

PROJECT DESIGN & ASSESSMENT

Historic Building Survey & Watching Brief

WELL HEAD,
FOX COURT,
CHETHAM'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
LONG MILLGATE,
MANCHESTER

Client: Chetham's School of Music

Report No: 2025-04 (MA882)

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July 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning background

Within the courtyard (the ‘Fox Court’), located in the western part of the Chetham’s School of Music and Chetham’s Library, is an ornamental well head, which seals a well or soakaway. The buildings are Listed Grade I, and were constructed in the 1420s as a College of Priests, linked to the nearby Collegiate Church. The site is also located within the Manchester Cathedral Conservation Area.

The well head is comprised of carved sandstone blocks, and is believed to have been reused from a rebuilt chimney top. Its condition has deteriorated significantly, and it is proposed to dismantle it, then to rebuild it, using stainless steel tie-rods and lime mortar bonding. An adjacent drain will also be repaired at the same time, and this work will fall within the scope of the watching brief.

Listed building consent (LBC) for restoration works has been granted by Manchester City Council, following an application by Senior Architect Steve Kendall of Buttress Architects. Condition No.3 of the Consent relates to an archaeological watching brief, applied by GMAAS:

“No development works shall take place until the applicant or their agents or their successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The WSI shall cover the following:

- 1. A phased programme and methodology of investigation and recording to include:- archaeological watching brief.*
- 2. A programme for post-investigation assessment to include:- production of a final report on the results of the investigations and their significance.*
- 3. Deposition of the final report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.*
- 4. Dissemination of the results of the archaeological investigations commensurate with their significance.*
- 5. Provision for archive deposition of the report and records of the site investigation.*
- 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.*

Reason: To record and advance understanding of heritage assets impacted on by the development and to make information about the heritage interest publicly accessible pursuant to policy EN3 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and in accordance with NPPF policy 16, paragraph 205.”

Therefore, a pre-intervention photographic record of the well head was undertaken on 18 July 2025, to create an ‘as is’ record before any dismantling works commenced. This WSI defines the remaining proposed works, archiving and reporting.

1.2 Location

The site was located between Manchester Cathedral and Victoria Station, within the northernmost part of Manchester city centre (**Figure 1**). Late post-medieval

development had obscured the original topographic setting of the site. The late medieval college buildings were originally located upon a distinct promontory, at *circa* 33m O.D., with the river Irwell to the west and the river Irk to the north. The Irwell is now confined between high embankment walls, and the Irk has long been culverted. The medieval courtyard buildings, including the Fox Court, occupy the north-westernmost point of this elevated promontory.

1.3 Geology

At depth, the site is underlain by the Bunter Sandstone of the of the Permo-Triassic period. This forms the promontory between the Irwell and the Irk, and outcrops of this sandstone have been noted wherever excavations and demolition has occurred across the site. This is intermittently overlain by late glacial flood gravels of the Devensian period, which have been encountered during utility service trench excavation, across the site ([Geology of Britain viewer | British Geological Survey \(BGS\)](#)).

1.4 Site History

The Fox Court is located at the core of the 1420s College buildings; and around the open courtyard, on all sides except the east, is a covered cloister which gave access to the rooms for the College Fellows (or priests). The courtyard surface is of river worn cobbles, with a gentle fall towards the north. The date of the well and well cover are not known. They were not indicated on either of the floor plans by John Palmer (1815) or Alfred Waterhouse (1876); nor on the O.S. 1:1,056 scale Town Plan of 1850. The earliest cartographic representation appears to be the O.S. 1:2,500 scale plan of 1892, where the feature is marked as 'W' for well. The well cover can be seen in a c.1890 photograph, which was taken before architects J. Medland and Henry Taylor carried out refurbishment of the elevations around the courtyard (Hartwell, 2004, 108).

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

2.1 A watching brief is required to be undertaken during the refurbishment works within the Fox Court and repairs to the drain. The required stages to achieve this are as follows:

- (1) Preliminary assessment, comprising 'as is' photographic record.
- (2) Site-based recording and interpretation.
- (3) Reporting and archive production.
- (4) Archive deposition.

