

# HERITAGE NETWORK



## **LETCHWORTH HALL HOTEL** **Letchworth, Herts.**

HN429

### *Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## LETCHWORTH HALL HOTEL

Letchworth, Herts.

HN429

### *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Letchworth Hall Hotel*

by

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Report no.223

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## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Karin Semmelmann, Mark Winter and David Hillelson. The report was written and the illustrations prepared by Karin Semmelmann. It was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Jay Chatwani, Letchworth Hall Hotel; Brian Hull, Brian Hull Associates; Mike Rainsford, BBR Architects; Peter Walker, Moulton Walker; Dave Woodland, Trak Construction; and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth Lane, Letchworth, SG6 3NP		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	North Herts.
<b>Village/town:</b>	Letchworth	<b>Parish:</b>	Letchworth
<b>Planning reference:</b>	00/1490/1	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 2161 3065
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Letchworth Hall Hotel, as above		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Extension	<b>Previous use:</b>	Garden
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	217m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	217m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN429	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Monitoring	<b>Finds location/Museum:</b>	N. Herts Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	27/06/03	<b>Finish of work</b>	31/07/03
<b>Related SMR Nos:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Modern
<b>Previous reports:</b>	<i>Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth</i> Heritage Network. Report No. 185.		

### Summary of fieldwork results:

As the result of an archaeological condition on the planning permission for the construction of a new extension at Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth, Herts, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to monitor the groundworks.

The present project formed a second stage of works at Letchworth Hall Hotel, following the construction of a new leisure centre in 2002/3. Much of the present site, which links the leisure centre with the existing hotel buildings, had been disturbed by earlier construction and drainage works, as well as landscaping. A few features were revealed during the groundworks, including the remains of a brick wall, a sand-filled rectangular feature of uncertain function, two pottery dumps, and a large bottle dump. The combined projects suggest that the study area lay outside the focus of the medieval moated complex.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Letchworth Hall Hotel Ltd* as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring of development groundworks located in the grounds of Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth, Herts. The planning permission for the development (ref. 00/01490/1), granted by the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), was subject to a standard condition which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which had been approved by the planning authority. The condition has been met by following the provisions set out in the *Design Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* prepared by the County Archaeology Office (CAO) of Hertfordshire County Council, acting as advisers to the planning authority (ref. SB 13/09/01). The work followed the specification set out in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design dated December 2001.

**1.2** The site lies on land sloping to the south-west, between the 75 and 80m contours (Fig.1). The development area covers approximately 217m<sup>2</sup> was formerly occupied by landscaped gardens. The underlying geology is formed of chalky boulder clay.

**1.3** The first phase of the development involved the construction of a new health and fitness centre incorporating a swimming pool, together with a new access road and car-park. The results of the monitoring of groundworks on this phase has been previously reported (Heritage Network report no. 185, March 2003). The present phase of development has seen the construction of a building to link the leisure centre with the existing Alington Suite of the hotel.

**1.4** The site is located in a documented historic landscape which includes recorded sites of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date. It forms part of Archaeological Area 90 (AA90) in the District Local Plan (No.2, July 1993), which defines the medieval and post-medieval village of Letchworth. The site may form the centre of the pre-Norman manor of Letchworth, and the present Letchworth Hall incorporates structural evidence which dates to the 15th century. St Mary's Church, which lies just outside the hotel grounds to the north, is 12th century in date.

**1.5** The aim of the monitoring programme has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which may have been uncovered, and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with current regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook, 2000), and subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

## 2. Fieldwork

### *Initial Ground reduction*

**2.1** The ground reduction was undertaken with a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a 1.80m toothless bucket. The ground was reduced by approximately 0.20m at the western end and 0.30m at the eastern end.

**2.2** A trial hole, which measured 2.65m in length, 1.65m in width and 1.62m in depth was excavated adjacent to the hotel wall. The stratigraphy consisted of dark olive brown (2.5Y 3/3), sandy silty topsoil with frequent chalk, brick/tile, charcoal and flint inclusions and some modern glass over a dark brown (10YR 3/3), silty, clay subsoil with similar inclusions. This lay over yellowish/brown (10YR 5/6) sand, below which was a layer of brownish yellow (10YR 6/6) sand.

**2.3** A line of frogged red bricks, orientated east to west was observed in the western part of the area [02]. The bricks [01] measured approximately 180 x 100 x 60mm (6 x 3 x 2½ inches). The feature was one course wide and at least 2m long.

**2.4** To the east of the brick line was a sub-rectangular feature [04] which was 2.80m long, 0.50m wide at the eastern end and 0.90m wide at the western end. The fill [03] consisted of yellowish sand with no datable artefacts.

