

**Kingsmills, Elgin, IV30 5QG  
Report on archaeological watching brief**



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Cover: wall F1 and foundation F2; facing NE

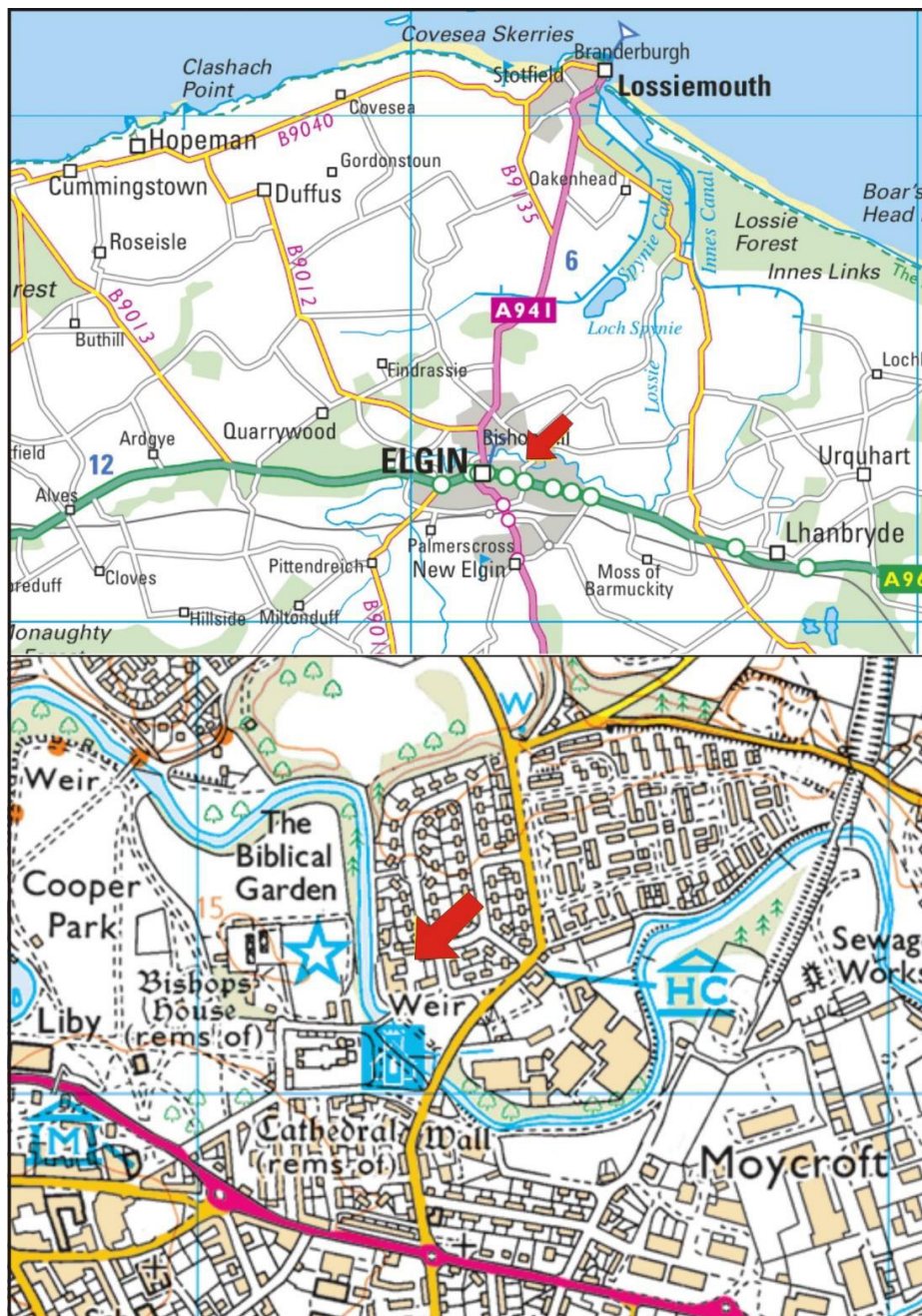
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## SUMMARY

Three sandstone walls and foundations of a building were uncovered and recorded. They are the remains of the King's Mill building constructed between the dates of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS maps (Illus 6-7). The building has been infilled with clinker and rubble. No other archaeological features or finds were recovered and as a result it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current planning application.

