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Professional cultural heritage consultants - branches nationwide
enquiries@cfa-archaeology.co.uk


# Land at Sir Walter Scott Drive, Slakbuie, Inverness

Archaeological Evaluation
Report No. 3069

Author: Ian Suddaby MA MCIfA

# 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


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|---|---|
| Authors | Ian Suddaby MA MCIfA |
| Illustrator | Graeme Carruthers MA MCIfA |
| Approver | Bruce Glendinning BSc PgDip MCIfA |
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# Land at Sir Walter Scott Drive, Slakbuie, Inverness

## Archaeological Evaluation

## Report No. 3609

**CONTENTS**



**Appendices**



**Illustrations (bound at rear)**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in November 2017 ahead of an application for development on land adjacent to Sir Walter Scott Drive at Slackbuie on the South-East outskirts of Inverness, Highland (NGR: NH 6696 4207) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), dated October 2017, was produced by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their clients. The WSI was designed to fulfil the requirements of the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HCHET) and was approved by them prior to the fieldwork.

## 1.2 Background

No archaeological known features had been recorded previously within the site. However, it lay in an area with established archaeological potential. Archaeological fieldwork on land neighbouring the site to its North and South had recorded numerous prehistoric features.

Land to the North-East of the site was the subject of an extensive programme of archaeological works between 2009 and 2011. This comprised trial-trenching, excavation and archaeological watching brief. In the course of this work, around 700 archaeological features were recorded. These included ‘two ring ditches, a possible prehistoric cairn/house, spreads of pits and a palaeochannel from which thousands of lithics were recovered’. Possible evidence of Mesolithic activity was identified, but the bulk of the excavated features were dated to the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age (Garry 2011).

The field to the South-East of the site was also subject to trial-trenching followed by a watching brief. These works encountered undated stone spreads but little else (Cameron 2016).

Features comprising pits containing Prehistoric pottery, a large four-poster structure and a roundhouse have been recorded recently in the field to the South of the site (Kirsty Cameron, pers. comm.)

More broadly fieldwork to the South of Inverness has identified extensive Prehistoric settlement remains, perhaps most notably at Culduthel, approximately 300m to the south-west of the site.

Examination of maps held by the National Library of Scotland indicates that the site was part of a field in the 19th century. The field remained unchanged until the construction of the B8082 (Sir Walter Scott Drive).

### 1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains that could be subject to disturbance during proposed development;

- if present, to determine the nature, extent and significance of any remains in order to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy (likely to be preservation by record, ie. excavation, analysis and dissemination of results).

## 2. WORKING METHODS

### 2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance. Recording of all elements followed established CFA methods.

### 2.2 Evaluation

The site extended to around 9200m² but buried electrical cables lie within the North-Western side, parallel to Sir Walter Scott Drive and mature trees with a Tree Protection Zone were present on the South-Eastern side. The area available for examination was therefore reduced to around 3845m².

Trench locations and extents were agreed in advance with HCHET. It was further agreed that 7% (270m²) of the available site area (3845m²) would be examined. A contingency of 1% was allowed which would be triggered should archaeological remains be encountered which would require additional trenching.

In the event, a 2m extension was made to Trench 4 making that trench 32m in length and a small sub-square extension was made to Trench 2 (14m²) so that archaeological remains could be properly assessed. The 1% contingency was not triggered but the total area evaluated was 287m².

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

Topsoil and subsoil were removed by a 360º tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide, smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All the groundbreaking work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. Any further excavations required to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation were carried out by hand.

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 following recording.

## 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 3.1 General

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

Five trenches (Trenches 1-5) amounting to c.287m² were excavated (Fig. 1). These are summarised in Appendix 3.

The site (Fig. 2) was generally North-West facing. Sir Walter Scott Drive formed the North-Western site boundary and a line of mature trees formed the elevated South-Eastern site boundary. The land to the North was currently being developed.

Relatively deep soils were present over much of the site, with depths of up to 1.4m in Trench 5. Over the whole site, a subsoil (**002**) was present under the topsoil (**001**). In the North end of Trench 3 and much of Trench 5, a thin and discontinuous layer of grey-black peaty silt (**301-2**, **004**) was recorded at the base of the subsoil. The natural subsoil (**003**) was very varied, with poorly drained silty sand and cobbles in the South and a much better drained sand or sandy gravel in the North.

