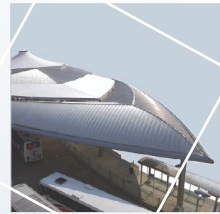


**Report № 1861**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
to the rear of 12a The Close, Norwich**

NHER 51704 N



Neil Moss

November 2008

BAU1861

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<b>NAU ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT CHECKLIST</b>		
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Location: 12a The Close, Norwich  
District: Norwich  
Grid Ref.: TG 3606 8745  
HER No.: 51704  
Dates of Fieldwork: 1 July 2008

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## **Summary**

*NAU Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of a French drain to the rear of 12a The Close, Norwich. The floor and a wall of a 19th-century outhouse, a 19th-century garden wall and a sequence of post-medieval and modern make-up deposits were identified, characterised and recorded. No finds were recovered.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

A single trench measuring 8.70m x 0.5m was hand excavated to a depth of approximately 0.75m by the Norwich Cathedral Works team under close archaeological supervision. The trench was positioned at the base of the northern gable wall of 7 The Close, in the car-park to the rear of 12a The Close (Figs 1 and 2).

This fieldwork was commissioned and funded by Norwich Cathedral Dean and Chapter. The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a Brief issued jointly by Dr Roland Harris (Norwich Cathedral Archaeologist) and Dr Ken Hamilton (Norfolk Landscape Archaeology) on 10 April 2008.

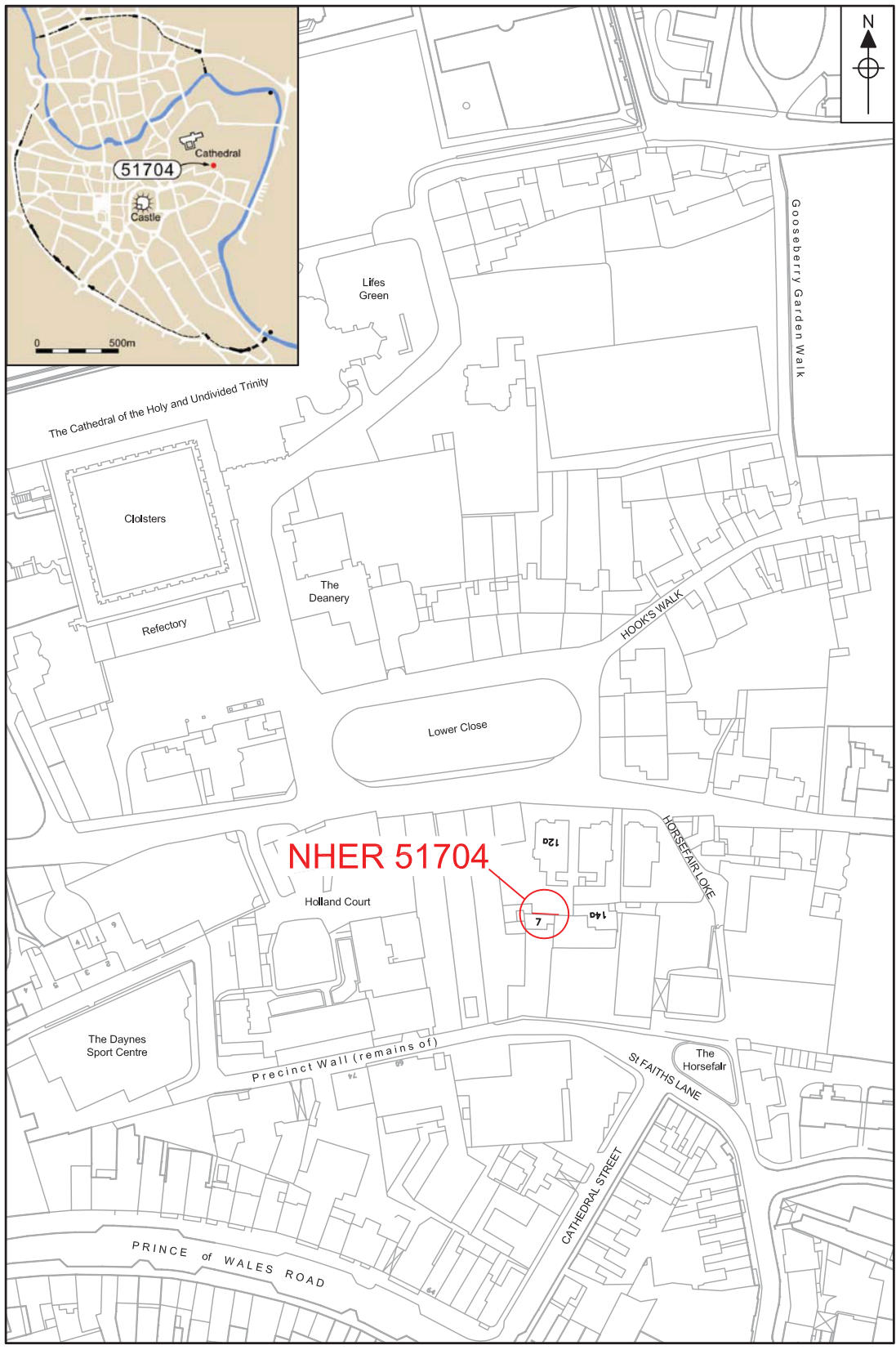
The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

