

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
MAJESTIC WINE WAREHOUSE
GOSSOMS END
BERKHAMSTED
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: SP 9835 0835

for Ormerod Design Group, on behalf of Majestic Wine Warehouse



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

May 2008

ASC: 1065/BMW/1

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BMW	<i>Project no:</i>	1065
<i>OASIS ref:</i>		<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9835 0835		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 35 x 30m.		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Commercial warehouse		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extension and external alterations		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum Borough Council		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	4/2104/07		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Ormerod Design Group 4 Arena Park Tarn Lane Scarcroft Leeds LE17 9BF		
<i>Client:</i>	Majestic Wine Warehouse		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Darren Kemp (Ormerod Design)		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	23 rd May 2008
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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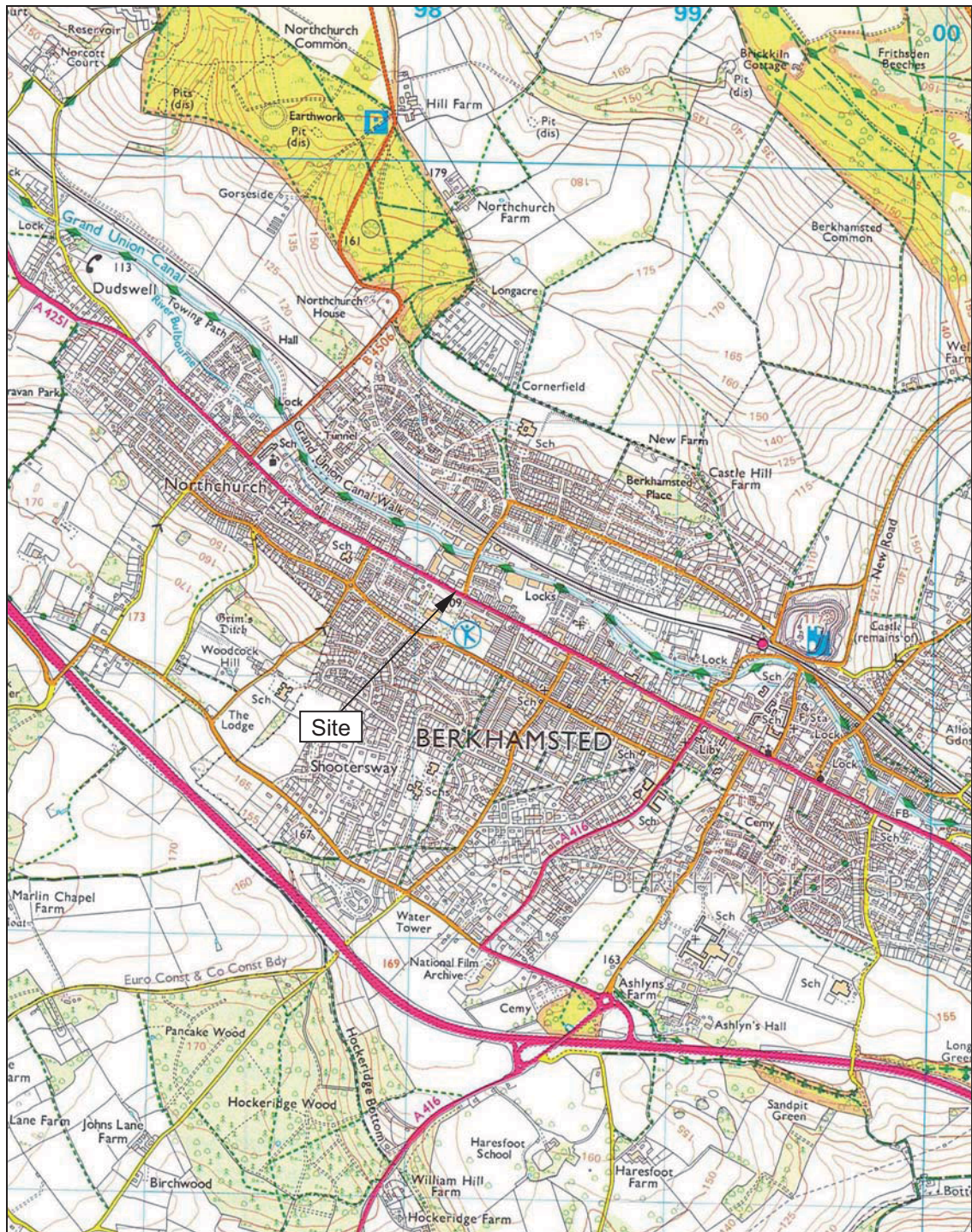


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In April 2008 a programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken on the site formerly known as the 'Crooked Billet', Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, during additions and alterations to the existing building. The footprint of the development was reduced in a piecemeal fashion with only short intervals between the ground being exposed and then filled with crushed rubble. However, it was clear that there was no evidence for any pre-modern activity on the site, either in the form of features or artefacts.

