

Watching Brief, Aboyne Castle, Aboyne, AB34 5JP
Data Structure Report (DSR)
Site Code CA488-2019



Moyra Simon
Cameron Archaeology
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ILLUSTRATIONS

Perimeter wall enclosing foundations of a 19th century building with granite block surround.

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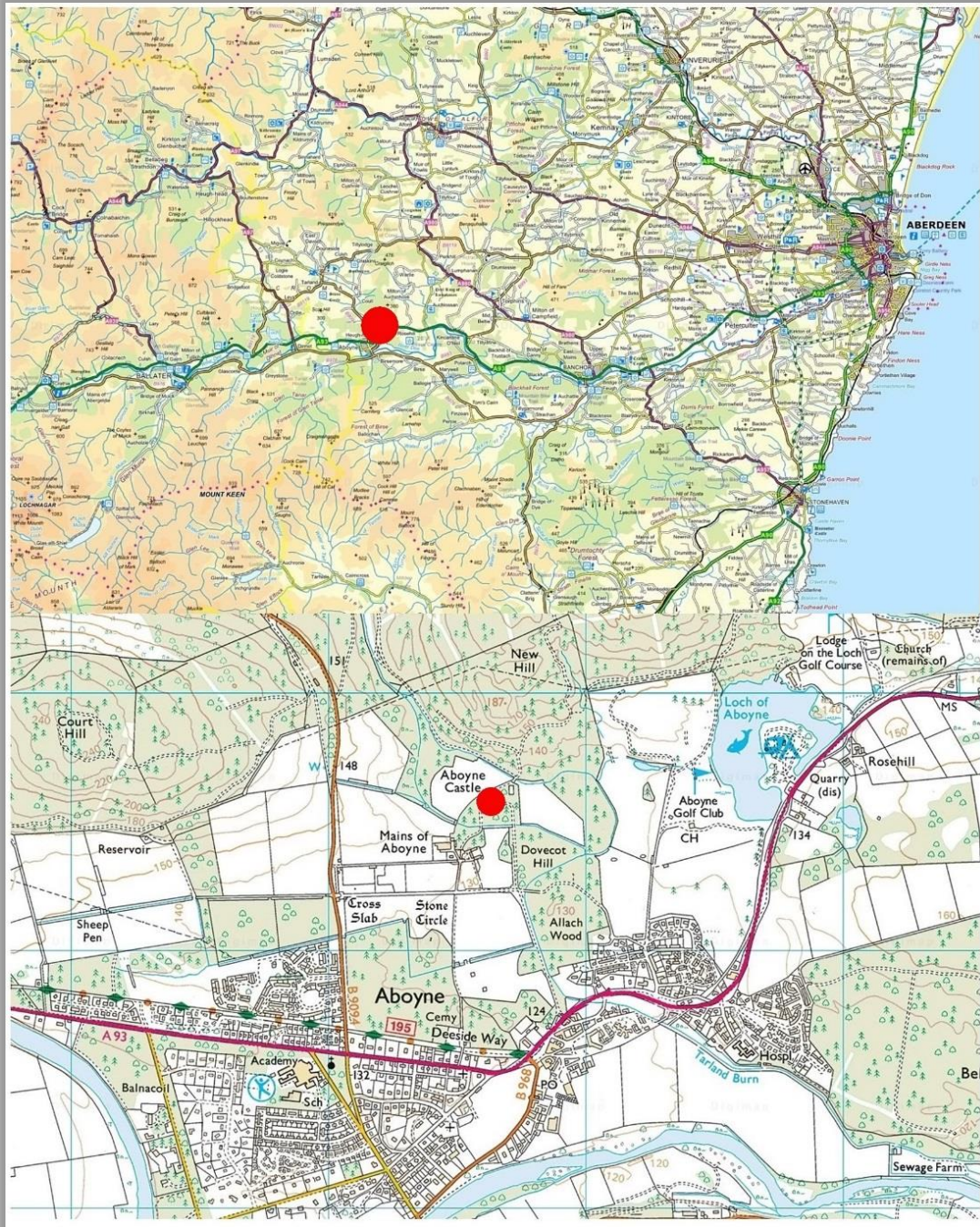
SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken between 13th and 15th November 2019 at Aboyne Castle, Aboyne, AB34 5JP. The watching brief revealed the foundations of a 19th century building, surrounded by a granite cobble border (8), which is believed to have served as the castle laundry. Lead pipes were exposed in the interior of the building adjacent to a granite stand (3) which may have supported a laundry copper. Sundry cast iron sewer pipes and drain box were recovered and a decorative granite finial.

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 some 920m due north of Aboyne off the A93. It is centred on NGR NO 52631 99580, at 128m OD in the parish of Aboyne and Glen Tanar.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Alistair Aboyne. An application APP/2019/2206 for the Erection of Domestic Garage is awaiting decision with Aberdeenshire Council, who require an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks.
- 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 with watching brief area marked in red (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2019)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument within 1km of Aboyne Castle. Heogan palisaded enclosure (SM10980, NGR: NO 531 990), lies some 635m SE of Aboyne Castle. “The monument comprises the remains of an enclosure and timber house of later prehistoric date, visible as cropmarks on oblique aerial photographs. The monument lies

