



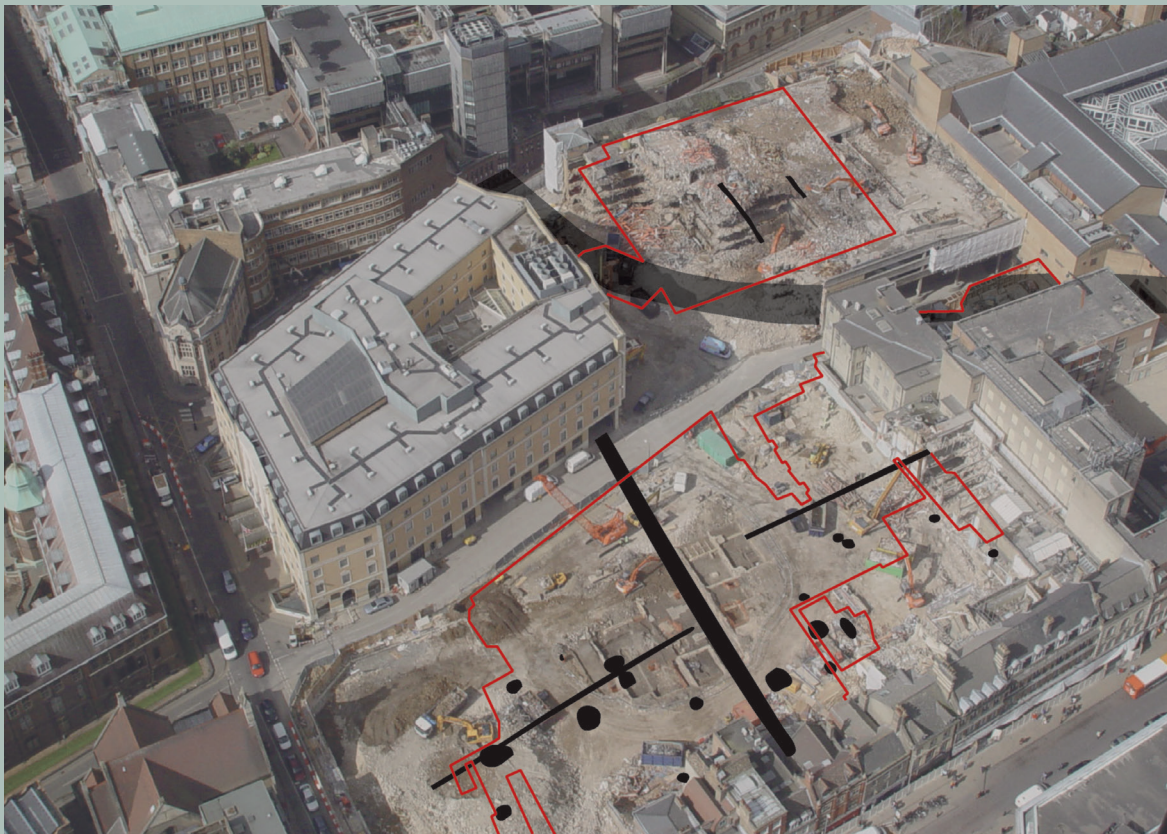
McDONALD INSTITUTE MONOGRAPHS

# Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge

Archaeological investigations of an eleventh-  
to twentieth-century suburb and town ditch

## Supplementary material

Craig Cessford and Alison Dickens



Cambridge Archaeological Unit Urban Archaeology Series  
The Archaeology of Cambridge Volume 1

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# Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge

Archaeological investigations of an eleventh-  
to twentieth-century suburb and town ditch

Supplementary material

By Craig Cessford and Alison Dickens

*With contributions by*

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Cover design by Dora Kemp, Andrew Hall and Ben Plumridge.  
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On the cover: *Aerial view of Grand Arcade, facing northwest, with outlines of areas of investigation and various features shown. Compare to fig. 1.11E (photograph courtesy of Bovis Lend Lease Ltd.).* On the back cover: *View of the excavation of the main area at Grand Arcade, facing west.*

Edited for the Institute by James Barrett (*Series Editor*).

