



## Tarbert Castle Excavation Publication Draft



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## Summary

*The excavation provided some evidence, albeit limited, for occupation of the Tarbert Castle ridge prior to the construction of the castle. The work has also demonstrated that the walls of the inner bailey are later than those of the outer bailey which counters the previously understood construction sequence of the castle. Well preserved medieval occupation deposits were shown to exist both within the inner and outer bailey of the castle. The excavation work also confirmed the existence of a major southern entrance to the castle complex in the form of a portcullis gate while the work also shed light on the tower structure at the south west of the outer bailey. Part of a medieval structure along with other medieval deposits were uncovered along the ridge to the south east of the castle complex and these may relate to the medieval burgh established at Tarbert, probably sometime in the 1320's. The work has shown that the castle from at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century was utilised by later settlement structures while much of the surrounding ground was used as fields for much of the post medieval period.*



## Acknowledgements

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## **1. Introduction and the Background to the Project**

Tarbert Castle - Our Castle of Kings, a Community Excavation Project was initiated by the TCT (formerly the Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust) who own Tarbert Castle on behalf on the community, maintaining the castle fabric and keeping the castle grounds open to the public as a Heritage Park. [www.tarbertcastle.info](http://www.tarbertcastle.info)

In order to better understand the castle and promote it within the community and beyond, Tarbert Castle Trust (TCT) aimed to conduct an archaeological investigation at the scheduled site of Tarbert Castle, Kintyre, Argyll. The project is the latest part of an ongoing programme of work that seeks to consolidate, conserve and enhance the understanding of Tarbert Castle.

Over the past 13 years the Trust has undertaken a strategy involving an extensive community effort to make the site more accessible to the public and to save and consolidate the remaining built structures. This included creating a sustainable conservation plan and a major consolidation of the Tower House. The Trust has improved access to the site by upgrading and consolidating paths through the castle site and providing improved information signage to the castle itself.

With this in mind, in 2013 and funded by HLF, TCT commissioned a detailed desk top historical investigation and non-invasive survey of the monument (Explore Tarbert Castle - YH-12-03691) which sought to establish a research framework that would expand the current knowledge of the site through archaeological and historical analysis and survey of the castle remains, whereby this knowledge would be used by the local people of Tarbert, professional archaeologists and visitors to the town and castle.

This was done through four phases of work (these are more fully outlined in Section 3).

- i) The production of a Desk Based Assessment which collated existing information about the history and archaeology of Tarbert Castle
- ii) A laser scan of the castle
- iii) A geophysical survey of the castle
- iv) descriptive and photographic survey of the castle remains

The results of this work were combined in the subsequent report (Regan 2013).

The proposed excavation within the scheduled area of the castle and burgh required Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and with this in mind an Excavation Project Design was prepared by Roddy Regan to accompany the SMC application (Regan 2018b).

## **2. Tarbert Castle and Medieval Burgh**

### **2.1 Location and Topography**

The castle occupies a prominent ridge on the SE side of East Loch Tarbert within the parish of Kilcalmonell. (Figures 1-3, Centred NR 86770 68730, Tarbert Castle NMRS No. NR86NE 1, Canmore ID [39316](#); Tarbert Mediaeval Burgh NMRS No. NR86NE 14, Canmore ID [39321](#)). Directly overlooking Tarbert Harbour and standing c.35m above the present town, the site of the castle is naturally defended all sides, except on the north west, by steep rocky scarps around the edge of the ridge, these sheer in places, particularly on the west side. The south



side of the castle overlooks a relatively flat area of marshy ground. To the south west the ground falls away from the castle in a series of ridges towards the present village of Tarbert.

The underlying geology of the area is a Metavolcaniclastic Sedimentary Rock from the Southern Highland Group and was formed in the Cambrian Period (BGS 1:50000). Bedrock outcrops in many places across the site indicating that the subsoils in places are shallow.

The main nucleus of the Castle formed by the inner bailey occupies the highest outcrop on the ridge; the lower ridges are enclosed by a curtain wall (the outer bailey) including a tower house at the west. Over the past seven years the site, has been steadily cleared of a substantial amount of scrub and vegetation cover by TCT. The castle grounds are now mainly covered in sheep-maintained grass cover, with a few gorse bushes.

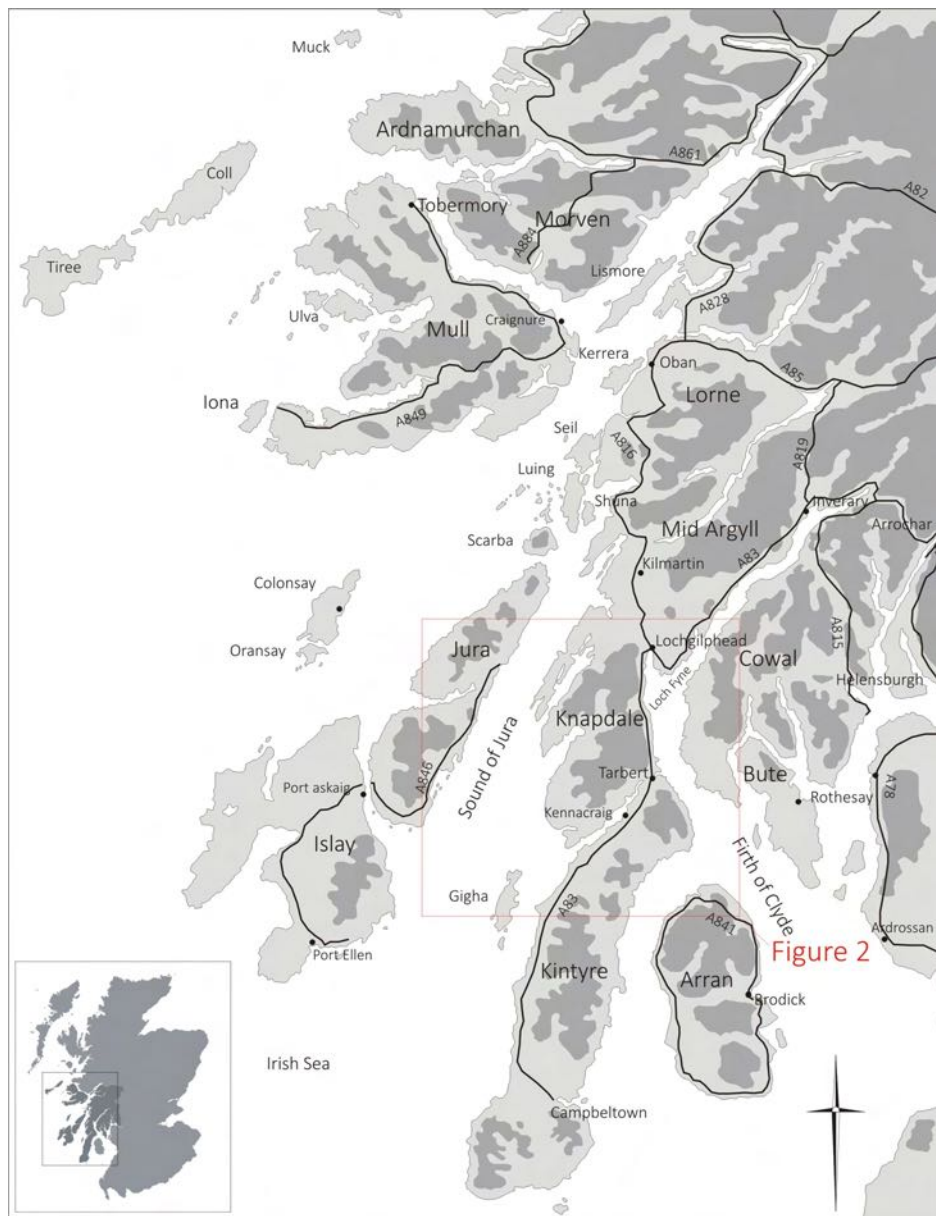


Figure 1: Argyll

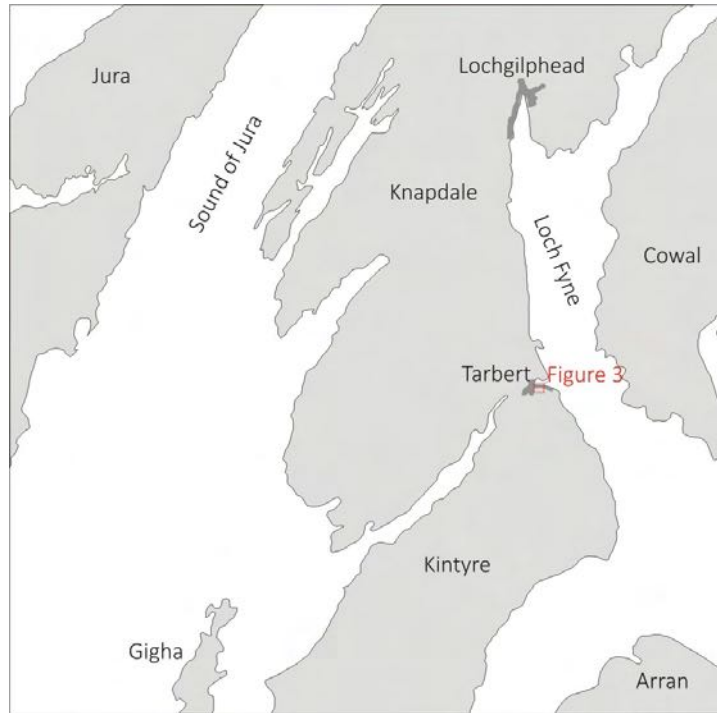


Figure 2: Location of Tarbert in Kintyre

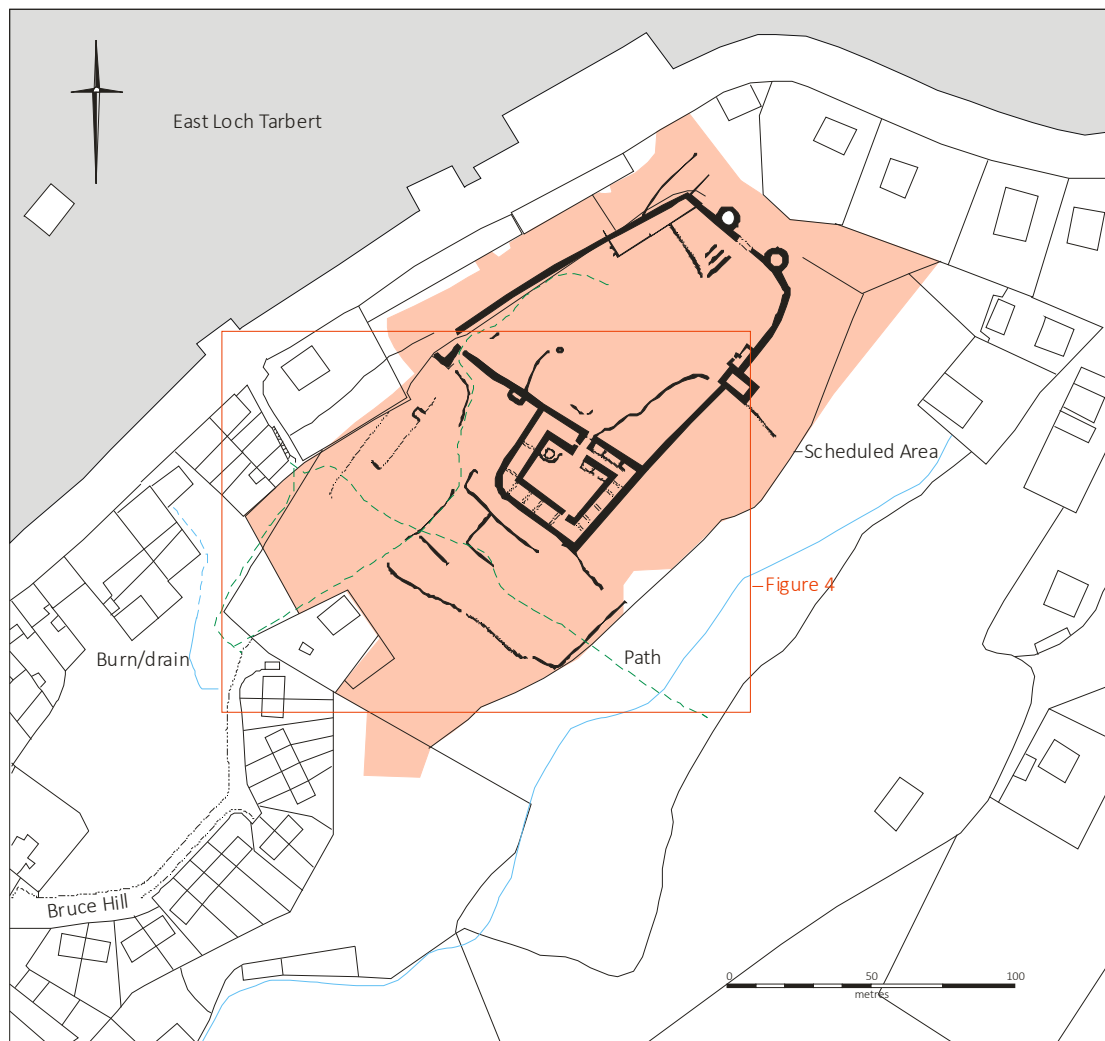


Figure 3: Tarbert Castle layout and Scheduled Monument area



## 2.2 Historical Background

The history of the castle has been outlined in several publications, the earliest being that of Dugald Mitchell in 1886, which sets the history of the castle beside the growth of the burgh town (Mitchell 1886). Thereafter David McGibbon and Thomas Ross wrote a detailed description of the castle as it survived in the late 19th century (McGibbon and Ross 1887). The archaeological remains of the castle, along with its history, are described by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland for their Inventory of Kintyre (RCHAMS 1971) while Dunbar and Duncan have outlined the history of the early Medieval castle (Dunbar and Duncan 1971). The history of the castle was summarised by Ian MacIntyre (MacIntyre and Smith 1974) and articles have appeared about the castle in the Kist (Campbell 1972 & 1987, Clerk 2002). Several of these works appear in full in the report of the survey of the castle which is accessible on the Kilmartin Museum website <http://www.kilmartin.org> (Regan 2013).

## 3. Archaeological Background

As mentioned above, the site has previously been surveyed and described by MacGibbon and Ross in the late 19th century (MacGibbon and Ross 1887). A second more extensive survey of the castle was undertaken by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland for their Inventory of Kintyre (RCHAMS 1971 No. 316, pp 179-84).

The castle was scheduled in 1935 (SM 276) while the area of the presumed medieval burgh was scheduled in 1975 (SM 3410)

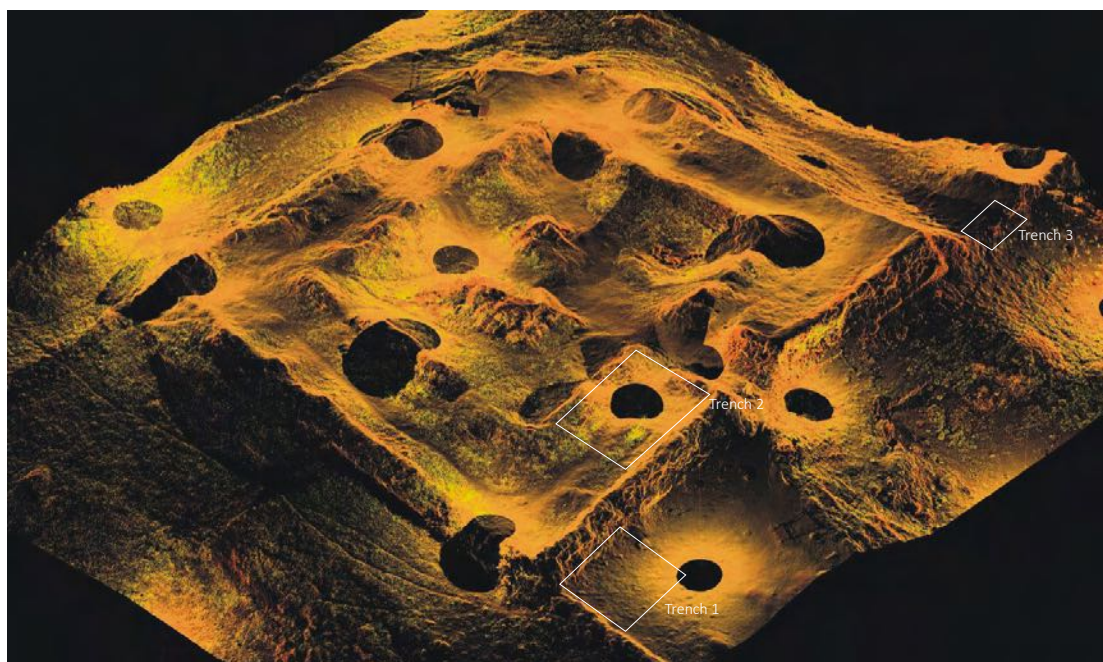
An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 1992 during the erection of a fence by CFA (CFA 1993). In 2009 an architectural survey was undertaken on the tower house prior to its consolidation by Austin-Smith: Lord as part of the Tarbert Castle Project. Another watching brief along with a photographic survey was undertaken by Highland Archaeology in 2010 prior to the erection of scaffolding around the tower as part of the consolidation work (Wood 2010).

The RCAHMS maintains the 'CANMORE' (Computer Application for National Monuments Record Enquiries) data base, which allows the user to access on-line the database of the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS). The RCHAMS collection contains historical and survey photographs and drawings of the castle.

As mentioned above a survey of the castle and surrounding grounds was undertaken in three stages, the results combined in the subsequent report (Regan 2013).

### 3.1 Laser Survey

A detailed survey of the Castle and surrounding scheduled area was conducted in 2012 by Northlight Heritage using a laser scanner and some of the resultant images can be viewed online at [www.northlight-heritage.co.uk](http://www.northlight-heritage.co.uk).



Illus. 1: Laser scan of Inner bailey showing positions of Trenches 1-3

### 3.2 Geophysical Survey

A geophysical survey was conducted by Northlight Heritage in 2013 concentrating on 5 areas over the more even ground within the inner bailey and to the south and west of the inner bailey (MacIver 2013). The results of the geophysical survey were dominated by modern disturbances and strong geological signals, most likely due to outcropping bedrock. However, some very subtle positive readings from the gradiometry survey possibly indicate that archaeological features do exist in the area which has been highlighted as the possible medieval burgh location. Even these readings, however, were obscured by the strong geological readings and the report recommends investigation of these features by excavation

### 3.3 Ground and Photographic Survey

A photographic and measured survey of the upstanding structures and features was completed in the spring of 2013 (Regan 2013). The work measured and recorded all the features identified within the survey conducted by RCHAMS in 1971 while compiling more exhaustive descriptions for individual elements of the castle structure along with other features not included within the original survey. The exceptions to this were the individual elements of the Tower house, many of which were inaccessible during the survey period. Many of the individual features within the tower had been previously recorded and drawn within the RCHAMS survey, while many were also photographed by John MacPhail during the recent restoration work.

A few unrecorded features within and around the castle itself came to light during the survey. Running from a wet area just south of a series of enigmatic earthen ridges downhill to the west was a possible drainage ditch, although this may be of recent origin. To the west of the castle a series of enclosure walls were recorded, these dividing the area into small enclosed fields surrounding the castle and obviously reflecting past land use over a period of time. Whether any of these are contemporary with the use of the castle or are associated with any early burgh is open to question. Possibly also field boundaries were two rectilinear

ditches lying to the south of the castle. These ditched features are readily apparent on an aerial photograph taken in 1967 as reproduced in Dunbar and Duncan's article on the castle (Dunbar & Duncan 1971). As these have no or little evidence of associated banks it is difficult to ascribe these as stock enclosures and their more formal layout may reflect horticultural use or represent relic garden features. There are also what appear to be artificially levelled terraces to the south west of the castle, these possibly past attempts at creating level planting areas or fields.

### 3.4 Mortar Analysis

A rapid masonry and mortar survey of Tarbert Castle was undertaken during recent PhD research by Mark Thacker (Thacker 2017). This involved non-intrusive examination of the standing remains and collection of eight loose (ex-situ) mortar samples. The results of this preliminary investigation suggested that all four main upstanding phases of the complex (Inner Bailey, Outer Bailey, Tower House and Tower extension) had been constructed with mortars made from wood-fired limestone-limes and highlighted that these materials had some radiocarbon dating potential.

### 3.5 Excavation

A small excavation was undertaken as part of the Medieval Mêlée celebrations at the castle in June 2013. A trench was opened in the ground of a private garden that backs on to the scheduled area of the castle. A small trench measuring 4.90m by 1.10m was opened, which revealed a homogenous garden/plough soil containing post medieval artefacts down to natural bedrock which lay 0.28-0.30m below the present ground surface.

### 3.6 Watching briefs

A watching brief was conducted on the erection of a fence around the tower house in 1992 (CFA 1993). Another watching brief was conducted when the path that forms part of the Kintyre Way was upgraded in July 2017 (HES Reference/Case ID 300019132) although nothing of archaeological significance was noted (Regan 2017).

