

## SHORTER NOTICES

### *The Norwich Survey*

*Excavations in Norwich—1971—an interim report*

BY A. CARTER, M.A.

#### INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE Norwich Survey Project was recently established for the purpose of recording and publishing the evidence for the origin and development of Norwich. The study is intended to cover the fields of archaeology, topography and vernacular architecture, and will be carried out partly within the context provided by documentary research, and partly by excavation. Supported jointly by Norwich City Council, the University of East Anglia and the Department of the Environment, the work is carried out from the University's Centre of East Anglian Studies.

The first season's excavations were only made possible by the co-operation and participation of many people, too many to thank individually. The sites for excavation were made available through the courtesy of the Eastern Gas Board, the Church Commissioners and Norwich City Council. To all these my grateful thanks are due.

#### THE BACKGROUND TO THE EXCAVATIONS

Fig. 1, purporting to show Norwich before A.D. 1150, is based on the previous work of Jope,<sup>1</sup> Hurst<sup>2</sup> and Green.<sup>3</sup> Against the physical background are plotted a suggested street plan, the line of possible early defences, and the distribution of archaeological finds. These alone suggest quite clearly the form of the Saxo-Norman town, but the pattern, depending as it does largely on casual archaeological finds, is obviously far from complete. An attempt has been made to complete the distribution pattern of the late eleventh century population by extrapolation from a late fourteenth-century document. This, the Norwich Domesday Book,<sup>4</sup> records for 1397 the distribution of properties paying landgable rent. In origin an eleventh-century 1d. burgess rent,<sup>5</sup> it is recorded for the French Borough at least in 1086, "et ex annua consuetudine reddebat unusquisque unus denarius".<sup>6</sup> Theoretically the distribution of these rents, which are not normally imposed after *c.* 1090, could when plotted show the extent and density of the eleventh-century built-up area. That this is not absolutely so is obvious, for the processes of amalgamation, division and substitution would have blurred the original pattern by 1397. Despite such blurring it is still thought that the plotted distribution is meaningful,<sup>7</sup> and the excavations of 1971 were designed to test this hypothesis.

