

# Jesus Green Tennis Courts, Cambridge

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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**CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
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**Illustrations by Bryan Crossan**

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University of Cambridge

Event No. ECB3748

Report No. 1096

May 2012

### **Non-technical summary**

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit between the 11th and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2012, on the site of tennis courts located at the western end of Jesus Green, Cambridge. The shallow depth of deposits being stripped meant that no significant archaeological deposits were disturbed.

## **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) between the 11th and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2012, on the site of tennis courts located at the western end of Jesus Green, Cambridge (centred on TL 4490 5915), which were being modified (Figure 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of Cambridge City Council in response to a brief for archaeological monitoring and recording issued by Dan McConnell of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (McConnell 2012) and following a specification devised by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2012). The CAU site code is JGT12 and the event number is ECB 3748.

## **Background**

The site is located on the southern floodplain of the River Cam and is situated to the northeast of Cambridge city centre, within an area of open common ground which was located within the East or Barnwell Fields of Cambridge during the medieval period. The height of the modern ground surface lies at around 5.0m OD and the underlying geology consists of alluvial deposits overlying 1<sup>st</sup> Terrace Gravels (British Geological Survey 1976). Earlier archaeological monitoring in the vicinity has encountered 1<sup>st</sup> Terrace Gravels at heights of 3.77–4.69m OD.

Finds of Prehistoric, Roman and later material have been made on Jesus Green, but relatively little archaeological investigation of this area of Cambridge has taken place. A 2003 excavation just inside Jesus College to the southeast revealed evidence of Iron Age settlement, plus Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the vicinity (Evans and Williams 2004). Monitoring of the Cambridge 33kv reinforcement cable route across Jesus Green, located just to the south of the development area, in 2006 revealed a series of bands of alluvial clays overlying intermittent palaeochannels of varying sizes, between these channels were ridges of 1<sup>st</sup> Terrace river gravels (Davenport *et al* 2008). Overlying the palaeochannels and gravels were a sequence of made-ground deposits, a buried soil horizon, a gravel surface and modern turf and topsoil layer. All these deposit contained a mixture of 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century material. In 2007 excavations to the southwest at No. 24 Thompson's Lane revealed a sequence of alluvial deposits dated to the Bronze Age and later, which included a distinctly drier episode during the Roman period (Newman 2008). Then, from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the area was gradually 'reclaimed' by the introduction of numerous dump deposits before becoming incorporated into an area of widespread riverside development undertaken in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Methodology**

Given the nature of the work the watching brief was recorded as a series of written notes and digital images. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory health and safety legislation and followed the recommendations of the Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers (Allen and Holt 2010). The area was machine stripped to a depth of 200–250mm by the contractor, using a toothless 1.8m wide bucket.

## Results

The machine stripping removed the topsoil and deposits associated with the previous tennis court down on to a homogenous mid to dark greyish brown subsoil containing a range of mid 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics and glass (Figure 2). This appears to be a late 20<sup>th</sup> century mixed makeup deposit and buried soil, associated with the construction of the previous tennis court and bowling green. No discrete features were identifiable, apart from some late 20<sup>th</sup> century gravel filled land drains associated with the previous recreational use of the area. As this was the final depth of material to be removed, and no deeper drains or other services were being installed, it was agreed in consultation with Dan McConnell to terminate the watching brief after approximately 60% of the area had been stripped.

## Discussion

The watching brief served to confirm that no significant archaeological deposits were being impacted by the development. Whilst earlier work in the vicinity has indicated that archaeological remains are present the shallowness of the development related disturbance meant that nothing relating to earlier deposits and human activity in the area was revealed.

## Acknowledgements

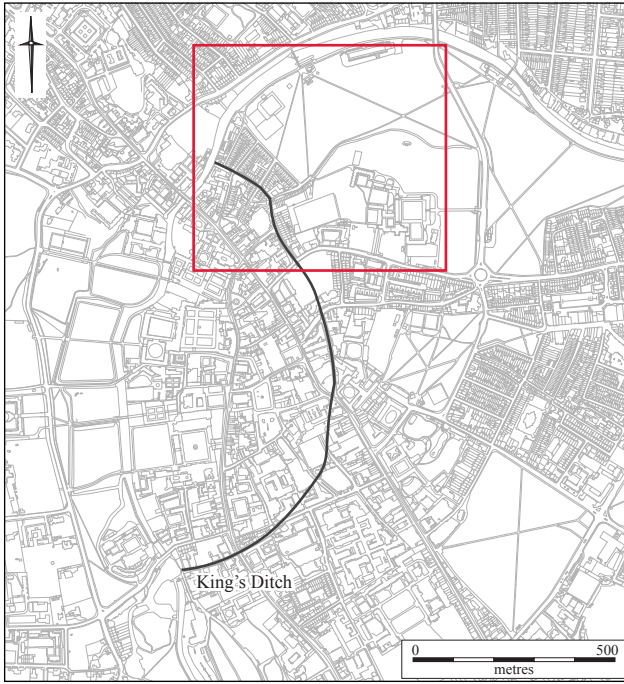
The fieldwork was monitored by Dan McConnell, Assistant Archaeologist (Planning and Countryside Advice) of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (formerly CAPCA). The project manager for the CAU was Emma Beadsmoore and the archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Craig Cessford, Hayley Roberts and Simon Timberlake. The graphics were produced by Bryan Crossan.

