

**FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL,
MOORFIELD ROAD, NARBERTH,
PEMBROKESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF**

(NGR SN10821 14798)



Prepared by
DAT Archaeological Services
For: HCUK Group



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**FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL, MOORFIELD ROAD,
NARBERTH, PEMBROKESHIRE**

(NGR SN10832 14798)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

By

Hubert Wilson



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**FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL, MOORFIELD ROAD, NARBERTH
PEMBROKESHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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**FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL, MOORFIELD ROAD, NARBERTH,
PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL, MOORFIELD ROAD, NARBERTH, PEMBROKESHIRE- ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at the former Narberth Primary School, Moorfield Road, Narberth, Pembrokeshire (centred on NGR SN 10832 14798).

The school building was constructed during the 1870s, with later extensions added in the 1960s-70s. The potential for revealing archaeological deposits within the site was uncertain but the site lies at the western edge of the medieval core of the town and medieval remains were discovered approximately 50m north-east of the development.

The watching brief concluded that the construction of the school and associated buildings would probably have erased or truncated any archaeological deposits. Evidence that a substantial amount of levelling material had been imported into the area during the constructing of the school was also recorded. This coupled with the fact that the final formation level for the development lay within the imported material suggested that the potential to uncover any medieval remains was negligible within the development area.

CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Comisiynwyd Gwasanaethau Archeolegol YAD i ymgymryd â brîff gwylio archeolegol yn ystod gwaith daear yn hen Ysgol Gynradd Arberth, Heol Moorfield, Arberth, Sir Benfro (wedi ganoli ar NGR SN 10832 14798).

Codwyd adeilad yr ysgol yn ystod yr 1870au, gydag estyniadau diweddarach wedi'u hychwanegu yn y 1960au-70au. Roedd y potensial i ddatgelu dyddodion archeolegol ar y safle yn ansicr ond mae'r safle ar ymyl ddwyreiniol craidd canoloesol y dref a darganfuwyd gweddillion canoloesol tua 50m i'r de-orllewin o'r datblygiad.

Casgliad y brîff gwylio oedd y byddai adeiladu'r ysgol ac adeiladau cysylltiedig yn ôl pob tebyg wedi dileu neu blaendor ar unrhyw ddyddodion archeolegol. Cofnodwyd tystiolaeth hefyd bod symiau sylweddol o ddeunydd gwastad wedi'i fewnforio i'r ardal yn ystod y gwaith o adeiladu'r ysgol. Roedd hyn, yn ogystal â'r ffaith bod y lefel ffurfio derfynol ar gyfer y datblygiad yn gorwedd o fewn y deunydd a fewnforiwyd yn awgrymu bod y potensial i ddatgelu unrhyw weddillion canoloesol yn ddibwys yn yr ardal ddatblygu.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services, in response to a request from James Meek (HCUK Group), were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the former Narberth Primary School, Moorfield Road, Narberth, Pembrokeshire (SN 10821 14798, Figures 1 and 2).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission has been granted for the development by Pembrokeshire County Council (Planning reference 20/0369/PA) for the 'Conversion and redevelopment for retail (class A1 and A3), residential (8 houses 3 apartments) and a library, including minor demolition – Old Narberth CP School, Moorfield Road, Narberth, Pembrokeshire SA67 7AG.
- 1.1.3 Following consultation with Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Development Management section (DAT-DM) the archaeological advisors to the planning authority, the following condition was attached to planning permission by Pembrokeshire County Council.

No intrusive groundworks shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall be first submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme of investigation. Reason: to ensure the recording of any items of archaeological interest; to accord with policy GN.38 of the Local Development Plan for Pembrokeshire (adopted 28 February 2013).

- 1.1.4 A written scheme of investigation was prepared by James Meek of HCUK Group (Feb 2021, Project Ref 06732A) which outlined the methodology by which the archaeological watching brief would be undertaken, which was approved by DAT-DM.
- 1.1.5 DAT-DM prepared an advice letter to the Local Planning Authority on 28th September which stated that 'We are uncertain as to the potential for revealing archaeological deposits preserved within the development site boundary but suggest that it might be useful for the proposed trial pits to be monitored through the implementation of an archaeological watching brief, with the results from this helping to inform possible further mitigation.'
- 1.1.6 The school building is not listed, and is not recorded on the Historic Environment Record.

1.2 Site Location

- 1.2.1 The proposed development lies on the southwestern side of Moorfield Road in Narberth, Pembrokeshire (NGR SN10821 14798). Narberth is a small town situated 1.5kms south of the A40 trunk road and lies 15kms east of Haverforwest and 10kms west of St Clears.
- 1.2.2 The site comprised the original 19th century school building fronting Moorfield Road with a small carpark to the northwest. The southwestern

side of the development area is taken up by the later 20th century extension to the school building that had been built on raised ground some 1.5m above the level of the car park that lies to the south and southwest. Grassland and playing fields lie to the northwest of the site.

- 1.2.3 The underlying solid geology of the area is represented by sedimentary mudstone of the Slade and Redhill Formation. The underlying superficial deposit is glacial till (British Geological Society)

1.3 Scope of the Project

- 1.3.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief was prepared by HCUK Group, which was approved by the planning authority prior to the works commencing. The WSI outlined the project objectives as:

- Provision of a written scheme of investigation to outline the methodology for the archaeological watching brief which the appointed archaeological contractor will undertake;
- Archaeological attendance during groundworks (archaeological watching brief) to appropriately investigate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the ground works, in order to identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits and to establish the character, extent and date range for those archaeological deposits;
- Production of a report on and an archive of the results of the historic buildings survey and archaeological watching brief.

