

# The Law School, Old College Quadrangle

*University of Edinburgh*

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## *Archaeological Watching Brief*

for

The University of Edinburgh

*August 2014*



*Old College Quadrangle, The Law School, looking NW*



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# **The Law School, Old College Quadrangle**

## ***University of Edinburgh***

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Archaeological Watching Brief: August 2014

Data Structure Report

*Project AA.2131*

by Kenneth Macfadyen

edited by Tom Addyman

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# **The Law School, Old College Quadrangle**

## ***University of Edinburgh***

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### **Archaeological Watching Brief : August 2014**

#### ***1. Introduction***

##### ***i. General***

Addyman Archaeology were contracted by The University of Edinburgh through LDN Architects (*contact Dermot Patterson*) to undertake an archaeological watching brief over invasive works within the basement level of the northern and NW parts of University's Old College Quadrangle.

This watching brief was to monitor the excavation of five engineer's test trenches that were being excavated to examine the floor make-up as well as the underlying substrate to inform proposed alterations including refurbishment of parts of the range above, the installation of a lift-shaft, etc.. The project engineer was Seamus Phillips of Elliot and Co., Engineers.

The requirement for an archaeological watching brief was placed upon the development works by the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS, contact, John Lawson), this particularly following the identification of significant archaeological remains during excavations within the main quadrangle interior in 2010 and 2011, work also carried out by Addyman Archaeology for the University.

The monitoring was undertaken by Kenneth Macfadyen between the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2014. The trenches were recorded by photography, drawn plans and sections with a written and context record of deposits.

The site is situated at **NT 25990 73360**, bounded to the north by Chambers Street, to the east by South Bridge, to the south by South College Street and to the west by the small lane of West College Street That separates the College building from the Royal Museum building (Figure 1).

A record of the watching brief has been deposited with the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) website hosted by the Archaeological Data Service (OASIS ID addymanal- 187668) and with *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (DES), the annual publication of fieldwork by Archaeology Scotland.

##### ***ii. Setting***

The underlying bedrock geology is sandstone of the Ballagan Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 343 to 359 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period in a Local environment previously dominated by rivers.

This is overlain by a Devensian – Diamicton Till. These Superficial Deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. In a Local environment previously dominated by ice age conditions.



*Figure 1 site location*



## **2.        *Brief historical summary***

The Old College Quadrangle is located in the heart of historic Edinburgh and the site has a rich and complex history. A Desk-Based Assessment undertaken by Addyman Archaeology in 2010 demonstrated a series of structures to have been present on this site from at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century, remains of some of these subsequently revealed through a programme of extensive excavations within the courtyard undertaken by Addyman Archaeology in 2010.

It is known that the site of Old College was home to the Church of St. Mary in the Fields dating back to at least 1279, and developed as a collegiate foundation in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century along with an associated hospital. This hospital was replaced by a mansion and formal gardens for the Duke of Chatelherault in 1552, referred to as Hamilton House. After 1582 the site was chosen by the city for the foundation of a college, the precursor of the present university. Hamilton House and some of the other earlier collegiate buildings were retained and further expanded with buildings added incrementally throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The existing buildings on site were built in phases from 1789, to the designs of Robert Adam, and from 1819-27, to the re-design of William Playfair. The history of this development is well documented.<sup>1</sup>

The western parts of the basement area to be examined by the engineer's test pits lie within the area formerly occupied by the small quadrangle of structures known as the *Laigh College* (Low College), so named because with the general and pronounced slope of the ground down to the north it lay at lower level in relation to the main college quadrangle on its south side. The central parts of the existing north range of the Old College Quadrangle were formerly occupied by a further lower-level court that was known in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century as *Printing House Yard*. This area was bounded to the south by the 17<sup>th</sup> century college library building whose cellar had been occupied by the college press. From c.1780 Printing House Yard was taken over for the teaching of chemistry, and a new lecture theatre built within the yard interior.

This notable downwards slope of the earlier topography along the north side of the site gave hope that remnants of the earlier college structures might still survive beneath the existing basement floor levels.

In all five trenches no pre-18<sup>th</sup> century structures were noted, some upstanding masonry walls found below floor were at first thought to be part of the early college but following the excavation of all the trenches these are much more likely to represent 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> C sleeper walls, a small area of pre-existing ground deposits were found in trench 1 but little can be said about that except that it is there

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<sup>1</sup> Fraser 1989.

