



## INDIA PLACE, EDINBURGH

*Historic Building Recording  
& Desk-based Assessment*

*for City of Edinburgh Council*

*10/03522/FUL*

*April 2011*



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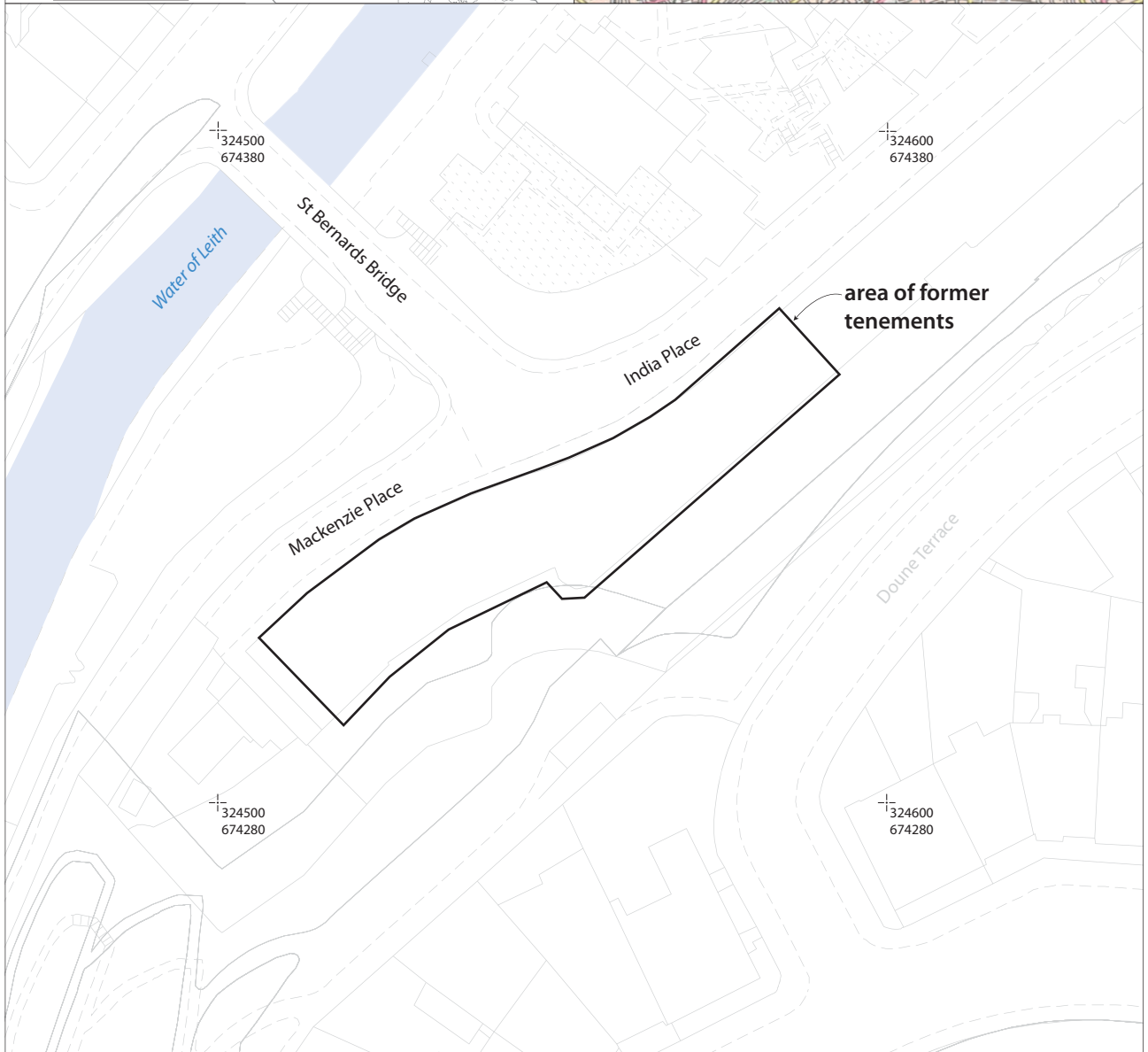
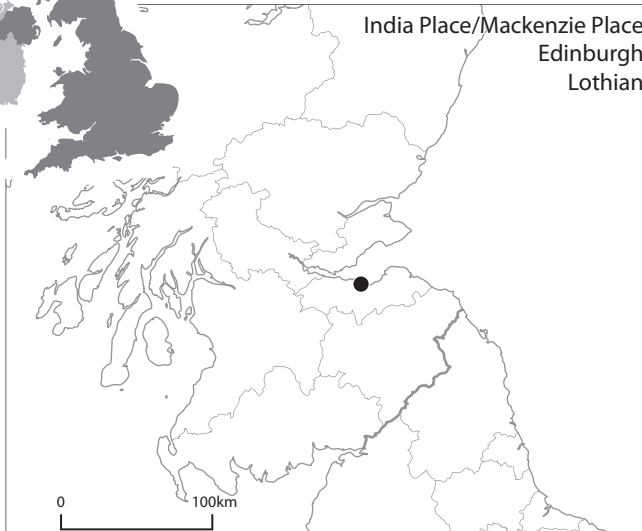
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Scale 1:1,000 @ A4



