

**DORRINGTON'S BAKERY, STATION ROAD
SAWBRIDGEWORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Client: Mr. J. Dorrington

NGR: TL 4848 1507

Planning Ref.: 3/02/0485

Site Code: DBSW 03

FAU Project No: 1215

Dates of Fieldwork: 6th, 8th & 10th October 2003; 12th July and 2nd August 2005

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks for an extension and new car parking area to the rear of Dorrington's Bakery revealed 20th century landscaping disturbance primarily associated with the levelling of the site for the existing bakery complex and the creation of a garden and swimming pool. No significant archaeological features were observed or artefacts collected that predate the 18th century.

While it is possible that the modern landscaping and ground reduction have removed all traces of archaeological remains, it is more likely that they were never present in these areas. It is concluded the Dorringtons Bakery site lies outside the perceived medieval settlement, or at least occupies a marginal area of it which was not intensively utilised in this period.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (EEC FAU) on the site of a new car park and building extension to the existing bakery. The work was commissioned by Mr. J. Dorrington and undertaken in accordance with a brief produced by the County Archaeological Officer of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC 2002) and with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by ECC FAU (2002).

The purpose of the work was to record the presence of any archaeological features or deposits identified within the area of the new building and car park prior to and during their construction.

The site archive will be deposited with Hertford Museum (Appendix 3) and copies of the report and site summary (Appendix 4) will be supplied to the County Archaeology Office at Hertfordshire County Council.

2.0 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

The town of Sawbridgeworth is situated 2km to the north of Harlow in the south-eastern corner of Hertfordshire. The proposed development area (TL4848 1507) lies in the historic centre, on high ground above the Stort valley (Fig.1).

The watching brief was carried out in two areas to the rear of the road frontage bakery; part of the existing garden, landscaped and under grass, and an existing outbuilding/yard area (Fig.1).

The natural subsoil is characterised by a free-draining, loose sandy gravel occurring at approximately 62.50m OD.

2.2 Archaeological Background

The proposed development lies within the historic medieval core of Sawbridgeworth, and has therefore been identified as an area of Archaeological Significance in the Local Plan. Monitoring works at the nearby Fawbes and Bernard School discovered a substantial ditch, which may be associated with the medieval manor of Sayesbury. No archaeological sites or findspots are known within the site or its immediate vicinity.

2.3 Planning Background

An archaeological planning condition was attached to proposals for a building extension and new car parking area to the rear of the bakery by the local Planning Archaeologist, due to its location within the medieval centre of Sawbridgeworth.

A brief was subsequently issued by the HCC Archaeology Office (HCC 2002). This specified a programme of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with construction.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the watching brief was to determine the location, extent, date character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the development, with particular reference to medieval occupation of the site. For these purposes, the machine clearance of soil and overburden stripping was to be observed as well as foundation trenches and service runs connected to the new structure.

4.0 METHOD

The work programme comprised of two phases. The first, undertaken in 2003, began with ground reduction works across a roughly square area of 364sq m in the eastern part of the site, to create a new parking area in the former garden. The second, undertaken in 2005, involved the demolition of outbuildings to the south of the existing bakery and ground reduction of the area in between. This is the site of an extension to the bakery buildings. The extent of observed ground reduction works is shown on Figure 1.

These areas of ground reduction were observed as machining was undertaken in order to identify any archaeological remains present. Any potentially significant deposits or features were cleaned, investigated and recorded as appropriate, using standard ECC FAU methodology, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation. This included the creation of written, drawn and photographic records.

Context numbers were assigned to a small number of deposits, to locate and record artefacts collected during the monitoring work (Appendix 1).

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

5.1 Car park Area (former garden)

The new parking area was located in the garden to the rear and east of the road frontage bakery buildings (Fig. 1). Prior to groundworks, the area was generally very flat, except to the south-west where the ground has been banked up to a height of approximately 0.80m around a swimming pool, inserted some 35 years ago (J. Dorrington pers comm). As part of the current works the pool was completely dug out, to a depth of 1.80m and backfilled to the desired level.

