

Selective Recording at the Southern Range of the Little Cloister, Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk.



Prepared for David Watt of
Hutton & Rostron Environmental Investigations Ltd

Giles Emery
January 2014

Report No: 40

NHES Event No: ENF 132215
Job Ref: NVC/2013/GE168
OASIS ID: norvicar1-169564

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Selective Archaeological Building Recording at the Little Cloister of Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk.

Location:	Walsingham
Grid Ref:	TG 9328 3656
NHES Event No:	ENF132215
Date of fieldwork:	15 th & 16 th of August 2013

1.0 Introduction

Norvic Archaeology was commissioned by David Watt of Hutton & Rostron Environmental Investigations Ltd, on behalf of the landowner, to undertake selective archaeological building recording of the southern range of the Little Cloister of Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk.

The Little Cloister ruins are part of an extensive complex of remains (Scheduled Monument No. NF201; 1003162) of a Franciscan Friary, which was founded in 1347 and dissolved in 1538. The surviving ruins include parts of the Great and Little Cloisters, the Guesthouse, the Chapter House and the precinct wall. Little of the church or Great Cloister remains but there are notable portions of the domestic buildings, especially the Little Cloister, Guest House and Kitchen.

During a programme of repair and consolidation work on the extant wall of the South Range of the Little Cloister, (which forms part of a greater work programme at the site partly funded by Natural England through Higher Level Stewardship) masonry details and joist pockets were revealed along the top of the wall. Prior to their being covered or intruded upon by the necessary actions of new repair work, it was requested by English Heritage and the Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES) that a suitable record be made, in the form of urgent and selective recording. The work was carried out in accordance with an informal email brief produced by the NHES, in liaison with English Heritage (issued 7/8/13).

On completion of the project, the site archive will be offered for long term deposition with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Summary of Results

The character of the window arches has been recorded and demonstrates a fairly ad-hoc approach to the use of medieval brick, whilst the various sockets and scars are the only surviving evidence for the nature of former timber work set above the southern walk. Many of these sockets can be interpreted as having once supported joists to support a ceiling or floor, perhaps for a lost first storey along the southern range.

It is hoped that this record will provide useful data to any future interpretations or study of the likely nature and construction methods of The Little Cloister.

