

Report BAU1520b



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An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Memorial Gardens, Norwich, Norfolk.

HER 26202



Prepared for

Norwich City Council
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH



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Location:	St Peter's Street/Market Place, Norwich
District:	Norwich
Grid Ref.:	TG 2292 0851
HER No.:	26202
Site No.:	ENF124322
Client:	Norwich City Council
Dates of Fieldwork:	21 October 2009; 24 February, 3, 5, 9 March 2010

Summary

In late 2009 and early 2010 NAU Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief for Norwich City Council ahead of deconstruction and renovation works at the Memorial Gardens, Norwich. The watching brief was concerned with recording any remains of archaeological interest revealed during these works, particularly during the mechanical excavation and replacement of concrete stanchions at the site.

The watching brief revealed little of archaeological significance as the area examined had been extensively truncated when a large scale re-ordering of the market place and construction of City Hall took place in the first half of the 19th century.

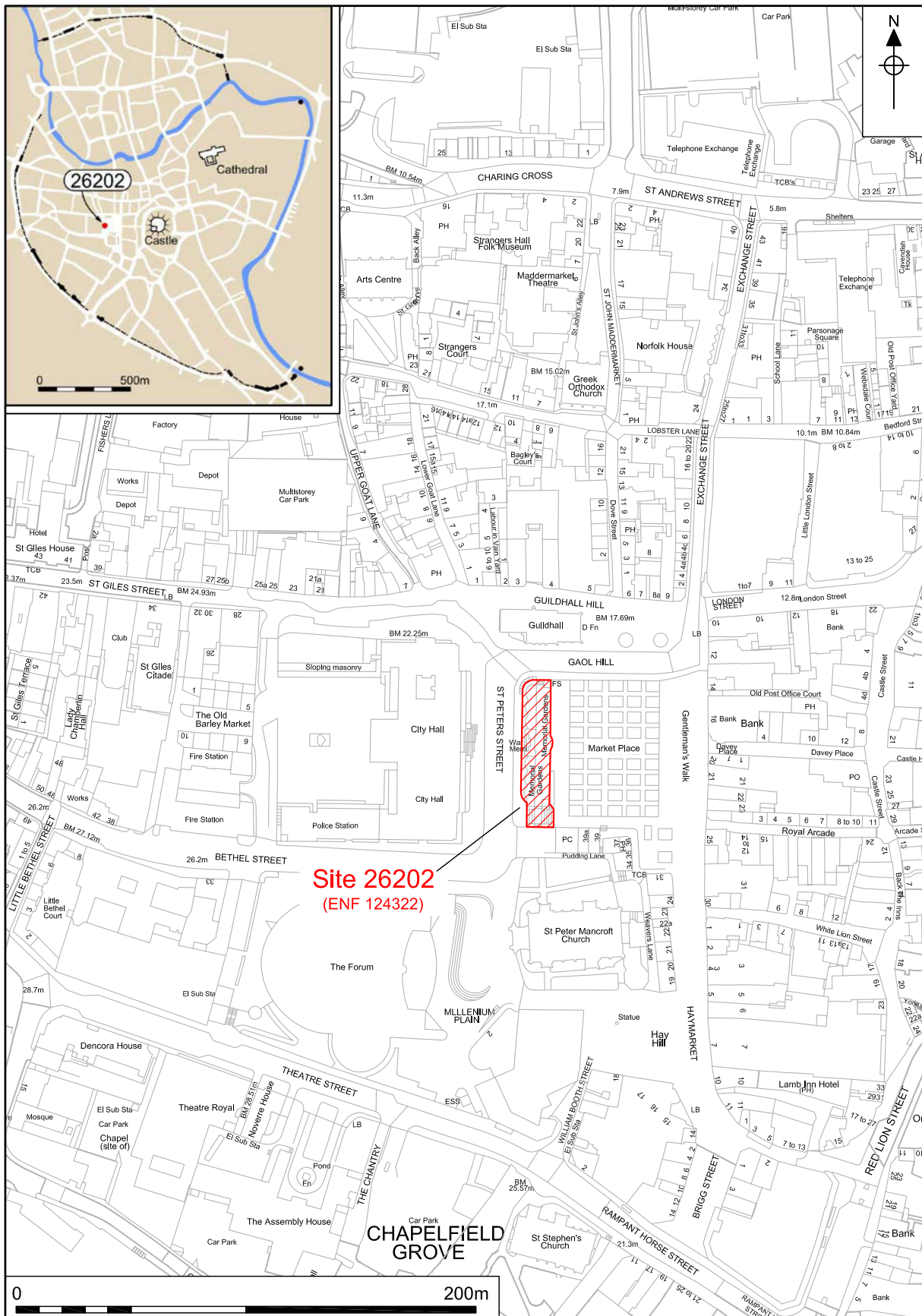
Undisturbed geological deposits were seen in all the stanchion trenches monitored. These deposits consisted of sands overlying chalk. The occurrence of large flint nodules overlying chalk in some of the stanchion trenches is of interest, as exposures of such material in the sides of the Cockney Valley might have provided a source of flint during prehistoric times.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Renovation of the Memorial Gardens at St Peter's Street in Norwich entailed, amongst other works, the removal and deconstruction of the structure and reinforcement of the undercroft on which the gardens and monument sat. The gardens are Grade II listed and recorded in the Norfolk Historical Environment Record as record number 26202.

