# PRIOR'S HALL WIDDINGTON ESSEX

# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**





**JULY 2007** 

# PRIOR'S HALL

# **WIDDINGTON**

# **ESSEX**

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#### PRIOR'S HALL

#### WIDDINGTON

#### **ESSEX**

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: Mr D. Webb

NGR: TL 53730 31750

Site Code: WDPH 07

Oasis No.: essexcou1-8083

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#### **SUMMARY**

The monitoring of extensive building renovation works at Prior's Hall, Widdington has revealed the presence of below ground remains dating to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. The opportunity was also taken to record significant historic details of the standing structure exposed during the same works.

Part of the flint foundations of the late Saxon building were revealed during alterations to the Drawing Room, as was a post-hole of possible 14th to 15th century date. In the yard to the west of the house a 13th century pit and a probable linear medieval feature containing oyster shell and charcoal flecks were excavated. In the garden area later medieval pottery sherds and numerous fragments of tile were recovered from mixed soil layers that may be contemporary with construction work on an adjacent 15th-16th century outbuilding or with the insertion of mullion windows and an upper storey in the east half of the hall.

Remains of the demolished 17th-18th century wing of an outbuilding were recorded in the yard/garden to the south of the house. Within this wing were fragmentary brick structural remains of probable ovens and chimneys and a rectangular ash rake-out pit from beneath a copper. In the Drawing Room of the house 18th century dwarf brick walls (floor supports) were revealed that link with those recorded in the adjacent room in 2004 and evidence for a change in doorway position was noted. Elsewhere on site, two probable post-medieval flint pathways were recorded.

Additional recording and photography was undertaken on a number of features of the standing building revealed during the works, including a Saxon doorway, a Tudor mullion window and the remains of 18th century and later timber framing.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological monitoring undertaken at Prior's Hall, Widdington, Essex during major refurbishment of the hall interior and associated groundworks to the south and west of the house. The fieldwork was carried out by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of Mr D. Webb, in accordance with an archaeological brief for the monitoring of groundworks prepared by the ECC Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM 2005) and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2005). The brief was originally only for monitoring of works associated with the re-building of the Sunroom but subsequently expanded to cover all interior and exterior below ground works. The project was monitored by ECC HEM and English Heritage.

The site archive will be deposited in Saffron Walden Museum. A digital version of this report will be submitted, along with a project summary, to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<a href="http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis">http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis</a>).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND** (Fig. 1)

## 2.1 Topography and Geology

Prior's Hall is located on rising ground to the west of Widdington village green at an approximate height of 106m OD. The hall consists of an L-shaped house with a number of outbuildings to the south. A short distance to the west is Prior's Hall Farm with its 14th century barn. To the immediate west of the house is a gravel covered tarmac driveway and yard area, to the immediate south of the house an enclosed concrete courtyard and raised garden bed, and to the north a lawn and flower beds bounded by the remains of a moat. The underlying geology is chalky boulder clay.

# 2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

This background makes use of the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held and maintained at County Hall, Chelmsford

Prior's Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 20715) comprising a moated site containing the remains of a pre-conquest manor, a medieval grange, and later farm buildings. The moat is approximately 100 x 85m, of rectangular shape, with the majority being infilled though surviving as visible earthworks. The original layout of the moat is known from a map of 1767 which shows the southern and western moat arms (SAM Description).

Within the moated enclosure lies Prior's Hall (EHER 199, 200), which contains the remains of a pre-conquest manorial church built of stone in the 10th or 11th century. Excavations in the late 1990s by the Central Archaeology Service, at the eastern end of the property (Fig. 2), have shown that the church once extended further to the east (English Heritage, unpublished).

The manorial complex was incorporated into a medieval grange when the site and its lands were transferred to the prior of St Valery-sur-Somme in Picardy, after the Norman Conquest. After several changes in owners the site passed to New College Oxford in 1379 where records show it was still the centre of an important agricultural estate. The house was considerably altered in the 16th when an upper storey, windows and a chimney stack were inserted. Further alterations were made in the 18th century when the west wing of the house was constructed. Additions/alterations to this wing occurred in the 19th century. The house is now a grade 1 listed building in private ownership.

Other associated buildings include a 14th century barn and a long 15th century outbuilding with 16th century extensions on either end. In the 17th-18th century a north wing, sometime used as a brewhouse (RCHM Inventory, 347), was added to the eastern end of the outbuilding. This wing is no longer extant having been demolished in the late 20th century.

Archaeological test pitting and clearance was undertaken at Prior's Hall in May 2004 (Ennis 2004) as a precursor to the present works (Fig. 2). Test pits around the outside of the house yielded evidence of domestic cooking activity dating to the 12th and early 13th century; perhaps originating from a near-by kitchen structure. Under-floor clearance within a ground floor room at the east-end of the house revealed the presence of 18th century brick foundations probably associated with an earlier floor.

#### 3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1 General aims

The aim of the work was to record the location, extent, date, character, significance and quality of any surviving below ground remains exposed during building renovation and landscaping works.

#### 3.2 Research objectives

The research objectives for the project were undertaken with reference to those laid out in Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). This document highlights the study of the evolution of the medieval house and farmstead as a current gap in knowledge (Wade 2000, 24) and points out how 'renovation and extension schemes are uncovering evidence, which in many cases is being destroyed or covered again without record' (*ibid.* 25). The impact of Christianity is also a highlighted research topic, particularly the need to 'systematically record evidence of the structural development of parish churches' and to survey and evaluate the known Middle and Late Saxon minsters and monasteries (*ibid.* 26). Prior's Hall, already recognised as a former manorial church and subsequent farmhouse, clearly had the potential to address these research areas.

## 4.0 METHOD

All groundworks, both internal and external, associated with the repair and renovation of Prior's Hall were monitored. Where archaeological excavation was required this was undertaken only down to the required build level. Specifically, two areas of surviving stratigraphy within the Drawing Room were hand-excavated down to the appropriate level and an adjacent exposed doorway, within the fabric of the Late Saxon building, was drawn and photographed. Monitoring was undertaken on the reduction of the ground surface within the kitchen, pantry and toilet; the reduced surface was hand cleaned to check for the presence of features. To the south of the building the exposed site of the former 17th-18th century brewhouse was hand cleaned and recorded. In the driveway/yard area to the west of the house monitoring was undertaken on a series of inter connecting service trenches. A trench to the south of the outbuilding, above the projected line of the moat, was also monitored. Further to the requirements of the brief, a photographic record was made of an exposed mullion window and timber framing at the south-east corner of the building.

All work was carried out in accordance with IFA (Institute of Field Archaeologists) by-laws and guidelines and complied with Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout.

#### 5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The results of monitored groundworks are set out below in sections 5.1 to 5.6. Sections 5.7 to 5.9 detail additional recording undertaken on key historic elements of the standing structure. Individual context numbers are cited in brackets and further context information is included in Appendix 1.

# 5.1 Drawing Room

Prior to the commencement of the archaeological fieldwork a deposit of loose silt and rubble, c.0.2-0.3m thick, was removed from beneath the Drawing Room floor (Fig. 3. This deposit in-filled an area of truncation that had removed most of the stratified deposits from within the room. It is probable that this truncation was associated with a previous episode of modern repair work as fragments of plastic sheeting were observed protruding from the base of the northern and western walls of the room. A brick chimney and fireplace was also dismantled and removed from the south wall. Preserved beneath the fireplace base was a small sub-rectangular area (1.3m x 1.4m) of undisturbed stratigraphy. A second area of preserved stratigraphy (1.7m x 1.4m) was revealed beneath a concrete floor in an alcove in the southeast corner of the room.