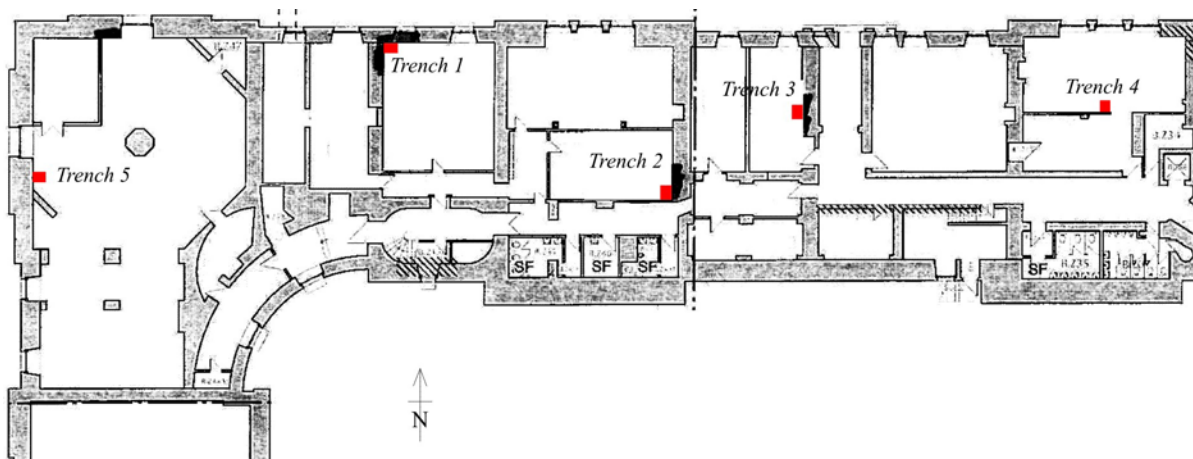
### 3. *Excavations*

#### i. *General*

As part of this current phase of works five small archaeologically monitored trenches were planned within the basement, a great many more localised openings up within the building were also undertaken at the same time. These further openings were undertaken to investigate the structure and test for asbestos, but did not require any archaeological presence.

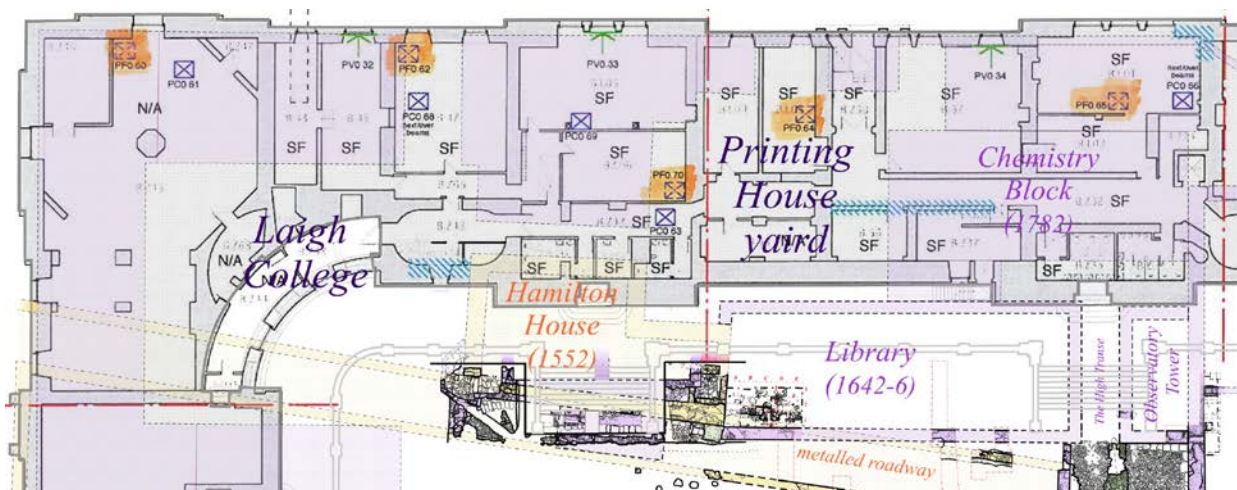
The monitored trenches were typically about 0.60m x 0.80 m in size and 0.60-0.80m deep. They were for the most part placed against the walls in order to investigate the sub-floor deposits down to solid deposits as well as to investigate the wall foundations.

The trenches were located to inform some proposed alterations to the basement, the proposed replacement of the current flooring with a more substantial base to carry a heavy filing system as well as the construction of two lift shafts.



*Figure 2 Trench location plan*

Overlaying the plan of the early college buildings onto the proposed trench location plan suggested there was a possibility that the trenches may expose some of the early structures beneath the floors



*Figure 3 Early college buildings (purple/yellow) overlain onto proposed trench location plan*

The interiors of the basement rooms were still fitted out and in use as classrooms and computer labs. Prior to excavation starting, furniture had to be moved and carpets lifted before the concrete floors could be broken through. The carpets were pulled back in the areas of excavation and any underlying timber of the flooring was kept for reinstatement.

*ii. Trench 1 (engineers trench PF0.62 ) room B.47*

Trench 1 was 0.90m x 0.60m aligned E-W in the NW corner of the room. The room was in use as a computer lab with rows of computers lining the walls.

The carpeting was pulled back exposing a plywood levelling, this was cut through to the outline of the trench. Below this was a historic wooden herringbone patterned parquet floor, within the confines of the trench this was lifted and the timber kept for reinstatement. The parquet floor was constructed from lengths of pine approximately 2 inch square bedded into tar on top of a concrete base.



