

**BANFF CASTLE, CASTLE STREET,
BANFF**

**Archaeological Watching Brief
and Recording**

Carried out between April and August 2003

By

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Report by
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- Archaeological Watching Brief – and Recording

Summary:

A programme of restoration work at Banff Castle and associated buildings was undertaken by the Banff Castle Community Association. As the site is partly a Scheduled Ancient Monument and, thus, of archaeological interest, an archaeological watching and recording brief was required. Remedial work was required in the East and West Pavilions and the North and South Gatehouses. Ground disturbance was also required for a series of new drains and soakaways. J C Murray was retained by the Banff Castle Community Association to advise on, and undertake, the archaeological work, which was carried out between April and August 2003. No archaeological features or artifacts were evident during the ground disturbance work.

Historical background:

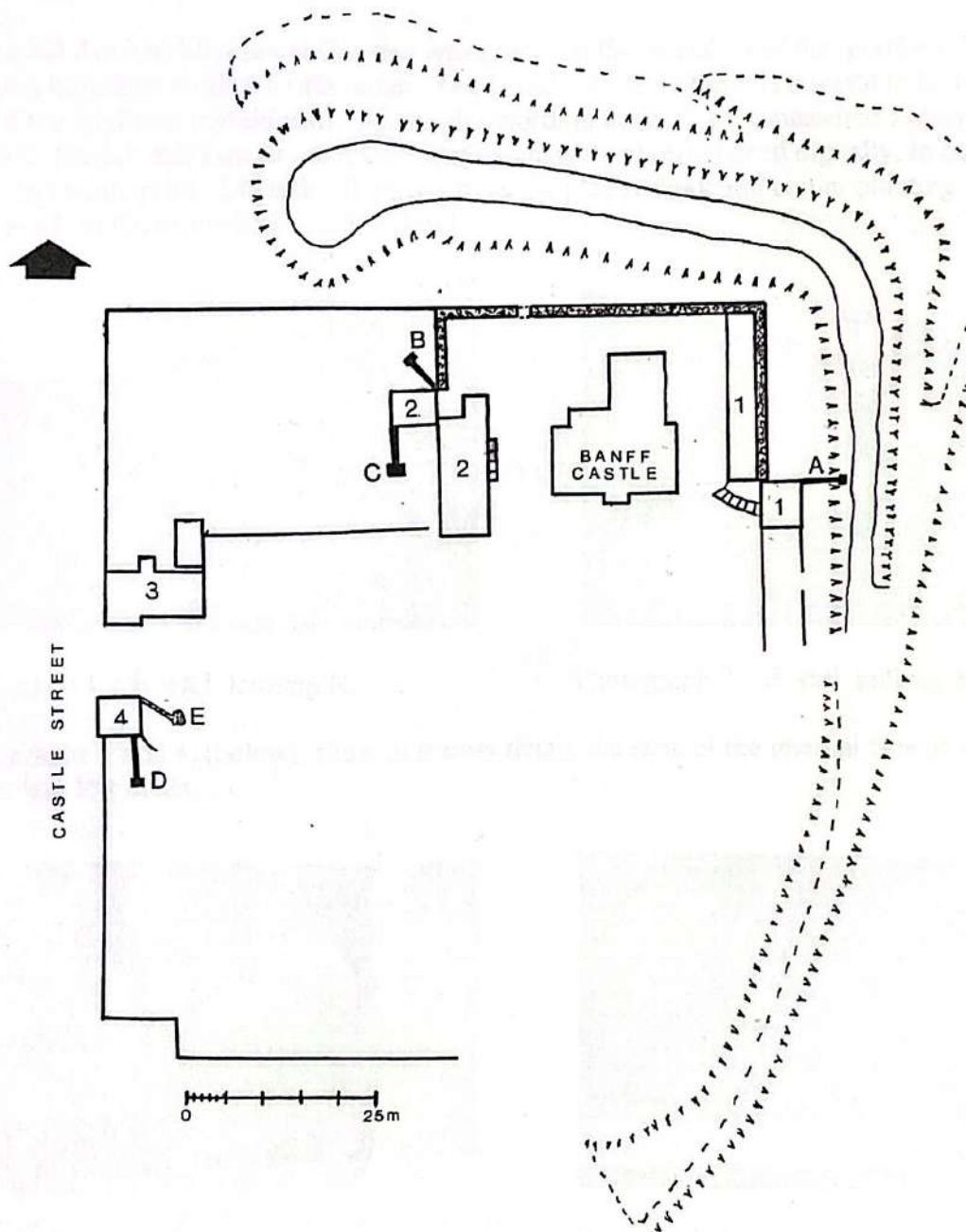
Banff Castle is located in the centre of Banff on the E side of Castle Street [Grid Ref: NJ 6893 6420; NMRS No. NJ66SE 23]

Little now remains of the c.12th/13th century castle of enclosure, with the exception of sections of the substantial curtain walls and wide ditches and ramparts, but it was, possibly, one of the earliest stone castles in Scotland¹.

Not a great deal is known of the early castle, but is thought to have been visited by Edward I in 1296, possibly garrisoned by him and recaptured by the Scots in 1310. The property passed to the Sharp family and was the birthplace of Archbishop James Sharp in 1618. In ruins by 1746, it is now the site of an Adam mansion built in 1750.

The only visible remains of the castle are now the N wall and parts of the E and W walls. The N wall is c.44m long, while the E is c.25m and the W is c.11m. In general the walls are c.5m high by c.1.8m thick [see Site Plan, p.3].

¹ Notes on the Castle by the late N Q Bogdan.



Banff Castle – Site Plan

- Key to Plan:
- 1. East Pavilion Buildings
 - 2. West Pavilion Buildings
 - 3. Caretakers Cottage
 - 4. South gate House
 - A to E – Soakaway trenches

East Pavilion Wall:

Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent was given for the reroofing of that portion of the East Pavilion buildings used as a rifle range. The E wall of the building is thought to be formed by part of the medieval curtain wall. Although recording in detail by a measured survey was not required, the internal face of the E wall was extensively photographed digitally, in colour, and in black and white print. Little detail emerged, as the plaster work and earlier pointing was not removed [see Photographs 1 and 2, below].



Photograph 1 – E wall, looking N.



Photograph 2 – E wall, looking S.

Photographs 3 and 4, (below), show in greater detail, the state of the internal face of the E wall, which was left intact.



Photograph 3.



Photograph 4.

In addition to the work on the internal side of the medieval curtain wall, the top of the wall was also repaired and consolidated.

Observation showed the wall, at its surviving height, to be of small rubble construction. Loose stones were removed and, after the surface was cleaned and examined, were replaced where required. The wall cap was then remortared to prevent further erosion and deterioration. No cut stone or other stone of architectural significance was evident at this level in the wall construction.

Photographs 5, (below), shows the external face of the E medieval curtain wall, looking N, while Photograph 6 shows a detail of the rubble construction at this level.



Photograph 5.



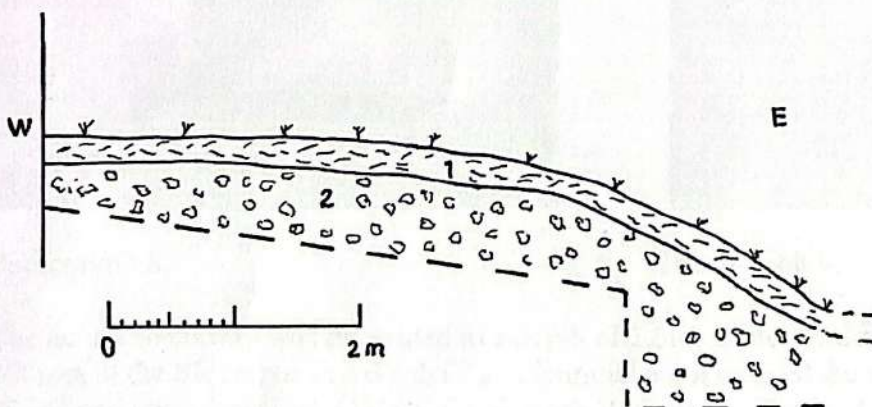
Photograph 6.

Watching Brief:

A total of five new soakaways and drains, in different locations around the castle buildings, were required [see Site Plan, drains marked A – E, p.3]. All the trenches for the soakaways were machine cut, under archaeological supervision, and then cleaned by hand and recorded.

Soakaway 'A':

The trench for Soakaway 'A' was located at the SE corner of the Gun Club Room, which forms part of the East Pavilion Buildings, and ran E into the moat for a distance of 6.2m [see Site Plan, p.3]. The cut was excavated to a depth of c.500mm at its W end to c.900mm at the edge of the moat or ditch. At this point it was deepened to c.1.5m and extended into the ditch for .1m [see Section through 'A', below and Photograph 7, p.6].



Section through 'A'

The fill was comprised of a c.250mm layer of topsoil and pea-gravel mix, Layer (1), which overlay a deep made-up deposit of brown earth mixed with stone and some animal bone, Layer (2). No cut for the moat or ditch was observed and it appears that at this point, the ground level was raised and landscaped.



Photograph 7 – shows Soakaway ‘A’, looking W. Only a depth required for drainage was excavated and no attempt was made to ascertain the original ditch profile.

No archaeological features or artifacts were evident in this trench.

Soakaway ‘B’:

Soakaway ‘B’ was located in the garden, to the N of the garden store which forms part of the West Pavilion range of buildings. It ran from the SE corner of the store, to the NW for a distance of c.4.5m [see Site Plan, p.3 and Photographs 8 and 9, below].



Photograph 8.



Photograph 9.

The actual soakaway was excavated to a depth of 1.5m, while the drain running into it was 300mm at the SE corner to a depth of c.600mm where it entered the soakaway. A 150mm layer of sod and topsoil overlay a layer of dark earth, 450mm deep, mixed with 19th and 20th century broken flowerpot, glass and crockery. This, in turn, directly overlay the natural brown sandy soil with fractured stone.

Even though the soakaway was within the medieval enclosure, no archaeological features or finds were evident.

Soakaway 'C':

Soakaway 'C', projected S from the SW corner of the garden shed [see Site Plan, p.3]. The drainage trench was c.4.4m long, leading into a soakaway c.1.6m long x 1.2m across and 1.4m deep [see Photograph 10, below]. The drainage trench was excavated to a depth of c. 500mm and consisted of a thin top layer of earth which overlay a layer of cobbling confined to the N end of the trench [see Photograph 11, below]. Below the cobbling was a dark brown earth fill mixed with 19th and 20th century material. In the soakaway, this layer extended down for c.700mm where it overlay the yellow-brown sandy and stoney natural [see Photographs 10 and 11, below].



Photograph 10.



Photograph 11.

No archaeological features or artifacts were evident in Soakaway 'C'.

Soakaway 'D':

Soakaway 'D' was located at the SE corner of the South Gatehouse and extended S for a distance of c.6.7m [see Site Plan, p.3 and Photograph 12, below]. The drainage trench leading to the soakaway was 5.5m long and was 250mm deep at its N end, deepening to c.750mm at its S end where it entered the soakaway. The soakaway was excavated to a depth of 1.52m.



Photograph 12



Photograph 13

Below a 100mm layer of grass and topsoil was a 200mm layer of pea-gravel, which extended the length of the drainage trench and overlay a brown soil with much tree root. In the soakaway itself, a 300mm layer of mixed earth and stone overlay the natural sand.

No archaeological features or artifacts were evident in Soakaway 'D'.

Soakaway 'E':

It was proposed that Soakaway 'E' would lead from the NE corner of the South Gate House and extend c.4m to the SE [see Site Plan, p.3 and Photograph 14, below]. The machine strip revealed a cobbled surface along the proposed line of the drainage trench and in the area of the proposed soakaway. It was clear from the small area exposed, that the cobbling probably covered the general area to the E of the South Gate House [see Photograph 15, below]. On account of this, the placing of the soakaway in this location was abandoned and instead was routed to run NE of the NE corner of the South Gate House to cross the driveway, through ground previously disturbed, and link up with an existing drain in front of the Caretakers House (No. 3 on Site Plan, p.3).



Photograph 14.



Photograph 15.

It was not possible to positively date the cobbling, but it is likely to date to 19th/20th century ground improvements.

Conclusions:

A black and white and colour digital photographic survey was undertaken on the internal face of the E wall in the Rifle Range in the East Pavilion Buildings. As the existing plaster work was left undisturbed, no additional features of the wall's construction was visible.

No archaeological features or artifacts were evident in any of the new drainage trenches and soakaways excavated.

CATALOGUE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographic record of East Wall, Rifle Range:

1 – 36. Black and White prints and digital colour photographs.

Soakaways and Drainage Trenches:

N.B. Numbers refer to both colour digital photographs and colour slide film.

1. View, N, of cobbles in Soakaway 'C'.
2. As 1, above.
3. General view of 1, above.
4. View, looking S, at location of Soakaway 'B'.
5. Detail of 4, above.
6. View, NW, along line of 'B'.
7. Detail of fill of 'B'.
8. General view, S, of location of Soakaway 'C'.
9. As 8, above.
10. Detail of 'C'.
11. General view, N, of location of Soakaway 'D'.
12. Detail of 11, above.
13. Detail of fill of 'D'.
14. As 13, above.
15. View, N, at top and external surface of E Wall.
16. Detail of 15, above.
17. View, S, at top of E Wall showing re-mortaring.
18. General view, N, of external face of E Wall.
19. As 18, above.
20. View, W, of Location of Soakaway 'A'.
21. As 20, above.
22. As 20, above.
23. As 20, above.
24. View, W, of location of proposed Soakaway 'E'.
25. Detail of cobbles in 24, above.