

**FYVIE CASTLE
FYVIE
ABERDEENSHIRE**



- Archaeological Watching Brief -

Carried out 17th March 2014
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2014-18
by
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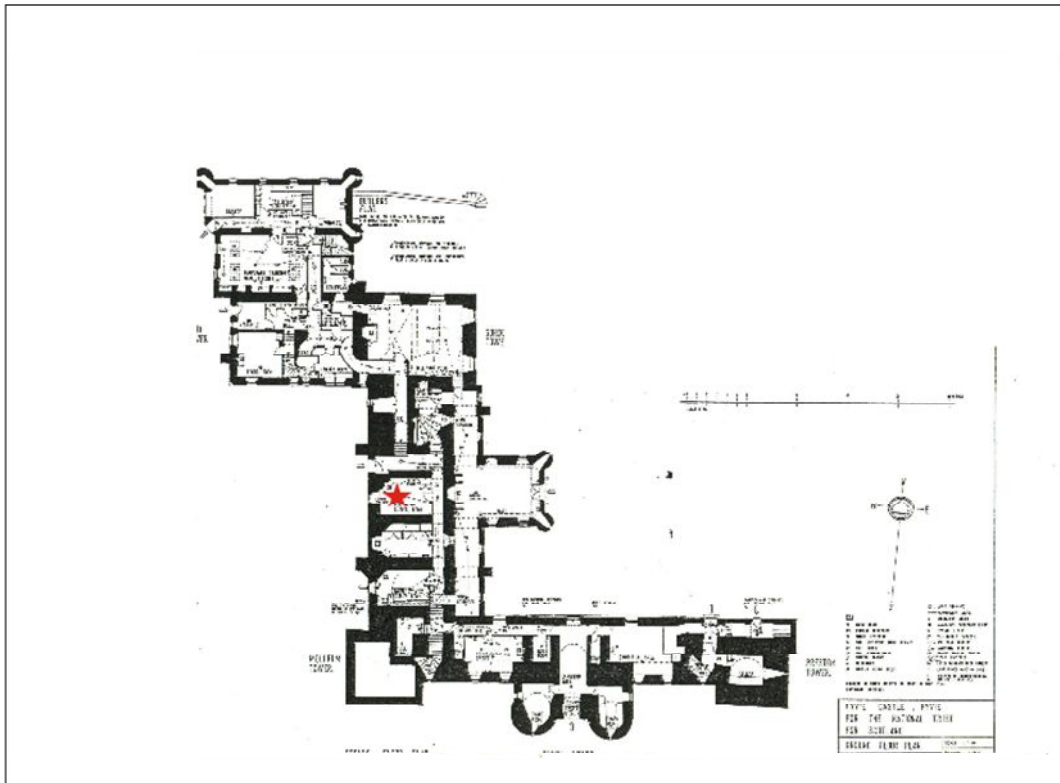
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1. Background

- 1.1 Damp and rot in the floor in a ground floor room, currently used as a meeting room, at Fyvie Castle required an archaeological watching and recording brief to be carried out during and after the removal of some of the floor boards prior to their replacement.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the work which was carried out on 17th March 2014.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 Once a royal stronghold, Fyvie Castle is located immediately N of the village of Fyvie, Aberdeenshire [NGR: NJ 76390 39306; NMRS No: NJ73NE 9.00; Parish: Fyvie]. First mentioned in a Royal Charter of 1211-14, it is built on a platform defended by the River Ythan. The castle was formally built around a courtyard, but the N and E sides were lost in the 18th century.
- 2.2 The room where the watching brief and recording was carried out is located on the ground floor of the W range which extends between the Gordon Tower (1777) to the N and the Meldrum Tower (1433-1596) to the S (Illus.1). Currently in use as a meeting room, it is designated on plan as a Temporary Guides Room.



Illus 1: Ground floor plan with room marked with red star.

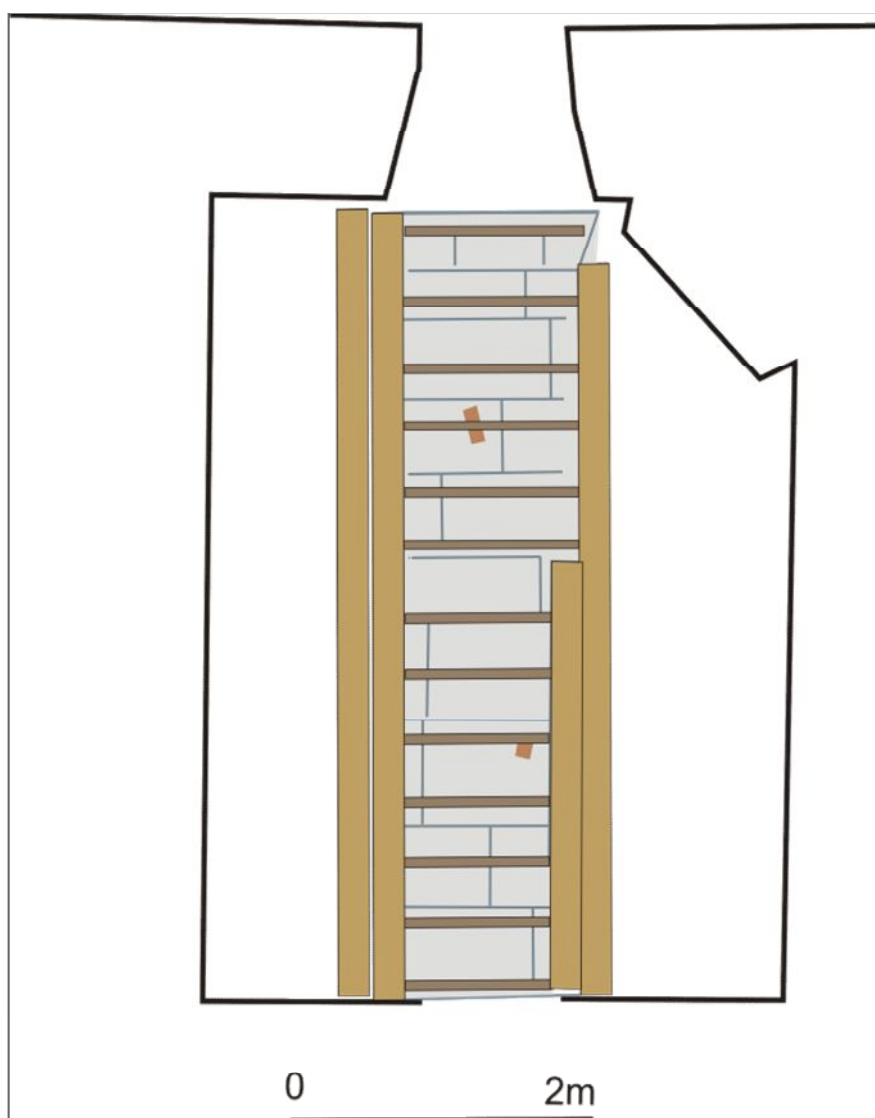
3. The Watching Brief

3.1 The room measures 5.2m (E-W) x 3.85m (N-S) with a tongued-and-grooved timber floor. A section of the timber flooring was lifted in the centre of the room measuring 5.2m (E-W) x 1m to 1.1m wide (Illus.2).

The timbers were pine and were c.140mm wide and c.20mm thick. They were laid directly on thin battens c.750mm wide x 20mm thick. The battens, in turn, overlie an earlier flagstone floor and were spaced at between 400 – 480mm. Where necessary, they were supported by thin wedges to level the floor.

The stone flags were laid N-S across the room and varied in length between 1m and 1.2m and in width to between 370mm to 530mm in width. At the only point possible to take a measurement, the flags appeared to be 20mm in

thickness. The stones appear to be a schist-like friable material with considerable signs of wear.



Illus 2: Floor plan of room with leveling wedges marked orange.

- 3.2 It is assumed that the stone flags are the original flooring in a ground floor barrel vaulted room.
- 3.3 It was observed that the end of one of the tongued-and-grooved timbers was stamped with the name 'HAUGAN'. This would appear to be the stamp used by O. Haugan & Co, timber exporters of Dranimen, near Oslo, Norway. Such stamps are common on imported timber from the Baltic and Scandinavian countries (Ref: <http://chestofbooks.com/architecture/Building-Construction->

[2/Marks-And-Brands-Upon-Timber-Continued.html](#)). Marks differed according to the quality of the wood used and it would appear that the stamp 'HAUGAN' (sic) was used on cheaper 3rd rate timber. The importation of timbers for use in Scottish buildings over an extended period is recently documented (Crone and Mills, 2012).



Illus 3: Flooring timber with 'HAUGAN' stamp.

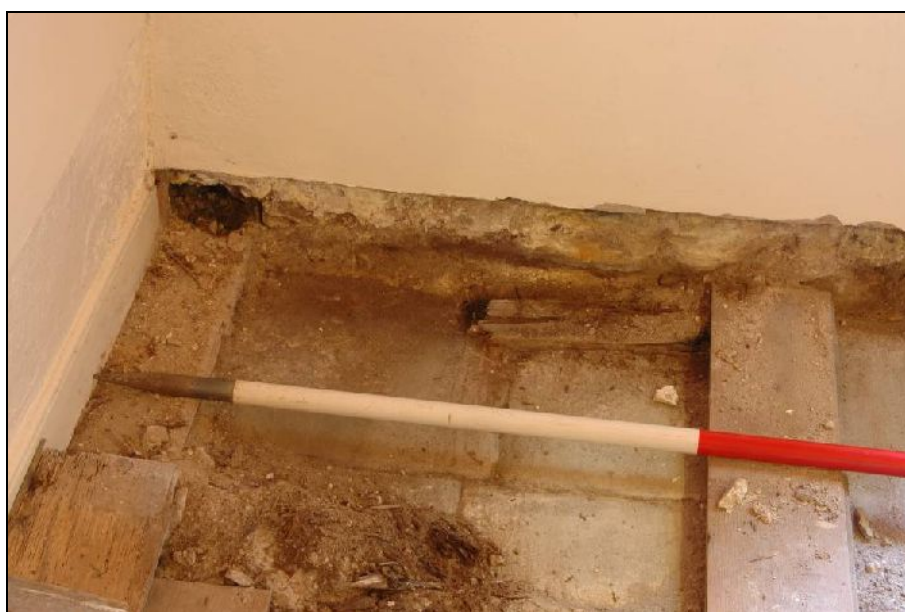


Illus 4: General view of room, looking W.



Illus 5: Detail of flagstones below the wooden flooring. Note the wedge below the batten in the centre.

- 3.4 In the SW corner of the room, between the S wall and the window recess, a small amount of the wall plaster, c.150mm from the floor, was removed. Behind this, the outer stone wall of the W range was visible. In the very corner a small cavity was noted, possibly where a stone had been removed. As so little of the plaster had been removed it was not possible to determine the nature of this hole.



Illus 6: SW corner where plaster was removed.

4. Results

- 4.1 The watching and recording brief showed that the original floor in this ground floor room of the W range of the castle was of flagstones, later covered with tongued-and-grooved pine timbers imported from Norway at a date, as yet, unknown but probably 19th century.
- 4.2 Owing to the small amount of plaster removed in the SW corner of the room it was not possible to comment further on the structure of the W wall.

References:

Crone, A and Mills, C M 2012 'Timber in Scottish buildings, 1450-1800: a dendrochronological perspective'. *Proceedings Society Antiquaries Scotland* 142, 329-69

Catalogue of Digital Photographs (Supplied to Archive)

1-3	General views of room, looking W
4-6	Details of flooring in centre of room
7	General view of room, looking E
8	Detail of flagstones
9-11	Views of SW corner, where plaster was removed
12	Flooring timber with 'HAUGAN' stamp