



Former Grill Bar (The Mile House) London Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



**FORMER GRILL BAR (THE MILE HOUSE)
LONDON ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared on behalf of
CgMs Consulting
Morley House
26 Holborn Viaduct
London
EC1A 2AT

by
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
SP4 6EB

Report reference: 65130.03

May 2007

**FORMER GRILL BAR (THE MILE HOUSE)
LONDON ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Contents

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| | Summary | iii |
| | Acknowledgements | iv |
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| | 1.1 Project Background | 1 |
| 2 | THE SITE..... | 1 |
| | 2.1 Geology and Topography | 1 |
| | 2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background | 1 |
| | 2.3 Geotechnical Investigations | 2 |
| 3 | AIMS AND OBJECTIVES | 3 |
| | 3.1 Archaeological Field Evaluation | 3 |
| 4 | METHODOLOGY | 3 |
| | 4.1 Fieldwork..... | 3 |
| 5 | EVALUATION RESULTS..... | 5 |
| | <i>Trenches 1 & 3</i> | 5 |
| | <i>Trench 2</i> | 5 |
| | <i>Trench 4</i> | 5 |
| | <i>Trench 5</i> | 5 |
| 6 | FINDS | 6 |
| 7 | ENVIRONMENTAL..... | 6 |
| 8 | DISCUSSION..... | 6 |
| 9 | ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION | 6 |
| | 9.1 Museum | 6 |
| | 9.2 Archive Storage | 6 |
| | 9.3 Copyright..... | 7 |
| | 9.4 Security Copy | 7 |
| 10 | REFERENCES | 7 |
| | Appendix 1. Trench Summary Tables..... | 8 |

Illustrations:

- Front cover. Trench 1 from the south-east
Figure 1. Site and trench location
Figure 2. Plate 1: Trench 2 from the east
Plate 2: Trench 3 from the south-east
Plate 3: Trench 4 from the north-west
Plate 4: Trench 5 from the north-east
Back cover. View of the Site from the south-east

**FORMER GRILL BAR (THE MILE HOUSE)
LONDON ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Weston Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation prior to redevelopment of land at the former Grill Bar (The Mile House), London Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference 516264 205901.

The Site was originally part of land owned by Richard Lee in the mid-16th century, which lay within a boundary, comprised of a bank and ditch, that encircled his estate. The bank is still partly visible today and runs along the southern side of London Road. It was anticipated that the ditch associated with this estate boundary may be encountered on the Site. However, no evidence for any ditch was identified and any historical and archaeological horizons that may have once existed had been severely truncated by more recent (20th century) building activity associated with the construction of the Grill Bar. It is possible that the ditch, if it survives, lies directly to the north of the Site and under the pavement associated with London Road.

The evaluation was undertaken from the 9th -11th April 2007.

**FORMER GRILL BAR (THE MILE HOUSE)
LONDON ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the evaluation.

The project was managed by Damian De Rosa for Wessex Archaeology and directed in the field by Catriona Gibson, assisted by Amelia Ness. The illustrations were prepared by Will Foster. The report was written by Catriona Gibson.

FORMER GRILL BAR (THE MILE HOUSE) LONDON ROAD, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of Weston Homes to undertake an archaeological field evaluation prior to redevelopment of land at the former Grill Bar (The Mile House), London Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference 516264 20590.
- 1.1.2 The work was carried out prior to the redevelopment of the Site (residential construction) comprising the construction of two three-storey detached houses and associated works.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological evaluation was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2007) and submitted to and approved by Simon West, Archaeological Advisor to St Albans District Council, prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Geology and Topography

- 2.1.1 The Site, comprising an L-shaped parcel of land covering an area of c.0.3ha lies at the corner of London Road, which bounds the Site to the northeast and Mile House Lane to the southeast, from where the Site is accessed (**Figure 1**).
- 2.1.2 The Site is flat lying at c.89m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology within the Site has been identified as Boulder Clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1978, Sheet 239 (Hertford)).
- 2.1.3 The majority of the Site is overgrown and lies under tarmac, within the car park of the former Grill Bar (The Mile House), which was demolished in 2004.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 The Site is situated on land once owned by Richard Lee, one of the main property owners in mid-sixteenth century St Albans. As a close advisor to Henry VIII, Lee was in a position to exploit the Dissolution of the Monasteries. In 1534, he became bailiff and farmer of the medieval Priory of Sopwell, and in 1549 began alterations, calling his new house 'Lee Hall'. Between 1561 and 1562 Richard Lee had a new park of 175 acres laid out and walled, using monastic rubble. The old medieval London Road, which ran across this new park, was diverted following the granting of a licence

in 1562. Hare's map of 1634 shows the location of the 'Old London Road' and a boundary wall, apparently constructed of coursed layers encircling the estate, cutting across this. Lee was given permission to undertake this work by inquisition, which took place on 8 January 1561-2.

