

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
25A HIGH STREET
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 0558 0779

on behalf of the House Restoration Co. Ltd



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

August 2009

ASC: 1196/HHS/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	HHS	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	1196
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-66710	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	DACHT: 3903
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Hemel Hempstead		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Unparished		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 0558 0779		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.3 x 4.5m		
<i>Present use:</i>	Basement night club		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extension and refurbishment		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Dacorum Borough Council		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	4/00138/09/FUL		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	July 21 st to 30 th July 2009		
<i>Client:</i>	House Restoration Co. Ltd Unit 1 25 High Street Hemel Hempstead HP1 3AA		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Michael Blennerhassett		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	10/8/09
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	10/8/09

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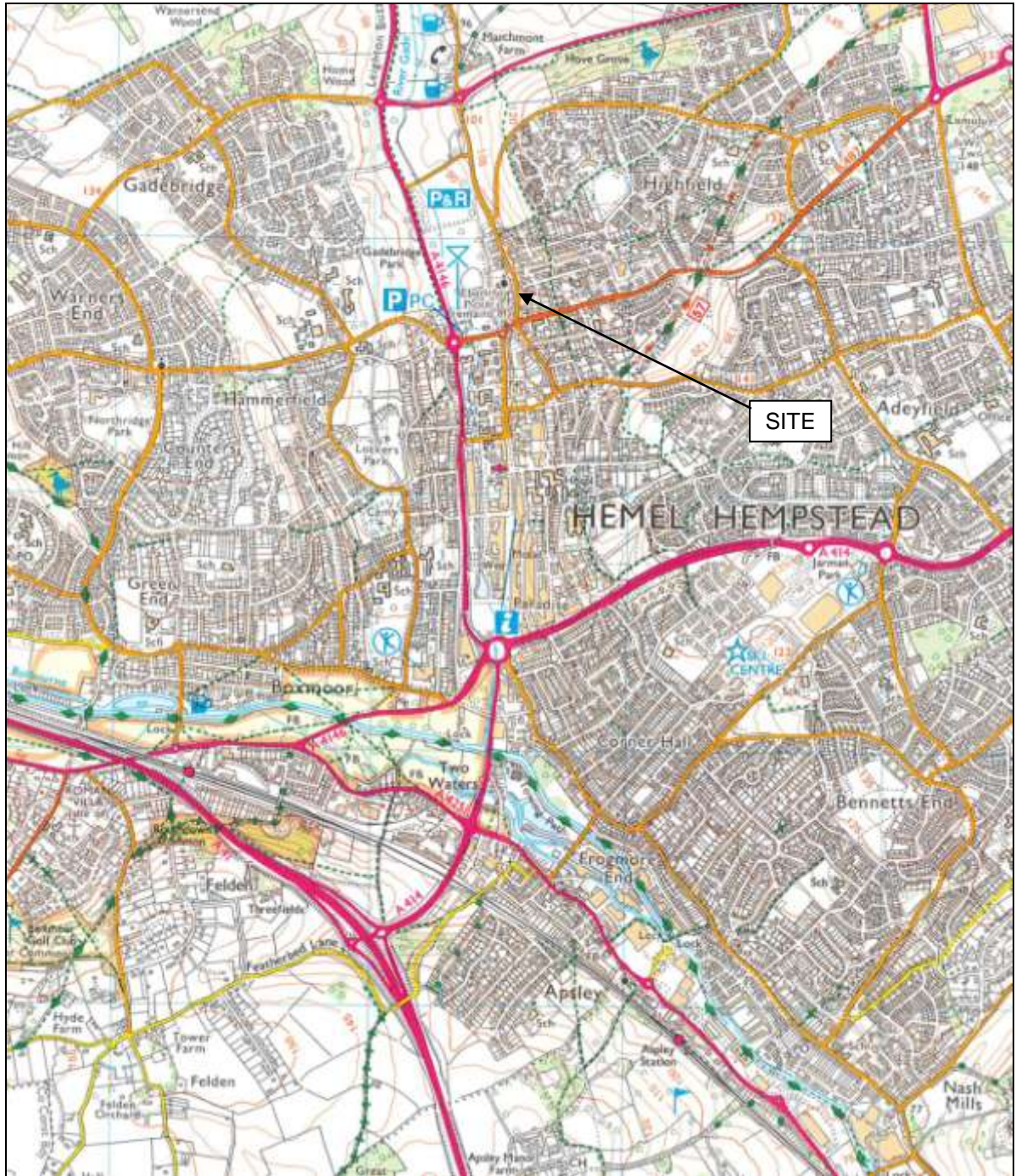


