

**8 Canal Street, Aberdeen, AB24 3ET
Data Structure Report (DSR)**



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Cover: excavating the trench; facing W

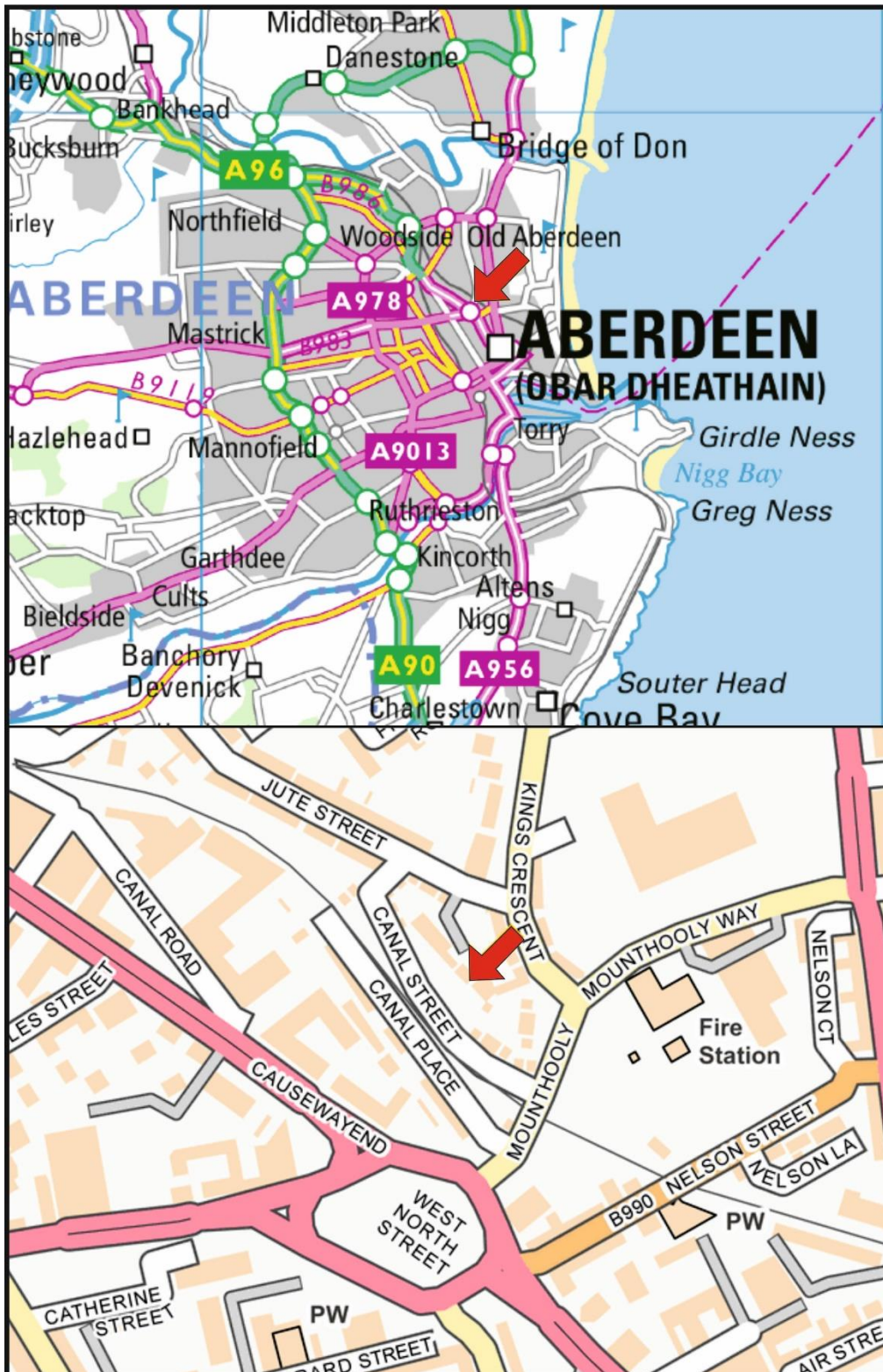
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SUMMARY

Workmen digging for a small toilet extension uncovered human bones and reported them to the police. After discussion the bones were recorded as archaeological and were released to the current author. An excavation was carried out on 23 November 2018 and the trench was fully excavated and the soil previously removed from the trench was sifted. A small number of other human bones were recovered as well as pottery, mammal bone and building materials. The bones appear to have been brought into the site in soil used to level up the site, possibly when the house was built in the early to mid 19th century. Radiocarbon dates and a report on the bones may help to determine where they originated.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located on the N side of Canal St in a small yard at the rear of the property and the boundary wall with the car park at the rear of 15-25 Jute St. It is centred on NGR NJ 94037 07220, at 20-25m OD in the parish of Aberdeen.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service (who cover Aberdeen City) after human bones were recovered at the premises.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Aberdeen Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and Canmore (HES) were consulted online.