**2.5** A pottery dump [06], which measured approximately 0.50m in diameter and 0.10m in depth, was revealed by heavy machine tracking during later groundworks. Although there was no defined cut to this feature the matrix consisted of dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4), sandy, silty clay [05]. The pottery sherds consisted of large fragments of brown glazed ware, probably from a modern century serving platter. Associated with the sherds were poultry bones.

### *Foundation pads*

**2.6** Ten foundation pads and a lift pit were excavated. Although no archaeological features were revealed, artefacts and modern features were present in a number of the pads, as shown in the table below.

Pad	Features	Artefacts
1	None	None
2	None	Post/med jug handle, modern pottery & animal bone
3	Sewer	Modern pottery, brick fragment & animal bone
4	Hedgeline, cinder layer [08], modern pottery dump [07] & possible path or levelling deposit	Modern pottery, iron, bottle sherds, slag & brick
5	None	Terram & backfill from groundworks undertaken in 2002
6	Cinder deposit [08]	Post/med brick/tile, modern pottery & glass
7	Bottle dump [09] (cf. Pad 11)	Bottles, modern pottery & brick, oyster shell & metal
8	None	None recorded
9	Manhole	None recorded

Table 1: Foundation pads		
Pad	Features	Artefacts
10	Drain run	None recorded
11	Bottle dump [09] (cf. Pad 7)	Cut animal bone, modern glass, pottery & oyster shells

### *Footings Trenches*

2.7 The footings trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° excavator with a 0.60m toothed bucket.

2.8 The trenches were also devoid of any archaeological features. Modern drainage pipes were revealed in Trenches E and G, and there was further evidence for the bottle dump seen in Pads 7 and 11 in Trench H.

### *Drainage Trenches*

2.9 The drainage trenches were excavated with a mini-digger using a 0.55m toothed bucket.

2.10 The only features observed in the drainage trenches were the remains of a probable hedgeline and part of the bottle dump previously noted. As the artefacts were generally of the same types and date as retrieved elsewhere, they were not collected.



### 3. Discussion & Conclusion

**3.1** The features revealed during the groundworks included the remains of a brick wall [02], a sand-filled rectangular feature of uncertain function, two modern pottery dumps [06] and [07], a cinder layer [08], which may have been a levelling deposit, and a large bottle dump [09], which also contained a mixture of artefacts and animal bone. In addition, a layer of brick and concrete conglomerate was present in the east facing section of Pad 4, south of the former hedgeline. Not enough of this was exposed to indicate whether this may have been the remains of a levelling deposit or a path.

**3.2** A number of modern services were also present in the study area, which was bounded to the east and west by modern buildings. Much of the area had been disturbed by earlier construction and drainage works, as well as landscaping which may have destroyed earlier archaeological remains. It is more likely, however, that the study area lay outside the focus of the medieval moated complex.

### 4. Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
27/06/03	KS	1	Site visit
	KS	4	Monitor ground reduction
30/06/03	KS	8	ditto
01/07/03	MW	2	ditto
	MW	1	ditto
07/07/03	KS	2	Pad 1 / Trench A
08/07/03	KS	1	Site visit
	KS	4	Pads 2/3
	KS/DJH	3	Pads 2/3, Trench B
09/07/03	KS	2	ditto
10/07/03	KS	9	Pad 4
11/07/03	KS	2	Pad 5
14/07/03	KS	6	Pad 6 / Trench E
15/07/03	KS	8	Pad 7
16/07/03	KS	1	Site visit
	KS	3	ditto
17/07/03	KS	8	Trench F
18/07/03	KS	11	Pads 9/10, Trench H
19/07/03	KS	3	Pads 9/11
30/07/03	KS	2	Drainage trenches
31/07/03	KS	1	ditto
	KS	1	ditto

## 5. Bibliography

Hillelson, D. 2001. *Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth, Herts: Archaeological Project Design*. The Heritage Network

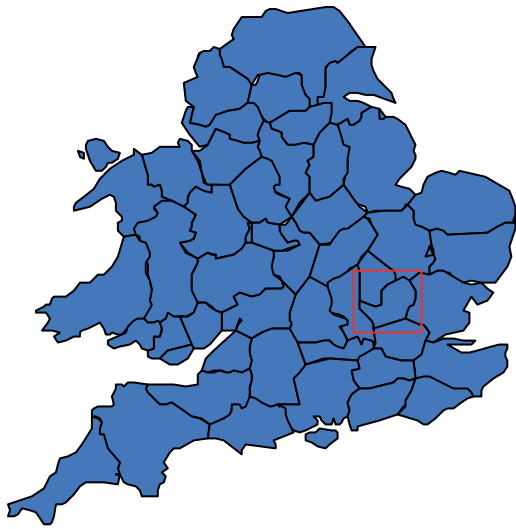
Semmelmann, K. 2003. *Letchworth Hall Hotel, Letchworth, Herts*. Report No. 185. The Heritage Network