- 1.3.2 The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance* and their codes of conduct (CIfA 2014).

1.4 Report Outline

- 1.4.1 This report provides a summary and discussion of the archaeological watching brief and its results. Sources are referenced within the text or as footnotes.

1.5 Abbreviations

- 1.5.1 Regional Historic Environment Record – HER; Primary Record Number – PRN; National Grid Reference – NGR; Written Scheme of Investigation-- WSI. Dyfed Archaeological Trust-Development Management – DAT-DM.

1.6 Illustrations

- 1.6.1 Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale and are illustrative only.

1.7 Timeline

1.7.1 The following timeline is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text.

Period	Approximate date	
Palaeolithic –	c.450,000 – 10,000 BC	Prehistoric
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 – 4400 BC	
Neolithic –	c.4400 – 2300 BC	
Bronze Age –	c.2300 – 700 BC	
Iron Age –	c.700 BC – AD 43	
Roman (Romano-British) Period –	AD 43 – c. AD 410	Historic
Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period –	c. AD 410 – AD 1086	
Medieval Period –	1086 – 1536	
Post-medieval Period ¹ –	1536 – 1750	
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	
modern –	20 th century onwards	

Table 1: Archaeological and historical timeline for Wales.

¹ The post-medieval and industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

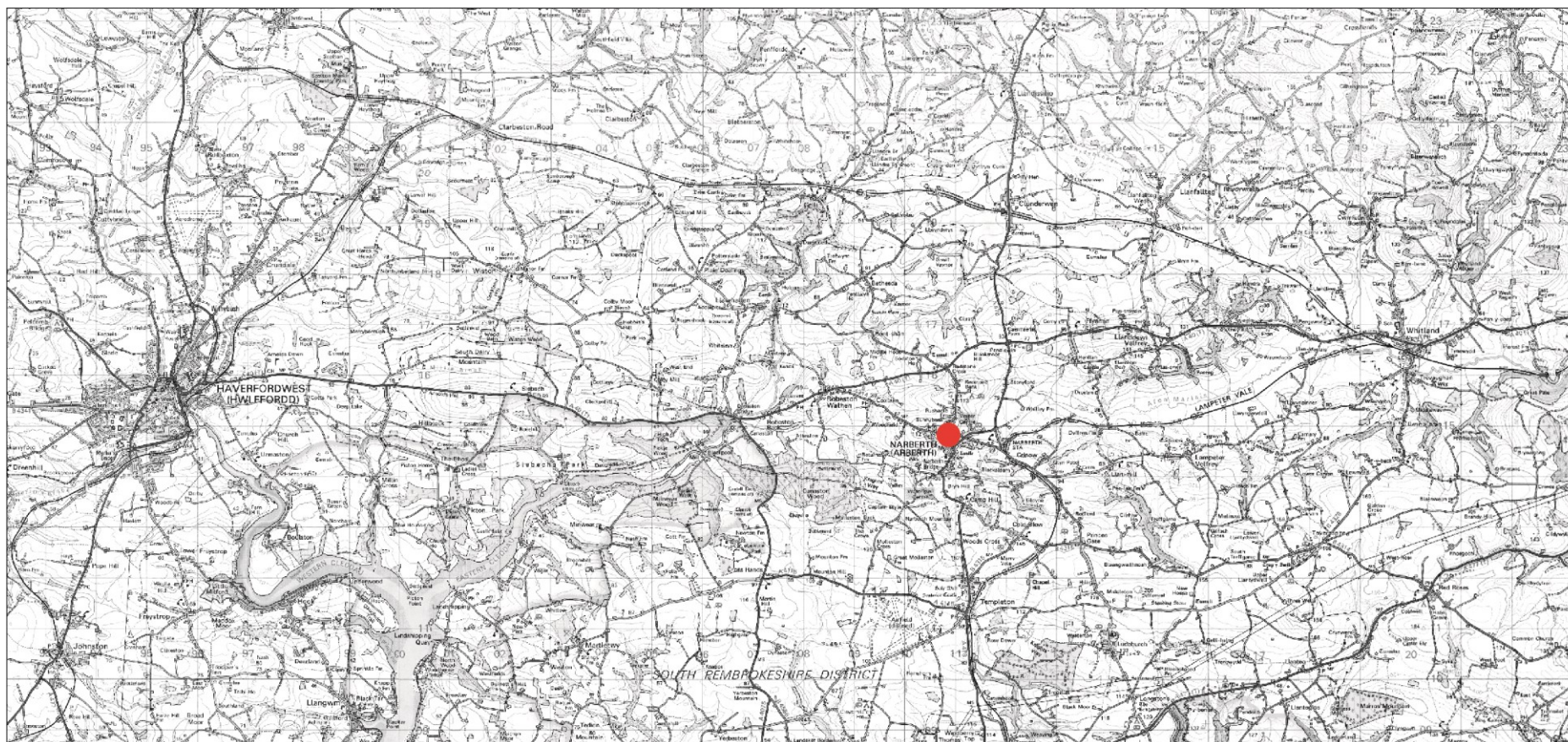


Figure 1: Map extract showing location of Narberth Town (red dot).

