

Alterations and refurbishment, 50-52 College Bounds, Old Aberdeen, Aberdeen, AB24 3DS



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ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover (top) Natural subsoil under rear wall 52 College Bounds (bottom) Location of former staircase, 50 College Bounds removed for installation of lift

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SUMMARY

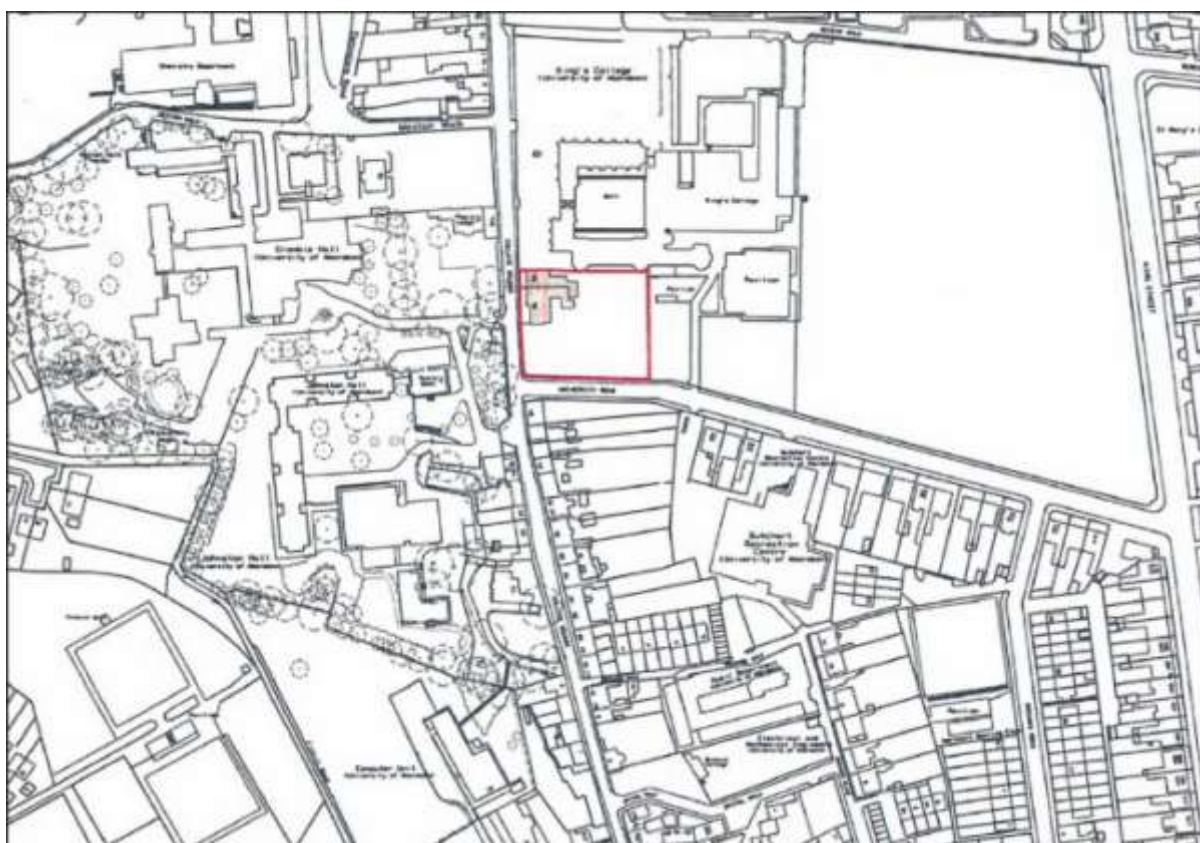
A watching brief was carried out on 27th September 2011 - 20 June 2012 to observe the digging of holes for posts for a new fence, electric cables and water/sewage service trenches. A standing building survey was carried out on the interior of the building where a soft strip had taken place.

