

Historic

FORRES

the archaeological implications
of development



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PREFACE

This report of the history and archaeology of the former burgh of Forres 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 Sheila Taylor. 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.

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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 Forres as depicted in Bute, MacPhail and Lonsdale, 1897, 145.

History

'Forres is one of the snuggest towns you will find in the Highlands. You could pick it up and plant it in a comfortable place like Devonshire and no one would ask it any questions'

(Anonymous English writer).

'Forres neither has, nor has ever had any history' (Sheriff Rampini).

'But this far from the truth. An air of serenity and retirement may seem to hover over it, but such an air generally comes with great age, and Forres is so old that its turbulent youth is almost forgotten'

(James B. Ritchie, 1953).

INTRODUCTION

Site: The burgh of Forres occupies a fertile plain projecting westwards from the Cluny Hill and surrounded by the Altyre Hills on the west, south and north. Hugging the town on the west, south and north is the Mosset Burn whose course throughout history has been subject to variation. The second town of Moray is located seventy-five miles west of Aberdeen and twenty-five miles east of Inverness.

Place-Name: The great Celtic place-name scholar William J. Watson proposed that Forres meant 'little shrubbery' (1926, 498). W.F.H. Nicolaisen (per lit.) agrees with Watson, but notes that the meaning 'lower place' has also been proposed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: Forres' burghal origins might well predate the reign of William the Lion, 1165-1214. A charter of Alexander II (1226) Kinloss Priory confirmed certain possessions including, ex donacione... regis David... unum rete in aqua de Eren simul cum burgensibus de Foreis (Pryde, 1965, 5). Forres' early appearance as a sheriffdom also indicates an early origin for the burgh and its castle. Forres was annexed to the earldom of Moray in 1312 and forfeited to the crown in 1455. Forres attended Parliament regularly from 1488 and was granted a charter of novodamus in 1495 (Pryde, 1965, 5).

Conventional History: Forres is one of the oldest of Scotland's royal burghs. In the twelfth century, Forres, along with Inverness, Auldearn, Nairn and Elgin formed part of a defensive chain along the south coast of the Moray Firth. The last mormaer of Moray died in 1130 and the province passed to the crown, but throughout the reign of Malcolm IV and his brother, William the Lion, Moray was an area seething with

revolt. Donald MacWilliam, a lineal descendant of Malcolm Canmore, rebelled against the crown in 1179, plunging the North into a bitter conflict which ended only with his death eight years later. A period of peace which followed the rebel MacWilliam's death was short-lived and the standard of revolt was raised by his son, Guthred. Guthred's revolt once again sparked off an unsettled condition in the North which was to last for about twenty years and led directly to the burning of nearby Inverness in 1228. Two years later, however, the area was subjected to crown control.

Forres is named often in the records of Kinloss Abbey. The monks had annual rents from the town and in 1179 x 1182 William the Lion granted one toft in Foreys to the monks (Barrow, 1971, 277). Abbey fishing rights overlapped with those of the burgh and often led to disputes. In 1574, the 'fishing of the fresche watter of Findhorne' formerly belonging to the abbey was 'sett yeirlie for the payment of xxvii li x s to Alexander Urquhart, burgess of Forres' (Craven, 1889, 212).

The relative wealth and position of Forres in the middle ages is difficult to gauge, although it did participate in overseas trade, and was undoubtedly a centre for infra-local commerce. It has been claimed that there was a thirteenth-century royal mint at Forres, and this claim may well have been strengthened by 'a fortunate find of a considerable number of coins in the churchyard of Dyke' (Douglas, 1934, 525). Forres had Findhorn as its port, but a decline in the town's commerce was noted by the 1496 charter of novodamus which stated that 'the resort of merchandise' had ceased to the burgh's great 'detriment and ruin' because of oppression with wrong from lawless and wicked men. Therefore the burgh was to have a weekly market on Monday, a market cross, plus one fair lasting eight days with the power of holding a burgh and sheriff court both (Douglas, 1934, 15-16, 17).

Many of Forres' early records have vanished and much of the town's story can be pieced together only by using central government records. In 1550, to help pay for an embassy to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Forres was ordered to pay twenty crowns, while Nairn paid eight and Inverness forty (RCRB, i, 519). Queen Mary's wedding to the Dauphin in 1557 resulted in a heavy stent. Forres was ahead of Nairn's contribution - £84 18s compared with £34 10s, but behind that of Inverness with £168 15s (RCRB, i, 526). The end of the century saw little change with Nairn paying a stent of 4s in 1597 compared with that of Forres at 6s (RCRB, ii, 10).

Against the backdrop of participation in national and international affairs, Forres attended to the business of everyday living. Its town council governed the lives of citizens and tried to ensure a smooth running of daily affairs. In 1585 the council ordered compulsory church attendance, stipulating that no one should eat or drink during the time of preaching and praying, under penalty of paying a fine on the first and second offences, but on the third, malefactors were to be deprived of their brew for a year (Douglas, 1934, 31). The following year no one was allowed to play in 'the kirkyaird at futt baw or caiche upon the kirk under the penalty of ten shillings' (Douglas, 1934, 36). Cleansing of the street was ordered to be undertaken by all citizens 'under pane of aucht shillings of inlaw from every person' (Douglas, 1934, 31).

Street cleaning was one of the many activities which dominated the life of the eighteenth-century town. In 1704, it was recorded that 'the muck upon the streets...and...the vennels' was to be given to Robert Taylor while residents were ordered to keep vennels and close heads clean. In 1760 the council forbade dunghills on the streets which were said to greatly incommode both inhabitants of the town and strangers. However, as late as 1801 it is said that dunghills were found frequently in front of shops and dwelling houses as well as in the High Street and vennels (Douglas, 1934, 374).

Forres' High Street was one feature of the town which attracted Bishop Pococke on his visit in 1760. He described it as a handsome broad street, and the town consisted of 150 houses all 'well-built' (Kemp, 1887, 183). Fourteen years after this account was written, the population of the town stood at 2793 and many of the inhabitants were engaged either in the spinning of yarn or selling merchandise. The reporter in the Statistical Account noted that formerly the town's merchants were supported by travelling and vending their goods in all villages and market towns to the west and north, but this trade was largely at an end as the northern counties had stationery shopkeepers of their own who could 'retail their goods nearly upon as low terms as the merchants of Forres' (OSA, 1796, xvii, 449). Forres also boasted a number of tradesmen and a healthy salmon trade in which the fish were sold for 4d the pound (OSA, 1796, xvii, 449).

