

Site **Dundonald Castle (I)**

N.G.R NS 3636 3451

Project Description Monitoring of installation of external floodlight cables

Report

The trench was excavated to a general depth of 300 mm below present ground surface, and followed a zig-zag route from a point (A) at the extreme NW end of the assumed barmkin area, through to a point (F) approximately 8.5 m S of the possible chapel site, within the inner courtyard, and immediately W of the wall separating inner and outer courtyards. The character and contents of the trench are described as a series of stages along its irregular path:

Section E-F

This section was c.8.5 m long, and ran parallel to the partition wall between the inner and outer courtyards, cutting through very late demolition debris.

Section D-E

This section was 7.4 m in length, running parallel (E-W) to the S wall of the probable chapel. This part of the trench cut already disturbed dumped material similar to that in section E-F, emanating from recent works on restoring the castle.

Section C-D

This section was 8.7 m long, and was aligned N-S, cut within the entrance pend defined by the tower house and chapel structures (arched over during the 14th-century occupation of the site. This cutting contained demolition debris, but apparently reflected final stages of stone robbing (c. 1650+), and featured much more mortar than elsewhere in the trench (D-E and E-F). The large quantities of mortar may imply that a greater depth of rubble remains *in situ* adjacent to the tower house E wall.

Section B-C

Section B-C was 10 m long and ran northwards from a point immediately N of the pend (C) to a point (B) approximately 1.2 m N of the 14th-century barmkin wall. For most of the section of trench only turf and topsoil were removed, but towards the assumed line of the barmkin wall more stone and mortar was encountered.

Section A-B

This part of the trench was 19.6 m in length and ran roughly E-W ending at a point (A) approximately 2 m W and 1 m S of the known (W) end of the barmkin wall. This cutting followed the line of the heavily robbed barmkin wall, and did not disturb any structural remains *in situ*, with the deposits generally reflecting turf and topsoil, with only a few loose

stones. Only at a point c. 13 m W of point B was there clear evidence of masonry *in situ* (002). This horizon was located immediately below a dark grey-brown topsoil (001) and appeared to represent a wall c. 2.5 m wide

Interpretation

In broad terms, nothing was revealed of the residual masonry towards the tower-house end of the castle complex. It is noteworthy however that particularly within the entrance pend, substantial rubble deposits were revealed, suggested in part by the character of the debris (mortar-rich), and the shelving nature of the bedrock, which may well be coincident with the entranceway. The ground would appear to slope upwards from outside to inside, and the pend may well have exploited a natural terrace in the underlying bedrock. Little new evidence was found of the still enigmatic route of the barmkin wall to the NW of the tower house. It is clear however that the wall line remains close to the surface, which could easily be cleared if the need were to arise.

Observations of the general topography to the W of the tower house at or near 'Dumpling Hill' seem at present to indicate a form of forework associated with the 14th-century castle, and revealed traces of a terrace and a probable rectangular building. The terrace appeared to be exclusively associated with the tower and tower-house elements, and did not necessarily reflect a rubble spread at the base of the ruined walls, being too regular in character. This feature is therefore best viewed as a platform, possibly deriving from elements of the Period IV complex (13th-century), recycled as a base for the later castle. The indications of a rectangular building were reflected by three sections of walling extending from the terrace, forming the N, S and W walls of a straight-sided structure. The S wall was indicated by a projection from the terrace noted above, and the N wall lay on an alignment approximately opposite the assumed blocked entranceway within the tower-house gatehouse structure. In all, these traces probably relate to the Period IV layout on the site, and have only become obvious due to :

1. The absence of scaffolding, fencing etc.
2. The low vegetation cover during the fieldwork.

If the opportunity were to arise, it would be helpful to mount a small contour survey at this end of the site.

Contexts

001 Grey-brown topsoil

002 Remains of N section of barmkin wall, comprising compacted stonework & mortar

Finds

No finds were recovered