

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 877

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Birkett's Building (Strangers' Hall),
4 Charing Cross, Norwich**

606 N

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Location: Birkett's Building (Strangers' Hall), 4 Charing Cross, Norwich
Grid Ref: TG2290 0873
HER No.: 606 N
Date of fieldwork: 15th May 2003

Summary

A watching brief was carried out at Birkett's Building (Strangers' Hall), 4 Charing Cross, Norwich to investigate shallow trenches excavated for services. Contractors reused existing trenches, and removed disused ceramic drainpipes, as a result very little ground was disturbed by the works.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig. 1)

The site was an area of re-exposed service trenches in the centre of Birkett's Building (Stranger's Hall), 4 Charing Cross, Norwich.

Strangers' Hall is a medieval town house that was presented to the city of Norwich in 1922 by Leonard Bolingbroke, grandson of the Norwich artist James Stark. At which time the building was changed into a museum. Access has been limited in recent years.

Strangers' Hall stands on Charing Cross in St. Andrew's, just off the junction with the Maddermarket. Built around two courtyards, the hall stands on an undercroft (arched vaults) dating from 1320AD. One of the hall's most well-known features is the crown-post roof added by its owner, Nicholas Sotherton in 1525. A wealthy grocer, Sotherton became the Sheriff of Norwich in 1530 and Mayor in 1539. In the main hall stands a wooden screen on which are carved several coats-of-arms and seals, including his own, the Grocers' Arms. Various merchants and noblemen owned the building, each remodelling it to his own tastes. By 1621, another grocer, Francis Cock acquired Strangers' Hall. He too became Sheriff in 1615 and Mayor in 1627. It was Francis Cock who had the wooden staircase and bay window added that now covets admiration from all visitors to the hall. Since 1668, there has been very little alteration made to the structure.

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of the groundworks. Contractors were re-excavating shallow services trenches to a depth of approximately 0.4m using hand tools. Colour photographs were taken of the excavated trenches.

This report was commissioned and funded by Norwich City Council.

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

2.0 Observations

No archaeological remains were disturbed during excavation of the service trenches.

3.0 Conclusions

Due to the exceptional care taken by the contractors during the re-excavation of service trenches, disturbance of deposits that may have potentially contained archaeological deposits was minimal. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed or retrieved.

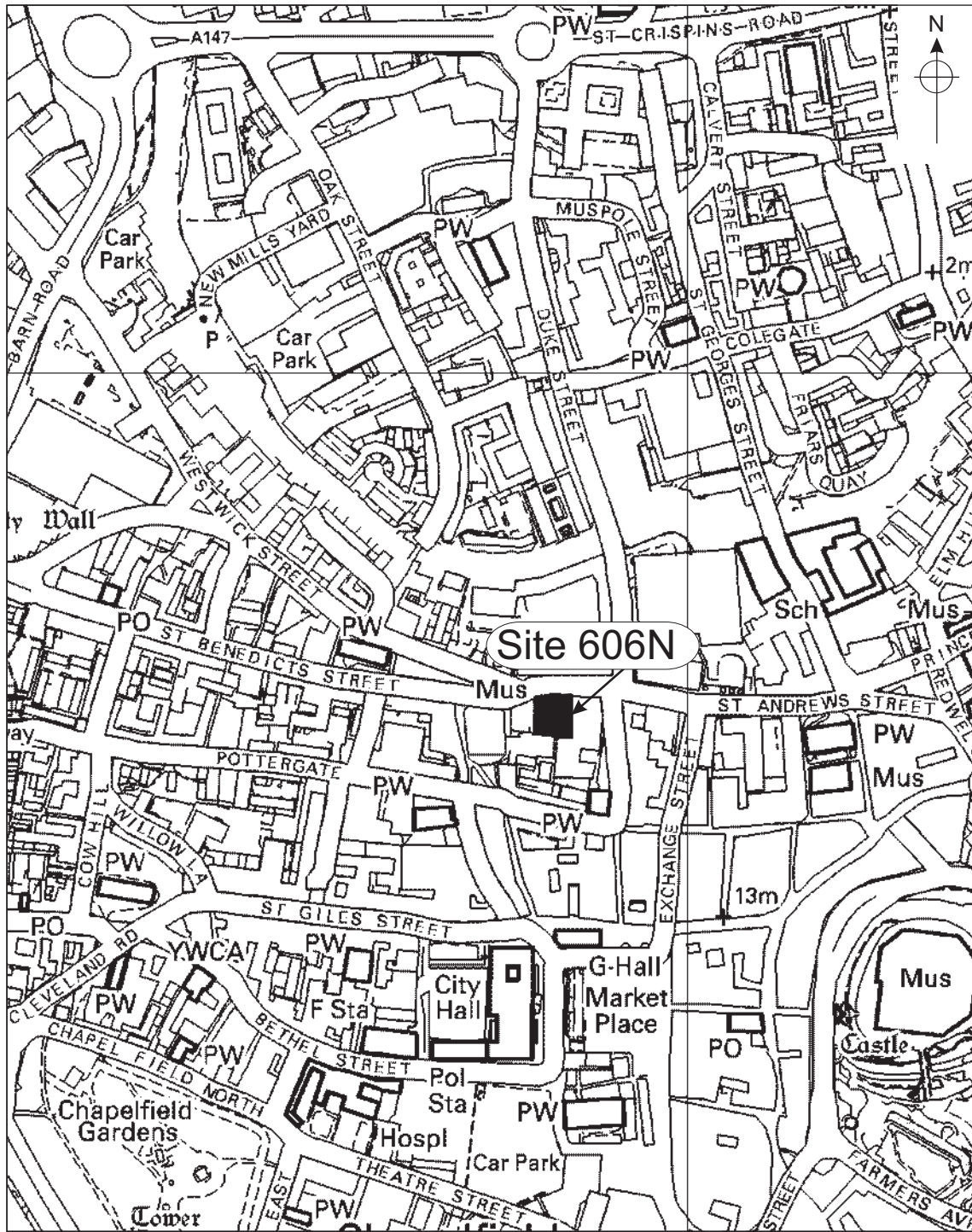


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

Local Authority No. 100019340

Fig. 1 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 (01/07/2004). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**