



**DUNOLLIE CASTLE,  
ARGYLL**



**Standing Building Survey and Excavation  
Data Structure Report**  
August 2017  
Roderick Regan



## Summary

The survey and drawing of two elevations of the castle tower showed that the historically robbed and degraded fabric of the castle walls had been extensively consolidated and repaired prior to this phase of consolidation work; this is particularly evident on the south west elevation.

The re-excavation of a previously excavated trench in the courtyard of the castle indicated that this was likely an archaeological sondage, although when it was excavated still remains unclear. This small trench sheds some light on the presence, preservation and nature of the buildings and features that occupy the courtyard, including a structure in the north west corner of the courtyard with an associated flagged surface and drain, along with what may be the edge of a platform around the castle tower, which the recovered finds suggested the were last used in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Flint scraper recovered from the excavation

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I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped in the excavation and survey and made the work enjoyable. I would also like to thank Sheila Clark and Jenny Pendreigh for undertaking the mighty task of proof reading my rather bland prose.

## 1 Introduction

This report describes the results of five programmes of archaeological work undertaken at Dunollie Castle between March 2016 and July 2017. These involved the drawing of the SW and SE elevations of the tower stonework, a watching brief undertaken on removal of topsoil over the wall core at the SW corner of the tower, a community survey project and the re-excavation of a previously excavated trench in the castle courtyard. The work was undertaken by Kilmartin Museum on behalf of Dunollie Projects Ltd.

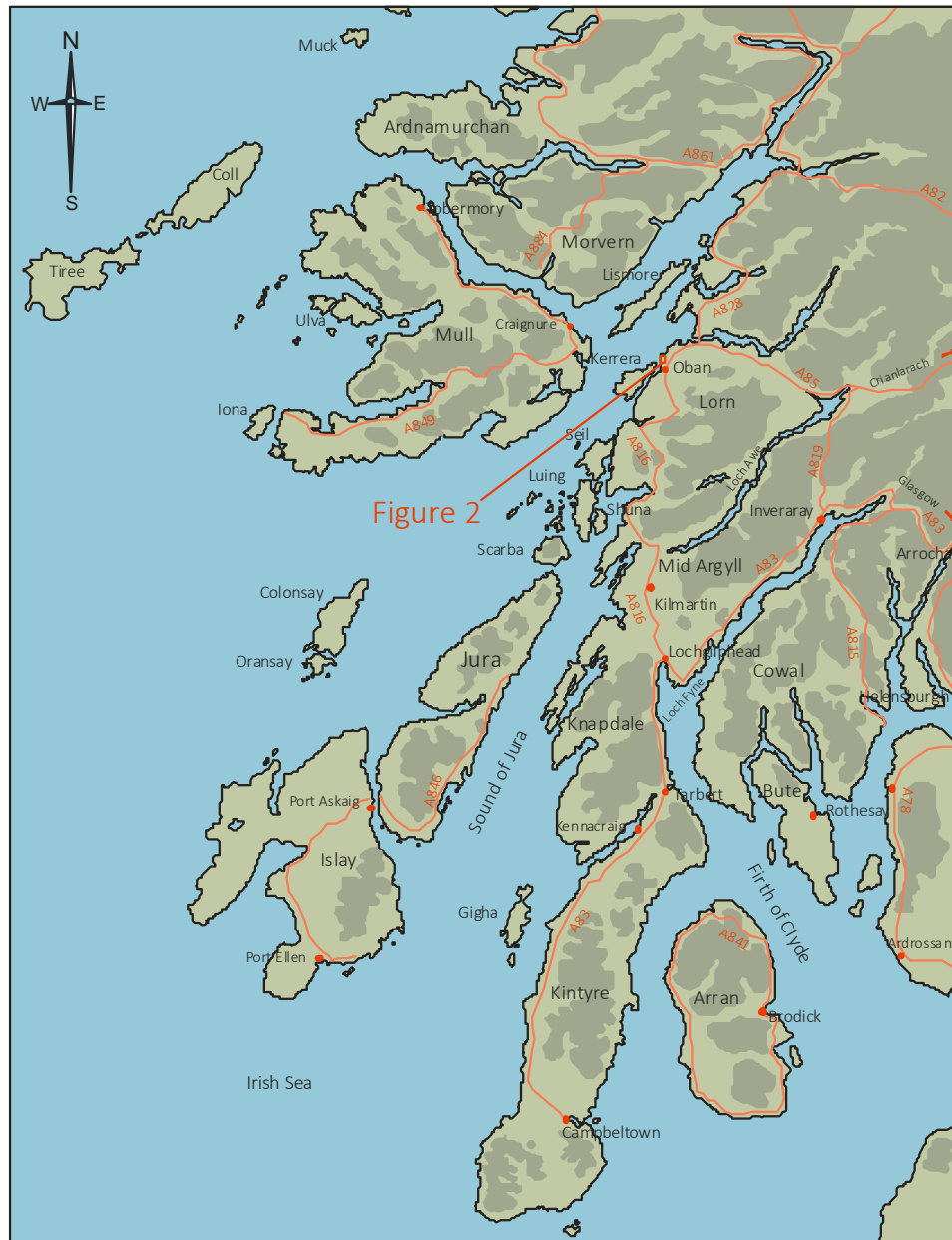


Figure 1: Location of Oban in Argyll

## 2 Location and Topography

Dunollie Castle is situated on the top of an outcrop of rock at Carraig Mhicheil at the north end of Oban Bay (centered NM 8524 3146, 20m AOD, Figure 1 and 2). The castle stands on a mass of boulder conglomerate of the Lower Old Red Sandstone capped with basalt, now forming part of the raised beach or early post-glacial sea coast. This outcrop is bordered to the south and west by the Corran Esplanade, an embankment and road constructed in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

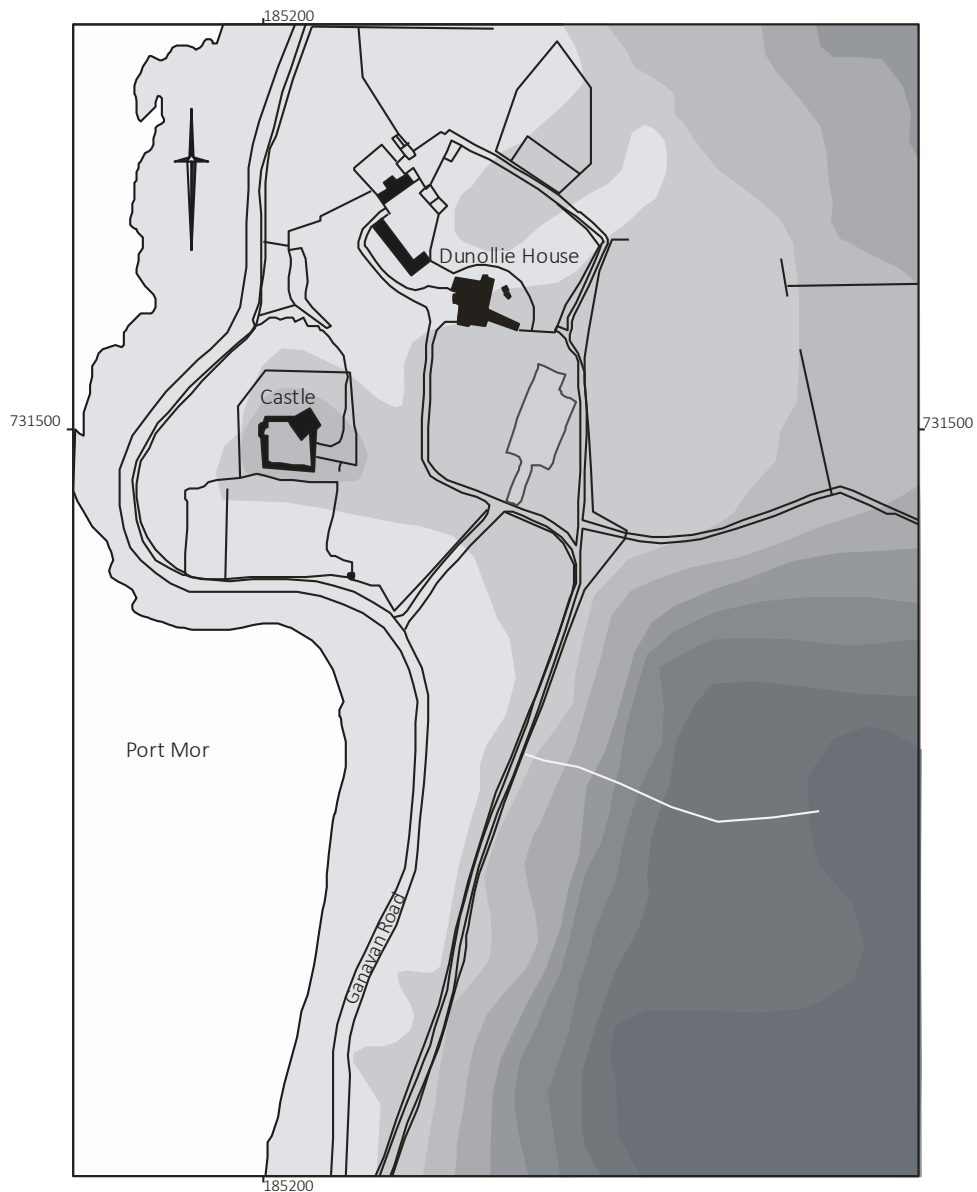


Figure 2: Dunollie House and Castle

The southern, western and eastern of the outcrop fall steeply, almost vertically, to the more gently sloping ground of the garden area below. At the north a rock spur descends in steps and gentler slopes into a wide gully that leads down to the beach. The tower house and courtyard of the castle occupy about one third of the overall area of the crag, with the west and south sides of the courtyard standing actually at the head of the crags, and the tower itself sitting on the highest point of the summit. To north and east the line of the masonry castle walls is set well back from the steeper slopes and these areas have traces of banks or ramparts which formed the subject of limited excavations in 1978 (see below). To the northeast of the castle crag there are considerable signs of quarrying into the sides of the cliff and (possibly later) landscaping in order to create terraced paths up to the castle summit.