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street Layout: Forres boasts the common street pattern of a single

market street with two back lanes. In older records, High Street, the main street, was often described as 'the king's calsay' or the king's hie gait'. It was described as running for a mile in length from east to west (Grant, 1798, 157) and in 1934 varied in width from about thirty-two to fifty feet (Douglas, 1934, 450). Douglas was of the opinion that the buildings and widening of High Street encroached upon an area of the churchyard and argued that the churchyard at one time possibly extended across the present High Street. He backed up this argument with the observation that, when excavations were being made in the High Street for water pipes, he found among the sand and opposite the churchyard certain small bones of human remains, thus indicating that burials had been made in what was now part of High Street (1934, 246). Tolbooth Street and Kirk Vennel, which crosses the Mossat Burn at a ford, are also old streets, and there were a number of wynds which ran off the High Street.

Market Area: It is believed that the market area of Forres was at the market green on the banks of the Mosset, also around the tolbooth and in the neighbourhood of the churchyard (Douglas, 1934, 338). The town council controlled the market's affairs and in 1595 decreed against Sunday markets. In 1620 a statute fixed the price of bread, and the sale of candles, shoes and other goods was also regulated (Douglas, 1934, 43, 38). The site of the horse market was changed in 1661 to a stance nearer the tolbooth, and the timber market maintained a new venue from 1712 at the churchyard wall (Douglas, 1934, 68, 339). In 1844 the ancient market cross was taken down and a new one built in its stead. Three carved stones from the top of the old cross are kept in the town's museum, but it appears that the cross was not always built of stone. In a minute of 1607, John Forsyth, wright, was instructed to build the cross of Forres of wood, sufficient for a number of years' (Douglas, 1934, 335).

Ports: Little is known of the ports of Forres of which there may have been four. A 'get at the Walk Mill' mentioned in a 1591 document has been identified by Douglas as the North of Kirk Port (1934, 478). The East Port which stood near the old mason lodge was referred to in 1588 but of the West Port which stood at the west end of High Street nothing is known of its size or construction (Watson and Watson, 1868, 249). A fourth port might have stood at the foot of St. Leonard's Road (Douglas, 1934, 494). Although Forres was not a walled town in the conventional sense, a 1588 statute urged men to build a dyke to keep out

the 'outlands men' and residents were to build their back walls 'sufficiently with mud or feill' (Douglas, 1934, 450).

Bridge: The first reference to Castle Bridge which crosses the Mosset at a ford occurs in 1607. Further down the burn was the Lee Bridge first mentioned in 1585 and the Hobb's Bridge which is not mentioned nearly as often as the Lee Bridge, 'and we may conclude that it was relatively unimportant' (Douglas, 1934, 527). There was a bridge, known as the Star Brig of possible eighteenth century date, which stood 300 yards up the Mosset from the Castle. It was demolished in 1970.

BUILDINGS

Castle: Reference to a sherrifdom in the early twelfth century implies that a castle at Forres might date from that period. One of the first concrete references to the castle occurs in 1264, when William Wiseman, Sheriff of Forres, disbursed £10 for building a new tower beyond the king's chamber, and moreover 16s 10d in wages were paid to two hawk-catchers for fourteen weeks (Douglas, 1934, 523). In 1297, it was said to have been in English hands, and in that year it was attacked and taken by the patriotic party under the command of Sir Andrew Murray. After Bruce's victory at Bannockburn in 1314 it was transferred to the custody of the Earls of Moray. Before the end of the century possession of the castle passed to the Dunbars of Westfield who remained hereditary sheriffs of Moray for centuries. The castle itself probably fell into decay at the end of the seventeenth century, and the stones were removed and incorporated into dwelling houses round about.

In the early years of the eighteenth century, the town's provost, Sir William Dawson, planned to construct a mansion on the site of Castle Hill, and much of the remains were cleared away. Dawson's town house was never completed and for nearly two centuries the ruins of the house were often taken for the original castle ruins. Another attempt to build on the site occurred in 1845 when General Sir Lewis Grant uncovered the foundations of the early castle. The foundations, discovered eighteen feet below the surface, extended in a line from east to west for twenty-six yards and the walls were six feet in thickness. The western approach appeared to have been defended by an angular turret (Barron, 1913, iii, 71). Nothing now remains above ground level and the area has now been landscaped as a public park.

Church: W.D. Simpson expressed the opinion that a Celtic churchman, St. Maelrubha (673 - 722) founded a church in Forres. The parish church of Forres was however dedicated to St. Laurence and apparently survived in its gothic form until 1775 (Cant, 1948, 7). A few surviving references to the church imply that the outside walls might have been twenty feet high and inside stone pillars supported the roof which might have in part at the end of the sixteenth century been slated (Douglas, 1934, 241). Its replacement built in 1775 was considered too small by the town council and had underwent numerous repairs. It was replaced in turn in 1906.

Tolbooth: The first reference to the tolbooth of Forres occurs in 1586. A short-stay jail was built upon the tolbuith stairs 'sufficient for keeping prisoners for one day (Douglas, 1934, 276). Another seventeenth century reference to the structure noted that the walls of the tolbooth were ruinous and could not carry the thatch. The present town hall dates from 1839 but 'its distinctive tower perpetuates the design of its historic predecessor' (Cant, 1948, 7).

School: Although the first reference to a schoolmaster occurred in 1582, the first actual reference to the building does not come until 1594. The school was then apparently in the parish churchyard and accommodated scholars until the eighteenth century, when a new building was constructed in Gordon Street in 1717. Those premises proved temporary as education in the burgh expanded, and both the Grammar School and English school left the vicinity of the church and moved further east. Even after this move, more school quarters had to be built and in 1767, they were located at the bottom of Caroline Street. For reasons of health and safety, the school moved again in the early nineteenth century (Ritchie, 1926, 99). Female education was not ignored, for one eighteenth-century commentator noted that there was a boarding school for young ladies in the town 'where the various branches of needlework, music and other parts of female education are taught' (Grant, 1798, 158-9).

Well: There were a number of wells in the town including the Cross Well which was perhaps the best known. In 1659 the council ordered a pump to be put in the well and ordered the same to be covered with deals. Two centuries later, in 1855, the well was ordered to be filled in, although the site at the beginning of the present century was still marked by a slight depression in the well (Douglas, 1934, 386). Other

pre-1800 wells include the Hangman's Well near Hangman's Croft, Our Lady's Well and another well sunk at the foot of Cumming Street in 1799 (Douglas, 1934, 386).

Mills: Little is known about the mills of Forres which must have played such a vital role in the history of the early town. A walk mill was on record in the last half of the sixteenth century.

