

HERITAGE NETWORK



**6 WALNUT TREE ROAD
Pirton, Hertfordshire**

HN971

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING REPORT***

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

6 WALNUT TREE ROAD

Pirton, Hertfordshire

Project Ref.: HN971

NHDC Planning Refs.: 11/02284/1HH

HER enquiry no.: 270/11

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Mrs Julie Writer

By

James Snee, BSC (HONS) AIFA

Report no. 713

March 2012

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The cover photograph shows the site prior to groundworks, looking northwest

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Robin Densem, Greg Jones and James Snee. The report text and illustrations were prepared by James Snee, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mrs Julie Writer, the owner of the site, Andy Instone & Isobel Thompson, Historic Environment Unit, HCC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	6 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire, SG5 3PX.		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Hertfordshire
Village/town:	Pirton	Parish:	Pirton
Planning reference:	11/02284/1HH	NGR:	TL 1485 3167
Client name and address:	Mrs Julie Writer, 70 Church Lane, Arlesey Bedfordshire, SG15 6UX		
Nature of work:	Extension	Former land use:	Residential
Site status:	n/a	Reason for investigation:	Direction of LPA
Position in planning process:	Post-determination	Project brief originator:	Local Authority
Size of affected area:	40.5 m ²	Size of area investigated:	18.5 m ²
Site Code:	HN971	HER reference	270/11
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc.:	Monitoring	Archive recipient:	North Hertfordshire Museum Service
Start of work	15/02/2012	Finish of work	16/02/2012
Related HER Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Post-medieval
Oasis UID	heritage1-117593	Significant finds:	Pottery
Monument types:	Ditch		
Physical archive:	Pottery		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis:

In response to a condition on the planning consent for the construction of an extension to the existing house at 6 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.

It was considered that the present project could provide the opportunity to investigate the development and extent of settlement at Pirton, from the Roman period onwards, the transition from the Romano-British to the Anglo-Saxon period, and the shrinking of Pirton during the later medieval period.

An undated ditch or pit [008] was revealed in the southeast corner of the extension footings. It is possible that this feature was part of the garden or yardland of the original cottages, perhaps as part of a boundary.

The deposits revealed along the west edge of the extension footprint formed part of the original line of the pond that lies to the west of the site, marked on the 1st edition O.S. map as a moat. It is possible that cut [006], with its fills of subsoil and oxidised clay (007), represents the consolidation and re-shaping of the bank, using material scoured from the pond.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Mrs Julie Writer, as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring of a development site located at 6 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

1.2 Planning permission for the development (ref: 11/02284/1HH) granted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), was subject to an archaeological condition issued in line with the Department of Communities and Local Government's *Planning Policy Statement 5* (PPS5). The extent of the work was defined in correspondence from the HEU (ref: AI – 08/11/2011) acting as advisers to the NHDC.

1.3 The site is located in the historic core of the village, on the west side of Walnut Tree Road, a short distance to the south of Little Green, centred on NGR TL 1485 3167. The property is part of a row of cottages, now used as two dwellings, both of which are Grade II listed (LB 163196). To the north of the property is 4 Walnut Tree Road, a thatched dwelling of 18th century date, formerly three cottages. To the east of the property are earthworks which form the remains of the medieval village of Pirton (Figure 1).

1.4 The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.75, as identified in the District Local Plan. This notes the medieval settlement of Pirton which is mentioned in Domesday Book as *Peritone*. The development lies close to extensive archaeological remains dating from the Roman period onwards, including the Scheduled Monument of Toot Hill (SM13612), a well preserved motte and bailey castle.

1.5 The aim of the present project has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains which were liable to be threatened by the development, and the establishment of a local and regional archaeological and historical context for them, if they were discovered, in accordance with the current published local and regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake et al 2007; Medlycott 2011).

1.6 It was considered that present project had the potential to contribute to research on the development and extent of settlement at Pirton, from the Roman period onwards; the transition from the Romano-British to the Anglo-Saxon period; and the shrinking of Pirton during the later medieval period.

1.7 The development comprised the demolition of an existing single storey rear extension and its replacement with one storey and two storey rear extensions.

