



Archaeological Field Unit

**Sawston Hall, Sawston, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

Alexandra Howe & Richard Mortimer

July 2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 743

Commissioned by *Adrian Critchlow*

SUMMARY

An archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council to determine the archaeological potential on an area of land at Sawston Hall, Sawston, Cambridgeshire (TL 4884/4912). The work was commissioned by Adrian Critchlow as part of a planning application to refurbish the Hall as a Hotel, an alteration also requiring a certain amount of development within the grounds. This assessment applies solely to the potential for archaeological remains within the grounds of the Hall, a Grade 1 listed building. The Sites and Monuments Record and documentary evidence have been consulted to inform upon the location of possible archaeological remains and to identify the impact of the proposed development on any such remains.

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Sawston Hall, Sawston, Cambridgeshire
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
(TL 4884/4912)

1 INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned on behalf of Adrian Critchlow as part of a pre-planning enquiry and aims to define the archaeological potential of the land likely to be affected by any future development to refurbish the Hall as a Hotel, an alteration also requiring a certain amount of development within the grounds. This assessment applies solely to the potential for archaeological remains within the grounds of the Hall and not to any refurbishment of the hall building itself.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Sawston village lies seven miles south of Cambridge on the eastern side of the valley of the River Cam. The Hall lies at approximately 25m OD, on a narrow spur of land projecting westwards into the Cam valley. The underlying geology of the hall and its grounds is Middle Chalk with 1st/2nd Terrace Gravels and possibly alluvium along the western fringes, marking the edge of the river valley (British Geological Survey 1985). The grounds cover *c.* 22 hectares and are bounded by Church Lane and St Mary's Churchyard to the north, housing development to the west, housing and open fields to the east and by West Green Plantation and the Pampisford Parish boundary to the south. Immediately to the south of the Hall, taking up nearly two thirds of the grounds, are extensive low-lying damp woodlands and a SSSI fen/meadow.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the desk-based assessment is to provide information concerning the location, extent and survival of the known archaeological remains on the site, and in the immediate vicinity as well as assessing the potential for disturbance of archaeological remains if any development went ahead.

During the course of the assessment visits were made to the Cambridge Records Office and the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record.

Rog Palmer was also consulted on the use of aerial photographs of the study area.

A site visit was also conducted.



Figure 1 Location of Sawston Hall

4. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

4.1 Archaeological and historical background

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 land between the Fens and the high claylands of Essex traversed by Southern England's principal west-east routeways from prehistoric times – the Icknield Way and Ashwell Street. There would also have been a north-south prehistoric and Romano-British route, passing through Sawston from London to Cambridge along the eastern side of the Cam valley.

Prehistoric

Several prehistoric finds have been made within the parish, few however, within the vicinity of the Hall itself. A collection of Neolithic flint tools were found near the vicarage (SMR 04113) with further finds to the south at The Spike. A Late Bronze Age hoard (SMR 04110) consisting of a winged axe, two socketed spearheads, two socketed axes and other pieces were found 'within the parish'.

Borough Hill, an Iron Age Hillfort (or more appropriately a promontory fort) is one of the largest in Cambridgeshire and occupies a spur of land overlooking the Cam 1500m to the west of the village at the site of Spicer's paper factory. Although little is now evident above ground, the sub-surface remains are extensive and in a good state of preservation (Mortimer 2001).

Romano-British

There is evidence for Roman occupation to the north of the village in the form of a group of rectangular or D shaped enclosures which can be seen as a series of crop marks (SMR 04118). These may be associated with a scatter of Roman pottery found to their immediate south-east (SMR 04115). Two Roman roads have recently been recorded in Sawston (SMR ECB1464), on excavations prior to the construction of the new Police Station at the north end of the village (Cessford and Mortimer 2004).

