

Proposed Brechin Community Campus, DD9 7PF Report and data structure report



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ILLUSTRATIONS

cover top: Trench 4 showing modern plough marks in the natural subsoil; facing WSW;
bottom all trenches facing NE

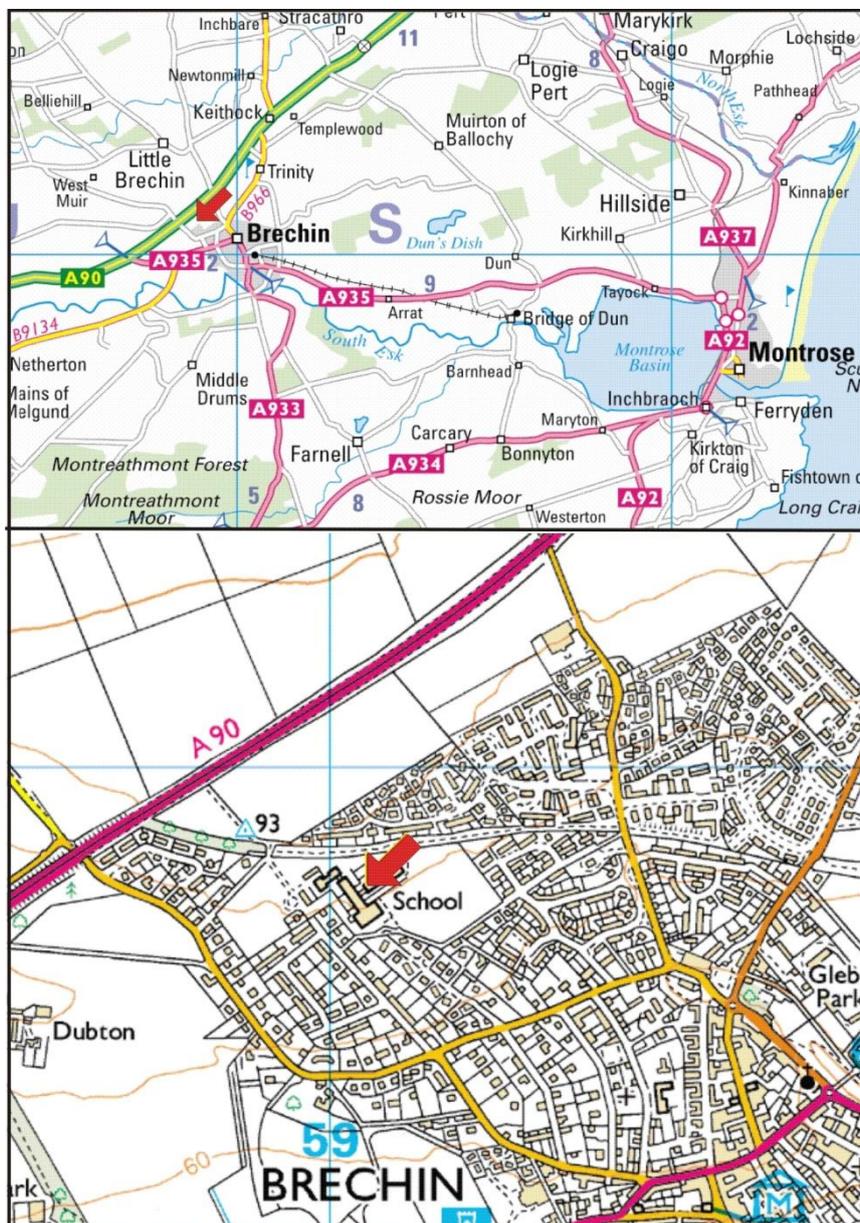
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SUMMARY

