

HERITAGE NETWORK



14 PRIORS HILL Pirton, Hertfordshire

(HN325)

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Land at
14 PRIORS HILL
Pirton, Herts.

HN325

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Griffin Housing Services

by

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Report no.202

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Acknowledgements

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Summary

Site name and address:	14 Priors Hill, Pirton, Herts.		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Herts.
Village/town:	Pirton	Parish:	Pirton
Planning reference:	01/01032/1	NGR:	TL 1445 3155
Client name and address:	Griffin Housing Services, C/O AT4 architects, 84 Tilehouse Street, Hitchin, Herts., SG5 2DY		
Nature of work:	Housing	Previous land use:	Garden
Size of affected area:	300m ²	Size of area investigated:	300m ²
Site Code:	n/a	Other reference:	HN325
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Monitoring & recording	Curating Museum:	NHDC Museums Service
Start of work	6 th August 2002	Finish of work	26 th June 2003
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	n/a
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis: As the result of an archaeological condition on the planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling, garage and associated landscaping on land at 14 Priors Hill Pirton, Herts., the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to monitor and record the groundworks.

Despite the proximity of known Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval remains, archaeological monitoring of the groundworks revealed no features that could be dated earlier than the modern period.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of *AT4 Architects*, acting on behalf of *Griffin Housing Services*, as part of a programme of archaeological work associated with building development on land at 14 Priors Hill, Pirton, Herts. The planning permission for the development (ref. 01/01032/1), granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), was subject to a standard archaeological condition according to the provisions of the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16). The scope of the required work followed the *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* issued by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to NHDC (ref. SB 13/09/01).

1.2 The site is located on the southern limits of Pirton, centred on NGR TL 1445 3155 (Figure 1). The development involved the construction of a new dwelling, garage, and associated landscaping (Fig.2).

1.3 The site lies within an Archaeological Area (AA75), defined by North Hertfordshire District Council. The historic village of Pirton lies to the north of the Icknield Way and remains from the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods are known in close proximity to the site. In particular, a medieval motte and bailey and associated earthworks (SMR13612) lies 200m to the east of the site. Excavations by the Heritage Network have also revealed the remains of an extensive Saxo-Norman settlement (Hillelson, forthcoming) 400m to the northeast of the site.

1.4 The aim of the monitoring programme has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which might have been uncovered, and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed, subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

2. Fieldwork

Ground reduction

2.1 Ground reduction across the plot frontage was undertaken with a JCB mini-digger. An area measuring 188.76m² was reduced by approximately 0.15m. Three geotechnical test pits were encountered, but no archaeology was observed.

Footings trenches

2.2 Eight footings trenches, measuring approximately 0.8m wide by 1.10m deep, were dug by a JCB mini-digger. Trenches D, E and G contained no archaeology. The remaining trenches contained a total of 7 cut features and one layer.

Context	Type	Description and interpretation	Max Th (m.)
01	Cut	U-shaped feature measuring 0.85m wide in north facing section of trench C.	
02	Fill	Fill of [01]. Sandy clay fill with sub angular stones and occasional chalk fragments. No finds.	0.43
03	Cut	Flat based feature measuring 0.30m wide in west facing section of trench A. No finds.	
04	Fill	Fill of [03]. Very dark greyish brown (2.5Y 3/2) clay fill. An iron object was found at the base of the feature.	0.80
05	Cut	U-shaped feature measuring 0.95m wide was observed in the east facing section of Trench B.	
06	Fill	Fill of [05]. Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) sand fill. No finds.	0.50
07	Cut	U-shaped feature measuring 0.70m wide in the south facing section of Trench F.	
08	Fill	Fill of [07]. Light olive brown (2.5Y 5/4) clay. No finds.	0.70
09	Cut	U-shaped feature measuring 1.50m wide was observed in both section of trench F.	
10	Fill	Fill of [09]. Light olive brown (2.5Y 5/3) silty sand. No finds.	1.00
11	Cut	U-shaped feature measuring 0.75m wide was in the north facing section of Trench H with adjoining Feature [13].	
12	Fill	Fill of [11]. Light olive brown (2.5Y 5/3) silty sand. No finds.	0.50
13	Cut	Flat based feature observed in both sections of Trench H with adjoining Feature [11]	
14	Fill	Fill of [13]. Light olive brown (2.5Y 5/3) silty sand fill. No finds.	1.10+
15	Layer	Charcoal layer measuring 1.0m wide by 0.82m long in both sections of Trench I. An almost U-shaped cut was noted in the north facing section but was very indistinct in the south facing. No finds.	0.06

Drainage Trenches

2.3 The drainage trenches were dug by a JCB mini-digger and measured approximately 0.45m in width and approximately 0.45m in depth. No archaeology was observed.

