

Archaeological Standing Building Survey  
Parkside  
Arbuthnott  
ABERDEENSHIRE  
INTERIM REPORT  
LK06



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STANDING  
BUILDING SURVEY  
PARKSIDE  
ARBUTHNOTT**

**LK06**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A ruinous house, possibly a dower house connected with the Arbuthnott Estate, was surveyed in advance of the construction of a new dwelling house, as the first part of a programme of archaeological work to include a watching brief on groundworks. The following is an interim report on the survey, which will be combined with the watching brief report once complete. The ruins appeared to represent a fairly high status building, with an associated enclosure, of at least mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century date and possibly considerably earlier. The survey was conducted on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2021.*

# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Harford-Cross Architects commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological standing building survey and watching brief on the site of a planned new build dwelling house at Parkside, Arbuthnott. The proposed development area is an open field containing a standing ruin, centred on NGR NO 79770 75861. The present report is an interim, covering only the survey. A final report will combine this with the watching brief at a later date. The survey (site code LK06) was undertaken on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, in fine weather conditions. The requirement was to conduct a Level 1 survey, as per ALGAO guidelines.

The work (survey and watching brief) was designed to satisfy the archaeological condition on development application reference APP/2021/0927.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this investigation was to create a permanent photographic, illustrated and narrative record of the building in advance of development, taking account of current setting and condition, form, function and fabric and noting features of interest and any phases of construction and use.

## **1.3 Reporting**

The present document has been prepared as an interim report on this survey. A copy will be sent to Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (ACAS). A final report will combine the standing building survey with the watching brief (to be completed). Copies of the final report will be sent to the client, The National Record of the Historic Environment at Historic Environment Scotland, and Aberdeenshire Historic Environment Record.

## **1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues**

This standing building survey is the initial part of a programme of archaeological work designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

## **1.5 Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Peter Harford-Cross for his assistance and guidance throughout this project. Mrs Clare Small funded this survey.

# **2 Details of Work**

## **2.1 The Site (Illus 1)**

Parkside, including both an inhabited house and a ruin, lies a short distance NE of the B967 road through Arbuthnott. The development area is a sub-rectangle of steeply sloping hillside with a triangular extension to the SW including access. The gradient is generally from NE-SW. The standing ruin occupies a more gently sloping plateau below the crest of the high ground, into which it is cut on the N and E sides. It

overlooks the inhabited cottage of Parkside from a distance of c.100m. A number of mature deciduous trees stand in close proximity to the ruin.

## **2.2 Archaeological Potential**

The planned development site includes the standing, ruinous remains of a house/dower house or steading (Aberdeenshire HER site NO77NE0052), as well as being in proximity to the site of a possible medieval manor (NO77NE0034). It is possible that the ruins are of earlier than 18th Century date, while the buried remains of the manor house may extend into the development area and may be impacted by the works.

## **2.3 Archaeological Method**

A rapid desk-based survey of online sources was conducted, primarily of map evidence held by the National Map Library of Scotland. Aberdeenshire HER and the NRHE were also consulted (the latter holds no records for the site).

Following the DBA, a Level 1 Standing Building Survey was carried out to create a permanent record. This comprised: a full photographic record of the ruin in its current setting, with all main external and internal elevations and features of interest; annotated measured plan and elevation drawings of the ruin, together with location maps at appropriate scales; a narrative account, taking in the form, fabric, condition and function of the building, together with features of interest, measurements of key features and details of any evidence of phases of construction and use. The survey also included associated linear features (the remains of banks and dykes).

## 2.4 Results of Investigations

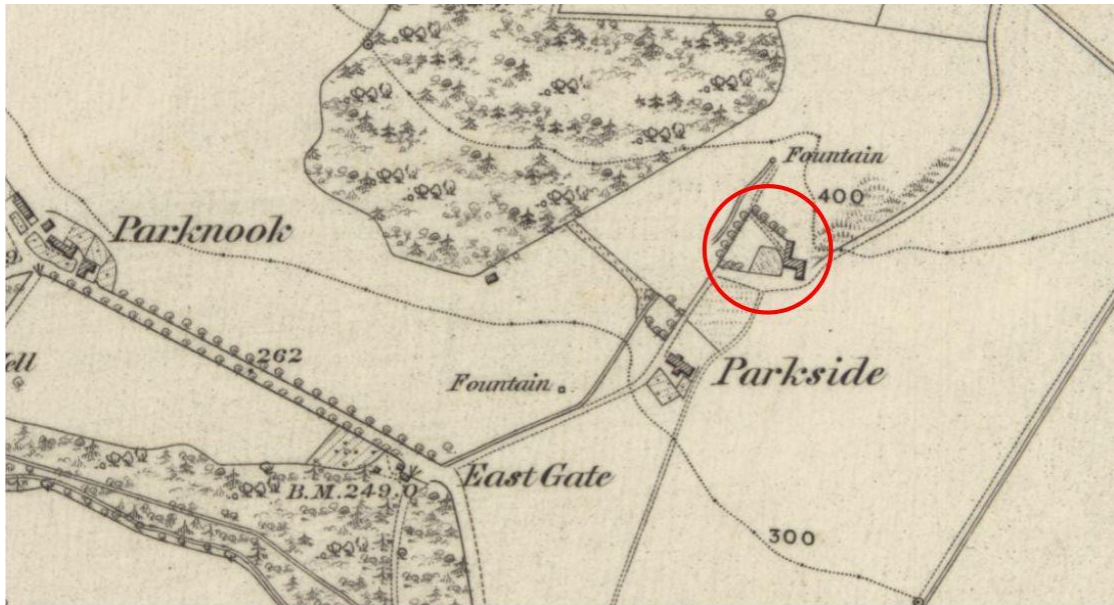
### Map Evidence

Timothy Pont's county maps of Scotland (1583-1614) unfortunately do not cover the area of Arbuthnott, while maps by Robert & James Gordon (c.1636-1652), Joan Blaeu (1654) and Hermann Moll (1745, although depicting Arbuthnott, are at too large a scale to show any local detail. The earliest map to depict Parkside is the military survey of the Highlands by William Roy:



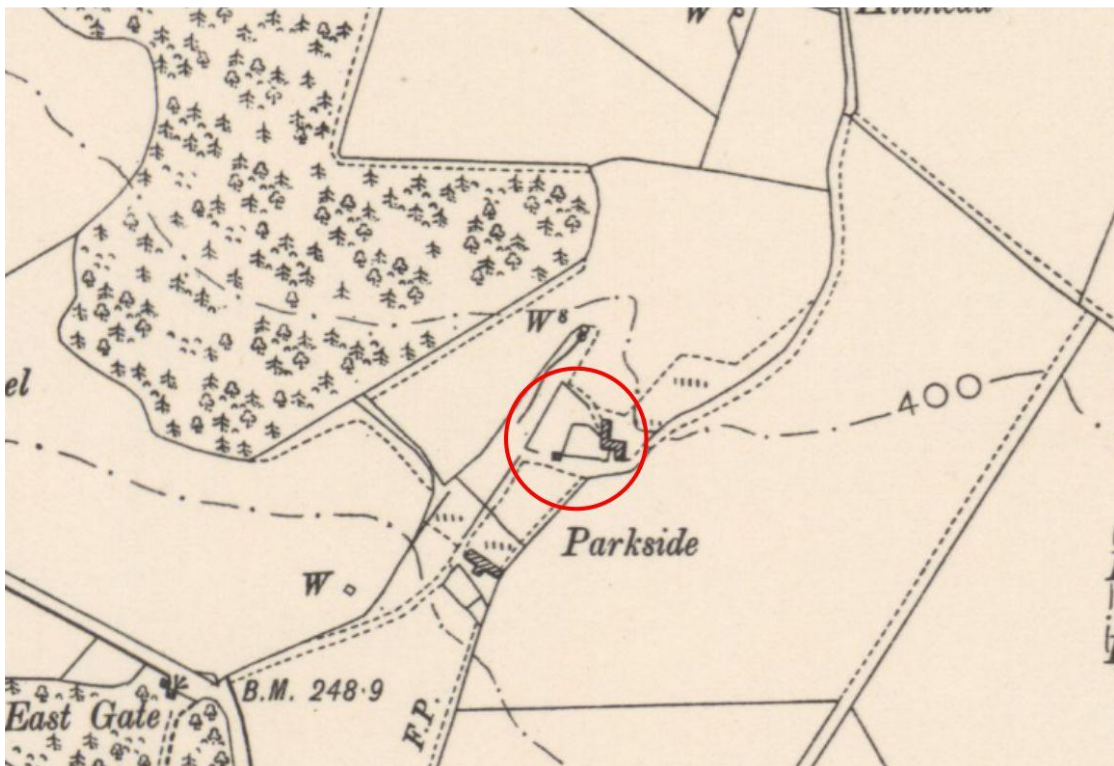
*Roy, 1747-52. Parkside is depicted as a building and attached enclosure- probably the present ruin is intended rather than the standing cottage to the SW (not shown).*

The enclosure gives the house the appearance of some importance, relative to neighbouring settlements, none of which are shown to be as large. The proximity to the formal landscaping at Arbuthnott is also apparent.



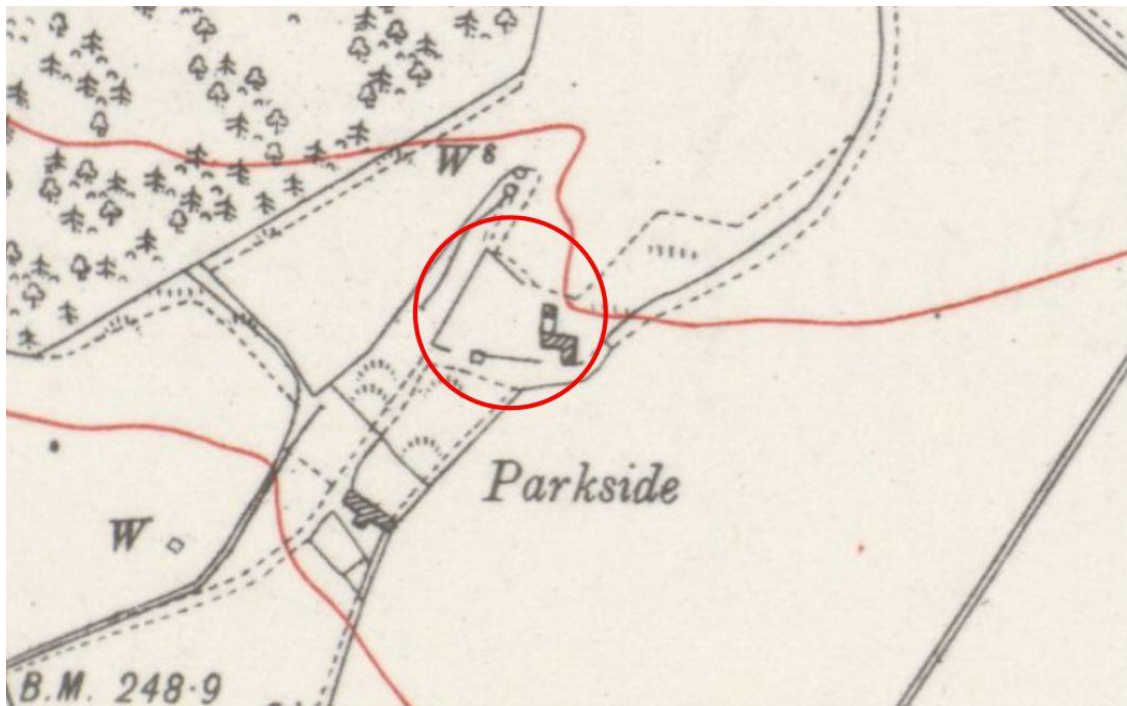
*OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, published 1868. The house is shown in its present outline, with an outer and an inner enclosure, the latter possibly a lawn or formal garden.*

