

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
House of Dun, Montrose, Angus  
DD10 9LQ**



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# ***An Archaeological Watching Brief***

## ***House of Dun, Montrose, Angus, DD10 9LQ***

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Cover: The House of Dun

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### **SUMMARY**

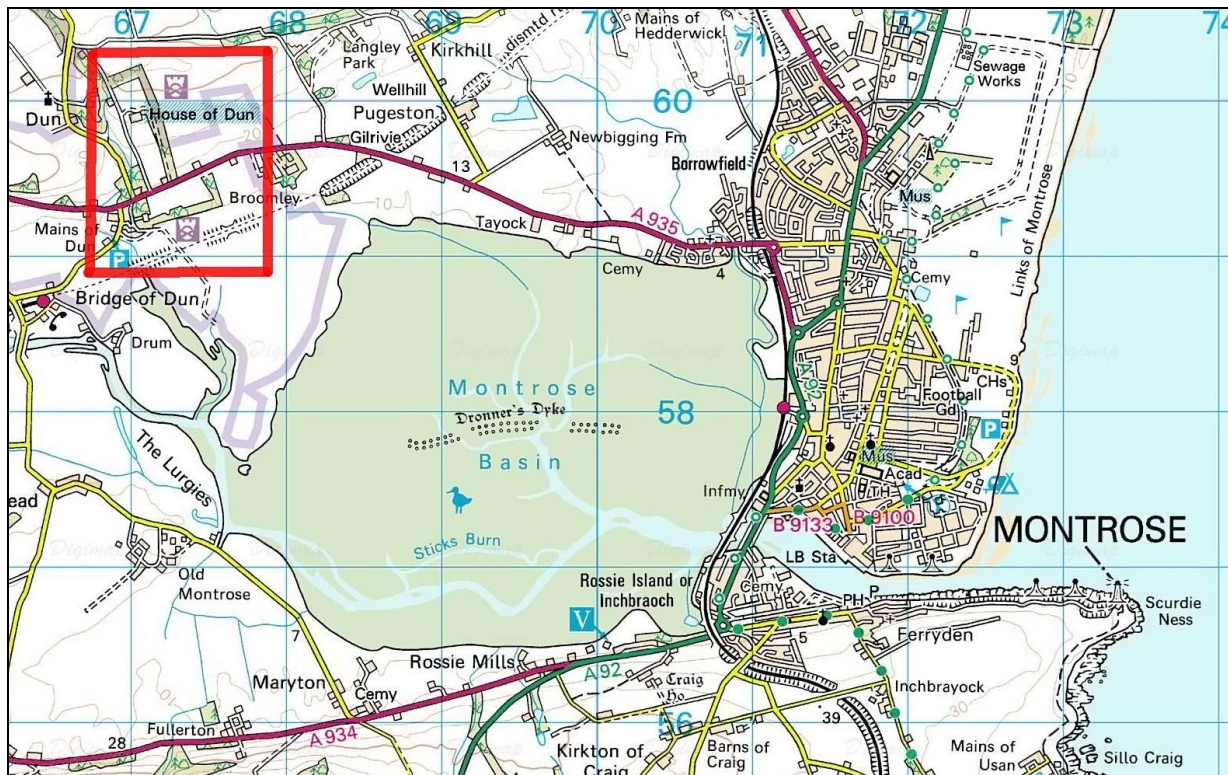
In late February and early March 2015, a series of small trenches for kerbing, drains and four larger 3x3m soakaways were dug along the south entrance drive to the House of Dun in advance of major resurfacing works. A prominent, yet largely enigmatic, archaeological feature with possible prehistoric and medieval use (Gallows Knowe NO65NE3) lies within 40m of the drive. While no features or archaeological finds were found during the monitoring, it should be noted that a discreet, dark layer with cobbles revealed in the sump for Soakaway 4 (illus 4) may well produce archaeological material in the event of future works.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Major roadworks were scheduled for the main entrance and south drive to the House of Dun, Montrose, Angus (Illus 1 & 2) at NO 6707 5953. As the works were located close to a probable prehistoric and medieval landmark, Gallows Knowe (NO65NE3), an archaeologist was drafted in to monitor all excavations in relation to the project.

The work was commissioned by archaeologist Daniel Rhodes, National Trust for Scotland.