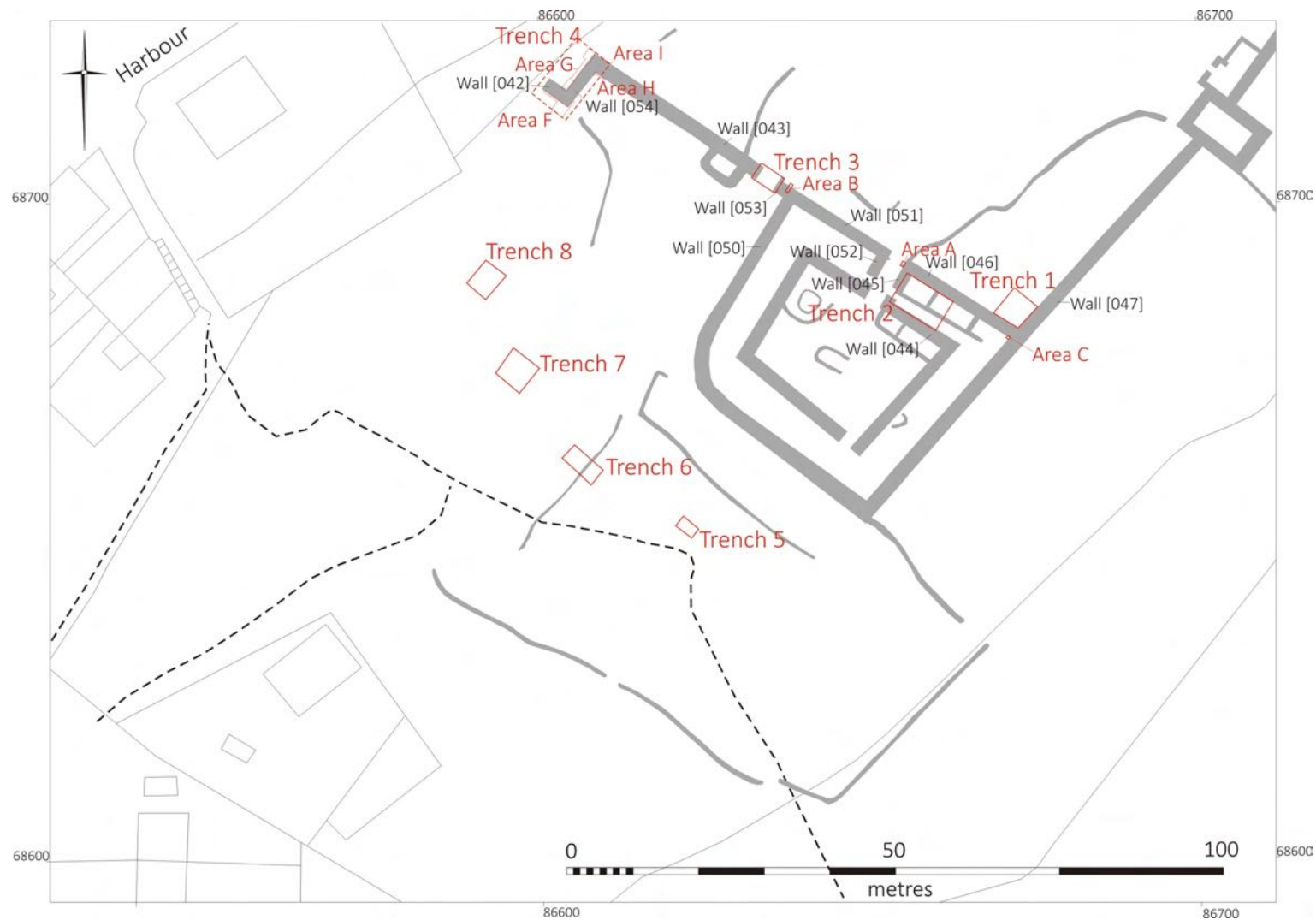


Figure 4: Location of excavation trenches





Illus. 2: Tarbert Castle from above showing the excavation trenches

#### 4. Excavation Results 2019

Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was granted for the excavation within 8 trenches (Trenches 1-8, Case ID: 300026684 and Case ID: 300033153). Trenches 1-3 were located within the Castle scheduled area (SM 276) and Trenches 5-8 are within the Burgh scheduled area (SM 3410) while Trench 4 fell within both scheduled areas (Figure 4). Consent was also given by HES under the granted SMC to examine wall relationships in three further areas (Areas A-C). The excavation took place over six weeks in May and June 2019 and the site code used during the excavation work was TAR 19 and the results were primarily outlined in the subsequent Data Structure Report (Regan 2019)

##### 4.1 Trench 1

This trench was located on relatively flat ground at the junction of the inner and outer bailey walls (Figure 5).



Illus. 3: Area of Trench 1 from north west pre-excitation





Figure 5: Trench 1 plan

Natural bedrock was encountered within the excavated trench at 33.08m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface. Above this lay a dark grey peaty soil [076]. This soil was observed to contain organic material, wood and plant material, which likely survived due the anaerobic nature of the soil (Figure 8, Illus. 7). The upper surface of this deposit was fire reddened in part indicating burning had taken place on the ground surface although it was impossible to determine if this represented limited burning, as in a hearth area, or represented more wide scale burning.

Overlying this buried soil horizon were the foundations of the walls of the castle (Figures 6 and 7). The earliest wall was that of the outer bailey, [047], that formed the western side of the trench. No cut or foundation trench for the wall was apparent within the trench the walls sitting directly over the subsoil mentioned above, although given the limited area of foundation that was exposed the presence of such a cut cannot be entirely discounted. Wall [046], forming the north side of the inner bailey abutted wall [046] and was thus later.

In no part of the trench were either of these walls observed to be founded on or built directly onto natural bedrock, although attempts may have been made by the builders to achieve this aim. In the absence of contact with the bedrock the builders had stepped out or offset the walls along their basal courses to give added support to the walls. As both wall [046] and [047] lay over the same deposits and were also sealed by the same deposits then it might be inferred that the construction of the earlier wall was followed closely by the later wall, with no deposits between suggesting no great time gap between their respective constructions.

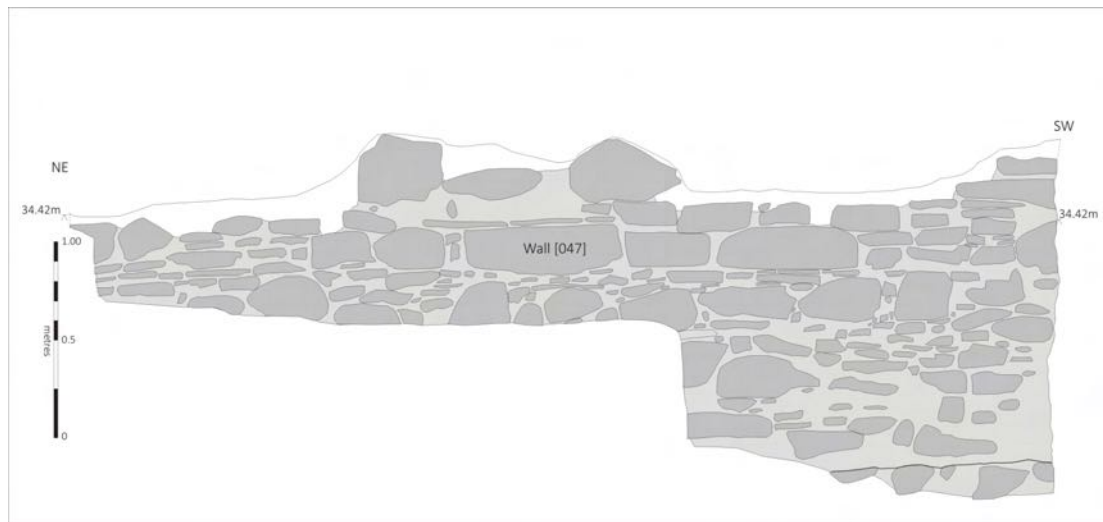


Figure 6: Wall [047]

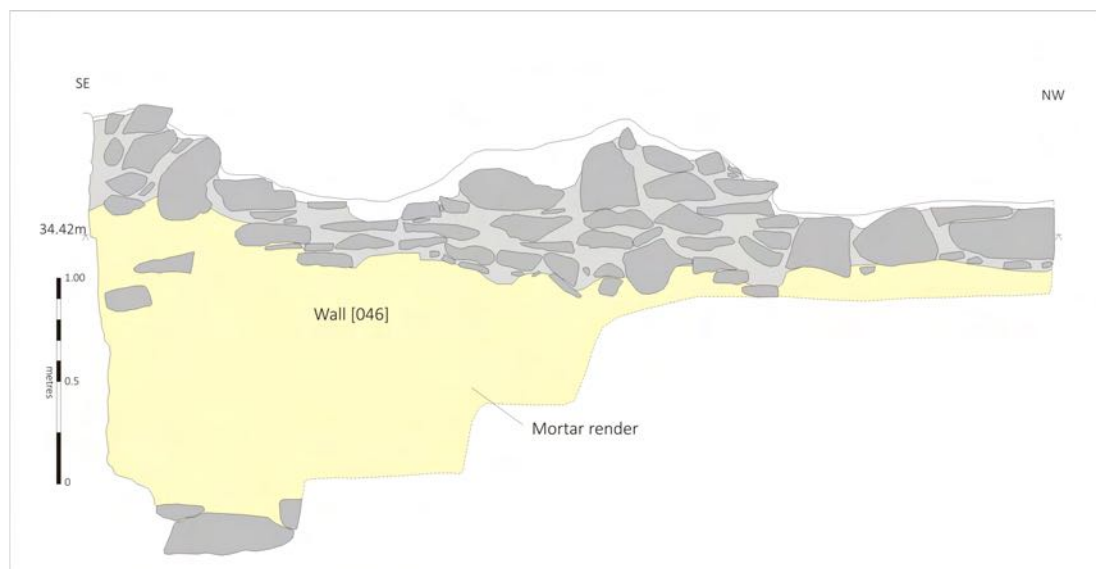


Figure 7: Wall [046]

The Inner bailey outer wall was coated in a firm mortar render which survived in height up to 1.5m above the wall footings at the western end of the wall, where it abutted wall [047]. The render had been preserved and protected by the later deposits that had built up against the wall face. Above this where the wall had been exposed to weathering and the affects of plant growth there was no evidence of any render or indeed any mortar pointing along the wall face.



Illus. 4: Wall [047] from south west



Illus. 5: Wall [046] from north





Illus. 6: Wall [046] abutting wall [047] from NW

Overlying the wall footings was a deposit of loose mortar [075] that probably relates to the construction of the wall. Above this mortar deposit was a series of occupation deposits [074], [073], [065], [064] and [023] that appear to represent a mixture of midden and levelling dumps, the later possibly also utilised as floors or surfaces.

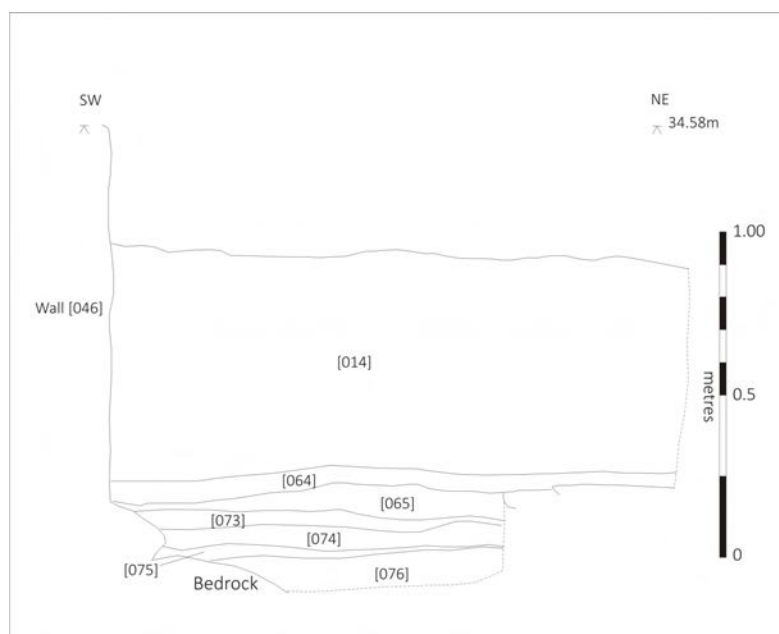


Figure 8: North west facing section Trench 1



Illus. 7: Deposit [076] with burning, below deposits [075], [074], [073] and [065]

The presence of possible surfaces suggests that this area lying against the west wall of the outer bailey may have contained structures although, beyond possible floor surfaces no firm evidence of structural footings for buildings were seen within the excavated area.

The earliest of these [075] was a mixture of mortar and sand that also contained some horizontally lain stones that sloped down to the south west, possibly indicating the presence of a run off or drainage channel. Over [074] was a patchy layer of sandy mortar, this suggestive of floor repair or make up. Deposit [065] was a grey humic silt, that contained animal bone, pottery, charcoal and some nails, the deposit suggestive of midden accumulation in this area. When excavating this deposit we came across surviving wood fragments and given the fragility of such deposits and that the excavation budget had no contingency for dealing with preserved wood, excavation of this deposit was stopped after samples were taken.





Illus. 8: Floor/occupation deposits in Trench 1 from above north

Deposit [065] was in turn sealed by a red/yellow sandy deposit [064] again this suggestive of a floor or floor make up. The uppermost of these deposits, [023] produced animal bone, some slag and medieval pottery, these, along with its dark colour and organic nature, suggesting this was a midden accumulation. The animal bone fragments appear to be large and may be the remains of primary butchery. The layer was also very sandy in content and contained fragments of mortar, which might suggest that the walls of the castle were either beginning to degrade or that they might have begun to be dismantled.



Illus. 9: Deposit [023] from north west

Above this was an extensive deposit of wall collapse/demolition [014]. This rubble deposit was up to 0.50m deep across the trench and contained some substantial masonry blocks surrounded by degraded mortar. Numerous voids between the rubble blocks suggested that this deposit formed relatively rapidly. Apart from the rubble and mortar content this deposit was relatively sterile of finds, the exception being an intact smithy base.



Illus. 10: Top of rubble deposit [014] exposed in eastern side of Trench 1

Sealing the rubble dump was a dark grey soil [003] that contained a mixture of post mediaeval finds throughout, although some medieval pottery sherds were also recovered. This soil has been interpreted as an agricultural/horticultural soil. A band of rubble [008] also lay along the outer wall of the inner bailey (see photo below). This appears to have formed at the same time as the agricultural soil was being worked.



Illus. 11: Plough soil deposit [003] and rubble [008] from south east

#### Area C

The upstanding wall remains within Trench 1 suggested that wall [047] of the outer bailey was earlier than the abutting wall of the inner bailey [046]. In order to see if this relationship still held good at their southern junction topsoil was stripped in a small area in Area C. This revealed that wall [045] did indeed abut wall [047] and was thus later.





Illus. 12: Internal face of wall [046] abutting wall [047]

#### 4.2 Trench 2

This trench was located in the western part of the north east range of the inner bailey which also contained a series of earthworks indicative of wall lines representing three rooms or bays.

Trench 2 was primarily excavated down to the top of an extensive rubble deposit across the whole of the trench. It quickly became apparent that the earthworks suggestive of walls belonged to a building inserted within this wing of the inner enclosure. The two 'rooms' of this building revealed in the trench were excavated down to their upper floor levels, as was an area to the south of the western room. Two areas, Area D and Area E, were then selected for deeper excavation in order to assess the earlier deposits within the castle.

#### *Mediaeval Occupation*

In both Area D and Area E natural bedrock was exposed and above this were medieval occupation sequences (Figure 9).

#### Area D

Area D was located against the south wall of the northern range of the inner bailey around what appeared to be an opening or doorway through wall [044] connecting this range with the courtyard of the inner bailey (Figures 10-12).

Within Area D bedrock was encountered at a height of 34.98m OD, or 1.70m below the present ground surface, this appearing to be a ridge sloping off sharply to the east. Bedrock was sealed by a deposit of dark grey humic soil [063], this deposit also containing charcoal, which suggested pre-castle activity in this part of the site. Constructed directly over this and natural bedrock was the southern wall of the inner bailey [044]. Only a small area of the wall footing was exposed in Area D, although it was built directly onto natural bedrock on the western side and stepped down to the east.



Figure 9: Plan of Medieval deposits in Trench 2

As with wall [046] in Trench 1, where the builders did not make contact with bedrock the wall footings were wider or were offset at the basal course to the rest of the wall above. The wall in the trench stood up to 1.70m high and was bonded and coated with a firm cream/off-white coloured mortar. The wall also contained an opening, most likely a door, being 1.35m (4 feet) wide. The base or threshold of this opening was 0.95m above the base of the wall below, however only 0.32m above the basal internal floor [035], indicating the opening function as a door rather than window opening.



Figure 10: North west facing section

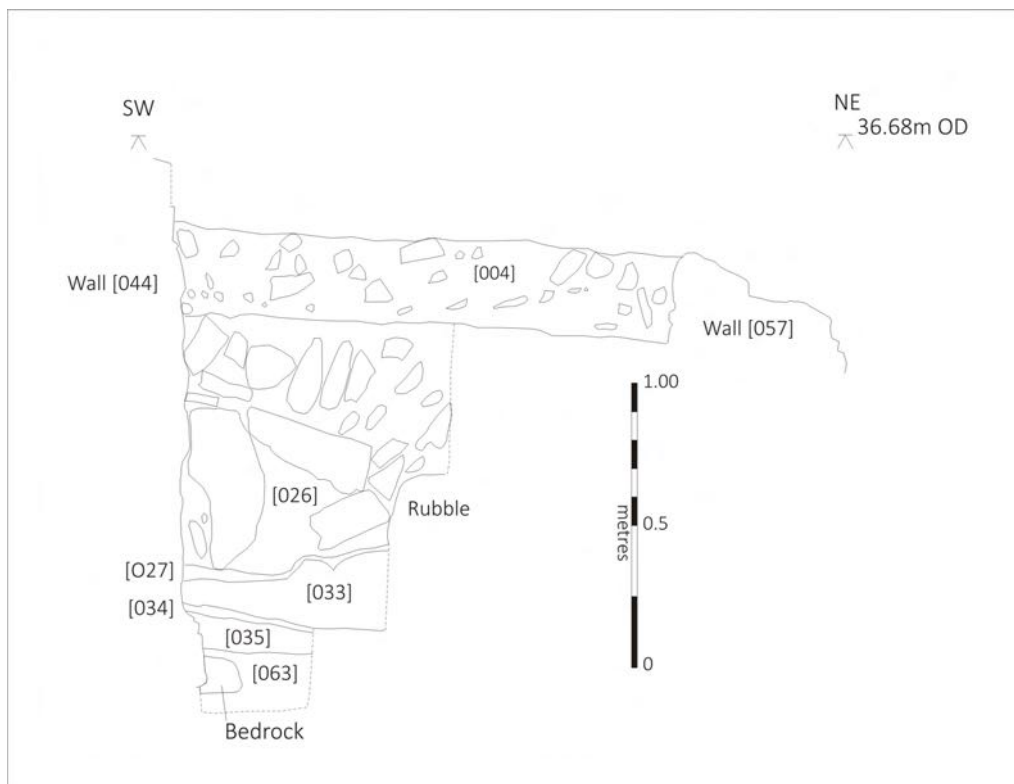


Figure 11: East facing section of Area D





Illus. 13: East facing section of Area D from south east

The mortar coating the wall was similar to, if not the same as, the compact mortar deposit [035] which also appeared to have been utilised as the primary floor surface of the castle in this area. This deposit dropped off steeply to the east and north away from both the wall and the underlying natural bedrock. This 'slumping' appears to have been caused by the floor lying directly over soft underlying soils, rather than directly onto bedrock where the sealing deposits had little or no evidence of slumping. Above this surface was a light brown sandy gravel [034], possibly a floor make up, although this also contained pottery and bone suggesting some mixing with midden material. Above this was a more extensive deposit, or dump of stones and gravel, [033], that may have been deposited to counteract the effects of slumping.



Illus 14: Slumped floor deposit [033] from south east above

Above this and filling the dip caused by the slumping was a midden deposit [027]. From this deposit was recovered, pottery, bone, shell, metal artefacts and slag, these suggesting both cooking/food preparation and metal working in the immediate vicinity. This deposit also contained over 30 metal artefacts, the presence of these perhaps suggesting they had been collected as scrap and for recycling. The majority of shells in this deposit derived from a dump, mainly periwinkles with lesser amounts of limpets, suggesting these had also been selected and used for a specific purpose. Sealing this midden material in Area D was an extensive deposit of rubble and mortar [026] which like the rubble deposit in Trench 1 contained voids, perhaps again suggesting rapid collapse/demolition.

#### Area E

This was located in the north west of Trench 1 where bedrock was encountered within the western half of the excavated area, this lying at a height of 36.42m OD or 0.80m below the present ground surface (Figure 13). This appeared to represent the top of a ridge crossing the area from south west to north east and dropping off to the east and west. A small section of the footings of the northern inner bailey wall of the [046] was revealed at the north west of the area and these were built directly onto the bedrock ridge, with no intervening deposits.



Illus. 15: Footings of wall [046] built over bedrock from south west





Illus. 16: Area E from south west

The upper extent of the internal junction of walls [045] and [046] suggested that wall [045] abutted wall [046] although this was not clearly established, the presence of the upstanding oven in this part of the trench preventing further investigation of this relationship.

To the west of the bedrock ridge was a deposit of gravelly sand and stones [071] that appeared to be a levelling deposit, perhaps flattening out the natural undulations caused by the sloping bedrock ridge in this area. Some horizontally lying stones were also seen at the top of this deposit, which suggests the use of this levelling deposit as a surface. This deposit was not excavated. Lying over this at the east of the area and also over natural bedrock was a dark grey deposit [066], this appearing to be an occupation accumulation containing bone, pot and charcoal and slag.

At the junction of walls [046] and [045] at the north west of the area it was noted that two stones had been discoloured by burning, suggesting the presence of a fireplace or fire installation [072] in this corner of the range.



Illus. 17: Fire affected stones [072] sealed by later oven [058]

Possibly associated with this feature were two thin deposits of charcoal [069] and [067], separated by an equally thin deposit of mortar [068]. The lower charcoal deposit lay over a sandy gravel deposit similar and possibly the same as [033] in Area D, although this was not proven. Built over the upper charcoal deposit and possibly a replacement for the burnt feature was a small 'key-hole' shaped oven or boiler [058] (Figure 14).



Illus. 18: Charcoal and mortar deposits running under wall of oven [058]





Illus. 19: Oven feature [058] from south east

This feature was constructed from rubble and clay, the walls standing up to 0.63m in height. The internal walls of [058] and the clay floor [039] were pink/red in colour, the effects of burning. It is hard to see how this feature functioned as an oven as the internal floor was lower than the floor level around its mouth or entrance. Also there was no evidence of any collapsed roof within its internal space. While this might be explained by later robbing, it seems more likely this feature did not have a roof and if this feature was indeed open then it is possible this was used in the heating of a cauldron or vat, although this has to remain speculation. Little evidence of any fuel was left in this feature as it appears to have been cleaned out after its last use.

