

**Report on an Archaeological Watching
Brief at '4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk'**

Prepared for:
C K C D & B Limited
Vermont Place
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK15 8JA

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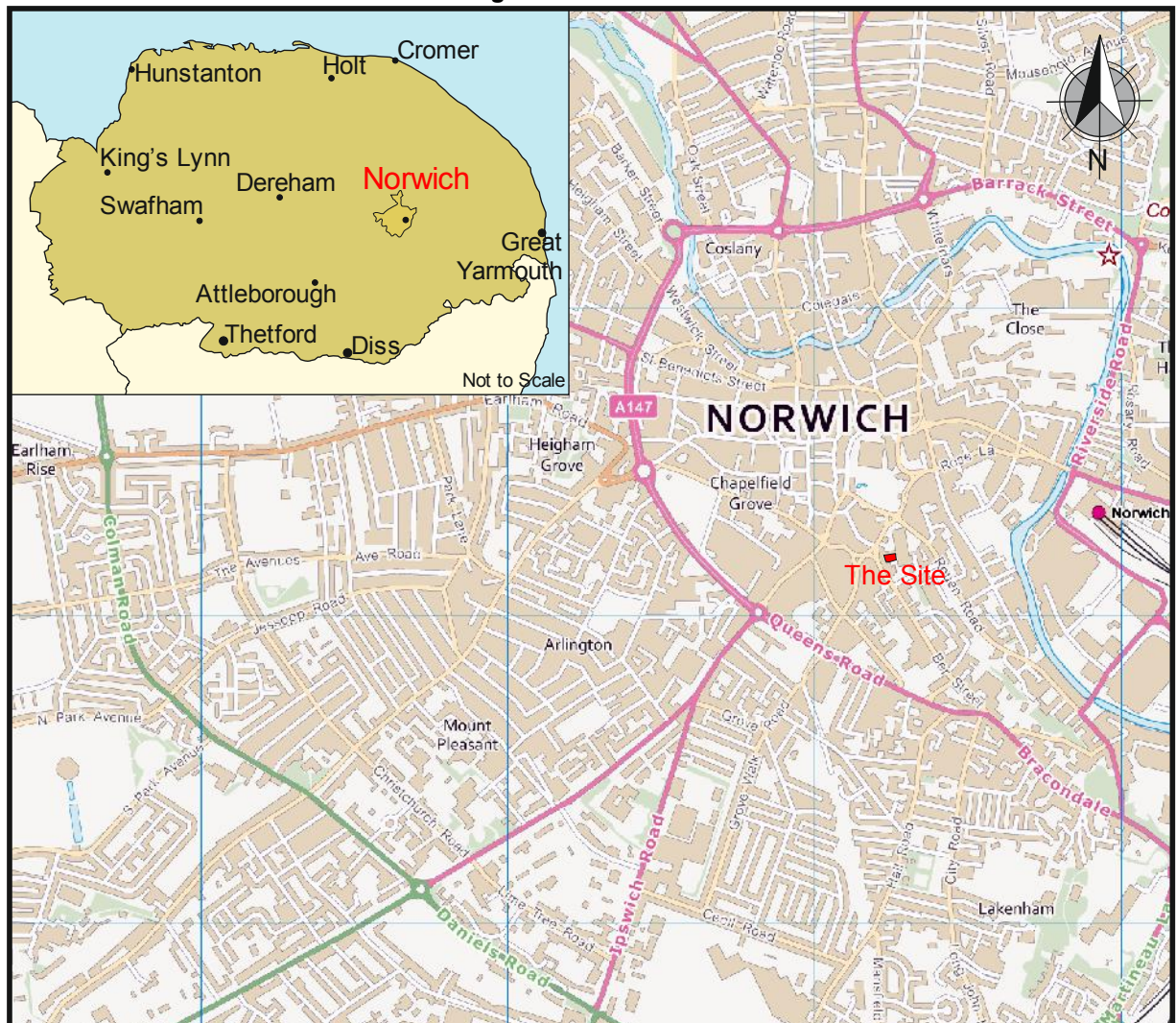
Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at '4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk' between 05 July 2012 and 04 April 2013 during excavations associated with the construction of a new residential and commercial development. The remains of a late medieval wall identified during an evaluation of the site by trial trenching in 2008 were located during the present works, the line of which was avoided to ensure preservation in situ although few further remains of the wall were observed. No finds and no further features of archaeological significance were present.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Archaeological monitoring ('Watching Brief') was carried out during ground works at '4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk' (Grid refs. TG 2323 0821, centred at, Fig. 1) during residential and commercial development of the site and was requested by the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service.
- 1.2 This report, CB279R, details how Chris Birks undertook these works and summarises the results. A copy has been sent to the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service.