## EARLY MEDIEVAL NORWICH - RECONSTRUCTED PLAN

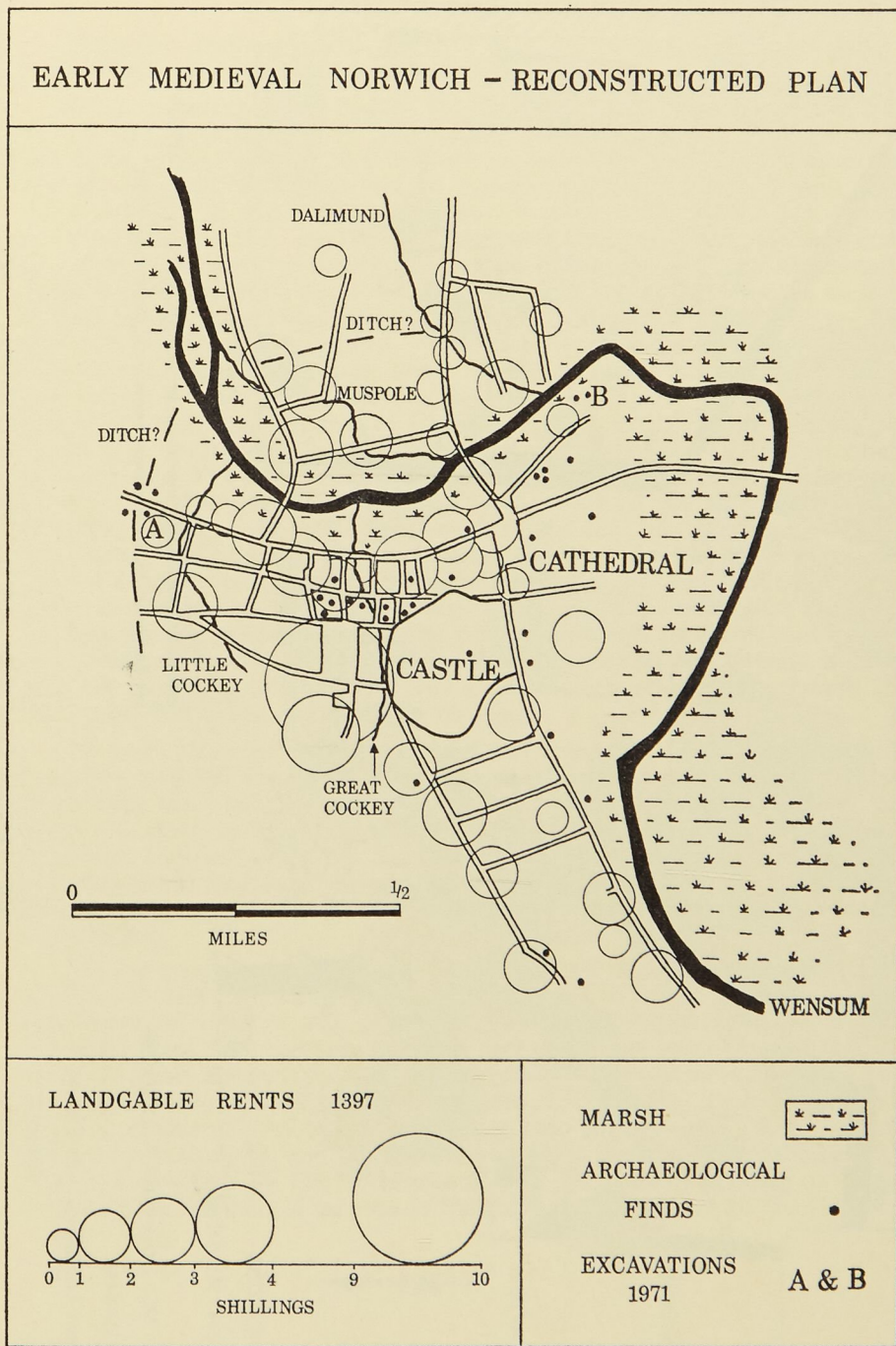
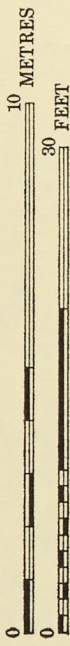
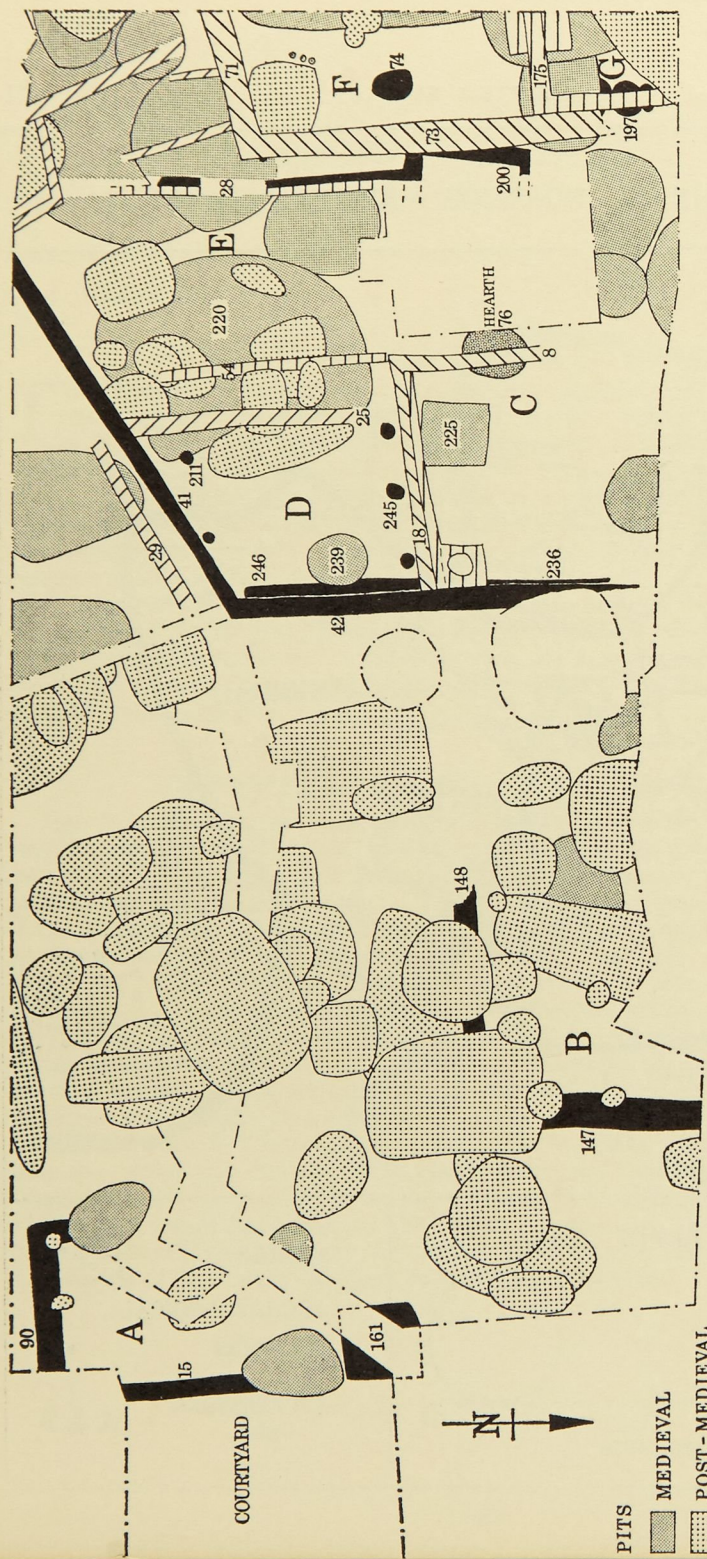


