

**THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAYING FIELD
SAFFRON WALDEN
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

SEPTEMBER 2010

ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: The Anglo-American Playing Field, Saffron Walden, Essex	
Parishes: Saffron Walden	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 53703883	Site Code: SWAA10
Type of Work: Archaeological Evaluation	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 27th July 2010	Size of Area Investigated: 80 sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding source: Saffron Walden Town Council
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: n/a
Final Report: EAH summary	Oasis No.: essexcou1-81999
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land at the Anglo-American Playing Field, Saffron Walden, in advance of the construction of a new sports pitch (Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken as part of a condition placed on planning consent by Uttlesford District Council (UTT/0735/09/FUL) on the advice of the ECC Historic Environment Management team.</p>	
<p>The evaluation comprised of two machine-excavated trenches, both 1.6m wide (Fig. 1). Trench 1, orientated north-west/south-east, was 26m long and varied in depth from 0.30m to 1.40m. Trench 2, orientated north-east/south-west, was 24m long and varied in depth from 0.12m to 0.58m. The trenches were originally planned to be 32m in length but both were curtailed at their eastern ends where the natural chalk rose virtually to the existing ground surface and had clearly been previously truncated.</p>	
<p>At the south-east end of Trench 1, 0.30m of mid to dark greyish brown topsoil directly overlay truncated chalk with occasional large flint inclusions (Plate 1). Approximately six metres to the west the chalk was overlain by a progressively thicker deposit of flinty gravel in a dark brown silt matrix. The gravel was loose, finds-free and appeared to be of natural origin. It was up to 0.15m thick and had a further 0.12m of brown silt with fewer flint inclusions above. Whereas the south-eastern end of the trench had been truncated the ground investigated in the western half of the trench had been substantially built-up. At the north-west end of the trench the original topsoil, brown silt and gravel were sealed beneath layers of modern silt and chalk rubble overburden up to 1m thick. No archaeological remains were encountered.</p>	
<p>At the north-east end of Trench 2 truncated natural chalk with occasional flints was overlain by a</p>	

thin layer of topsoil only 0.12m thick. In the western two thirds of the trench (Plate 2) slightly crumblier natural chalk with patches of orange brown silt was overlain by c. 0.25m of mid to dark brown silt with occasional flint inclusions, with up to 0.30m of topsoil above that. The boundary between the truncated eastern and un-truncated western parts of the trench was visible in the surface of the field as a distinct slope (Cover photo) extending some 45m across the grass on a north westerly alignment. The slope perpetuated the line of an underlying boundary ditch (2) approximately 1.4m wide and 0.50m deep with a concave profile. The bottom of the ditch was filled with mid greyish brown sandy silt (3) containing occasional small fragments of post-medieval brick and tile (not retained). The upper part of the ditch had been in-filled with dark greyish brown humic silt (1) indistinguishable from the overlying modern topsoil. Several sherds of residual post-medieval pottery were recovered from this deposit along with nine more recent sherds dating to the later 19th or 20th century.

Although prehistoric and Roman remains are known in the vicinity of the site no remains of this date were identified in the evaluation. Similarly, there was no archaeological evidence for medieval or early post-medieval development or other activity beyond the northern limit of the town enclosure. Evidence from the evaluation trenches and the surrounding topography indicated that a large proportion of the north-eastern part of the site has previously been truncated/levelled while the north-western part has been built-up. This implies that the current topsoil is not in-situ and may have been deliberately imported to cover the built-up ground in the north-west of the site. The excavated boundary ditch is depicted on late 19th century editions of the Ordnance Survey and appears to have been in-filled in the early part of the 20th century.

As no archaeological remains of any significance were identified during the evaluation the construction of the new sports pitch is unlikely to have any detrimental impact upon the archaeological record.

Trench co-ordinates (end, centre)

Trench 1 NW - TL 53717, 38865
SE – TL 53737, 38849

Trench 2 NE – TL 53734, 38824
SW – TL 53715, 38810

Previous Summaries/Reports: none

Author of Summary: T. Ennis

Date of Summary: September 2010

Finds report by Helen Walker

A small amount of finds were recovered from a single context (context 1) and are tabulated by count and weight (in grams) below. Fragments of pottery are the most numerous find with a total of seventeen sherds weighing 267g. The earliest is a sherd of Sandy Orange Ware, perhaps from a jug, showing a partial green external glaze and most likely dating to the 14th or 15th century. A glazed sherd of Post-Medieval Red Earthenware could belong almost anywhere in the post-medieval period. Sherds of Creamware and Pearlware indicate activity during the later 18th to earlier 19th century. However, the bulk of the pottery is Victorian (or perhaps 20th century), with finds including fragments from an Ironstone China plate and serving dish showing the ubiquitous willow pattern transfer print. Other finds comprise a post-medieval clay pipe stem and small fragments of brick and roof tile (six fragments weighing 306g), which are probably also post-medieval. All finds have been discarded.

