



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at
St Margaret's Primary School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire,
October 2010
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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at St Margaret's Primary School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire	
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at St Margaret's Lower School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire, in response to a planning application for the proposed extension to the existing school building. No archaeological features were found. The trenching confirmed the desk-based assessment, which suggested that the site of the school had been levelled and terraced in the 19th century.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment Northamptonshire Archaeology 2010	
Current land use	School playground and parking area	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	St Margaret's Primary School	
Easting Northing	SK 4330 3180	
Area (sq m/ha)	0.1 ha	
Height aOD	150m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell (NA)	
Project Manager	Antony Walsh (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	YMD Boon	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	18/10/2010	
End date	18/10/2010	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents
Physical	X.A175.2010	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at St Margaret's Primary School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire, October 2010	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
AT ST MARGARET'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
BLACKFORDBY, LEICESTERSHIRE
OCTOBER 2010
ACCESSION NO. X.A175.2010**

Abstract

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at St Margaret's Primary School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire, in response to a planning application for a proposed extension of the school building. The site was very constrained by live services. A single 5m long trench was excavated, which revealed no archaeological features. No surviving ploughsoil or cultivation subsoil was present and the natural geology had been truncated. This most probably occurred in the 19th century, to create a terrace for the building of the school.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out on the 18th of October 2010 by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) at St Margaret's Primary School, Blackfordby, Leicestershire (NGR: SK 4330 3180 Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by YMD Boon on behalf of their clients, Leicestershire County Council and was undertaken to inform a planning application for a proposed extension to the existing school building.

The scope of works was detailed in the written scheme of investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2010) which was approved by Richard Clark, Principal Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council.

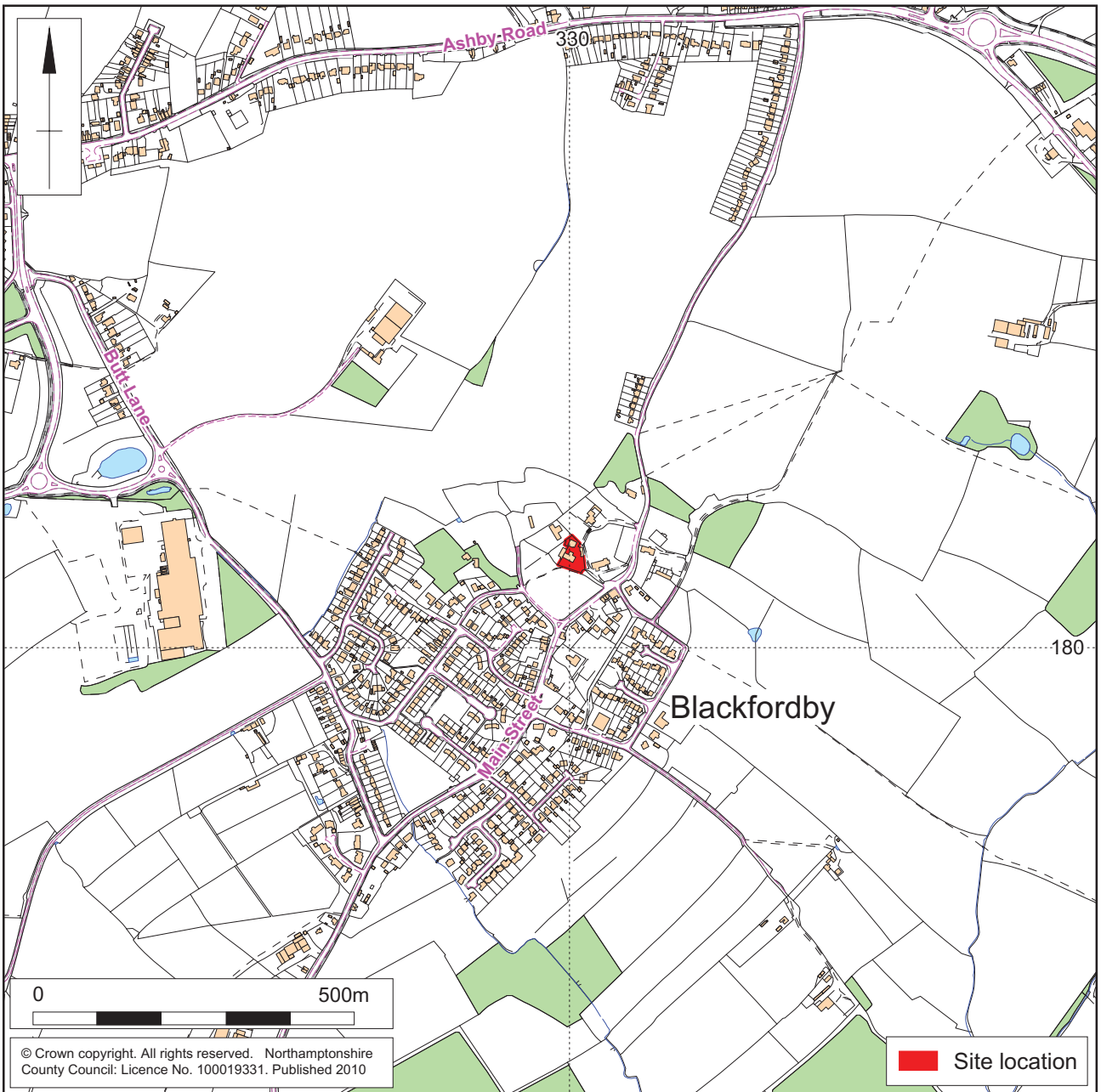
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The village of Blackfordby lies within the parish of Ashby de la Zouch, to the north-west of the town. The school is situated in the centre of the village just off Main Street and to the west of the church. A recreation ground lies to the south of the school; to the west is the adjoining property that once functioned as the schoolhouse.

