

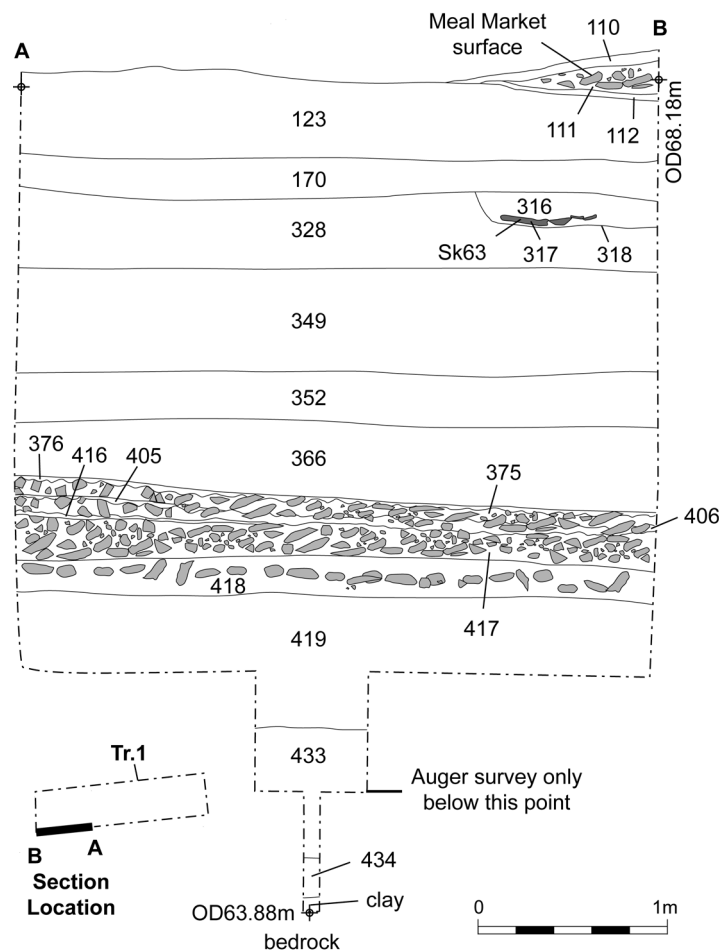
4. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

4.1 Introduction

A watching brief in 1999 in the Southern Courtyard identified midden deposits containing articulated and disarticulated human bone between 4m and 8m below the present car park surface (Toolis et al 2005). Bones had previously been observed during the 1992 construction of the PSA building in the south-east corner of the Parliament House site (Mark Collard, pers comm). Between January 2002 and March 2003 archaeological watching briefs (Illus 1) were undertaken at various locations around the Old Parliament House complex (Toolis et al 2005), identifying foundations and large granite boulders to a depth of up to 5.50m from the surface at the northern edge of the Southern Courtyard.

In 2004 two evaluation trenches were opened in the centre of the Southern Courtyard. Trench 1

was aligned roughly east/west while Trench 2 was orientated approximately north/south, to the west of Trench 1. Deep rubble deposits were removed and trench shoring 'boxes' were inserted to stabilise the sides of the evaluation trenches, in which archaeological hand-excitation was undertaken. These boxes formed divisions of the evaluation trenches. Thus Trench 1 (10.2m by 2.5m) was divided into Trench Boxes 1A, 1B and 1C and Trench 2 (6.2m by 2.0m) into 2E and 2F (Illus 2). The evaluation trenches were stepped, with deeper excavation undertaken in those boxes furthest from standing buildings. Box 1C was excavated to 65.15m above ordnance datum (OD) (Illus 10) while Box 2E was excavated to a depth of 65.6m OD (Illus 11). In both these areas, test pit and auger core surveys reached a depth of 63.9m OD, before reaching possible bedrock. An abundance of articulated human skeletal remains was recovered,



Illus 10 North-facing section of Trench Box 1C (© AOC Archaeology Group)

revealing an element of the late medieval burial ground south of St Giles’.

Subsequently, an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC in late 2007 and early 2008 on minor development works in Parliament Square and in a close to the west of the Solicitors’ Building of the Parliament House complex (Engl 2008) identified disarticulated human bone and elements of two east/west-aligned inhumations, an adult and a child, in the latter location, south-west of the 2004 evaluation.

