

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

December 2008

Commissioned by the University of Edinburgh

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Author: Magnus Kirby MA FSA Scot AIFA

Illustrations: Leeanne Whitelaw BSc MAAIS

Editor: Bruce Glendinning BSc PgDip MIFA

CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
The Old Engine House
Eskmills Business Park
Musselburgh EH21 7PQ

Tel: 0131-273-4380
Fax: 0131-273-4381
email: cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk

**New College
Edinburgh**

Archaeological Works

Report No. 1570

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological works undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in October 2008 at New College, Edinburgh (NGR: NT 2543 7358) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the University of Edinburgh.
- 1.1.2 The programme of archaeological works was based on a verbal brief from John Lawson of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS).

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The University of Edinburgh is currently carrying out a programme of landscaping works within an area of garden that lies between New College and Ramsay Lane. The work involves the construction of a retaining wall and two patio areas. During the course of works, a concrete plinth and a sandstone and lime mortar wall were identified. The sandstone and lime mortar wall was located at the base of the section that was created when a steeply sloping bank was cut into in order to construct the retaining wall. These features were brought to the attention of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service, who identified deposits of possible midden material within the section.
- 1.2.2 The area of garden is situated on ground that slopes down steeply from Ramsay Lane. Earlier episodes of landscaping have created paths, steps, garden walls and patio areas.
- 1.2.3 The First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map (1852) (Fig. 6) depicts a north to south orientated building running across the area where the landscaping is being undertaken. The building is conjoined to the Patrick Geddes Hall (NT27SE 171), which is a Category A-Listed house (HB No. 29380) dating to the late 18th century. On the Second Edition Ordnance Survey 1:1056 (1877) map a narrow corridor between the building and New College is annotated 'Sempill's Close'. This building also appears to be depicted on Ainslie's 1804 map, but does not appear on Kincaid's 1784 map. It is thought that the building is most likely to have been a tenement block.
- 1.2.4 There are no recorded archaeological sites within the development area and no previous invasive archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place prior to this programme of works.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 The aims of the programme of works were to record the concrete plinth and the section containing the sandstone and lime mortar wall and possible midden deposits.

2. WORKING METHODS

- 2.1 CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Works.
- 2.2 All on site excavation was carried out using hand tools. This was done by the contractor prior to CFA arriving on site. All features and sections were hand cleaned by CFA immediately prior to recording.
- 2.3 All on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 3.1.1 Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 1.

Concrete Plinth (Site 1)

- 3.1.2 Concrete plinth **001** was octagonal in shape (Fig. 2 and Fig. 4), measuring 1.24m across. A slot (Fig. 3) excavated through the layers of garden deposits (**003**, **004** and **005**) against the north-eastern side of the plinth showed that it had a height of 1.06m and that it sat on a base of sandstone slabs (**002**). The sandstone slabs were possibly part of a path that is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map (1852) (Fig. 6). A shutter line was visible c.0.35m above the sandstone blocks, with the plinth being marginally wider just above this line than it was below. Damage to the upper southern part of the plinth suggests that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to break it up and remove it from its current location.
- 3.1.3 Three metal pegs had been set into the top of the plinth. The pegs were laid out in the shape of an equilateral triangle with the distance between each peg measuring c.0.73m. Each peg protruded a distance of c.0.1m from the surface of the plinth, had a diameter of 0.015m and sat within a shallow slot measuring 0.1m by 0.1m that had a curved edge facing towards the outside of the plinth. It has been suggested that the plinth was a World War II emplacement relating to the defence of Edinburgh from aerial attack.

Section containing Sandstone Wall (Site 2)

- 3.1.4 A curving north-east/east facing section (Fig. 5) cutting through various layers of garden deposits was created during preparation works for the construction of a retaining wall. The section measured c.13.4m in length and was cut to a maximum depth of c.1.6m. The contexts identified at the base of the section consisted of two areas of grey-brown silty-sand (**008** and **009**) and a 4.5m length of sandstone and lime mortar wall (**011**). Wall **011** had been constructed from rough dressed sandstone blocks measuring up to 0.6m by 0.3m, but due to the extent to which this feature had been uncovered, it was

not possible to ascertain its width or the height to which it survived. The location of this wall corresponds with the position of the western wall of a probable tenement building that is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map (1852) and is likely to relate to this feature (Fig. 6).

- 3.1.5 Contexts **008** and **009** contained fragments of shell and were considered to be possible medieval midden deposits. However, a direct relationship established between **009** and wall **011** shows the potential midden deposit abutting and overlying part of the wall (**011**). This would suggest that **009** post-dates the destruction of the tenement block depicted on early Ordnance Survey map editions. Consequently, it is considered that deposit **009** was introduced during the 20th century as part of an earlier programme of landscaping works carried out within the garden. No direct dating evidence relating to context **008** was identified, but this deposit appeared to be the same as **009**. Wall **011** and deposits **008/009** were overlain by various layers (**012, 013, 014, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021** and **022**) consisting of garden deposits, mortar deposits and sandstone blocks from the demolition of the probable tenement building. Ceramic cylinder drains (**015** and **023**) had been cut into deposits **008** and **011**, and deposit **011** had been partially overlain by modern concrete (**024**) relating to the current phase of the landscaping works.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 A programme of archaeological works was carried out to record a series of features identified during landscaping works at New College. The features consisted of a concrete plinth of possible Second World War date, and a section containing a sandstone and lime mortar wall and possible medieval midden deposits. It is understood that these features will be preserved in situ.
- 4.2 The concrete plinth was octagonal in shape and had three metal pegs inserted into the upper surface.
- 4.3 The location of the wall corresponds with the position of the western wall of a probable tenement block that is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:1056 map (1852) and probably relates to this feature. A direct relationship established between the wall and the possible medieval midden deposits suggests that the midden material actually post-dates the demolition of the tenement and therefore probably represents material introduced during the 20th century during an earlier phase of landscaping.
- 4.4 The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the City of Edinburgh Council Sites and Monuments Record.
- 4.5 A summary statement of the results of this watching brief, to be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 3), will be sufficient to disseminate the results of this work.

5. REFERENCES

Ainslie J, 1804, *Old and New Town of Edinburgh and Leith with the proposed docks*

Kincaid A, 1784, *A plan of the city and suburbs of Edinburgh*

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1:1056 map, 1852, *The City of Edinburgh*, Sheet 35

Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1:1056 map, 1877, *The City of Edinburgh*, Sheet 35

APPENDIX 1

Context Register

| Context | Description |
|---------|--|
| 001 | Site 1: Concrete Plinth |
| 002 | Site 1: Sandstone base on which concrete plinth is located |
| 003 | Site 1: Upper deposit of ground in which concrete plinth is set |
| 004 | Site 1: Middle deposit of ground in which concrete plinth is set |
| 005 | Site 1: Lower deposit of ground in which concrete plinth is set |
| 006 | Site 2: Natural subsoil (orange brown sand) |
| 007 | Site 2: Natural subsoil (grey brown sandy clay) |
| 008 | Site 2: Grey brown silty sand containing shell (possible midden deposit) |
| 009 | Site 2: Grey brown silty sand containing shell (possible midden deposit) |
| 010 | Site 2: Grey brown silty sand |
| 011 | Site 2: Sandstone and lime mortar wall |
| 012 | Site 2: Band of light grey/beige mortar |
| 013 | Site 2: Band of light grey-brown mortar |
| 014 | Site 2: Compact black silt |
| 015 | Site 2: Ceramic cylinder drain |
| 016 | Site 2: Grey silt with numerous root and stone/mortar inclusions |
| 017 | Site 2: Band of light grey-brown mortar |
| 018 | Site 2: Dark silt |
| 019 | Site 2: Band of light-grey brown mortar |
| 020 | Site 2: Band of light grey-brown mortar |
| 021 | Site 2: Sandstone blocks |
| 022 | Site 2: Dark silt |
| 023 | Site 2: Ceramic cylinder drains |
| 024 | Site 2: Modern concrete |

APPENDIX 2

Photographic Register

Digital

| Shot | Description | Taken from | Conditions |
|-------|--|------------|------------|
| 1-20 | Site 2: Sequence of shots showing section | NE/E | Overcast |
| 21-24 | Site 1: Concrete Plinth NE elevation | NE | Overcast |
| 25-26 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | NE | Overcast |
| 27-28 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | North | Overcast |
| 29-30 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | West | Overcast |
| 31-32 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | NW | Overcast |
| 33-34 | Site 1: Plan view of slot excavated against SE elevation | Above | Overcast |
| 35-36 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | South | Overcast |
| 37-38 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | NE | Overcast |
| 39-40 | Site 1: Concrete Plinth NE elevation | NE | Overcast |
| 41-42 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | NE | Overcast |
| 43 | Site 1: Concrete plinth general | West | Overcast |
| 44-46 | Site 1: Sequence of shots showing metal pegs | Various | Overcast |
| 47-48 | Site 2: Wall 011 | South | Overcast |

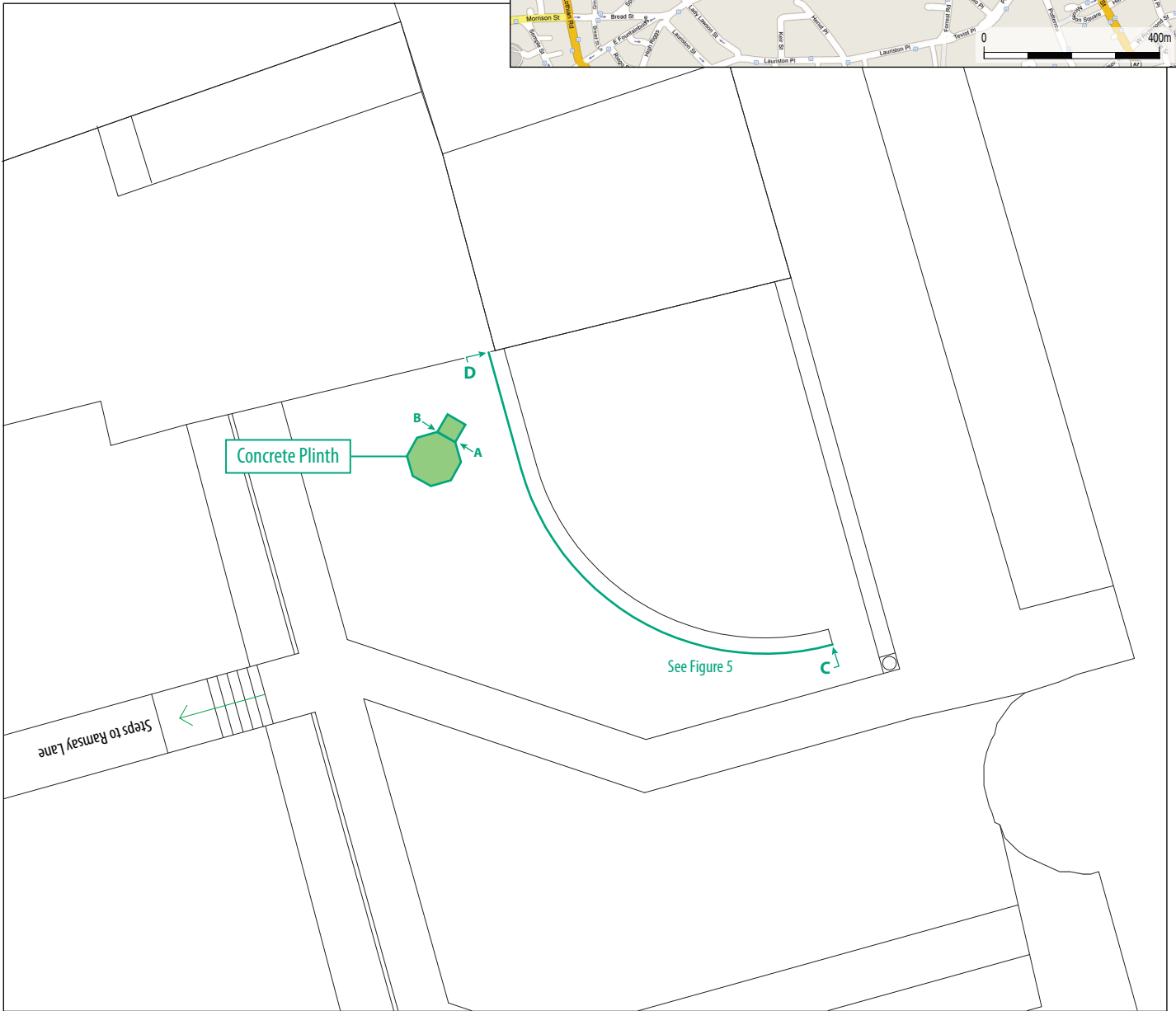
APPENDIX 3

Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

| | |
|---|---|
| LOCAL AUTHORITY: | City of Edinburgh Council |
| PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME: | Old College, Edinburgh |
| PROJECT CODE: | NECE |
| PARISH: | Edinburgh (City Of) |
| NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR: | Magnus Kirby |
| NAME OF ORGANISATION: | CFA Archaeology Ltd |
| TYPE(S) OF PROJECT: | Archaeological Works |
| NMRS NO(S): | N/A |
| SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S): | N/A |
| SIGNIFICANT FINDS: | N/A |
| NGR (2 letters, 6 Figures) | NT 2543 7358 |
| START DATE (this season) | October 2008 |
| END DATE (this season) | October 2008 |
| PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.) | N/A |
| MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields) | <p>A programme of archaeological works was carried out to record a series of features identified during landscaping works at New College. The features consisted of a concrete plinth of possible Second World War date and a section containing a sandstone and lime mortar wall and possible medieval midden deposits.</p> <p>The concrete plinth was octagonal in shape and had three metal pegs inserted into the upper surface.</p> <p>The location of the wall corresponds with the position of the western wall of a probable tenement block that is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1852) and probably relates to this feature. A direct relationship established between the wall and the possible medieval midden deposits suggests that the midden material actually post-dates the demolition of the tenement and probably represents material introduced during the 20th century during an earlier phase of landscaping.</p> |
| PROPOSED FUTURE WORK: | None |
| CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS: | N/A |
| SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY: | The University of Edinburgh |
| ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR: | The Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, East Lothian, EH21 7PQ |
| EMAIL ADDRESS: | cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk |
| ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited) | National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS) City of Edinburgh Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) |

APPENDIX 4: Drawings Register

| Sheet No | Drawing No | Scale | Section/Plan | Details |
|----------|------------|-------|--------------|--|
| 1 | 1 | 1:50 | Plan | General plan of area |
| 2 | 2 | 1:10 | Plan | Site 1: Plan of concrete plinth 001 |
| 2 | 3 | 1:10 | Elevation | Site 1: NE-facing elevation of concrete plinth 001 |
| 3 | 4 | 1:20 | Section | Site 2: Section containing deposits 008/009 and wall 011 |



Key:



Fig. No:

1

Revision:

A

Client:

University of Edinburgh

Title:

Location Map

Project:

New College, Edinburgh
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CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD
The Old Engine House
Eskmills Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian, EH21 7PQ

t: 0131 273 4380
f: 0131 273 4381
e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

Scale:



Drawn by:

LW

Page No:

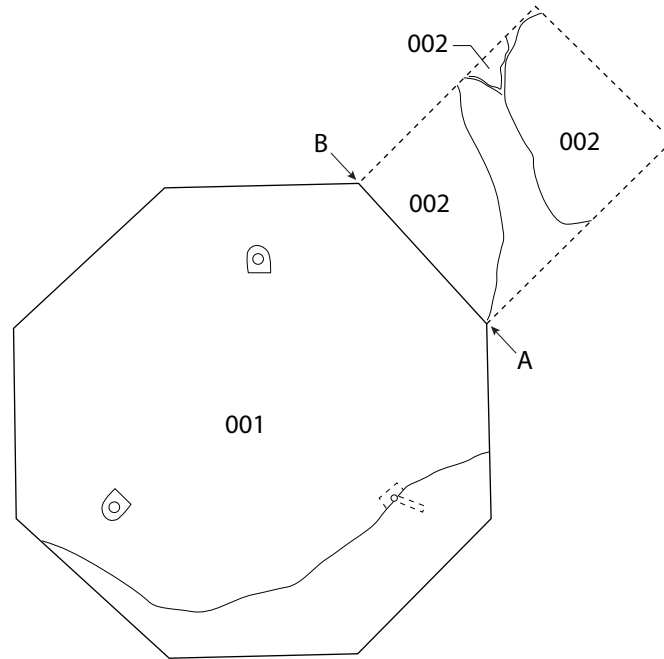


Fig 2 - Plan of concrete plinth

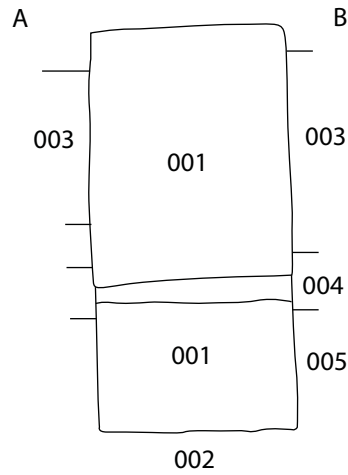


Fig 3 - Northeast-facing elevation of concrete plinth



Key:



Fig. No: **2,3** Revision: **A** Client: **University of Edinburgh**

Title:

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The Old Engine House
Eskmills Park
Musselburgh
East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
t: 0131 273 4380
f: 0131 273 4381
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Fig 4 - General shot of concrete plinth from the north

Key:

Fig. No:

4

Revision:

A

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Title:

Project:

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Scale:



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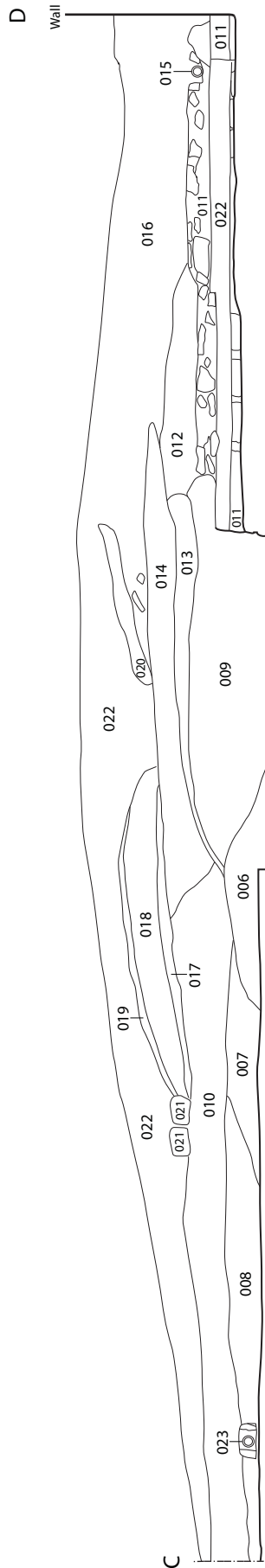


Fig 5 - Section northeast-facing containing deposits 008/009 and wall 011

Key:

Fig. No: **5** Revision: **A** Client: **University of Edinburgh**

Title:

Project: **New College, Edinburgh
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Scale: 50 cm 0 1 m

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Musselburgh
East Lothian, EH21 7PQ

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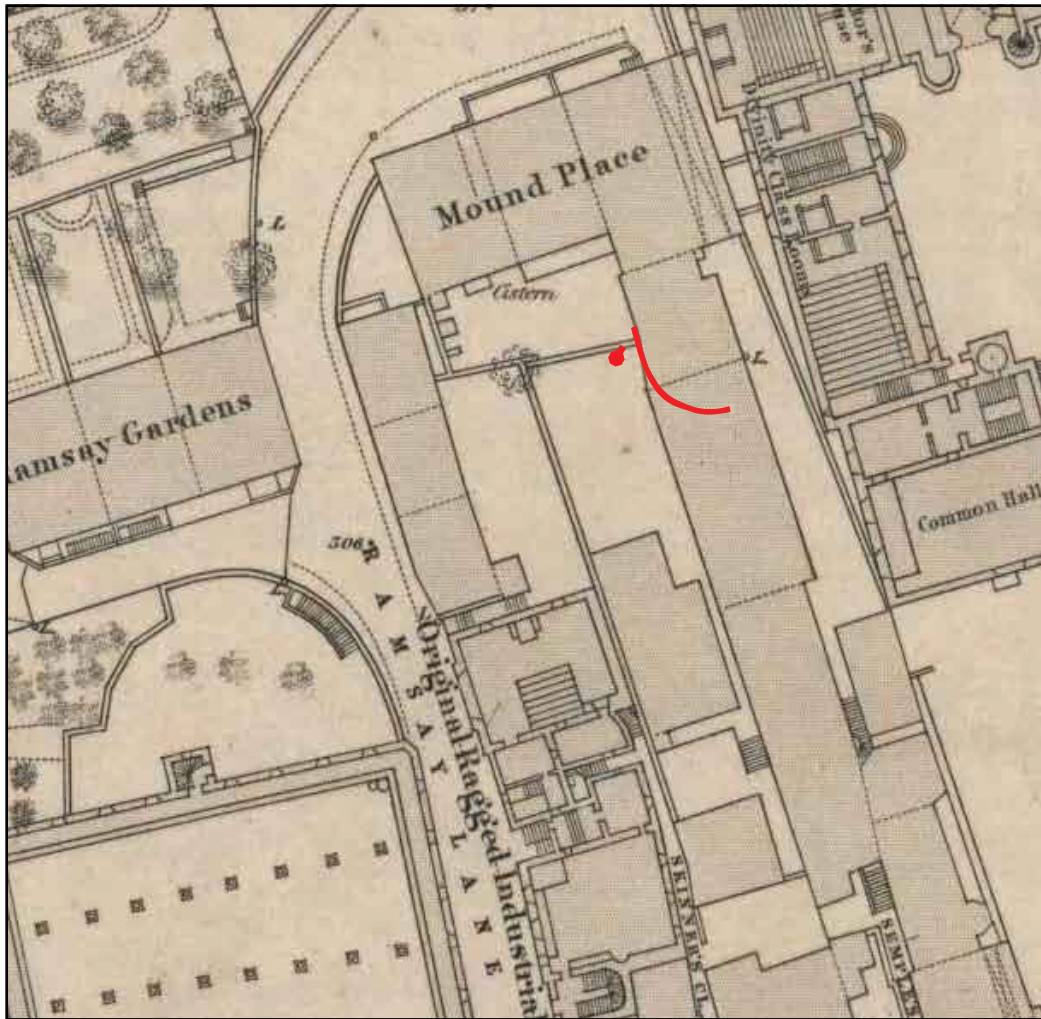


Fig 6 - First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1852)

Key:



-  Approximate Location of Concrete Plinth
-  Approximate Location of Recorded Section



Fig. No:

6

Revision:

A

Client:

University of Edinburgh

Title:

Project:

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East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
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w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk

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