#### 5.1.1 Beneath the chimney

Preserved beneath the former chimney was a 0.06m-thick layer of creamy buff mortar (1) of probable post-medieval date. This partly sealed a circular post-hole (4) loosely filled with grey and orange clay (Fig. 3) and which contained two small mammal bones, probably from a rodent, but no dating evidence. It was not possible to fully-excavate the post-hole, which continued below the required level, as it was obscured by an Acrow-prop used to support the end of an overhead beam formerly supported by the chimney. It is highly likely that the post-hole originally contained an upright timber that did an identical job to the prop prior to the construction of the chimney. The post-hole cut through a linear deposit of large unbonded flints in a loose matrix of grey brown silt and clay. The flints were 0.23m deep and protruded 0.16m from the base of the south wall and appeared to be a surviving remnant of Saxon wall foundation. The foundation cut through 0.10m of dark grey/brown clay (2), perhaps a remnant of original topsoil, which overlay chalk-flecked brown clay (3) of probable natural origin.

## 5.1.2 In the alcove

The concrete floor in the alcove to the south of the existing central fireplace and chimney was removed by the builders revealing a second area of un-truncated ground (Fig. 3).

Directly below the concrete was a loose deposit of grey silt (7) that contained pieces of 18th century bottle glass, a clay pipe stem and a residual sherd of medieval pottery. The silt (7) infilled the space between two east-west orientated dwarf brick sleeper walls (10). Both walls consisted of two rows of bricks laid end to end and bonded with cream-coloured mortar. The walls were only one brick deep and were set on a bed of mortar laid directly on top of brown clay. The dwarf walls aligned exactly with those revealed in the adjacent room in 2004 and dated to the 18th century. Sealed beneath the southernmost wall was a shallow post-hole (8) filled with silty grey clay (9) that contained one sherd of 14th to early 15th century pottery and a piece of oyster shell. The space between the southern dwarf wall and the edge of the building contained brick and flint rubble and had clearly been disturbed, probably in more modern times.

## 5.2 Kitchen and pantry

The ground beneath the kitchen and pantry floors was reduced by the building contractor by c.0.35m. Unfortunately, due to lack of communication, much of the kitchen floor was removed prior to monitoring. However, the reduced surface was hand cleaned and examined for the presence of features. A north-east/south-west aligned ditch (5) was observed and excavated in the southern half of the kitchen and was recorded in plan beneath the adjacent pantry room (Fig. 5). Although the upper portion of the ditch had been removed by the ground reduction it was visible beneath an internal wall thus allowing the full profile to be recorded in section (Fig. 6, Section 4). No dating evidence was recovered from this ditch, which was filled with mid grey silty clay (6), but it clearly pre-dated the construction of 18th-19th century rear wing of the house.

#### 5.3 Toilet

Directly beneath the toilet floor a thin (0.04-0.05m) layer of mortary clay-silt sealed a compacted deposit of large flints and occasional smaller lumps of chalk (11). This appeared to be linear in plan, aligned east/west and was possibly the remains of a pathway (Fig. 5). Although no dating evidence was recovered, the path appeared to be relatively high in the sequence and consequently is more likely of post-medieval date. Its westward continuation is presumed to have been removed in the kitchen during unmonitored floor reduction works.

#### 5.4 Enclosed Yard/Garden

The surface of the enclosed yard to the south of the house was removed and topsoil was cleared from the raised garden bed bordered by the outbuilding to the south and a garden wall to the east (Fig. 2). Hand cleaning of this area revealed a number of archaeological features and deposits including the partially surviving remains of the former brewhouse (Fig.

4). Deposits located beneath the garden bed survived 0.10m to 0.15m higher than those in the surrounding area.

Natural clay (yellow with chalk flecks) was not exposed other than in the bottom of modern pipe trench 29 at a depth of some 0.3m below the cleared level. Comparison of deposits across the yard/garden and evidence from the 2004 Test Pit 2 would suggest that in the south of the area the natural clay was probably 0.2m or more below the surface. Above the natural was a c.0.2m thick layer of greenish-grey clay (35), perhaps the remains of the old topsoil. This was revealed in the side of pipe trench 29 and was apparent in plan, albeit compacted and disturbed, across the north of the area. In the south of the area deposit 35 was overlain by a 0.10m-thick layer of greenish-grey to grey clay (20) containing numerous tile fragments and some patches of yellow sandy clay to the south. Two sherds of pottery broadly dating to the Tudor period were recovered from this deposit which may contain constructional debris associated with the 16th century extension to the adjacent outbuilding.

Along the southern edge of the exposed area was an irregular linear deposit of flints, silt and brick fragments (25), part bonded with buff mortar. Some of the flints were mortared into the foot of the adjacent outbuilding. It is therefore likely that deposit 25 was a protruding part of this foundation or an underpinning deposit associated with later repairs. The east end of 25 appeared to sit upon a thin bed (0.03m) of chalk laid directly upon deposit 20.

Remains of the former brewhouse consisted of parts of two external walls (13 and 14) and a number of internal brick features (Fig. 4). North-south wall 14 survived to a length of 1.68m, beyond which it was truncated by modern pipe trench 29. Only one course was clearly visible. The south end of the wall appeared to butt-up to the edge of the outbuilding. Wall 14 was mainly composed of half and three-quarter bricks (unfrogged) with occasional pieces of tile and large flints. All were heavily coated in buff mortar. Traces of a narrow construction cut were observed along the west side of the wall. Two sample bricks recovered for analysis are dated as late 17th/early 18th century. However, it is likely that some bricks may have been reused.

East-west wall 13 was of much better construction, and had subsequently survived to a length of 4.4m and a depth of 0.25m. Only the eastern end was missing, obscured beneath modern concrete. The wall was constructed from regular full-size bricks (unfrogged), set in four alternate courses of headers and stretchers (English Bond), and bonded with a cream mortar with tiny white, black and red inclusions. A construction cut filled with orange sand, brick fragments and yellow clay was noted on the south side of the wall. Wall 13 was L-

shaped in plan and continued for 0.8m to the south. It is possible that the end of the wall was truncated by an unobserved feature, perhaps associated with a nearby, undercut, water worn and partly-collapsed void (Fig. 4). A sample brick recovered for analysis from wall 13 was dated as being late 18th/early 19th century.

No other traces of the western wall of the brewhouse appeared to survive other than the two north-south wall stubs (13 and 14). It is possible that all traces of the wall have been removed or that there was a large doorway in this side of the building. No evidence for the eastern side of the building was identified as this was destroyed/masked by the foundations for a modern garden wall built on a similar alignment.

Roughly in the centre of the brewhouse was a linear, east-west aligned, compact foundation deposit of orange sandy gravel (19) upon which was a surviving lump of masonry (17) comprised of brick, flint and stone in a pale buff mortar matrix. The masonry was probably the remnant of a brick partition wall dividing the brewhouse in two. A protrusion of sandy gravel to the north of 19 and truncated by Test Pit 2 might indicate that this partition was L-shaped in plan.

In the room to the north of the partition was a well-defined rectangular brick lined ash-pit (18) with a sloping west side and a flat bottom (Plate 1). The pit was constructed from unfroggged bricks bonded with creamy mortar with rare white and black flecks. A sample brick was dated as 18th century. At some point this structure had been altered with the insertion of a north-south brick at the foot of the slope and a thicker lining along the south side.

To the south of the partition was another foundation deposit (16) comprised of buff/white mortar over brick and flint. One brick from this deposit was dated as late 17th/early 18th century though it is possible that this brick was reused. Built upon 16 was a substantial rectangular brick structure (15) (Plate 2), perhaps the base of an oven or chimney. Two courses of brick were visible; a protruding lower course (foundation?) and a narrower upper course (superstructure?), both constructed by part bricks (dated as 18th century) in a light buff to cream mortar matrix with white inclusions. To the east of structure 15 was a slight hollow in the clay (20) covered in a thin smear of charcoal (Plate 2). The hollow and adjacent area was infilled and overlain by a 0.1m thick deposit of pink silty ash (31). Above the ash was a line of three bricks laid end to end (36) and truncated to north and east.

