

Jesus College Porter's Lodge,

University of Cambridge:

An Archaeological Evaluation



Richard Newman

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Summary

A trench-based evaluation was undertaken within the Fellow's Garden at Jesus College, Cambridge, in advance of the redevelopment of the Porter's Lodge. The presence of a medieval horticultural soil was identified, associated with the former Benedictine nunnery of St Radegund. Subsequently, at the end of the 15th century when the nunnery was converted into Jesus College, the site appears to have been landscaped and the ground level raised. Further landscaping/planting bed deposits of 19th century date were also encountered, attesting to the long-lived usage of the area as a garden.

Introduction

This report presents the results of an archaeological trench-based evaluation that was conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) within the Fellow's Garden at Jesus College, Cambridge (Figure 1), between the 25th and 27th of July 2017. The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is centred on TL 4517 5887. Two trenches, covering a combined total of 3.1 sqm, were excavated here in advance of the redevelopment of the Porter's Lodge. They were sited as close as practicably possible to the footprint of the proposed new building (Figure 2), although their locations and extents were primarily determined by the presence of a substantial number of services, including major utilities, which ran along the southern portion of the site. A further restriction on their placement was imposed via the presence of two well-established trees with extensive root systems. As a result of these factors, the overall footprint of the investigation was smaller than originally intended.

Methodologically, the project followed the written scheme of investigation prepared by the CAU (Evans 2017) and it was monitored by Andy Thomas, Development Control Archaeologist at Cambridgeshire's Historic Environment Team. Where possible, excavation was undertaken by a small tracked mechanical excavator with a 0.6m wide flat-toothed bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The presence of a large number of services, however, combined with the extensive root systems of two protected trees, meant that the majority of deposits were excavated by hand. All archaeological features and deposits that were exposed by this work were recorded using the CAU-modified version of the MoLAS system (Spence 1994), and a sample of finds was recovered from the upcast spoil. Base plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20, whilst sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. A digital photographic archive was also compiled. Throughout the following text, context numbers are indicated by square brackets (e.g. [101]) and feature numbers by the prefix F (e.g. F.01). All work was carried out with strict adherence to Health and Safety legislation and within the recommendations of FAME (Allen and Holt 2010). The sitecode for the investigation was JFG17 and the event number was ECB5162.

Topographically, Jesus College is situated on the southern periphery of the historic core of Cambridge, outside the medieval town boundary formed by the King's Ditch. The area is characterised by a core of built settlement (nunnery/Colleges) surrounded to the north, east and west by greenfield (including College gardens, Jesus Green and Midsummer Common), and by urban settlement and primary roads (Jesus Lane and Park Street) to the south. Prior to the commencement of the present work, the well-maintained lawn surface of the Fellow's Garden in the area of investigation lay between 7.84m and 7.62m AOD. Geologically, the site lies on second terrace river gravels overlying Gault clay (British Geological Survey 1976). During the course of the investigation, natural gravels were encountered between 6.91m and 7.05m AOD.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The historical and archaeological background of the development area's environs has been discussed in detail in a recent desk-based assessment (Brittain 2016) and two previous CAU publications (Evans *et al.* 1998; Newman *et al.* 2013), as well as numerous other sources (Willis & Clark 1886 II, 115-186; Gray 1898; RCHM(E) 1959, 81-98; Gray & Brittain 1960; Haigh 1988). Consequently, only a brief summary is presented here.

