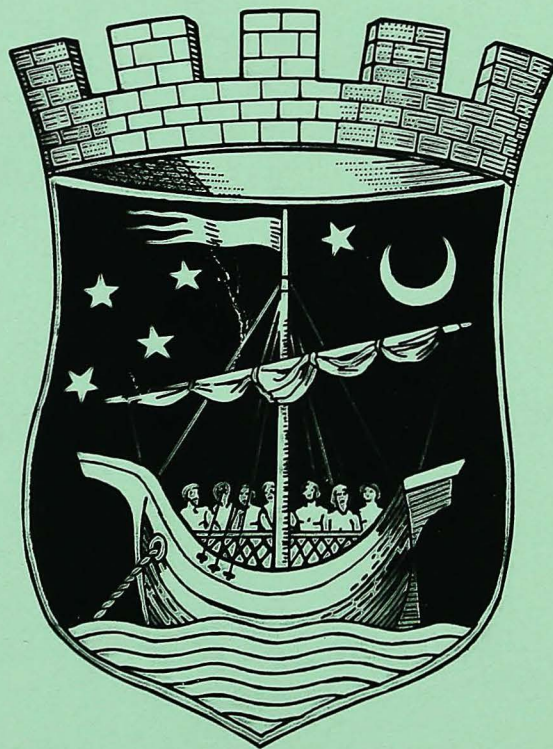


Historic
CRAIL

the archaeological implications
of development



Anne Turner Simpson
Sylvia Stevenson

Scottish Burgh Survey
1981



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Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow

CONTENTS

PREFACE

HISTORY

Introduction	Page 1.
Historical Background	Page 1.
Buildings.	Page 7.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Summary and recommendations.	Page 10.
Previous work	Page 14.
Archaeological problems	
Early settlement.	Page 15.
The Ports and Walls.	Page 16.
Street Plan.	Page 17.
Early Buildings and Materials.	Page 18.
The Church	Page 19.
The Nunnery.	Page 20.
The Priory.	Page 21.
The Castle.	Page 21.
The Harbour.	Page 22.

BIBLIOGRAPHY	Page 24.
--------------	----------

CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES.	Page 26.
-----------------------	----------

MAPS.

PREFACE

This report of the history and archaeology of the former burgh of Crail is one of a series of such reports on the historic towns of Scotland. The reports have been commissioned by the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Scottish Development Department with a view to providing the necessary background information upon which to base a policy for urban research in the future. They are also aimed at providing local authority planning departments with the historical and archaeological information necessary to enable them to assess the archaeological implications of any planning applications.

Each report contains an historical report compiled by Anne Turner Simpson with an archaeological report and a series of illustrative plans compiled by Sylvia Stevenson and drawn by Derek Shaw. The reports attempt to identify those areas within the burghs which were developed at various periods of their history up to approximately 1800, and to locate within those areas sites which are of particular historical importance. Areas of 19th century growth and modern suburbs have not been examined.

The survey team would like to acknowledge the help and support of Fife District Council: Mr. P.G. Hutchinson, Director of Physical Planning, north-east Fife District Council and members of his staff, specifically Mr. J. Hanson; the staff of the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey, Edinburgh; and the Historic Buildings Branch of the Scottish Development Department. The survey team would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. I.C. Copland, District Librarian of north-east Fife District Council and members of his staff, especially Mr. A. Rodden; Miss D. Fox, of the Department of Archaeology, Glasgow University, and Professor Leslie Alcock and Mr. Eric Talbot who supervised the project at Glasgow University.

Note:- The views expressed herein are those of the survey team freely given, and do not necessarily represent official policy.

Cover:- The Coat of Arms of the burgh of Crail as depicted in Bute, MacPhail and Lonsdale, 1897, 57.

History

'The whole town bears evident marks of having seen better days'
(Mr. Andrew Bell, 1793).

'Nothing can be more quaint than your first impression of Crail...Crail is little known for summer quarters. It lies for one thing completely off the beaten track, and the inhabitants...do not care to put themselves about for enticing visitors. Thus Crail is socially and physically a desolate place, and yet a fine picturesque sea-port, where a pleasant but rather contemplative season may be passed by the rock-fenced sea'
(H. Farnie, 1860).

'A stranger finding himself in any one of the old burghs which dot the coast from Inverkeithing to Crail is apt to feel far out of the world. They are the oldest fashioned towns in Scotland, and afford us good specimens of the architecture of the sixteenth century, yet the style is more Dutch than Scotch, for they were mostly built after Flemish models. Their crow-stepped gables and high plain towers are unmistakably Dutch, although brick clay abounds in their localities, the towns are entirely stone-built, and each has a natural harbour. The 'well-aired ancient town of Crail' is the quietest of them all' ('Kilrounie', 1881).

INTRODUCTION

Site: The town and parish of Crail occupies the extreme portion of the county of Fife. Within the parish's boundary lies the promontory of Fife Ness which forms the most easterly point of land between the Firths of Forth and Tay. In addition to various mill lades, a burn known in some historical documents as the 'Eist Burgh Burne' cut through the town.

PLACE-NAME: Erskine Beveridge thought the place-name could be derived possibly from two different Gaelic phrases either caithir uille 'the fortified place on the elbow (or corner)' or carr ville 'the rock on the corner' (1893, 2). Crail has been variously spelled. In the reign of William the Lion (1165 x 1214) Carale, Carel, Carelel, Carell, Karal, Karel, Karell, Kerel and Kerrall were all common forms (Barrow, 1971, passim).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: A spurious charter of David I to Dryburgh Abbey included the grant of unum manerium in burgo meo de Caraile (ESC, 1905, 194), but in actual fact Crail did not become a royal burgh until the late twelfth century. In the reign of her son Malcolm IV, Crail was in the possession of Ada, Countess of Fife (Barrow, 1960, 254), and on her death in 1178, the burgh passed to the crown (Pryde, 1965, 8). Crail participated in the ransom of David II in 1357, attended Parliament from 1471 and was a

member of the Convention of Royal Burghs.

Pre-1700: Throughout its long history, Crail has largely remained a backwater, seldom caught up in the drama of national affairs. Crail was a dower-town of Countess Ada, mother of Malcolm IV and William I, and she often resided there until her death in 1178 (Barrow, 1971, 5). It appeared to be largely unaffected by the Wars of Independence, although at a later stage the town participated in the ransom of David II. The town was important enough to have been singled out in the wording of a 1503 Act of Parliament which ordained that all towns in the neighbourhood of the Firth of Forth such as Leith, Inverkeithing, Kinghorn, Dysart and Crail were to construct walls to the sea side with 'lyme and stane' (Beveridge, 1893, 6n). A charter of James V spoke of Crail as an ancient burgh in our kingdom 'where sundry princes, his predecessors, had made their residence and dwelling place, as he and his successors might do in time to come, as reasonable causes and occasions should befall' (Beveridge, 1893, 6).

In the thirteenth century, Crail supplied the Scottish royal household with rabbits from the Isle of May, and herring and porpoises (ER, i, 4, passim 160). Although Crail remained throughout the medieval and early modern period as a centre of the herring trade, it only belatedly participated in overseas trade. One of the first surviving customar's reports for the burgh was in 1477 a year in which she exported hides and woollen cloth to a total value of £1 13s 3d (ER, i, 462). Inverkeithing in that same year on the other hand exported products to a total value of £22 16s 9½d and Cupar £8 5s 1d (ER, i, 460,461). Throughout the reign of James IV Crail experienced a minor boom in her export trade, and the goods she handled were not only herring, but cod, hides and woollen cloth (ER, ix, x, passim). The Scottish Parliament in 1584 recognised Crail's importance as a leading fishing port and for a short time Crail, along with Leith, was the principal packing point for white fish caught in the Forth (APS, iii, 302).