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

Excavations for an extension to an existing basement were observed at 25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire in July 2009. Most of the material removed from this extension consisted of natural chalk. A narrow pit was observed cutting into this strata but no dating evidence was retrieved. The western side of the cutting exposed the rear of an old facing wall consisting of a mix of coursed brick, flint rubble and brick and flint rubble. This is believed to be contemporary with the existing basement.

1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at 25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by *House Restoration Co Ltd*, and was carried out according to a standard brief provided by the *Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council*, archaeological advisors (AA) to the local planning authority, *Dacorum Borough Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC. The relevant planning application reference is 4/00138/09/FUL.

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 project was managed by Karin Semmelmann BA MA MIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is located in Hemel Hempstead, in the administrative district of Dacorum, Hertfordshire. It is situated to the north of the river Bulbourne and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 0558 0779 (Fig. 1).

The site is located in the historic core of Hemel Hempstead, on the east side of the High Street. The building is flanked to the north and south by both residential and commercial premises, and to the east by an open yard. Access is from the High Street (Fig. 2).

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The soils in the town centre have not been surveyed, but they are likely to comprise the Hornbeam 2 Association, namely deep fine loamy soils over plateau drift (Soil Survey, 1983, 582c). The underlying geology comprises Cretaceous chalk (BGS, sheet 238). The site is flat and lies at an elevation of c.100m AOD.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposed development comprises an extension to the existing basement (Fig. 3).

