Archaeological Monitoring at 82 Mill Lane, Sawston

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

December 2013

Client: Mr. A. Mohammed

OA East Report No: 1481
OASIS No: oxfordar3-167137
NGR: TL 4802 4948
Archaeological Monitoring at 82 Mill Lane, Sawston

Watching Brief

Site Code: SAWMLL13

CHER No. ECB3987

Date of Works: June & October 2013

Report No: 1481

Excavator: S Graham

Client: Mr. A. Mohammed

Report Date: December 2013
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Summary

On the 11th June 2013, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at 82 Mill Lane, Sawston (TL 4802 4948). The monitoring was carried out after the excavation of foundation trenches for the development of the existing shop/dwelling, in preparation for the Erection of a Bungalow and Garage, the formation of a Driveway and realignment of a Public Right of Way. A further visit was carried out on the 1st of October 2013 to inspect the trenches for the services.

Inspection of the foundation trenches for the bungalow and garage revealed a number of pits. The earliest datable feature was a well in Trench Two the construction of which contained brick rubble and post medieval ceramics. Several pits were identified in both trenches of varying depths, the pits in Trench Two containing Post Medieval glass and ceramics. Also evident was an extensive soil deposit, probably plough soil, in the western side of Trench Two. Although possibly earlier then the well or the pits, no datable archaeology was recovered from this layer. There was no evidence of pre medieval archaeology in either trench.
1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

1.1.1 Sawston parish is bordered by the Rivers Cam (to the West) and Granta (to the North) with the village in the south west of the parish on the east bank of the Cam. The parish occupies a central position on the strip of chalk between the fens and the highlands of Essex.

1.1.2 The development area lies on the west side of Sawston on a prominent contour of the first river terrace of the River Cam, which defines as a spine of land above the flood plain at an approximate elevation of 20m AOD. The soils within the parish are generally light and chalky.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Prehistoric finds have been made within the Parish. Knapping debris from Mesolithic stone tool working has been found in gardens approximately 300m to the east of the development area. A Bronze Age field system has been excavated north of the village. The Iron Age contour fort of Borough Hill is located immediately west of the A1301 and the railway line, 500m to the west of the development area. Within the fort Bronze Age field systems and Anglo Saxon remains have been identified.

2.1.2 Two possible Roman roads have been recorded in Sawston (ECB1464) and a scatter of Roman pottery was found to the south east (HER 04115).

2.1.3 Early, Middle and Late Saxon remains have recently been recorded within the grounds of Sawston Hall (Mortimer 2006b).

2.1.4 Evidence of Medieval activity includes St Marys Church (HER 04123) dating from the 11th or 12th century, a 15th century timber framed building formerly the Queens Head public house (HER 04140) and a possible medieval cross at the junction of High Street and Church Lane.

2.1.5 Little evidence is known from the area south of New Road, north of Mill Lane as this area was developed in the 1950s and 1960s without any archaeological observation.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

3.1.2 The Brief required that the monitoring and recording scheme must be undertaken by a competent archaeologist, fully experienced in work of this character. That any archaeological remains exposed during ground works were recorded, recovered and interpreted to an acceptable standard and any significant artefact evidence was recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard.

3.1.3 The area of investigation was located at the rear of the existing cottage in the area of the proposed new residence and separate garages adjacent to the public footpath. The foundation trenches for both the Garages (Trench One) and the proposed new Bungalow (Trench Two) had already been excavated by machine.
A further trench (Trench Three) was excavated around the completed garage and bungalow foundations after the first two trenches been backfilled to provide services to the new buildings.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

The depth of the first two machined trenches varied from 1.50m to 2.00m in depth. The width was uniformly 0.60m, which although narrow was just workable where safe to do so. There were two distinct trenches which followed the outlines of the foundations for the garage (Trench One) and the bungalow (Trench Two). The third trench, for the foundations, was uniformly 0.60m wide and on average 0.90m deep.

An inspection was carried out of the spoil from the machined trenches for datable archaeological finds.

### Results

The topsoil was a fairly loose, dark grey brown sandy silt with moderate small to medium stones and pea grit. This was most likely modern plough soil/allotment soil. The subsoil was a mid reddish brown, compact sandy clay silt with moderate small flint stones and chalk fragments.

#### Trench One

In addition to the top and subsoils, three features were identified. The most prominent feature was a pit **008** running from the south east corner of the trench to the central foundation ditch. Its full width was 2.96m and its depth was 1.32m and it contained four silty sand fills, no datable artefacts were present in the exposed fills. A second pit **010** was located in the middle of the eastern side of the trench, containing one clay sand fill and no datable archaeology. Only a third of the feature was visible in the foundation trenches, with a depth of 0.90m. A third pit was located in the north eastern corner of Trench One (**013**). It contained a lower clay silt fill and upper sand silt fill with no datable material in either. All three pits cut through the sub soil and were sealed by the Top soil. Despite the lack of dating evidence the most probable interpretation of the pits is that they are post-medieval chalk extraction features.

