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Tarbert Castle, Argyll: Community Excavations at a Royal Castle of Robert I

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1. ABSTRACT

The excavation work has demonstrated that Tarbert Castle is a construction of King Robert I (1306–1329) showing that both the Inner Bailey and Outer Bailey were built at the same time and not the result of two separate building campaigns as previously thought. The excavation work showed that well-preserved medieval deposits survive across the site also confirming several important aspects of the construction and layout of the castle establishing the presence of two portcullis gates giving access into the Outer Bailey also shedding light on the corner tower at the southwest of the same enclosure. The excavation also located the remains of one medieval building along with medieval deposits lying on the ridge south of the main castle, these confirmed the presence of the medieval burgh previously postulated as being in this area. Intriguingly an early historic 7th–8th century date was recovered from a deposit sealed below the castle walls which raises the possibility of the site being the '*Tairpirt Boittir*' (spelled in various ways) mentioned in the Irish annals.

2. INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years Tarbert Castle Trust (TCT; formerly the Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust who own Tarbert Castle on behalf of the community has undertaken a series of projects to better understand the scheduled site of Tarbert Castle, Argyll and promote it within the community and beyond (www.tarbertcastle.info). This has involved an extensive community effort to maintain the castle fabric while keeping the castle grounds open to the public as a heritage park and to make the site more accessible to the public and to save and consolidate the remaining built structures including the creation of 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 provided improved information signage to the castle itself. In 2013, and funded by HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund), TCT commissioned a historical and non-invasive survey of the monument (Explore Tarbert Castle – YH-12-03691).
This involved:

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) A descriptive and photographic survey of the castle remains

The results of this work were combined in the subsequent report (Regan 2013a). Other works within the castle have included a watching brief and a survey of the tower (CFA 1993; Wood 2010).

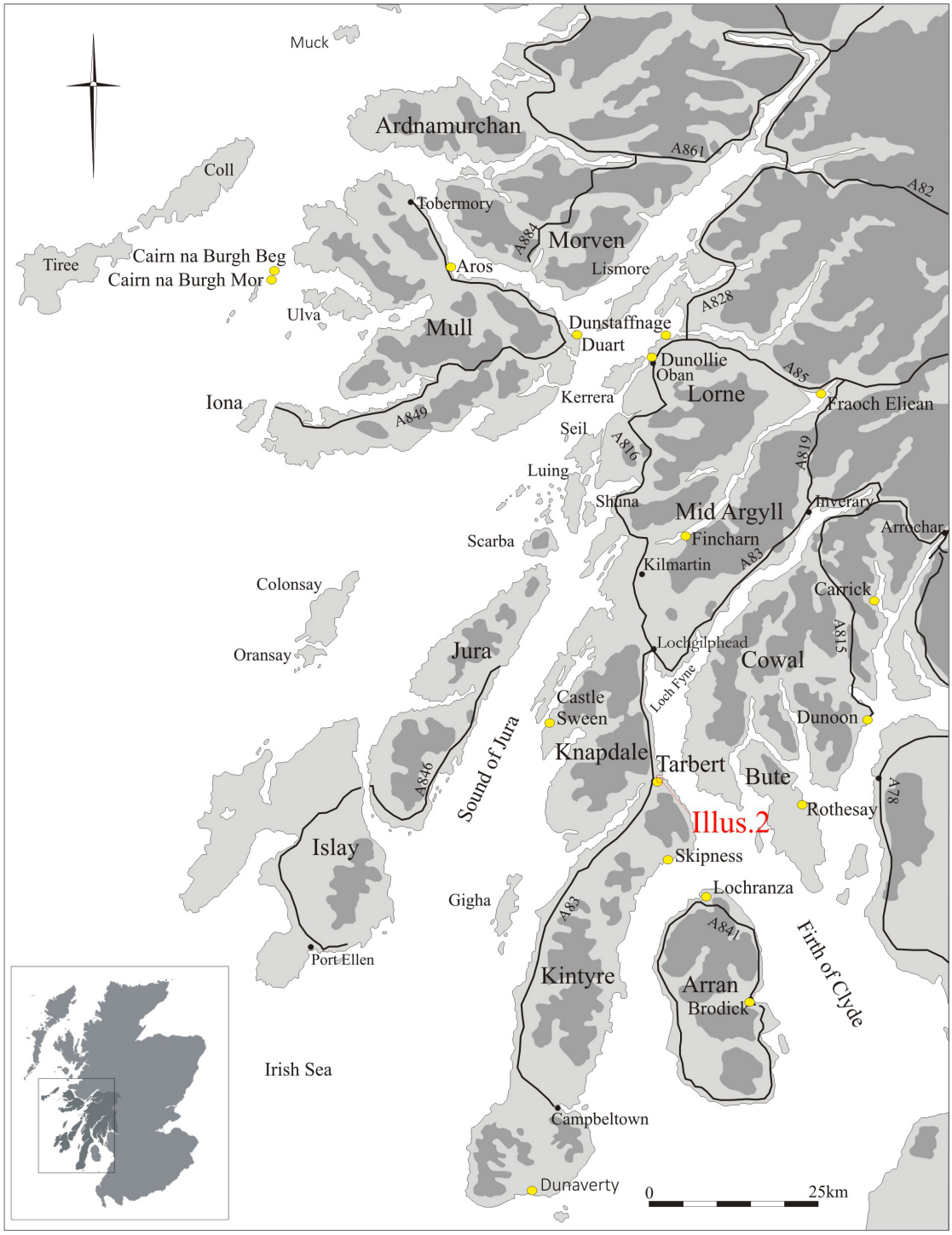
While some of the history of Tarbert Castle can be gleaned from extant but admittedly scant documentation, the origin of the castle, its development along with the function of many of its component features, remains unclear. Also unclear was whether the remains of the medieval royal burgh extend along the ridge to the south of the castle. TCT decided that a programme of community archaeological excavation would help to answer some of these questions and lead to a better interpretation, presentation, and future protection of the castle, while promoting the castle as an important place through generated publicity and the excitement of local involvement. TCT thus initiated Tarbert Castle - Our Castle of Kings, a Community Excavation Project and secured funding to undertake archaeological investigation at the site. Several areas of the castle readily suggested themselves as a focus for potential investigation, particularly the building ranges lining the Inner Bailey and the presumed entrances into the Outer Bailey. Beyond the castle to the south there was evidence of ditches and terracing while anomalies detected during a geophysical survey suggest further fruitful areas of investigation, which might help establish the presence of the putative medieval burgh. Another important consideration within any programme of archaeology that involved the general community was the accessibility and suitability of trenches that enabled the participation of as wide a group of individuals as secured resources allowed. As such, 52 volunteers along with 240 young people from local schools and youth groups took part in the excavation work. The project identified five key survey and excavation aims:

i) To reveal and confirm the presence/absence of entrances into the Outer Bailey.
ii) To investigate the northeast range of the Inner Bailey to the castle to examine its age and function.
iii) To establish the absence/presence of the medieval burgh within the scheduled area.
iv) To place the remains within a chronological and wider cultural and archaeological framework.
v) To investigate the presence/absence of any early medieval activity.

Beyond these, each excavation area had specific aims outlined at the introduction to each trench discussion in Section 5 below. 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 to accompany the SMC application (Regan 2018b).

3. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

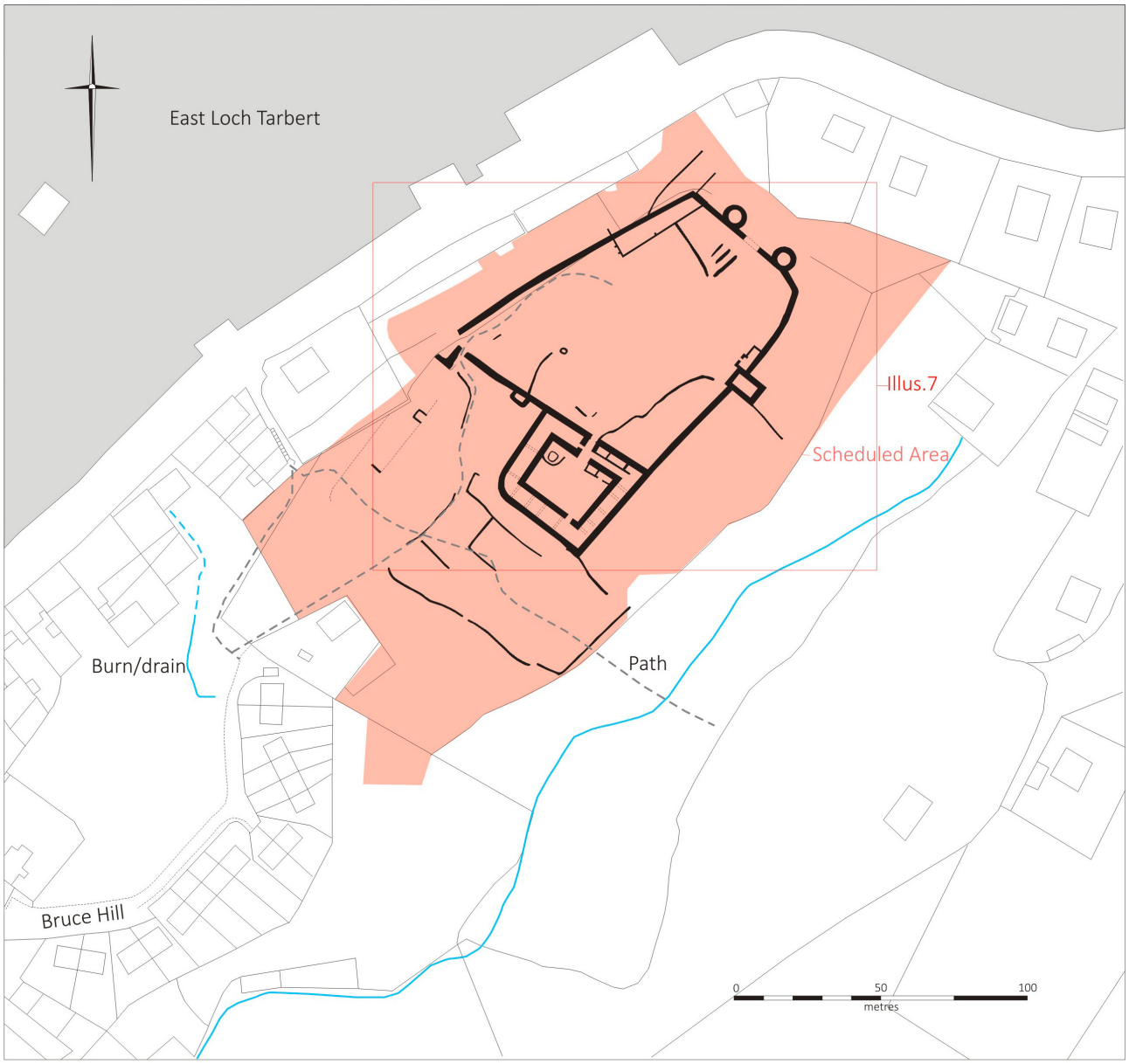
Tarbert Castle occupies a prominent ridge on the southeast side of East Loch Tarbert within the parish of Kilcalmonell (Illus 1–5, Centred NR 86770 68730, Tarbert Castle, Canmore ID 39316; Tarbert Medieval Burgh, Canmore ID 39321). The castle sits above a small well-sheltered harbour at East Loch Tarbert overlooking the present Tarbert village. The castle remains occupy an uneven ridge standing between 22m and 35m above the village and its outer walls are naturally defended on the north, east, and west sides by steep rocky scarps around the edge of the ridge, these are sheer in places, particularly



Illus 1 Argyll (© Roddy Regan)

on the west side. To the southwest the ground falls away from the castle in a series of ridges towards the present village of Tarbert. The village is situated on a small low-lying piece of land on the northeastern shore of the isthmus separating Loch Fyne and the Clyde Estuary from the Sound of Jura and the Atlantic Ocean effectively linking the Kintyre Peninsula to Knapdale and the rest of mainland Argyll. This position is reflected in the placename Tarbert (Gaelic: *Tairbeart)* which is a toponym meaning porterage a name often given to places, usually isthmuses, where boats could be transported between two bodies of water. Lying some 1.5 km away to the southwest is the north end of West Loch Tarbert, a narrow fjord-like loch some 14 km long that comprises the western side of the isthmus.

The orientation of West Loch Tarbert reflects the underlying geology of the wider Grampian region including Argyll which is dominated by southwest-northeast orientated Dalradian metamorphic strata including Ardrishaig Phyllites to various Schistose lithologies. Tarbert is situated across several parallel lithostratigraphic layers within this sequence, including a narrow stratum of Loch Tay Limestone which outcrops on the foreshore of Loch Fyne to the north of East Loch Tarbert.



Illus 2 Tarbert Castle layout and Scheduled Monument area

Illus 3 Tarbert Castle from southwest above (©flyingscotscan2024)

The main nucleus of the Castle is formed by a rectangular enclosure, the Inner Bailey which 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. Prior to the excavation of the site and over several years the castle site had 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.

Illus 4 Tarbert Castle from north above Tarbert Harbour (©Tarbert Castle Trust)

Illus 5 Tarbert Castle above West Loch Tarbert with East Loch Tarbert at top right from northwest (©flyingscotscan2024)

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The wider history of Tarbert and its castle has been previously outlined by Dugald Mitchell (this later summarised by Ian MacIntyre) (Mitchell 1886; MacIntyre & Smith 1974), while an outline of the historical background to the castle has been presented by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in their *Inventory of Argyll, volume 1, Kintyre* and within the *Origines parochiales Scotiae* (Innes 1854, 32–8; RCAHMS 1971: no. 316, 182–4). Articles about the castle have also appeared in editions of the *Kist* (Campbell 1972; 1987; Clerk 2002). It is probably beyond the remit of an essentially archaeological article to fully present the history and chronology of Tarbert Castle although the intention is for such an account to appear online via the Tarbert Castle Trust website. As such only a brief history of the castle is given below.

It has been suggested that the site of Tarbert Castle can be identified with the *Tairpert Boiter* mentioned twice in the 8th century Annals of Ulster, named alongside Dunaverty (*Aberte,* Canmore ID 38302), Dunadd (*Dun Att*, Canmore ID 39564), and Dunollie (*Dun Ollaigh,* Canmore ID 23027) (Bannerman 2016: 16). Excavations at both Dunollie and Dunadd have demonstrated that their mentions in the annals correspond with occupation phases uncovered at both sites (Alcock & Alcock 1988; Lane & Campbell 2001). During the 8th century, Dunaverty and Dunadd along with *Tairpirt Boitter* were likely controlled by the Cenél nGabráin, while Dunollie was a stronghold of the Cenél Loairn. Within Scottish Dalriata these two kindreds were perhaps the two most prominent during this time and conflict between them may have resulted in the annal entries. Both entries record the burning of a fort at Tarbert, in 712, '*Combusti(o) Tairpert Boiter'* (The burning of Tairpert Boiter) and in 731 '*Combustio Tairpert Boitir apud Dunghal*' (The burning of Tairpert Boitir by Dúngal) (*AU* 712; *AU* 731.4). The 712 entry does not mention who actually burnt '*Tairpert Boiter'* although a likely candidate is Selbach Mac Ferchair of Cenél Loairn, who also besieged Dunaverty in the same year '*Obsesio Aberte apud Selbachum*' (The siege of Aberte by Selbach) (*AU* 712.5*)*. The second entry refers to Selbach's son Dúngal leader of Cenél Loairn possibly leading a campaign against the Cenél nGabráin whose leader was Eochaid at this this time (Bannerman 2016: 109, 113).

After its mention in the Irish Annals Tarbert is seldom mentioned in extant historical records until the 11th century when it appears under another name in the *Orkenyinga saga* relating to the expedition by King Magnús Óláfsson (Magnus Barelegs) of Norway during his invasion of the Hebrides and Kintyre in 1098. Prior to this who had political control over the Kintyre Peninsula and Knapdale *vis-à-vis* the Kingdom of the Isles is not at all certain and the story of Magnús is regarded by some scholars as suspect given that the account dates to the 13th century when tensions between the Scottish and Norse crowns over the Hebrides was at their height and the Scottish king referred to in the account was Malcolm and not Edgar as it should have been at this time. Despite this, the existence of several accounts of Magnús's expedition suggests that even if the tale of Magnús drawing his boat over the isthmus is apocryphal his expedition to the *Suðreyjar* did take place with Magnús later making peace with King Malcolm, this later known as the 'Treaty of Tarbert' (Anderson 1922: 113; Woolf 2004: 101). The sagas use the word *eið (Satirismula eið*) to describe the Tarbert isthmus, a word that has been noted elsewhere in medieval Norway to also delineate portages. It has also been argued that these portages were considered as part of the navigable sea and not part of the land, which might make sense of Magnús's claim that Kintyre was indeed an island (McCullough 2000: 23).

Tarbert next gains a mention in historical sources when Donald MacGilchrist is mentioned as Lord of Tarbert (*Douenaldus Makgilcriste dominus de Tarbard*) in a charter of 1250. Donald MacGilchrist as Thacker and others have suggested may have been a brother of Gillescop and Eoghan (*Eugenius*) MacGilchrist who were granted large estates in Glassary and Cowal by Alexander II in 1240 (Innes 1832: 157; MacPhail 1916: 121; Thacker 2017). The MacGilchrist kindred were dynastically connected to other important landed families in what is now mid Argyll and Cowal, that included Clann Suibhne, who were likely the major force in Knapdale up until the middle of the 13th century with their lordship based on the two strongholds

of Castle Sween, built *c*1200, and Skipness Castle (Canmore ID 39798), likely built in the early decades of the 13th century (Thacker 2022). By the early 1260s, there appears to be a displacement of the Mac Suibhne kindred from Knapdale, by the Stewarts under Walter 'Balloch' earl of Menteith, when in 1262 there was a transfer of title of Skipness Castle from Dugall Mac Suibhne to Walter Stewart (Innes 1832: 120–2; Graham & Collingwood 1923). The Menteith Stewart's appeared to maintain this position in Knapdale up until King Johns ordinances of 1293 for establishing sheriffdoms in the west when Knapdale is listed as being under the control of the earl of Menteith (*comitis de Menteth de knapdal*) (Thomson & Innes 1814: 447b).

It is during the reign of Robert I (1306–1329) that Tarbert itself next comes into view when in 1315 the king received a charter resignation at Tarbert from John of Glassary at Tarbert next to Loch Fyne (*apud Tarbart' iuxta Louchfyne*), while in the same year according to Barbour in '*The Bruce*' the Scottish king had his boats drawn across the Tarbert isthmus (Duncan 1988: 69; 2007: 566–7). Tarbert Castle crucially earns its first mention in extant historical documents within the earliest extant Scottish exchequer roll listing the work undertaken at the castle between 1325 and 1326 submitted by its then Constable John de Lany (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 50–5). Between 1327 and 1329, Tarbert and its castle appear fairly regularly in the exchequer rolls with one appearance in 1330 (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8, 69, 118, 127, 135, 136, 153, 175, 184, 187–9, 191, 196, 201, 207, 213, 223, 237, 239, 287). From then Tarbert Castle disappears from view until it enters the records again during the reign of James IV when, between 1494 and 1499, the king personally led military campaigns to the Western Isles. In July 1494, James summoned a host consisting of 'the Lords of the Westland, Southland, and Eastland, to the meeting of the King at the Tarbert' and during his visit to Tarbert Castle the king ordered the repair or the '*biggin*' of the castle, this, and its provisioning can be gleaned from various exchequer accounts (Dickson 1877: 215, 223, 235, 237, 244; Burnett 1887: 407, 451, 452, 477, 478). On his visit to Tarbert in 1499, James IV made Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll, constable of the castle (Livingstone 1908: 413, 58). Five years later, in 1504, King James made Archibald Campbell his Royal Lieutenant in Argyll and the following year granted him the 'offices of justiciary and sheriffship, crownary and chamberlainry of the lands and lordship of Knapdale and Kintyre, and Captain of the House and fortalice of Tarbet when it shal be built…' (*RCHM 1874*: 239, 485). The castle is thereafter mentioned in a series of crown charters, granting lands in Knapdale including the keeping of the castle to Archibald Campbell's heirs and successors (Paul 1883: 348, 78–9; 2306, 527; 2814, 654; Thomson 1886: 2017, 525; 1888: 25, 9; 1890: 265, 97; *RCHM* 1874: 243, 485). During the 17th and 18th centuries, the castle enters the records as having been garrisoned in times of strife, although, given the troubled history of the region in this period the few mentions it does have is perhaps an under representation of the actual case. This is also a period where the MacAlisters (of Tarbert) become hereditary constables of Tarbert Castle under the Campbells. The castle appears to have been used as a place of imprisonment during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (*RPS*: A1662/5/1). During the Cromwellian campaign into Scotland in 1652, the castle was garrisoned by some of Cromwell's troops where they were famously attacked by the locals (Whitlocke 1853: 451; MacKinnon 1883: 54; Firth 1895: 362, 366; Brown 1910: 2–3). During the rebellion of the Earl of Argyll in 1685, the castle was garrisoned by government troops under the Marquess of Atholl and Patrick Stewart of Ballechin (Murray 1908: 201, 205–6). A few years later, in 1689, a government-backed Campbell militia was stationed at Tarbert Castle in readiness to counter the threat of a Jacobite invasion and similarly in 1745 the troops of the Earl of Loudoun, forming part of the Argyll Militia, were stationed at Tarbert (*NAS:* GD 14/22; GD 14/112; MacPherson 1775: 358). Almost two decades later it appears that the castle had fallen into disrepair when in 1762 the Earl of Argyll sued the creditors of the MacAlisters of Tarbert for having failed to fulfil the conditions stipulated in their fue of Tarbert Castle (Mitchell 1886: 80–1). No repairs to the castle appear to have been undertaken after this period and the castle subsequently fell into further disrepair.

The suggestion that the castle at Tarbert dates to before the early 14th century appears to have been made initially by MacGibbon and Ross in the late 19th century in their five-volume *Castellated*

and Domestic Architecture of Scotland (MacGibbon & Ross 1887). MacGibbon and Ross proposed three major phases of construction at Tarbert, the first phase consisting of the construction of a small sub-square enclosure 'Castle' (the Inner Bailey at Tarbert) situated on the summit of the site. They ascribed this to their 13th-century 'First Period –1200-1300' of Scottish castle construction pointing out that Tarbert in terms of plan and size had a 'strong resemblance to Kinclaven Castle' (Canmore ID 28498) in Perthshire and speculated that Tarbert Castle was one of the royal fortresses handed over to Edward I by John Balliol, after Edward placed him on the throne in 1292. The second phase of construction at Tarbert involved the construction of large irregularly shaped 'Lower Courtyard' (the Outer Bailey) attached to the earlier smaller primary enclosure with drum towers adjacent to a probable entranceway in the north-east with two further mural towers projecting from the south-west curtain wall. They ascribed this phase to the early 14th century based on a surviving account of John de Lany, the castle's constable, in the Scottish Crown's Exchequer Rolls detailing various 'additions and repairs' undertaken at Tarbert Castle in 1325/6 during the reign of Robert I (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8). The third phase comprised the construction of a four-storey 'Keep' or Tower House, which straddled the south-east curtain wall of the larger enclosure. This construction was ascribed to the late 15th or early 16th century on the basis of the general masonry style and various architectural details and underlined by the above-mentioned historical account of 1494 that tells of the '*biggin*' of the castle during King James IV's expedition into the Western Isles, although there is no information on what was actually built or repaired.

A detailed drawn survey of the castle fabric was undertaken in 1966 by RCAHMS, the results appearing in their above-mentioned *Inventory of Argyll, Kintyre* published in 1971(RCHAMS 1971: no. 316, 179–84). This produced a more detailed plan and description of the castle site and largely agreed with MacGibbon and Ross's proposed development of the castle, although they now identified the three phases of construction as the Inner Bailey followed by the Outer Bailey and lastly the Tower House. Also, in 1971, to complement this work, John Dunbar the lead architectural investigator of the RCAHMS at the time and Archie Duncan who had recently been appointed as a Commissioner, published a joint article '*Tarbert Castle: a contribution to the history of Argyll*' in the *Scottish Historical Review* that sought to amplify and underpin their analysis of medieval Argyll and went beyond the official remit of the *Inventory*. In their article Dunbar and Duncan (1971) described Tarbert Castle as '…three distinct units…' that appear '…to be the outcome of a separate period of building activity' suggesting the Inner Bailey could be identified as belonging to a group of early 'simple rectangular castles of enclosure' characterised by a 'substantial curtain-wall of stone, pierced with few openings, enclosing an oblong or square courtyard around which there were ranged lean-to buildings of stone or timber'. While they acknowledged that closely datable features were 'conspicuously absent' from the remaining or visible fabric of the castle, they did state that '…it is to be argued here on the basis architectural evidence that…Tarbert was built before the middle of the thirteenth century' based on the similarity of the ground plan of the Inner Bailey at Tarbert to the royal sites of Kinclaven and Kincardine Castle (Canmore ID 36061), suggesting all three were the works of either Alexander II or Alexander III (Dunbar & Duncan 1971). They framed the construction and strategic importance of Tarbert Castle within 13th century attempts by the Scottish Crown to control its western seaboard and the Western Isles suggesting the building of the castle was associated with a documented invasion of Argyll and the Isles by King Alexander II in 1221–1222, against Ruaidhri Mac Raonaill, great grandson of Somerled (Dunbar & Duncan 1971: 2–3; Oram 2012: 79–81).

More recently and working in collaboration with the present project an important programme of buildings analysis and materials sampling was undertaken at Tarbert Castle by Dr Mark Thacker under the aegis of the Scottish Medieval Castles and Chapels C14 Project (SMCCCP). The SMCCCP has previously examined the chronology of the fabric of several castles in Argyll, including Castle Sween (Canmore ID 39028), Fincharn Castle (Canmore ID 22777), Aros Castle (Canmore ID 22272), and Auchadun (Canmore ID 23018). Thacker's work also examines the families and lordships that were associated with the castles' construction (Thacker

2017; 2020a; 2020b; 2021). Building on this, the results of Thacker's programme of work at Tarbert Castle has recently appeared in a complementary publication, which examined the development and construction of the castle and its place within the lordships that developed in Knapdale in the 13th–14th century. The results of this work have a crucial bearing on the conclusions reached in this paper and these are discussed in Section 6.2 (Thacker 2022).

Like the castle, the first mention of the Burgh of Tarbert is within an exchequer roll, this time dating to 1328, which lists the expense of 7 shillings and 8 pence to produce a cocket (stamp seal) for the burgh '*Et pro factura unius cokete ad burgum de Tarbard*' (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 118). This entry suggests that the Burgh was a creation of the regime of Robert I and was very probably based around his new castle although the exact location of the burgh remained unclear. Dunbar and Duncan state that it 'probably occupied the flat-topped ridge immediately to the southwest of the castle…' and '…there may be seen traces of buildings, bounded by a rock-lined ditch…' (Dunbar & Duncan 1971: 15–6). The Royal Commission saw no reason to question this interpretation and the area of the presumed medieval burgh was scheduled in 1975 (SM 3410) while the castle fabric remains were scheduled earlier in 1935 (SM 276).

5. EXCAVATION RESULTS

Initially 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 were within the Burgh scheduled area (SM 3410) while Trench 4 fell within both scheduled areas (Figure 4). Consent was also given by Historic Environment Scotland under the granted SMC to examine wall relationships in three further areas (Areas A–C). In 2020, SMC was sought to explore the possibility of the existence of a gate between the two drum towers along the north wall of the Outer Bailey this area forming Trench 9 (SM276 Case ID: 300043382). The site code used during the excavation work was TAR 19 and the initial results of the excavation appeared in the subsequent Data Structure Reports (Regan 2019; 2020b).

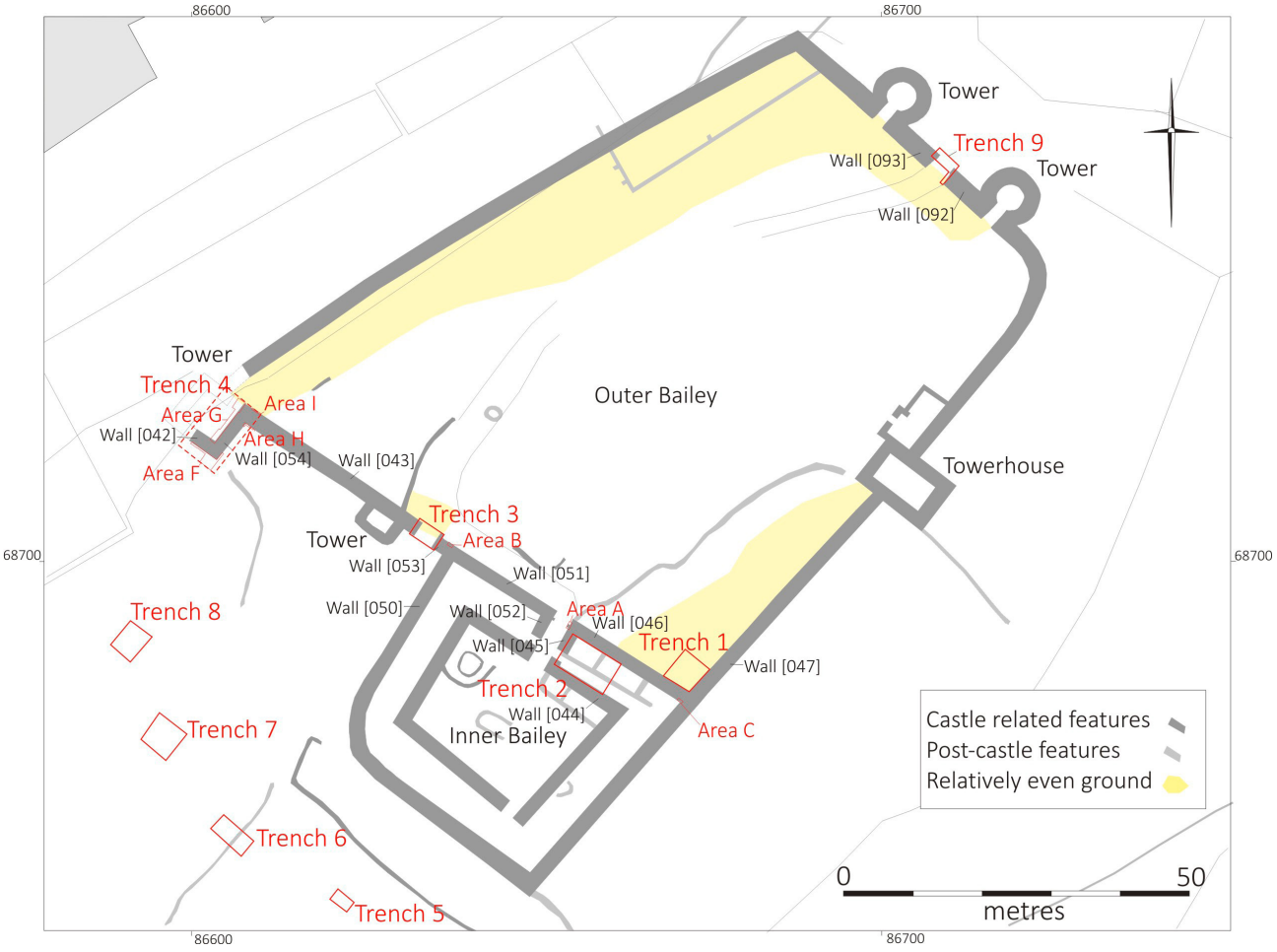
The nomenclature employed for the main areas of the site will follow that previously employed by the RCAHMS (RCAHMS 1971); the Inner Bailey, the Outer Bailey, and the Tower House and where possible, the results are presented in stratigraphic order from oldest to youngest.

