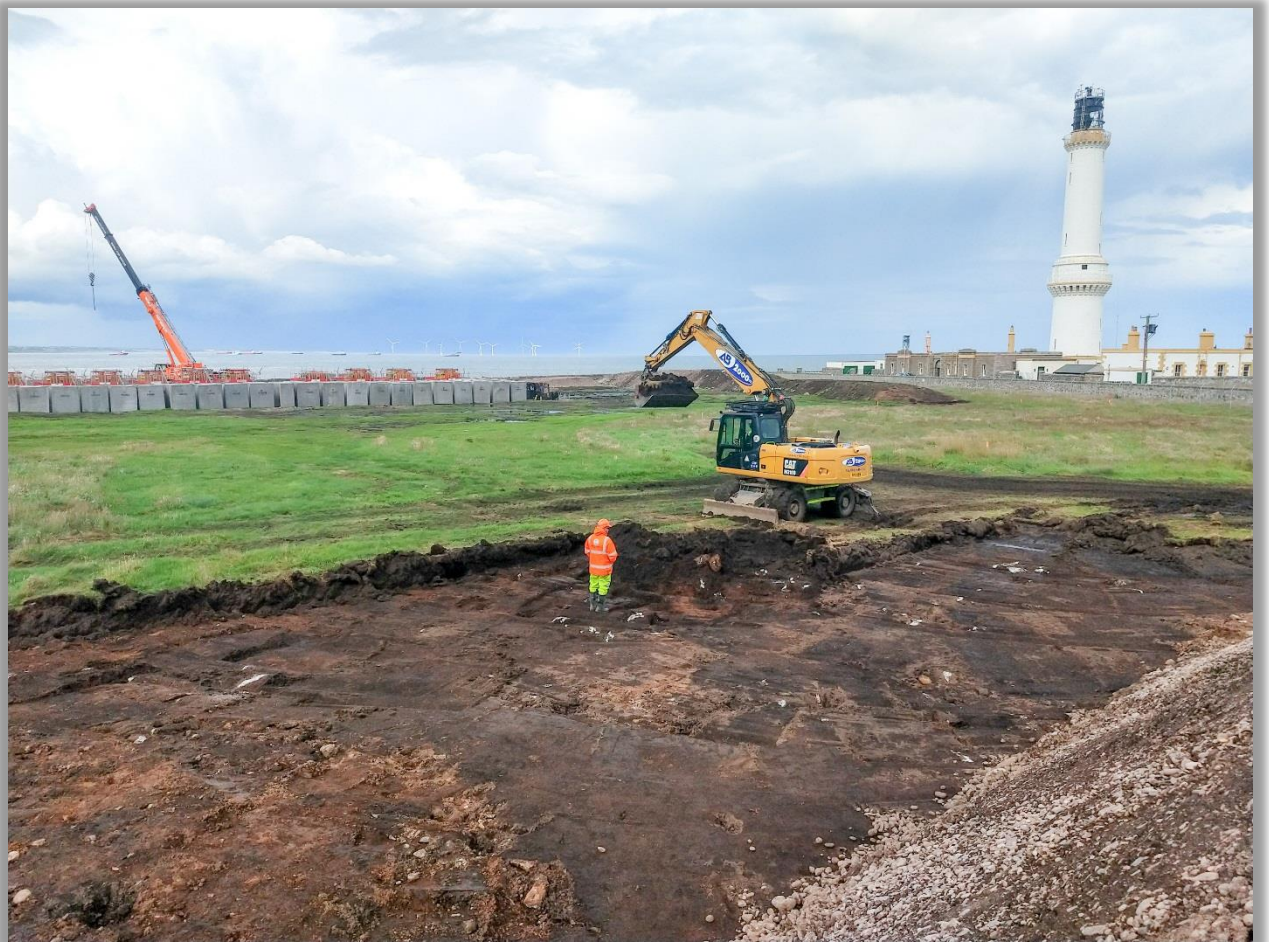


**Aberdeen Harbour Expansion Project, Nigg Bay,
Aberdeen, AB12 3LT
Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief
SW of Girdleness Lighthouse**



