

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT ANGEL COURT, TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

R. Regan (with a contribution by D. Hall)

Between the 8-13th of May 1996 a 2m x 2.70m evaluation sondage was hand-excavated in the grounds of Trinity College anticipating re-development of the Bursarial Range. Located within a small enclosed patio garden immediately east of the range (the eastern side of Great Court), the site lies some 25m south of the College's Great Gate (TL 4489/5861). The work was carried out by the C.A.U for Donald W Insall & Associates Ltd on behalf of Trinity College.

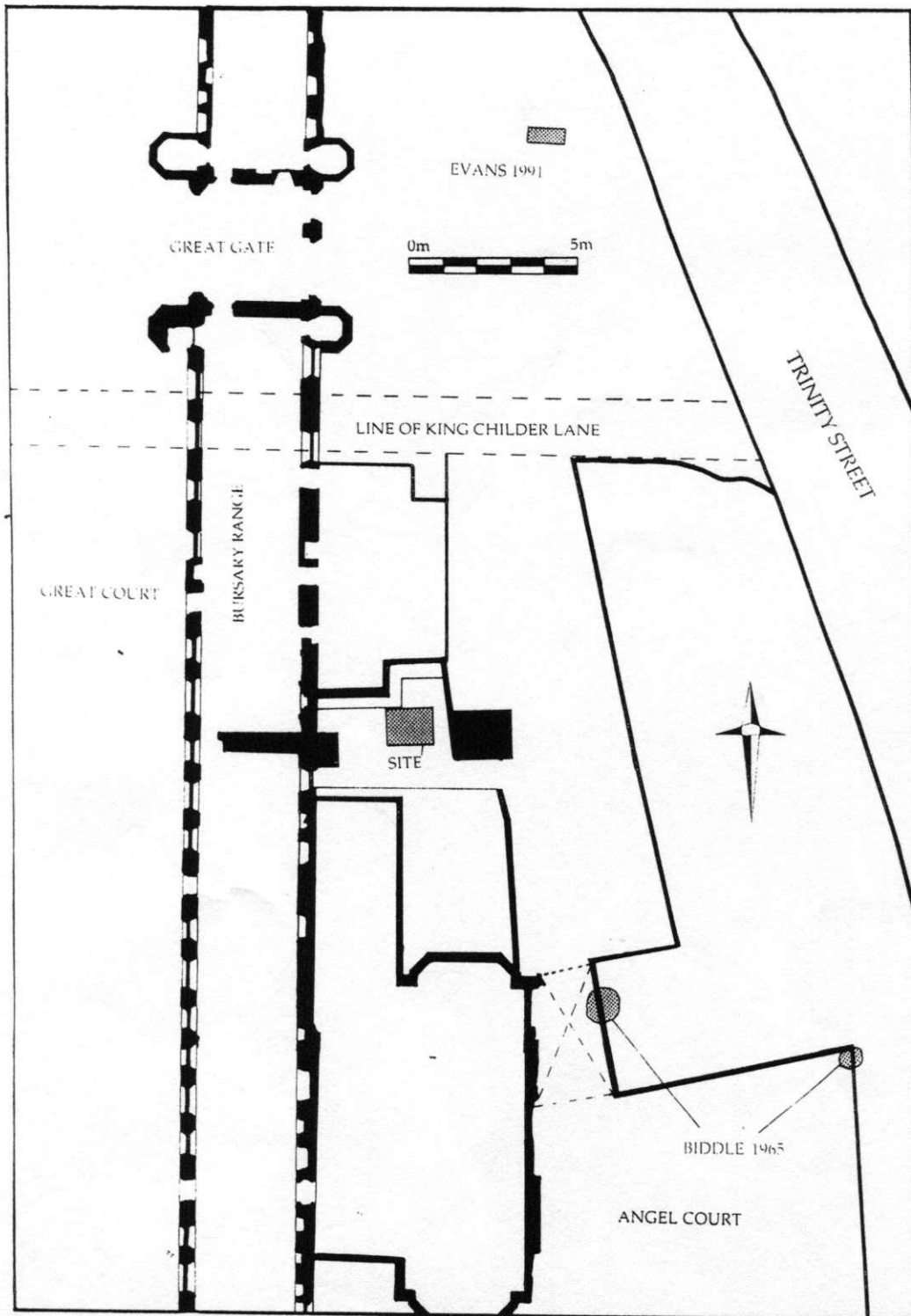
### *History and Previous Investigations*

