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## **Southampton Archaeology Unit Report 1278**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief on excavation of a pond at Southampton Sports Centre SOU 1747**

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2017

Client: Southampton City Council



## **Contents**

<b>1. Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Site Location and geology.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Archaeological and Historical background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Historic maps.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6. Aim of the Investigation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7. Methodology .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8. Results .....</b>	<b>7</b>
8.1 Natural .....	7
8.2 20th century .....	7
<b>9. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix 1. Context list.....</b>	<b>9</b>

Southampton Archaeology – Watching Brief at Southampton Sports Centre:  
SOU 1747

**Summary Sheet**

Site name/address: Southampton Sports Centre.
SOU site code: SOU 1747
Contractor site code: SOU 1747
Grid reference: SU 40852 16192
HET consultation number: 8441
Fieldwork dates: 16/3/17
Type of fieldwork: watching brief
Name of contracting unit: Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit
Report author: Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA
Report number: 1278
SCC Accession Number: 2017.17
Name of client: Southampton City Council
Summary: The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief in March 2017 on groundworks for the construction of a pond at Southampton Sports Centre. The site lay in an Area of Archaeological Potential identified by Southampton City Council and a number of prehistoric finds had been made in the area. An archaeological watching brief was kept on the groundworks. The area had been subject to level reduction for a sports pitch in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century. This had removed between 1.3m and 2m of the natural from the area where the pond was dug. This would have removed any archaeology that had previously been present, and none was observed. There was also much disturbance by land drains. No archaeological evidence was observed.

## **Archaeological Watching Brief on excavation of a pond at Southampton Sports Centre, SOU 1747**

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### **1. Summary**

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief in March 2017 on groundworks for the construction of a pond at Southampton Sports Centre. The site lay in an Area of Archaeological Potential identified by Southampton City Council and a number of prehistoric finds had been made in the area. An archaeological watching brief was kept on the groundworks. The area had been subject to level reduction for a sports pitch in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This had removed between 1.3m and 2m of the natural from the area where the pond was dug. This would have removed any archaeology that had previously been present, and none was observed. There was also much disturbance by land drains. No archaeological evidence was observed.

### **2. Introduction**

2.1 A pond to encourage amphibians was to be built in the Southampton Sports Centre to the north of the city (fig 1). The work was carried out under permitted development rights. Given the number of prehistoric finds in the area a watching brief was held on the excavation of the pond and associated groundworks.



**Figure 1. Location of the site, marked by a red star.**

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2.2 A project design was written to the recommended guidelines for archaeological projects laid down by English Heritage in *The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* 2006. All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

2.3 The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2015).

2.4 The observations were made by MF Garner BA MCIfA. On completion of the archaeological work the archive will be deposited with Southampton City Council Museums under Accession number 2017.17.

### **3. Site Location and geology**

3.1 The site lies within Southampton Sports Centre in the north of Southampton at Ordnance Survey grid reference 440852 116192 (fig 1).

3.2 The site lies in the valley of the Hollybrook Stream. The stream is recorded in the Stoneham Charter of 932AD (Burgess, Streams and watercourses of Southampton, 1982, page 4). The site lies west of the confluence of two tributaries of the Hollybrook, and south of a ditch that drain brings further water down from the valley side to the west. The site is fairly level but there has been much landscaping associated with the construction of the Sports Centre.

3.3 The geology map (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>) shows that the site lies on the London Clay.

### **4. Archaeological and Historical background**

4.1 The site lies in Area 5 of the Local Areas of Archaeological Potential as defined in the City of Southampton Core Strategy 2010. Area 5 is defined as:

#### ***LAAP 5 Chilworth Common (adjacent)***

*This area is adjacent to two prehistoric earthworks that lie just outside the city boundary - Chilworth Ring and Castle Hill. Many prehistoric stray finds have been made around here, including Neolithic and Mesolithic finds, and a settlement of some sort was probably in the area. Also of interest are boundary baulks set up in the 8th-11th centuries.*

4.2 Numerous prehistoric and later finds have been found in the vicinity of the site.

### **5. Historic maps.**

5.1 Historic maps from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century show the site as open land until the sports centre was built in the 1930s (figs 2-4).





Figure 2. The 1810 edition of the OS 1 inch to the mile map (Sheet XI).  
Approximate location of site marked by red star.

