Bluntisham Baptist Church Sunday School

Historic Building Survey and Archaeological Excavation

February 2010

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Bluntisham Baptist Church Sunday School

Historic Building Survey and Archaeological Excavation

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Summary

On 15th July 2009, OA East conducted a historical building survey at the former Sunday School building, on the site of the Bluntisham Baptist Church (also known as The Meeting House) on the High Street in Bluntisham. The site is owned by Bluntisham Baptist Church and is the subject of planning consent for development to include an extension to the southern side of the existing building plus minor internal alterations.

This work was carried out in response to a brief issued by Andy Thomas, Cambridgeshire County Councils Development Control Officer. The brief required that a historic building survey was carried out on the existing building to meet the requirements of English Heritages building survey at Level 1.

Four main phases of development were identified during the survey of the Sunday School building; construction of the original Sunday School, an extension on the eastern side of the main building dated 1887 on datestone together with a remodelling of the interior to commemorate the centenary of the first chapel, the addition of an external chimney stack on the southern side as well as a small single room extension, perhaps for the storage of coal and finally internal alterations to include a kitchen and storage facilities within the eastern extension together with the insertion/replacement of a number of windows.

Additional documentary research at Huntingdon Records Office has revealed that the earliest part of the building, the main hall, was constructed in 1842. This date is significant in that most sources have relied on the datestone plaque of 1887 and dated interior carvings to date the building which, it is now clear, was constructed 45 years previously.

The survey noted a number of interesting internal features including an elaborately carved screen, fire surrounds and ceiling detail which, according to historical sources were all the work of John Wheately, a local carpenter to whom a memorial plaque in the Sunday School building is dedicated. These carvings and patterns echo designs and craftsmanship also visible inside the Baptist Chapel.

Between 20th and 24th July, OA East returned to the site to undertake an archaeological excavation of the areas east and south of the Sunday School building. Burial plots and pits were discovered in both areas along with modern disturbance and truncation. All features in both areas were considered to be below the depth that would be disturbed by development and consequently it was not deemed necessary to excavate any of the features found. The excavation brief produced a small pottery assemblage of 28 sherds, from four contexts which represent the topsoil and subsoil from each trench. A single sherd of Late Iron Age pottery represents the earliest material recovered. The finds are a mix of medieval and post-medieval pottery, alongside which were recovered small amounts of disarticulated human skeletal remains which were returned to the Baptist minister for re-burial.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work
1.1.1 An historic building recording survey was conducted at The Baptist Church Sunday School building in the heart of the village of Bluntisham in the Huntingdon district of Cambridgeshire. The work was carried out in advance of alterations to the existing building which is to include an extension and associated services.
1.1.2 A subsequent excavation was required on areas to the east and south of the Sunday School building in the footprint of the proposed extension (Figure 1).
1.1.3 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas (Thomas, 2009), Development Control Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire County Council (Planning Application 0402557FUL), supplemented by Specifications prepared by OA East (Drummond-Murray 2009 and Gane 2009).
1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited within the County Stores at Landbeach, Cambridgeshire (along with the archives of previous archaeological work taken place on the site in 2008) in due course.

1.2 Location and topography
1.2.1 The Baptist Church Sunday School Building is located on High Street, in the centre of the village of Bluntisham centred at grid reference TL 3682 7460 (Figure 1).
1.2.2 The Sunday School stands within the grounds of the Baptist Church, also known as The Meeting House (plate 1).

1.3 Acknowledgements
1.3.1 The author would like to thank Bluntisham Baptist Church for commissioning the work and particular thanks to Revd Nick Hudson and to Tony Lodes of Haymills for their assistance on site and also to all who contributed to www.bluntishambaptist.org who granted permission to use extracts from the website. The author also acknowledges Huntingdon Records Office for their assistance and for permission to reproduce images for Figures 7 and 8. The author carried out all on-site building recording, photography and background research and the excavation was carried out by James Fairbain, assisted by Pete Boardman. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray and the building survey was managed by Toby Gane.
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aim of the investigation was to carry out a historic building survey equivalent to English Heritage Level 1 (English Heritage 2006).

2.1.2 The work was designed to adequately record the structure in its current state before the alteration work began. The specific aims of the project were:

- To collate information about the building in order to compile a record of the structure, with analysis and interpretation of the structure in conjunction with an associated documentary survey.
- To determine the presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the features of the buildings, in order to make an assessment of its merit in context.
- To make a permanent record of the structures, as they are, in order to preserve by record the character, state, preservation and architectural and historic significance of the building.
- To assess the archaeological value and research potential of known or possible structures to be measured against appropriate local, regional and national research agendas.
- To produce a high quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long-term deposition in order to 'preserve by record' the building in its current form.

2.1.3 The aim of the excavation was to preserve the archaeological evidence contained within the area by record and to attempt reconstruction of the history and use of the site.

2.2 Site Conditions

2.2.1 Conditions within and around the building were generally good, allowing measured and photographic survey to take place. Some basic preparation work was taking place around the building prior to the start of the groundworks restricting the photography of some external elevations, however, this did not affect or hamper the survey in any other way.

2.2.2 The building was vacant at the time of recording. All carpets and furniture had been removed.

2.2.3 Lights and fittings were still in place although the lights were not in use.

2.2.4 Access to all parts of both structures was possible, excluding the roof spaces in some parts of the building.

2.3 Methodology

- Building Survey

2.3.1 The measured building survey was carried out using basic equipment including: a distometer, tower tape, 30m tapes, hand tapes, a 30cm ruler and a plumb line.
2.3.2 Photographic survey (equivalent to English Heritage Level 1) was carried out by the author using a 35mm camera (monochrome and colour) with additional digital photographs using a high resolution Canon EOS 450D digital SLR camera.

