

# SLACKBUIE AVENUE, INVERNESS 1993

A Report on the archaeological examination of this site prior  
to building construction

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## INTRODUCTION

The proposed housing development being planned by **G.H. Johnston & Associates** at Slackbuie Avenue, Inverness for **W.T. Fraser & son** is sited in an area of known archaeological interest. It was therefore a condition of planning consent for this site that an archaeological investigation was carried out in advance of redevelopment

## BACKGROUND

A number of significant archaeological discoveries have been made in the locality of this site. The nearest is an unexcavated timber roundhouse, identified by aerial photographs at NH 670424 some 140m SSE of the funeral home. To the east is the preserved site of a palisaded enclosure at **Balloan** that probably dates to c500BC. Further to the west a major crouched inhumation was made at **Culduthel** in 1975 and to the south is the chambered cairn at **Druids Temple** dating to c2000BC and the now destroyed medieval castle at **Castle Heather**.

No archaeological discoveries have been made on this particular site, but sitting on a terrace above the surrounding low-lying ground this would have been a desirable site for human settlement. It is known from a military survey of Inverness drawn in 1725 that there was a substantial farming settlement at **Ballowen** and this is likely to have included buildings on the present development site. These buildings were shown at the end of a substantial lochan that now survives only as an area prone to flooding.

## METHOD

The topsoil in the survey area, originally a ploughsoil, was removed mechanically from a series of randomly sited trenches. The trenches were sited to sample as much as possible of the site in the time available. The area to the west of the roadway was not available as building had already started here. The building workers had removed a loamy deposit similar to that later found in Trench II, though it also contained blocks of sandstone rubble. The machine trenches were cleaned by hand to search for any archaeological features set into the subsoil.

## RESULTS

**Trench 1** A gravelly loam ploughsoil c300mm thick was removed to reveal a yellow/brown coarse sand and gravel subsoil. The middle of the trench was filled with a machine-cut trench c1 metre wide that was interpreted as the cut for a field drain. To the west and east of this were shallow gullies c50mm deep and between 1.4 and 1.65 metre apart. They were filled with a dark brown slightly clayish silty loam. There was a small amount of iron-panning but the high loam content and fragments of coal, glass and porcelain pottery within the fill suggested they were fairly recent features. They were interpreted as the remains of plough furrows.

**Trench II** This was sited to obtain a profile of the silts extending down slope to the low-lying area to the west. A thick dark grey/brown loam was revealed over 1 metre thick. For reasons of safety and time this was not fully excavated, though it was clear that this was a modern dump of material as it contained brick, porcelain pottery and an old wire-sprung bed-frame. This black soil extended north for 7.5 metres before the edge of the gravel terrace appeared.

**Trench III** A similar soil profile was revealed to that found in Trench I. Slight traces of plough furrows were found but they were less clear. No significant features were noted.

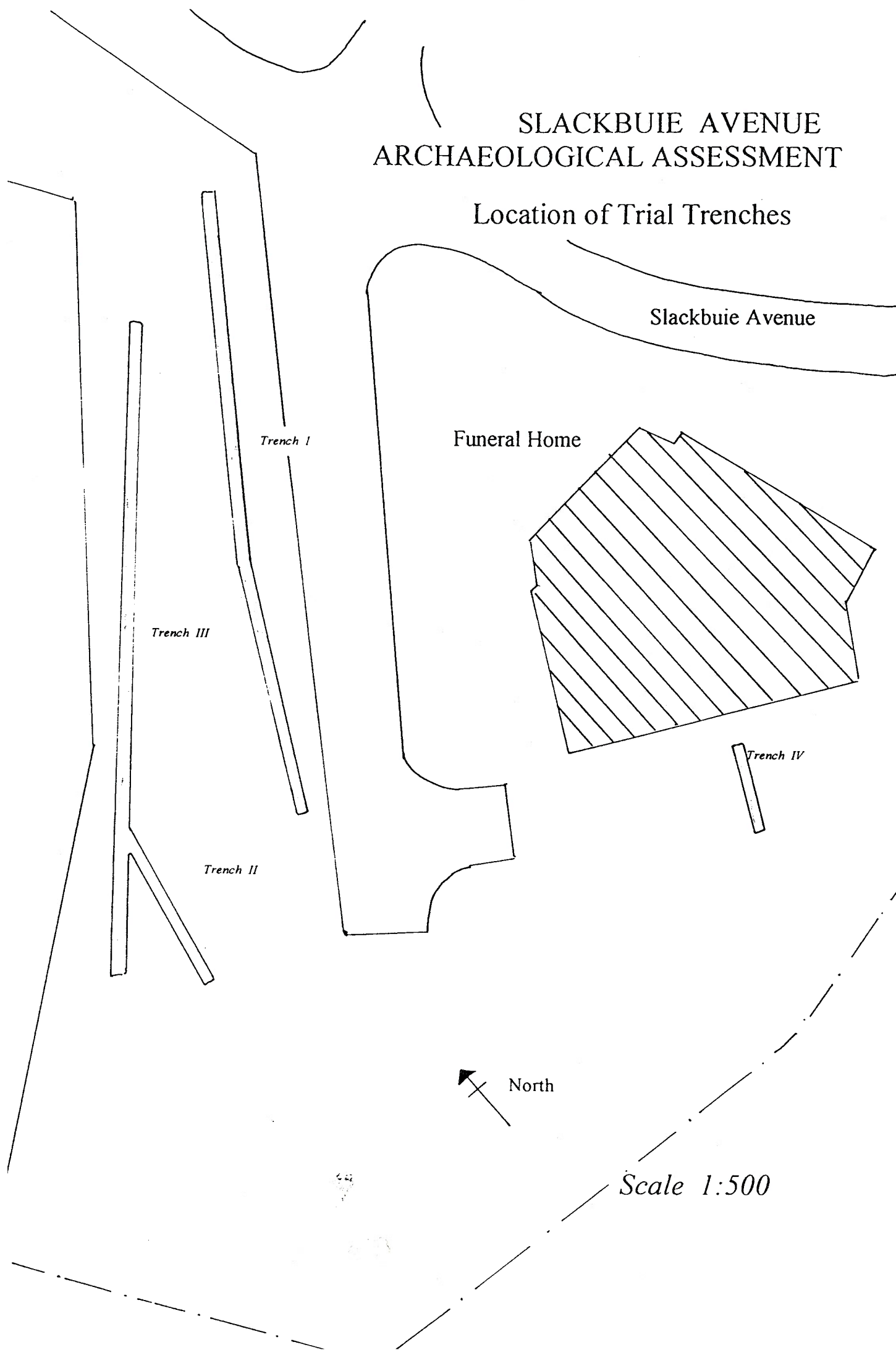
**Trench IV** A 10 metre long trench was set to the west of the funeral home. It was anticipated that this area would have been built up similar to Trench II. In fact the terrace extended the full length of the trench with a depth of former ploughsoil similar to that found in Trenches I and II. Apart from an old treehole at the east end of the trench no features were noted.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the evidence for prehistoric and later activity in this area, no archaeological remains were found in this trial excavation. The level ground of the terrace still showed traces of its agricultural use, abandoned when the funeral home was constructed. It is not known when the soil and other material were dumped to the west of the site. On the evidence of the builders it occurred before the funeral home was built and is likely to have been within the last 100 years.

# SLACKBUIE AVENUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

## Location of Trial Trenches



# SLACKBUIE AVENUE - ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

## PHOTOGRAPH INDEX

1. General view of Trench I and Funeral Home.	Looking Southwest
2. Trench I and general development area	Looking Southwest
3. West end of Trench I with traces of cultivation	Looking Southwest
4. Probable field-drain cut in centre of Trench I	Looking Northeast
5. Cultivation furrows at the west end of Trench I	Looking Southwest
6. Trench II with loamy soil dump	Looking North
7. Trench III part-excavated	Looking Northeast
8. Trench III fully excavated	Looking Southwest
9. Trench III fully excavated	Looking Northeast
10. Trench IV	Looking Northeast
11. Trench IV	Looking Southwest