# 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located on the east side of Elgin, on the east bank of the river Lossie. The site is located in a built up area of Elgin, a mix of residential and commercial properties. It is centred on NGR NJ 2231 6319, at 15m OD in the parish of Elgin.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Scott Russell. An application 16/01919/APP to Moray Council for erection of an extension to a garage workshop was approved on 1 March 2017 with a watching brief condition (condition 3). There is a requirement for a watching brief during all ground-breaking operations (Herbert 2017).
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Historic Environment Scotland's Policy Statement (HESPS) 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 2017)

## 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, the site of the toposcope lay in an area of subsoil.

- 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 The site was within the grounds of the King's Mills (HER NJ26SW0189) by the Second Edition OS map (Illus 4). They are corn and saw mills which first appear on the Robert Ray's map of 1838 on which it is annotated 'steam mill' and comprises an L-plan and a rectangular building. The mills do not appear on the John Wood map of 1822 so are presumed to have been constructed after that date. The OS 1st edition map of 1846 shows a group of nine buildings with a timber yard to the east. Further expansion took place in the later 19th century with additional buildings shown on the OS 2nd edition map. By the late 1960s the timber yard had been infilled with buildings, and the main Kings Mill building had been converted to a public house and a number of structures added in its east side. Other buildings have been demolished or converted, but by the mid 1980s most of the structures built in the 1960s east of the public house had been pulled down. Building recording was carried out by AOC in 2011. The present buildings on the site comprise an L-plan public house to the south with a linear wing to the north now occupied by three terraced houses which still show evidence of the former mill openings. An historic building survey was undertaken of the former mill building at Kingsmills in Elgin prior to its demolition in advance of works associated with the Flood Alleviation Scheme in the city. The former mill was constructed in the mid 19th century and was converted into a pub. The area to the north was then later converted into three two-storey tenements houses (Nos 28, 30 and 32 Newmills Road). A detailed photographic and written record of the buildings was undertaken together with a plan and section through the building and an exterior elevation survey of the main elevations, which revealed a number of former openings and features associated with its original use as a mill (AOC 2013).
- 2.6 A burial (HER NJ26SW0503) was found on the south side of Cathedral Court and north of Newmill Road during Elgin Flood Alleviation Scheme. A programme of archaeological monitoring on ground breaking works related to the Elgin Flood Alleviation Scheme, Moray was undertaken between June 2012 and April 2013. Previous evaluations and an excavation were conducted at four sites along the river Lossie in 2011, encountering the remains of a post medieval mill at Deanshaugh (AOC 2011). These further works are a safeguard against the destruction of significant archaeology throughout the areas not covered by the evaluation. Four areas (A to D) were highlighted as requiring further monitoring works. In Area A at Kingsmills, the remains of an illicit post medieval grave was revealed. Area B, next to Deanshaugh Mill (NMRS No. NJ26SW 535) revealed a well that would have been contemporary with the mill. At Pansport Bridge, Area C, the structural make-up of the Industrial river bank was exposed and recorded. Lastly the riverbank works to the West of Mansion House Hotel, Area D required a

watching brief during a topsoil strip but no archaeology was revealed (Paton 2013).