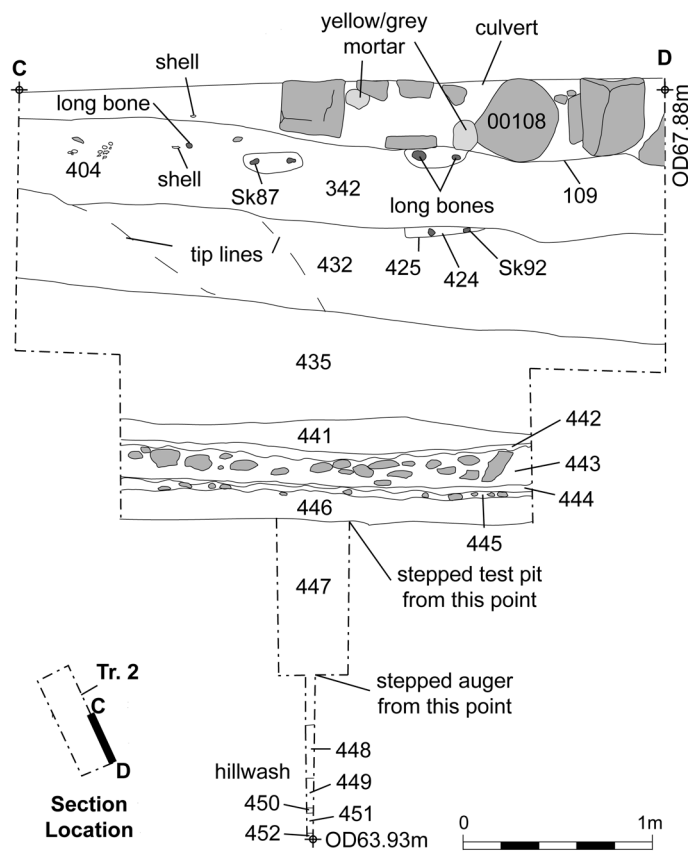
4.2 The archaeological remains

The surfaces, features and deposits identified during the archaeological works were phased according to stratigraphic and artefactual evidence (Phases 1 to 4). In addition, a programme of radiocarbon dating (Table 1) was undertaken, in large part to define the date range of skeletal material recovered from the late medieval burial ground to the south of St Giles’ (Phase 3).

4.2.1 Phase 1: Medieval hillwash, dump and levelling deposits and cobble surfaces

Naturally deposited clay, sand and organic silty clay layers overlay the probable bedrock. Above these, at a depth of between 64.0 and 64.2m OD silty clay hillwash material was identified (Contexts 434 & 449; Illus 10 & 11). A depth of approximately 1.4m of dark greyish-brown silty clay dumped material (Contexts 419, 433, 447 & 448) overlay the hillwash. The pottery from these buried soil deposits included Scottish White Gritty Ware, with some imported German Stoneware (see Appendix 3).

A silt and cobble levelling deposit (Contexts 418 & 446) sealed the buried soil and acted as a bedding layer for a cobbled surface (417/445), which had been resurfaced twice in Trench 1 (Contexts 406 & 375) and once in Trench 2 (Context 443). Late medieval pottery (commonly Scottish White Gritty Ware), animal bone and leather fragments were recovered



Illus 11 West-facing section of Trench Box 2F (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 12 Skeleton 32, showing truncation (© AOC Archaeology Group)

