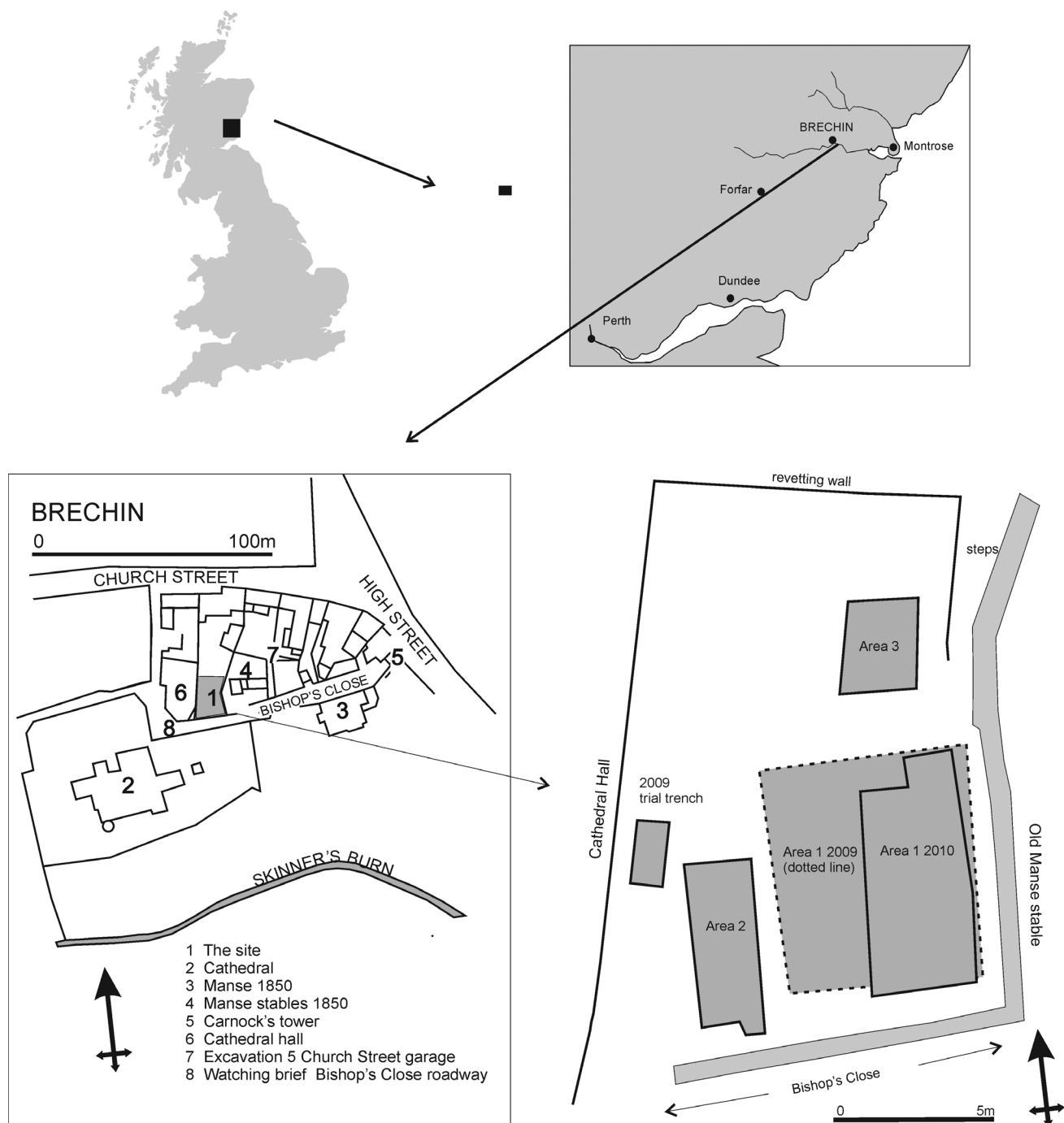




Illus 1 Site location.

Excavations in Bishop's Close, Brechin 2009 and 2010

H K Murray and J C Murray

Introduction

The initiative for the 2009 excavation in Bishop's Close developed from discussions between members of the Brechin Cathedral management team and Sarah Kettles, project manager with Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative, regarding funding for repair work to the Cathedral Hall including possible tidying up of the small patch of land adjacent to the hall. It became clear that this was a rare opportunity to initiate the archaeological examination of an area in or near the site of the medieval bishop's palace and to do so as a community project to further the understanding of Brechin's history – a major aim of the Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Brechin Cathedral to excavate the site as a community project and the first season of excavation took place between the 31st August and 11th September 2009. The results showed that as well as the foundations of post-Reformation buildings there was also a considerable depth of surviving medieval deposits, the excavation of which was completed in a second season of excavation which took place between the 18th and 30th June 2010.

The site

The site is located on the north side of Bishop's Close, Brechin, some 300m northeast of the Cathedral (NMRS No: NO56SE.12) and directly east of the Cathedral Hall (NMRS No: NO56SE.121). NGR NO 5966 6012 (front of site). Parish: Brechin

At the time of the excavation it was a small open area of grass with a low wall along the Bishop's Close frontage. There is a considerable slope down from Church Street to Bishop's Close and the northern, upper end of the site was terraced with steps on the east side leading up to a garden behind 13–17 Church Street. The west limit of the site was the boundary wall built up against the east wall of the Cathedral Hall, built in 1888–89 (NMRS No: NO56SE.121). The east side of the site was marked by a wall which separated it from the grounds associated with the Manse Stables/Offices (NMRS No: NO56SE.103.1), built in 1850 (Black 1867, 253). A modern sewer ran north/south through the middle of the site, restricting the potential areas for excavation.

The terraced nature of the north end of the site obscures the natural topography which is essential in understanding any earlier features. There is a natural, fairly steep slope down from north to south towards

the Skinner's Burn which lies south of the Cathedral grounds and of the Manse garden, both to the south side of Bishop's Close. This slope can be seen in Church Lane and to the east in High Street. On the present property it has been terraced, with a retaining wall between the higher Church Street end of the garden and the lower Bishop's Close end, where the excavation site lay. This terracing in its present form may be as late as the 1970s when lock-up garages were built on the site.

There is also a slope down from west to east visible in the graded slope of the road, but more apparent in the difference in level between the churchyard and the Manse garden where there is a revetting wall, the original date of which is unrecorded but which was repaired in 1648 (Thoms 1972, 58). This difference in level is also evident between the excavation site and the site of the Manse stables to the east, where ground level is some 800mm–1.2m lower beside the wall. The wall between the two properties is in part revetting this slope.

Historical background

From at least the 10th century there appears to have been a community of Culdees at Brechin (Gourlay and Turner 1977, 2). It is generally suggested that this was located to the west of the present site in the area around the Chanonry, but the exact location is not proven and it is also possible that some elements of a lay population may have lived around the fringes of the community.

A charter of 1165 x 1171 confirmed an earlier grant by David I (1124–1153) to allow the bishop and the Culdees of Brechin to hold a market, which indicates that the bishopric was established by the mid 12th century. While there is no direct evidence of the position of the bishop's palace from the 12th to the 15th centuries it is probable that for most or all of this time it was on the site of the later medieval palace which Bishop Carnock is commonly described as having erected on the north side of Bishop's Close between 1429 and 1450 (Jervise 1861). The extent of the late medieval bishop's palace precinct is indicated in a confirmation by James VI of a disposition of some land within the precinct by Bishop Campbell in 1579, which describes the limits as west to the Treasurer's garden and extending between the wall of the palace garden and the street (Bishop's Close) as far east as the gate of Carnock's tower (Brech Reg 1856, 217–8).

The manses of many of the other church officials were on either side of the Channonry Wynd but the Treasurer's manse was on the property described by Thoms (1978, 20) as c15m wide lying along the east side of Church Lane between 19–21 Church Street

and Bishop's Close including the site of the present Cathedral Hall (SUAT 1998, 11, Gourlay and Turner 1977, 8), to the west of the present site. The Treasurer's property continued along the Church Street frontage as far east as 9 Church Street, but only extending halfway down the slope towards the Bishop's Close. Thus it would appear that the excavation site lies within the area of the bishop's precinct (Illus 1).

The bishop's palace itself is recorded as having been in ruins by the end of the 17th century. This is noted by Jervise in 1861 but appears to be based on the text accompanying the engraving of Brechin in Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae* of 1693 'Here also are to be seen the Ruins of the Bishop's Palace, and of the Canons Houses' (Robert Sibbald wrote the original text for *Theatrum Scotiae* in Latin. It was translated into English by Slezer). From the Reformation the medieval palace had been used as a manse by the senior clergyman attached to the Cathedral. Thoms (1978, 22) suggests that this use continued from c 1650 until 1850 when 'this centuries old building was taken down'. However Thoms may be conflating references to two successive buildings as Black records that the foundation of the medieval palace was dug up in 1771 and notes (1867, 253) that 'On the N side of this lane [Bishop's Close] stood the bishop's palace but no vestige of it remains, the foundation having been dug out when the house, formerly occupied by the senior clergyman, was erected in 1771. This house was itself demolished in 1850 and a new manse built on the south side of the Bishop's Close, while office houses were erected on the site where the bishop's palace had stood'. The 1771 building is also recorded in the New Statistical Account (Stat Acc 1833) which records that 'the first minister ... possesses a house built from the funds of the Exchequer upwards of fifty years ago, in place of the bishop's palace, and some excellent garden ground of nearly an acre in extent'.

Two other strands of evidence exist for the buildings on the site before the construction of the new manse and stables in 1850. John Wood's map of Brechin published in 1823 shows a small building on part of the site of the Cathedral Hall and a larger building extending across the full frontage of the excavation site. A second long rectangular building is shown to the east, on the site of the present Manse stables and is labelled 'Manse'. It should be noted that part of the western building extends across the line of the present boundary between the excavation site and the Manse Stables which strongly suggests that in 1823 the two buildings may both have been parts of the property used by the first minister and, if Black is correct, both built around 1771. The Manse Stables/offices have a date stone of 1850 but also bear a worn quatrafoil datestone of 177[?] which may have come from the 1771 minister's house.

The 1st Ordnance Survey map (large scale town map) of 1862 shows the new manse and its stables, with two small walls between the stables and the boundary wall of the excavation site. It also shows that on the corner site (where the Hall stands) there was an

asymmetric building along the Bishop's Close frontage which appears to be on the same footprint and likely to be the same building as the one shown on Wood's map of 1823. On the excavation site the 1862 OS map shows two small buildings. To the west, alongside the present boundary wall (now mapped for the first time) is a small building (c 3 x 5m) lying NNE/SSW and another small square building (c 4 x 4m), also lying NNE/SSW at the east edge of the property. This eastern building is of particular interest as the NE corner extends on to the line of the wall as it exists today. There is no evidence for the function of either of these two small buildings. At this time the southern c 30m of the property is shown divided off from the backlands of the Church Street frontage by a wall with a central gateway (this is further S than the present wall). This gateway appears to be the only access to the site with no gateway onto Bishop's Close. It would appear therefore that in the 1860s the excavation site comprised ground accessed only from Church Street.

The Cathedral Hall (NMRS No: NO56SE.121) was built in 1888–9 on the corner property to the west. This did not project into the excavation site but as the east boundary wall of the hall is the west boundary of the excavation site, the small building shown on the west of the site in 1862 is likely to have been demolished at this time. The OS map of 1888 shows the hall and appears to show the other small building on the east side of the excavation site still in existence.

The most recent use of the site, prior to its present status, was as the site of a number of lock-up garages. Access was made to Bishop's Close as well as up steps to the Church Street frontage properties. It is also probable that at this time the dividing wall was moved further N, with part of the slope cut out and a new retaining wall built to hold the slope. Oral information from several visitors to the excavation relates that it was in the late 20th century that the wall alongside Bishop's Close was cut down to half its original height and it had prior to the excavation been tidied up by master mason Gordon Hill (pers comm).