5.1 Trench 1

This trench was located on relatively flat ground at the junction of the Inner and Outer Bailey walls to examine the relationship of the walls and establish a chronology of construction while investigating the area's potential use in the medieval period (Illus 11 and 12).

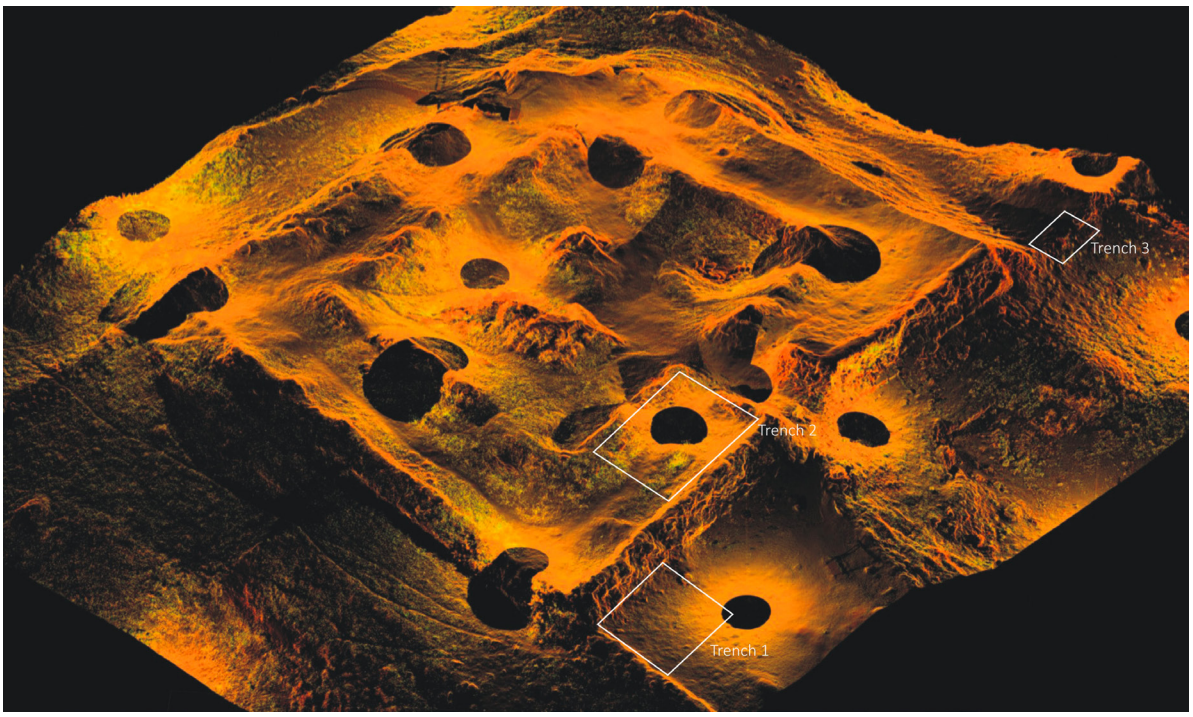
Natural bedrock was encountered within the excavated trench at 33.08m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface. Above this lay a dark grey peaty soil, C076. This soil was observed to contain organic preservation including recognisable remains of wood and plant material, which likely survived due to the anaerobic nature of the soil and it also contained carbonised hazel (Illus 18 and 19). 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 is representative of more widescale burning.

Illus 6 Tarbert Castle from above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 7 Location of excavation trenches

Illus 8 Tarbert Castle from above showing the excavation trenches in 2019 (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



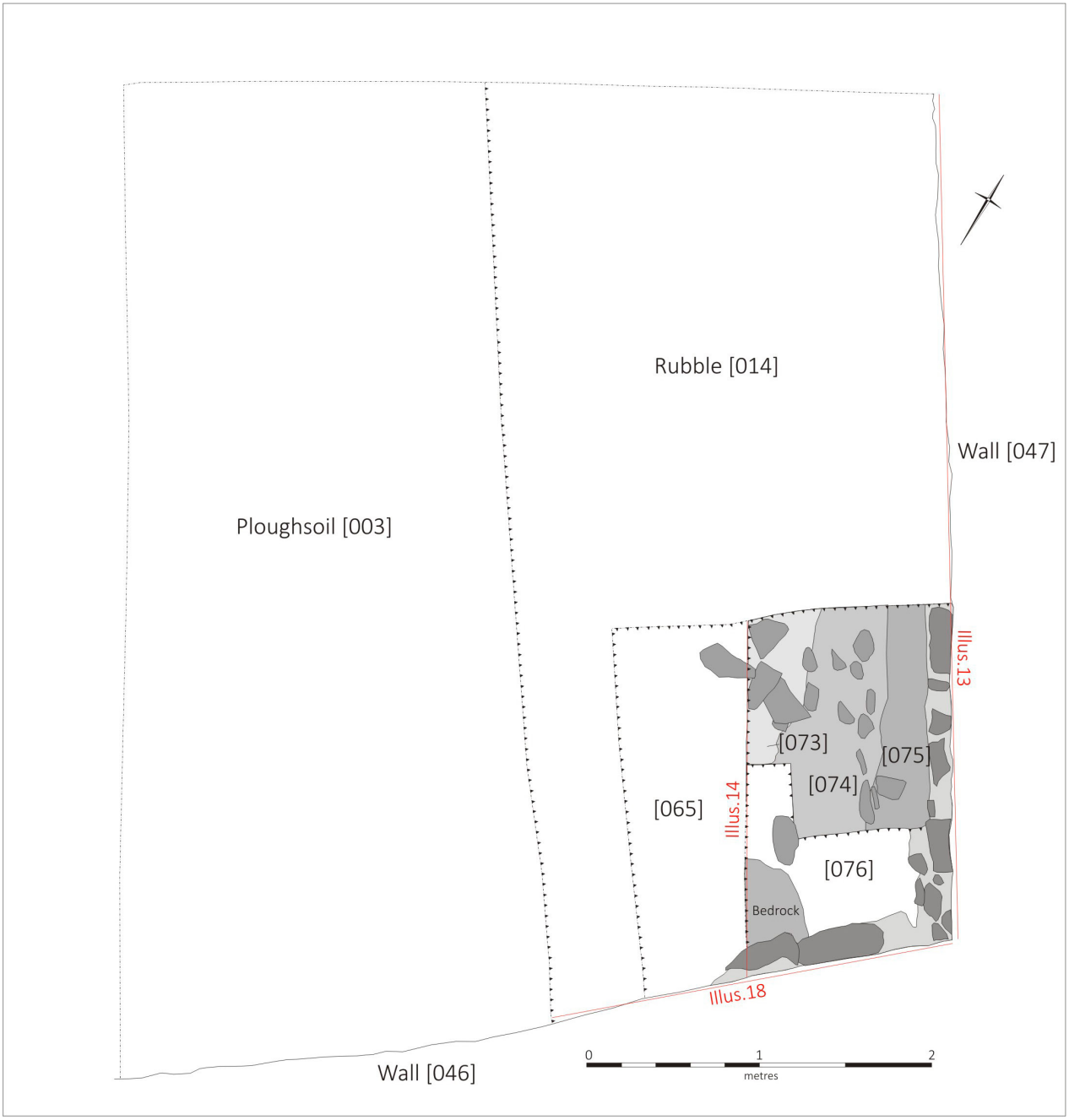
Illus 9 Laser scan of Inner Bailey showing positions of Trenches 1–3

Illus 10 Locations of Trenches 1 and 2 and Areas A and C from northwest above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)

Illus 11 Area of Trench 1 pre-excavation showing junction of Inner and Outer Bailey walls from the north

Overlying this buried soil horizon were the foundations of the walls of the castle (Illus 13, 14, 16, 17, and 18). The earliest wall was that of the Outer Bailey, C047, 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 C047, forming the north side of the Inner Bailey, abutted wall C046 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 with both walls having offset scarcements dividing the vertical internal wall faces (here surviving up to 1.6m high) from a roughly battered foundation (of approximately 450mm high). The walls were constructed from a mixture of undressed schistose rubble blocks (including slabs with faces up to 800 x 200mm) laid in informal level courses. The walls retain extensive evidence of lime-bonding. As both walls C046 and C047 lay over the same deposits and were also sealed by the same deposits, it might be inferred that the construction of the earlier wall was followed closely by the later wall, with no deposits between suggesting there was not a great time gap between their respective constructions.

The outer face of the Inner Bailey 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 C047. 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



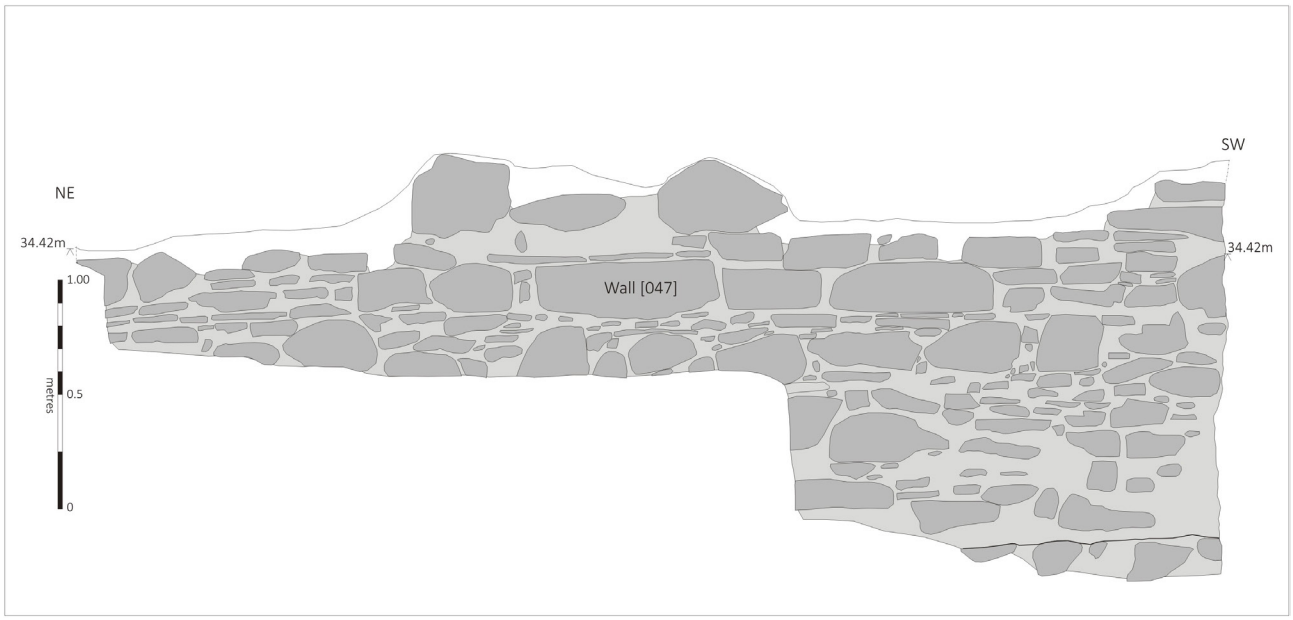
Illus 12 Trench 1 plan

to weathering and the affects of plant growth, there was no evidence of any render or indeed any mortar pointing along the wall face.

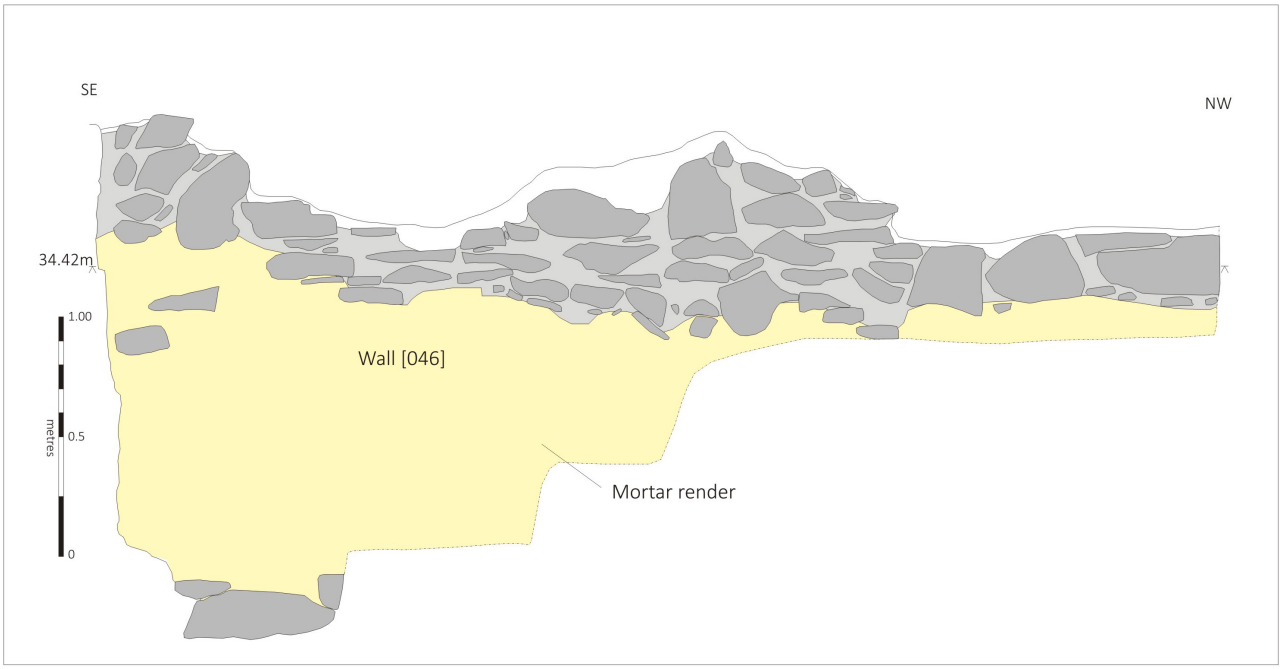
Overlying the wall footings was a deposit of loose mortar, C075, that probably relates to the construction of the wall. Above this mortar deposit was a series of occupation deposits (C074, C073, C065, C064, and C023) that appear to represent a mixture of midden and levelling dumps, the latter possibly also utilised as floors or surfaces.

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, C074, was a mixture of mortar and sand that also contained some horizontally lain stones that sloped down to the southwest, possibly indicating the presence of a runoff or drainage channel. Over C074 was a patchy layer of sandy mortar, C065, this is suggestive of



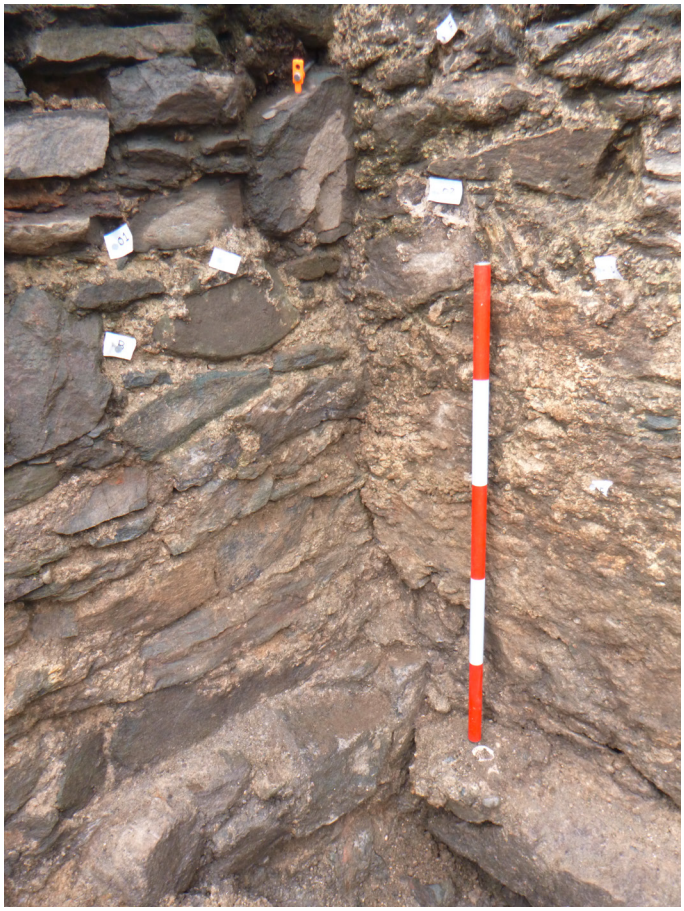
Illus 13 Trench 1 wall C047 elevation



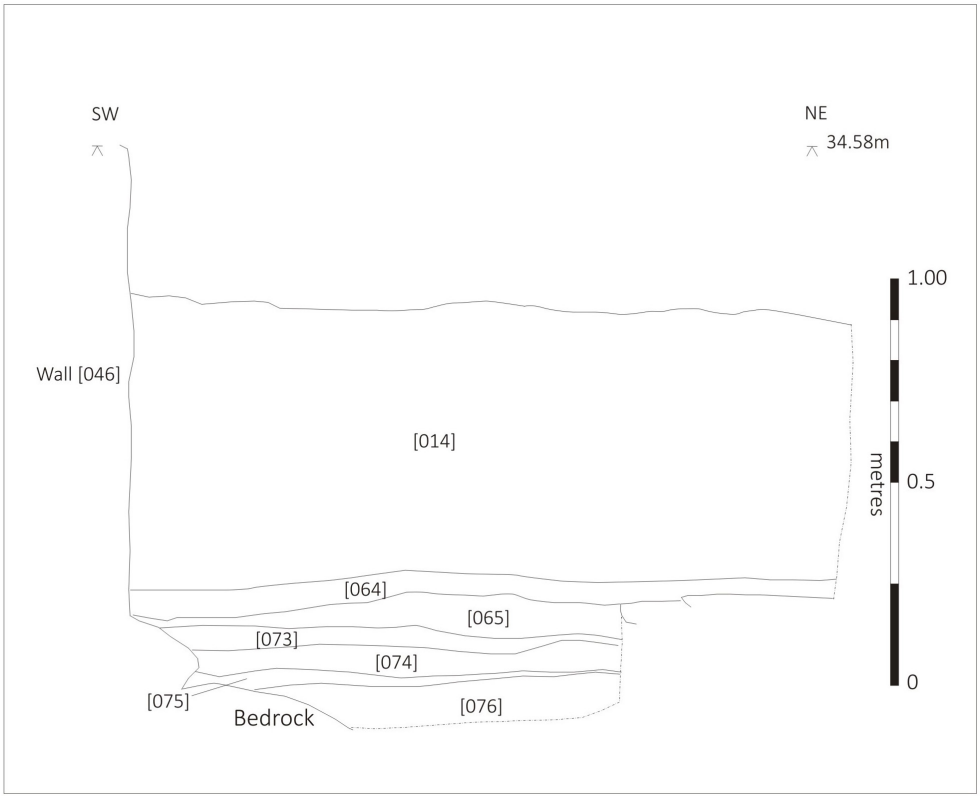
Illus 14 Trench 1 wall C046 elevation

Illus 15 Trench 1 wall C047 from southwest

Illus 16 Trench 1 wall C046 from north



Illus 17 Trench 1 wall C046 abutting wall C047 from northwest



Illus 18 Trench 1 northwest facing section

Illus 19 Trench 1 deposit C076 with burning, below deposits C075, C074, C073, and C065

Illus 20 Trench1 floor/occupation deposits from above north

mixed floor repair/make up and midden material containing animal bone, pottery, charcoal, and some iron nails along with carbonised hazel and oak. When excavating this deposit, we came across surviving wood fragments and, as with deposit C076 mentioned above, given the potential fragility of this material and that the excavation budget had no contingency for dealing with preserved wood, excavation of this deposit was stopped after samples were taken.

Deposit C065 was in turn sealed by a red/yellow sandy deposit, C064, again suggestive of a floor or floor make up. The uppermost of these deposits, C023, produced animal bone, some slag, and medieval pottery (dating to the 15th–16th century), these, along with its dark colour and organic nature, suggested 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.

Above this was an extensive deposit of wall collapse/demolition, C014. 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 a large fragment of slag.

Sealing the rubble dump was a dark grey soil, C003, that contained a mixture of post medieval finds throughout, although some medieval pottery sherds were also recovered. This soil has been interpreted as an agricultural/horticultural soil. A band of rubble, C008, also lay along the outer wall of the Inner Bailey. This appears to have formed at the same time as the agricultural soil was being worked.

Illus 21 Trench 1 top of rubble deposit C014 exposed in eastern side of area from the southwest

5.2 Area C

The upstanding wall remains within Trench 1 suggested that wall C047 of the Outer Bailey was earlier than the abutting wall of the Inner Bailey, C046. 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 C045 did indeed abut wall C047 and was thus later (Illus 22).

5.3 Trench 2

This trench was located in the western part of the northeast range of the Inner Bailey which also contained a series of earthworks indicative of wall lines representing three rooms or bays (Illus 23). The trench was designed to examine the last use/occupation of the range while also investigating the presence and preservation of medieval use.

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 Bailey. 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 (Illus 24).

5.3.1 Medieval Occupation

Excavation revealed internal wall faces on three sides of the Inner Bailey northeast range the walls

Illus 22 Area C internal face of wall C046 abutting wall C047 from the southwest

Illus 23 Northeast range of Inner Bailey pre-excavation from northwest

Illus 24 Trench 2 and Area A exposed deposits from above in prior to backfilling (©Tarbert Castle Trust)

Illus 25 Trench 2 plan of medieval deposits

all similar in character and bonded to one another with alternately bonded long stone slabs – clearly suggesting contemporaneity – although the relationship between these features and the adjacent cross-wall at the north angle was obscured by the remains of an oven-like masonry feature surviving in the north corner of the range.

In both Area D and Area E natural bedrock was exposed and above this were medieval occupation sequences (Illus 25).

5.3.2 Area D

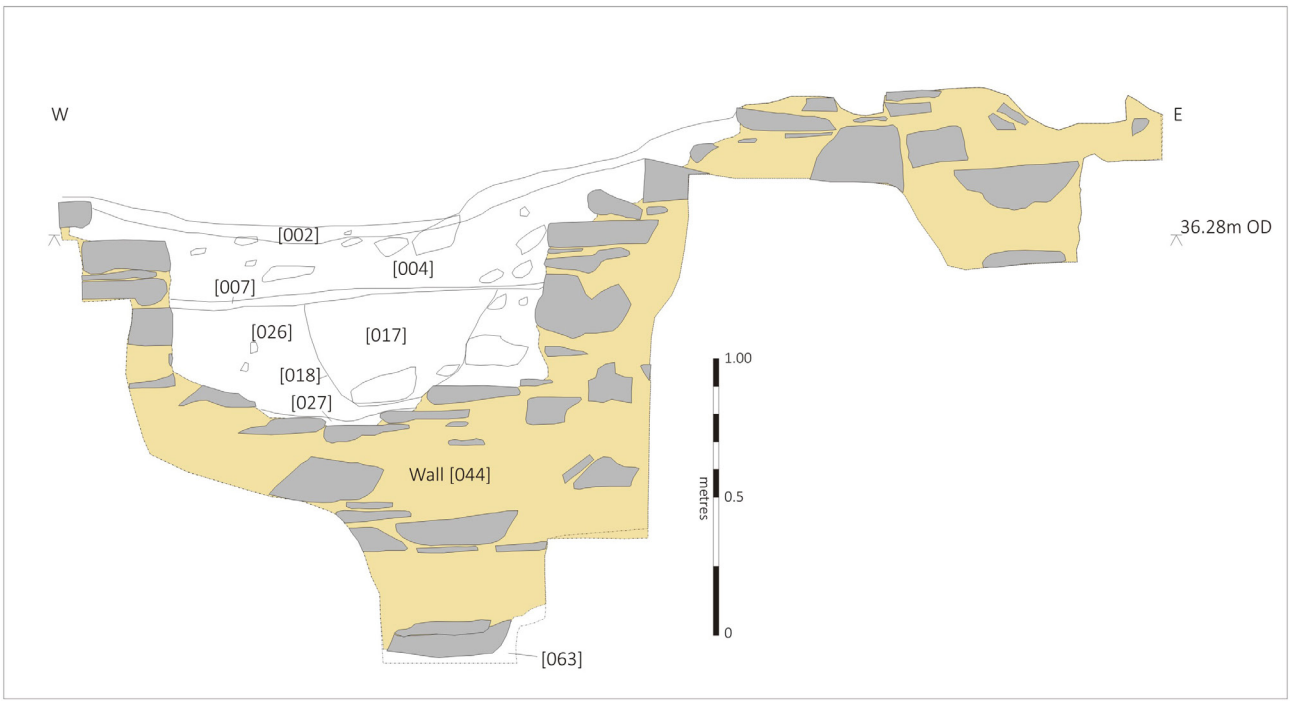
Area D was located against the south wall of the northern range of the Inner Bailey around what appeared to be an opening or doorway through wall C044 connecting this range with the courtyard of the Inner Bailey (Illus 26 and 30).

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, C063, this deposit also containing birch charcoal, which suggested pre-castle activity in this part of the site and a fragment of this produced a date of 677–877 calAD (BP 1246 ±24 95% probability SUERC-96577). Constructed directly over this and natural bedrock was the southern wall of the Inner Bailey, C044. 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.

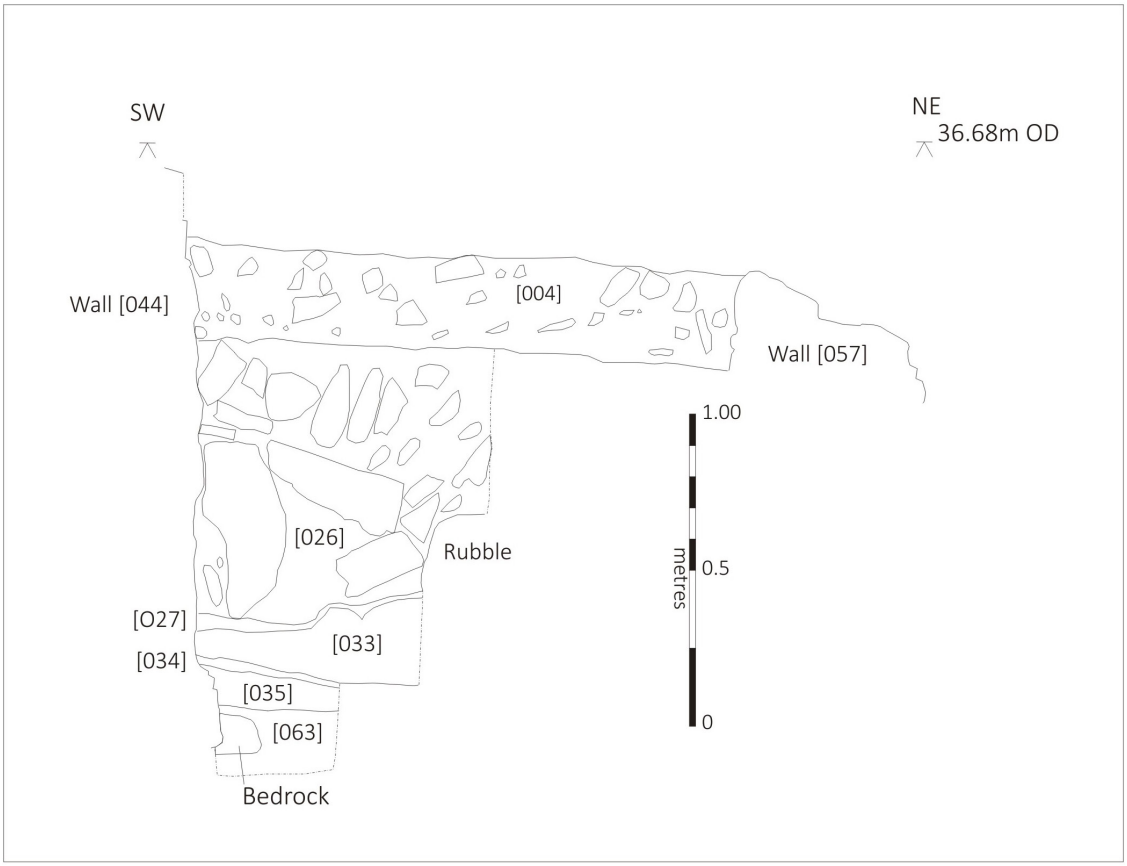
As with wall C046 in Trench 1, where the builders did not make contact with bedrock, the wall footings were wider or were offset at the basal course to the rest of the wall above. The wall in the trench stood up to 1.70m high and was bonded and coated with a firm cream/off-white coloured mortar. The wall also contained an opening, most likely a door, being 1.35m (4ft) 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 C035, indicating the opening function as a door rather than window opening.

The mortar coating the wall was similar to, if not the same as, the compact mortar deposit, C035, 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', which was recorded as C032, 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, C034, possibly a floor make-up, although this also contained pottery and bone and charcoal (alder, birch, hazel, and oak) suggesting some mixing with midden material which was likely trampled into this probable floor surface. A fragment of birch from this deposit returned a date of 1299–1398 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96572). Above this was a more extensive deposit, or dump of stones and gravel, C033, that may have been deposited to counteract the effects of slumping and providing a rough surface in this area.

This rough surface had in turn slumped and filling the subsequent dip was a midden deposit, C027. The deposit contained over 30 metal artefacts, the presence of these perhaps suggesting they had been collected as scrap and for recycling, however these also included a cauldron or pan, a flesh hook, a knife, and possible spoon suggesting perhaps cooking/food preparation. The deposit also contained a large concentration of shells mainly edible periwinkles (*Littorina littorea*) with lesser numbers of limpets, suggesting these had also been selected and used for a specific purpose before disposal. The animal bone from this deposit (mainly cattle) suggests the dumping of table waste and/or consumption. The deposit also contained slag from metalworking, possibly indicating this process being undertaken in the immediate vicinity. Sealing this midden material in Area D was an extensive deposit of rubble and mortar, C026, which like the rubble deposit in Trench 1 contained voids, perhaps again suggesting rapid collapse/demolition.



