

**Kirkton Cemetery, Fraserburgh, AB43 9TE**  
**Archaeological evaluation and data structure report**



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## ILLUSTRATIONS

(top) west end of grave cut showing Phase 1 cut (centre) and cut for modern alkathene pipe (top right). Bottom: disarticulated human bones laid in Phase 1 Trench 7.

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## SUMMARY

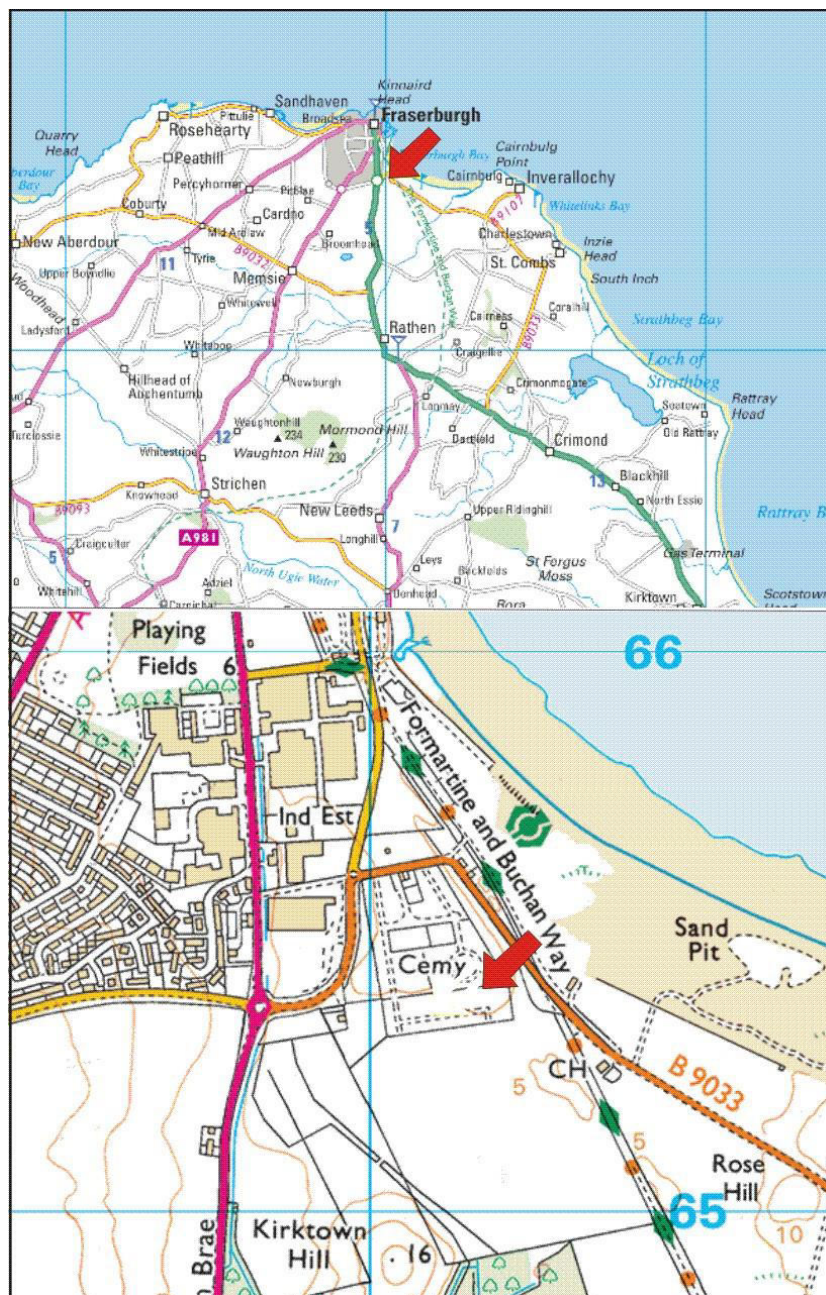
An archaeological evaluation was carried out on 18 July 2016 around the grave opened by Aberdeenshire Council staff on 8.7.16. A trench had been cut into this former agricultural land, possibly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century prior to the 1977 extension of the cemetery. Tin cans, glass bottles, ceramics, wood and human bones had been deposited. The linear nature of this feature suggests that it may not be as simple as a dump of rubbish, but no drainage pipe was uncovered and drainage is unlikely to have been required in the sandy soil. Four or five years prior to this evaluation a black alkathene pipe had been laid into a trench parallel and south of the 1870s south wall of the cemetery. This trench had disturbed the earlier cut and also the foundation trench of the 1870s graveyard wall. Pottery, glass, a coffin handle, wood and human bones were backfilled into this trench.

