

**MULBERRY GREEN HOUSE  
MULBERRY GREEN  
OLD HARLOW  
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY  
TRIAL TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**February 2006**

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OLD HARLOW  
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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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**MULBERRY GREEN HOUSE**  
**MULBERRY GREEN, OLD HARLOW**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL TRENCHING**

**Client:** Bermac Properties PLC

**FAU Project No.:** 1584

**NGR:** TL 4779 1152

**Planning Application Nos.:** HLW/0242/05 and HLW/0290/05

**Site Code:** HAMG06

**Date of Fieldwork:** 6th to 8th February 2006

### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation, consisting of four trenches, was carried out to the rear of Mulberry Green House, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow. Only two archaeological features were identified, both of which were probably Victorian in date. A deep pit, in Trench 1, containing a loamy fill with post-medieval brick and pottery at its base, was likely created as a planting hole, with the finds placed to aid drainage. The second feature was located in Trench 2 and was part of a planting bed; the fill of which contained a high humic content, suggesting that the soil had been improved. Both of the features were probably related to the garden of Mulberry Green house itself which was a Grade II\* listed building, dating to the 18th century.*

*No earlier archaeological features or finds were identified in any of the trenches and the western side of the development area was heavily disturbed by modern services. The garden features are of relatively low archaeological significance and it is unlikely that earlier remains exist within the development area.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report contains the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out prior to the determination of a planning consent for the construction of residential dwellings at Mulberry Green House, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow, Essex (Fig. 1). The evaluation consisted of trial trenching in a general area of known archaeological potential. The investigation was designed to determine the presence, nature, date and survival of any archaeological remains in the proposed development area.

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the evaluation for Bermac Properties Plc. The project was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Management (HEM) Team of Essex County Council, who also monitored the work. The site archive will be deposited at Harlow Museum. A copy of this report will be deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), a further copy will also be uploaded to the OASIS database and a summary will appear in Essex Archaeology and History (EAH).

This report initially describes the background to the project, followed by the fieldwork results and the finds report. An overall discussion and conclusion, followed by an assessment of the results are at the end. The appendices include trench, context and finds data, in addition to the details of the archive contents and the EHER summary. All illustrations are placed together towards the back of the report.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Planning**

Two planning applications (HLW/0242/05 and HLW/0290/05) for the construction of ten houses, one flat and a garage were submitted to Harlow District Council. The HEM Team of Essex County Council, due to the perceived archaeological potential of the proposed development area, advised that a full condition should be attached to any future planning consent.

### **2.2 Location and Topography**

The proposed development lies within a 4500<sup>2</sup>m parcel of land bounded to the east and west by property boundaries, to the south by Gliden way and to the north by Mulberry Green (TL 4779 1152) (Fig.1). It lies to the immediate south and west of Mulberry Green House.

The site is currently a garden that has recently been cleared of scrub. It is a relatively flat, and has some mature trees around the edge. Along the western edge of the house a thin layer of tarmac and modern levelling material overlie the natural geology.

### **2.3 Geology**

The depth of the topsoil averaged c.0.30m, although three trenches exhibited a significant sub-soil layer of disturbed silty-clay up to c.0.25m deep. Modern inclusions within this lower layer suggested that it was disturbed by rooting and the recent clearing of scrub.

The drift geology of the site was generally that of pale brown boulder-clay.

### **2.4 History and Archaeology**

The general area of the site is known to contain archaeological remains dating from the Neolithic through to the 20th century. The Stort valley has been occupied since at least the Bronze Age and a small Roman Town developed to the north of the site in the Holbrooks area of Harlow. The immediate area of the site contains a number of Medieval foci such as Harlowbury, Churchgate and Old Harlow (Medlycott 1998).

Mulberry Green was a probably originally a small post-medieval settlement. While Mulberry Green is now subsumed by Old Harlow, which itself is now only a part of Harlow, a number of buildings dating to the 16th, 17th and 18th century survive. Mulberry Green House (HER 31695) itself dates to the 18th century and is Grade II\* listed, although presently badly fire damaged.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The archaeological work was undertaken to determine whether archaeological features survive within the proposed development area and to assess the nature of any archaeological deposits.

The main aim of the work was to locate, identify and record any surviving remains. With more specific aims seeking to identify:

- The presence and nature of medieval and post-medieval deposits within the historic settlement.
- Medieval and post-medieval structural evidence.
- Medieval and post-medieval property boundaries.
- Evidence of back-land craft/industrial activity.
- Evidence of dating, trade, distribution networks and socio-economic factors from the artefactual assemblages.

