

**AYLEWARDS FARM
BRAINTREE ROAD, GOSFIELD
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

August 2008

AYLEWARDS FARM
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ESSEX

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Doc. Ref.	1881Report.doc
Report Issue Date	August 2008
Circulation	Mr W. Watson Steele
	ECC HEM & HER
	Braintree Museum

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AYLEWARDS FARM, BRAINTREE ROAD, GOSFIELD, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

Client: Mr W. Watson Steele

Planning application no: BTE/02122/07

Grid reference: TL 77738 28657

Date of fieldwork: 11/8/08 to 13/8/08

Site Code: GFAF 08

ECC FAU project number: 1881

Oasis reference: essexcou1-47184

SUMMARY

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit monitored the groundworks for a new house on the former site of a 17th-century farmhouse at Aylewards Farm, Gosfield. The groundworks revealed a ditch and three pits dating from the 12th/early 13th century, and the remains of the 17th-century farmhouse. The medieval features contained small amounts of medieval pottery, mostly Hedingham Coarse Ware.

It is concluded from the presence of the medieval features and pottery that Aylewards Farm dates back to the 12th/early 13th century or earlier. It is thought likely that further archaeological remains relating to the development of the farm over the last eight centuries survive below ground level in the garden surrounding the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks for a new house at Aylewards Farm, Gosfield. The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr W. Watson Steele and was undertaken by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit. It was carried out on the recommendation of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM) and was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological brief (ECC HEM 2008).

Copies of this report will be supplied to Mr Watson Steele, ECC HEM, the Essex Historic Environment Record and Braintree Museum. A digital version will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (www.oasis.ac.uk). The project archive will be deposited at Braintree Museum.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Location and geology

Aylewards Farm is situated amidst arable farmland, 1km south-west of the village of Gosfield (Fig. 1). The farm is accessed via a farm track leading off Braintree Road (the A1017). The farm overlooks Gosfield Lake and a tributary of the River Colne called the Bourne Brook. The new house replaces an earlier 17th-century farmhouse and is located immediately east of the farmyard.

The surface geology of the area comprises brownish yellow silt clay beneath a thin layer of dark brown topsoil.

Archaeological background

The following information has been obtained from the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (EHER 29053) and English Heritage's online list of Listed Buildings (LBS number 114662).

Aylewards Farm is named after its 15th-century owner Richard Ayleward and was formerly one of the nine manors of Gosfield.

A 17th-century timber-framed house occupied the development site until very recently. The house rested on a brick plinth and stood two storeys tall. It had two red brick chimney stacks and was roughly rendered. It also had a brick cellar and a double range red tiled roof with

two feature gables. A wing was added to the southern side of the house in the 19th or 20th century.

The 17th-century part of the house was de-listed and demolished after it was severely damaged by fire in 2005. The cellar and the 19th/20th-century wing were retained.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project was to preserve by record any archaeological deposits that were likely to be destroyed by the construction of the new building.

The objectives of the project were to ascertain the age of the farm and to establish if the 17th-century house had been preceded by an earlier sequence of buildings.

Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2: Research Agenda and Strategy identifies the evolution of the medieval house and farmstead as area for further research (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

4. METHOD

The archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IFA 1999; Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The ECC FAU uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features (ECC FAU 2006).

The project monitored the removal of a thin layer of concrete between the cellar and the 20th-century wing, and a thin layer of topsoil to the immediate east of it. Both deposits rested on natural clay and were removed by a tracked excavator with a broad toothless bucket. The exposed surface of the underlying clay was inspected for archaeological features and finds.

5. FIELDWORK RESULTS

The groundworks revealed a small number of medieval features and the remains of the 17th-century farmhouse (Fig. 2). Because none of the medieval features were very deep, it was possible that the site had been previously truncated. Further information about the medieval and post-medieval features can be found in Appendix 1.