Though the refurbishment took place in an area of high archaeological potential, the construction of the gardens themselves had significantly affected the survival of below ground deposits. Geotechnical investigations below the concrete floor of the undercroft/store indicated that any archaeological remains that may have been present below the undercroft had been destroyed during its construction. The watching brief monitored works carried out during the repair and refurbishment of the structure with the aim to record anything of archaeological interest exposed by these works.

The Watching Brief was commissioned and funded by Norwich City Council.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Norwich County Council (Heywood 2007) and was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Bown 2010).

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990).

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

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Memorial Gardens are situated in the centre of Norwich and bounded to the east by the Provisions Market and the west by the Norwich City Hall.

The site is underlain by Upper Chalk and Norwich Crag (British Geological Survey Sheet 161) and occupies the western side of the valley of a minor tributary (the Great Cockey) of the River Wensum.

An archaeological evaluation of the Provisions Market (Shelley 2004) indicated that immediately east of the Memorial Gardens undisturbed natural deposits (as recorded in Trench 4 of the evaluation) were present at 17.36m OD.

Construction works associated with the Memorial Gardens in particular the building of a basement recently used as a storage facility by vendors on the Provision Market had considerably lowered, truncated and levelled the pre-existing topography.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Construction of the Memorial Gardens, including the Lutyens memorial of 1927, was completed in 1938 and undertaken as an adjunct to construction of Norwich City Hall. The design and construction of City Hall were under the overall control the architects C.R. James and S.R. Pierce. It was thought that James and Pierce were responsible for the design and construction of the Memorial Gardens, (Pevsner and Wilson 1997) although other evidence points to the architect Robert Atkinson being responsible for the design

The market place in Norwich where the gardens are located was a Norman creation, the Late Saxon market having being situated on Tombland. A major phase of landscaping across the market place took place around 1500, probably contemporary with construction of a large and elaborate market cross that dominated the area until its demolition in 1732. The market place was substantially remodelled again in 1938 with the construction of City Hall and the Memorial Gardens. This episode of landscaping also probably removed traces of the early medieval market place (Boyle 2009). During the 17th–19th centuries the open market place was encroached upon by the construction of buildings of various kinds around its margins. By the early 20th century the municipal offices were housed in a range of buildings on the site of what is now the Memorial Gardens and the western edge of the market place. These buildings included reused parts

of the Victorian fish-market and a structure of sheet corrugated steel that housed part of the City police force (Priestly 1987). In response to the disparate nature of the municipal office buildings, the city began purchasing property between St Peter's Street, Bethel Street and St Giles Street in the 1920s prior to the construction of City Hall. The former municipal buildings east of St Peter's Street were then demolished and the Memorial Gardens built. Elements of the foundations of late post-medieval and perhaps 15th–16th-century buildings were uncovered during the 2005 excavations on the western side of the market place.