War and plague both visited the town in the 1640s. Parliament reimbursed Crail (along with many other burghs) in 1644 for a sum which it had advanced to the factors at Campvere for ammunition (APS, VI, 173b). In the following year plague hit the burgh, and town magistrates were forced to petition Parliament for a supply of food (APS, VI, 481). This had not been the first time that plague had threatened the burgh. Town magistrates in 1597 were forced to pass strict measures 'for avodying the appearand danger of pestilence within this burge'. No one was to harbour strangers

without giving notice to the authorities and the 'ports of the burgh were to be kept closed except the East and West Ports' (Beveridge, 1893, 269). With the stepping up of hostilities in the middle of the 1640s, Parliament was forced to turn to the burghs to help finance and supply their army. In 1645, the first year of this 'selective service', Crail along with Cupar was expected to field twenty-four men and pay £216 monthly, while St. Andrews would supply sixty men monthly and pay £540 (APS, VI, i, 352b). By the end of the decade, its population and coffers no doubt depleted through repeated Parliamentary measures, Crail petitioned that body for exemption from payment on account of the 'sad and low condition' into which it had fallen through its suffering from pestilence and 'by the los of divers of our men at Aberdeine, Alford and elsquhair...'. The petition continues that 'the maist pair of us have not a butt of meat to put in our bellies quhill the samyn be first gottin furth of the sea' (APS, VI, ii, 712-3).

Crail's fortunes continued to sink in the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1675, it was reported that due to the sad condition of the ancient burgh of Crail and in respect of several debts against her, there had not been any election of magistrates for four years (Beveridge, 1893, 7). A 1680 petition to the Convention of Royal Burghs noted their poverty, decay of trade, ruin of the harbour and 'want of their common good' (RCRB, iv, 21). In the pride of Crail's poverty, however, she actively supported the ill-fated Darien Scheme and in 1706 petitioned the Scottish Parliament against the proposed union with England (APS, XI, 320a).

Eighteenth Century: Impoverished backwater Crail was thrust into the forefront of national events early in the eighteenth century. On 20 March 1708 a few days after the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne a French fleet with a party of Jacobites (including the Old Pretender) lay off Crail. The invasion proved an abortive one, for the French captain seeing no sign of support from the shore, refused to do battle with the English fleet and sailed back to France ('Kilrounie', 1881, 71). The Highland army occupied the town in the autumn of 1715 and references in the kirk session minutes catalogue the upset that ensued. On the 18 October there was no sermon, 'the Highland army being here', and again on the 13 November, it is recorded that there was no sermon on the Sabbath or weekday, 'the town being bombarded'. Following this episode, the minister was forbidden to preach in the church unless he read the Earl of Mar's edict and prayed for King James. That Sunday the

minister conducted a service in his house. Further disruption was caused on the 11 December when a party of Highland men stopped the sermon (Wood, 1887, 420). The only tangible memorial left in the east of Fife of the rebellion of 1745 in Wood's day was the ruins of the episcopal chapel at Bankhead of Crail (1887, 421).

Fishing was the principal industry of eighteenth century Crail. In the early century the historian Robert Sibbald had remarked.

'It was of old a place of good trade, and again within these twenty years they have been improving their fishing, beyond what was for some time before. They have now belonging to them six ships and barks and about eighty fishing boats, which for the most part are employed in the herring fishing' (1803, 345-6).

Bishop Pococke in 1760 noted that most of the burgh's residents were engaged in the fishing trade, (Kemp, 1887, 274), while the reporter in the Statistical Account wrote at great lengths about this principal industry. The fishing, however, at this date was in great decline, and our reporter blamed the weather and 'our neighbours the Dutch' who occasionally swept the coast 'with a fleet of nets several miles in length' (OSA, 1793, ix, 445). Crail had thirteen herring boats and six vessels each for cod and lobster (Beveridge, 1893, 8). A sizeable amount of lobster, twenty to twenty-five thousand, were sent yearly to the London markets, but in the beginning of the 1780s it had been double that number (OSA, 1793, ix, 446).

Fishing was not the only industry, but other manufactures were not large-scale. The town had seven incorporated trades: smiths, bakers, wrights, tailors, shoemakers, coopers and weavers. In addition barbers and hairdressers, six retail shopkeepers, millers, a surgeon, a lawyer, plus masons, brewers and one vitner, served the needs of the burgh (OSA, 1793, ix, 448). Bishop Pococke noted that there had been an attempt to establish a manufactory of bone lace 'but the people have not so much application as they ought to make it turn to account' (Kemp, 1887, 273). Francis Douglas writing in 1782 also found little to say about Crail manufactures, but observed that 'in plentiful years a good deal of grain is shipp'd off from the port' (1782, 14). Despite the lack of heavy industry or the apparent decline in population, the population of the parish rose from 2173 in 1755 to 3011 in 1790-1 (OSA, 1793, ix, 447).

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street Layout: The street layout of Crail is marked by its magnificent simplicity: two parallel streets with the site of the castle and church at either end. As Professor Duncan has observed, at Crail the original nucleus round the harbour developed first on Market Street and then, parallel with this and further up from the sea, a High Street and Marketgate 'on a truly remarkable scale'. At the opposite end of the town from the castle is the church which has surviving twelfth century work. He concludes that 'it is therefore difficult to date the street between the castle and kirk any later than the twelfth century' (Duncan, 1975, 470). The street nearest the sea is called Nethergate, while the west portion of the other is known as the High Street and the east part as Marketgate.

Crail is also known for its narrow streets and lanes which add greatly to the charm of the modern fishing port. A number of these thoroughfares received early mention in documents. An as yet undetermined 'Pottergate' was noted in 1463 (Conolly, 1869, 120) and in 1500 (Millar, 1895, i, 370). Two tenements on the east side of the vennel leading to the port of Crail were mentioned in a sasine of 1512 (Conolly, 1869) and again that way remains unidentified. A 1520 sasine spoke of the tenement of John Rudman as being in vico cruci, a street which Erskine Beveridge took to be the Cross Causeway which led from the west end of High Street to the Harbour (1893, 26). Francis Douglas at the end of the eighteenth century stated that the town's magistrates were superiors of a wynd or lane in St. Andrews called Crail Wynd and the houses built on it paid an annual quit-rent to the town (1782, 14).

Market Area: The early market area of Crail is as yet undetermined, although in all likelihood it centred on the area of High Street and Marketgate. An early reference to a market at Crail occurs in a late thirteenth-century document when one Isabella de Beaumont was empowered to hold a market on her manor of Crail every Wednesday, and an annual fair for fifteen days (Wood, 1887, 406). By the sixteenth century the weekly market was being convened on the Sunday, although Parliament through the power of statute took steps to halt this practice (APS, III, 507). Parliament's plan to change the market day to Saturday was short-lived for in 1607 the day was again changed, this time to a Friday in an effort perhaps to stop people from travelling back from Crail market on the Sunday.

The market cross received an early mention in a charter of 1500 (Millar, 1895, i, 370), although its original site and composition is unknown. It was removed from the north side of Marketgate at an unknown date (Jackson, 1896, 11) and placed by the town house. The only part of the cross which is original is the shaft which dates probably from the early seventeenth century (RCAM, 1933, 64).

Ports: Little is known about Crail's four ports. Gateways stood at the harbour, at the east end of Nethergate, on the road to St. Andrews and in the Westgate (Beveridge, 1893, 7n). These might have been erected following the 1503 Act of Parliament which urged the construction of walls down to the sea side (Conolly, 1869, 106). When the ports were removed is likewise a mystery, although in Conolly's time there were people alive who remembered their removal (1869, 106).

