

## **A Watching Brief at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge** (CAU Report No. 1123; addendum to CAU Report 1000)

*Emma Rees*, with contributions by Craig Cessford & Richard Newman

### **Introduction**

A watching brief was undertaken at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge between the 11<sup>th</sup> of July and the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2012. Three investigative trenches were excavated by contractors within the northern part of New Court, one of which also extended partway along the adjacent Bakehouse Yard (Figure 1). The trenches were positioned so as to determine the layout and extent of pre-existing services in advance of the proposed instillation of new sewerage and drainage works. This comprised the second phase of investigative work to be undertaken in the area, following on from the insertion of seven similar trenches in December 2011 and January 2012 (see Newman 2012).

Topographically, the present ground surface of New Court varies between 7.42m OD and 7.64m OD. This variation is the result of surface undulations as opposed to an overall distinctive slope and the height averages around 7.50m OD. The underlying geology, in contrast, appears to slope downwards quite markedly to the west. The closest previous excavation, which was undertaken within the southeast corner of the east range of New Hall in 2009, identified natural gravels lying at 6.15m OD (Newman 2011, 60-65). To the south, however, natural gravels have been identified at 3.03m at the Trinity Hall Library site, in close proximity to the River Cam (Alexander 1997, 5). In addition, in a similar location further to the north, natural gravels were identified at 3.30m OD at the Trinity College Library Bookstore site (Cessford *in prep.*). Finally, a short distance to the southwest, an inspection pit monitored in 1994 in Garret Hostel Lane identified natural gravels at 2.95m OD (Evans 1994, 4). This trench, however, may have been situated within a former channel or canal as opposed to untruncated ground. Overall, therefore, this pattern indicates that significantly deeper made-ground (*c.* 3m+) is potentially present on the western side of New Court in contrast to a relatively shallow depth (*c.* 1.3m+) to the east.

### **Results**

The numbering sequence continues directly from that used during the previous phase of work (Newman 2012). It should be noted, however, that because one trench (ST07) was substantially longer than any that had been excavated before, for the purposes of the following discussion it has been sub-divided into three segments labelled ST07(A) to (C). In addition, a number of ‘spur trenches’ were also cut at various points at right-angles to the main body of ST07 (see Figure 1). These are referred to within the text as Spurs 1 to 6. The trenches were hand-excavated by the contractors to a depth of between 0.6m and 1.3m. In each instance, the uppermost 0.1m to 0.4m of the sequence consisted of modern tarmac and make-up deposits associated with current car park and lane surfaces (with the exception of ST09, which was located within the present standing building). Beneath these layers, numerous intercutting services were

encountered. But, despite the relatively dense profusion of service cuts, a number of archaeological deposits were encountered lying between and/or beneath the later truncations. These remains, which consisted of both structural foundations and layers/spreads, will be discussed below on a trench-by-trench basis.

#### *ST07(A)*

This section of the trench commenced in the northwest corner of New Court. It measured on average 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, and was aligned in a northwest to southeast direction for 10.7m; the trench then turned and ran parallel to the northern side of New Court, on a west - east alignment, for a further distance of 30m. Notably, the eastern and western ends of ST07(A) intersected earlier trenches ST01 and ST04 (see Newman 2012). In general, services were present in several locations along the length of ST07(A). Beneath and between the modern deposits and truncations, which included layers of make-up and tarmac material associated with the modern car park surface, a generic layer of made-ground material, [800], was present. It consisted of moderately compacted mid to pale brown sandy silt with occasional off-white clay mottles and occasional CBM fragment inclusions. This deposit most probably represents levelling/make-up material that was introduced during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when New Court itself was constructed. This attribution could not be confirmed, however, due to the absence of datable material culture. Approximately 15m along the west-east aligned stretch of ST07(A) the trench was expanded, becoming 0.75m wide and 0.9m deep. The additional depth in this area revealed a second layer of material, [801], which was located directly below [800]. This layer consisted of relatively friable mid brown clay silt with occasional charcoal and mortar fleck inclusions. Deposit [801] also contained a clay tobacco pipe bowl dating to 1640-60. It therefore appears likely that this material represents the vestiges of the old ground surface that existed prior to the introduction of made-ground deposits associated with the erection of New Court. Its upper horizon lay at 7.22m OD.

