

Report 2511



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**Archaeological Watching Brief at Greyfriars,
Great Yarmouth, Norfolk**

ENF125321



Prepared for

NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney



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Location:	Greyfriars Way, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk
District:	Borough of Great Yarmouth
Grid Ref.:	TG 5241 0741
HER No.:	ENF 125321
OASIS Ref.:	99275
Client:	NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney
Dates of Fieldwork:	5 October – 20 December 2010

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney during redevelopment work adjacent to Greyfriars House, Great Yarmouth in October to December 2010.

A post-medieval boundary wall was found which ran along the length of the property.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development involves the construction of a new building between Greyfriars House (formerly Middlegate Congregational Church) and the Ship Inn, Greyfriars Way, Great Yarmouth (Fig. 1). The site itself measures approximately 400m².

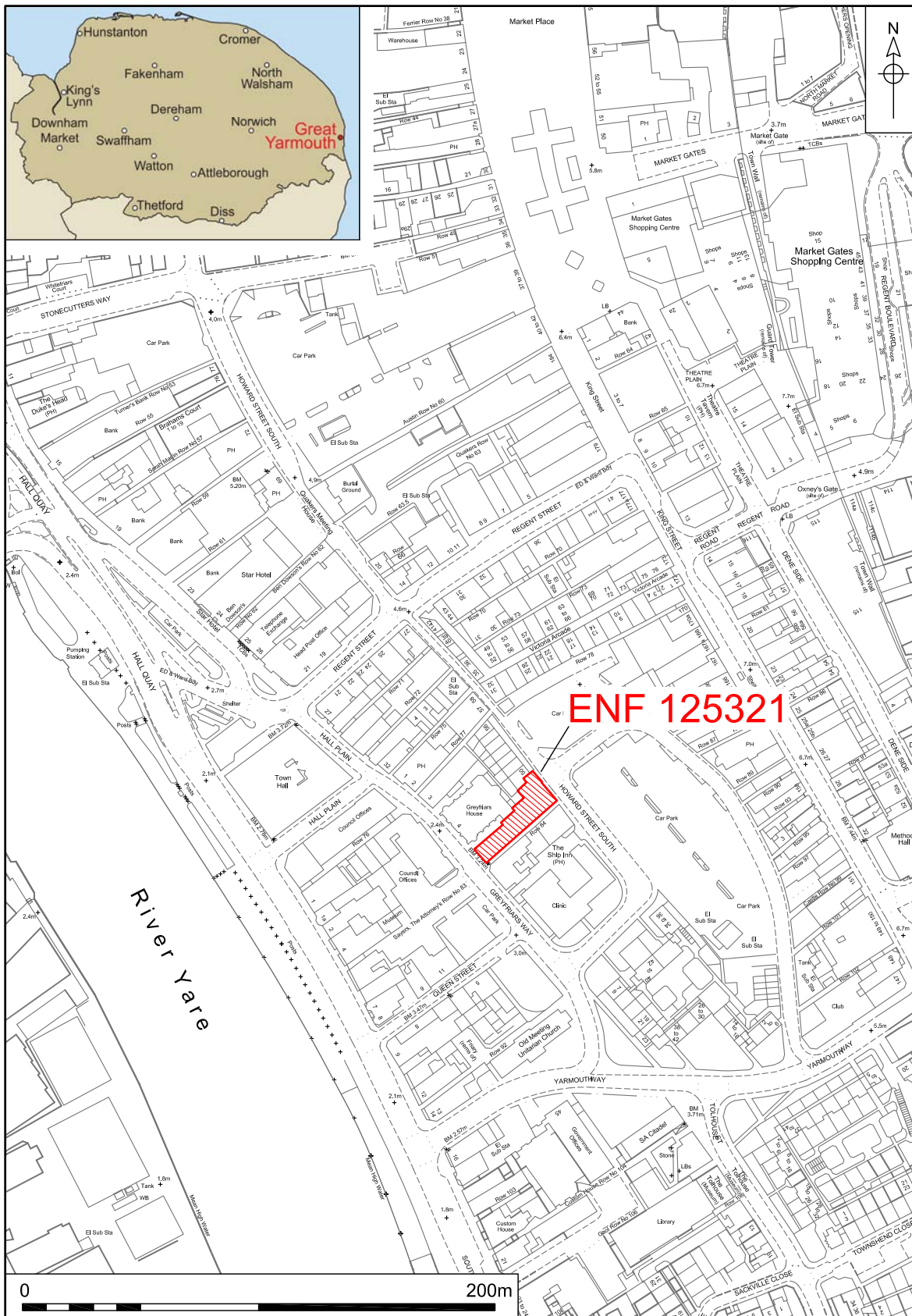
The work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Great Yarmouth Borough Council and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF 42611), and was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. BAU2511/DW). The work was funded by NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney and commissioned by Chaplin Farrant Ltd.