Harbour: Sibbald writing in the early eighteenth century about harbour facilities at Crail, initiated a cry which would be heard for decades:

'The harbour is at the west end of the town, but cannot admit ships of burden. But there is a creek east of the town called Roome, where there might be an harbour made for ships of any burden, and well fenced from the winds...'
(1803, 345).

At the opposite end of the century the reporter in the Statistical Account wrote 'the greatest disadvantage (to the town) of all is the badness of the present harbour' (OSA, 1793, ix, 456). He likewise singled out Roome 'which at moderate expense might be made an excellent harbour' (OSA, 1793, ix, 456). In 1840, a writer spoke of the old harbour as being unsafe and unable to admit any large vessels, but Roome Bay 'at no great expense could be converted into an excellent harbour' (Leighton, 1840, iii, 87).

This shallow, unsafe harbour had served Crail for centuries. One of the earliest written records of Crail harbour occurs in 1553 when town magistrates applied to the Convention of Royal Burghs for aid 'for the reparation of their decayit herberir' (RCRB, i, 180). When James VI granted to the bailies and community of Crail in 1587 the prebends and altarages of the collegiate church of Crail, revenues derived from it were put to harbour repair (Millar, 1895, i, 374). Harbour repair continued through to the eighteenth century. In 1736 town magistrates noted that the harbour needed cleaning and in 1767 the council 'considering that the harbour is much choked with sand' ordered the town's treasurer to employ a person to drive off a part of it to the back of the pier (Crail Town Council Minutes).

BUILDINGS

Castle: The castle at Crail boasts a largely uncharted history. There was a castle at Crail in the reign of Malcolm IV (1153 x 1165) (Barrow, 1960, 282) and in 1264 occurs the record of payment in regards to the repair of the structure (ER, i, 4). By the mid-sixteenth century the castle had apparently become ruinous. In a curious charter of Mary Queen of Scots to David Spens of Wormiston, it is alleged that the Spens were for many centuries past keepers and constables of the castle, now ruinous, 'so that there is nothing remaining but the moat...' (Millar, 1895, i, 375). The ruinous property was thus given to Spens but it is unclear whether he or his heir rebuilt the castle. In the early eighteenth century it was said that ruined masonry occupied the site of the castle (Millar, 1895, i, 375), and in the present day the only visible remains of the castle of Crail include a rough portion of masonry (Ordnance Survey Record Cards, NO 60 NW 19).

Church: The first mention of the parish church of Crail occurs in the reign of Malcolm IV (1153 x 1165) (Barrow, 1960, 282). It appears that at some point in his reign, Ada, Countess of Fife, granted to Haddington Priory, the church of Crail, the chapel of St. Ruffinus in the castle of Crail and other property, teinds, liberties, customs and so forth in the district (Barrow, 1960, 282). The church was consecrated by David de Bernham, Bishop of St. Andrews in 1243 and was dedicated in the first instance to St. Maelrubha of Applecross, and later to St. Mary (Anon, 1970, 5). St. Mary's attained collegiate status in the first half of the sixteenth century, but after the Reformation in 1587 James VI granted to the bailies and community of the burgh for the maintenance of several municipal projects, the church, with its benefices and properties (Cowan and Easson, 1976, 217).

Through the centuries Crail parish church has undergone numerous alterations although it was evidently first laid out in the form of an unaisled nave and chancel and the masonry at what had been the northern junction of the nave and chancel suggests a date in the second half of the twelfth century (RCAM, 1933, 57). In the first twenty years of the thirteenth century the church was rebuilt, the original nave being razed almost completely, and the reconstructed structure having both north and south side aisles and a western tower (RCAM, 1933, 58). The nave was re-roofed at a lower level in 1769, thus completely obscuring the old clerestory and the chancel was also reduced to half its original length and re-roofed

(Anon, 1970, 6,7). Alterations to the church continued in the nineteenth and present centuries.

Spurious Foundations: An amount of tradition and legend has grown up regarding three false religious foundations in the burgh. Many antiquaries have claimed the existence of a nunnery near the site of the Nethergate Port where a quantity of human bones had been uncovered (Conolly, 1869, 110). Erskine Beveridge supported this theory and went so far as to claim that the order was Cistercian, and that in 1801 'the last remaining gable, with its Gothic window, was torn down by the sea' (1893, 9). It is quite probable that its supposed existence is due to a misinterpretation of the fact that the nunnery of Haddington held the parish church and certain properties in Crail (Cowan, 1976, 156).

The gable thrown down in the 1801 storm formed the backbone for the evidence of a priory supposedly dedicated to St. Rufus according to the noted Fife historian M.F. Conolly (1869, 107). To back up his argument Conolly sited the existence of the so-called Priory or Briery Well situated at the northern end of town. Although there was a chapel in the castle dedicated to St. Rufus (Barrow, 1960, 282), the existence of a priory dedicated to the same saint in the burgh cannot easily be accepted (Millar, 1895, i, 370). The claim that there was a Dominican Friary in the town must also be dismissed (Cowan, 1976, 122).

Tolbooth: One of the earliest notices of the tolbooth at Crail occurs in 1517 (Rogers, 1877, 26). The tolbooth as it existed in 1517 is represented only by the lowest part of its tower which has been considerably altered (RCAM, 1933, 64). Extensive alterations were carried out on the tolbooth after November 1598 when the town council ordered the sum of 1000 merks to be 'for bigging of ane towbuth' (Beveridge, 1893, 270). The circular windows in the upper part were added in 1776 and the eastern extension dates from 1814 (RCAM, 1933, 64).

School: Although one pre-Reformation churchman, Sir William Myreton, intended to found both a grammar school and song school in the burgh in 1825, his plan was never carried out (Millar, 1825, i, 377). However, by 1560, there was a flourishing grammar school in Crail founded by another churchman, David Bowman (Millar, 1895, i, 380). School until the 1890s was convened in the churchyard.

Mills: The mills of Crail receive an early, if not slightly unfortunate mention, in 1343. In that year the mills were destroyed by the enemy and timber brought to rebuild them was burned by the Steward (ER, i, 521).

In the sixteenth century the town boasted two common mills (Millar, 1895, i, 374), a figure which had climbed to four by 1763. Francis Douglas, writing in 1782, observed that 'one of our kings gave to the town of Crail three mills, a few miles to the northward still called the King's Mills' (1782, 14). By the end of the eighteenth century, the burgh community only possessed two common mills and one of them was 'turned by salt water admitted during flood tide into a reservoir and discharged upon the wheel after the tide had ebbed (OSA, 1793, ix, 457).

Well: In addition to the so-called Priory Well, another early well of Crail was the Rude, Baptism or Scholar's Well. The Scholar's Well, known by that name through its proximity to the grammar school, was located to the west of a narrow stream 'which in early days might have been the East Burgh Burn' (Beveridge, 1893, 261). It was built according to Beveridge into the bank with masonry of a semi-circular form on its west side, and was open towards the burn.

Archaeology

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The town centre of Crail has changed little since the eighteenth century. Marketgate, with the exception of Friars Court and the Tolbooth which date from the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries respectively, consists of eighteenth and nineteenth century property. The burgages remain undeveloped to west and east, though new buildings have appeared to the rear of Kirkmay House (NO 612 079). The High Street and Nethergate are similarly a mixture of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings, and recent development has been confined to infill development on the street frontage (see map 2) and the renovation of existing property. New housing development has been restricted to the extremities of the West High Street backlands (NO 611 076), and peripheral to the St. Andrews Road.

New building and renovation has been carried out with great sensitivity in the town centre, and there is no presently existing proposed re-development for that area lying within the conservation area.

Future Investigation

The policies outlined below are not listed in order of importance, but are intended to provide guide lines for future research as opportunities arise through renovation and re-development (see page ff for full discussion).