Norwich Cathedral is situated on the southern bank of the River Wensum within a broad curve of the river. The Cathedral occupies a position on gently rising ground to the western edge of the flood plain. The site is located between the higher ground and the river in an area of low lying ground.

The natural subsoils in this area comprise riverine gravels and silts interspersed with peaty deposits overlying Upper Cretaceous Chalk (British Geological Survey Series Solid and Drift Edition Sheet 161).

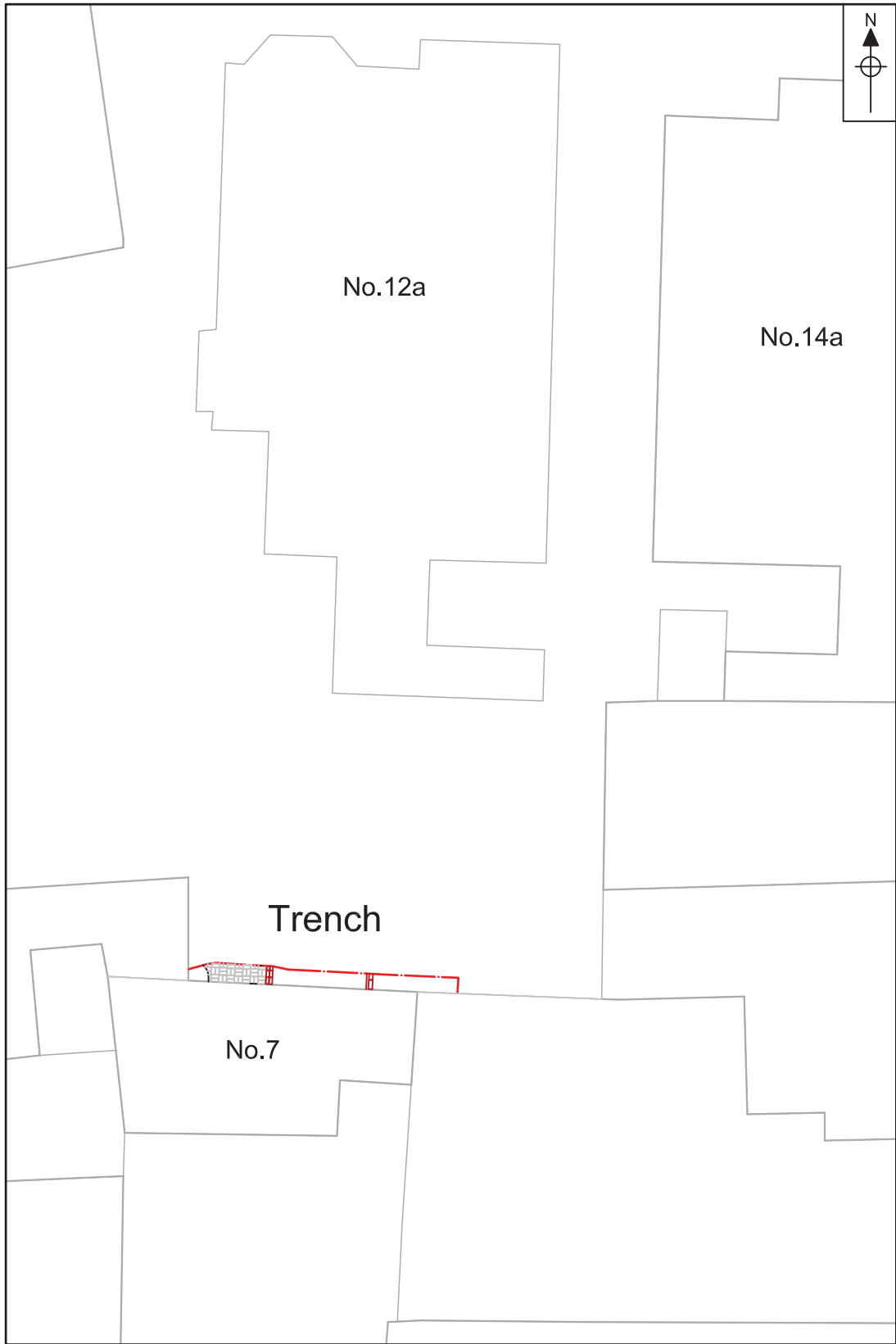
The site is within a gravelled car-park at approximately 3.00m OD and is enclosed by buildings and gardens with vehicular access between 12a and 13 The Close.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2000