### **3 Historical and Archaeological Background**

Dunollie Castle was a MacDougal stronghold comprised of a tower house and courtyard or keep and bailey generally accepted to have been built in the early 15th century with later additions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The remains of the castle and courtyard have previously been described in detail (NM83SE 11, RCHAMS 1975, MacGibbon and Ross 1887).

In summary the castle comprises a square courtyard and a tower.

#### **The Courtyard**

The walls of courtyard or curtain wall encompass a roughly square area measuring c.24.4m in width. The walls along the north and east sides are up to c. 2.3m thick and may have had a parapet walk along the wall heads, the walls in part still standing to over 4m in height. The walls on the west and south sides are narrower, up 1.5m thick and built along the edge of the rock outcrop. The walls on these sides are much reduced although on the west side a repaired wall still stands over 3m in height with evidence of other buildings particularly on the south and west sides of the courtyard.

#### **The Tower**

The tower is situated in the angle between the north and east curtain walls. The tower walls are nominally up to 3 metres thick but contain staircases, vices, embrasures and fireplaces. It is likely that the walls comprise two skins with a rubble core. The tower contained four floors, the ground floor-level with a stone vaulted roof supporting the surviving first floor. Above these the upper floors and roof were presumably of timber construction but nothing of these survive apart from a few projecting stone corbels at floor levels. Both the tower and curtain walls are of solid stone masonry construction. In the tower the masonry is of roughly-coursed local rubble of igneous origin consisting of large split boulders and pinnings in a coarse lime mortar. The freestone dressings are of finely-grained greenish-grey sandstone although many of these such as quoins, lintels over openings and dressings have been robbed.

As mentioned above outwith the castle there are traces of earthworks at the north and east and these were described by Alcock and Alcock prior to their excavations in 1978, which were part of a programme of research on Early Historic fortifications in Scotland and undertaken by the

Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow (Alcock & Alcock 1988). The earthworks that lay west of a zig-zag path that leads up from the shore consisted of a rampart with obvious inner and outer slopes that extended to the cliff edge before returning to the south. Below this rampart on the north, were slight surface indications of a silted ditch and counterscarp bank. Beyond the earthworks the ground drops off northwards into the wide valley below. The excavators thought this had the appearance of a double-banked defence. To the east of the path two courses of a drystone revetment were visible at the top of the eastern cliff. Some 10m west of this, a well-defined terrace suggested a second parallel bank. Again this suggesting a double rampart defence on the north and west sides, the continuity of the banks being broken by the terraced path and other landscaping at what may have been the north east corner of the defensive works. The excavation uncovered evidence of early medieval activity within a series of defensive works, these dating from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century and overlain by later medieval defensive works dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Buildings forming part of Dunollie House may date to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (NM83SE 46) although the north range dates to 1746-7 when the MacDougals of Dunollie abandoned the castle as their main residence. The House was thoroughly remodeled in 1834-5, a period which also saw major works on the policies of the estate including the construction of a large walled garden which lies below the castle, this bearing a date stone of 1826 (Regan 2009).

In the late 1860s there is mention of major works undertaken on the garden when some skeletons and a cist were discovered. The garden is depicted on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874 along with the notation 'Cave' and 'Human Remains Found' (NM83SE 30). This would appear to refer to the cave within the north east corner of the garden which can still be seen. Three skeletons were found within the cave, these the remains of a man, woman and child. Also discovered within the 'vegetable garden' (possibly during the same works) was a stone cist, containing a skeleton and a sword (NM83SE 31). Some coins, a gold brooch and a finger ring were also said to have been found close to the cist. No evidence of the cist now remains and the recovered objects were later stolen from Dunollie House (RCHAMS 1975).

First Scheduled as an Ancient Monument in 1931 (revised 1993, 2002), the Scheduled area was increased in 2011 to include the earthworks to the north and east, which have archaeological significance as early medieval defences dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Dunollie Castle is exceptionally significant for the continuity of its connection with Clan MacDougal. It also has considerable significance for its wider history and associations as an example of medieval fortification and as part of a group of West coast castles.

## **4 The Phases of Archaeological Work**

Five phases of work were undertaken at the castle between February 2016 and June 2017.

- 4.1 Survey of the castle fabric on the SE and SW sides of the tower. This involved the drawing of the castle tower elevations in advance of consolidation work with the aim of capturing the castle fabric prior to the work (HES Reference 201006357). The results are outlined in Section 4.1.
- 4.2 A watching brief was conducted on the removal of soil at the SW corner of the tower prior to consolidation work. The results are outlined in Section 4.2.
- 4.3 Community Survey Training. This work involved the training of community volunteers in the basics of standing building recording particularly through the drawn record. Volunteers were shown how to measure and draw masonry using offset methodology. After initial training the volunteers drew the internal arch of the ground entrance (Figure 7) and a section of masonry on the NE side of the castle (Figure 6). As part of survey training earthworks within the castle courtyard were also recorded using tapes and off set, while some external features outside the castle courtyard were also surveyed. Some internal features of the castle were also recorded during this work. The results are outlined in Section 4.3.
- 4.4 A small community excavation was undertaken on a previously excavated trench in the castle courtyard in order to assess its nature and examine what appeared to be surviving archaeological features. As it was decided to leave the trench open some further excavation and trench consolidation was undertaken in July 2017 (HES Reference 201508343). The results are outlined in Section 4.4.

### **4.1 Survey of the Tower Fabric**

#### **4.1.1 The Current Consolidation Work**

The repair of two sides of the tower involved removing the extensive ivy growth from the walls followed by the complete or partial removal of previous cement-based pointing prior to re-pointing the walls with a lime based mortar. This work afforded the opportunity to record the stonework within the south west and south east elevations of the tower (see Figures 3 and 4).