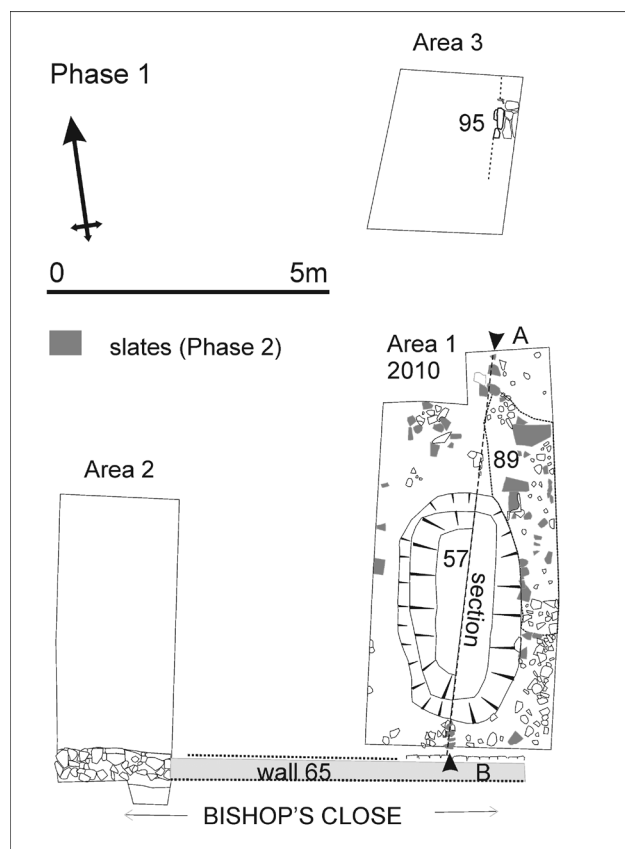
The excavation

Medieval activity

Phase 1: ?13th century Illus 2

The earliest phase of activity on the site comprised those features on or cut into the original soil above natural. All of these features had been sealed by the Phase 3 midden. Finds from the midden suggest that the phase 1 activity ceased around the end of the 13th/beginning of the 14th century.

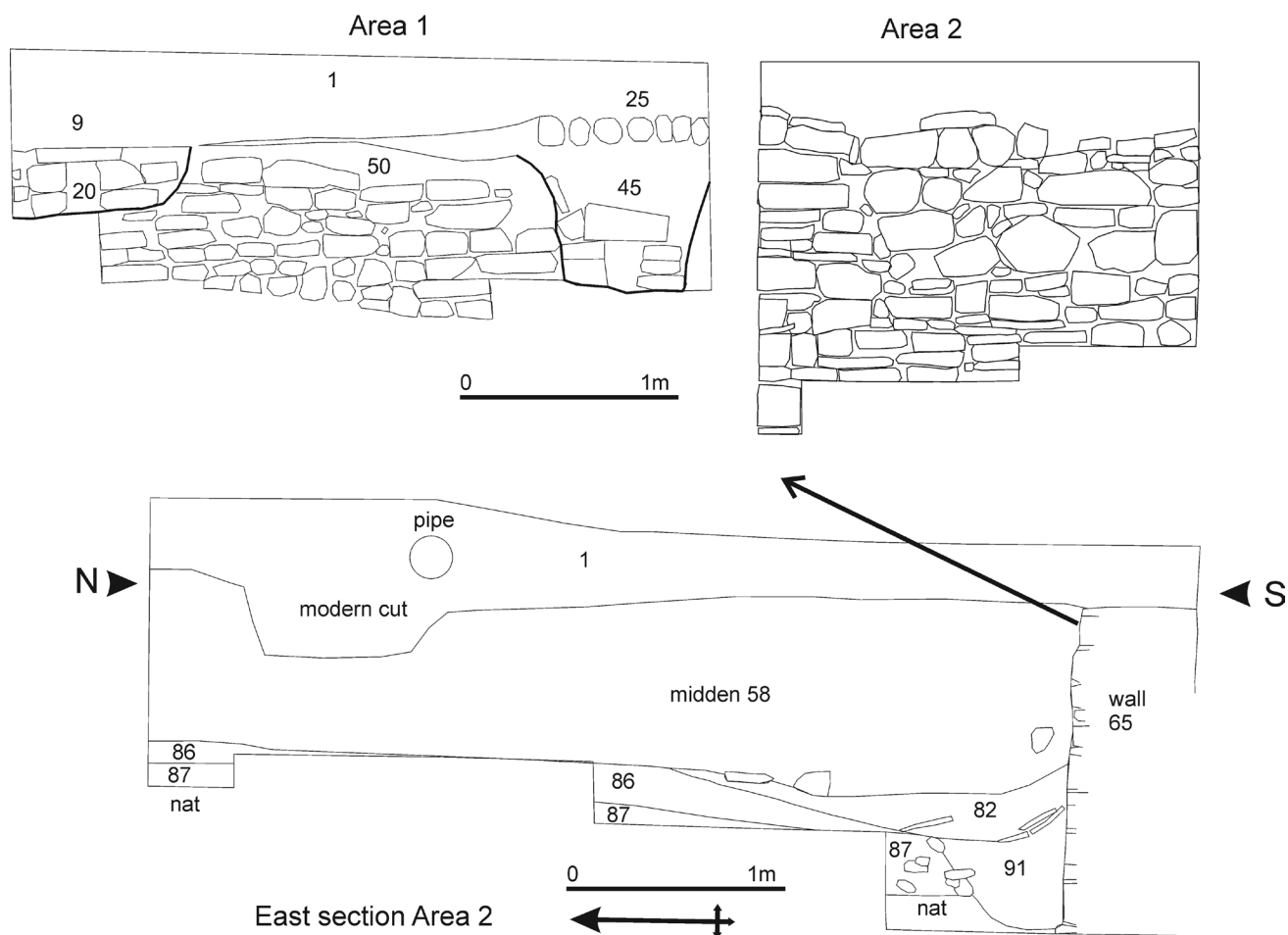
A well-built stone wall (65: Illus 3, 4) had stood along the S side of the site separating it from the roadway of Bishop's Close (0.89–1.47m N of the line of the present boundary). This wall was best preserved in Area 2 where it survived to a width of c 500mm and a



Illus 2 Phase 1 plan.



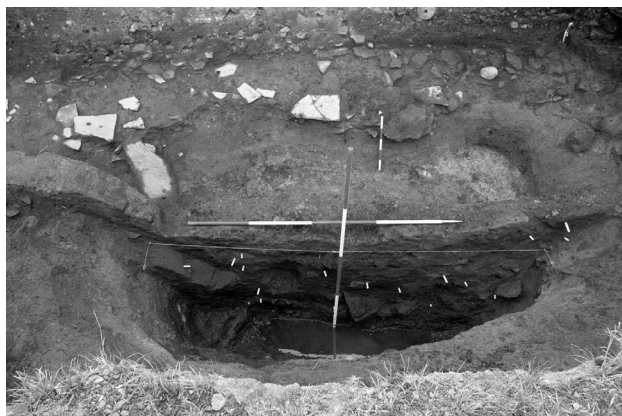
Illus 3 Wall 65 in the sections of Areas 1 and 2, alongside Bishop's Close.



Illus 4 Phase 1, Elevations and section of wall 65.

height of 1.25m, with a further c 250mm of footings in a foundation trench cut into the original ground surface (87). It was also exposed in the S section of Area 1 although there it had been cut by later drains (20, 45). The intervening length of wall could not be excavated because of the modern sewer running through the centre of the site. This wall is on the documented line of the S side of the bishop's palace precinct and can reasonably be interpreted as the precinct wall of the medieval palace. The pottery indicates that it was standing by at least the 13th century and that it continued as the boundary until the post-medieval period, possibly as late as the 18th century (Phase 5). The outer face of the wall in Area 2 had been damaged by the wall of the phase 5 building.

Phase 1 features to the N of this wall would therefore appear to have been within the precinct. The most significant was a large oval pit (57: Illus 5, 6) c 4m x 2.2m and 1.5m deep. Its original function is unclear – the lowest fill (81) and the primary fill against the sides (75) were both of sticky, gritty silt overlain by a layer of peaty material (76). Several planks of wood (77) lay between the primary fill and the peat, two lying along the N and W sides of the pit. At first it appeared that this might have been the remains of a lining but there was no other structural evidence and it is possible they had been part of a cover or simply incidental timbers



Illus 5 Section of pit 57, looking east.

thrown into the pit at a time when it was fairly empty as one timber was curved up the pit edge. It is probable that the pit was originally used as a well as it cut into the water table,

A path or yard surface (89) of a thick hard yellow clay matrix with rounded stones set on the contemporary ground surface extended along the E side of the pit, with a scatter of stones along the N side and to the S between the pit and the precinct wall appearing to be part of the same surface.

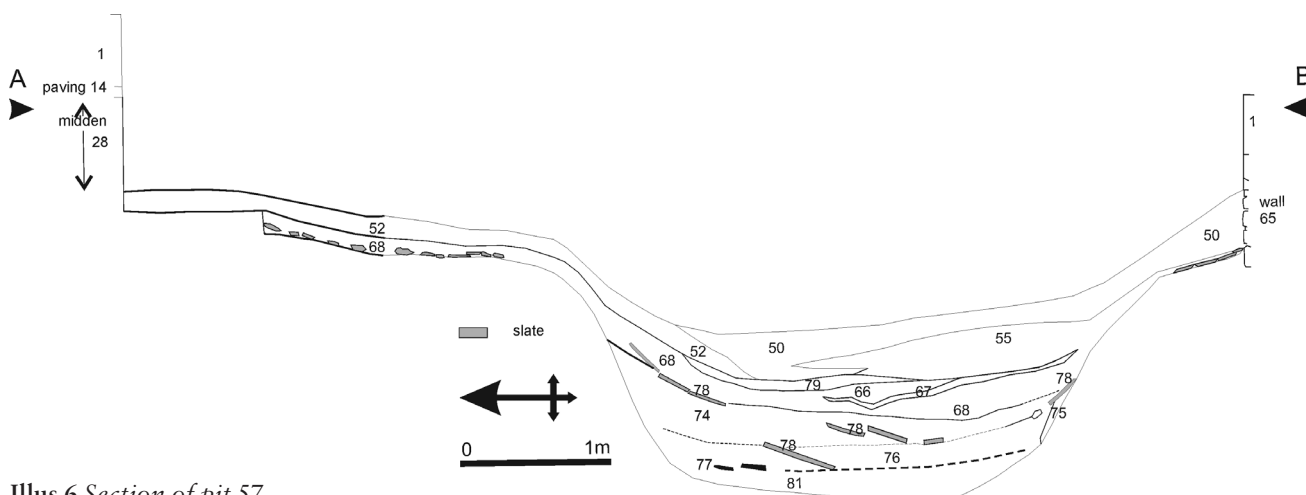
Area 3 was only partially excavated below the midden but a section across the trench revealed a cut (95) running N–S which was c 300mm deep and 500mm wide and extending into the E section. The base was stone-paved with a raised edging of stones on the excavated W side. It was not possible to determine if this was a drain or the edge of a floor/yard surface. It was directly overlaid by burnt clay (phase 2).

Phase 1 features in Area 2 had been largely cut away by later drainage trenches.

Phase 2: destruction/ fire

A layer of roof slates lying at all angles lay directly over the phase 1 path/yard surface in Area 1 and down into the pit, over the primary fills and in places sinking into them. The secondary fill of the pit (74), which has been assigned to Phase 2, was mixed with ash, charcoal and rubbish with some slates (78) sunk through it. Environmental analysis of both plant and insect remains (Timpany, p 51 below; Reilly, p 52 below) suggests that this was general domestic rubbish including food remains such as burnt and unburnt bone and charred cereal remains, with perhaps some animal and human dung mixed through it. Plant remains suggest wet-loving plants such as rushes and nettles growing in or around the pit. A large Low Countries pitcher of early 14th-century date (pottery cat no 1) had been thrown down into the secondary pit fill.

