

Cathedral Yard Drain Repairs, Angel Hill,
Bury St Edmunds
BSE 449

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SCCAS Report No. 2014/068

Client: Cathedral

Author: Andrew Tester

July 2014

© Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

Cathedral Yard Drain Repairs, Angel Hill

Archaeological Monitoring Report

SCCAS Report No. 2014/068

Author: Andrew Tester

Contributions By: Richenda Goffin and David Gill

Illustrator: Beata. Wiczorek-Olesky

Editor: Richenda Goffin

Report Date: July 2014

HER Information

Site Code: BSE 449
Site Name: Land behind Abbey House 30 Angel Hill
Report Number SCCAS Report no. 2014/068
Planning Application No: N/A
Date of Fieldwork: June-July 2014
Grid Reference: TL 855 641
Oasis Reference: suffolkc1-189368
Curatorial Officer: N/A
Project Officer: Andrew Tester
Client/Funding Body: Cathedral

Digital report submitted to Archaeological Data Service:
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

Prepared By: Andrew Tester
Date: September 2014
Approved By:
Position:
Date:
Signed:

Contents

Summary

Drawing Conventions

1. Introduction	1
2. The Excavation	1
2.1 Site location geology and topography	1
2.2 Archaeological and historical background	1
3. Methodology	4
4. Results	4
Hole 1	4
Hole 2	7
7. General Discussion	11
8. Archive deposition	11
10. Acknowledgements	11

List of Figures

Figure 2. 1880 OS Map showing excavation area outlined in red.	2
Figure 3. Excavation plan	3
Figure 4 Plan of Abbey House and grounds by J. G. Lenny dated 1823. Since this map was created the block to the southeast of Abbey House appears to have been extended and shortened with some buildings demolished before the 1880 Ordinance Survey map. The map is not measurably accurate (north is to the left).	6
Figure 5 extract from the 1885 Ordnance Survey map of the area (the red pencil line indicates the course of the Abbey precinct wall. Buildings have been demolished providing access to what was the bowling green and is now a lawn and car park leading to the cathedral refectory.	7
Figure 5. Phase 2 plan (17th to 19th century) including details of chimney foundations	
Error! Bookmark not defined.	

List of Plates

Plate 1 ranging poles (2m and 1m scales) indicate the south facing section showing the face of wall, 0001,	4
Plate 2 Detail looking north at wall 0004 showing through wall 0001, 1m and 2m scales.	5
Plate 3 the south side of hole 1 showing the brick cap of a c. 19th century well.	5
Plate 1. Exploratory hole beneath the downpipe alongside Abbey House.	8
Plate 2. Detail of burnt medieval surface cut by chimney foundation 0273, section facing west.	8
Plate 3. Probable cess pit 0269 cut by concrete stanchion, section facing south, scale 1m	9
Plate 4. Structure 0252 facing west, 1m scale.	9
Plate 5	10

List of Appendices

Appendix 1.	Brief and specification
Appendix 2.	Context list

Summary

The sudden appearance of a large void in the access drive to the Cathedral offices (adjoining 30 Angel Hill) exposed extensive erosion caused by collapsed drains. The site straddles the line of the Abbey precinct wall (here reduced to below ground level) and subsequent mitigation work required archaeological recording, which was carried out by the SCCAS. The wall of a probable medieval building was exposed running at right angles to the precinct wall. It cut various medieval deposits, which were therefore earlier. Three post medieval wells were also exposed including one positioned running just inside an outer wall and beneath a cross wall within 30 Angel Hill. A well in the yard area was capped with bricks that were bonded with lime mortar.

