

# Parliament House Gas Main, Edinburgh: Watching Brief Report

AOC 21299  
5<sup>th</sup> April 2009



## Parliament House Gas Main, Edinburgh

### Watching Brief Report

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<b>For:</b>	Interserve Project Services Ltd Parliament House Parliament Square High Street Edinburgh EH1 1RQ on behalf of Scottish Court Service
<b>National Grid Reference (NGR):</b>	NT 25727 73472
<b>AOC Project No:</b>	21299
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<b>Date of Fieldwork:</b>	February 2009
<b>Date of Report:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2009

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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<b>Draft Report Stage:</b> Draft	<b>Date:</b> 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2009

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Appendix 4	<i>Discovery and Excavation in Scotland</i> Report

## Abstract

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This report represents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group at Parliament House, Edinburgh, (centred NGR: NT 25727 73472). The work was commissioned by Interserve Project Services Ltd on behalf of the Scottish Courts Service to address the potential impact of a service trench required for the rerouting of gas main within the close to the west of the Solicitor's Building, directly north of the Cowgate, Edinburgh. The archaeological works were designed in accordance with the principles inherent within SPP23 (2008) and PAN42 (1994).

The objective of the work was to monitor all groundbreaking works associated with the new service trench. The work was carried out during February 2009 and was conducted according to a scope of works which was agreed in advance by the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS).

The watching brief revealed the presence of presumed *in situ* medieval deposits in which human burials were uncovered. Additionally the watching brief uncovered an assemblage of disarticulated human bone and pottery from previous modern ground-breaking associated with the insertion of utility services. Further post excavation analyses of the recovered material are recommended.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was required by Interserve Project Services Ltd on behalf of the Scottish Court Service to address the potential impact of a service trench required for the rerouting of gas main within the close to the west of the Solicitor's Building, directly north of the Cowgate, Edinburgh (Figure 1). The proposed development site is located immediately behind the Supreme Court and Court of Session buildings with the works required as part of a programme of refurbishment and upgrading. The area lies within the administrative jurisdiction of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), who are advised on archaeological matters by Mr John Lawson of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS). The archaeological works were required with regard to planning application 07/03862/FUL in accordance with SPP23 (2008) and PAN42 (1994). Given the proximity of the excavations to earlier identified archaeological remains, including human remains probably associated with the former graveyard of St Giles Cathedral, (Engl 2008), there was clearly the potential for the proposed works to encounter further archaeological material.

### 1.2 Location

- 1.2.1 The new gas service trench was located within the close immediately to the west of the Solicitor's Building, directly north of the Cowgate behind the Supreme Court and Court of Session buildings Edinburgh (NGR: NT 25727 73472; Figure 1). The close has a cobbled surface with tarmac patches and drains indicating presence of previous disturbances.

## 2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of the watching brief was:
- i) to determine the character, extent, quality, date and condition of any archaeologically significant remains that may be disturbed by the proposed development works;
  - ii) to liaise with CECAS and the client in the event of significant archaeological features and / or small finds being unearthed as to the most appropriate response in safeguarding these features either by preservation *in situ*, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The works involved an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of a service trench. Excavation was by means of a small mechanical digger initially utilising a toothed bucket to lift cobbles then reverting to a smooth bladed bucket for all further excavations. Due to the presence of numerous utility services a certain amount of digging was also undertaken by hand. All ground breaking was monitored by an experienced field archaeologist. Figures 4 & 5 show the general depth of excavations undertaken.
- 3.2 All recording was carried out according to AOC Archaeology Group's standard practices. A black and white print and digital photographic record of the archaeological works was taken (Appendix 1).

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by a single archaeologist in predominantly dry bright weather conditions between 23rd and 26th February 2009. The following should be read in conjunction with the data presented in Appendices 1 & 3, Figures 2 - 5 and Plates 1 & 2.
- 4.1.2 The groundbreaking works involved the excavation of two service trenches. Trench 1 aligned E-W measured 0.6 m wide by 5.1 m long (Figure 2). Trench 2 also aligned E-W and lying approximately 3 m south of Trench 1, measured 0.5 m by 3.9 m (Figure 3). The works required that the service trenches were dug to a minimum depth of 0.90 m in permitting a safe depth for the gas main.

