

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST-PIT SURVEY AT  
PAYCOCKE'S, WEST STREET  
COGGESHALL  
ESSEX**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**June 2011**

## Essex HER Summary Sheet

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Paycocke's, West Street, Coggeshall, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Coggeshall	<b>District:</b> Braintree
<b>NGR:</b> TL 8422 8522	<b>Site Code:</b> CG 19
<b>Type of Work:</b> Test-pit survey	<b>Site Director/Team:</b> Andy Letch ECC FAU
<b>Dates of Work:</b> 25th & 26th May 2011	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> 3 x 0.5m square test-pits
<b>Curating Museum:</b> Artefacts retained by owner	<b>Funding Source:</b> National Trust
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>OASIS No.</b> 102939
<b>Final Report:</b> N/A	
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Late medieval post-medieval & modern	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>Three archaeological test-pits were excavated to the rear of Paycocke's, a grade I listed 16th century cloth merchant's house restored in the early part of the 20th century. The aim of this work was to determine ground stability (possible voids, etc) prior to the erection of scaffolding against the building to enable retiling works to be carried out.</p> <p>Two test-pits were dug around a small brick-paved courtyard behind the central part of the house and a third was dug at the southern end of the covered passageway leading from West Street (fig. 1). Each 0.5m square pit was hand-excavated onto firm natural ground, to depths of between 0.6 and 0.8m.</p> <p><u>Test-pit 1</u> (plate 1) was excavated in the courtyard against the south wall of the 18th century stair tower. The yard's herringbone surface reportedly dates to the restoration phase and its construction reuses old bricks from outbuildings demolished within the garden (N. Simpson National Trust warden, pers. comm).</p> <p>Beneath the courtyard surface level was a 0.52m-thick layer of mixed clay, brick and gravel of 20th century date, though also containing sherds of late medieval pottery and an interesting piece of carved bone that in the context of the site may have been used as a smoothing tool for cloth. Immediately below this was a cleaner silty clay deposit (context 2) that appeared to continue beneath the building and contained occasional fragments of roof tile and Tudor brick datable to the construction of the main part of the house. The deposit was alluvial in nature and continued below the 0.8m depth of excavation. As exposed, the wall foundations consisted of two brick courses below the sill and this was repeated in the other test-pits, suggesting the rear of the house was underpinned when the stair tower was constructed.</p> <p><u>Test-pit 2</u> (plate 2) was located against the west wall of the sitting room, now used as an information point and access route into the garden. The pit was excavated on the north side of an old water pump (plate 1, left).</p> <p>Early 20th century layers were encountered to a depth of 0.45m from current ground level. The lowest of these was a thin rubble spread (context 5) believed to originate from the</p>	

demolished outbuildings from which the yard was created. This sealed a layer of former topsoil and silty clay alluvium mixed about by prolific root action. Pottery found in this layer, though sparse, was unabraded and more closely-datable to the late medieval period, c.14th–16th century, either before Paycockes was built or in its early manifestation. Below this was a thick layer of alluvial material, similar to context 2 in test-pit 1, but containing no finds or inclusions other than root activity. Excavation ceased at 0.85m depth.

Test-pit 3 was located just beyond the covered passageway, close to a small blocked doorway on the west wall (plate 4). It was suggested that this door might have led to an old cellar below a small utility/store area between the dining and sitting rooms.

The existing loose passage surface and a French drain against the wall were dug through to encounter a layer of disturbed soil/flint and brick rubble 0.25m below existing ground level (context 8), perhaps the remains of a post-medieval surface (plate 5), though none of the constituents showed signs of compaction. This layer overlay a silty clay deposit (context 10) that was located above a thin layer of tile and brick rubble (context 9). These fragments, some relatively large (plate 6), were laid on top of the natural boulder clay, and presumably derived from the construction of the house or a post-medieval roofing phase. One brick fragment in particular has internal moulding suggesting it is a medieval chimney brick. Natural clay was recorded in this test-pit 0.6m below ground level (plate 7); a similar depth to the alluvial material found in test-pits 1 and 2.

The test-pit survey at Paycockes demonstrates the absence of cellars and other voids at the rear of the building. Instead, it has established that late medieval and post-medieval deposits are preserved here below modern (early 20th century and later) surfaces and levelling, approximately 0.45m below present ground level. Modern deposits include significant amounts of earlier material mixed in, originating from archaeological remains disturbed during the restoration phase. More ancient alluvial deposits were recorded in the courtyard to a depth of between 0.45 and 0.65, presumably overlying natural deposits of boulder clay that was found in the passage test-pit relatively high at 0.60m.

