

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1322

An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Shrubbery, Blackfriars Road, King's Lynn, Norfolk

NHER 42824 KLY

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| Project overseen by: | Please tick |
| David Whitmore | ✓ |

B. Hobbs

September 2007

BAU 1582

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Location: The Shrubbery, Blackfriars Road, King's Lynn
District: West Norfolk Borough Council
Grid Ref: TF 6226 2027
HER No.: 42824 KLY
Date of fieldwork: 21st May to 23rd May 2007

Summary

An archaeological watching brief to monitor groundworks during a residential development on Blackfriars Road King's Lynn located an early 20th-century rubbish pit on the edge of a deep alluvial silt deposit representing the line of a navigable medieval watercourse, the Fisher Fleet, now located beneath Blackfriars Road. Other than the modern rubbish pit and its contents no features or finds of archaeological interest were observed during the watching brief.

1.0 Introduction

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by Phil Bone on behalf of Sigma Real Estate, King's Lynn, Norfolk in response to a Norfolk Landscape Archaeology brief stipulating archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a residential development on the site at The Shrubbery, Blackfriars Road, King's Lynn.

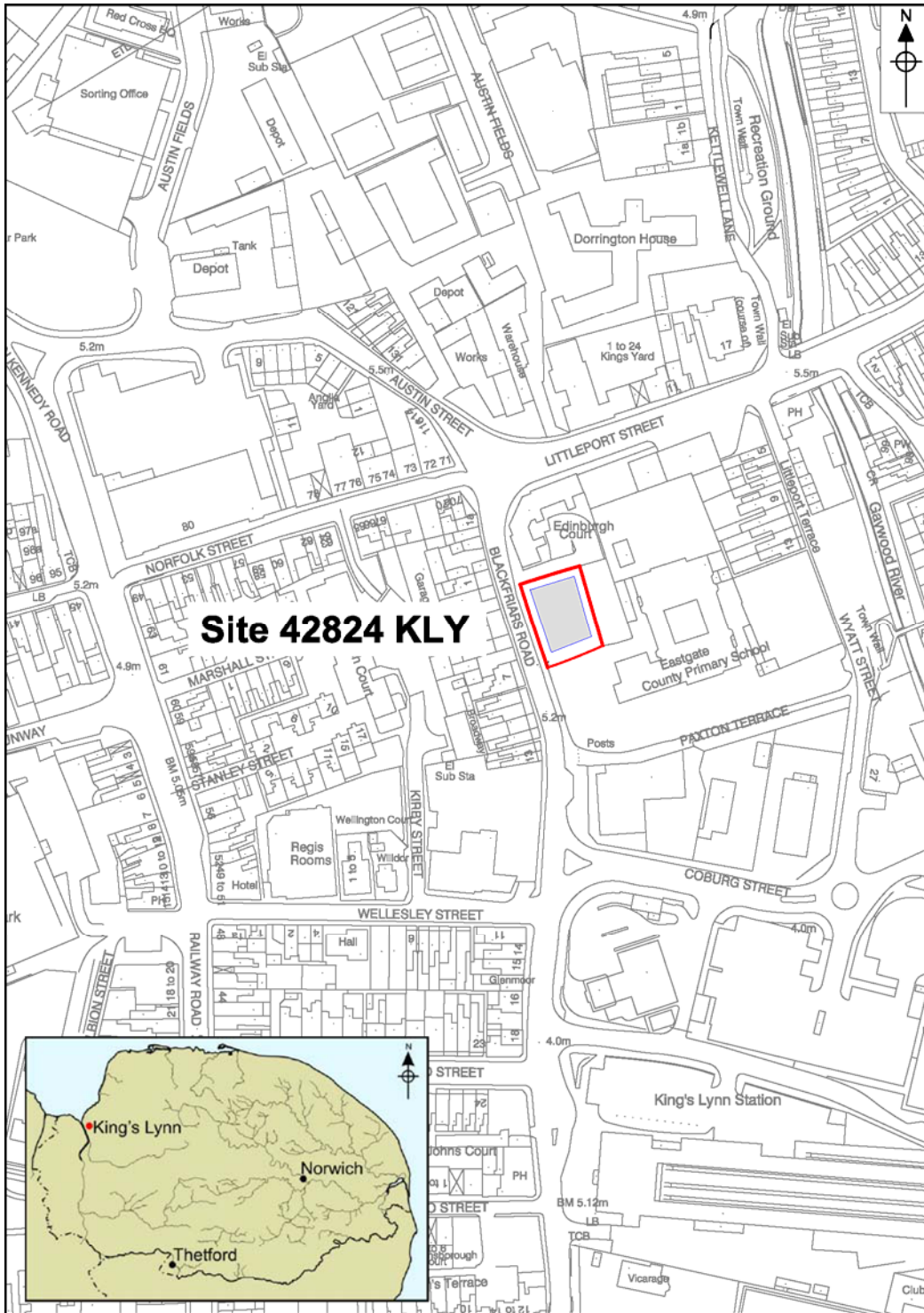
The proposed development encompassed an area of approximately 760m² adjacent to the east of Blackfriars Road. The site was previously occupied by a late 19th-century private dwelling, now demolished, to the north of the site with garden and associated outbuildings.