Fig. 1.





- PITS**
- MEDIEVAL
  - POST-MEDIEVAL
- WALLS AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES**
- MEDIEVAL
  - POST-MEDIEVAL - EARLY
  - MIDDLE
  - LATE

ST. BENEDICT'S STREET SOUTH - 1971 - GENERAL PLAN



## THE EXCAVATIONS

Three sites were excavated (Fig. 1, A & B) on the fringes of the late Saxon town, where occupation was expected to be sparse.

A. *St. Benedict's Street, South*. TG 22470881. A 400 sq. m. area was dug to the west of St. Benedict's churchyard. (Plan, Fig. 2.) In 1160 this area was given to the Priory of New Buckenham.<sup>8</sup> Described as being between the churchyard of St. Benedict's and St. Benedict's Gates, and as "duabus acris terrae aribilis", it had a parsonage house and garden in the angle between churchyard and street. In the 1397 landgable rental this area is assessed at 2d., so that the "acris" probably refer to plots rather than acres. The parsonage house is probably to be equated with Building A, measuring 3.5 by 8 metres, defined by cob walls 15 and 90, and Building B, defined by wall-trenches 147 and 148. Building A, modified by the insertion of the flint-built internal buttress 161, was out of use by c. 1300. During the period in which this building was occupied sand and gravel digging was taking place in the south-west corner of the site to the rear of Building C, e.g. pit 220. The evidence for Building C, measuring perhaps 5 by 10 m., is slight, but the documentary evidence suggests a late twelfth-century date. The east wall of the building was defined by wall-trench 236, continued to the south of the later wall 18 as a fence line 246, the west wall by post-holes 74 and 197. The missing south wall, presumably eroded away, almost certainly lay along the line of the later wall 18, but no trace was found of the north wall. By the time Building C went out of use the gravel pits to its rear were silting up. In the next phase Buildings C (replacement) and D probably form part of a kitchen, poorly defined by two east-west post-hole lines, 211 etc. and 245 etc. Within this possible kitchen area are two wells, 225 and 239, and a hearth, beneath the later hearth 76. This phase marks the end of timber building.