The slates and the secondary pit fills were overlain by a series of charcoal-rich layers, some of red-burnt clay, which were thickest in the pit and on the inside of



Illus 6 Section of pit 57.

the precinct wall, where they had extended up the wall face (50: Illus 6). To the N of the pit the burnt clay layer (68: Illus 6) was thinner but still lying directly over displaced roof slates and extending into Area 3 where it filled the cut of feature 95. To the W, in Area 2, the burning also lay directly over displaced slates and had banked up against the inner face of the precinct wall, thinning to nothing c 2m N of the wall. Burning was found at the same level in the 2009 trial trench by the W boundary.

It is hard not to interpret this series of burnt layers as representing a major fire or episode of demolition or destruction. The greater depth by the precinct wall and in incut features such as the pit and drain may represent those areas where it had not been mixed in by later cultivation, whereas within the midden, which was quite red in colour in Area 1, it has been disturbed by cultivation and mixed with added midden material. The concentration of slates and heavily burnt clay, including one fragment with rush or twig impressions, was greatest in Area 1 suggesting perhaps that this was nearest to the source of the material- possibly a demolished or destroyed building to the E of the path and pit.

The dating of material from the overlying midden places Phase 2 in the late 13th or early 14th century.

Phase 3: midden

In all areas of the site the Phase 1 and 2 contexts were sealed by a very thick, fairly sticky clayey earth with frequent charcoal flecks. It varied slightly in colour being reddish brown in Area 1 (where it had become mixed with burnt material from Phase 2) and buff to ginger in Areas 2 and 3 and in the 2009 trial trench. It was between 700 and 900mm in depth across most of the site (Areas 1 (28), 2 (58), 3 (60, 71)) but only c 500mm deep directly beside the W boundary wall in the 2009 trial trench. Throughout its depth this deposit was noticeably homogenous with no internal layering; this is interpreted as the effect of a continual process of turbation including both cultivation and continual deposition of midden material, possibly as part of annual manuring. The upper part of the midden in Area 1 excavated in 2009 had been cut by the later foundations of the Phase 4 drains and the Phase 5 and 6 buildings so there was some potential for contamination. As a result, in 2010 in an attempt to see if there was any apparent chronological sequencing of the finds, the less disturbed midden in Areas 2 (58) and 3 (60) was dug in a series of horizontal spits each c 50 – 60mm deep. Both pottery and bone from all areas of the midden was generally in small abraded pieces as can be expected in cultivated earth, although bone from the upper levels included larger pieces that had broken down less.

At two points during the build up of the midden there were small scatters of stone from the Phase 1 precinct wall 65 in Area 2. The earlier scatter (70) comprised only a few stones directly beside the wall

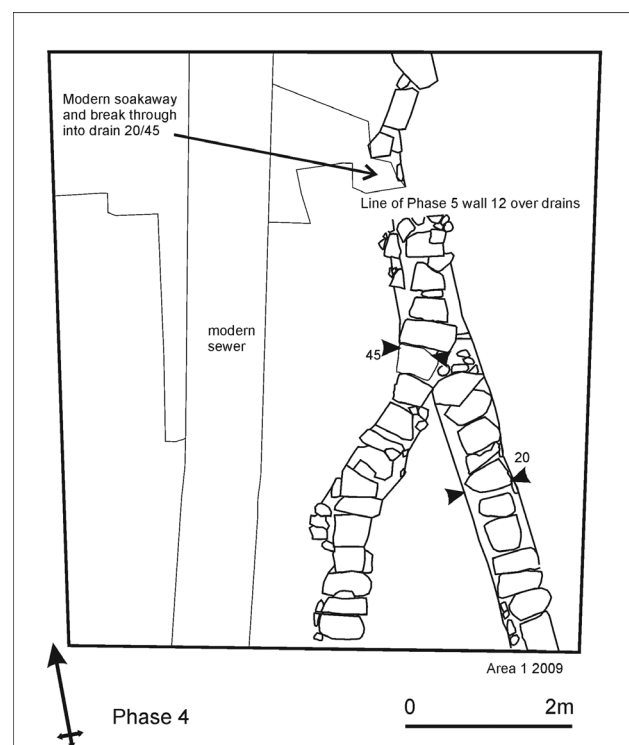
after some 500mm height of the stonework had been covered by the midden, however the later and more extensive scatter (63) was near the top of the midden just below the level of the surviving top of the wall. This suggests that during the build up of the midden and its apparent cultivation, the wall was still upstanding and forming a boundary, albeit not well maintained, and that later it had been demolished down to the contemporary ground level, possibly during the 18th-century rebuilding of the manse in Phase 5.

The earliest dating of the midden is indicated by a sequence of five coins minted between 1247 and 1310 (Thain, p 44 below). A very worn coin of 18th/early 19th century date from Area 1 was from the upper level of the midden where it was cut by the Phase 4 drains and the Phase 5 and 6 building foundations and is likely to be an intrusion. Most of the pottery from the midden was also of 13th to 14th century date but a very small quantity of later pottery in the upper levels included 15th-century stoneware and a few sherds of possible 16th/17th century date. The evidence suggests active deposition of rubbish perhaps throughout the 14th century but less from the 15th century onwards, a difference that may reflect a changing use of this part of the precinct.

Post-medieval features

Phase 4: drains into the midden/garden ground

Two stone-lined drains were cut into the top of the Phase 3 midden/ garden ground in Area 1. Both drains appeared to be earlier than the Phase 5 and 6 buildings. The deeper of the two (45) had been cut into the earlier



Illus 7 *Phase 4 plan.*

drain (20) and may in fact have been used to provide a replacement or additional run-off to the south towards Skinner's Burn. To the N the combined drain extended below and beyond the wall of the Phase 5 building for a further 2m or so but was very damaged by a modern soakaway outlet (38) which had also been broken through to empty into the earlier drains.

The earliest drain (20) had mortared stone sides and capstones set in a trench c 600mm wide. The base was formed of re-used stone roofing slates, some with the nail holes visible. It was fairly clear of silt where it was sectioned. Drain 45 was set in a trench c 600–700mm wide and had large capstones supported by sides lined with small stones but no base. Its internal dimensions at the section were 140–170mm wide and 310mm high. The lower fill (45/3) was of sandy silt, with an upper layer of clayey silt (45/2) totally blocking the drain.

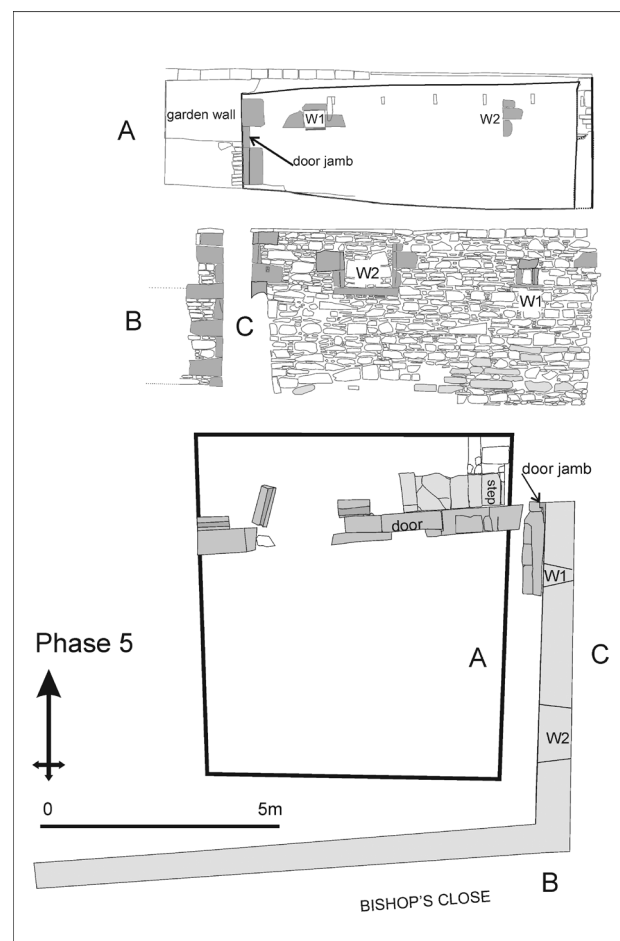
The drains are difficult to date but appear to be, at the earliest, late medieval, possibly 15th century and at the latest late 18th century as they pre-date the Phase 5 building. Both drains may have related to the frontage properties on Church Street. More probably they may have provided localized drainage of this end of the property which appears at this time to have been open ground within the precinct of the medieval bishop's palace, used in the post-Reformation period as the manse from c 1650 until 1771. They could even date from the documented remodelling of the episcopal palace in the second quarter of the 15th century.

Phase 5: 18th-century ?manse

The excavation recorded the foundations and part of the upstanding walls of a large stone building lying ENE/WSW across the southern end of the property, with its southern wall alongside Bishop's Close. The internal width was c 6.2m and the internal length over 7.5 m.

The east end of the excavated foundation of the north wall was excavated up to the face of the east boundary wall of the site, part of which comprised the re-used eastern wall of the building. The southern boundary wall of the site is also on the line of the southern wall of the building but, apart from the south-eastern corner, much of this wall has been both lowered and rebuilt. The western wall was not within the area excavated.

The foundations of the north wall were 520mm wide with well-coursed stonework and lime mortar. At the east end re-used roofing slates had been used to level the uppermost surviving course. The east wall, still used as the property boundary, survived to a height of over 2.5m and was built of rubble stone with dressed sandstone blocks used at the northeast and southeast corners. The stones at the southeast corner are slightly trapezoidal and may have been re-used from an archway (pers comm Gordon Hill). The re-use of stones from the Cathedral is well documented (Thoms 1972, 58) and it is probable that stones of the bishop's palace were similarly utilised.



Illus 8 Phase 5 plan with elevations of inner (A) and outer (C) faces of east wall and outer face of east end of south wall (B).

Dressed stones were also used at doorways and windows. There were two doorways in the excavated part of the north wall. One was at the east end of the building with three sandstone blocks that had formed the east jamb of the door preserved in the face of the upstanding east wall. Each had the partially chipped-off remains of a rebate. This doorway appeared to have been c 1.75m high. The west side of this door (within the excavated area) did not survive but the position of a step up to it on the outside (15) suggests that it may have been c 1m wide. Oddly, some 1.2m further west there was what appears to be a threshold 1.26m long and 330–370mm wide. A little additional evidence of an entrance here is suggested by the rebated stone on the east side of the inner face of the wall beside the threshold. A second stone, 730mm long, may be another threshold, giving a door width of c 2m but the wall beyond this has been cut through by the modern sewer so it is not possible to see if there had been a rebate on the west side. Below the thresholds the wall foundation was the full 520mm width, although cut when an outlet from a modern soakaway was broken through below the threshold into the Phase 4 drains. Outside this wide doorway there was an area of paving (14, 39 and step 15). The paving overlay a



Illus 9 View of phase 5 building, looking south-east. The vertical ranging rod marks the standing north-east corner of the building. The unexcavated area across the centre of the building is the line of the modern sewer.

very well made stone gutter (36) that ran flush along the outside of the wall. Five pieces of the gutter were found, the blocks measuring up to 920mm in length and all around 360–370mm wide with a very regular curved groove 120mm wide and 50mm deep cut along the centre of each stone. Apart from a block displaced by the soakaway (and backfilled into it) the sections of gutter appeared to be their original positions and draining down from west to east. Only the gutter stones outside the wide doorway were covered by paving slabs. An area of lower paving (31) may have been an earlier external surfacing. A narrow N/S wall (41) may have separated the two doorways at this point.