### 4.2 Trench 1 (Figures 2, 4 & 5)

- 4.2.1 Trench 1 was positioned against the external face of the western building forming the Close. Following the initial removal of the existing setts by hand the trench was then machine excavated. Under the setts lay a thin layer of bedding material which covered a thicker deposit of re-deposited material [102]. Soil [102] (between 0.88 m to 0.44 m thick) consisted of a dark brown gritty matrix in which numerous inclusions were present including oyster shell, disturbed disarticulated human bone (Find No.1), animal bone, post-medieval pottery (Find No.2), coal fragments, cinder pieces and stones. Soil [102] was heavily disturbed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century due to insertion of numerous services, [105], [107], [109] and [111].
- 4.2.2 Below soil [102] lay soil [104] which extended the length of Trench 1. This black, gritty sandy matrix contained the *in situ* remains of four disturbed burials: [113], [114], [115] and [116]. The skeletons were poorly preserved and were retained *in situ* after the relevant authorities (CECAS and Lothian & Borders Police) had been notified. Given the presence of such a density of human remains it was decided to attempt another route for the gas service and Trench 2 was opened to the south; thus very little excavation was conducted around the skeletons and the depth of soil [104] was not ascertained.
- 4.2.3 *Burial [113] (Plate 1)*  
Burial [113] consisted of an extended inhumation, presumed lying on its back, orientated on an E/W alignment with the head to the east (a Christian burial with the head to the east is unusual by not unknown). The remains visible included the upper and lower arm bones and shoulder of the right-hand side of skeleton. It is liable that foundations [103] at western end of trench were responsible for some of the truncation to the skeleton.
- 4.2.4 *Burial [114] (Plate 2)*  
Burial [114] consisted of a truncated extended inhumation, lying on its back and orientated in an E/W alignment with the head to the west. The remains visible included the left-hand side of the pelvis and left femur. Truncation, potentially due to service trench [109], appears to have removed the lower limbs. Additionally the right femur and side of pelvis as well as both hands and forearms would all be expected to be visible within trench suggesting they too have been lost to truncation. The remaining upper part of body and skull may survive beyond trench limits.
- 4.2.5 *Burials [115] and [116] (Plate 3)*  
Burials [115] and [116] lay side by side and both have suffered similar levels of truncation. The service trench to the west [109] has removed the much of the body from the pelvis to the head in both instances. The remains visible of [115] include the left femur and left and right lower leg bones,

whilst in case of [116] the left femur and left leg bone (tibia?) survive. Service [111] cuts across the ankles and feet of both burials though they may survive underneath the service pipe [112].

#### 4.3 Trench 2 (Figure 3)

- 4.3.3 Trench 2 was positioned to the south of Trench 1, and ran parallel to the edge of the Close. This trench was dominated by the presence of services. The basic stratigraphy present in Trench 1 continued into Trench 2, with setts and bedding material [101] lying over soil [102] however in this trench the presence of services including [107] and [109] continuing from Trench 1 meant that *in situ* medieval/late medieval deposits such [104] were not visible. Trench 2 never reached a depth greater than approximately 0.8 m.
- 4.3.4 At the western end of Trench 2 at a depth of between 0.4 m and 0.7 m were four large pieces of roughly hewn sandstone [117] which may have been the basal course or foundation to a wall (Plate 4). The stones extended from the northern section of the trench with only approximately 0.3 m protruding into the trench. The wall may have been aligned E/W and appeared unmortared; after superficial cleaning the stones were left *in situ*.

### 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The watching brief has demonstrated that the human remains found in 2008 within the northern end of the Close appear to extend across the Close as a whole. To the two bodies found in 2008 (Engl 2008) can be added a further four burials uncovered in Trench 1 which would suggest a densely packed burial site, presumably the outer edges of the cemetery site excavated in 2004 by AOC (Roy 2005). The fact the burials in Trench 1 were also present from 0.60 m ([115] & [116] to 0.95 m ([113]) in depth below current ground surface (approximately 68.70 m OD to 68.45 m OD respectively) is also suggestive that the burial site could conceivably contain the numerous layers and inter-cutting of burials typically found in many medieval/post-medieval cemeteries.
- 5.2 It is obvious that any further groundworks in this area are liable to disturb these remains and potentially other *in situ* burials (and very probably other archaeological material) and therefore would require an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation.