1 INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a watching brief carried out from 27 September 2011 - 20 June 2012 at 50-52 College Bounds, Old Aberdeen, AB24 3DS during the digging of holes for posts for a new fence dividing 50-52 College Bounds from the neighbouring property, Kings College Centre, service trenches, a new lift shaft and internal soft strip. The Aberdeen planning reference is 102014; no archaeology condition was attached and this work and report is being funded by Aberdeen City Council (contact Judith Stones).

The site is in Aberdeen parish, the NGR for the site is NJ93946 08085 which lies at 5-10m OD.

The watching brief was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



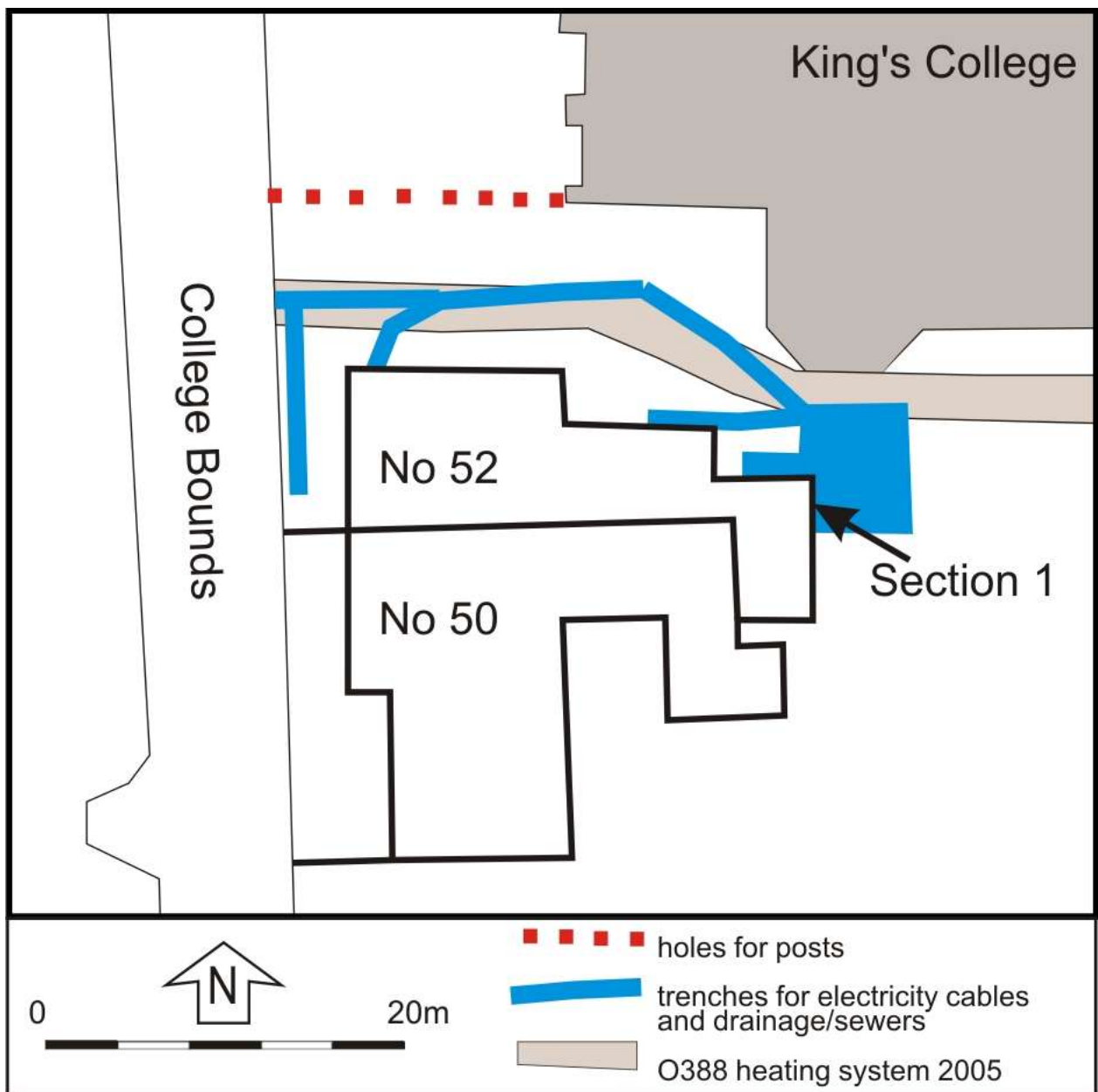
Illus 1 Location plan (Copyright Halliday Fraser Munro)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Several small trenches were opened up during the installation of floodlights on the west front of King's College chapel and library. The foundations of the 1832 library frontage were exposed. A drainage channel was discovered running parallel to this frontage and was thought to be associated with its construction. At the front of the site was a cobbled area which may be of fairly recent date (Stones and A S Cameron 1989, 18).
- 2.2 A watching brief was carried out in October 2004 during the installation of an electric cable through the lawn to the N of King's College Chapel. In a trench running between the High Street, Old Aberdeen and the Elphinstone Hall there was no evidence of any activity that might have been associated with the medieval frontage of the High Street - an area shown as garden ground on both Gordon's map of 1661 and the 1866-67 OS map of Aberdeen. In a second trench, running parallel to and E of the High Street to New King's Building, two walls and an area of flooring were uncovered, which are tentatively identified as relating to a 19th century professorial manse (Murray 2004, 8).
- 2.3 An archaeological excavation was carried out in December 2003 prior to the installation of a new organ in the chapel. Concrete flooring was removed and the ground excavated to natural level. In one trench a cut was revealed in the natural subsoil. The cut contained looses loam, stones and gravel, and a small number of iron nails with wood adhering. A fragmentary skeleton was cleaned. The grave had been disturbed, probably when the previous organ was installed, in 1959. Brick and stone supports were inserted under the floor during this time to add strength. It was ascertained that the burial took place in the chapel after its construction, thought to be around 1497-8. (Cameron 2004, 8-9)
