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Geophysical Survey

Princes Street Gardens City of Edinburgh

Archaeological Test Pitting

Report No. 2138

 0131 273 4380

 0131 273 4381

 info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

 www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

The Old Engine House
Eskmills Business Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian
EH21 7PQ

Tel: 0131 273 4380
Fax: 0131 273 4381
email: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
web: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Author	Magnus Kirby MA FSA Scot AIfA
Illustrator	Leeanne Whitelaw BSc MIFA
Editor	Bruce Glendinning BSc PgDip MifA
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**Princes Street Gardens
City of Edinburgh**

Archaeological Test Pitting

Report No. 2138

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological test pitting undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in October 2012 in advance of site investigation works relating to an ongoing landslip on the northern side of Castle Rock, Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh (NGR: NT 2530 7360 centred) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) covering this programme of works was produced by CFA. The WSI was based on a verbal brief from the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS).

Castle Rock is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 90130), but as this programme of works was carried out under Section 5 of the terms laid down by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (March 2010, Scheduled Monuments, Section 5, paragraph 46), formal Scheduled Monument Consent was not required.

1.2 Background

A programme of site investigation work was required to investigate an ongoing landslip on the northern side of Castle Rock below the esplanade. Starter pits needed to be excavated to check for services in advance of the site investigation works. Due to the area of investigation lying within a scheduled area the starter pits were archaeologically excavated. A programme of further work will be undertaken during the actual site investigations and this will be reported on under a separate cover.

The area in which this programme of works was undertaken sloped down steeply from south to north, extending from just below the castle esplanade to just above the railway line running through Princes Street Gardens. This steeply sloping hillside was largely grass covered with areas of mature and semi-mature tree cover. A tarmac surfaced foot path spiralled its way up the slope leading from the base of the hill up to the esplanade.

A desk-based assessment undertaken by CFA in 2012 (Hickman 2012) indicated that the archaeological potential of this area was considered to be low.

Previous work within Princes Street Gardens immediately to the north of the castle esplanade included watching briefs carried out in 2008 and 2011 (Suddaby & McKinney 2008 and Savory & Kdolska 2011). The 2008 watching brief carried out during bore-hole coring indicated a depth of >5m of made ground immediately to the north of the esplanade. Natural subsoil was not reached during the 2011 watching brief, but a possible wall consisting of three courses of masonry was identified.

1.3 Objectives

The project's aims and objectives were:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features or deposits the affected area and where necessary excavate and record those deposits or features where site investigation locations cannot be varied;
- To establish the vulnerability of any wider spread of archaeological deposits features within the affected area;
- To propose mitigation measures where appropriate to avoid, reduce or offset any predicted negative impacts on the archaeological resource.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

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

2.2 Test Pitting

Nine bore-hole starter pits (BH1 – BH9) (Fig. 1) were excavated. All pits measured 1.5m by 1m by 1.2m deep. The Method Statement proposed that the pits should measure 1.5m square by 1.2m deep, but the pits were narrowed down so that they could be safely straddled by the drilling rig. All pits were hand excavated to their full depth of 1.2m (standard depth for starter pits) even if natural subsoil was encountered at a higher level.

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 and all test-pits 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 test-pits excavated is contained in Appendix 3.

3.2 Test Pits

Nine test-pits were excavated (Fig. 1). Each test pit has been allocated the number of the corresponding bore hole (pre-fixed with BH). Details of these pits are contained in the following text.

BH1

Test-pit BH1 (Fig. 5) was located within the tarmac path towards the top of the slope (c.97m OD) and immediately down from the castle esplanade. The deposits within this test-pit from the top down consisted of the path which was constructed from 0.04m of tarmac (**031**) and 0.18m of grey-brown ash (**032**). The path overlay 0.92m of grey-brown sandy-silt (**033**) containing numerous small angular stones. Deposit **033** overlay orange-brown sandy-clay natural which was located at 1.14m below the current site surface. A number of finds were recovered from deposit **033**.

