

Report 2503



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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at Blakeney Church of England Infant School, Blakeney, Norfolk**

HER 125280



Prepared for NPS Property Consultants Ltd.



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February 2011



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Location	Blakeney Church of England Infant School
District:	North Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TG 0323 4358
HER No.:	ENF125280
OASIS Ref.:	83899
Client:	NPS Property Consultants Ltd.
Dates of Fieldwork:	23 August – 15 September 2010

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was conducted for NPS Property Consultants Ltd. at Blakeney School during works which included levelling part of the playground and the excavation of a wall foundation, two soakaway pits and associated pipe trenches. No archaeological features were observed. Three disarticulated human bones were recovered during the levelling of the playground from the backfill of a previous service trench. The bones were retained at Blakeney church for reburial.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

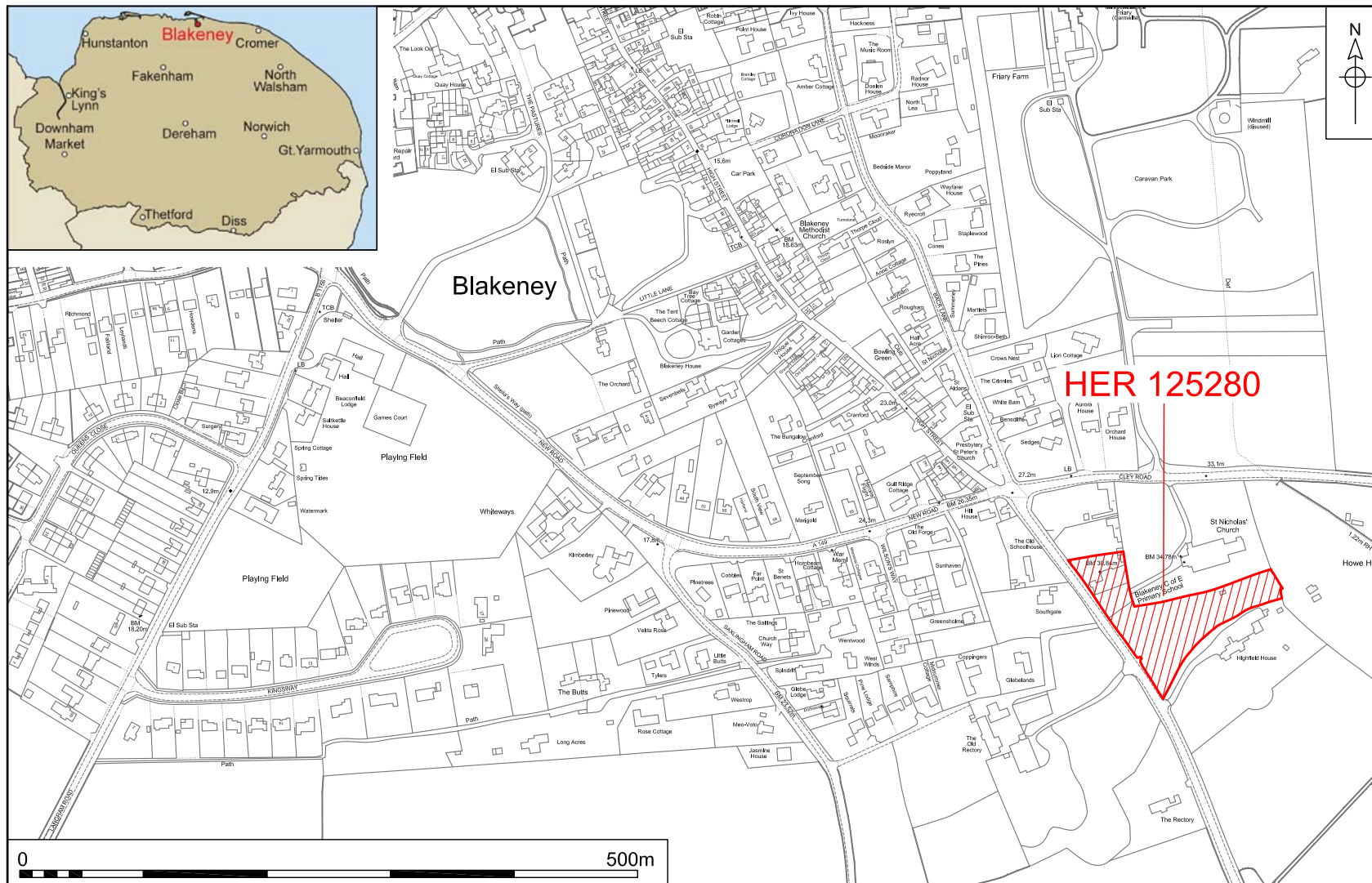
The watching brief was carried out during levelling works at the playground of Blakeney Church of England Infant School, encompassing an area approximately 30m east-west by 17m north-south. The school is situated immediately to the west of the cemetery of the medieval church of St. Nicholas and fronts onto Wiveton Road (Fig. 1).

