

**DUNMOW ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
GREAT DUNMOW
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit
March 2005**

**DUNMOW ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
GREAT DUNMOW
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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**DUNMOW ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL,
GREAT DUNMOW,
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

SUMMARY

Client: Dunmow St Mary's Primary School
FAU Project No.: 1452
Site code: GD 18
NGR: TL 6241 2189
Date of Fieldwork: 4th and 28th February 2005

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the groundworks associated with the construction of a swimming pool at Dunmow St Mary's Primary School, Great Dunmow. A service trench and 14 foundation trenches were observed. No undisturbed natural geology was encountered and the bases of all the groundworks remained within modern topsoil. It is evident that this area of the school grounds has been built up with a layer of redeposited topsoil, crushed concrete and brick rubble; probably during the construction of the school.

No archaeological features or deposits were identified but four pieces of residual Roman pottery and a single medieval sherd, as well as several post-medieval clay pipe stems, were collected. This suggests that archaeological remains may survive below the excavated depth.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring on the construction a new swimming pool Dunmow St Mary's School, Great Dunmow at High Stile. Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) were commissioned by Dunmow St Mary's School to undertake an archaeological monitoring exercise on the excavation of foundations and services associated with the construction of a new swimming pool at the school. The archive will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Geology (Figure 1)

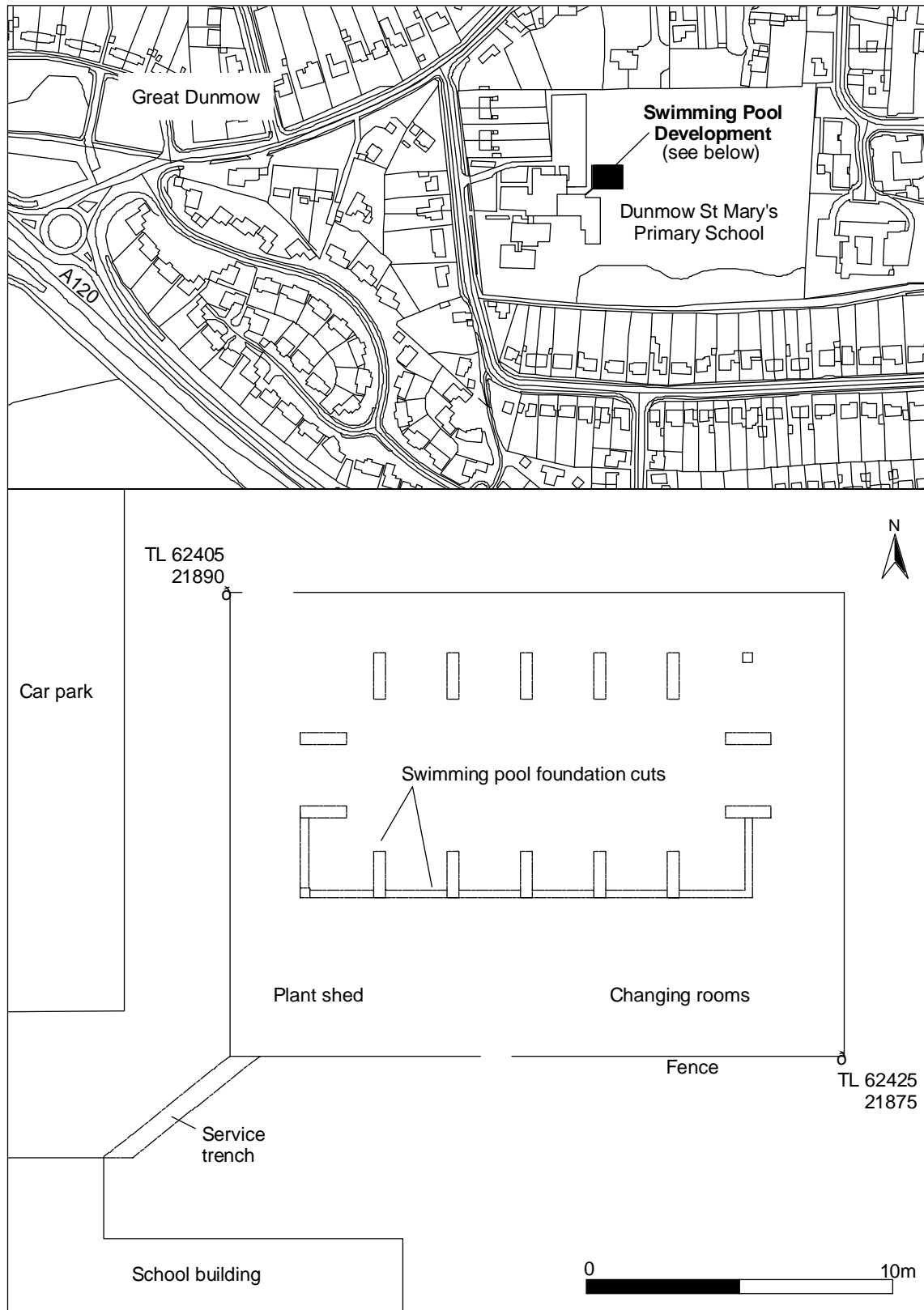
Dunmow St Mary's school lies towards the western end of Great Dunmow. The surrounding land slopes down eastward towards the town centre. The ground level of the school playing fields has been increased by c.0.4m, presumably during the construction of the school. The drift geology of the area consists of Boulder Clay.

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

Great Dunmow is a known Roman 'small town' which was situated on the junction of Stane Street running east – west and the north – south Cambridge to Chelmsford road. It is thought that the town covered an area of 10 –12 hectares (Havis 2004), most of which lies under the present town.

