

Report № 1882

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Zipfel's Court, Norwich

NHER 49838 N

Produced for

Portland Property Investments Limited
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Location: Zipfel's Court, Norwich
District: Norwich
Grid Ref.: TG 23199 09487
HER No.: 49838 N
Client: Portland Property Investments Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork: 11 June–2 July 2008

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted on the excavation of foundation trenches ahead of construction of three residential buildings at Zipfel's Court, Norwich. To the south of the site the monitoring works recorded a single post-medieval pit filled with peat ash and overlain by a mortar floor. Two post-medieval walls lay in close proximity to this floor, at least one of which was aligned east–west. A thick layer of dumped garden soil covered both the walls and the floor and extended across almost the whole development area. To the north, two 19th-century brick cellars cut through this deposit; both were filled with modern demolition material.

It would seem that the area to the east of Zipfel's Court remained as open ground at the rear of street-facing tenements until the post-medieval period, when pressure for space led to the construction of significant ancillary buildings. This development continued into the later 19th century with the construction of the recently demolished warehouse.

1.0 Introduction

An Archaeological watching brief was conducted on land to the rear of Zipfel's Court, off Magdalen Street, Norwich (Figs 1 and 2). The development required the excavation of foundation trenches for three new residential buildings over an area measuring 18m wide by 36m long (648m²).

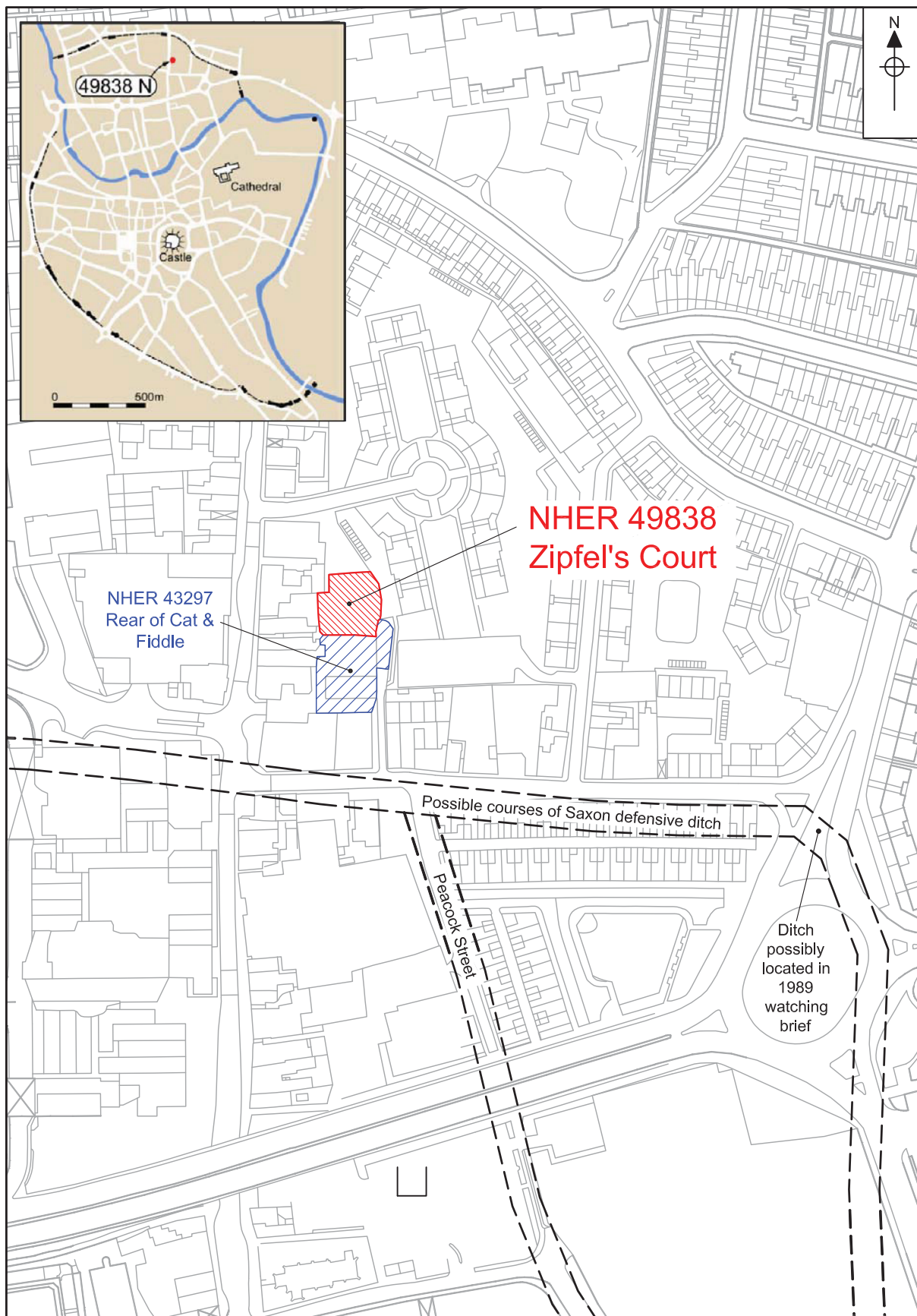
This archaeological watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Norwich City Council and in accordance with a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. This report and its associated fieldwork was commissioned and funded by John Ashfield of Portland Property Investments Ltd.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The area of development was situated just to the east of Magdalen Street on land formerly occupied by a warehouse (Fig. 1). The modern tarmac surface associated with this now-demolished building has a height of 5.00m OD and maintains a relatively level surface across site.

