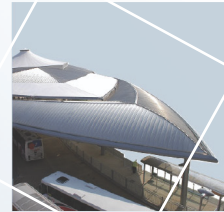


**Report № 1860**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at 27 The Close, Norwich**

NHER 51619 N



Neil Moss

October 2008

BAU1860

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<b>NAU ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT CHECKLIST</b>		
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Location:	27 The Close, Norwich
District:	Norwich
Grid Ref.:	TG 3998 8888
HER No.:	51619 N
Dates of Fieldwork:	24 June 2008

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## **Summary**

*NAU Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a watching brief concerning the excavation of a soakaway pit to the rear of 27 The Close, Norwich. A sequence of make-up deposits was identified, characterised and recorded, and pottery was recovered to assist in dating the deposits. No archaeological features were observed.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

A single trench measuring 2m x 1.2m was excavated to a depth of 1.10m by the Norwich Cathedral Works team under close archaeological supervision. The trench was located to the rear of the back garden of 27 The Close, in the south-west corner of Choristers' Meadow (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**

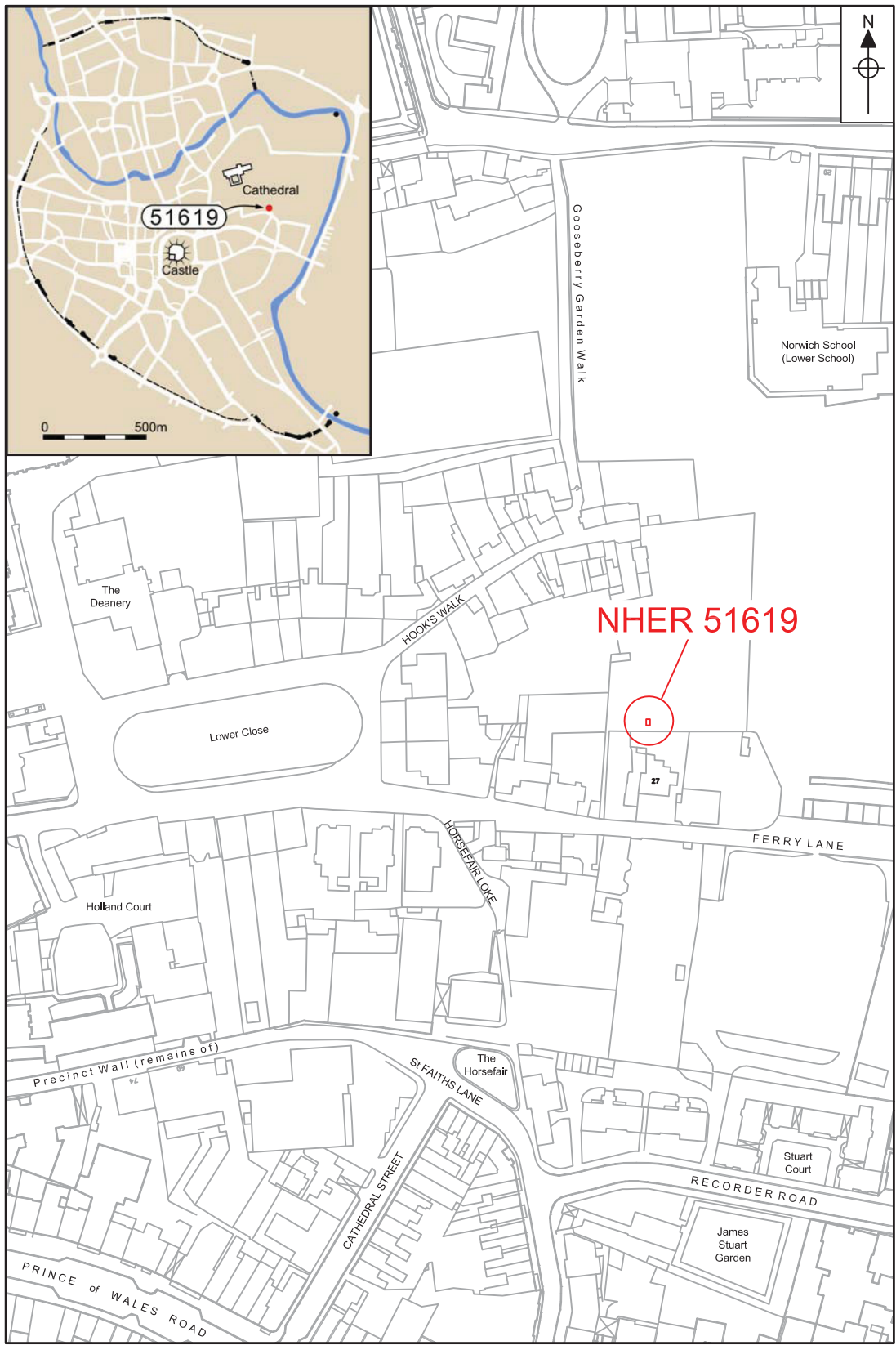
Norwich Cathedral is situated on the south bank of the River Wensum within a broad curve of the river (British Geological Survey Series, Solid and Drift Edition – sheet 161). The Cathedral church occupies a position on gently rising ground to the western edge of the flood plain. The site is located between 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.

