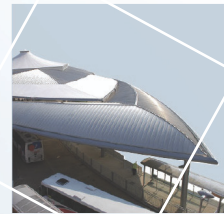


Report No. 1790

An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Faith's Lane and Cathedral Street, Norwich

NHER 49074 N



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BAU 1790

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Location:	St Faith's Lane and Cathedral Street, Norwich
District:	Norwich
Grid Ref.:	TG 23622 08682
HER No.:	49074 N
Dates of Fieldwork:	13–25 February 2008

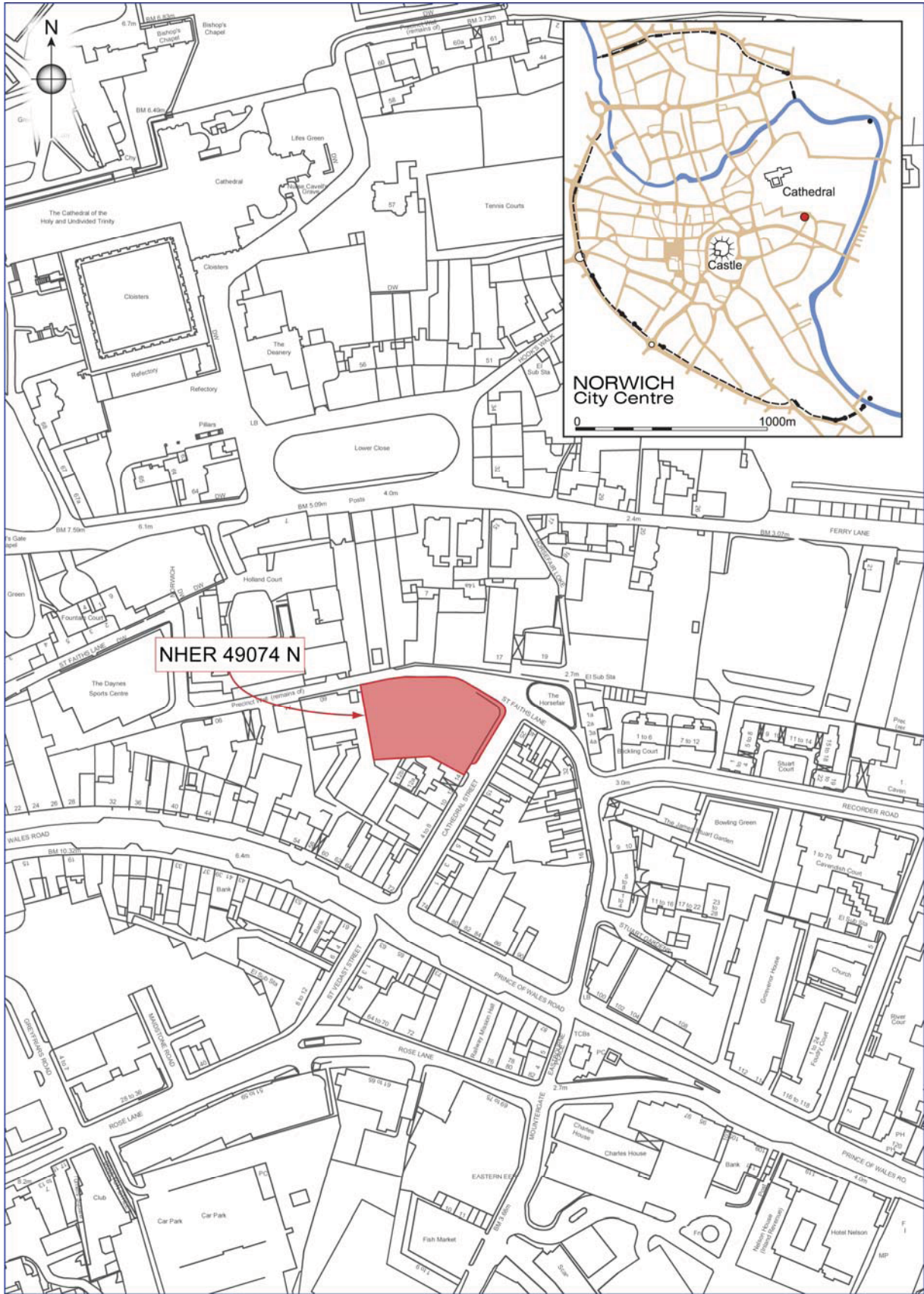
Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by NAU Archaeology from 13–25 February 2008 at a plot of land located at the corner of St Faith's Lane and Cathedral Street, Norwich. The work was monitoring the archaeological impact of foundations being excavated prior to the construction of residential flats. The construction site fell just inside the former medieval Greyfriars precinct and therefore had the potential to disturb medieval remains. An archaeological evaluation by NAU Archaeology had preceded the watching brief, but found little evidence for medieval activity on the site. The watching brief, however, recorded evidence of a possible medieval churchyard, with a quantity of human bone representing at least three adult individuals being recovered. A flint and mortar-built medieval structure was also found during the watching brief. It was located to the east of the possible graves and may have formed one boundary of the burial area.

