

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1202

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Norwich Lower School, Bishopgate,
Norwich**

45385 N

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BAU 1313

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Contents

Summary

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Geology and Topography
- 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background
- 4.0 Methodology
- 5.0 Results
- 6.0 The Finds
- 7.0 Conclusions

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

Appendix 3: Pottery

Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Site plan

Fig. 3 South facing section 1

Location: Norwich Lower School, Bishopgate
District: Norwich
Grid Ref: TG 2373 0893
HER No.: 45385 N
Date of fieldwork: 3rd to 7th August 2006

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by NAU Archaeology in advance of a classroom and staffroom extension at Norwich Lower School, Bishopgate, Norwich. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered; however, post-medieval to modern make-up or garden soil deposits produced an array of archaeological finds.

1.0 Introduction

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology and Dr Roland Harris (NLA Ref: 21/04/06/ARJH), following a Project Design for archaeological watching briefs prepared by NAU Archaeology (BAU1313/DW).

The work was undertaken in advance of a staffroom extension at the Norwich – Lower School (NGR TG23730893). Observations were undertaken on the groundworks associated with the foundations for the extension.

This watching brief was commissioned and funded by G.M. Pearce of Owen Bond Partnership Architects.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

Norwich Cathedral is located on the south bank of the River Wensum within a broad curve formed by a long bend in the river. Much of the Cathedral Close encompasses the low-lying land of the river valley, although from a point at the eastern edge of the lower close the land rises relatively steeply, with the cathedral church occupying the eastern extreme of this higher ground.

The natural subsoil consists of riverine gravels and silts which overlie Upper Chalk. The low-lying nature of the area between the Cathedral and the river leaves it vulnerable to flooding, a circumstance which has probably not altered to any great extent over the last thousand years.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The development site was located 40m to 50m south of Bishopgate (formerly *Holmestrete*, which is derived from Holme, from the old Danish *holm*, meaning water meadow or flat ground (Sandred and Lindström 1989, 90)).

The church of St Helen's (demolished c.1270) was situated c.75m to the north-west of the development site, although it is highly improbable that the burial grounds would have extended sufficiently far to the east to be affected by the development described here. During the late medieval period the site formed part of the great

garden and orchards, land-use which appears to have continued into the post-medieval period.

There have been a total of six archaeological investigations close to the development site in recent years, of which four found no archaeological features or deposits. In 2002, a geophysical survey of the playing fields produced an anomaly interpreted as an east-to-west trackway and a possible enclosure or building. An evaluation undertaken by NAU Archaeology (Wallis 1999) produced a shallow gully dug through garden soils.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the steel cast pile driving, the excavations of the ground beams, and the renewal of storm-water drainage pipes, and to determine the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that an archaeologist was in constant attendance during the steel cast pile driving, excavation of the ground beam foundations and the replacement of the storm-water drainage system.

The methodology adopted by the contractors was to remove mechanically the grass turf before driving steel cast piles into the ground to a depth of c.0.80m from the present-day ground surface. The steel cast piles were tapered and capped; therefore, no soil was excavated during this process and no unforeseen obstructions were encountered.

After the piling was complete the creation of the foundations commenced. A mini 360° tracked excavator, using a 1.60m ditching bucket, removed material between the piles. The spoil was placed directly on to a dump truck and carted away to be stockpiled within the confines of the site.

The site is divided into Areas A and B. In Area A, the 360° excavator machined foundation trenches between the piles (removing a trench 0.75m wide by 0.70m in depth from the present-day ground surface and 0.60m from the tops of the steel cast piles). In Area B, the methodology changed and the whole area was mechanically stripped because of the presence of a large tree-stump. The depth of the excavations in this area was 0.65m from the present-day ground surface and 0.80m to 0.90m from the existing building's damp-proof course.

