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28 Gallowgate, Aberdeen

**Archaeological Desk-based
Assessment
Report No: 3333**

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Commissioned by	Seaforth Developments Ltd
Date issued	September 2015
Version	1
National Grid Ref.	394146, 806710

This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd standard operating procedures.

28 Gallowgate, Aberdeen

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Report No. 3333

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) during September 2015 on the proposed development at Gallowgate, Aberdeen. The desk-based assessment has focused on the archaeological potential of the proposed development site based on the results from previous excavations in the vicinity of the site and from cartographic evidence.

The report is supported by:

- **Figure 1:** Extract from Gordon's 1661 map.
- **Figure 2:** Archaeological sites and features within the vicinity of the proposed development.
- **Appendix 1:** Archaeological sites and features within the proposed development.
- **Appendix 2:** Archaeological sites and features within the vicinity of the proposed development.

2. METHODOLOGY

A number of information sources were consulted as part of the desk-based assessment work:

- The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) database – Canmore (RCAHMS 2015);
- Ordnance Survey maps and other historic maps held by the Map Library of Scotland; and
- Relevant bibliographic references and on-line research resources to provide background and historic information (including Dennison & Stones 1997; Cameron & Stones 2001).

A list of all sources consulted during the assessment is provided at the end of this report.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

General

Numbers in brackets and in bold in the following text refer to assets depicted on **Figure 2** and listed in **Appendices 1** and **2**.

Heritage Assets within the Site

One Listed Building, former St Margaret's School (**1**) stands within the proposed development site. This building is Category C Listed and is of local heritage importance.

Cartographic/Documentary Sources

The proposed development site ['the Site'] stands on the main medieval route out of Aberdeen to the north leading from the Tolbooth, at the centre of 'New Aberdeen'. Documentary evidence records that the medieval township of Aberdeen was well established by the 13th century with King David I (1124-53) issuing at least one charter for the town (Dennison and Stone 1997). Early reference to parts of Gallowgate as in '*vico qui dicitur Smythy* [raul]' ('in the quarter called Smythy Row') hint strongly at the presence of an industrial zone or quarter, being sited in this northern part of the burgh (Dickson 1957) in the medieval period.

The basic street pattern of the town was established during the 14th century, with the main settlement of the town centred on the market area and Broadgate, Gallowgate and Upperkirkgate (Dennison and Stones 1997). By the late-14th century there is documentary evidence to indicate fairly extensive urban development in the Gallowgate area, with several tradesmen recorded as working in the area (Cameron & Stone 2001). This suggests that a thriving commercial area was present at Gallowgate, away from the market centre of the town.

Cartographic sources confirm that the Site lies within the core of the medieval burgh of Aberdeen. The Gallowgate area is shown on Gordon's map of 1661 (**Figure 1**) which depicts a series of buildings edging the frontage along the road with elongated 'backland' areas (or rigs) running back from the street frontage. The backlands were usually used for garden produce or to graze domestic animals. A mid-15th century description of the properties on the east side of the Gallowgate, and in the location of the proposed development, records that the rig lands stretched from the street frontage eastwards to the present day West North Street

(Cameron and Stones 2001). To the west of Gallowgate is a marshy area annotated as ‘The Marrich Called the Loch’ and to the east is ‘The King Meadows’ (agricultural land/corn fields).