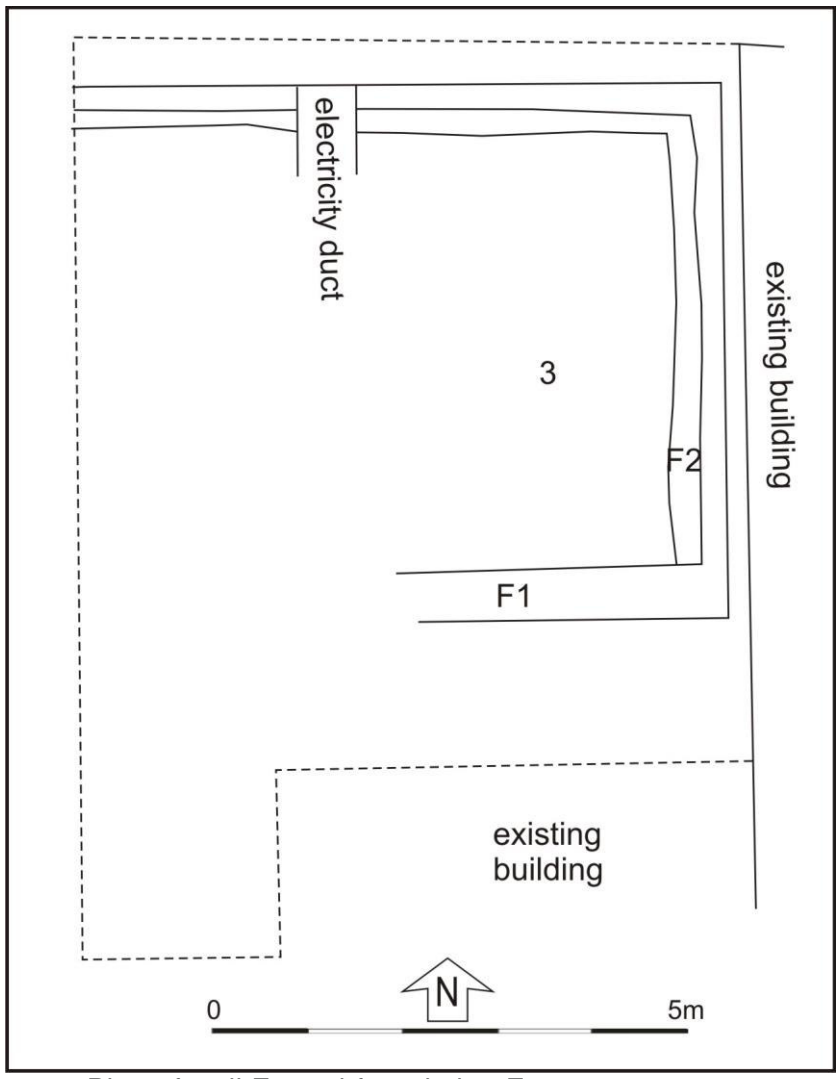
- 2.7 The site is in fields N of King's Mills by the First Edition OS map (Illus 3). The site is now surrounded by housing.

### 3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was carried out on 20 May 2017 during the soil strip for this development (Illus 2). Three walls of a building were uncovered (Illus 3, 4). The walls were constructed of sandstone rubble, 0.5-0.5m wide, up to 0.5m deep and with a foundation 0.18m wider. 0.5m depth of clinker, wood, sanitary ware, tile, wood and rubble were removed from within building foundation F1. This is the remains of the King's Mills building seen on the Second Edition OS map (Illus 5). The subsoil was light brown sand.



Illus 2 Plan showing location of watching brief (*copyright Glenarch Design*)



