

**Site** Holyrood New Parliament Site – Queensberry House Gardens

**N.G.R. (Mapsheet)** NT2673NE

**Project Description** Trial Trenching across (E-W) a grassed area lying to the S of Queensberry House Hospital.

### **Report**

In the light of the Desk based Assessment (DBA) completed on the proposed Parliament of Scotland Site (PSS), and the outline trial trenching strategy, Trial Trench 3 (T3 Fig 1) was partially excavated over 4 working days (28.4.98 – 1.5.98). The excavation concentrated on three areas of T3, resulting in 3 separate trenches – 3/1, 3/2, 3/3 (Fig 1).

The archaeological potential of the site was based on documentary & cartographic evidence and the findings of a borehole survey sited a short distance to the S of T3. The available evidence suggested the presence of deep stratified deposits reflecting primarily the evolution of the private formal gardens behind the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Queensberry House to early 18<sup>th</sup>-century army parade ground, culminating in the present arrangement of flower beds, lawn and car parking serving the site's most recent role as a hospital (early 19<sup>th</sup>-century to present).

The three separate trenches were sited on the grassy area affected by T3 and were aligned within the overall dimensions of T3

Trench 3/1 was the furthest W and it measured 3.6m E-W x 1.8m N-S (although it was subsequently reduced to 3m E-W x 1m N-S for safety reasons) and was dug to a general maximum depth of 1.3m deep. At the E end of this trench a sondage 1m E-W and 0.3m N-S removed a further 0.70m of deposits.

Trench 3/2 was approximately 1.5m to the E of trench 3/1, measured 2m E-W, 1m in width and was up to 1.1m deep.

Trench 3/3 was located 2m to the E of trench 3/2, measured 2m E-W by 1m wide and was excavated to a depth of up to 0.75m.

#### **TRENCH 3/1**

Turf and topsoil, F100, was found to a depth of 200mm. This was top quality, dark brown/black garden soil, apparently imported for the present lawn (20<sup>th</sup> century)

Sealed by F100 and cutting F103, was a planting pit (107), 0.60m deep, with irregular edges, located in the NE corner of the trench and therefore not seen in full. The fill of F107, F106, was mid-dark brown garden soil virtually indistinguishable from F100.

Under F100, was a deposit of orange/red blaze (F101) located in the western 0.70m of the trench varying in depth from 20mm-40mm. Immediately under F101 was a 50mm thick deposit of fairly

soft grey cinder and ash (F102). Under F102 and extending throughout the trench F103 was a 30mm thick deposit of slightly cambered compact grey ash. Sealed by F103 was a 110-150mm thick deposit of dark brown grey silty ash, F104, with the thickest part of the deposit being fairly central in the trench and a pronounced camber to both sides. F105 was a 0.40m thick mixed deposit of stones and garden soil with mortar flecks and lumps throughout.

F101, F102, F103, F104 and F105 were clearly related to the laying of a garden path. In turn deposits F101, F102 and F103 may be either repairs to the original path or disturbed material caused by wear and tear of F104, the path surface. F105 was also imported, and it was probably demolition debris brought in to level the ground up immediately prior to the construction of path F104. These features were all 20<sup>th</sup>-century in date

Sealed by F105, F108 was a 0.35m thick layer of dark brown silty loam with some small stones, flecks of coal and mortar. F108 was found throughout the trench and represents garden activity of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Below F108 and again throughout the trench, F109 was a 0.45m thick mixed deposit of mid brown silty clay with fragments and smaller lumps of broken masonry, occasional mortar flecks and oyster flecks. This in turn gave way to F110, a 0.50m thick deposit of dark brown silty loam with some small stones seen however only in the sondage at the E end of the trench. The deepest deposit revealed in the trench lay below F110 and proved to be another apparent dump of levelling material (F111) – a soft mid brown clayey silt with small stones and mortar and coal flecks, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m but not bottomed.

