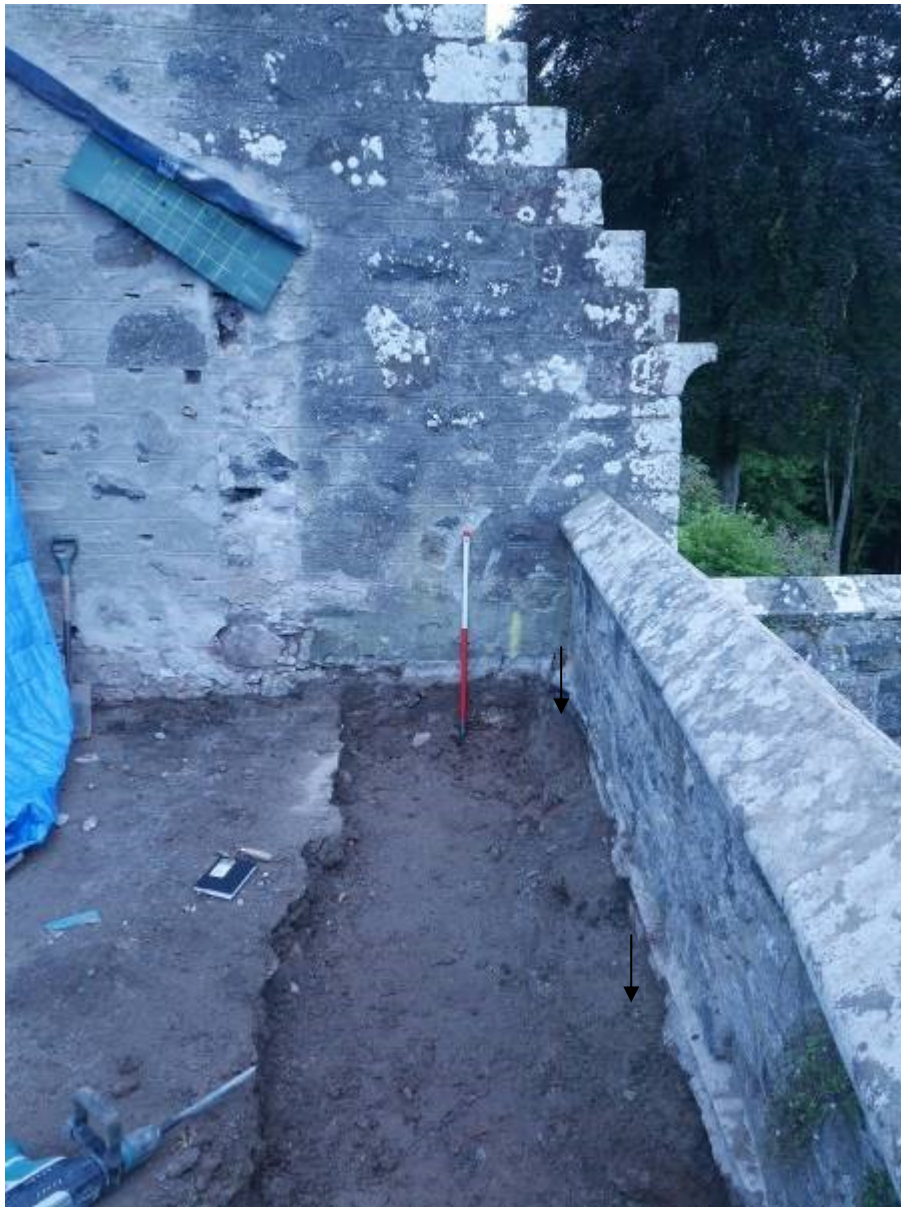


Illustration 15- Exposed wall face of Northern side of laundry building after demolition of larder.
Wall foundation 202 visible below riverside wall to right of scale (black arrows)