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 Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

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

Yarmouth is built on a solid geology of Norwich Crag, with overlying drift geology of brown earths. The predominant soils within the town itself however are likely to be the alluvial gley soils of the River Yare overlain by layers of modern make-up. The town is low-lying; the development site is 800m from the sea, just 100m from the River Yare and 3m above sea level.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Information for many of the nearby relevant sites has been obtained from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER).

Greyfriars House (NHER 25534) is a Grade II listed building dating from 1870. Initially constructed as a church in what was then Middlegate Street, it was designed by local architect J. Bottle and known as Middlegate Congregational Church. The lecture room (the site of the current development) was added in 1879 by converting the pre-existing schoolrooms buildings (1845), which may themselves have represented re-use or conversion of earlier buildings. Swinden's map of 1753 (Swinden 1779) shows two separate dwellings where the lecture rooms now stand, with Room C (Fig. 2) forming a courtyard. In 1990, the building was converted into offices, but was damaged by fire in 1999. A worked stone block found beneath the church during work in 1990 may be indicative of the occupation of the site by an earlier building.

The site lies less than 150m from the site of the late 12th- or early 13th-century Great Yarmouth Castle (NHER 13375) which was converted to a gaol in 1550 and demolished in 1621.

Archaeological work carried out on the site of 50-56 Howard Street, directly adjacent to the new development, uncovered a 12th-century barrel-vaulted undercroft and five 15th-century vaults along with medieval and post-medieval floor surfaces (NHER 4304).

On the opposite side of Greyfriars Way is the site of the Franciscan Friary (NHER 4297) which was founded in 1271 and dissolved in 1538. The area was redeveloped from the 17th century onwards and the remains still standing are a section of the south wall of the priory church and part of a 14th-century cloister. Remains of the friary church have been found buried beneath 9 Queen Street, and elements of other medieval buildings have been incorporated into later structures. The limits of the Friary site extend to within 20m of the development site.

Just 60m from the current development site are two 16th-century houses (NHER 4335 and 25433). A late medieval or 16th-century house (NHER 41913) lies 60m to the north-west of the development.

The Ship Inn, to the immediate south-east of the development, is recorded as a late 17th-century house: home of John Ireland, mayor of Great Yarmouth in 1716. Alterations were made and a new façade was added to the building in the 19th to 20th centuries (NHER 32730).

Five World War II air raid shelters formerly stood to the rear of the Temporary EAC Centre, adjacent to The Ship. These partially sunken structures are visible on aerial photographs from the 1940s (NHER 27530). The site is now occupied by a modern building and a car park.

