

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2011/189	Parish: Bury St Edmunds
GAS MAIN REPLACEMENT, GREAT CHURCHYARD	Planning Application No.: BSEI/2011_Pre Morrison
	HER Event No.: BSE 383
Address: Great Churchyard Bury St Edmunds	Grid Reference: TL 856 640
	Number of Site visits: 5
	Date of visits: 17/10/2011- 19/10/2011, 21/10/2011, 26/10/2011
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Five visits were made to monitor the excavation of trench to replace the gas mains running through the Great Churchyard located south of the Cathedral. The monitoring was required as part of an archaeological condition placed by Dr. Abby Antrobus of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Team. Four trenches were monitored.</p> <p>The site was previously used for burials, many of which were moved in the 1950s, and the potential existed for the finding of disturbed human remains, vaults, or structural fabric relating to Sampson's Tower.</p>	
<p>Trenching</p> <p>The trenches were generally 0.3m wide and 0.35-0.6m deep, rising as necessary to avoid obstructions. Much of the trenching followed the line of the existing gas main and cut through already disturbed soil. The first trench was dug across the green south of St James' Cathedral on the 17th through 19th of October. Three small trenches were dug, one prior to this investigation, in front of Provost's House on the 21st to access existing gas main points. The final trench was dug in the far northeast corner of the cemetery and around the south and east sides of Abbey Precincts on the 21st and extended on the 26th.</p>	

