

Historic
INVERURIE

the archaeological implications
of development



Robert Gourlay
Anne Turner

Scottish Burgh Survey
1977

Historic

INVERURIE

the archaeological implications
of development



Robert Gourlay
Anne Turner

Scottish Burgh Survey
1977

Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow

PREFACE

This report on the history and archaeology of the former burgh of Inverurie is one of a series of such reports on the historic towns of Scotland. The reports have been commissioned by the Ancient Monuments division of the Department of the Environment with a view to providing the necessary background information upon which to base a policy for urban research in the future. The reports 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, with a short archaeological report and a series of illustrative plans compiled and drawn by Robert Gourlay. 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 Grampian Region and Gordon District Planning Departments, Mrs. J. Beeley, Dr. G. Gill, Mr. A.L. Gray, Alice Kirkpatrick, W.F.H. Nicolaisen, Iain Shepherd, Miss Williamson of North-East Scotland Library Service, and Dr. A.A. Woodham. A special thanks should be offered to Mr. Oswald Prosser who read a draft of the historical report and added valuable comments.

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

Cover: One of the four Class I Pictish symbol stones in the old churchyard, Inverurie, depicting a stylised prancing horse.

History

INTRODUCTION

Site: Located sixteen miles (26km) northwest of Aberdeen, present-day Inverurie straddles a ridge nestling in an angle formed by the confluence of the Rivers Don and Urie. Its burghal origins date back to the reign of William the Lion, but until the early nineteenth century Inverurie was an agricultural town serving the surrounding rural community and, as a result, did not grow to any great size. Four major roads led into Inverurie: two southerly routes from Kintore and Keithhall and two highways from Huntly and Old Meldrum. Until the end of the eighteenth century Powtate Loch covered much of the area known as Market Place. Two burns cut through the town: Overburn, just hedging the north end, and Sketrie Burn, which flows to the north of the Kintore Arms Hotel. Both empty into the River Urie.

Place Name: Throughout its long history Inverurie was variously spelled: Ennroury (1172), Ineurie (1199), Innerrowie (1558) and Inverury up to the present day. The place name itself means 'Uriemouth', containing in Gaelic the first element, Inbhir, as in Inverness. The river name, Urie, has never been explained satisfactorily (Nicolaisen et al, 1970, 113). A reference in a ninth century chronicle to a Pictish king being slain at 'Nrurim' (ES, I, 1922, 357) has led many (Davidson, 1878, 14; Beveridge, 1923, 116; Alexander, 1952, 304, who cites the spelling 'Nrurin') to identify the place as Inverurie. In a letter, Professor Nicolaisen dismissed the equation of 'Nrurim' with Inverurie as 'highly speculative' and 'hardly provable'. His objections to the equation were largely based on chronological reasons, 'for it is most unlikely that we have Gaelic Inver names in Aberdeenshire as early as the ninth century, since Gaelic is only just beginning to replace Pictish at that time, and one would have expected Aberurie or the like'.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: Mention is made of 'Inuerurin' in a William the Lion grant of 1178 x 1182 of the lands of the Garioch to his brother, Earl David of Huntingdon, but its first mention as a burgh does not come until 1190 x 1195, when the king confirms the gift of unum toftum in burgo de Inverury along with the church of Inverurie to Lindores

Abbey, founded by Earl David (Barrow, 1970, 257, 858). Inverurie was, therefore, a baronial burgh and the caput of the lordship of the Garioch. Later documentation for the burgh is not plentiful, but it continued its association with the regality (Pryde, 1965, 16). In three sixteenth century entries in the Register of the Great Seal, Inverurie is described as a villa, but in a charter of Queen Mary in 1558 it is stated that Inverurie had been a royal burgh 'beyond the memory of man' (Davidson, 1878, 27) and was erected in liberum burgum regalem (Pryde, 1965, 16). Inverurie was admitted to the Convention of the Royal Burghs in 1661.