2. Fieldwork

SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The study area comprises part of a row of cottages, now used as two dwellings, and its garden. The site lies on fairly flat land at approximately 75m OD.

2.2 Locally the soils belong to the Wantage 2 Association (342d) described as ‘Shallow well drained calcareous soils over argillaceous with similar soils affected by groundwater. Deeper well drained coarse loamy soils in places. Complex soils patterns locally.’ (SSEW 1984).

2.3 The underlying geology comprises chalk of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

METHODOLOGY

2.4 Fieldwork comprised a series of site visits to supervise the excavation of foundation trenches to the new extensions.

2.5 The foundation trenches were machined using a tracked mini-digger, fitted with a 0.60m wide toothed bucket.

2.6 All recording work was carried out in accordance with the approved Project Design, current health and safety legislation, and both IfA and ALGAO standards.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

Stratigraphy

2.7 The stratigraphy, which was uniform across the site, consisted of a lower deposit of light grey (2.5Y 7/2) silty clay natural (003), at least 0.65m deep. This was overlain by 0.15m of greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clayey silt subsoil (002), sealed below 0.20m of very dark grey (10YR 3/1) clayey silt topsoil (001) (Plates 2 & 4).

Test Pit

2.8 A test pit, 0.50m wide by 1.80m long and 0.80m deep, was excavated in advance of the demolition of the existing single storey extensions/outbuildings (Figure 2). This revealed the overall stratigraphic sequence with the addition of a 0.20m thick layer of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sandy silty clay, overlying the subsoil (002). This was initially interpreted as possible upcast from the excavation of the pond immediately to the west of the development. However, monitoring of the extension footings demonstrated that this represents material from scouring the pond which was then used to consolidate the pond bank.

Extension footing trenches

2.9 Following the demolition of the existing single storey extensions/outbuildings, the footings for the new extension were excavated to a depth of 1m below the present ground level (Figure 2).

2.10 In the southeast corner of the extension footings, the profile of a pit or ditch [008] was revealed in section (Figure 3; Plate 4). This feature was at least 1.5m wide and more than 0.5m deep and contained a fill of greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clayey silt (009) with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks.

2.11 In the northwest corner of the footing was an irregular sub-oval feature [005], filled with greyish brown (10YR 5/2) clayey silt (005) (Figure 3; Plate 5). This probably represents tree root disturbance.

2.12 Along the western edge of the footprint was a north-south aligned cut feature [006] with a very irregular stepped side (Figure 3; Plate 6). This was filled with subsoil (002), mixed dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) clayey silt and yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sandy silty clay which was sealed below the topsoil (001), which thickened to the west. It has been interpreted as the former line of the pond that lies to the west.

Porch footprint

2.13 The porch footprint comprised two east-west oriented trenches, 0.5m wide by 0.90m long and 1.0m deep (Figure 2; Plates 7 & 8). The trenches revealed 0.60m of overburden above the natural silty clay natural. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed in these trenches.

FINDS ASSESSMENT

Finds Concordance

Context	Pottery		Notes
	No	Wt	
001	4	124	19 th /20 th century

Pottery

2.14 Four sherds, weighing 124g, were recovered from context (001) in the upper part of feature [006]. These represented three separate vessels, comprising a plate and a bowl, both factory made white glazed wares of probable late 19th century date, and likely to have been manufactured in Staffordshire. The third vessel was a white glazed plate of early to mid 20th century date, also probably from Staffordshire.

Recommendations

2.15 No further significant information is likely to be obtained from this material. On this basis, no further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

3. Discussion

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTING

3.1 The village of Pirton is situated on a gently sloping spur of the Chilterns, overlooking the lower Bedford plains to the north. A number of natural springs are located in the village which derive from a shallow valley to the north-west.

3.2 The study area lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No. 75, which defines the historic core of the village. 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. Area of Archaeological significance No. 21, lies to the west of the site. This encompasses a Scheduled Monument (SM13612), formed of the remains of a medieval mottle and bailey, Toot Hill, and the earthworks of house platforms and roads associated with the shrinking of the village at this period.

3.3 A possible bronze hoard (HER 553), consisting of four looped and socketed axes and a lump of metal was found in Pirton, but the actual location of 'Hilly Fields' has not been identified.

