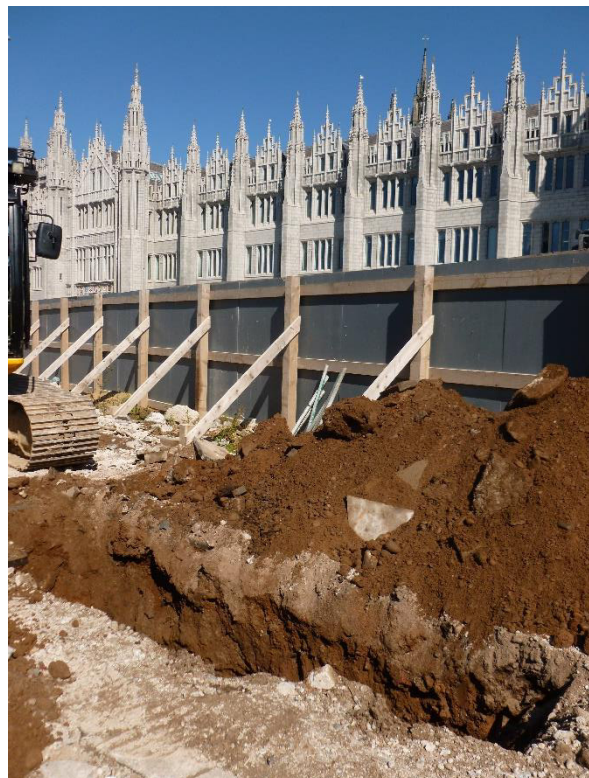


**MARISCHAL SQUARE, ABERDEEN, AB10 1AR**  
**Report On Archaeological Watching Brief For Trial Pits,**  
**Trenches And Pavement Works**



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3 March 2018**

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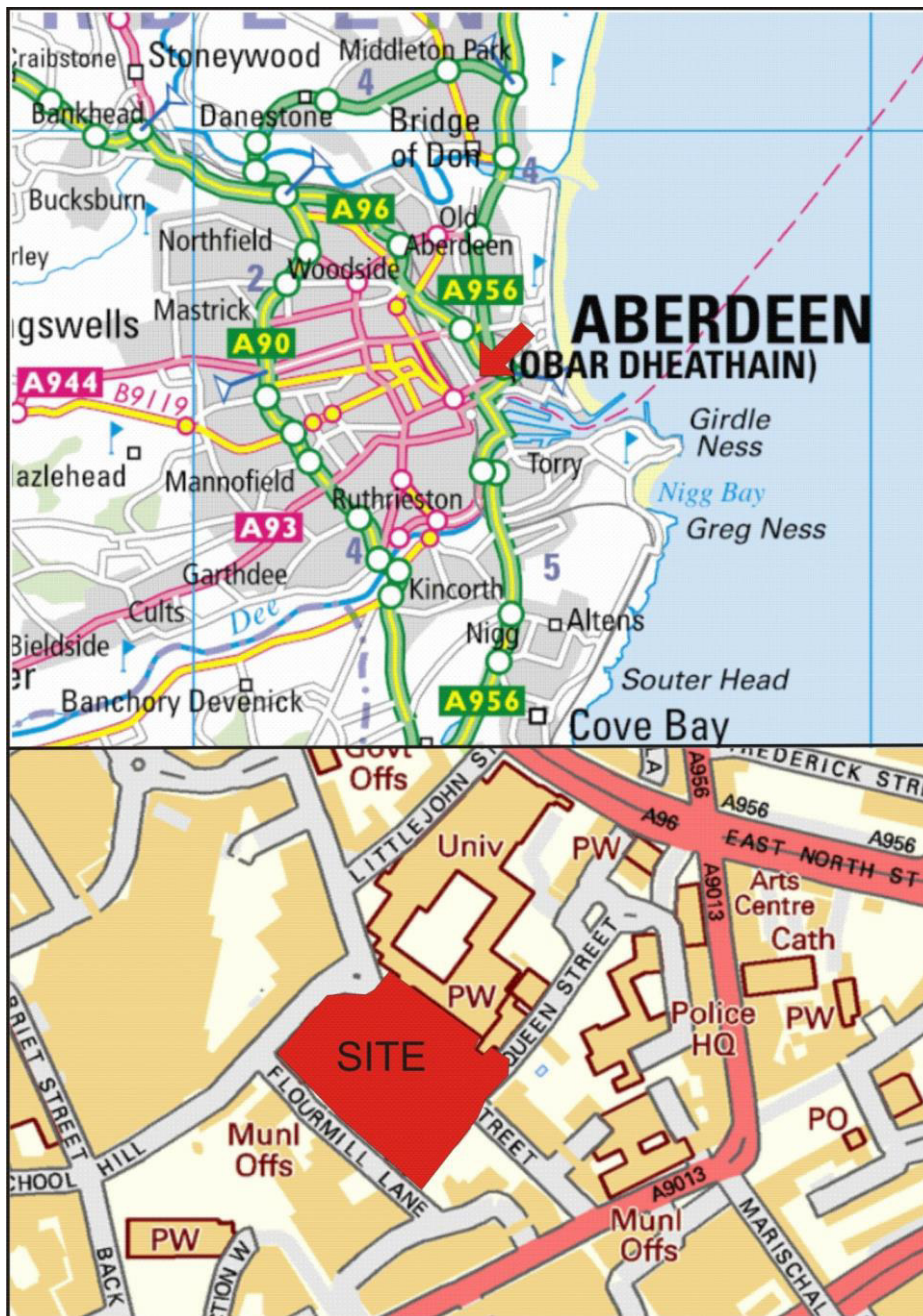
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## SUMMARY