- 2.1 No human remains have been found in this area previously. On the E side of King's Crescent is the site of the former Leper Hospital (SMR NJ90NW0016). The hospital is first mentioned in a charter of 1363 however a charter of 1333 refers to a 'montem hospitalis' although this may be a reference to a different hospital. It may well be the case that the leper hospital pre dated 1363 by a number of years, as leprosy first came to Scotland following the Crusades in the 12th and 13th century. Given Aberdeen's flourishing port and harbour leprosy may well have been transmitted to Aberdeen fairly quickly. There are only a few clues as to the nature of the hospital building itself from the extant documents. It was in need of repair in 1574 when the Privy Council ordered the Burgh Council to repair the building and 'caus the said hous be theikkit [thatched].' Also, in 1574 it was noted that the timber work of the building had been stolen. A charter issued by James VI in 1591 makes it clear that the prevailing conditions were still poor, the lepers the charter noted 'lief verie miserable'. In 1604 the Burgh Council ordered that Helen Smyth be sent to the hospital and be given the keys of the building, possibly as a result of the repairs effected in the late sixteenth century. The next reference to a different building on the site is in 1519. In that year the Burgh Council ordered that a chapel dedicated to St Anne be erected. This was to be designed by Alexander Galloway, Rector of Kinkell. A distinguished canon and architect, he was partly responsible for the erection of the Bridge of Dee and the heraldic ceiling of St Machar's Cathedral. Little is known about this building, outside of the (above quoted) order for its erection. If built this would have been a significant local building. As late as 1574 the Privy Council noted that the leper hospital consisted of the hospital, buildings and yards. The other buildings referred to in both 1363 and 1574 may have had a variety of different uses. A number of stores or sheds may also have existed. Although a conjectural point it remains the case that any one who was sent there was entitled to take all of their moveable goods with them. Over the years this would result in an accumulation of goods. However by 1661 when Parson Gordon drew the first map of Aberdeen and wrote the accompanying Description of Both Touns he noted that the hospital was gone and few people remembered anything about it. Despite this the site was occupied by the lepers for the best part of three hundred years, probably more. This may well, especially in the earlier period, have been a dynamic site seeing a number of changes and a number of different buildings over time. Although leprosy begins to die out as a problem in seventeenth century many people who had diseases akin to leprosy would have been sent there. Also given that those with the disease were treated as unclean then it is reasonable to expect that the lepers disposed of their rubbish on their own site. This is probably the case for burials. Given three hundred years of occupation by lepers then a large amount of rubbish, detritus and a number of burials on this site may be expected (Aberdeen SMR online) (Cameron 1990, 17).
- 2.2 Archaeological work was carried out at the Former tram and bus depots, converted from earlier militia Barracks built in 1861 (NJ90NW0124) and used by the Aberdeenshire Volunteers, later taken over by the Aberdeen Corporation Tramways in 1914 (SMR NJ90NW1184). After reuse by the military during World War I, the premises were reconstructed by the transport department for use as a tram depot. There is documentary evidence of a leper hospital (NJ90NW0016) and chapel dedicated to St Ann (NJ90NW0046) in this area in the medieval period although its exact site is not known. The 19th century barracks was built on the northern half of the development site. A programme of archaeological works was carried out by CFA between August 2007 and July 2008 ahead of demolition and during redevelopment of the site. Building survey showed that the current depot