- 2.4 NJ 939 081 Monitoring of trenches took place in August and September 2005 for the floodlighting of various University of Aberdeen buildings including King's College Chapel (NJ90NW 7 ; c 1500), New King's and Elphinstone Hall. The foundations of the chapel were recorded, including an X-shaped mason's mark on a sandstone block in the foundation of a buttress in the NE corner of the chapel. The foundations of the N wall of the chapel were 0.5-0.6m wide, whereas there was no foundation on the W side: the sandstone blocks were laid immediately onto the stone and gravel subsoil. A stone culvert was recorded adjacent to the W wall of the chapel; this was recorded in 1989 (DES 1989, 18) during a previous floodlighting scheme. One wall foundation was recorded in a trench in front of New King's; it was probably one of the walls of the brewery seen on the 1867 OS map (Cameron 2005a, 10).
- 2.5 In 2005 Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit monitored trenches for a new central heating system for King's College. A trench was dug just north of 52 College Bounds (Illus 2) and the area appeared to have been substantially disturbed, probably during the construction of 50-52 College Bounds (Cameron 2005b).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was carried out from 27 September 2011 - 20 June 2012. Eight postholes were dug (in red on Illus 2) for fencing; the soil appeared to have been previously disturbed and there were mammal bones and late 19th-20th century pottery in the fills. Trenches for a new electricity supply (in blue on Illus 2) were excavated to the north of 52 College Bounds. Again much of this soil had been previously disturbed (especially by the King's College heating replacement, Cameron 2005b) and no in situ deposits were recorded. In Section 1 at the NE corner of the rear extension to No 52, the natural subsoil was recorded showing that the foundations of this building were built onto the natural subsoil (Illus 5).



