

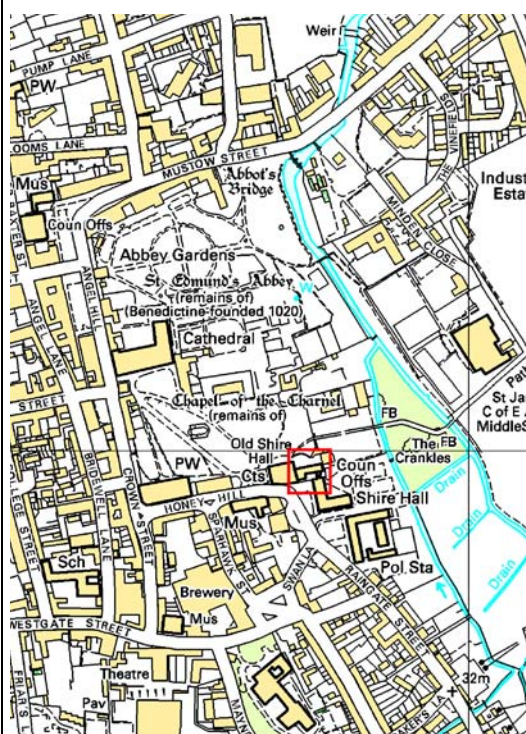
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2014/025	Parish: Bury St Edmunds
Monitoring at St Margaret's House Bury St Edmunds BSE 440	Planning Application No. SE/11/1377
	OASIS No. c1-171995
	HER Event No.: BSE 440
Address: St Margaret's House, New Shire Hall, Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds	Grid Reference: TL85800/63976
	Number of site visits: 4
	Date of visits: Summer 2013

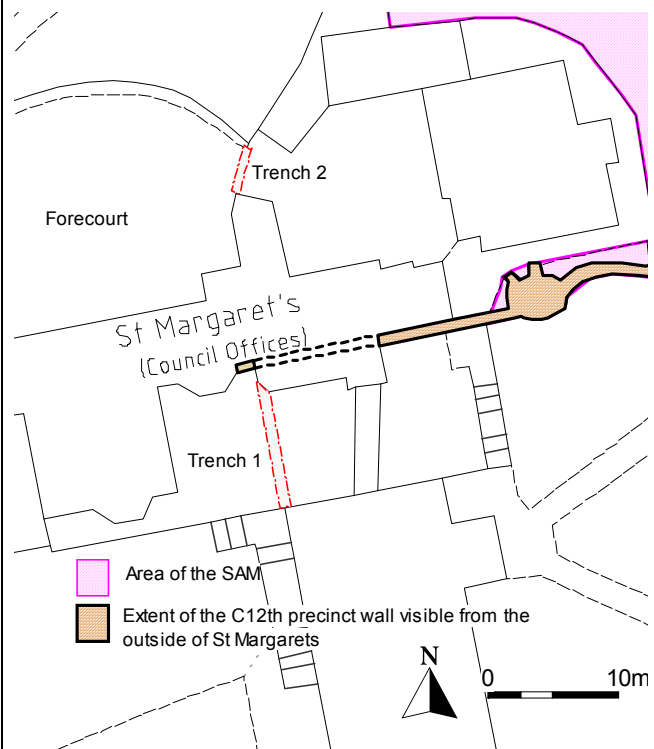
What was seen - nature of the work, condition of trenches etc.

The groundwork excavations at St Margaret's House were observed by a monitoring archaeologist as part of the building's conversion back to residential use. The foundation trenches for two boundary walls, erected to create separate gardens for the two buildings were seen, along with the stripping of the forecourt for replacement block paving at the front of the house. The proposed creation of access/half-lights to the cellar against the front (North) face of the building was abandoned due to listed building constraints without breaking ground.

Location Map:



Trench plan:



Background:

St Margaret's House is a Grade II* listed building; the brick façade dates from the early 18th century but it conceals a 17th century timber-framed core. It stands within the medieval abbey precinct and includes a length of the 12th century south precinct wall, which can be seen in the exterior rear (south) wall of the building. The house and adjacent magistrate's court are purported to stand on the site of the medieval chapel of St Margaret the Virgin and St Mary. Following the dissolution of the abbey, St Margaret's first became the Grammar School and then in 1579 it was gifted to the Guildhall Feoffees for use as the borough's Shire Hall. St Margaret's House was purchased by West Suffolk County Council in March 1932 and the 'new' Shire hall complex was opened in 1968.