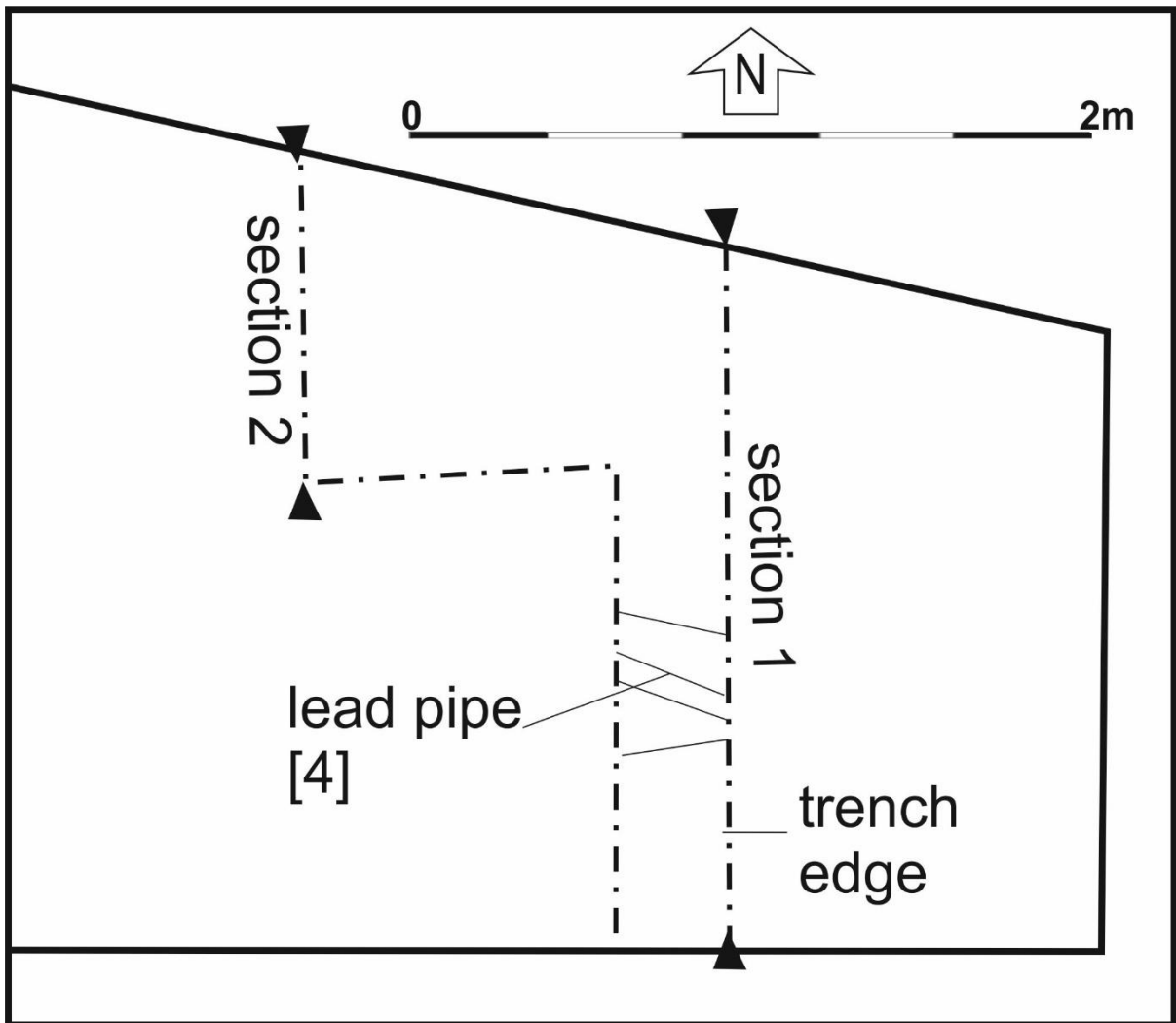
developed in three phases. The first was construction of three sides of a quadrangle and two buildings which were part of a militia barracks dating from 1862. The second phase is represented by a tram shed and conversion of the original buildings in 1918 when the site became a tram depot. The third phase dates to the 1950s when the complex was converted to a bus depot and extended with the addition of workshops and garages. The offices of the First Bus Depot appear to conform to the configuration of the main barrack buildings on the east side of the quadrangle. A watching brief during development recorded a relatively small number of archaeological features, all likely to be of 20th century date, and revealed that there was up to at least 4m of modern made ground, with extensive past disturbance from the insertion of services and remodelling of buildings. No features relating to the leper hospital were found. Evaluation covered 14% of the new office footprint and revealed a concrete floor and wall which were probably the remains of an open-ended tram shed. A deep soil deposit containing 19th century pottery and glass may have been deliberate infilling of the ground prior to construction of the barracks. Three footings of the interior walls of the former north wing of the barracks were also uncovered (Aberdeen SMR online) (Jones and Mitchell 2008, 12; Mitchell and Jones 2007, 9).

