

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 947

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Fellowes Plain,
former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital,
Norwich**

(Amended)

39839 N

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Location: The former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Fellowes Plain
District: Norwich
Grid Ref: TG 622600 307850
HER No.: 39839 N
Date of work: December 2003 to March 2004

Summary

An archaeological watching brief observing groundworks on the site of the former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital located no deposits or finds of archaeological interest.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

A watching brief was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) on the site of the former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital over a period of four months (Appendix 2). The hospital was built in the 18th century, with 19th and 20th century additions. The site covered a large area (6.6ha) bounded to the south-east by St Stephens Road, to the south-west by Brunswick Road and to the north-west by Union Street. Houses lined the south-west and north-west edges with the hospital occupying the central and south-east parts.

This project was commissioned and funded by Persimmon Homes, Anglia Ltd as part of the planning regulations concerning the development of the former Norfolk and Norwich Hospital site.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH 24/11/03).

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, in accordance with the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during groundworks including footing trenches, cable and service trenches and other below ground disturbance.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector.

All archaeological features and deposits, if found, were to be recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Plans and sections would be recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were to be taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Site conditions were fair to good, dependent on the weather, the main difficulties encountered being the degree of saturation of the soil during prolonged rain.

3.0 Observations

(Appendix 1)

The initial observations were of the excavation of the cut (1.3m deep) for a new cycle path running between the main block of the hospital and a former nurses home just to the south-west of the main hospital building. The underlying natural deposit was observed at an average depth 1.10m and consisted of a pale greyish-yellow sand with moderate small flint gravel and patches of clay. The bulk of the soil between the natural sand and the surface consisted of reddish clayey sand containing modern brick rubble. Evidence of ground disturbance was observed with several modern pits, filled with building debris and other refuse, recorded. The modern make-up deposits were observed to a depth of at least 0.8m within the sides of the cut. A number of previous surfaces and foundations were observed within the make-up, indicated by tarmac and courses of bricks laid on a base of flint cobbles.

To the south-east of the cycle path cut and close to the St Stephens street frontage a single east to west pipe trench (c. 3m) was excavated. The depth of this trench was, on average, 0.70m with a maximum depth of 1m. The visible deposits consisted of a dark grey-brown garden soil (0.25m) covering a mid brown sandy silt loam (0.45m to 0.75m) which contained fragments of brick, tile and mortar. No indication of underlying natural deposits were observed in the trench.

Further groundworks were observed in the south-west area of the site where footing trenches for new dwellings were being machine excavated to variable (according to the ground conditions encountered) depths. This area had already been stripped of topsoil to a depth of c. 0.5m. The area on the line of Brunswick Road was previously occupied by houses, several of which had cellars and therefore the new footings had to be excavated to a greater depth for suitable solid ground. In most cases these trenches were dug down to natural sand deposits between 1.2m to 1.5m in depth. The subsoil excavated from the footings and service trenches was a mid brown sandy silt containing fragments of brick and mortar, tile glass and metal fragments. One or two sherds of pottery were recovered from the spoil but these were of modern date.

The excavation of further service trenches, to a depth of 0.5m, were observed along the south and south-west side of the main area of the site and the deposits recorded matched those previously seen in the house footings. Observations in the north-east part of the site were not made initially as this area was used to dump spoil and demolition debris. When this had been cleared (halfway through the period on site) excavation was undertaken within the area of previous hospital buildings, to a depth exceeding 3m. This revealed modern building debris and backfill down to the full depth of the excavation, thus precluding any archaeological remains in this particular area. Natural sand was recorded at a depth in excess of 3.5m to 4.0m. This sand was covered with a spread of redeposited clay containing building rubble of an apparent thickness of 0.5m to 1.0m.

On the north-west side of the site, pipe trenches were excavated to a depth of c. 1.2m to 1.3m. At the base of the debris-filled make-up was a deposit of reddish brown sandy silt, c. 0.40m deep, resting on the underlying natural sand. This deposit was not accessible due to the depth of the trench but appeared to be homogenous in colour and texture with occasional small flint pebbles. No features of archaeological interest were observed within this deposit nor in the base of the trenches.

In the area near the junction of Union Street and Brunswick Road to the west of the site, footings and drain runs were observed being excavated to an average depth of 1.2m to a deposit of natural sand. The deposits seen here were similar to those seen elsewhere. At a later date in this area a bin store was constructed with footings dug to a depth of c. 3.0m to 4.0m which revealed heavily disturbed topsoil overburden 2.0m to 3.0m deep, at the base of which was a natural buff coloured sandy clay. Stored topsoil being removed from this area was observed and metal-detected. The main inclusions consisted of post-medieval and modern rubble and a few sherds of 19th-century ceramics. The rich loam topsoil may have been imported during the construction of the hospital and may have constituted a garden or orchard as several tree roots were observed. The topsoil was to be used for landscaping and levelling around the area of the new dwellings.

4.0 Conclusions

The watching brief established that the site had been heavily disturbed in post-medieval and modern times in the area covered by the groundworks. This was due, in the south-west and western areas to houses previously having stood along the line of Brunswick Road and Union Street. Several of these dwellings appear to have had cellars which had removed deposits down to the natural sand as well as service pipes which were observed in the footing trenches to a depth of 1.2m. Further to the east of the main area of development several deeper modern basements were located, these being associated with the hospital buildings that had previously occupied the site. The area to the north-east, towards Wessex Street, was also found to be heavily disturbed to a depth greater than 3.0m. This disturbance was also due to hospital buildings having previously occupied the site, whose foundations had removed all subsoil deposits down to and into natural sand.