2.3.3 All building recording work carried out complied with standards and guidance set out in by the IfA (2001) and was undertaken by an experienced buildings archaeologist. Scaled architects drawings, supplied by the client in AutoCAD format, were used for field notes and were annotated and amended on site as necessary.

2.3.4 Full descriptions of external elevations were made in note form including structural techniques and construction methods. Internally, all areas/rooms were described in detailed notes.

- Excavation

2.3.5 The excavation was carried out on two areas (Area 1 and Area 2). A total of 0.01ha was opened by a 360 excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision.

2.3.6 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits, supplemented by digital photographs.

2.3.7 Weather conditions were good, with constant sunshine and no rain.
3 Historical Background

3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background of Bluntisham

This section has been taken from Lyons, 2008.

3.1.1 Open area excavation to the south east of the proposed development area uncovered ditches, pits and post holes from the Bronze Age thorough to the Roman period. Most of this activity was dated to the late Iron Age and early Roman Periods. This consisted of enclosures and field boundaries and also included a crouched inhumation dating from the 2nd Century BC. Several post holes were also recorded, suggestive of structures and settlement. The earliest feature present was a pit containing Beaker pottery. Two Roman animal burials were recorded, dating from the later 1st or earlier 2nd Centuries AD (Burrow & Mudd 2008).

3.1.2 Previous evaluation on the site revealed substantial evidence for gravel quarrying in the post-medieval period as well as several other unexcavated features assumed to be post-medieval (Hatton 2004).

3.1.3 Other significant artefacts from the vicinity include two finds of Iron Age pottery and two Roman coins. These were located on the east side of the modern village, just beyond Holli-days’ Road (HER nos. 01722, 03930, 00929 & 01939). Lithic implements, including a Neolithic arrowhead, were discovered to the west of the village (HER nos. 03625 & 01761).

3.2 Historical Background of Bluntisham Baptist Church and Sunday School

Much of this section has been taken with kind permission from the Baptist Church’s own website www.bluntishambaptist.org.

3.2.1 Before and meeting house was built, the Baptist congregation used to hold their meetings in a nearby barn which was fitted with a few simple furnishings. By 1787, the congregation had grown so much that there was not enough room to accommodate them in the barn. It was therefore decided to build a Meeting House. A piece of land was purchased and the Meeting House built within a year.

3.2.2 Ten years later, the Meeting House was again too small to accommodate the crowds who came from far and near. The back wall was taken down and the building extended. In 1805, a vestry was added at the back, and in 1817 a gallery built behind the pulpit to accommodate the Sunday School.

3.2.3 By 1874, the Meeting House had been standing for 86 years and the church needed to address the issues of improving the interior to meet the needs of its Victorian congregation and also to make vital repairs to the old roof. It was also felt that a house should be provided for the minister.

3.2.4 The church decided to raise the sum of £1000 to carry out these two projects. A house, together with garden and orchard, was bought for £450 and plans made for the alterations in the Meeting House. The original intention was not to re-build entirely but to alter and improve the old chapel. A new roof was made of finely carved timber but when the old roof was taken off the walls were found to be in such a bad state that they had to be pulled down and rebuilt. The plan was therefore to do this without disturbing the interior.
3.2.5 On pulling down the walls it was then discovered that the foundations of the old chapel were also unsafe, so these were renewed as well. This meant that the old pews and the large pillar in the centre of the building were also removed.

3.2.6 As much as possible of the old building was used in the erection of the new chapel, so that what is seen today is not an entirely new building nor is it the old one. Its external appearance is the same but the interior ended up being considerably altered. Most of pine woodwork we see today was undertaken by John Wheatley (1812-1888).

3.2.7 The Sunday School is said to have been built by John Wheatley in 1887 to mark the centenary of the building of the first chapel. This is depicted on a datestone on the east-facing elevation as well as on a wooden memorial screen inside the Sunday School.

3.2.8 John Wheatley was born in Earith in 1812 where he was to become apprenticed to a local carpenter. In 1829 he moved to Bluntisham, where he remained as village carpenter for the rest of his life. Wheatley took great delight and interest in building the second Bluntisham Meeting House and Sunday School. Every piece of timber had to pass his exacting scrutiny and none with the slightest defect was used. All the carving was done by his own hand and, in the fashion of the mediaeval mason, some of the carved figureheads heads of the deacons of the chapel in the School are said to be a likeness of Wheatley and his friends.

3.3 Listed Buildings Description

3.3.1 A search of English Heritages on-line catalogue of listed buildings (www.lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk) shows a number of important and historic buildings surviving within the village. The table below shows the descriptions for Bluntisham Baptists Church and the Sunday School Building:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listed Building Number</th>
<th>Building name/address</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Listed Building Status/Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53756</td>
<td>THE MEETING HOUSE</td>
<td>Meeting House, dated 1874 (rebuilt from 1787 building on site) on plaque. Red brick with reddened brick dressings. Patterned roof tiles. Two-storeys with single-storey tripartite vestibule to west and vestry to east. Gable roofs with ornate barge boards and pendant finials. Pairs of three light windows in segmental arches with keystones and chamfered reveals. Interior: Gallery with carved pine balustrade supported on wooden Doric columns. Carpentry, work of John Wheatley (1812-1888) of Bluntisham. Carved oak pulpit, table and four chairs by P A Humphrey (d.1960) of Bluntisham. C18 staircase from original meeting house in vestry. (Included for historic interest as the traditional centre of local non-conformity).</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Grade II (GV)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Sunday School Building: Descriptions

4.1 External description

4.1.1 Bluntisham Baptists Sunday School was built using gault brick comprising at least three separate elements: the main rectangular shaped building, an extension on the eastern side and further additions (which appear contemporary) of an external chimney stack on the southern side and small single room addition, also on the southern side.

