



**Tarbert Castle Excavation
HES Report 3**



Week Three Update

Trench 1

Half the trench was cleared down to the top of an extensive demolition/robbing/collapse deposit, this consisting of wall rubble and loose broken up mortar. Apart from a few shells which appear to have originally derived from the mortar, this deposit has so far been fairly sterile of finds. We have now removed this rubble layer in the corner of the trench at the junction of the walls of the inner and outer bailey. The rubble lay over soil/s that appears to be a mixture of possible occupation and midden deposits. We have yet to explore this layer fully, but cleaning over the layer has produced animal bone, some slag and some medieval pottery. The animal bone fragments appear to be large and may be the remains of primary butchery, as opposed to the bone we are finding inside the castle which is smaller in size and appears to represent food waste. A small exploratory trench in the corner of the trench against the walls has also revealed their foundation levels.



Foundation offset at base of the inner bailey wall

Trench 2

The sondage excavated through the internal deposits of the inner bailey in Trench 1 has now revealed a small section of the footings of the wall foundation. The foundation, which steps down to the east in this part of the trench appears to have been built directly onto soft underlying soils, rather than directly onto bedrock. This fact may have eventually caused the internal slumping of the internal floor deposits that lie above the foundation. Lying over the foundation was a compact layer of mortar, which was also likely used as a floor. Above this was another clay floor deposit, and above this a more extensive deposit, or dump of stones and gravel, that may have been deposited to counteract the effects of slumping. Above this was an accumulation of midden material which was mentioned in the previous report.



Stepped wall footings lying over dark earth at the base of the trench

The midden contained pottery, shells (oyster, clam, cockles and periwinkles), bone (food waste) along with iron slag.

Also in Trench 2 when examining the junction of the inner bailey wall and the wall of the entrance pend, the wall of another structure was revealed.

This turned out to be a wall to a small 'key-hole' shaped oven or kiln. Some burnt bone and some slag have been recovered from cleaning over the remaining internal fills of the oven, the slag possibly indicating its use in iron working. The burnt bone however might suggest its use in cooking food although bone can also be used as a fuel. This structure was sealed by the rubble collapse of the castle walls over which was constructed the 17th/18th century building.



Medieval kiln or oven

Trench Three

The trench was extended to the south around the gate remains and this revealed a chamfered edge to the external face of the gateway. Also revealed was the slot for a portcullis, which indicates that the gateway would have had a room/or space above the gateway for the raised portcullis gate and adds to the picture of what would have been an impressive gate into the castle on its south landward side.



Red sandstone dressings at base of entrance wall with door check, portcullis slot and chamfered edge.



Trench 4

We have begun revealing the 'tower' walls at the south-west corner of the outer bailey.



Rubble against wall of 'tower'



External wall face of 'tower'

We have identified the corner of the 'tower' and traced the inner face line and presently there does not appear to be any entrance into the inner bailey along this part of the wall as had previously been suggested.

Trench 5

This revealed that the slight linear depression which can still be seen as an earthwork. This was indeed a ditch although very shallow in nature and may have functioned as a drain as it runs along a natural rock outcrop against which water still collects. Natural subsoil lay just below the topsoil.



Trenches 6, 7 and 8

These have so far produced evidence of worked agricultural soils. The artefacts recovered from these trenches, pottery, glass, fragments of tobacco pipe etc. are generally small in size and well dispersed suggesting midden material had been imported onto these areas which were likely filled areas in the post medieval period. A few fragments of earlier medieval pottery have also been recovered although the small quantity and their generally abraded nature are not as yet suggestive of medieval occupation within this area.

