

FYVIE CASTLE, AB53 8JS

Watching brief on lightning trenches



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SUMMARY

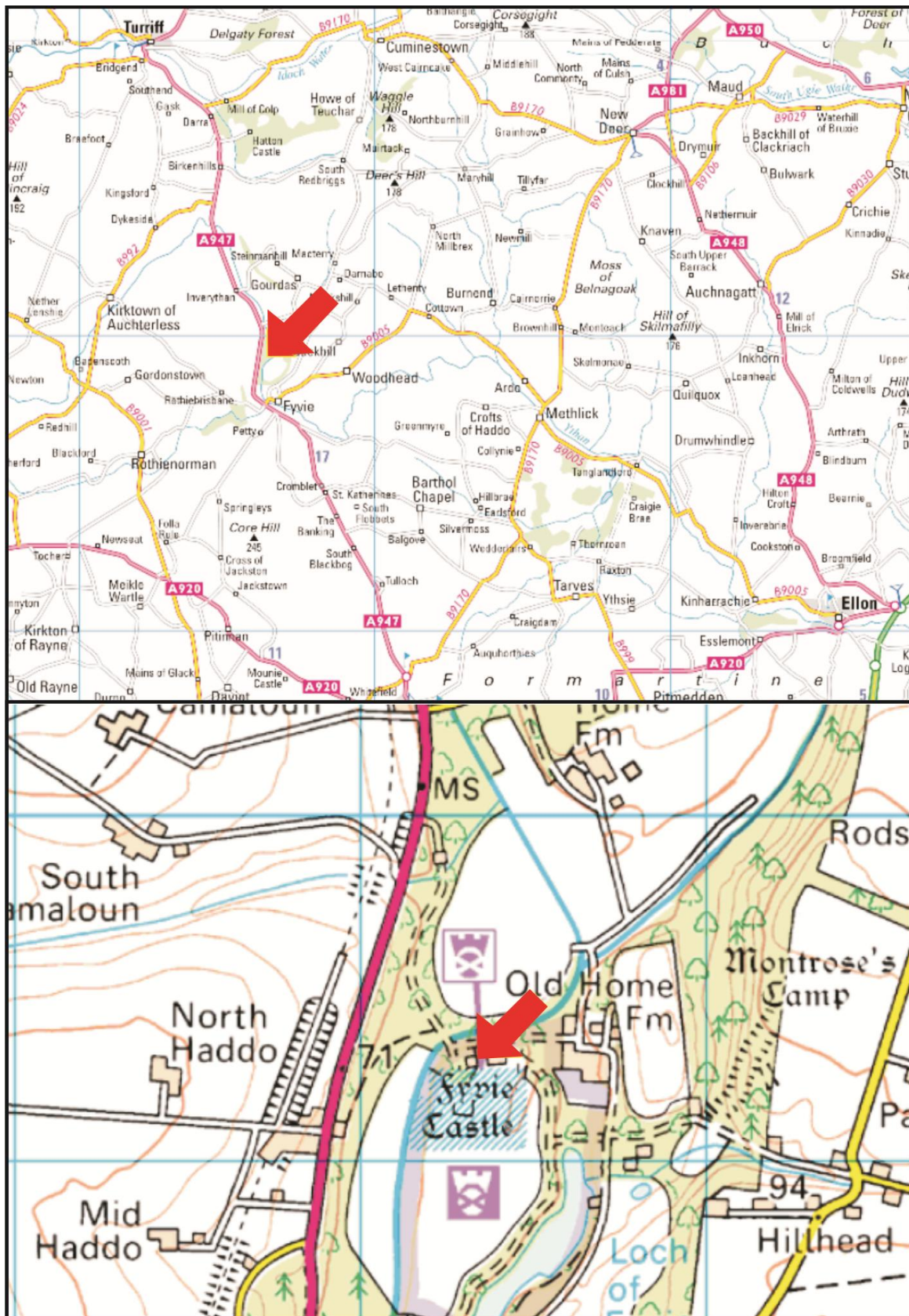
On 23th-24th January 2012 six trenches were excavated using mini digger for the improvement of lightning conductors. Existing conductors included tapes pinned to the castle walls and attached to either a copper alloy mat (Trench 6) or a copper alloy plate. The trenches were approximately 1-1.5m square and up to 1m deep. Two possible features were recorded in the trenches but all the soil removed had been disturbed in the recent past and no significant remains were disturbed.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Fyvie Castle lies immediately north of the village of Fyvie, Aberdeenshire (NJ 7636 3928), on lands forming a Royal seat in the 13th century and retained by the Crown until the late 14th century. A castle at Fyvie is first mentioned in a Royal Charter of 1211/14. In its original form the Castle sat within an enclosure delineated by a massive curtain wall; traces of the east range of the wall (demolished in the late 18th century) and a range of buildings built against it were revealed during archaeological excavations in 1985 (Shepherd 1985). The present building incorporates medieval fabric, some possibly as early as the 13th century; late 16th/early 17th-century work, late 18th-century additions and modifications, and late 19th-century fabric (Fraser 2010).
- 1.2 Existing lightning protection for Fyvie Castle required to be upgraded and six trenches were required adjacent to existing lightning tapes.

