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Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire

NGR: SK 60532 13779

Andrew Hyam

ULAS Report No.

An Archaeological Evaluation at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire

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For: Charnwood Borough Council

Approved by:

Signed 

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ULAS Report Number 2015-154

Accession Number X.A82.2015

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire.

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Summary

A three trial trench evaluation was undertaken at land east of Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire in advance of a proposed new school building. One archaeological feature was identified in one trench, comprising a pit containing pottery dating from 12th-14th century. This probably indicates backyard activity for medieval properties which would have fronted on to Main Street.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012), Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) as archaeological advisors to the landowner requested that an archaeological field evaluation take place in order to provide preliminary pre-planning information on the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains which may exist on the site. This document forms the report for the archaeological work on land at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington. Should planning permission be granted it is intended that a new school building will be constructed (Appendix 1).

Background

The village of Cossington is located approximately 8 km to the north of Leicester in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire and lies midway between the two larger villages of Sileby, to the north, and Syston, to the south (Figs. 1 and 2). The older parts of Cossington cluster along the Main Street which forms a north-west to south-east road through the centre of the village. More modern housing developments lead off from Main Street. The parish church of All Saints lies towards the northern boundary of the village suggesting that the village core has drifted southwards over time. Cossington Church of England Primary School is slightly further to the north of the church and is on the eastern side of Main Street.

The original school building, from a cursory inspection appears to be a late 19th century brick-built village school. A desk-based assessment (DBA) produced by ULAS in 2015 (Hearne 2015) indicates that the school was built backing onto agricultural land which has since been redeveloped for housing leaving a rectangular field to the north east of the school building as a playing field. It is this field which will be partially redeveloped to replace two temporary PortaCabin buildings which currently occupy the southern part of the field. The DBA also concluded that the application area lies within the historic settlement core of medieval Cossington and is close to prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon deposits. There was therefore thought

to be some potential for archaeological deposits to be present within the proposed development area. However, it was also noted that as area is currently used as a school playing field there is the possibility that the site may have been levelled to create a better surface. As a consequence it was suggested that the preservation of any archaeological remains could have suffered.

At the time of the evaluation work the site comprised a grassed playing field, with the development area being occupied by a built soft-bark wooden play park, and a classroom and hall on the eastern side (Fig. 3).