- 2.3 Six trenches were excavated by Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit (SMR NJ90NW1024) in 1990 ahead of road construction in the supposed area of the leper hospital (NJ90NW0016) prior to the construction of the Fire and Police stations on the E side of Mounthooly. Post-holes and stake-holes recorded in one trench may have been medieval features, but the depth of overburden (in excess of 3m) prohibited further excavation. Further work in 1994 revealed no evidence of the Leper Hospital.
- 2.4 The area now occupied by Canal Street was in an area over which King's College had feudal superiority after the Reformation (Morgan 1995, 65). Canal Street was laid out from 1808 (ibid) followed by other plots on the street in the next three decades. 8 Canal Street is likely to have been built in the early to mid 19th century.

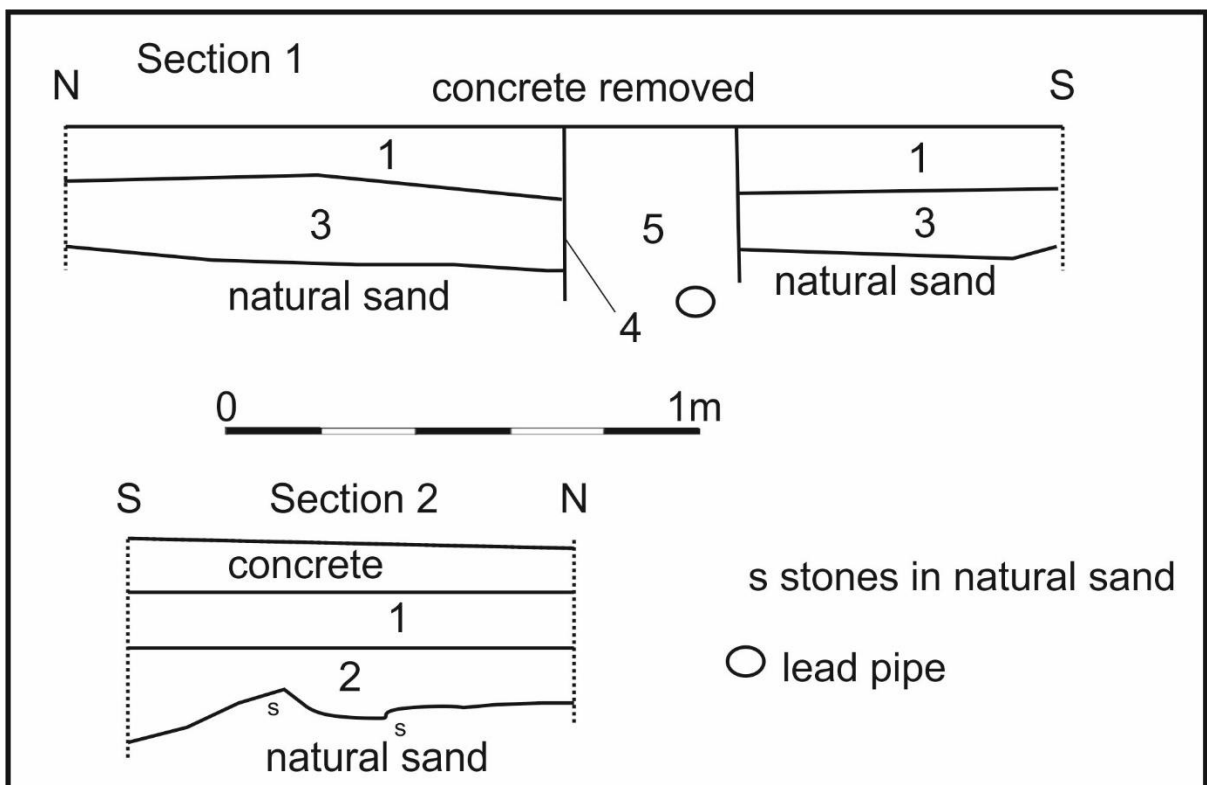
3 THE EXCAVATION

Workmen digging for a small toilet extension uncovered human bones and reported them to the police. After discussion with the current author, Bruce Mann, Jamie Grieve and Margaret Bruce, the bones were recorded as archaeological and were released by Leighanne Deboys to the current author. An excavation was carried out on 23 November 2018 and the trench was fully excavated and the soil previously removed from the trench was sifted. A small number of other human bones were recovered as well as pottery, mammal bone and building materials.