Located close to the western side of the building was a sub-rectangular fragment of masonry (30), 0.10m high, consisting of fragments of brick, flint and tile in a pale cream mortar matrix. It is possible this masonry was the support for a structural timber post. Two post-holes were located near the south end of the brewhouse close to the adjacent outbuilding. Post-hole 24 was undated but could pre-date the brewhouse, perhaps used during its construction or that of the 16th century extension to the outbuilding. Post-hole 22 had a loose fill (21) containing a piece of 19th century+ brick and clearly was of more recent origin, perhaps backfilled when the brewhouse structure was demolished in the latter part of the 20th century.

Within the building, on both sides of the partition, several patches of heated clay (26, 32, 33 and 34) varying in colour from red to pink and one patch of partially heated pink/buff mortar (27) were noted. These may have resulted from activities involving heat within the brewhouse. Patches 32 and 33, for example, were located close to the front of the ash pit where hot embers may have been raked.

No archaeological features were observed to the west of the brewhouse where only the surface of the yard had been removed and an existing drainage trench opened-up.

#### **5.5 Driveway/Yard** (Figs 5 and 6)

Three inter-connecting service trenches were observed in the drive/yard to the west of the house (Fig. 5). All of the trenches were dug through solid gravel-covered tarmac apart from the northern six metres or so of Trench 1 which was cut through turf.

#### 5.5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was approximately 17.5m long and 0.5m wide by 0.5m deep. The majority of the trench, apart from 3.5m at the northern end, was orientated north-west/south-east. At the northern end of the trench the section consisted of 0.2m of turf/topsoil above a similar amount of modern brick hardcore. The hardcore had clearly been laid to firm up the ground as underlying was a soft dark grey organic peat deposit visible in the base of the trench (Fig. 5) and which subsequently flooded. Where the turf met the yard a thick deposit of red ash was noted in section directly below the surface.

Several archaeological deposits and features were recorded in section (Fig. 6, Section 1) in the southern half of the trench. At the base of the sequence, the natural deposit comprised clean light brown clay with chalk flecks. At the south end of the trench the clay appeared greyer and more disturbed and was issued its own context number (56), although it was not distinctive enough to positively identify as fill. Above the natural (and sealing 56) was a layer

of dark grey clay (55), up to 0.12m thick, probably the remnants of buried topsoil. At the north-west end of the section the natural was cut by an east-west aligned linear feature (53) filled with medium to large flints and occasional fragments of chalk and stone (52) in a grey clay matrix. No direct dating evidence was recovered from this feature which may be a path or foundation.

The top of fill 52 was ill-defined but appeared to be partly overlain by a 'bitty' layer of chalk (57) comprised of numerous small pieces and flecks mixed with clay. Also constructed upon fill 52, though with an uncertain relationship with layer 57, was an east-west orientated brick wall (51) aligned with the corner of the later farm building to the west. The construction trench for a second, poorly-defined, brick wall (54), orientated north-south, cut layer 55. Wall 54 was truncated and was sealed by the chalky yard deposit (57). It is possible that the two walls formed either side of a small *c*.19th century infill structure between the two farm buildings. At the top of the sequence were mixed make-up deposits of brown clay, gravel, chalk and sand below modern tarmac.

#### 5.5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was approximately 12.5m long by 0.7-0.8m wide and 0.65m deep. The majority of the trench was orientated north-east/south-west, although there were various offshoots (manhole/link trenches) at the north-east end. No archaeological remains were observed at the north-east end of the trench which was heavily disturbed, in part, by existing service trenches.

Several archaeological deposits and features were recorded in section (Fig. 6, Section 2). The underlying natural clay was light yellow brown in colour with grey streaks and flecks of chalk. Overlying the natural at the north-east end of the section was a compact deposit of flints with chalk flecks in a light grey clay matrix (45). This deposit was similar to, and on the same east/west alignment as, the probable path (53) in Trench 1 and was almost certainly a continuation of this feature. Cutting the edge of the path was a poorly defined feature, possibly a pit or post-hole (48) containing two fills. The feature appeared to continue below the limit of excavation and is likely to be of later date if its stratigraphic relationship is correct. Some 3.2m to the south-west was a better defined pit (50) whose grey clay fill (49) contained fragments of animal bone and two sherds of 13th century pottery. On either side of pit 50, but with an unclear relationship, were further traces of charcoal flecked grey (55) believed to be a continuation of the buried topsoil from Trench 1. Cutting through this layer and the underlying natural was another linear pathway feature (60) composed of compacted flint in a matrix of grey clay (59). The deposit also contained traces of yellow mortar, although none

of the flints appeared to be bonded. It was visible in both trench sections and appeared aligned with a near-by door to the outbuilding. Overlying the fill of pit 50 were traces of orange clay and gravel (58) which were sealed, along with fill 59, by chalk layer 57 (also evident in Trench 1). At the top of the sequence were mixed make-up deposits of gravel and brick/tile hardcore, which were cut by two modern pipe trenches and sealed by tarmac.

#### 5.5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 3.5m long by 0.45m wide and 0.68m deep and orientated north-west/southeast. The part of the trench closest to the house was drawn as Section 3 (Fig. 6). At the south-east end of the trench was a probable medieval feature (42), in excess of 0.48m deep, containing two fills (40 and 41). Fill 41 comprised dark grey clay to greenish grey clay with charcoal flecks and oyster shells. The charcoal flecks became more concentrated towards the bottom of the section and showed clearly in plan in the base of the trench. Fill 40 had less charcoal flecks and a distinct greenish hue. Unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered but the fills had similarities with medieval deposits recorded in near-by Test Pit 4 Feature 42 appeared to be linear, and was perhaps part of a ditch or the construction cut for a timber beam. It was truncated to the south-east by the west wall of the 18th-19th century house wing and to the north-west by pit 38. This pit, visible as a steepsided, 1.15m-wide cut in section contained mixed grey brown clay, fragments of tile and flint (37). One recovered tile was dated as post-medieval. The pit continued below the required service trench depth but was visible in plan as a tapering cut. Both features were overlain by a mixed deposit of brown clay and gravel (39) sealed by gravel levelling and the tarmac surface. To the north-east of the drawn section were further compacted flints (45) directly aligned with the pathway in Trenches 1 and 2 and pathway 11 in the house (Fig. 5).

## 5.6 Moat

A single service trench 2.8m long by 0.4m wide was hand excavated (by the building contractors) to the south of the outbuilding to link with an existing drainage run (Fig. 5). This trench was located above the approximate position of the infilled moat. The section comprised 0.10m-0.15m of dark grey topsoil overlying a deposit of brownish grey silty clay (43) up to 0.35m thick. Beneath 43 was a layer of dark grey clay silt (44), in excess of 0.25m thick, and which contained occasional fragments of tile and sherds of modern porcelain. As future excavation was to be limited to locating the drainage run, further observation was judged unnecessary.

#### 5.7 Saxon door (internal)

The chimney removed from the south side of the Drawing Room, originally part of the manorial chapel, had previously concealed the position of a Saxon doorway (Fig. 3). The external face of this doorway, described as gable-headed with jambs laid 'Escomb-fashion', had been exposed, drawn and photographed by the Central Archaeology Service in 1997. In view of its importance and in keeping with the previous record the internal elevation was also drawn and photographed as part of the monitoring exercise (Fig. 7, Plate 3). The internal dimensions of the doorway ranged from 0.74m to 0.84m wide by 2.45m high from the approximate base of the plinth to the gable head. The edges of some of the limestone blocks used in the construction of the doorway were obscured by plaster but could be projected in places on the drawing. Two small (0.02m x 0.05m) bent iron bars were noted inserted into the stonework on the west side of the door. They were not located directly above one another and are probably fixings associated with later use of the room.