The school and the church sit on a promontory giving wide ranging views over the landscape to the south, the land rises further to the north of the church and school towards the village of Boundary. The site lies at c 150m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and measures 0.1ha in area. The bedrock geology of the area comprises Triassic rocks (undifferentiated sandstone and conglomerate) (bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex/).

Much of the proposed development area is currently occupied by the mobile classroom or tarmac although there is a small area of scrub to the west of the classroom.



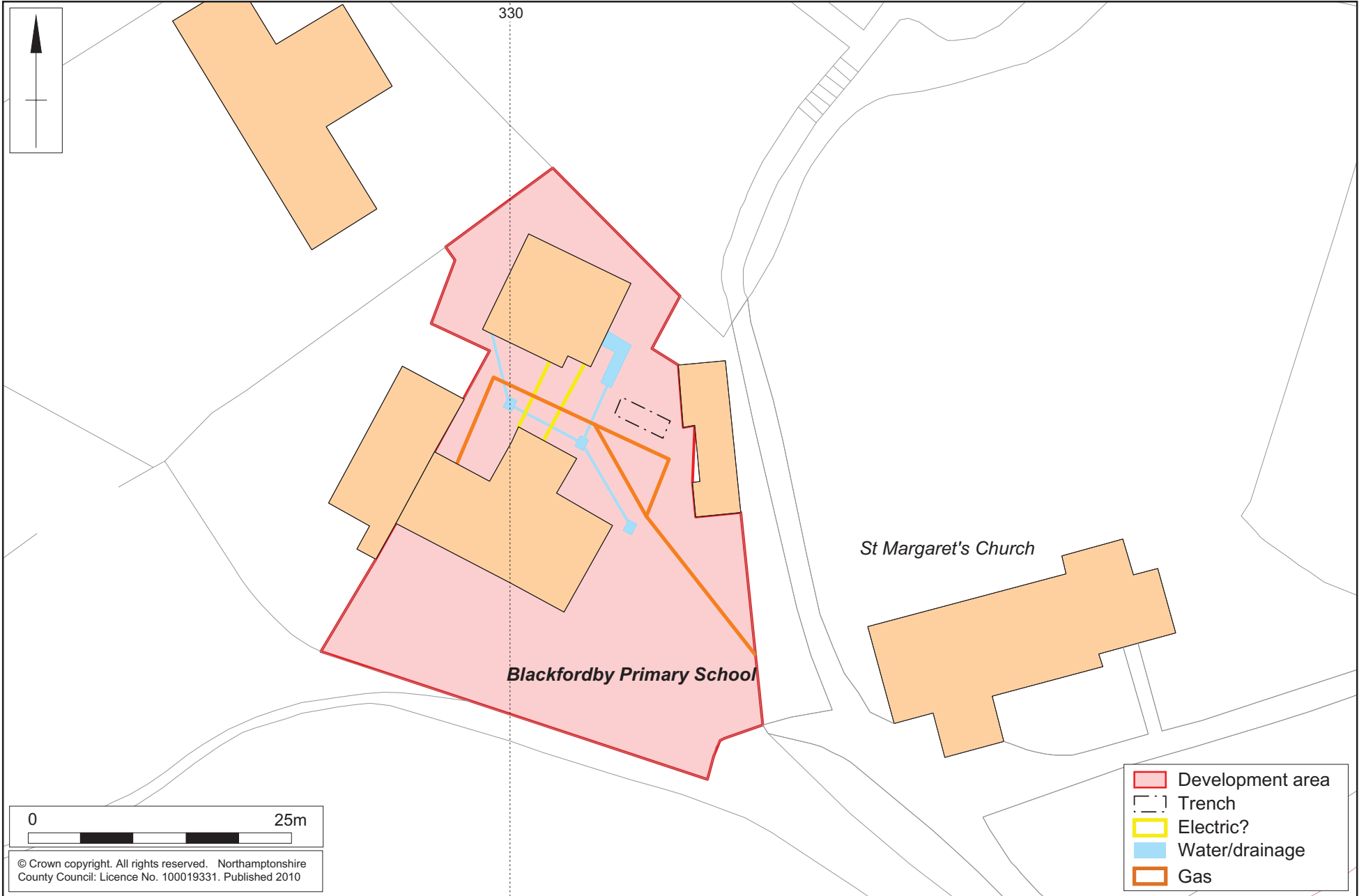
Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