Medieval & post-medieval

The village of Sawston is Anglo-Saxon in origin and is first mentioned in the 10th century as *Salsingetune*, either 'farm of *Salse*' or 'of *Salses* people', and later in Domesday (1086) as *Salsiton(e)* (Reaney 1943). An early Anglo-Saxon burial was found on Huckeridge Hill, on the Cambridge road to the north of the village (SMR 04537). The richly furnished burial was uncovered during road widening early in the 19th century and it is likely that others are, or were present. It is unclear whether it relates to settlement at Sawston itself, to an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Dernford Farm to the north-west, where there are a series of earthworks and cropmarks (SMR 10958) or to early Saxon occupation of the Iron Age Hillfort. An Anglo Saxon brooch (SMR 04112)

and Saxon/Viking key (SMR 04111) were found in the parish although their locations are not certain.

The main estate in Sawston at Domesday was known as Pyratts or Sawston Manor. It was held by the Pirot family until the late 14th century. According to Teversham (1942 – 1947) in *'A History of the Village of Sawston'* the manor, built by 1279, stood near the church on a moated site close to the present hall. Sutherland (1995) interpreted a flooded earthwork to the south of the site as representing part of the earlier moat (SMR 01267). However a survey commissioned by the hall in the 15th century makes no mention of a moat associated with the building, suggesting that Pirot's Manor, the precursor to Sawston Hall, was unmoated (Gdaniec 1991).

In the mid 15th century the manor consisted of a hall, two cross chambers, 30 other chambers, numerous outhouses, a gatehouse, two barns, two stables and a dovecote. The 'moat' may have been constructed during this period, however the date is unclear (Gdaniec 1991). The Huddleston family were lords of the manor during this period and occupied the hall until 1982. Sawston Hall is the only Elizabethan mansion in the country to be built of clunch rather than brick. Throughout the history of the hall there have been a number of different building phases. The first phase of building was of a traditional plan for the mid 16th century. It was a U shape with the hall set centrally and to the north, with the parlours and kitchen to the east and west respectively. The hall chamber and further chambers were situated on the first floor. By c.1600 the wings had been extended southwards to create two more chambers. Beyond these a long gallery range extended along the front of the first floor. By c. 1890 a little gallery had been built across the back of the hall range to improve circulation and remove the need for room to room access. It's restoration in 1850 consolidated much of the earlier work (VCH 1978). It is currently a Grade 1 listed building.

The Hall is located with c. 22 hectares of formal and informal gardens. Evidence from the OS map 1885 suggests that the gardens were mainly laid out during the 19th century but have been simplified in the 20th century. The pleasure grounds consist of ornamental and functional watercourses that feed the 'moat' ditch. There are plantations, fishponds (SMR 01267) and woodlands with interlinking pathways. The extent to which these areas are historic walks is unclear as they are not shown on any of the OS maps. There are remnants of a kitchen garden on the north end of the western boundary in the woodland (English Heritage 2001).

The park at Sawston is composed of woodland blocks and open meadows, one of which, lying c. 200m south-east of the Hall, is a SSSI. It was referred to as Hill Moor or the Lord's Close in the Sawston Court Rolls of 1398. By the early 19th century the area was being treated as parkland. The 1811 Enclosure map shows linear and curvilinear plantations, it also shows that the land to the north of the hall was still divided in 1811. Some of these boundaries were removed by 1885 when the park was extended (English Heritage 2001).