2 BACKGROUND

2. 1 Three previous intrusive archaeological interventions are known at the castle. In 1985 a trench 12m north of the Preston Tower revealed the footings of a wall 2.9m thick, probably the east side of an early curtain wall (Shepherd 1985, 17). In 1988 an archaeological observation took place during cabling work (Shepherd 1988, 13).
- 2.2 Excavations in 2010 and 2011 by the current author revealed well-preserved remains of a possible chapel on the south side of the Preston Tower, formal gardens on the south and south-west of the castle probably dating from the late 16th century and possible bowling green surface west of the Leith Tower. Earlier remains were uncovered including earlier surfaces, a clamp kiln and fragments of prehistoric pottery indicating occupation of this area for thousands of years (Cameron 2010, 21; Cameron forthcoming).

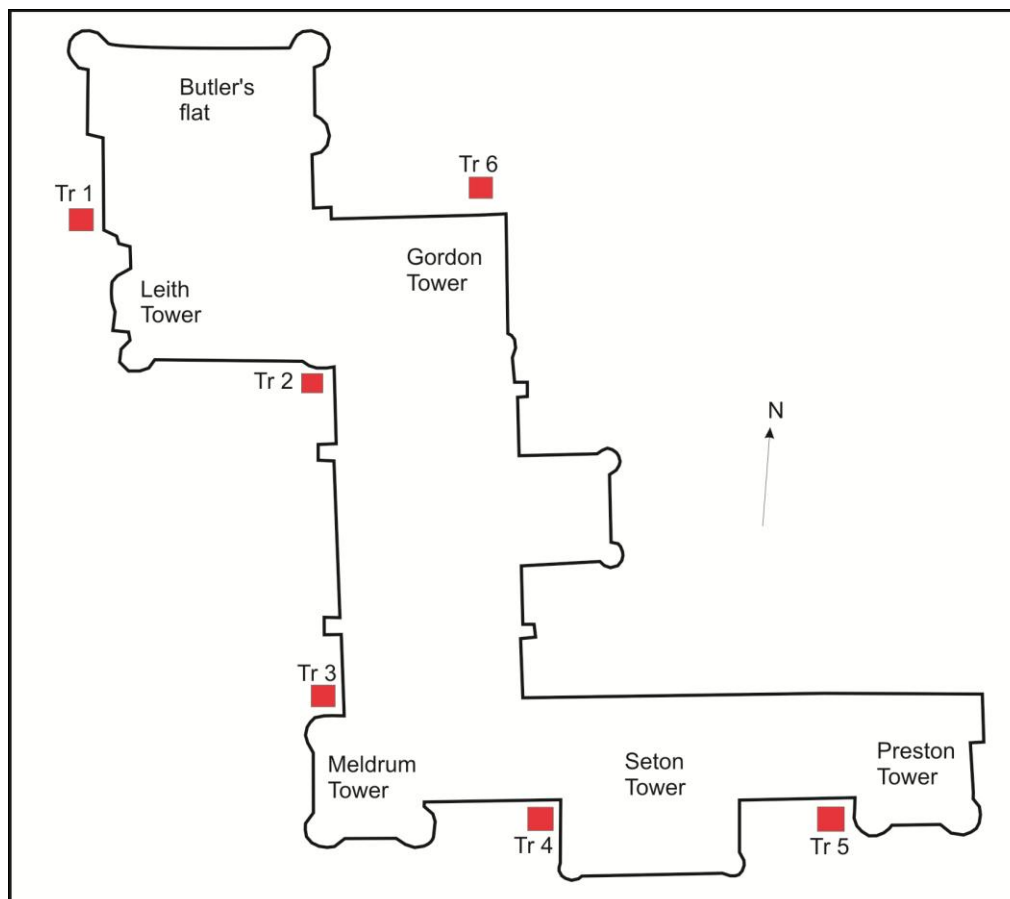


Illus 1 Location plan showing Fyvie Castle plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010).

3. RESULTS

3.1 The watching brief

On 23th-24th January 2012 six trenches (Illus 2) were excavated using mini digger for the improvement of lightning conductors. Existing conductors included tapes pinned to the castle walls and attached to either a copper alloy mat (Trench 6) or a copper alloy plate. The trenches were approximately 1-1.5m square and up to 1m deep.