Concrete had covered the entire area and had been removed in the trench (Illus 2, 3). Under this was a layer of black garden (1) soil and under this in the W half of the trench was a grey clayey loam (2) and in the E half of the trench a layer of grey clayey loam mixed with natural clayey sand (3) and this appears to be where most of the bones came from. There was a lead pipe trench (4) cut into the natural through all contexts. The current owner reported there had been a sink and this lead pipe therefore probably related to this. The stratigraphy suggest that layers 2 and 3 pre-date this and are therefore 19th-century in date. They appear to have been laid to level up the garden area at the rear of this house.



Illus 2 Trench plan



Illus 3 Sections



Illus 4 The trench facing W. The lead pipe trench is bottom left.



Illus 5 The trench facing E, showing the layer 3 (at the base of the ranging rod) where most of the bones appear to have originated.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The bones appear to have been brought in in a mixed soil layer. Their origin is as yet unknown but radiocarbon dating and a report on the bones may help to determine where they originated.



Illus 6 One of the juvenile skulls with incisions

5 REFERENCES

Cameron, A. (1990) *'King's Crescent, leper hospital site'*, *Discovery Excav Scot*, 1990.

Jones and Mitchell, C and S. (2008) *'King Street Bus Depot, Aberdeen City (Aberdeen parish), desk-based assessment, watching brief, evaluation and standing building survey'*, *Discovery Excav Scot, New, vol. 9, 2008*. Cathedral Communications Limited, Wiltshire, England.

Mitchell and Jones, S and C. (2007) *'King Street Bus Station, Aberdeen (Aberdeen parish), desk-based assessment, Level 1 standing building survey'*, *Discovery Excav Scot, vol. 8, 2007*. Cathedral Communications Limited, Wiltshire, England.

Morgan, D (1995) *'Round About Mounthooly'*. Aberdeen: Denburn Books.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Leighanne Deboys, Margaret Bruce and Jamie Grieve for bringing the bones to our attention, to Liz Myerscough for her assistance on the excavation and to Bruce Mann, and Claire Herbert, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for funding this work and for their advice during this project.

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APPENDIX 1 CONTEXTS

Context no	Description
1	Black loam
2	Dark grey clay loam
3	Dark grey clay loam and light brown clayey sand
4	Lead pipe trench
5	Fill of lead pipe trench

