

PETERSEAT, TORRY BATTERY AND ST FITTICK'S CHURCH, ABERDEEN

AUTHORS NAMES REMOVED AS PER PSAS GUIDLINES

1 ABSTRACT

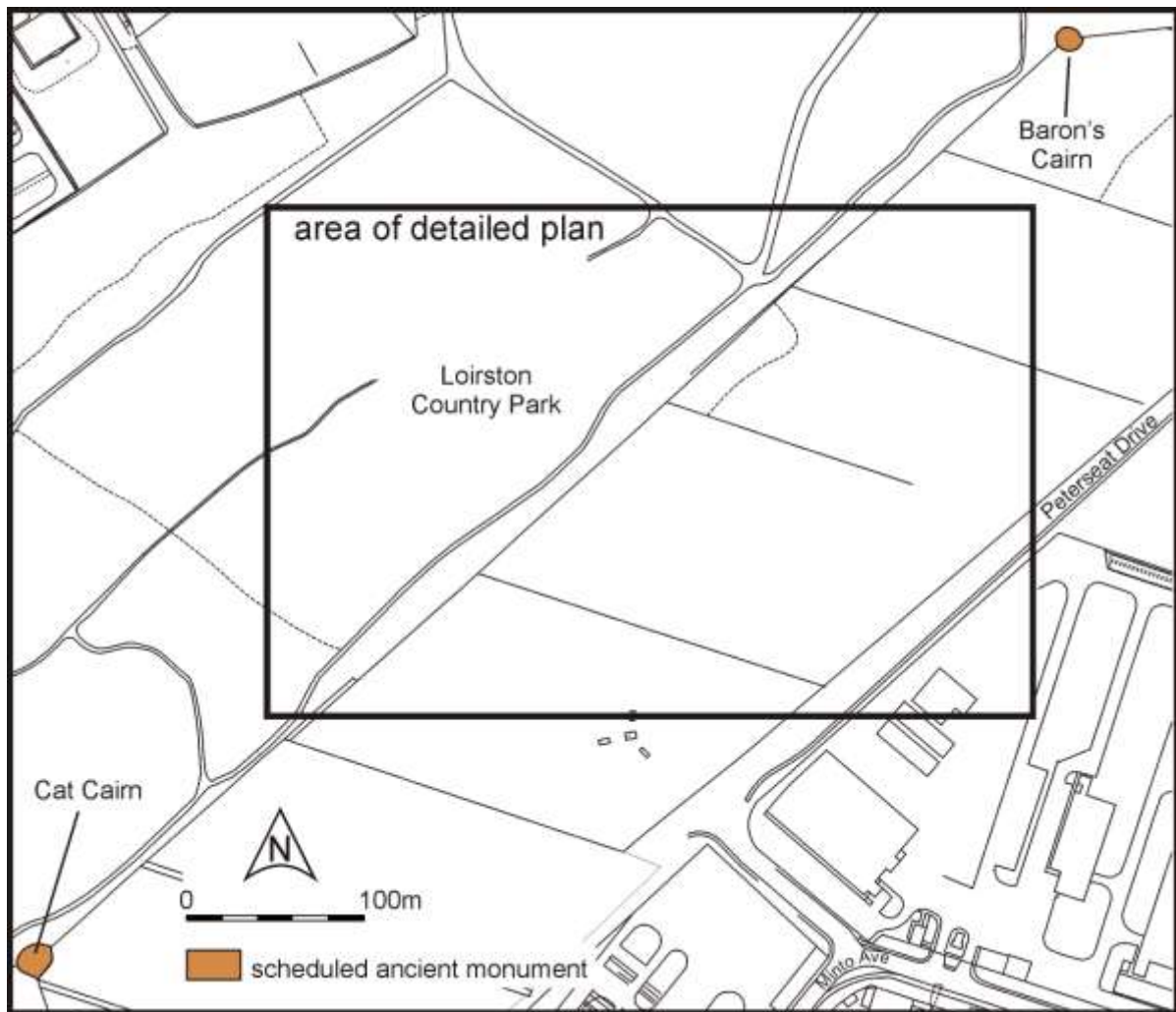
Excavations at Peterseat Anti-Aircraft (Ack-Ack) Battery later converted as a Prisoner of War camp (Nigg Hostel), Torry Battery, a mid 19th-century battery used during the First and Second World wars and St Fittick's Church, a church dating back to the 12th century. The excavations were carried out between 2001 and 2004 and were supplemented with historical research and oral history and produced a wealth of information about this area of the City during the 19th and 20th centuries. The excavation at Peterseat was funded by Forbes Homes; the St Fittick's Church and Torry Battery excavations were funded by Nave Nortrail, Historic Scotland and Aberdeen City Council.



Illus 1 Location of sites in this paper

2 INTRODUCTION

Three sites targeted for archaeological and historical research between 2001 and 2004 were Peterseat (NJ 9565 0339), Torry Battery (NJ 9565 0339) and St Fittick's Church (NJ 96270 04958) (Illus 1). Peterseat was a developer-funded Project (Forbes Homes) and Torry Battery and St Fittick's Church were both research excavations funded primarily by Historic Scotland and supported by Aberdeen City Council. No archaeological work had taken place previously at Torry Battery or St Fittick's Church but several archaeological interventions had taken place in the area of Tullos Hill during development work. Where appropriate these have been summarised in this paper. Torry Battery is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and SAM consent was secured to carry out this work. The excavations at Torry Battery and St Fittick's took place on land owned and managed by Aberdeen City Council; Peterseat is largely on land owned by Forbes Homes.



Illus 2 Plan of camp remains showing Cat and Baron's Cairns

3 PETERSEAT

This area to the south of Aberdeen City is bounded on the north-west by Aberdeen City Council land, to the south-east by Peterseat Drive to the west by Altens Farm Road and to the east by the remains of an Aberdeen City Council Refuse tip ('Ness Farm tip'; now closed and being capped). There are four Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity of the current site. To the south-west is Cat Cairn (NJ90SE 5) and a newly-scheduled cairn (NJ90SE 123) and to the north-east Baron's Cairn (NJ90SE 6) all parts of a Bronze Age cairnfield on the top of this ridge (Illus 2).

3.1 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

Several archaeological interventions have taken place in the area of Tullos Hill. Where appropriate these have been incorporated in this report. In 2005 a watching brief was maintained by Murray Archaeological Services over development in the field to the south-west of the current site. Although a number of features were recorded, they were identified as either stone holes or as drainage associated with 19th and 20th-century farming operations (Murray 2005, 11). In 2008-9 Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit monitored soil stripping at Site 19 to the west of the current site and recorded field drains but no earlier remains (Peters 2009). In 2011 an evaluation was carried out on another parcel of land immediately west of Baron's Cairn. Further parts of the WWII camp were uncovered and recorded (Cameron 2011 ADD DES page numbers) and these are summarised in this report. In 2009 a field evaluation, recording and excavation project by Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit at Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill Site revealed WWII remains and a small number of flints were recovered (Peters 2009, 12-13).

Survey work in 2004 by CFA Archaeology recorded 150 sites ranging in date from prehistoric to mid-20th century in Aberdeen City Council land north of the current site.

3.2 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Paradoxically there is least too say concerning the most recent of the structures under discussion here. Most modern camp lists are based on archaeological work, ironic

considering the camps existed a mere 60 years ago. Despite an increased amount of work, mainly archaeological but also historical, many camps remain undiscovered.

This camp was adapted out of Peterseat farm, as a farm it post dates the 1770s, when a survey map of the area was drawn which showed that the farm did not exist at that time. In its first incarnation during the Second World War this site was used as a Heavy Anti Aircraft Battery. The distinction between a light and a heavy anti-aircraft battery is determined by the calibre of weapons and their ballistic properties.

This battery was one of a number which were constructed in and around Aberdeen during WWII. Others were located at the North Pier, Pocra Quay, Kings Links and Torry Battery, as has been seen, was adapted for use. Aberdeen experienced 27 air raids between June 1940 and April 1943. This was due to the city's strategic position on the North Sea, its industrial output and its proximity to both the important shipping lanes of the north sea and to Axis occupied Denmark and Norway. Most of these were so called 'tip and run' raids carried out by armed reconnaissance planes that prowled the skies on spying missions, or by bombers searching for shipping to attack. If these maritime targets were not apparent, then the pilots would dump their bombs on a secondary target, such as Aberdeen, before returning home to occupied Europe.

Prior to late 1940 most batteries were temporary affairs with earth banks, tents and mobile guns. In general the proficiency of these sites developed as the war progressed: by 1943 the spotting and trajectory processes were all carried out electronically. Whilst in 1944 the proximity fuse was introduced. This allowed the shell to be detonated when it detected the presence of an aircraft nearby. HAA batteries used large calibre guns in order to reach high

flying aircraft; in WWII the standard gun was the 3.7 inch gun, which had an effective ceiling of 32,000 feet.

There were eight gun emplacements at this battery site. Five were arranged in an arc around a command post, the three other guns were located in an adjacent field. The command post itself housed an identification, or spotters, telescope along with a height or range finder and a predictor and mechanical computer which was used to predict the position of a target and plot the shell's trajectory.

In 1945 the army, following the cessation of hostilities in Europe, vacated the camp and prisoners of war were moved in. Mostly those prisoners housed here were Germans but also Italians. In general these were younger men who had been conscripted into the war and may not even have been involved in any fighting.

In the summer of 1941, with the dual purpose of meeting Britain's heavy labour requirements and reducing the number of Allied troops in Africa engaged in guarding prisoners, the War Cabinet authorised a more ambitious programme. Consequently, batches of Italian prisoners were shipped to Britain on a regular basis, and by the end of 1942 over 39,000 had been put to work. These numbers swelled dramatically after the surrender of the Axis forces in North Africa in May 1943, and by the end of the war there were around 132,000 Italian POWs working in Britain. Whilst the vast majority of these were used in agriculture, the others were employed as labourers in, for example, timber production, limestone quarrying, brickmaking, and road-repairing. The terms of the Geneva Convention stipulated that prisoners of war should not be forced to work while in captivity. However, given the choice, many prisoners of war chose to work rather than sit around the camp doing nothing.

Following the Normandy landings in June 1944, and the Allies' subsequent advance through France, the Italians were joined by large numbers of German prisoners. By the end of the war there were 200,000 German POWs on British soil. In order to accommodate this large prisoner of war population, hundreds of camps of varying sizes were established in Britain: large 'Working Camps' holding upwards of 1,500 men acted as administrative centres for networks of smaller 'Satellite Camps' and 'Hostels'. Generally, these were conveniently situated in those areas where labour was most urgently required. The North East of Scotland was certainly no exception: a number of camps were scattered throughout the area, mostly containing men employed in agricultural work.

Alford, Ballater, Boyndie, Dallachy, Spey Bay, Dallas, Deer Park, Monymusk (Camp no. 111), Duff House, Fochabers, Harlaw, Inch, Huntly, Kintore, Milltimber, Laurencekirk (Camp no. 75), Peterculter, Pitmedden, Potarch, Rickarton, Salthouse, Peterhead, Craigellachie (Camp no. 67), Seaton, Stuartfield (Camp no. 110) and at Peterseat on Tullos Hill

The camp itself was an adaptation of the HAA battery. It was of course surrounded by a barbed wire fence and was composed, internally, of a number of nissen huts, as well as a football field. Each hut had a stove inside. The prisoners did work in the local communities as well as playing football against the local amateur teams. The camp remained in use until 1947 when it was sold to a local farmer, one Herbert Anderson. It must be stressed that in the case of camps such as these a considerable amount of work, both archaeological and historical remains to be done nationally, especially at the level of constructing a clear list of camps, as often published lists have significant omissions, indeed Peterseat is regularly omitted.

3.3 THE 2001 EXCAVATION

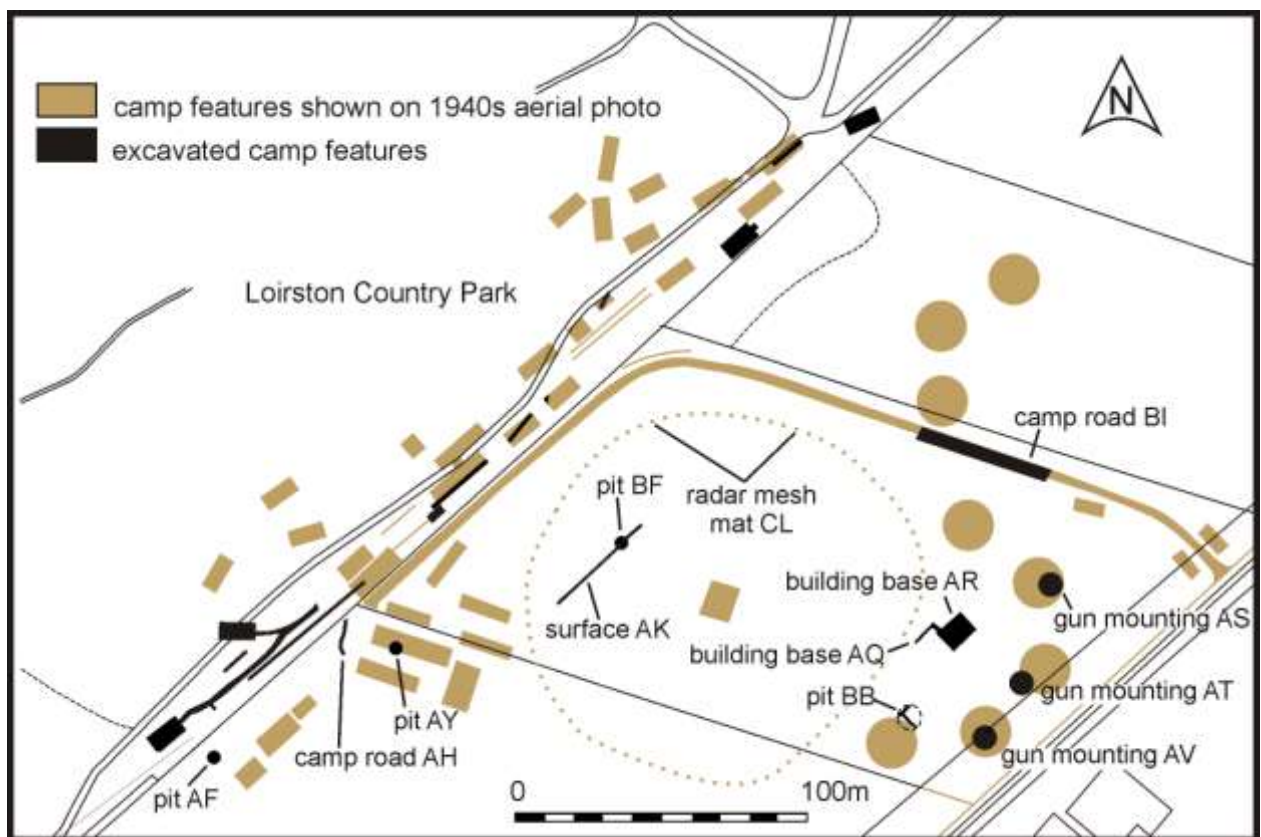
The current site was assessed and prior to the redevelopment of former farming land for light industrial use excavated (Cameron 2001, 7). Nineteen trenches were distributed across the potential development area (Illus 2); a small number of flints were recovered from the topsoil and the fields contained some field drains which are detailed in archive.

3.4 THE MILITARY CAMP

A heavy anti-aircraft ('AA', 'Archie' or 'Ack-Ack') battery is known to have been situated some 300m SW of the summit of Tullos Hill (NJ90SE 20). The battery was designated AB2 by the war office. The position consisted of a full battery of eight gun-emplacements, five in the same field as the former Peterseat Cottage (NJ 9572 0341) and three in the field to the north-east. The command position was central to the group of five emplacements and the accommodation camp was situated on both sides of a field boundary 150m to the NW. The remains of the battery are visible on an RAF aerial photograph which can be viewed at <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/80762/details/aberdeen+torry+battery/>.

The battery used visual observation and later had a radar guidance installation (GL MkII) to locate and track enemy planes. Interviews were carried out as part of this work with staff who functioned as plotters and predictors in the camp.

Trenches were positioned to sample the various features of the camp and determine how well preserved they were. Herbert Anderson who farmed the land before and after the Second World War, reported that the land was very poor after the Ministry of Defense removed the camp and he was continually finding lead paint tins and fragments of corrugated iron and wood (H Anderson, pers comm).



Illus 3 Plan showing WWII remains

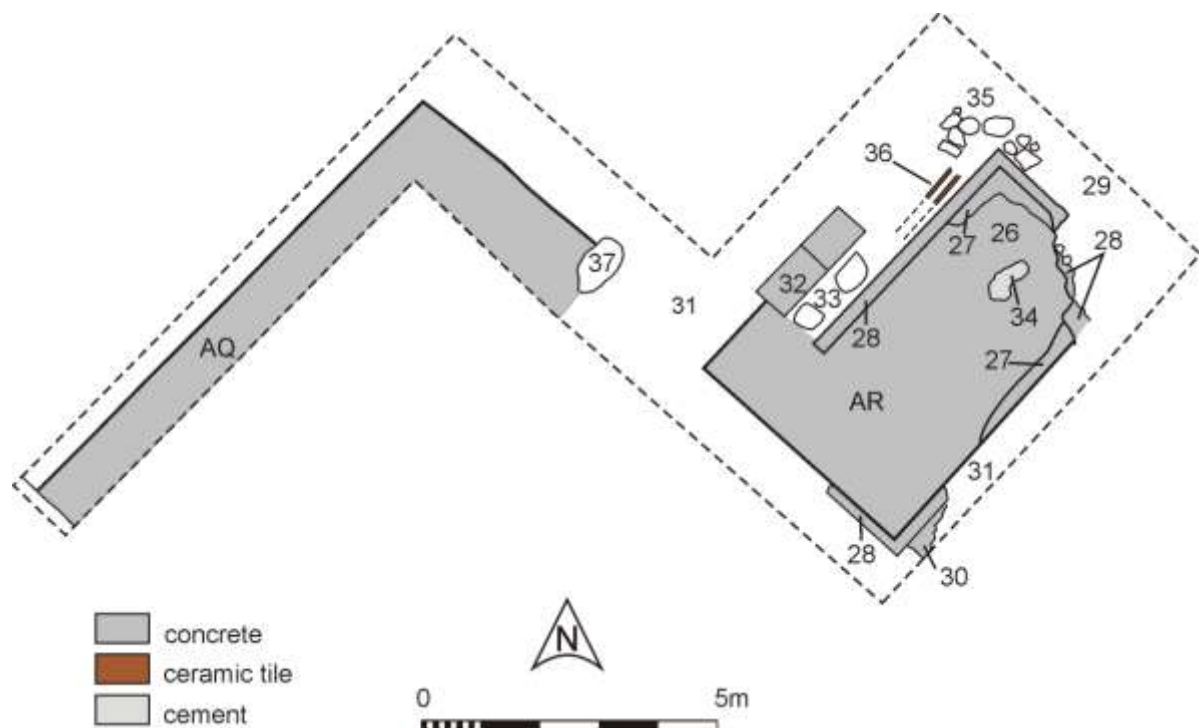
3.4.1 Hut bases

Three hut bases are extant on the north side of the summit of the hill in Aberdeen City Council land and five others were uncovered during work at the site in 2009-10. Very little evidence of hut bases was found during the 2001 excavation as after 1948 the bases were

removed to allow the land to revert to farm land. However, a NW-SE sub-rectangular area of hardcore and pink clay (AI) 17 x 5m in size and dug 0.2m into the natural subsoil, formed a relatively flat surface and was probably the foundation for a rectangular hut (Illus 3)

3.4.2 *Command post*

Concrete building bases AQ and AR were the remains of the command post. AQ was 8.3 x 3.3m in size and was under water for most of the time during the archaeological evaluation. AR, 5.9 x 3.9m in size, was constructed on a raft of medium boulders. Concrete had been poured into wooden shuttering over the foundation. Concrete blocks recorded around the structure may have been the remains of the walls (Illus 4-5).