The presence of human bones in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century trench outwith the extent of the graveyard at that time suggests that graves may have been present within the agricultural field to the south of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century graveyard. These may have been associated with the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Philorth graveyard, but their original deposition site is at present unknown.

As further human bones are likely to be present in the eastern extension of feature 7 an archaeologist should be present when the N line of graves is dug. There is a possibility that there are undisturbed human remains within the remainder of the 1977 cemetery extension and a geophysical survey of the area prior to further gravedigging would help to determine this.

# 1 BACKGROUND

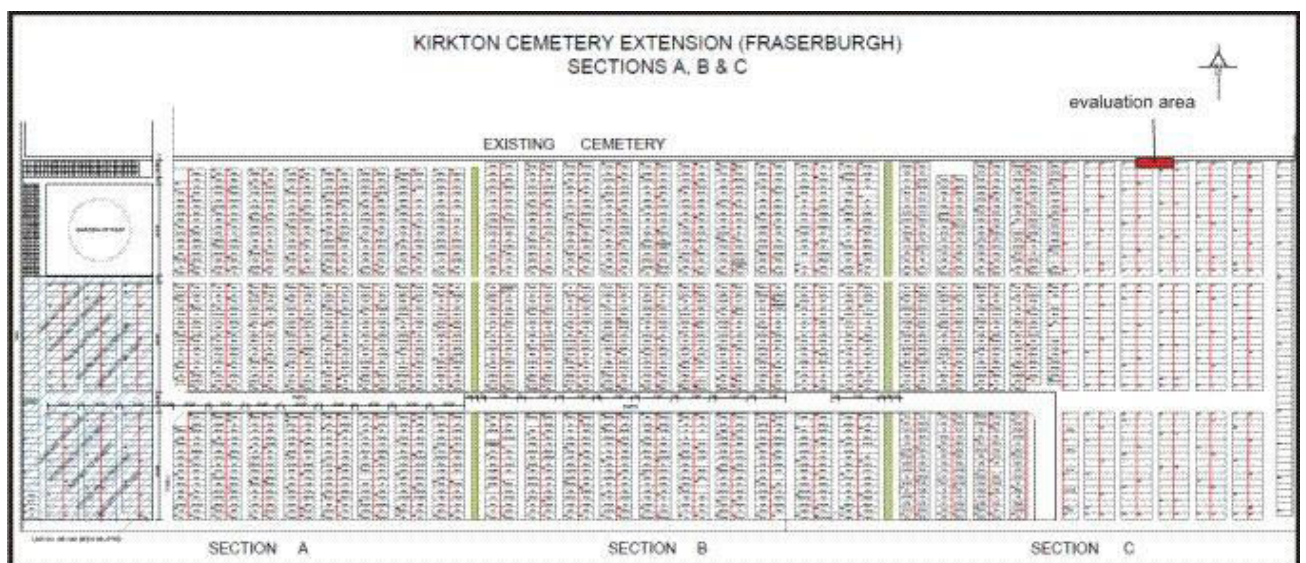
- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located. It is centred on NGR NK0009765368, at 0-5m OD in the parish of Fraserburgh.
- 1.2 Gravediggers encountered human and animal bone whilst digging a grave in the Kirkton Cemetery extension. The bones were light in colour and covered with sand and police were called to determine their nature, date and circumstances of burial. Cameron Archaeology were contacted by Matt Lyall, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Pathology, University of Aberdeen. Cameron Archaeology attended the mortuary and ascertained that the bones were probably not modern and were likely to be archaeological, possibly associated with the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Philorth Church. This evaluation work was commissioned by Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.
- 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.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016)