Illus 26 Trench 2 Area D northwest facing section



Illus 27 Trench 2 Area D east facing section

Illus 28 Trench 2 Area D east facing section from southeast

Illus 29 Trench 2 Area D slumped floor deposit C033 from southeast above

Illus 30 Trench 2 Area D doorway within wall C044 from north (photograph by Mark Thacker)

Illus 31 Trench 2 Area E footings of wall C046 built over bedrock from southwest

5.3.3 Area E

This was located in the northwest of Trench 2 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 (Illus 25 and 36). This appeared to represent the top of a ridge crossing the area from southwest to northeast and dropping off to the east and west. A small section of the footings of the northern Inner Bailey wall of the C046 was revealed at the northwest of the area and these were built directly onto the bedrock ridge, with no intervening deposits.

The upper extent of the internal junction of walls C045 and C046 suggested that wall C045 abutted wall C046 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, C071, 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 over natural bedrock was a dark grey deposit, C066, appearing to be an occupation accumulation containing bone, pottery, charcoal (alder, birch, hazel and oak), and slag.

At the junction of walls C046 and C045 at the northwest of the area it was noted that two stones had been discoloured by burning, suggesting the presence of a fireplace or fire installation, C072, in this corner of the range. Possibly associated with this feature were two thin deposits of charcoal, C069 and C067 (containing alder, birch, hazel and oak), separated by an equally thin deposit of mortar, C068. The lower charcoal deposit lay over a sandy gravel deposit similar and possibly the same as C033 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 'keyhole-shaped' hearth or boiler, C058 (Illus 25, 32, 35 and 37).

This feature was constructed from rubble and clay, the walls standing up to 0.63m in height. The internal walls of C058 and the clay floor, C039, were pink/red in colour, the effects of burning.

Illus 32 Trench 2 Area E from southwest with hearth area C058

Illus 33 Trench 2 Area E fire reddened stones C072 sealed by later hearth C058

Illus 34 Trench 2 Area E charcoal and mortar deposits running under wall of hearth C058

Illus 35 Trench 2 Area E hearth feature C058 from southeast

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 and 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 must remain speculation. Little evidence of any fuel was left in this feature as it appears to have been cleaned out after its last use.

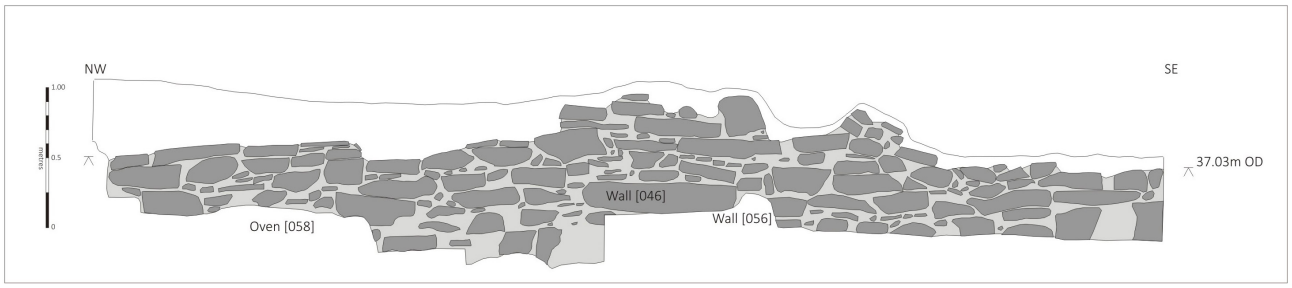
Above the floor of the hearth was a mixed deposit of grey clay, C038, that partially covered the hearth floor, but again contained little that was suggestive of its use, although the wood charcoal (birch, hazel, and oak) present perhaps represents the fuel of one of the last firings with a fragment of birch returning a date of 1282–1390 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96573).

Lying outside the mouth of this feature was a mixed deposit of clay and silt, C048. This contained quantities of charcoal (alder and oak) and suggests this was a trampled floor, with the charcoal representing fuel rake-out lying along the eastern outer edge of the hearth was a dark grey occupation deposit, C070, that also contained pottery and slag. Located around the upper edge of the hearth and against walls C045 and C046 was what appeared to be a deposit of midden-like material, C031, this containing pottery, bone, and slag.

The whole of Area E was sealed by the rubble collapse or demolition of the castle walls, C030, this deposit equivalent to deposit C026 seen in Area D.

5.3.4 Later Occupation

Built directly over rubble C030/C026 was Structure 1 (Illus 39). The earliest part of Structure 1 revealed in the excavated area were walls C055 and C056,



Illus 36 Trench 2 Southwest facing elevation of wall C046

Illus 37 Trench 2 Area E profile through hearth

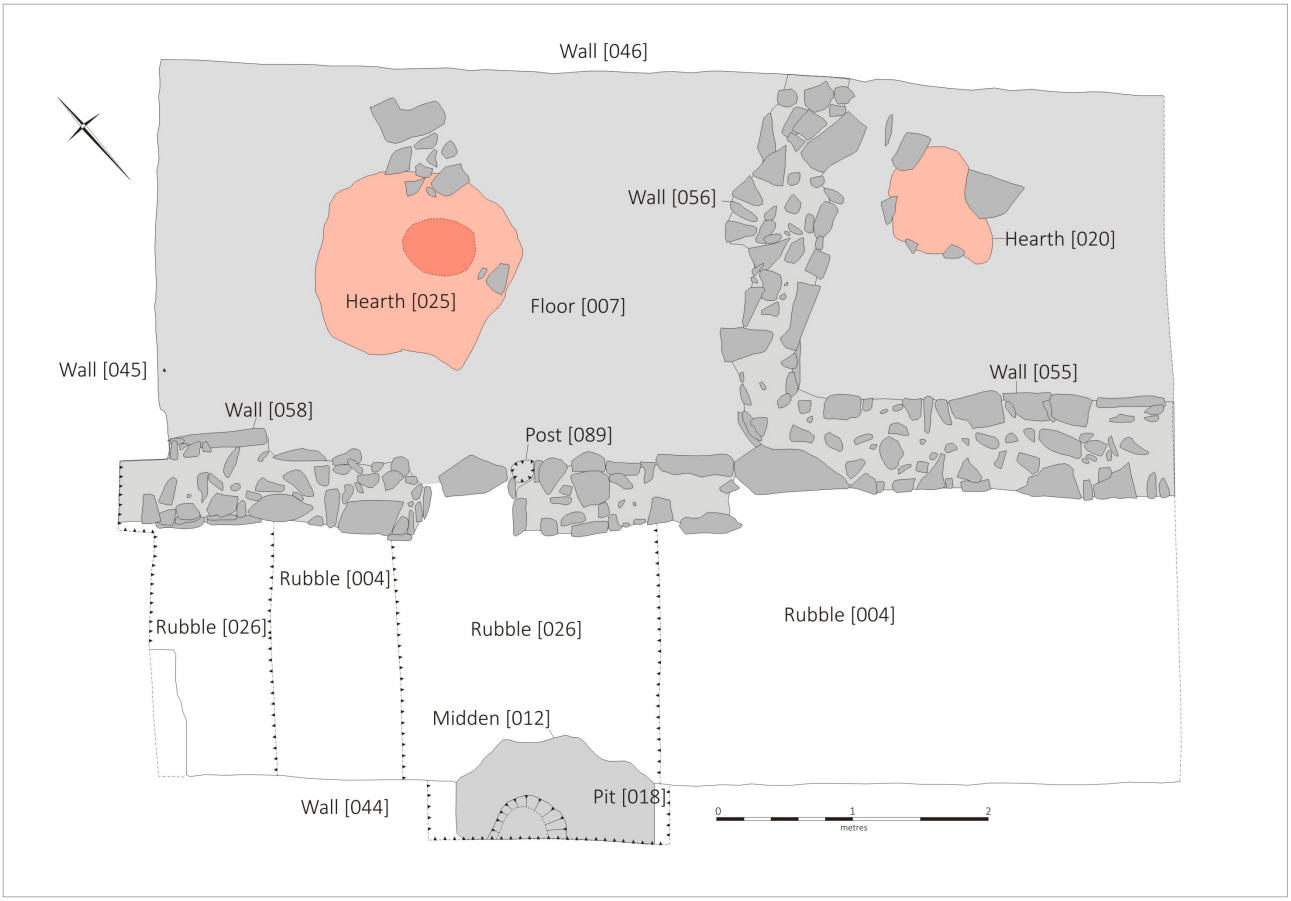
Illus 38 Trench 2 East facing cross section

which formed 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. The floor of the structure was very uneven, reflecting the underlying rubble, although an oval patch of fire affected clay C020 showed that this room had a hearth area. Abutting the southwest corner of this structure was wall C057 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. A gap in the wall, along with a flat threshold stone and posthole C089, indicated a doorway to the building. 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 (alder, birch, and hazel) with some scorching suggest a hearth position, C025. Retrieved from above the uneven floor of the building, C007, were five very worn/corroded coins, possibly Charles I and II two pence pieces or 'Turners'; also recovered were two knife blades, shards of bottle glass, and the upper stone of a rotary quern. Immediately south of the building threshold and situated in and around the former door/window aperture of the castle was a dark grey midden deposit, C012, sealing or contemporary with a small pit, C018, which had been cut into the underlying rubble. Metal items recovered from midden material included a possible table knife, a key, and a body fragment of a cast iron cauldron. The fill of the pit, C017, which was suggestive of cess contained some pottery fragments and animal bones, the latter perhaps food remains.

Both the internal and external areas of the building were then filled with both what appeared to be rubble from Structure 1 itself along with rubble from the original castle walls, recorded as deposits C004, C005, and C006.

5.4 Area A

As mentioned in Section 5.3.3, the upper extent of the internal junction of walls C045 and C046 suggested that wall C045 abutted C046 although this was not clearly established. To examine the



Illus 39 Trench 2 Plan of Structure 1

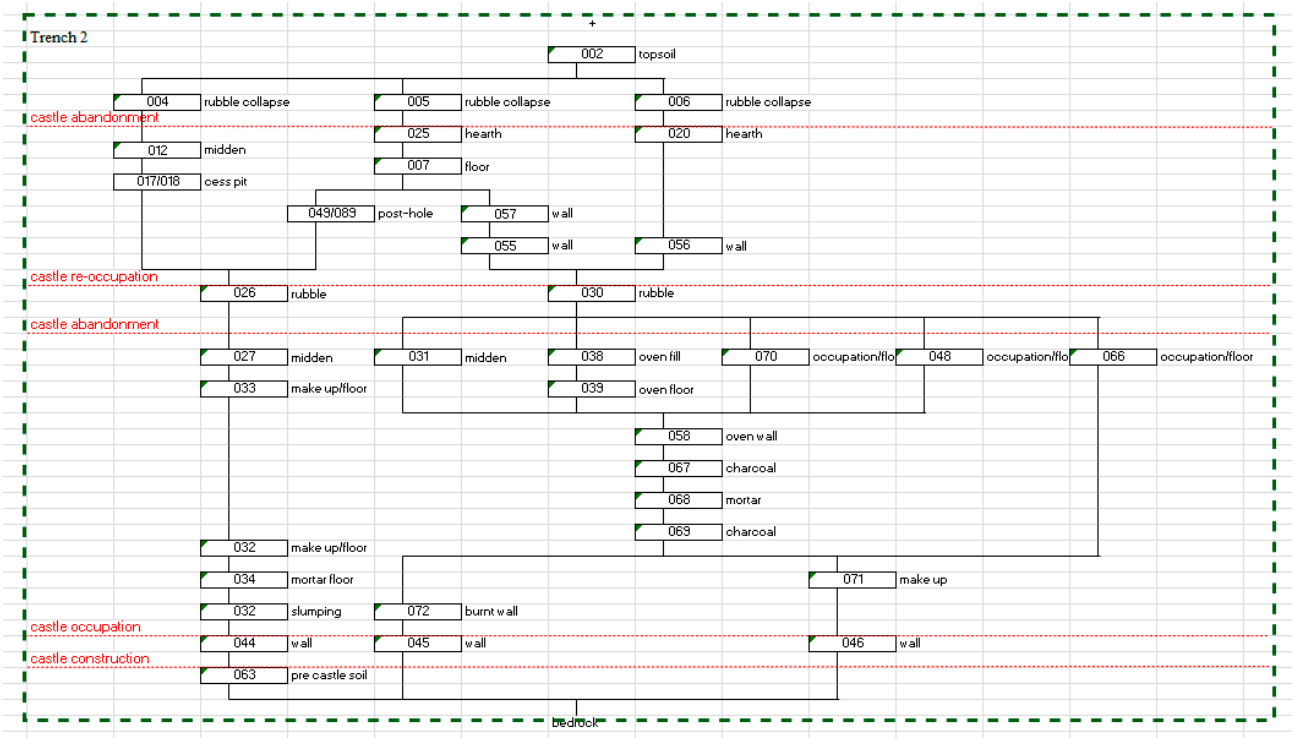
Illus 40 Trench 2 Structure 1 from the southeast

Illus 41 Trench 2 Structure 1 threshold stone and post hole C089 from southwest

Illus 42 Trench 2 Structure 1 upper rotary quern stone in situ from northeast

Illus 43 Trench 2 Small pit C017 from north

Illus 44 Trench 2 rubble fill within Structure 1 from northeast



Illus 45 Stratagraphic Matrix of Trench 2

relationship of these walls more fully, 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 (Illus 25 and 46).

This consisted of a door intake 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 a door mechanism, although what type remains unclear.

5.5 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 to examine whether there was a gate at this point where there was a distinct dip or 'gap' in the rubble between the tower remains and the Inner Bailey wall. This was reinforced by what appears to be a ramp leading up from the lower ground to the south and towards this putative gap (Illus 47–49).

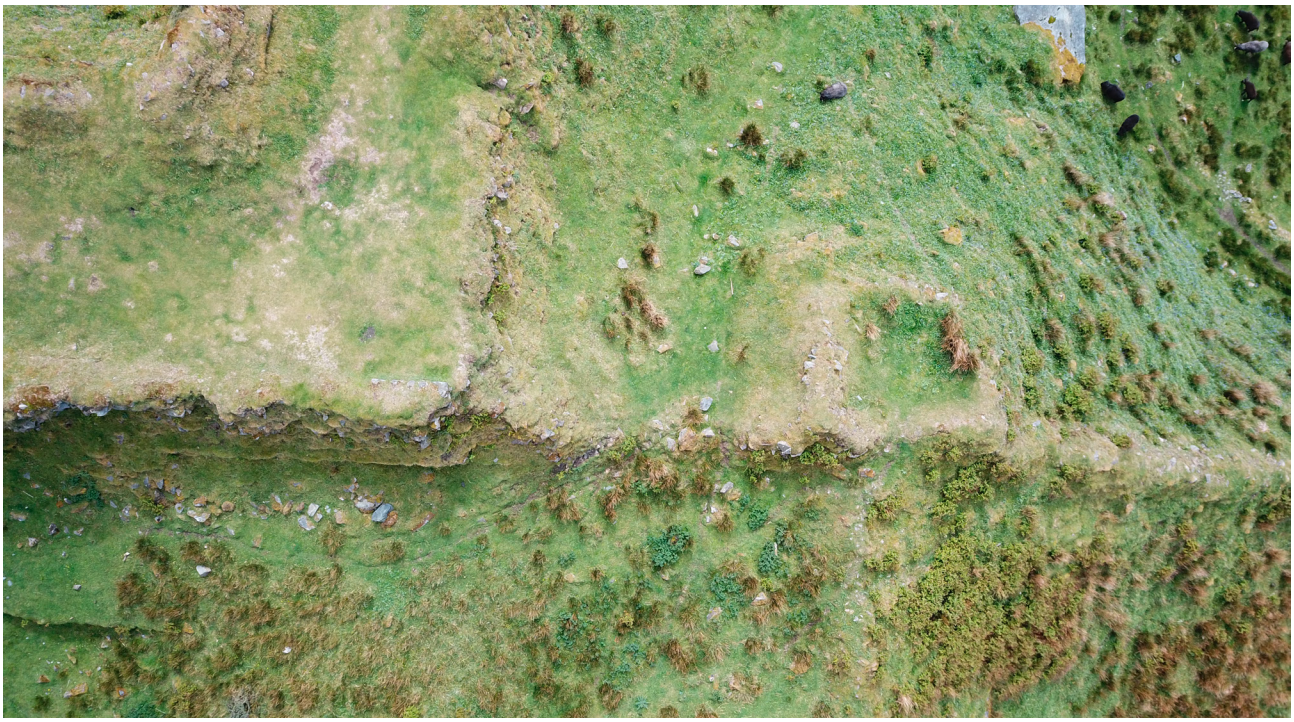
It became quickly apparent that the line of the Outer Bailey wall did not extend across the trench and the trench was indeed placed over a previously unrecorded southern entrance into the castle complex. The work in the trench principally involved the removal of rubble and mortar, sealing the gate remains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

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 remains of a substantial Outer Bailey southwestern gate, the western and eastern sides respectively recorded as C043 and C053.

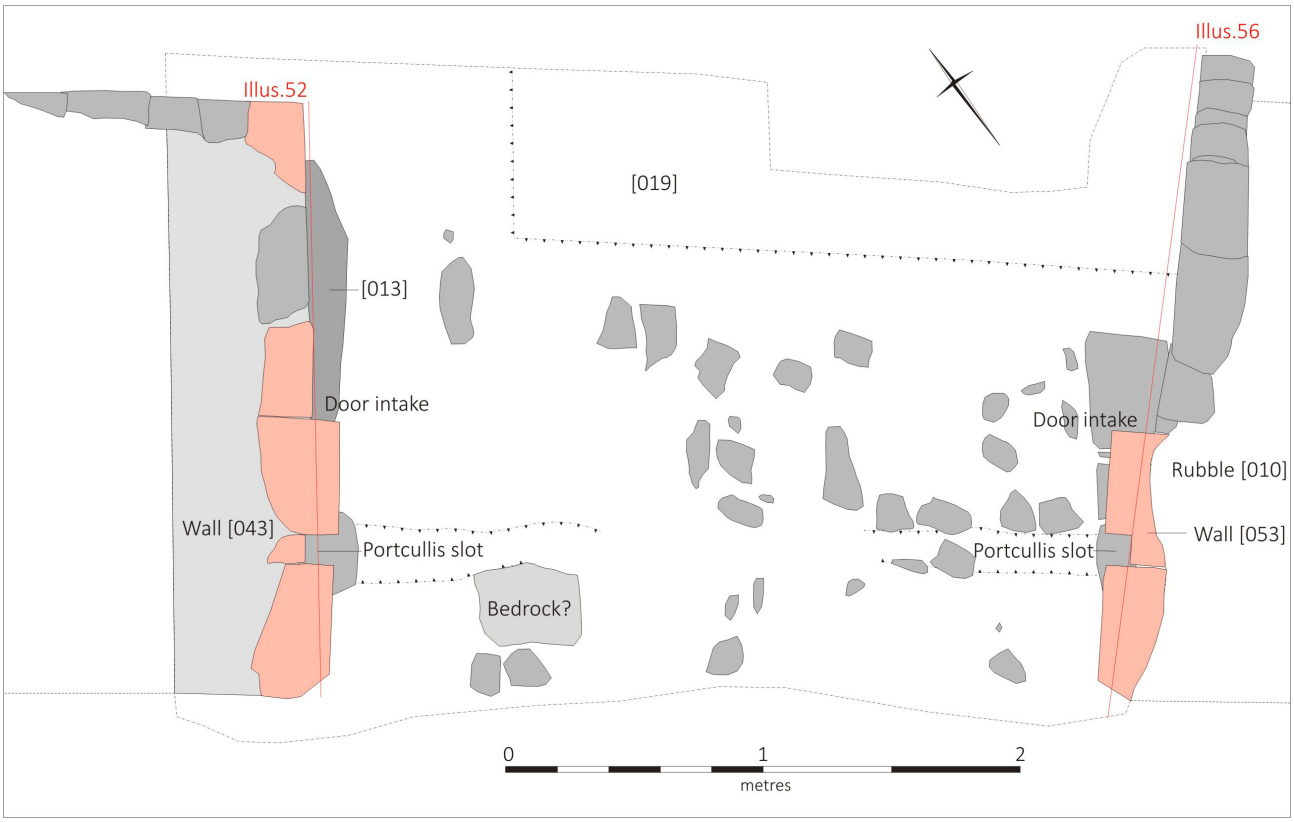
Most of the facing stones on the western side of the entrance C043 had been robbed (Illus 50–4). Only at the basal level of the entrance did any facing stones of the gate survive which consisted of red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals (square to the external wall face) with chamfered external arrises, a portcullis slot, and a doorframe intake or door-check. Internally, the wall is rubble-built and splayed, dominated by large roughly

Illus 46 Area A eastern side of entrance into Inner Bailey with door intake from the southwest

Illus 47 'ramp' leading up to gap between eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower from the southwest



Illus 48 Rubble within 'gap' between eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower prior to excavation of Trench 4 from northeast above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 49 Trench 3 plan

squared blocks and narrower slabs laid to formal courses and extending past the internal face of the curtain wall on the southeast side. A moderate concentration of red sandstone spalls was also visible in the wall core rubble close to the northwest reveal face, where extensive amounts of constructional mortar has also survived.

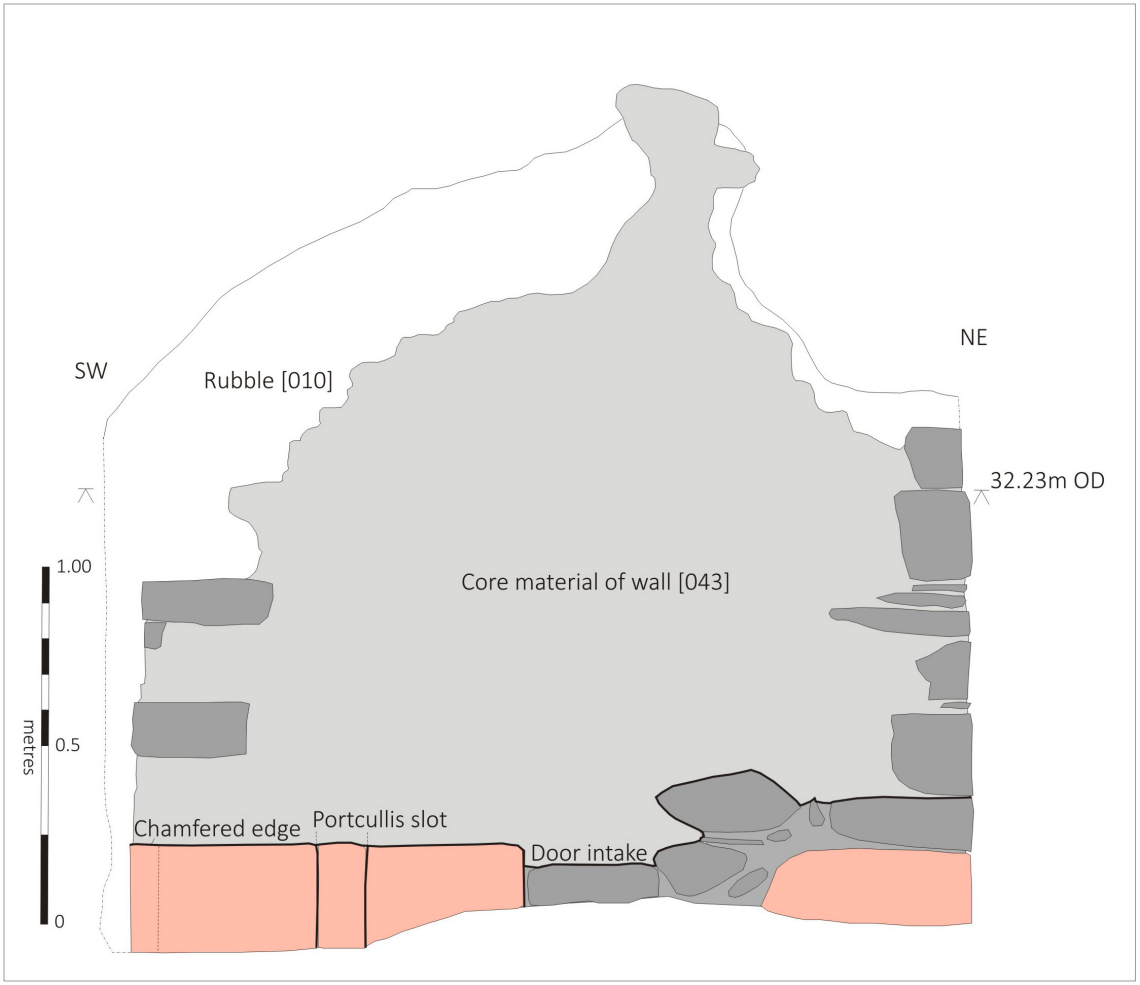
The western side of the gate C053 mirrored the arrangement of the eastern side of the gate with red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals with chamfered external arrises, a portcullis slot, and a doorframe intake or door-check.

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 (Illus 47–50). It was also apparent that the wall of the western side of the gate continued north beyond the edge of excavation and therefore exceeded the 2.3m width of the wall forming the eastern opposing gates. What this represented is unclear, possibilities being a gatehouse structure controlling access to the Inner Bailey gate, or perhaps the base of steps giving 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 door intakes, 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. Between the walls forming the sides of the gate 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

Illus 50 Trench 3 gateway from northeast above

Illus 51 Trench 3 western side of gate from northeast

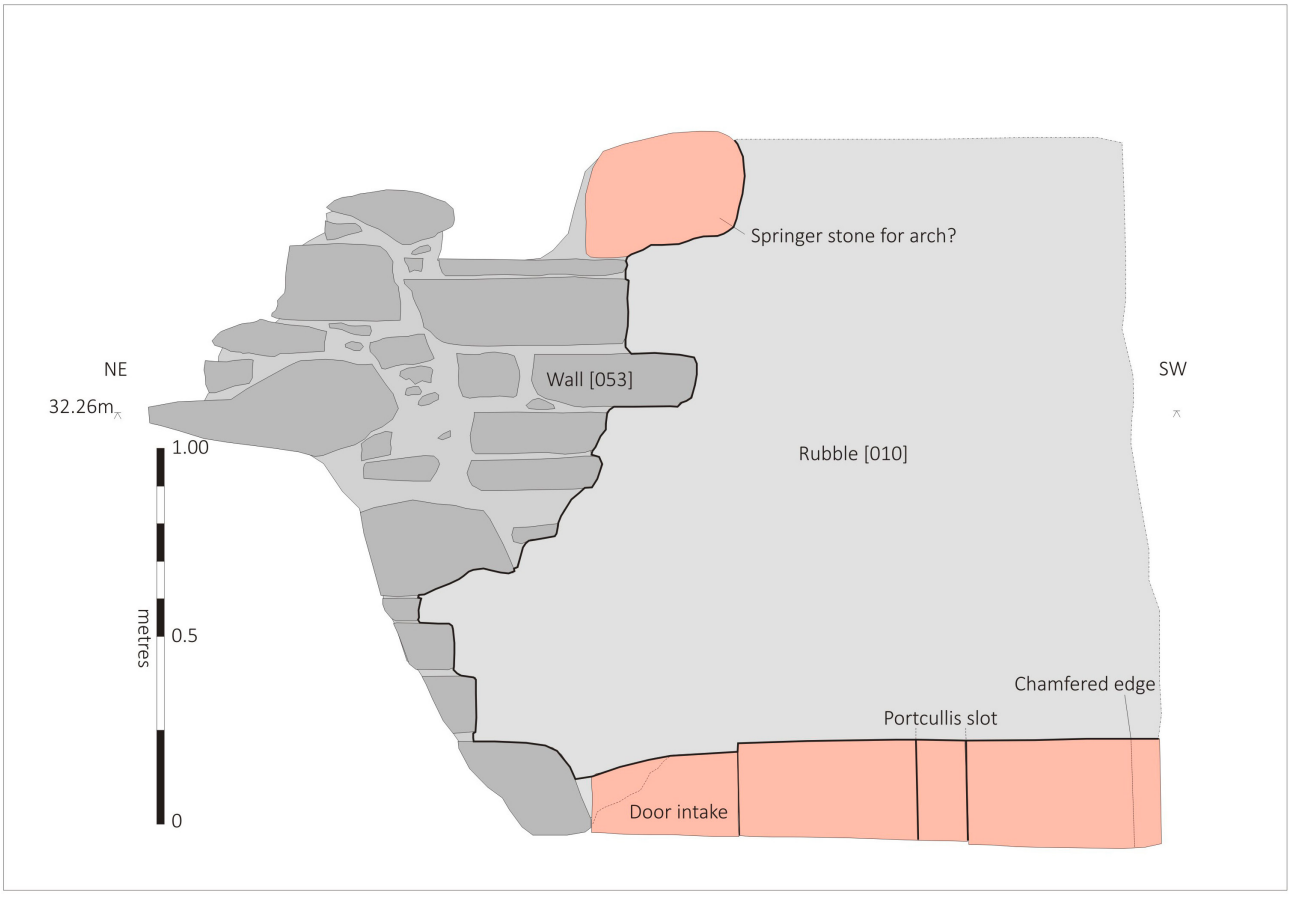


Illus 52 Trench 3 elevation of western side of gate

Illus 53 Trench 3 portcullis slot and door intake at western side of gate from northeast above

Illus 54 Trench 3 portcullis slot at western side of gate from northwest

Illus 55 Trench 3 eastern side of gateway from southwest



Illus 56 Trench 3 elevation of eastern side of gate

Illus 57 Trench 3 eastern gateway from northeast above

Illus 58 Trench 3 portcullis slot in eastern side of gateway from the northwest

remained unexcavated, apart from darker deposit C013 located along the base of the western gate, which produced some pottery, bone, and slag.

Most of the facing stones on both sides of the gate have been extensively robbed and the trampled mortar deposit C019 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 C010. 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.

5.6 Area B

To examine the relationships of the walls, topsoil was removed from the external junction of walls C050/C053 and C051 within Area B. This revealed that wall C051 was a later addition to the corner of walls C050/C053.

Previously this relationship had been misinterpreted, with the corner of wall C050/C053 being described as a later addition to wall C051. However, as can be seen from Illus 59 above C050/C053 is the more substantially built wall, although for the most part having lost most of its larger quoin blocks from robbing.

5.7 Trench 4

This trench was placed around the remains of the southwest tower of the Outer Bailey to examine the nature and preservation of the tower and establish the presence/absence of an entrance gate as suggested by earlier surveys.

