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MONTROSE
the archaeological implications of development

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Scottish Burgh Survey
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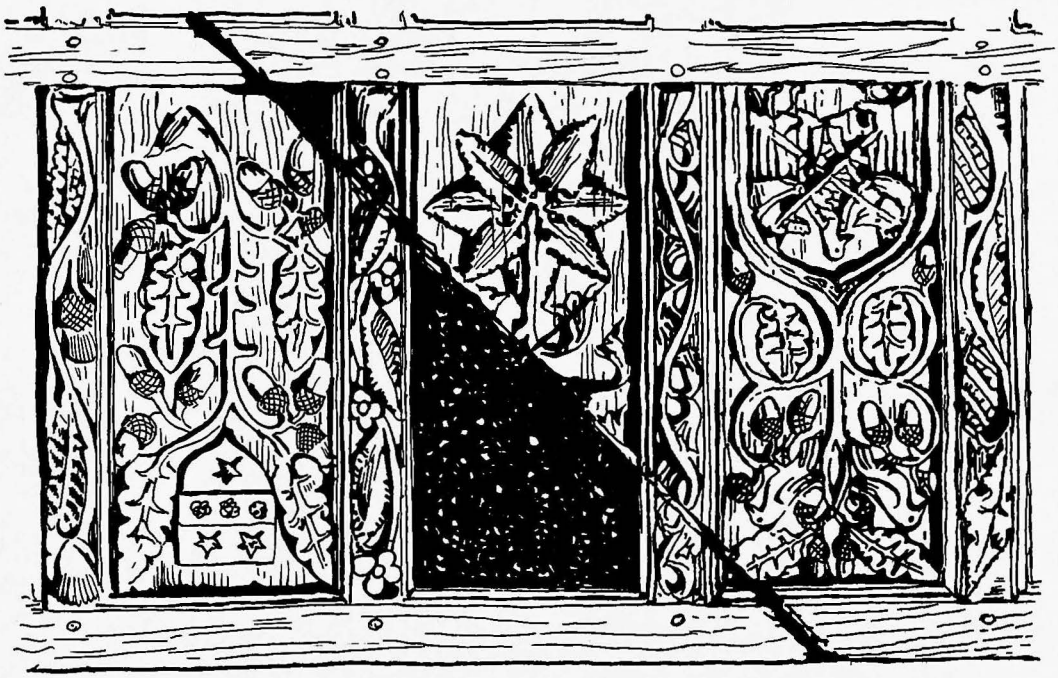

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PREFACE

This report of the history and archaeology of the former burgh of Montrose 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, with a short archaeological discussion 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 assistance of Angus District Planning Department, Forfar; the staff of the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey, Edinburgh; the staff of Montrose Library; the Historic Buildings branch of the Scottish Development Department; Miss Lisbeth Thoms of Dundee Museum and Professor Leslie Alcock and Mr. Eric Talbot who supervised the project at Glasgow University. A special thanks must be made to the late Mr. Duncan Fraser of Montrose who read the historical draft and added valuable comments.

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

Cover: Detail of the 'Panter Panels' described below (p. 9), found in 1878 in an old house in Montrose and dating from around 1500.

History

'Montrose is most pleasantly situated on an Eminence that falls every way in a beautiful manner, one street about half a mile in length extending along the height of it from the gate down to the pier, there being only two or three lanes that stretch from it to the North or South. The Street is broad and well built except that most of the houses are in that bad style of building with the Gable Ends to the Street.'
(Bishop Pococke, 1760)

INTRODUCTION

Site: Montrose is situated on a peninsula formed by the North Sea, the River Southesk and the Montrose Basin. The Montrose Basin, to the west of the town, is a broad tidal loch which at low tide displays an expanse of mud. The neck of the peninsula in former times was reputedly much narrower that at present (Sinclair, 1793, v, 29) and in the seventeenth century work began to reclaim land from the basin. Montrose is situated on a coastal route about halfway between Aberdeen and Dundee.

Place Name: Montrose is a Gaelic word meaning 'moor of the promontory'. In the Gaelic compound mon-rois, mon is a short form of monadh 'moor' and rois 'promontory or wood' (Nicolaisen, et al., 1970, 137).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: Montrose's burghal origins date back to the reign of David I. In the earlier twelfth century the name of what was later known as Munros, Munross, Montrose was Salorch, preserved in Hector Boece's History as Celurca. The name Munros does however, occur in an 1161 x 1162 charter of Malcolm IV confirming territory to the Abbey of Jedburgh (Barrow, 1960, 232). J.G. Low (1930, 12) appears to have considered that the original town and castle were on the south side of the River Esk and Salorch was to the north. G.W.S. Barrow believes that it is most probable that in the earlier twelfth century the name 'Munros' referred to what in William the Lion's time was called Vetus Monros, that is, Old Montrose of Maryton (Old Montrose being the name of an estate in Maryton Parish, close to the southwest corner of Montrose Basin). (1960, 93). About the end of the twelfth century, however, the name 'Munros' is transferred to the royal burgh and the name 'Salorch'; dropped out of general use though it is understood for many generations (Barrow, 1960, 93).