Previous archaeological work on the site has established that the natural geology is sands and gravels, encountered at depths ranging from 1.84m to 3.96m OD (Watkins 2007).



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Figure 1. Site location showing possible locations of Late Saxon defences. Scale 1:2000

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The archaeological and historical background of Zipfel's Court and its surrounding area has been discussed extensively in previous NAU Archaeology reports (Penn 2006; Watkins 2007; Percival 2008). These discussions have been summarised in the table below.

Date	Activity
c.AD 650–800	Middle Saxon settlement on northern bank of the Wensum.
c.AD 900–1050	'Norvic' become trading port, acquires Burghal status, mint and defences.
By AD 1066	All Saints' Church in existence, located on the site of the Gurney Surgery building, 101–103 Magdalen Street.
AD 1067–c.1100	Norman Norwich created, castle, cathedral and present Market Place created along with 'French Borough' west of Market Place.
By c.AD 1250	Magdalen Street built up north of postulated position of Saxon defences; St Margaret in Combusto church, located adjacent Throckmorton Yard, in existence.
By c.AD 1300	Partially extant stone-built city defences completed.
By c.AD 1550	All Saints' church demolished.
By c.AD 1600	Large-scale settlement in north Norwich of migrants from the Low Countries.

Table 1. Summary of the development of Zipfel's Court.

The Saxon defensive ditch was first postulated to run in close proximity to the site on an east–west alignment (Carter 1978) and three phases of previous archaeological works were undertaken in order establish its presence or absence. In addition, the graveyard of the demolished All Saints' church was identified to the south of the retained workshop building. The findings of these archaeological works are summarised here:

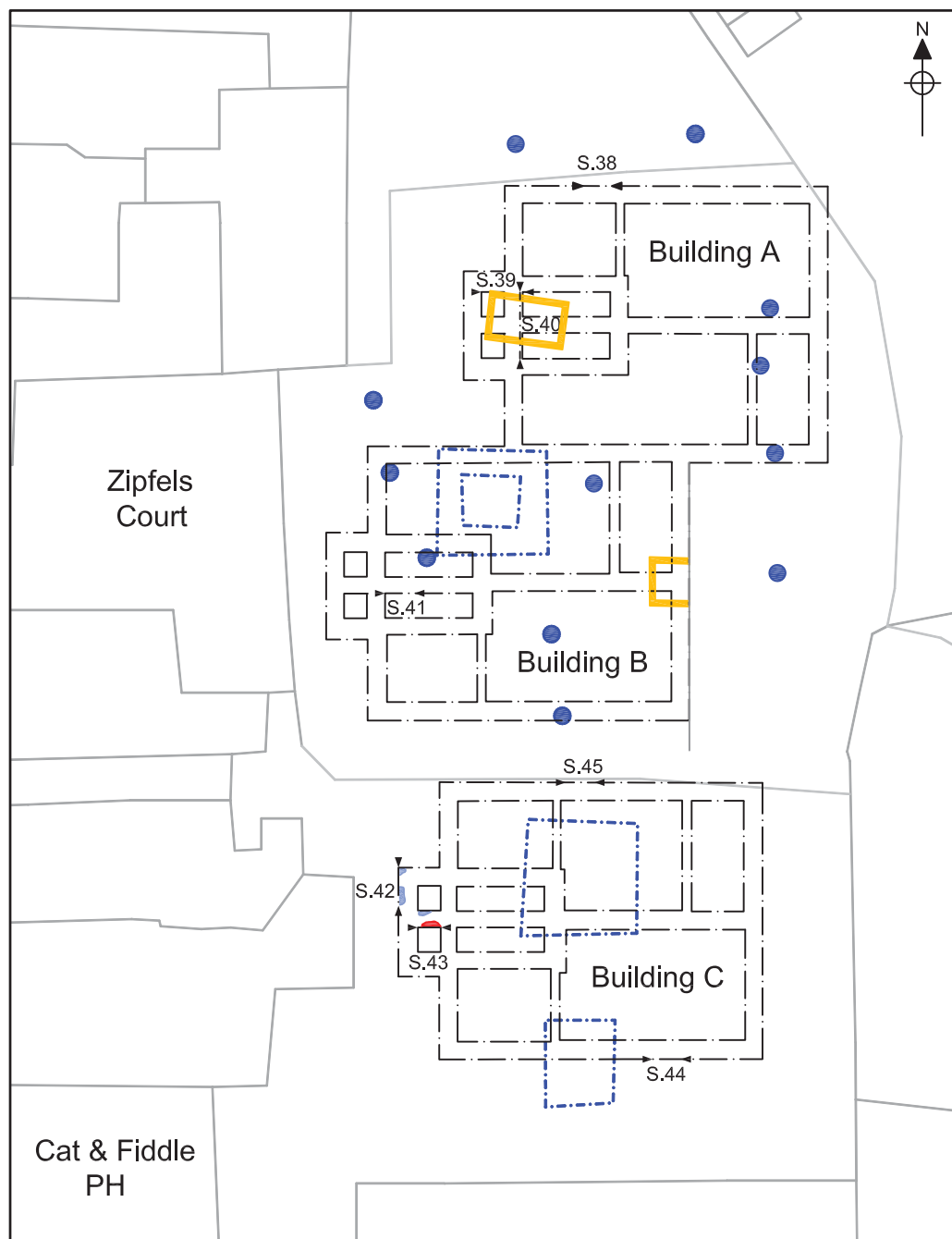
Three evaluation trenches opened in February and March 2006 recorded multiple burials at the southern end of the development site at c.1.5m below the modern surface (Emery 2006). To the north of the retained warehouse building a number of medieval and post-medieval pits were encountered, as well as the foundations of a late 19th-century building and an associated cobbled surface.

A window sampling evaluation was conducted in February 2007 within the now-demolished warehouse at the northern end of the site (Watkins 2007). The results suggested that further medieval and post-medieval pits survived in this area.

In March 2008 a further trench was opened towards the centre of the site where two further late medieval or post-medieval pits were observed (Percival 2008).

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the excavation of foundation trenches prior to construction of three residential buildings. Modern surface deposits had been machined away before monitoring works began in order to install a piling mat at a depth of approximately 4.51m OD for Buildings A and B and 4.21m OD for Building C (Fig. 2). The trenches, laid out to a pre-existing architectural design were excavated to a depth of 0.70m and width of 0.65m by a tracked 5-tonne excavator using a toothed ditching bucket.



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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1: 250

After the excavation of each trench an examination was made of the remaining sections and any observations noted. In areas where archaeological features and deposits were present they were recorded using the NAU Archaeology pro forma. In addition, several 1m-wide representative sections were compiled at various locations across the site (Fig. 2).

Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The quantity of modern material precluded the use of a metal-detector on this occasion, but all hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection. No environmental samples were taken.

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 5.01m OD located on the northern side of the Gurney Surgery, immediately to the south of the site.

Access to the site was limited to a small entrance on Little Bull Close and this coupled with the constraints of a small working area caused delays concerning removal of arising spoil. Weather varied over the period of monitoring but never interrupted the schedule of works.