BH2

Test-pit BH2 (Fig. 6) was also located towards the top of the slope (c.95m OD) lying immediately to the north of the tarmac path to the west of BH1. An electrical cable was uncovered during the initial excavation of this test-pit so it was relocated c.0.9m to the north of its original location. The deposits within this test-pit from the top down consisted of c. 0.2m of mid-brown silt topsoil (**020**), 0.4 – 0.6m of sandy clay deposits (**021**, **022** and **023**) and 0.3m – 0.65m grey-brown sandy-clay (**024**). Deposit **024** was not bottomed and natural subsoil was not reached in this pit. Finds were recovered from deposit **024**.

BH3

Test-pit BH3 (Fig. 7) was located at c.85m OD on a steeply sloping grassy bank. This test-pit contained a single homogenous deposit of grey-brown silt (**001**). Deposit **001** was not bottomed and natural subsoil was not reached in this pit. A number of finds were recovered from deposit **001**.

BH4

Test-pit BH4 (Figs. 2 and 3) was located at c.74m OD on a terrace created for the path. The pit was partially cut through the tarmac surface of the path and partially cut into the grass verge. The deposits within this trench consisted of the path which was constructed from tarmac and modern hardcore (**006**). This path was cut in to and overlay dark-grey silt topsoil (**007**). This in turn overlay a sequence of deposits (**037**,

008, 010 and 011) which filled a wide cut (**035**). The cut **035** overlay deposit **009** (grey sandy clay) which overlay natural (**012**).

The cut (**035**) may represent the edge of an earlier terrace or some other form of landscaping feature. Deposit **037** is interpreted as an earlier turf line post dating the infilling of cut feature but predating the current landscaping of the site. Finds were recovered from deposits **007, 010 and 011**.

BH5

Test-pit BH5 (Fig. 8) was located at c.63m OD on a terrace created for the path. It was mainly cut through the tarmac surface of the path, but extended into the grass verge. The top layer within this test-pit consisted of the path which was formed from 0.16m of tarmac and hardcore (**028**) this cut mid grey-brown silt topsoil (**029**) which was 0.16m deep. The topsoil directly overlay orange-brown sandy-clay natural (**030**). There were no finds from this test-pit. Two aligned edge set stones (**036**) (Fig.4) set into the natural may have been the edging for an earlier path (Fig. 4).

BH6

Test-pit BH6 (Fig. 9) was located at c.58m OD on a steeply sloping grassy bank towards the base of the slope. The deposits within this test-pit from the top downwards consisted of 0.1m of black humic silt topsoil (**013**), 0.2m of slightly orangey-brown sandy silt slopewash (**014**), 0.7m of slightly yellowish-brown sandy clay (**015**) and 0.2m of soft slightly purplish clay (**016**). Deposit **016** was not bottomed. The two lower deposits (**015** and **016**) possibly represent two different bands of natural subsoil. There were no finds from this test-pit.

BH7

Test-pit BH7 (Fig. 10) was located at c.74m OD on a terrace created for the path. It was partially cut through the tarmac surface of the path and partially cut into the grass verge. The uppermost layer (**005**) within this test-pit consisted of up to 0.2m of path material made up of tarmac and modern hardcore. This cut topsoil deposit **002**, which consisted of dark brown silt measuring up to 0.42m deep. This overlay a c.0.3m deep deposit of orangey-grey silty clay (**003**) and beneath **003** there was a c.0.65m deep deposit of orangey-brown silty (**004**). Deposit **004** was not bottomed and natural subsoil was not definitely reached. Finds were recovered from deposits **002** and **003**.

BH8

Test-pit BH8 (Fig. 11) was located at c.63m OD on a terrace created for the path. It was mainly cut through the tarmac surface of the path, but extended into the grass verge. The Path (**025**) was constructed from 0.35m of tarmac and modern hardcore which cut a similar depth of brown silt topsoil. This overlay 0.44m of mid grey-brown sandy-clay (**026**) containing numerous large and small stones, which in turn overlay natural which was a brown sandy-clay (**027**).