The site is located within the probable extents of the Roman town and within an area of proven archaeological potential. Immediate to the east of the school a number of sites have been previously excavated primarily at Chequers Lane (Wickenden 1988) and Redbond Lodge (Robertson In press). These revealed evidence of agricultural, domestic and ritual activity from the prehistoric to Saxon periods. The Roman remains suggest that the town expanded westwards from the crossroads between the 1st and 3rd centuries. With a concentration of domestic and ritual remains dating to the 3rd century. Further Roman material has been found during various episodes of groundworks in and around the school itself. Most recently, Roman cremation burials were excavated ahead of the construction of an extension on the east side of the school buildings, immediately to the south of the new swimming pool (O'Brien forthcoming).

The Roman road of Stane Street is thought to run to the south of the site roughly under High Fields road. No archaeological investigations were undertaken prior to or during the construction of this road and surrounding housing estate. However, there is anecdotal evidence for substantial Roman remains being uncovered.



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Figure.1 - Dunmow St Mary's Primary School swimming pool development

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the excavation was to record any finds or features disturbed by the groundworks (Havis 2004) and in particular to identify any further Roman cremation burials.

4.0 METHOD

The service trench was excavated using a 3-ton mini-digger, under archaeological supervision, while the foundation pits were hand excavated by the construction contractors. Sections of these footings and trench were recorded and a plan of their positions made. A photographic record comprising of digital images, colour slides and monochrome prints was maintained. The IFA standards and by-laws and ALGAO's Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003) were adhered to during the fieldwork.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig. 1)

The fieldwork comprised of monitoring the excavation of a service trench from the school buildings to the pool compound and 14 footings for the pool itself within a fenced compound measuring approximately 20m by 15m.

The service trench was approximately 5m long, 0.6m wide and 0.5m deep. It was heavily disturbed by existing services and no archaeological remains or undisturbed natural geology were observed.

The pool footings each measured approximately 1.2m x 0.3m and were roughly 0.3m deep. They were excavated through a redeposited grey silt containing brick, crushed concrete and plastic. No undisturbed natural geology was observed in any of the trenches and no archaeological features or deposits were identified. It seems that parts of the original ground surface was covered with plastic matting which was uncovered at the base of one of the footings, and rubble and topsoil placed on top to provide a more stable access during the original school construction works (N. Hill *pers. comm.*).

6.0 FINDS

A small group of unstratified finds, recovered from spoil, were examined. The pottery comprised of a bowl rim sherd (10g) in medieval coarse ware, which has wavy line decoration on the upper surface; two Roman body sherds (20g), one in sandy grey ware, one in black-surfaced ware; two indeterminate body sherds (4g), which could be Roman or medieval. They were all small and abraded and clearly residual as the base of the footings were still within a known modern layer.

Also present was a sherd of post-medieval tile (18g), a spall from a modern tile or brick (6g), and three large diameter, post-medieval clay pipe stems (18g).

7.0 DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The groundworks associated with the construction of the swimming pool were not deep enough to reveal any archaeological features or deposits. The excavations on the extension to the south of the current site showed that archaeological features survived at a depth of between 0.6m and 1m. It is not unreasonable to assume that a similar depth of overburden is present in the area of the swimming pool and that remains may survive below this.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned and funded by Dunmow St Mary's Primary School. Especial thanks are due to Mr N. Hill and Ms H. Bailey who both provided assistance throughout the fieldwork. Mr R. Havis of ECC HEM monitored the site on behalf of the local Planning Authority. Mr A. Lewsey prepared the illustrations and J. Compton examined the finds. Mr M. Atkinson managed the project and the fieldwork was carried out by Mr Atkinson and the author.

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| Robertson, A. | In press | <i>Redbond Lodge, Chequers Lane, Great Dunmow, Essex. Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation</i> Essex Archaeol. Hist. In press |
| Wickenden, N.P. | 1988 | <i>Excavations at Great Dunmow, Essex: a Romano-British Small Town in the Trinovantian Civitas</i> EAA 41 |

APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME: Dunmow St Mary's Primary School (GD18)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Research Archive

- 1.1 Archaeological Brief of works
- 1.2 WSI
- 1.3 Client Report

2. Site Archive

- 2.1 1x Trench Sheet
- 2.2 1 x Misc Plan (A4)
- 2.3 2 x Photo Registers
- 2.4 1 x Colour slide
- 2.5 1 x B + W print
- 2.6 7 x Digital prints

No Finds were retained

APPENDIX 2: HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Dunmow St Mary's Primary School, Great Dunmow	
Parish: Great Dunmow	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6241 2189	Site Code: GD 18
Type of Work: Watching Brief	Site Director/Group: Andrew Robertson ECC FAU
Date of Work: 4th and 28th February 2005	Size of Area Investigated: Approximately 300m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding Source: Dunmow St Mary's Primary School.
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related EHCR Nos:
Final Report: EAH Summary?	
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: <p>An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the groundworks associated with the construction of a swimming pool at Dunmow St Mary's Primary School, Great Dunmow. A service trench and 14 foundation trenches were observed. No undisturbed natural geology was encountered and the bases of all the groundworks remained within modern topsoil. It is evident that this area of the school grounds has been built up with a layer of redeposited topsoil, crushed concrete and brick rubble; probably during the construction of the school.</p> <p>No archaeological features or deposits were identified but four pieces of residual Roman pottery and a single medieval sherd, as well as several post-medieval clay pipe stems, were collected. This suggests that archaeological remains may survive below the excavated depth.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:	
Author of Summary: Andrew Robertson	Date of Summary: March 2005