

**Report on archaeological watching brief  
Proposed new amenity housing  
Haugh Road, Elgin, Moray, IV30 1AS**



**Alison Cameron  
Cameron Archaeology  
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## SUMMARY

A watching brief was maintained on 10 December 2014 during the excavation of three trenches for archaeological assessment and soil sampling. The trenches were 5m long and 1.5m wide dug with a wheeled JCB with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches indicated that the site had been scarped during the construction of the amenity housing in the 1970s and it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the redevelopment of amenity housing. It is recommended that the stonework should be reused within the new amenity housing development.

# 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The proposed development site, situated on the west side of Elgin centred on NJ 2109 6308 at c.15.5m OD, in Elgin Parish is an area of relatively flat ground which at present is largely occupied by Hanover Court, a three-winged sheltered housing complex. It is bounded on the north and east by Haugh Road; on the west by the Mansion House hotel and its gardens; and on the south by further residential/sheltered housing (Herbert 2014).
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Michael Davidson, ICOSIS and is being carried out pre-application to Aberdeenshire Council for demolition in advance of new amenity housing.
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was 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.



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the proposed site, Elgin Cathedral, Elgin castle and the Bishop's House.
- 2.2 The remains of the medieval Elgin Castle (NJ26SW0007) lie atop Lady Hill, less than 300m from the proposed development site, where artefacts dating to prehistoric period have also been found (NJ26SW0014, NJ26SW0176). In 1858, the Elgin Literary and Scientific Association conducted excavations at Lady Hill on the site of the castle. Three skeletons were discovered just outside the outer walls of the castle, together with a flint arrowhead, several pottery sherds, a quern and a copper coin of Charles II (Shaw 1882, 7). A fragment of an incised cross from the castle is in Elgin museum (NJ26SW 7.01). Five flat bronze axes of Migdale type (NJ26SW 121) were found when trenching a field, hoard. Coles (1971, 108) notes the discovery of a hoard 'near Ladyhill, Avoch, Ross and Cromarty' but OS maps cite no such place-name in that area. The objects were donated to Elgin Museum by James Fletcher of Rosehaugh (a house on the Black Isle) but it appears possible that they were originally found in the Ladyhill district of Elgin, the incorrect provenance being deduced from the seat of the donor and their description in an account of Ormond Castle (NH65SE 1). In June 1989, a trench was cut to accommodate electrical service cable to the floodlights installed on the Duke of Gordon's Monument. The trench extended c.115m from Hill Street to the monument and revealed features of no archaeological interest (NJ26SW 119.01).

Small scale excavations were carried out in 1972 and 1973. Considerable quantities of medieval pottery were found during a small excavation in c1973. At the N side down the slope of the hill was a low sand bank or rampart, strengthened with tipped stone, with a vertical timber revetment on its outer side, running along the original lip of the slope. Above it were the dry-stone footings of what may have been a medieval curtain-wall. An earlier small excavation on the Ladyhill revealed three skeletons, one in a crouched position, and two, just outside the castle walls in a horizontal position. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 2010 by Alba Archaeology during the erection of a toposcope (with associated access). No significant archaeological features or deposits were revealed..

- 2.3 Bishop's House (NJ26SW 1.02) lies 0.9km east of the proposed development. It is a small remnant of the town house of the Bishops of Moray immediately opposite Elgin Cathedral. The ruins possess some pleasing architectural features, notably a fine oriel window (Childe and Simpson 1961, 104). A short watching brief was carried out by Kirkdale Archaeology in the area immediately S of the Bishops House. The groundworks involved two trenches being dug by machine and then cleaned by hand. The features recorded were 20th century in date. The implications of excavating a soakaway to the S of the S tower of the W doorway were also investigated. After removal of topsoil and cleaning of the exposed surface, it was clear that the whole area represented disturbed ground with seven individual graves being identifiable (including the fragment of a base for a probable table tomb), and that it would not be possible to excavate further without disturbing burials. It was decided to open a second narrow trench against the SW angle and W face of the tower, where it was discovered that an existing, modern drainage channel had been cut against the base of the tower and ran into a rubble-filled soakaway area against the bottom step. No undisturbed natural horizons were identified within the excavated areas, indicating that the whole area

has been massively disturbed, probably entirely by graveyard activity (Ewart and Radley 1997, 55).