Pottery data

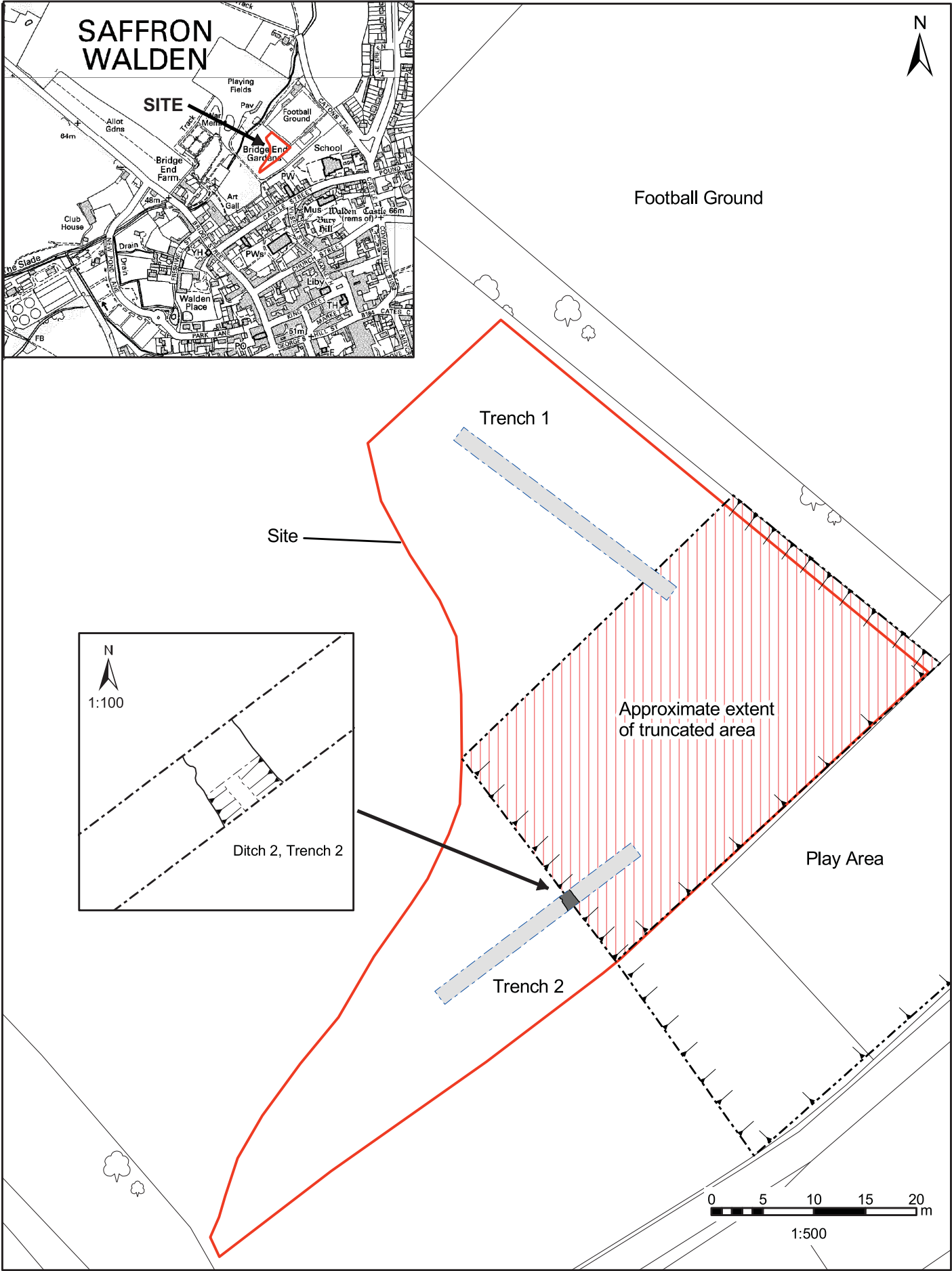
Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
1		1	4	Sandy Orange Ware body sherd, perhaps from a jug, partial greenish external glaze	14th – 15th C
		1	9	Post-medieval red earthenware, body sherd with all over glaze	Later 16th to 19th C
		3	24	Creamware, plain body sherds	Later 18th to earlier 19th C
		1	1	Pearlware rim from bowl or cup, painted decoration	c.1800
		1	45	Modern stoneware	c.1750 to early 20th C
		1	4	Modern white earthenware with a green glaze, perhaps from a lid	c.1750 to early 20th C
		9	180	Ironstone china, some sherds showing willow pattern transfer-print, includes the remains of a plate and serving dish	19th to 20th C
		17	267		

Brick and tile data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
1		2	145	Brick fragments (Discarded)	Post- medieval
		4	161	Roof tile fragments (Discarded)	Post-medieval
		6	306		

Other finds data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight (g)	Description	Date
1		1	2	Clay pipe stem (Discarded)	Post-medieval



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Fig.1. Trench location plan



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking NW (2m scale)



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking NE (2m scale)