1.0 Introduction

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by Hopkins Homes Ltd in response to a brief written by Norfolk Landscape archaeology, stipulating archaeological monitoring during groundworks for the construction of several flats. The construction site was located at the corner of St Faith's Lane and Cathedral Street in the centre of Norwich, designated an 'area of main archaeological interest' in the Norwich city plan (2004, HBE 3). In the medieval period this site would have fallen within the parish of St Mary in the Marsh. This parish had been granted to the cathedral priory on its foundation. By the mid-14th century the site would have been incorporated into the north-eastern extent of the expanding Franciscan friary precinct (Ayers 2003; Emery 2007, 52). However, the percentage of the parish which actually fell within the friary precinct was probably quite small, confined to the eastern half of the precinct and extending no further south than the Dallingflete stream (Emery 2007, 11).

There has been little previous archaeological work in this north-eastern portion of the friary precinct. A large section of the south-western corner of the precinct was excavated by NAU Archaeology in 1992–95 (Emery 2007). This work uncovered extensive remains of the pre-conquest town, as well as the medieval cloister and other buildings of belonging to the friary. In 1998–99, 137 burials from the Friary cemetery were excavated by Northamptonshire Archaeology at the former Wallace King premises on St Faith's lane, to the west of the current site (Soden 2001). Prior to this watching brief, three evaluation trenches had been excavated by NAU Archaeology on the site in November 2006. These trenches were excavated while a former office building (demolished at the time of the watching brief) was still extant (Adams 2007). The evaluation recorded only post-medieval features and a



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Figure 1 Site location

small quantity of Late Saxon pottery. The small amount of medieval debris that was present was felt to indicate the destruction of the friary's precinct wall. The area was presumed to have been largely undeveloped, remaining as gardens and away from the core of the friars' activity (Adams 2007, 16–17). Further window sampling was carried out in October 2007 with the aim of locating the Dallingflete stream, known to have run through the friary precinct (Crawford 2007). However, the sampling only recorded deposits which were consistent with those found during the archaeological evaluation, suggesting that the course of the Dallingflete must run to the south of the site.

Constant observation of the Hopkins Homes groundwork was undertaken by NAU Archaeology from the 13–25 February 2008. Several limiting factors were encountered: the trenches were generally too dangerous to be entered by the observing archaeologist, as they reached a maximum depth of 3m and experiencing ingressive ground water and collapsing edges. Once excavated the trenches were filled with concrete almost immediately. The construction team used two machines simultaneously to excavate the footing trenches: a 360° tracked mechanical excavator and a wheeled JCB, both equipped with narrow ditching buckets (Plate 3). Therefore, any recovery of finds was due only to diligent observation of the excavation process and often quick recovery from the spoil heap or ditching bucket. Observation *in situ*, particularly of a quantity of human remains that was recovered, was made impossible by the depth of the trenches, their tendency to collapse, and the watery context from which the finds were derived.

Weather conditions were generally good for the duration of the work. Spoil and exposed surfaces were scanned with a metal-detector, but only finds of modern iron objects were made. The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

As a result of the short windows during which observation was possible, the construction work had to be halted twice. The first time this occurred was due to the initial discovery of human remains. Time was allowed for this to be reported to Norfolk Landscape Archaeology and advice to be sought from the Ministry of Justice. A second interruption resulted from the discovery of two medieval flint and mortar walls which needed time to be recorded.

A detailed account of the archaeological observations is contained in Section 2, followed by specialist reports on the pottery (Section 3.1), human bone (Section 3.2), animal bone (Section 3.3) and masonry (Section 3.4). General conclusions are outlined in Section 4.