The playground sloped down from east to west and was to be levelled by excavating up to 0.15m from the eastern half and raising the west side by a similar amount. To the west of this newly-levelled area a north to south aligned foundation trench for a retaining wall was excavated to a depth of 0.80m for a length of 14m and 0.75m wide (Fig 2).

In the western half of the playground two soakaway pits were excavated, each measuring 2.50m square by 2.20m deep. Two trenches were also excavated connecting to the southernmost of these two pits. These were 4.5m long by 0.75m wide and 0.80m deep. A third trench excavated to the northern pit measured 8m long by 0.75m wide and 0.90m-1.20m deep (Fig 2).

The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2503/DW) The work was commissioned and funded by Blakeney Church of England Infant School.

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 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

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

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The school is located 1.5km west of the River Glaven and 500m south of Blakeney Quay, at an elevation of approximately 30m OD. The ground slopes down gently towards the Wiveton Road to the west and at the eastern boundary of the school the land rises by 1m-2m; caused by the proximity of the cemetery of St. Nicholas' Church.

To the west of the site machine excavation to a depth of 2.20m revealed palaeo-argillic brown earths 0.20m-0.40m deep. In some sections these overlay glacial brown orange sand also varying from 0.20m–0.40m deep. Beneath this sand was Cretaceous chalk bedrock with occasional large nodular flints. Other sections showed that the sub-soil formed a horizon directly onto the chalk bedrock.

## **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The medieval church of St. Nicholas lies directly to the east of Blakeney School which was built in 1863. Due to less pressures on space, the boundary's of church graveyards in the medieval period were often much more extensive than those extant today. It is possible that the cemetery originally extended to Wiveton Road and therefore burials were to be expected within the development area. Anecdotal evidence from the local community indicated that burials were discovered during previous construction works at the school.

Information held in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) was examined and showed many metal detected finds to the north-east and south-east of Blakeney School at a distance of 100m-200m. The majority of these are medieval and post medieval, with a few being Roman and Saxon. The nearest recorded find is one sherd of Late Saxon pottery from the cemetery of St. Nicholas' church. No monuments or earthworks near the school are recorded.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