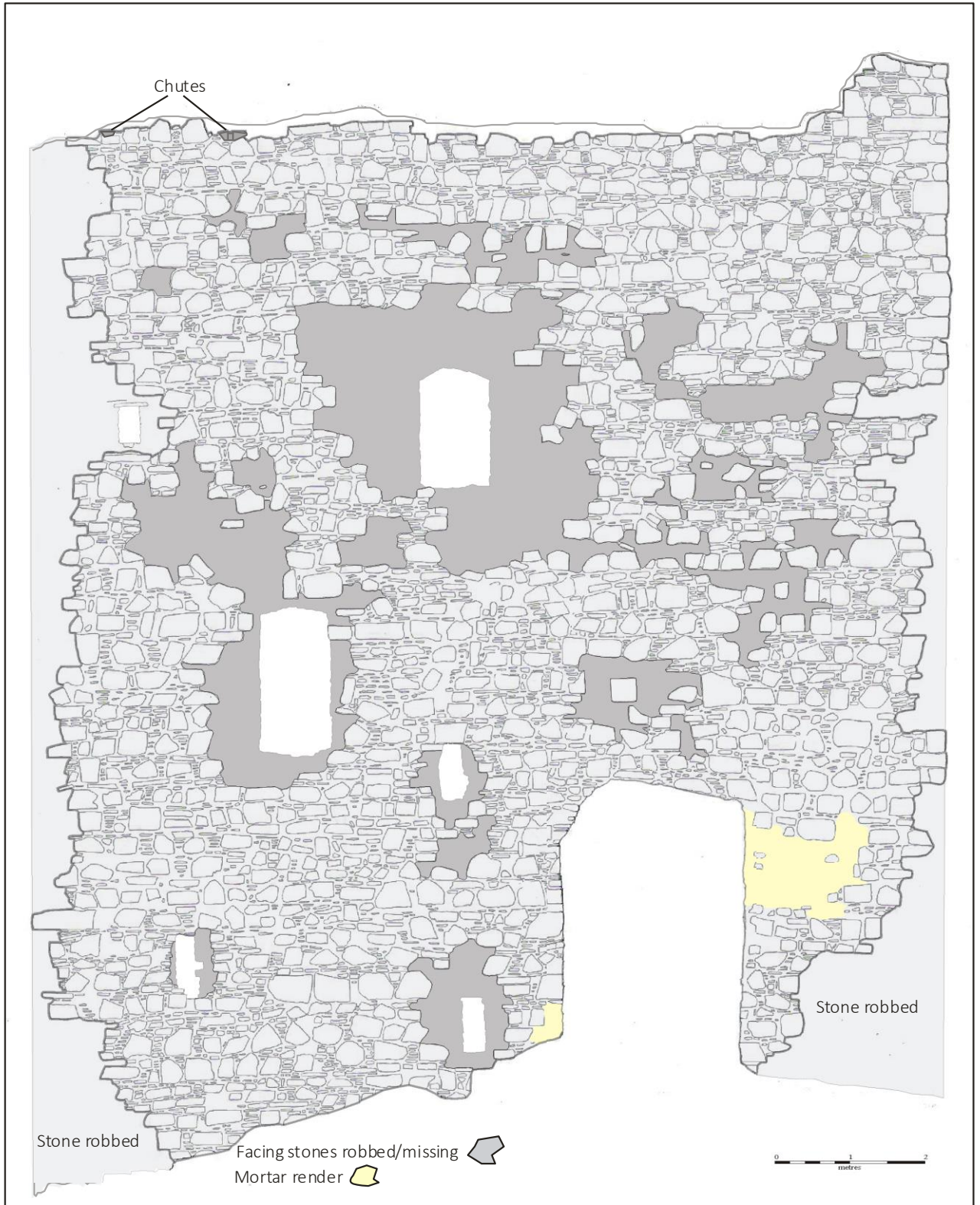


Figure 3: SE elevation of the tower

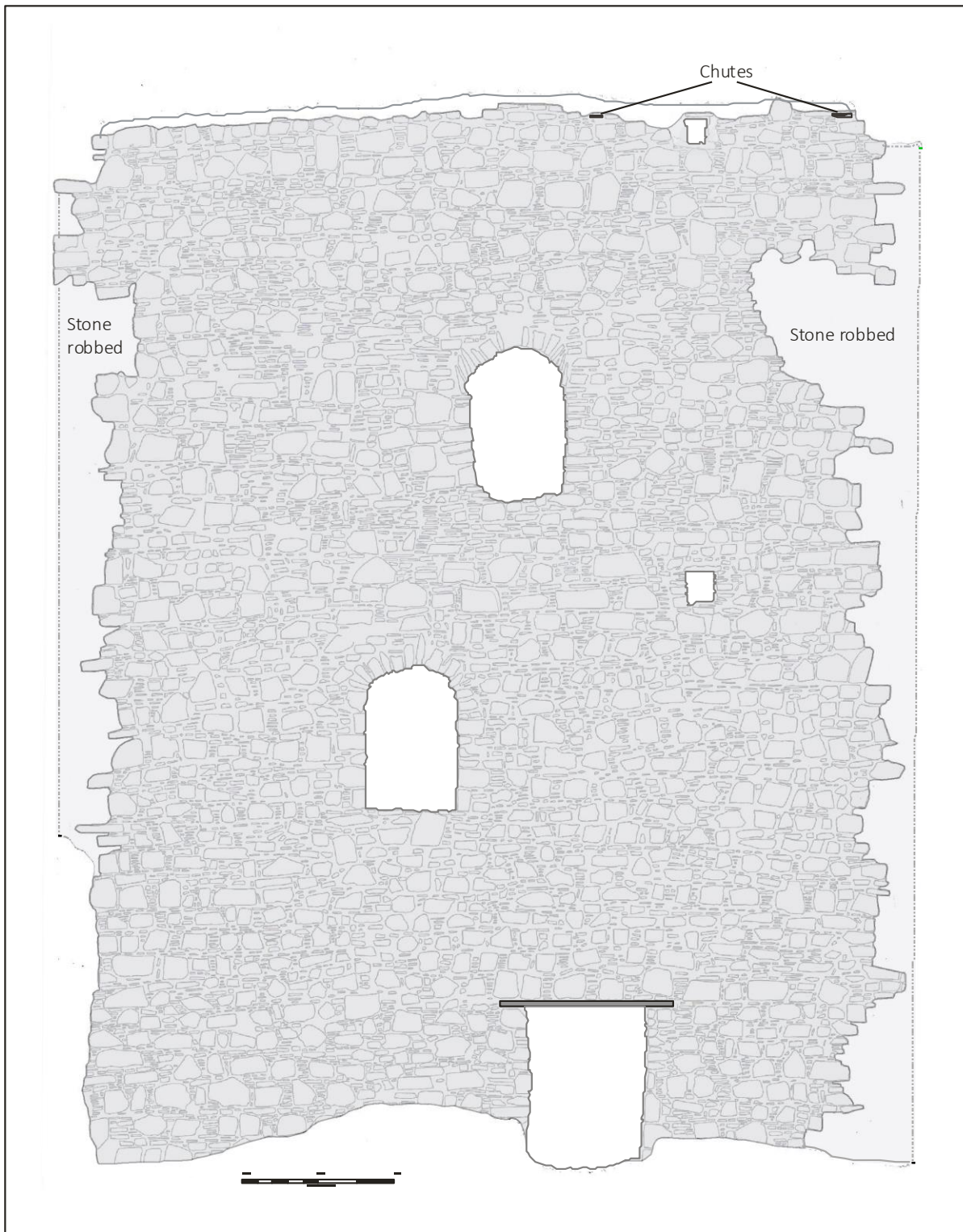


Figure 4: SW elevation of the tower



The tower is constructed from roughly coursed rubble blocks and split boulders, the gaps between the irregular blocks filled with tight closely packed pinnings all bound by a hard compact lime mortar. The mortar is light grey to light brown in colour with frequent coarse sand inclusions and occasional shell and charcoal fragments.



Stone work on tower



Surviving quoins on SE corner of tower

#### 4.1.2 Previous Repairs and Alterations

There is documentary evidence of structural repair work being undertaken on the fabric of the castles buildings dating to the 1930s and the late 1960s (by The Ministry of Works) although it is also likely repair work was conducted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This work included support of parts of the western courtyard by the rebuilding of a section of curtain wall (west facing). This was undertaken in stone masonry in a cement-based mortar. Substantial areas of external and internal masonry where original wall cores had been exposed were re-pointed using cement-based mortar.

Within the tower similar repair work has previously been undertaken. This likely involved the creation of a new ground floor entrance into the tower where an iron railway track had been inserted as a lintel over the modified entrance. There is now no evidence of the window at ground floor level on this side of the building, this having been blocked and refaced externally. Above the ground floor level, also on the SW side of the tower, the original entrance on the first floor, a second floor window and a stair window have all had 'new' block-work repair around their external surrounds, this no doubt replacing the original robbed facings. In fact most of the SW tower facing appears to have been re-pointed at some time.



Render plaque dated 1939



Repair around second floor window in SW tower wall



Render repair on upper stair window in SW tower wall





Personalised repair on the first floor entrance



Re-pointing below drainage chute on SW tower wall

The five windows on the SE side of the tower do not appear to have been repaired to the same extent although here as with the SW wall of the tower there is evidence of extensive re-pointing.



Re-pointing around 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window on SE side of tower

The only apertures that have what appear their original external surrounds are on the north east side of the tower within a blocked first floor window and the edge around what was likely a garderobe on the same floor.



Recording stonework on NE side of the castle

Within the tower the staircase from ground floor to first floor has also been reconstructed from stone slabs set in cement-based mortar and the upper level floor at turnpike stair level was covered with a cement-based concrete slab. The dating of these various repairs is problematic although the date 1939 is evidence of at least one campaign, this having been incised into the cement based mortar render above the repaired first floor entrance.

As mentioned above previous repair work was most extensive on the south west face of the tower, particularly around the windows and doors. On the south east side of the tower there is more evidence of extensive robbing around the doors and windows and it seems likely the extent of stone robbing was similar on the south west face prior to any repair work.

On both the south west and south east faces cement based re-pointing was in evidence up to wall head level although was less in evidence at the northern end of the south west side and the eastern end of the south east side where previous ivy growth may have prevented repairs being undertaken. However, beyond the immediate surrounds of the windows and doors on the south west side and evidence of obvious re-pointing any other repair to the original stone work is difficult to ascertain as this appears to have been undertaken in a relatively sympathetic manner using a similar style of split stones and pinning to the original work.

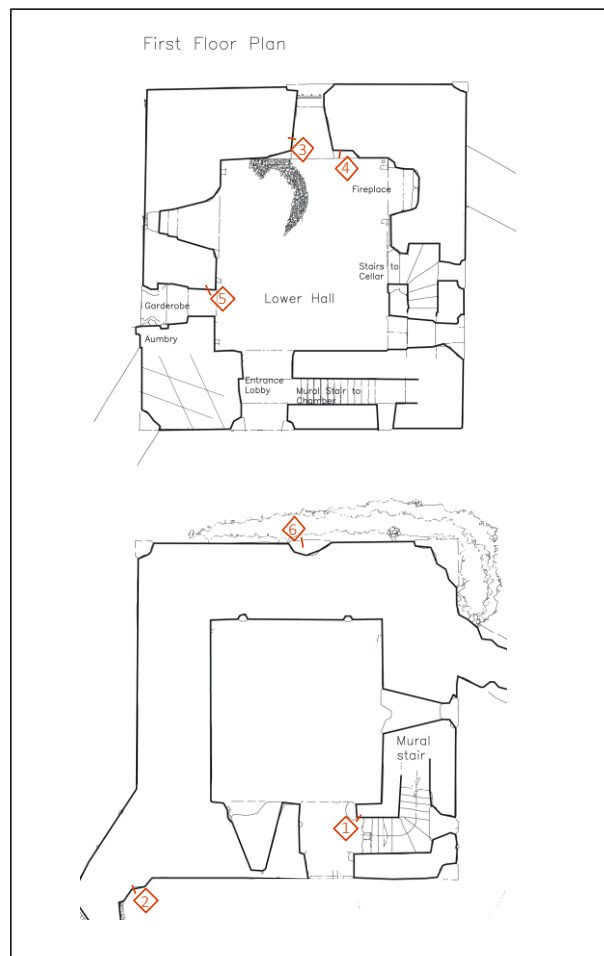


Figure 5: Location of mortar samples



Six samples of what appeared to be degraded but original mortar used in the core construction of the castle fabric were obtained during the survey work.

Sample 1 - from the eastern facing wall foot of the ground floor stair.