1. To attempt, through selective excavation, to establish the earliest possible date for the initial settlement of the burgh, and to establish the extent of this early settlement.
2. To confirm the site, date and physical nature of the burgh ports, and to determine the existence, course and construction details of the enclosing town wall, the presence of which is suggested by the Act of 1503. Also, to establish the presence of any pre-sixteenth century measures for town enclosure.
3. To establish the chronological development of the street plan and and fluctuations in street width and alignment. Further documentary and archaeological research is necessary to supplement limited existing knowledge.

4. To establish the physical nature and usage of town buildings prior to the seventeenth century.
5. To trace the limits of the twelfth century church, and to establish the existence of any earlier building on the site.
6. To investigate by trial trenching the sites of the supposed nunnery and supposed priory of Crail, and establish the actual function and chronology of each site.
7. To carry out a geophysical survey of the reputed site of the castle in an attempt to establish the general plan and disposition of the buildings, and limits of the defensive outworks.
8. To observe any future repairs to the harbour and improvements at the foot of Shoregate, in the hope of confirming the chronological development of the harbour works and any associated buildings.

Areas of Archaeological Priority

There is virtually no material or structural evidence from Crail to indicate those areas of the town which would prove to be of the greatest value archaeologically. Adams (see page 17) has established a basic sequence of development for the town plan, but there is a need for this to be put into a chronological framework.

The town has here been divided into those areas which contain the sites of greatest potential interest (see map 2) and the merits of each site are briefly discussed. However, the importance of one area and site in relation to another is dependent on the threat of re-development, and re-assessment will be necessary in the face of any future threat.

1. Area 1, is delineated by Kirk Wynd to the north-east, the coast to the south-east, and the property boundaries to the rear of Nethergate North, Rumford and Shoregate. This area is reputedly the oldest part of the town. It contains some of the known sites of interest such as the alleged chapel and nunnery (see page 20/21) the castle and the harbour. Rumford is also the reputed early market site (see page 18). Recent development has been minimal, and there are currently (July 1981) no immediate plans. The backlands on both the north and south side of the Nethergate, and the coastal slope below, remain clear of development, though an area has been levelled for building purposes at NO 6137 0754. Some unstratified pottery was recovered during recent fieldwork from the cutting at this site, and dates from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century (ex.inf.

Miss D. Fox). There was other domestic debris in the exposed section, mainly animal bones, shells and charcoal, material which was also to be seen along the coastal slope, though the deposits were not thick, bedrock lying quite close to the surface. There is a local tradition that Dutch boats collecting salted herrings from Crail deposited black earth on the foreshore which had been used as ballast, and that this now forms the Nethergate crofts (S.W.R.I, 1967, n.p.). There is, however, no evidence to support this statement.

To the north east of the castle, is the site of the King's Mills which were demolished in the early part of this century (see map 3). The site is now landscaped and is crossed by a path to the shore. There is no structural trace remaining.

The Castle Site (NO 613 074) has similarly been landscaped and is not threatened by development.

Many of the buildings and gardens along Shoregate are cut into the south east facing slope, and may have destroyed any surviving traces of early settlement. This is also true of those buildings in the Rumford, the possible early market site. However, the lack of recent development and its reputed early origins, makes this area of high priority, the undeveloped burgages have the potential to produce middens and signs early backland development.

2. Area 2 is defined by St. Andrews Road and Tolbooth Street, the backland boundaries of Nethergate North and Beech Walk. Very little modern development has taken place here, and little is known of its chronological development in relation to the remainder of the town. The church with its twelfth century origins is perhaps the most important site (see page 19) followed by the (partly) early sixteenth-century tolbooth. The property boundaries to both east and west of the Marketgate are well preserved, and no cellarage is immediately apparent, though some buildings on the east side of the street may have been cut into the front street.

The remaining item of interest in this area, is the possibility of establishing the existence of an enclosing town wall along the foot of the backlands, and confirming the location of a town port at the north end of Marketgate.

3. Area 3 is that part of the town which has seen the greatest disturbance in recent years. Backland development has taken place at a number of points to the rear of the West Green (see map 2), although generally

speaking this development has taken place within pre-existing property boundaries. Additionally, many of the street fronting properties on West Green and the High Street, are cut into the south-east facing slope, and must have caused some disturbance to earlier deposits. The potential of this area would not seem, therefore, to be as great as elsewhere in the town, however, no further development is at present proposed, and the undeveloped frontages along the back lane may provide information relating to the town's defences. Street repairs by the Golf Hotel and in Westgate could also help in identifying the site of the erstwhile town ports.

Recommendations

The whole of the historic centre of Crail lies within a conservation area. The town buildings are well maintained and there is no traffic congestion in the relatively wide streets. There are currently no plans to develop the backlands of the burgh, although some minimal re-development has taken place on the south-west. Opportunities to examine underlying deposits are therefore limited. The need to repair and replace existing structures and services may, however, lead to soil disturbance of which the archaeologist can take advantage, and the following recommendations are made in the hope that they will enable the maximum amount of information to be extracted from the minimum amount of disturbance.

1. Many aspects of the town development are at present obscure. A closer study of the burgh records than has been published at present may answer many questions regarding the growth of the burgh.
2. Considering the paucity of knowledge of the early history of the burgh, a policy of selective trial trenching could usefully be adopted in conjunction with '1' above.
3. Sites of dubious date and function, such as the spurious religious houses, could benefit from a detailed geophysical survey in an attempt to establish their extent and the disposition of buildings.
4. The renovation of property can be as destructive to the archaeological record as rebuilding. Any proposed renovation project could be usefully monitored, particularly where structural alteration is involved at ground level. The possibility that earlier structural remains survive beneath a later facade should also be borne in mind.

5. Any proposed road improvements, repairs to, and extension of existing services such as gas, electricity and water could be profitably monitored.

PREVIOUS WORK

In spite of the undisputed antiquity of the town, there is little artifactual evidence to support the surviving documentary material. Archaeological excavation in Crail has been restricted to investigation in the garden of 5, Rumford (NO 613 076). Structural remains revealed in the course of excavation consisted of a succession of covered and lined drains, a sealed well and a large pit. The drains and pit produced a large number of fishbones. The overlying soil was of some depth, and contained pottery, glass and animal bones. No structures earlier than the eighteenth century were, however, located. The excavator reports that the site was occupied in the eighteenth century by two cottages, the general area being occupied by the market place before its removal circa the sixteenth century to its present site (Proudfoot, 1979, 10).

Some finds have been made in the town, and though these have a wide chronological range, they contribute little to the reconstruction of the early history of the burgh.

1. A jar, of Medieval date, circa 9 inches (0.23m) high with a thumb marked border round the base and a loop handle at the neck, was found circa 14' (18.5m) below the surface while excavating for a gas tank in the burgh. Gas tanks were located at NO 6116 0746 and NO 6119 0745, but the actual find spot is not known. The jar is now in the collection of the National Museum, Edinburgh (Scott Moncrieff, 1909-10, 331; O.S. Record Card No. 60 NW 18).
2. Two incomplete pottery vessels, dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, were recovered from beneath the tower of the parish church (NO 613 079) in the course of restoration work in 1963 (Stevenson, 1963-64, 252-53; Anon, 1970, 13; Stevenson, 1963, 30).
3. A sculptured cross slab which originally stood on a mound near the farm of Sauchope (NO 617 082), was re-erected in 1929 in the Victoria Gardens (NO 6104 0788). The cross slab is badly defaced, but corresponds to Allen's Class III, and the description as given by Allen is as follows. The front bears a cross devoid of ornament but below the bottom of the shaft, one above the other, are carved

two beasts. On the reverse, is a single panel bearing two horsemen (the upper armed with a spear) and a dog. The stone probably dates from the ninth century. Nothing further was found when the mound was removed in 1929 (Stuart, 1856, 17, plate LIX; Romilly Allen, 1903, 368).