### 3.2 Trial Trenching

*Trench 1*

Trench 1 (Fig. 1) was aligned roughly NNE-SSW and measured 30m by 1.8m. It ran obliquely across the slope in the southern end of the site. Topsoil (**001**) with a depth of 0.25m overlay subsoil (**002**) with a depth of 0.15m. The natural subsoil (**003**) was poorly drained silty sand with frequent cobbles.

A single field drain (**101**) with a clay pipe (**102**) in the base was recorded.

*Trench 2*

Trench 2 (Figs. 1, 3-5) was aligned roughly E-W and measured 30m by 1.8m. It ran obliquely across the slope towards the SW end of the site. Topsoil (**001**) with a depth of 0.25m overlay subsoil (**002**) with a depth of between 0.25m and 0.45m, with the deepest deposits being at the eastern end of the trench. The natural subsoil (**003**) was silty sand with frequent cobbles.

Three features were recorded in this trench. At the western end, a culvert drain (**201**) made from sandstone slabs (**202**) was aligned SSE-NNW (Fig. 3). The channel was roughly 0.3m wide and the same deep.

Further east, feature **203** ran out of the trench so its full shape in plan was not identified. It measured over 0.7m in length, 0.6m in width and a section showed it had a depth of 0.2m (Fig. 4). It was filled with a sterile brownish grey silty sand (**204**),

little different from the overlying subsoil (**002**). No finds were recovered.

Near the eastern end of the trench, a second feature (**205**) was partially exposed and the trench was later extended by 14m² (Fig. 5) to further reveal it. Feature **205** was revealed to be an elongated pit, with a length of around 3m, a width of 0.8m and a depth of 0.25m. It was filled with a sterile dark grey silty sand (**206**). No finds were recovered. Next to Pit **205**, a second elongated pit (**207**) (Fig. 11) was partially revealed. This feature had a length of over 2m, width of 0.6m and a depth of 0.15m. It was filled with grey-black silt and frequent cobbles (**208**). No visible charcoal was present and no finds were recovered.

*Trench 3*

Trench 3 (Figs. 1, 6-7) was aligned roughly N-S and measured 30m by 1.8m. It ran obliquely across the slope in the centre of the site. Topsoil (**001**) with a depth of 0.25m overlay subsoil (**002**) with a depth of between 0.4m and 0.5m. At the north end of the trench, a discontinuous lens of grey-black peaty silt was present at the base of the subsoil (**301-2**) (Fig. 7) and this filled shallow undulations in the natural below (Fig. 6 foreground). The natural subsoil was a well drained sandy gravel at the north end and a silty sand and gravel at the south end.

Near the middle of the trench, a feature (**305**) ran out of the trench so its full shape in plan was not identified. This had a width of 0.8m and a depth of 0.25m. It was filled with a deposit (**306**) visually identical to the overlying subsoil (**002**). A fragment of white glazed ceramic and a piece of coal were recovered.

Three field drains containing clay pipes were recorded in this trench (**303, 307** & **309**)

*Trench 4*

Trench 4 (Fig. 1) was aligned roughly N-S and measured 32m by 1.8m. It ran obliquely across the slope in the north of the site. Topsoil (**001**) with a depth of 0.3m overlay subsoil (**002**) with a depth of between 0.2m and 0.4m.

A drain (**401**) containing field clearance stones was recorded in the west end of the trench and a second drain (**403**) containing a clay pipe was just to the east of it. At the eastern end of the trench, a large natural boulder was present. Investigation around the boulder lead to an initial observation of a possible shallow cut (**405**) on the eastern side of the boulder. However, the current interpretation is that this was simply a naturally formed depression around the boulder and not anything of anthropogenic origin.

*Trench 5*

Trench 5 (Figs. 1, 8-10) was aligned roughly WNW-ESE and measured 30m by 1.8m. It ran at 90° to the contours up the slope in the northern edge of the site. Topsoil (**001**) with a depth of 0.3m overlay subsoil (**002**) with a depth of between 0.7m and 1.1m (Fig. 8). In much of the central part of the trench, a discontinuous lens of grey-black peaty silt was present at the base of the subsoil (**004**) and this filled several irregular shallow hollows in the natural below (Fig. 9). At the western end of the trench, the

deposits were more disturbed, perhaps a result of the laying of electric cables to the west, and a mixed grey-brown deposit (**005**) was present under the topsoil in this area.

