

Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex.
Recording the ground works at the site prior to development.
Surveyed 06 10 2011. Harlow District Council HW/PL/11/00059.



Page | 1

Location of Ken Browns Garage in Potter Street, Harlow.



The Maintenance Workshop to be removed is in the centre of the site. Google Earth 2006.

Location

Ken Brown Motors is a medium sized Kia car dealership situated on the western side of Potter Street, south of Harlow, Essex. NGR TL 4716 0898.



**ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD
ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY
SUMMARY SHEET**

Site name/Address: Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex.	
Parish: Harlow	District: Harlow
NGR: TL 4716 0898..	Site Code: HAKB11
Type of Work: Watching Brief.	Site Director/Team: Barry Hillman-Crouch
Date of Work: 06 10 2011	Size of Area Investigated: 16x50m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: N/A	Funding source: Owner
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHER Nos:
Final Report: Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex. Recording the ground works at the site prior to development. Surveyed 06 10 2011. Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND. .	
Periods Represented: C15th - C20th	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: The watching brief examined an area of 15x50m excavated to 1.0m deep against the western boundary of the site. This area was formerly the site of C19th farm buildings removed in the MC20th. The ground was highly disturbed from the removal of the concrete hard standings and cable trenches and no significant archaeological features were discovered. One modern pipe trench contained fragments of Bellarmine and Metropolitan slipware but no mediaeval or roman material was found anywhere on the site. The ground was soaked with motor oil.	
Previous Summaries/Reports: Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex. Description and analysis of the timber-frame contained within the Maintenance Workshop. Surveyed. 06 10 2011. Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND	
Author of Summary: Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND.	Date of Summary: 18 09 2012.

Page | 2

Objectives and Scope

Ken Brown Motors is a medium sized Kia dealership situated on the western side of Potter Street south of Harlow. NGR TL 4716 0898. The site has a large recent glass and steel showroom to the SW corner of the plot and the Maintenance Garage sits in the middle of the plot. The maintenance garage is to be dismantled in the future to make way for the new showrooms and garage buildings.

Page | 3

An application for a new Workshop/MOT bay/Showroom Valet Area and Washdown bay plus the demolition of the existing workshop was submitted to Harlow District Council in 2011 under planning reference HW/PL/11/00059. This followed an earlier permission in 2001 (HW/ST/01/00213) for a new showroom which was only partly completed. As the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological potential, a full archaeological condition was attached to the planning consent.

The archaeological work comprised a watching brief of the whole of the stripped site associated with a new showroom. The site had already been visited and the present Maintenance Workshop recorded and detailed in the report- '*Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex. Description and analysis of the timber-frame contained within the Maintenance Workshop. Surveyed. 06 10 2011*' by Barry J Hillman-Crouch.

The conclusion was that the building contained the frame of LC15th barn. The topographical study showed a range of buildings forming a farm that were only removed in the C20th.

The specific aim of the archaeological monitoring was to preserve, by record, the archaeological deposits that were uncovered by the excavation of foundations and service trenches.