## References

- Allen, J.L. and Holt, A. 2010. *Manual of Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 2010*. Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers.
- Beadsmoore, E. 2012. *A Specification for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Jesus Green Tennis Courts, Cambridge*. CAU unpublished document.
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- Evans, C. and Williams, C. 2004. *Jesus College, Cambridge: the maintenance workshop and gardener's compound site excavations*. CAU report 618.
- McConnell, D. 2012. *Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording at Jesus Green Tennis Courts, Cambridge*. Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team unpublished document.

Newman R. 2008. *24 Thompson's Lane, Cambridge: An Archaeological Investigation*. CAU report 809.

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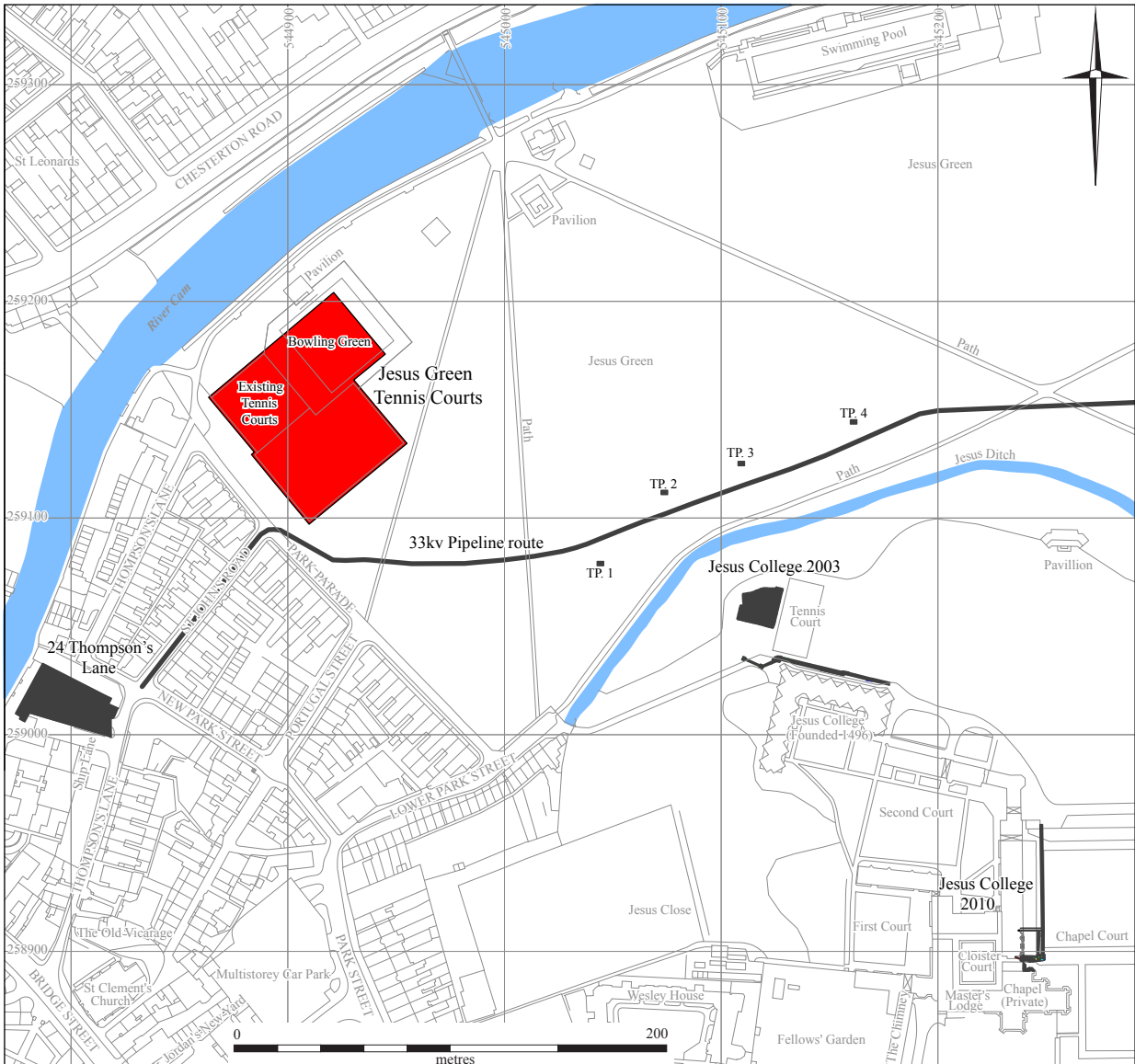


Figure 1. Location Plan.





Figure 2. Views of the watching brief A) Machine stripping in progress, facing north B) View of stripped areas, facing southwest C) Gravel filled modern drain, facing southeast D) Section through stripped deposits, facing southeast D) Section through stripped deposits, facing northwest.



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### Project details

Project name	Jesus Green Tennis Courts, Cambridge
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit between the 11th and 23rd April 2012, on the site of tennis courts located at the western end of Jesus Green, Cambridge. The shallow depth of deposits being stripped meant that no significant archaeological deposits were disturbed.
Project dates	Start: 11-04-2012 End: 23-04-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	JGT 12 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB 3748 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Significant Finds	POTTERY Modern
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Jesus Green Tennis Courts, Cambridge
Postcode	CB5 8AL

Study area	3238.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4490 5915 52.2110648820 0.121003916076 52 12 39 N 000 07 15 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5.00m Max: 5.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Craig Cessford
Type of sponsor/funding body	District Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	Cambridge City Council

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	JGT12
Digital Contents	'Survey','other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	JGT12
Paper Contents	'Survey','other'
Paper Media available	'Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Survey ','Unpublished Text'

### Project bibliography 1

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