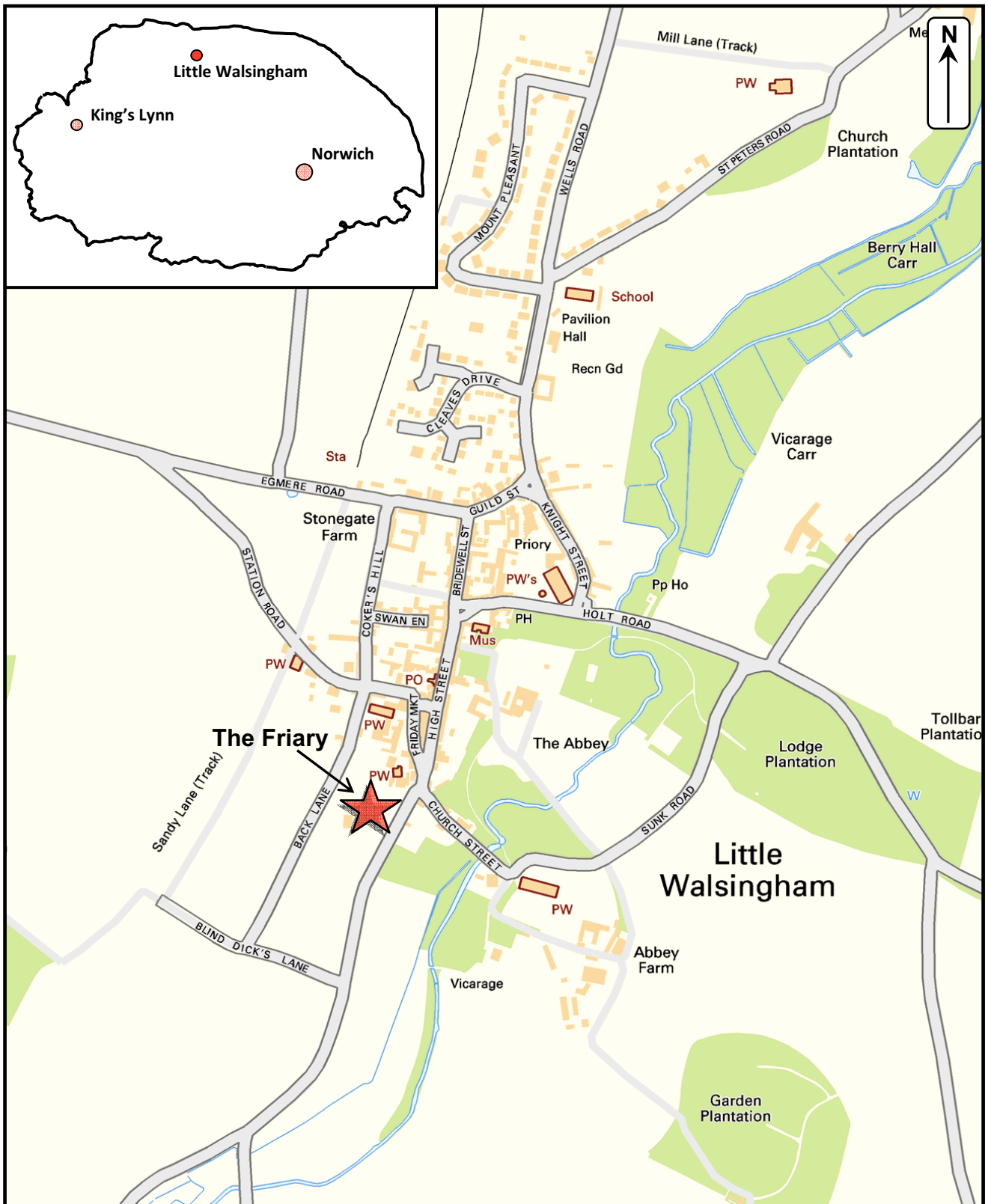


Figure 1. General Location Plan

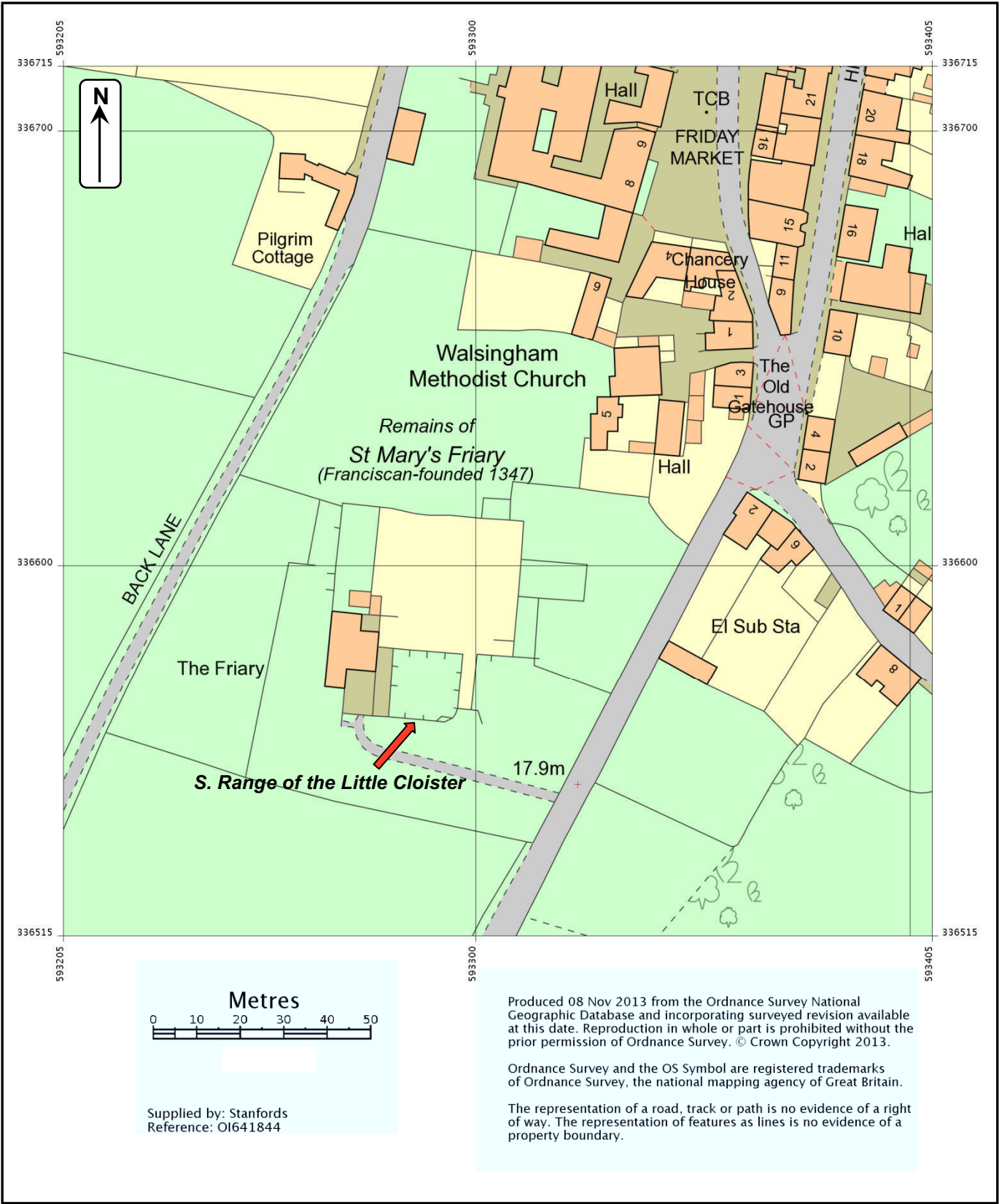


Figure 2. Site Location Plan

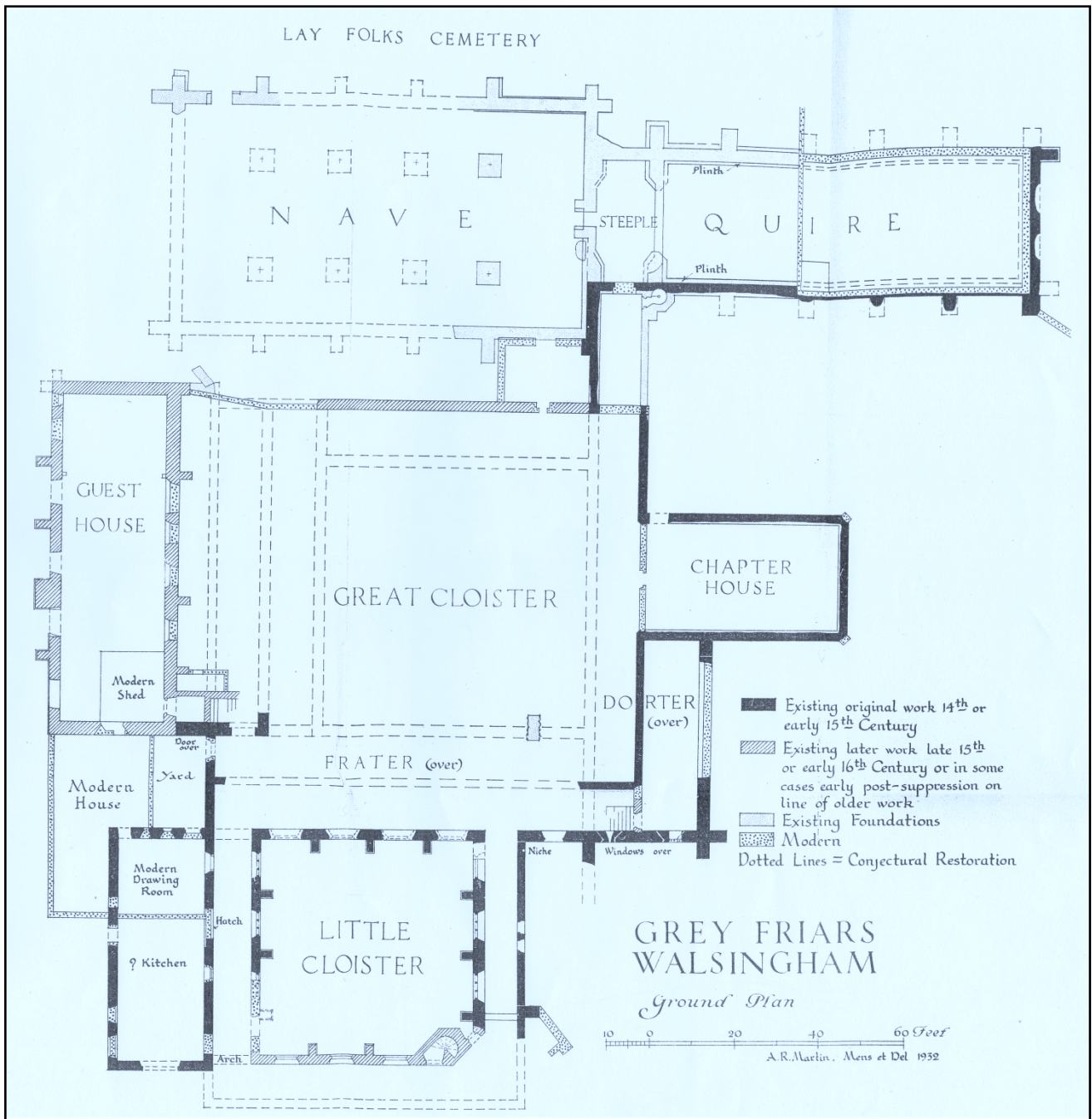


Figure 3. Plan of the Walsingham Grey Friars by A.R.Martin (1932)

3.0 Geology and Topography

The site is located on the eastern slopes of the River Stiffkey valley; c.200m from its western banks, on well sloping ground of c.20m OD rising to c. 24m OD.

The underlying geology is Upper Chalk, overlain by subaerial Quaternary period superficial deposits of clays, silts, sands and gravels, formed mostly by solifluction and/or hillwash and soil creep – Geology of Britain Viewer at a scale of 1:50 000 (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

The sub-surface geology of the site encountered during the fieldwork can be characterised as chalk-flecked sandy-clay with pockets of soliflucted chalk.

4.0 Brief Archaeological and Historical Background

Walsingham is located in the district of North Norfolk and is a village formed from two conjoined settlements, Little Walsingham and Great Walsingham. It is famed internationally for its religious shrines in honour of the Virgin Mary and as a major centre for modern pilgrimage.

Walsingham first became a major centre of pilgrimage in the eleventh century when in 1061 a Saxon noblewoman, Richeldis de Faverches, had a vision of the Virgin Mary in which she was instructed to build a replica of the house of the Holy Family in Nazareth in honour of the Annunciation. Walsingham quickly rose to become one of northern Europe's great places of pilgrimage and remained so throughout the medieval period.

A religious order and Holy House was founded at Little Walsingham and the first prior was put in place in 1153. St Mary's Augustinian Priory (NHER 2029) was built adjacent to the first Holy House and in the 14th century the Franciscan Friary (NHER 2036) was also built near the site.

To provide accommodation and facilities for the visiting pilgrims, the medieval village of Little Walsingham grew around the religious core, although the extent of any planned settlement remains uncertain. Many of the remaining medieval buildings in Little Walsingham may have served as pilgrim hostels and inns. Excavations in the 1950s underneath the modern Anglican shrine (NHER 2035) revealed foundations of a medieval inn or almonry. Other medieval structures include the Shire Hall (NHER 15129), now a museum, and a leper hospital (NHER 2060).