In all, deposits F109, F110 and F111 form part of a massive levelling phase, perhaps over a terraced profile, dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### TRENCH 3/2

The upper deposit, F200 (the present lawn bedding), was a black slightly clayey silty sand with occasional small, up to 20mm, stones and was 110mm thick. Sealed by F200, F201 was loose grey brown, coarse, slightly clayey silty sand with many small, up to 20mm, angular stones many mortar flecks and blaze inclusions. F201 was between 240mm and 300mm thick and again was associated with the laying of the present turf surface.

Running E-W through the trench was a cut with gently sloping sides and almost flat base (F204). Only the N edge of F204 was seen and it was a maximum of 0.3m deep. F204 was sealed by F201 and filled with F203, loose dark brown silty sand with some clay patches, a few angular pebbles and occasional mortar flecks.

F204 is probably a robber trench associated with the removal of the trench 3/3 wall F307 in this area.

Sealed by F201 and cut by F204, F202 was a compact cream/yellow mortar deposit with much building rubble and occasional lenses of dark brown topsoil derived material. The top of this deposit formed a fairly level surface. F202 also appeared to fill a N-S cut F205 up to 0.45m wide and 0.25m deep, which extended across the full width of the trench at its W end.

A composite layer, F206, was cut by F205 and was sealed by F202. In total, the deposit was up to 0.42m thick, the upper part being a compact, mixed dark brown clayey silty sand and pale orange clay. The lower part was loose, white decayed mortar with much building rubble.

Beneath F206, F207 was a mixed deposit of crumbly dark brown silty sand with mortar inclusions. F207 was exposed but not excavated.

It is likely that F202, F205 and F206 represent an in-filling / levelling phase with cut F205 being merely an accidental result of this in-filling, probably reflecting the direction of tip lines (from the E). These deposits reflect late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century dumping / landscaping.

### TRENCH 3/3

The upper deposit, F300 (modern topsoil), was a moderately compact very fine black loam with occasional small pebbles throughout.

The W side of the construction trench (F301) for the present path immediately E of the trench, was found at the E end of the trench and extended N-S across it. It was filled with a thin, up to 50mm, band of orange sand over 150mm of coarse grey gravel.

Cut by F301 and sealed by F300, F302 was a deposit of fairly loose black loam with mortar lumps and flecks and some angular stones. F302 was throughout the trench to a depth of up to 0.25m and represent imported soils for the present garden.

In the SE corner of the trench and sealed by F302, was a modern pit (F303) with fairly steep irregular edges and sloping base. The full dimensions of F303 were not seen as the S and E edges were outwith the excavated area but it was over 1m N-S, 1m E-W and 0.3m deep.

Present in the western part of the trench but cut by F303 to the E, F304 was the N side of a cut feature with a steep edge and rounded base. F304 was a modern robber trench for wall F307, up to 0.25m deep in the excavated area and it was filled with a fine black loam with small stones, mortar flecks and frequent red blaise chips.

Sealed by F302 and cut by F304, was another modern deposit, F305, a relatively compact mixed deposit of very fine slightly yellow / white mortar with frequent charcoal flecks and stones up to 0.25m thick.

Towards the S side of the trench and sealed by F305, F307 was an E-W aligned wall built with large (up to 0.9m by 0.3m) sandstone blocks bonded with a fine slightly yellow / white mortar containing frequent small shell fragments and some pebbles. F307 stood to 0.35m, three

courses, in height. The construction cut for F307, F308, was steep sided with an uneven base and was up to 0.30m deep. The fill of F308 (F306) was loose and mixed. The major component (c. 70%) was coarse grey silt but there were also 20% sandstone chips and 10% mortar fleck and lumps. There were occasional patches of fine black loam throughout.

F307 appeared on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition O.S map but it seems unlikely that it is a great deal earlier than this. The impression gained of this feature was more of a garden boundary than the remains of a building.