A storm-water drainage system was exposed during the mechanical excavations in Areas A and B; the old pipe-work was replaced with new and directed into an existing storm-water conduit.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

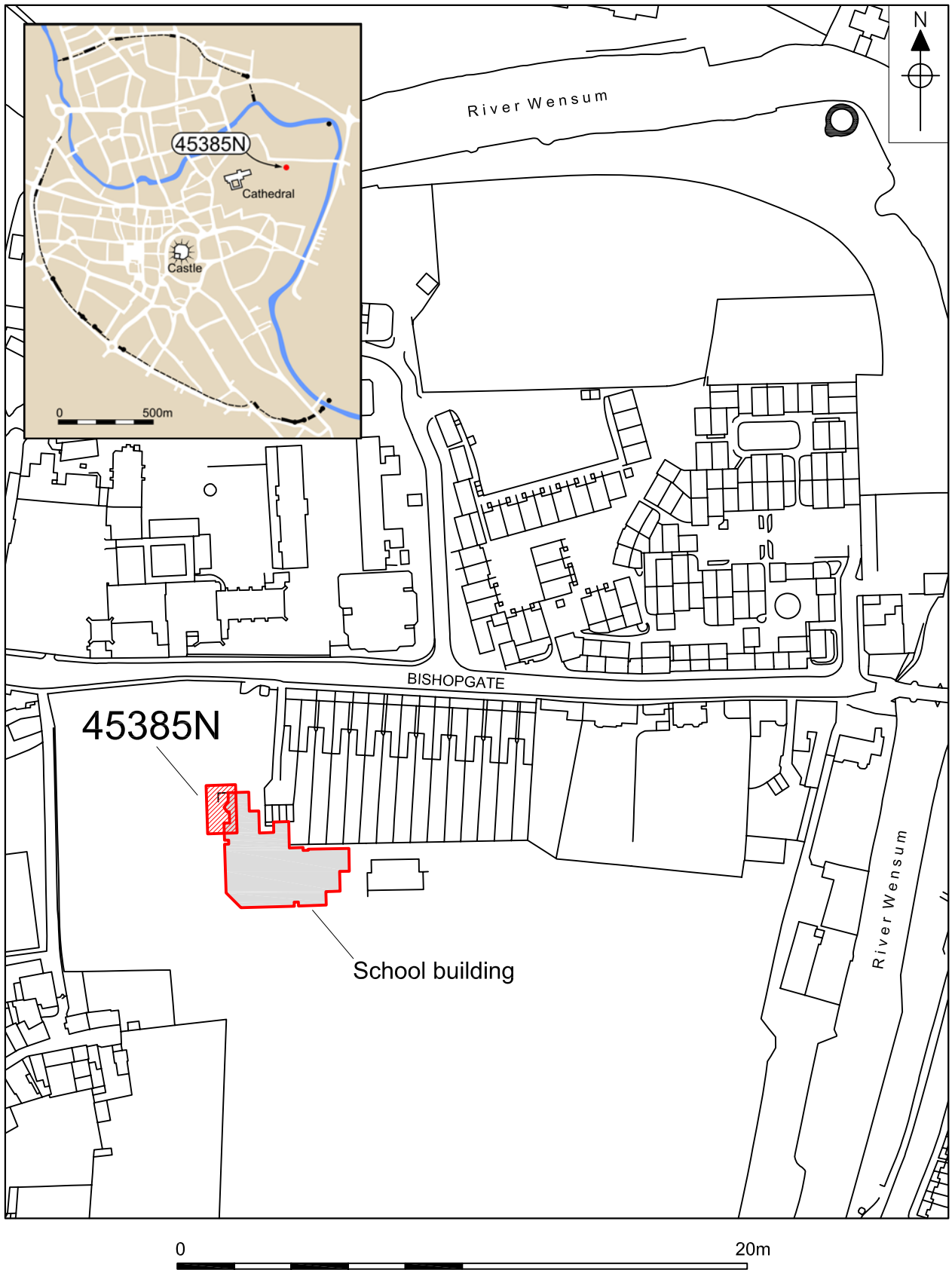


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2000

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 Fig. 13 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (05/01/05). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made**

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Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken. Site conditions were favourable, with clear access to and around the site.