Medieval

The medieval features comprised three pits (4, 7 and 8) and a ditch (16), with the majority of them lying within the footprint of the 17th-century house. All of them contained single fills and pieces of 12th/early 13th-century pottery. Other finds from the features included a small quantity of oyster shell and a fragment of roof tile. The ditch and the 17th-century house lay perpendicular to each other.

Post-medieval

The remains of the 17th-century house comprised the cellar (27), part of a possible construction cut for the cellar (9), and two wall foundation trenches (28 and 29). None of them were archaeologically excavated.

The cellar was constructed from red un-frogged bricks and lime-based mortar in an English bond. It had a brick-paved floor and measured 6.35m long, 5m wide and 1.8m deep. The walls of the cellar were 0.3m thick. There was no indication of an entranceway.

The possible construction cut for the cellar was large and irregularly shaped (9). The backfill of the feature contained occasional pieces of red brick and tile. A sherd of 17th/early 18th-century pottery was found lying on its surface.

A 2m wide gap between the wall foundation trenches may have been part of an entranceway. The wall in trench 28 still partially survived and was constructed from red bricks like the ones in the cellar. The walls in both trenches are likely to have been part of the plinth on which the superstructure of the timber-framed house would have rested. Two pits (5 and 10) cut by the trenches must have been in use during the 17th century or earlier. Neither pit was investigated, due to access constraints.

Undated

Three features remain undated (6, 19 and 25). None of them were archaeologically investigated. Feature 25 was possibly part of an internal division within the 17th-century house because it was aligned on the south-western wall of the cellar. Feature 19 at the

south-western end of it may have been part of it, although it was too poorly defined to confirm this. On the surface of the feature lay a sherd of medieval coarse ware. Post-hole 6 was situated halfway between wall foundation trenches 28 and 29. Its purpose remains unknown.

6. FINDS, by Joyce Compton

Small groups of finds were recovered from eight contexts. All of the material has been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The largest assemblage component is pottery, which forms the subject of a separate report, see below. The remaining finds are few, comprising an undiagnostic fragment of roof tile in the fill of pit 4, a single piece of animal bone in the fill of ditch 16 and a small quantity of oyster shell, amounting to 11 pieces, weighing 64g. The shell was found in three contexts, the fills of pit 4 and ditch 16 and from the surface of construction cut 9, with pit 4 producing the majority. Medieval pottery was recovered from all three contexts.

Medieval and later pottery by Helen Walker

A small amount of pottery, forty-nine sherds, weighing 596g, was excavated from eight contexts (Appendix 2). The pottery has been catalogued according to Cunningham's typology of post-Roman pottery in Essex (Cunningham 1985, 1-16). Most of the pottery comprises medieval coarse ware, a high percentage of which is Hedingham coarse ware, which can be distinguished from other coarse wares by its relatively fine fabric and smooth surfaces. Its abundance is unsurprising as there is a Hedingham ware kiln site (one of around sixteen production sites scattered around north-central Essex) located at Harmas Farm, less than 1km to the west of Aylewards Farm (ERO 06283). The fact that many Hedingham coarse ware sherds have fire-blackened surfaces shows that they have been used (probably for cooking) and therefore do not constitute evidence of pottery production at Aylewards Farm.

The most interesting find is part of a Hedingham coarse ware storage jar from the surface of ditch 16 (finds context 14) decorated with thumbing and thumbled applied strips, and most likely dating to c.1200. Also from this ditch is a fragment of B4 cooking pot rim of a similar date, and a thin-walled sherd with rilled surfaces in the manner of Thetford-type ware, which could be as early as 12th century. Pottery of a similar c.1200 date was excavated from adjacent pits 4, 7 and 8. Pit 4 (fill 11), produced a single sherd of Hedingham fine ware, the only fine ware to be found at this site, exhibiting a single splash of clear glaze. Its creamy-orange fabric suggests a 13th rather than a 12th century date. Most sherds from pit 4 show

post-breakage accretions, possibly cess. Diagnostic pottery in pit 7 comprises a hollowed everted jar rim in medieval coarse ware. This is an unusual rim type for medieval coarse ware and is more typical of Saxo-Norman pottery such as Thetford-type ware, again suggesting an early date of the 12th century. A single sherd of medieval coarse ware was excavated from the surface of pit 19 (finds context 18).