Illus 4 Plan showing command post AR/AQ

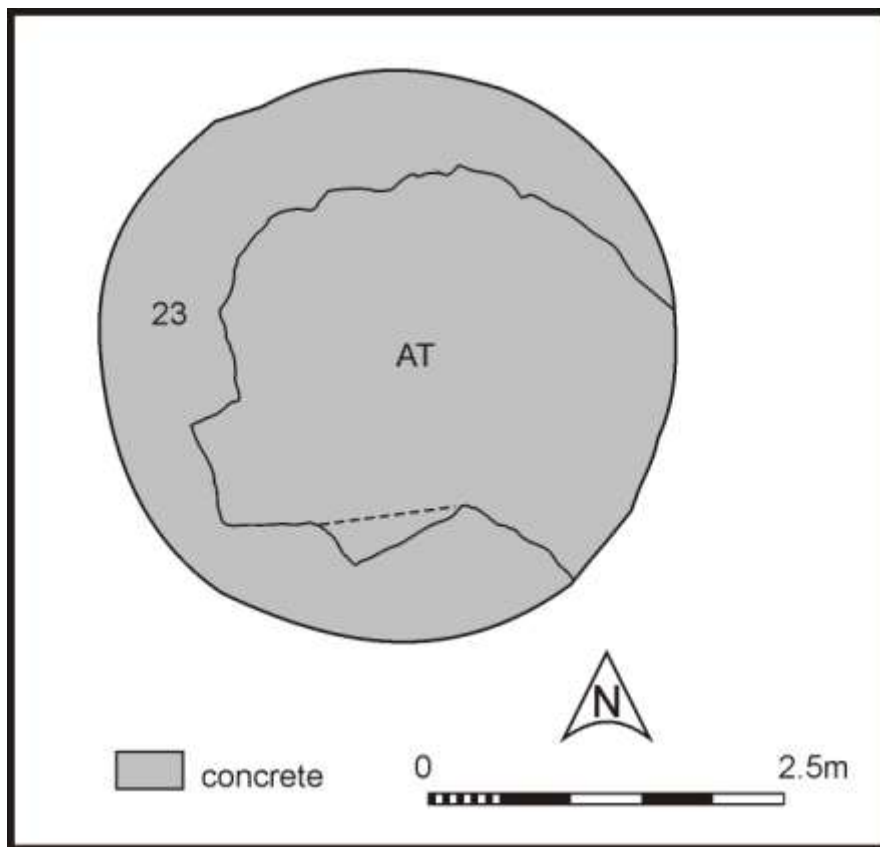


Illus 5 command post AR showing construction techniques (below)

The Command Post would have been a one storey building protected by earth banks (Brown *et al* 1996: 52). The Peterseat example follows the standard format with the command post located at the centre of a 130ft (39.6m) radius semi-circle formed by the gun pits. The command post would have been occupied by predictor and plotters who plotted the trajectory of a plane, fed the information to the guns, initially using hand signals but after 1943 electronically. The guns were then aimed at the plotted position. After 1943 the plotters and predictors jobs were done by radar.

3.4.3 *Gun emplacements*

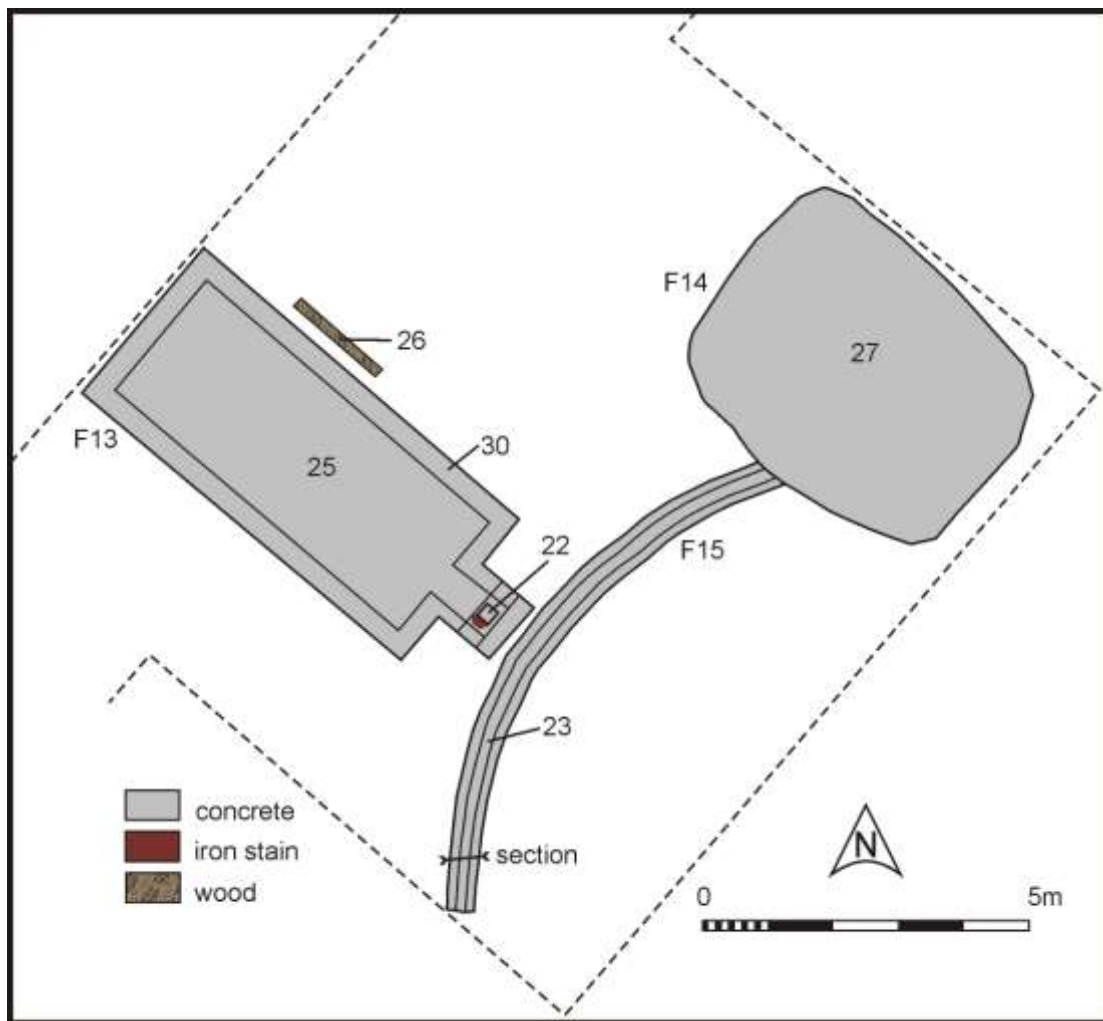
Remains of five (of eight) gun emplacements have been investigated. AS was a 3.6m diameter pit consisting of concrete, hardcore and gravel. AV was only partly revealed and was 2.2m (NE-SW) and 0.70m (NW-SE). It was also filled with concrete, hardcore and gravel. BB was 7.3m diameter, 0.50m deep and was infilled with loam, charcoal, tile, brick, small stones and fragments of concrete. AT (Illus 6) was examined in more depth as it appeared on initial inspection to be more complete. It was circular, 4.10m diameter and contained part of its concrete structure *in situ*. It survived to a depth of 0.48m.



Illus 6 Plan showing foundation for gun emplacement AT

One gun emplacement was found during a subsequent evaluation (Cameron 2100: ppp; Illus 7). F13 is probably a magazine or ammunition store with concrete ducting F15 the electricity

supply between the gun (F14) and the central command post (AQ/AR above). F13 was 2.8m wide and 6.3m long, on a NNW-SSE orientation; the concrete was 25cm thick. A reddish brown stain around the edge of the concrete indicated that the building was constructed of brick. Along the east side of the structure traces of wood survived (26). At the south end an entrance consisted of three steps one with a square socket for a post surrounded by a reddish brown iron stain. Immediately south of this entrance was a semi-circular arc of concrete 0.5m wide and 10m long with a channel 20cm wide in the centre filled with loam. This concrete ducting has been destroyed at the west end but at the east it ended at a rough concrete platform (F14) 5 x 4m in size. The aerial photographs of the WWII heavy anti-aircraft battery show foundation F14 is the remains of a gun emplacement,



Illus 7 Plan showing structures F13, F14 and F15

The gun pit would have consisted of the gun's holdfast (securing bolts) set in a concrete slab surrounded by (usually) six or seven ammunition lockers protected by a blast wall and /or earthen banks (Brown *et al* 1996: 52). The ammunition magazine F13 appears to conform to a standard type, a concrete base surrounded by a brick wall up to 6ft (1.83m) high

Public Record Office documents indicate that there were four guns present in 1942 but by 1943 it had been supplied with an additional four 3.7-inch calibre static guns (RCAHMS CANMORE). The guns were disarmed in 1945 and the 1946 aerial photograph shows that

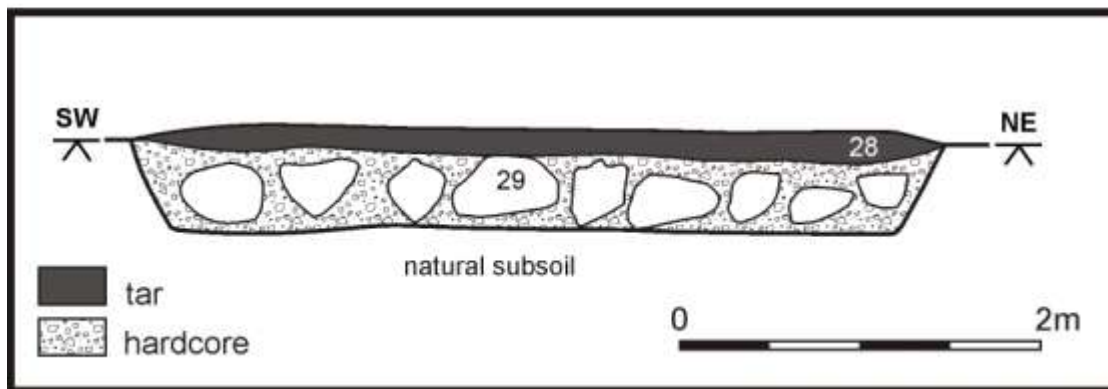
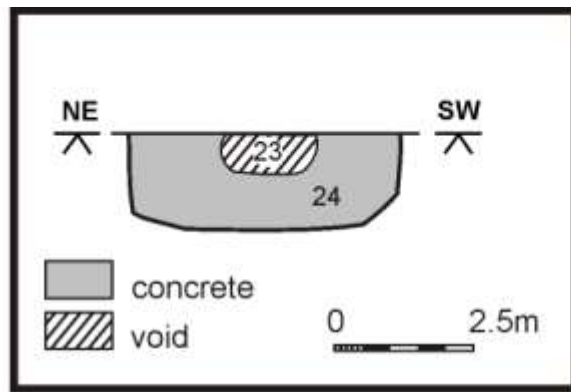
the guns had been dismantled by that date. The gun emplacements were blown up after the war and evidence of this was uncovered during the excavation. They would have been surrounded by sandbags or banked up soil but no evidence of this was found as most of the remains had been removed to below ground level and covered with plough soil after the war.

3.4.4 *Camp road*

From the NW end of hut base AI, the remains of a tarmac road (AH; Illus 8-9) was traced to the north-east corner of the field and across the north edge of the next field. It was then recorded running along the east edge of the next field and down to the field boundary where two huts had functioned as guard posts.



Illus 8 tarmac road surface, AH, scored by later plough marks



Illus 9 Section through F15 (top) and camp road F18 (below)

The standard model of roads leading from the camp entrance via the magazine, around the command post with offshoots to each gun pit (Brown *et al* 1996: 52) appears to have been partially followed at Peterseat. Tracks to some of the gun emplacements can be seen on the aerial photograph but none were located on the excavation suggesting that they were rough tracks rather than tarred or concreted roads.

3.4.5 Radar

A compact pink clay and clinker surface (AK; Illus 10) was recorded but a extant mast did not allow further investigation of this area. Towards its NE end, a pit (BF), 2.6m wide and at

least 1m deep, had been dug to bury metallic waste including painted corrugated iron roofing material, posts and tins and a small amount of 'domestic' rubbish. AK is within the radar netted area and may be the remains of a surface associated with the radar equipment. A well-preserved Battery with radar mounting survives at Blyth
(<http://www.airfieldinformationexchange.org/community/showthread.php?2903-Search-Light-Batteries/page3>)



Illus 10 *Surface AK*

3.4.6 *Other remains*

A number of pits found during the excavation were probably dug to dispose of rubble from the camp either at the time of demolition or by the farmer in the following decades. The former farmer at Peterseat, Herbert Anderson, remembered that rubbish from the huts was buried in pits. Details of these features are recorded in archive.

3.5 THE PRISONER-OF-WAR (POW) CAMP

From 1945-48 the camp was converted for use as a PoW camp for German prisoners.

Administratively it was part of North Hill Camp, Laurencekirk, Kincardineshire (Camp No 75). The guns had been dismantled in 1945 but the concrete-floored Nissen and wooden huts were reused for the prisoners.

Prisoners went to tend local gardens in Torry, one owned by a Mr and Mrs Duncan; as part of this project Sheila Watson (nee Duncan), the daughter of the family, contacted the author as she had kept in touch with one of the former PoWs, Karl Roth. Karl had been captured in NW Germany on 29th March 1945. He was taken to Laurencekirk camp on 4 September 1945 and then to Nigg Hostel where he remained until 10th January 1948, when he was transferred to Camp 114 in Salisbury.

The prisoners slept 15-18 per hut, on wooden bunk beds with straw-filled mattresses with 2 blankets per head. Heating was supplied by a coal stove and there was a bathroom where they had a weekly shower. There was a square for roll calls which were carried out twice daily at the start and one per day latterly. The camp was surrounded by a simple wire fence and the PoWs were treated correctly. A curfew was lifted at the end of the war. When they were captured they continued wearing their uniforms without any signs of rank and later they received second-hand British uniforms which had been dyed. A colourful square had been sewn on the back of the jacket and on one trouser leg.

Karl supplied a great deal of information about life at the camp and allowed access to a variety of objects associated with his stay there. The PoWs worked on various farms and

were occupied constructing prefabricated buildings. There is a photograph of PoWs working on the roads (Harris 1987, pl 115, 116) and Karl Roth's photographs include one of the lorries used to transport the prisoners to their jobs (Illus 11). Karl also took home with him a map showing work locations marked by pin holes.

Karl remembers that they had camp money, but took his remaining money to Salisbury camp on his way home in 1948 and spent it. They were given 6 shillings for a 48 hour working week, later rising to 9 shillings. The prisoners carved wooden toys and sold them or gave them away as presents. Karl also kept his letters home (Illus 12) and a kit bag which he has since donated that to Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums (Illus 13).

3.6 ORAL HISTORY

Reminiscences collected by the author as part of this project, include interviews with several former staff of the Ack-Ack Battery. They were generally fond memories. The food was plain but wholesome; the huts were basic and rather cold but had a stove in the centre with blankets which were not too rough. Women received a sheet to put between them and the blanket but these were not supplied to the men. Memories varied from being allowed one bath per week to sharing bathwater occasionally. The position of the camp on a scrub-covered hill by the coast made it scary some of the time; memories included the sounds of the roaring sea hitting the cliffs, the extreme darkness when crossing the camp at night or sneaking back in after curfew. Access to the camp was either by Wellington Road or from Torry via the railway underpass.



Illus 11 Transport vehicle for taking PoWs to farms; Karl Roth is in the middle



Illus 12 Letter sent by Karl Roth from Nigg camp and postmarked POW Camp No 75



Illus 13 Canvas kit bag donated by Karl Roth to Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Collections (ABDMS 69921),

3.7 FINDS

A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the excavation. Three flints including a possible scraper were found in the topsoil. A selection of 19th to early 20th-century pottery and other finds were also recovered from the topsoil. A small number of finds were associated with the camp including pottery, glass and metal fittings. Details of all finds appear in archive.

3.8 CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological work, historical research and oral history have added hugely to what was known about the Nigg Hostel (Peterseat). Although the remains were very disturbed enough remained to allow confirmation of the camp layout.

4 TORRY BATTERY

Torry Battery was constructed in 1860; many of the elements of the Battery have been demolished or removed. A standing building survey was carried out by Granite City Surveys in 2004 which recorded the current condition of the remaining buildings. The work was funded by Nave Nortrail and was carried out to assess the quality and quantity of the surviving remains.



Illus 14 Entrance into Torry Battery

4.1 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Originally built to defend the port, trade and city of Aberdeen Torry Battery has been many things to many different groups. It is often stated that it was built to defend Aberdeen against an expected French invasion. The occasion of this potential invasion was the succession of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to the Imperial throne of France as Napoleon III. However, the story had become an established ‘fact’ of its history by at least the 1960s. In the 29 March 1962 edition of the *Evening Express* in an article entitled ‘Battery has become a dangerous eyesore’ the following is written: ‘Built in 1860 to withstand an invasion by the French that never materialised.’ Whilst in the *Press and Journal*, of 1966 in an article entitled ‘Built to repel the French’ it is similarly stated that, ‘It was built in 1860 to withstand an invasion of

the French which, in fact, never materialised.’ This, however, is not correct. Britain and France were allies at several points during the reign of Napoleon III.

When the Earl of Aberdeen formed a coalition government in Britain in 1852 he sought to pursue a policy of entente with Napoleon III (Connacher 1968: 38). There was some trepidation about this but the two countries found much common ground in their reaction to Russian expansion within Europe. It should be noted here that this policy of economic warfare caused some friction in British-French relations. In early February 1855 Lord Granville (a leading Whig in parliament and appointed member of the cabinet in 1852; Connacher 1968: 43-4) ‘the deficiencies in blockading Russian ports have arisen in almost every case from the French. In the north they objected to any blockades...In the Black Sea, Hamelin [the French Admiral] had not the will or the means to establish effective Blockades, and was extremely jealous, probably in compliance with orders from home, of giving any sanction to what they deem to be the loose theories of Blockade adopted by us (MSS PRO 30/29/23; Anderson DATE: 260. Despite this fracture in their relations Britain and France remained allies throughout the mid-to-late 1850s.

British French co-operation in the mid to late 1850s was not just limited to the war against Russia. In the second China war Britain and France fought together there because their aims, of Imperial expansion, were comparable. As allies in the Far East Britain and France fought together until 1862 (McCord 1991: 250. Moreover the historian McCord also make the point that Palmerston’s government had even been accused of subservience to the government of Napoleon III (the end of the Crimean war precipitated a crisis in British politics that saw the Aberdeen coalition being overthrown and a new government emerging under Palmerston). This accusation arose because of an attempted assassination of Napoleon III in January 1858:

the conspirators, Italian exiles, were living in Britain. The French wished them extradited for trial. However the British government could not arrest them because there was no law to extradite those accused of conspiracy to commit murder outside of British jurisdiction, thus Palmerston introduced the Conspiracy to Murder Bill (McCord 1991: 251).

However the course of British-French relations were never so smooth. I should, of course, point out that England and France were traditionally enemies in the course of European history. Indeed the situation after the accession of Napoleon III was a fairly new departure.

