

**Archaeological monitoring  
at Vine House, The Green,  
Blackmore, Essex  
December 2009**

**report prepared by  
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**on behalf of  
Mr Bill Smith**

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## 1 Summary

*Two modern ditches discovered during archaeological monitoring of the rebuilding of Vine House may have been old property boundaries, pre-dating the existing house.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on archaeological monitoring at Vine House, The Green, Blackmore, Essex, undertaken by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

Vine House is situated at the core of the historic village of Blackmore, immediately adjacent to the Market Square and near the junction of Church Street and The Green, site centred at NGR TL 6030 0189.

A planning application (BRW/55/2009) for the demolition of an existing conservatory and garage and erection of a new two-storey extension to the side and rear and a single-storey extension to the front and rear of Vine House was submitted to Brentwood District Council (BDC) on 26/01/2009. As the proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological sensitivity, the HEM team of Essex County Council made a recommendation to BDC for archaeological monitoring of the groundworks following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990). The recommendation was as follows:

*Full condition*

*'No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.'*

A brief (HEM 2009) detailing the required archaeological work (archaeological monitoring of groundworks) was written by Adam Garwood, the HEM team officer.

CAT was commissioned by Mr Bill Smith to carry out the archaeological work as detailed in the brief. CAT, therefore, wrote a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation: CAT 2009) in response to the HEM brief. This WSI was approved by HEM.

The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the WSI between the 16th and 18th December 2009. Post-excavation work was carried out from then until February 2010.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with the Colchester Archaeological Trust's *Policies and procedures* (CAT 2008), and the Institute for Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (IfA 2008b). The guidance contained in the documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment* (EAA 3), *Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy* (EAA 8), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) were also followed.

## 3 Archaeological and historical background

The following archaeological background utilises the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

Medieval Blackmore appears to be a classic example of shifting medieval settlement. The original settlement appears to have been based at Fingrith Hall (approx 2km to the north of the present village). The focus of settlement moved southwards to the site of St Lawrence's priory, possibly at the time of the founding of the priory in the second half of the 12th century. This later medieval settlement was based around a large central green. The green was partially infilled in the later medieval period, the earliest surviving building being 14th century in date. The priory (with St Lawrence's Parish Church) was dissolved in 1525. The rights were originally

granted to Cardinal Wolsey, then to the Abbots of Waltham Abbey, and finally in 1541 the Manor, rectory and advowson were granted to John Smyth (one of Henry VIII's auditors, from a local landowning family). There is an altar tomb in Blackmore Church to his son, also John Smyth, and his son's second wife Margaret. The present parish church (EHER no 744) was formerly the nave of the priory church.

The proposed development site lies to the north of the site of the priory and at the core of the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Blackmore (EHER no 19009). It is also situated within an area recorded as The Green, a 12th- or 13th-century landscape feature typical of the village greens of Essex (Hunter 1999). The built-up area appears to have developed slowly during the post-medieval period, gradually encroaching upon and infilling the green, particularly along the south-western roadside and in the area of the development site.

#### 4 Aim

The aim of the monitoring was to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains. Particular attention was paid to:

- the presence and nature of medieval and post-medieval domestic activity.
- medieval and post-medieval property boundaries.

#### 5 Monitoring results and site log (Fig 1)

Due to the very wet nature of the site and the serious risk of trenches collapsing, it was very difficult to fully inspect all the sections. The ground around the current house was very disturbed. The worst area was that of the new kitchen/dining room, on the site of the recently-demolished garage. The foundations of the garage extended down to 1.4m below modern ground-level. Therefore the construction of the garage will have destroyed any archaeological horizons there.

Many of the trenches collapsed during excavation, due to the high levels of ground-water. As a result it was only possible to identify two significant features: two modern ditches which may have joined up at right-angles (F1, F2).

The site log is given below in the appendix.

#### Contexts recorded during monitoring

| Feature no | Type    | Dated finds                   | Phase             |
|------------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| F1         | ditch   | Tudor and post-medieval brick | mid 19th century  |
| F2         | ditch   | Fabric 48d pottery            | 19th-20th century |
| L1         | layer   | modern tile fragments         | 20th century      |
| L2         | layer   | none                          | ?                 |
| L3         | natural |                               | -                 |

#### 6 Finds

##### Post-medieval pottery and bricks, shell

by H Brooks

##### Introduction

This is a catalogue of the post-medieval pottery and bricks, and shell. Pottery fabric descriptions are after *CAR 7*.