The pilgrimage centre at Walsingham was reinstated in the 20th century, following the construction of a new sanctuary of Our Lady at Walsingham in 1897 and a new Roman Catholic Church. The village is now frequently visited by followers of the Roman Catholic and Anglican faiths, with the additional development of a new Anglican shrine.

The Franciscan Friars were invited to found a religious house at Walsingham by Elizabeth de Burgh, daughter of Gilbert the Red, 9th Earl of Clare. Elizabeth had inherited the Manor from her brother the 10th Earl of Clare. The necessary licences were obtained from both Pope Clement VI and Edward III in 1347.

After nearly two centuries, the Friary was dissolved and surrendered in 1538 to Richard Ingworth, who was appointed to receive English Friaries on behalf of the Crown. Passing through several hands, the property passed to John Bond, a Norwich wool merchant. His son, Nehemiah, a Sheriff of Norwich, is documented as owning a home there in 1648; a stone lozenge placed over the entrance to the Little Cloister bears this date (Bond 1956).

The majority of the complex is thought to have been constructed in the 14th to 15th centuries. The surviving ruins include parts of the Great and Little Cloisters, the guesthouse, the Chapter House and the precinct wall. The church was a simple plan of nave and quire with a central tower. Little of the church or Great Cloister remains but there are notable portions of the domestic buildings, especially the Little Cloister, Guest House and Kitchen. Adjoining to the south was the Great Cloister with the guesthouse in the west wing, Frater to the south and the Chapter House to the east. The Little Cloister with kitchen

to the west adjoins the Frater on its south side. The main entrance to the friary formerly opened out onto the southwest corner of the marketplace. The Friary is believed to have been sited across the former course of a road which led to the market until 1384, when a licence was granted to enclose the area of the 'old road' and create the 'new road' (Page 1906).

The Guesthouse walls are the largest standing remains. Built against its southern end is a house of c.1840. Some areas of the extensive complex of ruins were subject to archaeological excavation in 1932 which included preliminary investigations on the site of the church and other buildings and a survey of the surviving layout to produce an overall site plan (see Figure 3). An account by A.R.Martin for the Little Cloister, also known as an Infirmary Cloister or Monks' Cloister, produced as part of the results of the excavation and survey work is presented below:

THE LITTLE CLOISTER

The little cloister is the best preserved part of the surviving buildings, the inner wall of the garth standing in one place almost to the top of the upper storey, which seems to have projected here on all sides over the cloister alleys. The garth itself, which is turfed and forms a pleasant lawn, is 50 ft. square. The walls are of flint, with stone dressings for the windows and buttresses. The lower windows on the east and west are of three lights with square heads and moulded drip-stones, two on each side, retaining their tracery intact. These were glazed only in the heads of the lights. On the east side, where the wall is considerably higher, one of the upper windows with the sill and jambs of a second survive. Like the lower series it has a square-headed frame, but with two cinquefoil cusped lights divided horizontally by a single transom. The upper part appears to have been rebuilt with the original stone. On the north side only the sills of the windows survive, but they seem to have been similar to those of the east and west. On the south side the three windows have slightly pointed arches worked in flint and brick. In the south-east corner a stair turret projects into the cloister garth. It is approached by a plain doorway with a four-centred arch from the site of the south walk of the cloister, and gave access to the upper floor of the southern range, all trace of which has disappeared.

The cloister is now entered from the south by a pointed archway of brick and flint, which spans the north walk and has recently been repaired. In the south face over this arch is a lozenge-shaped tile bearing the name Nehemiah Bond and the date 1648, on either side of which is a curious carved brick medallion with a grotesque man's head on one side and a female figure on the other. They are said to have been brought from the neighbouring manor house at East Barsha, and were probably placed there when this part of the site was converted into a dwelling-house.

Martin, A.R. The Greyfriars of Walsingham, Norfolk Archaeology vol. XXV pp.260



Plate 2: South Elevation of the S. Range taken in 1954 (H.G.Thursford)



Plate 3: South Elevation of the S. Range taken in 2009 (D.Watt)

Sites of particular relevance or interest which fall in close proximity to the site include:

The following information has been sourced from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER):

NHER 2036: *Franciscan Friary.* The Franciscan Friary at Walsingham was founded in 1346. It was dissolved in 1538. Part of the buildings were excavated in the 1930s and some ruins still survive including parts of the Great and Little Cloister, the guesthouse and the base of the chapter house. Very little is left of the church. The main entrance to the friary led onto the southwest corner of the marketplace.