Torry Point battery was built in 1860 with the stated purpose of defending the port and harbour of Aberdeen. An entry in the council register, dated 6 April 1857, records that a communication from the secretary of state for war had stated that because of ‘the representation made from several localities during the late war pointing out the great insecurity of the commercial parts of the United Kingdom in the event of any desultory attack by an armed force...’ a battery should be constructed at Torry Point (ACR Vol 81: 209). The late war referred to here is the Crimean war of 1854-6, that war produced fears of political instability in Europe and highlighted problems in British military administration and defence. However the origins of the Battery are slightly longer and more complicated than merely arising out of the Crimean War.

The battery was the result of a number of historical forces. The first to be emphasised, and indeed the most important, is that the building of the battery was a conventional policy which sought to provide defence for the port, harbour, trade and city of Aberdeen. In this way the battery at Torry Point was simply the latest in a long line of batteries and fortifications which had existed for this purpose. However the history of the negotiations for the construction of

the battery itself are long and marked by a lack of impetus. The two sides involved were the council of the city and the military authorities of Britain, represented here by the Board of Ordnance. Both recognised that a new battery was needed for Aberdeen, but both sides dragged their feet over what became a very vexed question of finance. The story of these negotiations begins in 1808 and continues on and off until 1860. The Crimean war enters the story at the final stage and acted purely as a spur to the long term plans for a new battery: it provided the impetus which both sides needed.

But it was not until after the conclusion of the war with Russia that the final stages of the negotiations are reached. In either late March or early April of 1857 the council received a communication from a clerk acting on behalf of the secretary of state for war. This reads: 'I am instructed by the secretary of state for war to acquaint you that acting upon the representation made from several localities during the late war pointing out the great insecurity of the commercial parts of the United Kingdom in the event of any desultory attack by an armed force, or enemy's cruisers, his lordship has been induced to cause the subject to be enquired into...' (ACR vol 81: f.209v 23 April 1857). This letter stems from a visit of a committee of officers who had visited Aberdeen with what can only be assumed to have been a similar remit to that of Oldfield back in 1813. They recommended going ahead with a battery at Shortness to cover the entrance and approach to the harbour. They also suggested the erection of a battery at North Beach, which would cover the entrance to the harbour, whilst the old battery of 1780 should be armed with newer guns. Moreover they also set out conditions upon which the land could be granted to the War Office and held by them (ACR vol 81, f.209v-211r). The evidence for this visit and the subsequent report is deduced from internal evidence in the above mentioned letter, full reference, f.209v-211r.

Later in July of 1857 another letter was received from Waddell which outlines that all of the proceedings are going ahead and making preparations for the roup of the lands. This was to be done in accordance with the terms of the Act 3 Geo IV Cap 91 5&6 (ACR vol 81: f.219v-220r, 6 July 1857). Later in November Aberdeen's Links and Bents Committee laid before the Council a copy of their report into the proposed battery on the beach stating that the four gun battery there should go ahead (ACR vol 81, f.242r-243v, 2 November 1857). In early December of 1857 the Council drew up the conditions of the roup (ACR vol 81, Volume 81, f.267v-268r, 7 December). On 4 January 1858 an entry was put into the council register that the lands in question had been sold. This stated that the land for the batteries had been sold by roup (which was a form of public auction), at a rate of one shilling per site, to one William Waddell, an Edinburgh solicitor acting on behalf of the War Department (ACR vol 81: f.2v, 4 January 1858). An entry in the register for March 1858 indicates that a contract was issued for the construction work to begin on the beach battery (ACR vol 81, Volume 82: f.20v-21r, 1 March 1858). This entry also reveals that the contractors in this instance were John Fraser and Son Co., whilst Farquhar and Gill were the plumbers who laid piping from Garvock Street along the margin of the existing road towards the battery site. Care was taken that the links were not damaged by any of the operations concerned with the construction. Please note Garvock Street no longer exists but is in the area of Garvock Wynd. Much later on 5 March 1850 Colonel Skyring, the Commander of the Royal Engineers in the North of Britain wrote to the town clerk requesting permission to run a drain pipe from the toilets in the beach battery to the ordinary high water mark on the beach. The actual contract itself is in National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh (E 886/11/2).

The beach battery was then completed in 1858. However, as a final fop in this narrative: the building of the battery at Torry Point did not commence until the following year. This time it

was the Board which were dragging their heels and the council who had to send a 'respectful' notice to the Board requesting that they undertake the building work. Moreover the entry also reveals that the military had not yet installed guns or stationed men in the battery on the beach (ACR vol 82: f.157v-158r, 5 May 1859). A reply was received to the letter which resulted from that resolution in August of 1859. In which reply it was noted that work would begin on the battery at Torry Point in the following year. Interestingly it also reads: 'Mr Secretary Herbert desires me to point out to you, as the Chief Magistrate of a large city where there is so much valuable property to protect, the importance of providing by local means for manning Batteries for the Defence of coast Towns and Harbours, a duty in which the inhabitants would be so immediately interested (ACR Volume 82, f.182v). Work on the battery at Torry Point did subsequently begin and end in 1860, the necessary granite was extracted from the quarry in the bay of Nigg (ACR Volume 82, f.190v, 3 October 1859). Finally here it is not by any means clear that the proposed battery at the north pier was ever built.

The beach battery when completed was a four gun battery. It does not occur on the 1867 OS map, but does appear on the relevant 1901 sheet. From that source it appears to be an oblong structure. The battery itself survived until 1927. It was removed then as a consequence of plans first detailed and approved by the City Council in 1923 for development and extension of the beach for recreational purposes. The delay between the decision being outlined and then undertaken can be accounted for by two main reasons. First the Council had decided that as far as possible the demolition work was to be undertaken by unemployed labour, thus a number of applications had to be made to the Unemployment Grants Committee to fund the work. Second permission also had to be sought from the War Office in London (Minutes of

the Town Council of Aberdeen, 1922-3, 307-9, and Minutes of the Town Council of Aberdeen, 1927-8: 1413).

Construction began on Torry Point Battery in 1859 and was completed in March 1861, at a total cost of £7236. It was built with granite which had been extracted from a quarry in the Bay of Nigg, unfortunately it has not yet been possible to identify this quarry. The Battery was at first manned by a volunteer force. These forces were another dimension of the new attitudes after the debacle of Crimea: the defence of the nation was to receive a shot in the arm, through the creation of new volunteer defence forces. They were to be trained like the regular army, but would remain as civilians until called on, the forerunner of the Territorial Army. A circular was issued on 12 May 1859 by the Secretary of State for War inviting proposals for raising artillery corps and riflemen on a voluntary basis. On 24 October 1860 the 1st Aberdeenshire Royal Garrison Artillery (Volunteers) was formed; they adopted the blue uniform common to most of the new corps.

On completion, the Battery was armed with nine heavy guns: six 68 pounders and three 10-inch shell guns. Later in 1861, two of the heaviest known armaments of the day were delivered: 200lb Armstrong guns. They have been described as being capable of ‘dropping a ball from Torry as far as Newburgh...’. They were installed in September of that year, the month when drill formally began.

Little is known about the people who lived and worked in the Battery in its early days.

However the 1881 Census provides the briefest of glimpses: John Thomson, dwelling at the Battery was a Master Gunner for the Royal Artillery, George Barker was a corporal in the Royal Artillery Coast Brigade, Edward MacDonnell was a gunner in the Royal Artillery, as

was George Spiers. They were all listed as living at Torry Point Battery, as was Thomson's wife and two children, Barker's wife and daughter and McDonnell's wife. Life must have been reasonably Spartan for the families living there, but may have been moderated by the early 'central heating system' uncovered during the 2005 excavations.

In 1895, the Battery was partially dismantled, when the guns and mountings were returned to the ordnance stores at Leith. After this, the Battery was principally used as a training ground for the volunteer forces. Little of note dates from these years, save that in 1904, the Gunners of Torry Battery won the King's Cup at the Scottish National Artillery Association Competition. In the same year, the decision was taken to reconstruct the Battery. At this time two new 6 inch MK VII guns, on CP MK II mountings were installed. The works took two years to complete, at a cost of £5640.

It was, however, during the First World War the Battery was again manned on a permanent basis. It was mainly used as a training ground during the war; many of the troops who were trained at the Battery saw action elsewhere.

Importantly, twice in its life the Battery has been home to various family groups. The first instance of this was in the mid 1930s. In early 1935 the Battery had been decommissioned by the War Office at the same time as there was a housing problem developing in Aberdeen. The Evening Express, on 14 June 1935, stated that 'Aberdeen Town Council are once again taking emergency steps to house homeless families at present living in tents, caravans, huts and in one case, a tool shed in Aberdeen.'

Underlying the problem was a lack of affordable housing for a large number of families. Many families had sub let flats and houses from tenants. The particular crisis which arose in 1934-5 came in the summer months when tenants and landlords began to ask tenants and sub-tenants to vacate their various premises so that the flats could be let out to the lucrative summer market. By no means was the first time that this sort of problem had arisen. In the years immediately following the Versailles Peace Treaty (28 June 1919) the City Council had developed the expedient solution of converting part of the military barracks in King Street into temporary accommodation. The solution remained this sort of expedient short term one over the following decades, despite the theoretical protection, in theory offered to these families by the provisions of the Rent Restrictions Act. This had stipulated that if the rent was restricted in a particular flat or house then no tenant or sub tenant could be evicted for this purpose. However there were a large number of families to whom eviction could and did happen.

In response to this problem the Special (Accommodation) Committee of Aberdeen Town Council recommended that they take advantage of the recently vacated Torry Point Battery. On 20 September 1934 the Council had received a letter from the Command Law Agent, Scottish Command, of the War Department, noting that Torry Battery was surplus to requirements and would revert to the council. The Committee visited the Battery along with the City Architect and decided that the Battery could be made suitable as emergency accommodation with some alterations. On completion there was accommodation for 20 families. Each family had a fireplace and was also provided with an oil lamp. Although the Press and Journal on 15 June 1935 noted that ‘the absence of gas or electricity was not regarded as being fatal to the scheme...’. The Battery at that time was exactly as it was when the military had vacated the previous year. One reporter noted that a notice board inside the

main gate still informed intruders that they would not be permitted entrance out of uniform. Barricading also had to be constructed around the sunken area which led into the Battery magazine (which had previously been accessed by lift shafts, used to raise the cordite and ammunition).

The twenty houses, once the barracks rooms were divided off, were then rented out at different rates. Two houses were rented at 3s 6d per week; two at 4s; six at 4s 6d; four at 4s 9d and six at 5s 6d. A caretaker was also appointed, given a free house and a weekly allowance of 22s 6d. A journalist from the Aberdeen Bon Accord and Northern Pictorial, having visited the Battery reported on 14 June that he met 'Mr Johnson of "Plot No.9" who has been promised accommodation in the fort. He told me that any one of the improvised homes would be a veritable palace when in comparison with his toolshed. When Johnson, his wife, and three children were thrown on to the streets they were forced to live in an implement hut on his allotment. His kitchen was exposed to the weather. "We'll be fine and protected against the weather here", he said: "There are fireplaces, sinks, and everything here," he went on, as though a fireplace was a luxury.'

The army Barracks on Castlehill were also considered by the Council as an emergency solution to this issue. Emergency or not the families were still living at the Battery as late as October 1938. On 30 September 1938 Harry J. Rae, Medical Officer of Health, wrote to the Council stating that 'The dwelling-houses are, by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects, unfit for human habitation.' The Council took this on board and decided, on 3 October, that they had 'satisfied themselves that accommodation [was] available for the persons of the working classes who will be displaced' can be provided by them in advance of the displacements...', thus that the Battery was declared a clearance area. The families were finally moved and, of

course, not long afterwards the Battery was once again the property of the War Office for the duration of the Second World War.

Just a year later the Battery once again was transferred back into the hands of the War Office. During the Second World War the Battery was surrounded by a camp and various other structures and a large area of ground was fenced off, to which you needed a pass to gain access.

During the Second World War, the Battery's guns were provided with concrete overhead covers, as protection against dive-bombing attacks, but also against land-ward attack. The dramatic changes in technology, and the heavy reliance on fighter planes, meant that the Battery also had to have anti-aircraft guns and search lights installed. Throughout the war the Battery personnel liaised closely with the RAF squadrons at Dyce, and in 1943 a combined army and navy plotting room was built at the Battery.

The Battery was staffed by a variety of personnel during World War II, including men from the Home Guard and the City of Liverpool Battalion of the Royal Artillery. During the Second World War, artillery men trained at Torry Point Battery saw action all across the world. Those from the Liverpool Battalion recall the very warm and friendly welcome they got in Aberdeen, that fish suppers were brought gratis to the Battery for them, that their money was no use in any pub they went into and that they had trouble understanding the locals.

World War II was also the only time that the Battery's heavy guns ever opened fire. On the night of 3 June 1941 two unidentified vessels approached Aberdeen harbour. Only Admiralty

ships were allowed to enter the harbour at night, the gunner took no chances and fired two shells. The vessels (as it turned out) were friendly ones. Later in 1941 the Battery's machine guns engaged a German plane, which had dropped bombs off Kinnaird Head. It was later brought down in flames at St Cyrus. Whilst the generator room just outside of the Battery also took a direct hit one night, causing casualties in the Battery.

At the end of the Second World War the housing shortage was still as bad. Little if no housing had been constructed during the war, whilst some reserves of housing stock had of course been lost to the 27 German bombing raids which Aberdeen suffered during the War. Moreover the situation was aggravated by the number of demobilised soldiers and their families looking for new accommodation. Whilst from July-August 1946 the situation was further aggravated by the returning issue of summer lets. People began to squat in anywhere that was suitable. Given that the war had just ended, this often meant Nissen huts and buildings which had been appropriated for the war effort and were now vacant. Moreover these often had facilities such as gas, electricity and running water. By no means was this problem confined to Aberdeen: on 20 August 1946 the Press and Journal reported that 'The squatter movement has spread to the North and North-east of Scotland...' They reported that it had spread to Peterhead and Inverness. In Aberdeen a number of families had begun to squat in the nissen huts at Torry Battery and Balnagask.

On 20 August 1946 the Evening Express reported that there were some 20 families at Torry Battery and its associated huts and camps. The next day the paper reported that the number had risen to over 40 families. The paper also reported that an official from the City Council had visited and had begun to take names. Clearly the Battery and its camp was full by the end of play on 21 August. On 22 August the Evening Express reported that Balnagask Golf Club

House and an unoccupied dwelling house at 63 Albury Road had also been acquired by the squatters. On 24 August the Evening Express reported that the then P.M. Clement Attlee and the Home Secretary Chunter Ede had ordered that there was to be no eviction of squatters to make way for the Polish troops who were being brought over en masse from Italy.

In fact Aberdeen City Council had been ready for this issue for some months. On 21 January 1946, following correspondence with the Department of Health for Scotland, the Council had resolved to convert Torry Battery into accommodation. They had proposed 9 single rooms, 8 two roomed houses and 2 three roomed houses, at a conversion cost of £300. The military authorities held up the proceedings, however.

Many of the families who began squatting were those of ex-service men whilst others were those whose men were still in service. In the huts at Torry battery were Mrs Alan Graham, whose husband was in the Royal Navy (serving in Singapore). She lived in the huts along with her two children after having been turned out of her house in Donald's Court. There were also Mr and Mrs Cyril Broderick, with their young baby. The Press and Journal of 20 August 1946 gave details of the Brodericks' family. Cyril, from Newfoundland, had been serving, in Invernesshire, as a lumberjack. At that time his wife had 'squeezed into my mother's house - which was already crowded - with the baby...' After her husband's release Mrs Broderick noted that there were 14 people staying in her mother's house. She wrote to George VI outlining her situation and asking for help. She received a reply from the Secretary for Scotland's Private Secretary. Whilst Councillor McIntosh, Aberdeen's housing convener, was quoted as saying: 'In cases where the camps are not wanted by the military authorities- and I cannot say whether or not these huts at Balnagask and Torry Fort are- the attitude of the government seems to be that steps must be taken to make such places habitable.' The

paper also reported that one of the families who were squatting (in a hut with five other families) was headed by Mr Henderson. When the reporter called on them he found Mrs Henderson 'looking for a place to hang up the photograph of her husband and herself taken outside Buckingham Place after [his] investiture...' with the Distinguished Service Medal.

It was not until September 1946 that the City Council formally took over the camps. They immediately began to oversee the provision of communal water supply, sanitary arrangements, lighting, erection of partitions and the installation of a coal bunker in each hut. Rent was subsequently set at 8s per hut, but only charged after the water supply and sanitary arrangements had been worked out. Life eventually settled down at the Battery and its camp. From an oral history project that has been conducted by Aberdeen City Council

Archaeological Unit it is apparent from people who shared with us their memories of life there that there was a great community spirit. The young boys remembered playing football along what was once known as 'Main Street', the path running between the two rows of barracks buildings on the landward side of the battery. Moreover a Balangask Hut Tenants' Association was formed. They petitioned the City Council in 1947 to, inter alia, place all of the resident's names back onto the housing lists. The Council had previously decided that they should be regarded as householders and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the housing list. The Council acquiesced to the petition. The protests really centred around getting permanent accommodation for these families, who numbered 44 in total by January 1948. The move began slowly, with the Press and Journal reporting on 28 February 1948 that 15 families had been moved out of the huts.

By the early 1950s all the families were gone. After that the Battery was partly demolished and for the next twenty years mouldered and was described variously, by different

newspapers, at different times, as an eyesore which ought to be demolished. Neglect, however, is not always a bad thing. The thick walls, the ruined buildings, and the increasing scrub and rough ground around about proved irresistible to migrant birds. Each spring and autumn the Battery provides a sheltered resting and feeding place for tired birds, many of which have struggled across the North Sea in foul weather, eager to lurch under the first bush or behind the first wall they can find. Each spring the Wheatears arrive back from Africa, en route to Greenland or the Cairngorms, and the Meadow Pipits take up residence. Warblers rest in the gorse bushes and Linnets feed inside the walls. With the common birds come occasional rarities, including Shore Lark, Ortolan Bunting, Woodchat Shrike, Greenish Warbler, and Bluethroat, making this an essential stopping-off point for birdwatchers as well.