Two further features were revealed within ST07(A). Perhaps most significantly an area of clunch rubble, [802], was identified towards the centre of the trench. This material extended for a length of 9.5m and was a maximum of 0.32m thick. [802] predominately consisted of roughly-squared clunch blocks that measured on average *c.* 250mm by 160mm by 140mm. These blocks were accompanied by occasional smaller pieces of clunch rubble and patches of pale brown sandy mortar within a matrix of mid to dark brown clay silt. The deposit therefore appears most likely to represent demolition material generated by the levelling of a relatively substantial structure. In addition, the remnants of a probable wall foundation – [803] – were also revealed within the southern section of the trench, located 6.0m west of the eastern limit of ST07(A). [803] comprised a thin remnant of a red brick wall foundation that was bonded together with very firm white lime mortar. It had been heavily truncated by modern services, and its surviving portion measured 0.18m+ wide by 0.51m+ deep. A series of possible make-up/floor surface deposits were present to the east of the wall, which included several thin bands of gravel that were sealed by a thin layer of mortar. These could conceivably have been associated with the interior of the structure, although this possibility could not be confirmed within the narrow confines of the trench. The wall and its potentially associated layers were only present within the southern section of ST07(A) and ran for a length of approximately 1.7m; they were heavily disturbed by services at either end.

Three spur trenches were also excavated along this stretch of ST07. Spur 1, which was located at the junction of the two different alignments of the trench, ran in a north-south direction for 4.75m until it reached the northern perimeter of the area. It measured 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, and contained no archaeological features. Spur 2 initially extended from ST07(A) in a north-south direction, where it measured 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, before turning west-east for a distance of 1.0m at a width of 1.3m. Despite being heavily disturbed by modern services, clunch rubble layer [802] was again identified within this spur. Its presence here revealed that the rubble/demolition material extended for a width of at least 2.15m+. Finally, Spur 3 consisted of an irregular series of conjoined west-east and north-south aligned elements (Figure 1). Initially Spur 3 ran in a north-south direction for *c.* 1.5m, where it measured 0.6m wide and 0.9m deep. The next 0.7m then saw Spur 3 widen to 2.3m before narrowing again to 1.0m for the next 1.15m, before then finally widening to 2.0m for the remaining 0.5m. The very southern extent of an inverted brick-built arched foundation, [804], was present within the northern section of Spur 3. This measured 0.8m + wide by 0.35m+ deep, and was constructed of pale yellowish red unfrosted bricks – measuring *c.*

220mm by 110mm by 60mm – that were bonded with firm pale brown sandy mortar. This foundation comprised part of the footings for a single-storey arcade with six arches that originally connected New Court to Neville's Court. Constructed in 1823-5, this feature was most probably demolished at some time during the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Elements of this foundation were previously encountered within TP01 and ST02 during the earlier watching brief phase (Newman 2012).

#### *ST07(B)*

This stretch of the trench, which extended from the eastern limit of ST07(A), was orientated in a broadly north - south direction for a distance of 13.4m; it measured 0.75m wide and varied between 0.9m and 1.0m deep. The trench then changed direction, taking on a northwest to southeast alignment for a distance of 6.9m (Figure 1). At a distance of 6.9m along ST07(B) from its northern end was situated wall foundation **[805]** (Figure 2). This measured 0.57m wide by 0.58m+ deep and was oriented broadly east - west. It consisted of a series of large clunch blocks, measuring *c.* 220mm by 200mm in extent, which along with some smaller clunch rubble fragments were bonded with relatively firm pale to mid brown sandy mortar. A pot sherd recovered in close proximity to **[805]** was of 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century date. Approximately 4.0m east of **[805]** a second wall foundation, **[807]**, was also identified (Figure 2). This consisted of an internal core of red bricks that was surrounded by medium to large roughly squared clunch blocks, all of which were bonded with firm pale brown sandy lime mortar. Foundation **[807]**, truncated to the north by a service trench and to the south by brick-built drain **[808]**, measured 0.9m+ wide and 0.55m+ deep. It appears to have followed the same alignment as **[805]**, but differences in build suggest that these walls are unlikely to have belonged to the same building – although they could of course represent different phases of construction. Drain **[808]** measured 0.45m wide and 0.82m+ deep, and was most probably 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.

Two spur trenches were also excavated along this stretch of ST07. Spur 4, which projected on a north-south alignment from the eastern edge of ST07(B), measured 2.5m long and was 0.7m wide with a depth of 0.4m to 0.6m. Partway along its length, it intersected the alignment of earlier trench ST05 (Newman 2012). No archaeology was revealed within this spur, as it contained a high concentration of services. Spur 5, which projected on a north-west to south-east alignment from the southern edge of ST07(B), measured 2.5m long by 1.2m wide and was 0.8m deep. Once again, no archaeological deposits were identified.