The next phase involves the enclosure of areas C, D and E within a flint boundary wall, 28, 41 and 42. Built into wall 28 was the cess-pit 200. Within these walls the whole area was floored with a level of decayed chalk, in the centre of which hearth 76 was built. Despite this hearth, the lack of any structural features within the area and its size, 8 m. across suggest that this was an enclosed courtyard behind a building on the street frontage (an 8 to 10 m. deep strip along the street frontage had been totally destroyed by modern disturbance).

The enclosing of the courtyard marked the end of medieval occupation on the site. Between the late fourteenth century and the early sixteenth century occupation on the site was either restricted to the street frontage or non-existent. From 1500 onwards the back part of the site is re-occupied and the medieval walls are incorporated into sixteenth-century structures. Only two buildings have to be considered, those in areas C/D and F/G, these representing the rear ranges only of buildings fronting onto the street. C, 5 m. sq. and defined by walls 8, 18, and the re-used wall 42, is the first to be rebuilt. This was soon modified by the thickening of wall 18, possibly to take an upper floor, and the insertion of an oven in the angle of walls 18 and 42. At the same



time the range is extended to the rear by the building of wall 54, enclosing a further 4.5 m. sq. room, D, in the angle of the courtyard. The contemporary room E, measuring 3.5 by 6 m., is created by thickening the medieval wall 28. No north wall was found and it is assumed that it was timber framed, resting on an impermanent timber sill. The subsidence of wall 54 into the underlying medieval pits led to a rebuilding and enlargement. The medieval wall 41 was demolished to its foundations and a new wall, 29, constructed parallel to it. This, with wall 25, enclosed a room slightly narrower but of the same area as the preceding room D. Rooms D and E of this period are probably those referred to in a document of 1678 as "two low rooms with a chamber above".<sup>9</sup> Building F, measuring perhaps 5 by 10 m., started as a simple rectangular building defined by walls 71 and 73, with a cess-pit in the angle of these walls screened from the room by a post-framed structure. During the later sixteenth or early seventeenth century the building was modified by the insertion of a partition wall, 175, and the thickening of wall 73. This thickening and the insertion of a stack probably indicates the insertion of an upper floor and a change from a storage or industrial function to domestic use.

During the period of this sixteenth- and seventeenth-century building activity large numbers of rubbish pits were dug on the eastern half of the site. The contents of these, both animal bone and pottery, indicate an affluent population. This, and the hundreds of pins found on the site, underline the documentary evidence for the occupations, and wealth, of the inhabitants of St. Benedict's, e.g. draper, calenderer, tailor, capper and worsted weaver.<sup>10</sup>

B. *Bishopgate, North*. TG 23600927, and *Bishopgate, South*. TG 23650922. For some 70 m. west from Palace Plain Bishopgate runs east-west before turning south to run along the edge of the gravel terrace. One trench, dug in the angle formed by Bishopgate as it turns south, served only to confirm the existence of the medieval churchyard of St. Matthew. One piece of Saxo-Norman pottery was found but any possible trace of occupation had been destroyed by grave digging. The second site, north of Bishopgate, was equally disturbed but here by post-medieval pits. Unlike St. Benedict's these produced little material indicative of prosperity in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Likewise little evidence of medieval occupation was found, despite a number of rubbish pits. The underlying late Saxon and early medieval levels were so dissected by medieval and post-medieval pits that little sense could be made of them. That there were two late Saxon buildings is certain but nothing can be said of their form. Associated with the traces of these buildings were a number of cess and rubbish pits from which came considerable quantities of pottery and animal bone.