*Plates 1 and 2 Trench 1 carpet lifted trench being opened up and at LOE*

This concrete *101* was broken out and proved to be of uneven depth, up to 0.30 m at the deepest .this overlay a loose mixed deposit of soils *102* this was loose, very dry, cinder rich and contained some small rubble fragments as well as a high % of crushed lime mortar. This proved to be backfill within the construction cut *104* for the current structures foundation *103* as well as a general build up within the structure, likely relating to dumps of construction waste.



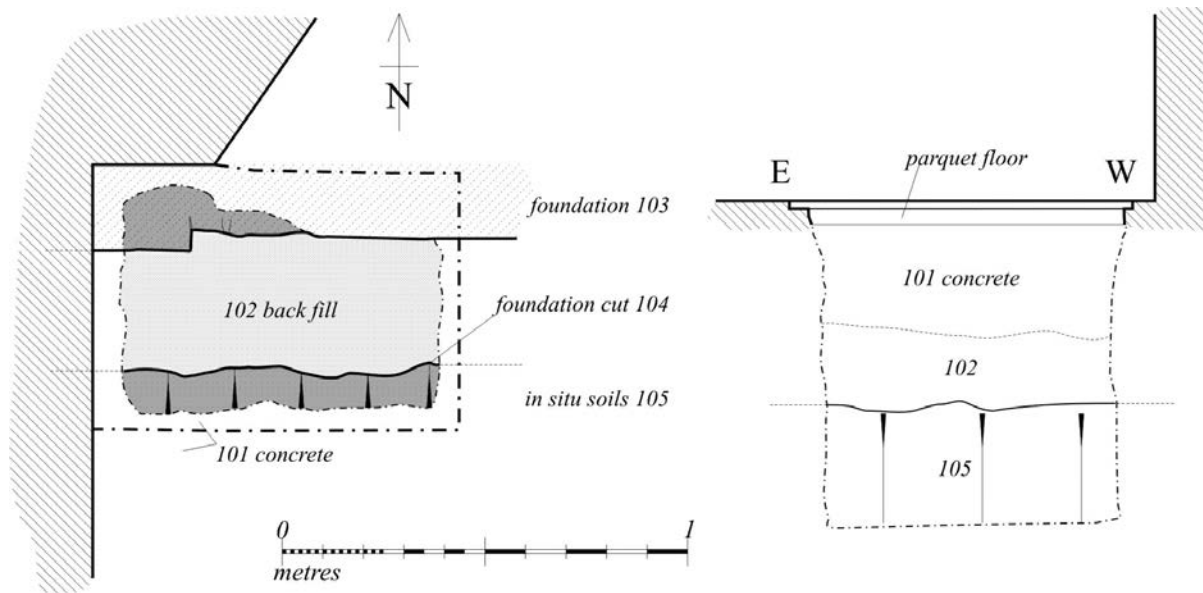


Figure 4 Trench 1 plan and Figure 5 trench 1 section

The trench was largely excavated within this construction cut. However in the south section some remnants of the pre-existing soil deposits were exposed 105 at a depth of 0.50 m below ground, it seems probable that these will continue across the room at a similar level. This soil 105 was a very solid clayey mid brown soil deposit and felt like an in situ deposit rather than being redeposited during the later building works and may suggest remnants of pre OCQ archaeology survive in this area.

iii. *Trench 2 (engineers trench PF0.70) room B.L06*

This trench was excavated in the SE corner of lecture room B.L06 and was 0.80m x 0.75m aligned E-W, this was to inform the construction of a lift shaft pit. The carpet was pulled back and underlying plywood cut through and as in trench 1 a wooden herringbone parquet floor was exposed. This as before was bedded in tar onto a concrete base 201.