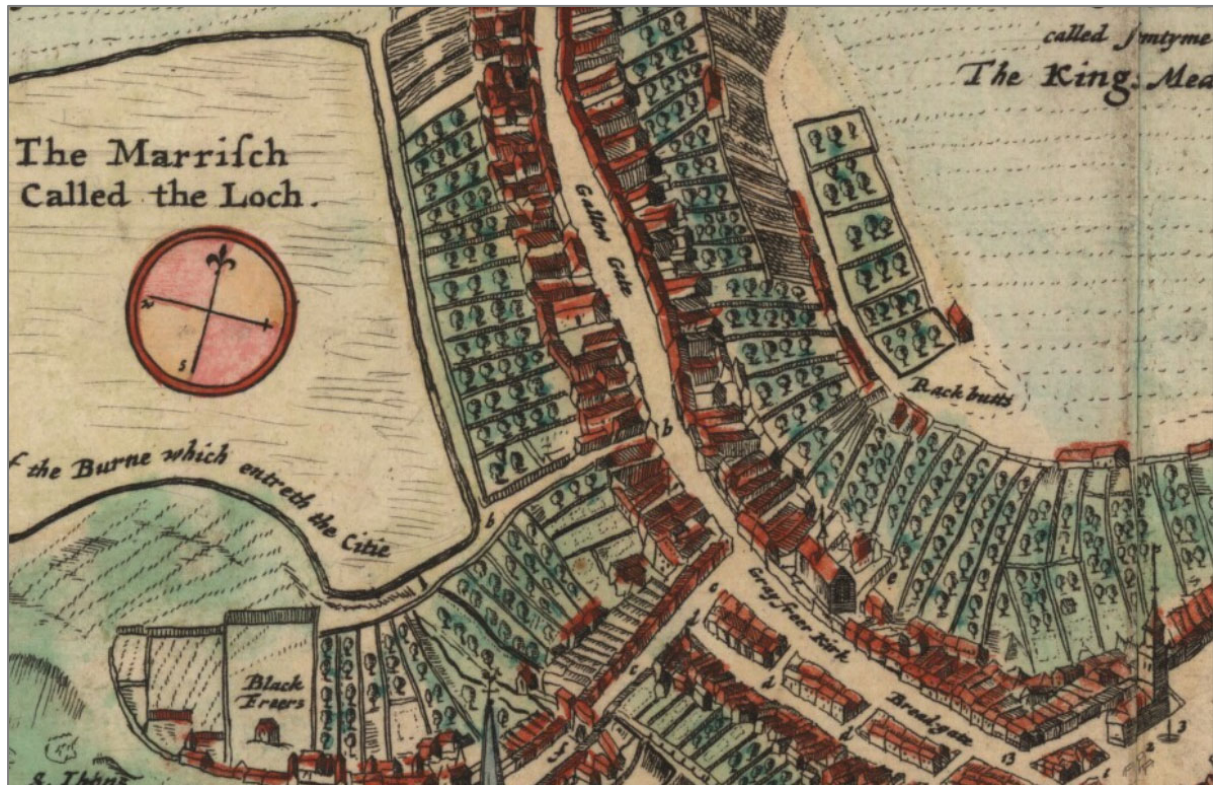


Figure 1: Extract from Gordon's 1661 map showing 'Gallow Gate'

A similar layout is shown on Roy's map of 1747-55 and this layout persisted until the late-17th century/18th century.

As the name implies, the Gallowgate ran to the town's gallows. At the northern end of Gallowgate was the Gallowgate Port (or gate) (17) which was the most northerly port controlling movement between New and Old Aberdeen and the north. Dennison and Stones (1997) suggest the Port was first located around 120 m to the north of the proposed development area (**Figure 2**), although as the town expanded it was moved further north.

By the second half of the 18th century the town had extended westwards with a number of mills established in this area and the Harbour had been considerably expanded (Dennison & Stones 1997), as shown on Milne's map of 1789. At the centre of the town, old timber buildings were being replaced by stone ones and this redevelopment continued into the 19th century. The former St Margaret's School (1) that stands on the Site dates probably to the

early-19th century and is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map (Aberdeen, 1869, Sheet LXXV.11). The building follows the plan of previous rig development on this side of Gallowgate, with the traditional gable-end to the street, stretching from south-west to north-east. The same building continues to be depicted on subsequent maps, indicating that there has been little development of the area since at least the 19th century.

Archaeological Remains within the vicinity of the Proposed Development (Figure 2)

Within c. 500 m of the proposed development large scale excavations have been carried out at 45-75 Gallowgate (8, 9), Gallowgate Middle School (3), Upperkirkgate (12) and St Paul's Street (7, 11). A number of small trial trench investigations and archaeological watching briefs have also been carried out, largely during service repairs or road maintenance, at West North Street (2), Gallowgate (5), Littlejohn Street (6), Loch Street (10) and Berry Street (13). All of these investigations have uncovered deep complex deposits that generally range in date from the 12th to the 20th centuries indicating that the area around Gallowgate was occupied from the early medieval period onwards. The investigations have found that, even in areas that have been later disturbed by 19th and 20th century development (for example at 56 Gallowgate (4) in front of Greyfriars House), at least some medieval deposits are likely to survive and that, in general, substantial archaeological levels are preserved within the city limits.