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Explorer Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office,
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Figure 2: Site location plan (supplied by HCUK Group)

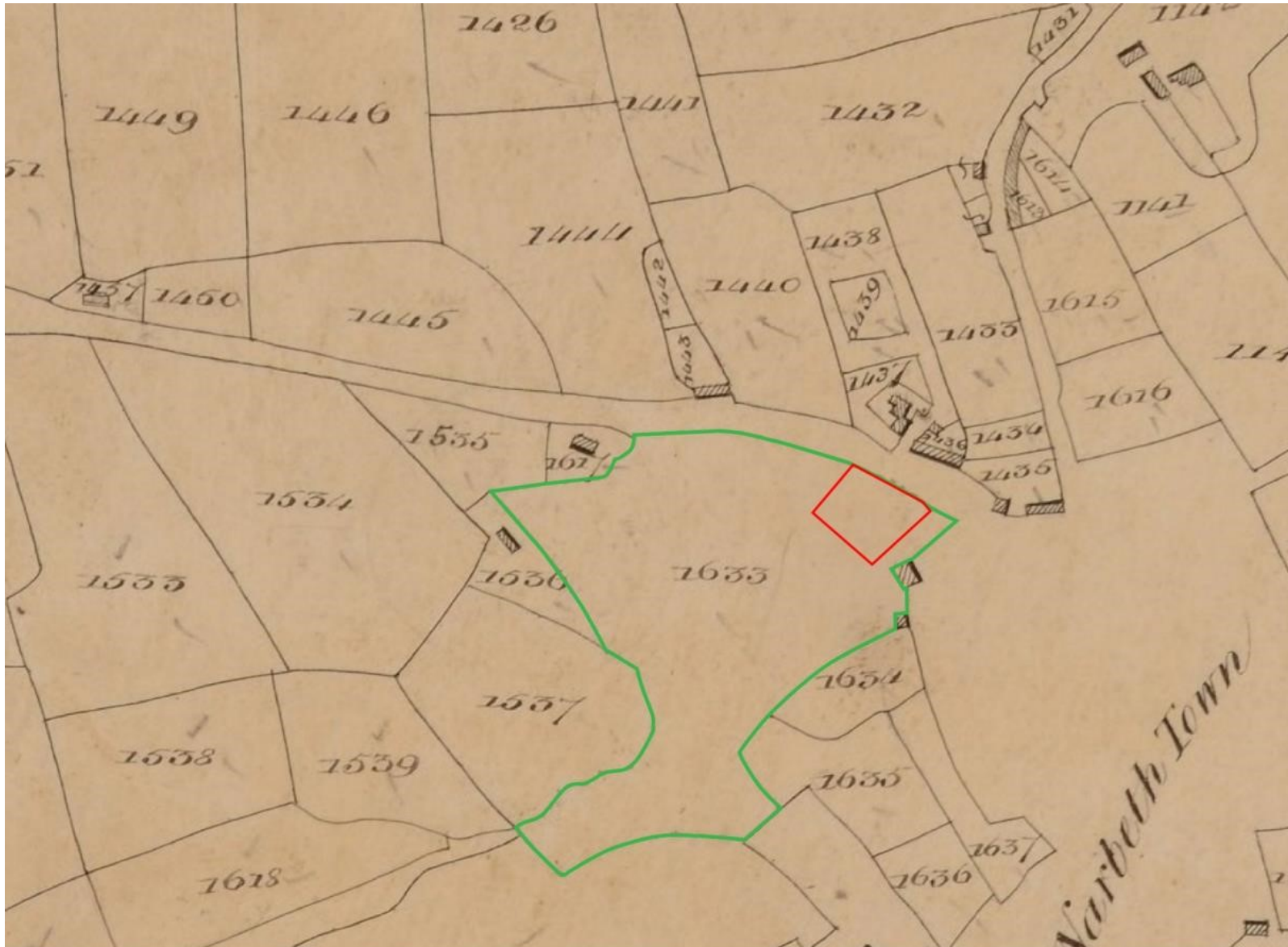


Figure 3: Extract from the 1840 tithe map of Narberth Parish (town moor outlined in green and development site outlined in red)