Soakaways

2.4 Two soakaways, measuring approximately 2.0m by 2.0m by 0.65m deep, were excavated at the front and rear of the plot (Figure 2). The stratigraphy in both consisted of a 0.30m deep layer of brown (10YR 4/3) silty clay topsoil over a 0.35m deep layer of grey (2.5Y 6/1) clay natural. No archaeology was observed in the rear soakaway, but a linear feature [16] was observed in the one to the front of the development.

Context	Type	Description and interpretation	Max Th (m)
16	Cut	Linear feature measuring 1.15m+ wide by 2.0m+ long with straight sides and a flat base	
17	Fill	Dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2), silty clay containing occasional flint inclusions and root activity. No finds.	0.22

3 Discussion & Conclusion

3.1 A total of twelve features and deposits were revealed during the groundworks on the present site, comprising three modern geotechnical test pits, eight cut features and one layer (Figures 2 & 3).

3.2 Five of the features, cuts [01], [03], [05], [07] and [11] were only identified in one section, indicating that these may have been pits. Two of the other features, cuts [09] and [13] possibly represent gullies and ditches. Layer [15] was also observed in both trench sections. The high concentration of charcoal in this layer is indicative of burning, but the lack of any further information relating to the feature makes a more accurate interpretation impossible.

3.3 The only artefact recovered from the site was an unidentified iron object, found at the base of cut [03]. As a result of the lack of finds most of the features are undated.

Conclusion

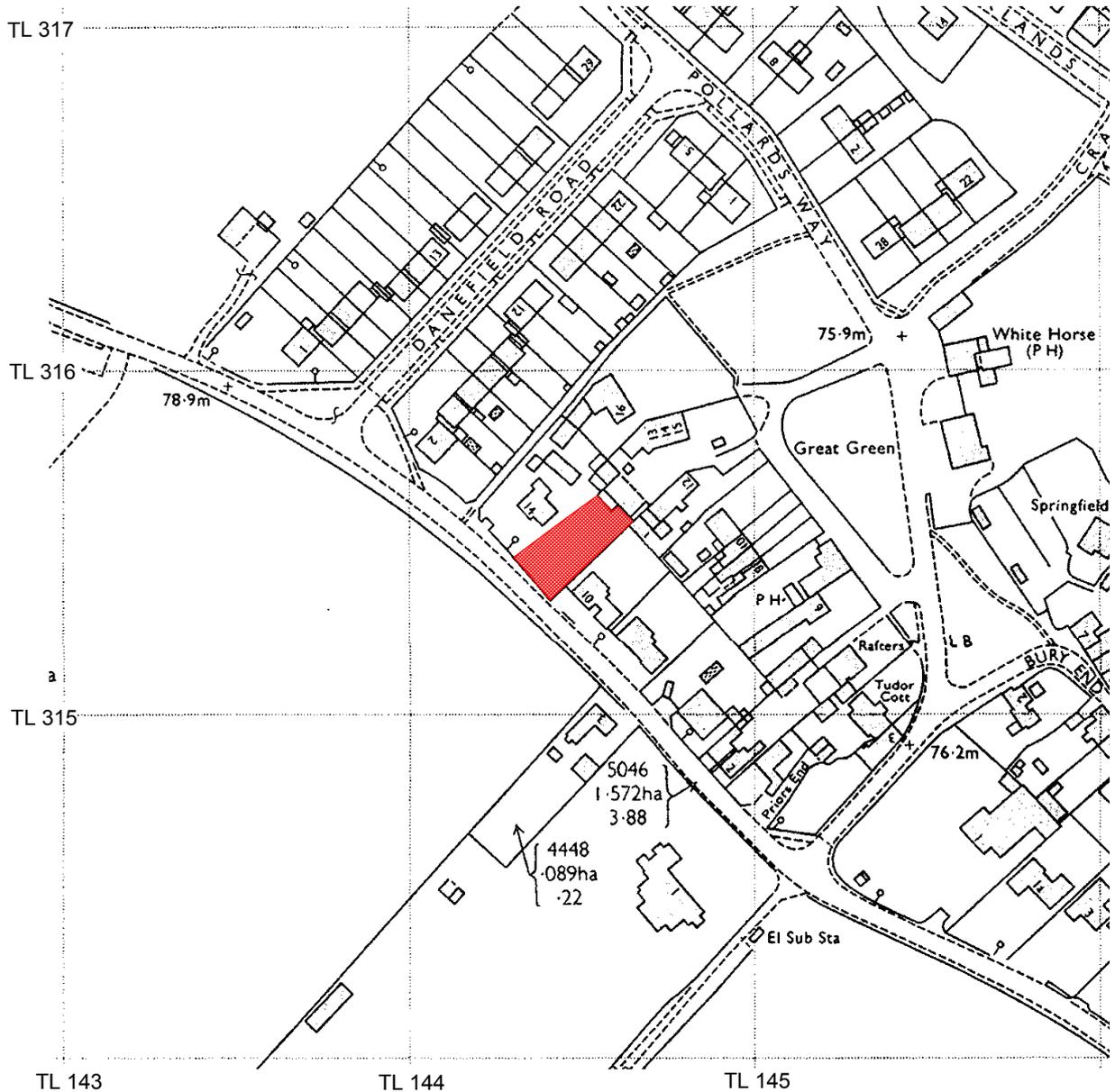
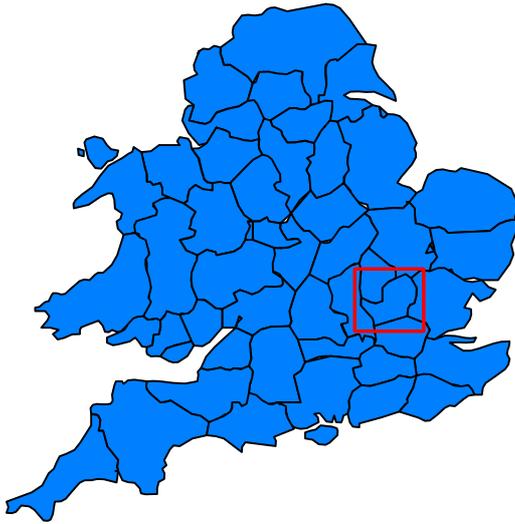
3.4 Despite the proximity of the site to Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains, the lack of finds makes it impossible to date the identified features. However, it seems likely that they are modern in date as several appeared very regular in section, with flat bases and straight sides, including features [01], [11] and [16] (Figure 3).