#### Trench Two

The earliest identified deposit was a layer of light reddish brown clay sand with occasional chalk fragments and flint nodules (**017**) on the western side of the trench running approximately 12m north to south and 3m east to west. This layer was sealed by both the top and subsoils and cut into by later pits. Although no datable finds were evident in the exposed sections, similar layers have been identified around the village (e.g. at the Bellbird Primary School) and have been interpreted as probable Medieval plough soil (Mortimer 2007).

The north east corner of the trench contained a well cut (**016**). Only part of the cut, and the packing fill, were visible in section, to a depth of 1.50m and a width of 1.00m. There were two packing fills, one a clayey silt and brick rubble. Glass and brown glazed post-
medieval ceramics were retrieved from the fill and have been dated to the 19th century. The second fill was of loose chalk nodules and contained no datable material.

4.2.3 Four further pits were identified in Trench Two. All cut into the subsoil and were sealed by the topsoil. The most notable pit (020) was located in the southeast quadrant of the trench facing westwards. This pit was 1.88mm wide and 1.14m deep with a single fill of clay silt containing post medieval to modern blue and white glazed ceramic and glass.

Pit 022 was located in the northwest corner of the trench in both sides of the foundation cut, containing a single fill of sandy silt with yellow glazed post-medieval pottery. Its depth was 1.40m and its width was 0.80m.

The other two pits in trench two were noticeably more shallow and smaller, however both were located on the corners of the foundation trenches and their full depths and sizes were clearly not seen.

Pit 024 was located in the northwest corner of the trench being visible both sides of the foundation trench, its depth was 0.50m deep with a width of 0.75m, containing post medieval rubble, roof tiles and 19th C blue and white patterned ceramic.

Pit 026 was located in the southwest corner of the trench with a depth of 0.50m and a width of 0.55m although only two thirds of the pit were visible within the section. Again the fill was a mixture of backfill rubble and late post-medieval ceramic with patterned glaze.

4.3 Trench Three

A single pit was identified in the third trench, this again was cut into the subsoil and sealed by the topsoil. The fill of the pit was a mix of chalk rubble and redeposited clays and contained no datable finds. Again this is most likely to be post medieval for chalk extraction.

4.3.1 An investigation of the machined spoil from the trench produced some ceramic material all of which was post-medieval in date.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 All the dated features contained Post-medieval ceramics and glass. The only possible earlier deposit present was a remnant Medieval plough soil, similar to the subsoil across the remainder of the site but better preserved. There was no evidence of earlier archaeological activity at this site and no struck flints were recovered.

5.1.2 The pits recorded are interpreted as small post-medieval chalk quarries. The only obvious exception to this is the 19th century well cut within its rubble backfill.

5.1.3 The majority of these features were difficult to record and impossible to excavate within deep narrow trenches, and some, such as the back of the well cut, could only briefly be accessed due to health and safety concerns.
6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1.1 The author would like to thank Armogham Mohammed who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer. Graphics are by David Brown.

6.1.2 The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec.
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Oxford Archaeology East Report 1476
Gdaniec, K. 2013 Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and recording. Cambridge
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Mortimer, R. 2006a Bronze Age Enclosures on land at rear of 16-20 Cambridge Road,
Sawston, Cambs. CCC AFU Report No.831
Mortimer, R. 2006b Multi-period remains at Sawston Hall, Sawston, Cambridgeshire.
Mortimer, R. 2007 Bellbird Primary School, Sawston, Cambridgeshire.
CCC AFU Report No. 981
APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM
All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

**Project Details**

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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

Prompt: Planning condition

- [x] Field Observation (periodic visits)
- [ ] Part Excavation
- [ ] Salvage Record
- [ ] Full Excavation (100%)
- [ ] Part Survey
- [ ] Systematic Field Walking
- [ ] Full Survey
- [ ] Recorded Observation
- [ ] Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- [ ] Geophysical Survey
- [ ] Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- [ ] Test Pit Survey
- [ ] Open-Area Excavation
- [ ] Salvage Excavation
- [x] Watching Brief

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus and significant finds using the MDA Object type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

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### Digital Media

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

### Paper Media

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey

**Notes:**
Figure 1: Site location showing development area
Figure 2: Trench plan

Key
- Development Area
- Monitored Trench
- Archaeological Feature
- Drawn Section
- Context Number

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Report Number 1481
Figure 3: Trench Two drawn sections 2 and 3
Figure 4: Trench Two drawn sections 4, 5 and 6
Plate 1: View of Trench One from west

Plate 2: Trench Two south-east corner, viewed from west