### 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 From the works conducted in Trench 1 and Trench 2 no *in situ* material was removed, however an assemblage of bone some of which is believed to human was recovered from [102] along side a small assemblage of pottery. In both instance these finds will require assessment and cataloguing.

### 7 BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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Engl, R 2008 *Parliament House Watching Brief: Data Structure Report*. Unpublished AOC Archaeology Archive Report.



Roy, M 2005 *Parliament House Phase 1C Evaluation: Data Structure Report*. Unpublished AOC Archaeology Archive Report.

SPP23 2008 *Scottish Planning Policy SPP23. Archaeology and Planning*. Nov.2008.

PAN42 1994 *Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology – the Planning Process and Scheduled Ancient Monument Procedures*. The Scottish Office Environment Department, January 1994.

# **Parliament House Gas Main: Watching Brief Report**

## **Section 2: Appendices**

## APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

### Black & White Print Film 1

Frame	Description	From
1-2	Registration shot	-
3-4	Detail of burial [113]	S
5-6	Detail of burial [113]	S
7-8	Detail of burial [114]	S
9-10	Detail of burial [115]	S
11-12	View of Trench 1 with burial [115] in foreground	E
13-14	View of Trench 2 showing service [107]	E
15-16	General view of Trench 1	S
17-18	Detail of wall [117]	E
19-20	General view Wall [117]	E
21-22	View of Trench 2 showing service [107]	E

### Digital Film 1

Frame	Description	From
1-2	Detail of burial [113]	S
3-4	Detail of burial [113]	S
5	Detail of burial [114]	S
6	Detail of burial [115]	S
7	View of Trench 1 with burial [115] in foreground	E
8	View of Trench 2 showing service [107]	E
9	General view of Trench 1	S
10	Detail of wall [117]	E
11	General view Wall [117]	E
12	View of Trench 2 showing service [107]	E
13	Detail of burial [114]	S
14	Detail of burial [114]	S
15	Details of burials [115] and [116]	W
16	Details of burials [115] and [116]	S
17	General view of Trench 1	W
18	General view of Trench 1	E
19	Close general view from southern side of Cowgate	S
20	View of pavement running along eastern side of close	S
21	General view of northern end of close	S
22	General view of northern end of close	SE

## APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No.	Context Description
101	Cobbled surface. The whole of the pend, except a N-S aligned gutter & kerbed pavement with concrete surface positioned along eastern side of pend, was covered by cobbles. The cobbles had a typical bevelled surface and lay upon on a bed of finer bedding material consisting of orange/brown sand. Present in both Trench 1 and Trench 2.
102	Mixed deposit consisting a dark brown gritty matrix in which numerous inclusions were present including oyster shell, disarticulated human bone, animal bone, pottery, coal fragments, cinder pieces and stones. Heavily disturbed in later 20 <sup>th</sup> century due to insertion of services and other excavations. Overlies [104] and underlies [101]. Present in both Trench 1 and Trench 2.
103	Stone foundations. Building on western side of pend had foundations that extended to a depth of at least 0.8 m and protruded out from wall line as they descended, creating a wider foundation/footing. Cut into [104]. Present over both Trench 1 and Trench 2.
104	<i>In situ</i> medieval/late medieval cemetery soil in which humans remains were uncovered. Dark gritty sandy matrix almost black in colour with inclusions of cinder, small stones, shell and <i>in situ</i> burials. Underlies [102] and truncated by modern service trenches. Present across trench 1 in depths from
105	Cut for small cast iron service pipe. Cut into [102] and filled by [106]. Underlies cobbles [101]. At least 0.3 m deep.
106	Fill of [105].
107	Cut for large plastic gas pipe. Cut into [102] and [104]. Filled by [108]. Underlies cobbles [101]. Approximately 1.0 m deep. Extends into Trench 2.
108	Fill of [107].
109	Cut for cast iron pipe. Cut into [102] and [104]. Filled by [110]. Underlies cobbles [101]. Approximately 1.0 m deep. Extends into Trench 2.
110	Backfilled material of redeposited [102] and service pipe.
111	Cut for cast iron pipe. Cut into [102] and [104]. The pipe lies directly over <i>in situ</i> burials [115] and [116]. Filled by [112]. Underlies cobbles [101]. Approximately 0.6 m deep.
112	Fill of [111].
113	<i>In situ</i> burial within [104]. An extended inhumation, presumed lying on back. Burial orientated in an E/W alignment with the head to the east. The remains visible included an upper and lower arm bones and shoulder of right-hand side of skeleton with majority of skeleton outwith the trench.
114	<i>In situ</i> burial within [104]. A truncated extended inhumation, lying on back. Burial orientated in an E/W alignment with the head to the west. The remains visible included the left-hand side of pelvis and left femur. Truncation, potentially due to service trench [109] appears to have removed the lower limbs. Additionally the right femur and right side of pelvis as well as both hands and forearms would all be expected to be visible within trench suggesting they too have been lost to truncation. The remaining upper part of body and skull may survive beyond trench limits.
115	<i>In situ</i> burial within [104]. An extended inhumation, presumed lying on back. Burial orientated in an E/W alignment with the head to the west. This burial lies side by side with burial [116] and both have suffered very similar levels of truncation. The service trench to the west [109] has removed the much of the body from the pelvis to the head. The remains visible include the left femur and left and right lower leg bones. Service [111] cuts across the ankles and feet, although they may survive underneath the service pipe [112].
116	<i>In situ</i> burial within [104]. An extended inhumation, presumed lying on back. Burial orientated in an E/W alignment with the head to the west. This burial lies side by side with burial [115] and