The site lies within an area called 'Choristers' Meadow' behind 27 The Close. Choristers' Meadow is an enclosed, flat area of grass sloping slightly to the north-east, lying between 1.70m and 1.50m OD. It is separated from the main playing field of the Norwich School by a flint and brick wall with trees and shrubs forming a screen on the inside of the wall.

The modern ground surface of the area where the soakaway is located is very slightly raised (10–15cm) above Choristers' Meadow and the surrounding garden.

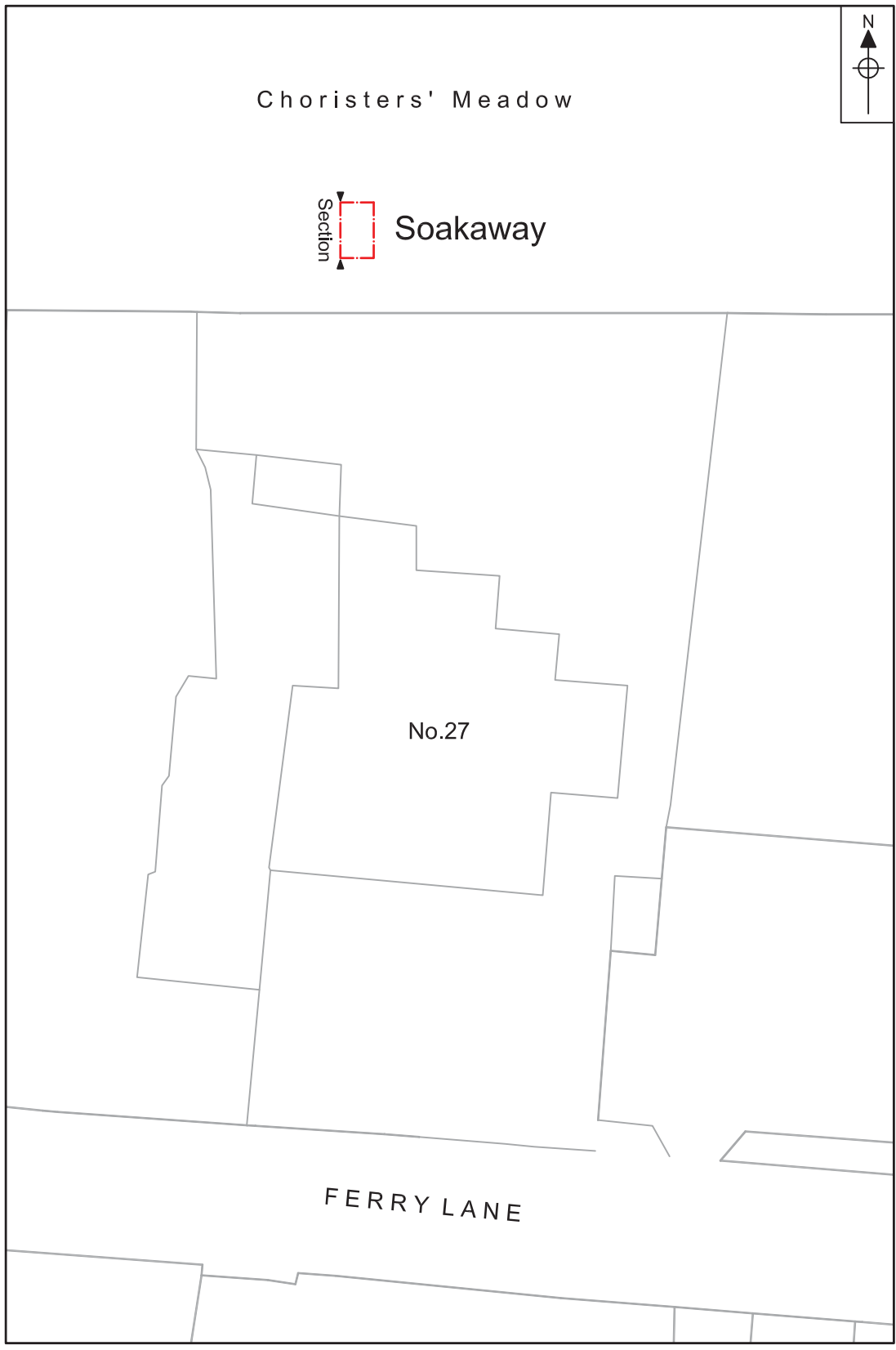
Prior to flood mitigation works carried out during 2007, the lower close had been vulnerable to flooding, a situation that is likely to have influenced the development of the area during the last thousand years.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2000