1:500

Trench location with services

Fig 2



The slope of the church graveyard is marked, as is the slope of the recreation field to the south, while the land within the school is quite level. The ground beyond the northern and eastern boundary walls is at least 1.3m higher than that within the school boundary, suggesting that the plot of land taken up by the school was terraced at the time of its construction and when further land to the north was taken in by the school at some point in the 20th century, this too was terraced. The slope in the western part of the site does not appear to have been quite as marked and may not have been terraced.

2.2 Historical background

A desk-based assessment of the site in was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2010 (Walker 2010), from which the text below is taken.

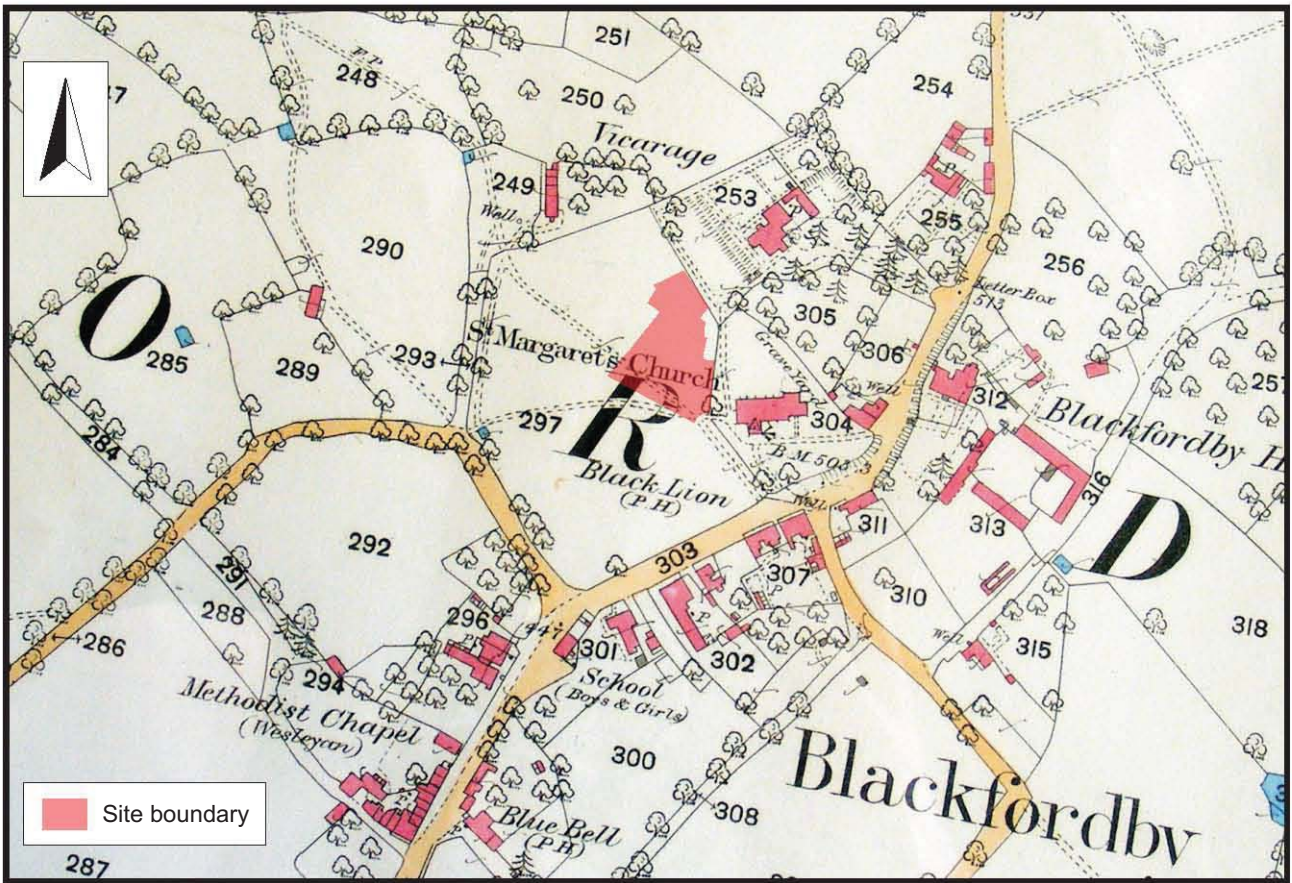
Little is known about the early history of Blackfordby; it is likely that the spring, which until the 1930s was the only water supply in the village, was a major factor in its being located here. Blackfordby is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, and was first recorded in the Leicestershire Survey of 1125. A Charter of the 12th century also records that the chapel and some land at Blackfordby were gifted to the Abbey of Lilleshall in Shropshire, shortly after its foundation in 1145 to 1148, by Philip of Belmeis. The abbey had a grange within Blackfordby and evidence suggests that canons frequently resided here, probably supervising the cultivation of land within the grange (VCH 1973). Although it was apparently somewhat irregular for a canon to live alone in a grange; the custom appears to have persisted for some time, since in around 1330, the bishop of Lichfield complained that canons were frequently alone at Blackfordby to the peril of their souls.