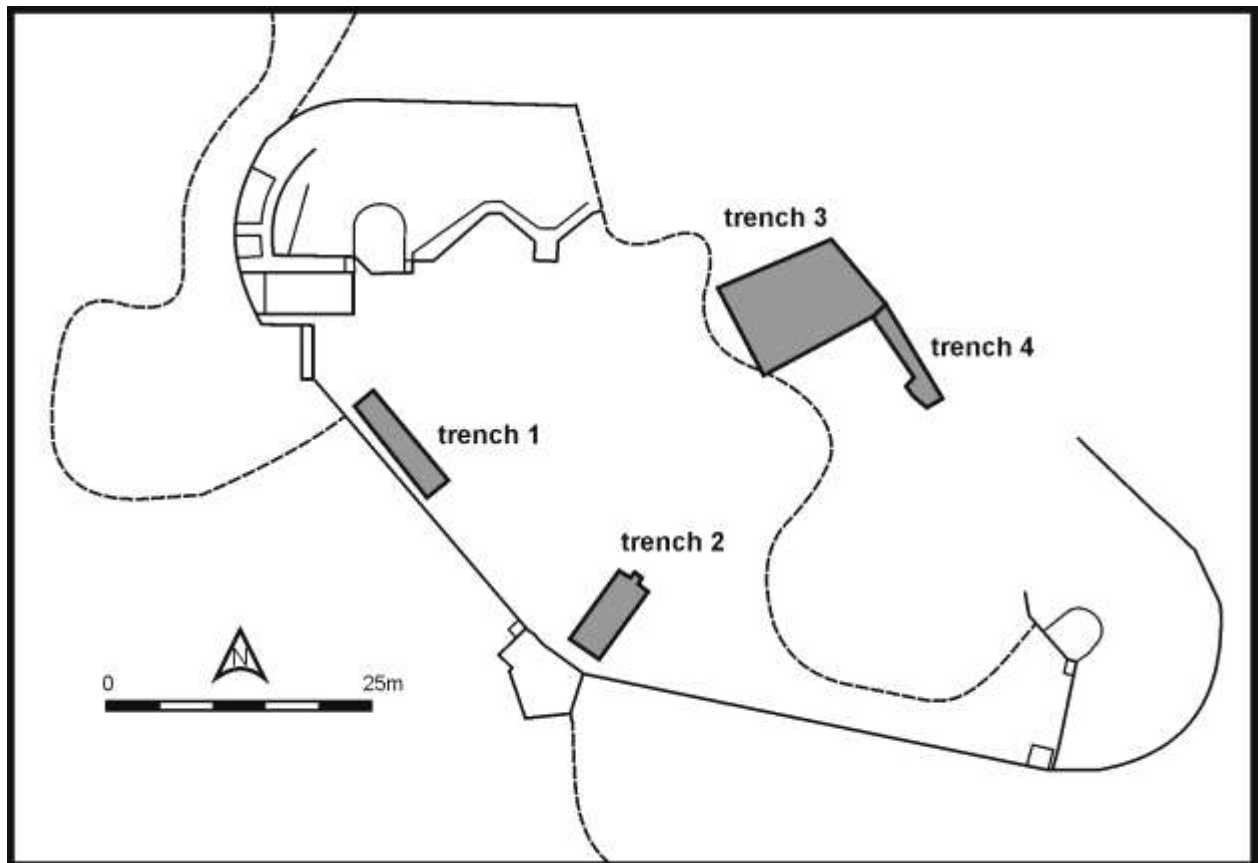
4.2 THE EXCAVATION

During March and April 2004, four trenches were excavated at Torry Point Battery (NJ 96527 05627; NJ90NE 22.00; Illus 15), a coastal defence battery built between 1859 and 1861. Trench 1 was positioned just within the gate to the battery, in the area of a range of buildings used during the military period as storerooms. Trench 2 was positioned in the area of a building used in the first period of the battery as an infirmary and latterly as a Royal Artillery gun store. Trenches 3 and 4 were located to determine whether gun emplacements survived underground.

4.2.1 *The stores*

Well preserved archaeological remains were uncovered within Trench 1 where remains of four rooms were excavated. The west wall of these rooms was the boundary or curtain wall

around the Battery (Illus 15). Scars on the interior face of this curtain wall corresponded to partition walls excavated within the archaeological trench.



Illus 15 Location plan of trenches

4.2.2 *Utensil store*

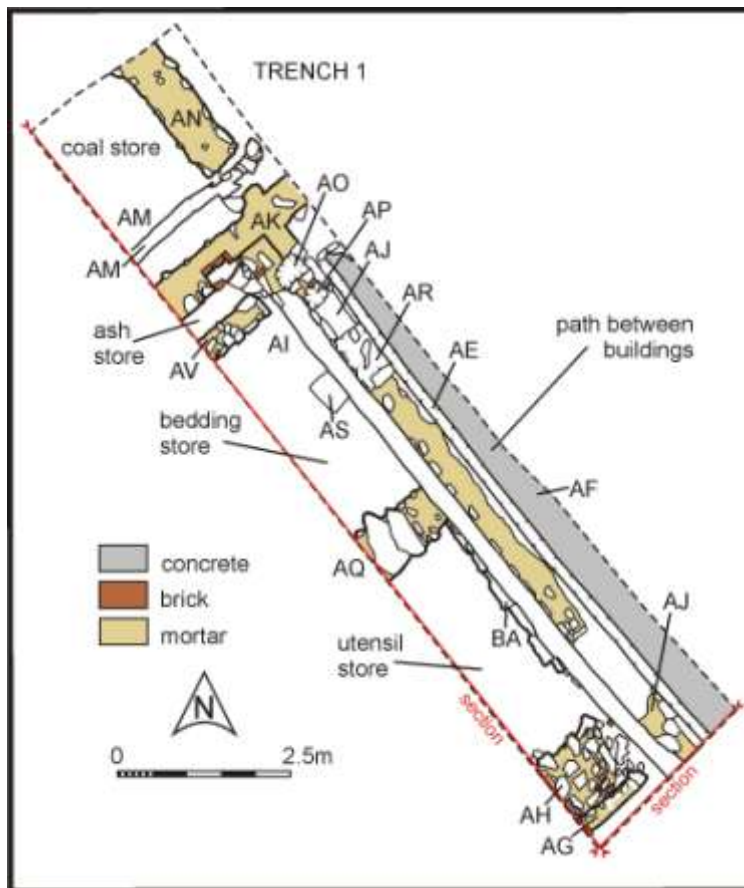
The southernmost room (the 'utensil store'; Illus 16, 20) was 3.5 x 2m internally and was bordered on the south by wall AH, to the east by wall AJ and the north by AQ. All walls were constructed of brick and stone with mortar bonding. The foundations were a maximum of 0.4m deep and the area within the foundations had been filled in with demolition material which consisted mainly of brick, stone and wood. Large stones (BA) protruding from wall

AJ formed a scarcement, probably for the suspension of a wooden floor within the room.

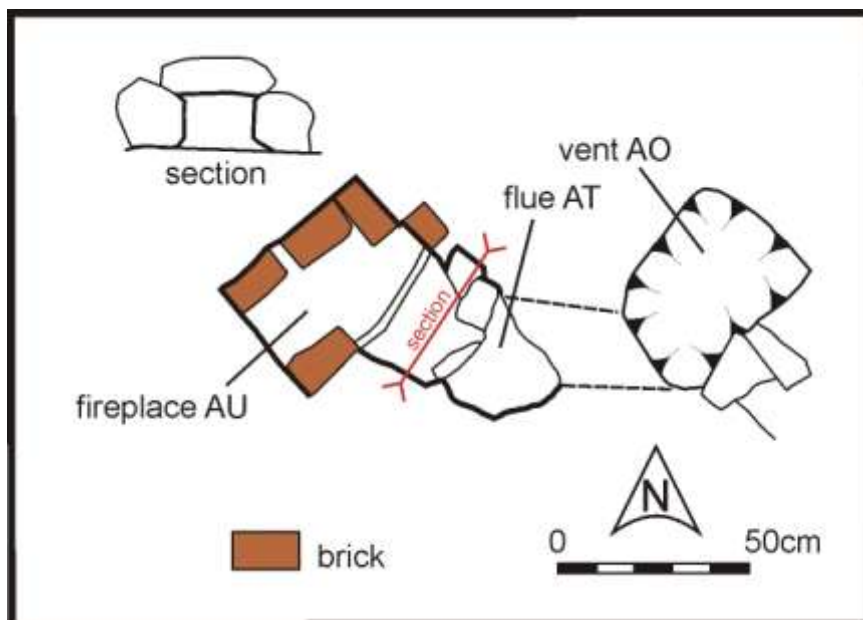
This was the only room in which this type of scarcement was found.

4.2.3 *Bedding store*

North of the utensil store was the 'bedding store' (Illus 16, 20) bordered on the south by wall AQ, the east by wall AJ and the north by wall AK making a complete internal dimension of 4.1 x 2m. Due to the original function of this room to store bedding, a small fireplace (AU, Illus 17) had been constructed in the north wall of the room. It was lined with bricks and was 0.4 x 0.3m in size. The bricks were heavily burnt and the fireplace was filled with coal and burnt material. Air was fed into the fireplace through a flue (AT) which led to a vent AO in wall AJ. Within the fill of AO, fragments of iron grate were found, which presumably had covered an opening in the exterior face of the wall. A large granite block (AS) was probably a step into the room, and a rectangular depression in wall AJ (AR) was probably a threshold. Within the room, and in front of the fireplace, AV was an insubstantial wall faced only on the south side (into the room). It was not a load-bearing wall and may have been a dwarf wall to protect the contents of the room from intense heat and smoke.



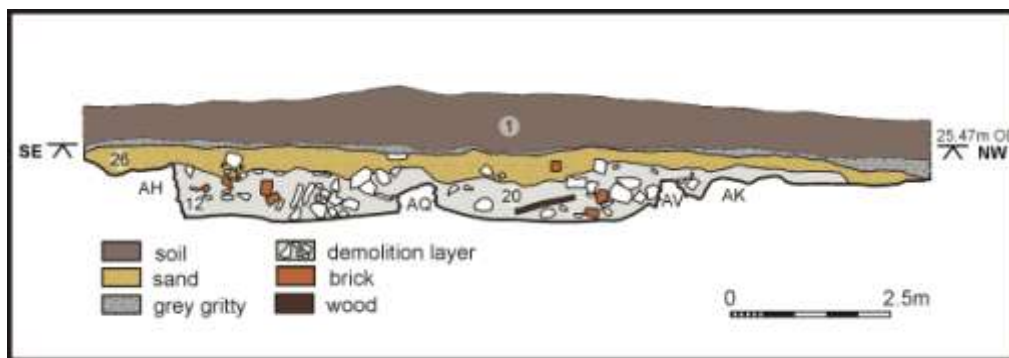
Illus 16 Plan of Trench 1 building



Illus 17 Interpretation of fireplace AU and flue AT

4.2.4 Ash and coal stores

The rooms to the north-west of the 'bedding store' were bounded by walls AK to the south and AN to the east and were the ash and coal stores (Illus 16, 20). The full extent of these rooms was not within the excavation area, however. Wall AN had been cut through to insert drain AM, presumably a surface water drain taking water from gutter AE and from the roofs of the buildings to a main drain on the exterior of the battery. This room originally consisted of two rooms, a small ash store and a coal store. These can be seen on contemporary plans of the battery and the scars seen on the curtain wall. Latterly it appears that the wall between the ash and coal stores had been removed, probably to provide a larger room when these buildings were used for accommodation for families.

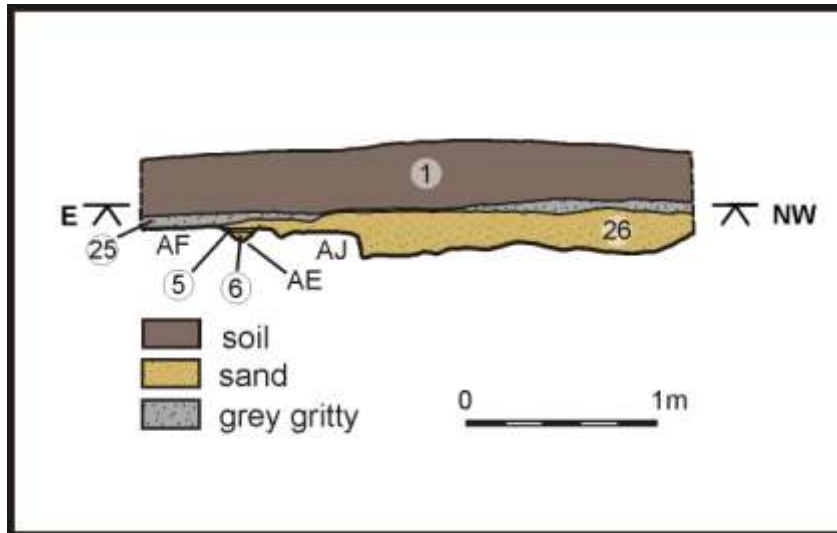


Illus 18 Section through utensil store (left) and bedding store (right)

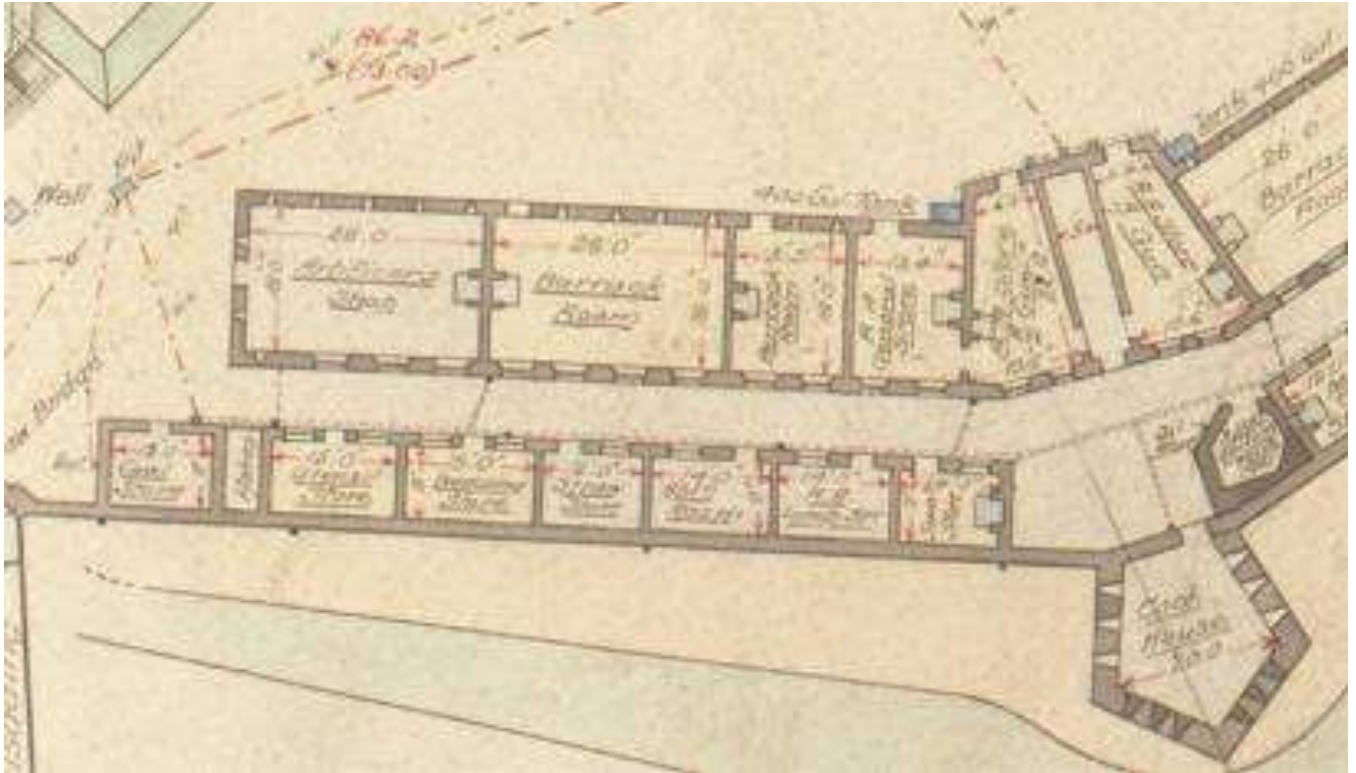
4.2.5 *Path and gutter*

These store rooms formed one of two lines of rooms which were separated by concrete path AF. A gutter (AE) on its west side took surface water from this path. The path was made from blocks of poured concrete with the gutter moulded into these blocks. The fill of the gutter included small fragments of demolition material and small metal fittings. It appeared

that the gutter had not been cleaned out regularly, as there was a heavy compacted black silty deposit (contexts 5, 6; Illus 19) in its base.



Illus 19 section showing gutter AE



Illus 20 Plan of Torry Battery 1906 showing coal, ashes, utensil and bedding stores

(copyright The National Archives of Scotland)

4.2.6 Trench 2

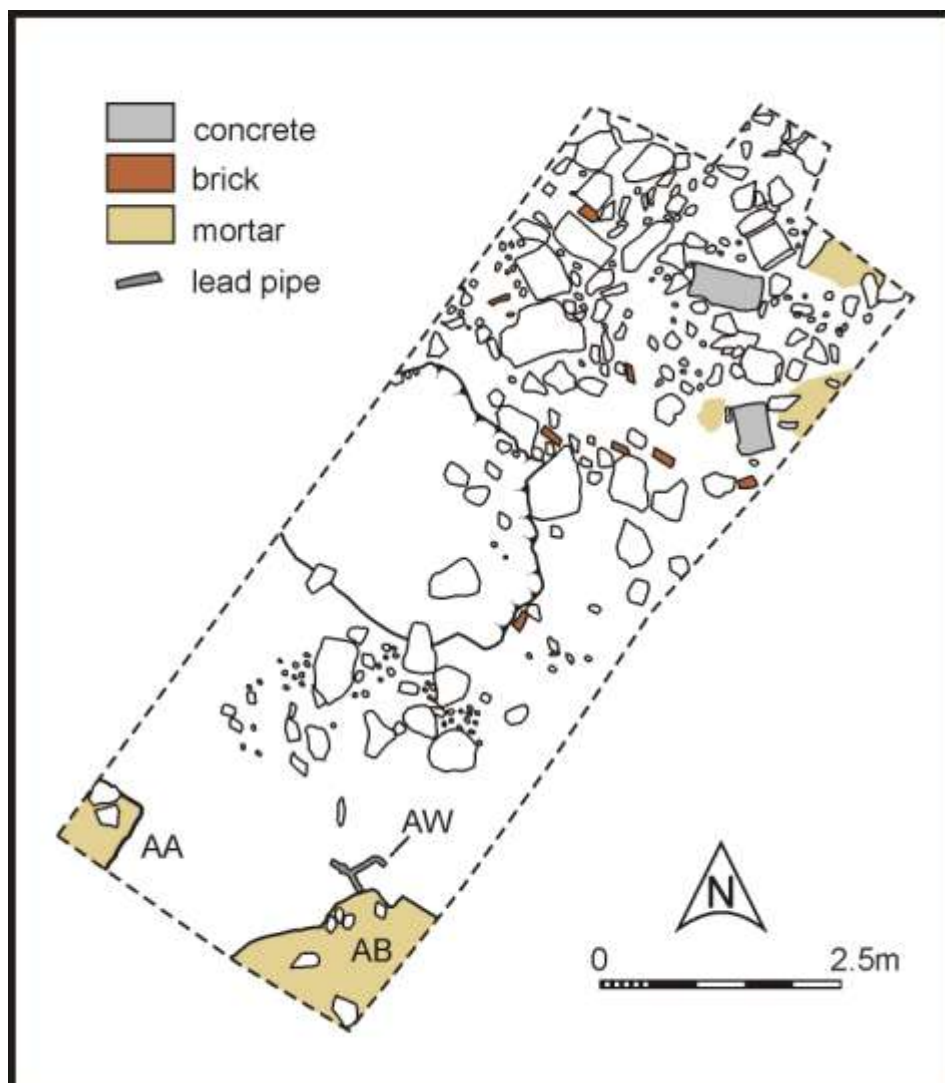
This was excavated in the area of a building originally used as an infirmary and later as a Royal Artillery gun store. A large trench was opened and initially it appeared that building remains would be found. Unfortunately all walls had been completely robbed out and large amounts of building materials scattered over the whole area. These included a small number of granite blocks, lumps of poured concrete including fragments from a path and gutter (identical to those seen *in situ* in Trench 1), bricks and mortar.

4.2.7 Stair base

At the west end of the trench, a square area of mortared granite blocks (AA; Illus 20) was probably the base for a stair shown on the contemporary plans which led from the infirmary up to the cookhouse, a building which is still standing at the time of writing.

4.1.8 *Tank base and lead pipe*

A sub-circular area of stones and mortar (AB; Illus 20) was probably the base for the water/oil tank which is also seen on plans. This was confirmed when a section of lead pipe (AW) was uncovered leading from and mortared into the underside of this tank base.

