

# **Continuous Archaeological Recording At St Peters Church Blaxhall Suffolk**



**DRAFT**

Grid Reference TM 3565 569  
Oasis Ref: 114399  
HER No: BLX 020

(Dennis Payne Archaeological Services)  
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Dennis Payne Archaeological Services  
Commissioned by Mr N Armstrong



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## Summary

This is a report for archaeological monitoring or continuous archaeological recording in advance of the erection of a new toilet and drainage trench. It has been written in response to an archaeological brief written by Dr Abby Antrobus of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services Conservation Team, dated the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2011.

Monitoring of the ground-works took place on the ninth of September 2011 during which no archaeology was encountered except a pit containing crushed building material that was likely to have been deposited during the restoration of the church tower.

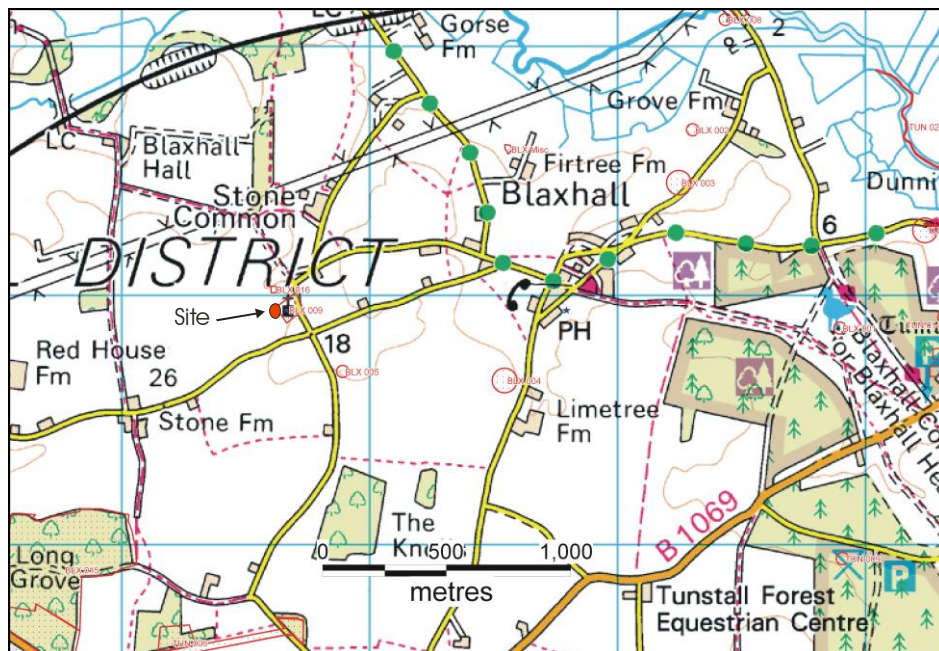
## 1. Introduction

Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new toilet facility within the church: St Peters Blaxhall (a Grade II\* Listed Building BLX009, Listed Building No. 285174); a drainage trench was required within the cemetery to carry this out. Permission was granted from the Diocese Advisory Committee for St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and by Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Grant of the Faculty is conditional upon an agreed programme of work taking place to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage asset before it is damaged or destroyed. This is in accordance with National Planning Policy Statement 5 (policy 12.3).