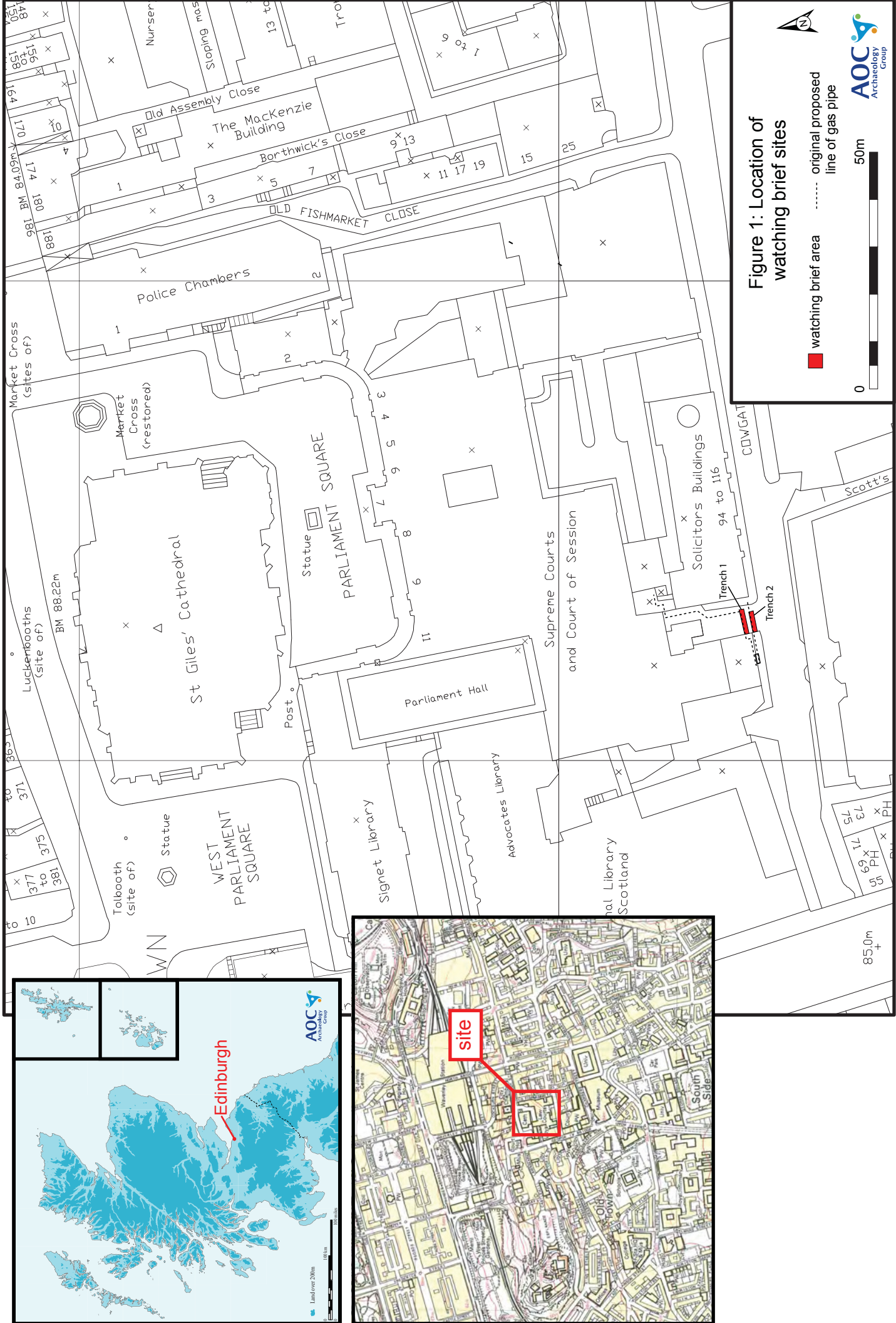
	both have suffered from similar levels of truncation. The service trench to the west [109] has removed the much of the body from the pelvis to the head. The remains visible are believed to be the left femur and left leg bone (tibia?). Service [111] cuts across the ankles and feet, although they may survive below service pipe [112].
117	Potential base of sandstone wall. Represented by four large stones which extended into the Trench 2, along its northern edge at a depth of c.0.5 m.

