

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 937

**An Archaeological Excavation at The Paddocks,  
Cley Road, Swaffham, Norfolk**

40197 SWF

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June 2004

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## **Contents**

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### ***Summary***

Introduction

- 2.0 Geology and Topography
- 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background
- 4.0 Methodology
- 5.0 Results
- 6.0 The Finds
- 7.0 Conclusions

### ***Acknowledgements***

### ***Bibliography***

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Appendix 3: Pottery

Appendix 4: Faunal Remains

### **Figures**

- Fig.1 Site location
- Fig.2 Site plan



Location: The Paddocks, Cley Road, Swaffham, Norfolk  
Grid Ref: TF 817 086 (c)  
HER No.: 40197 SWF  
Date of fieldwork: 4th, 5th and 8th March 2004

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological excavation was undertaken by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit within the grounds of 'The Paddocks' retirement home, Swaffham, in west Norfolk. Only one feature of archaeological interest was identified, a pit containing several sherds of medieval pottery.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological excavation was carried out by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit in the grounds of a retirement home at The Paddocks, Cley Road, Swaffham, in west Norfolk. This consisted of a single trench that measured c. 8.5 x 5.2m (c. 44 square metres). The proposed development consisted of extensions to an existing building of the retirement complex.

The principal objective of the excavation was to determine whether an Early Saxon cemetery known to have existed a short distance (c. 70m) to the south extended into the area of proposed development. This work was commissioned by Sketcher Partnership, Dereham, on behalf of their client.

The excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: KJP/1724) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ARJH/15/03).

The work was designed to record the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). As the results of this project were quite limited, an Assessment Report and Updated Project Design have not been produced.

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 solid geology in the area of the site is Upper Chalk covered by boulder clay, mainly Lowestoft and Anglian Tills and Breckland soils (Wade-Martins 1994). The boulder clay on site was relatively close to the surface which affected the drainage and water content of the overlying soil.

### 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

This site was located in an area of archaeological interest, with several sites noted on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER). The most significant of which was an Anglo-Saxon cemetery located a short distance, (approximately 70m), to the south. This cemetery site was excavated in 1970 by NAU in response to building development (Hill and Wade-Martins 1976). The site (HER 1125) produced nineteen 6th-century Anglo-Saxon inhumations complete with grave goods. Brooches, spear points, shield bosses and traces of textile were all found within the burials. One of the male skulls exhibited possible evidence of trepanation which is comparatively rare from sites of this date.

In addition, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by the NAU, c. 200m south-west of the present site, at Copper Hall, Cley Road (Trimble 1999) to check if the Anglo-Saxon cemetery extended that far to the west. No features or deposits of archaeological interest, however, were recorded.

### 4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that the area enclosing the footprint of the proposed extension was to be excavated to the fullest extent possible. Initially the site to be excavated included a main area of lawn, c. 44 square metres, running south-west to north-east (parallel to the line of Cley Road) and a second smaller area slightly to the north-east. After consultation with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, however, it was decided to abandon the second area (it would have prevented access to a fire door).

The working area of the site was restricted due to the installation of anti-climb metal Heras fencing placed around the protected trees to prevent machine damage and to limit the spread of spoil under the canopy cover, as stipulated in the planning requirements.

Machine excavation was carried out in spits with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The extreme south corner of the site, however, was stripped and excavated by hand as this was under the canopy of one of the trees. As the northern half of the site consisted of modern backfilled material and space for machining was restricted, this area was consolidated and used as a platform for the machine to strip and excavate the southern half of the site. The resultant spoil was piled around the machine within the fenced enclosure protecting the nearby trees.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

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.

Site conditions were moderately wet with ground and surface water within the area under investigation. Access to the site was limited by a narrow entrance to the rear of the main buildings.

## **5.0 Results (Appendix 1)**

(Fig. 3)

The area excavated measured c. 8.5m x 5.2m, the northern and southern parts of the trench was examined separately and described below.