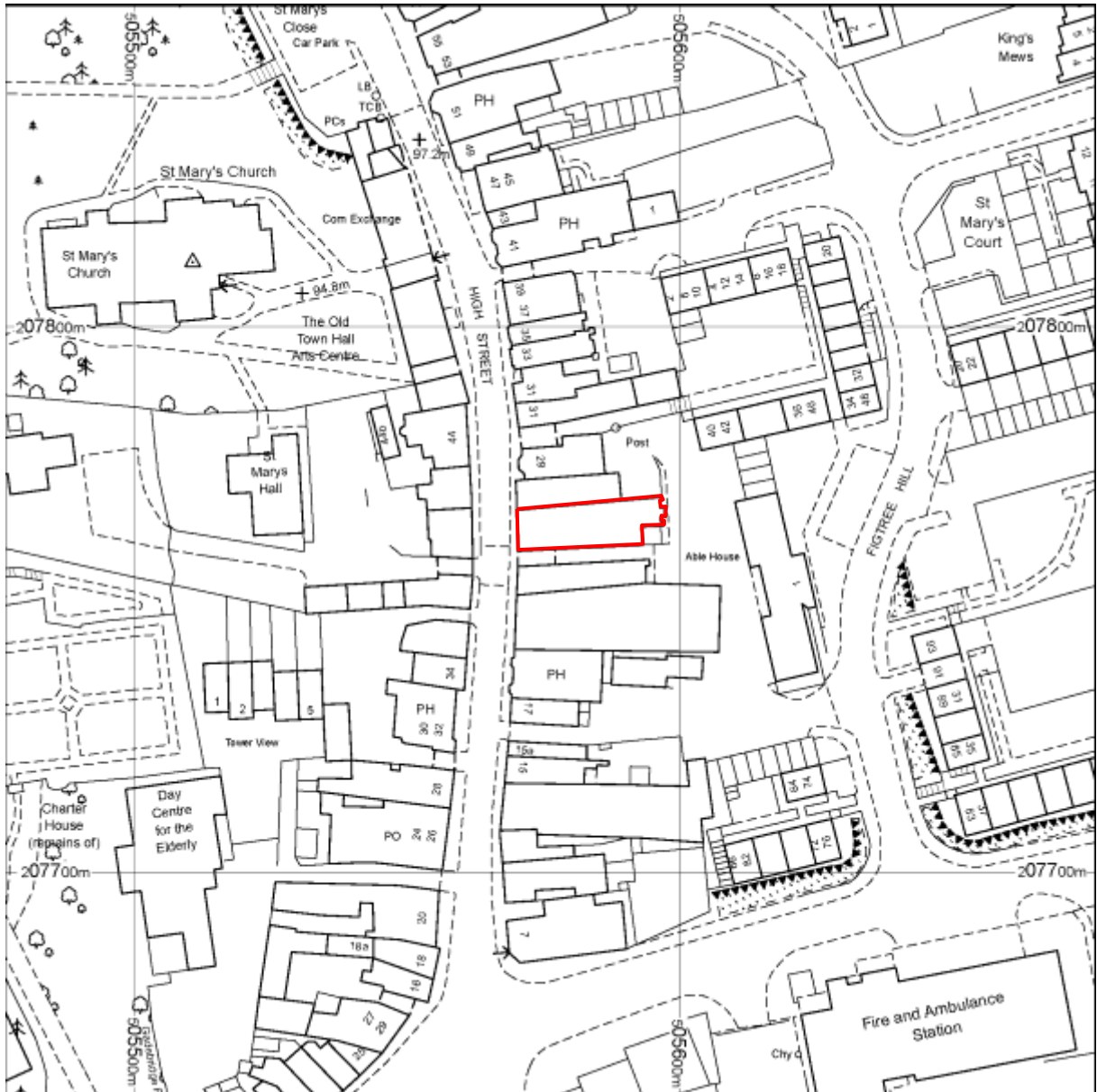


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

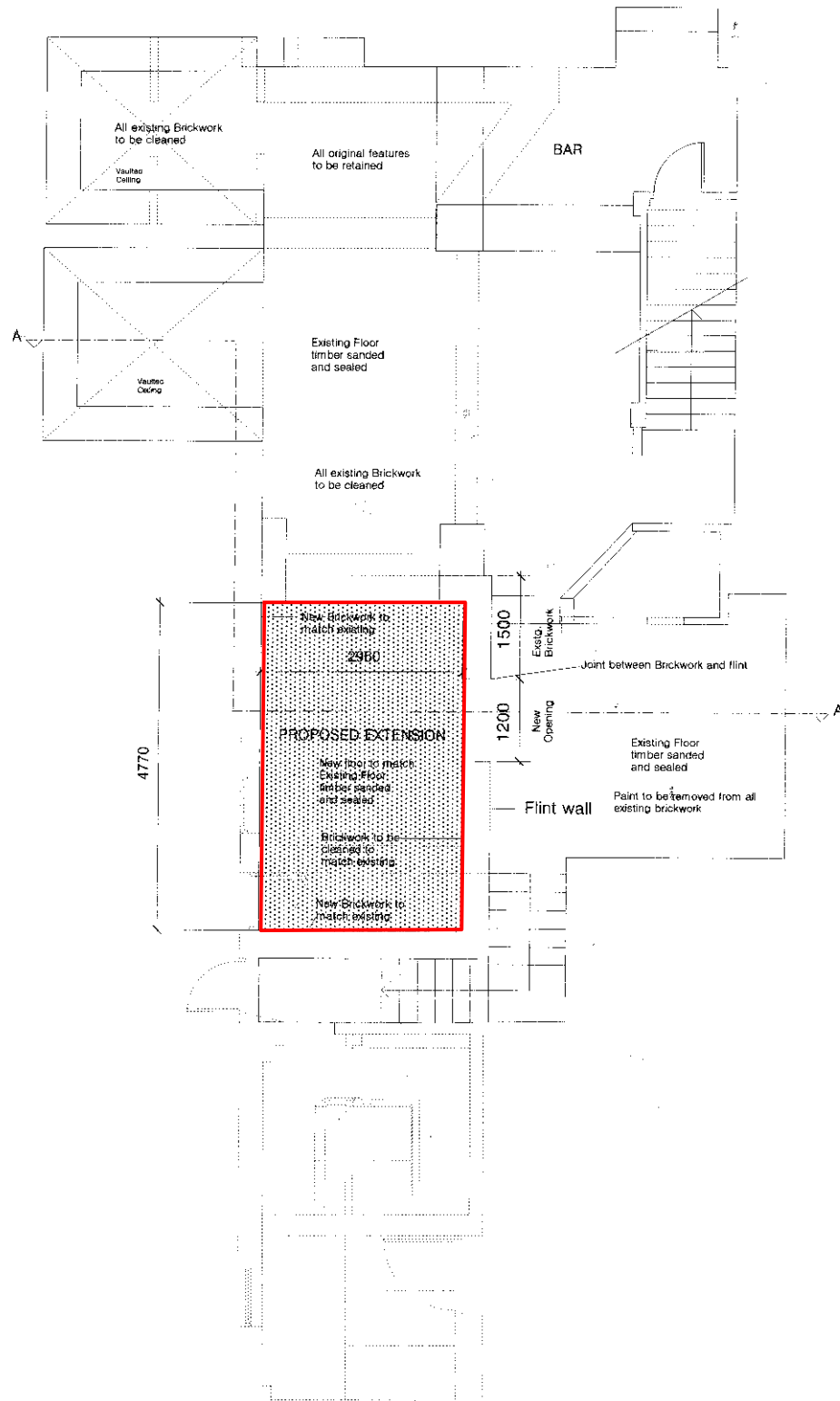


Figure 3: Proposed development (scale 1:100)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the project design (Section 3), 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 for 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 project design (Section 3), which required:

- The archaeological monitoring of all groundworks associated with the proposed development – including foundations and service trenches
- A contingency for the rapid archaeological investigation of any remains encountered during the monitoring programme
- The analysis of the results of the archaeological work and the production of a report.

2.4 *Constraints*

No constraints were experienced during the execution of this watching brief.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the site and its environs. Hemel Hempstead is an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest (Hunns 2000; Page 1908), and the site has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.
- 3.2 There is little evidence for early prehistoric activity in the environs of Hemel Hempstead. A number of sites of Iron Age date are known within the valley of the river Bulbourne.
- 3.3 During the Roman period the area fell within the *civitas* of the *Catuvellauni* (Branigan 1987), which had its capital at *Verulamium* (St Albans). There is now an increasing amount of evidence for Roman settlement in the area, including a villa at Boxmoor, c.2km southwest of the site (Neal 1976).
