

# LEITH HALL COURTYARD KENNETHMONT ABERDEENSHIRE



## - Archaeological Watching Brief - Carried out 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013 by Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



**Report No: MAS 2013-21**  
by  
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**-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

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**1. Background**

- 1.1 The need for a new alarm telephone line to be laid below ground at Leith Hall courtyard required that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the excavation of the cable trench.
- 1.2 Leith Hall is in Kennethmont parish, Aberdeenshire (NGR: NJ 5418 2979). It is a multi-phase building set around a courtyard. The north wing incorporates a tower-house, dated to c. 1650. The trench observed ran along the S and E side of the courtyard.
- 1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the watching brief on the works; the field element of which was carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

**2 Methodology**

- 2.1 The cable trench was excavated by hand and the position of services and other features were recorded.

**3. The Work**

- 3.1 Granite setts bordering the S and E sides of the courtyard were lifted by hand and carefully set aside so that they could be replaced on completion of the work. The setts extended out from the courtyard walls for c.460mm and were laid in rows of three. Their average size was 150mm wide x 75-80mm across x 145mm deep (Illus.1).



**Illus 1: Granite setts along the S side of the courtyard**

- 3.2 The setts were bedded in a mixture of dark brown soil and sand and had been lifted as the installation of modern services required. The trench for the new cable duct was c.500-600mm wide and c.500mm deep.



**Illus 2: Trench on S side after excavation**



- 3.3 At 1.04m E of the doorway in the SW corner of the S range a number of stones which may possibly be associated with the main wall projected some 100mm into the trench. The possible foundation was c.1m wide and was made up of three stones varying in width between 180mm and 420mm and did not extend to the N side of the trench [see No.1 on Site Plan, Illus.9].



**Illus 3: Wall foundation in SW end of trench**

- 3.4 At c.1.4m W of the E range a square stone and red brick drain was located. Projecting into the trench c.500mm from the S wall the drain was 300mm wide and c.260mm deep on the W side. It was filled with pea gravel to a depth of c.300mm but the bottom was not reached [see No.2 on Site Plan, Illus.9].



**Illus 4: Stone and brick drain at E end of trench**

- 3.5 At the E end of the trench two further services were located; being a 'V' jointed sewer or waste water pipe and two lead water pipe running SE to NW across the trench [see No 2 on Site Plan, Illus.9]



**Illus 5: E end of trench showing the pipes and water pipes**

- 3.6 The continuation of the cable trench running N-S across the E range of the courtyard was also heavily disturbed by services. In front of the Boiler Room door eight services were located. These consisted of three waste water pipes



and five smaller services placed above the water pipes. At this point the depth of the trench was deepened to 800mm to allow the new cable duct to pass below the existing services [see No.3 On Site Plan, Illus.9].



**Illus 6: Services in front of Boiler Room door**

- 3.7 Between 1.5m and 2m N of the Boiler Room door a further five services including power and old water pipes were located [see No.4 on Site Plan, Illus.8].

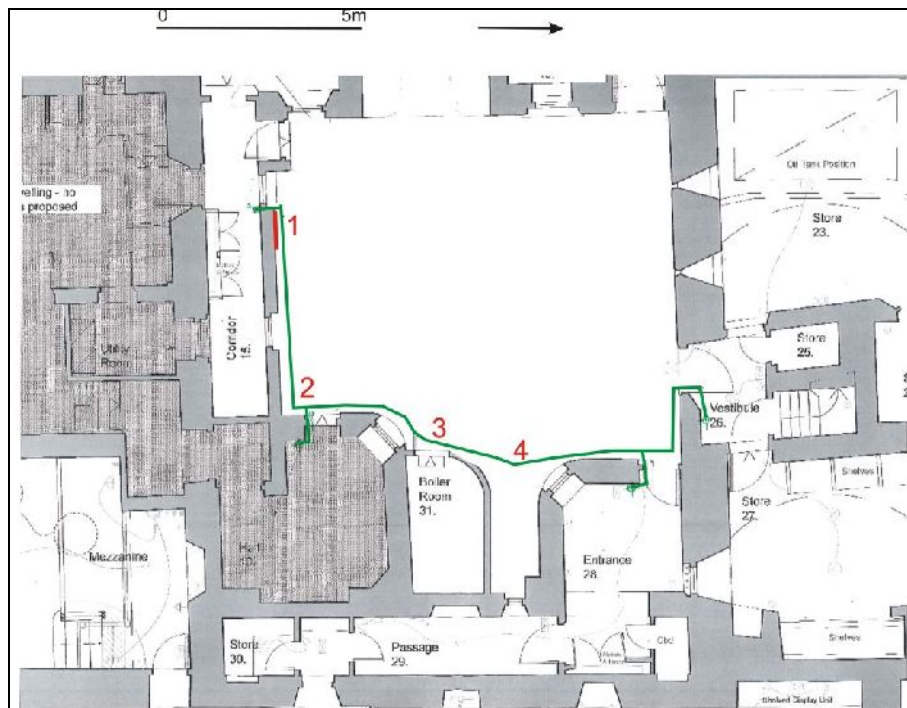


**Illus 7: Services N of the Boiler Room**

- 3.8 From the end of the services to the N wall of the courtyard and around the E side of the vestibule door the fill of the cable trench consisted of c.400mm of clean beige sand below the setts with no further disturbances.



Illus 8: N section of trench to vestibule door



Illus 9: Plan of Courtyard showing trench and features

#### 4. Results

- 4.1 With the exception of the possible wall foundation located the W end of the E-W trench no other structural evidence was present.

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue Leith Hall Courtyard	
Digital frame no	Content
1-10	Views of the courtyard interior prior to the lifting of the setts
11	View, looking E, of the cable trench along the S side.
12	Possible wall structure in W end of the S side
13-16	Services at Se corner of trench
17-22	Services in front of Boiler Room door
23	Cable trench at NE corner of courtyard, looking E
24	Cable trench at NE corner, looking NE
25	Cable trench leading to vestibule door, looking N
26-28	Services N of Boiler Room door, looking W and S