Archaeology

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The basic single street plan of medieval Forres survives fossilized in the present burgh. The streets and wynds have been widened over the last hundred years, and in the course of these improvements the majority of the early street fronting properties have been replaced. The boundaries of the burgages associated with the High Street frontage have now largely been destroyed. Housing development between Castlehill Road and Cumming Street (centred on NJ 036 587) has removed all trace of the pre-existing burgage plan so distinct in early nineteenth century records (Wood, 1823). More recently, new car parking facilities together with the necessary access roads, have meant the clearing of further boundaries on both the north (NJ 036 590; NJ 037 590; NJ 038 591) and the south (NJ 037 588; NJ 038 587; NJ 038 589) of the High Street (see map 2). Some new building has also been carried out in the burgages for example at NJ 0385 5892 and NJ 036 589 (see map 2).

On the High Street frontage, little recent building replacement has taken place with the exception of Forres House on the High Street (NJ 0388 5909).

The majority of the large scale redevelopment projects in Forres pre-date local government re-organisation. At present, development in the burgh is piecemeal. In Caroline Street (NJ 036 590), rehabilitation of existing housing is proposed but some sub-standard properties are to be demolished. Redevelopment is also proposed at some unspecified date for the present car-park on the High Street frontage (NJ 038 590). Building will also eventually take place to the rear of the tolbooth (NJ 0376 5887).

Indications are that cellarage is not a common feature of the chiefly nineteenth-century buildings which dominate the present townscape, and the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits seems good. Large scale redevelopment in the burgh is no longer a threat but it is unfortunate that no archaeological investigation was carried out at that time.

Future Investigation

The policies outlined below are not listed in order of importance, but are intended as guide lines for future research as opportunities arise

through renovation and redevelopment (see page 12 ff for full discussion).

1. To establish the chronology and origins of the earliest settlement and reconstruct the socio-economic development of the burgh.
2. To identify the sites and structural nature of the town ports.
3. To determine any variation in street alignment and width not already identified.
4. To identify the physical nature of pre-eighteenth century town buildings, their relationship to the contemporary street frontages and the usage of both the street fronting properties and backland buildings other than as dwelling houses. These buildings may be used in conjunction with '3' above, as an indicator of the pace of burgh development within the established street plan.
5. To identify traces of church buildings preceding the present structure and to establish a chronology. Additionally, to determine the original extent of associated burial ground, and the date of the laying out of this part of the High Street.
6. To determine the degree of survival of archaeological deposits on the site of the castle.

Areas of Archaeological Priority

The almost total lack of material and structural evidence from Forres to provide a basic guide to those areas of the burgh which would be the most profitable archaeologically, places perhaps an inevitable dependence on the surviving documentary evidence. The sites of known antiquity, the castle, the church, the archdeacon's manse and the tolbooth, are the earliest recorded and identifiable areas of specific function in the historic core. All structural traces of the fore-runners of the present buildings have, however, now vanished.

Much of the backland has now been redeveloped with housing or car-parking facilities, which will inevitably limit opportunities to examine the underlying deposits. Although cellars and basements are not a particularly common feature of the townscape, many of the frontage sites have been levelled into the sloping ground on which the town is built, and have probably truncated early deposits in many cases. This is particularly true on old thoroughfares such as Tolbooth Street and at the rear of properties on the north side of the High Street.

The area of interest is defined by North Road, South Street, Cumming Street, Hainings Road and Strathcona Road . Any future developments proposed for the street frontages would be of interest in this broad area, though as stated above the lack of material and structural evidence means it is not possible to identify any specific area.

Recommendations

Most of the redevelopment planned for the historic centre of Forres has now been completed. The street frontages have remained virtually intact since the nineteenth century, and are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Opportunities to examine underlying deposits are, therefore, likely to be limited. The High Street and certain other thoroughfares were widened in the last century, and early frontages may still survive beneath the present streets. In the event of further work taking place on both frontages and backland, it is important that advantage is taken of opportunities to identify residual deposits. With this in mind, the following recommendations are made.

- a. The trial trenching of frontages and burgages as they become available will allow the assessment of the degree of survival of archaeological deposits and indicate those areas likely to be most profitable in terms of full-scale excavation preliminary to redevelopment.
- b. A watching brief on the renewal or repair of services on the street frontages would assist in determining the past width and orientation of the burgh streets and their relationship with early town buildings.
- c. It has been found in other Scottish towns that the structural remains of early buildings can be identified in the course of restoration work on ostensibly nineteenth-century structures. Any renovating project should therefore be undertaken bearing this possibility in mind.

PREVIOUS WORK

No recorded archaeological investigation has been carried out in the burgh.

Artifactual finds in the town centre have been rare, are largely unprovenanced and very few relate to the medieval period. The variety of historical periods represented suggest that Forres and its immediate environs has been populated, even if only transiently, for many centuries.

Unfortunately, however, the objects listed and described below provide little information on which to construct a framework for the early history of the burgh.

1. A roughly diamond shaped flint blade was discovered during work on the site of the gasworks (NJ 035 5912) in the late nineteenth century. The flint is in the collection of the Falconer Museum, Forres (Anderson and Black, 1887-88, 353).
2. A slightly worn bronze coin of Honorius was discovered in 1947 during excavation work in the High Street (NJ 0352 5879). In 1950, the coin was in the Falconer Museum, Forres (Robertson, 1949-50, 146).
3. A Constantinopolis coin of Constantine I minted at Thessalonica was recovered from the garden of 'Kenora' (NJ 0343 5850) in Forres. The present whereabouts of the coin is not known (Robertson, 1949-50, 146).
4. A corroded and defaced coin of Domitian was discovered amongst loose stones on the High Street in 1844. The exact find spot and present whereabouts of this coin are uncertain (Douglas, 1934, 20).
5. An iron rapier blade was discovered in the late nineteenth century near the Mills of Forres (Robertson, 1862-64, 215). The blade was presented to the National Museum in Edinburgh.
6. A medallion of soft alloy, probably associated with a number of coins, was found near the cross (NJ 0370 5890) during levelling and paving of the street about 1790. The medallion may have been of medieval date, but there is no information relating to its current whereabouts (Forbes, 1975, 16; Shaw, 1882, 174-5).
7. A pair of thumbkings (instruments of torture) were found in 1820. Anderson and Black (1887-88, 353), claim the find was made during excavations in the High Street. However, Douglas (1934, 273) claims that the find was made in the thatched roof of a derelict house during the laying out of Cumming Street in that year.
8. A carved stone probably dating from the ninth or tenth century stands at NJ 0465 5953 on the outskirts of the burgh. The pillar of hard grey sandstone probably from the parish of Duffus, is 20' (6.1m) high and intricately carved with Celtic interlace, elaborate battle scenes, and some indeterminate symbolism. Local traditions claim that the stone was discovered during the reclamation of the field in which it stands (Douglas, 1934, 306; Curle, 1939-40, 110).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Early Settlement