#### *ST07(C)*

This section of the trench continued in an east-west direction for a distance of 9.0m from the southeastern end of ST07(B). It extended beneath the current eastern range of New Court, under the archway that provides access from New Court to Bakehouse Yard. It then turned northwest - southeast before turning again to run parallel to Bishop's Hostel, where it continued for a further 6.25m before terminating (Figure 1). ST07(C) measured 0.6m to 0.9m wide and reached a maximum depth of 0.9m. Notably, the eastern end of ST07(C) was situated in relatively close proximity to a service trench in Bakehouse Yard that was monitored archaeologically in 2009 (Newman 2011, 86-87). No archaeological deposits were identified in ST07(C) due the presence of a large number of modern services. A single sherd of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century pottery was found on the base of the trench, but this had most probably been derived from the backfill of one of the numerous services.

A single spur trench was excavated from this stretch of ST07. Spur 6 was located 3.4m west of the eastern end of ST07(C), and measured 2.8m long by 1.7m wide with a maximum depth of 1.3m. The greater depth of this spur saw it reach the base of one of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century service cuts (Figure 3). Deposited at the base of this feature, within backfill **[810]**, was a large quantity of pottery fragments bearing the name and/or crest of St John's College (see further below). These ceramics appear to have been broken-up and used as packing/levelling material, upon which the pipe was then laid. Although the material extended beyond the limits of Spur 6 in three directions, nevertheless a relatively substantial assemblage was recovered.

#### *ST08*

This trench was located towards the northern limit of New Court, and lay 1.4m north of Spur 2 from ST07(A). It was also situated in close proximity to TP02, which was recorded during the

previous phase of investigation (Newman 2012). ST08 measured 0.5m wide by 5.3m long and varied between 0.38m and 0.76m deep. Here, inverted brick-built arch [900] was encountered. Although disturbed by several services, this was nevertheless identifiable as a continuation of the footing for a single-storey arcade that had previously been identified in Spur 3 of ST07(A). The uppermost surviving element of the foundation lay at 7.24m OD, while the base of the arch lay at 6.84m OD.

### *ST09*

This trench was located inside the standing eastern range of New Court, within one of the rooms originating from Staircase K (Figure 1). As such, it lay in relatively close proximity to a trench that was excavated in the eastern corner of New Court in 2009 (see Newman 2011, 60-76). ST09 measured 5.3m long by 0.6m wide and was 0.9m to 0.95m deep. The internal floor height was *c.* 7.84m OD. The uppermost 0.4m of the sequence in ST09 comprised the current floor surface and its associated make-up deposit, [1000]. Beneath this lay [1001], a compacted layer of clunch rubble, 0.11m thick, which may represent a demolition horizon. This overlay possible trample horizon [1002], which comprised a 0.06m thick dark brownish grey to nearly black deposit of clayey silt with frequent white speckles. Below this was [1003], a firm mid grey silty clay, 0.20m thick, with frequent small clunch and CBM fragments. Finally, the lowest deposit to be revealed in section was [1004], a firm, mid grey silty clay that was similar to [1003] but which contained noticeably fewer inclusions. The two lowest deposits most probably represent general layers/spreads, but they could not be dated as no material culture was recovered.

## *Material Culture*

A small finds assemblage was recovered during the course of the watching brief. This consisted of small quantities of pottery and clay tobacco pipe, and these materials are discussed further below.

### **Clay Tobacco Pipe** (Craig Cessford)

The clay tobacco pipe consisted of 4 fragments weighing 64g. This included two bowls, which have been classified following Oswald's simplified general typology (Oswald 1975).