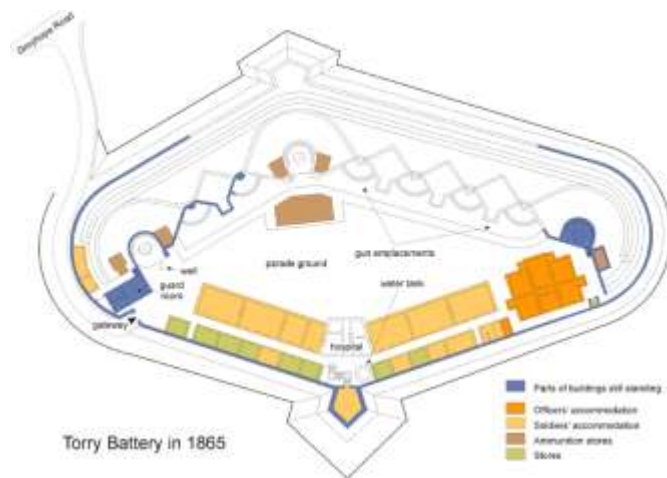


Illus 21 Trench 2 showing stair base AA, tank base AB and lead pipe AW (Jan to redraw)

4.1.9 *Trenches 3 and 4*

These were excavated to the east of the battery in an area which was occupied by gun emplacements in the early 20th century (Historical Research). The excavation revealed that these had been completely removed and the area dug down c 4m for the disposal of building materials, particularly stone, brick, wood and metal. In Trench 4 a large fragment of brick wall, concreted at its base, was uncovered but it was quickly established that this was rubble, not part of an adjacent building which had fallen or been dumped in this location. It may have been part of one of the gun emplacements which were known to have occupied this area.

A metallised surface (AY) was traced in part of the trench. It was on the same level as the current 'parade ground' surface. The original 'parade ground' extended further to the east than it now does, and this can be seen on the contemporary plans of the battery.



Illus 22 Plan of Battery in 1865



Illus 23 Model of Torry Battery in late 19th century (by Jan Dunbar)

4.3 Finds

A small assemblage of late 19th and early 20th-century finds include pottery, metalwork and bone. Three bullet fragments were recovered from Trenches 1 and 2; they were all .303 rifle or machine gun cartridge fragments. This was the standard British and Commonwealth military cartridge from 1889 until the 1950s. There were no other finds indicating the military use of this structure. Most of the finds were related to the non-military aspects of the Battery or its use for housing between WW1 and WW2 and after WW2.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This iconic monument visible from many parts of Aberdeen city is visited by many people. This project has increased our knowledge of the site, while the archaeological dig confirmed that the domestic structures were demolished down to foundation level but the gun emplacements were completely removed during demolition. The excavations provided a focus for collecting memories of the Battery and carrying out associated research.

5 ST FITTICK'S CHURCH

The recording of the upstanding remains, graveyard survey and excavation was funded by Nave Nortrail and was carried out to assess the quality and quantity of the surviving remains. All aspects of the work involved community participation and the gravestone recording was carried out in conjunction with Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society.

The church of Nigg (Illus 24; also called St Fittick's) (NJ 96270 04958; NJ90SE 1) was first mentioned in a document dated between 1189 and 1199 when the lands in the area of Nyg and the church there were given by King William I (the Lion) to the new Tironensian Abbey of Arbroath. The current church is covered with harling and it is not possible to determine the date of the standing structure but it may date from as late as the 17th century. The church went out of use in 1829 when a new Nigg Church was constructed in a different location.

On the east side of the exterior of the south door into the church is a link of chain onto which joughs, a common form of ecclesiastical censure, was attached. The earliest surviving gravestone dates to 1645; many of the stones are worn, broken and illegible. Outside and to the west of the churchyard, the last manse (NJ90SE 88; NJ 9620 0498) dated from 1759 and was a very large and imposing building



Illus 24 St Fittick's Church and graveyard (facing west) showing excavation in the background

5.1 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

5.1.1 St Fittick's

At some point between 1189 and 1199 the lands in the area of Nigg Bay were given by King William I (the Lion) to his newly founded Abbey of Arbroath (or Aberbrothock, as it was then known). Part of this grant included the 'ecclesiam de Nyg...' along with its pertinents, although not named as St Fittick's this is the first recorded instance of a church in this area.

This charter does not really give away many details of what the place would have been like but it does refer to 'communi pastura...', so there were grazing animals at any rate (Innes 1848, 17). A number of the Abbey's charters subsequently refer to the lands as do a number of crown charters over the next hundred years or so (Innes 1848: 70-4). These do provide interesting glimpses of life at the time. A charter of 1233 reveals two points: first that there was a mill ('molendinis') and that the area was boggy ('stagnis') (Robertson DATE: 257). The first part is the more interesting and undoubtedly points to the development of a community there, although in all likelihood there had been a mill and a community there previously. Fishing rights are also indicated in these documents (REF?)

Nevertheless this church and its associated parish, which stretched from the southern banks of the Dee down to the ferm-toun of Cove and westward in land to the eastern banks of the river Dee, was formed as part of the radical religious re-organisation of Scotland that took place in the 12th and 13th centuries. In turn this was part of the wider Norman feudalisation of Scotland that took place under the sons of Malcolm Canmore. In religious terms this meant that dioceses were being reorganised and the seats of the Bishops moved in some cases. New churches were being founded to serve new parishes, which were often, but not always co-

terminus with new secular estates. Unfortunately there is no evidence which points to why the boundaries of the parish that St Fittick's served evolved the way they did.

Many new churches were created as part of this process and often they were not consecrated for some time. This was the case at the Bay of Nigg: eventually de Berham, Bishop of Saint Andrews (in whose diocese the church stood) consecrated it in 1231 (he tried to consecrate as many of these churches as he could within the time of his episcopacy). Despite the survival of the crucial evidence regarding the earliest history of the church little is known about it in the medieval period. The records of Arbroath Abbey reveal occasional glimpses: for example the abbot of Arbroath enacted certain pieces of business in the area. Thus a charter granting land in Forglen was written 'apud Torre in capella...', dated 1481. Certainly this was written in the church. However, the abbot would have needed somewhere to stay whilst he was in the area. The place names of Abbotswells, Abbots Place and so on in Kincorth stand in memory of what is said to have been a lodging associated with the abbey. The streets are so called now as they stand on the area of a farm of that name which stood there until the early 20th century. The farm, said to have been built in the 17th century, was located on or near still visible ruins of the venerable structure. Further the nearby stream which flows into the Dee across Duthie Park is called the Spital burn, suggesting a hospital or lodging for pilgrims or generally for travellers.

Equally obscure are the pre-reformation ministers of the church: one who emerges from the historical record is Andrew Schearer, whose incumbency dates from 1502 and continued into the 1530s. He was used by the council of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen as a trusted man of business and his name often occurs as a signatory and witness on council business papers from that date. On 20 July 1529 the council decided to wall the town and Shearer was the

man in charge of collecting the tax for this purpose (Stuart 1844: 123). Later, on the 10 December 1529 he was put in charge of the newly founded bridge work money fund (Stuart 1844: 126). This was the fund laid down by Bishop Dunbar to ensure that the recently completed Bridge of Dee had a source of money for its repairs (Stuart 1844: PAGES). Shearer was clearly a solid man of business, who also held tack of the kirk of Briss and had business interests in Flanders and Dieppe (Stuart 1844: 136-7).

5.1.2 Post Reformation Church Of St Fittick's

It has been alleged that portions of the walls which remain may date from the 13th century (Ogilvie 1901, 2). However, it is much more likely that all that which is visible dates from the rebuilding of the entire church in the early 18th century. MacGibbon and Ross notes that the church 'is probably one of those built during the short period of Episcopalian government in the seventeenth century (MacGibbon and Ross 1897: 592). By that token then they mean that the church was built to reflect the older Catholic style (MacGibbon and Ross 1897: 534). The former as noted looked back to the grandeur, colour and flourish of the Catholic style, in contrast the Presbyterians eschewed all such pomp and looked to plainness, partly to contrast with the richness of Roman Catholic style and also so as not to detract in anyway from the centrality of the bible and the preached word of God. It is hard to test the claim of MacGibbon and Ross in this regard as so little remains of the structure. They also argue that there may have been a chancel at the east end of the church. They argue this on the basis that there was evidence of an arch way on the walls, again at present this claim cannot be tested (MacGibbon and Ross 1897: 592-4).

Ogilvie in the *Book of St Fittick* gives a sketch of the church belfry before it was covered in ivy which shows an inscription on the structure. It reads 'M M MINISTER 1704' (Ogilvie 1901, title page). The inscription is also given by Jervise (1875: Vol II, 14). It is curious that MacGibbon and Ross do not mention the inscription. However, Jervise suggests that it refers to one Richard Maitland, who was minister there in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Jervise 1875: Vol II, 14). Ogilvie also gives this information but adds that he was the last of the Episcopalian ministers of the church and that he was deposed for supporting the Jacobite cause in 1716. At any rate the belfry may therefore have been built at some point in the first years of the seventeenth century (MacGibbon and Ross 1897: 594). The vane from the top of the belfry, according to Jervise, is dated 1763 (Jervise 1875: Vol II, 14). A bell from the church survives and is on display in Torry St Fittick's Church. The bronze bell was made by John Mowat in Old Aberdeen in 1759 for £153 4 shillings. The upper inscription, in Latin, tells that the bell was made by John Mowat in Old Aberdeen in 1759. The lower inscription reads 'Sabata pango funra plango'; 'Sabbaths I proclaim, funerals I toll'.

The churchyard is intriguing and is revealing of the extent of the occupations of the people in the parish and its physical boundaries, containing as it does people from Cove to Torry. In the 1870s Jervise recorded four seventeenth century grave markers in the churchyard. Perhaps the most interesting is that for William Milne, who had lived in Kincorth and was 'slain...on 10th of July, 1645,...fell by the sword of a savage Irishman (Jervise 1875: Vol II, 15). This relates to the Civil Wars: the Irishman referred to was one of the mercenary force under the command of Alistair Maccollagh who fought for James Graham, the Marquis of Montrose. Between 1644 and 1645 these forces almost won the wars for Charles I in Scotland. This is the only grave marker in Aberdeen to relate to those dramatic and turbulent times.

Not everyone interred in the graveyard got eternal rest. The early 19th century brought with it a growing problem of grave robbing. The growth in this problem was manifest through out Britain as a whole and is traditionally ascribed to a decline in the number of executions and a growth in medical faculties and student numbers, resulting in an increased need for subjects for anatomical purposes and a reduced supply.

In December 1831 this reached something of a nadir in Aberdeen. In late November or early December an Anatomical Theatre had been set up in St Andrews Street by Mr Moir. There was a yard at the back of this which was viewed with suspicion by those neighbouring the theatre. On 21 December the *Aberdeen Journal* reported that on the 19th ‘a few little boys, who were playing close by, observed a dog tearing up some substance from the loose earth. They gave the alarm, and, in a few moments some twenty or thirty people were on the spot, when two lads said to be tanners, finished what the dog had begun and dug up a portion of the fragments of a human body...’. The crowd then broke into the theatre and chased Moir out to his house where he had to escape by a back window. The crowd, by no swollen to over 100 ransacked the building and found three bodies, one of which had half of the skull removed. Council officers arrived and took these to Drum’s Aisle in St Nicholas Church. The crowd then tried to set the interior of the theatre alight and took down the back wall; they started on the front wall when the Provost, Magistrates and a number of special constables arrived. The Provost threatened legal action but the theatre was entirely dismantled and several students chased through the streets (*Aberdeen Journal*, 21 December 1831: 3). An interesting and revealing riposte was eventually issued by Moir condemning the actions of the crowd and the newspaper for failing to condemn the actions of the crowd. On 28 December in retort to Moir’s open letter the *Journal* accepted that the students needed subjects for study but that ‘while these difficulties remain, and subjects can only be procured for the dissecting room in

a clandestine manner, it surely becomes those who are necessitated so to procure them, to conduct their operations in a way that shall not do outrage to the ordinary feelings of humanity...In this case, a very ordinary degree of care might have prevented the painful disclosures...and to the want of that care alone can be attributed the lawless proceedings *Aberdeen Journal*, 28 December 1831: 3). From this we can see that snatching of bodies was clearly wide spread and something of an open secret at the time.

In particular St Fittick's due to its relative isolation was vulnerable to this problem. One grave robbing incident was that of the body of Janet Spark, nee Young, which was snatched between 22nd and 23rd of December 1808, although the robbers must have been disturbed as the body was found in the sand on the north side of the Bay of Nigg. The Watcher's House, also known generally as a Burkin' House (after the famous grave robber William Burke) was erected to deal with this problem and was converted to a tool shed in 1907.

The church itself was used by the Presbyterian branch of the church until it was replaced by the new parish church built in 1829. The Kirk Session took the decision to decommission the church at that point as it was no longer commodiously situated for the growing population of the parish. Thus it was re-sited to a position which was at that time felt to be better placed to serve the needs of the parishioners.

Two silver communion beakers have survived from the church and are in the collections of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums. They were made by George Walker and purchased with funds raised in 1703 Easter collections in St Fittick's Church. An inscription, repeated on each, reads 'This cup with its followe-ware acqyred out of the extraordinarie collections got at Easter in the church of Nigg under the ministrie of Master Richard Maitland Anno 1703'.

5.1.3 Manse

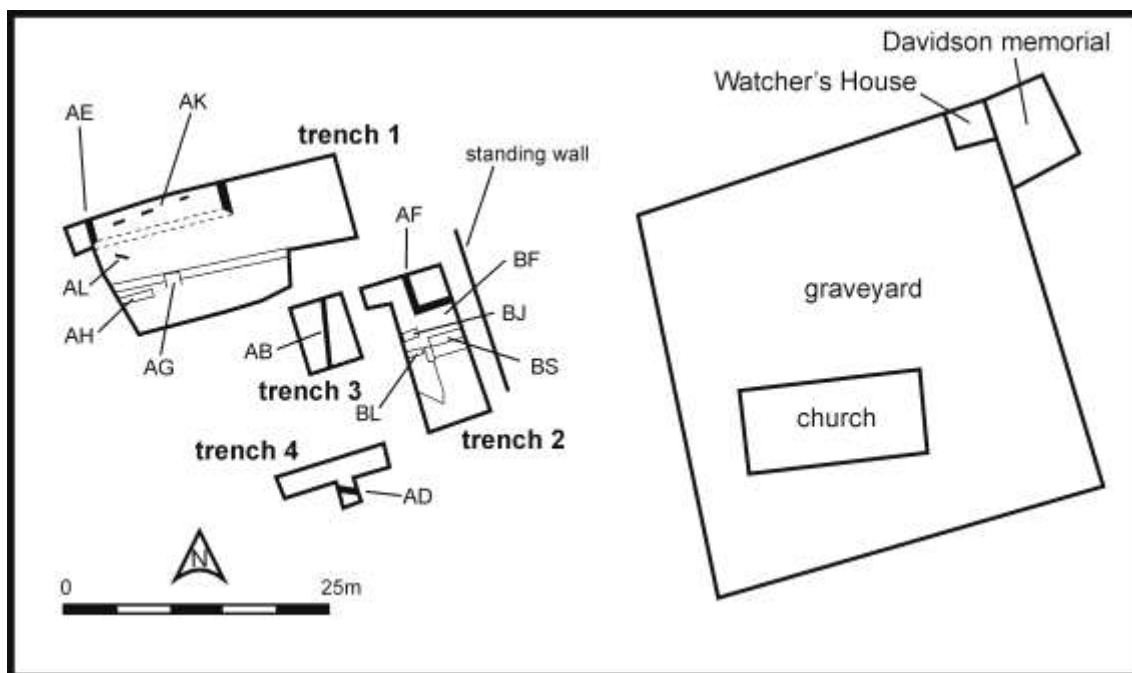
Unfortunately there is no historical evidence, yet discovered which relates to the medieval manse. It has only left tangential evidence. Thus: on the map of 1777 two fields to the north west and west of St Fittick's are called Ouer and Louer Douecoate fields. Perhaps these point to the time when a manse had a dovecote, serving the table of the minister. In 1759 when the calls were issued for tenders to build the new manse it was stated that the new manse was to be to the west of the medieval one.

The last manse, as built in 1759 by David Shirref who won the tendering process started by the council of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen, at a time when John Farquhar was minister at St Fittick's, was a large and imposing building. The manse was added to at several times and was enlarged over time. In 1795 the stipend for the minister of the church was still being given in kind: at 52 bolls of bear and meal: valued at £80. Together with a glebe of 10 acres, enclosed (Withrington and Grant, DATE : 220). Dr Cruden farmed his glebe extensively and kept very detailed notes in his commonplace books concerning his crops and their varying success rates. His commonplace books survive in the National Archives of Scotland as well as in the archives of Aberdeen City Council.

After St Fittick's ceased to be a church the manse was let out to farmers. The manse survived until fairly recently but was demolished in the 1960s.

5.2 THE EXCAVATION

The excavation took place in September 2004 and the excavation trenches were targeted as follows: Trench 1, the manse, Trench 2, the agricultural buildings and Trenches 3 and 4, the garden (Illus 25). Further details of Trenches 3 and 4 appear in archive only.

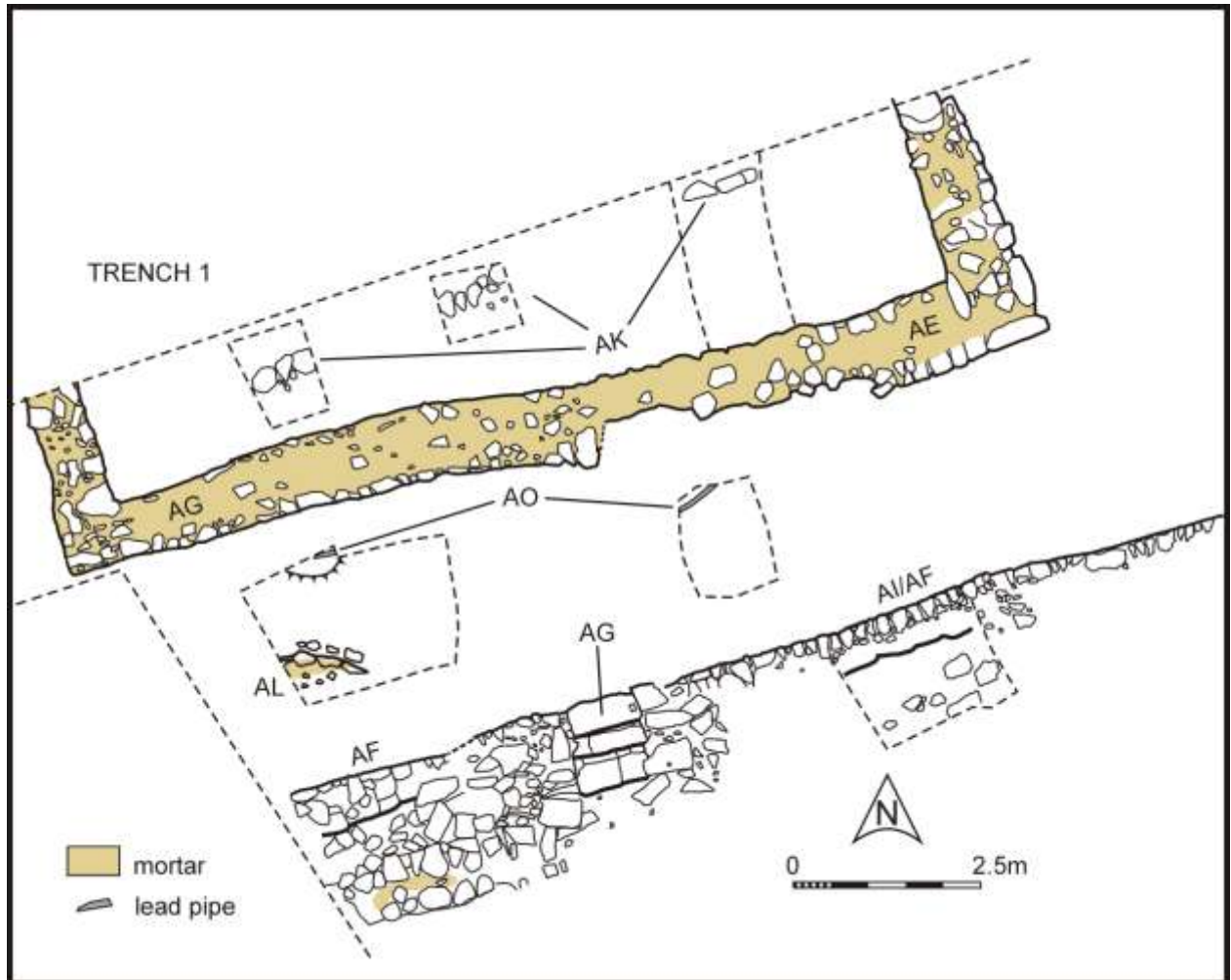


Illus 25 Trench plan showing main features

5.2.1 *The earliest structures*

The earliest features excavated were a substantial building wall AL and footing AM and a stone agricultural feature AK. Building 1 consisted of wall foundation AL. Its full width and depth were not revealed but it was constructed of small to medium granite fieldstones bonded with mortar. Its footing extended 20cm from the edge of the wall. The wall was not

excavated, but the garden soil layers banked up against and on top of this wall contained only medieval pottery, bone and shell.