The depth of archaeological deposits varies throughout the Gallowgate area, although in most cases archaeological material (medieval/post-medieval) has been found to at least a depth of 1.5 m to 2 m, and up to 4 m deep in areas to the south of the Site (for example at sites 3 and 7-12). The deposits uncovered have been particularly rich in organic material (environmental remains) and organic artefacts, with large assemblages of leather and wooden artefacts; remains of timber structures; and cess pits containing plant, insect and parasite remains having been uncovered; a particularly large assemblage of leather fragments, including 277 fragments of cobbler waste and discarded boots, was recovered from the excavations at 47-75 Gallowgate (8) (Cameron & Stones 2001). The uncovering of a late-19th century wooden pipe, during investigations in front of St Paul's Church (9), also indicates that some later waterlogged deposits survive in areas.

Evidence from the archaeological record indicates that industrial activities including cobbling/leather working, tanning works, fish-processing and butchery were being carried out

within this area of Aberdeen, particularly between the 12th and 14th centuries. Large numbers of small finds have been recovered from excavated areas, in addition to the well-preserved organic material, including large assemblages of medieval pottery, animal bone and industrial waste.

The remains of timber buildings have been discovered, including post-and wattles structures dated to the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries at Gallowgate Middle School (3) and 42 St Paul's Street (11), just south of the proposed development. The remains of later (15th-17th century) stonewalled buildings were discovered within the frontage area of Upperkirkgate (12) (Dennison and Stones 1997).

The bulk of the material recovered from this area of Aberdeen relates to the medieval and post-medieval periods; nevertheless, excavations at St Paul's Street (13) to the south of the proposed development did uncover a substantial assemblage of worked flint, including cores, scrapers and flakes, which were dated to the Mesolithic period. These finds, along with others at various sites within Aberdeen, for example at the Green, indicate early prehistoric activity in the area.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE SITE

Flint working debris found at St Paul's Street hints at some potential prehistoric activity in the area. However, the most common finds from previous archaeological excavations in the vicinity of the Site are deep, well-preserved medieval and post-medieval deposits. Substantial artefactual assemblages and waterlogged remains have been recovered from these excavations. The evidence points to occupation of this area from at least the 12th century.

Cartographic evidence indicates that the proposed development site is near the medieval street frontage and suggests that there has been a lack of significant development in the area. The Category C Listed Building of probable early-19th century date which stands on the Site has no cellars further indicating that there has likely been little disturbance of the deposits underlying the building. Bore-hole investigations carried out at the site (Ramsay & Chalmers 2007) record up to 4m of made-ground around the edge of the proposed development, which appears over much of its depth to be of probable 20th century origins and hence not of archaeological interest

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The former St Margaret's School (1) is a Category C Listed building. Refurbishment or demolition of the building would require Listed Building Consent.

Taking account of the results from previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the proposed development and the depth of made-ground at the Site, it is possible that buried archaeological remains of medieval and later date survive on the site. However, the results of bore-hole investigations indicate that it is likely that much of the made-ground is of 20th century origins and hence not archaeologically important.

Seaforth Developments proposes to conduct trial pitting and additional bore hole investigation in the near future. Archaeological monitoring of that work will enhance the understanding of the likely archaeological potential of the site, including an understanding of how much of the made-ground is of modern origins, and will enable the development of an appropriate programme of mitigation.

6. REFERENCES

Cartographic Sources

Roy, W (1747-55) Military Survey of Scotland.

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- Murray, H. (1982a) '56 Gallowgate, 1979', in Murray, J C, Excavations in the medieval burgh of Aberdeen 1973-81, *Soc Antiq Scot Monograph*, Series No.2. p110.
- Murray, H. (1982b) 42 Loch Street, 14-21 Drum's Lane 1979', in Murray, J C, Excavations in the medieval burgh of Aberdeen 1973-81, *Soc Antiq Scotland Monograph Series* no.2, p 109.
- Murray, H. (1985) Excavation of 45-47 Gallowgate, Aberdeen', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, vol. 114, p 303-13.