Although the watching brief was necessarily confined to the groundworks associated with the new development the results suggest that the majority of the ground currently under development has at some stage in the past been disturbed to varying degrees, in many areas to a depth sufficient to preclude any surviving archaeological remains.

Acknowledgements

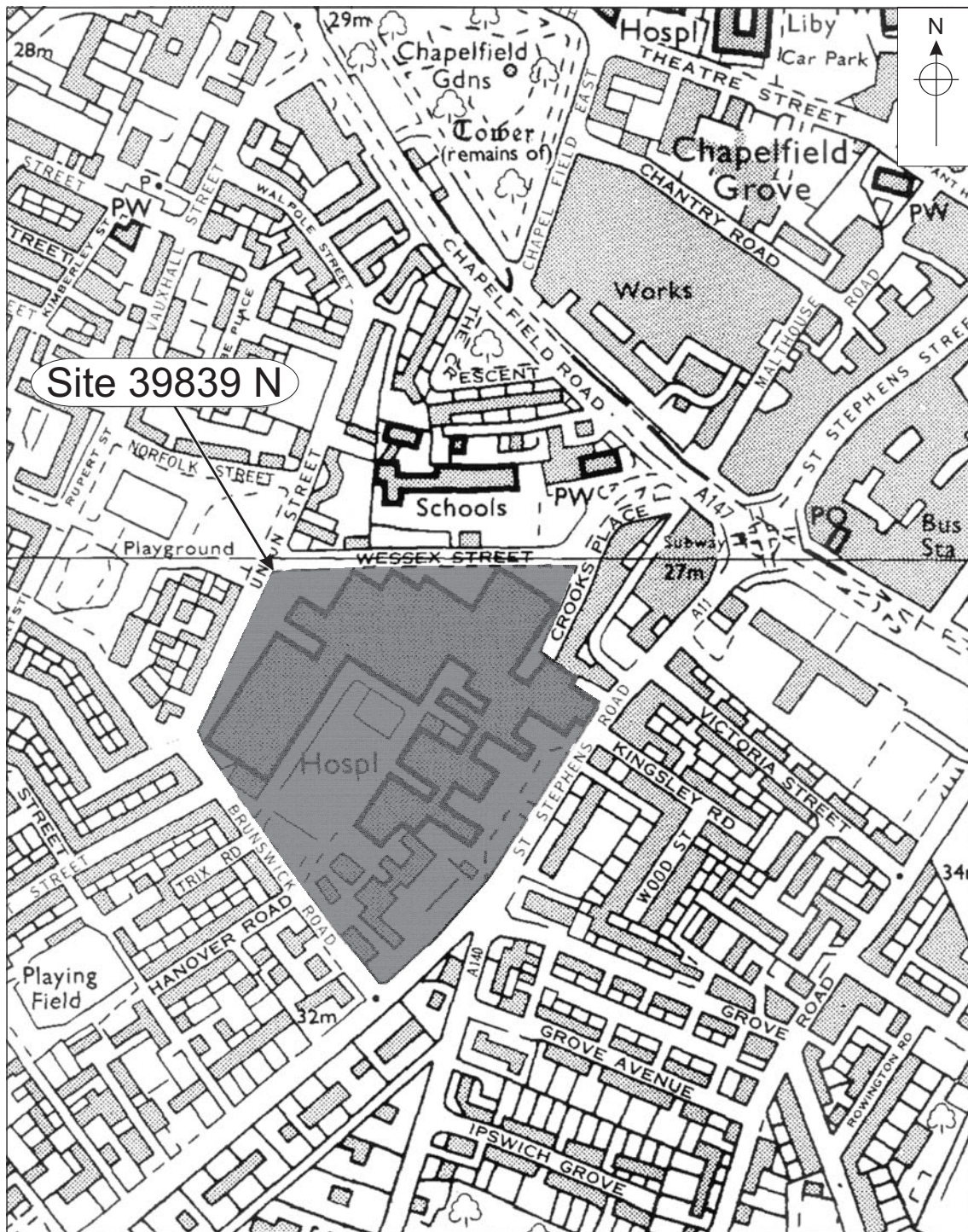
The watching brief was carried out by Neil Moss and the author. Thanks go to Alex Clark from Persimmon Homes, Anglia and the contractors on site for their assistance and co-operation during this ongoing watching brief. Historical Environment Record information for the site area was provided by Jan Allen. The report was illustrated, formatted and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description/interpretation	Period
1	Deposit	Modern 'topsoil'	Modern
2	Deposit	Building rubble and make-up	Modern
3	Deposit	Subsoil	Unknown
4	Deposit	Sand	Natural

Appendix 2: Dates of archaeological attendance at Fellowes Plain site during groundworks

Week ending	Days
30/11/03	2
07/12/03	4
14/12/03	1
21/12/03	4.5
11/01/04	2.5
18/01/04	5
25/01/04	5
01/02/04	3
08/02/04	5
15/02/04	5
22/02/04	4.5
08/03/04	1



0 300m

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000