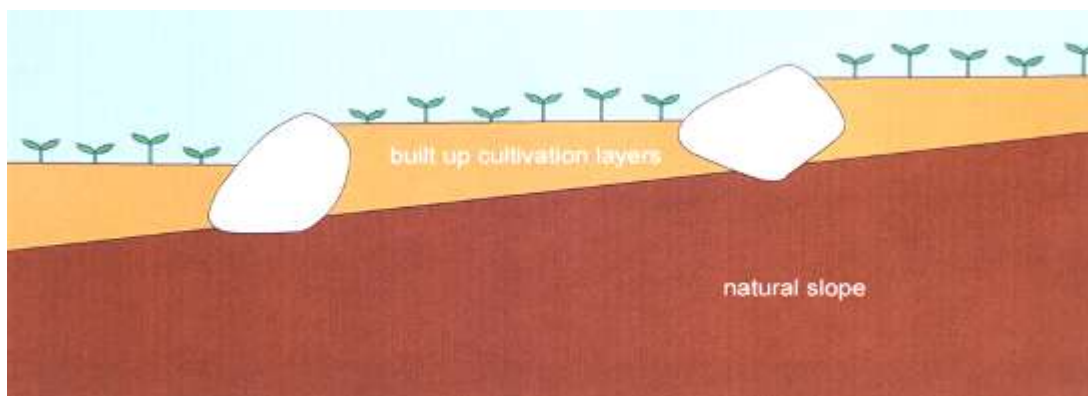
Illus 26 Trench 1 features

Stone line AK was seen in three sondages excavated under the later manse (Illus 26). It was constructed of one to two courses of large granite fieldstones up to 0.3m wide which had been set into garden or plough soil. On the north (upslope) of the line of stones the subsoil was at a level of 9m OD whereas on the south side it was at 8.84m OD. The layers associated with this feature contained a small number of abraded medieval pottery sherds. It is possible

that this was a terracing feature to allow cultivation on the slope and discourage the plough soil from eroding through wind and water action (Illus 27, 28).



Illus 27 Terracing wall AK under the manse building



Illus 28 Diagram showing how terracing wall AK might have worked (N to right)

5.2.2 *The 18th-century manse (Building 2)*

The manse and associated buildings were constructed in 1759. The foundation of the manse (AE) was constructed of large fieldstones bonded with mortar. It was c 1m wide and survived to 0.70m deep. The full depth of the foundation did not survive, some of it having been removed during demolition. Contemporary photographs show that there were two steps up into the building. The internal W-E width of the manse was 11.80m. The foundation was constructed in a trench up to 1m wide using larger fieldstones for facing and infilled with small stones in a hard white mortar (Illus 26, 29).

Contemporary illustrations (Illus 30) indicate that the south-facing aspect of the house had three storeys whilst the northern (upslope) part of the building had only two as the building had been constructed into the sloping ground. Former inhabitants of the building indicated that there were steps within the manse going down into the southern part of the building although these were not within the excavation area.



Illus 29 Building 2, Foundations of manse building (foreground), driveway (with 2m scales) and garden (top)



Illus 30 Building 2, Manse (foreground) showing Kirkhill Farm (background right) prior to the development of Balnagask (copyright Aberdeen Journals)

A path or driveway, 124, was c 3.6m wide between the front south facade of the manse and the garden wall, AF (Illus 26). Due to the changes in ground level, the wall was still standing to a height of c 0.5 - 1m where it bounded the garden of the manse. The level of the natural subsoil in the garden was 8.10m OD. Three steps (AG) which had led from the drive into the garden were also uncovered. They were 1.1m wide and constructed of poured concrete. The steps were 0.4m deep and were cracked and much worn. A square hole (AY; Illus 32) for setting a post was recorded at the east end of the top step. Contemporary photographs show the steps in a state of disrepair with no railing present (Illus 33). Under the driveway, two lengths of lead pipe (AO) were recorded but not excavated.



Illus 31 Building 2, Concrete steps (AK) leading from driveway (top right) and garden (bottom left)



Illus 32 Building 2, Looking south down steps AG showing hole for railing AY



Illus 33 Family photograph showing garden steps, Building 2, AK foreground and garden wall AF (right) (copyright Syd Wood).

The former manse was damaged by fire in the 1970s (Alastair Corbett, former farmer at Balnagask pers comm) and subsequently the building complex was demolished apart from one wall of the agricultural buildings. The manse is now buried under up to 1.2m of landscaped topsoil.

5.2.3 *The manse garden*

Wall AF was of rubble construction and had divided the garden from the driveway. 13m of its length was recorded. It had a large stone foundation AI which would have been required to hold the substantial weight of the driveway to the north. The wall was topped with a less substantial structure which included the use of stone, concrete, brick and roof tile; this may have been the remains of repairs to the wall. Wall AB was 0.4m wide and formed the eastern wall of the garden.

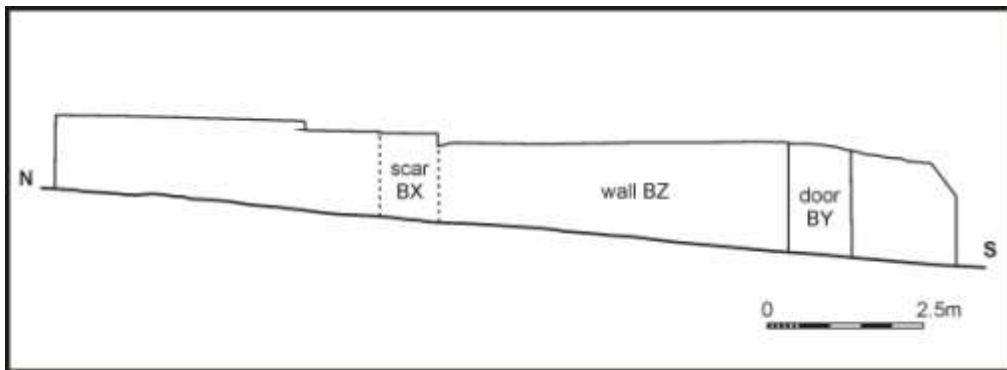
Finds from the garden area were mainly 19th and early 20th century in date and were concentrated at the base of the wall outside the garden as though a large amount of crockery had been smashed on the outside of the garden wall. The garden area had been infilled with demolition material from the manse, including a section of mortared stone wall, presumably part of the garden wall which had fallen intact and been buried.

5.2.4 *The agricultural building (Building 3)*

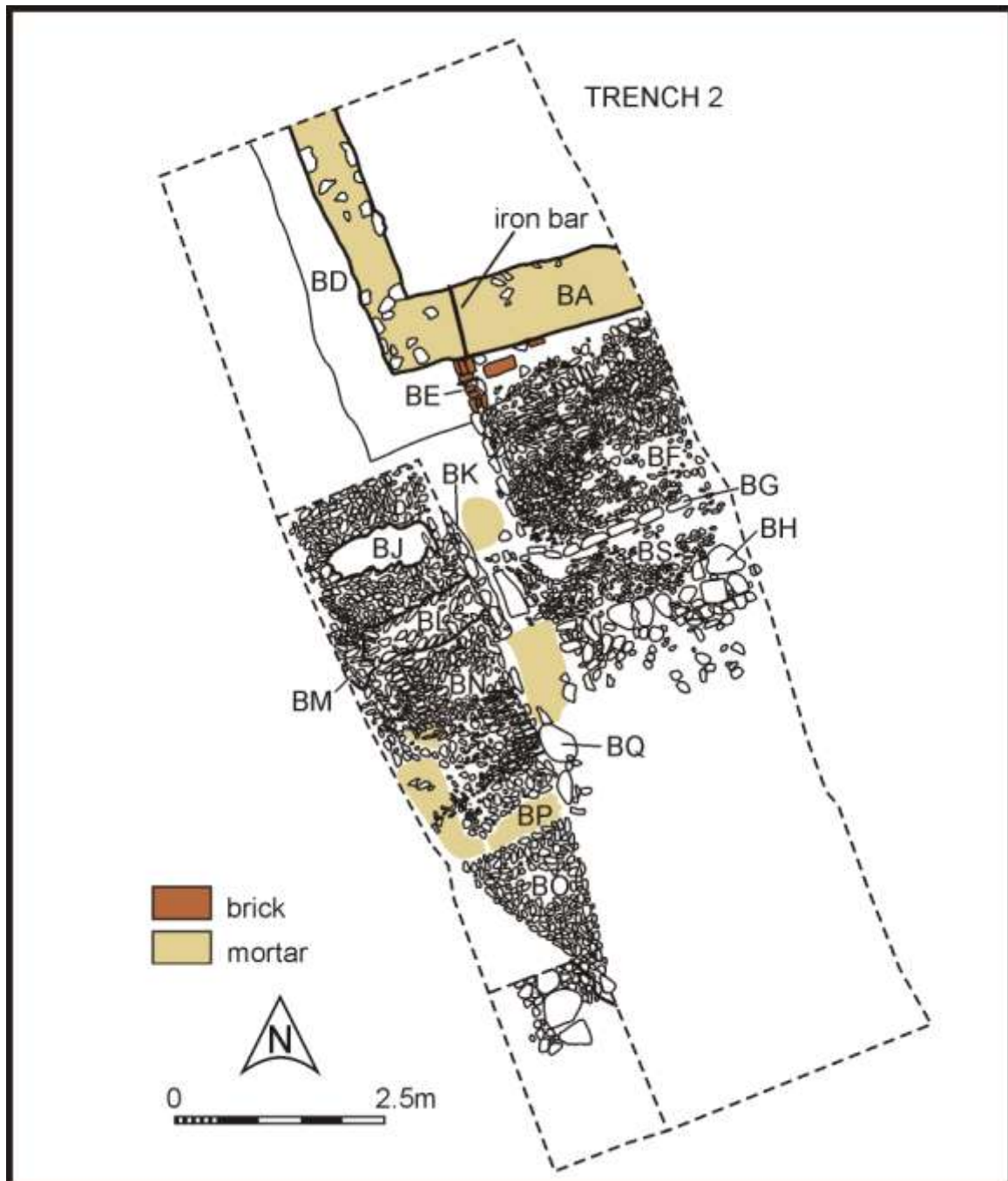
An upstanding wall was thought (from cartographic evidence) to be the east wall of a long farm building. The wall is 14.5m long and 1.6m high (Illus 34) and it contains a blocked doorway close to its SSE end (Illus 34, 35). This range and the manse are both depicted as roofed on the 1st and 2nd editions of the OS 6-inch map (Kincardineshire, 1869, sheet iv and 1902, sheet iii.SE). This building was called ‘The Piggery’ by a local farmer who farmed the surrounding land in the mid 20th century (Alastair Corbett pers comm).



Illus 34 Building 3, Upstanding wall, the east wall, BZ, of the agricultural building facing west



Illus 35 Building 3, Upstanding wall, the east wall, BZ, with blocked doorway, BY, wall scar BX facing east



Illus 36 Building 3, Trench 2: plan of all features

Building 3 was 4.2m wide (Illus 36). To the north was a room at least 4.5m long formed by wall foundation BA (Illus 37). BA was 0.8m wide and constructed of large and medium stones bonded with cream mortar. The room had an earthen floor but was later patched with a floor made from broken fragments of stone roof tile (at a level of 8.31m OD). This room

may have originally been a cottage for agricultural workers as the wall foundation is wide and substantial enough for a 2-storey building. When the manse went out of use this building probably went out of use for accommodation and became a garden or agricultural store with a floor patched with broken roof tile.



Illus 147 Building 3: BA showing scar BX; facing east

South of this was a room with a floor made from water-worn beach pebbles, BF (Illus 38).

This room was 2.5 x 4m in size and set 0.49m lower than the room to the north (which was at 7.82m OD). The pebbles were 0.1-0.15m in size and it would appear that they had been laid by several people working around a central position; this gives an effect of several roughly circular areas of cobbles within the whole floor surface.

There was no evidence of a west wall of this room; it is assumed that there was a large barn door which did not need a foundation. At the south of this room remains of a partition wall

foundation BH survived. Only the facing stones on the north side and some hearting survived and all archaeological remains to the south of this had been lost.



Illus 38 Building 3: Cobbled surface BF showing circular patterns made during laying

At the south of this room BA, an area of cobbles, BS, set 0.16m lower than the main floor represented a dung channel or grip, known locally as a greep (cf *The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre*: 'For the daughter had to strae and neep/The auld wife started to swipe the greep') (Forsythe 1960, 8). This aligned with a runnel or drain (BL, c 0.10m deep) which ran from BS inside the building across the external courtyard, to channel waste materials from these floor surfaces. Its sides and base were lined with waterworn cobbles.

There would have been one or two more rooms to the south; one of the old photographs of the building (Illus 40) shows the south end of the building consisting of a narrower, lower extension at that end. In the photograph a hay stack is shown piled against the south wall of this building surrounded by a wooden fence. No evidence of this end of the building survived archaeologically

The exterior cobbled floor, BN, sloped down slightly from north to south (7.66m OD at the north and 7.50m at the south). This surface had been patched a number of times with poured concrete and one L-shaped area, BP, appeared to have been laid to divide an area off from the main cobbled floor (Illus 39).

Adjacent to BL, an oval-shaped area of the cobbled floor had been removed (BJ). It was 1.4m long, 0.5m wide and 0.20m deep and its sides were lined with waterworn cobbles but the base was unlined. Its purpose is uncertain.

At the south of this trench the topsoil was very shallow and the south end of the building had been completely demolished leaving no traces of flooring or walls. Large amounts of pantile were recovered from this trench indicating that this was the roofing for the building (Illus 37) The building was constructed on a N-S alignment popular with this type of structure as it allows an equal distribution of natural light within the building) (Forsythe 1960: 7).



Illus 39 Building 3: The agricultural building or 'piggerie' showing wall BA (right), waterwashed pebble floor BF (left), wall BH (bottom) and exterior cobbles BN (top)



Illus 40 Building 3: Early 20th century piggyery (copyright left Winram's Bookshop)



Illus 41 Artist's impression of the church, agricultural buildings and manse in 1759.

By Claire Roberts

5.3 THE MEDIEVAL PARISH CHURCH OF NIGG

5.3.1 *Historical background*

The abandoned medieval church of Nigg, which was in the county of Kincardineshire and is now within the City of Aberdeen, is located on the city's southern outskirts. It served the most northerly parish of the diocese of St Andrews, where it was within the archdeaconry of St Andrews and the deanery of Mearns (McNeill & MacQueen 1996: 348-9). There was a parish here from at least 1189-94, when King William I granted it to his recently founded Tironensian abbey of Arbroath (Barrow 1971, 337; Cowan 1967: 157), a grant that was confirmed by Bishop Roger of St Andrews (1189-1202) at an uncertain date during his episcopate Innes (ed) 1848-56, 1, 20, 147). With the parsonage thus held by the abbey, arrangements were made for the provision of a perpetual vicar by Bishop William Malveisin in 1202-4 and by Bishop David de Bernham in 1249 (Innes (ed) 1848-56, vol. 1, nos 158, 165-7 and 236; vol. 2, nos 556 and 734). The last of those bishops carried out one of his many conditional dedications on 30 July 1242 (Anderson 1922, Vol 2: 522), though it is unlikely that dedication has any significance for the building history of the church. The dedication of the church was said by Mackinlay to be to St Fiacre (Mackinlay 1914: 334), though it is more usually given as Fittach or Fittick.

The church continued in use after the Reformation, and came to be within the presbytery and synod of Aberdeen. Although said still to be 'decent' in the 1790s (*Statistical Account of Scotland* 1791-99: vol. 7, 211), it evidently subsequently fell into disrepair, though its main disadvantage may have been that it was deemed to be inconveniently at the north-eastern extremity of the parish. It was replaced by a more centrally located building that was opened

for worship on 7 June 1829. Drawings for the new church of 1829 are held by the National Records of Scotland, RHP 8135 and RHP 8142. That later church, which had been built at a cost of £1,800 (NSA 1834-45, vol. 11: 120) to the designs of John Smith (online Dictionary of Scottish Architects: www.scottisharchitects.org.uk), has now itself been abandoned for worship. At a relatively recent - but so-far unknown - date, the walls of the medieval church were covered with a thick cement render and the wall heads protected by coping, and there may also have been some modification of a number of architectural features. This intervention was doubtlessly carried out with the best of intentions in order to protect the fabric, though it has made interpretation of the architectural evidence additionally difficult.

