

**ABERDEEN ART GALLERY, SCHOOLHILL
ABERDEEN, AB10 1FQ
Watching brief on trial pits**



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ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover (top) location TP6 (left) TP7 (right); facing E (bottom) TP4 during excavation; facing NW

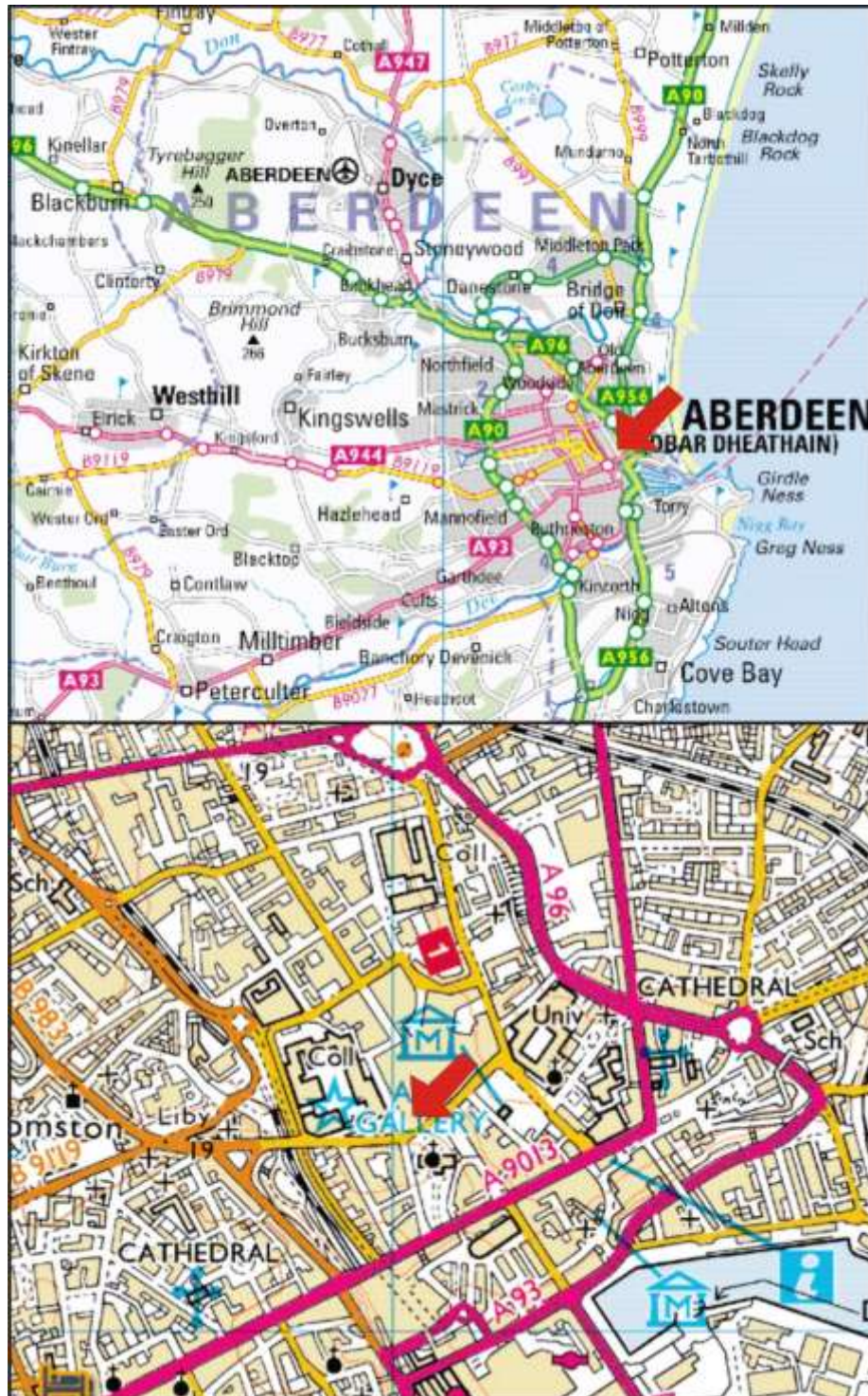
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SUMMARY

A watching brief was carried out from 19-28th January 2015 during the excavation of trial pits by Raeburn Drilling at exterior and interior locations within Aberdeen Art Gallery. No finds were recorded during this work and no *in situ* archaeological deposits were identified; all the trial pits were located adjacent to walls and pillars where archaeological deposits are less likely to survive *in situ*. There is potential for archaeological deposits to survive however, and further archaeological work will be required when the Art Gallery redevelopment takes place.

