

# Archaeological Watching Brief

## Skinner's Burn, Brechin



Site works looking North



1<sup>st</sup> March 2010

## **Introduction (Illus 1)**

This archaeological watching brief was carried out for A and J Stephen Ltd to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this sewer upgrading, as noted by Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service (advisers to Angus Council) in the Terms of Reference to Planning Application 08/008181/FUL dated November 2009. The watching brief was undertaken by the author on 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, weather conditions were generally dry and cold.

## **Archaeological Background**

Although there were no sites recorded in the area of the proposed sewer renewal as it lay just below the Eastern side of Brechin Castle and at the foot of the Bridge Street / Back Braes backlands it was felt that a watching brief was worthwhile. The name Skinner's Burn also suggested that there may have been an early tannery nearby.

## **Watching Brief (Illus 2, 4)**

The watching brief concentrated on the monitoring of all below ground excavations on both the eastern and western sides of Skinner's Burn.

### *Eastern Side of Burn (Illus 5)*

The excavations on the eastern side of the burn exposed the course of an existing concrete sewer pipe to a depth of at least 1.2m. The foundation trench for this pipe took up most of the excavated area leaving a very narrow corridor of undisturbed deposit on its western side. This deposit was made up of a brown silty clay with abundant stones and appeared to be the fill of the foundation trench for a mortar bonded stone wall which was 0.56m wide and ran along the eastern side of the burn. This material produced a single rimsherd from a brown glazed red earthenware pottery bowl probably of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century date. The formation level for the new pipe bottomed out on top of this deposit. Skinner's Burn broke through at this point in the operation limiting the amount of recording that was possible.

## **Interpretation**

The stone wall encountered on the eastern side of the burn is almost certainly the one marked in red on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map as forming the boundary of the foot of the Bridge Street backlands at this point (Illus 3). The single sherd of pottery recovered from its foundation trench would suggest a Post Medieval date for its construction.

### *Western side of the burn (Illus 6)*

The excavations on the western side of the burn opened a trench 1.10m wide by 1.25m deep to enable the insertion of steel gabions. This trench encountered a mortar bonded stone wall 0.56m wide, to its West lay a foundation trench that was filled with a mixed brown silty clay and stone and produced no finds. The formation level for the gabions on this side of the burn bottomed out at this point.

### **Interpretation**

The stone wall encountered on the western side of the burn is the one marked in black on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map (Illus 3). No finds were recovered to aid the dating of the construction of this feature.

### **Conclusions**

This watching brief found no structures, deposits or finds associated with Brechin Castle nor anything that could be associated with the name Skinner's Burn. Limited evidence was recorded on the eastern side of the burn for the date of the construction of the stone boundary wall for the backland rigs running back off Bridge Street, this feature also served as the boundary wall for Skinner's Burn at this point. The foundation trench for the stone wall on the western side of the burn produced no finds.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Hugh Davidson and Craig of Martin Allen Construction and Hamish MacKay of Stephen Homes Ltd for their help and interest during this project.

### **Illustration List**

Illus 1 Site location (based on Ordnance Survey map © Crown Copyright 2009. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

Illus 2 Location of excavated trenches on either side of Skinner's Burn, Brechin scale 1:250

Illus 3 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of c 1860 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Stone walls located during watching brief indicated by arrows.

Illus 4 Site looking South with machine excavation beginning on West side of Skinners Burn

Illus 5 Excavated area to West of Skinners Burn looking North showing existing sewer pipe and wall and foundation trench in section