1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at The Majestic Warehouse, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by the *Ormerod Design Group* on behalf of the clients, *Majestic Wine*, and was carried out according to a brief (Batt 2007) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), Dacorum Borough Council, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Barclay 2008). The relevant planning application reference is 4/2104/07.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The watching brief was managed by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of the author.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is located in Berkhamsted in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). It is roughly rectangular in shape, and is situated to the north of the High Street, and to the south of the River Bulbourne, at the junction of the High Street and Billet Lane and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 9816 0837 (Fig. 2). Access to the site is from the east, off Billet Lane.

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The site is in an urban area and has been subject to development. Accordingly the natural soils may not survive. Any surviving natural soils will comprise the *Frome Association*, which consist of “*shallow calcareous and non-calcareous loamy soils, over gravel*” (Soil Survey 1983; 812a). The underlying geology comprises alluvium over the gravel of the river Bulbourne (BGS sheet 238). The site is on level ground, at an elevation of *c.*108m OD.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposal is for a single storey extension and external alterations to the existing building (Fig. 3).

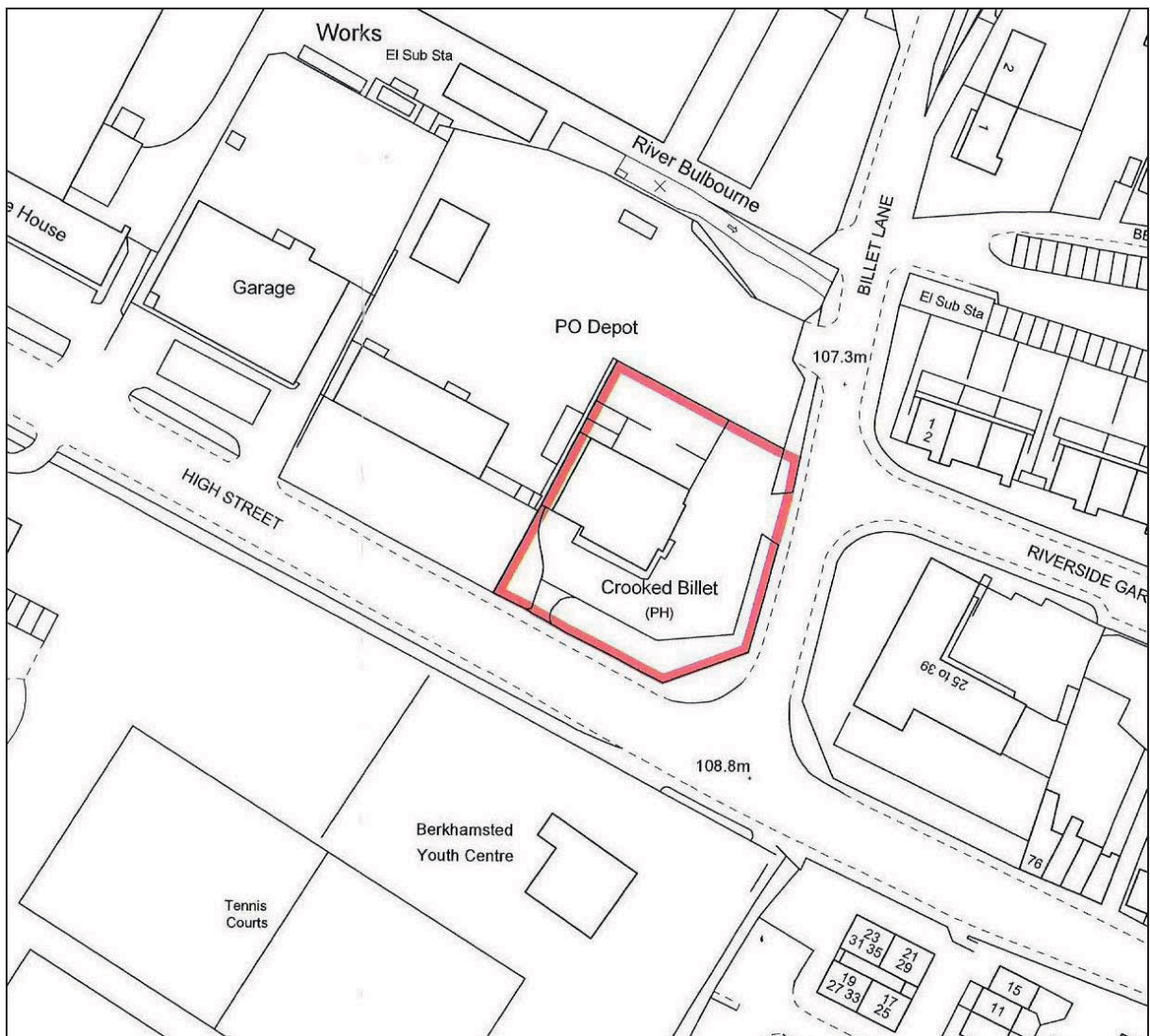


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:1250)