Sample 2 - from the base of the curtain wall

Sample 3 – from the north side of robbed surround of the east window

Sample 4 – from the south side of robbed surround of the east window

Sample 5 – from the east side of robbed surround of the garderobe

Sample 6 – from the robbed footings on the north west side of the castle tower

#### **4.2 A Watching Brief on the South East Corner of the Tower**

The consolidation work required the underpinning and support for the badly robbed out corner of the south east corner of the tower. To provide a solid foundation for the repair work, the original masonry of the tower had to be exposed below the current overhang. This involved the removal of topsoil that had accumulated over the original *in situ* masonry of the tower.



The cleared stonework prior to underpinning

The masonry lay under up to 0.35m of what was mainly a dark brown sandy silt or loam that contained some small rubble fragments along with some small fragments of mortar. This appeared to be an accumulation of vegetation debris (i.e. degraded ivy leaves) with some weathered building material, overlying the original robbed stonework. No artefacts were recovered.

### 4.3 Community Survey Training

A programme of survey training was undertaken primarily on drawing upstanding masonry but also involved some training in surveying earthworks related to the castle and some work of descriptive recording of features within the tower.

The survey work within the courtyard of the castle confirmed what are likely to be the remains of a suite of buildings situated around the curtain walls. Figure 6 shows the measured earthworks while Figure 14 below suggests a possible building layout.

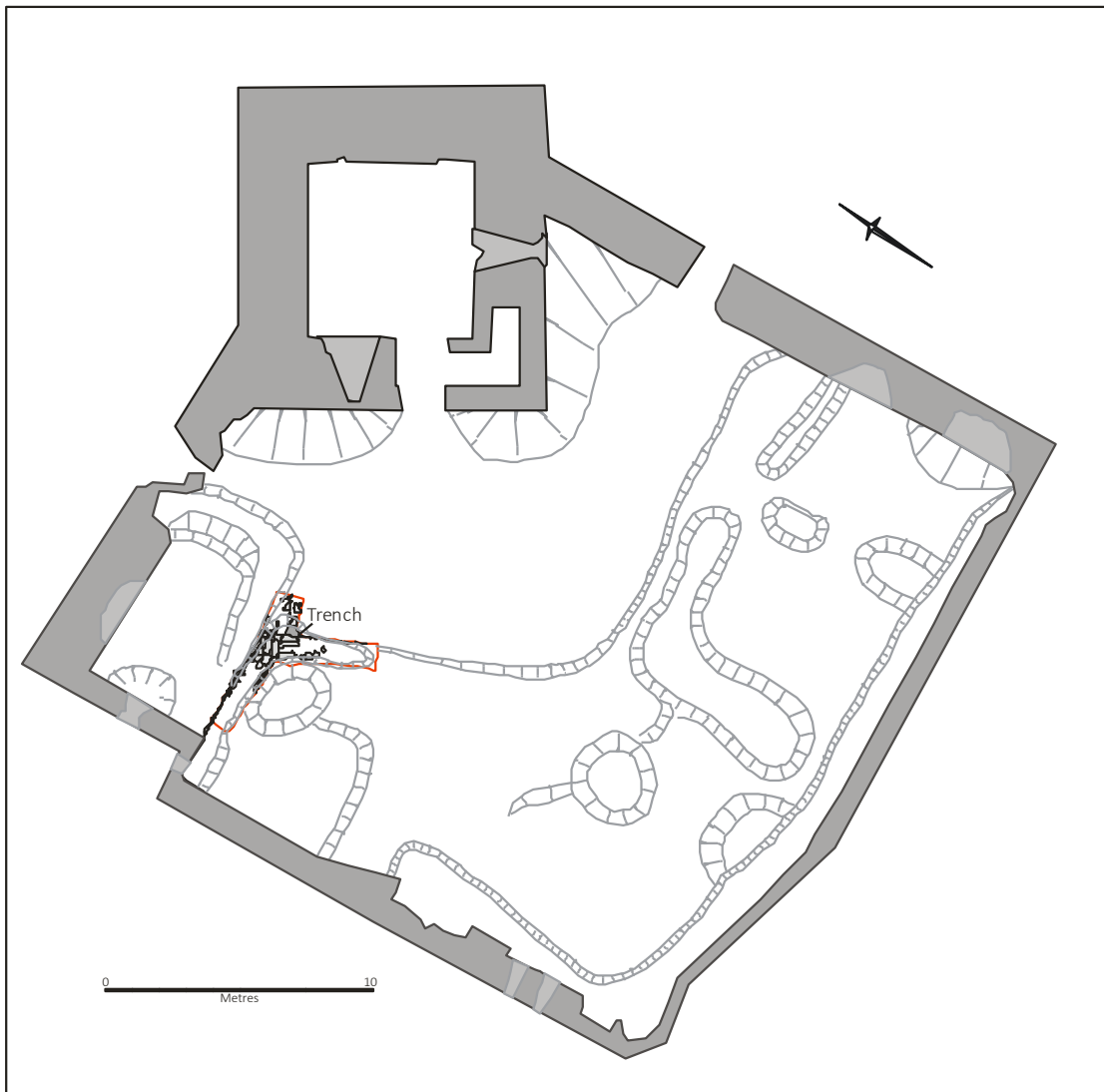


Figure 6: Position of trench and other features in the castle courtyard

The best preserved part of these buildings forms part of the western curtain wall in the north west corner of the courtyard. The northernmost structure had at least two floors, the height of the second floor suggested by two beam slots in the north curtain wall. This adjoins a three storied structure lying to the south. This building has been much repaired although two late 19<sup>th</sup>

century photographs of the remains show some architectural detail hidden by later repair work and ivy growth. These show what appears to be the remains of one side of a fireplace as suggested by ashlar blocks and the remains of an arched chimney above, these features not previously mentioned in the RCHAMS description of the courtyard buildings. The features uncovered in the excavation (see Section 4.4 below) likely relate to the last use of the castle, given that they lay under what appears to be demolition waste, the recovered finds (while mainly from disturbed deposits) tentatively indicating a late 18<sup>th</sup> century date.

The survey also indicated the edge of what may be a revetment or platform to the south and west of the tower and as the edges of this feature run roughly parallel to the south east and south west walls of the tower it is possible these demarcate the edge of a courtyard.

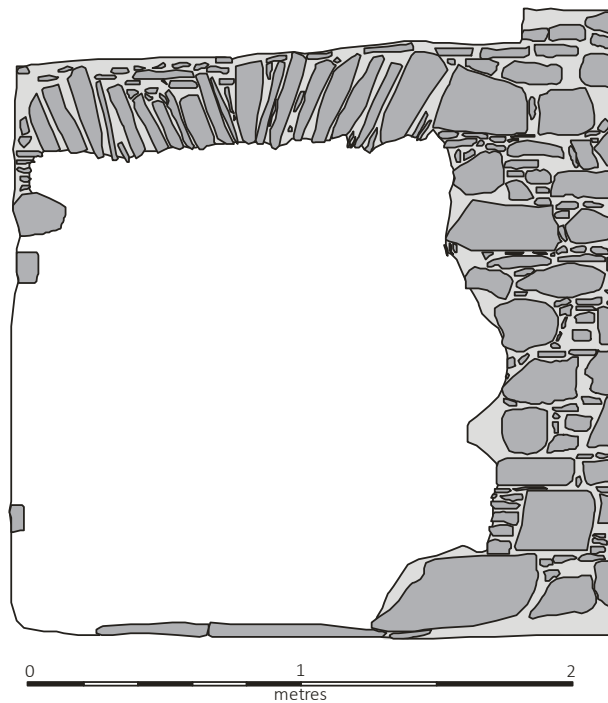


Figure 7: Internal arch into ground floor cellar

During the training the volunteers produced drawn records of the inner archway of the entrance to the ground floor (Figure 7) and recorded some of the masonry fabric on the NE side of the tower (Figure 8).

Although the castle has been extensively described previously as part of the drawing and survey training volunteers produced written descriptions of some aspects of the castle not previously recorded and these descriptions are outlined below.

Beyond what was likely an inserted or greatly modified entrance on the ground floor there are the remains of what is likely an original arch into the cellar proper (Figure 8). The cellar also has two splayed windows; one in the SW wall is now blocked and measured 2.30m wide internally.



Figure 7: NW elevation of castle tower and courtyard wall

The second in the SE wall measured 1.30m wide and 1.48m tall internally. Both windows have original sandstone dressings on their internal faces.

The stairway to the first floor, which measures 1.10m wide, is lit by two small splayed windows the lower window measuring 0.75m wide internally the upper window measuring 0.80m wide internally.

The first floor has several features from which measurements were obtained. The south east wall contains a window and fireplace. The window measured 1.85m high and 2.0m wide, although the internal masonry sides of the window have been removed/robbed while the upper supporting arch appears original. The surrounds of the fireplace have been robbed although the remaining masonry suggested it measured over 1.40m wide and 1.08 deep. The window in the north east wall was splayed measuring 0.70m to 1.50m wide although here again its original surround had been robbed. The north west wall contains a blocked window and a garderobe. The splayed widow measured 0.60m to 1.40m wide with robbed surrounds while the garderobe measured 0.84m to 0.97m wide. In the western side of the garderobe wall there is aumbry or storage space measuring 0.44m by 0.40m.

The south west wall contains the original entrance and an intramural stair to the second floor. The original surrounds of the entrance on the internal face have been removed the side walls entrance measuring 1.17m to 1.55m apart. The stairway from the first to second floor measures 0.80m wide and consists of 14 steps lit by two splayed windows. The lower window measures 0.96m wide internally and between 0.44m to 0.50m tall with the upper window measuring 0.70m wide and 0.42m tall internally. No access could be gained to the upper floor walls to provide measurements.