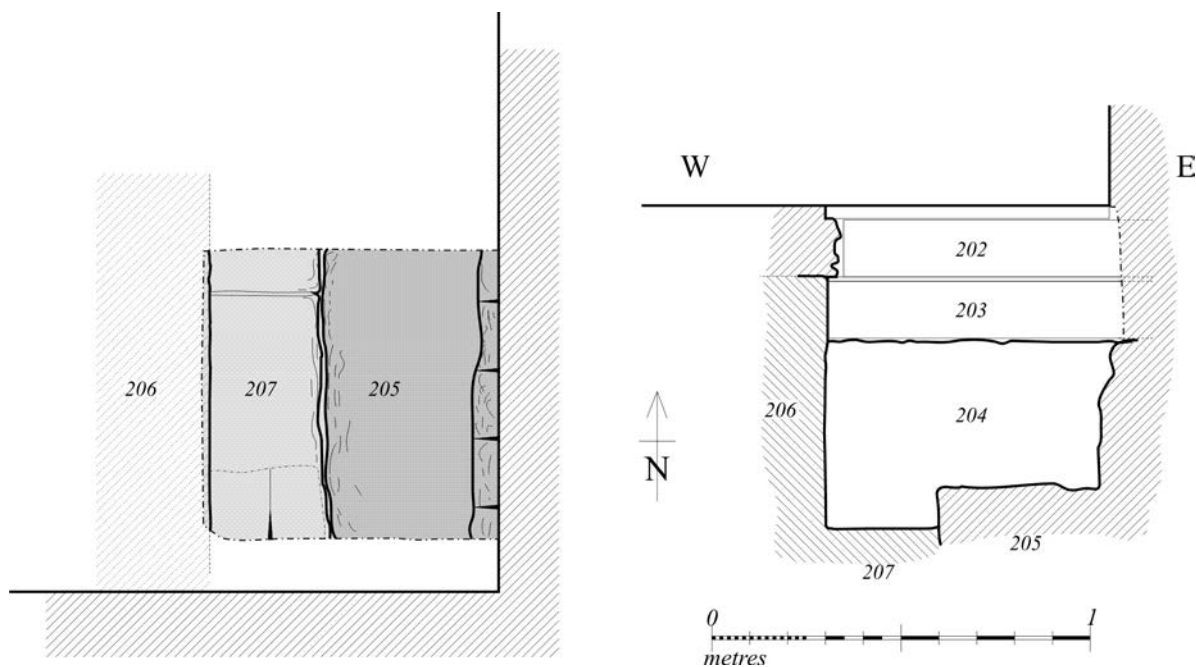
Plates 3 and 4 Parquet flooring exposed and following removal of floor to expose 202 brick floor

Following the breakout of the concrete 201 this proved to be quite shallow and was poured over a neat well-formed brick floor 202, this existed within the trench stopping at the west section and abutting the wall 206, but continuing beyond the east section either within a former door/recess in the masonry or more likely to the hidden former Wall face. The modern linings seem to heavily overlie the former floor and the parquet floor timbers along the wall foot are clearly built over and trapped beneath the modern linings and it seems likely the bricks beneath are similarly trapped.

These heavy bricks were 10.5cm x 23cm x 8cm of white fireclay and with a plain frog on one face. No manufacturer's marks were noted on any of the ones seen. They were lain on edge to form a neat floor and were bonded with a soft brownish lime mortar.

Directly beneath the 202 bricks was a second level of neatly lain bricks either an earlier floor or more likely a base for the 202. These 203 bricks were of similar dimensions and form but were of a red common brick type in contrast to the white of the upper layer. These are likely to be of the same phase.

Following the removal of these a deep deposit of crushed lime mortar and rubble fragments 204 was excavated leaving exposed rubble work to the west and east as well at the base of the trench. The rubble masonry 205 to the east appears to be the stepped /rough foundation for the major masonry of the east wall.



*Figure 6 Trench 2 plan and figure 7 section at LOE*

The masonry wall 206 to the west was constructed from smaller rubble stone in a lime mortar with a well formed face where seen. when initially exposed this was thought to be the eastern wall of the building to the north of Hamilton House, the slabs 207 at the base of the wall was suggestive of a courtyard potentially "Printing House Yard" to the exterior of that building with the foundations of the current structure 205 simply built up from this level. But following the excavation of trench 4 it may be that is more likely to represent large sleeper walls associated to the OCQ building rather than an earlier structure.



*Plate 5 Trench 2 looking west, wall 206 and slabs 207 at base*

*iv. Trench 3 (engineers trench PF0.64) room B.L03*

Trench 3 was excavated against the east wall and as well as to investigate underlying deposits this was intended to locate a service trench known to run through this area. Lifting of the carpet exposed a former lino floor formed from blocks of coloured lino lain to form a geometric pattern



*Plate 6 trench 3 patterned lino beneath the carpet*

Beneath the lino was as in the other trenches a timber floor also bedded in tar on a concrete base, this floor was a bit different in that it was not a herring bone pattern just normal lines of flooring. These boards 301 were tongue and grooved on their edges 5 cm deep and of narrow boards.

Beneath the timber flooring, breaking out of the underlying concrete slab 302 had begun when a deep void was noted beneath the slab, the small hole made was squared up and investigated. This was not made any larger as it allowed the purpose of the trench to be fulfilled.



This void below proved to be a 0.90m square service duct with a concrete slab capping .the east wall of the duct was the rough foundation of the east wall, this stepped out a little and the capping appeared to sit upon the step . The west appeared to be of cemented brick. The base of the duct looked solid and was probably concrete.