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# *Chapter 1 – Supplementary material*

## **Introduction**

Craig Cessford and Alison Dickens

### **Previous archaeological investigations**

The beginning of archaeological investigations is reflected by a number of items recovered by nineteenth-century antiquarians, the find spots of which can be located with a greater or lesser degree of accuracy. From 1873 onwards the Woodwardian Professor of Geology Thomas McKenny Hughes (1832–1917) undertook more systematic investigations, paying workmen to recover as much material as possible and recording whatever features he could observe during building work. In 1892 Hughes discussed observations and material collected ‘during the excavations for Messers Fosters’ new bank, and others behind Mr Hunnybun’s shop and various smaller excavations which have been made from time to time’ (1894a, 36). Hughes’ next opportunity to observe the deposits in this area came in 1905 when the Birdbolt Inn was demolished (Hughes 1907), while later he observed the foundations of part of the Masonic Hall in 1914 (Hughes 1915). After Hughes’ death no one continued his work, in part due to a general lessening in the pace of building work in Cambridge. The only archaeological activity that took place for the next few decades was the recording of stray items recovered during building work (e.g. Lethbridge & O’Reilly 1938, 169).

The pottery collected by Hughes was subsequently studied by a number of scholars; this included some rather idiosyncratic work by T.C. Lethbridge (1949), the definition of Cambridge Sgraffito ware (Bushnell & Hurst 1952; Dunning 1950), and John Hurst’s classic works defining the triumvirate of tenth–twelfth-century wares from East Anglia (Hurst 1956; Hurst 1957; Hurst 1958). Hurst paid tribute to Professor Hughes and noted that his ‘work in collecting assiduously all medieval pottery found during the heyday of rebuilding Cambridge in Late Victorian times has been largely forgotten, but between 1880 and 1915 he saved pottery ranging from Late Saxon to the

late eighteenth century from about 40 building sites. Although none of this pottery is stratified, owing to most of it coming from made-up ground, without it we would have no basis at all for a study of Saxo-Norman and medieval pottery in Cambridge’ (Hurst 1956, 49). The dearth of activity between Hughes and Hurst was apparent by the fact that ‘Much of the pottery was in fact still wrapped in newspapers of the 1880s and 1890s as Professor Hughes had packed it’ and much material appears to have been discarded in the intervening period, as many tea chests got mixed together during WWI and were thrown away as unprovenanced (Hurst 1956, 49).

As the pace of building work increased in the 1950s John Alexander began to undertake excavations in Cambridge from 1956 onwards, focussed mainly on the Castle Hill area where the principal Roman settlement was located (Alexander & Pullinger 1999; see also Wahida & Wahida 2004). In 1957 when the Prudential Buildings were constructed, little if any archaeology took place; some pottery was collected by Mary Cra’ster but the quantity is negligible given the scale of development and there appear to be no associated records. Between 1958 and 1961 two enthusiastic undergraduates – Peter Addyman and Martin Biddle, who had already worked together on ‘rescue’ excavations (Biddle 1962, 70) and were to have highly distinguished careers in British urban archaeology at York and Winchester respectively – undertook a sustained campaign of excavation and recording on development sites. This included several sites in or near the relevant suburb, including the courtyard of 14–15 Corn Exchange Street (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 77–80), Bradwell’s Court (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 80–2) and Post Office Terrace (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 85–8). As with Hughes before them, once Addyman and Biddle left Cambridge no one continued their fieldwork.

The Lion Yard development which occurred in the 1970s had long been recognized as a major

archaeological opportunity. The initial design arose out of the 1950 Holford-Wright Report (Holford & Wright 1950), which would have resulted in massive changes over a much larger area (Senior 1956). The area eventually occupied by Grand Arcade would have been crossed by New Emmanuel Street and New Guildhall Street, plus a large roundabout which formed part of the spine relief road for central Cambridge and a substantial area of car parking. In addition, much of the area was zoned for 'comprehensive redevelopment', which would have involved demolishing the buildings and the only surviving structures would have been some of the St Andrew's Street frontage. A modified version of the plan was submitted to the Government in 1952 and was largely accepted in 1954. John Hurst noted that, 'Before the Lion Yard area is redeveloped it is hoped that an excavation will be possible on this important area inside the King's Ditch, and there is the prospect that this will produce some stratified material' (Hurst 1956, 50). The entire development was, however, hampered by a three way power struggle between the City Council, County Council and University, characterized by 'rows, corruption, lies and incompetence' (Nicholson 1972). Agreement between City and County Councils was reached in 1958 and tenders invited for redeveloping the whole street block apart from the Post Office and St Andrew's Church, but this proposal was rejected by the government in 1960. This period formed the background to the archaeological investigations by Addyman and Biddle, some of which were undertaken specifically 'to ascertain the nature of the archaeological deposits likely to be destroyed during the Lion Yard development scheme, which then seemed imminent' (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 77). They noted that 'In a few years the redevelopment of the largest single site ever to be rebuilt in the town in modern times – the Lion Yard – will destroy the archaeology of a large area within the King's Ditch. Its prior excavation on an adequate scale is imperative' (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 76).

