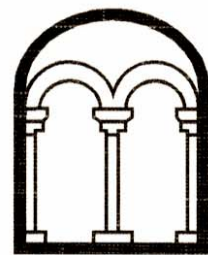


**PIRTON GRANGE GATEHOUSE  
PIRTON  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING,  
DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

**Albion**  
archaeology





**Albion**  
archaeology



**PIRTON GRANGE GATEHOUSE  
PIRTON  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING,  
DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING**

Document: 2012/95  
Version: 1.0

30th August 2012

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Mark Phillips Jane Blanchflower Holly Duncan	Hester Cooper-Reade	Hester Cooper-Reade



## Contents

---

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Planning Background .....	7
1.2 Site Location and Description .....	7
1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background .....	7
1.4 Programme of archaeological works .....	8
<b>2. HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Methodology .....	9
2.2 Results .....	9
2.3 Analysis of Building Sequence .....	14
<b>3. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4. APPENDICES 1: .....</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 APPENDIX 1: HISTORICAL RESEARCH (Jane Blanchflower).....	19
4.2 APPENDIX 2: THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE (Jane Blanchflower).....	33
4.3 APPENDIX 3: ARTEFACTS (Holly Duncan) .....	44
4.4 APPENDIX 4: OASIS SUMMARY FORM .....	45

### List of Figures

Figure 1	Location plan
Figure 2	Ground floor plan
Figure 3	First floor plan
Figure 4	North elevation
Figure 5	East elevation
Figure 6	South elevation
Figure 7	West elevation

### List of Plates

Plate 1	East elevation
Plate 2	East elevation
Plate 3	West elevation
Plate 4	West elevation
Plate 5	West elevation showing pargetting



Plate 6	South elevation
Plate 7	North elevation
Plate 8	Ground floor interior
Plate 9	Ground floor interior, detail
Plate 10	Ground floor interior, detail
Plate 11	Ground floor interior, detail
Plate 12	Ground floor interior, detail
Plate 13	First floor interior, north wall
Plate 14	First floor interior, east wall
Plate 15	First floor interior, south wall
Plate 16	First floor interior, west wall
Plate 17	First floor interior, detail
Plate 18	First floor exterior, north east corner
Plate 19	Central tie beam, detail
Plate 20	Comb, Registered Artefact 1



## **Preface**

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a report as possible, within the terms of the commission. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.*

*The building recording was undertaken by Mark Phillips; the documentary and cartographic research by Jane Blanchflower. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Christiane Meckseper. Artefact analysis was undertaken by Holly Duncan. The report text and figures were prepared by Mark Phillips with additional sections written by Jane Blanchflower and Holly Duncan. The project was managed on behalf of Albion Archaeology by Hester Cooper-Reade BA (hons) who also collated the report.*

## **Acknowledgements**

*The project was commissioned by Laurane Bubbins of the Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of Mary Moffat.*

Albion Archaeology  
 St Mary's Church  
 St Mary's Street  
 Bedford, MK42 0AS  
 ☎: 01234 294001  
 Fax: 01234 294008  
 e-mail: office@albion-arch.com  
 Website: www.albion-arch.com

## **Version History**

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
1.0	30th August 2012	n/a

## **Key Terms**

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>EH</i>	English Heritage
<i>HCC</i>	Hertfordshire County Council
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>HER</i>	Historic Environment Record
<i>NHLE</i>	National Heritage List for England
<i>WSI</i>	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*The gatehouse at Pirton Grange is a grade II\* listed building located in the hamlet of Apsley End, north west of Pirton in North Hertfordshire (grid ref. TL1228 3294). It stands on the eastern side of a rectangular moated enclosure (scheduled monument NHLE 1012348). The large timber-framed house which is situated in the centre of the enclosure dates from the fifteenth century with later additions.*

*The gatehouse was put on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2001. This report details the results of historical building recording and archaeological monitoring undertaken during repairs to the building carried out between 2011 and 2012 with the aid of an English Heritage repair grant. Assessment works carried out prior to the repairs included an impact assessment (Albion 2011a), historical research (Blanchflower 2011) and tree-ring analysis (Bridge 2011). A programme of archaeological monitoring of below ground works and historic building recording was carried out during the repairs according to the requirements of English Heritage and the local planning authority brief (HCC 2011).*