Illus 2 Plan showing location of watching brief areas



Illus 3 Holes for posts (in red on Illus 2)



Illus 4 detail of post-hole showing tile and bone finds; all 19th or 20th century and previously disturbed



Illus 5 Trench for electricity cables; the level of the natural subsoil can be seen immediately below the foundation of the rear extension to 52 College Bounds (Section 1 Illus 2)

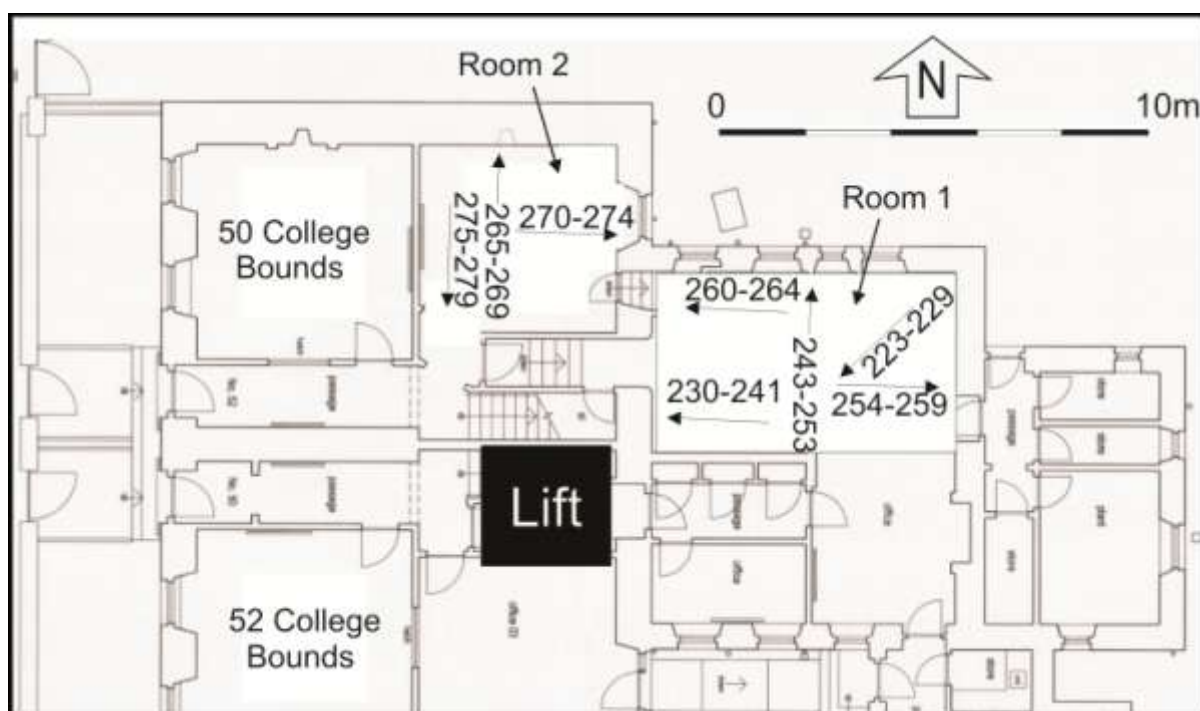


Illus 6 Trench for new lift shaft

A trench was excavated under the former stairwell of No 50 for a new lift (Illus 6, 7) and natural subsoil recorded at the basement level; several small trenches were excavated in the building for work on the foundations and for concreting; garden soil was removed but no archaeological contexts or features were recorded.

4 THE STANDING BUILDING SURVEY

The work at 50-52 College Bounds involved soft strip in some areas of the building and a photographic survey was carried out in these areas. Rooms 1 and 2 on the ground floor were recorded revealing granite rubble construction. Three rooms on the first floor also revealed architectural details and these were recorded. Access to the 4th floor revealed the original back wall of the building.



