

Swavesey Primary School, Swavesey, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



Elizabeth Middleton

Swavesey Primary School,
Swavesey
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University of Cambridge
Department of Archaeology

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Summary

An Archaeological Evaluation was carried out at Swavesey Primary School, Swavesey on 14th April 2014 by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU). The work was commissioned by Martindales on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Two trial trenches were cut to evaluate the land to the east and west of the main block of school buildings in zones currently laid to grass. The work was undertaken ahead of the proposed construction of new classrooms and associated facilities.

The trial trenching revealed no archaeological features or deposits.

Introduction

Location and Topography

An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken on land to the east and west of the current Primary School at Swavesey, located under areas currently laid to grass. The work was carried out in response to a brief produced by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (Thomas 2014). The work was a pre-determination evaluation in relation to the proposed construction of new classrooms and associated facilities. The site is located in the historic village of Swavesey, 14km northwest of Cambridge, grid reference TL 7634 6857, (Fig.1).

The underlying geology is West Walton Formation and Amphill Clay Formation (mudstone) with a general elevation of 5.50m AOD.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies in an area rich in history, most of which dates from the 11th- 13th centuries. Most of the excavations over the last 30 years in Swavesey have focussed on the northern half of the village around the Priory (HER ref: 03488), Castle (HER ref: 01772), and market centre, within the ditched Medieval settlement. Major features from the 11th to 13th centuries have been investigated around the castle mound area (ECB1540) with Late Saxon occupation at Blackhorse Lane (ECB943, ECB944, ECB248). This is also where the earliest known settlement at Swavesey was identified, dating to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period, and included a (Belgic) kiln, which is uncommon for this area, (Evans, 1990). No evidence for later Roman occupation has been identified to date within the village itself however approximately 400m to the northwest fairly dense Romano-British activity in the form of a drove-way and accompanying enclosure ditches was excavated. This indicated the presence of an extensive area of agriculture attached to a significant rural dwelling/settlement dated to the later Roman period (Murrell, 2007). Along the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway significant archaeology was uncovered including Late Iron Age/ Early Roman activity consisting of a field system and evidence of settlement. The Swavesey Kiss and Ride site also produced evidence of Early Roman activity despite the area being dominated by post-medieval quarrying (Collins & Dickens, 2009).

Swavesey village has been continuously occupied since Saxo-Norman times, and St. Andrew's, the parish church, is known to have its origins in the Late Saxon period. A Benedictine priory was built around the church grounds by 1086, of which the surviving earthworks can be seen.

Investigations of the medieval village ditch in the 1980s confirmed the line of the ditch and bank and indicated a 13th century date for its construction (ECB466).

The construction of the canal from the River Ouse to the market place and establishment of a quayside in 1244 by Henry III led to Swavesey becoming a locally important economic centre. The construction of a castle by 1476 shows that the village of Swavesey had become important enough strategically and economically to warrant it (Collins & Dickens, 2009).

The archaeological and historical evidence to date shows the rich history of Swavesey and the surrounding area and therefore the site had the potential for archaeological remains of all periods, with its location just outside the boundary of the medieval village.

Methodology

The trial trenching comprised of one 5.0m x 1.80m trench, and one 6.0m x 1.80m trench, with a total area of 19.80 sq. metres. **Trench 1** was aligned northeast/southwest, **Trench 2** was northwest/southeast (Fig.1).

The area was CAT scanned to identify the presence of any active services.

Under supervision a 360° tracked machine with a toothless ditching-bucket was used to remove the topsoil and subsoil deposits (a depth of 0.80m - 1.10m) down to the level of natural geology. The area was then surveyed into the OS grid. All work was carried out in strict accordance with the Health and Safety legislation in line with the FAME Manual of Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 2010.

Recording followed the standard CAU context sheet and trench sheets using the CAU modified Museum of London system (Spence 1994). A digital photographic record was made.

Results

A metal detecting and bucket sampling of top and subsoil revealed no artefacts.

Trench 1		
General Description	Orientation	SW - NE
No archaeological features or deposits were present. One post-medieval field drain crossed the trench at 2.25m from the southwest end aligned diagonally across the trench.	Modern Ground Level AOD (m)	5.75
	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.36-0.45
	Subsoil Depth (m)	0.25-0.45
	Width (m)	1.80
	Length (m)	5.10

Trench 2		
General Description	Orientation	NW - SE
No archaeological features or deposits were present. Four modern services crossed the trench.	Modern Ground Level AOD (m)	5.50
	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.25-0.40
	Subsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Width (m)	1.80
	Length (m)	6.00

Discussion

The evaluation produced no evidence of archaeological activity. The location of the trenches near school buildings had led to some disturbance of the deposits with evidence of levelling, made-up ground and services, particularly in Trench 2. The site itself is located outside of the known medieval settlement and it seems likely with the lack of archaeological features that the site was arable farmland. Although the limited size of the trenches has to be taken into account the potential for archaeology in the immediate vicinity seems low.

