

**THE COCK INN  
BISHOPS STORTFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
MONITORING AND RECORDING**



**Essex County Council**

**Field Archaeology Unit**

**July 2006**



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**SUMMARY**

**Client:** Arc Design Associates on behalf of Punch Taverns

**NGR:** TL 492 212

**Oasis Accession Number:** essexcou1- 14926

**Project No:** 1639

**Date of Fieldwork:** 15th May 2006

*Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out an archaeological investigation comprising monitoring and recording for Arc Design Associates on behalf of Punch Taverns under an archaeological condition placed on planning consent (ref: 3/06/0106) for external garden works at The Cock Inn, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire (TL 492 212), a grade two listed building. Observations were carried out on groundworks associated with the refurbishments of the patio areas to the rear of the Public House, principally the excavation of post-holes denoting the line of two fences.*

*Previously the area to the rear of the public house has been landscaped, creating a lower and upper terrace separated by a c.0.5m high retaining wall. A patio has been laid adjacent to the retaining wall on the upper terrace with a small grassed area beyond. Both have remained undisturbed by the refurbishments. Currently, the lower terrace is under tarmac with access to the main road via a private driveway; it was here where the principal groundworks took place. Landscaping has involved reduction of the lower terrace to provide a level surface. The up-cast from this reduction has been placed the other side of the retaining wall to form the higher ground of the upper terrace. Consequently, any significant archaeological features and deposits of interest located on this upper terrace, though buried, may remain intact. On the lower terrace, reduction has resulted in the truncation of any archaeological remains of interest that would pre-date or relate to the historic property. Several modern services and drains also truncate the lower terrace.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Planning Background**

The Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the monitoring and recording on behalf of Arc Design Associates, agents for the client, Punch Taverns under the terms of an archaeological condition placed on planning consent in accordance with Planning Policy Guideline note 16 (PPG16). The development included internal refurbishment, external garden works, and redecoration of The Cock Inn, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire. The internal refurbishment and redecoration was minimal and consequently was not covered by this archaeological investigation.

The condition was placed on planning application ref: 3/06/0106 by East Hertfordshire District Council Planning Department following specialist advice from the Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office (CAO), as the development site lies in an area with potential to contain archaeological remains.

The archaeological work followed a brief produced by the County Archaeology Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC 2006) and the written scheme of investigation (WSI) prepared by ECC FAU (2006).

### **1.2 Report and Archive**

Copies of this report will be supplied to the client, the CAO and East Hertfordshire District Council Planning Department. A version will be uploaded to the Online Access Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>). A further copy will be submitted to the National Monuments Record at Swindon.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location, Geology and Topography**

The Cock Inn is situated to the east of Bishops Stortford on the Hockerill crossroads (TL 492 212). It occupies the high ground overlooking the town centre and fronts Stansted Road. The road was once one of the principle routes between London and East Anglia and is now the B1383. Generally, the ground surface slopes from north to south and the geology consists of coarse sandy gravels.

### **2.2 Historical and Archaeological Background**

The following utilises information given by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC 2006). A guide to the History of Bishops Stortford can be found via the internet at <http://www.stortfordhistory.co.uk>.

### **Prehistory**

Although there is no evidence of early occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site, the Stort valley is likely to have been occupied throughout prehistory. There is some evidence that Mesolithic people have been utilising the landscape from an early stage. Worked flint has been recovered from near Hadham Road and an axe of comparable date has been found at Bishops Stortford Meads, near the river (Gibson 1968). Extensive Iron Age settlement is also known at Woodside Business Park, 1.5km to the east of the site, adjacent to Dunmow Road (Medlycott 1994).

### **Roman**

Roman settlement evidence has been uncovered at various locations around the town principally at Cannons Close to the west of the development and Grange Paddocks to the north. At Cannons Close, coins and pottery were found dating from between the 1st and 5th centuries, along with other material remains suggestive of a substantial settlement (Gibson 1970). In addition, several coffins and cremation burials have been discovered that indicate a cemetery could survive nearby. The settlement has likely built-up along the Roman road that links St Albans and Colchester (Stane Street). This road is 700m to the north of the development. Excavations at Legions Way in 1976 revealed its 'V' shaped roadside ditches dating to the 1st Century (Wright 1980/82). Although occupation evidence of this date is not known in the vicinity of the site, little archaeological investigation has actually been carried out. Consequently, the possibility exists for significant features and deposits of this date to survive in the area.

