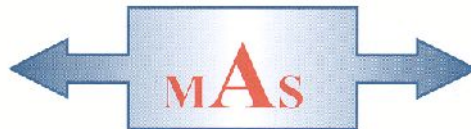


# BELDORNEY CASTLE GLASS ABERDEENSHIRE



**- Archaeological Watching Brief -**  
**Carried out July 30<sup>th</sup> & August 5<sup>th</sup> 2014**  
by  
**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



**Report No: MAS 2014-29**  
by  
**H K Murray & J C Murray**

H K Murray BA, PhD, MIFA, FSA Scot  
J C Murray BA, MIFA, FSA Scot, FMA  
Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN  
Telephone: (01651) 806394 e-mail: cmurray@btinternet.com

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**BELDORNEY CASTLE  
GLASS  
ABERDEENSHIRE  
-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

**H K Murray & J C Murray**

1. Background

1.1 As part of an extensive programme of restoration work at Beldorney Castle, Glass, Aberdeenshire, the gable of a secondary, single-story wing of the castle required dismantling and re-building. As part of the Planning/Listed Building Consent (ref APP/2014/0543) an archaeological condition was imposed (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP) for a watching brief 'to be applied over ground breaking works, due to the potential for previously unrecorded archaeology to survive'.

1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Thomas Munro and Co, Chartered Architects, Inverness, to undertake the watching brief on the footprint of the new gable; the field element of which was carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

2. The Site

2.1 Parish: Glass

NMRS No: NJ43NW 13

Aberdeenshire SMR: NJ43NW0012 and designed landscape NJ43NW0092

Historic Scotland A-listed building HS Ref: 9164

NGR: (general) NJ 422259 36980

GPS (by gable): 342237, 835984

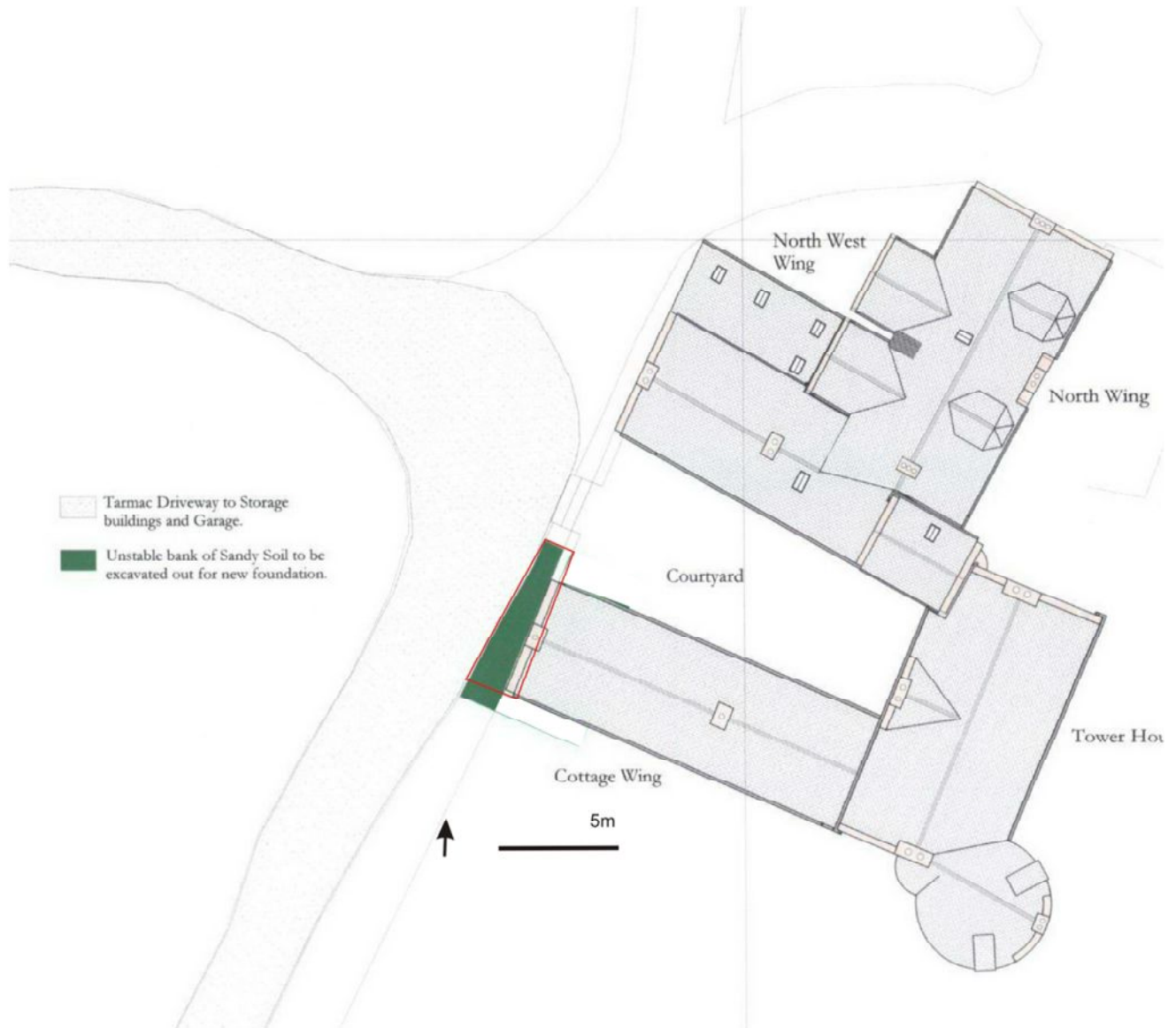
2.2 Beldorney castle lies to the S of the A920 Huntly to Duffton Road and S of Glass, on a sandy ridge at around 240m OD on the W bank of the River Deveron and just S of the Chapel Burn, an offshoot of which appears to have been culverted below the haha around the W side of the castle.



**Illus 1 Location.** Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright (2007) All rights reserved. Licence number (100049810). Site indicated by red circle.

### 3 Methodology

- 3.1 The collapsing W gable wall of the S wing and part of the W courtyard wall abutting it were dismantled by hand by the site contractors Darroch & Allan of Elgin. The new foundations were dug to natural by mini-digger. A bank of earth between the gable and the tarmac drive was also removed to the level of the drive. The work was observed and photographed by MAS Ltd.
- 3.2 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper 120 GPS and Glonass.



**Illus 2 Plan indicating area of watching brief (red outline). Based on survey drawing by Thomas Munro and Co.**

#### 4. Historical Background

Beldorney Castle is a Z-plan tower house built c1550 and before 1575 and modified in the late 17<sup>th</sup>/ early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two wings are later; the N wing probably built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but rebuilt or re-designed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The S wing, which is single-storied, had been built or rebuilt in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**Illus 3 View of the castle from the SW showing the S wing with the W gable removed**



**Illus 4 View of the S wing from the S**

## 5. The Results

The W gable wall of the S wing and the adjacent part of the courtyard wall had been dismantled. The existing walls of the single-storied wing were of rubble

stone construction c 600mm wide and standing some 2.2m high to the wall head. They had been externally harled with concrete. Some patching of cracks had been undertaken in the past, with concrete blocks filling in an area at the base of the W end of the N wall of the gable; these were dismantled as part of the present works.

There was no foundation to the wall which was built directly on a bank of natural sand which was cut away to a maximum depth of 1.2m on the line of the gable, tailing down to the level of the drive (illus 5). There were no foundation trenches for the gable or side walls of the S wing or for the wall of the courtyard. The only cut in the sand was for a modern ceramic drain.



**Illus 5 S wing, looking E, showing the excavation of the bank and the foundation for the replacement of the W gable. Red arrow shows cut for a modern ceramic drain.**

## 6. Discussion

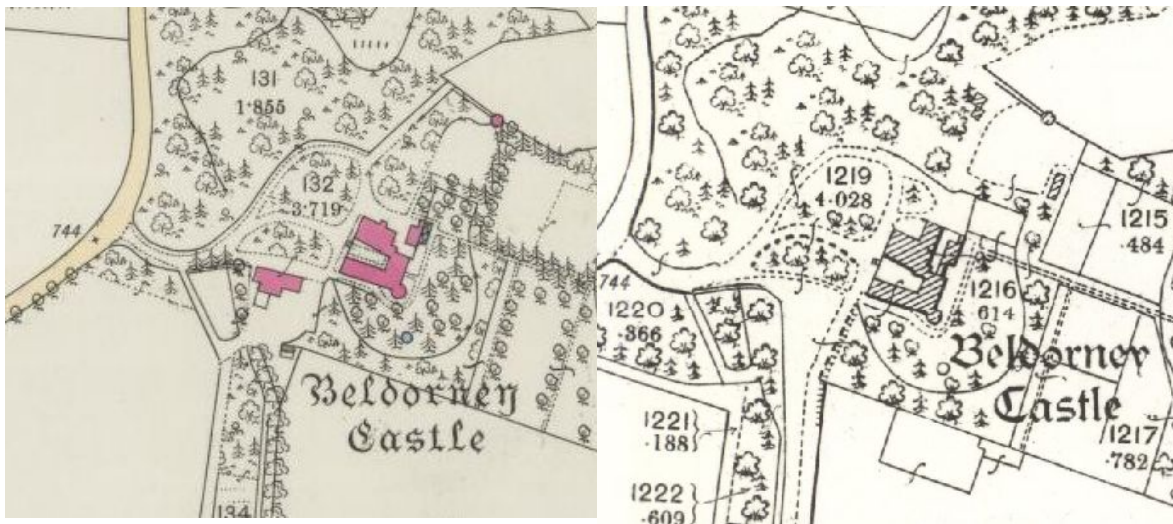
There was no evidence for any earlier S wing extending as far to the W as the existing building. This does not preclude there having been such a wing as it might have been shorter or might have had no foundations.

The instability of the existing wing is likely to have been caused by the terracing of the ground level directly to the W between the drive and the haha (illus 6). This layout is shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> OS maps (illus 7) and is likely

to relate to the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion for removing formal 17<sup>th</sup> century gardens and re-modelling the grounds around castles or mansions in a more open, parkland landscape.



**Illus 6** Looking S across the front of the excavated line of the W gable of the S wing, showing the line of the slope between the upper garden and the drive and lower lawn.



**Illus 7** 1<sup>st</sup> OS map (LHS: Banff sheet XXVI.13 1869 pub. 1872.) and 2<sup>nd</sup> OS map (RHS: Aberdeenshire 025.13. 1900 pub 1901) showing the layout of the ground to the W of the castle..

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

<b>Photographic catalogue Beldorney Castle</b>	
<b>Digital frame no</b>	<b>Content</b>
Beldorney Castle	
1	General view from W
2	General view W end of S wing with gable dismantled
3-5	S wing with gable dismantled looking NE
6-9	Details of gable of S wing partly dismantled 30 <sup>th</sup> July
10-12	D wing looking N
13	Excavation of bank and foundation at W gable of S wing 5 <sup>th</sup> August
14-16	Section of natural sand below gable of S wing
17-20	Section of sand below gable, with S section of bank on RHS
21-22	Section of sand below gable, with N section of bank on LHS
23	Looking S across the excavated are, showing bank between garden and drive