To the north of the test pit lies the former line of Kings Childer Lane, a Medieval street leading from the High Street (now Trinity Street) to the River Cam. The property lying south of it, where the evaluation was undertaken, is recorded as having been occupied by the gardens and 'void' land of the Priory of St Edmund which were leased to Kings Hall in 1417. Gardens owned by Michael House and a Messuage (a dwelling house with attached property) of St John's Hospital also existed in the immediate vicinity, both were acquired by Kings Hall in 1433. Thereafter the area became subject to the changes associated with Kings Hall developments and, after its incorporation with Michael House in 1546, by Trinity College itself (see Willis & Clark 1886; Trevelyan 1983)

On all early maps of the town the immediate area is depicted as lying within variously configured yards/gardens.

Whilst all of very limited scale, a number of investigations have occurred within the immediate vicinity. Addyman and Biddle were able to excavate three pits during the construction of Angel Court in 1958. One, of Saxo-Norman date, was found sealed by a 'thick level' (5'6") of 'dark accumulation'. A pit cut into this apparently featureless/homogeneous layer produced finds of early 17th century attribution (Pit 2; 1965: fig. 2). Unstratified finds, recovered from contractor's spoil, fell into three distinct groups: 12/13th century; 14/15th century; and 16-18th century (*ibid*: 76-77).

Producing findings disproportionate to its telephone booth-size, in 1991 a sondage was excavated in the northern lawn immediately in front of the College's Great Gate (Evans 1991). The most outstanding result of this work was the shallowness of the sequence (natural gravel was found only 1.30m deep) and, the fact, that 0.20-.35m of Saxo-Norman strata was found in its base (including structural features).



TL 44878 58602

TL 44814 58602

Figure 1: Location of Trench

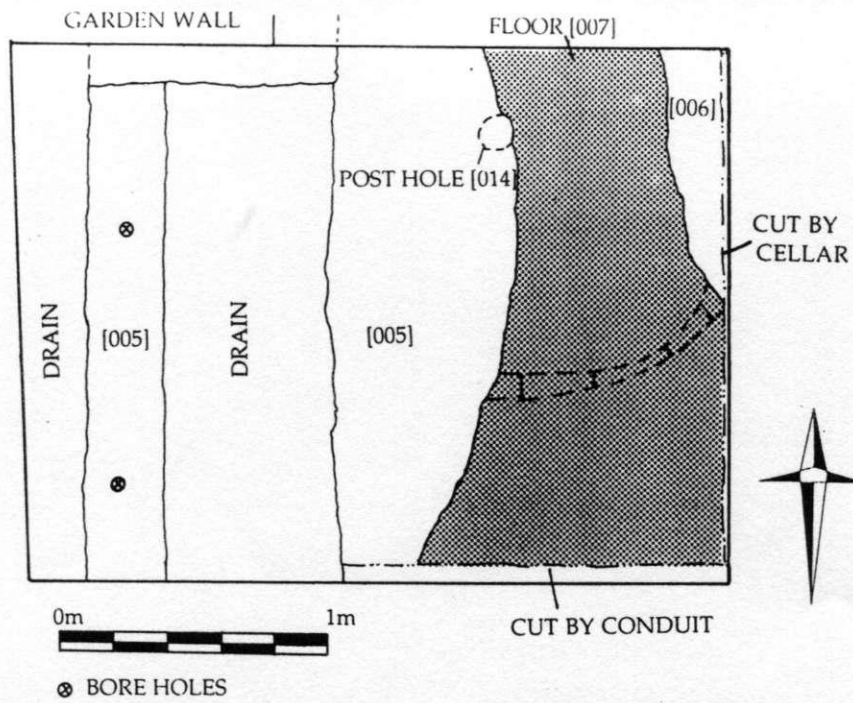


Figure 2: Modern disturbance and later features.