### ***The northern part of the trench***

Below the modern topsoil a dark grey-brown sandy silt ([12]) subsoil was identified containing mortar, brick and tile fragments over the whole of the northern part of the trench.

Within the first metre of the excavation a water/drainage pipe was located 1.5m to the south of the modern building extension. This pipe could be traced along the width of the excavation from north-west to south-east and was left undisturbed.

A substantial modern brick structure was uncovered running along the western side of the side of the trench. This consisted of a brick-built platform ([11]) of at least four courses (0.50m deep), running for a distance of c. 2.75m, with a visible width of 0.40m. The deposits adjacent to the brickwork were machine excavated to a depth of 1m from the surface and consisted of the same grey-brown silt ([12]) subsoil as noted above. Further excavation in this area to the safe limit of 1.2m revealed the same soil with more frequent chalk fragment inclusions, but an earlier subsoil was not observed.

Examination of the northern part of the trench showed that this area was a backfilled cellar. No further investigation was made of the cellar, although the southern wall of this feature was located ([10]).

The ground gradually excavated to the south of the cellar line was of a different character entirely in that was stratified with a loamy topsoil, [1], a sandy silt subsoil, [2] and a primary subsoil, [17]. This overlaid a natural boulder clay located at an average depth of 0.75m. The southern half of the site was gradually machine excavated to the natural clay and the surface thus revealed was cleaned by hand.

Along the length of the eastern edge of the site for a distance of approximately 10m from the level of the brick platform nearly to the south-east corner of the cleared area was a deposit of crushed chalk, [16] (average thickness 100mm) which lay within a regular cut into the upper subsoil [2]. No dating evidence came from this deposit but it was assumed to be associated with the date of brick structure [11] and therefore post-medieval to modern. The deposit was possibly laid to make-up the ground level in this area or to facilitate drainage.

### ***The southern part of the trench***

The southern edge of the site was cleaned and a number of deposits were observed in section. Beneath the dark brown loam topsoil ([1]), with an average thickness of 0.20m, was sandy silt subsoil ([2]) seen in all sections of the south half of the area that had an average thickness of 0.15m. In the south section a compact dark grey layer of clayey coarse sand ([3]) was observed to be directly beneath the topsoil and over subsoil [2]. This deposit contained fragments of brick, glass and coal dust and was deduced to be a later dump laid down and cut into the subsoil, probably, like deposit [16], to make-up the ground level.

At the east end of and cutting deposit [3] was a semi-circular cut [13] (only seen in section), it had a diameter of 0.40m and was 0.25m deep. It contained a very compact dark grey sandy clay silt with orange flecks ([14]) which was sealed by the topsoil ([1]). It contained occasional small stones with glass and brick fragments and was considered modern. The soil beneath this cut was discoloured as if stained by oil or garden chemicals. Cut [13] appeared associated, or at least contemporary, with the hard dark grey deposit [3], as the soil was very similar in composition and colour.

The deposit directly above the natural boulder clay was a mid brown-orange sandy silt primary subsoil ([17]) with a visible thickness of 0.37m, it contained occasional small stones and flint pebbles. No dating material was recovered from this deposit.

After hand cleaning the base of the exposed area, several features were observed cut into the clay natural to the south of the line of the modern cellar. After investigation, three of these features were dismissed as natural depressions, tree boles or tap root holes.

An irregular shaped feature located almost adjacent to the southern cellar wall line comprised of two shallow intercutting pits ([8] cut by [6], filled by [7] and [9] respectively) with a maximum depth of 0.20m and dimensions of 1.5m by 1.8m. The fills were of a mid brown silty sand and contained occasional small stones and fragments of brick, mortar and clay pipe. One fragment of medieval pottery was found in fill [9], but with the presence of later artefactual evidence was deemed residual.

The feature exposed close to the west edge of the site, was a roughly ovate pit ([4]) which measured 3.20m by 2.0m and was 0.14m deep. The fill ([5]) of this shallow feature was a fairly homogenous fine sandy silt with occasional small stones, which contained seven sherds of medieval pottery and six fragments of animal bone.



