

**TENNIS COURT
RECREATION GROUND
SCHOOL LANE
WATTON-AT-STONE
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

March 2007

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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SUMMARY

Client: Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

FAU Project No.: 1712

NGR: TL 30187 19055

Planning ref: 3/1386/06

Site Code: WASH 07

Date of Fieldwork: 6 February 2007

OASIS Ref: essexcou1-23984

Two 10 x 1.8m archaeological trenches were excavated on the land to the south of the existing tennis courts at the recreation ground, School Lane, Watton-at-Stone, prior to the submission of a planning application for the construction of a new tennis court. In Trench 1 was a single east-west ditch containing Roman pottery and degraded bone. This ditch corresponds with cropmarks showing in aerial photographs, indicating a possible Roman road to the west of the development area.

It is probable that the ditch is the southern of the two ditches identified by aerial photography but no sign of any road remains was identified.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) was commissioned by Watton-at-Stone Parish Council to carry out an archaeological evaluation prior to submission of a planning application for the construction of a tennis court. The area of the site is within the Roman and medieval settlement of Watton-at-Stone, within area of Archaeological significance No 126, as designated on the local plan (HCC 2006). In line with PPG16 (DOE 1990), Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office issued a brief for archaeological works for a two-trench evaluation for which ECC FAU submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation (ECC FAU 2006).

Copies of the report will be supplied to the client, Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit (HCC HEU) and the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record. A further copy will be uploaded to the OASIS database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>) and a summary will appear in an appropriate journal. The archive will be deposited at Hertford Museum.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Figure 1)

The site is situated to the south of existing tennis courts at the recreation ground off School Lane, Watton-at-Stone. It is surrounded by open field to the south and west, by an existing tennis court to the north and Church Lane footpath to the east. Prior to works commencing, the site lay in the corner of a grassy field containing horses. The land slopes downwards slightly to the east.

2.2 Geology

The topsoil was approximately 0.25m deep across the investigation area, with between 0.33 and 0.44m of mid brown silty clay subsoil below it. The observed undisturbed natural is a mid-orange gravelly clay. The underlying bedrock is Chalk (BGS Accessed Feb 2007).

2.3 History and Archaeology

The development site lies in an area of much historical interest, with the 15th-century church of St Andrew and St Mary possibly replacing a 13th-century chapel, the remains of which may have been identified in Chapel Wood. Although no direct evidence for Roman settlement has been uncovered, a number of burials, agricultural remains and stray finds suggest occupation close by. Cropmarks, identified from aerial photographs, to the west of the development area suggest that a trackway, of possible Roman date, runs through the site. Watton-at-Stone is first mentioned in a 10th century Anglo-Saxon will as *Wattun* and later in the 1086 Domesday Book as either *Wodtune*

or *Watone* (Watton-at-Stone Parish Council 2006). No known archaeological investigations have taken place within the development area.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the development area (ECC FAU 2006). The specific objectives to:

- Identify and investigate any Roman or medieval remains within the development area, and relate these to the wider area.
- Identify and investigate any remains associated with the Roman road projected to run through the development area

4.0 METHOD

The topsoil, and modern overburden, was removed from two 10m x 1.8m trenches using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features were then excavated by hand using standard ECC FAU procedures, with plans being drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. Finds were collected for dating and characterisation purposes. No environmental samples were taken. Sections of the trenches were recorded following standard ECC FAU methodologies. All the trenches were located by measuring off boundaries extant on the most recent OS map.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig. 1)

Two trenches measuring approximately 10 x 1.8m were excavated in the footprints of the proposed tennis court. The presence of two substantial fences along the northern edge of the site meant that both trenches were moved southward by approximately 5m. Details of both trenches and contexts are provided in the tables in Appendix 1.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the north-west corner of the site of the site and ran north-south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.79m to undisturbed natural orange gravel clay. A single ditch [1] was the only feature identified within the trench. The ditch measured 1.2m in width and 0.3m deep and ran east-west across the trench. It contained a single fill (2) from which was recovered locally made

Roman pottery. A piece of unabraded samian pottery was recovered from the subsoil in the area of the ditch, and may have been originally deposited within the feature.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2, located to the south east of Trench 1, was again orientated north–south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.77m onto the mid orange gravel clay natural geology. The topsoil was 0.2m deep and overlay 0.44m of mid brown silty clay subsoil. No archaeological features or finds were identified within this trench.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL by J Compton

Finds were recovered from two contexts, one of which represents unstratified material. The finds have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The finds are described by context below.