1 INTRODUCTION

The site is at NJ 93881 06367 in the parish of Aberdeen and at 15-20m OD. Aberdeen City Council Planning application P131247 for internal alterations and extension to Aberdeen Art Gallery was passed on 19/3/14 with an archaeology condition (condition 1). The watching brief on the trial pits was commissioned by Nick Domminney, Gareth Hoskins Architects.



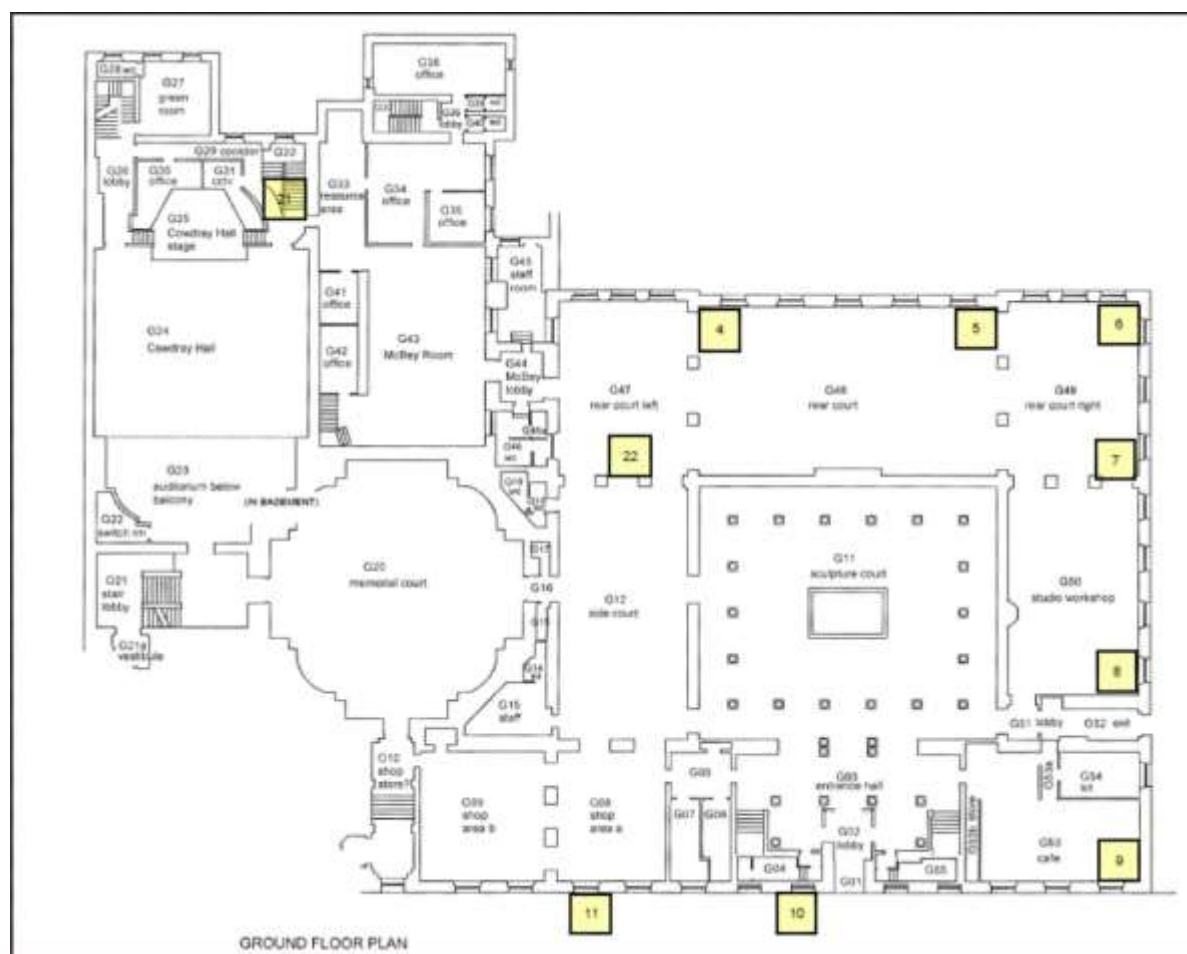
Illus 1 Site location (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Aberdeen Art Galley was designed by A Marshall Mackenzie in 1885 with the Sculpture Court (1905) and the War Memorial and Cowdray Hall (1923-5) by the same architect (PASTMAP, NJ90NW 180).
- 2.2 There are references in the 18th and 19th centuries to human remains being found on the site of Aberdeen Art Gallery. A cist (NJ90NW 169) was found at the site of the Art Gallery in 1883 (Wyness 1965, 292).
- 2.2 Excavations prior to the library extension at Robert Gordon's College ('Auld Hoose') found part of a ditch which may have been related to the fortification of the then Robert Gordon's Hospital by the Duke of Cumberland's troops when they were billeted there immediately before Culloden (Cameron 2000, 7).
- 2.3 In 2009 during landscaping in front of Robert Gordon College, found traces of walls, disarticulated bone, stone slates and window glass fragments relating to the Dominican Friary (Cameron 2009, 11).
- 2.4 Two test pits were observed in 2012 on the exterior of the north and east walls of the Art Gallery. An earlier lime-bonded sandstone foundation was observed on the north wall and a stepped foundation on the east wall; medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered from mixed soils on the test pits (Hall 2013, 10).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