##### Catalogue, with comments on feature dating

##### F1

*Finds no 1*

1 ?Tudor brick fragment, 40mm thick. 97g.

2 post-medieval brick fragments, 24g.

*Finds no 4*

1 post-medieval brick fragment, 110 x 60 x 185+ mm, thin narrow frog, probably mid 19th century, 2,172g.

1 complete post-medieval brick, 110 x 60 x 230mm, frogless, probably early 19th century, 2,500g.

**F1 date: mid 19th century**

**F2**

*Finds no 7*

2 sherds Fabric 48d (modern ironstone), 17g.

**F2 date: 19th-20th century**

**L1**

*Finds no 3*

4 oystershell fragments, 52g.

*Finds no 5*

1 very modern (20th-century) moulded roof-tile fragment, 53g.

*Finds no 6*

1 fragment of white ceramic wall tile (20th century), 5g.

**U/S**

*Finds no 2*

1 fragment of attractive frilled jug base in Fabric 40, 117g.

## 7 Discussion

The principal discoveries were two modern ditches (F1, F2), seen in section in T1, T3, T5 and T9 respectively. Ditch F1 could be seen to run completely straight for the full length of the old house.

The dark fills of the two features were very similar, and they both contained post-medieval bricks and/or 19th-/20th-century pottery. The ditches appeared to be heading towards a junction under the dining room, but this junction was not seen on site.

The purpose of the ditches is unclear. A reasonable suggestion is that they are old property boundaries. The main argument against this is that they were rather close to either side of the old house. However, as noted in the site log, the buildings to the east of Vine House are Victorian, Georgian and Tudor in date. It is, therefore, possible that the plot boundaries belonged to an earlier building on this plot, standing perhaps a little to the south of the old house (ie closer to the frontage line of the adjacent properties: see Fig 1). It is not possible to say when the ditches were first dug out, but finds indicate that they were infilled probably in the early 20th century.

## 8 Acknowledgements

The Trust would like to thank Mr Bill Smith for commissioning and funding the work. The site work was carried out by Richard Crocket. The project was monitored for the ECC HEM team by Adam Garwood.

## 9 References

- |       |      |   |
|-------|------|---|
| CAR 7 | 2000 | <i>Colchester Archaeological Report 7: Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-85</i> , by John Cotter          |
| CAT   | 2008 | <i>Policies and procedures</i>  |
| CAT   | 2009 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological monitoring at Vine House, The Green, Blackmore, Essex</i> , November 2009 |
| DoE   | 1990 | <i>Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning</i>  |

|           |       |  |
|-----------|-------|--|
| EAA 3     | 1997  | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource assessment</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>3</b> , ed by J Glazebrook                    |
| EAA 8     | 2000  | <i>Research and archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>8</b> , ed by N Brown & J Glazebrook |
| EAA 14    | 2003  | <i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> , East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, <b>14</b> , ed by D Gurney  |
| HEM       | 2009  | <i>Archaeological monitoring at Vine House, The Green, Blackmore</i> , November 2009   |
| Hunter, J | 1999  | <i>The Essex landscape : a study of its form and history</i> (Essex Record Office)   |
| IfA       | 2008a | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i>  |
| IfA       | 2008b | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>  |
| MoRPHE    | 2006  | <i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)  |

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| AOD           | above Ordnance Datum   |
| CAT           | Colchester Archaeological Trust  |
| CBM           | Ceramic Building Material, ie bricks and tiles                                     |
| context       | specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made   |
| ECC           | Essex County Council   |
| EHHER         | Essex Historic Environment Record, held by Essex County Council                    |
| feature       | an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain, a floor; can contain 'contexts' |
| fill          | the soil filling up a hole such as a pit or ditch                                  |
| HEM           | Historic Environment Management team of ECC  |
| IfA           | Institute for Field Archaeologists   |
| modern        | from 1900 to the present day   |
| natural       | geological deposit undisturbed by human activity                                   |
| NGR           | National Grid Reference  |
| post-medieval | the period from the mid 16th to the 18th century                                   |

## 11 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at 12 Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3NF, but will be permanently deposited with Chelmsford and Essex Museum (accession code CHMRE 2009.231).

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### Distribution list:

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Date: 05.02.10

Adams x c:/reports 10/blackmore/report537.doc

## 12 Appendix

### Thursday 3rd December 2009

07.50 Excavation commenced on the playroom area of the extension (T1).

08.30 Depth of excavation reached at 1.2m below ground-level. Natural (L3) is light brown clay. Topsoil (L1) is grey/brown clay silt. The ground appears to have been heavily disturbed by the construction of the old house, patio and garage (now demolished).