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Cameron Archaeology
14 08 2019**

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SUMMARY

Cameron Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on July 18th and 31st, 2019 on a 50m x 50m parcel of land (0.25Ha) at the North Compound Area of the Aberdeen Harbour Expansion Project, adjacent to and due west/south-west of Girdleness lighthouse. The watching brief area was approximately 33% stripped prior to arrival of the archaeologist and was covered in gravel and spoil upon arrival. The remainder of the soil strip was observed. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located at the north end of Nigg Bay, Aberdeen, due SW of Girdle Ness lighthouse and is centred on NJ 97065 05297, at 15m OD in the parish of Aberdeen (Illus 1).
- 1.2 An application has been lodged with Aberdeen City Council (P151158) for a National development comprising construction of new infrastructure to facilitate the creation of a new deep water harbour, including new roads, parking and means of access, temporary construction and fabrication areas and other associated development which may include public realm areas, paths, lighting and signage and there is a standard archaeology condition.



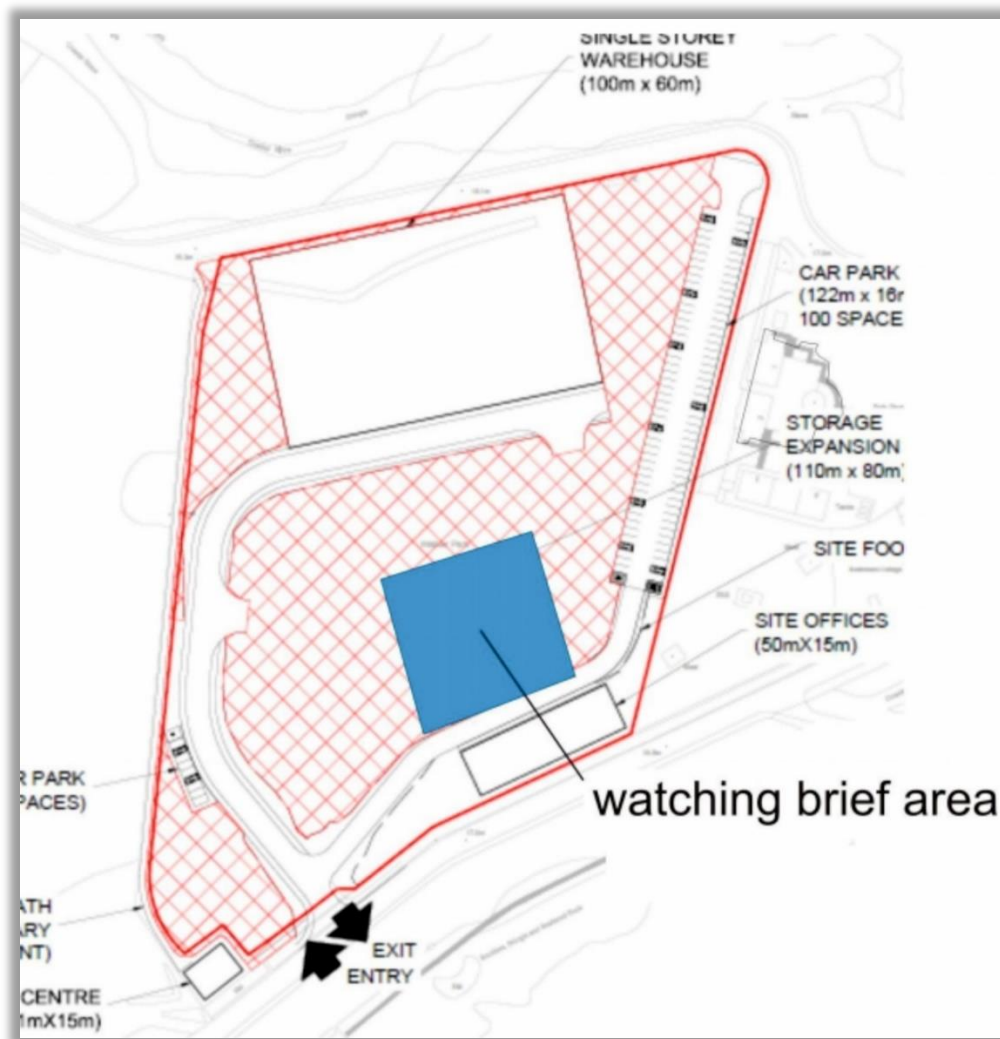
Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2019)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There are five Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the current site. These include two Bronze Age cairns on Tullos Hill (Crab's Cairn NJ90SE.4 ; Tullos Cairn NJ90SE.2), medieval and early post-medieval St Fittick's Church (NJ90SE.1), Balnagask Motte, a possible motte or garden feature (NJ90NE.13) and Torry Battery (NJ90NE.22.0) a mid -19th century coastal defence battery. St Fittick's Church is Listed Category A. None will be directly affected by the current works and Chapter 24 of the EIS deals with the mitigation for these sites.
- 2.2 Nigg Bay is the coastal bay between Girdle Ness and the north and Greg Ness at the south. Previous archaeological work includes a watching brief carried out prior to tree planting on the links between St Fittick's Church and the sewage works (Buchanan 2009); no archaeological contexts were recorded but two broken flint nodules were recovered. A watching brief at Upper Kirkhill Farm (Peters 2008) and a watching brief during the construction of the sewage works (Cameron 2000, 147) both produced no archaeological finds or contexts. An excavation and research project at St Fittick's Church (Cameron 2009) revealed the foundations of the former manse on the NW side of the church and produced medieval pottery associated with a terraced field system. A series of trial pits were observed in preparation for this harbour development on the Nigg Bay beach and foreshore in 2013 but no archaeological deposits were identified during this work (Cameron 2013, 11).