Online Resources

Royal Commissions on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) PASTMAP online data service, available at: <http://pastmap.org.uk/>

APPENDIX 1: Archaeological sites and features within the proposed development site

No: 1

Name: Aberdeen Voluntary Services (alt: St Margaret's School)

Class: Building

NGR: 394146, 806707

Status: Category C Listed (HBNum: **50053**)

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 2699

Source: Statutory List; RCAHMS

Description

The Statutory List records that this probable early-19th century building was a former school before being converted to retail premises in the late-20th century. Few such early granite structures have survived in the Gallowgate area making the early stonework of the south-west and north-west elevations particularly valuable survivors of early building in this area. The fact that the property follows the plan of narrow rig development, with traditional gable-end to the street, stretching from south-west to north-east, further elevates the historic importance of the building. The early south-west gabled range is probably the former St Margaret's Home, a little-altered building which subsequently became St Margaret's school and was later taken over as a state school before closure in the late-20th century when the whole property was converted to a warehouse/shop by Voluntary Services Aberdeen. The later wing may be contemporary with the nearby St Margaret of Scotland Episcopal Church.

APPENDIX 2: Archaeological sites and features within the vicinity of the proposed development site

No: 2

Name: West North Street

Class: Watching Brief – Road surface and bedding material

NGR: 394242, 806710

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 2728

Source: RCAHMS

Description

A watching brief took place at West North Street in July 2014. The main leg of the excavation trench contained road surface and bedding material on top of natural subsoil. This carriageway represents the widening of West North Street which would have cut into the hill to the west of the current road.

No: 3

Name: Gallowgate Middle School

Class: Excavation – well-preserved 12-14th century (medieval) industrial activity

NGR: 9421, 0659

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 286

Source: RCAHMS; Cameron & Stones 2001

Description

The demolition of the Gallowgate Middle School permitted excavation of a potential medieval frontage site in 1991, with excavations concentrating on the west half of the site where it fronted onto Gallowgate. Preservation of organic material and artefacts was very good, including a large assemblage of pottery, leather, animal remains and wooden objects. Within the excavated area several phases of use and occupation of the site was uncovered dating from the 12th-13th centuries through to the 14th century. Notable structures and areas of activity include:

- small pits and a posthole, suggesting a 12th century wooden structure
- evidence for shoe-making and cobbling- a large late-12th/early-13th century pit which contained over 50 boots and shoes, belt fragments and leather trimmings from shoemaking suggesting waste from a cobbling area.
- remains of what may have been a post-and-wattle 12-13th century structure
- remains of a 13th to 14th timber structure
- evidence for the presence of four medieval buildings
- hint at flax production on site
- evidence for manufacturing – goat horn cores and antler working

The remains indicate that this area of Aberdeen was an industrial zone in the medieval period.

No: 4**Name:** 56 Gallowgate, Greyfriars House**Class:** Excavation – 19th century cellars**NGR:** 394170, 806570**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 93**Source:** RCAHMS; Dennison & Stones 1997**Description**

The pavement in front of Greyfriars House, Gallowgate was excavated to a depth of 1.5m to provide foundations for a new entrance and ramp (Murray 1982a). Observation showed the site to be within the 19th century cellars and to have been disturbed to a level just above natural. A humic soil above natural, which may have been medieval, yielded bone but no datable finds. The original east frontage of Gallowgate is now below the street due to road widening earlier in the century.

No: 5**Name:** 52 Gallowgate**Class:** Watching Brief – thick deposit of medieval midden material**NGR:** 394170, 806560**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 96**Source:** RCAHMS**Description**

Thick organic medieval deposits were observed in service trenches dug when laying a telephone cable in Gallowgate, between St Paul Street and Upperkirkgate; pottery, leather, slag and bone were recovered. No evidence of earlier street surfaces was noted as the ground was totally disturbed by existing service trenches (Murray 1979b; 1982a).

No: 6**Name:** Littlejohn Street**Class:** Watching Brief – thick deposit of medieval midden material**NGR:** 394190, 806520**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 98**Source:** RCAHMS**Description**

Observation of service trenches when laying a new telephone cable showed that in Littlejohn Street there were thick organic midden layers at the west end, from the top of the hill to approximately halfway down the hill where they ceased abruptly. This confirms the estimated extent of the medieval town in this direction. There was no surviving evidence of a ditch or any boundary, but it is unlikely that a fence would have been identifiable in the very narrow trenches. No evidence of earlier street surfaces was seen as the ground was totally disturbed by existing service trenches. Medieval pottery, leather, slag and bone were recovered (Murray 1979b; 1982a).