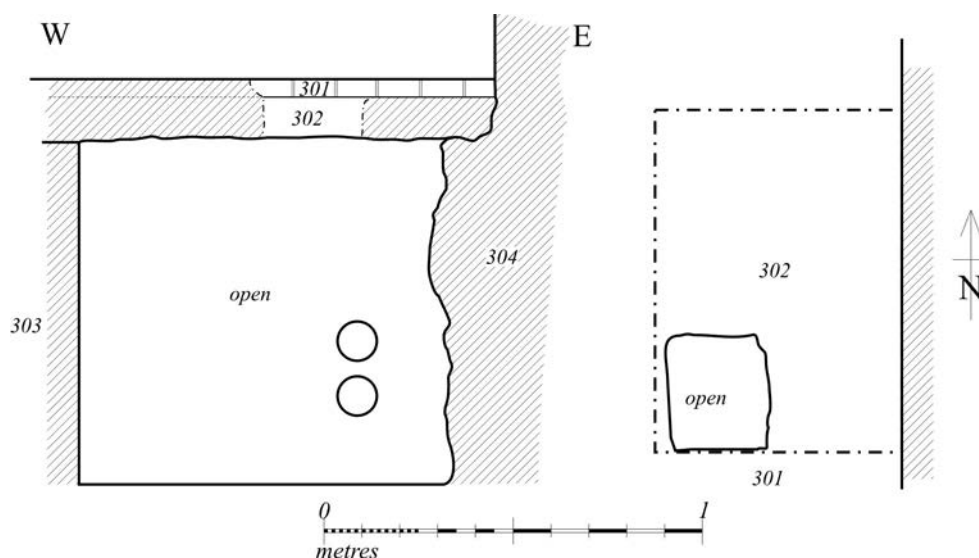
Within the duct 2 insulated pipes ran, these came from the room to the east through the wall to the north of the trench and ran to the north before turning to the west at the north façade. To the south the duct runs empty to the south wall face. Following the discovery of this duct excavation was stopped and the hole readied for reinstatement. No archaeology apart from the duct and the foundations of the main structure was seen.