- 2.4 Elgin Cathedral (NJ26SW 1.04) is 0.98km to the east of the proposed development and the remains consist of a nave with double aisles and N and S porches; twin western towers having a superb portal and window between them; transepts above which rose a great central tower (which collapsed in 1711); a choir with aisles and presbytery; and a detached octagonal chapter-house, rebuilt in the 15th century. The cathedral was founded in 1224 and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Much of the remaining work is from that century; but in 1390 the cathedral was burnt by Alexander, earl of Buchan, also known as the "Wolf of Badenoch", and the ruins show traces of extensive early 15th-century rebuilding. In the surviving ruins and in the detached fragments assembled on the site there is a wealth of moulded work, heraldic decoration, and figure sculpture; preserved in the nave is a standing cross-slab with Pictish symbols, which formerly stood in St Giles's kirkyard in Elgin (Richardson and Mackintosh 1950, 15-17).
- 2.5 A short distance to the south the possible site of the medieval Blackfriar's monastery has been recorded (NJ26SW0006). While the monastery buildings are said to have been levelled in the 18th Century, during construction works carried out in the early 1970s, up to 50 human skeletons were uncovered in this area, possibly dating to the 17th Century (Cowan and Easson 1976, 118).
- 2.6 An examination was carried out by SUAT for two weeks in September 1993, in advance of the development of shop and office units at 213-225 High Street (NJ26SW 153). An area measuring 7m by 14m, aligned E to W, was opened close to the street frontage. Three phases of activity were identified. The earliest was represented by a series of elongated pits cut into the natural coarse sand. Locally produced Redware pottery sherds were recovered from the fills of these pits, dating them to no later than the 15th century. The function of these pits is unclear, but one possible use may have been for the retrieval of coarse sand, perhaps for building purposes. The presence of the pits implies that the site was vacant during this time and may relate to a period prior to burgh expansion. The site then appears to have been scarped down slightly, truncating these earlier features and reducing the profile of the natural sand. This action was possibly part of later development represented by a series of deposits and features dated to the 18th to 19th centuries. Several structural features, hearths, burnt layers and quantities of slag indicate industrial activity on the site during this period. The site then appears to have been slightly reduced again, prior to 20th-century development of a garage and forecourt, only recently demolished. (MacKenzie 1993, 40). In May and June 2004 a watching brief and subsequent excavation were carried out at the N end of the site. Some 146 features were excavated, comprising medieval pits, post-holes, property boundaries, and three medieval timber-built wells. The wells were square, formed around a prefabricated mortised framework with corner posts. They contained much leather, animal bone, worked timber objects and the mid-section of a solid cart wheel. Quantities of 13th/14th-century pottery were also found (Murray and Murray 2004, 86).
- 2.7 Trial trenching was carried out in advance of a housing development by Moray District Council (NJ26SW 97). Natural sand was encountered at 0.20m below modern ground level. No archaeological evidence was encountered (Hall 1986, 11-12).
- 2.8 There are 190 Listed Buildings within 1km of the proposed development. These are listed in Appendix 2. 0.5km west of the proposed development is the Old Mills (NJ26SW 92) an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century water mill. A two-storey and attic rubble building on an L plan, with a kiln at the end of one wing, with a square-section

louvred ventilator. There is a six-spoke, all-iron, low-breast paddlewheel, 4ft (1.22m) wide by 11ft (3.35m) diameter. Apparently disused, but in good external condition. Nearby is a two-storey and attic granary, with rubble ground floor and wooden superstructure (Hume 1977, 231-2).