Though Montrose's burghal origins date back to the reign of King David I, the town does not possess an incontestable David I foundation charter. A fourteenth-century forgery of a 'David I' charter of confirmation grants to his burgesses (of Montrose) the whole land of 'Sallork' lying north of the harbour of 'Stromnay' to be held as his good town of Perth is held. The Montrose burgesses were allowed a wide trading area within the following marches: from the water of Taycock to Findon and from Findon by northern parts to Carity Burn, thence descending by southern parts to the Dighty Water as it flows into the Drumlay (i.e., the mouth of the River Tay) (Barrow, 1960, 143). The place names in this fourteenth-century forgery do not appear to be fictitious and Barrow argues that this may well have been the authentic twelfth-century trading limits for Montrose for it 'was good twelfth-century practice to delimit the area within which a burgh could enjoy trading privileges by reference to well-marked geographical features especially rivers and streams' (Barrow, 1960, 94). The harbour of Montrose was known as the portus de Strumnay in the fifteenth century and it is conceivable that the name was of a much older date than that. The Taycock Burn flows into the Montrose Basin just north-west of the town while Findon is in the Mearns and the Carity Burn joins the Southesk at Inverquharity. The Dighty Water rises in Lundie parish about fifteen miles southwest of Inverquharity, and reaches the Firth of Tay at Monifieth. At this point the firth broadens out into a wider basin, and the Abertay Sands which form part of the southern boundary of this basin appear to have had the name Drumlay at least from the time of Robert I and it is conceivable that the name is much older (Barrow, 1960, 96). As Dundee's burghal history does not begin until the late twelfth century, it is probable that such a wide trading area could be granted to an important king's burgh and port on the Angus coast in the reign of David I (Barrow, 1960, 96). Montrose participated in the ransom of David II and received feu-ferme status in 1370 (Pryde, 1965, 8).

Medieval: Montrose exercised a powerful trading influence over the east coast of Scotland in the Middle Ages. In 1289 the 'provost and remanent burgesses of the community of Banff' complained to the Guardians that the burgesses of Montrose were troubling fairs established in Aberdeen by Alexander III for the use of the burgesses and other burghs north of the Mounth (Cramond, 1893, 373). Montrose was also jealous of Brechin's right to hold a market and took several active steps to discourage her from doing so. David II, however, gave Bishop Patrick of Brechin a charter allowing the merchants of that city free access to the Rivers Tay and Southesk and the burgesses of Montrose were strictly prohibited from troubling

Brechin merchants (Black, 1839, 13).

Montrose's first entry in the customs accounts occurs in 1330 when she exported £6 8s 4d worth of hides and wool (ER, i, 227). In 1443 her exports included hides, wool, and fleece and totalled £218 12s 6d (ER, v, 131). 'From the port of Strumnay' in 1451 Montrose shipped hides, wool and fleece to a total value of £18 16s 8½d while Aberdeen reported a figure of £361 4s 6½d (ER, v, 431). By 1473 Montrose's trade had diversified to include wool, hides, fleece, salmon and woollen cloth and in that year she reported £203 14s in customs receipts (ER, viii, 197).

Early Modern: In 1483 Montrose participated in the stent for burghs north of the Forth, paying a tax of £5 6s 8d compared to £4 for Brechin and £26 13s 4d for Dundee. Arbroath paid the lowly sum of £2 (RCRB, i, 543). In the national stent for 1535 Montrose paid a sum of £90 compared to Arbroath's £45 (RCRB, i, 514). To help cover costs for an embassy to the Emperor in 1555 Montrose was stented at a rate of sixty-four crowns while Brechin paid forty and Dundee three hundred and four (RCRB, i, 519).

Montrose became an early centre for Protestantism in Scotland. The great reformer, George Wishart, taught and preached openly in Montrose in 1543 'within a private house next unto the church except one' (Groome, 1883, iii, 52). After he had been forced to flee, another reformer, Paul Methven, originally a Dundee baker, administered Protestant sacraments to several Montrosians before he too was forced to flee in 1559. A General Assembly held in Montrose in 1600 proved to be a boisterous affair when King James VI and Andrew Melville locked horns over the question of episcopacy and the Kirk.

A French soldier, writing in 1548-9, described Montrose as a 'beautiful town' with 'a very good harbour' (Brown, 1891, 66). An early seventeenth-century observer, Monipennie, noted not only Montrose's commodious harbour but also that the town was built of stone (Jervise, 1885, i, 117). Richard Franck, a Cromwellian official, was especially laudatory in his praise of Montrose. 'A beauty that lies concealed as it were in the bosom of Scotland', he wrote, 'most delicately dressed up, and adorn'd with excellent building, whose foundations are laid with polished stone' (Brown, 1891, 207). John Ochterlony in his 1682 description of Forfarshire stated

> 'It is a very handsome and well built toune, of considerable trade in all places abroad; good houses all of stone, excellent large streets, a good tolbuith and church, good shipping of their own ... it is a very cheap place in all things

> necessary except house rent, which is dear, by reason of the great distance they are from stones, and makes their building very dear, yet notwithstanding they are constantly building both in the toune and in the suburbs which are a considerable distance from the toune, where are their malthouses, and kills and granaries for cornes of thrie stories high' (Spottiswoode Misc., 1864, i, 338).

The 1692 report for Montrose indicated that her main sources of income were the windmills, shore duties and petty customs (RCRB, iv, 596). The burgh owned a staggering eighteen ships which traded to such varied places as Norway, Holland, London, Dunkirk, Shetland, Danzig and Veere. The only inland trade she maintained was in coal and salt while tobacco, sugar and leather were sent from Glasgow (RCRB, iv, 598). An increase in the standard of living on the whole can be noted in the fact that by the end of the 1690s there was both a periwig maker and a wig powderer's business in Montrose (Fraser, 1974, 106).