The First Edition OS map contains the first detailed depiction of the site, with all major elements already in place by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The enclosure is fringed with trees, with the appearance of a formal garden setting. This seems to have been discontinued by the Second Edition:



*OS 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, published 1904. The house still appears to be a roofed building, although the outer enclosure is no longer tree-lined.*

The date of abandonment of the house is not known, although it may have become disused as a dwelling between the Second and Third Editions:



*OS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, published 1928. The N block of the house appears partially roofless, while the inner enclosure has gone. The house may have been partially or completely abandoned as a dwelling by this time.*

The map evidence suggested the site had been occupied by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century at the latest. The configuration depicted on the OS maps, of a Z-shaped house with attached double enclosure, may well have been in place by the time of Roy's map.

### Results of survey

As suggested by map evidence, the now ruined building was a rough Z or zig-zag shape in plan; a central block aligned just off E-W connected with a block extending almost N-S (actually between N-S and NNE-SSW) from the W end and another on the same alignment against the E end. For the purposes of the survey, these are referred to as the N, central and S blocks, while elevations are referred to as "W", "E" etc.

### General

The ruin was entirely roofless, with walls standing to c.5.00m in places, although the wallheads were very uneven and generally lower than this. The NE corner of the building was partially cut into the hillslope. Throughout, the majority of the fabric was rough-hewn grey whin rubble, with sandstone on the central block (mostly red/red-brown and more visible in parts of the interior, particularly in the central block). Window and door casings were sub-ashlar, but nevertheless fairly high quality, mainly of sandstone with moulded sills and lintels (where present). Many stones were stugged, particularly casings and interior wall facings. Eroded deposits of coarse, gritty limestone mortar were noted in several of the interstices. In general, the impression was of a fairly high-status construction. Junctions were apparent in the wall faces between



the central block and both of the N-S blocks, suggesting the former had probably been constructed first, as a simple rectangle, with later extensions to create the present Z-shape.

### Exterior, central block

The central block measured 5.20m N-S x 15.00m E-W (external). The S elevation featured a blocked ground floor doorway at the E end, 1.60m tall (from uneven ground probably composed of rubble and hillwash and obscuring the threshold) x 0.80m wide, filled with stone rubble similar to (but slightly more closely packed than) the surrounding fabric. The casings were small, sub-ashlar blocks on the W side, larger and apparently more random on the E, with a massive single block stone lintel. The doorway stood 0.60m from the E end of the wall, where the W side casing and a stub of lintel from a ruined doorway were visible. This had presumably been a re-positioned entrance replacing the blocked doorway.

The centre of the elevation featured an open, unglazed, ground floor window, 1.15m tall x 0.80m wide, 1.20m above the present external ground surface. The sill was a single, roughly-moulded block, but the lintel was formed from two unequal blocks, possibly suggesting a repair to an originally single-piece lintel which had cracked. 0.95m W of the window were the remnants of a stone water bowl, trough or fountain, carved from a single (now broken) boulder and standing 0.50m above the present ground surface. This might perhaps have been intended for animal use, if not for general hand-washing.



### *The water bowl/trough*

The first floor, to which the uneven wallhead still extended, featured two windows, spaced each side of the ground floor example. The W window was broken, with only the sill and the E casing remaining, but the E version showed that both would have been approximately square and topped with a slab lintel.

The W elevation was blank, apart from a vertical line 5.20m from the S end indicating the junction with the N block. The wall fabric on this elevation contained a larger proportion of red/red-brown sandstone than elsewhere, with cracking apparent towards the S wall/S elevation. Whether this indicated rebuilding of the W elevation, perhaps following demolition of an extension to the W, or refacing of the S elevation to bring it into conformity with the S block (see below) is unclear. Given that the internal S elevation (see below) also contained more frequent red sandstone, it may be that the latter hypothesis is nearer the truth.

The E elevation was attached to the E of the S block in similar fashion, with a vertical line at the N end of the S block (see below). The elevation N of this line was mostly destroyed, surviving as footings up to 0.80m tall (albeit partly dug into the slope), across the 5.20m width of the central block. The only feature, which was nevertheless notable, was a ground level window or vent, partially blocked with rubble and c.0.60m tall x 0.40m wide:



#### *The ground level window*

This suggested there may have been a cellar floor beneath the central block, the interior of which was too full of tumbled stone rubble to discern any further such evidence.

The N elevation, similarly to the E, was reduced to below half height, more of the wall being visible 4.50m from the E end due to a change in the gradient of the hill, which fell away from a small hummock at the NE corner. The visible wall was 1.20m – 1.40m tall. No features were apparent, apart from the junction with the N block, 10.10m from the E end.

