

## Jesus College, Chapel Court – *Archaeological Watching Brief*

Christopher Evans , Richard Newman and Jonathan Tabor

An archaeological watching brief has been conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at Jesus College, Cambridge, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, 2011 and then, again later, in March of the following year. This primarily consisted of the monitoring of drainage works associated with the refurbishment of the Carpenter and Morley Horder Buildings, which are situated a short distance to the east of the former Benedictine Nunnery of St Mary and St Rhadegund.

In the September-phase, a near-continuous circuit of drainage pipes was established around these structures, although the southern portion of this loop – surrounding the Morley Horder Building – made use of a pre-existing culvert and did not, therefore, require the excavation of any undisturbed deposits (Fig. 1). The remaining portion of the circuit was excavated by a 360 degree mechanical excavator to a depth of between 0.6m and 0.9m within a trench 0.6m wide. Monitoring of this work revealed a relatively simple sequence: a layer of sub-soil overlain by a remnant top-soil horizon. This latter was overlain, in turn, by a layer of made/disturbed ground associated with the construction of the adjacent buildings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sequence was capped by a band of rubble hardcore and, finally, a modern top-soil deposit. Along the length of the trench, no archaeological features or material culture was identified. A representative section of the sequence has been drawn within one of the two manholes, as these extended to a depth of 1.85m.

The March monitoring first occurred along a c. 1.00m wide and 0.90m deep trench running along the south side of the Morely Horder Building and which then turned south to continue along the west side of the driveway down to Jesus Lane. Apart the localised survival of a c. 0.30m deep sandy silt sub-soil within its lower section, essentially the sequence consisted of top-soil deposits. Undisturbed geological/natural gravels were only observed at two points as approximately metre-square ‘patches’; otherwise, no obvious ‘archaeology’ was present and the trenches’ base lay upon backfilled gravel quarries (i.e. directly comparable to those at the earlier, Library Site excavations; Evans *et al.* 1998).

Subsequent groundworks immediately behind/east of the Chapel comprised the re-laying of a c. 2m wide by 0.2m deep pathway. Along the eastern edge of this a deeper ‘soakaway’ trench, c. 0.5m wide by up to 0.6m deep, was also dug. The CAU were called to the site when the removal of the existing path revealed a deposit of disarticulated human bone.