Medieval: The history of the medieval burgh is not clear and is complicated by the vexed problem of the burgh's original location. It has been proposed that the original burgh settlement was in the area known as the Stanners - to the south and east of the modern town - and shifted to its present location perhaps early in the fourteenth century. One of the major proponents of this theory, W. Douglas Simpson, based his conclusions largely on the position of the churchyard. The churchyard is located to the south and east of the modern town under the shadow of the motte of Inverurie, commonly called the Bass. Simpson stated, 'while the modern parish church climbed the hill, cemeteries are not so readily abandoned and Inverurie burghesses still find rest at the omphalos of their mother town' (1943, 127). He accepted that the change in the burgh location came when Inverurie no longer required the protection afforded by the castle at the Bass. Others have cited the flooding waters of the Don as a possible incentive to move. There is little documentary evidence for settlement in the Stanners. A charter of King James VI in 1600, raising Lindores into a temporal lordship, mentions an Inverurie property which Davidson believed to be the toft granted by Earl David to the abbey at the end of the twelfth century. The description domum cum hortulo et cimbe piscatione apud Futtey (RMS, vi, 1032) according to Davidson corresponded to a small patch of property south of Uriebank (Davidson, 1878, 27). Whether this was the actual Earl David toft is perhaps a debatable point, yet its stated location would place it not in the Stanners proper, but slightly north. Another 1600 document, a contract of multures (mill dues) between the burgh and John Leslie of Wardes, makes mention of 'the Stanners' ruids and tofts pertaining to the said John Leslie . . .', but this is not to imply any scale of settlement in the area at that date (Davidson, 1878, 182). Where documentary evidence fails there is aerial photography. In an aerial view taken June, 1973, soil marks at NJ 7822 2015 may indicate two equal-sized timber buildings in the southern end of the Stanners (Photo reference from Ian Shepherd, Grampian Regional Archaeologist).

Inverurie was not involved in the mainstream of Scottish affairs in the middle ages, though the Garioch as a doorway to Moray had an importance to the crown which cannot be denied and Inverurie was the chief burgh of the regality. Inverurie and the Garioch remained loyal to Bruce throughout the Wars of Independence. King Robert came to the burgh ill in December, 1307, and was shortly afterwards compelled to fight a battle with the Earl of Buchan. The result of the engagement was a rout of Buchan's forces and, according to tradition, accolades for an Inverurie farmer. That tradition records that in 1308 Bruce granted all the land of Inverurie to Farmer Bainzie and his eleven sons, a gift which corresponds with the date accepted by some for the abandonment of the Stanners for the safety of the ridge.

It is only with the fifteenth century that fact begins to take over from fiction in Inverurie history. At the beginning of the century we know not only the name of the lord superior of the regality who held courts in the burgh, but also the names of burgesses. Included among the names of prominent citizens are a bevy of 'Bainzies'. Three Inverurie tanners - Michael Sutor, John Atkynson and John Andrew - were sent to trial in Aberdeen along with a number of other people in 1402 to answer charges relating to misconduct in their trade (Davidson, 1878, 115). Throughout the century the town did not grow to any appreciable size and does not even appear in the stent roll of 1483.

Early Modern: The charter issued by Queen Mary in 1558 in addition to recognizing Inverurie's royal burgh status formally allowed for the erection of a market cross, two weekly markets and two yearly fairs, but did not define the limits of the royalty. It also provided for the election of a provost and bailies, yet for well over a century afterwards Inverurie burgesses did not elect a magistrate higher than a bailie, of whom there were usually three (Anon, 1911, 6). In 1663 the Scottish Parliament confirmed Inverurie's status as head burgh of the Garioch as the place where all courts of justice and all executions belonging to the regality should take place (APS, VII, app. 97). Nevertheless, Inverurie throughout the seventeenth century remained primarily an agricultural town, serving an intensely rural area. In 1696 it could only boast of a church, school, tolbooth with four merchants, seven shoemakers, six masons, three tailors, three smiths and a wright (Davidson, 1878, 383). The wealthiest resident was a Quaker merchant who boasted 500 merks worth of stock and three servants (Davidson, 1878, 360).

