



**Property in Care (PIC)ID:** PIC046

**Designations:** Scheduled Monument (SM90299)

**Taken into State care:** 1939 (Guardianship)

**Last reviewed:** 2004

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# TEALING EARTH HOUSE



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# TEALING EARTH HOUSE

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Tealing is an Iron Age souterrain set within a fenced enclosure situated in arable farmland near Carlungie farmstead. Its form is typical of the souterrains in Angus, comprising a banana-shaped subterranean chamber some 25m in length with a maximum width of about 2.5m and an internal height of about 2m. The monument was systematically dismantled and rebuilt in conservation works in 1979

Like many souterrains in Scotland, the souterrain was discovered accidentally during ploughing. Following discovery in 1871, Andrew Jervise, the celebrated Angus antiquary, conducted an excavation three years later. His careful investigation of the site revealed that the souterrain was divided into a series of compartments, along with evidence that the structure was roofed with massive flat slabs. Two cup-and-ring marked stones are incorporated within the souterrain's corbelled walls.

Unfortunately, the finds from the excavation are now missing, but Jervise provides good descriptions of them in his report. These included a range of domestic debris, such as animal bones, sherds of native pottery, and 10 broken quern stones, as well as Roman glass and pottery of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD date.

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## CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

### Historical Overview

1871: souterrain discovered during agricultural operations.

1874: excavations within the souterrain carried out by Andrew Jervise.

1937: monument is Scheduled.

1939: Tealing becomes a Guardianship monument.

1958: investigations of the field show the souterrain to be well-preserved.

1970s: various consolidation and rebuilding works carried out at Tealing.

1997: monument is re-Scheduled.

### Archaeological Overview

Souterrains are a characteristic feature of Iron-Age settlements in many parts of Scotland, although marked clusters occur in Fife, Perthshire and Angus (Wainwright's 'Southern Pictland'), Aberdeenshire, the Moray Firth estuary, the Western Isles, Caithness and Sutherland, and the Northern Isles. While the majority of sites are known through aerial photography, an increasing number of sites have been excavated in recent times. Evidence suggests the more northerly examples are amongst the earliest souterrains, dating from the late centuries BC, while those in Fife, Angus and Perthshire are later, with dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD.

Various uses for souterrains have been suggested, ranging from places of defence or shelter in times of strife, winter accommodation for farm stock such as cattle or sheep, and stores for agricultural produce. As souterrains vary considerably in size and form throughout Scotland, it is unlikely they had a single and identical purpose.

Excavated in 1871, Tealing is typical of the Fife, Perthshire and Angus group with its narrow entrance passage, curved chamber and corbelled walls, but it lacks the complexity of design or the sheer size of souterrains such as Carlungie or Ardestie. The 1871 excavation confined itself only to the souterrain, and did not explore the surrounding area for remains of an associated settlement, as seen at Carlungie and Ardestie.

In his report, Jervise notes the discovery of massive slabs, interpreted as roofing material, within the entrance passage. A cup-and ring marked stone is incorporated into the north wall of the entrance passage near, while a cup marked stone was discovered to the south of the entranceway. Finds from the 1871 excavation included charcoal, animal bones and teeth, a Samian sherd (possibly 2nd century), a bracelet, bronze rings, cinerary urn fragments, 10 querns, whorls, and remains of stone cups. By 1932, these finds were missing but a fragment of Roman glassware from a 1st-2nd century 'pillar-moulded' bowl found here was donated to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1940.

### Artistic/Architectural Overview

Banana-shaped on plan, Tealing exhibits many of the characteristic architecture of souterrains in this area. The structure was built within a trench cut through the surrounding ground using massive boulders as a foundation course, the walls being composed of small boulders and split flagstones. The upper walls were corbelled out to support a roof structure, which was probably composed of the flat slabs Jervise discovered within. Entry to the souterrain is by a narrow, curving passage leading down from the surface, with a pair of vertical door lintels marking the point of entrance to the main chamber. The interior of the souterrain was subdivided into two compartments with a pair of vertical orthostats partitioning the furthest quarter of the chamber.

Overall, the structure is similar to other souterrains in the Fife, Perthshire and Angus group. Unfortunately, consolidation work carried out at Tealing in the 1970s has altered the architecture of the souterrain, with the corbelling now largely dismantled and a greater number of pinnings inserted into the drystone structure.

### Social Overview

Unfortunately there is no evidence to make an assessment of the monument's current social significance, although it features in several popular archaeological guides.

Constructing a souterrain would have required significant effort on the part of the community in terms of labour and organisation. As a store for the community's agricultural produce it was probably an important building, especially if it was part of the trade in such goods with the Roman military or other communities.

### Spiritual Overview

It is unknown whether the souterrain has any spiritual or ritual significance today. However, it is likely that such a structure may have been part of the local community's rituals associated with significant events such as the harvest. The

incorporation of the cup-and-ring marked stone into the stonework of the souterrain may be accidental, but could be re-use of an object regarded as ritually significant by the builders.

### Aesthetic Overview

The souterrain lies within a small enclosure in an arable field reached by an informally arranged access path from the south. On the other hand, the setting allows visitors to place the site within an appropriate context given its purpose as an Iron Age agricultural store.

Repair and consolidation works in the 1970s have altered the character of the souterrain.

### What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

The extent of any associated settlement remains unknown. While Jervise excavated the souterrain with some care, no attempts were made to explore the surrounding area for settlement remains.

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## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Key points

- Souterrains are a characteristic feature of Iron Age settlement sites across Scotland, but most fall into one of several well-defined regional groups which share common characteristics. Tealing is part of a large group of over 50 known souterrains in Fife, Perthshire and Angus. Although souterrains vary considerably in size, structure and age, it is believed they may have been used to store agricultural produce such as grain, dairy products and meat.
- Most of these souterrains were built in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD and were abandoned by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. There is a suggestion that the building, use and abandonment of souterrains in this area may have been linked to the Roman military presence in Scotland. Most souterrains of the Fife, Perthshire and Angus group were systematically dismantled and infilled.
- Souterrains formed part of Iron-Age settlements, and excavated examples have revealed often complex sites where occupation continued long after the souterrain was abandoned.
- Like several sites in the area, a cup-and-ring marked stone has been incorporated into the stonework of the main chamber.
- At Tealing, excavations revealed a number of finds, including high-quality Roman ceramics and glassware. The interior of the souterrain was subdivided, with a small room at the end of the main chamber formed by a pair of upright orthostats.

Associated Properties

**PICs: Ardestie & Carlungie** (larger and more complex, but has shares many of the same architectural features); Pitcur (offers the visitor the opportunity to experience a partially-roofed souterrain); Barns of Airlie (near complete example of the Fife, Perthshire and Angus group).

Keywords souterrain; corbelling; orthostat; cup-and-ring marked stone; Iron Age; samian ware; Roman glass; cinerary urn; spindle-whorls