BH9

Test-pit BH9 (Fig. 12) was located at c.58m OD on a steeply sloping grassy bank towards the base of the slope. The deposits within this test-pit from the top downwards consisted of 0.14m of black humic silt topsoil (**013**), 0.34m of mid grey-brown silty-clay (**018**) and 0.72m of wet unconsolidated mid orangey-brown sandy-clay (**019**). Deposit **019** was not bottomed and natural subsoil was not definitely identified. A sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from deposit **018**.

3.3 Finds

Sue Anderson

Artefacts were recovered from nine contexts in six boreholes (BH1–4, 7 and 9). Table 1 shows the quantities by find type, and a summary catalogue by context is included in Appendix 4.

Find type	No.	Wt (g)
pottery	19	138
CBM	13	1301
stone	3	381
clay pipe	1	3
glass	6	42
cu alloy	4	31
iron	2	35
plastic	2	18
rubber	2	41
wood	1	19
bone	33	625
shell	8	104

Table 1. Finds quantities.

Pottery

Seven sherds of medieval pottery (Scottish white gritty ware, including two beaded jar rims) were recovered from BH3 (001).

Scottish post-medieval oxidised and reduced wares of 15th–18th-century date were found as single sherds in BH3 (001), BH7 (003) and BH9 (018).

Nine fragments of refined factory-made whitewares of 19th/20th-century date were collected from BH1 (033), BH7 (002 and 003) and BH9 (018).

Building materials

One fragment of a press-moulded flat tile in a red-firing clay was found in BH3 (001). A fragment of pantile was recovered from BH4 (007). Eleven fragments of CBM came from BH1 (033), comprising a piece of worn quarry floor tile, five fragments of chimney pot with sooting internally, and five pieces of pantile. All fragments are of post-medieval or modern date.

Stone building material comprised two fragments of a red sandstone block from BH4 (007), and there was a fragment of ?Welsh slate roofing tile from BH4 (011).

Other building materials included a fragment of modern window glass from BH7 (002), and two ?post-medieval iron nails from BH7 (002) and BH1 (033).

Glass

Four fragments of vessel glass were pieces of modern bottle and were collected from BH3 (001) and BH7 (002). The latter also contained a blue and clear glass marble.

Miscellaneous

A fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered from BH2 (024) and is likely to be of 18th/19th-century date.

Four copper alloy objects were recovered. BH3 (001) contained a 20th-century 2p coin and a moulded pendant or locket (double-sided in the form of a shield or heart, with suspension loop), possibly of 18th/19th-century date. Two unidentified, worn post-medieval coins were found in BH4 (007 and 010).

Modern finds included a plastic comb, a fragment of a cylindrical plastic fitting, a wooden brush, and two rubber bottle bungs.

Bone and shell

Well preserved animal bone was recovered from BH1 (033), BH2 (024), BH3 (001) and BH4 (011). Most fragments were pieces of large mammal (probably cow) and included pelvis, teeth, long bone ends and bones of the feet, suggesting that it may represent butchered animal bone. The use of a saw on at least one fragment suggests a post-medieval or modern date.

Fragments of oyster and one whelk were found in BH1 (033), BH2 (024), BH3 (001) and BH7 (003). These probably represent food waste of post-medieval date.

Discussion

Overall this finds assemblage is reminiscent of the mixed artefact assemblage recovered from the castle esplanade (Anderson 2011). There are medieval elements and some material is of early and late post-medieval date, but almost all contexts produced modern finds.

4. CONCLUSIONS

No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified, however, a cut for a terrace or other landscaping feature was identified within test-pit BH4 and two aligned stones within test-pit BH5 might represent the edge of an earlier path. Neither of these features were thought to be of any antiquity and probably related to the use of the area as a park.