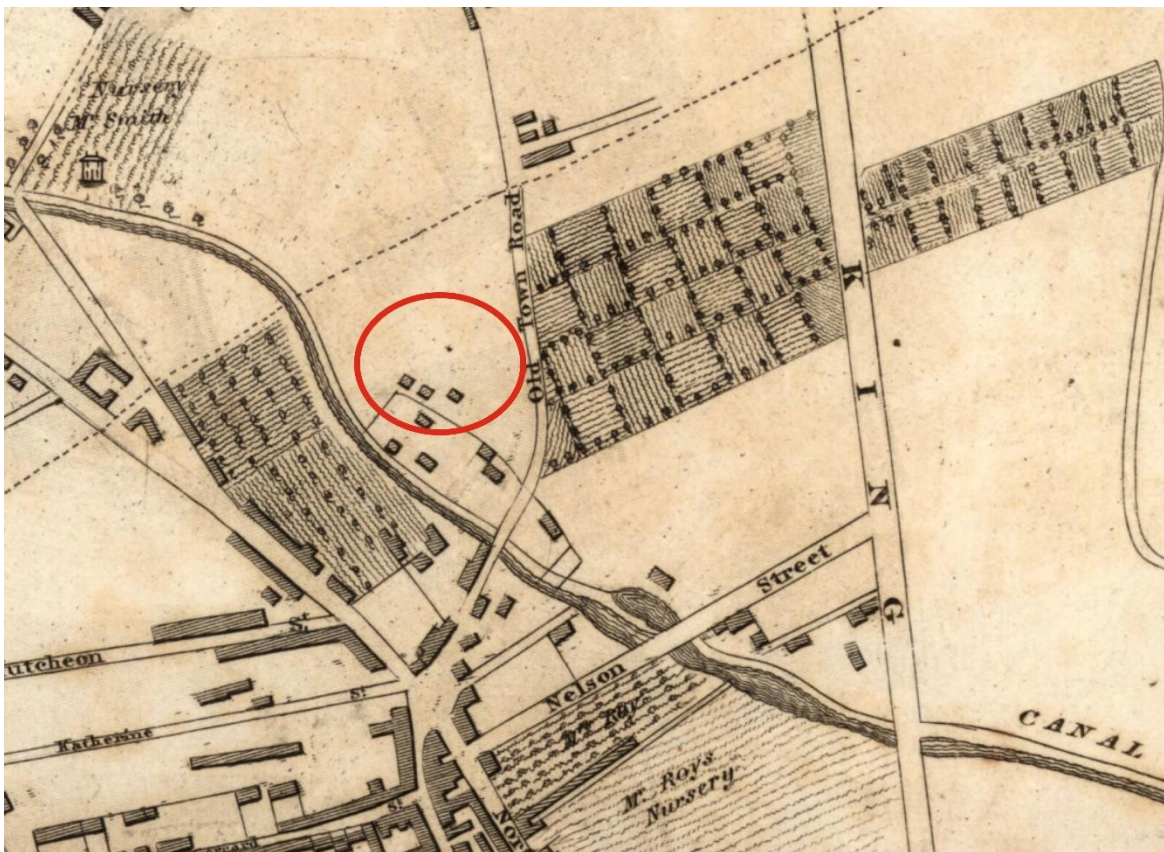
APPENDIX 2 MAPS



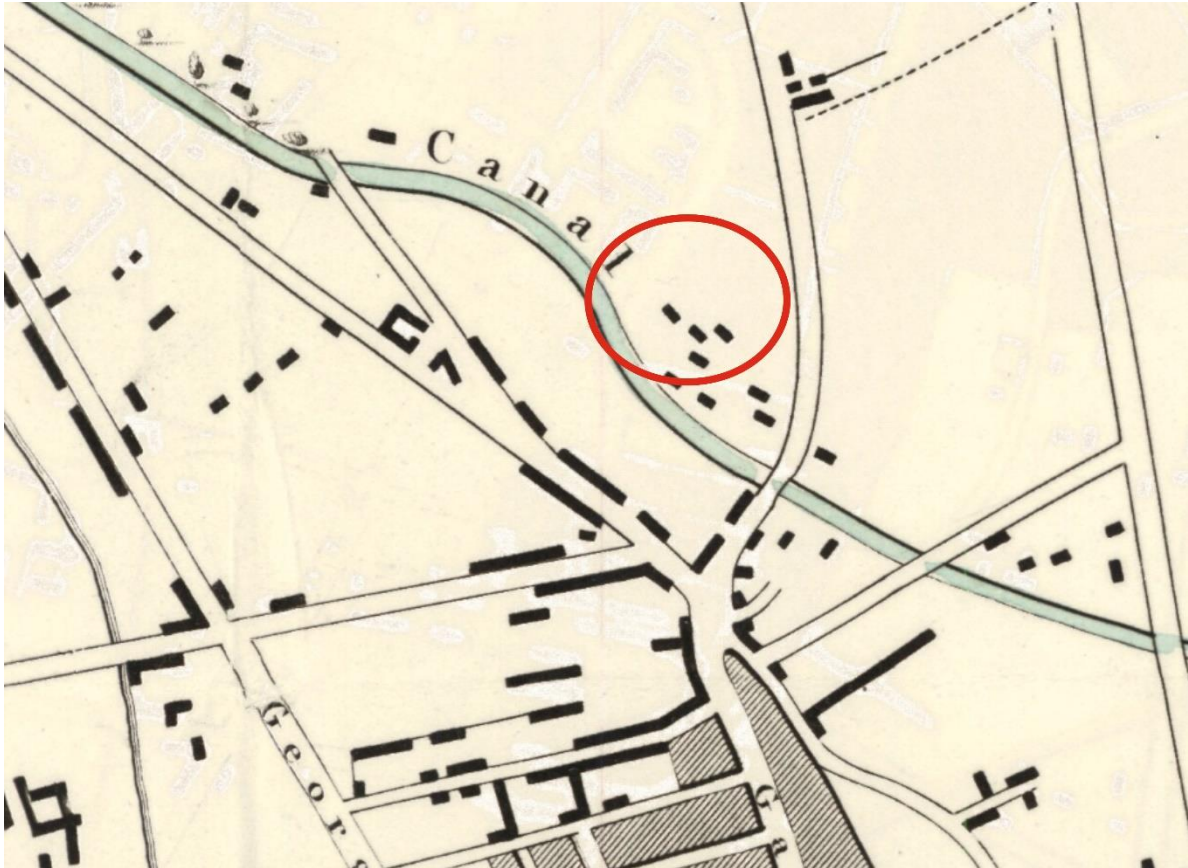
Illus 7 Gordon's map of 1661 *Abredoniae novae et veteris descriptio* = A description of new and of old Aberdeens, with the places nearest adjacent / auctore Jacobo Gordono showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 8 Roy's map of 1747-55 showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland)