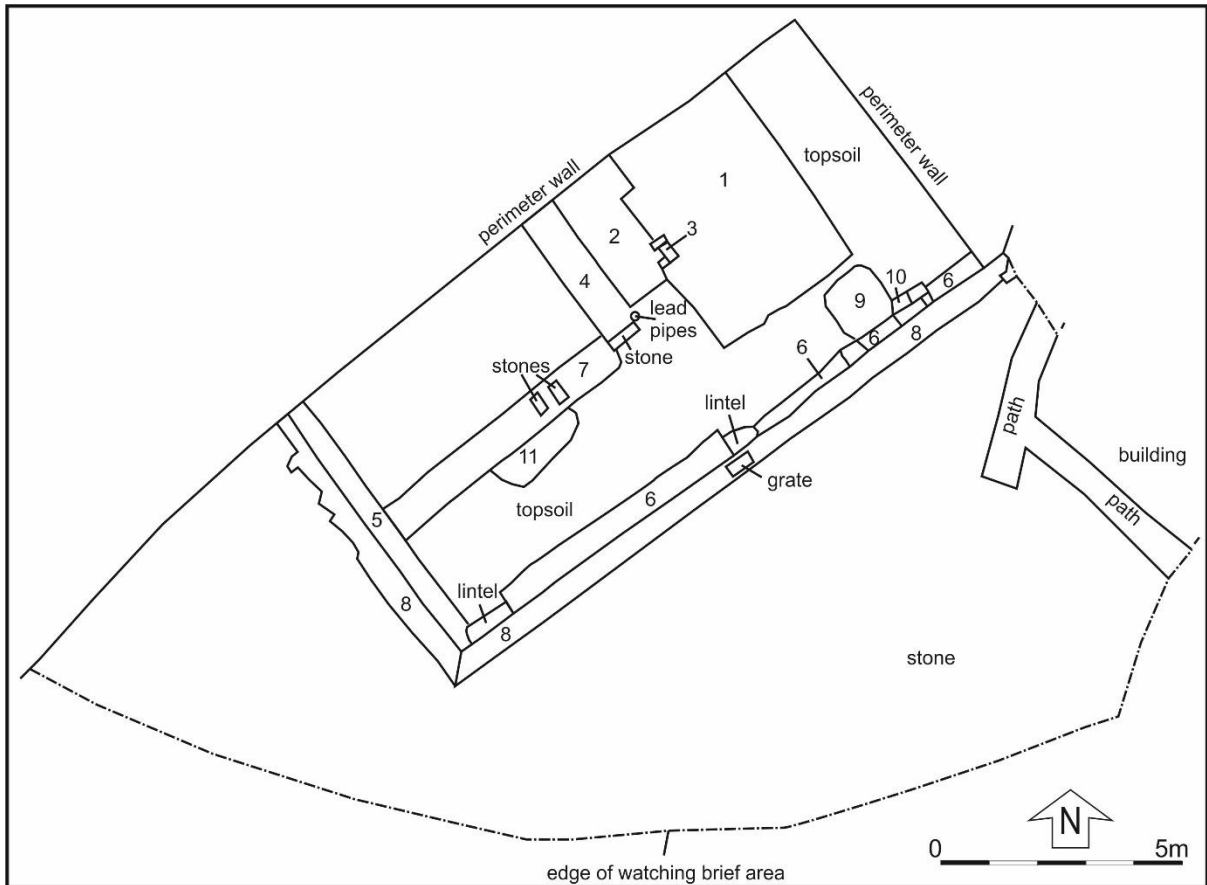
in arable farmland at around 120m OD. It comprises a circular palisaded enclosure, with a diameter of approximately 26m with an entrance to the E. A circle within the enclosure, measuring about 17m in diameter, probably indicates the remains of a timber roundhouse. It also has an entrance to the E in line with that of the enclosure. Other cropmarks in the vicinity include pits and linear features, which may represent the remains of associated structures. These cropmarks may not all be contemporary and might represent a long history of human occupation in this area in the later prehistoric period. The area proposed for scheduling comprises the remains described and an area around them within which related material may be expected to be found. It is irregular in shape with maximum dimensions of 144m from its westernmost to easternmost point by 114m from its northernmost to southernmost point, as marked in red on the accompanying map extract. The boundaries to the south, east and west are defined by the boundary fence of the field, which is itself excluded from the designated area.”

- 2.2 Aboyne Castle (NO59NW 5; NO 5263 9955) is itself listed by Historic Environment Scotland as “A tall rambling multi-period mansion now falling into ruin, occupying almost the same site as a possible medieval peel and a horizontal motehill (Simpson 1949) castle of the Bissets, lords of Strathdee from before 1233. The site was protected by a wide, boggy loch formed by the Tarland Burn. The present building has been so much altered and enlarged in the 18th and 19th centuries that its original plan cannot now be determined, but the NW portion is the oldest incorporating a five-storey circular tower corbelled to square and crowned by a classical balustrade. This is presumably part of the "house" capable of defence which existed in 1638 and was partially rebuilt in 1671. A later replica of this tower stands at the NE angle. In 1242 the Thanage of Aboyne lapsed to the Crown and the estate appears thereafter as a favourite royal residence. It played a locally important part in the Wars of Independence, and in 1307 Edward I sent instructions for its fortification. No further record exists until the mention of the 17th century "house". Simpson was of the opinion that the late 13th century and 14th century references to the Castle of Aboyne actually referred to Coull Castle (NJ50SW 5) and that no medieval peel existed. He explained away references to it as misinterpretations. Aboyne Castle belongs to the Marquis of Huntly whose family have held the property since at least the early 15th century.” (W D Simpson 1929; 1949; New Statistical Account (NSA) 1845; N Tranter 1962-70; D MacGibbon and T Ross 1887-92; E Meldrum 1957).
- 2.3 Mains of Aboyne, Site Number NO59NW 5.02 NGR NO 52556 99371, some 200m SSW of Aboyne Castle. Little information is available about this ‘period unassigned’ house built for the factor at Mains of Aboyne, other than an early 18th century (1717) reference to a wright (builder) and building materials: “Accounts for wright work, the supply of timber, and a load of 10 000 divots (cut sods for roofing)” (Scottish Records Office 1717 GD 181/212).
- 2.4 Mains of Aboyne enclosure (Site Number NO59NW 49; NGR NO 525 993) is located some 280m SSW of Aboyne Castle. The ‘period unassigned’ enclosure is noted by Historic Environment Scotland as follows: “Air photography (CUCAP CDE 82, dated 20 July 1977 and AAS/95/09/G26/11-12, dated 28 August 1995) has recorded a large rectilinear enclosure cut by a track. (NMRS, MS/712/19).