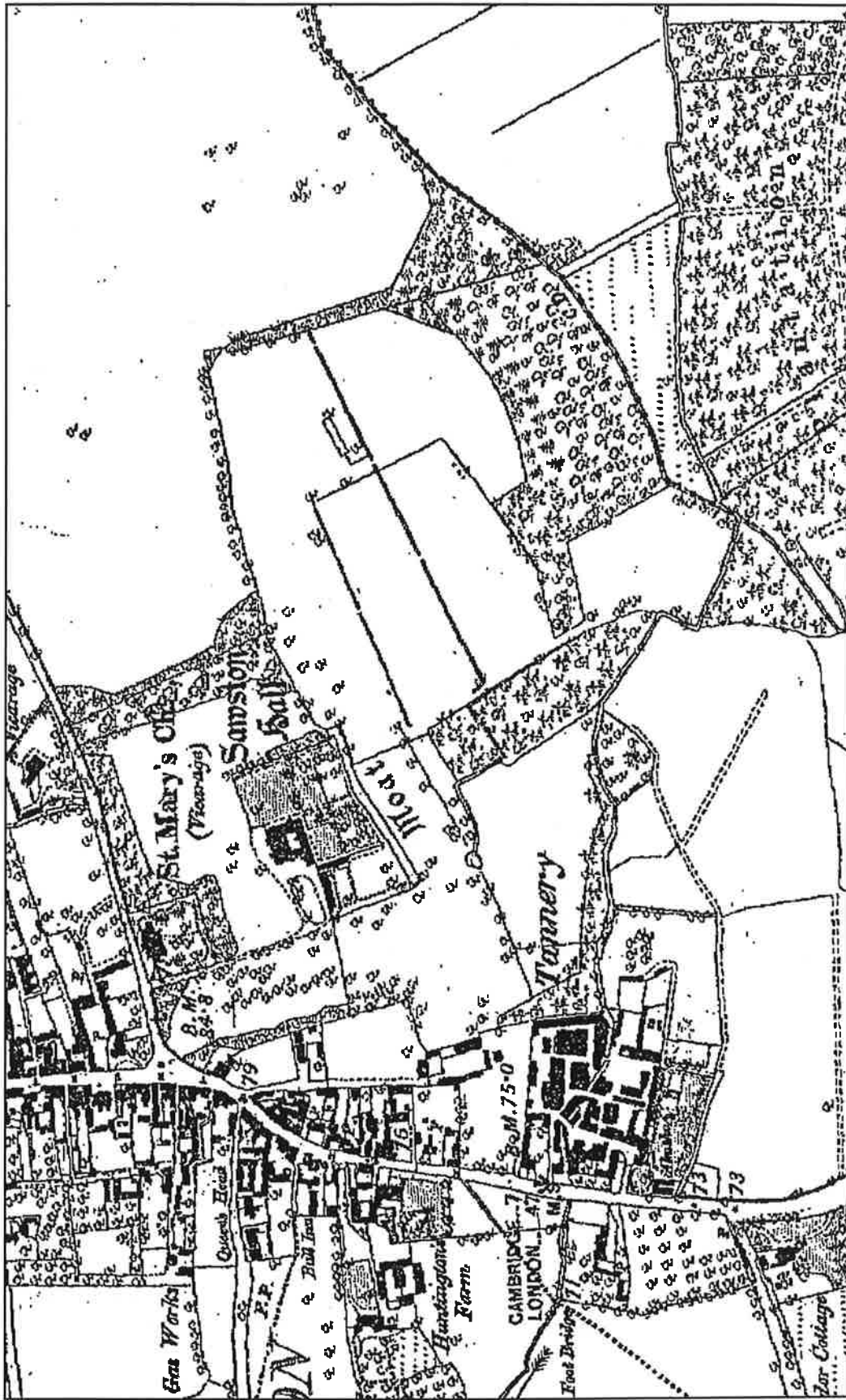


Figure 2 1st Edition OS showing Sawston Hall Estate

Another important manor known as Huntingdons or Somerys Manor recorded in 1279 was located to the west of the village (SMR 01268) and stood on a moated site just west of the present farmhouse, Huntingdon's farm. The moat is rectangular and surrounds the garden of Huntingdon's Farm with the west side of the moat fairly complete.

There is further evidence of medieval activity in the immediate vicinity with St Mary's church, dated from the 11th or 12th century (SMR 04123); the Queen's Head Inn, a 15th century timber framed building (SMR 04140) and the medieval or post medieval cross that stands at the junction of High Street and Church Lane.

Sawston was enclosed by an act of parliament in 1802, its general extent indicated later on the Inclosure map of 1811.

Sawston experienced considerable industrial growth in the 19th century with the presence of the leather and parchment works and also the paper-mill. This led to a great expansion of the working population which in turn led to the building of considerable numbers of workmen's cottages, some on land bought by the leather works owner in South Terrace and along the main road to the west of the Hall (VCH 1978).

The Hall was requisitioned by the military during the Second World War and used as headquarters of the 66th Fighter Wing of the 3rd Air Division of the American Eighth Airforce. There is clear evidence for this occupation in the grounds with paths and platforms of wartime concrete, there are also relics of the period – graffiti drawings - in the Hall itself.