- 2.2.2 By 1902, the boundary bank was still described as having 'a well defined ridge of earth planted with a thorn and bramble hedge'. Earlier in 1901, some 50 yards of the bank were cut through, producing 150 large fragments of carved Totternhoe stone work. The site of the cutting was 'Mr Glovers property', the first house east of the Railway Bridge.
- 2.2.3 The boundary survives as an intermittent bank for approximately 710m along the south side of London Road. The earthwork starts at the Railway Bridge and continues to Mile House Lane corner at which point it turns at right angles south and continues down the west side of Mile House Lane. Along London Road, it has been removed in places for driveways, and it is not easily evident along Mile House Lane. It may be present as the south-east as the boundary to the golf course on the north side of the Lane. There are just hints of a continuation of an earthwork to the east of Mile House Lane along London Road, but this may not be Lee's boundary but simply associated with the construction of London Road.
- 2.2.4 Rescue excavations in 1996 at No 3 Mile House Lane, opposite the Site, uncovered a probable lime kiln, which may date to the mid-sixteenth century, when Lee was constructing 'Lee Hall'. It is suggested that the kiln was used, perhaps only for a short period, during the construction of this or other buildings, or during the construction of a wall delineating the curtilage. It lies just outside the north-east boundary of Richard Lee's land.
- 2.2.5 The Site sits in one of the most important early post-medieval sites within St Albans. The Tudor boundary line runs along London Road, turns down Mile House Lane and is within the Site. Evidence from across Mile House Lane suggests that there is the possibility for additional structures, associated with this enclosure, to be present.

2.3 Geotechnical Investigations

- 2.3.1 In August 2003 ground investigations comprising three deep boreholes and six trial pits (**Figure 1**) were undertaken by KF Geotechnical within the Site. The investigations identified in two boreholes (BHA and BHC) within the area of the car park, 0.50m (in the north) to 1.30m (in the south) of modern made ground directly below the tarmac/concrete surface. The made ground was observed to overlie the natural brickearth. Trial pits (TP1 – TP3) carried out next to the then still standing public house only identified modern material contained within the foundation cut for the building. Further exploratory work (BHB, BH4 and BH5) was undertaken in the northwest corner of the Site covered in trees and revealed directly below the turfline/surface the natural geology.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Archaeological Field Evaluation

3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological field evaluation were:

- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be threatened by development.
- identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site.
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.
- specific aims will be to investigate evidence and survival for the presence/absence and extent of the documented Tudor boundary.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

4.1.1 The Evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2007) and the relevant guidance given in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 1999)

4.1.2 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken between the 9th – 11th April 2007.

4.1.3 The evaluation comprised the excavation of five trial trenches, comprising 3 No 20m x 1.8m trenches (Trenches 1-3) and 2 No 10m x 1.8m trenches (Trenches 4-5) (**Figure 1**).

4.1.4 The trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a wheeled 180° excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket.

4.1.5 Mechanical excavation continued to the top of archaeological horizons or to the surface of the natural geological deposits or stopped at a depth of 1.20m, whichever was encountered first.

4.1.6 All trench spoil was scanned for finds.

4.1.7 All archaeological features, horizons and natural deposits encountered in the evaluation were fully recorded on Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets. A full photographic (digital, and, where appropriate, 35mm black and white prints and colour transparencies) and graphic record was kept. The site drawings drawn were drawn at an appropriate scale, typically 1:10 for sections and 1:20 for plans

4.1.8 All trenches were located in relation to the Ordnance Survey national grid using a Leica GPS 500 Smart Rover, and all archaeological features were related to Ordnance Survey datum.