*The gatehouse is a two storey structure. At ground floor level it has double gates in the east front which are pierced by a wicket gate and it is open at the rear. A single room on the first floor was at the time of the survey lit by a single window in the centre of the east front. The exterior was covered with a rough cast render over riven lathes with its western (rear) side was decorated with planted wood chevrons and pargetting type impressed patterns. The gabled roof is covered in plain tiles with decorative ridge tiles.*

*Details of the original construction and later repairs were recorded during the repairs. The building had a closed studded frame. Assembly marks survived on the studs at first floor level in the east and west sides and on the framing of the floor. Stave holes and grooves show that the panels were originally infilled with wattle and daub. Sections without stave holes probably indicate the original location of two windows in the east front at first floor level. The details of the construction, particularly the use of close studding, suggest a probable fifteenth or sixteenth century date for the original construction of the gatehouse.*

*Later repairs were indicated by different timbers and redundant mortise holes. The north end wall contained a significant proportion of replaced timber. The west wall at first floor level contained a secondary set of smaller studs which had been inserted during later repairs, possibly to support the external planted chevrons. The south wall had been entirely rebuilt with lightweight primary braced framing. The roof had also been rebuilt. The repairs are likely to be part of works carried out in the late nineteenth century. Doors of seventeenth century construction in the gatehouse may have been relocated from elsewhere on the site during the nineteenth century works.*

*Precautionary archaeological monitoring of below ground disturbance during the works produced no significant results, although a bone comb was found during building works. The comb will be retained by the landowner.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 *Planning Background*

During 2011 and 2012 a programme of repairs was undertaken on the gatehouse at Pirton Grange, a moated house in the hamlet of Apsley End, Hertfordshire. The gatehouse is grade II\* listed situated within a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the repairs were carried out with grant aid from English Heritage.

Preparatory works such as the erection of scaffolding had the potential to impact on below-ground archaeology and the English Heritage Inspector therefore requested that these works were monitored in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion 2010).

As the building was the subject of a grant application for repairs, English Heritage requested a Conservation-based Research and Analysis (CoBra) report in support of the grant application. An assessment report was prepared by Albion which outlined the history and development of the building to inform decisions regarding the conservation works (Albion 2011a). Other assessment work included tree-ring analysis (Bridge 2011). Parts of the works required planning consent and a condition on the planning application (North Hertfordshire District Council 1/01070/11) required a scheme of building recording and archaeological monitoring and observation. Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Unit, on behalf of the local planning authority, produced a brief for this which outlined the requirements (HCC 2011). The recording and monitoring was undertaken by Albion Archaeology according to a written scheme of investigation (Albion 2011b) prepared in response to the brief.

This report presents the results of the programme of historic building analysis, historic research and archaeological monitoring.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Pirton Grange is a large timber framed house and ancillary buildings set within a rectangular moated enclosure. It is situated on Shillington Road, in the hamlet of Apsley End to the north west of Pirton village, North Hertfordshire at grid reference TL1228 3294. The gatehouse is a freestanding structure situated on the eastern side of the moat.

### 1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

The gatehouse is part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (NHLE 1012348) that encompasses the moated site of Pirton Grange. Pirton Grange moat (HER 1927) comprises a large rectangular water filled moat with gatehouse (HER 11188) and a complex of medieval and post medieval buildings on the platform (HER 11187 and 11189). The moat surrounds an area roughly 70m x 50m and is fed by a leat to the south. There is a fishpond (HER 4706) 40m south of the moat. Pirton Grange itself (HER 11187, listed grade II\*) is a large two-storey house located centrally within the moated enclosure. It dates from the 15th century with 16th and 17th century additions and alterations. Around 1879 the house was renovated to give its



present form. Other buildings on the moated platform include a bakehouse and dairy (HER 11189, listed grade II).

Some previous archaeological works were undertaken during repairs to the revetment wall in the moat below the gatehouse. A method statement for observation and recording (Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust, 1997) exists but no other records have been located. The gatehouse was put on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2001.

#### **1.4 Programme of archaeological works**

Precautionary archaeological monitoring began in January 2011 during the initial erection of scaffolding around the gatehouse. The groundworks associated with the building repairs were minimal with no significant effect on subsurface deposits. As a result there are no archaeological findings to report.

Historic building recording began as part of the initial assessment of the building in January 2011. The majority of the survey took place in August 2011 with work prior to and following the removal of the external render.





