

**1 - 3 FAIRYCROFT ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



Essex County Council

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

February 2007

**1 - 3 FAIRYCROFT ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

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1 – 3 FAIRCROFT ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

Client: Claydens of Saffron Walden Ltd.

NGR: TL 53992 38443

Planning Application No: UTT/0706/06/FUL

Site Code: SW 52

ECC FAU Project No: 1691

Oasis Reference No: essexcou1-23611

Date of Fieldwork: 2/2/7 and 5/2/7

SUMMARY

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit undertook a small archaeological excavation at 1-3 Faircroft Road, in advance of the construction of two small apartments. The primary aim of the excavation was to locate the eastern side of the Magnum Fossatum. The archaeological work was carried out on behalf of Claydens of Saffron Walden Ltd.

The excavation found remnants of post-medieval/modern roadside buildings, but no medieval features or finds, nor any trace of the Magnum Fossatum. It is concluded that much of the eastern side of the Magnum Fossatum runs beneath Faircroft Road, and that Faircroft Road is post-medieval in origin.

The post-medieval/modern remains included a late 18th/early 19th-century cellar, a brick support for an oil tank, a cut for a ceramic drain pipe, a possible yard surface, and a small number of pits and post-holes. Some of these features lay beneath 0.4m of modern ground.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of an archaeological excavation at 1 - 3 Fairycroft Road, Saffron Walden. The excavation took place in advance of the construction of two small apartments and was carried out by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Claydens of Saffron Walden Ltd. The work was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological brief and a written scheme of investigation and was monitored by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC FAU 2006a; ECC HEM 2006).

Copies of this report are supplied to the client, to ECC HEM and to the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of this report will become part of the OASIS online archaeological record (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). The site archive will be stored at Saffron Walden Museum.

2.0 THE SITE

2.1 Location and geology (Fig. 1)

The development site covers 200m² and lies in a mixed residential and commercial area at the north end of Fairycroft Road, on the eastern side of Saffron Walden. The eastern half of the site was covered by concrete, and the western half by grass and a large wooden shed.

The site is generally level and has been terraced into a gentle north-facing slope.

The geology of Saffron Walden consists of glacial drift deposits above Chalk. The drift deposits are very varied and are not present in all areas within Saffron Walden.

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background (Fig. 4)

The remains of a mid 12th-century castle is situated in the north-east part of Saffron Walden. The castle consisted of a keep and inner and outer baileys. The keep lay within the inner bailey and was constructed from flint. The outer bailey encircled the inner bailey and incorporated St Mary's church and the town's earliest market place (Medlycott 1999).

A large ditch and bank subsequently surrounded the castle and a large part of the town. The enclosure was constructed in the 1230s and is referred to as the Repell Ditch or the *Magnum Fossatum*. The south-western corner of the enclosure survives as an earthwork and was trial-trenched by Ravetz and Spencer in 1959 (Fig. 4, J) (Ravetz and Spencer 1961; Bassett 1982). The course of the rest of the enclosure is less certain, but has been provisionally reconstructed from existing property boundaries and the results of archaeological investigations (Bassett 1982, fig. 10). Sections of the southern side have been found and investigated at Elm Grove and the Cinema-Maltings (Fig. 4, G to I) (Bassett 1982; Ennis 2002), and parts of the western side at Abbey Lane, Park Lane and Swan Meadows (Fig. 4, K to M) (Bassett 1982; Garwood 1994; Gilman 1993). An archaeological search at Fairycroft House for the southern side proved inconclusive (Fig. 4, F) (Brooks 1991). The northern side is conjectured to have included a large section of the outer bailey and has been investigated at 63A Castle Street (Fig. 4, A) (Ennis 2005). Maynard identified the eastern side beneath the southern end of Fairycroft Road during the excavation of a sewer trench in 1911 (Fig. 4, E) (Bassett 1982, 23). A 20m long section of the eastern side was archaeologically investigated at the 'Rose and Crown' in 1973 (Fig. 4, B) (Bassett 1983, 68). By contrast, no trace of the eastern side was found during archaeological trial trenching near Fairycroft Road in 1997 (Fig. 4, D) (Dale 1997).

