

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND  
PROPERTIES IN CARE  
MINOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS 2016/2017**

**Kinneil House • Watching Brief • April 2016**

**HS PIC Index Number: 90189**

**SITE:** Kinneil House, near Bo'ness, West Lothian.

**N.G.R.:** NS 982 805

**DESCRIPTION:** Archaeological watching brief during the excavation of two test trenches against the north face of the south orchard wall ahead of stabilisation works.

**PROJECT CODE:** HSCO-90189-2016-01

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## INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Kinneil House near Bo'ness in West Lothian. The south orchard wall was leaning considerably to the north, rendering it potentially dangerous and, as such, it was to be the subject of stabilisation works. A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of two test trenches on the north side of the orchard wall, positioned  $\approx 24\text{m}$  and  $\approx 30\text{m}$  east from the angle formed by the west and south orchard walls (Figs. 1 and 2).



**Figure 1:** Plan showing the general location of the trenches.

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As part of the remedial works, several large trees to the south of the wall were cut down at the same time as the test-trenching was in progress. The trenches were excavated manually by the MCU under archaeological supervision, and the work took place on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

## DESCRIPTION

As the south orchard wall was leaning heavily to the north, and as the test trenches were positioned on that side of the wall, the wall first had to be propped. This required two long shallow trenches (4.30m E/W x 0.35m N/S x 0.15m deep, through disturbed topsoil) to be excavated in order to recess long battens running parallel to the wall. These would provide the footing for the diagonal braces holding the wooden frameworks against the wall face over the position of each test trench.

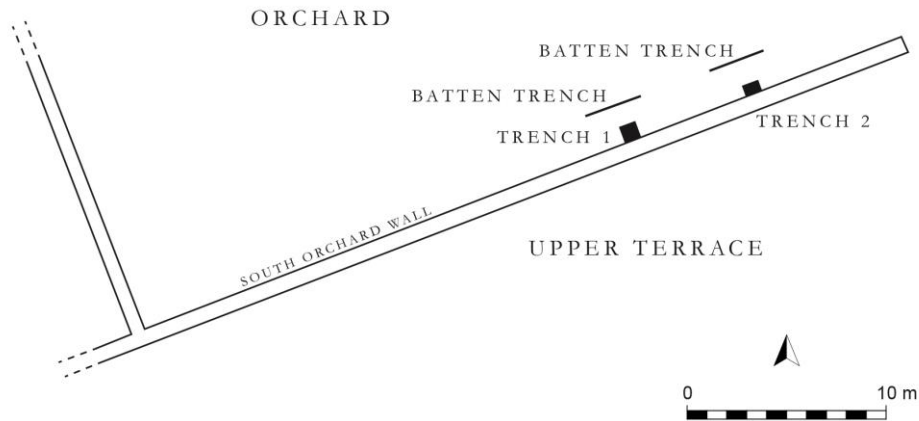


Figure 2: Location plan of the two trenches.

### Test Trench 1

Test Trench 1 was positioned with its western edge 24m to the east of the angle formed by the west and south orchard walls. The trench measured 0.80m E/W x 0.80m N/S x 0.55m deep (the trench was deeper adjacent to the wall). The disturbed topsoil **103** was full of modern refuse such as plastic and broken glass. This layer was 0.32m deep and cleared onto a layer **105** of re-deposited clay flecked with charcoal up to 0.30m deep (with a 0.06m deep spread visible below the rubble wall foundation). This layer also carried, and abutted the northern edge of, the rubble foundation of the south orchard wall **104**.

The rubble foundation of the wall was recessed back from the main wall build **101** by 0.05m. The foundation was composed of angular sandstone rubble bonded in a lime mortar. The top of the foundation course was seen 0.35m below the current ground level; its base sat at a depth of  $\approx$ 0.60m. The main wall build **101** consisted of pieces of angular sandstone rubble bonded in a white/grey lime mortar with numerous small angular stone inclusions. This build was capped by a cope course **102** of flat sandstone slabs  $\approx$ 0.10m high. Below ground, the layer **105** carrying the wall foundation **104** was set within a cut **106** through the natural **107** below. This suggests that a degree of ground preparation was required in order to build the wall and that the ground level of the orchard was raised after the wall had been built (or was in the process of being built). The 'natural' consisted of a compact layer of yellow/brown clay containing numerous water-rolled pebbles. It was clean and carried no charcoal flecks, making it distinctive from layer **105** above.

