
**CASTLE FRASER WALLED GARDEN
ABERDEENSHIRE
SOAKAWAY TEST PITS
-Archaeological Watching Brief-**

HK Murray

1. Background

- 1.1 Maintenance work on the septic tank for the public toilets beside the walled garden at Castle Fraser, Cluny, Aberdeenshire required several test pits to be dug to determine the soil porosity prior to the maintenance or replacement of the soakaway from the tank. As a result an archaeological watching brief was carried out to record any archaeological features that might be revealed.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in the context of the presence of known prehistoric archaeology in the estate such as the John Bel standing stone (NJ71SW5) and the recumbant stone circle (NJ71SW3), both of which lie W of the present site. A small number of flints were found in excavations in 2010 in the former Privy Garden to the E of the castle but these were considered to have been possibly brought in with soil from elsewhere.
- 1.3 The 1788/9 estate plan appears to show this area as a fir plantation so considerable root disturbance of the ground might be anticipated.
- 1.4 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 20th April 2011.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The site lies outside the walled garden, to the E of the E wall and beside a lean-to gardener's tool shed which abutts the wall.

Parish: Cluny NGR: NJ 72384 12736

NMRS ref: NJ71SW.6.05



Illus 1 Location of test pits looking W

3 Methodology

- 3.1 Two test pits (Illus 1, 2) were dug by a mini- digger; a straight-edged bucket was used for the upper horizons but the lower *c* 500mm of test pit 1 required to be dug with a toothed bucket. Both were observed, planned and photographed by MAS Ltd.

4. The Results

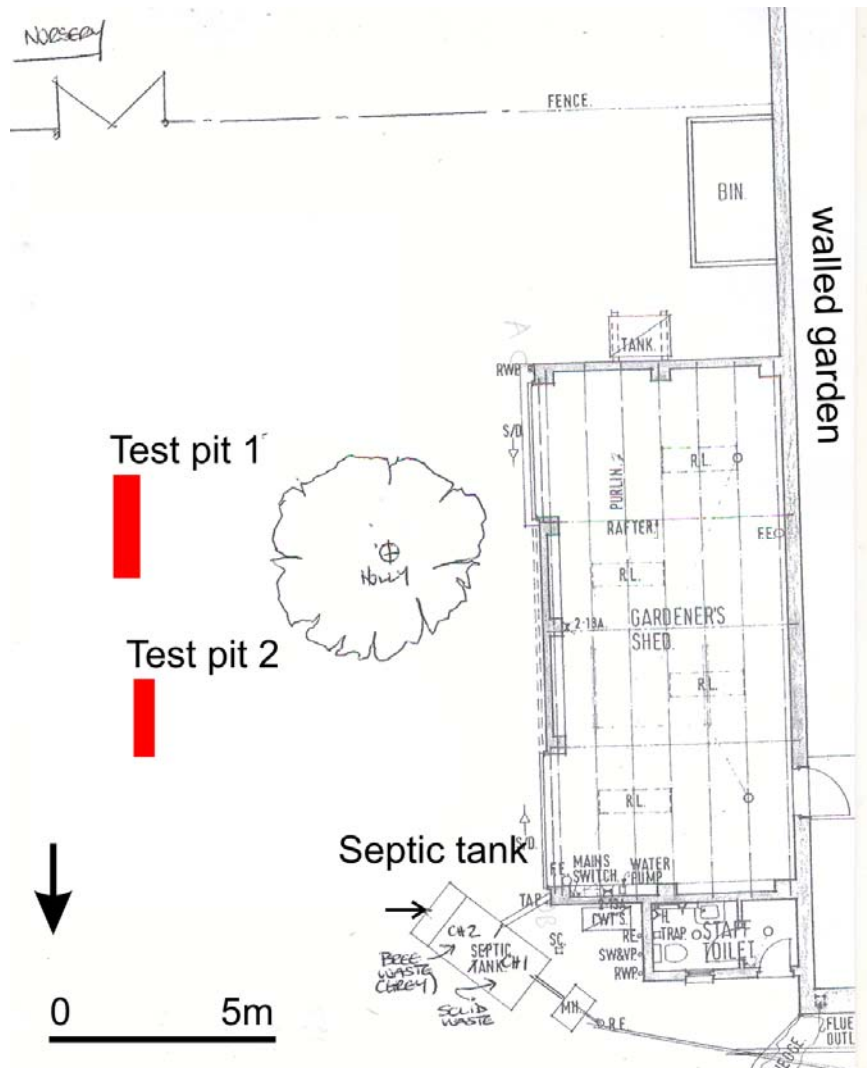
Test Pit 1 (TP1) GPS: 372384, 812736.

TP1 was 0.55m (E/W) x 2.20m (N/S). Depth: 1.85m

The S half of the test pit was cut into the top of an existing soakaway formed of small angular stones covered by a membrane of plastic (Illus 3). This extended to the S and E of TP1 from a depth of *c* 700mm below the yard surface to the base of the test pit. A clay drain led into it from the NE corner of TP1. It was sealed by yard makeup (*c* 200mm) and redeposited topsoil. It was cut into

clean hard natural glacial deposits. The stratigraphy at the N and W sides of TP1 showed c 200mm yard make up over c 300mm of disturbed and mixed topsoil and subsoil over natural.

No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.



Illus 2 Plan showing location of test pits

Test Pit 2 (TP2) GPS: 372385, 812740

TP2 was 0.60m (E/W) x 1.8m (N/S). Depth: c 1.10m.

The whole of TP2 was cut into the top of an existing soakaway formed of small angular stones covered by a membrane of plastic. A clay drain ran along the top of the soakaway below the plastic. There was c 600mm of yard make up and redeposited topsoil and subsoil above the soakaway. This was a separate soakaway from the one observed in TP1.

A water pipe was ruptured at the SW corner of the test pit.
No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.



Illus 3 Soakaway in TP1

5. Interpretation

No archaeological features or finds were observed and it was clear that this area of hard standing to the E and S of the septic tank has all been very considerably disturbed by the two soakaways and related pipework as well as by a number of water pipes relating to the garden.

Photographs supplied to archive on CD

Photographic catalogue Castle Fraser Soakaway	
Digital frame no	Content
1	Test pit 1 looking W
2-3	Test pit 1, S end showing top of soakaway
4	Test pit 1, N end
5-6	General views of site looking W
7-8	Test pit 2 S end looking W