**Illus 1**  
Site location



# INDIA PLACE, EDINBURGH

## *Historic Building Recording & Desk-based Assessment*

*Headland Archaeology was commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council to undertake a programme of desk-based assessment and historic building recording on two ranges of cellars running from India Place to Mackenzie Place in the New Town of Edinburgh. The cellars are built into a NW facing slope facing the Water of Leith and the land in front of them was formerly occupied by a row of Georgian tenements. This has lain vacant since their demolition in the 1960s. The work was required to satisfy a planning condition set out by the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service, in advance of the construction of a number of allotments on the site.*

*The programme of building recording has created a basic record of the cellars as they presently stand. No reference could be found that specifically relates to these structures but they are visible on 19th century maps. Indeed, little documentary evidence could be found that directly referred to the former tenements. No remains of these survive on the ground but it is likely that foundations or features relating to the construction of these buildings remain below present ground level.*

1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council to undertake a programme of desk-based assessment and historic building recording on two ranges of cellars running from India Place to Mackenzie Place in the New Town of Edinburgh (Illus 1). The work was required to satisfy a planning condition set out by the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service, in advance of the construction of a number of allotments on the site.

The cellars are built into the base of a steep NW facing slope, overlooking the Water of Leith (Illus 2). They are the last visible remnants of two rows of Georgian tenements that were demolished in the 1960s. The remainder of the development area has lain vacant since that time.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Utilising the general standards set out by English Heritage (2006), a Level 1 historic building survey was undertaken. This aims to provide a basic visual record of the cellars as standing, and a brief assessment of their location, age and type. A photographic survey, in print, slide and digital formats provides a record of key elevations and significant features (see Appendix 1 for a register of shots taken). An accompanying written account gives further

detail on the form, materials and purpose of the cellars. Additionally, an EDM and Disto survey was undertaken to provide a basic floor plan.

This fieldwork has been complemented with a brief desk-based assessment, intended to provide a little more history of the site based on readily accessible archive material.

This methodology was agreed in advance with the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service.

## 3. HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

Illus 3 presents the general layout of the cellars. They are at ground level, and have been built into the base of a steep slope running up to the massive stone revetment for Doune Terrace (Illus 2). The ground between them and India Place comprised patchy and heavily disturbed rough grass. No structural remains of the former tenements were visible. There are effectively two ranges of cellars, one to the NE (nos 1–19) and one in the SW (nos 20–31).

### 3.1 India Place cellars (NE)

The NE range of cellars are situated 12–20m SE of the curving India Place, running for some 50m on a straight



*Illus 2*

General view of site from St Bernard's bridge, facing SE

SW-NE alignment. The range continues to the NE outwith the scope of the present development area.

2 The cellars (Illus 4) have a slightly battered façade of mostly squared stone, built to courses with stressed quoins. This façade wall is up to 2m high, around 0.8m thick, and is penetrated by 19 doorways, each measuring approximately 0.9 x 1.5m. These are topped by substantial squared lintels of around 0.2m in depth. The lintels of cellars 18 and 19 are half the height of the others. In many doorways there are remains of ironwork and slots for door furniture (Illus 5). Additionally, there is clear evidence that most of these have been blocked at some point (probably with brick, Illus 5), perhaps only being re-opened relatively recently.

The cellars themselves are barrel-vaulted and range from 1.6–1.8m wide, 1.7–2.1m deep and up to 1.9m high (Illus 6). The alignment of the cellars with their doorways is not consistent, to the point that the stonework of the vaulted ceiling is often visible in profile from outside. Furthermore, towards the NE end of the range, exposed areas of the vaults are (in places) also visible from above, where the earthen bank has eroded. The vaults appear to be coarsely built, some being well rounded, others more pointed.