4.1.9 On completion of recording the trenches were backfilled in the approximate order in which they were opened.

5 EVALUATION RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The results set out in this report represent a synthesis of the principal archaeological features investigated. A summary of the deposits encountered in each trench is given in Appendix 1
- 5.1.2 Only modern disturbance or features were encountered within the trenches. Most of the soil horizons encountered, comprising building rubble, related to activity associated with the use of the Site as the former Grill Bar.

5.2 Results

Trenches 1 & 3

- 5.2.1 In Trenches 1 and 3 which were aligned north-west – south-east and parallel to the London Road edge of the Site, natural geology was encountered at a depth of between 1.10m and 1.20m. No evidence for a ditch that may have been associated with the Tudor Boundary was identified. Given the close proximity of these trenches to London Road and therefore the 16th century boundary bank, these two trenches were thought to be the most likely candidates for providing evidence for the associated boundary ditch. A modern treethrow (**105**) was noted in Trench 1 (**Front cover** and **Figure 1**) and a number of modern services were identified in Trench 3 (**Figure 1** and **Plate 2**).

Trench 2

- 5.2.2 In Trench 2, the majority of deposits related to modern made ground horizons, and natural geology was encountered at a depth of 1m below the present ground surface. At the eastern end of the trench, a number of modern services were encountered and the opening of the trench was curtailed 2m short of its proposed full extent of 20m. No archaeological features or finds were encountered (**Figure 1** and **Plate 1**).

Trench 4

- 5.2.3 Trench 4 had been subject to major modern disturbance, as a result of its direct location over the former Grill Bar. A series of services were encountered in the south-eastern part of this trench, including a man hole cover and two water pipes. Modern wall footings associated with the foundations of the Grill Bar were present in the central and western parts of the Trench, truncating all earlier deposits in this area. Natural geology was noted at 1.25m below the modern ground surface demonstrating that any previously surviving archaeological horizons would have been completely truncated by the former building. No archaeological features or finds were identified (**Figure 1** and **Plate 3**).

Trench 5

- 5.2.4 Trench 5 was opened within the former garden of the Grill Bar which had been laid to grass. After removal of modern topsoil and made ground, natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.6m in the southern part of the trench and 0.45m in the northern part of the trench. This confirms the results of the geological borehole survey in this area, which had encountered a shallow depositional sequence (KF Geotechnical 2003). A large modern rubbish pit (**504**) at least 2.5m in diameter, truncated the

natural geology in the southern part of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were retrieved (**Figure 1 and Plate 4**).

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 Finds were recovered only from modern horizons, in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. These comprised two sherds of pottery and one fragment of roof tile (all post-medieval), and a prehistoric worked flint flake. None of these finds have been retained.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 7.1.1 No features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1.1 The Evaluation demonstrated that any archaeological horizons and features relating to post-medieval or earlier activity on the Site had been severely truncated and destroyed by modern building activity and services, particularly that associated with the construction of the Grill Bar.
- 8.1.2 The lack of any evidence for a ditch associated with the Tudor boundary may not simply be a result of modern truncation, since it is unlikely that even the significant modern disturbance identified on the Site would have completely removed a substantial and deep negative feature. It is not clear whether the ditch associated with the boundary lay to the south rather than the north of the bank. If it lay to the north it may survive under London Road. Even if the ditch lies to the south of the boundary, it is possible that it is situated to the north of the Site and just beyond the proposed area of development, under the pavement that runs along the southern side of London Road.
- 8.1.3 The results of the Evaluation were able to demonstrate that the Site has a low archaeological potential. The lack of evidence from any of the trenches implies that the ditch associated with the 16th century boundary is not present within the confines of the Site. Any archaeological features and finds that may originally have existed within the Site have likely been completely removed and disturbed by more recent building activity.

9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Museum

- 9.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive is deposited with the St Albans Museums Service.

9.2 Archive Storage

- 9.2.1 The archive is currently stored at Wessex Archaeology under the Project Code 65130.

- 9.2.2 The complete site archive, which will include records, plans and photos, will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *Environmental Standards for the permanent storage of excavated material from archaeological sites* (UKIC 1984, Conservation Guidelines 3), and *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (Walker 1990).