5.0 Results

Excavation of the foundation trenches revealed a dump of mid–dark brown clay silt directly beneath the piling mat that covered almost the entire area of development and in places extended to the base of the trench (recorded variously as (68), (77), (85) and (83)). The colour of the material varied slightly across the site, but essentially its character remained the same. It contained occasional fragments of well sorted post-medieval brick and tile and a dump of clay tobacco pipes dating from the first half of the 17th century.

At the northern end of the site, deposit (68) was underlain by a mid-ginger-brown sandy silt (69), which may have constituted a well mixed dump of redeposited natural and topsoil. At a maximum height of 4.01m OD, it extended below the depth of the trench and seemed to be localised; it was not visible at all to the north-east or beyond the southern extent of Building A.

Beneath Building B, deposit (85) was underlain by a mid-greenish-grey-brown fine silt (86) at a depth of 3.96m OD with rare, but well sorted, charcoal flecks. It appeared to be the result of a gradual deposition of organic waste material, such as might be associated with an urban post-medieval tenement. As with (69), this deposit was localised and not present in the area of Buildings A or C.

To the south of the site and lying beneath deposit (77) at a depth of 3.81m OD a thin layer of clinker (76), a waste material produced during smelting or the burning of fossil fuels, was visible. It increased in thickness to the east and lay directly above (75), a mid-grey-brown silt identical to (77) that continued to the base of the trench.

A small rectangular red brick cellar (71) measuring 1.70m by 2.80m and of probable later 19th-century date was encountered on the north-western side of Building A directly beneath the piling mat (Figs 2 and 3). The cellar was constructed of double-thickness English bond, cut deposit (68) and was aligned just off of east–west. Its foundation extended below the base of the trench and it

had been backfilled with a dark grey-brown silt, containing abundant brick and ceramic material consistent with demolition (73). Its interior surface had been whitewashed and coal residue was evident.

A similar structure (88) was encountered partially exposed at the eastern limits of Building B (Fig. 2). Although its alignment was more east–west than (77) its dimensions and character were identical and it was also backfilled with demolition rubble (90).

Further fragments of wall, (74) and (84), were recorded at 4.21m OD at the western extremes of Building C (Fig. 2). Both walls were of rough brick, flint and mortar construction and appeared to predate deposit (77). Wall (74) was 0.50m thick and survived to a height of at least 0.67m, extending below the limits of excavation. It was aligned approximately east–west, terminating just within the boundaries of the foundation trench, and appeared to continue westwards beyond the edge of the trench.

Wall (84), 0.50m to the north of (74), was only partially visible and no alignment could be ascertained. However, its visible width was approximately 0.30m and its height 0.65m. As with (74), it extended below the base of the trench. Both walls were post-dated by a dark grey-brown silt (78) filling the space between them and deposit (77).

In close proximity and possibly related to both of these walls remnants of a flint and mortar floor were recorded at a depth of 3.71m OD (Fig. 3). This constituted a 0.03m-thick deposit of yellowish-white soft mortar, set upon a layer of large flints (79) (Plate 1). Beneath this was a 0.20m-thick layer of pinkish-orange burnt clay (82) which may have formed the floor's base.

Just visible in plan at a depth of 3.51m OD and sealed below (82) was the northernmost edge of a small pit [80], the fill of which was a pinkish-red-brown silt (81) consistent with peat ash (Plate 1). It contained a fragment of post-medieval brick. The visible extent of the pit measured approximately 0.60–0.70m in diameter and continued to the south beneath a retained baulk (Fig. 2). A mid-grey-brown silt (87), through which pit [80] was cut, was just discernable at the base of the trench at a depth of 3.51m OD.



Plate 1. Pit [80] and floor surface (79), looking south-west. Scale: 0.5m.