1. Introduction

The sudden appearance of a hole outside Cathedral offices on Angel Hill led to the exposure of two large openings, which had spread unobserved below the tarmac skin. Extensive erosion, caused by blocked drains, of soft fill had undermined part of the yard, and ground running beneath Abbey House. The deepest of the holes, at over two metres, offered a significant threat to the integrity of the standing building and the surrounding area, which provided vehicular access to the Cathedral car park. The archaeological brief provided by the Cathedral authorities was to investigate and record archaeological deposits exposed by the erosion

2. The Excavation

2.1 Site location geology and topography

The site lies at TL 855 641 on a level tarmac surface ground above the floodplain of the River Lark. Surface geology consists of drift deposits of sand and gravel over Cretaceous chalk bedrock (Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, Seaford Chalk Formation, Newhaven Chalk Formation and Culver Chalk Formation, British Geological Society). Site conditions revealed orange silt/ and gravel natural at a depth of c. 1.4m below the present ground surface.

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

The Abbey of Bury St Edmunds was founded in the 7th century and expanded in the Late Saxon period when the body of the Saint was interred in the Abbey Church. Following the Norman Conquest the shape of the town changed with the imposition of a plan which included a gridded pattern of streets over the rising ground in front of the Abbey Church, by Abbot Baldwin during the 1070s. The Abbey precinct was also enlarged over the grid in front of the Abbey, which can be seen in the interrupted alignment of Northgate Street and Southgate Street. In places, the street grid pattern is thought to have displaced earlier buildings.

The site straddles the line of the medieval precinct wall that enclosed the monastery with the potential for both medieval and Anglo-Saxon remains surviving in the immediate area. Following the dissolution of the monastery the precinct wall was punctured in several places but did remain, fossilized as a property boundary with much of it still standing. Abbey House and the Cathedral Yard mark a gap in the preserved sections of the medieval wall.