No: 7

Name: St Paul Street

Class: Excavation – thick deposit of medieval midden material

NGR: 394060, 806520

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 95

Source: RCAHMS

Description

Thick organic medieval deposits were observed in trenches dug at the east end of St Paul Street in 1979 when laying a telephone cable; there was little medieval evidence from the west end of the street (Murray 1979a; 1982a).

No: 8

Name: 45-75 Gallowgate

Class: Excavation – extensive 13th-19th century activity

NGR: 394100, 806500

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 80

Source: RCAHMS; Dennison & Stones 1997; Cameron & Stones 2001

Description

Excavations were carried out in advance of redevelopment of the court of St Paul's Episcopal Church (Evan 1986, Murray 1979b, Murray 1979c, Murray 1982a, Murray 1985). A long and complex sequence of occupation at the site was uncovered, beginning in the early-13th century and continuing into the 19th century. Activity included:

- early 13th century sand and gravel extraction works and later dumping of extensive midden deposits;
- division of the area into plots during the 14th century and industrial activity connected with leather working (tannery) – the entire yard was cobbled and at least three kilns or ovens were set into the cobbling along with a number of tanning pits;
- in the late medieval period, new plot boundaries were established;
- early-17th century domestic housing were erected on the site;
- later-17th century rebuilding of the domestic housing and excavation of massive cellars;
- 17th century use of backland plots for blacksmith and cobbler workshop areas;
- Around 1720-21 the site was cleared for the construction of an Episcopal church;
- Rebuilding of the street frontage between 1757 and 1782 and creation of an entrance courtyard to the church;
- Building of a new manse in 1843 and the rebuilding of the church in 1866.

In addition to the main phases of activity on the site the excavation also uncovered finds and waste debris which hinted at various medieval industrial activities being carried out on, or near, the site, including bronze casting, fish processing and leather working. All of the evidence suggests that the west side of the Gallowgate was being utilised for 'antisocial' industries in the backlands away from the main domestic areas of the medieval town centre (Cameron & Stones 2001).

No: 9**Name:** Gallowgate**Class:** Excavation – wooden pipe (architectural)**NGR:** 394100, 806500**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 679**Source:** RCAHMS**Description**

A wooden pipe was uncovered during excavations in 1985 in front of St Paul's Church at a depth of 0.9 m. The pipe was in good condition, measured 12.8 m long and comprised strips of wood 3.4 m long made watertight with pitch. This is the first such discovery from the Aberdeen area and is believed to date from the late-1860s.

No: 10**Name:** 42 Loch Street**Class:** Excavation – cess pit, coin(s) (13th Century)**NGR:** 394050, 806510**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 92**Source:** RCAHMS**Description**

Excavations carried out in 1979 revealed evidence that this area was used for backland dumping and cultivation during the medieval period. Two silver pennies, of Edward I, were found by workmen and a cess pit was uncovered in one of the excavated trenches. The pit, which contained shell, bone and nut fragments but no datable material was found to be overlain by post-medieval garden soil suggesting a medieval/post-medieval date for the feature (Murray 1982b).

No: 11**Name:** 42 St Paul Street**Class:** Excavation – Extensive 12th to 16th century activity; Prehistoric (Mesolithic) evidence (flint)**NGR:** 394120, 806490**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 86**Source:** RCAHMS; Cameron & Stones 2001**Description**

Excavations were carried out at 42 St Paul's street in 1977-78 (Brooks 1974) and examined an area formerly occupied by warehouses. The work uncovered well-preserved and undisturbed medieval deposits which were rich in organic debris. There was evidence for activity from at least the 12th century to the 16th century, including:

- rigs of 12th century date;
- medieval pits, midden deposits and a bread oven;
- traces of five houses dating to the 13th and 14th centuries.

Documentary evidence indicated that the area had been used for work- and craft-shops since at least the 16th century.

A substantial assemblage of worked flint was recovered from the excavation with a total 142 pieces of flint being recovered. The bulk of these (93 pieces) were identified as being of Mesolithic date, including cores, microburins, a burin spall, scrapers, a wedge and a number of flakes – hinting at prehistoric activity on the site.

