

**CONTAMINATED GROUND IN  
SERVICE TRENCHES  
CASTLE FRASER STABLES  
ABERDEENSHIRE**



**- Archaeological Watching Brief -**  
Carried out 4<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011  
by  
**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2011-22**

by  
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-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

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**1. Background**

- 1.1 A long-standing leakage of fuel oil at the Stables, Castle Fraser, Cluny, Aberdeenshire required the excavation of contaminated ground along and around existing service duct trenches. As a result an archaeological watching brief was carried out to record any archaeological features that might be revealed.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in the context of the possibility of features relating to either the existing 1795 Stable Range of building or to the earlier buildings of the Mains Farm which may be incorporated into, or may have been on the same footprint as the existing freestanding W range.
- 1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the work. The main field element was carried out on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2011 with a further attendance on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011 when more contaminated soil was removed.

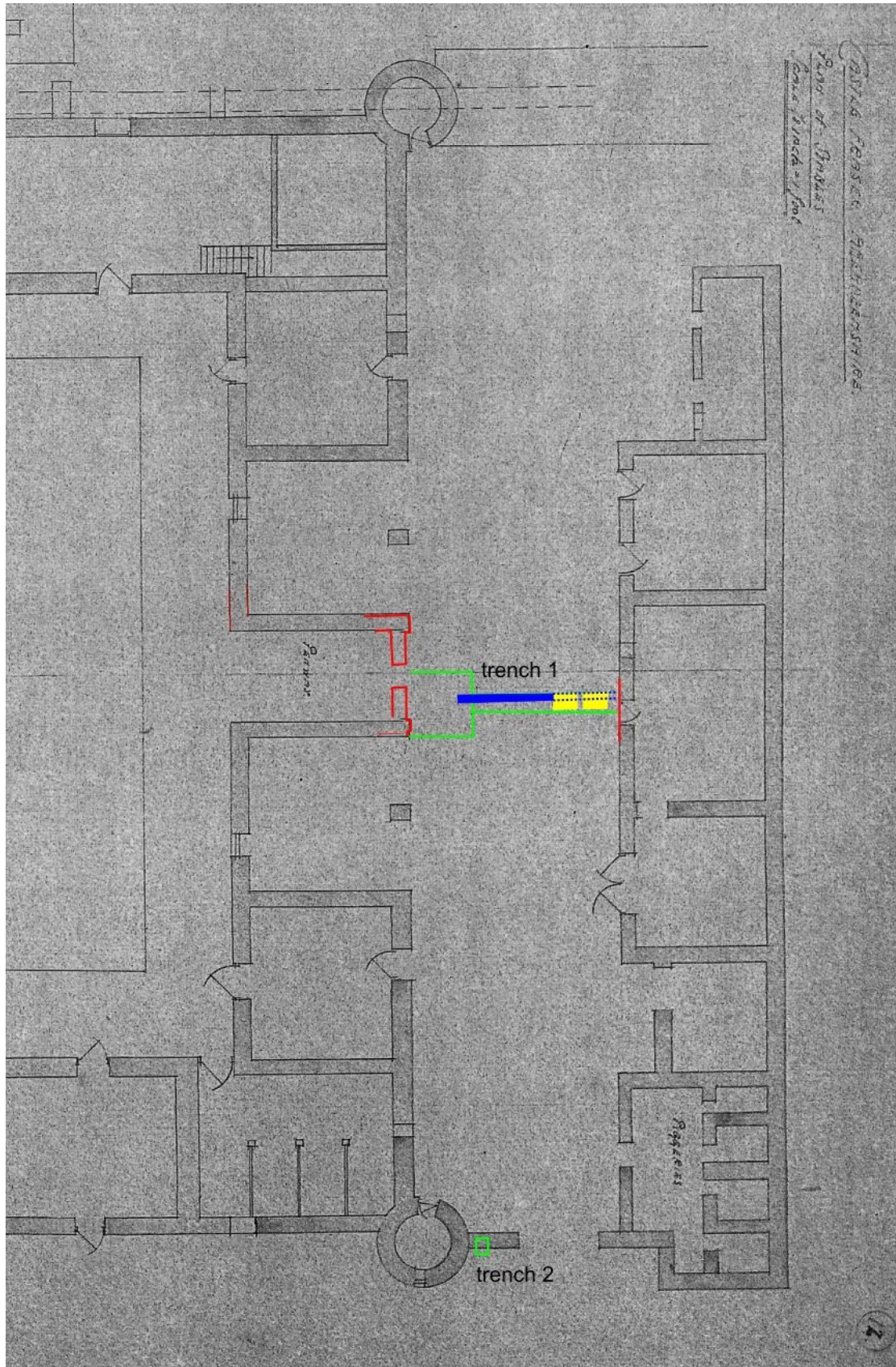
**2. The Site**

- 2.1 The site lies outside the 1795 Stable Range of building, between its W wall and the E wall of the freestanding W range.

Parish: Cluny NGR: NJ 7202 1245 NMRS ref: NJ71SW.6.01

**3 Methodology**

- 3.1 A trench was cut across the yard (Illus 1, 2) by a mini- digger with hand excavation around the service pipes. A second small trench was excavated at the N end of the yard beside the NW turret of the 1795 Stable Range. Both trenches were observed, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.



Illus 1 Detail of 1922 plan showing trenches (green), manholes (yellow) modern blockings (red) and stone drain (blue)