08.35 Excavation started on the north wall of the play room (T2).

09.20 Excavation continued in T2; no finds or features were seen. Trench sides starting to crumble and the bottom of the trench filling with water.

09.50 A feature (F1) was seen in the north-south aligned western wall of the play room (T3) and 1m from the existing outer wall of the house. It had a dark fill, and contained brick. F1 appears to be a ditch approximately 1.4m wide and 1.1m deep. It is possible that the same ditch was visible as a patch of black silt clay in the playroom's eastern footing (ie T1). However, this could not be confirmed because trench too dangerous to access due to the collapsing sides and rising water.

11.20 F1 was drawn and recorded. Samples of the brick saved (finds no 1). Also retrieved were oyster shells found in topsoil L1 near F1 (finds no 3). and a pot base also found in topsoil L1 (finds no 2).

11.50 Excavation complete for the day to allow concrete to be poured.

### Monday 7th December 2009

07.25 Previously-excavated sections, concrete, and patio bricks removed to start second section of excavations on central east-west footings (T4: continued from Thursday).

08.10 Depth of excavations reached at 1.5m below ground-level. No features or finds seen as yet.

08.20 Excavation started on the east-west footings at the west end of the current house (T5 and T6).

08.25 F1 seen again (F1 Sx 2). Fill was very dark, and contained Ceramic Building Material (CBM).

08.50 Trench fully excavated and complete section of F1 was revealed. Contained several bricks. Two of the most complete were saved (finds no 4).

09.10 Photographs taken, and finds recorded.

09.25 Street frontage examined. All buildings to the east of Vine House appear to be Victorian, Georgian and Tudor. All buildings to the west are modern (c post-1950). Vine House appears to be in a plot of land surrounded by older houses, thus suggesting that it may have previously been the site of a former dwelling previous to the current house.

09.50 Possible second ditch containing CBM around 1.5m to the north of F1. However, due to the sections collapsing, they had to be shored up and the section was no longer visible.

10.40 Excavation started on the most westerly east-west wall (kitchen/dining room: T7).

11.05 Depth of excavation reached at 1.5m below ground-level. Silt clay at the bottom of the trench is still very dark and contains modern bricks. On investigation,

this proves to be the foundations of the now-demolished garaged. Its foundations went down to 1.4m below ground-level, and during construction of the garage the trench sides collapsed and were backfilled (which explains the large dark areas).

11.15 Possible sighting of F1 again. However, the sides once again collapsed and have been shored up, so nothing can be seen. Trench too dangerous to stand near to get a better look.

11.30 Excavation continued at a slow pace due to collapsing sides. Ground heavily disturbed due to the garage. Fill is all modern bricks and soil is very dark.

11.55 Excavation complete for the day.

### **Wednesday 9th December 2009**

07.50 Work started on far western north-south wall (T8). Previous excavations now filled with concrete and areas around footings cleaned (topsoil removed and scraped). Ditch F1 can now be seen in the infilled trenches.

08.10 T8 continues to be opened. L1 was especially dark, and contained modern material brick (finds nos 5, 6). Modern milk bottle seen but not recovered.

08.15 Depth of excavation reached at 1.5m below ground-level.

08.20 Excavation started on the east-west trench of the kitchen (T9).

08.45 What appears to be a ditch (F2) with a modern pipe cut into it seen in T9. Fill is very dark and contains CBM and pottery (finds no 7).

09.10 Depth of excavation reached at 1.2m below ground-level (T9).

09.30 T9 now complete. Excavation starts on western garage trench (T10).

09.45 Depth of T10 reached at 1.5m below ground-level.

10.40 Excavation starts on east-west trench to front of garage (T11).

10.50 T11 completed. Excavation started on the north-south garage footing (T12).

11.30 After finding several pipes and an electrical cables trench, T12 fully excavated. 90-degree slits and the end of T10, T12 and T13 were cut.