Results:

Trench 1 was located on the south side of the house and ran from an Edwardian extension to the NW corner of the 'New Shire Hall' across an area of lawn. The trench was 500mm deep and was cut through a layered soil profile which showed that the ground had been made up with successive dumps of material. The pre-'new' Shire Hall ground surface, including the remains of an early 20th century tiled path close to the house, was found at a depth of 200mm along with the footing trench for the Edwardian addition. At the base of the trench, beneath thin buried topsoil, was a layer of rubble. The rubble was composed of crushed chalk, lime mortar, fragments of limestone and narrow 'handmade' bricks. The brick thickness (2 $\frac{1}{8}$ "") was consistent with 16th-17th century brick sizes and probably relates to the modernisation of the core timber-framed building in the early 18th century.

Trench 2 was excavated for a boundary wall to the north of St Margaret's House that would close off a small courtyard which was once the access to the associated coach house. The new wall would link together two sections of a flint and brick 'rubble' wall which are characteristic of the town; the wall dates to at least from at least the mid-18th century and is shown on Warren's map of 1746. The former break in the wall was an original opening although it had been reduced by the addition of taller piers (built without any foundations) during the 19th century.

The trench was 500mm deep and was excavated wholly within made up ground. A layer of rubble composed of coarse, pale/orange brown coloured lime mortar, flint and brick was recorded at a depth of 300mm. The rubble ran below the 19th century piers but its relationship with the original wall was unseen; the rubble was similar to the 16th/17th century rubble layer observed in Trench 1 suggesting that the two were related to the

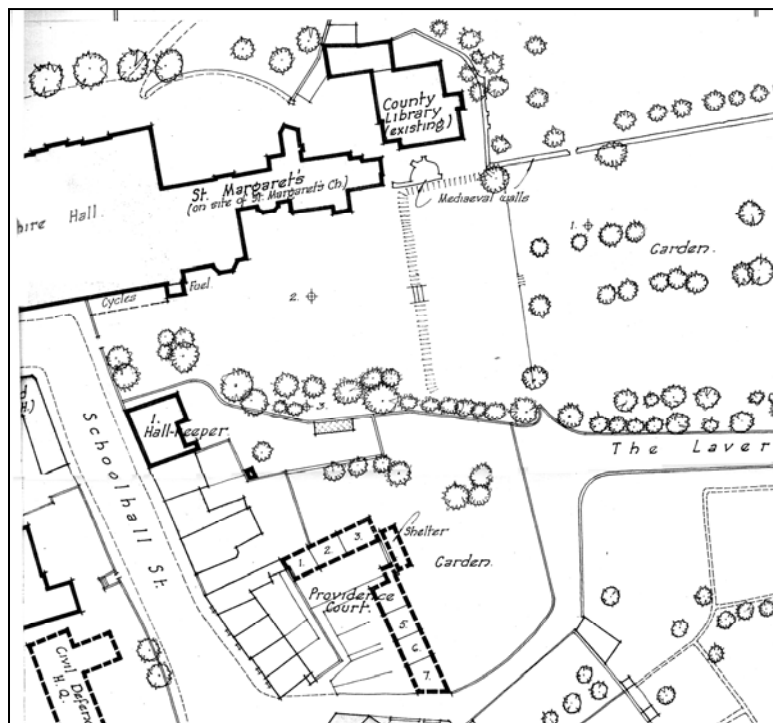
same early 18th century phase of rebuilding work. The depth of the rubble layer gave an indication of the ground surface at the time of the alterations and overlay a buried topsoil made up of muddy silt with charcoal and brick fragments; no pottery or closely datable material was found.

Forecourt: The pre-existing tarmac was stripped away from the area in front of St Margaret's and the ground level reduced by a minimal amount in order to relay brick pavements to the same level. The stripped surface was viewed by the monitoring archaeologist but reduced dig depth was entirely within a modern overburden.

Historic Maps:



(left) Thomas Warren's Map of Bury published in 1746, showing the site of St Margaret's divided into two separate tenements. The former shire hall is shown as a square block and attached to its south side is the medieval song school. To the left of the shire hall is the Magpie Inn; a haunt of prostitutes and thieves



(right) The site as depicted in the architect plan from c.1960 prior to the construction of the 'new' Shire hall complex.

Photographs



- 1) Tr.1 south of St Margaret's House
- 2) Tr.1. Horizon of C17th-18th building rubble sandwiched between modern and buried topsoil layers.
- 3) C17th cellar below St Margaret's with numbered alcoves for orderly wine storage
- 4) Section of the C12th precinct wall visible on the south side of the house
- 5) Tr.2 Layer of C17th-18th building rubble beneath C19th overburden



Recorded by: David Gill

Date: 18/02/2014