- 2.9 Immediately west of the proposed site is The Haugh (Mansion House Hotel; NJ26SW 231) a 19<sup>th</sup> century house remodeled by W Kidner in 1882 in a 'fruity' baronial style, possibly said to have been influenced by contemporary American architecture (Buildings of Scotland, RCAHMS). It appears on the First and Second Edition OS maps (Illus 16, 17)
- 2.10 On the First and Second OS maps the site is divided into fields with the southern half of the site within the Glebe and the northern half in Borough Briggs. Haugh Road is set out between the two editions and the area starting to be developed by the Second Edition.

### 3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was maintained on 10 December 2014 during the excavation of three trenches for archaeological assessment and soil sampling. The trenches were 5m long and 1.5m wide dug with a wheeled JCB with a toothless ditching bucket.



Illus 1 Site plan showing Trenches and stonework (copyright ICOSIS)

#### Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in Area B on the west of the amenity housing. The upper 0.5m of the trench was mixed sand, soil and modern rubble on top of wet clean light brown beach sand. At the north end of the trench a cut was located for two plastic drainage pipes (Illus 3).



Illus 2 Trench 1 section with plastic drainage pipes; facing NE

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was located at the north end of the internal courtyard within the current amenity housing. The upper 0.5m of the trench was mixed sand, soil and modern rubble on top of wet clean light brown beach sand. At the north end of the trench a cut was located for two plastic drainage pipes (Illus 4).



Illus 3 Trench 2; facing SW



Illus 4 Trench 3 NE section showing grey silt

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated at the SW edge of the open courtyard. The upper 0.5m of the trench was mixed loam, sand, soil and modern rubble including plastic; the lower 0.25m



was grey silt (Illus 5) indicating that the area had been waterlogged prior to the construction of the amenity housing.

### **Stonework**

Nine items of stone had been reused within the garden of the amenity housing. F1 and F2 are sections of sandstone drain/gutter paired to form flower containers (Illus 6). F3 is a stack of three sandstone pillar bases stacked to form a flower container (Illus 7). F4 and F5 are sections of shaft with a capital from one of the 17th-century arcades which can still be seen in 7 High Street, Elgin (Illus 13) and F7-9 are sandstone pillar bases reused as flower containers.



Illus 5 F1 (left) F2 (right); facing ENE



Illus 6 F3; facing ENE



Illus 7 F4; facing N



Illus 8 F5; facing NE



Illus 9 F7; facing W



Illus 10 F8; facing W



Illus 11 F9; facing W

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

The three trenches excavated indicate that the area was scarped during the construction of the amenity housing in the 1970s. The stonework recorded probably comes from a nearby site where 17<sup>th</sup>-century arcades (Illus 13) were being demolished and the stone was used in the garden of the amenity housing.



Illus 12 7 High Street, Elgin showing 17<sup>th</sup>-century arcade

The architects (ICOSIS) are intending to resite the stonework within the new amenity housing development.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the redevelopment of amenity housing.
- It is recommended that the stonework should be reused within the new amenity housing development.

## 6 REFERENCES

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## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cameron Archaeology  
45 View Terrace  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2RS  
01224 643020  
07581 181057  
cameronarch@btinternet.com  
www.cameronarchaeology.com  
Company registration no 372223 (Scotland)  
VAT registration no 990 4373 00

## APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_0702-5	Trench 1 location	NNW
DSC_0707-9	Trench 1	SSE
DSC_0710-11	Trench 1	SE
DSC_0712-15	Trench 1 services N end	S
DSC_0716-19	Trench 1 E section	E
DSC_0720-23	Dave Thornton and Chris, Billy Miller (ex shepherd) discuss services in area of Tr 3	S
DSC_0724-25	F4-9 set in concrete wall with benches	N
DSC_0726	F6-9	E
DSC_0727-29	F9	E
DSC_0730-32	F8	E
DSC_0733-34	F7	E
DSC_0735	F7	NE
DSC_0736-7	F7	E
DSC_0738	F6	NE
DSC_0739-40	F6	N
DSC_0741-44	F6	NE/E
DSC_0745	F7	NNW
DSC_0746-8	F7	N
DSC_0749	F7	NNE
DSC_0750	F7	NNW
DSC_0751-2	F7	N
DSC_0753	F7 with F1-3 (background)	NW
DSC_0754	F7 with F1-3 (background)	NNW
DSC_0755-7	F3. F1, F2	NNW
DSC_0758	F3 three column bases	NNW
DSC_0759-60	F3 three column bases	N
DSC_0761-2	F3 three column bases	NNE
DSC_0763-4	F3 three column bases	ENE
DSC_0765-6	F3 three column bases	SW
DSC_0767-73	F2	
DSC_0774-78	F1	
DSC_0779-80	Trench 2 location	NW
DSC_0781-82	Trench 2	WSW
DSC_0783-88	Trench 2	S
DSC_0789	Trench 2 location	NW
DSC_0790	Site from Tr 2	SSE
DSC_0791	F1-3 location	NW
DSC_0792-96	F5 and F4	WSW
DSC_0797-800	F4-F7	
DSC_0801	F7	W
DSC_0802	F8	W
DSC_0803	F9	W

DSC_0804-6	F4-9 set in concrete wall with benches	N
DSC_0807-8	Trench 3	SSE
DSC_0809-13	Trench 3	SW
DSC_0814-15	machine	
DSC_0816-17	Trench 3	SW
DSC_0818	Trench 3	NNE
DSC_0819-21	Trench 3	SSE
DSC_0822-26	Trench 3	SW