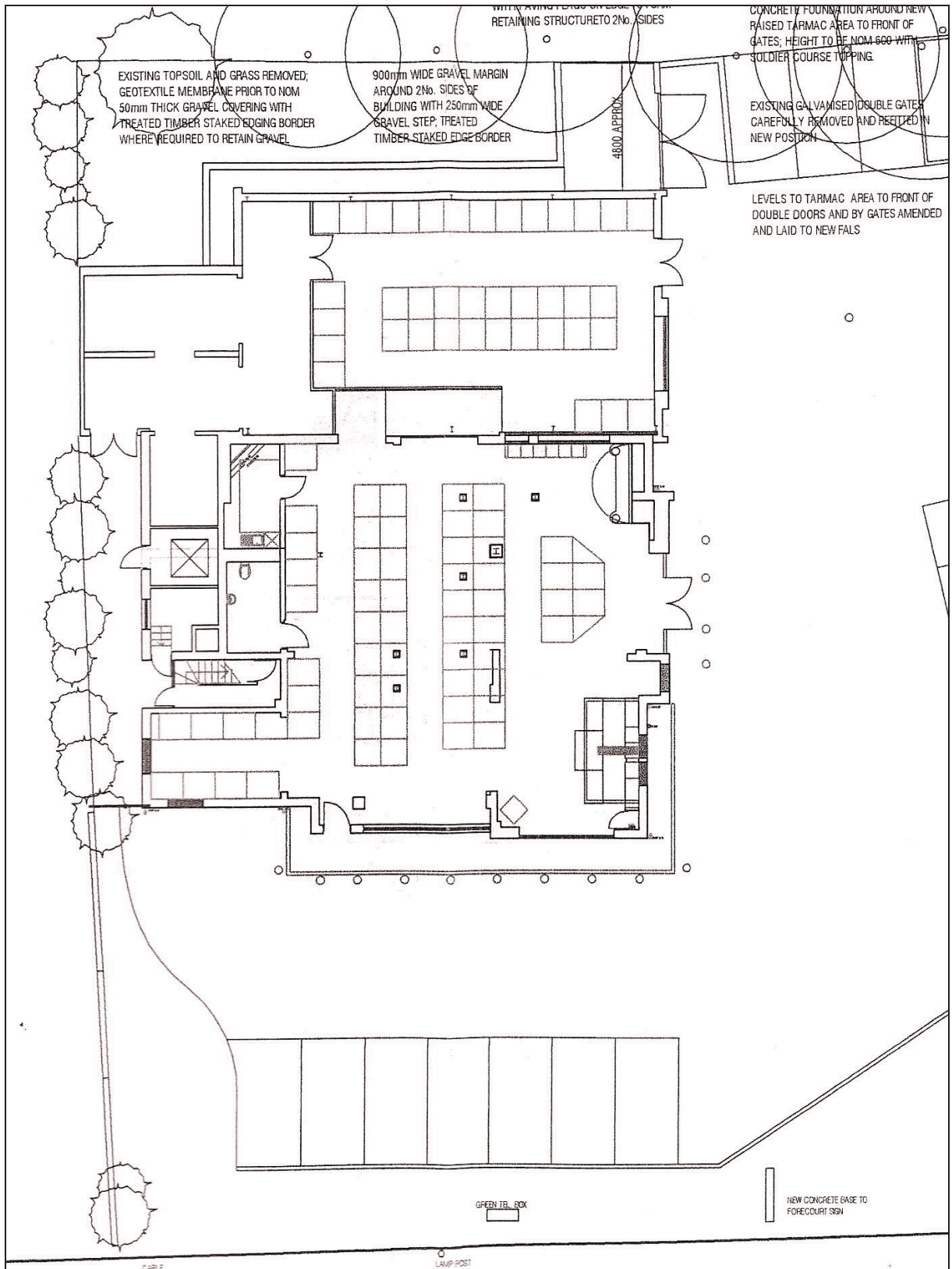


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development (*not to scale*)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 1), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains
- To secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 5), which required:

- Soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision
- Inspection of subsoil deposits for archaeological features
- The rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits
- Sub-soil stripping under archaeological supervision
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and the subsequent recording of any exposed archaeological deposits
- Examination for spoil heaps for any archaeological material
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving, and publication

2.4 *Constraints*

Other than the restricted nature of the topsoil removal from off the garden area there were no particular constraints associated with this project.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. The site lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

3.2 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

The evidence for early prehistoric activity in the Berkhamsted area is not great. Until recently it consisted of only random finds, such as flint implements, the context and location of which is poorly understood. The picture has been considerably enhanced by the preliminary findings of sites along the route of the Berkhamsted by-pass. In particular, at Oakwood (NGR SP 974 072) there were 'a large number of dispersed features (pits, gullies, ditches)': the associated finds dated to the Neolithic/Bronze Age and Iron Age (McDonald 1995, 122). At Pea Lane (NGR SP 964 083) there was structural evidence and associated pottery of the later Bronze Age/Iron Age (McDonald 1995, 121-2).

Apart from the Pea Lane site mentioned above, the only evidence for late Bronze Age/Iron Age activity is derived from occasional find spots. For example, a late Bronze Age brooch from Berkhamsted Castle (Branigan 1977, 174-5) and an iron sword and copper alloy sheath from the cress beds at Bourne End (SMR 4097). There are earthwork monuments around Berkhamsted attributed to the 'prehistoric' period, but their precise date has yet to be established.