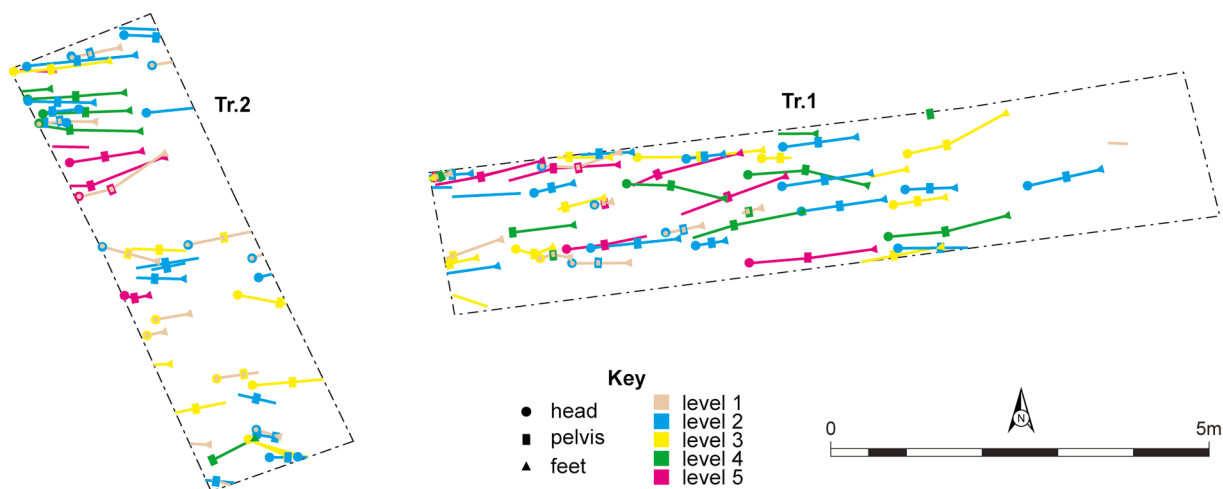
amid these cobble surfaces and the waterlogged dark silt deposits that sealed them (Contexts 405, 416 & 444). A well-preserved wood and copper alloy seal matrix (SF244) (Appendix 4) was found in Deposit 405, between cobble surfaces in Trench 1. In Trench 2 the cobble surface sloped visibly down from north to south, possibly representing the camber of a road.

4.2.2 Phase 2: Medieval trample deposits and tipped layers

A thin silt layer (Contexts 376 & 442) represented trample over the uppermost cobble surface. Above this a 1.4m-deep series of dark grey clayey silt deposits (328, 349, 352, 366, 432, 435 & 441) contained building and domestic debris, such as late medieval pottery including significant quantities of Scottish White Gritty Ware (Appendix 3), animal bone (Appendix 10) and leather (Appendix 9). Small fragments of wool textile (Appendix 8) were also recovered from these deposits. A series of tip lines were seen to slope down from north to south.

4.2.3 Phase 3: The St Giles' inhumations (mid-15th century to mid-16th century)

A dark greyish-brown clayey silt layer (Contexts 101, 123, 124, 170 & 342) was present in both trenches, from which elements of 95 articulated inhumation



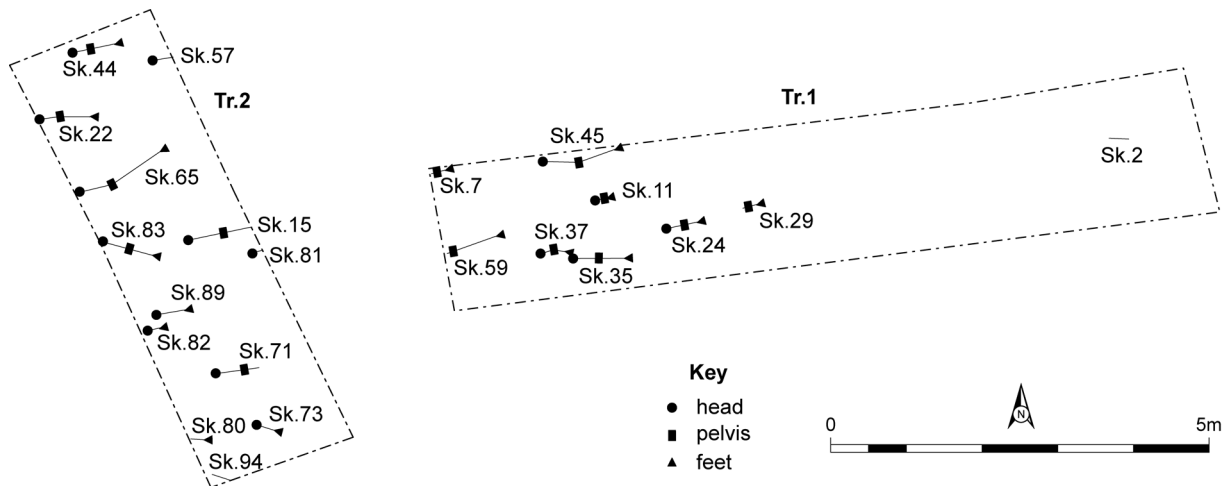
Illus 13 Plan of articulated skeletons (© AOC Archaeology Group)

burials (Skeletons 1; 3–96) were recovered, together with much disturbed chancel. The skeletal remains were analysed in detail (Appendix 1).