Four trenches representing 7% of the area of the new school were excavated on 12 March 2014 with a JCB and 1.8m ditching bucket. An area which had been stripped for a new entrance into the site was also inspected during this work. No archaeological features or finds were recorded and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current redevelopment.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site is located to the northwest of the centre of Brechin, on the site of the present High School. It is centred on NGR NO 5914 6075, at 75-90m OD, on land sloping gently to the South. Early Ordnance Survey maps show the area to have been in agricultural use prior to the erection of the present High School. The site is bounded on its northern edge by the former Forfar & Brechin Branch railway line, and is enclosed by residential housing (Herbert 2014).
- 1.2 The work was commissioned John Millar, Robertson Construction Eastern Ltd for Angus Council. A planning application (Ref No 13/00831/FULLM) has been approved for the erection of a new community campus with associated hard and soft landscaping, car parking, all weather sports pitch, energy centre and external lighting with archaeology condition (condition 4) requiring a 7-10% archaeological evaluation.
- 1.3 All the archaeological work will be carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is on the NW side of Brechin. There are no known archaeological sites within the boundary of the current site and the site is fields on all the early maps of the site including the First, Second and Third OS maps (Illus 5-7). The current site is occupied by Brechin High School.
- 2.2 There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the site. Brechin, Maison Dieu Chapel (NO596603) consists of the surviving fragment plus the remainder of the site of the chapel which served the Maison Dieu hospital in Brechin. The Maison Dieu hospital was founded in 1256 by William de Brechin, and the existing remains accord well with that date. The only surviving fragment is the S wall of the hospital chapel, with its finely detailed windows and doorway; parts of the E wall also survive, embedded within the W wall of the adjacent house, but are not included here. The area to be scheduled is rectangular, 13m E-W by 10 N-S to include the surviving wall and an area to the N which may be expected to contain foundations or other traces of the chapel, as marked in red on the accompanying map. That portion of the E wall of the chapel which forms part of the wall of the house adjacent is excluded. The monument is of national importance because it is one of the very small number of medieval hospitals in Scotland of which there are any significant standing remains. It has additional importance because of the quality of its architecture, which is datable to its original foundation, and because of the archaeological potential of the site for the recovery of further information about the construction and use of the chapel. A watching brief (NO56SE 271) was carried out by SUAT Ltd 20m west of the chapel remains. Maison Dieu Lane was widened and a new wall built, along with a new car park in a section of former school playground. See site NO56SE 305 for more details. The location of this property and gardens was next to these works (Dowling 2006).
- 2.3 Brechin Cathedral Round Tower NO596600 consists of the round tower at the SW angle of the nave of Brechin Cathedral. The round tower, with upward tapering walls, rises to a height of about 26.5m, from a base 5m in diameter. It is capped by a later stone spire. Its chief original feature is the carved doorway, which has a crucifixion at its apex, unidentified saints on the jambs and crouching beasts flanking the threshold. The tower is now embodied in the SW corner of the cathedral nave, and a doorway (now blocked) has been cut through its wall to give access from the cathedral. However, the tower was almost certainly originally free-standing. A religious community of some sort is known to have been on the site from at least the 970s, though the tower is unlikely to date from much before 1100. The spire is probably of the 15th century. The area to be scheduled is circular, 5m in diameter, to include the tower and the ground below it, as marked in red on the accompanying map. The monument is of national importance because it is one of only two round towers of Irish type definitely known to have been built in Scotland, and because of the outstanding value of the sculptured decoration.
- 2.4 An archaeological evaluation (NO56SE 83) was undertaken at the site of a proposed industrial estate. Excavation revealed the well-preserved remains of possible multi-period settlement dating to the Early Neolithic and Iron Age. A rich artefactual and ecofactual assemblage was recovered from a variety of features. This includes pottery, flint and cereal grain. The features dating to the Neolithic comprised a series of pits, hearths and a possible occupation layer. The pits were of various dimensions, the largest of which measured over 4m in diameter and approximately 1.2m in depth. Pottery was recovered throughout the fills of the pits. Features dating to the Iron Age were identified as souterrains and these were also well preserved. One of these features was over 1.4m deep and yielded

an abundance of charcoal fragments including possible shaped timbers. Further stake-holes and post-holes were also identified, although no dating evidence was recovered from these features and the limited size of the trenches precluded the identification of any structures which these features may have formed (Baker 1999, 11; Cameron 1999, 11-12).

- 2.5 600m north of the current site is Maisondieu an area of linear cropmarks were recorded by CUCAP reconnaissance in 1960 (NO56SE45).
- 2.6 There are also several records of finds of artefacts dating to the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods which have been found in the Brechin area. A stone axe was found in College Gardens in 1868 (NO56SE20) and a flint scraper in Cookston Road in 1983 (NO56SE38). In the grounds of Brechin Castle a perforated stone (NO55NE2) was found in 1954 and a spindle whorl (NO55NE35) before 1889.