A number of finds were recovered from the test-pits. There were medieval finds and finds of early and late post-medieval date, but almost all contexts produced modern finds. This is suggestive of mixed deposits of material that have accumulated through dumping and landscaping rather than secure archaeological contexts.

Natural subsoil was not identified with any certainty in BH2, BH3, BH6, BH7, BH9. Whilst it was identified with a fair degree of certainty at varying depths in the other borehole starter pits. Therefore any monitoring of the boreholes need only extend to BH2, BH3, BH6, BH7, BH9. However, the final decision over what is required lies with CECAS.

It is understood that other localised groundbreaking may be required to facilitate the Site Investigation works. Further work may be required to mitigate the effects of this and the final decision over what is required lies with CECAS.

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 City of Edinburgh Council Sites and Monuments Record.

Upon completion of this project a summary statement of the results will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*.

5. REFERENCES

Bibliographic

Anderson, S 2011 *Edinburgh Military Tattoo Grandstand Works, Castle Esplanade. Post-Excavation Archive Report*. CFA Report No. 1984.

Hickman, S. 2012, *Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh: Desk-based Assessment*, CFA Data Structure Report N. 2119

Savory, G & Kdolska, H 2011 *Edinburgh Military Tattoo Grandstand Works, Fencing to North of Esplanade – Archaeological Watching Brief*, CFA Data Structure Report No. 1968

Suddaby, I & McKinney, L 2008 *Edinburgh Military Tattoo Grandstand, Edinburgh Castle Esplanade, Edinburgh – Site Investigation Works: Archaeological Watching Brief*, CFA Data Structure Report No. 1447

APPENDIX 1: Digital Photographic Register

Shot	Description	From
1	Test-pit BH3, north-facing section	N
2	Test-pit BH3, east-facing section	E
3	Test-pit BH4, north and east -facing section	NE
4	Test-pit BH4, east-facing section	E
5	Test-pit BH7, north-facing section	N
6	Test-pit BH7, west-facing section	W
7	Test-pit BH9, north-facing section	N
8	Test-pit BH9, east-facing section	E
9	Test-pit BH6, north-facing section	N
10	Test-pit BH6, east-facing section	E
11	Test-pit BH5 showing stones 036	E
12	Test-pit BH5 showing stones 036	W
13-14	Test-pit BH2, east-facing section	E
15-16	Test-pit BH2, south-facing section	S
17	Test-pit BH8, north-facing section	N
18	Test-pit BH8, east-facing section	E
19	Test-pit BH5, east-facing section	E
20	Test-pit BH5, north-facing section	N
21	Test-pit BH1, west-facing section	W
22	Test-pit BH1, south-facing section	S

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context	Test-pit	Description
001	BH3	Mid grey-brown silt topsoil deposits
002	BH7	Dark brown silt topsoil
003	BH7	Orangey-grey silty-clay
004	BH7	Orangey grey-brown silty-clay
005	BH7	Hardcore and tarmac path material
006	BH4	Hardcore and tarmac path material
007	BH4	Dark grey silt topsoil
008	BH4	Grey-orange silty-clay
009	BH4	Grey sandy-clay
010	BH4	Sticky grey-yellow clayey-silt
011	BH4	Dark-grey clayey-silt
012	BH4	Orange-brown sandy-clay natural
013	BH6	Black humic silty topsoil
014	BH6	Slightly orangey grey-brown sandy-silt s
015	BH6	Slightly yellowish grey-brown sandy-clay (probably natural)
016	BH6	Slightly purplish brown clay (probably natural)
017	BH9	Black humic silty topsoil
018	BH9	Slightly orangey mid grey-brown silty sandy-clay
019	BH9	Slightly orangey mid-brown sandy-clay
020	BH2	Mid grey-brown silt topsoil
021	BH2	Stoney yellow sand
022	BH2	Orange-brown sandy clay
023	BH2	Yellow-brown sandy clay
024	BH2	Grey-brown sandy-clay
025	BH8	Gravel and tarmac path surface abutting mid-brown sandy-silt topsoil
026	BH8	Mid grey-brown sandy-clay
027	BH8	Mid grey-brown sandy-clay with numerous stones
028	BH5	Tarmac and hardcore forming path
029	BH5	Mid grey-brown sit topsoil