The upstanding east wall has two blocked windows, both internally splayed. The north window, c 1.5m (centre) from the smaller northeastern doorway, was 220 wide and 300mm high externally, splaying to 420mm wide and 380mm high internally. It has sandstone sill, lintels and rybats which appear less well finished than those on the southern window. The southern window is visible on the west face of the wall but partially obscured by render, it is far clearer on the east face. Externally it is 950mm wide and over 900mm high. It has a sandstone sill and rybats. These are better finished and appear more intended for display than those of the north window which may have opened into a passage or stairwell inside the door at the northeastern corner of the building.

Assuming that the thresholds in the north wall and a ledge beside the east wall indicate the internal floor level, the internal floors of the building had been totally destroyed.

There are traces of plaster on the highest of the door slabs, on what would have been the wall just inside the entrance. This suggests the whole wall may have originally been internally plastered but concrete rendering associated with the 20th century garages has obscured much detail on this face of the wall.

There is a clear difference in the level of the ground on either side of the eastern wall of the building, the ground to the Manse Stables (E) side being lower by c 800mm at the S end of the wall and c 1.2m at the N end. This difference in level appears to coincide with a difference in the construction of the wall, illustrated by the use of worn reddish sandstone blocks at the lower level. It is possible that this is a remnant of an earlier wall but it is between 200 and 460mm above the level of the Phase 1 yard and 840mm above the base of the precinct wall so it would appear to post-date the midden. The W face of the wall could not be exposed to the base on the grounds of stability so no direct stratigraphic observations were possible.

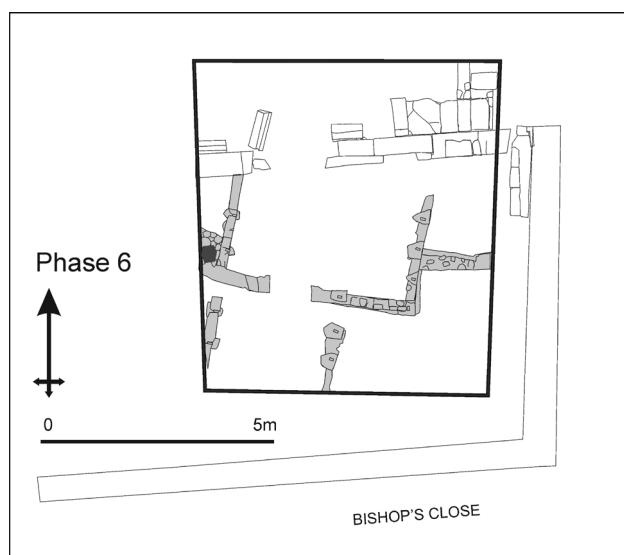
This building is on the footprint of the building shown on Wood's map of 1823 which is interpreted as related to the manse built c 1771, either being part of the manse itself or stables and offices associated with it.

Phase 6: small building, possibly a laundry or wash house

A series of low, narrow wall foundations (21, 24, 26, 34, 35, 37) formed the outline of a building orientated NE/SW. In plan it had a main rectangular room 3.9m x 2.45m internally with a smaller extension to the S 2.5 x over 2m internally. Wall 21 is bonded to the E wall and may indicate a further extension to the E. The N end of the W wall was mortared on to the N wall of the Phase 5 building. The building must be envisaged built with the surviving walls of the Phase 5 building acting as the S and E boundaries of the property.

The walls, made of small stones set in mortar, were on average 250mm wide and 240–250mm high at foundation level. Set into the foundation level at regular intervals of 600–700mm in the E and W walls there were flat triangular stones each with a rectangular socket 110 x 65mm and 10mm deep cut in the top surfaces. In the W wall, which survived to the greatest height, these padstones were clearly set in the base of the foundation with the socket hole extending up through the mortar to a depth of c 100mm. In the side walls these sockets, which presumably held timber or possibly iron uprights, were set with the longer axis at right angles to the wall. In the S wall the spacing was more irregular and two of the sockets were placed along the line of the wall. Above the foundation the impressions in the mortar suggest that the wall narrowed to c 160mm width but there was no indication of the upper wall material; it could have been brick or possibly timber set on this low stone foundation. The foundation is too narrow and insubstantial for a clay or stone wall.

The most interesting feature of this building was a stone-lined pump shaft 250–260mm in internal diameter (35) built into squared stonework bonded into the wall at the SW corner of the building. The pump shaft, which was stone lined and mortared, was excavated to a depth of 700mm but not bottomed. The only fill was rubble and some topsoil.



Illus 10 Phase 6 plan.

No internal levels associated with this building survived so there were no associated finds. The fairly insubstantial construction and the water pump suggest that this may have been an outbuilding associated with the Church Street properties, possibly a pump-house or laundry.

Phase 7: lock-up garages

Lock-up garages were built on the site in the 1970s which re-used the E wall of the Phase 5 building. These had been demolished some years prior to the excavation. A roof raggle, sockets for roof timbers and cement rendering on the inner face of the eastern boundary wall are all attributable to these garages.

The coins

Stewart Thain

- 1 English silver penny, Henry III, Long Cross (1247–1272), London mint. Context 4; SF4; Phase 3.
- 2 English silver penny, Edward I/II, Class X (1301–1310), London mint. Context 4; SF1; Phase 3.
- 3 English silver penny, Henry III, Long Cross, Class III (1247–1272), moneyer Nicole, London mint. Despite being slightly double-struck on the obverse this is in much better condition than catalogue no 1 and is unlikely to have been in circulation very long before being lost. Area 3, context 71; SF 40; Phase 3.
- 4 English silver penny, Henry III, Long Cross, probably Class III (1247–1272), because of its poor condition and the fact that almost half of it is missing, it is very hard to give a more-detailed identification. Context 50; SF32; Phase 2.
- 5 Silver halfpenny, Edward I, (1280–1295), Waterford mint. On the obverse the king's head appears within a triangle, a convention which was used to denote a coin struck in Ireland. There is a little pellet before the king's name suggesting that it is an example of the earlier of the two types of halfpenny. Context 71A; SF35; Phase 3.
- 6 Silver farthing, Edward I, (1280–1307), worn. Almost all the detail on the obverse has worn away while on the reverse only just enough remains to identify the type but not enough to tell whether it is the product of an English or Irish mint. Context 28A; SF23; Phase 3.
- 7 British copper farthing, George II – George IV, (1730–1830), very worn. Context 28B; SF 24; Phase 3.

A total of six medieval coins were discovered, one from the Phase 2 burning and five from the Phase 3 midden; this is a fairly high concentration from a very small site especially as all the coins found on the site date from the period 1247–1310. With one exception all these medieval coins are English, which is not surprising given the paucity of Scottish coins in circulation in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Most interesting are the Edwardian halfpenny and farthing since even in the early years of the 14th century it was still fairly common practice to obtain fractions of the silver penny by cutting the coin into halves or quarters. Round halfpennies and farthings were still uncommon

and Irish ones even more so. While Waterford-mint pennies seem to have circulated throughout Scotland halfpennies did not do so to anything like the same extent (North 1992).

A coin hoard (Gourlay and Turner 1977, 10; Thompson 1956, No 55) was discovered some 30m to the west of the site in 1785 during grave digging near the main entrance to the cathedral churchyard. The hoard comprised six silver spoons of 14th-century type, and an unrecorded number of silver pennies of Alexander III, Edward I and Edward II. The spoons and six of the coins are now in the Royal Museum Scotland, the remainder having been dispersed.

A second hoard, found in 1891 'in a garden in Brechin' is described as including 'a quantity of the coins of the Edwards' (Purchases 1890–91, 417; Callander 1924, 168; Gourlay and Turner 1977, 10; Thompson 1956, No 56). Intriguingly this hoard included five silver brooches, three with the inscription IHESVS NAZARENVS REX IVDEORVM, the inscription described by Callander as talismanic may however suggest ownership by a cleric.

The Georgian farthing, also found in the Phase 3 midden, is intrusive, probably from the disturbance caused by the Phase 5 and 6 foundations in Area 1.

The artefacts

In comparison to the large number of coins from such a small area, there were relatively few non-ceramic artefacts from the site. Of 58 small finds, 50% were from the Phase 3 midden and likely to date to the late 13th and 14th centuries with the possibility of occasional later objects in the top of the midden or in Area 1 where the midden was cut by the Phase 4 drains and the foundations of the later buildings. Objects may have entered the midden through accidental loss during cultivation, by the addition of household rubbish from the precinct or possibly by the addition of soil from elsewhere.

A further 28% of the artefacts were from the Phase 2 burning and may relate to activities within the precinct prior to the development of the midden.

Few of the finds are exotic or high status and none are specifically religious.

A select catalogue is presented here.

Copper-alloy objects (Illus 11)

8 Leather mount T-shaped mount (possibly originally cruciform) made of flat copper-alloy sheet each 'arm' being slightly curved in section. The arms radiate from a roughly circular shallow central socket; there may originally have been a fourth arm, now bent over to the back. Upper surface decorated with parallel lines. Mounts of this type would have been used on leather or material and although it may have been part of a book binding it is also possible it could have been decoration from clothing or harness (Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2905–7, 2939). A cruciform mount was found

in a secular context at Rattray, Aberdeenshire (Murray and Murray 1993, 192, fig 42: 212).

Length 12mm; width 9mm; thickness mm. Context 45/1; SF 9; Phase 4.

9 Copper-alloy nail Total length c 40mm. Context 28/2; SF 7; Phase 3.

10 Handle or leg of vessel Cast curved and tapering handle or leg from a small vessel, broken at both ends. Length 46mm; Maximum width 1mm. Context 60F; SF 25; Phase 3.

11 Dress pin Small dress pin with flat lozenge-shaped head. Length 61mm; width of head 9mm. Context 50; SF 29; Phase 2.

12 Vessel fragment Copper-alloy sheet fragment, probably scrap from a vessel. Length 36mm; width 25mm; thickness 1 mm. Context 60M; SF 33; Phase 3.

13 Wire Fragment of round-sectioned wire. Length 52mm; diameter 2mm. Context 73; SF 36; Phase 2.

14 Strap end Small rectangular copper-alloy sheets on either side of leather strap. Four rivet holes in each sheet with two copper-alloy rivets remaining. Central perforation diameter 2mm. Width of leather strap 12mm. Sides 10 x 28mm and 12 x 28mm. Context 92; SF 41; Phase 1.

15 Copper-alloy pin Length: 29mm. Context 45/47; SF 18; Phase 4. Not illustrated

Three small fragments of copper alloy were too corroded for identification: Context 28C, SF 26, Phase 3; Context 50, SF 31, Phase 2; and Context 53, SF 34, Phase 2.

Two small fragments of copper-alloy casting debris SF 14 and SF 17 were both in topsoil but may be residual. SF14, SF 17.

Lead alloy objects (Illus 11)

All the lead came from the Phase 3 midden and included several pieces of scrap, possibly melted down from window came such as No 17. A small suspension weight is of some interest as it weighed 33 grammes or approximately an ounce and may have been a personal weight used by a craftsman or merchant working with precious metal. The wear around the suspension hole suggests fairly extensive use.

16 Weight Length 38mm; diameter of base 13mm

Conical cast suspension weight with small perforation at upper end. Weight 33gm (1oz).

