

Bruce's Motte and Bailey, Annan, Dumfriesshire.

Forestry Report, March 2006.

Report Brief:-

- Identify the tree works required to improve views into and out of Bruce's Motte and Bailey.
- Consider the effect from Parkland trees outwith the site which may impact on the objectives of the project.
- Improve access to and around the site and increase the sense of security for users. It is hoped that the flat part of the Bailey can become an informal outdoor performance space.

A local community Group "The Friends of Annandale & Eskdale Museum" are keen to restore the site to prominence as an important local archaeological feature.

Background :- The site extends to approximately 1 h.a. and is situated at the Southern end of the Everholm Park and Bruce Road in Annan (grid reference NY192 667). Throughout the 19th century and into the 1990's it was a private garden which had been partly landscaped. The site is designated as an Ancient Monument and was purchased by Dumfries & Galloway Council some years ago and is now retained as part of the Everholm Park. Within the site a number of mature broadleaves namely Oak, Ash and Sycamore were established around a hundred years ago. Planting of the steep sides of the Motte and Bailey was carried out about 25 / 30 years ago (around the mid 1970's) with a variety of species, both coniferous and broadleaves. This planting has resulted in the loss of the outline of the site from the Westerly approach into Annan. The tree cover has also resulted in loss of ground vegetation, particularly on the Motte resulting in the increased susceptibility to soil erosion and the potential loss of archaeological interest.

Site Meeting :- Attended by

- Mr Nic Coombey, Solway Heritage
- Ms Anne Ramsbottom, Museum Curator Annandale & Eskdale,
- Mr Roderick McCallum and Mrs Norma Oxley Friends of Annandale & Eskdale Museum Committee.
- Mr Peter Atkinson Kingan Forestry Ltd report author.

The purpose of the meeting, held on Wednesday 8th February 2006 was to walk the area and discuss the outline of the proposals in general terms and look in detail at the present standing trees. Identify areas where the objective of the project could be achieved within the constraints of operating within a Scheduled Ancient Monument site and public access considerations. The large public car park and sports complex to the Western side of the Motte and Bailey pose particular operational difficulties.

Thorough planning and execution of works particularly around this area will be needed, to minimise the risk to members of the public.

Detail of Site Survey :-

- **Steep Banking of the Bailey:-**

The Western edge adjoining the public car park. It is estimated approximately 25 years ago a mixture of conifers and broadleaved trees were planted along the length of the banking with additional shrub planting carried out approximately 8 - 10 years ago (it is considered, unnecessary to list each individual species). One can only speculate as to the reasons for this planting, however protection of the banking from erosion due to water runoff and the creation of a barrier to prevent public access, will undoubtedly have been a major consideration.

It is recommended, removal of one group of Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) approximately forty five trees and three small Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). The remaining three Horse Chestnut should have some lower branches removed to balance their appearance.

Thin out the majority of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) Birch (*Betula pendula*) and fell one dead Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*). This operation will significantly open up the view, both from and to the Motte and Bailey.

It was decided that the majority of shrubs adjacent to the car park at the bottom of the banking would be retained to continue to stabilise the bank and hinder public access up the banking, to the flat topped Bailey.

Some planting, within the gaps created by the felling would be advisable. It is suggested this planting should be with low ground cover shrub type plants. Possible species could include,

- Shrub Roses i.e. Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) Red Leaved Rose (*Rosa rubrifolia*) Ramanas Rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
- Origan Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)
- Black Thorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Berberis (*Berberis Atropurpurea* or *Berberis Thunbergii*)
- Dogwood (*Cornus alba* or *sanguinea*)

This is not a definitive list, many others could be suggested to meet the objectives. It is recommended that a proportion of the plant species should be of a “spiky” nature to help restrict public access up the steep bank side, preventing excess wear and possible erosion of the site.

- **Foot Path :-** Starting at the North of the Sports Complex. (Picture 1 a,b & c) :-

The short section of Privet (*Ligustrum*) hedging approximately 35m in length and four small Wych Elm to the rear of the hall will be removed to allow better access and to open the view of the Motte from a Northerly aspect.

On the North side of the path close to its start is a large mature Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) (Picture 2 a,b & c), there are visible signs of decay from a broken branch approx 4m from the ground. With the potential for further decay it would be advisable to remove this tree.