Cameron Archaeology monitored trial pits and soil strips between 2014 and 2018 during works for Marischal Square. In general the ground was very disturbed by previous excavations and services. Some 19<sup>th</sup>-century walls were uncovered and redeposited medieval pottery and animal bone was recovered. The works have now been completed for this development.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report details an archaeological watching brief which took place between 2014 and 2018 (Illus 2) during the test pits, trenches and pavement works on a parcel of land previously occupied by Aberdeen City Council headquarters, St Nicholas House, demolished 2013-4 and by CHAP adjacent to Provost Skene's House. A mixed use development including office, hotel, retail, restaurant, leisure, civic space including car parking, access, landscaping, infrastructure and public realm improvements, Aberdeen City Council Planning application number P140698 is now complete. The site is at NJ 94198 06385 (centred), in the parish of Aberdeen and at 20-25m OD. It is bounded on the NE side by Broad Street and Marischal College, on the NW by Upperkirkgate, on the SE by Queen Street and on the SW by Flourmill Lane.



Illus 1 Site location (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 94198 06385 has been heavily disturbed by development of St Nicholas House. The NW end of the site has an underground car park and the main office block had basements.
- 2.2 Mesolithic activity has been found at several sites in the vicinity. Several hundred flints were recovered from earliest layers at the adjacent 16-18 Netherkirkgate/Guestrow site (Cameron 2001, 30) and at 12-26 Broad Street (Murray 1982, 26-27).
- 2.3 This site is at the centre of the medieval burgh of Aberdeen; Parson James Gordon's map of Aberdeen 1661 shows that this area was well developed by this period. Substantial well-preserved medieval remains were found at several sites in the vicinity including Marischal College on the opposite side of Broad Street (Cameron forthcoming) which slightly overlaps the current site. Marischal College is the site of the Franciscan friary and buildings and burials from this religious centre were excavated as well as the early buildings of Marischal College. During the work to convert the building to Aberdeen City Council headquarters the pavement between Broad Street and the SW frontage of the building was lifted and a watching brief carried out; the 19th to early 20th-century tenement building remains were recorded but nothing of an earlier date. Medieval sites have also been excavated at Gallowgate Middle School (Cameron 2001, 73-79), 43-57 Upperkirkgate/Flourmill Brae (Cameron 2001, 50-58), 16-18 Netherkirkgate (Cameron 2001, 28-37), 30-46 Upperkirkgate (Stones 2001, 60-69) and 42 St Paul Street (Murray 1982, 46-84).
- 2.4 Provost Skene's House was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the Aberdeen's few surviving examples of early burgh architecture. The first reference to the plot of land was in 1545 when Alexander Knollis took possession of the site on Guestrow, one of Aberdeen's principal streets at that time (Aberdeen City Council 1994, 3). Y 1661 (III0 the NE part of the site is occupied by houses on the south side of Broad/Bread Street, south of which Guestrow (Gwestraw) runs across the current site NW-SE and south of this another line of buildings which include What is now Provost Skene's House. South-west of these buildings are backlands running along the entire west edge of the site.
- 2.5 The site is heavily built up in the First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps (Illus 8) with Guestrow still extant across the site and extensive buildings on both the north and south of this street.
- 2.6 An archaeological evaluation and watching brief in 2012 during preparations for demolition of St Nicholas House, revealed undisturbed levels in the grass area SE of Provost Skene's House (Cameron 2012). There is archaeological potential in the area formerly occupied by the pond and grassed area.

## **3 THE WATCHING BRIEFS**

Cameron Archaeology monitored trial pits and soil strips between 2014 and 2018 during works for Marischal Square.

### **3.1 Engineers trial pits 22-26 August and 15 September 2014**

TP01 Dug to 3m depth through sand, gravel, concrete, clay and rubble; not bottomed.

TP02 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, clay and rubble dug to natural reddish-brown sand and gravel. Natural sloping from 1.8m below current ground level at NE to 2.8m deep at SW (not bottomed).

TP03 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, clay and rubble dug to 2.5m deep; not bottomed.

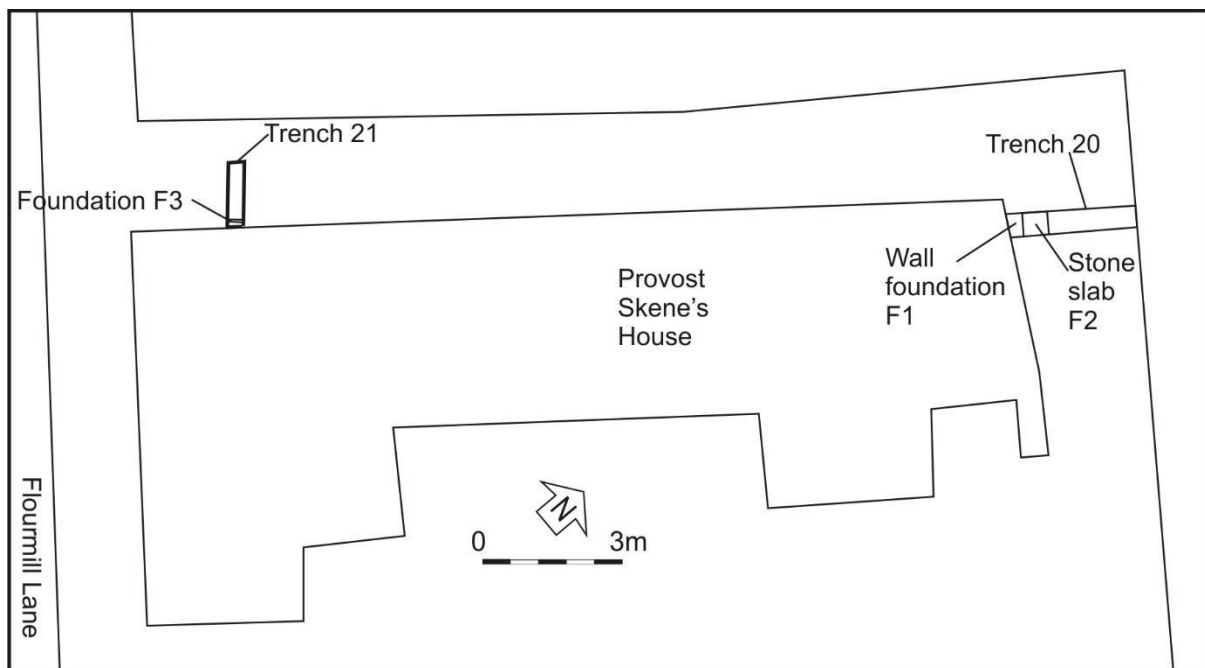
TP04 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, clay and rubble dug to 2.6m deep; not bottomed.

