

**An archaeological evaluation at  
Bocking Hall, Bocking Churchstreet,  
Bocking, Essex  
August 2004**

**report prepared by  
Carl Crossan**

**on behalf of  
Mr and Mrs Pickford**

CAT project ref.: 04/7g

NGR: TL 7568 2578

HAMP site code: BOCBH 04

Braintree Museum accession code: BRNTM 2004.41

Planning application nos: BTE/104/04 and BTE/LB/109/04



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## **1 Summary**

*The present Bocking Hall was built in the late 16th century on the probable site of its medieval predecessor which, with the adjacent church, lies in an area believed to have been the original focus of Bocking's medieval settlement. Evaluation trenches were dug to the north-west of the hall on the line of foundations for a new extension and detached garage. The excavation of the trenches revealed widespread deposits of post-medieval to early modern rubble laid to form a terrace on the naturally sloping ground. The levelling lay on an earlier topsoil which merged with underlying subsoil. No archaeologically significant structural remains were recorded during the investigation.*

## **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 This is the archive report on an archaeological evaluation which took place on the 2nd and 3rd August 2004 at Bocking Hall, Bocking Churchstreet, Bocking, Essex (Fig 1; NGR TL 7568 2578).
- 2.2 The 16th-century hall stands in grounds adjoining the Church of St Mary the Virgin near the junction of Bovingdon Road and Church Street, Bocking Churchstreet, Bocking, Essex.
- 2.3 The investigation was prompted by the proposed construction of an extension and detached garage/studio in the garden to the north-west of the hall (planning application nos BTE/104/04 and BTE/LB/109/04).
- 2.4 The fieldwork and report follows a brief written by the Essex County Council Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion (HAMP) group and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).
- 2.5 The fieldwork and report preparation were carried out in accordance with the relevant standards set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1999).

## **3 Archaeological background**

The archaeological significance of the site and its probable place in the early development of Bocking is set out in detail in Medlycott 1998. In summary, the present Bocking Hall was built in the late 16th century and incorporates 17th-century additions and 18th-century alterations. It stands on the probable site of its medieval predecessor which, with the adjacent church, lies in an area believed to have been the original focus of Bocking's medieval settlement.

## **4 Aims**

The aims of the fieldwork were to establish and record the character, extent, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by the proposed development.

## **5 Methods**

Foundation trenches for the four walls of the garage/studio (Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5) and the north-east wall of the extension (Trench 2) were progressively excavated under archaeological supervision using a mechanical digger equipped with a 450mm-wide toothless bucket. The results were recorded using methods set out in the WSI dated 30th July 2004, a copy of which is included as the appendix to this report.

## 6 Results (Figs 2-3)

6.1 Figure 2 shows the trench locations and the positions of the sections illustrated in Figure 3.

### 6.2 Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5

The soil sequence was as follows:

**Context table 1.**

layer no	trench nos	description	interpretation and comment	period
L1	1, 3, 4, 5	Dark greyish brown sandy loam with a low to medium content of small brick, tile and mortar fragments	Dumped garden topsoil with a variable content of inclusions; same as L7 in Trench 2.	modern
L2	1	Mainly soft white mortar	Localised and erratic patch, dumped rather than a laid surface.	post-medieval or modern
L3	1, 3, 4, 5	Mixed: mainly greyish brown sandy loam with a generally high content of small red brick and tile fragments	Make-up; similar to L8 in Trench 2.	post-medieval
L4	1, 3, 4, 5	Brown sandy silt loam	Earlier topsoil accumulation. Becomes paler and sandier with depth - merged with underlying subsoil L5; similar to L9 in Trench 2.	post-medieval and earlier
L5	1, 3, 4, 5	Fine silty sand, brown with a very slight olive tinge in places	Subsoil; same as L10 in Trench 2.	-
L6	1, 3, 4, 5	Reddish brown stoney sand	Natural; same as L11 in Trench 2.	-

The excavation of this group of trenches revealed two drains, both leading from the direction of the house toward the lower-lying ground to the north-west.