4.1.2 A tall chimney extends from the centre of the roof at the eastern end of the building which had a central arch void, two terracotta pots sat on top of the stack. A second chimney (external addition on the southern side) had a single terracotta pot.

4.1.3 The roof of the entire building was covered with grey slate.

North-Facing elevation (Figure 2)

4.1.4 The north-facing comprised two elements of the building; the main building with seven windows and what appears to be a slightly later addition at the eastern end.

4.1.5 The eastern part of the building was constructed using gault brick laid in a Flemish bond with a light coloured gritty mortar. Horizontal pressure marks were visible on many of the bricks and the average brick measured approximately 0.22m by 0.07m.

4.1.6 The three windows in the eastern range of the building were set beneath segmented brick arches constructed using stretchers with concrete cills beneath (plate 2). They were all set within wooden frames and appeared to be original to this part of the building.

4.1.7 The main component of the building was also constructed using gault brick laid in a Flemish bond with a light coloured gritty mortar. Horizontal pressure marks were visible on many of the bricks and the average brick measured approximately 0.22m by 0.07m.

4.1.8 There were seven windows on this elevation of this part of the building. Each was set beneath a brick arch comprised of header bricks. The round-headed windows each had twelve panes with a lower “swing” opening casement (plate 3).

East-Facing elevation (Figure 3)

4.1.9 The east facing elevation comprised three components of the building, the main building with a higher roofline and central arched chimney and two small extensions added onto this elevation, one with a lower roofline and the other added onto the southern side (plate 4).

4.1.10 The extension was constructed using gault brick laid in a Flemish bond with a light coloured gritty mortar. Horizontal pressure marks were visible on many of the bricks and the average brick measured approximately 0.22m by 0.07m. The elevation of this gable also has an open-bed brick pediment.

4.1.11 This part of the building had two windows, a tripartite, wooden framed window with a central upper opening set beneath a straight row of headers. This is not original to this part of the building as the brickwork on the right-hand side does not respect the opening and fragments of brick have been used to infill small voids.

4.1.12 Above this window is a tall, narrow window with a three-pointed arch set within a surround of single brick headers. This window is set within a wooden frame with a brick
cill located beneath. The window itself is comprised of a number of small square panes set within what appears to be lead glazing bars and has a design of three central circles.

4.1.13 Located immediately above the smaller window is a commemorative plaque which reads “CENTENARY 1887”

4.1.14 This part of the building was entered through a doorway on the right side of the elevation set beneath an arch comprising header and stretcher bricks. The door itself is a modern replacement constructed using vertical boards.

4.1.15 To the left of this part of the building is a small extension with a sloping roof and a simple wooden plank and batten door. There are six deliberate voids in the brickwork above the doorway. The extension was constructed using gault brick laid in a Flemish bond with a light coloured gritty mortar. Horizontal pressure marks were visible on many of the bricks and the average brick measured approximately 0.22m by 0.07m. A rectangular-shaped void was recorded in the floor of the extension which had a wooden cover.

**South-Facing elevation** *(Figure 4)*

4.1.16 The south-facing elevation comprised three elements/phases of the building (plate 5).

4.1.17 The main Sunday School building dominates this elevation, located at the western end. Unlike the other side (north-facing elevation) the brick on this side was laid in an unusual bond comprising a row of stretches followed by a row of three stretchers and a header (repeated) followed by a row of stretchers. There are two small wooden-framed windows located close to the roofline, each comprising ten panes (in a five, five arrangement). The brickwork either side respect the opening, suggesting these windows are original to this part of the building.

4.1.18 Two large steel framed windows have been inserted (brickwork does not respect the openings) at a lower ground level. These windows, possibly dating to the 1950s each comprised twelve panes in a three-three-three-three-three arrangement set beneath a row of stretcher bricks and with a terracotta tile cill below.

4.1.19 An external chimney stack has been added to this elevation using an orangey red brick constructed in a Flemish bond. There was evidence of repair to the brickwork to the immediate left, perhaps to repair damage caused as the chimney stack was added.

4.1.20 To the right of the chimney stack was a small brick-built construction with a sloped tiled roof.

4.1.21 At the far right end of this part of the building a brick support has been added. A similar gault brick to the rest of the building has been used with the same 0.22m by 0.07m measurements.

4.1.22 A blocked-up door is visible in the extension on the right of the main building (plate 6). This narrow doorway measured approximately 0.60m wide and 2.01m tall. It was set beneath a segmental archway of two courses of header bricks.

**West-Facing elevation** *(Figure 5)*

4.1.23 Facing onto Bluntisham High Street, the west-facing elevation (plate 7) appears to have been the original entrance to the building and comprised just one phase of construction. A brick plinth is visible at the base of the elevation which respects the incline of the road and two central pilasters are incorporated in the brickwork.
4.1.24 Entrance is via a small set of step through a simple plank and batten door comprised of vertically laid boards and painted blue. The doorway was set beneath square-headed arch of brick stretchers.

4.1.25 To the right of the door, on the other side of the pilasters is a blocked opening. This doorway was also set beneath square-headed arch of brick stretchers.

