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Mapping the History of Perth

Theresa Hughes, Chair PSNS
Archaeological & Historical Section

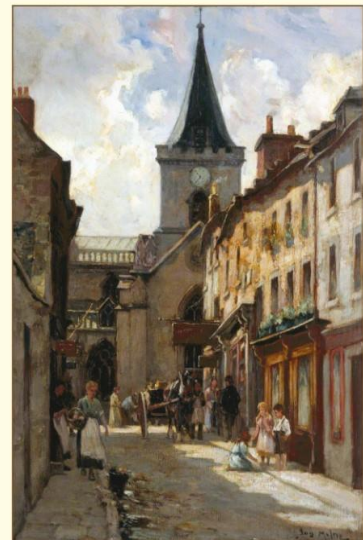
The Perthshire Society of Natural Science is joining in partnership with the Historic Towns Trust to contribute to a pan-European project described as the European Atlases of Historic Towns. Inspired from the devastation of the Second World War, the project seeks to record the history of important historical towns and cities in an easy-to-read form and detailed Gazetteer. Funding has been secured for the first stage of the Perth project thanks to the Thompson Trust, The Guildry Incorporation of Perth, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, and the support of local organisations. The only other city mapped in Scotland was Glasgow (mapped in 1969), so Perth is delighted to have been asked to participate. Historic Towns Trust say – ‘Close to the city of Perth is Scone Abbey, historically home of the Stone of Scone (the ‘Stone of Destiny on which kings of

Scotland were traditionally crowned. This enhanced the early importance of the city, and Perth became known as a ‘capital’ of Scotland due to the frequent residence there of the royal court. Due to Perth’s situation on the Tay the city became one of the richest burghs in the country, having been granted Royal Burgh status by 1127, engaging in trade with France, the Low Countries, and the Baltic, and importing goods such as Spanish silk and French wine’.

Significant sites will be located using the 1910 OS map of Perth as a base. The printed map will give a short history of the city through a gazetteer that will include illustrations in the form of engravings, watercolours or early photographs. The map is designed for locals and visitors and educational organisations.