Context	Test-pit	Description
030	BH5	Orange-brown sandy-clay natural
031	BH1	Tarmac surface of path
032	BH1	Grey brown ash path material
033	BH1	Grey-brown silt with numerous angular stones
034	BH1	Grey-brown sandy-clay natural
035	BH4	Possible cut for earlier terrace
036	BH5	Aligned stones (possible edging stones for earlier path)
037	BH4	Turf line - earlier ground surface

APPENDIX 3: Summary of Excavation Results

Test-pit	Size (m)	Depth of deposits (m) to Natural	Features
1	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	1.14m	N/A
2	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	>1.2m	N/A
3	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	>1.2m	N/A
4	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	0.48 – 0.9m	Possible cut for earlier terrace
5	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	0.16m	Possible edging stones for earlier path
6	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	0.3m	N/A
7	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	>1.2m	N/A
8	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	0.8m	N/A
9	1.5 x 1 x 1.2 deep	>1.2m	N/A

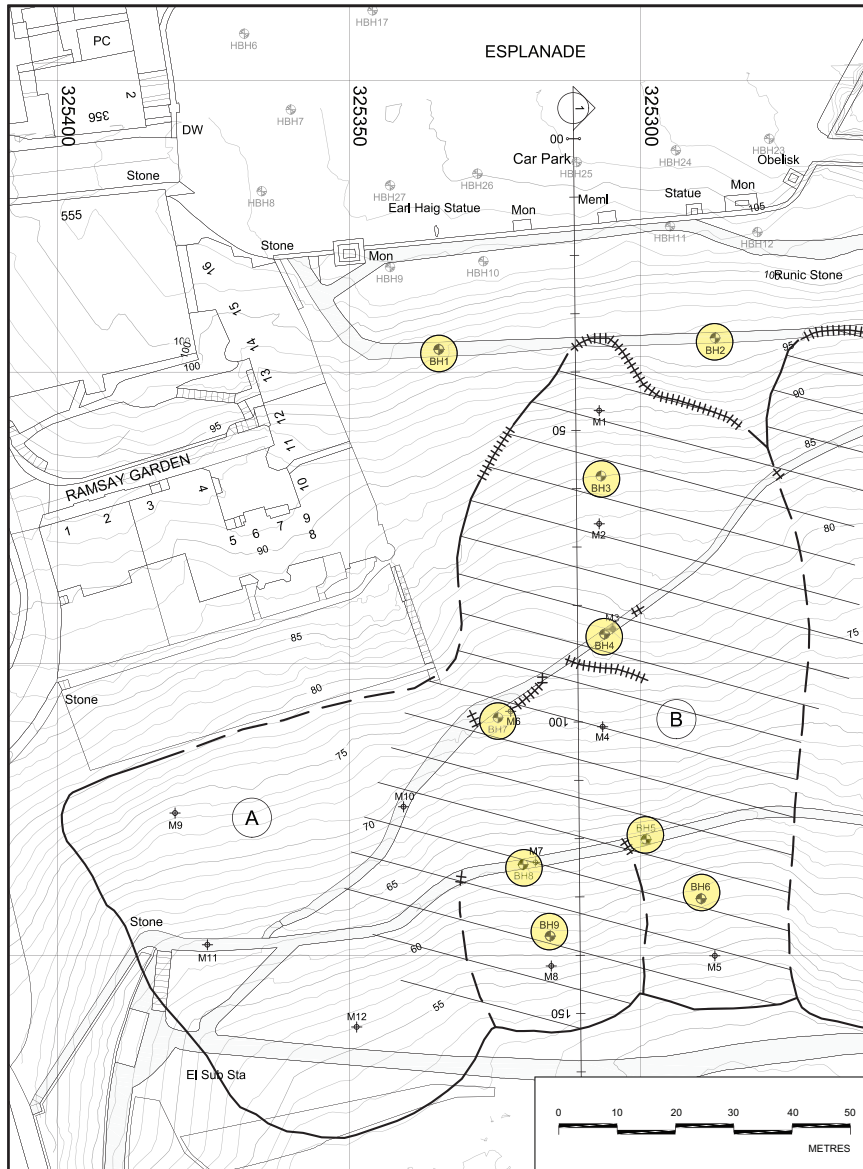
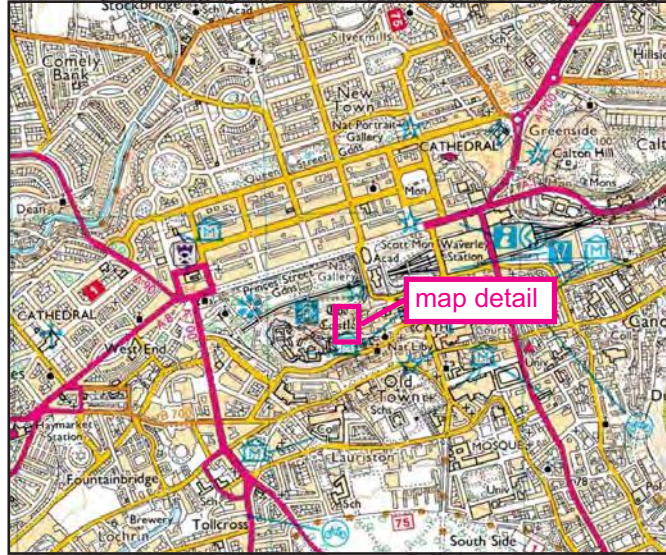
APPENDIX 4: Finds Quantities