Eighteenth Century: Montrose's prosperity continued into the eighteenth century. In the stents of 1705, 1718, 1730 and 1737 she was in sixth place behind Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth (RCRB, iv, 371); v, 196, 507, 631). Nevertheless, Pennant observed that before 1745 there was not one single manufacture in the town and that the inhabitants lived by hiring out ships or fishing (Butchart, 1967-68, 14). A dyeworks was, however, established in Murray Street in 1752 (Low, 1938, 82). Cloth manufacture, which was established in Montrose by the end of the century, was varied and included sail cloth, canvas and linen manufacture. Pococke noted that flax was imported from Russia (Kemp, 1887, 214) and other imports included tar and iron from Stockholm; oranges, cork, and salt from Lisbon and cinnamon, mace, cloves and tea from the Low Countries (Butchart, 1967-68, 12). Butchart claimed that Montrose was Scotland's biggest port for the eighteenth-century tobacco export trade (1967-68, 12), and she also shipped grain and fish overseas.

Montrose invested in a large-scale project of urban renewal in the second half of the century. The reporter in the Statistical Account spoke of additions being made to the pier, making a new market for butcher meat, erecting lamps, improving walks, building schools and so forth (Sinclair, 1793, v, 36). Fishing was described as 'a precarious' trade, yet there was a quantity of cod and mussels to be caught as well as an 'incredible' number of lobsters, though haddock was 'rare and expensive' (Sinclair, 1793, v, 38). The population of the town steadily rose from 4465 in 1776 to 4866 in 1784 and 5196 in 1790 (Sinclair, 1793, v, 32).

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street Layout: Montrose is noted for its wide High Street which runs north and south. In 1682 a bailie applied to the town council for permission to extend his house forward on the east side of the High Street. The council agreed to his request in 1684 and said that he and anyone else on the east side between the Tolbooth and the North Port should be allowed to come west a distance of four and a half ells, provided that the work was done in stone (Fraser, 1967, 158). Bailie Pyper's neighbours quickly followed his lead. A row of houses formerly ran up the centre of High Street, dividing it into two streets: Murray Street on the west and High Street on the east (Mitchell, 1866, 79). In 1734 a resolution was passed to tear down this middle row of houses 'for beautifying the town' and the remnant material was to be sold off at the best price (Low, 1938, 40). The removal of the row, which lasted over several years, provided an impetus for settlement outside the North Port (Low, 1938, 41). Also, at the beginning of the demolition it was proposed to extend the High Street to the river in a straight line but 'this noble idea was unfortunately opposed to the great detriment of the town' (Mitchell, 1866, 79). Beyond the Tolbooth, Castlegate made a slight westerly dogleg. At its foot was Seagate and Pier Wynd which were joined together by Netherseagate. Notable families lived in Seagate which for many years was 'inconvenienced' by projecting outside stairs (Low, 1938, 41). A back row, which ran from the foot of School Wynd (George Street), skirted the east side of the town by way of what are now called Southesk Street and Apple Wynd (Fraser, 1967, 56). High Street and Castlegate had a number of wynds running off them: Short Wynd, Lower Craigo Street (known formerly as Rottenrow or St. Mary's Wynd), Upper Craigo Street, Balmain Street, Mill Lane (formerly Flesh Market Wynd) and New Wynd (Low, 1938, 27, 31, 41). A weaver's settlement grew up outside the North Port in the mid-eighteenth century (Low, 1938, 41) and a small lane, Dummie's Ha' Wynd provided access to the slaughterhouse (Fraser, 1967, 154).

Market Area: Montrose had an extended market area. It once stretched from the North Port to the Tolbooth and is now almost completely blanketed by a car park. In the seventeenth century a site on the west side of High Street was fixed for the sale of 'skinned fleshes' while fish were hung from poles, thus discouraging folk buying directly from the boats (Fraser, 1967, 54). A flesh market was erected by 1677 near the churchyard dyke and at the end of the seventeenth century a slaughterhouse was constructed outside the North Port at the foot of Dummie's Ha' (Fraser, 1967, 54). The Market Cross once stood in the southern end of the High Street near the Tolbooth

and was reputedly removed in 1763 by a town councillor who had it taken to his country house. It has since vanished (Fraser, 1957, 18). By 1600 a weighhouse had been introduced in front of the Tolbooth (McNeill, 1961, no page no.).

Defences: A port blocked the northern entrance to the High Street and was still standing in 1760. In the area of Victoria Place and St. John's Place a deep ditch (fosse) had been dug connecting the Basin with the road leading into the burgh (Low, 1891, 28).

Harbour: Monipennie in 1612 wrote of Montrose's 'commodious harbour' (Jervise, 1885, i, 117). The harbour at the end of the seventeenth century was reputedly constructed of wood; however, a great deal of work was carried out in the eighteenth century which included the construction of a stone 'port' stretching a distance of 650 feet (198·12m) from the bridge along the north side of the river (Jervise, 1885, i, 119). The reporter in the Statistical Account wrote of the 'good wet dock where ships are built and repaired' (Sinclair, 1793, v, 39).

Bridge: A bridge linking Montrose with Ferryden was not constructed until the eighteenth century. Before that time a ferry boat mentioned as early as 1178 x 1187 (Barrow, 1971, 270) carried goods and passengers across the Southesk.

BUILDINGS

Castle: Although its exact location is unclear a royal castle at Montrose dates to at least the reign of William the Lion. That monarch issued twenty charters from Montrose and at one point during his reign granted land to a man called Crane 'for the service of being a porter in the royal castle of Montrose' (Barrow, 1971, 476). One local historian believed that the early castle of Montrose was on Maryton Law adjoining the lands of Old Monros or further east (Low, 1930, 4). Other local worthies have cited Forthill as a possible early castle site. Forthill, a hillock, was located at the foot of Bridge Street and was largely destroyed in the early nineteenth century. Investigators from Ordnance Survey reported that 'local people do not like the assertion that this was the site of the castle as it was outside the royalty of Montrose until 1826' (Ordnance Survey, Record Cards, Reference No. 75 NW 3). The castle was reputedly destroyed during the Wars of Independence (Fraser, 1974, 81).