No: 12

Name: 30-46 Upperkirkgate

Class: Excavations – Extensive 12th to 20th century activity

NGR: 394000, 306400

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: N/a

Source: Dennison & Stones 1997; Cameron & Stones 2001

Description

Excavations were carried out at 30-46 Upperkirkgate in 1987 in advance of the construction of the Bon Accord shopping centre. The excavation covered a large area encompassing former backland site. It was found that much of the late medieval/early post-medieval deposits had been scarped during 19th century development, but sufficient remained to allow some archaeological interpretation of the area. Remains on site included:

- Clay foundation probably the remains of a 13th to 14th century boundary
- Remains of a possible timber building near the frontage
- Number of medieval pits, which may have originally been storage pits
- 14th century bread oven

Although, not so richly bestowed with well-preserved archaeological remains as the excavations at St Paul's Street (11) the excavation did uncover some particularly rich waterlogged organic material and unusual, and well-preserved, early artefacts. These included 11th-12th century pottery, the earliest recovered from Aberdeen, and a series of pits that contained mixed organic rubbish including faecal material; the material from these pits were particularly rich in plant, insect and parasite remains.

No: 13

Name: Berry Street

Class: Excavation – medieval midden material

NGR: 394000, 306600

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 240

Source: RCAHMS

Description

During the excavation of a service trench, animal bone and medieval pottery were removed from a midden layer c. 2 m deep (Cameron 1990).

No: 14

Name: Loch Street, Ogston and Tennant Factory Site

Class: Excavation – no archaeological remains

NGR: 394000, 806700

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 255

Source: RCAHMS; Dennison & Stones 1997

Description

Five trenches were excavated (Cameron 1991) to assess the archaeological potential of the site once occupied by the Ogston and Tennant Soap and Candle factory. The site is adjacent to areas where substantial medieval remains extending back from Gallowgate were recorded during previous excavations (for example **5**, **6**, and **13**). No medieval backland traces were uncovered on this site, disturbance probably from the construction of the factory had removed an earlier material, whilst examination of natural levels adjacent to modern Loch Street indicated that the eastern edge of the medieval loch did not impinge upon the area of the site.

No: 15

Name: Mars Castle

Class: Castle (former)

NGR: 394110, 806760

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 25

Source: RCAHMS; Dennison & Stones

Description

The RCAHMS records that this was the site of the former Mar's Castle', known locally as the 'Old Castle' dating to the 15th century. It is recorded that in 1866 there were remains of walls on the site but that these were believed not to have been strong enough to belong to the castle and it is known that the building was considerably altered in the mid-19th century to form retail and domestic dwellings (Courage 1856; Ordnance Survey Name Book 1866). The RCAHMS recorded that today no upstanding remains of the castle survive and its site now lies in a built-up part of the city.

No: 16

Name: Windmill

Class: Building (former)

NGR: 394100, 806800

Status: N/a

NMRS Ref: NJ90NW 413

Source: RCAHMS; Gordon's Map 1661

Description

The RCAHMS note that Milne (1911) records that this was the site of a former windmill erected in c.1602 and still extant in 1661. No further information is provided.

Information from Gordon's 1661 maps suggests that this mill may have actually been located further to the north-east and closer to West North Street, than the location recorded by the RCAHMS.

No: 17**Name:** Town Gates**Class:** City gate (former)**NGR:** 394090, 806820**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 24 / NJ90NW 24.1

Source: RCAHMS; Dennison & Stones 1997

Description

The RCAHMS records that this was the site of the former Gallowgate or Causey Port (gate) built before 1440. About 1768 the council decided that these were such an obstruction to traffic that they should be demolished. By the end of the 18th century they had all been removed and neither sketch nor description survives.

The port was the most northerly port controlling movement between 'New Aberdeen' and 'Old Aberdeen' and the north. At its demolition, sometime between 1769 and 1778 its site had long been on Port Hill, however, it is possible that in earlier medieval times the port may have been positioned further south and that it was gradually moved further north in response to town expansion. No physical evidence for this port survives today and, to date, archaeological investigations has produced no direct evidence of the structure (Dennison & Stones 1997)

No: 18**Name:** Young Street**Class:** Street (former)**NGR:** 394020, 806800**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** NJ90NW 1414