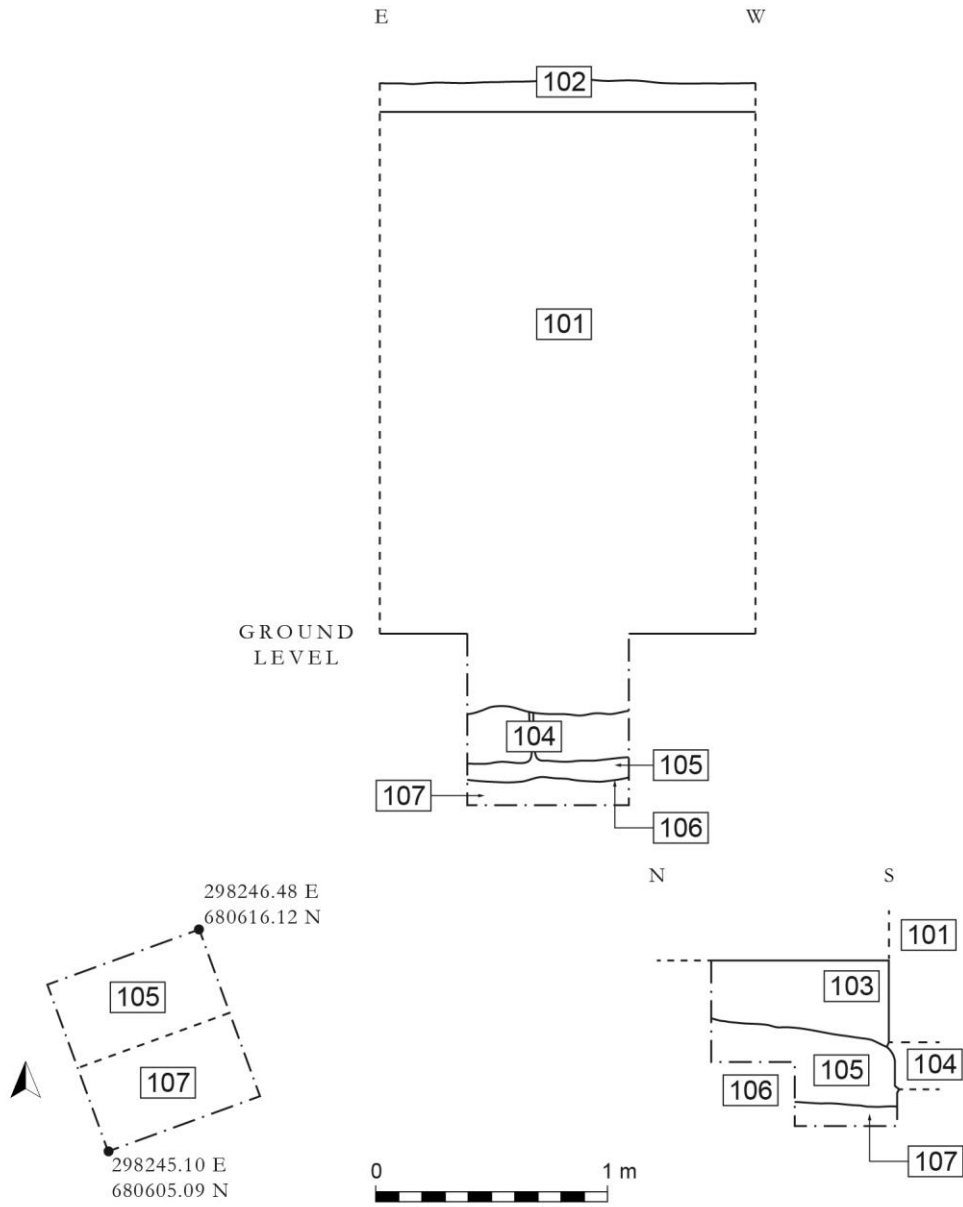


Figure 3: Clockwise from top: Trench 1, N-facing elevation, W-facing section, and post-excavation trench plan.