The newly-created Duke of Montrose in the second half of the fifteenth century was granted the site of the Castle of Montrose, 'commonly called the Castlested' (Fraser, 1974, 81). The Duke of Montrose never constructed a castle on that site; however,

workmen in 1950 found ancient brick foundations set upon slabs of stone which continued under the building at No. 5, Castle Place and gave the indication that they formed a single building. In one part was a circle of stone slabs not unlike a large boiler or the base of a small tower (Fraser, 1974, 82). It is believed that these foundations were those of a town house acquired by the Earls of Montrose in the sixteenth century (Fraser, 1957, 26).

A fort for defence against the English was hastily constructed in the late 1540s at Forthill. A French soldier described the fort as small with little space for storing provisions or keeping men. The fort furthermore was built on moving sands and was constructed solely of turf (Brown, 1891, 67). The Royal Infirmary now occupies the site (Fraser, 1974, 69).

Church: The first mention of the church at Montrose (Salorch) is in 1161 x 1162 (Barrow, 1960, 232). It was included among Brechin Cathedral's earliest benefices (Low, 1891, 23). The old parish church was described as a 'Gothic Structure rendered very gloomy and irregular by the large additions to the gallery and to the building itself' (Sinclair, 1793, v, 32). Francis Douglas also described it as an 'irregular' structure which was 'gloomy and disagreeable' on the inside (1782, 64). That church had been extensively refurbished in the early seventeenth century (Low, 1891, 112) and in 1690 the magistrates and kirk session met jointly to consider the ruined nature of the choir, but the only repairs carried out on that occasion included propping up the walls with trees brought from Edzell (Low, 1891, 136). The present church was constructed in 1791 and the steeple was added in 1832.

Friary: A house of Dominican Friars had been established in Montrose by 1275 but the friary was destroyed in the fourteenth century and the convent afterwards abandoned. The house was re-founded in 1516 by Patrick Painter, Abbot of Cambuskenneth and in 1518 the friars moved into the town's hospital. A charter of May 1524 relates that the king had ordered the return of the friars to their former house, as the situation of the hospital in the street gave rise to the disturbance of the friars' services and devotions (Cowan and Easson, 1976, 119). The Dominicans, however, apparently retained the hospital building until the Reformation. In 1559 a letter from Mary and Francis II approved the ejection of the friars and ordered the restoration of the hospital (Cowan, 1976, 119). In the reign of James VI the revenues and other properties of the Dominicans were granted to the burgh of Montrose (Cowan, 1976, 119). The site of the friary is not definitely known. Pococke relates that he was shown the site to the north of the town in Montrose Muir 'where foundations of buildings have been discovered'

(Kemp, 1887, 213) while Jervise said that it stood on the links of Montrose.

Hospital: A hospital at Montrose was mentioned in 1246 x 1265. It was described in James IV's reign as a hospital for the poor (Cowan, 1976, 186) and later housed a Dominican convent. The ruins of this hospital were still visible on the Sand Haugh in 1793 (Sinclair, 1793, v, 3). The first lunatic asylum opened in Scotland was built in 1781 on the links near Montrose.

Tolbooth: Robert II about 1377 reputedly granted the burgesses of Montrose land in the High Street measuring eighty feet (24·38m) long and forty feet (12·19m) broad south of the market cross of the burgh in which to construct a tolbooth (Low, 1938, 29). Another tolbooth was erected on the same site in 1467 which today is marked by the Peel Statue. In 1550 the tolbooth received an additional storey and two outside stairs and when a new window was formed the records indicate that glass was put in it (Low, 1938, 29). That tolbooth was removed in 1763 when a Town House was constructed at the southern end of High Street 'according to modern taste' (Sinclair, 1793, v, 32). It was described in 1782 as a large building 'with a handsome front of cut stone: a pediment above and an exchange, with piazzas under it' (Douglas, 1782, 63). An additional storey was added in 1819.

Houses: Francis Douglas observed that the principal street was broad with a paved footway on each side and that the houses would have a neat elegant appearance 'were it not that the gables of many of them are to the street' (1786, 62). The reporter in the Statistical Account likewise commented that the houses as 'if not elegant, are, on the whole, well built and vulgar; but like those of Flanders their gable ends are often towards the streets. With one or two exceptions they are now all of stone, and many of them covered with blue slates' (Sinclair, 1793, v, 49). The wide-spread construction of stone houses in Montrose had been noted as far back as 1612 (Jervise, 1885, i, 117), and in 1739 the erection of houses with wooden gables was forbidden, so that by Jervise's time there were very few left in the town (Jervise, 1885, i, 21). Similarly, Montrose retains only a handful of gable-ended houses in the High Street.

Mills: A mill at Montrose was mentioned as early as 1161 x 1162 (Barrow, 1960, 232). A windmill was built on the Rood Hill (or Rudhill) in 1588 (McNeill 1961, no page no), and although it stood in the neighbourhood of Hill Street and reputedly had a chapel connected with it (Low, 1891, 26), its exact location is unknown. A second windmill was built to the north of the town beyond the crofts on the site of the present distillery (Fraser, 1967, 153). John Adair noted that in 1693 'the wind milns, one upon a height near the Key and two about half-a-mile north from the town make it very remarkable' (Fraser, 1974, 107).

ARCHAEOLOGY

PREVIOUS WORK

There has been no archaeological investigation to date within the historic centre of Montrose. There are, nevertheless, a number of interesting finds from the burgh, the most important of which are described briefly below:-

1. Coin hoard, Castle Street (NO 7126 5750) : This hoard, discovered by workmen in 1973, consisted of 77 silver pennies, mainly from the reign of Edward I, but including examples from the mints of Edward II, Alexander III and Robert I. It was apparently contained in a leather satchel which disintegrated soon after discovery. The hoard was probably concealed between 1322 and 1326 (D. and E, 1974, 7).