4.1.26 Set immediately above both doorways were two identical windows, each comprising three arches set within wooden frames, each with two wooden columns and stone lintels.

4.1.27 An ordnance survey benchmark was also noted on the plinth beneath the left brick pilaster (plate 8).

4.2 Internal description (Figure 6)

There were three main internal areas of the building. For the purposes of this report, they are described as rooms 1-3 (Figure 6).

Room 1 – Main Hall (Figure 6)

4.2.1 This area/room comprises the main part of the Sunday School building. This room measured approximately 14.5m by 7.5m.

4.2.2 Running around the walls of the room were carved wooden rails and the running the length of the room, the walls were panelled from the floor to a height of approximately 1m.

4.2.3 The room was subdivided in two by a large folding wooden screen at one end, creating two areas. This large screen (plate 9) was elaborately decorated and comprised four hinged panels which allowed them to be folded back and when closed, locked into the floor with fastening bolts. On either side of the screen were two carved Doric columns and above was an elaborately carved entablature of four parts decorated with flowers and oak leaf design which read “CEN TEN ARY 1887” (plate 10). Three carved figureheads were also incorporated into the entablature. Two doors were located either side of the screen to allow access when the screen was closed.

4.2.4 There were further carved figure heads located around the room, fourteen in total, each one was different, depicting a different person/character (plates 11 and 12 are just two examples). There was three heads above the screen, three on the wall at the opposite end of the hall (western end) and four on each side of the room at the base of the roof supports.

4.2.5 The ceiling was entirely covered with wooden boards and decorative floral motifs located at intervals across the ceiling and along the joists (plate 13). The roof structure appeared to have been constructed in four parts with iron supporting bars/rods located at each support. these iron rods appear to be original, although the wooden ceiling and carved detail has been added at a later date

4.2.6 On the far wall at the western end of the room were two wooden entrance areas (plate 14) which corresponded to the two entrances recorded on the west-facing elevation (plate 7 and Figure 5). The entrance area on the left of the room (plate 15) measured approximately 2.26m wide and 1.24m deep, the door had been recently been removed. The floor inside the room was covered with bricks, each with an average dimension of 23cm by 11cm. Inside the room was boarded recess which would correspond to the bricked up door recorded externally. The small room on the right side of this wall had
the same dimensions and constructed from the same vertically laid boards (plate 16). the floor of this area however was covered with red and black tiles, each measuring 6” by 6” (15cm by 15cm). The way in which the entrance area “cuts” through the bottom of the window on the northern side would suggest that they are not contemporary with the original construction of this part of the building. From within this room, access to the door recorded on the external west-facing elevation was gained.

4.2.7 Running between these two entrance areas was a stage (recently removed) which was laid upon a brick plinth.

4.2.8 Located on the southern side of the room was a fireplace with carved wooden surround and terracotta tiled hearth and moulded stone edging stone (plate 17). the fireplace itself was constructed from red rectangular and moulded brick. The carved detail included a stem of flowers/oaks leaves rising from a vase on either side and more oak leaf and flower designs along the top. Even each bracket was carved with a flower design (plate 18).

4.2.9 Above the fireplace was a memorial to John Wheatley (plate 17) which read

“IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

OF

JOHN WHEATLEY

CARPENTER, MUSICIAN, ASTRONOMER, STUDENT

FOR THIRTY THREE YEARS SUPERINTENDENT

OF THIS SUNDAY SCHOOL AND CONDUCTOR

OF THE BIBLE AND SINGING CLASSES

BORN APRIL 22ND 1812. DIED OCTOBER 16TH 1888.”

4.2.10 Located either side of the fireplace were two small cupboards built into the panelling, the one on the left of the fireplace was deeper and corresponds with the small brick-built addition recorded on the southern external elevation next to the chimney stack.

4.2.11 The floor was covered mostly by pine (?) floorboards, each measuring 0.11m wide and running the width of the room, however, on the other side of the screen, the floorboards were oak and much wider (approximately 0.17m wide) and ran in the opposite direction (the length of the room).

4.2.12 At the eastern end of the room, on the other side of the screen was another fireplace (plate 19). Like the other fireplace, the surround on this one was also carved, however less elaborately, with a floral motif at the top on each side and a drop-leaf design beneath. The hearth was tiled with small red and black hearth tiles which each measured 4” by 4” and solid grey stone edging which has been used as a surround.

R2 – Eastern Extension (Figure 6)

4.2.13 This area/room comprises the extension to the eastern side of the Sunday School building. Most recently, this room has been used as a kitchen area (plate 20). This room measured approximately 6.76m by 4.01m excluding sub-divisions).

4.2.14 From within this extension, it is possible to see the original external wall of the main hall and also the original entrance into the building from the eastern approach. Access to
this room was gained via a door from the main hall (Room 1b) and from the outside via an external door.

4.2.15 The floor in this area was all a modern linoleum and a number of kitchen units had been added, the earliest dating to the 1950s. Around this time it appears, a low-level ceiling was inserted, perhaps to make this room more practical as a kitchen area, and a temporary partition was inserted just left of the entrance door.

4.2.16 A low-level brick wall was inserted at a later date to subdivide the room and create two small storage areas (plate 21) into which wooden shelving had been inserted. The storage area measured 4.01m by 1.08m. Within one of the storage “cupboards” was evidence of a narrow bricked-up doorway which corresponds to the bricked-up door recorded on the south-facing elevation (plate 5, Figure 4).