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument within 1km of the proposed evaluation area. Fraserburgh Cemetery, pill box 280m ENE of Kirkton Cottages. The monument comprises a pill box which was one of a group built during World War II to protect against landings from Fraserburgh Bay. The pill box is six-sided and has a door to the SW, with a blast wall outside the doorway. It has a wide loophole in each of the other 5 sides. It is about 4m across and 1.6m high and is made of concrete. It is built on a flat sandy area just behind the beach to the W of Fraserburgh Bay.
- 2.2 Philorth Churchyard within Fraserburgh Cemetery is listed Category B (NK06NW0001). The church of Philorth was dedicated to St Medan, and is first mentioned in the 13th Century. It stood in the old graveyard on the Links near the farm of Kirkton, but was abandoned in the 16th Century. The massive well-defined foundations were uncovered in 1910 when the graveyard was being extended. They were found to lie partly within and partly without the W wall of the original churchyard, part of which still stands 0.6m thick and in places 2.2m high. The 16/17th century churchyard wall has a roll-moulded gate, partly coped; arched gate with roll moulding. There is a good collection of stones from the 17th Century onwards; brick arched vault.
- 2.3 Graveyard/cemetery, still in use (NK06NW0134). The old graveyard of Philorth Church has been considerably expanded, initially to the southeast by the time of the OS 2nd edition and subsequently also to the north and south. The cemetery contains 31 Commonwealth burials of World War I and 30 burials of World War II, including 4 unidentified seamen of the Merchant Navy. The cemetery also has the grave of Joseph Watt, Royal Naval Reserve, who was awarded the Victoria Cross 15 May 1917, and died 1955.
- 2.3 Shell middens (NK06NW0002) were found in Kirkton Cemetery while opening graves on the S side of the 1866 addition to the cemetery and in agricultural operations on the S side of the graveyard. They were described as consisting of 'ash middens, some built round with stones, with whole buckets of shells mixed in'.



Illus 2 Plan showing 1977 cemetery extension and location of evaluation (from copyright Aberdeenshire Council)