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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:200

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

The property to the immediate south of this investigation – 27 The Close – was identified by Whittingham as a single property with no. 28, built by Edmund Spendlove in 1646 (Whittingham 1985). A medieval origin is suggested by Gilchrist (2005). The Parliamentary Survey of 1649 described the adjoining garden as measuring about one half of a rood (i.e. 506m<sup>2</sup>). The size of the current gardens belonging to both 27 and 28 is approx. 540 square metres, suggesting that they are of similar extent to the 17th-century garden. Hochstetter's 1789 map shows the garden in detail, but the boundaries of this do not match those shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1882. However, both maps indicate the garden as separate from the open area to the north (i.e. Choristers' Meadow). The soakaway was located within this open area.

Choristers' meadow formed part of the monastic outer court, but its medieval function is uncertain. The outer court included open areas such as gardens, meadows, orchards and fishponds (most likely located in the area of the school playing fields). Gilchrist has suggested that mills were located in this area and, as Choristers' Meadow is located at the junction of the built-up and more open parts of the outer court, it may have been the location of documented buildings whose precise location is not known (Gilchrist 2005). These may include a bakehouse and possibly structures associated with the nearby brewhouse at the eastern end of the Lower Close.

There have been three recent archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the soakaway. In October 1994, foundation trenches for a conservatory to the rear of 27 The Close were excavated to a depth of 0.75m revealing 0.2m of topsoil over a lighter brown garden soil with occasional mortar flecks and red brick fragments. A trench excavated to a depth 1.2m to the north of the conservatory revealed 0.1m of garden soil over a light brown clay/loam subsoil with flints, brick fragments and mortar fragments. Finds from the topsoil included 'willow pattern' pottery and clay-pipe bowls dated to the 19th century. These deposits were interpreted as modern garden build-up (Shelley 1994).

In 2002 a geophysical survey was conducted of the Norwich School playing fields by Northamptonshire Archaeology. The survey located the drainage system beneath the playing fields, and a possible enclosure or building and an east to west trackway were identified (Masters 2002).

Later in 2002, Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated eight test pits located around the edge of the playing field and designed to record the depth of any archaeological deposits. No archaeological deposits of significance were encountered (Leigh 2002).

### **4.0 Methodology**

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of the soakaway pit. The Brief required that the excavation of the soakaway pit be closely monitored by an attending archaeologist. The soakaway pit was excavated by the Norwich Cathedral Works team in order to resolve surface water drainage problems associated with 27 The Close.



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

All archaeological deposits were recorded using the NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant deposits.

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.

No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were generally good with fine, sunny weather most welcome due to the proximity of the water-table. Access was via a gated passage between 27 and 29 The Close.

## **5.0 Results**

The soakaway pit revealed a sequence of made ground deposits, (003), (004) and (005), beneath a topsoil deposit (001) and a garden make-up deposit (002) (Fig. 3). All of the deposits were homogenous and seemed to have been reworked.

The topsoil (001) was dark grey to black and extended to a depth of approximately 0.1m below the ground surface. It was composed of silt and sand and contained small fragments of demolition or construction debris (lime mortar and red brick or tile fragments), as well as small rounded pebbles.

The modern ground surface is slightly raised (10–15cm) above Choristers' Meadow and the surrounding garden, which is most likely produced by topsoil deposit (001). One can speculate that this is a minor building platform for a glass-house, shed or similar garden structure.

Beneath (001) was a dark grey/brown, humic, sandy garden make-up deposit (002) with few inclusions, and was 0.15m thick.

Two made-ground deposits, (003) and (004), which had a combined thickness of 50cm, were identified as being of similar origin. Their composition and colour were identical, the only differentiation between the two being a subtle horizon about halfway through. The deposits were composed of silt and sand in roughly equal proportions and contained small fragments of demolition or construction debris (lime mortar and red brick or tile fragments) as well as flint cobbles and half bricks (porous, sandy 'Norfolk Reds'). The pottery assemblage recovered from the lower of these deposits, (004), has been dated to the later medieval or post-medieval period.