AN HISTORICAL MAP OF PERTH

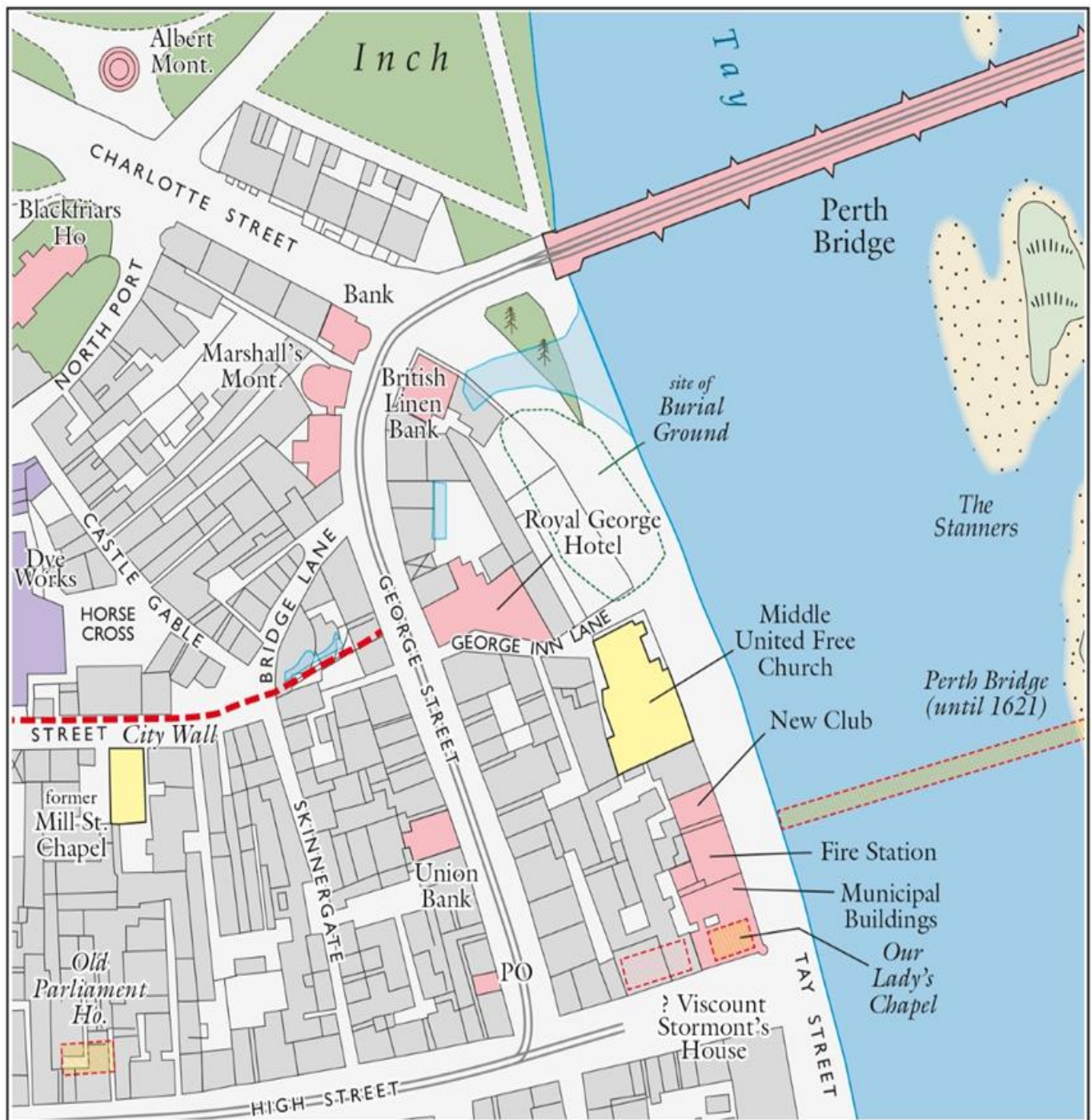
MEDIEVAL CITY AND REGIONAL TOWN



SHOWING MAJOR MEDIEVAL
AND LATER BUILDINGS
AND PLACES OF HISTORIC INTEREST
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND
EXPLANATORY GAZETTEER

TOWN & CITY
HISTORICAL
MAPS n°18

A number of large English cities, such as London, York, Oxford, Winchester and Norwich, have been mapped but smaller places, such as Alnwick, have also been included. Some towns also have complementary Atlases. An Atlas is the second phase of the project where much greater detail is gathered into a handsome portfolio.



It is the Trust's ambition to have completed a Historic Town Atlas for every historic area of Britain by 2050. On the European mainland, beginning in 1973, over 500 important cities have been recorded in this way. Perth's Polish twin town, Bydgoszcz, was mapped in 1997.

Having secured the funding for the map the Perthshire Society of Natural Science is enjoying the challenge this project inspires. The intention is to have the map completed and published for the opening of the new Perth Museum.

Professor Bruce Proudfoot, OBE, FRSGS (1930-2022): an appreciation by David Munro

The death of Professor Bruce Proudfoot in February 2022 saw the passing of a distinguished academic figure whose career exemplified the assertion that geography is the most integrative of all disciplines. This he ably demonstrated from his earliest days as a student and then a researcher and lecturer at Queen's University in Belfast where he developed a strong interest in archaeology. Amongst his early publications in this field were papers on the Cathedral Hill, Downpatrick, gold find and the finds from Coney Island, Lough Neagh. In 1983 he also played an important role in editing *Site, environment and economy* in the Symposia of the Association for Environmental Archaeology. Continuing to publish in the field of archaeology as



well as geography, Bruce subsequently proved a constant source of support to his wife Edwina in her work as a noted promoter of historic heritage and archaeology after their marriage in 1961.