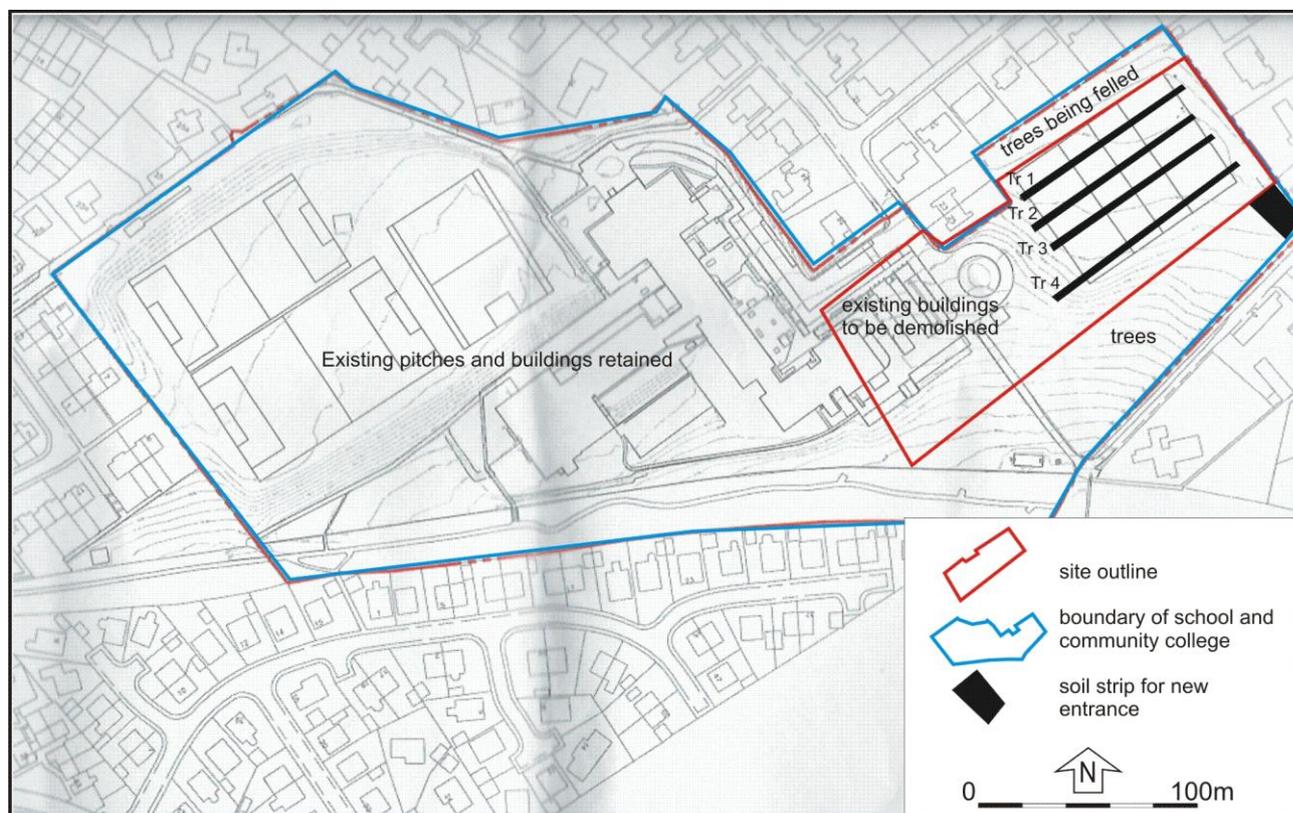
A small copper alloy coin of Constantius Gallus (329-354 AD) was found during the restoration of Brechin Cathedral (NO56SE14).