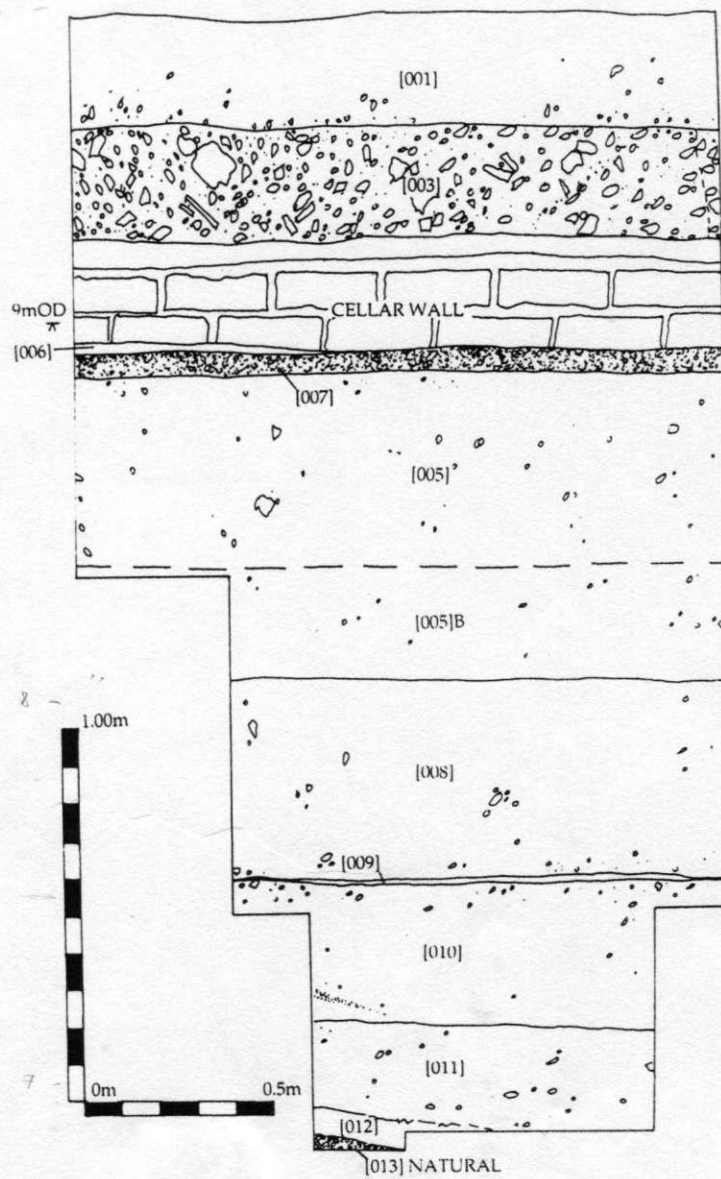


Figure 3: West facing section

## The Excavation

Lying 3.00m to the east of the Bursary Range (15-16th century fabric), the western and southern sides of the sondage were effectively bounded by a sunken boiler house and, leading to, it a brick heating conduit. A modern garden wall formed the northern limit of the evaluation (fig 2). These modern intrusions effectively decimated the upper sequence to a depth of c. 1.00m. For reasons of safety, the sides of the trench were progressively stepped with depth; the basal area only measuring 0.90 x 1.40m, with natural was only exposed within a corner.

The excavation results can be divided into four phases of activity:

*Phase I* - 3.00m deep, natural gravels [013] were encountered at 6.81m OD. However, their limited exposure makes it difficult to extrapolate definite information about nature of this deposit. Two cores (sunk along the western side of the trench; fig 2) struck gravels at between 6.45-6.50m OD, indicating a west to east slope of 0.30m or more over 2.00m. Sealing this horizon was [012], a dark grey organic deposit.

Clean and uncompacted, the natural would appear truncated. The composition of [012] seemed very different to the garden soils above and it may represent the fill of a large, otherwise undefined, cut feature.

*Phase II* - To a depth of over 2.00m, between 8.86-6.96 OD was observed a series of 'laid' garden soils ([005], [005]B, [008], [010] & [011]), with one only probable intervening surface ([009]). Although at first appearing homogenous, through close inspection distinct horizons could be differentiated. While the interfaces between the soils suggested a horizontal stratification, the limited size of the trench probably disguised any bedding of the strata. No cut features were observed within or cutting through these soils; the patchy nature of [009] suggested an external spread or path, perhaps within a garden itself.