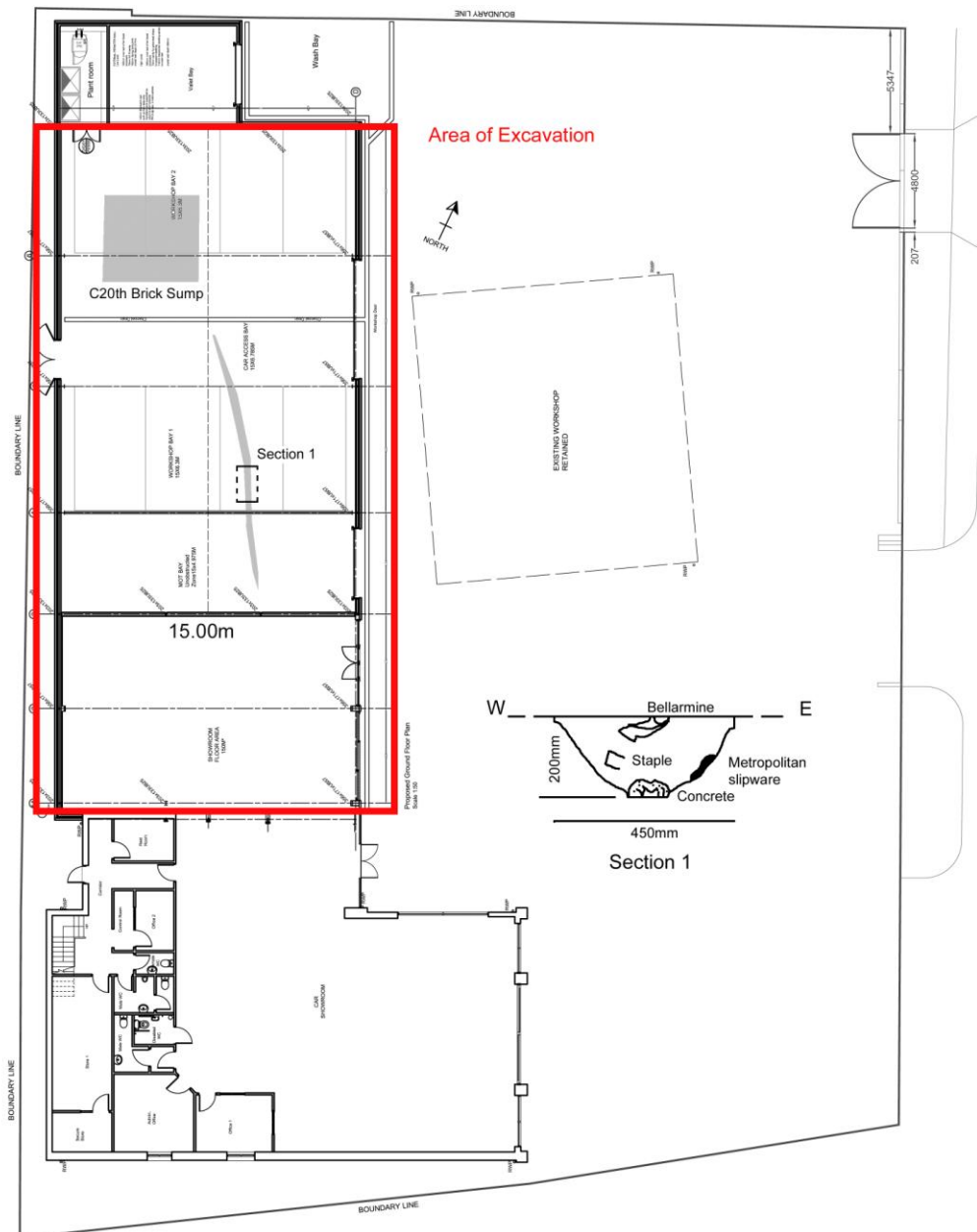
The original brief required that 'The monitoring work will record the ground works of the eastern and northern wall foundations, cross walls and any significant service runs.' This was mainly due to the unusual circumstances regarding the planning conditions than the topography of the site.

However the ground stripping was extensive and it was more appropriate to record the whole area that was stripped back to a depth of 1.0m.

Local Geology.

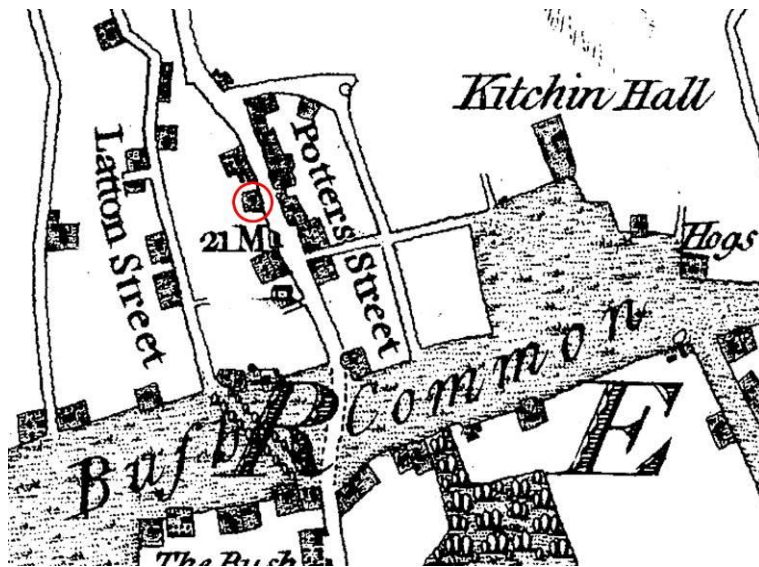
The site was excavated by machine to a depth of approximately 1.0m below the present surface level visible in the forecourt. The site itself was under rafts of concrete and gravel surfaces. The cleanly cut sections exposed a layer of pure London clay.