<003>, [800], ST07(A): type 7 bowl, *c.* 1680-1710

<004>, [801], ST07(A): type 5 bowl, *c.* 1640-60

### **Pottery** (Craig Cessford)

The pottery consisted of a single moderately sized assemblage (303 sherds, weighing 8371g) and a few other sherds derived from separate contexts (5 sherds, 52g). In the first instance, the single assemblage consisted of a group of sherds that can be directly related to Trinity College and which were deposited within backfill [810] of a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century service trench in ST07(C), Spur 6. In total 303 sherds weighing 8371g were recovered, although this is clearly only part of the original assemblage as the deposit extended beyond the limits of the trench in three directions. The material related to two distinct services and consisted primarily of plates, although larger serving vessels were also present. The more common service was decorated with the transfer printed 'Flying Bird' or 'Paradise' floral pattern with a prominent bird, added colour and an ochre rim. These vessels have the blue transfer printed name TRIN.COLL. around the rim, whilst on the rear is TRINITY COLLEGE / CAMBRIDGE / KITCHEN DEPARTMENT. The second pattern is plainer with a centrally placed brown transfer printed college crest and a brown transfer printed geometric border plus blue and gilt painted rings around the rim. On the rear is the brown transfer printed mark KITCHEN DEP<sup>I</sup> / TRINITY COLLEGE / CAMBRIDGE / J.ABRAHAMS L[TD] / COMMERCE HOUSE / 72. OXFORD S<sup>I</sup> / LONDON W.I. Both these services must date to 1888 or later when Trinity College took over direct control of its catering (Stovin 1999, 59) and appear to be early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that the more common 'Flying Bird' pattern was used by students and the crested ware by fellows. Although assessment of the assemblage is problematic due to its partial recovery, this still represents an important discovery.

The additional material comprised:

<001>, [800], ST07(A): Staffordshire white salt glazed stoneware of c. 1720-70 (1 sherd, 10g), 18<sup>th</sup> century English stoneware (1 sherd, 7g) and pearlware c. 1770-1820 (1 sherd, 3g).

<005>, [806], ST07(B): Glazed red earthenware of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century date (1 sherd, 11g).

<006>, [809], ST07(C): German stoneware, probably from Frechen, with part of a decorative medallion, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century (1 sherd, 32g).

## **Discussion** (with Richard Newman)

The results of this watching brief largely confirm the pattern that was identified during the preceding phase of work (Newman 2012), as well as that conducted in association with the redevelopment of the College's kitchens in 2009 (Newman 2011). The limited depth of the trenches, however, precluded examination of the earliest deposits at the site. Indeed, the earliest horizon to have been reached appears most likely to have been 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. Nevertheless, a number of archaeological deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief. The most significant of these comprised a number of foundation remnants – situated in ST07(A) and ST07(B) – along with a relatively substantial demolition deposit – situated in ST07(A).

In this context, it is interesting to note that in 1611-12 Trinity College is known to have constructed a number of 'out-buildings' at the site (Willis & Clark 1886 II, 633-34). These structures were situated adjacent to the newly completed Nevile's Court, upon which work had commenced in 1605. The layout of these buildings has been interpreted as follows:

“the Stable was on the south side, and the Brewhouse on the west side, of a yard which occupied part of the site of the ancient Garret Hostel. The Bakehouse was on the north side of the same yard, in continuation of the south side of the Great Court. They remained in this position until the New Court was built; when the Stables were curtailed in extent, and the Brewhouse was transferred to its present position on the opposite side of the river. The Bakehouse was then pulled down, and was not rebuilt. We do not know the position of the Fish-house” (Willis & Clark 1886 II, 634).

Additional ancillary buildings were also referred to in the college's 17<sup>th</sup> century accounts. These included a 'Pounded meat house, Capon house, Hen-house, Malt-chamber, Limehouse, Storehouse, Spice-house, Horsekeeper's chamber, Barber's shop and Swan-house' as well as a 'Stangate-hole, Wood-yard and Slaughter-house yard' (*ibid.*). Although their precise locations were not recorded, the majority of these structures are similarly presumed to have lain in the general vicinity of New Court. It is apparent from the surviving cartographic sources that many of these buildings were between two and three storeys in height, implying that their foundations are likely to have been relatively substantial. As a result, these structures comprise much the most probable source for the foundation remnants that were encountered in ST07(A) and ST07(B).

A further point of interest pertains to the assemblage of St John's College ceramics that was identified within the backfill of a service trench in ST07(C) Spur 6. Although only a small portion of the original deposit was recovered, this nevertheless represents the largest assemblage of college-related ceramics yet recovered from a college site. As such, it is of significance in determining the after-life of such material, which is often encountered on a sporadic basis on non-collegiate sites across Cambridge.