Some observations were also made on the surrounding earthworks previously investigated and described by Alcock and Alcock belonging to the earlier fort.

To the east of the castle, lengths of drystone walling were traced along the eastern and south eastern edges of the cliff top and these likely represent the upper outer face of the dun or fort structure (Figure 9). The wall on the eastern side of the cliff head had previously been observed by Alcock and Alcock and exposed in their excavations (cutting 301).

During our survey work there was little vegetation growth on the south east side of the escarpment and walling was observed poking out through the mossy cover for a distance of over 10m. Alcock and Alcock had projected that the defensive work extended along the top of this side of the escarpment and this perhaps confirms their hypothesis.

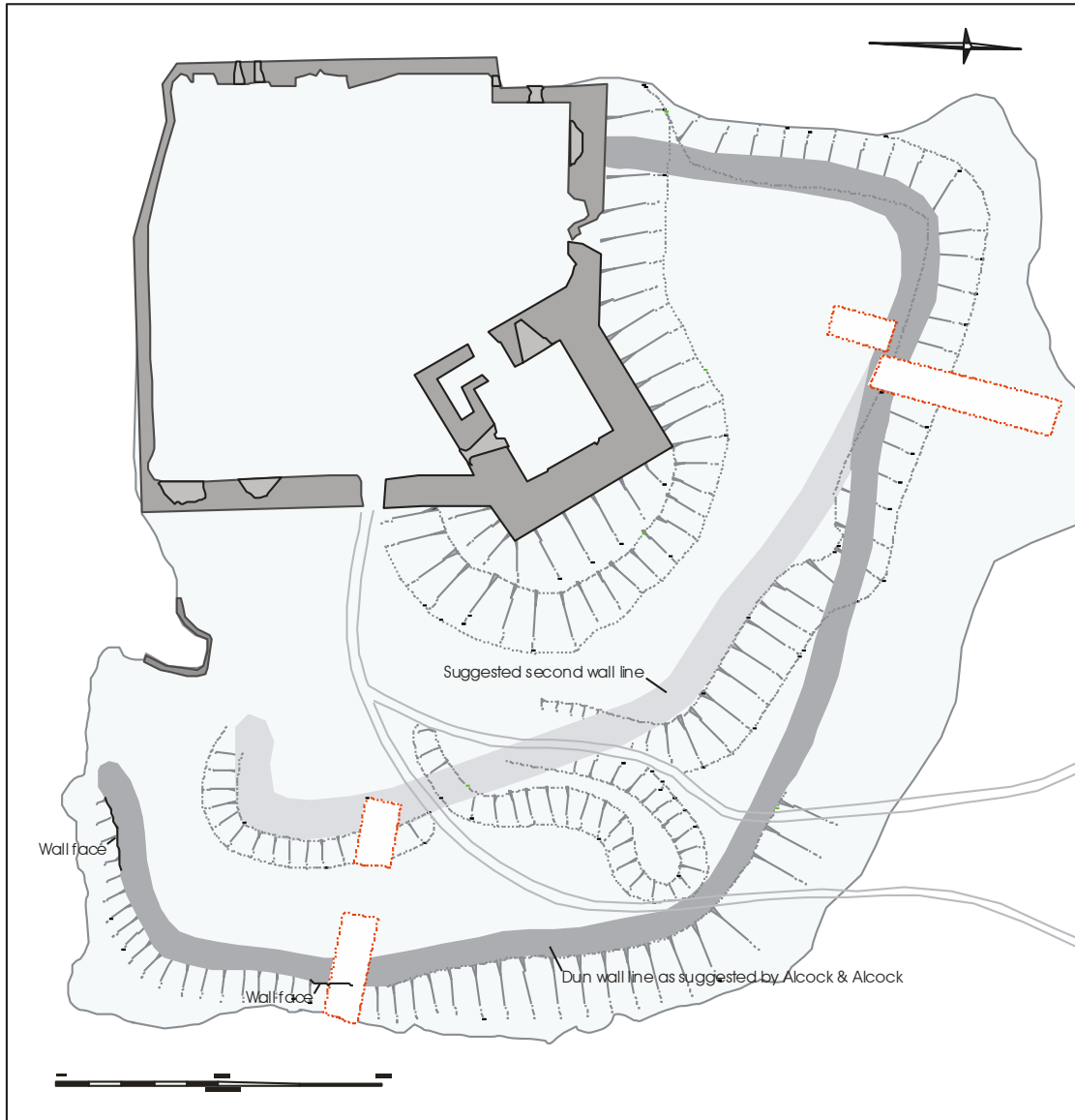


Figure 9: Earthwork features surrounding the castle (after Alcock and Alcock, their excavation trenches shown in red)

The ground along the eastern side of the escarpment has undoubtedly been disturbed by later landscaping and this, as Alcock and Alcock suggest, may have disturbed the original wall circuit on this side. However, even taking this into account it seems unlikely that the wall seen on the east joins the walls seen within their trenches at the north (within cuttings 101 and 102) as they suggest in their report. They also do not adequately take into account the earthwork they examined in cutting 401, and while they acknowledge in their report that 'Because lack of resources 401 was not carried to any depth' it seems unwise to leave it out altogether from any possible reconstruction of the original defensive layout. The present topography and earthworks perhaps suggest an upper circuit of defensive works and a second lower rampart.

#### 4.4 The Re-excavation of the Courtyard Trench

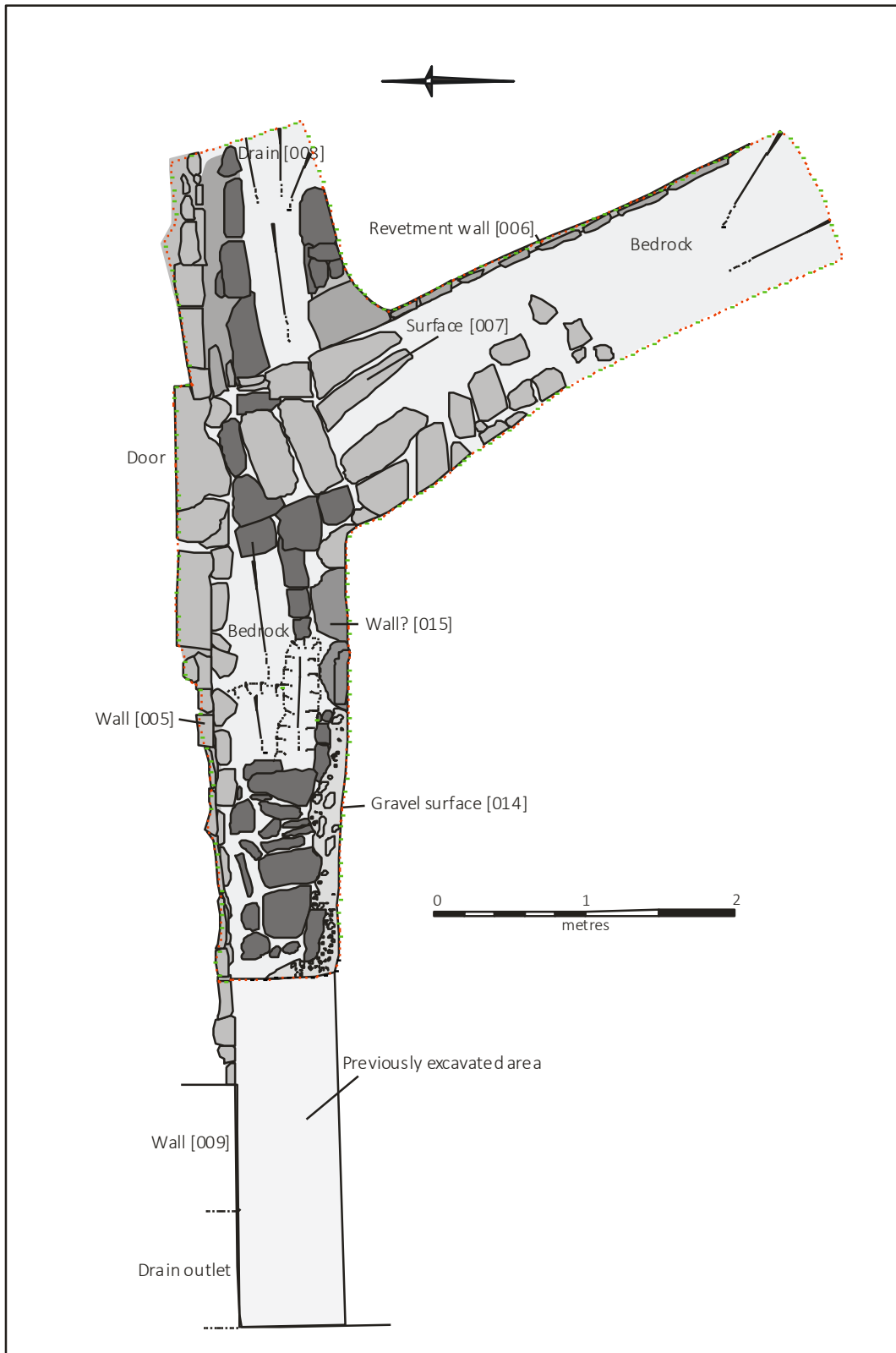


Figure 10: Trench plan

In July 2016 work was undertaken on the re-excavation of what appeared to have been a sondage excavated within the courtyard of the castle. The aim of the excavation was to assess what had been exposed in the initial excavation prior to consolidation and landscaping work in this area of the courtyard. Following this first phase of excavation Dunollie Projects Ltd decided to leave the uncovered features within the trench on display. In order to do this and recover some dating from '*in situ*' material a small excavation was undertaken over two days in July 2017, this programme of works outlined in the WSI in support of the Scheduled Monument Consent. The work also involved the consolidation of exposed deposits on the southern and western sides of the excavated trench. The two phases of excavation work had their own site codes DNO 16 and DUN 17 although the same context numbers were used during both excavation phases. The results of both phases of work have been combined in Section 4.4.1 below. The area at the west of the Trench labelled as 'previously excavated area' within Figure 10 shows the extent of the original excavation trench, most of which now lies beyond the modern perimeter fence and would in any case would have been too dangerous to re-excavate, given the vertical cliff drop below the 'chute' in the curtain wall. All built structures and surfaces were left in situ. The covered drain at the east of the trench was covered in geotextile this covered with loose soil. The southern wall face and door of the building in the NW of the courtyard were left exposed and on view to the public as was the paved surface and revetment wall to the south of these. The exposed east facing and north facing sections were covered with geotextile held in place by a battered 'wall' of turves rising to the current ground/grass level.