3.3 Iron Age (600BC-AD43)

For the later prehistoric and Roman periods there is a considerable body of evidence that suggests that there was dispersed occupation dating from the late Iron Age and Romano-British period along the length of the upper Bulbourne valley (Morris & Wainwright 1995, 68-75). In the middle section of the Bulbourne valley the level of activity and/or settlement is equally high.

3.4 Roman (AD43-c.450)

There is evidence for dispersed occupation during this period along the length of the upper Bulbourne valley (Morris & Wainwright 1995, 68-75). Berkhamsted's principal thoroughfare follows the course of Akeman Street, which was an important communication between the Roman towns of *Verulamium* (St Albans) and *Corinium Dubunorum* (Cirencester). The closest Roman occupation site was situated 250m to the east of the development site (SMR 6421) and another is recorded less than 200m to the north-east, near the railway line (SMR 6437). There is evidence for industrial activity in the form of shaft furnaces at Dellfield (SMR 4904), a pottery kiln in Bridgewater Road (SMR 6083) and one other concentration of pottery further along the same road (SMR 6071), which could indicate another kiln. The remaining evidence is all derived from random coin loss. Several Roman coins came from the castle (SMR 1336), a gold coin from Meadway (SMR 6070), one from Dellfield (SMR 6076), and one from Swingate Lane (SMR 6080).

3.5 Saxon (c.450-1066)

In the late Anglo-Saxon period Berkhamsted was held by Eadmer, a thane of Earl Harold. It is probable that the settlement now known as Northchurch was, at that time, a precursor of Berkhamsted (Doggett & Hunn 1985). The evidence for this comes from the fabric of St Mary's Church, otherwise known as St Mary's Berkhamsted, which has pre-Conquest stonework in its nave walls on the western and southern sides (Taylor & Taylor 1980, 462-63; Smith 1973). With the construction of the castle in Berkhamsted some 2km to the WSW, there developed an alternative settlement focus to Northchurch.