### **4. METHOD**

A mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed bucket was used to open four trenches under archaeological supervision. This represents a 3% sample of the total development area

Standard ECC FAU methodologies were employed with regard to excavation and recording. The machine-excavated surface of the trenches was sufficiently cleaned to ensure that any features present were visible. Archaeological features and deposits were excavated using hand tools. All features exposed within the trenches were recorded using the FAU's context recording system. Linear features were sampled by at least one excavated segment and discrete features were 50% excavated. All artefacts from the excavated features were collected to aid dating and characterisation. Surveying and planning was tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record consisting of colour slide and black and white print was maintained throughout the course of the investigation.

Both the fieldwork and the reporting have been carried out to professional standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*IFA*) (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999) and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers for the East of England (*ALGAO*) (Gurney 2003).

## **5. FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig.2)**

Four trenches were positioned to provide a representative sample of the potential archaeological remains across the site. All of the trenches, except one, measured approximately 20m by 1.7m. Trench 4 was shortened to 17m to avoid drainage pipes. Each trench is discussed in more detail below.

Further information on the trenches is presented in Appendix 1 and individual features are listed in Appendix 2. All pertinent trench plans (Figs 1 and 2) are situated at the rear of the report. Finds recovered from the fills of the features are discussed in Section 6, below.

The geological deposit was seen to mainly be pale brown clay silt, with patches of pale brown silty sand scattered across the site. A number of natural features were investigated that proved to be root disturbance. The average depth of the topsoil across the site was 0.3m with approximately 0.25m of disturbed subsoil below this. A number of modern services ran approximately north-south along the western edge of the site, these were recorded on plan.

### **5.1 Trench 1**

Located along the western edge of the proposed development area this trench was aligned north-south. It was machine-excavated to a depth of 0.48m. The southern half of the trench was heavily disturbed by modern services and the natural geology was not seen. Only at the northern end of the trench was the undisturbed geological deposit identified. A single feature, pit 1, was investigated. It was located at the northern end of the trench and extended beyond the eastern baulk. The 0.56m deep pit and it was filled with post-medieval brick and tilerubble mixed with dark loam. It is likely that this pit was dug to place a plant into and that the rubblely fill was added to aid drainage to the plant's roots.

### **5.2 Trench 2**

Situated along the eastern edge of the site, Trench 2 was orientated north-south. It was machine-excavated to a depth of 0.32m onto the undisturbed natural geology. A single feature, ditch 3, was identified running east – west across the northern end of the trench. It was 2.3m wide and 0.26m deep. The silty clay fill contained a considerable amount of humic material that may have been added to improve the clay soil. It is likely, given its shallowness and the nature of the fill, that this feature was a planting bed rather than a true ditch. The finds recovered indicate a post-medieval date for this feature.



### **5.3 Trench 3**

Located to the north of Trenches 1 and 2, Trench 3 ran east-west. It was machine-excavated to a depth of 0.35m onto the undisturbed natural geology. The eastern end of the trench was heavily disturbed by tree roots and the western end by modern disturbance from the construction/demolition of a modern wall. No archaeological features were identified and no finds were collected from this trench.

### **5.4 Trench 4**

Situated immediately to the west of Mulberry Green House, Trench 4 was orientated north-south. It was machine-excavated through tarmac and modern levelling material onto the undisturbed geology at a depth of 0.44m. The length of the trench was shortened to 17m to avoid live drainage pipes at the northern end. No archaeological features were identified and no finds collected.

## **6. FINDS** by Joyce Compton

Post-medieval and modern finds were recovered from two excavated contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full details can be found in Appendix 3.

Almost all of the finds date to the late Victorian period or later. The pottery from the fill of pit 1 comprises three large vessels, which probably originated in a kitchen area. There is a thick body sherd in post-medieval red earthenware, probably derived from a bread crock, or similar. The rim sherds are also from large vessels - basins, tureens or similar. The very small brick fragments from the same feature include the corner of a London 'stock' brick.

Similarly-dated finds in smaller amounts were recovered from the fill of ditch 3. The white earthenware rim sherd is from a serving-dish and the bottle glass is derived from a medicinal phial-type vessel. The roof tile fragments are not closely datable within the post-medieval period, and there are two undatable items (an iron shaft and an oyster shell). The iron shaft has a circular cross-section and thus is unlikely to be a nail. Since it is broken at both ends, however, the parent object cannot be identified.

As the finds are relatively recent, no further work is required. All of the finds have been discarded following recording.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

The only archaeological remains identified were garden features which probably date to the Victorian period or later. This is not unexpected, as Mulberry Green House itself dates to the 18th century. The finds recovered were all seemingly domestic in nature and were probably deposited as an aid to drainage for planting, a practice that is still commonplace today in heavy clay soils.

While the fieldwork shows that archaeological features do survive in the development area it seems likely that they all relate to 19th century gardening activity. No evidence was uncovered of earlier or more widespread activity on the site and it is assumed that medieval occupation in the general area did not extend into the development area.