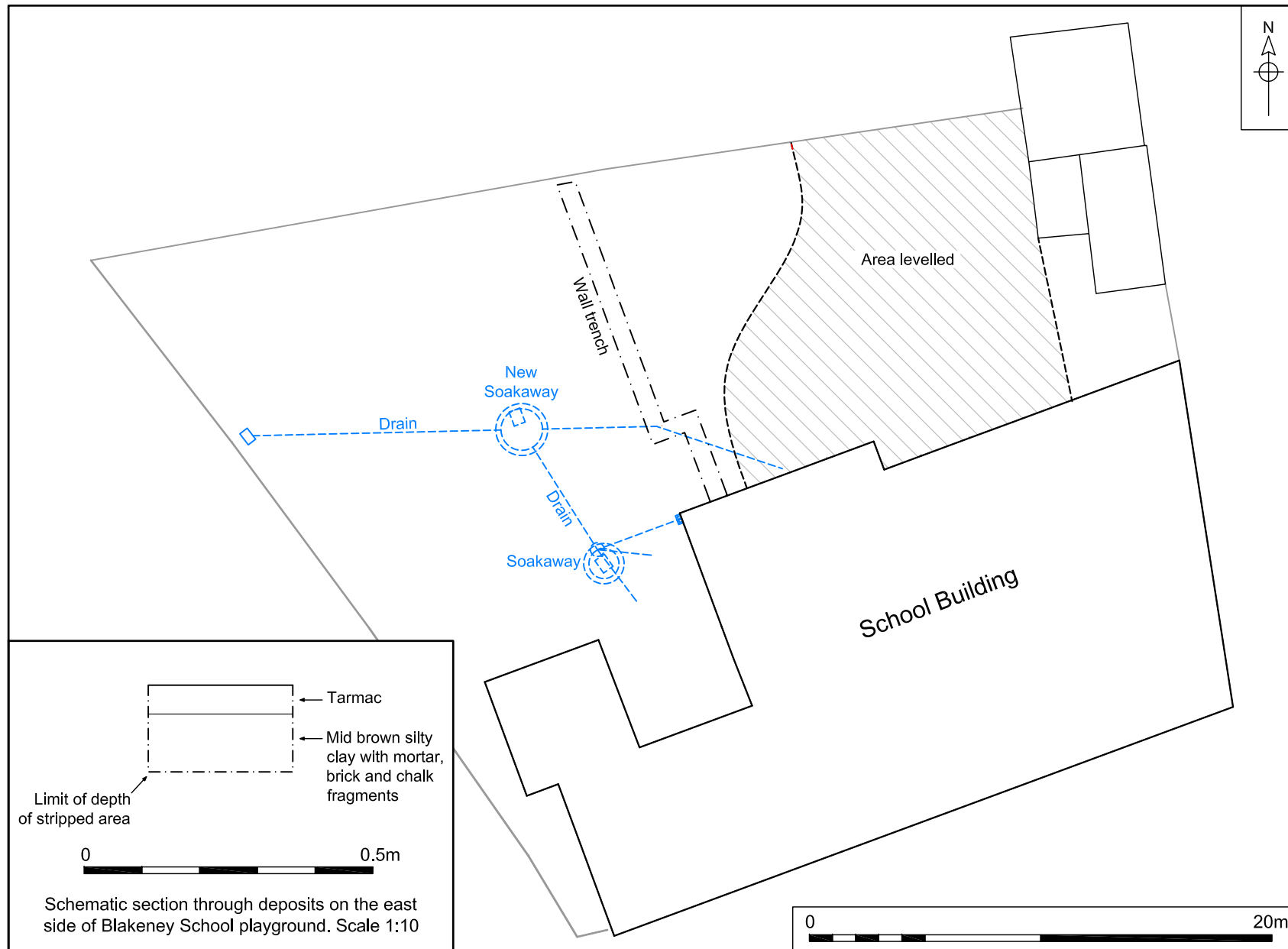
The objective of the watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

Machine excavation was carried out with a 360° excavator equipped with a toothed bucket and operated 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.

No environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.



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Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:250



The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 30.84m OD, located on the side of Blakeney School.

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

## 5.0 RESULTS

The eastern half of the playground was levelled by the excavation of an area measuring approx. 7m east-west by 14m north-south to a depth of 0.15m. This revealed a layer of mortar, brick and chalk fragments in a matrix of mid brown silty clay (Plate 1). The backfill of an old service trench was clearly identified in plan and from the surface of this backfill three disarticulated human bones were recovered no more than 0.10m below the modern ground surface. These bones were returned to St. Nicholas Church for reburial.



Plate 1. Excavation works in progress with old service trench visible, looking north

The north-south wall foundation trench measured 14m long by 0.75m wide and 0.80m deep. A mid brown silty sub-soil (3) was observed, measuring 0.70m in depth, in the northern part of the trench reducing to only 0.10m to the south where natural chalk rose almost to the surface. No archaeological features were observed.

To the west of this wall foundation trench two soakaway pits measuring 2.50m square were excavated to a depth of 2.20m (Plate 2).



Plate 2. South facing section of soak away pit

Two pipe trenches were excavated to join the east and north-eastern sides of the southern soak away (Plate 3). They were both 4.50m long by 0.75m wide and 0.80m deep.



Plate 3. North-east facing section of pipe trench

The third pipe trench ran east-west and met the west side of the northern soakaway. This trench was 8m long by 0.75m wide by 0.90m–1.20m deep. There were no archaeological features in any of these pits and trenches. The subsoil (3) was 0.25m–0.40m deep with a horizon to natural orange sand or, straight to chalk bedrock.