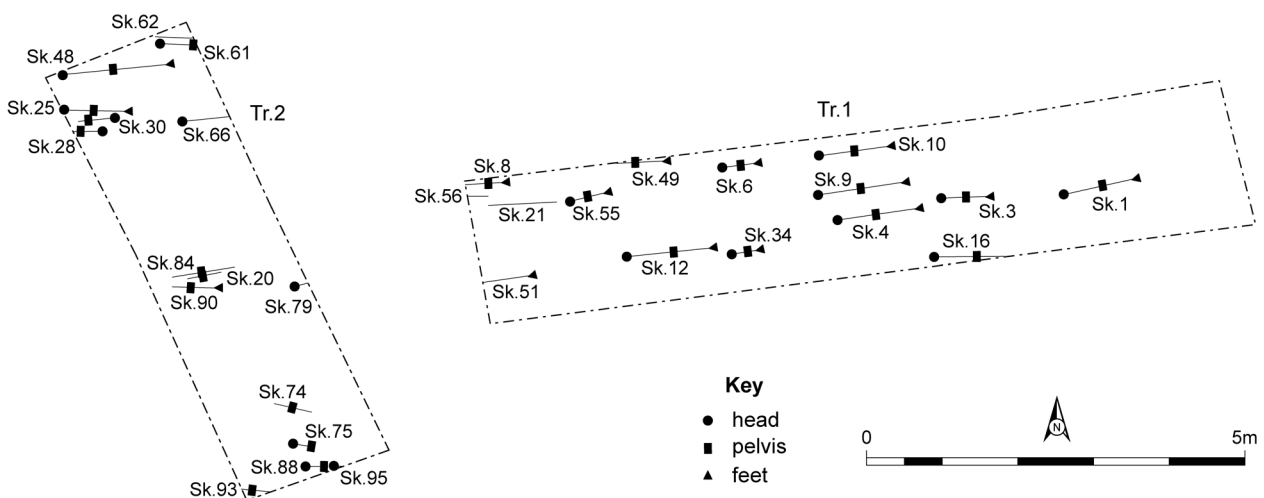
The deposits containing inhumations lay between 68.15 and 67.40m OD in Trench 1, and between 68.30 and 67.30m OD in Trench 2. This burial horizon was fully excavated in just three shoring boxes; only partial excavation was possible in Boxes 1A and 2E due to the limitations of the shoring equipment. There was heavy truncation (Illus 12) of many skeletons.

The articulated skeletons were aligned east/west in rough strings or columns, with the heads generally

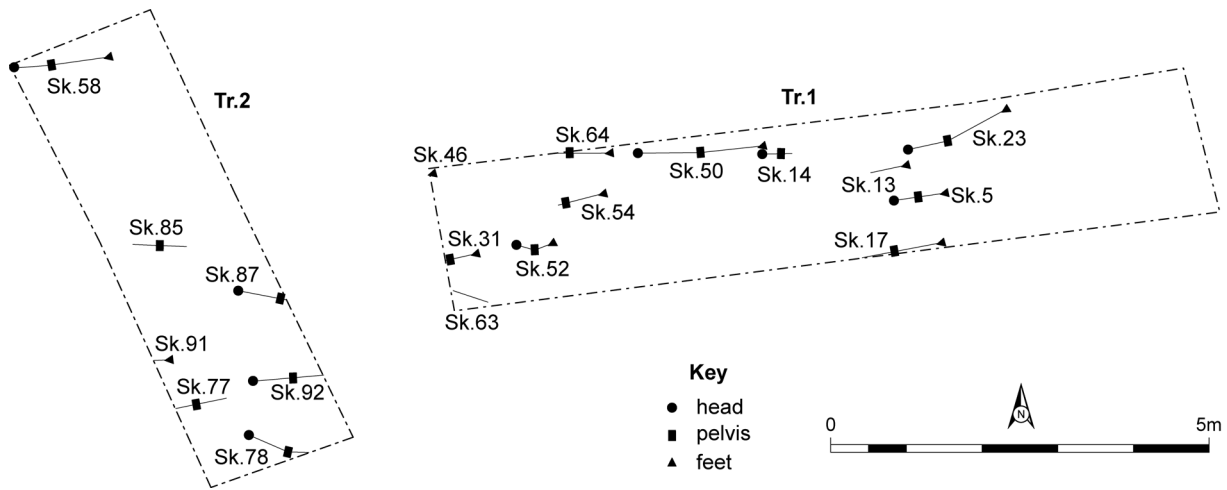
to the west (Illus 13). Only rarely were grave cuts clearly visible, as the burial ground had been heavily reworked. There were up to six intercutting inhumations in some areas. For example, in Box 1C, Skeleton 7 overlay Skeleton 8, which lay over Skeleton 46, which in turn lay over Skeleton 47. Skeleton 47 then appeared to overlay Skeleton 42. At the base of this sequence was Skeleton 41. The plans of skeleton positions within the evaluation area (Illus 14–18) are based on the height of burials and on stratigraphic relationships between individual burials, with Level 1 the highest and Level 5 the lowest, but do not represent clear sub-phases.