The site of the burgh lies on the sand and gravel of a 50' (15.2m) raised beach. Historically, the topography of the surrounding area was probably substantially different from today, with the North Sea shore much closer than at present. Certainly, a map by Speed (1610) shows the Firth extending much nearer to Forres in the seventeenth century, than it does today. This coastal situation must have played an important part in the development of the burgh. There are many artifactual finds from the immediate vicinity dating from the prehistoric and Roman periods which indicate favourable environmental conditions for settlement at an early date. Boethius records a supposed mention of Forres as early as 535 'In 535 Toncet the King's Chancellor causit divers merchandises of the towne of Fores in Moray and (as then the chiefest towne of all that countrie) to be accused of treason...' (Douglas, 1934, 21). Such an early date is as yet uncorroborated by fact. In the seventh or eighth century, it has been claimed (Simpson, 1935, fig.10) that a church was founded at Forres by St. Maelrubha, but again this has no basis in fact. By the tenth century, however, 'Fothir' (which may or may not be interpreted as Forres) is mentioned in documentary sources 'Dovenaldus filius constantin occisus est in oppido Fothir anno 904' (Shaw, 1882, III, 72). The magnificent carved stone dating from the ninth or tenth century on the outskirts of the burgh (see page 8) is itself only an indication of human presence in the vicinity rather than settlement. In the eleventh century, the Danes are said to have burned the 'castle of Forres' in 1008 (see page 19) , though in fact it is doubtful if a proper fortification existed here until the twelfth century when charters dated at Forres were issued by William the Lion.

It is most probably beneath the protection of the fortress here that the site of the burgh originated and developed, with a single market street aligned on the castle. The earliest written records are thought to have been destroyed in the fire of 1390 initiated by the Wolf of Badenoch, and the main sources of information for events in the twelfth and thirteenth century lie mainly in charters and the records of religious houses with property holdings and dues in the locality. The burgh records proper do not take shape before the latter part of the sixteenth century, earlier entries tending to be intermittent. It is therefore with the early period of burgh history that the main interest lies.

Future investigation should be directed towards the determination of the chronology and origins of the earliest settlement of the burgh, and the course of its social and economic development.

The Town Walls and Ports

There is no evidence that Forres was ever a walled town in the formal military sense. It is more likely that the burgh boundaries, as in the majority of other Scottish medieval burghs, were defined by a strong wall at their extremities along the present North Road to the north, and South Street and Orchard Road to the south. Access to the High Street would be further restricted by strong gates at the close entries, channelling all goods and traffic through the town ports. References to the town wall are few. In the sixteenth century, the town council minutes recorded permission given to James Urquhart at Bailliefields' to build a dyk to keep out Owtlands men', and also in 1588, neighbours in the burgh were urged 'to brig their heid yards sufficiently with mud or feill' (Douglas, 1934, 450).

Of the possible four ports of entry to the burgh (see page 4) only the site of the east port seems reasonably certain (NJ 0400 5915). The dates of its first erection and eventual demolition remain, however, uncertain. Douglas (1934, 491) quotes a reference in the council minutes in 1588 to 'Efter zowill to mak ane stent roll upon the leding of ye stanes for bigin of ye Est Port at ye town end' and in a further reference in the same year, 'The said day the judis decernis ye psonis yat let is not ye stanes conforme to ye stent roll to big ye Est Port at ye town end'. It is not clear if repair or rebuilding was being carried out at that time. The 'leading of stones' referred to may, however, imply the replacement of an earlier structure of timber. The West Port may have stood opposite 145 High Street (NJ 0353 5881) controlling an earlier access route to the burgh High Street from a ford across the Mosset Burn before Bridge Street was cut into the Castle Hill (Douglas, 1934, 451) (see also page 20). Little is known of the North and South Ports (see page 4) if indeed they existed, though closer examination of the burgh records than has at yet been carried out, may provide further information. Future roadworks in the areas indicated above, may provide some indication of the site of the ports.

The Town Plan

Forres provides a perfect example of the single medieval market street

with parallel back lanes. In 1948, Cant commented that 'these traditional features are still so strongly marked as to make Forres one of the best places in Scotland in which to study the lay-out of a medieval burgh' (Cant, 1948, 6). Although the street frontages remain largely unchanged, since that time, the backland properties running between the High Street and North Road and South Street respectively, have now undergone extensive redevelopment (see map 2).

The basic medieval single street plan has, however, altered little since the surveys made in 1806 (Chalmers, 1807) and 1823 (Wood, 1823). The High Street extends eastwards from the castle widening to form a market square, and is flanked by roughly parallel back streets. Access to the rigs was originally provided by a number of wynds running both north and south from the High Street. Many of these original wynds are still in use, though have been considerably widened. Urquhart Street for example, between the High Street and South Street (NJ 038 589) was first causewayed in 1772 and is probably greatly reconstructed (Douglas, 1934, 482). The nineteenth century saw the introduction of a series of street widening programmes and some additions were also made to the original medieval plan at this time. Cumming Street, for example was cut through the High Street frontage to join with Orchard Road about 1820. Wood's plan (1823) suggests that the street was named after the owners of the adjacent property, Geoffrey and John Cumming. In 1803, attempts were made to obtain permission to 'lower the School Vennel, at least the north half thereof' (Douglas, 1934, 382), (NJ 038 589) suggesting a steep incline at the High Street end. If such levelling did take place, it would obviously have affected the survival of archaeological levels here. The widening of Caroline Street (then known as Shambles Brae) took place in 1878, and in the same year approval was given to widen the road at Milne's Wynd followed in 1879 by similar improvements in Tolbooth Street, South Street and North Road were similarly affected by alterations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Castlehill Road is also a relatively recent intrusion. These alterations probably involved the demolition of existing frontage property, the foundations of which may possibly still be traced in the area between the present street and frontages. The examination of such areas could indicate the sequence, plan, physical nature and commercial usage of street fronting properties in earlier periods.

The maintenance and replacement of services such as gas, water, electricity

and drainage may allow opportunities to examine sub-street deposits in order to establish the survival of archaeological levels. These modern services have obviously caused some disturbance to the stratigraphy. The principal streets and lanes of the burgh possessed covered drains by 1840, but contemporary with these improvements, less hygienic practices were still being carried out. About 1838, it was still common to cover dunghills in streets and closes with sand where they lay, and it is possible that this practice may have led to a rise in street level, thus preserving earlier traces of occupation. This is however, purely speculative, and can only be proven by archaeological investigation.