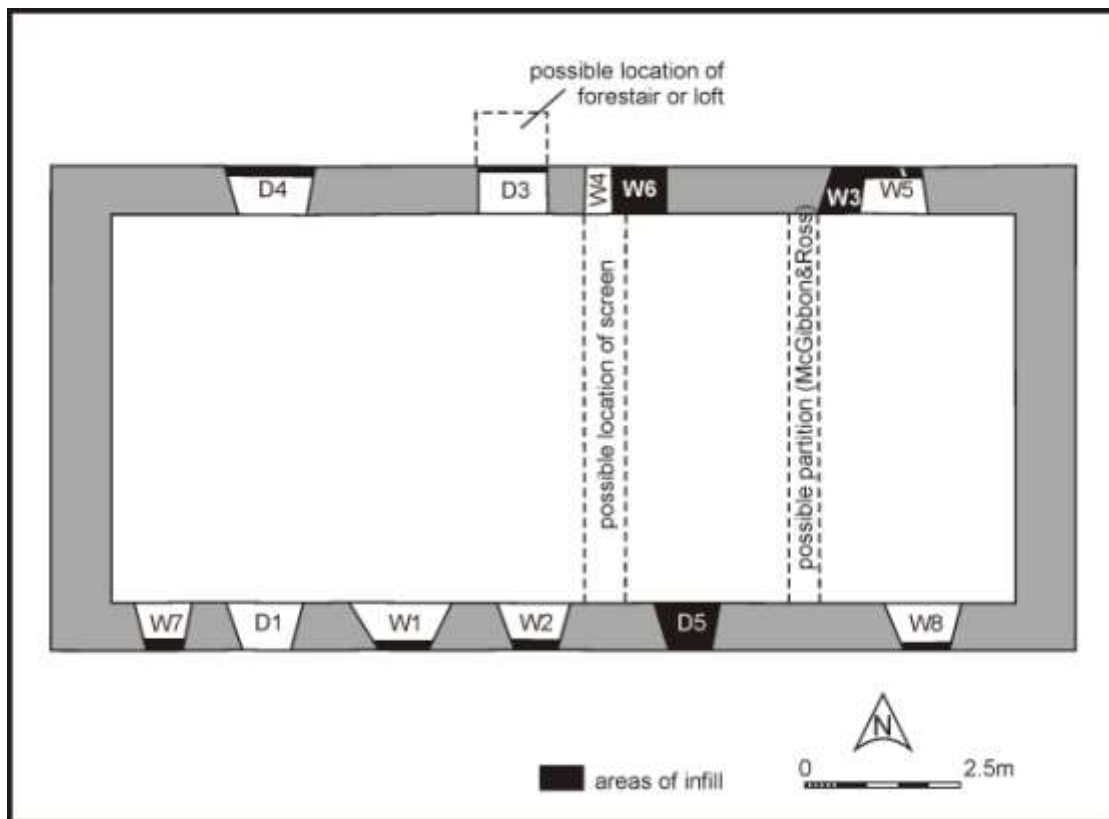


Illus 42 The church and graveyard from the ESE

5.3.2 Architectural description

In the hope of achieving a degree of clarity, the principal overall forms will be described first, and then an account will be given of the individual openings, describing the external and internal forms of each together. The church (Illus 42) is an oriented rectangular structure with

an east-west length along the south side of 16.5 metres and a north-south width along the west wall of 7.85 metres; the thickness of the wall through the south doorway is 84 millimetres. The walls appear to stand to their full medieval height except for the west wall, where the gable above the height of the adjacent north and south walls has been removed and the wall coped off at that level. The east gable is reduced above a chamfered string course at the level of the general wall-head, and its sloping wall-heads are coped. At the apex of the gable is a rectangular birdcage bellcote, which has a single opening to east and west, but with the narrower openings to north and south subdivided by a transom; the openings and the angles are marked by a roll moulding. The bellcote rises above a rectangular plinth that finishes with a cavetto-moulding and has an ogee-moulded cornice. A sketch published in 1897 appears to show that it then had pyramidal pinnacles at the four corners, around a central gablet surmounted by a weather vane (MacGibbon & Ross, 1897: vol 3, fig. 1577). The plinth has an inscribed tablet on its east face that is now partly obscured by ivy, but that is said to be inscribed MM MINISTER 1704, presumably in reference to the Reverend Richard Maitland, who was incumbent between 1674 and 1716. Immediately below the bellcote plinth is a row of four ogee-profiled corbels that do not appear to relate to the bellcote in its present form, and that may thus have been provided for a predecessor.



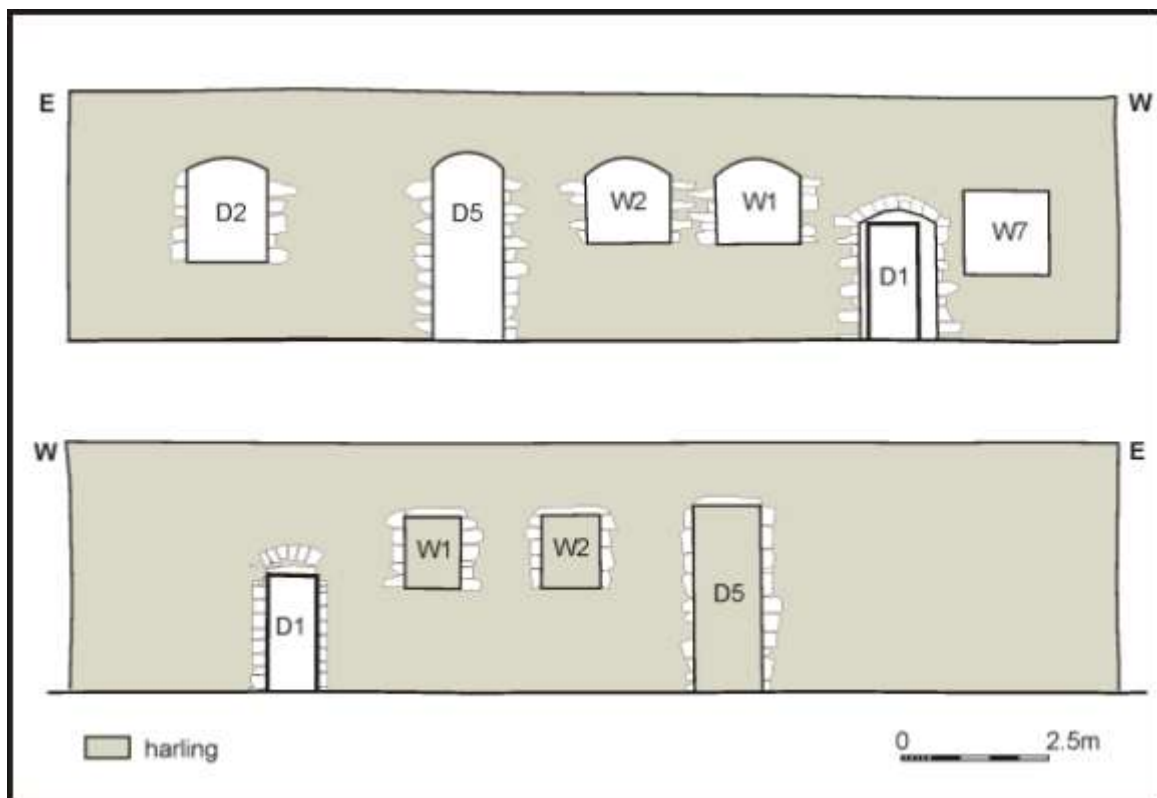
Illus 43 Church plan showing location of doors and windows

The only openings that are currently unblocked are a doorway towards the west end of the south wall and a small window opening near the centre of the north wall, which appears to have been re-set within a blocked larger opening. The form of the blocking varies considerably. In most cases it only occupies approximately the external third of the wall thickness, and the external surround of the opening more frequently remains externally visible. But some cases the opening is blocked through the full wall thickness, while in other cases the external evidence for the opening is almost entirely obscured beneath the cement coating.

The description of the openings will consider the south wall first, and then the north wall, in each case working from west to east.

South wall

There is virtually no external evidence of window W7 (Illus 43, 44) beneath the cement render. Internally it is an almost square opening that is blocked in its outer part. It has slightly splayed jambs to the embrasure, but the cement render applied to the jambs and sill makes it impossible to assess a likely date. The provision of what appear to be concrete safe-lintels, however, might suggest that decayed timber safe lintels have had to be replaced in a more permanent material. Those safe-lintels appear to be contemporary with the cement render. On balance it seems likely that it was inserted at some uncertain post-Reformation date to let more light into the building; it might be a possibility that its relatively low lintel height was because it was set below a western gallery, though there is no other visible evidence to support this idea.

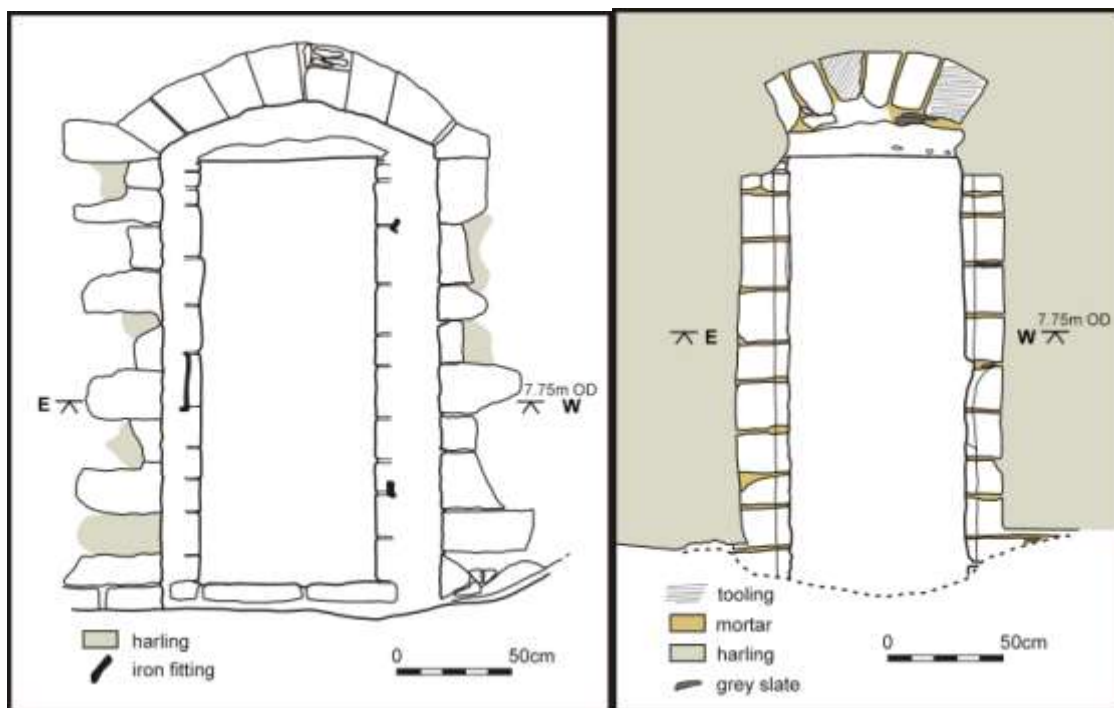


Illus 44 South wall elevations top: interior; bottom: exterior

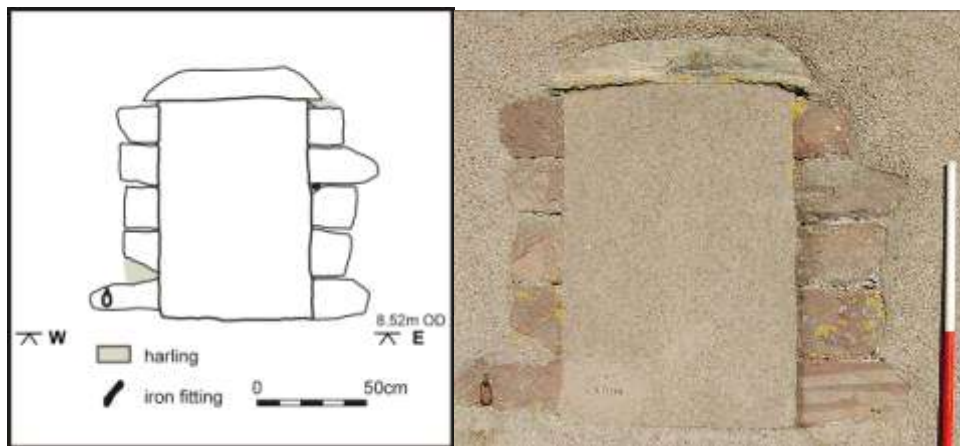
[D2 change to W8]



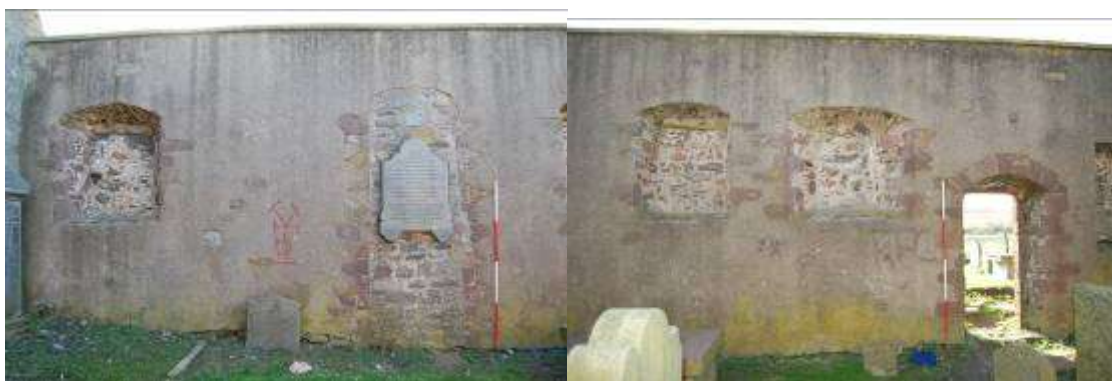
Illus 45 South wall: D1 interior (left) and exterior (right)



Illus 46 South wall: Elevations of D1 interior (left) and exterior (right)



Illus 47 South wall exterior: Window 1 exterior south facing showing chain for jous in situ



Illus 48 South wall interior: (l-r) W8, D5, W2, W1,D1, W7

D1 (Illus 45, 46) was presumably one of the two principal entrances into the church.

Externally it is a lintelled opening with ashlar jambs, and with a narrow chamfer running around both jambs and lintel; above the lintel is a well-formed segmental relieving-arch that appears to extend through the wall thickness to form the rear-arch. Externally the outer part of the tails of the jamb stones and relieving-arch voussoirs are masked by the cement render, and the junctions of the jambs, lintel and relieving arch are also masked. Internally the embrasure is slightly splayed, and the tails of the quoin stones are left largely exposed, but not the outer parts of the segmental rear-arch voussoirs. There seems no reason to doubt that this doorway is medieval, albeit it is more likely to be of a relatively late medieval date on the evidence of the narrow chamfer and the lintelled head.



Illus 49 South wall exterior: (l-r) Door 1, window 1, window 2, door 5

W1 (Illus 47) is one of three (but possibly originally of four) rectangular windows along the south flank that were of broadly similar type. Externally it is slightly taller than it is wide, and has narrowly chamfered jambs bridged by a lintel; the modern blocking is set back a little within the opening. Internally the embrasure is widely splayed with well formed quoins on the inner plane, though it cannot be ruled out that the splay has been increased by paring back the flanks of the embrasure. The segmental rear-arch is formed from rubble.

W2 (Illus 44, 48) is similar to W1, but is of slightly greater width externally, and has a less widely splayed embrasure internally.

D5 (Illus 44) is a doorway which, unusually for a doorway, rises to a slightly greater height than the adjacent windows (W1, W2 and W8). Unlike those windows it is blocked through the full wall thickness, though the jambstones and lintel are left partly in evidence externally, as are the internal quoins of the embrasure and the segmental outline (but not the masonry itself) of the rear-arch. Slight changes of course depth at levels corresponding to the lintels and sills of the adjacent windows could suggest that this opening had originated as a window,

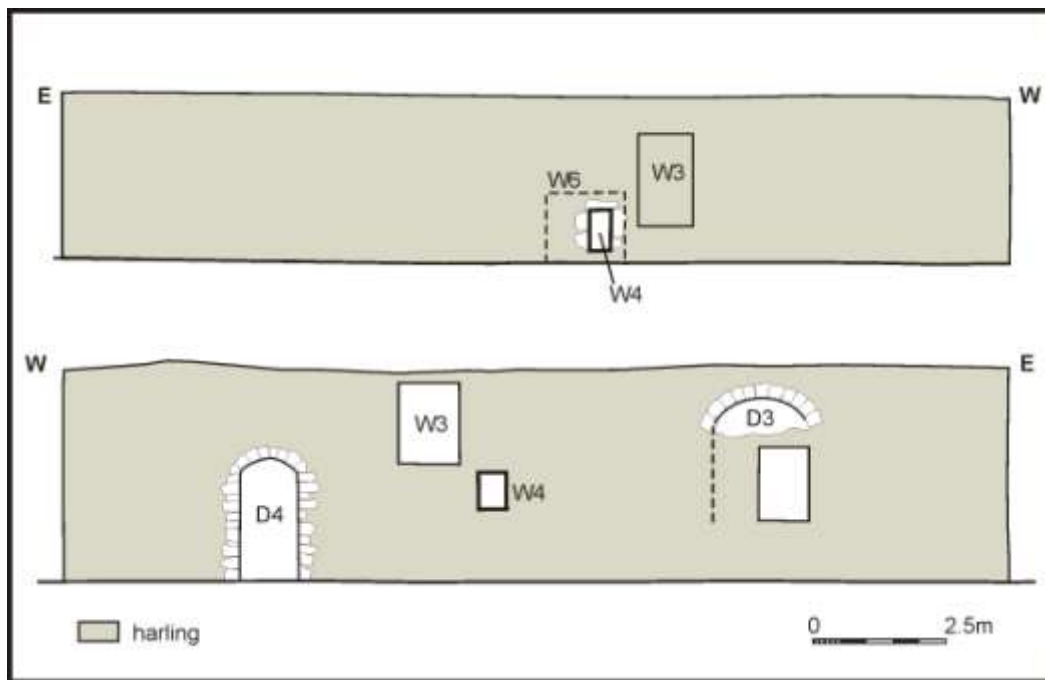
and that it was only secondarily adapted as a doorway. The space between W2 and D5 is rather greater than that between W1 and W2.

W8 (Illus 44) is externally obscured by a mural monument and associated ivy growth. Internally it is of essentially similar form to W1 and W2, having well-formed quoins to the embrasure and a rubble-built segmental rear-arch, except that the rear-arch is a little more rounded than those over W1 and W2.

Exterior

D4 (Illus 50) is externally entirely masked by cement render; internally it is broadly similar to D1 in having ashlar quoins to the slightly splayed embrasure and a well-formed segmental rear-arch. It is possible that the two doorways are more or less contemporary, and that they were formed in the later middle ages as opposed entrances to the nave.

D3 (Illus 50, 51) is externally expressed as a shallow rectangular recess in the cement render, with chamfers to the jambs and lintel; it is elevated a little above the external ground level, which is itself well above the internal ground level at this point. Internally it is a rectangular opening with cement-rendered straight jambs; it appears to be bridged by concrete safe-lintels. The possibility that this opening was the doorway to a post-Reformation loft will be discussed below.

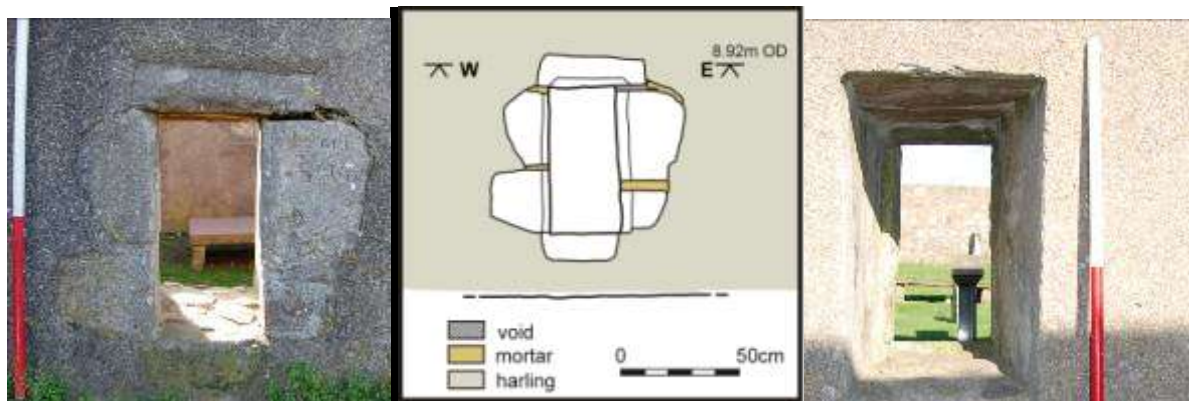


Illus 50 North wall elevations top: exterior; bottom: interior

(W5 to be labelled)



Illus 51 North wall: W5 with D3 above



Illus 52 North wall: Window 4



Illus 53 North wall: W4 (centre) with scar of W6, left and infilled window W3, right

W4 and W6 (Illus 50, 52, 53), which are close to the mid-point of the north wall, have to be considered together, since one is set inside the other, though the inter-relationship between the two is now extremely difficult to determine. W6 is expressed both externally and internally as nothing more than a barely discernible rectangular panel. W4 is a small rectangular window inset towards the western side of that panel. Externally it is a small rectangular opening with narrowly chamfered jambs and lintel, that is of only two irregular

courses in height; one of its most striking features is that it is of a whiter stone than that used to frame most of the other openings in the church. As will be discussed below, in a medieval church a small window in such a position might be assumed to have been associated with the chancel screen. However, the facts that it has evidently been inserted within another opening, that the date of its insertion in that other opening is unclear, and that its difference of material might even place in question that it had originated in this building, mean that such an interpretation can only be advanced with great caution.

