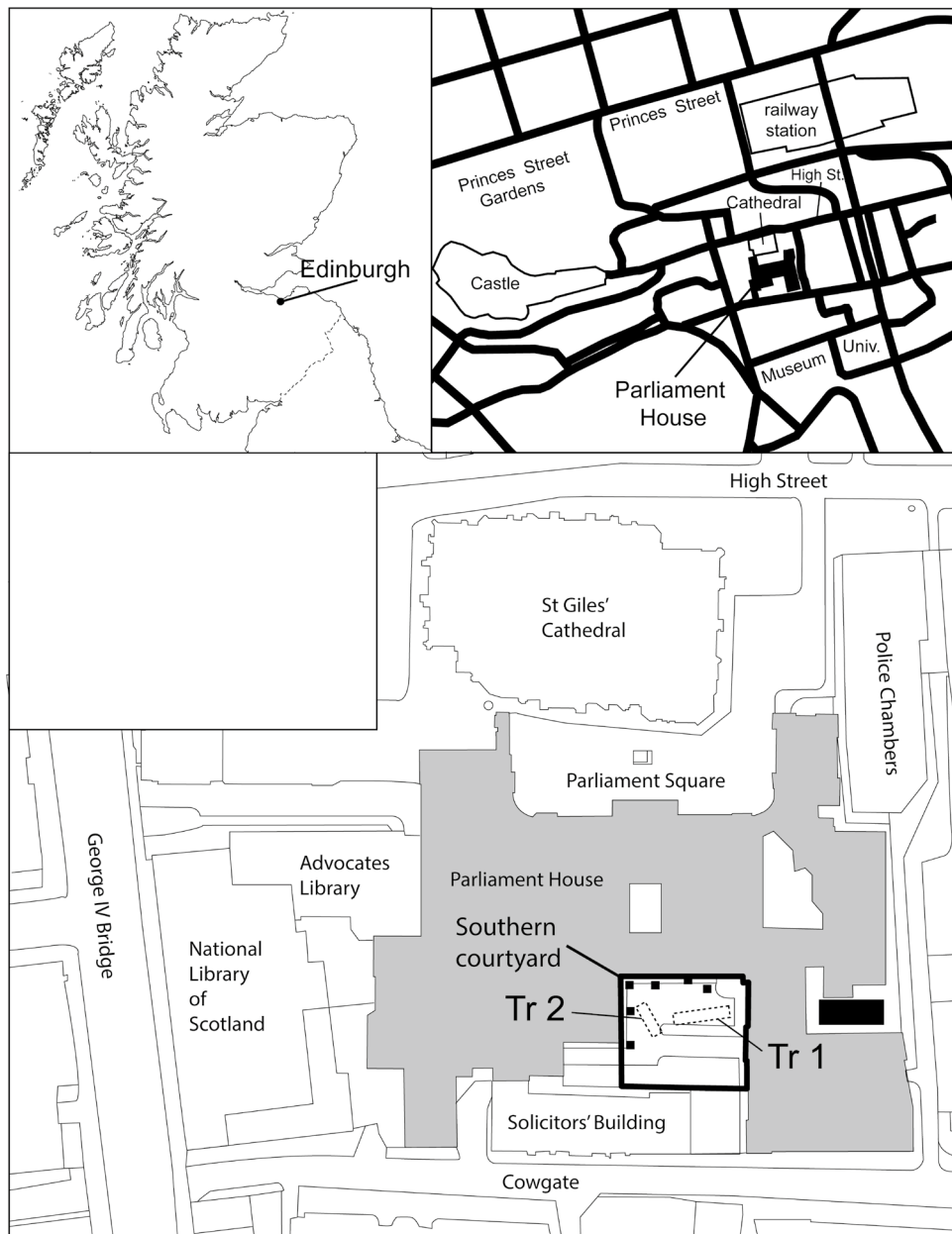


2. INTRODUCTION

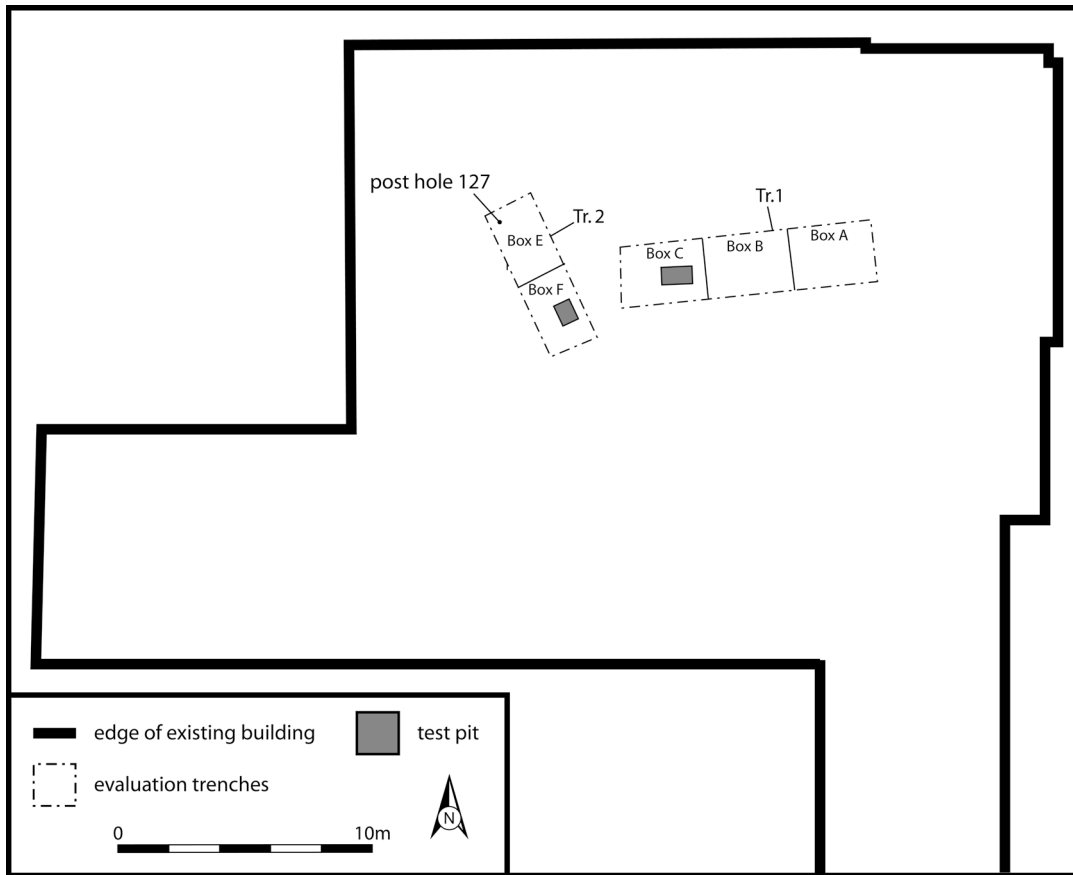
Parliament House occupies a 2ha area within the World Heritage Site of Old Town, Edinburgh with Parliament Square, St Giles' Cathedral and the High Street to the north, the Cowgate to the south, Old Fishmarket Close to the east and the National Library to the west (Illus 1). The area occupied by Parliament House slopes down from Parliament Square towards the Cowgate and the building complex incorporates small landscaped spaces and courtyards, of which the Southern Courtyard is the largest. The courtyard (NGR: NT 2577 7350) is bounded to the north,

east and west by Parliament House and to the south by the Solicitors' Building and the Cowgate. The natural geology of the site consists of boulder clay overlying bedrock comprising the Cementstone Group of the Calciferous Sandstone Measures of Lower Carboniferous Age (British Geological Survey 1965).

Following the recommendations of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS), archaeological works were undertaken between 1998 and 2004 by AOC Archaeology Group in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the Scottish Law



Illus 1 Site location (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 2 Evaluation trench locations (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 3 View of site from west (© AOC Archaeology Group)

Courts at Parliament House. A series of watching briefs identified the presence of human bone at a depth of between 4m and 8m in the Southern Courtyard, leading to archaeological evaluation of the courtyard (Illus 2 & 3) in late 2004.

Significant archaeological remains were recorded, including inhumations within the 15th/16th-century southward expansion of St Giles' Church graveyard as well as earlier medieval deposits underlying the burial ground and the later probable surface of the 17th- to 19th-century Meal Market. The remains of 95 individuals were recovered from the burial ground; the analysis of this material (Appendix 1) has proven illuminating with regards to the population of late medieval Edinburgh.