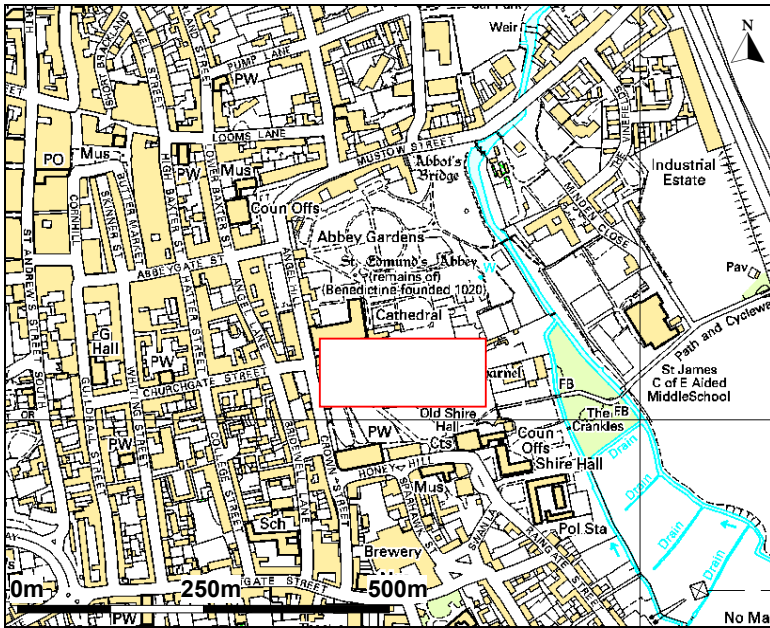


Figure 1. Site location

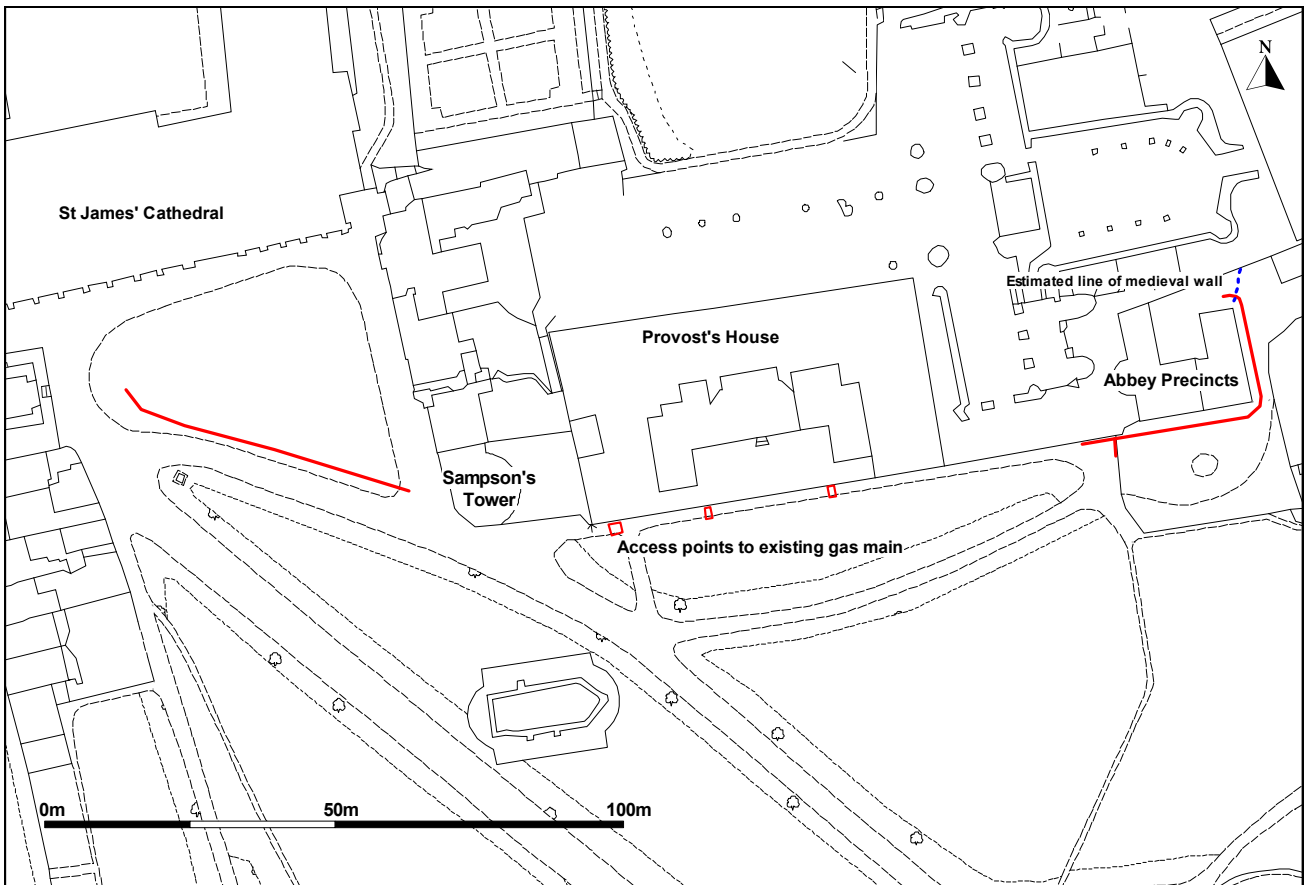


Figure 2. Trench plan with estimated line of medieval wall marked in blue

Results

The trench south of St James' Cathedral cut through a disturbed layer of made up ground where it followed existing services, but this varied little from the less disturbed lengths of trench. Beneath the topsoil was a thin (0.03m - 0.1m) layer of yellowy-orange sandy gravel (context 0001), which covered a layer of dark greyish brown sandy silt (context 0002) with frequent inclusions of post-medieval CBM and small to medium sub-angular and rounded flints. A square, moulded ceramic drain from the 18th or early 19th century crossed the trench at its eastern end, just below the stone edging of the pavement.

The trenches in front of Provost's House and the section of the trench in the northeast corner cut through a very disturbed layer of greyish brown sandy silt (context 0003) containing fragments of brick and small angular flints. Fragments of disarticulated human remains were recovered from these, probably remnants of earlier removals or burial disturbances. These remains were later redeposited in the same location.

The trench that was dug south of Abbey Precincts, and later extended around towards the northeast corner of the building, cut through a layer of dark grey silty sand (context 0005) beneath the gravel surface and a thin (0.1m thick) layer of yellowy-orange clayey sand (context 0004). This layer appeared to be an intact archaeological deposit containing animal bone, oyster shell, and medieval tile fragments. A large lump of chalk was seen near the southeast corner of the building, but did not appear to be structural in any way. Beyond this the soil became more disturbed where a driveway had been laid, and possibly as a result of making up ground above the level of the walled garden to the east. A modern concrete drain crossed the trench and ran from the southeast corner of the building east towards the garden wall. The ground grew less disturbed in the northern end of the trench. The base of a medieval wall (context 0008) of flint bonded in yellowish lime mortar was seen 0.35m below the surface on the base of the trench (see Plate 1). The wall was located approximately 2m north of the northeast corner of the house and appeared to run in a generally north-northeast – south-southwest. The soil north-northeast of the wall had a very high mortar content, and suggests the wall may have extended further that direction or spread that way after its demolition.

Finds

Two fragments of ceramic roofing tile were collected from 0005, an archaeological deposit around the house.

A single medieval rooftile made out of estuarine clay was identified (174g). It is made in a purple and buff mixed clay, and has been re-used with mortar over the broken edges. It dates to the 13th-15th C.

A red-fired rooftile with brown glaze was also present (130g). It is made in a fine fabric with frequent clay pellet inclusions and probably dates to the 17th century or later.

Retained Yes

Recorded by: Mike Feider

Date: 23/11/2011



Plate 1. Medieval wall 0008, looking north