### 3 THE EVALUATION

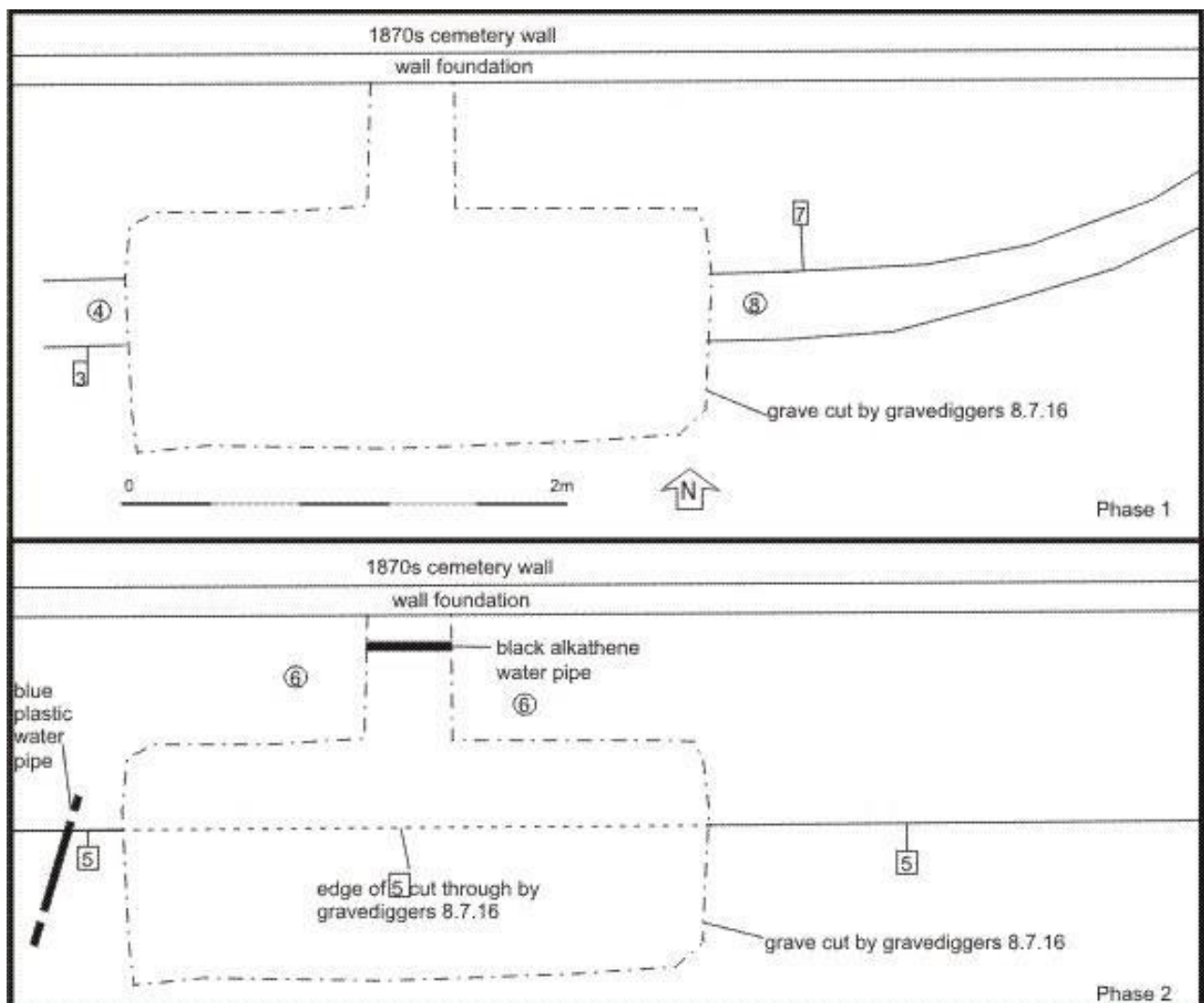
An archaeological evaluation was carried out on 18 July 2016 following the discovery of bones by gravediggers at Kirkton cemetery. An area 2m south and 10m east of the newly cut grave (Illus 2, 3) were stripped of topsoil. The 1870s south cemetery wall (built between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS maps; Illus 10,11) was 0.8m from the N edge of the grave and this area was investigated. There was a new grave 1m from the W edge of the grave and so this area was unavailable for investigation.

#### Phase 1

A trench (3/7) had been cut into the natural clean light brown sand and infilled with tin cans, glass bottles and disarticulated human bones (Illus 6). The trench was 0.3m wide, up to 0.5m deep with steep side and a round base.

#### Phase 2

An alkathene pipe had been inserted by Aberdeenshire Council staff (not the gravediggers) around 4-5 years prior to this evaluation. The pipe was in a trench (5) parallel to the cemetery wall (Illus 7); there is a possibility that this area had already been disturbed when the 1870s wall foundation was built but the depth seems more likely to be accounted for by the water pipe. The trench for this pipe had cut through the top of the Phase 1 trench. Feature 5 was sectioned to locate the pipe and determine whether there were any earlier features underneath. It contained a large amount of glass and ceramics, an iron coffin handle and human bones.



Illus 3 Plan showing early 20<sup>th</sup>-century trench 3/7 and Phase 2 cut for water pipe, c 2012



Illus 4 Tin cans and green glass bottle in situ in base of trench 7; facing E.



Illus 5 Phase 2 alkathene pipe trench 5, with 1870s cemetery wall and foundation (top); facing N

#### **4 THE FINDS**

The human and mammal bones and wood were photographed and recorded at the mortuary. The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century trench, 3/7 contained tin cans, green glass bottle (one complete and fragments), stoneware bottle fragments and human and mammal bone (Illus 6). The human bone recovered is a pair of adult tibiae, radius, ulna, fibula and one lumbar vertebrae.

The later cut 5 contained glass, ceramics, coffin handle, wood and human and mammal bones (Illus 7). The human bone includes a complete adult L femur, fragment of fibula and skull.