Unstratified material

There is a piece of abraded post-medieval roof tile, plus a footring sherd from an imported samian dish of Roman date. The footring sherd is large, fresh and unabraded and was probably recovered close to its original place of deposition. The fabric suggests a 2nd-century AD date for the sherd.

Fill 2 of ditch 1

This context contained two sherds of Roman pottery and several tooth enamel fragments, probably from cattle teeth and in poor condition. The pottery comprises a body sherd in sandy grey ware and a footring sherd, probably from a flagon, in Verulamium Region white ware. Both pottery types were likely to have been manufactured locally. Several pieces of bone were also noted within this context during excavation but were too badly degraded to be removed.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The single ditch identified during the evaluation corresponds with the cropmarks identified to the west of the development area. The pottery recovered from the ditch apparently confirms the crop marks, showing on the aerial photographs, as Roman in date. From the location of the ditch it would seem that it represents the southern of the two; no sign of the other ditch was uncovered and it is likely to lie to the north of trench 1. No evidence for any Roman road remains was identified within the trenches.

In conclusion, it is likely that the cropmarks identified to the west of the site are Roman ditches. They may well be roadside ditches but the evidence from the evaluation neither confirms nor disproves this.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned and funded by Watton-at-Stone Parish Council, thanks go to Ms J Allsop and Mr I Knight for their help throughout the project. The digital illustrations were prepared by A Lewsey and the finds assessed by J Compton. Ms A Tinniswood from Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office was the monitoring officer on behalf of the local planning authority. The project was managed by P Allen and the fieldwork was carried out by the author.

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|--------------------------------|----------|--|
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| ECC FAU | 2006 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching. Tennis Court, School Road, Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire.</i> ECC FAU WSI |
| Gurney, D. | 2003 | <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England.</i> E. Anglian Archaeol. Occ Paper 14 |
| HCC | 2006 | <i>Design Brief of an Archaeological Evaluation recreation ground, School Lane, Watton–at-Stone</i> Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office Archaeological Brief |
| Watton-at-Stone Parish Council | Aug 2006 | www.watton-pc.org.uk/guide/hist_watton.htm Accessed 19/2/2007 |

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Trench Descriptions

Trench	Length	Breadth	Depth	Contexts	Comments
1	10	1.8	0.58	1, 2	Unstratified finds
2	10	1.8	0.77	-	Blank trench

Context Data

Context	Type	Comments
1	Ditch	East-West running ditch – 1.2m wide; 0.3m deep
2	Fill	Single fill of 1 – Contains Roman pottery and degraded bone

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights given in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
u/s	-	1	108	Roof tile fragment, sandy fabric	Post med. Roman
		1	64	Pottery; dish footring sherd, samian	
2	1	3	2	Animal bone; tooth enamel fragments (Discarded)	- Roman
		2	28	Pottery; footring sherd, Verulamium Region white ware; body sherd, sandy grey ware	

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

TENNIS COURTS, RECREATION GROUND, SCHOOL LANE, WATTON-AT-STONE (WASH 07)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 Written Scheme of investigation

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Evaluation Report
- 2.2 Original Finds report