**Figure 1. Blaxhall location**



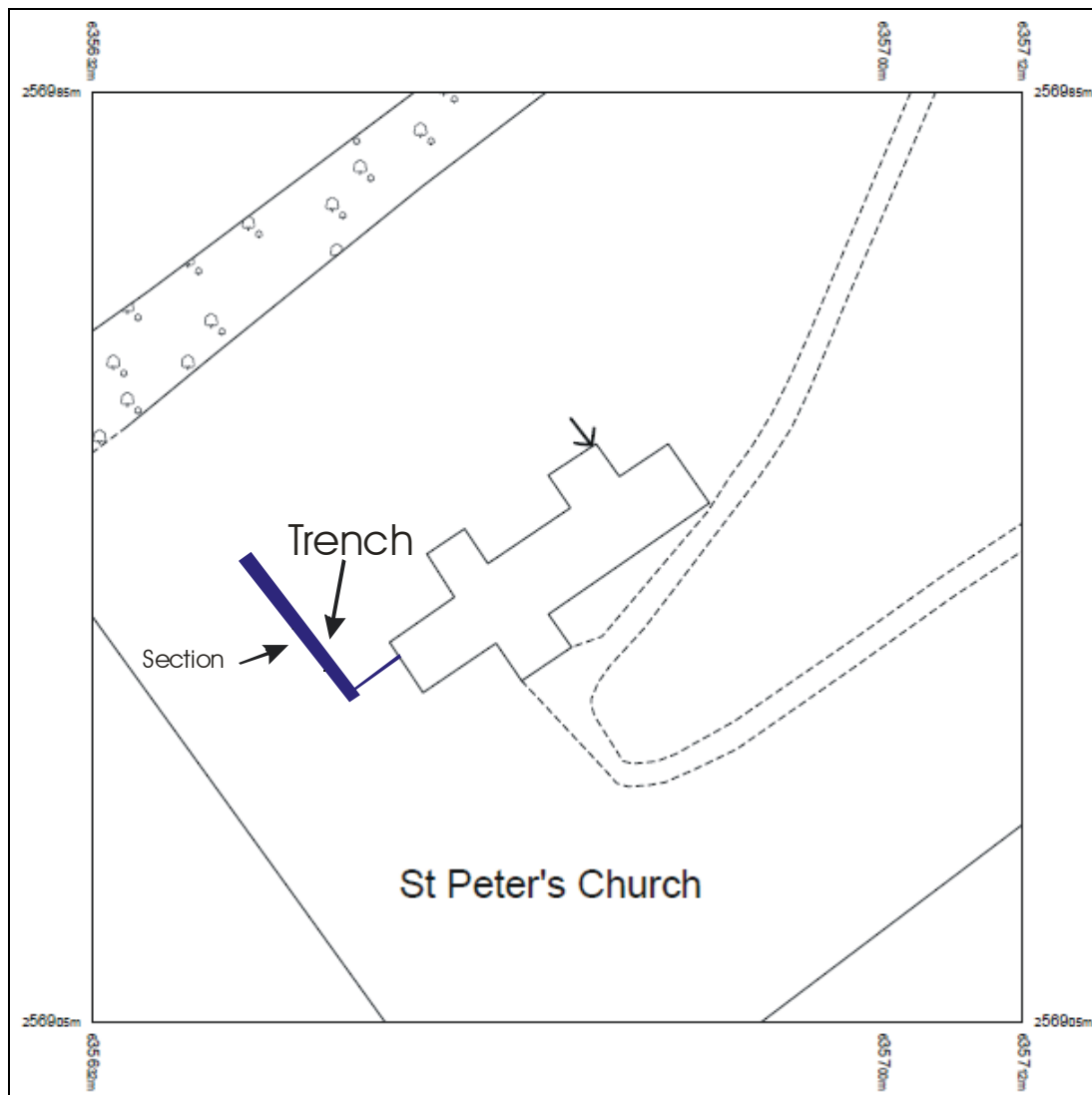
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## Figure 2. Site Location

**Grid Reference: TM 3565 5693**

## Geology

The site is located 300m south of Stone Common and 1.2 km west of the village centre of Blaxhall at 17.0m OD on generally low-lying ground. The underlying geology comprises chalky till and glaciofluvial drift (BGS 208/225).



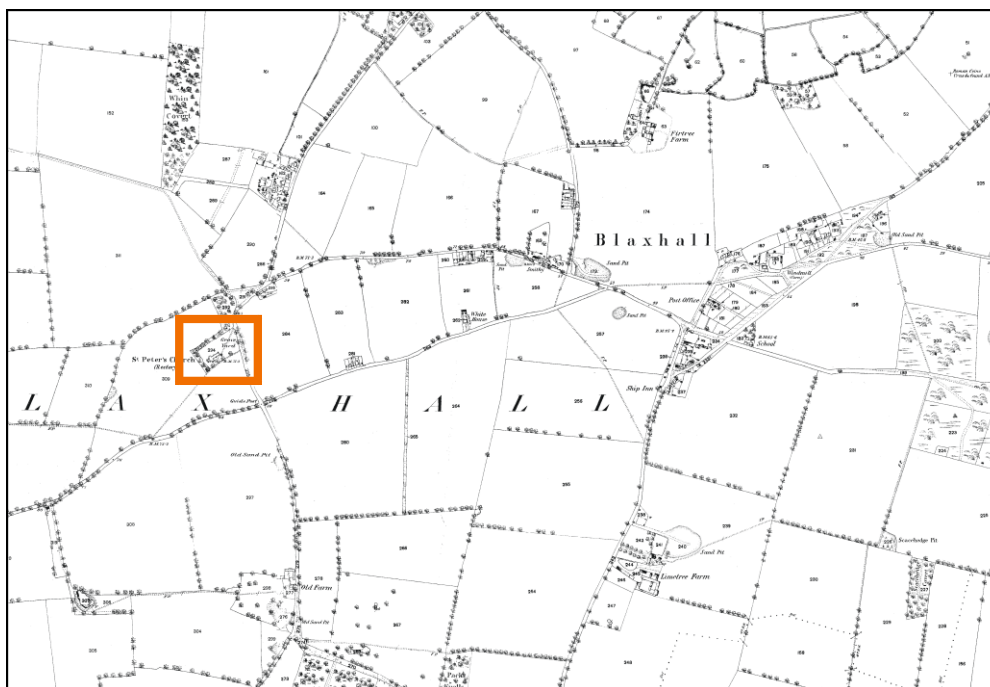
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**Figure 3. Modern Ordnance Survey map of site showing trench location. (Scale 1:1250)**

### 3. Map Information

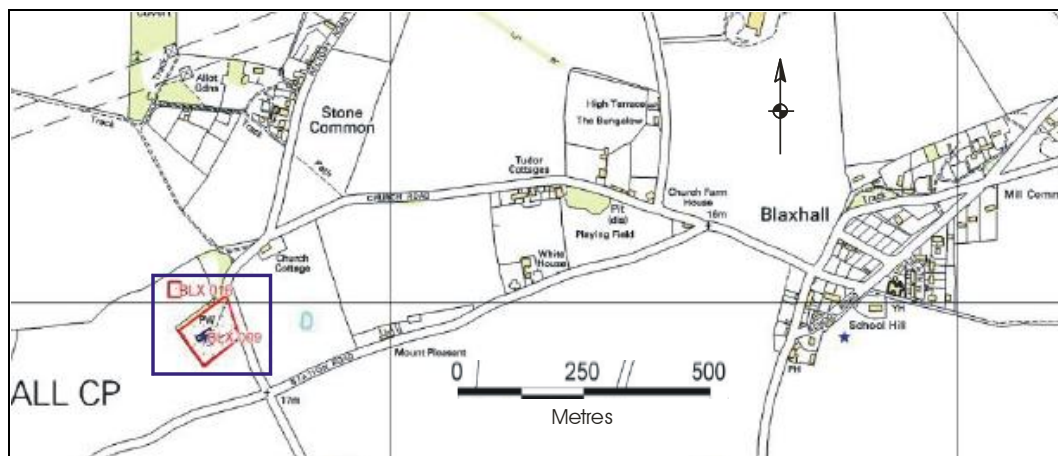


**Figure 4. Hodskinson's map of Blaxhall, 1783**



**Figure 5. Ordnance Survey 1880's of Blaxhall, site highlighted**





**Figure 6. Site location (highlighted) on the modern Ordnance Survey**

## **4. Monitoring of Trench**

### **4.1 Fieldwork**

A plan of the trench was drawn to a scale of 1:50; sections were drawn to a scale of 1:20.

A metal detector survey was carried out at all stages of the project.

Prior to excavation, all features were manually cleaned.

A full photographic archive was produced consisting of colour slide, monochrome print and digital at 10 million pixels resolution, and will form part of the site record to be curated at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

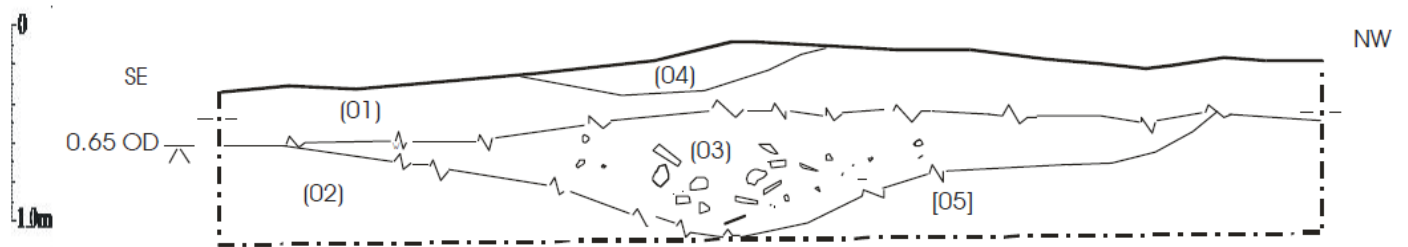
Relative site levels were taken from a TBM on the south-west buttress ledge of the tower at 0.99m; no OD point could be located locally.