### APPENDIX 3: FINDS REGISTER

Find No.	Context No.	Find Description
01	[102]	Assemblage of bone some of which is human deriving from mixed fill [102] with smaller amounts from the service fills [[108], [110] and [112] (which are effectively redeposited [102] and [104]). Assumed that human bone present is disturbed from <i>in situ</i> burials originally within [104].
02	[102]	Assemblage of mixed pottery sherds deriving from mixed fill [102] with smaller amounts from the service fills [[108], [110] and [112] (which are effectively redeposited [102] and [104]).

#### APPENDIX 4: 'DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND' REPORT

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Edinburgh Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Parliament House Gas Main Watching Brief
PROJECT CODE:	AOC 21299
PARISH:	Edinburgh
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Lindsay Dunbar & Alan Duffy
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	<i>In situ</i> and disturbed human burials
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NT 25727 73472
START DATE (this season)	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2009
END DATE (this season)	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2009
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	AOC 20761
MAIN DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>A watching brief was undertaken to address the potential negative archaeological impact of a service trench required for the rerouting of gas main within the close immediately to the west of the Solicitor's Building, directly north of the Cowgate behind the Supreme Court and Court of Session Buildings, Edinburgh.</p> <p>The watching brief revealed the presence of presumed <i>in situ</i> medieval deposits in which four truncated human burials were uncovered. Additionally the watching brief uncovered an assemblage of disarticulated human bone and pottery from previous groundworks associated with the insertion of modern services.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	n/a
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Scottish Courts Service
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	c/o AOC Archaeology Group
EMAIL ADDRESS:	admin@aocarchaeology.com