- 2.5 Image Wood (Site Number NO59NW 1; NGR NO 5240 9904), 580m SSW of Aboyne Castle, is a rather unusual prehistoric stone circle or possible 'four-poster' with a potential later fifth stone addition. HES describes Image Wood as follows: "Aboyne Stone Circle: An extremely small stone circle; the space between the inner faces of its N and S stone is only 11' wide. The two stones on the N are close together, and all the stones are erect and massive. The circumference, taken through the centres of the stones, is exactly 40'. A very slight mound rises round the bases of all the stones, causing the enclosed space to be slightly higher than the level of the ground outside, possibly due to the modern path being carried around the circle. Some years ago, Lord Huntly dug a trench at this circle and "only some black earth and cinders were found." (F R Coles 1905). A setting of five stones, generally as described and planned by Coles. The most northerly stone is canted to the N, and though earthfast, may not be in situ. Without this stone, the remains could be either a "four poster" or the remains of a small stone circle of the transitional type described by Burl (Burl 1971).
- 2.6 Aerial photography has identified a possible ring ditch and associated souterrain or 'earth house' some 575m SW of Aboyne Castle. HES describes the cropmarks as follows; "NO59NW 44 523 991 - Ring-ditches and souterrains: identified while checking aerial photographs held by Grampian Regional Council." (M Greig 1994). Air photography (CUCAP CDE 82, dated 20 July 1977) has recorded the cropmarks of what may be ring-ditches and a souterrain on a gentle SE-facing slope immediately S of a large rectilinear enclosure. (NMRS, MS/712/9).
- 2.7 Some 434m NNE of Aboyne Castle are situated a number of clearance cairns, described as follows: "On a SE facing slope in the area centred NO 528 999 is the remains of a field system marked by several stone clearance heaps. The area has been heavily afforested and no huts, lynchets or fields were visible under thick vegetation" (HES 2017).

3 WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was carried out between 13th and 15th November 2019. Foundations of a 19th century structure were found within the perimeter wall enclosing the grounds immediately surrounding Aboyne Castle. The foundations of the outer SW (5) and SE (6) rubble walls remain along with foundations of an internal wall (4) running NW- SE and robbed out remains of a second internal wall (7) aligned SW-NE. Further interior features were located; a rubble floor (2) overlain by a granite structure (3) and two lead water pipes. A cement floor (1) and an area of plaster floor (9) were located in the E of the structure. A band of granite blocks (8) abutted the exterior SW and SE walls.