The Phase II deposits would suggest dumping/continual build up and the turning over of the soils for gardens. If this was the case, then cut features, if they existed at all, would have become indistinguishable (see *Discussion*, below). While the depth of the strata indicates dumping, the distinct lack of building debris may attest to long term levelling/terracing of the immediate area for gardens or domestic yards and not structural purposes.

*Phase III* - Sealing the Phase II deposits was at least one floor surface with the possible remains of a second ([006] & [007]). While [006] was most likely remains of an extensively truncated make-up, [007] was much more robust (truncated on all sides within the trench; fig 3); lying to west of [007], was probably an associated posthole ([014]).

The pottery recovered from these surfaces suggests a 16th century date and they may represent the remains of a covered yard or College out-building.

*Phase IV* - Truncating Phase III features were a series of modern cut features and services (fig 2), consisting of two drainage pipes to the west of the trench. These, along with the wall to the north, the boiler house and conduit to the east and west respectively, would appear to have been constructed at approximately the same time. The associated constructional debris/backfill ([002]-[004]) lay at a depth throughout the trench of 0.60-.70m. Over this were the existing beds of the patio garden (0.30-.40m deep).

It is likely that this depth of modern disturbance (c. 1.00m) extends throughout the proposed application area.

### **Artefacts**

Given the limited area excavated, extraordinary quantities of material were recovered: 594 sherds of pottery and 227 pieces of bone (see Appendix 2). The latter were in fresh condition and the assemblage includes fish. Amongst the small finds were three Medieval jettons (including a later 13th-early 14th century Edward I issue) and two carved bone pins; glazed roof tiles were also present.

*The Pottery* (D. Hall) - 360 sherds were viewed, of which 8 were 12th century (St. Neots, 2%); 16, 13th century (4%); 223, 14th century (62%); 91, 15th century (25%); 20, 16th century (6%); there were two recent sherds from the upper contexts (1%; see Appendix 3).

The St. Neots wares are abraded and residual, as are also the 13th-century sherds (late St. Neots type). The bulk of the sherds dated from the 14th and 15th centuries, the 15th being well represented by reduced flanged-bowl rims. Most of the sherds ascribed to the 16th century are orange sandy wares of Colchester type and many may be a little earlier.

Glazed wares represent 15 percent overall (52 sherds) and fine wares (mainly jugs, 27 sherds) made up 7.5 percent of the collection. The coarse wares came from Ely and possibly from Colne (in a gritty fabric), but more than half were from Essex, mainly Colchester (finer sandy wares with

'mica dust', both oxidized and reduced). The forms are jugs, bowls and jars with no identifiable later forms of cisterns or costrels.

The fine wares are from Grimston (Norfolk), Colchester slip ware (the same type as have sgraffito decoration), Hedingham, Surrey borders, probable Brill (Bucks), and developed Stamford ware. The only import was a single sherd of 15th-century Langewehe stoneware (Rhineland).

The group is probably a midden of the 14-15th century containing a little earlier residual material, the whole perhaps being used for make-up in the early 16th century.

### Discussion

Although limited in nature, several important indicators of the archaeology were provided during the trial excavation. Firstly, the fact that the surface of the natural gravels lay at least a metre deeper than in the northern Trinity Gateway sondage. Even if truncated within the Bursary Range test pit, this suggests considerable topographic variation. Secondly, a garden soil sequence of up to 2.00m can be expected within the proposed application area. This depth of 'dark soil' has been encountered elsewhere in central Cambridge, and been interpreted as disturbed and truncated urban sequences in which cut features were effectively disguised/obliterated by later activity (Addyman & Biddle 1965). This may be exactly what was seen in the Bursary sondage sections, for the character of the lower two deposits ([011] & [012]; and possibly [010]) seemed quite different from the upper soil sequence. [009] may mark a truncation boundary, dividing 13-14th century pit fills from the upper garden-type deposits. This would be collaborated by the (cut?) slope of natural and the primary fill-like character of [012] above. Horizon [010] may have been interfacial in this change of use inasmuch as it may have been a pit fill 'turned' through horticulture (when 15th century material was introduced). The strata above this level all contained substantially greater quantities of finds. Whilst the dating evidence could suggest some element of 'horizonisation' within the upper sequence ([008] of 15th century date; [005], early 16th), they may have been deposited *en masse* with the later material introduced into the uppermost deposits through horticultural activity.

