R 691

COPY 1

SMR

10916

THE

HERITAGE NETWORK

LTD

14 WESTELL CLOSE
Baldock, Herts

(HN243)

Observation and Recording Report

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

S11122

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

14 WESTELL CLOSE
Baldock, Herts.

HN243

Observation and Recording Report

Prepared on behalf of Mr Hays

by

Chris Turner BSC

Report No. 74

June 1999

© The Heritage Network Ltd

12 ROYSTON ROAD, BALDOCK, HERTS. SG7 6NT
TEL: (01462) 893288 FAX: (01462) 893562

Contents

	Summary	Page i
Section 1	Introduction	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork	Page 2
Section 3	Discussion and Conclusions	Page 4
Section 4	Illustrations	*following* Page 5

Acknowledgements

Fieldwork for this project was carried out by Chris Turner.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to the following individuals and organisations for their cooperation and assistance:

Mr and Mrs Hays;
Gil Burleigh and the staff of the NHDC Archaeology Section.

Summary

Site Name:	14 Westell Close, Baldock.	**NGR:**	TL 2542 3385
Address:	*ditto*	**Site Code:**	Bal- 80 '99
Client:	Mr Hays	**HN Reference:**	HN 243
Project Type:	Observation & Recording	**Period Range:**	Romano-British
Fieldwork Dates:	21st May 1999	**Report Date:**	June 1999
Director:	David Hillelson	**Supervisor:**	Chris Turner
LPA:	North Hertfordshire DC	**Archive held at:**	North Herts Museums

In response to a planning condition placed on building works at no.14 Westell Close, Baldock, by the local planning authority, North Hertfordshire District Council, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner, Mr Hays, to undertake archaeological observation and recording of the groundworks for the construction of an extension to the side of the building.

The excavations revealed the remains of one Romano-British cremation. The presence of nails suggests that this deposit was placed in a box at the time of burial.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Mr Hays, as part of a programme of archaeological observation and recording on groundworks at 14 Westell Close, Baldock. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out in response to a planning condition placed on the development by the North Hertfordshire District Council.

1.2 The site lies within a complex multi-period archaeological landscape covering Clothall Common and the eastern fringes of modern Baldock, and which includes, in particular, remains dating to the Late pre-Roman Iron age and Romano-British periods.

1.3 This house lies between the 70 and 75m OD contours at grid reference TL 2542 3385, within Archaeological Area 96 as defined in the District Local Plan No.2. The natural geology is lower midde chalk with peri-glacial deposits.

1.4 The site is situated close to an area of known inhumations and cremations, and there was considered, by the local authority, to be a high potential for encountering human remains during the present groundworks.

2 Fieldwork

METHODOLOGY

2.1 This development consisted of three elements

Stage 1) The demolition and clearance of the existing garage block

Stage 2) The excavation of the footings for the new house extension.

Stage 3) The excavation of a new service trench

2.2 The Heritage Network was requested to inspect the groundworks after the footings had been excavated.

2.3 Archaeological deposits and features were investigated for artefactual evidence, in addition natural peri-glacial deposits were also examined for any archaeological material.

2.4 All work was carried out in accordance with the standard requirements of the NHDC *Model Brief for Archaeological Observation and Recording* and following the Heritage Network's normal standards and practice.

OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

2.5 The site had been heavily disturbed prior to the commencement of this building work. Along side the existing house was a band 0.50-0.60m in width and 0.75m in depth of modern disturbance caused by the house footings and services. Additional modern services were observed in the southern baulk and south western corner of the new footings.

2.6 The original construction of the driveway had penetrated to a depth of 0.50m. The footings for the demolished garage were also observed to a depth of 1m and measuring 0.50m in width.

Stage 1

2.7 The demolition and clearance of the existing garage block and driveway did not affect or reveal any potential underlying archaeological features or deposits. Elements of the footings for the demolished garage had been left in situ. The top surface had been removed from the driveway, but the underlying hardcore was left in situ. The service trench had been cut through these modern deposits.

Stage 2

2.8 The footings for the new house extension measured 0.70m in width and 1-1.10m in depth. The trenches butt onto the eastern side of the existing house. The rectangular footprint for the extension covered an area 4.95m in width and 9.50m in length.