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on September 24th, 1930, the son of Bruce and Cecilia Proudfoot, Vincent Bruce Proudfoot obtained both a 1st class honours degree (1951) and a doctorate (1957) from Queen's University, Belfast. A career in geography took off on his appointment as a research officer with the Nuffield Quaternary Research Unit in Belfast, followed by nearly a decade as a lecturer in geography, first at Queen's University, Belfast, and then at the University of Durham. A period of eight years as an associate professor and then professor of geography at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, led to his eventual appointment as professor of geography at the University of St Andrews, a post he held for nearly two decades from 1974 to 1993. During the 1960s he also enjoyed visiting fellowships with the University of Auckland in New Zealand and with the Association of Commonwealth Universities in Australia.

Throughout his career and subsequently whilst holding an emeritus professorship in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development at St Andrews, Bruce maintained his interest in antiquities and archaeology. This was clearly reflected in his appointments as a Trustee of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. In 1985 he was also president of anthropology and archaeology in the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

In addition to these influential appointments Bruce's wide reach saw him appointed general secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (1991-96) and both chairman of council and Vice-President of the Royal Scottish Geographical

Society. In recognition of his services to education he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in 1991. Six years later, in 1997, Bruce was the recipient of the Bicentenary Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and was invested as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

A familiar face with his wife Edwina at TAFAC conferences, Bruce Proudfoot played to the end a key role with Edwina in the St Andrews Heritage Trust. To many who knew him, Bruce was always highly regarded as a trusty friend offering invaluable support and advice as well as much-needed good humour.

The Greenford Cist

-- Christina Donald

Abertay Historical Society's Fieldwork Division was alerted recently to the presence of the capstone of a short cist on the campus of the University of Dundee. The stone has resided there since 1957 but it was originally discovered during ploughing on Greenford Farm near Arbirlot in Angus. Its Canmore reference is ID 34710.

Details of the cist's excavation are given in a paper, *Survey of Archaeological sites in the parish of Arbirlot, Angus* compiled by Elise Wilson and published in *Aspects of Antiquity* (1966) by the Archaeological Section of Abertay Historical Society. The publication can be freely downloaded from the Abertay Historical Society's website ([https://abertay.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Aspects of Antiquity r.pdf](https://abertay.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Aspects_of_Antiquity_r.pdf)).

An image of the capstone, lifted from the cist, with the cist stones still upright in the ground is in the frontispiece of the publication. The same image is reproduced on Canmore. The short cist was discovered during ploughing operations in 1957 in a field to the right of the road leading to the farm of Greenford, and to the right of the Greenford or Rottenrow Burn. The cist did not contain



The current location of the capstone.



The full extent of the capstone exposed.

any grave goods but human bones were found and removed for examination by Professor D.R. Dow of Queen's College, Dundee. Today, the location of these bones is unknown and research into their whereabouts is continuing.

The capstone, with a commemorative plaque attached, is located just behind the former University Chapel at the side of the pathway leading to 1 Airlie Place. But is it

just the capstone? The plaque and the Aspects of Antiquity entry both mention that 'stones' were re-located to the University.

After gaining permission from the University, members of Abertay Historical Society's Fieldwork Division, trowels in hand, got to work to find out. On Saturday 12 November 2022 turf was lifted from around the capstone and trowelling around it exposed its edges and full extent. Focussing on the lower right-hand corner of the stone, trowelling beneath it exposed part of



The stones beneath the lower right-hand corner.

another stone. There was a gap between the capstone and the stone underneath, but the gap was too narrow to fit a camera inside. Feeling by hand however, the edge of a stone standing vertically, with a second stone meeting it at the corner could be detected along with a void behind them. No more soil was removed because the capstone is resting on earth rather than the side-slabs and the turf was reinstated. Even with this limited investigation it would appear that the four side-slabs of the cist were reconstructed in some form beneath the capstone.