TP05 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, plastic, textile, rebar, corrugated iron, clay and rubble dug to natural reddish-brown sand and gravel. Natural sloping from 3.1m below current ground level at SE to 3.5m deep at NW.

TP06 Dark grey loam, gravel, clay, stone, concrete and brick 1.6m deep above rusty brown sand and gravel natural subsoil. Squared poured concrete duct (not excavated) at SE end of trench.

TP07 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, clay and rubble dug to natural reddish-brown sand and gravel. Natural sloping from 1.8m below current ground level at NE to 2.8m deep at SW but an old sewer pipe in a trench was encountered at the SW end of the trial pit running along the line of Flourmill Brae filled with dark grey loam.

TP08 Loose fill of sand, gravel, concrete, wood, clay and rubble dug to a depth of 3m below current ground surface but the collapsing sides halted the digging and the trial pit was not bottomed.



Illus 2 Plan showing trenches 20 and 21 around Provost Skene's House (based on copyright Fairhurst)



Illus 3 Trench 20 wall foundation F1 (centre) and stone slab F2 (left); facing



Illus 4 Trench 21 NE wall of Provost Skene's House (right), foundation F3 (centre right) with telephone cable and concrete foundation and kerbing under ranging rod; facing NE

### 3.2 Engineers trial pits Aug-Sept 15

#### Trench 21

Trench 21 was hand-excavated 15 September 2014 and was located against the NW wall of Provost Skene's House to locate services. The foundation of Provost Skene's House was uncovered. It was 0.3m-0.4m wide and the top of the foundation is 0.6m below the current ground surface (Illus 3, 5). The base of the foundation was below the level of the excavation.

#### Trench 20 and 22

Trench 20 was hand-excavated by CHAP on 15 September 2014 to examine the foundation of Provost Skene's House and the associated services. Trench 20 was located adjacent to the NE gable and contained a wall foundation (F1) at the SW end of the trench and a stone slab surface (F2) associated with the wall (Illus 3, 4) were 0.7m below the current ground surface. Slab F2 was at least 0.2m thick. It was abandoned and reopened 18 June 2015 using a small tracked machine. It was completed on 14 September 2015 when Trench 22 was also opened.

Trenches 20 and 22 were dug down to the base of wall F5 (Illus 2, 5) which is the current NE end wall of Provost Skene's House. It is a total of 2.80m deep and has large stones in base on top of rusty brown sand and stone natural subsoil.

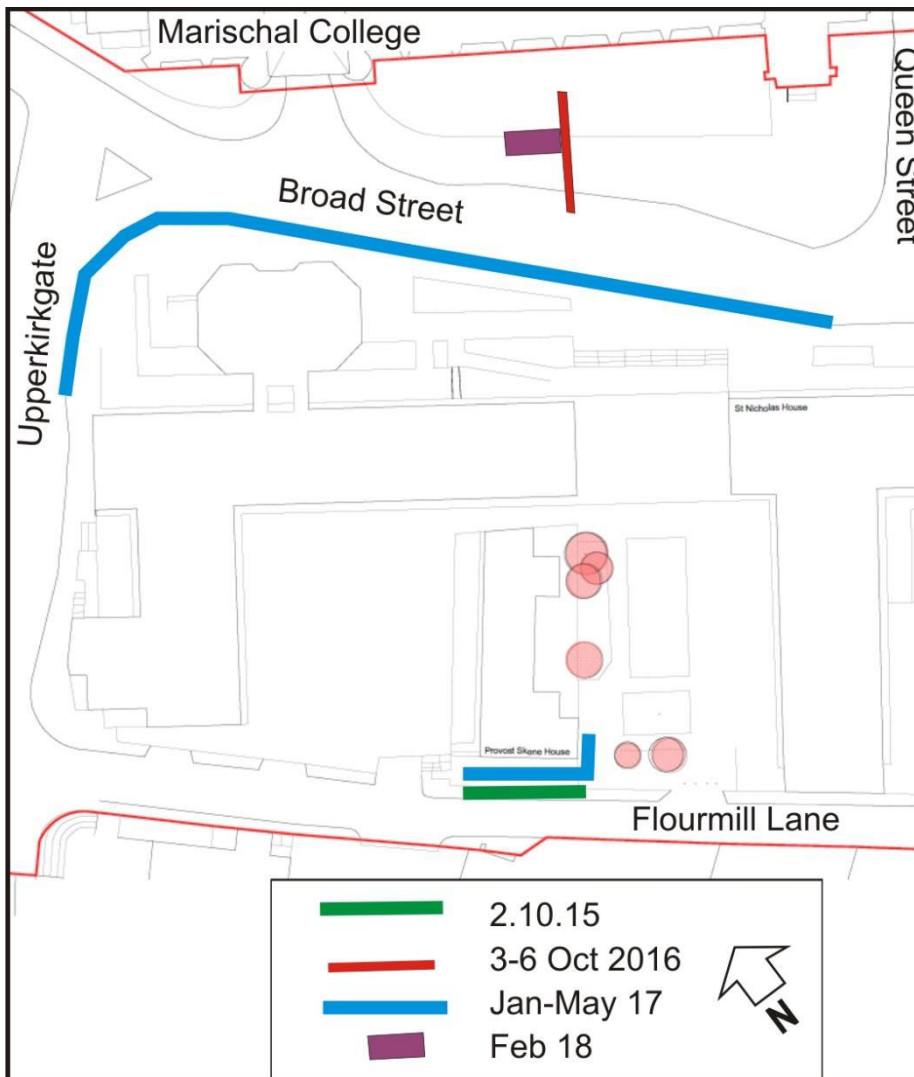
At 90 degrees to wall F5 (Illus 5) is wall F4 which is a continuation of the NW wall of Provost Skene's House (Illus 3, 4). It formed a corner with F5 and is probably the corner of a basement which had been located under the NE wing of Provost Skene's House. It is not known when this was demolished but demolition material including stone, mortar, sand and soil filled the former basement.



