

## ARCHAEOLOGY at DRAGON HALL: A SHORT SUMMARY

There have been four archaeological excavations of this site between 1980 and 2005.

### 1980 EXCAVATION at rear

An archaeological trench of 7m was dug at the rear of the Hall. A report can be found in Brian Ayers in S.M. Youngs and J. Clark 'Medieval Britain in 1980' *Medieval Archaeology* XXV, 211

### 1987/88 EXCAVATION in MIDDLE CELLAR

The small excavation in the middle cellar done in 1987 has been left open to show the evidence of Saxon occupation long before Dragon Hall was built. The post holes indicate the presence of a simple two roomed cottage with timber walls, plastered with clay and straw.

The report of this excavation can be found in Brian Ayers: *Digging Deeper – Recent Archaeology in Norwich (1987)*.



*Excavation in 1987/88*

### 1997/98

The most comprehensive dig was in 1997/98. The excavation revealed evidence of some 37 separate buildings, which were constructed, burnt down or demolished with new ones replacing them, over the thousand years from the first settlement on the site in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, when occupation began, to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From this excavation we can reconstruct the evolution of the site from a semi-rural settlement facing King Street to its development as a river - facing site, then to its short life as Toppes' commercial complex, and finally its nearly 500 years as a primarily residential site on and behind King Street. When Dragon Hall was built in about 1427 there were six buildings already on the site.

The finds from this dig give us some idea of the scale of the excavation, and how it provides evidence of the intensive use of the site. The earliest finds were some thirty late prehistoric worked flints. Then over the period of occupation from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were in total some 1,000 iron items, a very few coins, and over 9,000 sherds of pottery, mostly of local manufacture, of which some two thousand were late Saxon Thetford ware. There were also 15 Roman tile fragments, remains of over 900 clay pipes, and 1400 roof tile fragments. The riverside location has always been important and there were also some 3,000 fishbones, mostly from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, reflecting partly Woburn Abbey's use of the site for fish processing. The majority of the fish were

herring, reflecting the riverside location and the fact that in the earlier periods the inhabitants could not afford much meat. This quantity of finds is not uncommon in urban excavations.

The results, together with extensive documentary research, can be seen in the very detailed Archaeological Report EAA 112: Andy Shelley (ed.): *Dragon Hall, King Street, Norwich: Excavation and Survey of a Late Medieval Merchant's Trading Complex* (East Anglian Archaeology Report No.112, 2005)

For a summary of the archaeological sections of EAA Archaeology Report 112 (2005) see *Dragon Hall Excavation Results - Summary of Archaeology for 1997/98* by Amy Culwick.

The full archive of the 1997 excavation is in the care of the Norfolk Museums service.



*The dig in 1997/98*

### **2005 WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY DIG**

This was undertaken in the north west corner of the site just before the new north wing was built in 2005/06 and was roughly in the area where the lift and stairs are now. They found that there was a large flint rubble building with a basement here before Dragon Hall was built which would have abutted it. Therefore Dragon Hall could not have had a northern wing.

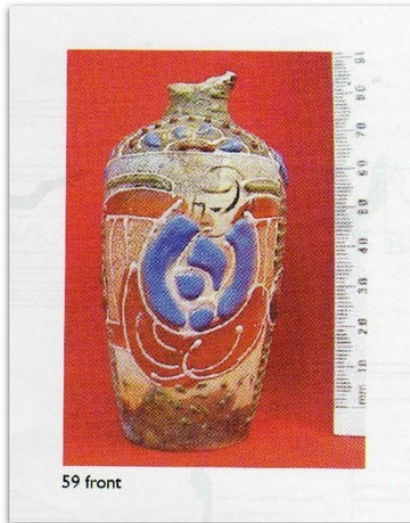
The full report of this dig is in *Norfolk Archaeology Vol XLV (2007): Further Excavation sat Dragon Hall, King Street, Norwich, 2005* by Gary Evans and Reuben Thorpe

### **ITEMS TO BE SEEN**

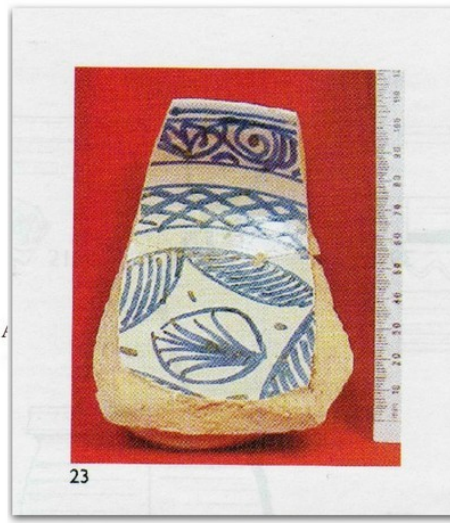
**(Note: as from 2015 these items are no longer on display)**

In the Glass Gallery is a 14<sup>th</sup> century carved limestone head – origins unknown and in the last Cellar you will see a 12<sup>th</sup> century glass linen smoother, used to give cloth a shiny finish; a 14<sup>th</sup> century spindle whorl used as a weight for a spindle; some bricks, stonework and a floor tile and some 12<sup>th</sup> century bone tools made from the antlers of red deer. You can also see 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century clay bricks, a carved stone window mullion and a perforated floor tile from a malting in King Street. On the ground floor in

the last Display Room, at the end of your tour, you can see a domino made from bone, three mugs – probably from one of the two pubs on the site - and a boxwood pipe; these are all probably 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Archaeology 1997/98: Stoneware bottle  
- possibly oriental: C19/20th (EAA Report 112)



Late medieval import (EAA Report 112)