But questions remain. Whose decision was it to reconstruct a Bronze Age short cist on the University campus? Who commissioned the plaque attached to the stone? What happened to the skeletal remains from the cist? Was anything discovered about them? Historic Environment Scotland holds more documents related to the excavation that have yet to be digitised so a visit to their archives may answer some of these questions.

Images courtesy of Christina Donald.

St Martins: a case of swings and roundabouts

A recent sojourn into St Martins parish (north of Scone) resulted in your editor being surprised twice – the first marked by a deep disappointment; the second by a reminder that even in areas we think we know quite well there are still aspects of our heritage that remain to be recorded.

The first surprise was a realisation that the remains of a prehistoric stone setting he had recorded in April 1989 as part of the RCAHMS South-east Perth survey had effectively been destroyed. The second surprise was the discovery of the remains of an early 20th century private hydro-electric facility that supplied power to St Martins House (now known as St Martins Abbey).

The stone setting (Canmore ID is 28632; NO13SE 9) lies immediately west of the old turnpike road about 800m NNE of St Martins. It has been known about since at least the middle of the 19th century and is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 25-inch map (Perthshire 1866, Sheet LXXXVI.3). At that time the stones stood within some form of earthwork, and it is quite possible that there was originally a circle of stones here. By the of time the RCAHMS survey in 1989 the site had clearly been disturbed and comprised what appeared to be a row of three large boulders, only the northerly



A view of the disturbed stone setting taken from the SW. Image copyright: J Sherriff.

one being erect (1.05m high) and certainly *in situ*. Since 1989, the scheduled monument (SM7297) has suffered further disturbance which seems to have occurred before 2005, when Nick Brand photographed the site in its present state. See https://www.themodernantiquarian.com/site/4087/st_martins.html

The hydro-electric facility is situated on the St Martins Burn 160m east of Burnside. It is unclear when it was constructed but the reservoir that would have supplied a turbine is depicted on OS maps at the beginning of the 20th century.



A view from the NNE of the 'Powerhouse' at the WSW end of the reservoir. Water to power the turbine entered the turbine chamber via a concrete channel (centre left of image and bottom left image on the next page). Images copyright: J Sherriff.

The reservoir (now drained) was a substantial body of water, measuring some 135m from ENE to WSW by 55m transversely. A dam at the WSW end has been partly removed, but it has measured 10m thick at the base by at least 3m high. Incorporated within the dam and still standing is a concrete and brick powerhouse that originally housed a turbine and generator to covert water power into electricity, and a transformer to send that electricity to St Martins House initially but probably also to other parts of the estate.



A portion of the OS 25-inch to a mile map (Perthshire and Clackmannanshire 1901, Sheet LXXXVI.7) depicting (upper centre in image) the reservoir that powered the water turbine. That the reservoir was also used for recreation is evidenced by the presence of a small island (duck island?). A boathouse, the ruinous remains of which (image bottom right) stand on its N side of the reservoir, and the hydro powerhouse are not shown but, equally, they are also not shown on later editions of the OS mapping including a revised 1:10560 scale map of 1955 despite the fact that they must have been in existence.



View from ENE of a boathouse on the north side of the former Reservoir. Image copyright: J Sherriff.

Hidden in Plain Sight: a Bronze Age barrow only recently recognised.

Kyle Armstrong, Designations Officer, Historic Environment Scotland (HES).



View of the barrow from southwest (Copyright: HES)

Working in the Designations Team at HES offers plenty of opportunities to study and visit sites as part of assessing them for designation. However, it is unusual for a proposal to arrive on our desks for a site that has no record in the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) - also known as Canmore.

Last year, a member of the public proposed a possible prehistoric burial mound near Earlsferry in Fife for designation. We always start understanding a site by carrying out desk-based research, but in this case the lack of any records for the mound, not even antiquarian references, offered us less of a lead than usual. The site stands on a ridge known as Grass Law, just northwest of Flagstaff Hill. The mound is visible on aerial and satellite images, with field boundaries converging on it and skirting around its base. Helpfully, the proposal also included some photos and a site description, so it certainly appeared that this was a monument that had remained 'under-the-radar'. A site visit was needed to help verify the physical remains and try to categorise it as a field monument.