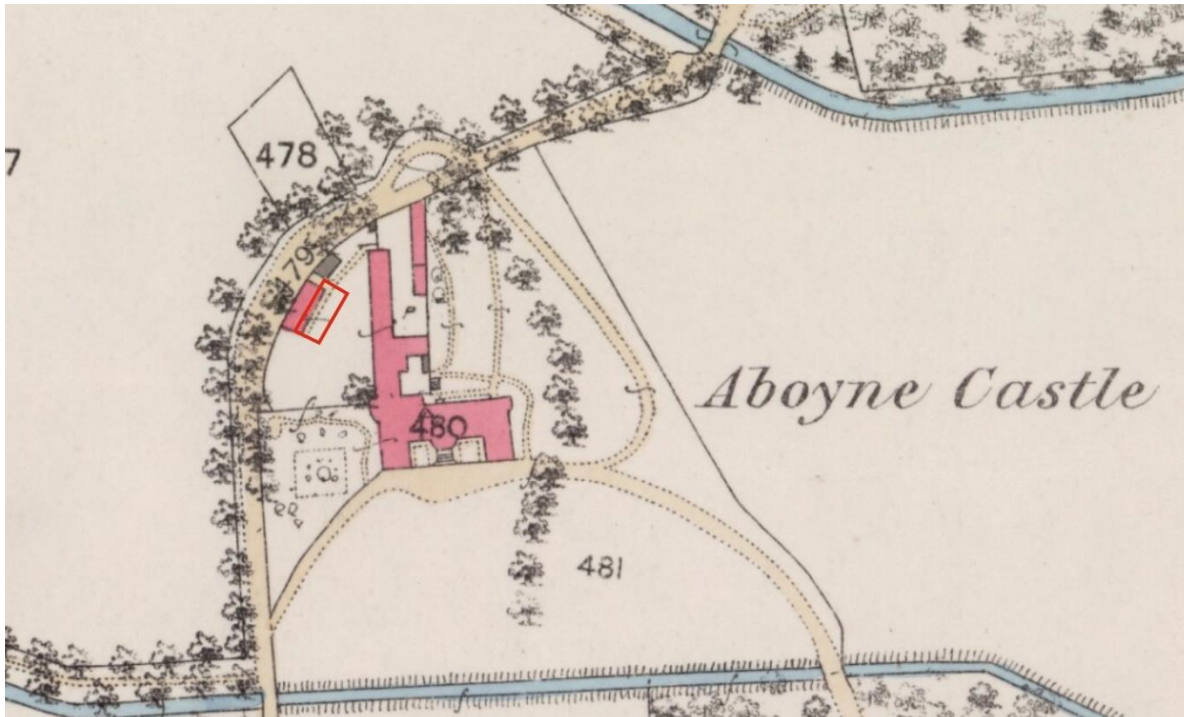
Illus 2 Plan of all features

3.1 The Perimeter Wall

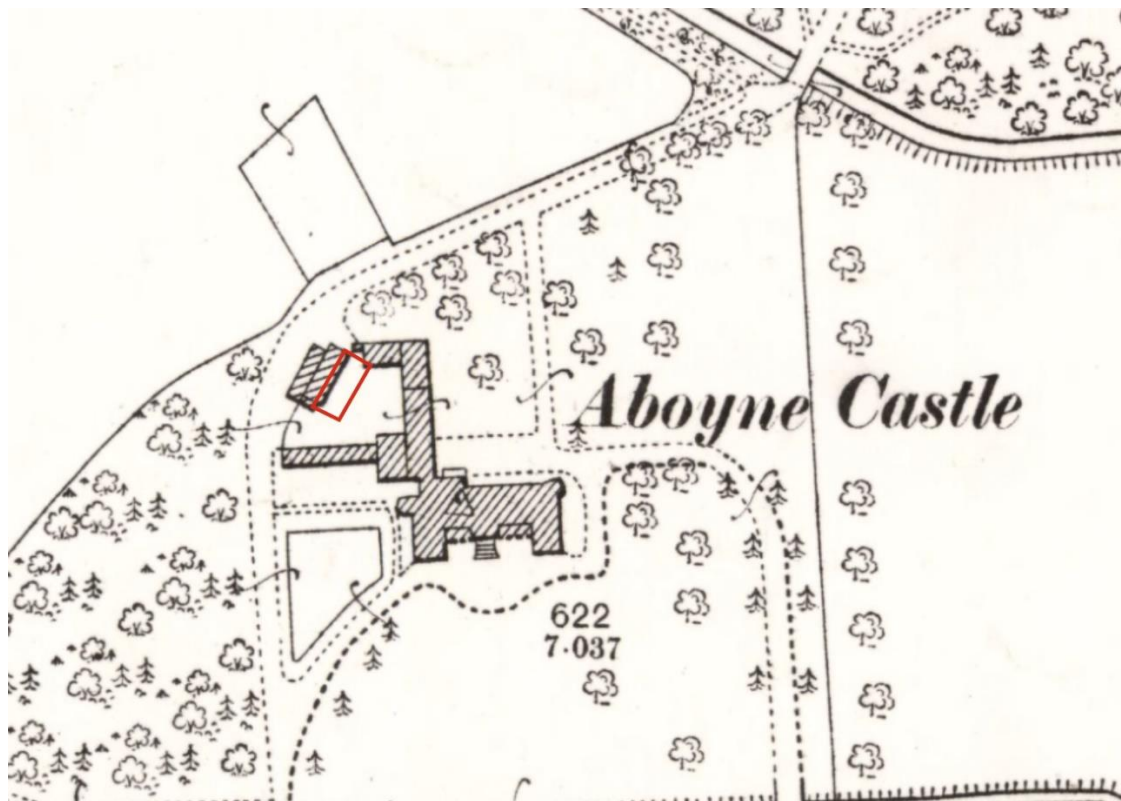
The watching brief area was bounded on the NE and NW by a perimeter. The NE wall had been partially demolished and rebuilt in the modern period. A 19th century ashlar granite gatepost stood at the W terminus with approximately 6m of rubble wall extending NE: the remainder had been replaced with modern block construction.

3.2 Walls 4, 5, 6 and 7

Both first and second edition OS maps depict structures associated with the perimeter wall (Illus 3 & 4); the earlier map denotes 2 separate structures the larger of which remained standing in 1899, albeit modified by the addition of a rectangular extension to the NW side.



Illus 3 First Edition OS map of Aboyne Castle showing proposed garage development site in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeen Sheet LXXXII.14 (Aboyne and Glentanner) Survey date: 1867 Publication date: 1870



Illus 4 Second Edition OS map of Aboyne Castle showing proposed garage development site in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeenshire 082.14 (includes: Aboyne and Glen Tanar; Birse) Publication date: 1900 Revised: 1899

It is possible that the 19th century peripheral wall formed the NW and NE walls of a rectangular building with rubble wall foundations 5 and 6 being the remains of the outer SW and SE of this structure (Illus 2). Therefore 5 and 6 can be considered as a single wall rather than separate phases of construction. The building is thought to have served as the castle laundry (Alistair Aboyne, *pers comm*).