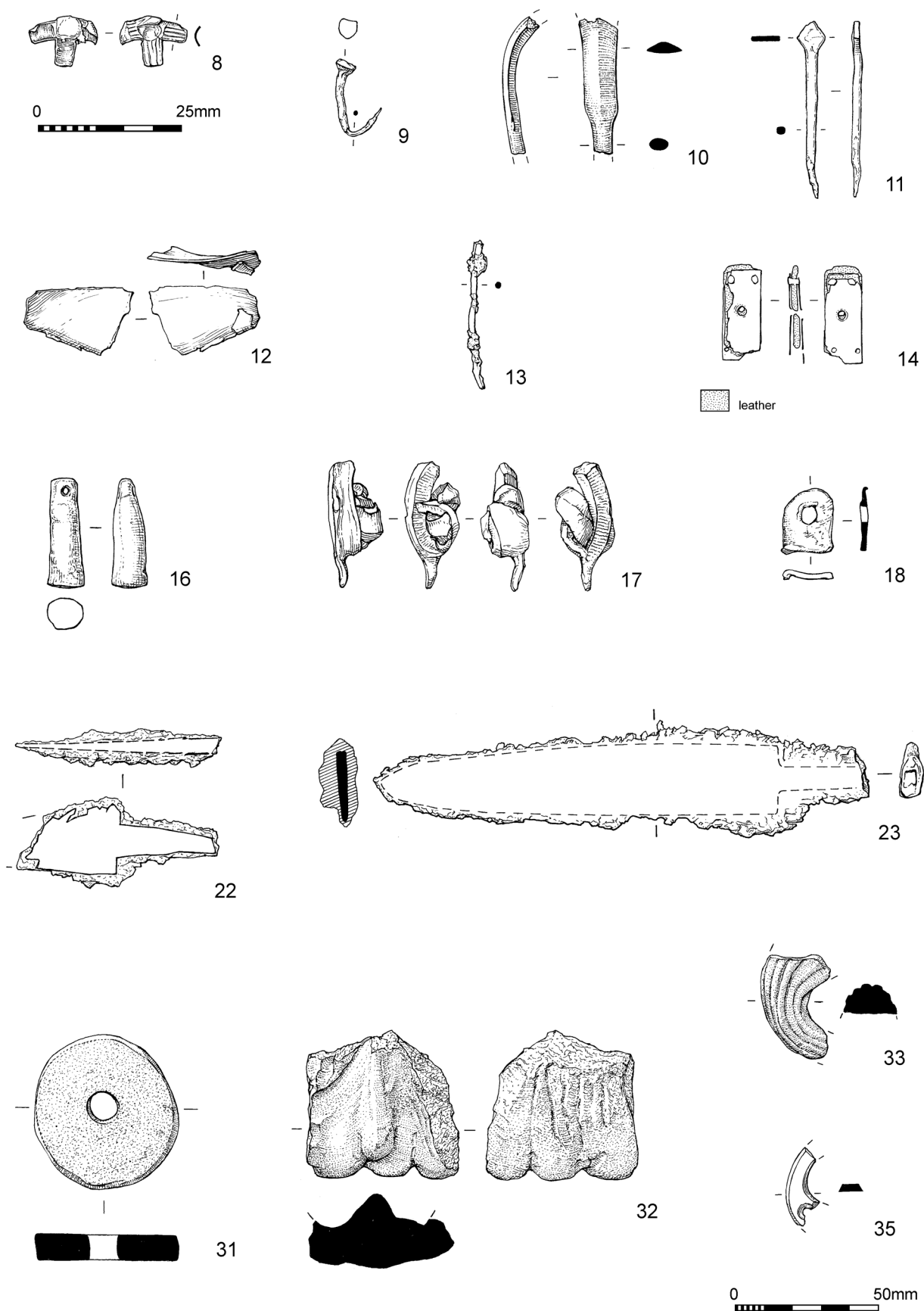
Context 28/1; SF 8; Phase 3.

17 Window came Two twisted fragments window came, one of which is the crushed end of a triangular setting similar to one published from Perth Carmelite friary (Stones 1989, 153, ill 94:413). Context 60C; SF 22; Phase 3.

18 Cast strip Length 22mm; maximum width 18mm; thickness 2mm.

One end rounded with a punched perforation and the other cut off. Context 28/4; SF 12; Phase 3.

19–20 Scrap Two pieces of scrap lead, the larger being a twisted flat sheet. Contexts 28/3, 71; SF10, 39; Phase 3. Not illustrated.



Illus 11 *Small finds.*

Iron objects (Illus 11; No 21: Illus 12)

Iron from the site was poorly preserved. A number of artefacts were x-rayed to aid identification. Two knives and an unidentified object decorated with inlaid copper-alloy or silver wire were all found in the burnt debris of Phase 2 and appear to be more personal items. In contrast the iron objects from Phase 3 midden contexts include a hinge strap from a chest or window shutter and a hinge pivot, also probably from a shutter; both may be from wood burnt on site and may relate to structures within the precinct. A single lump of iron-working waste was found in the Phase 3 midden but is not sufficient to indicate whether smithing took place within the precinct.

21 Unidentified object with wire inlay

Flat oval iron bar. Heavily corroded but x-rays show inlaid wire decoration forming round and teardrop shapes. Length 88mm; width at centre 15mm tapering to 7mm at the ends; thickness c 10mm tapering to 3mm at the ends. Context 50; SF 46; Phase 2.

The function of this object has not been identified but the use of silver or copper wire inlaid into iron can be paralleled on three medieval knives from York which are considered to be high status objects (Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2756–2757, figs 1361–1363).

22 Whittle tang knife

Part of a blade and tang. Length 70mm. Context 52; SF 49; Phase 2.

23 Whittle tang knife

Blade and part of tang. Length of blade 153mm; Width 38mm tapering to 18mm. Context 50; SF 28; Phase 2.

24 Hinge strap

Flat hinge strap with eye at wider end. X-rays show nail hole at narrower end. Length 145mm; width 32mm tapering to 20mm. Context 58G; SF 51; Phase 3. Not Illustrated.

A hinge strap of this size is more likely to be from a chest or window shutter than a door (Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2837–9).

25 Iron strip with eyelet

Flat strip broken at one end. Length 55mm; width 20mm; thickness 3mm. X-rays show eyelet 11 x 7mm at one end and nail hole through other end. Context 50; SF 45; Phase 2. Not Illustrated.

26 Hinge pivot

Shank and broken guide arm. Length of shank 60 mm; maximum width 17mm tapering to end. Context 58D; SF 50; Phase 3. Not Illustrated. The size suggests this is more likely to have been from a shutter than a door or gate (cf Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2834–5).

27 Fragment flat iron plate

Length 48mm; width 30mm; thickness 3mm. Context 62A; SF 55; Phase 2. Not Illustrated.

28 Pin with eyelet

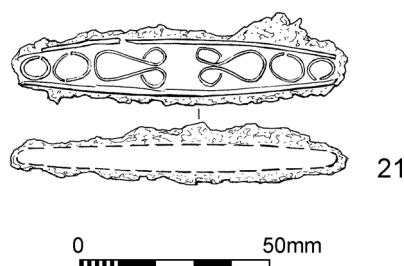
Pin with squared shank bent at one end to form eyelet. Length 126mm; shank 8mm. Context 68; SF 56; Phase 2. Not Illustrated.

29 Staple

Large staple with square-sectioned arms with broken tips. Maximum length 65mm. Context 28; SF 42; Phase 3. Not Illustrated.

30 Rod

Iron round-sectioned rod broken at both ends. Length 65mm; diameter 4mm. Context 28; SF 43; Phase 3. Not Illustrated.



Illus 12 Cat no 21. Iron object with wire inlay.

Nails

A total of 34 complete and 139 fragmentary nails were found from Phases 1–3. Nails from the later phases were not retained. The nails ranged in length from 40–95mm; where identifiable they are of a type common from other urban assemblages (Cox, 2001, 65) with a large approximately round head and a roughly square shank. There appeared to be a slightly greater concentration of nails in the south end of the midden; this may relate to the concentration of slates in the area in Phase 2.

Four horseshoe nails and a possible nail head were found, three in Phase 2 and two in the Phase 3 midden. All were of 13th- to 14th-century types. (cf Goodall 1993, 185, fig. 38 163–5). Context 50; SF 47, 47A; Phase 2. Context 52; SF 48; Phase 2. Context 4; SF 2, SF 3; Phase 3.

Stone objects (Illus 11)

31 Spindle whorl

A perforated stone disc is likely to have been a spindle whorl although the slightly asymmetric perforation would have been slightly awkward in use. Diameter 50–53mm; thickness 8mm; diameter of perforation 10mm. Context 60B; SF 20; Phase 3.

32 Carved stone fragment

A small carved fragment of pink sandstone broken off a larger piece, decorated with possible drapery or foliage. Length 50mm; width 50mm. Context 60G; SF 53; Phase 3.

33 Carved stone fragment

A small fragment of very fine grained grey stone carved with relief decoration and broken from a larger object. Length 36mm; maximum width 24mm. Context 45/47; SF 58; Phase 4.

34 Carved stone fragment

Fragment of a larger object with roughly carved socket. Length 65mm; width 33mm; thickness 20mm. Context 58G; SF 52; Phase 3. Not Illustrated.

Bone objects (Illus 11)

35 Bone manufacturing waste

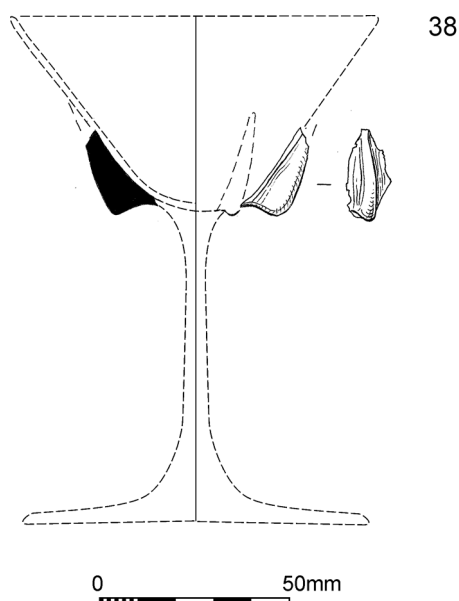
Length 26 mm; width 10mm. A smooth flat fragment of worked bone with parts of two drilled discs removed from it is very similar to waste from button or bead manufacture common on medieval sites and dating from the 14th century onwards (MacGregor 1985, 101, fig 58). Context 60H; SF 57; Phase 3.

36–37 Bone spoons Two bone spoons were found in the Phase 4 drain. They are very similar with flat bowls and slender handles widening to a slight shoulder. They are made to resemble metal spoons with a marked tang carved on the back at the junction of bowl and handle (MacGregor 1985, 182–3). They are probably of 17th to 19th-century date and may have been pushed into the drain by a child as appears to have happened with a group of seven clay marbles also found in the drain. Similar spoons have been published from St Andrews (Cox 2001, 65, illus 14:11; Cox 1997, 102, illus 48:16). **36.** Length 127mm; maximum width of bowl 23mm; maximum width of handle 16mm. Context 45/47; SF 19; Phase 4. Not Illustrated. **37.** Length 122mm; maximum width of bowl 25mm; maximum width of handle 11mm. Context 45/47; SF 21; Phase 4. Not Illustrated.

Vessel glass (Illus 13)

38 Fin of a glass goblet with mould-blown fins. Length 22 mm; width 11 mm; width of fin 10mm. Context 28/3; SF 11; Phase 3.

This tiny fragment of vessel glass appears to be the fin of a glass goblet with mould-blown fins. This type of vessel is distinctive with a series of ‘fins’ or sometimes ‘ribs’ decorating the side or lower portion of the bowl. This piece is green in colour, which according to Charleston (1975) is ‘due mainly to the iron impurities in the silica employed’. It is typical of a type of stemmed glass made in Northern Europe, probably in France or the Low Countries. Harden (1975) dates an almost complete example found at Nieuwendoordn



Illus 13 Glass vessel fragment 38 with reconstruction based on complete glass from Nieuwendoordn (Harden, 1975, 38).