The burgh streets appear to have maintained a consistent orientation until recent modern intrusions. However, the discovery of skeletal material in and on the south side of the High Street (see page 18) may confirm that the original exit to the burgh was via Gordon Street, the High Street at some point in the past being extended south-westwards through the erstwhile kirkyard. More recently, new roads have been put through the backlands on the north side of the High Street between Gordon Street and North Street Place (NJ 036 589) and to provide access to new and extensive parking areas on the south side of the High Street (NJ 038 589; NJ 038 588). The South Street/High Street junction (NJ 039 590) has also recently been widened. The new car parks which have appeared in the burgh during the last few years, have contributed to the general breakdown of the old system of property division. The medieval burgages had an approximate width of 18' (5.4m) and because of this narrow width, the majority of the town houses were constructed gable end on to the street, subsequently, expanding back into the burgage (Wood, 1823). The boundary of each strip was indicated by marker stones, one of the few remaining was, according to Forbes (1975, 33) removed during the construction of the Leys car park (c. NJ 038 589).

Early Buildings and Materials

Enthusiastic building replacement on the burgh frontages in the nineteenth century has meant that there are few obviously early buildings in the burgh today. Douglas (1934, 454) claimed that 154 High Street was probably the oldest surviving house in the town, incorporating a date stone of 1668. Forres House (NJ 0398 5909) at the east end of the burgh, now demolished and the site landscaped, also had seventeenth century origins, but had undergone several reconstructions. Other

specific references and descriptions of burgh houses are rare. The manse of Forres, also known as the Archdeacon's Manse, stood on the west corner of Gordon Street (NJ 035 589). A manse on this site was reputedly burned by the Wolf of Badenoch (Alexander Stewart, Lord of Badenoch and third son of King Robert II) in 1390. Successive buildings must have stood on the site, as one of the earliest documentary references appears in the burgh court records in 1593, when John Froster, minister of Forres, requests assistance to 'big his hous' (Douglas, 1934, 256), further references in 1617 to repairs and in 1659/1660, to rebuilding, imply a series of buildings on the site. Shaw (1882, II, 169) however, claimed that remains of the manse existed in the late nineteenth century in the vicinity of Burnside House.

There is virtually no evidence of the physical nature and plan of early town buildings. The burgh records for November 1586 refer to 'mud houses' when a dispute arose between neighbours as to the possession of the mud lying between them (Douglas, 1934, 450), but there is little other information available at present. Information is rather more forthcoming on the structure of the civic buildings. It is not known when the first tolbooth was erected, but it was certainly in existence by 1586. References in the burgh records in 1588 to structural repairs suggest that this was not a new building. In the seventeenth century, information is again sparse, but in 1655 some inkling as to the structure is given in an entry referring to 'a thackit building' and reporting that 'the Tolbooth is ruinous and cannot carry thack (thatch) till the walls are repaired. Crackit to the very top'. Further repairs were carried out in 1670 and references made to the 'vaults' of the tolbooth and 'two standing-up gabells above the said second storey height' which suggests a building of some height and strength. In 1702, reference is made to a third storey. Agreement was reached in 1698 to build a new tolbooth, but it was not until 1715 that an order was issued for demolition and rebuilding of 'the said old tolbooth of new of the same quantities in height and breadth and length, and if it be thought convenient and possible to lengthen the said tolbooth at the east, one foot or twa...and to vault the tolbooth from one end to the other...'. This new building was completed in 1734, and remained virtually unaltered, apart from the building of shops from the north-west to south-west corner in 1759, until 1839, when the present building was erected on the site (NJ 0372 5892).

Present knowledge of the site and nature of early industry in the burgh is sparse and deeper research into the early burgh records than is possible in this context would perhaps be profitable. There is little or no artifactual evidence from the burgh to provide any indication of the kind of industries once established. The recent conversion of relatively large areas of erstwhile burgages into large tarmac car-parks has regrettably for the present, effectively sealed off areas of potential interest. For this reason, any future proposals for surviving backland areas would be of interest.

The Parish Church of St. Laurence

The Parish Church of St. Laurence stands on the north side of the High Street (NJ 0356 5887). It is the latest in a series of religious buildings which had stood on this site probably since the thirteenth century. Traditionally, a chapel of St. Laurence was built in Forres by King Alexander III in 1275. This building is said to have been destroyed in 1390 as a result of the depredations of the Wolf of Badenoch in this part of Morayshire. Seton (1978, 33) claims at least four churches preceded the present structure, dedicated in 1906, but there does not appear to be any firm evidence for the exact number of buildings which have stood on this site.

The lack of knowledge concerning the church in the early medieval period, is qualified by documentary evidence from the sixteenth century. Repairs to the extant church in 1589 suggest that it was at that time in a state of decrepitude and also provide some information as to its structural appearance. An entry in the burgh records in December 1589 orders that 'the south side of the Kirk of Forres shall be thekit wi sclaitt' suggesting that the roofing medium before this time may have been thatch. The building also appears to have been quite large, with side walls some 20' (6.1m) high, probably side aisles with stone pillars separating them from the nave and a transept (later converted to use as a porch) in the centre of the church (Douglas, 1934, 241). In spite of 'building and thatching' carried out by John Anderson, Wright, in 1594, the building was again apparently in need of repair in June 1595. Structural instability is suggested by two entries in the burgh records. The first in the aforementioned year, when lime is required 'to mend ye butrichis (buttresses) of ye Kirk' and the second four years later, in June 1599, when the burgh records report the 'east gable of the Kirk biggit' which would seem to confirm the earlier suggested decay.

By 1660 the Presbytery records of Forres show that further work was required on the building, particularly the porch and quire which were 'ruinating through want of tack' (Douglas, 1934, 242). After much haggling over repairs in the latter part of the seventeenth century, it was decided to build a new church in 1774. Work was begun in 1775 on the site of the earlier church. The new building measured 72' (21.9m) long by 36' (10.9m) broad internally. After completion, no major structural alterations were made, apart from the addition of two porches and a session house in 1859 (O.S. 1868,X, 8), although the building was repaired on several occasions through the nineteenth century. The decision to replace the eighteenth century church was made in 1896, and work commenced in 1904, again on the same site.