## **5 Results**

5. 1 Trenching for the drain was excavated under the west doorway to a fifteen metre soak-away. The soak-away trench, being fifteen metres long by 0.90m deep by one metre width revealed no archaeology except a pit [05] containing building rubble. Upon examining the rubble, it appeared to be the same material as used to restore the tower, which took place during the late seventeenth – late eighteenth centuries. It was concluded that the pit, therefore contained material from the restoration mentioned and had been excavated for that purpose.



During excavations under the west doorway for the gulley leading to the soak-away, two sections of dressed and cut stone\*<sub>1</sub> were recovered just below the surface, within the top soil. They appear to have been placed there as a form of base or step for the doorway. It is impossible to say what they were originally intended for or where they came from, but they may have originally been part of the church (see plates 5&6). No further evidence of Saxon stonework was seen, but these two examples of stone may have come from an earlier building on the site.



**Figure 7. Section 1 at 1:20**

Context	Type	Description/Dimensions	Interpretation	Finds Types /comments
(01)	Layer	Dark brown top soil; 0.20m in depth	top soil	Modern fire waste
(02)	Layer across trench	Sub soil; 0.50 maximum depth	sub soil	none
(03)	fill	Orangey-brown, compacted silty clay Length 4.50 m, depth, 0.80m.		Crushed building material composed of red brick, red tile, angular flint nodules, mortar
[04]	Layer	Greyish-brown, silty, friable spread	Waste fire material	n/a
(05)	Cut	Pit; length 4.50 m, depth, 0.80m.	For burial of waste building materials	n/a

**Table 1. Contexts Descriptions**

## **6 Discussion**

In spite of the close proximity of the church and within the oldest part of the churchyard, no archaeology was found. The pit containing the rubble, presumably from the rebuilding of the church tower, was the only feature discovered and was filled with material exactly the same as used in the tower restoration. The pit could be seen before excavation as a rising piece of ground (plt.1) that the trench would cut through, concluding that the hump in the ground was not a 'plague pit' as local tradition would have it. No grave cuts were encountered or any other features of archaeological interest.

Continuous archaeological recording has shown that no archaeology was compromised during the excavation of the footings. No further work is recommended for this site.

## **7 Post Excavation**

7.1 All finds were (where applicable) processed by the staff of DPAS (washed, labelled and bagged) and sent to the relevant specialist for their assessment, which will form an integral part of this report.

Site plans and sections were digitized to archive standard, reduced versions of which are included in this report.

Finds dating, and stratigraphic relationships (where applicable) were combined to produce phasing of the features encountered.

All features were described in detail with an overall statement of the potential for further work.

All information received from the specialist reports (where applicable) was assimilated to produce an archaeological interpretation

The author would like to thank Mr N Armstrong who commissioned and funded the archaeological work.

This report for archaeological evaluation was written by Dennis Payne (DPAS), who also managed the project and carried out the field-work.

## Bibliography

British .Geological. Survey. 1990    Eye, 190

Carlford, Colneis, Gosford, 1909    Hartismere. Copinger, Vol III

Goult, W., (researcher), 1990, A Survey of Suffolk Parish History (East Suffolk, vol 1, A-H)

White, W, (4<sup>th</sup> edition), 1884. *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk*, Sheffield.

## References

1. The two sections of dressed stone found in the west doorway were left on site at the request of the developer who was instructed by the church officials to leave any stone found on-site.

### ONLINE REFERENCES

*PastScapes* <http://www.pastscape.org/homepage/index.htm>

## Photographs



**Plate 1. Pre excavation form the south**



**Plate 2. Section through trench showing pit (03)**





**Plate 3. The gully leading to the soak-away**



**Plate 4. Post excavation of trench for soak-away, from the south**



**Plate 5. Dressed and cut stone from below the west doorway**



**Plate 6. Dressed stone from below the west doorway**