3.6 Medieval (1066-1500)

The Domesday survey of 1086 mentions that *Berchehastede* was a *burbium* (borough) whose burgesses paid £4 from tolls and held half a hide of land. The number of burgesses was 52, although this has been questioned (Doggett & Hunn 1985, 22). However, if this was accurate then it would make the borough second only after Hertford with 146 burgesses, but third after St Albans whose 46 burgesses paid £11.14s from tolls. The precise limits of the Domesday borough have never been satisfactorily established. For example, it is possible that the late Anglo-Saxon 'burgh' lay towards what is now called Northchurch. However, there is a mention of land called 'Oldeburgh' in the vicinity of the old Post Office on the High Street some 500m to the ESE, which might also indicate an earlier settlement focus. Even if this is uncertain there is no question that the post-Conquest core of medieval Berkhamsted lay along the axis of the present-day High Street. The main road to Dunstable ran along Billet Lane until shortly after 1821.

3.7 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The earliest representation of the town is Norden's survey of the early 17th century (PRO MR 603). This shows that settlement was located along the High Street and Castle Street. According to *Dury and Andrews* 1766 survey of Hertfordshire, a building was situated at the junction of Billet Lane with the High Street. From documentary sources, the earliest reference to the *Crooked Billet* dates to 1753 (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 107). At the time of the Tithe Apportionment survey of 1839 the site was occupied by the Crooked Billet public house and two cottages (HALS: DSA4 73/2: Fig. 4). The site was owned by Isaac Winter: the public house was occupied by Robert Rance and the cottages by Martha Gower and Ann Chappell (*ibid*). At the time of the 1851 census the site was called the 'Billet Public House' with Mary Rance in possession, and with Samuel Evans, a farm labourer, living there (Goose 1996, 187).

3.8 Modern (1900-present)

The original Crooked Billet survived until the early 1960s when it was demolished and the present one built further to the north in 1962 (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 108-9).