Above the floor of the oven was a mixed deposit of grey clay [038] that partially covered the oven floor, but again contained little that was suggestive of its use.

Lying outside the mouth of this feature was a mixed deposit of clay and silt [048]. This contained quantities of charcoal and suggests this was a trampled floor the charcoal representing fuel rake-out. Lying along the eastern outside edge of the 'oven' was a dark grey occupation deposit [070] that also contained pot and slag? Located around the upper edge of the 'oven' and against walls [045] and [046] was what appeared to be a deposit of midden-like material, [031], this containing pot, bone and slag.

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.

The whole of Area E was sealed by the rubble collapse or demolition of the castle walls, [030], this deposit equivalent to deposit [026] seen in Area D.



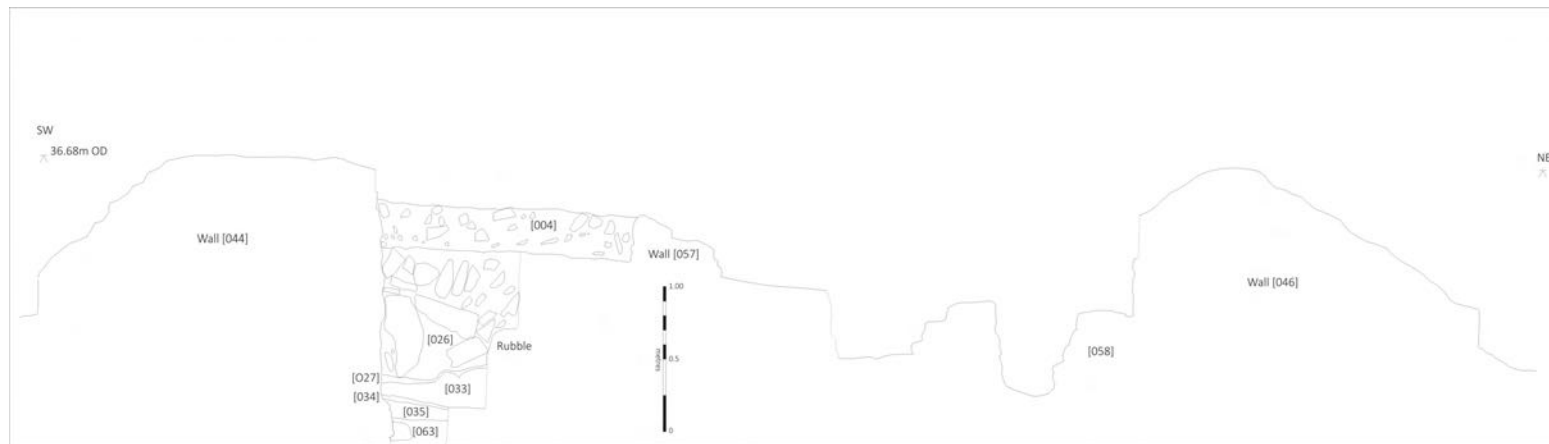


Figure 12: East facing cross section across Trench 2

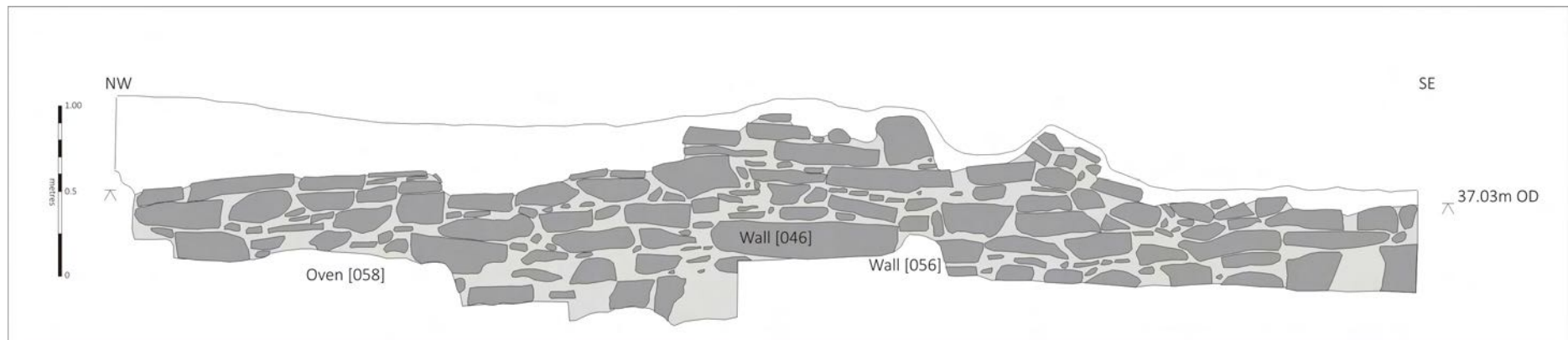


Figure 13. Wall [046] internal face

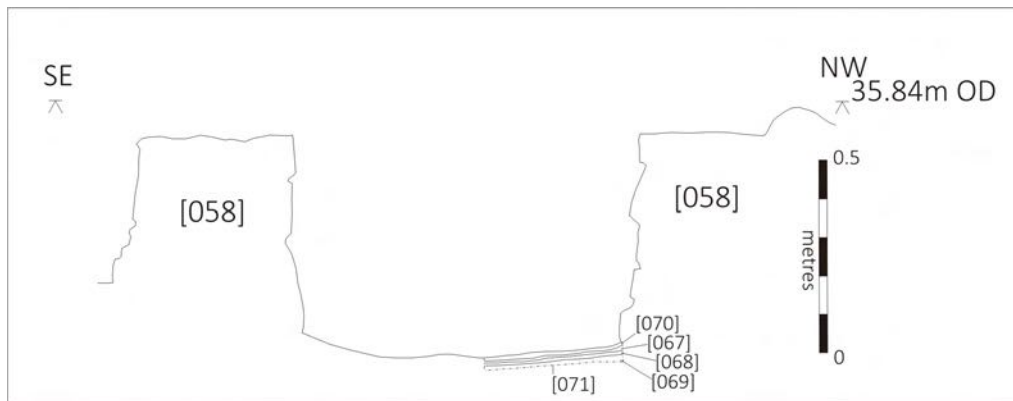


Figure 14: Profile through oven



Illus. 20: Exposed deposits from above in Trench 6 and Area A prior to backfilling

### *Later Occupation*

Built directly over rubble [030]/[026] was Structure 1 (Figure 15).

The earliest part of Structure 1 revealed in the excavated area were walls [055] and [056] these forming the western and southern walls of a room that continued beyond the excavated area to the east, with the northern wall of the inner bailey utilised as its northern side.

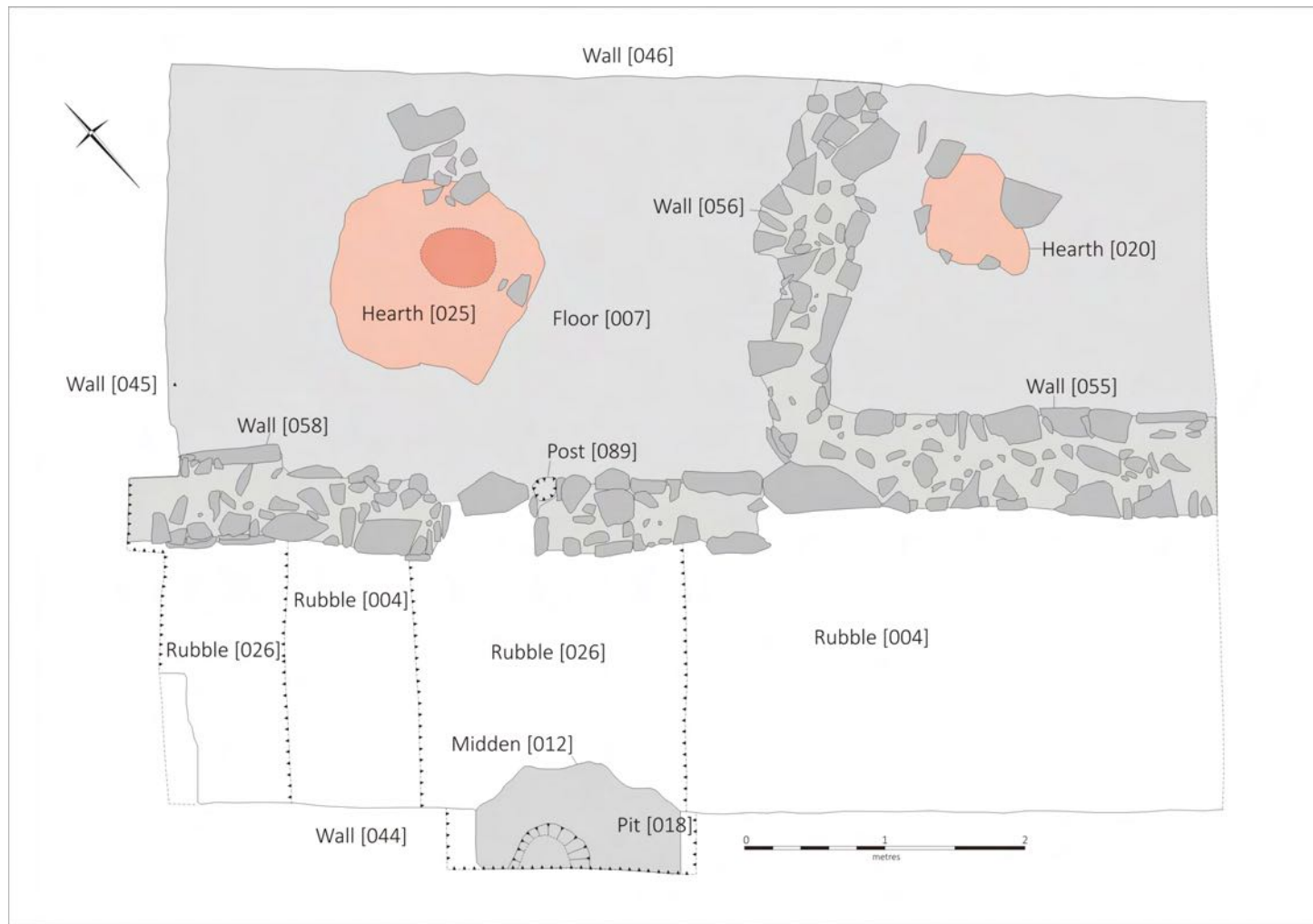


Figure 15: Plan of Structure 1



The floor of the structure was very uneven, reflecting the underlying rubble, although an oval patch of fire affected clay [020] showed that this room had a hearth area.



Illus. 21: Eastern room formed by walls [055] and [056] with burnt area [020] from north east

Abutting the south west corner of this structure was wall [057] which constituted the southern wall of a northern room to this building, this again utilising the inner bailey wall as its northern and western sides.



Illus. 22: Western room with burnt area [025] from north west



A gap in the wall, along with a flat threshold stone and posthole [089], indicated a doorway to the building.



Illus. 23: Threshold stone and post hole [089] from south west

The wall of this building extended into what was the space of the original doorway into the castle entrance pend. Internally the floor of this western room was more even than the room to the east and perhaps some attempt had been made to level the floor area. A dark area of ash and charcoal with some scorching suggest a hearth position [025]. Retrieved from above the uneven floor of the building were five very worn/corroded coins, possibly Charles I and II two pence pieces or 'Turners'; also recovered were two knife blades, sherds of bottle glass and the upper stone of a rotary quern.



Illus. 24: Upper rotary quern stone in situ

Immediately south of the building threshold a small pit [018] had been cut into the underlying rubble, this situated in the former door/window aperture of the castle. The pit was filled with a deposit [017] that suggested it was a small cess pit, which contained some pot and animal bones, the latter perhaps food remains.



Illus. 25: Small pit [017]



Illus. 26: Structure 1 from the south east

Both the internal and external areas of the building were filled with both what appeared to be rubble from Structure 1 itself along with rubble from the original castle walls these recorded as deposits, [004], [005] and [006].





Illus. 27: Rubble fill within Structure 1.

#### Area A

As mentioned above, the upper extent of the internal junction of walls [045] and [046] suggested that wall [045] abutted [046] although this was not clearly established. In order to more fully examine the relationship of these walls vegetation cover was removed within Area A. Unfortunately, if anything the relationship of the walls on this side was less clear than on the inner junction. However, this small exposed area did reveal the eastern side of the gate into the inner bailey. This comprised a door check in red sandstone masonry. The red sandstone block within the internal door rebate had a curvilinear groove either carved or worn in its upper surface. If carved then it is possible that this block was reused from an earlier building. However, it is possible that the groove comes from wear, or has been deliberately fashioned to receive some kind of door mechanism, although what remains unclear.



Illus. 28: Door-check within entrance pend from south west

### 4.3 Trench 3

This trench was placed between the eastern wall of the inner bailey and the projecting tower situated along the southern wall of the outer bailey where it was thought that there may have been a gate into the outer bailey (Figure 16).

It became quickly apparent that the line of the outer bailey wall did not extend across the trench and the trench was indeed placed over a previously unrecorded southern entrance into the castle complex. The work in the trench principally involved the removal of rubble and mortar sealing the gate remains prior to their recording.

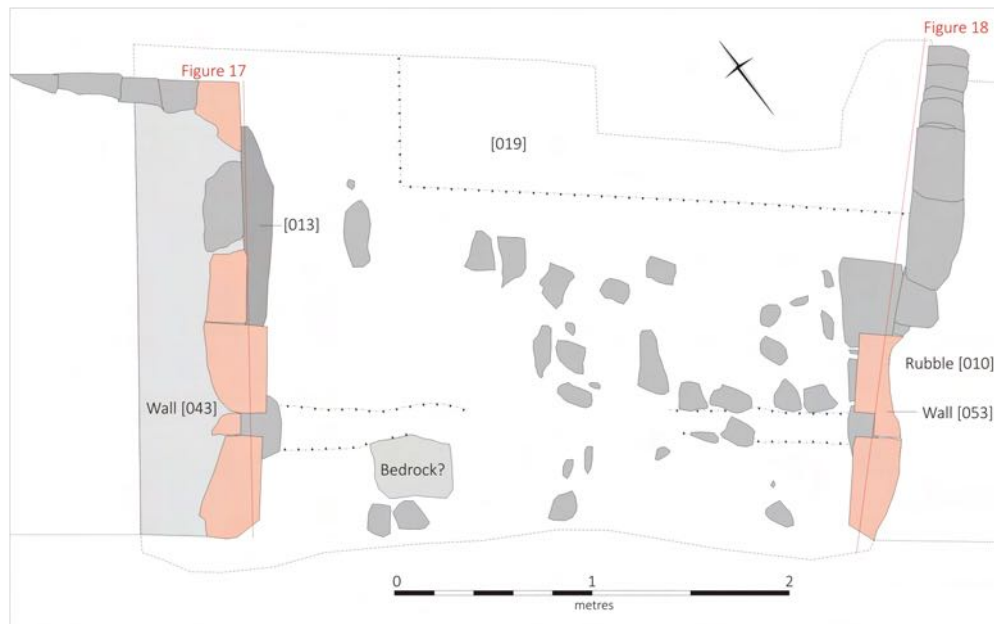


Figure 16: Trench 3 plan



Illus. 29: Gateway from north east above



Revealed within the gateway was a small exposure of what was likely natural bedrock at a height of 30.98m OD or 1.35m below present ground surface.

Lying west and east of this possible outcropping bedrock were the western and eastern sides of a southern gateway into the outer bailey, these respectively recorded as [043] and [053].

The majority of the facing stones on the western side of the entrance [043] had been robbed (Figure 17). Only at the basal level of the entrance did any facing stones of the gate survive these being constructed of blocks of dressed red sandstone. Within the arrangement of surviving sandstone blocks the outer edge of the gate consisted of block with a chamfered edge and lying internally to the north of this was a portcullis slot and a door check, both constructed from sandstone blocks.



Illus. 30: Western side of gate from north east

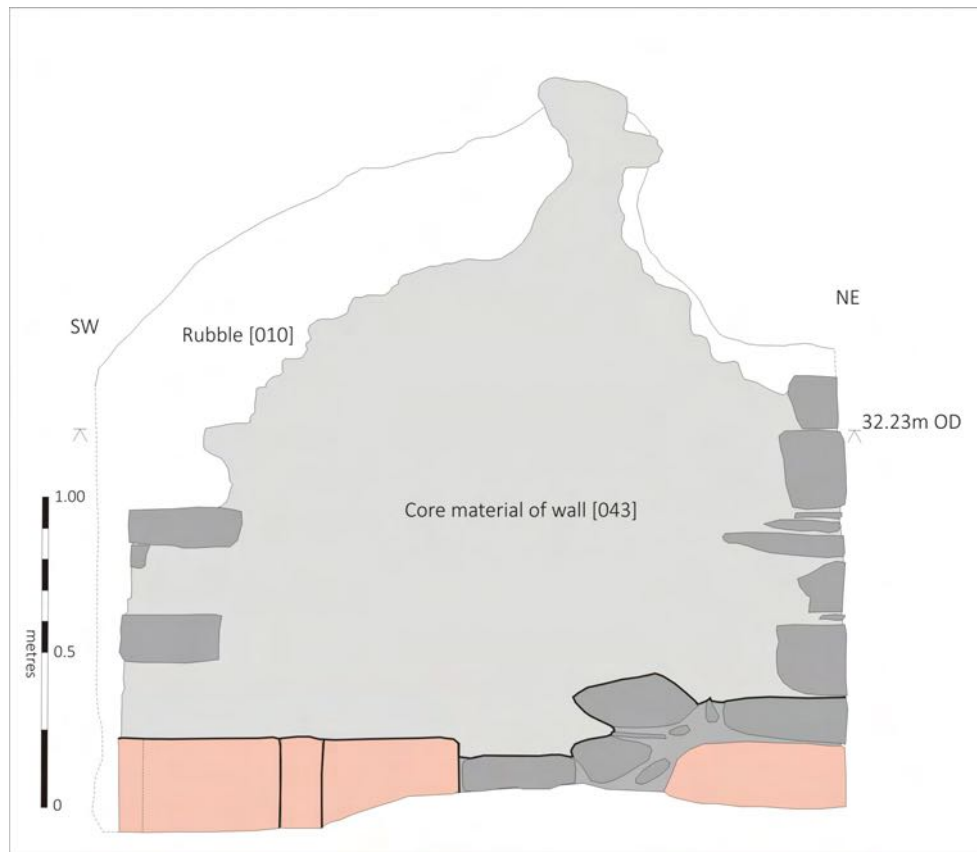


Figure 17: Western side of gate



Illus. 30: Portcullis slot and door check at western side of gate





Illus. 31: Portcullis slot

Like the eastern side of the gate the basal courses of the western side consisted of ashlar blocks of red sandstone with an outré chamfered edge and the remains of a portcullis slot and a door check and mirroring the arrangement on the opposite side.



Illus. 32: Eastern side of gateway from south west

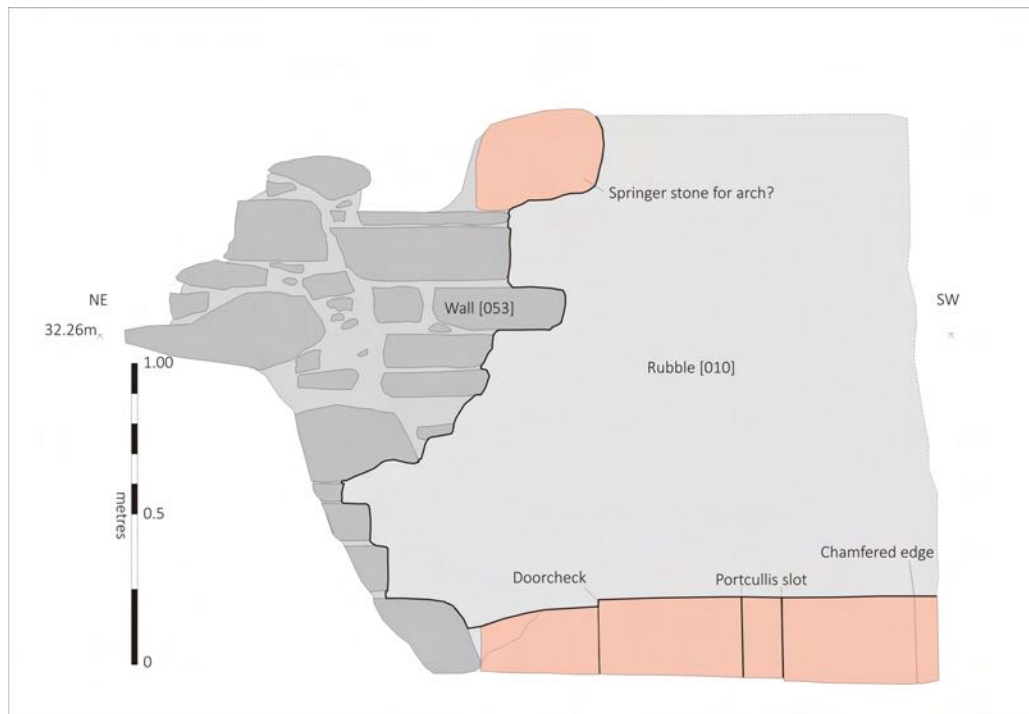


Figure 18: Eastern side of gate



Illus. 33: Eastern side of gateway from north east above





Illus. 34: Portcullis slot in eastern side of gateway

Although badly robbed, part of the wall face of the gateway survived above the basal course on the western side of the gate, here the wall standing up to 1.90m in height. Attached to this surviving masonry face was a red sandstone block which may be a surviving springer-stone for an arch, its base 1.70m above the upper surface of the entrance (Figure 18). It was also apparent that the wall of the western side of the gate continued north beyond the edge of excavation and beyond the northern edge of the gate on the western side. What this represented is unclear, possibilities being some kind of gatehouse structure or perhaps access to a portcullis chamber above the gate.