**Plate 1:** Trench 1, post-excitation.

### **Test Trench 2**

Test Trench 2 was positioned with its western edge 30m to the east of the angle formed by the west and south orchard walls. The trench measured 0.80m E/W x 0.60m N/S x 0.72m deep. The disturbed topsoil **203** was full of modern refuse such as plastic and broken glass. This layer was 0.30m deep and cleared onto a layer **205** of re-deposited clay flecked with charcoal up to 0.52m deep. This layer also carried, and abutted the northern edge of, the rubble foundation of the south orchard wall **204**.

The rubble foundation of the wall was recessed back from the main wall build **201** by 0.05m. The foundation was composed of angular sandstone rubble bonded in a lime mortar. The top of the foundation course was seen at 0.38m below the current ground level; its base sat at a depth of up to  $\approx$ 0.62m. The main wall build **201** consisted of pieces of angular sandstone rubble bonded in a white/grey lime mortar containing numerous small angular stones. This build was capped by an area of rebuild **202** consisting of buff-coloured angular pieces of sandstone bonded in a grey/brown mortar topped by a cope course of flat sandstone slabs  $\approx$ 0.15m high. There was no trace of the cut encountered in Test Trench 1.

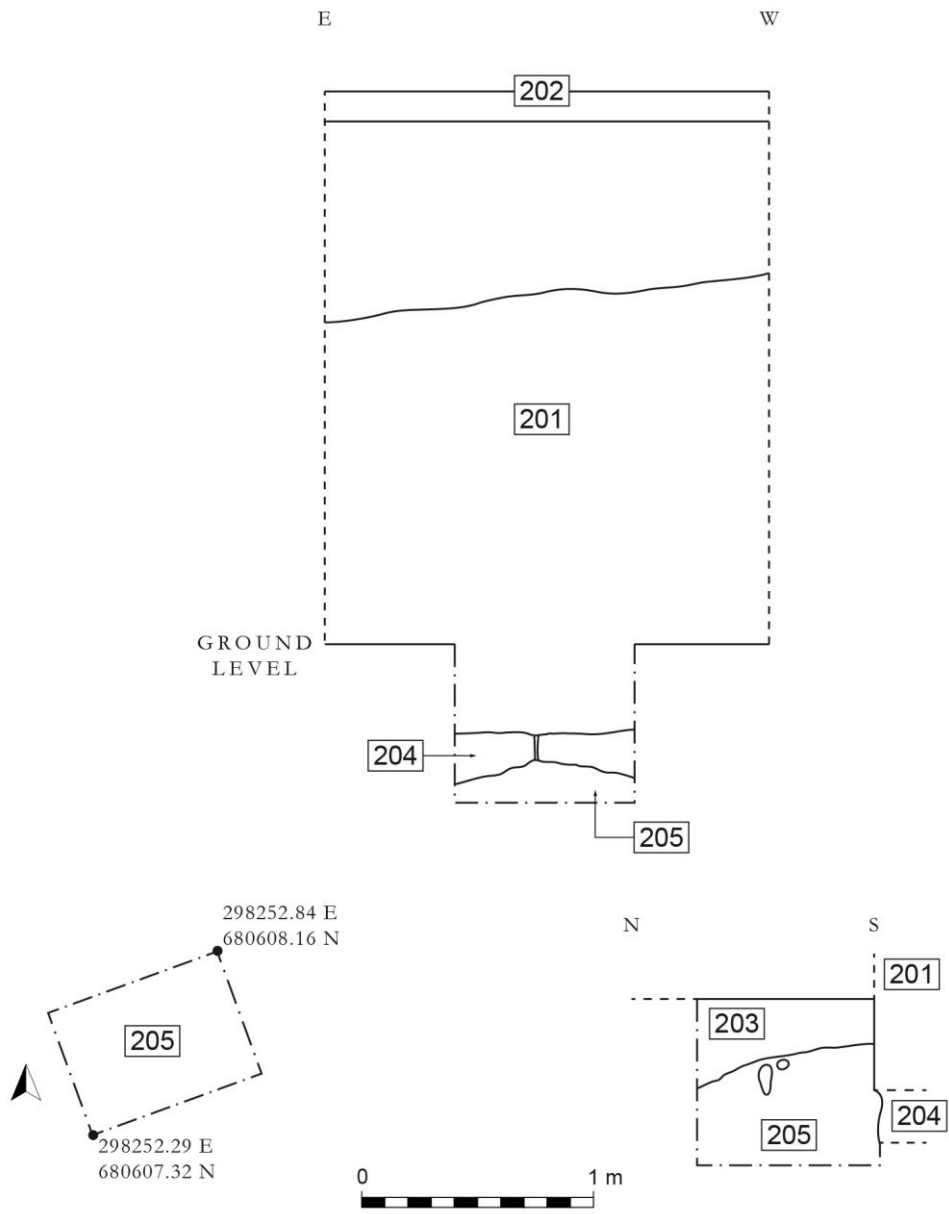


Figure 4: Clockwise from top: Trench 2, N-facing elevation, W-facing section, and post-excavation trench plan.



**Plate 2:** Trench 2, post-excitation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The suggestion would seem to be that an area of undulating land (on the orchard side of the wall) was scarped back in places and that material in the form of re-deposited clay was brought in as (1) levelling material to bed the orchard wall, and (2) as material brought in to level-up the ground of the orchard formed as a result. The south orchard wall formed a boundary and revetment between the higher made-up entrance terrace to the south and the lower level of the orchard to the north. There was nothing in the way of historical artefacts to clarify exactly when this work was carried out but clearly there is high archaeological potential in the area. If the wall is to be stripped-down in order to be rebuilt then it follows that the layers comprising the entrance terrace to the south will be exposed. These would be of historical interest, and it is recommended that they be archaeologically recorded.

## LIST OF CONTEXTS

Trench	Context	Description