After the dissolution of the monasteries much of the land at Blackfordby was given to the Hasting family (Earls of Huntingdon) of Ashby Castle. Prior to the 19th century the inhabitants of the village were largely engaged in agricultural work but the focus changed during this period and many were employed by local collieries and potteries. The parish made bricks, sanitary pipes and pottery during this period.

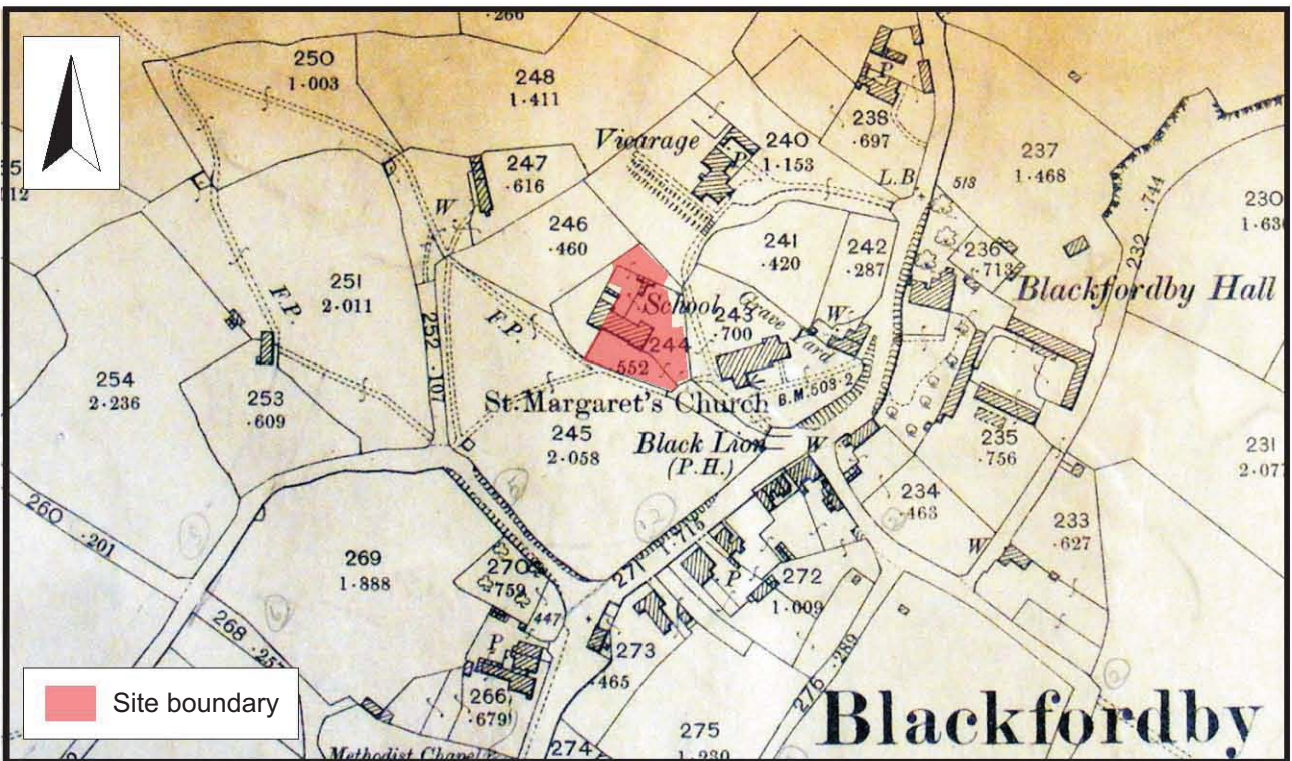
By the mid-19th century the chapel had fallen into a state of disrepair and in 1855 the vicar of the time, Marmaduke Vavasour, sent out leaflets asking for subscriptions for the rebuilding and enlarging of the church. He stated that the chapel was

