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enquiries@cfa-archaeology.co.uk



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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract Inchcolm Abbey, Fife PIC028

Cable Trench, Archaeological Recording, March 2018

Report No. HES-PIC028-2018-01

Authors:

Stuart Mitchell MA ACIFA

Edward Rayner MA



CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Old Engine House
Eskmills Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian
EH21 7PQ

Tel: 0131 273 4380

Fax: 0131 273 4381

email: Edinburgh@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

web: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Author	Edward Rayner MA
Illustrator	Marta Perlinska BA PCIfA
Approver	Melanie Johnson MA PhD FSA Scot MCIfA
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Minor Archaeological Services Call-Off Contract

Inchcolm Abbey, Fife (PIC028)

**Cable Trench: Archaeological Recording
March 2018**

Report No. HES-PIC028-2018-01

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological site visit carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) during March 2018 to record an excavated cable trench and monitor further excavation at Inchcolm Abbey, on Inchcolm Island, Fife (NGR: NT 1905 8265; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken in order to investigate the open trench to ascertain the archaeological significance of the exposed deposits. The work was commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland as part of the Minor Archaeological Services Call-off Contract.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) dated 28 February 2018 was produced by CFA Archaeology for this programme of works. The WSI was agreed with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in advance of the work taking place. The site is a Property In Care in the guardianship of HES (PIC028).

1.2 Background

Inchcolm Island lies within the Firth of Forth and is occupied by the remains of the Augustinian Abbey of Inchcolm, a hermit's cell, and the remains of World War I and World War II defences, together with miscellaneous associated remains.

The Augustinian Abbey of Inchcolm, established first as a priory for Augustinian Canons, was elevated to the status of a full abbey in 1235. It suffered repeatedly from the English raids of the 14th century, and, following the Reformation, the community was disbanded. The church was partially dismantled in 1581 and in 1611 the Abbey lands were translated to a secular Lordship. The monument passed into state care in 1924.

The remains of the Abbey church point to a building programme which spanned some 300 years. The original, simple mid 12th-century building was enlarged ca.1200, at which date a bell tower was raised above the original chancel. The octagonal chapter house, one of only three in Scotland of this shape, was added to the S side of an extended choir in the 1st half of the 13th century. Also constructed about this date was a transept on the N side of the tower, built to house two additional chapels.

This church was abandoned in the early 15th century and replaced by a new one further to the E. The nave of the old church was then converted into domestic accommodation. The cloister buildings, the most complete in Scotland, appear to date from this period of rebuilding and are unusual in that the ground floor of all three ranges was occupied by covered walkways.

To the NW of the Abbey stands 'the Hermit's Cell', traditionally said to be the place where Alexander I took refuge during a storm in 1123 which resulted in his vow to found a monastery on the island. The simple structure was rebuilt in the 15th century and used as a mausoleum in the 17th. On a knoll beyond the cell there is a fine, though weathered, example of a hogback tombstone; four rows of tegulae, or roof-tiles, are carved along the sides and a great beast's head adorns either end. Dating to the mid 10th century, this is probably the earliest hogback to survive in Scotland.

Remains of some of the various World War I defences, and most of those from World War II, survive. Inchcolm was heavily fortified in World War I as part of a scheme to provide three defence lines across the Forth comprising shore-based batteries complemented by batteries on the various islands. Inchcolm was armed with two 12-pounder guns, two 6-inch breach-loaders, four 4-inch quick-firers and four 4.7-inch quick-firers. Accommodation for army personnel was erected around the Abbey.

In 1930, the guns were removed from the island although the aprons for the 4.7-inch guns and the observation posts still survive in the W of the island. On the outbreak of WWII the island was once again fortified. Although many of the installations were demolished in the 1950s, the extant remains comprise the concrete aprons for Bofors Anti-Aircraft guns, for two twin 6-pounders and for the remnants of a 12-pounder battery.

Also still visible are searchlight installations, a tunnel through the hill to give quick access to the guns and the line of a small railway built to haul equipment from the main slope up to the pier. These are all concentrated in the E of the island although the remains of the NAAFI canteen survive in the W.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the programme of archaeological works were:

- To inspect the excavated cable trenches.
- To mitigate the effects of construction on any archaeological deposits or features identified through their excavation and recording and produce a report on them.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

All work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) 'Code of Conduct' (Cifa 2014), and other relevant Cifa Standards and Guidance.

Any alteration to this methodology required agreement in advance with Historic Environment Scotland.

2.2 Recording

The excavated section of the trench was cleaned and inspected for archaeological features and stray finds. The excavation of an additional section of the trench was monitored during the recording visit (Fig 1).