The site was of archaeological interest due to its proximity to the route of the Fisher Fleet, a medieval navigable waterway that once existed to the immediate west of the site. Evidence of late medieval occupation on the site had come to light during a previous archaeological intervention. This was an evaluation carried out in February 2007 which located a Victorian brick culvert running along the east side of Blackfriars Road and a late medieval ditch (Emery, 2007).

King's Lynn lies between the underlying solid geology of the Upper Jurassic and the Lower Cretaceous series. This is overlaid by a sequence of marine clays, sands and peat, with alluvial and marine silt deposits at the surface (Funnell 2005).

A temporary bench mark on the pavement at the entrance to the site on Blackfriars Road measured 5.05m OD taken from a bench mark of 5.12m OD on the western wall of King's Lynn train station. The water table was encountered at an average depth of 2.8m.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work conducted in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: KH 28/03/07) following an archaeological evaluation of the site. The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, in accordance with the relevant policy on archiving standards.



0 200 m

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2,500

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The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during excavation of footing trenches and sewer trenches for the new development.

The contractors excavated the footing and trial trenches using a tracked 360° machine with 0.90m and 1.2m wide toothed buckets. Two trial trenches to locate an underground sewer pipe were also excavated to the immediate west of the site into Blackfriars Road, one to a depth of approximately 4m below the road surface.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector but no finds of archaeological interest were located.

Deposits were recorded using the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's *pro forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant deposits.

Site conditions were dry and bright. Access to the site was from Blackfriars Road.

2.0 Observations

The western edge of the footing trenches was located approximately 5m to the east of the edge of Blackfriars Road. The ground had previously been reduced to remove topsoil and level the site, and several areas had been excavated to the overall depth of the final footings, presumably to remove loose or disturbed ground. The footings were 0.90m wide and excavated on average to a depth of 0.70m. Of this depth, 0.40m to 0.50m was a make-up deposit containing modern brick rubble, tile, slate and glass fragments ([50]). Below this deposit was a firm silty sand containing moderate small stones, mortar flecks and occasional brick and tile rubble ([51]). Several sherds of early modern glazed domestic china were recovered from this deposit but were not retained. Several patches of intrusive material such as ash and clinker were within the deposit.

No finds of archaeological interest were located within this deposit and no features were observed within the sections of the trenches. The location of the three trenches excavated during the previous archaeological evaluation phase were not apparent within the footings; these may have been truncated by the stripping prior to the excavation of the trenches, or their backfill was too similar to the overall made ground observed in the sections.

Two trial trenches were excavated across the pavement and just into Blackfriars Road to locate a sewer main to link with site services. Both trenches were excavated with a 1m wide toothed bucket. The trench to the north (trial trench 1) ran roughly east-west, was 2.3m long and was excavated to a depth of approximately 2.2m before the presence of several underground cables prevented further excavation. Below the 0.50m depth of road tarmac and foundation was 1.7m of modern make-up material including brick rubble, concrete, tile and glass ([52]).

Trial trench 2 was located 30m to the south of the first trench, ran east-west at 4m long and was excavated to an overall depth of approximately 4.2m before the safe reach limit of the machine excavator was reached. Below the road surface and its foundation was at least 2m of makeup material ([52]) as seen in the first trench to the north. Nothing was observed in the sections of the trench to suggest an edge cut for the line of the Fisher Fleet channel.

