

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 1049

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Garden Lodge,
Campingland, Swaffham, Norfolk**

41192 SWF

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Location: Garden Lodge, Campingland, Swaffham
District: Breckland
Grid Ref: TF 8204 0892
HER No.: 41192 SWF
Date of fieldwork: 21st and 22nd of February 2005

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on a private residence at Campingland, Swaffham during the excavation of footings for a proposed garage, driveway and soakaway pit.

A probable 18th- to 19th-century brick boundary wall was recorded at the east entrance to the property but no other archaeological features were observed.

1.0 Introduction

(Fig 1)

Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) undertook a watching brief at Garden Lodge on the edge of Campingland in Swaffham. The private residence was undergoing development which involved the excavation of footings for a proposed new garage, driveway and a soakaway pit. The area under development measured 35m by 23m (805 sq. m).

This work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Harding and was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: EJR/22.12.04).

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The site was located to the east of the market place, to the south of St Peter and St Paul's church and immediately to the west of Campingland. The site was once part of a larger block of property (at least five times as large) which was subdivided when a retirement home (The Lodge) was built.

The underlying natural deposits consist of argillic brown sands over chalk-sand and glaciofluvial drift material. The topography of the site is generally level, lying at around 70 m OD, sloping gently down to the north.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The west Norfolk market town of Swaffham has not been subjected to intensive archaeological research and like many market towns in Norfolk its origins are not completely understood.

Consultation of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) shows activity from the prehistoric to the post-medieval periods in the vicinity. This data is discussed in broad chronological order below.

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the Swaffham area appears to be patchy with no major concentrations, although objects have been recorded to the south and west

of this watching brief area. A Palaeolithic handaxe was found in a garden c. 250m to the south-west (NHER 25686); however it is possible that this was imported into the garden with other materials. Other Neolithic and Bronze Age flints were found further from the site. A Neolithic axehead (NHER 2653) and a Bronze Age rapier (NHER 2665) have also been found within 500m of the site to the south-west.

The town is situated in the area of the intersection between two Roman roads (Gurney 1994). The Peddars way (probably built by the Roman military) lies to the east, leading from the south to the north-west Norfolk coast. To the west an unnamed south-west to north-east road which probably connected the Fen Causeway with settlements at Billingford and Brampton. The proposed junction of these two roads lies 5km to the north of the modern town of Swaffham. No evidence of a sizeable Roman settlement has so far been found in the Swaffham area and only four recorded instances of Roman finds lie within a 500m radius of the site. To the north Roman pottery (NHER 12856) has been found, to the west a Roman coin (NHER 2674) and to the south two Roman coins (NHERs 2672 and 2653 respectively).

The origins of Swaffham are more likely to lie in the Saxon period. The place name of Swaffham is first recorded in the *Codex diplomaticus aevi saxonici* of A.D. c. 1050. The name is thought to indicate the “ham of the Swabians” (Penn 1994a, 36). Ham as a suffix is usually an indicator of a Saxon settlement, whilst the Swabians were probably a local tribe. Evidence of the local population during the Saxon period is provided by the Early Saxon cemetery at the Paddocks, on the western side of Swaffham, which was partially excavated in the 1970s (NHER 1125; Hills and Wade-Martins 1976). Excavation by NAU close to and north of this site in 2004 determined that the cemetery did not extend that far (NHER 40197; Hobbs 2004).

Before the Norman Conquest (1066) Swaffham was only a moderately sized village, however by the mid 13th century, the town had grown to support a market and two fairs. Swaffham has been interpreted as an early unplanned medieval town, comparable to such settlements as Pulham Market, Diss, East Dereham and Aylsham (Penn 1994b). Much of the Market Place frontage at Swaffham was probably established during the early medieval period. As Swaffham thrived as a market town, the buildings around the Market Place were continually replaced and rebuilt. Today much of the older architecture of the town centre dates from the 17th to 19th centuries.