The dearth of fine wares suggests that the pottery is from service rather than living areas. Little else can be said about function except for the storage jar; similar storage jars in Thetford-type ware were used to transport grain (Kilmurry 1980, 170), and fragments from Hedingham ware storage jars were found at a windmill site in Boreham (Walker 2003, fig.25.12), so it is possible that grain was grown (or milled) here in the early medieval period. However, use as a container for grain does not explain the patch of fire-blackening on the inside of the neck of this vessel.

The medieval pottery spans the later 12th to earlier 13th centuries and there is no evidence (from the pottery) of later activity apart from a black-glazed ware handle from construction cut 9. Black-glazed ware was produced from the later 16th century, but was most abundant during the 17th to early 18th centuries, and is therefore probably contemporary with occupation of the 17th-century house.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological monitoring has found a medieval ditch and a small number of medieval pits and has recorded the remains of the 17th-century farmhouse. The discovery of the medieval features and finds is significant because it suggests Aylewards Farm has been in existence since at least the 12th/early 13th century. A degree of continuity in the development of the farm between the 12th and 17th centuries is perhaps recorded in the repeating of the alignment of the medieval ditch by the 17th-century farmhouse. It is likely that the ditch was used as a drain and a boundary. The function of the pits remains uncertain, although analysis of the staining on some of the pottery sherds suggests that they may have been used as cess pits. An earlier house is likely to have preceded the 17th-century farmhouse, although the groundworks have revealed no direct evidence to confirm this. The location of this conjectured earlier house is not known, although it is likely to be somewhere in the near vicinity.

Documentary and place name evidence suggest that many of the county's existing farms have late medieval or earlier origins, although few archaeological investigations have been

carried out to confirm this. The information obtained from Aylewards Farm is therefore welcome because it begins to redress this. The continued existence of the farm for at least 800 years accords with information obtained from archaeological work along the A130, which has suggested that most of the farms which have survived from the medieval period onwards have tended to be the larger establishments and the manorial centres (Dale *et al* 2005). Aylewards Farm appears to have been no exception to this, since it was formerly one of the nine manors of Gosfield.

8. ASSESSMENT

The archaeological monitoring has discovered a small number of medieval features, despite the site probably having been partly truncated. It is likely that the medieval features and the 17th-century house represent one small part of a medieval and post-medieval farm, and that further archaeological remains relating to that farm and its development survive below ground level in the immediate area surrounding the site. The archaeological remains are likely to include enclosures, pits and ditches, and the remains of timber farmhouses, workshops and barns.

Although the finds assemblage is small, it is cohesive with very little that could be post-medieval or modern. The excavated features have been truncated, presumably by later activity, but have nevertheless provided evidence for the medieval origins of Aylewards Farm. No further work is required on any of the material and all of the finds should be retained.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Essex County Council Field Archaeological Unit would like to thank Mr W. Watson-Steele for his assistance and co-operation.

The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Trevor Ennis, Mark Germany and Dave Smith. The finds were processed by Phil McMichael and were analysed by Joyce Compton and Helen Walker. Figures 1 and 2 were drawn by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby, and was monitored by Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

