

**ST DROSTAN'S HOME
OLD DEER
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Archaeological Evaluation
Carried out 18th February 2014
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2014-14
by
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-Archaeological Evaluation -

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1. Background

- 1.1 A Planning Application (Planning Ref: B/APP/2011/2807) for a housing development on the land at St. Drostan's Eventide Home, Russell Street, Old Deer, Aberdeenshire was granted planning permission.
An archaeological condition (No 7) was applied to this application in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP).
The condition required that no development should take place before an archaeological evaluation be carried out on previously undisturbed areas of the site.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by JKR Construction Ltd to carry out the work.
- 1.3 The evaluation was undertaken on 18th February 2014.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The site lies on the W side of Old Deer, between Russell Street and Abbey Street.
Parish: Old Deer.
Map ref: 375600, 822860 (approx centre of evaluation site).

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- 2.2 The site was the site of the former St Drostan's Home, which had been demolished prior to the evaluation.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The cultivated topsoil was removed by a full slew excavator with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. Any possible features were cleaned and excavated by hand.
- 3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper 120 GPS and Glonass.

4. Desktop Survey: Archaeological and historical background

4.1 Map evidence

25"/mile OS map 1870 (pub. 1873) (Aberdeen sheet xxi.4 (Old Deer)). Most of the site is shown as open ground. At the Abbey Street frontage, in the area of ornamental garden beside the road, around trenches 9 and 10, there were the four cottages of the Old Deer Poorhouse, built c.1851 and housing up to 22 men and women by 1904 (www.workhouses.org.uk).

25"/mile OS map 1899 (pub. 1902) (Aberdeenshire sheet 021.04). The Poorhouse is still shown. There is also an L-shaped building on the E end of the site, near trenches 1, 2 and 11.

4.2 Background

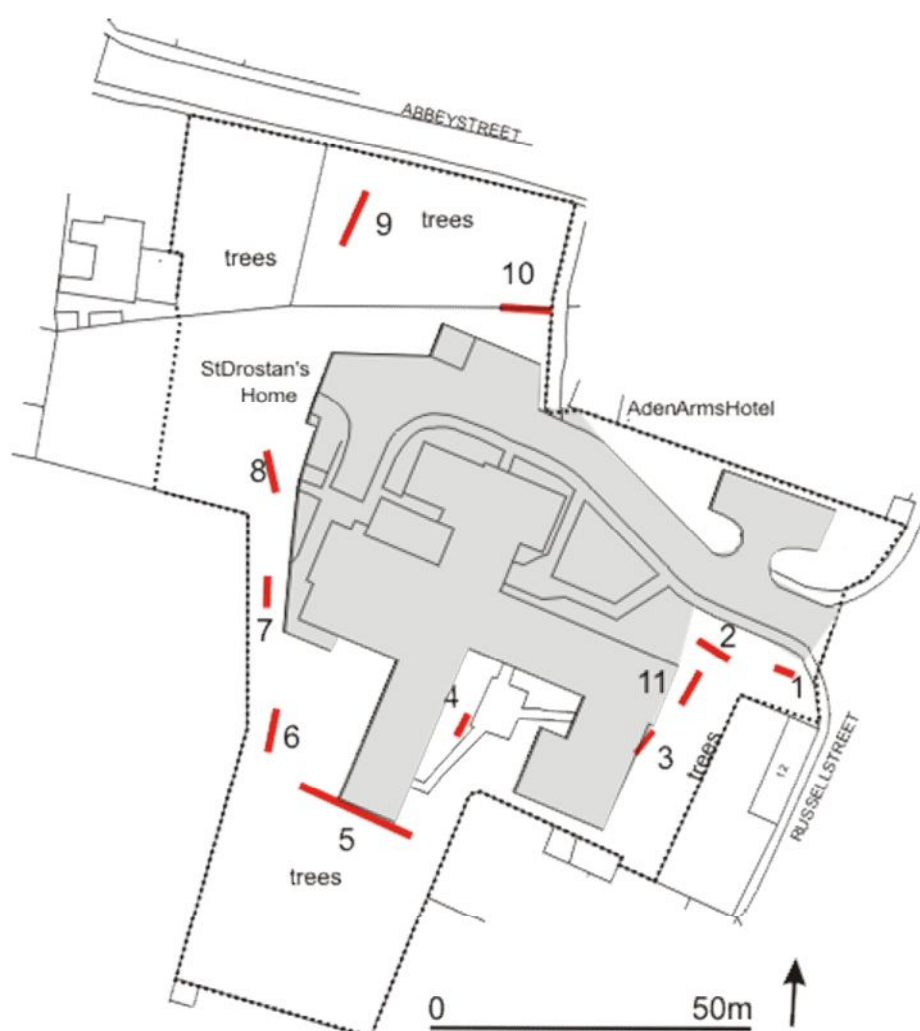
Old Deer is considered a probable site of the Early Christian monastery of Deer; centred on the site of the Old Kirk within the circular graveyard and with an outer enclosure possibly following the line of Russell Street. As part of the Book of Deer Project there have been a series of archaeological interventions to assess and identify any evidence that may indicate the original site and characteristics of the early medieval Monastery of Deer. In 2009 a desk-based assessment and field evaluation of the lower ground to the E of the Old Kirk was undertaken by Olivia Lelong on behalf of GUARD (Lelong 2011). One of the recommendations of Lelong's report was that a geophysical survey should be undertaken; this was implemented in 2010 (Rennie and Lelong 2010).

In 2011 and 2012, the Book of Deer Project contracted Murray Archaeological Services Ltd to undertake further field evaluations of other areas of the village of Old Deer, developing upon the results of the earlier interventions (Murray & Murray, 2011, 2012).

None of these interventions have yielded clear evidence of the monastic centre. There have, however, been some finds of medieval pottery, giving an indication of the later settlement.

5 Results of the Evaluation

Eleven evaluation trenches were excavated in total (Illus 1).



Illus 1 Location of the evaluation (trenches in red). Approx site outline dotted. Grey shading shows area destroyed by buildings, access roads and car parks. Survey based on Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2014. License No 1000410404

Trench 1

GPS E end: 397707, 847649 W end: 397704, 847651

Orientation: E/W Length: 4.17m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Made up ground containing bricks, pipe etc in fill. Depth: 0.95m



Illus 2 Trench 1, looking W

Trench 2

GPS E end: 397697, 847651 W end: 397691, 847654

Orientation: E/W. Length: 6m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Made up ground and redeposited topsoil over clay natural, from 0.40m depth at W, sloping to 1m depth at E.



Illus 3 Trench 2, looking E

Trench 3

GPS N end: 397685, 847641 S end: 397683, 847636

Orientation: N/S. Length: 6m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Made up ground including infill of pebbly gravel over clay natural.

Depth: 1m

Trench 4

GPS N end: 397656, 847644 S end: 397654, 847639

Orientation: N/S Length: 4.5m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: 0.55m redeposited topsoil over clay natural.



Illus 4 Trench 4, looking S

Trench 5

GPS E end: 397647, 847624 W end: 397630, 847633

Orientation: E/W. Length: 19.4m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Made up ground and redeposited topsoil over clay natural, from 0.60m deep at E to 0.40m for most of trench.



Illus 5 Trench 5, looking W

Trench 6

GPS N end: 397626, 847644 S end: 397625, 847637

Orientation: N/S. Length: 7.5m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Redeposited topsoil c. 0.5m deep.

Trench 7

GPS N end: 397625, 847665 S end: 397624, 847660

Orientation: N/S. Length: 5.2m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Redeposited topsoil to 0.40m deep over natural clay. The foundations of the building c 2m to the E were 1.3m below the surface.

Trench 8

GPS N end: 387625, 847684 S end: 387626, 847677

Orientation: N/S. Length: 7m. Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: 0.40-0.50m topsoil over natural clay.

Trench 9

GPS N end: 397640, 847725 S end: 397636, 847716

Orientation: N/S. Length: 9.5m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Redeposited topsoil with quantity of 19th/20th century glass, china etc, over clay natural. 0.30m deep at N to 0.70m deep at S end.



Illus 6 Trench 9, looking N

Trench 10

GPS E end: 397670, 847706 W end: 397661, 847706

Orientation: E/W. Length: 8.5m Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Redeposited topsoil with quantity of 19th/20th century glass, china etc, over clay natural. 1m deep.



Illus 7 Trench 10, looking NE

Trench 11

GPS N end: 397692, 847650 S end: 397689, 847644

Orientation: N/S. Length: 6m. Width: 1.5m

Stratigraphy: Made up ground and redeposited topsoil over clay natural, 0.30m deep at S to 0.50m deep at N.

6. Discussion

6.1 As the major part of the site had been destroyed by the previous building, access road and car parks, little remained undisturbed. In addition, the requirement for the preservation of existing trees on the site further restricted the areas available for evaluation. For this reason the evaluation trenches were confined to the remaining green areas around the periphery of the site (Illus.1).

6.2 The lack of any archaeological features or finds would seem to confirm the results of the work undertaken in 2011 and 2012 and supports the suggestion that the most likely position of any early monastic settlement would be to the E of the village, possibly centred on the Old Kirk and circular graveyard.

7. Impacts and Mitigations

7.1 Impacts

None

7.2 Mitigations

None

7.3 The lack of surviving archaeology does not preclude the possibility of chance finds or archaeological discoveries elsewhere on the site, outwith the evaluation trenches. Should such chance finds occur, then the Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council, or Murray Archaeological Services Ltd, must be informed immediately so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed by all parties concerned.

References

Lelong O 2010 *The monastery of Deer archaeological project : Desk-based assessment & field evaluation*. GUARD Project 2712. Glasgow University: Glasgow.

Murray, H K & Murray, J C 2011 *Book of Deer Project Excavations 2011, Old Deer, Aberdeenshire*. MAS 2011-25. Archive report: Aberdeenshire.

Murray, H K & Murray, J C 2012 *Book of Deer Project Excavations 2012, Old Deer, Aberdeenshire*. MAS 2012-26. Archive report: Aberdeenshire.

Rennie, C and Lelong, O 2010 *Old Deer Geophysical Survey: The Book of Deer Project*. GUARD Project 3016. Glasgow University: Glasgow

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic records

(Supplied to Aberdeenshire SMR on CD)

Digital frame number	Content
St Drostan's Home, Old Deer	

01-03	General views of site, looking SW
04-07	Trench 1, looking W
08-09	Trench 2, looking E
11-15	General views, looking SE
16	General view, looking W
17-19	Trench 4, looking S
20-21	Trench 5, looking W
22-23	W sector of site, showing depth of foundations, looking SW
24-26	Trench 9, Looking N
27-28	View across N sector of site, looking E
29-31	Trench 10, looking NE