2.9 The overburden consisted of a grey brown silty topsoil measuring 0.30-0.40m in depth overlying chalk natural. Modern building debris and patches of redeposited chalk natural were observed within this matrix.

2.10 A small concave cut feature measuring 0.30m in width and 0.15m in depth was located 3.80m north of the south eastern corner of the footings, situated beneath the overburden in the eastern baulk. This feature contained a dark silty fill with charcoal and chalk inclusions. Calcified bone and five nails were also recovered from this context. This deposit had been heavily truncated by the footings and the remains were removed in their entirety.

2.11 Natural reddish brown peri-gacial deposits were observed in the north eastern corner of the footings, measuring approximately 0.70m in depth. No artefactual evidence was recovered from these natural features.

Stage 3

2.12 The service trench measured 0.50m in width and 0.60m in depth. The trench was orientated approximately N-S and ran between the road and the new footings. The service

trench cut through the modern driveway layers and into the natural chalk. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during this stage of the works.

3 Discussion and Conclusions

3.1 The work undertaken by the Heritage Network has established that, although the ground had been extensively disturbed by the construction of the modern houses, some archaeological deposits do still survive in situ.

3.2 The dark deposit removed during stage 2 of the groundworks appears to be a cremation. The deposit weighed 320 g and contained 15g of calcified bone. The bone had been exposed to a high level of heat, consistent with deliberately being placed within a fire. The assemblage was very fragmentary, the largest piece measuring 15mm in length. Because of this, little information is likely to be gained from it, although it has been possible to identify the presence of fragments of long bone and some small fragments of skull. It is highly likely that these remains are human.

3.3 During the excavation of this context five artefacts were also recovered:

Artefact 1 was a corroded iron nail weighing approximately 5g. The head of the nail measured 12mm in diameter, and the square tapering shaft measured 5mm in thickness and 50mm in length. The end of the nail was bent.

Artefact 2 was a corroded iron nail fragment weighing approximately 3g. The head of the nail measured 14mm in diameter, and the square tapering shaft measured 5mm in thickness and 17mm in length. The end of the nail was missing.

Artefact 3 was a corroded iron tack weighing approximately 2g. The head of the tack measured 7mm in diameter, and the tapering shaft measured 4mm in thickness and 26mm in length.

Artefact 4 was a corroded iron tack weighing approximately 2g. The head of the nail measured 5mm in diameter, and the tapering shaft measured 2mm in thickness and 17mm in length.

Artefact 5 was a corroded copper alloy nail weighing approximately 5g. The head of the nail measured 14mm in diameter, and the square tapering shaft measured 4mm in thickness and 52mm in length. The end of the nail was bent.

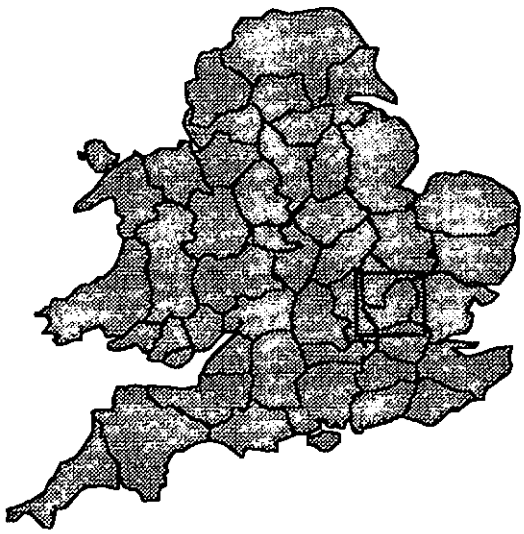
3.4 The recovery of three nails and two smaller tacks suggests the cremation had been placed in a box prior to burial. Copper alloy nails are one of the features of cremations in this area (Gil Burleigh, pers. comm).

