
**CASTLE FRASER COURTYARD
ABERDEENSHIRE
DRAIN UNBLOCKING
-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

HK Murray

1. Background

- 1.1 A blocked drain in the courtyard at Castle Fraser, Cluny, Aberdeenshire required several test pits to be dug to find the blockage and repair the drain. As a result an archaeological watching brief was carried out to record any archaeological features that might be revealed.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland, to undertake the work; the field element of which was carried out on 4th November 2010.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The courtyard lies between the E and W wings of the castle, to the N of the main block. The drain was located on the E side of the courtyard, at the N end.
Parish: Cluny NGR: NJ 72309 12581
NMRS ref: NJ71SW.6.1 Aberdeenshire SMR ref: NJ71SW0139



Illus 1 Location of test pit 1, looking E



Illus 2 Location of test pit 2, looking N to test pit 1

3 Methodology

- 3.1 Two test pits (illus 9) were dug by hand by the drainage engineer to locate the blocked section of drain. Both were observed, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.

4. The Results

Test Pit 1 (TP1) TP1 was originally 900mm (E/W) x 400mm (N/S) but was later extended to an L-shape by 600 x 400mm at the SE corner. The E edge of the test pit was located 100mm to S and 100mm to the E of the SW corner of the E gatehouse.

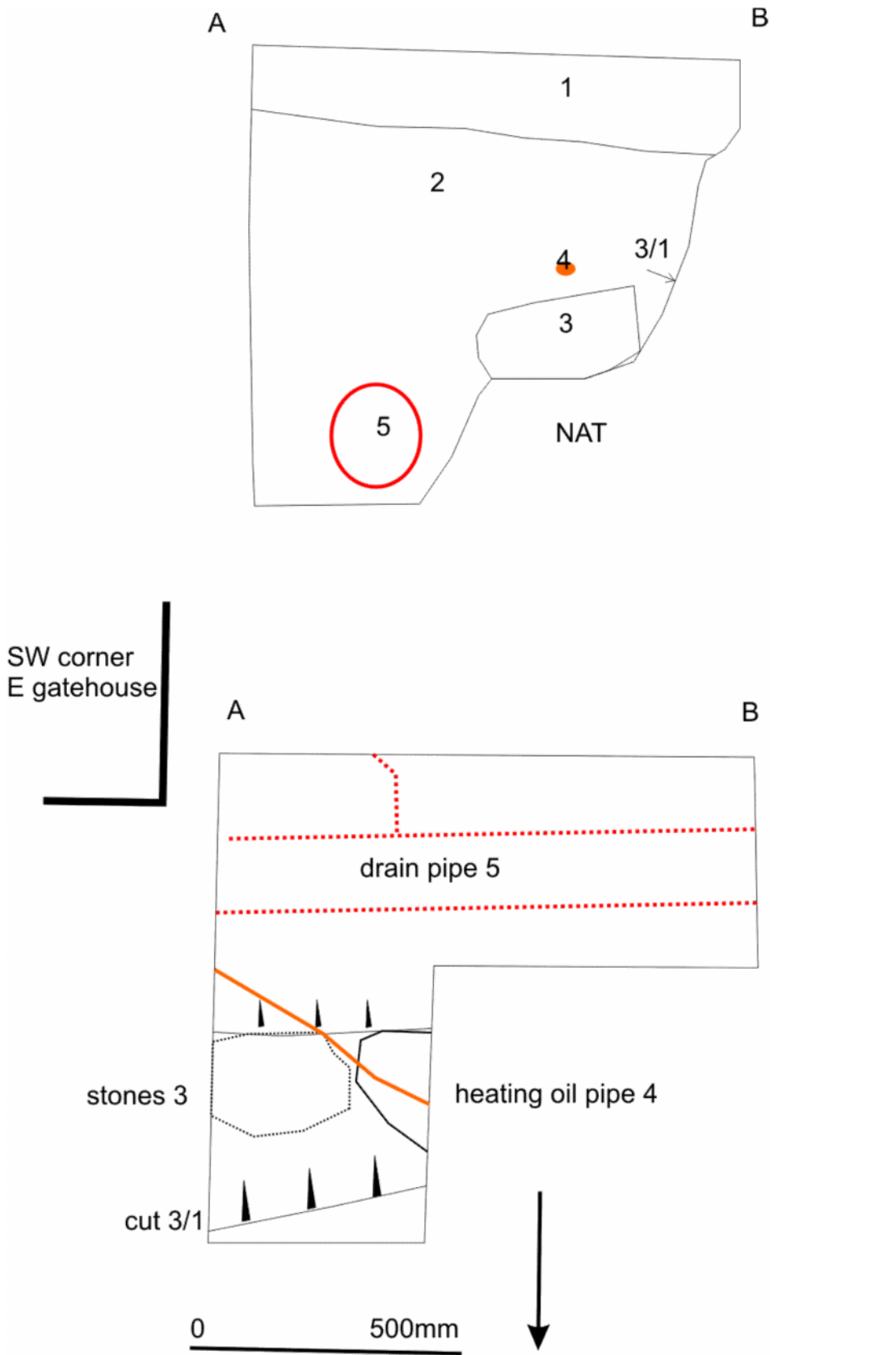
100-150mm gravel (1) overlay loose earthy sand and gravel backfill (2) over the drain. The ceramic drain (5) ran N/S along the E arm of the test pit, with a junction from the nearby downpipe coming in from the E. The drain had been cut into clean hard natural glacial deposits. The W side of the drain cut had cut along the side of two stones (3) placed in a higher cut into the natural. These stones had been partially disturbed by the earlier insertion of a thin pipe (4) for heating oil for the manager's flat.