#### Exterior, S block

The S block measured 6.00m E-W x 7.50m N-S. The centre of the W elevation featured a ground floor window of the same proportions as that in the S elevation of the central

block (see above). Unlike the previous example, however, both the sill and lintel were of single, roughly-moulded stone pieces. The N end of the elevation featured a blocked doorway, very similar to that in the central block (see above) and 0.40m from the junction with the latter. It thus appeared that an earlier pair of doorways had been replaced with a single, repositioned entrance (since destroyed). The wallhead did not survive much beyond the top of the window, so evidence of a first floor was lacking from this elevation, although a small slab laid directly on the lintel of the doorway may have represented part of an upper window (if so, much lower down than those in the central block).

The S elevation was even more ruinous, standing to 3.00m tall at the W side quoins, but falling away to 1.40m on the E side. The remains of a rectangular window were present on the W side, 1.00m above the exterior ground surface, while on the E, a jagged hole may have replaced a doorway, although this was by no means certain.

The E elevation rose gradually from 1.40m tall at the S to 3.10m at the junction with the central block, 7.50m from the S end. Its main feature, besides the junction, was a window standing 1.20m tall x 0.80m wide, 0.30m above the exterior ground surface. Immediately above this was a sill and one casing block, representing a first floor window. As elsewhere, the sandstone casings were sub-ashlar, but very precisely cut on the inner faces and edges, below a moulded stone lintel.

### N block

This had been reduced to low footings for most of its length, so is here described in full, exterior and interior together. The exact dimensions of the block were difficult to determine, as a stone spread against the N end may actually have represented the remains of a room. With this included, the block measured 10.00m N-S; without the spread, 7.50m. The E-W width was 5.20m. The spread or room was 2.50m N-S, therefore, with a possible N end wall of bonded rubble, including large cobbles, and the faint suggestion of cutting into the hillslope on the E side. The N wall of the room to the S stood up to 1.10m tall, but the remaining walls, on the E and S sides, fell away to below 0.50m. The room was open on the W side, with the stump of a recently-felled tree in the NW corner. The room measured 3.10m N-S x 4.00m E-W (internal). The S end room was the best preserved, with the E wall up to 1.40m tall in the SE corner, at the junction with the central block. The interior was, however, largely filled with tumbled rubble, which mounded up towards the S. The room was of the same dimensions as its neighbour to the N.

### Interior

The central block was divided into two rooms, with a main room to the W and a smaller space to the E. The latter was entirely filled with tumbled rubble, to the extent that entering it was difficult and no features could be discerned. Internally, it measured 5.00m E-W x 4.20m N-S. While it must presumably have communicated with the rest of the house in some way, no entrances were apparent.

The main room, 8.40m E-W x 4.20m N-S, was also largely rubble-filled, but to a lesser extent than elsewhere. The windows noted on the exterior S elevation (see above) were on the interior found to be housed within embrasures, while the blocked doorway in the same elevation preserved a wooden beam lintel, perhaps indicating that the present

roofless condition was relatively recent. A possible beam slot for the first floor was also present in the S elevation, with three similar features in the W elevation (approximately 0.10m above the lintel of the S elevation ground floor window). The most notable feature, however, was a chimney flue built against the W elevation (into which the beam slots were cut), with an arched fireplace below. The flue was the full height of the interior wall face (3.00m), while a 2.00m wide, 1.00m high stretch of the fireplace arch was visible above the tumbled rubble. The arch was formed of rough-dressed, stugged, precisely-fitted blocks and would have been quite an unusual, archaic feature by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which might indicate an earlier foundation date for the house.



*Fireplace and flue, central block main room*

The S block interior was also filled with rubble, obscuring most of the internal wall faces. However, the windows in the E and W elevations (see above) could be examined and were found to feature quite finely moulded interior jambs. The W elevation window, moreover, featured a small, angular hole in the sill which may have been a socket for a vertical bar.



*Window sill, S block*

#### Attached features

To the SW of the house, aligned approximately E-W and extending for approximately 50.00m between NGR NO 79705 75865 and NO 79759 75859 was the remnant of a drystone dyke, surviving as intermittent, scattered footings composed of rounded stone rubble on a low earth bank. This almost certainly represented the S side of the sub-rectangular outer enclosure featured on the First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps (see above). A stone dump towards the W end of the dyke contained a probably ad hoc shelter (sheep pen?) but may have been the location of the small, square feature on the Second Edition map. The remains of the W and N sides of the outer enclosure were much less visible, being little more than a low scatter of grassed-over stones along the W and a faint, linear depression in the hillside along the N side. No trace of the inner enclosure was discernible.

### **3 Interpretation**

Notwithstanding that much of the interior was obscured by rubble tumbled from the walls, the ruined house was an interesting and somewhat unusual example of local vernacular architecture. While the wall fabric was generally fairly rough, elements such as moulded window jambs and sills suggested more care had gone into the construction than might normally have been the case for a small cottage. Local tradition suggests the building may have been a dower house connected with the Arbuthnott Estate, and this possibility is not contradicted by the survey evidence. Moreover, the narrow, but quite tall, proportions of the building as it originally may have appeared are also rather atypical for 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century farm buildings, which tend towards a lower, squat appearance. Finally, the large, stone flue with its massive, arched fireplace is both unusual for a labourer's cottage and suggestive of a date before the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, possibly considerably so. The (admittedly incomplete) evidence points towards a

reasonably high status building constructed in two or three phases, perhaps beginning prior to the 1700s, the first phase being the simple rectangle of what became the central block, subsequently expanded at either end with the addition of the N and S blocks.