NHER 53949: *Franciscan Friary Gatehouse (site of).* It has been suggested that this is the possible site of the gatehouse to the friary (NHER 2036), on the line of the road leading north to Friday Market (next to the current Methodist Chapel on the High Street). [c. 30m N]

NHER 15507: *?Fish-ponds.* An L shaped pond and a ditch can be seen on early maps. These could be evidence to suggest the presence of a former medieval moat or fishponds associated with the Friary site. [c. 75m SE]

NHER 2029: *St Mary's Priory, Walsingham.* This Augustinian priory was founded in the 12th century but there has been a chapel on the site since the 11th century. The site became an important pilgrimage centre. Existing remains include fragments of 13th to 15th century buildings including the chancel, refectory, precinct walls and gates. There are also two Holy wells east of the abbey (NHER 56856). Parts of these remains were revealed after excavations in 1961. After the Dissolution of the priory in 1538 some of the ruins were built into a new mansion (Abbey House) that was built on the site. A landscaped park was built around the house and ruins in the 19th century. [c. 250m NE]

NHER 14302: *Market Cross.* This is the site of medieval market cross that was removed around 1790 [c. 50m NNE]

NHER 2052: *Cropmarks/Find-spot.* A group of three circular cropmarks can be seen on aerial photographs of a field to the west of the Friary site. Site visits have failed to identify these on the ground. Metal detecting has recovered two Roman coins. [c. 150m W]

NHER 24308: *Find-spot.* Metal detecting recovered a 1st Century Roman coin from fields to the south of the Friary site. [c. 100m S]

5.0 Methodology

The objective of the archaeological recording was to create a rapid record of the recently uncovered joist/rafter pockets in the top of the walls through measured drawing, written description and photographs. Detail of the arches above Windows 2 and 3 required similar recording, with photographic records taken for all three windows.

This recording was required to take place urgently to allow the remedial work to continue on the masonry, some elements of which required immediate consolidation and repair. Access was provided by the on-site contractor (R & J Hogg Ltd), with scaffolding already set around the wall tops, under the frame of a temporary shelter.

All levels were taken were tied to an OS Spot Height of 17.9m OD located on the road outside the entrance to the site.

The work was carried out in changeable weather conditions, with bouts of sunshine interspersed with heavy rain showers and occasional strong winds.

6.0 Comments (Figures 4 & 5, Plates 4 to 17)

Wall Fabric Types

The wall fabric was bonded generally with the use of a pale-yellowish-white, medium to coarse mix of gritty, sandy mortar with moderate inclusion of chalk (up to 5mm) and small pebbles (5mm to 10mm max.). The mortar ranged in condition from good to weakly cohesive, with extensive weathering damage to many surface areas. The mortar lining of several of the pockets for joists/rafters was of a very similar mix to the main mortar bond.

The walls were constructed with even courses of unstruck flints and chalk 'clunch', with rare pieces and fragments of reused Oolitic limestone (Barnack-type) and ceramic building material. The flint and chalk was well sorted, with larger pieces of chalk having been roughly shaped into rectangular blocks.

The medieval brick fabric is a hard, purplish to dark orangey red, roughly mixed clay with low sand content and occasional external straw markings. Whole examples typically measure between 220mm to 230mm in length, 110mm in width and 50mm thick.

Window Arches

Within the head of each window light, medieval bricks were used in the construction of the arches, interspaced widely with flints in the original arches and used exclusively for the relieving arches below. As the illustrations demonstrate, the placement of bricks varied greatly, with an ad-hoc approach to the arch construction, suggestive of a mason more used to selecting and placing flints than using brick as a building material in its own right. The results for each window arch varies accordingly. No 'keystone' is present in any of the arches, which are fairly uneven in their form and spring at differing angles, meeting with a distinct mismatch most noticeable in the northern face of Window Arch 2 and the southern elevation of Window Arch 3.

The relieving arches, by their very nature, echo the form of the original construction above, although in general the bricks have been spaced more regularly. They utilise the same mortar and brick as those appearing in the original arch.

Rafter/Joist Pockets and Scars

Tile pieces have been set highly sporadically in a loose string which coincides with the base level of the joist/raft pockets set within the southern elevation.

A total of sixteen scars or raft/joist pockets were identified along the southern elevation, although it seems likely that another had already been hidden behind the repair work between R2 and R3. These varied in condition from partial to complete, they also varied considerably in form and definition.

A small number of the sockets had been partly or near completely blocked (with fabric conforming to the main build), with R10 and R11 the clearest examples. However, in some cases the pockets may have been purposefully shaped to create either a bevelled socket or an upright socket (such as R13 and R14).

The openings varied in shape, but the majority were sub-square in form, possibly shaped to match the particular form of the wooden element they were to receive/enclose. The most complete examples ranged between c. 170mm to 230mm wide. They are dispersed fairly regularly, although there appears to be a tighter grouping of pockets from R3 to R5 and R17 to R19.

The various pockets exposed and recorded along the southern elevation could be interpreted as the supports for a first storey over the southern walk of the Little Cloister.

Martin assumed that the stair turret at the east corner of the southern range gave access to such an upper floor, although, aside from these sockets, no other trace for such a storey exists.

Other elements

The facing stones that remained in place on the buttress adjacent to Window 2 included reused pieces of decorative stone, with the uppermost block exhibiting tracery reminiscent of those used in the windows of the eastern range (see Plates 16 & 17).

The two putlog holes on the northern elevation (P1 & P2) varied in depth (PL1 = 56mm; PL2=80mm), both had brick and tile used to define their openings.

Many of the surviving limestone side jambs near the top of each arch had been severely eroded.

7.0 Conclusions

This work was commissioned in order to produce a record of masonry details which might otherwise have been lost or hidden during a thorough programme of repair and consolidation work on the extant wall of the southern range of the Little Cloister. It is hoped that this information will provide useful data to any future interpretations or study of the likely nature and construction methods of the Little Cloister.

