

# CHAPEL FARM BUCKSBURN ABERDEEN



**- Archaeological Watching Brief -**  
Carried out 22nd February 2012  
by  
**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2012-6**  
by  
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# CHAPEL FARM BUCKSBURN ABERDEEN

## **-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 A Planning Application (Ref No P090328) was granted permission in May 2009 for the erection of a house on a site at Chapel Farm, Bucksburn Aberdeen.

An archaeological condition (Condition 7) was applied to this application in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN 42).

The condition required that no development should take place before the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be agreed with Judith Stones, Archaeologist, Aberdeen City Council.

- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by William Lippe Architects Ltd on behalf of Mr Hamish McDonald to undertake the work.
- 1.3 Following discussion with Judith Stones it was determined that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained.
- 1.4 The field element of the work was carried out between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012.

### 2. Historical Background

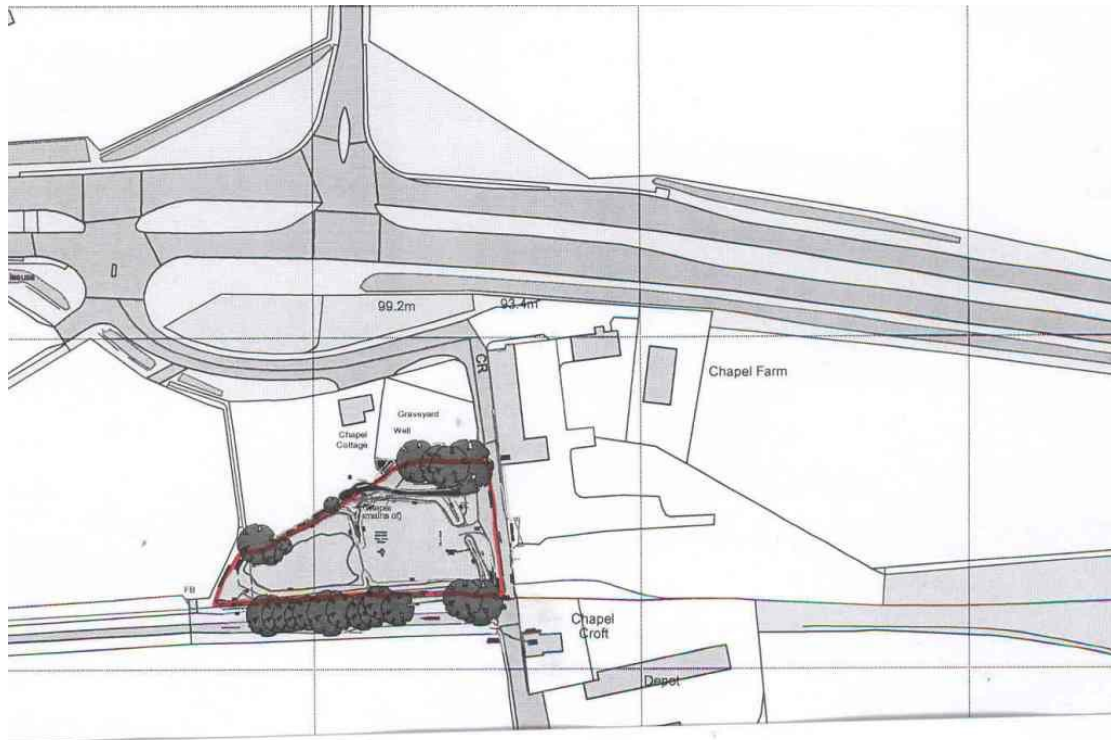
- 2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore and Pastmap.

The 1<sup>st</sup> OS 25" map of Aberdeen of 1865 (Aberdeen Sheet LXV.16(Combined) published 1869), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1899 (pub. 1901. Sheet 065.16), and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1923 (pub. 1925 Sheet 065.16) were consulted.

