

**BALNAGASK MOTTE
BAXTER PLACE
ABERDEEN**



- Watching Brief -
Carried out 14th April 2014
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2014-4
by

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1. Background

1.1 An investigation for remedial works to the retaining wall at Balnagask Motte, Baxter Place, Aberdeen, by Housing and Environment, Aberdeen City Council, required that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the excavation of trial pits on the site.

1.2 The watching brief was necessary as the motte is a Scheduled Monument (Index 10403).

1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Aberdeen City Council to undertake the work, which was carried 14th April 2014.

2. THE SITE

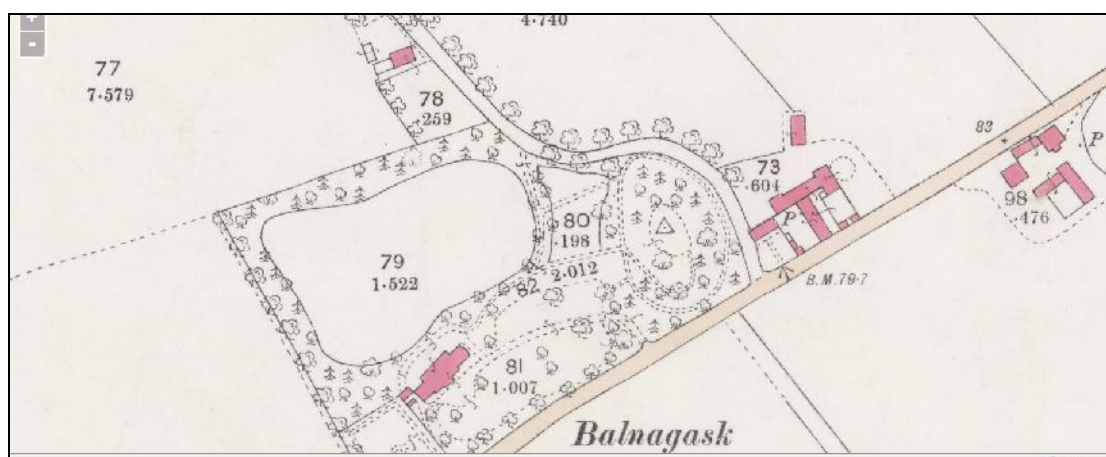
2.1 The site is located at Baxter Place, Torry, Aberdeen, in the former grounds of Balnagask House (demolished in the 1990's).

Parish: Aberdeen

NGR: NJ 9574 0511

NMRS No: NJ90NE 3

2.2 There is some doubt as to whether this large grass-grown mound is an actual motte or a natural knoll that has been adapted as a garden feature in the grounds of Balnagask House. The mound rises to c.8m above the surrounding ground and at its top is c.10m across. It appears on the 1st edition OS 6-inch map (Kincardineshire, Sheet iv.3, Survey date: 1865; Published 1868) as a mound, partly wooded with an Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar (Illus 1, below)



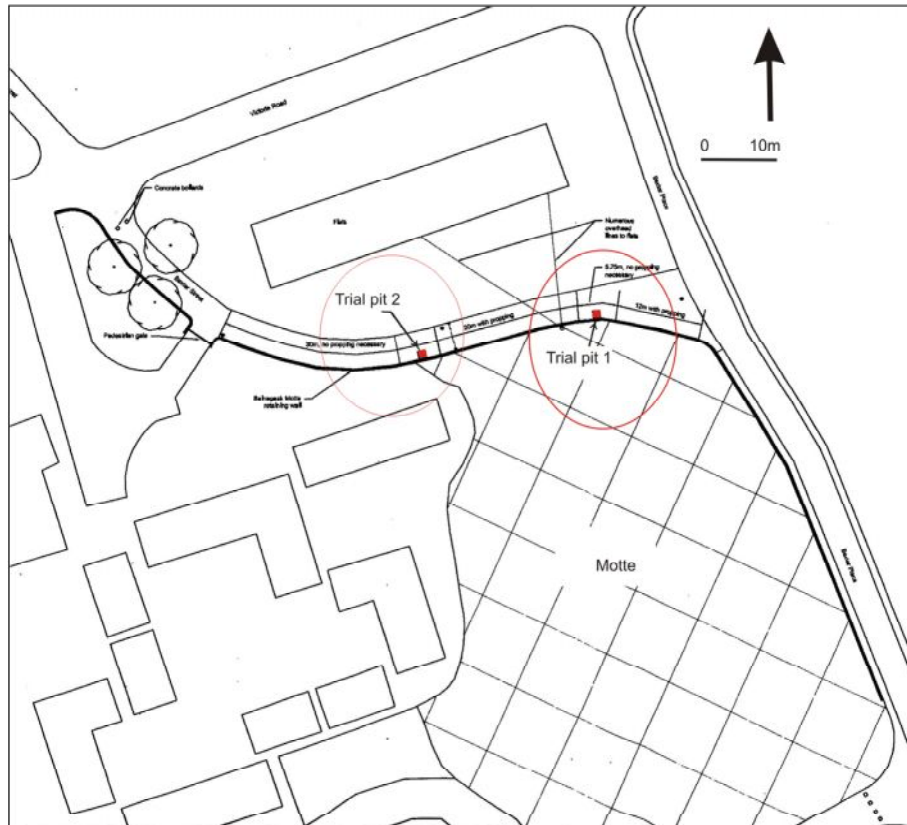
Illus 1: 1st edition OS 6-inch map (www.nls.ac.uk)

It also appears on the 2nd edition of the map (Aberdeenshire 1902, sheet lxxv.SE).