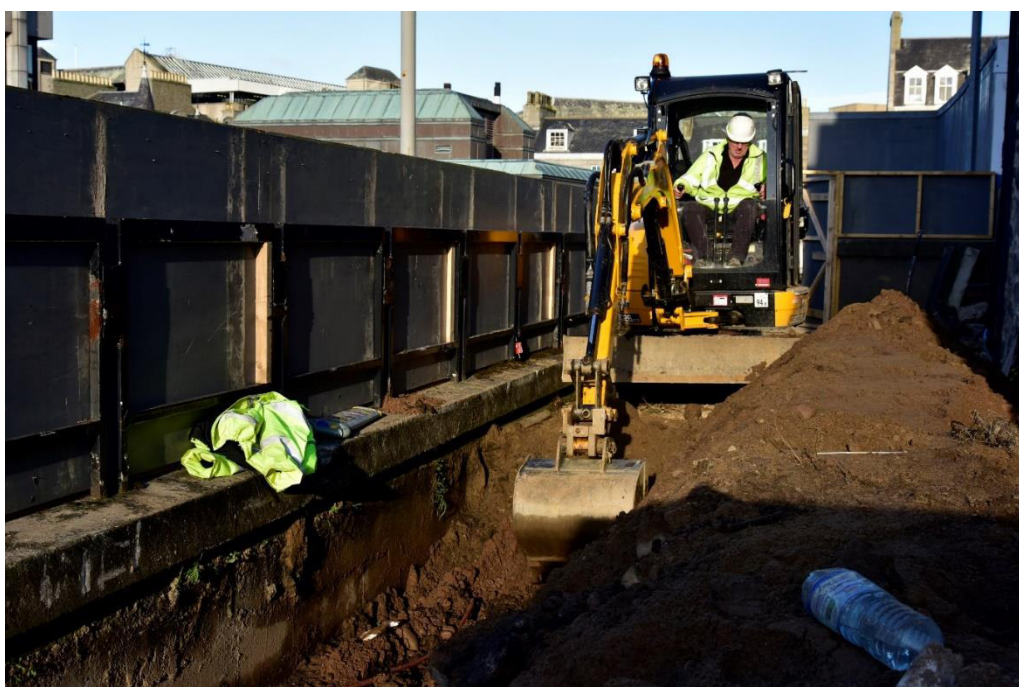
Illus 5 TP20 showing wall F5 with natural subsoil below and wall scar F5 (centre) which has been removed by machine; facing SW

### 3.3 Watching brief 9.10.2015

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken alongside Provost Skene's House and Flourmill Lane in a confined area excavated by mini-digger for the installation of buried service cables, including phone and electrics (Illus 6, 7). This work was in line with conditions laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Cameron 2015) requiring an archaeologist present for excavations around Provost Skene's House, which dates to c.1545. The primary trench fill was an imported greyish-brown silty sand with gritty inclusions which extended to a depth of approximately 1m, overlying one set of existing service cables installed prior to the project (a second deeper cable, c1.5m deep was later discovered as well). Underlying this sandy imported top layer appeared to be the disturbed natural strata consisting of a light reddish-brown sandy-silt with small grit and gravel inclusions. This layer was void of archaeological material as well. The completed dimensions of the trench were approximately 1.2m wide by 1.5m deep by 18.5m long, with a 2m deep 'sump' at the NE end to route cable underneath the existing concrete retaining wall (see DSC\_6059 & DSC\_6060). The excavation of the sump afforded an opportunity to examine the deeper strata of the trench, which reveal a modern disturbed layer containing a service cable at c.1.5m for street lighting and considerable tarmac in-fill associated with the installation of this cable. No archaeological materials or features were discovered during this watching brief.