Source: RCAHMS

Description

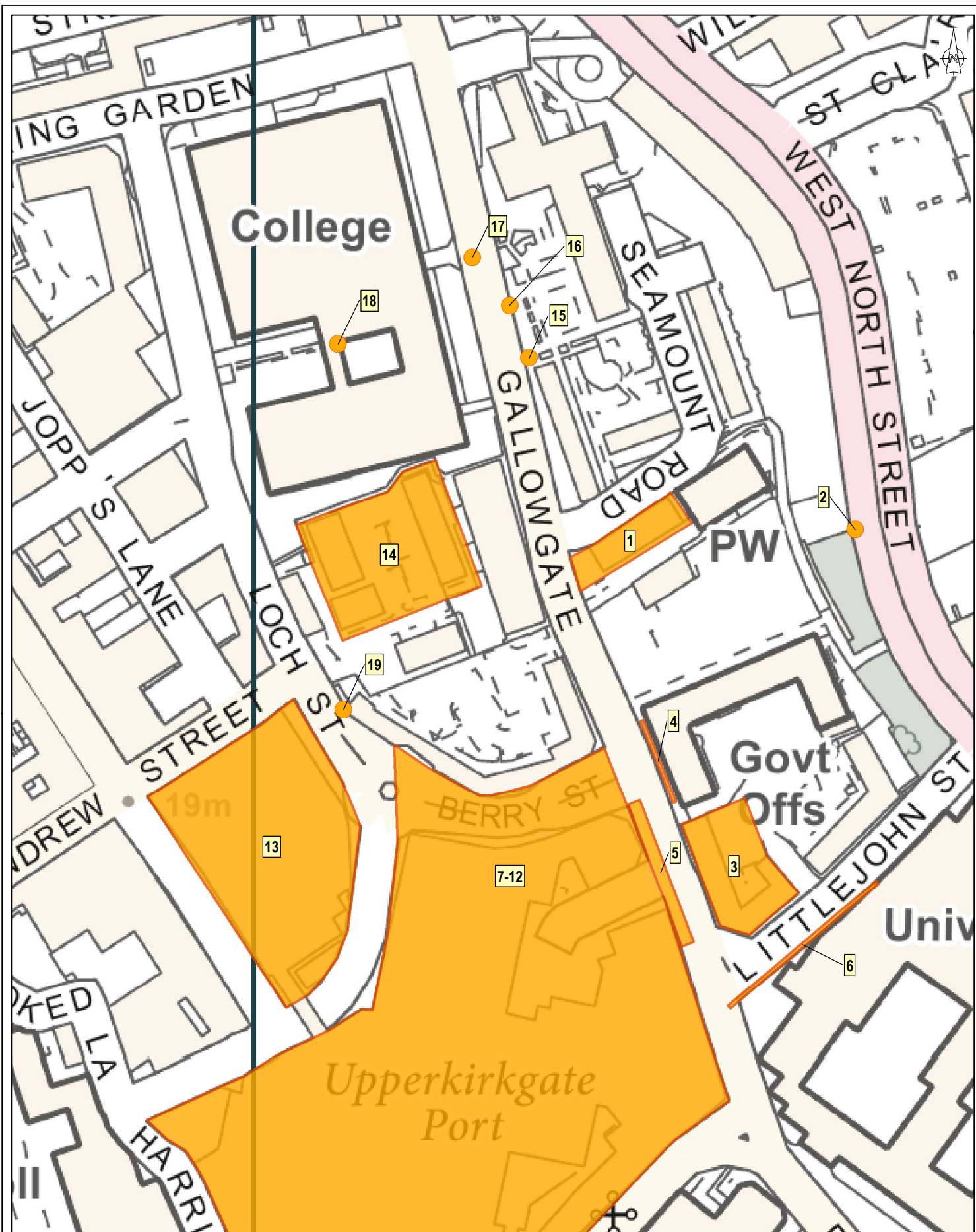
The RCAHMS records that former Younger Street is no longer in existence due to construction of Aberdeen College of Further Education

No: 19**Name:** Loch Street Services**Class:** Excavation – Midden deposit**NGR:** 394000,806600**Status:** N/a**NMRS Ref:** N/a

Source: Dennison & Stones 1997

Description

During the excavation of a service trench, animal bone and medieval pottery were removed from a midden layer c. 2 deep, located adjacent to the supposed edge of the medieval loch.



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Title: Archaeological sites and features within the vicinity of the proposed development

Project:

Gallowgate Aberdeen

Fig.No:	Report:	Drawn by:	CKD:	Date:
2	DBA	KH	MH	10/09/2015

Client:	Seaforth Developments Ltd
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