5.0 Results

(Figure 3, Section 1)

During excavation of the foundation trenches it was realised that the excavated depth would not exceed the made-up ground level of the post-medieval to modern periods. Section 1 demonstrates the relationship between modern activity (asphalt

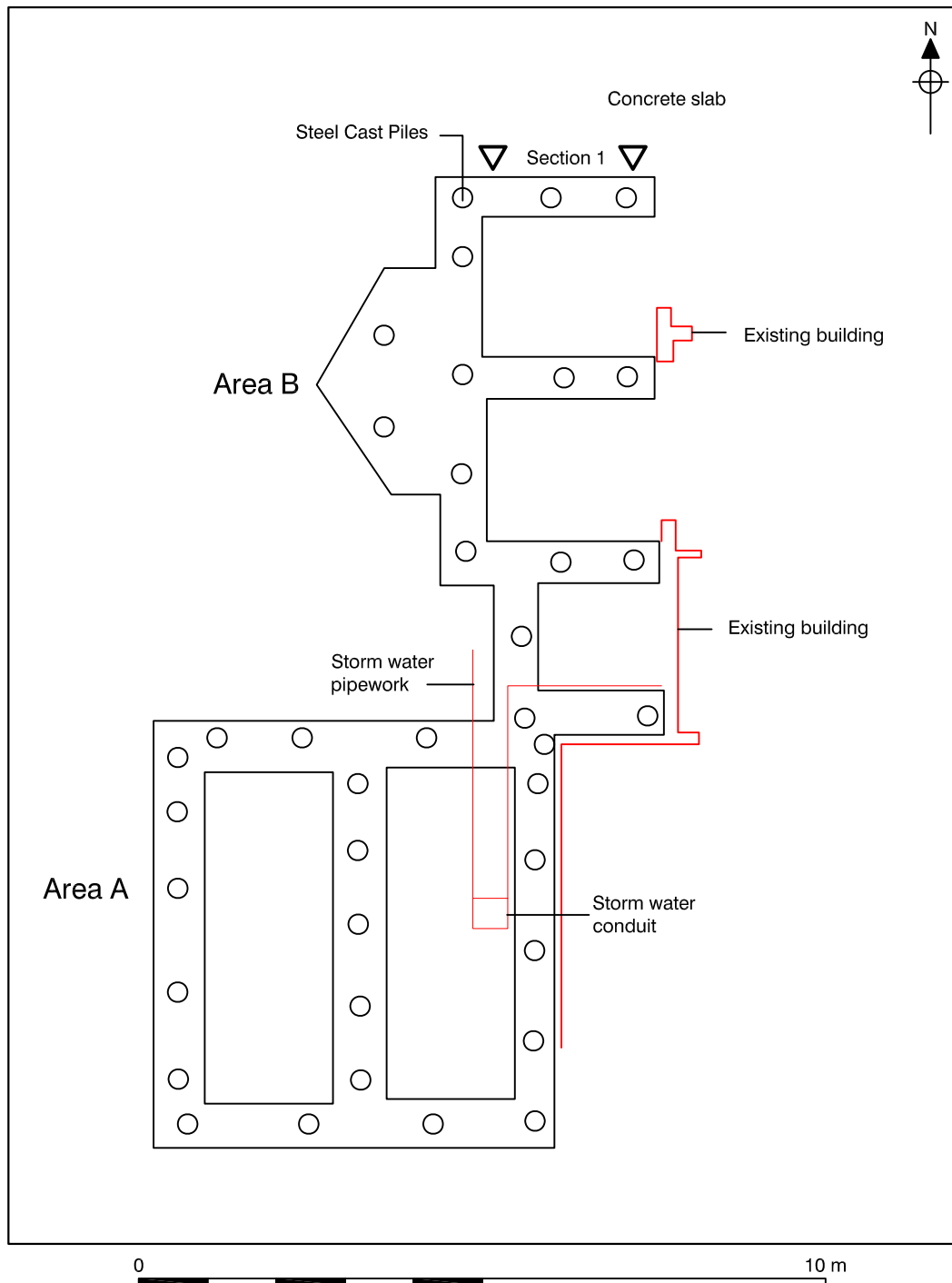


Figure 2. Site plan. Scale 1:100

([3]), concrete ([4]), and probable post-medieval make-up deposits ([2 and 5])). One sherd of ?12th-century pottery, which was probably residual, was recovered from deposit [5].