## 6. Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site location

Figure 2 ..... Site layout





Site location


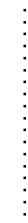







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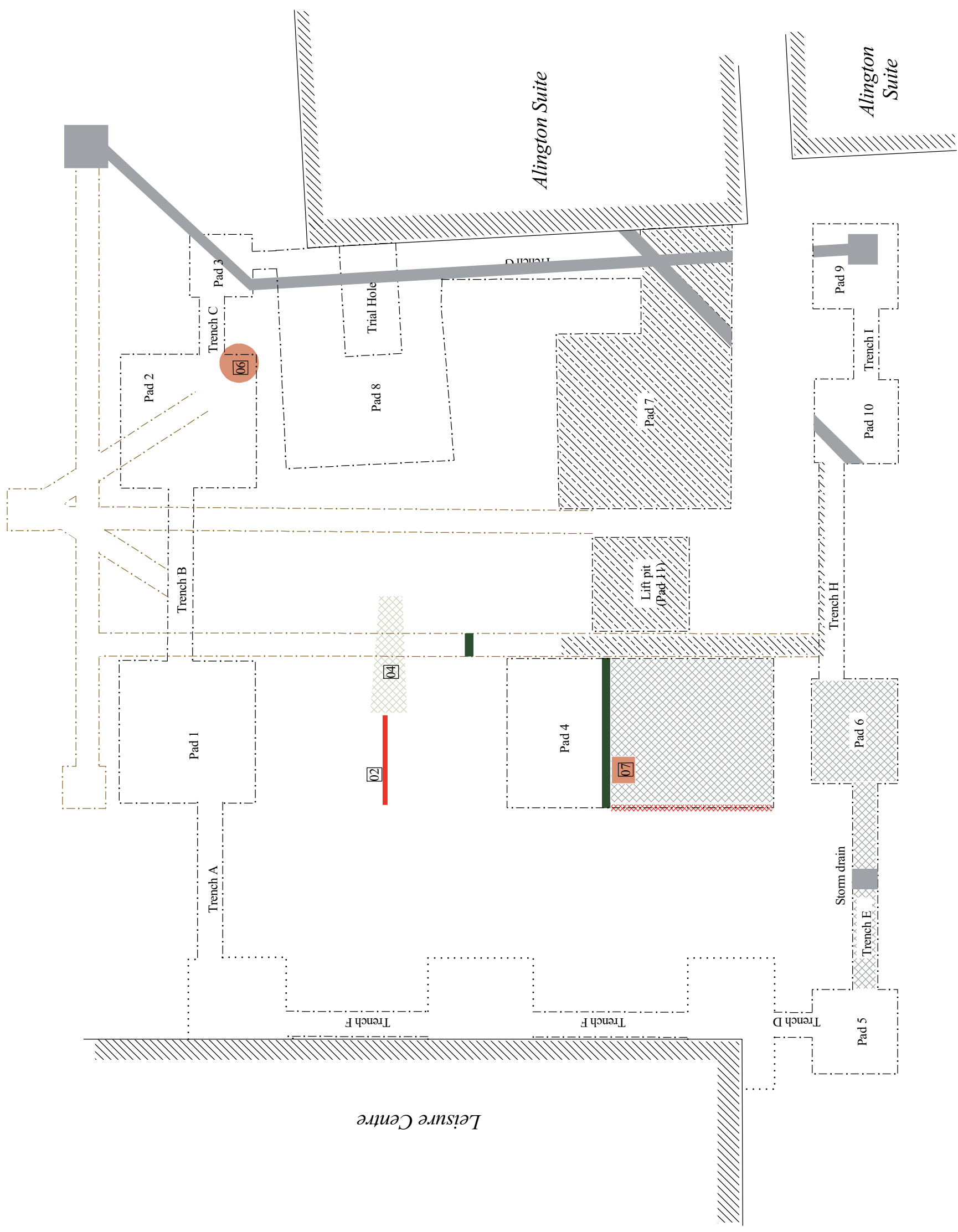
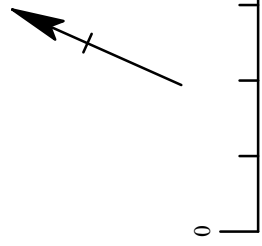


Letchworth Hall Hotel,  
Letchworth

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Site Layout

-  New foundations
-  Existing foundation
-  New drainage
-  Existing drainage
-  Hedge line
-  Possible path
-  Dump layer
-  Cinder deposit
-  Pottery dump



Scale 1:100

Figure 2