## **4 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **4.1 This report is an interim, to be combined with a second report on the watching brief, to follow this phase of work.**

### **4.2 Recommendations for Further Work**

Alder Archaeology consider the standing building survey to have been conducted correctly and do not recommend further work, except the planned watching brief. However, the final decision ultimately rests with Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.

## **5 Bibliography**

Ordnance Survey, *Kincardineshire, Sheet XX*, Survey date: 1863-64, Publication date: 1868 (six inches to a mile, First Edition)

Ordnance Survey, *Kincardineshire, Sheet XXV.NW*, Date revised: 1901, Date Published: 1904 (six inches to a mile, Second Edition)

Ordnance Survey, *Kincardineshire, Sheet XXV.NW*, Date revised: 1923, Date Published: 1928 (six inches to a mile, Third Edition)

Roy, William, *Military Survey of Scotland (Highlands)*, 1747-52

## Appendix 1 Photographic Register

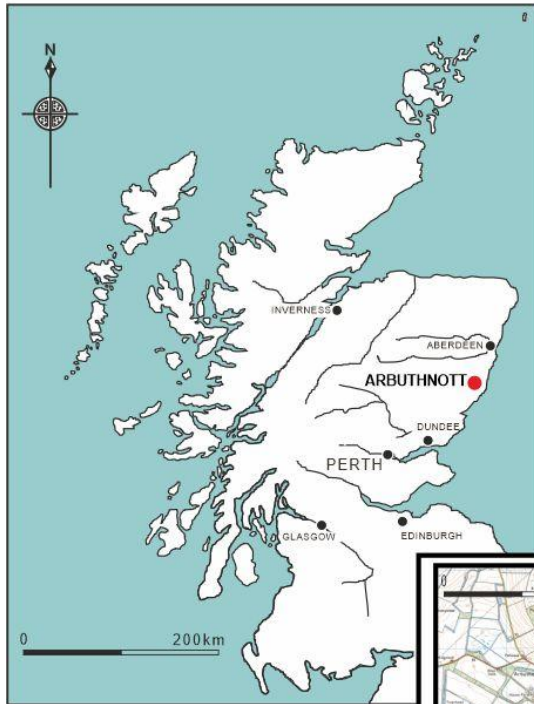
<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
1-2	Location shots, ruin from SW	NE
3	Location shot, bank and trees from S	N
4	Location shot, ruin from W	E
5-7	Location shot, ruin from NW	SE
8-13	Location shot, ruin from N	S
14-15	W end of E-W dyke footings	W
16-17	E-W dyke footings	E
18	Scooped (ad hoc) shelter in dyke footings	N
19	Location shot, shelter, dyke and ruin	NE
20	Scooped shelter	N
21-22	Exterior, W elevation of E block	E
23	Location shot, countryside to S of site	S
24	Exterior, S elevation of central block	N
25	Exterior, S elevation of ruin	N
26-27	Exterior, detail, first floor windows in S elevation of central block	N
28-29	Exterior, detail, stone drinking fountain/trough in S elevation of central block	N
30-31	Exterior, detail, crumbled lime mortar in interstices, S elevation of central block	N
32-34	Exterior, S elevation of S block	N
35-36	Exterior, detail, crumbled lime mortar in interstices, S elevation of S block	N
37-38	Exterior, E elevation of S block	W
39	Location shot, ruin and landscape to S	SW
40	Exterior, detail, ground level window, E elevation of central block	W
41-43	Exterior, N elevation of central block, oblique	SW
44-45	Exterior, W end of N elevation of central block	S
46-47	Exterior, E elevation of N block	W

48-49	Exterior, junction of main and N block, oblique	SW
50-51	Exterior, S end of W elevation, central and N blocks	E
52-53	Exterior, W elevation of N block	E
54-55	Exterior, W elevation of central block	E
56-57	Exterior, W elevation of N and central blocks	E
58-59	Overview of "N room"/stone spread, N block	E
60-62	Interior, central room, N block	E
63-64	Interior, S room, N block	E
65-66	Interior, detail, thickness of W wall of central block	S
67-69	Exterior, detail, ruined doorway at junction of central and S blocks	N
70-71	Interior, general view of main room	W
72-73	Interior, W elevation of main room	W
74-75	Interior, detail, arched fireplace in W elevation of main room	W
76-77	Interior, W elevation of main room	W
78-79	Interior, open doorway and first floor window, centre of S elevation of main room	S
80-82	Interior, S elevation of main room, oblique	SW
83-85	Interior, detail, open doorway in S elevation of main room	S
86-88	Interior, detail, first floor window in S elevation of main room	S
89-91	Interior, detail, blocked doorway in S elevation of main room	S
92-93	Interior, S elevation of main room, oblique	SE
94-95	Interior, internal dividing wall, S block/E end of central block	E
96-97	Interior, overview of E room, central block, oblique	NE
98-99	Interior, N end of S block	E
100-101	Interior, E end of N elevation of main room	N
102-104	Interior, N elevation of main room, oblique	NE
105-106	Interior, W end of N elevation of main room, oblique	NW
107-108	Interior, overview of S block	S
109-112	Interior, detail, doorway in E elevation of S block	E



113-115	Interior, detail, window in W elevation of S block	W
116-119	Interior, detail, sill of window in W elevation of S block (bar socket)	W
120	Interior, detail, beam socket in S elevation of main room	S
121-122	Interior, location shot, beam slot in S elevation of main room, oblique	SE
123	Interior, beam sockets in W elevation of main room	W
124-125	Interior, location shots, beam sockets in W elevation of main room	W
126-127	E-W bank parallel with dyke footings	W
128-130	N-S bank between bank and dyke	S
131	Location shot, ruin from N-S bank	E