- 2.3 A shell midden (NJ90SE 8) was recorded on the '25 feet raised beach' at Bay of Nigg and was excavated and found to contain periwinkle, limpet and mussel shells as well as fish and mammal bones (Reid 1912, 15; Simpson 1943, 11). The exact location is unknown and there is now nothing visible of this midden.
- 2.4 A flint arrowhead was also found near the church and now resides in the Marischal Museum (ABDUA; 17209; NMRS No: NJ90SE 100).
- 2.5 A silver chain was found 'at Nigg' (NJ90SW 13) and was presented to Marischal Museum by Jonathan Troup, Surgeon, in 1796. The links are circular, and pairs alternate with single links. They are 115mm long and the diameter of the rings is 33mm (Reid 1912, 18). The chain is probably 7th century in date and is in University of Aberdeen Collections (ABDUA 15644).
- 2.6 St Fittick's well was located on the bay in the south-west edge at the high tide level; it is marked on the First and Second Ordnance Survey maps (1867/1091) but by the Third Edition (dated 1923) the well is recorded as 'site of'. This well is associated with St Fittick, a saint of the 7th century. The well is mentioned after the reformation when the Protestant authorities attempted to ban people from using the well for its curative powers (Aberdeen City Council leaflet).
- 2.7 Nigg Bay salt pans (NJ90SE 12) is recorded in 1845 to have been out of use for many years and nothing of these pans now survives (NSA 1845, 209). This sea salt manufactory and refinery was established in 1796 by Alexander Smith, a merchant from Old Aberdeen A building and slipway (NJ90NE 42) is visible on Ordnance Survey maps from the first edition onwards. On the 1901 version, a well is marked nearby and even today the remains of a slipway can be seen. Local people recall it being used seasonally by lobster and crab fisherman up until the 1960s (Aberdeen City Council leaflet).
- 2.8 A kelp works was in use by 1728 by John Gordon, a merchant from Aberdeen, who had been collecting 'sea ware' in the Bay of Nigg and burning it in his nearby kilns. The Town Council objected to this because it encroached on the rights of those who lived there and collected the seaware for dung for their fields. On 8 March 1750, George Leslie, a merchant trading in Aberdeen, applied to Aberdeen Council for a warrant to cut and burn

kelp. He wanted to undertake this work as part of what he described as his 'soapere' (Aberdeen City Council leaflet).