There is no record of earlier foundations being identified in the course of reconstruction, and it is possible that all traces of earlier churches from the thirteenth century onwards have been destroyed by later building. In addition, it was at one time common practice in Forres, as elsewhere, to make interments within the church. The burgh records for 1589 confirm this practice with an entry ordering that 'no landward person be bureit within the kirk without licence of the Town Council' (Douglas, 1934, 241). Considerable disturbance to underlying deposits must have resulted, and it may now be impossible to identify any surviving structural remains. However, any future renovation or improvement proposed inside the present church, especially work on the foundations, or below the present floor level, could be usefully monitored in the hope of identifying the remains of any earlier building and determining the chronology and sequence of places of worship on this site.

The associated churchyard seems likely to have been more extensive than at present, having been reduced in area by the encroachment of buildings and subsequent widening of the High Street on the south side. The evidence for this lies in the discovery of skeletons beneath the High Street in 1819, and in ground immediately south of the High Street (Algie, 1887, 27). Douglas (1934, 246) recovered human remains from the same area during pipe laying operations earlier this century.

Future roadworks immediately south of the present churchyard boundary could, therefore, usefully be monitored in an attempt to identify the extent of the original burial ground, and the date of the laying out of this part of the High Street.

The Castle

The castle of Forres stood on a low mound at the west end of the burgh High Street above the Mossett Burn (NJ 0341 5873). Traditionally, a defensive structure has existed here since the eleventh century, when the Danes are said to have burned the castle in 1008 (Douglas, 1934, 523). There is, however, no firm evidence for such early occupation. Charters issued by William the Lion between 1189 and 1198 dated at Forres, do suggest that by this time, some form of Royal residence existed in the burgh.

The structural nature of the early fortification is not certain. The records of Pluscarden Priory for 1233 refer to the 'Bailiwick' of Forres (Forbes, 1975, 55), and by the thirteenth century, evidence suggests that the structure was of masonry. In 1264, William Wiseman the then Sheriff of Forres, disbursed £10 for building walls and a 'new tower beyond the king's chamber' (Douglas, 1934, 523). The fourteenth century saw further destruction and rebuilding on the site. The castle was reputedly destroyed by fire after seizure from the English by Sir Andrew Murray in 1297. However, it had been rebuilt by 1303 when the castle was occupied by Edward I. Further rebuilding followed the attack and burning by William Wallace in this same year, and the castle continued in occupation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The castle probably fell into decay and disuse towards the end of the seventeenth century. Some sources claim many of the castle stones were removed for use in rebuilding dwelling houses in the burgh between 1660-1670 (Douglas, 1934, 524). In 1712 the burgh provost, William Dawson, began the erection of a mansion house on the Castle Hill which was subsequently left unfinished. The external dimensions of this building are recorded as 47' (14.3m) by 59' (17.6m), the remains of which were in the nineteenth century frequently mistaken for those of the early castle. The plan of Forres published for Chalmers in 1806 (Chalmers, 1807, I, 131) illustrates what are presumably the remains of the castle visible at that time, consisting of a broken circular wall with bastions, enclosing the summit of the castle hill. The foundations do not appear in this form on Wood's Plan (1823) where the rectangular shape of Provost Dawson's house appears to be illustrated on the summit.

In 1845, tree planting on the hill by the then owner, Sir Lewis Grant,

revealed the foundations of the old castle, described as a length of wall 78' (23.7m) long and 6' (1.8m) thick, with angular turrets of considerable strength to the west (Douglas, 1934, 525). In 1933 the site of the castle was acquired by the town from the Grant Family, and the early eighteenth century building was levelled.

The site shows evidence of considerable disturbance. The mound has been landscaped as a public park, and at some unspecified date Bridge Street has been cut into the base of the mound. No recorded archaeological investigation has taken place here and the available information concerning the ruins is limited to that described above. Any future proposed improvements for this site could usefully be preceded by exploratory excavation to determine the degree of survival of archaeological deposits, in the hope of expanding current knowledge of the history and appearance of the site.