Initial investigation in this area led to the decision not to fully excavate the area as proposed in the project design, but rather to expose smaller targeted areas to better understand the tower remains (Areas F–I, Illus 61).

Illus 59 Area B junction of walls C050/C053 and C051 from northeast

5.7.1 Area F

In Area F the external face of the southeast corner of the tower C042 was exposed. The area was excavated down to the basal course of the foundation of the wall (Illus 63–65). The wall survived to 1.9m in height, with the core of the wall to the north standing 0.9m higher, and was constructed to a batter of approximately 1:10, the wall face was tightly built in well-bonded rough courses of large narrow schistose slabs up to 1.15 x 0.21m. No protruding foundation plinth is apparent at the base of this wall, although the adjacent external face of wall does display a low battered plinth. The wall face was traced for a length of 4.3m from the southeast 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.

The basal courses of the wall were then sealed by a deposit of clayey silt, C085, this was very similar to the glacial till below the wall foundation and possibly represents redeposited soil 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, C037, the upper extent producing a quantity of post medieval artefacts.

5.7.2 Area G

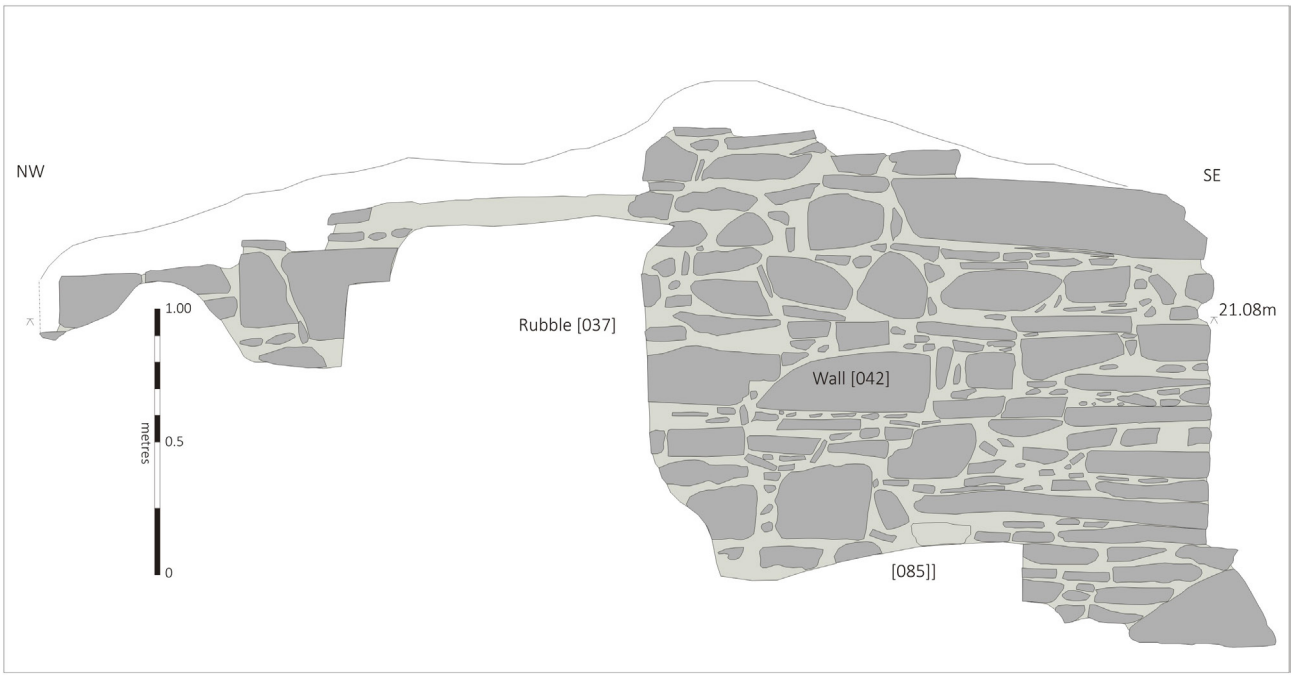
Area G investigated the internal arrangement of the tower, showing that the tower wall C054 was continuous along its eastern side, being 7.1m long internally with no evidence of an entrance on this side (Illus 66–69).

The wall stood up to 2.3m in height in the excavated area, the wall faces having been neatly constructed using smaller mica-schist slabs than used on the outer face. 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, C054, and

Illus 60 Remains of southwest tower (beside the telegraph pole) and Outer Bailey wall from the southeast

Illus 61 Trench 4 plan

Illus 62 Trench 4 from east above (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 63 Trench 4 Area F elevation of external face of tower wall C042

Illus 64 Trench 4 Area F southeast corner of tower wall C042 from southwest

Illus 65 Trench 4 Area F deposit 085 and rubble C037 against wall C042 from east

the Outer Bailey wall, C043. Despite this robbing activity, the remains of the eastern side of an entrance or doorway, C090, survived this framed by dressed red sandstone blocks with chamfered external arises, which gave 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 intake or door jamb and a threshold. Both threshold and vertical intake 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.

Sealing the doorway in the south facing section was a deposit of rubble, C062. Above this and absent from the west facing section was ash/charcoal layer C061, this sealed by a rubble and mortar deposit, C060, which had been discoloured red/pink by burning (Illus 69). Both deposits C061 and C060 suggest the burning and collapse of some of the superstructure of the tower. Sealing this burning episode was rubble and mortar deposit C059.

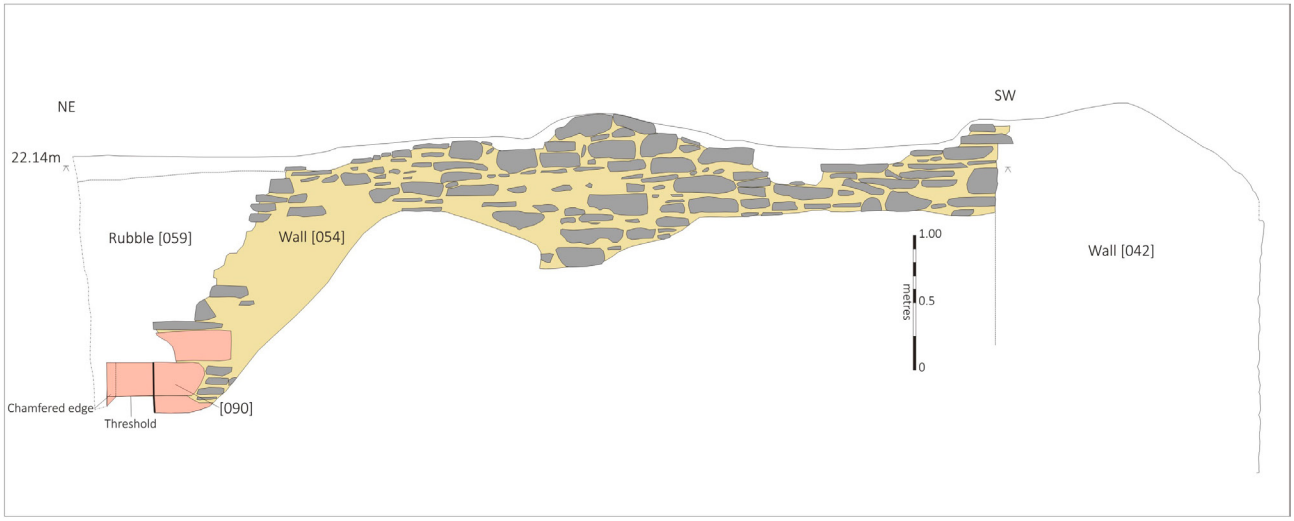
5.7.3 Areas H and I

Area H revealed the line of the wall of the Outer Enclosure, C043, while Area I revealed the junction of walls C043 and C054. Once these were established no further excavation took place in these areas.

5.8 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 which would examine the nature of the ditch (which was also picked up in geophysical survey) and its relationship, if any, to the castle or burgh.

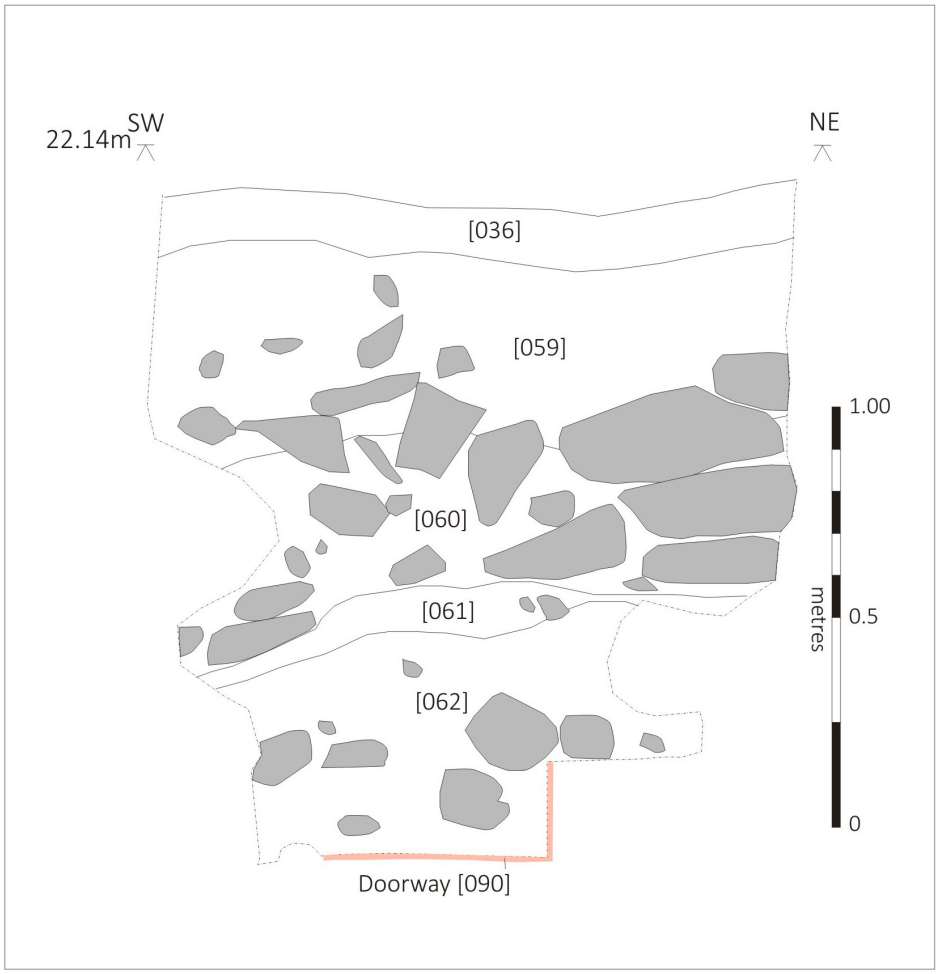
The excavation quickly revealed that natural bedrock outcropped very close to the surface and lay just below the turf, C021. Because of this it was decided to limit the size of the proposed excavation area. The trench revealed that the slight linear depression which can still be seen as an earthwork was indeed a ditch or channel although very shallow in nature. The channel C029 was filled with C028 and may have functioned as a drain as it runs along a natural rock outcrop against which water still collects.



Illus 66 Trench 4 Area G internal northwest facing elevation

Illus 67 Trench 4 Area G remains of doorway C090 from northwest

Illus 68 Trench 4 Area G architectural detail of door C090 from northwest above



Illus 69 Trench 4 Area G southwest facing section

Illus 70 Trench 4 Area I Junction of walls C043 and C054 from southwest

5.9 Trench 6

This trench was placed either side of an upstanding revetment wall, C084, to examine its relationship to the medieval castle and burgh (Illus 71 and 72).

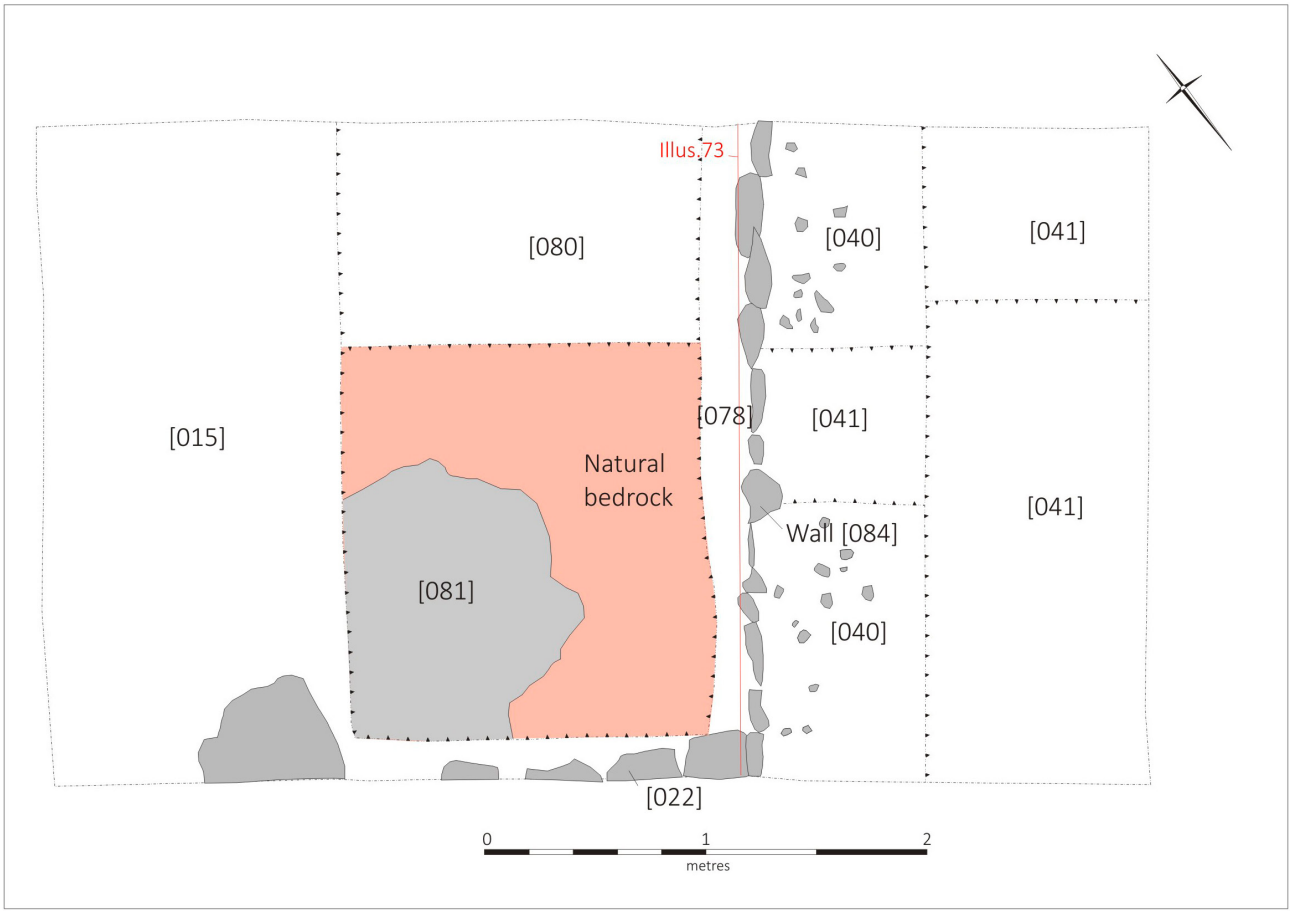
Natural bedrock was reached within the western part of the trench at a height of 23.62m OD or 1.30m below the present ground surface on the western side of the wall. Above natural bedrock was a thin spread of material, C081, that included burnt bone and charcoal, while the natural bedrock showed distinct signs of being reddened by fire, C082. It is possible that the bedrock had been burnt when it was utilised as the floor for a feature such as a kiln although no walls or superstructure were located within the excavated area.

Above this deposit was a large dump or dumps of soils C079 and C080, these both contained 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 latter likely representing the waste from smithing. The nature of these deposits remains unclear, but they appear to be levelling deposits of medieval 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 so this interpretation has to remain speculative.

Above these stony deposits was a fairly uniform deposit of yellow brown silty loam, C078, 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.

Over this soil was constructed wall C084, which must also be of post medieval date. Lying against the wall face on its western side was a heap of stones, C022, possibly deriving from field clearance, these stones in turn were sealed by deposit C015, another plough/agricultural accumulation. The nature of the revetting wall C084 is still unclear but it may have had a dual function of demarcating a property or field boundary but also constructed to counteract weathering of soil down slope.

Illus 71 Revetment wall C084 before excavation from the northwest



Illus 72 Trench 6 plan

Illus 73 Trench 6 northwest facing section

Illus 74 Trench 6 showing deposits below wall C084 from northwest

Excavation on the higher ground on the eastern side of the wall demonstrated that plough/agricultural soil, C041, had accumulated against the wall on this side, this deposit was 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, C040, which coincided with the upper course of the wall, this lying over plough/horticultural soil C041. C040 in turn was then sealed by deposit C016, this another plough/agricultural accumulation.

5.10 Trench 7

This trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the Outer Bailey and designed to investigate any potential remains relating to the putative medieval burgh (Illus 75 and 76).

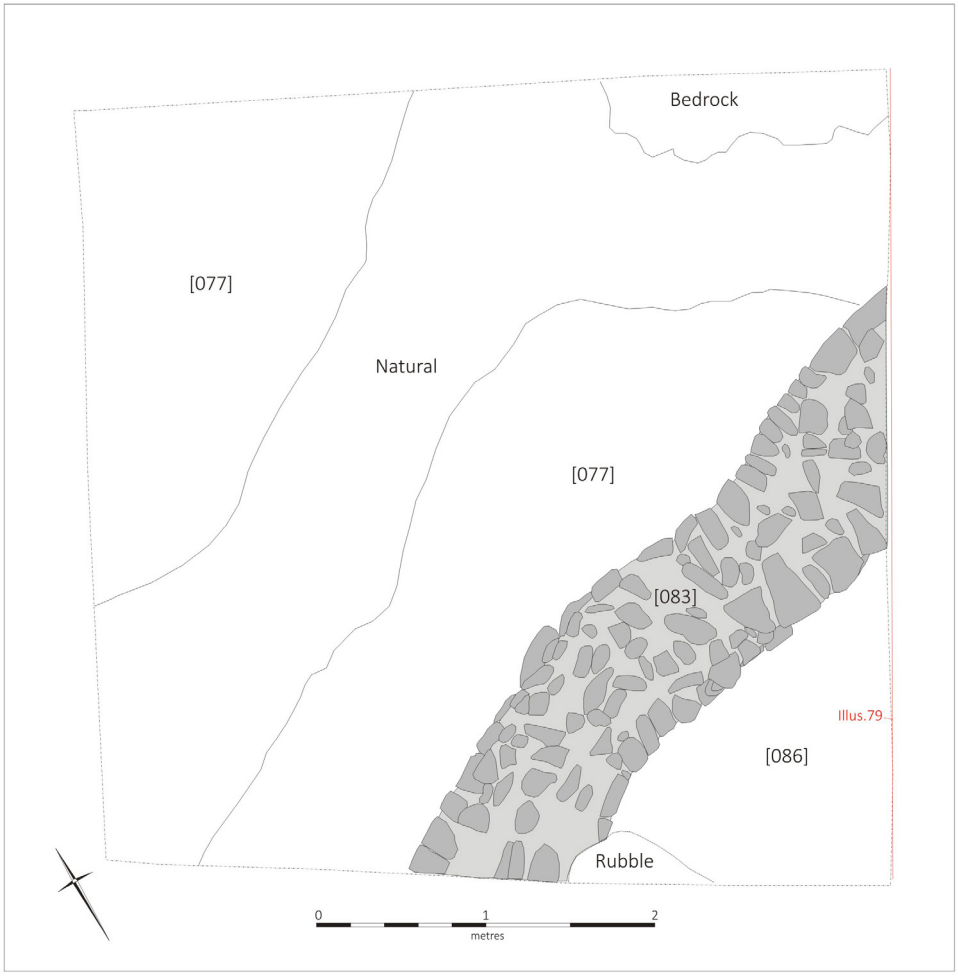
Natural bedrock and glacial till lay below the present ground surface in the northeast corner of the trench. Built against/over the sloping western side of these natural deposits was rubble wall C083 which crossed the trench from northeast to southwest, beginning to turn to the south at the southern edge of the trench. The wall stood up to 0.7m in height and was between 0.8m and 1m in width.

To the south of the wall was a mixed deposit of clay and stone, C086, 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.

The floor was then sealed by a mixture of rubble and red orange clay deposit, C077, over this, lying against the southern face of the wall. The northern face of the wall was sealed by subsoil deposit C088, this in turn was sealed by quite an extensive rubble deposit, C087, likely a spread of collapsed building material (Illus 79).

The rubble deposit and the rest of the trench was overlain by plough soil deposit C011 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 into these areas, which were likely field areas in the post medieval period.

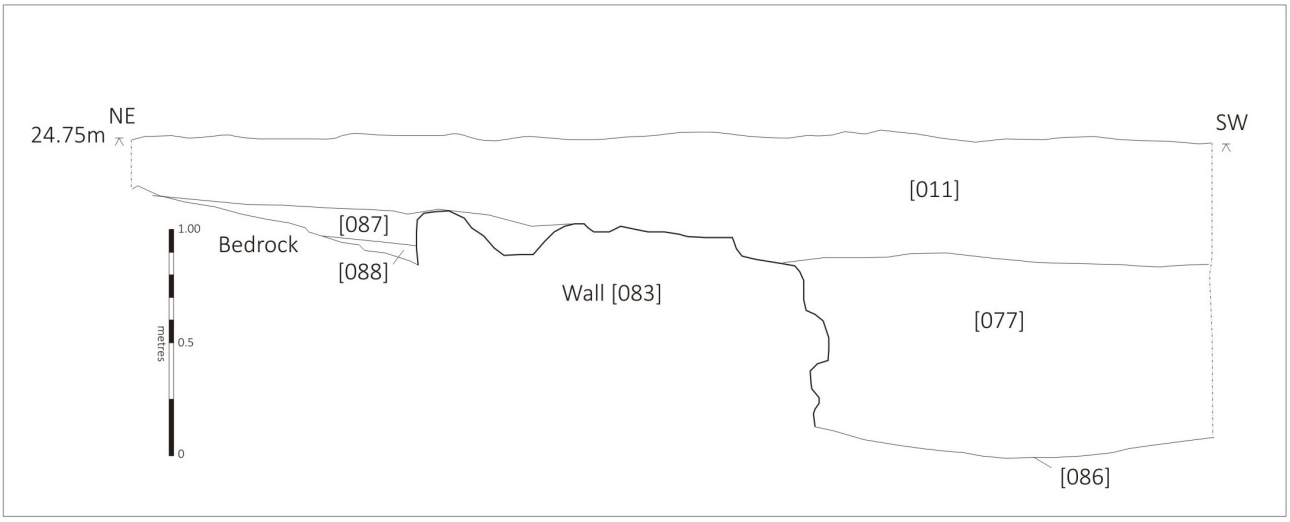
Illus 75 Terraced area of Trenches 7 and 8 prior to excavation from the southwest



Illus 76 Trench 7 plan

Illus 77 Trench 7 and wall C083 from northeast

Illus 78 Trench 7 wall C083 with floor C086 at base of scale from west



Illus 79 Trench 7 northwest facing section

Illus 80 Trench 7 rubble spread C087 of wall C083 from southeast above

5.11 Trench 8

Like Trench 7 this trench was placed within a relatively flat or terraced area lying to the south of the Outer Bailey and designed to investigate any potential remains relating to the putative medieval burgh.

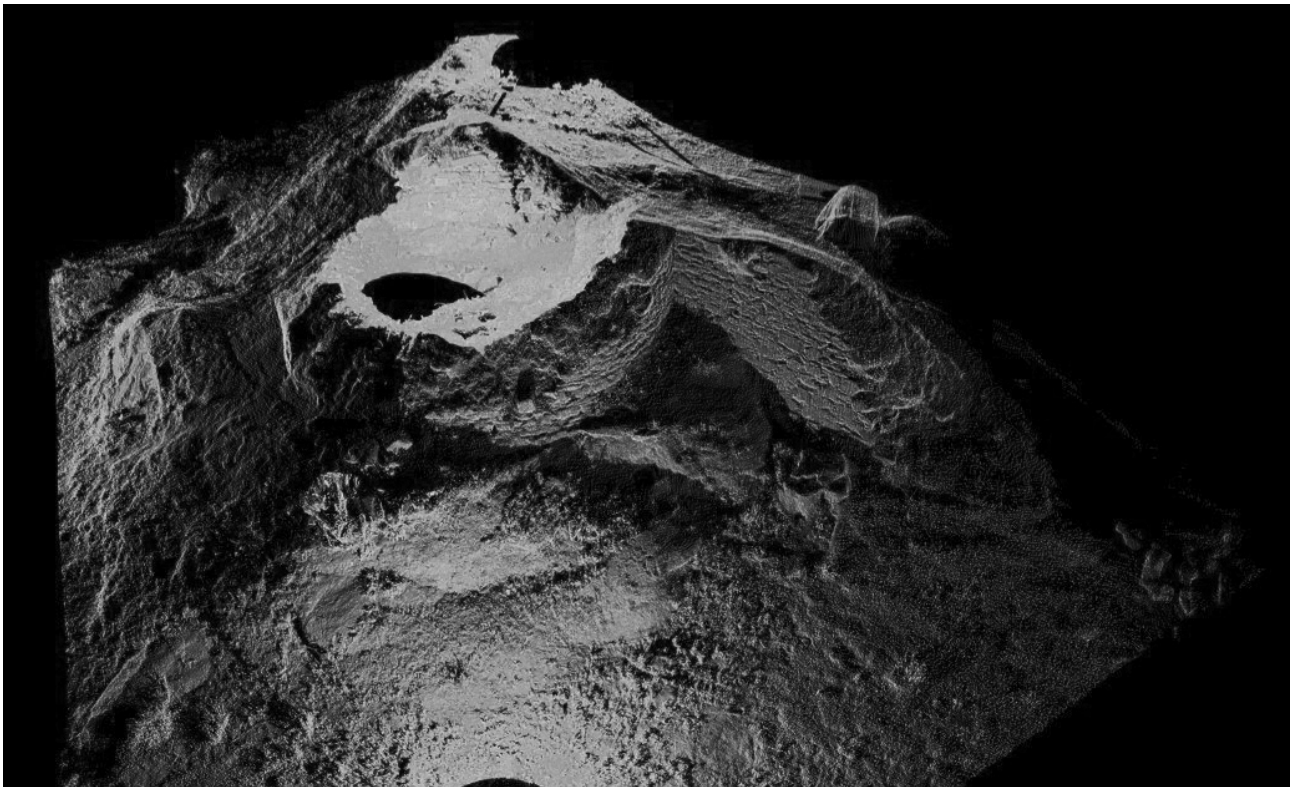
Natural glacial till was exposed along the northeast of the trench and beyond this to the west was either lower plough soil or perhaps a colluvial deposit. Cutting through both these deposits could be seen numerous plough scars. Lying above this was plough soil C024 and, like deposit C011 in Trench 7, contained mainly post medieval finds and, again like C011, 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 fertiliser.

5.12 Trench 9

This trench was designed to examine a possible northern entrance into the Outer Bailey within a distinct dip in the surrounding rubble located between the two drum towers that line the northern wall of the castle. The remains of a badly robbed 3m wide portcullis gate were established although the gate was not quite centrally placed between the two towers, lying 6.9m from the western tower edge and 5.6m from the eastern tower (Illus 80–85).

Bedrock, which can be seen below the eastern drum tower, drops off in steep rounded ridges from west to east. The current ground level also falls off in a steep incline to the north. Given the natural undulating formation of the bedrock, it seems likely that the bedrock was levelled prior to the gate being constructed, as the bedrock below the eastern side of the gate was only 20mm in height above the bedrock lying below the western side of the gate.

Illus 81 'gap' between the projecting drum towers from southeast above



Illus 82 Laser scan of the eastern tower with surviving wall lying above the gate position

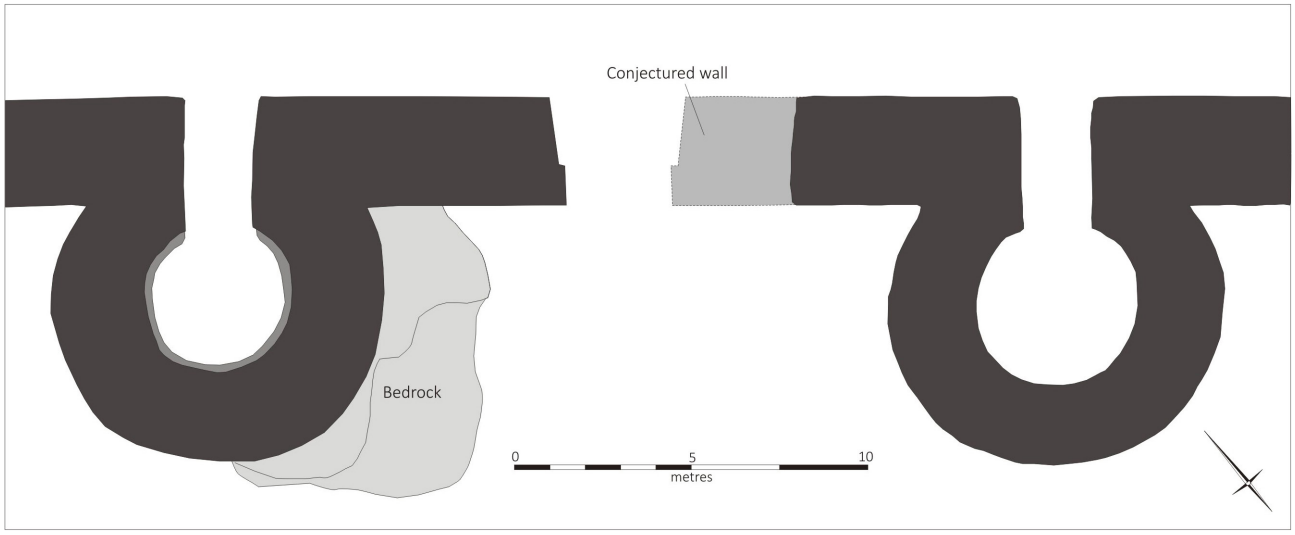
5.12.1 The eastern gate side C092

As mentioned above, natural bedrock was revealed lying just below the lowest course of the eastern side of the gate, which like the southern gate to the Outer Bailey, had red-coloured dressed sandstone external reveals, a portcullis slot, and a door intake. Internally, the wall is rubble-built and splayed, dominated by large roughly squared blocks and narrower slabs laid to formal courses. Thin packing/levelling stones were used to support the lowest dressed sandstone block forming the outer face of the gate. The red sandstone blocks survived in four courses standing up to 0.9m in height, the largest block measuring 0.39m x 0.30m x 0.25m. These were bonded by a hard light grey mortar. The portcullis slot lay 0.62m from the outer face, this measuring 0.13m by 0.12m. Lying 0.24m beyond the portcullis slot internally was the door intake. The upper surviving stone that formed the door intake had what appeared to be the southern edge of a carved vertical slot although any corresponding northern edge was not observed. It is possible this slot held a vertical timber for the door surround.