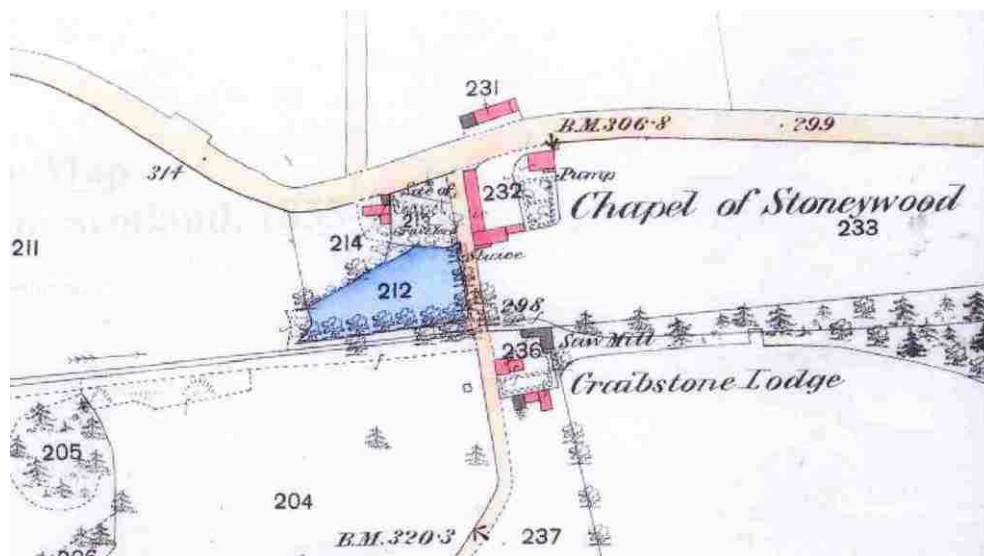
2.2 Directly to the N of the present site lies the graveyard around the ruins of the medieval St Mary's Chapel of Stoneywood, begun in 1367/8. Aberdeen SMR No: NJ81SE0008. RCAHMS No: NJ81SE10. St Mary's Well, located in the graveyard may also be of medieval date. SMR No: NJ81SE 0040. NMRS No: NJ81SE8.

The possibility of structures or finds associated with the chapel is the reason for the archaeological condition being imposed.

2.3 On the OS map of 1865 the whole of the almost triangular site is shown as a mill pond, servicing both a mill on the SW gable of the farm standing at Chapel of Stoneywood and a saw mill beside Craibstone Lodge to the SE of the pond, both on the opposite side of the road. A sluice is marked at the NE corner. The later maps show the same layout although a second sluice is marked at the SE corner.



**Illus 1** Location of site. Plan courtesy of William Lippe Architects Ltd. Site outline in red.



Illus 2 Detail of 1st OS map of 1865 showing mill pond. ([www.nls.ac.uk](http://www.nls.ac.uk))

2.4 One of the machine drivers working on the site recalled filling in the site with earth from the Dyce area some 30 years ago.

### 3. The Site

3.1 The development site is located on the W side of a minor road on the S side of the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness road.

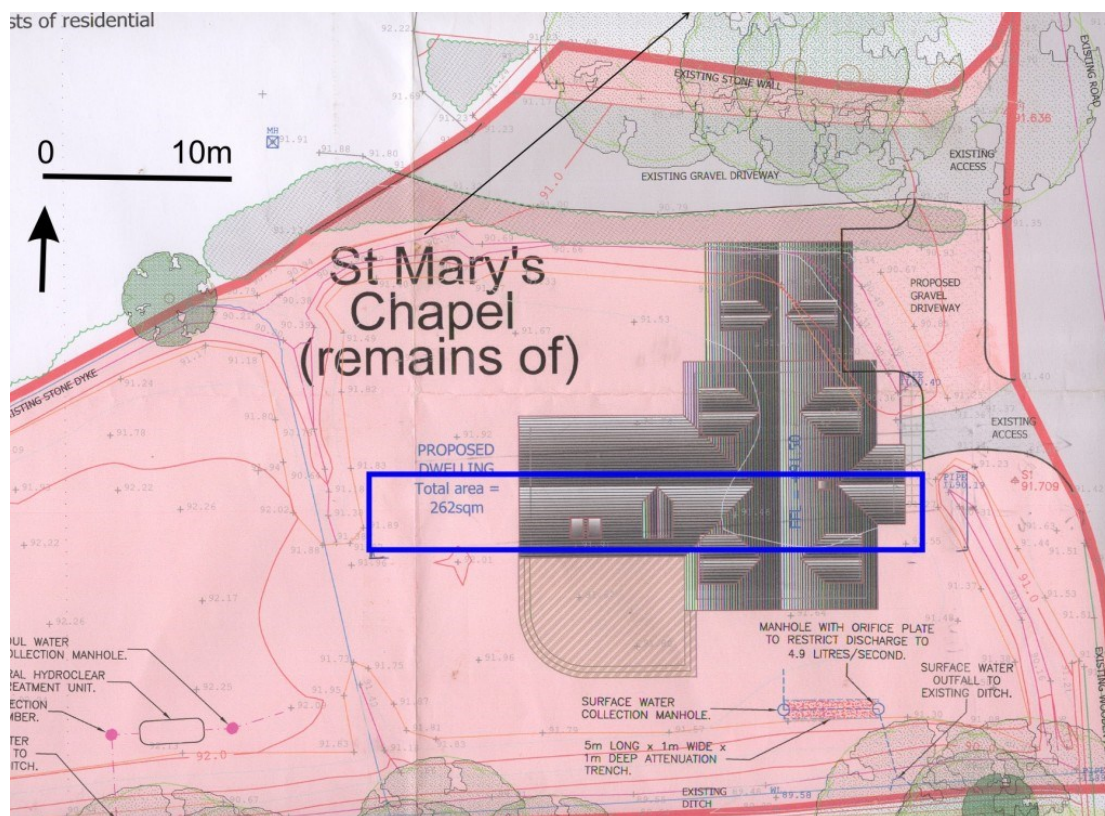
GPS: NJ86628, 11132 (centre of site).