#### 5.8 Mullion window

During the course of building works the removal of render from the external south wall of the Late Saxon building revealed the presence of a mullion window (Fig. 3 and Plate 4). Although technically beyond the scope of the monitoring brief the window was photographed and measured. The window was unglazed and had been truncated to the east by the insertion of a later (18th century?) brick doorway. The window survived as a frame, 1.55m high by 1.10m wide (external measurements), divided in half by a horizontal transom. The upper half contained three vertical mullions (3½ lights) 0.58m high. The lower half of the window was empty and was slightly higher at 0.63m. It is likely that the window was originally 6 lights wide before truncation by the doorway and matched a repaired and glazed mullion window directly above in the upper storey. The two windows are probably contemporary with the insertion of the upper floor within this part of the hall in the Tudor period.

#### 5.9 South-east corner of Late Saxon building

At the request of English Heritage an archive photographic record was made of the timber frame exposed during renovation work to the south-east corner of the Late Saxon building (Fig. 3). The original south-east corner of the building had been truncated by about 0.5m and all trace of the long and short quoin stonework, as recorded on both northern corners of the building, had been removed. The stonework had been replaced by a timber frame believed to be part of an 18th century stair extension, the east end of which was recorded by

the Central Archaeology Service in 1997. Whether the stonework was removed to facilitate the construction of the stair extension is unclear.

A variety of timbers were noted during the photographic survey (Plate 5). Some were shaped and clearly re-used, one timber post had bark adhering, a few timbers showed traces of paint and others were clearly recent repairs. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this corner of the building has been subject to regular repair over a considerable number of years.

# **6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL** by Joyce Compton

#### 6.1 Introduction

Small groups of finds were recovered from nine contexts, and sample bricks were collected from a further five. All of the finds have been recorded by count and weight, in grams, by context. Full quantification details can be found in Appendix 2. The finds are described by category below.

# **6.2 Pottery** by Helen Walker

A very small amount of pottery, ten sherds weighing 119g, was excavated from six contexts. Details can be found in Appendix 3. The earliest pottery comprises two sherds of medieval coarse ware from the fill of ?pit 50, including an H1-type cooking pot rim, datable to the 13th century, but possibly continuing into the 14th. Late medieval sherds were excavated from layer 7 and the fill of posthole 8, although are likely to be residual. These comprise a sherd of glazed sandy orange ware with the same fabric as that of Cambridgeshire Sgraffito ware but showing slip-painting rather than sgraffito decoration. It is probably of the same date as Sgraffito ware, belonging to the 14th to early 15th centuries. The second sherd is unglazed with a sandy buff fabric and may also be of this date. Both fabrics are typical of this north-western corner of Essex. Later material comprises a hollowed everted jar rim in Tudor red earthenware from layer 20, dating from the later 15th to 16th centuries and a sherd of glazed red earthenware, perhaps from a jug, which can be assigned a date in the post-medieval period. Modern pottery was found in layer 44.

#### 6.3 Brick and tile

Sample bricks were collected from five contexts and a further fragment came from the fill of post-hole 22. The latter is from a regular-sided modern brick and probably dates to no earlier than late 19th century. The sample bricks were dated using the typology in Ryan (1996, 94-6). Wall 13 contained a regular-sided late 18th or 19th century example, with a depth of

65mm. The remaining five bricks are likely to be somewhat earlier, as these are less regularly-made with depths of 50 to 55mm. Those from structures 15 and 18 are both 18th century types. The three bricks from wall 14 and foundation 16 are late 17th to early 18th century examples, although the full length of the bricks from wall 14 could not be ascertained. A date earlier in the 17th century is possible and a date as early as Tudor cannot be ruled out.

The fills of post-hole 22 and pit 38 each produced a single roof tile fragment, neither of which can be closely dated within the post-medieval period.

#### 6.4 Glass

Seven sherds, 282g, of dark green bottle glass were recovered from layer 7. At least three bottles are represented. The sole bottle neck has an applied string-lip, and probably dates to the first half of the 18th century. Cylindrical base sherds may belong to the later 18th or 19th centuries.

#### 6.5 Clay pipe

Layer 7 produced a post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem fragment.

#### 6.6 Animal bone

Two contexts produced animal bone, amounting to four pieces, weighing 20g. Context 4 contained a tibia from a small mammal, probably a rodent, and a rib fragment from a larger mammal. Two fragments, from a phalanx and an astragalus, came from the fill of ?pit 50; these probably derive from cattle, representing the remains of food waste.

#### 6.7 Shell

Three oyster shells, weighing 40g, were found in two contexts, the fill of post-hole 8 and layer 12, both in the Drawing Room. All three shells are small examples.

#### 6.8 Comments on the assemblage

A range of late medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered, although quantities are small. No further work is required on any of the material. The bricks and the bottle glass (except for the rim/neck sherd) have been discarded following recording. The remainder of the finds should be retained, although further discard could take place at the archiving stage.

#### 7.0 DISCUSSION

#### 7.1 Saxon

Other than the significant exposure of the internal face of the Saxon doorway and an adjacent line of flint foundations no remains of Saxon date were identified. The drawing of the Saxon doorway supplements the work done on the external face by the Central Archaeology Service. Recording of the fabric of the standing building, where exposed by removal of external render and internal plaster, wasn't in the remit of work and was only incidentally recorded photographically. Unfortunately, monitoring works established that most of the ground in the western half (Drawing Room) of the Late Saxon building had been truncated to foundation or sub-foundation level during previous improvements to the house. The rebuilding of the Sunroom at the east end of the house had minimal impact on the remains of the Saxon Chancel excavated by the Central Archaeology Service and no further useful information was recorded during its monitoring.

#### 7.2 Medieval

A pit containing 13th century pottery was excavated in the yard (Trench 2) and a post-hole containing a single sherd of 14th to 15th century pottery was excavated in the Drawing Room. It is possible that the undated linear feature containing charcoal flecks and oyster shell in the yard (Trench 3) is also of medieval date as it was located close to 2004 Test Pit 4 which contained similar material. In the garden area later medieval sherds were recovered from soil layers that may be contemporary with work on the adjacent 15th and 16th century outbuilding or with work to insert an upper floor and mullion windows in the south wall of the hall itself. Generally, the pottery was later in date than the predominately 12th-13th century material recovered from the test pitting (Ennis 2004, 14). This may in part be due to the fact that the natural clay, and potential medieval features cutting it, was not exposed in plan to the south of the house.

# 7.3 Post-medieval

Walls associated with the 17th-18th century north wing of the outbuilding, sometime used as a brewhouse, were recorded. These differed from each other in many ways (mortar colour, brick size, location of construction cut, etc) suggesting at least two phases of construction were evident. The building itself is likely to have been of timber frame construction with the structure sitting on low walls. It is feasible that the west side of the building had a large doorway (or was heavily truncated) as only two short lengths of wall at either end were recorded. Within the building were several phases of brick structure probably the remains of ovens and chimneys. The rectangular ash rake-out pit is very similar to one observed by the author beneath a copper in a broadly contemporary bakehouse behind Jane Austen's House

in Chalton, Hampshire. In this complete example, an iron grate for the base of the fire sat above the pit with the copper supported on brickwork above. Elsewhere within the brewhouse were patches of heated clay that are presumably contemporary with its use.