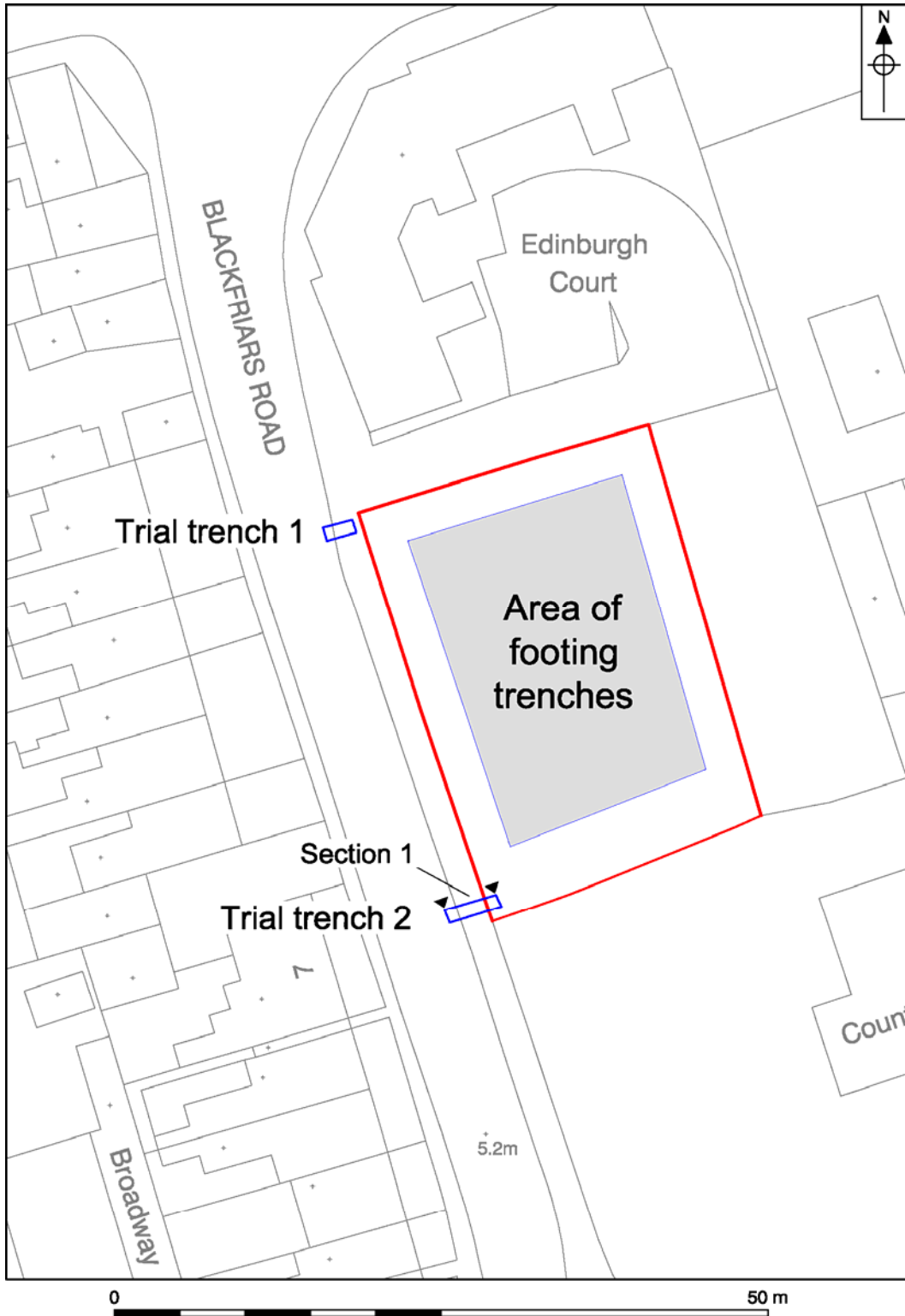


Figure 2. Location of trial trenches and area of footing trenches.
Scale 1:500

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At a depth of approximately 2.5m from the surface on the east end of the trench the edge of a rubbish pit ([53]) was exposed. The extent of the rubbish pit was not determined due to the narrowness of the trial trench. The fill of this feature ([54]) contained early modern pottery, glass bottles, animal bones and oyster shells. None of this material was retained as it was of insufficient archaeological interest.