***Previous Summaries/Reports:*** None

***Author of Summary:*** Andrew Letch

***Date of Summary:*** 9th June 2011



Mapping reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of HMSO. Crown copyright. Licence no.LA100019602.

Fig.1. Location of test-pits



Plate 1 Test-pits 1 and 2 in courtyard



Plate 2 Test-pit 1 viewed to north-west (0.5m scale)



Plate 3 Test-pit 2 viewed to north (0.5m scale)



Plate 4 Location of test-pit 3 in passage



Plate 5 Earlier passage surface 8 in test-pit 3 (0.5m scale)



Plate 6 Tile layer 9 in test-pit 3 (0.5m scale)



Plate 7 Test-pit 3 viewed to south (0.25m scale)

## Appendix:

### Test-pit survey at Paycockes, Coggeshall (CG 19)

Finds report by Alan J Jacobs

#### Introduction

A total of 82 fragments of brick, tile, iron, oyster shell, stone and pottery weighing a total of 4999 grams, were recovered from seven contexts. All of the material was sorted into context and recorded by count and weight. The finds are described in table 1.

#### Pottery by Helen Walker

A total of nineteen sherds weighing 225g were recovered from three contexts. The lowest layer to contain pottery was subsoil layer 6 (test-pit 2), which produced a sherd of late medieval Sandy Orange Ware showing a sparse external plain lead glaze, and a sherd of Buff Surfaced Ware. The latter is an unglazed ware that normally has buff surfaces and/or margins and is otherwise oxidised to a reddish or orange colour. It has been found at other sites in central north-east Essex, for example at Rivenhall, Kelvedon, and at another site in Coggeshall (East Street, CG16). Very similar pottery has been collected from the site of a ploughed-out kiln at Blackmore End, Wethersfield, and may be the source of this pottery, which most likely dates to the 14th or 15th centuries. A similar date can be assigned to the Sandy Orange Ware sherd, although such pottery persisted into the 16th century.

Above layer 6, layer 4 produced a single sherd of thick-walled Post-Medieval Red Earthenware showing a lustrous all over glaze, dating between the 17th and 19th centuries. A tiny sliver of Modern White Earthenware showing a blue transfer-print, possibly willow pattern was also recovered, dating from the beginning of the 19th century onwards.

The earliest pottery from modern layer 1 comprises three sherds of residual, unglazed Sandy Orange Ware, probably of a similar date to that found in layer 6. Examples of Post-Medieval Red Earthenware (also residual) account for most of the pottery in this layer, the only diagnostic piece being part of a flanged rim dish. The dish rim, although unglazed and undecorated, is similar in form to dish rims produced in Metropolitan Slipware at Harlow, dating to the earlier to mid 17th century, perhaps c.1630 to the 1650s (Davey and Walker 2009, fig.29, type E14), although an earlier or later date cannot be precluded. The latest pottery in layer 1 comprises two sherds of Modern White Earthenware, one showing a grey transfer-print datable from the Victorian period to 20th century. The late medieval pottery may pre-date Paycocke's or date to around the time of its construction.

#### General finds

A variety of types of brick were recovered from three contexts, these consisted of a fragment of possible medieval chimney brick (context 9), two fragments of Tudor Brick (context 2), dating from the 15th to early 17th century and a more modern fragment of 18th to 19th century shaped brick (context 1). Tile fragments were more common being recovered from four contexts, no complete forms were recovered. Fragments of pan tile of 18th to 19th century date and more broadly dateable medieval/post medieval tile were recovered from context 1. The bulk of the assemblage consisted mainly of post medieval to modern tile fragments (contexts 1, 2, 8 and 9). A single stone cobble was recovered (context 1), along with two fragments of the stems of tobacco pipes (contexts 1 and 4).

Several fragments of iron were recovered including an iron fitting (context 4), a nail and an unidentified fragment of iron, steel pin and an iron ring from a chain (context 1). Glass was

present in the form of a single sherd of a brown beer or wine bottle recovered from only a single context (4). This material was all recovered from modern contexts.