1	101	Main wall build of pieces of angular sandstone rubble bonded in whitish lime mortar with numerous small angular stone inclusions.
1	102	Cope course of flat sandstone slabs.
1	103	Disturbed topsoil full of modern refuse such as plastic and broken glass.
1	104	Recessed rubble foundation of the south orchard wall.
1	105	Fill of cut 107. Re-deposited clay flecked with charcoal carrying 104.
1	106	Cut through natural 107.
1	107	Natural layer of yellow/brown clay containing numerous water-rolled pebbles.
2	201	Main wall build of pieces of angular sandstone rubble bonded in white/grey lime mortar with numerous small angular stone inclusions.
2	202	Rebuild and cope course over 201.
2	203	Disturbed topsoil full of modern refuse such as plastic and broken glass.
2	204	Recessed rubble foundation of the south orchard wall.
2	205	Re-deposited clay flecked with charcoal abutting 204.

## LIST OF DRAWINGS

No.	Type	Description	Scale
1	Elevation	N-facing, Trench 1.	1:20
2	Plan	Trench 1.	1:20
3	Section	W-facing, Trench 1.	1:20
4	Elevation	N-facing, Trench 2.	1:20
5	Plan	Trench 2.	1:20
6	Section	W-facing, Trench 2.	1:20
7	Plan	Trenches 1 and 2, locations of.	1:200

## LIST OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

No.	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 1 laid out.	N	28/04/2016
2	Trench 2 laid out.	N	28/04/2016
3	Props at Trenches 1 and 2.	W	28/04/2016
4	Section at east end of wall.	E	28/04/2016
5	Setting up props.	E	28/04/2016
6	The angle of the south and west orchard walls.	NE	28/04/2016
7	Tree felling in progress.	NE	28/04/2016
8	Laying batten at Trench 1.	W	28/04/2016
9	Trench 1, post-excavation.	N	28/04/2016
10	Trench 1, wall and exposed foundation.	N	28/04/2016
11	Trench 1, post-excavation.	W	28/04/2016
12	Trench 1, W-facing section.	W	28/04/2016
13	Trench 2, post-excavation.	N	28/04/2016
14	Trench 2, post-excavation.	NE	28/04/2016
15	Trench 2, post-excavation.	W	28/04/2016
16	Trench 2, post-excavation.	N	28/04/2016
17	Propping at Trench 2.	N	28/04/2016
18	Propping at trenches 1 and 2.	NE	28/04/2016
19	Entrance terrace and orchard ground levels.	E	28/04/2016