Seen throughout the northern part of the trench and cut by F308, F309 was light-mid grey slightly greasy silt with many stones up to 100mm in size. Sealed by F309 and not excavated, F310 was a compact mixed deposit of fine light brown silt, 60%, with 20% mortar and 20% stones up to 100mm in size. Artifactual evidence suggests that F309 and F310 date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Interpretation**

The majority of the deposits encountered were imported material used to raise the ground level. It was notable that although 2.05m of material was removed in part of trench 3/1 it was not thought that 17<sup>th</sup>-century deposits were reached. Coring in nearby areas seems to indicate that there could be over a metre of deposits below what was seen.

The present threshold level for the S doorway at Queensberry House appears to be essentially unchanged since the construction of the mansion in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However the results of the trial trenches show clearly that a considerable degree of in-filling over 17<sup>th</sup>-century garden levels has taken place. This in turn probably reflects the original terraced nature of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century layout, a consequence of the natural landfall down towards the line of Cowgate / Holyrood Road.

The broad chronology of the development of the garden area behind Queensberry House can be summarised as :

1. c. 1679 – c. 1750 Formal, compartmentalised beds, probably on 3 steep, and possibly graded terraces, the uppermost being essentially present ground level towards the N half of the present lawn and parking areas. The available evidence suggests that the 17<sup>th</sup>-century and earlier deposits lie over 3m below ground level at the S end of the site and over 2m in the area of T3.
2. c. 1750 – c. 1785 Possible formal planting over infilled terraces, creating large single garden plot. This appears to be the point at which the general ground level was raised significantly for the first time, creating a sloping profile for a large garden, rather than individual beds. This may in turn reflect the occupancy of the house by the Lord Chief Baron of Exchequer, James Montgomery of Stanhope.

3. c. 1785 – c. 1808 Final formal layout for the garden, this time introducing formal divisions over the informal planting, creating a parterre arrangement. This was probably preceded by further landfill activity, bringing the general level of the garden up by losing the glacis or slope of the Period 2 layout.
4. c. 1808 – 1832 After the sale of the house to the Board of Ordnance in 1803, the parterre garden was eventually cleared and converted to a parade ground.
5. c. 1832 – present The later history of the site is associated with the service and communal space behind the newly created People's Refuge and later Hospital. The layout as shown on OS map of 1893 was succeeded by the present arrangement of parking bays around a central lawn, by the simple clearance of partition walls (F308 etc.) and the importation of new garden soils.

The majority of the deposits encountered are thought to be late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century in date although in some cases the majority of the finds were earlier than this. Given the degree of landfill from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, this material is either imported or residual. In broad terms, it seems likely that only activity associated with the Period 4 and 5 garden layouts was found (Fig 2).

## Context List

<b>Context No</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
100	3/1	Turf and topsoil	
101	3/1	Orange/red blaze	20 <sup>th</sup> -century path repair
102	3/1	Grey cinders and ash	Part of 20 <sup>th</sup> -century path make-up
103	3/1	Compact grey ash	Main deposit on late path
104	3/1	Dark brown/grey, silty ash	Cambered imported material, path make-up
105	3/1	0.4m thick deposit of garden soil and stones	Laid deposit, possibly raising ground level immediately prior to path being laid
106	3/1	Dark brown topsoil	Fill of F107
107	3/1	Pit irregular in shape, only part seen	Possibly a laid flower bed
108	3/1	Dark brown garden soil, 0.4m thick	Imported for late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> -century garden
109	3/1	Mixed demolition material, 0.3m-0.35m thick	Levelling, possibly late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> -century
110	3/1	Dark brown silty loam	Garden soil, 18 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup> -century
111	3/1	Soft mid brown clayey silt	Levelling, not fully excavated
200	3/2	Turf and topsoil	
201	3/2	Loose grey/brown silty sand	Make up for present surface
202	3/2	Compact cream/yellow mortar and rubble	20 <sup>th</sup> -century in-filling deposit
203	3/2	Loose dark brown silty sandy clay with occ. mortar flecks. Fills F204	Fill of probable robber trench associated with F307
204	3/2	E-W cut	N edge of robber trench
205	3/2	N-S linear cut	Possibly S edge of planting pit
206	3/2	Mixed stony deposit	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> -century in-filling
207	3/2	Mixed dark brown silty sand and mortar flecks and lumps	Imported infill (= F108?)
300	3/3	Turf and topsoil	
301	3/3	N-S linear cut	Cut for current path to E of the trench
302	3/3	Fairly loose dark brown loam	Material imported for current garden
303	3/3	Pit, only N and W edges in trench	Possibly planting pit
304	3/3	Linear E-W cut	Possible robber trench
305	3/3	Stone and mortar deposit	Collapse of wall F307
306	3/3	Loose very mixed deposit	Fill of construction trench F308