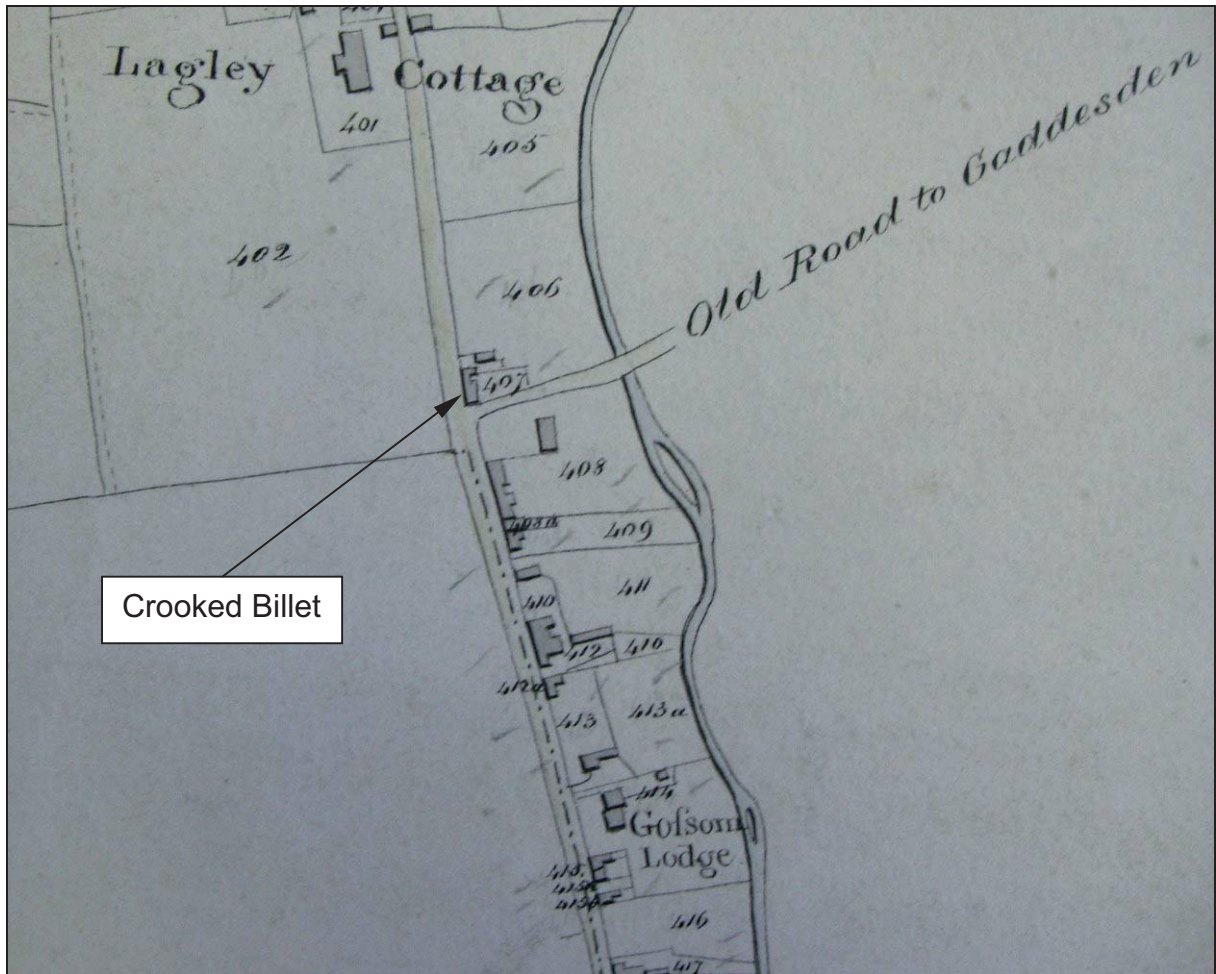


Figure 4: Extract from the Berkhamsted tithe map, 1839 (HALS: DSA4 73/2)

4. Results

- 4.1 Observations were made during the ground reduction phase of this development, over a four-day period in late April. This phase of development was undertaken on a piecemeal basis, which is reflected in the monitoring sheets (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The northern side of the site (here defined as the footprint of the proposed extension) amounting to about one third of the area, was cleared. This was the former pub garden (Plate 1), and only about 0.2m depth of soil was removed, which made it very difficult to observe the character of the subsoil (Plate 2). Only a small portion of the area was examined, due to the short period between initial ground reduction and backfilling with crushed rubble. Nevertheless, it is most probable that nothing of significance was disturbed due to the shallowness of the topsoil strip.
- 4.3 Prior to development, a concrete apron covered the south side of the site. This was broken up and the level reduced by about 0.2m. Here the ground consisted of a silty brown subsoil in a relatively clean state, cut by a single feature, a modern pit about 1.2m wide (Plate 3). Due to the unsatisfactory nature of the original rubble sub-base and the position of the service pipes the ground was further reduced to about 0.7m below the existing ground level (Plate 4). Again observation was difficult, but where visible the ground was as previously described (*i.e.* a brown silty clay with occasional stones).
- 4.4 The spoil heaps were inspected where possible and these were devoid of anything earlier than 20th century artefacts. From the observations made the author is reasonably confident there were no features or artefacts of archaeological significance present on this site.



Plate 1: View of old garden area looking west



Plate 2: Detail of depth of original soil in garden area



Plate 3: Detail of subsoil looking east



Plate 4: View east of layers beneath the existing ground surface.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 No significant archaeological remains or artefacts were revealed in this watching brief. This may be due in part at least to the restricted nature of the observations that were possible, and to the piecemeal and superficial nature of the ground reduction carried out for the development.

- 5.2 From the archaeological and historical background it is evident that the site has been occupied since the mid 18th century at least, and has been redeveloped at least once since that time, so it is possible that any earlier archaeological features may have been truncated or removed. The location of the site close to the course of the river Bulbourne to the north indicates that the area is likely to have been pasture for much of its history.

6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Darren Kemp of *Ormerod Design Group* on behalf of Majestic Wine Warehouse. The writer is grateful to the on-site assistance and cooperation of Andy Wilkinson and Wayne Wilson. The project was monitored by Kate Batt of the HCC Historic Environment Unit on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council.

Fieldwork was carried out by the author. The project was managed for ASC by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA, who also edited the report.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Clients site plans
4. Site Monitoring Sheets
5. List of photographs
6. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Dacorum Heritage Trust.