- 2.9 There are two house platforms on the south side of Greg Ness depicted on the 2nd Edition OS map and recorded during the walkover (Wessex Archaeology 2015, EIA Chapter 24).
- 2.10 There are possible rig and furrow cultivation marks on Balnagask Golf course (NJ90NE 44; (Harding 1997, 5).
- 2.11 A pillbox (NJ90SE 57) and anti-tank blocks (NJ90SE 58) have been identified on aerial photographs of Nigg Bay but nothing now survives. There are circular depressions in the intertidal zone which may be bomb craters but this is undetermined and uncertain (Aberdeen City Council SMR). This work may clarify these features.
- 2.12 Early maps show the bay between Girdle Ness and Greys Ness (for example Moll c 1745; Illus 14) but no detail of features or sites. First Edition Ordnance Survey (Illus 17) shows the west foreshore was occupied by a firing range including target areas. The area had been occupied by a series of boundary stones (V, W, X, Y and 10) none of which now survive.
- 2.13 There are 89 shipwrecks in the study area; details of these appear in the EIA and appendices (Wessex Archaeology 2015) and in the PAD (Cameron 2016).



Illus 2 Location of watching brief area – map copyright Dragados SA/UK/Ireland.

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

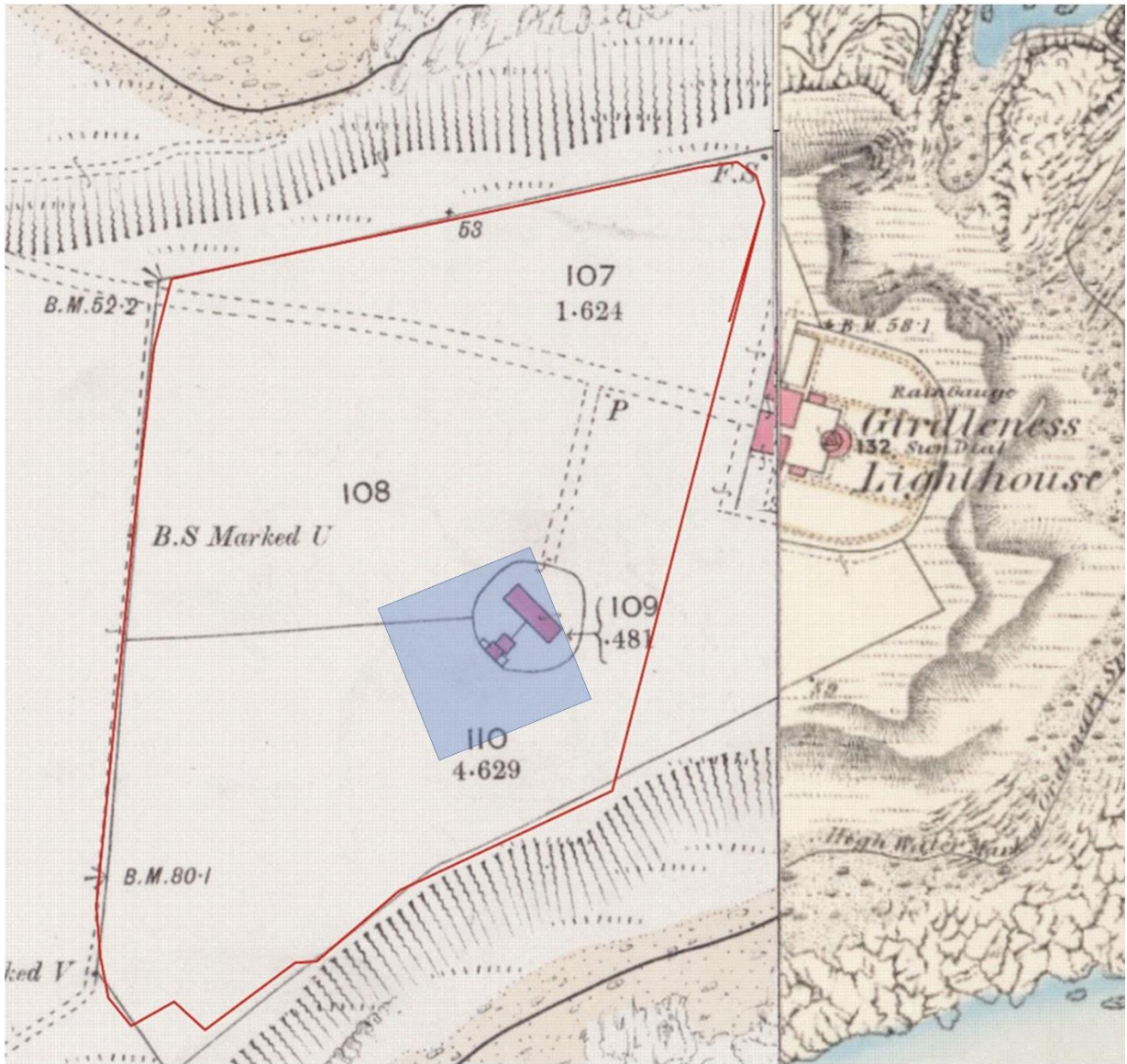
Cameron Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief (Illus 2) on July 18th and 31st at the North Compound area adjacent to Girdle Ness lighthouse. The area to be monitored during the soil strip was a box area measuring 0.25Ha. The watching brief area was approximately 60-75% stripped prior to arrival of the archaeologist and was covered in gravel and spoil upon arrival. The remainder of the soil strip was observed. The soil stripped revealed a topsoil depth initially below 300mm, though this deepened to approximately 450mm at the east end of the project area. The soil strip revealed a subsoil consisting primarily of red-brown sandy clays, with occasional wetter, water-holding areas indicating the early formation of peats. Smaller sub-angular very coarse gravels and cobbles <256mm, though more typically <150mm, were frequently encountered, but the area was free of larger boulders >256mm. No archaeological finds or features other than a modern field drain were noted.