Acknowledgements

The excavation was commissioned by Martindales on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. Andy Thomas monitored the site on behalf of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team. The Project Manager was Alison Dickens, and Dan Lovelace contributed to the monitoring and recording of site. The site was surveyed by Jonathon Moller and the graphics were produced by Bryan Crossan.

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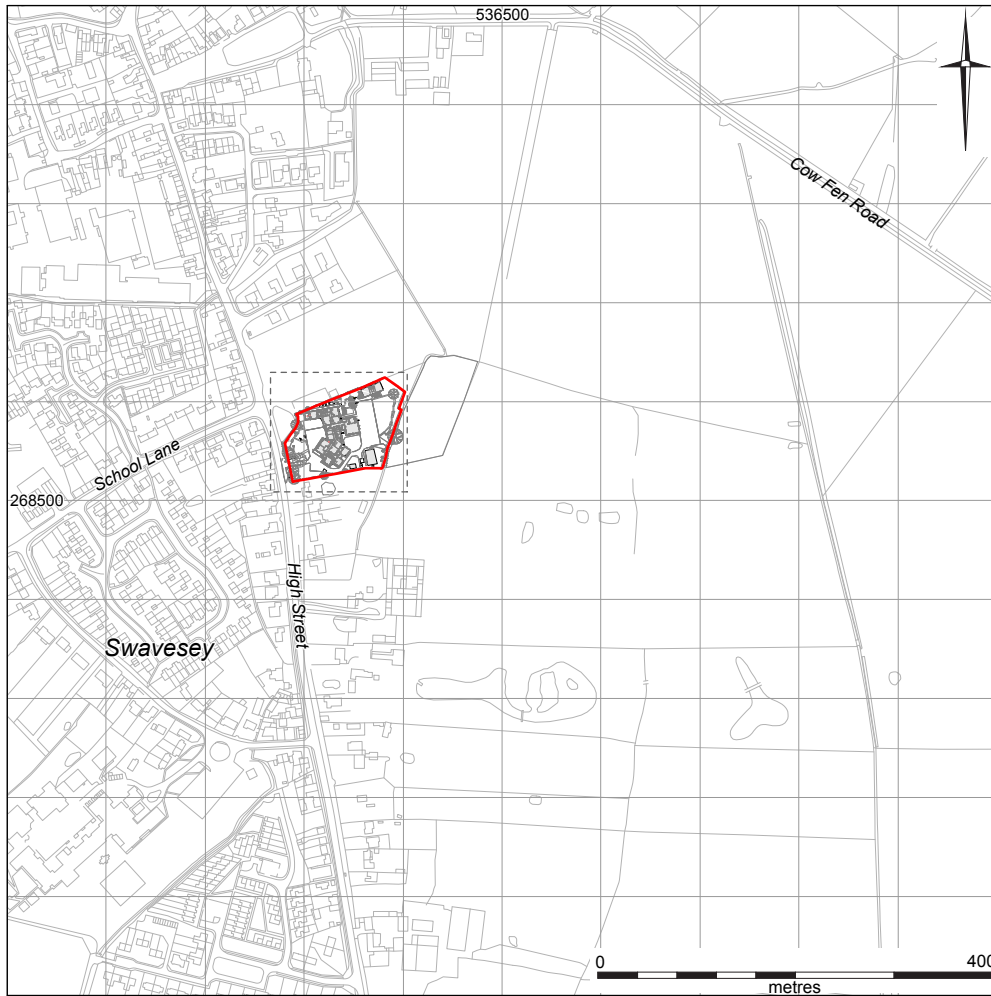


Figure 1. Location Plan

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Project details

Project name	Swavesey Primary School, An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	An Archaeological Evaluation was carried out at Swavesey Primary School, Swavesey on 14th April 2014 by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU). The work was commissioned by Martindales on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. Two trial trenches were cut to evaluate the land to the east and west of the main block of school buildings in zones currently laid to grass. The work was undertaken ahead of the construction of new classrooms and associated facilities. The trial trenching revealed no archaeological features or deposits.
Project dates	Start: 14-04-2014 End: 14-04-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB 4172 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	SPY14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE SWAVESEY Swavesey Primary School, Swavesey
Postcode	CB24 4RN
Study area	8500.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 7634 6857 52.286484461 0.585669976113 52 17 11 N 000 35 08 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 4.51m Max: 4.97m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Lizzy Middleton
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Martindales

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	SPY14
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	SPY14
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Plan","Report","Section","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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