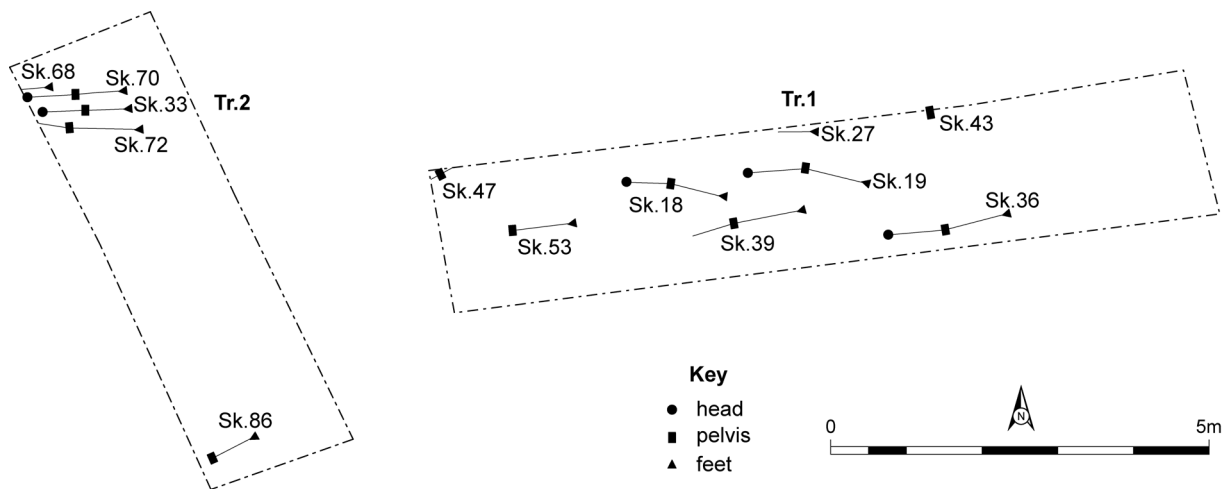
Illus 14 Plan of articulated skeletons (Level 1 - highest) (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 15 Plan of articulated skeletons (Level 2) (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 16 Plan of articulated skeletons (Level 3) (© AOC Archaeology Group)