The results of these archaeological investigations reveal that the ditch of the *Magnum Fossatum* is flat-based and steep-sided and approximately 4m wide and 2m deep. The associated ditch-side bank, where it survives in the south-western corner, runs along the top of the inside edge and is at least 7m wide and 2m high.

E. J. Eyre's 1758 map of Saffron Walden records that Fairycroft Road was formerly called Long Lane and was largely surrounded by enclosures and fields. The exceptions to this, to either side of the lane, were a single house about halfway down its eastern side, and a small cluster of buildings and properties at its junction with Hill Street. The first four editions of the Ordnance Survey (1861 to 1947) record both sides of Fairycroft Road largely lined with houses.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the excavation was to investigate and record archaeological remains with the potential to facilitate understanding of the historical development of Saffron Walden.

More specifically:

- To locate and investigate the eastern side of the *Magnum Fossatum*, and to clarify its course along Fairycroft Road
- To obtain evidence for medieval and post-medieval road-side settlement and commercial activity

The research objectives for the project referred to *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). A major research topic is the origins and development of towns, and their social and economic organisation (Ayres 2000, 30-1).

4.0 METHOD

The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IFA 1999), and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

The ECC FAU uses its own recording system to record all uncovered archaeological deposits and features (ECC FAU 2006b). The minimum sample sizes are 50% for self-contained features (e.g. pits and post-holes), and 10% for linear features (e.g. ditches and gullies). Plans are drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10. Digital photographs and monochrome and colour prints are taken of significant features and of work in progress. Each context is individually numbered and is recorded on individual pro-forma sheets. Modern (*i.e.* 19th/20th-century) deposits and features are not investigated, unless it is specifically stipulated in the archaeological brief and the written scheme of investigation.

The excavation investigated the footprint (9m x 12m) of the proposed two apartments. The footprint lay in the eastern half and covered about 50% of the development area. The developer used a mechanical excavator to remove a topmost layer of concrete and to level and clean the surface of underlying post-medieval/modern deposits. The post-medieval/modern remains were planned and recorded (Fig. 2).

The mechanical excavator was used to cut a single trench (A) across the centre of the footprint in order to establish if the *Magnum Fossatum* or other pre-modern remains lay buried beneath the stripped surface (Figs 2 and 3). The trench was 1.3m wide and c. 0.4m deep and exposed archaeological remains and the surface of the undisturbed natural. The archaeological features in the trench were planned and recorded. Only one was excavated. The other features were left untouched because they appeared to be post-medieval/modern. The undisturbed natural across the whole of the footprint was not exposed, because most of it lay below construction levels.

Three large holes, which had been dug by the developer (Fig.2, B to D), in order to remove the footings for a wooden hoarding, were inspected for archaeological remains. The holes lay at the south end of the footing for the proposed new apartments.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The stripping of the footprint exposed post-medieval/modern deposits and features. These comprised a brick cellar (2), a brick support (3), a cut for a ceramic drain pipe (4), four patches of redeposited chalk (5), and a small post-hole (6). All of these features cut or lay on top of 0.4m of disturbed ground, containing fragments of post-medieval/modern pottery, glass, brick, tile, slate, mortar and concrete (1). The cellar walls had been constructed from un-frogged orange-red bricks in a Flemish bond and had been bonded together with lime-based mortar. They extended beneath the existing pavement and implied that Fairycroft Road and/or the pavement had originally been narrower. A backfill of silt clay and post-medieval/modern building rubble (7) lay inside the cellar, which was at least 1.2m deep. The brick support butted against the cellar's north-west corner and had been made from orange-red frogged bricks. It smelt of oil and had possibly been used to support an oil tank. The

patches of chalk were up to 5cm thick and are conjectured to be the remnants of a surface for a yard.