- 3.4 The origins of Hemel Hempstead are not understood in detail, and there is no evidence for Saxon settlement in the area. However, the settlement may have been established during this period, falling within the Saxon hundred of Dacorum. The place-name may derive from an Old English word meaning ‘homestead of the Hæmele’, the Hæmele being the Saxon tribe occupying the area (Gover *et al* 1938, 40). At the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) the land in the area was held by the Count of Mortain (Morris 1976, 15/10).
- 3.5 The modern town of Hemel Hempstead developed from the 12th century, when a planned town was laid out. It was centred on the High Street and Queensway, c.0.5km northeast of the site (Hunns 2000, fig. 3). The town grew in prosperity and the medieval settlement was dominated by the church of St Mary (Buteaux 1997, 22; Pevsner & Cherry 2002, 177). The town received borough status in 1539 (Page 1908, 217). The historic core of the town, which includes the site, is now designated as an *Area of Archaeological Significance*.
- 3.6 25 High Street is a Grade II Listed Building, and is described as follows: *Early C19. Red brick, hipped old tiled roof with modillioned cornice. 3 storeys, tall Corinthian pilasters to angles of upper floors. 1st floor has 2 triple light sash windows in surrounds. Modern shop with C19 cornice. Nos 25, 27 and 29 form a group.*

4. Results & Conclusions

4.1 Results

Two watching brief visits were made to the site. The first was when the initial chalk strata was exposed, prior to it being fully excavated. The second was after excavation had taken place, prior to the insertion of face work.