If truncated, where otherwise undisturbed within the development area the surface of natural may lie some 0.50m higher than observed within the sondage.

Despite the fact that no Saxo-Norman strata/remains were evident, the recovery of eight c. 12th century sherds generally collaborates the results of other investigations within the vicinity. It suggests that this area was a foci

of the early lower town and that Saxo-Norman structural remains may be present.

As a final observation, it warrants notice how closely the results of this sondage bear out the findings of Addyman and Biddle's (then-student) 1958 observations. Although lacking absolute heights, it suggests that they recorded with considerable accuracy and insight.

## **Appendices - Context Descriptions (1)**

### ***Phase I***

- [012] - A dark grey organic clayey silt; depth of deposit unknown.
- [013] - Loose light yellow-brown clean natural gravel.

### ***Phase II***

- [005] - 0.50m thick; moderately compact mid-grey silty clay, including occasional coarse pebbles, oyster/mussel shell, bone, tile and chalk/clunch fragments, pottery sherds and slag.
- [005]B - 0.30m thick; [005]B is similar in nature to [005] but browner and sandier in composition.
- [008] - 0.55m thick; loose mid to light grey clayey silt, including moderate flint pebbles with occasional pottery and bone fragments, oyster shell and charcoal.
- [009] - 20mm thick (maximum); patchy yellow brown sandy silt, including occasional bone, charcoal and pebbles which appeared trodden in.
- [010] - 0.40m thick; moderately compact dark grey clayey silt, including frequent pebbles with occasional oyster/mussel shell, pottery, bone, charcoal and clunch fragments.
- [011] - 0.30m thick; moderately compact dark grey clayey silt, including moderate flint pebbles with occasional bone, pottery and chalk clunch fragments.

### ***Phase III***

- [006] - 30mm thick; light grey silty clay with frequent patches of pink/red/white clay/clunch, including occasional pot and tile fragments.
- [007] - 70mm thick layer of compact crushed pink/red tile/brick and clunch.
- [014] - Circular posthole measuring (0.16m diameter) with sides steeply tapering towards rounded base, 0.25m deep; filled with compact mottled pink grey silty clay.

### ***Phase IV***

- [001] - 0.30-.40m thick dark grey brown garden loam.
- [002] - Cement surface/path.
- [003]/[004] - 0.60-.70m thick loose grey clayey silt and modern construction/backfill rubble.

## Appendix 2: Finds Catalogue

Cat. No.	Context	Mat. No.	Location	Notes	Wt (g)
001	001	PT 2		Body sherds (both glazed)	
002	001	TL 2		1 glazed	
003	003	PT 6		1 body sherd (glazed), 2 rims (1 glazed), 2 bases and 1 handle	
004	003	TL 12		All but 1 are glazed (includes roof and garden border tiles)	
005	003	MT 1		Frag. of sheet lead	
006	003	TP 1		Broken stem	
007	004	PT 17		15 body sherds (3 glazed), 1 handle (glazed) and 1 base	
008	004	MT 1		Cu object	
009	004	BN 1		Burnt animal rib	
010	005	PT 312		278 body sherds (26 glazed), 12 rims (2 glazed), 6 handles and 16 bases	
011	005	BN 96			
012	005	MT 1		Cu pin/badge-flower with hook fastener	
013	005	MT 2		Jettons. Late 13th-early 14th century (Edward I). English, 1 with bishops mitre	
014	005	MT 5		Fe objects	
015	005	SL 1			
016	005(B)	PT 88		71 body sherds (11 glazed), 11 rims (1 glazed) and 6 bases	
017	005(B)	BN 22			
018	005(B)	MT 1		Fe object	
019	005(B)	MT 1		?coin/counter (?Pb)	
020	006	PT 2		Body sherds (1 glazed)	
021	007	PT 2		Body sherds (both glazed)	
022	007	TL 4		Fragments (red)	
023	008	PT 133		109 body sherds (10 glazed), 13 rims, 10 bases and 1 handle (glazed)	
024	008	BN 83		Animal. Plus fish bones	
025	008	MT 3		Fe nails	
026	008	TL 1			
027	010	PT 24		20 body sherds (4 glazed), 2 bases and 2 rims	
028	010	BN 17			
029	010	MT 1		Fe object, ?nail	
030	011	PT 7		All bodies (2 glazed)	
031	011	BN 6			
032	014	PT 1		In post hole/floor. Body sherd	
033	005(B)	SL 1			
034	005	TL 3			
035	005	WS 1		? quern stone	
036	005	BN/ OT 1		decorated bone pin	
037	010	BN/ OT 1		carved bone pin	