Castle to the mid 13th century, at the latest. One of the earliest examples known in Britain is from a pit at Cuckoo Lane, Southampton which is dated to the late 13th century. Pieces of a similar date come from an excavation at Ludgershall, Wiltshire (Wilson and Hurst 1970, 177) and from Goldsmith Street, Exeter where it is dated, by association with pottery, to c 1300 (Tyson 2000, fig 5, p.55). Although fin-moulded glasses of this type occur in many assemblages of medieval glass from excavations in England, to date, no similar pieces are known from Scottish sites.

Window glass

39–41 Two small fragments of probable medieval window glass were found in the Phase 3 midden and one in the Phase 2 burnt deposit. A fragment of lead window came (no 17) was also found in the midden. Context 58E; SF 27; Phase 3, Context 50; SF 37; Phase 2 and Context 58G; SF 38; Phase 3. Not Illustrated.

The pottery

Introduction

Of the pottery recovered from all phases of activity on the site, only material from Phases 1, 2 and 3 were examined in detail. Pottery from Phases 4, 5 and 6, much disturbed by modern features, was examined to determine if any medieval material of intrinsic interest occurred. Large quantities of 19th/20th century ceramic were recovered, mainly from later phases, but little of this material was retained.

The pottery from Phases 1, 2 and 3, while not a large assemblage, provides valuable corroborative information on the dating of the site, its contacts abroad, the type of vessels in use in the locality and the nature of the local pottery industry.

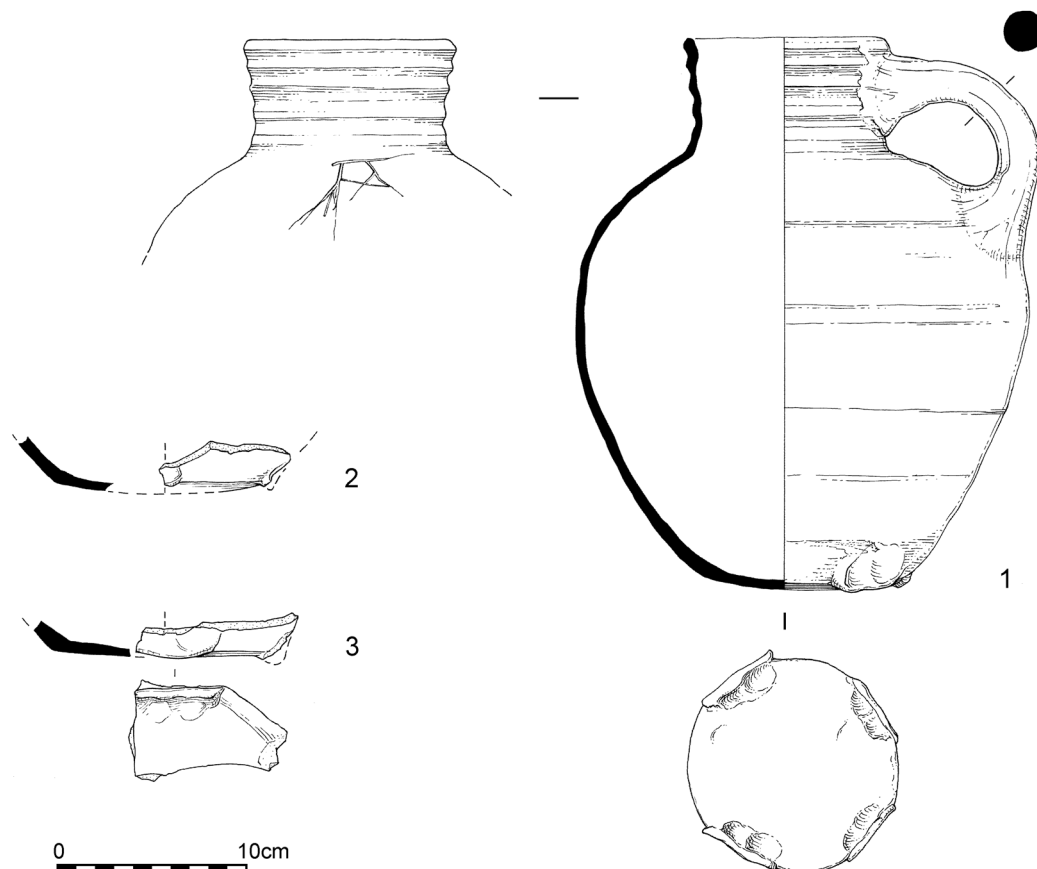
The pottery is recorded as a sherd count but it should be borne in mind that many of the sherds are little more than fragments and in a much abraded state. The assemblage is discussed by phase with a selective catalogue of illustrated pieces. The full analysis of the pottery is in the archive report.

Phase 1

Only 32 sherds were recovered. With the exception of two sherds from Yorkshire, of Scarborough-type ware, the remaining pieces were Scottish Redwares, probably of local manufacture. The redwares were mainly comprised of body sherds with 2 base sherds, 1 strap-handle and 1 rim sherd, all much abraded. Incised and applied pellet decoration was evident and most sherds bore traces of both olive green glaze and iron enriched glaze. One sherd of glazed Scottish White Gritty ware was also present.

Vessel types: jugs.

Date range: 13th/14th century.



Illus 14 *Low Countries jug Cat no 1 with Low Countries jug bases Cat nos 2 and 3.*

Phase 2 (Illus 14–15 no 1; Illus 16 nos 2–6)

Of the c 245 sherds present, 224 were of Scottish Redware. Imports included 11 sherds from Yorkshire, 7 from the Low Countries including one almost complete Greyware pitcher and a single sherd of unidentified pale turquoise tin-glazed ware. The Scottish Redwares were mainly small body sherds and fragments with only 5 rim, 3 handle and 11 base sherds, all showing much abrasion. Three pieces were identified as coming from possible urinals and one small fragment of face-mask jug is illustrated (no 6). By contrast the pottery recovered from the Pit 57 showed little signs of abrasion (nos 1–5) and are unlikely to have been re-deposited from elsewhere. In addition to the Highly Decorated Low Countries jug rim illustrated (Illus 16 no 4), four body sherds of a second jug were also found. In a fine red sandy fabric, the sherds are partially covered in a white slip under a clear honey to light green glaze. Decoration consists of a partial large roundel with applied floral-like dots which have become detached (Contexts 49 and 62A).

1 Pitcher Low Countries Greyware. Dark grey hard fabric with slightly lighter grey core. 2 examples – one from Elgin (Verhaeghe and Lindsay 1983) and one Gallowgate, Aberdeen (Cameron and Stones 2001, 187, Illus 149, no.306) date to the later part of the 14th century. An almost exact example of the Brechin pitcher was been found at Lamprenisse in coastal Flanders (Verhaeghe 1983).



Illus 15 *Low Countries jug Cat no 1 photograph.*

Verhaeghe identifies two distinct sub-types of this form of pitcher.

While both have the same general body shape, they have markedly different neck and rim forms. The earlier, dating to the period 1300–1350, has a slightly funnel shaped neck with distinct external rilling, while the second has an almost cylindrical neck with a collared rim and dates to c

1350–1375. The Elgin and Aberdeen examples fall into this later category but the Brechin pitcher is certainly of the earlier group. Incised markings, post firing, exist on the shoulder of the pot. Context 74.

2 Pitcher base Low Countries Greyware. Mid to dark grey. Context 68.

3 Pitcher base Low Countries Greyware. Dark grey surfaces with lighter grey core. Pinched thumbing at base. Context 67.

4 Rim and partial thumb impression, probably at handle attachment. Low Counties Highly Decorated ware. Red sandy fabric with lustrous dark to lighter green glaze over a white slip. Contexts 74 and 88.

5 Shield from a Yorkshire, Scarborough-type Knight Jug. Beige sandy fabric with lustrous green glaze. The shield is decorated with six horizontal bands of incised decoration (cf McCarthy and Brooks 1988, fig 127, no 647). Context 68.

6 Face-mask jug Lower portion, showing the mouth and chin, incised. Scottish Redware covered with iron enriched glaze, probably local. Context 62A.

Vessel types: jugs.

Date range: 13th/14th century.

Phase 3 (Illus 16, nos 7–11)

The pottery recovered from Phase 3 (1,544 sherds) accounted for 85% of the total pottery from the three phases examined. Of this, 96% was in the Scottish Redware tradition, mostly small, fragmentary and very abraded body sherds with less than 20 simple upright rim forms. The later phases of the midden (60) contained a very few sherds of Late Medieval

Transitional Wares and post-medieval Glazed Red Earthenwares. About 25 sherds of glazed Scottish White Gritty Ware were present and the only imports were six sherds of North Yorkshire wares of Scarborough type and two body sherds of the same Low Countries glazed pot from contexts 49 and 62A in Phase 2.

7 Anthropomorphic pulled jug spout Only half of the face survives showing a prominent nose with an applied ring-and-dot eye. Scottish Redware with iron enriched glaze, probably local (as no 6 in Phase 2). Although face-masks are a fairly common feature of most local pottery repertoires, the face as part of the jug spout is relatively uncommon. Examples were noted amongst the pottery produced at Rattray, Aberdeenshire (Murray and Murray 1993, 164, fig. 27, nos.117 and 118). Context 28.

8 Anthropomorphic pulled jug spout As 7 above, but more abraded. Context 71.

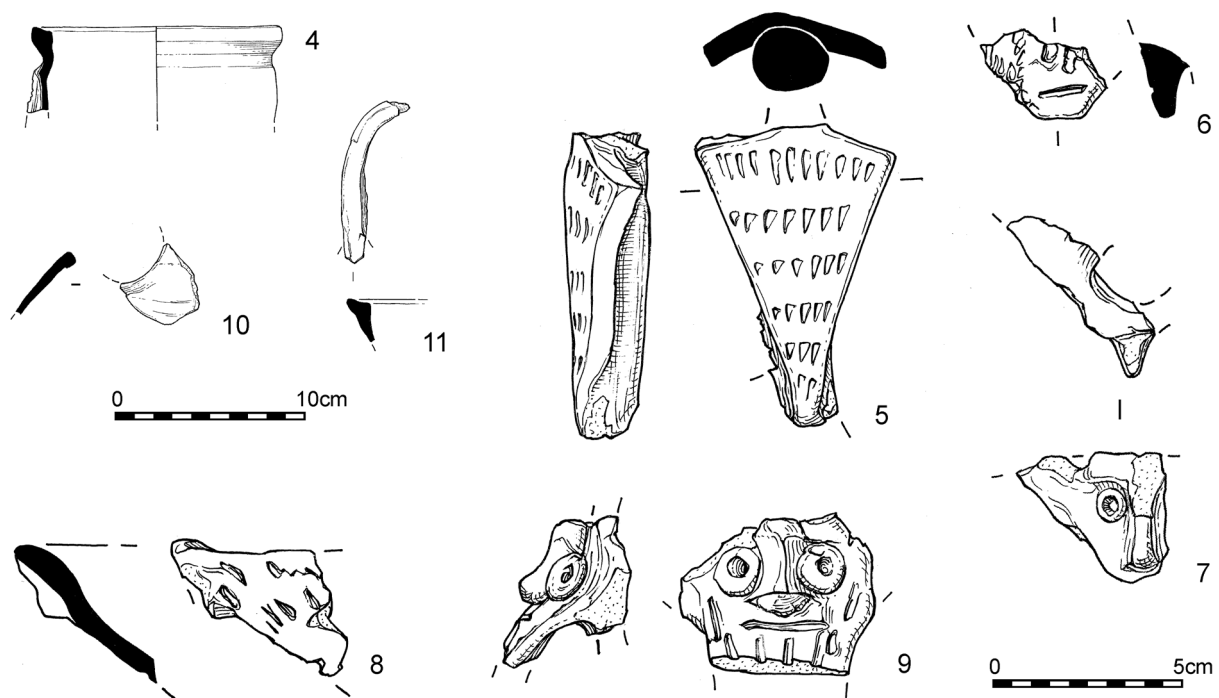
9 Face-mask jug Portion. Scottish Redware, probably local. Same fabric and glaze as nos 7 and 8, above. Context 71.