#### Drain F1/F4

This drain run was represented by a brick-lined square inspection pit (Feature or F1 in Trench 1) and a pipe trench (F4) which was cut by Trench 3. The inspection pit F1 was constructed of unfroged red brick typically measuring 22cm x 6cm x 11cm and was covered by a stone slab. The slab was laid at the level of the interface between Layer or L3 and L4 and appeared to be sealed by L3, although the continuity of this layer could not be established with certainty at this point due to heavy local root disturbance. The mortar adhering to the bricks varied from a lime-rich white to sandy yellowish brown, indicating either a very poor mix or possible re-use of the bricks. To the north-west, the associated pipe trench (F4 in Trench 3) contained a brown salt-glazed earthenware drainpipe of probable 19th- to 20th-century date.

#### Drain F2/F3

The excavation of foundation Trench 1 revealed the cut for this drain (F2) which was more fully exposed by the deeper excavation in Trench 2 (F3). Here, the bottom of the trench contained a brick-floored drain with sides built from several courses of red brick laid lengthways in line with the course of the drain. The roof construction was not discernible as safety considerations prevented closer inspection of the drain, which lay at a depth of 2.1m. Bricks excavated from this feature were unfroged and measured 20cm x 5cm x 11cm. The trench was sealed by L3.

### 6.3 Trench 2

The soil sequence in this foundation trench for an extension to the house was similar to that noted in Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5.

**Context table 2.**

layer no	trench nos	description	interpretation and comment	period
L7	2	Same as L1	Topsoil; same as L1.	modern
L8	2	Similar to L3	Make-up; similar to L3.	post-medieval
L9	2	Similar to L4	Earlier topsoil accumulation; similar to L4.	post-medieval and earlier
L10	2	Same as L5	Subsoil; same as L5.	-
L11	2	Same as L6	Natural; same as L6.	-

Trench 2 butted against the north-west wall of the present hall, exposing its brick footing (F5) which is shown here in profile in Figure 3. The footing projected 5-6cm from the face of the standing wall and was constructed of red brick, typically 23cm x 6cm x 11cm, laid in five alternating courses of headers and stretchers (English bond).

## **7 Finds**

### **7.1 Brick and tile**

Brick and tile inclusions in the make-up layers L3 and L8 were generally too small for dating purposes. However, cambered peg-tile was noted in L3 and this is normally considered to be post-1600 in date.

### **7.2 Pottery** (identification by Howard Brooks)

One small sherd (8 grams) of Fabric 35 Mill Green ware was found in the lowest 10cm of L3. This dates to the late 13th or 14th century and is assumed to be residual.

### **7.3 Clay tobacco pipe**

A fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem (17th-19th century) lay at the interface between L8 and L9.

## **8 Discussion**

No remains of early buildings were found in this part of the grounds. The site of the development lies to the north-west of the present house in an area where the land naturally slopes downwards in a westerly direction. This area has been made up to form a terrace more or less level with the house. The make-up, represented by layers L3 and L8, is probably of more than one phase, originating in the post-medieval period and augmented by early modern deposits. It is composed mainly of building debris, and extends from the house as far as the present north-west boundary of the garden, a distance of 20m. Beyond this boundary, open grassland falls away into a fold which reaches its lowest point approximately 50m from the house. Spot levels taken during the fieldwork indicate that the natural downward incline is in the region of 3.4m over a distance of 50m, or approximately 1 in 14.

## **9 Acknowledgements**

The CAT is grateful to the following individuals and organisations for their help in the course of the investigation:

Mr and Mrs Pickford of Bocking Hall

Andrew Stevenson Associates, Architects

David Whiffen Builders (Tony Whiffen)

R P Bareham Groundworks

Essex County Council Heritage Advice, Management and Promotion group (Vanessa Clarke and Richard Havis)

Braintree District Museum (Robert Rose)

## 10 References

Medlycott, M 1998 Bocking: historic town project assessment report, ECC internal document

## 11 Archive deposition

The evaluation archive, consisting of the site context records, section drawings, plans, digital photographs and selected finds are currently held by CAT but will be deposited with Braintree District Museum for permanent storage under cover of museum accession code BRNTM 2004.41.