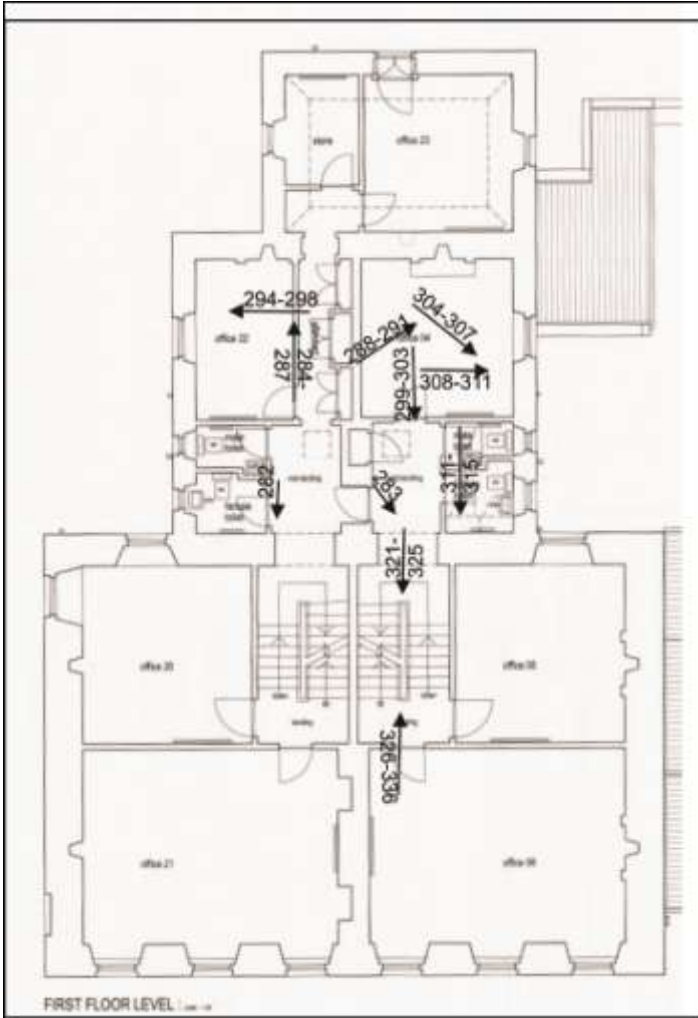
Illus 7 Plan showing photograph numbers and directions and location of lift shaft



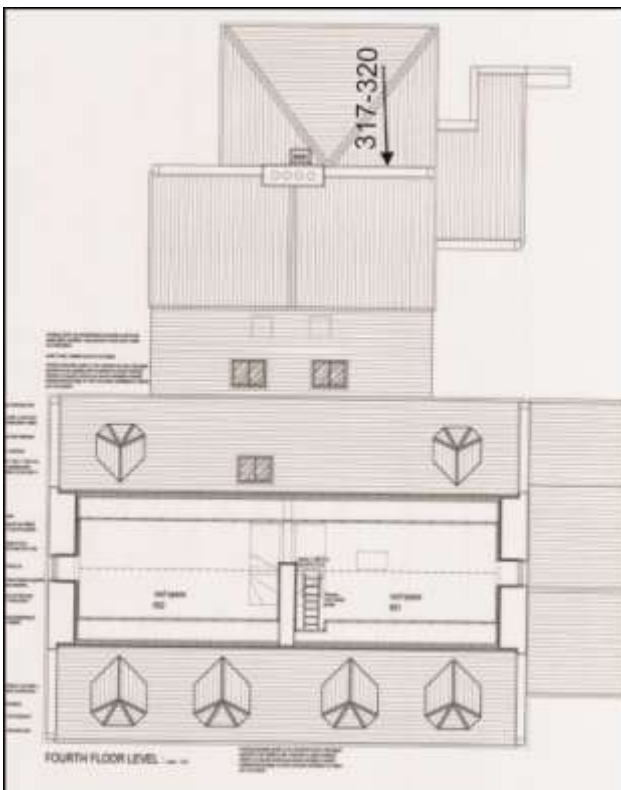
Illus 8 50 College Bounds Room 1 north wall



Illus 9 50 College Bounds Room 2 south wall



Illus 10 First floor level showing photograph locations



Illus 11 Fourth floor level showing photograph locations

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to David Robertson, Willie Reid and other site staff, Stewart Milne Group and Judith Stones, Aberdeen City Council.

5 REFERENCES

Cameron, AS 2004 'King's College (Aberdeen parish), watching brief' *Discovery Excav Scot*, vol.6, p8-9.