The walls were constructed of mixed granite blocks bonded with mortar. Wall foundation 5 adjoined the peripheral wall and ran 6.4m NW-SE and was 0.5m wide. Wall foundation 6 measured 13.8m SW-NE surviving to a width between 0.4m – 0.6m. Both walls survived to a maximum depth of 0.5m, no more than 2 courses of stone set directly onto soil. This wall was interrupted by three entranceways: the central and W entrances (Illus 5) were indicated by single red granite lintels whilst the E entrance was a short pathway (10).



Illus 5 Intersection of walls 5 and 6 with a cut pink granite lintel surrounded by granite cobbles (8): facing NNE

An interior wall (4) measuring 3.4m x 0.85m was positioned approximately central to the area enclosed by walls 5 and 6 and the perimeter wall and ran parallel to wall 5. To the N it abutted the perimeter and had large stone at the S end which was displaced from this wall (Illus 6). A second interior wall (7) ran from wall 5 to wall 4, parallel to 6, forming a smaller rectangular structure measuring 5.85m x 2.8m. Wall 7 was heavily robbed out and therefore it was not possible to ascertain whether it abutted or adjoined walls 4 and 5.



Illus 6 Wall 4 with trace of wall 7 to the W: facing NW

3.3 Features 2 and 3

Wall 4 was abutted to the NE by an area of rough rubble flooring (2) 2.8m NW-SE by 1.6m SW-NE (Illus2) comprising a mix of stone, brick and mortar. A few of the brick fragments were burnt, but there was no evidence of further burning which indicates the bricks may have been part of a hearth rather than the entire structure being affected by an uncontained fire.

A plinth comprising 3 red granite blocks forming an open rectangle 0.62m x 0.53m (max) alongside a single broke flagstone (Illus 7), overlay floor 2. As the building was thought to have been a laundry the granite blocks may have been a sink stand or formed the base of a structure to hold a laundry copper.



Illus 7 Rubble floor 2 (foreground) with possible laundry copper base 3 (right): facing NE

3.4 Features 1, 9 and 10

A large area of light yellow/ grey cement plinth (1) measuring a maximum 4.8m NW-SE by 3.4m SW-NE and 0.15m deep abutted the NE side of 2, but was distinct from it. The plinth lay directly over mid brown sandy soil. The level surface showed traces of degradation, but could originally have been smooth rather than textured. There was a 2m gap containing topsoil between 1 and the NE perimeter wall which could indicate that it was a later modification to the structure (Illus 8). However, examination of the second edition OS map shows that the building may have had 2 phases of construction; the first an early 19th century structure incorporating part of the original NE perimeter wall as a gable and a second phase built on the NW side, slightly shorter, with a NE gable separate from the perimeter wall. Therefore 1 could be part of this second phase of construction. The NE gable of the second phase of construction may have been lost during subsequent modification of the perimeter wall.



Illus 8 Outline of the building from above with the space between the NE perimeter wall and 1 visible (top right) as a darker band beyond the lighter yellow / grey of 1. The red/ orange patch of 9 can be seen middle right: facing N

An area of red/ orange plaster floor (9) (Illus 9) 1.2m x 1.4m (max) measuring 0.02m deep was located to the SE half of the structure and was laid directly over soil. Feature 9 abutted wall 6, but was heavily degraded therefore it was not possible to establish its relationship to feature 1.



Illus 9 Feature 9 facing NW

Feature 10 was a short section of stone pathway, 0.85m x 0.5m situated towards the NE end of the structure cutting through wall 6 (Illus 10). It comprised 3 cut red granite slabs and a single dark grey flagstone similar to that found adjacent to feature 3.



Illus 10 Feature 10 (top): facing NW

3.5 Feature 8

A band of dark grey granite cobbles surrounded the SW and SE walls of the structure abutting 5 and 6 extending 15m SW-NE by 6.8m NW-SE. It was composed of 4 rows of granite cobble of even size (0.28m x 0.16m x 0.13m deep) placed directly onto mid-brown sandy soil. At the SW corner the blocks were cut to form a mitred corner and on the NE they were staggered to follow the contour of the adjacent path (Illus 11).



Illus 11 SW corner of 8 facing NE (left) and NE corner of 8 facing NW (right)

The position of the granite blocks had been distorted by pressure of overlying demolition debris and machine disturbance. However, it was possible to discern they originally formed a shallow u-shaped gully to collect and drain water away from the building. A box drain was situated approximately midway along the SE cobbles (Illus 12) which would indicate water was channel towards it.



Illus 12 Granite cobbles (8) with box drain: facing NW

3.6 Tumble and Miscellaneous Elements

An area of tumbled demolition debris was found adjacent to 7. Though some of the stone components may have originated from 7 itself, a mid-grey granite finial (Illus 13) found within the spread, would originally have been positioned on a gable end. The styling of this feature- a round ball supported on a squared base- is similar to those which adorn the 19th century gate posts at the W end of the perimeter wall.



Illus 13 Recovered granite finial

A section of cast iron sewer pipe was recovered from the interior of the structure and was notable for having a u-bend silt trap (Illus 14).



Illus 14 Section of cast iron sewer pipe with u-bend silt trap

4 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief revealed the foundations of a 19th century building. Evidence of a possible laundry copper base, lead water pipes and cast iron sewer pipe validate the owners belief that this building was used as a laundry.