Fig. 1. Site Location



2.0 Project Background

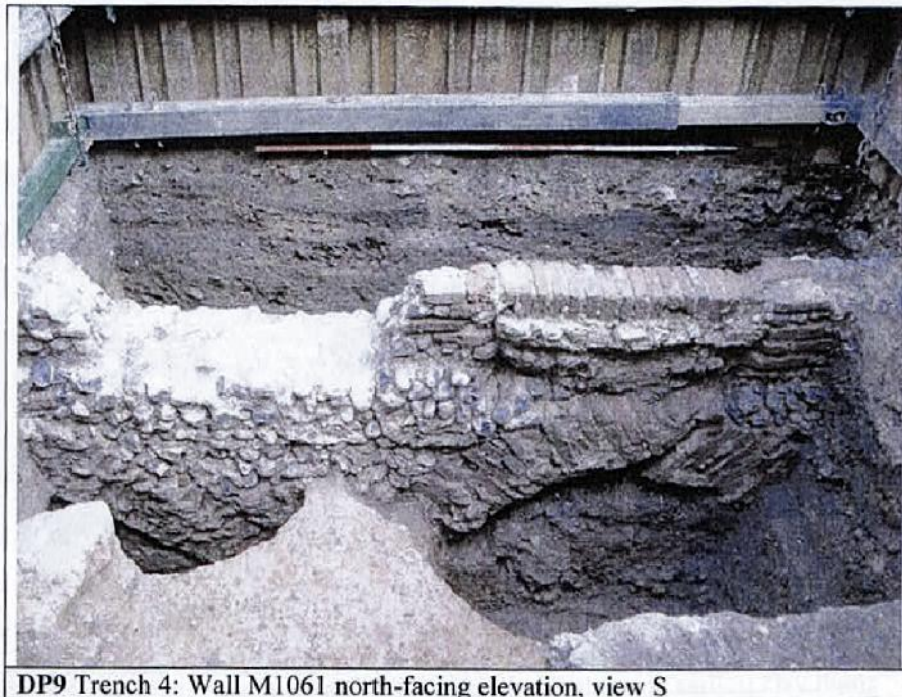
- 2.1 A proposal for a new residential and commercial development was approved subject to a condition for a Programme of Archaeological work. Archaeological Monitoring (“Watching Brief”) at a level of constant attendance during groundworks associated with the development was required to determine the presence/absence, date, extent, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological layers or subsoil archaeological features. Monitoring of the demolition of back yard buildings was required. Any historic masonry and other historic building elements were to be recorded before their removal. The removal of any foundations was to be monitored and any archaeological deposits exposed recorded.
- 2.2 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Brief by the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service (reference CNF41199, Ken Hamilton, 08 June 2012) and a generic Project Design for Watching Briefs by Chris Birks (Birks 2004). Full details of research aims (Medlycott 2011), methodology and standards are provided in the Project Design.
- 2.3 The site archive will be held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, in accordance with the relevant policy on archiving standards. An OASIS record has been raised – reference number chrisbir1-150220.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 A great number of entries exist in the Norfolk Historic and Environment Record (NHER) for Norwich and the surrounding area and only those within the immediate vicinity of the site are described in this report. Full details of these and all other entries can be seen at the NHER office based at Gressenhall, near Dereham, by prior appointment.
- 3.2 The following background was provided in the trial trench evaluation summary report (Woolhouse 2008, Historic Environment Record 51618) and associated figures can be seen in this report. Ber Street runs along the top of a south-east to north-west ridge, on the west side of the river Wensum. The development of this area of the city is thought to have begun before the Norman Conquest (Young and Young 1981; Fig. 4); partial remains of a late Saxon timber building have been excavated close to the street frontage a short distance south of the present site (HER 39789). Several nearby churches, including St Michael-at-Thorn (destroyed during a Second World War air raid) and All Saints, are thought to have late Saxon origins. St John the Baptist, 60m north-west of the site, contains early post-Conquest long-and-short work. *Berstrete* is mentioned in documentary records from the 12th century and was one of the principal roads into the medieval city; the site would have been well within the circuit of late 13th/early 14th century city walls. Previous fieldwork at 93-101 Ber Street identified a Bronze Age round barrow, a medieval street front building and early medieval ovens/hearths (HER 45439). Medieval and early Post-medieval sand/clay quarrying has been identified at several sites (HER 26508, HER 39789). An excavation on the corner Thorn Lane (100m south of 4-8 Ber St) found features associated with early Post-medieval bell founding, as well as what may be the first tin-glazed earthenware kiln site in England (HER 39789). In the Post-medieval period, Ber St was known as ‘Blood-and-Guts Street’, being the only place within the city walls where cattle were slaughtered (Brooks 2006, 24). Both 4 and 8 Ber Street are listed buildings; No. 8 was originally a 16th century inn and has a surviving carriage entrance. Cartographic sources dating from 1696 to the late 18th century show the site as an open area (probably a yard) to the rear of the street frontage buildings; early Ordnance Survey maps depict numerous buildings on the site.
- 3.3 The 2008 evaluation identified well-preserved, stratified medieval and Post-medieval archaeological remains though disturbance by modern activities was evident including cellars and, more recently, a series of garage buildings with inspection pits and a fuel tank serving a petrol filling-station. The remains of a late medieval stone building were revealed in Trench 4 towards the southeast corner of the site (*Plate 1, Fig. 2*). The positioning of such a large and