In c. 1138 Nigellus, the second Bishop of Ely, founded the Benedictine Nunnery of St Mary and St Rhadegund at the site. This appears to have been a *de novo* foundation, situated upon land that had formerly comprised part of Cambridge's medieval East Fields. Relatively little is then known of the convent's history up until its suppression by a later Bishop of Ely, John Alcock, in 1496. Alcock subsequently reused many of the former claustral buildings to establish a new college, with the first Master and Fellows being admitted in c. 1500. Although the College plan accords with the outline of much of the monastic complex there is little of it that remains visible in the current building fabric, although convention stipulates that the east end of the chapel was subsequently used as the College chapel, and that surviving nunnery clunch-built walls were given a more durable outer skin. Although obscured by later buildings, a reconstruction of the plan of the monastic complex from c. 1250 has been proposed in light of archaeological investigations (Evans *et al.* 1998; Newman *et al.* 2013; Figure 6). The PDA covers the South Range, Gatetower and Porter's Lodge of Jesus College. Previous archaeological works, although limited by their scale, have identified no trace of pre-collegiate buildings in the PDA. The South Range connects to the west side of the Gatetower and was built as a grammar school between 1503 and 1507. The building was passed into College use following the school's suppression in 1570, and underwent alterations in the 18th century and again in 1950, the latter as a result of fire damage. Probably completed around the same time as the South Range, the Gatetower links this with the Master's lodge to the east and is presumed to stand upon the site of the outer gate to the nunnery (RCHM(E) 1959, 84), although its misalignment to the monastic phase complex renders this assignment doubtful.

Both the Gatetower and the South Range are Grade I Listed Buildings. These are connected to the College's Jesus Lane pedestrian entrance by a walled corridor – The Chimney – the west length of which was built between 1608-9, and the east in 1681-2; The Chimney is a Grade II Listed Building and its west wall is incorporated within the PDA. Appended to the South Range and The Chimney is the 20th century southern extension to the Porter's Lodge, also included within the PDA. The current development proposals for an extension to the Porter's Lodge comprise a single storey structure that will impact upon the existing fabric of the Porter's Lodge, the South Range, the Gatetower and the west wall of The Chimney (Figure 6). Modifications to existing buildings include the removal of an archway in the Grade I Listed Building connecting the Porter's Lodge and the South Range, the insertion of a window through a wall separating the Grade I listed South Range and the Gatetower, and the cutting of a doorway through the Grade II listed 'Chimney' wall. Three rooms of bathroom

facilities and services are forecast for the south half of the extension that projects into the Fellow's Garden.

Archaeological results

A relatively well-preserved and near-identical sequence of deposits was identified in the two trenches (see Figures 2 and 3). Overlying the initial sub-soil horizon was a possible horticultural soil that contained medieval pottery; suggesting that this activity was most probably associated with the former nunnery. Subsequently, an extensive layer that contained 15th century material was identified. This may represent a large-scale landscaping event associated with the initial establishment of the college, or alternatively a more gradual accrual of material that developed after its foundation. Next, above this layer was situated a gravel-rich deposit that contained frequent fragments of ceramic building materials and 18th and 19th century pottery. It is likely that this deposit was associated with ongoing landscaping/horticultural activity, being introduced either to level out the general ground level or possibly to act as free draining material at the base of a large planting bed. Finally, the sequence was capped by a deposit of humic topsoil, representing the ongoing attention paid to the maintenance of the college grounds.

In Trench 1, the present ground surface lay at 7.84m AOD. At the top of the sequence, topsoil deposit [001] measured 0.25m thick. It overlay [002], the mid greyish brown sandy silt backfill of concrete-covered drain pipe [003], and both deposits were contained within cut [004]; a northeast to southwest aligned pipe trench with near vertical sides that measured in excess of 1.12m in length, 0.52m in width and 0.68m in depth. [004] had been cut into 0.32m thick layer [005], which consisted of two bands; the upper was composed of mid brownish orange loose sandy gravels, and the lower of more compacted mid yellowish orange sandy gravels that contained several sherds of coarse red earthenware plant pot. Beneath [005] was [006], a firm deposit of mid brownish grey sandy silt with occasional to rare gravel, pea grit and charcoal fleck inclusions as well as two sherds of 15th century Essex Redware. It measured 0.23m thick. Finally, the lowest layer consisted of firm dark orange sandy silt subsoil deposit [007], which contained frequent gravel and rare charcoal fleck inclusions; it measured 0.10m thick. Natural gravels lay at 7.05m AOD.