4. A sculptured cross slab was used in paving the west passage of the parish church between 1815 and 1857 and now stands at the west end of the church. The rather worn relief sculpture is composed of a cross of Celtic design, with four arms of equal size ornamented with interlaced work, and the shaft bears a key design. The remainder of the stone has animal and human figures. The slab probably dates from the eighth or ninth century. The pre-1815 site is unknown (Anon, 1970, 6; Stuart, 1856, 19, plate LXIV; Romilly Allen, 1903, 363).
5. A fragmentary carved grave stone with a bevelled upper surface, bearing on the left hand bevel, an incised sword with lobed pommel, the front carries an incised Cross and the right bevel an open book and a chalice in relief. The stone was found in the foundations of the old school within the Kirkyard in circa 1893, and is now in the church (Brydall, 1898-99, 53-54).
6. An instrument used for impressing the ancient burgh seal was found beneath the roof of a ruinous tenement in Castle Street in 1902. The matrix corresponded with oldest known impression (1357) and probably pre-dates 1550. In 1903, the matrix and instrument were kept in the charter room of Crail burgh (Millar, 1902-03, 160-165; Murray, 1902-03, 143-144).
7. A gold coin of Queen Mary dated 1553 was discovered circa 1793, about 3' (0.9m) below the surface "under a stratum of rock from whence coal had formerly been wrought" (OSA, 1793, 443). This find was made within the high water mark presumably to the south-west of the town where coal pits are marked on the Ordnance Survey map. In 1793, this coin was in the possession of Captain Whyte of Dysart, but its present whereabouts is unknown.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Early Settlement

Although there is a wealth of Prehistoric material from the immediate environs of the burgh, there is no indication of settlement in Crail

before the ninth century. Tradition claims that the town was a considerable place in 874 when Constantine II was defeated and slain by the Danes in a battle at the East Neuks (Beveridge, 1893, 2; Wood, 1887, 405). The church itself holds a Pictish stone (Stuart, 1856, 19; Romilly Allen, 1903, 363) described on page 15, which, although it has been re-used and the original find spot is not known, most probably comes from the town. Another ninth century cross slab was removed from a mound half a mile north-east of Crail in 1851 (NO 617 082) and this at least appears to have been in situ until that date. There is some evidence, therefore, to suggest some kind of settlement there by the ninth century.

Horsley (n.d.18) suggests that Crail was erected into a Royal Burgh by Malcolm Canmore, circa 1066, while Sir James Barbour, writing in the seventeenth century, claimed that the burgh origins lay with Malcolm III, but whatever the date of its erection to Royal status, the burgh was flourishing by the late twelfth century.

What single or combination of factors provided the initial stimulus to settlement is uncertain. There is no structural evidence in the town earlier than the twelfth century, by which date both a church and a castle were established. The presence of the cross slabs in close proximity (see page 15) might argue for some settlement but not of the kind defined as 'urban', rather more probably of a religious nature.

The position of Crail on the outermost promontory of Fife made it a natural landfall to early fishermen and traders, a factor which probably stimulated its development. In the reign of David I, the Firth of Forth was frequented by multitudes of fishermen from Scotland, England, France and Holland who sought refuge in the harbours of the Isle of May and the Fife coast. Whatever the reason, early urban development took place north of the harbour and castle.

Future investigation should be geared towards a greater understanding of the nature and extent of early settlement.

The Ports and Walls

The site of the town ports of Crail is no longer clear. In 1845, the reporter on Crail in the New Statistical Account, recorded that there were people alive who remembered their existence, yet there is no mention of these, fifty-two years earlier in the Old Statistical Account.

Confusion has arisen in relation to the ports; street names such as West Gate, Nederget and reference to the 'common gate to the Haven', occur in sasines and burgh archives from 1552 to 1600 but 'gate' in these contexts, should most properly be construed as 'street'. However, it seems probable that in the sixteenth century at least, Crail had four gates and by this time the town had developed beyond a single street to the parallel plan which survives today (see below). The west end of Westgate (NO 611 074), the junction of Marketgate and the St. Andrews Road (NO 612 077), the junction of Kirk Wynd and Marketgate (NO 614 079) and possibly the harbour (NO 612 074), are all probable sites.

Crail is specifically mentioned in an Act of Parliament of 1503 as one of the east coast towns urged to build walls, with ports of lime and stone as a precaution against the English threat (Conolly, 1869, 106). Whether this programme was implemented is not clear, and deeper research into the burgh records during the sixteenth century than is possible in the present context must be relegated to the future. Any development proposed for the at present undeveloped foot of burgh plots on the north-west side of the High Street and Marketgate, could be usefully observed for any traces of an early enclosing wall.

Street Plan

The distinctive parallel street plan of Crail is a feature chiefly of the east coast of Scotland, and is particularly common in the vicinity of the Firths of Forth and Tay. The plan can be seen as a development of the more common single street system, in response to a steady growth in trade with the continent and consequent increasing prosperity among the populace.

Adams (1978, 33) identified three market streets in Crail. The original market street was the Nethergate aligned on the castle and harbour. As the economy of the town expanded, the High Street was laid out to the west of the castle, and subsequently, further expansion took place from the north end of High Street along the foot of the Nethergate burghs. The exact dates at which the original single street of the burgh expanded to form the present plan, is uncertain. However, the Marketgate was established by the early sixteenth century, as parts of the present tolbooth (NO 6131 0777) pre-date 1517 (RCAHMS, 1933, 64) and a charter dated 1500 refers to the 'Marketgate' (Millar, 1895, 370). It seems

probable, therefore, that in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, the burgh market was transferred here. The market is thought to have been held at one time on a site at the foot of the Nethergate (NO 613 076) (Proudfoot, 1979, 10), and a reference to property in Crail dated 1500-1501 refers to 'in vico occidentali supra crucem' which would seem to confirm that there was a cross here near the top of Shoregate (previously Cross Causeway NO 6116 0754), (Beveridge, 1893, 26). Whether this site was the immediate predecessor of the Marketgate site, or whether it was based for a period of time in the High Street is not certain.

Taking into account the relatively high percentage of seventeenth century buildings remaining in Crail, it can justifiably be said that the present streets, wynds and frontages are those which existed in the seventeenth century. For information relating to the development of the street plan and frontages, and fluctuations in the width of the streets, further documentary and archaeological research is necessary to supplement existing knowledge.

Early Buildings and Materials

Although a high proportion of late sixteenth and seventeenth century houses are preserved in Crail with greater or lesser degrees of later alteration, very little is known of those buildings belonging to the preceding centuries.

A twelfth century charter granted by Ada the mother of Malcolm IV to the monks of Dryburgh, mentions a toft of houses in the burgh of Crail, but there is no accompanying description (Conolly, 1869, 105). It is reasonably certain, however, that buildings before the sixteenth century were largely of wood. The remains of such structures are likely to be slight (except occasionally under waterlogged conditions), and thus very susceptible to destruction by later cellars and foundations on the same building line. Many of the buildings on the High Street, Marketgate, Castle Street and more importantly Rumford and Shoregate, are cut into deposits to the rear and side, which may have inhibited the preservation of early levels. The burgh now lies within a conservation area (see map 3) and is unlikely to undergo drastic re-development. However, any future proposals for renovation and repair and extension into backlands, especially on the Nethergate and Shoregate may provide some indication of the degree survival of archaeological deposits in these areas.

The usage to which buildings of the sixteenth century and earlier were put other than as dwelling houses, is another problem which it may be possible to solve archaeologically. Various trades are recorded in Crail in the eighteenth century, and the location of some cottage industry can be identified, for example, the Nethergate was at one time occupied by single storied weaver's cottages (Horsley, n.d. 18). Unfortunately, this occupation together with those of the tailor, the baker, smith, wright and cooper, are, except under exceptional circumstances, not likely to leave physical evidence of their existence. On the other hand, the shoemaker was frequently in the habit of preparing the raw materials of his trade, and consequently, tanning pits may be found in the burghages. Further research into the burgh records and sasine registers may provide more detailed information than is at present available to determine the usage of street fronting sites in the burgh.