Victorian pottery, glass bottles and clay tobacco pipes were found in the brown silty sub-soil (3) across the site.

## **6.0 THE FINDS**

### **6.1 Pottery**

A sample assemblage comprising nine sherds of pottery weighing 255g was collected from subsoil deposits (3) (Appendix 3). A total of six vessels plus a fragment from a figurine were collected. The whole assemblage is of 19th- to 20th-century date and comprises three refined white earthenware flatware vessels and a hollowware mug or jug, a blue and white transfer printed earthenware plate and a fragment from a pressure moulded porcelain vessel. The incomplete figurine shows the head of a woman in pastoral costume and is of 18th- to 20th-century date. The small assemblage represents modern dumped refuse deposits.

### **6.2 Glass**

A small square pressure moulded clear glass bottle and the base from a pale green bottle were collected. Both bottles date to the 19th to 20th century and were collected from subsoil deposits (3).

### **6.3 Ceramic building material**

A total of seven pieces of modern pan tile, were collected from subsoil (3). Two fragments are in sandy orange fabric and five in fine dark grey/blue sandy fabric with occasional voids.

### **6.4 Clay tobacco pipe**

Two fragments from the bowls of elaborately moulded clay tobacco pipes were collected; both are of late 18th- to 20th-century date. One bowl has a shield with two standing figures. A similar pipe bowl believed to depict 'supporters and shield' and possibly related to the Battle of Waterloo is attributed to Yarmouth pipe manufacturer William Harvey and dated post 1815 (Atkin 1985, fig.8. 114). A second pipe shows a thistle on the bowl base.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The watching brief was undertaken to determine the likelihood that the cemetery of St. Nicholas' church may have originally extended westwards towards the Wiveton Road before the school was built in 1863. It was feasible that burials may have been present below the surface of the playground and hence be disturbed during this episode of construction work designed to level the playground and improve drainage.

Three unarticulated human bones were discovered during monitoring works but these appeared to have been redeposited in the backfill material of an earlier service trench. These bones were found approximately 6m to the west of the present cemetery boundary and were retained by the church for reburial within the graveyard.

It is reasonable to suppose that the cemetery may have extended slightly further to the west prior to the construction of Blakeney school in 1863 and it is probable that landscaping occurred at that time to create a horizontal surface for the construction of the school and play area. There is a sudden rise in the ground surface of 1m–2m at the school's eastern boundary with the cemetery. There is no evidence that the cemetery extended as far west as Wiveton Road but it is possible that burials may have been present and were removed when the school was built.

The finds in the subsoil (3) are consistent with the date of the school's construction.

## ***Acknowledgements***

The finds were washed by Michelle Bull and analysed by Sarah Percival. The clay pipe was identified by John Ames. David Dobson prepared the figures and produced the report which was edited by Jayne Bown

## ***Bibliography***

- Atkin, S., 1985 'The Clay Pipe-Making Industry in Norfolk' *Norfolk Archaeology XXXIX Part II*, 118-150.
- Department for Communities and Local Government 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*



## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Asphalt	Modern
2	Deposit			Orange sand and flint cobbles	Modern
3	Deposit			Mid brown sandy silt subsoil	Post glacial
4	Deposit			Brown orange natural sand	Glacial
5	Deposit			White chalk	Cretaceous

## Appendix 2: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period
3	Pottery	9	255g	Modern
3	Ceramic Building Material	7	433g	Modern
3	Glass	2	250g	Modern
3	Clay Pipe	2	9g	Modern

## Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	fab	Form	qty	wt	spotdate	Comment
3	REFW	Saucer	1	53	L.18th-20th c	Refined white earthenwares
3	REFW	Bowl	3	111	L.18th-20th c	Refined white earthenwares
3	REFW		1	14	L.18th-20th c	Refined white earthenwares
3	REFW		1	30	L.18th-20th c	Refined white earthenwares
3	TPE	Plate	1	19	L.18th-20th c	Transfer printed earthenware
3	PORC		1	5	L.18th-20th c	Porcelain
3	REFW	Figurine	1	23	L.18th-20th c	Refined white earthenwares