The Lutyens memorial is of Portland stone and originally stood at the eastern end of the Guildhall; it was moved into its present position in 1938. The inscriptions on the western face must have been altered soon after 1945, possibly by removing the carved blocks and turning the old inscriptions to face into the monument. The bronze vase-like features atop the monument once reputedly held gas flares. The hard landscaping of the Memorial Gardens are constructed principally of Clipsham stone, with steps and paving of York stone. The northern multi-curved planting bed retaining wall is of brick with a stone-effect Portland cement render. The southern multi-curved planting bed retaining wall is a complete replacement of the rendered brick original in pre-cast concrete put in place approximately 15 years ago. The refuse bins and planters in the garden are probably also of pre-cast concrete or reconstituted stone and did not form part of the original design. Before the deconstruction and associated works the monument and its surrounds were surveyed by NPS Property Consultants Ltd and a metric survey and historic building record undertaken by NAU Archaeology utilising a CAD survey and rectified photography (Percival 2009). Each element of the monument and gardens was allocated individual identifiers and its condition recorded

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The watching brief required all works that revealed soils or hidden detail of the monument would be monitored by an experienced archaeologist. The monitoring was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute for Archaeologists 2008) and the guidelines set out in the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

The watching brief examined a total of 16 trenches resulting from the removal of concrete stanchion bases by contractors at the site. Stanchions were removed to prevent obstructions to augur piling associated with the new structure of the Memorial Gardens. A further two trenches (Nos.17 and 18) at the north end of the site could not be accessed during the course of the watching brief, but were not notably different in appearance to those that were (Roy Nichols pers. comm.).

Each stanchion was machine excavated and resulted in a trench corresponding with the proportions of the stanchion, approximately 1.5m square with a depth of c 0.75m. In a small number of examples the presence of large flint nodules prevented augur piling and required deeper machine excavation to remove them.

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.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits no environmental samples were taken.



Plate 1. Working shot of site looking north towards Guildhall

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

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking west, 1m scale



Plate 3. Trench 5 looking west, 1m scale

5.0 RESULTS

A sample of trenches providing a broad north – south transect across the site are presented as Plates (Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7).



Plate 4. Trench 13 looking west, 1m scale



Plate 5. Trench 16 looking west, 1m scale

Undisturbed geological deposits [2] were present in all the trenches examined. These deposits consisted of mid yellow sands and gravels that overlay a dull white to pale yellow chalk. This chalk was presumed to be present across the whole extent of the site and underlying each of the stanchion trenches at varying depths.

It was visible in Trenches 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 broadly indicating it was higher in the north of the site.

In all of the trenches a considerable depth of concrete slab [1] overlaid these deposits. This concrete was part of the construction of the basement area below the Memorial Gardens. In a small number of trenches modern brick rubble was present, perhaps as a blinding on which the concrete slab had been laid.



Plate 6. Trench 5 looking south at deep excavation with flint nodules visible at base



Plate 7. Flint Nodules from Trench 5, 1m scale

In some trenches along the east of the site, large flint nodules apparently directly overlying the chalk were present (Plate 6). As these nodules prevented augur piling, where they occurred material was removed to a greater depth i.e. to c.2m

These flint nodules (Plate 7) were of considerable size, being up to 0.40m in diameter with buff yellow cortex. The flint was a dark grey to black in colour, with little obvious indication of frost damage or weathering.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the watching brief indicated that the degree of truncation by previous building works at the site meant no artefacts, deposits or remains of archaeological significance survived in the areas examined.

At least one interesting observation can be made regarding the occurrence of large, good quality flint nodules in Trench 5 and some other trenches along the eastern edge of the site. If such nodules were exposed in the past, perhaps downslope of the site, they could have provided a valuable resource for prehistoric hunter-gatherers. The presence of a nearby watercourse (The Great Cockey) would also have added to the appeal of the area.

Evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age and undated prehistoric activity in the vicinity was identified at Millennium Library site excavation (Percival *in prep*) some 100m to the south west of the present site, and perhaps such activity was connected to the local availability of the resources mentioned above.



Plate 8. Working shot of site looking north-west with Trench 3 in foreground

Acknowledgements

The watching brief was undertaken by the author.

Thanks are due to Roy Nichols of R G Carter for his assistance during the fieldwork.

The report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Jayne Bown who also provided the section on the Archaeological and Historic background.

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