The Church

The first mention of a church at Crail occurs in the reign of Malcolm IV (see page 7). Whether or not this was the first church on the site is debatable, and no structural evidence has been identified in the present building, earlier than the twelfth century. The trigonal string course at what had been the north junction of the nave and chancel, suggested a date in the second half of the twelfth century. At least two Romanesque architectural fragments have been built into the walling of the tolbooth, and a third is reported by the Royal Commission in 1933 as being in the possession of a local resident. It seems very possible that these fragments came from the parish church after the thirteenth century rebuilding.

Further alteration and rebuilding in the fifteenth, sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, has effectively disguised the original twelfth century plan of a simple unaisled rectangular nave and chancel. This early church is now presumably largely enclosed by the present structure, though Beveridge (1893, 37) records two somewhat drastic reductions made in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the length of the chancel. The choir was at one time more than double its present length, being reduced by 1893 from 55' (16.7m) to 22' (6.7m). The Sexton's book proves this assertion as, old walls and rubbish were identified to the east of the then choir between 1797 and 1810 (Beveridge, 1893, 38).

Between 1962 and 1963, extensive restoration took place in the church in the course of which the building was re-floored. At one time interments had been made beneath the floor of the nave and chancel, a practice discouraged by the Kirk session from the early seventeenth century (Anon, 1970,15), but which must have done considerable damage to any surviving early archaeological levels. The present heating system, however, is conducted above ground level, and deposits below floor level will not have suffered this further complication. No attempts appear to have been made during restoration to assess the survival of below floor level deposits. However, in the case of the tower, the floor of which had undergone less disturbance than the body of the church, some important information was recovered. The interior of the 15' (4.5m) square tower was being made level with the floor of the nave, when a large pottery jar was discovered embedded in the deposits beneath the original floor. This appeared to have been closed by a fragmentary second vessel. The pottery was dated to the thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and confirmed the early date of the tower arch previously dated by MacGibbon and Ross (1897, vol.III, 263-9) to the early sixteenth century. There was, unfortunately, no opportunity to examine the floor of the tower for further information (Stevenson, 1963-64, 252; Anon, 1970, 13).

The earliest present available date for a church in Crail is, therefore, the twelfth century. Any future structural work internally or externally, and any disturbance of the churchyard deposits to the east of the present chancel could usefully be observed in the hope of identifying any structural traces of the twelfth century church, or any earlier building on the site.

The Nunnery (NO 615 078)

There is no documentary evidence for the existence of a Nunnery in Crail although a wall of considerable age, probably dating from the sixteenth century, does front the Nethergate at NO 6152 0781. Recent building has taken place immediately to the rear of this wall, and archaeological investigation may have thrown some light on the earlier usage of the site. It is regrettable that this opportunity has been lost. Some human bones were found during street levelling operations adjacent to the entrance a few years previous to 1845 (NSA, 1845; Conolly, 1869, 110); which may have had some bearing on its function,

but the evidence as it stands at present is too slim to allow conjecture.

The Priory (NO 6163 0779)

The traditional existence of a Priory at Crail is well rooted. The Old Statistical Account (1793, 451) records that a Croft belonging to the burgh is described in the valuation of the teinds in 1630 as the 'Prior Croft'. A manuscript inventory amongst the Harleian Manuscripts, mentions a charter recording a grant to the prior of Crail 'of the second teinds of the lands between the waters of the Neithe and Nith', and other mentions are made in the charters of David II (OSA, 1799,440). Conversely, the foundation is not mentioned amongst the religious houses suppressed at the Reformation (Conolly, 1869, 107). In all likelihood the remains described on page 8, were those of a small chapel under the patronage of, and on lands owned by, the Prioress of Haddington, reference to whose property in the burgh has led to this confusion. Although the last remaining gable of this alleged chapel was destroyed in 1801, some foundations remained in 1869 (Conolly,1869,107) and on the 25" Ordnance Survey map at the end of the nineteenth century (1894, XXIII, 2), to indicate the position of the site on the cliff edge. However, a retaining wall has now been built to strengthen the low cliff-edge and there is no trace of any surviving structural remains (July 1981). Any future improvement or development proposed for this part of the cliff could usefully be monitored to determine the presence or absence of archaeological levels with a view to clarifying the nature and chronology of the site.

The Castle (NO 613 074)

The origins of the castle, occupying a strategic site overlooking the harbour, are obscure. Beveridge (1893, 5) and Wood (1887) claimed that in the earlier part of the twelfth century, David I occasionally occupied the site but there is little supporting evidence. By the late twelfth century, however, the castle was certainly established as a royal stronghold and progressed to become the manor house associated with the office of Constable of Crail. By the thirteenth century it was most probably of stone and lime, and the exchequer rolls of 1264 record payments made for the repair of fabric 'infra castrum de Karrell' (Beveridge, 1893, 5). The extent of the castle enclosure is not known. Of the internal buildings, references are found to a chapel within the

castle walls in documents dated 1458 'capella Beati in Castello', and in 1512, an annual payment is mentioned in support of the service in 'capella S.Malrubii infra castrum de Craill' (Beveridge, 1893, 8-9).

The fabric seems to have deteriorated in the sixteenth century, as a charter dated 1563 states the ruinous condition of the buildings, and also mentions a moat. This charter made provision for rebuilding, but it is not known if this was actually carried out, though Sibbald (1803, 345) in a brief notice on Craill in the early eighteenth century, claimed that the ruins of a strong castle were to be seen. Similarly, in 1706, petition was made to the town bailies to acquire 'a piece of waste ground lying within the castle wall for the purpose of building thereon', (Conolly, 1869, 175), a statement which would imply a degree of dereliction. As to later buildings on the site, at the end of the eighteenth century, it is possible that a square tower crowned with a spire stood within the precincts, as a coloured engraving existed in the 1920s showing such a structure above the harbour (Jackson, 1927, 19). This claim is supported by Wood (1862, 38) who confirmed that on the site of the castle 'a fancifull building has been in more recent times erected, in the form of a tower'. This had however, apparently been removed by 1894 (O.S. 25" XXIII, 2).

In 1968, however, the only visible remains of the castle identified by the Ordnance Survey investigators was a rough portion of mortared masonry 17' (5.2m) long by 4'7" (1.4m) wide by 4'7" (1.4m) high, sited at NO 6130 0747. To what date this walling is attributable is not known.

No recorded archaeological investigation has been carried out at the castle site, and any future proposed improvement or development in the general area could usefully be observed in an attempt to establish the general plan and disposition of the buildings and the limits of the defensive outworks.

The Harbour (NO 611 073).

The decision to use the present site of the harbour in preference to the more sheltered inlet at Roome Bay some half a mile to the north-east of the town, has puzzled travellers for centuries (see page 6). It could be argued that the site of the pre-burgh settlement was chosen for its strategic value, ie. as a castle site, rather than for any topographic merits which might in future be advantageous to trade. If this was so, a marked change in emphasis is identifiable as the burgh grows

away from dependence on the castle community. Additionally, the early fisher boats would not necessarily be of a size with the later merchant vessels, and any sandy beach would allow them to be drawn up above the high water line.

Graham (1968-69, 226), approaches the subject of the harbour with caution. The early history is confused by the mention of an 'old harbour' which is probably not the description applied to the present site, but was most probably applied to the haven at Roome Bay. A 'havin' is mentioned as early as 1498 in the Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Causes. The documentary evidence suggests that formal harbour works were not raised until 1574, when the 'building of the bulwark, port and havin' were authorized, however, references are made in 1512, 1537 and 1540 to the port or harbour of Craill, implying a formal landing place.

