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Advice on Archaeology & Planning

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Geophysical Survey

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Interpretation, Design & Display

**92-112 John Street
Aberdeen
Archaeological Evaluation**

Report No. 3227

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd standard operating procedures.

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CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Working Methods	4
3.	Archaeological Results	5
4.	Conclusions	5
5.	References	6

Appendices

1.	Photographic Register	7
2.	Context Register	7
3.	Summary of Excavation Results	7
4.	Discovery & Excavation Entry	8

Illustrations (bound at rear)

Fig. 1 Location map and trench plan

Fig. 2 Trench 1 from the Southwest

Fig. 3 Trench 2 from the Southeast

Fig. 4 Trench 3 from the Northeast

Fig. 5 Trench 4 from the Southeast showing demolition/levelling deposit 004

Fig. 6 Trench 4 from the Northwest

Fig. 7 Trench 5 from the Northwest

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in October 2014 at 92-112 John Street, Aberdeen (NGR: NJ 93725 06648) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Covell Matthews Architects Ltd on behalf of Granite City Assets Ltd.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) covering this programme of works was produced by CFA on behalf of Granite City Assets Ltd. The WSI was based upon documents supplied to CFA by Covell Mathews Architects and was designed to meet the requirements of the Aberdeen City Council Archaeologist.

1.2 Background

Granite City Assets Ltd has had a planning application (Ref. No. P130579) approved for the redevelopment of 92-112 John Street, Aberdeen. This redevelopment consists of the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of a 182 bedroom hotel along with a food and beverage facility and associated parking. The planning approval was subject to an archaeological condition consisting of a standing building assessment and a 5% trial trenching evaluation.

This report covers the trial trenching evaluation and was undertaken following the demolition of the existing buildings on the site. The standing building assessment was undertaken by CFA in January 2014 prior to the demolition works and the results produced under separate cover (Cressey 2014). This report provides a full desk-based assessment so this information is not repeated in full here.

Early map editions indicate that the development area was situated within the area of a former marsh, which had previously been a loch. On James Gordon's map of 1661, the area in which it is situated is annotated *The Marrisch (marsh) called the Loch*. This area is annotated *The Loch Lands* on Milne's map of 1789, with a linear body of water annotated *Loch* depicted some distance to the east of the development area within the approximate location of the current Loch Street. The site and the surrounding area remain relatively undeveloped until the mid 19th Century when the expansion of Aberdeen takes over the area. By 1867 the Ordnance Survey mapping shows the site to have been extensively developed.

When this evaluation was undertaken in October 2014, the existing buildings had been demolished and the foundations had been grubbed out leaving a surface of compacted crushed rock. The area available for trial trenching was limited by a large bund of crushed rock which occupied the central part of the site. No invasive archaeological work is known to have been undertaken within the area prior to this evaluation.

1.3 Objectives

The projects aims and objectives were:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features or deposits within the proposed development area through trial trenching evaluation;
- To establish the vulnerability of any archaeological features to the proposed development;
- To propose mitigation measures.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance.

2.2 Evaluation

Five trenches (Tr1-Tr5) (Figs.1-7) were excavated amounting to 225m² (c.5.1% of the proposed development area).

Modern overburden was removed by a JCB 3CX type mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All groundbreaking work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. Any further excavation required to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation was carried out by hand.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

The stratification of all excavated areas was recorded whether or not significant archaeological deposits were identified.

Trench positions were surveyed using industry standard electronic surveying equipment and all trenches were backfilled.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 General

Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 2. A summary of the trenches excavated is contained in Appendix 3.

3.2 Trial Trenching (Figs 1 - 7)

The deposits across the development area predominantly consisted 0.5m – 1m of demolition debris (**001**) overlying orangey-grey sand/sandy-clay natural (**002**). Deeper deposits of probable garden soil (**003**) were identified overlying the natural at the SW-end of Tr3. This deposit measured up to 0.7m deep and were overlain by c.0.5m of demolition debris. Further deeper deposits were identified towards the centre of Tr5, where up to 0.8m of dark-brown silty clay (**005**) was overlain by up to 1m of demolition debris. Within Tr4, an earlier demolition/levelling deposit (**004**) (Fig.5) consisting of sandstone blocks, rubble, and black industrial ash was identified c.0.5m below the current ground surface. This deposit contained occasional sherds of 19th century pottery and probably relates to the Victorian development of the site. There were no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance identified.

4. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological trial trenching evaluation was carried out at 92-112 John Street, Aberdeen. No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance identified. This supports the development history of the site as identified from the historical mapping which indicated that the site was marsh land associated with a former loch during the 17th century before being drained during the 18th century and extensively developed during the mid 19th century. The 19th century and later development was recently cleared from the site during the demolition phase of this redevelopment. These remains are described in the standing building survey for the site (Cressey 2014).

No further works are recommended in relation to this evaluation. However, it is recognised that the final decision on any mitigation required lies with the planning authority as advised by the Aberdeen City Council Archaeologist.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record.