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0 20 m

Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:200

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The site is located within the lower inner court of the precinct, possibly within the cellarer's great garden. The site is adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the churchyard of St Mary in the Marsh. This church survived at least until the 18th century, when it was replaced by 10–12 The Close. It seems unlikely that the church was entirely demolished, however, as 12th-century and possibly earlier remains of the church survive along with 16th-century elements which suggest earlier secular development of the church site. With no definitive record of the extent of the pre-Conquest churchyard, it remains a possibility that the site lies partly within it. The gable wall of 7 The Close, along which the drain will be built, is a roughly coursed brick wall of later 18th- or early 19th-century date, with 20th-century repairs.

In 1976 an excavation on the Lower Close green recorded a massive build up of soil – interpreted as material from the cloisters – and dated to the 18th century (NHER 300). This sealed a sequence of road surfaces aligned north-west–south-east and dating from the 13th century. Beneath these was 12<sup>th</sup>-century building of post hole construction with a hearth and oven. Adjacent to the building was a natural hollow that had become infilled with midden. Three drainage channels of 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>-century date were also filled with this midden deposit.

There have been four recent archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the proposed French drain. In August 1994 three trenches were excavated to the north and east of 15 The Close. Trench A, against the east wall of 15 The Close was dug to a depth of 1m and revealed modern tarmac over garden soils. Trench B was located on Horsefair Loke, but was only dug to a depth of 0.3m showing only modern service trench backfill. Trench C ran north from the north-east corner of 15 The Close to the middle of the Lower Close roadway and was dug to a depth of 0.5m revealing modern build-up (Shelley 1994).

In 1995 a watching brief concerning an inspection pit just to the north of 15 The Close recorded modern tarmac over garden soils to a depth of 0.7m. (Adams 1995).

### **4.0 Methodology**

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the installation of a French drain at the base of the northern gable of 7 The Close, within the car park to the rear of 12a The Close. The brief required that a suitably qualified archaeologist observe, investigate and record archaeological material that may be encountered during excavation of the trench.