Cameron, A 2005a 'King's College (Aberdeen parish), watching brief' *Discovery Excav Scot*, vol.6, p10.

Cameron, A 2005b Old Aberdeen Heating replacement (site code O388). Archive report available from Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record.

Murray, H K 2004 'King's College, University of Aberdeen (Aberdeen parish), watching brief', *Discovery Excav Scot*, vol.5, P8.

Stones and Cameron, JA and AS (1989) 'King's College, Old Aberdeen, drainage channel and cobbled area', *Discovery Excav Scot*, P18.

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APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Postholes



Post-holes for fencing		
DSC_0506	Pit 1	E
DSC_0507	Pit 1	E
DSC_0508	Pit 3, 2, 1	E
DSC_0509	Pit 3, 2, 1	E
DSC_0510	Pit 2	W
DSC_0511	Pit 2	S
DSC_0512	Pit 3	W
DSC_0513	Pit 3	W

DSC_0514	Pits 4, 5, 6	S
DSC_0515	Pits 6, 7, 8	S
DSC_0516	Pits in relation to King's College Library (left) and 52 College Bounds (right)	SE
DSC_0517	Pits in relation to King's College Library (left) and 52 College Bounds (right)	SE
DSC_0518	Pits in relation to King's College Library	SE
DSC_0519	Pit 4	S
DSC_0520	Pit 4	W
DSC_0521	Pit 5	S
DSC_0522	Pit 6	S
DSC_0523	Pit 6	S
DSC_0524	Pit 6, 7, 8	W
DSC_0525	Pits 7, 8	W
DSC_0526	Pits 7, 8	W
DSCF1114	animal bones and medieval pottery sherd	
DSCF1115	animal bones and medieval pottery sherd	
DSCF1116	animal bones and medieval pottery sherd	
DSCF1117	animal bones and medieval pottery sherd	
DSCF1118	Rear of 50-52 College Bounds	NW
DSCF1119	Rear of 50-52 College Bounds	NW
DSCF1120	Rear of 50-52 College Bounds	NW

Electricity supply trenches

DSC_0168-171	West trench adjacent to north wall 52 College Bounds	SW/S
DSC_0172-176	West trench adjacent to north wall 52 College Bounds	E
DSC_0177-186	W-E trench	N
DSC_0187-191	W-E trench	NE
DSC_0192-196	W-E trench with King's College in background	ENE
DSC_0197-201	Trench adjacent to extension to rear of 52 College Bounds	S
DSC_0202-206	Rear extension 52 College Bounds - corner showing foundation built on natural subsoil	S
DSC_0207-211	Rear extension 52 College Bounds - corner showing foundation built on natural subsoil	SW
DSC_0212-216	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds	S
DSC_0217-221	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds showing foundation built on natural subsoil	W