On its southern, outer extent, the entrance gap was 3m wide as was the gap between the two portcullis slots. However, the entrance widens to the north of the opposed doorchecks, to 3.30m and from here both eastern and western sides to the gateway splay out to 3.50m on the northern side of the gate.

Within the gate there were the remnants of a worn channel running between the portcullis slots. The channel ran through sequential layers of mortar and clay that likely represent the upper surfaces or make-up for surfaces within the entranceway. It is possible the area had been paved, with only a few surviving horizontal stones suggestive of this, the rest possibly robbed. The surfaces within the entranceway remained unexcavated, apart from darker deposit [013] located along the base of the western gate, which produced some pottery bone and a metal object.

The majority of the facing stones of both side of the gate have been extensively robbed and the trampled mortar deposit [019] that lay in the entranceway may represent detritus from this systematic robbing. However at some time the remnants of any upstanding gate superstructure must have collapsed into the gateway, creating the extensive rubble deposit [010]. That this happened rapidly is suggested by numerous voids seen within much of the lower rubble. That demolition and robbing of the castle structure continued is suggested by the mixture of post medieval material from the upper extent of the rubble.

## Area B

To examine the relationships of the walls topsoil was removed from the external junction of walls [050]/[053] and [051] within Area B. This revealed that wall [051] was a later addition to the corner of walls [050]/[053].



Illus. 35: Junction of walls [050]/[053] and [051] from north east  
(corner of inner bailey wall [050]/[053] to the right of picture)

Previously this relationship had been misinterpreted, with the corner of wall [050]/[053] being described as being the later addition to wall [051]. However, as can be seen from Illus. 35 above [050]/[053] is the more substantially built wall, although for the most part having lost most of its larger quoin blocks from robbing.

### 4.4 Trench 4

This trench was placed over the remains of the south west tower of the outer bailey. Initial investigation in this area led to the decision not to open up the full extent of the area as proposed in the project design, but to open up smaller areas to better understand the tower remains (Areas F-I, Figure 19).



Figure 19: Plan of Trench 4





Illus. 36: Area of Trench 4 from east above

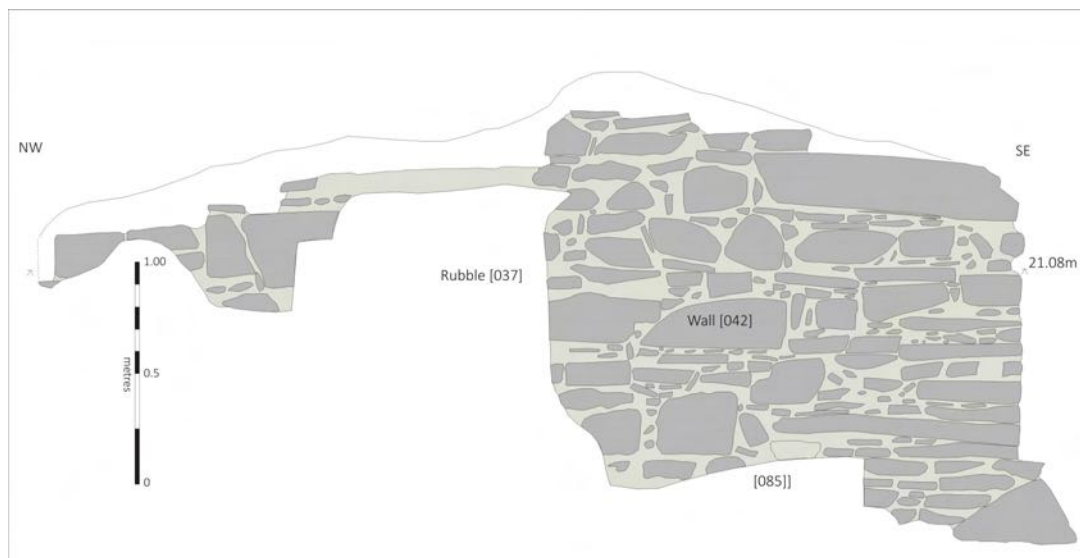


Figure 20: External face of wall [042]

#### Area F

In Area F the external face of the south east corner of the tower [042] was exposed. The area was excavated down to the basal course of the foundation the wall face above, standing up to 1.9m in height, with the core of the wall to the north standing 0.9m higher (Figure 20).



The wall face was traced for a length of 4.3m from the south east corner of the tower. No foundation trench was apparent and the wall appears to have been founded on natural glacial till, although some extra support was added on the corner of the wall where the wall stepped out to the east. The wall face had some traces of a sandy mortar render although for the most part this appeared to have degraded from the surface.



Illus. 37: Tower wall [042] from south west



Illus. 38: Corner of tower wall [042] from south west

The basal courses of the wall were then sealed by a deposit of clayey silt [085], this very similar to the glacial till below the wall foundation and this possibly represents redeposited natural protecting the foot of the wall after its construction. This deposit sloped away from the wall to the south and may have formed a bank along the outer face of the wall.

Sealing this was an extensive deposit of rubble [037], the upper extent producing a quantity of post mediaeval artefacts.



Illus. 39: Showing rubble [037] against wall [042] from east

Area G investigated the internal arrangement of the tower, showing that the tower wall [054] was continuous along its eastern side, being 7.1m long internally with no evidence of an entrance on this side (Figure 21). The wall stood up to 2.3m in height in the excavated area. Traces of mortar render were apparent along most of the exposed wall face but best preserved at a lower level down where it had been protected from weathering and root damage. The tower wall had been badly robbed at the junction between the tower wall [054] and the outer bailey wall [043]. Despite this robbing activity the basal courses of the eastern side of an entrance or doorway [090] did survive this giving access through what was presumably the northern wall of the tower. The remnants of the door consisted of finely dressed red sandstone blocks with the remnants of a door check or jamb and a threshold. Both threshold and vertical jamb had chamfered outer edges. There was also evidence of a cobbled surface lying to the west and south of the threshold stone. The south facing section at the northern end of the excavated area was different from the adjacent west facing section, the difference likely explained by robbing disturbance above the eastern side of the doorway.



Figure 21: Internal north west facing section of Area G





Illus. 40: Remains of doorway [090] from north west

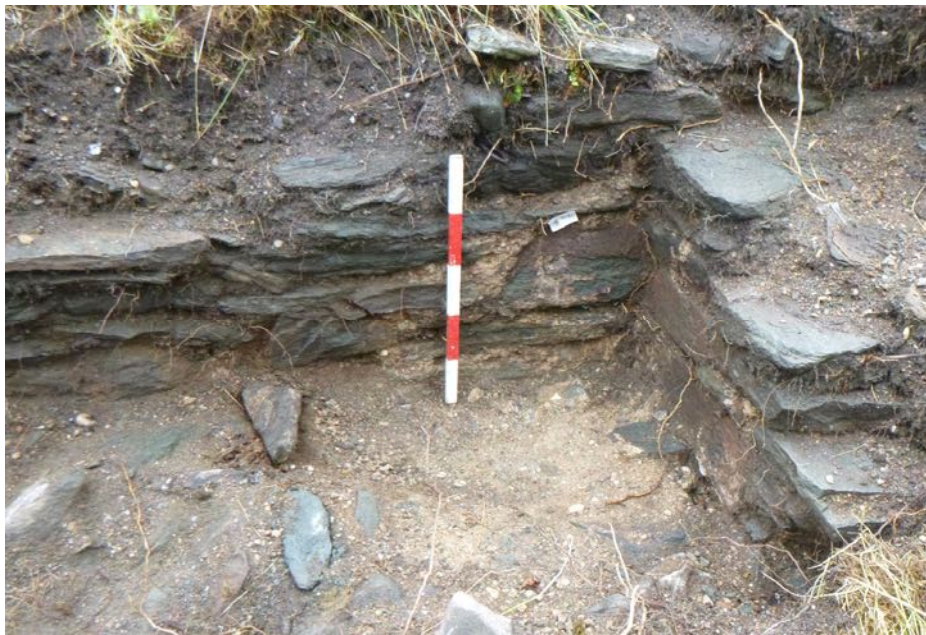


Illus. 41: Doorway [090] from north west above





Illus.42: Architectural detail of door [090]



Illus. 43: Internal junction of walls [042] and [054]



Illus. 44: Surviving mortar render on inner face of wall [042] from north west

Sealing the doorway in the south facing section was a deposit of rubble [062]. Above this and absent from the west facing section was ash/charcoal layer [061], this sealed by a rubble and mortar deposit [060] which had been discoloured red/pink by burning (Figure 22). Both deposits [061] and [060] suggest the burning and collapse of some of the superstructure of the tower. Sealing this burning episode was rubble and mortar deposit [059].

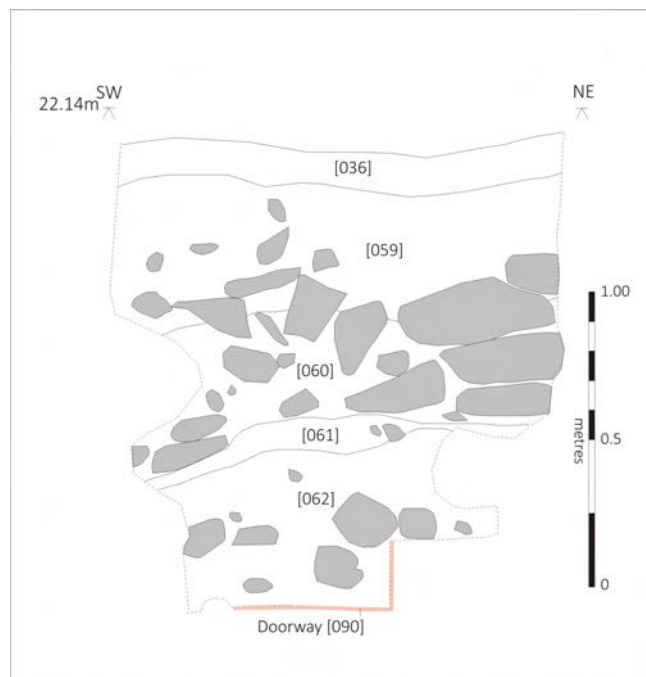


Figure 22: South west facing section Area G





Illus. 45: South west facing section Area G

Areas H and I

Area G revealed the line of the wall of the outer bailey [043] while Area H revealed the junction of walls [043] and [054]. Once these were established no further excavation took place in these areas.



Illus. 46: Junction of walls [043] and [054] from south west

#### 4.5 Trench 5

This trench was placed over the remnants of a ditch system lying to the south of the inner bailey and berm of the castle, an area that also had some geophysics results suggesting underlying features (Figure 23).

The excavation quickly revealed that natural outcropped very close to the surface and natural subsoil lay just below the turf [021]. Because of this it was decided to limit the size of the proposed excavation area. The trench revealed that the slight linear depression which can still be seen as an earthwork was indeed a



ditch or channel although very shallow in nature. The channel [029] was filled with [028] and may have functioned as a drain as it runs along a natural rock outcrop against which water still collects.



Illus. 47: Trench 5 from south west

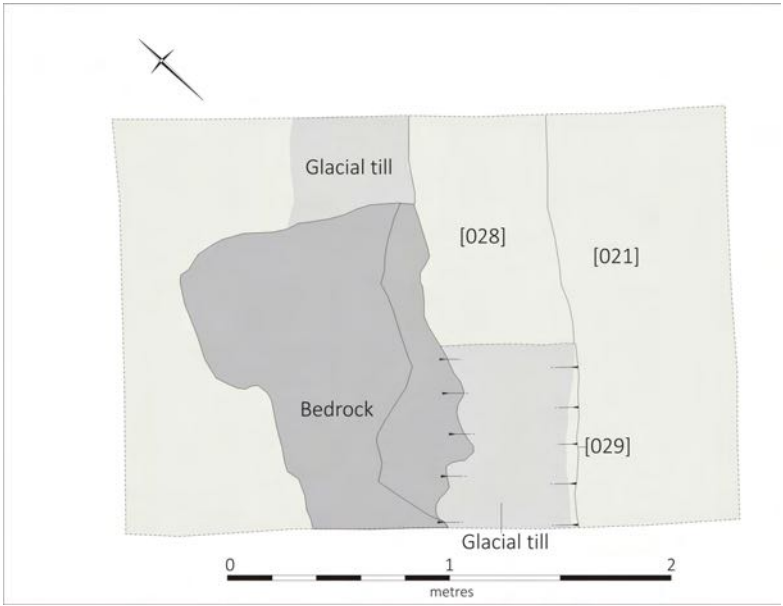


Figure 23: Trench 5 plan

#### 4.6 Trench 6

This trench was placed either side of an upstanding revetment wall [084] (Figure 24).

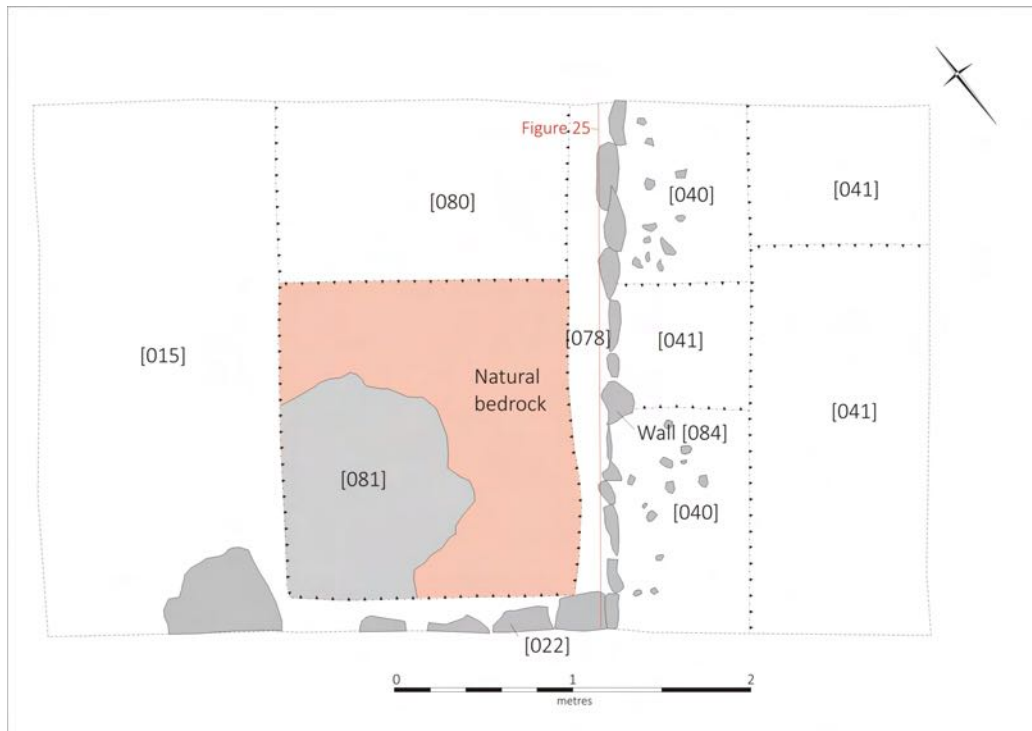


Figure 24: Trench 6 plan

Natural bedrock was reached within the western part of the trench at a height of 23.62m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface on the western side of the wall. Above natural bedrock was a thin spread of material [081] that included burnt bone and charcoal, while the natural bedrock showed distinct signs of being reddened by fire [082] (Figure 25). It is possible that the bedrock had been burnt when it was utilised as the floor a feature such as a kiln although no walls or superstructure were located within the excavated area.

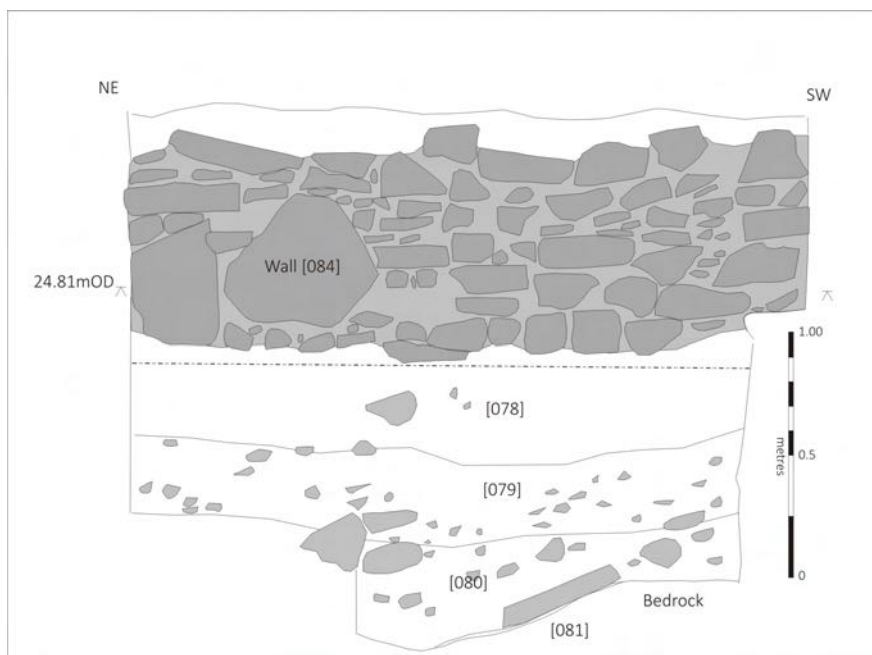


Figure 25: North west facing section Trench 6



Illus. 48: Burnt bedrock at base of Trench 6

Above this deposit was a large dump or dumps of soils [079] and [080] these both containing a relative abundance of small to medium sized, mostly angular stones. These deposits also contained medieval pottery and some very large fragments of slag, the later likely representing smithy bases. The nature of these deposits remain unclear, but they appear to be levelling deposits of mediaeval date and could possibly relate to a track leading up to the castle entrance, although no obvious consolidated surfaces were apparent within the make up of these deposits and this interpretation has to remain speculative.



Illus. 49: Showing deposits below wall [084] from north west

Above these stony deposits was a fairly uniform deposit of yellow brown silty loam [078] containing post-medieval glass and pottery. This has been interpreted as the remains of a plough soil, although one that may have collected in a natural dip over time due to weathering of soils that may have originated from the higher ground to the east.





Illus. 50: Wall [084] from north west

Over this soil was constructed wall [084] which must also be of post mediaeval date. Lying against the wall face on its western side was a heap of stones [022], these possibly deriving from field clearance, these stones in turn sealed by deposit [015], another plough/agricultural accumulation. The nature of the revetting wall [084] is still unclear but it may have had a dual function of demarcating a property or field boundary but possibly also constructed to counteract weathering of soil down slope.

Excavation on the higher ground on the eastern side of the wall demonstrated that plough/agricultural soil [041] had accumulated against the wall on this side, this deposit only partially excavated. Indeed the height of the wall may have been added to over time as suggested by a narrow band of stones/packing [040] which coincided with the upper course of the wall, this lying over plough/horticultural soil [041]. [040] in turn was then sealed by deposit [016], this another plough/agricultural accumulation



Illus. 51: Stone accumulation [022] against wall [084] from north east



Illus. 52: Stony deposit [040] from south west

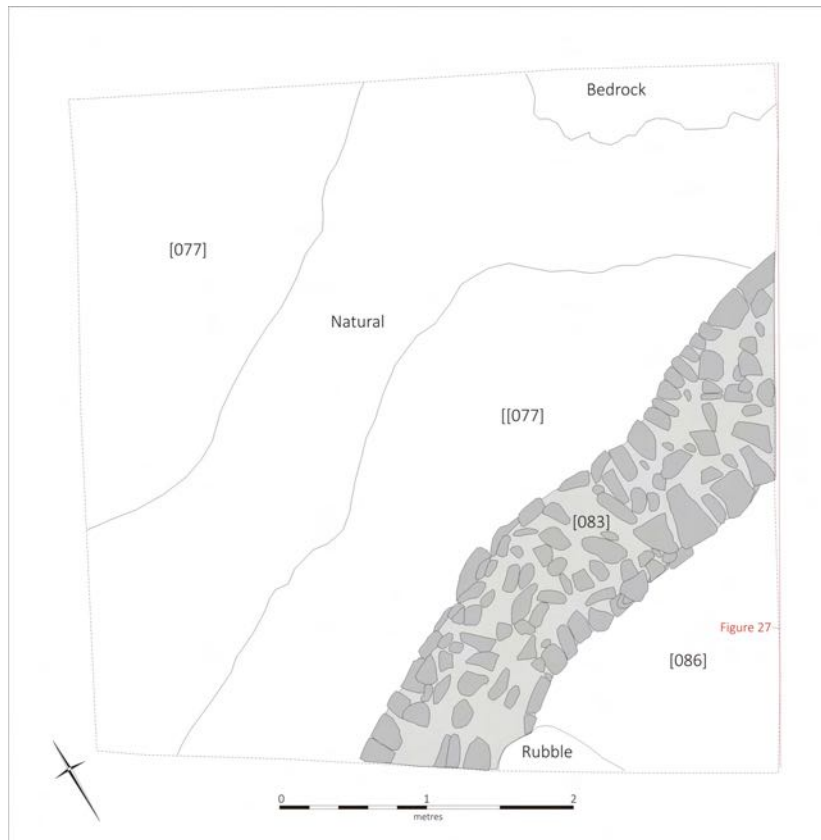


Figure 26: Trench 7 plan

#### 4.7 Trench 7

This trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the outer bailey (Figure 26).

Natural bedrock and glacial till lay below the present ground surface in the north east corner of the trench. Built against/over the sloping western side of these natural deposits was rubble wall [083] which crossed



the trench from north east to south west, beginning to turn to the south at the southern edge of the trench. The wall stood up to 0.7m in height and was between 0.8m and 1m in width.



Illus. 53: Trench 7 and wall [083]

To the south of the wall was a mixed deposit of clay and stone [086] that was only partially excavated. Given the darker colour of this deposit to the soils above and the presence of charcoal and a few sherds of pottery, this deposit likely represents floor or use deposits lying within the building.