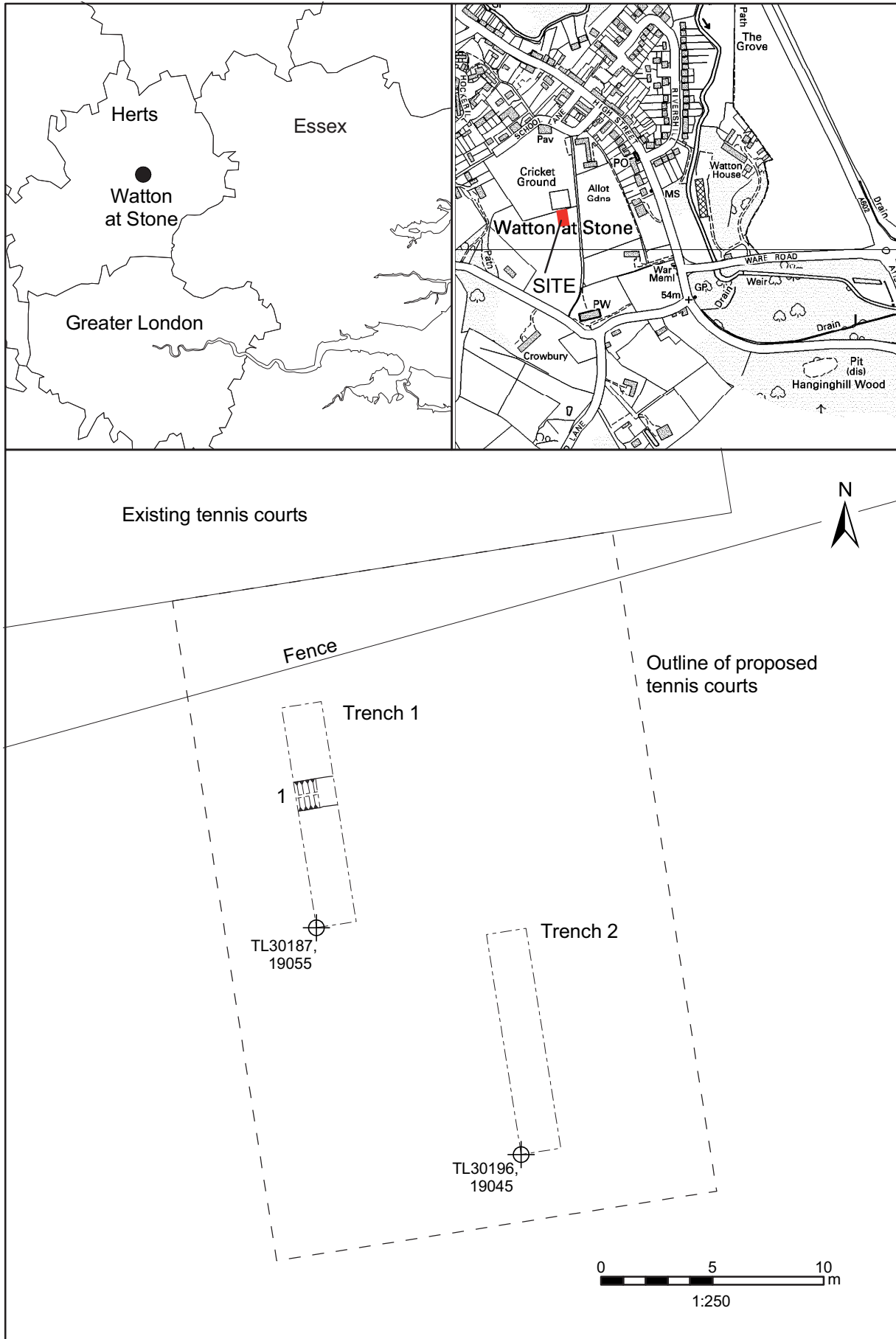
3. Site Archive

- 3.1 2 small permatrace sheets – site plans and sections
- 3.2 1 context register
- 3.3 2 context sheets
- 3.4 2 Trench sheets

1 small bag of finds

APPENDIX 4: HERTFORDSHIRE SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD SUMMARY

Site name and address: Tennis Courts, Recreation Ground, School Lane, Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Hertford	
Village/Town: Watton-at-Stone	Parish:	
Planning application reference: 3/1386/06		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Watton-at-Stone Parish Council, c/o The Parish Clerk, 9 Beane Road, Watton-at-Stone, Hertford, SG14 3RG Tel 01920 830330		
Nature of application: Tennis Court		
Present land use: Grazing Field		
Size of application area: Approx. 1200sq. m	Size of area investigated: 40 sq. m	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 30187 19055		
Site code: WASH 07		
Site director/Organisation: A Robertson ECC FAU		
Type of work Archaeological Trial trenching		
Date of work:	Start: 6th Feb 2007	Finish: 6th Feb 2007
Location of finds/Curating museum: Hertford Museum		
Related SMR Nos.:	Periods represented: Roman	
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>Two 10 x 1.8m archaeological trenches were excavated on the land to the south of the existing tennis courts at the recreation ground, School Lane, Watton-at-Stone, prior to the submission of a planning application for the construction of a new tennis court. In Trench 1 was a single east-west ditch containing Roman pottery and degraded bone. This ditch corresponds with cropmarks showing in aerial photographs, indicating a possible trackway to the west of the development area.</p> <p>It is probable that the ditch is the southern of the two ditches identified by aerial photography but no sign of any trackway remains was identified.</p>		
Author of summary: A Robertson	Date of summary: 19th Feb 2007	



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Fig.1. Location plan



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking S, showing Roman ditch (1)



Plate 2. Trench 1, looking W, showing detail of Roman ditch (1)