

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

St Peters Nursing Home, BSE 307

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING DURING GROUNDWORKS AT ST PETER'S NURSING HOME, BURY ST EDMUNDS

Planning Application. No. SE/07/1110

Co-ordinates: TL 8446 6444

Funded by County Care Homes

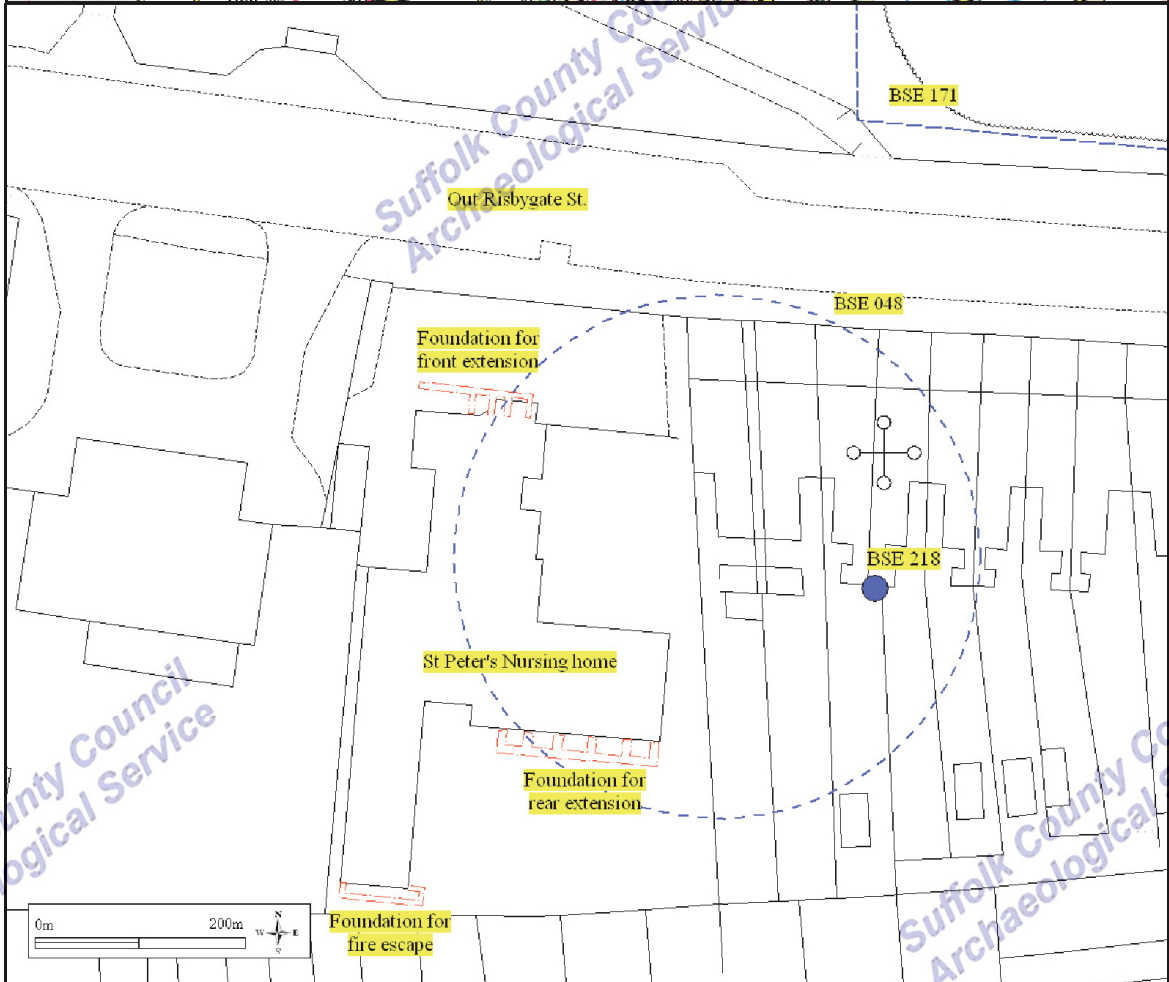
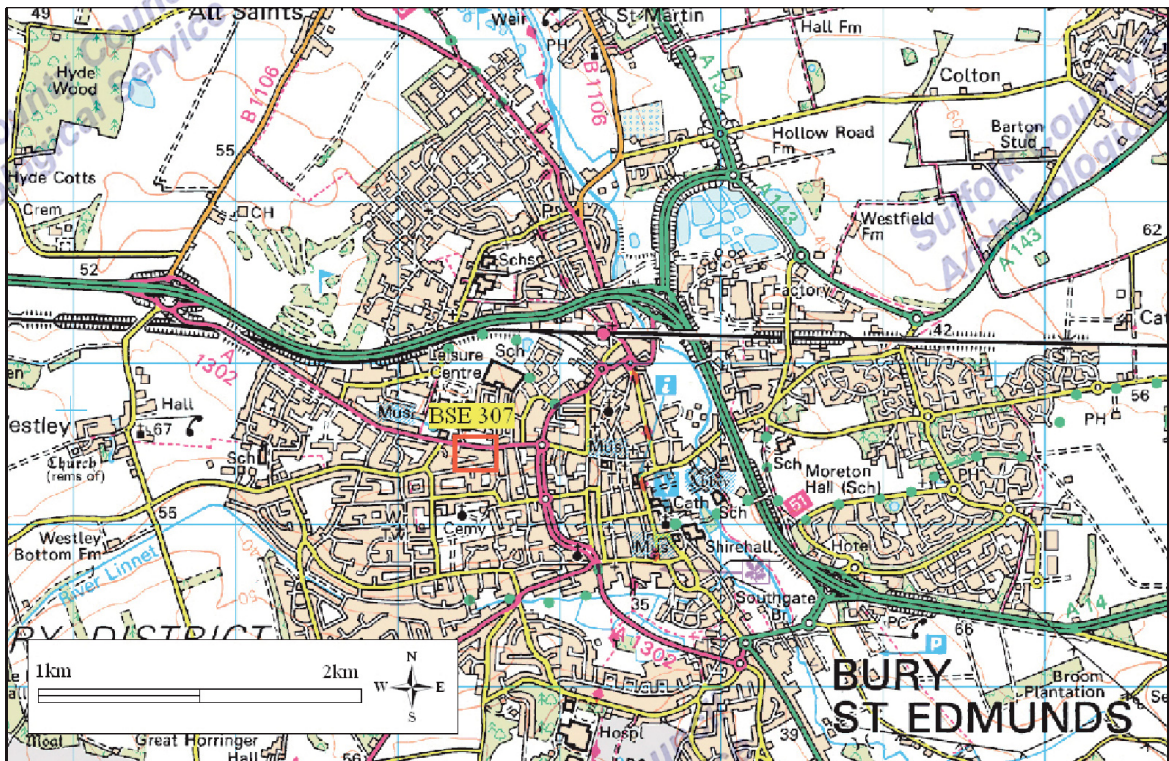
SCCAS Report No. 2008/209

Summary

An archaeological monitoring was carried out at St. Peters nursing home, Out Risbygate, Bury St. Edmunds. The site lies within the boundaries of St. Peters hospital (BSE 048) a medieval hospital for lepers. Previous work in the area has found at least twelve medieval graves (BSE 218). Three sets of footing trenches were monitored. Only one trench, for the rear bedroom extension, was found to have a single non-modern context the post-medieval re-deposition of a previous medieval context, dated from the presence of post-medieval glass and metal work finds, and two fragments human skeletal remains likely to be medieval and to have originated from burials in the near vicinity

Introduction

An archaeological monitoring was carried out to satisfy a condition on planning application SE/07/1110 at St. Peters nursing home, Out Risbygate St, Bury St Edmunds during groundworks for extensions to the front and rear of the existing building. Three areas were identified for monitoring; the rear fire escape extension, the rear bedroom extension and the front porch access ramp extension (Fig 1). The areas for development lie in close vicinity, if not within the grounds, of the site of a medieval hospital of St Peter (Fig. 1, BSE 048). which was in use from the early 12th century and finally closed in 1545. Through that time the role of the hospital evolved from caring for infirm and leprous priests to solely caring for lepers (Rowe 1958). An archaeological monitoring of footings within these grounds carried out in 2003 (Fig 1, BSE 218) discovered at least 12 medieval burials (Anderson 2003). The area was possibly reused in 1637 to bury plague victims (Tymms 1849) although this is disputed by Statham (1988) who believes that they were buried to the north side of Out Risbygate St in the lime working pits (Fig 1, BSE 171). In either case, a known burial site and the grounds of a medieval hospital (BSE 218) plus another possible burial site (BSE 171) lie in close proximity to the proposed development.



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Figure 1. Locations of the site and known surrounding archaeology

Methodology

A mini-digger with a flat bladed bucket was used to excavate trenches 450mm wide and approximately 350mm deep. The trench sections and bases were inspected for evidence of archaeological activity. Sample sections were cleaned and recorded digitally, monochromatically, and by hand at a 1:20 scale. Each context was individually recorded in accordance with Gurney (2003). A plan of the footing trenches was made by collating data from hand drawn plans at 1:100 and data recorded on a Leica system 1200 GPS. The archive is to be stored at SCCAS, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds with a new HER No. BSE 307.

Results

The area identified for the rear fire escape area had already suffered extensive disruption from previous ground works which were sufficient in depth to have destroyed any archaeology present (Fig. 1). Similarly the area for the front extension showed that previous construction and ground works had removed the potential for any archaeology that may have been present at this level.

The footings for the rear bedroom extension were excavated to a depth varying from 0.5m-0.65m. A service trench running NE-SW across the east end of the trench had disturbed a large percentage of the area. A sample section from the west end (Fig. 2) of the trench shows stratigraphy comprising (from the most recent) a large rubble layer approximately 0.12m in depth which is resultant from the current building work, a mid/dark slightly sandy-clay-silt (10:30:60) topsoil, 0001, varying in depth from 0.28-0.4m. This had been heavily disturbed by modern activity and contained occasional chalk flecking (<10%) and occasional modern building debris (10%). Below this lay a mid orangey-brown sandy-silt (40:60) subsoil, 0002, which contained occasional (10%) chalk and charcoal flecking at its base. Occasional (<10%) building debris, similar to that found in 0001, was localised at the top of the context and is thought to have originated from trample of 0001. 0002 was excavated to a depth of 0.08-0.18m, but its lower boundary was not found, the footings required depth having been reached.

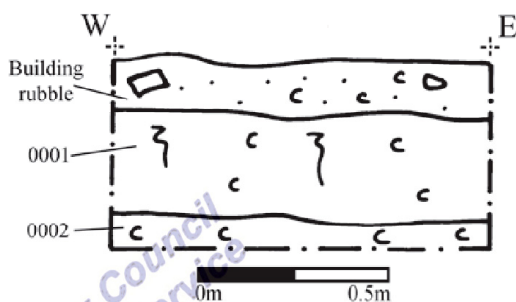


Figure 2. Sample section from rear bedroom extension.

The Finds by Richenda Goffin, January 2009.

Introduction

Finds were collected from a single context, as shown in the table below.

OP	CBM		Post-med glass		HSR		Animal bone		Small finds	Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g		
0002	2	25	1	14	2	84	2	4	1 lead small find @ 27g	Post-medieval
Total	2	25	1	14	2	84	2	4		

Ceramic building material

Two small fragments of pegtile were recovered from the sandy-silt deposit in the trench for the rear bedroom extension. Both are made from hard red-fired fabrics which are post-medieval. One fragment of tile has a particularly dense fabric containing a large flint up to 10mm in length (msf).

Post-medieval bottle glass

The neck and rim of a small flask made from blue glass, probably a pharmaceutical vessel was present in deposit 0002. It has a slender cylindrical neck with a thickened lip and is likely to date to the nineteenth century.

Human skeletal remains

Two fragments of human bone were collected from deposit 0002. One of these is a small fragment of cranium with sutures. The second is from the shaft of a longbone, perhaps a femur.

Animal bone

Two joining fragments of the shaft of a small animal bone from 0002 are fragmentary and undiagnostic.

Metalwork

A single piece of a moulded decorated lead mount from the monitoring dates to the post-medieval period. It is circular at one end and perforated, with a spheroid decorated with a projecting lion's head set in a roundel at the other end. The back face is flat and undecorated, and is clearly not meant to be viewed. The classical style of decoration with the lion's head suggests that it may date to the eighteenth century.

Discussion of the finds and environmental evidence

Only a small quantity of finds was recovered from the monitoring, and where datable, the material is post-medieval. The exception to this is the two fragments of human bone which are likely to be medieval and redeposited from the burial ground of the medieval hospital or other burial grounds in the vicinity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Of the three areas to be monitored only the rear bedroom extension contained a possible archaeological context, 0002. The areas proposed for the front extension and rear fire escape were observed to have been completely disturbed by previous building work in the area.

The rear bedroom extension footings contained 2 contexts. A mixed topsoil with modern building debris inclusions, 0001, and a mixed subsoil from which was recovered post-medieval CBM, glass and metal work. Non-dateable fragments of animal bone were also recovered from this context as well as, most interestingly, two fragments of human skeletal remains. These remains consisted of cranium and a long bone fragments. No discreet features were identified, in part because of the high percentage of modern disturbance covering the site and also due to the relatively shallow depth of the footings. With this evidence it is likely that 0002 is a post-medieval re-deposition of a medieval context that was originally within the area of St Peters hospital BSE 048, where it is known at least twelve graves are present (Anderson 2003).

Andrew Vaughan Beverton
December 2008

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