2. Coin hoard, High Street (NO 7144 5785) : Comprising 19 silver Edwardian coins, this hoard was found with a number of other objects including a bronze spoon: buckles and ornaments, probably for horse trappings; and an iron key. The material was recovered in 1859, by workmen digging the foundations for the Hume Monument. The deposition of the hoard probably took place around 1296 (PSAS, 1860-62 , 397; Metcalfe, No. 24, 17).

3. Coin hoard : From an unascertained location within the burgh comes a third hoard of coins, in this instance 'twenty small coins, chiefly billon and copper, of Mary Queen of Scots...' (AS 5, (1890), donations 35; Brown and Dolley, SN 19, 46; Metcalfe, No. 236, 52).

4. Oak door and panels : Found in 1878 in an 'old house in Montrose' where they acted as a partition wall between two garrets, these items represent one of the finest surviving examples of medieval wood-carving in Scotland. Known as the 'Panter Panels' because of the similarity of the crests on them to those of the Panter family of Newmanswalls, near Montrose, they are believed to be part of the internal fittings of Panter's hospital, which was built by Patrick Panter, or Painter, Bishop of Ross and Abbot of Cambuskenneth to replace the convent of Black Friars in or around 1515 (above, p. 7). A detailed discussion and descriptions of the panels, which since 1939 have been in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, are given by Reid (Reid, 1881-82). He suggests that the workmanship may date back to the late fifteenth century. Also see (Richardson, 1926, 1939).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

A considerable number of problems, archaeological and historical, are posed both generally and specifically by the historic burgh of Montrose. In general terms, two main difficulties arise. The first of these concerns the early morphology of the burgh in relation to that of the present day. As has been discussed above, High Street at one time comprised two streets - High Street and Murray Street with a line of buildings dividing one from the other. The Mid Row was later removed to produce a single, broad street - a form it almost certainly had in its earliest days. After the removal of the Mid Row, however, the street frontage was apparently brought forward by some distance - certainly on the east side (see historical plan) and possibly on the west, where a house now numbered 186 High Street, and dating from before 1734, stands some 6-8m back from the present frontage. Also in some doubt is the old line along Castle Street to the river crossing, particularly where this is disturbed by later streets such as Bridge Street, and so too is the dating of initial settlement in this area.

The second general question refers to the buildings in early Montrose themselves. Nothing much is known of their size, their shape, or of the materials used to construct them, nor is it possible to trace their distribution into residential, commercial and industrial areas. Excavations of sites throughout the town would help to clarify this picture and at the same time, by recovery of associated artefacts, shed light on such matters as to which trades were carried on in the town and their commercial links. If organic remains also survive, information might even be forthcoming on social conditions, health and diet.

Turning to more specific matters, many individual sites have a confused history, and historically documented buildings cannot now be located on the ground. Of the latter, perhaps the most obvious puzzle is the site of the castle of Montrose, recorded as early as the reign of William the Lion, 1165-1214. Excavation at one or all of the sites suggested above (p. 6) might shed light on this most important facet of the town's history. In addition to the castle, other sites of importance to the burgh may lie outside the burgh itself. These include the Dominican Friary (above pp. 7, 9), and the 'hospital' (above, p. 8). Other problems of this nature, where specific buildings are mentioned in the documents but cannot be located on the ground, will undoubtedly arise as the records relating to Montrose are studied in the future. It will only be by combining historical and archaeological methods that these problems can be resolved.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Very little information exists in readily available form on the sub-surface deposits in Montrose, so that an accurate assessment of those areas which might prove to be archaeologically productive is impossible at the present time. However, a number of factors may be noted which might suggest areas of possible survival. In the first instance, the line of High Street is quite clearly on an elevated ridge, dropping off both to east and west towards the ends of the burgage plots. While this could be solely due to the underlying geomorphology, it may also relate to a build-up of deposits along the street frontage as buildings were replaced without removing earlier foundations. The level of the street itself would rise accordingly. Around this elevated ridge the land is generally low-lying, although artificially altered, particularly to the south of the town, along the rivers' edge. Here, where present-day wharves exist, a more gradual underlying slope with archaeological deposits may survive beneath made-up harbour areas. This might be of particular importance around the south western end of Seagate, in Wharf Street, and in Apple Wynd where similar reclamation might have occurred to that west of Western Road where the railway line now runs.

Outwith the main axis of the town, potential survival of archaeological remains is even more difficult to assess. Here, only detailed examination of bore samples, if these exist, would confirm or deny survival of early levels. It is worth noting, however, that the low-lying nature of the site together with the proximity of the sea and river will contribute to a fairly high water table and consequently the possibility of good preservation of organic materials (wood, bone, leather etc) where early deposits can be shown to survive.

Against these factors, the large number of buildings in Montrose which have basements suggest easily-excavated sub-surface material. If this material is of human origin, it may well have been wholly or partially destroyed by the creation of the basements. The overall picture therefore suggests that archaeological levels will survive, particularly along the High Street and close to the South Esk, where they have not been destroyed to a greater or lesser extent by basement digging or deep foundations.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Along High Street itself, recent redevelopment has been generally small in scale and almost wholly confined to sites behind the street frontages, a pattern which is likely

to continue due to the almost universal listing of buildings within this area as being of architectural or historical interest. Where redevelopment takes place here in the near future, therefore, it is likely to be confined to small sites only, or to restoration, rather than replacement of existing properties.