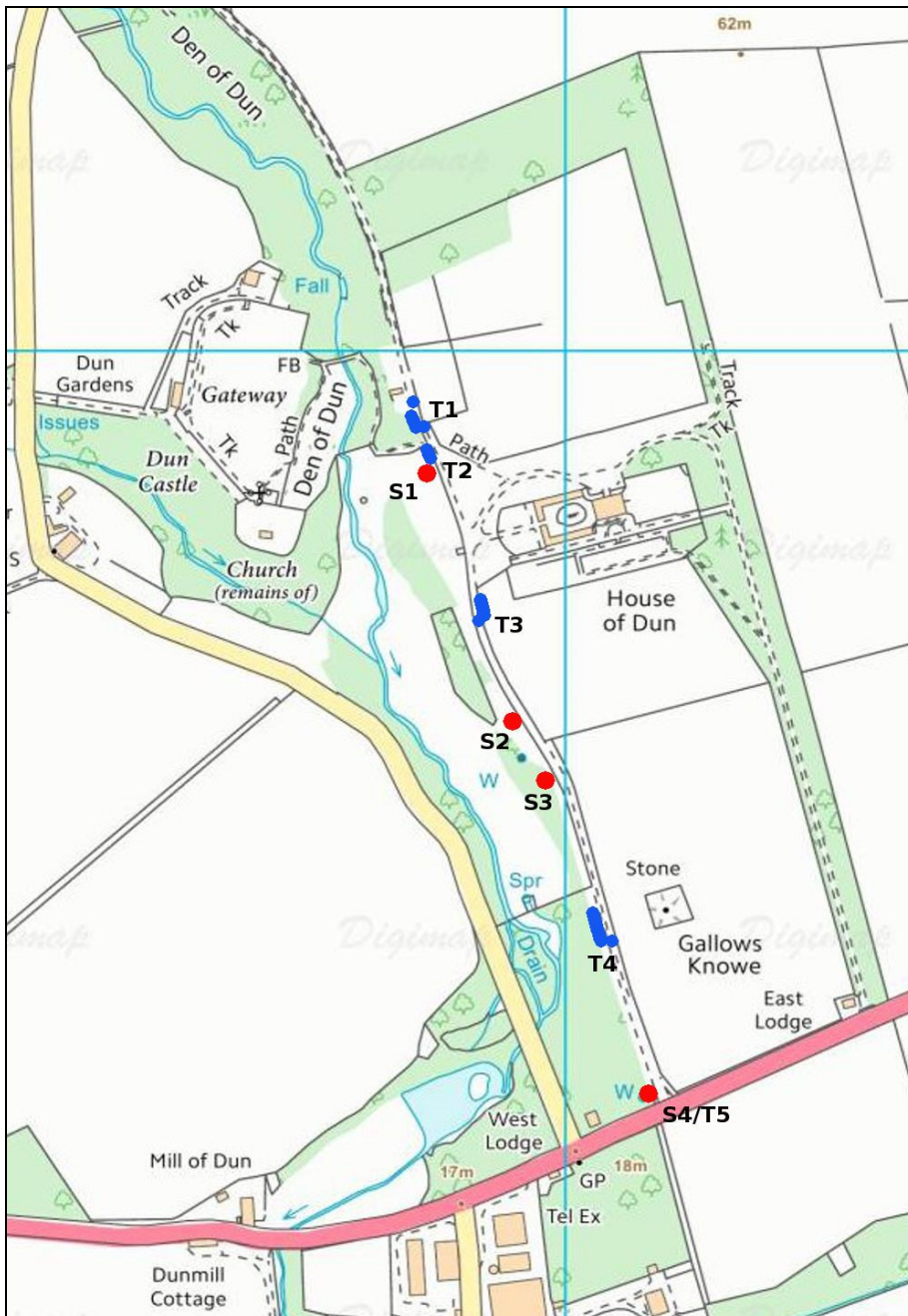
The watching brief took place on between 25<sup>th</sup> January and March 2nd 2015, and was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN 42) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



**Illus 1:** Location of House of Dun in relation to Montrose Basin and town (Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010)

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Gallows Knowe (site reference NO65NE) is an artificial, stony, flat-topped mound situated at the top of a rise. It is thought that it was originally built as a burial monument 3500- 4500 years ago over a central 'cist' containing a burial. Similar monuments of the period have contained numerous burials in and around the mound, as the original site continued in use over many years. Surveyors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century recorded the knowe as a medieval execution site, and its close proximity to the medieval Dun Castle, and to the



**Illus 2:** Location of soakaways and trenches installed during the watching brief.

main Brechin to Montrose road may further suggest it as a likely site of public execution. When the House of Dun was built in 1730, it was set within a formal landscape extending towards Montrose Basin. Early designs show a long vista, drawing the eye to the summit of Maryton Law on the opposite side of the Basin. The prehistoric burial mound would have made a good focal point, and a 1850s estate plan shows it planted with trees to make it more obvious and to add variety and interest to the landscape. Gallow's Knowe has never been excavated in modern times.

As well as being situated in close proximity to a probable prehistoric mound, the excavations are also taking place on land purchased by Sir Robert Erskine in 1375 (The National Trust for Scotland, 1992, 2). A 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house was built to the west of the driveway, quarter of a mile west of the present house.



**Illus 3:** The House of Dun

### **3 THE WATCHING BRIEF**

The watching brief took place from 25<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> February and March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015. It monitored the excavation of four 6-10m trenches for kerbing, three road cuts for drain pipes (road width) and the installation of four c.3x3m 'soakaways' or gravel-filled pits to collect water runoff. All digging of trenches took place immediately adjacent to, or within the existing road surface. The soakaways themselves were located c.3-4m west of the road respectively, opposite a fence which runs parallel with the drive. In addition to the soakaways, four narrow (c.35cm) trenches or slots were machine dug to receive stone kerbing. These small trenches averaged 40-60cm in depth.