Illus. 54: Wall [083] with floor [086] at base of scale from west



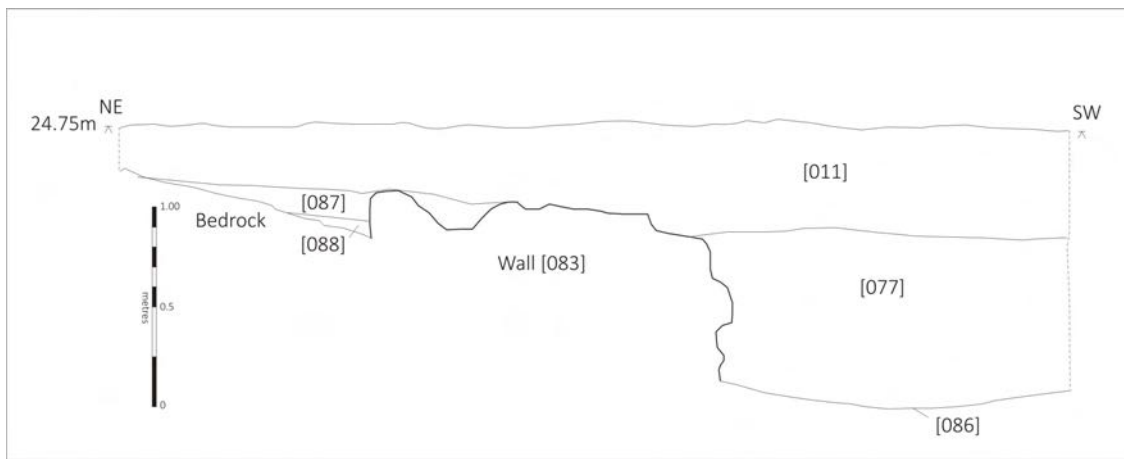


Figure 27: North west facing section Trench 7

The floor was then sealed by a mixture of rubble and red orange clay deposit [077] over this, lying against the southern face of the wall. The northern face of the wall was sealed by subsoil deposit [088], this in turn sealed by quite an extensive rubble deposit [087], this likely a spread of collapsed building material (Figure 27).

The rubble and the whole trench was overlain by plough soil deposit [011] that contained pottery, glass and fragments of clay tobacco pipe amongst mainly post medieval finds. These artefacts were generally small in size and well dispersed, suggesting midden material had been imported onto these areas which were likely field areas in the post medieval period.



Illus. 55: Rubble spread [087] of wall [083] from south east above

#### 4.8 Trench 8

Like Trench 7 this trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the outer bailey (Figure 28).

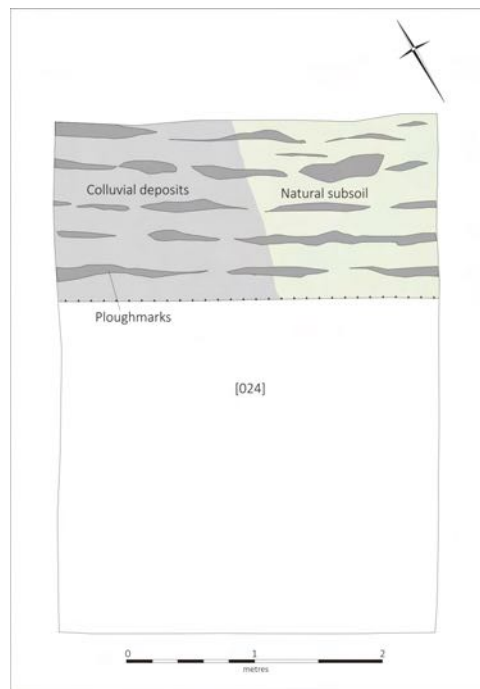


Figure 28: Trench 8 plan

Natural glacial till was exposed along the north east of the trench and beyond this to the west was either lower plough soil or perhaps a colluvial deposit. Cutting through both these deposits could be seen numerous plough scars.



Illus. 56: Showing plough scars along northern side of trench

Lying above this was plough soil [024] and like deposit [011] in Trench 7 contained mainly post medieval finds and again like [011], some of the pottery and glass appeared to have been worn smooth by the sea, suggesting the possibility that seaweed may have been gathered from the foreshore and brought up to the fields and used as fertilizer.

## 5. The Artefacts

### 5.1 Pottery Report      Derek Hall

#### *Introduction*

These excavations produced an assemblage of 280 sherds of pottery ranging in date from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. All of the material has been examined by eye and x10 lens and where possible assigned to a recognised fabric type. A spot dated catalogue was also prepared as an Excel spreadsheet and a representative sample of pieces for illustration or display have been selected (Table 1).

#### *Transitional Craggan/Redware*

There is a single sherd from context [011] <027> which appears to be in a fabric that is a mix between a handmade Craggan Type ware and a Redware. Similar fabrics have been identified from excavations at Baliscate on Mull (Hall 2017) and at Iona Primary School (Hall 2019) and dated between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### *Redwares*

The 67 sherds in Redware fabrics present in this assemblage share the attributes that have previously been attributed to the Scottish Redware industry dating between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Haggarty, Hall and Chenery 2011). Vessel wise it is plain undecorated splash glazed jugs that dominate the assemblage with a single potential fragment from a figure jug being present from context [066] <039> (Illus. 57). There is a partially complete jug profile from context 'tower' which is splash glazed green, decorated with raised horizontal cordons and has a complete strap handle, this appears to be of a slightly later 15<sup>th</sup> century date (Illus. 58). The closest known Scottish Redware production centres are in the Clyde Valley, and it seems likely that this may be where these vessels originate from.

#### *Reduced Gritty Wares*

These hard fired reduced gritty fabrics have been identified as potential 'local' West Coast products since their identification in assemblages from Ayr, Dundonald Castle and Dumbarton (Franklin and Hall 2004; Caldwell and Campbell 2006; Franklin and Hall 2012) and have since been also identified from Rothesay Castle (Hall 2009). All of the sherds in this assemblage are from well made plain jugs which are hard fired, well glazed and have simple strap handles. A basal angle from context [080] <043> is decorated with occasional thumb marks and has a visible kiln stacking scar on its base (Illus. 59). A group of 39 bodysherds from Context [034] <035> come from a single vessel and have raised cordons running around the vessel (Illus. 60). Generally, these fabrics would seem to date between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### *Unidentified Whitewares*

Included amongst the fabrics that are assumed to be of Scottish manufacture are some distinctive whitewares (24 sherds). These are present in contexts [027] <033> and [080] <043> and contain red (sandstone?) inclusions. There are also joining pieces from a whiteware rim and bridge spout from context [080] <043> that show traces of iron leeching out of the fabric on one side of the top of the spout. Similar fabrics have been seen in assemblages from excavations in Ayr (pers comm G Haggarty) and future chemical sourcing would be the only way of confirming the Scottish origin of these fabrics. These vessel forms would suggest a date of the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> centuries for these fabrics.

#### *Dating*

The lack of a good datable chronology for Scottish West Coast medieval pottery makes the dating of assemblages that are dominated by presumed locally produced wares fraught with difficulties. There are no obvious 12<sup>th</sup> century wares present in the assemblage, the whiteware vessels from contexts [027] <033> and [080] <043> are of 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century date, the vast bulk of the assemblage dates to between the 13<sup>th</sup>



and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and the domination of glazed jugs as the preferred vessel type would also fit that date bracket.

#### *Discussion and Recommendations*

The pottery assemblage from the excavations at Tarbert Castle is an important addition to the study of Scottish medieval pottery from the Scottish West Coast. There are no obvious imported wares and all of this pottery would appear to be of Scottish manufacture. Consistently the fabrics are highly fired and well potted implying the existence of available good local potters, a similar picture is seen in Fife where imported pottery vessels also tend to be in the minority (Hall 1997). It has long been recognised that our current understanding of pottery manufacture, use and trade on the West Coast and Islands is sadly lacking when compared to the rest of the country. Previous published reports on assemblages from Dumbarton, Ayr and Dundonald Castle (Franklin and Hall 2004; Franklin and Hall 2012; Caldwell and Campbell 2004) have started to create the background to pottery fabrics, vessel types and their use in the medieval burghs and castles of the West of Scotland but the subject still lacks a proper synthetic overview and the considered use of chemical sourcing to identify potential production centres. With that in mind it is recommended that 20 samples of pottery are selected from this assemblage and chemically sourced.



Illus. 57: Bodysherd from figure jug in Scottish Redware with remains of junction from applied decorative handle (Context [066] <039>)



Illus. 58: Rim, sidewalls and complete strap handle from a splash glazed jug (Context 'tower')



Illus. 59: Context [080] <043> Basal angle from jug in Scottish Redware with occasional thumb marks and visible kiln scar on base



Illus. 60: Context [034] <035> bodysherds from green glazed jug with raised cordons

Table 1. Pottery Catalogue

Catalogue No.	Context No.	Sherd Count	Description	Spot dates
025	003	8	rim and bodysherds from green glazed redwares	15th-17th
025	003	1	bodysherd from glazed green/brown vessel in a reduced grey fabric	15th/16th
025	003	1	bodysherd from green glazed vessel in a reduced blue grey fabric	15th/16th
025	003	2	rimsherd and bodysherd from internally glazed vessel in light redware fabric (durg jar?)	17th/18th
025	003	1	bodysherd from splash green glazed vessel in gritty fabric (Scottish)	15th/16th
026	004	1	bodysherd from splash green glazed vessel in grey fabric with white internal surface	
027	011	6	bodysherds from green glazed vessels in reduced grey fabric	15th/16th
027	011	5	rimsherd and bodysherds from splash glazed vessels in a whiteware fabric with a light brown external surface (Scottish)	13th-15th
027	011	1	bodysherd from green glazed vessel (well glazed) in a well sorted redware fabric with at least one large rock inclusion	15th/16th
027	011	1	bodysherd from splash glazed vessel, odd shape possibly just below rim? reduced grey fabric with light brown surface	13th-15th
027	011	1	bodysherd from green glazed vessel in gritty redware fabric with burnt out inclusions. Scottish	13th-15th



			trans Craggan/Redware?	
027	011	1	bodysherd from green glazed vessel in Redware fabric with grey core	13th-15th
027	011	1	bodysherd with handle junction in a coarse micaceous fabric with traces of splash glaze	13th-15th
028	013	1	smoke blackened basal angle from splash glazed vessel in white fabric with red inclusions	13th/14th
028	013	2	two green galzed bodysherds in redware fabric with a grey core	13th-15th
028	013	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel in a redware fabric with raised cordon	13th-15th
028	013	2	Bodysherds from green glazed vessels (well glazed) in a whiteware fabric	13th-15th
029	015	3	Bodysherd from vessel splash glazed green in redware fabric	13th-15th
030	017	3	Bodysherds from vessels splash glazed green with visible slight external rilling in hard fired reduced grey fabric	
031	023	1	Rimsherd and side wall from open vessel form, well glazed green internally and externally. Reduced grey slightly gritty fabric	15th
031	023	6	Green glazed bodysherds in a reduced grey gritty fabric, one sherd has raised brown vertical strip decoration	15th/16th
032	024	2	Bodysherds from green glazed vessels (well glazed) in light redware fabric	
032	024	1	Bodysherd in hard fired redware fabric splash glazed green	17th/18th
032	024	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel in reduced blue grey fabric	
032	024	1	Bodysherd from unglazed redware vessel	
032	024	1	Bodysherd in thin redware fabric internally white slipped	17th/18th
032	024	1	Bodysherd in brown glazed stoneware	18th/19th
032	024	1	Rimsherd from vessel glazed light green in hard white fabric	
033	027	14	3 rimsherds and 11 bodysherds (2 joining from handle junction) from a splash glazed jug in a whiteware fabric with a reduced grey core and occasional red (sandstone?) inclusions. Light brown external surface	
033	027	36	Strap handle, large bodysherd with handle junction and bodysherds from splash glazed jug in a hard fired reduced grey fabric	13th-15th
033	027	9	Basal angles and bodysherds from splash glazed vessel in hard fired reduced grey fabric with light brown surface, some concretions on interior of base	13th-15th
033	027	20	2 joining bodysherds and 19 bodysherds in a whiteware fabric with red inclusions from a splash glazed vessel with light brown exterior surface	
033	027	2	Rimsherds from splash glazed vessel in hard fired redware fabric	
033	027	4	2 joining thin baseshards and two bodysherds from unglazed cooking vessel? in hard fired whiteware fabric with incised throwing marks on interior of base.	

033	027	3	Green glazed bodysherds in whiteware fabric	
033	027	2	Two unglazed basesherds in whiteware fabric with red inclusions	
033	027	18	basal angle and bodysherds from splash glazed vessels in a reduced grey fabric	13th-15th
033	027	1	Unglazed bodysherd in whiteware fabric with light brown external surface	
033	027	2	Unglazed bodysherds in redware fabric with light grey brown external surfaces	
034	031	5	Bodysherds from vessels splash glazed green in reduced grey fabric	
034	031	1	Rimsherd from jug splash glazed green brown in whiteware fabric	13th-15th
034	031	1	Bodysherd from unglazed vessel in whiteware fabric with red inclusions	
035	034	39	Bodysherds from green glazed jug (well glazed), 6 of the sherds have raised horizontal cordons in micaceous sandy fabric with grey core light brown internal surface (Scottish Redware?)	13th/14th
036	036	1	Bodysherd from green glazed jug (well glazed) in Scottish Redware with reduced grey fabric	15th/16th
037	038	1	Bodysherd from green glazed jug (well glazed) in micaceous reduced grey fabric (Scot Red?)	13th-15th
037	038	1	Bodysherd from green glazed jug (well glazed) in micaceous fabric with grey core and internal red brown surface (Scot Red?)	13th-15th
038	065	4	Bodysherds from green glazed vessels in reduced grey fabric	13th-15th
039	066	2	Bodysherds from spash glaazed jug in hard gritty redware fabric with grey core , traces with burnt out organic inclusions on internal surface. Larger shred has applied pad decorated with vertical incised slashes suggesting this may be from a figure jug. (Scot Red?) fabric is noiticeably layered and slightly splayed	13th/14th
039	066	6	Bodysherds from green glazed jug in reduced grey fabric	14th/15th
039	066	3	Bodysherds from green glazed jug (well glazed) in light grey gritty fabric (not Scottish?)	14th/15th
039	066	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel with fragment of handle junction in white gritty fabric (SWGW?)	13th-15th
039	066	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel in whiteware fabric with grey core and white grey interior	13th-15th
039	066	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel in light brown fabric with light brown core	
039	066	1	Bodysherd with very abraded external surface in a pink red fabric	
040	070	6	Green glazed bodysherds in reduced grey fabric from jug (largest sherd has part of handle junction)	13th-15th
041	077	1	Rimsherd from splash glazed vessel in a Redware fabric (Scottish?)	
041	077	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel in a fine less gritty Redware fabric (Unid)	
041	077	2	Basesherds from splash glazed vessel in slightly gritty whiteware (Scottish?)	
041	077	1	Bodysherd from green brown glazed vessel in whiteware fabric	

041	077	1	Bodysherd from green glazed whiteware vessel (well glazed) Scottish?	
042	079	2	Joining pieces from abraded splash green glazed strap handle in a whiteware fabric (Scottish?)	13th-15th
042	079	5	Joining rimsherds, strap handle, decorative handle and bodysherd from splash green glazed jug (figure?) in reduced grey fabric (Scottish?)	13th-15th
042	079	1	Thumbled handle junction from unglazed (?) vessel in red brown fabric with dark grey brown external surface (Unid)	
042	079	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel with vertical bovril strip in well sorted redware fabric	
042	079	2	Bodysherds from green glazed vessel in fabric with grey core and red brown internal surface (Scottish Redware?)	13th-15th
042	079	1	Bodysherd from unglazed vessel in blue grey fabric	
042	079	1	Rimsherd from unglazed vessel in a redware fabric	
042	079	1	Bodysherd from unglazed vessel in fabric with blue grey core and red external surface	
042	079	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel (well glazed) in a well sorted redware fabric (could be a Yorkshire Redware?)	13th/14th
043	080	1	Basal angle from splash glazed jug with occasional thumb marks on basal angle, traces of external white slip in a reduced grey redware fabric with an external red brown surface (traces of purple heat skin) (Scottish Redware)	13th-15th
043	080	4	Basal angle and bodysherds from splash glazed jug in a hard well sorted slightly gritty whiteware fabric	
043	080	1	Bodysherd from a splash glazed vessel in a redware fabric with a grey core and an internal light brown surface and an external light brown surface (Unid)	
043	080	1	Bodysherd in a Redware fabric with a blue grey core and interior and a light brown external surface, traces of splashed glaze	13th-15th
043	080	1	Bodysherd from green glazed vessel with reduced grey fabric	13th-15th
043	080	1	Rimsherd from splash glazed vessel (Scottish Redware)	13th-15th
043	080	3	Joining pieces of rim and bridge spout from splash glazed jug in gritty whiteware fabric with light red brown in and ext surfaces. Fabric has distinctive black inclusions. (Unid)	13th/14th
044	086	1	Bodysherd from green glazed jug (well glazed) in micaceous reduced grey fabric (Scot Red?)	13th-15th
044	086	1	Bodysherd from green brown glazed jug (well glazed) in fabric with grey core and light brown internal surface (Scot Red?)	13th-15th
044	086	1	Small unglazed sherd in gritty whiteware fabric with light brown external surface (Scottish Whiteware?)	13th-15th
	path	1	Abraded Scottish Redware bodysherd grey core and interior red brown exterior with slight traces of splashed glaze	14th/15th



045	Tower	1	Rim, neck and sidewalls from green glazed jug with attached complete strap handle raised horizontal cordons similar to <035> fabric is micaceous has occasional burnt out inclusions and is reduced grey with light red brown surface	15th/16th
	Total	280		

## 5.2 Metal Finds                      Andrew Morrison

### *Introduction*

A metal finds assemblage comprising 150 artefacts (Mass: 3,329.0g) was recovered during recent excavations at Tarbert Castle, in Tarbert, Argyll. The castle is situated atop a promontory along the southeastern side of East Loch Tarbert, with its original construction thought to date from around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and a long history of occupation, use, and alterations taking place through the 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (RCAHMS 1971, 180-2). The assemblage comprises ferrous and non-ferrous metals (largely copper alloys, but also lead and tin.

The metal finds assemblage is dominated by building fixtures and fittings, including 81 nails and a number of clench bolts and roves, and also includes coins, dress accessories, copper alloy sheet metal repair patches with paperclip rivets, knives, utensils, and other household items, tools, and security items. Many of the finds are long-lived types and cannot be closely dated, however of the ones to which a broad period can be assigned, the assemblage is split into two distinct groups: those associated with medieval and early post-medieval features approximately 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century in date, and those associated with contexts attributed to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Condition*

The ferrous and non-ferrous metal assemblages display varying degrees of post-deposition corrosion ranging from light corrosion, to being completely obscured by heavy corrosion and concretions and visible through x-ray analysis only. The majority of the assemblage, however, displays only moderate corrosion (though in some instances, still active) with the object forms clearly visible and the original surfaces remaining. Only in a few cases were the finds corroded beyond the point of positive identification. A large number of the finds also survive intact with very little post-deposition damage or distortion which also aided in their identification.

### *Contextual analysis*

The metal finds from Tarbert Castle were retrieved from a total of 16 separate contexts from approximately six different areas including the castle's inner and outer baileys, the portcullis gateway, and a medieval oven feature. The vast majority of the finds (almost 50%) were retrieved from context (027) which is described as an occupation/midden deposit above the floor level of the Inner Bailey.

Grouped by area, the majority of finds were retrieved from the Inner Bailey (51.4%), followed by the medieval oven feature (17.6%), the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure (16.9%), the Outer Bailey (4.0%), and the Portcullis Gateway (1.2%). Table 2 below lists the total quantity of finds retrieved by context and area, with the percentage of the total quantity of the assemblage they represent.

Context	Area	Quantity
003	No context information	1
007	17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	16
012	17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	8
013	Portcullis gateway	2
017	17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	1
023	Outer Bailey midden	6
026	rubble infill	1
027	Inner Bailey floor deposit	75
031	Medieval oven	4
034	Inner Bailey floor deposit	1
038	Medieval oven	11
048	Medieval oven	11
065	Outer Bailey	6
066	Inner Bailey	2
067	Charcoal spread	3
070	Inner Bailey floor deposit	3
<i>Total</i>		<i>150</i>

*Table 2: Quantity of metal finds retrieved by context with area*

### *Classifications*

The assemblage comprises both ferrous and non-ferrous metal artefacts, including 122 iron finds, 26 in copper alloy, one in lead, and one possibly in tin. As some of the finds are adhered to one another in corroded masses, some individual measurements and weights were not obtainable, including the tin strip mentioned above (Cat.229.3). Table 3 below illustrates the quantity and mass divided by material classification.

Material	Quantity	Mass (g)
Iron	122	3,245
Copper Alloy	27	76.5
Lead	1	8.0
Tin	1	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>3,329.5</i>

*Table 3: Quantity and mass by material of metal finds under discussion*

### *The Non-ferrous metal finds*

The non-ferrous metal finds assemblage comprises 28 objects (Mass: 75.5g) recovered from five separate contexts. The majority of the finds are in copper alloy (Q: 26), with one lead object, and one likely tin object also recovered.

### *Copper Alloy*

The copper alloy assemblage is made up of 26 objects, and includes: eight coins, three sheet vessel repair patches with *in situ* staple rivets (Cat.149) and 10 fragments of cold working waste including staple rivets and sheet off-cuts, one composite strap-end plate (Cat.144), one pin shank fragment (Cat.269), and three non-diagnostic sheet fragments possibly associated with cold sheet metal working.