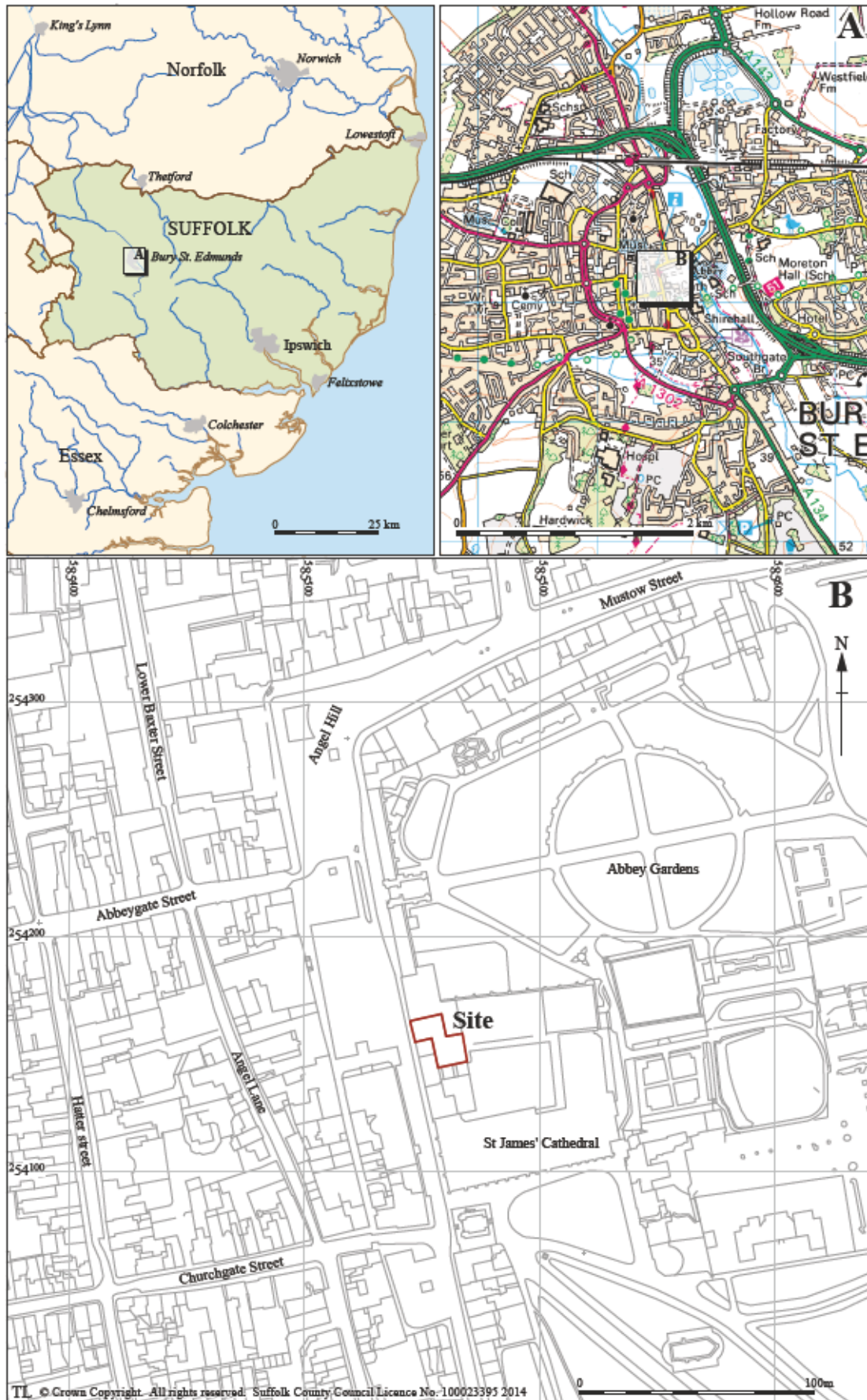


Figure 1. Site location

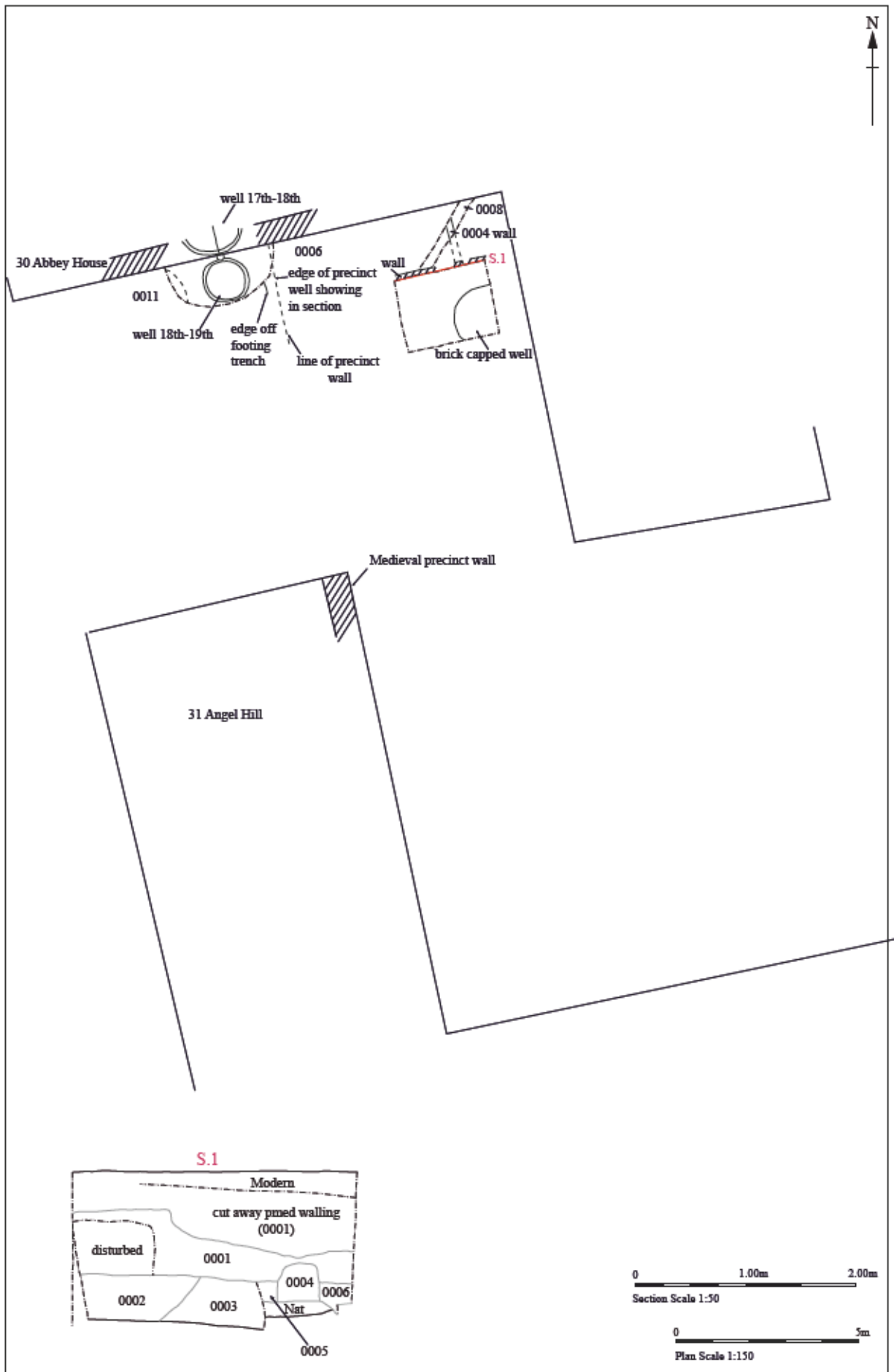


Figure 2. Site plan

3. Methodology

Visits were made to the site during the course of the works. Limited cleaning and recording took place in hole one including photography, a plan and section drawing at a scale of 1:20. The second hole was unsuitable for extra cleaning because of health and safety considerations and was recorded by photography and by planning. The site was visited on several occasions during the repair works and a general photographic record made

4. Results

Hole 1

Following the appearance of a large hole in the surface of the yard outside 30 Abbey House the tarmac surface was removed in an area of c.2m x 2.5m (Fig. 2) and loose infilling material removed; the hole was partly obscured by the storm/foul drain, a water pipe and a brick lined well, which occupied the south east corner, and had been capped probably in the early 19th century. The hole was cleaned with shovels and the north face of the hole was trowelled clean and drawn (Fig. 2, Pl. 1).



Plate 1 ranging poles (2m and 1m scales) indicate the south facing section showing the face of wall, 0001,



Plate 2 Detail looking north at wall 0004 showing through wall 0001, 1m and 2m scales.



Plate 3 The south side of hole 1 showing the brick cap of a c. 19th century well.

Section 1