*Plate 7 Trench 3, pipes within service duct looking north.*



*Plate 8 Trench 3, service duct looking south*



*Figure 8 trench 3 plan at LOE and figure 9 section through*

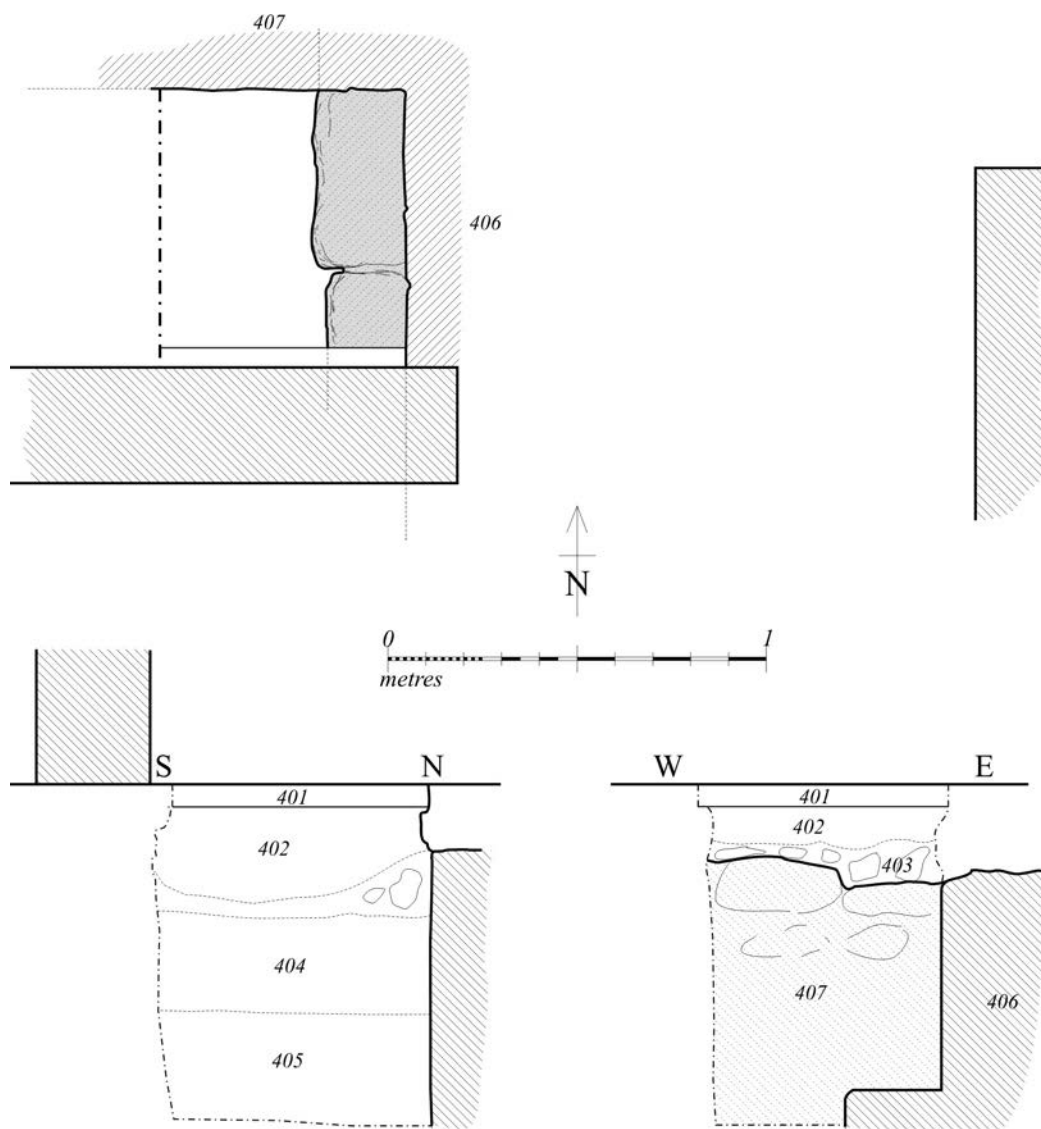


v. *Trench 4 (engineers trench PF0.65) room B.L01*

This trench was excavated to inform the construction of a lift shaft pit, the trench was opened up in the middle of a newly re carpeted and painted computer lab and was positioned to the immediate north of a low partition wall.

Following the lifting of the carpet and underlying plywood a timber floor was exposed. This was of similar dimensions to the flooring in trench 3 and was also tongue and groove jointed. This as before sat upon a concrete base although no evidence for tar bedding was seen and the concrete beneath 402 was very easy to break up and very cinder rich.

Beneath the concrete was an uneven deposit of sandstone rubble and crushed lime mortar 403, once this was removed the tops of 2 walls could be seen just below the east and north sections these formed a right angle and the trench by chance fitted right into the corner. Within these walls at first it looked like a hard packed deposit of natural clays could be seen 404



*Figures 10 -12 Plan and sections of trench 4*



Plate 9 trench 4 Opening up and plate 10 trench 4 at LOE looking east to 406

The surface of 404 was heavily trampled and formed a working surface for constructions. After excavation the deposit proved to be a fairly loose beneath the compacted surface and a redeposited loose mix of clays overlying a further deposit of loose gravelly clays 405 this was not bottomed.

The masonry walls exposed were of lime bonded rubblestone with a good formed face, the eastern wall 406 was associated with a wide stepped foundation at the LOE, the northern wall 407 did not appear to have a stepped foundation, and at least none was exposed within the trench.

These walls after consulting historic plans (supplied by engineer) of the foundations and sleeper walls in this area, appear to be original sleeper walls. The historic plans of the sleeper walls match the found location of the walls exposed very well

vi. *Trench 5 (engineer's trench PF0.60) room B.Z45*

Trench 5 was excavated in the plant room. Originally this was planned to be to the north of the room but a series of securely fastened pallets holding supplies in this area meant that the trench was moved to the west by the engineer

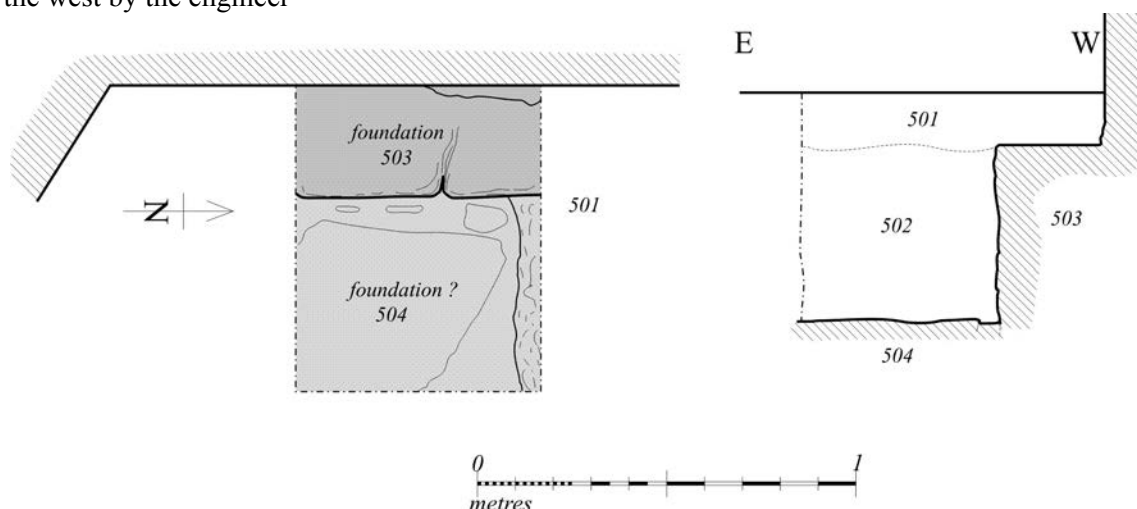


Figure 13 Trench 5 plan and figure 14 trench 5 section

The room generally was floored with a red painted concrete floor, numerous boilers and the machinery of ventilating the college sat upon the floor, within the trench the concrete 501 broke up much easier than expected, this was relatively thin and not very solid for a plant room. Removal of this exposed a deep deposit of loose crushed lime mortar and rubble 502. Following removal of this 502. The stepped foundation 503 of the main gable wall was exposed and at the LOE a further horizontal masonry 504 was noted possibly related to the building



*Plate 11 trench 5 at LOE foundation exposed*

*vii. Summary and Discussion*

Because of the natural slope of the ground down to the north it was hoped that within these small excavations some surviving remnants of the earlier college buildings might have survived the terracing into the ground for the basement level and might still be identified.