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### Distribution:

Mr and Mrs Pickford, Bocking Hall  
Vanessa Clarke, Essex County Council, HAMP group  
Essex Heritage Conservation Record, Essex County Council



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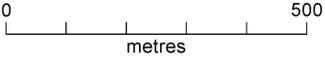


Fig 1 Site location.

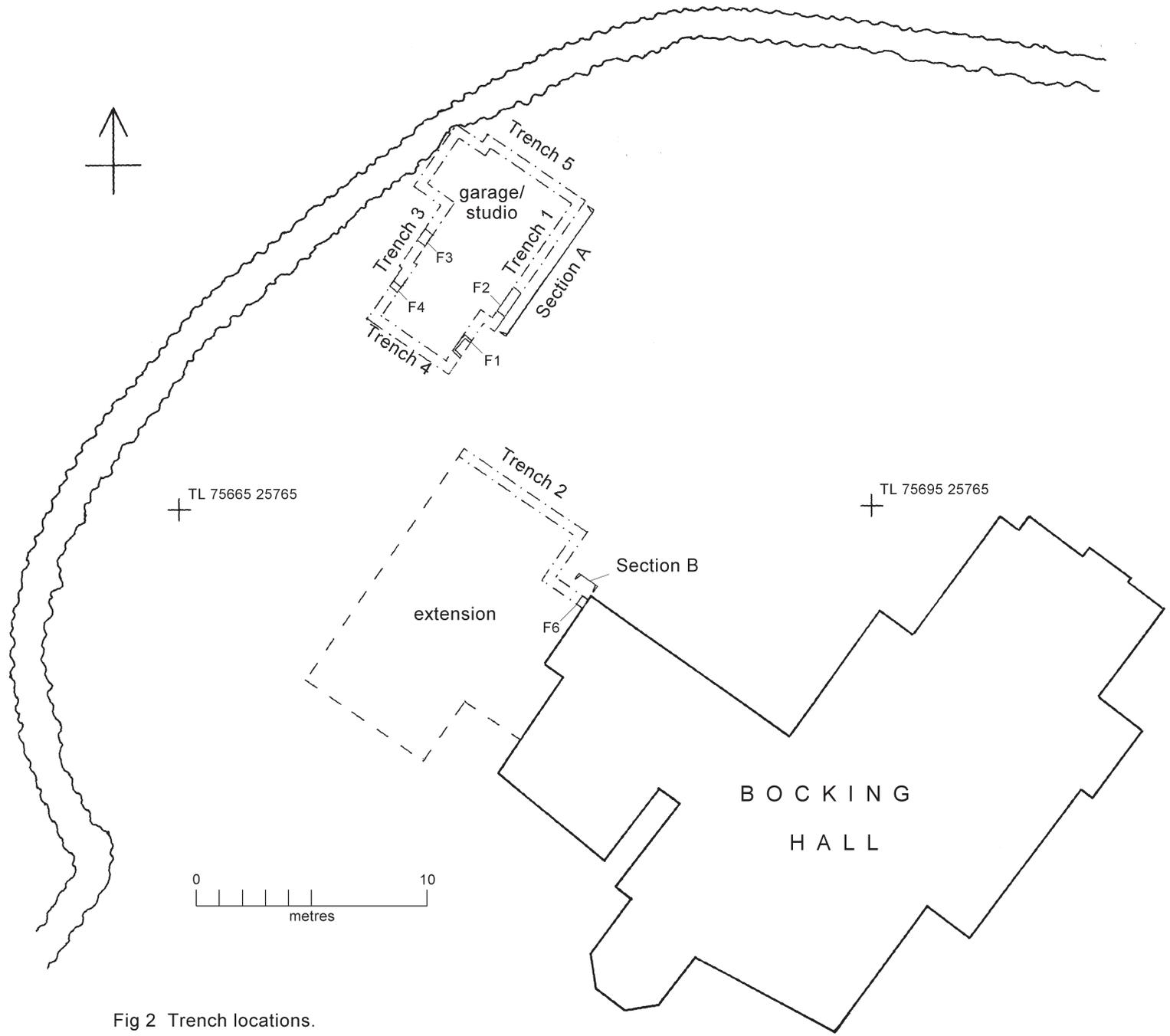
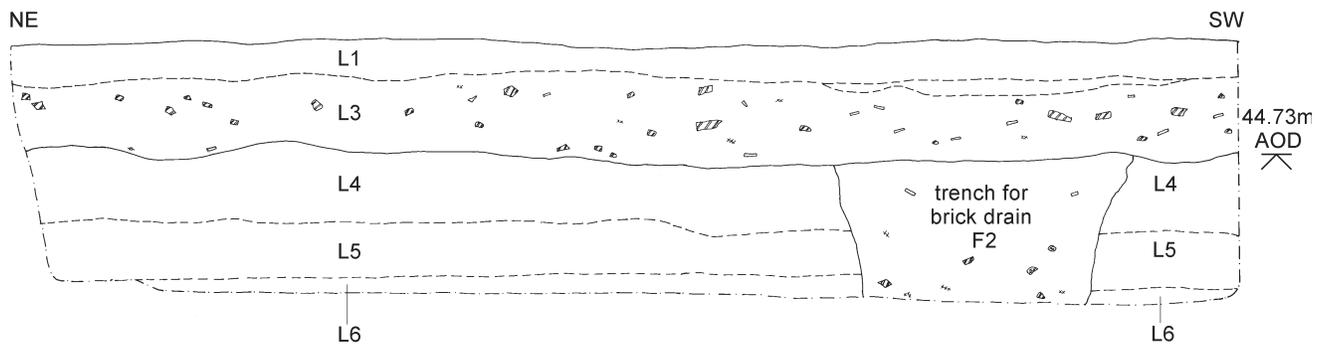
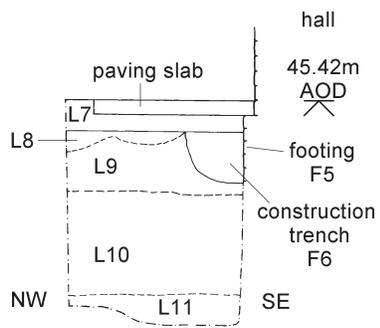