Parish: Aberdeen

### 4. Methodology

4.1 On 10<sup>th</sup> February the ground was too waterlogged for soil stripping. Two drainage channels were excavated, linking with an existing drainage channel around the site.

4.2 On 22<sup>nd</sup> February a trench 30m long and 4m wide was excavated E-W across the site the long axis of the proposed house. It was excavated by a full slew machine using a toothed bucket to remove the upper level which included branches etc. Lower levels were excavated using a flat edged ditching bucket.



Illus 3 Detail of site showing excavated trench with blue outline

## 5. Results

Before excavation began a large pile of tree debris was removed. The trench was excavated to natural ground at a depth of 2.5m at the E end and c. 2m at the W end. There was a uniform thickness of c.1.20m depth of dumped gritty earth and stone with occasional brick and occasional pieces of non-organic rubbish (1). This is the material dumped on the site c. 30 years ago.

For c. 10m from the E end of the trench this overlay up to 0.80m of stable straw and some brushwood (2). This would appear to have been dumped shortly before the site was levelled as the straw had not rotted fully due to the anaerobic conditions.

Below this there was c. 0.50m of fine grey silt (3) which appeared to be slightly thicker at the E end. This can probably be interpreted as the silting accumulated at the base of the mill pond. No artefacts were observed.

Over most of the trench the natural was compact boulder clay with large boulders in it (4). This was patchily covered by a thin skim of brown peat (5), possibly accumulated when this natural hollow was waterlogged.

The drainage channels around the site showed the same stratigraphy with the dumping thinning slightly towards the burn.



Illus 4 Trench looking E towards road



Illus 5 S section E end. Darker silt at base. Layer numbers in red.

## 6. Discussion

This area is a distinct natural hollow beside the burn and to the S of the higher ridge where the chapel lies. The peat layer suggests it had naturally been waterlogged before it was made into a mill pond by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There is no evidence of any earlier activity.

In total some 40% of the footprint of the house has been observed to natural. Much of the N wing of the house footprint is on the line of an existing drainage channel and as a consequence has been scraped to natural in the past and has lying water. Given these conditions and the lack of archaeological evidence it was deemed that further archaeological observation was not required.

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

<b>Photographic catalogue</b>	
<b>Digital frame no</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>10<sup>th</sup> February</b>	
<b>1-6</b>	<b>Site from road 10<sup>th</sup> February</b>
<b>7-16</b>	<b>Drainage channels showing dumped material over natural and silt 10<sup>th</sup> February</b>
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> February</b>	
<b>1-8</b>	<b>Trench looking W</b>
<b>9-11</b>	<b>E end of trench</b>
<b>12-15</b>	<b>W end of trench</b>
<b>16-19</b>	<b>Trench looking E to road</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Detail of W end of trench</b>
<b>21-24</b>	<b>Looking along trench E to road</b>
<b>25-27</b>	<b>Detail W end section showing dumping (brick fragment) over silt</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>E end</b>
<b>29-30</b>	<b>Detail brushwood over silt and peat at c. 10m from E end</b>
<b>31-33</b>	<b>E end section detail</b>
<b>34-37</b>	<b>Backfilled</b>