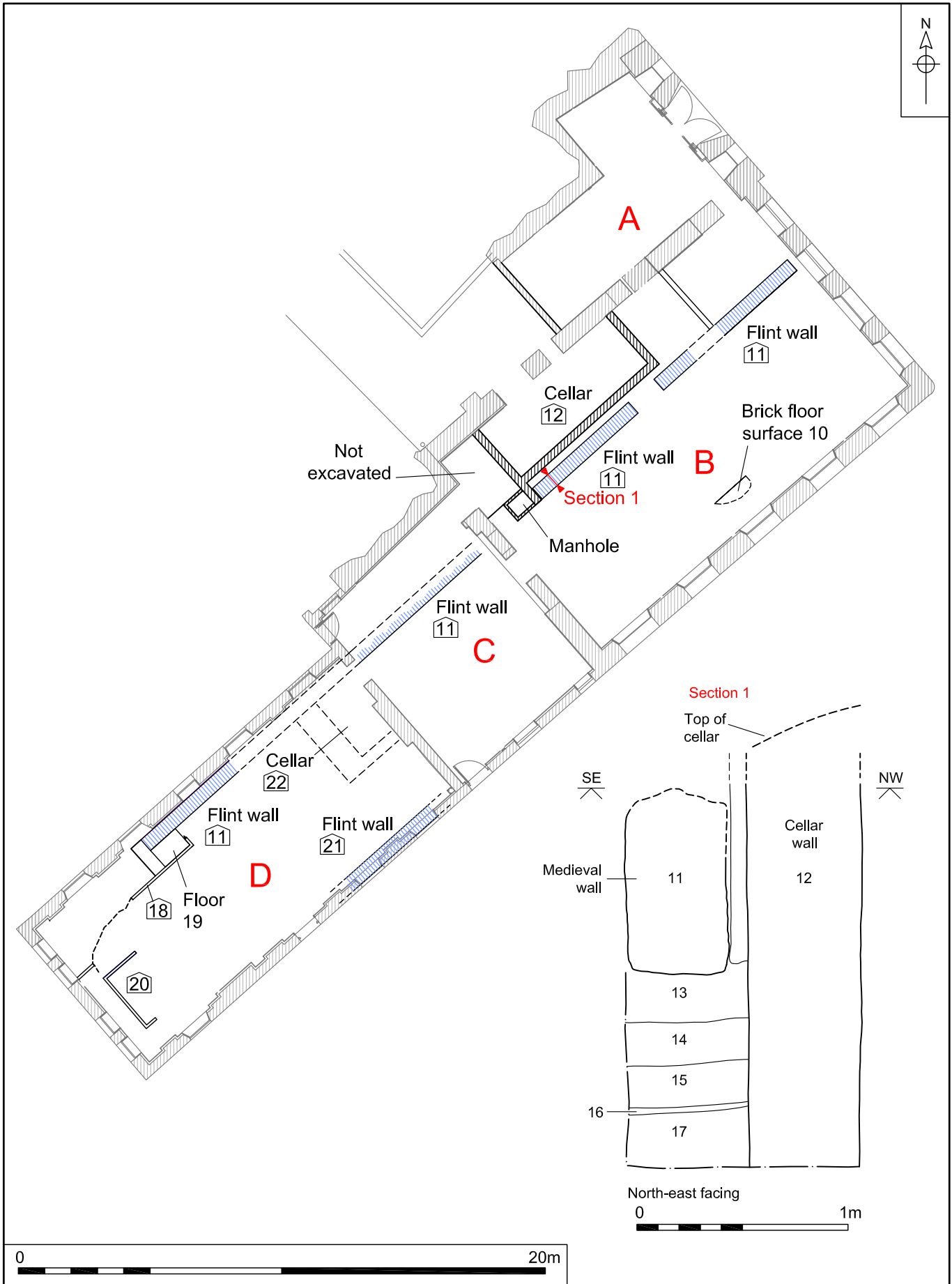


Figure 2. Site plan showing archaeological features identified during the Watching Brief. Scale 1:200 and 1:25

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to record exposed remains as a result of ground disturbance associated with the new development.

The Brief required constant attendance by an archaeologist during any groundworks at the site.

The excavation methodology varied within each of the four rooms and is discussed below under the headings Rooms A, B, C and D as illustrated on the site plan.