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

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 2.

3.1 Opened Trench Deposits

The upper deposit within the cable trench (**001**) was a thin layer of modern landscaped path surface comprising coarse sand and gravel measuring between 0.1m and 0.2m thick, which also contained some loose bricks (Fig. 4, 7). This context overlay (**002**), a 0.05m thick band of black ash and sand, which forms a modern levelling layer/base course for the path. Five lenses of natural beach sand and silt (**003, 004, 007, 010** and **011**) (Fig. 5) occurred throughout the cable trench, likely disturbed/deposited by wartime activity and the effects of weather (Fig. 2).

A small cut (**005**), 0.5m wide, ran NE to SW and contained two iron pipes (**006**) of unknown purpose (Fig. 3, 8).

At the western end of the trench was a brick surface (**009**), one course thick and laid flat but with no consistent pattern (Fig. 3, 6). Signs of mortar on some of the bricks indicate that they were re used. Some bricks were stamped 'Mitchell West Bank Portobello' which dates them to between 1905 and c.1915 (I Suddaby pers comm), so it is possible they are reused from former WW1 defences.

4. CONCLUSION

The cable trench was inspected by a representative of CFA. No features of archaeological significance were identified, likely due to the overall shallowness of the trench (up to 0.3m deep), and the wartime disturbance.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Record for the Historic Environment Scotland (NRHE) and copies of reports will be lodged with Fife Council Sites and Monuments Record.

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

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

Photo No.	Summary description of subject	Facing
1	Trench section view	S
2	Trench section view	S
3	Trench section view	S
4	Trench section view	S
5	Trench section view	S
6	Trench section view	S
7	Trench section view	S
8	Detail of section showing (003) and (004)	S
9	View of trench	E
10	View of trench	SE
11	Detail of pipes (001)	S
12	Working shot	E
13	Detail of brick surface	S
14	Detail of brick surface	S
15	Detail of brick surface	S
16	Detail of brick surface	S
17	Detail of brick surface	S
18	Detail of brick surface	S
19	Working/promo shot	W
20	Working shot	NE
21	Working shot	E

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

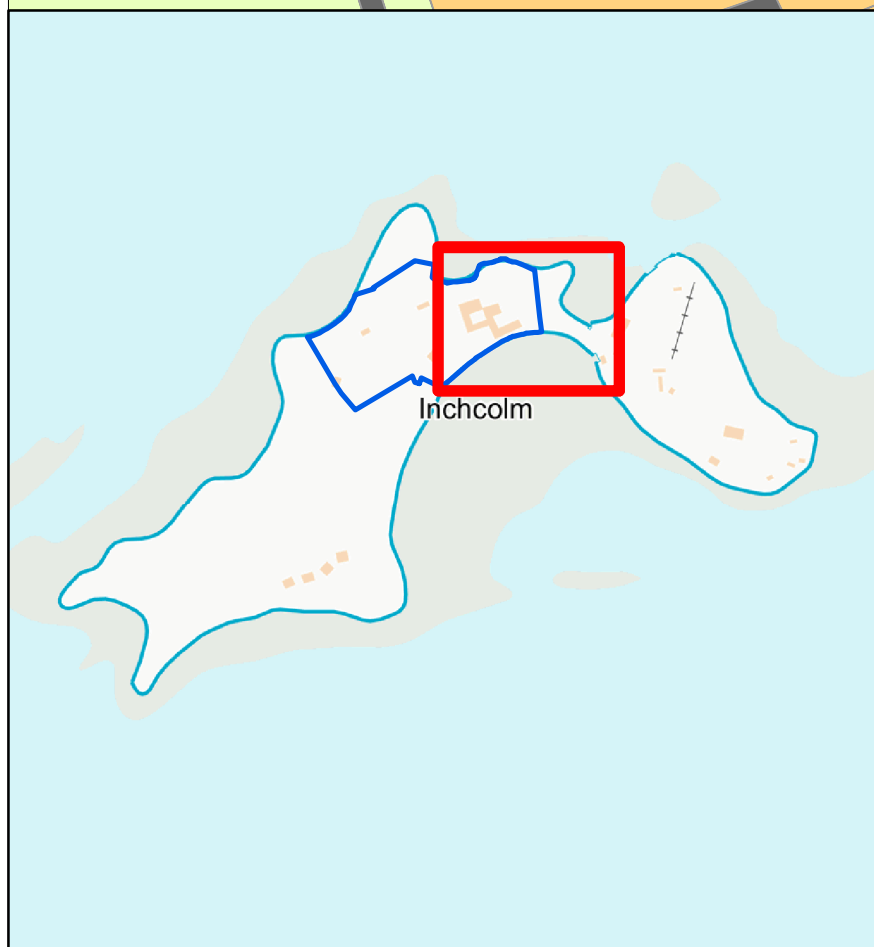
Context no.	Fill of	Trench	Type	Description
001				Sand/fine gravel surface
002				Dark ash/sand
003				Sand
004				Compact brown silt
005				Cut for pipe trench
006	005			Pipes and infill
007				Sand
008				Rubble
009				Brick surface
010				Compact brown silt
011				Sand