## 2. HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

---

### 2.1 Methodology

Limited recording was undertaken as part of an initial assessment in January 2011 when the building was surrounded by scaffolding. After the removal of the scaffolding further survey work was undertaken between June and August 2011. During this period contractors started to strip away a partial covering of ivy and also removed limited areas of the external render. In August 2011 the building contractors re-erected the scaffolding and removed all of the external render. A detailed survey of the frame was undertaken at this time. Scale drawings prepared by the architects were used as the basis of the survey. These were annotated with additional measurements and details of mortise and peg holes, stave holes, stave grooves and carpenters assembly marks. Photographic survey included general views and details.

### 2.2 Results

#### 2.2.1 General Arrangement

The gatehouse is a two storied building with a gabled roof. It is 5.1m long and 4.25m wide externally, with the long sides forming the front and rear elevations (Figure 3 and 4). The timber-framed structure stands on a brick and stone battered base which projects approximately 2m from the central platform into the moat. The moat is spanned by a modern bridge of concrete on steel beams.

#### 2.2.2 External Elevations

This section describes the exterior of the building prior to the removal of the lath and render.

The front (east) elevation of the gatehouse is symmetrical with a ground floor gate opening and a small first floor window located centrally above (Plates 1 and 2). The gate opening is surrounded by a narrow wooden architrave and has double doors pierced by a wicket gate. The existing window was a two light wooden casement, with rectangular leaded panes of clear glass. The external covering consisted of a roughcast finish layer over a keyed base layer on riven laths.

The rear (west) elevation has a wide opening which is offset slightly to the south (Plates 3 and 4). The wall had a smooth cement render over riven laths with planted woodwork used to create a 'timber frame' pattern. The planted timber surrounds the ground floor opening, the corners of the building and at first floor level forms a chevron pattern. The render within the uppermost chevrons had been impressed with shapes to produce pargetting type patterns. The shapes used consisted of concentric circles, diamonds with a central cross and a hatched pattern formed from parallel groups of three or four short lines (Plate 5).

The end walls (north and south) consist of plain gables with a roughcast finish on riven laths (Plates 6 and 7).

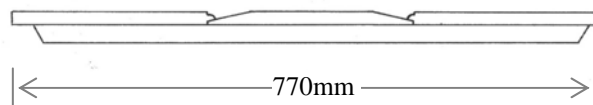


### 2.2.3 Internal Details

The ground floor has a cobbled area which is open at the rear and gated at the front on the east side (Plate 8). A partition wall along the north side encloses a staircase to the first floor and a storage cupboard under the stairs. The walls and ceiling are covered with lath and plaster.

The main entrance doors are double doors with a wicket door in the southern door. The doors are of brace-and-ledged construction covered in narrow planks with beaded edges. The door is likely to date from the late 19th or early 20th century. Some of the door fittings are likely to be earlier. The three hinges on the wicket gate are T-shaped strap hinges with rounded ends of a type used from the 17th to the early 19th century.

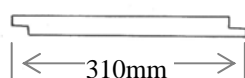
The stair door is a plank and batten door made up of three planks with four battens on the rear side (see drawing below and Plate 9). The outer planks have simple moulded rebates where they meet the central plank which has chamfered edges. A similar treatment appears on a door from Suffolk dated to 1614 (Hall 2005, p37, fig 2.44); however in that case the door is made up of multiple, narrow planks. In this case the appearance is similar to a type of three plank door referred to as a creased door, in which the central plank is given prominence (Brown 1986, 130 and Heritage Directory 2010). Creased doors date from the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Section of stair door

The cupboard door is also plank and batten, with bead mouldings along the rebate on the inner and outer faces of the door (Plate 11). Both this door and the stair door have iron latches and latch fasteners of a type in use during the 17th and 18th centuries (Plates 10 and 12). The latch on the cupboard door is decorated with a saltire cross between vertical lines, a form of decoration which went out of use during the 18th century (Hall 2005, p58-60).

The room on the first floor room is lit by a single window in the east wall. At this level the timber frame is visible internally, the building being covered by a single layer of lath and plaster on the exterior of the frame (Plates 13 to 16). The ceiling of lath and plaster fixed to joists laid directly over the tie beams forms a curved ceiling, following the line of the tie beams. Both walls and ceiling were whitewashed. The floorboards are laid on an east-west alignment. These are mostly between 290mm and 310mm wide, approximately 20mm thick with rebates on opposite sides (see drawing below).