Trench A revealed that undated and post-medieval/modern features lay beneath the modern made-ground (1). The features in the trench cut an undisturbed drift deposit of light yellow/reddish sand clay and gravel (24) and comprised three pits and/or post-holes (8, 16 and 22), three post-holes (10, 14 and 18) and a linear feature, which may have been the remains of a ditch or a cut for a wall (12). The post-holes were probably remains of one or more wooden buildings or sheds. In one of the post-holes lay the semi-decayed remains of a large wooden post (20). All but two of these features contained fragments of post-medieval/modern brick, tile and/or lime-based mortar. Pit 22 also contained a large piece of concrete. Post-hole 10 and pit 8 contained no finds, and remain undated. The fill in pit 8 was loose and un-compacted, and this suggested that it was not of great antiquity and had not had time to settle.

Holes B, C and D, which had been dug by the developer in order to remove a large wooden hoarding, were approximately 1m deep. All three exposed post-medieval/modern deposits and finds. In holes C and D, The natural (24) lay at a depth of c. 0.4m in holes C and D. The natural in hole B was not exposed.

The excavation found no medieval features or finds, nor any trace of the *Magnum Fossatum*. Disturbance of the site was clearly severe, due to terracing and levelling activities, and with the agreement of ECC HEM, no further investigation was undertaken.

6.0 FINDS, by Joyce Compton

A single brick, from cellar 2, was retrieved from the site and examined. The brick is orange-red in colour with occasional large flint inclusions, and is encrusted with mortar, particularly on the upper surface. Quantification details for the brick can be found in Appendix 2. The brick has regular sides, although the width tapers slightly from 105mm at one end to 115mm at the other. There are crease marks on the sides, probably the result of pressing the wet clay into a mould. Following the typology in Ryan (1996, 94-6), it can be seen that this is an 18th or early 19th-century brick. The brick has not been retained.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation has found post-medieval/modern remains, but no medieval features or finds or any indication of the eastern side of the *Magnum Fossatum*. The most likely explanation for the absence of the *Magnum Fossatum* is that it runs not alongside, but beneath Fairycroft Road, and from there extends northwards towards the 'Rose and Crown' (Fig. 4, B). This is supported by Maynard's identification of the ditch beneath Fairycroft Road during the construction of a sewer in 1911 (Fig. 4, E). If the ditch runs past the western side of the excavation area, then it is likely that it would have been detected by the trial-trenching, which was carried out along Fairycroft Road in 1997 (Fig. 4, D). Another reason as to why it is unlikely to be present along that western line is that it would then be out of alignment with the known section of the *Magnum Fossatum* at the 'Rose and Crown'.

The likely presence of a large section of the eastern side of the *Magnum Fossatum* beneath Fairycroft Road (or Long Lane as it used to be called) implies that the road is post-medieval in origin. It is surmised that after the ditch had largely silted-up, it was used as a hollow-way, and that this was then subsequently developed into Long Lane/Fairycroft Road.

The post-medieval/modern structural remains indicate that sheds, workshops and houses have occupied the development site for at least the last 200 years. The cartographic record accords with this and shows that there have been buildings on the site since at least 1758. The absence of medieval features and finds possibly indicates that the development area lay on the periphery of the medieval town. The post-medieval origin of Fairycroft Road supports this, as it possibly indicates that the south-east part of Saffron Walden was largely undeveloped prior to c. 1600.

8.0 ASSESSMENT

The construction of the apartments will result in minimal disturbance to the archaeological resource of Saffron Walden. The development area contains post-medieval/modern remains of low archaeological significance and lies on the fringe of the medieval town. The site has been terraced into a hill-slope, and has been impacted upon by subsequent roadside development. This includes a cellar, which is at least 1.2m deep.

The results of the excavation demonstrate that it is unlikely that the eastern arm of the *Magnum Fossatum* runs alongside the western side of Fairycroft Road. Maynard's observation that it runs beneath the road could perhaps be confirmed in the future by archaeologically monitoring deep service trenches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological excavation at 1-3 Fairycroft Road was commissioned by Claydens of Saffron Walden Ltd; Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit would like to thank Peter Clayden and Trevor Start for their assistance and co-operation.