Large sections of the site were permeated with black engine oil which discoloured the soils and smelt quite redolently of GTX. The area immediately north of the Maintenance Workshop was particularly rich in oil and this area had been scraped out several times and successive layers of coal, crushed brick and asphalt laid down to form a roadway.



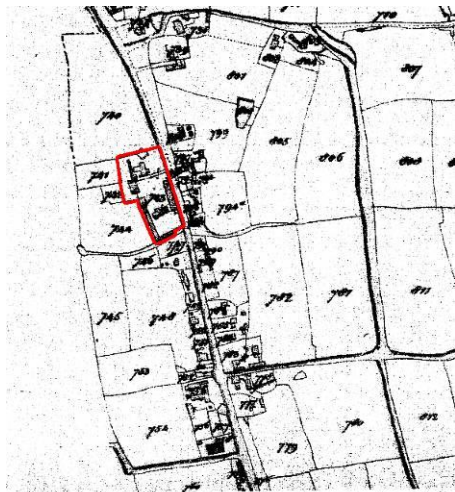
The area of excavation locating the only feature of archaeological interest.

Topographical Survey from Maps



1777 Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex. Sheet 11.

In 1777 Chapman and Andre produced a detailed map of the whole of Essex with some parts of major neighbouring towns. The map of Potter Street shows a plot coinciding with that of the position of Ken Brown's Garage with a large building in the middle of it. There is also a plot to the north which is probably the White House mentioned in later maps.



1849 Tithe Award Map. ERO D/CT 164.

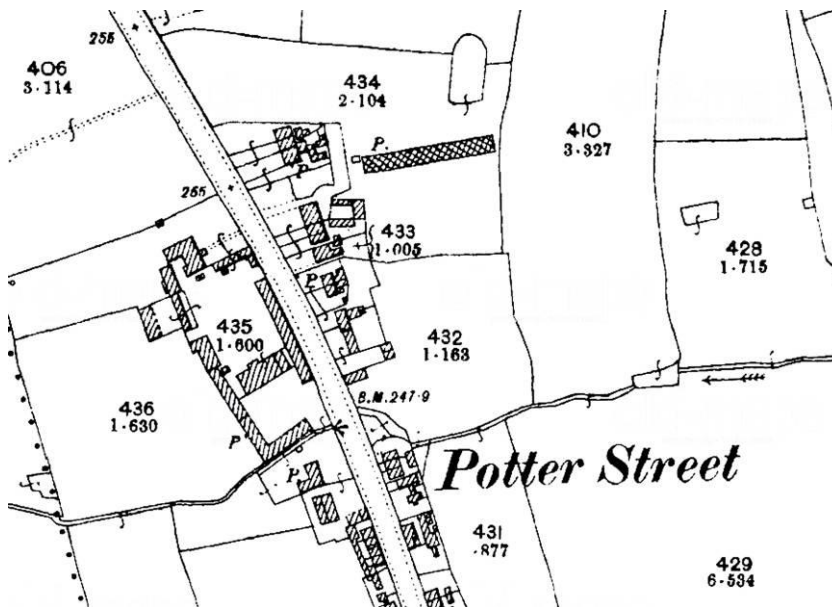


By 1849 the two plots are amalgamated and the White House is shown to the north while the barn is clearly shown with a midstrete off-centre to the west. Long buildings line the boundaries in a formation which would have been recognised by the High Farmers. Plot 743 is recorded as 'White house premises and garden' owned and occupied by the Revd Jos. Arkwright.