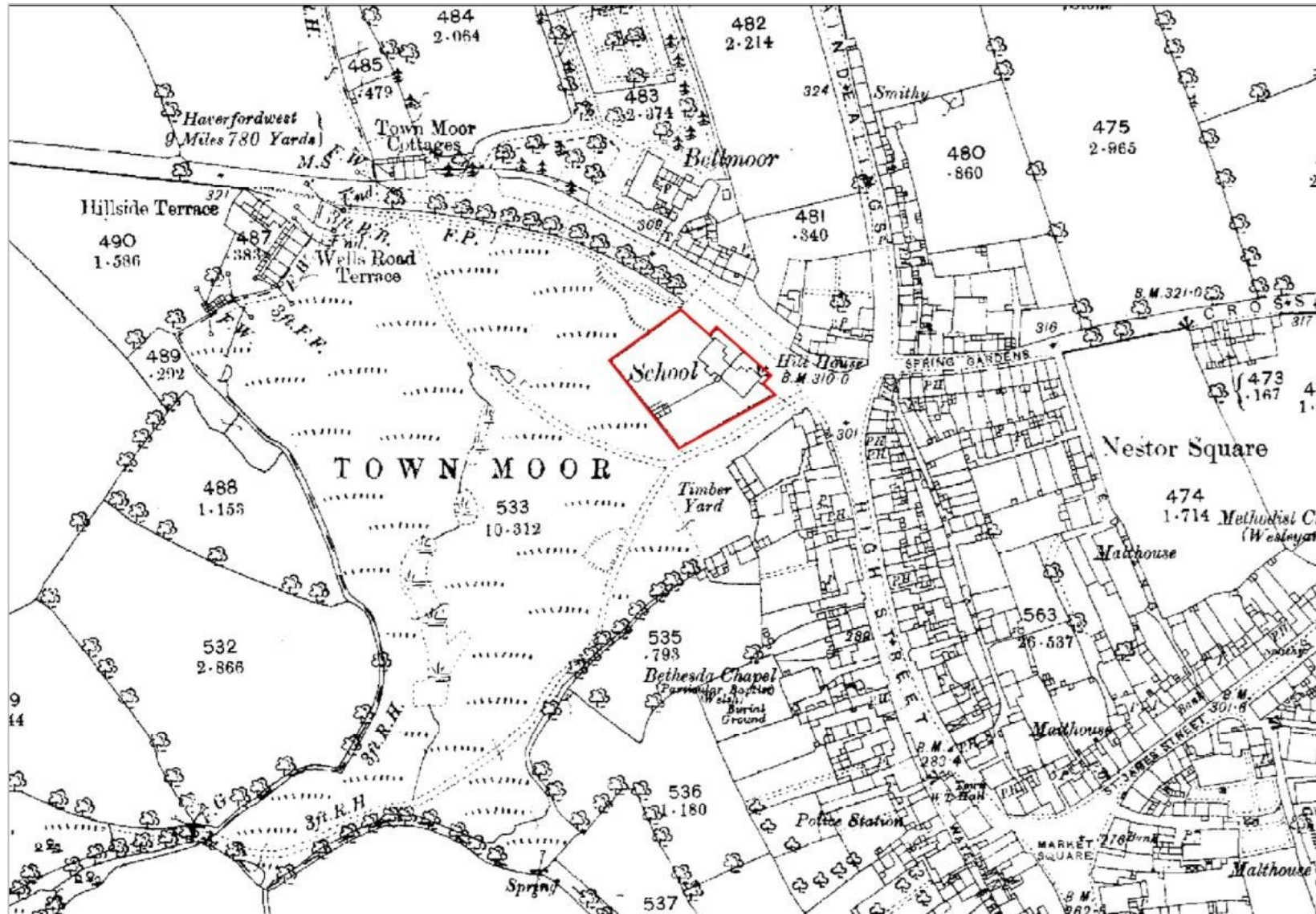


Figure 4: Extract of Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (1889) showing development site in red