9.3 Copyright

- 9.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

9.4 Security Copy

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon); a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the Museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

10 REFERENCES

Geological Survey of Great Britain 1978 Sheet 239 (Hertford)

KF Geotechnical 2003. *Report on Ground Investigation at The Grill Bar, London Road, St Albans*. Ref: S/080320/001

Wessex Archaeology 2007. *Former Grill Bar (The Mile House), London Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Ref: 65130.01

Appendix 1. Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1. Dimensions. 20m x 1.8m x 1.12m deep. Ground level = 88.70m aOD

| Context Number | Description | Depth (m) |
|----------------|---|-------------|
| 101 | Modern concrete | 0-0.18m |
| 102 | Broken up asphalt and hard standing. Modern levelling layer for Grill Bar carpark | 0.05-0.45m |
| 103 | Made ground. Mid brown clay with modern brick and tile fragments | 0.45-0.71m |
| 104 | Fill of tree throw 105. Orange-brown silty clay | 0.71-1.07 |
| 105 | Cut of tree throw. Probably fairly modern. | 0.71-1.07m |
| 106 | Natural geology. Orange brown silty clay with some flint pebbles | 1.07-1.12m+ |

Trench 2. Dimensions. 20m x 1.8m x 1.12m deep. Ground level = 88.80m aOD

| Context Number | Description | Depth (m) |
|----------------|--|------------|
| 201 | Modern concrete | 0-0.23m |
| 202 | Made ground. Dark grey greasy clay with frequent root, modern tile and clinker | 0.23-0.65m |
| 203 | Made ground – dark brown silty clay with small fragments of tile & brick etc. | 0.65-0.9m |
| 204 | Natural geology. Orange-brown silty clay with occasional flint cobbles | 0.9m+ |

Trench 3. Dimensions. 18m x 1.8m x 1.20m deep. Ground level = 88.85m aOD

| Context Number | Description | Depth (m) |
|----------------|---|-------------|
| 301 | Modern Concrete | 0-0.15m |
| 302 | Made ground – levelling layer comprising rubble, stone & brick fragments | 0.15-0.30m |
| 303 | Black asphalt layer | 0.3-0.45m |
| 304 | Demolition layer containing modern brick walls that formed the foundations of the Grill Bar | 0.45-1.05m |
| 305 | Levelling layer of redeposited natural under the foundations of the modern Grill Bar. Brown sandy clay with some brick fragments and occasional flint cobbles | 1.05-1.25m+ |
| 306 | Made ground – dark brown silty clay with some modern CBM inclusions | 0.45-1.20m |
| 307 | Natural geology – orange brown silty clay with stone and flint inclusions | 1.10-1.2m+ |

Trench 4. Dimensions. 12m x 1.8m x 1.25m deep. Ground level = 88.30m aOD

| Context Number | Description | Depth (m) |
|----------------|---|------------|
| 401 | Modern levelling horizon – clinker and asphalt. Would have formed earlier tarmac surface | 0-0.15m |
| 402 | Modern brick course – would have formed modern foundations for the Grill Bar. | 0.15-0.70m |
| 403 | Made ground – mixed and mottled clayish silt with frequent modern tile and brick inclusions | 0.70-1.06m |
| 404 | Made ground - dark grey silty clay with charcoal, CBM and plaster fragments. Elements of the footings of the modern Grill Bar | 1.06-1.25m |
| 405 | Natural geology. Orange silty clay with occasional flint nodules | 1.25m+ |

Trench 5. Dimensions. 11m x 1.8m x 0.6m deep. Ground level = 88.56m aOD

| Context Number | Description | Depth (m) |
|----------------|---|------------|
| 501 | Modern topsoil with frequent roots. Formed topsoil for the pub garden | 0-0.2m |
| 502 | Made ground – levelling layer. Dark brown silty clay with frequent modern brick and tile and much root action | 0.2-0.55m |
| 503 | Natural geology. Orange silty clay with frequent flint cobbles. | 0.45-0.6m+ |
| 504 | Modern rubbish pit cut – at least 2.5m in diameter | |
| 505 | Fill of pit 504. Full of modern waste including rusty metal, used oil drums and tennis balls | |



Plate 1: Trench 2 from the east



Plate 2: Trench 3 from the south-east



Plate 3: Trench 4 from the north-west



Plate 4: Trench 5 from the north-east



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.

Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 **Fax:** 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 701, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 **Fax:** 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