3.4 The county Historic Environment Record (HER) lists 32 heritage assets within 500m of the site, including a number of listed buildings, the medieval parish church of St Mary (HER 4315), the medieval Docwra Manor House (HER 15905), the medieval Three Gables (HER 15903), and 17th century houses at 7-13 Bury End (HER 13426).

3.5 Finds of Roman artefacts have been made in the vicinity of the present site, including a spindle whorl (HER 1480), Roman pottery from Toot Hill (HER 1477) and the village school playground (HER 1475), a coin from Crabtree Farm (HER 1474). In addition the floor of a Roman building, with associated pottery (HER 1478) was excavated in Bury Field in 1955.

3.6 A programme of test pitting, carried out by the University of Cambridge and North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society from 2008 onwards, has found evidence of medieval and post-medieval occupation throughout the village (HER 16620).

CONCLUSIONS

3.7 It was considered that the present project could provide the opportunity to investigate the development and extent of settlement at Pirton, from the Roman period onwards, the transition from the Romano-British to the Anglo-Saxon period, and the shrinking of Pirton during the later medieval period.

3.8 An undated ditch or pit, context [008], was revealed in the southeast corner of the extension footings. It is possible that this formed part of the garden or yardland of the original cottages, perhaps as part of a boundary.

3.9 The deposits revealed along the west edge of the extension footprint formed part of the original line of the pond that lies to the west of the site, marked on the 1st edition O.S. map as a moat. It is possible that cut [006], with its fills of subsoil and oxidised clay (007), represents the consolidation and re-shaping of the bank, using material scoured from the pond.

Confidence Rating

3.10 Conditions on site were generally acceptable for the identification and recording of any potential archaeological remains, and as such there are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than *High*.

4. Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
15/02/2012	JGS	2	Monitoring of test pit
28/02/2012	RD	3	Initial visit
01/03/2012	RD	8	Supervision of extension footing trenches
02/03/2012	RD	8	Supervision of extension footing trenches
16/03/02	GJ	6	Supervision of porch footing trenches