Excavations for the cellar extension comprised an area approximately 3m sq. by 2.5m high on the north east side of the existing cellar (Fig. 3). On the north and east sides the natural chalk strata was exposed. The west side consisted of a brick and rubble wall, while the roof comprised the base of the original ground floor of 25 High Street, an extremely hard mix of rubby brick and flint, set in hard concrete.

The floor of the existing cellar (revealed where slabs were lifted) and of the extension comprised natural chalk.

The watching brief revealed only two elements of particular interest. The first was a long narrow tapering pit-like feature, 0.8m deep by 0.45m wide, cut into the chalk forming the north face of the cellar extension (Plate 1). It was filled with a light brown chalky matrix containing occasional flints and small fragments of brick. The feature remains undated but a post-medieval date is suspected.

The west side of the cellar consisted of a composite facing wall made up of a mix of coursed brick, flint rubble and brick and flint rubble (Plate 2). The bricks were frogged and set in lime mortar. The most recent bricks in the surviving pillar were reddish grey and measured 230 x 110 x 65mm; others were 230 x 105 x 60mm and 215 x 100 x 65mm. Although the sizes of individual bricks varied, none appeared to pre-date the 19th century.

No artefacts of archaeological significance were recovered during the watching brief.

4.2 Conclusions

Apart from a probable pit-like feature on the north side of the cellar extension, the chalk contained little intrusive material or features. The feature could possibly be a setting for scaffolding from an earlier building phase on the site. The wall revealed on the west side of the extension was irregular in its construction, suggesting that it was built on an *ad hoc* basis, with readily available materials. The size of the bricks used suggests a late Victorian date for its construction, in keeping with the scale and design of the basement itself.



Plate 1: Detail of elevation of south facing basement extension



Plate 2: East facing brick elevation

5. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Mr M. Blennerhasset of the House Restoration Co. Ltd. The writer is grateful to him for assistance. The project was monitored by Kate Batt of the Herts CC Historic Environment Unit, on behalf of the local planning authority.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann BA, MA, MIFA. Fieldwork and report preparation was undertaken by the author and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA .

6. Archive

6.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

6.2 The archive will be deposited with the Dacorum Heritage Trust (DACHT: 3903).

7. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- 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)*.
- Rouse C 2009 *25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. ASC document 1196/HHS/1.

Secondary Sources

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Branigan K, 1987 *The Catuvellauni. Peoples of Roman Britain*. Alan Sutton
- Buteaux, E. 1997: 'St Mary's Church, Hemel Hempstead: a little known Norman church'. *Hertfordshire's Past* **42**, 21-27.
- Gover, J.E.B., Mawer, A. and Stenton, F. M. 1970: *The Place-Names of Hertfordshire. English Place-Name Society 15*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Hunns T, 2000 *Hemel Hempstead Extensive Urban Survey: Assessment Report*. Herts County Council.
- Morris, J. 1976: *Domesday Book: Hertfordshire*. History from the Sources. Phillimore.
- Neale D S 1976 'Northchurch, Boxmoor and Hemel Hempstead Station: the Excavation of three Roman Buildings in the Bulbourne Valley'. *Hertfordshire Archaeology* **4**, 1-135.
- Page, W. 1908: *The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire*. Dawsons of Pall Mall.
- Pevsner, N. and Cherry, B. 2002: *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire*. Yale.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend*