The Norwich Cathedral Works team hand excavated the trench, with spoil being deposited in a skip adjacent to the works. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. No metal-detected or hand-collected finds were retained, as they were all modern. No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. During breaks in the work trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. These plans and photographs are included in the digital site archive.



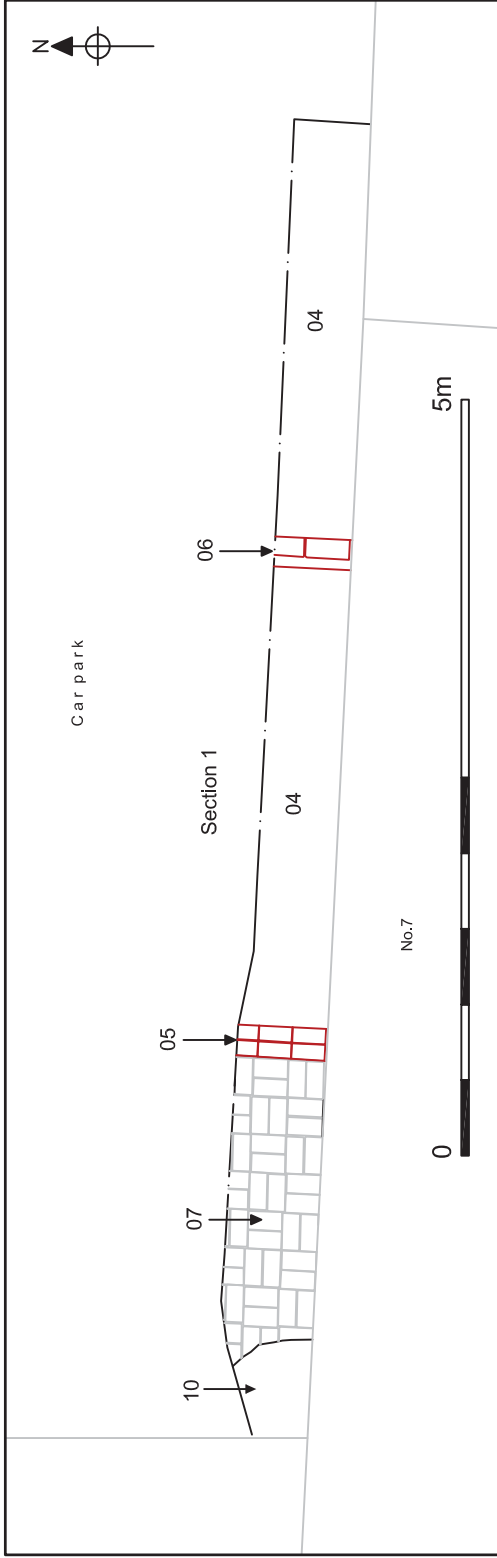


Figure 3. Trench plan. Scale 1:50

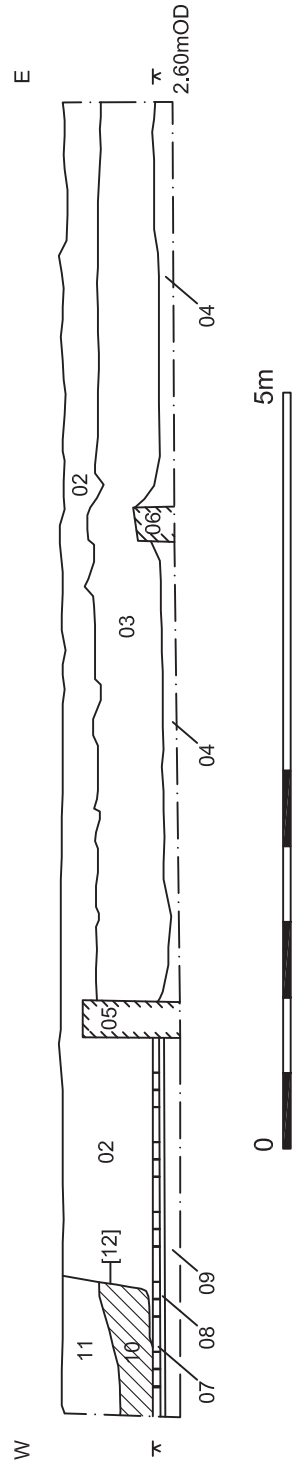


Figure 4. Section. Scale 1:50

A level was transferred using an optical level from an Ordnance Survey spot-height of 2.40m on the pavement in front of 19 The Close.

