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Introduction

The installation of a new septic tank and soak away reed bed at Barcaldine Castle, Ledaig, Benderloch, Argyll required an archaeological watching brief of the new ground breaking work. (Planning Application 03/01649/DET). Apart from the new septic tank and soakaway being located within the curtilage of the restored 17th century castle, a number of prehistoric sites are present in the immediate vicinity. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over one day on 5 January 2004 by Fiona Baker of Firat Archaeological Services. The weather was grey and overcast with mist and rain.

Barcaldine Castle, located at NGR NM 9079 4058, is an imposing A Listed tower house built by Sir Duncan Campbell 7th Laird of Glenorchy, between 1601 and 1609. Minor alterations to the castle were made in the early 18th century but by the later half of the 19th century it was derelict and roofless. The castle was restored between 1897 – 1911. The castle sits on a low hill with gently sloping ground to the E and has superb views to the NE over Loch Creran. The castle is L shaped in plan with the main block aligned approximately E-W and measures 14.5m by 8.9m over walls varying from 1.4m to 1.9m at ground floor level. The wing to the SW measures 7.5m E-W by 7.3m and it projects slightly beyond the W gable of the main block. At the SE re-entrant angle there is a circular stair tower.

The building consists of a vaulted ground floor with two unvaulted upper storeys and a rebuilt garret. Above the entrance door, which is located on the E side of the stair tower, is an iron gridded window over which is a schist panel inscribed with the initials of the original owner and the date 1609. Angle turrets protrude on the NW, SW and SE corners and all have modern conical roofs. The masonry of the castle is pierced by a number of peep holes, pistol holes and gun loops but many of these have external blocking. The walls are now harled and white washed. An inventory of fittings for the castle compiled in 1621 survives.

The castle was surveyed at 1:2500 by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (RCAHMS) in 1975 and was also recorded by MacGibbon and Ross in 1889. The information given above is from the West of Scotland Sites and Monuments Record (WoSASPIN 1479).

Report on the Archaeological Watching Brief

The area of excavations were located at the NE corner of the castle and comprise a slip trench for the new drainage pipe running NE-SW from the corner of the castle and cutting through the HaHa to the lower ground level where a reed bed soakaway and septic tank pit were excavated. All excavations were carried out with a toothless ditching bucket.

The drainage track on the higher garden ground was excavated first and consisted of a trench 8.00 m long, 1.30m wide at the top narrowing to 0.60m wide at the bottom and 0.80m to 0.90m deep. This trench started at the location of an existing 1930s – 1950s fireclay drain, which fed the existing septic tank that was being replaced, and was located 0.5m E of the NE corner of the castle and 0.85m N. The new sewerage

outflow pipe was connected into the existing fireclay pipe. The new pipe trench was excavated along the line of an existing gravel path 0.10m deep. A small area of concrete patio paving is located immediately to the E of the new drain trench.

The overall area of the soakaway was 5m NW-SE x 12.80m NE-SW. The pit for the new septic tank was excavated at the S end of the soak away at the foot of the HaHa wall and measured c.2.5m x 2.5m and 3.00m deep. The excavations for the septic tank disturbed the water table.

The HaHa is a retaining wall of drystone construction of four courses of water rounded boulders and irregular angular stones and cobbles, mostly glacial cobbles and schist boulders and some stones left over from the restoration work on the castle. A few roughly squared off granite blocks are also included in its construction. The boulders are on average 0.25m x 0.30m x 0.30m and smaller angular schist and sandstone stones have been used as packing material. The HaHa wall retains the higher ground around the castle and there is a ditch running along the foot of the wall, which is a drainage feature. The HaHa wall is 1.20m high and the drop in ground level all along the N side of the castle where the HaHa is present is 0.75m on average, with the lower part and foundations of the HaHa wall now concealed under the earth. The HaHa wall is splayed out at the bottom where it is 0.80m wide and tapers as it rises to 0.40m wide at the top. On average the wall is 0.56m wide. The ditch that runs parallel to the HaHa wall is 0.50m wide and is 0.40m deep and is filled with black gritty ashy silt. The fill indicates fire rake-out and it was probably introduced to assist with drainage. Frequent early 20th century white earthenware pottery sherds were present in the black ash backfill of the ditch.

The garden soil on the higher ground to the S of the HaHa is an imported topsoil and it lies directly on natural sand and gravel. It is highly likely that this garden soil was imported during the 1897-1911 restoration works and it is retained by the drystone wall of the HaHa, which is itself probably of the same 1900s date. The HaHa is not shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of c.1860 further indicating it is of later date. The garden soil / topsoil was medium brown sandy silt (silt 80%, sand 20%) up to 0.45m deep and contained only a few sherds of a 20th century floral printed white earthenware tea cup and a later 20th century drink can and ring pulls of 1980s date, no artefacts earlier than the later 20th century were found. The topsoil overlies natural orange-red silty sand and gravel with 70% of the natural layer made up of gravel 20mm – 30mm in size and some sub-angular and water rounded cobbles of sandstone, schist and quartz ranging from 0.08m x 0.08m x 0.06m up to 0.20m x 0.15m x 0.12m in size. The natural indicates a well drained fluvio-glacial terrace.

