

3 THE SITE



Illus 1 Location plan showing evaluation trenches (T1-T6), 1990 excavation and 2008 excavation areas 1 and 2

Old Rayne lies in Rayne parish on the east side of the River Urie, to the east of the A96 road between Inverurie and Huntly, approximately 40km from Aberdeen (illus 1). The site of the bishop's manor (NGR: NJ 6758 2851) can be seen on the east side of the village as a prominent mound on part of which are built the village school and schoolhouse. The line of the ditch surrounding the manor is visible as a distinct dip in the ground on the north and east sides.

The site (NMRS No.: NJ62NE 2) is variously named as Bishop of Aberdeen's House, Bishop's Palace, Bishop's Manse and described as the 'bishop's manor', 'moated homestead' or an 'earthwork castle' (Shepherd 2006, 105). In this report the term 'episcopal manor' will be used, following the definition in the RCAHMS survey of Donside (RCAHMS 2007, 161–3) and, indeed, using the term 'manor' that was used in the medieval period for this residence.

The centralisation, by the 15th century if not before,

of the administration of the bishop's Clatt and Tullynessle lands with those of Rayne and Daviot (Innes 1845, i, 217–8) is logical in relation to early roadways as the road through the village – the St Lawrence Road – is possibly a medieval route associated with the Lourin Fair and described (NMRS No.: NJ62NE110 and NJ72NW 33) as the old road between Aberdeen and the north-west; a distance of some 40km (25 miles) – a day's journey on foot, roughly 3–5 hours on a horse. Assuming that the roads shown on Roy's map of 1747/55 were generally established medieval routes, a journey from Old Rayne to the bishop's lands in Clatt (c 5km, 12 miles) could follow a route shown parallel to the Gaudie burn from a point on the Lawrence road just a few miles south-east of Old Rayne. From Clatt to the lands at Tullynessle (c 2km, 5 miles) Roy's map shows a route through the hills at Suie. From Old Rayne, the management of the Clatt and Tullynessle lands was within far more practical distances than from Aberdeen.