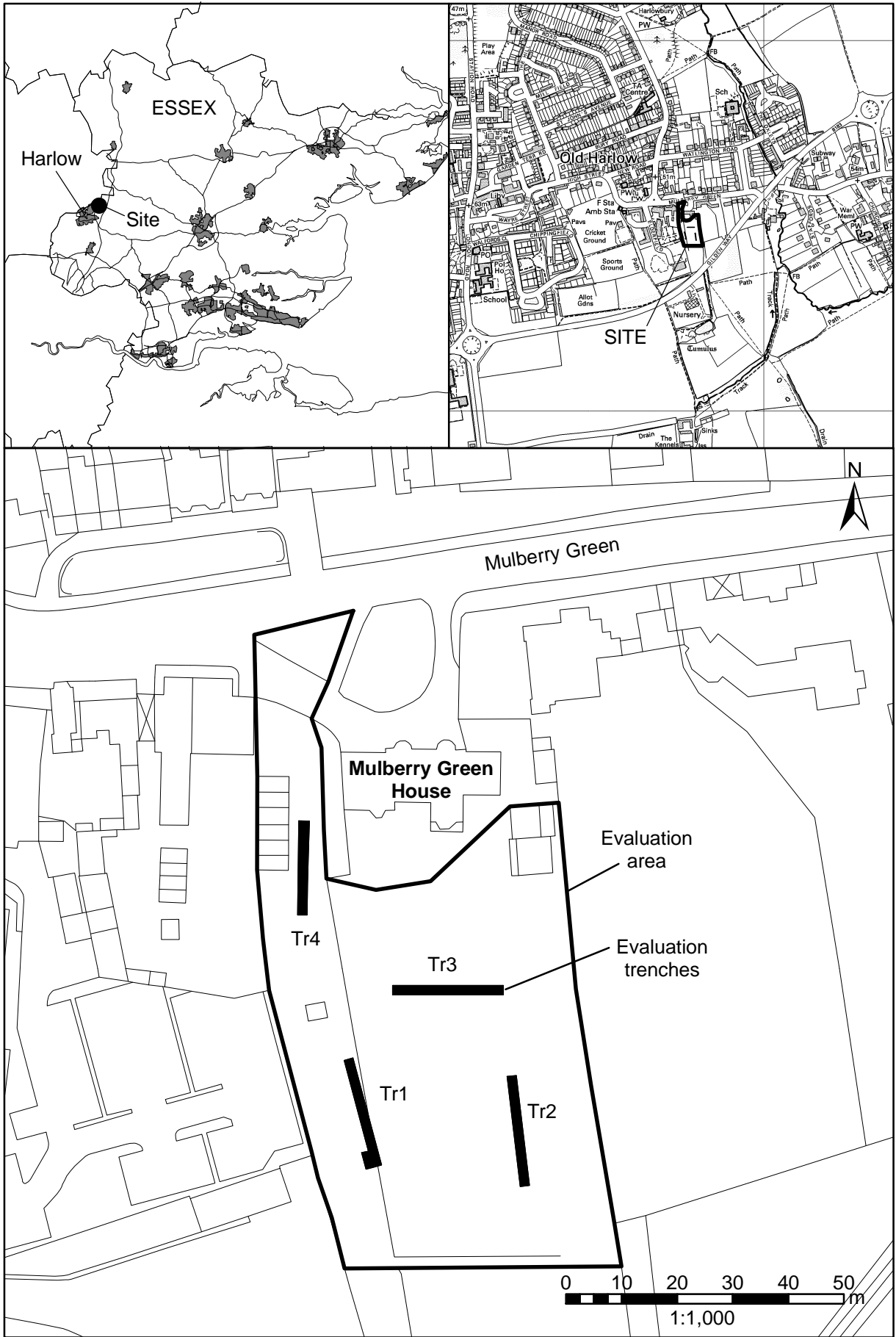
It is anticipated that the Local Planning Authority will not require further archaeological works to be undertaken on the development area.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project was commissioned by Bermac Properties PLC, and thanks are due to Mr A Temperton for his assistance. The project was conducted by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit. All finds were analysed by Joyce Compton. Digitising of plans and digital illustration was undertaken by Andy Lewsey. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson of ECC FAU. Vanessa Clarke of the ECC HEM Team monitored the evaluation. The fieldwork was carried out by the author.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Clarke, V. 2005 *Brief for an Archaeological Investigation at Mulberry Green House, Mulberry Green, Harlow* ECC HEM Brief
- Gurney, D. 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeol. Occ. Pap. **14**
- Medlycott, M. 1998 *Harlow, Historic Towns Project Assessment Report*. ECC Assessment Report



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Fig.1. Location of evaluation trenches