Ten trial pits, 8 interior and 2 exterior were observed between 19th and 28th January 2015. Most were positioned along walls to inspect foundations of walls and pillars.



Illus 2 Plan showing location of trial pits (*copyright Gareth Hoskins Architects*).

Trial pit TP4

Located on the inside of the north wall of the rear court this trial pit was dug down adjacent to a pillar and revealed the stone pillar base. The test pit contained 40cm of granite rubble, above 50cm of mixed loam, sand, construction debris on top of natural subsoil consisting of reddish brown sand and rounded boulders.



Illus 3 TP4 showing foundation for pillar and loam with construction rubble (2); facing N

Trial pit TP5

Located on the inside of the north wall of the rear court this TP was dug down adjacent to a pillar and revealed the stone pillar base. The test pit contained 40cm of granite rubble, above 50cm of mixed loam, sand, construction debris on top of natural subsoil consisting of reddish brown sand and rounded boulders.



Illus 4 TP5 showing foundation for pillar and loam with construction rubble (2); facing N

Trial pit TP6

Located on the inside of the NE corner of the rear court this TP was dug down adjacent to a pillar and revealed the stone pillar base. The test pit contained 30cm of granite rubble (1), above 45cm of mixed loam, sand, construction debris (2) on top of natural subsoil consisting of reddish brown sand and rounded boulders.



Illus 5 TP6 showing granite rubble fill, loam and stone (1) on top of natural subsoil; facing N

Trial pit TP7

Located on the inside of the east wall of the rear court. It contained rubble fill (1) to 50cm on natural subsoil.



Illus 6 TP7 showing rubble fill (1) above natural subsoil

Trial pit TP8

Located in the SE corner of the Studio Workshop this trial pit revealed a service duct which was left unexcavated.

Trial pit TP9

Located in the SE corner of the Café this trial pit revealed a void 1.5m deep, probably into a service duct which was left unexcavated.

Trial pit TP10

TP10 was located on the exterior of the south wall of the Art Gallery on the pavement on Schoolhill, just to the west of the main entrance. The foundation of the Art Gallery south wall consisted of large sandstone block (4) 45cm below the current street level; Hall 2012 reported a similar sandstone stepped foundation on the north wall (Hall 2012, 10). The fill of the trial pit revealed lead water pipe and ceramic drain pipe (3).