Within the hall, further 18th century dwarf brick sleeper walls were recorded which aligned with those recorded in 2004. These continued directly below the partition wall to the south of the central chimney suggesting that there may have been an earlier doorway in this position. This was confirmed during building work when it was revealed that hood of the central chimney originally extended across to the north wall of the building and that the major beam supporting the chimney had been cut through to accommodate the existing northern doorway.

A probable flint pathway was recorded crossing the yard and toilet and a second probable path was recorded heading towards a door of the outbuilding. Both paths are likely to be of post-medieval date.

#### 8.0 CONCLUSION

It is clear that continuous occupation, alteration and 'improvement' of the building over the past 1000 years has had an impact upon the survival of its earlier component remains. In particular, Tudor and 18th century alterations have effected the fabric of the standing structure whilst 18th century and later groundworks appear to have removed almost all earlier floor surfaces within the building.

Externally, the raising of ground surfaces to the south and west of the house in the past has served to preserve medieval and post-medieval below ground remains, though no earlier surfaces have so far been identified, other than the post-medieval flint paths. It is highly likely that further medieval remains survive elsewhere within the moated enclosure.

The archaeological monitoring has successfully gathered new archaeological, and to some extent architectural, evidence during the major refurbishment work at Prior's Hall and has allayed some of the concerns over lack of recording during renovation schemes pointed out in the regional research agenda (Wade 2000, 24). The recovered evidence contributes to a growing body of knowledge, acquired through previous fieldwork, that should one day combine to help elucidate the development of Prior's Hall and to contribute to wider research on the development of the medieval house and farmstead and perhaps even the impact of Christianity on the eastern counties.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Trevor Ennis and Dave Smith of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. The co-operation and enthusiasm of the owner, Darrell Webb, was gratefully appreciated as was assistance from the building contractors, John W. Younger. Thanks go to Fachtna McAvoy for providing CAS excavation information. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson of ECC FAU and monitored by Richard Havis of ECC HEM in consultation with Deborah Priddy of English Heritage.

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# **APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA**

All dimensions given in metres.

Context	ions given in metro	Туре	Description	Period
1	Drawing Room	Layer	Creamy-buff mortar, crumbly, 0.06m thick	Post-med
2	Drawing Room	Layer	Dark grey to brown clay, 0.10m thick	Sax/med
3	Drawing Room	Layer	Brown clay, 0.08m+ thick	Nat
4	Drawing Room	Post-hole	0.48m x 0.52m x 0.17m deep. Loose, grey clay & orange sand	Post-med
5	Kitchen	Ditch	NE/SW aligned, 5m+ x 0.8m x 0.7m deep	Med/post-med
6	Kitchen	Fill of 5	Mid grey silty clay with yellow-brown mottles	Med/post-med
7	Drawing Room	Layer	Loose grey silt, 0.03m thick	18th century+
8	Drawing Room	Post-hole	Very shallow, circular, 0.3m diam. x 0.05m deep	?Medieval
9	Drawing Room	Fill of 8	Grey silty clay (below brick sleeper wall)	?Medieval
10	Drawing Room	Walls	2 brick sleeper walls, E/W aligned, 1.06m+ & 1.2m+ x 0.2m x 0.08m high, cream mortar	18th century
11	Toilet	Layer	Flint surface/pathway, E/W aligned, 2.4m+ x 1m wide	Post-med
12	Garden	Layer	Finds from trowel-over of lower garden area (equiv of 35)	Med/post-med
13	Garden	Wall	E/W brick wall, substantial, 4 courses high, uniform whole bricks, creamy mortar, 4.4m x 0.22m x 0.25m high	18th/19th century
14	Garden	Wall	N/S brick wall, 1.68m x 0.34m, mostly ½ - 3/4 bricks that vary in size, smaller brick from south. Buff mortar.	17th/18th century
15	Garden	Structure	Rectangular brick plinth/foundation, 0.9m x 0.4m x 0.10m+ high, light buff/whiteish mortar	18th century
16	Garden	Foundation	Buffy/white mortar over mixed brick and flint, 0.65m+ x 0.5m wide	17th/18th century
17	Garden	Foundation	Pale buff mortar with brick, flints and stone, 0.65m x 0.24m+	?18th century
18	Garden	Structure	Rectangular brick ash-collection pit with sloping end 0.8m x 0.52m x 0.26m+ deep, cream/white mortar	18th century
19	Garden	Foundation	Orange/yellow sandy gravel, linear, E/W aligned, 2.6m x 0.42m	?18th century
20	Garden	Layer	Mixed grey clay, c.0.10m deep	Tudor
21	Garden	Fill of 22	Loose, dark grey/brown clay silt	19th century+
22	Garden	Post-hole	Sub-circular, 0.35m+ x 0.33m x 0.28m+ deep	19th century+
23	Garden	Fill of 24	Mixed orange/grey/black sand, ash and clay	Post-med
24	Garden	Post-hole	Oval, 0.38m x 0.3m x 0.15m	Post-med
25	Garden	Foundation?	Flints and buff mortar above chalk layer, 0.09m high	Post-med
26	Garden	Layer	Red burnt clay patch, 0.7m x 0.4m x 0.02m thick	?post-med
27	Garden	Layer	Pink (burnt)/buff mortar patch, 0.68m x 0.36m x 0.03m thick	?post-med
28	Garden	Fill of 29	Mixed grey/brown clay and ash, orange sand, one metal pipe, one plastic pipe	Modern
29	Garden	Pipe Trench	E/W aligned, 3.8m+ x 0.55m x 0.4m deep	Modern
30	Garden	Masonry	Sub-rectangular, 0.38m x 0.24m x 0.10m high, frags of brick, tile and flint, pale cream mortar	18th century+
31	Garden	Layer	Red-pink, 'bitty' silty ash, 0.10m thick	?Post-med
32	Garden	Layer	Red (heated) gravely clay patch, 0.6m x 0.5m	?Post-med
33	Garden	Layer	Pink (heated) clay patch, 0.52m x 0.4m	?Post-med
34	Garden	Layer	Red (heated) clay patch, 0.42m x 0.38m	?post-med
35	Garden	Layer	Greenish grey clay, c.0.2m deep	Med/post-med
36	Garden	Wall?	Line (E/W) of 3 bricks, 0.48m x 0.08m, disturbed	Post-med

Context	Location	Туре	Description	Period
37	Yard	Fill of 38	Mixed grey brown clay	Post-med/ mod
38	Yard	Pit or trench	1.15m wide x 0.48m+ deep, steep sides	Post-med/ mod
39	Yard	Layer	Mixed brown clay and gravel, 0.15m thick	Post-med/ mod
40	Yard	Fill of 42	Greenish grey clay	?Medieval
41	Yard	Fill of 42	Dark grey silty clay	?Medieval
42	Yard	Ditch/slot	0.65m+ wide x 0.48m+ deep	?Medieval
43	Moat	Layer/fill	Brownish grey silty clay, 0.35m thick	Modern
44	Moat	Layer/fill	Dark grey clay silt, 0.25m+ thick	Modern
45	Yard	Layer	Path?, Common flints in light grey clay matrix, 0.85m+ wide x 0.17m thick	Post-med
46	Yard	Fill of 48	Brown clay	Post-med
47	Yard	Fill of 48	Grey clay	Post-med
48	Yard	Pit	0.52m wide x 0.3m deep, in section only	Post-med
49	Yard	Fill of 50	Grey clay	Medieval
50	Yard	Pit?	0.9m x 0.3m+ deep	Medieval
51	Yard	Wall	0.5m+ x 0.26m x 0.23m thick, cream/light buff mortar	Post-med
52	Yard	Fill of 53	Grey clay with common flints,	Post-med
53	Yard	Path cut?	Linear, E/W, 0.5m+ x 0.95m x 0.2m deep	Post-med
54	Yard	Wall	0.5m+ x 0.3m x 0.16m thick, light cream mortar	Post-med
55	Yard	Layer	Dark grey clay, 0.12m thick	Med/Post-med
56	Yard	Layer	Disturbed light brown clay (Nat?), 0.23m + thick	Nat?
57	Yard	Layer	Pieces/flecks of chalk, some grey silt, 0.08m thick	Post-med
58	Yard	Layer	Orange clay and gravel, 0.06m thick	Post-med
59	Yard	Fill of 60	Common flint, grey clay & yellow mortar	Post-med
60	Yard	Path cut	1.3m wide x 0.32m deep	Post-med