Elsewhere in the historic core the picture is quite different. Along Castle Street, for instance, where more than 50% of the original street frontage has now been redeveloped, much of this occupies the entire area between this street and the early back rows. This situation applies also to the streets round the harbour although these are of more recent origin. Potentially, much more of this area is likely to be redeveloped in the foreseeable future. Otherwise, most of the large-scale redevelopment is likely to be, as it has been up till now, outside the confines of the medieval burgh.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As can be seen from the previous section, the most immediately threatened area of historic Montrose is that around Castlegate, from South Esk Street/Apple Wynd/Wharf Street to the Montrose basin. Some investigation of this area should take place before the entire area, probably occupied early on in the burgh's history, disappears beneath new structures. More important even than this, however, are sites (particularly on street frontages) which might be redeveloped along the High Street. Backland sites should also be investigated as and when they are redeveloped.

By taking opportunities afforded by redevelopment to investigate sites within the town as they become available, a much more coherent picture of the areas and degree of survival of early occupation deposits could be build up. Initially, such investigation would take the form of small scale exploratory trenching to ascertain the relative archaeological productiveness of each site. Where this is shown to be high, negotiation between those parties concerned should take place to decide upon the feasability of more extensive excavations taking place.

Montrose is one of a number of major Scottish burghs along the east coast of Scotland. As part of the trading link with Continental Europe, it is undoubtedly important that we learn in much more detail of the commercial network based on the town itself, its immediate hinterland, and its relationship with other east coast burghs. Archaeology, with its corresponding documentary research, constitutes the primary method by which information relating to the past development of an historic town will be extracted in the future. Every effort must be made to allow such investigations to

proceed as and when the opportunities arise.

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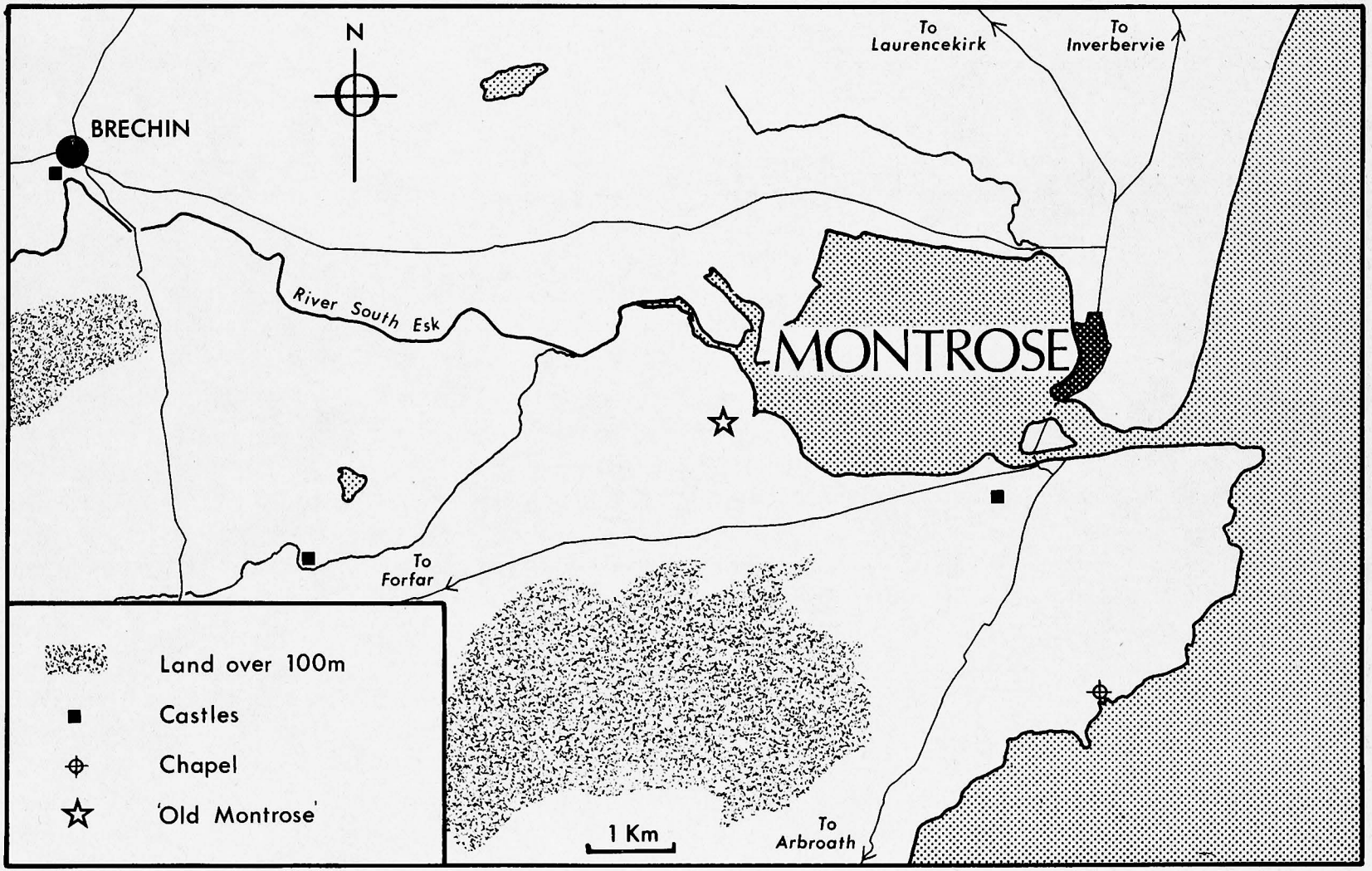
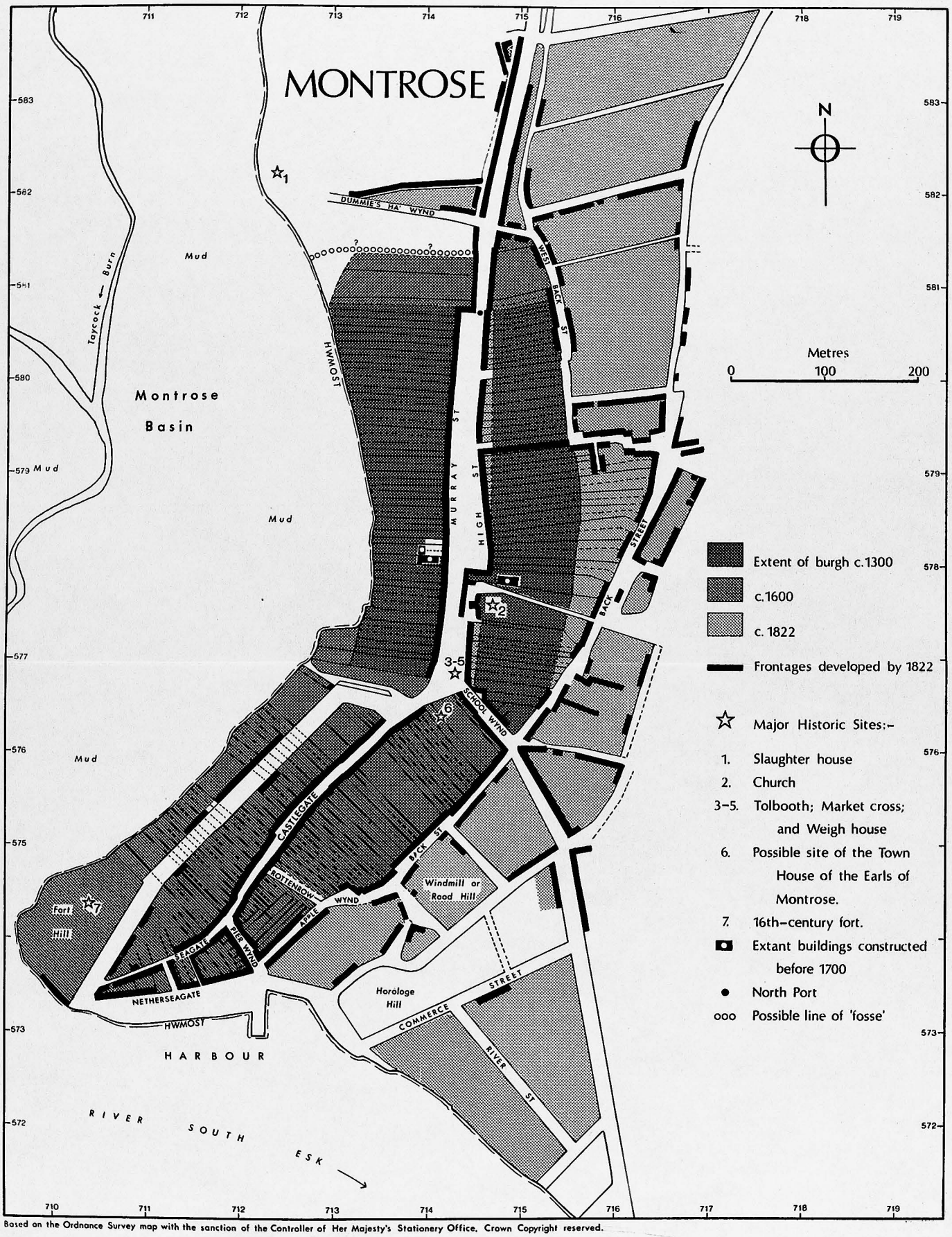