All excavations took place using a 1.5 tonne mini digger using a toothless bucket where feasible (some very narrow trenches combined with extremely loose rubble deposits up to one metre thick entailed the application of a toothed bucket in part). All obstructions including walls below the ground surface at the start of works were removed.

Room B involved the most significant ground disturbance with soils being removed to a depth of up to 3m while excavations in Room C entailed removal of the concrete floor.

No environmental samples were taken.

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

Site conditions were relatively good with the work taking place in dry but extremely cold weather. The enclosed nature of Room D meant that it was quite dark and this combined with dull winter conditions and limited access to the area made photography difficult in that particular room.

5.0 RESULTS

(Figure 2)

Room A

Excavations within Room A reduced the ground level by 0.1m to 0.2m across the entire room. The ground disturbed was an extremely loose, dusty, post-medieval demolition rubble layer composed of building material rubble and silt. Fragments of post-medieval pottery were noted in this deposit. Once the ground level had been reduced, a narrow trench approximately 0.15m deep was excavated around the edges of the room. This trench did not reveal any earlier deposits and no context numbers were assigned.

Room B

Room B was the largest of the rooms and subject to the greatest disturbance during the course of the watching brief. The roof and upper floor levels had collapsed during the fire which damaged the building in 1999 and debris from this remained over the ground surface. As this material was removed, it became clear that a network of 19th-century brick heating channels [9] had been laid beneath the floor. Each channel had been capped by a series of stone slabs and was approximately 0.6m deep and 0.55m wide. The channels ran both parallel and

perpendicular to the orientation of the building. They had been cut into loose mid-grey-brown silty rubble (1) almost identical to that observed within Room A. Before piling could take place in this room, these channels were removed and, along with the soils through which they had been cut, were systematically dug up by a mechanical excavator. This method was not ideal for the recording of archaeological deposits (Plate 1), but over much of the room this disturbance did not reach beyond the depth of the post-medieval silty rubble (1).



Plate 1. Removal of the under-floor heating system [9]



Plate 2. Brick floor surface [10], Room B

Archaeological remains were observed in just three areas. The first of these was to the south, where a fragment of *in situ* brick floor [10] of probable post-medieval date was observed at the base of the rubble and silt layer (1). It consisted of a single layer of soft, fawn-coloured handmade brick, laid on a bed of sand in an interlocking diagonal pattern and topped with a crushed chalk surface (Plate 2). Its full extent was not observed but it appeared to have survived only in a limited area measuring perhaps 2m by 1m.

The second and most substantial archaeological deposit was a flint and brick wall [11] running the length of the building. It was 0.56m wide and survived to a height of between 0.75m and 1m. A yellowy-white lime mortar had been used to bond the soft, hand-made orangey-red bricks to the flint rubble core. Based on the bricks used, it seems likely that this wall was of early post-medieval date. It had been truncated at several points by the 19th-century heating system [9] but otherwise remained largely intact. Any deposits which had originally surrounded it had been removed and replaced by the mid-brown rubble and silt material described above.



Plate 3. Wall [11] in Room B looking south-west



Plate 4. Cellar [12] being demolished

In the north-western corner of the room, a 19th-century cellar [12] (Plate 4) had heavily truncated all deposits to a depth of 3m; but demolition and removal of this cellar provided a free section showing the earliest archaeological deposits within Room B (Fig. 2 Section 1). The deposits exposed to the south and east of the cellar could not be directly connected to one another due to the disturbance created by the demolition process, but at the south-western end the sequence included a profile through wall [11]. Here, the wall lay upon a soft light brown silt deposit (13) approximately 0.2m thick, beneath which were deposits of about the same thickness of yellow-brown silty sand (14), then mid-brown clay (15). At a depth of 0.6m beneath the base of the wall, an organic dark brown lens (16), no more than 30mm thick, was observed. This overlay a deposit of crushed chalk (17) which was at least 0.25m thick. At the southern end, the loose silt and rubble layer (1) sealed a layer of reddish brown silt clay (2) 0.35m thick, which in turn covered deposit (3), a pale sand 0.05m thick. A layer of orange sand (4) then extended for a depth of 0.3m before a dark brown clay silt containing charcoal flecks (5) was encountered, measuring 0.1m in depth. Another layer of yellow sand 0.2m thick (6) was then recorded, followed by a dark brown silt sand (7) to the limits of excavation (Plate 5). Thin lenses of organic brown silt divided the upper and lower horizons of these last three deposits and several sherds of pottery were recovered from layer (7) at the base of the sequence. This stratigraphic sequence had the appearance of having been deposited by water, perhaps through flooding, but the extent of these deposits beyond the sections revealed could not be established.