However no features were noted that could be said to be older than the existing Old College building. Some masonry revealed within trenches 2 and 4 were at first considered good candidates for surviving remains of earlier structures but these were subsequently judged to be masonry sleeper walls for an original timber floor within OCQ. Apart from these walls all the other built features noted were related to the foundations of the OCQ phase structure, or later services within the building; this is perhaps not surprising as the trenches were located to allow the engineers to investigate these.

The only possibly earlier deposit was seen in trench 1 where the foundation cut for the OCQ structure cuts a solid clayey soil 105. This was only seen in a small area in the trench section. This possible *in situ* archaeology was located at 0.50m below floor level and may continue across the room. However with such a small area exposed its nature remained unclear; it could perhaps represent re-deposited soils as part of the new build for the existing building. All that can really be said is that it was clearly truncated by a cut for the 18<sup>th</sup> C foundations of the NW part of the current building.

## **7. Recommendations**

Natural subsoil was not exposed within any of the five trenches. In each the excavation was either stopped by the masonry of the 18<sup>th</sup> century construction or terminated at the intended depth of 0.80m and still within 18<sup>th</sup> century build-up.

As no natural was seen in any of the trenches there is still a possibility for parts of the earlier college to survive beneath the wider floor areas, the probable *in situ* soils within trench 1 strengthens this possibility.

Any reduction of the loose building debris beneath the floors to allow a new more substantial floor to be laid, will at the very least expose the network of the substantial masonry sleeper walls of an original timber floor, this would be of some interest to plan and record any details as it was exposed.

The loose fill between these represents construction debris from the 18<sup>th</sup> C build and maybe demolition debris from the earlier structures on the site. This may contain artefacts of interest and some monitoring should be done during any removal.

Deeper excavations for the lift shaft pits should be monitored as these would be likely excavated down to solid deposits and the likelihood of encountering *in situ* pre-late 18<sup>th</sup> century deposits is considered possible. The upper 0.80m is of loose 18<sup>th</sup> C building debris and could be removed rapidly. In trench 2 the wider lift shaft excavation would determine if the wall 206 was part of the earlier college or 18<sup>th</sup> century sleeper walls and should be closely monitored.



**Appendix A Contexts Register**

Context numbers are prefixed with the trench no i.e. 101 (trench 1) 201 (trench 2)

Context no	Description
101	Concrete base for floor with timber parquet floor on top
102	Loose cinder and crushed lime mortar rich deposit, construction debris 18 <sup>th</sup> C
103	Rubble stone foundation of 18 <sup>th</sup> C college building
104	Linear Cut for foundation 103
105	Possibly in situ soils cut by 104, hard packed mid brown clayey soils with some charcoal flecks
201	Concrete base to flooring with parquet floor on top
202	White fireclay brick floor, bricks 23x 10.5 x 8 cm, plain with frog on one face
203	Red clay brick floor, bricks 23x 10.5 x 8 cm, plain with frog on one face
204	Compacted crushed lime mortar and rubble fragments, building debris
205	Large stepped foundation for 18 <sup>th</sup> C college building
206	Rubble masonry, possibly a sleeper wall
207	Possible flagstones against 206 but more likely to be a foundation
301	Wooden flooring formed from tongue and groove boarding of 4x 7.5 cm bedded in tar
302	Concrete slab roof to service trench approximately 0.10 m deep
303	West elevation of service trench, formed from cemented brick
304	Rough rubble foundation of eastern wall 18 <sup>th</sup> C
401	Wooden flooring formed from tongue and grooved boards of 3 x 7 cm
402	Concrete base to 401 formed from a loose cinder rich concrete
403	Narrow rubble spread, large blocks of rubble mixed through with a high % of crushed lime mortar. Construction debris
404	Redeposited natural clays, the upper surface of which was heavily trampled as a working surface. 0.25 m deep
405	Redeposited deposit of natural gritty sands and clays not bottomed
406	Rubble built sleeper wall with stepped foundation
407	Rubble built sleeper wall
501	Concrete floor .0.15 m deep of concrete that broke up very easily
502	Deposit of crushed lime mortar and a small % of sandstone fragments, construction deposit
503	Stepped foundation for the 18 <sup>th</sup> C building
504	Possible masonry relating to foundation at loe

**Appendix B Drawings Register**

Drawing No	Scale	Trench No	Description
1	1:20	1	Plan at LOE
2	1:20	1	South section
3	1:20	2	Plan at LOE
4	1:20	2	North section
5	1:20	3	Plan at LOE
6	1:20	3	Section through trench running E-W
7	1:20	4	Plan at LOE
8	1:20	4	North section
9	1:20	4	West section