DSC\_0754.JPG



DSC\_0755.JPG



DSC\_0756.JPG



DSC\_0757.JPG



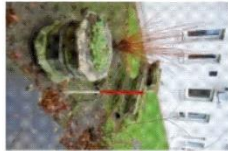
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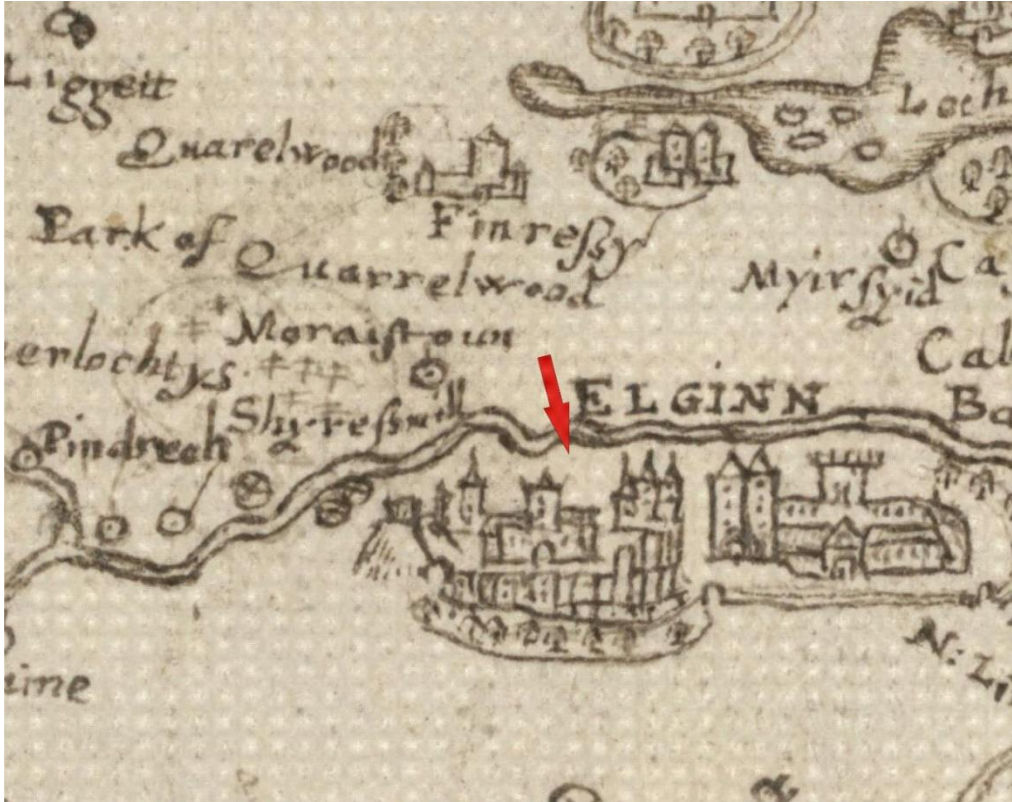
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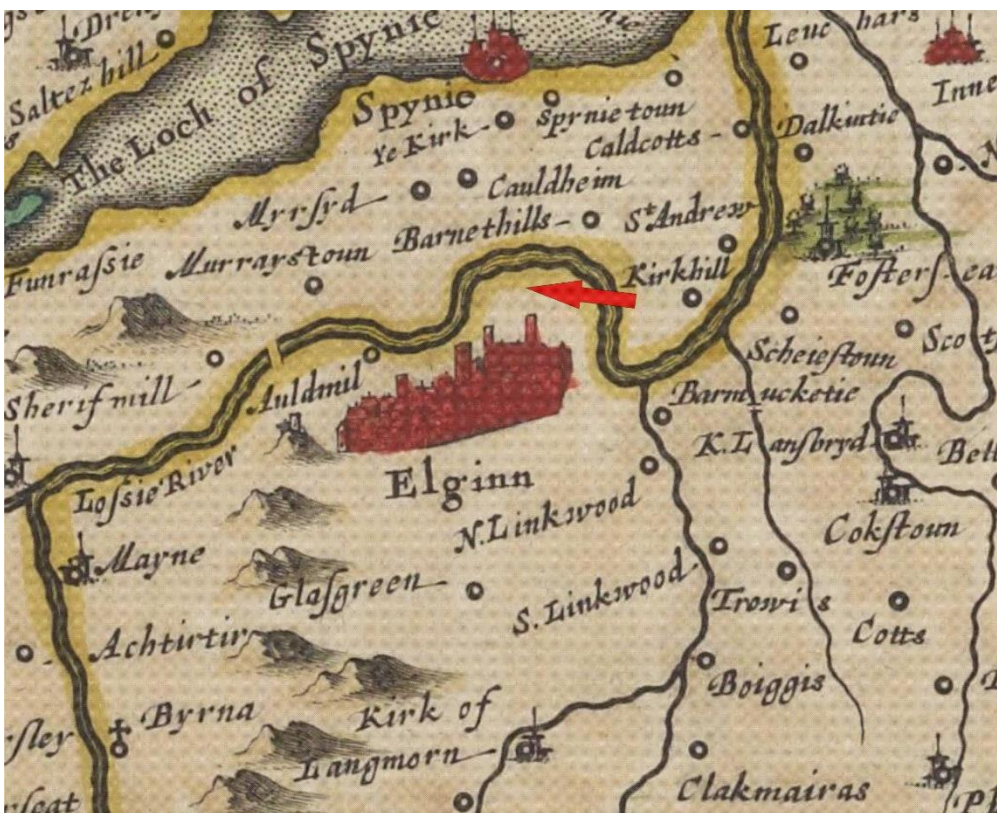
## APPENDIX 2 FEATURES

Feature no	Description	Size
F1	Sandstone guttering (two stacked)	51cm diameter, central circular hole 30cm diameter
F2	Sandstone guttering (two stacked)	51cm diameter, central circular hole 30cm diameter
F3	Sandstone pillar base (3 stacked)	62x62cm with central octagonal aperture 51cm diameter
F4	Sandstone column with capital with scroll moulding	Column 38cm diameter, top 44x44cm scroll moulding 10cm deep
F5	Sandstone column with capital with scroll moulding	Column 38cm diameter, top 44x44cm scroll moulding 10cm deep
F6	Sandstone column with capital with scroll moulding	Column 38cm diameter, top 44x44cm scroll moulding 10cm deep
F7	Sandstone pillar base	62x62cm with central octagonal aperture 51cm diameter
F8	Sandstone pillar base	62x62cm with central octagonal aperture 51cm diameter
F9	Sandstone pillar base	62x62cm with central octagonal aperture 51cm diameter