#### **4.4.1 The Excavation Results**

The trench was situated within the northern half of the courtyard and prior to the current excavation work the trench measured 6.90m long east west before turning 3.30m to the south east, its original width c1.0m (Figures 6 and 10). At the south west side of the trench there was an area of what appears to be mounded soil, this possibly the weathered remains of the spoil heap.

The removal of backfill deposits [002] revealed several features within the trench all which may have functioned at the same time (Figure 9). In the north of the trench was the southern wall face and doorway of a structure situated in the north west corner of the courtyard [005]. Running down the southern side of the wall was a partially covered stone drain [008] that leads to a chute in the western wall of the courtyard surround [009]. To the south of wall [005] and abutting it was another wall [006] forming what might be the edge of a platform or revetment. South of wall [005] and west of the revetment was a paved area [007].

All the built features within the trench had been constructed over/onto bedrock which sloped down from east to west. There was little or no evidence of earlier deposits existing between the bedrock and the built structures. Given the depth (and extent) of the occupation deposits associated with the earlier defensive works at the north west of the castle it seems likely any pre-medieval deposits, if they existed, had been removed from this part of the site prior to the construction of the structures encountered within the trench.

Built directly over bedrock and forming the northern side of the trench was the southern wall face [005] of a rectangular structure situated in the north west corner of the courtyard. Wall [005], of which only part of the south face was seen in the trench, was constructed from split angular and rounded rubble (max size 0.55m x 0.28m) standing up to 0.90m high. The gaps



between the larger blocks were filled by close and tight pinning all bonded with a soft light yellow mortar although much of the later had weathered from the surface area of the wall.



South facing section of trench, wall [005]



Lower door jamb



Door jamb

A doorway (which is likely centrally placed along the wall) gives access to the structure from the south, and the basal remnants of a door jamb is preserved on the east side of the door, which was 1.00m wide, although the west side of the door is less well preserved. The doorway was filled by a mixed rubble and loam deposit [011] that contained some midden material.

The stones at the base of the wall were partially offset from the main face of the wall, these forming the supports for a covered drain running down the southern side of the wall as well as providing the foundation for the wall, suggesting perhaps the drain and wall were constructed at the same time.

Abutting wall [005] at the north end of the trench was wall [006] which incorporated a drainage channel [008] at its northern end (measuring 0.30m wide). The wall stood up to 0.54m high and was more roughly coursed than wall [005] with no evidence of mortar used in its construction, although this might have more to do with weathering along its external face than actual absence.



Platform? wall [006]

To the south of wall [005] and west of wall [006] were the remains of a well worn paved surface [007], consisting of large angular flat blocks of sandstone, split cobbles and slate. The surface lay opposite the entrance into the building at the north and might also have led to a door into a related building at the west although this has to remain speculation. The surface did not continue into the southern part of the trench and here ridges of natural bedrock were exposed. While this absence of paving may be due to robbing (and some disturbance by tree roots) it seems more likely any such paving was originally absent in this part of the trench with some flat slates providing a less robust surface.



Paved surface [007]

As mentioned above, drain [008] runs down the southern side of wall [005] and leads to a chute in the western wall of the courtyard surround [009]. At the north the drain is formed by a stone-lined channel running through wall [006]. It then runs through floor [007] before descending downslope through a rough-cut bedrock channel into a stone covered conduit (which presumably leads to the chute in the outer courtyard wall). The conduit was constructed with stones forming ledges either side, these supporting a stone capping, some of which had partially collapsed/subsided. Within the covered part of the drain was a dark grey clayey silt [013], although little of this was excavated and no artefacts recovered from this deposit.

Towards the eastern part of the trench no such capping or covering was observed, suggesting that any such covering had been robbed or the drain was open in this part of the trench. The drain covering at the westernmost part of the trench was sealed by a deposit of crushed stone and sand [014]. This very likely represents the remains of a floor and is possibly associated with the upstanding structural remains beyond the trench to the west. No eastern wall to this structure was positively identified in the trench, although two substantial stones [015] revealed in section might delineate the eastern side of a building (Figures 10 and 13).





Drain [008] at east of trench



Covered drain [008] at western end of trench



Possible wall footings [015]

Sealing the floor deposits, the drain and lying to the west of stones [015] was [004] a midden deposit, containing amounts of animal bone and sea shells, these no doubt deriving from food waste, as well as glass and clay tobacco pipe fragments. Surface [007] was sealed by a similar deposit [012] containing bone, shell, bottle and widow glass along with pottery.

Both deposits [004] and [012] were sealed by what appears to be mainly demolition material [003], this mixed with some midden material. The demolition material [003] consisted of small to medium angular stones in a dark grey silt up to 0.43m in depth. This deposit also contained fragments of roofing slate and frequent fragments of mortar. The relatively small size of the stones within this deposit suggests it represents robbing discard rather than building collapse.



Rubble deposit [003] above occupation/midden deposits and paved surface



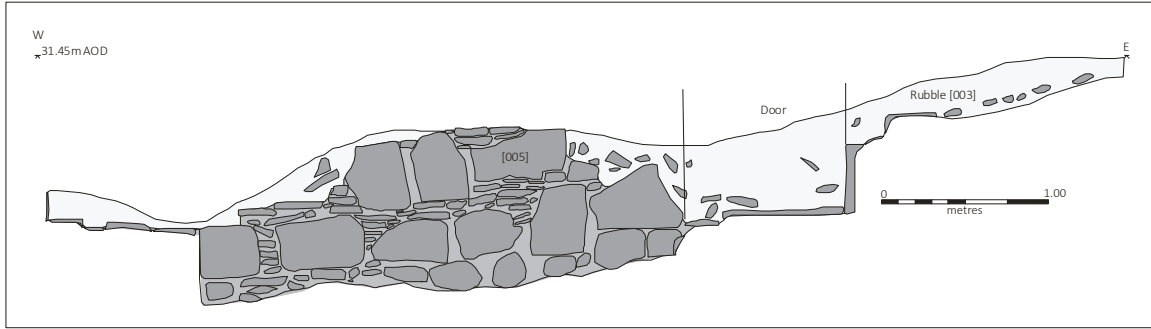


Figure 11: South facing section

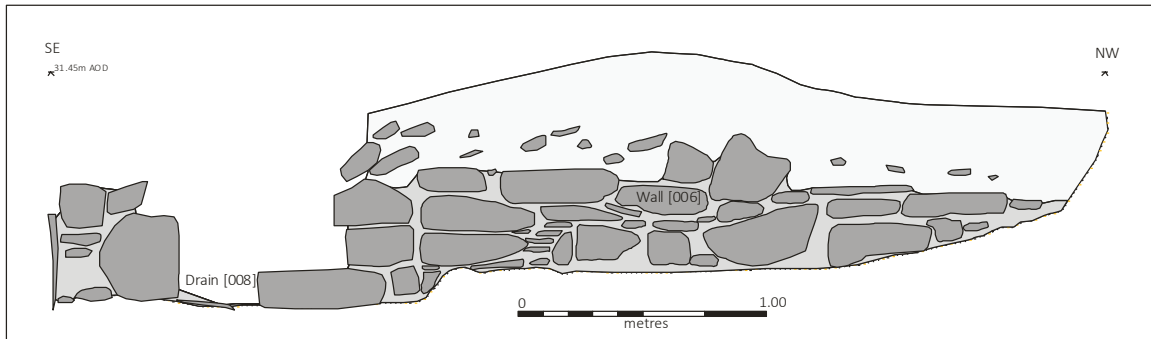


Figure 12: South west facing section

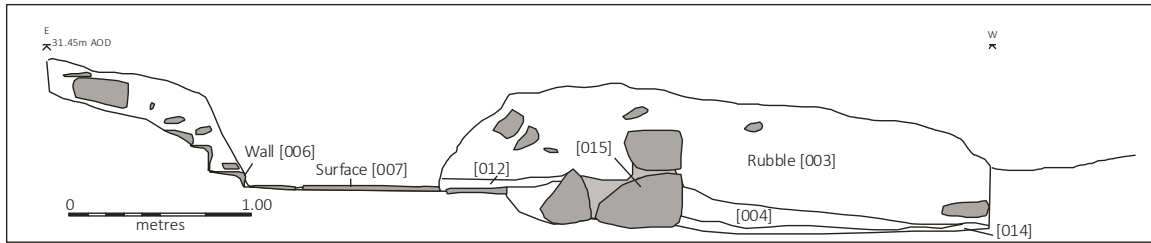


Figure 13: North facing section

Since the initial excavation of the trench (at a still unknown date) the base of the trench had partially been refilled with what was likely a mixture of weathering from the sides, vegetation growth and some obviously modern material [002]. This soil was relatively free of rubble (or indeed artefacts) suggesting these had been removed during the original excavation of the trench. Despite the presence of some of the recent artefacts the deposit also had finds that appear to have weathered from the sides of the trench or had been missed by the original excavators.