Above these red sandstone blocks, forming the door arrangement, the face stones of the entrance passage had been robbed, however above and beyond the door intake the face stones of the entrance passage survived to a height of 2.3m above the natural bedrock located on the outer face of the gate. At the northern end of these surviving face stones, some stones projected beyond the line of the inner wall face, and these also appeared to slope down from east to west. While this may have been caused by later disturbance it appears more likely these represent the basal stones of an entrance archway, while one block of red sandstone, still in situ, might be the remains of a dressed sandstone archway surround (like the stone seen on the eastern side of the southern gate). The wall forming the eastern side of the entrance passage is 3m wide which widens at its southern inner end beyond the door intake, a similar arrangement to that used in the southern gate. The wall to the east of the gate stands to a height of 5.2m (17ft) above the basal course of the gate.

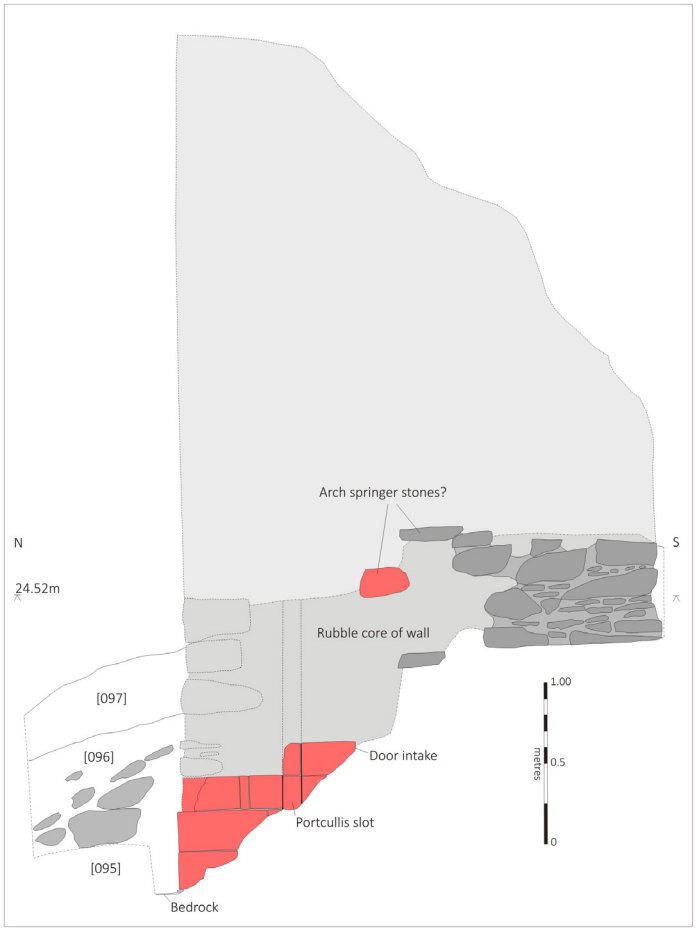
Illus 83 Surviving wall of the Outer Bailey to the east of the gate from the north (note the tree stump at bottom left of photograph)

Illus 84 Eastern drum tower external face from southeast



Illus 85 Trench 9 position of the gate between the two drum towers

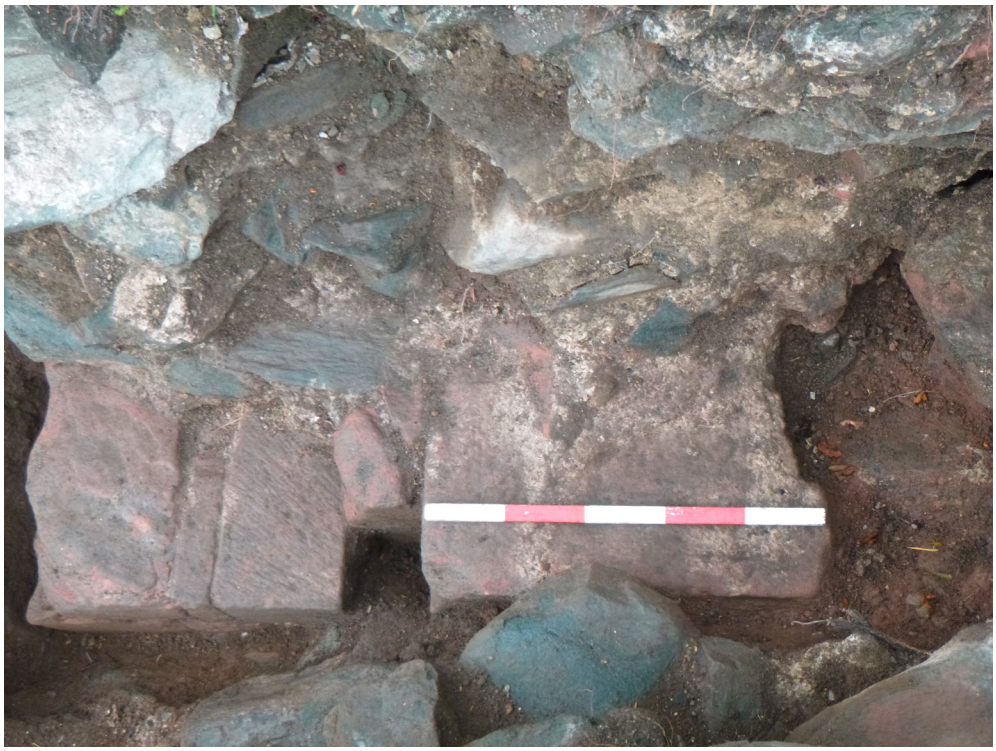
Illus 86 Trench 9 plan



Illus 87 Trench 9 elevation of eastern side of gate

Illus 88 Trench 9 external face of west side of gate from northwest above

Illus 89 Trench 9 basal courses of external face of eastern side of entrance from northwest



Illus 90 Trench 9 portcullis slot and door intake of eastern side of gate from northwest above

Illus 91 Trench 9 wall face of gate passage from northeast (evidence of the springer arch is at the left of the scale)

Illus 92 Trench 9 footings of the western gate from east (the remains of the western drum tower are in the background beyond the scale)

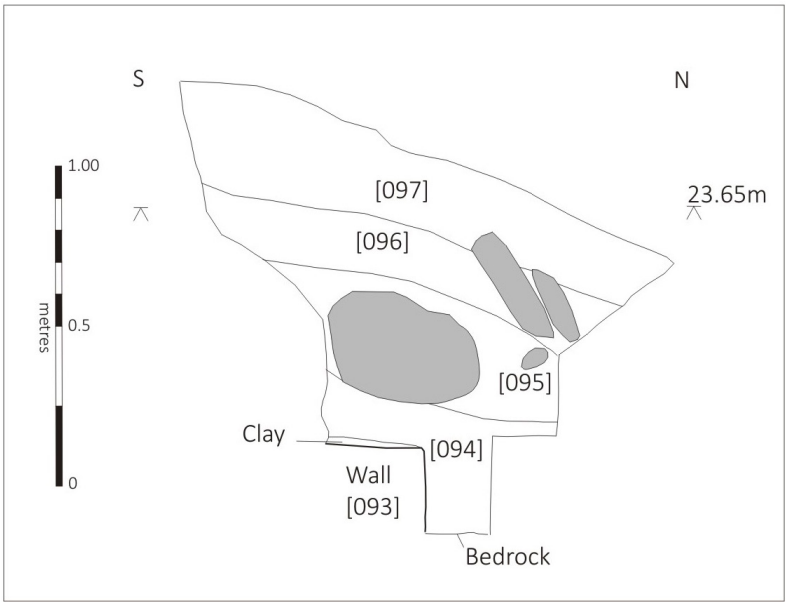
5.12.2 The western gate side C093

Only the basal course of the entrance wall survived on this side. Lying directly on natural bedrock was a deposit of small schist blocks, which was likely used as a bedding/levelling deposit. Over this deposit were laid the basal blocks of the wall, the largest observed block measuring 0.70m x 0.40m x 0.20m. Lying between and partially over these blocks were the remnants of a light yellow-brown clay deposit, this no doubt was used as a binding agent. None of these blocks had evidence of mortar bonding, suggesting this was only used within the wall above, which had been completely robbed.

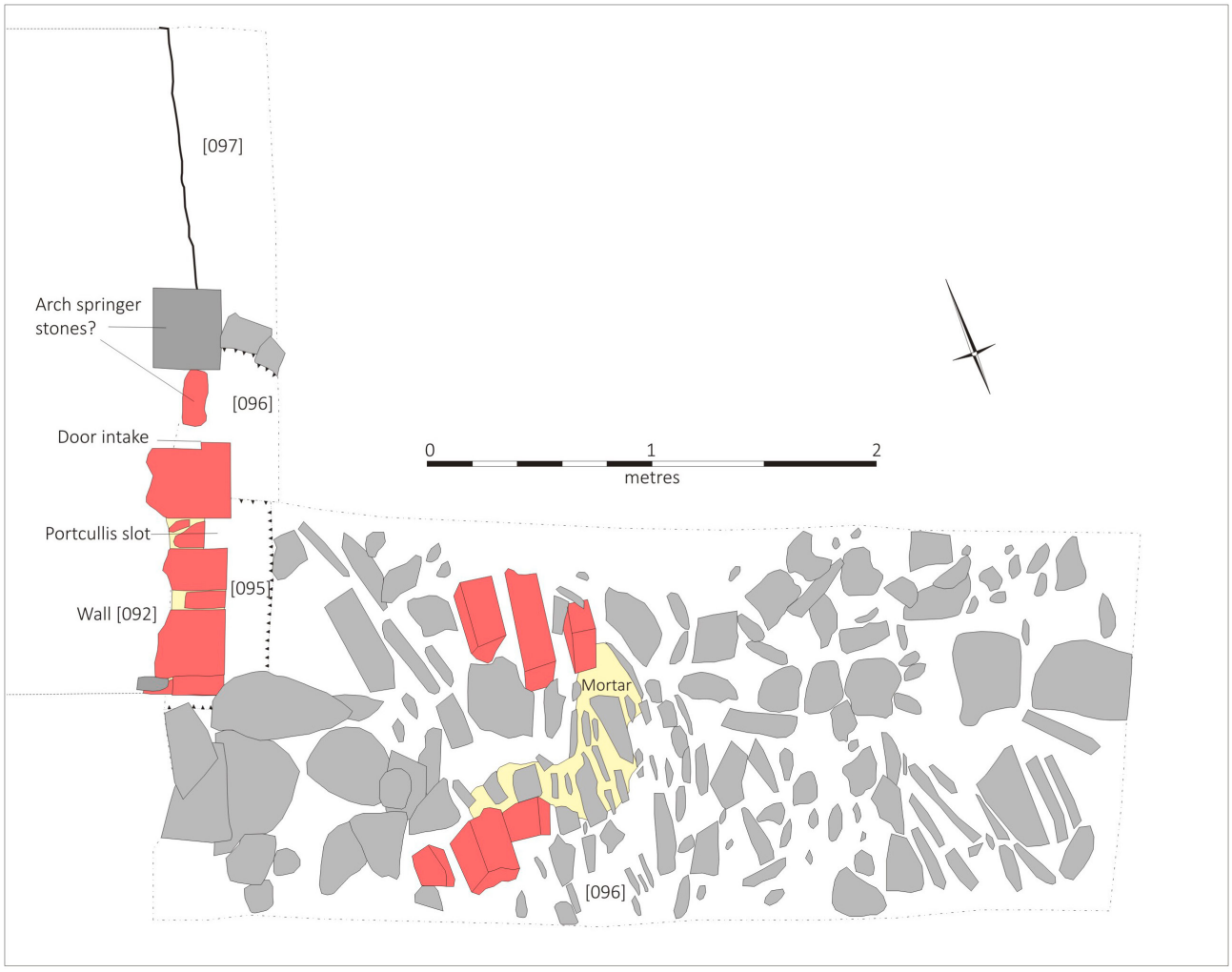
Sealing the remains of the wall on this western side of the trench was a deposit of light brown sandy silt, C094, with frequent fragments of mortar and occasional fragments of red sandstone, suggesting this deposit was the remnants of the robbing activity. A similar deposit was not observed on the eastern side of the trench where the wall had been less severely robbed.

Sealing this deposit and the remains of the eastern gate was a series of rubble/demolition deposits interspersed with more soil-like accumulations, suggesting more than one episode of robbing/collapse. The lowest of these deposits consisted of a brown sandy loam that contained some large irregular stone blocks, C095, along with some small fragments of mortar and some patches of more sandy soil. Above this was a deposit of more structured collapse, indicated by the presence of mortar bonded stones, a series of coursed stone blocks and two rows of red sandstone blocks, C096.

These red sandstone blocks might be the remains of the inner and outer arches of the entrance, these collapsing along with the surrounding blocks. This suggests that part of the eastern side of the archway continued to stand after the western side had been robbed, but eventually collapsed. This collapse was sealed by a dark grey silty loam which included some rubble, C096, supporting the vegetation cover.



Illus 93 Trench 9 section of western side of gate



Illus 94 Trench 9 plan of western gate side and collapsed rubble

Illus 95 Trench 9 collapsed red sandstone blocks from northeast

Illus 96 Trench 9 chiselled dressing on one of the collapsed sandstone blocks

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Pre-castle activity

The exposure of deposits pre-dating the construction of the castle was limited. Fragments of charcoal and burnt bone were recovered from the soil below the castle wall in Trench 2, indicating some form of pre-castle occupation. A fragment of birch was dated to 677–877 calAD (BP 1246 ±24 95% probability SUERC-96577), which was obtained from a pre-castle soil lying under the Inner Bailey wall. Within Trench 1 an earlier pre-castle soil was also revealed, and this had evidence of burning in upper extent, although whether this related to pre-castle activity or to the construction of the castle itself remains unclear. The early historic date for the soil below the castle wall in Trench 2 is of course intriguing and raises the question as to whether this deposit relates to the two burnings of the putative fort mentioned in the Irish annals in 713 (*Combusti(o) Tairpirt Boitter)* and 731 (*Combustio Tairpirt Boittir apud Dunghal)*. It has been argued that many Scottish western seaboard castles were likely to have been built on earlier sites, such as prehistoric forts, duns, and brochs (Raven 2012). Raven suggested that there was a significant phase of occupation beginning in the thirteenth century, accelerating in the 15th and 16th centuries, but then declining although still occurring in the 17th century (Raven 2005). The work has thrown up a complicated picture of their use, from convenient places of refuge to communal meeting places, summer dwellings and even fishing lodges. There also appears to be a link between the re-use of sites with a desire to naturalise Gaelic familial lineages with a place, particularly after a period of Norse influence, these places seen as representing links to a pre-Norse past, with legitimacy of occupation perhaps stemming from such claims. While the majority of duns, forts, brochs, and crannogs in Argyll as yet show no evidence of having been reoccupied in the medieval period, a number of excavated sites have, including the sites at Kildonan (Canmore ID 38756; Fairhurst 1939), Ugadale (Canmore ID 38760; Fairhurst 1956), MacEwan's Castle (Canmore ID 39861; Marshall 1982), Dunollie, and Dun Mhuirich (Regan 2013b).

If the present Tarbert Castle is indeed the site of the *Tairpert Boiter* of the annals, then the question must be, where are the earlier remains? The other sites mentioned in the annals, Dunollie, Dunadd, and Dunaverty along with many other duns and forts in Argyll are built on prominent geological stacks. If an earlier structure existed at Tarbert, and these geological determinants were followed, then the place most likely for the position of an earlier fortification would be on the rise now occupied by the Inner Bailey, and if so, its construction may have eradicated most, if not all, of the evidence of any such building, although pockets of earlier occupation might survive.

While it may be attractive to conflate the carbon date to the events mentioned in the Irish Annals, without further substantial proof of a defensive structure occupying the ground below the present Inner Bailey the case for this site being *Tairpirt Boittir* is still unproven.

6.2 The Medieval Castle

It must be said at the start of the discussion on the medieval remains at Tarbert Castle that only a small percentage of potential medieval deposits were sampled during the excavation and any conclusions presented here must be treated with some degree of caution, given that so much remains unknown archaeologically. That said, the excavation work has shed light on several important aspects of the construction and layout of Tarbert Castle. The building analysis undertaken by Mark Thacker as part of the Scottish Medieval Castles and Chapels C-14 Project, has shown that the Inner Bailey was originally conceived as an integral part of the larger structure at Tarbert and has shown that the cross-wall of the Inner Bailey is a later insertion between the surrounding walls forming the circuit of the Outer Bailey. Two radiocarbon dates recovered from the mortar of the southwestern gate of the Outer Bailey and the cross-wall of the Inner Bailey provided similar dates, respectively 1210–1290 calAD (BP 788±31 95% probability SUERC-93141) and 1220–1290 calAD (BP 775 ± 31 95% probability SUERC-93140) (Thacker 2022). This appears to indicate that Tarbert Castle was constructed sometime in the later 13th century or early 14th century. Indeed, Thacker concludes that 'it remains possible that all surviving masonry structures on the site were built by the crown after 1315, as the earliest

documentary-led interpretations had previously suggested' (Thacker 2022: 196). This arrangement and chronology of the wall development *vis a vis* the Inner and Outer Bailey walls also appear to be historically documented within the 1325–26 exchequer rolls where in the final entry to John de Lany's account it states, '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' (*De ferro non vacat nunc computare, nec de domibus infra interiorem clausuram, nec de medio muro claudente, nec de domo vini computatur*) (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 58). This likely refers to the cross-wall which essentially completes the wall circuit forming the Inner Bailey and given that its cost had not been included in John de Lany's account suggests that it was one of the latest pieces of work completed at the castle. This of course has important implications for the overall understanding of the castle's development and is discussed more fully below.

The excavation within Trench 4 showed that no entrance to the Inner Bailey, as previously suggested, lies near the southwest tower of the castle although this trench did reveal the scale and preservation of the southwestern tower and exposed the remains of a doorway into the tower suite.

Trenches 1 and 2 demonstrated that well-preserved medieval occupation deposits survived within both the Inner and Outer Baileys. The medieval deposits in Trench 1 within the southeast corner of the Outer Bailey were suggestive of a series of floor and midden deposits, while one deposit contained evidence for the survival of organic material, in this case wood. While these deposits likely 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 evidence of such structures along the walls of the castle in this area of the site. Within Trench 2 inside the Inner Bailey similar well-preserved medieval occupation deposits were uncovered along with the remains of an upstanding clay and stone structure, or hearth used for heating. Beyond its heating function the true nature of this sub-circular feature remains elusive, although it is suggested here that it was used as a firebox that supported a pot or cauldron for heating liquids. If so, it could have been used for a number of functions such as cooking or brewing, both of these attested to within the surviving exchequer rolls, which mention both a kitchen (*coquine*) and brewhouse (*bracina*) being present within the walls of the castle. Evidence of food preparation was also recovered from this area including butchered bone and seashells (mainly edible periwinkles) recovered from a midden accumulation from which an iron fleshhook was also recovered. The pottery recovered from these same occupation deposits were almost entirely from jugs indicating their use as tableware in consumption and/or storing of wine and/or beer. However, without further evidence, attributing such specific functions to these spaces must be treated with caution, for example low quantities of slag fragments were also present within the general midden material, although perhaps not in such concentrations to suggest any metalworking took place in the immediate vicinity. The hearth feature also appeared to be the replacement for an earlier fire installation, possibly with a similar function, which, along with at least two superimposed floor surfaces, suggests some degree of longevity of use in this part of the castle. The pottery assemblage in this part of the castle was dominated by the sherds of several vessels that displayed very fresh breaks that often conjoined, perhaps suggesting a close correlation in time between their last use and being discarded into middens and/or on floors. The above-mentioned pottery group was recovered from above the earliest floor, which produced a date of 1299–1398 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96572). The radiocarbon date recovered from the charcoal from what was very likely the fuel from the last firing/use of the hearth in the Inner Bailey produced a similar date of 1282–1390 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96573). Both dates suggest occupation and use of the Inner Bailey in the 14th century. These dates are perhaps supported by the ceramic evidence, which is wholly dated between the 13th and 15th century, recovered from above the floor deposits within the Inner Bailey and that above the earliest floor, while admittedly only a handful of sherds were dated to the 13th–14th century, the overall assemblage suggests a 14th century date (Derek Hall pers comm.). These medieval occupation deposits were all sealed by an extensive deposit of rubble which appeared to have formed rapidly

and can perhaps best be explained as the deliberate demolition of the surrounding walls, rather than long-term degradation. Given these factors, it might suggest this part of the castle was redundant by the later 15th century, although the charcoal from what was possibly the last firing of the hearth feature might indicate an even earlier date for this demise (that is before the end of the 14th century). If this process was repeated elsewhere within the Inner Bailey, then it is highly likely that equally well-preserved medieval deposits survive elsewhere. Two other observations from the excavations are worth mentioning. Firstly, in all trenches where the castle walls were exposed there was evidence that the walls had been rendered in a light brown or cream coloured plaster, and it would appear that the majority if not all of the walls in the castle were originally rendered in a similar manner, with the exception of the carved red sandstone surrounds of entrances. The second observation was that there was no evidence of slate or stone being used as a roofing material, which indicates an organic roofing material was used. The 1326 Exchequer Roll does, however, mention the 'service of mowers of thatch for roofing the hall' (*servico messorum pro coopertura metanda pro aula*) and we can perhaps assume that other buildings were roofed with a similar material.

The confirmation of the positions of the gateways into the castle complex provides important new elements as to understanding of the castle's layout. The gates undoubtedly had several roles, defensive, controlling access to the castle, while they were also undoubtedly architectural projections of power and display. The southwestern gate into the Outer Bailey was positioned below the eastern wall of the Inner Bailey with the projecting tower in the Outer Bailey lying immediately to its west it would have presented an imposing approach and façade. The entrance on the opposite northeastern side of the castle was arguably even more impressive with the portcullis gate positioned between the two projecting drum towers. With its sloping access ramp, the southwestern entrance would have been the easier approach particularly for animal-drawn vehicles, while the northeastern gate is situated above what appears to be a very steep slope. As such it remains unclear as to how this gate was accessed from the sea (which now lies some 80–90m to the north). It is likely that much of the original topography is masked by the rubble collapse from the castle itself as well as being covered in extensive vegetation. Certainly, there appears to have been extensive reworking of the lower slopes below the gate with the creation of garden terracing at the rear of the Victorian houses that now line the south side of Pier Road (A8015). However, current topography suggests that the approach must have wound up from the sea to the castle from either the western or eastern side by passing below one or the other of the drum towers, as the ground immediately in front of the gate appears to be too steep to accommodate a direct approach to the gate from the north, unless of course steep steps were involved. The relatively inaccessible nature of this gate, as opposed to that on the southwest side of the castle, led Thacker to suggest that the former is a postern gate while the latter was the main entrance (Thacker 2022). Whatever the case, further topographic and survey work needs to be done on this side of the castle to shed more light on the access to the castle in this area.

Portcullis entrances are relatively rare features amongst west coast castles, although they exist at nearby Skipness Castle and at Rothesay Castle both considered works of the Stewart/Mentieth family. While containing later additions and repairs, the original elements of the gate at Skipness have strong similarities to the surviving structural features of both Outer Bailey gates 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 examples at Skipness being 12.5cm (or 5 inches wide) while those at Tarbert were 19cm (or 8 inches wide). At Tarbert red sandstone is also used within the surrounds of the gate into the Inner Bailey and within the surrounds of the entrance to the southwest tower of the Outer Bailey. Again, a comparison with Skipness can be made where doorway surrounds within the enclosure walls are rendered in moulded red sandstone blocks. The similarity in date and the similar use of red sandstone raises the question, previously postulated by Simpson, as to 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 (Simpson 1966).

Examination of the masonry at base of the Tower House at Tarbert appears to show that it is tied into the masonry of the Outer Bailey wall while the northeast corner of the projecting tower base is constructed with different masonry (using squared quoins) from the upper build of the Tower House. This suggests that this lower section of the tower is contemporary with the construction of the Outer Bailey wall and may represent the remains of projecting tower on this side of the castle prior to the construction of the Tower House in the late 15th century. However, closer and more specialist examination needs to be undertaken to confirm or contradict this observation.

Other castle sites in Argyll have produced excavated evidence for occupation in the late 13th and early 14th centuries including Achadun, the Lismore seat of the Bishop of the Isles built sometime between *c* 1295 and 1310 (Turner 1975; Caldwell & Stell 2017), Dunstaffnage (Canmore ID 23036), a MacDougall stronghold probably constructed in the mid-13th century (Lewis 1996; Radley 2000; Stewart 2004; Breen et al 2010), and Castle Sween (Phases 2 and 3) constructed by the MacSweens in the late 12th or early 13th century (Ewart & Triscott 1996; Thacker 2020). However, within the published reports few of these artefact groupings are firmly dated to the 14th/15th centuries or are in significant enough quantities to conduct anything more than broad comparative analysis, such as the similar preference for the eating of beef in other medieval lordly residences, such as Castle Sween (McCormick 1996).

6.3 The Medieval Burgh

The area to the southwest of the castle within the scheduled area occupies a ridge of undulating ground that slopes off to the east and west. The results of the excavation suggest that medieval topography may be partially masked by what appears to be the accumulations 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 downslope within Trench 6 there was a depth of up to 1.0m of soil covering the underlying archaeology, this was likely an accumulation of hill wash/colluvial forming within existing natural hollows and it is highly likely that this process was repeated across the whole area of the ridge to the south of the castle. The recovery of dumped medieval pottery and slag along with evidence of burning within Trench 6 as well as 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 in both Trenches 6 and 7 indicates possible metalworking activity in the vicinity. Part of one building does not of course make a burgh, but does suggest that other buildings may lie along this same ridge to the south of the castle, this perhaps underlined by the recovery of medieval pottery from a small community excavation on Bruce Hill, further south along the same ridge (Regan 2018a). Sherds of 15th–16th century pottery along with one 17th–18th century sherd were recovered from the ploughsoil deposits within Trenches 6 and 7, this perhaps indicating a decline in any burgh activity after the 16th century. This may reflect the increased importance of Inveraray (created a burgh of barony in 1472) or that any burgh activity within Tarbert had moved closer to the sea around any harbour area.

6.4 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 and appear in the Royal Commission's published plan of the castle (RCAHMS 1971: no. 316, 179–84). This building is also depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey, although, prior to the excavation it was unclear whether these were a depiction of the walls of the castle or a later building (OS 1870). The building is probably 17th century in date given the evidence from the coins recovered from the floor of the building. While Structure 1 utilised the walls of the castle on 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 with signs of burning which was likely a hearth or perhaps a work area. The western room also contained a hearth area with signs of burning on the floor in the centre of the room and lying nearby on the floor was the upper stone of a large rotary quern. The quern might suggest a domestic use for the building, however, the presence of several 17th century coins from the building's floors might reflect the garrisoning of the castle during this turbulent century whether during the Civil War period or its occupation by Cromwellian troops in 1652. This building appears to be one of a series of earthworks that suggest other structures of a similar late date occupy the internal space of the Inner Bailey.

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 19th century 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, perhaps indicating that there may have been a problem with 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 enclosure 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 latter possibly indicating the use of seaweed introduced to the soil as a fertiliser.

6.5 Re-thinking Tarbert Castle

As mentioned above the suggestion that the castle at Tarbert dates to the 13th century was initially made by MacGibbon and Ross who suggested that Tarbert Castle was one of the royal fortresses handed over to Edward I by John Balliol, after Edward placed him on the throne in 1292 (MacGibbon & Ross 1887: 136). They also pointed out the similarities of ground plan and size of the inner enclosure at Tarbert to Kinclaven Castle in Perthshire. The comparison to Kinclaven was later expanded upon by Dunbar and Duncan who compared the Inner Bailey at Tarbert with both Kinclaven and Kincardine Castles, the later probably dating to before 1249 and speculating that Tarbert might also date to before that time and may have been constructed by Alexander II (1214–1249) as part of his successful campaign in 1221 and 1222 against Ruaidhri mac Raonaill to subdue the west and attempting to regain the Western Isles from the Norwegian crown (Dunbar & Duncan 1971:13). This has been accepted and expanded on by other scholars while some have argued that it was Alexander III (1249–1286) who, after gaining his majority in 1261 and continuing his father's policy of regaining the Western Isles from the Norwegian crown, built Tarbert as part of crowns consolidation in the west, possibly after the Treaty of Perth in 1266 when the Western Isles were ceded to the Scots. Dunbar and Duncan's (1971) argument that Tarbert may have been built by Alexander II is based on their understanding, like MacGibbon and Ross, that the Inner Bailey of the castle is earlier than the walls of the Outer Bailey, which appeared to have been recently confirmed by the RCAHMS Inventory survey undertaken in 1966. The comparison of Tarbert Castle with both Kinclaven and Kincardine only holds 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 along with that undertaken by Mark Thacker has shown that the cross-wall that effectively creates the Inner Bailey is secondary to the surrounding curtain walls of the Outer Bailey, their construction likely being of a late 13th to the early 14th century date. A 14th century occupation date is suggested by the carbon dates and the ceramic evidence for the initial occupation of the Inner Bailey at Tarbert Castle. This dating evidence would appear to eliminate the possibility that Alexander II constructed the castle and perhaps make it unlikely that it could have been built by

Alexander III who was dead by 1286. However, this does not necessarily preclude the construction of Tarbert Castle by a local magnate in the later 13th or early 14th century period. As mentioned above it is likely that the Stewart/Menteith family held the lordship of Knapdale from at least the 1260s and the Stewarts of course had a long tradition of building or improving castles.