No	Category	Description	Date
1	Artefacts	Unstratified surface finds	
2	Not used		
3	Not used		
4	Pit	Elongated oval pit with gradual-sloping sides and a concave base. 1.5m long, 0.85m wide, 0.07m deep. Filled by 11	12th/early 13th century
5	Pit	Small rounded pit. 1.15m long, 0.25m+ deep. Filled by 20. Cut by wall foundation trench 28. Not excavated	17th century or earlier
6	Post-hole	Small circular post/stake-hole. 0.15m diameter. Filled by 21. Not excavated	Undated
7	Pit	Oval pit with steeply-sloping sides and a concave base. 1m long, 0.7m wide, 0.26m deep. Filled by 13	12th/early 13th century
8	Pit	Elongated pit with moderately-sloping sides and a concave base. 1.78m long, 0.56m wide, 0.1m deep. Filled by 12	12th/early 13th century
9	Construction cut	Possible construction cut for adjacent cellar 27. Irregular plan. 5.5m long, 3m wide. Filled by 23. Not excavated	Post-medieval
10	Pit	Rounded pit or post-hole. 0.8m long, 0.55m wide. Filled by 22. Not excavated	17th century or earlier
11	Fill	Single fill of pit 4. Brownish grey plastic silt clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal	12th/early 13th century
12	Fill	Single fill of pit 8. Brownish grey plastic silt clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal	12th/early 13th century
13	Fill	Single fill of pit 7. Brownish grey plastic silt clay with infrequent gravel and flecks of charcoal and occasional large nodules of flint	12th/early 13th century
14	Artefacts	Surface finds. Ditch 16	
15	Fill	Single fill of ditch 16. Greyish brown plastic silt clay with infrequent gravel, large nodules of flint, and flecks of charcoal	12th/early 13th century
16	Ditch	Irregular-sided ditch with gradually-sloping sides and a slightly concave base. 3.5m+ long, 1.09m wide, 0.18m deep. Filled by 15. Uncertain stratigraphic relationship with cut-feature 26	12th/early 13th century
17	Artefacts	Surface finds. Construction cut 9	
18	Artefacts	Surface finds. Pit 19	
19	Pit	Elongated pit. 1m+ long, 0.45m wide. Filled by 24. Not excavated	?17th century
20	Fill	Unexcavated fill of pit 5. Greyish brown silt clay	17th century or earlier
21	Fill	Unexcavated fill of post/stake-hole 6. Not recorded	Undated
22	Fill	Unexcavated fill of pit 10. Greyish brown silt clay	17th century or earlier
23	Fill	Unexcavated fill of construction cut 9. Yellowish brown silt sand clay. Contains pieces of post-medieval brick and tile	Post-medieval
24	Fill	Unexcavated fill of pit 19. Greyish brown silt clay	?17th century

No	Category	Description	Date
25	Cut-feature	Large cut-feature, partly destroyed by later disturbance. 2.5m+ long, 0.6m+ wide. Filled by 26. Not unexcavated. Uncertain stratigraphic relationship with ditch 16	?17th century
26	Fill	Unexcavated fill of cut-feature 25. Yellowish brown silt clay	?17th century
27	Cellar	Constructed from red, un-frogged bricks and lime-based mortar in an English bond. 6.35m long, 5m wide, 1.8m deep. Walls are 0.3m wide. Brick floor.	17th century
28	Wall foundation trench	Foundation trench for brick wall. Part of 17th-century house. 0.3m wide, 4.25m long. Not excavated. Fill not recorded. Contains loose red bricks. Cuts pit 5	17th century
29	Wall foundation trench	Foundation trench for brick wall. Part of 17th-century house. 0.7m wide, 5m+ long. Not excavated. Fill not recorded. Contains loose red bricks. Cuts pit 10	17th century

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Finds data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
1	Finds	1	6	Pottery; body sherd	Medieval
11	4	9	52	Shell; oyster, seven valves and fragments	-
		1	42	Roof tile fragment	Med/post med.
		7	100	Pottery; base and body sherds	Medieval
12	8	5	32	Pottery; base and body sherds	Medieval
13	7	6	70	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Medieval
14	Finds	15	264	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Medieval
15	16	1	40	Animal bone; metacarpus, proximal end, cattle	-
		1	4	Shell; oyster, one valve, small example	-
		13	98	Pottery; body sherds	Medieval
17	Finds	1	8	Shell; oyster, one valve	-
		1	22	Pottery; body/handle sherd	Post med.
18	Finds	1	4	Pottery; body sherd	Medieval