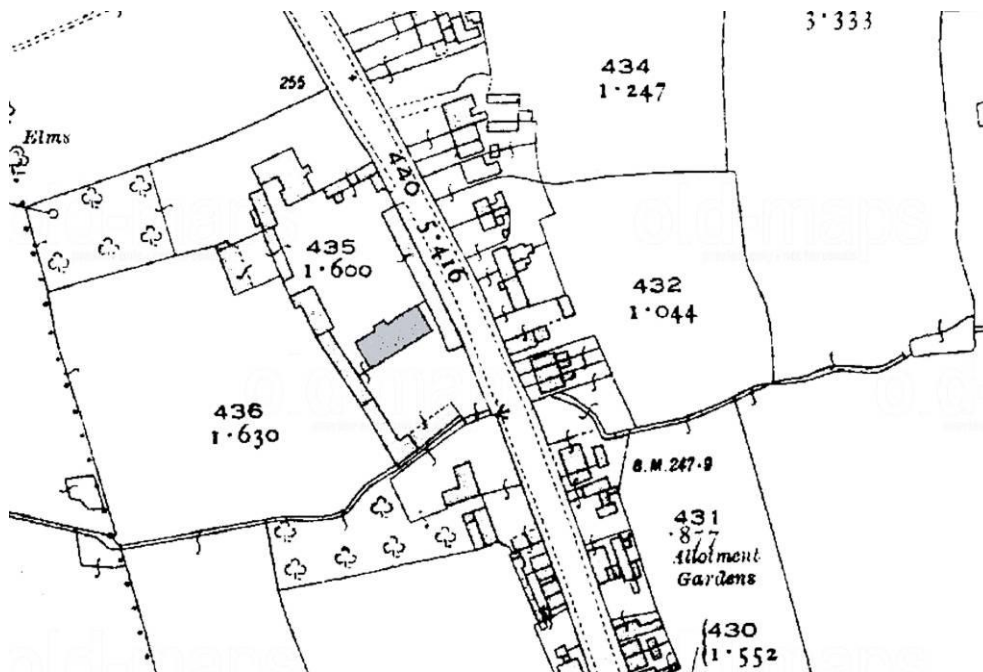
1881 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map

The First Edition Ordnance Survey for 1881 is only available at the less detailed 1:10560 scale. It depicts the site much as it was in 1848 and names the Whitehouse.



1896 Ordnance Survey Map

The 1:2500 2nd edition OS is much clearer and shows the disposition of the farm buildings that can be actually seen in the EC20th photographs of the site.



1922 Ordnance Survey

In 1922 the site is still a farm with all the buildings shown on the 1848 Tithe Award. The barn is depicted again as a single building with an offset midstretey.



1947 Ordnance Survey

The significant change in detail in 1947 is the appearance of the forecourt and the removal of some of the boundary buildings. The former farmyard has been fenced off from the Whitehouse.

Historic Photography. Kindly supplied by Mick Taylor, senior technician at Ken Brown's.



Page | 8

Larter's garage in the later 1920's or 1930's.



The SW corner of the barn (rhs) and the range of buildings on the west boundary. All thatched. The little girls have grown up a bit in this photograph.



1930's facade of Larter's garage.

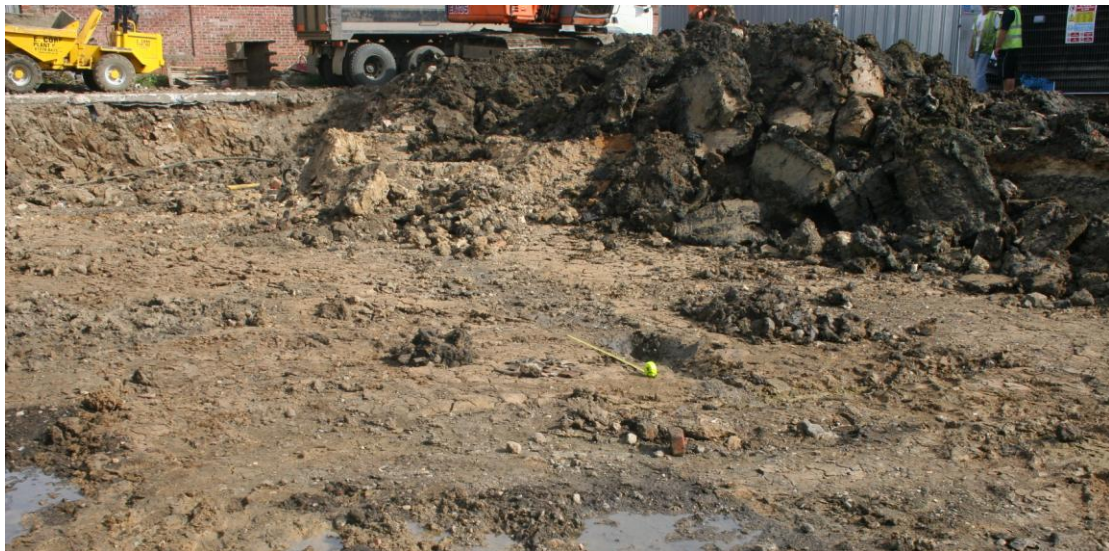
Excavation Methodology and Timescale.