The surface (i.e. the playing field grass ([1])) was excavated to a depth of c.0.10m. Below layer [1] was a mixed black to mid ginger-brown silty sand ([2]) which contained frequent fragments of brick/tile. This deposit was seen throughout the excavated areas to a depth of at least 0.70m. Recovered from deposit [2] were red earthenwares and stonewares dating to the 16th to 17th centuries. Also recovered were eleven clay tobacco pipe fragments. One bowl had the initials 'WA' incorporated into the spurred heel. Three recorded Norfolk makers share these initials: William Adamson (1767?), William Andrews (1850) and William (Arterton) Atterton (1818–1861). The bowl form suggests a mid 18th- to mid 19th-century date.

Seen only towards the northern part of the site (Area B) was a mid greyish-brown silty sand ([5]). It was at least 0.40m deep and contained frequent lumps and flecks of mortar. The contractors excavated this deposit for 0.20m, stopping at their formation level. An additional 0.20m was revealed when a small hand-excavated slot was dug through the layer. Observation of the deposit was limited.

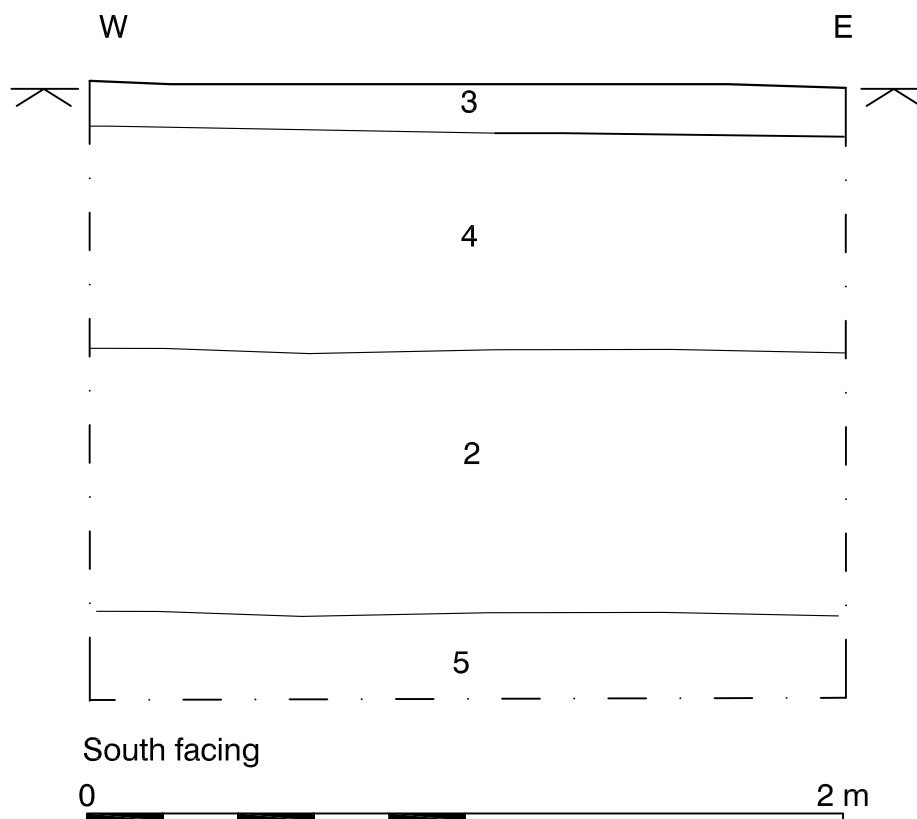


Figure 3. South facing section 1. Scale 1: 20

6.0 The Finds

(Appendix 2)

Pottery and Ceramic Building Material

by Lucy Talbot

Pottery

The site produced seven fragments of pottery with a total weight of 0.331kg. The majority of the pottery was post-medieval in date; however, a single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered.