The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Down and Mark Germany. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson, and was monitored by Richard Havis of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team. The find was processed by Phil McMichael and was analysed by Joyce Compton. The figures were drawn by Andrew Lewsey.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

Post-medieval = 16th to 18th century. Modern = 19th/20th century

No.	Category	Description	Date
1	Layer	Modern mixed deposit of yellowish brown and brownish white clay sand. Contains occasional post-medieval/modern artefacts. 0.4m thick	Modern
2	Cellar	Constructed from orange-red un-frogged bricks in a Flemish bond. Filled by 7. 4.5m wide, 3m+ long, 1.2m+ deep	18th/19th century
3	Brick base	C-shaped support constructed from orange-red frogged bricks. 1.3m long, 0.9m wide	Modern
4	Drain	Contains ceramic water pipe. 0.45m wide, 6m+ long	Modern
5	Layer	5cm thick fragmentary layer of redeposited chalk. Overlies 1	Modern
6	Post-hole	Cuts 5. 0.3m square	Modern
7	Deposit	Backfill of 2. Contains modern pottery and rubble	Modern
8	Pit or post-hole	Filled by 9. 0.6m long, 0.35m wide	Undated ?Modern
9	Deposit	Single fill of 8. Loose and un-compacted	Undated ?Modern
10	Post-hole	Filled by 11. 0.34m long, 0.26m wide, 0.05m deep	Undated
11	Deposit	Single fill of 10. Contains no finds	Undated
12	?Ditch	Filled by 13. 1.3m+long, 1m wide.	Post-medieval/Modern
13	Deposit	Single fill of 12. Contains frequent pieces of post-medieval/modern brick and lime-based mortar	Post-medieval/Modern
14	Post-hole	Filled by 15. 0.55m long, 0.43m wide	Post-medieval/Modern
15	Deposit	Single fill of 14. Contains infrequent fragments of orange-red tile and brick	Post-medieval/Modern
16	Pit or post-hole	Filled by 17. 0.72m long, 0.3m+ wide	Post-medieval/Modern
17	Deposit	Single fill of 16. Contains infrequent small pieces of orange-red brick and tile	Post-medieval/Modern
18	Post-hole	Filled by 19. 0.39m diameter	Modern
19	Deposit	Single fill of 18. Contains 20	Modern
20	Post	Filled by 21. Within 19. 0.2m square	Modern
21	Deposit	Single fill of 20. Grey silt and semi-decayed wood	Modern
22	Pit or post-hole	Filled by 23. 1.1m+ long, 0.78m wide	Modern
23	Deposit	Single fill of 22. Contains large fragment of concrete	Modern
24	Natural	Glacial drift deposit. Light yellow/reddish sand clay and gravel. 0.6m+ thick	Pleistocene

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
52	Cellar 2	1	2910	Brick, encrusted with mortar, 235 x 105-115 x 60mm	18th/early 19th C

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

In one A4 folder:

- 2 Copies of this report
- 1 Copy of the archaeological brief
- 1 Copy of the written scheme of investigation
- 1 Finds report
- 1 Context register sheet
- 23 Context sheets
- 2 Photographic register sheets
- 1 Levels register sheet
- 1 Plan register sheet
- 17 Colour prints and negatives
- 16 Black and white prints and negatives

