

**Site Adjacent To Abbey Gardens, Mintlaw,
Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, AB42 4LP
Data Structure Report**



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SUMMARY

A watching brief was maintained on 24 July 2017 during the soil strip for the proposed house and garage. The topsoil was up to 1m deep as the area had been within the walled garden for Pitfour House. A path (F1) had been recorded on the early maps and geophysical survey. This was excavated and the section showed the path was 1.5m wide constructed of pink sandstone chips with a pink and light brown sand and sandstone foundation. A stone drain (F2) was cut to the level of the clayey sand natural subsoil on the east side of the path. A small number of 19th and 20th-century china sherds were recorded.

No other archaeological features or finds were recorded and it is therefore 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 south side of the A950 on the east side of Deer Abbey. It is centred on NGR NJ 97041 48151, at 40-45m OD in the parish of Old Deer.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by James Strachan, Abbey Gardens. An application APP/2017/0301 to Aberdeenshire Council for the construction of a dwellinghouse was approved on 14 March 2017 with archaeology condition (condition 2) for a watching brief during all ground disturbance.
- 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 two scheduled monuments within 1km of the proposed development. 150m to the west of the site is Deer Abbey (HER NJ94NE0004). The monument consists of the remains of Deer Abbey, founded in 1219. Little remains of this house which was founded by William Comyn, Earl of Buchan as a daughter house of Kinloss in Moray. Buchan was himself buried in the abbey in 1233. The community was never large, in 1544 it was recorded as being 11 monks. This is presumably less than originally occupied it, but it is unlikely that there was ever more than 15, the lowest number acceptable to the Cistercian order. The arrangement of the abbey follows the standard Cistercian layout, with the church forming the N side of a cloister. The cloister is ranged around by the domestic buildings; the monks' range in the E, a domestic range in the S and the lay brothers' range in the W. The buildings were of simple construction with round-headed windows and no apparent decoration. The church was cruciform, with a single aisle on the north side. The cloister was 22m across. To the E of the E range was an infirmary building and to the south of it the Abbot's house. In 1587 the abbey became a secular lordship, as the Barony of Altrie; although this was simply regularising the arrangement which had existed since about 1560. By 1809 the ruins were repaired and the grounds laid out as a garden, but in 1854 Admiral Ferguson practically destroyed the abbey to construct a mausoleum. This has since been removed. (Cowan and Easson 1976, 47, 74). A geophysical survey was recently carried out as part of the Book of Deer Project by Rose Geophysics including the area of the proposed development.

An application to develop the land between the Deer Abbey guardianship site and the estate wall prompted a small excavation to estimate the extent of medieval activity in that area. Some medieval features were found, particularly to S of the Abbey buildings and to W, where the line of the main drain was identified. To E of the Abbey there was no trace of structures, and it seemed that burials may have been confined to the guardianship area (Stones 1986, 10).

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken in April 2002 at Old Deer Abbey during the initial phase of construction of a new wooden porch. Nothing of archaeological significance was found (Ewart and D Stewart 2002, 11).

A watching brief was maintained 6–8 June 2011 during the removal of a tree stump. There were no finds or features of archaeological significance other than deposits which may date to 19th-century landscaping (Murray 2011, 25).

2.2 The second Scheduled Monument is Old Deer Parish Church (NJ94NE0002). The monument comprises the remains of the old parish church which lie immediately E of the present parish church in the centre of Old Deer, incorporated into two contiguous walled roofless burial enclosures, separated by the medieval chancel arch. The only surviving parts of the medieval church appear to be the chancel arch itself, the truncated E end of the nave, and some parts of the N and S walls of the chancel. The nave was 6.2m wide internally and of uncertain length, the W part having been destroyed completely when the parish church was built in 1788-9. Its overall width was probably 8.05m, the same as the present burial enclosure, though it is hard to detect any medieval masonry in the external walls as the facing has been greatly altered by repairs and the insertion into it of various memorials. The W burial enclosure, of which it now forms part, extends 6.62m E-W, with a W wall 0.6m thick containing the entrance. This enclosure was probably formed in 1892, which is the date at which William Ferguson of Kinmundy erected a memorial against the S wall in memory of his ancestors, the earliest mentioned being James Ferguson of Kinmundy, who died in 1777. Medieval features of the nave that survive in situ include a splayed rounded-arched window in the N wall, and another facing it on the S. Just to the left of the latter is a scalloped piscina, set in a recess enclosed by a trefoil arch; this was probably intended to serve a nave altar placed to the right of the chancel arch. Immediately to the left of the chancel arch is another similar piscina, though less well preserved, indicating the former existence of