BN - Bone  
 BN/OT - Bone/other  
 MT - Metal  
 PT - Pottery

SL - Slag  
 TL - Tile  
 TP - Tobacco Pipe  
 WS - Worked Stone

## Appendix 3: Pottery Catalogue

Cat.	Cont.	St Neots		13th		14th		15th				16th				Notes
		12th	Ox	Red	Ox	Red	Grims	Other	Ox	Red	Other	Ox	Red	Other		
1	001				P	8P	8		P	8P	8		P	8P	8	Plus 1 18thC
3	003									1			2	1		Plus 1 19th C and 1 plant pot; 14th bowl rim from Ely with speckles of glaze; 15thC rod handle, frilled pedestal base, glazed Babylon type.
7	004				2	2	10	2		1			1			14thC probably late; other = frag of fine jug of Developed Stamford or Brill (pinkish) with narrow raised strip and speckled glaze; some Ely wares, some finer mica dusted; 15thC oxid 1 strap handle with flecks of glaze (Ely).
16	058				6	44	4	1	2	2	26		2	1		14thC oxid 1 jug rim; other = 1 internal green speckles, 1 fine pinkish jug Brill?; 14thC rduc 1 jug rim several bases; glazed Ely wares; 15thC light grey 6 flanged rims plus 2 other, 1 strap handle, many fine with mica.
10	005		2abr	7	15	78	1			10			1	3	1	13thC late SN type fabric; 15 other = early stone ware (Langewehe); whole collection no rims and only 2 glazed pieces; 14thC rduc may have some 15thC pieces. Wares are Ely and finer mica type.
10	005			7	4	16	1	1	5	42		9	4	3		14thC oxid 2 strap handle, oxid glazed Ely; 15th 5 flanged bowl rims, 1 jug rim, 1 hollowed bowl rim, 1 other jug, 2 other bowl, 1 jug strap handle, some wares mica; 14thC other 1 Brill with iron rib, 3 surrey white; 16thC all OSW, some mica.
																glazed sgraffito type with slip and speckled green glaze; 15thC Other 5 are pinkish fine white ware (developed Stamford?) 4 are Heddingham - all these 15thC are glazed.
20	006									1				1		
21	007					1		1								Grimston?, some yellow slip
23	008			6	4	3Rm			1	22	1	94	7			15th oth = Heddingham, incl stabbed jug hand; 1 gl 16th ox bse; 13th 1 jug rim 2 bowl rms; 15th ox 2 rms one an Ely stabbed bowl; 15th rduc 4 flan, 1 Ely pinched frilly bse; oth bses; rduc Ely grm glaz sherds 14/15th. 1 grey plain w/ knife lined raised rib
27	010			2	2	2	22	2		2	7					13th C late St Neots types; 15thC rduc, one flanged rim; 15thC oxid 1 jug rim with external finger tipping under rim; several 14thC & 15th C wares contain mica (from Essex).
30	011			1		4	2									13thC is leached SN type? Lyveden, at least 2 of other Ely and 1 possibly Colne
32	014					1										

## References

Addyman, P.V. and M. Biddle 1965. Medieval Cambridge: Recent Finds and Excavations. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 58: 74-137.

Evans, C. 1991. *Archaeological Investigations at Trinity College Gateway, Cambridge*. Cambridge: Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Report 34.

Trevelyan, G.M. 1983. *Trinity College: An historical sketch*. Cambridge: Trinity College.

Willis, R. and J.W. Clark 1886. *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge* (Vol II). Cambridge: University Press.