The path rises steeply through a Rhododendrum avenue (Picture 3) with a group of Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and two European Larch (*Larix deciduas*) planted on the steep side of the Motte. It is suggested that these are removed to allow the Rhododendrum to receive more light and develop. A Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) is situated on the path edge which needs some of its lower branches removed which are encroaching on the path.

To the North of the path at this point and running to the boundary of the site, the area comprises of a mixture of mature trees and shrubs which provide a valuable screen for the residential properties adjoining the site. It is intended to retain this screen as it is at present.

A large Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) should be retained with some tree surgery works carried out to reduce its crown and balance its overall appearance.

On the Eastern side of the Motte a group of four Cherries (*Prunus avium*) have been planted. As this species differs from the existing mature trees in this location, it is suggested that they be removed.

To the South of the Motte the path splits (Picture 4), giving access to the Bailey and views over the play park and river to the West.

Continuing round the path the entrance gate, of wrought iron construction (Picture 5a) provides access onto Bruce Street. Some tidying up of vegetation around the gate is necessary to provide a more welcoming entrance in the site.

Across from the entrance, to the right, is a Large Leaved Lime (*Tilia platyhyllus*) (Picture 5b). The appearance from the entrance gate could be enhanced considerably by removing some of its lower branches and sucker growth at the base.

Slightly to the left when entering the site (Picture 6), almost hidden at present with under growth, are a set of steps leading to the flat area of the Bailey. This vegetation, consisting mainly of Laurel, Privet and Beech will be cut back to clearly mark the route onto the Bailey. At the top of the steps is a large Horse Chestnut tree which needs its lower branches and some sucker growth removed. There is also a small Sycamore which should be removed. It is hoped that once this work has been done it will encourage visitors to use the recognised route onto the Bailey rather than walking up the bank at the nearest point to the gate, causing damage to the raised bank. Some work on the steps would be advisable.

The path runs down the boundary wall/hedge with Bruce Street and Battery Street (Picture 7). Along this length the path is rather narrow with a steep bank onto the Bailey. A light thinning out of the vegetation on the banking and some pruning back of any branches which are encroaching and hindering access, will take place. However care must be taken to retain the screen between the residential properties of Bruce Street and Battery Street.

As the path nears the car park, at the Southern end of the Bailey (Picture 8), several large Sycamore trees require some surgery to remove some of their lower branches, which are starting to encroach onto the path and boundary wall.

On the steep banking of the Bailey, a proportion of conifers planted in the mid 1970's will be removed.

As the path terminates at the entrance and egress to the car park (Picture 9 a,b,c) consideration must be given to public safety.

- **Bailey :-**

It is hoped that the flat area on the top could become an outdoor performance area. A place where locals and visitors could enjoy the views across the River Annan to the West. The area could also provide an ideal picnic site and place of quiet reflection.

At present this area is primarily used by dog owners as a toilet for their pets, therefore little or no public enjoyment can be had.

On three sides of the area Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*) (Picture 10 a,b) has been planted, resulting in very limited views, creating a rather confined and oppressive space. In addition to the poplar trees a Privet hedging (*Ligustrum vulgare*) has been planted further restricting the view. Behind this hedge a protective fence has been erected, consisting of wire sheep netting attached to wooden posts. It is presumed this was erected as a safety barrier or security measure, perhaps by the previous owners.

It is proposed to remove all of the poplars. The privet hedge and fence on the Western edge will also be removed. This operation will significantly open up the views to the West and enhance the aesthetic value of the site.

Consideration must be given to erecting a safety barrier or fence once the privet hedging has been removed, as children could easily fall or slip down the steep banking towards the car park. If a fence or barrier is not erected it may encourage members of the public to clamber up from the car park to reach the Bailey causing damage to the bank.

Erection of a replacement fence/barrier on the line of the existing fence could detract from the objectives of having an unrestricted view Westwards over the

river. It may be possible to site the line of any new fence/barrier slightly over the banking thus reducing the obstruction. Guidance from the Dumfries & Galloway Councils Safety Officer should be gained, in this regard.

To the South, in addition to the removal of a proportion of the conifers as mentioned under Foot Path above, some additional thinning out of the broadleaves on the banking will be carried out to open the view towards the Town Hall. This particular operation needs to be treated with care to avoid opening up views from the area too much.