Illus 6 Plan showing minor watching brief locations (*copyright Fairhurst*)

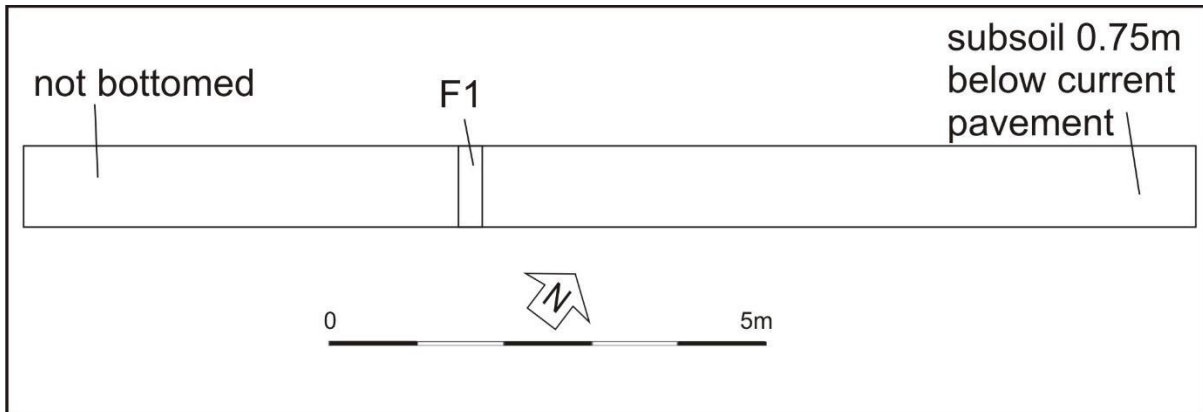


Illus 7 Trench dug 9.10.15 adjacent to provost Skene's House; facing NW  
CA147 Marischal Square, Aberdeen, AB10 1AR DSR Cameron Archaeology Ltd



### 3.4 Test Trench Broad Street 3-6.10.2016

A watching brief was carried out from 3-6 October 2016 during the excavation of an exploratory trench in Broad Street (Illus 8, 9). The trench was dug with mini digger and ditching bucket to 1.2m deep, 1m wide and 13.5m long. At the NE end of the trench the natural subsoil was recorded at 0.75m below the current street level; above that is a sterile gravel backfill which was infilled in 2009-10 when the current paving was installed. The SW end of the trench was deeper and a wall F1 was probably the wall of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement. It was 0.3m deep and dug into the natural subsoil at the NE side. The area to the SW of F1 (Illus 8) was filled with mortar, brick and was probably an infilled cellar.



Illus 8 Trench showing wall F1



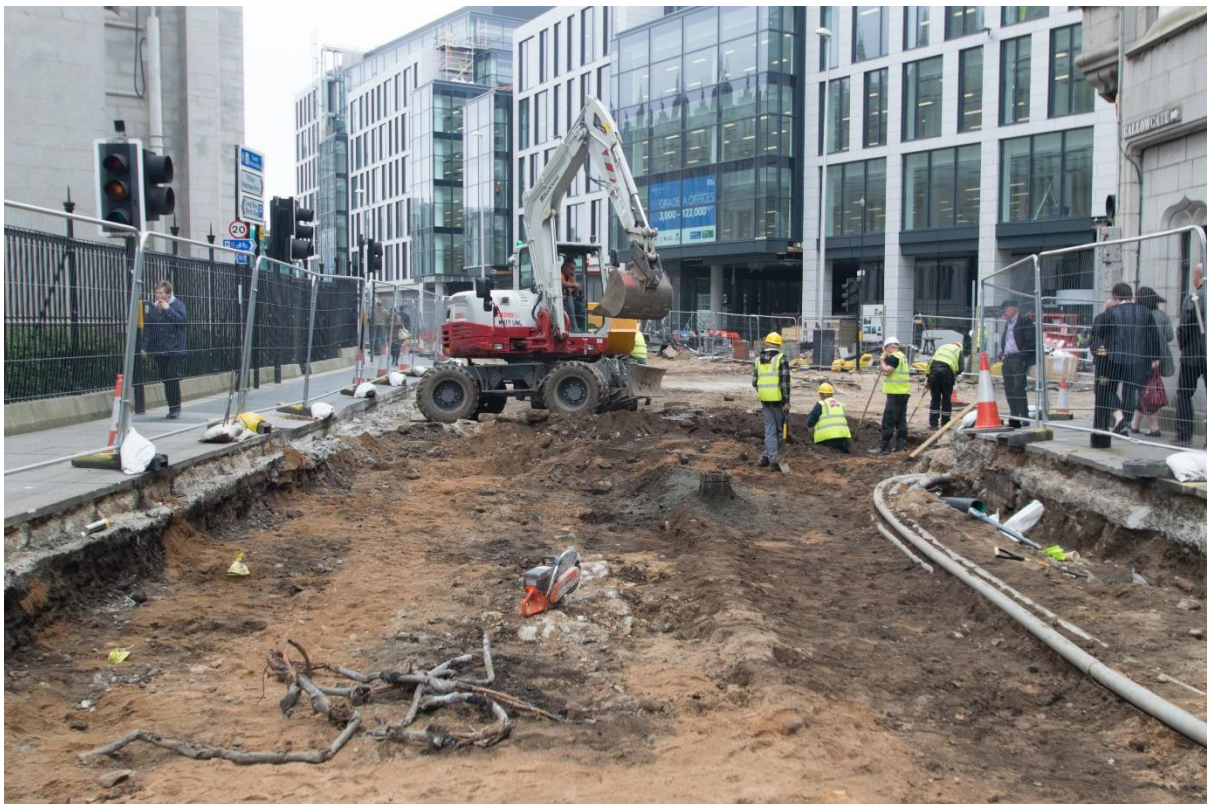
Illus 9 NE end of trench showing natural pebble and sand natural at 0.75m deep and cabling (left)

### 3.5 Provost Skene's House Feb-May 2017

Excavations around Provost Skene house commenced on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 (Illus 6). Works were resumed on March 3<sup>rd</sup> after foundational stability around the house was improved by pouring a concrete retaining wall running parallel with Flourmill Lane. This section of the site revealed the least modern disturbance, but conversely, did not reveal any signs of disturbance from the Medieval or post-Medieval periods prior to or after the construction of Provost Skene House after the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century. Slight intrusions of darker soils were subsequently identified as organic deposits from a broken sewage pipe dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century or soon thereafter.