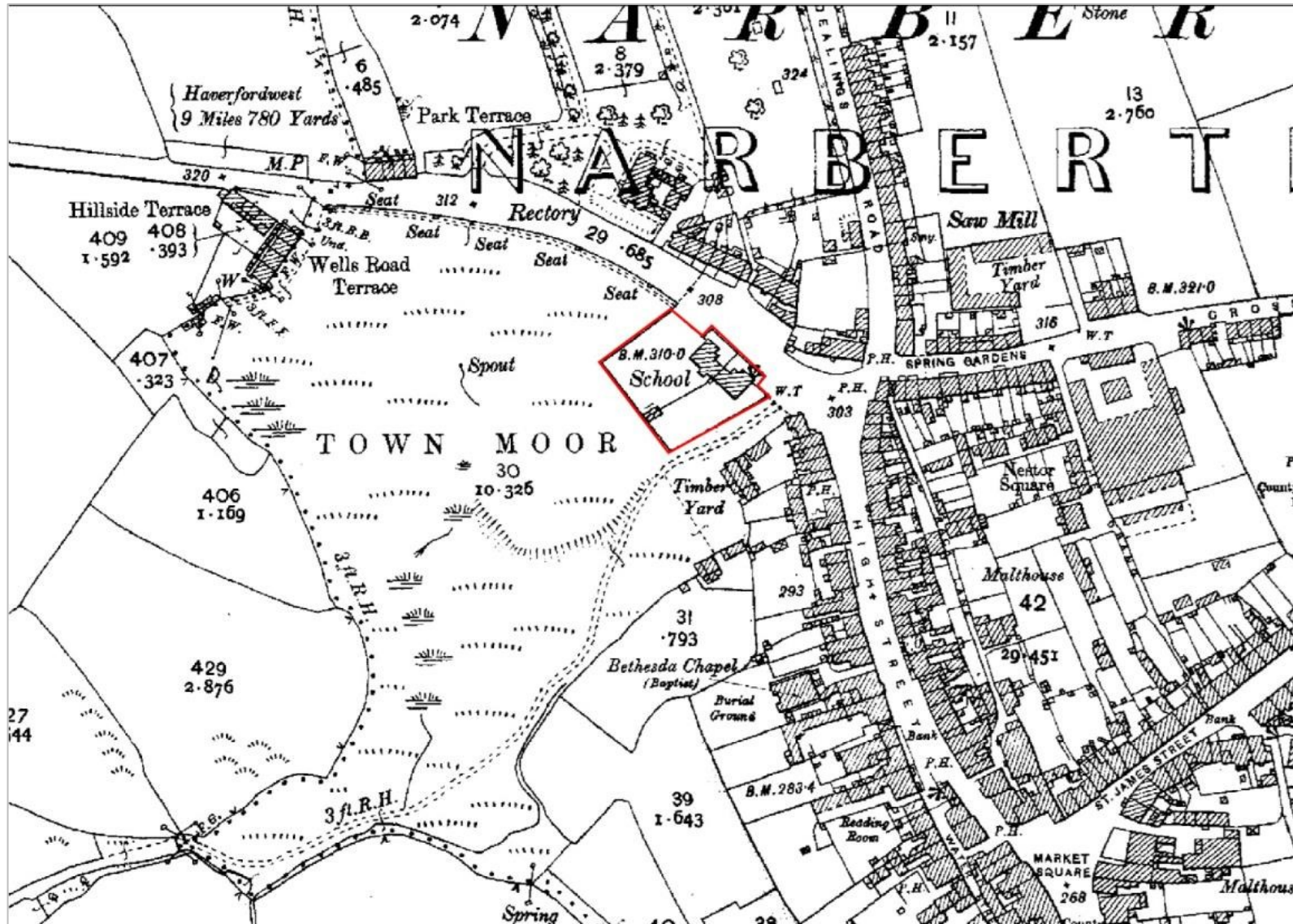


Figure 5: Extract of Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map (1907) showing development site in red

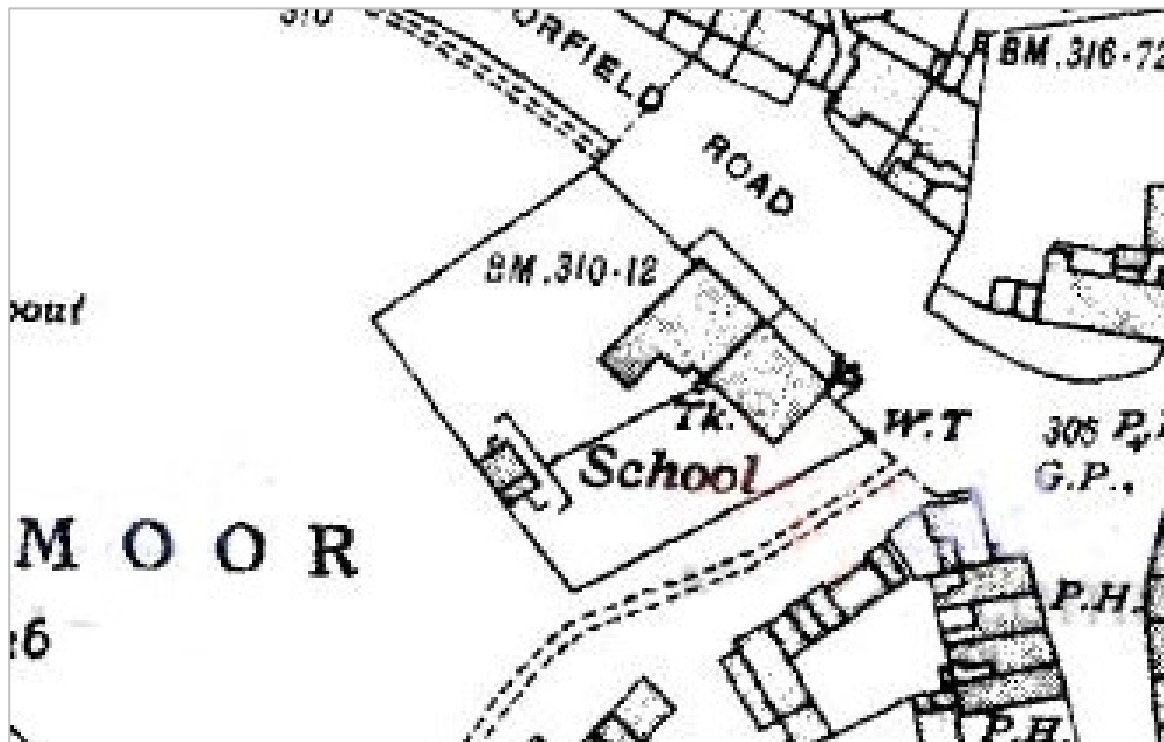


Figure 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 edition map (1937).