Illus 6 Excavated area on Eastern side of Skinner's Burn looking South

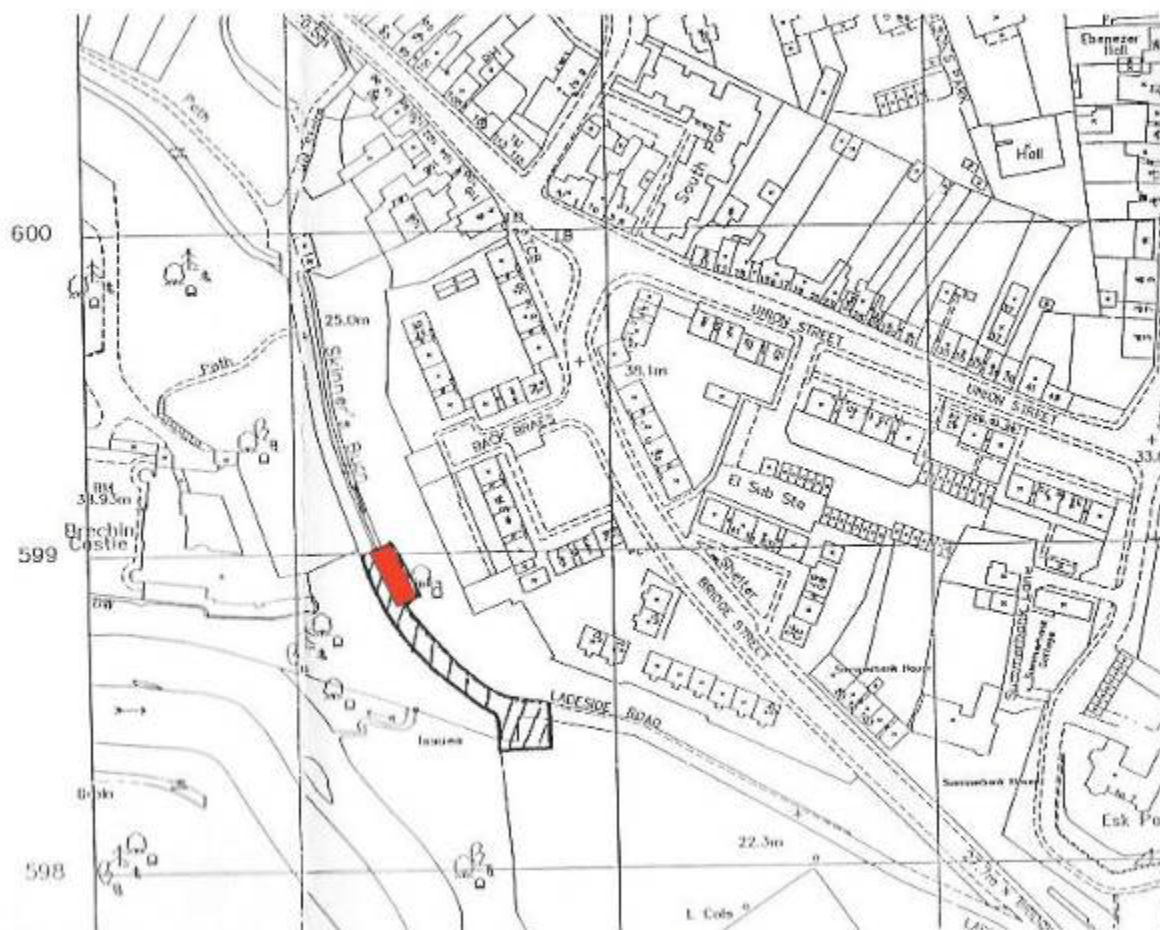


Illustration 1 Site location (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2009. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