The area around the building has been subject to significant modification and excavation during the 19th and 20th centuries rendering the discovery of pre- 19th century development within the area improbable.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Alison Cameron for all her advice and assistance during the preparation of this DSR and to Claire Herbert and Bruce Mann of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for Aberdeenshire, Angus, Moray and Aberdeen City Councils. Thanks also to Alistair Aboyne for providing valuable background information regarding Aboyne Castle. Special thanks to Barry Taylor of AJS for his help during excavation and to machine operator Alan Alexander.

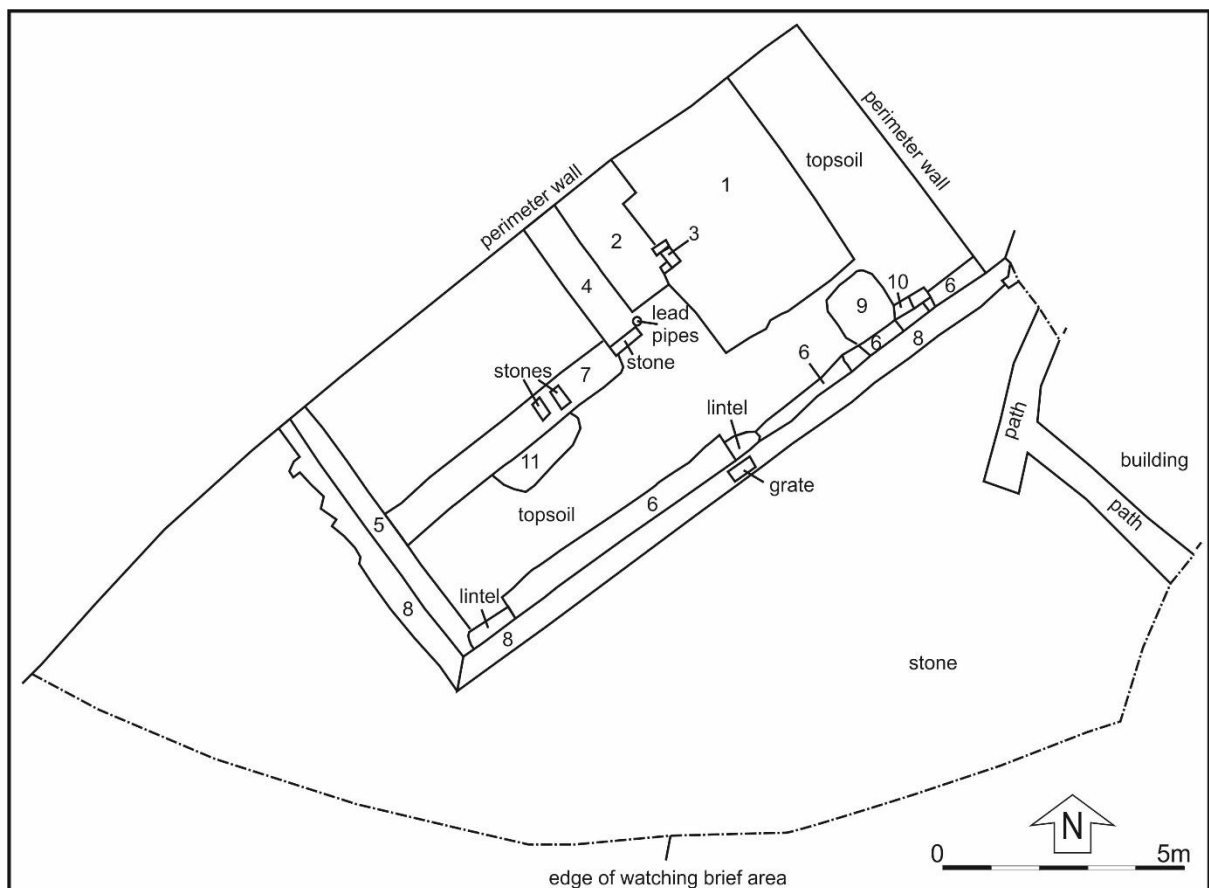
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APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context Number	Description
1	Cement / concrete surface
2	Rubble base of structure
3	Granite setting (3 cut stones) on rubble base 2
4	Rubble wall foundation -internal to structure
5	Rubble wall foundation of W end of structure
6	Rubble wall foundation of S side of structure
7	Robbed out rubble wall foundation- internal to structure
8	Granite cobble surround / gutter
9	Pink / orange plaster surface
10	Granite slab path/ entrance
11	Masonry tumble including granite finial