The character of the Window Arches has been recorded and demonstrates a fairly ad-hoc approach to the use of medieval brick, whilst the various pockets and scars are the only surviving evidence for the nature of former timber work set above the southern walk. Many of these features could be interpreted as having once supported joists to support a ceiling or floor, perhaps for a lost first storey along the southern range.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to David Watt who commissioned Norvic Archaeology to carry out this work and the site staff of R & J Hogg Ltd for their assistance and cooperation on site. All stages of the work were carried out by the author.

NHER data was obtained directly from the archives of the Norfolk Historic Environment Office at Gressenhall. The 1954 image of the S. Range was kindly digitised for inclusion in this report by Heather Hamilton of the NHES and the 2009 image was shared by David Watt.

9.0 Bibliography

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|--|
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| Page, W. | 1906 | <i>A History of the County of Norfolk: Vol. 2.</i> Victoria County History. pp 435. |



Plate 4: Window 1 (S. Elevation) [1x2m Scale]



Plate 5: Window Arch 2 (S. Elevation) [1x2m Scale]



Plate 6: Window Arch 2 (N. Elevation) [1x2m Scale]



Plate 7: Window Arch 3 (S. Elevation) [1x2m Scale]



Plate 8: Window Arch 3 (N. Elevation) [1x2m Scale]



Scales in divisions of
100mm

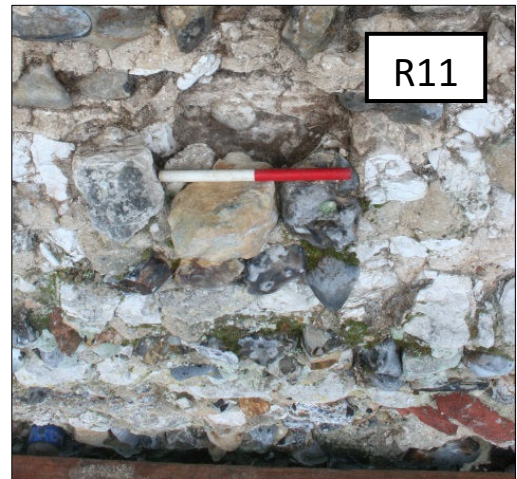
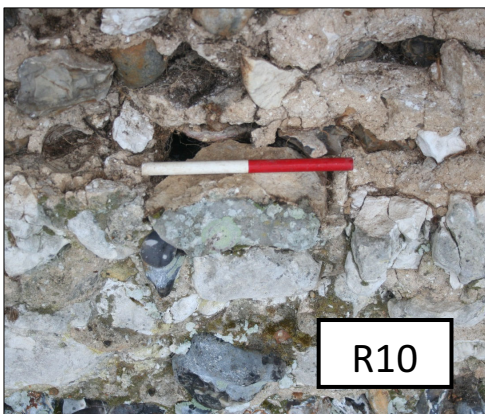


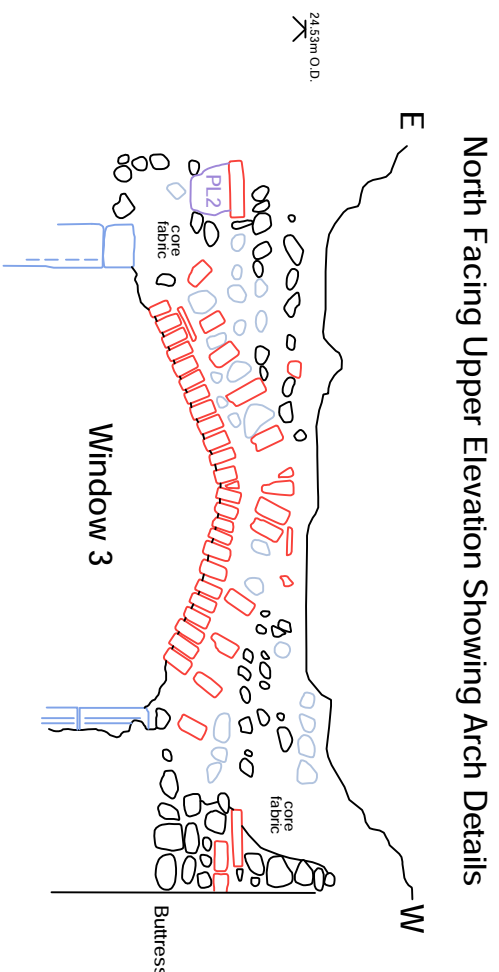




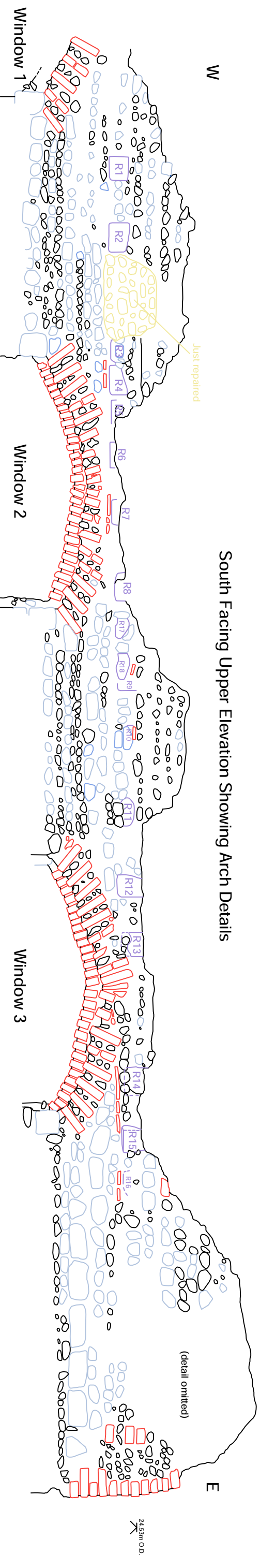
Plate 16: Reused Decorative Masonry
(looking W) [1x0,2m Scale]