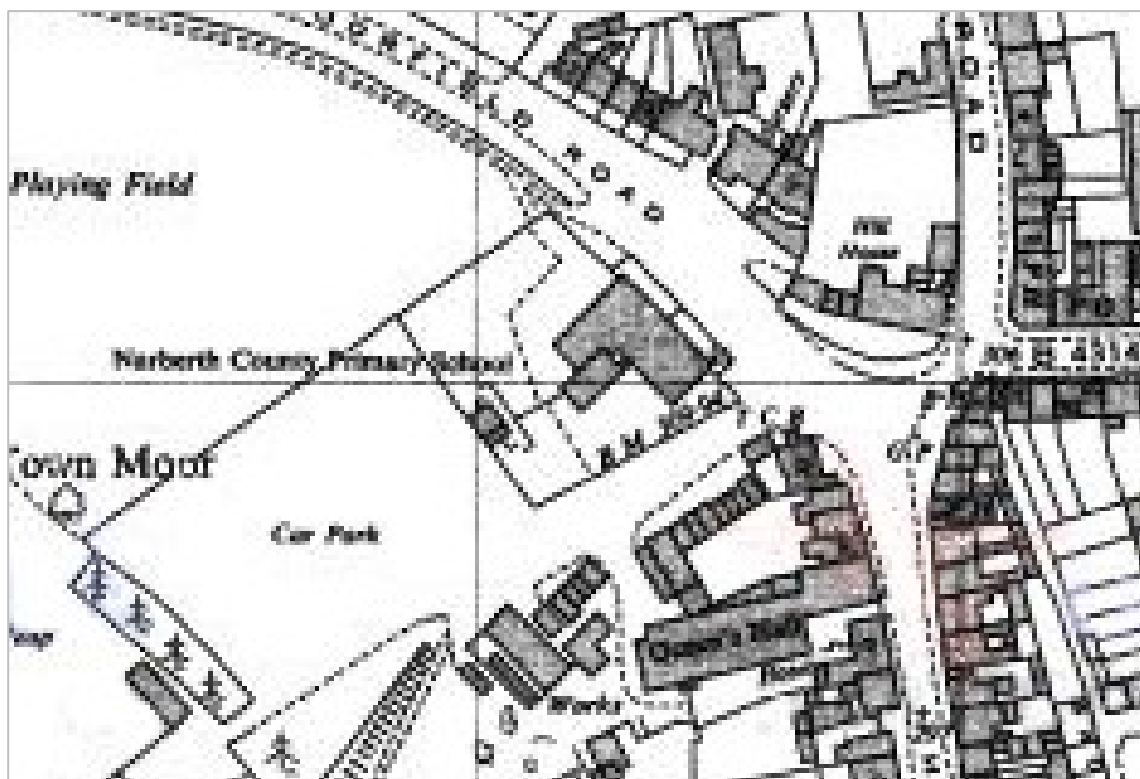


Figure 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 edition map (1967).

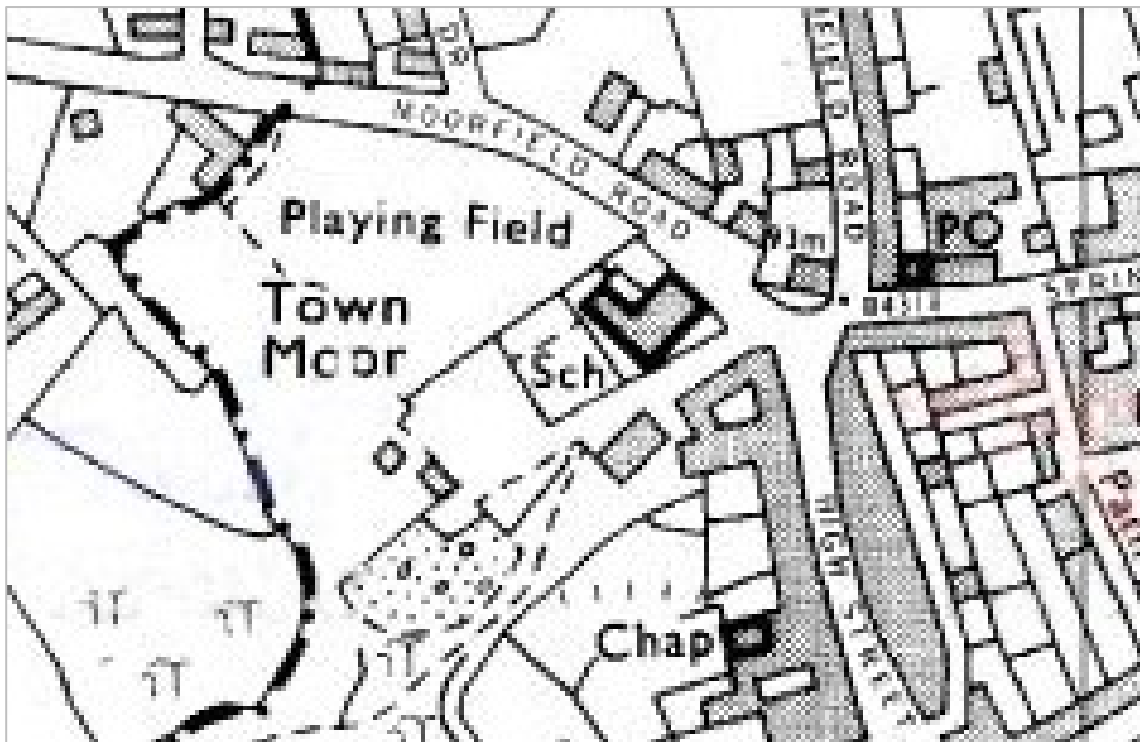


Figure 8: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 edition map (1972)