APPENDIX 2 PLANS

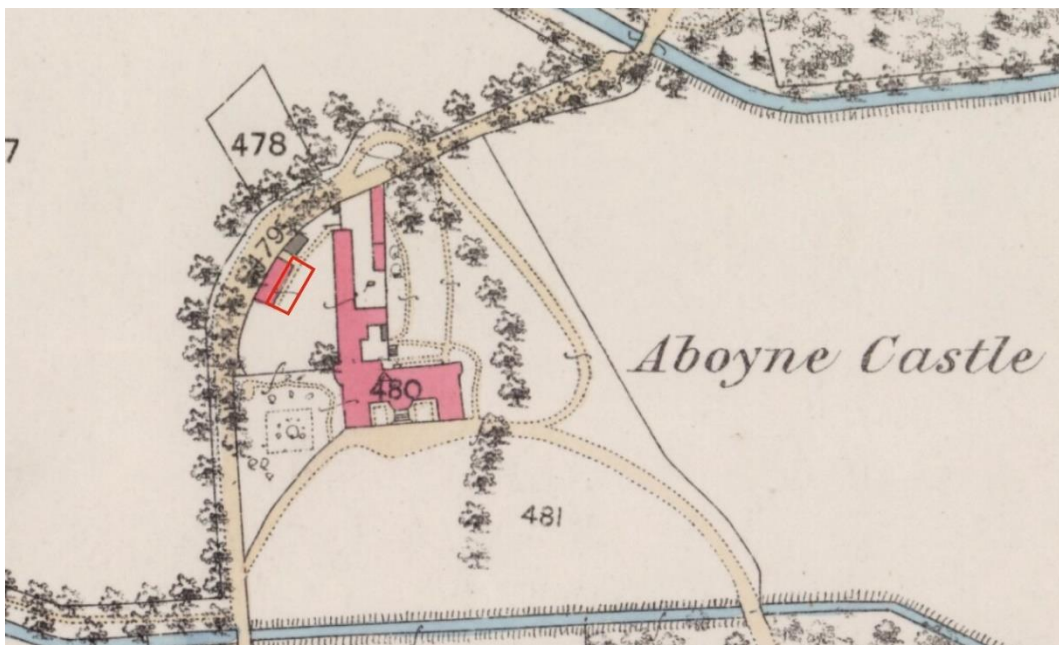


Illus 15 Plan 1

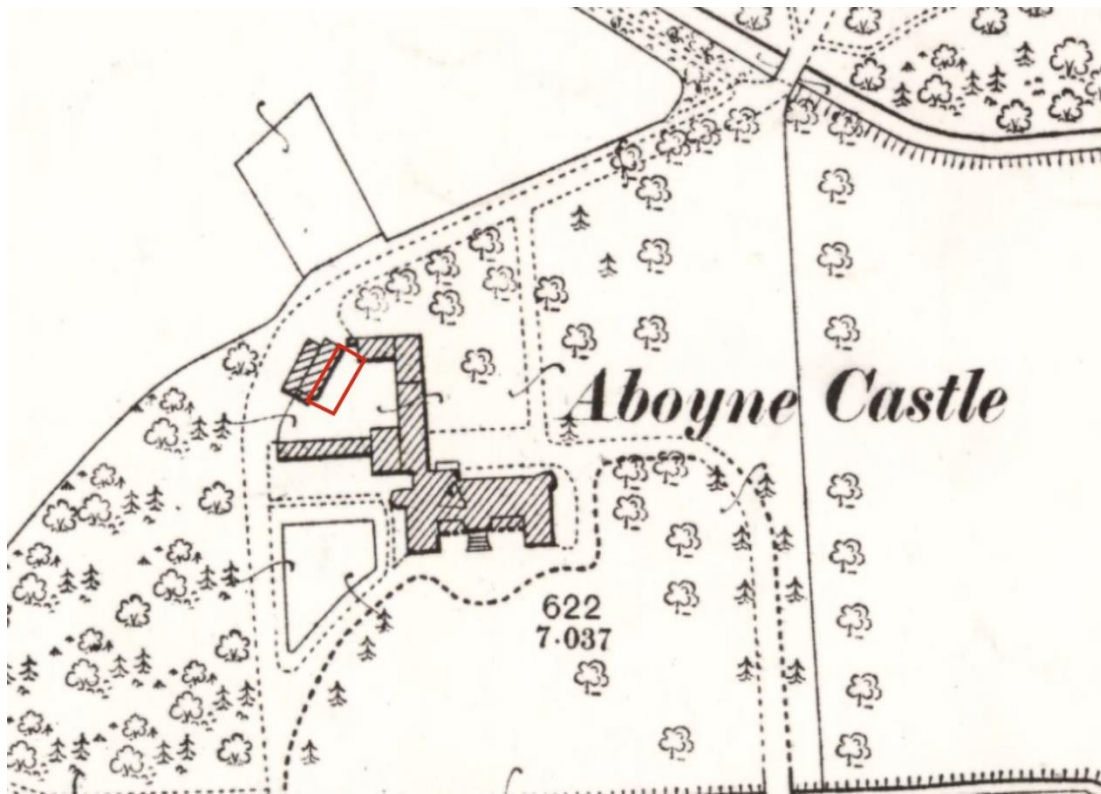
APPENDIX 3 MAPS



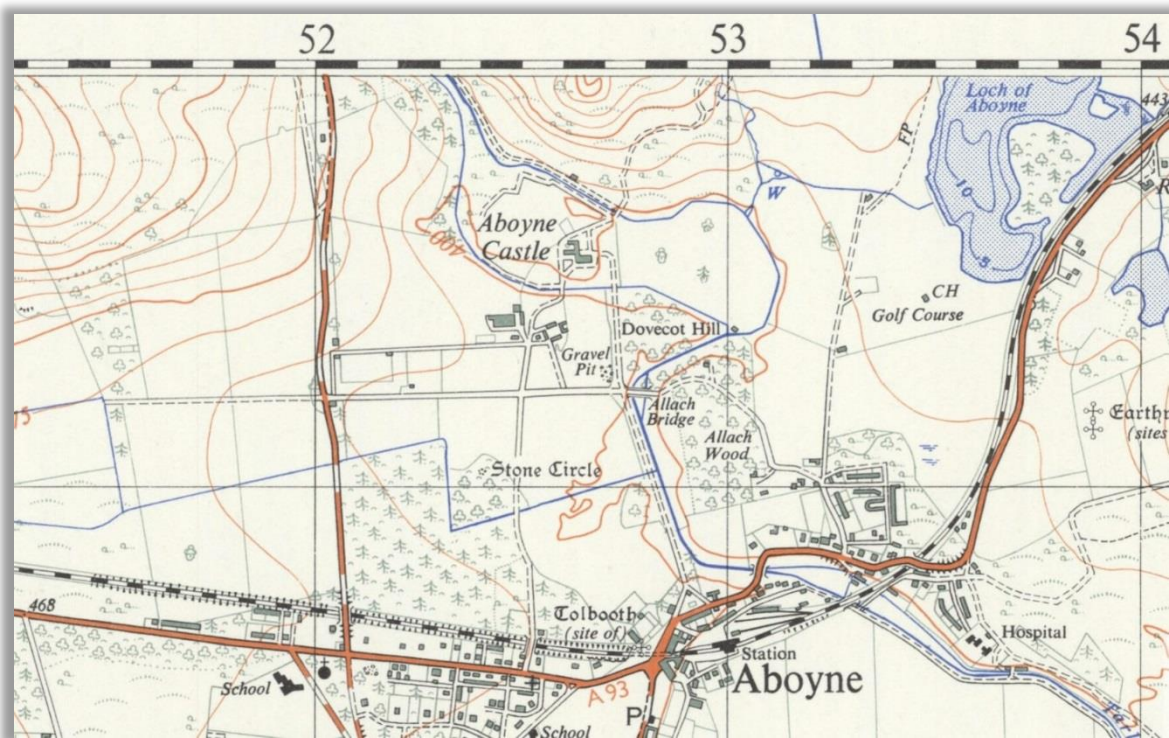
Illus 16 Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-55



Illus 17 First Edition OS map of Aboyne Castle showing proposed garage development site in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeen Sheet LXXXII.14 (Aboyne and Glentanner) Survey date: 1867 Publication date: 1870



Illus 18 Second Edition OS map of Aboyne Castle showing proposed garage development site in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeenshire O82.14 (includes: Aboyne and Glen Tanar; Birse) Publication date: 1900 Revised: 1899



Illus 19 Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map of Aboyne Castle, Revised 1960, published 1961 (Crown copyright 1961).

APPENDIX 4 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph ID	Direction facing	Comments
DSC_5708	NNW	Site before stripping began
DSC_5709	NNW	Perimeter wall with evident differences in paintwork
DSC_5710	N	Modern granite block border edging
DSC_5711	N	Modern granite block border edging with perimeter wall
DSC_5712	NW	Granite slab entrance/ pathway (10)
DSC_5713	NW	Granite slab entrance / pathway (10)
DSC_5714	NW	Rubble floor base (2) with granite setting (3)
DSC_5715	SW	Rubble floor base (2) with granite setting (3)
DSC_5716	NE	Rubble floor base (2) with granite setting (3)
DSC_5717	NE	Rubble floor base (2) with granite setting (3)
DSC_5718	SW	Lead pipes protruding adjacent to rubble floor (2)
DSC_5719	NW	Lead pipes protruding adjacent to rubble floor (2)
DSC_5720	NW	Rubble wall base (4), lead pipes, rubble floor (2) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5721	NE	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5722	NW	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5723	NW	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5724	NW	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5725	SW	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5726	SW	Rubble wall base (4), rubble floor (2), granite setting (3) and cement surface (1)