Hoard of five circular silver brooches and coins (NO56SE50), three of the brooches are inscribed were found in 1891 in a garden at Brechin, with a quantity of coins of the Edwards (Edward I and Edward II?). The first three of the brooches are talismanic, having inscriptions. The first brooch is a circular flat ring brooch, the ring being rectangular in section, complete with pin. It is 4.37cm in diameter. On the face it has the inscription -IHESVS NAZAVRIOR-, on the back are eight letters followed by -IHESVS NVS-, with traces of niello visible in the letters. The pin is of flattend oval section with projecting collar with horizontal groove. The second brooch is circular, flat and of plano-convex section. It has the inscription - + IHESVS NAZ[AREN]VS REX IVDEORVM +- (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) on the face. It is 4.92cm in diameter. The pin is of flattened oval section and oval collar and it has worn away -AREN- from the inscription. The third brooch is octagonal, with its sides alternately flat and ridged. It is 5.87cm in diameter and is complete with pin. The inscriptions on both front and back read - OX XI HESV SNAZA VIXER- (Rex Iv[deorum] reversed) and -RMES IAEV MSD IAN-. The pin is flat and thick, has chamfered corners, and the collar projects and has a horizontal groove. The fourth brooch is a wire ring brooch, originally with four knops and four rosettes attached. Only two and a half knops survive of this decoration. The pin is circular in section and its collar has been removed. It is 5.72cm in diameter. The fifth brooch is fragmentary, less than half of the brooch survives with the pin. It is a wire ring brooch with oval section and a prominent oval collar. It would have been 3.49cm in diameter when complete. The front of the ring has oblique and transverse grooves, probably once filled with niello. IHESVS NAZARENVS REX I VDEORVM. No details of the coins are preserved, but the brooches are in the National Museum of Scotland (NG 158-162).

An English gold half-crown of James I (1406-1437), said to have been found in the garden of Mr James Smith, clothier, Brechin, was forwarded to the Exchequer and reported in 1864 (NO56SE51).

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Four trenches representing 7% of the area of the new school were excavated on 12 March 2014 with a JCB and 1.8m ditching bucket. An area which had been stripped for a new entrance into the site was also inspected during this work (Illus 2). This area had been planted in trees and no archaeological deposits were recorded. The topsoil in the trenches was 0.3-0.6m deep and the subsoil was red clay and sandstone. No archaeological features or finds were recorded and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current redevelopment.



Illus 2 Site plan showing proposed development site (in blue) and the area of the new school (in red) with trenches and watching brief area (*copyright JM Architects*)

4 REFERENCES

Cameron, K 1999 'Dubton Farm, Brechin (Brechin parish), Neolithic activity, Iron Age structures and ?souterrains', *Discovery Excav Scot*, 11-12

Baker, L 1999 'Dubton Farm, Brechin (Brechin parish), early Neolithic occupation; souterrains', *Discovery Excav Scot*, 11

Herbert, C 2014 'Brechin High School New Community Campus brief for an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and 7 – 10% Field Evaluation

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Claire Herbert at Aberdeenshire Archaeology; John Millar, Robertson Construction Eastern Ltd.

APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_1856-60	Trench 1	SW
DSC_1861	Trench 1	WSW
DSC_1862-71	Trench 1	NE
DSC_1872	Trench 2 SW end	NE
DSC_1873-76	Site clearance to north of site from top of spoil heap	NNW/N
DSC_1877-82	Trench 1 (right) Trench 2 (left)	E
DSC_1886-95	Soil strip area for new entrance to north	NNW
DSC_1896-98	tree felling south of site	E
DSC_1899-1909	Trench 2	NE
DSC_1910-1919	Trench 2	SW
DSC_1920-1928	Trench 3	SW
DSC_1929-1933	Trench 4	E
DSC_1934-1941	Trench 4 plough marks	ENE
DSC_1942-1946	Trench 1, 2, 3, 4	SW
DSCF6874-889	panoramas	



