

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 911

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
St Andrew's Hall, St George's Street,
Norwich**

40127N

John Ames

April 2004

© Norfolk Archaeological Unit

Contents

Summary

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

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Figures

- Fig.1 Site location
- Fig.2 Location of Trial Trench
- Fig.3 Trial Trench, plan
- Fig.4 Trial Trench, section

Location: St Andrew's Hall, St George's Street, Norwich
Grid Ref: TG 2315 0885
HER No.: 40127N
Date of fieldwork: 28th January 2004

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Norfolk Archaeological Unit during the excavation of a trial hole on the west-facing gable of St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich.

A platform-type deposit of very compact chalk mixed with brick flecks and flint nodules was observed under the medieval footings of St. Andrew's Hall. It should be stressed, however, that this investigation was very limited and that the chalk platform may not be in evidence elsewhere beneath the building.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

A watching brief was undertaken at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU). A small trial hole was opened, designed to test the nature and depth of the footings of to St Andrew's Hall.

This watching brief was commissioned by Norwich City Council Property Services. The contractor employed was Richard Jackson PLC, consulting civil and structural engineers.

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

2.0 Geology and Topography

The underlying geology is Norwich Crag, a mixture of glacially deposited sands with pockets of gravel and silty sand which overlies chalk.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

(Fig. 1)

The area of St Andrew's Hall and Blackfriars lies well within the probable core of the Late Saxon town of Norwich (Ayers 1994, 32). This area continued to be densely settled in the post-Conquest era.

In 1310, the Dominicans or Blackfriars were granted a license to obtain land adjacent to the property they already owned. This plot of land was bounded by the river Wensum to the north, Princess Street to the south, St George's Street to the west and Monastery Lane and Elm Hill to the east. After a legal dispute over the closure of two lanes within this plot in c.1345 the friary buildings were complete (Sutermeister 1977, 2-3). A significant proportion of the friary complex survives today and the medieval plan and road systems are readily reconstructable (Sutermeister 1977, 14-15).

Several entries for this ancient part of Norwich were found on the Norfolk Historic Environmental Record (HER).

- HER 194; St, Andrew's and Blackfriars Halls. This site constitutes the former friary, now both an amenities centre and art school. The original building was completed during the 15th-century with 19th- and 20th-century alterations. Located within the Hall and surrounding area is a medieval church, a friary, an non-conformist chapel, an undercroft, a post-medieval school and a mint.
- HER 340; west of St George's Street. An excavation in c.1977 (Sutermeister 1977) revealed a post-medieval 16th- to 17th-century cellar. Further excavation in this area in 1997 (Shelley 1997) indicated 13th- to 14th-century attempts to raise the level of the site, with evidence of buildings, followed by post-medieval buildings and levelling.
- HER 428; north-east of St. Andrew's Hall. This area was the Second Precinct of the Dominican Friary. Several field observations have occurred within this area relatively recently. In c.1991, re-deposited Late Saxon pottery and medieval levelling was recorded. In c.1992 the original cobbled surface of Elm Hill with traces of burning, metalworking debris, architectural fragments, medieval and post-medieval pottery was seen and in c.1999 a watching brief (Evans 1999) on the south cloister walk revealed a mortared flint core and limestone facing of a north-to-south wall.

4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of the trial hole and to determine the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The trial hole was located on the west gable of St. Andrew's Hall, St. George's Street, opposite the Red Lion Public House. The trial hole was excavated by hand and measured c.1.10m by c.0.60m and was c.1.20m deep. As the spoil was placed directly to the side of the trench monitoring and inspection of the spoil was achievable. The spoil was to be reinstated by the contractors.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using 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. Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken. No finds were recovered.

Site conditions were very good, with clear access to and around the trial hole.

5.0 Results (Appendix 1)

(Figs 3 and 4)

The pathway asphalt and associated modern make-up deposits ([1]) consisted of mixed hardcore and rubble and measured c.0.25m in depth.

Below [1] a compact chalk ([2]) was encountered which measured c. 0.25m in depth. Incorporated into this chalk deposit were small red brick flecks and the occasional deposit of mid greyish-brown clayey sand.

The chalk deposit protruded from the west gable-face of St. Andrew's Hall by c. 0.30m and may represent a chalk platform.

Underlying, the chalk deposit was a possible construction cut which is noted in the south- and north-facing sections of the trial hole. The probable construction cut ([3]) measured c. 0.25m in length by c. 0.30m in depth and contained a light-to-mid brown grey clayey sand ([4]) with moderate small-to-medium sized rounded and sub-rounded flint. The narrowness of the trench, however, means that the interpretation of this feature as a construction cut should be viewed with caution.