A summary statement of the results of this project will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (See Appendix 4) and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

5. REFERENCES

Bibliographic

Cressey, M, 2014, *92-112 John Street, Aberdeen: Standing Building Survey*, CFA Data Structure Report No. 3119

Cartographic

Gordon, J 1661 'Map of Aberdeen'

Milne, A 1789 'A plan of the City of Aberdeen with all the inclosures surrounding the town to the adjacent country, from a survey taken 1789'.

Ordnance Survey First Edition 1867 Sheet LXXV.11.7 Aberdeen

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

Photo Number	Contexts/Description	Taken From
1	Tr1 General	SW
2	Tr2 General	SE
3	Tr3 General	NE
4	Tr4 showing demolition/levelling deposit 004	SE
5	Tr4 General	NW
6	Tr5 General	NW
7-14	General site shots from crushed rock bund	Various

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

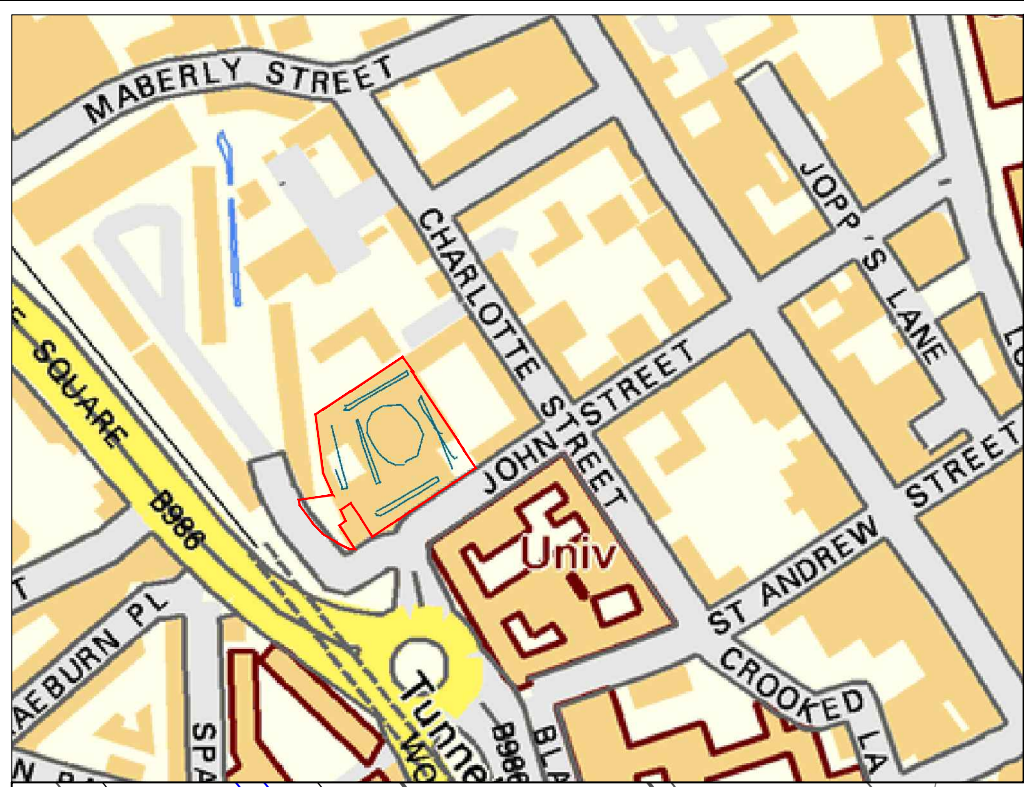
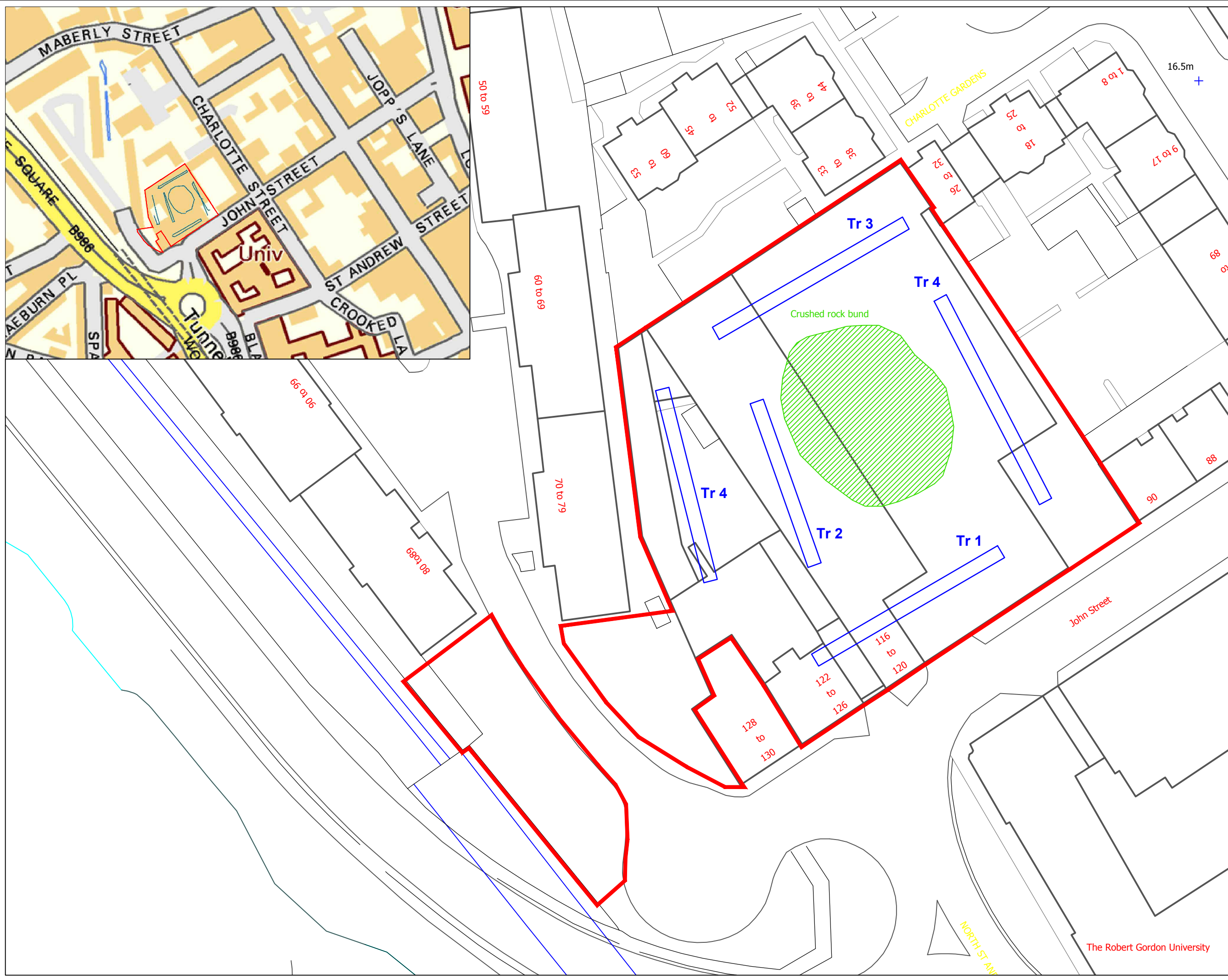
Context No.	Trench	Description
001	All	Demolition debris overlying site
002	All	Natural (orangey grey sand/sandy clay)
003	3	Dark silty garden soil deposit
004	4	Demolition/levelling deposit (sandstone, rubble, black industrial ash)
005	5	Dark-brown silty-clay (possible alluvial deposit associated with loch?)