2.0 Observations

On 13 February work digging the first set of foundations began in the far south-western corner of the site (Fig. 2). The trenches were excavated down to a light orange natural sand, approximately 1.3m below surface level. The monitoring archaeologist observed deposits that were consistent with those recorded by the aforementioned phases of previous work on the site: window sampling (Crawford 2007) and evaluation trenches (Adams 2007). As work progressed towards the

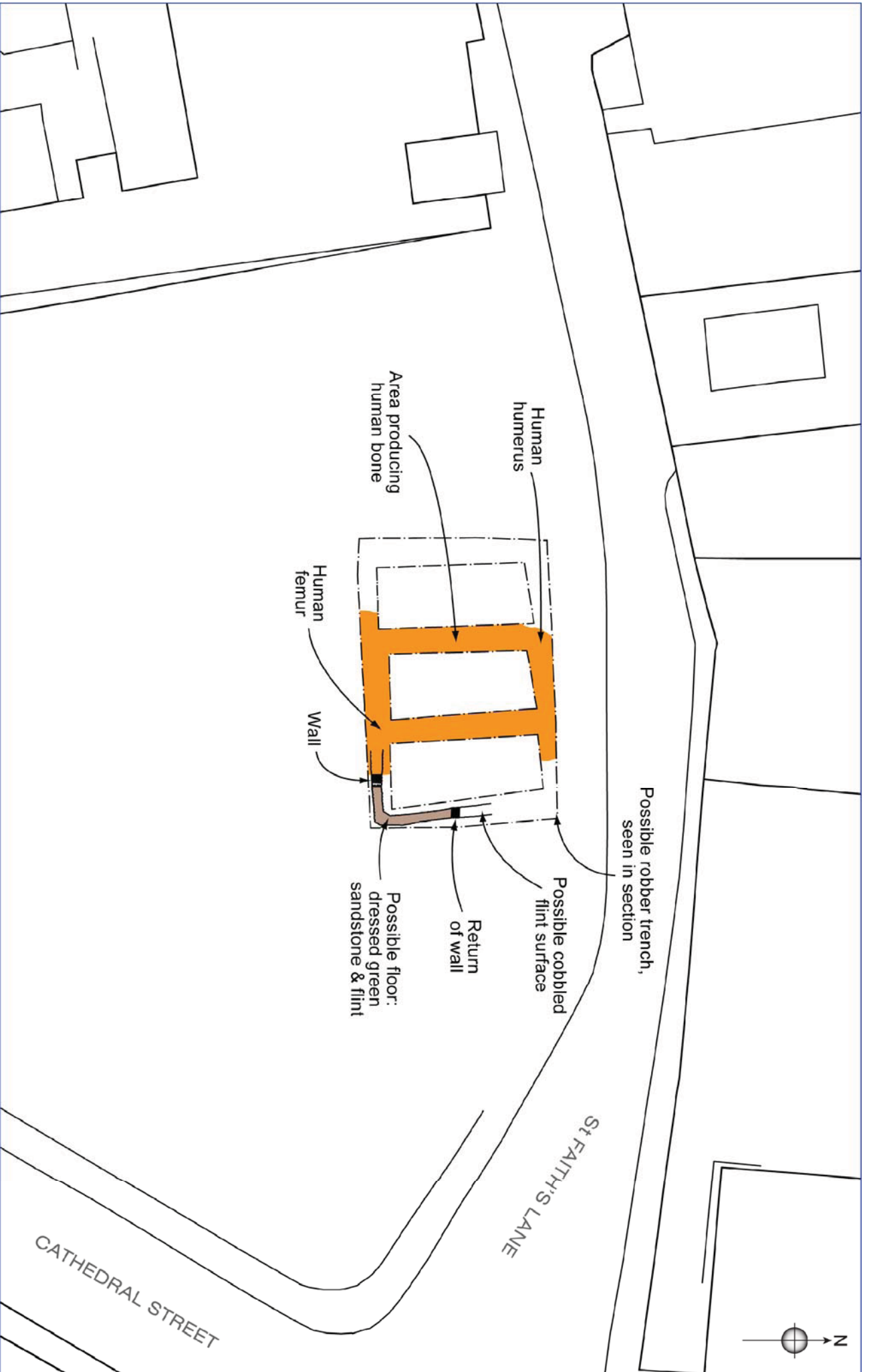


Figure 2 Trench location, showing recorded features and finds

north of the plot the archaeological deposits became deeper. Groundwater was encountered at an approximate depth of 1.5m and this began to severely undermine the trench edges causing work to be abandoned that day.