## **6.0 The Finds (Appendix 2)**

### **6.1 *The pottery***

The pottery from the site consisted of eight fragments, weighing 0.093kg, of medieval pottery dating from the 11th to the 14th centuries. Seven of these sherds were found in one feature ([4]) were identified as a medieval coarseware; a local medieval unglazed variant and an unglazed Grimston ware. The provenance of all these types can be attributed to a similar date range and are not likely to be residual.

A single piece of unprovenanced medieval glazed ware was recovered from a post-medieval pit ([9]) and was probably residual.

### **6.2 *The faunal remains***

A total of 0.071kg of animal bone was recovered from the excavations. The remains were all found in one feature ([5]). The front part of an equid (horse) jaw was identified, the wear on the teeth present would suggest that this was from a mature animal. Five other fragments of bone were present, but could only be identified as a large mammal.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The only feature of archaeological interest located was the single shallow pit ([4]) containing seven sherds of medieval (11th to the 14th century) pottery. Along with the pottery, the presence of fragments of horse and other mammal bone indicates that the feature was most likely a rubbish pit. As no other archaeological features were located that could be associated with the pit, it was considered to be an isolated feature.

The absence of any burial, or other feature, of Anglo-Saxon date provides excellent negative evidence that cemetery previously identified (Hill and Wade-Martins 1976) close-by to the south did not extend into this area.

It is proposed to publish a brief summary of the results of this excavation in the Recent Archaeology section (Excavations and Surveys in Norfolk) of *Norfolk Archaeology*, the annual journal of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society.

### ***Acknowledgements***

The author would like to thank the staff and residents at The Paddocks Retirement Home for their interest and particularly for the forbearance of the gardening staff during the work on site. The excavation was carried out by Peter Crawley and the author. Tree Protection Order information was provided by Gilbert Addison, Breckland tree and countryside officer. The small finds were processed by Lucy Talbot; the pottery was inspected by Richenda Goffin and the animal bone was assessed by Julie Curl. Historic Environment Record (HER) information was provided by Jan Allen. The report was illustrated by Sandrine Whitmore and Maggie Footitt who also produced it, and edited by Alice Lyons.

### ***Bibliography***

- |                                 |      |   |
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### ***Appendix 1: Context Summary***

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Subsoil	Post-medieval
3	Deposit	Compact dark grey silt	Post-medieval
4	Cut	Oblate pit feature	Medieval
5	Deposit	Fill of [4]	-
6	Cut	Pit feature	Post-medieval
7	Deposit	Fill of [6]	-
8	Cut	Pit feature	Post-medieval
9	Deposit	Fill of [8]	-
10	Cut	Cut line of south cellar boundary	Post-medieval
11	Masonry	Brick platform	Post-medieval
12	Deposit	Cellar fill	Modern
13	Cut	Small pit cut in north-facing section	Post-medieval
14	Deposit	Fill of [13]	-
15	Cut	Cut of chalk dump layer	Post-medieval
16	Deposit	Fill of [15]	-
17	Deposit	Primary subsoil	Unknown
18	Masonry	South brick cellar wall	Post-medieval

### ***Appendix 2: Finds by Context***

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
5	Pottery	7	0.081	Medieval
5	Animal bone	-	0.071	-
9	Pottery	1	0.004	Medieval

### ***Appendix 3: Pottery***

Context	Fabric	Form	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Date
5	Medieval coarseware	Body	2	0.028	11th to 14th century
5	Local medieval unglazed (variant)	Body	2	0.024	11th to 14th century
5	Grimston unglazed ware	Body	3	0.037	11th to m13th century
9	Unprovenanced medieval glazed ware	Body	1	0.004	12th to 14th century

### ***Appendix 4: Faunal Remains***

Context	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Species
5	6	0.71	Equid: X1, fragment of lower jaw
			Mammal: X5, large rib fragment and unidentifiable fragments