The reference of 1553 mentioned on page 6, suggests the presence of formal works of some description, especially since in that same year a boat was damaged by a ship lying in the harbour which Graham (1968-69, 227) claims implies moored craft crowded together at a quay or organized anchorage.

Further late sixteenth century references would seem to confirm the presence of a breakwater. In 1583, a reference is made to 'a decayit harboris and bulwarkis' and in 1587, a grant was made 'pro sustentatione portus et lie Bulwark dicti burgi, tunc arena et ventis orientalibus devastati'. It seems unlikely in the light of the number of subsequent repairs which it has undergone, that any of this original fabric survives in the east pier. The west pier was not constructed until 1828 when the harbour was also deepened. The north quay in its most recent pre-repair form, dates from the 1830s (Graham, 1968-69, 228), and has in the last 150 years shown considerable instability, being repaired in 1872, and in the 1970s after a disastrous slump (ex.inf. Mr.J. Hanson). There is no published record of any examination of this wall at the time of repair, and this is perhaps to be regretted, as some structural or chronological information may have been forthcoming.

Any future repairs to the harbour or improvements to the foot of Shore-gate should be kept under observation in the hope of confirming the chronological development of the harbour works, and any associated buildings.

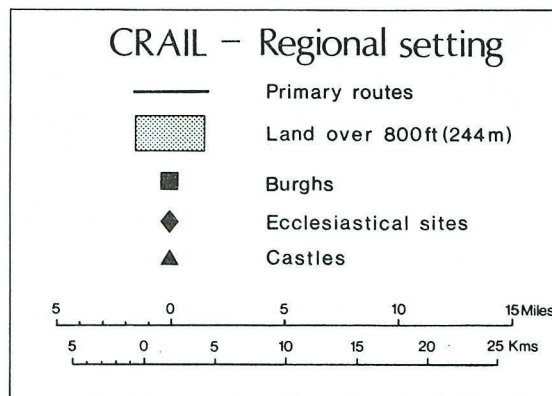
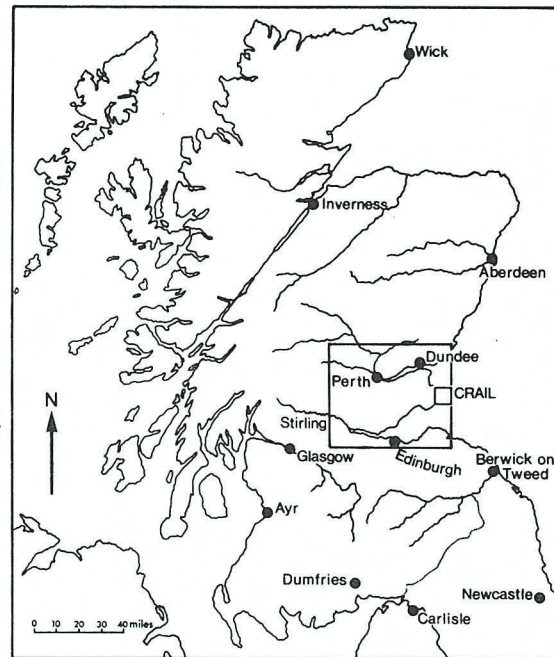
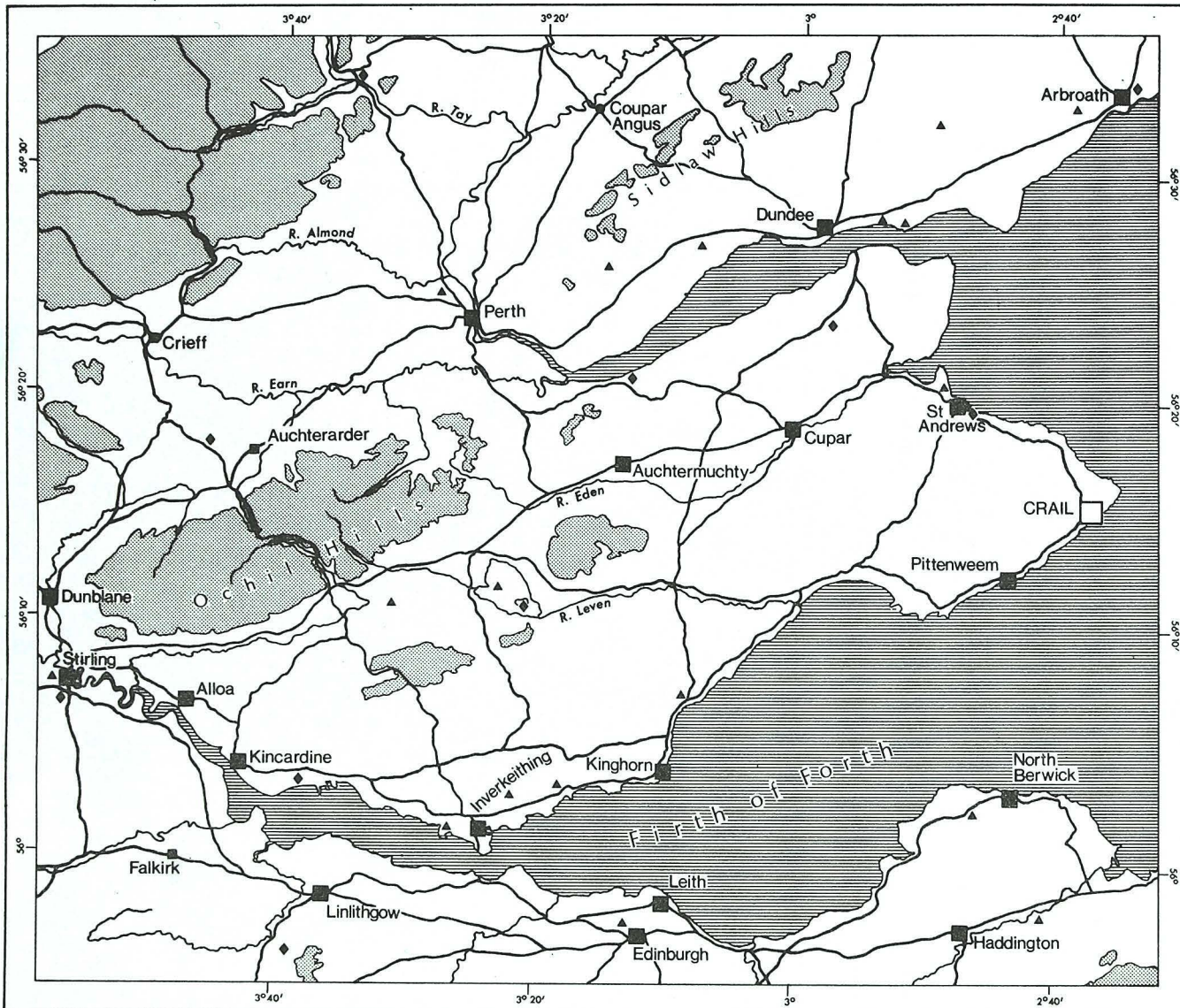
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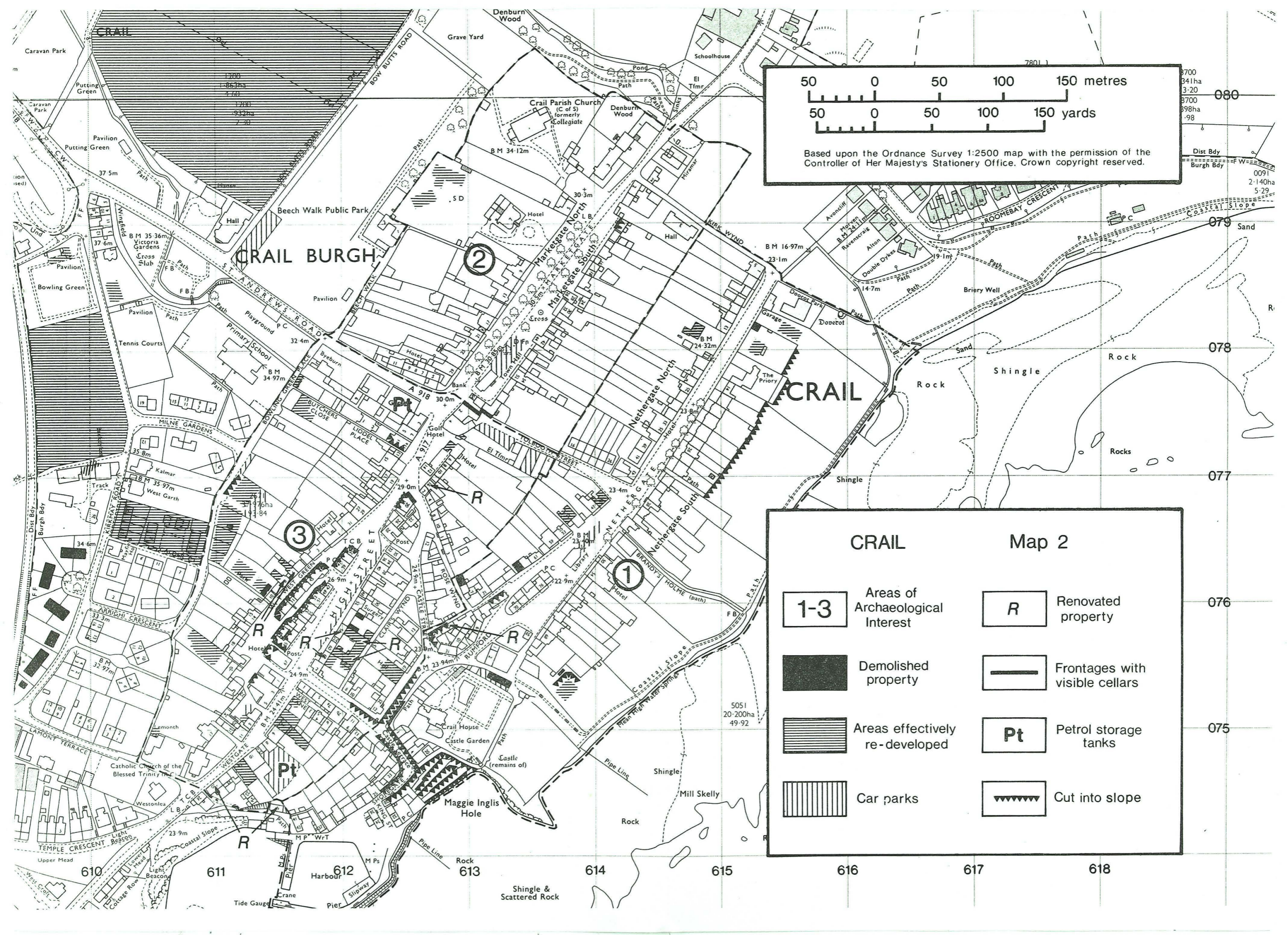
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Map 1