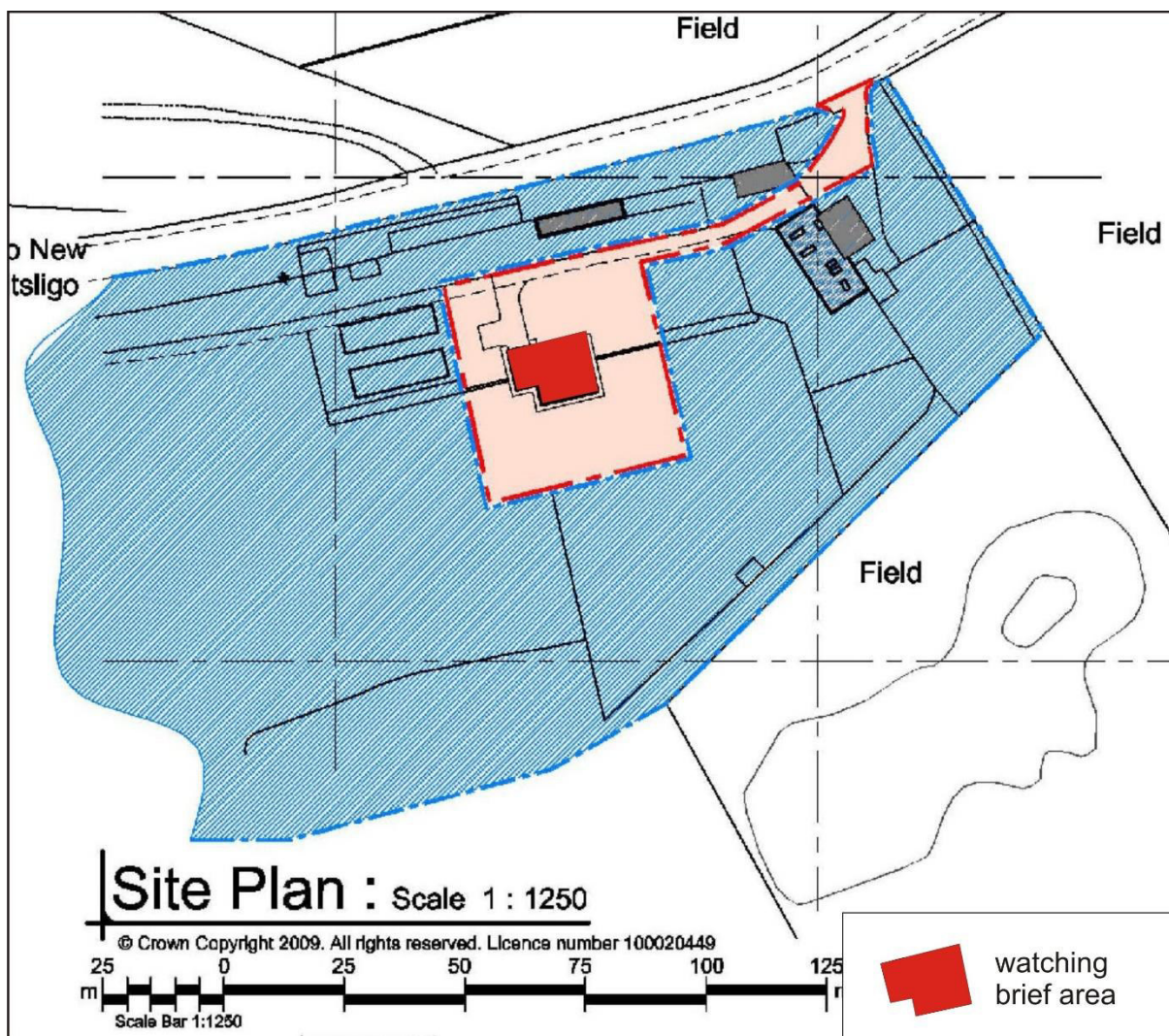
another nave altar in that position also. To the left of the N window is an aumbry with a segmental-arched head surmounted by a pointed arch containing a cross in circle.