The following descriptions are in chronological sequence. The section extended to a depth of 1.4m from modern ground surface. Natural red/brown silt and gravel was only visible at a depth of 1.2m towards the north end of the section; immediately above this was the exposed section of a wall, 0004, which was c. 0.4m wide by 0.4m high. It was aligned east-west, which was confirmed when it was again encountered in a new drain run to the west of the hole. The wall was made of medium flints, c. 0.03-5m wide, in a

pale cream mortar and similar to that used close by on medieval stone buildings. Feature 0006 was filled with light mid/grey silt sand and cut the natural to the north of 0004. Only a small section of this feature was exposed and no finds were retrieved. To the south of wall 0004 was deposit 0005, which was suggested to be re-deposited natural gravel and silt. This layer was cut by a probable pit, 0003. The fill of this pit was loose dark grey silt with shell, peg tile and animal bone and small amount of coal. It was expanding slightly at the base of the pit, probably due to the side collapsing inward creating a bell shape, but it was undoubtedly later than deposit 0005. Pit 0003 was cut by pit 0002, which contained mid/brown silt and contained tile and some bone. From general appearance it was judged to be post medieval. Neither pit 0002 or 0003 was traced in the bottom of the hole. Sealing all of these contexts was a north-south wall, 0001; it was exactly parallel to the section and exposed when the face of the trench was cleaned. Approximately 0.4m of the medieval wall, 0004, had been incorporated into the base of the wall (Pl. 2) and the fabric included both brick and flint. The top of the wall had been reduced to at least 0.4m below the modern ground surface.