Alexander Stewart the brother of Walter Stewart may have been responsible for the construction of Rothesay Castle and also for the rebuilding of Dundonald Castle (Canmore ID 41970) and it may have been Walter himself who oversaw the construction of Dunoon Castle (Canmore ID 40729) following his grant of lands in Cowal, although this is less than clear, while Ewart and Baker postulate that the structure below the present tower and enclosure at Carrick equates to a hunting lodge constructed by the Stewart family (Simpson 1939; Ewart & Baker 1998: 999; Ewart et al 2004;). Caldwell has argued that Stewart influence in the west also extended to the construction of Brodick Castle (Canmore ID 40145) on Arran (Caldwell 2022). It appears likely that after the Menteith Stewarts obtained possession of Skipness Castle they may have been responsible for rebuilding the castle compound, this work attributed to the late 13th or early 14th century and may have also displaced Clann Suibhne from Castle Sween, as they took control of Knapdale (Simpson 1966). Thacker has pointed to the *c* 1300 construction for the northwest tower at Castle Sween as likely being the work of the Menteith Stewarts which contains cross-slit openings similar features in the nearby castles of Skipness and Brodick which also had an entrance flanked by a large drum tower (Thacker 2020: 238; Caldwell 2022: 7). As such the Menteith Stewarts, as lords of Knapdale undoubtedly had the resources and the power base within southern Argyll to construct a castle at Tarbert and the dates retrieved from the walls of the mortar of the walls of the Inner and Outer Baileys make this a possibility. However, and surely important, is why would they build another even larger castle in Knapdale given that they already had control of Skipness Castle and possibly Castle Sween by the late 13th–early 14th century?

The first documented reference to Tarbert Castle is in the above-mentioned exchequer rolls entries of 1325–1326 outlining building work undertaken by Robert I and it has been maintained for some time that these referred to major additions to a previously established royal castle. Prior to this there is no mention in extant historical documents of a castle existing at Tarbert. Thacker has previously pointed out that the castle is not mentioned in the catalogue of 23 royal castles handed over to Edward I in 1292 (Thacker 2022: 180). The castle of course may have been held by the English or their allies at this time but the fact that Tarbert Castle escapes notice in any historical source prior to its mention in the 1325–26 exchequer account is surely problematic, particularly given that other Argyll castles including Rothesay, Brodick, Dunaverty, Dunstaffnage, Skipness, Sween, Cairn na burgh, and Fraoch Eilean are all documented in some form before this time. The documentary evidence, scant though it may be, combined with the archaeological evidence tends to suggest that the remains we see at Tarbert Castle, apart from the later Tower House, are from the time of Robert I and as such represent the only major new castle constructed during his reign.

As west coast magnates, the Bruce family and the future Robert I himself, were, as previously outlined by Seán Duffy, firmly entangled in Gaelic west coast and Irish geopolitical culture (Duffy 2002: 46–70). The future Robert I inherited the Gaelic earldom of Carrick through his mother, while in 1282, the Bruces were granted a licence by Edward I so that his men could travel to Ireland to buy and export goods receiving a similar permission in 1291 (Sweetman 1877: 1928; 1881: 945; Bain 1884: 211, 535). After succeeding to the earldom, in 1294, the future Robert I obtained a safe conduct lasting a year and a half in which he was given permission to travel and stay in Ireland which has led Duffy to suggest that he had landed interests in Ulster (Sweetman 1881: 136; Duffy 2013: 135). Robert's second wife Elizabeth, whom he married in 1302, was the daughter of Richard de Burgh, the Earl of Ulster, additionally some have suggested, on admittedly speculative evidence, that his brother Edward may have been fostered in Ireland amongst the Ó Néills (Philips 1979: 269–70; Duffy 2013: 60). The Bruces were then fully aware of the strategic importance of controlling Scotland's western seaboard, particularly the approaches to the Clyde Estuary from Ireland and Inner Hebrides giving access to the Scottish

Lowlands, the route known in Ireland as *Sruth na Maoile* (the North Channel). During one of his earliest campaigns in 1306, Robert Bruce provisioned Dunaverty Castle in Kintyre and Loch Doon in Carrick (Canmore ID 63601). It has been argued that this along with his failed attempt to secure Dumbarton Castle (Canmore ID 43376) from John of Menteith, was an attempt by the new Scottish king to secure the seaway of the Firth of Clyde allowing communication with Ireland and the Western Isles of Scotland and which was a potential source of Irish and/or Hebridean troops (Stones 1970: 260–1; Cornell 2008). Through Christiana MacRuairi and Angus Òg MacDonald the Western Isles did provide Robert I with a supply of men and resources in the early days of his kingship, while men from the Isles took part in the Bruce invasion of Galloway in 1308. Duffy has also argued that Bruce's famous letter to 'all the kings of Ireland, to the prelates and clergy, and to the inhabitants of all Ireland' (*Rex omnibus et singulis regibus Ybernie prelatis quque et clerico euisdem ac incolis tocius Ybernie nostras*) dates to the winter of 1306–07, indicating Bruce's intention to create a pan-Gaelic anti-English alliance (Duncan 1988: no. 564, 695; Duffy 2002: 46–70). By 1309, Robert I's forces had seen off many of the west coast magnates who had remained allies of the Balliol and English factions, particularly Alexander MacDougall of Argyll and his son John. Here again, like his provision of castles in 1306, the MacDougall strongholds such as Dunstaffnage were garrisoned by Robert I's forces rather than destroyed, no doubt with the aim of controlling his former enemy's heartlands and their adjacent seaways of the Sound of Mull. Other former MacDougall strongholds may have come into Robert I's or his allies' hands, such as Cairn na Burgh (Canmore ID 21822 and 21823), which has been identified with the '*castri de Scraburgh*' whose constable was Neil MacLean (*Nigello McGillon)* in 1329 (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 238). Others such as Duart (Canmore ID 22662) and Aros Castles may have gone the same way, but without documentary evidence this must remain speculation. The displaced MacDougalls however sought refuge in Ireland and along with other dispossessed Scottish magnates continued to pose a threat along Bruce's western seaboard, particularly after John of Argyll had been appointed admiral of his western fleet by Edward II in 1311. Ireland of course could also be used by the English king to raise troops and to provide a supply base in support of any future campaign against the Scots. This threat appeared to be particularly acute in early 1315 after John of Argyll had recaptured the Isle of Man from pro-Bruce forces, while Edward II had ordered his officials, including the Irish Justiciar to raise troops and supply ships to John's fleet for a renewed campaign against the Scots. Securing the Scots western seaboard was no doubt an important consideration when in May 1315 Edward Bruce and his fleet sailed from Ayr launching his seaborne invasion of Ireland, supported by his brother King Robert, who joined him in Ireland, in July. Prior to Robert I sailing to Ireland the king, according to John Barbour, mustered his forces at Tarbert. The Bruce invasion of Ireland is narrated in Barbour's '*The Bruce*' Book XIV while Robert's crossing with his fleet at Tarbert to daunt the Isles appears in the following Book XV (Duncan 2007: 563–7). King Robert now repeated the symbolic annexation of Kintyre and the Isles undertaken by Magnús Óláfsson, hauling his ships across the Tarbert isthmus '*Out-our Betwix the Tarbertis twa*'. Whether, like the story of Magnús, Barbour's poem is apocryphal is still debated but it does appear that King Robert was at Tarbert in March–April 1315, where he received the resignation of a charter by John of Glassary at Tarbert (*apud Tarbart' iuxta Louchfyne*) and he may have returned there to prepare for the pacification of the isles after his brother's departure (Duncan 1988: 69).

One assumes that the Scottish king and his entourage were adequately accommodated when staying at Tarbert, while Thacker has pointed out the issuing of charters in 1315 from Tarbert might imply that some kind of administrative structure was located here at this time (Thacker 2022: 180). However, there is still no mention of a castle at Tarbert, either by Barbour or in the above resignation by John of Glassary. It is not clear what role if any Tarbert played in supplying Edward Bruce in his Irish campaign or if it was used during the transit of magnates between Scotland and Ireland including Robert and Edward Bruce at various times between 1316 and the defeat of the Scots at Faughart in 1318. The invasion of Ireland by the Scots might be seen as the most dynamic expression of King Robert's attempt to control his western seaboard but

before 1315 his administration had already begun the process of consolidating its position in the west through a series of land grants given to loyal west coast-based adherents, particularly the lands of the defeated and banished MacDougall kindred. Prior to Faughart, the beneficiaries Robert I's network of military patronage included the MacDonald and MacRuairi kin groups (Thomson 1912: App. 1, no. 9; App. 2, no. 56, 57, 58). However, after 1318 the Bruce regime appeared to specifically exclude the same MacSorley kindreds from further patronage. The reason for this is unclear but the Irish Annals tell us that two Hebridean lords died alongside Edward Bruce at Faughart '*Mac Ruaidhri tigerna Innsi Gall, Mac Domhnaill tigearna Airir Gaoidel*' while the Annals of Inisfallen names the fallen MacDonald leader as '*Alexander*' (*FM*: M1318.5; *AI*:1318.4). It has been postulated by Boardman that these individuals were the heads of MacDonald and MacRuairi families and if so, this may have caused instability within the families possibly leaving minors as heirs leading to factional competition between elder family members seeking to control the respective chieftainships. Any new emergent leaders may not have automatically followed the cause of Robert I and any growing animosity of some of the MacSorley kindred is no doubt reflected in the forfeiture of Roderick of the Isles (*Forisfactura Roderici de Ylay*) in 1325 for unspecified offences. However, this break could not have been complete as John MacDonald is named as bailie of Islay (*Johanne McDonnyle Ballio de Ile*) between 1326 and 1329 (*RPS:* A1325/2; Stuart and Burnett 1878: 52, 196–8; Boardman 2006: 37–55; Penman 2014: 62–76).

The Scottish king continued to increase the presence along his western seaboard of men who he regarded as trustworthy, these including members of the Campbell and Stewart/Menteith families who continued to be rewarded for faithful service receiving further land grants, these often held in return for ship or other military service (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52; Thomson 1912: App. 2 nos. 352, 353, 363, 364, 368, 372, 374, 661 and 695; MacPhail 1916: 132–4; Duncan 1988: nos. 27, 239, 366, 374; Boardman 2006: 41–6). Other west coast families also benefited from crown patronage such as the MacKays in Kintyre, while Alexander MacNaughton, Ewan McIver, and two MacLean brothers appear as witnesses amongst other Bruce loyalists in a grant of Christina MacRuairi to Arthur Campbell, while, as mentioned above, one of the MacLean brothers, Neil, is named as constable of 'Scraburgh' possibly Cairn na Burgh (Thomson 1912: App. 1, no. 99; Duncan 1988; Boardman 2006: 47–8). These west coast magnates and local families controlled an impressive series of strongholds along the firths of Clyde, Mull, and Lorne that included Dunoon (Canmore ID 40729), Rothesay, Brodick, Dunaverty, Lochranza (Canmore ID 39807), Skipness, Castle Sween, Dunstaffnage, and possibly Cairn na Burgh More/Beg.

Robert I's construction work at Tarbert could have started any time after 1315 but he may have had to wait until the Treaty of Bishopsthorpe in May 1323 before he was able to fully resource such a project. The treaty provided for relative peace on his English border and specifically prevented the Scottish king from building new castles along the same border which in turn may have allowed the crowns finances to be directed towards castle building in the west (Duncan 1988: no. 232). Only two years after the Treaty of Bishopsthorpe, Tarbert Castle appears on record for the first time within the above-mentioned exchequer roll of 1325–1326 submitted by John de Lany (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8). By this time the works at the castle appear to be well underway when King Robert visits Tarbert accompanied by William Lamberton, the bishop of St Andrews and Sir James Douglas (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 58). Although the date of the visit is not specifically mentioned in de Lany's account it appears likely it occurred July 1325 when the King along with Sir James were at Cardross, after which they possibly sailed by galley to Tarbert (Duncan 1988: no. 277, no. 279; Penman 2018: 260).

The accounts also give a detailed glimpse into the building work involved at Tarbert Castle and its provisioning. If we examine the account and give some allowance for the transcription of the original Latin, we can perhaps differentiate between new building works and repairs to existing structures. The new work involved the building of a peel tower at West Loch Tarbert, which still has not been definitively located, and the construction of a new road between the two Tarberts. Within the castle itself a new kitchen was built along with a house, presumably a workshop, for the goldsmith.

A '*fabrilis*' for the 'plummer' was also built, and if this is taken as a literal translation meaning 'carpentry' then it likely indicates the building was a timber construction, perhaps a workshop or shelter. A house was also built for the '*pistrius*', likely a bakery (*pistrinus*). New works also involved the excavation of a mill pond and lade as well as a ditch, presumably defensive, below the castle along with a ditch around the brewhouse, was likely a drain. A number of buildings which appear to have already been in existence were also repaired or upgraded.

The building of a new kitchen, of course indicates a previous one, while making the mill 'anew' and 'making good its walls' also suggests this building was already in existence. Also suggestive of extant buildings were roofing for the chapel. There are also repairs to the brewhouse, which was fitted out with a lead sink/tub, and the making of a '*ruderis*' (rubble) of stone and clay in the middle of the brewhouse, which may mean a cobbled surface or hard standing. A kiln was also made 'anew' although what type is not stated. The hall also seems to have been extensively refurbished at this time. That it was already in existence is indicated by the underpinning of timber supports of the hall by stone. Carpenters were also involved in 'raising the hall' with 'mowers' presumably providing thatch for roofing it. Clay and sand were used for the walls ('*parietibus*') and birch branches collected to repair the hall and rooms, which suggest the use of wattle and daub type construction. The park was also repaired or expanded at this time. Several trades are named in the construction and repair of the castle, these including, mason, smith, plumber, carpenter, plasterer, roofer, thatcher, and sawyer. The smith was also paid for working 78 stones of iron, possibly indicating the production of construction materials, for example nails, door fittings, yetts, portcullis, etc.

While some of the buildings may indeed have been new, we have no way of knowing how old the extant buildings were at the time of any repair, or whether these were just upgrades to buildings that may not have been very old at the time of John de Lany's account.

Being one design from the start and at almost 2 acres in extent as Dunbar and Duncan noted Tarbert 'must have ranked as one of the largest and most strongly fortified castles in Scotland' (Dunbar & Duncan 1971: 14). While correct, this calculation is based on the total area encompassed within the walls of the Inner and Outer Baileys, however, given the steep rocky nature of much of the rest of the internal area within, the extent of its usable space is considerably lower (see Illus. 4). It is then within either the Inner Bailey or within the more level ground of the Outer Bailey that the location of the buildings mentioned in the exchequer roll, including the hall, chapel, kitchen, brewhouse, granary, and smith's workshops for example might be identified. The confirmed presence of an entrance gate on this northeast side of the castle might justifiably focus more attention on this area of the Outer Bailey particularly the area lying immediately to the southwest of this gate where there is a strip of relatively level ground some of which is currently occupied by the linear remains of 19th century outbuildings and as such this is an area worthy of closer examination by geophysical survey.

It is also perhaps 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 & Munro 1986: 86). The signing of the charter presumably took place within some form of building on the island and the RCAHMS 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 with the nearby anchorages (RCAHMS 1992: no. 141, 303). 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.

As mentioned above, when Tarbert actually became a Royal Burgh is open to question but it is referred to as such in an exchequer roll of 1328 where a charge of seven shillings and eight pence is recorded for '*Et pro factura unius cokete at un Burgum de Tarbard*', the making of a coket (a customs seal) for the Burgh of Tarbert, to have the right to custom a levy on goods imported and exported through the port of Tarbert. Expectation

of the expansion of trade within the new burgh can perhaps also be seen the following year when the purchase of two more customs seals is recorded in the exchequer roll (Stuart & Burnett 1875: 118, 175). Whether Robert I ever intended Tarbert Castle to be the base for a new sheriffdom of Argyll is open to question. Dunbar and Duncan have argued that a new sheriffdom of Argyll, possibly recreating the 1293 administrative ordinances of John Balliol, was established sometime between 1318, before which time Argyll was in the sheriffdom of Perth and 1325–26 when Dougall Campbell is named in the exchequer rolls as sheriff of Argyll (*vicecomitatus Ergadie*) (Stuart & Burnett 1875: 52; Dunbar & Duncan 1971: 14). They also argue that the sheriff was possibly based at Dunoon with Tarbert and Dunstaffnage as dependent constabularies. Others have suggested that Tarbert was the base of the new sheriff, however, again this must remain speculation without firm documentary evidence as to where any sheriff was based during this time (Boardman 2006: 45).

The King's concern establishing a strong crown presence on the west coast and influencing affairs in the Islands and in Ireland are underlined, by his interventions in Ireland in 1327 and 1328 when he used his new castle as a base (Nicholson 2002: 145–61; Barrow 2013: 408; Penman 2018: 217). Robert I's continued concern for the stability of the west is underlined by the specific clause in the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton which was concluded by May 1328, which stated that the Scots would not support England's enemies in Ireland while in return the English would not aid the enemies of the Scots in the Isle of Man and the other Isles of Scotland (…*Auxint est il tretee et acordee qe si nul leue de guerre contre lauandit Roi Descoce ses heirs ou ses successors en lisle de Manne ou es autres illes Descoce*…) (Stones 1970: 334–5; *Duncan 1988:* nos. 342, 593). In the second half of November 1328, King Robert was again at Tarbert Castle and likely stayed there for up to a month during which time he received the resignation of Argyll lands in the presence of the Barons of Argyll (*Duncan 1988:* nos. 156, 366, 617). The exchequer rolls of 1328–1329 list various revenues and expenses relating to Tarbert Castle and its constable, John de Lany, and the new Burgh such as bringing Patrick the fool from England to Tarbert, no doubt to entertain King Robert and his noble entourage. The King's ship also had to be brought back from Tarbert by John, son of Gun. The castle was also supplied with provisions of grain some of which were stored in a granary (*granario*), while William Scot receives a payment for finishing the Park (*parci del Tarbard*) (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 127, 153, 175, 184, 187, 188, 193, 201, 207, 213, 223, 237, 239, 287).

As has been argued previously, Robert I's construction of Tarbert Castle can be seen as a major part of consolidating and improving his western defences which created a bulwark of crown influence along his western seaboard, whether against new threats from Edward III, influencing events in Ulster/Ireland while also countering the growing MacDonald/ MacRuairi animosity towards the crown. While King Robert's building work at Tarbert may have started by 1315 it seems more likely any construction began when the political and perhaps financial situation allowed, perhaps after the Treaty of Bishopsthorpe in 1323.

Apart from the 8th century date retrieved from soil under the present walls of the castle, there is presently no firm evidence for occupation or indeed structures dating to before Robert I's time, and the construction of Tarbert Castle should be framed within the political reality of his time as suggested by the surviving historical sources. It is argued here that until any evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, it is unnecessary to insert a castle at Tarbert Castle into an earlier historical narrative. Indeed, historical works earlier than either the MacGibbon and Ross description of Tarbert Castle or Dunbar and Duncan's essay had no issue with stating that the castle was a creation of Robert I (Innes 1854: 32; Stuart & Burnett 1880: lxxi).

While Dunbar and Duncan's historiography of Tarbert Castle has been re-examined and questioned there appears no reason to dispute their concluding paragraph:

> 'When King Robert in something like a decade created so flourishing a community at Tarbert, he had in mind the need to bind the whole western seaboard to the rest of the kingdom by ties of trade, by shared prosperity, as well as by a strong fortress and by the sherriff's wand and summons' (Dunbar & Duncan 1971: 16).

Over 350 years later, in 1685 during the rebellion of Archibald Campbell, Earl of Argyll, he ordered his troops to gather at Tarbert, which Robert Wodrow narrating these events described as a 'very centrical place' a description that would have been familiar to Robert I who understood its strategic position as being an integral part of the crown's political and military settlement securing the western flank of his kingdom (Burns 1832: 290). Both the 16th century *Holinshed Chronicle* and *Buchanan's History* narrate similar accounts of the death of Robert I, who aware his life was ending, advised the councillors of his young son and heir to make sure that the Western Isles be kept under royal control and make sure they did not unite under one leader, the islanders being numerous, hardy, ferocious, and easily moved to rebellion and could cause 'very extensive mischief' (Ellis et al 1808: 361; Aikman 1827: 444–5). In this respect Robert I was right as his successors failed to prevent the rise to the MacDonald lordship of the Isles which was to remain a thorn in the crown's side until its ultimate demise in the late 15th century when Tarbert Castle was once again utilised as a royal base in the crown's campaign against that turbulent lordship.

The evidence from the excavations within the Inner Bailey and Outer Bailey of Tarbert Castle show that the medieval occupation deposits were sealed by an extensive deposit of rubble, which likely formed rapidly sometime before the late 15th century. In 1494, as mentioned above, James IV personally led a military campaign to the Western Isles and appears to have visited Tarbert Castle twice, whereupon he ordered the repair or the '*biggin*' the castle. Essentially James IV's settlement in Knapdale and Kintyre reflected that of Robert Bruce, whereby various strongholds were utilised against a western threat, in this case that posed by Clan Donald South, with royal garrisons installed at Skipness and Dunaverty while Tarbert was repaired, and a new castle built at Kilkerran (Boardman 2006: 268). By this time, it may be that the Inner Bailey was extensively abandoned, and its walls may have provided some of the material for the building of the Tower House. The *Origines parochiales* states that the castle may never have been completed after Bruce's reign. Presumably this statement is based on the repeated phrase used in crown charters (from 1505) giving the custody of the Tarbert Castle to the Campbell family 'when it shall be built' *(custodia castri de Tarbart cum edificatum foret* or *cum custodia castri de Terbert cum edificari contingeret*) (Innes 1854: 35; *RCHM 1874*: 239, 485; Paul 1883: 348, 78–9 and 2306, 527; Thomson 1886: 2017, 525; 1888: 25, 9; 1890: 265, 97). This may just be a repeated legal convention used across charters although there may be some validity in that argument, particularly when looking at the rather incongruous rock outcrop that still dominates the central area of the Inner Bailey and which surely would not have been beyond the ability of medieval or later quarriers or masons to have either removed or flattened. After the construction of the Tower House this edifice became the centre for any resident constable and their garrison, with later outworks perhaps added in the 17th century. As mentioned above some post medieval structures were also constructed within the Inner Bailey reflecting this later use of the castle, although whether they were garrison related is open to question. The excavation results indicate that the medieval occupation deposits within the castle remain largely unaffected by this later activity and extensive wall robbing, protected it seems by deposits of rubble collapse. If such well-preserved medieval deposits survive within the other parts of the site, then Tarbert Castle provides a unique opportunity for further excavation to gain a fuller understanding of the construction, function, and material culture of a major Scottish royal fortress of the 14th century.

7. SPECIALIST REPORTS

Over 4,500 individual artefacts were recovered from the excavation, the majority of these recovered from post medieval plough soil or horticultural deposits. All finds are listed and briefly described in the Data Structure Report while only potentially medieval artefacts or artefacts from secure contexts were sent for further analysis.

7.1 The Medieval Pottery

by Derek Hall

7.1.1 Introduction

These excavations produced an assemblage of 280 sherds of pottery ranging in date from the 13th to 17th centuries. All 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 and presented in Table 1.

7.1.2 Transitional Craggan/Redware

There is a single sherd from context C011 <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 (Canmore ID 294740: Hall et al 2017) and at Iona Primary School (Canmore ID 351310: Hall 2019) and dated between the 13th and 15th centuries.

7.1.3 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 13th and 15th centuries (Haggarty et al 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 C066 <039> (Illus 97). 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 15th century date (Illus 98). 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.

7.1.4 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 (Caldwell & Campbell 2004; Franklin 2004; Hall 2004; Franklin & Hall 2012) and have since also been 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 C080 <043> is decorated with occasional thumb marks and has a visible kiln stacking scar on its base (Illus 99). A group of 39 bodysherds from context C034 <035> come from a single vessel and have raised cordons running around the vessel (Illus 100). Generally, these fabrics would seem to date to between the 13th and 15th centuries.

7.1.5 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 C027 <033> and C080 <043> and contain red (sandstone?) inclusions. There are also joining pieces from a whiteware rim and bridge spout from context C080 <043> that show traces of iron leeching out of the fabric on one side of the top of the spout (Illus 103). 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 13th/14th centuries for these fabrics.

7.1.6 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 12th century wares present in the assemblage, the whiteware vessels from contexts C027 <033> and C080 <043> are of 13th/14th century date, the vast bulk of the assemblage dates to between the 13th and 15th centuries and the domination of glazed jugs as the preferred vessel type would also fit that date bracket.

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 (drug 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 trans Craggan/Redware?	13th-15th
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 glazed 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

Table 1 *cont.*

Catalogue No.	Context No.	Sherd Count	Description	Spot dates
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	Three 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	Two 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	Two joining thin basesherds and two bodysherds from unglazed cooking vessel? in hard fired whiteware fabric with incised throwing marks on interior of base.	

Table 1 *cont.*

Catalogue No.	Context No.	Sherd Count	Description	Spot dates
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 splash glazed 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 noticeably 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

Table 1 *cont.*

Catalogue No.	Context No.	Sherd Count	Description	Spot dates
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	Thumbed 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

Table 1 *cont.*

Catalogue No.	Context No.	Sherd Count	Description	Spot dates
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 interior and exterior 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		

7.1.7 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 (Caldwell & Campbell 2004; Franklin 2004; Hall 2004; Franklin & Hall 2012) 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.

Illus 97 C066 <039>, Bodysherd from figure jug in Scottish Redware with remains of junction from applied decorative handle (photograph by Derek Hall)

7.2 Metal Finds

by Andrew Morrison

A metal finds assemblage comprising 150 artefacts (Mass: 3,329.0g) was recovered during recent excavations at Tarbert Castle. The assemblage comprises ferrous and non-ferrous metals (largely copper alloys, but also lead and tin).

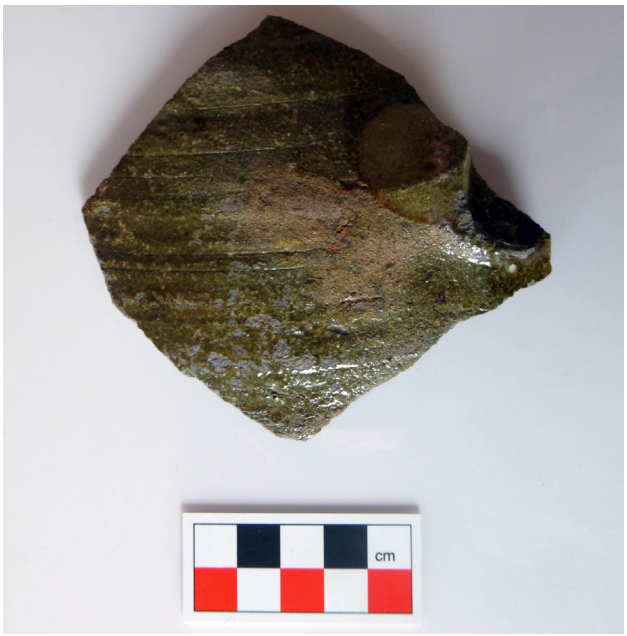
The metal finds assemblage is dominated by building fixtures and fittings, including 81 nails and a number of clench bolts and roves, and also includes coins, dress accessories, copper alloy sheet metal repair patches with paperclip rivets, knives, utensils, and other household items, tools, and security 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 13th to 16th century in date, and those associated with contexts attributed to the 17th century.

Illus 98 Context 'tower', Rim complete strap handle and sidewalls of green splash glazed jug (photograph by Derek Hall)

Illus 99 C080 <043>, Basal angle from jug in Scottish Redware with occasional thumb marks and visible kiln scar on base (photograph by Derek Hall)

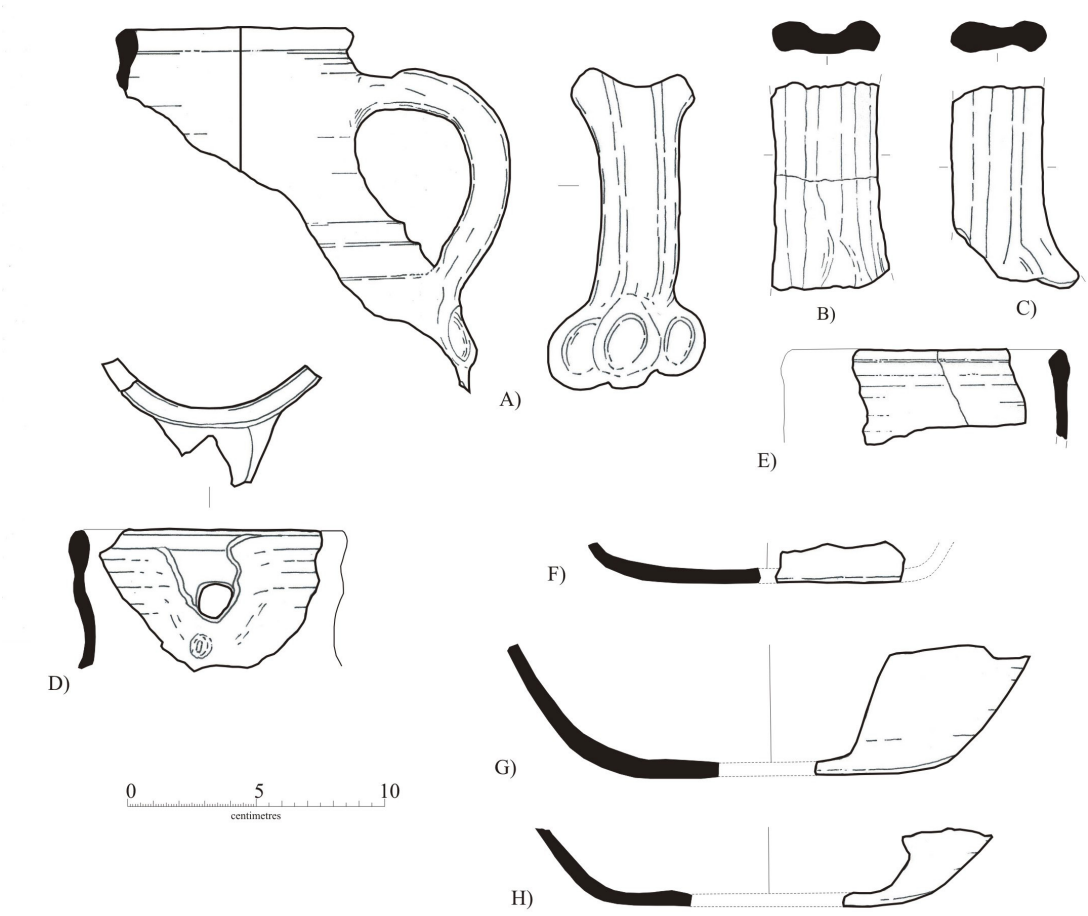
Illus 100 C034 <035>, Bodysherds from green glazed jug with raised cordons (photograph by Derek Hall)

Illus 101 C027<033>, Bodysherd from green glazed jug with co-joining strap handle



Illus 102 C027 <033>, Bodysherd from green glazed jug with base of thumbed handle junction

Illus 103 C080 <043>, Rimsherd with bridge spout from splash glazed jug



Illus 104 A) Context 'tower, jug rim and complete strap handle, B) & C) C079 <042> green splash glazed strap handles, D) C080 <043> rimsherd with bridge spout from splash glazed jug, E) C027<033> rim of splash glazed jug, F) C027 <033> basal angle from splash glazed jug G) C080 <043> basal angle from splash glazed jug H) C027 <033> basal angle from splash glazed jug

7.2.1 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.