4 Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
6/8/02	GS	4	Monitor ground reduction
7/8/02	GS	7	Monitor ground reduction
08/08/02	KS	1	Monitor footings trenches
09/08/02	CT	1	Inspect footings trenches
12/08/02	KS	2	Inspect footings trenches
14/08/02	KS	3	Inspect footings trenches
16/08/02	KS	1	Inspect soakaway
16/08/02	KS	1	Inspect drainage trenches
11/03/03	MW	3	Inspect soakaway

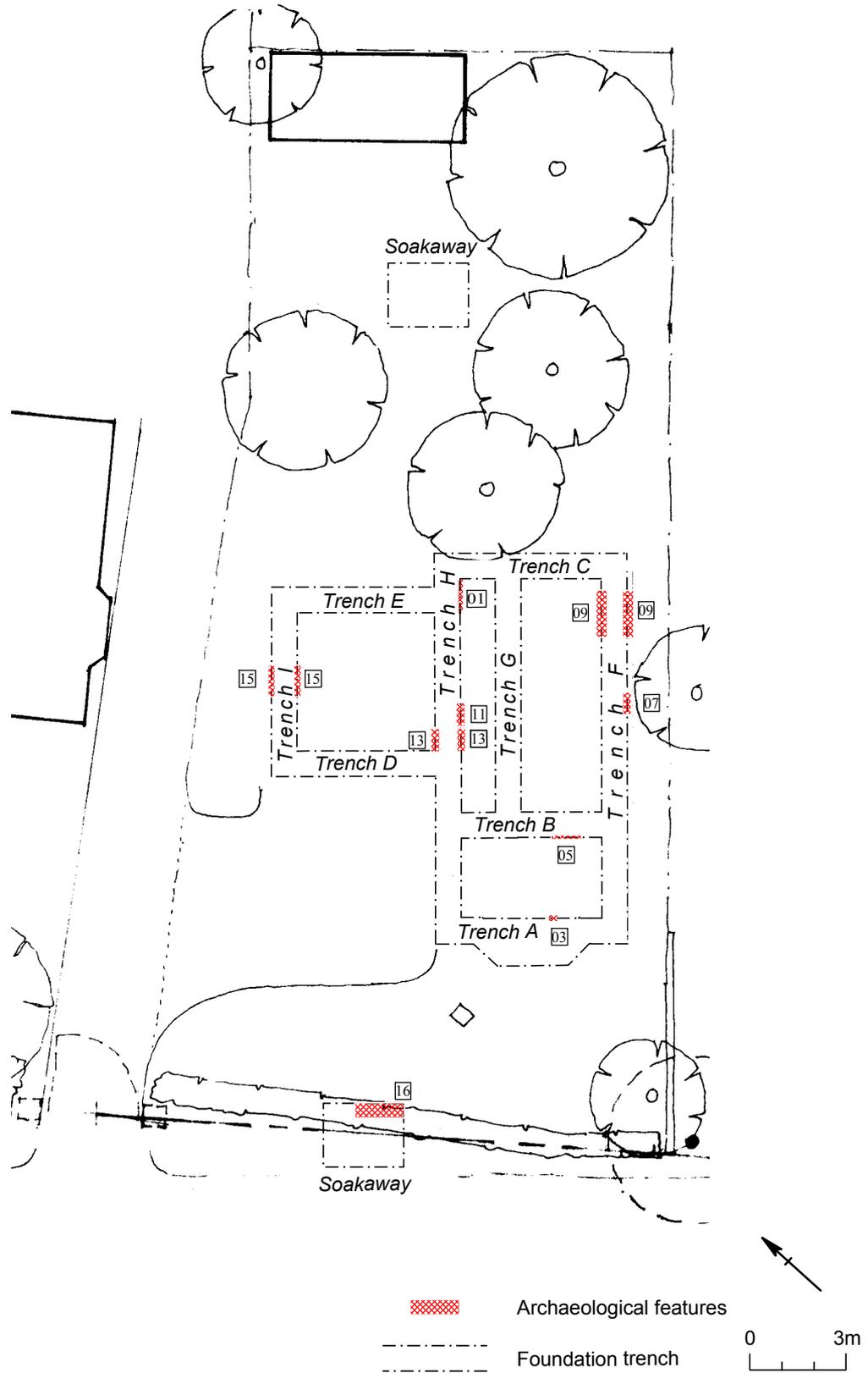