Context No	Trench	Description	Interpretation
307	3/3	Wall built with sandstone blocks, mortar pointed	Wall shown on 1 <sup>st</sup> edition O.S map
308	3/3	Linear E-W cut.	Construction trench for F307
309	3/3	Mid grey slightly clayey silt	Levelling deposit
310	3/3	Compact very mixed deposit with mortar flecks and lumps throughout. (= F206)	In-filling/levelling material

### **Finds List**

Context No.	Finds
F102	4 sherds plant pot, 1 iron nail + 1 clay pipe stem.
F104	6 sherds 20 <sup>th</sup> -century ceramics, 2 frags of modern red brick, 2 sherds of post-medieval reduced ware.
F105	2 frags late house brick, 2 animal bones.
F109	6 animal bones, 2 Fe Objects, 4 plaster frags, 1 pantile frag, 3 sherds Green Glaze pottery, 1 Cu Alloy pin.
F201	1 mother of pearl button , 6 frags of glassy slag, misc frags of roof tile and modern ceramics.
F202	10 frags of house brick (some hand made), 12 sherds of modern china, 2 clay pipe stems.
F206	1 Cu Alloy coin, 4 frags of house brick (all hand made) 2 frags of wall plaster, 2 frags of pantile, 4 oyster shells, 4 Green Glaze sherds, 4 sherds of 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> -century ceramic, 1 frag Pb window came, 2 frags window glass , 6 pipe stems frags.
F302	1 cat skeleton, 6 sherds of plant pot.
F303	7 sherds of plant pot, 1 frag clear window glass.
F305	8 frags of red pantile, 1 frag handmade brick, 8 sherds of brown glazed earthenware (teapot type), 2 frags pipe stem, 1 sherd Green Glaze pottery, 1 sherd blue vessel glass, 1 animal bone.

The finds assemblage reflects 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century deposition in the main. However, the material from F206 in particular demonstrates the scale and quality of albeit redeposited finds – which in this case appear to represent a demolished structure of possible Post Medieval date, imported or spread as landfill.

## **Photographic List**

B/W Film 1

<b>Frame</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Description</b>
9-10	3/1	E	Turf and Ts removed
13/14	3/3	N	302 removed, 303 excavated
15/16	3/2	E	202 revealed, 201 excavated
17/18	3/1	E	105 & 106 revealed
19/20	3/2	E	202 & 204 revealed
21/22	3/3	N	305 removed
23/24	3/3	W	309 removed
25/26	3/2	E	202 removed
27/28	3/3	N	307 exposed
29/30	3/2	S	S facing section
31/32	3/2	W	W facing section

B/W Film 2

<b>Frame</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Description</b>
8-9	3/1	W	general view
10-11	3/1	"	E section
12-13	3/1	S	S facing section
14-15	3/1	SE	S facing section
15	3/1	SW	S facing section
16	3/1	W	S facing section
17	3/1	E	S facing section
18-19	whole site	S	general view