Floor board



The floor is supported by an east-west aligned principle joist and a series of north-south aligned common joists whose outer ends rest on top of the end girts (Figure 2). The common joists were laid flat and have average dimensions of 200mm by 150mm. The pattern of joists is interrupted in the north-east corner of the floor where a trimmer joist suggests the presence of an earlier stair opening which has been filled. An area of narrow floor boards on the north side of the room was probably a later replacement, possibly associated with the alterations to the stair opening. The existing stair in the north end of the building emerges in the north-west corner of the room with the opening guarded on two sides by a roughly constructed wooden rail.

The north-east corner of the room contains a storage bin in the form of a low partition with upright timbers to support removable horizontal boards (Plate 13). It was made from a mixture of re-used and modern machine sawn wood. The west end of the partition is formed from a re-used cupboard door laid on its side. It is a two panel door measuring 1.35m long with raised and fielded panels of late 17th or 18th century date. The eastern end consists of uprights to support removable horizontal planks.

During repair works a comb was recovered from beneath the floor boards in the north-east corner of the room. It is a type of comb which was popular between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (see Appendix 3).

#### **2.2.4 The Timber Frame**

The timber frame is supported on a 0.5m high brick sill wall. Substantial corner posts, up to 0.26m square with swelling jowls are joined by side and end girts up to 0.31m deep. On the north, east and west sides the framing consists of close set vertical studs with tension braces at first floor level. The frame for the south wall is in machine sawn softwood with primary bracing in the upper storey. Three curved tie-beams support a roof structure which was entirely rebuilt in the modern period.

Details of the individual walls appear below.

##### **2.2.4.1 North End**

The base of the frame on this side show considerable decay. The sill beam, lower parts of studs and the bases of corner posts were lost or badly decayed.

The surviving original structure consists of the corner posts, end girt, tie-beam and some of the studs (Figure 4 and Plate 13). Empty mortises along the top of the tie-beam indicate the original location of vertical studs to support the gable. An angled mortise noted at the west end of the tie-beam suggests that the gable may have contained diagonal braces.

The studs at ground and first floor level include some replacements, however the arrangement of mortises and peg holes suggest that these occupy the original locations. The frame contains mortises for possible arch braces at the upper corners of the wall; long mortises infilled with plaster are found in the corner posts with a corresponding angled mortise in the underside of the tie beam, towards its west end



(Plates 17 and 18). Note however that the shape of the long mortises in figure 4 is inferred as this was obscured by plaster infill.

Evidence for the infill survives in the form of stave holes and grooves (Plate 17). Holes the underside of the tie beam and side girt are spaced at three per panel. A corresponding groove exists in the upper face of the end girt, but any evidence in the sill beam was lost due to decay.

The end wall contained evidence for a considerable amount of repair. All of the studs in the gable, above the tie-beam consisted of machine-sawn, squared timber. A number of the studs at first floor level, likewise, had been replaced with machine-sawn, waney-edged timber. One of these had been let into a notch in the tie-beam to form a lap joint. This type of repair could have been made to the standing structure. A similar empty notch, 0.8m to the west suggests the location of a similar stud which has since been replaced. At least three of the other replacement studs are fixed with pegged mortise and tenon joints at top and bottom indicating that the frame must have been at least partially dismantled to carry out the repair. Long, straight tension braces extending from the centre of the side girt to the top corners of the wall may have been added during repairs to the structure.

### 2.2.5 East front

The frame on this face is largely intact with some loss of detail in the sill beam and the base of the corner posts due to decay.

Surviving original structure consist of the decayed sill beam, corner posts, side girt, wall plate and most of the studs (Figure 5 and Plate 14). A small number of empty mortises indicate possible reuse or alterations, however the evidence is ambiguous. The south-east corner post contains two empty mortises just below its junction with the side girt. At the top of the same post an empty mortise lies in front of the mortise for the head of the tension brace. The northernmost stud in the first floor wall had a shallow diagonal cut out for a possible brace, but no corresponding evidence for any such timber existed to either side.

Evidence for the original infill is similar to that noted above for the north wall with three stave holes per panel and stave grooves at the foot of the panel. Additionally this wall, and the west wall, contain evidence of a single horizontal stave at the mid height of the panels. This consists of paired holes in the sides of adjacent studs, one of them with a groove to guide the stave end into the hole.