Removal of the floor of the cellar [12] appeared to reveal more of layer (7) but it was too heavily disturbed by the demolition process to be certain and recording was, by necessity, limited to observations from the edge of the trench.



Plate 5. Section through post-medieval deposits (1) to (7) in Room B

Room C

Excavations in Room C were limited to the breaking up and removal of the concrete floor surface, reaching a depth of no more than 0.2m. This revealed a mid-brown mixed silt deposit which contained large amounts of brick and tile of post-medieval or modern date. Wall [11] also continued across this room, following the same alignment as observed in Room B. Its depth was not recorded here as it was only exposed in plan and even then only in patches. However its width and the construction materials used appeared to be consistent with that previously recorded.

Room D

In Room D, alongside Greyfriars Way, a 10m long trench was excavated approximately 0.6m-0.8m deep along the north-western side of the room, starting in the north-west corner. Wall [11], previously noted in Rooms B and C was also identified in this trench (Fig. 2) however here it was composed almost entirely of flint pebbles, with only occasional small fragments of brick visible (Plate 6). The surrounding deposit was, as in the other rooms, made up of a very loose grey-brown silt and building rubble mix. The remains of a red brick wall [18] and brick floor surface [19] were identified adjacent to the flint wall (Plates 7 and 8). These may represent the remains of the buildings which occupied the site prior to the construction of the lecture hall in 1879. (The buildings can be seen on Swinden's 1753 map (1779).

The south-western façade of the building (facing onto Greyfriars Way) had been built against the south-east wall with no marking of the corner, indicating that it is a later addition to the building and not original. About a metre back from the façade, bricks jutting from the south-east wall indicate where there had formerly been an internal partition across the building here. It seems that, at some point in the 19th or early 20th century, a new façade was added to the south-west side of the



Plate 6. Wall [11] as observed in Room D (looking south-west)



Plate 7. Looking north-east at floor surface [19] between walls [11] (left) and [18] (right)



Plate 8. Brick wall [18], looking east

building and that it was set further back from Greyfriars Way than the earlier one. It may be that the old street frontage of the building stood right against the edge of the street or more likely in line with its neighbour to the south-east (Geoffrey Kelly *pers comm.*). The internal partition would have created a room only 2m to 3.5m wide but this could easily have formed an entrance hall (such as in a chapel) or a small back-room (if the main entrance was (as it is now) accessed from Howard Street South). A trench across the width of Room B at its south-western end revealed the remains of brick wall [20]. This wall aligned with the vertical line broken bricks on the south-east wall (Plate 9) but there was a gap of 1.25m between the two, so it was not absolutely clear whether wall [20] represented the foundations of a former partition (the missing 1.25m having been removed at an earlier date), was part of an earlier building or part of the under-floor heating system [9]. Burnt deposits within the trench may have come from this under-floor heating system or from the fire that destroyed the interior of the building in 1999.

Towards the centre of the room, wall [20] made a right-angled turn and continued for a further 3.5m towards the north-east but this did not help to determine whether it related to the Victorian building or to an earlier one. The wall here was of a very rubbly construction.

A trench running across the width of Room D towards its north-eastern end revealed more of post-medieval flint wall [11]. It also revealed flint wall [21] on the opposite side, beneath the south-east wall (Plate 10). This appeared to run parallel to [11] and is probably contemporary with it.