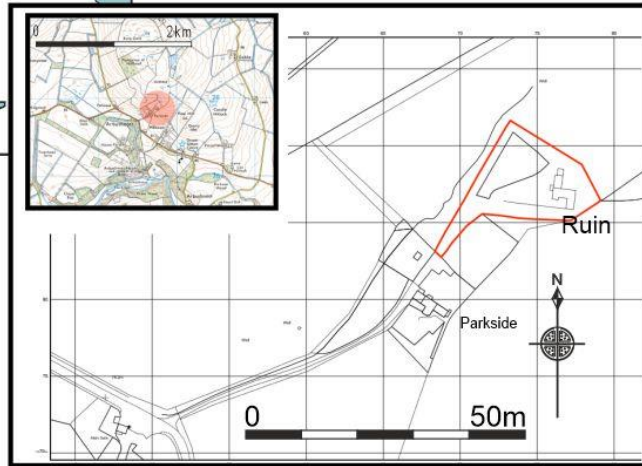
Illus 1



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## Parkside, Arbuthnott

### Site location

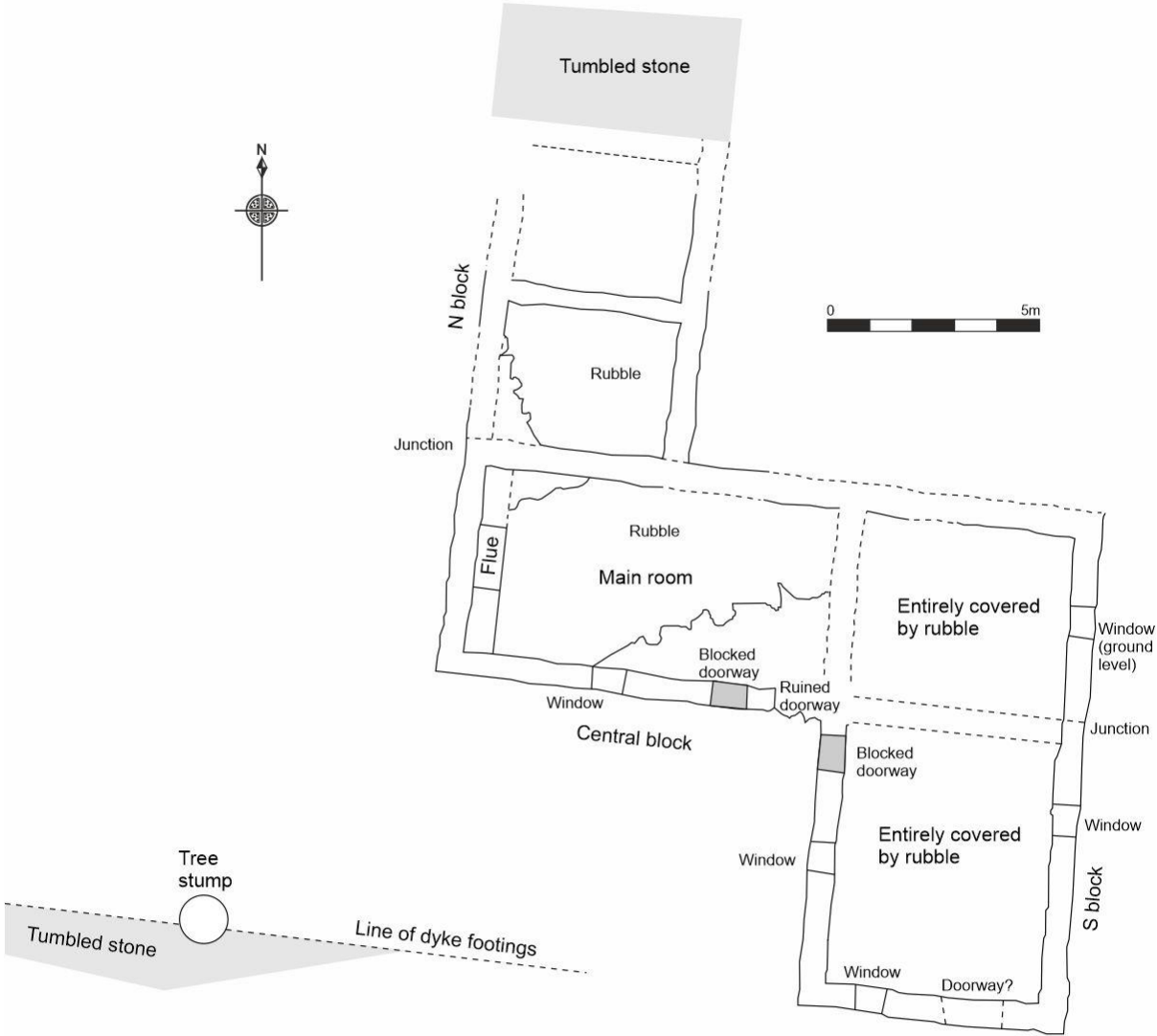


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Illus 2