Figure 9: Location of watching brief areas and section photos

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Watching Brief

- 2.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 2.1.2 A written scheme of investigation was prepared by James Meek (Director, Archaeology) of HCUK Group detailing the proposed archaeological works. After the demolition of the modern extension and the grubbing out of concrete foundations, the original intention was to monitor the excavation of a number of trial pits located across the site, but it was deemed more practicable by the developer to reduce the ground level on the western half of the site en-masse to within 0.1m of the required formation level with a machine using a toothed bucket; leaving the remaining 0.1m of overburden to be excavated with a grading bucket. However, of the initial ground reduction only an area measuring approximately 21m by 16m (Area 1) was graded down to formation level (Figure 9, Photos 6-7).
- 2.1.3 At the northern edge of the site the excavation of a deep concrete foundation (Area 2) provided a useful section with which to gauge the depth of made ground in that part of the site (Figure 9; Photo 8).
- 2.1.4 Having monitored and assessed Areas 1 and 2 it was plain that the formation level for the new build would be within the made ground therefore it was considered more practicable to look at Area 3 after it had been graded.
- 2.1.5 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual² used by DAT Archaeological Services. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout this watching brief. All contexts encountered during this watching brief were recorded.
- 2.1.6 The watching brief took place on the 21st, 23rd and 24th of February with a brief visit on 3rd March 2021.
- 2.1.7 All data recovered during the fieldwork will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with specifications in Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 2.1.8 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts. The report includes a desk-based research element to ensure that the site is placed within its wider archaeological context.
- 2.1.9 A report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork has been prepared.

² DAT Archaeological Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

3. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The earliest available map of the area, the 1840 parish tithe (Figure 3) shows the site location on undeveloped land in the northeast corner of Narberth Town Moor. This was common land owned by Baron de Rutzen of Germany (1795-1874). In 1821 whilst in Rome, Italy he met Mary Dorothea Phillips (1797-1860) the daughter and heiress of Nathaniel Phillips of Slebech, Pembrokeshire, they were married a year later and became Lords of the Manors of Slebech, Minwear, Newton, Robertson Wathen, Lampeter Velfrey, Llanddewi Velfry and Narberth, and it was he who, as reported in the School Board minutes dated August 2nd 1871, gave consent for that particular parcel of land to be used as the school site. The minutes read: *'Census taken. Schoolroom for 200 children to be built, site to be part of the waste land on the Town's Moor. The Baron de Ruzten as Lord of the Manor, having intimated his willingness to convey the same over to the school board'*. The school therefore must have been built after 1871. It should be noted that the tithe map does not include the urban development of Narberth Town.
- 3.2 The school first appears cartographically on the 1889 Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (Figure 4) as a 'C' shaped building. The same footprint is shown on the 1907 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map (Figure 5).
- 3.3 The publication of the 1937 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map shows a small extension has been added to the rear of the school and a length of wall partially surrounding the toilet block has also been built (Figure 6).
- 3.4 By the publication of the 1967 OS 1:2500 another building now appears beside the extension seen in the 1937 map (Figure 7).
- 3.5 The final phase of development appears on the 1972 OS 1:10000, which shows the flat-roofed, modular buildings that were built at the rear of the school (Figure 8).

4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS (Figure 9)

- 4.1 It was reasonable to assume from the difference in heights between the school garden and the carpark situated the other side of the retaining wall that a large amount of material had been imported into the school site to level the ground prior to the construction of the modern extension in the 1960s-70s. The demolition confirmed that the extension was built on large, concrete strip foundations dug into made ground. The demolished building and concrete foundations were removed to another part of the site and crushed for hardcore. Afterwards the ground on the southern side of the site adjacent to the retaining (carpark) wall was removed down to within 0.1m of the final formation level using a toothed bucket. This area measured approximately 41m by 10m.



Photo 1: Looking east along retaining wall during initial ground reduction in Area 1 (1m scale).

4.2 Area 1

- 4.2.1 The ground reduction in this area was between 0.4m – 0.5m depth along the retaining wall (Photo 1). The area contained a good depth of topsoil, a number of service runs and a soakaway in the southeast corner of the site. The soakaway was 1.8m deep and when emptied confirmed the following sequence:
- a. The top 0.9m depth comprised imported material of topsoil and subsoil mix, with a greater concentration of yellow clay towards its base.
 - b. This overlay buried topsoil (presumably the original ground surface of the slope) of 0.4m depth.

- c. This overlay a clay subsoil of 0.2m depth overlying undisturbed thick clay at the base of the soakaway pit (Photo 2)



Photo 2: Looking southwest at emptied soakaway pit (1m scale).

- 4.2.2 At the north side of Area 1, close to the east wall, a layer of roofing slates (seemingly older than the debris comprising made ground above) were laid across the ground sealing underlying mixed deposits. It is possible that these were part of the modern made ground but could equally be levelling material associated with the Victorian school yard (Photo 3)



Photo 3: Looking northeast at possible earlier layer of roofing slates underneath imported material (1m scale).

- 4.2.3 An exploratory trench measuring approximately 3m by 0.5m was excavated to a depth of 1m in order to ascertain the whereabouts of a service pipe. The trench was positioned 0.5m out from the south wall and 10m from its eastern end (Photo 4). The trench section revealed a homogenous mix of imported yellow/orange clays and subsoil and small stones down to its base.



Photo 4: South facing shot of narrow exploratory trench (1m scale).

- 4.2.4 Of the original 41m by 15m area of ground reduction only the southeastern quadrant, measuring approximately 21m by 15m, was reduced with a grading bucket down to the final formation level (Figure 9). The rest of the reduced ground was deemed to be at the correct level and might possibly have required building up. An exposed section through the made-ground at the northern edge of the area (Photo 5) confirmed the following sequence:

- a. The top 0.35m depth comprised imported grey-brown, mixed soil and stony rubble.
- b. This overlay a 0.4m deep layer of imported grey-brown, silty-clay with a moderate amount of stone.
- c. This overlay 0.45m of imported yellow-orange clay.
- d. Beneath which stood a layer of light-grey clay, 0.15m deep.