- **Motte Summit (Picture 11) :-** The tree cover consists primarily of mature broadleaves
 - Oak (*Quercus petraea*)
 - Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)
 - Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)

With the exception of one visible dead branch on an Oak, which should be removed, the remaining trees appear healthy, therefore no works are proposed.

One immature sycamore will be removed, which is being suppressed by the larger mature trees.

Two areas of erosion, one on the narrow path leading back to the sports hall and the other associated with the steps onto the top of the Motte, need to be addressed.

It is important to maintain the tree cover on this area to help prevent any further erosion.

Parkland Trees:-

A small number of trees planted in the Everholm Park and outwith the Motte and Baily will have a minimum effect on the view towards the site from the Westerly approach into Annan (Picture 12 a b). The approach from Brydekirk (Picture 13) will be affected more, due to the planting along the River bank. It may be appropriate to discuss with the local Council if the removal of some of these trees should be considered.

Proposed Works

As the clearance works being proposed will include major tree surgery and felling these operations **must** be executed by professional personnel with the necessary qualification and requisite certificates of competence for the various operations and equipment needed to execute the works.

A suggestion, that perhaps local volunteer involvement could be harnessed in respect of part of the works. It is **strongly** advised, that in as far as the clearance operation is concerned this must be carried out by competent personnel. However it would be possible to use local volunteers for some of the planting works, if thought appropriate.

It will be necessary to close off parts of the site from members of the public whilst certain operations are carried out, on grounds of safety. It is envisaged that any restrictions, would be limited to working hours.

This type of operation would be of interest to local companies specialising in tree surgery and timber clearance operations. Once firm plans have been approved identifying the extent of the felling and surgery required a schedule of works and tender document should be drawn up and sent to interested parties, to submit a fixed price for the operation.

Identification of Trees for Removal:-

All trees to be felled will be clearly marked with aerosol tree marking paint, (Soppec, Sylvamark, Fluo Marker is recommended) Trees which require surgery will be identified on a site plan, with a written explanation of the work required.

Work Method :-

- Tree surgery operations. The removal of limbs will be carried out using cutting equipment which may involve the use of chainsaws and or manual loppers or sawing devices. If it is not possible on safety grounds or impractical to allow them to fall to the ground, the limbs will be lowered down from the crown using ropes.
- Tree felling, will be carried out using chainsaws of an appropriate bar length to accommodate the tree to be felled.
- Disposal of branches and larger timber: - Chipping of the branches is recommended as the most appropriate and cost effective method of disposal. This operation will be carried out by portable chipping machine either powered by a tractor (type machine) or a unit with its own power supply. Resulting chipping would be removed from the site. Arrangements could be made for this material to be made available to the local Parks Department, if considered a suitable material for composting or use as mulch.

Larger timber would be removed from site. This should be made a condition of contract

It is not envisaged that any timber of value would be produced from this operation to offset the costs of the work.

- Access for machinery, particularly for chipping of brash is limited by the width of the gate from Bruce Street and by the internal paths. As a consequence the size and therefore the efficiency of such equipment will be affected.

- Advice from the regulative authorities i.e. Historic Scotland will be needed, as to the use of machines on the site. This element of the work will need to be clearly laid out within the invitation to tender for the works.
- Consideration to grinding out the poplar stumps on the Bailey should be given.

Risk Assessment and Work Method Statement:-

- It will be a condition within the tendering process that the successful party will draw up a detailed risk assessment and method statement, which will form part of the contract.
- There is a statutory requirement, on the part of the organisation awarding the works to point out any known hazards which could effect the work site. i.e. over head power lines, public access etc. This information would need to be included within the invitation to tender.

Consent:-

To work within the site, consent will need to be obtained from Historic Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway Council both as the Planning Authority and owners of the site.

A felling licence will need to be obtained from the Forestry Commission to allow tree felling works.

Estimate of Cost :-

It is estimated the cost of works as indicated within the report will be in the region of £ 9,000.00 excluding VAT and management time.

This is an indicative figure for budgeting purposes only. Until the extent of the work has been quantified a more accurate figure cannot be indicated.

The information within this report is given as guidance only and does not in any way give definitive advice on the health, stability or any other matter in relation to the trees within the site, being safe in any respects.