### *Coins*

A total of eight coins were recovered from two separate contexts: one from context (003), and seven from the floor deposit (007) within the western room of Structure 1. The coins are all copper alloy, and range in condition from lightly corroded and completely legible, to heavily worn and corroded and completely illegible. Two of the coins (Cat.165 and Cat.166), though heavily worn and corroded, are still partially legible, with enough of the design elements visible to suggest a possible ruler, date, and denomination. The coins recovered are all Scottish coins, spanning in date from 1559-1668, and represent the reigns of Mary, Queen of Scots, Charles the 1<sup>st</sup>, and Charles the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The coin retrieved from context (003) is a copper billion lion/hardhead of Mary Queen of Scots, and Francis (Cat.154) with a crown over an FM monogram with two flanking dolphins facing left on the obverse, and a crowned lion rampant facing left on the reverse. These coins were issued in 1559-1560 following the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to the French Dauphin Francis in 1558. The Tarbert example dates to late 1559-1560 where the coins were minted with the flanking dolphins facing left instead of right as on the earlier coins (Holmes 1998, 42). This coin also bears the countermark of the crest of the Earl of Morton, a star within a heart, that was applied in 1575 under Act of Parliament signifying this coin as legal tender which was a necessary measure due to the large number of forgeries of this coin, as well as others, in circulation at the time (ibid, 46).

The remaining seven coins are all from the floor deposit (007) within the western room of Structure 1, which has been interpreted as dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The coins are all from the reigns of Charles I and Charles II, and date from between 1632 and 1668 which matches with the period assigned to the structure. These coins comprise three 'Stirling' turner twopence of Charles I with a crown above CIIR on the obverse and a thistle on the reverse, issued between 1632 and 1639 (Cat.160, Cat.162, and Cat.163), two heavily worn copper turners of Charles I, likely third issues from between 1643-1650 (Cat.165 and Cat.166), a copper turner of Charles II issued between 1663 and 1668 (Cat.161), and one coin that is completely illegible, though based on size, shape, and composition, is likely to date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Cat.164).

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.154 Context (003)

A Scottish copper billion lion/hardhead of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Francis.

Diameter: 14.0mm, weight: 0.7g

Moderately corroded, crown over FM monogram and two flanking dolphins facing left on the obverse. Suggestion of a worn and corroded crowned lion rampant facing left on the reverse. Bears a countermark in the form of a star within a heart of the Earl of Morton. Issued late 1559-1560, countermarked 1575.

#### Cat.160 Context (007)

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner twopence of Charles I.

Diameter: 15.9mm, weight: 0.6g

Moderately corroded with some surface loss. Crown above CIIR on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Issued 1632-1639..



Cat.161 Context (007)

A Scottish copper turner of Charles II.

Diameter: 19.5mm, weight: 1.7g

Moderately corroded with some surface loss. Crown above CR II on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Issued 1663-1668.

Cat.162 Context (007)

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner twopence of Charles I.

Diameter: 15.8mm, weight: 0.8g

Partially obscured by moderate corrosion. Crown above CIIR on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Issued 1632-1639.

Cat.163 Context (007)

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner twopence of Charles I.

Diameter: 15.7mm, weight: 0.6g

Partially obscured by moderate corrosion. Crown above CIIR on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Issued 1632-1639.

Cat.164 Context (007)

Illegible.

Diameter: 17.1mm, weight: 0.9g

Heavy wear and moderate corrosion. Very little of original surface remains. Form suggests a 17<sup>th</sup> century date.

Cat.165 Context (007)

Likely Scottish copper turner of Charles I.

Diameter: 17.9mm, weight: 1.9g

Heavy wear and corrosion making the coin almost completely illegible. Very faint crown above CR on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Likely 3<sup>rd</sup> issue, 1643-1650.

Cat.166 Context (007)

Likely Scottish copper turner of Charles I.

Diameter: 18.5mm, weight: 1.2g

Heavy pitting and corrosion making the coin almost completely illegible. Very faint crown above CR on the obverse, and a thistle on the reverse. Likely 3<sup>rd</sup> issue, 1643-1650.

### *Dress Accessories*

The dress accessories identified amongst the assemblage include an angle-ended plate from a composite strap-end (Cat.144) retrieved from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floor level of the Inner Bailey, and a circular sectioned pin shank and tip fragment (Cat.269), recovered from a cesspit context (017) associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure 1. The pin fragment may be from a wound wire-headed pin or similar dress pin and is not closely dateable.

The strap-end plate (Cat.144) was likely part of a composite strap-end that would have had a sheet spacer spanning the whole width of the base. This type of strap-end is considered a relatively short-lived type,

with the 12 examples that were excavated from sites in London all dating exclusively from 14<sup>th</sup> century deposits (Pritchard 2002, 148 and 147, fig.96, 692, 694). This type of strap-end would have been used to protect the end of a fabric or leather belt measuring around 8.2mm in width.

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.144 Context (027), Composite strap-end plate

Straight attachment edge tapering to an angled end. Undecorated. Two rivet holes centrally located, one at each end. Marks from iron rivet heads survive on the strap-end face. Likely part of a composite strap-end with sheet spacer occupying the whole width. Likely 14<sup>th</sup> century. L: 19.7mm, W: 6.1mm – 8.2mm, Th: 1.0mm, Hole Diam: 1.2mm, Mass: 1.6g.

#### Cat.269, Context (017), Pin shank

Pin shank and tip, likely from a wound wire-headed pin. Circular section. Not closely dateable, though most likely post-medieval. L: 14.0mm, Diam: 0.9mm, Mass: 0.01g.).

### *Sheet vessel repair patches and cold metalworking waste*

A number of finds were recovered that indicate that the cold metalworking of copper alloy sheet and the repairing of vessels was taking place on site. These objects include three sheet vessel repair patches with *in-situ* paperclip rivets (Cat.149.1, Cat.149.2 and Cat.149.3), three separate paperclip rivets (Cat.149.4, Cat.343 and Cat. 364), a cut sheet fragment (Cat.149.7), and three sheet vessel repair patch fragments (Cat.149.5, and Cat.149.6).

The finds were all retrieved from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) above the floor level of the Inner Bailey, apart from (Cat.343) which was retrieved from the occupation deposit (066) from the floor of the Inner Bailey.

The three sheet vessel repair patches are thin, relatively large irregular sections with *in-situ* paperclip rivets and display possible creases formed by the vessel they were intended to repair, though each display additional post-depositional distortion. The sheet fragments are likely to have joined with one another and in an overlapping manner, as is evidenced by the differential staining on the individual sections and the two fragments that are still joined by paperclip rivets (Cat.149.3). Individual hammer marks are visible in the x-ray, arranged in regular columns to thin-out and shape the copper alloy sheet. Two of the fragments display regular, finished straight edges; one of these (Cat.149.2) has four straight edges, two meeting at a 90-degree angle and two meeting at 45-degree angles. The remaining edges are either scalloped, possibly intentionally or as a product of hammering and thinning or have been lost to corrosion. Unfortunately, there is no overall discernible form indicated by these fragments that might indicate the type of vessel these patches were intended to repair; the staining on the fragments suggests that they were used on or over the hearth, therefore a vessel such as a cauldron or pan seems plausible.

The paperclip rivets are formed by the folding over of lozenge-shaped copper alloy sheet off-cuts and are used to repair vessels either individually for small flaws or in conjunction with repair patches for larger areas of damage (Cox 2004a, 60). Paperclip rivets work by feeding the tapered ends of the rivet through a punched rectangular slot, either in the vessel or the repair patch, and flattening and pinching either end to

create a fix. Paperclip rivets are not considered to be closely dateable, as they are known from contexts dating from the Saxon period up to and throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Egan 2005, 101).

Evidence for the cold metalworking of copper alloy sheet is almost ubiquitous on medieval and early post-medieval sites where the conditions allow for the good preservation of metals (ibid, 133). Though finds of sheet off-cuts and even paperclip rivets are relatively common, the recovery of larger sections of sheet repair patches with *in-situ* paperclip rivets are far less so.

Paperclip rivets together with repair patches have been uncovered on a number of Scottish sites including: Meal Vennel, Perth (Cox 1996, 768, illus.19, No.115-6, 144), Perth High Street (Goodall 2012, 108, illus.123, 124), and from late 14<sup>th</sup> to late 15<sup>th</sup> century contexts at Canal Street II in Perth (Ford 1987, 127-8, illus.63, 39-41), and also at Castlecliffe, in St. Andrews (Caldwell 1996, 636, illus.26, No.11), from 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century contexts at the Scottish Parliament site in Edinburgh (Cox & Hall 2008, 45, fig.3.26, 35), in situ on substantially intact vessels from Dowalton Loch, Dumfries and Galloway (Hunter 1994) and from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century contexts at Portmahomack, on the Tarbat peninsula (Carver et al 2016, 315), *inter alia*.

## Catalogue

### Cat.145 Context (027)

Thin, rectangular sheet. One terminal folded over into a loop. Non-diagnostic. Not closely dateable. L: 0.9mm, W: 8.7mm, Th: 0.4mm, Mass: 0.5g.)

### Cat.146 Context (027)

Thin sheet fragment. Cut triangular strip with slightly curled end. Likely trimming. Not closely dateable. L: 33.5mm, W: 5.1mm, Th: 0.5mm, Mass: 0.4g. Context (27): Occupation/ midden deposit from above the floors of the Inner Bailey.

### Cat.147 Context (027)

Thin sheet fragment. Half of a crescent-shaped off-cut. Iron corrosion on one face. Not closely dateable. L: 30.6mm, W: 8.4mm, Th: 0.5mm, Mass: 0.9g.

### Cat.148 Context (027)

Thin sheet fragment. Crescent-shaped off-cut. Possible staple rivet. Not closely dateable. L: 33.6mm, W: 7.0mm, Th: 0.5mm, Mass: 0.6g.

### Cat.149.1 Context (027)

Sheet vessel repair patch with in-situ paperclip rivets. Irregular linear fragment with undulating or scalloped edges. No discernible vessel form. Possible intentional crease, though the patch is crinkled, torn, and distorted. Some lustrous bronze sheen remaining. Three paperclip rivets in situ, all different sizes, and two punched rectangular holes now torn and lacking rivets. Hammer marks from flattening sheet visible on x-ray. Differential staining suggests the patches were overlapping. Likely medieval. L: 188.2mm, W: 49.7mm – 72.2mm, Th: 0.3mm, Rivet W: 9.6mm - 22.5mm, Mass: 20.8g

### Cat.149.2 Context (027)

Sheet vessel repair patch with in-situ paperclip rivets. Irregular, slightly trapezoidal fragment with four finished straight edges- three meeting at two 45 degree angles and two meeting at a 90 degree angle, and one irregular



edge. No discernible vessel form. Five paperclip rivets in situ and two empty punched rectangular rivet holes spaced along the finished straight edges. Patch is slightly bent and distorted, with differential staining suggesting the patches were overlapping. Hammer marks from flattening sheet visible on x-ray. Likely medieval. L: 142.0mm, W: 16.2mm – 54.9mm, Th: 0.5mm, Rivet W: 10.5mm - 11.5mm, Mass: 20.9g.

#### Cat.149.3 Context (027)

Two fragments of attached and overlapping sheet vessel repair patches fastened with paperclip rivets. Two large paperclip rivets in-situ within the base fragment, and two smaller rivets joining the smaller fragment to the larger below. Irregular fragments with only one straight edge intact and no discernible form. Patches are crinkled and distorted with some loss to corrosion, and hammer marks from flattening sheet are visible on x-ray. Likely medieval. L: 119.3mm, W: 53.6mm – 82.6mm, Th: 0.4mm, Rivet W: 7.7mm - 20.6mm, Mass: 13.4g.

#### Cat.149.4 Context (027)

Cut lozenge-shaped sheet folded over on itself and pinched mid-length. Likely medieval. L: 20.1mm, W: 10.1mm, Th: 0.5mm, Mass: 0.7g.

#### Cat.149.5 Context (027)

Small fragment of sheet vessel repair patch with scalloped edge and staining from overlapping sheet. Likely medieval. L: 31.3mm, W: 17.1mm, Th: 0.4mm, Mass: 0.3g.

#### Cat.149.6 Context (027)

Small, irregular fragments of a sheet vessel repair patch with staining from an overlapping sheet. Likely medieval. L: 20.3mm, W: 18.1mm, Th: 0.3mm, Mass: 0.4g.

#### Cat.149.7 Context (027)

Irregular fragment of cut copper alloy sheet with shear marks along one edge and an undulating surface. Likely medieval. L: 27.5mm, W: 22.8mm, Th: 1.1mm, Mass: 2.2g.

#### Cat.343 Context (066)

Thin sheet fragment. Crescent-shaped off-cut, bent over width-ways. Possible paperclip rivet. Not closely dateable. L: 14.8mm, W: 5.7mm, Th: 0.2mm, Mass: 0.1g.

#### Cat.364 Context (027)

Cut lozenge-shaped sheet folded over on itself. Likely medieval. L: 21.1mm, W: 20.1mm, Th: 0.5mm, Mass: 0.1g.

### *Non-diagnostic*

Three of the copper alloy finds recovered are classed as non-diagnostic, meaning that they cannot be identified to perform a specific function or definitively grouped into a particular object category. The finds were all recovered from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey, and comprise: a thin rectangular sheet strip (Cat.142) with a slight S-shaped profile and a rectangular indentation at one end, a slightly curled tapering sheet fragment (Cat.143) with two small triangular tabs folded beneath, and a heavily corroded sheet fragment folded into a triangular packet (Cat.275). Though their function is not readily apparent, there is a possibility that they may be associated with cold sheet

metal working similar to the other working waste and repair patches retrieved from the same context (027).

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.142 Context (027)

Thin sheet strip. Flat rectangular with slight S-shape section. Long edges are cut, as is one terminus. Other terminus broken. Small linear indentation on one face near cut terminus. Iron corrosion on face opposite indentation. Non-diagnostic. Not closely dateable. L: 21.7mm, W: 7.8mm, Th: 0.8mm, Mass: 0.9g.

#### Cat.143 Context (027)

Flat sheet cut to form a tapering rectangle. One flat terminus, two sides expanding to slightly concave terminus. Curled slightly upwards at short end. Underside has triangular tab bent under on one long side close to convex end and one smaller triangular tab folded over to one side on convex end. Possible wood remnants underneath. Non-diagnostic. Not closely dateable. L: 19.7mm, W: 6.1mm – 8.2mm, Th: 0.3mm, Mass: 0.5g.

#### Cat.275 Context (027)

Heavily corroded sheet fragment with iron corrosion staining. Folded packet, roughly triangular in shape. Non-diagnostic. Not closely dateable. L: 22.7mm, W: 21.0mm, Th: 6.8mm, Mass: 2.9g.

### *Lead*

One lead or lead alloy object (Cat.141) was recovered from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey. The find has a thin, semi-circular base with a rectangular sectioned stem protruding from the top. There are fold marks at the stem and base junction where the material was pinched to form the stem, and linear irregular scratches along one face of the base. The stem is broken at the top, and an even horizontal cut or tear with burrs forms the long edge of the base.

This find most likely represents the junction between the lower portion of the stem and the top portion of the bowl of a lead spoon. The shape formed by the junction between the stem and the bowl, the profile of the stem, and the bowl form displayed on the Tarbert example are all consistent with lead spoons dating from between the 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Egan 2005, 2010). Lead spoons of the medieval and early post-medieval periods tended to have long, thin, gently tapering stems with different-shaped sections including triangular, hexagonal, trapezoidal, and rectangular amongst others, and are sometimes finished with a decorative knop at the tip. Spoon bowls can take a number of different shapes, including rounded, oval, fig-shaped, and pointed (Egan 2010, 246). Spoon bowl profiles also vary from deeply dished as in modern spoons, to more shallow and even flat which may have had more specialized uses at the dinner table, where it has been suggested that they could have been used for softer foods and the serving of salt (*ibid*, 245).

The fragment from Tarbert fits with the established spoon typologies in that it displays the base of a narrow, rectangular sectioned stem, expanding to the top of a curved, flat bowl. The Tarbert fragment also displays linear scratch-marks on the bowl surface, possibly through use, that have been shown on other examples excavated from early to mid-16th century contexts from riverside sites in Southwark, London (Egan 2005, 110, fig.100, 527). A number of 16<sup>th</sup> century spoons recovered from Southwark also display a tear along the top of the bowl near to the stem junction (*ibid*, 133, fig.103, 546), or bowl fragments with missing tops and stems and a tear along the same area (*ibid*, 115, fig.106, 553), indicates that the top of the

spoon bowl near to the stem junction was a weak point that was prone to bending and breaking which explains the tear with burrs along the base of the Tarbert example.

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.141 Context (027)

Likely spoon fragment. Base of stem and top portion of bowl surviving. Stem is rectangular in section (W: 5.7mm, Th: 2.3mm), with visible folds shaping the top portion of the bowl. Straight tear along the top portion of the bowl, retains some burrs. Light scratch-marks present on bowl surface. H: 35.6mm, W: 38.2mm, Bowl Th: 0.7mm, Mass: 8.0g.

### *Tin*

One possible tin fragment was recovered from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey. The fragment (Cat.229.3) is a long, narrow, and thin strip with tapering terminal that is part of an amalgam of iron finds adhered to one another through corrosion (Cat.229). Possibly working waste or inlay, only one terminal is visible protruding from the mass, however, x-ray analysis shows the strip to be relatively long and loosely wound in a bundle.

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.229.3 Context (027)

Possibly tin, long, thin cut strip. Part of a composite of objects adhered through corrosion. Xray indicates a small wound bundle of thin tin stripping within the iron corrosion. The protruding tip tapers to a point. Non-diagnostic. Not closely dateable. W: 2.6mm, Th: 0.3mm.

### *The Ferrous metal finds*

The ferrous metal assemblage comprises 121 objects (Mass: 3,214.5g) recovered from 14 separate contexts and a number of amalgams, particularly from context (027), adhered together through corrosion.

The iron assemblage is dominated by nails, and to a lesser extent, clench bolts and roves. Other building fixtures and furniture fittings were also retrieved, as well as a number of household items and tools, knives, a lock and key, and a number of unidentifiable or non-diagnostic fragments. These finds represent items associated with the day-to-day use and habitation of Tarbert Castle during the medieval and post-medieval periods, and in the large percentage of nails and clench bolts and roves, may reflect episodes of structural alterations and repairs.

The ferrous metal finds were recovered from a number of different areas, including the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure (007) and (012), the inner bailey (013), (027), (034), (066), and (070), outer bailey (065), oven feature (031), (038), and (048), and fire installation (067). Iron finds were also retrieved from contexts (023) and (026) for which there was no information available.

### *Knives*

A total of six knives or knife fragments were recovered, including four associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure (a likely scale tang handle fragment (Cat.82.1), two intact or largely intact whittle tang knives (Cat.185 and Cat.186), and a possible table knife blade (Cat.191)) and two associated with earlier deposits from the inner bailey and the medieval oven feature (a non-diagnostic blade fragment (Cat.229.2) and a



possibly serrated blade tip (Cat.299.2). On medieval sites, knives are generally one of the most common tools recovered, when preservation permits, as they were carried by large numbers of people as general-purpose tools, including for eating and also at times, for self-defence (Franklin & Goodall 2012, 132).

Knives can be broadly divided into two categories: whittle tang knives, which have a long and thin tang extending from the blade back that is inserted into the handle, and scale tang knives, which have broad tangs forming the core of the handle to which grip plates are attached via rivets. Knives can also be difficult to classify as their forms do not always coincide with their use, and it may be that the design was selected based on the taste of the smith or the consumer. Also, it can be difficult to assess the degree of change from its original form the blade has undergone, either through wear, damage, or excessive sharpening. Because of the inconsistencies of the blade, the blade back is most often used to classify knives, as it is one of the knife's most distinct features, is less likely to have undergone change through use, and is more robust so more likely to withstand the effects of weathering and corrosion (Ottaway 1992, 559).

A widely used typology when classifying medieval knives is that set out by Ian Goodall based on 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century excavated assemblages from across Britain. Goodall subdivided whittle tang and scale tang knives based on blade back form and the angle at which they run in relation to the cutting edge and meet with the blade tip (Goodall 2011, 106, fig.8.2). As knives are long-lived tool types that saw very little change over time from the Iron-Age to modern periods, this typology can apply to a much broader period of time. It should however be noted that though whittle tang knives are the earliest form and continue in use throughout history, scale tang knives begin to appear from around the mid to late 14<sup>th</sup> century and start to outnumber whittle tang knives from around the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is likely attributable to their greater strength (Franklin & Goodall 2012, 132).

Four of the knives and knife fragments recovered from Tarbert Castle were retrieved from deposits associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure. These include a largely intact whittle tang knife (Cat.185) classified as a Goodall Type G, where the cutting edge rises up to meet the tip of a straight back, and an intact whittle tang knife (Cat.186) classified as a Goodall Type C, where the cutting edge rises to the tip, rounding to a point. The Type C knife (Cat.186) is of considerable interest as the analysis of the X-ray suggests a possible 'S' possibly followed by another illegible letter, in what may be inlaid metal to the rear of the blade near the tang, although conservation to clean the surfaces would be required to confirm this detail. This may be the identifying mark of the cutler who made it, but it is most likely the monogram of the knife's owner. A scale tang handle fragment with bi-lobed terminal (Cat.182.1) was also recovered from the same context (007) as the knives mentioned above. Also retrieved from an occupation deposit (012) associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure is what is interpreted as a table knife blade (Cat.191) which has a slightly curving concave back and an abrupt tip that drops slightly before rounding outward to the cutting surface.

The two other blade fragments were recovered from contexts associated with medieval activity, though in themselves are not diagnostic. A section of blade broken before the tip and the tang (Cat.229.2) was noted within an amalgam of corroded finds recovered from the inner bailey (027), and a small, possibly serrated blade tip (Cat.299.2) was recovered from the medieval oven feature (038).

## *Catalogue*

### Cat.182.1 Context (007)

Possible scale tang knife handle. Irregular flat rectangular strap with two visible and one partial square punched perforations (c.4.0mm x 4.0mm). Bi-lobed terminal, one side slightly larger than the other. Handle is broken prior to the blade. Not closely dateable. L: 121.1mm, W: 26.2mm – 33.0mm, Th: 3.3mm, Perforations: 4.0mm x 4.0mm, 44.5mm apart. Mass: 59.1g.