'in a lamentable state of repair and totally incapable of being repaired. It is also much too small for the present number of inhabitants; (the population (principally consisting of families engaged in the neighbouring Collieries and Pot-Works) having increased to between five and six hundred...' (ROLLR: Misc 117)

A new church was consequently built in its present form in 1857-58 by HI Stevens of Derby. Blackfordby became a civil parish in 1866, but was abolished in 1936, with most of the area being returned to Ashby de la Zouch and the remainder to Ashby Woulds parish. The National School was built in 1843 and subsequently the Public Elementary School was built near the church in 1889 to hold up to 71 children and 46 infants (Figs 3 and 4).



First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1882 Fig 3



Second Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1901 Fig 4

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The principal aim of archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality and extent of the archaeological resource and inform further decisions regarding the archaeological mitigation strategy for the site.

The aim of trial trench evaluation, as stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2010), was to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial for important archaeological remains within the application area. Specifically this was to:

- Establish whether any archaeological deposit existed in the area with particular regard to any which would merit preservation *in situ*.
- Identify the date, form and function of any archaeological deposit, together with its extent, depth and quality of preservation.
- Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and possible presence of masking colluvial or alluvial deposits.
- Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence.
- Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practises, timetables and overheads.

3.2 Methodology

The Written Scheme of Investigation originally proposed 20 linear metres of trenching, however, due to the number of services on site, including a medium-pressure gas main, and foul water pipes, it was only possible to excavate 5m length of trench safely (Fig 2). The trench measured 1.5m wide and was excavated using a JCB 3CX machine. All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The trench was cleaned sufficiently to define the exposed features. All archaeological deposits were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures (NA 2006). The deposits were given separate context numbers. They were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation.

The trench was planned at a scale of 1:50 and the location of the trenches was surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A full photographic record comprising 35mm black and white negatives and colour slides was maintained. The field data, including that from the evaluation, has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by Leicestershire County Council. All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008) and the *Code of Conduct* (IfA 1985, revised 2010) and English Heritage *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2006)

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The trench was 5m long and 1.5m wide, orientated north-west to south-east and.



General view along trench, looking north-west Fig 5

The natural substrate Mercia Mudstone (104), red sandy-clay with patches of broken sandstone, occurred at approximately 0.18m and 0.25m below ground (Fig 6). Above this was a hoggin/hardcore layer (103) made up of broken tile and stone between 0.08m and 0.15m thick. This was clearly the levelling layer for the earlier playground tarmac (102) 0.07m thick which overlay it. This had been re-tarmaced, to form the current surface of the car park and playground (101).

No archaeological features were present within the trench (Fig 5).



North section of trench, looking north-east Fig 6

5 DISCUSSION

The evaluation successfully confirmed the suggestion made in the desk-based assessment (Walker 2010) that the site of the school appears to have been levelled and terraced in the late 1880s prior to building the school. The terracing would have truncated any archaeological features that there may have been on the site. The current difference in height of c1.5m between the ground level of the church yard and school playground reflects this.

No surviving ploughsoil or cultivation subsoil was present. No archaeological features were found which predated the construction of the school. No residual artefactual evidence was present in the levelling deposits of the playground.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers Guide*, English Heritage

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Watkinson, D, and Neal, V, 1998 *First Aid for Finds* RESCUE/UKIC

Websites

BGS <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html> British Geological Survey website

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

Trench	Context	Type	Description	Dimensions /thickness (m)	Artefact type
1	101	Tarmac surface	Dark brown sandy-loam with stone and chalk inclusions	0.03m thick	
	102	Previous tarmac surface	Mid brown-orange sandy-clay with chalk inclusions	0.07m thick	
	103	Hardcore	Yellow-orange clay till with chalk and flint inclusions	0.08m – 0.15m thick	
	104	Natural geology	Mid grey-brown silty-clay with flint and chalk inclusions		



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