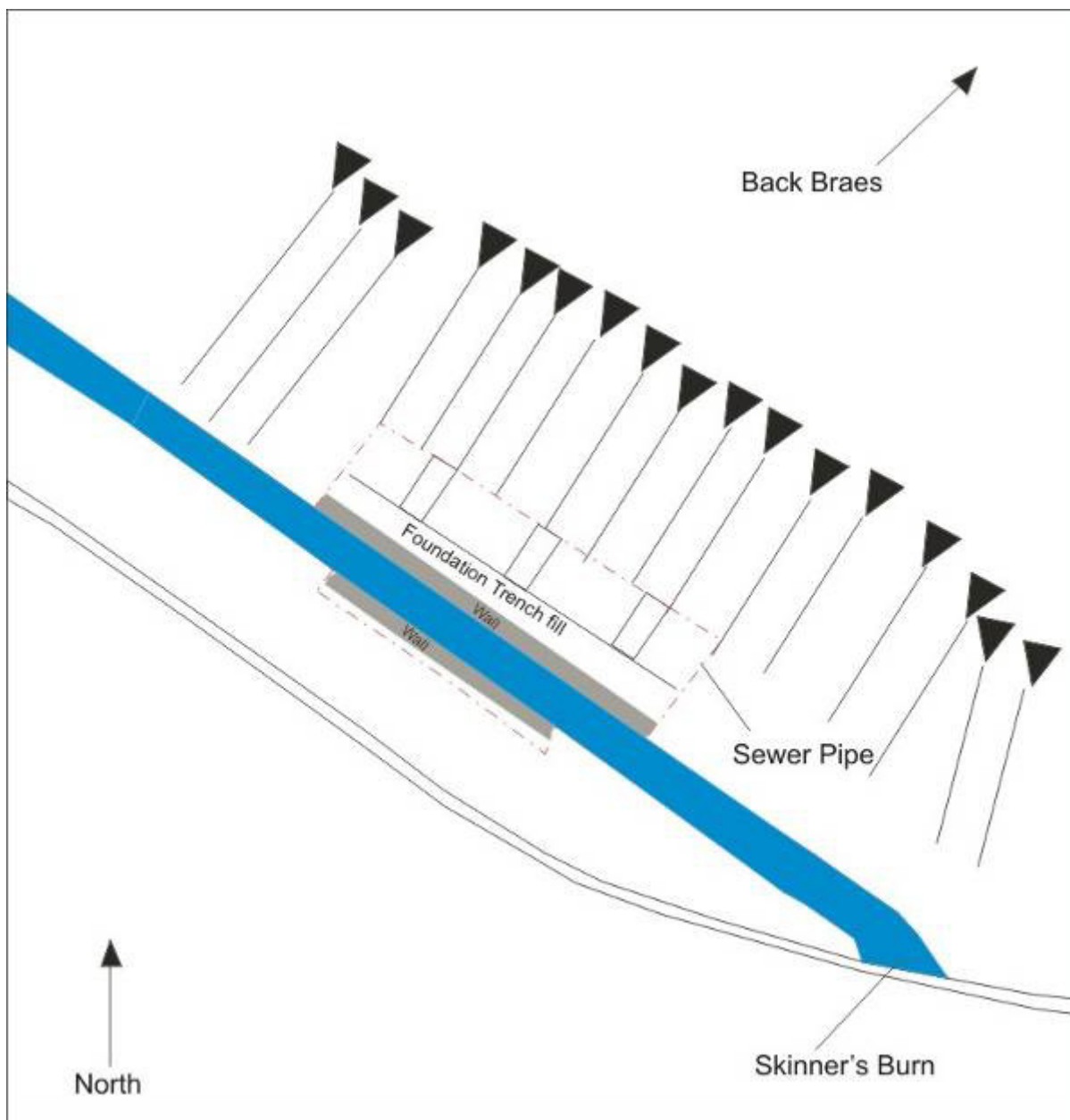
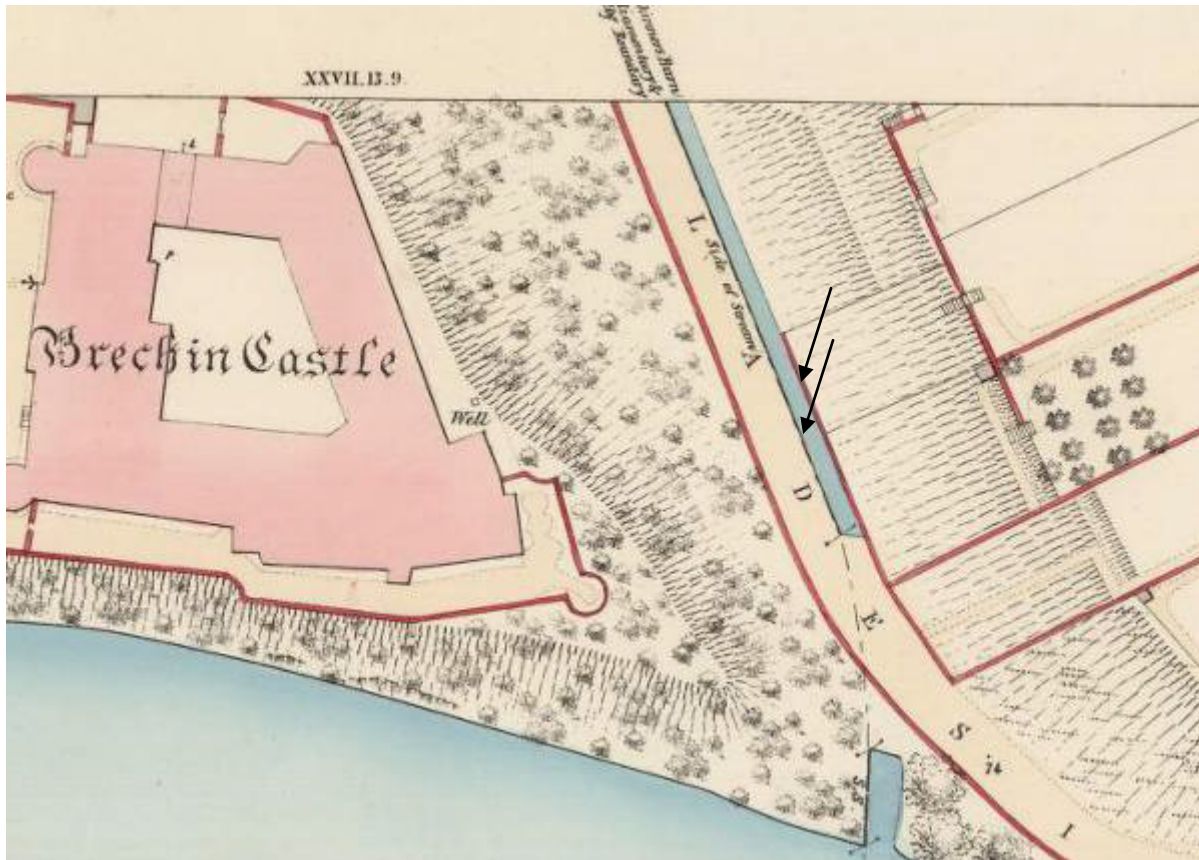


Illustration 2 Location of excavated trenches on either side of Skinner's Burn, Brechin scale 1:250





**Illustration 3** 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of c 1860 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Stone walls located during watching brief indicated by arrows.



**Illustration 4** Site looking South with machine excavation beginning on West side of Skinner's Burn



**Illustration 5** Excavated area to West of Skinner's Burn looking North showing existing sewer pipe and wall and foundation trench in section





**Illustration 6** Excavated area on Eastern side of Skinner's Burn looking South

## Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Angus
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Skinner's Burn, Brechin
PROJECT CODE:	BREC01
PARISH:	Brechin
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Derek Hall
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Derek Hall, archaeologist and ceramic specialist
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	N0 5985 5986
START DATE	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
END DATE	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	Below ground excavations for sewer renewal adjacent to Skinner's Burn in Brechin located the foundation trench for a stone wall on the Western side of the burn. This is marked on the 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map as the boundary of backland rigs running off Bridge Street. A single sherd of brown glazed redware was recovered from the fill of this trench probably dating to the late 18 <sup>th</sup> early 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Excavations on the Eastern side of the burn located the foundation trench of the stone wall on that side, no finds were recovered.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	A and J Stephen Ltd
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	N/A
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	NMRS
EMAIL ADDRESS:	Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk