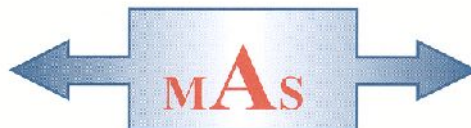


GARDEN WALL PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE



- Structural Recording -
Carried out 15th January 2015
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2015-2
by
H K Murray

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

PITMEDDEN HOUSE ABERDEENSHIRE RECORDING OF GARDEN WALL

-Archaeological Watching Brief-

H K Murray

1. Background

- 1.1 In consequence of the demolition of a derelict 1950s shed against the outer face of the NE corner of the 17th century garden wall (MacGowan and Addyman, 2007, vol ii, 21, B01- original dated c.1675) at Pitmedden House, Pitmedden, Udney Parish, Aberdeenshire (NJ 8844 2805), the National Trust for Scotland required structural recording to document any surviving evidence of an earlier structure on the site shown on the 1st edition of 1870 and 2nd edition 1899 OS maps.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake the work; the recording was carried out 15th January 2015.

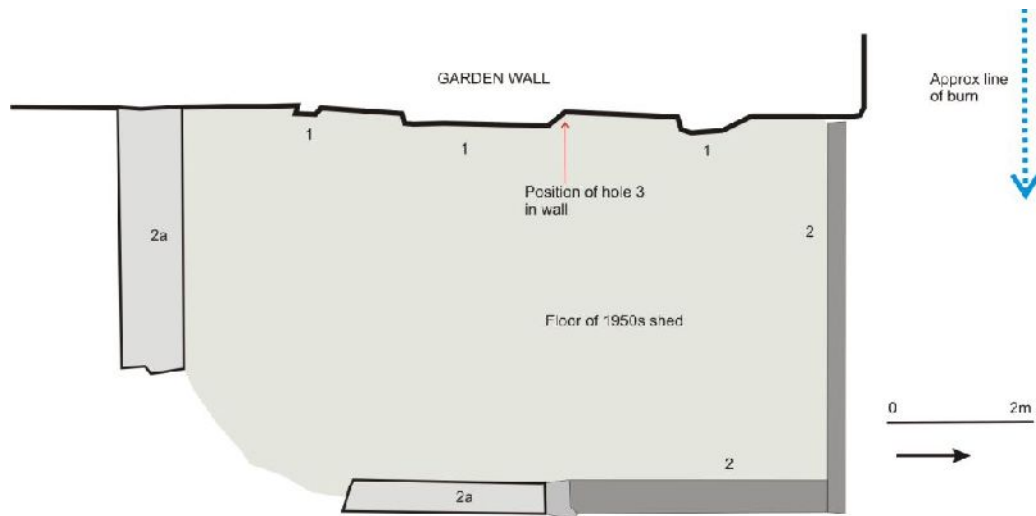
2. The Site

- 2.1 The 1950s shed had abutted the outer face of the E wall of the garden wall at the NE corner.
Parish: Udney
NGR: NJ 88595, 28113 (centre of former shed)
NMRS No: NJ82NE 33

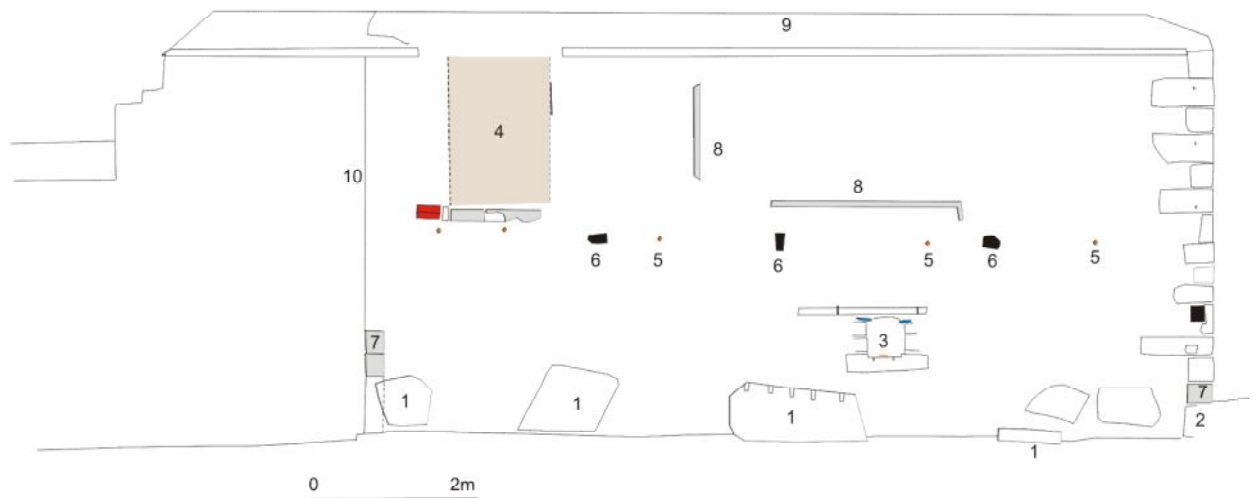
3 Methodology

- 3.1 The building, which had become dangerous, had been demolished prior to the recording. Some earlier wall elements had been retained. The elevation of the outer face of the garden wall was drawn and photographed. The plan of the footprint of the building was drawn and photographed.

4. The Results



Illus 1 Plan of the footprint of the 1950s workshop showing elements of earlier building.



Illus 2 Elevation of E face of garden wall showing features related to both the 1950s workshop and the earlier building

The 1950s workshop

The 1950s workshop had abutted the outer face of the garden wall and was 9.8m long (N/S) by 5.5m wide externally. The walls, which had been largely removed at the time of the recording, had been of cement blocks.

However both the N wall (below external ground level) and the N end of the E wall were set on earlier stone wall footings (Illus 1, 2: feature 2); the stonework of the E wall can be clearly seen below the blocked windows in the pre-demolition photograph

(Illus 4). The remaining walls had no surviving stonework above ground but there appeared to be stone foundations (Illus 1: 2a)

It was a two-storied structure with the internal floor resting on a series of E/W metal beams that had been set into the outer face of the garden wall. The beam holes (Illus 2: feature 6) are visible in the wall face. In the same line there were a number of iron brackets (Illus 2: feature 5) which held a horizontal timber at the W side of the 1950s floor. These features can be seen clearly in a photograph taken at the time of the demolition (Illus 5).



Illus 3 Glass bottle fragments in cement raggle (for position see illus 2: 8)



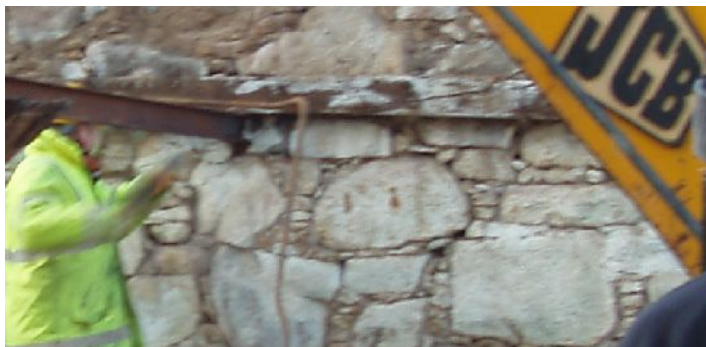
Illus 4 1950s shed prior to demolition (Photograph courtesy of Susan Burgess)

The roof had a single pitch sloping slightly down to the E, the W end resting on the top of the garden wall where the outer face of the coping had been removed to accommodate it (see elevation Illus 2: feature 9).

Raggles of cement against the outer face of the garden wall (Illus 2: feature 8), one of which incorporated glass bottle fragments as filler (Illus 3) are likely to be internal details of the 1950s workshop as the cement looks quite modern.



Illus 5 1950s shed during demolition (Photograph courtesy of Susan Burgess) with detail below.

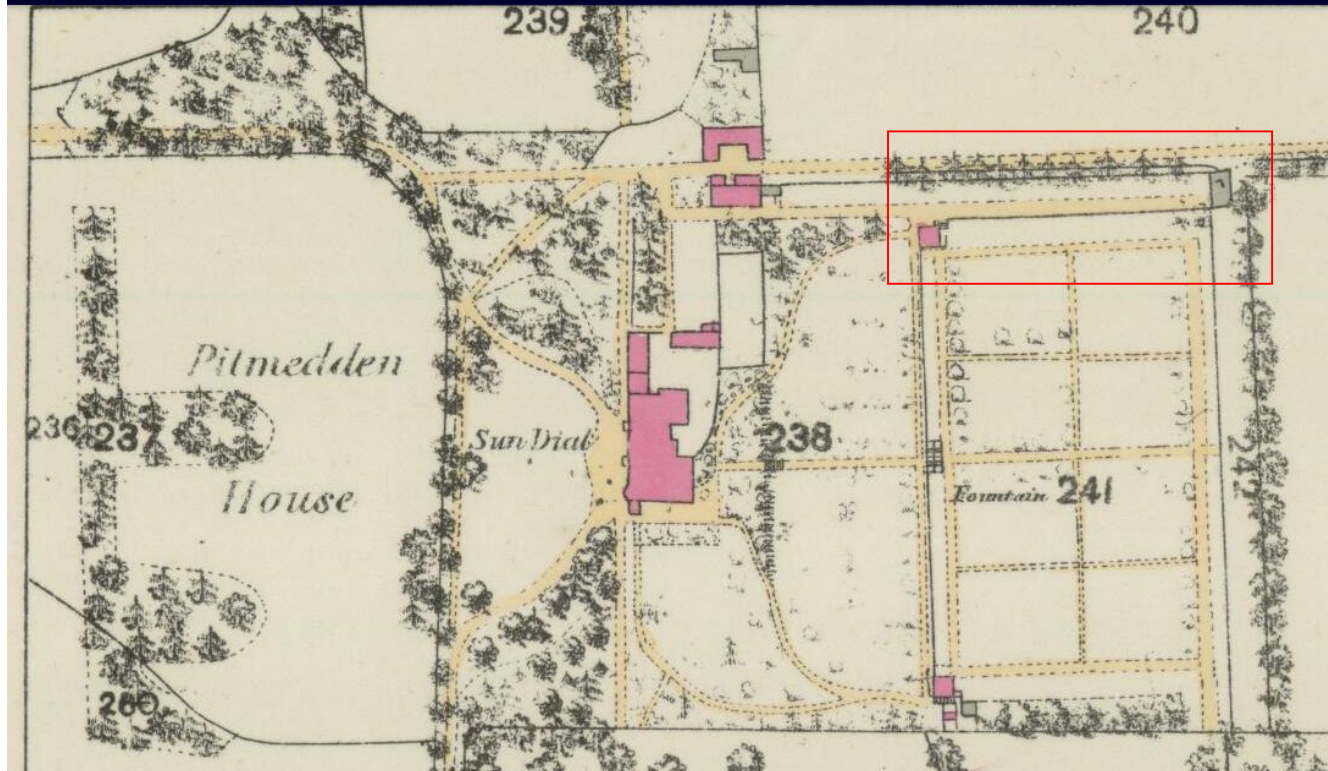


The earlier building

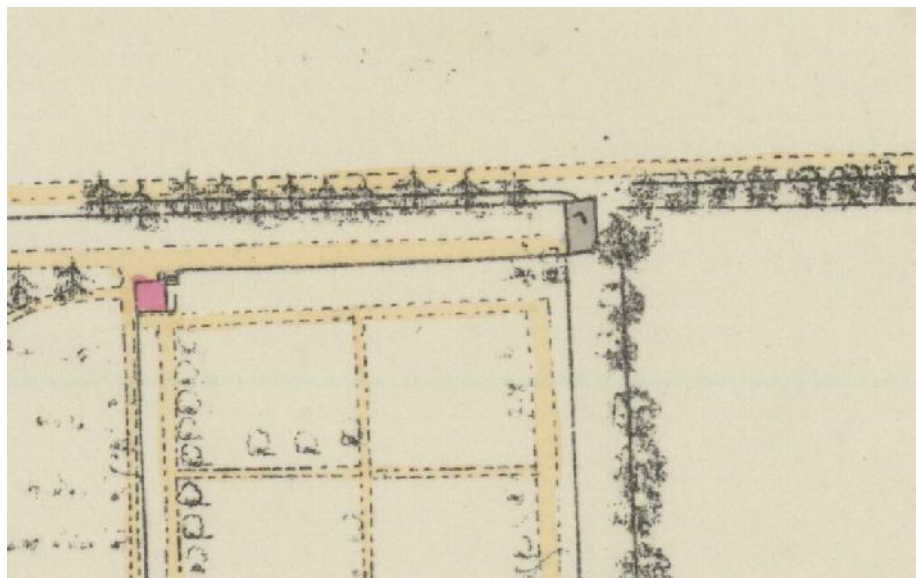
A number of features cannot be directly related to the 1950s workshop and probably relate to the building or buildings shown on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps.

Aberdeen Sheet XLVII.5 (Udny)
Survey date: 1867 Publication date: 1870

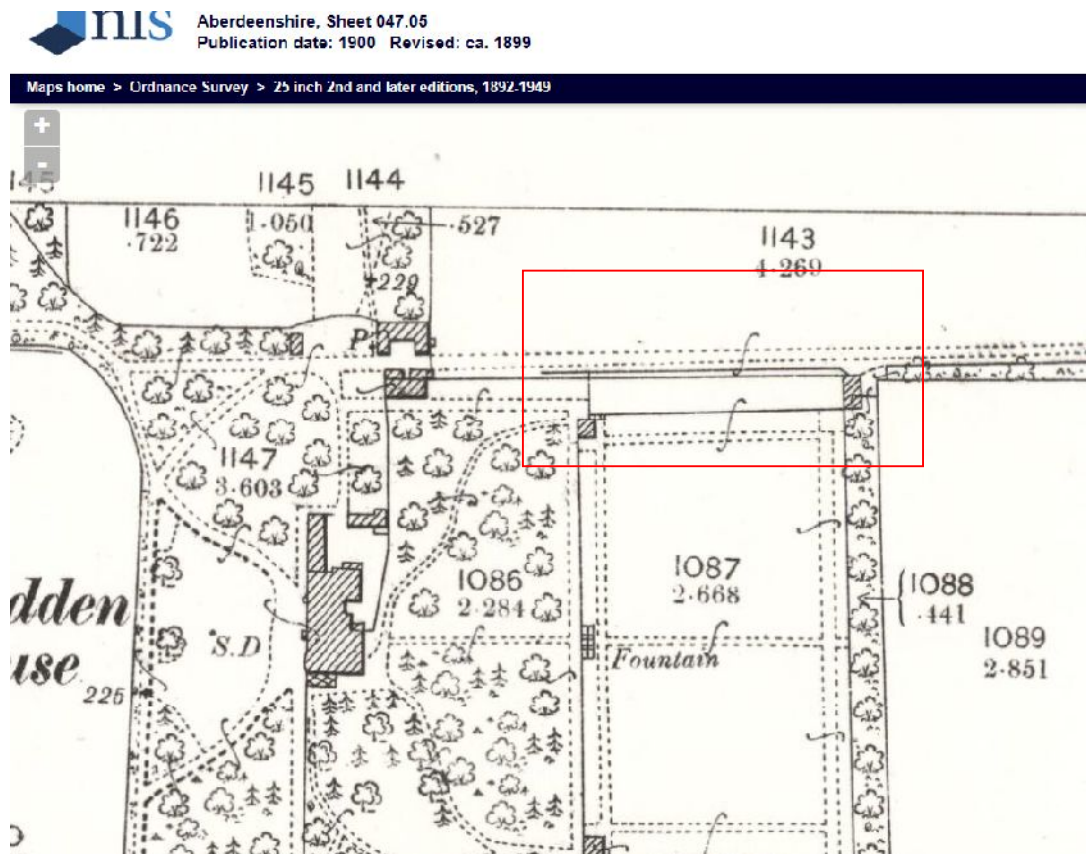
Scale: 25 inch to the mile, 1st edition, 1855-1882



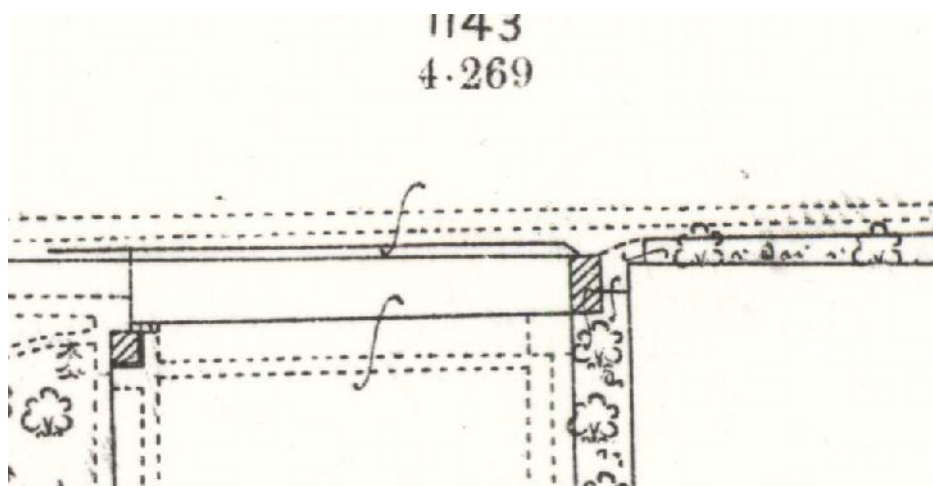
Illus 6 Detail from Aberdeen sheet xlvi (Udny) 1867 (pub 1870). (www.nls.ac.uk) Outlined area shown enlarged below.



On the 1867 OS map (Illus 6), the building is shown as of a similar size and plan to the 1950s workshop, although oddly appearing slightly asymmetric. It is coloured grey, indicating that it was largely built of iron or wood. A line parallel to and N of the wall appears to curve in towards the middle of the N gable of the building. This line appears to represent the burn.



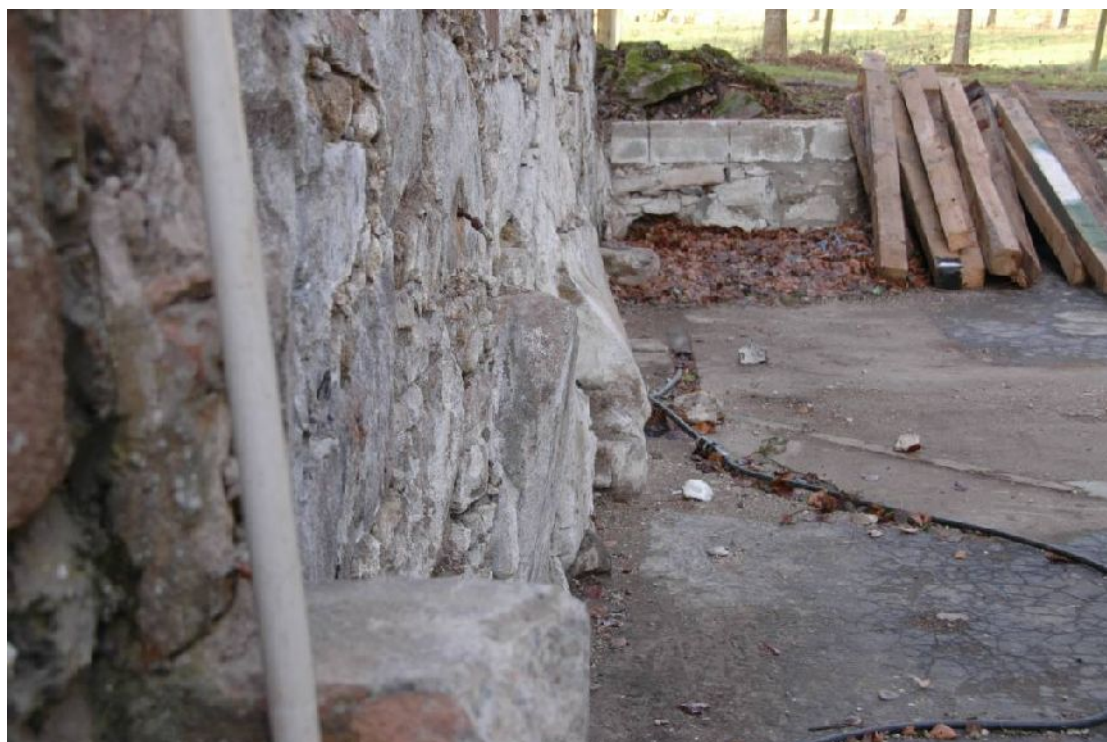
Illus 7 Detail from Aberdeenshire sheet 47) 1899 (pub 1900). (www.nls.ac.uk) Outlined area shown enlarged below.



A building on the same position is shown on the 1899 OS map (Illus 7), although this is more symmetrical and may be a different structure. In this instance the line parallel to the N side of the garden wall bends in to the NW corner of the gable, with another line (dotted) from the NE corner. This line appears to represent the burn.

As noted above, the base of the N and E walls are of stone (Illus 2: feature 2), with possible stone footings at the S wall line (Illus 2: feature 2a); these would appear to have belonged to the earlier building. As the 1867 OS map shows this structure as wood or iron, it is possible that there was a superstructure of wood or iron on a stone footing. However, the 450mm width of the E wall seems wide for a base for a timber wall and may indicate an earlier, fully stone-walled structure.

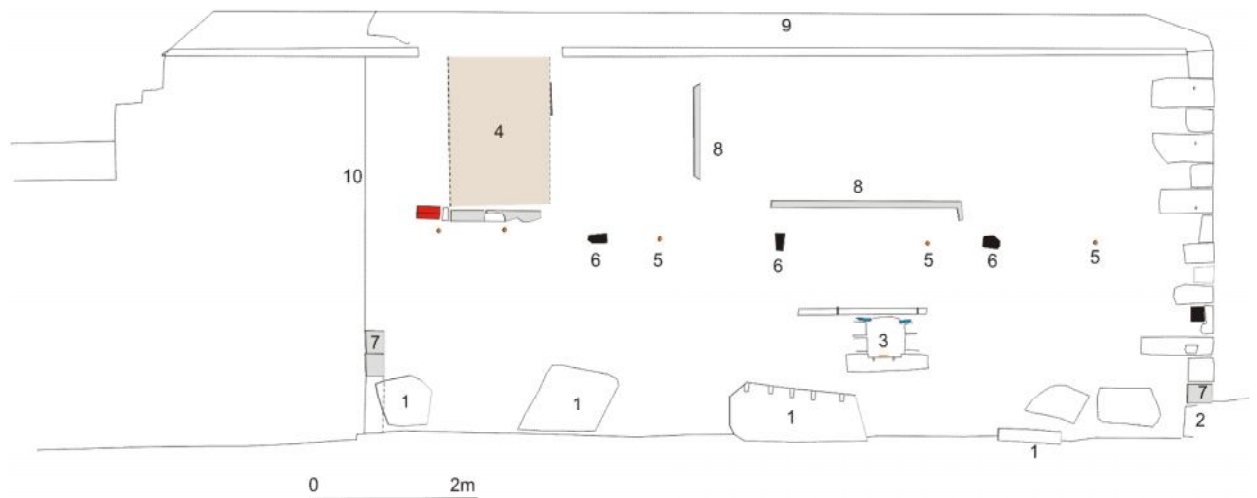
Of some significance are the large projecting stones in the base course of the garden wall (Illus 2: feature 1, Illus 8); on this stretch of wall this appears to be the only place where the wall stones project. This may indicate that there was a structure here from the date of the wall's construction in the 17th century and that this part of the outer face of the wall was not intended to be seen. Significantly one of the stones even displays the quarry drill marks along one edge (Illus 9). It might be worth looking for similar features elsewhere on the wall perimeter.



Illus 8 Looking N along the face of the wall showing basal stones projecting.



Illus 9 Base stone in garden wall showing quarry drill marks.



Illus 10 Elevation

Of considerable interest is feature 3, a small rectangular recess (W: 480mm, H: 380mm, depth: 260mm) in the face of the wall c 1m above (existing) floor level. This had a stone sill with a vertical drilled hole (2.5mm diam) for a bolt on either side of a strip of iron or ferrous corrosion 70mm wide. There were remnants of a slate lintel at the top of the recess.

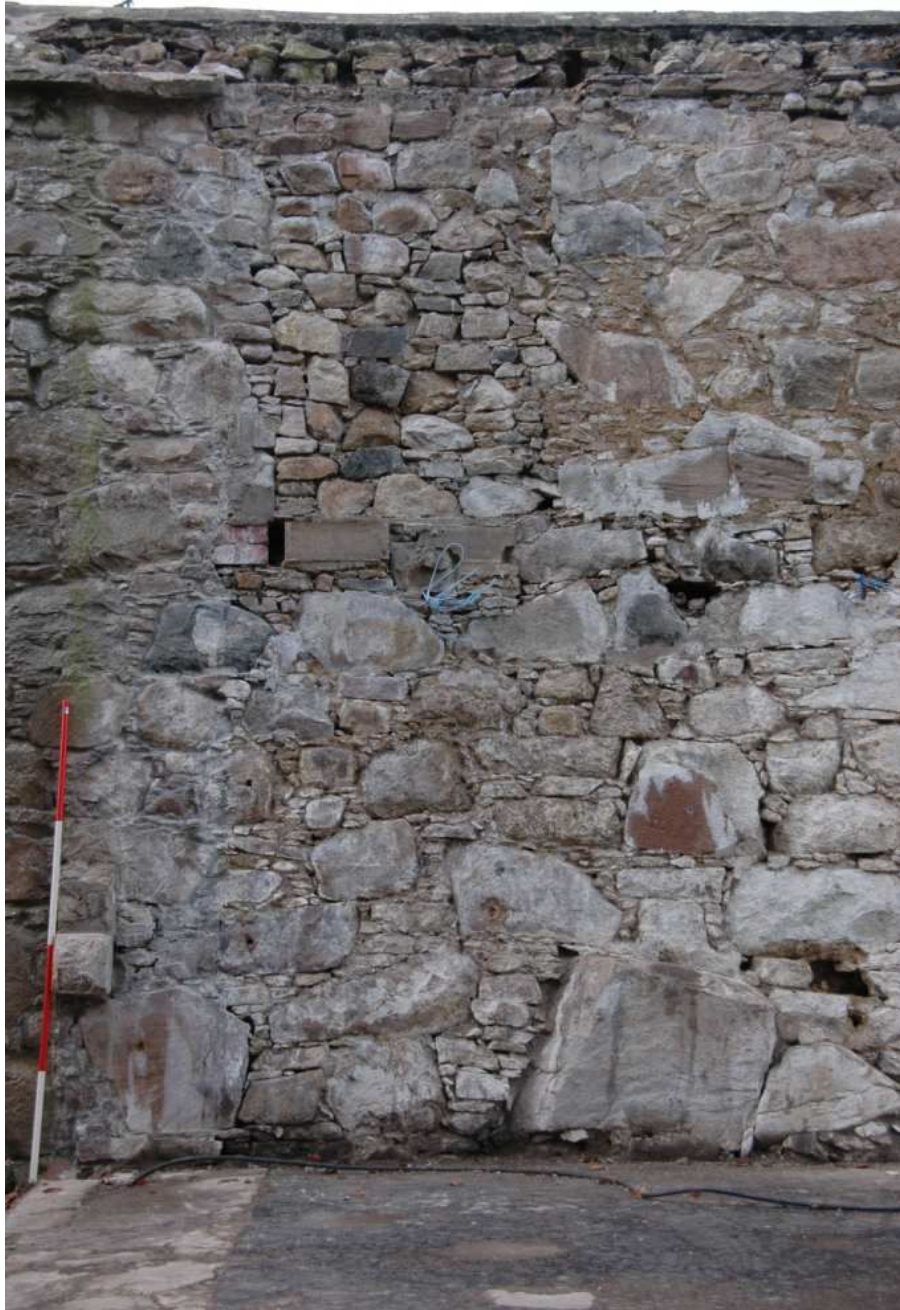


Illus 11 Detail of recess (For position see Illus 2: feature 3)

A number of bolt holes and two corroded bolts in the stones around the recess may derive from a sequence of different uses of the recess. A wooden bar (L: 1.5m. 80 x

40mm) above the recess is likely to date from the 1950s workshop as it is held with iron clamps similar to those used on the internal floor.

This feature almost certainly held one end of an iron shaft clamped into position and held by the bolts; possible interpretations will be discussed below.



Illus 12

Another interesting, and possibly early, feature is what appears to be a door-sized blocking at the upper floor level (Illus 2: feature 4). This appears to be c 1.8m high and c 1.2m wide and has been blocked with smaller stones than appear elsewhere in the wall. The blocking could not be identified on the inner face of the garden wall

although that area of wall does appear to be of more varied construction than the wall on either side (Illus 13).



Illus 13 Inner face of the section of garden wall.

This blocking is intriguing- it was clearly in use until, although not necessarily dating from, quite a late date as there is concrete along the base. While it is tempting to suggest this had been a door through to the garden, there is little evidence of this on the inner wall face and no evidence on either side of the stone lintel and sill one would expect (by comparison with features such as the bee boles – or even the recess in this wall).

For memories of this door in use note Appendix 2 below, information acquired since the first draft of this report was written.

5. Discussion

The 1950s workshop, most recently used as a tool store, had been a carpenter's workshop until the retirement of the joiner John Morgan in the 1980s (pers. comm Susan Burgess).

There is both structural and map evidence of an earlier building (or possible succession of buildings) on the site at least by 1867. The difference between the 1st and 2nd OS maps suggests that the apparently timber building of 1867 may have been rebuilt by 1899. However the irregularity and projection of some of the basal stones of the garden wall where it would have been hidden by a building, perhaps suggest that

there may have been a building here, of stone or with stone foundations, from the time the garden wall was built in the 17th century.



Illus 14 General view of the garden wall and the foundations of the workshop.

There is a local oral tradition of there having been a mill on this site prior to the 1950s (pers. comm Susan Burgess). The map evidence supports this as, in both 1867 and 1899, a line to the N gable of the building on site at the time can be interpreted as a diversion of the burn to form a lade to power a mill or other machinery. The detail on the 1899 map shows a channel coming in at the W end of the N gable and an underground (dotted) channel coming out at the E side of the N gable. Were any work to be done on the bank E of the building it would be worth some investigation to see if stone-lined lades survive.

The mill may have been a small sawmill rather than agricultural in function, especially as it is separate from the farm buildings.



Illus 15 General view looking W showing the foundations in relation to the stream to N

The recess in the garden wall (Illus 2: feature 3, Illus 16) would have held one end of an iron shaft that rotated, secured by a semi-circular bracket held by the bolts- the holes of which survive. The line in relation to the water makes it unlikely to have held a wheel shaft, but more probably the shaft of related machinery. An example from the 17th-century mill at Caie's Mill, Kinellar, Aberdeen (Murray & Murray 2008) (Illus 17) shows a very similar feature relating to a mill.

The later wooden bar above the recess and the numerous bolt holes around it suggest that the recess may have had a different, secondary use to hold equipment for the carpenter's workshop.



Illus 16 Detail of feature 3



Illus 17 Caie's Mill, Kinellar, Aberdeen

6. References

MacGowan, P. and Addyman, T. 2007. Pitmedden Historic Landscape survey.

National Trust for Scotland, unpublished report.

Murray, H K & Murray, J C with a contribution by C Croly. *Caie's Mill, Kinellar, Aberdeen: Standing Building recording*. Unpublished client report MAS 2008-16. Available in City of Aberdeen SMR and on-line through Oasis.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Susan Burgess for discussion, advice and photographs of the building during and prior to demolition.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of digital photographic record

Photographic catalogue Pitmedden Garden wall NE corner	
Digital frame no	Content
Pitmedden Garden wall 2015	
01-05	Inner face of the recorded section of the 17 th century garden wall
06-10	General views of the outer face of the garden wall after removal of the 1950s workshop
11-12	Detail of quarry marks in one of the lower foundation stones of the wall
13	Blocking at upper level in outer face of garden wall
14-24	Details of the outer face of the wall in sections from S to N
25-26	Foundations in relation to stream to N
27-36	Details of recess in the outer face of the garden wall
37-39	Detail of the stones at base of this section of wall projecting
40-44	General views looking N
45-47	Details of cement raggle with bottles used as filler
48-52	Details of the iron brackets used to secure floor timbers of 1950s workshop

Appendix 2. Extract from email from Susan Burgess, Property Manger/Head Gardener at Pitmedden. Dated 22 January 2015.

I have just had an interesting conversation with Aileen Reid daughter of George Barron – Head Gardener at Pitmedden for 30 years from 1948 – 1978. Aileen clearly remembers George accessing the loft of the Joiners Workshop via a little wooden door at the bottom right hand corner of the top terrace. He had a key for it. Aileen was not allowed to go in because George told her it was dangerous! She was a little girl at the time. Planks of wood were stored in the loft and the workshop machinery etc was downstairs. George Barron used the Thunder House (north) as his potting shed which

therefore made access to a supply of wood very easy. They used to make their own wooden seed trays in those days.

Apparently Margaret Massie – gardener at Pitmedden in the 1970's also remembers the wooden door at the end of the north terrace. Both ladies will delve into their old photographs to see if they can find a photograph. I am confident we can rely on their recollections. Aileen volunteered the information without me even prompting her about it.

This now means that the door was definitely blocked up in the NTS' time probably in the late 70s or early 80s.