After these works were completed, excavation activities were sporadic and limited to several metres at a time, often to less than 400mm in depth, over the course of the next eight weeks as works progressed along Broad Street heading in a NW direction towards the intersection with Upperkirkgate, then rounding the corner along Upperkirkgate by the end of April. These works occurred in sections, primarily removing concrete layers from the previous pavement, while the installation of shallow trenching to accommodate waterpipes or electrical cabling occurred in front of Provost Skene house and along several sections of Broad Street.

Site visits were made on the following dates: February 13<sup>th</sup>, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, and April 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> as excavations in advance of pavement replacement progressed primarily around Broad Street and Upperkirkgate areas. Beyond sparse sherds of modern ceramic vessels or drainage tile, one animal leg bone (either pig or sheep) and a pewter teapot spout, no other archaeological features or artefacts were noted. Again, excavation works tended to be relatively shallow, below 400mm depth, only encountering previously disturbed modern layers of a late-19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> Century date.



Illus 10 Monitoring at the junction of Broad Street and Gallowgate; facing SE

### 3.6 Fountain 21-23.2.2018

From February 21st-23rd, 2018, a rectangular sump measuring approximately 10m in length by 3.45m in width and 4.3m in depth was excavated near the current Robert the Bruce statue on Broad Street as part of a water feature installation (Illus 6). Although the upper fills contained dressed stone from historic demolition of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings which lined the street, little else of archaeological significance was noted beyond two pieces of cut animal bone. These were identified approximately 1m down below the modern surface. Below this level, a reddish-brown silty clay subsoil with angular stone inclusions remained consistent to the full depth of the excavation. Although the necessary shuttering prevented a clear inspection of the trench sections, the excavation was closely monitored as it progressed down in the central areas. No other finds or features were noted.



Illus 11 Trench for fountain; Facing SE

## 4 THE FINDS

A small number of medieval pottery sherds (Illus 12) and mammal bone (Illus 13) were recovered from watching briefs in Broad Street. Midden material has been found on several excavations in areas around Broad Street and it is likely that this has been redeposited from one of these areas. The pottery is mainly of 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century type and East Coast redwares but there is a sherd of Scarborough-type ware and a number of non-local earthenwares. The bones consist of several horns including one which has been cut (Illus 14), as well as several long bones mostly split radially for the removal of marrow (Illus 15). There is a young ?sheep/goat long bone which has transverse cuts suggesting the removal of flesh or skin (Illus 16-17).



Illus 12 Medieval pottery recovered from watching briefs in Broad Street, mainly local 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century but sherds of Scarborough-type ware and other non-local earthenwares



Illus 13 Mammal bone from watching briefs in Broad Street



Illus 14 Cut horn



Illus 15 Long bones split radially for removal of marrow



Illus 16 Young ?sheep/goat long bone with skinning cuts



Illus 17 Young ?sheep/goat long bone with skinning cuts

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The watching briefs carried out during this work proved that this area has been heavily disturbed in the past particularly by services. Medieval pottery sherds and animal bones were found redeposited but no *in situ* deposits and the development work is now complete.

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## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Trial pits Aug-Sept 2014

Photo no	Description	Facing
P1010947, 55	TP08 location with Provost Skene's House	NW/W
P1010957-59	TP08 upper layer of sand, concrete, wood etc	SW/W
P1010960-64	TP08 location with Provost Skene's House	NW/W
P1010965-66	TP08 upper layer of sand, concrete, wood etc	SW/W
P1010967	TP08 location with Provost Skene's House (right)	SW
P1010968	TP08 location with Provost Skene's House	NW
P1010969	TP08 location with Marischal College	NE
P1010973	TP08 location with Provost Skene's House	NW
P1010974-5	TP09 location	NE
P1010976	TP09 upper levels of sand, concrete, wood etc	NE
P1010977-8	TP09 location with Marischal College	NE
P1010979-88	TP09 upper levels of sand, concrete, wood etc	NE/N/NW
P1010989	TP09 location with Marischal College	NE
P1010996	TP01 location with Upperkirkgate in background	NW
P1020003, 6, 7	TP01 upper levels of sand, clay, gravel, concrete	E
P1020008-12	TP01 upper levels of sand, clay, gravel, concrete	W
P1020015	TP01 location with Upperkirkgate in background	NW
P1020016-17	TP01 upper levels of sand, clay, gravel, concrete	E
P1020018-20	TP01 location with Broad St and Town House in background	E
P1020021-22	TP02 location with Provost Skene's House	W
P1020023-25	TP02 location with Marischal College in background	NNE
P1020034-38	TP02 upper levels of sand, clay, gravel, concrete	NE/N
P1020039	TP02 location with Marischal College in background	NE
P1020040-41	TP02 location with Broad St and Town House in background	E
P1020046	TP04 location with Marischal College	NE
P1020047	TP04 upper layers	NW
P1020048-50	TP04 location with Marischal College	NE
P1020067-74	TP05 location with New Town House/Marischal	NE/NNE
P1020075-77	TP05 upper layers of demolition debris	SE
P1020078-86	TP05 upper layers of demolition debris	SE/E
P1020087-88	TP05 location with New Town House/Marischal	SE
P1020100-101	TP06 with former Tisos on Netherkirkgate in background	E
P1020102-103	TP06 with Marischal College	NNE
P1020104-107	TP06	SE
P1020108-109	TP06 with Provost Skene's House	NW
P1020110-111	TP06	SE