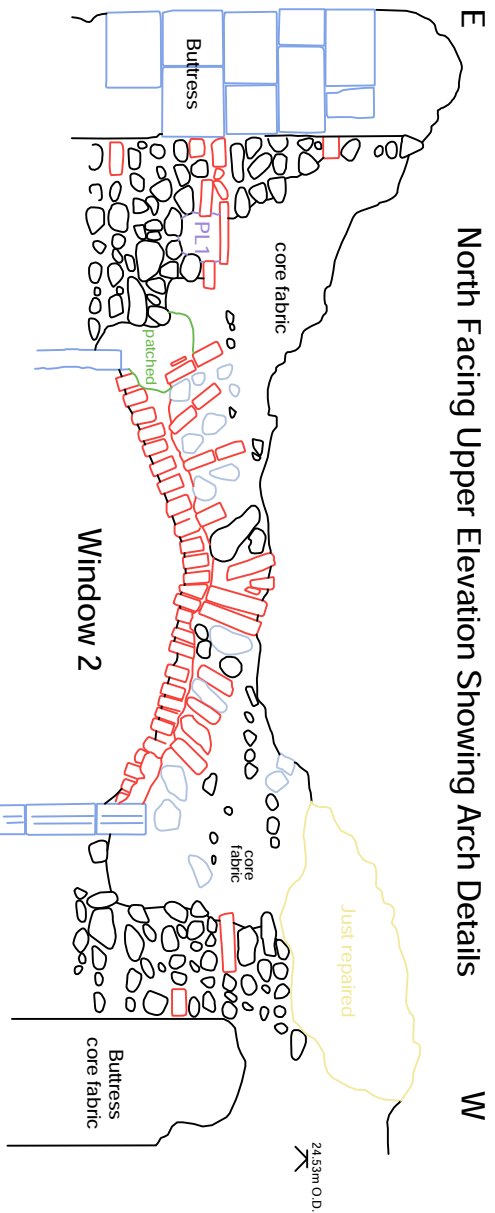
Plate 17: Reused Decorative Masonry
(looking SW) [1x0,2m Scale]