Page | 9

Excavator with ditching bucket. Looking S.

The westernmost bay of the Maintenance Workshop was removed and the building made water tight with plastic sheeting as it was still in use. The site was excavated with a tracked excavator using a 1.8m ditching bucket leaving a clean scraped surface.



The measuring tape lies beside a linear feature that was hand excavated. Looking NE.

Only one feature of possible archaeological interest was identified because it contained pieces of Bellarmine salt glazed ware. When excavated the clay soil was full of motor oil and had to be withdrawn in lumps and allowed to dry in the sun before being broken down.

Care was exercised at all times not to make contact with the soil which may have contained other chemicals or acids associated with cars.

The excavation was carried out over two days and the site visited twice to make records.

Excavation Sequence



Page | 10

Layers of road make up adjacent to the Maintenance Workshop. Looking E.

The only true archaeological sequence that was recorded was that of the successive layers of the roadway to the north of the Maintenance Workshop. Here there was a build up of road making materials with the earliest being broken brick and roof tiles and gravel straight onto the London clay. Because the soil was permeated with oil it was decided not to excavate by hand but a clean section was created by the machine.

In the section 500mm of London was overlain with crushed brick and tile identifiable as peg and pan tiles. This was intermixed with coarse gravels and pebbles to a depth of 200mm. On top of this was a 200mm layer of gravel hoggin (commonly called Type 1) and the surface finished with layers of concrete and asphalt representing many path repairs. A number of sawn off railway sleepers were pulled out and these were no doubt post repairs from the range of timber buildings that lined the western side of the site until the later C20th.



Linear feature containing oil soaked clay and some finds. Scale is 1m. Looking W then N.

There was one feature of interest that was excavated by hand because it contained pieces of a salt glazed Bellarmine bottle and a piece of undecorated Metropolitan slipware from a platter. This was a linear feature with a dished profile that descended 200mm into the London clay at a depth of 1.0m from the present surface level. A 1.0m long section was removed to test the feature.

Page | 11

The oil soaked clay soil contained a small cache of pottery, a leather boot sole, roof tile and ironwork consisting of a door latch, square shouldered staple and a hexagonal nut. At the very base of the deposit was a chunk of concrete rubble and so it had to be concluded this was all redeposited into the feature in the C20th. There had been a drainage pipe running across the site at this point to a C20th brick built sump. The rest of the feature was sterile of finds and lensed out to the south.