2.2 Potential Research Objectives ([The North West England Regional Research Framework - North West Regional Research Framework](#))

The North West England Regional Research Framework includes within its Late Medieval Agenda the following question:

LM11: How can we improve our understanding of the origins and developments of building types from early med to late medieval?

The Post Medieval Agenda contains the following relevant questions:

PM03: How do large domestic buildings relate to their wider social context?

PM17: How have recent detailed surveys of medieval and Tudor halls informed our understanding of their evolution and transition to modern housing?

3. METHOD STATEMENT

In line with the objectives and stages of the archaeological work stated above, the following work programme is submitted.

3.1 Preliminary Assessment

This was undertaken by a visit on 18 July, 2025, resulting in a record of 20 digital photos, which will be located upon a floor plan of the courtyard.

3.2 Site recording work

3.2.1 Existing AutoCAD Drawings

The existing base drawings of the site, from previous Matrix Archaeology projects, will be modified with archaeological detail, as below.

3.2.2 Historic Building Survey (Matrix Archaeology)

The well head is required to be recorded at Level 2/3 (Historic England, 2017). The well head and courtyard will be scanned by mobile phone app Polycam, with plans and elevations being produced. The existing surveyed AutoCAD 2D drawings would be modified to provide the following:

- (a) A 1:20 floor plan at ground level of the courtyard, including detail revealed during refurbishment works, and watching brief works on the drain. This would use a combination of scanning and hand measurement.
- (b) No.2 cross-sections across the well head, to include the internal well structure.
- (c) Possibly detailed drawings to indicate stone carved elements, mouldings, etc.

3.2.3 Drawn records (Matrix Archaeology)

The drawn field records would be redrawn in 2D AutoCAD 2025, then drawings produced in accordance with the guidance and drawing conventions outlined within Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to good recording practice* (2017); and *Recording Archaeological Field Monuments: A Descriptive Specification* (1999). However, with regard to CAD layering conventions within the former guide, it is proposed to use **nine** CAD layers, as follows:

These designated layers would be as follows:

LAYER	LAYER	LINE TYPE	LINE
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NAME	CONTENT		THICKNESS
(1) BORDER	Drawing borders	Solid black	0.40mm
(2) TEXT	All text, scales, compass points	Solid black	0.20mm
(3) CENTRELINE	Section lines, centre lines (machinery etc)	Dashed & dotted red	0.00mm
(4) ONCUT	Wall lines	Solid black	0.30mm
(5) BELOW CUT	Detail below or beyond cut line	Solid black	0.00mm
(6) ABOVE CUT	Detail above or in front of cut line	Dashed black	0.00mm
(7) FORMER CUT	Line of demolished or projected wall	Dashed black	0.30mm
(8) PLANNED CUT	Planned wall line, but never built	Dashed blue	0.30mm
(9) HATCH	Phasing cross-hatching	Solid black	0.00mm

Where possible, the drawings would be colour-phased, to indicate any perceived construction-period variations. Additionally, components would be colour cross-hatched to indicate material types, ie grey for iron/steel; light brown for timber; black stipple for gritstone; red stipple for sandstone, etc.

3.2.4 *Small finds treatment*

Any small finds recovered from the watching brief will be collected by trial pit and context numbers, and will then be forwarded to Jeremy Bradley for specialist reporting, with the report being integrated into the final site report. This will be in accordance with the relevant Historic England and CifA guidelines. If significant, then the finds archive will be offered to Manchester Museum Service for long term curation.

3.2.5 *Textual description of building and features*

A detailed textual description will be undertaken of the well cover and internal features, concentrating upon the materials used, subsequent changes, and building development. Pro-format context sheets would be used to record any individual excavated contexts.

3.2.6 *Photographic record*

- a. Additionally, a full digital photographic survey of the well cover and excavated drain features will be undertaken. This will be undertaken in colour digital, with a minimum of ten megapixels, using a wide-angle lens, with scales in photographs where appropriate. Photograph positions would be located on the AutoCAD floor plan presented with the report. This would be undertaken following the guidelines produced by Historic England, entitled 'Digital Image Capture & File Storage: Guidelines for Best Practice, 2015'.
- b. Drainage watching brief photography
A full digital photographic record of all accessible trenching during proposed groundworks. Where possible, sections exhibiting 'live' stratigraphy will be quickly cleaned, and scales added in.