Photo 5: Exposed section in north edge of Area 1 showing layers of imported material (1m scale).

- 4.2.5 The grading of Area 1 down to formation level revealed a mixed horizon of yellow-orange clays, subsoils, stone and brick, all indicative of imported material (Photos 6 and 7).



Photo 6: Looking west across the finished formation level in Area 1.



Photo 7: Looking south across the finished formation level of Area 1 (1m scale).

4.3 Area 2

- 4.3.1 At the western edge of the site the excavation of a deep concrete foundation strip provided a useful section with which to assess the composition of the ground that once stood beneath the modern school extension (Figure 9, Photo 8)
- 4.3.2 The section was 1.55m deep and revealed a number of sloping layers synonymous with tip lines. The section comprised the following sequence:
- a. The top 0.25m depth comprised dark-brown, topsoil.
 - b. This overlay a 0.3m deep layer of imported yellow gritty clay.
 - c. This overlay 0.15m of imported dark-grey clay and sharp stone.
 - d. Beneath which stood a layer of light-yellow, silty-clay with a high percentage of small stone.
 - e. At the base of the section stood 0.35m thick layer of light-grey, silty-clay.



Photo 8: East facing section in Area 2 showing tip lines of imported material (1m scale).

4.4 Area 3

- 4.4.1 Area 3 was situated a few metres away from the rear of the old school building and measured approximately 3.5m by 10m. The finished formation level at the school end of this area was obscured by standing water but at the south end it was clearly seen to comprise made ground (Photo 9).



Photo 9: South end of Area 3 showing mixed materials denoting made ground (1m scale).

- 4.4.2 A vertical section to the west of the area showed a profile of mixed soils and debris seen in other parts of the site and characteristic of imported material (Photo 10).



Photo 10: East facing section at western edge of Area 3 (1m scale).

- 4.4.3 The south facing section, located a few metres away from the rear of the old school (Photo 11) presented a much cleaner profile and seemed to represent in-situ natural deposits but further investigation revealed part of a base for a recent white-glazed vase or bowl in one of the lower deposits.

- 4.4.4 The section comprised the following sequence:

- a. Approximately 0.3m deep layer of ballast for a path that skirts around the rear of the school. This consists of brick, stone and gravels.
- b. This overlay a 0.6m deep layer of light yellow, silty-clay with occasional stone.
- c. This in turn overlay a 0.15m deep layer of soft, dark-grey, clayey-silt.
- d. Beneath which stood a 0.3m deep layer of light grey clay (it was in this deposit that the pot sherd was uncovered).
- e. At the base of the section a thin layer of degraded shale fragments was revealed.



Photo 11: South facing section situated a few metres from the rear of the old school (1m scale).

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during initial groundworks associated with proposed redevelopment and ground preparation at the former Narberth County Primary School, Moorfield Road, Narberth, Pembrokeshire SA67 7AG (NGR SN10821 14798).
- 5.2 This was required due to an archaeological condition (Condition 12) having been attached to the planning permission for the development (20/0369/PA) following advice from the Development Management section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT-DM) because of the potential for archaeological remains to be preserved within the site boundary associated with the medieval development of Narberth town.
- 5.3 The original ground level sloped down from the northeast to the southwest and in order to level the ground at the rear of the school (and also provide support for the large concrete-strip foundations) a substantial amount of material had been imported into the site. Judging by the cartographical evidence this must have occurred during the 1960s – early 1970s.
- 5.4 The removal of the imported material from the development site down to the required final formation level did not expose any undisturbed ground or archaeological features or deposits. The formation level still lay within imported material.
- 5.5 There was a possibility that the depth of imported material might diminish further upslope towards the old school due to the rising old ground surface but there was no evidence for this (compare the sections in Photo 5 taken midway up the site and Photo 10 taken beside the old school; the bases of both sections are composed of imported material) and it would seem that the original sloping ground was benched prior to the importation of

levelling material. This procedure would have erased or truncated any surviving archaeological deposits within the affected area.

- 5.6 It is difficult to be sure when the made ground shown in Photo 11 was deposited. It is cleaner material, not as dirty as the material seen across the rest of the site and might possibly be associated with the construction of the original school building.
- 5.7 Due to the depth of imported material the final formation level did not encounter any undisturbed superficial or bedrock geology.
- 5.8 The results of the archaeological watching suggested that it was unlikely that significant archaeology would have survived the construction of the former primary school and that further development works at the site were unlikely to disturb archaeological deposits or features even if they had survived.

6. SOURCES

Published

Brown, D.H., 2011. *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

British Geological Survey: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
(Accessed February 2021)

Chartered Institute of Archaeologists, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Cartographic

1840 Narberth Parish Tithe Map and Apportionment

1889 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map

1907 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map

1937 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 edition map

1967 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 edition map

1972 Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 edition map

Database

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust in The Corner House, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AE

RCAHMW Coflein Database: - <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>

Cof Cymru - National Historic Assets of Wales: - <http://cadw.gov.wales/historicenvironment/recordsv1/cof-cymru/?lang=en>

Historic Wales: - <http://historicwales.gov.uk>