Site access was unrestricted with only minimal disruption to car parking in the area of works. The weather was hot, sunny and humid.

## **5.0 Results**

Gravel (001) forming the car park surface was removed from the immediate area of the trench and stored for reinstatement after completion of the works. Excavation commenced from both ends of the trench.

Excavation at the western end of the trench produced a brick-rubble deposit (002) approximately 0.5m thick, overlying a brick-weave floor (007) and the remains of an upstanding wall aligned north–south (005). In addition to these structural features a diagonal scar was visible on the wall face above the trench.

Excavation at the eastern end of the trench encountered the same brick-rubble deposit (002) recorded at the western end of the trench, however the rubble was shallower, only 0.20–0.25m thick, and overlay an homogenous dark grey-brown soil (009). This soil sealed a mixed sand and lime-mortar deposit (004) which in turn overlay a remnant of a brick wall aligned north–south (006).

It is likely that wall (005) and brick-weave floor (007) represent the remains of a Victorian or Edwardian outhouse. The diagonal scar on the wall face above was probably caused by the presence of a pitched roof on the outhouse. The brick rubble deposit (002) was of 20th-century origin and may have come from clearance of bomb damage during or soon after the Second World War. The dark grey-brown soil (009) is a late 19th- or 20th-century garden soil. The mixed sand and lime-mortar deposit (004) is difficult to interpret. It is most likely to be a demolition deposit, but it is also possible that it is construction debris from building the outhouse or maintenance on the gable wall of the house. The brick wall remnant (006) appears to be contemporary with the remains of the outhouse and is almost certainly a garden wall.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

This watching brief observed and recorded a sequence of activity relating to the later post-medieval history of the site. The depth of the intervention did not encounter medieval deposits and consequently did not contribute to the interpretation of the church of St Mary in the Marsh. It remains a possibility that deposits or features relating to the church could survive at a greater depth than was exposed during this watching brief.

The gravelled car park has the appearance of a courtyard, but the excavated evidence indicates that the area was sub-divided into gardens and at least one outbuilding during the Victorian period. One Garden wall was removed during the late 19th- or early 20th-century, possibly amalgamating two neighbouring gardens. Certainly the area seems to have continued to have been used as a garden after the wall was removed, as is indicated by the subsequent garden soil. Eventually all dividing walls and the outhouse were demolished and the ground level was raised by laying down an extensive rubble deposit. Finally the area was gravelled and used as a car park in the latter half of the 20th century.

## **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork associated with this project was undertaken by the Norwich Cathedral Works team and the monitoring and recording was conducted by the author. The figures were produced by the author and David Dobson. The report was edited by Richard Hoggett.

## **Bibliography**

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

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Deposit	Gravel (car park surface)	Modern
002	Deposit	Rubble (demolition debris)	Modern
003	Deposit	Garden soil	Post-medieval
004	Deposit	Demolition debris	Post-medieval
005	Masonry	Outhouse wall	Post-medieval
006	Masonry	Garden wall	Post-medieval
007	Masonry	Outhouse floor	Post-medieval
008	Deposit	Bedding for (007)	Post-medieval
009	Deposit	Garden soil	Post-medieval
010	Masonry	Concrete footing	Modern
011	Deposit	Backfill over (010)	Modern
012	Cut	Construction cut for (010)	Modern

### Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900 AD)	Wall	2
	Floor	1