**Figure 1: Location of watching brief sites**

■ watching brief area  
 ..... original proposed line of gas pipe



Trench 1

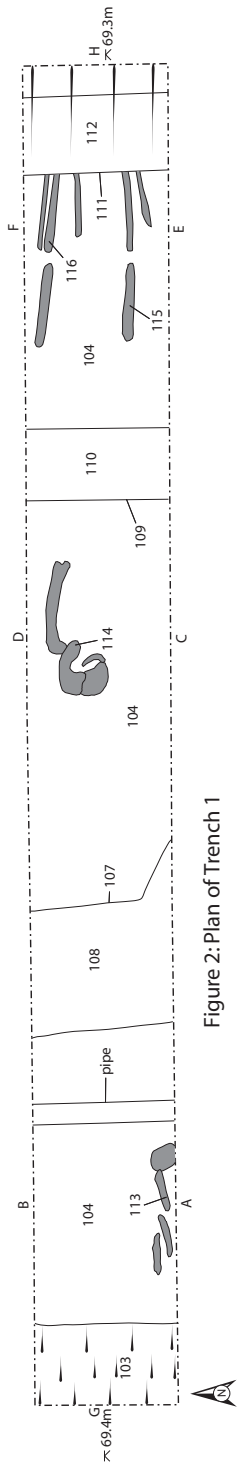


Figure 2: Plan of Trench 1

Trench 2

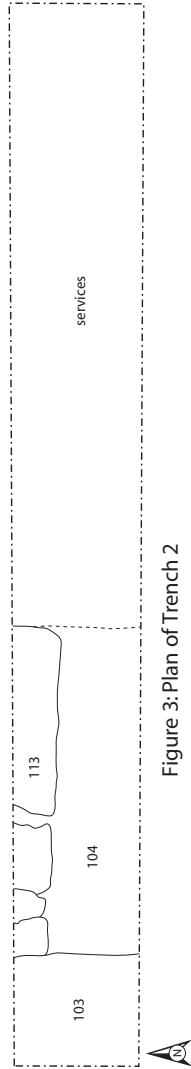


Figure 3: Plan of Trench 2

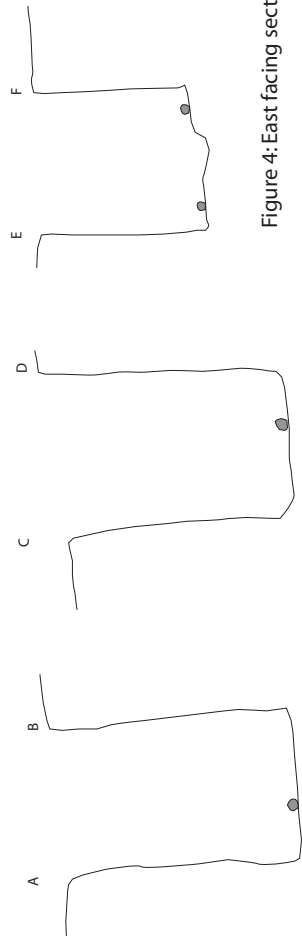


Figure 4: East facing sections through Trench 1

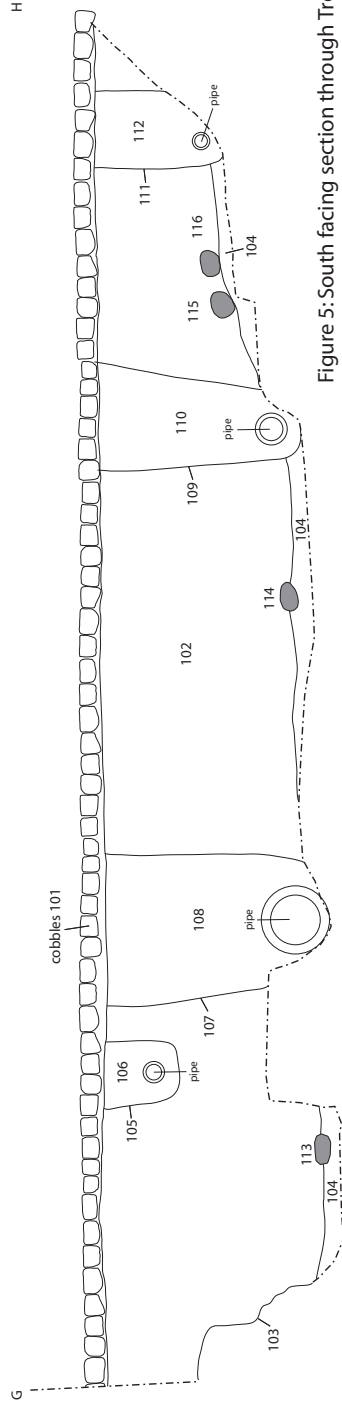
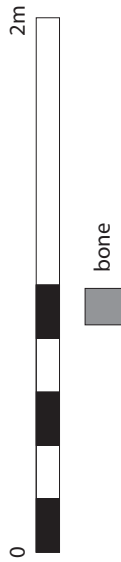


Figure 5: South facing section through Trench 1





Plate 1      View of burial [113] *in situ* from South



Plate 2      View of burial [114] *in situ* from South

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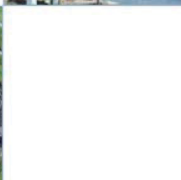
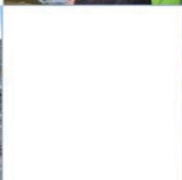


Plate 3 View of burial [115] & [116] *in situ* from West



Plate 4 View of possible sandstone wall [117] from East

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