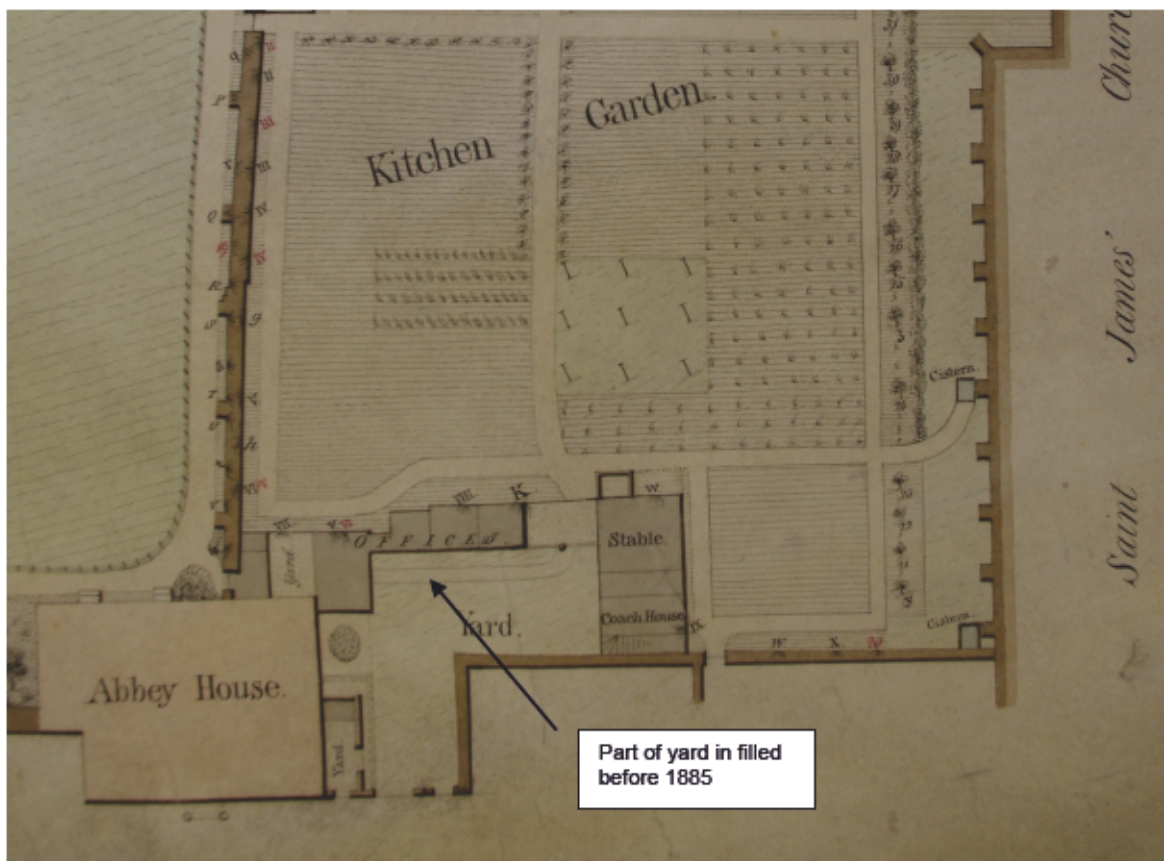


Figure 4 Plan of Abbey House and grounds by J. G. Lenny dated 1823. Since this map was created the block to the southeast of Abbey House appears to have been extended and shortened with some buildings demolished before the 1880 Ordinance Survey map. The map is not measurably accurate (north is to the left).