**Appendix C      Photographic Register**

<i>Photo No</i>	<i>Trench No</i>	<i>Aspect Facing</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	1	N	Pre excavation trench starting , carpets lifted
02	1	V	At LOE shows foundation cut 104
03	1	S	At LOE shows south section with foundation cut 104 cutting 105 soils
04	2	S	Pre excavation carpet pulled back
05	2	S	Detail of parquet floor
06	2	V	Parquet floor lifted upper bricks 202 exposed
07	2	V	Parquet floor lifted upper bricks 202 exposed
08	2	V	Parquet floor lifted upper bricks 202 exposed
09	2	E	Parquet floor lifted upper bricks 202 exposed
10	2	V	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 205 foundation and 207 flags
11	2	V	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 205 foundation and 207 flags
12	2	V	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 205 foundation and 207 flags
13	2	V	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 205 foundation and 207 flags
14	2	W	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 207 flags and 206 wall
15	2	W	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 207 flags and 206 wall
16	2	E	Foundation 205 and section through brick floors 202,203
17	2	E	Foundation 205 and section through brick floors 202,203
18	2	W	202 and 203 lifted and 204 fill removed shows 207 flags and 206 wall
19	2	E	Section through brick floors 202,203
20	2	E	Section through brick floors 202,203
21	3	NE	Pre excavation carpet lifted
22	3	N	Pre excavation carpet lifted shows geometric patterned lino
23	3	N	View to north within service track, shows pipes
24	3	S	View to south within service track
25	3	N	View to north within service track, shows pipes
26	3	S	View to south within service track
27	3	N	Trench at LOE
28	3	N	Trench at LOE, location view3
29	4	NW	Pre excavation carpet lifted
30	4	SW	Pre excavation carpet lifted
31	4	V	Pre excavation carpet lifted
32	4	V	401,402,403 removed to top of 404 with sondage through 404
33	4	S	Wall 407
34	4	W	Wall 406
35	4	SW	Walls 406,407
36	4	W	Walls 406,407
37	4	W	Walls 406,407
38	4	S	Walls 406,407
39	4	V	Wall 406 foundation
40	4	V	Wall 406 foundation
41	4	E	East section
42	4	E	East section
43	4	-	Detail of original sleeper wall plan
44	5	V	Trench at LOE shows foundation step 503
45	5	V	Trench at LOE shows foundation step 503
46	5	W	Trench at LOE shows foundation step 503, west section showing 502
47	5	NW	Trench at LOE shows foundation step 503, west section showing 502
48	5	W	Trench at LOE shows foundation step 503, west section showing 502

**Appendix D    Photographic Thumbnails**



2132-(01) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(02) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(03) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(04) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(05) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(06) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(07) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(08) OCQLS.JPG

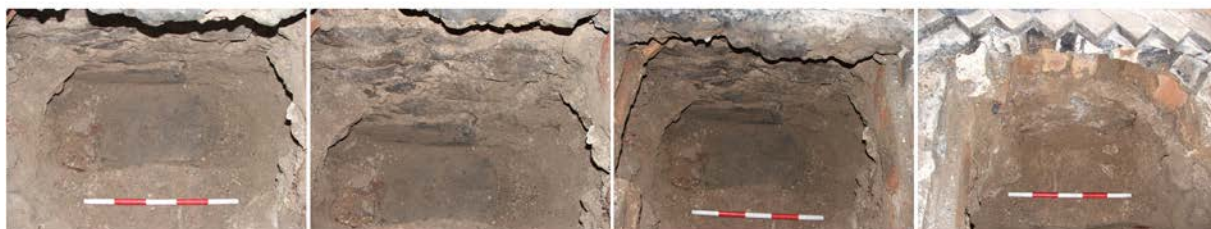


2132-(09) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(10) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(11) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(12) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(13) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(14) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(15) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(16) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(17) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(18) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(19) OCQLS.JPG

2132-(20) OCQLS.JPG





2132-(21) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(22) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(23) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(24) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(25) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(26) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(27) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(28) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(29) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(30) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(31) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(32) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(33) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(34) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(35) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(36) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(37) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(38) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(39) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(40) OCQLS.JPG

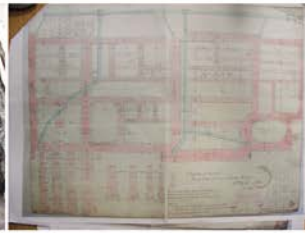




2132-(41) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(42) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(43) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(44) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(45) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(46) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(47) OCQLS.JPG



2132-(48) OCQLS.JPG

***Appendix E : Provisional Discovery and Excavation Scotland (DES) entry***

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	City of Edinburgh Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Old College, Edinburgh Law School
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	AA 2132
<b>PARISH:</b>	City of Edinburgh
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Kenneth Macfadyen
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Addyman Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NT27SE 357
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> C building
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	none
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NT 25990 73360
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	28/07/14
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	30/07/14
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	Yes
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	The University of Edinburgh
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	St. Ninian's Manse, Quayside Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6EJ
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<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service and NMRS (intended)