A trench in the north corner of Room D revealed the remains of cellar [22] (Fig. 2). This was evidenced by a wall, approx. 2.3m long by 1m wide and 2m deep composed of red brick with pale grey mortar, no clear coursing and patches of possible flint, running north-west to south-east along the side of the trench. A second, narrower wall, 0.45m wide and composed entirely of red brick, ran

perpendicular to it from its south-eastern end to the north-east wall of Room D (1.8m away). The space formed was filled with loose silt and rubble material.



Plate 9. Wall [20] at the south-west end of Room D



Plate 10. Flint wall [21] on the south-east side of Room D

6.0 THE FINDS

by Sarah Percival



Plate 11. Fragment of 16th- to 17th-century Bartmann jug

6.1 Pottery

A total of thirteen sherds of pottery weighing 582g were recovered, eleven from one excavated context and two as unstratified finds.

6.1.1 *Medieval and late medieval transitional*

A small assemblage of medieval pottery was collected, principally from dark silty sand layer (7). The assemblage includes two rims, both from unglazed bowls, one of which has a pierced hole for suspension. The remainder of the assemblage comprises undiagnostic unglazed bodysherds in locally made fabrics, along with two sherds of shell-tempered ware – perhaps from West Norfolk (Anderson 2005) – and two sherds with speckles of glaze of which one is Grimston Ware and the other is ‘Yarmouth-type’ glazed ware (Anderson 2005). One unglazed bodysherd of late medieval transitional ware was also found in context (7).

The pottery is heavily abraded, suggesting that it was redeposited within the context from which it was recovered. Heavy sooting on the rim of the suspended

bowl indicates a domestic assemblage probably of 12th- to 13th-century date (Jennings 1981, 121).

6.1.2 Post medieval

The upper part of a Bartmann jug with applied mask in Frechen stoneware (Plate 11) which dates from the 16th to 17th centuries was found from an unstratified context.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

A fragment of post-medieval roof tile with heavy glaze was found in layer (7). The fragment is heavily burnt.

6.3 Animal Bone

Two small pieces of undiagnostic butchered rib and a fish bone were collected from context (7).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The conditions on site – in particular, the looseness of the rubble and silt layer which overlay all other deposits to a depth of at least 0.5m, and the degree of previous disturbance – made it difficult to identify and record the archaeological layers and features present.

The current (Victorian) building had been initially equipped with an under-floor heating system, evidence of which was discovered in Room B and possibly Room D. In the largest room (Room B), a small brick cellar was also discovered which was likely to have been constructed as part of the Victorian building.

A flint wall of probable early post-medieval (or possibly late medieval) date was identified running almost the entire length of the building. A parallel flint wall, presumably of the same date, was identified along the south-east side of Room D, 6.15m distant from the first. The current building thus appears to follow the alignment of an earlier construction on this site, with the south-eastern wall of Room D built directly onto earlier foundations. The fragment of Bartmann jug found by the construction engineers may date from the same period as the flint walls.

The length of the main flint wall, [11], and the fact that it corresponds with the shape and alignment of the buildings shown on Swinden's map of 1753, suggests that was a boundary wall, while the shorter, red brick walls identified in Room D represent some form of internal division; but whether the two were contemporary is impossible to say from the limited exposure of the features that occurred here. It may be that the red brick walls and brick floor surface within Room D and the tile and chalk floor surface in Room B date from a later building phase or formed part of the under-floor heating system for the current building.

The deepest stratigraphic layer identified (layer (7) in Room B) produced ten potsherds of medieval date along with one late medieval to early post-medieval potsherd and a fragment of post-medieval roof tile. The ten clearly medieval sherds are all from types of pottery which were in use in the 12th to 13th centuries (although most were also in use for a hundred years on either side of this), but the late medieval to early post-medieval sherd is late medieval to transitional ware dating from the 15th to 16th century (the post-medieval tile fragment has been

dated less precisely). Given the nature of the site, it is possible that the later finds are intrusive within a medieval layer, but it is more likely that this is a post-medieval deposit, containing a large number of sherds from an earlier period which were disturbed nearby and redeposited. The presence of the earlier potsherds indicates that there was activity on this site during the medieval period, but it appears that at least some of these remains have been disturbed, either by natural processes such as flooding, or by post-medieval building activity: resulting in the deposition that we see here.