Illus 7 TP10 showing stone stepped foundation (4) of south wall of Art Gallery; facing N

Trial pit TP11

TP11 was located on the exterior of the south wall of the Art Gallery on the pavement on Schoolhill. The foundation (4) of the Art Gallery south wall was revealed (as TP10) and under this a large granite block (5) forming a stepped foundation. A cast iron gas pipe was contained in context 3 ran N-S into the wall foundation.



Illus 8 TP 11 showing stone foundation (4 above 5) and cast iron gas pipe (left)

Trial pit TP21

This trial pit was located in the basement of the Art Gallery; it consisted of natural sand and waterwashed boulders under the concrete floor.

Trial pit TP22

TP 22 was located adjacent to a freestanding pillar in the rear court left. The floor and concrete were removed and revealed a concrete base underneath which was left unexcavated.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No finds were recorded during this work and no *in situ* archaeological deposits were identified; all the trial pits were located adjacent to walls and pillars where archaeological deposits are less likely to survive *in situ*. There is potential for archaeological deposits to survive however, and further archaeological work will be required when the Art Gallery redevelopment takes place.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Nick Domminney, Gareth Hoskins Architects for initiating this project, Sandy Stephen and other site staff, Raeburn Drilling for their help during the watching brief and to Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council for his advice during this work.

6 REFERENCES

Cameron, A S 2000 'Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen', Discovery and Excavation in Scotland, 7.

Cameron, A S 2009 'Robert Gordon's College, Schoolhill', Discovery and Excavation in Scotland, New Series Vol 10, 11.

Hall, D 2013 'Aberdeen Art Gallery Schoolhill', Discovery and Excavation in Scotland, New Series Vol 14, 10.

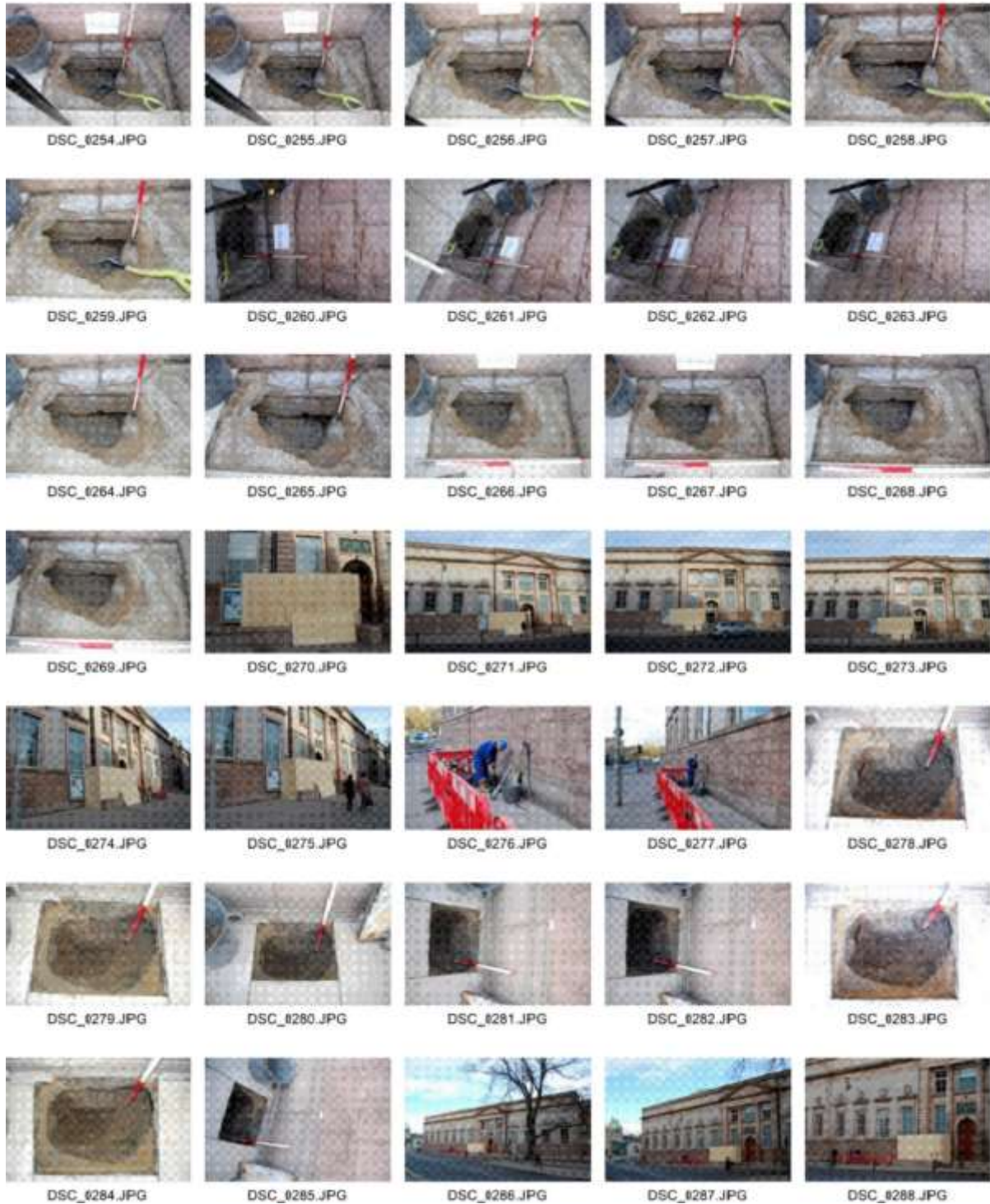
Wyness JF 1965 City by the Grey North Sea. Aberdeen.