DSC_1860



DSC_1861



DSC_1862



DSC_1882



DSC_1887



DSC_1895



DSC_1903



DSC_1919



DSC_1920



DSC_1933



DSC_1934



DSC_1935



DSC_1936



DSC_1937



DSC_1942



DSC_1943



DSC_1944



DSC_1945



DSC_1946



DSCF6873



DSCF6883



DSCF6884



DSCF6885



DSCF6886



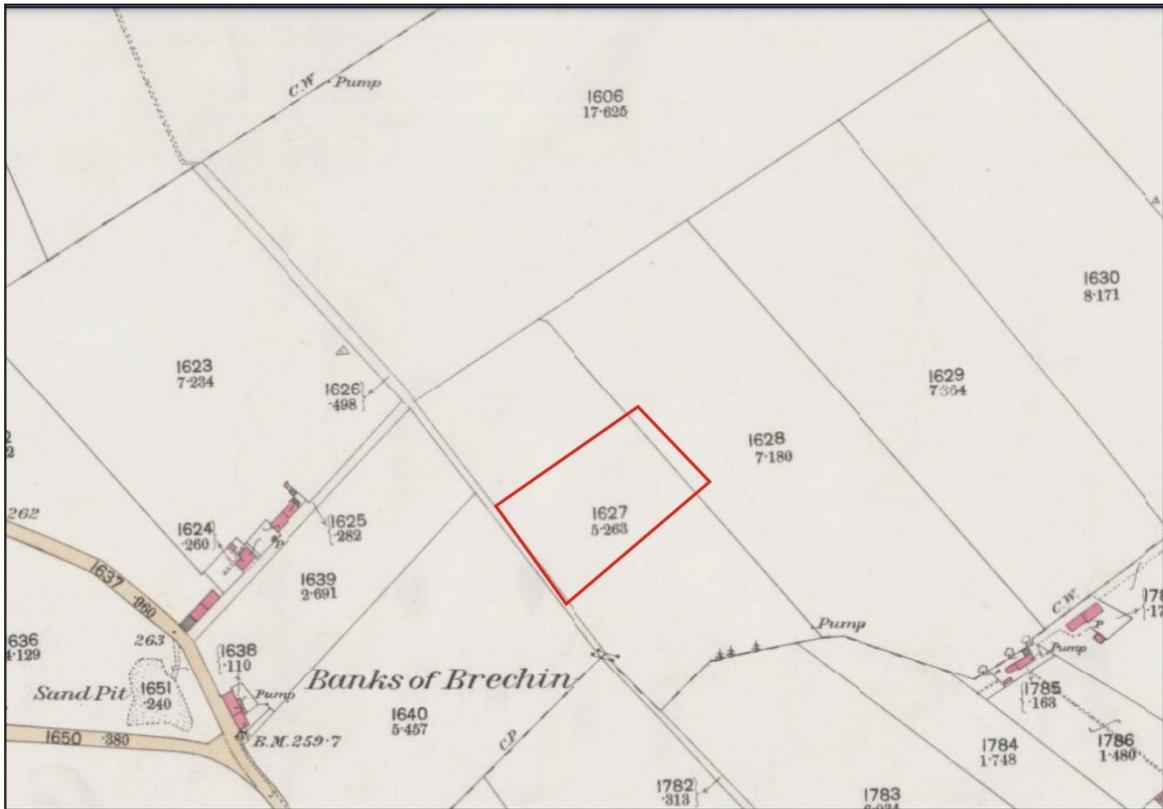
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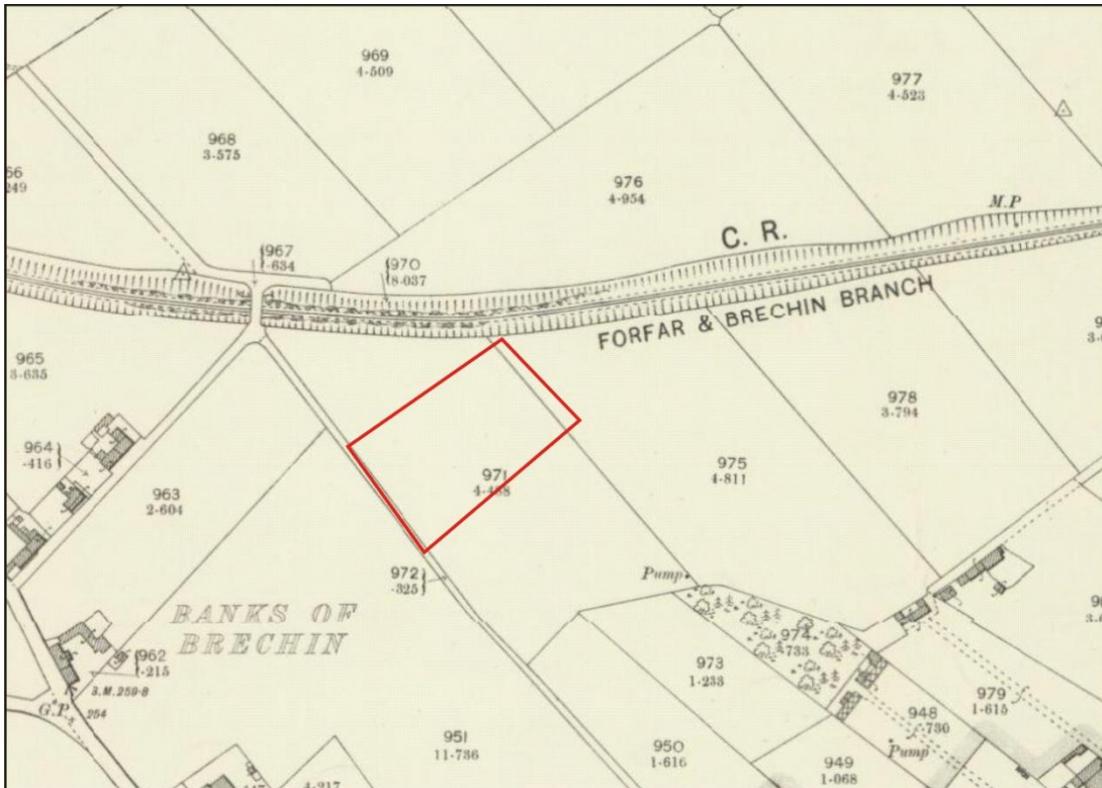
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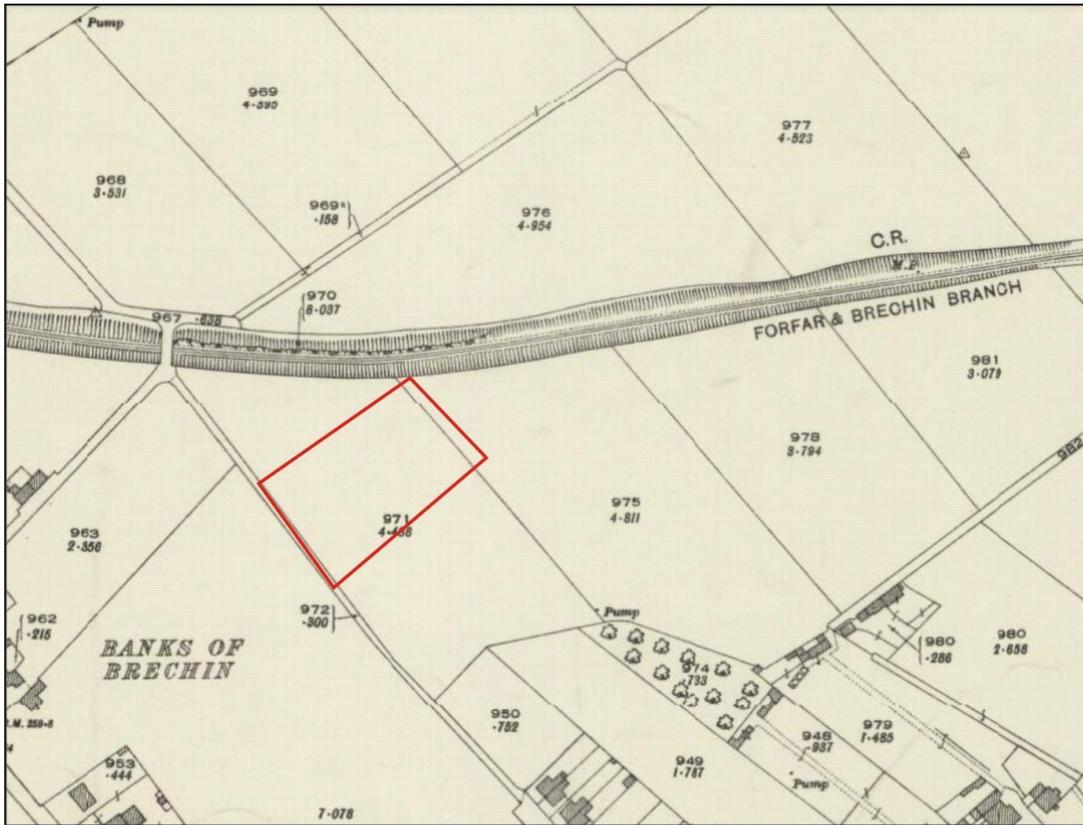


Illus 5 First Edition OS map showing approximate site outlined in red. Forfar Sheet XXVII.9 (Combined) Survey date: 1862 Publication date: 1865 (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 6 Second Edition OS map showing approximate outline of site in red. Forfarshire, Sheet 027.09 Publication date: 1903 Revised: ca. 1901

(copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 7 Third Edition OS map showing approximate outline of site in red . Forfarshire, Sheet 027.09 Publication date: 1924 Revised: ca. 1922 Levelled: 1901 (copyright National Library of Scotland)