The deposit beneath the make-up layer ([52]) was a dark grey-brown sandy silt ([55]) approximately 2.2m thick to the visible base of the trench. From the sides of the trench, fragments of brick and tile building rubble were observed to be within the silt, implying a backfilled material. At the base a deposit of natural blue clay ([56]) was just visible from the surface. Access to the trench was restricted due to the depth and instability of the upper sides.

By utilising an existing manhole access in the road it was determined by the building contractors that the sewer pipe was located at a depth of approximately 10m from the surface and further excavation to reach it was not possible. It was further proposed that the new sewer pipes might be connected to an existing outflow of adjacent properties, thus reducing the necessity for additional excavation.

3.0 Conclusions

Cartographic evidence suggests that between 1830 and 1840 and certainly by the 1884 publication of the 1st edition OS map, the Fisher Fleet had been filled in to become the current route of Blackfriars Road. It is probable that the dark silt containing brick rubble seen in the section of the second trial trench was part of this backfill material and thus post-medieval in date. The cut for the channel may be presumed to be slightly further to the east of the observed sections, between the road edge and the western footing trenches.

The rubbish pit on the eastern edge of the trial trench probably dates from the late 19th or early 20th century, when the site was occupied by the private dwelling recently demolished. No evidence of earlier occupation was observed during the groundworks.

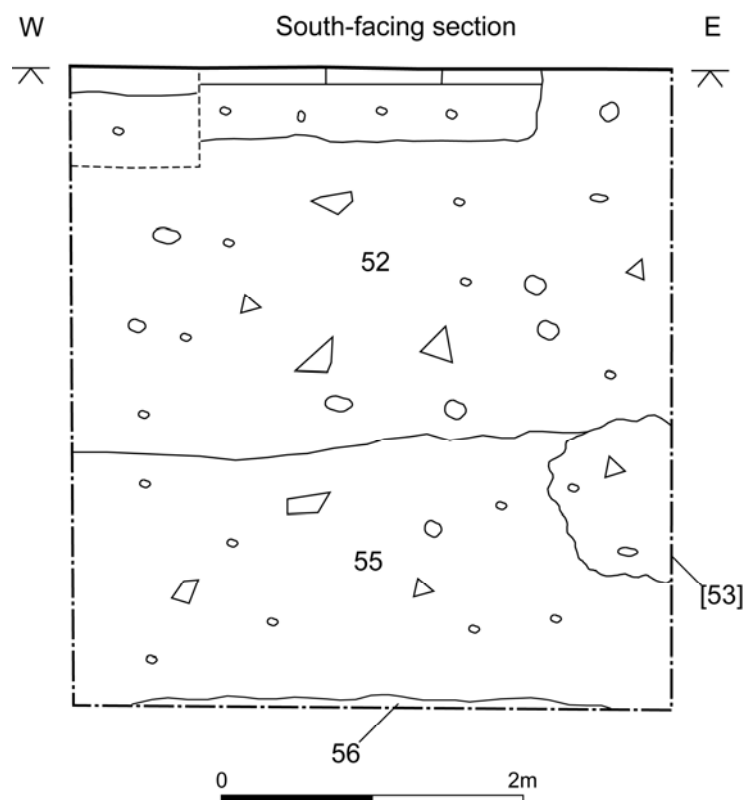


Figure 3. Section drawing. Scale 1:50

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Phil Bone of Sigma Real Estate Ltd, and Carl Fox, site foreman of the construction crew of Kevin Covell Groundworks for their assistance during the watching brief. The report was produced by David Dobson and edited by Martin Smith.

Bibliography

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| Funnell, B. | 2005 | <i>Geological Background</i> , in: <i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (ed Ashwin, T. & Davison, A.) Phillimore & Co. Ltd |

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

| Context | Category | Description | Period |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 50 | D | Made ground | Modern |
| 51 | D | Made ground | Modern |
| 52 | D | Make-up | Modern |
| 53 | C | Rubbish pit | Modern |
| 54 | D | Fill of [53] | - |
| 55 | D | Silt backfill | Post-medieval |
| 56 | | Blue clay | Natural |

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

| Period | Feature type | Quantity |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Modern (1900-2050 AD) | Pit | 1 |