A circular pit (**501**) was recorded in the centre of the trench (Fig. 8). This feature was 0.55m wide 0.15m deep (Fig. 10). It was filled (**502**) with sterile light grey-brown silt and a few pebbles. No finds were recovered.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological evaluation was conducted on land adjacent to Sir Walter Scott Drive (B8082) on the South-Eastern edge of Inverness.

Five trenches were excavated with a coverage of 287m² which equates to just over 7% of the available area.

Deep soils were present over much of the site. The natural subsoil was varied, with the best drained area being present on the level ground in the North-West corner of the site.

Aside from field drains, six negative features were recorded. The culvert drain (**201**) in Trench 2 is assumed to be post-medieval. Five other features (**203, 205, 207, 305, 501**) were identified. Two of these (**203** & **305**) were only partially exposed. However, the fills in these two features were identical to the subsoil and in feature **305** a fragment of white glazed ceramic and a piece of coal were recovered. It was considered that these were recent features, possibly stone holes. The other three features were potentially small pits, although features **205** and **207** were unusual in that they were elongated in plan, suggesting that they could have been formed when a stone was dislodged and dragged out of the ground by ploughing. It is considered that only Pit **501** had the potential to have been purposefully created. No finds were recovered from any of these and there were no visible environmental inclusions such as charcoal in any of the fills.

All decisions as to further work on the site rest with HCHET in consultation with CgMs Consulting.

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

On completion of this project a summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland.*

## 5. REFERENCES

Cameron A & Farrell, S 2016 Slackbuie Inverness IV2 6BG. Report on an Archaeological Evaluation. Commissioned by Kirkwood Homes

Garry, N 2011 Excavations of Lower Slackbuie, Inverness, prehistoric site, project codes SL09 and SL09WB for ASDA Stores Ltd

## APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

| Shot No. | Summary description of subject | Facing |
|---|---|---|
| 1-3 | General site views from the northern corner | S to E |
| 4 | General site view from the southern end | NE |
| 5 | Trench 1, working shot | SSW |
| 6-7 | Trench 1 general view | SSW |
| 8 | Trench 1 soil section | WNW |
| 9 | Trench 1 general view | NNE |
| 10-11 | Trench 1, drain 101 plan & section | SSW |
| 12 | Trench 2, culvert drain 201 | E |
| 13 | Trench 2, culvert drain 201 | N |
| 14 | Trench 2, feature 203 | SE |
| 15 | Trench 2, feature 203 section | E |
| 16 | Trench 2, general view | W |
| 17 | Trench 2, feature 205 | SE |
| 18 | Trench 2, feature 205, plan view | E |
| 19 | Trench 2, feature 205 section | E |
| 20 | Trench 2, general view | E |
| 21 | Trench 2, culvert drain 201 reinstated | E |
| 22-23 | General site views from the eastern corner | SW to W |
| 24 | Trench 3, general view | S |
| 25 | Trench 3, grey-black layer 301 | W |
| 26 | Trench 3, views of the N end showing the basal deposit 301, 302 | N |
| 27 | Trench 3, section at N end showing 302 at the base of the profile | W |
| 28 | Trench 3, stone pit 305 and fill 306 | W |
| 29 | Trench 3, stone pit 305 and fill 306 | S |
| 30 | Trench 3, general view | N |
| 31 | Trench 5 working shot showing where the upper soil layers have been recently truncated | NE |
| 32 | Trench 4, general view | E |
| 33 | Trench 4, drain 403 | E |
| 34 | Trench 4, general view | W |
| 35 | Trench 4, cut 405 and the large natural boulder | W |
| 36 | Trench 5, pit 501 pre-ex | ESE |
| 37-38 | Trench 5, pit 501 sectioned | ESE |
| 39 | Trench 2 extension, feature 205 fully exposed and feature 207 | S |
| 40 | Trench 2 extension, feature 205 fully exposed and feature 207 | E |
| 41-42 | Trench 2 extension, feature 207 section | W |
| 43 | Trench 2 extension, feature 205 fully exposed and feature 207 | W |
| 44-45 | Trench 5, soil section in mid trench | SSW |
| 46 | Trench 5, soil section in mid trench | ESE |
| 47-48 | Trench 5, general view | ESE |
| 49-50 | Trench 5, examples of the grey-black layer 004 filling natural undulations in the natural subsoil | NNE |
| 51-52 | Trench 5, general view | WNW |