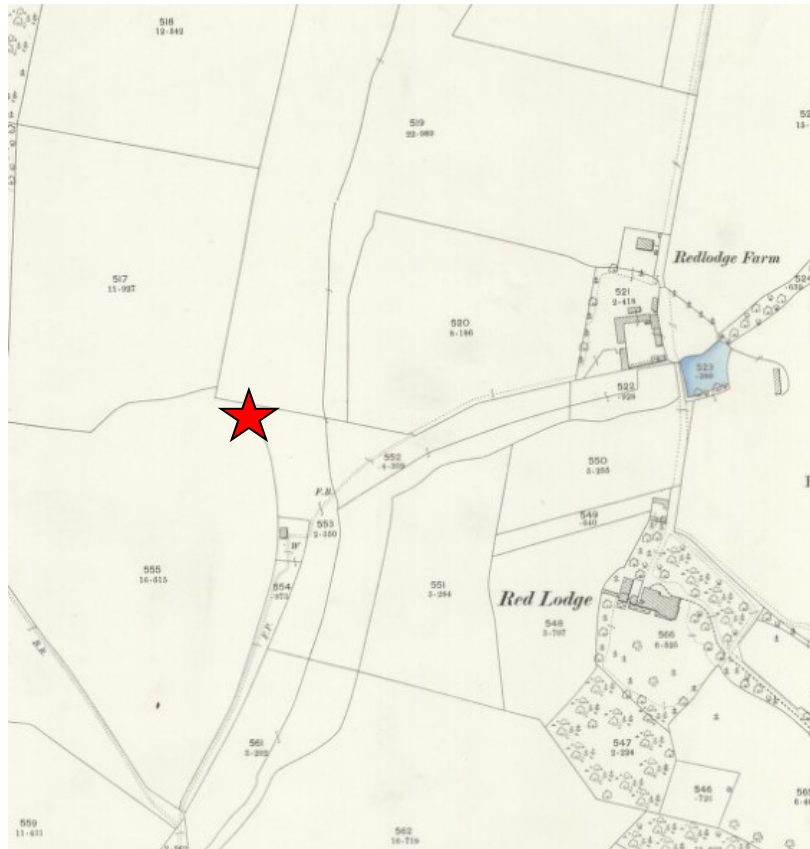


Figure 3. The 1896 edition of the OS 25 inch to the mile map (Sheet LVII.14),  
surveyed 1895. Location of site marked by red star.



**Figure 4. The 1946 edition of the OS 25inch to the mile map (Sheet LVII.14), surveyed 1941. Location of site marked by red star.**

## **6. Aim of the Investigation**

6.1 The aim of the watching brief was to make a record of any archaeology disturbed by the works and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, and date of any archaeological remains encountered, as dictated by current best practice.

6.2 An additional aim was to identify and record the nature, dimensions, and relationship of natural deposits on the site.

6.3 For the purposes of the project, archaeologically significant remains and contexts were defined as remains and contexts relating to pre-19th-century human use of the area.

## **7. Methodology**

7.1 Southampton site code SOU 1747 was issued to the project by the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Southampton City Council and was used throughout the project to identify the site records and artifacts.

7.2 The Southampton Archaeology Unit recording system was used. The Soil Survey Field Handbook (Soil Survey of England and Wales) and Munsell colour chart were used to describe the deposits revealed.

7.3 An archaeologist was present on site during the first day of excavation. The area excavated for the pond was some 20m square with rounded corners. It sloped gently down to the centre which was some 500mm below ground level. No vertical sections were exposed.



7.4 The archaeologist observed the deposits, made records and collected artifacts. By the end of the first day it was clear that no archaeological deposits had escaped the 1930s level reduction, and further excavation works were not observed.

7.5 No soil samples were taken.

## **8. Results**

The results are presented with the oldest period first. Details of deposits are given in appendix 1. No finds were retained.

### **8.1 Natural**

8.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was the London Clay, context 3. It was a reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/8) clay, and was seen across the entire excavation (fig 5)



**Figure 5. Excavation of the pond in progress, showing the London Clay.**

8.1.2 Above the London Clay was context 2, a deposit of mottled yellowish grey (2.5Y 5/1) clay, some 100mm thick. This appeared to be the weathered top of the London Clay, which had been subject to reduction causing the colour change. It contained rare charcoal flecks, probably due to bioturbation.

### **8.2 20th century**

8.2.1 The area was developed as the Southampton Sports Centre in the 1930s, and the area had been subject to a level reduction to create a sports pitch by 1946 (fig 4). The level reduction was approximately 2m at the west side of the pond, and approximately 1.3m on the east side of the pond.



8.2.2 After the area had been subject to the level reduction ceramic land drains were installed and then topsoil 1, was imported. The topsoil was a brownish black (10YR 3/2) silty clay loam with flecks of charcoal, calcined flints and cinders. The pitch had suffered from waterlogging and two further phases of land drains, one using ceramic pipes and one using trenches filled with calcined flints and cinders, were installed. The calcined flints in the topsoil were the same as those in the land drains, and appeared to be the product of an extremely high temperature process resulting in a glazed surface on some of the flints.

## **9. Conclusions**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century level reduction had removed between 1.3m and 2m of the natural from the area where the pond was dug. This would have removed any archaeology that had previously been present, and none was observed. The few burnt flints in the topsoil were from a modern industrial process.

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**Appendix 1. Context list**

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Munsell page	Col	Texture	Fill of	Filled by
1	1	Layer	Turf and topsoil	10YR	3/2	Silty clay loam	4	
2	1	Layer	Weathered natural clay	2.5Y	5.1	Clay		
3	1	Natural	London Clay	7.5YR	6/8	Clay		
4	1	Feature	Level reduction					1