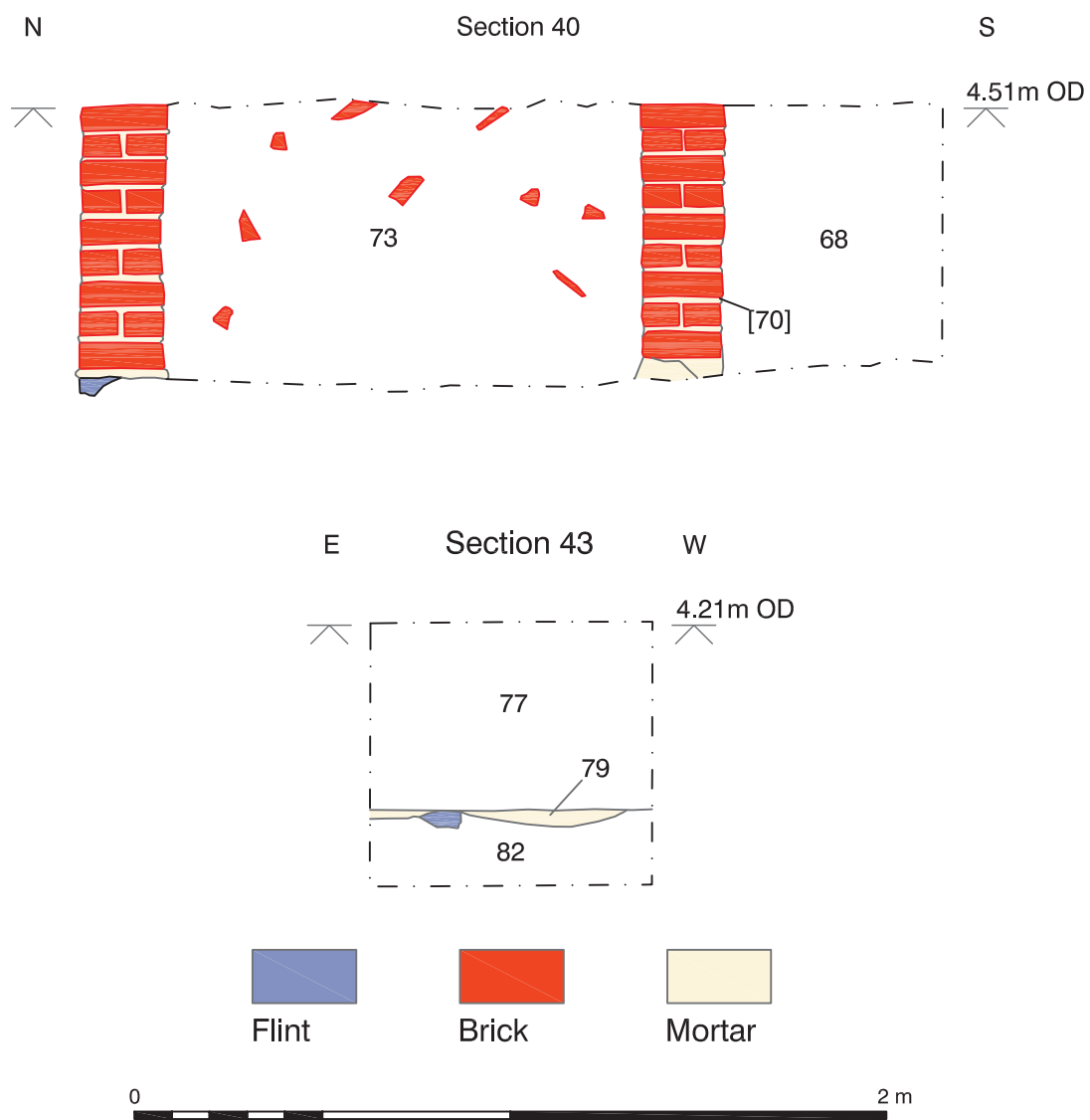


Figure 3. Foundation trenches; sections 40 and 43. Scale 1:20

6.0 The Finds

6.1 Pottery

By Lucy Talbot

The site produced a single fragment of iron-glazed mug handle fragment, weighing 16g, recovered from deposit (85) (Appendix 3). The sherd is 16th–18th century. Identification of the fabrics was based on the typology of Norwich ceramics established by Jennings (1981).

6.2 Clay Tobacco Pipe

By John Ames

The clay tobacco pipe assemblage recovered during the watching brief consisted of nine bowls and three stem fragments with a total weight of 0.128kg (Appendix 4). All of the pieces were recovered from deposit (85) and probably represent a single dump, as they are all of the same style and date range.

The dating of the assemblage has been principally based on the London-type series of bowl forms (Oswald 1975). No attempt was made to employ stem bore dating techniques.