In Trench 2, the present ground surface lay at 7.62m AOD. At the top of the sequence, topsoil deposit [008] measured 0.28m thick; it had been heavily disturbed by rooting, as had all of the deposits in this trench. Beneath the topsoil was layer [009], a 0.26m thick deposit that consisted of mid-yellowish brown sandy silt deposit with frequent gravel and rare CBM and charcoal fleck inclusions. Pockets of decayed root material ([010]) occurred sporadically throughout. The next layer in the sequence comprised [011], a 0.12m thick deposit of mid brownish grey sandy silt with occasional to rare gravel, pea grit and charcoal fleck inclusions, as well as a sherd of 14th-15th century grey coarseware. Finally, at the base of the sequence was subsoil deposit [012], which consisted of firm dark orange sandy silt subsoil with frequent gravel and rare charcoal fleck inclusions; it measured 0.10m thick. Natural gravels lay at 6.91m AOD.

In addition to the two evaluation trenches, a preliminary survey was also made of the brick-built western Chimney wall (Figures 4 and 5). Initially erected in 1608-09, this structure has since been repeatedly patched, repaired and refaced. The deleterious impact of this process is particularly apparent in its eastern elevation (Figure 3), where very little of the original fabric now remains extant. The western elevation, in contrast – visible only from the Fellow's Garden (Figure 4) – has been less extensively altered, although numerous episodes of repair are nevertheless apparent. Particularly notable here is the inclusion of several reused moulded stone blocks in its construction. Consequently, when the densely planted border that runs along the western face of this wall is cut down prior to the commencement of the next phase of work, it is recommended that a rectified photographic survey and measured elevation are made.

Although it was not possible to investigate the nature of the wall's foundation during this phase of work, due to the proximity of several mature fruit trees, a previous watching brief conducted in 2001 revealed that its upper portion consists of clunch blocks with a single skin brick face to the west (Hall 2001; see Figure 2). It is therefore possible two distinct phases of development are represented, with the stonework perhaps having been retained from an earlier iteration of the boundary wall. This possibility should be investigated when a new doorway is cut through the wall to permit access to the reconstructed Porter's Lodge. A cross-section obtained at this time may also reveal additional information pertaining to the wall's construction that is currently obscured on its exterior face.

Material culture

A small finds assemblage was recovered during the course of the evaluation. This group includes pottery (17 sherds, weighing 141g), clay tobacco pipe (eight fragments, weighing 52g), metalwork (one artefact, weighing 12g) and animal bone (10 fragments, weighing 83g). The latter material was distributed in small quantities throughout the sequence, but none of the fragments were large enough to identify to species. The remaining material-types are discussed in greater detail below.

Pottery (with David Hall)

A total of 17 sherds of pottery, weighing 141g, were recovered, spanning the medieval to modern periods. The earliest material is medieval in date; it comprises a single sherd of 13th-14th century grey coarseware, weighing 8g, and four sherds of 14th-15th century Essex Redware, weighing 21g. Post-medieval material is represented by four sherds of 16th-17th century Glazed Red Earthenware, weighing 12g. Finally, modern material is represented by a sherd of 18th century Westerwald stoneware, weighing 1g, a sherd of 18th century Creamware, weighing 5g, and six sherds of 18th-19th century coarse red earthenware plant pot, weighing 89g. Although small, this assemblage nevertheless attests to the prolonged usage of the site.

Clay tobacco pipe (with Craig Cessford)

Two clay tobacco pipe bowls were recovered, along with six stem fragments. In general, the presence of clay tobacco pipe fragments in a context indicates a date between late 16th to early 20th centuries (c. 1580-1910). Bowls, however, can often be more closely dated via comparison to Oswald's simplified general typology (1975). In this particular instance, both bowls correspond to Type 12, which is dated c. 1650-80; no maker's marks or other decorative features were present.

Metalwork

A single post-medieval metal artefact was recovered from layer [009]. Deriving from layer [009], this consisted of a fragment of iron door furniture, most probably a latch or latch lifter, that weighs 12g. It is handmade and 17th-19th century in date.

Discussion

As previous phases of work have revealed, the archaeology of Jesus College has considerable research potential (Evans *et al.* 1998; Newman *et al.* 2013). Of particular significance is the site's transition from nunnery to college; a potentially unique circumstance in which a female homosocial community was replaced by one with a membership that was predominantly male. Whereas the challenges of material deposition versus the use of space tend to hinder the possibilities for exploring such concerns at most institutional sites, at Jesus College there is a context in which the rhythms of gender and practice have largely (or at least initially) unfolded on corresponding spatial terms – the early College buildings utilising the foundational layout of the preceding monastic complex. Of similar importance is the suburban character of the nunnery, the boundaries of which lay on the fringes of the bustling market town of medieval Cambridge, as a venue for exploring issues of liminality and boundedness. Equally, the study of the role played by historic institutions such as Jesus College in the cultural development of the post-medieval world, most notably its complex structures of power and authority, is also a rapidly emergent field (e.g. Beisaw and Gibb 2009).

In terms of the proposed area of development itself, however, it was situated outside the occupied core of both the monastery and the college (Figure 6). Indeed, the deposits that were encountered here are highly indicative of a peripheral area, subject to possible horticultural/garden use during the Middle Ages and subsequently the focus of at least two concerted programmes of landscaping; the first probably occurring upon the nunnery's transformation into a college at the end of the 15th century, the second perhaps when the Porter's Lodge was constructed in the 19th century. Whilst the possibility of discrete refuse deposits or isolated features of monastic or early collegiate date being present within the PDA cannot be discounted, the extensive disturbance caused by both modern services (the main feed of all major utilities runs along the eastern perimeter of the Fellow's Garden to connect with the rear of the Porter's Lodge) and large-scale tree-rooting renders the

likelihood of such material surviving below ground highly doubtful. The upstanding remains, portions of which will be impacted by the development, are of greater significance and should be recorded accordingly as part of the construction process.

Acknowledgements

As always, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the friendly and enthusiastic assistance of the staff and fellows of Jesus College in the implementation of these works; in particular, Head Gardener Paul Stearn and Maintenance Manager Richard Secker were immensely helpful, as was project architect Paul Vonberg of Paul Vonberg Architects. The fieldwork was directed for the CAU by Richard Newman and undertaken with the assistance of Dave Webb. The project was managed by Christopher Evans and monitored by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire's Historic Environment Team. Photography was undertaken by Dave Webb and the graphics were prepared by Andrew Hall.

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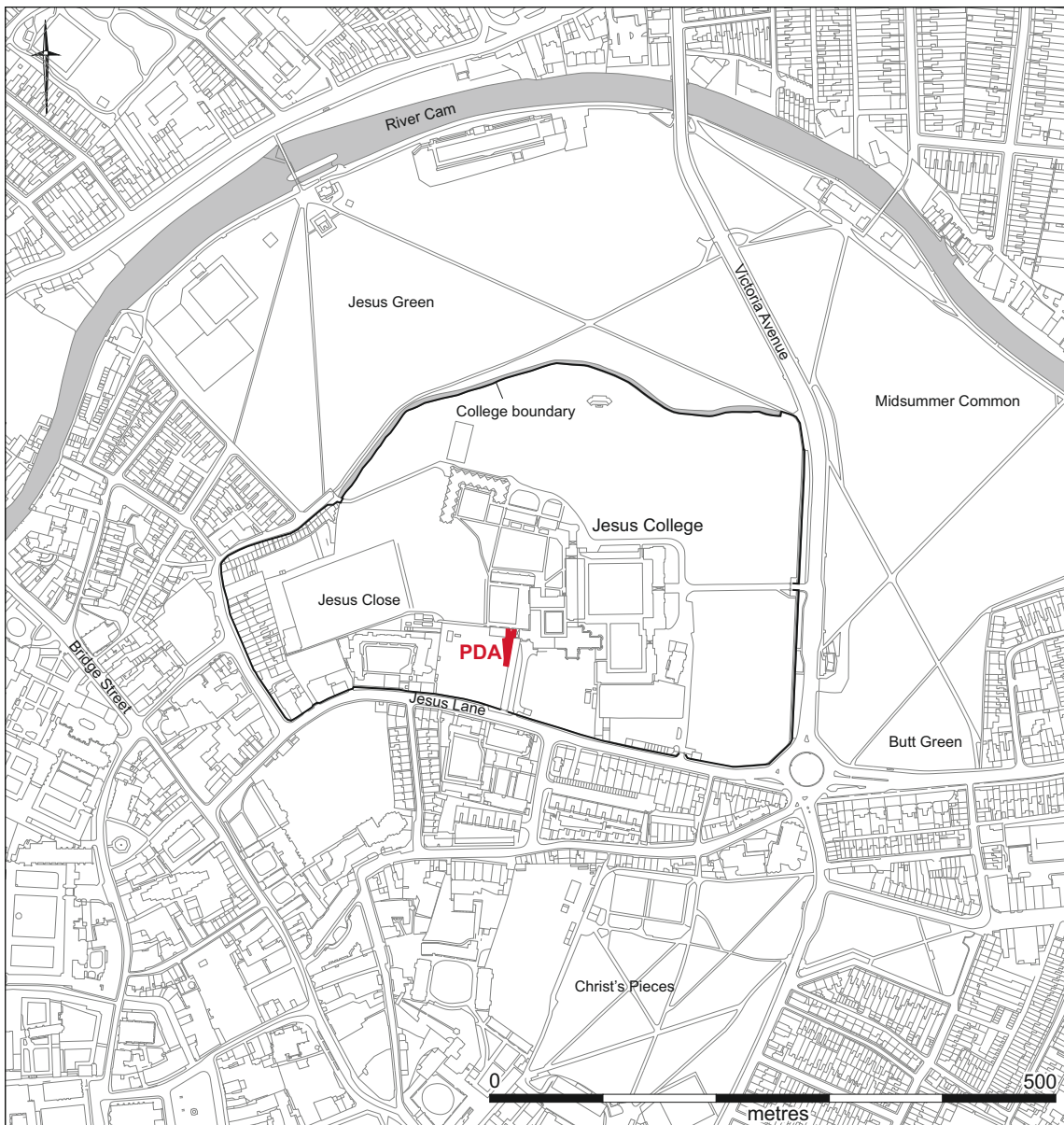
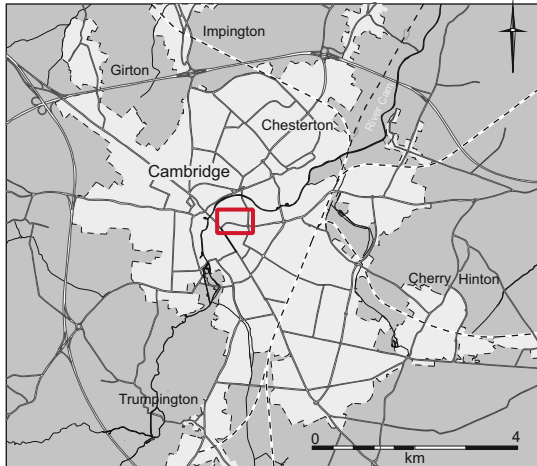


Figure 1. Site location

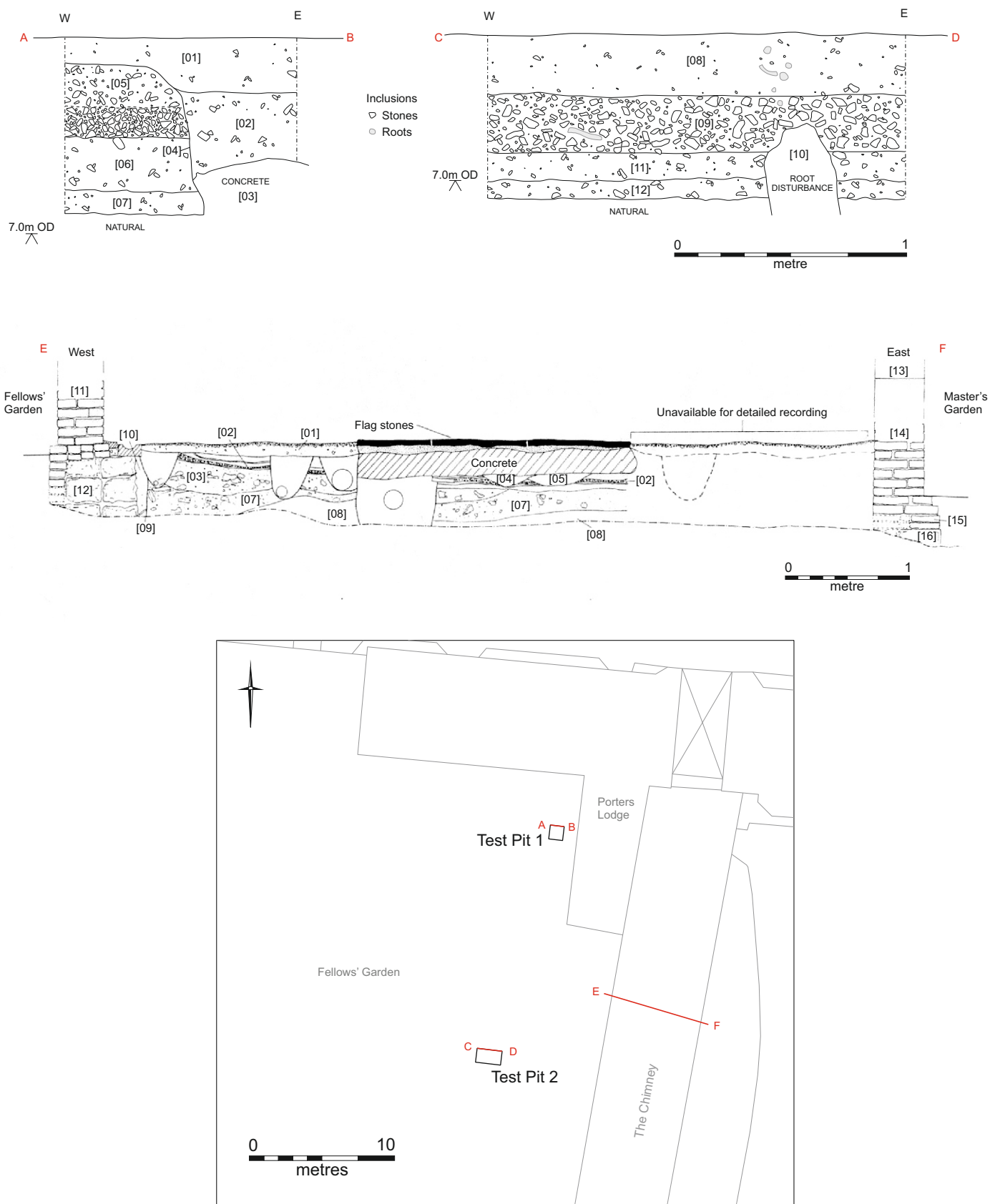


Figure 2. Sections and Test Pit locations



Test Pit 1, facing east



Test Pit 2, facing north

Figure 3. Photographs of excavated Test Pits



Figure 4. Section of Chimney wall into which a new doorway is to be cut, facing west



Figure 5. Elements of reused masonry incorporated into the rear elevation of the western Chimney wall (views facing east)

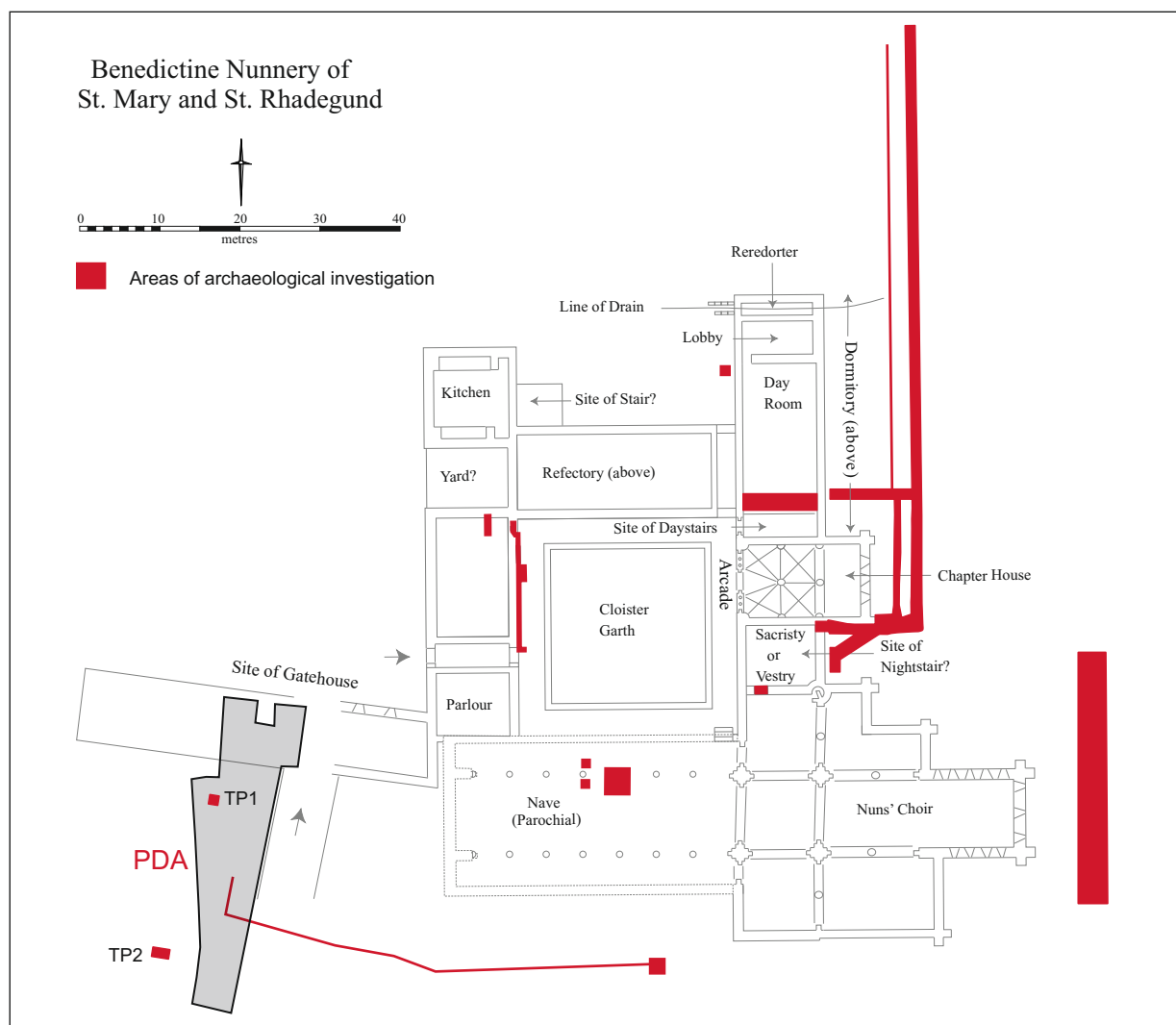


Figure 6. Layout of the medieval nunnery, showing the relative proximity of the PDA (Previous investigations are shown in red)

Oasis form

OASIS ID: cambridg3-297748	
Project details	
Project name	Jesus College Porter's Lodge
Short description of the project	A trench-based evaluation was undertaken within the Fellow's Garden at Jesus College, Cambridge, in advance of the redevelopment of the Porter's Lodge. The presence of a medieval horticultural soil was identified, associated with the former Benedictine nunnery of St Radegund. Subsequently, at the end of the 15th century when the nunnery was converted into Jesus College, the site appears to have been landscaped and the ground level raised. Further landscaping/planting bed deposits were also encountered of 19th century date, attesting to the long-lived usage of the area as a garden.
Project dates	Start: 25-07-2017 End: 27-07-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	ECB5162 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	JFG17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	PLOUGH SOIL Medieval
Monument type	MADE-GROUND Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Test Pits"
Development type	Large/ medium scale extensions to existing structures (e.g. church, school, hospitals, law courts, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Jesus College

	Porter's Lodge
Postcode	CB5 8BL
Study area	3.1 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4517 5887 52.208477769956 0.124833075557 52 12 30 N 000 07 29 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 6.91m Max: 7.05m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Christopher Evans
Project director/manager	Christopher Evans
Project supervisor	Richard Newman
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Jesus College, Cambridge
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Physical Archive ID	JFG17
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones", "Ceramics", "Metal", "other"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Digital Archive ID	JFG17
Digital Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Spreadsheets", "Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Paper Archive ID	JFG17
Paper Contents	"Ceramics"

Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Plan", "Section"
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