## APPENDIX 2: Context Register

| Context no. | Fill of | Type | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| **001** | | Deposit | Topsoil |
| **002** | | Deposit | Subsoil |
| **003** | | Deposit | Natural subsoil |
| **004** | | Deposit | Grey black peaty soil in the base of the soil profile in Trenches 3 and 5. Same as 301, 302 |
| **005** | | Deposit | Greyish compact silt under 002 |
| **101** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **102** | 101 | Fill | Clay pipe, stones and mixed fill |
| **201** | | Cut | Linear culvert drain |
| **202** | 201 | Fill | Quarried sandstone slabs |
| **203** | | Cut | Cut for possible pit, partially exposed |
| **204** | 203 | Fill | Mid brownish grey silty sand |
| **205** | | Cut | Cut for pit |
| **206** | 205 | Fill | Dark grey silty sand & small stones |
| **207** | | Cut | Cut for possible pit, partially exposed |
| **208** | 207 | Fill | Grey brown and grey black silty sand & cobbles |
| **301** | | Deposit | Grey black peaty soil in the base of the soil profile |
| **302** | | Deposit | Grey black peaty soil in the base of the soil profile |
| **303** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **304** | 303 | Fill | Clay pipe, stones and mixed fill |
| **305** | | Cut | Stone extraction pit |
| **306** | 305 | Fill | Grey brown silty sand & stones. Fragment of modern ceramic & coal |
| **307** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **308** | 307 | Fill | Clay pipe, stones and mixed fill |
| **309** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **310** | 309 | Fill | Clay pipe, stones and mixed fill |
| **401** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **402** | 401 | Fill | Field clearance stones |
| **403** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **404** | 403 | Fill | Clay pipe, stones and mixed fill |
| **405** | | Cut | Irregular possible cut to the east of a massive boulder |
| **406** | 405 | Fill | Mixed deposit consisting of subsoil 002 and redeposited natural subsoil |
| **501** | | Cut | Cut for circular pit |
| **502** | 501 | Fill | Light grey-brown wet silt & stones |
| **503** | | Cut | Linear field drain |
| **504** | 503 | Fill | Field clearance stones |

## APPENDIX 3: Trench Summary

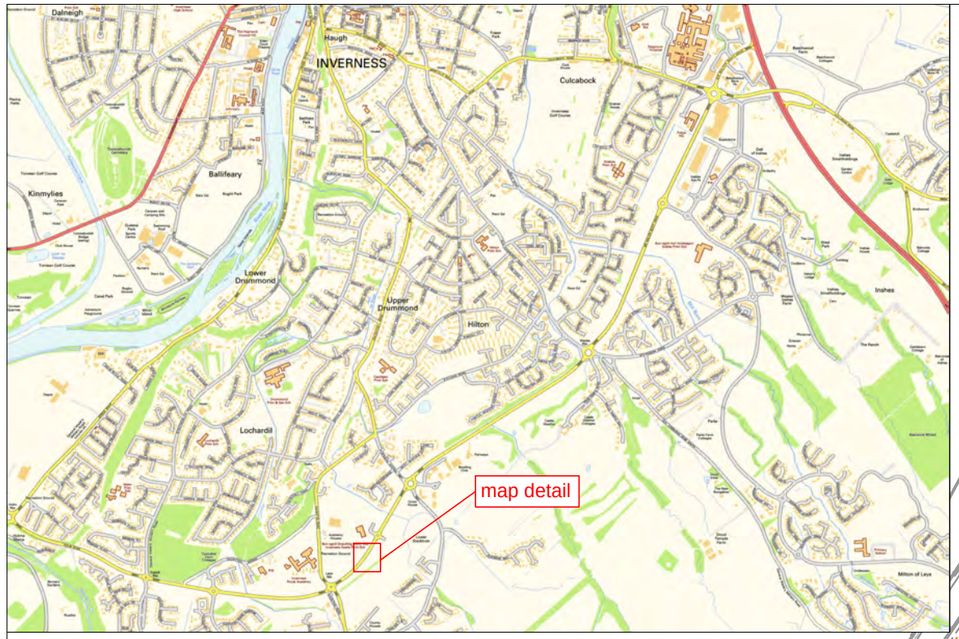
| Trench | Dimensions | Depth of deposits | Features |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 30m x 1.8m | | 1 field drain |
| 2 | 30m x 1.8m with an extension of 4m x 3.5m | | 1 culvert drain<br>3 pits |
| 3 | 30m x 1.8m | | 3 field drains<br>1 pit |
| 4 | 32m x 1.8m | | 2 field drains<br>Natural depression around boulder (**405**) |
| 5 | 30m x 1.8m | | 1 field drain<br>1 pit |