Many of the cellars are partly infilled with rubble, so it was not possible to assess most of their floors. Those that were visible appeared to be of stone or poured concrete. All the cellars were very damp, one was flooded (number 11). Most have a small square hole in their back wall – presumably for drainage or ventilation. Some of these holes are now blocked with brick or mortar. The walls themselves are of random rubble. In cellar 5, the outline of a possible lean-to internal structure can be seen in the moss on the back wall (Illus 6).

### 3.2 Joining wall

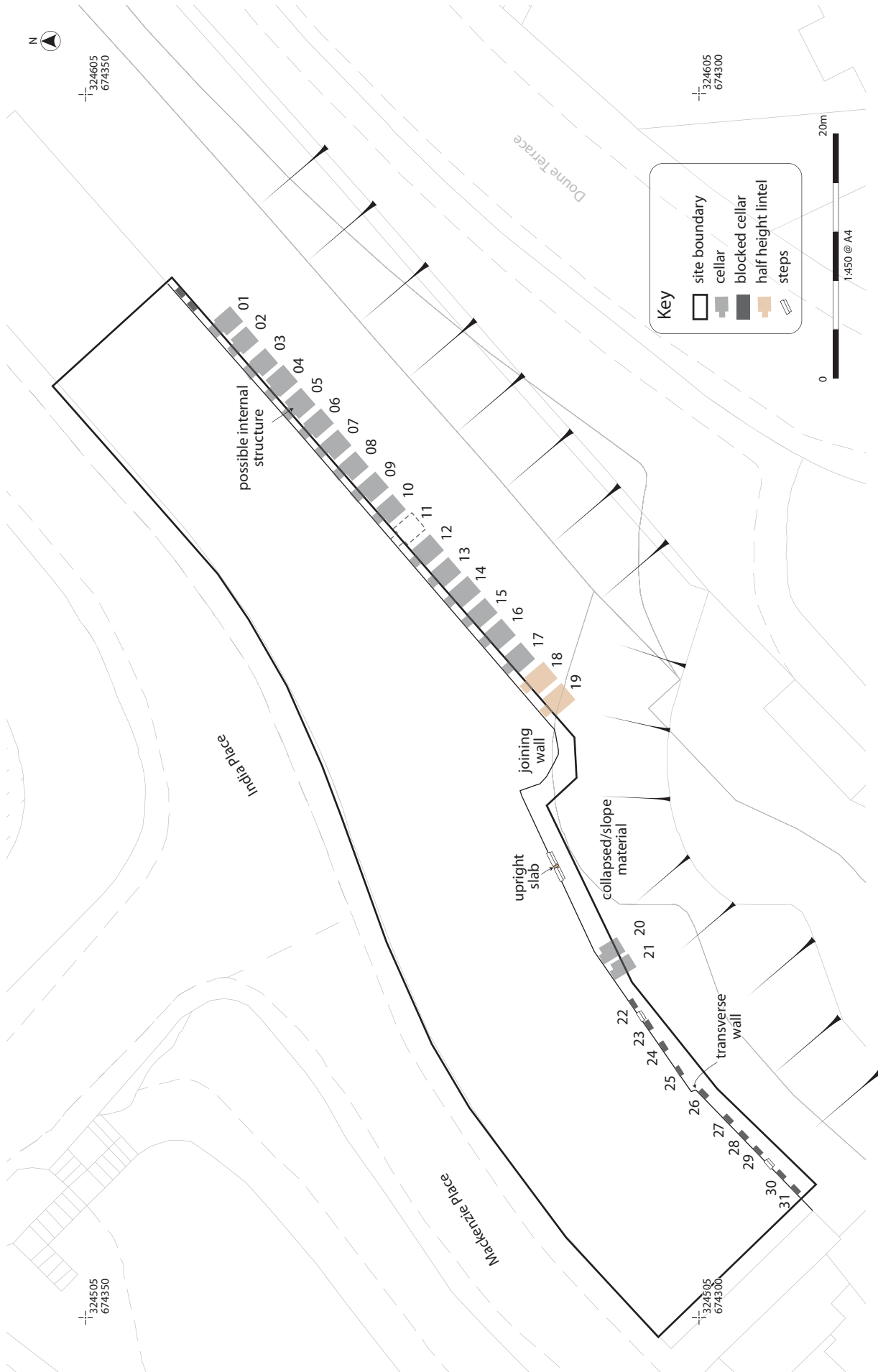
A curved revetment wall fills the gap between the two ranges of cellars (Illus 7). It stands to 3m high, which may suggest that the façade of the India Place cellars does not stand to its original height. The wall is constructed of loosely coursed random rubble, and appears to have been repaired at least once.