Illus 3 Plan of wall F1 and foundation F2

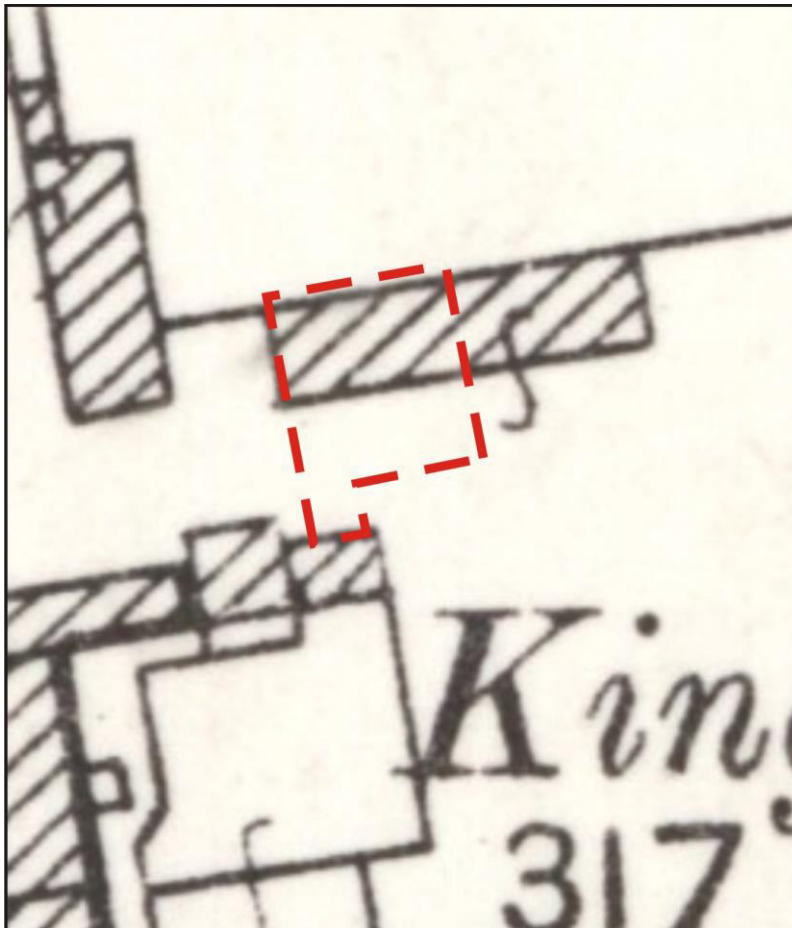


Illus 4 North wall F1 and foundation F2 showing sand natural subsoil; facing N

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Three sandstone walls and foundations of a building were uncovered and recorded. They are the remains of the King's Mill building constructed between the dates of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS maps (Illus 6-7). The building has been infilled with clinker and rubble. No other archaeological features or finds were recovered and as a result it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current planning application.





Illus 5 Detail of Second Edition OS map showing location of watching brief and building F1 (copyright National Library of Scotland) Elginshire 007.12 (includes: Elgin; Spynie; St Andrews Lhanbryd) Publication date: 1905 Revised: 1904

## 5 REFERENCES

Herbert, C 2017 Scope and Framework of an Archaeological Watching Brief at Kingsmills, Elgin.

Paton, K 2013 Elgin Flood Alleviation Scheme: Watching Brief Data Structure Report

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Scott Russell for initiating this project and to Claire Herbert, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (who cover Moray) for her advice during this work.

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## APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context no	Description
F1	Sandstone rubble walls forming three sides of a building. S wall is 0.55m wide and was left unexcavated. E and N walls 0.3m wide and max 0.5m deep.
F2	Sandstone rubble foundation for F1. 0.18m wide and max 0.2m deep
3	Clinker, cinders, tile, wood, sanitary ware, sewer pipe dumped over Building F1

## APPENDIX 2 MAPS



Illus 6 First Edition OS map showing site outline in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Elgin Sheet VII.12 (Combined) Survey date: 1870 Publication date: 1873



Illus 7 Second Edition OS map (copyright National Library of Scotland) Elginshire 007.12 (includes: Elgin; Spynie; St Andrews Lhanbryd) Publication date: 1905 Revised: 1904

### APPENDIX 3 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_9577-9	Watching brief area	NE
DSC_9580-1	Corner of building wall F1 and foundation F2	NE
DSC_9582	N wall F1 and foundation F2	N
DSC_9583	Sandstone block from rubble	
DSC_9584-5	E wall F1 and F2	E

DSC_9586-7	E wall F1 and F2	N
DSC_9588	N wall F1	E
DSC_9589	N wall F1	E
DSC_9590	S wall F1	S
DSC_9591	Watching brief area	NE
DSC_9592-4	Watching brief area	ENE
DSC_9595	Watching brief area	NE
DSC_9596-7	Watching brief area	NNE
DSC_9598	F1 and F2	ENE
DSC_9599-600	Location of watching brief	NE
DSC_9601	N wall F1	E
DSC_9602	N wall F1	N
DSC_9603	N wall F1	W
DSC_9604	Watching brief area	SW
DSC_9605	Watching brief area	E
DSC_9606	Watching brief area	SE
DSC_9607	Watching brief area	SE
DSC_9608-9	Watching brief area	E
DSC_9610	Watching brief area	S
DSC_9611	Watching brief area	SW
DSC_9612	Watching brief area	S
DSC_9613	Watching brief area	SW



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