



Illus 13 South Sector: cleaning Area 8 at start of second season of excavation, 1977, looking north-west.
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2 The excavation: introduction

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The archaeological excavations in 1975–7 at 75–95 High Street, Perth (known as the Marks and Spencer excavation or Perth High Street Archaeological Excavation, hereafter PHSAE) were the first major urban excavations undertaken in Scotland, and, until the Scottish Parliament excavations in Edinburgh, the largest undertaken in Scotland.

Urban excavations had taken place in place in England from the late 1940s, particularly in London, Canterbury and Southampton, as a result of redevelopment of urban sites after wartime bombing. They concentrated on the recovery of remains of Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlements but generally ignored medieval remains. During the 1960s and 1970s the pace of urban redevelopment had quickened and excavations in Winchester and York had highlighted the importance of rescue excavations in advance of redevelopment. Nevertheless, urban archaeology was not a high priority for the public, developers or politicians.

To highlight the need for urban excavation in advance of redevelopment a number of initiatives were undertaken in the early 1970s. In 1971, 'Rescue, A Trust for British Archaeology' was established by leading archaeologists as a pressure group to bring to public attention the threat to archaeological remains posed by redevelopment, particularly in towns. In 1972, the Council for British Archaeology published a report on urban archaeology in Britain (Heighway 1972). Although this report included a section on Scottish towns and cities, it was only an interim assessment as the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland had already established an Urban Research Committee to report on Scottish towns (Murray 1983, 2). Its report (Simpson 1972) highlighted the threat to the archaeological remains of several Scottish burghs, including Perth. It recommended Government funding of surveys and rescue excavations, the appointment of local authority archaeological officers to ensure that archaeological interests were represented within the planning process, the training and provision in universities of more archaeologists and the involvement of local societies, museums and developers in the archaeological process (Murray 1983, 2).

Few urban excavations had taken place in Scotland until then and all were small in scale. Doreen Hunter conducted an excavation in Linlithgow in 1966 (Hunter *et al* forthcoming). Eric Talbot of Glasgow University conducted two excavations in Glasgow in 1969, another in 1971 (Talbot 1969, 26–7; Talbot 1971, 22) and one in Dumbarton in 1971 (Coleman 2004b). In St Andrews, Professor Nicholas Brooks and Nicholas Bogdan excavated four sites between 1970 and 1972 (Rains and Hall 1997, 5). Between 1973 and 1975 more sites were

excavated, particularly in St Andrews (*ibid*, 5), but also in Aberdeen (Hunter 1974; Murray 1982), Dumbarton (Coleman 2004b), Dunfermline (Perry 1999a, 811), Edinburgh (Schofield 1976), Elgin (Hall *et al* 1998, 822) and Linlithgow (Hunter *et al* forthcoming).

Perth had been amongst the first Scottish towns where excavation had taken place. In 1967, the eminent archaeologist, the late Dr Margaret Stewart, had directed members of the Archaeological and Historical Section of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science (PSNS) in the excavation of a medieval well found in the basement during alterations at 13 George Street (NGR: NO 1201 2367) (DES 1968, 35–6). In 1955, Dr Stewart had previously recorded a wattle structure, sealed beneath midden deposits at a depth of 20 feet (Stewart 1974, 5), that had briefly been ex-posed during the construction of an extension to the headquarters building of General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation on the corner of High Street and Watergate (NGR: NO 1204 2363). The wattle was originally considered to be prehistoric, although medieval pottery was recovered from the midden (Stewart 1955). Later, Dr Stewart believed the wattle to have been early medieval (*pers comm* to N Q Bogdan).

Despite these promising archaeological interventions in Perth, which had revealed the archaeological potential within the historic core of the medieval burgh, the city was to lose an important part of its architectural legacy with the demolition in 1966 of Kinnoull Lodging, the early 17th-century town house of George Hay, 1st Earl of Kinnoull, who died in 1634. This was a timber-framed building, which stood in Watergate and was demolished despite being a Category A listed building (NGR: NO 1203 2346) (Stell 1980, 17–18). Although the building was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, no archaeological investigation of the site was conducted.