50 0 50 100 150 metres

50 0 50 100 150 yards

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CRAIL **Map 2**

1-3	Areas of Archaeological Interest	R	Renovated property
	Demolished property		Frontages with visible cellars
	Areas effectively re-developed	Pt	Petrol storage tanks
	Car parks		Cut into slope

CRAIL BURGH

CRAIL

②

③

①

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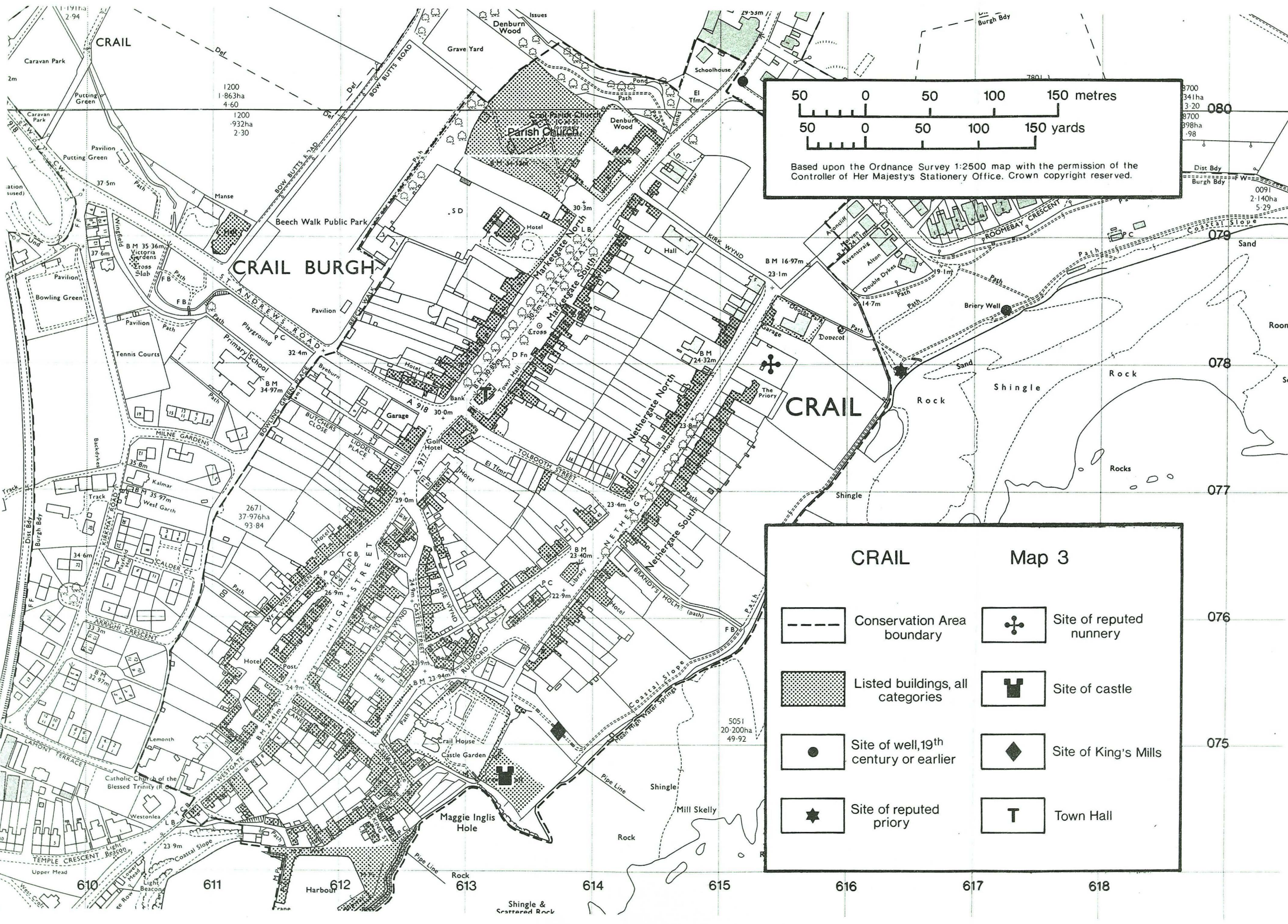
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50 0 50 100 150 metres
 50 0 50 100 150 yards

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CRAIL Map 3

	Conservation Area boundary		Site of reputed nunnery
	Listed buildings, all categories		Site of castle
	Site of well, 19th century or earlier		Site of King's Mills
	Site of reputed priory		Town Hall