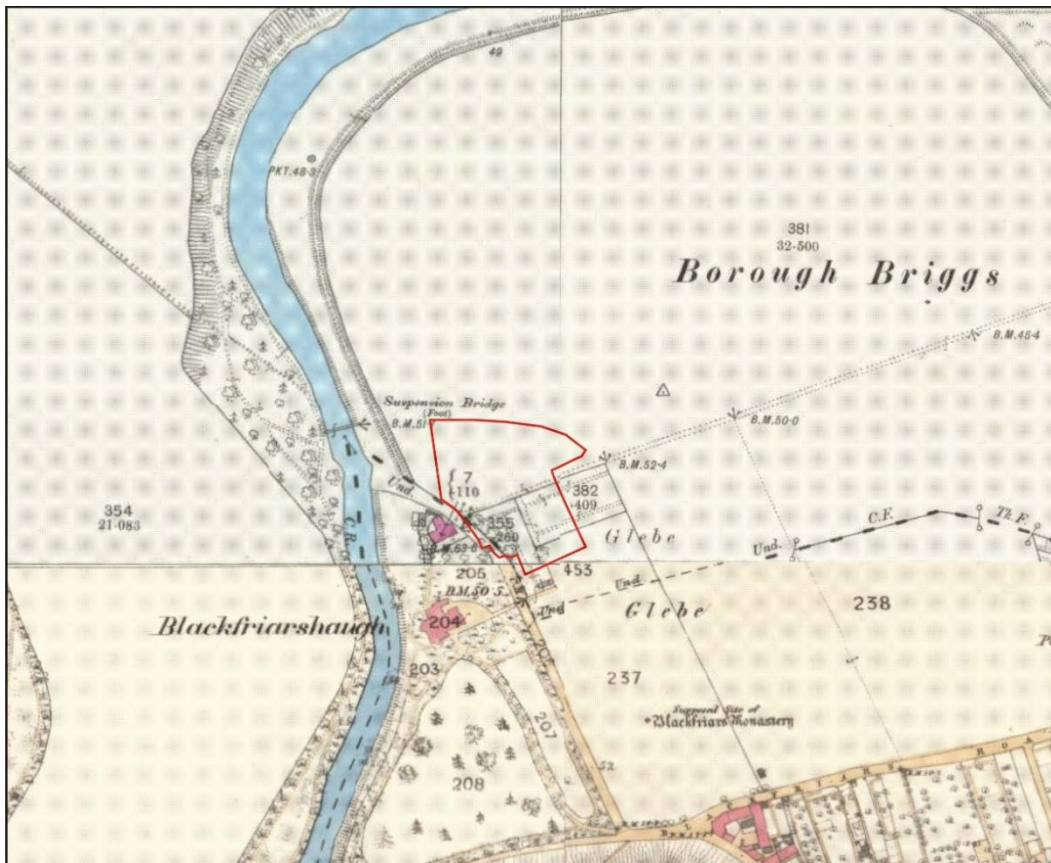
### APPENDIX 3 MAPS



Illus 13 Pont's late 16th-early 17th-century map with approximate area of site arrowed (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 14 Blaeu Map of 1654 with approximate area of site arrowed (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 15 First Edition OS map showing approximate outline of site in red Elgin Sheet VII.11/12/15/16 (Combined) Survey date: 1870/1868 Publication date: 1873 (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 16 Second Edition OS map showing approximate outline of site in red. Elginshire, Sheet 007.11/12/15/16 Publication date: 1905 Revised: ca. 1904 (copyright National Library of Scotland)