All finds were photographed and retained. The human bone will be reunited with the bones in Aberdeen University Mortuary and be reburied. There is a minimum number of two adult individuals; there is a female (skull, pair of pelvis) and a possible male (pelvis) as well as 3 femur, 4 tibiae, 3 radii, 2 ulnae, 2 humerus, 1 sacrum, 2 fibulae and miscellaneous vertebrae and skull fragments.



Illus 6 Finds from Phase 1 trench 7



Illus 7 Finds from modern pipe trench 5



## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on 18 July 2016 around the grave opened by Aberdeenshire Council staff on 8.7.16. A trench had been cut into this former agricultural land, possibly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century prior to the 1977 extension of the cemetery. Tin cans, glass bottles, ceramics, wood and human bones had been deposited. The linear nature of this feature suggests that it may not be as simple as a dump of rubbish, but no drainage pipe was uncovered and drainage is unlikely to have been required in the sandy soil.

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## 6 REFERENCES

- Cranna, J.** (1914) *Fraserburgh: past and present*. Aberdeen.  
**Smith, J H D.** *The topography of ancient Fraithlie'*, *Fraserburgh Herald*.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Bruce Mann, Archaeologist, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for initiating and funding this project and for his advice during the work. Thanks also to Matt Lyall, University of Aberdeen and Ken Regan, Principal Landscape Services Officer, Aberdeenshire Council and to Mark, John, Davey and James, Aberdeenshire Council ground staff, for their assistance with this project.

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## APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context no	Description	Size
1	Wall foundation for 1870s cemetery wall	0.15m wide
2	Turf	8cm thick
3	Cut, early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0.3m wide, 0.5m deep
4	Light brown sand with small pockets of loam. Fill of 3	
5	Cut for alkathene pipe, possibly earlier cut for 19 <sup>th</sup> -century cemetery wall	0.5-0.8m wide
6	Light brown sand with small pockets of loam. Fill of 5	
7	Cut, early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0.3m wide, 0.5m deep
8	Light brown sand with small pockets of loam. Fill of 7	

## APPENDIX 2 MAPS



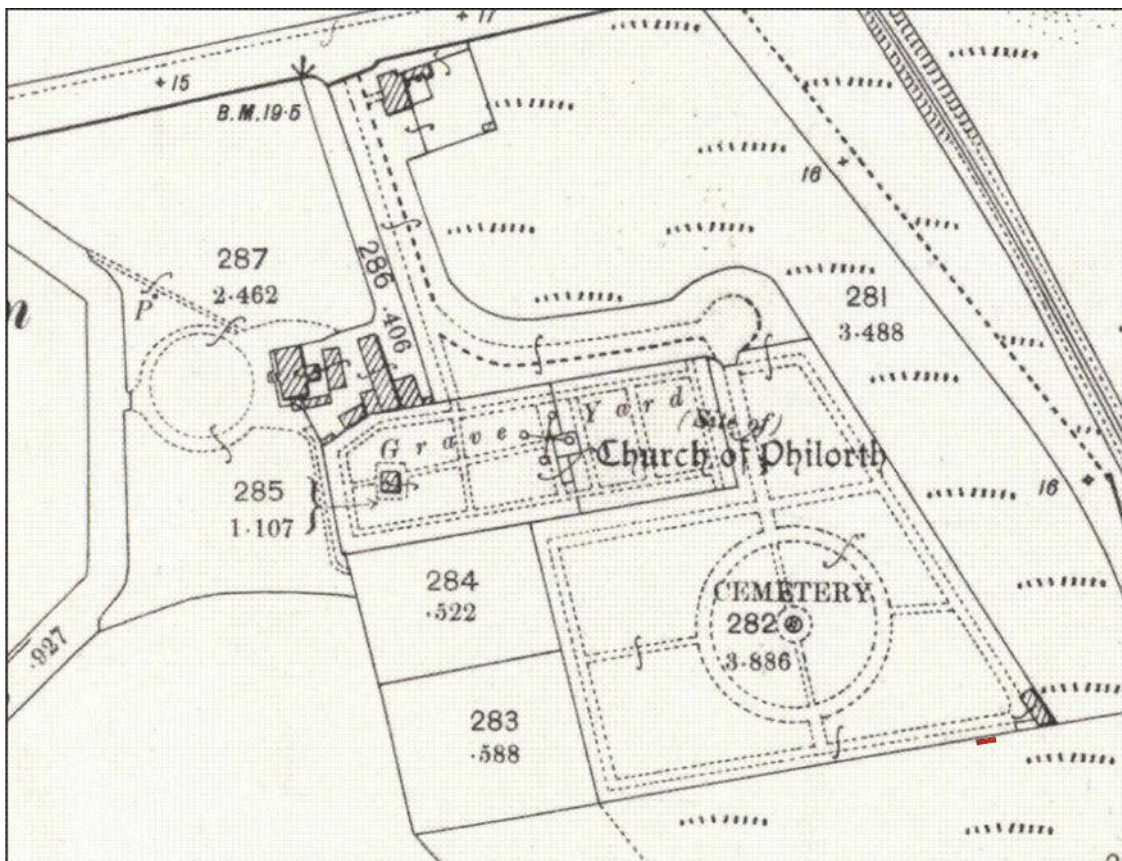
Illus 8 Pont's map of c1583-96 showing 'Phillorth' (*copyright National Library of Scotland*)