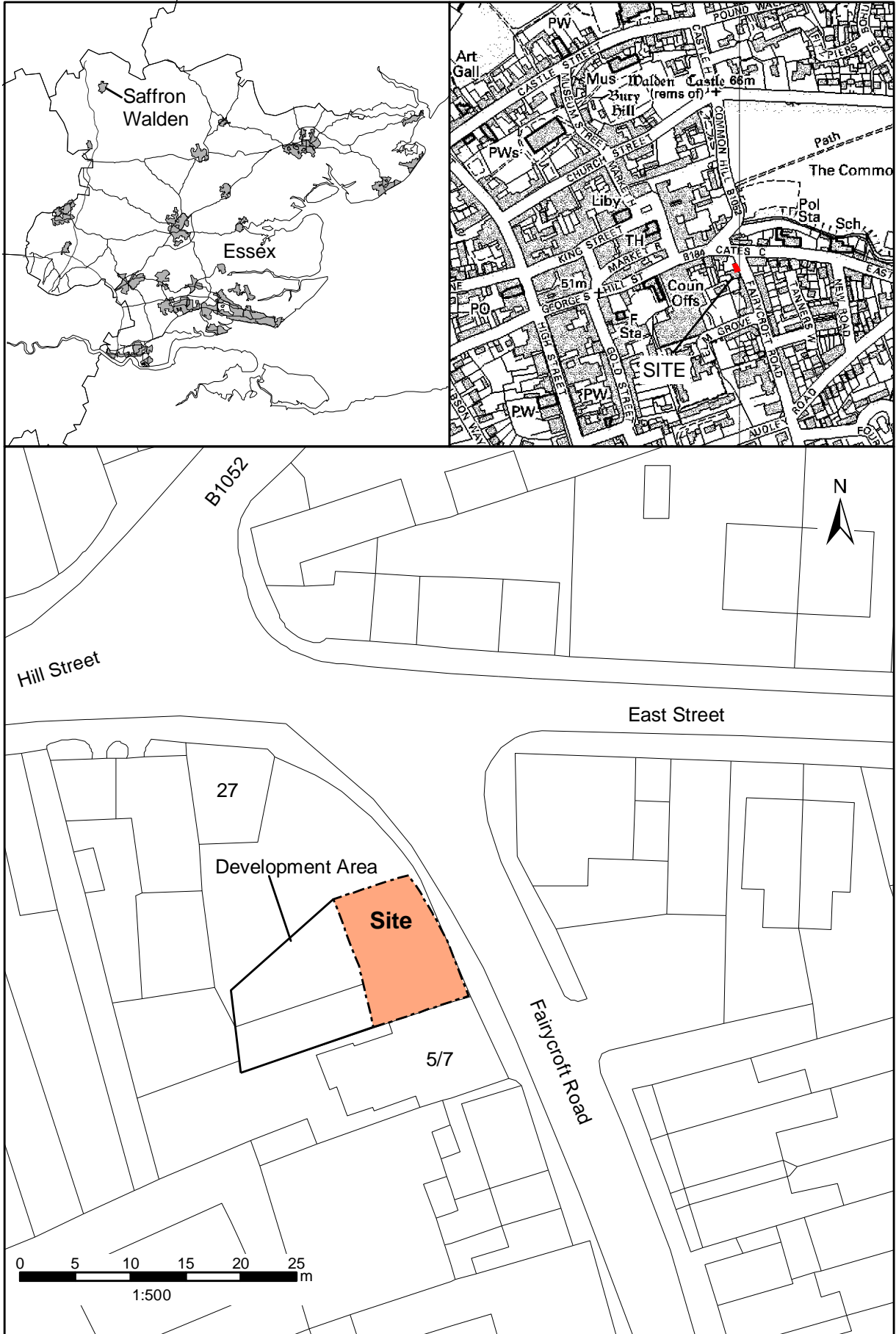
Separate from folder:

- 3 Large sheets of site drawings

No finds were retained.

APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD/ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: 1-3 Fairycroft Road, Saffron Walden, Essex	
Parish: Saffron Walden	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 53992 38443	Site Code: SW 52
Type of Work: Excavation	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 2/2/7 and 5/2/7	Size of Area Investigated: Excavation area: 108m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Client: Claydens of Saffron Walden Ltd.
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHR Nos.:
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (Summary)	
Periods represented: Post-medieval Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>A small archaeological excavation was carried out at 1-3 Fairycroft Road, in advance of the construction of two small apartments. The principal aim of the excavation was to look for the eastern arm of the Repell Ditch/Magnum Fossatum.</p> <p>The excavation found remnants of post-medieval/modern roadside buildings, but no medieval features or finds, nor any trace of the Magnum Fossatum. The report (Germany 2007) concludes that much of the eastern side of the Magnum Fossatum runs beneath Fairycroft Road, and that Fairycroft Road is post-medieval in origin.</p> <p>The post-medieval/modern remains included a late 18th/early 19th-century cellar, a brick support for an oil tank, a cut for a ceramic drain pipe, a possible yard surface, and a small number of pits and post-holes. Some of these features lay beneath 0.4m of modern made-ground. It was possible that shallow medieval remains, if ever present, had not survived, because the site had been levelled and terraced into a gentle north-facing slope.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:- Germany, M. 2007 <i>1-3 Fairycroft Road, Saffron Walden, Essex: Archaeological Excavation</i> . ECC FAU Report 1691	
Author of Summary: Mark Germany	Date of Summary: February 2007