The chancel arch is 2.24m wide and roughly semi-circular, with a broad chamfer on both arrises. On the E face of the wall between the nave and the chancel, to the left of the arch and at a level just above its springing (perhaps some 2m above the original floor level) is a blocked door, that would possibly have given access to a rood loft above the nave altars. The chancel was 4.3m wide, though the medieval walls survive only as footings at the W end and in the central part of the S wall where the wall of the E burial enclosure appears to retain the original wall-thickness. If one assumes that the form of the chancel is perpetuated more or less in that of the E burial enclosure, it would have been some 10.75m long internally. The burial enclosure itself appears to date from 1731, when James Ferguson of Pitfour erected a fine marble memorial to his wife, Anne Stuart, in the centre of its S wall. A heraldic stone is built into the E wall. A number of heraldic stones and memorials are built into the external S wall of the W burial enclosure and appear to have been brought here from elsewhere. They include a 17th-century tomb set in an arcosolium with an inscription on the tomb chest, only part of which is now visible above ground; the arch encloses a heraldic stone and another representing a man and a woman identified by the initials AK and GK respectively with the date 1603. Above the arch is another inscription recording:...]KEI[.]S BALLI[.....]ANDREA SVMA.IVSTISSIMVS OMN[... (or Andreas vita ?)...]PIVS ATQ(ue) PROBVS KAETHIA DVM [.....]VSIT FAEMINAEI.SEXVS.COGNOMIN[e k]AETHANOMINE ET AEGIDI[e....t]VMVLATA IACET OBIERE 1603 16[.] LAVS DEO. This evidently also relates to Andrew Keith and his wife, Gillian (?). The Old Parish Church is traditionally supposed to have been dedicated to St Drostan, though there appears to be no certain evidence of this. Nor is there any certain evidence that it occupies the site of a monastery established by St Columba and St Drostan in AD 580. The Old Parish Church and Churchyard are listed as Historic Buildings (Category B).

2.3 The proposed development is on the opposite side of the A950 from the grounds of the former Pitfour House (HER NJ94NE0039), site of manor/ mansion house; possible site of Manor Place of Pitfour. The estate came in to the possession of the Ferguson family in the early 18thC. The original estate was enlarged by the acquisition of land at Inverugie, formerly owned by the Earl Marischal. The 'improving' Fergusons subsequently built one of the most magnificent mansions in the north-east designed by John Smith, with landscaped surrounding policies. The finished product was one of the show-pieces of Buchan. The earlier mansion house may have been an addition to the former manor or built on the site of the manor. The conservatory gallery was carried on Ionic columns with a protruding studio on Corinthian columns, which was added along the entire front of the house. When the house was demolished, the studio and gallery were removed to Kinloch House, near St Fergus. Although the house was demolished in 1927-30 and the grounds have suffered much from timber felling, the lake and its surrounding buildings still have great landscape and architectural value. All buildings associated with the house are listed B because of this. To the north of the house lay gasometers, the laundry (with ice-house to the rear), stables and a riding school. To the west were the kennels and pheasantry. There were also sawmills at NJ9627 4930 with a lade leading from the west to it. To the west of the stable block, itself a U-shaped building with central tower, is the remains of a circular game larder (Aberdeenshire HER). Several of the buildings within the estate are listed. The Stables (NJ94NE 67.5) are listed B: John Smith, shortly after 1820. 2-storey (low 1st) U-plan, pinned rubble (formerly harled) with granite dressings, centrepiece segmental arch with 3 recessed panels over enclosed in antis and pediment with wooden Doric cupola over. Low-pitched roof (now asbestos) behind blocking course. The Game Larder (NJ94NE 67.15) Circa 1820. Single-storey octagon, harled with granite margins, apex of broad-eaved roof platformed with louvre. Dilapidated. The Laundry (NJ94NE 67.4) is listed C Circa 1820. 2-storey 5-window pinned rubble with granite dressings, centre bay projects; broad-eaved piend roof. The Chapel (NJ94NE 67.7) is listed C 1850-1 (as English Episcopal

Chapel continuing); Crude gothic, roughly built of rubble, rectangular plan with 60' battlemented W. tower, wood tracery. The NE (NJ94NE 67.1) and SE (NJ94NE 67.2) and NW (NJ94NE 67.3) bridges date to before 1820. 3 low segmental arches with cutwaters granite ashlar built with square recessed panels at the spandrels. Fluted cast-iron post and chain parapets. The Temple of Theseus Circa 1835 (?). Small Greek Doric Hexastyle temple with 34 granite- column peristyle; wood entabature; very finely detailed. The Boathouse (NJ94NE 67.8) is now listed C Probably before 1820. Single-storey artificial rubble-built ruin with gothic arches; granite dressings; landing area for boats. The Kennels (NJ94NE 67.14) are listed B Before 1820(?). Single-storey 2-window and centre distyle Doric Portico in antis. Rubble built with granite dressings (Historic Scotland online). On the N side of the estate is Pitfour 'homestead moat' (NJ94NE 41). Air photography (CUCAP BVI 25, flown 29 July 1975 and AAS/77/10/SL/28, flown 8 August 1977) has recorded the cropmark of a rectilinear or rectangular enclosure among indeterminate cropmarks on a gentle slope at an altitude of 75m OD (Bogdan and Bryce 1991, 26). On the E of the estate at mains of Pitfour is a rectilinear enclosure (NJ94NE 82). Air photography (AAS/82/12/S14/13-17, flown 20 July 1982) has recorded the cropmark of a rectilinear enclosure on a gentle slope at an altitude of 65m OD.