2.3 Recent research by Christopher Croly, Historian, Education, Culture and Sport, Aberdeen City Council revealed that the mound shows on a plan of 1777 which was drawn up as part of a legal dispute between the two landowners of the area, the Council and the Menzies of Pitfodels family. It appears on land owned by Robert Davidson but is not labelled in any way (see Illus.2, below).

natural clayey sand. The wall foundations only extended below ground to a depth of 80mm.

No archaeological features or finds were evident.



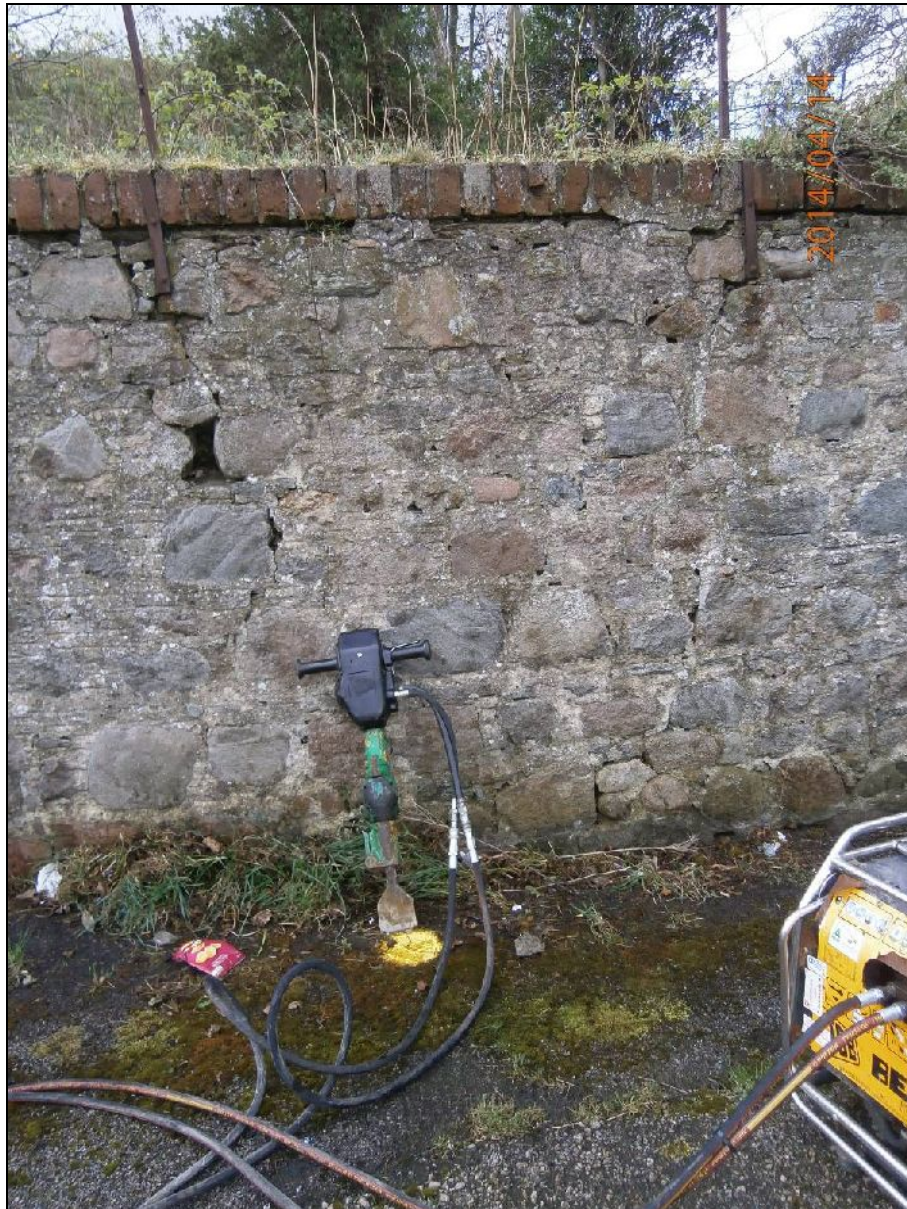
Illus 3: Plan of site, showing location of Trial pits 1 and 2

3.5 It is intended to support the existing retaining wall with concrete supporting blocks, pending a more long term solution in the future.

4. Results

4.1 The excavated Trial Pits were very limited in scale and showed no surviving early deposits.

4.2 No archaeological features or finds were observed.



Illus 4: Area of Trial Pit 1, pre-excitation, looking S



Illus 5: Trial Pit 1, looking S



Illus 6: Area of Trial Pit 2, pre-excitation, looking S



Illus 7: Trial Pit 2, looking S