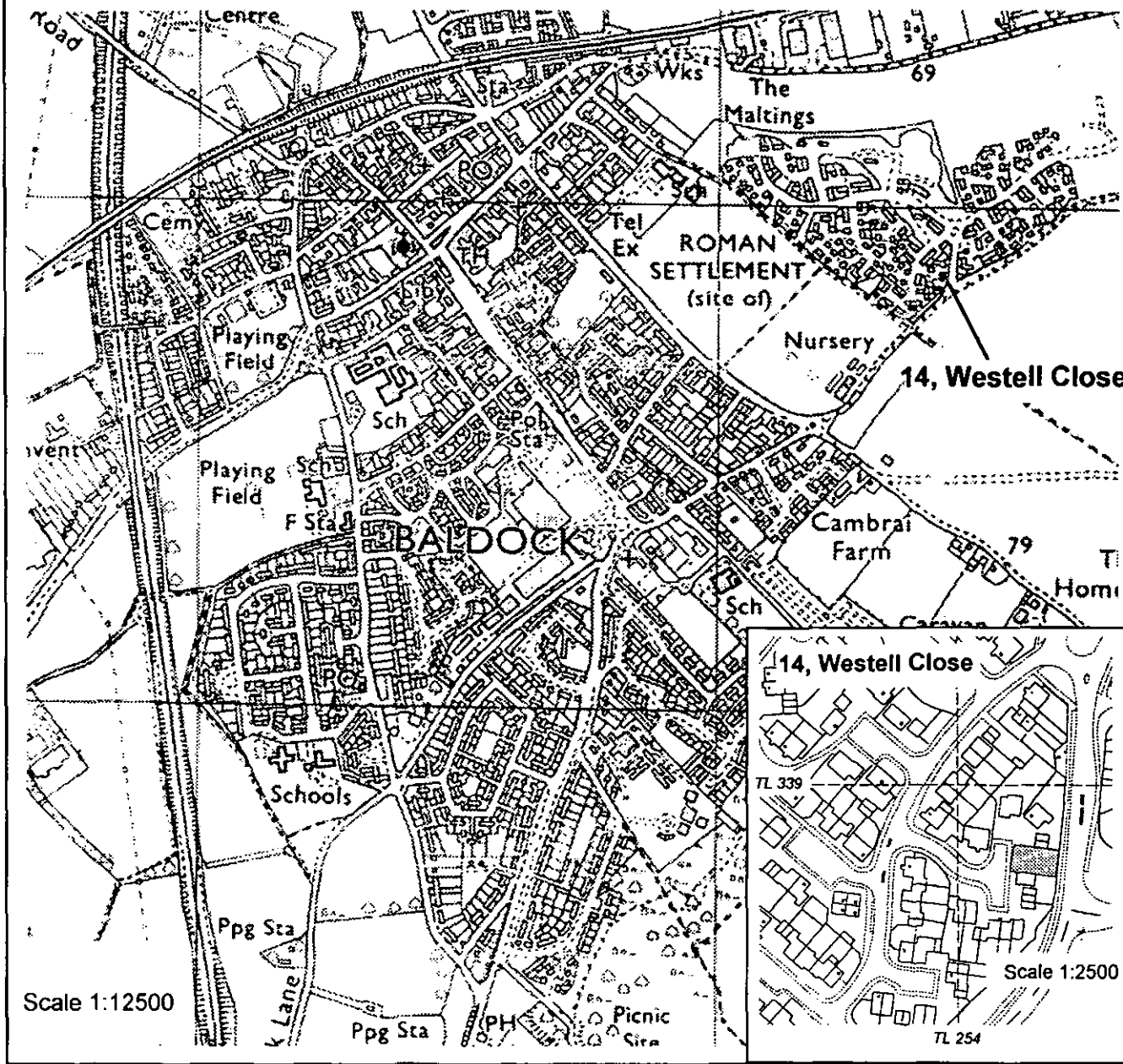
3.5 Although no direct dating evidence was recovered from this feature, the nature of context and the artefacts suggests they are from the Romano-British period (1st - 4th Century AD) and form part of the mixed rite cemetery excavated in advance of the present estate (BAL-6).

4 Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site Location
Figure 2 ..... Site Plan and Cremation Section

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD	14 Westell Close, Baldock	HN243