APPENDIX 3: Summary of Excavation Results

Trench Number	Trench Size	Depth of Deposits	Features
Tr1	30m by 1.5m	0.6m	N/A
Tr2	30m by 1.5m	0.5m	N/A
Tr3	30m by 1.5m	0.5m – 1.2m	N/A
Tr4	30m by 1.5m	1m	Demolition debris/ levelling deposit
Tr5	30m by 1.5m	1m-1.8m	N/A

APPENDIX 4: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Aberdeen
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	92-112 John Street, Aberdeen
PROJECT CODE:	JOSH
PARISH:	Aberdeen
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Magnus Kirby and Mike Cressey
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Standing Building Assessment and Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	N/A
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NJ 93725 06648
START DATE (this season)	January 2014
END DATE (this season)	October 2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	N/A
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:	A standing building assessment and archaeological trial trenching evaluation were carried out at 92-112 John Street, Aberdeen. This area is understood to have been marsh land associated with a former loch during the 17 th century before being drained during the 18 th century and extensively developed during the 19 th and 20 th century. The standing building assessment determined that the 19 th /20 th century tenement building and industrial premises formerly occupying the site were of no particular architectural or historical importance. This 19 th /20 th century development appears to have involved fairly heavy landscaping/levelling, and there were no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance identified during the evaluation.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	N/A
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	N/A
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Granite City Assets Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ
EMAIL ADDRESS:	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	NMRS and Aberdeen Council SMR



Key:

- Development Area
- Trenches



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Fig. No: **1** Report No: **3227**

Title:
Location map and trench plan

Project:
92-112 John Street, Aberdeen

Client:
Granite City Assets Ltd

Scale at A3:
1:500

Drawn by: **LW** Checked: **LW** Date: **29/10/2014**

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The Robert Gordon University



Fig. 2 - Trench 1 from the Southwest



Fig. 3 - Trench 2 from the Southeast



Fig. 4 - Trench 3 from the Northeast



Fig. 5 - Trench 4 from Southeast showing demolition/levelling deposit 004



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Fig. 2 - 5	Report: 3227	Drawn: LW	CKD: BG	Date: 29/10/14
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Fig. 6 - Trench 4 from the Northwest



Fig. 7 - Trench 5 from Northwest



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Fig. 6-7	Report: 3227	Drawn: LW	CKD: BG	Date: 29/10/14
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