Fig 2 Trench locations.



Section A Trench 1



Section B Trench 2

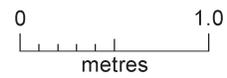


Fig 3 Trench sections.

# Essex Heritage Conservation Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

## Summary sheet

<b>Site name/address:</b> Bocking Hall, Bocking Churchstreet, Bocking, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Bocking	<b>District:</b> Braintree and Bocking
<b>NGR:</b> TL 7568 2578	<b>Site code:</b> CAT site code: 04/7g HAMP code: BOCBH 04 Braintree Museum code: BRNTM 2004.41
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> August 2004	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> approx 200 sq m
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Braintree District Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Developer
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHCR nos:</b> 18416, 27991
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 278 and summary in EAH	
<b>Periods represented:</b> post-medieval to modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b>  <i>The present Bocking Hall was built in the late 16th century on the probable site of its medieval predecessor which, with the adjacent church, lies in an area believed to have been the original focus of Bocking's medieval settlement. Evaluation trenches were dug to the north-west of the hall on the line of foundations for a new extension and detached garage. The excavation of the trenches revealed widespread deposits of post-medieval to early modern rubble laid to form a terrace on the naturally sloping ground. The levelling lay on an earlier topsoil which merged with underlying subsoil. No archaeologically significant structural remains were recorded during the investigation.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Author of summary:</b> Carl Crossan	<b>Date of summary:</b> November 2004