Staffordshire slipware

Three pottery fragments were also recovered from the backfill of the trench [002] these two sherds being tin glazed earthenware while the third was a small sherd of creamware, suggesting an 18<sup>th</sup> century date.

#### Tobacco pipe

Six fragments of Tobacco pipe stems were recovered from deposit [004] while one fragment recovered from [002] was part of a small bowl suggesting this dated to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (c1620).



Tobacco pipe



#### Glass

Forty eight shards of glass were recovered, the majority being bottle glass (all green in colour) and represent various types of vessel including onion and mallet shaped examples. Window glass was also recovered from the midden deposits [004] and [012].

#### Metal

A number of nails and several corroded but less readily identifiable iron objects were recovered from the excavation. A George V penny dating to 1919 was also recovered from the back fill [002] of the trench.

#### Slag

Three fragments of slag or fly ash suggest some industrial activity in the area and possibly represents blacksmithing waste.

#### Bone

Given the limited amount of soil actually excavated from *in situ* deposits the amount of animal bone recovered (252) was relatively large. The small size of the majority of the bone suggested most had undergone secondary butchering and were no doubt food waste although some of the larger bones had primary butchery marks.

#### Shell

The largest quantity of shells were periwinkles with lesser amounts of cockles, mussels and razor clams, all no doubt locally sourced.

#### Flint

Two worked flints were recovered from the excavation, one a grey coloured scarp the other possibly a gun flint or strike-a-light.

#### Stone

A small smoothed irregular disc of slate had a crisscross design incised on one of its surfaces and may have been used as a gaming piece.

The demolition and collapse deposits within the trench contained some fragments of roof slate, and several of the larger or better preserved examples were retained. Some of these had pierced peg holes, their relatively large size perhaps suggesting these may originally have been fixed by wooden pegs.

#### 4.4.3 Discussion

The small excavation within the courtyard at Dunollie castle uncovered a number of features within the confines of the previously excavated trench. These seem to indicate that the built structures, at least in this part of the courtyard, may have been conceived to function together, this shown by the drain running between and possibly under the courtyard buildings. When these structures were built is of course open to question as no earlier deposits appeared to lie below the revealed structures in the trench, but that is not to say they might not exist elsewhere. The excavation has shown that the lower portion of the building within the north west corner of the courtyard is relatively well preserved and perhaps indicates that similarly well preserved buildings and associated deposits may occur along the courtyard wall. The evidence obtained from the *'in situ'* deposits lying above the floors and drain within the trench indicate a midden forming sometime in the late between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. This of course would fit with the historical picture of the castle being abandoned as a residence by the MacDougal family by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Initially two possibilities suggested themselves as to why the trench had been originally excavated, firstly to act as drainage as the trench leads to a chute in the outer wall. Secondly, and perhaps more likely, it is the remains of a small evaluation or investigation trench, by person or person's unknown. The latter proposition appears to be the correct one as the trench was originally excavated to the chute in the courtyard wall and then followed the outer (south) face of the wall of the structure within the north west corner of the courtyard, turning south east as it encountered the revetment wall and stopping at the level of the paved surface. Some of the artefacts obtained from this original excavation may however still survive, with some now on display in the 1745 house, including bottle glass, the former very similar in date and preservation to those recovered from the present excavation. The objects on display (potentially also including the Jew's harp) were found in a box in Dunollie House with a note linking them to the castle (C. Gillies pers. comm.)

When the trench was originally excavated is still unknown although it must have been before 1975 as both the wall of the building in the north west corner of the courtyard [005] and the edge of the revetment platform [006] are depicted within the RCHAMS Inventory plan of the castle. Two photographs held by Historic Environment Scotland likely dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (c1880, SC1242436 & SC948543) show the remaining 3 storied building on the west side of the courtyard. This depicts that the lower courses of the wall of this building had been badly robbed with two timber braces supporting the upper part of the wall. What also appears to be the remains of a chimney on the south side of the upstanding masonry is also shown in the photos, this now obscured by ivy.



Photo SC 948543

The overhang created by the robbing in the curtain wall is depicted in an undated sketch in the MacDougall Collection showing that it formed part of a cage to house a golden eagle, the eagle appearing in a poem written by William Wordsworth on a visit to Lorne in 1831 (MacDougall 2008). Since the time of the above photo the robbed part of the wall has been repaired and this repair work coated with cement based render. At the southern end of the previously excavated trench (just above the drainage chute as shown in Figure 10) the render of this repair stops abruptly indicating the original ground level when the repair work was undertaken, indicating the trench must post date the render repair. What is also apparent from the present survey within the courtyard was evidence of a trench that has been excavated against much of the inner face of the courtyard curtain wall (Figures 9 and 14). MacGibbon and Ross's plan of the castle, published in 1887, does not depict the two windows at the southern end of west curtain wall which suggests these were obscured when they described the castle. If both trenches were excavated at the same time then the most we can say at present is that they were likely excavated sometime after c.1887 and before 1975 (although it is tempting to see the recovered 1919 coin of George V as dating the excavation work).

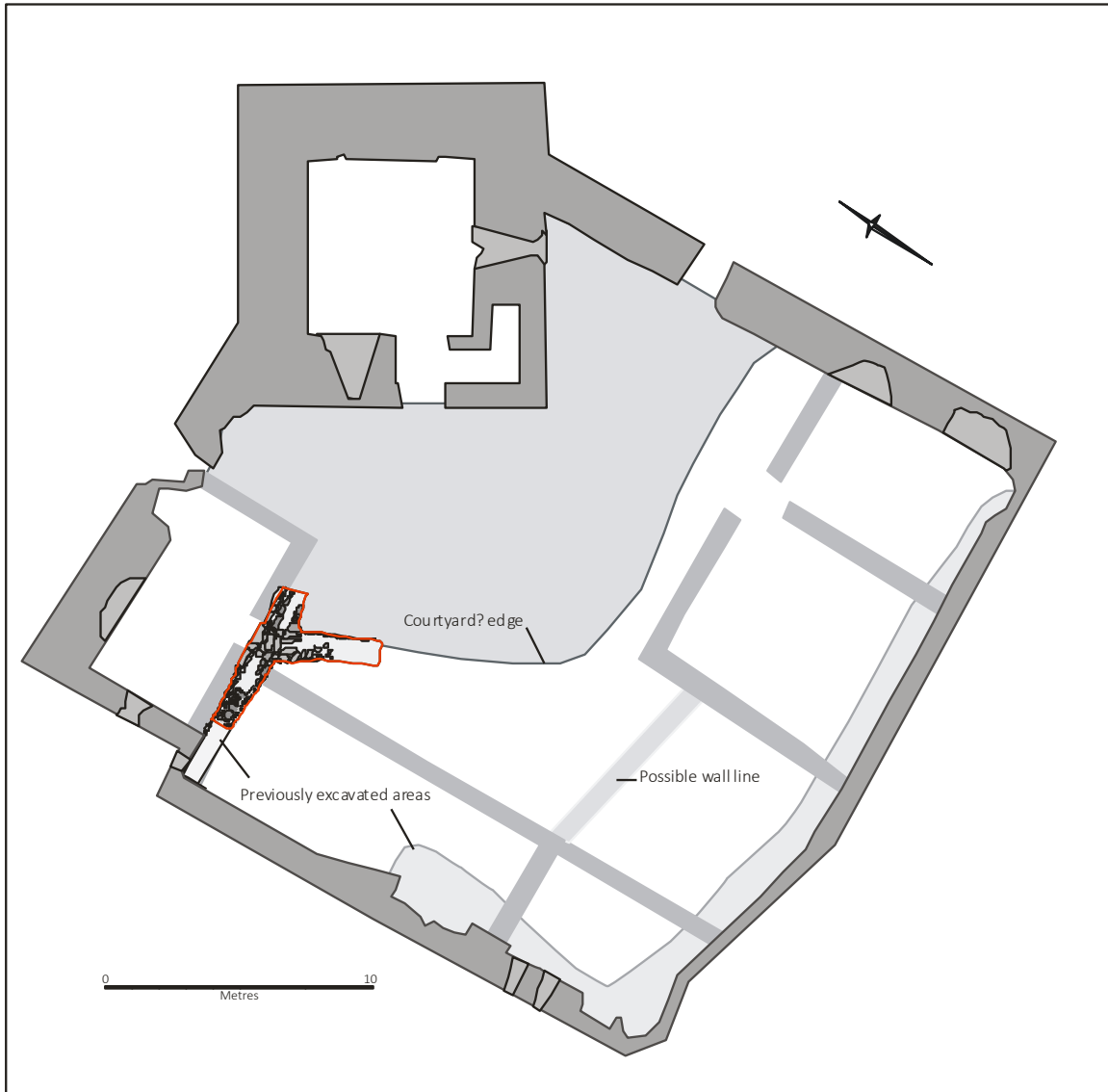


Figure 14: Interpretation of courtyard features

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## Appendix 1: Context Descriptions

[001] Layer. Topsoil and vegetation cover. Mainly grass, but with some moss and other weed growth.

[002] Layer. Trench backfill. Mid to dark brown silty loam, includes occasional metal, pot and glass.