The opening for the gateway on the ground floor is framed by uprights on either side. These are joined to the side girt above with pegged tenons indicating that the opening has not been changed during later works.

Some modification is evident at first floor level. At the time of the survey the wall contained a central window. This was evidently a later insertion which truncated the timber frame. A truncated stud remains below the window and a peg hole above indicates its original continuation. A gap below the window suggests the location of a missing sill beam or deeper window.



The construction of the wall indicates an earlier arrangement that probably included two windows arranged symmetrically at first floor level. The current frame has nine studs; however two of these appear to be later insertions within possible earlier window openings. The original seven studs are rectangular in section and have assembly marks at their bases in Roman numerals from I to VII, starting at the south end of the wall. The third and seventh studs from the south end are quarter-round in section, have different assembly marks and are not pegged at top or bottom indicating that they are later insertions. The wall plate above these studs has no stave holes showing that these two areas had no infill panels in contrast with the rest of the wall. A sill had been inserted into cut-outs in the sides of the southern opening and cut-outs for a missing sill exist in the northern opening; however the surviving sill was relatively modern and made of machine-sawn timber.

The wall is braced by two straight tension braces set behind the studs at first floor level. The similarity of these to those in the north wall suggests that they may have been inserted during later repairs. No evidence for an earlier arrangement was visible.

### **2.2.6 South end**

The frame at the south end has been largely rebuilt in the modern period. The original elements comprise the tie beam, corner posts, side girt and sill beam (Figure 6, Plate 15).

The redundant mortises and stave holes in the tie beam demonstrate that the wall was originally close studded with wattle and daub infill. The corner posts have long mortises on their inner faces which have been filled with plaster. These could indicate the position of former diagonal braces however they occur at different levels and the original arrangement is unclear. The eastern corner post has a square cut-out at the top, inner side of the jowl which has been infilled with a block of wood. The west corner post has a shallow cut-out on its inner face close to the top, possibly for a lap joint.

During modern repairs to the wall the external face of the end girt was cut back and refaced with a new horizontal rail. The wall frame had been replaced with nailed lightweight studs and primary braces in machine-sawn timber. This form of construction came into use from the early nineteenth century onwards.

### **2.2.7 West side**

The frame on the west/rear side of the gatehouse survives intact with minor later additions (Figure 7, Plates 4 and 16). It has a wide opening at ground level and a continuous wall at first floor level with no evidence for any openings. The frame has closely set studs, pegged at top and bottom. The studs at first floor level have assembly marks on their lower ends. Roman numerals cut with a chisel from I to VIII start at the south end of the wall. The wall is braced by two diagonal down braces of relatively thin section which are let into recesses in the studs. Stave holes and groves indicate former wattle and daub infill with three vertical staves and one mid height horizontal stave to each panel.



Later repairs include the addition of nine thinner studs which were inserted between the original timbers in the upper part of the wall. These are nailed at top and bottom ends into shallow, chamfered cut-outs in the side girt and wall plate. These intermediate studs appear to have been added to provide a firm support for fixing the lath and plaster and decorative chevron timberwork on the outside of the wall.

### **2.2.8 Central tie beam**

The ceiling of the first floor room was supported by a central, cambered tie beam aligned east to west (Plates 14, 16 and 19). A series of at least six peg holes situated close to the upper edge of the beam suggest that it once supported studs. The underside of the beam contained two long mortises with double peg holes. These were situated close to the ends of the beam and probably held the upper end of arch braces. The walls beneath either end of the beam showed no corresponding mortises for braces, possibly suggesting that the tie beam had been reused in this position.

A break in the western end on the beam and decay meant that the beam had to be replaced as part of the current works. On removal an unusual dovetail joint was found in its lower face. This consisted of a double lap dovetail with a mortise through the inner part of the dovetail (Plate 19). The inner end of the mortise had been filled with plaster where it would have been visible inside the building, this corresponds to the whitewashed section of the beam in Plate 19.

### **2.2.9 Roof structure**

The roof is covered in plain peg tiles. These are variable in colour and placement of peg holes, suggesting that they come from more than one source. The ridge has alternating plain and decorative ridge tiles. The latter include two damaged examples with an uneven, handmade finish whilst the remainder appear to be more recent copies with a more regular finish.