W3 and W5 (Illus 51) also have to be considered together since, like W4 and W6, one is partly set inside the other. Neither of these openings is now externally expressed, though a blocked opening at this point is shown in the sketch published by MacGibbon and Ross in 1897, and their plan shows an opening at this point (figs 1576 and 1577). On the internal evidence W5 is clearly the earlier of the two, and is in fact probably the earliest identifiable feature in the church. What is visible is the semi-circular head of a rear-arch formed from carefully cut voussoirs, of which sufficient is visible to be able to see that the embrasure it framed was widely splayed. The insertion of W5 necessitated the destruction of the east side of that embrasure. The latter is a square opening with cement rendering to the flanks of the embrasure, concrete safe-lintels and a roughly formed sloping sill.

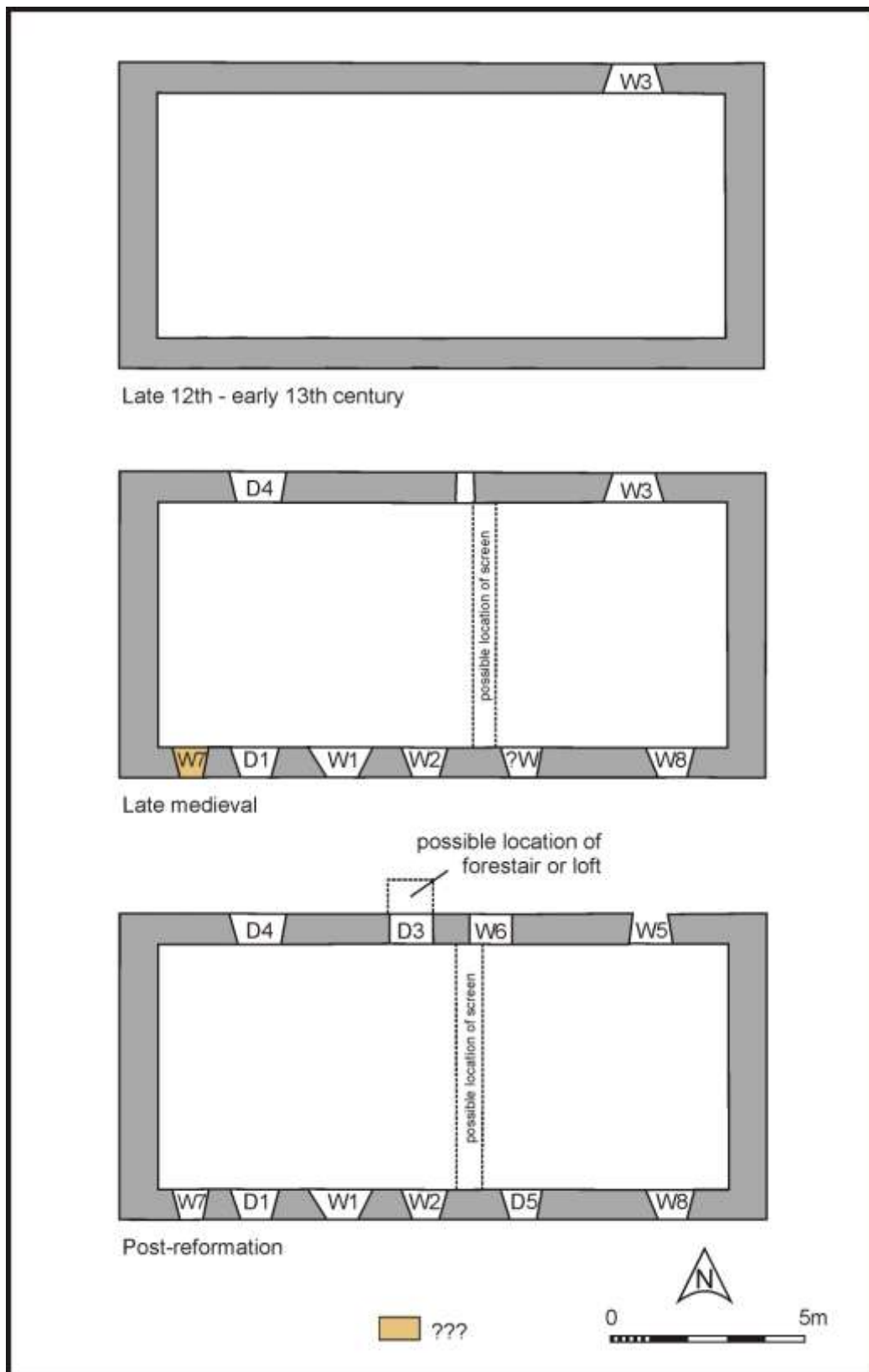
5.3.3 Analysis of the architectural evidence

With its proportions of 1 to 2.1, it might be wondered if the church is a little short in relation to its width for it to be safely concluded that its plan reflects its medieval state. A survey of rectangular medieval churches in the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld found that the average proportions were 1 to 2.69 (Fawcett *et al* 2010: 261-98, <http://arts.st->

andrews.ac.uk/corpusofscottishchurches). However, if there is any question of its having been truncated – and this can be no more than a question that it is proper to ask - such evidence as there is suggests this would have been carried out before the Reformation. The basis for concluding this is a combination of the relationship of the two nave doorways to the west wall and the form of the east gable. In the former case, the two doorways are towards the west end of the nave, as would be expected in a medieval church, while the absence of an east window and the intake above a chamfered string course at the base of the gable are common characteristics of the east walls of smaller late medieval churches and chapels, with the absence of a window possibly being prompted by the wish to accommodate an altarpiece behind the principal altar. It might be added that the location of window W3 so close to the east end of the north wall would be consistent with the possibility that it was intended to cast light on the principal altar, supporting the idea that the east gable was always on the present line.

That window (W3) is the earliest identifiable feature in the church, and it could certainly date from around the time of the first references to the church in the later twelfth century. The only other openings that appear to be certainly medieval are the two doorways towards the western end of the south and north walls, (D1 and D4), the narrow chamfer of the jambs and lintel of the former, however, suggest a date that is unlikely to be earlier than the fifteenth century. In its earlier medieval state it may be that the church had relatively few windows, and the wide splay of window W3 suggests that the daylight opening of those windows would have been relatively small. Here it should be remembered that of those worshipping in such a church, the only ones likely – or able - to have to read would be the celebrant priest and his clerk. As furnishings tended to become more complex in the course of the later middle ages, however, more and larger windows were often introduced, most frequently

along the south side. It may be that several of the windows along the south flank (W1, W2, D5, W8) are of later medieval origin, some possibly being adaptations of earlier windows. But most of them have been further modified at a later date, though the cement render makes certainty on this currently impossible.



Illus 54 Church phase plan; there would have been more openings in the earliest phases but all evidence of these early doors and windows has been obliterated by later building

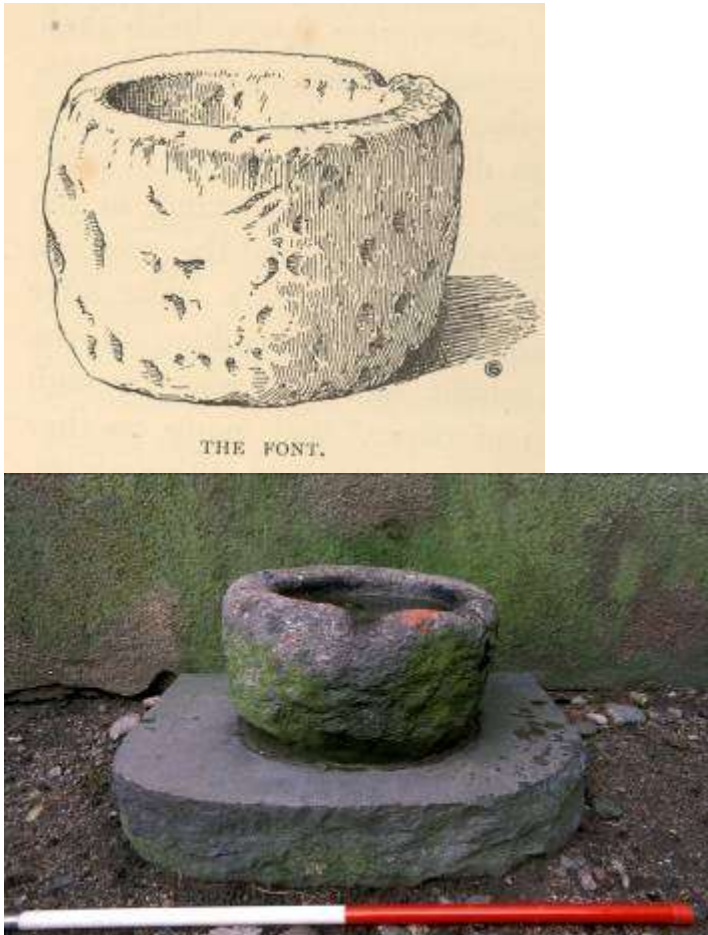
There is very little evidence for the internal medieval arrangements. MacGibbon and Ross stated that they had found ‘indications of an arch across from side to side’ towards the east end of the building, to the west of the easternmost window on each side, and suggested it could have demarcated a chancel (1897: 592-4). Although the opening appears to be a doorway in the sketch, the raised ground levels on the north side of the church mean that it could equally have been a window. But any such evidence has now been either lost or obscured under the cement coating of the walls. If there is any evidence for a division between nave and chancel, and there could be no certainty on this, it might be that the wider spacing between openings W2 and D5 on the south side (the latter of which we have seen may have originated as a window before being modified as a doorway) indicates the location of a screen. Some support for this might be found in the location of the small window W4 in a corresponding position on the north side, since such small and low-set windows are sometimes found associated with the altars in front of a screen. Examples of smaller windows of various forms that appear to have been associated with screens exist, or are known to have existed at a number of churches, including Fowlis Easter Collegiate Church (Perthshire), Aberdeen Franciscan Friary and Innerpeffray Collegiate Church (Perthshire) (Fawcett, 2011, figs 289, 348 and 349). However, since that window was evidently re-set within a larger opening at some uncertain stage, its value as evidence is open to question.

To meet the changing needs of Reformed worship the church would have been extensively re-ordered on more than one occasion, and perhaps the most obvious pointer to this is the construction of a bellcote on the east gable, showing that there was no sense in which the church was regarded as still being liturgically oriented at the time it was added. There is also evidence for such changes in all of the window openings, but that is perhaps seen most obviously in windows W4/W6 and W3/W5, where an earlier window appears to have been superseded by a later one. In the post-Reformation liturgical arrangements the pulpit was probably near the middle of the south wall, and the modification of a window to form a door at D5 was perhaps to give the minister the commonly favoured direct access to his pulpit from the exterior of the church. Seating for the congregation would presumably have been provided in a number of ways and at a range of times, varying from stools, pews and enclosures to elevated lofts. The elevated blocked opening at D3 may have been to give access to a loft, with the doorway reached externally by a forestair of some kind. The location of this presumed loft more or less opposite the pulpit suggests it might have been provided for the principal landowners or heritors of the parish (*Statistical Account of Scotland* , vol. 7: 199-200), while the patronage of the parish pertained to the crown, in 1786 the parish had been divided between the burgh of Aberdeen and the family of Menzies of Pitfoddels. Is it possible the loft was the seat of the latter family?

5.4 *The fonts*

A stone basin, reputed to be a font from St Fittick's is in the collections of The University of Aberdeen (Reid 1912: 20) and illustrated in *The Book of St Fittick* (Ogilvie 1901) which reports that 'For, until rescued from its degradation by its present custodian, it served for many years as the trough in a poultry yard'.

A stone basin, locally reputed to be another font is located inside the church on the floor in front of Window 5 (Illus 55). Both are roughly carved and unlikely to have been high enough quality to function as fonts.

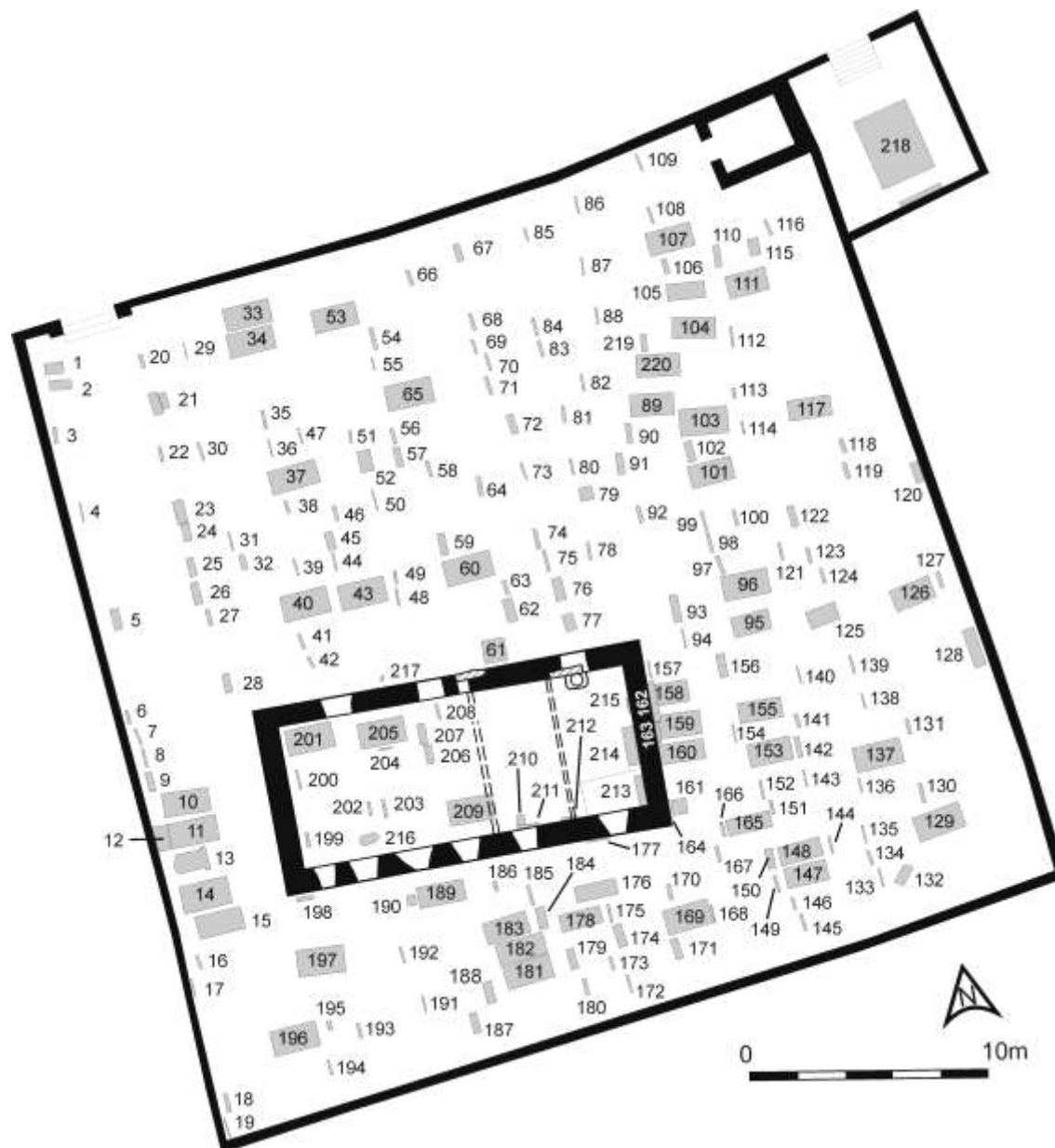


Illus 55 Stone basin now in Marischal Museum (left) and basin in situ in church (right)

5.5 *The graveyard*

The difference in ground levels of 1.1m between the higher ground to the north of the church and lower internal level can partly be explained by the concentration of graves to the

north of the church raising the ground level. Table stones 40 and 43 (both dated to 1823) are deeply buried suggesting the ground has been raised since that date.



Illus 56 Church and graveyard plan

5.6 *Watcher's house (Building 5)*

This structure is granite rubble built and is 7.5m long, 3.5m wide and 2.1m high (Illus 57). It is similar to other watcher's houses in Aberdeen graveyards such as St Fergus, Dyce and St Machar's, Old Aberdeen. It has a small window (now blocked) in the south wall which allows a view of the greater part of the graveyard. It had a fireplace to warm those who kept watch in the winter nights.



Illus 57 Building 5 from the SW

5.7 *Graveyard recording*

As part of the Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit project, staff, students and volunteers worked with Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Family History Society to record the memorial inscriptions (MIs) in the graveyard (Illus 58). The type and style of stone and mason's marks were also recorded, a gravestone plan created and all the stones photographed. A copy of the MIs can be purchased from <http://www.anesfhs.org.uk/publ.htm>.

220 gravestones were present at the time of the survey and were recorded (Illus 58). There were 18 internal graves, a private Davidson graveyard annex to the main graveyard, and 201 external graves.



The oldest surviving stone dated 1645 reads 'Gviel McMylne, Incola Villae de Kincorth, Chricaus ab inimicis, 16th? 1? 1645 [Occisvs] Innocenter Albore his. in pace quies cit. Ovem pie tas pro. Bitas Sacr ie oe. Dvso Bearvnt Nvinis Hiberni *Concidit ense* trycis'. William Milne who lived at Kincorth and was 'slain...on 10th of July, 1645, ...fell by the sword of a savage Irishman (Jervise 1875: 15). The stone is sandstone and the inscription remarkably well-preserved. It depicts a stylised skull and a possible coat-of-arms.



Illus 60 gravestone 176 dated 1645;

One of the oldest stones (165: Illus 61) is of granite and is now broken in two pieces. It depicts a high relief decoration of a skull and crossbones, hourglass and crossed spades. The inscription reads 'Here lyes an honest man, George Gartli in Lorstown and husband to Agnes Boner, departed this life 19th Nov.1658 aged 49yrs.



Illus 61 *gravestone 165*

Stone 147 (Illus 62) is sandstone and is inscribed on one half 'W.M. William Marnoh, merchant, Burgess, Aberdeen d. 15th Mar.1706 aged 33yrs'. The other half was prepared presumably for his wife and headed M.F. but no detail has been added suggesting she was buried elsewhere.



Illus 62 *gravestone 147*

5.8 *Conclusions*

St Fittick's Church is a well-known local site but little research has taken place until this project. It has now been possible to say that elements of the church date back to the 12th or 13th century as previously it was thought by many that the church had been completely rebuilt in the 18th century.

Foundations of the manse are buried 1.5m below the current ground level and so although much survives it is well-protected. Earlier evidence includes possible earlier buildings and evidence of medieval agricultural practices and there is much that could form part of future archaeological research.

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