4.2.17 A service “hatch” had been created by knocking a hole in the brickwork from room 1b, next to the chimney.

4.2.18 The roof structure within this room was exposed, although not easy to photograph or record due to the inserted ceiling. However, the roof structure was constructed with two substantial queen-post roof trusses ant the tie-beams rested upon brick supports which jutted out of the two main supporting walls.

**R3 – Coal Store/Lavatory (?) (Figure 6)**

4.2.19 This area/room comprises the small extension to the southern side of the eastern extension of the Sunday School building. This room measured approximately 1.61m by 1.77m and had most recently been used for storage.

4.2.20 There were no details to be recorded on the interior of this brick extension other than a small void in in the floor which had a wooden cover.
5 DISCUSSION: BUILDING SURVEY

5.1 Phase 1: 1842 (Figure 6)

5.1.1 The main Sunday School building, comprising Room1 was evidently the original and oldest part of the Sunday School building. On site evidence has established a date for the extension and interior of this part of the building to 1887, however there was no suggestion on site of an exact date of construction of the first phase. The almost identical brickwork (colour and bond) of the extension and the main building would suggest little difference in their construction date.

5.1.2 Further research of the archives at Huntingdon Records Office however, has provided evidence of a date of construction of the Sunday School building of 1842. A programme of events marking the Jubilee celebration of the chapel Sunday school produced in 1892 has a short paragraph on the reverse about the history of the Sunday School (Figure 7). This summary states that the Sunday School was built in 1842. Further evidence of this can be found in a book produced in 1925 (Edley Willings 1925) which provides a good account of the history of the Chapel and various people associated with it. Only a small amount is written on the Sunday School, however, detail is given about the purchase of two cottages which adjoined the meeting house which were to be demolished to build a ministers house or Sunday School. Although there is no detail about the building itself or those involved, the book goes on to describe the opening of the school in the summer of 1842.

5.1.3 It appears that much of the elaborate carved wooden interior is a later addition and the original building may have been much less decorated. The original entrance may well have been on the High Street where, evidence in the brickwork has shown there were two doorways. Although there is no internal evidence of segregation internally, this design may have purely have been to mirror that of the two doors on the original chapel building (Figure 8).

5.1.4 There were seven elongated round headed windows on the north-facing elevation and two impressive windows with wooden mullions on the front west-facing elevation. There were just two small windows located close to the roof line on the southern elevation and it appears there were no windows on the original east facing elevation.

5.1.5 The large windows on the north-facing elevation would have been quite impressive for the time and perhaps so expensive that they were only used on the one elevation. There was a dramatic change in the 1840s as new much larger sheets of glass became cheaper and more readily available (Hall, 2007). Alternatively, such large windows may have only been used on this side to make the most of the sunlight on the northern side, or perhaps in order to reduce the cost of window tax which was still enforced up until 1851 (when it was replaced by House Duty).

5.1.6 There was a door located on the eastern end of the building and just one fireplace, also located at the eastern end.

5.1.7 Further information about the centenary celebrations in 1887 (Edley Willings, 1925) reveals that before improvements took place, the building originally had a stone floor.

5.2 Phase 2: 1885-87 (Figure 6)

5.2.1 This second phase of construction mainly comprises Room 2 as well as alterations and additions discussed below.
5.2.2 The datestone on the gable end of the eastern extension clearly dates the next phase which was to include the remodelling of the interior, also dated to mark the centenary of the original building of the chapel, 1887.

5.2.3 The extension was added, although it is not clear for what purpose to the eastern end of the first phase of building. Internal evidence proves that this is a later addition as the exterior brickwork is visible from within Room 2. Edley Willings' book on the History of the church (Edley Willings, 1925) states that it was decided in May of 1887 that as part of the church's centenary celebrations alterations were carried out to the school which would include "a new building at the eastern end".

5.2.4 Evidence within the building reveals that inside the school, further alteration work took place at this time, most of which would include the addition of much elaborate and decorative carved woodwork, in particular the carved entablature above the screen. It is unclear whether the screen was already there by 1887, however the detailed design above was certainly added at this time and clearly there to celebrate the centenary. Wood used in other parts of the main hall also appear contemporary – the carved wooden fire surround would also indicate that the second fireplace was added at this time too, evident by the addition of the external stack recorded on the southern elevation. The carved design on the ceiling and beams would also indicate the ceiling was also decorated and the addition of the carved heads would appear to be contemporary too. The two entrance areas were created around the doors, the new floor was added and the stage area between the entrances may have been created at this time also.

5.2.5 The commemorative plaque was added to mark the occasion of the centenary and the window added to this elevation also makes a statement on this gable end. Perhaps it was re-used from the chapel which had also undergone renovation and rebuilt in 1875

5.2.6 By adding this extension, a new entrance was created on the eastern end and evidence recorded internally and externally suggests a narrow entrance was also built into the southern elevation. Externally, a brick-built buttress/support was added to the eastern end of the building, on the southern elevation.

5.2.7 By this point, the building is almost as seen on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 9). The extension is visible on the map, as is the external chimney. There appears to be two other elements to the building no longer present at this point, there appears to be a square shaped building not attached but linked to the school building by what may be a brick wall. There is also what appears to be another element to the building on the eastern side which may have been demolished to make way for the later extension. The map shows the arrow pointing from the High Street indicating the benchmark as recorded on the west-facing external elevation.

5.2.8 The various heads around the room are thought to represent important figures in the church's history. Among the carved heads, three over the platform at the west end are thought to be reverend Simmons (centre), Reverend Green (left) and on the right, John Wheatley himself. At the eastern end, over the doors is Coxe Feary (Edley Willings, 1925).