DSC_5727	NE	Rubble wall base 4
DSC_5728	N	Rubble wall base with features 2 and 3
DSC_5729	N	Granite cobble surround (8) with features 2 and 3
DSC_5730	NE	Mitred corner of granite cobble surround (8)
DSC_5731	NW	Mitred corner of granite cobble surround (8)
DSC_5732	NNE	Mitred corner of granite cobble surround (8) with rubble wall foundations 5 and 6- close up
DSC_5733	NNE	Mitred corner of granite cobble surround (8) with rubble wall foundations 5 and 6
DSC_5734	NW	Mitred corner of granite cobble surround (8) with rubble wall foundations 5 and 6
DSC_5735	N	Whole structure within perimeter wall
DSC_5736	N	Whole structure within perimeter wall photographed from above
DSC_5737	N	Zoom in on main structures from above
DSC_5738	N	Whole structure photographed from above
DSC_5739	NW	Drainage grate set into granite cobbles (8)
DSC_5740	NW	Drainage pipes set into granite cobbles (8) adjacent eastern lintel
DSC_5741	NW	Drainage pipes set into granite cobbles (8) adjacent to plaster floor (9)
DSC_5742	NW	Granite slab entrance (10) at eastern end of structure

DSC_5743	NW	Eastern terminus of granite cobbles (8)
DSC_5744	NE	Robbed out wall base (7) with tumble (11)
DSC_5745	NE	Whole structure from ground level
DSC_5746	NW	Rubble wall base (5) with rubble floor (2) and granite setting (3)
DSC_5747	SW	Rubble wall base (5) with rubble floor (2) and granite setting (3)
DSC_5748	W	Looking across structure to perimeter wall showing position relative to gateway
DSC_5749	SE	Ornamental finial within tumble (11)
DSC_5751	n/a	Drain box
DSC_5752	n/a	Drain box with pipe section
DSC_5754	n/a	Cast iron drainage pipe with silt trap
DSC_5755	n/a	Cast iron drainage pipe with silt trap
DSC_5756	n/a	Cast iron drainage pipe with silt trap
DSC_5757	n/a	Excavated finial
DSC_5758	n/a	Excavated finial