Trenches 20 and 21

Photo no	Description	Facing
P1020264-74	Trench 20 location	SE
P1020275-77	Trench 20 stone slab F2 and wall foundation F1	SW
P1020278-81	Trench 20 stone slab F2 and wall foundation F1	SE



P1020282-91	Trench 21 location	SE
P1020292-207	Trench 21 Provost Skene's house NW wall and foundation F3	

Fountain 21-23.2.18

PHOTO ID	DIRECTION FACING	COMMENTS
DSC5032	NW	Sump installation in progress
DSC5037	SE	Sump installation in progress
IMG_20181	NW	Sump installation in progress
IMG_20182	SE	Sump installation in progress. Note soil colour change - excavation reaching subsoil at this point.
IMG_20183	NW	Excavation nearing completion

Jan-May 17

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
DSC0599	N	Excavations commencing next to Provost Skene House
DSC0602	SE	Excavations underway next to Provost Skene House
DSC0603	NW	Site view from works along Provost Skene House
DSC0606	NE	Section from Provost Skene House. Note sewage pipe in upper strata.
DSC0607	NE	Section from Provost Skene House. Note sewage pipe in upper strata.
DSC0615	SE	Excavations underway next to Provost Skene House
DSC0617	SE	Trench section along Provost Skene House
DSC0618	SE	Trench section along Provost Skene House
DSC0679	SE	Trench section along Provost Skene House
DSC0680	SE	Trench section along Provost Skene House
DSC0681	SE	Trench section along Provost Skene House
DSC0695	E	Trench section just SE of Provost Skene House
DSC0784	NW	General view along Broad Street prior to main works
DSC0789	NW	General view along Broad Street prior to main works
DSC0792	NW	Removal of preexisting concrete foundations along Broad Street
DSC0793	NW	Removal of preexisting concrete foundations along Broad Street
DSC0796	NW	Removal of preexisting concrete foundations along Broad Street
IMG20170330	SW	Broad Street foundation modification in progress
IMG20190405	SE	General view along Broad Street
DSC0967	NE	Detail of service trench along Flourmill Lane just NW of Provost Skene House. Note metal rebar from existing construction.
DSC0969	N	Detail of service trench along Flourmill Lane just NW of Provost Skene House.
DSC0971	N	Detail of service trench along Flourmill Lane just NW of Provost Skene House.
DSC0974	SE	Works in progress along Provost Skene House/Flourmill Lane
DSC0980	N	Detail of service trench along Flourmill Lane just NW of Provost Skene House.
DSC1088	SE	Works in progress along Provost Skene House/ Flourmill Lane
DSC1089	SE	Works in progress along Provost Skene House/ Flourmill Lane

DSC1172	SE	Broad Street prior to main pavement works
DSC1174	NW	Broad Street prior to main pavement works
DSC1201	SE	Broad Street works in progress
DSC1203	NE	Concrete foundations encountered during Broad Street Works
DSC1207	SE	Concrete foundations encountered during Broad Street Works
DSC1209	SE	Concrete foundations encountered during Broad Street Works
DSC1210	SE	Broad Street works in progress, general view
DSC1218	NW	Broad Street works, approximately 75% completed
DSC1219	NW	Broad Street works, approximately 75% completed
DSC5756	--	Animal Bone recovered from Broad Street works
DSC5757	--	Distal end of animal Bone recovered from Broad Street works
DSC5759	--	Pewter teapot spout recovered from works along Broad Street
DSC1431	NE	Extent of section along Provost Skene House
DSC1434	NE	Extent of section along Provost Skene House
DSC1436	SE	Service trench along Broad Street, in progress
DSC1440	E	Service trench along Broad Street, in progress
DSC1442	NW	Service trench location on Upperkirkgate
DSC1443	NW	Detail of service trench on Upperkirkgate
DSC1446	SW	Excavations along Flourmill Lane, just NW of Provost Skene House
DSC1449	SW	Excavations along Flourmill Lane, just NW of Provost Skene House

Watching brief 9.10.15

PHOTO ID	DIRECTION FACING	COMMENTS
DSC_6039	NW	Clearing service trench for cables
DSC_6040	NW	Clearing service trench for cables
DSC_6041	NW	Clearing service trench for cables
DSC_6042	NW	Clearing service trench for cables
DSC_6043	SE	View of completed area of service trench for cables
DSC_6045	NE	View alongside SE side of Provost Skene's house, looking towards Marischal College
DSC_6046	SW	View alongside SE side of Provost Skene's house, looking away from Marischal College
DSC_6047	NE	View alongside NE side of Provost Skene's house.
DSC_6049	NE	View alongside NW side of Provost Skene's house.
DSC_6051	SW	View alongside SE side of Provost Skene's house from courtyard.
DSC_6052	N	Detail of SE facade of Provost Skene's house.
DSC_6053	NE	Detail above lintel on SE facade of Provost Skene's house.
DSC_6054	NE	Groundworks on NE side of Provost Skene's house
DSC_6055	W	View towards NE half of building site
DSC_6056	NW	Service trench nearing completion
DSC_6058	NE	Detail of service trench profile showing heavy layer of imported sand overlying disturbed natural. Black band at bottom is residual tarmac dust and infill.
DSC_6059	NW	Groundworker hand-clearing sump for cables to exit onto Flourmill Lane. Machine digging finished by this point.
DSC_6060	NW	Groundworker hand-clearing sump for cables to exit onto Flourmill Lane. Machine digging finished by this point.