Illus 3 Soil strip along N side of watching brief area with DGPS radio tower aerials in background.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological finds or features were observed or identified within the watching brief area, and no further archaeological mitigation is deemed necessary at this time, subject to alterations or new areas of development/expansion beyond the original project outline.



Illus 4 North compound overlain on 1st edition OS map (©National Library of Scotland)



Illus 5 'Plan of Girdleness showing the lighthouse and grounds' carried out by Stephenson surveyors, c1830.

5 REFERENCES

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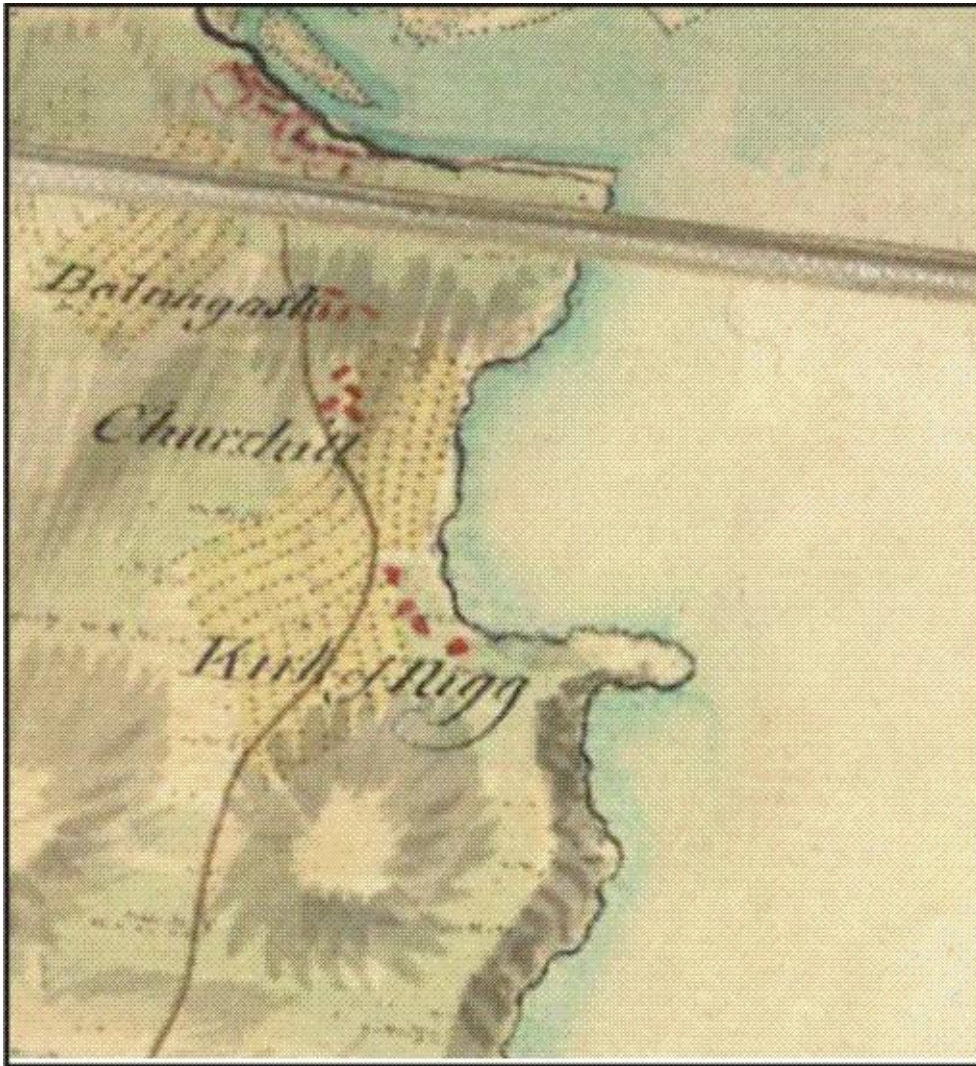
6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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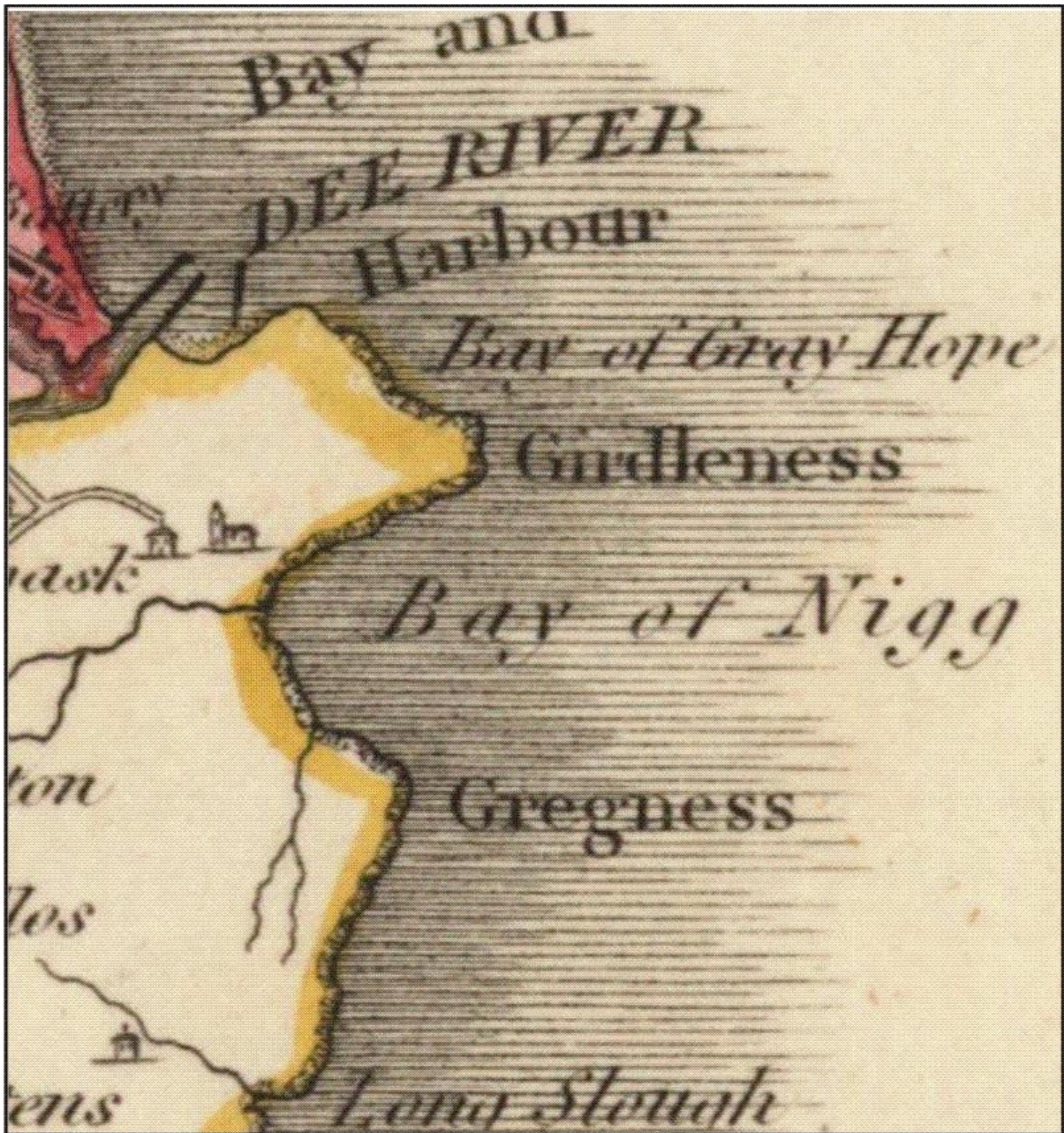
APPENDIX 1 MAPS