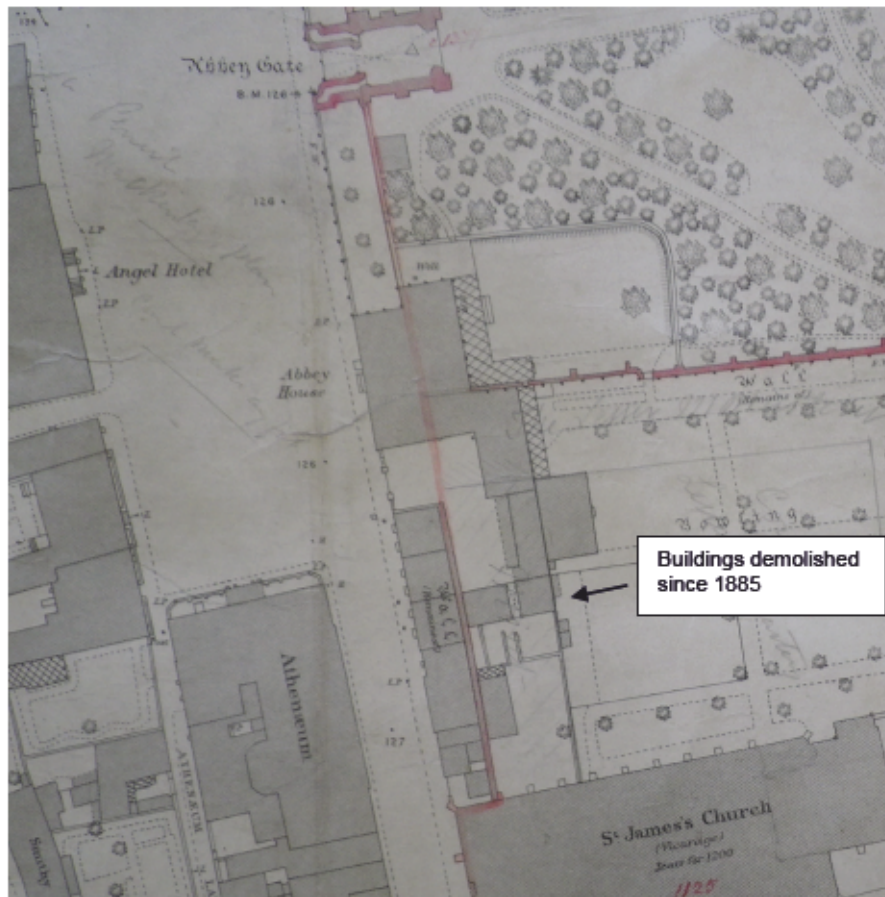


Figure 5 extract from the 1885 Ordnance Survey map of the area (the red pencil line indicates the course of the Abbey precinct wall. Buildings have been demolished providing access to what was the Bowling Green and is now a lawn and car park leading to the cathedral refectory.

Hole 2

(Fig. 2)

The roof line of Abbey House is divided into two with a central gutter emptying into the cathedral yard and it was this drain that had become blocked causing water to erode a wide area below the yard and the gable wall of the property. The hole was difficult to record due to the limited access and health and safety considerations. It was therefore recorded largely by annotated plan and by photograph. Two probable wells were exposed the earliest is likely to have been that which stood just inside the gable wall directly behind the downpipe. In this position it also straddled the north south internal wall separating the two sides of the building longitudinally. It is not uncommon to find wells directly under walls the function no doubt being to access water from both inside and outside the building, a grate had been fitted. The second well was made of unbonded c.19th century bricks; a small inlet of cemented red bricks may have been the outflow of an earlier drain (pl. 6). This wall collapsed during the initial works having previously been undermined by the blocked drain. On the west side of Hole 2 was a

vertically sided, post medieval pit (it was cut from very high in the section implying a later date) with a high chalk content and many pegtiles.



Plate 4. Exploratory hole beneath the downpipe alongside Abbey House revealing the extent of the damage.



Plate 5. Showing a probable well, c.18th century, under Abbey House and beneath an internal partition between two separate elements of the building.