well-constructed building away from the street frontage is interesting; it is possible that it represents part of a hall range extending back from the Ber Street frontage (Woolhouse 2008). A severely truncated ?medieval grave (Woolhouse 2008) was identified in Trench 2 in the north-east corner of the site

Plate 1. Medieval wall identified in 2008 evaluation
(courtesy of Archaeological Solutions Ltd report number 3169)



4.0 Geology and Topography

- 4.1 Ber Street lies upon the crest of a hill above the River Wensum to the east, generally level at c. 35m OD, the slope drops off considerably to the east of the Ber Street frontage with Mariners Lane (formerly Holgate, meaning 'hollow gate' or 'way') cut into the escarpment.
- 4.2 The site lies upon a geology of Norwich Crag with an overlying deposit of marine or shelly sands and gravels approximately 10m in depth (Funnell 1994). The Norwich Crag overlies a solid geology of Upper Chalk (Funnell 2005) exposed at the lower reaches of the scarp.

5.0 Observations

- 5.1 Monitoring was carried between 05 July 2012 and 04 April 2013 during excavations associated with the new residential development.
- 5.2 Site conditions were good and access was gained from Ber Street to the west of the site. The weather was varied from rain to sunshine.
- 5.3 A photographic record of the existing garage buildings was made on 05 July 2012 prior to their demolition. Due to the modern nature of these buildings and lack of any historical elements, the photographs have not been included in this report. A copy of the photographs will be included in the site archive.
- 5.4 The location of the *in situ* medieval wall [2] identified during the 2008 evaluation was observed c. 1.1m beneath present ground level, overlain by backfill [1] of the evaluation trench. The upper c. 0.2m of the wall was exposed and comprised brick and medium rounded flints in a light brown sandy lime mortar. It was seen to extend c. 2m beyond the east edge of the evaluation trench, overlain by c. 0.7m of mixed dark grey clayey sand

modern deposits [3] and mid to dark brown sand and gravel [4] at this point. No elements of the wall were removed and although no further remains of the wall or any associated structural elements were observed, the line of the wall towards the east was avoided during piling operations associated with the current works.