5.2.9 The plaque above the fireplace, dedicated to John Wheatley was obviously added after his death in 1887, however, it does indicate he had a connection with the Sunday school and it is well documented that he carried out much of the carpentry for the chapel building. Documentary research further adds to the evidence regarding Wheatleys involvement in the buildings alterations. To commemorate the centenary, a committee was established of which Wheatley was a member and as part of the
alterations program, he “undertook interior decoration and carved woodwork” (Edley Willings, 1925).

5.3 Phase 3: c1914 (?) (Figure 6)

5.3.1 The alterations around this time includes the addition of the small brick-built addition on the southern side of the phase 2 extension. Although not clearly datable by physical or documentary evidence, this building clearly post-dates the phase 2 extension and may have been added for storage. Attempt has been made to blend it in with the rest of the building as the brick dimensions are the same as is the bond used.

5.3.2 Another suggestion for the use of this building, is an outside toilet. Although it would be unusual to have a toilet for such a building at this time, between 1914 and 1917, the Sunday School building was used as a house for two Belgian refugee families (Edley Willings, 1925). The deliberate voids in the brickwork above the doorway add weight to this suggestion as they would provide essential ventilation if this was an outside lavatory. The void recorded in the corner of the building may have been for waste and may have held a bucket which could be easily emptied.

5.3.3 The eastern extension (phase 2) by this time may have been used as a kitchen area. and it was at this time that the wall was added into the the eastern extension to create storage cupboards and the narrow doorway on the southern elevation was blocked up.

5.3.4 It may also have been at this time that the second entrance on the western elevation facing onto the High Street was bricked up. As traffic became more busy and dangerous, the main entrance may have been moved to the rear, away from the High Street, reducing the need for two front doorways yet retaining one as a means of emergency escape.

5.4 Phase 4: 1950s (Figure 6)

5.4.1 The final phase sees the addition of new windows on the southern elevation of the original building. These larger steel frame windows allowed for more light on this of the building, although whether they replaced earlier ones could not easily be established.

5.4.2 New kitchen units were also added at this time and a partition from inside the doorway and a lowered ceiling created a smaller room area.
6 Results and Discussion: Excavation, by James Fairbairn

Area 1 (Figure 10)

6.1.1 Area 1 was situated to the east of the Sunday school building (Figure 1 and 10 and plate 22) and revealed up to ten possible graves, feature numbers 103 to 113. These features all had an east-west alignment and mostly ran in two rows north to south (Figure 10). Two broken and buried grave markers were found at the western end of features 112 and 113. No other burials in Areas 1 or 2 had any associated grave markers, although to the west and immediately adjacent of features 104, 105, and 106 a small linear trench 116 could be evidence that grave markers did once exist. The fills of these grave like features were all very similar consisting of a mid dark yellowy grey/brown sandy silt, this mixture most probably derives from back filling of the graves.

6.1.2 Three possible pits were also recorded in Area 1 (Figure 10). Feature 114 consisted of an oval shaped pit with a dark grey silty clay fill measuring 0.90m x 0.50m. Another pit, feature 107 was circular in shape with a diameter of 0.90m and contained a dark grey silty fill. The third pit, feature 115 was truncated by the edge of the evaluation trench (Lyons, 2008) and ran into the southern limit of the excavation area, its estimated diameter would have been approximately 0.75m. The fill was very similar to that of pit 107.

6.1.3 Two amorphously shaped areas of compacted clay existed at either end of Area 1, no definite edges were recorded and the suggestion was made that these could be pads at the base of larger grave memorials. A small part of Area 1 to the south of the Sunday School building and adjoining area two was completely truncated by a store room or toilet building constructed c.1914? (Figure 6). All of the pottery was found in topsoil or subsoil layers so none can be attributed to a definite context.

Area 2 (Figure 10)

6.1.4 Area 2 was situated to the south of the Sunday School building (Figure 10 and plate 23) and contained less archaeological features than Area 1. Two post medieval graves, features 209 and 210 were removed prior to topsoil and subsoil stripping and were relocated slightly to the south. A redundant service trench ran north from the limit of excavation to the wall of the Sunday School building and an area of modern disturbance was recorded at the centre of Area 2. To the northwest of this were two circular pits, features 206 and 207. Pit 206 had a diameter of 0.75m and pit 207 had a diameter of 0.90m. Both contained similar fills of a dark to mid brown silty clay. Another possible pit, feature 205 with a diameter of 0.45m and with a mid brown silty clay fill was partially truncated by the foundation trench of the Sunday School.

6.1.5 Only two other features, possibly graves were found in Area 2. These features 204 and 208 had an east-west orientation and similar fills of a mid to dark grey brow silty clay, feature 203 was partially truncated by a later buttress added in about 1885 so must pre-date this. The 2008 evaluation trench was visible along the southern most limit of excavation.

Discussion

6.1.6 Although not fully investigated, the excavation revealed post-medieval burials on an east-west alignment, associated with the Baptist Church which, given the close proximity to the Sunday School, are likely to pre-date the building.
6.1.7 A number of other features were mapped and recorded, however, without intrusive investigation, could not be dated or validated as archaeological features. As with the trenches of the previous investigation (BLUBAP 08), the possible features were likely to be either medieval or post medieval in date (as indicated by the pottery retrieved from the top and sub soils – Appendix B) and perhaps represent activity on the site prior to the construction of the first Baptist Church in the late 18th Century.

6.1.8 Research has revealed that two cottages stood on or near the site of the present school and it is possible that any post-medieval features may relate to activity associated with occupation on the site around the time of, and possibly prior to these houses as the assemblage of pottery indicates domestic occupation.

