

Site Palace of Holyroodhouse

N.G.R NT 2691 7392

Project Description Watching Brief

Kirkdale Archaeology was commissioned over 3rd - 4th October 1996 to monitor the excavation of 4 small test trenches situated in the gardens to either side of the main façade of the palace (Fig. 1). The test trenches were intended to locate two fire hydrant service pipes which were to be replaced in the near future.

Report

TRENCH 1

Trench 1 measured 1.2 x 1.6m and lay to the north-east of trench 2, within the lawn area of the gardens to the north side of the courtyard before the main façade. The trench was opened beside an existing manhole cover in the lawn area. Deturfing revealed the black garden soil (F001) and a layer of sand (F002), the uppermost fill of an excavation against the manhole conducted in the previous year. As the objective was to locate the pipe, a policy of minimum disturbance was preferred, and only the previously disturbed material was excavated. After the removal of F002, a shallow layer of sand, the topsoil F001 was encountered. This comprised a clean, inclusion-free black sandy silt, and lay up to 30cm deep in the disturbed area against the manhole. F001 removed onto F003, a layer of damp clay with angular stones up to 20cm and the occasional larger boulder (max. 40cm). Also uncovered was the brick lining of the manhole itself (F004), and the concrete foundations of the same (F005). Due to leakage from the manhole, the test trench became increasingly waterlogged as excavation progressed. Eventually the service pipe was located at a depth of 80cm, and excavation ceased, with no archaeological features having been encountered or recorded.

TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was located to the south-west of trench 1, lying against the kerbing retaining the garden to the north of the courtyard before the main façade, and measured 0.8 x 1.5m. This area had not been excavated previously, and turf removal exposed F006, the clean garden soil, equivalent to F001 in trench 1. F006 lay to a depth of 20cm, shallower than the same in trench 1, where the deposit also filled the earlier excavation disturbance. Beneath F006, F007 was revealed, comprising the same clay and angular stones as F003. Within this matrix the service pipe was encountered at a depth of 85cm. F006 contained a few fragments of oyster shell and 1 Fe nail c10cm long with a rounded head. The latter was of relatively modern origin, and was discarded. No other archaeological feature was recorded.

TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was located against the manhole cover in the grassed area to the south of the courtyard before the main façade, and was 1.5 x 1.1m in area. Beneath the turf a layer of

topsoil (F008 = F001) up to 20cm deep overlay F009, a mixture of the same topsoil matrix with frequent angular stones. From F009 a fragment of white china and brick were recovered. The deposit also produced occasional oyster shells. The service pipe was encountered within this deposit at a depth of 75cm.

TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was located against the kerbing retaining the gardens to the south of the courtyard before the main façade, and was 0.8 x 1.5m in dimensions. Topsoil F010 (= F001) lay directly beneath the turf, and extended to a depth of 15cm. Beneath this F011 (= F009) contained frequent angular stones in the topsoil matrix. F011 also produced fragments of animal bone and sherds of glass and modern china and wall tile. The pipe was located within F011, at a depth of 75cm

Interpretation

The trenches opened were relatively small, and were located beside existing manholes and kerb-edges (i.e. in already, recently disturbed areas). However, the nature of the garden soil (which is probably an imported black earth) was revealed, and the depth of the disturbed horizon was established.

Finds

No finds were retained.

Contexts

Context	Description
F001	Topsoil in Trench 1
F002	Sand in disturbed area in Trench 1
F003	Clay and gravels in Trench 1
F004	The brick lining of the manhole in Trench 1
F005	Concrete founds of F004
F006	Topsoil in Trench 2
F007	Clay and gravels in Trench 2
F008	Topsoil in Trench 3
F009	Stony topsoil in Trench 3
F010	Topsoil in Trench 4
F011	Stony topsoil in Trench 4