### **Saxon and medieval**

It was the Saxons who established a settlement in the area we now call Bishop's Stortford: the focus of which is thought to have been what we now know of as North Street, on the opposite side of the current town centre. The ownership of the land underwent several exchanges and markets, industry and agriculture flourished along with the population. There is currently no archaeological evidence to suggest that occupation continued where the Roman settlements once were or that the growing town utilised this area. In the 14th century, the area in which the development is situated had the name 'Hokerhull' which infers that settlement in some form was nearby.

## **Post-medieval**

The Cock Inn is the oldest of four inns that were built on the Hockerill crossroads and the only one still in business. Hockerill (17th century), previously Hokerhull (14th century) then Hokers Hill (16th Century), was once referred to as Bishop's Stortford's 'hilltop outpost' and became prominent in 1670 after Charles II instigated the building of the Hockerill 'bypass'. The bypass established an alternative route from London to Newmarket. The existing road ran through Stortford town centre and was becoming increasingly busy as well as not meeting standards required for stage coach travel. Consequently, the four crossroad inns made significant gains. In the 18th century, Hockerill's wealth was greater than the town itself and shops and houses sprang up along the routes that fed the crossroads, Dunmow Road, London Road and Hockerill Street. The prosperity of the area decreased as the railway replaced mail and stage coaches services. No longer an outpost, in 1852 a second parish church was established as testament to the areas ever-growing population.

## **The Inn**

The Cock Inn, LBS (Listed Building Survey) number 160973, was constructed around 1555, has been a tavern since 1620, and was first known as the Black Lion. In 1749 it was renamed the Vernon's Head and later, the Cock Inn. The Inn was also used as a courthouse and jail in the 19th century, both housed in a part of the building that adjoined its south side. In the 1960's local planners put forward a road widening scheme to improve the junction by demolishing the Cock, but in the ensuing public inquiry, the inn was saved and in 1965, only the former courthouse and jail were taken down. The timber framework that supported the wall between the inn and these premises now forms the Cock's exterior wall facing Dunmow Road.

The following utilises information provided by the English Heritage, Listed Building Online Archives (<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk>).

The surviving building is plastered and timber framed. Its west elevation has a jettied first floor with 19th century casements and three jettied gables; the north gable holds the 19th century iron sign. The south elevation has exposed half timbering with surviving carpenters marks and a three bay timber framed east extension has been added covered in modern plaster. Extending further east is another 19th century extension constructed of red brick comprising weather boarded storerooms with two pitched roofs.



### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Generally, the aim of the work was to 'determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains' (HCC 2006).

More specifically, the investigation aimed to:

- Provide an assessment of any archaeological remains revealed and place them in their regional context.
- Project the quality and quantity of remains likely to be present in the development area.

### **4.0 FIELDWORK**

#### **4.1 Requirements**

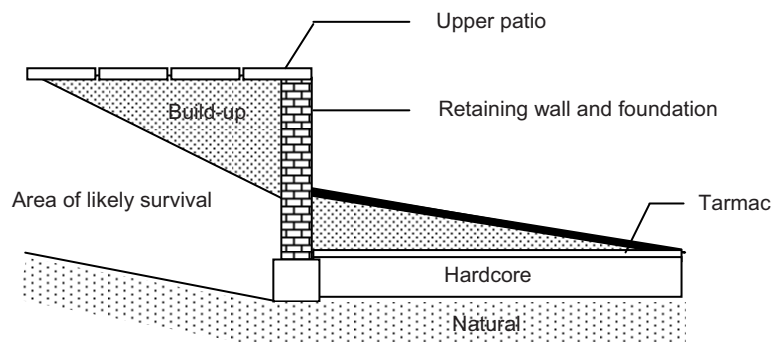
Principally, the archaeological investigation comprised the observation of groundworks in association with erection of two fence lines as part of the garden refurbishment to the rear of The Cock Inn (Fig 1). In addition, a record was made of deposits encountered after the partial removal of the 0.52m high retaining wall separating the lower private parking and patio area from the upper patio and garden (Fig 1).

All work was carried out according to regional standards in field archaeology. Standard ECC FAU recording and excavation methods were used. All fieldwork methods and recording conformed to the codes of practice and guidance issued by the IFA (1999) and adhered to regional guidelines (Gurney 2003).

#### **4.2 Results**

No significant archaeological remains were observed during the excavation of the post-holes for the new fence lines in the lower patio area. The natural sandy gravels were directly below a 0.10m layer of compacted hardcore that in turn was sealed by a thin tarmac crust. Primarily, excavation of the post-holes encountered modern drains and service trenches that truncated the natural.