[003] Layer. Demolition material. Consisted of small to medium angular stones in a dark grey silt up to 0.43m in depth. This deposit also contained fragments of roofing slate and frequent fragments of mortar.

[004] Layer. Midden deposit. Dark grey clayey silt, containing animal bone, sea shells, glass and clay tobacco pipe fragments.

[005] Wall. South wall of structure. This was constructed from split angular and rounded rubble (max size 0.55m x 0.28m) standing up to 0.98m high, all bonded with a soft light yellow mortar. Has an entrance along its length measuring 1.00m wide.

[006] Wall. platform/courtyard wall. The wall was constructed from randomly coursed rubble and stood up to 0.54m high with no evidence of mortar used in its construction. The wall incorporated a drainage channel [008] at its northern end (measuring 0.30m wide).

[007] Surface. Stone paving. Consisting of large angular flat blocks of sandstone (maximum size 0.60m by 0.24m), split cobbles and slate.

[008] At the north the drain is formed by a stone lined channel running through wall [006] (0.30m wide). It then runs through floor [007] before descending downslope through a rough cut bedrock channel (0.32m wide) into a stone covered conduit (which presumably leads to the chute in the outer courtyard wall). The conduit was constructed with stones forming ledges either side these supporting a stone capping (maximum size 0.42m by 0.26m), some of which had partially collapsed/subsided.

[009] Wall. Western courtyard/curtain wall

[010] Layer/fill. Rubble deposit filling drain channel. Dark grey silty loam includes occasional stone, bone and glass.

[011] Layer. Deposit filling doorway/threshold in wall [005]. Dark brown silty loam includes moderate stones and occasional slate fragment and bone.

[012] Layer. Midden deposit. Dark grey clayey silt, containing animal bone, sea shells and glass.

[013] Fill. Dark grey silty clay.

[014] Layer. Surface? Mid grey brown gravel and schist fragments.

[015] Wall? Possible wall stub, measuring 0.70m wide and up to 0.50m in height.

## Appendix 2: Context List

Context No.	Type	Description
001	Layer	Topsoil
002	Layer	Trench Backfill
003	Layer	Rubble/Midden
004	Layer	Midden
005	Wall	S wall of building
006	Wall	Revetment
007	Surface	Paved Surface
008	Drain	Drain
009	Wall	Courtyard Wall
010	Layer	Rubble at east of trench
011	Layer	Rubble in door
012	layer	Midden
013	Fill	Drain fill
014	Layer	Floor?
015	Wall?	Possible wall

## Appendix 3: Finds List

Context	Material	Number	Description
002	PT	3	2 tin glazed earthenware (1 with green and blue decoration), 1 creamware
002	TP	4	3 stem fragments, 1 bowl fragment
003	BN	28	some with butchery marks
004	TP	1	stem fragment
002	GL	10	green bottle glass
002	ST	2	two roof slate fragments with nail holes
004	GL	1	green bottle glass
002	GL	3	window glass
002	BN	35	some with butchery marks
002	CU	1	penny of George V dated 1919
002	FE	3	three square headed iron nails
003	FE	1	staple?
004	BN	15	some with butchery marks
002	SH	8	sea shells winkles and cockle
003	SH	1	oyster shell
002	FL	1	scraper
002	FL	1	with worked/retouched edge
002	ST	1	pebble of rose quartz, with smoothed side?
002	ST	2	slate
003	PT	2	Tin glazed earthenware
004	PT	1	Lead glazed redware
012	PT	3	Staffordshire slipware
004	TP	5	pipe stems

003	GL	3	green bottle glass
004	GL	2	1 green bottle glass, 1 window glass
010	GL	1	1 window glass
012	GL	28	20 green bottle glass (2 base), 8 window glass
003	FE	1	nail
004	FE	1	blade?
010	FE	1	nails
011	FE	2	nail plus unidentified
012	FE	7	nails?
003	BN	45	animal bone
004	BN	104	animal bone
010	BN	5	animal bone
011	BN	1	animal bone
012	BN	64	animal bone
003	SH	17	periwinkle, cockle, oyster, razor clam
004	SH	25	periwinkle, cockle, oyster, razor clam
010	SH	1	oyster shell
012	SH	22	periwinkle, cockle
012	SL	3	slag
004	ST	1	games piece?
011	ST	1	slate
	OT		Mortar sample 1
	OT		Mortar sample 2
	OT		Mortar sample 3
	OT		Mortar sample 4
	OT		Mortar sample 5
	OT		Mortar sample 6

#### Appendix 4: Graphics List

Graphic No.	Scale	Description
1	1:20	SE Elevation of Tower
2	1:20	SW Elevation of Tower
3	1:50	Courtyard of castle
4	1:100	Earthworks surrounding castle
5	1:20	Ground floor entrance arch
6	1:20	Masonry NE of Tower
7	1:20	Excavation Trench 2016
8	1:20	Excavation Trench 2017
9	1:20	South facing section
10	1:20	South west facing section
11	1:20	North facing section

#### Appendix 5: Samples

One sample was taken from the fill of the covered drain, Sample 1 [013].



## Appendix 6: Photo List

Photo No.	Context	Direction from	Description
001			SW corner watching brief
002			SW corner watching brief
003			SW corner watching brief
004			SW corner watching brief
005			SW corner watching brief
006			SW corner watching brief
007			SW corner watching brief
008			SW corner watching brief
009			SW corner watching brief
010			SW corner watching brief
011			SW corner watching brief
012-113			stonework
114-153			upper stonework SE face of tower
154-197			upper stonework SW face of tower
198			first floor entrance
199			first floor entrance
200			window in stairs
201			window in stairs
202			stairs
203			window in stairs
204			window in stairs
205			window in stairs
206			window in stairs
207			window in stairs
208			window in stairs
209			window in stairs
210			window in stairs
211			garderobe 2nd floor
212			garderobe 2nd floor
213			fireplace 2nd floor
214			fireplace 2nd floor
215			fireplace 2nd floor
216			fireplace 2nd floor
217			fireplace 2nd floor
218			fireplace 2nd floor
219			fireplace 2nd floor
220			turnpike stair
221			window 2nd floor
222			window 1st floor
223			window 1st floor
224			garderobe 1st floor
225			garderobe 1st floor
226			garderobe 2nd floor

227			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
228			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
229			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
230			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
231			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
232			blocked window/fireplace 1st floor
233			window 1st floor
234			window 1st floor
235			window and fireplace 1st floor
236			window and fireplace 1st floor
237			fireplace 2nd floor
238			fireplace 1st floor
239			fireplace 1st floor
240			fireplace 1st floor
241			window 2nd floor
242			window 2nd floor
243			window 2nd floor
244			window 1st floor
245			stair door 1st floor
246			stair door and window 1st floor
247			window arch 1st floor
248			aumbry garderobe
249			blocked window
250			drawing castle
251			courtyard
252			plaque
253			grafitti
254			stair window
255			stair window
256			stair window
257			stairs
258			stairs
259			drawing entrance arch
260	006	W	platform wall
261	006	W	deturfed trench
262	005	S	wall
263	005	W	deturfed trench
264	005	E	deturfed trench
265		E	trench and curtain wall
266		E	trench and curtain wall
267		E	trench and curtain wall
268		W	trench and tower
269		W	trench and tower
270		W	trench and tower
271	005	SW	wall
272	005	S	wall
273	005	SE	wall
274	005/007	SE	wall and surface

275	006	W	platform wall
276	006	W	platform wall
277	007	N	surface
278	007	N	surface
279	007/008	W	surface and drain
280	007/008	N	surface and drain
281	011	S	door
282	005	SE	wall
283	007	E	surface
284	006	W	trench
285	003/007	E	surface and rubble
286	003	E	rubble
287	004/015	N	midden and wall?
288	004/015	N	midden and wall?
289	004	W	midden
290	007/008	E	drain and surface
291	003/007	E	surface and rubble
292	007	N	surface
293	008	W	drain channel
294	005/011	S	door
295	005	W	door jamb
296	005	W	door jamb
297	005	W	door jamb
298	008	E	covered drain
299	008	W	covered drain
300	008	W	covered drain
301	008	E	covered drain
302	008	E	covered drain
303	015	N	wall
304	003/004	N	rubble and midden
305	008	N	covered drain
306		E	trench
307	008	E	drain channel
308		SE	trench
309		SW	trench
310		SW	trench
311		SW	trench
312	007	S	surface

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Argyll and Bute
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Dunollie Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	DUN 17
<b>PARISH:</b>	Kilmore and Kilbride
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Roddy Regan
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kilmartin Museum
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Excavation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NM83SE 46
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Medieval Castle
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	worked flint, late 17 <sup>th</sup> early 18 <sup>th</sup> century finds
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NM 85240 31460
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	July 2017
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	July 2017
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	Another phase of excavation work was carried out in the castle courtyard at Dunollie, following on from initial work undertaken last year. This involved excavation of in situ deposits around the existing trench edges and over some of the built features exposed last year. Finds included food waste (mainly bone and shell along with pottery (tin glazed earthenware and Staffordshire slipware) and glass. The excavated deposits confirmed the picture of habitation of courtyard buildings dating from the late 17 <sup>th</sup> to early 18 <sup>th</sup> century prior to their demolition or abandonment.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Dunollie Projects Ltd.
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Kilmartin Museum, Kilmartin, Argyll, PA31 8RQ
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	rodody@kilmartin.org
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	The archive is retained by Kilmartin Museum with view to its deposition with Dunollie Projects Ltd through TT. Copies of the report will be lodged with, Historic Environment Scotland, WoSAS SMR and the NMRS