Illus 6 Hermann Moll, c. 1654-1732, The Shires of Bamf [i.e. Banff] and Aberdeen
Published: 1745 (©National Library of Scotland)



Illus 7 Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-55 (©National Library of Scotland)



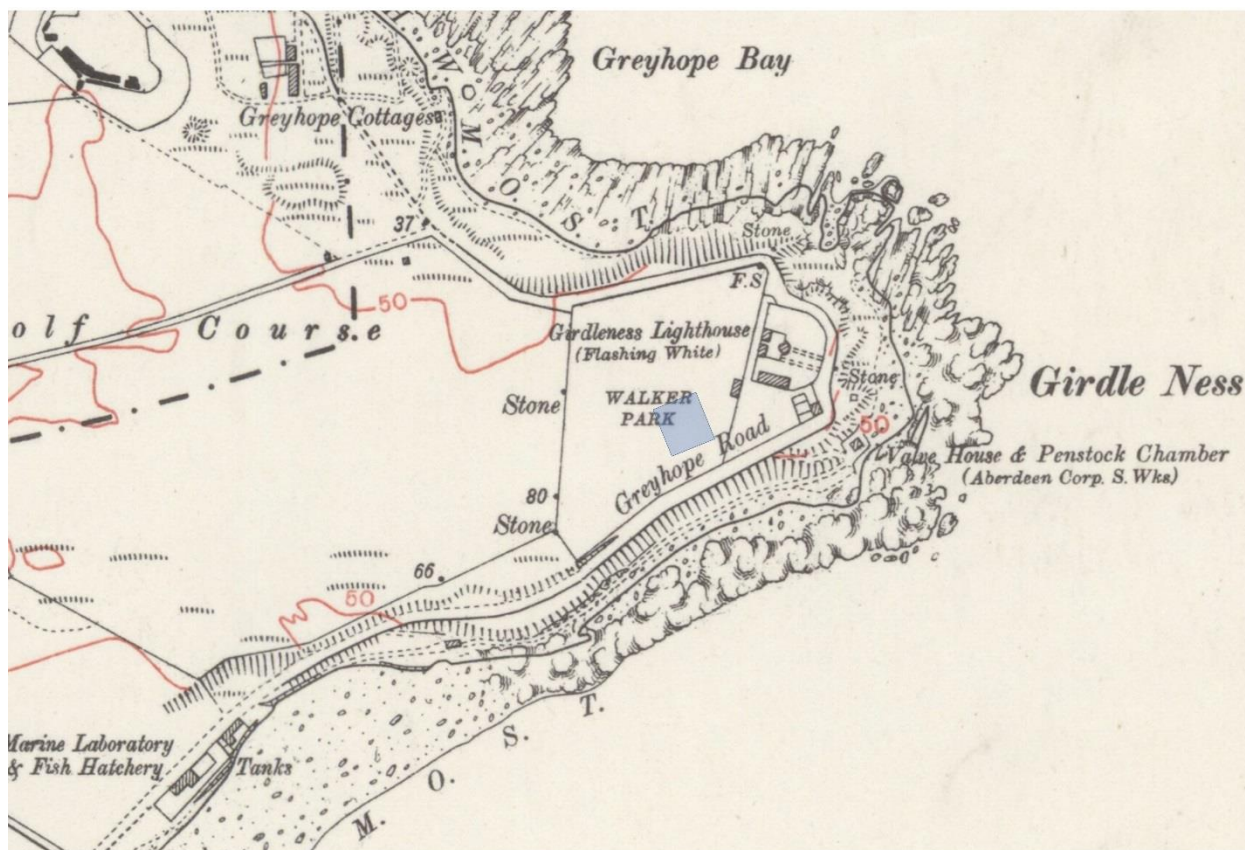
Illus 8 John Thomson, Northern Part of Aberdeen & Banff Shires. Southern Part.
Published: 1826 (©National Library of Scotland)