Eighteenth century: An early eighteenth century observer described Inverurie as

a town with 'ane single street, lying from northwest to southeast along the water of Urie'. He went on to describe its yearly fair 'called St. Pollinar's fair' and underlined the fact that Inverurie had no public buildings save a tolbooth and church (Smith, 1875, 754). Bishop Pococke described it as a 'poor village'. In 1745 Inverurie was the scene of a skirmish between rebel and royalist forces which resulted in the rout of the latter. Population declined through the remainder of the century. In 1755 Inverurie's population was judged to be 730, a figure which slipped to 712 by 1791. The following year it was observed that Inverurie had no trade nor manufacture save for a few craftsmen 'occupied on the immediate business of the inhabitants' (Kincaid, n.d., 2). A report issued in 1794 by James Anderson on the agricultural and rural economy of Aberdeenshire described Inverurie as a 'trifling place', Old Meldrum being 'in a state of advancement' with double Inverurie's population. Anderson judges that Inverurie's lowly state is due to purposeless electioneering by the inhabitants with the hope of 'acquiring a pittance without proper exertions' (Kincaid, n.d., 1). Although the population by 1804 had reportedly slumped to the figure of 400 souls, the construction of a canal between Inverurie and Aberdeen in 1805 brought significant economic prosperity to the burgh in the first half of the nineteenth century.

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street layout: In short, the burgh which developed on the ridge overlooking the River Urie had only a single street with no back lanes. Its present-day High Street is an especially long thoroughfare, a product of centuries-long ribbon development. Burgages of an irregular shape, although of the herringbone pattern (Alauddin, 1968, 255), presumably took shape from the south, pushing north until they reached Gallow-slack, the point at which the highway from Huntly anciently entered Inverurie (Davidson, 1878, 6). Lands were reclaimed as the waters of the Powtate Loch gradually receded until it disappeared altogether at the end of the eighteenth century. Market Place and West High Street were thus formed after the period under review.

Market Area: Inverurie served primarily infra-local trade and we can assume, therefore, that its market area was fairly insignificant. Trade in the pre-1800 burgh largely took place in front of the old Tolbooth, near where the Kintore Arms Hotel now stands. In 1671 organised local opinion had the Market Cross moved to the 'pairting of the gaits be south of the draw-well', but in 1678 it was 'removed back againe from William Downie's land to the place where it stode auncientlie' (Davidson, 1878, 9). Where it 'stode auncientlie' was opposite Old Station Road. For years, according largely to local tradition, a portion of the old Market Cross, dated 1671,

was built into the garden wall of the Kintore Arms Hotel, but this is not now visible. A large stone in Inverurie Museum is said to have been the base of the cross.

Bridge: A bridge was not built across the River Don until 1797. Until then, travellers to Kintore and Aberdeen perhaps relied on a number of fords in the river.

BUILDINGS

Castle: Little is actually known of the castle of Inverurie. In the late twelfth century Malcolm, son of Bartolf, held the castle as constable for David, Earl of Huntingdon (Davidson, 1878, 2). Up to the date of its abandonment it was the chief seat of the lords of the Garioch. The discovery of early fourteenth century pottery on the motte, or the Bass, as it more popularly was known, suggest that it was a castle site to at least the period of the Wars of Independence. Bass and Little Bass (the bailey) were connected before excavations and alterations were undergone in 1883. During the excavations the remains of an oaken gangway up the south side were discovered. The circumference of the Bass is 510 feet (155m) at the bottom and 240 feet (73m) at the top (Anon, n. d., no page number), with the surrounding ditch estimated to have been up to ten feet (3m) wide and at least eight feet (2m) deep (Simpson, 1924, 41).

Church: Inverurie parish church, along with others, was granted to Lindores Abbey by Earl David of Huntingdon at the end of the twelfth century, a grant mentioned in a papal bull of 1195 (Davidson, 1878, 25). Until 1775 the parish church stood in the northwest corner of the churchyard down by the Bass. There is little indication what material the building was constructed of, although an early seventeenth century entry in the burgh records refers to the townsmen bringing thatch to the church (Davidson, 1878, 197). From 1660 Kirk Session references to the dilapidated condition of the structure increase, with a bulwark being constructed at the end of the century to help save the fabric from the ravages of the flooding Don (Black, 1942, no page no.). A new parish church was not built in the High Street until 1775, with that building being replaced by the present South (now St. Andrew's) Parish Church in 1842. Although early this century portions of the foundations of the pre-1775 church were uncovered by gravedigging (Ritchie, 1911, 343), the only above-ground indication of the church site is a slight platform, described by the Ordnance Survey as too amorphous for survey, which might represent the church or be associated with later graves (Ordnance Survey Record Cards, Reference NJ 72 SE 15).