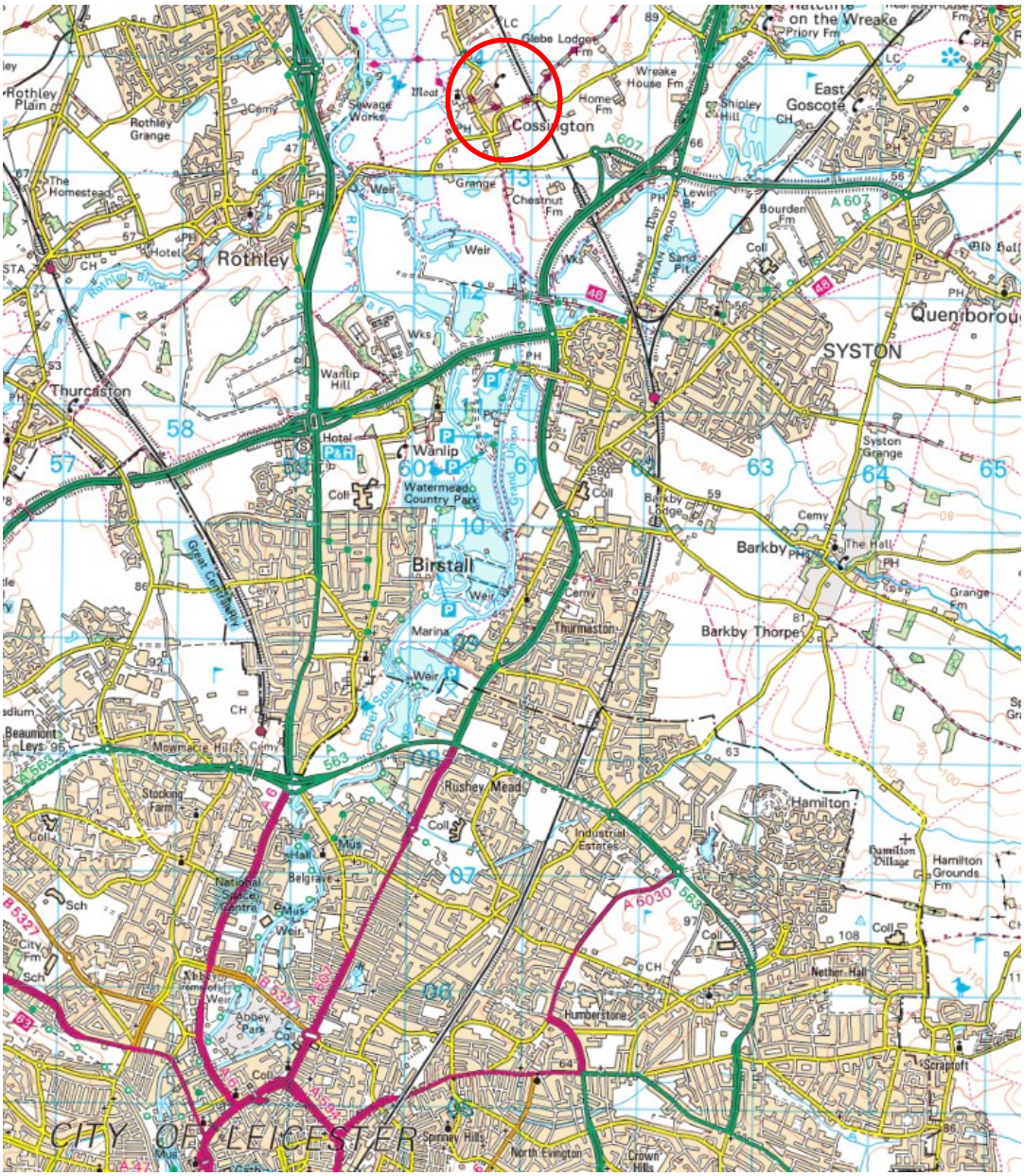

Figure 1 Cossington location

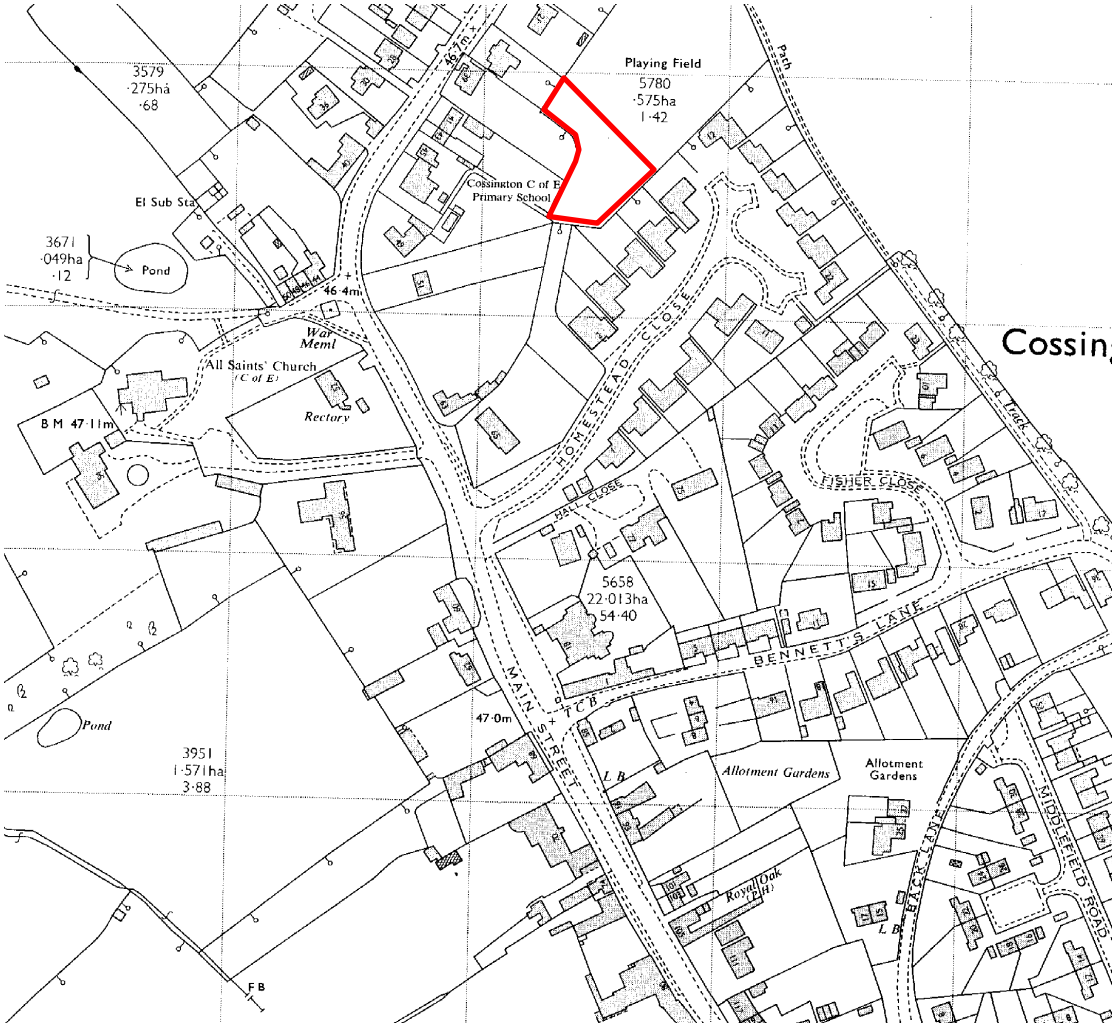

Figure 2 1975 Ordnance Survey map SK6013, with development area highlighted
Original scale 1:2500

Figure 3 Proposed development area prior to trenching
Looking south-west. Play area to right of JCB

Figure 4 Proposed development site
Looking north

Objectives

The archaeological objectives for the evaluation are discussed in detail in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological work at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington* (WSI). However, within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development. This will include characterisation of the sites within the broader landscape, any activities identified on the site and changes in land-use over time.

Methodology

The general methodology for archaeological evaluations is shown in the ULAS WSI. For this project two 20m long by 1.6m wide trenches giving an approximate sample size of 5% was originally specified. However, because of the presence of the play area the locations of the trenches were adjusted slightly and, to achieve the required sample size, a third trench was required. The trench locations are shown below in Figure 5.

Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and backfilled in order following the trenching work. Trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was reached first. All excavation by machine and hand was undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological

deposits or features which may have appeared worthy of preservation in situ or where a more detailed investigation might be required. In the event of the discovery of structures, features or finds which might merit preservation in situ, they would be adequately protected from deterioration using suitable methods.

Appropriate recording methods as specified in the ULAS WSI were used throughout the project.

