

MOAT FARM, STISTED, ESSEX,
CM77 8BW

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING

DECEMBER 2012




PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY
R11356

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT MOAT FARM, STISTED, ESSEX, CM77 8BW

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AT MOAT FARM,
STISTED, ESSEX, CM77 8BW**

Site Code: SSMF12

Report No: R11356

Central National Grid Reference: NGR TL 80797 27215

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ABSTRACT

Pre Construct Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Mel Mackay, the owner of Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex, to carry out archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a new garden room adjoining the existing early-17th-century timber-framed house. The monitoring was undertaken between the 4th and 6th December 2012. A made ground layer containing two sherds of medieval (12th-14th-century) pottery and medieval peg tile was encountered beneath the present garden soil and represents a build-up of medieval occupation deposits, possibly levelled in the area immediately surrounding the extant house during its construction in the 17th century. The presence of medieval finds reinforces the presumed medieval date of the surrounding moat, and supports the conjectured presence of a medieval dwelling predating the extant building.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details the methodology and results of archaeological monitoring carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) at Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex (Figure 1; Plate 1). The project was commissioned and funded by the owner of Moat Farm, Mr Mel Mackay.
- 1.2 The archaeological monitoring was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (Garwood 2012), in response to a Brief issued by Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team (Medlycott 2012). The fieldwork took place between the 4th and 6th December 2012 and was managed for PCA by Mark Hinman and supervised by Tom Woolhouse.
- 1.3 Moat Farm is located approximately 2.5km north-east of Stisted, between Halstead and Braintree in north Essex (centred on NGR TL 80797 27215). The existing building is a Grade II Listed 17th-century timber-framed house with later alterations and additions (Plate 2), situated within a moated enclosure of presumed medieval date (Plate 3). The archaeological monitoring was of groundworks associated with the construction of a new single-storey timber-framed garden room (Planning References: BTE/01462/11/FUL & BTE/01463/11/LBC) adjoining the south-eastern gable wall of the existing house (Plate 4).
- 1.4 The site is bordered by woods to the north (Stable Wood) and west (Moat Wood, on the opposite side of Moat Road). To the south is an arable field, recently ploughed at the time of the monitoring visits, beyond which is an area of ancient woodland managed by Essex Wildlife Trust (Belcher's Wood and Brooke's Woods). The land immediately around Moat Farm is fairly level, at 72-73m OD, with a gentle slope down towards the Bourne Brook (a tributary of the river Colne) beginning a few hundred metres to the east. The underlying geology is seasonally-waterlogged chalky boulder clay. The character of the local landscape and dispersed

settlement pattern are typical of the 'ancient countryside' of the north Essex and south Suffolk claylands.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following archaeological background is taken from the Brief (Medlycott 2012). Moat Farm is a Grade II Listed building (HER 8630). It is a two-storied timber-framed and plastered house of early-17th-century origin, but largely rebuilt in the 19th century, with further 20th-century alterations, including a rear wing added in 1986. There is much reused timber in its frame. It is sited within a nearly square homestead moat dug on level ground and filled by surface drainage. The moat measures c. 45m overall, with arms averaging 6m wide x 1.5m deep. There is no obvious drainage channel from the moat, which is seasonally dry. An entrance causeway crosses the south-west arm; this has been widened by later tipping. The earliest surviving reference to the site is as *Mottes* in AD 1420 (in an inquisition post-mortem report). This is in keeping with our current knowledge of Essex moats, which date roughly from the 13th to 16th centuries (HER 8629) and it can be presumed that the current Moat Farm House replaced a medieval predecessor on the moated platform.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The monitoring archaeologist was present on site on the 4th and 6th December 2012 and observed the excavation of 0.5m-wide strip foundations for the north-east, south-east and south-west walls of the new garden room and reduction of the ground level across the full footprint of the extension (5.3 x 4.7m). The excavation was carried out using a 3-tonne rubber-tracked Kubota excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed 0.5m-wide bucket. The strip foundations were excavated into the natural clay geology to a depth of 1.85m, the considerable depth being a requirement of Building Regulations due to the nature of the geology and the presence of large tree roots in the vicinity. The ground level was reduced by 0.85m across the remainder of the building's footprint. Excavated soil was removed in even spits to facilitate recognition of any archaeological features and deposits.
- 3.2 All aspects of the monitoring were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and the Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2008), as well as the Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Field techniques and guidance are detailed within the PCA fieldwork induction manual (Taylor and Brown 2009).