12.15 Excavation complete for the day. Plans of F2 drawn, and photographs taken.



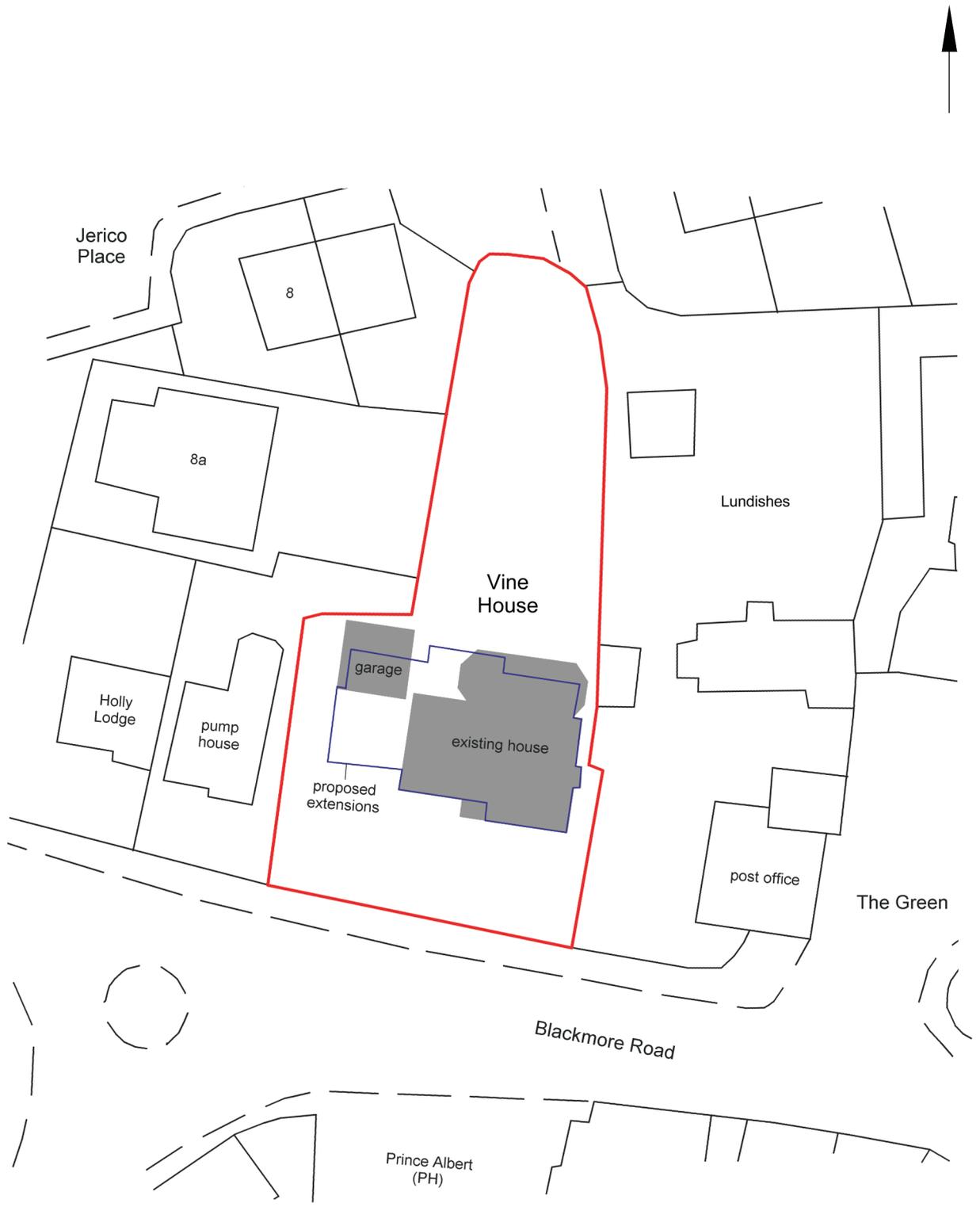
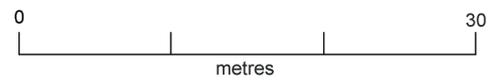


Fig 1 Site location plan (scale 1:500).