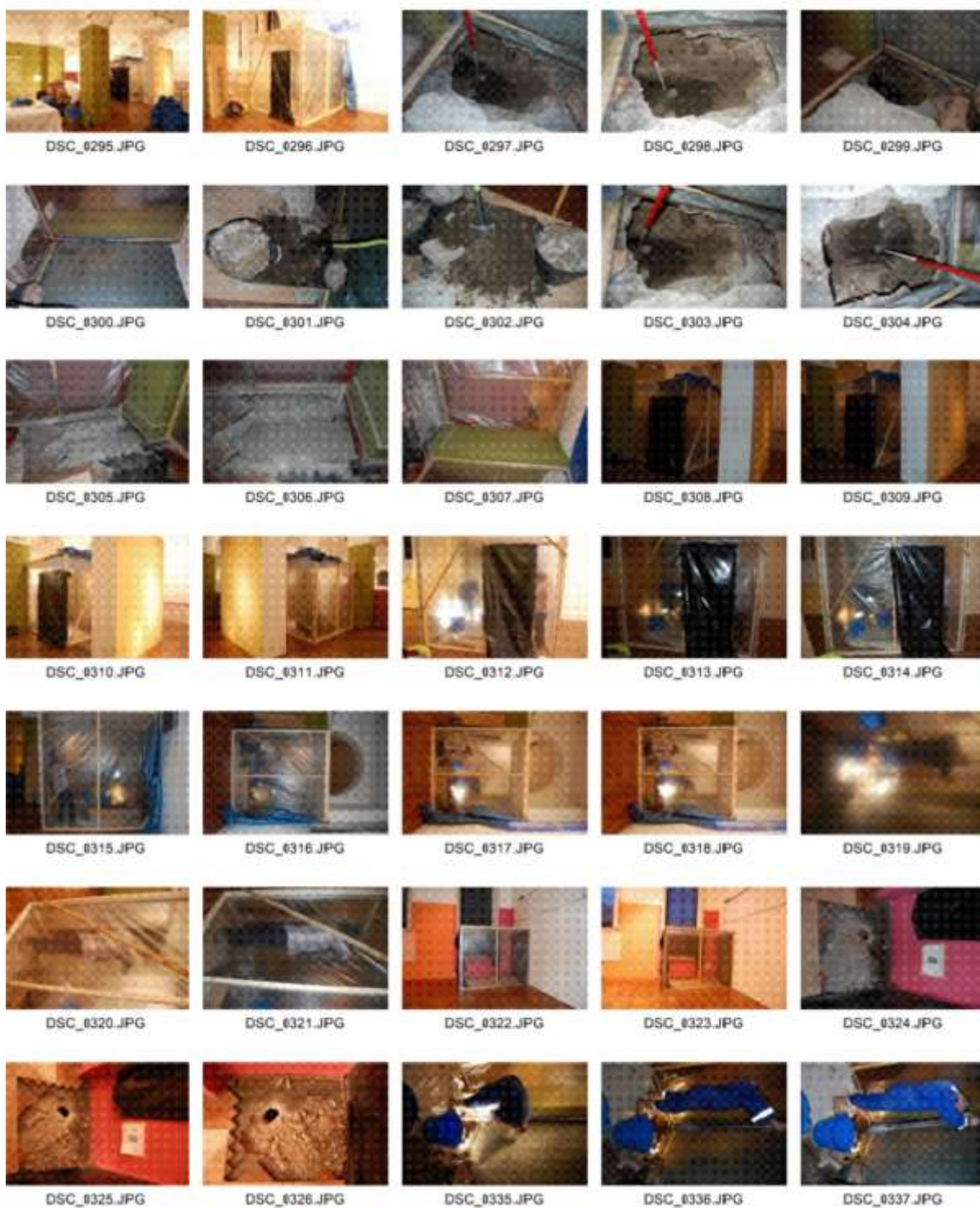
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