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Fig.1. Location plan

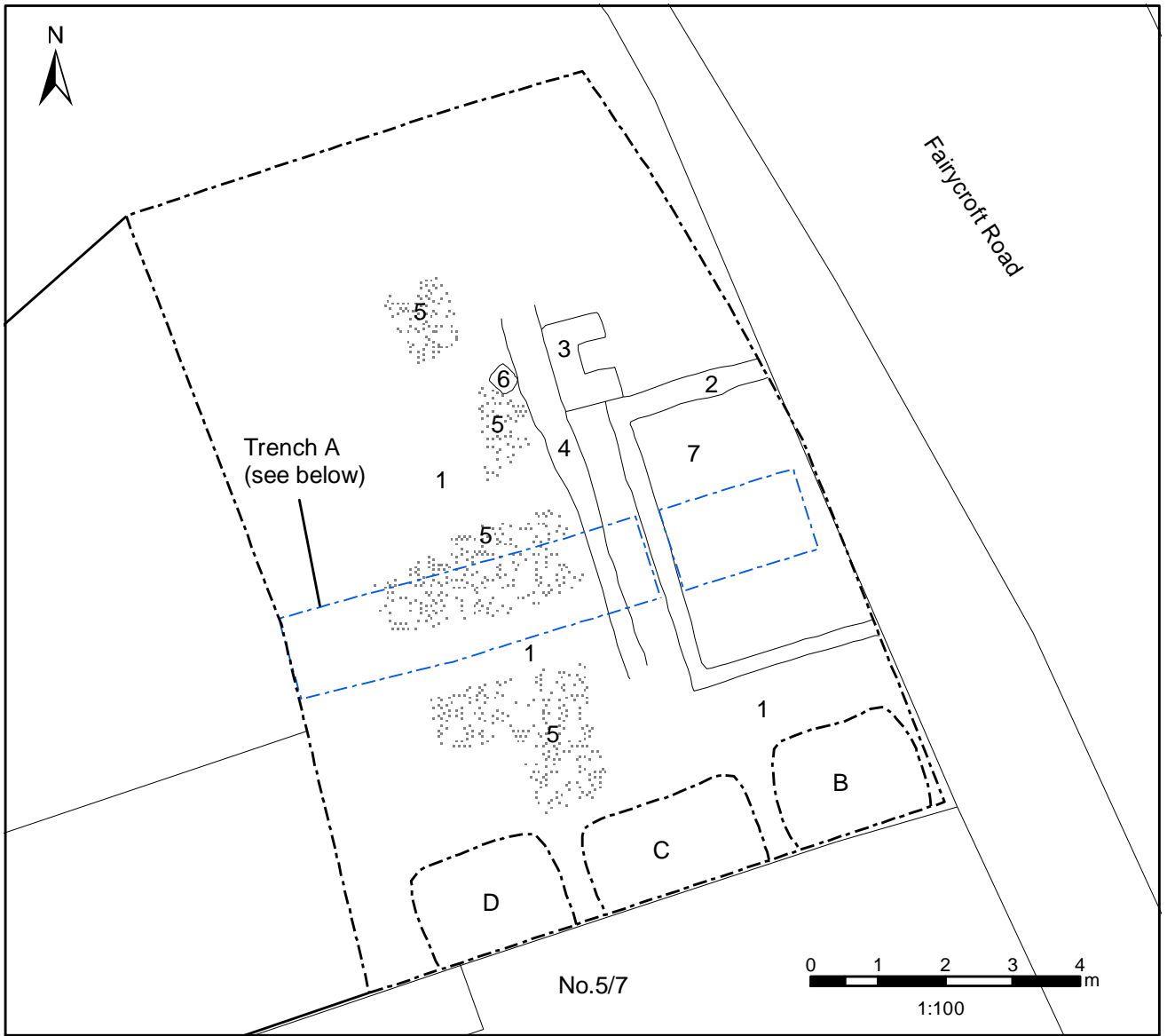


Fig.2. Site plan