Illus 2 Fyvie Castle showing trench location

3.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated to the north of the cafe door in the Leith Tower. Modern drains were encountered and all material removed was very modern. No archaeological features or finds were identified.



Illus 3 Trench 1 Left: trench facing east; Right: location facing north east

3.3 Trench 2

A trench maximum 1.5 x 1.5m in size was excavated in the south east corner of the Leith Tower. The fill was dark brown loam with few small stones in a trench dug to bury the existing lightning conductor. No archaeological features or finds were identified.



Illus 4 Trench 2 Left: Right:

3.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 1.2 x 1.2m in size and located near the north west corner of the Meldrum Tower. It was filled with a brown loam with many stones in a trench dug to bury the existing lightning conductor. A modern plastic pipe was cut through the east edge of the trench and a modern electric cable along the north of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were identified.



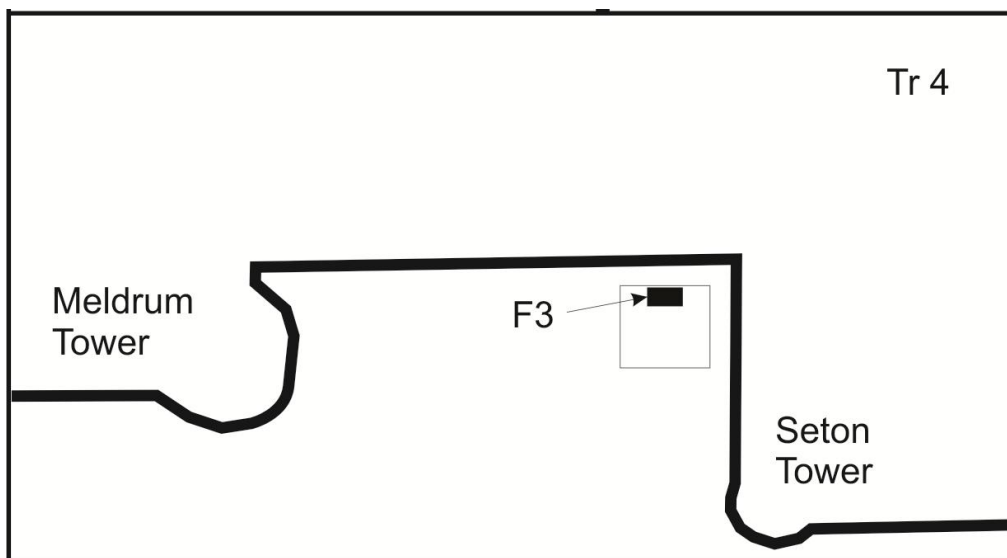
Illus 5 Trench 3 Left: trench facing south; Right: location facing south-east