### 3.3 Mackenzie Place cellars (SW)

The SW range consists of 3 short stretches of straight, vertical façade, stepped and running around the base of the slope. The construction is different to that of the NE range, which suggests that the two associated groups of tenements may have been built at different times. Only two cellars were accessible at the time of the survey – the other 12 were sealed with heavily rendered brick or stone work. Each stretch of façade is interrupted by a stairway giving access to the slope behind.

The NE-most stretch appears to have been recently rebuilt (Illus 8). It is constructed of random squared masonry around 0.3m thick and from 1.3 to 1.8m high. The stone work in the SW end of this stretch may be original, being generally less squared and more weathered. The current revetment wall is unlikely to represent the original height of the wall here. Had there been cellars here previously the current structure would be too low to accommodate full-height doorways. The gap for the stairway is 2.6m wide, and may have accommodated a double set of steps. These are not clearly visible as they are covered with collapsed slope material. A thin upright slab may mark the divide between the two adjacent stairs.

The middle stretch is stepped back from the NE-most one, and has doorways to 8 cellars, 4 on each side of a



Illus 3  
Site plan



**Illus 4**

General view of India Place range

narrower stairway (0.95m). The steps here are still visible, and would originally have protruded from the façade by several steps. The façade is built of random rubble but with very substantial, squared quoins. It is around 0.35m thick, and survives to 1.5m, or the height of the doorways. Again, this is unlikely to be the original height of the wall. Modern square slabs serve as lintels, though they do not support any further masonry. The two NE-most cellars were accessible and measured 1.3 x 1.7m and 1.6m high (Illus 9). The ceiling was of flat stone slabs, though at the back of cellar 21, a crude arch had been formed

by two abutting slabs (Illus 10). The floors were again covered with debris so it was not possible to investigate these in detail.

The SW-most stretch of the range is constructed in a manner similar to the central one, though it survives to approx. 2m. Three original stone lintels survive, the others either missing or replaced with modern squared stone. Some quoins are missing from the doorways and these have been filled in and rendered when the entrances were blocked. The stairway is in good repair though the lower (protruding) steps are missing. It is likely that this range continues further SW, but it has now been obscured by a modern garage (Illus 11).

4



**Illus 5**

Detail of door jamb, showing former blocking and notches for door fittings

#### 4. RESULTS OF DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

Map evidence (Illus 12) shows that prior to the extension of the Edinburgh New Town to the N and W in the early 19th century, the area was used for light cultivation or parkland, and was bounded to the NW by a mill lade which ran from Dean Bridge to Canonmills. There were cottages and possibly some industrial buildings along what became Saunders Street, between the lade and the Water of Leith (Gow).

The site itself lies in an interesting location on the boundary between the former Moray and Raeburn estates, forming the southernmost part of the latter. The large retaining wall to the SE was constructed to support Doune Terrace, part of James Gillespie Graham's 1822 scheme for the Earl of Moray's land. This development also includes Randolph Crescent, Ainslie Place and Moray Place (Gifford *et al.*, p355). Further to the SW, the steep slopes to the water of Leith were landscaped as 'pleasure gardens' for the wealthy residents of these streets (Byrom, p267). The grassy slope behind the India Place and Mackenzie Place cellars does not form part of these gardens, but is

**Illus 6**

Inside of cellar 5, showing possible internal structure

**Illus 7**

Joining wall from the north

**Illus 8**

NE end of Mackenzie Place range, showing double stairway and rebuild

**Illus 9**

Cellars 20 and 21, external view

visually a continuation of them, being made accessible by several paths and the steps mentioned above (see Illus 13). The cellars themselves are also visible on this map, with a narrow open area separating them from the tenements.

India Place, Mackenzie Place and Saunders Street (to the north) lie on ground formerly owned by businessman and politician Walter Ross, which was later bought by the painter Henry Raeburn (City of Edinburgh Council, p5). He added it to the Deanheugh estate he had gained through marriage to Ann Edgar, and started feuing it for development around 1813 (Gifford *et al.*, p405). The architect for the development of this area was James Milne, though it is not certain whether he designed the tenements of India and Mackenzie Places. The feuing plan, dated 1822 exists for Athole Street, St Bernard's – which could be an earlier name for one of the streets around India Place (NAS). This may provide further details.