2.4 The area of the proposed development has been a nursery and market garden since the First Edition OS map (Illus 9) and the recent geophysical survey show that this property was within the designed landscape created by Ferguson in 1809 when the surrounding wall was built and the entire grounds were set out as a garden with paths which can be seen throughout the geophysical survey area (Illus 3). These paths run through the proposed development area.

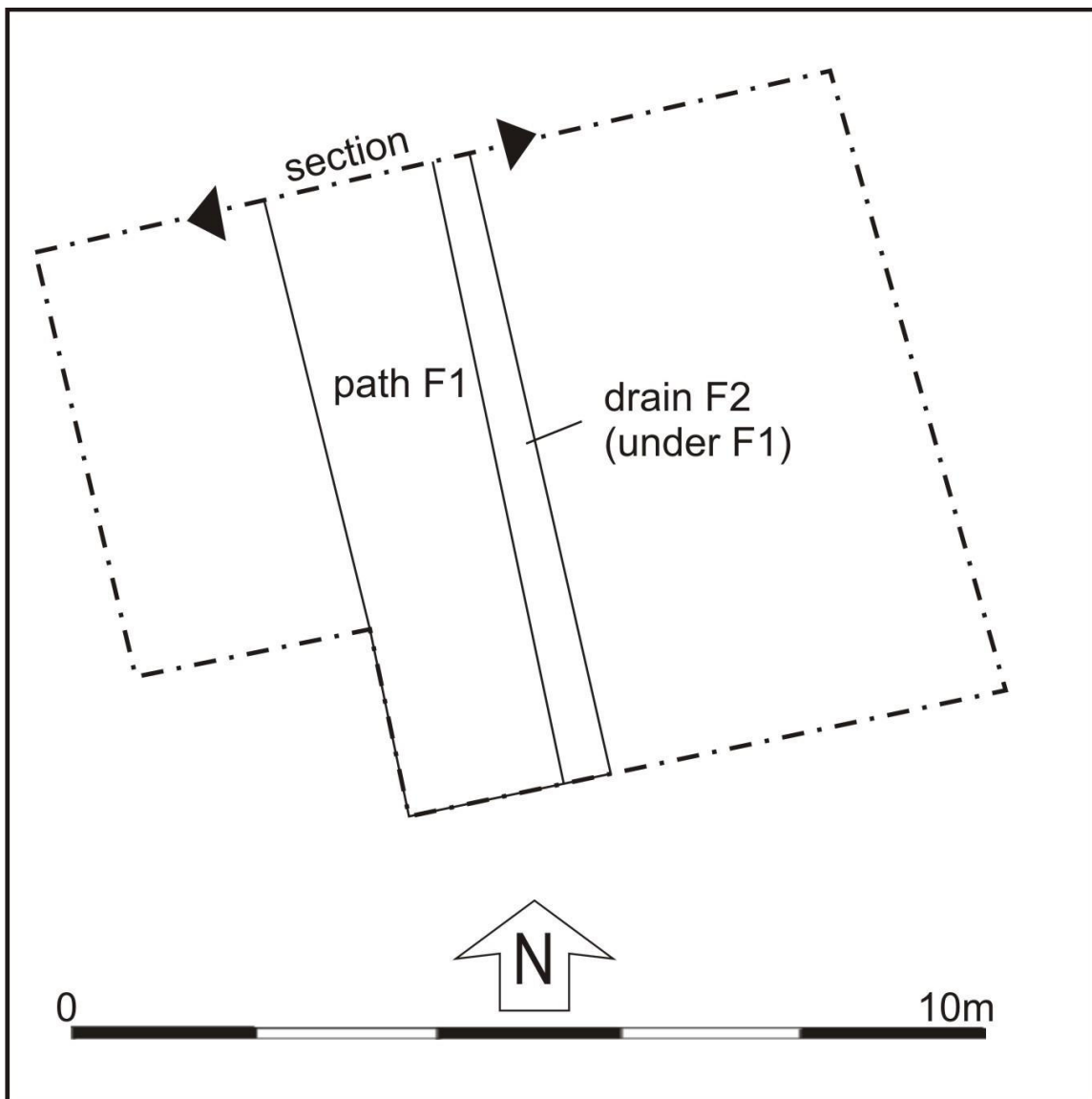


Illus 2 Plan showing watching brief area (copyright Baxter Design)