3.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located on the west side of the Seton Tower on the south facade of the castle. Modern services included a sewer pipe running across the south east corner of the trench and a ceramic water pipe along the north edge. A mortared stone feature (F3; Illus 6, 7) in the north of the trench under the ceramic water pipe may pre-date these services. F3 was constructed of mortared stone and slate but its date or interpretation were not possible to ascertain during this work.



Illus 6 Trench 4 Left: F3 (right) facing west; Right: location facing east



Illus 7 Trench 4 showing F3

3.6 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located on the west side of the Preston Tower on the south facade of the castle. It was filled with a brown loam with many stones in a trench dug to bury the existing lightning conductor. No archaeological features or finds were identified.



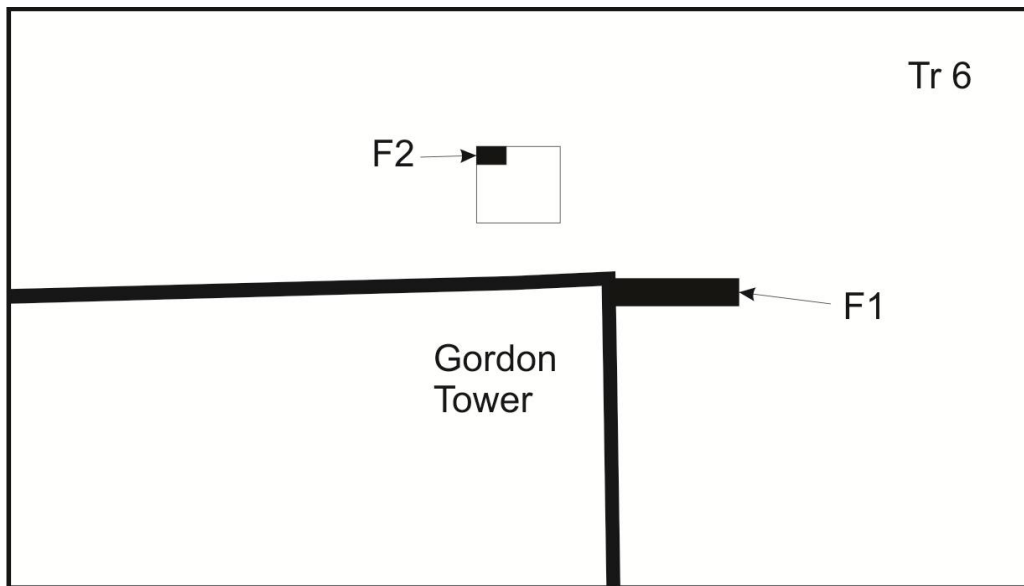
Illus 8 Trench 5 Left: trench facing east; Right: location facing north-east

3.7 Trench 6

Trench 1 was 1.5 x 1.5m in size and was excavated east of the Butler's flat north of Leith Tower. A lightning mat consisting of copper alloy tapes pinned into a rectangular mesh was uncovered (Illus 9); it was hand-made (Best Contractors staff, pers comm) and at least 25 years old. At the north of the trench one mortared stone (F1; Illus 9, 10) may have been the remains of a structure. Adjacent to Trench 6 were three stones which may be the remains of an old wall foundation. These were photographed (Illus 11) and will be studied at a later date.