- 5.5 Spoil arisings during piling comprised mixed dark grey clayey sand modern deposits [3], mid to dark brown sand and gravel [4], mid brown clayey sand [6] with occasional chalk and occasional rounded flint inclusions and off-white chalk [7]. Excavations for the ground beams extended less than c. 0.5m beneath present ground level – the finished floor level of the new buildings is higher than the former surface ground levels and material was used to make-up the ground to achieve the finished floor levels where necessary. Excavations revealed mixed dark grey clayey sand modern deposits [3] and occasionally extended into mid to dark brown sand and gravel [4]. No archaeological features or deposits were present.
- 5.6 Service trenches and excavations associated with drainage were monitored but did not reveal any archaeological remains. Excavations extended to a maximum c. 0.9m beneath present ground level removing c. 0.5m of disturbed mixed dark grey clayey sand modern deposits [3] that overlay mid to dark brown sand and gravel [4].

6.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 6.1 Despite the presence of a late medieval wall (Woolhouse 2008) identified during an evaluation of the site by trial trenching, it was seen to survive a short distance towards the east following which point it had either not existed or been truncated by the construction of the former modern garage units and associated vehicle inspection pits. A return wall towards the north or south may have been expected had this wall formed a part of a building but none was observed. However, such remains may have existed further towards the east but truncated as described. No construction was carried out during the current works towards the west on this alignment so its existence beyond that observed in the trial trench would have been preserved *in situ*. No similar remains were observed in Trench 3 of the evaluation towards the west of this location so it seems likely it does not extend this far towards the west. No further indications of the supposed building to which this wall has been associated with were observed elsewhere on site.
- 6.2 No further archaeological remains were encountered. Modern deposits extended a minimum of 0.6m beneath present ground level across the site and in addition to disturbance caused through construction of the former modern garage buildings and associated features, a tank previously belonging to a petrol station on this site and cellars towards the west had caused considerable disturbance to archaeological remains that may have once existed. Equally, aside from piling operations, the construction of the new buildings involved minimal excavation beyond present ground level so more deeply stratified medieval archaeological remains identified during the 2008 evaluation would have been preserved *in situ*.



Acknowledgments

The project was undertaken by Chris Birks on behalf of C K C D & B Limited who also funded the work. Many thanks to Pete Holden of C K C D & B Limited and especially to Peter Griddlestone, site manager, who was most diligent in ensuring an archaeological presence at the appropriate times.

Fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Birks. The report and drawings were prepared by Chris Birks.

Many thanks to Heather Hamilton at the Norfolk Historic and Environment Record office based at Gressenhall. Thanks also to Ken Hamilton at the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Service and James Albone, David Gurney, David Robertson and Andrew Rogerson at the same.

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Appendix 1. Context Summary

Context No.	Type	Description
1	D	Mixed dark grey clayey sand backfill of evaluation trench
2	M	Brick and flint wall (same as [M1061] in evaluation
3	D	Mixed dark grey clayey sand modern deposits
4	D	Mid to dark brown sand and gravel
6	D	Mid brown clayey sand with occasional chalk and occasional rounded flint inclusions
7	D	Off-white chalk

D = deposit

M = masonry

Appendix 2. OASIS Record

OASIS ID: *chrisbir1-150220*

Project details

Project name	4-8 Ber Street, Norwich WB
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at '4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk' during excavations associated with the construction of a new residential and commercial development. The remains of a late medieval wall identified during an evaluation of the site by trial trenching in 2008 were located during the present works, the line of which was avoided to ensure preservation in situ. No finds and no further features of archaeological significance were present.
Project dates	Start: 05-07-2012 End: 04-04-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	WALL Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK NORWICH NORWICH 4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk
Study area	5000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TG 2323 0821 52 1 52 37 30 N 001 17 55 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Chris Birks
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Chris Birks
Project director/manager	Chris Birks
Project supervisor	Chris Birks
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums Service
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Plan","Report","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at '4-8 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Birks, C.
Other bibliographic details	Report Number CB279R
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Chris Birks
Place of issue or publication	Contractor's Report
Description	Bound a\$ single-side printed report with text, colour digital image, site location plan and plan drawing
Entered by	Chris Birks (chris@chrisbirksarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	10 May 2013

OASIS:

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Figure 2. Site plan