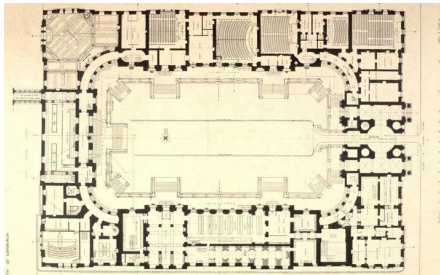
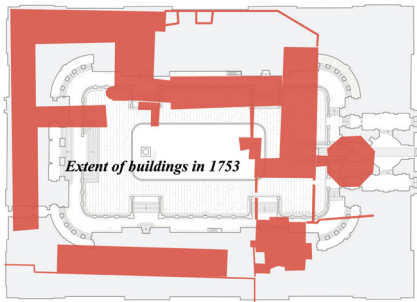


Old College Quad, Edinburgh



Client: The University of Edinburgh
Year: 2011
Contract Value: £1M

Edinburgh University was founded in 1582 on the site now occupied by the Old College. This building was designed by Robert Adam in 1789 to replace the earlier buildings. Adam died in 1792 with less than a quarter of the scheme built. W. H. Playfair was appointed in 1816 to complete the buildings, and reorganised Adam's scheme, completed around 1820. As funds ran out, the courtyard was never completed and paved.

Simpson & Brown was approached in 2005 by the University to complete the scheme. Our historical research established that there were no original drawings, so the paving was designed closely following the precedents of Playfair's other Edinburgh buildings. Under the courtyard, layers of archaeology stretching back to the 16th century had survived. A full archaeological excavation was carried out by Addyman Archaeology, a division of Simpson & Brown, as a condition of the planning consent. The land before 1582 had been the precincts of St. Mary's Kirk, the Kirk o'Fields, and part of the medieval burial ground, including over 60 burials, was discovered. Most of the footings of the 17th and 18th century university buildings were also uncovered, including the fully-paved courtyard of the 1617 Common Hall.

The remains of the 18th century chemistry store were also discovered. Evidently, most of the equipment had not been removed before demolition, and as it was excavated, it emerged as densely packed with finds. The objects were probably used by Joseph Black, one of the last professors of Natural Philosophy to use the building, and one of the most important chemists of the Enlightenment.