P1010947.JPG



P1010955.JPG



P1010957.JPG



P1010958.JPG



P1010959.JPG



P1010960.JPG



P1010961.JPG



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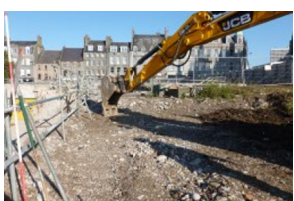
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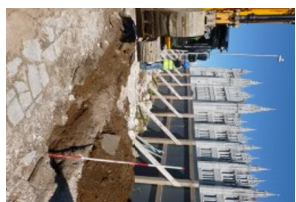
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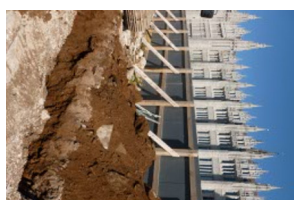
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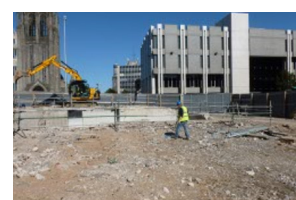
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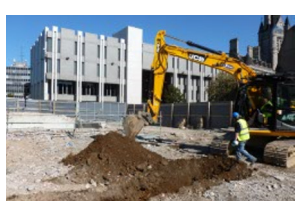
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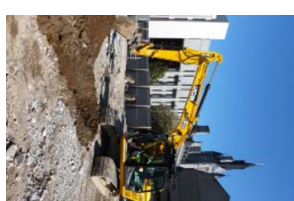
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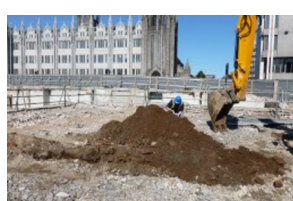
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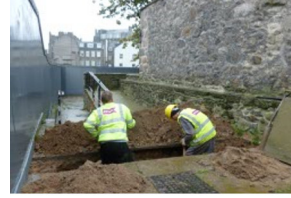
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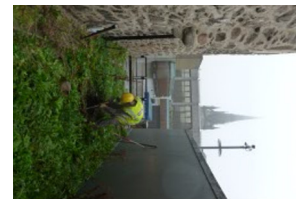
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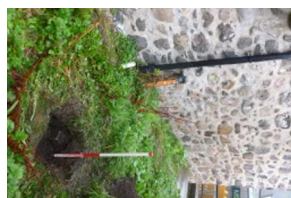
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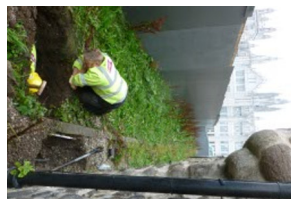
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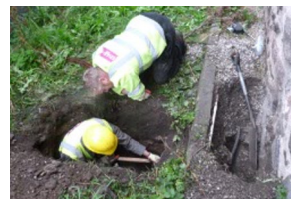
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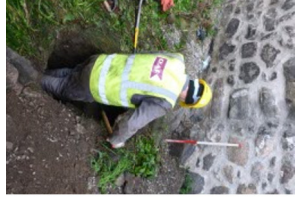
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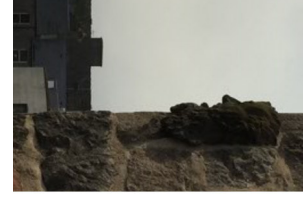
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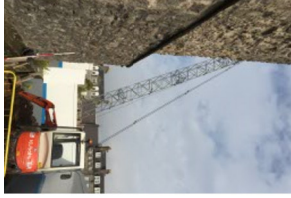
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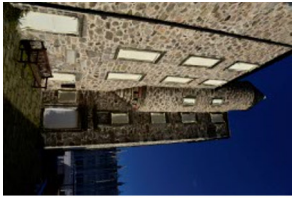
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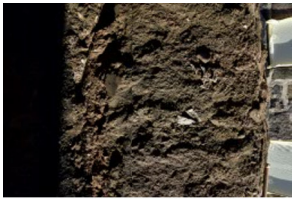
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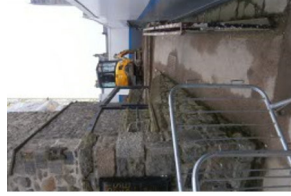
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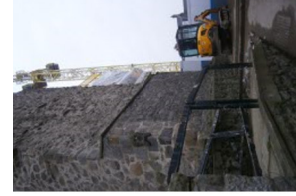
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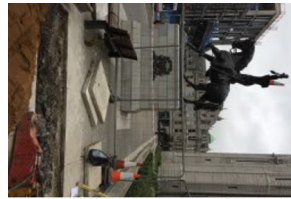
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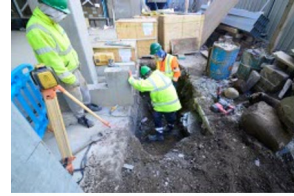
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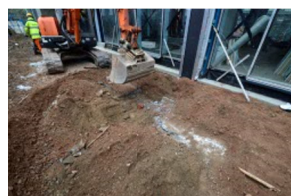
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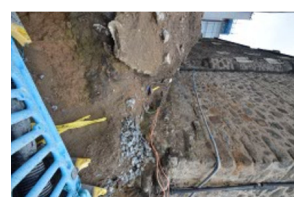
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