4 RESULTS

- 4.1 The sequence of subsurface deposits was uniform across the majority of the new building's footprint. Dark brown/ black loam garden soil (1) 0.25m deep overlay a made ground layer (2) 0.20-0.25m thick. The made ground (Plate 5) comprised fairly firm mid brownish-grey clayey silt containing occasional flecks of chalk and degraded red brick/ tile. This layer contained around ten fragments of tile and two sherds of pottery, the latter both found on the interface between the made ground (2) and the natural clay (3). One potsherd is a moderately-abraded flat-topped jar rim in local medieval sandy greyware (Essex Fabric 20; 12th- to 14th-century); the other is a small body sherd in the same fabric (pers. comm. Berni Seddon). The tile is medieval peg roof tile made in a coarse sandy fabric with coarse moulding sand. This deposit appears to be a build-up of medieval occupation material, possibly levelled in the area immediately surrounding the extant house during its construction in the early 17th century. The presence of these finds on the site adds weight to the presumed medieval date of the moat and the conjectured presence of a medieval dwelling predating the early-17th-century house. No archaeological features were observed within/ cut into the made ground.
- 4.2 Directly below the made ground was the natural clay geology (3), a firm light to mid grey/ yellowish-brown clay containing abundant (40%) chalk flecks and small to medium-sized chalk nodules (10-200mm) and occasional (<5%) medium-sized (50-150mm) rounded flints (Plate 6). The natural clay was present at between 0.45 and 0.50m below existing ground level (72.70m OD).
- 4.3 A visual appraisal of the site suggests that the ground within the moat is raised slightly above the level of the surrounding landscape (Plate 1). Levels taken using GPS (Leica 1200 Smartrover) show that the interior of the moat is indeed 0.30-0.50m higher than land immediately outside it (73.15-73.21m OD within the moat adjacent to the new garden room,

compared to 72.68-72.88m outside it to the west and south, respectively). During the monitoring, it was considered whether this difference could be the result of upcast material excavated during the digging of the moat being 'dumped' on the interior of the enclosure. The exposed 'natural' clay horizon was examined with this possibility in mind, but there was little discernible difference in consistency or composition between the 'upper' and 'lower' levels of the clay. Instead, the difference in ground level is likely to be entirely due to the presence of (levelled) medieval occupation deposits within the moated enclosure and a deep garden soil from several centuries of cultivation.

- 4.4 Immediately adjoining the south-eastern gable wall of the house, removal of a modern brick path constructed by the present owner revealed a thin builder's sand bedding layer for the path, overlying a brick rubble levelling layer (6) 0.15m deep. Beneath this was made ground (2) and the natural chalky clay (3).
- 4.5 A tree hollow [4] 2m wide and 0.90m deep, with moderately-steep sides and a rounded base, cutting through the made ground and containing fairly loose greyish-brown clayey silt, was observed in the north-west-facing section of the south-eastern strip foundation. It did not extend across the full width of the foundation trench, but continued to the south beyond the excavation area. It contained old roots. It was sealed by the garden soil.
- 4.6 Where the foundation trenches of the new garden room adjoin the south-eastern gable wall of the existing 17th-century house, the foundations [5] for its timber frame were exposed and found to comprise un-bonded red bricks (dimensions: 112-115mm wide x 40-55mm deep; length not visible) laid in 3 – 4 rough header courses (between 0.17 and 0.29m high in total) directly onto 0.10m of made ground (2) overlying the natural clay (Plate 7). The bricks are un-frogged and vary in their dimensions but generally have fairly regular, 'sharp' angles. The owner of the cottage, Mr Mel Mackay,

stated that the sill beams of the gable walls were replaced by the previous owner, an architect, in the 1950s, so the observed foundation wall may consist of reused bricks and not itself be of any great antiquity. On the long sides of the building, oak sill beams rest on these shallow brick foundations.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring identified a made ground layer sealed by the current garden soil. The made ground contained local medieval (12th-14th-century) pottery and medieval peg tile and represents a build-up of medieval occupation within the moated enclosure, possibly levelled in the area immediately surrounding the present farmhouse during its construction in the early 17th century. The presence of medieval finds on the site reinforces the presumed medieval date of the surrounding moat (HER 8629) and supports the conjectured presence of a medieval dwelling predating the extant house.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited is grateful to Mr Mel Mackay for commissioning and funding the project and to Maria Medlycott and Teresa O' Connor of Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team for their assistance and advice. The author is grateful to Aileen Tierney for coordinating finds analysis and Berni Seddon (PCA in-house finds specialist) for examining the medieval pottery and tile.