Tolbooth: The Tolbooth until the last century was located near the site of the Kintore Arms Hotel. A Town House at Inverurie dates back to the seventeenth century when there is a sale recorded in 1642 of 100 merks of the 'eastmost' house of James Fergus which was to act as 'ane tolbuith' (Davidson, 1878, 349). That sale proved a bad investment for the burgh for by 1660 the magistrates were meeting in a 'chalmer' of one of the bailie's houses while awaiting the construction of a new Olbooth (Davidson, 1878, 349). The 1660 Town House served the burgh until 1868 when it was pulled down to make way for the construction of a dwelling house at No. 81 High Street. A new Town House was subsequently built at the head of High Street in Market Place.

Houses: The houses of seventeenth century Inverurie have been described as buildings with walls of drystone and turf supporting low thatched roofs (Davidson, 1878, 187). In an effort to make houses more fire-proof the burghal magistrates ordered the inhabitants in 1616 that no one should 'big fire house nor chalmers but they be fundit with stein ane ell hyt about, and then to get mud and fiall to serve the rest of the house' (Davidson, 1878, 200). The first stone house of any magnitude to be built in Inverurie was constructed by Bailie George Leslie in the 1640s. The house was dubbed Stonehouse by the inhabitants and later was sold to an Aberdeen merchant (Davidson, 1878, 294).

Mills: Both the Rivers Don and Urie had a number of mills. The burgh mill was upriver from Inverurie on the Don at Ardtannes.

Archaeology

PREVIOUS WORK

There have been no archaeological excavations within the historic core of the burgh. No finds are noted from satisfactory archaeological contexts, but the following are of interest; four Class I Pictish symbol stones from the fabric of the former church by the Bass, now in the churchyard (Allen, 1903, III, 168-70); a fifth stone of similar type, from the river Don west of the Stanners (Allen, 1903, III, 170); three Medieval potsherds, recovered during grave-digging immediately adjacent to the Bass, from a dark soil which might indicate a now invisible ditch surrounding the site (Curle, 1919, 46-50); a stone, reputedly the base from the former market cross, now in Inverurie Museum.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

The primary archaeological problem is to attempt to identify the location of the burgh prior to the putative move to its present site, discussed above (p. 2). As documentary evidence relating to the earlier phases of the development of Inverurie is scarce, evidence requires to be sought on the material aspects of that development both from the abandoned site and from the present burgh. This would involve the investigation of the house plans and constructional materials of the various public, industrial and domestic buildings in existence at various periods of the town's history. It would also be necessary to tie in evidence from artefacts in a bid to establish the distribution of such buildings within the town and the date of periods of expansion suggested in Plan 1.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Nothing is known of the survival or otherwise of stratified archaeological deposits in Inverurie, so that the potential return from archaeological investigation cannot be accurately assessed at this stage. Certain areas might well prove to be more productive than others.

The Stanners : A substantial proportion of this area is lost to archaeological investigation, lying below the railway embankment or occupied by the sewage farm

(Plan 2). The remainder is presently under arable cultivation and might well yield archaeologically interesting material. This is to some extent hinted at by the presence of soil-marks of what might be two equal-sized timber buildings within this area, (above, p.2). The Stanners is still subject to periodic flooding, and although this could suggest that it was never suitable for settlement, if such settlement did exist, there could be a high survival of organic material. Moreover, material from this area might be early and distinct from the later intrusions which so often cloud the issue on urban sites. Only excavation can provide the answers to such questions.

The High Street Axis : Most of the buildings along the High Street are of one or two storeys with presumably relatively shallow foundations. Cellars and basements which might have destroyed underlying archaeological deposits appear to be few. Additionally, a significant number of buildings stand somewhat back from the present street line, so that the possibility of earlier structures surviving beneath the front gardens must be considered. A large number of access lanes also exist which might protect deposits from pre-existing frontages.