Plan of ruined building

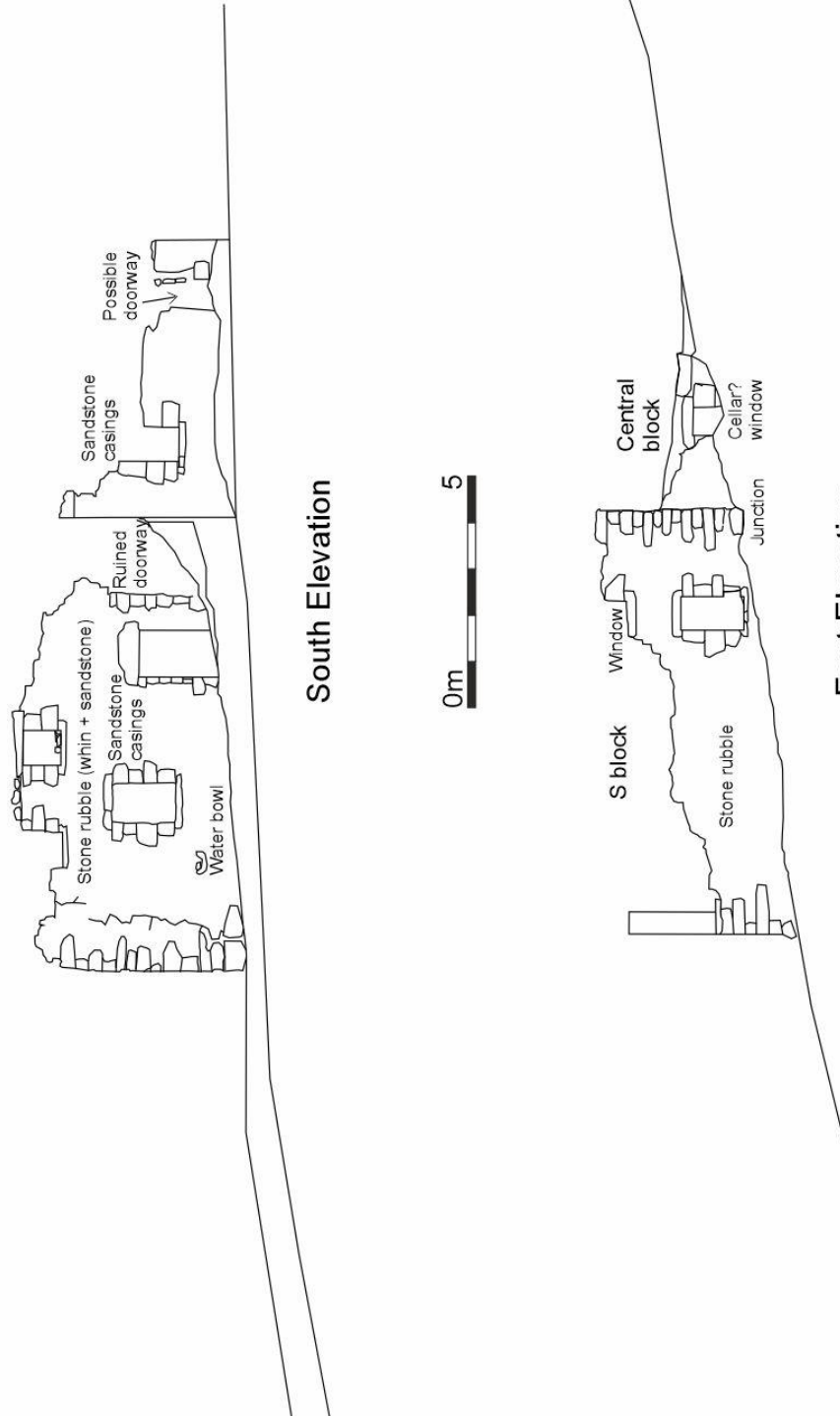


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Illus 3

South and East External Elevations

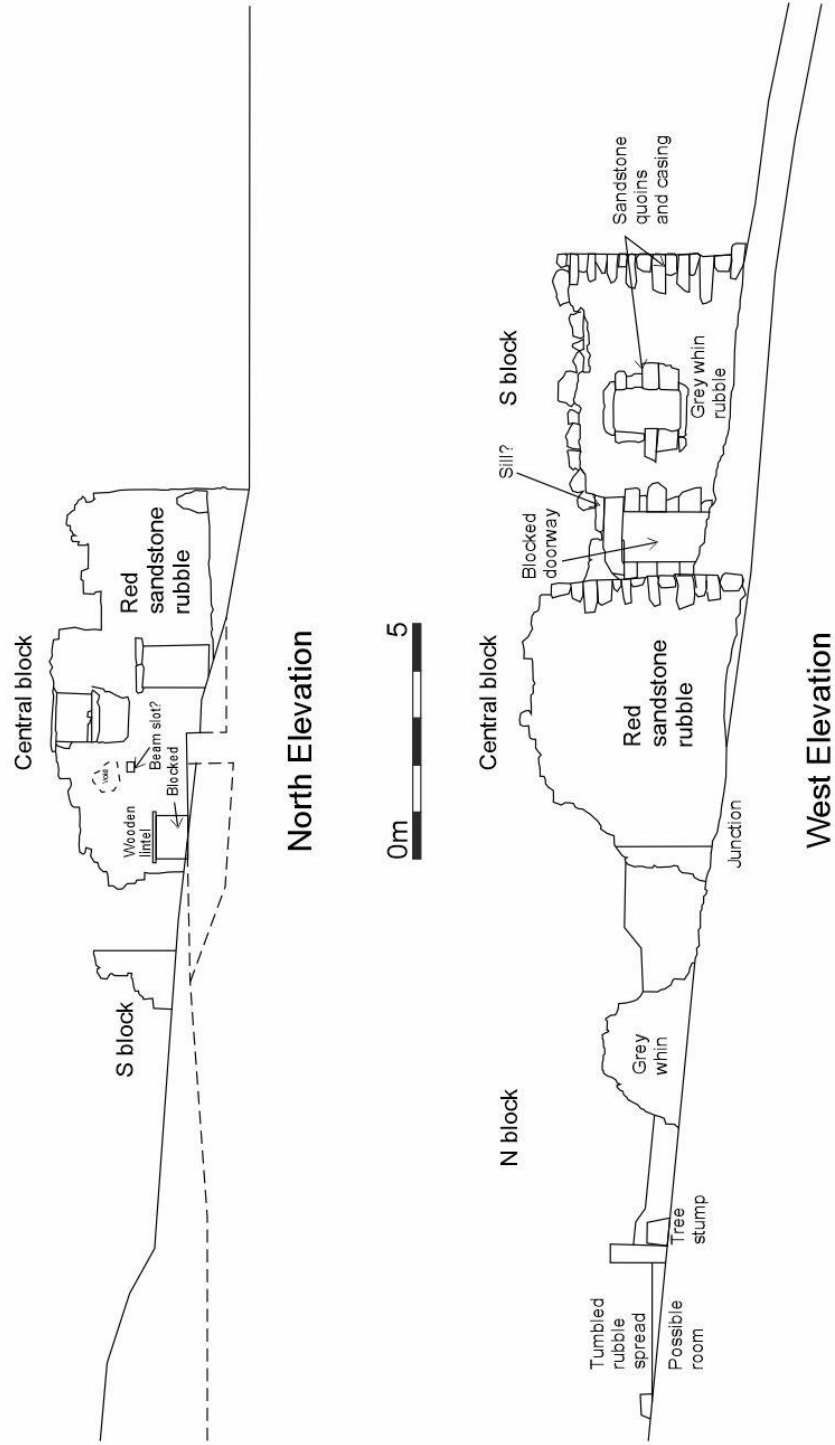