There are three major medieval monuments in the immediate vicinity of the site. To the north is the church of St Peter and St Paul (NHER 2698) which is largely rebuilt but contains elements of a medieval structure. To the east is Campingland (NHER 33714) an area of open land bequeathed to the town in AD 1475 which was used for medieval sports. A probable medieval windmill mound (NHER 2655) lies some distance to the north-west of the site. To the west and situated in the north-east corner of the market place, were found the remains of a 15th- to 16th-century timber framed house (NHER 1029). These remains formed the core of a 19th-century building, which was demolished, and it is likely that other buildings in the centre of the town have similarly early elements. To the south a buckle and sheath were found in a garden (NHER 28056), to the south-west two sites are listed as utilising reused medieval stone (NHER 34731 and 32079).

There are many post-medieval elements around the market place. The Greyhound Inn (NHER 34721) was constructed in the 16th century and later extended, gives a flavour of the type of later development that occurred in Swaffham. Of more interest is the presence of The Antinghams (NHER 33713) to the east. Now a park and garden, this area shares boundaries with both the churchyard and Campingland, it represents an interesting survival of public land within the town.

In a recent desktop survey (Tremlett 2001) two aerial photographs taken in 1988 were used to suggest a possible continuation of the graveyard southwards beyond its present limit towards the area of this watching brief.

4.0 Methodology

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of footings for a new garage, driveway and soakaway pit. The brief required constant attendance by an archaeologist during these groundworks.

The footing trench for the new garage was located to the north-east of the present Garden Lodge and formed a rectangle measuring 7m by 5.30m. It was composed of a trench, 0.45m wide, dug down by mini-digger to a depth of 0.70m at the north end, and to 0.40m at the south end, to take account of the slope.

The soakaway had a trapezoidal shape and measured 1.60m long east-to-west with the other two sides 1.80m and 1.0m respectively. It was excavated by mini-digger down to a depth of 1.10m and later backfilled with modern rubble.

An area of driveway (5m by 3m) situated to the south of the Garden Lodge and near to the road had up to 0.10m of topsoil removed. Further removal of deposits was halted at this point because of waterlogging. Stripping of this small area had shown that the topsoil was relatively recently deposited (probably when the Lodge was built) and after consultation with Edwin Rose (NLA) it was decided further monitoring of the driveway was not needed.

Spoil, and exposed surfaces were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were to be retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

A general level of 0.70m O.D was taken from the ordnance survey map of the area under development.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were in general cold and wet with frequent snow showers. The soft condition of the topsoil caused the developers to change from the use of a small dumper truck to a wheelbarrow.

5.0 Results

(Fig. 2)

The topsoil ([1]) was a mid brown clay silt with occasional flint gravel, its depth varied from 0.40m (in the soakaway) to only 0.10m (in the garage footings). This difference probably indicated that landscaping had been undertaken to level the area, probably during the construction of Garden Lodge.

The subsoil ([2]) had a consistent depth of 0.20m. It consisted of orange brown silty sand including occasional flint gravel as observed in the soakaway, becoming greyer where observed in the footings for the garage. In both the soakaway and the garage-footing trench, orange brown natural sand was seen in the base.

The only feature observed within the watching brief area was a boundary wall ([3]) at the eastern side of the property which had been demolished at an unknown time in the past. The remains were 11.3m long by 0.22m wide and composed of one course of handmade red bricks held by soft white mortar. Similar free-standing walls following the same line still exist along the boundaries of other adjacent properties. The wall probably dates to the 18th or 19th century.

6.0 The Finds

The objects observed during this watching brief consisted entirely of items found within the spoil. These included metal objects and glass bottle fragments, which were not retained as they were modern.

7.0 Conclusions

The watching brief was situated in an area close to both the market and the church within the centre of the early medieval market town of Swaffham, in an area where archaeological remains might be expected. However, the survival of Campingland and Antinghams Park on the eastern side of town has meant that much of the land adjacent to the east of the site has been open parkland since the medieval period. It is highly likely that the plot of land covered by the watching brief was for a long time part of this open area. It may only have become part of a smaller property during the later post-medieval period. Wall [3] was almost certainly a garden boundary wall from this late period.