## **Bibliography**

- Alexander, M. 1997. *Excavations for the New Library Extension, Trinity Hall College, Cambridge*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 222.
- Appleby, G. & Newman, R. 2011. *New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge: An Archaeological Desktop Assessment*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 1050.
- Cessford, C. in prep. *Trinity College Library Bookstore, Cambridge: an Archaeological Excavation*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report.
- Evans, C. 1994. *Trinity Hall Library: an Evaluation Statement*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 119.
- Newman, R. 2011. *Trinity College Kitchens, Cambridge: an Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 1000.
- Newman, R. 2012. *A Watching Brief at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 1069.
- Oswald, A. 1975. *Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist*. Brit. Archeol. Rep. Brit. Ser. 14.
- Stovin, P. 1999. 19th-century Cambridge College Ceramics and a Comparison with Oxford Colleges, *J. Northern Ceramic Soc.* 16, 51–71.
- Willis, R. & Clark, J. W. 1886. *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge and of the Colleges of Cambridge and Eton (Three Volumes)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

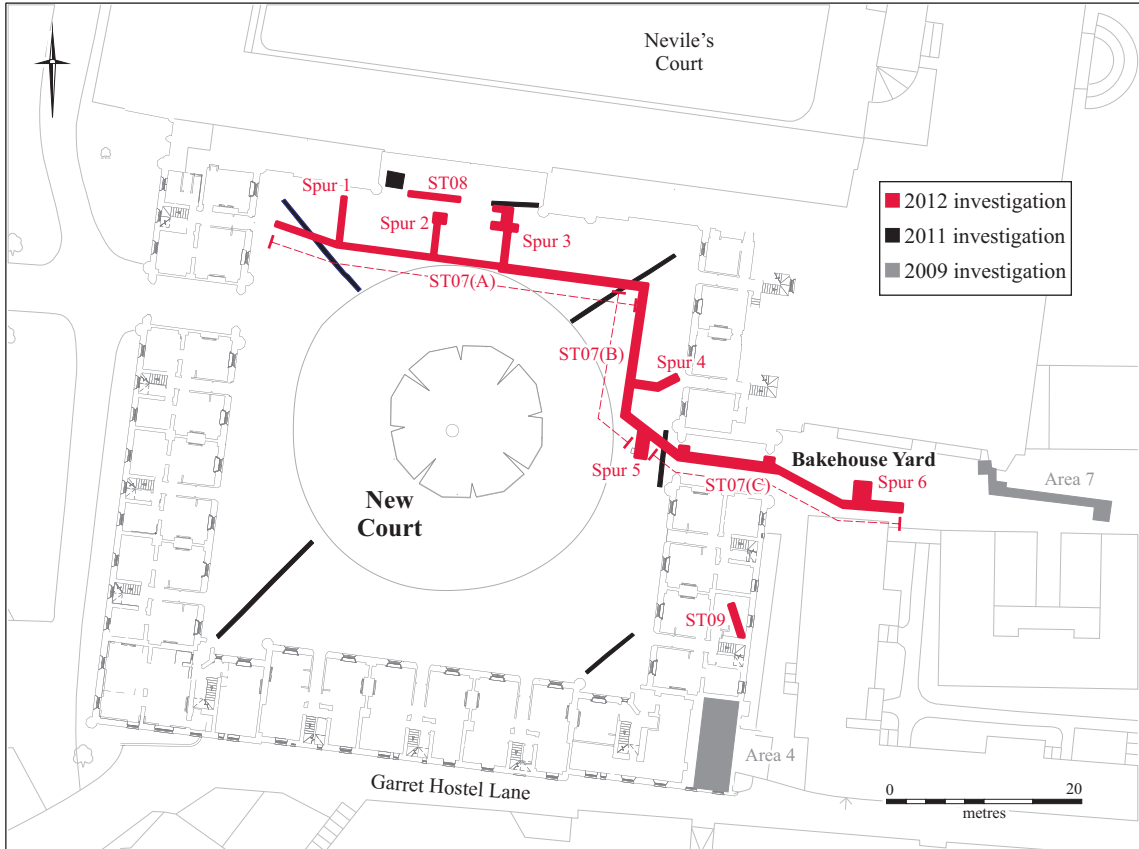
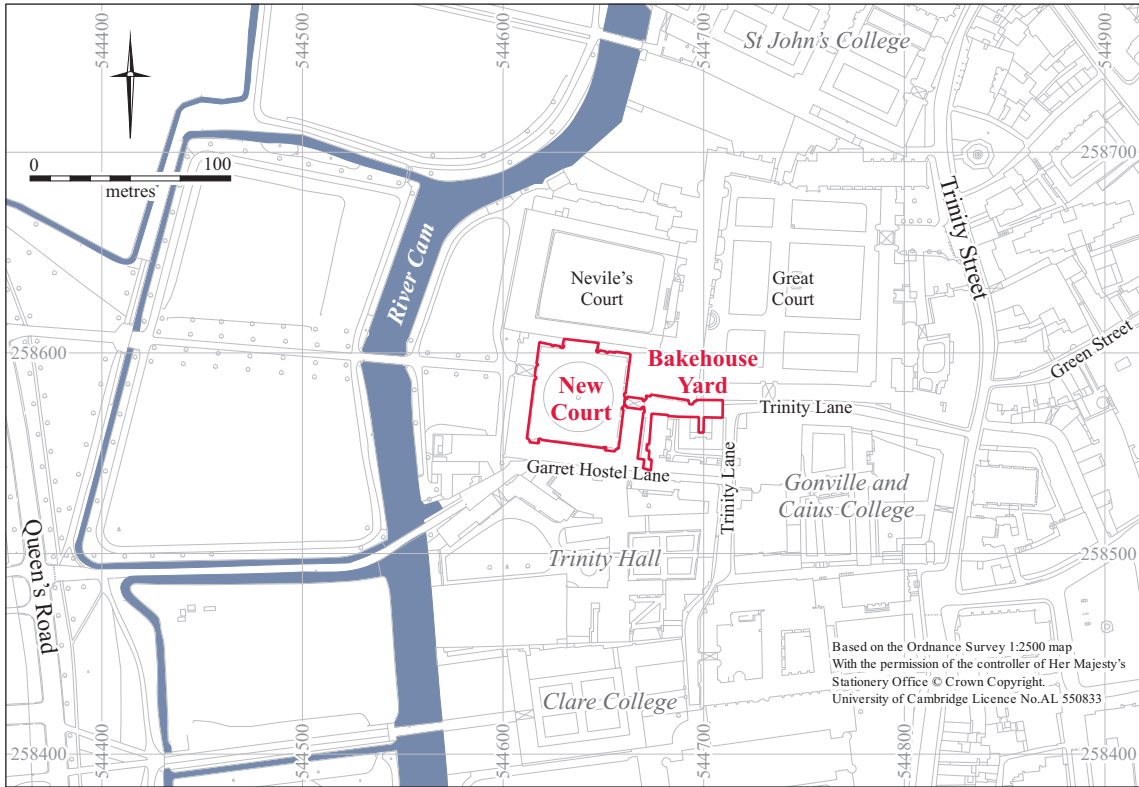


