

Preliminary Report on an Archaeological Test Pit at The Weatheralls Junior School 24-29 April 2017

Soham, Cambridgeshire



**Report prepared by Archaeology Cambridgeshire East
June 2017\April 2018**



Report No 0005/CMC
Site Name The Weatheralls School
Playing Field
HER Event No ECB5214
OASIS ID archaeol33-TBA
Date of Works 24-28 April 2017
Grid Reference TL59420 73611 Nearest postcode CB7 5BJ Ten Bells Lane, Soham
Site Code SOHWS17
Receiving Body The Weatheralls School, Soham
Accession No TBA

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Date April 2018

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Date June 2017 & April 2018

Signed

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Only children with written permission from their parents or guardians appear in photographs.

The Weatheralls School 2017 Dig Summary

Introduction

When ACE were invited to support the Weatheralls School annual archaeology project, we decided that we would give the children the opportunity to be real archaeologists and undertake a proper archaeological evaluation using real archaeological techniques and equipment. We provided them with learning materials a week in advance. Their curriculum project was 'Stone Age to Iron Age'.

Methodology

We had one week to dig a 1 metre square test pit. The site chosen has been evaluated several times in the past and our aim was to dig our trench in undisturbed ground so that we might find layers of stratified archaeology. Our expert Bill used mapping skills to help us find a good site and Chris used his surveying skills to help us plot the site on the ground. The children excavated the test pit in 10cm layers called spits, taking it in turns to scrape back the soil with metal trowels. The soils was then sifted for finds, providing the main activity. All finds were sorted into trays and scrubbed and washed by our children. We also took soil sample and created a 'flotation station' to look for macro finds.



Results

We were excited to find Victorian pottery in the compacted soil beneath the turf layer because it meant we were breaking 'new' ground and that hopefully there would be evidence of human activity and archaeology in the ground beneath us. As we progressed through the layers our three classes of 90 children in total per day unearthed pottery dating from the modern period to the Saxon period. They found iron nails and lots of pieces of worked flint. As we reached the last few layers the soil had turned to sand and it became clear that we were excavating through the fill of a ditch that had been filled in a long time ago. The last three layers were pure sand with no finds in at all. When we got to the bottom of the trench we were able to excavate beneath the old ditch and found that it had cut through the beaten clay floor of an Iron Age dwelling.



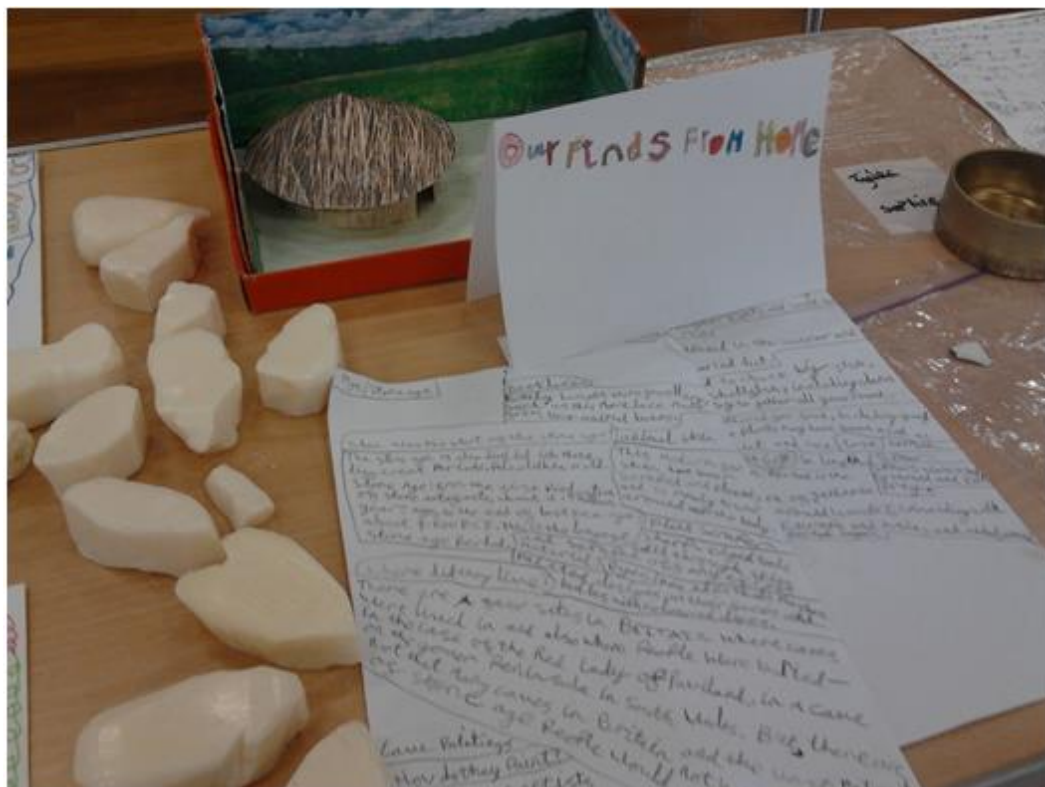
Even though we only had a few centimetres of the floor intact, we could see orange burnt patches in the white clay and lots of specks of charcoal.

This was exciting for the children because it was so relevant to their project work. Our best finds were sherds of Saxon pottery and a beautiful worked flint. The children liked finding flints and iron nails because they found them easiest to identify.



The Exhibition

One week after the archaeological dig, we were invited back to the school to see an exhibition of work about the dig. There were photographs of the activities, a description and finds display from each layer, models of iron age and stone age dwellings, timelines, and pieces of writing about the children's individual experiences. We were thrilled to see how much the children had got out of the experience and they were thrilled to have discovered their heritage all by themselves.



The Weatheralls School – Test Pit April 2017

Test Pit Location