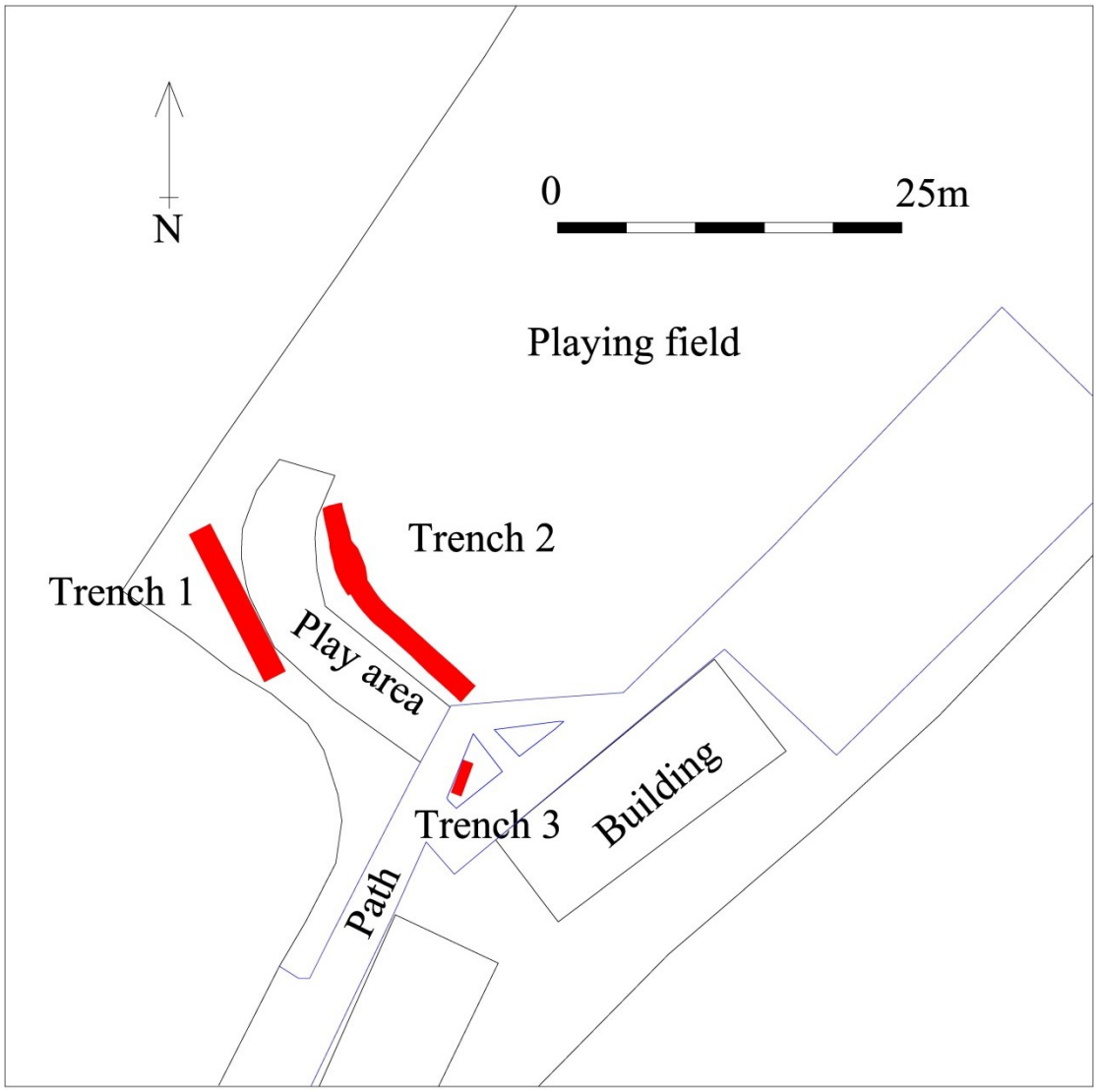

Figure 5 Trench locations

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the south-eastern corner of the proposed development site running along the south-western edge of the play area. Spoil was placed to the south-west of the trench in the available space between the trench and the boundary hedge.

Following removal of the turf a mid-grey brown clayish silt topsoil was removed. The topsoil had an average depth of 0.23m and was heavily disturbed with roots from the nearby hedgeline. A slightly more orange mid-grey brown clay silt subsoil was then encountered which had a significant number of rounded and sub-rounded stones. Removal of the subsoil revealed a dark orange brown clay silt natural substratum with patches of gravel (Fig. 6). Traces of the bases of two possible north to south plough furrows were observed within the trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

Figure 6 Trench 1
Looking south-east. 1m scale

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the north of the play area and was angled to follow the play area outline and to achieve the maximum trench length without going beyond the footprint of the proposed building.

The same topsoil and subsoil deposits as seen in Trench 1 were observed although in this trench the subsoil was generally thicker (see Table 1 below). The natural substratum also consisted of the same dark orange brown clay silt with patches of gravel (Figs. 7 and 8). No plough scars were visible in this trench.

Near to the northern end of the trench a rounded feature could be seen encroaching from the western baulk. The edges of this feature [3] were relatively smooth and indicated the presence of a large round pit. The visible portion measured approximately 3.4m suggesting that the feature is likely to be significantly larger (Figs. 9 and 10). An exploratory slot was cut across it in order to recover any dating evidence (Fig. 11). The single fill (4) consisted of a dark grey clayish sandy silt with frequent sub-rounded and rounded stones. The edges of the feature appeared to be quite steep although the base could not be reached due to the presence of a large boulder at the base of the slot which was rapidly filling with water during the excavation. Nine sherds of medieval pottery was recovered from this pit

No other features or deposits were present in this trench.

Figure 7 Trench 2, east end
Looking north-west. 1m scale

Figure 8 Trench 2, west end
Looking south-east. 1m scale. Pit feature [3] beyond ranging pole