3.3 Fabric analysis and interpretation

3.3.1 Analysis

Analytical plans, elevation drawings, and sectional elevations, will depict the boundaries between identifiable building periods, phases of construction, and repair, including the positions of any reused material, colour shadows, or structural 'ghosting' indicating removed components. It is anticipated that the context of the courtyard itself will be included in this, with ground surfaces and courtyard walls being covered.

3.3.2 Interpretation

An interpretation of the fabric history will be offered in the light of the evidence generated during the building survey, augmented by the evidence from the existing corpus of cartographic and historical research. Attention will be focused on the original plan form of the courtyard, and the nature and extent of subsequent alterations to the fabric.

3.4 Archive and report

3.4.1 Archive

The results of Stages 3.1 - 3.4 will form the basis of a fully integrated archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*, Historic England, 2015). and in accordance with the CIfA paper *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*. The digital archive will be deposited with the ADS, following their requirements.

The digital archive drawings will be presented in AutoCAD 2023, in dwg files. All drawings will be produced in AutoCAD, at A3 format. Each sheet will be fully titled. Drawing conventions for plans and sections will follow the general guidelines as issued by Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2017).

All watching brief works, both for the refurbishment of the well cover, and for the drain repair, will be conducted in accordance with the CIfA guidance paper *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording*, 2023.

Digital photographic images will be titled, and will be included within the report as part of the Gazetteer. These will also be provided digitally, in JPEG and RAW form.

A PDF report will be submitted as part of the OASIS record; and a copy of the digital archive will be submitted to the ADS record.

The report will comprise the following content:

- Summary
- Introduction
- Scope & Methodology
- Site Location
- Site Description

Finds Description (if any)
Site Interpretation
Recommendations
Archive Contents
Figures – Historic map extracts; floor plans, elevations, & cross section
Plates – External and internal colour digital images

3.5 Other Matters

3.5.1 Project monitoring

Any proposed changes to this project design will be agreed with the client and Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service, prior to commencement of any fieldwork. A preliminary meeting could be arranged at the outset of the project, if necessary. Further meetings to review the progress of work could occur during the programme.

3.5.2 Health and Safety

Full regard will, of course, be given to all Health and Safety considerations. Matrix Archaeology fieldwork conforms to all the provisions of the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Unit Managers) Health and Safety manual. Risk assessments are undertaken as a matter of course for all projects.

3.5.3 Access

Matrix Archaeology should be provided with unrestricted access to the building for the duration of the works. The client's building surveyor should advise on any areas which are deemed unsafe for working.

3.5.4 Independence

Matrix Archaeology is a limited company, taking full employment responsibility for all of its employees and sub-contractors.

4. PROJECT COSTINGS

4.1 Historic Building Survey Watching Brief

Site attendance (per day)

£XXXX plus VAT.

Reporting and archiving (per day, 1:1 ratio against attendance)

£XXXX plus VAT.

TOTAL COST: £xxx plus VAT (inclusive of all expenses).

The total cost quoted is a fixed price, inclusive of all management, overheads, and other disbursement costs (travel and expenses), to undertake the programme of work as

defined in the project brief and this project design. Any other variations from this programme of work at the client's direction will require re-costing.

5. STAFFING

The fieldwork will be supervised by **Mark Fletcher, BSc, MAAIS** (Matrix Archaeology Director). He has worked as a professional archaeologist since 1985.

His former employment posts are as follows:

Supervisor and Project Officer with **Trust for Wessex Archaeology**, 1985-87; Project Manager with **Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit**, 1987-94; Senior Project Manager with **Lancaster University Archaeological Unit**, 1994-1997; Senior Managing Archaeologist with **West Yorkshire Archaeological Service**, 1997-2000. Set up **Matrix Archaeology** of Lancaster as a commercial contracting and consulting body in March, 2000.

SOURCES

Hartwell C. 2004 *The History and Architecture of Chetham's School and Library*, Yale University



Figure 1. Site location, derived from O.S. 1:25,000 map sheet. Crown copyright, O.S. License No. AL 100065631.