The exposed sections of the swimming pool construction cut revealed only backfilled material consisting of mixed gravels with lenses of topsoil running through. Various pieces of metal wire, retrieved from the section, attest to the late date of these deposits. Away from the landscaped area, and across the majority of the garden, between 0.25 and 0.52m of modern topsoil was removed. This contained coal flecks, brick, plaster and slate fragments, together with 20th century pottery. To the east, this overlay a brown friable silty deposit, likely to be an earlier garden soil. This too contained modern material. Apparently, this area was formerly landscaped for a tennis court before it was grassed over, which would account for the large amounts of hard core/building material in the higher soil strata. To the west, undisturbed natural sand and gravel was exposed, although no features of archaeological interest were seen.

5.2 New Bakery Buildings (former outbuildings and yard)

The site of the new bakery extends across what was formerly a concrete yard and modern outbuildings, between the bakery to the north and neighbouring boundary to the south (Fig.1). Following demolition of the 20th century structures along the boundary wall, a 5m-wide area was stripped down to orange clay gravel natural from the adjacent bank and across into the yard. This exposed a 30m-long section along the southern boundary, revealing topsoil and made ground to a thickness of between 0.9 and 1.2m, depending on the depth of outbuilding foundations. The strip was then continued northwards, where only the thin concrete hardstanding (0.1m thick) was removed to construction level, directly onto natural gravel. A slot was dug into the gravel to prove its natural provenance. The only feature observed cutting into this natural deposit was a large modern pit backfilled with pieces of tarmac. No significant artefacts were collected.

6.0 FINDS REPORTS

6.1 General Finds by J. Compton

Small groups of finds from two contexts from the car park area monitoring were recorded. The topsoil, context 1, contained a large diameter clay pipe stem, and four sherds of pottery ranging in date from the 17th century to the modern period. The subsoil, context 3, contained a small, slender fragment of clay pipe stem of post-medieval date. This, and the modern sherd of pottery from the topsoil, has not been retained. Further details are presented in Appendix 2.

6.2 Environmental Remains

No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation due to the extremely light gravelly nature of the soils which had poor water-retention properties. The high acidity of the soil has probably affected the preservation and survival of animal bone and other organic remains.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

The monitoring of the groundworks has revealed that there are no significant archaeological remains present within the two areas of current development. It is possible that earlier ground reduction associated with the original preparation and construction of the bakery site, and of the adjacent garden, has resulted in their truncation and removal. However, the absence of residual artefacts of significance in the topsoil and other deposits inspected suggests that it is unlikely that remains of any antiquity were ever present in these areas or, probably, the general vicinity.

Due to the lack of on-site remains and given the distance from the main medieval thoroughfare of London Road, it is concluded that the Dorringtons Bakery site lies outside the perceived medieval settlement, or at least occupies an area of it which was not intensively utilised in this period. Considering the likely medieval town lay-out fossilised in the existing plan, the site can be construed to occupy probable marginal land behind Bullfields and Knight Street between the settlement area and the River Stort. However, Station Road, onto which the site fronts, may well have been a medieval thoroughfare itself; extending off from the main street to service a mill on the Stort and crossing the river itself as it does today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was funded by and carried out on behalf of Mr. James Dorrington, who also kindly gave insights into former landuse. The assistance and cooperation of Chris Sharp (CP Contracts) and Mike Mashiter (Roy Millard Associates) is also acknowledged. The site visits were undertaken by the author and Mark Germany of ECC FAU. The information was collated and illustrations provided by the author and Andy Lewsey. The pottery was identified by Joyce Compton. The site was monitored by Jonathan Smith, Planning Archaeologist for Hertfordshire County Council.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ECC 2002 Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological monitoring and recording, Dorrington's Bakery, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire. ECC FAU
- HCC 2002 Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Dorrington's Bakery, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

Context	Area	Type	Description	Date
1	Garden	Deposit	Topsoil. Dark grey, compacted	Modern
2	Garden	Deposit	Redeposited natural sand and gravel, mid-orange, compacted	Modern
3	Garden	Deposit	Natural orange gravel subsoil	-

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

Context	Feature	Count	Weight	Description	Date
1	Topsoil	1	4	Clay pipe stem	Post med.
		3	48	Pottery; dish rim sherd, Staffs slipware; bowl rim sherd, green glaze, yellow slip decoration, and body sherd, black glaze, both PMRE	17-18th C
		1	6	Pottery; white earthenware ?bowl body sherd, blue stripes (Discarded)	Modern
3	Subsoil	1	2	Clay pipe stem (Discarded)	Post med.