8. References


Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- Barclay, C 2008 *Majestic Wine Warehouse, Gossoms End, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire: Project Design for Archaeological Watching Brief*. ASC document, ref. 1065/BMW/1.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Secondary Sources

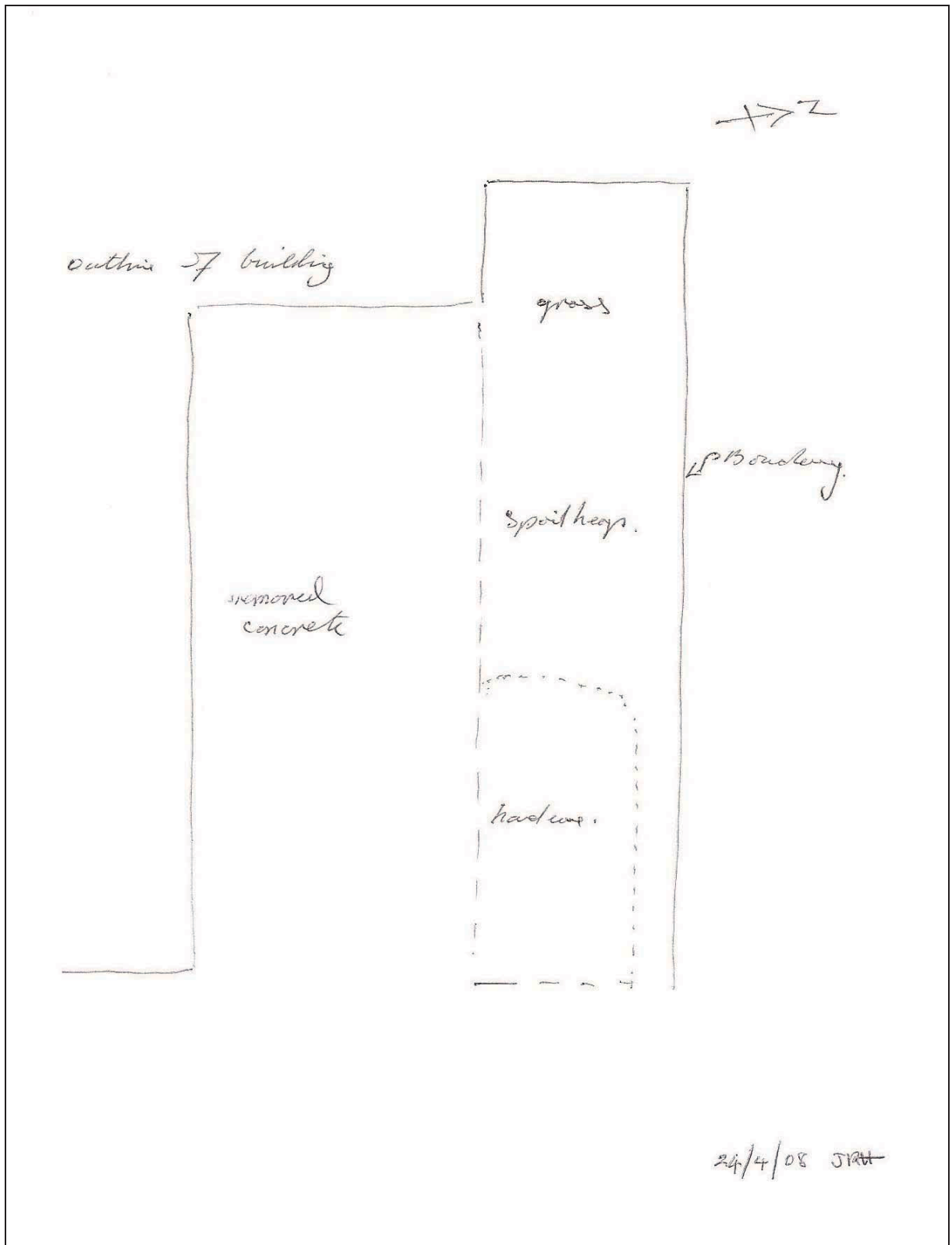
- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Branigan, K. 1977 'A Prehistoric Brooch from Berkhamsted', *Hertfordshire Archaeology* **4**, 1974-76.
- Doggett, N and Hunn, J. 1985 'The Origins and Development of Medieval Berkhamsted, *Hertfordshire's Past* **18**, 18-36.
- Dury, A. & Andrews, J. 1768 *A Topographical map of Hartford-shire*. Hertfordshire Publications 1980.
- Goose, N. 1996 *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851: the Berkhamsted region*. The University of Hertfordshire Press (Hatfield).
- Jolliffe, G & Jones, A. 1995 *Hertfordshire Inn & Public Houses: an historical gazetteer*. Hertfordshire Publications (Hatfield).
- McDonald, T. 1995 'The A41 Project. Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust' in Holgate (ed) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent work*, 68-75. The Book Castle (Dunstable).
- Morris, M and Wainwright, A. 1995 'Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, agriculture and industry in the upper Bulbourne valley, Hertfordshire: an interim interpretation', in Holgate (ed) *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent work*, 68-75. The Book Castle (Dunstable).
- Smith, T. P. 1973 *The Anglo-Saxon Churches of Hertfordshire*. Phillimore (Chichester).
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Taylor and Taylor 1980: *Anglo-Saxon Architecture, vol. 1*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge).