### Cat.185 Context (007)

Whittle tang knife. Goodall Type G. Cutting edge of blade rises up to meet the tip of a straight back. Broken tang, with folded in sides, rising up to abrupt shoulder. Robust back. Rounded choil and irregular cutting edge. Broken tip. Not closely dateable. L: 150.9mm, Blade L: 131.0mm, Blade H: 22.6mm, Th: 6.2mm, Mass: 44.3g.

### Cat.186 Context (007)

Whittle tang knife. Intact. Goodall Type C. Flat, straight back. Cutting edge rises to the tip, rounding to a point. Short shoulder and sloping choil. Thin, slightly bent tang. 'S' in possible inlay on blade forward of tang, visible through x-ray. Not closely dateable, likely post-medieval. L: 133.4mm, Blade L: 78.9mm, Blade H: 19.7mm, Tang L: 52.7mm, W: 9.2mm, Th: 3.5mm – 5.6mm, Mass: 23.3g.

### Cat.191 Context (012)

Blade fragment with straight to slightly concave back, rising to abrupt tip that drops slightly before rounding outward to the cutting surface. Cutting surface is intact and tapers inwards towards break. Possible groove along side parallel to blade back. Broken before shoulder and choil. Potentially a table knife. Not closely dateable, though likely post-medieval. L: 97.7mm, H: 16.5mm, Th: 4.2mm, Mass: 21.5g.

### Cat.229.2 Context (027)

Blade fragment with V-shaped section. Tip and tang broken. Part of a composite of objects adhered through corrosion. Not closely dateable. L: 42.9mm, W: 14.2mm, Th: 3.3mm.

### Cat.299.2 Context (038)

Triangular blade tip with rounded end. Potentially serrated. Torqued and snapped. Not closely dateable. L: 24.4mm, W: 13.3mm, Th: 1.7mm, Mass: 1.3g.

## *Building ironwork and furniture fittings*

The classification encompasses all of the iron fixtures and fittings associated with the structural components of a building and the doors, windows, and furniture it contains. Of the iron objects recovered from Tarbert Castle, this classification includes a large assemblage of nails and clench bolts and roves (which will be discussed further below), as well as a spiked bar (Cat.194), a wedge (Cat.231.1), two stapled hasps (Cat.224 and Cat. 235.3), and a possible hinge strap (Cat.248.1).

The spiked bar (Cat.194) was recovered from the midden/ occupation layer (012) associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure, and is a long, thin and narrow bar with a circular sectioned central portion with an extending arm on either side, one rectangular in section with a broken tip, and the other diamond-shaped in section with a pointed tip. The interpretation of this object is not certain, however it seems plausible that it was used as a complement to the castle's masonry acting, likely in series with others of the same type, as a spiked barrier embedded in the masonry to act as an access deterrent; another spiked bar of similar size

and form was recovered from Dryslwyn Castle, in Wales, was interpreted as such (Goodall 2007, 172, fig.6.12, M65).

Other finds recovered include: a wedge (Cat.231.1), a stapled hasp (Cat.224), and a possible stapled hasp (Cat.235.3) from the occupation/ midden deposit from above the floors of the inner bailey (027), and a possible hinge strap (Cat.248.1) from a door hinge or similar, from the rake-out material of the medieval oven-feature (048). The wedge, though a common tool used in many trades including woodworking, is similar in size and shape to one found at Dryslwyn Castle that was interpreted as having been used with building construction, inserted into masonry to help strengthen any weak points (ibid, 171).

Another object of note is the stapled hasp (Cat.224) recovered from the same context (027). Stapled hasps were used together with locks to fasten chests, caskets, and doors (Goodall 2011, 167). The Tarbert example can be categorized as a Goodall Type 1, which is a stapled hasp fixed to the chest by an end loop and a U-shaped eye acting as a lock catch. Similar examples to (Cat.244) have been recovered from early to mid-13<sup>th</sup> century contexts at Oxford (ibid, 214-5, fig.9.25, H573), and early to mid-12<sup>th</sup> century contexts at Winchester (ibid, H574).

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.194 Context (012)

Spiked bar. Long, thin bar, with slight upwards bend. Three distinct sections: one arm diamond-shaped in section terminating in a pointed tip (L: 118.0mm, W: 9.5mm, Th: 9.0mm), central portion (L: 39.2mm) has a circular section 8.8mm in diameter, and other arm is rectangular in section, tapering lightly to a damaged tip (L: 130.0mm, W: 8.5mm, Th: 5.0mm). Function uncertain; possibly embedded in masonry to deter access. Not closely dateable. Overall L: 292.7mm, Mass: 63.9g.

#### Cat.224 Context (027)

Stapled hasp fragment. End-loop Goodall Type 1. End loop has rounded expanded sides and a protruding rectangular tab at the top. Circular hole with possible tapering groove below. Body narrows before expanding to possible leaf-shaped tip. Retains off-centre U-shaped eye. Tip broken. Possibly 13<sup>th</sup> century. L: 56.1mm, W: 15.4mm – 19.6mm, Th: 1.3mm, Hole Diam: 4.5mm, U-shaped eye: H: 8.1mm, W: 14.5mm, Th: c.5.1mm, Mass: 10.3g.

#### Cat.231.1 Context (027)

Wedge with flat rectangular top and slightly burred head, tapering on both faces to a convex tip. Moderate corrosion with heavy concretions. Identification aided by x-ray analysis. Not closely dateable, but similar wedge from Dryslwyn Castle, Wales dated to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. H: 58.6mm, W: 21.6mm, Th: 19.7mm, Mass: 92.9.

#### Cat.235.3 Context (027)

Dumbbell-shaped hasp formed from flat sheet. Two circular lobes connected by a stout strip. Possible hole in centre of one lobe visible through x-ray. Part of an amalgam of objects adhered through corrosion. Not closely dateable. L: 66.6mm, Th: 2.0mm, Smaller lobe Diam: 27.7mm, Strip W: 13.6mm, Larger lobe Diam: 30.0mm.

#### Cat.248.1 Context (048)

Tapering flat rectangular sectioned perforated bar fragment. Possible hasp. Remnants of two square holes, one at each break. Not closely dateable. L: 90.3mm, W: 27.0mm – 31.8mm, Th; 5.6mm, Mass: 65.4g.

#### *Nails*

A total of 83 nails were recovered from 12 contexts at Tarbert Castle, by far the most numerous of the finds types represented within this assemblage. A full catalogue of these finds are presented in the archive and are summarised in Table 4 below. The majority of the nails (Q: 35, c.43%) were recovered from the occupation/midden deposit from above floors of inner bailey (027), with a further four coming from other contexts within the inner bailey (contexts (013), (034), (066), (070), 6 from the outer bailey (065), 22 from the medieval oven feature (031), (038) and (048), three from the fire installation (067), 5 from the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure (007) and (012), and six from context (023) a mixed midden deposit within trench 1 in the outer bailey.

A total of 14 out of 83 of the nails remain intact, with further examples classifiable where the head form was visible. In a few instances, the presence of mineralized wood was observed as incorporated within the corrosion product, but in some cases it was not clear if this wood represented the remains of the timber fixture or indirectly associated wood incorporated in the corrosion due to proximity post-deposition.

Nails are ubiquitous on settlement sites, with hand-wrought nails being long-lived types that saw very little change over time, and as such, most nail forms are not closely dateable. Nails are typically classified using well-established nail typologies constructed to categorise large and well stratified excavated assemblages. A more general nail typology often used, was created by Goodall based on nail assemblages from large medieval excavations at Waltham Abbey, in Essex, and Ospringe and Stonar, in Kent (2011). Here, nails are divided into broad types based on head form and size. Following Goodall's typology, the classifiable nails recovered from Tarbert Castle can be divided into five different types. By far the most numerous are the Type 1 nails, characterized by their square, rectangular, or rounded flat heads, of which 28 examples from seven separate contexts were identified. Two examples of Type 2 nails- having circular or rounded rectangular domed heads- were recovered from two separate contexts, one Type 3 nail with a flat, narrow rectangular head, one Type 5 nail with a flat head in a figure of eight shape, and one Type 6 nail with a flat rectangular head formed by a flaring, wedge-shaped shank were also recovered (see Table 3).

Nail head and shank forms were recorded with measurements, as well as the overall condition of the nail, for example if the shank is straight, slightly bent, bent in an L-shape or an S-shape, or if the tip is clenched, which can all help to indicate whether the nails had been removed from their fixtures, perhaps for salvage, or if their fixtures had rotted with the nails *in-situ*. Of the identifiable examples, 16 of the nails have straight shanks, 23 have slightly bent shanks, three have been heavily bent 90 degrees, two have been bent in an S-shape, and three have clenched tips.



Nail Type	Total Quantity	Intact	Contexts
Type 1	29	9	(007) (027) (031) (034) (048) (065) (066) (070)
Type 2	2	1	(013) (027)
Type 3	1	-	(070)
Type 5	1	1	(027)
Type 6	1	1	(027)
Non-classifiable	49	2	(007) (012) (023) (027) (031) (038) (048) (065) (067)
<i>Total</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>14</i>	

*Table 4: Quantity of nails retrieved by type with number of intact examples and associated contexts*

### *Clench bolts and roves*

This category of fitting encompasses nails with clenched tips that are used in conjunction with iron plates known as roves to secure two pieces of timber together. The clenched nail secured the two layers together, while the rove prevented the nail from pulling through. Clench bolts and roves are common in shipbuilding, but are also commonly associated with doors, window covers, and well covers (Goodall 2007, 175; Thompson 2007, 175).

A total of 13 clench bolts and roves were recognised amongst the fittings, including four clenched nails with the roves still attached, and nine individual roves. The finds were retrieved from six separate contexts associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure (007) and (012), the inner bailey (027 and (070), the medieval oven feature (038), and one for which there is no information (026). The majority (Q:8) were recovered from the occupation/ midden deposit within the inner bailey (027), mostly roves both square and lozenge-shaped, with one intact clench bolt and rove recovered as well. The distance between the base of the head and rove for the intact examples is variable: (Cat.195.1) recovered from (012) is 33.2mm, for (Cat.201) recovered from (026) it's 66.3mm, and for (Cat.299.1) from (038) the distance is 20.7mm.

### *Locks and Keys*

Two finds within the assemblage can be categorized as pertaining to security and safe-keeping: the first, an intact key (Cat.190) recovered from the midden/ occupation layer (012) associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure, and the second, a U-shaped padlock bolt fragment (Cat.202) recovered from the occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey.

The key is partially obscured by heavy corrosion, though with the aid of x-ray analysis, it is shown to display a solid stem, pointed D-shaped bow formed from a bent rectangular strip and likely held in place by a rivet. The bit form is not entirely clear due to corrosion, but it appears to be solid with horizontal grooves cut on either side. This type of key is similar to a Goodall Type-H key, most likely dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later, and is similar to a late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup> century example from Winchester (Goodall 2011, 294, I578). This type of key would have been designed to be used from one side of the lock only.

The U-shaped padlock bolt (Cat.202) survives in two joining fragments, with the single spine curving around to a thin, tapering free arm. This type of padlock bolt is associated with barrel padlocks, and would have

been opened via a slide key designed to compress the spines (missing from this example) and free the bolt from its casing. Barrel padlocks are known from around the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD but are most commonly associated with the medieval period (Franklin & Goodall 2012, 151). The Tarbert example likely dates from around the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, with similar examples coming from the High Street, in Perth (ibid, 155, illus.139, 254), and from Lochmaben Castle in Dumfries and Galloway (Goodall 2011, 246-7, Fig.10.7, 145).

### *Catalogue*

#### Cat.190 Context (012)

Intact key with solid circular stem, and a pointed D-shaped bow formed from a bent strip and likely attached by a rivet. Tip possibly hollow. Bit form is visible through x-ray only, appearing solid with cut horizontal grooves on either side. Goodall Type H. Likely post-medieval. L: 78.2mm, Bow: H: 34.8mm, W: 6.2mm, Th: 3.1mm, Stem Diam: 7.0mm, Bit: H: 15.6mm, W: 14.6mm, Mass: 32.6g.

#### Cat.202 Context (027)

U-shaped padlock bolt in two fragments. Single spine with a possible expansion at its head. Spine is broken, bent and sheared at the break, and the leafspring is missing. Rectangular section spine, and a circular section free arm with slight step between. Survives in two joining fragments. Possibly 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. L: 79.1mm, W: 8.8mm, Th: 4.4mm-9.4mm, Free arm Diam: 5.0mm, Mass: 21.5g.

### *Household equipment*

Four items associated with the household furnishings and cooking activities were recognised. Two of the objects were recovered from contexts associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure: a possible vessel leg (Cat.184) from the floor of the floor of the western room in Structure 1 (007), a probable cast-iron cauldron body fragment (Cat.192) from the midden / occupation layer (012), and two of the objects were retrieved from the medieval occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey: an annular loop (Cat.225) possibly part of a chain (Cox 2004b, 66), and a flesh-hook (Cat.233).

The possible leg (Cat.184) may be associated with a fire grate, trivet stand, or similar object, though its exact use is unclear due to the fragmentary condition of the surviving fragment. A robust, tapering leg with rounded foot is fixed through a thin slightly curved sheet of iron, and the leg has been punched-through width-ways below the sheet and an iron peg has been inserted, presumably to help take the weight of the object and prevent the sheet fragment from sliding down the leg. This is likely a secondary repair intended to prolong the use of the object it is associated with.

The flesh-hook (Cat.233) is heavily corroded and distorted but can be categorised as a Goodall Type 1 flesh-hook, with two hooked arms set on a short, angled stem (Goodall 2011, 298). Flesh-hooks were principally used in cooking to extract meat from cooking pots while over the fire (ibid). Similar examples of two armed flesh-hooks are known from the Saxon and medieval manorial complex of Faccombe Netherton, in Hampshire (Goodall 1990, 418, fig.9.8, 400), from 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century context at Wroughton Copse in Wiltshire (Goodall 2011, 309, fig.11.4, J17), and 11<sup>th</sup> century context at Goltho Manor, in Lincolnshire (ibid, J15).

## *Catalogue*

### Cat.184 Context (007)

Repaired leg for fire grate or similar. Robust square sectioned tapering leg with rounded tip. Runs through flat slightly domed iron sheet fragment with possibly scalloped edges. May be part of a vessel or resting surface. Leg is punched through below sheet and a short length of iron rod is inserted, likely to take weight and prevent the surface from slipping down the leg. Not closely dateable. L: 108.7mm, Leg: W: 17.9mm x 19.0mm, Vessel L: 62.3, W: 45.0, Th: 4.1, Peg L: 45.3, W: 7.4, Mass: 153.9g.

### Cat.192 Context (012)

Plate vessel body fragment. Possible cauldron fragment with domed body with everted section likely leading to lip. Possible rivet visible through x-ray, may be a handle attachment. Possibly post-medieval. L: 154.0mm, H: 112.6mm, Th: 3.4mm, Mass: 464.7g.

### Cat.225 Context (027)

Small annular loop with circular section. Wood adhered through corrosion product. Diam: 17.0mm, Th: 3.2mm, Mass: 2.1g. Not closely dateable.

### Cat.233 Context (027)

Flesh-hook. Rectangular sectioned shank fragment split into two widely spaced arms. Both arms are broken, one surviving as a short stub, the other, longer, and bent inwards on itself. Not closely dateable, but most likely medieval. L: 51.1mm, W: 37.0mm, Th: 12.7mm, Arm Diam: 5.1mm, Mass: 43.2g.

## *Leatherworking Tool*

A single needle (Cat.274) was from the medieval occupation/ midden deposit (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey. This needle, though not closely dateable, is similar in size and form to needles associated with leatherworking, such as the 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century example from St Peter's Street, in Northampton (Goodall 2011, 75, fig.6.3, E60).

## *Catalogue*

### Cat.274 Context (027):

Possible needle. Circular section, slightly bent, tapering to a pointed tip. Top possibly flattened or ovoid in section, partially obscured by corrosion. Potentially associated with leatherworking. Not closely dateable. L: 44.1mm, Shank Diam: 3.3mm, Mass: 1.7g.

## *Non-diagnostic*

Eight iron objects are not readily classifiable due to their form or current condition. Two of the finds were retrieved from contexts associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure: a possible strap fragment (Cat.182.2) from the floor of the western room (007) in Structure 1, and a perforated strap fragment (Cat.193) recovered from the midden/ occupation deposit (012).

From the contexts associated with an earlier date, a robust, bolt-shaped object (Cat.243)- heavily corroded- was retrieved from the medieval oven feature (038), four bar fragments (Cat.206, Cat.215, Cat.234, and Cat.235.2) and one unidentifiable lump were retrieved from the medieval occupation/ midden deposits (013) and (027) from above the floors of the inner bailey, and one unidentifiable lump (Cat.193) was recovered from Occupation/midden deposit from above floors of inner bailey.

## *Catalogue*

### Cat.182.2 Context (007):

Possible strap fragment. Flat irregular rectangle in shape. One slightly rounded terminal and one straight side. Other sides are broken. Not closely dateable. L: 32.4mm, W: 32.6mm, Th: 3.4mm, Mass: 8.7g.

### Cat.193 Context (012)

Perforated strap fragment. Thin, rectangular section with irregular edges and broken terminals. Square punched hole and circular punched hole. Not closely dateable. L: 65.5mm, W: 30.1mm, Th: 2.7mm, Hole Diam: Square: 4.6mm x 4.7mm, Circular: 3.5mm, Mass: 24.2g.

### Cat.196.2 Context (013)

Unidentifiable lump. Faint square section visible on surface. Wood adhered. X-ray inconclusive. Not closely dateable. L: 35.5mm, W: 30.7mm, Th: 20.3mm, Mass: 22.4g.

### Cat.206 Context (027)

Bar fragment. Straight, tapering flat rectangular section with rounded tip. Not closely dateable. L: 69.5mm, W: 20.7mm, Th: 4.7mm, Mass: 46.8g.

### Cat.215 Context (027)

Bar fragment. Slight curve. Rectangular section transitioning to a square section. Both ends broken. Not closely dateable. L: 103.0mm, W: 11.5mm – 13.2mm, Th: 11.5mm, Mass: 69.1g.

### Cat.234 Context (027)

Bar fragment within corroded mass. Visible square section tapering to a rectangular section. Slight bend. Not closely dateable. L: 68.1mm, W: 12.9mm, Th: 8.8mm-11.9mm, Mass: 192.9g.

### Cat.235.2 Context (027)

Bar fragment. Rectangular section with parallel sides. Part of a composite of objects adhered through corrosion. Not closely dateable. L: 54.0mm, W: 11.1mm, Th: 5.9mm.

### Cat.243 Context (038)

Unidentifiable. Possible robust bolt. Diamond-shaped head and possible circular shank. X-ray inconclusive. Not closely dateable. L: 54.2mm, W: 52.7mm, Th: 31.3mm, Mass: 75.0g.

## *Summary and Discussion*

The metal finds can be grouped into two classes, medieval finds, including those associated with the inner bailey and medieval oven feature, and the post medieval finds associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure. Overall, the Tarbert Castle metal assemblage is notable for its good state of preservation, particularly for a few of the copper alloy and iron objects, and for the finds recovered from the medieval occupation/midden deposit (27) from above the floor of the inner bailey.

The assemblage is dominated by building fixtures and fittings- particularly nails and also clench bolts and roves, but perhaps also notable is the absence of any materials classifiable as weaponry, which is slightly unusual for a Scottish castle, but may be down to biases caused by the areas that were excavated.



Overall, the Tarbert Castle metal represents day-to-day household and craft activities, as well as providing evidence for potential periods of castle construction and alteration, and is an excellent assemblage of medieval and post-medieval finds with the potential to make an important contribution to the study of Scottish life that took place within the castle walls over a 400 year period.

### 5.3 Charcoal Report

Genoveva Dimova

#### *Factual data*

A total of 38 bags of charcoal separated into fractions were submitted for environmental assessment from the excavation at Tarbert Castle, Argyll as part of the community led 'Our Castle of Kings' project. The charcoal was collected from a series of occupation deposits, spread, ovens and pits believed to date to the medieval and post medieval periods. The aim of this report was to identify the charcoal to species to aid selection of samples for radiocarbon dating and give recommendations for further work.

#### *Methodology*

Only those fractions which had charcoal fragments larger than 4mm were selected for species identification. A maximum of 10 fragments where possible were selected for further study from each fraction. Species identifications were confirmed by analysing the transverse, tangential and radial sections at x70-x450 magnification and aided by established guides (e.g. Schweingruber 1982) and a comprehensive reference collection stored at AOC Archaeology Group premises.

The charcoal assemblage while small was concentrated within specific contexts. To ensure as much accurate information as possible was obtained, the following criteria were used as a rough guide in interpreting this assemblage. Large concentrations of charcoal of a single species were viewed as more likely to represent the burning of *in situ* structural elements or artefacts whereas deposits of mixed fragments were interpreted as the remains of fuel debris.

#### *Results*

Charcoal was present in 38 fractions but fragments suitable for species identification were collected from 22 samples. The results are recorded in full below in Table 5 and are summarised by context in the following section.

The charcoal assemblage comprised 571.2g of fragments in total and 160 fragments were identified. The species represented included alder (*Alnus glutinosa* L), birch (*Betula* sp), hazel (*Corylus avellana* L), ash (*Fraxinus* sp), and oak (*Quercus* sp).

The dominant species was oak (41%), followed by birch (28%), hazel (16%), alder (14%), and ash (1%). There were 14 pieces of roundwood identified as birch (42%), hazel (42%) and alder (16%).

Preservation of the fragments ranged from poor to excellent. Those fragments described as poor were noticeably friable and there was some evidence of oxidisation.