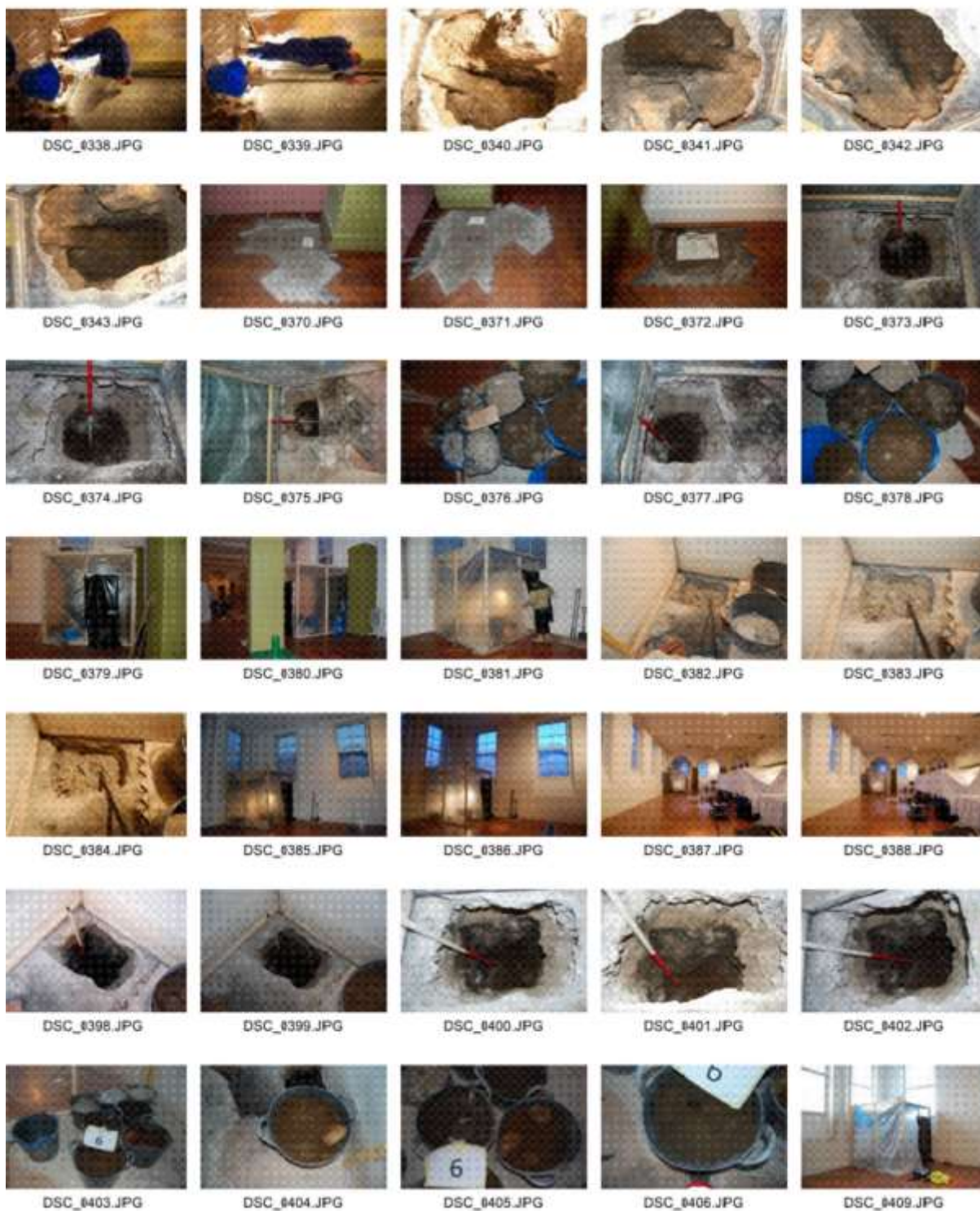
APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