Methodology

The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric (see Appendix 3). Identification of the fabrics was based on the typology of Norwich ceramics established by Jennings (Jennings 1981).

Medieval

The site produced a single medieval unglazed rim sherd likely to be of 12th-century date (0.042kg [05]). The fragment is possibly part of a jar or spouted pitcher. The fabric has pinkish/grey margins with a grey reduced core.

Post-medieval

The remainder of the assemblage consists of six sherds of 16th- to 19th-century domestic and tableware weighing 0.289kg, which were recovered from context [02]. The assemblage consists of a single Frechen stoneware jug handle, two fragments of unglazed red earthenware flower-pot, a glazed red earthenware bowl rim, the neck and body of a stoneware ginger beer bottle, and part of a porcelain gravy boat which is white glazed and has a blue painted outdoor scene.

Ceramic Building Material

The site produced four examples of post-medieval ceramic building material weighing 0.135kg.

Methodology

The assemblage was quantified (counted and weighed) by form and fabric (see Appendix 4). The fabrics were visually identified and the main inclusions noted. Fabric descriptions and dates are based on the provisional type series established by Sue Anderson, formerly of the Suffolk Unit.

The material recovered consists of two pieces of white-fired, grog-tempered floor tile/brick and two fragments of orange-coloured medium sandy flat roof tile. The assemblage is of 18th- to 19th-century date.

7.0 Conclusions

Although the development site is situated in a rich archaeological landscape, the results of this watching brief were negative, except for the recovery of a few artefacts. No archaeological features were observed, although they could well be present, albeit preserved beneath the new development.

The groundworks were relatively shallow and did not penetrate below post-medieval made-up deposits, which are 0.70m to 0.80m deep in this area of Norwich School.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Owen Bond Partnership for commissioning and funding the project, Nigel Smith, project manager for TAYT Maintenance Contractors and especially Dr Roland Harris, the Cathedral Archaeologist.

The author digitised the site plan and section. Lucy Talbot processed and reported on the finds. The report was prepared and produced by David Dobson and edited by Sarah Harrison. The project was overseen by David Whitmore. Thanks are given to Giles Emery for supplying information on the geology and topography.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
01	Deposit	Removal of grass and topsoil	Modern
02	Deposit	Make-up deposit	Post-medieval to modern
03	Deposit	Asphalt	Modern
04	Masonry	Concrete	Modern
05	Deposit	Mid greyish-brown silty sand	Post-medieval

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
02	Pottery	6	0.289	Post medieval
02	Ceramic Building Material	4	0.135	Post medieval
02	Clay Pipe	11	0.073	Post medieval
02	Animal bone	—	0.146	—
02	Shell – oyster	—	0.016	—
05	Pottery	1	0.042	Medieval

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

Period	Material	Quantity
Medieval (1066 to 1539AD)	Pottery	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Pottery	6
	Ceramic Building Material	2
	Clay tobacco pipe	11

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Ceramic Date
02	Frechen stoneware	Jug handle	1	0.014	17th century
02	Glazed red earthenware	Bowl rim	1	0.006	16th – 18th century
02	Unglazed red earthenware	Flower-pot/ large bowl rim	1	0.052	17th – 18th century
02	Unglazed red earthenware	Flower-pot base	1	0.041	18th – 19th century
02	Local stoneware	Ginger beer bottle	1	0.152	18th – 19th century
02	Porcelain	Gravy boat rim	1	0.024	19th century
05	Medieval unglazed	?Jar/ spouted pitcher rim	1	0.042	? 12th century
TOTAL			7	0.331	

Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

Context	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
02	Floor tile/ floor brick	2	0.023	Post medieval
02	Roof tile	2	0.112	Post medieval
TOTAL		4	0.135	