The lowest deposit encountered (005) was a mid- to light grey deposit comprising silt and clay with sand and was rather wetter than the overlying deposits. It contained small fragments of demolition or construction debris (lime mortar and red brick or tile fragments) and rounded flint cobbles and smaller pebbles. The pottery assemblage recovered from this deposit has been dated to the post medieval period. Two coins recovered by metal-detector from this deposit date from the medieval and post medieval periods and are detailed in the following section.

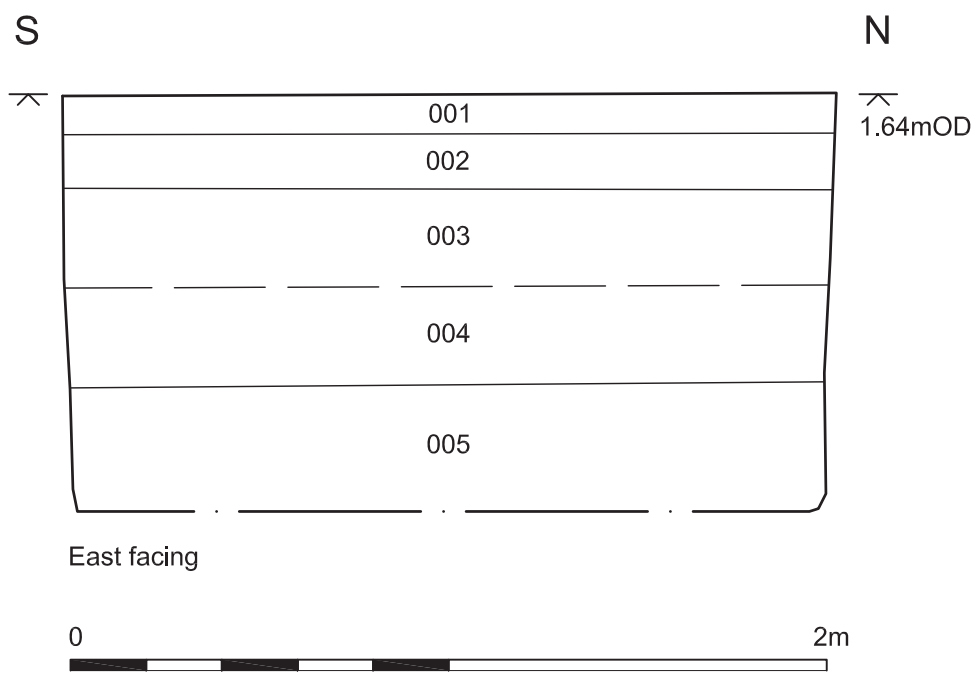


Figure 3. Section. Scale 1:20

## 6.0 The Finds

### 6.1 Pottery

By Sue Anderson

Fourteen sherds of pottery weighing 275g were collected from two contexts (Appendix 3). Table 1 shows the quantification by context. This small assemblage is very mixed, including Late Saxon–post-medieval pottery and suggesting activity in these phases and all periods in between. The mixture suggests a high level of residuality and redeposition has occurred in these layers. The fabrics and forms are all typical of the city. The wide date range, together with the small quantities from each period, makes further interpretation difficult.

Context	Fabric	No.	Wt/g	Description	Spotdate
04	GRIM	1	13	Jug rim, triangular bead	13th/14th c.
	GSW3	2	52	Thin clear/brown glaze, rilled	L.15th/16th c.
	GSW3	1	13	Small jug/mug rim, pale grey with clear glaze	L.15th/16th c.
05	THET	1	7	Medium jar rim, rounded wedge	11th c.
	LMU	3	9	= 2 vessels	11th–13th c.
	GRIM?	1	12	Pale grey fabric, poss. N Norfolk variant, light green glaze	13th/14th c.
	LMT	1	28	Body sherd, incised wavy line, speckled green/orange glaze	15th/16th c.
	SWWT	1	4	Mug rim, copper green glaze	15th/16th c.
	WNBC	1	54	Jar/pipkin rim, orange glaze int, green glaze ext	17th c.
	GSW4	1	29	Brown glazed, poss. late GSW3	16th/17th c.
	GSW5	1	54	Chamber pot rim	17th/18th c.
<i>Total</i>		<i>14</i>	<i>275</i>		

Table 1. Pottery catalogue.

Key: THET – Thetford-type ware; LMU – local medieval unglazed; GRIM – Grimston-type ware; LMT – late medieval and transitional; SWWT – Tudor Green; GSW3 – Raeren stoneware; GSW4 – Frechen stoneware; GSW5 – Westerwald stoneware; WNBC – West Norfolk Bichrome.