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

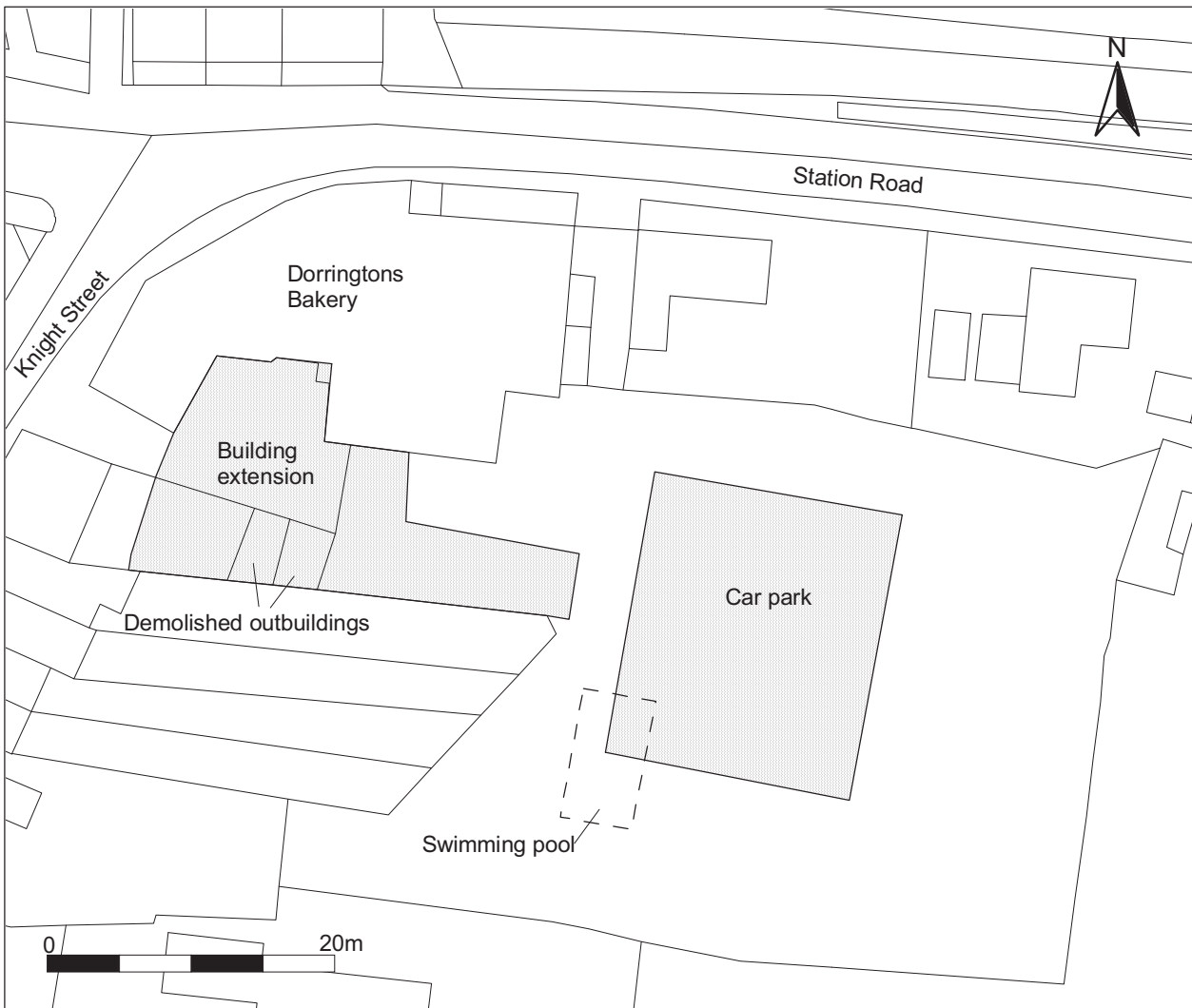
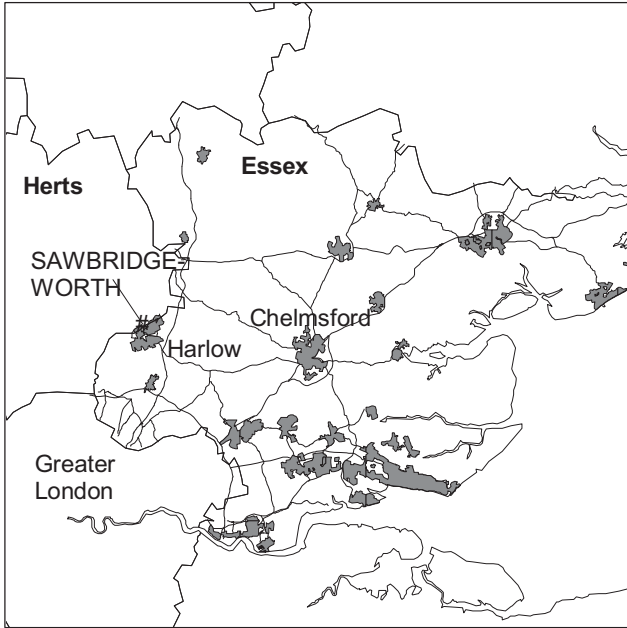
File containing:

- 1. Introduction**
 - 1.1 Brief for watching brief
 - 1.2 Written Scheme of Investigation
- 2. Research Archive**
 - 2.1 Watching brief report
- 3. Site Archive**
 - 3.1 Site notes, including context information
 - 3.2 Annotated site drawings (paper)
 - 3.3 Photographic registers
 - 3.4 B+W Prints, Colour Slides

1 small bag of artefacts

APPENDIX 4: HERTFORDSHIRE SMR SUMMARY

Site name and address: Dorrington's Bakery, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts.		
County: Hertfordshire	District: East Hertford	
Village/Town: Sawbridgeworth	Parish:	
Planning application reference: 3/02/0485		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Mr J Dorrington, Dorringtons Ltd, Station Rd, Sawbridgeworth CM21 9JY		
Nature of application: Building extension and car park construction		
Present land use: Commercial / garden		
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated: c. 625 sq. m	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 4848 1507		
Site code: DBSW 03		
Site director/Organisation: A. Letch ECC FAU		
Type of work: Archaeological Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 6th October 2003	Finish: 2 nd August 2005
Location of finds/Curating museum: Hertford Museum		
Related SMR Nos.: -	Periods represented: Modern	
Relevant previous summaries/reports - none		
Summary of fieldwork results: Two areas of the Dorringtons Bakery site were subject to a watching brief; outbuilding/ yard area to the south of the road frontage bakery (new building extension); part of the existing garden (new car park). Significant ground reduction was undertaken at both locations. The monitoring of the groundworks revealed that there were no significant archaeological remains present within the two areas of development. It is possible that earlier ground reduction associated with the original preparation and construction of the bakery site, and of the adjacent garden, had resulted in their truncation and removal. However, the absence of residual artefacts of significance in the topsoil and other deposits inspected suggests that it is unlikely that remains of any antiquity were ever present in these areas or, probably, the general vicinity. It was concluded that the Dorringtons Bakery site lies outside the perceived medieval settlement at Sawbridgeworth, or at least occupies a marginal area of it which was not intensively utilised in this period.		
Author of summary: A. Letch	Date of summary: 3rd September 2005	



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Fig.1. Site location