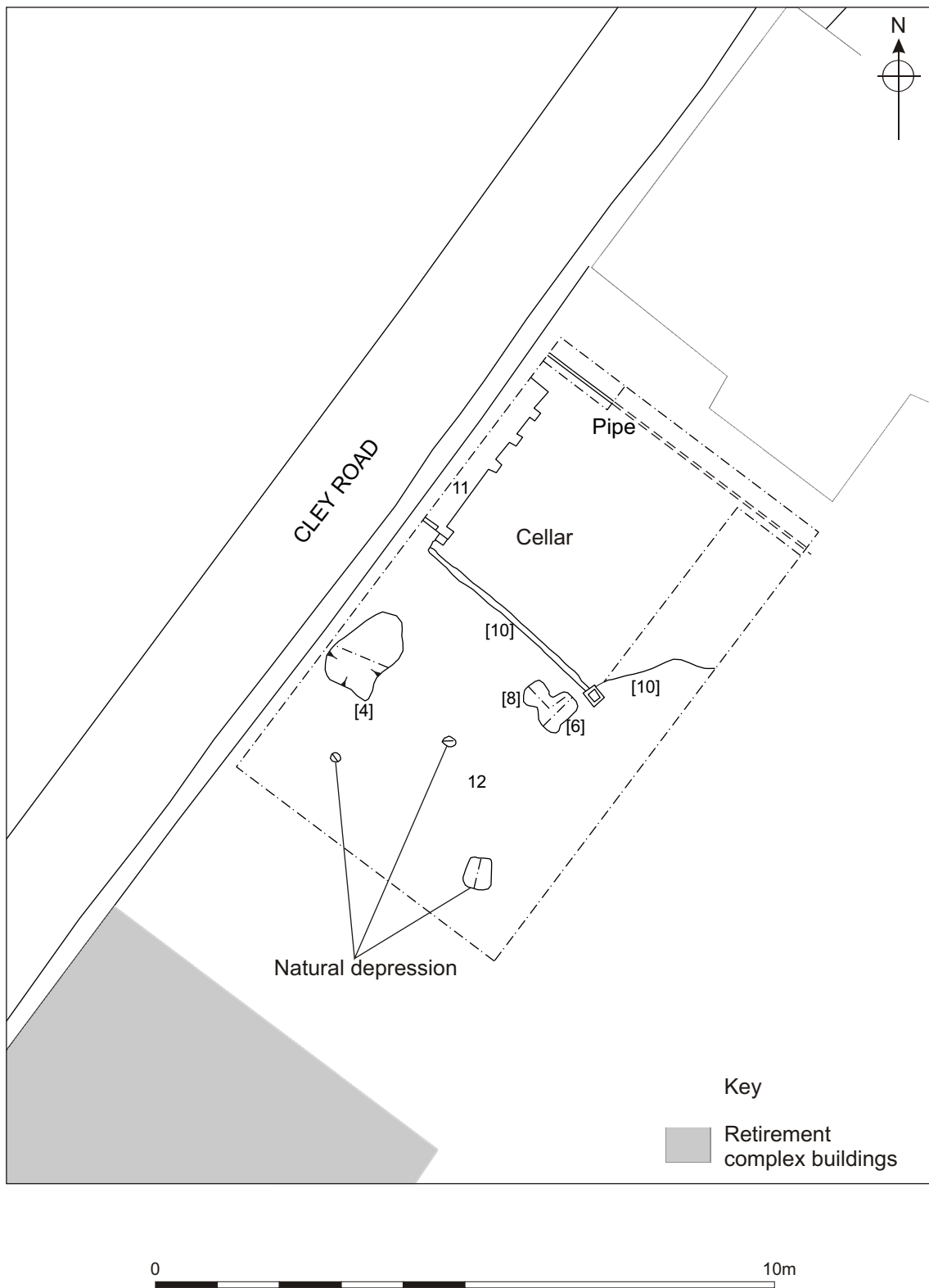


Figure 2. Site plan. Scale 1:100