10 Urinal Small portion of vessel perforation. Scottish Redware, traces of external honey coloured glaze. Very abraded. Context 28.

11 Shallow dish Scarring on interior suggests an internal compartment. Hard white gritty fabric with a light olive green glaze on the interior and rim. Hand made, possibly Scottish. Context 28.

Vessel types: jugs, urinals.

Date range: 13th – 16th/17th century.



Illus 16 *The pottery.*

Summary

Of the less than 2,000 sherds recovered from Phases 1–3 c 32 came from Phase 1, c 245 from Phase 2 and over 1,500 from the deep midden deposits of Phase 3. 95% of the pottery is of probable local manufacture in the Scottish Redware tradition, while only 5% is imported. Only a handful of sherds of glazed Scottish White Gritty Ware were recovered. The imports are comprised of a small amount of richly glazed North Yorkshire Wares, c 10 sherds of possible Low Countries Highly Decorated Wares and a few sherds of later Rhenish stonewares. An almost complete Low Countries Greyware pitcher came from Pit 57 as well as basal sherds of two additional pitchers.

It is assumed that the bulk of the Scottish Redwares are locally produced, but in the absence of local pottery kiln evidence, this is by no means certain. Clay source analysis using inductively coupled mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) is proving to be successful in identifying the origin of pottery sherds (Haggarty, Hall and Chenery 2011) and a selection of probable local ware sherds from the site will be submitted for analysis as part of an ongoing programme of research.

The vessel types represented are almost exclusively jugs. Decorative techniques such as stamping, incision and applied strips and dots are used and local potters can be seen to be copying the more decorative forms of imported pottery such as face-mask jugs. Handles are almost exclusively of the strap variety and would indicate a range of small to medium size vessels with some larger ones evident. Cooking wares are totally absent – a rare occurrence in urban assemblages where a combination of table and food preparation wares is the norm. While this may represent selective deposition within this area of the precinct it is noteworthy that a similar lack of cooking pot was observed in an excavation within the precinct of the bishop's palace at Old Rayne Aberdeenshire (Murray and Murray, forthcoming).

The pottery dates, in the main, from the 13th and 14th centuries with only a handful of 15th/16th century and later stoneware evident. The range of imported wares is consistent with those found in other burghs and ports along the eastern Scottish seaboard such as Aberdeen and Perth and demonstrates the desire for good quality and highly decorated products.

The environmental evidence

Palaeoenvironmental assessment of a possible medieval cess layer in pit 57

Scott Timpany

A sample was taken from the secondary Phase 2 fill (context 74) of the large Phase 1 pit (context 57) in order to see whether the fill represented cess or domestic rubbish. Given the waterlogged nature of the sample it was decided to process the sample through

paraffin floatation to see if there were any beetle fragments present, which could provide information on the nature of the sample. A sub-sample of approximately 1 litre was taken for plant macrofossil assessment. Full results are available in the site archive.

Results

Insect and plant remains

Insect fragments were present in the sample with the majority recovered from the paraffin floated component. These are considered by Reilly (p 52 below).

All plant remains were preserved through a mixture of waterlogging and charring. Plant remains were recovered from both components of the sample. A small quantity of charred cereal grains were recovered of oat (*Avena* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale*). Preservation of the grains was generally good to poor, with some showing some evidence of abrasion and breakage indicating either some post-depositional movement within the deposit or damage as they were deposited (Kenward and Hall, 2004). Charred remains of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) were also recovered from the sample, with charred leaves, florets and probable stems present.

Waterlogged plant remains of common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) were abundant, together with smaller quantities of goosefoot sp. (*Chenopodium* sp.), sedges (*Carex* sp.) and possible rush (cf *Juncus* sp.). These remains were found to be generally well preserved and identifiable; although some of the smaller fruits such as rush did exhibit some decay to cell structure preventing the surface pattern to be clearly observed. The general good preservation of the waterlogged material indicate it can be used to provide interpretable data (Jones et al 2007) and that these may have been deposited following the charred remains (Kenward and Hall 2004).

Other finds

Together with the insect and plant remains in the sample, fragments of unburnt bone, including fish and burnt bone were also found.

Discussion

The main objective of the assessment was to determine whether the sampled deposit could be identified as cess or domestic waste. The assemblage from the sample appears to relate more to the dumping of domestic waste than cess. The presence of fragments of burnt and unburnt bone, together with fish bone and charred oat and rye cereal grains, suggest discarded domestic food waste.

No direct indicators for faeces were found such as bran and (digested) fruit stones or fly larvae cases which have been recorded from cess deposits in Aberdeen and Edinburgh (e.g. Kenward and Hall 2001; Timpany and Haston 2008).

The charred heather remains present in the sample may represent the remains of burnt peat. Similar charred heather remains in urban medieval contexts

were found at Aberdeen and have been suggested to represent the import of peat for fuel (Kenward and Hall 2001). The heather remains could also be related to its use as stabling and roofing material during the medieval period.

The waterlogged plant remains are from taxa usually associated with waste ground (Clapham et al 1962; Stace 1997). Damp indicators are also present with sedge nutlets and possible rush seeds present, which is likely to signal the wet conditions within the pit. The abundant nettle achenes could signal the occurrence of cess with nettles known to grow in nitrogenous habitats, such as would be offered by accumulating faecal matter (Rodwell 2000). Kenward and Hall (2001) noted pits from medieval Aberdeen often contained evidence for faeces, despite this not being their main use. Similar evidence has also been found in ditch deposits in Edinburgh, where insect and parasite eggs have been found showing the incorporation of faecal material into the feature (Mighall 2008; Reilly 2008). Thus medieval deposits often contain traces of dung from animals and humans.

Analysis of insects from a possible medieval cess layer in pit 57

Eileen Reilly

Methodology

The sample processed for the palaeoenvironmental assessment (Timpany, p 51 above) was subjected to paraffin flotation, the standard method used to recover insect fragments from archaeological soils (Kenward et al 1980). The resulting flot was provided for sorting, identification and analysis. Insect sclerites were extracted onto wet filter paper and identified to the highest taxonomic level possible. Full results are available in the site archive.

Analysis

A small assemblage of 40 beetles was recovered from the flot. No fly puparia were recovered. Despite apparently good preservation conditions, the insect sclerites were generally poorly preserved. Primarily, they appear to have been subject to post-depositional degradation, either from drying out and partially decaying in situ or from the presence of other material in the pit fill, most notably charcoal and ash. This concurs with the findings from the plant remains assessment (Timpany, above).

The insects themselves suggest a number of origins for the material disposed of in the pit. *Cercyon* spp. are generally indicative of dung, including human faeces, and rotting plant matter. They make up the bulk of the species recovered within the deposit. While most were too fragmented and flimsy to identify to species, at least two examples appeared to be *Cercyon unipunctatus*, a beetle commonly found in cess-pits and animal byres, being highly tolerant of very foul conditions (Hansen

1987). It is a regular member of archaeological faunas in urban settlements (Kenward and Hall 1995). Other indicators of decaying material, including dung, were *Megasterum obscurum*, *Coprophilus striatulus* and probably *Philonthus/Quedius* spp. and *Xantholinus/Gyrohypnus* sp. Two species present, *Protenius* sp. and *Silpha* sp., suggest carrion, possibly bones or discarded kitchen waste, although both are found on fungi and in decaying vegetation also (Koch 1989; Tottenham 1954).

The second most common insect genus recorded is *Anobium* sp., again, too fragmented and faded to definitively identify as *Anobium punctatum*, the 'woodworm' beetle. It is highly likely, however, that this is *A. punctatum*. In the absence of a wooden lining within the pit, its presence suggests either the pit was once lidded, not uncommon for post-medieval privies and cisterns, or that structural wood was dumped into the pit. *A. punctatum* is still ubiquitous today but would have been extremely common in the medieval/post-medieval period due to the universal construction of wooden framed houses (Reilly 2003). Therefore, even overhanging beams or external wooden structures built within the episcopal palace precinct would have been infested with woodworm.

Lastly, a small number of species in the pit are most likely indicative of plants growing within or around the episcopal palace grounds. *Dasclllus cervinus* is generally found on flowering herbs in grasslands, woodland margins and other natural habitats (Koch 1989). It may have occurred in gardens in the episcopal precinct or nearby but is likely to be a casualty of gathered material from the surrounding landscape, which eventually ended up in the pit. Charred heather fragments, possibly suggesting gathered peat from nearby bogs, were identified in this deposit (Timpany above).

A number of examples of a large Ceutorhynchinae weevil, unfortunately too fragmentary to identify to genus or species, were also recovered. Many Ceutorhynchinae beetles are found on urban weeds and various plants of disturbed or arable ground (Morris 2008). Nettles were particularly common among the plant remains identified in the same deposit (Timpany, above). These plants may have been growing within the cathedral precinct or were gathered in floor coverings, bedding or foodstuffs, which were later dumped into the pit.

Discussion

The analysis above suggests two clear sources for the material in the pit. Firstly, dung/foul indicating beetles certainly suggest that this was a component of the fills. However, a true 'garderobe', privy or cistern pit would likely have a higher presence of fly puparia. Garderobe deposits examined by the author from Rothe House in Kilkenny, Ireland, dating from the 17th century, contained moderately large numbers of mineralized fly puparia indicative of human faeces and urine (Reilly 2010). It is clear that this element of the pit fill has been

severally diluted by the presence of other household rubbish, including possibly kitchen scraps, hearth rake-out, floor coverings, bedding and even garden waste. This would appear to concur with the findings from the analysis of plant remains (Timpany above). All of this combined suggests that the pit was a general-purpose rubbish dump and that cess disposal was not its primary function.

The animal bone

Catherine Smith

A small assemblage of animal bones was recovered. The bones were variably preserved. This was particularly demonstrated by those from the upper spits dug from the Phase 3 midden, which appeared to be in a better state of preservation than those found lower down in the midden. Bones in pre-midden contexts of Phase 2 were generally better preserved than those from Phase 3. However, even within a single context, the condition of individual bones was very variable, ranging from 'fair', that is fairly dense, with slight to moderate surface abrasion, to 'very poor', that is light, friable, crumbly and with heavy surface abrasion.

The preservation of the bones has some bearing on what will have survived and it seems clear that a bias towards denser parts of the adult skeleton will have had a better chance of survival than the spongier articulations of younger animals. Thus although a few bones from juvenile cattle and sheep/goats were recovered it is likely that younger age groups were under-represented in the sample.

Results

The animal bones were identified to species and particular bone. Full results are available in the site archive.

Present in Phase 1 were bones of cattle (3), sheep/goat (3), cat (3), large ungulate (that is, probably cattle; (2)) and indeterminate mammal fragments (39); the fragment count is given in brackets. The minimum number of individuals for each species was one only.

In Phase 2, cattle (33), sheep/goat (33), pig (4), horse (1), large ungulate (7), small ungulate (that is, probably sheep/goat; (9)), indeterminate mammal (258), domestic fowl (2), greylag/domestic goose (2), wader species (1), indeterminate bird (2), fish (5) and a mussel shell (*Mytilus edulis*) fragment were recovered. Generally, minimum numbers were one for each species in each context, although occasionally there was evidence for two different cattle beasts.

Present in the Phase 3 midden were cattle (93), sheep/goat (78), pig (9), horse (4), red deer (2), roe deer (2), hare (7), small mammal, probably *Rattus* sp (1), large ungulate (38), small ungulate (17), indeterminate mammal (148), domestic fowl (10), indeterminate bird (1) and fragments of shells from cockle (*Cerastoderma* sp), wulk (*Littorina* sp), buckie (*Buccinum undatum*), oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) and possible Iceland cyprina (*Arctica islandica*). Minimum numbers of animals in each context was generally one, although at least

two sheep/goats and bones from at least two different domestic fowl were recovered from the midden.