The four soakaways – the largest excavated features during the project – were placed immediately west of the drive (illus 2). These are effectively large pits, approximately 3x3m and 1.2-1.5m deep, which are filled with stone and connected to a shallower channel with carries standing water off of the drive. In each, a light-brown loose topsoil up to 1m deep was encountered above an orange sandy natural (illus 4). No finds or features of archaeological interest were revealed during the soakaway excavations. In addition, four trenches were also machine dug for kerbing, and did not produce signs of archaeological material, rather layers of imported material for levelling and construction of the drive and paths that they border.

However, in the sump for Soakaway 4 near the entrance to the estate, it should be noted for future works that a moderately discreet layer of cobbles c.10cm in depth, in a darker, organic strata separates the upper light brown organic from the lower, apparently 'sterile', subsoil. While no entirely convincing archaeological material was produced, a number of cobbles showed possible signs of fire-cracking. No pottery or lithics, including debitage, were noted in the sump though the excavated area here was relatively small at c.1x 1.4m x 1.4m (LxWxD).



**Illus 4:** Stratigraphical profile of sump for Soakaway 4, indicating light brown silty overburden and deep underlying clean sandy deposit (orange/brown) separated by a dark, silty organic layer containing numerous small cobbles.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The excavations undertaken during the civil engineering works were monitored by this watching brief and are outlined in this report. It is unlikely that further archaeological mitigation will be required during the resurfacing portion of the roadworks as the intrusive element took place during this watching brief.

#### **5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to Daniel Rhodes and National Trust for Scotland staff for their help during the work and to Alison Cameron for her advice during this watching brief.

#### **6 REFERENCES**

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The National Trust for Scotland, 1992, House of Dun; visitor's guide, *National Trust for Scotland, Glasgow*

Canmore Database, RCAHMS, Record for 'House of Dun NO65NE3' accessed at:  
<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/35682/details/gallows+knowe/> as of 04-03-2015.

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## APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo ID	Comments	Facing Direction
DSC_0002	General view of soakaway 3	NW
DSC_0003	General view of soakaway 2	NW
DSC_0007	View of main entrance drive	N
DSC_0010	Gallows Knowe mound with House of Dun in distance	SE
DSC_0014	General view of soakaway 4	NW
DSC_0015	General view of soakaway 4	S
DSC_0017	Trench 2 (for kerbing)	N
DSC_0018	Detail of N end of Trench 2	E
DSC_0021	Trench 3 (for kerbing)	N
DSC_0022	General view of bus parking with Trench 3 in background	SE
DSC_2222	Trench 4 underway	W
DSC_2223	Trench 4 underway	S
DSC_2224	Trench 4 underway, nearing completion	S
DSC_2225	Detail of Trench 4	E
DSC_2228	Detail of Trench 4	E
DSC_2230	General view of Trench 4, completed	NE
DSC_2231	General view of Trench 4, completed	SW
DSC_2233	Detail of Trench 4	E
DSC_2234	Detail of Trench 4	E
DSC_2260	Kerbing completed in Trench 1	N
DSC_2264	General view of Trench 4, completed	N
DSC_2265	Drain for Trench 4 underway	N
DSC_2267	Drain for Trench 4 underway	E
DSC_2269	Drain for Trench 4 near completion	E
DSC_2274	Channel connection Trench 4 to drain outlet	W
DSC_2277	Sump in south end of Trench 4	E

DSC_2280	Channel for Trench 4 underway	N
DSC_2282	Channel for Trench 4 underway	N
DSC_2284	Detail view of stratigraphy in sump, Trench 4	SW
DSC_2285	View of Trench 4	S
DSC_2287	View of Trench 4 with sump installed	N
DSC_2295	North of Trench 3, slot for kerbing marked out and underway (modern timbers on left)	S
DSC_2296	Detail of Trench 3	S
DSC_2299	Slot in road, Trench 3, for drainpipe	W
DSC_2300	Detail of road slot for drainpipe, Trench 3	N
DSC_2302	Trench 3 near completion	E
DSC_2348	Start of sump for drain, Soakaway 4	E
DSC_2350	Channel leading to Soakaway 4	SE
DSC_2352	Dressed stone from channel, Soakaway 4	S
DSC_2353	Moving into position for Soakaway 4	SW
DSC_2358	Soakaway 4, underway	SE
DSC_2360	Soakaway 4, underway	S
DSC_2361	Soakaway 4, underway	S
DSC_2362	Soakaway 4, underway	S
DSC_2366	Soakaway 4, stratigraphical profile shot	S
DSC_2368	Soakaway 4, nearing completion	S
DSC_2372	Soakaway 4, completed	SW





DSC\_0002.jpg



DSC\_0003.jpg



DSC\_0007.jpg



DSC\_0010.jpg



DSC\_0014.jpg



DSC\_0015.jpg



DSC\_0017.jpg



DSC\_0018.jpg



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