# **APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA**

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
4		2	2	Animal bone; tibia, small mammal (?rodent); rib fragment	-
7	Layer	7	282	Bottle glass; rim/neck, base and body sherds, at least three bottles, cylindrical (rim only, 54g, retained)	18th C
		1	1	Clay pipe stem	Post med.
		1	6	Pottery; body sherd	Medieval
9	8	1	12	Shell; oyster, one valve, encrusted	-
		1	2	Pottery; body sherd	Late med.
12	Layer	2	28	Shell; oyster, two valves	-
		1	8	Pottery; body sherd	Post med.
13	Wall	1	3040	Sample brick, 225 x 110 x 65mm deep	Late 18th/19th C
14	Wall	2	4340	Sample bricks, both mortar-encrusted; c. 220 x 115 x 50mm deep; fragment is also 50mm deep	Late 17th/ early 18th C
15	Structure	1	1390	Sample brick, 110 x 50mm deep	18th C
16	Found'n	1	2220	Sample brick, unevenly made, two joining fragments; 230 x 110 x 50mm deep	Late 17th/ early 18th C
18	Structure	1	2470	Sample brick, 225 x 110 x 55mm deep	18th C
20	Layer	2	38	Pottery; rim and body sherds	Late med/ EPM
21	22	1	720	Brick fragment, depth 65mm, regular-sided	19th C+
		1	160	Roof tile fragment	Post med.
37	38	1	282	Roof tile fragment	Post med.
44	Layer	3	52	Pottery; base and body sherds	Modern
49	50	2	18	Animal bone; phalanx fragment, cattle; ?astragalus	-
		2	14	fragment Pottery; rim sherds	Medieval

# **APPENDIX 3: MEDIEVAL AND LATER POTTERY**

All weights in grams

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
7	Layer	1	6	Sandy buff ware with pale grey surfaces and reddish core, late med	residual ?14th C pot
9	8	1	2	Sandy orange ware, same fabric as Cambridgeshire sgraffito but slip-painted	14th to early 15th C
12	Layer	1	8	Post-medieval red earthenware glazed sherd ?from jug	late 16th to 19th C
20	Layer	1	13	Sandy orange ware, extremely abraded, ?late medieval	?14th to 16th C
		1	24	Tudor red earthenware hollowed everted jar rim with slight external bead internal glaze on inside of rim	later 15th/16thC
44	Layer	3	52	Modern porcelain sherds from vessel showing moulded decoration	19th to 20th C
49	50	2	14	Medieval coarse ware including H1 cooking pot rim	13th (possibly into 14th C)
		10	119		

## **APPENDIX 4: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE**

**SITE NAME: Prior's Hall, Widdington** 

SITE CODE: WDPH 07

## Index to Archive:

- 1. Introduction
- 1.1 ECC HEM Brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU WSI

## 2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Client Report
- 2.2 Finds Reports
- 3. Site Archive
- 3.1 Context Record Register
- 3.2 Context Records (1 to 60)
- 3.3 Plan Register
- 3.4 Section Register
- 3.5 A4 plan sheets
- 3.6 Levels Register
- 3.7 Trench location plan
- 3.8 Photographic Registers
- 3.9 Site Photographic Record (1 set of Black & White prints, 1 Set of digital images on disk)
- 3.10 Miscellaneous notes/plans

# Not in File

One large plan, one large section drawing

#### **Finds**

The finds occupy less than one box.

#### **APPENDIX 5: EHER SUMMARY SHEET**

#### **EHER SUMMARY SHEET**

Site name/Address: Prior's Hall, Widdington, Essex					
Parishes: Widdington	District: Saffron Walden				
NGR: TL 53730 31750	Site Code: WDPH 07				
Type of Work: Archaeological Monitoring	Site Director/Group: T. Ennis, ECC Field Archaeology Unit				
<b>Date of Work:</b> 29th January to 29th March 2007	Size of Area Investigated:				
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding source: Mr D. Webb				
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos.: 199, 200				

Final Report: EAH round-up

Periods Represented: Medieval, Post-medieval

#### SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

The monitoring of extensive building renovation works at Prior's Hall, Widdington has revealed the presence of below ground remains dating to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. The opportunity was also taken to record significant historic details of the standing structure exposed during the same works.

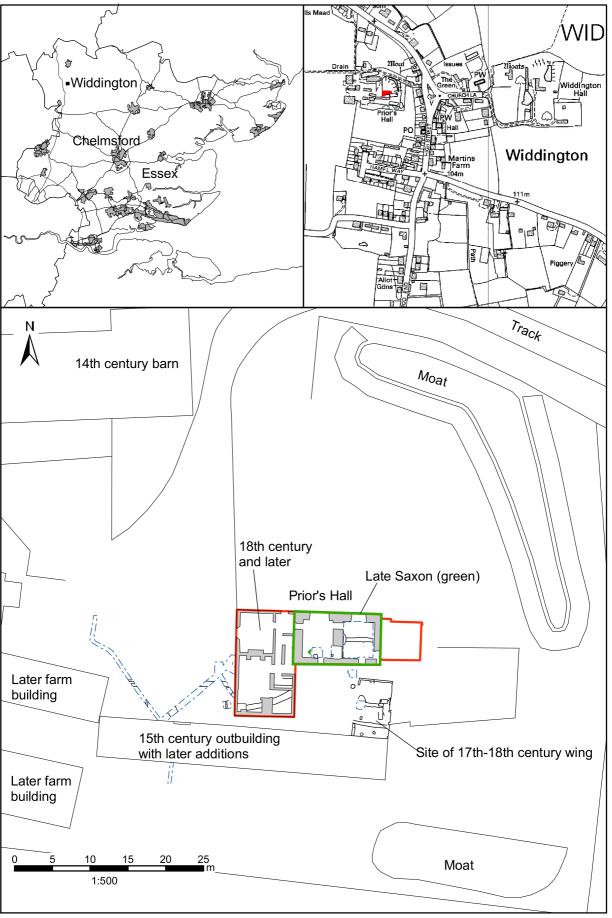
Part of the flint foundations of the late Saxon building were recorded during reduction of the floor level in the Drawing Room. The internal face of a Saxon doorway, revealed after the removal of a later chimney, was drawn and photographed. A post-hole of possible 14th to 15th century date was excavated in the Drawing Room and a flint pathway and ditch of probable post-medieval date were recorded during ground reduction in the toilet and kitchen. Within the Drawing Room 18th century dwarf brick walls (floor supports) were revealed linking with those found in the adjacent room in 2004 and evidence for a change in doorway position was noted. A photographic record was made of an exposed mullion window in the south wall of the building and the remains of 18th century and later timber framing at the south-east corner.

In the yard to the west of the house a 13th century pit and a probable linear medieval feature containing oyster shell and charcoal flecks were excavated. In the garden area later medieval pottery sherds and numerous tile fragments were recovered from soil layers that may be contemporary with construction work on an adjacent 15th-16th century outbuilding or with the insertion of mullion windows and an upper storey in the east half of the hall.