N
BRECHIN
To Laurencekirk
To Inverbervie
River South Esk
MONTROSE
To Forfar
To Arbroath
1 Km
Land over 100m
Castles
Chapel
'Old Montrose'



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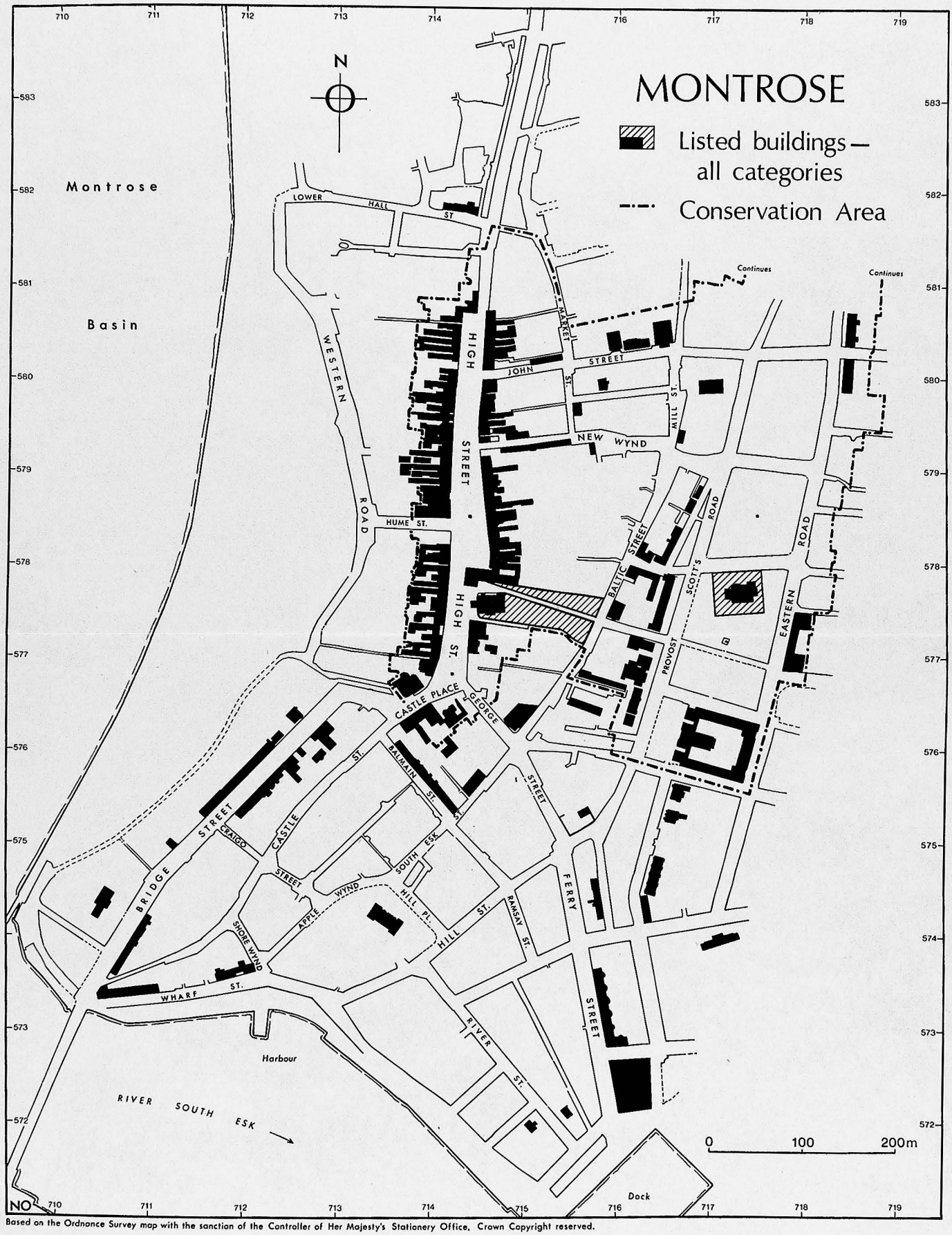

