

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY  
NURSERY LANDSCAPE WORKS  
DATA STRUCTURE REPORT

PROJECT 2990

carried out  
on behalf of  
Robert Gordon University/Ironside Farrar Ltd

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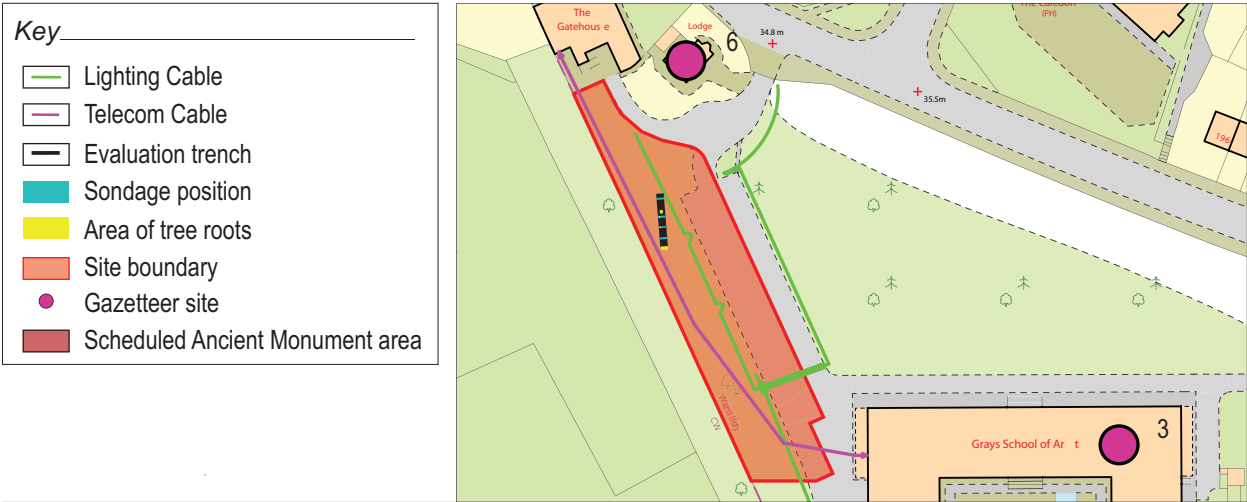
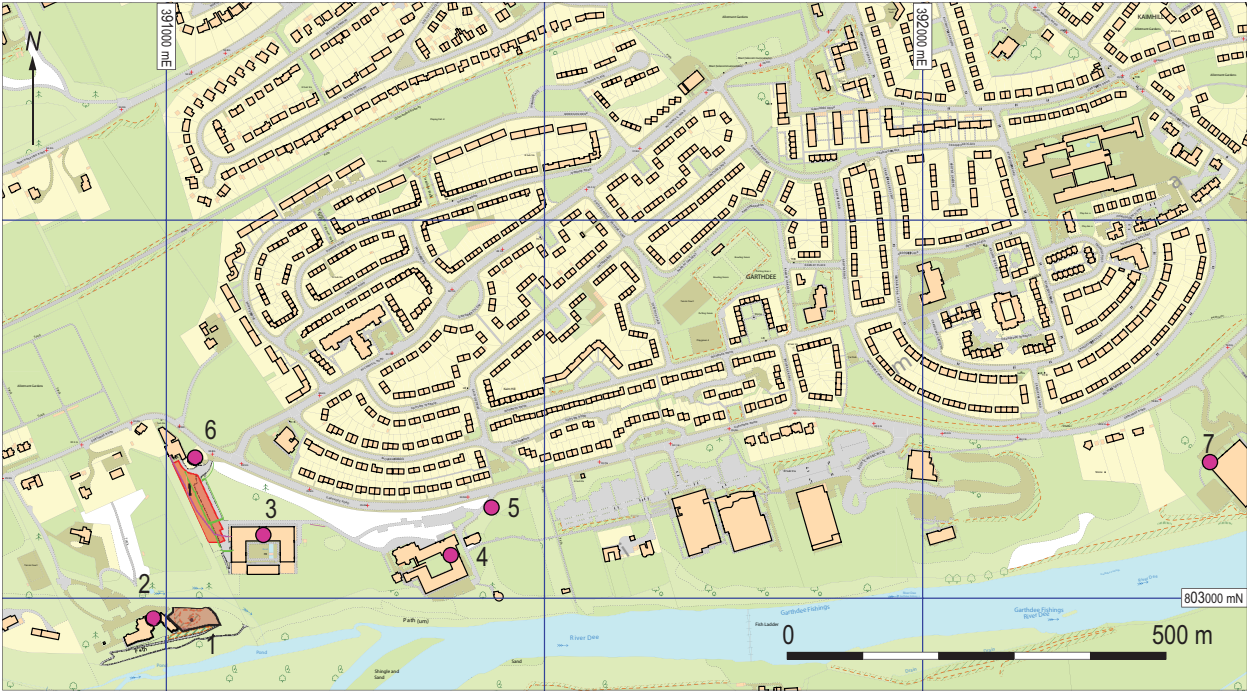
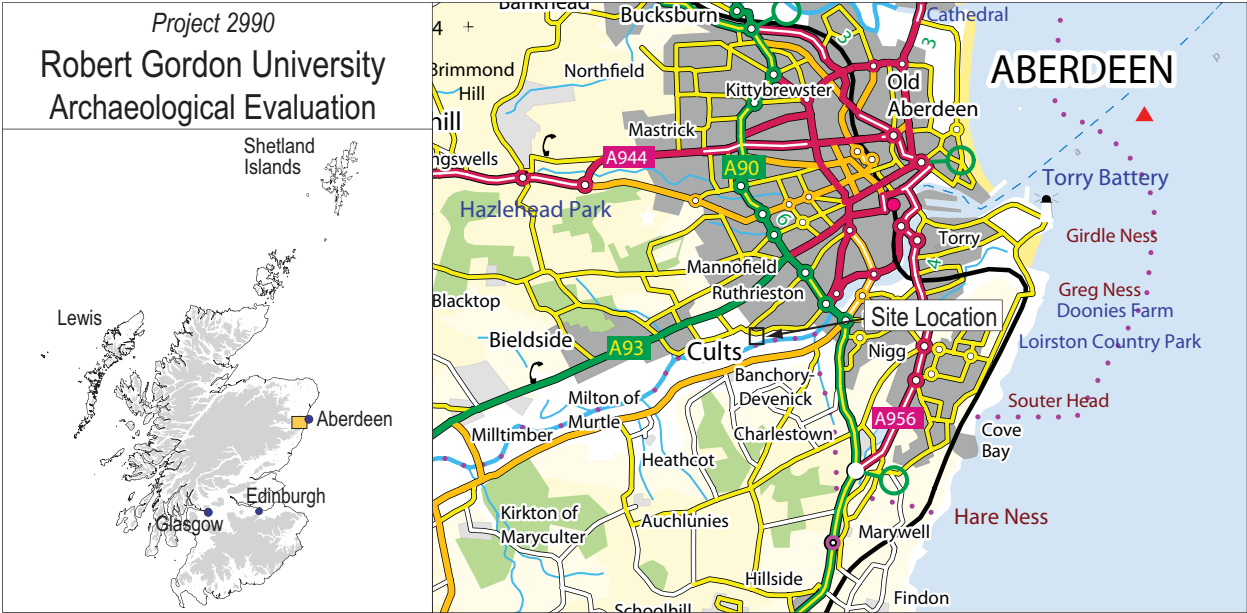
PROJECT 2990