The stamped relief in the base of the heels of six of the bowls probably represents a rose with five pellets and is likely to have been manufactured in London. However, similar floral stamped reliefs have been recorded from Amsterdam and it has been suggested that English rose variants probably originate from the Tudor rose. The bowls dated from the early to mid-17th century.

A further three bowls were in the same style and of the same date, but carried no decoration, and three stem sherds were undatable.

7.0 Conclusions

The small pit recorded towards the southern half of the site is typical for a post-medieval tenement plot, when undesirable waste materials, in this case in the form of fuel waste, were buried in the open spaces to the rear of the residence.

With continued urban development throughout the post-medieval period and increased pressure on land these open areas were utilised for the construction of ancillary buildings. The fragments of floor surface and two flint, brick and mortar walls probably relate to such activity. Cartographic evidence indicates that by the later 18th century a rectangular building stood within the southern half of the site, the southern external wall of which aligns with at least one of these walls (Campbell 1975). It seems reasonable to hypothesise these are the foundations of this long-demolished building or one of its predecessors.

A dump of imported garden soils was levelled across the whole site, raising the ground surface by about 0.70m. Recovery of clay tobacco pipe dates this material to no earlier than early to mid-17th century and this is supported by the pottery fragment retrieved from the same context. The purpose of dump is not clear, but the quantity of pits filled with compressible materials in existence by this time would have made for a poor foundation upon which to build and prior to any further construction it was probably necessary to consolidate the ground.

The two red-brick cellars recorded within the footprints of Buildings A and B are likely to relate to the most recent phase of construction. They both appear to be of similar alignments to the recently demolished warehouse, for which archaeological work suggested a late 19th-century date (Watkins 2007). The surviving coal dust residue would suggest they were probably for the storage of fuel.

No indication of the presence of either the Saxon defensive ditch or the continuation of All Saints' cemetery was recorded, although the limited depths of excavation do not preclude their existence.

Acknowledgements

This report and its associated fieldwork was commissioned and funded by John Ashfield of Portland Property Investments Ltd.

The pottery was analysed by Lucy Talbot and the clay pipes by John Ames; Jon Percival offered advice on report production. The illustrations were prepared by David Dobson after digitising by the author. The report was edited by Richard Hoggett.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
68	Deposit	Dark grey-brown silt	19th century
69	Deposit	Mid-ginger-brown sandy silt	
70	Cut	Of wall [71]	19th century
71	Masonry	Brick wall	19th century
72	Deposit	Mid-yellow-orange	19th century
73	Deposit	Dark grey-brown silt	20th century
74	Masonry	Brick and flint wall	Post-medieval
75	Deposit	Mid-grey-brown clay silt	Post-medieval
76	Deposit	Ash and industrial waste	Post-medieval
77	Deposit	Mid-grey-brown clay silt	
78	Deposit	Dark grey-brown silt	
79	Masonry	Mortar floor	Post-medieval
80	Cut	Small pit	Post-medieval
81	Deposit	Pinkish-red-brown	Post-medieval
82	Deposit	Pinkish-orange	Post-medieval
83	Deposit	Mid-grey-brown silt	
84	Masonry	Brick and flint wall	Post-medieval
85	Deposit	Mid-dark grey-brown silt	
86	Deposit	Mid-greenish-grey-brown silt	
87	Deposit	Mid-grey-brown silt	Post-medieval
88	Masonry	Brick wall	19th century
89	Cut	Cut for wall [88]	19th century
90	Deposit	Demolition back fill of [89]	19th century

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900)	Pit	1
	Wall	4
	Floor	1

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
85	Clay pipe	12	128	Post-medieval
85	Pottery	1	16	Post-medieval

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900)	Clay Pipe	12
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900)	Pottery	1

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
85	Iron-glazed ware	Handle	1	16	Post-medieval

Appendix 4: Clay Pipe

Ctxt	Description	Dateable Category	Qty	Spotdate	Discussion
85	Bowls with incomplete stems	Bowls with stamped relief.	6	Early to mid-17th century.	Six small bulbous/waisted bowls with stamped relief of a probable five pellet rose in the base of the heel.
85	Bowls with incomplete stems	Bowls with no stamped relief	3	Early to mid-17th century	Three small bulbous/waisted bowls without stamped relief.
85	Stem fragments		3		Not dateable