South Facing Upper Elevation Showing Arch Details



North Facing Upper Elevation Showing Arch Details



	Brick		Flint
	Tile		Limestone
	Chalk		Scar/Pocket/Putlog

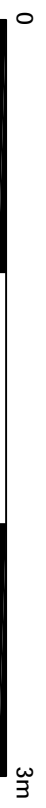
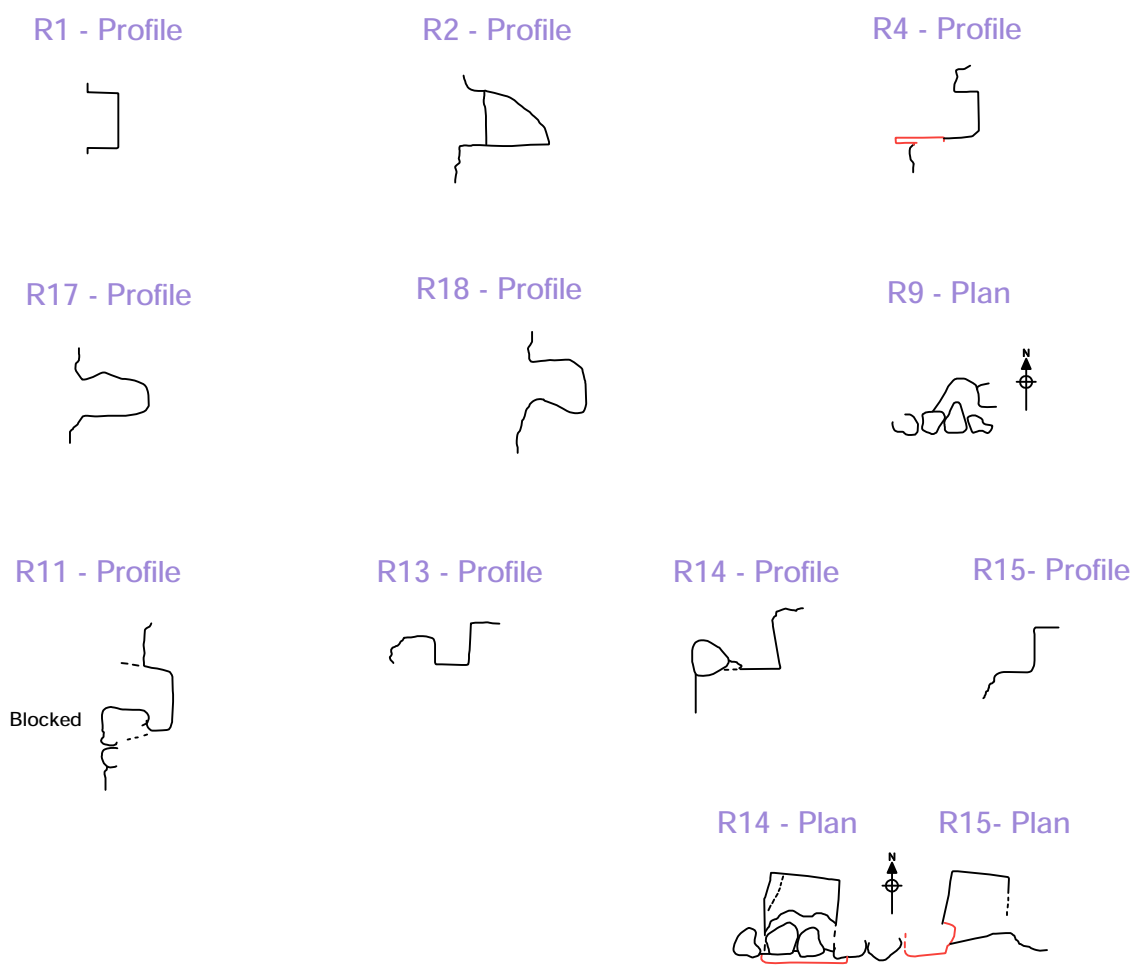
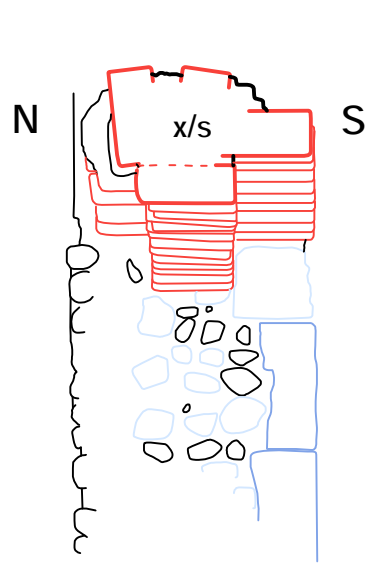


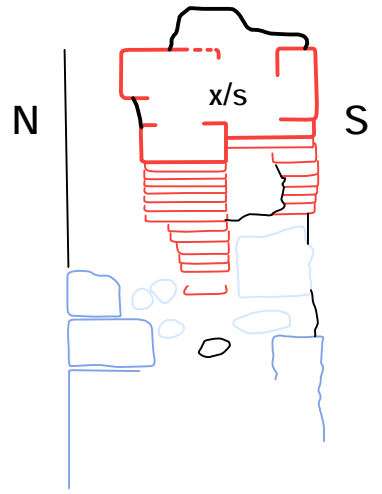
Figure 4. Elevations. Scale 1:30



Window 2



Window 3



(x/s taken through c. apex of each window)



Figure 2. Arch X/S and 'joist/rafter details'. Scale 1:20

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OASIS ID: norvicar1-169564

Project details

Project name	Selective Recording at the Southern Range of the Little Cloister, Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk.
Short description of the project	Norvic Archaeology was commissioned by David Watt of Hutton and Rostron Environmental Investigations Ltd, on behalf of the landowner, to undertake selective archaeological building recording of the southern range of the Little Cloister of Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk. The Little Cloister ruins are part of an extensive complex of remains (Scheduled Monument No. NF201; 1003162) of a Franciscan Friary, which was founded in 1347 and dissolved in 1538. The surviving ruins include parts of the Great and Little Cloisters, the Guesthouse, the Chapter House and the precinct wall. Little of the church or Great Cloister remains but there are notable portions of the domestic buildings, especially the Little Cloister, Guest House and Kitchen. During a programme of repair and consolidation work on the extant wall of the South Range of the Little Cloister (which forms part of a greater work programme at the site partly funded by Natural England through Higher Level Stewardship) masonry details and joist pockets were revealed along the top of the wall. Prior to their being covered or intruded upon by the necessary actions of new repair work it was requested by English Heritage and the Norfolk Historic Environment Service that a suitable record be made in the form of urgent and selective recording.
Project dates	Start: 15-08-2013 End: 16-08-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	ENF132215 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	NVC/2013/GE168 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	NF201; 1003162 - SM No.
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential

Monument type	CLOISTER Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE Uncertain
Methods & techniques	"Photographic Survey", "Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure"
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK NORTH NORFOLK WALSINGHAM Little Cloister, Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk
Postcode	NR22 6AE
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TF 93318 36596 52.8915975294 0.874017629069 52 53 29 N 000 52 26 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Noric Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Noric Archaeology
Project director/manager	Giles Emery
Project supervisor	Giles Emery
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Andrew McLaren

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	NMAS
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	NMAS
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Diary", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Selective Recording at the Southern Range of the Little Cloister, Walsingham Greyfriars, Norfolk.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Emery, G.
Other bibliographic details	Norvic Archaeology Report No. 40
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Norvic Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Norwich
Description	Spiral bound
Entered by	Giles Emery (giles.emery@norvicarchaeology.com)
Entered on	2 March 2014

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