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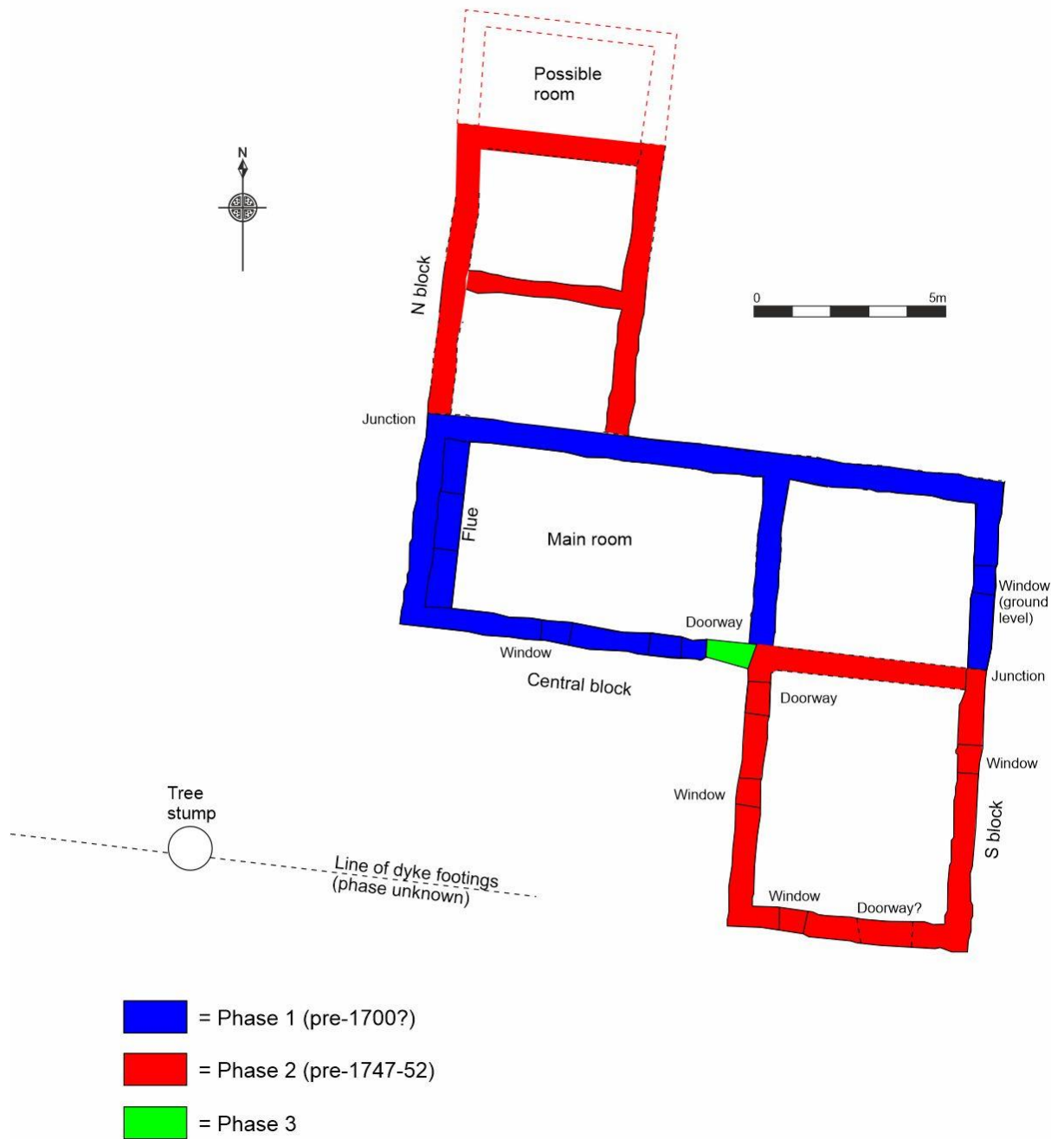
Illus 4

North and West External Elevations



Illus 5

Suggested phase plan



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