

SEWER PIPE REPLACEMENT PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE



- Archaeological Watching Brief -
Carried out 27th November 2012
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2012- 33
by
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PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE SEWER REPLACEMENT PIPE

-Archaeological Watching Brief-

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1. Background

1.1 A replacement drainage pipe was required at Pitmedden House, Aberdeenshire. 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 that the line of the drainage pipe trench might have cut across foundations relating to the 17th century wings of the house that existed prior to the burning of the house in 1807 (MacGowan and Addyman, 2007).

It was also considered that knowledge of the soil and rubble in this area might help in assessing any geophysical survey work undertaken in the future.

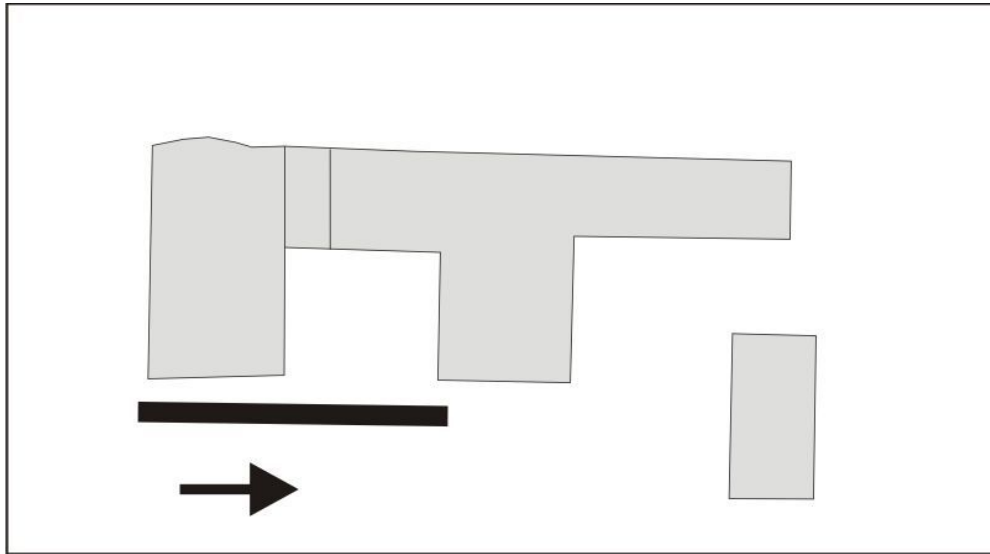
1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 27th November 2012.

2. The Site

2.1 The pipe trench lay across the open E side of the courtyard between the two wings of the house as it now stands (Illus 1, 2). It extended between two manholes and was a re-cutting of the original pipe trench. As the same line had been used for other services it is clear that this has been opened on more than one occasion.

Parish: Udney Parish NGR: NJ 8844 2805

NMRS No: NJ82NE 33



Illus 1 Location of pipe trench (trench line black)



Illus 2 Location of trench across courtyard looking W

3 Methodology

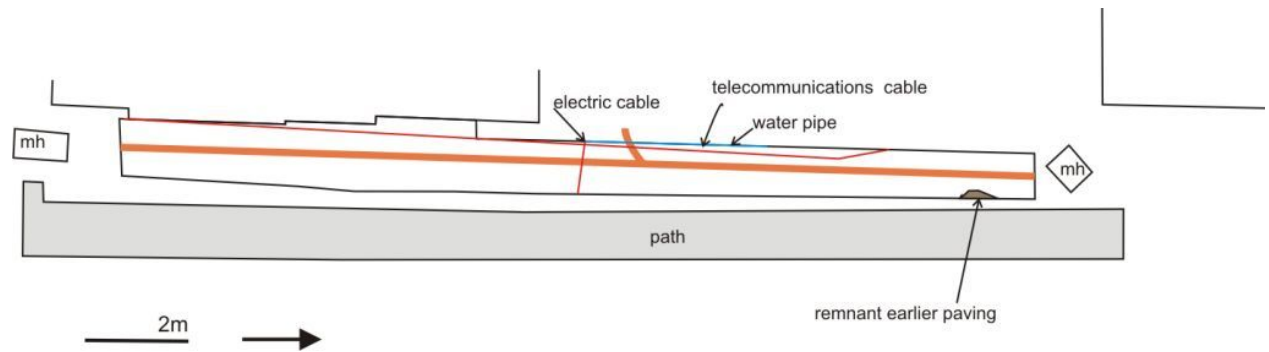
- 3.1 The drain pipe trench was dug by a mini- digger with a straight-edged bucket. The excavation of the trench was observed, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.