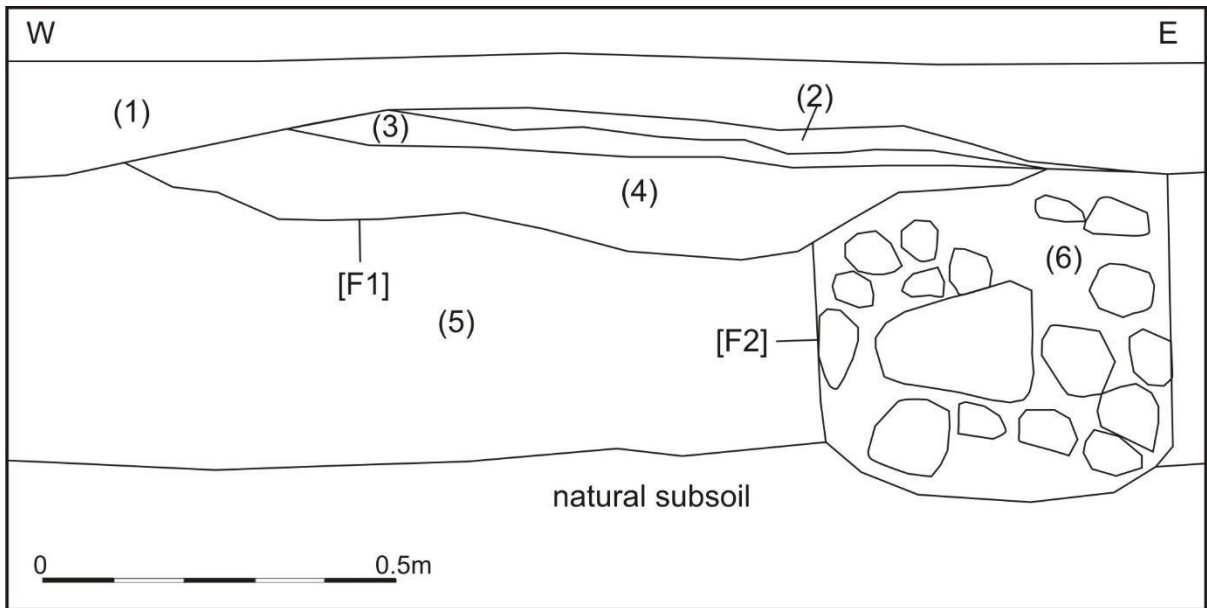
3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was maintained on 24 July 2017 during the soil strip for the proposed house and garage. The topsoil was up to 1m deep formed by two distinct layers of medium grey sandy loam 0.5m deep above a medium brown clayey loam 0.5m deep (Illus 3). The area had been within the walled garden for Pitfour House and this depth of soil reflects this land use.

A path (F1; Illus 4 and cover) had been recorded on the early maps and geophysical survey. This path consisted of a 0.25m deep trench 1.5m wide filled with pink sandstone chips with a pink and light brown sand and sandstone foundation. A stone drain (F2) was cut to the level of the clayey sand natural subsoil on the east side of the path. A small number of 19th and 20th-century china sherds were recorded and one sherd of very abraded medieval pottery.