#### THE POTTERY

The earliest pottery, apart from one Roman sherd from Bishopgate, was the Middle Saxon, 9th century pottery found in small quantities at both sites: Ipswich ware at St. Benedict's and Ipswich ware with Badorf Reliefband-amphorae at Bishopgate. In both cases this seems to indicate Middle Saxon



occupation in the vicinity of, rather than on, the site in question as no related structures were found. Most of the late Saxon and Early Medieval wares from both sites were of standard Thetford type but an important overlap group was identified. This, though of standard Thetford form, has an equally standard Early Medieval fabric: hard and sandy with a reddish or brown surface.<sup>11</sup> Additional features of these transitional wares are the impressed stamps below the rims of "ginger-jar" forms<sup>12</sup> and the consistent rouletting on the shoulders of cooking pots.<sup>13</sup> Associated with these transitional wares at Bishopgate was a single sherd of a Netherlandish blue-grey ladle<sup>14</sup> and a number of sherds of twelfth-century Dutch red-painted wares,<sup>15</sup> and yellow-glazed Andenne ware.<sup>16</sup>

The post-medieval pottery from both sites can only be commented on briefly. The repertoire of coarse lead-glazed earthenware was much as described by Hurst.<sup>17</sup> An important variant of this group is the group of recently recognized Dutch imports, chamber-pots and cooking pots, almost indistinguishable from their English equivalents. The other imported material clearly demonstrates the North Sea links of East Anglia with the Netherlands, Northern France and the Rhineland.

Additions to the range of imports described by Hurst<sup>18</sup> are the following: sixteenth-century Northern Dutch green slipware, sixteenth-century Beauvais stoneware and slipware, fifteenth-century Valencian tin-glaze, sixteenth-century Langerwehe stoneware, and seventeenth-century Northern French earthenware flasks.<sup>19</sup> Also found was a Wanfried ware<sup>20</sup> dish dated 1621.

### CONCLUSIONS

An important feature of these excavations is the quantity of material, both animal bone and pottery, from all periods. The continuing study of this will further advance our knowledge of past material culture in Norwich, particularly in the virtually undocumented period of its origin and early development.

The excavations carried out in 1971, with those previously conducted by Jope and Hurst suggest that the hypothetical distribution of early medieval population based on the landgable rents is correct, i.e. dense between St. Lawrence and SS. Simon and Jude and thinning out rapidly from this area. In this context the marked clustering of Saxo-Norman finds from the slopes leading down to the Great Cockey is seen to be an accurate indication of this distribution. The implications of this are of most consequence north of the Wensum where, to date, no Saxo-Norman material has been found. The sparse distribution along Magdalen Street is in marked contrast to that around St. Michael in Coslany, and it will be in this area and in the parishes of St. Lawrence and St. Gregory, to the south of the Wensum, that future efforts will be concentrated. Attention will also be directed to the problem of the early defences or boundaries. There is clear documentary evidence<sup>21</sup> for a ditch to the west of the city in 1155-58 and for its continued existence until 1214-29.<sup>22</sup> (Shown on Fig. 1.) The existence of St. Benedict's Gate by 1160<sup>23</sup> might indicate, as Hurst suggested,<sup>24</sup> a timber gate on the line of the later walls. No bank is mentioned in connection with these early ditches and it is uncertain whether one existed before 1253.



