

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

CAT Report 560

Summary sheet

Address: Mascallsbury Farm, Church Lane, White Roding, Essex.	
Parish: White Roding	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 5674 1268	Site codes: CAT project –09/4f ECC HEM code– WHRMF10
Type of work: Archaeological strip and map	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: 9th-12th July 2010	Size of area investigated: 60m ²
Location of finds/curating museum: Saffron Walden Museum accession – SAFWM 2010.39	Funding source: Landowner
Further seasons anticipated? Yes	Related EHER numbers: 4380-1
Final report: CAT Report 560 and summary in EAH	
Periods represented: medieval, post-medieval, modern	
Summary of fieldwork results:	
<p>Background</p> <p>Mascallsbury Farm, a 15th-century listed house (Essex Historic Environment Record 4381), is on a fragmentary medieval moated enclosure located on the southern edge of the village of White Roding (Fig 1). The moat was originally more extensive - EHER notes that the eastern arm, and parts of the north and south arms are water-filled, but only the eastern arm is now extant (EHER 4380). Many of the moats in Uttlesford have their origins in the 12th and 13th centuries, and so the Mascallsbury moated enclosure may be earlier than the house.</p> <p>The potential of the site meant that a programme of archaeological work was required. Details of this were set out in a brief issued by Essex County Council Historic Environment Management (ECC HEM) officer Richard Havis. The fieldwork was carried out as according to the HEM brief, and to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CAT.</p> <p>The land was formerly used as a small car park, and before that had been the driveway entrance leading to the house before the renovation of the adjacent barns and the construction of a new entranceway from the south.</p> <p>Method and results</p> <p>In advance of the construction of a cart lodge to the north-east of the farm, a 60m² area was stripped by machine under the supervision of CAT between the 9th and 12th of July 2010. After the removal of tarmac, a toothless ditching bucket was used to strip away the underlying hoggin (L4). The entire area was initially reduced by 350mm, revealing the light yellow/brown</p>	

natural clay with frequent chalk nodules (L3). In the area beneath the proposed cart lodge (Fig 2) the combined thickness of the tarmac and the hoggin was just over 350mm. This meant that across much of the excavation area the desired construction level was reached before all the hoggin had been stripped away. The hoggin had been laid directly onto the natural clay, and any soil overlying the clay had been removed prior to the construction of the car park. In the southern portion of the footprint, where the proposed store was to be built (on the side of the cart lodge), undisturbed dark grey/brown topsoil (L1) overlay a lighter, clay soil accumulation (L2). Together, the two soil layers were just over 400mm thick, so stripping in this area continued to a depth of 450mm, revealing solid clay. A large tree stump was excavated by machine to the south of the proposed store (under archaeological supervision). No archaeological features were observed, and the only finds recovered were four flowerpot sherds (Fabric 51b, 51g: Pottery fabrics are after Colchester Archaeological Report 7: *Post-Roman pottery from excavations in Colchester, 1971-1985*, by John Cotter).

Even where the initial strip had reached the natural clay, the identification and definition of archaeological features was problematical. Over most of the site a couple more scrapes with the machine would have been required to truly define the archaeological features, but the construction levels did not require this, and the area remained masked by a thin layer of dirty natural or pressed-in hoggin. A cluster of poorly-defined pits was identified in the north-east corner of the excavation area (F7), from which a medieval sherd was recovered (Fabric 20, 2g). In the centre of the excavation another ?pit was recorded (F9), and to the south the pit F5, contained a sherd of post-medieval Metropolitan slipware (Fabric 40a, 13g) and two fragments of post-medieval CBM (17.8g). A large and shallow pit F8 appeared to contain modern brick. The pits all had grey silty clay fills. Charcoal flecks were common and daub flecks rare. The construction of a raft foundation over these deposits will preserve them *in situ*.

Where the initial strip had stopped at a depth of 350mm below modern ground level, a further reduction of 100mm was required around the perimeter of the excavation for the raft foundation. The additional depth in this 600mm wide strip allowed for much greater definition of archaeological features: two post-holes (F2 and F3), a gully with a ?pit on its western side (F4) and a charcoal rich pit (F6). A medieval sherd (Fabric 20, 2g) was recovered from F4, and two fragments of medium/large mammal *humerus* and a small (probably residual) prehistoric retouched flake was recovered from F6. F1 was possibly the return of a wall along the driveway (the frogged bricks were 220x115x65mm). No cut features were seen beneath the footprint for the store, but recovered finds included a handle and rim sherd from a medieval jug (Fabric 20, 12.4g), a horse molar (39.4g) and a scraper made on a small secondary flake with an area of abrupt scraper retouch on the ventral face, distal end (5.2g).