Illus 9 Trench 6 Left: Lightning mat with Stone F1 (foreground) facing south; Right: location facing west



Illus 10 Trench 6 showing features F1 and F2



Illus 11 Remains of possible wall foundation F1

4. CONCLUSIONS

On 23th-24th January 2012 six trenches were excavated using mini digger for the improvement of lightning conductors. Two possible features were recorded in the trenches but all the soil removed had been disturbed in the recent past and no significant remains were disturbed. Feature F1 adjacent to Trench 6 will be studied further at a later date as part of a larger project (Fraser, Cameron and Addyman forthcoming).

5. REFERENCES

- Cameron, A 2010 'Fyvie Castle: excavation' *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, New Series, Vol 11, 21.
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- Fraser, S 2010 'Fyvie Castle, Fyvie, Aberdeenshire, Castle Environs Project 2010 FYC/10/1'. Unpublished Project Outline document.
- Fraser, S, Cameron, A and Addyman, T forthcoming 'Fyvie Castle'. Report on the excavations, building recording and historical research.
- Shepherd, IAG 1985 'Fyvie Castle' *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 17.
- Shepherd, IAG 1988 'Fyvie Castle' *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 13.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

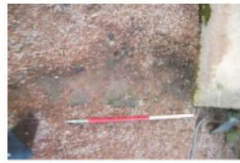
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APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS



DSC_0327



DSC_0336



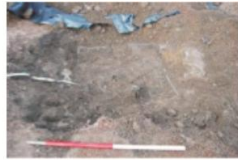
DSC_0337



DSC_0343



DSC_0364



DSC_0371



DSC_0377



DSC_0386



DSC_0414



DSC_0415



DSC_0417



DSC_0418



DSC_0421



DSC_0425



DSC_0430



DSC_0435



DSC_0446



DSC_0452



DSC_0456



DSC_0462



DSC_0466



DSC_0469



DSC_0474



DSC_0475



DSC_0476



DSC_0477



DSC_0482



DSC_0489



DSC_0493



DSC_0494



DSC_0507



DSC_0508



DSC_0509



DSC_0515



DSC_0585



DSC_0591



DSC_0609



P1010065

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_0327	Trench 6	NW
DSC_0336	F1	W
DSC_0337	Trench 6 location	W
DSC_0343	Trench 6 location	W
DSC_0364	F1	S
DSC_0371	Trench 6 lightning mat	NW
DSC_0377	Trench 6 lightning mat	SW
DSC_0386	Trench 6 lightning mat	S
DSC_0414	Trench 5 location	NE
DSC_0415	Trench 5 location	NE
DSC_0417	Trench 5	E
DSC_0418	Trench 5	E
DSC_0421	Trench 5	E
DSC_0425	Trench 5	SW
DSC_0430	Trench 5	E
DSC_0435	Trench 4 location	E
DSC_0446	Trench 4 F3 (left)	E
DSC_0452	Trench 4 F3	N
DSC_0456	Trench 4 F3	W
DSC_0462	Trench 4 F3	W
DSC_0466	Trench 4 location	E
DSC_0469	Trench 4 location	E
DSC_0474	Trench 3 location	SE
DSC_0475	Trench 3 location	SE
DSC_0476	Trench 3 location	SE
DSC_0477	Trench 3	S
DSC_0482	Trench 3	S
DSC_0489	Trench 3	N
DSC_0493	Trench 3	SE
DSC_0494	Trench 3	SE
DSC_0507	Trench 2	NE
DSC_0508	Trench 2 location	E
DSC_0509	Trench 2 location	E
DSC_0515	Trench 2 location	E
DSC_0585	Trench 1	E
DSC_0591	Trench 1	W
DSC_0609	Trench 1 location	NE
P1010065	Trench 2	SW

APPENDIX 2 FEATURES

Feature no	Trench	Description
F1	6	Three sandstone blocks 1.1m long, 0.4m wide, possibly wall foundation
F2	4	Mortared stone block 0.4 x 0.3m; possibly wall foundation
F3	4	Mortared stone and slate; possible wall foundation 0.4 x 0.2m.