by  
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This document has been prepared in accordance with GUARD standard operating procedures.

Approved by: ..... Date: 5 November 2009  
Dr John Atkinson





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Figure 1: Site location.

0 100 m

## 1.0 Executive Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD). One hand-excavated trench, comprising a 2% sample of the proposed RGU Nursery development area, revealed that this area had been heavily landscaped, probably during the construction of the adjacent car park. No significant archaeological remains were encountered. It is therefore advised that no further archaeological work will be required by Aberdeen Council.

## 2.0 Introduction

Between 5 and 9 October 2009 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by GUARD on behalf of Ironside Farrar Ltd, acting on behalf of the Robert Gordon University to support a planning application for the construction of a new nursery.

## 3.0 Site Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located at the west side of the car park area (NGR: NJ 9106 0313) north-west of Gray's School of Art in Robert Gordon University's Garthdee Campus (Figure 1). The proposed development area lies within the local authority area of Aberdeen City Council.

The underlying drift geology consists of Blairdaff Moraine Formation (BDMO), while the solid geology consists of unknown bedrock known as Aberdeen Formation (<http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/bgsmapper/map.action?scale=bgs25k>).

## 4.0 Archaeological Background

National and local monument records for the area surrounding the proposed development site (Figure 1) reveal a number of archaeological sites:

- Site 1: Pitfoddel's Castle (NMRS NJ90SW 1 );
- Site 2: Norwood Hall Hotel (NMRS NJ90SW 43; SMR: NJ90SW 0423);
- Site 3: Gray's School of Art (NMRS NJ90SW 87.03);
- Site 4: Garthdee House (NMRS NJ90SW 87 );
- Site 5: East Lodge (NMRS NJ90SW 87.02);
- Site 6: West Lodge (NMRS NJ90SW 87.01);
- Site 7: Neolithic House, Garthdee Road (NMRS: NJ90SW 268; SMR: NJ90SW 0429).

The site of Pitfoddel's Castle (Site 1) lies to the south of the proposed development area and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Probably built by the Murrays of Colbyn between 1389 and 1397, the barony of Pitfoddel de novo passed to the Rede family in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and then to the Menzies during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Pitfoddels appears in maps of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Pont, Gordon and Blaeu, but is not apparent in 18<sup>th</sup> century maps such as Roy and Taylor & Skinner. The natural mound that comprises the site, is depicted on maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Thomson & Johnson and Robertson, and in some detail in the First Edition map of 1869, which first depicts it as the site of Pitfoddels Castle. Considered to be a probable motte and bailey, it has since been heavily truncated by landscaping and development of the adjacent Norwood Hall Hotel (Site 2). The remaining sites around the proposed development area have more recent origins, Norwood Hall (Site 2), a B listed building, dates from 1861; Gray's School of Art building (Site 3) dates from 1884; Garthdee House (Site 4), now the Sutherland School of Architecture, and its East (Site 5) and West (Site 6) Lodges, all B listed buildings, date from 1872. Garthdee Estate was gifted by Thomas Scott Sutherland to the then Aberdeen School of architecture in 1956.

Historic maps, such as Roy's map of 1747-55, Taylor & Skinner's map of 1776, Robertson's map of 1822 and Ordnance Survey maps from 1869 onwards indicate no previous structures within the footprint of the proposed development area.

An archaeological survey was carried out of Pitfoddell's Castle in 1992 but recorded no traces of a bailey, defences or any stonework related to the castle. An archaeological evaluation was also carried out within the grounds of Norwood Hall Hotel (Site 2) in 2007, but encountered no archaeological remains. Archaeological evaluations in 2006, in advance of the redevelopment of the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture (Site 4), revealed no archaeological features or finds in the area surrounding the buildings, previous landscaping and development in the 1960s having apparently removed the original ground surface. An archaeological evaluation in 2004 and subsequent excavation in 2005 in advance of the David Lloyd Sports Centre development (Site 7) also on the north bank of the river Dee, a short distance to the east of the proposed development area, revealed a Neolithic house radiocarbon dated to the early fourth millennium BC.

The evaluation thus had the potential to encounter archaeological remains related to occupation of the site of Pitfoddell's Castle during the medieval period, or possible riverside occupation during the prehistoric period.

## 5.0 Aims and Objectives

The project objectives are:

- to establish whether or not significant archaeological remains survive within that part of the proposed development area boundaries to be subject to disturbance

and, if present:

- to establish so far as possible, their condition, structure, survival, significance and date.