Illus 9 First Edition Ordnance Survey showing approximate location of watching brief area. (©National Library of Scotland) Title: Kincardine Sheet IV.3 (Combined) Survey date: 1865 Publication date: 1868.



Illus 10 Second Edition Ordnance Survey showing approximate location of watching brief area. (©National Library of Scotland Title: Aberdeenshire, Sheet 075.16 Publication date: 1901 Revised: ca. 1900.



Illus 11 Third Edition Ordnance Survey showing approximate location of watching brief area. (©National Library of Scotland) Title: Aberdeenshire, Sheet 075.16 Publication date: 1926 Revised: ca. 1923 Levelled: 1899/1900.

APPENDIX 2 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-1	N	Soil strip preparing to commence/general view of site
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-2	NE	Soil strip preparing to commence/general view of site
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-3	ENE	Soil strip preparing to commence/general view of site
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-4	S	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-5	SSE	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-6	ESE	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-7	E	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-8	ENE	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-9	SE	Soil strip underway
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-10	ESE	Soil strip underway
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-11	NE	Soil strip underway
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-12	NE	Soil strip underway

CA313 Girdle Ness WB-13	ESE	W end of remaining soil strip area completed
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-14	SE	Central area of soil strip nearing completion
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-15	SE	Central area of soil strip nearing completion
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-16	ENE	Central area of soil strip nearing completion
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-17	NNE	West end of soil strip, elevated view
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-18	N	West end of soil strip, elevated view
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-19	NNE	Central area of soil strip, elevated view
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-20	NE	East end of soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-21	NE	East end of soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-22	E	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-23	ESE	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-24	SE	Area previously stripped and stoned prior to arrival
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-25	N	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-26	ENE	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-27	E	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-28	ESE	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-29	ENE	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-30	ESE	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress
CA313 Girdle Ness WB-31	SE	Remainder of watching brief area – soil strip in progress



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-1



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-2



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-3



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-4



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-5



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-6



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-7



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-8



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-9



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-10



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-11



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-12



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-13



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-14



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-15



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-16



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-17



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-18



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-19



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-20



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-21



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-22



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-23



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-24



CA313 Girdle Ness WB-25



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CA313 Girdle Ness WB-31