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nps archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief at the Tombland Earth Rod, Norwich, Norfolk

ENF134336



Prepared for
Norwich City Council



Steve Hickling

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| PROJECT CHECKLIST | | |
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| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Location: | Tombland, Norwich |
| District: | Norwich City |
| Grid Ref.: | 623355, 308760 |
| Planning Ref.: | n/a |
| HER No.: | ENF134336 |
| OASIS Ref.: | 189054 |
| Client: | Norwich City Council |
| Dates of Fieldwork: | 3 June 2014 |

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for the NPS Group during groundworks associated with the installation of an earth rod for a new electrical feeder pillar recently installed on Tombland, Norwich. This involved the excavation of a small hole measuring 0.8m deep.

No evidence of earlier market surfaces was present and the dating of the layer immediately below the modern cobbles was of 16th-17th-century date suggesting that there may not be a great build-up of material in this area.

The excavation took place within an area that may have been on the site of the church of St Michael, demolished in the early 12th century. If this were the case then the earliest deposit encountered may have been a churchyard soil, but no human bone was recovered.

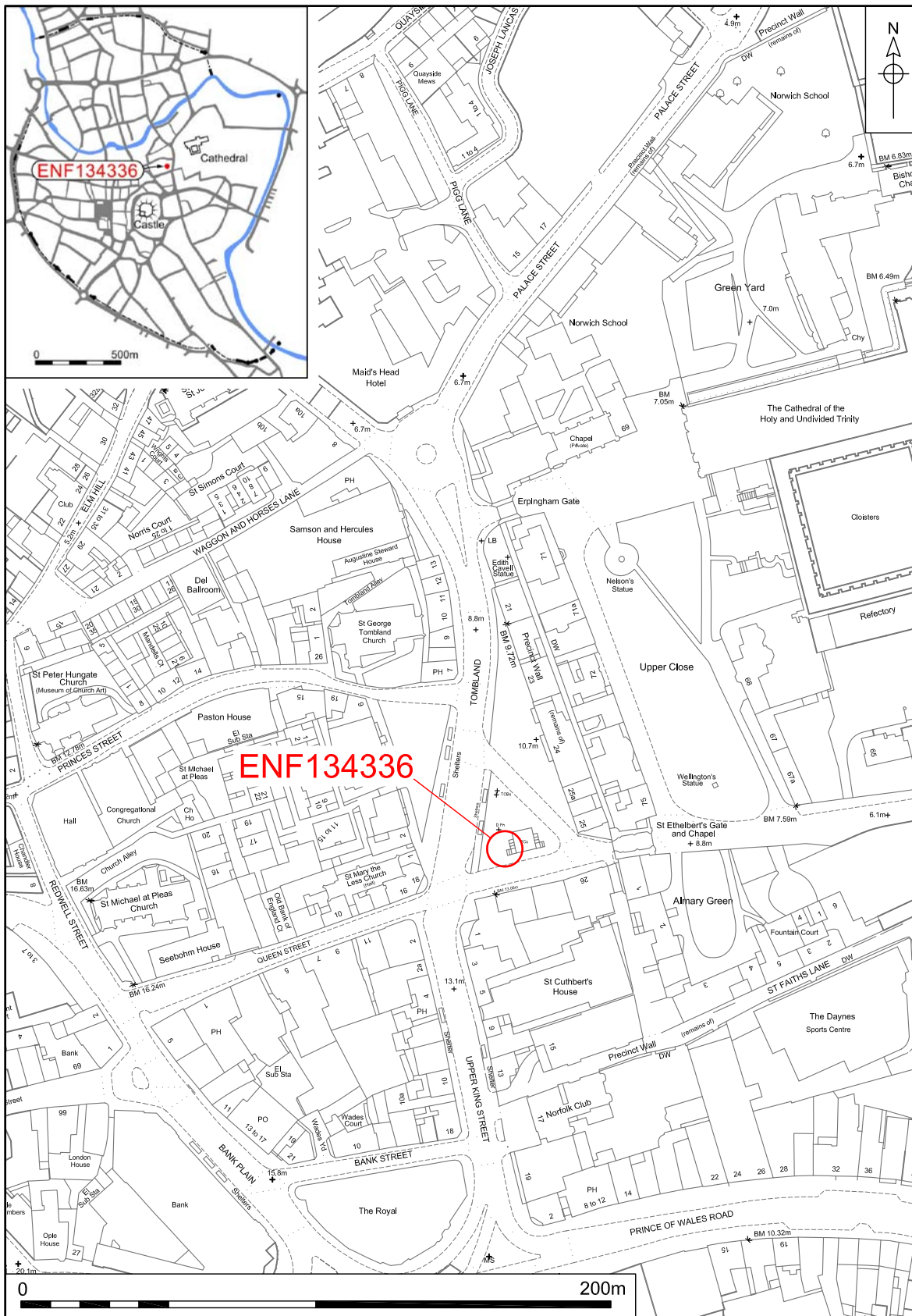
1.0 INTRODUCTION

It was found necessary to add an earth rod to a recently installed electrical feeder pillar in Tombland, Norwich (Fig. 1). Works were undertaken on 3 June 2014 and because of the depth of the excavation required along with its location in the heart of the medieval and Anglo-Saxon core of Norwich, archaeological monitoring was required during groundworks.

This work was undertaken following recommendation from Norfolk Historic Environment Service. The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (01-04-15-2-1072). This work was commissioned by the NPS Group and funded by Norwich city Council.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums Service (NMS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology consisted of Cretaceous Chalk (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>), but this was not reached during the groundworks.

The development site was located at the southern end of Tombland, a large open space in the centre of the medieval core of Norwich. It is surrounded by restaurants and offices, with the Cathedral Close located to the east. It is located just to the west of the public conveniences located here. The site lies on a gentle north facing slope at a height of c.12.5m OD.

The area is cobbled and used for motorcycle parking (Fig. 2).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The information for this section of the report is mainly taken from a commissioned search of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER). Because of the large number of entries for the city centre area, only those closest or most relevant have been presented here. Other secondary sources were also reviewed.

Tombland is on the site of a possibly Roman crossroads (Hickling 2009) and was the Late Saxon market place at the centre of a developing urban centre (Ayers 1994, 33)

Just to the north of the earth rod, is the possible site of St Michael's Church (NHER 586), which was possibly the oldest and most important church in Late Saxon Norwich. It was demolished by Herbert de Losinga before 1119.

The church of St George (NHER 454), 75m northwest of the location of the earth rod is probably a 12th-century foundation, encroaching into the Anglo-Saxon market place of Tombland (Groves 2009), although it was first mentioned in 1248. The building has a 13th-century core but is mainly of 15th-century date. The church was built in what was, in the 13th century, a declining market place as the commercial importance of the market place had been eclipsed by the establishment of the new market in the Norman borough. The position of the church blocked the alignment of several roads, and encroached on the Saxon market place. A late medieval resurgence in the importance of Tombland led to the development of a line of stalls to the east of the church, giving Tombland its modern shape.

Tombland is lined with buildings of note. Those in the vicinity of the earth rod include 26 Tombland (NHER 26254) - a late 18th-century three-storey red brick house with the remains of a 15th-century brick and stone undercroft, 4 Tombland (NHER 26214) - an 18th-century three storey red and blue brick house with vertical blue brick bands and a 15th-century brick undercroft below, 27 Tombland (NHER 51766) - a mid-18th-century red brick house, 28 Tombland (NHER 51767) - a three-storey red brick house, 25 Tombland (NHER 48165) - an early 19th-century two-storey white brick former coach house, 24 Tombland (NHER 413) - a late 19th-century red brick and render building. Fragments of human bone and 11th/12th-century pottery have been found here.