Conclusions

A number of archaeological features were exposed in the strip, but they could not be examined in any meaningful way beyond the recovery of some finds from their surfaces. These finds do give us a little detail of the site's history, even if in a simplistic way. There are two points worthy of mention. First, the majority of the contexts (F4, F7, L1) contained medieval sherds, indicating that the main period of activity was probably in the 12th-14th centuries. This is of interest, since it predates the earliest phase of the farm (15th century) and may indicate that the site is older than the buildings which now occupy it. One later sherd is contemporary with the later rebuilding of the house in the 17th/18th century.

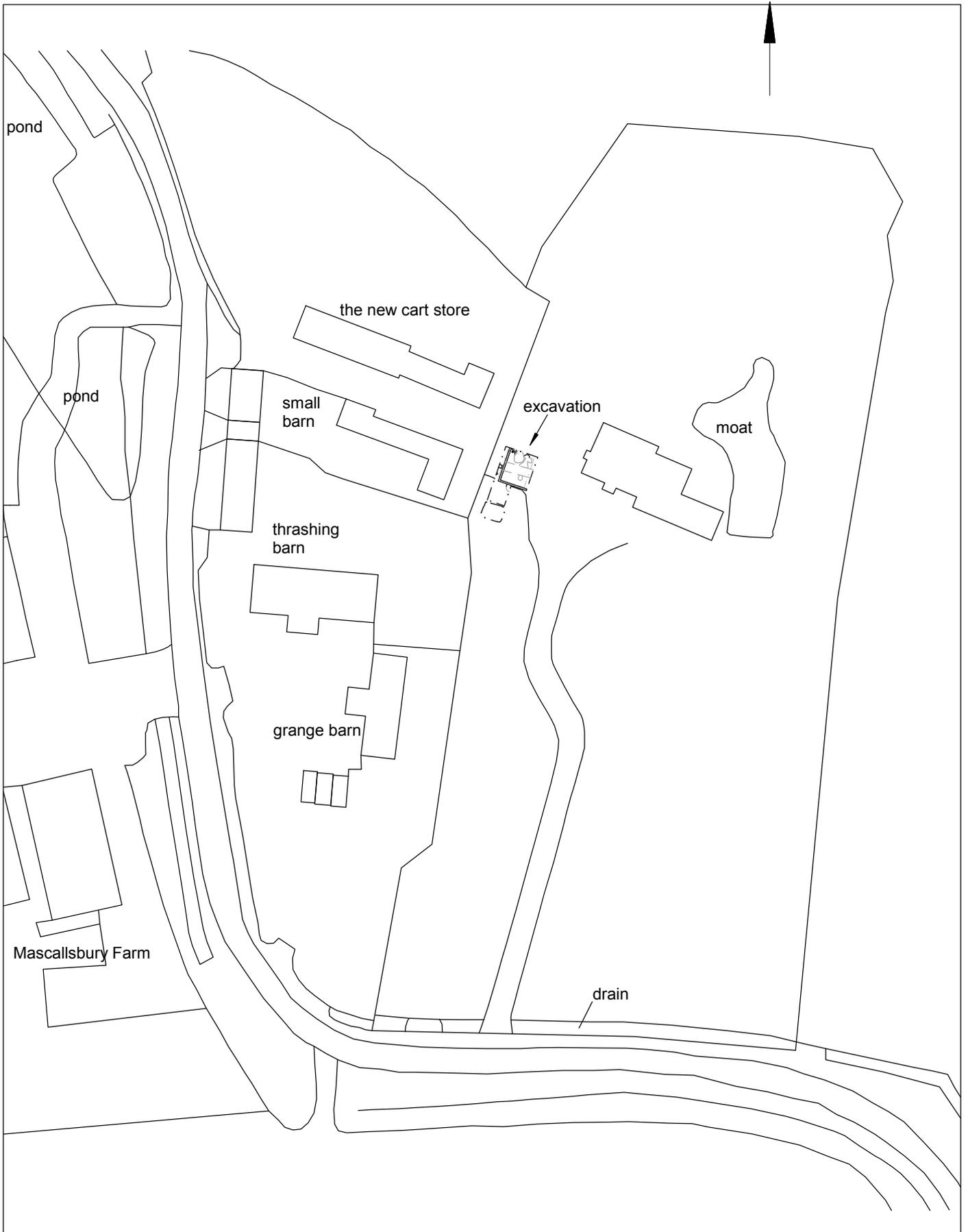
Previous summaries/reports: None

Keywords: medieval moat

Significance: *

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Fig 1 Site location



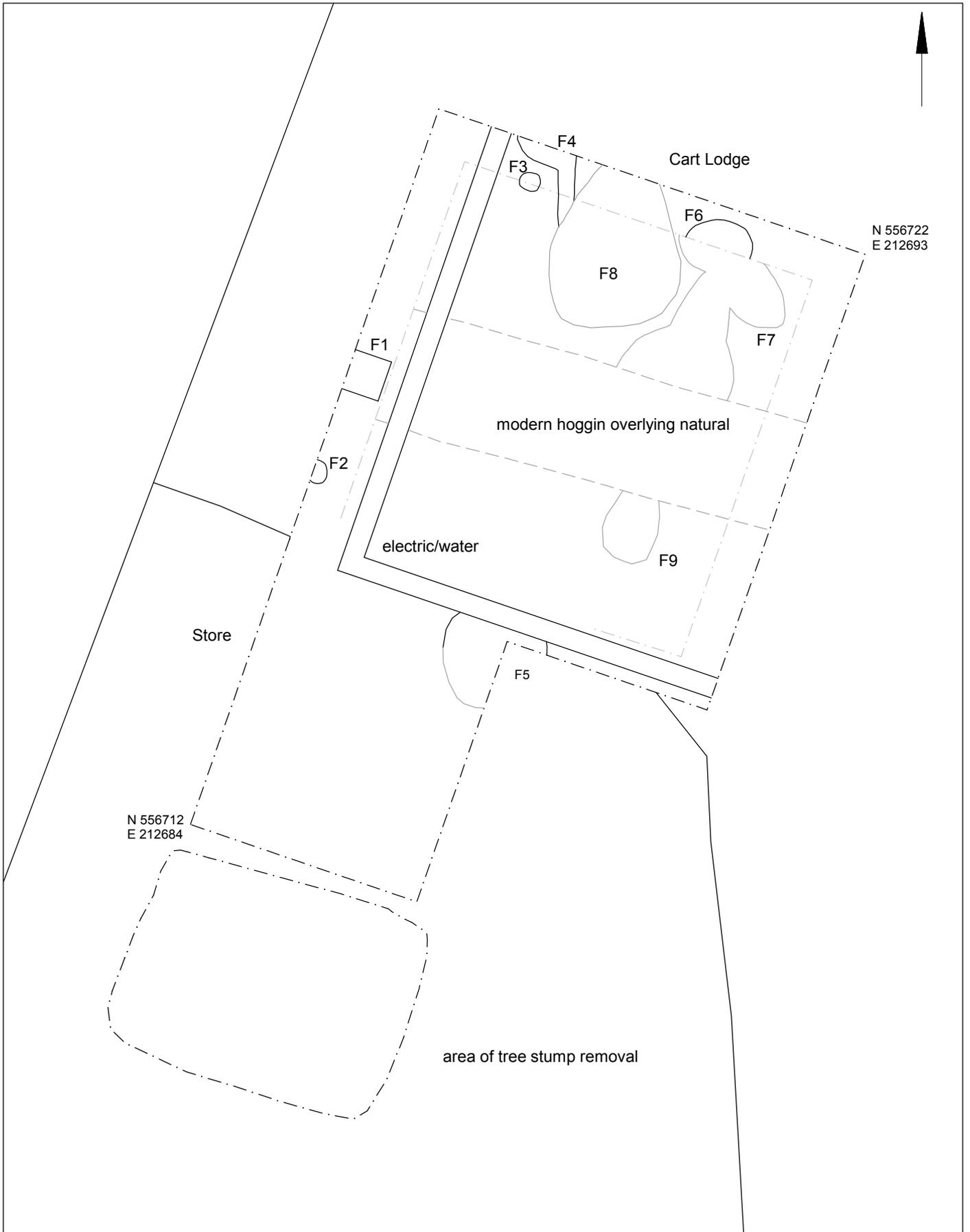


Fig 2 Results (grey solid lines are approximate edges based on poor definition)

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