### 6.2 Coins

By Andy Barnett

Two coins were recovered during the watching brief (Appendix 4). Both are silver pennies, one medieval and the other post-medieval. Both coins were recovered by metal-detector from contexts with a high degree of residuality and little can be said about them other than they are probably stray losses. They are not surprising finds in an urban context, but will add to the growing corpus of coins found in the city.

The medieval penny is of archiepiscopal issue (1280–1489). It is of long-cross type with three pellets in each angle and a quatrefoil with pellet in the centre. The coin is covered in surface corrosion making the obverse unreadable. It is sub-oval with most of the legend missing due to clipping.

The post-medieval penny is from the reign of Charles I (1625–49). The coin has corrosion obscuring the surface detail. The identification was only possible from an X-ray which revealed a shield of arms of Charles I.

## 7.0 Conclusions

The deposits observed in the soakaway pit record a history of repeated episodes of land make-up within the post-medieval period. The earliest deposit (005) produced a pottery assemblage indicative of a post-medieval date, but included sherds from throughout the medieval period. The degree of residuality within the deposit, its heavy nature (clay and silt predominate) and the rounded-cobble inclusions suggest dredged deposits, more than likely from the River Wensum.

The subsequent make-up deposits, (004) and (003), are most likely to have been laid down during the later post-medieval period, perhaps enabled by the availability of heavy machinery. The final make-up deposit (002) is a high-quality imported cultivation soil, probably relating to Victorian or later gardening practices. The topsoil (001) is of poorer quality than deposit (002) and forms the slightly raised area interpreted as being a building platform.

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork associated with this project was undertaken by the Norwich Cathedral Works team. The monitoring and recording were completed by the author with the assistance of Rebecca Crawford. The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot and Rebecca Crawford. The pottery was examined by Sue Anderson, and the coins by Andy Barnett. The figures were produced by the author and David Dobson. The report was edited by Richard Hoggett.

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## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Deposit	Topsoil	20th century
002	Deposit	Topsoil (buried)	19th–20th century
003	Deposit	Make-up	18th–19th century
004	Deposit	Make-up	18th–19th century
005	Deposit	Make-up	17th–18th century

## Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
004	Pottery	4	78	Late medieval
005	Pottery	10	194	Post-medieval
	Coin	1	-	Medieval
	Coin	1	-	Post-medieval

## Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Medieval (1066 to 1539 AD)	Pottery	11
	Coin	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900 AD)	Pottery	3
	Coin	1

## Appendix 3: Pottery

Ctxt	Ttl by ctxt of sherd count	Ttl by ctxt of sherd wt (g)	Fabric	Form	Qty	Wt (g)	Ceramic date
004	4	78	GRIM	Jug	1	13	13th/14th c.
			GSW3		2	52	L.15th/16th c.
			GSW3	Jug	1	13	L.15th/16th c.
005	10	194	THET	Jar	1	7	11th c.
			LMU		3	9	11th–13th c.
			GRIM?		1	12	13th/14th c.
			LMT		1	28	15th/16th c.
			SWWT	Mug rim	1	4	15th/16th c.
			WNBC	Jar/pipkin rim	1	54	17th c.
			GSW4		1	29	16th/17th c.
			GSW5	Chamber pot rim	1	54	17th/18th c.

## Appendix 4: Small Finds

Small Find Number	1	Context Number	05
State	Medieval		
Ruler	Not Known (1280–1489)		
Denomination	Penny		
Date	1280–1489		
Mint/Moneyer	York Archbishopal issue		
Metal	Silver		
Obverse Legend	Illegible		
Obverse Description	Covered in surface corrosion and deposits		
Reverse Legend	[CIVI]-TA[S-EBO-RACI]		
Reverse Description	Long-cross with quatrefoil and peelt at centre. Three pellets in each angle. Partially covered in surface corrosion and deposits		
Diameter	17.5mm x 15mm		
Weight	0.88gm		
Reference	Wren 1995: The English Long-Cross Pennies 1279–1489		

Small Find Number	2	Context Number	05
State	Post-Medieval		
Ruler	Charles I (1625–49)		
Denomination	Penny		
Date	1625–44		
Mint/Moneyer	Not known		
Metal	Silver		
Obverse Legend	Illegible		
Obverse Description	Obscured by corrosion and surface deposits		
Reverse Legend	Illegible		
Reverse Description	Centre of coin worn smooth. Shield of arms identified on X-ray		
Diameter	14.5mm x 13mm		
Weight	0.44gm		
Reference	Spink 1989: The Brooker Collection. Coins of Charles I North: EHC Vol II		