It is not known whether any medieval deposits remain at deeper levels than were exposed here, or whether all such layers have been disturbed and removed by later phases of construction, activity and occupation.

Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was carried out by Andy Phelps, Suzie Westall and Lilly Hodges. Andy Phelps also contributed to the results section of the report. Additional information on the history of the building itself was provided by Geoffrey Kelly.

The finds were washed by Lucy Talbot and analysed by Sarah Percival.

The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Disturbed modern/post-medieval rubble and silt layer	Modern
2	Deposit	Mid grey-brown (silt?)	
3	Deposit	Pure white sands	
4	Deposit	Orange sands	
5	Deposit	Clay silt with charcoal flecks	
6	Deposit	Yellow sand	
7	Deposit	Dark silt-sand with pottery	Med./Post-Med.
8	U/S Finds	Unstratified finds	
9	Masonry	Victorian under-floor heating system	Post-medieval
10	Masonry	Brick floor	Post-medieval
11	Masonry	Flint and brick wall	Med./Post-Med.
12	Masonry	19th century cellar beneath Room B	Post-medieval
13	Deposit	Soft light brown silt deposit	
14	Deposit	Yellow-brown silty sand	
15	Deposit	Mid-brown clay	
16	Deposit	Organic, dark brown deposit	
17	Deposit	Crushed chalk	
18	Masonry	Red brick wall running NE-SW in Room D	Post-medieval
19	Masonry	Brick floor surface adjacent to [18]	Post-medieval
20	Masonry	Red brick walls at SW end of Room D	Post-medieval
21	Masonry	Flint wall on SE side of Room D	Med./Post-Med.
22	Masonry	Cellar beneath Room D	Post-medieval

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature type	Number
Medieval / Post-medieval	Flint wall	2
Post-medieval	Cellar	2
	Floor surface	2
	Under-floor heating system	1
	Brick wall	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
7	Pottery	10	82g	Medieval	
7	Pottery	1	8g	Med./Post-Med.	
7	Ceramic Building Material	1	142g	Post-medieval	Roof tile
7	Animal Bone	3	6g	Unknown	
8	Pottery	1	38g	Medieval	
8	Pottery	1	454g	Post-medieval	

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Medieval	Pottery	11
Med./Post-Med.	Pottery	1
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	1
	Pottery	1
Unknown	Animal Bone	3

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Dsc	Form	Qty	Wt	Dec	Period	Spotdate	Comment
7	LMU	Rim	Jug	1	2g		Medieval	11th to 14th	Bridge spout with pouring hole. Sooted
7	LMU	Rim	Bowl	1	11g		Medieval	11th to 14th	
7	LMU	Body		4	30g		Medieval	11th to 14th	
7	Grim gl	Body		1	21g	Specks of green glaze	Medieval	L12th to 14th	
7	MSHW	Body		2	5g		Medieval	12th to 13th	
7	MCW	Body		1	13g		Medieval	12th to 14th	
7	LMT	Body		1	8g		Late medieval to transitional	15th to 16th	
8	YARG	Body		1	38g	Specks of glaze	Medieval	L12th to 14th	Oxidised surfaces
8	GSW4	Rim	Bartmann jug	1	454g	Face mask	Post medieval	16th to 17th	Frechen stoneware

Key: LMU Local medieval unglazed; Grim gl Grimston Glazed Ware, YARG Yarmouth-type Glazed Ware; MSHW Medieval shell-tempered Ware; MCW Medieval coarseware; GSW4 Frechen stoneware.