Behind the retaining wall the ground levels of the upper patio have been raised by over 0.5m (see adjacent schematic diagram). The natural geology was not observed here but a



layer 0.57m thick that comprised hardcore and rubble sat over topsoil that may once have been the original ground surface. Sealing the hardcore was a further 0.08m of clean soil that could have been imported fairly recently. Above this latest soil horizon was 0.07m of bedding material, sand, and cement, for the upper patio surface.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

No archaeological remains were identified as part of his investigation and no artefacts were recovered. In part, this was due to the restricted nature of the groundworks. It is clear that the area to the rear of The Cock Inn has been landscape and terraced in the modern period. Generally, the ground surface in the immediate vicinity of the development slopes gently from east to west and the terracing has countered this to provide level areas to facilitate the construction of a private driveway and upper patio/ garden area.

The ground surface in the area of the lower terrace has been reduced. The resulting up-cast from this has likely been placed behind the retaining wall in order to construct the upper patio and garden area. Consequently, it is possible that archaeological features and deposits survive to the rear of the property beneath those re-deposited layers.

The amount of truncation that has occurred through ground reduction and excavation of modern services trenches mean that it is unlikely any archaeological remains that either pre-date or relate to the development of the property survive in the lower levels of the development area.

Current development proposals will not significantly impact archaeological features and deposits that may survive beneath the upper patio area.

## **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The ECC Field Archaeology Unit thanks Mr Brian Richardson for his assistance and Arc Design Associates on behalf of Punch Taverns for commissioning and funding of the project. Mark Atkinson managed the project, Matthew Pocock carried out the fieldwork. Alison Tinniswood of the Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology Office monitored the investigation on behalf of the local planning authority.

## **10.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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| Wright, W.J.           | 1980/82 | Excavations at Elliot's Yard, Bishops Stortford.- Hertfordshire Archaeology, Volume 8, 78-84                                                                |

## **APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF ARCHIVE**

### **SITE NAME; The Cock Inn, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire**

#### **Index to the Archive**

File containing:

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Brief for the archaeological investigation
- 1.2 Written scheme of investigation