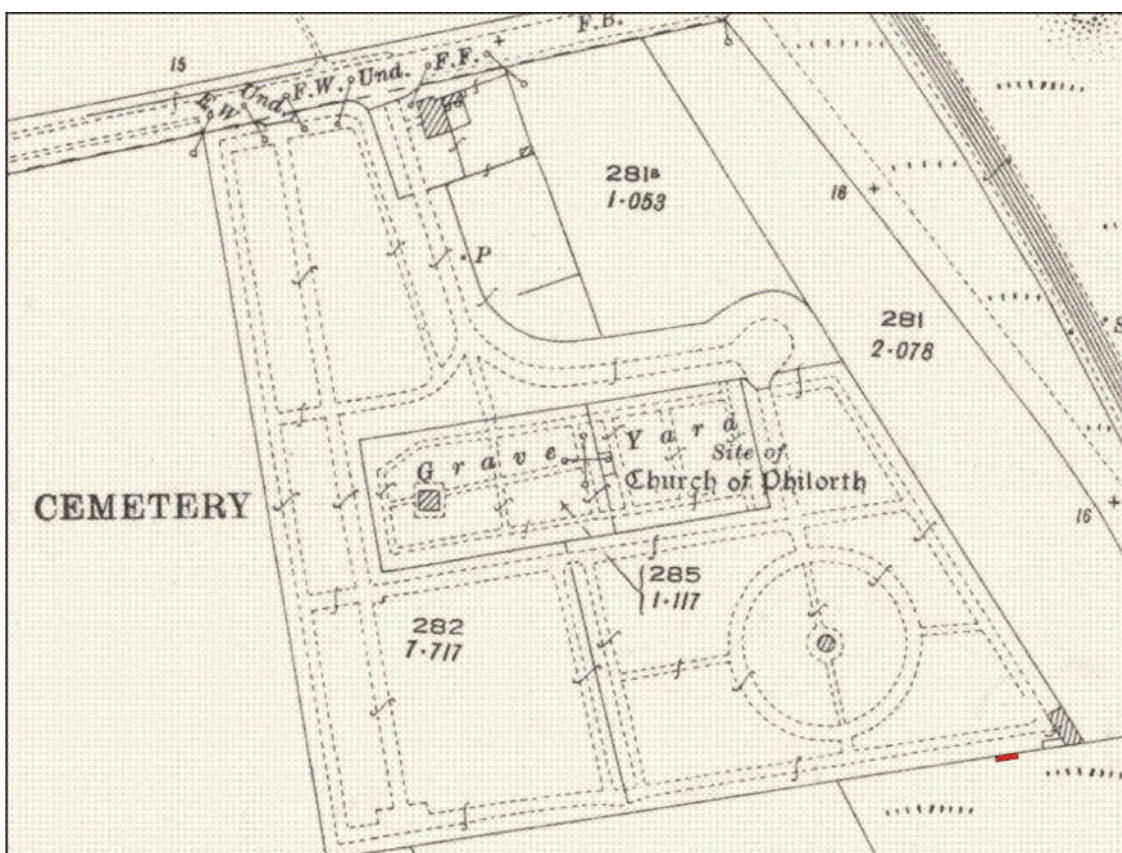
Illus 9 Roy's Military Survey of Scotland 1747-55 showing 'Frazerburgh' (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 10 First Edition OS map showing site outline in red and arrowed (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeen Sheet III.5 (Fraserburgh) Survey date: 1869 Publication date: 1874