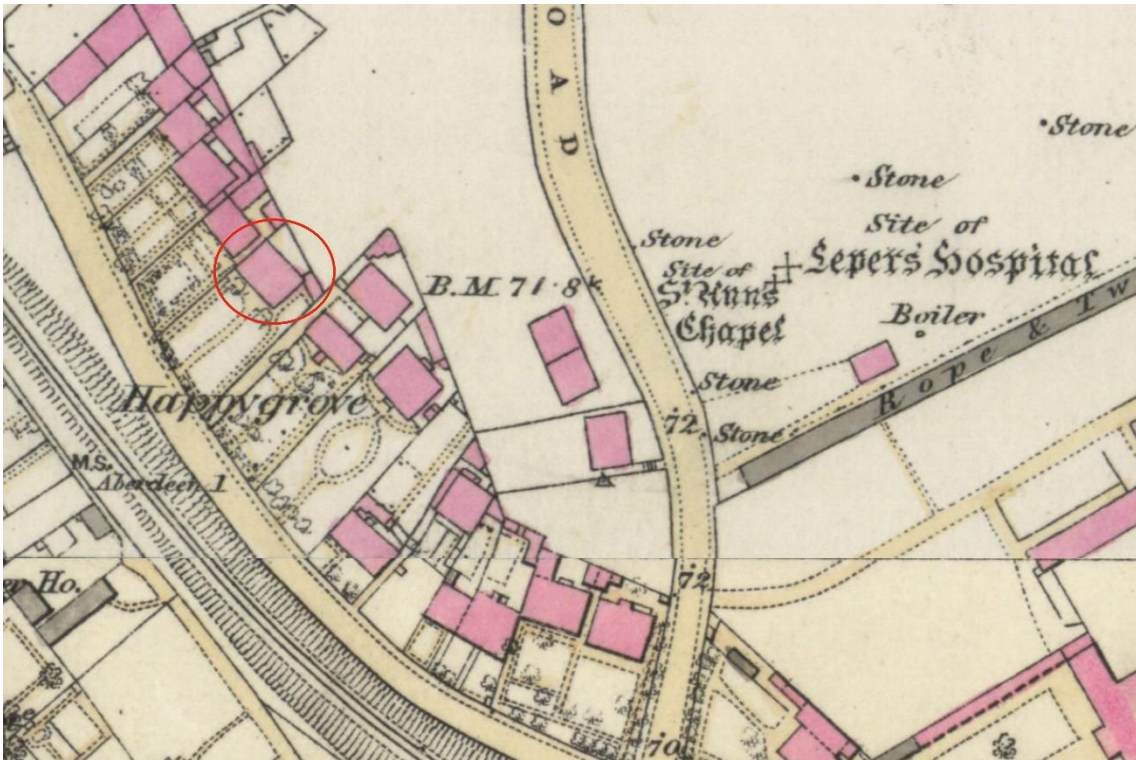
Illus 9 Wood's map of 1828 showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland).



Illus 10 House of Commons map of 1828 showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland).



