

**WRITTEN STATEMENT  
OF INVESTIGATION**

*In respect of*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RECORDING

*at*

**MELROSE ABBEY  
SECURITY GATES**

*For*

Historic Scotland

*By*

Kirkdale Archaeology



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## INTRODUCTION

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HS Index Number: 90214

A programme of archaeological works conducted by Kirkdale Archaeology is required in order to monitor the proposed work associated with the installation of new security gates at the entrance to the depot area at the east end of Cloisters Road at Melrose Abbey (Fig. 1). The installation of the gates requires the excavation of two foundations measuring (a maximum of) 0.7m x 0.7m in plan x 1m in depth (Fig. 2). The location of the new posts is very likely to have been previously disturbed, by the construction of both the road and the adjacent walls; however there is a possibility of reaching archaeological levels due to the proposed depth of the foundations.



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the general location of the proposed work.

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## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Founded in 1136, Melrose Abbey was the first foundation for the Cistercian order in Scotland. Richly endowed by royal and noble benefactors, it is the burial place of both Alexander II and Robert the Bruce. Central to David I's programme for the revival of the Scottish church, it grew to be one of the wealthiest and most majestic medieval monasteries in the country.

The abbey consists of the shell of much of the abbey church, the consolidated lower walls and footings of the conventual buildings and the restored residence of the post-Reformation commendators, along with a significant buried archaeological resource. The late-medieval church is arguably the most important single building for the understanding of Scottish late medieval architecture from the late-14<sup>th</sup> century to the Reformation, and of the range of sources to which its patrons and masons looked.

The slight changes of architectural detail are a particularly invaluable indicator of the progress of building a major late-medieval church.

The conventual buildings are situated to the north of the abbey church rather than to the south, as was more usual. This option may have been chosen due to the many uses that fresh water from the nearby River Tweed could be put to. The abbey precinct, beyond the cloister, was quite extensive.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The abbey underwent poorly-recorded clearance excavations after being taken into state care in 1919, most of the work being carried out between 1921 and 1936. Following the demolition of the Abbey Hotel in 1948, there were further excavations at the south-west corner of the nave. There have been further minor excavations since then, notably within the chapter house in 1996. There has been very little archaeological investigation of the wider precinct.

A narrow trench was excavated under archaeological monitoring in 1999, part of it lying close to the site of the proposed gates. No structural remains of abbey buildings were revealed in this area, although this trench extended to only 0.3m in depth. More recently, a standing building survey was carried out on a structure in the brewery yard, a short distance to the south-east of the site of the proposed gates; however this did not include an examination of the buried archaeology.

## ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

The new gate will be located at the western edge of the brewery yard, now in use as the local Monument Conservation Unit depot. Previous archaeological monitoring in the near vicinity has not revealed structural remains, but the depth of this information was limited to 0.3m below the current ground level. The location of the new posts is very likely to have been previously disturbed, by the construction of both the road and the adjacent walls; however there is a possibility of reaching archaeological levels due to the proposed depth (1m) of the foundations.

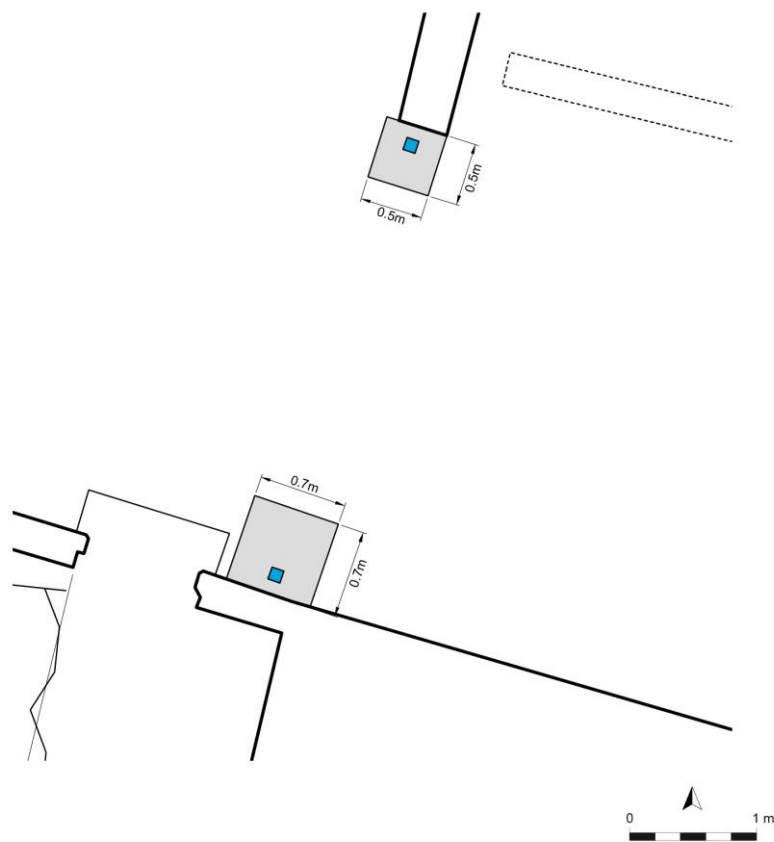


Figure 2: Location plan of the two gate post foundation trenches.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESPONSE**

### **F I E L D W O R K**

As there is a possibility that the excavation of the gate post foundations will impact on archaeological deposits, the excavation will be take place under an archaeological watching brief. Two foundation trenches will be excavated; the one to the north will measure 0.5m x 0.5m in plan x 1m in depth, while that to the south will measure 0.7m x 0.7m in plan x 1m in depth.