In September 2022, I visited the site accompanied by a colleague from our Archaeology Survey Team. The visit pooled our knowledge and experience for categorising and assessing the site for designation. We were also able to collect information in order to create an entry (site description) for inclusion in the NRHE, which is available through our Canmore website. On arriving at the farm below the hill, the massive mound was obvious. It sits on the ridge, prominently visible above the natural slope and land around it. It consists of a large earth and stone grass-grown mound, measuring about 32m from east to west by 29m transversely and up to 5m in height. The surrounding historic field boundaries, built as stone dykes, respect the edge of the mound and curve around its outer edge. The visit confirmed the status of the mound as an artificial feature and comparison with other similar sites allowed us to confidently identify it as a barrow. A round barrow is a type of

prehistoric earthen burial monument likely to date to the late 3rd millennium and first half of the 2nd millennium BC, but most likely to be of Bronze Age date. The barrow is likely to contain one or more burials (inhumations and/or cremations), and possibly grave goods and palaeobotanical remains. There is also good potential for the survival of secondary or 'satellite' burials and related archaeological evidence for funerary pyres or other funerary activity in the area surrounding the barrow.



View of barrow mound and surrounding ground from south (Copyright: HES)

A trench measuring 17.9m in length has been dug into the barrow from the east, exposing a core of earth containing some loose stones (see image next page). The views from the barrow are expansive and even stretch over the Firth of Forth (on a clear day!).

Back at my desk, further investigation revealed an interesting mapping history. The trench cut into the barrow summit may relate to an historic triangulation point mapped by the Ordnance Survey (OS) in 1855 and 1896, or it could be an undocumented antiquarian excavation. The triangulation point is long-gone -- removed in the early 20th century. It is common for historic OS triangulation points to be placed on prominent summits and sometimes the OS survey team would make use of archaeological sites that had a useful viewpoint. However, it is very unusual for the OS to use an archaeological feature in this way and not recognise or record that it as a site of antiquity. The barrow stands out prominently out from the hill and ridge



Ordnance Survey 1 inch to a mile map, published in 1900. Grass Law is shown with a triangulation point and on the Parish boundary. (Copyright: Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland).

and is clearly not a natural feature. The 19th century OS team would have been familiar with such features and often recognised them. For many sites the OS record is the earliest written, but this is not the case at Green Law. The barrow has remained unrecognised until now, even escaping the attention of modern map makers, including the OS.

Another interesting feature about the location of the barrow is that it lies at the meeting of two historic parishes. Ainslie's map of 1775 and of 1801, the Sharp, Greenwood and Fowler map of 1828 and the James Fraser map of 1841 all depict a hillock feature at the location of the barrow. Later 19th century OS mapping also show that the parish boundaries of Kilconquhar and Newburn meet at the barrow.

It is intriguing that the barrow has been a feature where parish boundaries meet, and this may not be coincidental. It supports the theory that some prehistoric burial and ceremonial monuments were located on the boundaries of prehistoric land divisions. Could the barrow have been on the edge of land used or managed by one prehistoric community and it was a formal marker as such? An artificial feature of social significance that also delineated land? This we will probably never know for certain but it does form part of the historic parish boundary that would have originally been drawn up in the medieval period. It is interesting and comforting to believe that the 4000-year-old burial site was not totally forgotten and, even without direct acknowledgement, it has formed part of our landscape and understanding of land management through mapping for many centuries.

The barrow was scheduled as Flagstaff Hill barrow, 725m ENE of Blinkbonny (Scheduled Monument reference SM13770), and is now on Canmore as Flagstaff Hill, Barrow (Canmore ID 374001).



View of north side of barrow with depression on summit marking the trench (Copyright: HES)