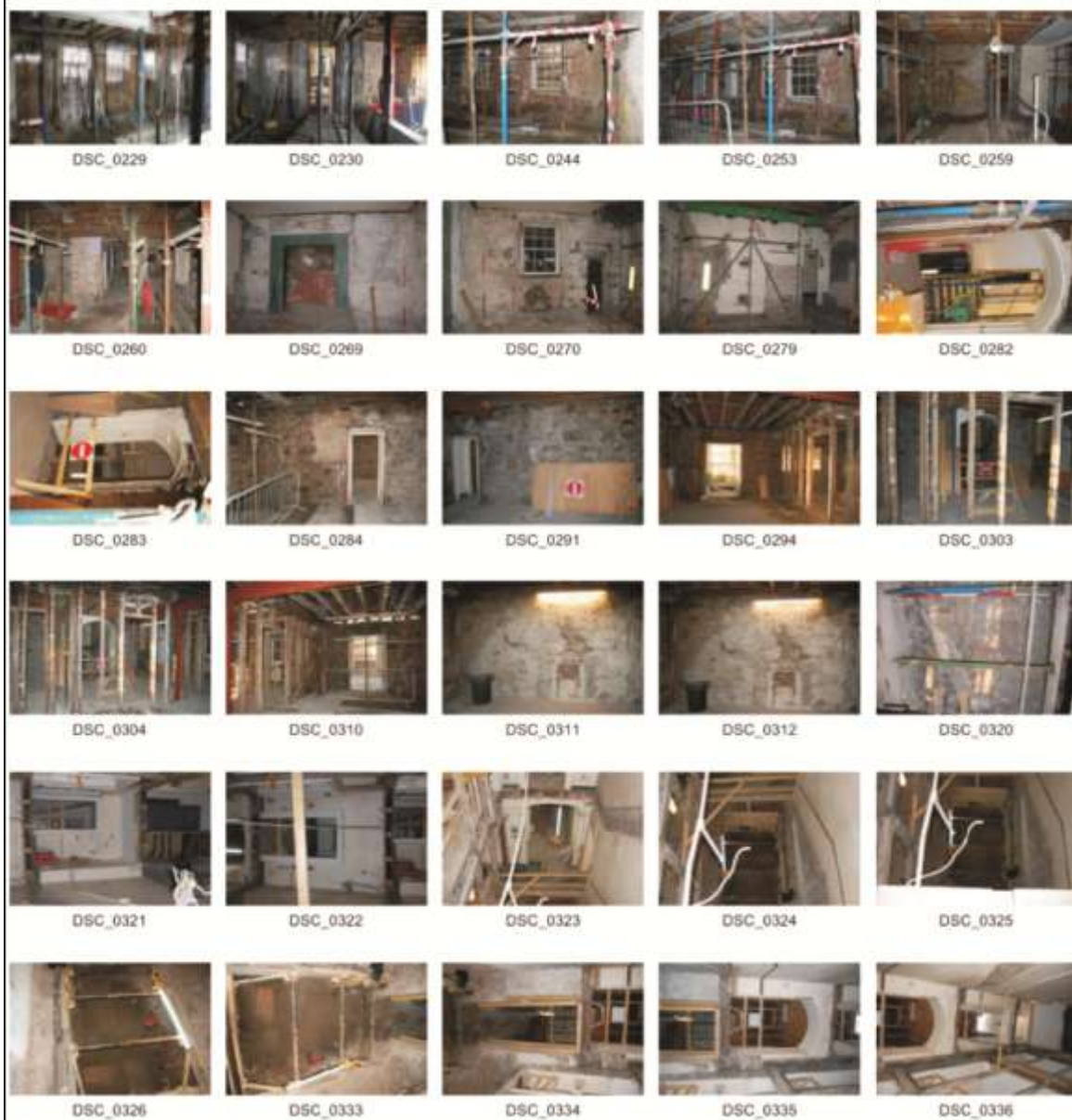
DSC_0222-226	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds showing foundation built on natural subsoil	NW
DSC_0227-242	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds showing foundation built on natural subsoil	W
DSC_0243-244	52 College Bounds - rear facade	W
DSC_0245-249	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds showing foundation built on natural subsoil	N
DSC_0250-259	Trench behind rear extension 52 College Bounds showing foundation built on natural subsoil	NW
DSC_0260-264	52 College Bounds - rear facade	WNW



Building recording

Building recording		
DSC_0223-229	Ground floor	SW
DSC_0230-241	Ground floor	W
DSC_0243-253	Ground floor	N
DSC_0254-259	Ground floor	E

DSC_0260-264	Ground floor	W
DSC_0265-269	Ground floor	N
DSC_0270-274	Ground floor	E
DSC_0275-279	Ground floor	S
DSC_0282	First floor	W
DSC_0283	First floor	SW
DSC_0284-287	First floor	E
DSC_0288-291	First floor	SE
DSC_0294-298	First floor	N
DSC_0299-303	First floor	W
DSC_0304-307	First floor	SW
DSC_0308-311	First floor	S
DSC_0311-315	First floor	W
DSC_0317-320	Second floor; original east outside wall showing old roof line	W
DSC_0321-325	First floor	W
DSC_0326-336	First floor; lift shaft (old stair well 2)	E



Lift shaft