Illus 3 Test pit 1, looking W to stones (3)



Illus 4 Test pit 1, looking at S section showing stone (3) and cut into natural (3/1)



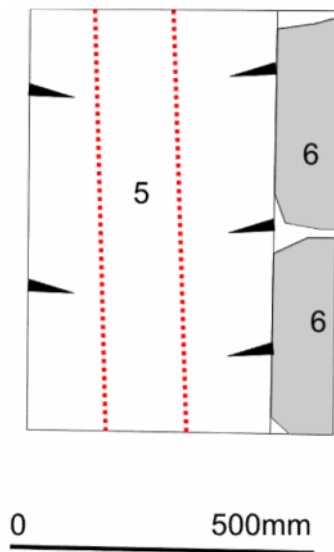
Illus 5 TP 1. Plan and S section

Test Pit 2 (TP2) TP2 was 700mm (N/S) x 500mm E/W). It was located 4m S of the SW corner of the E gatehouse and 4m W of the E wall of the courtyard. 100-150mm gravel (1) overlay loose earthy sand and gravel backfill (2) over the drain. The ceramic drain (5) ran N/S along the centre of the trench, 630mm below the present yard surface, and had been cut into clean hard natural glacial deposits. The W side of the drain trench had cut along the side of two in-situ stones with clay bonding (6) which were sealed by c100mm of grey gritty sand with charcoal in it (7). These stones were undisturbed by the present works and lie 400mm below the present yard surface.

A fragment of animal bone was found in context 2 but could be of any date.



Illus 6 Test pit 2, looking W, showing wall 6 and grey sandy layer 7 above it

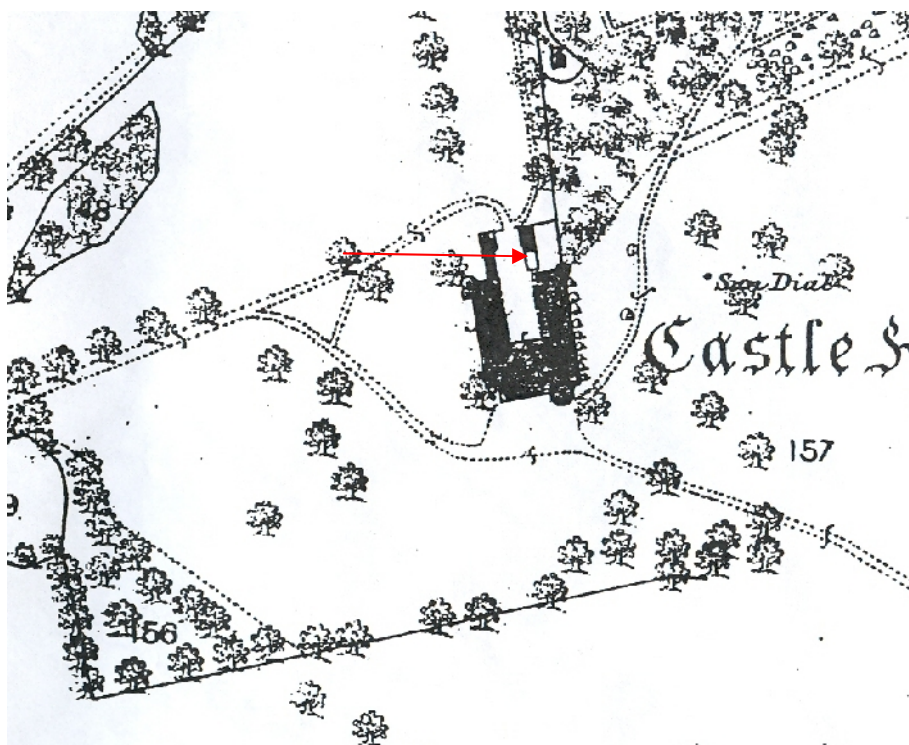


Illus 7 Test pit 2

5. Interpretation

5.1. Stones (6) in TP2 and the disturbed stones (3) in TP1 appear to be on the wall line of a small structure on the E side of the entrance as shown on illus 8.

