CASTLE FRASER
ABERDEENSHIRE
DRAIN TEST PIT

- Archaeological Test Pit -

Carried out September 17th 2014

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd

Report No: MAS 2014-35

by

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1. Background

1.1 A blockage between the septic tank in the lawn to the E of the castle and the bree chamber in the Factors Field at Castle Fraser, Cluny, Aberdeenshire, required the line of the pipe between the two to be dug to find the blockage and repair the drain. As the line of the pipe crossed a low-banked linear feature to the S of the drive, it was decided that a section should be cut by hand across the feature on the route of the pipe, so that the nature of the feature could be understood and its form recorded.

1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland, to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 17th September 2014.

2. The Site

2.1 The drain ran between the septic tank in the S side of the lawn to the E of the castle and the bree chamber in the field S of the drive and SE of the castle. The linear feature ran NE/SW between the drive and the fence to the S.

Parish: Cluny NGR: NJ 72309 12581

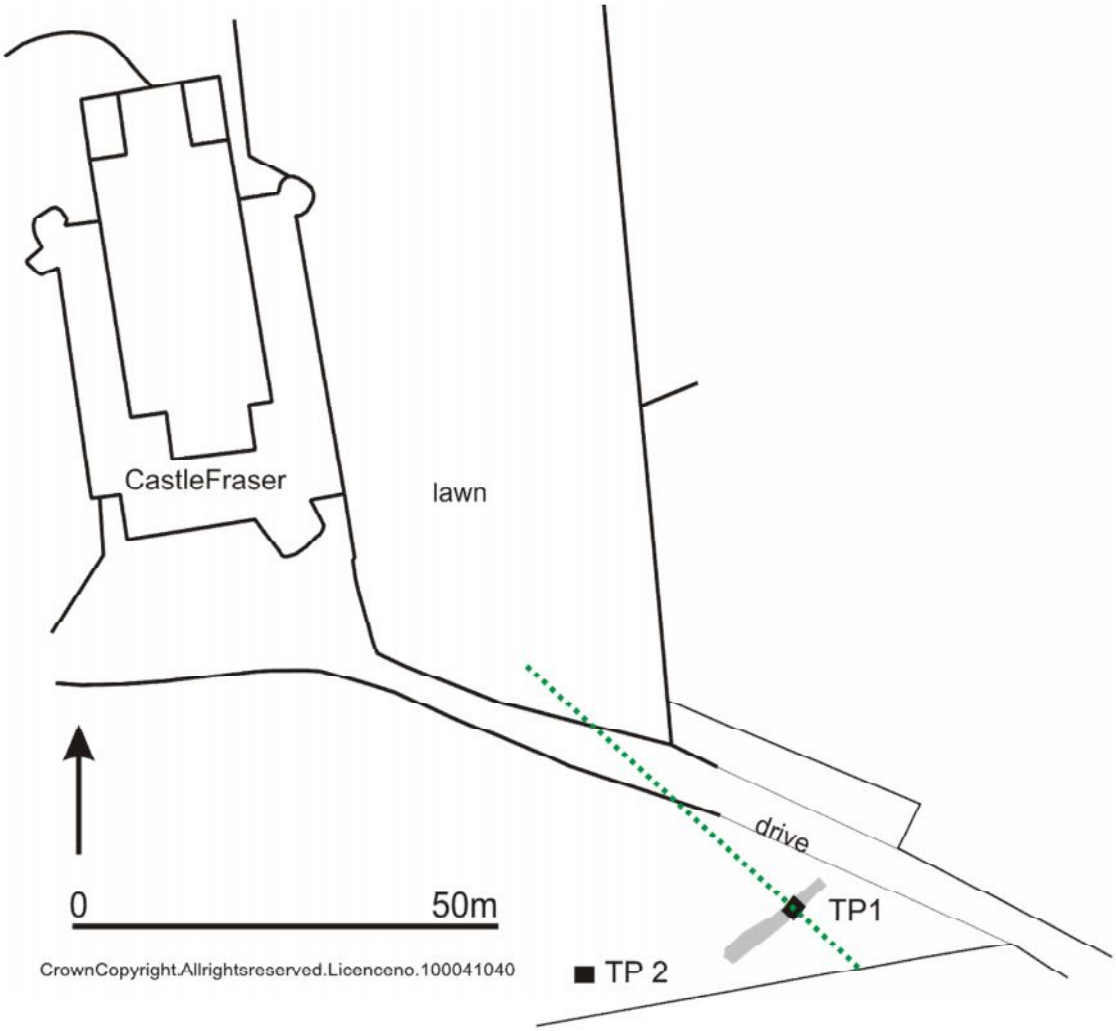
NMRS ref: NJ71SW.6.1 Aberdeenshire SMR ref: NJ71SW0139

3 Methodology

3.1 A test pit (Test Pit 1-TP 1) (illus 1) was dug by hand on the line of the drain where it crossed the linear feature to locate the blocked section of drain. The results were recorded, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.

3.2 A second test pit (Test Pit 2- TP 2) was excavated further W, on the line of a different drain at a point where the drainage contractor had noted large stones in the fill. The stones however were non-structural fill over a broken drain and of no archaeological significance.

3.3 All mapping was done with a Magellan Mobile Mapper 120 GPS and Glonass.



Illus 1 Plan showing position of TP1 and TP 2. Green dotted line indicates the line of drain from septic tank to bree pit . Grey shaded area indicates the raised linear feature.

4. The Results

4.1 ***Test Pit 1*** *(TP1)* TP1 was c 1.5 x 1.2m. The N edge of the test pit was located 6.2m S of the S edge of the road on the line of the clearly visible linear feature. GPS 372345,812504.

The linear feature cut by TP1 extended c 16m NE/SW and was visible as a raised bank some 200mm high and c2m wide, with occasional stones in the surface.

Where TP 1 cross-sectioned the bank, along the scanned line of the drain pipes from the septic tank, there was an irregular layer (1) of sandy brown topsoil with rubble stones backfilled in the central area and a more coherent but equally random patch of stones forming the bank (Illus 2).

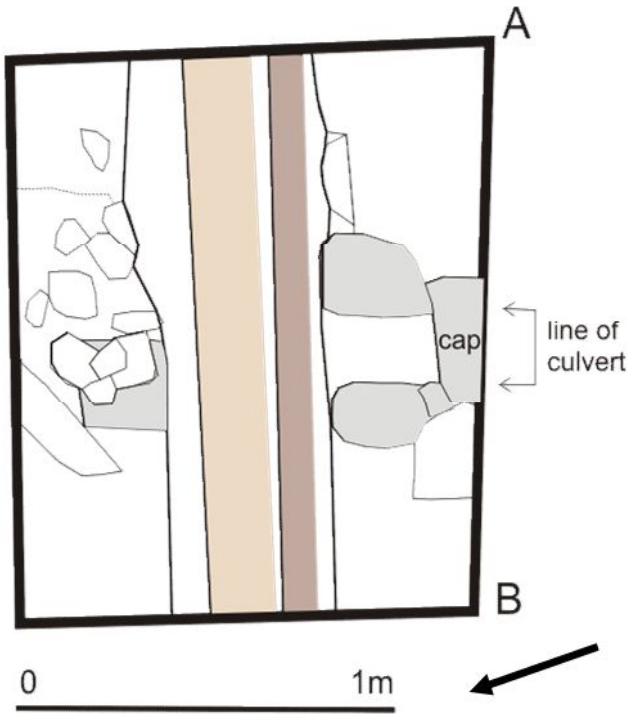
Illus 2 TP1 looking W showing rubble backfill over drain pipes

When the rubble backfill of the drain cut was removed two modern pipes were revealed- the ceramic pipe from the septic tank to the bree pit and a sectional clay field drain alongside it (Illus 3, 4).

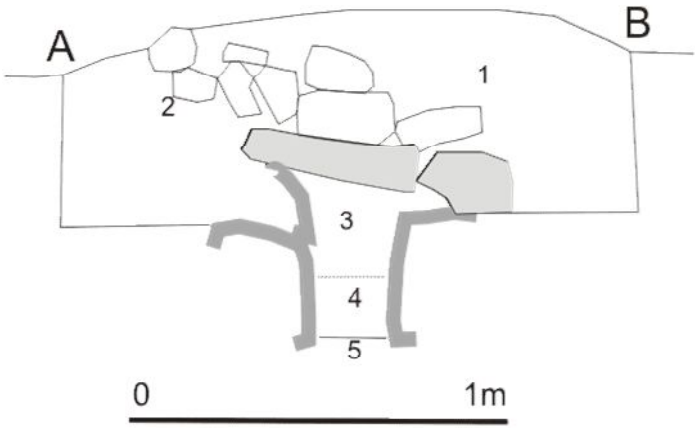
The N section appeared very disturbed by the drain trench but in the S section (Illus 4, 5), there were the side stones and capstone of a culvert or drain running along the line of the linear feature. Internally the drain was 280mm wide and 450mm from the underside of the cap to the base of the side stones. It was completely filled; the upper fill was c 250mm brown humic earth (illus 5:3) above c 200mm of clean yellow sand (illus 5:4) down to a very fine silt above clay/silt which appeared to be the base (illus 5:5).

The loose stones over the capstone may have been a backfilling over the culvert/drain or may have been field gatherings- they appeared too random to be convincing as the remnant of a drystone dyke although this remains a possibility.

Illus 3 TP 1 looking W after rubble removed and drain pipes revealed



Illus 4 Plan of TP1. Modern drains shown coloured.



Illus 5 Section of S side of TP1 showing culvert/drain.

Illus 6 S section of TP 1

Illus 7 Detail of section of culvert/drain in S section of TP 1

4.2 ***Test Pit 2*** *(TP2)* was c.1m square. GPS 372319,812497. It comprised stoney rubble over a broken 6" clay drain. There was nothing of archaeological significance.

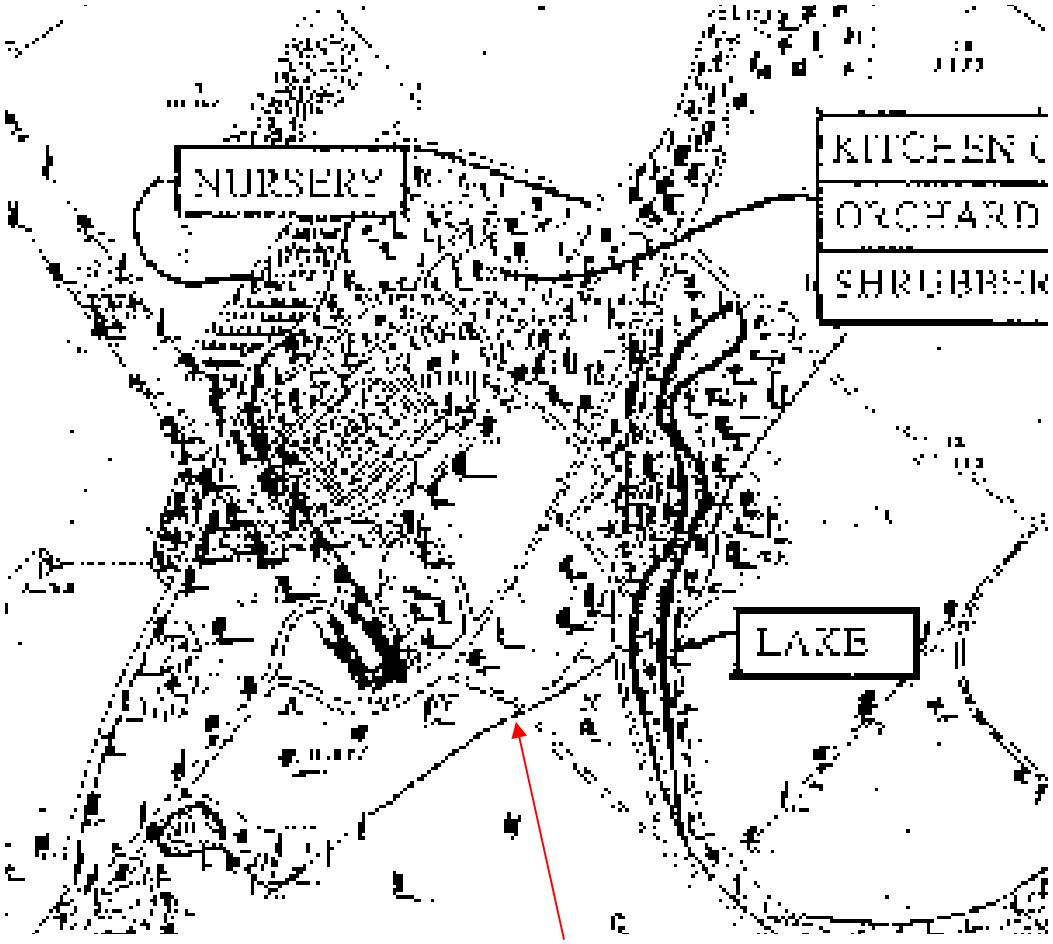
Illus 8 Location of TP 2 looking NW

Illus 9 Broken clay drain in base of TP 2

5 Interpretation

5.1 The raised feature appears to be the somewhat disturbed line of a culvert, possibly with the remnant of a drystone wall on the top, although this may be incidental stone gathering over the capstones.

5.2 There are no features on the 1788 estate map that fit this line, although drains were not always marked. However a copy of an 1846 estate map shows a line, possibly a culvert/drain taking water to a lake in what is now woodland to the NE of the driveway. This appears to be on the line of the recorded feature, although the rather poor construction suggests it may never have been very efficient in terms of carrying water. The lake does not appear on the 1st OS map of 1864.



Illus 10 Detail of 1846 estate plan with possible drain/culvert to lake (Courtesy of NTS). Red arrow marks the position of TP1

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue Castle Fraser Drain 4/11/2010	
Digital frame no	**Content**
01	Position of TP1 in relation to castle, looking W
02-03	TP 1 looking W. Before rubble backfill over drains removed
04-05	TP 1 looking S
06-07	TP 1 looking W
08-09	TP1 detail of S section through culvert
10	TP 1 detail of N section
11	TP2 In relation to castle
12-18	TP2 during excavation