All works were to comply with the Institute for Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct, to the satisfaction of the Aberdeen City Council Keeper of Archaeology.



*Plate 1:*

*Hand-excavation of trench in progress.*



## 6.0 Methodology (Figure 1)

A trench measuring 15 m by 2 m, comprising 2% of the area to be developed, was hand-excavated. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.5 - 0.6 m. However, since the surface of the subsoil horizon was not encountered after cleaning the trench, four sondages were excavated in order to expose the subsoil. The sondages were excavated to a depth of 1.2 m on the west side (where no spoil was concentrated) and to a maximum of 1 m depth on the east side. Digital photographs were taken of the trench, its sections as well as the excavated sondages and their sections. Measured section drawings of the trench and the four sondages were also completed. All contexts encountered were recorded by written description and the presence of modern artefacts was noted. Some finds were also catalogued and collected as a representation of what was found within the trench. Finally the location of the trench was surveyed.

## 7.0 Results

All the deposits encountered during the excavation of the trench were interpreted as levelling or landscaping material. The topsoil, composed of grey brown silty sand (001), was a mixed deposit of topsoil and tumbled material with frequent inclusions of modern debris and tree roots. Re-deposited natural white sand (002) was encountered beneath the topsoil. Another re-deposited natural orangey brown sand (003) in which frequent rusted metal finds were found also underlay the topsoil and (002). A layer of hard core material (004) was encountered in the first sondage, just below a deposit of black brown sandy silt (006) deposit that underlay deposit (003). These two deposits (004) and (006) were only found in this first sondage. A burnt deposit with frequent inclusions of wood and paper material (005) was found along the middle area of the trench, also just beneath (003). This deposit too appeared to be dumped material used for levelling or/and landscaping the area. In the rest of sondages a grey brown silty sand (007), possible old topsoil or levelling material highly disturbed by roots was found overlying orangey brown silty sand subsoil (008) and beneath (003) and (005). This last deposit appeared at a depth of 1.2 m in the north sondage while at the south end it appeared at a depth of 0.75 m.



Plate 2:  
*Excavated trench and sondages.*

## 8.0 Discussion

The evaluation encountered no significant archaeological features. The excavated trench revealed that this area had been exposed to substantial landscaping and ground levelling probably related to the modern development of the car park or surrounding buildings. As noted above (section 4.0), a previous evaluation conducted in the vicinity (Site 4) also revealed that landscaping and development works had disturbed the original ground and any potential archaeological remains.

## 9.0 Recommendations

No further archaeological intervention is recommended for the proposed development area, as no significant archaeological remains were encountered during this evaluation. The final decision on the need for further work, however, resides solely with the Planning Authority and they should be consulted before any further development takes place.

## 10.0 Acknowledgements

GUARD thanks Tina Muldowney from Ironside Farrar Ltd and Judith Stones, Aberdeen City Council Keeper of Archaeology, for their advice, and David Williams from Robert Gordon University Estates and Buildings who allowed the field team to use the parking and welfare facilities at Gray's School of Art. Many thanks to Maureen Kilpatrick and Fraser MacRae for their hard work. Ronan Toolis managed the project for GUARD, John Kiely and Aileen Maule gave technical support and the report was desk-top published by Jen Cochrane.



## 11.0 Appendices

### 11.1 *List of Contexts*

<i>Area</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Interpretation/Relationships</i>
TR1	001	Grey brown silty sand	Mixed topsoil and trampling deposit
TR1	002	White sand	Levelling deposit
TR1	003	Orangey brown sand	Levelling deposit
TR1	004	Hard core	Made up ground
TR1	005	Very black silt	Dumped deposit
TR1	006	Brown black sandy silt	Made up ground
TR1	007	Grey brown silty sand	Levelling deposit/old topsoil
TR1	008	Orangey brown silty sand	Possible subsoil

### 11.2 *List of Finds*

<i>Area</i>	<i>Find No</i>	<i>Context No</i>	<i>No of Pieces</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Description</i>
TR1	001	001	1	Glass	One clear shred
TR1	002	001	5	Ceramic	Various ceramic shreds
TR1	003	003	2	Iron	One hinge and one nail

