



Tarbert Castle Excavation HES Report 4



Trench 1

We continued to excavate within the trench at the junction of the walls of the inner and outer bailey. Here it has become apparent that the wall of the outer bailey was actually built prior to the wall of the inner bailey.



Junction of inner and outer bailey walls

This contradicts the relationship that was previously postulated that the inner bailey was the earlier structure, the outer bailey being added at a later date and has important implications of when the castle was actually built.



Deposits at the base of trench 1

Lying against the walls within the trench was a series of deposits, that appear to represent a mixture of midden and levelling dumps, the later possibly floors. One of the deposits contained degraded, but still surviving wood fragments and given the fragility of such deposits, excavation was concluded in this area after samples were taken.

Trench 2

As mentioned in the last report we had uncovered a small medieval oven built against the walls of the inner bailey. We expanded the trench around the oven, by digging through the overlying rubble and came down onto natural rock and some extant floor deposits to the east of the oven. Medieval pottery other artefacts were recovered from these floors deposits.



Medieval oven with floors and natural bedrock

It also became apparent that the oven was the replacement for a feature similar in nature as the wall to the rear of the oven also showed signs of burning, while two charcoal deposits that initially were thought to be in the oven in fact ran under the walls of the oven and likely relate to this earlier oven or fireplace.



Photo showing the fire reddened walls behind the oven structure

We also received permission from HES to look at the wall relationships within the entrance pend of the inner bailey. Here we quickly revealed the red sandstone door check of the eastern side of the entrance.



Door check in entrance to inner bailey

Trench Three

The removal of the overlying rubble in the eastern half of the trench revealed the wall, door-check and portcullis slot of the eastern side of the gate mirroring that on west side.



Entrance to castle

A fragment of red sandstone placed within the wall above might also be a springer stone of the base of an archway above the gate.



Eastern side of entrance way

Trench 4

We continued to uncover the walls of the tower at the south-west corner of the outer bailey and showed that there was no entrance to the castle along the walls as previously suggested. However, we did uncover one side of the door into the tower, this again like the main entrance to the castle and the entrance to the inner bailey constructed in red sandstone.



Corner of the tower



Doorway into the tower



Photo showing the fine tooling used by the masons on the red sandstone blocks

Trench 6

The revetment wall in trench 6 has proved to be of post mediaeval date, possibly a field or property boundary. However, below the wall and quite an overburden of post medieval soil, was a large dump or dumps of soils containing quantities of small stones.



Stone and soil dumps below the revetment wall

No surfaces were apparent within this deposit although it may represent the deliberate attempt to level the area. The deposit contained medieval pottery and some very large fragments of slag, the latter likely representing smithy bases. Below these dumps was a thin

spread of material that included burnt bone and charcoal, while the natural bedrock showed distinct signs of being reddened by fire.



Fire reddened bedrock

Trench 7

Below the post medieval ploughsoil was a spread of what at first glance appeared to be rubble.



'Rubble' within Trench 7

However, this turned out to be the collapsed remains of quite a substantial rubble built wall of a structure. Only the corner of the structure was revealed in the trench but what appear to be floor deposits were reached, this producing some medieval pottery and slag.



The structure

Trench 8

This 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. Natural was located in the eastern side of the trench and no more work was conducted within the trench.