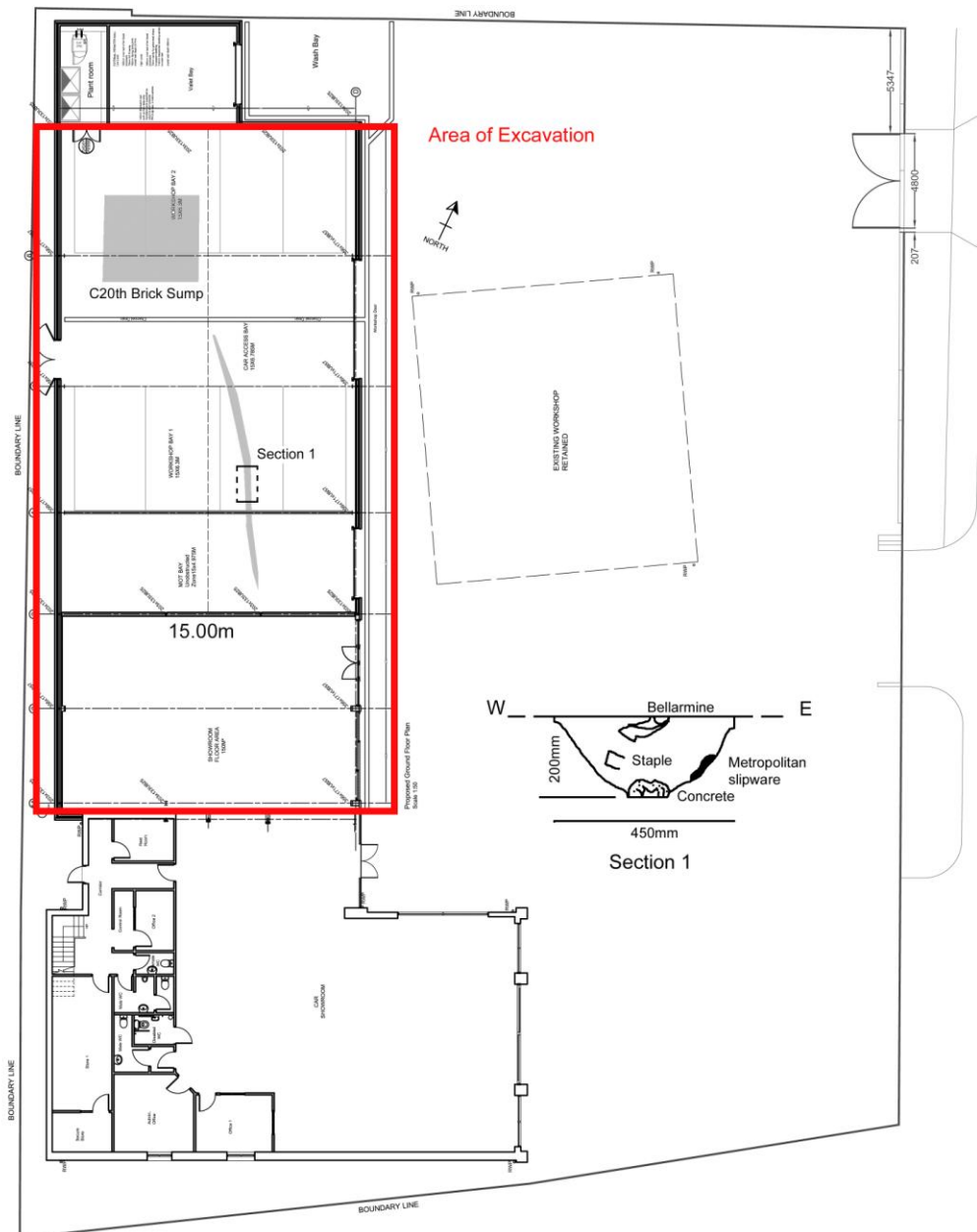
Finds



Finds recovered from a C20th pipe trench.

The finds from the C20th pipe trench are of interest because they imply an occupation of the site at least as far back as the C16th when Bellarmine bottles were commonplace. They were also reused as witch's bottles when pieces of cloth, material or hair were put inside them and used as charms to ward off evil. The metal fittings must come from the C19th buildings and the hexagonal nut from a C20th machine.

Because they were found in a C20th context they were reburied where they were found. There were a number of other discrete dumps of C20th car parts, metal and a front roller from a lawn mower all apparently buried on purpose.



Site plan and section through the modern feature containing the Bellarmine fragments.

Phasing and Discussion

The phasing of the site through its buildings has been developed at length in the companion report *“Ken Browns Garage, 42-44 Potter Street, Harlow, Essex. Description and analysis of the timber-frame contained within the Maintenance Workshop. Surveyed. 06 10 2011”*

The excavation has not uncovered anything of substance to add to the conclusions of the report which are broadly that the LC15th barn contained within the Maintenance Workshop was incorporated into the EC19th farmyard that was laid out in the style of a Victorian High Farm.

The farm continued its function into the 1920's when part of it was converted to a garage and petrol station. During the 1930's the forecourt buildings were converted to the International Modern style that was sweeping the country at the time.

The historic mapping shows that the range of outbuildings were mostly still in place in 1947 and the sawn off railway sleepers recovered indicate they were repaired in the normal way for a farm.

Page | 13

Eventually they were all demolished to make way for the present showroom and the rough hard standings and makeshift buildings. This intervention removed nearly all traces of the earlier buildings and a succession of isolated modern dumps, pipe networks and cables disrupted the site further. The ground was soaked in car oil, discolouring the soils and creating a health hazard.

Significance

Ken Brown's Garage was once the site of a considerable farm belonging to the Whitehouse to the north. The barn and the few archaeological finds recovered suggest an occupation back into the LC15th. In the 1920's it was converted to Larter's Garage which was a thriving business into the later C20th. Those buildings that could be used were converted to the International Moderne style while the others no doubt languished until they were pulled down.

Potter Street is well known for its association with Romano-british pottery kilns but there is no evidence that they extended to this part of the village.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Graham Peskett who engaged me on behalf of Ken Browns garage. Thanks are due to Mick Taylor for his interest, memories and photographs. I also acknowledge the help of Adam Garwood of the ECC HEM team for his help with the application.