The area was still thriving economically and socially in the early 1960s, but the closure of the Red Lion Hotel in 1965 and its demolition in 1968 decisively swung things in favour of redevelopment. The scheme was modified and revamped several times and finally approved in January 1970, although only after struggles involving 'money, power [and] vanity' (Nicholson 1972). The development by Ravenscroft Properties and City Centre Properties occurred in several stages, the first phase being the multi-storey car park, which opened in mid 1972. This overlapped with the next stage, the shopping centre which involved the demolition of the south side of Petty Cury and Alexandra Street. The final stage was the site of the central

library at the western end of the shopping centre. Throughout the construction phase the development, particularly some aspects such as the multi-storey car park, remained highly controversial (Bosanquet 1974a; Bosanquet 1974b; Nicholson 1972). Heritage aspects were rarely mentioned, concerns about either below-ground archaeological remains or above-ground buildings were never raised and the Cambridge Preservation Society stated that the area was 'appropriate for comprehensive redevelopment'. The only significant issue appears to have been the development's visual impact upon nearby colleges.

In 1969 John Alexander, who had moved from the Cambridge Department of Extra-mural Studies to a senior lectureship in London in 1968, undertook small scale excavations in the area of the Red Lion car park on behalf of the Cambridge Excavation Committee (see Fig. 1.3 for location, plus Fig. 3.30) (Alexander 1970; Hurst 1970, 180). Further trenching was undertaken in 1970 and the King's Ditch was investigated in 1971 (see Chapter 3). In *The Erosion of History*, a seminal work in the development of the 1970s 'rescue' movement of British archaeology, it was noted that 'after a fierce fight, permission for an adequate excavation of the city ditch in the publicly owned Lion Yard area, the most important archaeological site in the city centre, was refused. Local politics, especially town-university relationships, seem to have complicated the matter', what resulted was described as a 'disastrous failure' (Heighway 1972, 51). This was also recognized locally, 'As a result of the increasing pace and pressure of redevelopment within the city ... it has become clear that archaeological resources in Cambridge are inadequate for the present emergency situation' (Browne 1974, foreword) and the Cambridge Archaeological Committee was set up in 1972. Then in 1973 7m of archaeological and geological deposits totalling c. 70,000m<sup>3</sup> were removed during the construction of the Lion Yard shopping centre with only an extremely limited watching brief undertaken. In 1974 a popular publication rather inaccurately reported that 'a "rescue" archaeological dig in 1970 established it (the King's Ditch) was Saxon. The dig, of vital importance to the town's history, was curtailed by the Council's anxiety over the temporary loss of 12 car spaces during the May Balls. The 12 cars could only wait a week' (Bosanquet 1974a, 5). A survey of the town's archaeology published in 1974 stated that 'In the Lion Yard Area ... much of the evidence has been obliterated, although fortunately not entirely without record. This is by no means as satisfactory as it might be, and one cannot be hopeful of much additional knowledge. Nevertheless it is crucial to watch every patch of ground, however slight, to gain