4.2 Sites and Monuments Record Survey

For the purposes of this survey an area of 500m radius from the centre of the site was studied, providing an overview of the known archaeology in the vicinity. A full summary of the SMR data is presented in Table 1 (see Figure 3 for a location map of SMR entries).

There are currently only two prehistoric find spots within the study area; Neolithic worked flint tools (SMR 04113) found near the Spike and a Late Bronze Age hoard, recovered within the parish (SMR 04110) although the exact location is unclear. There is a single Roman or Romano-British entry within the area – two rectangular enclosures (SMR 04118) that, in shape and alignment, suggest small fortifications. Two entries refer to finds of Saxon and/or Viking period domestic objects (SMR 04111 an iron key; SMR 04112 an S-shaped brooch).

The remainder of the SMR entries, by far the majority, relate to medieval and post-medieval buildings and earthworks, principally the Hall itself (SMR 01267), with its grounds, and the Church of St Mary's (SMR 04123). Other entries include the Queen's Head Inn (SMR 04140), Huntingdon's Farm moat

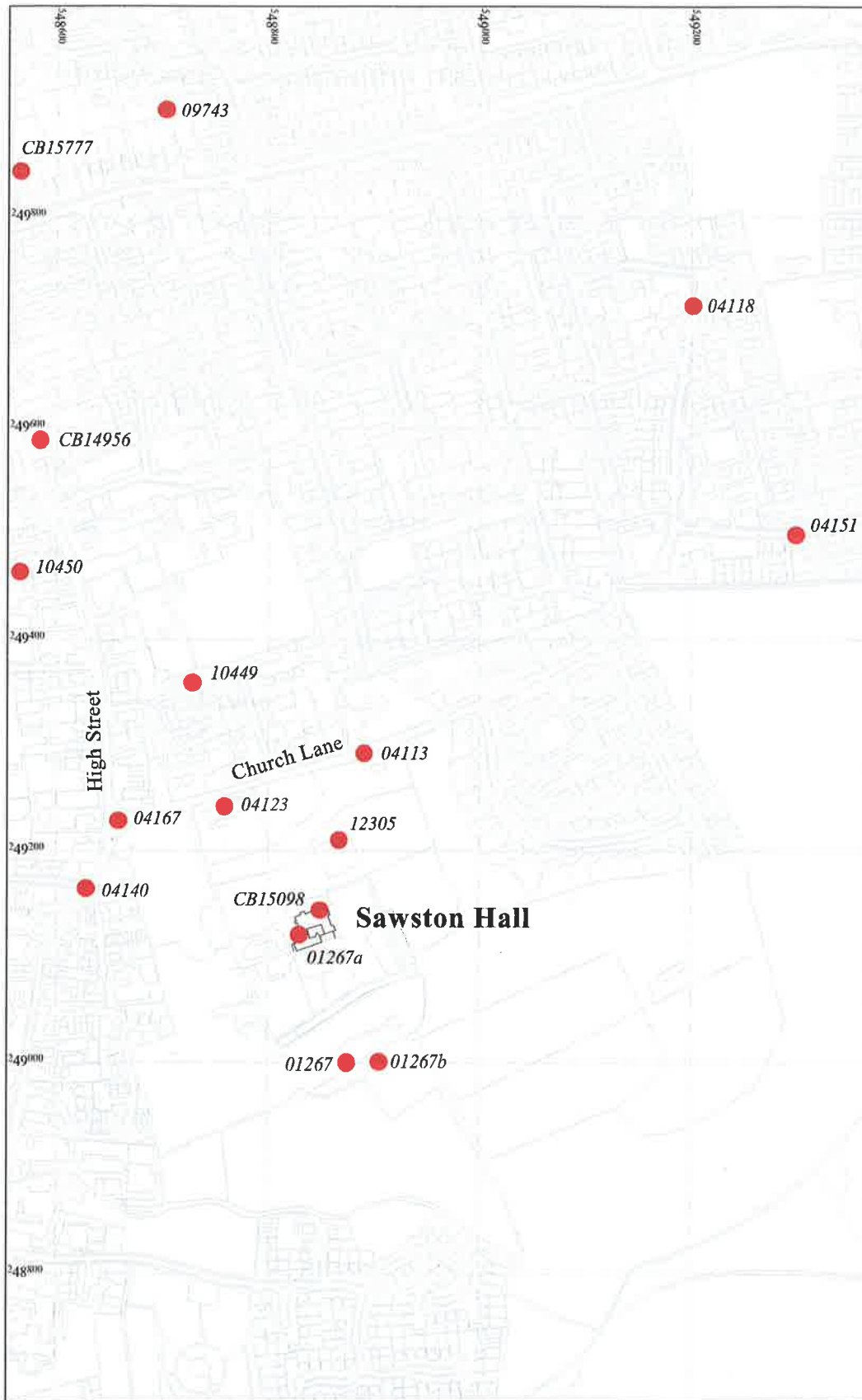


Figure 3 Location of Sawston Hall with SMR data

(SMR 01268), two dovecotes (SMR 10450 & SMR 10449) and the remains of ridge and furrow and possible medieval house platforms (SMR 10005).

4.3 Cartography

The 1st edition OS map 1885 was consulted. The moat is marked as such, rather than as a 'pond' on more recent editions. The area surrounding the Hall has essentially changed very little apart from the obvious housing development within the village.

4.4 Previous Archaeological work

Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) carried out an evaluation at Sawston Hall in 1991 prior to the development of a tennis court in the orchard to the north-east of the Hall. Two trenches were excavated. Trench I measured 36m and its southern end was 8m from the existing yew hedge that separated the 'sunken garden' from the orchard. Trench II measured 16.4m and was located 12.5m from Trench I.

It had been thought that the area may have contained the putative northern side of the moat, however, no archaeological remains were found. The trenches would have located the moat ditch had it been in the vicinity. The evaluation concluded that there is unlikely to have been a moat ditch to the north of the Hall rather than the northern and eastern banks are probably garden features providing landscaping for the sunken garden. This has been the only archaeological intervention within 500m of the study area.

Within the parish of Sawston further work has been carried out at Borough Hill Iron Age hillfort in 1993 and 2001 by the Archaeological Field Unit (Bray 1994) and the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (Mortimer 2001) (respectively SMR ECB1086 and ECB1378). Further large-scale trenching was carried out in 2001 by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC), this work however remains unreported. An evaluation and watching brief was conducted by the CAU at Sawston Police station (SMR ECB1464). This revealed the remains of two ditched enclosures that may be Roman Military camps and a subsequent road junction, both probably dating to the 1st century AD (Cessford and Mortimer 2004). The location of suggested Roman road routes can be seen in Figure 4. An evaluation at The Spike (SMR 11720) revealed a series of undated ditches (Sutherland 1995).

4.5 Aerial Photographic Assessment

Rog Palmer was consulted on the potential usefulness of an aerial photographic assessment of Sawston Hall and its grounds. It is believed, however, that no further information would be gained from carrying out an assessment as most of the visible earthworks are already recorded adequately

on the SMR and the surrounding land has, since the earliest aerial photography, been under woodland, parkland or built-up areas.

4.6 Site Visit

A site visit was undertaken on the 16th July 2004. The hall and grounds were observed and a photographic record was taken. Particular attention was paid to potential areas of development.

5 POTENTIAL FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVIVAL

From the research undertaken it is clear that the development site has the potential for the survival of archaeological features and deposits. The manor and its surrounding park and gardens have been located on the site from at least the 16th century, implying that the land has been untouched by intrusive modern farming techniques such as deep ploughing. If the area proves also to have been the site of the previous manor buildings, it would suggest that it has been untouched even by Medieval ploughing. There is therefore the possibility that if sub-surface remains are present, they could be associated with stratified archaeological deposits such as buried soils, make-up and demolition layers. This increases the potential for archaeological preservation within the immediate area.

There is relatively little visible landscaping within the grounds. To the east of the hall there is the sunken garden with banks to the north and east, and a broad, deep ditch that may once have been linked to the 'moat' to the south. The sunken garden will have truncated any archaeological remains to some degree, however this area is at present outside the proposed development area. The planting of trees throughout the history of the park and gardens may also have disturbed archaeological features and deposits.

The level of water in the 'moat' ditch, or pond, is fairly high, even in summer. This can be seen in Plate 2. This implies a relatively high water table and the possibility of waterlogging and the subsequent preservation of organic remains within any deep sub-surface archaeological features.

The presence of WWII activity on the site may have affected, by truncation, any earlier remains, particularly the partially sunken air raid shelter to the north of the Hall.

The absence of recorded remains in some parts of the study area should not be interpreted as an indication of the absence of archaeology.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

The sources consulted can only be used as a guide to what archaeology may or may not be present in the proposed area and each has a varying degree of usefulness. The old maps are useful in that they show the boundaries and grounds of the Hall as well as the earthworks. However most of these features are still visible and can be seen on the current ordnance survey maps. The SMR data hints at the variety of archaeology with 500m of the study area but does not reveal it's density. Most periods are covered from the Neolithic find spots to the modern US military headquarters. All of these could provide strong evidence for the presence of archaeological remains on the site. The limited evaluation (not listed on the SMR) carried out in 1991 by the CAU however uncovered no archaeological remains.

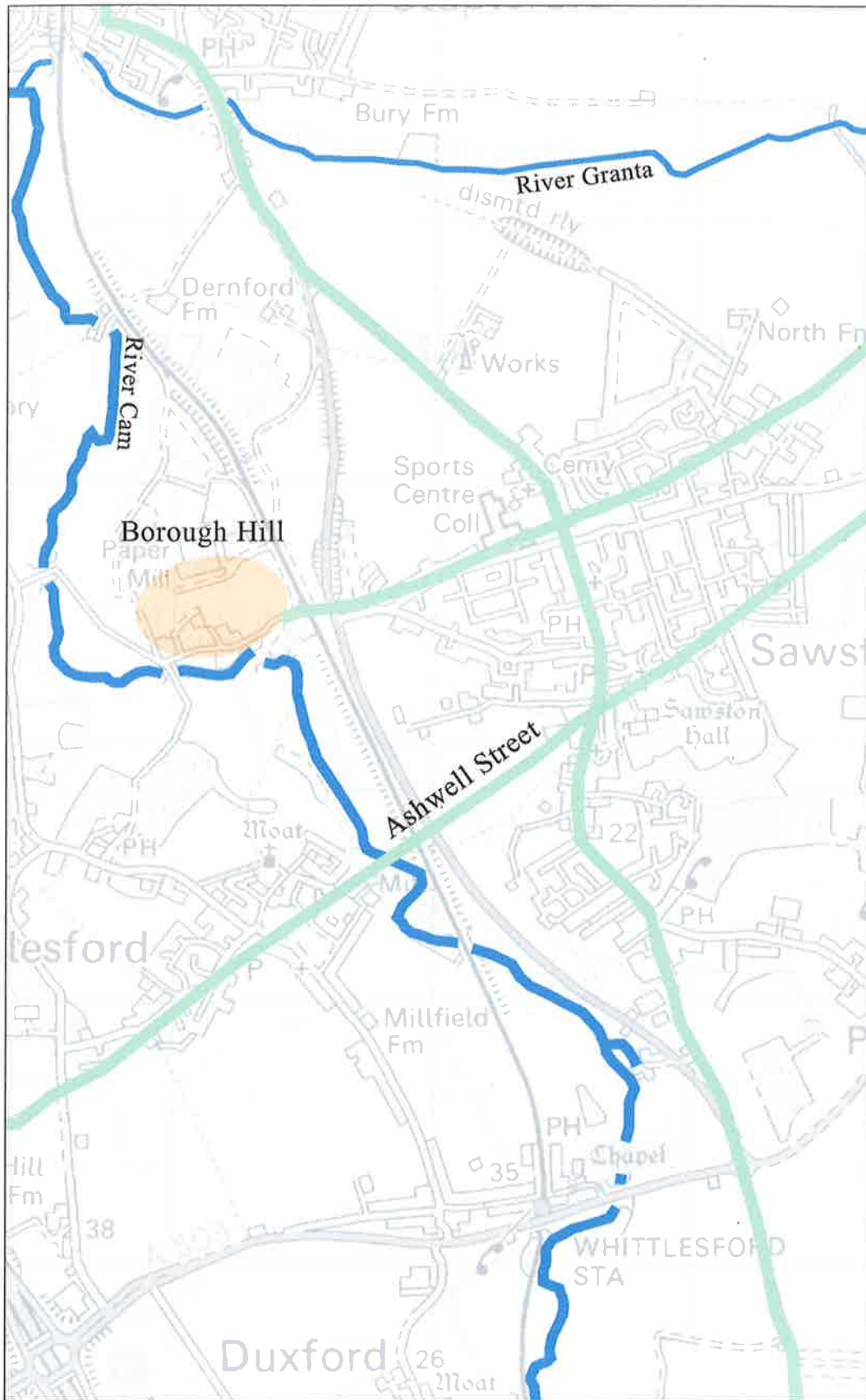
Geophysical survey would be a cost effective method of further investigating the presence/absence and potential extent of any archaeological remains. This would be particularly effective on the lawns to the north and west of the Hall.

7 DISCUSSION

The study has demonstrated that the area within the grounds of Sawston Hall contains little known archaeology prior to the later medieval period. However, there have been very few archaeological interventions within the area and much of the land has either been developed since the medieval period or has remained unploughed, severely limiting the possibility of the discovery of chance finds. Conversely, the later medieval/post-medieval period is very well represented within the study area, with the likelihood of the known remains, specifically the Hall and Church, being sited on or near earlier versions of themselves.

There is as yet no known Romano-British settlement in the vicinity of the modern village and there is a suggestion that, at a junction of two major routeways and possibly lying within a military zone, the area may not have been greatly settled. Cropmarks from aerial photography show a very high density of Romano-British settlement features to the west and north-west, further down the Cam valley, and another scattering to the south-east on the claylands bordering Essex. Cropmarks within Sawston Parish itself show only the Romano-British occupation within Borough Hill Iron Age fort and the scattering of possible forts along the routeways of Ashwell St. and the Icknield Way.

Recent archaeological evaluation in the north of the village, at the Police Station, revealed the locations of two Roman roads. One aligned broadly north-south, the other east-west (perhaps leading to Borough Hill) (Fig 4). The north-south road would occupy the route of the modern High St/London



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Figure 4 Map showing Sawston in proximity to Borough Hill Iron Age hill fort (orange) and suggested Roman road routes (green)

Rd and would form a direct link between the area's two principal Roman towns, Cambridge and Great Chesterford. Possible traces of this road have been observed at recent excavations at Hinxton Hall to the south (Kenney pers. comm.). A further east-west road runs parallel to that found at the police station, through the south of the village, perhaps along the line of Church Lane which bounds the Hall to the north. This road, Ashwell St, is seen further to the west in Whittlesford parish where it runs through the Whittlesford Villa complex. While the exact course of these roads is unknown it is possible that they run through the grounds of the hall, with a crossroads perhaps somewhere to the north-west. If this were the case there may be further Roman remains, such as burials or military sites, in the immediate vicinity.

It is not known where the location(s) of the earliest Saxon settlement lies, though later Saxon occupation is suggested to have been centred on the southern end of the modern village, in the vicinity of the Hall. This is due to the position of the 12th century church and the siting of the village cross at the junction of Church Lane and High Street. The main north-south road in the village, now known as High Street has continued to be the main focus of the settlement in recorded times (VCH 1978).

The early settlement of Sawston is likely to follow the pattern commonly seen, with the church located between the main village settlement and the manor house or hall. This appears to be the case by the 11th or 12th century in Sawston, with St Mary's church in a central location between the village and Sawston Hall and it may well apply to the manor's and church's predecessors. It is possible that the earlier buildings will lie beneath or in the immediate vicinity of the later ones. In reference to the church, this has particular implications for the identification of the earlier boundaries of the associated graveyard, with the possibility of burials extending beyond the current boundary wall.

An earlier manor house was apparently destroyed in 1553 with the current Sawston Hall subsequently built in its place. However, some 15th and 16th century architectural features in the hall indicate that the manor was not entirely destroyed and its remains may have been incorporated into the new building. Anthony Baggs (2004) reports that none of the visible stone on the new hall is coloured pink by fire, suggesting that it had not been on site in 1553. He concludes that the original hall may have been timber framed and it is suggested that the date stones of 1557 and 1584 may mark the beginning and the end of the rebuilding of the hall.



Plate 1 Sawston Hall



Plate 2 The moat at Sawston Hall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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British Geological Survey 1:50000 Sheet 205, Saffron Walden, 1952

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1" 1885 OS LVI.II

APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Record entries for study area

Record No	Grid_Ref	Period	Description	Source
01267	TL 4890 4900	1540 AD to 1900	1. Sawston Hall	1. Arch J 84 1927 2. Gdniec, K 1991
01267a	TL 4884 4912	1401 AD to 1600 AD	1. Sawston Hall 2. A C16 Mansion with some pre 1553 work 3. The only Elizabethan mansion built of clunch not brick	1. Map 1960 OS 6 inch 2. DoE 1956 3. Pevsner, 1954 4. Spittle, 1967 5. Arch J 1927 6. VCH 1967 7. JBAA 1913
01267b	TL 490 490	Post Medieval 1540 AD? o 1900 AD?	1. Park and gardens around Sawston Hall	1. Scheduling record: English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens
01268	TL 484 490	1066 AD to 1900 AD	1. Moat at Huntingdon's Farm 2. Huntingdon's Farm C15	1. Salzman 1948 2. Elrington 1978
04110	TL 4800 4900	Bronze Age 2500 BC to 701 BC	1. Late Bronze Age hoard, winged axe, 2 socketed spearheads, 2 socketed axes	1. Salzman 1938
04111	TL 4800 4900	Saxon/ Viking 410 AD? To 1065 AD?	1. Iron Key	1. Salzman, 1938
04112	TL 4800 4900	Saxon	1. Saxon S shaped brooch	1. Briscoe, T. 1968
04113	TL 489 493	Neolithic	1. Flint tools	1. verbal communication
04118	TL 4920 4970	Roman 43 AD to 409 AD	1. Enclosure	1. Palmer 1983 CUCAP 2. Aerial photograph CUCAP APs
04123	TL 487 492	1066 AD to 1900 AD	1. Parish church of St Mary	1. Serial, Gentlemans Magazine 1815 2. CRO R58/5/10 3. Pevsner 1954 4. Webb 1990 5. JBAA 1913
04140	TL 4863 4917	1401 AD to 1900	1. Queen's Head Inn 2. Grade 2* late C15	1. 1903 OS 1:2500
04167	TL 4866 4923	1066 AD to 1900 AD	1. Cross 2. C16	1. 1901 OS 25 inch map
06326	TL 4684 5145	1540 AD to 1900 AD	1. Course of old railway	1. 1974 OS 1:50000 Map 2. Gordon C. I, 1977 3. Clinker CR 1978
10005	TL 482 489	Unknown	1. Earthworks on TL 482/489 and TL 484/492	1. Edwards 1991
10449	TL 4873 4936	1540 AD to 1900 AD	1. Early C18 Dovecot	1. PCAS 75, 1988
10450	TL 4853 4946	1540 AD to 1900	1. C17 dovecot	1. Davies, E.M. 1988
11254	TL 489 490	Unknown	1. Fishponds in grounds of Sawston Hall	1. Edwards, B 1991
11720	TL 489 487	Modern	1. Two ditches, 19 th 20 th Century pottery and glass	1. Sutherland, T. L, 1995
12305	TL 489 492	Unknown	1. Park	1. Way, T 1998
CB 14956	TL 4858 4959		1. Church	
CB 15098	TL 488 491	Modern	1. Military Headquarters (US Fighter Wing)	None recorded



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