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD				
Project: 25a, High St, Hemel Hempstead, Herts		Project No/Code: 1196/HHS	Sheet: 1 of 4			
Client/Developer: House Restoration Co Ltd		Date of visit: 21/7/09				
Contact: Mike Blennerhassett		Phone: 07956590055				
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10.35	Finish: 12.35pm				
Completed by: JRA						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pipelines	Other (specify): cellars excavations
Site & weather conditions: Indoors.						
Observations: Observed the partial excavation of an internal cellar extension. This currently is 3.4m NW-SE x 0.9m deep (measured from side-brick buttress) and c. 2.5m high. The great majority of the ground consists of banded natural chalk. The roof is concrete rubble on the north side about 1m of flint, chalk & mortar rubble is present.						
Comments: This is a new extension to the existing cellar. No deposits of any antiquity noted.						

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project: 25a, High Street Hemel Hempstead		Project No/Code: 1196 1HHS		Sheet: 3 of 4	
Client/Developer: Horse Restoration Co Ltd		Date of visit: 30/7/09			
Contact: M. Blenchedale		Phone: 0795659005			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 1.55am	Finish: 3.30am			
Completed by: JRH					
Development Type:					
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pipelines Other (specify): cellar extension
Site & weather conditions: inside (weather outside - sunny & dry).					
Observations: Observed the full extent of the new addition to the cellar. It was approximately 3m Sq. (the ceiling 2.48m) with a level concrete 'base' consisting of a mix of small flint & small chunks of bricks. This will be removed. No sign of any archaeological deposits except at the northern end where was small pit (c. 0.8m deep x 0.45m wide, slightly tapering) filled with a light brown chalky matrix; see flints and fragments of bricks. Date uncertain. The western face of the new extension in the most interesting consistency of 3, possibly four separate elements - see sketch over. On far west side the elevation is 300mm pure chalk 1100mm clauze (some stretches the heaviest). upper 1330mm white painted Raygael flint. Area of exposed floor - where flags have been removed = all chalk.					
Comments: No further visits proposed.					

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: 25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead			SITE NO/CODE: 1196/HHS
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		9057	South facing chalk strata in basement (21.7.09)
2		9058	East facing chalk strata in basement
3		9059	West facing chalk strata in basement
4		9060	General view of basement looking south
5		9061	General view of basement looking south east
6		9062	Detail of one the basement's internal bays
7		9063	Detail of south west corner
8		9064	South facing brick and flint topped wall (NW corner)
9	yes	9188	General view of fully extracted cellar extension (30.7.09) cover
10	Yes	9189	Detail of fully extracted cellar extension plate 1
11		9190	Detail of pit like feature in south facing chalk elevation
12		9191	Detail of south facing chalk elevation
13		9192	East facing brick wall elevation plate 2
14		9193	Ditto
15		9194	Western side of wall adjacent to basement extension

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead		
Short Description:	<i>Excavations for an extension to an existing basement were observed at 25a High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire in July 2009. Most of the material removed from this extension consisted of natural chalk. A narrow pit was observed cutting into this strata but no dating evidence was retrieved. The western side of the cutting exposed the rear of an old facing wall consisting of a mix of coursed brick, flint rubble and brick and flint rubble. This is believed to be contemporary with the existing basement.</i>		
Project Type:	Watching Brief		
Site status:	GII listed building	Previous work:	none
Current land use:	commercial	Future work:	no
Monument type:	building	Monument period:	Late Victorian
Significant finds:	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Hertfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 0558 0779
District:	Dacorm	Parish:	Hemel Hempstead
Site address:	25a High St, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP1 3AA		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	12 sq.m.	Height OD: (metres)	100m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Kate Batt	Project design originator:	Calli Rouse
Project Manager:	Karin Semmelmann	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	House Restoration Co Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	21/7/09	End date:	30/7/09
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Dacorum Heritage Trust (DACHT: 3903)	none	
Paper:		Project Records, brief, project design, Report etc	
Digital:			
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: 25a High St, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP1 3AA		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1196/HHS/2		
Author(s):	Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA		
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