Although the upper levels of the foundation trenches may require mechanical excavation, the lower levels will be hand excavated to the required depth or to the top of the first archaeological layer, whichever is shallower.

If significant archaeological deposits are encountered, excavation will stop and the findings will be recorded. The HES Cultural Resources Advisor will be consulted, who will discuss the implications of this with the District Architect, Interpretation Manager and Heritage Management.

### **M O N I T O R I N G**

This will entail:

- The presence on site of at least one site archaeologist during all ground breaking works.
- The archaeologist should be able to direct rate, location and method of excavation employed by contractor.
- The archaeologist should suspend excavation if necessary, in order to examine / clean / retrieve any archaeological features, surfaces, structures or artefacts that may be exposed during excavation.
- All spoil will be suitably stored for examination before backfill/reinstatement.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

This will entail:

### *Drawing*

- Confirmation of site plan as supplied by the Client.
- Location plan of all interventions at a suitable scale, 1:50/1:100.
- Detailed, individual area plans of all interventions – at significant stages of excavation if appropriate and on completion of excavation, drawn at a scale of 1:20.
- All sections, or a representative selection, will be drawn in detail at a scale of 1:10.
- All drawing will be annotated with site feature numbers, site code, scale, date and name(s) of staff.

### *Photography*

- Still photographs will be colour digital and will record general location of works, plus detailed coverage during, and on completion of, excavation.
- All photographs will have a suitable scale visible.
- All photographs will be listed in a full photo register (describing content, orientation and date).
- 'Documentary' photographs will also be taken in order to represent site conditions, constraints and resources.
- If appropriate, digital moving coverage will be taken for further illustration of site conditions, constraints and resources.

### *Site Recording: Buried Archaeology*

- Description of all excavated material will be expressed in terms of archaeological features, each of which will be assigned a unique three digit number. The numbering will also reference the site code and any individual trench number.
- Each discrete feature will be described on site *pro forma* which will cover stratigraphic relationships, finds, physical description, location, drawing references and interpretation.
- Each feature will also be listed in a feature register – comprising a brief description, date, and feature number.

### *Sampling*

When required, three levels of sampling are proposed for above and below ground investigations:

- **General:** Bulk sample per context removed.
- **Special:** Specific sample identified for later specialist study (charcoal, industrial waste, environmental, infestations, organics).
- **Specialist:** Monitoring of any independent sampling strategy from external specialists (dendrochronological, mortar, paint, *etc.*)

## **GENERAL ISSUES**

In the event of the discovery of significant remains and/or artefacts, which may be impacted by the proposed works, excavation should be suspended until further instruction is received from relevant agencies. At this point the Historic Environment Scotland CRT should also be informed and consulted.

All artefacts, faunal remains and samples will be processed off-site. Disposal and/or examination/ conservation of this material will be assessed in the light of results of fieldwork. Any programme of specialist post-excavation work on finds, faunal remains and analysis of samples will be assessed on completion of the fieldwork

Any human remains revealed during the excavation will remain *in situ*. All discoveries of human remains will be reported to the local police and Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

If human remains are to be excavated during any subsequent work, this will be completed in line with Historic Scotland policy on the treatment of human remains.

## **REPORTING**

The results of the Fieldwork and DBA will be presented in an illustrated Data Structures Report (DSR) with accompanying digital documentation as specified by the Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

Copies of the report and digital files will be produced as specified. Typically this comprises:

- Four bound paper copies.
- Two digital versions on CD including all photographs (the latter in .tiff or jpeg format).

This will include an assessment of all assemblages and recommendations for any further specialist work.

A costed programme for the full sample analysis towards publication of the findings will be included if appropriate.

A short note will be submitted to 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland'.

The position of all trenches, excavation areas *etc.*, will be supplied on CD disk, as a georeferenced .dxf file.

Reports will be submitted within 20 working days of completion of the fieldwork.

## **ARCHIVE**

If there is no further requirement for reporting beyond the DSR and D&E entry, the report and site records will be compiled in a suitable archive comprising primary data and digital documentation as appropriate, suitable for submission to local and national archives.

The archive will follow current guidelines for archival standards set by the Archaeology Data Service and RCAHMS.

The project archive will be deposited with the NMRS within six months of completion of fieldwork and relevant post-excavation analyses. Finds will be subject to the Scots laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*, and will be reported to the Crown Agent for disposal. Appropriate conservation of finds will be conducted before disposal.

**Gordon Ewart**

**8<sup>th</sup> July, 2016**