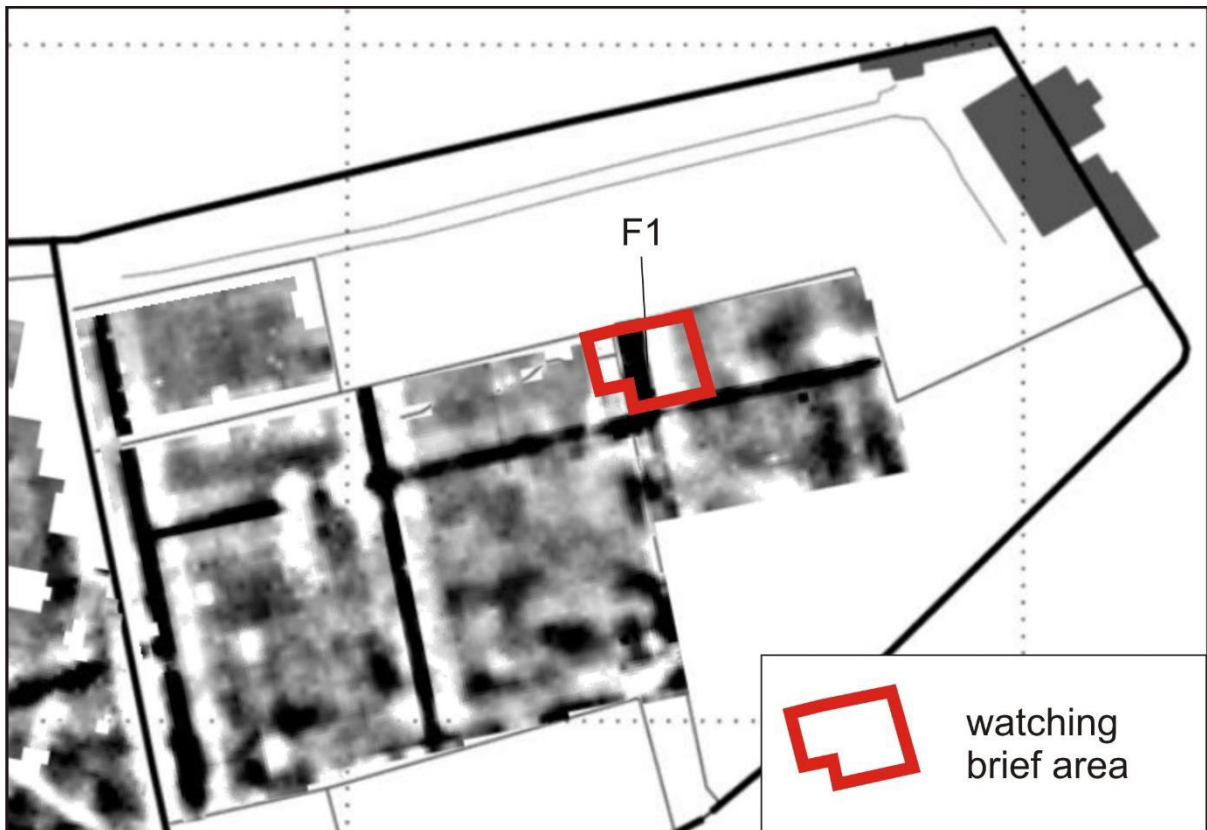
Illus 3 Plan showing watching brief area with path F1 and drain F2



Illus 4 Section through path F1 and drain F2



Illus 5 Up to 1m depth of topsoil in two layers; facing W



Illus 6 Watching brief area overlaid on geophysical survey showing path F1

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A watching brief was maintained on 24 July 2017 during the soil strip for the proposed house and garage. The topsoil was up to 1m deep as the area had been within the walled garden for Pitfour House. A path (F1) had been recorded on the early maps and geophysical survey. This was excavated and the section showed the path was 1.5m wide constructed of pink sandstone chips with a pink and light brown sand and sandstone foundation. A stone drain (F2) was cut to the level of the clayey sand natural subsoil on the east side of the path. These were probably laid in the early 19th century by James Ferguson of Pitfour.

A small number of 19th and 20th-century china sherds were recorded.

No other archaeological features or finds were recorded and it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required during the current planning application.

5 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1 MAPS



Illus 7 Pont's map of c1583-96 showing Deer Abbey (*copyright National Library of Scotland*)



Illus 8 Blaeu's map of 1654 showing 'The Abbey' (copyright National Library of Scotland)