6.1.9 The medieval pottery most likely relates to occupation along the line of the High Street prior to the Sunday School and the first Baptist Church. The Iron Age and Roman material may have been disturbed by later intrusion, and could indicate archaeology of this period survives at a lower depth, disturbed by burial activity, bringing finds towards the surface.
7 **CONCLUSIONS**

7.1.1 This survey has identified four main phases of building of the Bluntisham Baptists Sunday School. Most significantly however, is that it has established a date for the construction of the oldest part of the building.

7.1.2 Although some sources attribute the building of the Sunday School to John Wheatley, it appears that most of his involvement was in the interior re-modeling in the late 19th century. That is not to say he was not involved in the construction in 1842, however it is the centenary celebrations in 1887 which allow him to really leave his mark with his carvings and fine attention to detail. Bearing in mind he was 75 and the work was carried out a year before his death, he must have had great enthusiasm for the the building and his church. More of his work can be seen in the chapel building itself, however, in the Sunday School he was able to add more of a personal mark which may not have been as appropriate on the chapel such as the carved figureheads and decorative fireplace.

7.1.3 The detail recorded on site has allowed for different phases to be recognised, however, it is with the added benefit of documents and written sources that allow for more accurate dates to be attributed as well as adding personal detail and aspects of social history to the story of this buildings development. The alterations taking place now will add to the story and again reflect the changing needs of the community and the Baptist congregation and how well this building has developed over time to meet those demands.

7.1.4 The excavation revealed evidence of a number of post-medieval burials which was to be expected in this area, together with a number of other possible pits which were mapped but not investigated as they were not under threat from the current development. The pottery found in the top and sub soils however, indicates potential survival of archaeology on the site, beneath the burials from the Iron Age through to post-medieval periods.

8 **SIGNIFICANCE**

8.1.1 This survey has established the various dates of alliterations to the building and also the reasons behind the changes made to it and who was involved in them. Establishing the date of construction and alterations are an important part of this project as other sources may not have accurately recorded them.

8.1.2 The available sources will need to be corrected/updated to reflect the true date of construction rather than having used the often misleading date stone located on the extension.

8.1.3 Indication of activity beneath or in the immediate area of the building revealed from the excavation is also significant, although perhaps to be expected in the core of a medieval settlement.
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<th>Author/Institution</th>
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<td>Drummond-Murray, J.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Specification for Archaeological Excavation : Bluntisham Baptists Church</td>
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<td>Edley Willings, A.</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>A Short History of Bluntisham Baptist Church issued in connection with the 139th anniversary and the Jubilee of the New Meeting House</td>
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<td>English Heritage</td>
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<td>Management of Archaeological Projects</td>
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<td>Understanding Historic Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice</td>
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<td>Hall, L.</td>
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<td>Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900</td>
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<td>Hatton, A.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Iron Age and Roman Activity at 6 Rectory Road, Bluntisham. Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Unpublished Report 740</td>
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<td>IFA</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings</td>
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| Lyons, T | 2009 | An Archaeological Evaluation at
Maps and other sources consulted

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Websites consulted

www.blutishambaptist.org

www.heritagegateway.org.uk

www.lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
### APPENDIX A. EXCAVATION CONTEXT SUMMARY

#### Area 1

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APPENDIX B. FINDS ASSESSMENT

By Carole Fletcher, BA AIFA with contribution by Stephen Wadeson

Pottery

B.1 Introduction

B.1.1 The The Archaeological excavation at Bluntisham Baptist Church Sunday School, Bluntisham, Cambridgeshire produced a small pottery assemblage of 28 sherds, weighing 0.493kg, from four contexts which represent the topsoil and subsoil from the two excavated trenches.

B.1.2 The condition of the overall assemblage is moderately abraded and the average sherd from individual contexts is moderate at approximately 17g.

B.1.3 Ceramic fabric abbreviations used in the text are:

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<tr>
<td>Yellow ware</td>
<td>YELL</td>
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B.2 Methodology

B.2.1 The basic guidance in the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991). In addition the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations (Blake and Davey, 1983), A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms (MPRG, 1998) and Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard.

B.2.2 Pre-Roman and Roman pottery was identified by Stephen Wadeson and recorded using standard nomenclature.

B.2.3 Dating was carried out using OA East’s in-house system based on that previously used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described medieval and post-medieval types. All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed. All the pottery has been spot dated on a context-by-context basis.

B.2.4 The pottery and archive are curated by OA East until formal deposition.
B.3 Assemblage

B.3.1 Trench 1: Context 101 (topsoil) contains a small number of medieval sherds alongside post-medieval BOND and PMR sherds. The subsoil context 102 contained only medieval and earlier material, including a single abraded sherd of Iron Age pottery, Roman SGW and three sherds from the thumbed base of a high medieval GRIM jug.

B.3.2 Trench 2: The pottery from context 201(topsoil) was residual post-medieval PMR bowl sherds, a late 18th or early 19th century RFWE plate and cup and sherds of 19th century YELL. Context 202 produced a single sherd from the rim of a medieval jar.

B.3.3 The assemblage indicates activity in the area of the site from the 1st century to the first half of the 19th century. The assemblage is domestic in origin and represents background noise or low levels of occupation or rubbish disposal on the site.

B.4 Statement of Research Potential and Further Work

B.4.1 An assemblage of this size provides only basic dating information. The Iron Age and Roman material have been disturbed by later activity on the site. The medieval pottery most likely relates to occupation along the line of the High Street and the post medieval pottery may relate to two cottages that were on or in close proximity to the site before the present Sunday School building was built. The 19th century pottery relates to the building and subsequent use of the Sunday School.