The possible construction cut appeared to obliquely cut a make-up deposit ([5]) which consisted of a mid-to-dark brownish grey clayey sand with frequent small-to-medium sized rounded, sub-rounded, angular and sub-angular flint and chalk lumps/flecks. Also contained within [5] were charcoal flecks and the occasional shells, possibly freshwater. The presence of possible freshwater shells may indicate that the deposit came from a riverine deposit and, with the close proximity of the river Wensum, this is entirely possible.

6.0 Conclusions

The evidence gained during this watching brief suggests that St. Andrew's Hall may have been built on a platform of re-deposited chalk. Below these make-up deposits it is possible that Late Saxon to early medieval deposits survive.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Nigel Syder of Richard Jackson PLC and John Nuttall of Norwich City Council Property Services. The work was funded by Norwich City Council. Jan Allen of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology supplied the Norfolk Historic Environmental Records (HER). The author digitised the location plans and section. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Footitt; edited by Andy Shelley and Alice Lyons.

Bibliography

- | | | |
|-------------------|------|--|
| Ayers, B.S., | 1994 | <i>Norwich</i> , Batsford/English Heritage, London |
| Evans, H., | 1999 | <i>Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich</i> , NAU Report 450 (unpublished) |
| Shelly, A., | 1997 | <i>An Evaluation at St. Andrew's House, Norwich</i> , NAU Report 246 (unpublished) |
| Sutermeister, H., | 1977 | <i>The Norwich Blackfriars: An Historical Guild to the Friary and it's Buildings up to the Present Day</i> , City of Norwich and Norwich Survey, Norwich |

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Make-up deposit of pathway asphalt and associated hardcore	Modern
2	Deposit	Chalk mixed with flint and mid greyish/brown clayey sand	?Medieval
3	Cut	Probable construction cut	?Medieval
4	Deposit	Fill of [3]	?Medieval
5	Deposit	Make-up deposit consisting of mid-to-dark brownish grey clayey sand	?Medieval