- <sup>1</sup>Jope, E. M. "Excavations in the City of Norwich, 1948", *Norf. Arch.*, XXX, 1952, 287-323, hereafter, Jope 1952.
- <sup>2</sup>Hurst, J. G. and Golson, J. "Excavations at St. Benedict's Gates, Norwich, 1951 and 1953". *Norf. Arch.*, XXXI, 1955, 1-112, hereafter, Hurst 1955.
- <sup>3</sup>Hurst, J. G. "Excavations at Barn Road, Norwich, 1954-55". *Norf. Arch.*, XXXIII, 1963, 131-179, hereafter, Hurst 1963.
- <sup>4</sup>Green, B. and Young, R. M. R. "*Norwich, the growth of a city*". City of Norwich Museums, 1968.
- <sup>5</sup>Norfolk and Norwich Record Office. Norwich City Records, Case 17, Shelf b, folio XLII v.-LIII r.
- <sup>6</sup>Land in the boroughs was not held by lease or by base tenure but by fixed hereditary money rents—usually fixed at a uniformly low level.
- <sup>7</sup>*Domesday Book*, folio 18, quoted in Blomefield, *History of Norwich*, 1741, Pt. I, 17.
- <sup>8</sup>An alternative, and more pessimistic, interpretation of the landgable rents, by James Campbell, will be published in *Norf. Arch.*, XXXVI.
- <sup>9</sup>Blomefield, *id.*, Pt. II, 249.
- <sup>10</sup>Norfolk and Norwich Record Office. Norwich City Records, Enrolled deeds, Roll 42, membrane XXXVI.
- <sup>11</sup>Norfolk and Norwich Record Office. Norwich City Records, Enrolled deeds, Rolls 27-30 *passim*.
- <sup>12</sup>Hurst 1963, 155.
- <sup>13</sup>For the form see Jope 1952, 303, Fig. 8, for the type of impressed stamp, Dunning, G. C. *et al.* "Anglo-Saxon Pottery: a symposium", *Med. Arch.*, III., 1959, 35, Fig. 11.
- <sup>14</sup>For cooking pots with rouletting see, Jope 1952, 304, Fig. 9.1.
- <sup>15</sup>For a discussion of this ware and its distribution see, Dunning *et al.*, *op. cit.* note 10, 60-61, Figs. 31-32. The distribution for Norfolk shown on Fig. 32 should be amended by deleting the find from Acle and adding those from King's Lynn, Norwich and Hardingham.
- <sup>16</sup>Bruijn, A. "Die mittelalterliche keramische Industrie in Sudlimburg", *Berichten R.O.B.*, 12-13, 1962-63, 357-459.
- <sup>17</sup>Borremans, R. and Warginaire, R. "*La Ceramique d'Andenne*", Stichting 'het Nederlandse Gebruikvoorwerp, Rotterdam, 1966.
- <sup>18</sup>Hurst 1955, 62-85, and Hurst 1963, 161-167.
- <sup>19</sup>Hurst 1955, 64-76 and 85, and Hurst 1963, 164-166.
- <sup>20</sup>For typology and discussion see Hurst, J. G., "Imported Flasks" in "Kirkstall Abbey Excavations 1960-64" *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, LI, no. 112, 1966, 54-9.
- <sup>21</sup>For discussion and form see, Hurst 1963, 166.
- <sup>22</sup>"... nouum fossatum quod burgenses fecerunt post mortem regis". West, J. R. Register of the Abbey of St. Benet of Holme, 1020-1210, I. *Norfolk Record Society*, II, 1932, 14, no. 17.
- <sup>23</sup>Register of St. Benet of Holme. 1214-29. MSS. transcription by Beecheno in the margin of the Norwich Castle Museum copy of, Kirkpatrick, J. "*The streets and lanes of the City of Norwich*", 1889, 52.
- <sup>24</sup>*Op. cit.*, note 6.
- <sup>25</sup>Hurst 1953, 6 and 14.

## Excavations at North Elmham

BY PETER WADE-MARTINS, B.A., PH.D.

THE year 1971 was the fifth season of excavations in North Elmham Park, on the site of a part of the Anglo-Saxon and early medieval village near the ruins of the eleventh century Anglo-Saxon cathedral. The excavations were again financed by the Department of the Environment through the Norfolk Research Committee<sup>1</sup>. This report summarises the results of this season, and it follows three previous reports in *Norfolk Archaeology* for the years 1969, 1970 and 1971<sup>2</sup>.

The areas stripped this year were all that remained to be excavated on the north side of the park drive and also a smaller area on the south side. The work therefore joined up the main excavation with that excavated further south in 1969<sup>3</sup>; only the piece actually under the park drive has yet to be examined. With only this interruption, the excavation now measures nearly seven hundred feet from north to south and four hundred feet from west to east at its widest points. In the area available in the park nearly all the evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation has therefore been examined. It remains to dig up the drive and, sometime in the future, to explore the park further to the south, away from the area of medieval disturbance alongside the old street.