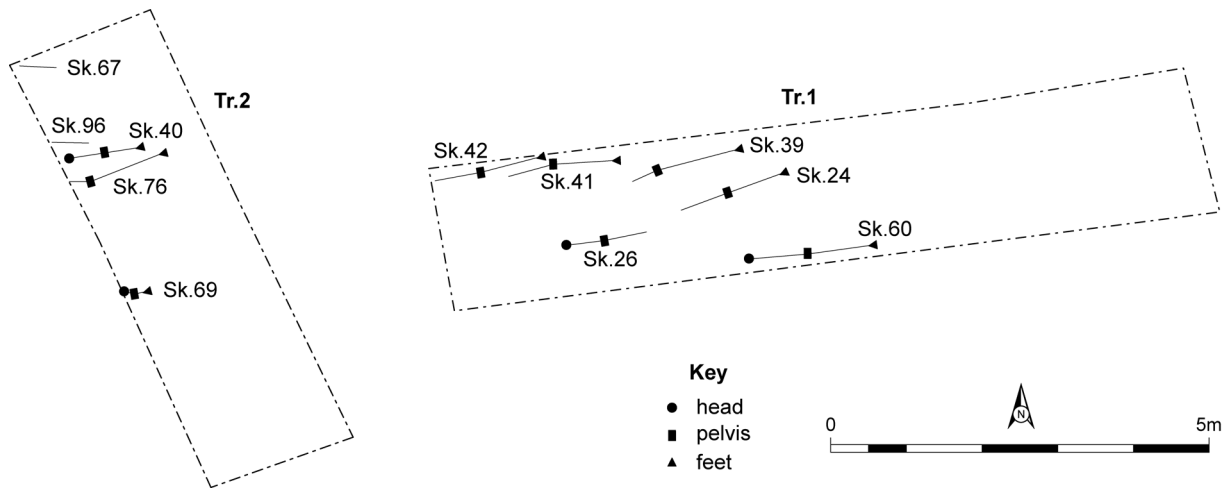


Illus 17 Plan of articulated skeletons (Level 4) (© AOC Archaeology Group)

Where visible, the grave cuts were sub-rectangular in plan and generally had a shallow, U-shaped profile with a flat base. Relatively few iron and copper artefacts, indicative of shroud fastenings, were recovered (Appendix 4), perhaps due to the intensive reworking of the burial soils. Nails and fragments of wood (Appendix 7) were also rarely recovered from grave fills.

The bodies were commonly laid flat on their backs in a supine position, though several lay more awkwardly in partially flexed positions. A group of six adult skeletons (Skeletons 22, 25, 28, 30, 33 and 40) in Trench 2 (Illus 19 & 20) lay

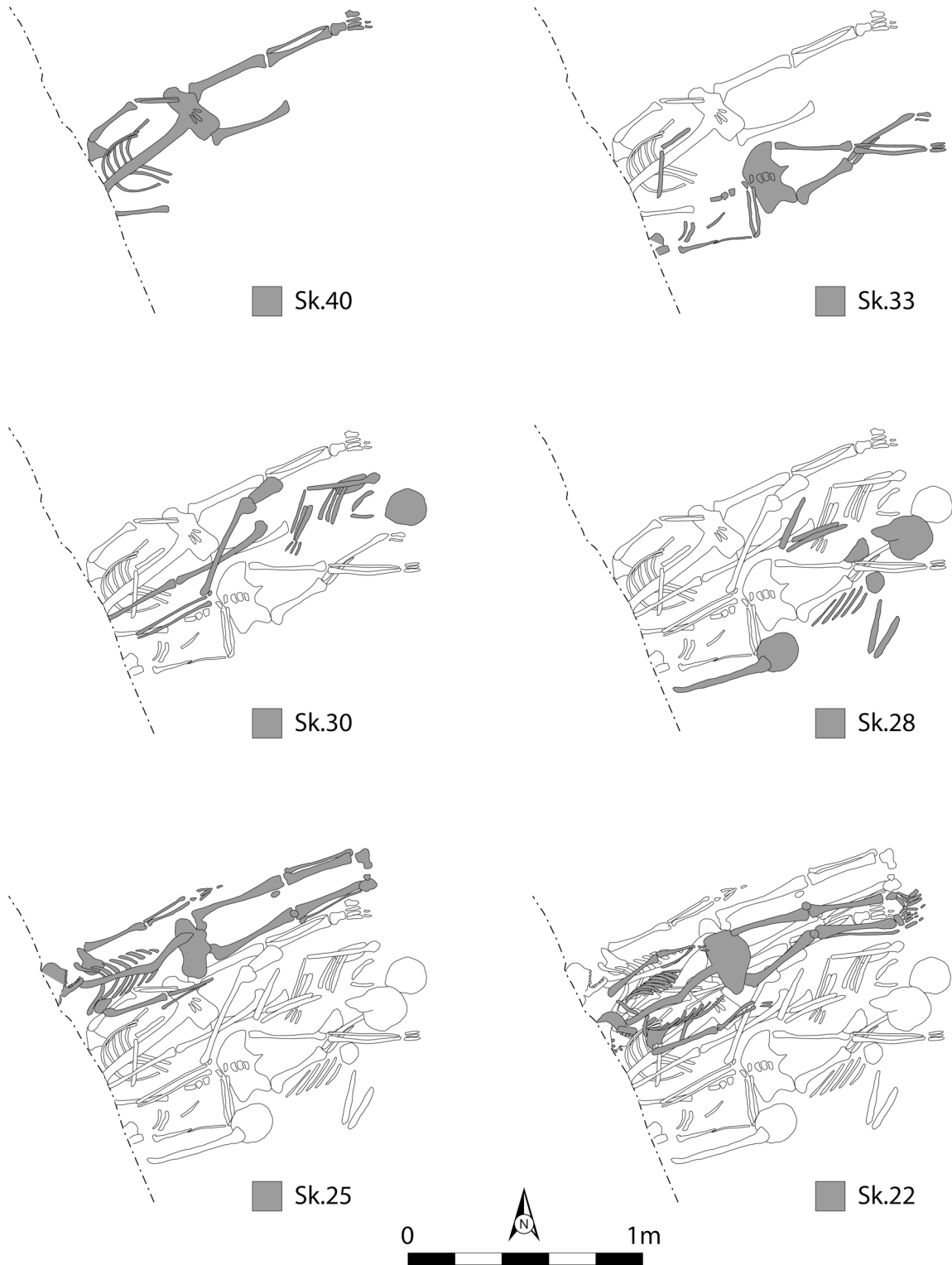
in a closely packed group, with the skeletons in contact with each other, and did not appear to have been heavily disturbed during inhumation. Three of these adults lay in unusual positions; one (Skeleton 28) lay prone, with the arms awkwardly spread-eagled and with the head to the east and the feet to the west, the opposite orientation to most inhumations in this cemetery. Skeleton 30 had a similarly contrary alignment. Under Skeleton 30 lay Skeleton 33, which though supine and on the normal alignment, had crossed legs and its left arm spread out, pointing towards the east. It is postulated that this unusual group of skeletons