7 REFERENCES

Garwood, A. Oct 2012 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring of Groundworks at Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8BW*. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, Stapleford

Gurney, D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 14, ALGAO, Gressenhall

Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

Medlycott, M. Jan 2012 *Archaeological Monitoring at Moat Farm, Stisted*. Essex County Council Historic Environment Management Team, Chelmsford

Taylor, G. and Brown, J. 2009 *Fieldwork Induction Manual*. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, London

APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: Moat Farm, view east towards 17th-century house from edge of property, beside Moat Road. Note raised level of moated platform adjacent to southern arm of moat.



Plate 2: Moat Farm House, west elevation



Plate 3: South arm of moat, view south-east



Plate 4: Location of new garden room, adjoining the south-eastern gable wall of the early-17th-century farmhouse, view north



Plate 5: Removal of Made Ground (2) and (immediately adjacent to gable wall of house) Levelling Layer (6) under archaeological supervision



Plate 6: South-eastern strip foundation (end wall of garden room), view west showing (from top to base of section): Garden Soil (1), Made Ground (2) and Natural Clay (3) (2m scale)



Plate 7: North-eastern strip foundation, view north-west showing brick foundation wall [5] for sill beam of existing timber-framed house (1m scale)

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Type	Category	Notes
(1)	Garden Soil	Layer	Organic-rich topsoil in area of moated enclosure to south of existing house
(2)	Made Ground	Layer	Medieval occupation build-up, possibly leveled during construction of 17 th -century house. Contained medieval (12 th -14 th -century) pottery and peg roof tile.
(3)	Natural Clay	Geology	Natural chalky clay, present below Made Ground (2)
[4]	Tree Hollow	Cut & Fill	Natural tree hollow cutting Made Ground (2) and sealed by Garden Soil (1), observed in south-eastern strip foundation
[5]	Brick Foundation	Structure	Brick foundation for sill beam of south-eastern gable wall of extant 17 th -century house
(6)	Leveling Layer	Layer	Brick rubble leveling deposit for modern garden path alongside gable wall of house

APPENDIX 3: OASIS SUMMARY

OASIS ID: preconst1-139568

Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring at Moat Farm, Stisted
Short description of the project	Monitoring of foundations for a new garden room adjoining the south-eastern gable wall of the existing timber-framed Moat Farm House revealed a made ground layer sealed beneath the present garden soil. This layer contained roof tile and two sherds of medieval (13th-14th century) pottery and represents the levelling of the interior of the moated enclosure prior to the construction of the present house in the early 17th century. The presence of medieval finds on the site reinforces the presumed medieval date of the surrounding moat and the likelihood that a medieval dwelling preceded the extant house.
Project dates	Start: 04-12-2012 End: 06-12-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	8629 - Related HER No.
Any associated project reference codes	8630 - Related HER No.
Any associated project reference codes	BTE/01462/11/FUL - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	BTE/01463/11/LBC - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation

Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	MADE GROUND Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Visual Inspection"
Development type	Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX BRAINTREE STISTED Moat Farm
Postcode	CM778BW
Study area	25.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 80797 27215 51 0 51 54 48 N 000 37 44 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 72.65m Max: 72.76m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project originator	Essex County Council
Project design	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

originator	
Project director/manager	Mark Hinman
Project supervisor	Tom Woolhouse
Type of sponsor/funding body	Householder
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mr Mel Mackay

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Client
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Digital Archive ID	SSMF12
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Braintree Museum
Paper Archive ID	SSMF12
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Report"