To the N of the HaHa on the lower lying ground the rough turf ground cover and subsoil was very thin and overlies natural sands and gravels, which in turn overlie the glacial boulder clay or till, which increases in clay content with depth. This area of lower lying ground appears to have been truncated and had the ground level lowered. It is probable that this took place at the time of the restoration works in the 1900s. Only 0.30m depth of topsoil and natural sandy gravel subsoil was removed across the soak-away area. A lead water pipe was located running NE-SW across the soakaway area and some early 20th century bricks were in the backfill of this pipe trench. Manganese staining was also present in patches along the length of the water pipe. The lead water pipe probably leads to a well and water tower located to the N of the castle. The lead water pipe runs under the HaHa indicating that the lead water pipe

was installed before the HaHa was built although both features date to the 1897-1911 restoration work.

The castle owner, Mr Campbell, is in the possession of plans showing the extent of the castle restoration and garden landscape works carried out in 1897-1911. The plans show that the Ha-Ha was constructed at this time and confirms the archaeological evidence.

Figure 2: Photograph showing excavations of the drain track and soakaway area completed, view to the SE.

Figure 3. Photograph showing the HaHa wall in section, note ditch at bottom of wall on right of photograph and lead water pipe. Also note details of gravel path, imported garden topsoil and natural sand and gravel in section of the drain trench. View to the W

Conclusions

The archaeological watching brief did not encounter any archaeological deposits dating to earlier than the 1900s. The land immediately surrounding the castle and forming the garden, at least on the NE side where the drainage track is, is made up ground with an imported topsoil. The dry stone HaHa wall and associated ditch is also of 1897-1911 date and was constructed during the castle restoration work of this period. This is confirmed by plans of the restoration works held at the castle. The area of the soakaway and septic tank had only a thin turf covering on the natural sand and gravels and it appears that this area has been quite severely truncated and reduced in level. A lead water pipe, which runs under the HaHa, strongly suggests that this lower ground to the N of the castle was truncated and reduced in level at the same time as the castle restoration.

No features of archaeological note were observed during the watching brief and it is clear that this area was severely disturbed during the restoration works. However, it is unknown if the rest of the castle precincts were disturbed to the same degree and any further excavation works at the castle should be monitored by a professional archaeologist.

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY: Argyll and Bute
PROJECT TITLE: Barcaldine Castle
PARISH: Ardchattan and Muckairn
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR: Fiona Baker
NAME OF ORGANISATION: Firat Archaeological Services
TYPE OF PROJECT: Archaeological watching brief
NMRS NOs: NM94SW1
SITE / MONUMENT TYPE: Castle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS: None
NGR: NM 9079 4058
START DATE: 5.01.04 **END DATE:** 5.01.04
PREVIOUS WORK: none
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK: none

MAIN DESCRIPTION:

An archaeological watching brief of the installation of a new drain, septic tank and soakaway reed bed covering a total area of c. 70 square metres was undertaken at Barcaldine Castle. The excavations were located at the NE of the castle. No archaeological features of note were located. The HaHa wall is of 1900s construction and the land immediately surrounding the castle, at least in the NE, has been made up with imported garden soil. The 1900s date for the construction of the HaHa wall is confirmed in plans relating to the restoration of the castle and gardens in 1897-1911.

PROJECT CODE: BCA04
SPONSOR: Mr RDH Campbell / Trustees of Sir AWD Campbell's Trust
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR: Hillcroft, Station Road, Rhu, G84 8LW, Argyll
ARCHIVE LOCATION: With Firat Archaeological Services and to be deposited in the NMRS. Report lodged with WoSAS.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological watching brief and reporting was carried out by Fiona Baker of Firat Archaeological Services. The scope of the work was specified and the work was monitored by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service represented by Mr Hugh McBrien. The project was funded by Mr Roddy Campbell / Trustees of Sir AWD Campbell's Trust. The site contractor was Ronnie McColl of Appin and we are grateful to the assistance given to us on site by Arthur and Ian.

Report Distribution

Five copies of this report have been produced and distributed to:

- Mr RDH Campbell
- West of Scotland Archaeology Service (2 copies and disk copy)
- National Monuments Record of Scotland and project archive
- Firat Archaeological Services.

Photograph List

Colour Print Roll No.1 of 1.

Frame No.	Direction To	Description
9	NE	Drainage track prior to excavation
10	NE	Septic tank and soakaway area prior to excavation
11+12	W	HaHa wall with turf removed prior to excavation
13	NE	Excavations of soak-away are in progress
14-16	NE	Excavations as completed
17	SW	Excavations as completed
18	S	Excavations as completed
19	W	General view
20+21+22	W	HaHa wall and W side of excavations in section
23+24	SW	Drain track as excavated
25	W	W section of drain track
26	SE	General view of castle
27	E	General view of castle
28	ENE	General view of castle
29	NE	General view of castle
30	N	General view of castle
31-33	NW	General view of castle
34+35	W	Detail of Coats of Arms at entrance
36+37	NE	Septic tank under excavation

Contents and Location of the archive

The archive contains the following items:

- One bound copy of this report
- Disk copy of this report
- All photographs as listed
- Copy of OS map extract showing castle location and location of excavations
- Copy of Crerar and Partners architect's drawing of block plan and section of new drain and septic tank.

The project archive is currently held by Firat Archaeological Services and will be deposited in the National Monuments Record of Scotland in due course.

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