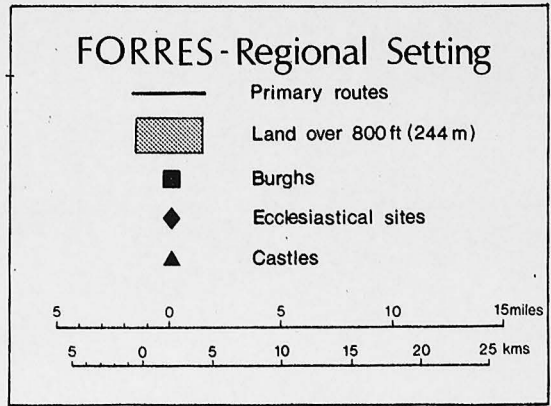
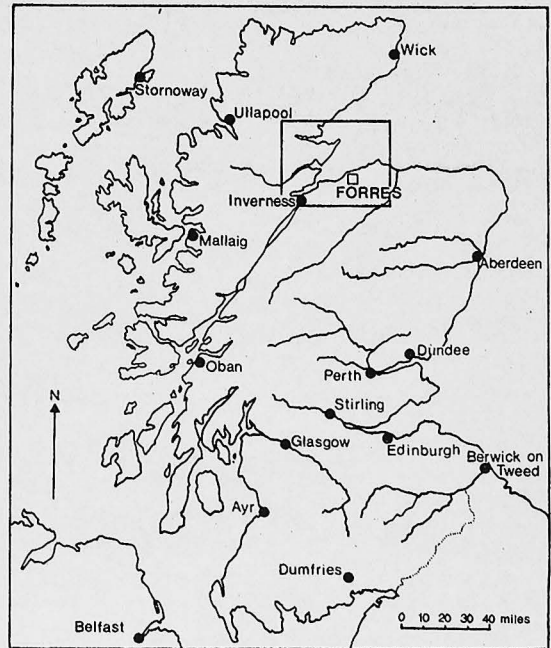
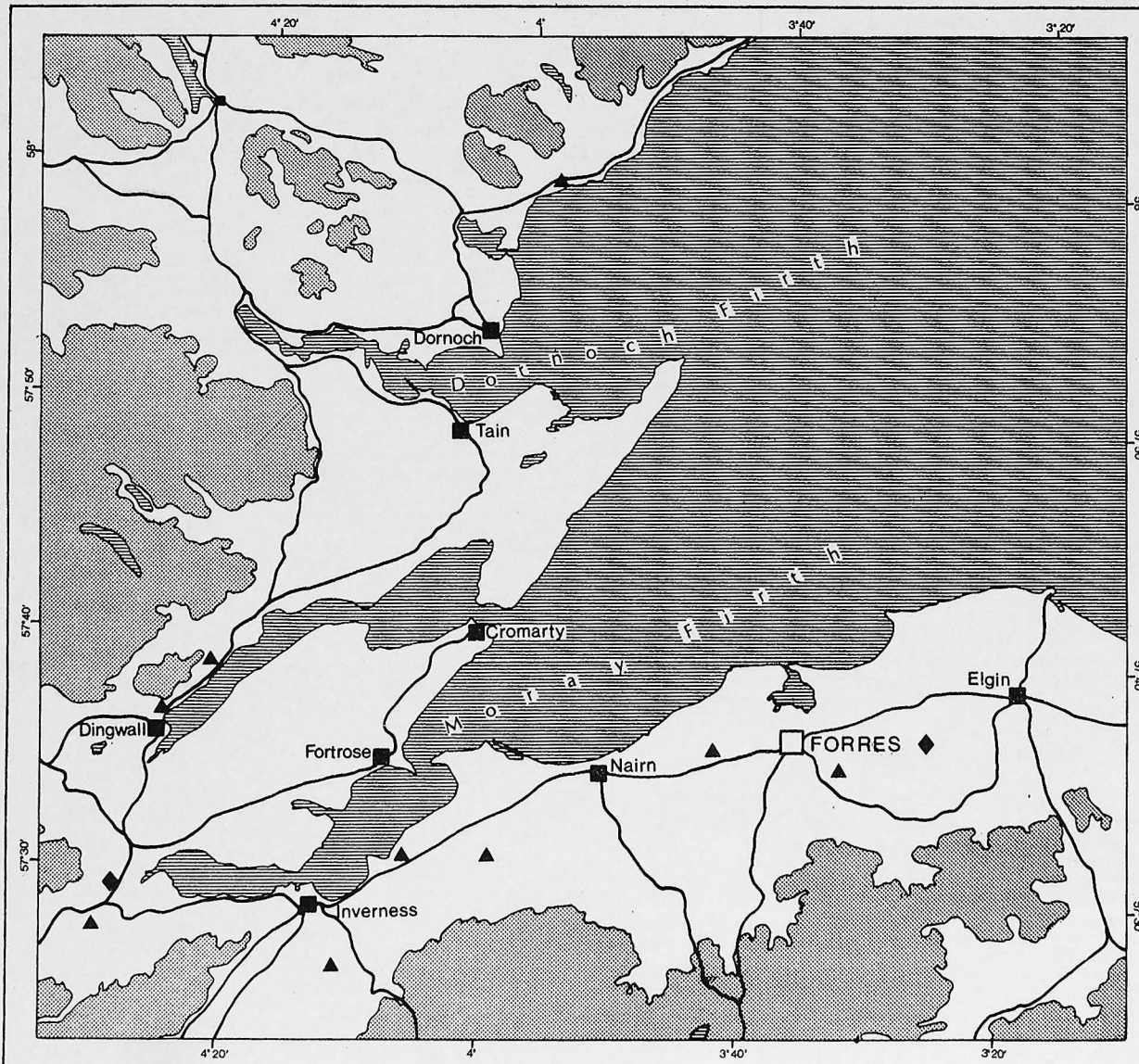
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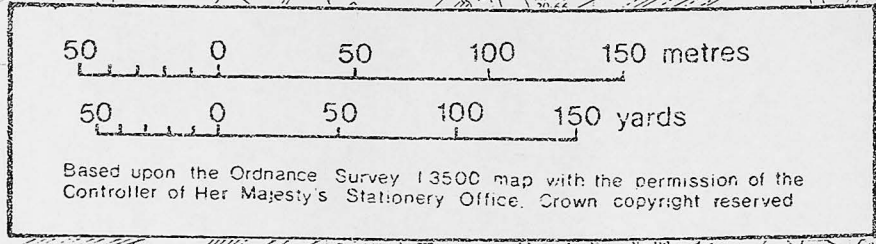
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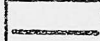


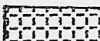

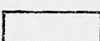
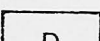
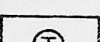
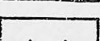
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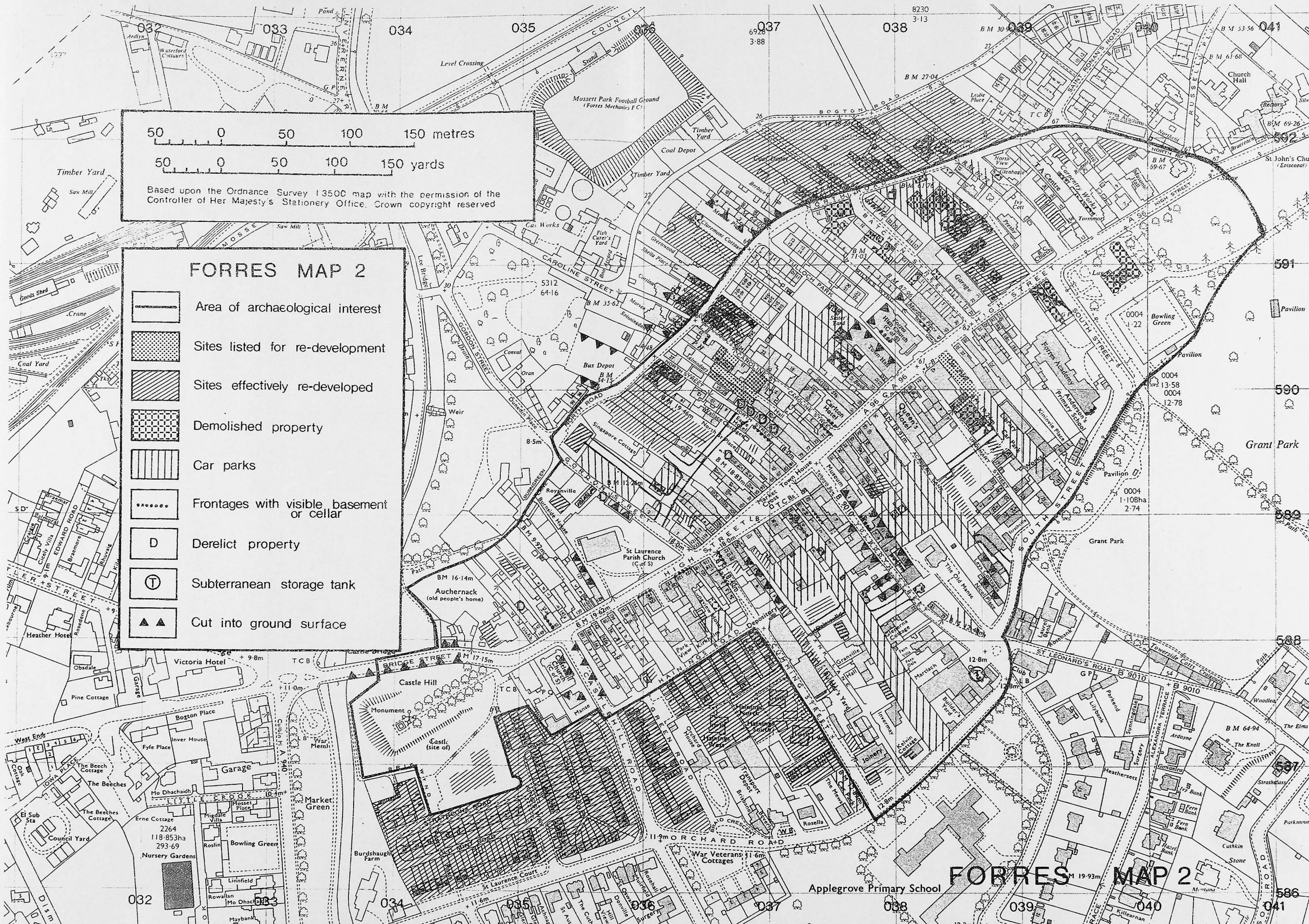