0 1000m

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

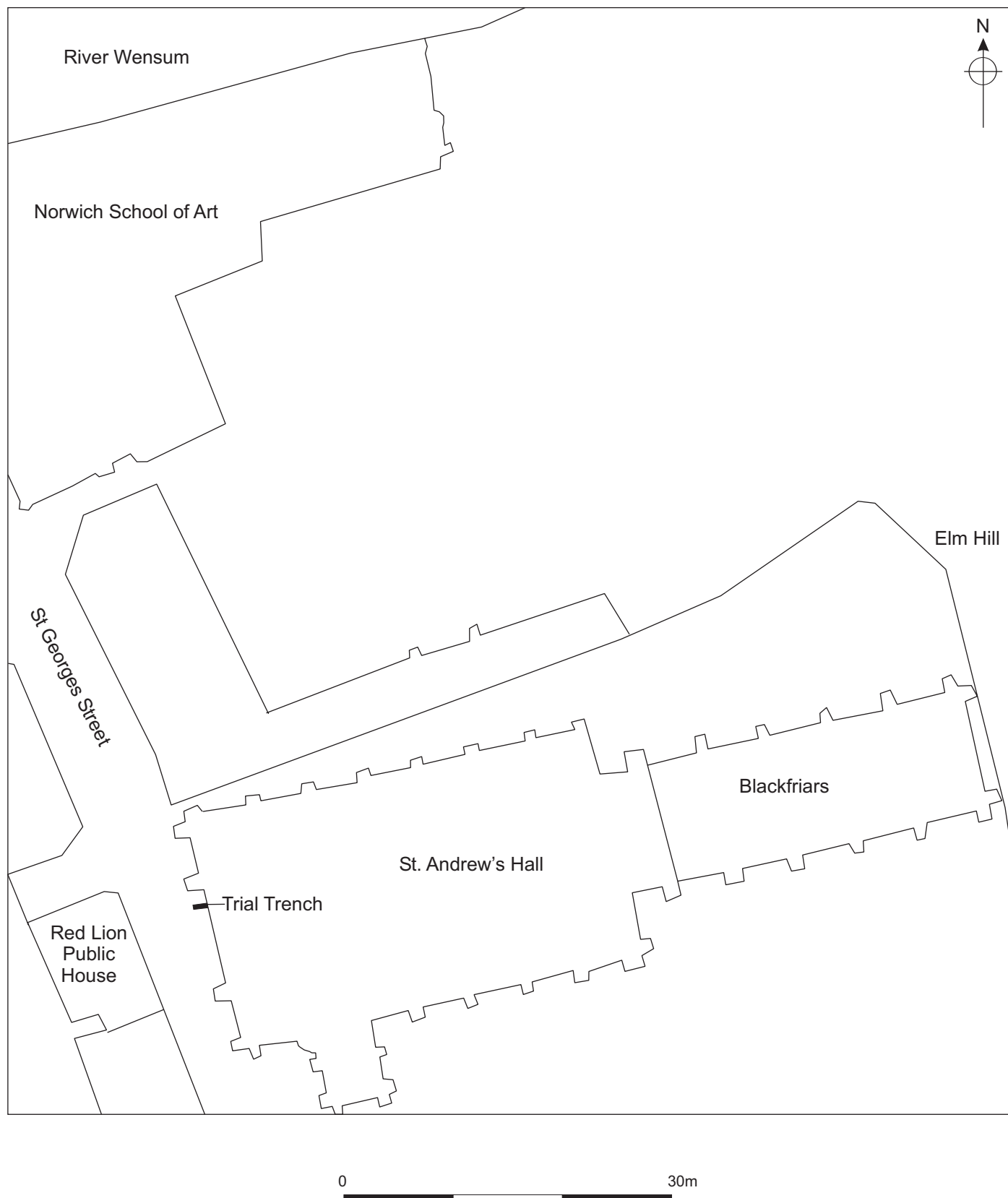


Figure 2. Location of Trial Trench . Scale 1:500

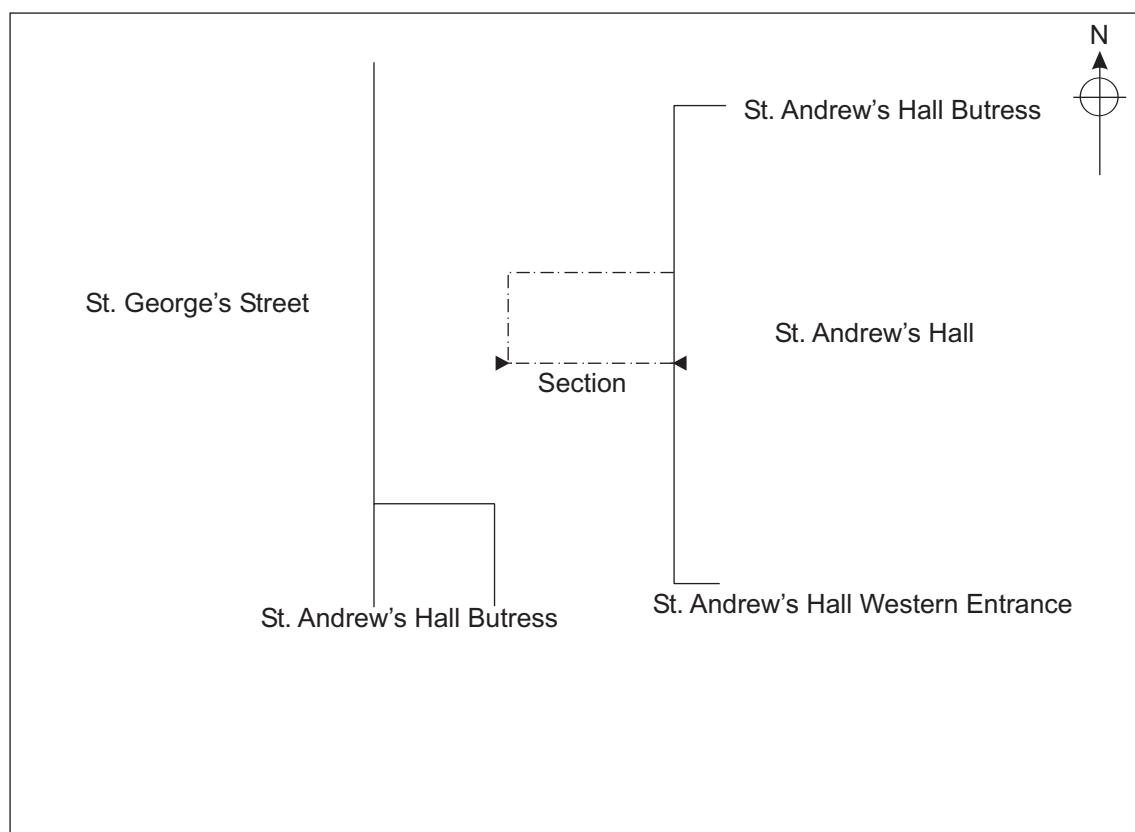


Figure 3. Trial Trench, plan. Scale 1:50

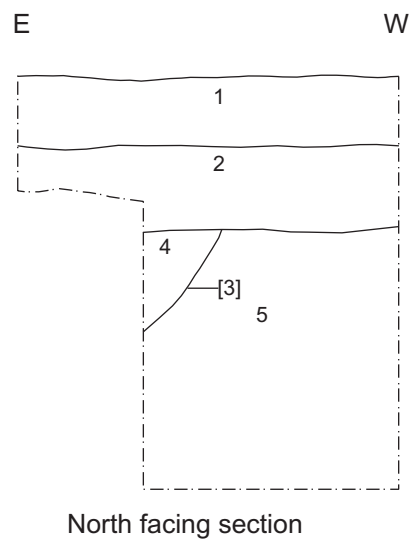


Figure 4. Trial Trench, section. Scale 1:20