Illus 11 Second Edition OS map showing site outline in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeenshire 003.05 (includes: Fraserburgh) Publication date: 1902 Revised: 1901



Illus 12 Third Edition OS map showing site outline in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeenshire 003.05 (includes: Fraserburgh) Publication date: 1926 Revised: 1925 Levelled: 1901

## APPENDIX 3 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_2170-2249	Bones in Aberdeen University mortuary	
DSC_2250	Location of grave dug 8.7.16	W
DSC_2251-2	Grave dug 8.7.16 with props still in situ	N
DSC_2253	Grave dug 8.7.16 with props still in situ	E
DSC_2254-5	Grave dug 8.7.16 with props still in situ	W
DSC_2256	Grave dug 8.7.16 with props still in situ	WSW
DSC_2257	Turf cutting	
DSC_2258-9	Grave with props removed	N
DSC_2260	Grave with props removed	NE
DSC_2261	Grave with props removed	E
DSC_2262	Turf cutting	
DSC_2263	Grave sections cleaned	SW
DSC_2264-7	Grave sections cleaned	W
DSC_2268-9	Turf cutting	
DSC_2270-2	Grave sections cleaned	NW
DSC_2273-5	Section 1	N
DSC_2276-7	Turf cutting	
DSC_2278-80	Grave N section 2	N
DSC_2281-3	Grave E section 3	E
DSC_2284-5	Trench	NW
DSC_2286	Trench	N
DSC_2287-9	Trench through black water pipe trench 5	N
DSC_2291-2	Trench through black water pipe trench 5	E
DSC_2293-4	Trench through black water pipe trench 5	W
DSC_2295-7	Cut 7 with disarticulated human bones laid in trench	E
DSC_2298-9	Cut 7 with tin cans and green bottle	NE
DSC_2300	Cut 7 with tin cans and green bottle	E
DSC_2301-2	Cut 7 bottomed	N
DSC_2303-6	Cut 7 bottomed	S
DSC_2307-9	Cut 7 bottomed	S
DSC_2310	Cut 7 bottomed	SSE
DSC_2311	Cut 7 bottomed	SE
DSC_2312	Trench showing blue and black water pipes	NW
DSC_2313	Trench showing blue and black water pipes	NW
DSC_2314	Trench extended 10m to E following cut 7	E
DSC_2315-34	Finds from 8	
DSC_2335-48	Finds from 2	



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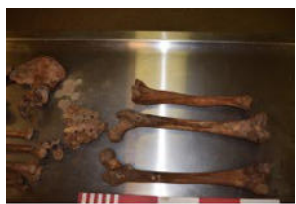
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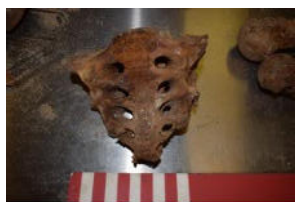
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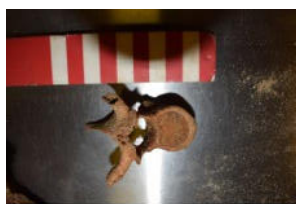
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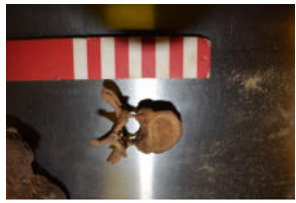
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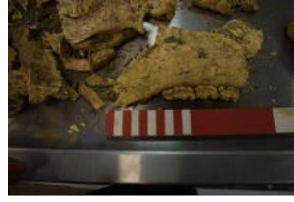
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