5. Bibliography

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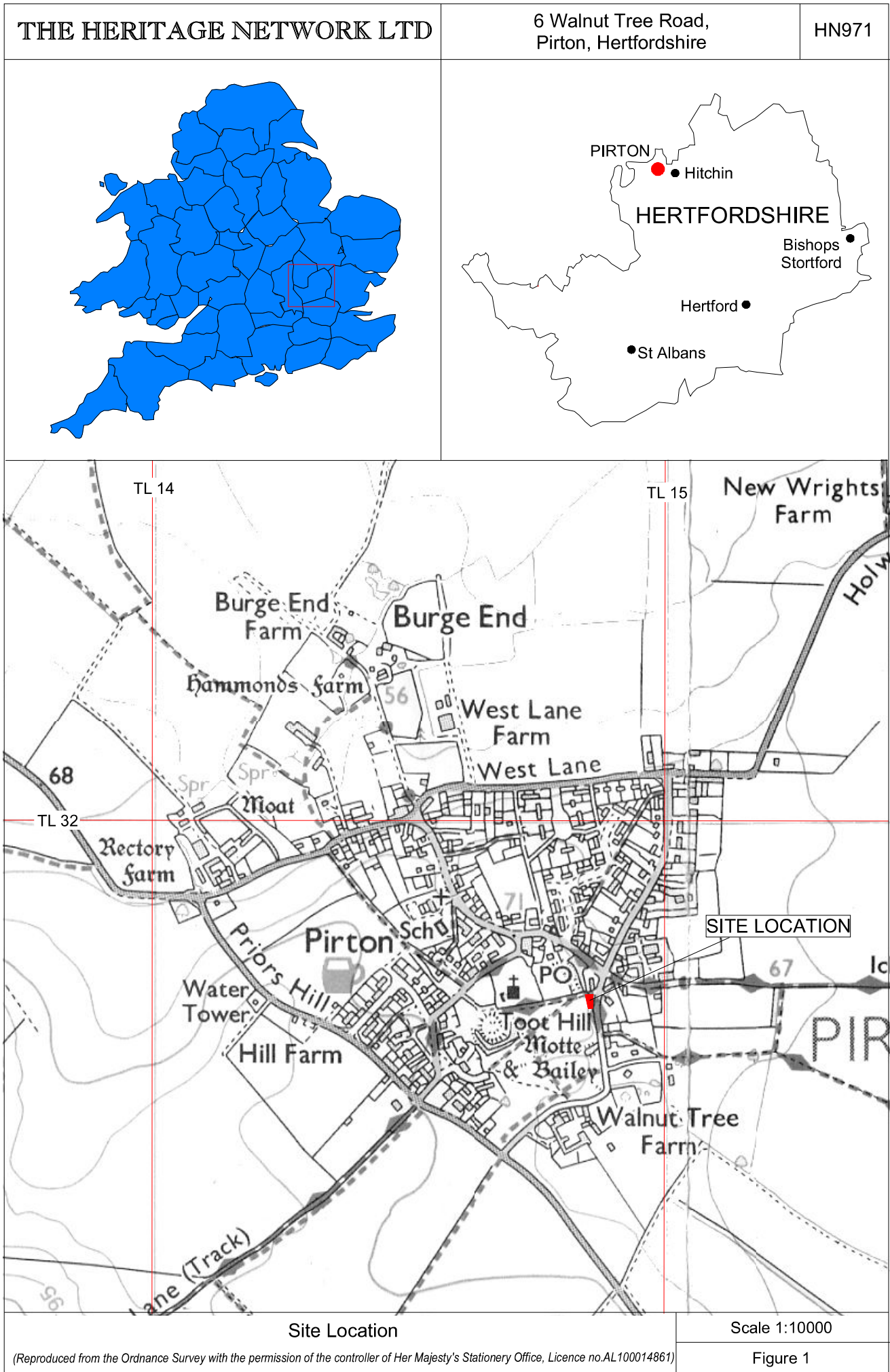
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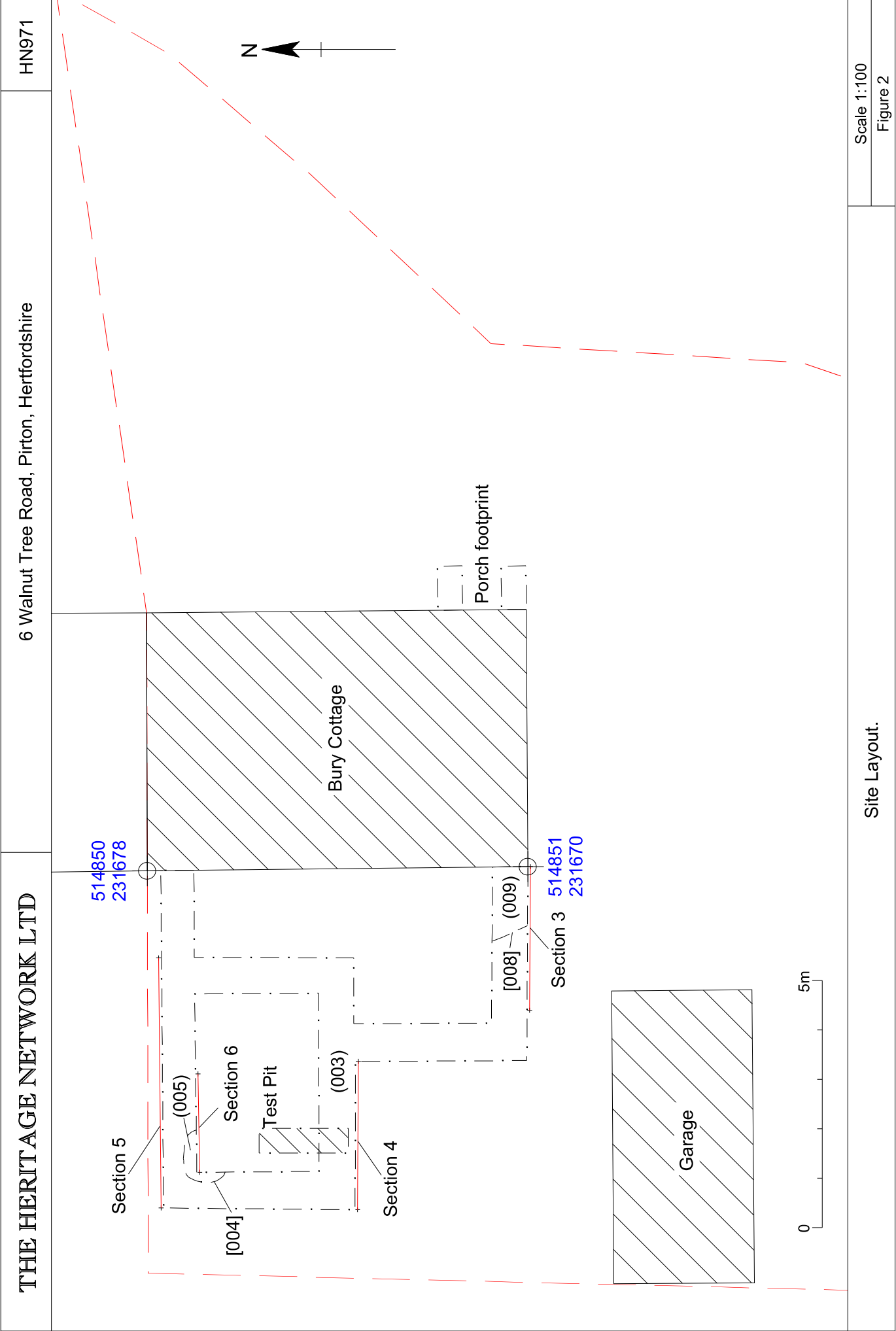
6. Illustrations

Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Site Layout
Figure 3	Sections 3 to 6

Plate 1	General view of the site during test pitting, looking northeast
Plate 2	Test Pit, looking west
Plate 3	General view of extension footings, looking west
Plate 4	Section 3, looking south
Plate 5	Section 4, looking south
Plate 6	Section 5, looking northwest
Plate 7	General view of porch footings, looking southwest
Plate 8	Porch footings, looking north

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Plate 1: General view of site during test pitting, looking northeast.



Plate 2: Test Pit, looking west.



Plate 3: General view of extension footings, looking west.



Plate 4: Section 3, looking south.



Plate 5: Section 4, looking south.



Plate 6: Section 5, looking northwest.



Plate 7: General view of porch footings, looking southwest.



Plate 8: Porch footings, looking north.

Appendix

OASIS ID: heritage1-117593	
Project details	
Project name	Pirton, Bury Cottage, 6 Walnut Tree Road
Short description of the project	<p>In response to a condition on the planning consent for the construction of an extension to the existing house at 6 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owner to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks.</p> <p>It was considered that the present project could provide the opportunity to investigate the development and extent of settlement at Pirton, from the Roman period onwards, the transition from the Romano-British to the Anglo-Saxon period, and the shrinking of Pirton during the later medieval period.</p> <p>An undated ditch or pit [008] was revealed in the southeast corner of the extension footings. It is possible that this feature was part of the garden or yardland of the original cottages, perhaps as part of a boundary.</p> <p>The deposits revealed along the west edge of the extension footprint formed part of the original line of the pond that lies to the west of the site, marked on the 1st edition O.S. map as a moat. It is possible that cut [006], with its fills of subsoil and oxidised clay (007), represents the consolidation and re-shaping of the bank, using material scoured from the pond.</p>
Project dates	Start: 15-02-2012 End: 16-02-2012
Previous/future work	No/Not known
Associated project reference codes	HN971 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Modern
Methods & techniques	'Watching Brief'
Development type	Rear extension
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Post determination
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE PIRTON Bury Cottage, 6 Walnut Tree Road
Postcode	SG5 3PX
Study area	40.50 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 1485 3167 51.9711810770 -0.327889415618 51 58 16 N 000 19 40 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 75.00m Max: 75.00m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Heritage Network

Project director	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	James Snee
Type of sponsor/ funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/ funding body	Mrs Julie Writer
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	Yes
Physical Archive recipient	North Herts Museum Services
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	North Herts Museum Services
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	North Herts Museum Services
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Section'
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	6 WALNUT TREE ROAD Pirton, Hertfordshire
Author(s)/Editor(s))	Snee, J.
Other bibliographic details	Heritage Network Report no. 713
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth Garden City
Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 10 pages, 3 figures, 8 plates