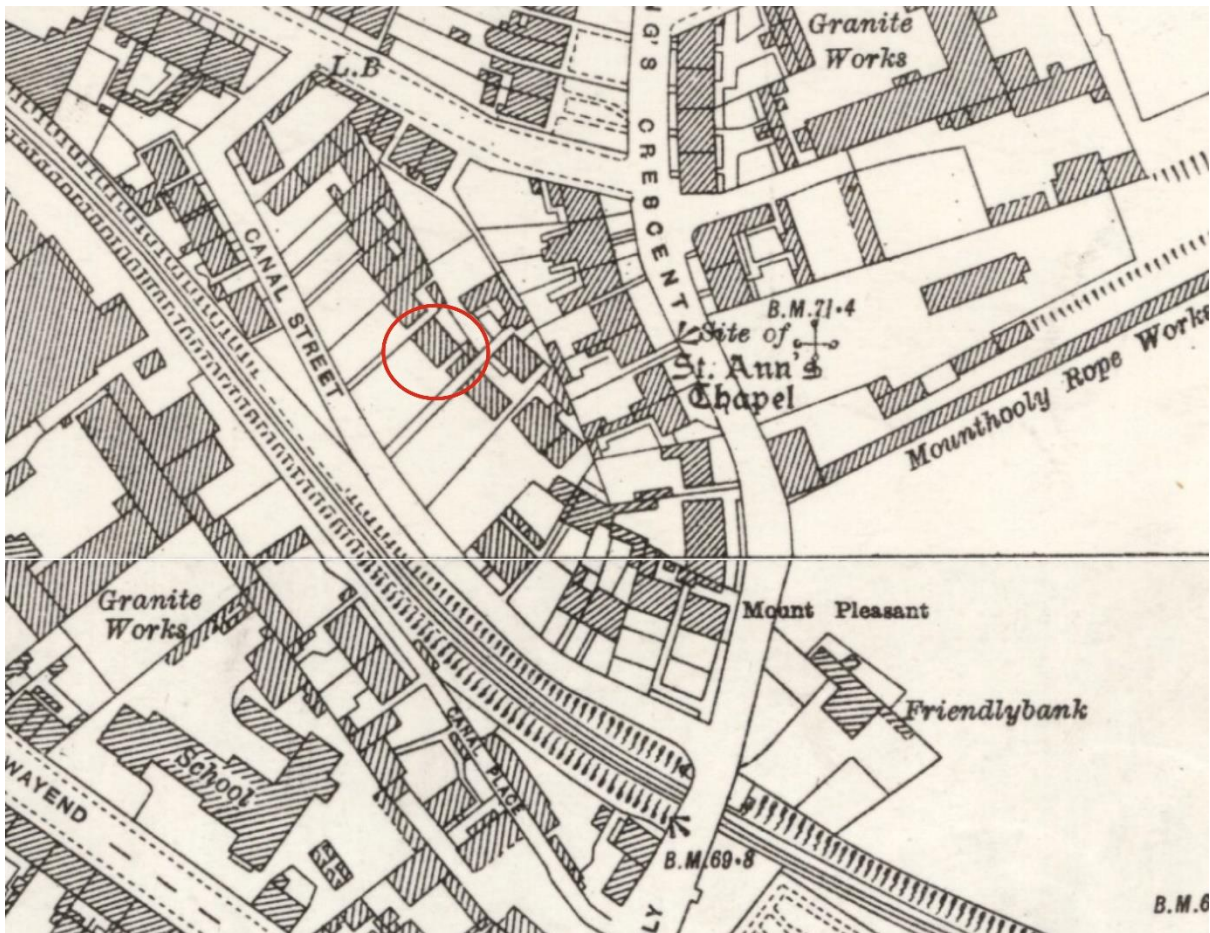
Illus 11 Gibb's map of 1862 showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 12 First Edition OS map showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeenshire LXXV.7/11 (Old Machar, Greyfriars, St Clements, East, West, North & South) Survey date: 1864 to 1867 Publication date: 1869



Illus 13 Second Edition OS map showing site outlined in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeenshire LXXV.7/11 (Aberdeen) Publication date: 1902 Revised: 1899 to 1900



Illus 14 Third Edition OS map showing site outlined in red (*copyright National Library of Scotland*) Aberdeenshire LXXV.7/11 (Aberdeen) Publication date: 1926 Revised: 1924 Levelled: 1899



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DSC_2938



DSC_2939



DSC_2940



DSC_2941



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DSC_2950



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DSC_2952



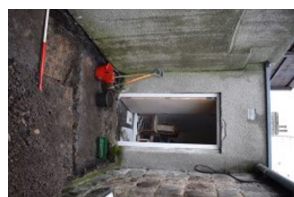
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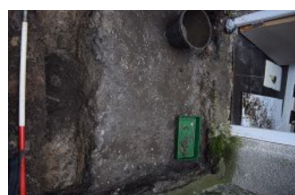
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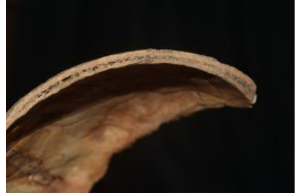
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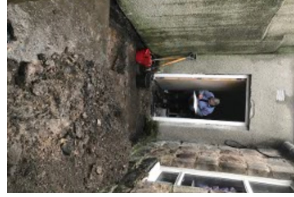
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