7.2.2 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 hearth feature. The vast majority of the finds (almost 50%) were retrieved from context C027 which is described as an occupation/midden deposit above the floor level of the Inner Enclosure.

Grouped by area, the majority of finds were retrieved from the Inner Bailey (51.4%), followed by the medieval hearth feature (17.6%), the 17th 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.

Table 2 Quantity of metal finds retrieved by context with area

Context	Area	Quantity
003	No context information	1
007	17th century structure	16
012	17th century structure	8
013	Portcullis gateway	2
017	17th century structure	1
023	No context information	6
026	No context information	1
027	Inner Bailey floor deposit	74
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
Total		*150*

7.2.3 Classifications

The assemblage comprises both ferrous and non-ferrous metal artefacts, including 122 iron finds, 26 copper alloy, one lead, and one possibly 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 illustrates the quantity and mass divided by material classification.

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

Material	Quantity	Mass (g)
Iron	120	3,215.5
Copper Alloy	27	75.5
Lead	1	8.0
Tin	1	-
Total	*148*	*3,299.0*

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 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 metalworking.

Coins

A total of eight coins were recovered from two separate contexts: one from context C003, and seven from the floor deposit C007 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 I, and Charles II.

The coin retrieved from context C003 is a copper billon 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 C007 within the western room of Structure 1, which has been interpreted as dating to the 17th 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 two pence 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 17th century (Cat.164).

Catalogue

▸ Cat.154 Context C003

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

Diam: 14.0mm, M: 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 C007

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner two pence of Charles I.

Diam: 15.9mm, M: 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 C007

A Scottish copper turner of Charles II.

Diam: 19.5mm, M: 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 C007

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner two pence of Charles I.

Diam: 15.8mm, M: 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 C007

A Scottish copper 'Stirling' turner two pence of Charles I.

Diam: 15.7mm, M: 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 C007

Illegible.

Diam: 17.1mm, M: 0.9g

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

▸ Cat.165 Context C007

Likely Scottish copper turner of Charles I.

Diam: 17.9mm, M: 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 3rd issue, 1643–1650.

▸ Cat.166 Context C007

Likely Scottish copper turner of Charles I.

Diam: 18.5mm, M: 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 3rd 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 C027 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 C017 associated with the 17th century Structure 1. The pin fragment may be from a wound wire-headed pin or similar dress pin and is not closely datable.

The strap-end plate (Cat.144, Illus 105) 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 14th 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.

Illus 105 C027 <144> strap-end plate

Catalogue

▸ Cat.144 Context C027, Composite strap-end plate

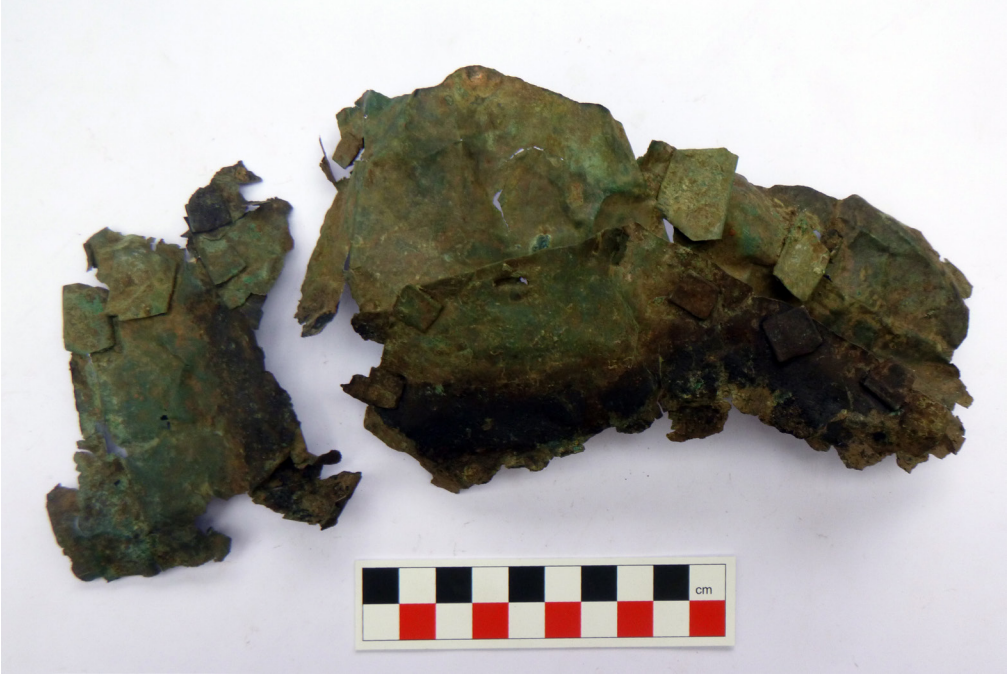
Straight attachment edge tapering to an angled end. Undecorated. Two rivet holes centrally located, one at each end. Marks from iron rivet heads survive on the strap-end face. Likely part of a composite strap-end with sheet spacer occupying the whole width. Likely 14th century. L: 19.7mm, W: 6.1mm –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

▸ Cat.269, Context C017, Pin shank

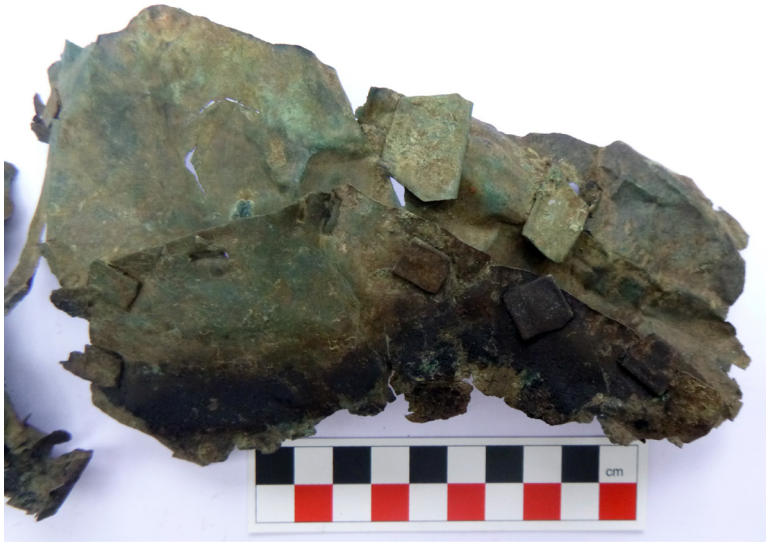
Pin shank and tip, likely from a wound wire-headed pin. Circular section. Not closely datable, though most likely post medieval. L: 14.0mm, Diam: 0.9mm, M: 0.01g.

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 (Illus 106 and 107). 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).



Illus 106 C027 <149.1> Sheet vessel repair patches



Illus 107 C027 <149.1> Sheet vessel repair patch with detail of paperclip rivets

The finds were all retrieved from the occupation/midden deposit C027 above the floor level of the Inner Enclosure, apart from (Cat.343) which was retrieved from the occupation deposit C066 from the floor of the Inner Enclosure.

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 datable, as they are known from contexts dating from the Saxon period up to and throughout the 16th 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 14th to late 15th 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 14th to 15th 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 15th to 16th century contexts at Portmahomack, on the Tarbat Peninsula (Carver et al 2016: 315), *inter alia*.

Catalogue

▸ Cat.145 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.146 Context C027

Thin sheet fragment. Cut triangular strip with slightly curled end. Likely trimming. Not closely datable. L: 33.5mm, W: 5.1mm, Th: 0.5mm, M: 0.4g. Context (C027): Occupation/midden deposit from above the floors of the Inner Enclosure.

▸ Cat.147 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.148 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.149.1 Context C027

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, M: 20.8g

▸ Cat.149.2 Context C027

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, M: 20.9g.

▸ Cat.149.3 Context C027

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, M: 13.4g.

▸ Cat.149.4 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.149.5 Context C027

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, M: 0.3g.

▸ Cat.149.6 Context C027

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, M: 0.4g.

▸ Cat.149.7 Context C027

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, M: 2.2g.

▸ Cat.343 Context C066

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

▸ Cat.364 Context C027

Cut lozenge-shaped sheet folded over on itself. Likely medieval. L: 21.1mm, W: 20.1mm, Th: 0.5mm, M: 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 (C027) 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 metalworking similar to the other working waste and repair patches retrieved from the same context, C027.

Catalogue

▸ Cat.142 Context C027

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 datable. L: 21.7mm, W: 7.8mm, Th: 0.8mm, M: 0.9g.

▸ Cat.143 Context C027

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 datable. L: 19.7mm, W: 6.1mm – 8.2mm, Th: 0.3mm, M: 0.5g.

▸ Cat.275 Context C027

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

Lead

One lead or lead alloy object (Cat.141) was recovered from the occupation/midden deposit (C027) from above the floors of the Inner Bailey (Illus 108). 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 12th and 17th 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 specialised 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 16th 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.

Illus 108 C027 <141> Lead spoon fragment

Catalogue

▸ **Cat.141 Context C027**

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, M: 8.0g.

Tin

One possible tin fragment was recovered from the occupation/midden deposit (C027) 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 C027**

Possibly tin, long, thin cut strip. Part of a composite of objects adhered through corrosion. X-ray indicates a small wound bundle of thin tin stripping within the iron corrosion. The protruding tip tapers to a point. Non-diagnostic. Not closely datable. 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 C027, 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 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 17th century structure C007 and C012, the Inner Bailey C013, C027, C034, C066, and C070, Outer Bailey C065, oven feature C031, C038, and C048, and fire installation C067. Iron finds were also retrieved from contexts C023 and C026 for which there was no information available.

Knives

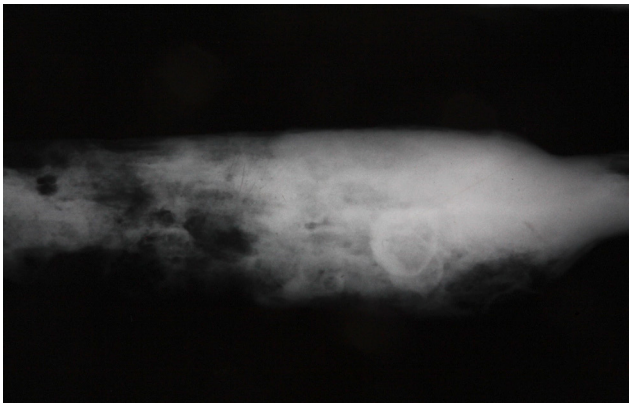
A total of six knives or knife fragments were recovered, including four associated with the 17th century structure (a likely scale tang handle fragment (Cat.82.1), two intact or largely intact whittle tang knives (Cat.185 and Cat.186), and a possible table knife blade (Cat.191)) and two associated with 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, it 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 11th to 16th 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). 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 14th century and start to outnumber whittle tang knives from around the early 15th 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 17th 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, Illus 109 and 110) 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 inlayed 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 (C007) as the knives mentioned above.

Illus 109 Knife blade Cat.186 after full restoration



Illus 110 X-ray of knife blade Cat.186 showing detail of 'S' stamp inlay

Also retrieved from an occupation deposit (C012) associated with the 17th 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 Enclosure, C027, and a small, possibly serrated blade tip (Cat.299.2) was recovered from the medieval oven feature, C038.

Catalogue

▸ Cat.182.1 Context C007

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 datable. L: 121.1mm, W: 26.2mm – 33.0mm, Th: 3.3mm, Perforations: 4.0mm x 4.0mm, 44.5mm apart. M: 59.1g.

▸ Cat.185 Context C007

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 datable. L: 150.9mm, Blade L: 131.0mm, Blade H: 22.6mm, Th: 6.2mm, M: 44.3g.

▸ Cat.186 Context C007

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 datable, 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, M: 23.3g.

▸ Cat.191 Context C012

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 datable, though likely post medieval. L: 97.7mm, H: 16.5mm, Th: 4.2mm, M: 21.5g.

▸ Cat.229.2 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.299.2 Context C038

Triangular blade tip with rounded end. Potentially serrated. Torqued and snapped. Not closely datable. L: 24.4mm, W: 13.3mm, Th: 1.7mm, M: 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 (C012) associated with the 17th 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, which 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 Enclosure, C027, and a possible hinge strap (Cat.248.1) from a door hinge or similar, from the rake-out material of the medieval oven-feature C048. 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, Illus 111) recovered from the same context, C027. Stapled hasps were used together with locks to fasten chests, caskets, and doors (Goodall 2011: 167). The Tarbert example can be categorised 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-13th century contexts

Illus 111 C027 <224> Stapled hasp

at Oxford (ibid: 214–5, fig.9.25, H573), and early to mid-12th century contexts at Winchester (ibid: H574).

Catalogue

▸ Cat.194 Context C012

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 datable. Overall L: 292.7mm, M: 63.9g.

▸ Cat.224 Context C027

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 13th century. L: 56.1mm, W: 15.4mm – 19.6mm, Th: 1.3mm, Hole Diam: 4.5mm, U-shaped eye: H: 8.1m, W: 14.5mm, Th: *c* 5.1mm, M: 10.3g.

▸ Cat.231.1 Context C027

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 datable, but similar wedge from Dryslwyn Castle, Wales dated to the late 13th century. H: 58.6mm, W: 21.6mm, Th: 19.7mm, M: 92.9g.

▸ **Cat.235.3 Context C027**

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 datable. L: 66.6mm, Th: 2.0mm, Smaller lobe Diam: 27.7mm, Strip W: 13.6mm, Larger lobe Diam: 30.0mm.

▸ **Cat.248.1 Context C048**

Tapering flat rectangular sectioned perforated bar fragment. Possible hasp. Remnants of two square holes, one at each break. Not closely datable. L: 90.3mm, W: 27.0mm – 31.8mm, Th: 5.6mm, M: 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 (Illus 112). A full catalogue of these finds is presented in the archive and summarised in Table 4 below. The majority of the nails (Q: 35, *c* 43%) were recovered from the occupation/midden deposit from above the floors of the Inner Bailey (C027), with a further four coming from other contexts within the Inner Enclosure (C013, C034, C066, C070), six from the Outer Bailey (C065), 22 from the medieval oven feature (C031, C038, C048), three from the fire installation (C067), five from the 17th century structure (C007, C012), and six from context C023, 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 mineralised 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 datable. 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 (2011) based on nail assemblages from large medieval excavations at Waltham Abbey, in Essex, and Ospringe & Stonar, in Kent. Here, nails are divided into broad types based on head form and size. Following Goodall's

Illus 112 C027 nails <216>, <201>, <212> <217> and <219>, rove <220> and bar fragment <215>

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, characterised 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 to 90 degrees, two have been bent in an S-shape, and three have clenched tips.

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 17th century structure C007 and C012, the Inner Enclosure C027 and C070, the medieval oven feature C038, and one from C026. The majority (Q:8) were recovered from the occupation/midden deposit within the Inner Enclosure C027, 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 C012 is 33.2mm, for Cat.201 recovered from C026 it is 66.3mm, and for Cat.299.1 from C038 the distance is 20.7mm.

Locks and Keys

Two finds within the assemblage can be categorised as pertaining to security and safe keeping: the first, an intact key (Cat.190) recovered from the midden/occupation layer C012 associated with the 17th century structure, and the second, a U-shaped padlock bolt fragment (Cat.202) recovered from the occupation/midden deposit C027 from above the floors of the Inner Enclosure (Illus 113).

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 16th century and later, and is similar to a late 15th

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

Nail Type	Total Quantity	Intact	Contexts
Type 1	27	10	(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)
Total	*81*	*13*	

Illus 113 C027 <190> Padlock bolt fragment after restoration

to early 16th 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 1st millennium AD but are most commonly associated with the medieval period (Franklin & Goodall 2012: 151). The Tarbert example likely dates from around the 13th to 14th 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, I45).

Catalogue

▸ **Cat.190 Context C012**

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, M: 32.6g.

▸ **Cat.202 Context C027**

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 leaf spring is missing. Rectangular section spine, and a circular section free arm with slight step between. Survives in two joining fragments. Possibly 13th–14th century. L: 79.1mm, W: 8.8mm, Th: 4.4mm–9.4mm, Free arm Diam: 5.0mm, M: 21.5g.

Household equipment

Four items associated with household furnishings and cooking activities were recognised. Two of the objects were recovered from contexts associated with the 17th century structure: a possible vessel leg (Cat.184) from the floor of the western room in Structure 1, C007, a probable cast iron cauldron body fragment (Cat.192) from the midden/occupation layer C012, and two of the objects were retrieved from the medieval occupation/midden deposit C027 from above the floors of the Inner Enclosure: an annular loop (Cat.225, Illus 114) 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 fleshhook (Cat.233) is heavily corroded and distorted but can be categorised as a Goodall Type 1 fleshhook, with two hooked arms set on a short, angled stem (Goodall 2011: 298). Fleshhooks were principally used in cooking to extract meat from

Illus 114 C027 <225> Annular loop

cooking pots while over the fire (ibid). Similar examples of two armed fleshhooks are known from the Saxon and medieval manorial complex of Faccombe Netherton, in Hampshire (Goodall 1990: 418, fig. 9.8, 400), from the 12th to 13th century context at Wroughton Copse in Wiltshire (Goodall 2011: 309, fig. 11.4, J17), and the 11th century context at Goltho Manor, in Lincolnshire (ibid: J15).

Catalogue

▸ **Cat.184 Context C007**

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. The 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 datable. 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, M: 153.9g.

▸ **Cat.192 Context C012**

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, M: 464.7g.

▸ **Cat.225 Context C027**

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

▸ **Cat.233 Context C027**

Fleshhook. 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 datable, but most likely medieval. L: 51.1mm, W: 37.0mm, Th: 12.7mm, Arm Diam: 5.1mm, M: 43.2g.

Leatherworking Tool

A single needle (Cat.274) was from the medieval occupation/midden deposit C027 from above the floors of the Inner Bailey (Illus 115). This needle, though not closely datable, is similar in size and form to needles associated with leatherworking, such as the 11th to 15th century example from St Peter's Street, in Northampton (Goodall 2011: 75, fig. 6.3, E60).

Illus 115 C027 <274> needle fragment

Catalogue

▸ **Cat.274 Context C027**

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 datable. L: 44.1mm, Shank Diam: 3.3mm, M: 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 17th century structure: a possible strap fragment (Cat.182.2) from the floor of the western room C007 in Structure 1, and a perforated strap fragment (Cat.193) recovered from the midden/occupation deposit C012.

From the contexts associated with an earlier date, a robust, bolt-shaped object (Cat.243), heavily corroded, was retrieved from the medieval oven feature C038, 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 C013 and C027 from above the floors of the Inner Bailey, and one unidentifiable lump (Cat.193) was recovered from occupation/midden deposit from above the floors of Inner Bailey.

Catalogue

▸ Cat.182.2 Context C007

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

▸ Cat.193 Context C012

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

▸ Cat.196.2 Context C013

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

▸ Cat.206 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.215 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.234 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.235.2 Context C027

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

▸ Cat.243 Context C038

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

Summary and Discussion

The metal finds can be grouped into two classes, medieval finds, including those associated with the Inner Enclosure and medieval oven feature, and the post medieval finds associated with the 17th 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 C027 from above the floor of the Inner Bailey.

The assemblage is dominated by building fixtures and fittings – particularly nails as well as 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.

7.3 Charcoal Report

by 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. The charcoal was collected from a series of occupation deposits, spreads, ovens, and pits believed to date to the medieval and post medieval periods.

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 (eg 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.

Discussion

Pit associated with 17th century structure context C017
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 C025
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.

Occupation/midden deposit context C027
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.

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.

Oven fill context C038
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 C039
There was one fragment of hazel and one of oak (1.3g).

Oven rake-out context C048
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 C061
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 C063
The charcoal (5.4g) was composed of three fragments of birch. This material is re-deposited fuel debris.

Occupation horizon in Outer Bailey context C065
The charcoal (4.3g) was hazel (80%) and oak (20%). These fragments are re-deposited fuel debris.

Floor of Inner Bailey C066
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.

Table 5 Catalogue of charcoal fragments examined and identified, per bag, per context.

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Pit associated with 17th century structure	017	265	sample 1 flotation	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	4			
Pit associated with 17th century structure	017	265	sample 1 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	5	1	27	
Pit associated with 17th century structure	017	267	sample 1 1mm					2	No fragments suitable for id
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	2			
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	6		26	
Hearth deposit	025	319	sample 8 flotation	*Corylus avellana* 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	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	1	1		
Occupation/midden deposit	027	270	sample 2 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	1		67.7	
Occupation/midden deposit	027	270	sample 2 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	7			
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	2			
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	*Betula* sp.	Birch	1		8.1	
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1	1		
Occupation/midden deposit	027	271	sample 2 4mm	*Quercus* 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	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	1			
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	2		15.9	
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Floor/make up	034	287	sample 3 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	6			

Table 5 *cont.*

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Floor/make up	034	289	sample 3 4mm	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	2		0.5	
Floor/make up	034	289	sample 3 4mm	*Quercus* 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	*Betula* sp.	Birch	4		25.1	
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	*Fraxinus* sp.	Ash	1			
Oven fill	038	296	sample 4 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	4			
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	*Betula* sp.	Birch	2		3.8	
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	*Fraxinus* sp.	Ash	1			
Oven fill	038	297	sample 4 4mm	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	7			
Oven fill	038	302	sample 4 1mm					3.1	No fragments suitable for id
Oven floor	039	344	sample 12 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Oven floor	039	344	sample 12 flotation	*Quercus* 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	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	3		13.6	
Oven rake out	048	348	sample 13 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	6			
Oven rake out	048	349	sample 13 4mm	*Quercus* 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	*Betula* sp.	Birch	3	1		
Burnt material	061	307	sample 6 4mm	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	3	3	7.7	

Table 5 *cont.*

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
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	*Betula* 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	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	8		1.2	
Occupation horizon in outer bailey	065	315	sample 7 4mm	*Quercus* 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	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	2			
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	2	1	71.3	
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Floor of inner bailey	066	335	sample 11 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	4			
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	1		0.8	
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Floor of inner bailey	066	336	sample 11 4mm	*Quercus* 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	*Betula* sp.	Birch	4	3	110.6	

Table 5 *cont.*

Feature	Context	Cat No	Fraction	Species	Name	Frag	Round wood Frag.	Weight (g)	Comments
Charcoal spread	067	323	sample 9 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel		1		
Charcoal spread	067	323	sample 9 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	2			
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	*Alnus glutinosa* L.	Alder	2	1		
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	*Betula* sp.	Birch	4		39.8	
Charcoal spread	067	324	sample 9 4mm	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	3			
Charcoal spread	067	328	sample 9 1mm					14.2	No fragments suitable for id
Charcoal spread	069	331	sample 10 flotation	*Betula* sp.	Birch	1		13.2	
Charcoal spread	069	331	sample 10 flotation	*Quercus* 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	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1		5.7	
Occupation deposit	081	354	sample 14 flotation	*Corylus avellana* L.	Hazel	1			
Occupation deposit	081	354	sample 14 flotation	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	3		0.4	
Occupation deposit	081	355	sample 14 4mm	*Quercus* sp.	Oak	1		0.2	
Occupation deposit	081	357	sample 14 1mm					0.7	No fragments suitable for id

Charcoal spread C067
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 C069
The charcoal (85.5g) was oak (90%) and birch (10%). These are the remains of fuel debris.

Pre castle deposit C076
There was one fragment of hazel (5.7g) which was of little interpretive value.

Occupation deposit C081
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; Stace 2010; Martynoga 2012).

7.4 The Faunal Assemblage

By Helen Newton & Ingrid Mainland

Excavations at Tarbert Castle, Argyllshire during 2019 revealed occupation deposits and other evidence dating to the medieval and post medieval periods within the Inner and Outer Bailey area of the castle. The small assemblage of animal bone recovered during these excavations derive mainly from the medieval occupation (13th–15th century), a period during which there is very little archaeological evidence for diet or animal husbandry in the west of Scotland, or indeed more widely in Scotland. This assemblage is also of interest because of its potential to shed light on elite dietary tradition in this period. A much smaller assemblage of animal bone was recovered from post medieval deposits, thought to date to the 17th century AD. The presence of these later deposits potentially enable identification of any diachronic changes in husbandry/diet during the *c* 400 years of occupation represented.

Analysis of the Tarbert faunal assemblages aimed to:

1) Provide an overview of species and anatomical representation for the two main phases of occupation
2) Identify where possible age-at-death for the main species
3) Explore dietary customs at a high status medieval to post medieval site in the west of Scotland
4) Identify any changes in diet between the 13th–15th and 17th centuries AD

7.4.1 Methods

Recovery Methods
The faunal assemblage reported on here was primarily recovered by hand during excavation with a smaller amount arising from flotation/wet sieving of soil samples. Only mammal and bird from the >4mm residues were recorded. The hand-collected and wet-sieved residue assemblages are reported separately below.

Identification and Recording System
All mammal and bird fragments were weighed and whenever possible were identified to species, anatomical element, and body side. Where this was not possible, fragments were assigned to one of the following size classes: L.ung (large ungulate – eg cattle/horse/red deer); S.ung (small ungulate – eg sheep/goat/pig); S.mam (small mammal sized – eg dog/cat); Mam (indeterminate land mammal) and I.sea (indeterminate sea mammal); L. Avian (large avian, eg cormorant-sized and above); S. Avian (small avian, eg ducks, guillemots, puffin- sized); S. Passerine (small song bird – sparrow, etc.). Vertebrae and ribs were not identified to species (or side for rib) but were grouped into one of the size classes above. The presence of particular diagnostic zones on elements were also recorded and specifically whether 50% or greater of the zone was present. This system allows for quantification and a study of fragmentation within the assemblage. Epiphyseal fusion was also recorded for all bones identified to species, any bone completely fused and not

displaying signs of erosion was measured using criteria set out in von den Driesch (1976). Finally, all fragments were examined for signs of pathology, butchery, recent breaks, erosion or weathering, burning, and canid gnawing. For the purpose of this report, species relative frequency has been assessed using the total number of identifiable fragments (NISP).

Mammalian and avian species identification was achieved using the modern reference collection in the UHI Archaeology Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands with reference to identification manuals such as Schmidt (1972), Cohen and Serjeantson (1986), Boessneck (1969), and Halstead et al. (2002).

Quantification of Species and Skeletal Elements
Relative frequencies of species and body part were estimated using the total number of identifiable fragments (NISP). MNI (minimum number of individual) was calculated for the main species represented on the basis of body side and epiphysial fusion. Bone fragmentation was not taken into account.

Ageing
Age-at-death (mortality profile) was assessed using tooth eruption and wear following Payne (1973; 1987), Mainland and Halstead (2005) for ovicaprid, Halstead (1985) for cattle, and Grant (1982) for pig.

Metrical Data
Metrical information was taken on any completely fused bones not displaying signs of damage or erosion following criteria set out in von den Driesch (1976).

Butchery
Evidence of butchery was recorded by producing a sketch of the element, illustrating the position and type of mark. Marks were classified as either cut (produced by a knife) or chop (using heavier action like that of a cleaver).

Taphonomic Indicators and Depositional Practices
A total of 424 bone fragments were recovered by hand with a further 219 collected in the >4mm wet-sieve residues (Table 6a). In the medieval phases (ie 13th–15th centuries), bone was recovered from 11 contexts (Table 6b). The bulk of this medieval assemblage (n=135, 43%) derives from a midden deposit (C027) which appears to have collected within a dip caused by slumping of original floors around a doorway within the Inner Bailey and is assumed to relate to occupation and/or activities within the Inner Bailey. A further 62 fragments of bone were recovered from sample 2, which was taken from this midden (Table 8). A smaller assemblage was found in contexts associated with an oven structure, including from the fill of this feature (C031, C038, C039, and C048). Samples 4, 12, and 13 derive from these contexts comprising 24, eight, and six fragments, respectively. The remaining bone (n=131) dating to the medieval phase of occupation was recovered from floor or occupation deposits in both the Inner and Outer Bailey. In addition, bone was recovered from two further contexts described as potentially dating to the medieval period and relating to wall collapse/mortar trample (n=21). The post medieval assemblage was mostly recovered from a plough-soil deposit (C003) with a smaller fraction (n=25) associated with a 17th century structure located in the Inner Bailey. The small sample sizes in individual contexts and areas of the site (ie Inner versus Outer Bailey) preclude a detailed analysis of spatial patterning in bone deposition by species or element for most contexts.

A small amount of mammal/bird and fish bone was recovered from the 14 samples (Table 6), a high proportion of which was burnt (97%); very little of this material was identifiable (Table 7). Burnt bone was recovered from contexts associated with the oven feature but was also spread through the midden, floor and other occupation layers. Over half of the burnt bone (from the hand-collected and samples) was calcined (n=78, 60%), indicating combustion at high temperatures.

Overall, bone preservation was good though *c* 7–8% of fragments showed evidence of weathering, suggesting some exposure to the elements prior to deposition. The relative high frequency of loose teeth in the post medieval deposits is indicative of greater fragmentation and may relate to the fact that the bulk of this material is derived from plough-soil deposits (Table 7).

Table 6 Taphonomic indicators at Tarbert Castle for (a) the hand collected bone assemblage and (b) wet-sieved bone assemblage. Lists for each phase the total number and % of fragment (n) which show evidence for modification by dogs (GN), of bone surface weathering (WE), erosion (ER), butchery (BUT), or burning (BRT). The final column indicates the number of loose teeth (LT) per trench. Only phased bone is included.

Trench	Phase total	GN		ER		BUT		BRT		WE		LT	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
?Medieval	21											1	4.76
Medieval	307	6	1.95	3	1.0	6	1.95	31	10.10	24	7.82	2	0.65
Post Medieval	96			2	2.08	1	1.04	3	3.13	6	6.25	12	12.5
TOTAL	424		1.42	5	1.18	7	1.65	34	8.02	30	7.06	15	3.53

Trench	Phase total	GN		ER		BUT		BRT		WE		LT	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
?Medieval													
Medieval	215							93	43.26			2	0.93
Post Medieval	4							4	100				
TOTAL	219							97	44.29			2	0.91

Species, Anatomical Representation and Age-at-Death
Six mammal species were identified in the Tarbert Castle assemblage: cow (*Bos taurus*), sheep/goat (*Ovis aries*/*Capra hircus*), pig (*Sus domesticus*), dog (*Canis familaris*), and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) (Tables 8–10). The assemblage is dominated by domesticates and in particular by cattle.