Context	Test pit	Find type	No.	Wt (g)	Notes	Spotdate
001	3	pot	8	79	Scottish white gritty (7) and post-med oxidised (1)	pmed
		CBM	1	155	Press-moulded flat tile	mod
		glass	2	27	1 green & 1 uncol bottle	mod
		cu alloy	1	7	two pence coin	mod
		cu alloy	1	11	moulded pendant/locket	18/19?
		wood	1	19	brush back with bristles	mod
		plastic	2	18	comb and pipe frag	mod
		rubber	1	21	bottle bung	mod
		shell	3	49	oyster	
002	7	pot	2	6	refined whitewares	19/20
		glass	4	15	1 window, 2 bottle, 1 blue marble	mod
		rubber	1	20	bottle bung	mod
		Fe	1	11	?nail with mineral preserved wood	pmed+
003	7	pot	2	3	1 post-medieval reduced, 1 refined whiteware	19/20
		shell	2	12	oyster	
007	4	CBM	1	35	pan-tile	pmed
		Stone	2	142	sandstone block	
		cu alloy	1	6	coin, worn, unident	pmed
010	4	cu alloy	1	7	coin, worn, unident	pmed
011	4	stone	1	239	roofing slate	19/20
		bone	2	22	large mammal frags, mainly cow	
018	9	pot	2	7	1 post-medieval reduced, 1	19/20

Context	Test pit	Find type	No.	Wt (g)	Notes	Spotdate
					refined whiteware	
024	2	clay pipe	1	3	stem	pmed
024	2	bone	7	169	large mammal frags, mainly cow	
		shell	2	33	oyster & whelk	
033	1	pot	5	43	refined whitewares	19/20
		CBM	11	1111	1 quarry floor tile, 5 chimney pot, 5 pantile	mod
		Fe	1	24	nail	
		bone	11	165	large mammal frags, mainly cow	
		shell	1	10	oyster	