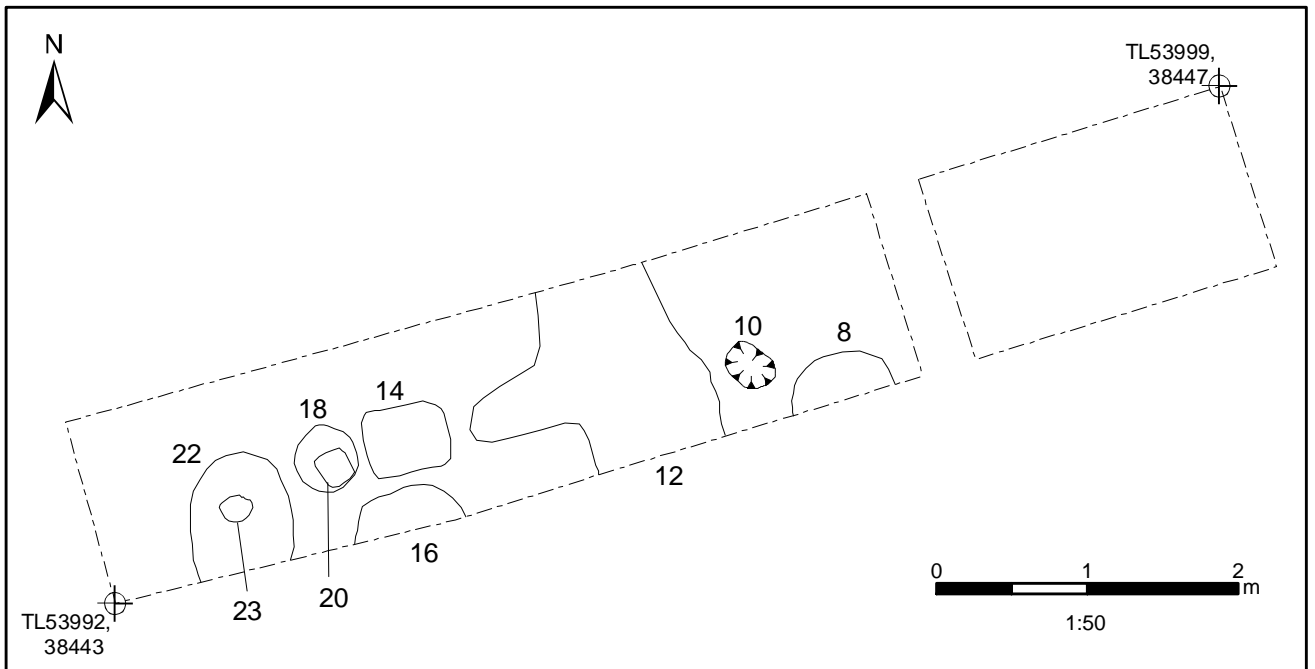


Fig.3. Trench A

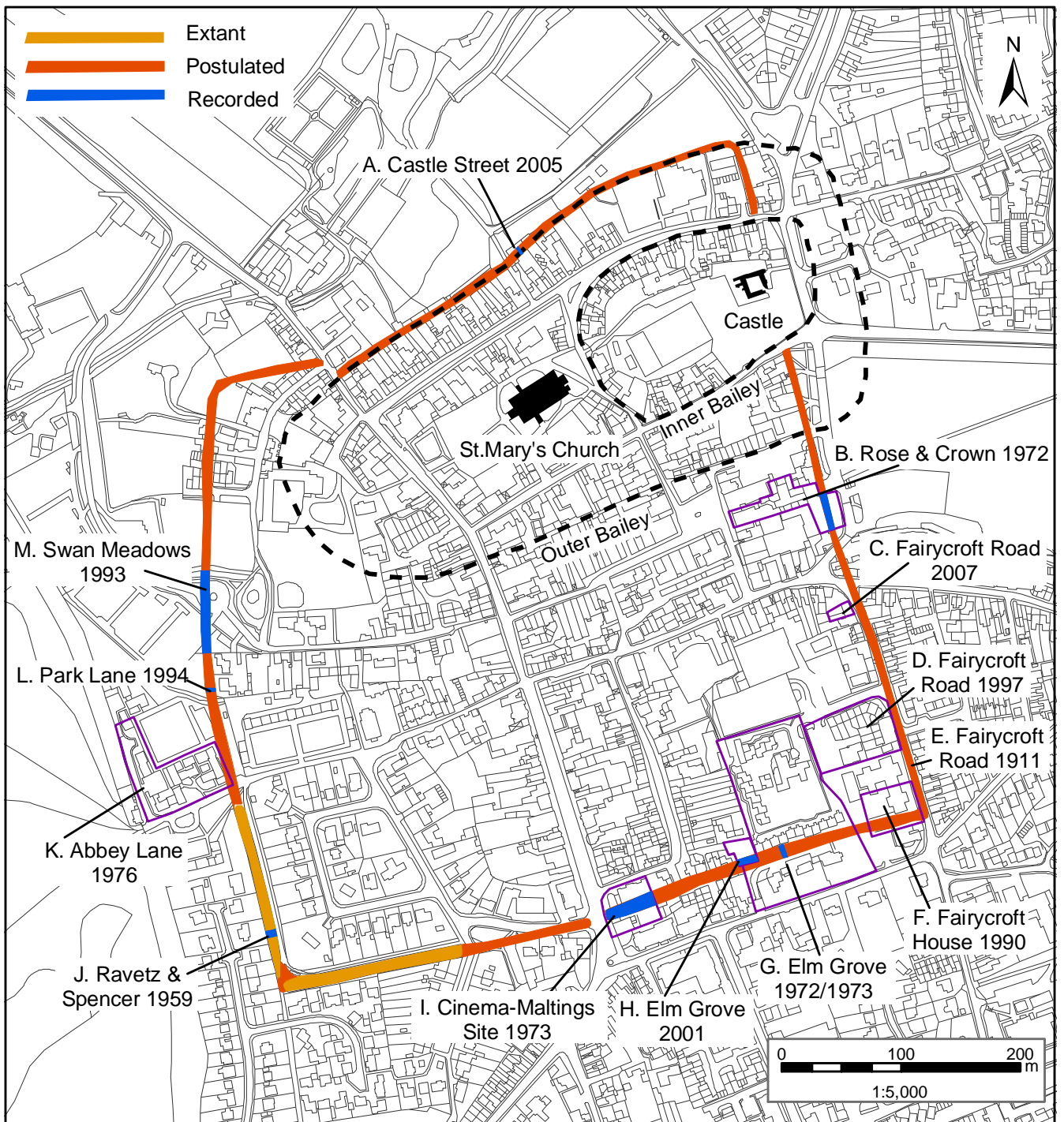


Fig.4. The castle and Magnum Fossatum