On 14 February the foundations continued to be excavated, interrupted by regular deliveries of concrete. The south-western range of foundations was successfully completed with no sign of any archaeologically significant deposits having been disturbed, except for a fairly modern looking pit (Plate 2). The deposit sequence consisted of modern layers of soil and rubble with occasional re-deposited sand lenses to an average depth of 1.2m. Pottery, found to be late medieval and post-medieval, and animal bone were recovered from the spoil from this area and catalogued under the unstratified context number [130].

On 18 February the digging of foundations began at the north-west of the site through modern backfilled deposits down to natural. Again, proceedings were slowed by the problem of groundwater causing frequent trench collapse (Plate 1).

On 19 February digging commenced at the central-northern part of the site, fronting onto St Faith's Lane. The natural here was deeper than in other parts of the site and was encountered at 2–2.5m deep. Despite the increased depth of the trenches, only modern deposits were observed, but as work progressed from west to east some archaeological layers were revealed at the very bottom of the trenches. This deposit was primarily a very wet dark grey sandy silt. At this point quantities of human bone began to appear in the digger bucket and on the spoil heap (unstratified context number [132]). It was impossible to clarify whether or not this bone came from *in situ* burials as this lowest context was submerged. The monitoring authority Norfolk Landscape Archaeology were immediately informed, and the Ministry of Justice were consulted before work continued.

The depth of the trenches (now up to 3m), ground water and the speed of the excavation process meant that only the largest pieces of bone could be spotted and recovered (unstratified context numbers [133] and [131]). Trenches were being dug and immediately filled with concrete, although often they were still collapsing before the concrete could be poured.

On 20 February digging continued on the eastern section of the foundation trenches. Two walls were located at right angles to one-another. The first, an east–west section of flint and mortar wall was removed in one stroke by the 30-tonne excavator. The second wall, a similarly constructed north–south section, was found with the JCB. The monitoring archaeologist asked for a chance to record the locations of these walls and the construction work was halted for several hours (Fig. 2; Plate 4). When work continued, other structural elements were viewed, such as possible flint-cobbled floors. Unfortunately, the nature of the machining meant that it was impossible to distinguish, for example, between cobbled flooring and collapsed wall facing. This completed the digging of the deeper foundations.

On 25 February work began on the digging of shallower ground-beams. These were only 1m deep on average and occasionally revealed the tops of 19th-century rubbish pits.

3.0 The Finds

3.1 The Pottery

The site produced nine fragments of late medieval and transitional ware, weighing 151g, from unstratified context [130]. The material consists of four pieces of T-profile plain rim and five body sherds. 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).

3.2 The Human Skeletal Remains

by Francesca Boghi

The human remains recovered consist of 1,293g of disarticulated remains from three unstratified contexts [131], [132] and [133]. The analysis was carried out according to Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994), incorporating suggestions from Brickley and McKinley (2004).

The bone from the three contexts comprises the following. Context [131]: R humerus (proximal epiphysis and middle 1/3). Context [132]: R femur (proximal 1/3 and middle 1/3). Context [133]: L, R frontal bone, R femur (proximal 1/3, middle 1/3, distal 1/3), R femur (middle 1/3, distal 1/3), L tibia (middle 1/3), L tibia (middle 1/3 and distal epiphysis), R ulna (proximal epiphysis and middle 1/3) and 2 rib fragments.

The remains derive from a minimum of three adult (>20 years) individuals, as indicated by the presence of three fragments of R femur (middle 1/3). The age at death was determined according to the stage of epiphyseal fusion. No pathological conditions were noticed.

3.3 The Faunal Remains

by Julie Curl

All of the bone was examined primarily to determine range of species and elements present. The assessment was carried out following a modified version of guidelines by English Heritage (Davis 1992). A note was also made of butchering and any indications of skinning, horn-working and other modifications. When possible a record was made of ages and any other relevant information, such as pathologies. Counts and weights were noted for each context examined. All information was recorded on the faunal remains recording sheets.

Two contexts produced four pieces of faunal remains weighing 37g. Two fragments of a large butchered rib, which may be from cattle, were seen in [130]. Context [133] produced a juvenile sheep/goat metacarpal; this bone showed a knife cut at the rear of the bone that suggests this animal was skinned. A single medium-sized mammal (?sheep/goat) rib was also noted in [133].