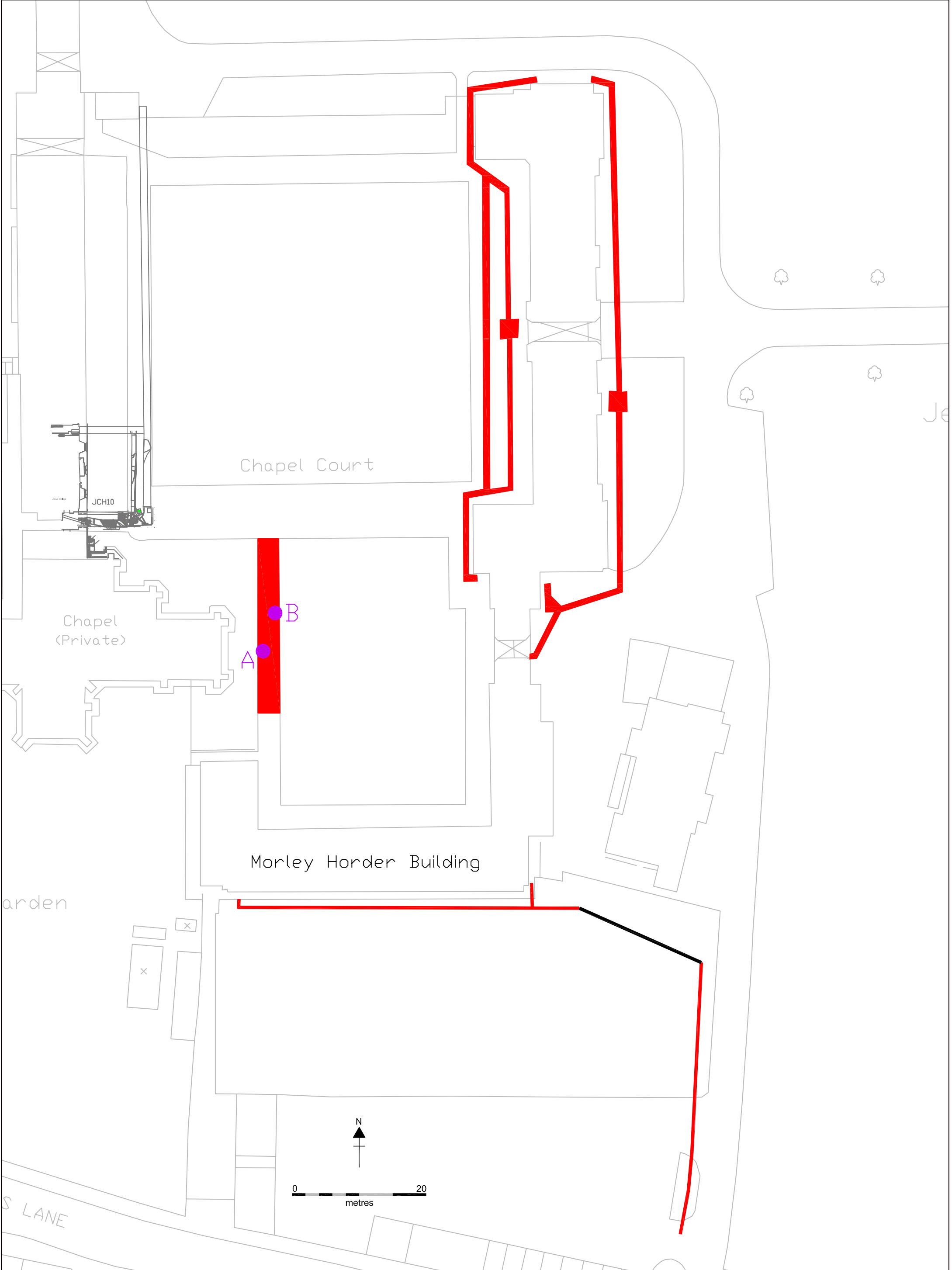
Beneath the existing pathway was a layer of hardcore (largely comprising brick fragments) up to 0.15m thick, which overlay a layer of made-ground comprising dumps of garden soil and gravel, a minimum of 0.3m deep. In some areas a potentially ‘undisturbed’ sandy subsoil was exposed in the base of the ‘soakaway’ trench at a depth of around 0.4m, however, the made-ground was seen to extend beyond the base of the trench along most of its length.

A number of features, all modern, were exposed within the ‘soakaway’ trench including two brick drains, an earlier brick-filled ‘soakaway’, a brick and concrete

wall/culvert foundation and two further 'cuts' of unknown function. Of greater significance were two discrete concentrations of disarticulated human bone encountered within the layers of made-ground. The first concentration (A), the larger of the two, was located immediately beneath the hardcore layer, just 0.15m below the current ground surface. The 0.18m thick deposit of human bone extended over c. 0.36 x 0.26m and the assemblage appeared to be dominated by long bones and fragments of pelvis and skull (Fig. 2). The deposit clearly comprised the remains of numerous individuals with at least three skulls present. The second concentration of human bone (B) was less 'dense' and situated slightly deeper, c. 0.35m below the current ground surface. Once again, long bones, skull fragments and pelvis fragments were identified within the deposit as well as fragments of ribs and spine. Following brief examination the human bone was reburied on site. No evidence of *in situ* or articulated human bone was encountered and it is reasonable to assume that any surviving burials occur at a greater depth than 0.6m and were consequently undisturbed by the current groundworks.

Given the proximity to the Chapel the recovery of human bone is to be expected and the deposits strongly suggest the presence of a cemetery at this location; in all probability, that of St Rhadegund's nuns. However, the human bone was clearly out of context and must surely derive from burials disturbed by previous groundworks – probably during installation of services – at the site. Given the presence of bones from numerous individuals such previous groundworks have clearly disturbed a number of graves.

Evans, C., A. Dickens and D.A.H. Richmond 1998. Cloistered Communities: Archaeological and Architectural Investigations in Jesus College, Cambridge, 1988-97. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 86: 91-144.



PROJECT NAME: Jesus College  
 SITE CODE: N/A

DRAWING TITLE: New trenches  
 March 2012

DRAWN BY: JM  
 DATE: 29/03/12

SITE CENTRE CO-ORDINATES: 545300/258890  
 SCALE: See bar

LEGEND:  
 — Monitored  
 — Unmonitored  
 ● Human bone deposit  
 — Earlier work



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Disarticulated human bone Deposit A in situ



Bone recovered from disarticulated human bone Deposit B

<b>OASIS ID:</b>	
<b>1. cambridg3-94163; 2. cambridg3-127354</b>	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	1. An archaeological investigation at Jesus College, Cambridge 2. Jesus College, Chapel Court - Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	<p>1. Between May and October 2010, archaeological monitoring was undertaken during a phase of service and refurbishment works conducted within the buildings and grounds of Jesus College, Cambridge. These works took place internally within the former eastern claustral range of the Benedictine Nunnery of St Mary and St Rhadegund and externally across the western portion of Chapel Court. Although limited in scale, the investigations were successful in contributing new information with regard to the original architectural form of the northern end of the range (formerly the nun's dayroom); here, the lower portions of two in situ wall shafts - which appear to have comprised part of a colonnade, or a wider scheme of arcading/vaulting - were revealed. Further to the south, partial elevations of the extant medieval fabric of the chapter house and sacristy/vestry, previously recorded in 1995, were also re-exposed and re-examined. Furthermore, during the course of the external service works, the southern wall of the demolished east end of the chapter house was identified, and the remnants of an ancillary timber-framed structure of probable monastic date uncovered. Finally, deposits associated with the late 15th century conversion of the nunnery for collegiate use - along with three 17th century pits associated with the disposal of refuse from the college - were also encountered.</p> <p>2. An archaeological watching brief has been conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at Jesus College, Cambridge, between the 1st and the 26th of September, 2011 and then, again later, in March of the following year. This primarily consisted of the monitoring of drainage works associated with the refurbishment of the Carpenter and Morley Horder Buildings, which are situated a short distance to the east of the former Benedictine Nunnery of St Mary and St Rhadegund. The CAU were also called to the site when the removal/re-laying of an existing path immediately behind/east of the College Chapel revealed a deposit of disarticulated human bone. The disarticulated bone almost certainly derives from a cemetery - either on or close to the site - which has been previously disturbed by works associated with earlier services. It seems likely that the cemetery is that of the Benedictine Nunnery,</p>
Project dates	1. Start: 18-05-2010 End: 07-10-2010 2. Start 01-09-2011 End 28-03-2012
Previous/future work	1. Yes / Not known 2. Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	1. JCH 10 - Sitecode 2. JCD 11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	1. ECB 3544 - HER event no. 2. ECB3848 - HER event no.; 1564235 - NMR no.
Type of project	1. Field evaluation 2. Watching Brief
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building

Monument type	WALLS Medieval
Monument type	PITS Post Medieval
Monument type	HUMAN REMAINS Medieval
Monument type	DEMOLITION LAYERS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BOY BISHOP TOKEN Medieval
Significant Finds	WORKED BONE Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	HUMAN BONE Uncertain
Methods & techniques	'Photographic Survey','Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure','Test Pits','Visual Inspection'
Development type	Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Jesus College
Study area	1. 500.00 Square metres 2. 1700.00 Square metre
Site coordinates	1. TL 4523 5890 52.2087314752 0.125723503479 52 12 31 N 000 07 32 E Point 2. TL 453 589 52 0 52 12 31 N 000 07 36 E Point
<b>Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Christopher Evans
Project director/manager	Christopher Evans
Project supervisor	1. David Webb 2. Jonathan Tabor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Jesus Colege, Cambridge
<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	1. JCH 10 2. JCD 11
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Human Bones','Metal','Worked bone'

Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	1. JCH 10 2. JCD 11
Digital Contents	Animal Bones, Ceramics , Glass, Human Bones, Metal, Worked bone
Digital Media available	Images raster / digital photography
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	1. JCH 10 2. JCD 11
Paper Contents	1. None 2. None
Paper Media available	1. Drawing , Notebook - Excavation, Research, General Notes, Plan , Report, Section 2. Plan , Report, Section, Unpublished Text
<b>Project bibliography</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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