APPENDIX 3: Drawing Register

Dwg No.	Sheet No.	Scale	Plan / Section	Description/contexts
1	1	01:10	Section	Trench section (part of) A-B
2	1	01:10	Section	Trench section (part of) B-C
3	2	01:20	Plan	Plan of trench (part of) A-B
4	2	01:20	Plan	Plan of trench (part of) B-C

APPENDIX 4: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Fife
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Inchcolm Abbey
PROJECT CODE:	MINA56
PARISH:	Aberdour
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Stuart Mitchell, Edward Rayner
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	
NMRS NO(S):	SM90166
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NT 1905 8265
START DATE (this season)	March 2018
END DATE (this season)	March 2018
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A pre-excavated cable trench was inspected and recorded by CFA. A further section of the trench was monitored under a watching brief. The remains of a randomly laid brick surface was identified under the existing path. No other features of archaeological significance were identified, likely due to the overall shallowness of the trench (up to 0.3m deep) and disturbance from wartime activities
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	N/A
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Historic Environment Scotland
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)	Archive to be deposited with NRHE, reports lodged with SMR.



Key:

- PIC Boundary
- New Section Monitored
- Recorded Open Excavated Section
- Archaeological Feature

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CFA
 ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
 CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
 The Old Engine House
 Eskmills Park
 Musselburgh
 East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
 T: 0131 273 4380
 F: 0131 273 4381
 info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
 www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Title:
Location map and plan of cable trench

Project:
Inchcolm Abbey

Client:
HES

Scale at A3:
1:500

Drawn by: SW	Checked: MJ	Date: 01/06/2018
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Report No: 3648	Fig. No: 1
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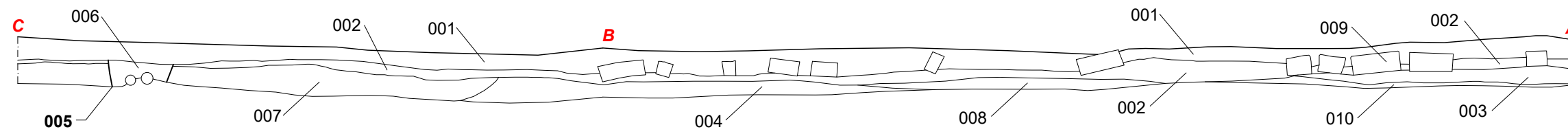