Keithhall Road area : The area now lying between the present built-up High Street and the Stanners proper is also little developed, much of it still under arable cultivation. Survival here is also likely to be high.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

At present, only a few isolated sites along the High Street are likely to be redeveloped in the foreseeable future. The short-term threat therefore seems to be low (Plan 2). No development is currently envisaged in the Stanners.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A large proportion of the area occupied by Medieval Inverurie appears to have been relatively undisturbed by later building, so that the survival rate of archaeologically interesting deposits is likely to be high. As archaeological investigation constitutes the primary method by which information on Medieval Inverurie can be recovered in the future, all sites within the area delimited on Plan 2 must for the time being be regarded as of equal importance. Ideally, a period of time for archaeological investigation should be made available on all sites to be developed within the historic core. Only by this method can sites which are proven to be non-productive be disregarded.

Inverurie has few listed buildings and no Conservation Area at present. As the street pattern itself, and the 'feel' of the historic centre are themselves historically important, much thought is required as to the nature of future development within this area. Such development should be in keeping with the present architectural styles and should not interfere with street layout. It is suggested that a Conservation Area be established that would assist in the preservation of these features.

Finally, a number of other important archaeological sites exist within the present town boundary, such as the Brandsbutt stone and the Bronze Age burial mound at Conyng Hillock, which though not the direct concern of this survey should not be ignored.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