These tenements are described as follows:

*'India Place (1823–5) consisted of long ashlar fronts with simple architrave-and-cornice doorpieces and an almost unbroken cornice-line, but no front gardens or basement areas. A curved front with pilastered endpieces joined it to Mackenzie Place, a plain terrace with basement areas to the W of St Bernard's Bridge.'* (Gifford *et al.*, p410).

5

Several photos exist of the tenements (Illus 14), including some held by RCAHMS from the early 1960s (RCAHMS).

No further references to the buildings could be found with regards to their use, except for one quote:

*'India Place, with its tenements, was further along across the street, up behind the fire station in Saunders Street (long since demolished). India Place had a terrible reputation as one of the roughest street's in town. I was forbidden to even go near it lest I 'catch nits or be sold to the tinkers!!!'.* Keith Main, 2008.

By the 1960s, the buildings were deemed to be in a poor state of repair and fit for demolition (RCAHMS). The same fate awaited the tenements on the other side of India Place, and those on Saunders Street and Kerr Street, all of which were demolished in 1966–7 (Gifford *et al.*, p409; Illus 15). The land bounded by these three streets was used to accommodate several 5-story housing units and a health clinic, designed by Michael Laird & Partners in 1974–5 (*ibid.*, p410). The present site has not been reused since, other than as parkland, although it does seem like the cellars themselves have been at least in intermittent use.



**Illus 10**  
Cellar 20, internal view

## 5. DISCUSSION

The specific purpose of these cellars is not clear. Since the former tenements had no gardens, they would probably not be used for tool storage, with fuel or cool food storage being more likely.

While no remains could be seen on the ground, it is likely that foundations of the tenements or features relating to their construction may remain below present ground level. Little documentary evidence could be found that directly referred to these buildings, themselves being described as the 'less ambitious of the Raeburn terraces' (*ibid.*). However, potential remains to further assess the site in the context of New Town development and its social history.

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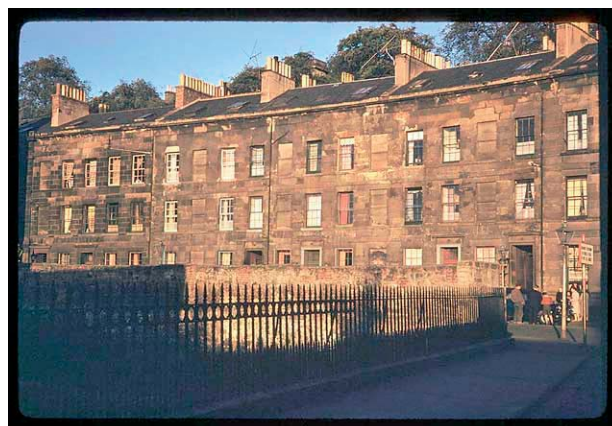
**Illus 11**  
SW end of Mackenzie Place range, showing modern garage



**Illus 12**

Kirkwood's Plan, 1819

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**Illus 14**

India Place from St Bernard's Bridge (Cushman, 1961)



**Illus 13**

Ordnance Survey Town Plan, 1851

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**Illus 15**

India Place from Saunder's Street, following demolition.

The site is slightly to the right of this photo

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## 6.2 Cartography

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1853, Ordnance Survey, *Town Plan of Edinburgh*, sheet 28, Ordnance Survey, Edinburgh.



## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix 1 – Photo register

<i>Photo no.</i>	<i>Direction facing</i>	<i>Description</i>
001	–	ID shot
002	SW	India Place, general view from NE
003	SE	India Place, general view from NW
004–013	S	India Place, panorama of cellars 1–19
014	S	India Place, cellar 1, interior
015	S	India Place, cellar 5, interior
016	SW	India Place, cellar 7, door jamb
017	W	Curved joining wall
018	S	Mackenzie Place, NE stretch, NE end
019	S	Mackenzie Place, NE stretch, stairway
020	S	Mackenzie Place, NE stretch, SW end
021–025	S	Mackenzie Place, middle stretch, panorama
026	S	Mackenzie Place, SW stretch, cellars 26–7
027	SE	Mackenzie Place, SW stretch, possible transverse wall
028–031	S	Mackenzie Place, SW stretch, panorama
032	SW	Mackenzie Place, cellar 21, interior
033	E	General view
034	SE	India Place, cellar 10, ironwork in doorway
035	SE	Continuation of cellars to NE









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