The undeveloped nature of this plot until relatively recent times may explain the lack of features recorded during this watching brief. However, the landscaping of the topsoil may also have destroyed or obscured archaeological remains.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	-
2	Deposit	Subsoil	-
3	Structure	Brick Wall	18th to 19th century
4	Deposit	Natural	-



Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

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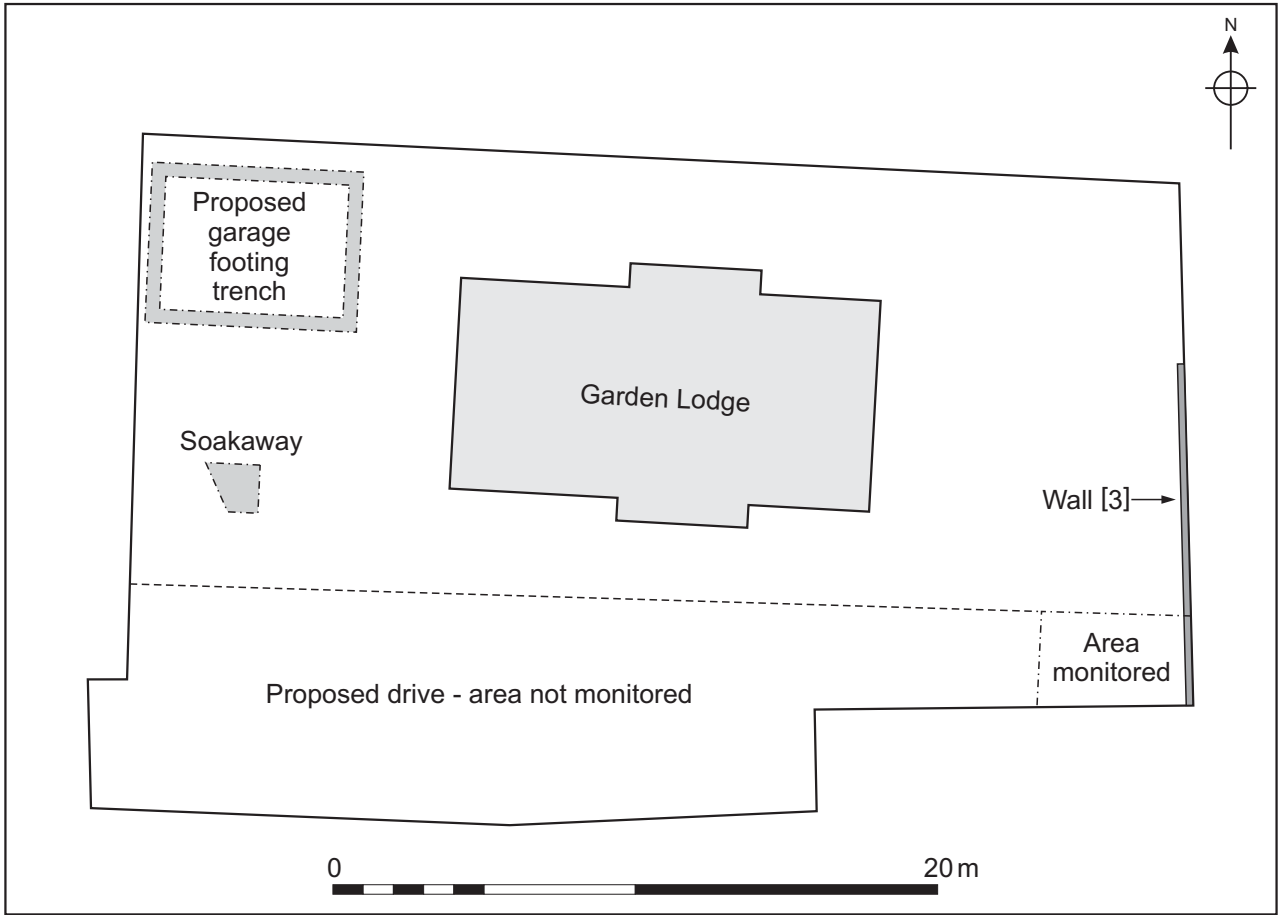


Figure 2. Position of wall [3] and specific areas of ground work. Scale 1:250