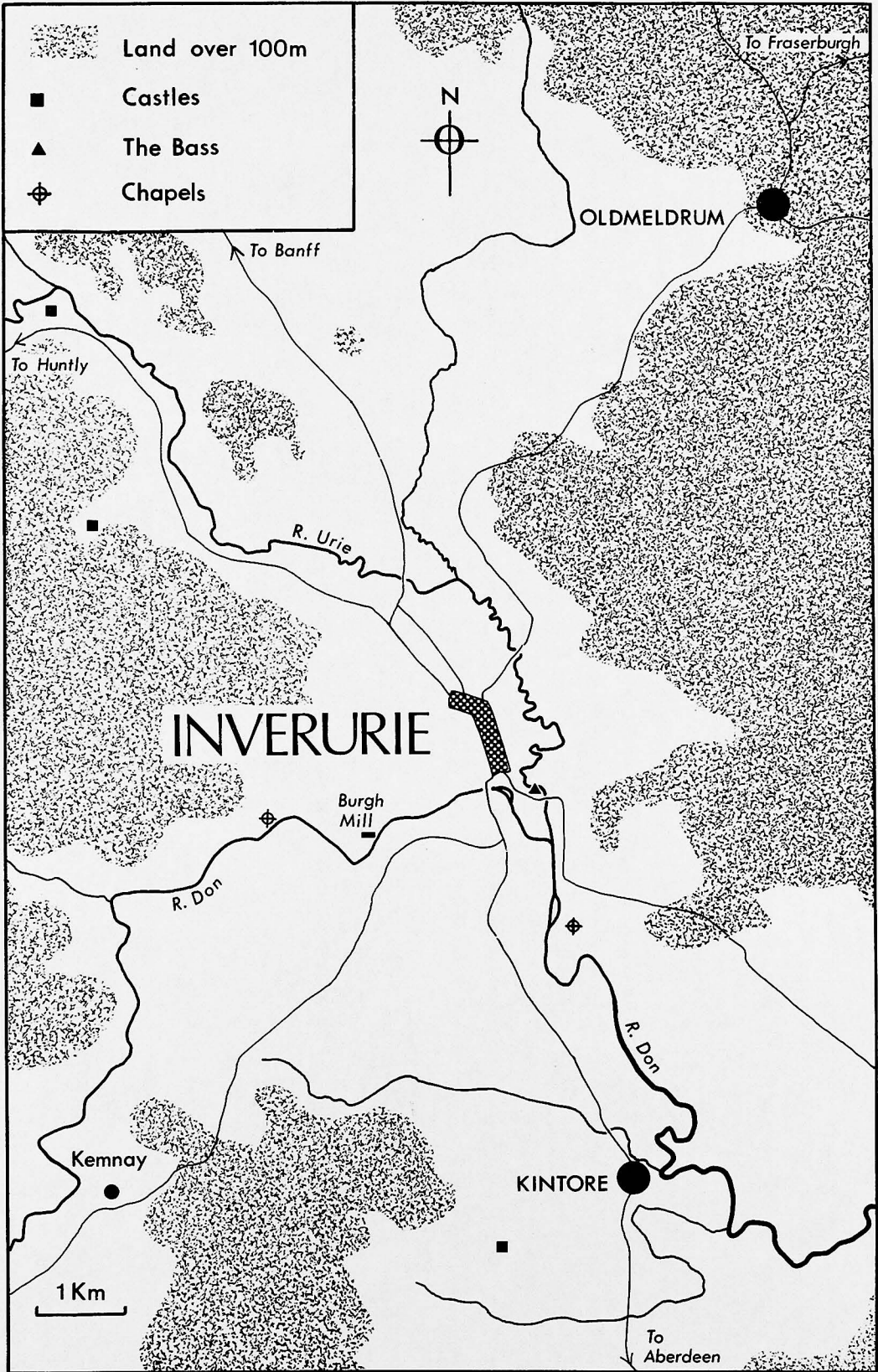
- | | | |
|--|---------|--|
| ALAUDDIN, K. | 1968 | <u>Scottish Burghs: Some Aspects of Their Development and Plan</u> (Unpublished B. Litt Thesis Department of Geography, University of Glasgow). |
| ALLEN, J. | 1903 | <u>The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland</u> (Edinburgh). |
| ALEXANDER, W. | 1952 | <u>The Place Names of Aberdeenshire</u> (Aberdeen). |
| ANON | No date | <u>Some Aspects of the History of Inverurie</u> (Typewritten sheet). |
| ANON | 1911 | <u>The Royal Burgh of Inverurie in the Coronation Year</u> (Aberdeen). |
| APS | 1814-75 | <u>The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland</u> , edd. T. Thomson and C. Innes (Edinburgh). |
| BARROW, G. W. S. | 1971 | <u>The Acts of William I, King of Scots 1165-1214</u> (Edinburgh). |
| BEVERIDGE, E. | 1923 | <u>The 'Abers' and 'Invers' of Scotland</u> (Edinburgh). |
| BLACK, I. | 1942 | <u>The Story of Inverurie South Parish Church</u> (Inverurie). |
| CURLE, A. O. | 1919 | 'Notes on a Pottery Mask and Sherds of Medieval Pottery Found at the Bass of Inverurie, With Some Particulars of the Bass'
<u>Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot., LIII</u> (1918-19) |
| DAVIDSON, J. | 1878 | <u>Inverurie and the Earldom of the Garioch</u> (Edinburgh). |
| ES | 1922 | <u>Early Sources of Scottish History 500 to 1286.</u> ed. A. O. Anderson (Edinburgh). |
| KINCAID, M. W. | No date | <u>The Role of Transport in the Development of Inverurie and District</u> (Typewritten sheet). |
| NICOLAISEN, W. F. H.,
GELLING, M. and
RICHARDS, M. | 1970 | <u>The Names of the Towns and Cities in Britain</u> (London). |

PRYDE, G.S.	1965	<u>The Burghs of Scotland</u> (London).
RMS	1882-1914	<u>Registrum Magni Siglei Regum Scot-</u> <u>orum.</u> eds. J.M. Thomson and Others. (Edinburgh).
RITCHIE, J.	1911	Some Old Crosses and Unlettered Sepulchral Monuments in Aberdeenshire <u>PSAS</u> ix, 333-353.
SIMPSON, W.D.	1924	The Bass of Inverurie. <u>Scottish Notes</u> and <u>Queries</u> ii, 39-42.
	1943	<u>The Province of Mar.</u> (Aberdeen).
SMITH, A.	1875	<u>A New History of Aberdeenshire</u> (Aberdeen).