Fig. 2 - Post excavation section

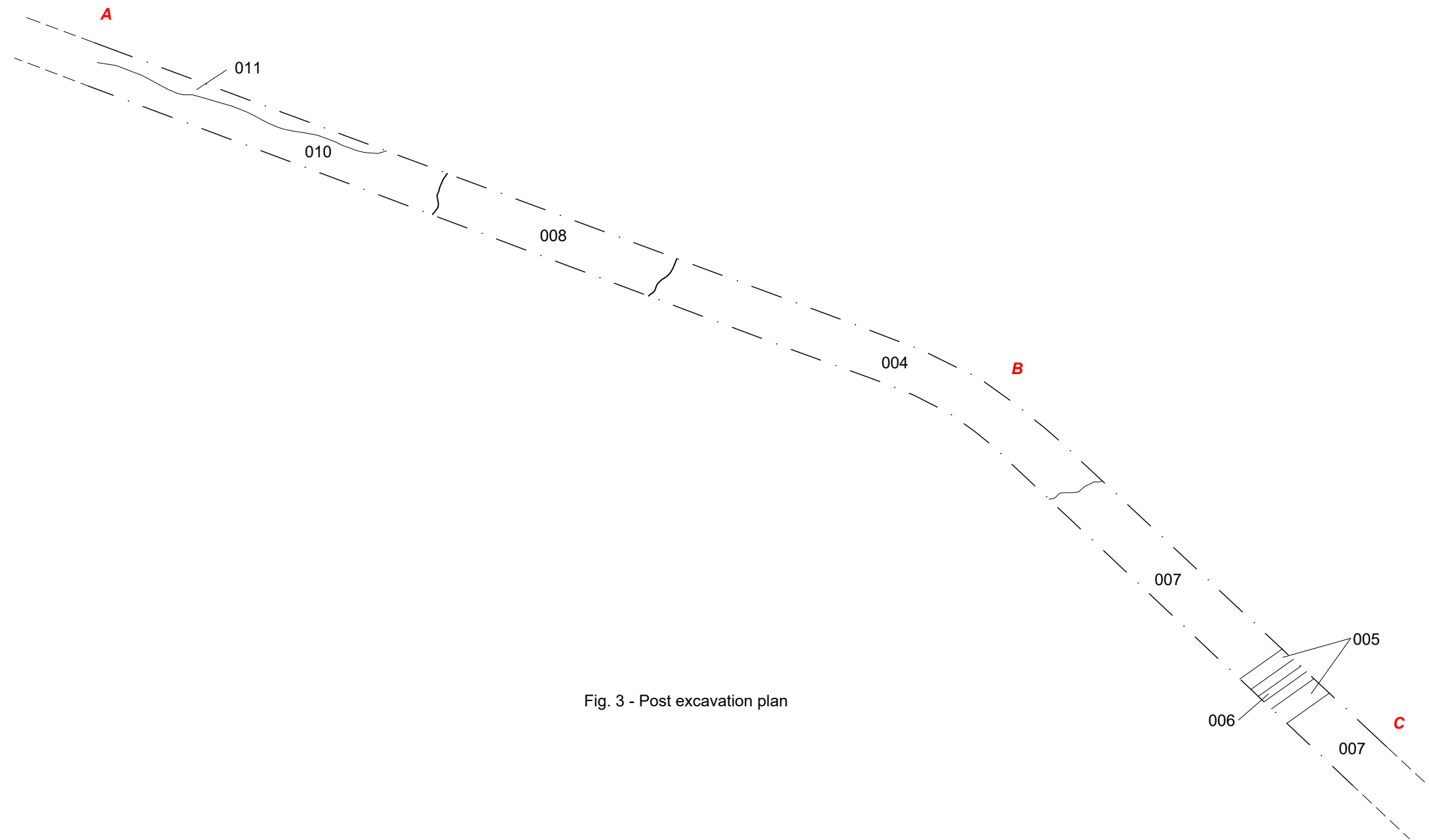


Fig. 3 - Post excavation plan



CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
 The Old Engine House
 Eskmills Park
 Musselburgh
 East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
 T: 0131 273 4380
 F: 0131 273 4381
 info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
 www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Title:
Plan and section

Project:
Inchcolm Abbey

Client:
HES

Scale at A3:
1:30

Drawn by: MP	Checked: SW	Date: 31/05/2018
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Report No: 3648	Fig. No: 2-3
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Fig. 4 - Working shot



Fig. 5 - Detail of deposit (004) & (007)

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
info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Client:
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Fig. 6 - Detail of brick surface



Fig. 7 - General view of trench

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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
info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Client:
HES

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Fig. 8 - Detail of deposit (006) & (007)

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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
info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Client:
HES

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Report No: 3648		Fig. No: 8



CFA ARCHAEOLOGY
www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

HEAD OFFICE - Musselburgh

Old Engine House
Eskmills Park, Musselburgh
East Lothian, EH21 7PQ

t: +44 (0) 131 273 4380
e: enquiries@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Leeds

Offices C1 & C2
Clayton Business Centre, Midland Road
Leeds, LS10 2RJ

t: +44 (0) 113 271 6060
e: yorkshire@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Manchester

44G9, Europa Business Park
Bird Hall Lane, Cheadle Heath
Manchester, SK3 0XA

t: +44 (0) 161 428 8224
e: manchester@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Milton Keynes

Suite 11, Letchworth House
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall
Milton Keynes, MK6 1NE

t: +44 (0) 1908 226 124
e: miltonkeynes@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Carlisle

Warwick Mill Business Village
Warwick Bridge, Carlisle
Cumbria, CA4 8RR

t: +44 (0) 1228 564 531
e: cumbria@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Sheffield

Office 5, Ecclesfield Business Centre
46 Stocks Hill, Ecclesfield
Sheffield, S35 9YT

t: +44 (0) 114 327 1108
e: sheffield@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Leicester

Business Box
3 Oswin Road, Brailsford Industrial Estate
Leicester, LE3 1HR

t: +44 (0) 116 279 5156
e: leicestershire@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Hertfordshire

Amwell House
9 Amwell Street, Hoddesdon
Hertfordshire, EN11 8TS

t: +44 (0) 845 017 9847
e: herts@cfa-archaeology.co.uk