5 Illustrations

Figure 1 Site location
 Figure 2 Site layout
 Figure 3 Sections



Site Location

Scale 1:2000

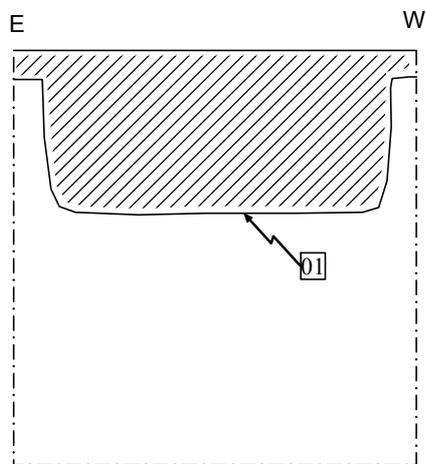


Site layout
(Plan courtesy of AT4 Architects Ltd.)

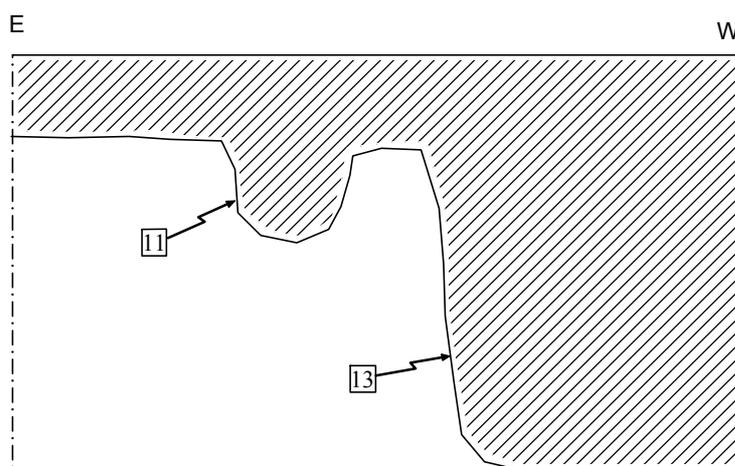
Scale 1:200

Figure 2

North facing section of feature [01]



North facing section of features [11] & [13]



North facing section of the front soakaway