Project bibliography 1

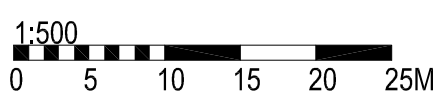
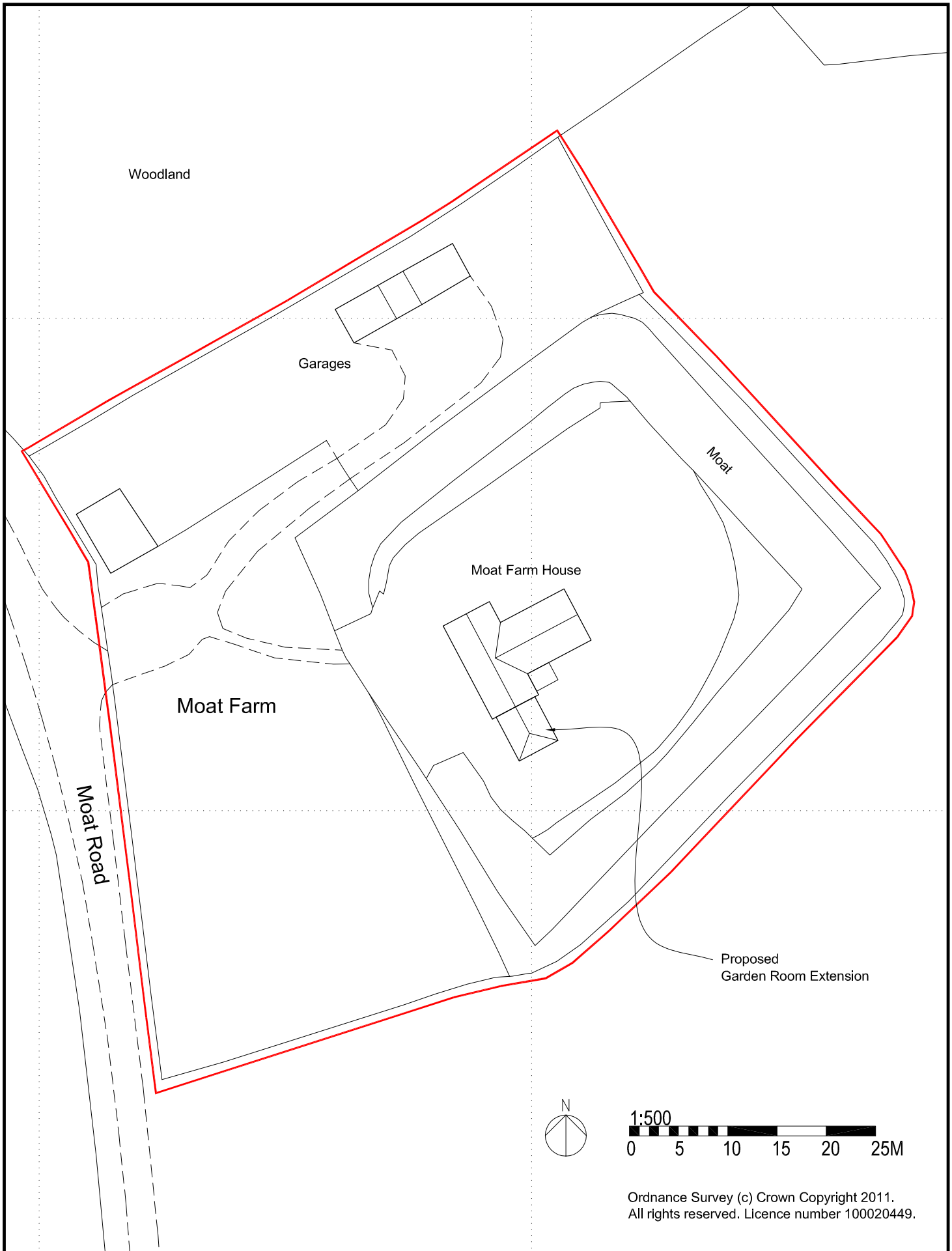
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Monitoring at Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8BW
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Woolhouse, T.
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	Stapleford
Description	A4 bound report comprising 28 pages of text, photos and a site location plan

Entered by	Tom Woolhouse (T.A.Woolhouse.99@cantab.net)
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Entered on	17 December 2012
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APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD/ ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8BW	
Parish: Stisted	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 80797 27215	Site Code: SSMF12
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring of groundworks	Site Director/Team: Tom Woolhouse, Pre-Construct Archaeology
Date of Work: 4 th -6 th December 2012	Size of Area Investigated: 25m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding source: Private client (Mr Mel Mackay, owner of Moat Farm)
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHER Nos.: HER 8629, 8630
Final Report: Woolhouse, T. 2012 <i>Archaeological Monitoring at Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex, CM77 8BW</i> . Pre-Construct Archaeology Report No. R11356	
Periods Represented: Medieval (12 th -14 th -century), Post-Medieval (c. AD 1540 - present)	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>Monitoring of foundations for a new garden room adjoining the south-eastern gable wall of the existing timber-framed house revealed a made ground layer sealed by the present garden soil. The made ground represents a build-up of medieval occupation material within the moated enclosure, possibly levelled in the area immediately surrounding the extant house prior to its construction in the early 17th century. Two sherds of local medieval sandy greyware pottery (12th-14th-century) were found in association with medieval peg roof tile in this layer and add weight to the presumed medieval date of the surrounding moat and the conjectured presence of a medieval dwelling predating the existing house.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: N/A	
Author of Summary: Tom Woolhouse	Date of Summary: 17 th December 2012



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Moat Farm, Stisted, Essex

Block Plan

Scale	Date	Drawn	No.	Rev.
1:500	Oct 2011	DG	5151 Block Plan	

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