Figure 9 Trench 2, section across cut [3]
Looking south-west, 1m scale

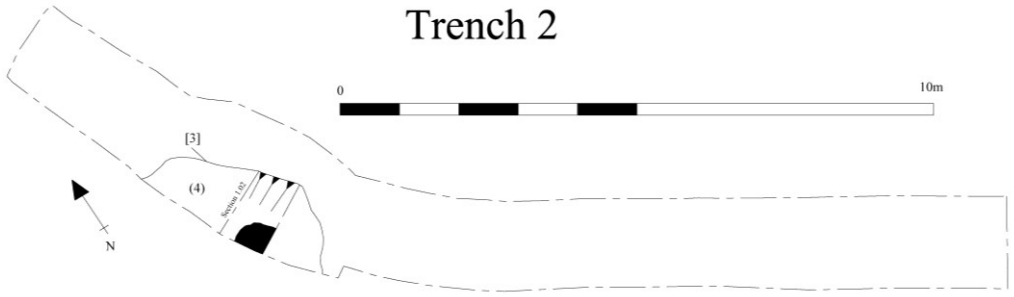

Figure 10 Trench 2 plan

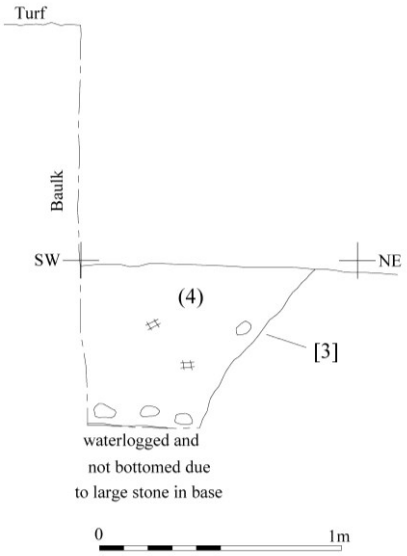

Figure 11 Trench 2 section

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in a small area of grass in front of the present portacabin. Space permitted only a 2.5m length to be excavated but the same topsoil, subsoil and natural substrata were seen in this trench (Fig. 12). The topsoil had an average depth of 0.40m which was significantly higher than the other two trenches and may suggest more landscaping has taken place in this area. Conversely the subsoil at 0.32m was less than in the other trenches.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

Figure 12 Trench 3
Looking north-east. 1m scale

Because of the site constraints no more space was available in which to place any further trenches despite a total trench length of only 32.5m being achieved. Further trenches could have been placed beyond the footprint of the proposed new building but this would also have encroached on the marked-out running track and football pitch.

Trench Descriptions

Table 1. Trench descriptions

Trench	Length (m)	Max depth (m)	Min depth (m)	Av. Topsoil depth (m)	Av. Subsoil depth (m)
1	12.00	0.90	0.60	0.23	0.48
2	18.00	0.95	0.70	0.26	0.57
3	2.50	0.73	0.70	0.40	0.32

The Ceramic Finds *Deborah Sawday*

Methodology

The pottery, nine sherds, weighing 297 grams, and a vessel rim equivalent of 0.175, (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where

one vessel equals 1.00) was examined under a x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998; MPRG, 2001) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 2009).

Discussion

The results are shown below (Tables 2 and 3). The assemblage was all from context 4 [3]. The light grey interior on one of the Nottingham ware sherds is typical of wares dating from the mid or later 13th century.

Conclusion

The relatively large average sherd weight indicates a degree of contemporaneity within the assemblage and also suggests the survival of relatively intact archaeological levels in the vicinity.

Table 2: The medieval pottery and ridge tile fabrics.

Fabric	Common Name/Kiln & Fabric Equivalent where known	General Date Range
PM	Potters Marston ware - Potters Marston, Leicestershire (1)	c.1100-c.1300/50+
CS	Coarse Shelly ware Northants CTS 330 (2)	c.1100-1400
NO2	? Nottingham Coarse Sandy Ware NCSW (3)	c.1230-c.1280
NO3	Nottingham Light Bodied/Reduced Green Glazed ware NOTGL/NOTGR (3)	Early/mid 13th c.1350

(1) Haynes 1952, Davies and Sawday 1999
(2) Northants CTS
(3) Nailor & Young 2001, Nailor 2005

Table 3: The medieval and later pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/ware	no	gr	comments
POT				
4 [3]	PM – Potters Marston	2	45	Small rounded jar, rim diameter c110mm, EVES 0.175. Sooted externally. Paralleled at Leicester, (Davies & Sawday 1999, fig.89.53)
4	PM – Potters Marston	1	13	Body
4	PM – Potters Marston	1	105	Body/flattish base, trimmed, sooted externally, burnt through base, coils visible on interior surface
4	CS – Coarse Shelly ware	1	27	Sooted body
4	NO2 – Nottingham ware	1	17	
4	NO3 – Nottingham Glazed ware	2	20	Base/body, light grey interior
4	NO3 – Nottingham Glazed ware	1	70	Glazed jug strap handle, pale pink interior
BONE				
4 [3]	Animal bone	1		unidentified

Discussion

The trial trench evaluation has identified one archaeological feature in Trench 2. This comprised a pit containing pottery dating from 12th-14th century. This probably

indicates backyard activity for medieval properties which would have fronted on to Main Street. No deposits were present in Trenches 1 and 3. The subsoil had an average depth of 0.48m which is relatively deep for a former arable field and may suggest that some landscaping had taken place.

Archive

The archive consists of:
This report,
3 ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheets,
1 A3 permatrace drawing sheet,
4 ULAS single context record sheets,
1 ULAS pro-forma context register sheet,
1 photograph record sheet,
1 contact sheet of digital photographs,
1 CD containing 29 digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

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16.10.2015

Appendix 1 Proposed development details

Appendix 2 OASIS Details

Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Cossington Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Cossington, Leicestershire
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	DBA
Current Land Use	School
Development Type	School building
Reason for Investigation	Pre-planning
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning
Site Co ordinates	SK 60532 13779
Start/end dates of field work	11.8.15
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	0.12ha

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