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

 A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD	
Project: <i>Knooked Mill, Berkhamsted</i>		Project No/Code: <i>1065 1BMW</i>	Sheet: <i>1 of 3</i>
		Date of visit: <i>24/4/08</i>	
Client/Developer: <i>Majestic (Andy Wilkinson)</i>		<i>07784197433</i>	
Contact: <i>Darren Kemp</i>		Phone: <i>07894 514189</i>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>9.00 am</i>	<i>1.30 pm</i>	Finish: <i>- 2.55</i>
Completed by: <i>JMAH</i>		<i>10.45</i>	
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Dull and wet.</i>			
Observations: <i>Observed the site clearance involving the demolition or break up of the concrete apron and ramps on the north side. To the north of the concrete the ground level had been reduced by c.200mm. Only top soil was revealed with few finds other than modern building debris.</i>			
<i>Concrete removed & remaining balance to be removed.</i>			
Comments: <i>Too shallow to reveal anything of significance</i>			

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

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A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>Crooked Billet, Berkhamsted</i>		Project No/Code: <i>1065 1 BMW</i>	Sheet: <i>2 of 3</i>
		Date of visit: <i>25/4/08</i>	
Client/Developer <i>Majestic</i>			
Contact: <i>Andy Wilkinson</i>		Phone: <i>0 7784 197433</i>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>9.05</i>	<i>2.25</i>	Finish: <i>10.05</i>
Completed by: <i>MAA</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Mild & breezy - dry.</i>			
Observations: <i>Ground on the western side further reduced; also the base level on the eastern side beside the existing structure/building also being reduced to provide depth for the hardstanding for the drilling rig. All this is relatively superficial so far.</i>			
<i>2nd visit during further ground reduction on E. side by c. 200mm. Down into the natural silty brown subsoil - 1 machine pit 1.2m diam seen. Others clean.</i>			
Comments: <i>No artifacts of significance observed.</i>			

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Majestic Warehouse, Billet lane, Berkhamsted			SITE NO/CODE: 1065/BMW
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		4385	View west of former garden area
2		4386	Oblique view SW across garden area
3		4387	View of security gates looking west
4		4388	Crooked Billet fronting onto Billet Lane
5		4389	View south of side elevation of Crooked Billet
6		4390	Oblique view frontage onto High Street looking WNW
7		4477	View during site clearance and demolition
8		4478	Detail of depth of soil removal
9		4479	Demolition view south
10	✓	4480	Demolition view west
11	✓	4481	Easterly view during demolition
12		4482	Ground reduction on the west side of the site
13		4483	Ditto
14		4497	View east showing nature of the topsoil
15		4498	View west of ground reduction underway
16	✓	4499	View west of edge of reduced level at east end
17		4500	View east of stratigraphy beneath the existing ground surface
18		0905	Piling underway
19		0906	Piling underway
20		0907	Piling underway
21		0908	Piling underway

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Crooked Billet		
Short Description:	In April 2008 a programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken on the site formerly known as the 'Crooked Billet', Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, during additions and alterations to the existing building. The footprint of the development was reduced in a piecemeal fashion with only short intervals between the ground being exposed and then filled with crushed rubble. However, it was clear that there was no evidence for any pre-modern activity on the site, either in the form of features or artefacts.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	retail	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	unknown
Monument type:	Post-medieval	Monument period:	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 9835 0835
District:	Dacorum	Parish:	Berkhamsted
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Crooked Billet, Billet lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	9m x 15m	Height OD: (metres)	108m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Project brief originator:	K Batt (HEU)	Project design originator:	C. Barclay (ASC)
Project Manager:	R. Zeepvat BA MIFA	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Majestic Wine Warehouse		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	24/4/08	End date:	28/4/08
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	none	none	
Paper:	Yes	Brief, project design, report, architects drawings	
Digital:	yes	CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: Majestic Warehouse, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1065/BMW/2		
Author(s):	Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA		
Page nos	20	Date:	22/5/08