B.4.2 None of the pottery is located in its place of primary deposition and unless further excavation takes place no further work is required on this assemblage.

B.5 Pottery Dating Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Fabric</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Sherd Count</th>
<th>Sherd Weight (kg)</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>BOND T</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>16th-17th century</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUNEMW</td>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PMR</td>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>GRIM</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>Mid13th-mid 14th century</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.006</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUNEMW/HUNFSW</td>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Late Iron Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SGW</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHW</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Fabric</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Sherd Count</td>
<td>Sherd Weight (kg)</td>
<td>Date Range</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Cup</td>
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<td>0.002</td>
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<td>YELL</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>202 MSGW</td>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>13th-15th century</td>
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</table>

**Other Finds**

B.6 Metal

B.6.1 Two iron nails were recovered from context 201. The first nail is relatively uncorroded and is approximately 76mm in length with a round flattened head, approximately 8mm in diameter, a sub-rounded shank and a chamfered tip.

B.6.2 The second nail is most likely hand made, slightly corroded, it has a domed head and is rectangular in section. The tip has been bent over suggesting it was hammered through a plank or planks of wood and the tip bent over where it protruded through the wood. Total length of nail approximately 85mm.
APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM
All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

**Project Details**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Field</th>
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<td>Oxfordar3-62720</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Historic Building Survey and Watching Brief at Bluntisham Baptist Church Sunday School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Dates (fieldwork) Start</td>
<td>15-07-2009</td>
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<td>Project Dates (fieldwork) Finish</td>
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**Project Reference Codes**

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<td>HER No.</td>
<td>ECB 3217</td>
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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

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<tr>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16</td>
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**Please select all techniques used: Building Survey**

- [x] Annotated Sketch
- [ ] Photogrammetric Survey
- [ ] Dendrochronological Survey
- [x] Photographic Survey
- [ ] Laser Scanning
- [ ] Rectified Photography
- [x] Measured Survey
- [x] Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure

**Please select all techniques used: excavation**

- [ ] Field Observation (periodic visits)
- [ ] Part Excavation
- [ ] Salvage Record
- [ ] Full Excavation (100%)
- [ ] Part Survey
- [ ] Systematic Field Walking
- [ ] Full Survey
- [ ] Recorded Observation
- [ ] Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- [ ] Geophysical Survey
- [ ] Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- [ ] Test Pit Survey
- [ ] Open-Area Excavation
- [x] Salvage Excavation
- [x] Watching Brief

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the **NMR Monument Type Thesaurus** and significant finds using the **MDA Object type Thesaurus** together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state “none”.

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<td>Post Medieval 1540 to 1901</td>
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<tr>
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**Project Location**

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**Project Originators**

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<td>CAPCA</td>
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<td>Project Design Originator</td>
<td>James Drummond-Murray &amp; Toby Gane</td>
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<td>Project Manager</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Taleyna Fletcher &amp; James Fairbain</td>
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**Project Archives**

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**Archive Contents/Media**

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**Digital Media**

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

**Paper Media**

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey
Drawing Conventions

Plans

- Limit of Excavation
- Deposit - Conjectured
- Natural Features
- Sondages/Machine Strip
- Intrusion/Truncation
- Illustrated Section

Archaeological Deposit
Grave
Modern Deposit
Brick
Cut Number 118

Convention Key
Figure 1: Location of Sunday School building (red) and areas of watching brief (green)
Figure 2: North-facing elevation, with phasing (scale: 1:100), from data supplied by client

Key to Phases
- Phase 1. 1842
- Phase 2. 1885 - 7
- Phase 3. c.1914?
- Phase 4. 1950s
Key to Phases

- Phase 1. 1842
- Phase 2. 1885 - 7
- Phase 3. c.19147
- Phase 4. 1950s

Figure 3: East-facing elevation (1:100), with phasing, from data supplied by client
Key to Phases

- Blue: Phase 1. 1842
- Green: Phase 2. 1885 - 7
- Orange: Phase 3. c.1914?
- Red: Phase 4. 1950s
- bd: Blocked doorway

Figure 4: South-facing elevation (1:100), with phasing, from data supplied by client
Figure 5: West-facing elevation (1:100), with phasing, from data supplied by client
Figure 6: Plan of Sunday School Building (1:100), with phasing, from data supplied by client.
Figure 7: Programme of Jubilee Celebration of the Chapel Sunday School, 1892
Figure 9: Extract from 1st edition OS map (1887), with development area (red)
Plate 1: Bluntisham Baptists Church

Plate 2: Fenestration on eastern extension, north facing elevation
Plate 3: Detail of arched window, north facing elevation

Plate 4: East-facing elevation
Plate 5: South-facing elevation

Plate 6: Blocked doorway, south-facing elevation
Plate 7: West-facing elevation (taken from High Street)

Plate 8: Benchmark on west-facing elevation
Plate 9: Wooden screen inside Sunday School building

Plate 10: Detail of entablature above screen
Plate 11: Carved figurehead

Plate 12: Carved figurehead
Plate 13: Detail of ceiling

Plate 14: Mail hall (R1) entrance “rooms”
Plate 15: Entrance room on left-hand side

Plate 16: Entrance room on right-hand side
Plate 17: Detail of fireplace and memorial plaque

Plate 18: Detail of carved bracket
Plate 19: Detail of fireplace at eastern end of main hall

Plate 20: Room 2 Eastern extension
Plate 22: Area 1

Plate 23: Area 2