Pottery data

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
1	Finds	1	6	Medieval coarse ware, body sherd, fire-blackened	later 12th to 14th C
11	4	1	7	Hedingham fine ware, creamy orange fabric, single splash of clear glaze, accretion on surfaces and breaks	13th to early 14th C
		6	93	Hedingham coarse ware, misc. sherds including sagging base, some sherds are fire-blackened, and most show accretions on surfaces and breaks	later 12th to mid 14th C
12	8	1	8	Early medieval ware, external fire-blackening	10th to 13th C
		1	2	Hedingham coarse ware, thin-walled rilled sherd	12th C or later
		3	22	Medieval coarse ware, misc. sherds including sagging base	later 12th to 14th C

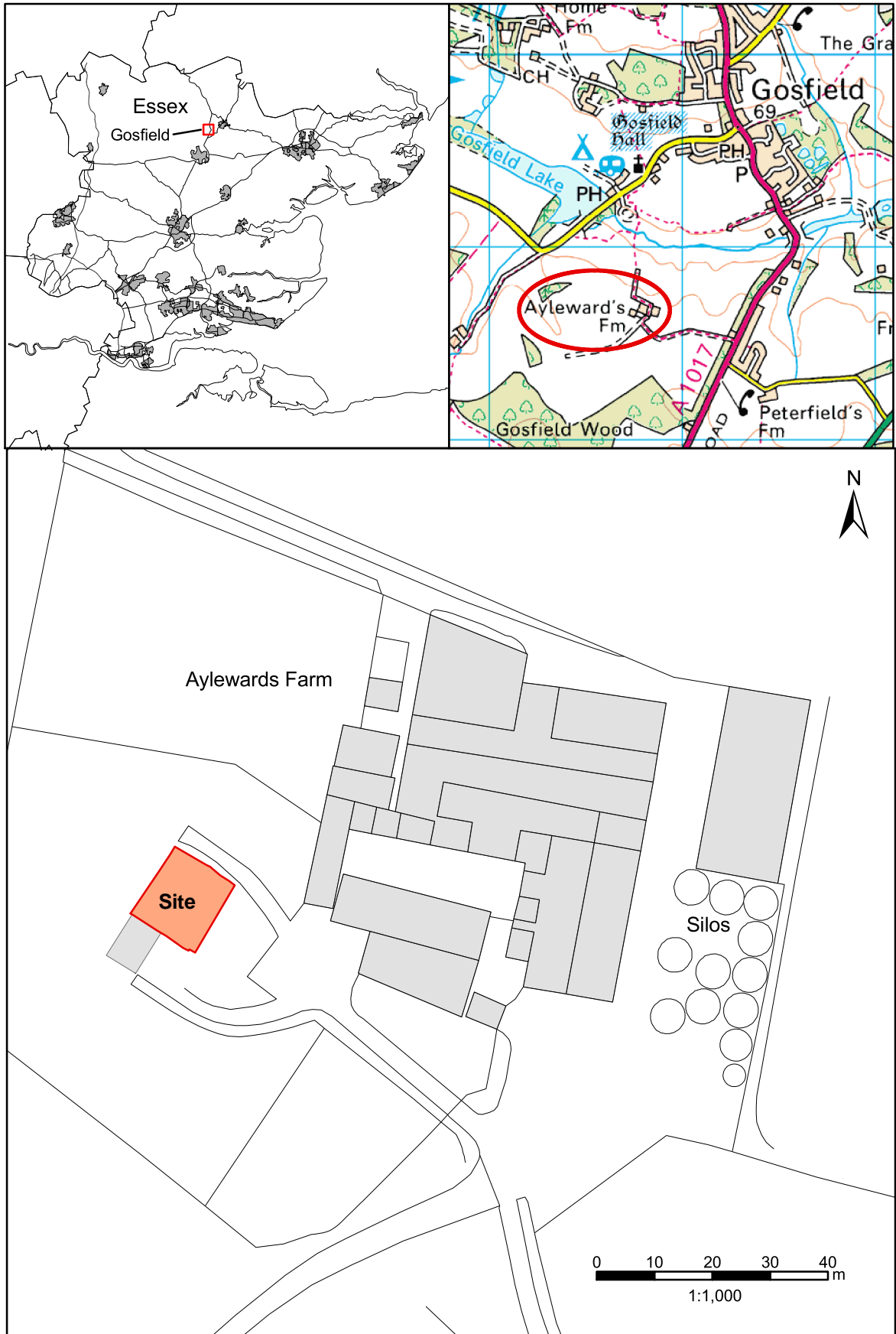
Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
13	7	3	17	Medieval coarse ware, hollowed everted rim from small jar and misc. body sherds	12th C or later
		3	53	Hedingham coarse ware, includes sherd from shoulder of vessel showing slight rilling, and base sherd with traces of fire-blackening on sides	later 12th to mid 14th C
14	Finds	2	33	Transitional sandy ware, body sherds, possibly early products of the Hedingham industry	12th to early 13th C
		1	6	Medieval coarse ware, body sherd	later 12th to 14th C
		12	225	Hedingham coarse ware including fragment of B4 cooking pot rim and sherds from the rim and shoulder of a storage jar, showing a thumbled B2 rim and thumbled cordon below the neck, accompanied by vertical thumbled applied strips, patch of fire-blackening on inside of neck	c.1200
15	16	4	50	Medieval coarse ware, misc. sherds one externally fire-blackened	later 12th to 14th C
		9	48	Hedingham coarse ware, misc. sherds, most are fire-blackened, one is very fine thin-walled, wheel-thrown with external rilling in the manner of Thetford-type ware	12th C or later
17	Finds	1	22	Black-glazed ware, handle from jug or drinking vessel, shape of handle section and fabric are consistent with Harlow production	most likely 17th C
18	Finds	1	4	Medieval coarse ware, body sherd	later 12th to 14th C
		49	596		