## APPENDIX 4: Drawings Register

| Dwg No. | Sheet No. | Scale | Plan / Section | Description/contexts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 01:10 | Section | Trench 2, feature 205, north facing section |
| 2 | 1 | 01:20 | Plan | Trench 2, feature 205, plan |
| 3 | | 01:20 | Plan | Trench 2, feature 203, half section plan |
| 4 | | 01:10 | Section | Trench 2, feature 203, W facing section |
| 5 | | 1:100 | Plan | Trench 1 plan |
| 6 | 1 | 01:10 | Section | Trench 5, pit 501 WNW facing section |
| 7 | 1 | 01:10 | Section | Trench 2 extension, pit 207, SE facing section |
| 8 | 1 | 01:20 | Plan | Trench 2 extension, pits 205, 207 plan |
| 9 | 1 | 01:20 | Plan | Trench 5, pit 501 half section plan |

## APPENDIX 5: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

| | |
|---|---|
| **LOCAL AUTHORITY:** | Highland |
| **PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:** | Land adjacent to Sir Walter Scott Drive, Slackbuie, Inverness |
| **PROJECT CODE:** | SLAK |
| **PARISH:** | Inverness and Bona |
| **NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:** | Ian Suddaby |
| **NAME OF ORGANISATION:** | CFA Archaeology Ltd |
| **TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:** | Evaluation |
| **NMRS NO(S):** | None |
| **SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):** | |
| **SIGNIFICANT FINDS:** | None |
| **NGR** (2 letters, 6 figures) | NH 6696 4207 |
| **START DATE** (this season) | November 2017 |
| **END DATE** (this season) | November 2017 |
| **PREVIOUS WORK** (incl. *DES* ref.) | None |
| **MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:** (May include information from other fields) | Due to the location of the site in an area of high archaeological potential an evaluation was carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd in advance of a possible development adjacent to the B8082 on the edge of Inverness. Five trenches were excavated, covering 287m². Aside from field drains, six negative features were recorded. A culvert drain in Trench 2 was assumed to be post-medieval. Five other features were identified. Four were thought to be stone holes, one of these contained modern finds. The remaining feature could have been a small pit but contained no finds or environmental inclusions, such as charcoal. |
| **PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:** | Unknown |
| **CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:** | None |
| **SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:** | CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction 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) | Archive to be deposited with NRHE, reports lodged with SMR. |




B8082 SIR WALTER SCOTT DRIVE

Tarmac

Tr.1

Tr.2

Tr.3

Tr.4

Tr.5

101

201

203

204

205

206

207

208

303

306

305

307

309

401

403

405

stone

501

502

503

Rough Grass

0 20m

**Key:**

- Service buffer
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- Drain



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, site plan and trench layout

Project:
Land at Sir Walter Scott Drive, Slakbuie, Inverness

Client:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

Scale at A3:
1:500

| Drawn by: | Checked: | Date: |
|---|---|---|
| GC | SW | 09/11/2017 |

| Report.No: | Fig. No: |
|---|---|
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Fig. 2 General view of the site from the south-west

Fig. 3 Trench 2, culvert 201

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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:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

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Fig. 4 Trench 2, feature 203

Fig. 5 Trench 2 extension, features 205, 207 from the north

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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:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

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Fig. 6 Trench 3, general view from the north

Fig. 7 Trench 3, section at the north end showing the grey-black peaty silt 301 at the base of the profile

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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:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

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Fig. 8 Trench 5, general view from west-north-west with pit 501 in the centre of the trench

Fig. 9 Trench 5, section at the centre of the trench showing the grey-black peaty silt 004 at the base of the profile

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Land at Sir Walter Scott Drive, Slakbuie, Inverness

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:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

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Fig. 10 Trench 5, pit 501 section

Fig. 11 Trench 2, feature 207 section

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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:
CgMs Consulting on behalf of Carter Lauren Construction Ltd

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# 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

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

t: +44 (0) 1228 564 531
e: cumbria@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

**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

**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

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

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

**Milton Keynes**
Town Hall
Creed Street, Wolverton
Milton Keynes, MK12 5LY

t: +44 (0) 1908 226 124
e: miltonkeynes@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