**2. Research Archive**

- 2.1 Client Report

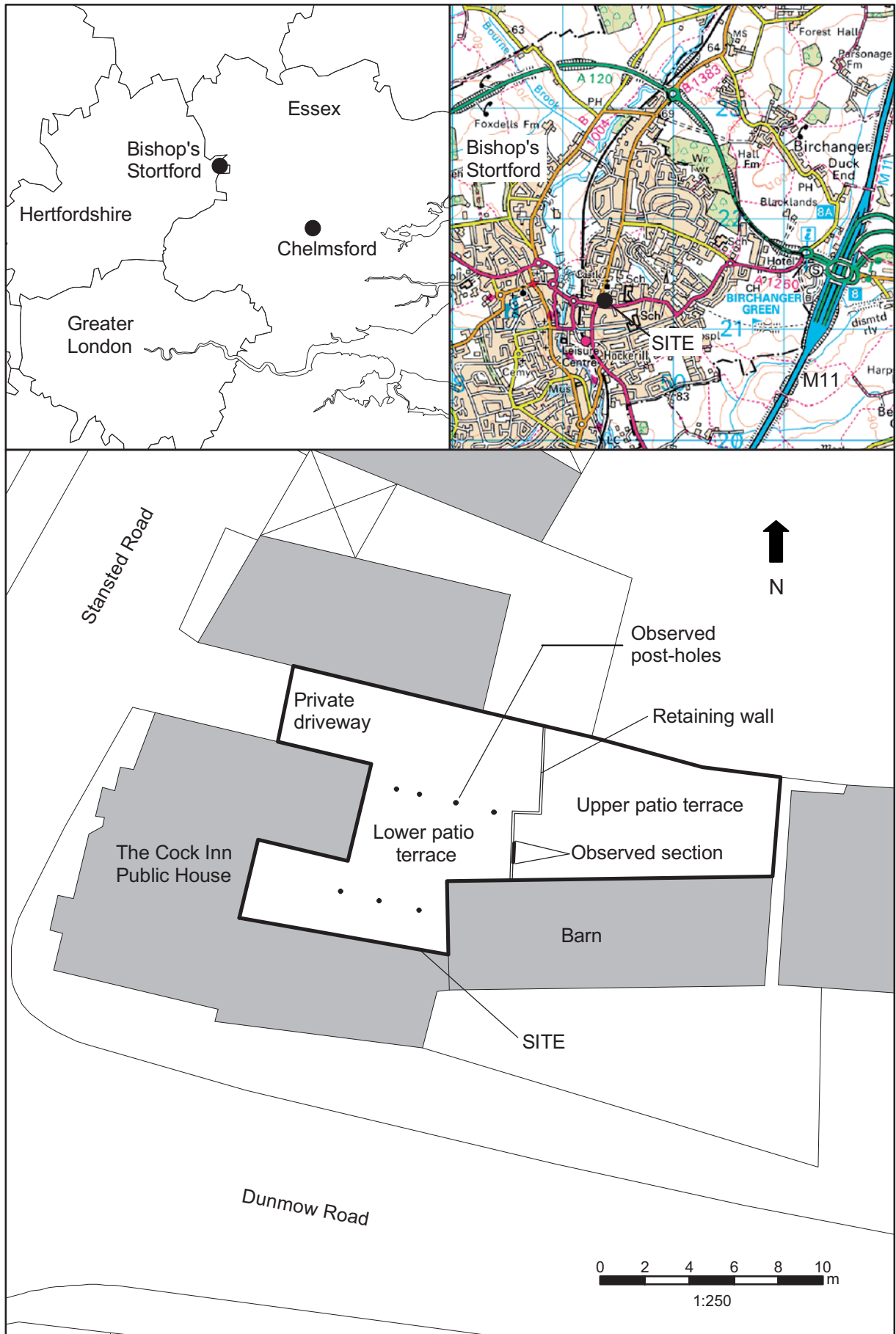
**3. Site Archive**

- 3.1 Plan and section
- 3.2 Photographic Register
- 3.3 Miscellaneous maps and plans

No finds were recovered

## APPENDIX 5: HER SUMMARY

<b>SITE NAME/ADDRESS:</b>	The Cock Inn, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire		
<b>OASIS ACCESSION NUMBER</b>	Essexcou1-14926		
<b>PARISH:</b>	Bishops Stortford	<b>DISTRICT:</b>	Bishops Stortford
<b>NGR:</b>	TL 492 212	<b>SITE CODE:</b>	n/a
<b>TYPE OF WORK:</b>	Monitoring and Recording	<b>SITE DIRECTOR/GROUP:</b>	M.Pocock (ECC FAU)
<b>DATE OF WORK:</b>	15/05/2006	<b>SIZE OF AREA INVESTIGATED:</b>	
<b>FINDS/CURATING MUSEUM:</b>	B. Stortford	<b>FUNDING SOURCE:</b>	Developer
<b>FURTHER WORK ANTICIPATED.</b>	No	<b>RELATED HER No.</b>	n/a
<b>FINAL REPORT:</b>	Summary in Hertfordshire Archaeology		
<b>PERIODS REPRESENTED:</b>	Modern		
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>			
<p>Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out archaeological monitoring and recording at The Cock Inn, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, a grade two listed building and a 17th century coaching Inn. Observations were carried out on groundworks associated with the refurbishments of the patio areas to the rear of the Public House, principally the excavation of post-holes denoting the line of two fences.</p> <p>No archaeological remains were identified as part of his investigation and no artefacts were recovered. In part, this was due to the restricted nature of the groundworks. The natural sandy gravels were directly below a 0.10m layer of compacted hardcore that in turn was sealed by a thin tarmac crust. Primarily, excavation of the post-holes encountered modern drains and service trenches that truncated the natural. It is clear that the area to the rear of The Cock Inn has recently been landscape and terraced to create two level platforms separated by a c. 0.5m high retaining wall. A patio has been laid adjacent to the retaining wall on the upper terrace with a small grassed area beyond. Both have remained undisturbed by the refurbishments. The lower terrace is under tarmac with access to the main road via a private driveway, it was here the principal groundworks took place. Landscaping has involved reduction of the lower terrace to provide a level surface, the up-cast from which has been placed on the other side of the retaining wall to form the higher ground of the upper terrace. Consequently, any significant archaeological features and deposits of interest located on this upper terrace, though buried, may remain intact. On the lower terrace, reduction has resulted in the truncation of any archaeological remains of interest that would pre-date or relate to the historic property. This has been made worse through truncation by several modern services and drains.</p>			
<b>PREVIOUS SUMMARIES/REPORTS:</b>	None		
<b>AUTHOR OF SUMMARY:</b>	Matthew Pocock (ECCFAU)	<b>DATE OF SUMMARY:</b>	July 2006



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Fig.1. Location plan