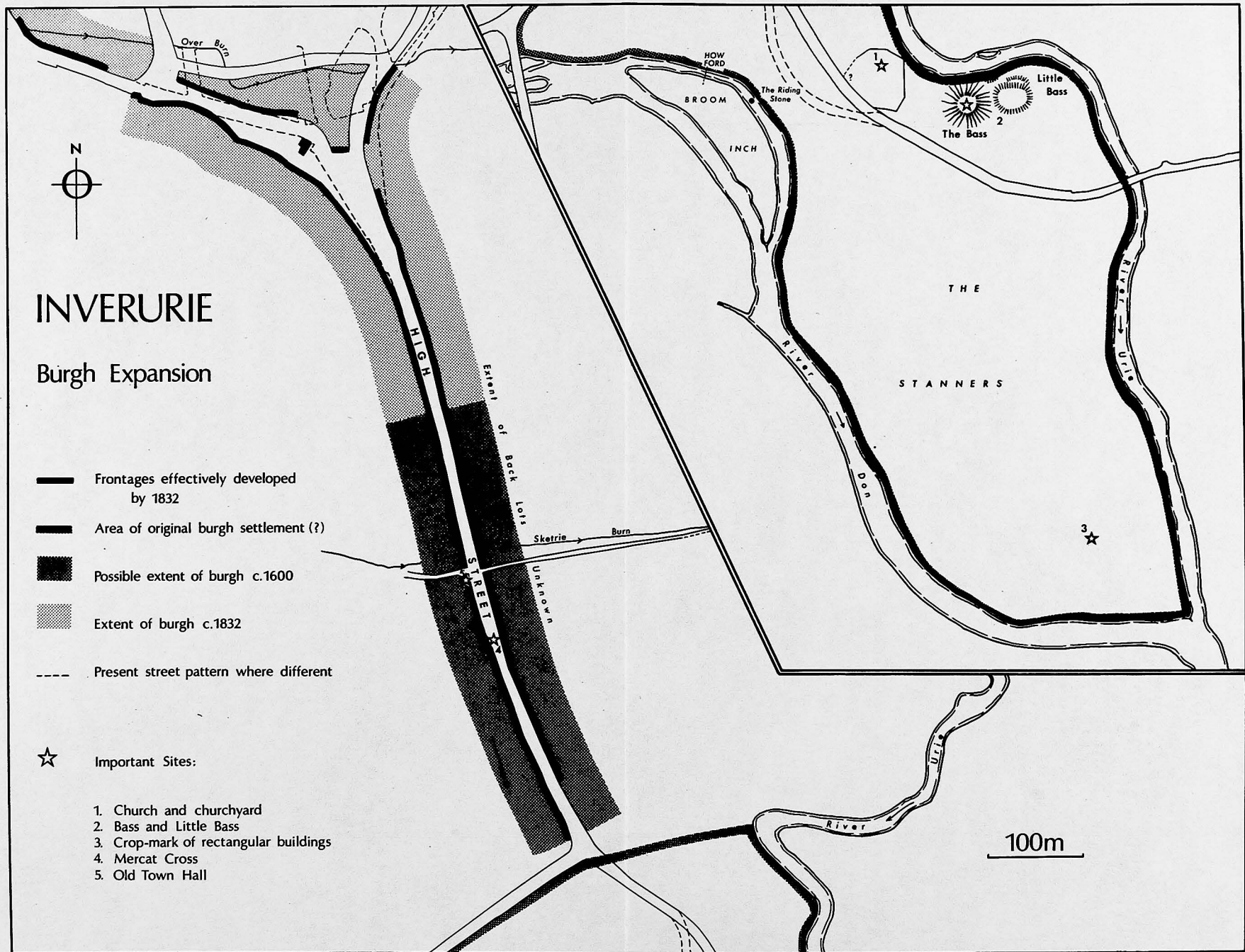
TOWN PLANS

Report on Parliamentary Boundaries (1832)

ORDNANCE SURVEY	1:2500	County Series (1850)
ORDNANCE SURVEY	1:2500	Latest Edition.



Based on the Ordnance Survey map; Crown Copyright reserved.



Based on the Ordnance Survey map with the sanction of the controller of H.M.S.O., Crown Copyright reserved.