The Tombland Obelisk (NHER 26526), just to the north of the earth rod, dates from 1860 and was originally a drinking fountain, replacing an old wellhead on the site.

There are 20th-century features in the immediate area including a pair of type K6 glazed cast iron telephone boxes (NHER 48248), 15m north of the proposed earth rod, built to a 1935 design by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. A possible Second World War Air Raid Precaution post or air raid shelter (NHER 54319) is located 40m northwest of the earth rod. Two possible Second World War road blocks and an earth-covered air raid shelter (NHER 54320) are visible on aerial photographs within Tombland and to the north of Upper King Street, Norwich.

The remains of an undated walled circular structure (NHER 26379), possibly a tower, were found over 4m below the surface in 1914, 17m southwest of the earth rod.

A watching brief (NHER 26459) on groundworks 12m southeast of the proposed earth rod in 1997 indicated that least 65cm of earlier market surfaces lie beneath the present road. The earliest of these surfaces was of late medieval date.

A building demolished at 1 Upper King Street (NHER 137), 20m south of the earth rod, in 1964 had a 14th century vaulted brick undercroft. Late Saxon, medieval and post medieval pottery, including a complete medieval jug, were found on the site.

A watching brief during groundworks at 27 and 28 Tombland (NHER 26516) in 1999 noted a single medieval inhumation of an adult male, possibly from the graveyard of the now demolished Church of St Cuthbert to the south.

Part of a human skeleton and fragments of post-medieval stoneware mineral water bottles were found in 1987 during internal alteration work at 2, 3 and 3a Tombland (NHER 789). A watching brief in 1999 recorded undated pits, late medieval occupation and post-medieval buildings.

Work preparing foundations in 1956 at 18 Queen Street (NHER 106) exposed a refuse pit containing early medieval pottery fragments and animal bone.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to record exposed archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that all groundworks be monitored.

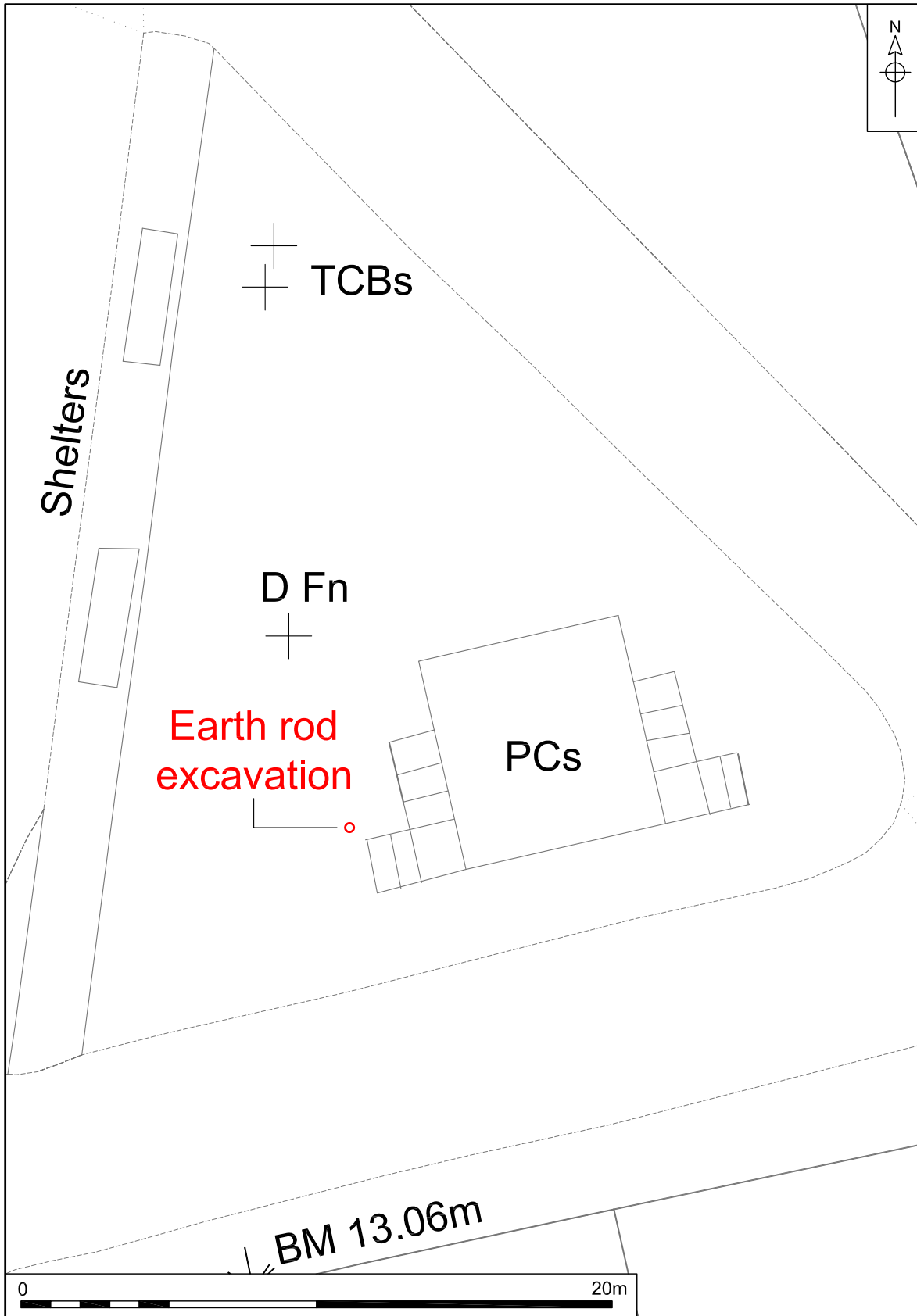
Excavation was carried out by hand under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

Due to a lack of suitable deposits, environmental samples were not taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Digital record photographs were taken.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.



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Figure 2. Location of earth rod. Scale 1:200

5.0 RESULTS

A hole was dug for the installation of an earth rod, adjacent to the newly installed electrical feeder pillar. The hole was roughly circular, with a 0.3m diameter and was 0.8m deep.



Plate 1. The excavation, facing north

The stratigraphy encountered in the hole for the earth road was as follows.

| Context No. | Depth (bgl) | Description |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 2 | 0.00-0.15m | Modern flint cobbles with yellow sand bedding |
| 1 | 0.15-0.42m | Dark brown silty sand with occasional flint gravel and ceramic building material fragments |
| 3 | 0.42-0.52m | Dark brown silty sand with frequent mortar flecks and sparse ceramic building material fragments |
| 4 | 0.52m+ | Dark brown silty sand with occasional flint gravel and sparse ceramic building material fragments |

Layer (1) appeared to have a firmly post-medieval (16th/17th-century) date.



Plate 2. The earth rod excavation, from above

6.0 THE ARTEFACTUAL MATERIAL

by Rebecca Sillwood

Finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and information entered onto an Excel spreadsheet.

A list of finds can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

Three pieces of post-medieval pottery (64g) were found in deposit (1) during this watching brief.

Two pieces were conjoining rim sherds (50g) from a Surrey white ware colander, or similar. Surrey white ware was produced in the 16th and 17th centuries, although Jennings (1981, 129) states that most of the Norwich examples date to the early 17th century. The fabric consists of a pale creamy-pink, with patchy yellow glaze visible on both the interior and exterior. Jennings further states that the glaze is usually present on the inside only, except on colanders and candlesticks, and these two pieces from Tombland are likely to be from a colander, with a similar rim to one depicted by Jennings (*ibid* no. 895).