Figure 1. Location of 2012 investigations, 2011 slit trenches and 2009 excavation areas





Figure 2. Above: Wall foundation [805] in ST07(B) (east facing). Below: Wall foundation [807] in ST07(B) (east facing). Both scales are 1m in length.





Figure 3. Fill [810] of a mid 20th century service containing a large quantity of St John's College pottery in ST07(C), Spur 6, east facing (scale is 0.5m long).

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

[Printable version](#)

OASIS ID: [cambridg3-154160](#)

## Project details

Project name	A watching brief at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge
Short description of the project	A watching brief was undertaken at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge. The second of two phases, this work monitored three trenches. A number of post-medieval foundations, along with a 17th century made-ground deposit, were identified.
Project dates	Start: 11-07-2012 End: 15-07-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	TNC 11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3802 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Residential 2 - Institutional and communal accommodation
Monument type	WALL FOUNDATON Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Modern
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG15

## Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE New Court Trinity College, Cambridge
Postcode	CB2 1TQ

Study area	2000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 0000658 0521222 51 0 51 44 10 N 000 33 05 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 3.00m Max: 6.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Emma Rees
Project supervisor	Richard Newman
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Trinity College, Cambridge

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Physical Archive ID	TNC11
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Digital Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Paper Contents	"Ceramics"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Photograph", "Plan", "Section"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	A watching brief at New Court, Trinity College, Cambridge (addendum to CAU Report 1000)
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Newman, R
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Reese, E
Other bibliographic details	CAU Report No. 1123
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Place of issue or publication	Cambridge
Description	A4 ring bound, laminate front

Entered by	Hayley Roberts (hr270@cam.ac.uk)
------------	----------------------------------

Entered on

1 July 2013

# OASIS:

Please e-mail [English Heritage](#) for OASIS help and advice

© ADS 1996-2012 Created by [Jo Gilham and Jen Mitcham, email](#) Last modified Wednesday 9 May 2012

Cite only: <http://www.oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm> for this page