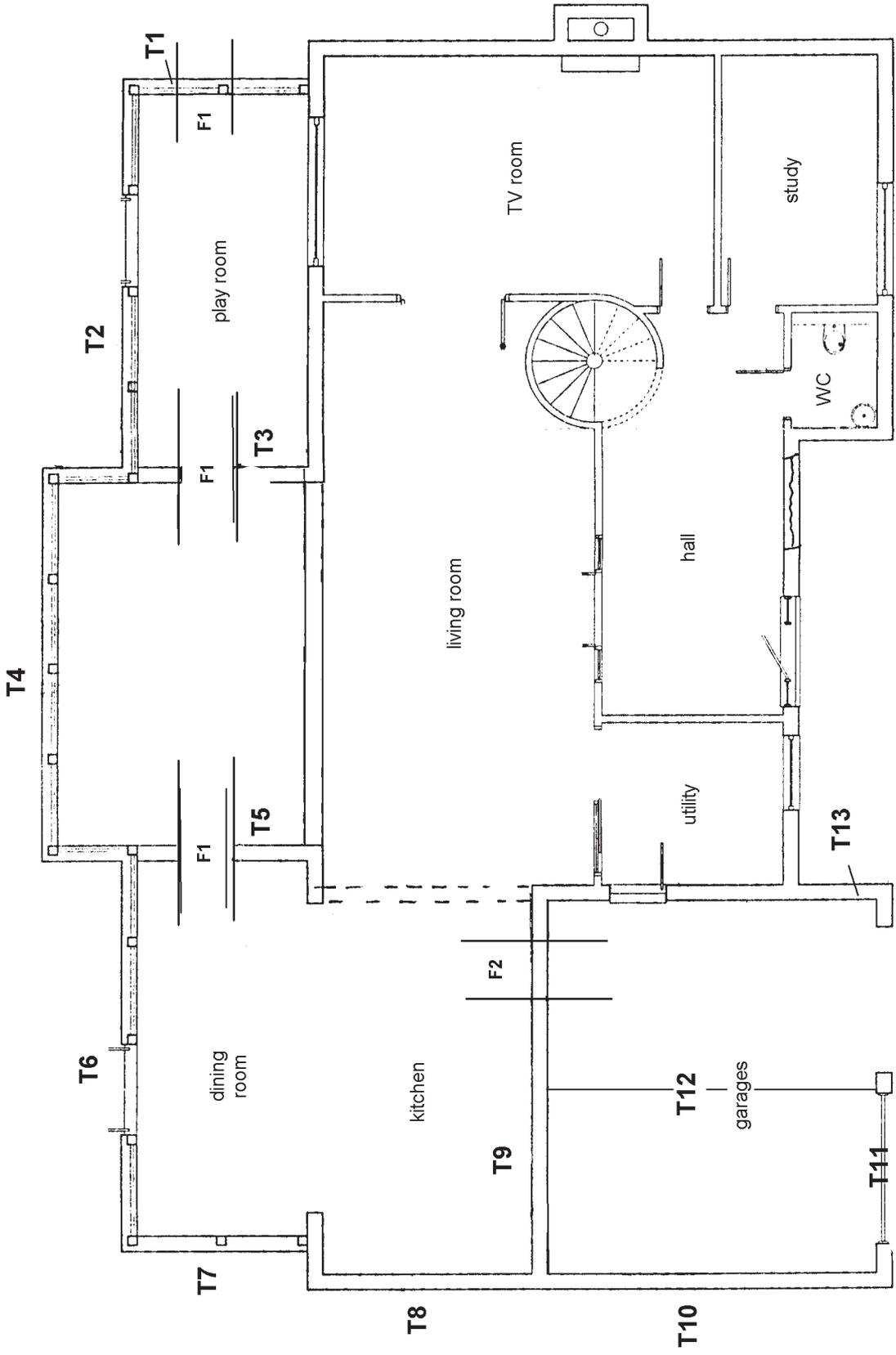


Fig 2 Footings plan, showing trenches and features.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Site address:</b> Vine House, The Green, Blackmore, Essex  |  |
| <b>Parish:</b> Blackmore  | <b>District:</b> Brentwood                                     |
| <b>NGR:</b> TL 6030 0189 (c)  | <b>Site codes:</b><br>CAT project – 09/11a<br>HEM – BVH 09     |
| <b>Type of work:</b><br>Monitoring  | <b>Site director/group:</b><br>Colchester Archaeological Trust |
| <b>Date of work:</b><br>December 2009   | <b>Size of area investigated:</b><br>–                         |
| <b>Curating museum:</b><br>Chelmsford and Essex Museum<br>(accession code CHMRE 2009.231)   | <b>Funding source:</b><br>Developer                            |
| <b>Further seasons anticipated?</b><br>No   | <b>Related EHER nos:</b><br>744, 19009                         |
| <b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 537 and summary in <i>EAH</i>   |  |
| <b>Periods represented:</b> modern  |  |
| <b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b><br><i>Two modern ditches discovered during archaeological monitoring of the rebuilding of Vine House may have been old property boundaries, pre-dating the existing house.</i> |  |
| <b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None   |  |
| <b>Keywords:</b> modern ditch   | <b>Significance:</b> neg                                       |
| <b>Author of summary:</b><br>Howard Brooks  | <b>Date of summary:</b><br>February 2010                       |