APPENDIX 5: Field Drawings Register

No.	Sheet No.	Description	Scale
1	1	BH3, N and E-facing sections	1:20
2	1	BH7, W and N-facing sections	1:20
3	1	BH4, N and E-facing sections	1:10
4	2	BH6, N and E-facing sections	1:20
5	2	BH9, W and N-facing sections	1:20
6	2	BH5, plan showing alignment of stones	1:20
7	2	BH8, N and E-facing sections	1:20
8	2	BH2, E-facing section	1:10
9	3	BH5, N and E-facing sections	1:20
10	3	BH1, S and W-facing sections	1:20

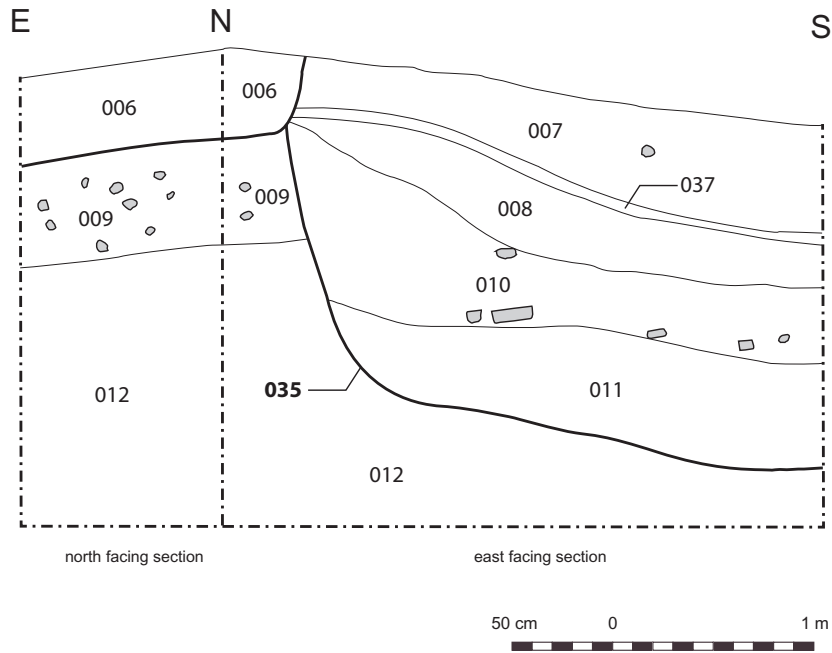


Key:
 test pit

Fig. No: 1 Revision: A Client: City of Edinburgh Council
 Title: Site location and test pit layout
 Project: Princess Street Gardens

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
 The Old Engine House
 Eskmills Park, Musselburgh
 East Lothian, Eh21 7PQ
 T: 0131 273 4380
 F: 0131 273 4381
 e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
 w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Scale at A4: Drawn by: GC Checked: LW Report No: 2138



Key:

Scale at A4: 1:40

Fig. No: 2
 Revision: A
 Client: City of Edinburgh Council

Title:
 BH4, east facing section

Project:
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CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
 The Old Engine House
 Eskmills Park, Musselburgh
 East Lothian, Eh21 7PQ

T: 0131 273 4380
 F: 0131 273 4381
 e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
 w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

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Fig. 3: BH4, east-facing section



Fig. 4: Edge set stones 036 within BH5





Fig. 5: BH1, south-facing section



Fig. 6: BH2, east-facing section



Fig. 7: BH3, east-facing section

Fig. No: 3-7		Revision: A	Project: Princess Street Gardens		
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Fig. 8: BH5, east-facing section



Fig. 9: BH6, east-facing section





Fig. 10: BH7, west-facing section



Fig. 11: BH8, east-facing section



Fig. 12: BH9, east-facing section

Fig. No: 8-12		Revision: A	Project: Princess Street Gardens		
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