Due to sample size, age-at-death could only be assessed for cattle (Table 11) and was based on epiphysial fusion data. This data is very limited but suggests that in the medieval phase beef was largely derived from individuals which had reached skeletal maturity, that is older than 3–4 years, with some limited culling of 'prime' cattle, that is those which had reached optimum meat weight, *c* 2–4 years. The small number of long bones epiphyses (n=3) represented in the post medieval assemblage were derived from fully fused individuals along with at least one neonatal/foetal calf (2 metacarpals, 1 LHS and 1 RHS). This individual was recovered from the plough-soil deposit (C003) and may reflect disposal of a calf which had died at birth.

Table 7 Bone deposition by context type and phase of occupation. Only phased bone is included

Period	Context	Description	Sample – TNB >4mm	Hand-collected - TNB
Pre-Castle	63	Pre-castle deposit	S5-0	0
Medieval	23	Occupation deposit		21
	27	Occupation/midden from above floors of inner bailey	S2-62	135
	31	Midden material around oven		20
	34	Floor	S3-34	40
	38	Above floor of medieval oven	S4-24	8
	39	Fill of oven above floor	S12-8	3
	48	Floor in front of oven	S13-6	10
	65	Occupation, outer bailey	S7-28	42
	66	Floor, inner bailey	S11-8	16
	67	Charcoal deposit	S9-26	0
	69	Charcoal deposit	S10-4	0
	70	Floor, inner bailey		10
	81	Occupation	S14-19	2
?Medieval	19	Mortar trample		17
	26	Wall collapse		4
Post medieval	3	Plough-soil		63
	5	Rubble, associated with structure 1, inner bailey		4
	7	Floor of structure 1, inner bailey		7
	9	Dump, inner bailey		5
	12	Dump, associated with structure 1, inner bailey		1
	17	Cess pit, inner bailey	S1-17	8
	59	Rubble collapse, outer bailey		8
	25	Hearth deposit of structure 1	S8-1	0

Table 8 Tarbert mammal species representation by period – hand-collected bone: lists the total number of bones (TNB) recovered and the number (n) and (%) of fragments identified to species (NISP) and/or mammal size category

	Species	?Medieval		Medieval		Post Medieval	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Domestic Mammals	Cow	3	27.27	72	33.33	30	42.86
	Sheep/Goat			9	4.17	13	18.57
	Pig			4	1.85	1	1.43
	Dog						
Wild mammals	Red Deer			2	0.93		
Other	Large ungulate	7	63.64	101	46.76	13	18.57
	Small ungulate	1	9.09	28	12.96	13	18.57
	Small mammal						
Unidentified	Mammal	9		88		26	
	Fish	1					
	Avian			3			
Total id.		11		216		70	
Total unid.		10		91		26	
Total (TNB)		*21*		*307*		*96*	

Table 9 Tarbert mammal species representation by period – wet-sieved residue (<4mm): lists the total number of bones (TNB) recovered and the number (n) and (%) of fragments identified to species (NISP) and/or mammal size category

	Species	?Medieval		Medieval		Post Medieval	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Domestic Mammals	Cow			1	5.26		
	Sheep/Goat			1	5.26		
	Pig			1	5.26		
	Dog			1	5.26		
Wild mammals	Red Deer				0.00		
Other	Large ungulate			9	47.37		
	Small ungulate			9	47.37		
	Small mammal			1	5.26		
Unidentified	Mammal			186		4	
	Fish			5			
	Avian			1			
Total id.				23		0	
Total unid.				192		4	
Total (TNB)				*215*		*4*	

Table 10 MNI for mammal species identified at Tarbert Castle

Species	?Medieval	Medieval	Post Medieval
Cow	1	3	2
Sheep/goat		2	1
Pig		1	1
Dog		1	
Red deer		1	

Table 11 Cattle epiphysial fusion in the medieval phases (12–18m, n=2; 24–36m, n=2, 36–42m, n=14)

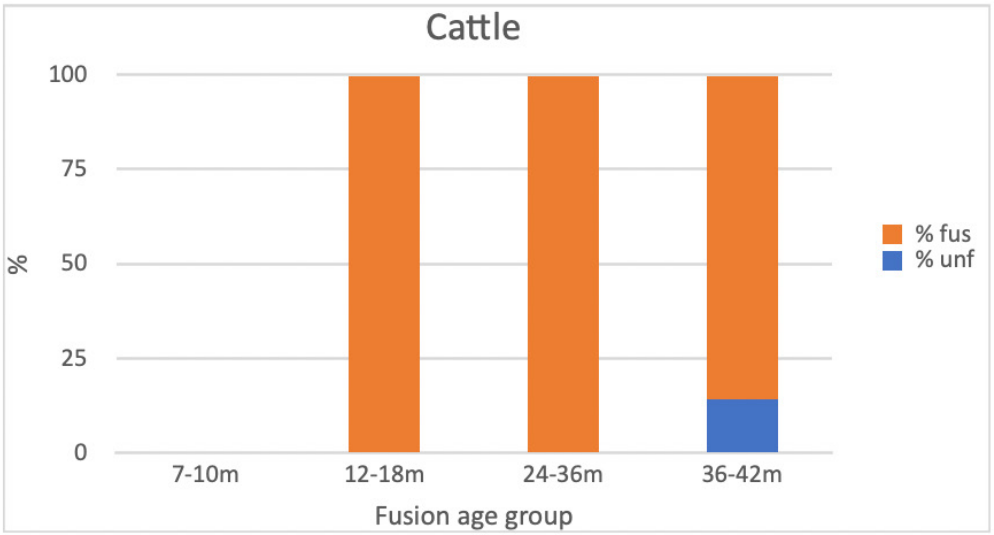
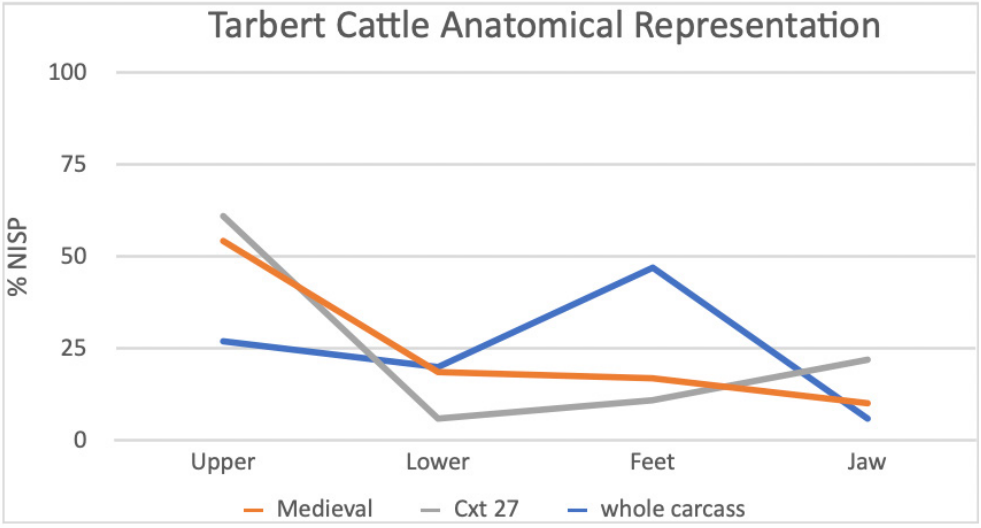


Table 12 Cattle element representation: medieval (medieval NISP=62; C027 NISP=22)



There was only sufficient data to explore anatomical representation for cattle in detail (Tables 12–13). In the post medieval deposits element representation is consistent with what is expected when entire carcasses are processed and deposited, perhaps reflecting an origin of the assemblage in generalised midden refuse which had accumulated from carcasses processing, food preparation or perhaps disposal of fallen animals. An articulated lower hind-leg leg joint (distal tibia, calcaneum, astragalus, RHS) of cattle was recovered from 17th century rubble deposits associated with Structure 1 in the Inner Bailey. This part of the carcass does not contain much meat and may reflect disposal of primary butchery waste arising from removal of the feet. Weathering of the bone indicates exposure for some time prior to deposition. A partially articulated sheep carcass was also recovered from post medieval rubble deposits (C059), in this case at the gate of the Outer Bailey.

A slightly different pattern of cattle element representation is apparent in the medieval phases, where there is an apparent emphasis on meat-bearing elements from the upper limb and an under-representation of feet elements. Analysis of C027, which may derive from activities within the Inner Bailey indicates a similar trend. Here, refuse deriving from table waste and/or consumption may be indicated.

Five bones were measurable: 2 cattle astragali (C026, C027), a cattle radius (C034), a sheep/goat astragalus (C066), a sheep/goat radius (C027),

Table 13 Cattle element representation: post medieval (NISP=22)

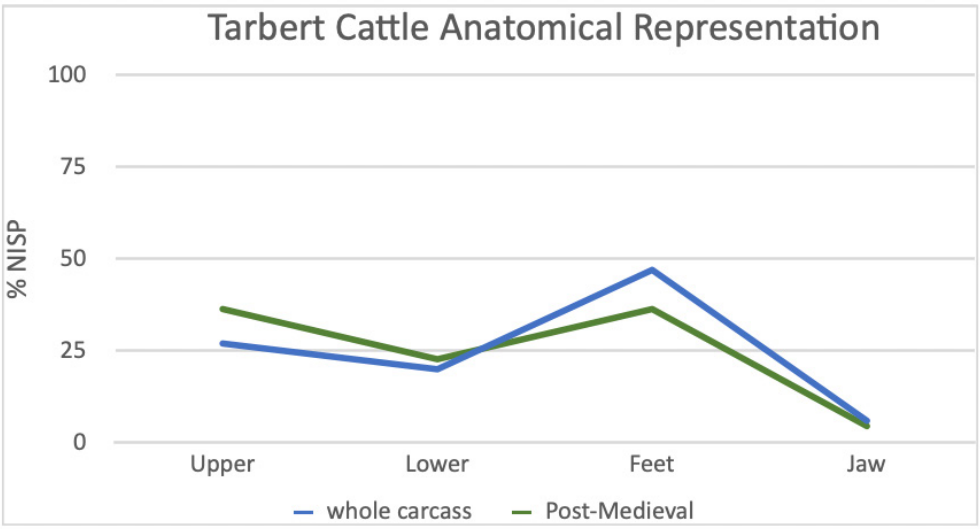


Table 14 Metrical data for Tarbert Castle faunal assemblage (all date to the medieval phases) (measurements after von den Dreisch 1976)

Cxt	Species	Bone	GL	Bp	Bd	SD	GLl	GLm	DL	Dm
34	Cattle	Radius		72.45						
27	Cattle	Astragalus			40.55		60.93	57.1	36.7	36.5
27	Sheep/ goat	Radius	136	27.26	25.25	14.17				
65	Cattle	Astragalus					58.65	52.86	37.85	36.26
65	Pig	Radius	122.75	27.8		17.09				
66	Sheep/ goat	Astragalus			16.85		24.84	26.25	15.86	15.36

and a pig radius (C064) (Table 14). These indicate relatively small animals broadly similar in size to cattle, sheep, and pigs found elsewhere in Scotland at this date (eg McCormick 1996; Noddle 2000; Small 2015; Mainland in prep).

7.4.2 Discussion

Cattle are the dominant species in both the medieval and post medieval phases of occupation, as shown by both NISP and MNI calculations (Tables 8–10). A similar emphasis on cattle is evident at other archaeological sites of this date in the west of Scotland, such as Dun Mhuirich (Canmore ID 39122: Small 2015), Iona (McCormick 1996), Castle Sween (McCormick 1996), Dunadd (Noddle 2000), and Dunyvaig (Canmore ID 38002: Mainland in prep), where %NISP values are typically between 60–80% of NISP identified to species. Cattle played an important role in Highland medieval society not only for subsistence but as sources of wealth, indicators of status and as a form of social currency, eg as gifts in feasts, in dowries, or as plunder during raids (Dodgshon 1998). In Scotland and more widely during the medieval period, a major political focus for those in any level of power was control of pasture. Tarbert Castle is likely to reflect the economy of multiple estates where social power created the system to divide land or give divisible access to land, possibly with a profit. This took place with initiatives such as cattle clientship and cattle loans. The 1326 accounts of John de Lany, who was constable of Tarbert at this time, provide evidence for these kinds of activities when recording the dues owed to those looking after the Tarbert flocks and herd:

> 'for keeping forty of the King's sheep before the arrival of the King, 12d; for keeping the King's marts and swine by two shepherds and two lads (pagetes), seven bolls meal, price 14s., and in silver 6s. 3d' (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8).

The technical ownership of the cattle by those in power while allowing secondary products, specifically milk for the production of butter and cheese, to be utilised by tenants and others lower down the social strata created a system whereby there could be increased earnings for the rich through a variety of sources (Patterson 1994: 94). Butter and cheese, along with milled or malted grains were widely used in rental payments by tenant farmers (Dodgshon 1998). The significance of cheese in the economy (and diet) of medieval West Highland estates is again documented by John de Lany's accounts in which a circulation and redistribution of cheese can be traced. Cheese is brought in from estates under the jurisdiction of John de Lany:

> '3,564 lbs meal and cheese from John McDonyle, bailie of Ile (Islay) reckoning 7d per lb; £124.7.4d; … 96 lbs cheese from bailies of Kintyre, of the lb of that place, at l2d per lb; £4.16.0' (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8).

It is then used in payment for work undertaken,

> 'four codri of cheese to the men who came round the Mull (le Mole) with a ship which belonged to Donald M'Gilhon',

is sent onwards in taxation due to the king and others,

> 'for eighty stones cheese sent by John Fitz-Maurice (fil-Maricio) to Cardros to the King'

or is consumed by the inhabitants of the castle,

> 'for twelve codri of cheese delivered to John clerk of the kitchen (Coq'ne)' (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8).

The age profile of the medieval cattle at Tarbert, which emphasises adults with some culling of 'prime' adults is consistent with meat consumption rather than a production of milk and by extension cheese or butter. Thus, although cattle herds will have been owned by the castle and inhabitants with some likely kept in the vicinity of the castle, their primary function was for providing meat for the table rather than secondary products. This focus on consumption is also evident in the anatomical representation for cattle.

Distinction between sheep and goat was only possible for one fragment, a radius from C027 which was identified as *Ovis aries*. Both species were present in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland during the 13th–17th centuries, though sheep tend to be more commonly represented than goat when species can be ascertained (McCormick 1996; Small 2015). Sheep will have provided meat, wool, and potentially milk; goats were milked and may also

have been eaten. There is some indication that sheep/goat increase in relative importance during the later phases of occupation (ratio of cow to sheep/goat – medieval = 1:9; post medieval = 1:1:2). A similar trend towards increased numbers of sheep/goat in later medieval and 17th century deposits was also evident at Dun Mhurich in North Knapdale (Small 2015) and across Scotland more widely (Mainland in prep). Pigs were also reared, but likely in small numbers. A herd associated with Tarbert Castle is, however, recorded in 14th century accounts of John de Lany (see above). Unlike in medieval England, where pigs were an elite foodstuff, the consumption of pork was not common in Scotland in urban, rural, or elite contexts (Smith 2001).

Two fragments of red deer were recovered from context C023, a medieval phase occupation deposit. These are a proximal femur and fragment of tibia, ie hind leg elements, both from the right-hand side of the body. It is conceivable that these reflect a haunch of venison, though they were not in articulation nor was any evidence of butchery or meat removal found. Hunting of red deer was an important elite activity and in medieval Scotland was carefully regulated to ensure limited access to other sectors of society (Dodgshon 1998; Malloy et al 2013). Hunting will have been undertaken with dogs, and hunting dogs of different sizes are documented in historical sources for this period and are found in archaeological contexts. At Tarbert only one fragment of dog was recovered, a lower canine from C027 indicating a medium-sized individual. Their presence in the castle is also indicated by gnawing marks in the bone assemblage and from John de Lany's accounts, which note a payment

> 'for watching bran (breni) for the dogs at Wester Tarbart for three weeks, 2s. 6d (Stuart & Burnett 1878: 52–8).

7.4.3 Conclusions

The small assemblage of animal bone from Tarbert Castle indicates that cattle were the mainstay of the economy during the 13th–15th and 17th centuries AD and will have provided the bulk of the meat consumed. Mutton and pork were also eaten. The medieval assemblage, which largely derives from deposits associated with activities within the Inner Bailey are interpreted as table refuse and/or discard from food preparation. These demonstrate an emphasis on beef, but venison was also being consumed. In the later post medieval assemblage, although cattle remain the most common species represented, sheep increase in importance, an economic shift which is more widely seen across Scotland at this date. There are some hints of a change in function for the castle environs in the depositional practices documented by the post medieval assemblage which suggest the castle and its environs were being used as a dump for carcass processing or more generalised food refuse rather than table waste.

7.5 Vitrified Material

by Dawn McLaren

A sample of vitrified material recovered from potential occupation/use deposits were examined. In total, 28 fractured fragments of heat-affected, fused, and vitrified materials were recognised, weighing 192.8g. Visual examination has enabled classification of these slags as waste deriving from ironworking but each of the fragments lack diagnostic characteristics to enable closer identification of the stage of the metalworking process that they derive from.

Classifications

The fragments of vitrified material were visually examined with the aid of a low-powered binocular microscope allowing the material to be classified into broad categories on the basis of size, colour, texture, level of vesicularity, and response to a magnet. A wide variety of different vitrified materials can be produced during various industrial and non-industrial processes but only a few, for example, hammerscale or tapped slag are considered to be truly diagnostic of metalworking (McDonnell 1994).

No scientific analysis was undertaken at this time to investigate aspects of the chemical and microstructural composition of the individual fragments and the classifications presented below are based on macroscopic examination only. The assemblage has been described using common terminology (eg McDonnell 1994; Spearman 1997; Starley 2000) and has been catalogued in full (Table 15).

Table 15 Summary of the Tarbert Castle slag assemblage

Type	Count	Weight (g)	Contexts
Indicative of ironworking			
Unclassified ironworking slag (UIS)	28	192.8	C013, C026, C027

7.5.1 Ironworking

All of the vitrified material from Tarbert Castle consists of randomly shaped, amorphous fragments of dark red-brown/orange-brown waste. The surface of each of the fragments is coated in patches of a powdery orange-brown iron oxide layer which incorporates natural grits. The material itself is generally dense and responds to scanning with a magnet, reflecting the iron-rich content of the fused lumps. Although these fragments are undoubtedly waste relating to ironworking, the individual fragments lack any distinctive surface characteristics to allow them to be more closely identified and as such are best described as unclassified slags (Starley 2000; Crew & Rehren 2002: 84). Such slags are common components of many assemblages of ironworking waste (Heald et al 2011: 20) and could be rake-out material from an ironworking furnace (for example smelting) or blacksmithing hearth. The small, fractured fragments of unclassified slags from context C027 incorporate small charcoal flecks and impressions, indicating the wood charcoal was used as the main source of fuel in the hearth or furnace.

7.5.2 Distribution

The unclassified slags were found in Trenches 2 and 3. Two fragments, weighing 44.9g, were incorporated within midden or occupation layer C013 at the base of the western gate between the eastern wall of the Inner Bailey and the projecting tower. Twenty-five small, fractured fragments (78.7g), each incorporating small charcoal flecks and impressions, were recovered from midden deposits C027 abutting the south wall of the northern range (Area D) of the Inner Bailey. A single amorphous fragment (69.2g) was also found amongst rubble and mortar collapse, C026, in this same area, overlying the midden deposit just described.

Table 16 Summary of MERLF sample radiocarbon results. Determinations have been calibrated using OxCal 4.4 against IntCal.20 atmospheric calibration data (Bronk Ramsey 2009; Reimer et al 2020), with date ranges rounded out to 10 years.

Feature	Sample Code	Sample Taxon	Terminal Ring	Laboratory Code	δ13C (‰)	14C Age (BP)	Calibrated Date Ranges 68%	95%
Pe-inner Bailey Deposit	TAR19 <5> [063]	Betula	None	SUERC-96577	-28.0	1246± 24	690–820	680–880
SW Gate	TCA.I	Corylus	None	SUERC-93141	-25.6	788±31	1220–1270	1210–1290
Cross-wall	TCA.F	Betula	None	SUERC-93140	-27.0	775±31	1220–1280	1220–1290
Inner Bailey Floor	TAR19 <3> [034]	Betula	None	SUERC-96572	-27.0	622±24	1300–1390	1300–1400
Hearth Feature	TAR19 <4> [038]	Betula	None	SUERC-96573	-26.9	622±24	1290–1380	1280–1390

7.5.3 Discussion

The limited size of the assemblage examined and its restricted range in terms of the classification of slag types present makes it impossible to say anything pertinent about the scale of ironworking activities at Tarbert Castle, but the slags are suggestive of the presence of a smithy, if not in the castle itself then perhaps in an ancillary building. This assertion is entirely speculative on the basis of such limited evidence, but it is likely that such a smithy would have engaged in the repair and maintenance of day-to-day implements and tools but could also have manufactured bespoke items such as horseshoes, knives, and any other items needed by the household, including nails and chains.

Although these fragments of ironworking waste are not inherently datable, their recovery from midden, occupation layers, and rubble relating to medieval and post medieval use in the castle is entirely consistent with the picture presented of everyday crafts and activities represented amongst other Scottish Castle assemblages, such as at Inverlochy Castle, Inverness-shire (Canmore ID 23701), where slags recovered were suggestive of blacksmithing (Cullen 1998); at Carrick Castle, Argyll (Canmore ID 40804) and Lochmaben Castle, Dumfries and Galloway (Camore ID 66315), where both ferrous and non-ferrous metalworking was in evidence (MacDonald & Laing 1975: 144; Cressey 1998); and at Castle Sween, Knapdale, bloomery slags may have been used as ballast post-dating activity at the castle itself (Ewart & Triscott 1996: 518).

7.6 Radiocarbon Dates

Table 16 below includes the carbon dates from the Inner Bailey wall and the southwestern gate structure of the castle obtained by Mark Thacker (Thacker 2022).

In summary, the earliest date 677–877 calAD (BP 1246 ±24 95% probability SUERC-96577) was obtained from a pre-castle soil, C063, lying under the Inner Bailey wall. The southwest gate structure produced a date of 1210–1290 calAD (BP 788±31 95% probability SUERC-93141) while the cross wall of the Inner Bailey produced a date of 1220–1290 calAD (BP 775 ± 31 95% probability SUERC-93140). Occupation above the earliest floor of the Inner Bailey (C034) produced a date of 1299–1398 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96572). Charcoal recovered from what was very likely the fuel from the last firing/use of the hearth in the Inner Bailey produced a date of 1282–1390 calAD (BP 622 ± 24 95% probability SUERC-96573).

Table 17 Radiocarbon date from C068

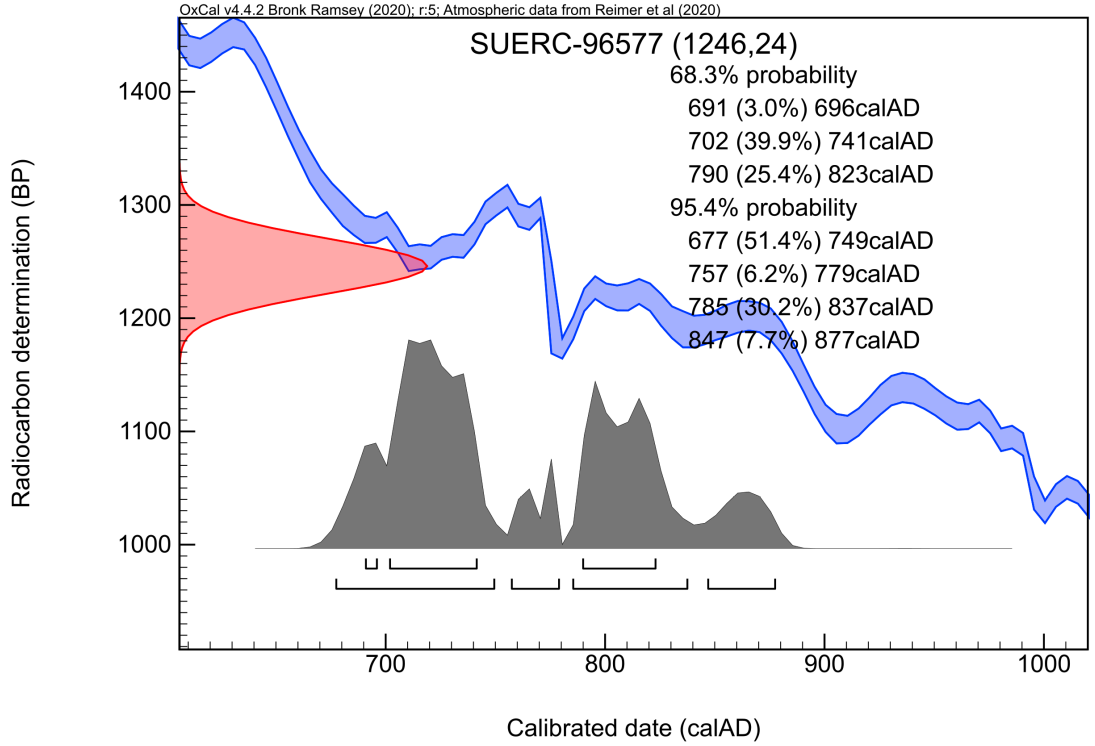


Table 18 Radiocarbon date from C034

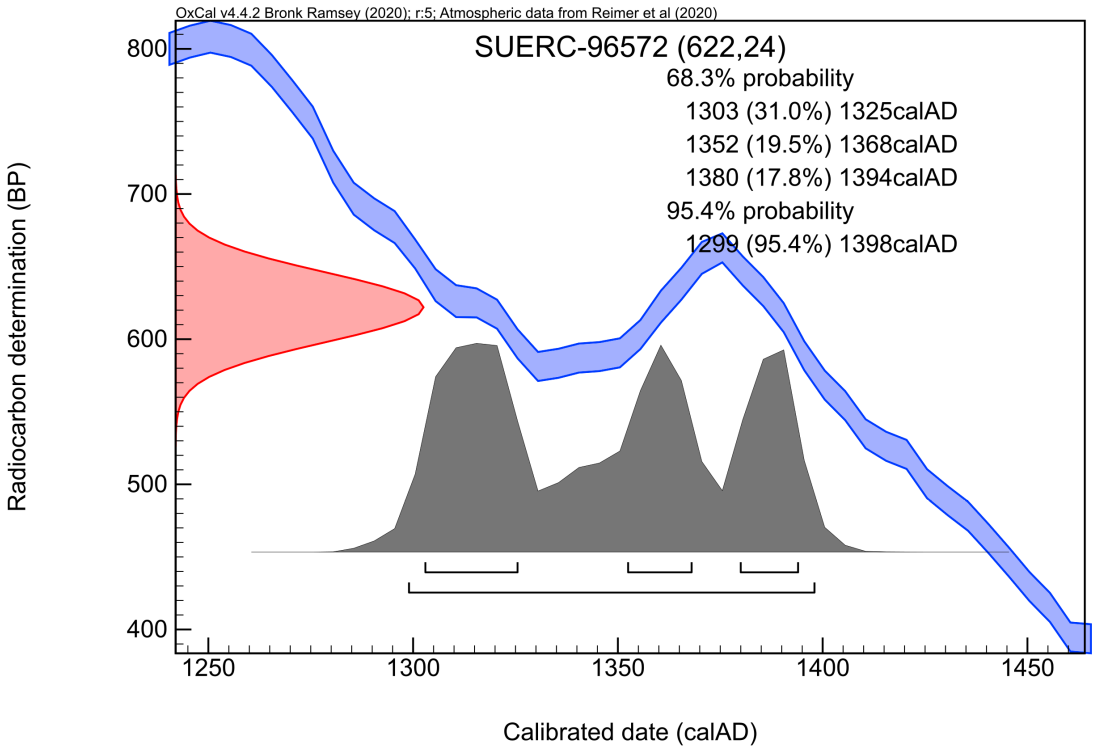
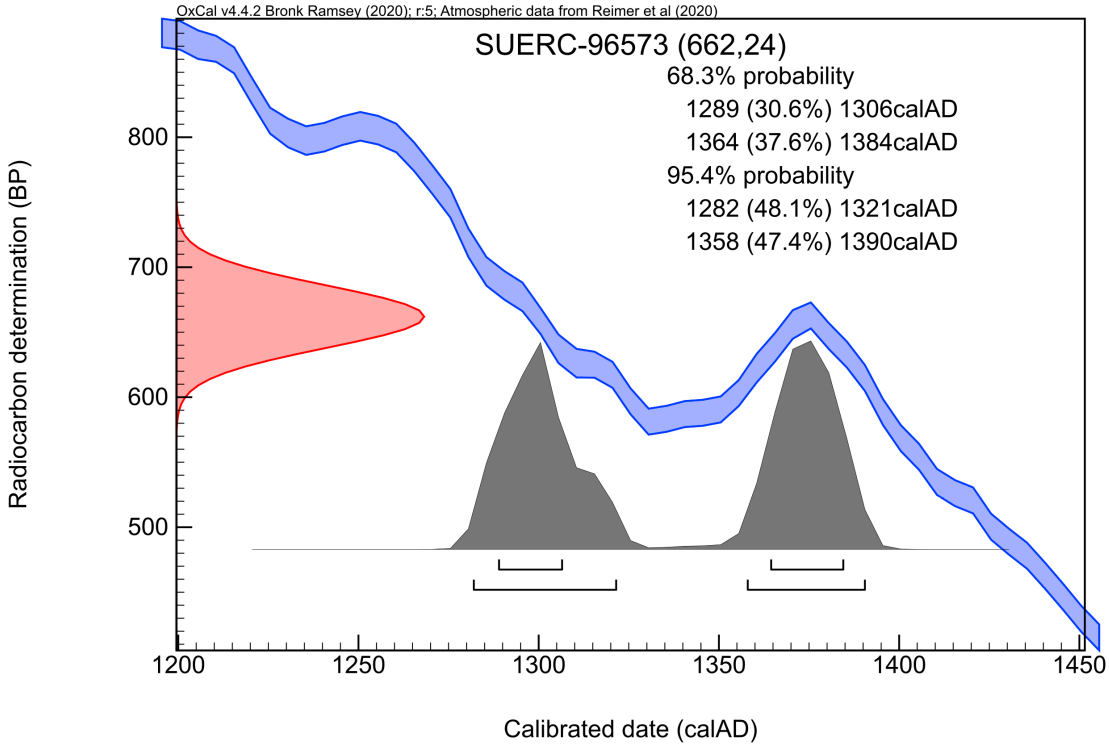


Table 19 Radiocarbon date from C038



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Abbreviations

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