Remains of the demolished 17th-18th century wing of an outbuilding, at one time used as a brewhouse, were recorded. Within the building were fragmentary brick structural remains of probable ovens and chimneys and a rectangular ash rake-out pit from beneath the presumed position of a copper. Elsewhere on site, two probable post-medieval flint pathways were recorded that probably predate the construction of the west wing of the house in the 18th century.

Previous Summaries/Reports: Prior's Hall,	Widdington: Archaeological Test Pitting and
Clearance, ECC FAU, May 2004	
A 41	D 1 10

Author of Summary: T. Ennis Date of Summary: July 2007



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Fig.1. Location plan

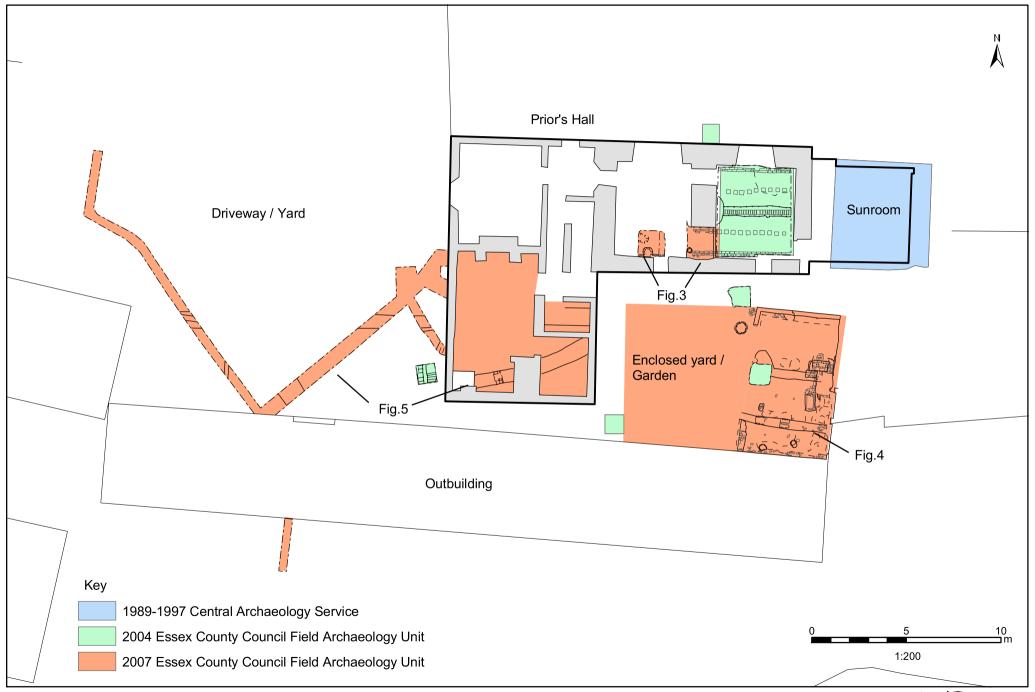


Fig.2. Areas of archaeological investigation and monitoring



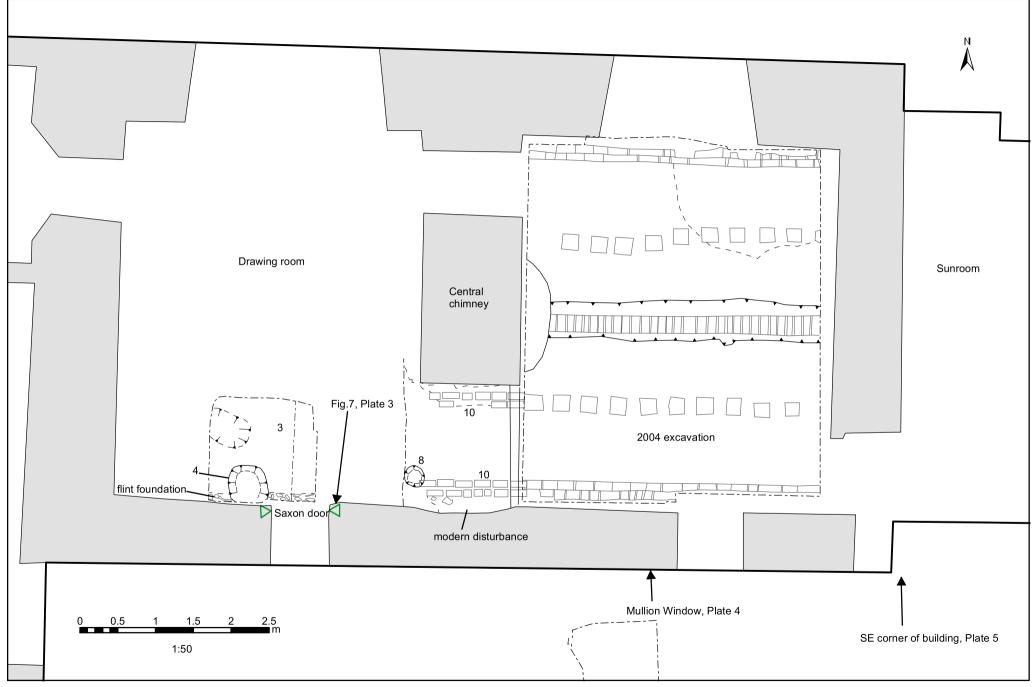


Fig.3. Excavated features - house



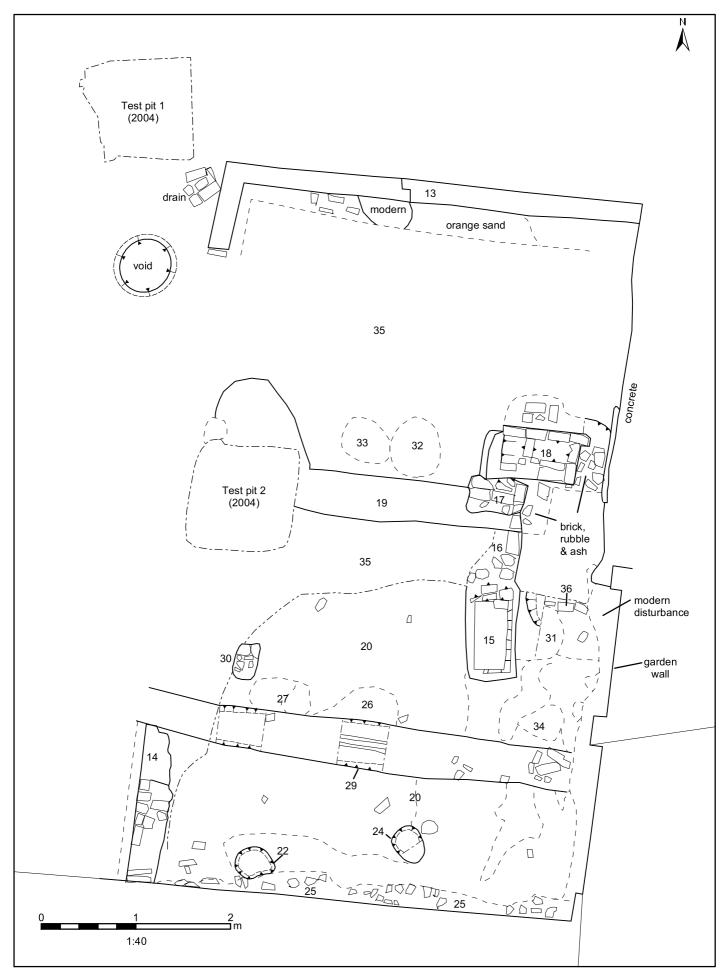


Fig.4. Recorded features - garden



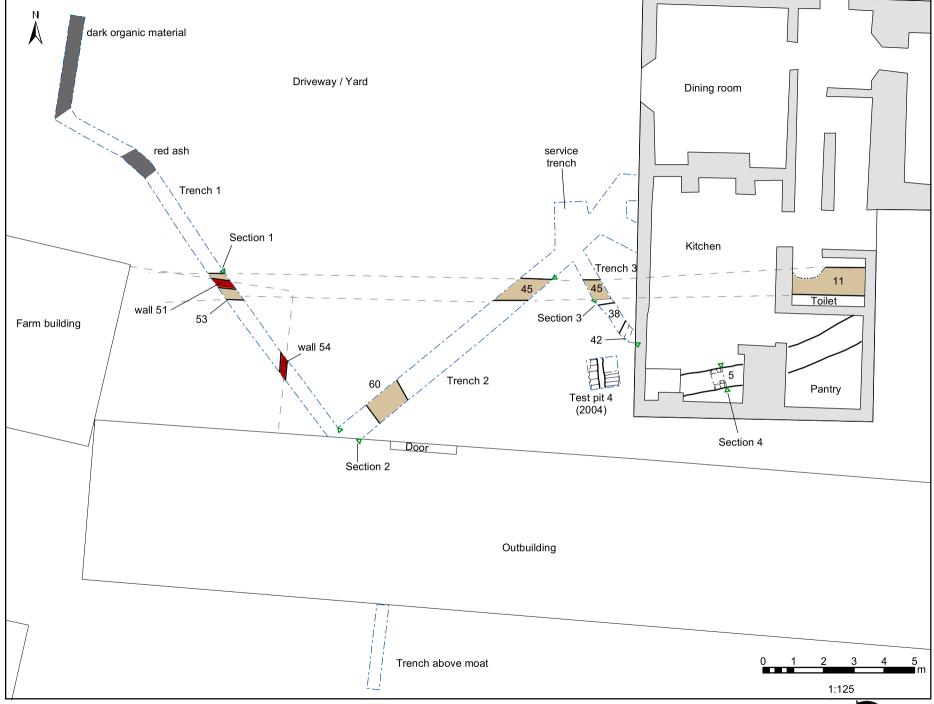


Fig.5. Recorded features - yard



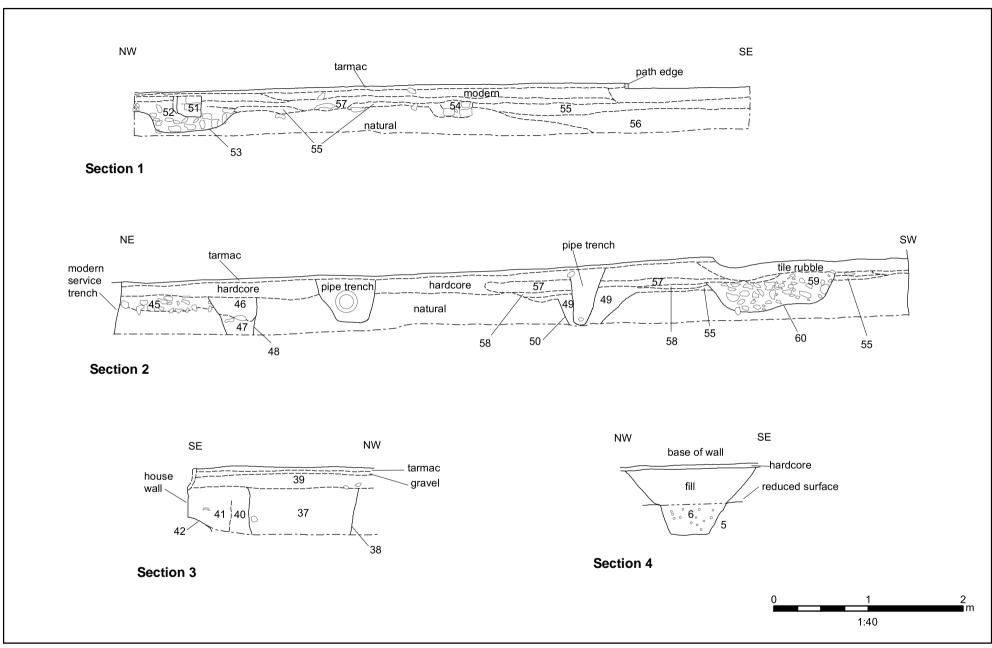


Fig.6. Sections



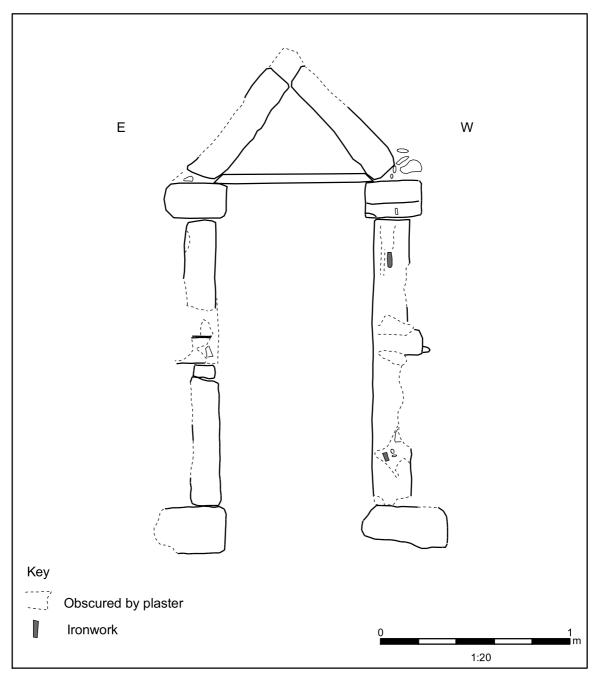


Fig.7. Internal elevation of Saxon door





Plate 1 Brick ash pit 18 (1m scale)



Plate 2 Brick structures 15 and 36 (1m scale)



Plate 3 Saxon door (internal) (2m scale)

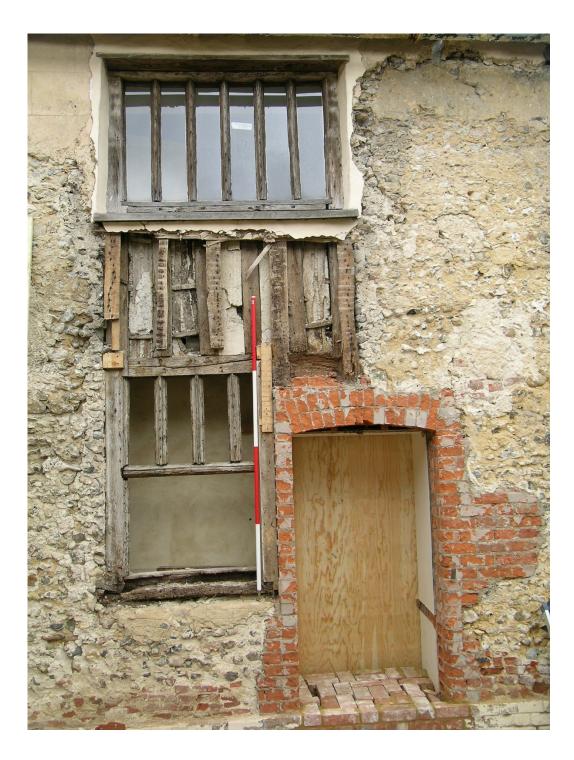


Plate 4 Mullion window (2m scale)



Plate 5 South-east corner of building (2m scale)