Fig.2. Trench details

Key



Modern disturbance



Modern pipe trench

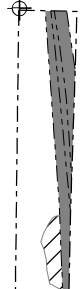


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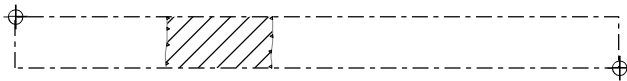
TL47776,11526



Trench 4

TL47778,11509

TL47793,11496



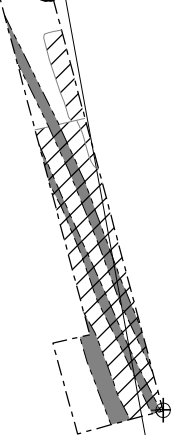
Trench 3

TL47813,11495

TL47784,11483

Trench 1

Pit 1

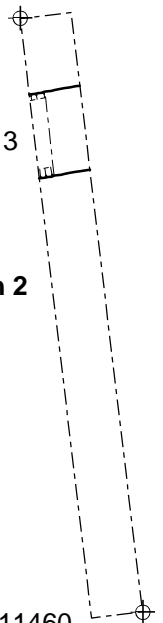


TL47791,11464

TL47814,11480

Ditch 3

Trench 2



TL47818,11460

## APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY

Trench No	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Features
1	20	1.7	0.48	34	Yes
2	20	1.7	0.32	34	Yes
3	20	1.7	0.35	34	No
4	17	1.7	0.44	28.9	No

## APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Context	Fill of	Trench	Category	Details	Period
1	-	1	Pit	Planting pit	
2	1	1	Fill	Backfill probably to aid drainage to roots	Post-medieval
3	-	2	Ditch	Possible planting bed	
4	3	2	Fill	Loamy fill – possible improved soil	Post-medieval

## APPENDIX 3: FINDS DATA

Finds data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
2	1	11	530	Brick fragments, one is a 'stock' brick corner, the rest are red	Post med/ modern
		3	106	Pottery; body sherd, large vessel PMRE; rim sherd, kitchen earthenware; rim sherd, large vessel, white earthenware, blue transfer-printed edging	Victorian or later
4	3	1	50	Iron shaft, not a nail	-
		1	16	Oyster shell, one valve, pierced by 15 x 12mm hole	-
		1	4	Glass; phial neck sherd, pale blue-green	Post med.
		2	132	Roof tile fragments	Post med.
		1	10	Pottery; white earthenware dish rim sherd, blue transfer-printed	Victorian or later



## **APPENDIX 4: ARCHIVE INDEX**

**SITE NAME: HAMG06**

### **Index to the Archive**

File containing:

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation/Watching Brief
- 1.2 Specification for Evaluation/Watching Brief.

**2. Research Archive**

- 2.1 Evaluation Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports

**3. Site Archive**

- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Original Context Records 1 to 4
- 3.3 Trench Sheets 1 to 4
- 3.4 Photographic Register x 2
- 3.5 Site Photographic Record (6 x B+W Prints; 6 x colour slides)
- 3.6 Site Plans and Sections (1 x A1 sheet and 2 x A5 sheets)

No finds were retained

## APPENDIX 5: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Mulberry Green House, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow, Essex.	
<b>Parish:</b> Harlow	<b>District:</b> Harlow
<b>NGR:</b> TL 4779 1152	<b>Site Code:</b> HAMG 06
<b>Type of Work:</b> Evaluation by Trial Trenching	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> A Robertson ECC Field Archaeology Unit
<b>Date of Work:</b> 6th to 8th Feb 2006	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> Development area 4500 <sup>2</sup> m 4 trenches = 131 <sup>2</sup> m (3 %)
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Harlow	<b>Funding Source:</b> Bermac Properties PLC
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER Nos:</b> 31695
<b>Final Report:</b> EAH Summary.	
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Post-medieval Modern	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>An archaeological evaluation, consisting of four trenches, was carried out to the rear of Mulberry Green House, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow. Only two archaeological features were identified, both of which were probably Victorian in date. A deep pit, in Trench 1, containing a loamy fill with post-medieval brick and pottery at its base, was likely created as a planting hole, with the finds placed to aid drainage. The second feature was located in Trench 2 and was part of a planting bed; the fill of which contained a high humic content, suggesting that the soil had been improved. Both of the features were probably related to the garden of Mulberry Green house itself which was a Grade II* listed building, dating to the 18th century.</p> <p>No earlier archaeological features or finds were identified in any of the trenches and the western side of the development area was heavily disturbed by modern services. The garden features are of relatively low archaeological significance and it is unlikely that earlier remains exist within the development area.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b> N/A	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Andrew Robertson (ECC FAU)	<b>Date of Summary:</b> February 2006