### 11.3 *List of Photographs*

#### *Digital Photographs*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Taken From</i>
1	General shot of trench after de-turfing	N
2	General shot of trench after de-turfing with Gray School of Art on the background	N
3	General shot of trench after de-turfing with Gray School of Art on the background	NW
4	General shot of trench after de-turfing	S
5	General shot of trench after de-turfing	E
6	Shot of trench post topsoil removal	S
7	Shot of section (S end of trench) after removal of topsoil	E
8	Shot of North facing section in central area of trench- made up ground above sand	N
9	Shot of North facing section in central area of trench- made up ground above sand	N
10	Shot of tree stump in North end of trench	S
11	Shot of North end of trench	N
12	Metal object on (003)	N
13	Metal object on (003)	N
14	Working shot	N
15	Working shot	N
16	Trench after cleaning (post-ex)	N
17	Trench after cleaning (post-ex)	N
18	Trench after cleaning North end	E
19	Trench after cleaning North end	E
20	Trench after cleaning shows tree stump	E
21	Trench after cleaning shows black area	E
22	Trench after cleaning shows black area and tree stump	E
23	Trench after cleaning shows black area	E
24	Trench after cleaning shows black area	E
25	Trench after cleaning shows black area	E
26	Trench after cleaning shows black area	E
27	Trench after cleaning	E
28	Trench after cleaning	E
29	Trench after cleaning South end	E
30	Trench after cleaning South end	E
31	Trench after cleaning (post-ex)	S

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Taken From</i>
32	Trench after cleaning (post-ex)	S
33	General post-ex shot of sondage 1 showing hardcore levelling	W
34	Detail of section of sondage 1	W
35	Slot 2 post-ex shot showing old topsoil and natural subsoil	W
36	Slot 2 showing West facing section excavated to 1 m depth	W
37	Slot 2 showing East facing section excavated to natural subsoil	E
38	Slot 3 showing South facing section	S
39	Slot 3 post-ex (general shot)	W
40	Slot 3 showing East facing section (1.2 m deep)	E
41	General post-ex shot of sondage 4 showing natural	E
42	Detail of East facing section of sondage 4	E
43	Oblique shot of West facing section of trench at North end	SW
44	Oblique shot of West facing section of trench at North end	SW
45	Oblique shot of West facing section of trench at central area	SW
46	Oblique shot of West facing section of trench at South end	SW
47	Oblique shot of West facing section of trench at South end	SW
48	Post-ex shot of trench (South end)	S
49	Post-ex shot of trench (South end)	S
50	Post-ex shot of trench (North end)	N
51	Post-ex shot of trench (North end)	N
52	Post-ex and backfilling	N
53	Post-ex and backfilling	NE

#### 11.4 DES Report

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Aberdeen City Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Gray's School of Art Car Park, Robert Gordon University
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	GUARD 2990
<b>PARISH:</b>	Peterculter
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):</b>	Iraia Arabaolaza
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	GUARD
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Archaeological evaluation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NJ90SW 87.03
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Evaluation
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR</b> (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NJ 9106 0313
<b>START DATE</b> (this season)	5 October 2009
<b>END DATE</b> (this season)	9 October 2009
<b>PREVIOUS WORK</b> (incl. DES ref.)	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by GUARD prior to the proposed development of a nursery on the Robert Gordon University Garthdee Campus, due to the proximity of Pitfoddel's Castle Scheduled Ancient Monument (NMRS NJ90SW 1) and the discovery of a Neolithic house during a previous evaluation a short distance to the east (NMRS NJ90SW 268). The trial trench, amounting to a 2% sample of the proposed development area, was hand-excavated due to the location of live services. The trench revealed that this area had been heavily landscaped, probably during the construction of the adjacent car park. No archaeological remains of any significance were encountered.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS.
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Robert Gordon University
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	GUARD, Gregory Building, Lilybank Gardens, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QQ
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	i.arabaolaza@archaeology.gla.ac.uk