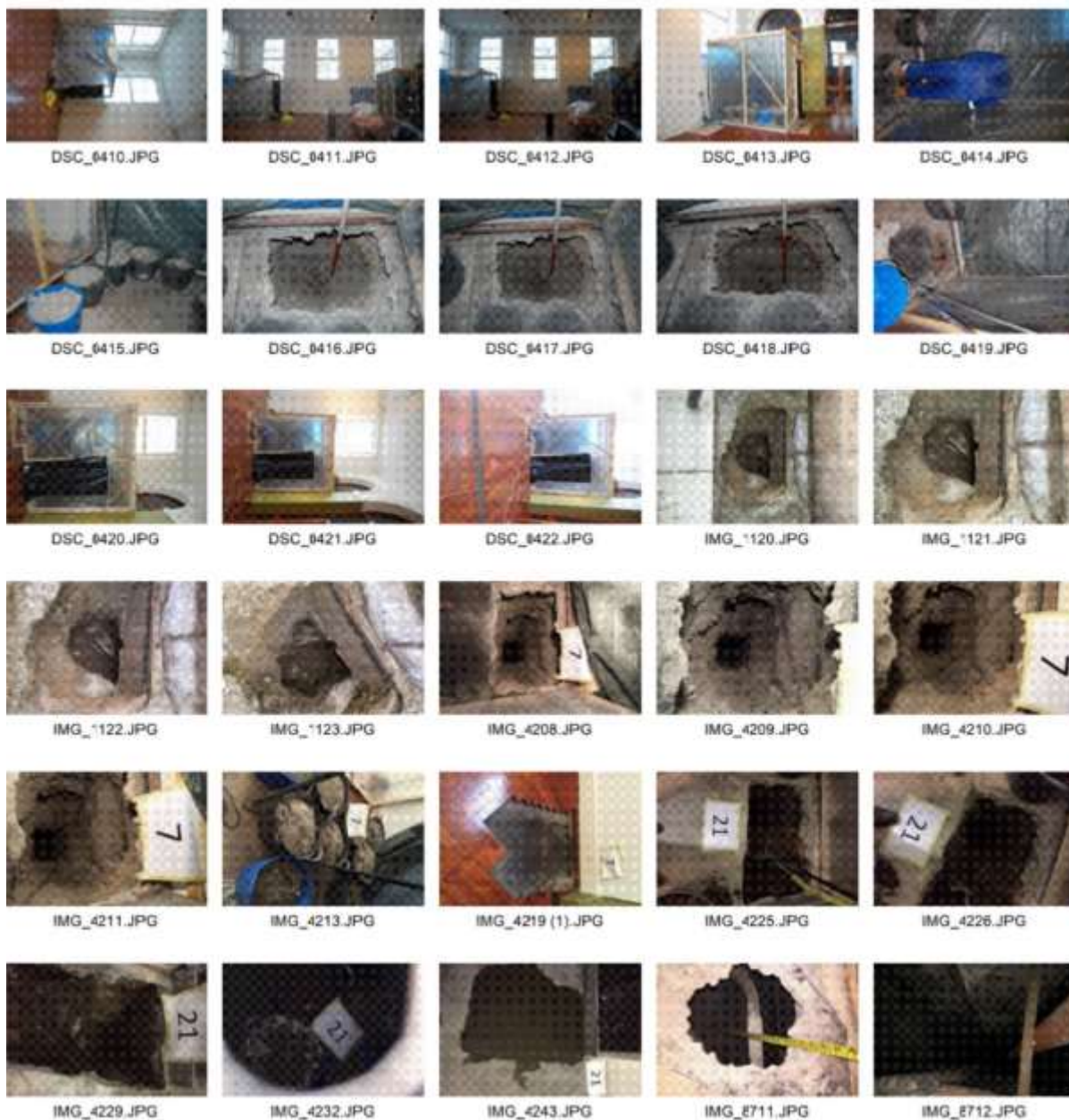
Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_0254-60	TP10 showing Art Gallery south wall foundation and water/drain pipes	N
DSC_0261-63	TP10 showing Art Gallery south wall foundation and water/drain pipes	NNW
DSC_0264-69	TP10 showing Art Gallery south wall foundation and water/drain pipes	N
DSC_0270-75	TP10 location	N/NE
DSC_0276-77	TP11 being excavated	NW
DSC_0278-85	TP11 showing stone foundation and cast iron gas pipe	N
DSC_0286-88	TP11 location	NW
DSC_0295	TP22 location	SW
DSC_0296	TP4 location	NW
DSC_0297	TP4	NW
DSC_0298	TP4	N
DSC_0299	TP4	NW
DSC_0300	TP4	NW
DSC_0301	TP4 fill including soil mixed with construction debris, wood plaster	-
DSC_0302	TP4 fill including soil mixed with construction debris, wood plaster	-
DSC_0303	TP4	NNE
DSC_0304	TP4	NW
DSC_0305	TP22 concrete removed	SW
DSC_0306	TP22	SW
DSC_0307	TP22	SW
DSC_0308-310	TP22 location	SW
DSC_0311	TP22 location	SE
DSC_0312-14	TP4 Sandra McKay Aberdeen City Council photographer and Neil, Raeburn	N
DSC_0315-21	TP4 Sandra McKay Aberdeen City Council photographer and Neil, Raeburn	W
DSC_0322-3	TP 8 location	E
DSC_0324-6	TP8 hole into duct below, no archaeology	E
DSC_0335-39	TP4 excavation	NW