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE

- 1 Copy of this report
- 1 Copy of the archaeological brief
- 1 Finds report and tables
- 1 Medieval and post-medieval pottery report and tables
- 1 Context register sheet
- 28 Context sheets
- 1 Plans register sheet
- 6 Colour digital photographs
- 6 Black and white prints and negatives
- 4 Sheets of site drawings
- 1 Small box of finds

APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY

Site name/Address: Ayleswards Farm, Braintree Road, Gosfield, Essex	
Parish: Gosfield	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 77738 28657	Site Code: GF AF 08
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring and recording	Site Director/Group: Mark Germany, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 11/8/08 to 13/8/08	Size of Area Investigated: 170m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Braintree	Client: Mr W. Watson Steele
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHR Nos.: 29053
Final Report: Essex Archaeology and History (summary)	
Periods represented: Medieval Post-medieval	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit monitored the groundworks for a new house on the former site of a 17th-century farmhouse at Aylewards Farm, Gosfield (HER 29053). The groundworks revealed a medieval ditch and three medieval pits and the remains of the 17th-century farmhouse. The medieval features contained small amounts of pottery, mainly Heddingham Coarse Ware, and were of 12th/early 13th century date. The remains of the 17th-century timber-framed farmhouse comprised a brick cellar and two partially grubbed out brick walls.</p> <p>It is concluded from the presence of the medieval remains that Aylewards Farm dates back to c. 1200 AD or earlier. Further archaeological remains relating to the development of the farm over the last eight centuries are likely to be present below ground level in the surrounding garden.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:-	
Germany, M. 2008 <i>Aylewards Farm, Braintree Road, Gosfield, Essex. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording.</i> Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit Report 1881	
Author of Summary: Mark Germany	Date of Summary: August 2008