Animal bone was present in only two contexts (1 and 6). The group included fragments from medium sized mammals (context 1 and 6), frog leg bones (context 1), and fragments of cattle bone. One piece of rib bone has been polished or cut flat on three sides (context 1) and appears to have been used as a burnishing tool, wearing the bone down to a very smooth surface. Mollusc shell in the form of fragments of oyster was recovered from three contexts (1, 6 and 10)

## Conclusion

The excavation of the three test-pits produced a limited finds assemblage, the bulk of which was recovered from a modern context. However, the distinct late medieval and post medieval layers (contexts 2, 6 and 9) indicate the potential survival of earlier remains in this area. In particular, the highly polished fragment of bone is possible indication of domestic activity on the site. The small size and mixed nature of the finds assemblage, with much earlier material in later contexts, limits further interpretation.

## Finds identification and quantification

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Wt (g)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Layer	3	282	Tile, fragments of pan tile, sandy oxidised fabric.	18th-19th cent
		8	556	Tile, medieval/post medieval, flat and slightly curved orange sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions, two fragments with nail holes.	1500-1900
		1	460	Stone, cobble, traces of mortar on surface.	
		1	706	Brick, fragment compact orange sandy fabric, white flint inclusions, slightly rounded and smoothed outer edge surface, roughly smoothed sides and smoothed as is the base with traces of mortar, no surviving arrises. 55mm depth.	1700-1900
		1	32	Iron, ring, part of chain? Very corroded, modern.	19th-20th cent
		7	18	Mollusc shell, fragments of oyster	
		2	24	Iron, nail and unidentified fragment	
		8	134	Animal bone, medium mammal fragments and cattle rib bone.	
		1	16	Animal bone, cattle rib bone that has been smoothed on top and bottom does not appear to be a handle; possibly a smoothing tool on cloth or leather?	
		4	1	Animal bone, frog leg bones.	
		1	1	Pin, steel.	19th-20th cent
		1	4	Pipe clay, tobacco pipe stem, abraded.	17th-20th cent
		3	28	Sandy orange ware, unglazed body sherds, late medieval.	14th-16th cent
		10	150	Post-medieval red earthenware, including flanged rim from dish, unglazed and undecorated but similar in form to rims found on Harlow Metropolitan Slipware (Davey and Walker 2009, fig.29.E14), remaining pottery comprises partially glazed base sherd perhaps from the flanged rim dish, and unglazed or internally glazed body sherds.	17th cent
		2	15	Modern white earthenware comprising a recessed base showing traces of a design in mauve and a sherd from a hollow ware showing a grey transfer-print.	Victorian -20th cent

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Wt (g)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>2</b>	Layer	1	56	Tile, post medieval, slightly curved orange sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions.	1500 - 1900
		1	106	Brick, fragment compact orange sandy fabric, very rare white flint inclusions, rounded arrises.	15th - early 17th cent
		1	658	Brick, fragment compact orange sandy fabric, very rare white flint inclusions, slightly rounded and smoothed upper surface, roughly smoothed sides and smoothed concave base, rounded arrises, traces of water staining on surfaces. 108mm by 42mm depth.	15th - early 17th cent
<b>4</b>	Layer	1	52	Iron fitting, rounded rectangular, 75mm long.	Post -med
		1	10	Glass, fragment of bottle, green and tarnished grey blue.	18th-19th cent
		1	4	Pipe clay, tobacco pipe stem, abraded.	17th-20th cent
		1	8	Post-medieval red earthenware body sherd, thick-walled and showing an all over glaze.	17th to 19th century
		1	1	Modern white earthenware, small sliver showing blue transfer-print, possibly willow pattern.	19th cent +
<b>6</b>	Layer	4	26	Mollusc shell, fragments of oyster	
		1	2	Animal bone, fragment of medium mammal rib.	
		1	1	Sandy orange ware, thin walled body sherd showing sparse external plain lead glaze, probably late medieval	14th-16th cent
		1	22	Buff surfaced ware, unglazed body sherd from large vessel showing buff external margin and orange internal margin and surfaces, internally abraded	14th-15th cent
<b>8</b>	Layer	6	220	Tile, post medieval roof tile fragments, sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions, some fragments slightly burnt, one with mortar on the surface.	1500-1900
<b>9</b>	Layer	1	338	Brick fragment with curved interior surface, medieval chimney brick?	14th-16th cent
		1	748	Tile, substantial fragment post medieval, slightly curved orange sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions, traces of mortar on surface edges, 165mm wide.	1500-1900
		5	300	Tile, fragments, post medieval, slightly curved orange sandy fabric with occasional flint inclusions; some examples burnt one with nail hole.	1500-1900
<b>10</b>		1	20	Mollusc shell, fragment of oyster	
<b>Total</b>		<b>82</b>	<b>4999</b>		