Illus 18 Plan of articulated skeletons (Level 5 - lowest) (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 19 Possible mass grave in west of evaluation (© AOC Archaeology Group)



Illus 20 Plans of putative mass grave (© AOC Archaeology Group)

represents a mass grave of individuals buried in a single event.

Elsewhere, there were three possible examples of double inhumation, each of which consisted of the remains of a small child overlying those of an adult. In Box 1C, Skeleton 12 was associated with the skeletal remains of a neonate, Skeleton 11. In Box 2F, the left shoulder and torso of Skeleton 84 was overlain by Skeleton 83 and the lower right leg of Skeleton 90 was overlain by Skeleton 89.

Most of the skeletons in which the original position of the body was discernible had been laid supine with straight legs and arms either straight at the sides of the body or with the arms slightly flexed, so that the hands met over the pelvis. Skeletons 16 and 32 (Illus 12) had the arms crossed over the torso.

A single probable post hole (Context 127) (Illus 2) was cut into the burial deposits in the north end of Trench 2, slight evidence for a former structure. Pottery associated with the burials in the courtyard (Appendix 3) was indicative of a date in the late medieval/early post-medieval period.

4.2.4 Phase 4: Cobble surface (early post-medieval)

Patchy remnants of a yard or road surface (Context 111), which consisted of closely packed sandstone cobbles, was encountered in Trench 1 at a depth of between 68.3 and 68.15m OD, directly above skeletal remains and under a thin layer of disturbed clayey silt, Context 110 (Illus 10). Ceramics associated with these surfaces and the overlying deposits were again of late medieval/post-medieval date. The entire area was overlain by over 4.5m of rubble overburden associated with the construction of the court buildings in the 19th century.

4.2.5 Radiocarbon dating

Samples from charred macroplant and bone samples, including samples from ten skeletons, underwent

accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) ¹⁴C dating at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre in East Kilbride. Calibration was conducted using OxCal v4.3 and the IntCal13 calibration curve.