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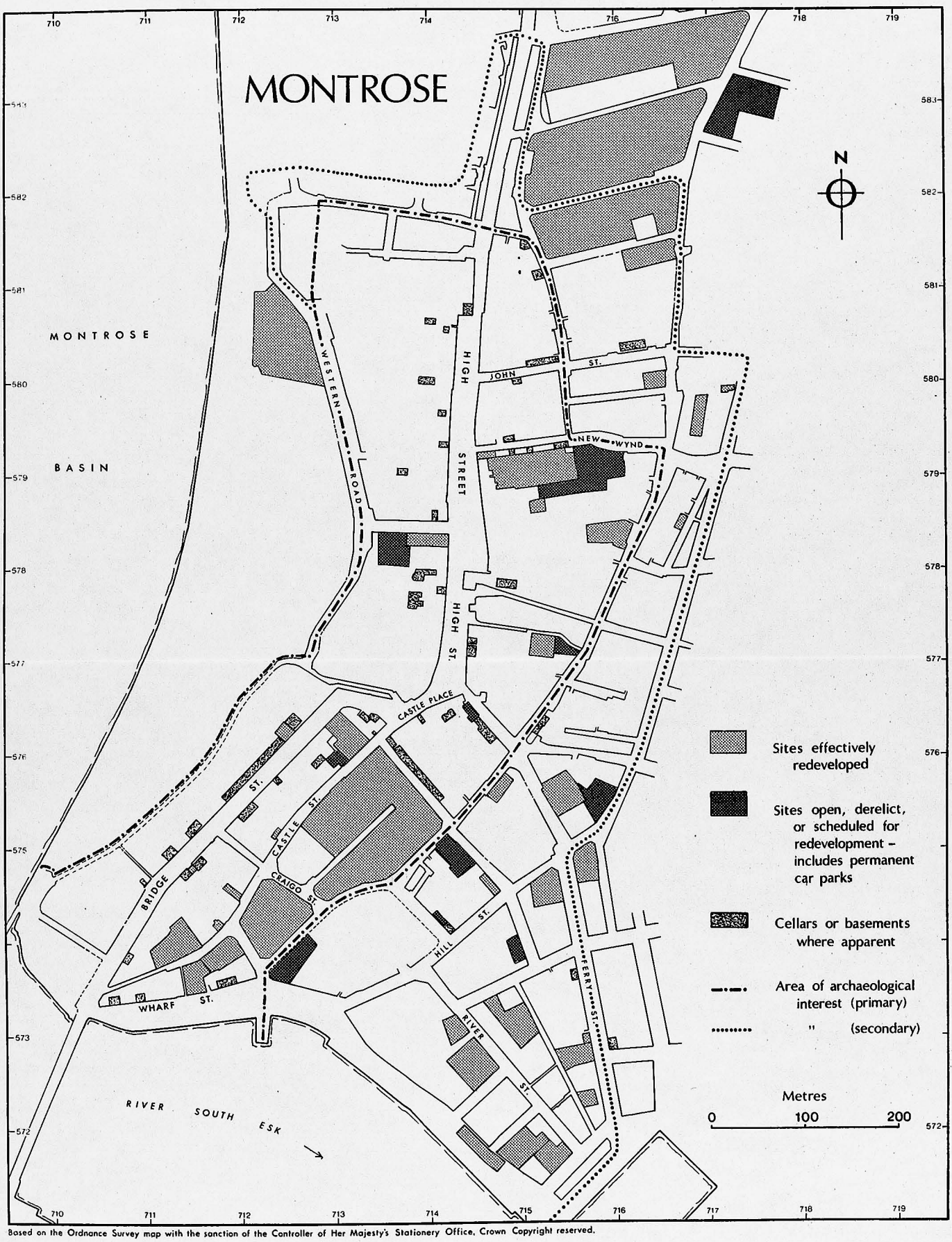

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