Illus 3 Looking S along trench

4. The Results

The trench extended between two manholes situated by the corners of the N and S wings. The trench had been cut out when the original pipe was laid and backfilled with the earth and stones that had been dug out. The W side of the trench was fill (the original trench was clearly wider). The E side however was cleaned to an undisturbed face and is drawn below (Illus 5).



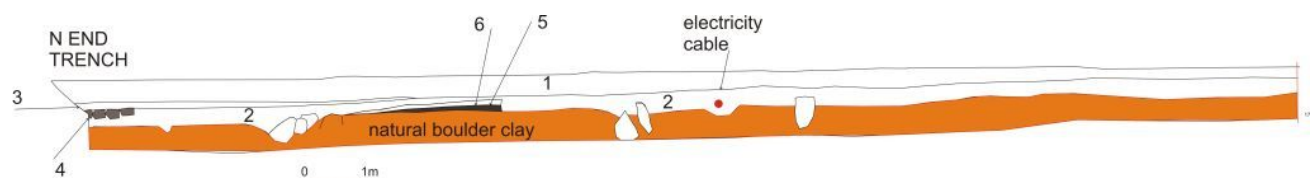
Illus 4 Plan of trench

Layers:

- 1 Make up for present surface. Gravels.
- 2 Grey gritty earth with small stones. No artifacts and little to indicate building rubble or burning.
- 3 Pink sand, quite hard surface, possibly a former path make up.
- 4 Small area of undisturbed flat angular stone setts. Path or yard surface.
- 5 Black and red burning with charcoal. Tapered out to S.
- 6 Pale yellow sand.

The natural comprises very hard compact bright yellow boulder clay with frequent large boulders in it. Some of these protruded above the top of the clay and gave the impression that the top of the natural may have been scarped.

Apart from the sewer pipe being replaced, a water pipe and electricity and telecommunications cables (as well as an old disused water pipe and a disused electricity cable) were identified (see plan Illus 4).



Illus 5 Section of E side of drain pipe trench



Illus 6 E face of N end of trench showing paving setts (Layer 4). Note orange = natural. The grey at base of trench is original backfill.



Illus 7 Boulders in natural

5. Discussion

There was no evidence of any foundations of the 17th century building. The top of natural boulder clay appeared to have been scarped or levelled to some extent and only in one small area was there some indication of burning that might be associated with the fire of 1807 (Illus 5: layer 5). The general layer

overlying natural appeared to be a levelling deposit of stony, gritty earth (2). This was noticeably free of any rubbish or obvious building debris and may even have been brought in from elsewhere. A short section of small, flat paving stones (rather than cobbles) at the N end of the trench appear to have been an earlier path or yard- probably post-dating the mid 19th century reconstruction (Illus 4; Illus 5: layer 4; Illus 6).

In regard to any possible geophysical survey it is worth noting the large boulders in the natural boulder clay (Illus 5; Illus 7). It is also worth noting that the original drain trench had been backfilled with similar boulders clearly dug out of the trench. These were not replaced.

6. References

MacGowan, P. and Addyman, T. 2007. Pitmedden Historic Landscape survey. National Trust for Scotland, unpublished report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record (on CD)

Photographic catalogue Pitmedden House drain 2012	
Digital frame no	Content
Pitmedden House nov 2012	
001	Layer 4 paving in E section at N end of pipe trench
003	Layer 4 paving in E section at N end of pipe trench
004	E section of pipe trench between c 1 and 3m from N end
006	General view looking W to indicate trench location
009	General view looking S to indicate trench location
011	E section between c 3-4m to indicate boulders in natural
012	Detail of boulders in natural
014	E section at approx 8m
017	Disturbed ground below N window in E wall of S wing
020	Detail boulders in natural
021	Detail boulders in natural