additional clues' (Browne 1974, 8). In the St Andrew's Street area 'much damage has already occurred, but the remnants should be salvaged' (Browne 1974, 8). The 1969–73 investigations have never been published; some records are in the possession of the CAU while other material is held by the County Records Office, but even in conjunction these are clearly incomplete.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s a series of developments, such as Norwich Union House built in 1975, were undertaken with no archaeological intervention at all. Literally within sight of the University Department of Archaeology, deep basements were dug removing almost all archaeological deposits, with less investigation than Hughes had undertaken 70 years earlier on the same site (Hughes 1907). It is hard to escape the conclusion that, with the exception of a few temporary aberrations such as the work of Addyman and Biddle, in the intervening decades the state of archaeology in Cambridge had regressed badly. By the late 1980s circumstances had begun to change, with recognition that the situation was unacceptable. In July 1988 a small excavation was undertaken during repairs to Department of Metallurgy on the opposite site of Corn Exchange Street and in 1989 when the Crowne Plaza Hotel was built, effectively the long delayed final element in the 1970s Lion Yard development, excavations did take place, although these were extremely limited and were effectively a mixture of a watching brief and evaluation. 'Long continuous trenches or large open area excavations were not permitted as they would have interfered with the running of the building site ... this meant trenches had to be relatively short and narrow, restricting observation and reducing the amount of information that could be recovered' (Malim 1990, 2). Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that the results of this work were negligible.

The formation of the CAU in 1989, followed soon after by the implementation of PPG16 in 1990, led to major improvements in the treatment of Cambridge's archaeology. Ironically, Peter Addyman and Martin Biddle, whose work represented one of the few success stories of Cambridge's archaeology prior to this, have argued that the 1970s–80s represented something of a high water mark in British urban archaeology and that in the 1990s, particularly since the introduction of PPG16 and the development of commercial archaeology, had seen a number of unwelcome developments (Addyman 2005; Biddle 2005). Addyman and Biddle were presenting personal viewpoints and it is perhaps fairest to say that the success or failure of PPG16 is essentially a relative issue, largely dependent on what had happened in the decades preceding it. In the case of Cambridge it was hard for PPG16 not to be a relative success, given past events.

A considerable amount of archaeological evaluation has been undertaken by the CAU within Cambridge's hinterland following the introduction of PPG16. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, but will be briefly summarized here. The first area of investigation comprises the former East Fields (Fig. 6.1; Table 6.4). Archaeologically, this area of nineteenth-century urban sprawl lacks both the stratigraphy of urban/suburban sites and the extensive exposures of rural investigations. Sandwiched between the two satisfying types of archaeological investigation, this area is largely doomed to be relatively unproductive and infuriating, although it can reveal some evidence (*cf.* Yates 2007, 97–8). The investigations have, with a single exception, failed to locate any archaeological remains deemed worthy of detailed investigation and have therefore never progressed beyond the trench-based evaluation stage. Even when a larger area was opened, the paucity of finds meant that the results remained ambiguous (Slater 2010). The most successful intervention proved to be at the Parkside Fire and Rescue site (Newman 2011), where the size of the open area meant that a significant quantity of overburden could be stripped and, after cleaning and recording, a further machine dug slot could be undertaken to reveal a meaningful exposure of the quarry pits in section. This demonstrated how misleading the normal scale of investigations would be as it was only through this approach that a closer understanding of the quarrying was achieved. Despite their generally limited nature, the results of work in the East Fields do warrant consideration in terms of providing an immediate rural hinterland for the suburb; additionally they serve more broadly to link Cambridge effectively to the work in the Addenbrooke's/Trumpington Meadows landscape (Evans *et al.* 2008).

The suburb outside the Barnwell Gate is just one of several around Cambridge (Fig. 6.23), the others being located at Castle Hill, at Barnwell, across the river at Newnham and outside the Trumpington Gate. Although precise figures are problematic it appears that in the medieval period the area bounded by the river and King's Ditch accounted for just over half the households of the town. The largest suburb was that around half a mile outside the town at Barnwell, followed by the Castle Hill area (*c.* 14 per cent), with the areas outside the Barnwell Gate, the Trumpington Gate and in Newnham much smaller. None of the other suburbs have been investigated archaeologically on anything like the scale of Grand Arcade or even Christ's Lane, however some work has been undertaken. Archaeological excavations at Castle Hill (Cessford with Dickens 2005a; Cessford *et al.* 2007) and the nunnery of St Mary and St Radegund/



Jesus College (Evans *et al.* 1997) have already been published and subsequent investigations have added little. These suburbs were markedly different from that outside the Barnwell Gate. The Castle Hill area, which was the focus of Roman occupation, was re-occupied from the Middle Saxon period onwards and became the site of the Norman castle, is perhaps best thought of not as a suburb, but as a ‘dual’ part of the town that ‘consisted locally of two practically distinct settlements’ (Gray 1908).

The area around Jesus College was overwhelmingly dominated by the ‘suburban institution’ (*cf.* Evans *et al.* 1997) of the nunnery of St Mary and St Radegund that later became Jesus College and the archaeological investigations that have taken place have focussed almost entirely on this. Further outside the town the suburb at Barnwell was probably established by the Augustinian Barnwell Priory, the largest and wealthiest monastery in medieval Cambridge, and may well have benefitted from its proximity to Stourbridge fair. The Barnwell suburb which has recently the subject of relatively large-scale archaeological investigation (Atkins 2012; Newman 2013), will eventually become the most comparable to that of the Barnwell Gate suburb when published. Rather more distantly Chesterton (Cessford with Dickens 2004; Mackay 2009), although spatially distinct from Cambridge but lying within the town fields, appears in some respects to be a village suburb. Archaeological work in the suburb of Newnham has been extremely limited (Gdaniec 1992; Hutton & Timberlake 2006; Timberlake & Webb 2006).

The suburb outside the Trumpington Gate was the most similar to that outside the Barnwell Gate in terms of both form and size, both being ribbon developments along roads to the south of the town with a mixture of domestic plots, religious institutions and eventually Colleges. Archaeological investigations in this suburb have been extremely limited but include an evaluation on land adjacent to the Fitzwilliam Museum (Whittaker 2000; Whittaker 2001) plus small-scale watching briefs at 15–19 Trumpington Street (Webb *in prep*) and 76 Trumpington Street (Dickens 1997b).

Although Pembroke College (founded 1347) is part of this suburb it stretches far enough east to effectively link the two suburbs outside the Trumpington and Barnwell gates. There were some intriguing discoveries in the late nineteenth century and a small amount of archaeological work has taken place more recently (Hall 2001; Hall 2002; Robinson 1995).

### **Tenement narratives, a partial critique**

The ‘tenement narrative’ approach was popularized by the work of Martin Carver in the 1970s (Carver 1979; Carver 1981) and is now common in British medieval and later urban archaeology, with notable recent examples including Coppergate in York (Hall & Hunter-Mann 2002) and the Guildhall in London (Bowsher *et al.* 2007); it is also relatively common internationally (*e.g.* Hansen 2005). Whilst such ‘tenement narratives’ are undoubtedly a strong structuring device, reflecting as they do the essential primary organizational element of medieval and later urban life, they are problematic when too uncritically applied as they often impose a spatial framework or straitjacket without justifying in detail the evidence upon which it is based. The evidence for ‘tenement narratives’ often appears to derive primarily from the later periods of occupation at sites where boundaries are of greater archaeological visibility and are supplemented by more copious and detailed documentary and cartographic evidence. This is then extrapolated backwards and applied to earlier periods, with the underlying assumption apparently being that boundaries were fixed unless there is evidence to contradict this. The precise details of the evidence used to define tenements is often not discussed, making it difficult to critique how reliable this is, as evidence that supports it is often emphasized whilst evidence that contradicts it is not. As a result tenement definition often has the feel of an esoteric art. The cases where it has been successfully applied often have exceptional survival, particularly of organic material, rendering it appropriate but there is a sense that when too widely and uncritically applied it is misleading.



## Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge

This is the first volume describing the results of the CAUs excavations in Cambridge and it is also the first monograph ever published on the archaeology of the town. At 1.5 hectares the Grand Arcade investigations represent the largest archaeological excavation ever undertaken in Cambridge, significantly enhanced by detailed standing building recording and documentary research. It includes one of the most comprehensive studies of the suburb of a British town, with fourteen investigated plots of the mid/late eleventh to twentieth centuries, and the most detailed investigation of a British town ditch ever undertaken, spanning the early/mid-twelfth to eighteenth centuries. Major artefactual assemblages of many material types were recovered, with extensive waterlogged preservation of wood and leather plus environmental sampling, including pollen and insects. The volume treats the copious eighteenth–twentieth-century material culture in a manner unparalleled in a British context, including a considerable number of college related items that attest to the town's distinctive role as a university centre.

This is an important book, and the scale of the investigations and the richness of the archaeology make it a major contribution to studies of British town suburbs and boundaries in particular and urban archaeology more generally. The ground-breaking commitment to the archaeology of the eighteenth–twentieth-centuries is particularly important, as Cambridge was one of the key intellectual hubs of the foremost global power for much of the period.

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