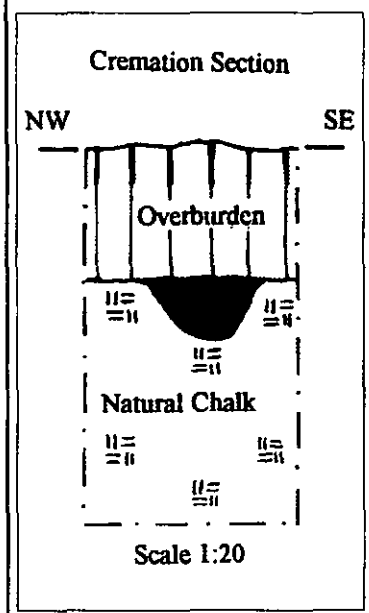


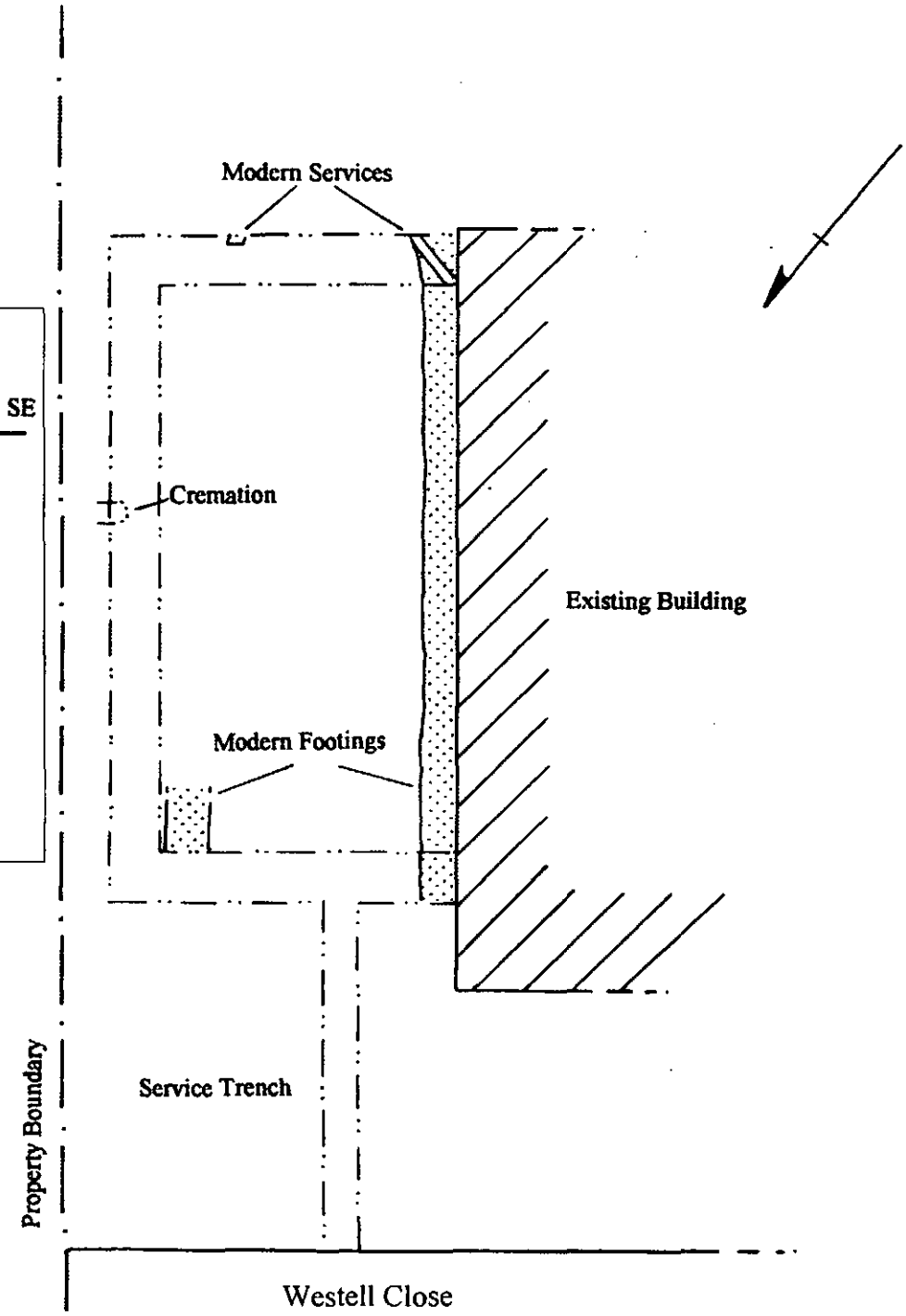


Site Location	Scale as shown
	Figure 1

Reproduced from the 1:25000 series OS map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence no. AL52036A

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD	14, Westell Close, Baldock	HN243





Site Plan and Cremation Section	Scale 1:100
	Figure 2