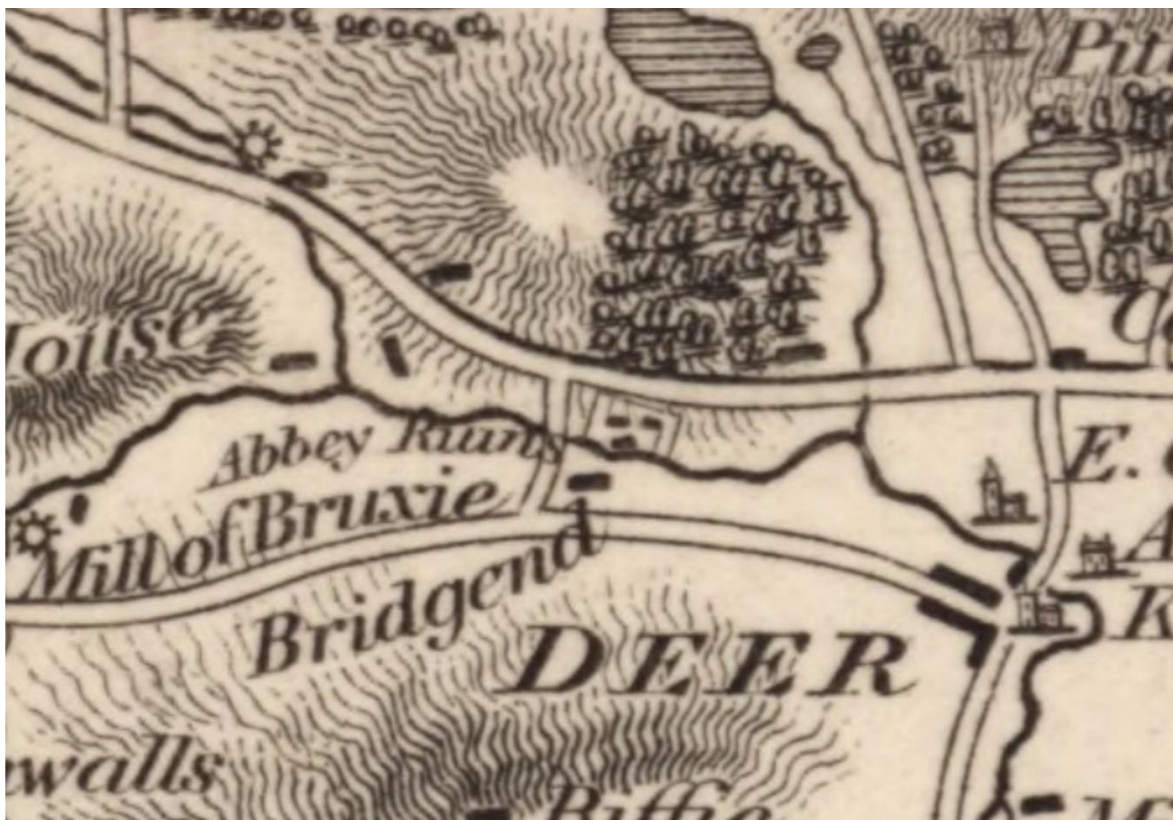


9 Roy's map of 1747-55 showing 'Abbey' (copyright National Library of Scotland)

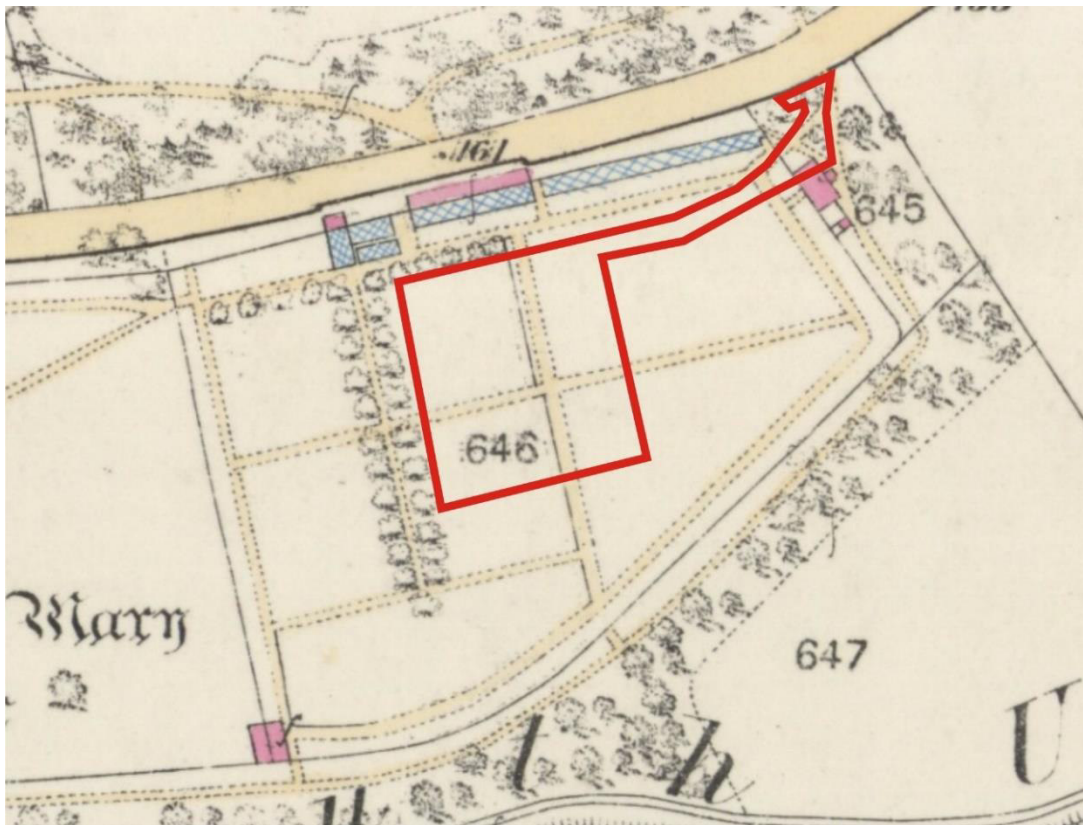
Illus



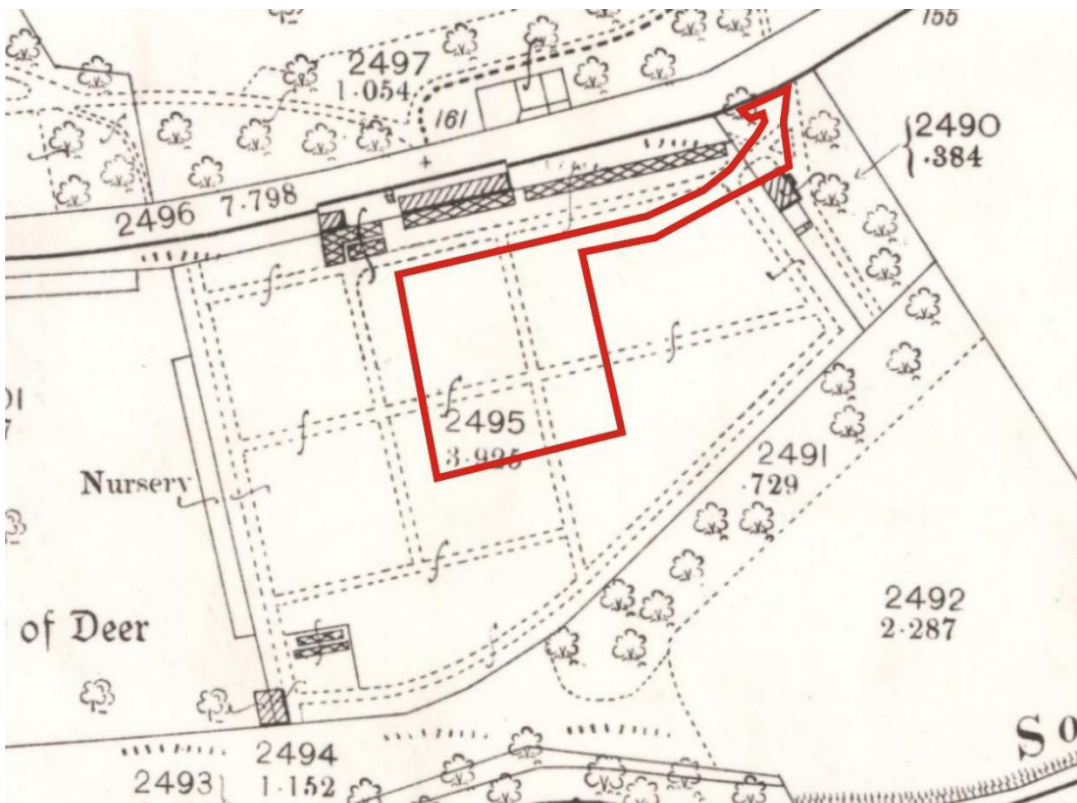
Illus 10 Moll's map of 1745 showing 'Abbey' (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 11 Thomson's map of 1832 showing 'Abbey ruins' (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 12 First Edition OS map showing site outline in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeen Sheet XXI.4 (Old Deer) Survey date: 1870 Publication date: 1873



Illus 13 Second Edition OS map showing site outline in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeenshire 021.04 (includes: Old Deer) Publication date: 1902 Revised: 1899



Illus 14 1976 aerial photograph showing area of proposed development in area of market garden (*copyright National Library of Scotland*)

APPENDIX 2 CONTEXTS

Context no	Description
F1	Path 1.5m wide 0.25m deep consisting of layers of sandstone and sand (2, 3, 4)
F2	Stone drain round base and straight sides filled with stones (6) 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep cut into natural subsoil
1	Medium grey sandy loam topsoil
2	Pink sandstone chips
3	Pink sandstone and sand
4	Light brown small sandstone pebbles and sand
5	Medium brown clayey loam
6	Medium and small angular boulders with silt and sand

APPENDIX 3 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description
DSC_2123-41	Watching brief progressing
DSC_2142-3	Path F1 and drain F2 (right)
DSC_2144-58	Watching brief progressing



DSC_2123.JPG



DSC_2124.JPG



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