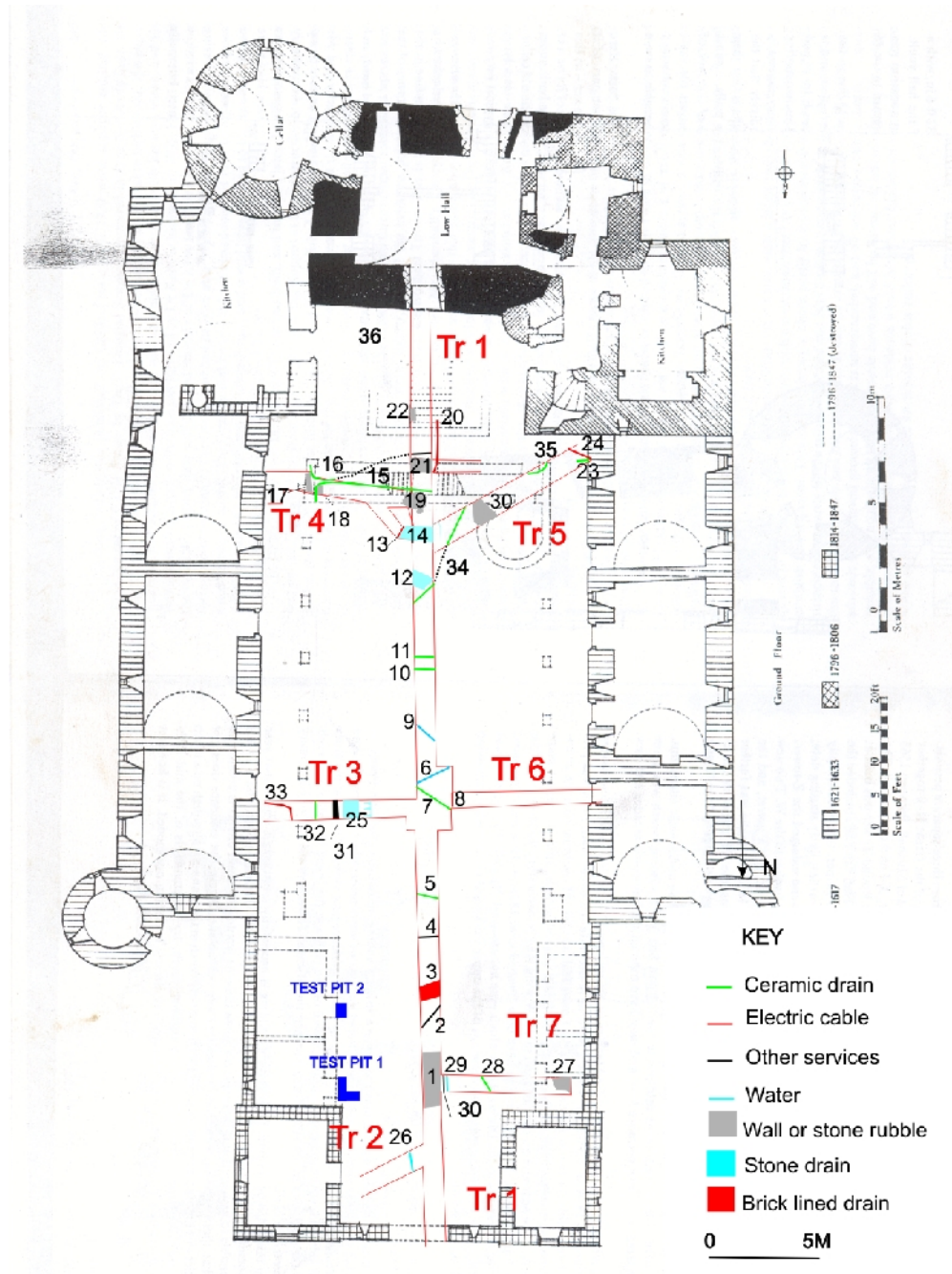
This building- and a similar building on the W side of the entrance - are not on the 1788/9 or 1799 estate plans. They are shown on the 1846 estate plan and on the 1st OS map of 1864/7 and the 2nd edition OS map of 1899. They appear therefore to date to the 19th century.



Illus 8 1st OS map (1864/7) with arrow marking wall shown in test pits

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue Castle Fraser Drain 4/11/2010	
Digital frame no	Content
1769-1770	TP1, looking W, context 3
1771-1772	TP1, looking S, stone 3 and cut 3/1. Detail
1773	TP1, looking S, stone 3 and cut 3/1. General view
1774-1775	Location TP1
1776	TP1 after drain burst, looking S
1777	TP2, looking W
1778	TP2 location, looking N .TP1 in background
1779-1781	TP2, looking W, 'wall' 6



Illus 9 Test pits (blue) superimposed on plan of drains etc recorded in 2005