Plate 6. Inside the well (see pl.5) cap

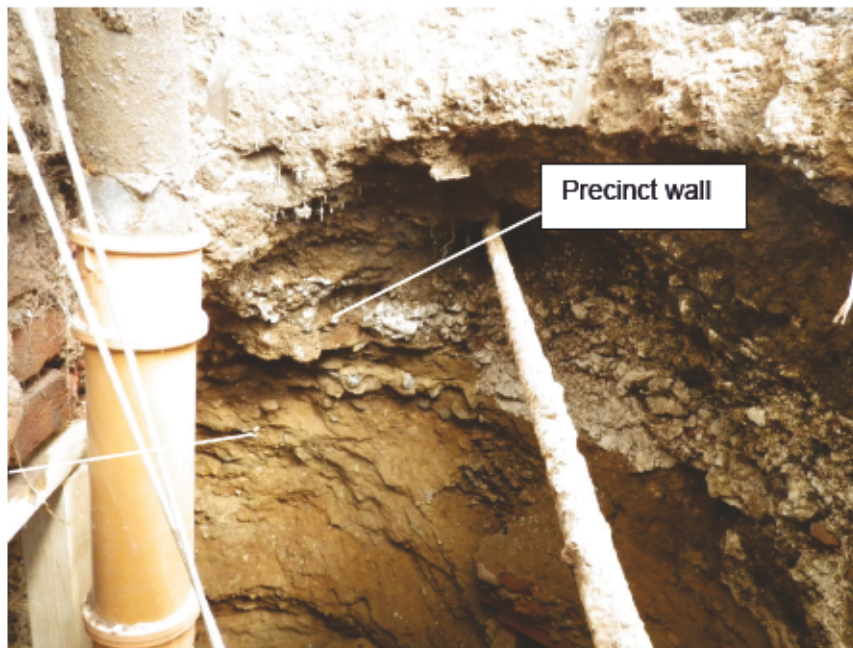


Plate 4. East side of Hole 2, between the downpipe and the waterpipe a small fragment of the flint and mortar precinct wall can be seen; rammed foundations of gravel and sand appear below with a post-medieval chalky layer above, and to the right, of the wall.



Plate 5. Probable 19th century well on the south side of Hole 2 (this unbonded wall later collapsed), a cemented red brick insertion can be seen in the centre of the photograph, which may have been an inlet for a soak away.



Plate 6. Repaired drain line. No undisturbed layers were uncovered during this work or during the re-laying of the tarmac.

7. General Discussion

The earliest features that were uncovered were the stub of the precinct wall, which appeared under Hole 2 and the narrower, parallel wall 0004 which appeared in Hole 1. From its stratigraphic location at the base of the trench and the appearance of the flint and mortar wall 0004 is likely to have belonged to a monastic range that backed onto the precinct wall. This type of development occurred against the western length of precinct wall where the internal wall forms the back wall for the aviary. Wall 0004 could only have been about 4m from the precinct wall, however, is not therefore likely to represent a substantial building. Wall 0001 was built of a later mortar and postdates the Abbey having post medieval brick mortared in being cut through two earlier pit deposits that were also post-medieval.

8. Archive deposition

Paper archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds

Digital archive: SCCAS R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\Archive\Bury St Edmunds\ BSE 290 57-59 College Street.

Digital photographic archive: SCCAS R:\Environmental Protection\Conservation\Archaeology\Catalogues\Photos

Finds and environmental archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds.

10. Acknowledgements

The project management and fieldwork were carried out by Andrew Tester, who also managed the post excavation with Richenda Goffin. Finds processing was done by Jonathan Van Jennians and the finds report prepared by Andrew Fawcett. Richenda Goffin advised on the pottery. The specialist small finds report was prepared by Ruth Beveridge. The report illustrations were created by Beata. Wiczorek-Olesky and the report was edited by Richenda Goffin.

11. Bibliography

Statham, M., 1988, *The Book of Bury St Edmunds*. Buckingham.

Tester, A., 2003, *High Baxter Street Bury St Edmunds (BSE 183)*. A Report on the Archaeological Excavations SCCAS Report No. 01/92.

Tester, A., 2001, *High Baxter Street Bury St Edmunds (BSE 202)*. A Report on the Archaeological Excavations SCCAS Report No. 03/18.

Appendix 1. Brief and specification
Appendix 2. Context list

Archaeological services

Field Projects Team

Delivering a full range of archaeological services

- Desk-based assessments and advice
- Site investigation
- Outreach and educational resources
- Historic Building Recording
- Environmental processing
- Finds analysis and photography
- Graphics design and illustration

Contact:

Rhodri Gardner

Tel: 01473 265879 Fax: 01473 216864

rhodri.gardner@suffolk.gov.uk

www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Archaeology/