Discussion

The midden deposits were dominated by the bones of domestic mammals, principally cattle and sheep/goats. Pigs and horses were present but not in great quantities. This is in keeping with results from many other Scottish medieval sites, both urban and rural. That hunting had played a part in the economy of the site was attested by the presence of bones of red and roe deer, hare and a single bird bone from a wader species, most likely snipe or woodcock.

Interestingly, marine mollusc shells were also found at the site, possibly brought inland from one of the east coast ports in Angus, such as Arbroath or Montrose. The source of the oyster, ubiquitous in Scottish medieval deposits from the east coast, may have been the Forth, although it is thought that oyster beds may also have been present in the Tay estuary at this period.

Discussion

In any consideration of the changes and activities within this site it is important to consider what might be expected within the precinct of an episcopal palace. The excavated evidence from sites such as Glasgow (Clarke and Thomson 1987) in an urban context or Old Rayne (Murray and Murray, forthcoming) in a rural context and the documentary evidence from Old Aberdeen (RCAHMS 2007, 163), indicate that there would not only have been the 'palace' or residence of the bishop- but also many secondary structures such as stables, kitchens, brewhouses and bake houses, chapels, orchards and doocots. As the excavation of one edge of the Old Rayne precinct demonstrated, it is also important to be aware that structures and areas within the precinct could change their function and status, possibly several times. Within the urban context the precinct cannot be regarded as only the equivalent of a backland rig- but as a more complex and relatively self-contained unit. In a case such as Brechin, where in the post-Reformation period the bishop's residence continued in use as the manse, this insularity might be expected to continue.

The pottery and finds do not suggest any activity on the site prior to the 13th century, this may be lack of datable evidence or it could indicate that when the bishopric was first established in the mid-12th century the bishop may have lived elsewhere, possibly in the Chanonry where the Culdee community is thought to have been established.

From the 13th century the excavation has demonstrated that this area beside Bishop's Close was enclosed by a well-built stone wall along the edge of the Close and is likely to have been part of the bishop's precinct at least from this period. Later documentary evidence places the bishop's residence on the north side

of the Close and his orchards on the south side which slopes towards Skinner's Burn. The excavation lay at the edge of the precinct and activities there may often have been marginal and not necessarily fully reflecting the quality and fortunes of the residence itself. In its initial stage there was a stony path or yard, giving access to a pit, probably originally a well. Later the pit had been filled with domestic refuse including some sewage that spread up over the edges. A spread of charcoal and the distribution of a large number of broken roofing slates along the eastern side of the site, including slates that had slipped almost vertically into the pit suggests that a substantial building had stood off the site to the east of the path and had been damaged in a fairly sudden event, possibly in a fire that had destroyed the roof. It is notable that there were no spreads of stone rubble and such a building may have remained standing and been repaired. Fragments of broken window glass (nos 39–41) and a lead came fragment (no 17) found in Phase 2 and 3 contexts also suggest a high status building nearby. Spreads of burnt clay and charcoal appear to be part of the same destructive event and may possibly indicate that there had been a clay-walled structure nearby, this is however unlikely to have been strong enough to carry the weight of the slates and while it could derive from a smaller building it could equally have been from a clay-walled oven or similar feature. The dating evidence suggest that this destruction took place in the late 13th or early 14th century and it is tempting to relate it to the Wars of Independence and the siege of the castle on the far side of Skinner's Burn in 1303; however fire was a common event in medieval towns and it is equally likely to have been caused by a localised domestic incident. The environmental evidence suggests that after the fire there may have been an initial period- perhaps only a year or so when the area around the pit was fairly untidy with nettles and other waste ground weeds growing in the vicinity. Later, both the earlier features and the burnt debris were sealed by a thick layer of homogenous earth interpreted above as cultivated garden ground with midden material added to it on a regular, possibly annual basis.

Such deep 'garden earths' are common in medieval Scottish burghs and have been the subject of some discussion. One argument (Clark 1997, 142) is that they are the result of earth being brought in to a site from elsewhere and used for cultivation; in such a scenario finds within the layer would bear no significance to the site on which they were found. Others (Golding et al 2010) would argue that domestic waste from the property was used to add soil fertility or simply dumped to dispose of it. Carter (2001) has used soil analysis on a site in St Andrew's to provide a thought provoking challenge regarding how these deep deposits may be interpreted, postulating two possible models: the importation of garden soil and subsequent cultivation or the gradual and continual accumulation of soils through intensive activity, including the construction and use of wooden buildings, pits and other features

that remain unrecognised because of constant biological mixing of the soil.

On the Brechin site there is some evidence to argue for gradual accumulation with both biological and cultivation mixing the deposited materials. Beside the precinct wall in Area 2 there was a small scatter of stones from the wall after the 'midden' had built up c 500mm above the top of the wall's foundation trench and above burnt material and slates that had banked up against the base of the wall; this scatter was sealed by the continued build-up of the midden. The far redder colour of the midden at the eastern end of the site has been interpreted as the result of the re-working of burnt clay and other material derived from Phase 2, possibly collapse from a building or other structure; the unmixed condition of part of this same deposit where it had slumped into the pit and where it was banked against the face of the precinct wall suggests that a major agent of the reworking in the more open areas of the site was cultivation as biological mixing could be expected to have extended to these undisturbed areas. However it is not inconceivable that some of the mixing may have been done by pigs for household consumption being penned on garden ground. Carter (2001) rightly argues that both biological mixing and cultivation may remove the traces of many activities; wooden fences, animal pens or earth-trodden paths could easily have existed here and left no evidence. We can however be reasonably confident that no major buildings of stone or timber were within this small area at least in the earlier period of deposition as even with timber buildings some of the roof supports and major structural timbers such as door jambs could be expected to have penetrated the subsoil (cf buildings from Perth High Street, Murray 2011). Analysis of the pottery also suggests the mixing of material with sherds from one pot with applied decorative roundels being spread between the Phase 2 burnt deposits and the Phase 3 midden, suggesting the cultivation of existing burnt material up into the 'midden'. The very abraded nature of most of the Phase 3 pottery and of the bone from the lower levels of the midden can also be attributed to the constant reworking of the soil. This may also be the reason why the charred cereal grain was so abraded and preservation of beetle remains was poor.

The content of the deposit which included fuel remnants, pottery, bone, and burnt bone suggests the addition of largely domestic waste, argued to have been a common addition in Scottish burghs as a soil fertiliser (Golding et al 2010) but also perhaps simply a way of rubbish disposal. Anyone who has to dispose of ashes and cinders, animal manure and composted rubbish will appreciate how quickly it builds up. In the medieval context, as the environmental evidence suggests, human and animal dung and products such as waste rushes from floors are also likely. We may envisage that within the precinct such rubbish may have been piled in heaps in less frequented areas. The regular spreading of such dumps and subsequent cultivation would create the type of evidence found in Brechin. We could perhaps

envisage the growing of vegetables for the episcopal household such as onions, leeks, garlic and kale, all known from 13th and 14th century Scotland (Dickson and Dickson 2000, 196–7). The environmental analysis of the secondary, Phase 2, fill of the Phase 1 pit included evidence of heather, possibly in peat and there was a peaty layer in the lower pit fill. Peat and sand may also have been brought on to the site, not only as building materials but also as sealing or 'clean' layers as shown on sites with organic survival such as High Street Perth (Perry et al 2001) or St Paul Street, Aberdeen (Murray 1982, 53–62). References in the Brechin Kirk Treasurer's accounts (Thoms 1972, 59) mention the dumping of rubbish even up to the doors of the Cathedral as late as the mid-17th century. Similarly within the episcopal precinct at Old Rayne (Murray and Murray forthcoming) a deep deposit of animal bone from food debris had been dumped in a derelict building during the late 14th/15th century, illustrating that there should be no presumption that the whole area around the bishop's palace was necessarily orderly or particularly clean. The nature and extent of the Phase 3 midden must also be seen in relation to a 1.4m depth of similar deposits recorded by Sherriff (1992, 355–8) some 30m NE of the present site, during excavation of the site of a garage behind 5 Church Street (Illus 1). Those deposits, which were dated on the basis of pottery to the mid 13th to early 14th century, sloped steeply down to the south and were considered by the excavator to have derived from the Church Street frontage rather than the bishop's palace.

In summary the midden/garden earth on this site appears to have been a gradual accumulation with some evidence to suggest that cultivation as well as biological mixing has created the homogeneity of this deposit and although there is some possibility of minor or temporary structures, there was no evidence of major structures at this edge of the precinct. It is argued that there is likely to have been dumping of domestic rubbish from within the precinct and therefore relevant to the episcopal household.

There is no demonstrable change within this area of the bishop's precinct from the early 14th century until stone drains were dug across the site through the top of the midden. These can not be dated but it is possible that the earlier drain could relate to a general tidying of the precinct between 1429 and 1450 during documented building works initiated by Bishop Carnock. The paucity of 15th-century and later pottery may suggest less rubbish being dumped here from that period onwards.

There is nothing else on the excavated site to reflect Bishop Carnock's building activities, but the remnants of Carnock's tower, a formal gateway into Bishop's Close from the High Street give an indication of a new level of sophistication in the main structures. The documentary references should perhaps be seen in relation to the contemporary remodelling of other episcopal palaces such as Spynie, Moray (Lewis and Pringle, 2002) Fetternear (Dransart, P and Trigg, J

2008), Old Rayne, Aberdeenshire (Murray and Murray, forthcoming), and Old Aberdeen (RCAHMS 2007, 162) and to the increasing use of stone construction in high status domestic architecture from this period (Murray 2011, 134–5).

The pottery and other artefacts do not include any overtly religious items but are unsurprisingly much what might be expected from any relatively high status household such as a manorial family or a wealthy merchant, although the number of coins on such a small site is perhaps unusual. The unidentified iron object with silver or copper wire inlay (no 21) seems to be a fairly unusual find but as the inlay could only be discerned by x-ray, such artefacts may be more common than it would appear. The glass vessel (no 38) may be an import from France or the Low Countries and imported pottery has been identified from Yorkshire and the Low Countries but none of these would be out of place on any relatively wealthy urban site. The bone evidence of the consumption of hare, red and roe deer suggests hunting which may have taken place on the bishop's nearby rural manor at Farnell, some five miles southeast of the town.

On this site, the foundations of the 18th-century manse have removed evidence of the later medieval period but the site as a whole shows the huge potential for both medieval and later evidence surviving in other areas of the episcopal palace precinct and indeed elsewhere in Brechin.

Acknowledgements

The excavation was funded by Angus Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund under the City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative and was made possible by Brechin Cathedral. Thanks are due to Sarah Kettles of the Brechin THI for initiating and administering the project. We would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to the more than 50 local volunteers who worked on site and all the members of the Cathedral community who helped behind the scenes – the enthusiasm and hard work of everyone made even the rainy days enjoyable! We are grateful to Gordon Hill for discussion of stone work found on the site and to Peter Morris for undertaking a geophysical survey of the site. Thanks are also due to Margot Wright for the conservation of the finds and to Jan Dunbar for the finds illustrations. The site drawing of the outer face of the Phase 5 wall was drawn by Nick Pilzack.

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Abstract

Excavations in Bishop's Close, Brechin revealed a 13th-century wall and pit within what is believed to be the precinct of the medieval bishop's palace, sealed beneath a 13th and 14th century cultivated midden deposit. Foundations of later buildings were excavated, including a post-reformation manse. Medieval finds included six coins, an almost complete 14th century Low Countries Greyware pitcher and a fragment of an unusual imported glass goblet.

Keywords

bishop
episcopal palace
glass
Low Countries Greyware
manse
midden
precinct wall
Yorkshire ware

The publication of this paper has been funded by Angus Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund under the City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative.