

Sawston Hall Lawns

Members of the Archaeology RheeSearch Group made two separate geophysical surveys on the Sawston Hall lawns:

- (a) On the 18 May, 2006 to survey the **front** lawn.
- (b) On Sunday 28 May, 2006 to survey the **side** lawn.

Conditions Both lawns were level with short grass.

Weather During both surveys it was mild and there had been quite heavy rain within 24 hours.

Access From Church Lane, Sawston, through the wrought iron gates, just before the church. The **front** lawn is immediately to the north of the Hall, on the LHS of the drive. The **side** lawn is to the east of the Hall, accessed from a path going along the north side.

Location TL 488491. All images shown below are orientated with **north at top of page**.

Purpose of survey To locate evidence of any underground features which may be associated with the previous hall or manor, burnt down in 1553. It is not known if the present Hall was built on exactly the same site, and how much of the previous building had been destroyed. It was also hoped to find evidence of the conjectured northern side of the moat, between the Hall and the church.

Equipment Bartington 601 gradient magnetometer, TRCIA 50cm twin probe soil resistivity meter

Soil: Not examined in detail but generally quite moist and firm.

Area covered See map below (in red dashed boxes)

- (a) **Front lawn:** Two 30m × 30m grids in an east–west orientation
- (b) **Side lawn:** Four 20m × 20m grids in a north–south orientation, with an additional 17m × 20m to the east of the most northerly grid by magnetometry only.

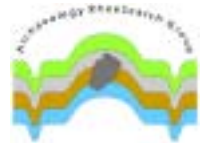
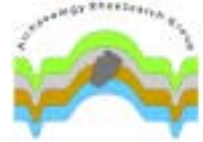


Fig. 1. Plan of Sawston Hall from Ordnance Survey 1886 map, showing survey areas.





Results

1. Resistivity

**Fig. 2. Resistivity plot of front lawn
(white high resistance, black low resistance).**

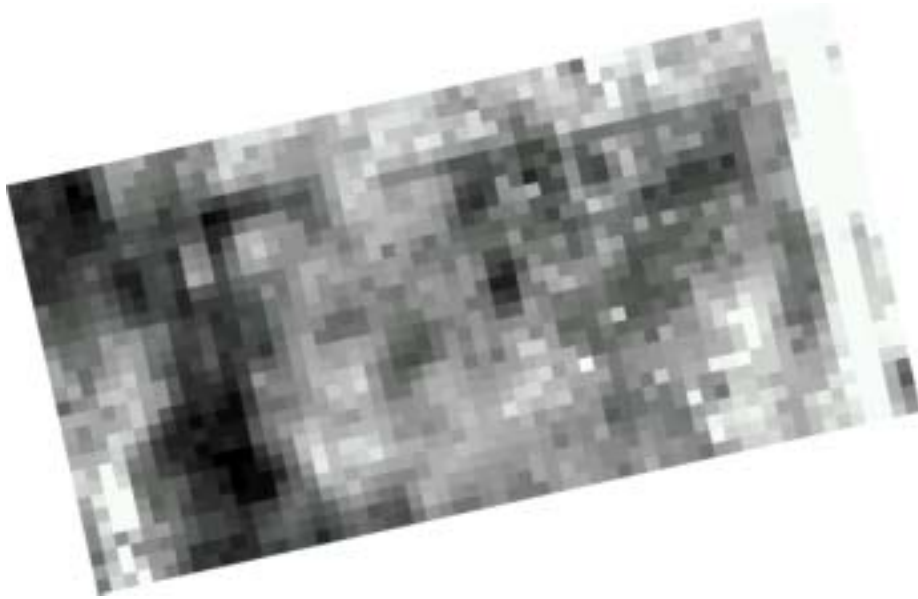
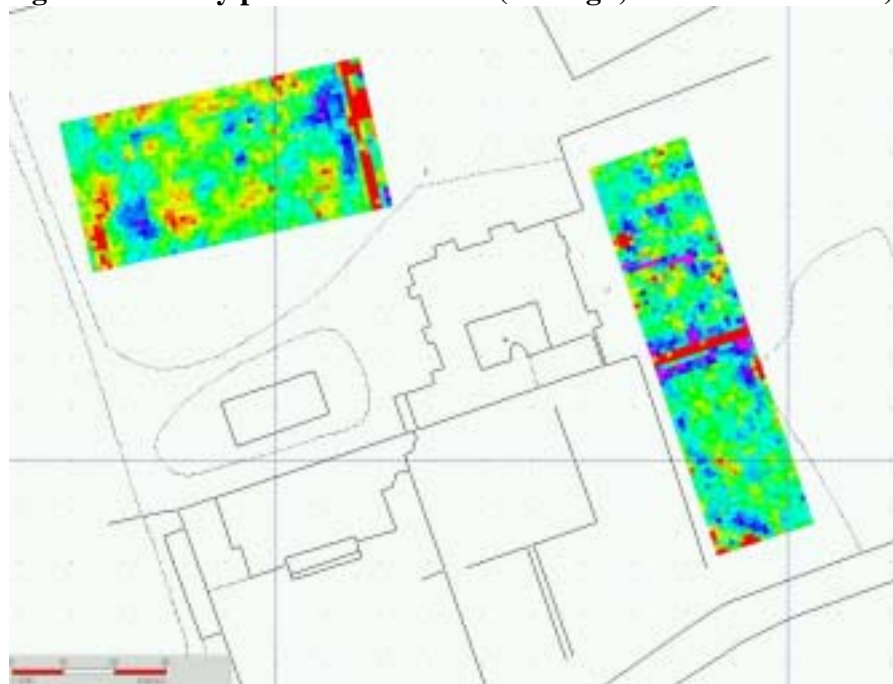
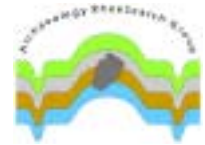


Fig. 3. Resistivity plots of both lawns (red high, blue low resistance).





Front lawn There is an approximately 2m wide band of high resistance on the east side of the survey area, with low resistance areas towards the northwest and southwest corners. There are suggestions of a low resistance rectilinear feature, with one side almost parallel with the northern edge of the survey area.

Side lawn There is a distinct high resistance band bisecting the survey area. On either side, and parallel, there are lines of low resistance. There is a line of low resistance running east-west approximately 25 m from the northern end of the survey.

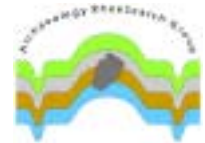
2. Magnetometry

Fig. 4. Magnetometry plots of both lawns.



The predominant feature in the magnetometry plot of the front lawn is a line, running at an angle across the survey area. A band also runs up the eastern side, and there is a weaker signal of a band parallel to the northern edge turning abruptly south to cross the angled strong signal towards the southern edge. With the exception of the angled line, these appear to be coincident with the resistance results from the front lawn.

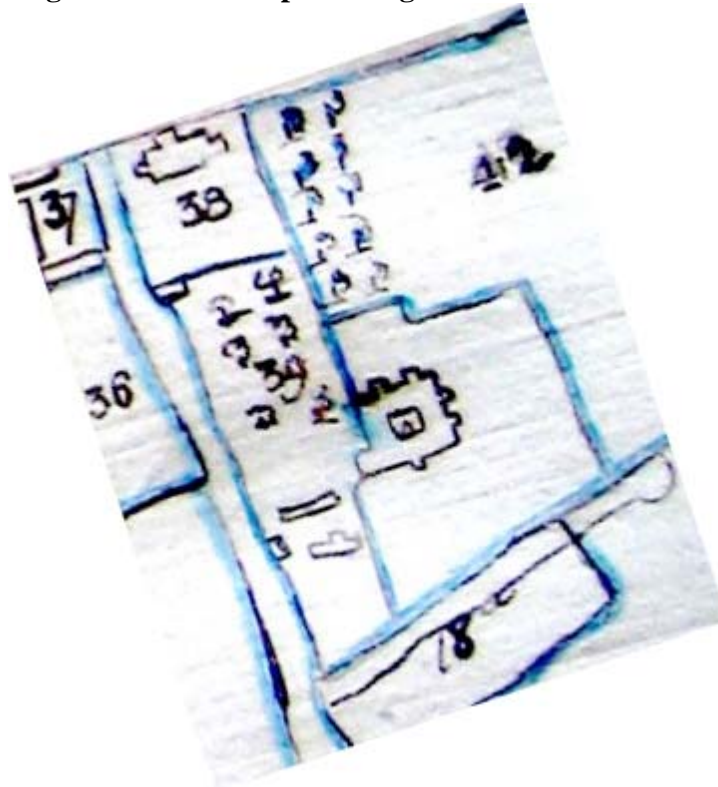
The side lawn magnetometry results are broadly coincident with the resistivity results but with a weaker signal bisecting the area and a stronger east-west signal about 25m from the northern edge of the survey area, the latter terminating in a pronounced loop. There may be other structures evident within the magnetometry results.



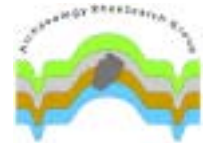
Discussion

1. The distinct linear features, north-south on the east side of the front lawn and bisecting the side lawn, and particularly pronounced in the resistivity plots, are almost certainly metalled paths. The 1886 map (figure 1) clearly indicates a path across the side lawn in this location. This path is also visible in an early aerial photograph of Sawston Hall (ref.1). The signals on the front lawn are in line with the east wall of the churchyard (immediately to the north of the surveyed area), and the west side of the Hall. Although the 1886 map does not show a path in this position, this would be a plausible direct route between the Hall and the church, particularly as the Sawston Inclosure map (figure 5) shows a field boundary along this line. In this position, between the Hall and the church, it is also possible that the high resistance line may represent the foundations of a stone wall.

Fig. 5. Inclosure map showing Sawston Hall and church.



2. A pictorial view of the Hall from the front lawn in 1844 (ref. 2) appears to show a ditch or narrow moat with two small bridges crossing on the front lawn, which suggests a ditch or moat was present then.
3. The resistivity shows two broad low resistance lines parallel to the east-west “path” on the side lawn. An archaeologist familiar with this site has suggested that this might indicate the remnant of a medieval moat, approximately 50m north of the existing moat (shown in blue on the 1886 map), and if extended east, leading to the north-south ditch, the remnant of which is indicated on the 1886 map at the eastern end of



- the moat. There is a distinct angle in the moat approximately 50m from its eastern end. However, the geophysics results do not appear to indicate any building remains in the southern part of the side lawn that would support this hypothesis. A rescue dig by the Cambridge Archaeology Unit slightly to the north and east of the survey areas (ref 3) found no indication of a moated feature.
4. The front lawn rectilinear response is likely to reflect a pre-Victorian structure, as the lawn has been a predominant feature of the site for nearly 200 years. Intriguingly, Rosen and Wright note “the early manor house of Pyratts, built by 1279, stood near the church on a moated site close to the present house” (ref. 4).
 5. The diagonal line feature shown in the front lawn magnetometry results running northwest–southeast leads to the present modern annexe, suggesting that this is associated with modern utilities, particularly as a short extension of the line would run into a lamp post on the drive
 6. The areas of low resistivity on the northwest and towards the southwest corners of the front lawn survey may be associated with ground disturbance associated with point 6, although the southwest area is coincident the low resistance rectilinear feature.
 7. The clear east–west feature, shown by the magnetometry, towards the north end of the side lawn is associated with a manhole at the western edge of this lawn. It would seem likely that this is associated with the low resistance line that is parallel to, but a few metres to the south. The near-circular magnetometry response suggests an iron based liner to a drainage system.

It is speculative, but possible, that the original Hall which was burnt down in 1553, was situated slightly to the east of the present building surrounded by a 50m square moat, and that the rebuilding incorporated and extended the moat to approximately 130m square. This would account for the rectilinear feature in the front lawn survey and the angle in the southern moat, and some of the complexity shown in the magnetometry results on the southern part of the side lawn. The actual results are insufficient to determine the matter.

References

1. S. Oosthuizen, *Cambridgeshire from the Air* (University of Cambridge Committee for Aerial Photography, 1996), p 75
2. T. Teversham, *History of Sawston* (1947), vol 2, p 1
3. K. Gdaniec, *Sawston Hall, 1991, Tennis Court Development* (CAU report 13/3/91)
4. A.B. Rosen and A.P.M. Wright, *A History of Sawston, Pampisford and Whittlesford* (1978) p 250

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