A single piece (14g) was a fragment of handle from an iron-glazed ware dating from the early 16th through to the 17th century (Jennings 1981, 150). The piece was covered in an opaque black glaze with a fabric of pinkish-orange with a reduced grey core.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The installation of an earth rod on Tombland, involved the digging of a small hole 0.8m deep.

No evidence of earlier market surfaces was present and the dating of the layer immediately below the modern cobbles (16th/17th-century) suggests that there may not be a great build-up of material in this area.

The lowest layer (4) may be a medieval deposit as the excavation may have taken place within the area of the former church of St Michael. This church was demolished in the early 12th century, in which case, the earliest deposit encountered may have been a churchyard soil, however no human bone was recovered.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Steve Barrett, the onsite foreman and Daniel Middleton of NPS for their help and cooperation on site.

The finds were processed, recorded and reported on by Rebecca Sillwood.

This report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Jayne Bown.

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<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 03.06.2014

Appendix 1: Context Summary

| Context | Category | Description | Period |
|---------|----------|--|---------------|
| 1 | Deposit | Dark brown silty sand with occasional flint and cbm | Post-medieval |
| 2 | Deposit | Flint cobbles in yellow sand bedding | Modern |
| 3 | Deposit | Dark brown silty sand with frequent mortar flecks and occasional flint and cbm | Uncertain |
| 4 | Deposit | Dark brown silty sand with occasional flints and very rare cbm fragments | ?Medieval |

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

| Context | Material | Qty | Wt | Period |
|---------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| 1 | Pottery | 3 | 64g | Post-medieval |

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

| Period | Material | Total |
|---------------|----------|-------|
| Post-medieval | Pottery | 3 |

Appendix 3: OASIS Report Summary

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OASIS ID: norfolka1-189054

Project details

| | |
|--|---|
| Project name | Tombland Earth Rod - watching brief |
| Short description of the project | An archaeological watching brief was conducted for the NPS Group during groundworks associated with the installation of an earth rod for a new electrical feeder pillar recently installed on Tombland, Norwich. This involved the excavation of a small hole measuring 0.8m deep. No evidence of earlier market surfaces was present and the dating of the layer immediately below the modern cobbles was of 16th-17th-century date suggesting that there may not be a great build-up of material in this area. The excavation took place within an area that may have been on the site of the church of St Michael, demolished in the early 12th century. If this were the case then the earliest deposit encountered may have been a churchyard soil, but no human bone was recovered. |
| Project dates | Start: 03-06-2014 End: 03-06-2014 |
| Previous/future work | No / No |
| Any associated project reference codes | ENF134336 - HER event no. |
| Type of project | Recording project |
| Site status | None |
| Current Land use | Other 3 - Built over |
| Monument type | NONE None |
| Significant Finds | POT Post Medieval |
| Investigation type | "Watching Brief" |
| Prompt | National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF |

Project location

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Country | England |
| Site location | NORFOLK NORWICH NORWICH Tombland Earth Rod |
| Study area | 0.50 Square metres |
| Site coordinates | 0 0 623355 00 00 N 308760 00 00 E Point |

Project creators

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Name of Organisation | NPS Archaeology |
| Project brief originator | Norfolk Historic Environment Service |
| Project design originator | NPS Archaeology |
| Project director/manager | Nigel Page |
| Project supervisor | Steve Hickling |

Project archives

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Physical Archive recipient | Norfolk Museums Service |
| Physical Contents | "Ceramics" |
| Physical Archive notes | At the time of making this record NMS is not making new accessions |
| Digital Archive recipient | NPS Archaeology |
| Digital Contents | "Ceramics","other" |
| Digital Media available | "Images raster / digital photography" |
| Paper Archive recipient | Norfolk Museums Service |
| Paper Contents | "Ceramics","other" |
| Paper Media available | "Context sheet","Plan","Report" |
| Paper Archive notes | At the time of making this record NMS is not making new accessions |

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