In 1973 the Archaeological and Historical Section of the PSNS marked its 25th anniversary with a conference at which Professor A A M Duncan delivered a paper on the early history of Perth (Duncan 1974). He concluded his paper with a call for archaeological investigations to resolve problems – early street lines and the evolution of the town, the shape and scale of the town houses, the materials of which they were built, the standard of living of those within them, the places of trade and modes of manufacture of the craftsmen – for which documentary sources did not exist. Perth could provide evidence to resolve these problems, as excavations in Dublin, Winchester and Bergen in Norway were currently doing (*ibid*, 49).



Illus 14 South Sector: general view, looking south, of Areas 1–4 in May 1976.
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In November 1974, a meeting, organised by Rescue and the Archaeological and Historical Section of the PSNS, was held in Perth to draw attention to the archaeological potential of the medieval burgh, which was under threat from modern development and about which little was known (Stewart and Thoms 1976, 3). As a result of that meeting the Perth Archaeological Survey was set up in December 1974 to appraise the archaeological potential of Perth, conduct excavation on selected sites and carry out documentary research (*ibid*, 3). Two sites subject to proposed development were almost immediately identified by the Survey for excavation. One was a proposed new local branch for General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation at St Ann's Lane, on the south side of St John's Kirk. This site was chosen for a trial excavation beginning in March 1975, which revealed some 2m of midden material above natural deposits (Thoms 1982).

The other site was the proposed new store for Marks and Spencer on the north side of High Street, the subject of the present report. A public meeting was held by Perth Civic Trust and Rescue on 27 May 1975 to publicise the opportunity for an excavation to take place at the site of the proposed new store and to call for funding from the Government. (At that time the Department of the Environment was responsible for archaeology in Scotland as well as England and Wales, before responsibility for Scottish archaeology was transferred to the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Scottish Development Department.) Both Marks and Spencer and the local authority, at that time Perth Town Council, later Perth and Kinross District Council, had assented to archaeological investigation of the site. The site was of importance for two reasons. It was known that part of the site had been occupied by a building known as the 'Old Parliament House', which had been demolished in the early 19th century but whose name was perpetuated by that of a lane on the site, 'Parliament Close'. There was also the possibility of examining the course of the former town wall on the northern edge of the site.

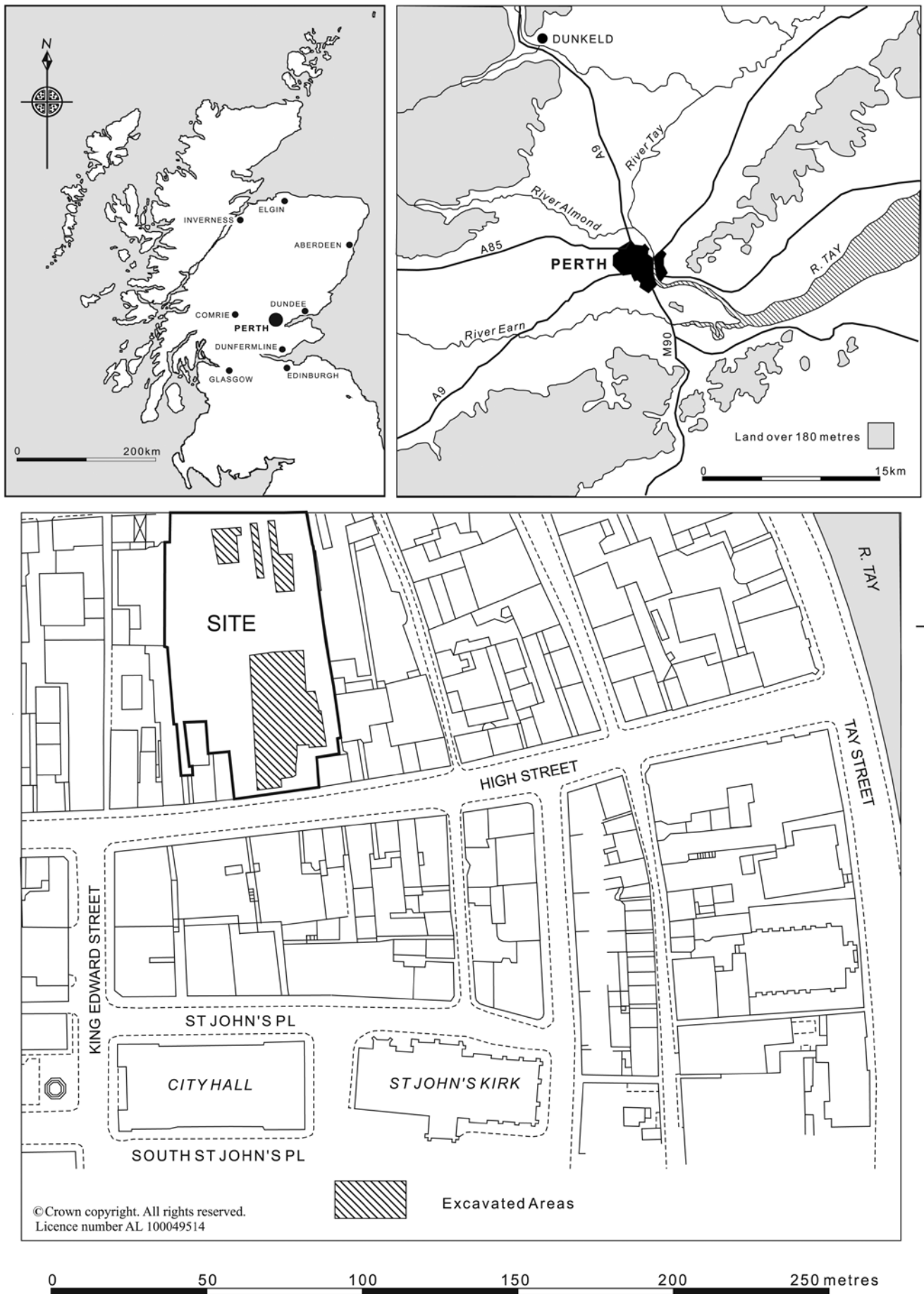
As a result of the meeting, the Perth High Street Archaeological Committee (PHSAC) was formed, at the request of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Scottish Development Department, by a group of concerned citizens – businessmen, council officials, and amateur archaeologists interested in the future of Perth's past – under the chairmanship of an ex-Lord Provost of Perth, Alastair Cross. They appointed the late Nicholas Bogdan, then a post-graduate student in archaeology at St Andrews University, to direct the excavation. Initially, it was expected that demolition of the existing buildings would begin in June with excavation following thereafter. Delays in progress led to the matter being raised in the House of Commons by the then SNP MP for Perth and East Perthshire, Douglas Crawford.

As the delays resulted in the demolition not commencing until October and the team of archaeologists had already been assembled, a detailed architectural survey

of the standing structures was carried out with the cooperation of the demolition contractors, Messrs F Hardwick of Leeds. Although these buildings largely dated from the 18th and 19th centuries, and were mainly in a derelict condition, it was considered that they, like the archaeological deposits, were an important part of Perth's historical heritage. Several important discoveries were made in the course of the survey, amongst which were the fine Georgian panelling in a room in a tenement in Parliament Close (Architecture Survey, Building L) (donated by Marks and Spencer to Dundee Museum and Art Gallery) and a carved heraldic stone and a stone dated 1777 in a stairwell (Architecture Survey, Building W) (Illus 162–4). The heraldic stone is now built into the present Marks and Spencer store, but not accessible to the public (Appendix 5). More important in view of the background publicity for the excavation, the fine Masonic Hall, which had been built in the centre of the site in 1818, incorporated remains of an earlier structure, the 'Old Parliament House' that had been demolished in 1818. Parallel with the building survey was a programme of historical research into the property ownership of the site and the burgh of Perth conducted by Tom Beaumont James, Assistant Director of PHSAE, with the help of local volunteers from Perth Archaeological Survey. (The Architecture Survey and the history of the properties, written up by Nicholas Bogdan and Chris Given-Wilson respectively, were to have formed part of Fascicule 1 in Bogdan's original publication scheme, but are now part of the unpublished archive in Perth Museum and Art Gallery and in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.) The standing structures were given reference letters in the Architecture Survey (Building A, B, etc); in this report the standing structures are referenced as 'Architecture Survey, Building A, B, etc'.

Previous discoveries

No previous formal archaeological work had taken place on the site of the proposed development prior to the survey of the standing structures in late 1975. However, two chance finds are recorded from the site, both in the early 19th century. In 1811/12, a hoard of silver coins had been discovered by John Duncan, a chemist (Smart *nd*), during the construction of the cellar of Building T (Architecture Survey, Building T). Duncan secretly melted down most of the hoard, but some stray coins were found by the workmen and news of the discovery leaked out. Some of the surviving coins from the hoard, a penny of 'Alexander I' (1107–1124), but presumably Alexander II (1214–1249) or III (1249–1286), a penny of John Balliol (1292–1296), a groat of James I (1406–1437), a penny of Edward II of England (1307–1327), a Danish silver coin, and another foreign coin, were donated to the museum of Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society, although only the penny of John Balliol can now be identified in the collection of



Illus 15 Site location plan.

its successor, Perth Museum and Art Gallery. A Roman coin, a *denarius* of Tiberius, was reputedly found on the site of the Old Parliament House before 1827 and is now in Perth Museum and Art Gallery (MacDonald 1918, 246). If the coin was from the site, it may have been found during the construction of the Masonic Hall on the site of the Old Parliament House in 1818.

At some time between the demolition of the south wing of the Old Parliament House in 1811/12 and of the north wing in 1818, James Davidson made a drawing of the north wing, now in Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Illus 10). The only other architectural record of the buildings on the site prior to the survey carried out by members of PHSAE was an inspection carried out by RCAHMS in June 1975.

The excavation

Excavation began in late November 1975 with a team of 14 archaeologists, assisted by local volunteers, and was projected to last for three months, until February 1976. Funding was provided mainly by the Department of the Environment, with contributions from Perth and Kinross District Council and Marks and Spencer. Digging started at the Mill Street end of the site (Trenches A and B), where demolition had been completed. After demolition in the central and southern parts of the site, excavation began in January 1976 in Area C, the foundations of the Masonic Hall/Old Parliament House.

Very soon after digging started, it became apparent that the preservation of material on the site was exceptional both for organic remains – leather and wood – and for metalwork, as well as pottery and animal bone. Clearly the excavation merited much more work than had been originally intended. Consequently an approach was successfully made by Nicholas Bogdan and the District Council's Finance Director, William Reid, also Treasurer of PHSAEC, for funding under the Government's newly launched jobs creation scheme, through the Manpower Services Commission. This was a scheme launched to counter rising unemployment during the country's economic crisis in the 1970s. The Perth project was the first excavation to be funded in this way, the precursor to many other such excavation schemes in England as well as Scotland. The Manpower Services Commission, through five Jobs Creation Projects, was to be the excavation's main source of funding over two seasons in 1976 and 1977, providing almost £102,000 (PHSAE, ESC 82.1); headline figures were £64,000 (*Courier* 15 July 1976) in the first year and £88,000 (*Courier* 20 April 1977) in the second year. The extensions were possible because of the decision by Marks and Spencer to delay its development plans for financial reasons. The first scheme, in March 1976, was scheduled to end in May, but was continued on a reduced basis over the summer, and expanded again from August to December 1976. The second season lasted from April to October

1977. Under the schemes, experienced archaeologists supervised local unemployed people, up to 60 or so at the height of the excavation in 1976, making it the largest urban excavation to have taken place in Britain up till then. The new source of funding meant that a larger area could be excavated: Areas 1–6 in 1976 and Areas 7–10 in 1977 (Illus 16).

Archaeological interest in the site did not end when the excavation finished at the end of October 1977. During the construction of the new store, Linda Blanchard, Deputy Director of PHSAE, conducted a watching brief in March 1978, although little new information was recovered.

The site (Illus 16)

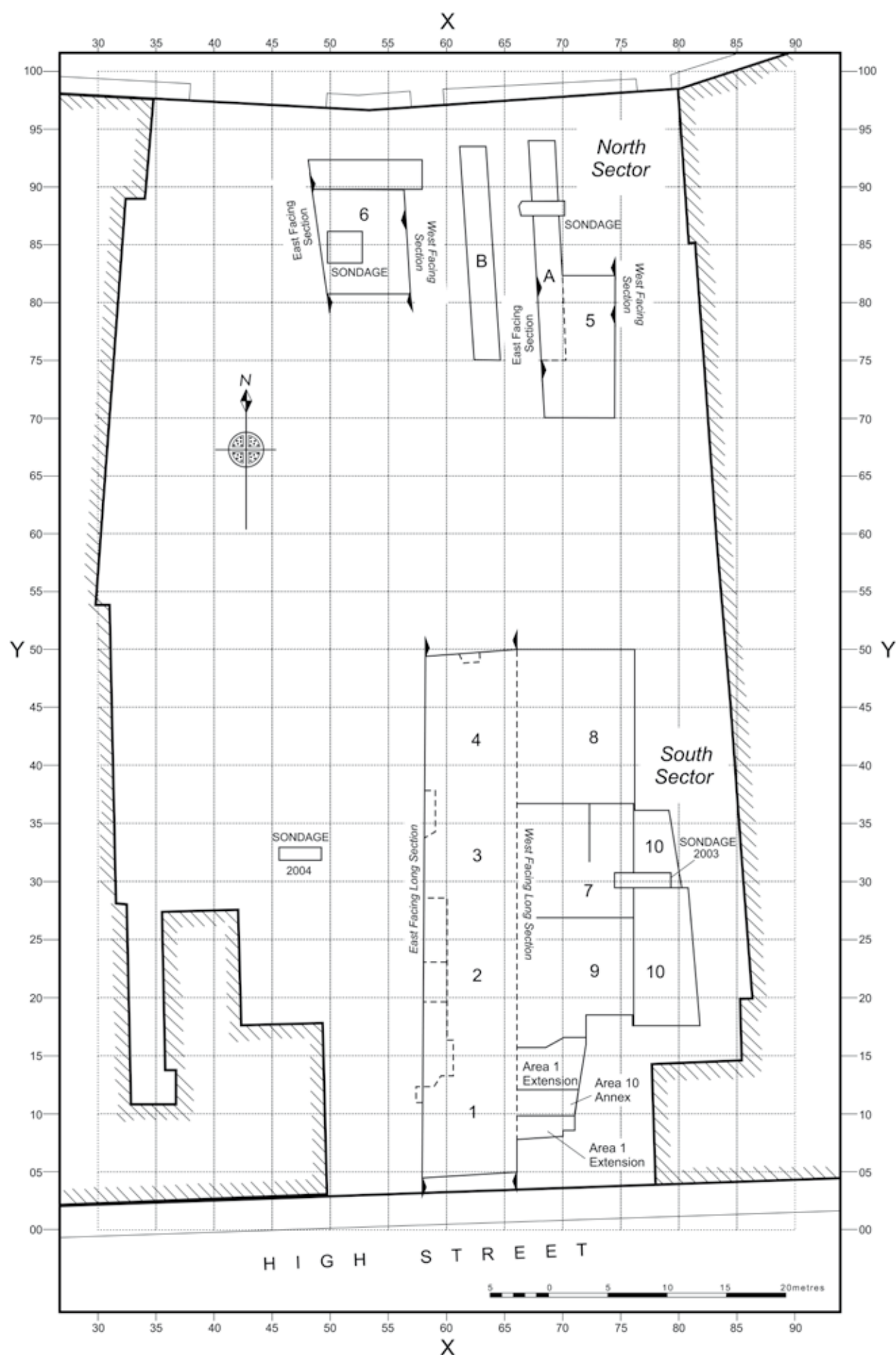
For practical purposes the site was divided into South and North Sectors, since there was no connection between them and they were excavated separately. The North Sector, which comprised Trenches A and B and Areas 5 and 6, is reported separately after the South Sector.

Ten areas were opened in the South Sector: Areas 1–4 and Area 1 Extension in 1976 and Areas 7–10 and Area 10 Annexe in 1977. However, Area 8, after being initially cleaned and recorded, was not excavated, as was the case at the N end of Area 10. In addition, in 1975–6, the foundations of the Masonic Hall/Old Parliament House were examined and two trenches (Sondage 2003 and Sondage 2004) were excavated by machine. Except for Area 1 Extension, part of Area 3 and some deep pits, all areas of the South Sector were excavated down to natural in 1976. In 1977, because of limitations of time, no areas were fully excavated down to natural.

As the areas of the South Sector formed a single unit, with features extending across several areas, a single phasing scheme was developed for this part of the site. The phasing was developed in the post-excavation analysis after the end of the excavations in 1977. The post-excavation analysis was long and complicated and took place in three stages. Linda Blanchard produced a summary report in 1978 (Blanchard 1978), identifying a sequence of main features – buildings, paths and 'gardens' or 'middens' – and producing a basic stratigraphic sequence for the South Sector. This provided the basis for all subsequent interpretation of the excavation.

Between 1978 and 1980 more detailed post-excavation analysis, including the construction of matrices for the site, was undertaken by David Perry, resulting in modifications to Blanchard's interpretation and the identification of more paths and 'middens'. Most contexts were assigned to these main features, but many were unassigned.

A conference of specialists involved in the post-excavation was chaired by Dr Margaret Stewart on 9 February 1980 in Perth Museum and Art Gallery, at which dating evidence was provided for certain finds – the spurs, a coin, a piece of lace and imported



Illus 16 Location of excavated areas with site grid and location of sections.

pottery – and dendrochronological dates obtained from excavated timbers. The dating was applied to the site stratigraphy and six broad ‘Periods’ were identified:

Table 2 *Periods identified.*

Period	date	evidence
Period I	pre-1150	dendrochronology pottery
Period II	c1150–1200	dendrochronology pottery coin spur
Period III	c1200–1250	pottery
Period IV	c1250–1300	pottery spur
Period V	c1300–1350	pottery lace hairnet
Period VI	post-medieval/modern	

The earlier spur is now considered to belong to the 11th century rather than the 12th century (Williams 2002, 117 n37). The early pottery identified in Periods I and II included Sandy Shelly Ware and sherds originally thought to be Low Countries Greyware, but recent research has provided radiocarbon dates of the 11th century for the Sandy Shelly Wares (Appendix 6) and the Greywares are now considered to be of East Anglian or Danish origin (The ceramics). The general cut-off date of the mid-14th century for the South Sector (the North Sector produced evidence of later activity in the infilling of the Lade and the features cut into it) was concluded from the absence of stoneware from the South Sector (stoneware was found in the North Sector) (The medieval pottery). This cut-off date was subsequently confirmed by later analysis of other finds. No thimbles, common in Britain from the 14th century, were found in the excavation except for one unstratified example (The metalwork). No cupped or socketed candleholders, common in the later medieval period, were found in the excavation (ibid). A type of shoe (Type L), evident in England from the late 14th century, was absent from the leather assemblage (The leather).

Since the excavated areas covered four rigs or properties, as well as an extensive part of each rig, there was no period when the entire South Sector underwent a simultaneous alteration (although there are two possible ‘fire horizons’). Instead there might be alterations to buildings, paths and middens within and across some rigs, but none in other rigs (Appendix 2). Some 37 alterations were identified to main features, which could be reduced to 28 occupation phases. Each change of a main feature – building, path or midden – was considered to represent a ‘Phase’. Some main features could last several phases, while others lasted only one phase. Initially, 28 such Phases were identified within the five medieval Periods.

In 1984, the office of PHSAE was closed and the site records transferred to Historic Scotland in Edinburgh. Nicholas Bogdan continued the work of post-excavation interpretation, assigning all contexts into Context Groups (CG), grouping the contexts not assigned to buildings, middens or paths as ‘Miscellaneous Contexts’ (MC), and including them in the phasing, resulting in a total of 34 phases (including Phase VI) for the South Sector. The Context Groups were numbered 1–322 in the South Sector and 323–393 in the North Sector, in sequence beginning with the earliest in each Sector. The miscellaneous contexts were also numbered sequentially 001–175, beginning with the earliest. Buildings were not numbered in sequence, but as they were identified on-site or in post-excavation (Blanchard 1978). Paths and middens were also not numbered in sequence, but as they were identified. Each Context Group was given a designation, for example Building 1, Path 7, Midden 1.4f, MC096, unstratified. Within each CG, individual or related contexts might be assigned a Feature description, for example a pit, posthole or trench and its fills (for example, Pit 2111; PH9284; T2729) or a wall, post or timber (for example, Wall 2724; PP9039; MW9173). (In the North Sector the ‘Miscellaneous Contexts’ were numbered as Context Groups 001–034.) (See Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms.) Bogdan also prepared a Context Index, originally devised as an aid to locating the 4000 contexts on the matrices. He enlarged the scope of the Index until it eventually reached its final form, listing the contexts with Area number, Context Group number, Feature description, Rig number and Phase. This final phasing and the Context Index, as modified in the current writing up, form the basis of the present report.

Parallel with the early post-excavation analysis was the drawing up of phase plans and site sections, as well as plans and sections of individual features, such as pits, trenches and postholes, by David Harrison and Robin Gibb between 1979 and 1981. These drawings, drawn at a scale of 1:10 for sections and 1:20 for plans, were originally intended for publication as foldouts in the case of the phase plans and site sections. However, publication of drawings of that size is no longer feasible and they now form part of the excavation record. With Bogdan’s subsequent post-excavation analysis, changes became necessary for the publication drawings.

As part of this publication report, the phase plans, drawn by David Harrison, have been computerised by Dave Munro and any necessary changes have been made to the computerised drawings to update them to the revised phasing. The original phase plans, in ink on permatrace, have not been amended.

Bogdan had prepared a publication plan for the excavation, with nine or ten fascicules as the intended result, each fascicule for a different aspect of the site (the Environmental Evidence was intended to be in two fascicules, with the Entomology and Botany as a tenth fascicule).

Table 3 *Nicholas Bogdan's intended publication plan.*

Fascicule 1	History and architecture
Fascicule 2	The excavation
Fascicule 3	The ceramics (pottery, tiles, tobacco pipes)
Fascicule 4	The metalwork
Fascicule 5	The worked wood
Fascicule 6	The leather

Following the early death of Nicholas Bogdan in August 2002, his excavation archive passed to the National Monuments Record of Scotland, where, along with the site records formerly in the possession of Historic Scotland, it has been catalogued. The site plans intended for the original publication of the excavation had previously been passed to the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust (SUAT) in 1995 by Historic Scotland as part of a project to revive the publication process. It was as part of this process that the computerisation of the plans was undertaken. As well as work on the plans, the pottery collection from the excavation was bulk catalogued and a new pottery report produced (The medieval pottery) and the Environmental fascicule was completed (The environmental remains).

At the time of Bogdan's death, the fascicules were incomplete. Fascicules 1, 5, 6, 7 and 9 were at an advanced stage, with only parts of the other fascicules ready. Bogdan had only partially prepared an excavation report, with an incomplete 'Phase Commentary' to be accompanied by data tables and lists. A second conference of specialists, chaired by Peter Yeoman of Historic Scotland, was held in Perth Museum and Art Gallery on 11 June 2004 to discuss the means of producing a final publication of the excavation, to which Historic Scotland were committed. SUAT undertook to manage the publication process, with Derek Hall, Depute Director of SUAT, as project manager. Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee,

(TAFAC), under the editorship of Lis Thoms and Derek Hall, would undertake publication of the reports. Publication would proceed following the format of the fascicules that were already near completion, although the number of fascicules would be reduced to four:

Table 4 *Modified publication scheme.*

Fascicule 1	History, excavation and excavated buildings
Fascicule 2	Ceramics, metalwork and wooden artefacts
Fascicule 3	Leather and textiles
Fascicule 4	Miscellaneous finds and environmental evidence

This excavation report is based on the revised phase plans prepared by Dave Munro and discusses the features on the plans. Detailed description and discussion of the buildings are not given in this report but in Dr Murray's report (The buildings, this volume). Under Bogdan's publication scheme, plans were not drawn for all phases, only where major changes occurred. Minor changes were drawn as underlays or overlays. With the computerisation of the plans it is possible to produce plans for all phases.

Since the excavation covered such a large extent and since the structural and other timbers was so well preserved, most of the excavated features that were not assigned to buildings or middens were omitted from the phase plans. Instead, in Bogdan's original publication scheme, they were to have been published as a separate data section in his report (Part 3B – Feature Descriptions) with a series of sketch plans ('feature phase plans') for pits; stone walls; wattle fences and alignments of posts and stakes; individual postholes and posts; and trenches. These texts and sketch plans are not included in the present publication scheme but instead form part of the archive in the NMRS.