**Illus 2 Location of site, looking S with the W exterior wall of the Stable Range of building to LHS and the freestanding W range to the RHS**

#### **4. The Results**

##### *Trench 1 (Tr1)*

Trench 1 was a rectangular area 2.65m E/W and 1.75m N/S with a narrower extension originally c 500mm wide and later widened to almost 1m, extending E/W across the yard to the wall of the W range of building.

As the service pipes and duct were exposed it became clear that they had been built over and partially destroying an E/W stone drain. The drain was c 200mm wide and 200mm deep internally with stone sides and caps set in a cut dug into the natural compact clean hard natural glacial deposits. The E end of the drain and its relationship with the W range of the main stable block had been cut away by a N/S sewer pipe. The W end of the drain and its relationship with the freestanding W building had been cut by a clay drain and other services at a point c 2.5m from the wall of the building. About 3m of the drain was exposed, mostly in the S section of the trench, it ran E/W, draining down towards the E.

##### *Interpretation*

Although no direct relationships survived with the standing buildings, some deduction may be made from its line. If the line of the drain was continued, the W end would have extended to the S side of the blocked doorway in the freestanding W building (illus 5) and the E end would have run through the now blocked central archway in the W elevation of the 1795 Stable Block (illus 1).

It could be argued that the drain was associated with the earlier Mains steading that was either retained as, or replaced by, the freestanding W building. However its line, draining through the passageway into the central courtyard of the 1795 block (and possibly across and through the main E entry), strongly suggests that it was at least known of in 1795 and more likely constructed at that time to drain the yard between the two buildings.



**Illus 3 Trench 1. Section of stone drain shown below duct for service pipes**



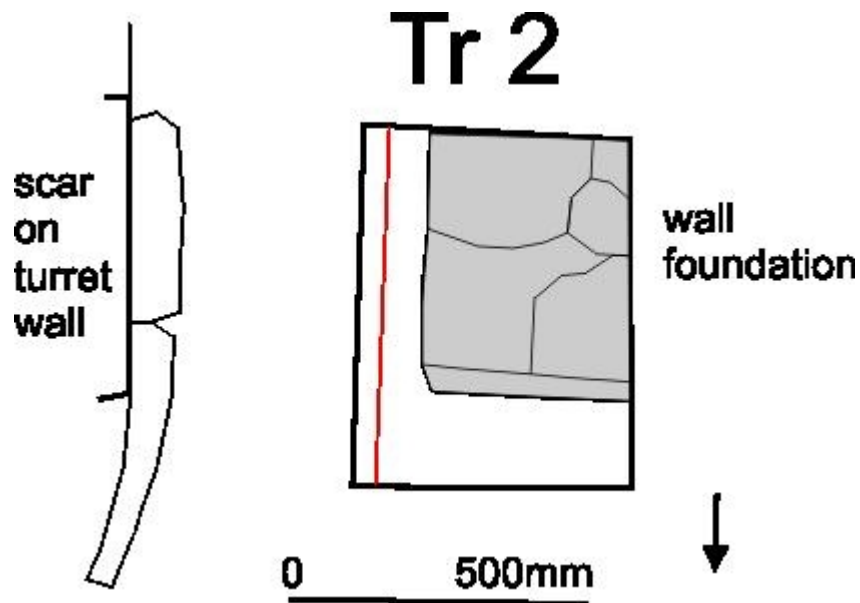
**Illus 4 Looking W along trench 1, showing stone drain on LHS of pipe duct**