The bone is in reasonably good condition. The metacarpal in [133] showed fairly heavy gnawing from a rat; bones are often gnawed by rodents, both as a supply of calcium and to keep the continually growing incisors in trim.

A single fragment of incomplete oyster shell was recovered, weighing 5g.

3.4 Architectural Masonry

by Neil Moss

A single piece of architectural masonry was recovered from the mechanical excavator's ditching bucket. It was given context number [134], a possible floor associated with the medieval walls. The stone was examined, quantified then discarded.

Crafted from pale, greenish-grey micaceous sandstone it measured 165mm long, 145mm wide, 120mm deep and weighed approx 3kg. Shaped into a rough block with two distinct tool mark types, one face has small shallow axe marks (heavily weathered), while two faces have close, parallel tooling marks. Both these marks are indicative of early medieval working. The block shows signs of abrasion as well as weathering, indeed a small piece of lime mortar adhering to one of the abraded surfaces indicates its re-use. The stone type is not one that is commonly found in stone buildings in medieval Norwich, but it may be that this piece is simply a 'glacial erratic' recovered locally during quarrying for aggregates.

No clear date can be inferred for the wall observed during the watching brief, however, the evidence for re-use would imply a late medieval date.

4.0 Conclusions

The discovery of human skeletal remains and *in situ* medieval walls were unexpected after the previous archaeological evaluation (Adams 2007). The site seems to be too great a distance from the 137 burials of the friary cemetery, discovered in 1998–99 (Soden 2001), for the human remains recovered here to have been associated with that burial area. It is possible that these potential burials belonged to the churchyard of St Mary in the Marsh, before the area was incorporated into the friary precinct in the middle of the 14th-century.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Matthew Hobson. The human bone was examined by Francesca Boghi, the animal bone by Julie Curl, and a single architectural fragment was reported on by Neil Moss. The report was illustrated by Michael Feather and edited by Richard Hoggett.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
130	Unstratified	Unstratified finds	–
131	Unstratified	Unstratified finds	–
132	Unstratified	Unstratified finds	–
133	Unstratified	Unstratified finds	–
134	Deposit	Possible floor associated with walls	?Late Medieval

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Medieval (1066–1539)	Floor	1
	Wall	2
	Burial	>3
Post-medieval (1540–1900)	Rubbish Pits	1+

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
130	Pottery	9	151	Post-medieval
130	Animal bone	2	17	Undiagnostic
130	Shell – oyster	1	5	Undiagnostic
131	Human Skeletal Remains	–	–	Undiagnostic
132	Human Skeletal Remains	–	–	Undiagnostic
133	Animal bone	2	20	Undiagnostic
133	Human Skeletal Remains	–	–	Undiagnostic
134	Architectural Masonry	1	3	Undiagnostic

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Animal bone	4
	Oyster Shell	1
	Human Bone	11
Post-medieval	Pottery	9

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Wt (g)	Period
130	Late Medieval and Transitional	Rim	4	74	Post-medieval
130	Late Medieval and Transitional	Body sherd	5	77	Post-medieval
	<i>TOTAL</i>		9	151	

Appendix 4: Human Skeletal Remains

Ctxt	Contextual information	Description
131	Unstratified	R. humerus (proximal epiphysis and middle 1/3)
132	Unstratified	R. femur (proximal 1/3 and middle 1/3)
133	Unstratified	L. frontal bone R. frontal bone R. femur (proximal 1/3, middle 1/3, distal 1/3) R. femur (middle 1/3, distal 1/3) L. tibia (middle 1/3) L. tibia (middle 1/3 and distal epiphysis) R. ulna (proximal epiphysis and middle 1/3) 2 rib fragments

Appendix 5: Faunal Remains

Ctxt	Total wt (g)	Total qty	Spp.	Spp. qty	Comments
130	0.017	2	Mammal	2	Large rib fragments, chopped/cut.
133	0.020	2	Sheep/goat	1	Juvenile metacarpal, several knife cuts and rodent gnawing
			Mammal	1	Rib from medium-sized mammal



Plate 1 Foundation trench widened due to collapsed edges



Plate 2 Pit visible in foundation trench in south-western corner of site



Plate 3 Thirty-tonne machine excavating foundations at the north of the site



Plate 4 East-west aligned Medieval wall
Scale bar = 30cm