DSC_0340-43	TP4	N/W
DSC_0370-1	TP22 backfilled	
DSC_0372	TP4 backfilled	
DSC_0373-75, 77	TP5	N
DSC_0376, 78	TP5 fill	
DSC_0379	TP5 location	N
DSC_0380	TP5 location	NW
DSC_0381	TP6 location	NE
DSC_0382-84	TP6	NNW/W
DSC_0385-86	TP6 location	NE
DSC_0387-88	TP6 location	E
DSC_0389-402	TP6	NE/N
DSC_0403-406	TP6 fill	

DSC_0409-10	TP6 location	NE
DSC_0411-412	TP6 (left) TP7 (right)	E
DSC_0413	TP7 location	SE
DSC_0414	TP7 being excavated	E
DSC_0415	TP7 fill	
DSC_0416-19	TP7 fill	E
DSC_0420-22	TP7 location	E
IMG_1120-23	TP10 completed	N
IMG_4208-11	TP7 completed	E
IMG_4213	TP7 fill	
IMG_4219	TP7 backfilled	E
IMG4225-43	TP21	
IMG_8711	TP9 café duct 1.5m down	
IMG_8712	TP9 café duct 1.5m down	









APPENDIX 2 CONTEXTS

Context no	TP	Description	Size
1	4, 5, 6, 7	Loose granite rubble, mortar (under parquet floor and concrete floor)	Up to 0.4m deep
2	4, 5, 6, 7	Loose loam, brick, wood, plaster, small angular stones	Up to 0.5m deep
3	10, 11	Loose stones, sand, loam (under pavement); contains cast iron gas pipe, ceramic drain pipe and lead water pipe	Up to 0.5m deep
4	10, 11	Large sandstone blocks; foundation of south wall of Aberdeen Art Gallery	0.3m deep
5	11	Large granite block below 4	0.2m deep