**Illus 5 Looking W along trench 1, showing new service pipes and the stone drain (LHS) in relation to doorway (now window) in W building.**

*Trench 2 (Tr 2)*

Trench 2 was 0.50m (E/W) x 0.60m (N/S). The E side of the trench was c 0.40m from the wall face of the centre of the NW turret of the Stable Block.  
Depth: c 0.55m



**Illus 6 plan of Trench 2 (red is line of water pipe)**

Trench 2 was excavated to cut and close off a water pipe into the nearby turret. A mortared wall foundation was revealed c 250mm below the surface of the tarred yard, this foundation extended down to c 500mm below the surface where it appeared to be built onto very hard stoney natural glacial deposits. The E side of the foundation had been cut by the now redundant water pipe. This foundation was in line with a vertical scar c 2.15m high and c 550mm wide on the W face of the turret.



**Illus 7 Wall foundation in trench 2**



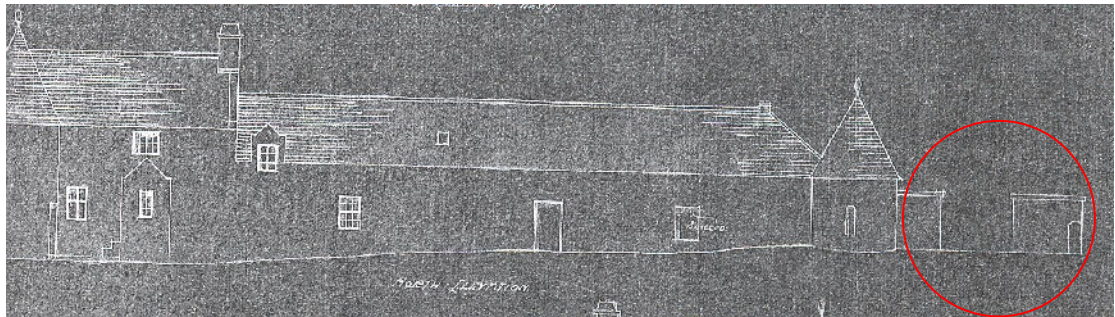
**Illus 8 Position of trench 2. Scar of wall visible on turret wall beside ranging rod.**

*Interpretation*

This appears to be part of the foundation of a wall across the N end of the yard between the 1795 Stable Block and the E wall of the freestanding W building. This wall is not shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25" OS map of 1864 (Aberdeen sheet LXIV.10. pub 1869). It is shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map of 1899 and in more detail on the estate plan entitled 'Proposed new layout for the stables' dated 1922, where it is shown c 7 feet (2.13m) high on either side of a central gap 8-9 feet (2.4- 2.7m) wide. It is not clear when the wall was



demolished but it appears to have been built between 1864 and 1899.



**Illus 9 Detail of 1922 plan: N elevation of stable block showing wall between it and the freestanding W building**

### 5. Interpretation summary

A drain was found in Trench 1, which, it is argued, may have been constructed c 1795. The foundation of a wall across the yard, built between 1864 and 1899 was found in Trench 2.

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue Castle Fraser Stables Drains	
Digital frame no	Content
1-4	31 <sup>st</sup> August. Looking W along trench 1. drain in LHS section
5-7	31 <sup>st</sup> August. Line of drain in relation to blocked door in freestanding W block
2450	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Looking W showing services
2451	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Looking S general view
2452-53	4 <sup>th</sup> August. General view services
2454-55	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Wall scar on NW turret and trench 2
2456-58	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Wall in trench 2
2459	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Trench 1 in relation to W wall of stable block
2466-79	4 <sup>th</sup> August. Trench 1 extension details of stone drain, looking W