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Pit associated with 17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	017	265	sample 1 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	4			
Pit associated with 17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	017	265	sample 1 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	5	1	27	
Pit associated with 17 <sup>th</sup> century structure	017	267	sample 1 1mm					2	No fragments suitable for id
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	2			
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	6		26	
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1	1		
Hearth deposit	025	321	sample 8 1mm					4.9	No fragments suitable for id
Occupation/midden deposit	027	270	sample 2 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	1	1		
Occupation/midden deposit	027	270	sample 2 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	1		67.7	
Occupation/midden deposit	027	270	sample 2 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	7			
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	2			
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	1		8.1	
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1	1		
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	5			
Occupation/midden deposit	027	280	sample 2 1mm					15.5	No fragments suitable for id
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	1			
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	2		15.9	
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	6			
Floor/make up	034	289	sample 3 4mm	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	2		0.5	
Floor/make up	034	289	sample 3 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	2			
Floor/make up	034	292	sample 3 1mm					2.5	No fragments suitable for id
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	4		25.1	
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	<i>Fraxinus</i> sp.	Ash	1			
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	4			
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	2		3.8	
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	<i>Fraxinus</i> sp.	Ash	1			
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	7			

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Oven fill	038	302	sample 4 1mm					3.1	No fragments suitable for id
Oven floor	039	344	sample 12 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			
Oven floor	039	344	sample 12 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	1		0.8	
Oven floor	039	346	sample 12 1mm					0.5	No fragments suitable for id
Oven rake out	048	348	sample 13 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	3		13.6	
Oven rake out	048	348	sample 13 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	6			
Oven rake out	048	349	sample 13 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	2		0.4	
Oven rake out	048	352	sample 13 1mm					1.2	No fragments suitable for id
Burnt material	061	307	sample 6 4mm	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	3	1		
Burnt material	061	307	sample 6 4mm	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	3	3	7.7	
Burnt material	061	307	sample 6 flotation					0.3	No fragments suitable for id
Burnt material	061	310	sample 6 1mm					3.5	No fragments suitable for id
Pre wall soil of inner bailey	063	304	sample 5 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	3		3.3	
Pre wall soil of inner bailey	063	305	sample 5 1mm					2.1	No fragments suitable for id
Occupation horizon in outer bailey	065	313	sample 7 flotation					2.5	No fragments suitable for id
Occupation horizon in outer bailey	065	315	sample 7 4mm	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	8		1.2	
Occupation horizon in outer bailey	065	315	sample 7 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	2			
Occupation horizon in outer bailey	065	317	sample 7 1mm					0.6	No fragments suitable for id
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	2			
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	2	1	71.3	
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	4			
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	1		0.8	
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			



Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	2			
Floor of inner bailey	066	340	sample 11 1mm					2.2	No fragments suitable for id
Charcoal spread	067	323	sample 9 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	4	3	110.6	
Charcoal spread	067	323	sample 9 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel		1		
Charcoal spread	067	323	sample 9 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	2			
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	Alder	2	1		
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	4		39.8	
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	3			
Charcoal spread	067	328	sample 9 1mm					14.2	No fragments suitable for id
Charcoal spread	069	331	sample 10 flotation	<i>Betula</i> sp.	Birch	1		13.2	
Charcoal spread	069	331	sample 10 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	9			
Charcoal spread	069	333	sample 10 1mm					72.3	No fragments suitable for id
Pre castle deposit	076	360	sample 16 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1		5.7	
Occupation deposit	081	354	sample 14 flotation	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	Hazel	1			
Occupation deposit	081	354	sample 14 flotation	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	3		0.4	
Occupation deposit	081	355	sample 14 4mm	<i>Quercus</i> sp.	Oak	1		0.2	
Occupation deposit	081	357	sample 14 1mm					0.7	No fragments suitable for id

Table 5: catalogue of charcoal fragments examined and identified, per bag, per context

## *Discussion*

### *Pit associated with 17th century structure context [017]*

The charcoal (29.0g) was composed of birch (60%) and alder (40%). Birch roundwood formed 10% of the identified assemblage. This mix of charcoal fragments and roundwood is representative of fuel debris. The birch roundwood from this stratified pit may be a good candidate for radiocarbon dating.

### *Hearth deposit context [025]*

The charcoal (30.9g) was birch (60%), alder (20%) and hazel (20%). There was hazel roundwood (10%). The charcoal is fuel waste from the hearth which was not removed during cleaning of this feature. The hazel roundwood from this hearth deposit may be a good candidate for radiocarbon dating.

### *Occupation/midden deposit context [027]*

The charcoal (91.3g) was a mix of oak (60%), alder (20%), birch (10%) and hazel (10%). Roundwood was identified as alder (5%) and hazel (5%). This charcoal is fuel waste which was deliberately disposed of within this midden. The redeposited character of this deposit makes it a low priority target for radiocarbon dating.

### *Floor/make up context [034]*

The charcoal (18.9g) was oak (57%), alder (22%), birch (14%) and hazel (7%). This assemblage has derived from fuel residue. Much of this material is likely to be redeposited.

### *Oven fill context [038]*

The charcoal (32.0g) was oak (55%), birch (30%), ash (10%) and hazel (5%). The charcoal is fuel waste which was not removed from the oven during cleaning of this feature.

### *Oven floor [039]*

There was one fragment of hazel and one of oak (1.3g).

### *Oven rake out context [048]*

The charcoal (15.2g) was oak (73%) and alder (27%). The charcoal is an accumulation of fuel debris which is likely overspill from when the oven was cleaned.

*Burnt material context [061]*

The charcoal (11.5g) was hazel (60%) and birch (40%). The roundwood was formed of hazel (30%) and birch (10%). These remains are fuel waste.

*Pre wall soil of inner bailey context [063]*

The charcoal (5.4g) was composed of three fragments of birch. This material is re-deposited fuel debris which is of little interpretive value.

*Occupation horizon in outer bailey context [065]*

The charcoal (4.3g) was hazel (80%) and oak (20%). These fragments are re-deposited fuel debris.

*Floor of inner bailey [066]*

The charcoal (74.3g) was a mix of oak (43%), birch (22%), alder (21%) and hazel (14%). There was birch roundwood (7%). These charcoal fragments are likely fuel waste which was trampled into the floor surface.

*Charcoal spread [067]*

This feature had the largest quantity of charcoal (164.4g) recovered from site. The species were birch (55%), oak (25%), alder (15%) and hazel (5%). The roundwood was composed of birch (15%), alder (5%) and hazel (5%). This material has accumulated through the disposal of fuel waste.

*Charcoal spread context [069]*

The charcoal (85.5g) was oak (90%) and birch (10%). These are the remains of fuel debris.

*Pre castle deposit [076]*

There was one fragment of hazel (5.7g) which was of little interpretive value.

*Occupation deposit [081]*

The charcoal (1.3g) was oak (80%) and hazel (20%). These fragments are re-deposited fuel debris which was trampled into the floor.

### *Wood species*

The wood species found at Tarbert Castle would have grown locally in the surrounding landscape and been easily accessible. Hazel tends to grow in hedgerows; alder, birch and ash normally favour more damp habitats whereas oak tends to grow wherever the soil and climate will allow (Linford 2009; Martynoga 2012, Stace 2010).

## **6. Conclusion**

### *Pre-castle activity*

The exposure of any deposits pre-dating the construction of the castle was limited. However, within Trench 1 burning was evidenced seen on upper extent of deposit [076] which appeared to be soil predating the castle. Perhaps more importantly charcoal and burnt bone were recovered from the soil below the castle wall in Trench 2, indicating some form of pre castle activity.

### *The Medieval Castle*

The excavation work has shed light on several important aspects of the construction of Tarbert Castle and its layout.

The excavation has shown that the north walls of the 'inner bailey' are a later addition to the enclosure walls of the 'outer bailey' and this sequence appears contrary to the earlier interpretations of the sequence of castle walls. This has important implications which will be discussed below.

The identification of a major entrance on the southern side of the castle also gives us important new insights as to the arrangement of the castle and how it may have functioned.

The excavation has also shown that no entrance to the inner bailey, as previously suggested, lies near the south west tower of the castle. What the excavation did reveal was the scale and preservation of the south western tower and exposed the remains of a doorway into the tower suite.

Trench 1 within the south east corner of the inner bailey showed that well preserved medieval occupation deposits survived these sealed below an extensive deposit of rubble.

These deposits although only partially sampled, were suggestive of a series of floor and midden deposits, while deposit [065] contained evidence of the survival of organic material in this case wood. While these deposits may represent successive floor/make up and midden deposits no structural elements beyond the walls of the inner and outer bailey were identified, although it seems likely that further excavation work would uncover such structures along the walls of the castle in this area of the site. As mentioned above the extensive rubble accumulation that sealed the occupation deposits contained numerous voids suggesting much of this deposit formed rapidly, either due to wall collapse and or robbing

Within the castle itself in trench 2 there are well preserved medieval occupation deposits, along with surviving internal structures as evidenced by the upstanding oven feature. The



oven feature also appeared to be the replacement for another fire installation as evidenced by burnt stones within the wall to the rear of the oven, this likely connected to two charcoal deposits that ran under the walls of the upstanding oven feature. The replacement of one similar feature with another suggests at least some degree of longevity of use of this area of the castle, although what either of these features were primarily used for remains for the moment unclear.

While only sampled in small part, the occupation deposits within Trench 1 produced evidence of food preparation/consumption, along with evidence of metal working in the vicinity. These deposits were all sealed by an extensive deposit of rubble which again contained numerous voids suggesting much of this deposit formed rapidly. It seems highly likely that equally well preserved medieval occupation deposits survive under similar rubble deposits elsewhere in the inner bailey.

### *The Medieval Burgh*

The recovery of medieval pottery and burning in Trench 6 along with the presence of what is likely a medieval building in Trench 7, indicates that medieval activity and occupation was present within the area to the south of the castle. The exact nature of this activity was harder to glean from the limited exposure within the excavated trenches, however, the presence of large fragments of slag and smithy bases perhaps indicates metal working activity in the vicinity. Whether any of occupation is specifically associated with the medieval burgh is open to question but if a medieval burgh does exist along this ridge then there is the strong possibility that they are.

The ground to the south of the castle within the scheduled area occupies a ridge of undulating ground that slopes off to the east and west. The topography of the area in the medieval period might be masked by what appears to be the accumulation of later soils likely caused by the movement or weathering of worked soils into lower areas across the site. This process was observed within Trenches 5-7. In trench 5 any plough horticultural soils were very shallow, but within Trench 6 downslope there appeared to be a depth of as much as 1.0m of colluvial and or plough soil material. More locally within trench 7 natural bedrock/subsoils lay some 0.30m below the ground surface in the NE corner of the trench. However, this natural sloped off to the south and against this slope was constructed the wall of a mediaeval structure, Structure 2, the 'dip it occupied subsequently filled in by colluvial deposits. It is highly likely that across the whole area of the ridge to the south of the castle that deeper colluvial deposits masks earlier medieval activity. The recovery of medieval pottery from excavations on Bruce Hill, further south along the same ridge, suggests there is the potential to find medieval occupation along the whole ridge (Regan 2018a).

### *Post medieval evidence*

Within the inner bailey and constructed directly over the rubble collapse sealing the medieval sequence was Structure 1, the walls of which were apparent as earthworks prior to excavation.

The building is probably of 17<sup>th</sup> century in date given the evidence from the coins recovered from its rubble fill and from the floor. This building is actually depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey, although it was never clear whether these were a depiction of the walls of the castle or a later building.

While Structure 1 utilised the walls of the castle on from its western and northern sides the 'new built' walls of this structure are poorly constructed when compared to the castle walls and do not show any sign of mortar use in their construction. The floor in the eastern room was very uneven although it did contain a clay spread that shows signs of burning which is likely a hearth or perhaps a work area.

The building appears to be one of a series of structures that occupy the internal space of the inner bailey and could equally be of a late date.

The excavation has also shown that the area immediately to the north of the inner bailey had been used as a field, this area demarcated by a sinuous wall running from the entrance of the inner bailey to the tower house. Indeed this wall is shown, in a much better preserved state, in a 19<sup>th</sup> postcard of the castle.

Similarly the area to the south of the castle appears to have been extensively cultivated, given the evidence of plough soil within all the excavated trenches. The depths of the plough soil in each trench varied this perhaps indicating that there may have been a problem of the movement of soils from the upper sloping ground to lower ground and it is possible one function of the revetment wall examined in Trench 6 was to counter this erosion. It also seems likely that the earthworks which can still be seen lying to the south of the southern berm of the inner bailey are of late date, these representing drainage and lazy bed or narrow strip cultivation.

The relatively large number of artefacts recovered from the plough soil can perhaps only be explained by these being introduced onto field areas as midden material for soil enhancement. This process perhaps underlined by the generally small size of the artefacts, the presence of burnt/melted material and some sea worn artefacts the later possibly indicating the use of sea weed as a fertilizer.

### *Re-thinking the castle*

We firstly perhaps need to recognise that the terms inner and outer bailey used to describe the remains at Tarbert castle have undoubted problems and it perhaps might be better to use inner and outer enclosure which come with less interpretive baggage. However, as these are the terms used in previous accounts of the castle it would perhaps confuse matters. The excavation work has shown that the north enclosing wall of the inner bailey, which includes the entrance passage, is later than the walls of the other three sides. These three walls appear from current evidence to be contemporary with the construction outer bailey circuit with north wall of the inner bailey inserted after these had been constructed. However, there is no need to presume that there was a major constructional break between the two works and the building of the north wall of the inner bailey may have happened soon after the completion of the outer bailey wall.

If, as the current work suggests the outer and inner bailey walls are near contemporary structures then this questions earlier interpretations of when the castle was constructed.

The suggestion that the castle at Tarbert dates before the early 14<sup>th</sup> century appears to have been initially made by MacGibbon and Ross who suggested that Tarbert Castle was one of the Royal fortresses handed over to Edward I by John Baliol, after Edward placed him on the throne in 1292 (MacGibbon and Ross 1887). They also pointed out the similarities of ground plan and size of the inner bailey at Tarbert to Kinclaven castle in Perthshire. This

comparison was later expanded by Dunbar and Duncan who compared Tarbert with both Kincardine and Kinclaven, suggesting all three were the works of either Alexander I or his successor Alexander II. They also say that *'each unit'* of Tarbert, referring to the inner and outer baileys and the tower house, *'appears to be the outcome of a separate period of building activity'* (Dunbar & Duncan, p 7). They go on to argue that as the inner bailey of Tarbert more closely resembles Kincardine, which probably dates to before 1249, then Tarbert might also date to before that time and may have been constructed after Alexander II concluded his successful campaign against Ruaidhri mac Raonaill (great grandson of Somerled and Lord of Kintyre) in 1221 and 1222. (Dunbar & Duncan p13). Thereafter most historical and survey works have assumed the inner bailey to be of 13<sup>th</sup> century date, while the outer bailey dated to the *'first half of fourteenth century'* and was the work of Robert I mentioned in the extant exchequer rolls of 1326 (Stuart and Burnett 1878), while the tower house was given a late 15<sup>th</sup> century date as being the work of James IV.

However, Duncan and Brown's argument that Tarbert may have been built by Alexander II is wholly based on the comparative architectural evidence with Kinclaven and Kincardine. This comparison of course only works if the inner bailey at Tarbert is seen as a stand alone 'simple rectangular castle of enclosure' and perhaps more importantly a structure that can be shown to be earlier than the walls of the outer bailey. The present work however suggests that the comparison with either Kinclaven or Kincardine is erroneous, given that the inner bailey at Tarbert appears to have been conceived, along with the outer bailey, as an integral part of a much larger structure.

Possibly relevant to this chronological reinterpretation of the construction of the castle is the mention at the end of the 1326 exchequer roll. The translation of the original Latin tells us *'In this statement are not included the iron, the houses within the inner court **the middle wall enclosing it**, or the wine-house, for which the constable had not leisure to account'*. The inner court or *clausura* must surely be a reference to the 'inner bailey' while the 'middle wall enclosing it' is a likely reference to the northern wall of the inner bailey. If it is, then it is probably not too much of a stretch of the imagination to postulate that this statement and the building work it refers to were the most recent work undertaken in the castle, works that Constable De Lany did not have time to account for.

It may be then that both the inner and outer bailey of the castle are wholly the work of Robert I and that the later repairs mentioned in the Exchequer rolls refer to an upgrading of continuation of work on a castle he had started building prior to 1326, although what precise date this was is still open to question.

In a sense it may be easier to argue that there was no major castle at Tarbert before the time of Robert I. Prior to its mention in the exchequer roll there is no mention of a castle at Tarbert in extant documentation while other castles in Kintyre and Knapdale are mentioned before this time, including, Skipness, Dunaverty and Sween and given this, it is perhaps unlikely that a major Royal stronghold was completely escaped mention prior to the 1320's. Given the paucity of surviving records absence of historical evidence might not of course reflect the physical absence for many medieval castles on the western seaboard, but given the present evidence it is perhaps harder now to argue that Tarbert dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and might be seen as primarily a construction by Robert I.

The ceramic evidence recovered from the floor deposits within the inner bailey may also point to an early 14<sup>th</sup> century date for the initial construction of the castle, the pottery assemblage wholly dated between the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. The absence of pottery of a

12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century date along with the absence of imported wares may also discount the possibility of an earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century castle of either Alexander II or Alexander III, although at present it does not discount it entirely. Other elements of the castle remain poorly phased, in particular the lower build of what became the tower house of the castle.

Whatever the case, there is no doubt that by the time of the 1326 exchequer roll that Tarbert Castle at almost 2 acres in extent as Duncan and Dunbar noted '*must have ranked as one of the largest and most strongly fortified castles in Scotland*' (Duncan and Dunbar p 14).

This is perhaps underlined by the uncovering of a major gateway into the castle complex during the current excavation work. The construction of a portcullis gate itself, placed between the walls of the inner bailey and a tower, suggest this was always intended to be the main entrance to the castle on the south landward side and must now be postulated that a similar impressive entrance might lie between the drum towers on the seaward side of the castle.

Other castle sites in Argyll have produced excavated evidence for occupation in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century including Auchinduin, Dunstaffnage and Castle Sween. Auchinduin itself may have been built sometime between c 1295–1310 while at Dunstaffnage and Castle Sween there also appears to have been major alterations to the fabric of these castles during this period, alterations which are also in evidence at Skipness and Rothesay. The remodelling of these castles no doubt reflect the turbulent times in Scotland and the west in this period but they may also reflect a broader phase of upgrading of relatively simple walls of enclosure with more 'modern' embellishments of such as additional defensive towers and incorporating more elaborate entrances.

At nearby Skipness the addition of a portcullis gate, part of the major rebuilding of the castle this work attributed to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The gate itself is built over and incorporates part of the earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel. While containing later additions and repairs, the original elements of the gate at Skipness have strong similarities to the surviving structural features at Tarbert using similar red sandstone for the architectural mouldings and detail. The gate at Skipness is slightly narrower being 2.70m wide as opposed to the 3.0m at Tarbert. Both have door checks set internally to the portcullis slots, the both examples at Skipness being 12.5 cm or 5 inches wide while those at Tarbert were 19cm or 8 inches wide. At Tarbert red sandstone is used within the main southern gate to the inner bailey, the entrance to the south west tower and within the gate into the inner bailey, while it is used at Skipness as doorway surrounds and quoins within the enclosure walls. The similarity in date and the similar use of red sandstone raises the question of whether the same masons were involved in the construction of both edifices, although without closer dating evidence or comparative masons' marks this has to remain speculation.

If the present evidence suggests the inner and outer baileys are wholly constructed by Robert I then does the excavation also throw any light on its length of occupation. The replacing of one oven-like feature with another at least two floor layers, suggest some degree of longevity, as does the build up of midden material within a hollow against the southern wall of the north east range. However, the pottery recovered from the occupation deposits form a tight dated group of between the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. The freshness of the breaks within the pottery and the fact that the floor deposits are immediately sealed by what appears to be rapid rubble collapse might suggest this part of the castle was perhaps redundant as early as the later 15<sup>th</sup> century. After the 14<sup>th</sup> century have little mention of



the castle being used until James IV is responsible for the '*biggin of the a castle*' this likely a reference to the construction of the tower house.

Given the excavation results we perhaps need to reinterpret the whole castle layout and look again at the relationship of all the walls within the castle layout. Of particular interest is the presence and nature of a gate between the drum towers, this giving access to the sea. Also open to interpretation might be the original date of tower house currently ascribed to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and postulated to have been constructed by James IV. On current examination there can be discerned several distinct 'builds' within the upstanding fabric and there remains the possibility that this existed as a tower integral to the original outer bailey works, and remodelled at a later date. Similarly the ruined wall footings on the opposite side of the outer bailey need to be more closely examined for any such defensive elements on this side. At present this can only be speculation but a closer examination of the fabric is perhaps warranted, given that the excavation work has already changed some aspects of our understanding of the castle's layout.

If the castle proves to be wholly the work of Robert I then the construction of such a major work also needs to be reappraised with a closer examination of what were the crowns political intentions in the west and royal influence across the Isles, as well as the Robert I's aspirations in Ireland. We can then perhaps see Tarbert castle as part of broader network of constructions not only controlling the Tarbert isthmus but the Clyde estuary on one side and the islands and the seas to the west.

Part of these works are of course the new '*pele*' mentioned in the 1326 exchequer roll. Some building footings have been recorded on a rocky knoll at the head of West Loch Tarbert (Canmore ID 39328), although their exact nature is unclear.

It is also perhaps is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to equate the entry '*making a house anew in the island*' in the exchequer roll with a building identified on Eilean Da Ghallagain at the head of West Loch Tarbert (Canmore ID 39336). In May 1455 John, Lord of the Isles, is found on '*Cleandaghallagan in Knapadal*' granting a charter to Paisley Abbey, (Munro and Munro p86). The signing of the charter presumably took place within some form of building on the island and the RCHAMS has recorded a building with '*unexpectedly substantial*' footings not typical of later agricultural buildings and has suggested the building may have been used in connection the nearby anchorages. If the structure on Eilean Da Ghallagain can be identified with the '*house anew in the island*' then this and the peel along with the castle might be an overall scheme for the control and protection for an anchorage and the road, or route over the isthmus.

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