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Fig.1. Site location

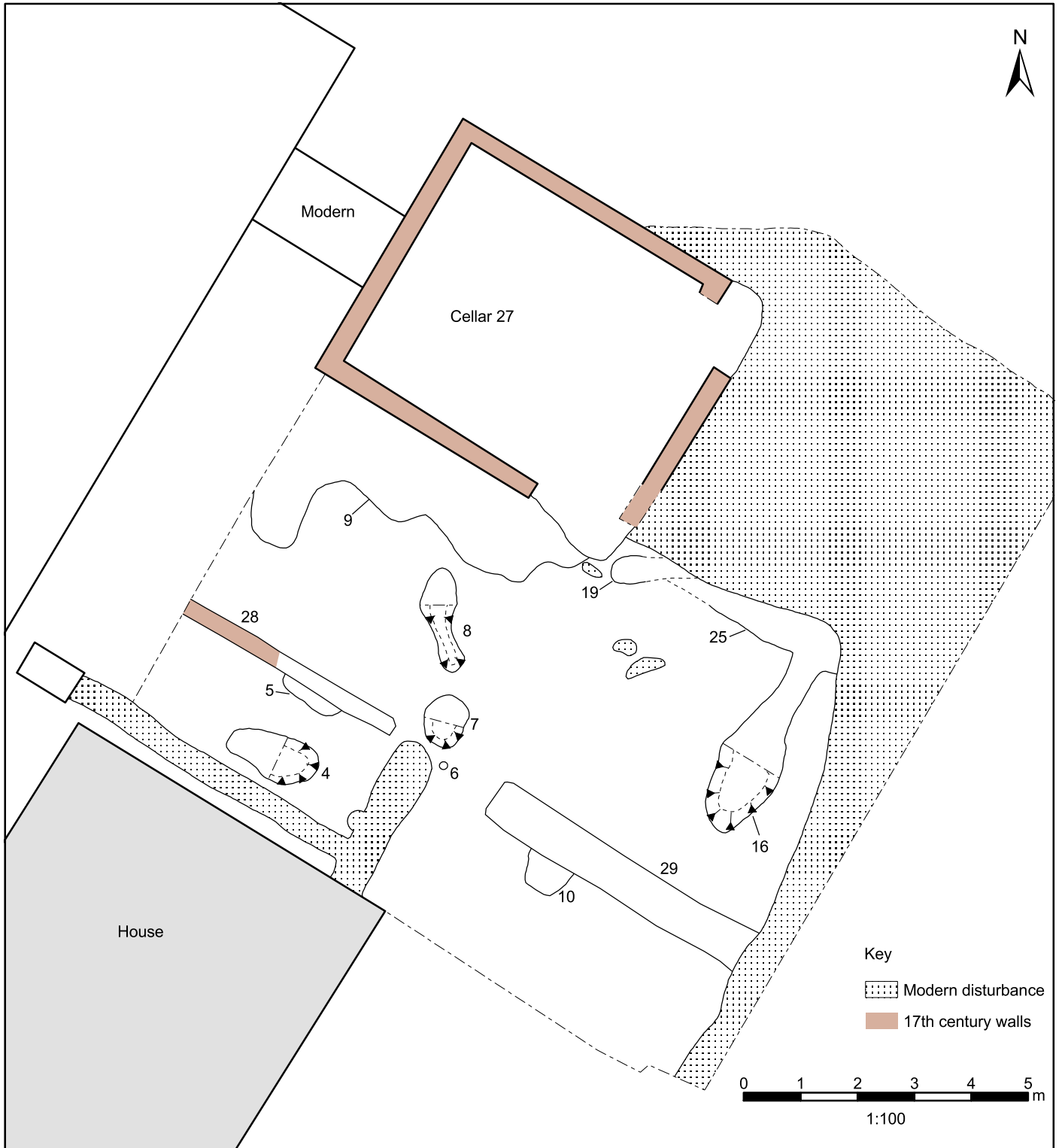


Fig.2. Excavation area