The calibrated dates from the skeletal samples (Phase 3) were roughly consistent with the historically documented period of use of the churchyard extension from the late 15th to the mid-to-late 16th century, though analysis suggests that burial had commenced before the official donation of Forbes' land in the 1470s. The relatively early dates for Skeletons 58 and 60 (likely to date from the 15th century) were in agreement with their location towards the base of the stratigraphy of the burial ground, but in general the date ranges provided by the bone samples were too similar to aid understanding of the sequence of burials, being essentially statistically indistinguishable. Bayesian analysis of the dates from the Phase 3 skeletal material suggests that the duration of use of the churchyard expansion can perhaps be more closely estimated, with its start occurring between 1410 and 1460 cal AD (at the 95% probability range), and the end of its use between 1440 and 1510 cal AD (at the 95% probability range). While only a small proportion of the area of the graveyard extension was excavated, these results indicate that burial started in the area prior to the recorded donation of the glebe land in the 1470s.

The calibrated dates derived from charred macroplant remains in Phase 2 Contexts 349, 432 and 441 (underlying the grave soil) were varied, with calibrated dates ranging from the early 11th to the early 17th century. If the two earliest dates derived from Context 432 are taken to represent residual material, however, the radiocarbon dates suggest that these contexts were probably deposited between the early 15th and the early 16th centuries.

Table 1 Radiocarbon samples (* Where two or more date ranges occur, this is a result of the calibration plot.)

Lab code	Context	Graveyard level (See Illus 14–18)	Material	Radiocarbon age BP	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (‰)	Calibrated date 95.4% probability range*
SUERC-15550	163 (Skeleton 16)	Level 2	Bone: human left femur	435±35	-19.8	AD 1415–1514 (90.3%), AD 1600–1618 (5.1%)
SUERC-15551	166 (Skeleton 17)	Level 3	Bone: human left tibia	455±35	-19.2	AD 1409–1486 (95.4%)
SUERC-15560	190 (Skeleton 59)	Level 1	Bone: human right femur	390±35	-19.2	AD 1439–1525 (64.4%), AD 1556–1632 (31.0%)
SUERC-15555	256 (Skeleton 44)	Level 1	Bone: human cranium	430±35	-20.1	AD 1417–1516 (88.3%), AD 1596–1618 (7.1%)
SUERC-15556	260 (Skeleton 45)	Level 1	Bone: human left femur	410±35	-20.7	AD 1429–1522 (77.6%), AD 1574–1626 (17.8%)
SUERC-15557	272 (Skeleton 49)	Level 2	Bone: human left femur	395±35	-20.5	AD 1437–1524 (67.3%), AD 1558–1632 (28.1%)
SUERC-15559	304 (Skeleton 58)	Level 3	Bone: human left femur	470±35	-19.2	AD 1404–1472 (95.4%)
SUERC-15561	308 (Skeleton 60)	Level 5	Bone: human left femur	480±35	-19.8	AD 1400–1465 (95.4%)
SUERC-15565	344 (Skeleton 71)	Level 1	Bone: human right femur	360±35	-21.5	AD 1450–1530 (46.6%), AD 1538–1635 (48.8%)
SUERC-15558	349 (sub-graveyard deposits)		Charred nutshell: <i>Corylus avellana</i>	415±35	-25.4	AD 1426–1522 (80.3%), AD 1575–1624 (15.1%)
SUERC-15568	424 (Skeleton 92)	Level 3	Bone: human left humerus	375±35	-20.1	AD 1444–1528 (55.4%), AD 1544–1634 (40.0%)
SUERC-15993	432 (sub-graveyard deposits)		Cattle tooth	385±35	-22.2	AD 1440–1527 (61.4%), AD 1554–1634 (34.0%)
SUERC-15994	432 (sub-graveyard deposits)		Indet mammal bone	850±35	-19.0	AD 1049–1084 (8.2%), AD 1124–1136 (1.9%), AD 1150–1262 (85.3%)
SUERC-15566	432 (sub-graveyard deposits)		Charred grain: <i>Triticum</i>	915±35	-22.6	AD 1029–1190 (94.0%), AD 1198–1204 (1.4%)
SUERC-15567	441 (sub-graveyard deposits)		Charred nutshell: <i>Corylus avellana</i>	420±35	-25.2	AD 1420–1522 (82.6%), AD 1575–1624 (12.8%)