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FORRES MAP 2

-  Area of archaeological interest
-  Sites listed for re-development
-  Sites effectively re-developed
-  Demolished property
-  Car parks
-  Frontages with visible basement or cellar
-  Derelict property
-  Subterranean storage tank
-  Cut into ground surface



FORRES MAP 2

Applegrove Primary School

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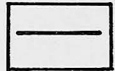
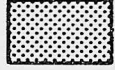
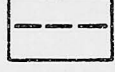

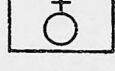


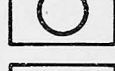
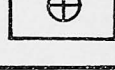
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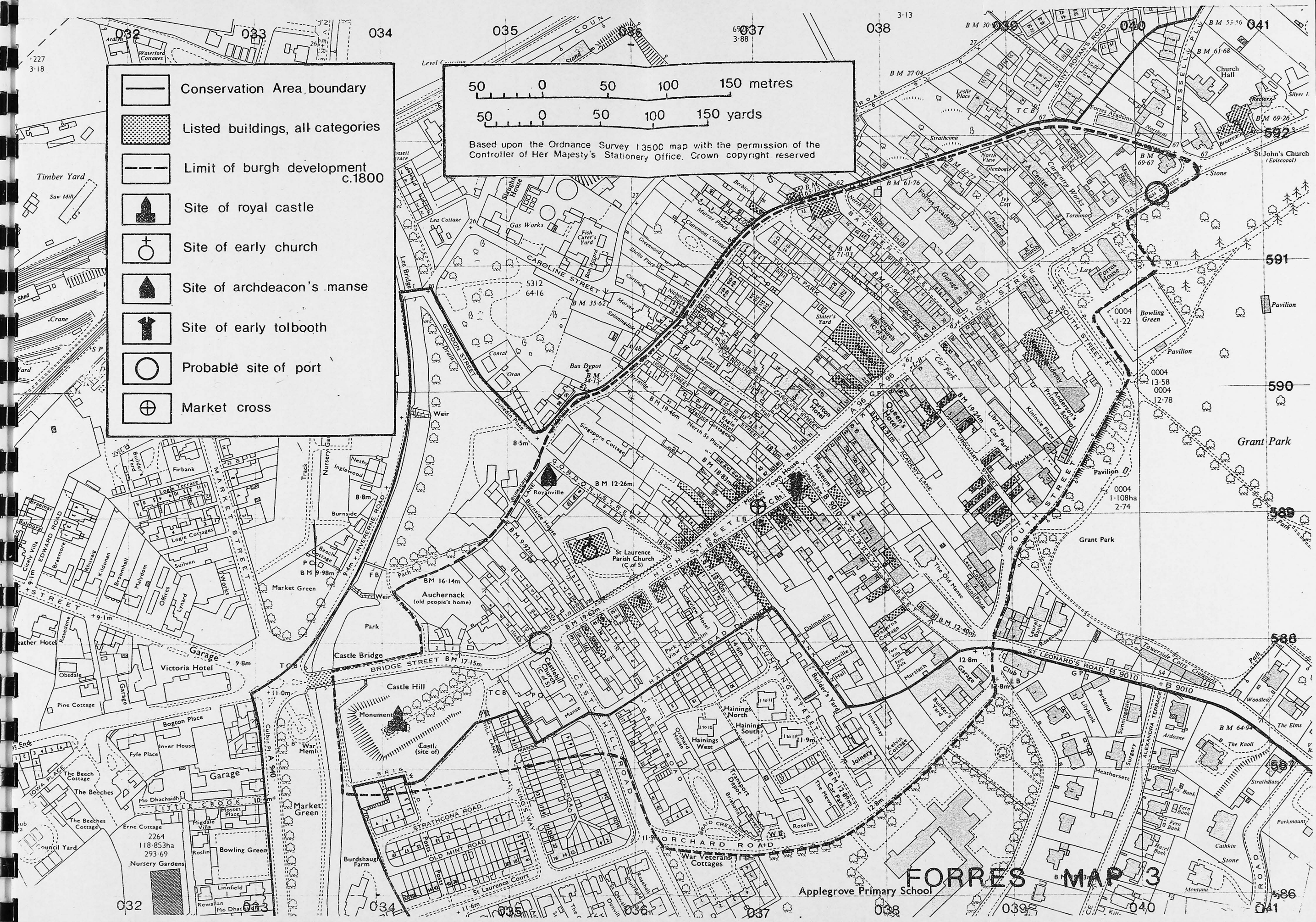
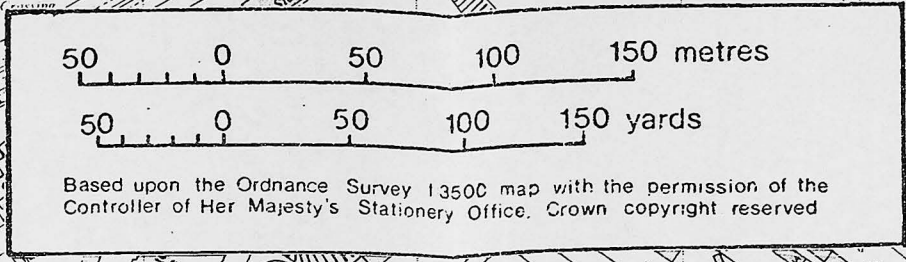
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-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Listed buildings, all categories
-  Limit of burgh development c.1800
-  Site of royal castle
-  Site of early church
-  Site of archdeacon's manse
-  Site of early tolbooth
-  Probable site of port
-  Market cross



FORRES MAP 3

Applegrove Primary School