The roof structure consists of a series of common rafters fixed to a ridge plank with two purlins which retain bark on at least one face. The tiles are hung from machine sawn battens. The majority of the timber in the roof was machine sawn showing that the roof has been completely rebuilt, probably as part of late nineteenth or earlier twentieth century repairs.

## **2.3 Analysis of Building Sequence**

### **2.3.1 Fifteenth/Sixteenth Century**

The original construction of the gatehouse probably dates from the late fifteenth or sixteenth century. Construction using close studded timber frame typically dates from the later fifteenth to the earlier seventeenth century. It is likely that the gatehouse is contemporary with the earlier parts of the main house which is similar in construction and is dated to the fifteenth century.

The size and form of the building would be as it survives today but its external appearance would have been very different. When built the close studded timber frame would have been visible, the panels being filled with wattle and daub producing a similar appearance to restored parts of the main house. Examination of



the frame during the repair works suggests that there were two first floor windows in the east front arranged symmetrically over the gateway. There was no evidence for window openings in the west side (rear) or north end and the south side had been rebuilt in the modern period.

Gatehouses were constructed from the early medieval period to the sixteenth century. All are associated with high status sites, ranging from smaller manorial centres like Pirton, to large magnate houses, religious foundations and castles. High status building complexes in the medieval period would typically consist of a group of separate buildings possibly with a gatehouse similar in appearance to that at Pirton.

By the early Tudor period the symbolic role of the gatehouse may have been as important as its defensive function. This can be seen in the large gatehouses built in this region such as that at Rye House near Hertford which has large windows and decorative brickwork (Smith 1975). With the development of courtyard plans during the Tudor period the gatehouse was often integrated into a range of buildings situated along the edge of a courtyard.

The nearest comparable gatehouse is at Manor Farm, Tilsworth in Bedfordshire, a moated site located 17km to the west of Pirton (Emery 1996). It is a similar size but built in stone with small windows at the front and rear on the first floor and an external access to the upper storey.

A large timber framed gatehouse survives at another moated site at Downhall Farm, Abington Pigotts, Cambridgeshire 20km to the north east of Pirton. This originally had separate entrances for a wagon way and a pedestrian entrance. A small ground floor room contained an internal stair to the first floor (Bailey 1979, 30).

Gatehouses would have once been a relatively common feature of moated and manorial sites. A number of factors would have affected their survival. Many moated sites were abandoned in the later middle ages or early post medieval period. Other gatehouses would have fallen into disrepair or been demolished when they ceased to have a useful function or came to be regarded as architecturally outmoded.

### 2.3.2 Seventeenth Century

Some of the fixtures and fittings of the gatehouse date from this period. The stair and cupboard door along with their fittings and possibly the T-shaped hinges on the wicket gate appear to date from this period. The most distinctive feature is the stair door with its three plank construction similar to creased doors which are dated to the later seventeenth century.

The cupboard and stair doors are hung from a partition wall which appears to be a nineteenth century addition. These doors may have relocated within the gatehouse or could have been removed from another building, possibly the house which also contains seventeenth century work.



### 2.3.3 Late Nineteenth Century

Pirton Grange was subject to a major programme of renovation during the late nineteenth century and it is likely that most of the repairs and alterations to the gatehouse were carried out at this time.

Two methods have been used to repair the frame, probably during separate phases of work. Repairs to the south wall and gable were undertaken using squared section timber with nail fixings to produce a frame with primary bracing. It is possible that the stairs and partition wall were built during this phase of work because the partition wall is constructed using similar methods and materials. Other repairs were carried out using larger sections of timber on which some bark and waney edges remain. These include the west wall, where new studs were pegged and tenoned into the existing frame. Diagonal braces were fixed to the inside of the north, east and west walls to strengthen the first floor frame.

The roof was completely rebuilt using new timber and reused tiles. The external walls were covered with cement render with wooden chevron ornament applied to the west elevation. The entrance gates probably date from this period with some reused fittings.

The retention and restoration of the gatehouse during the late nineteenth century reflects the appreciation for all things medieval at that time. The use of decorative chevron woodwork on the west side of the building is similar to the treatment applied to gables in the contemporary houses which were built in the domestic revival style.





### 3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Albion Archaeology, 2010, *Pirton Gatehouse: Specification for Archaeological Monitoring, Investigation and Recording*. (Report No.2010/111)
- Albion Archaeology 2011a, *Pirton Gatehouse, Pirton, Hertfordshire, Historic Building Assessment and Documentary Research*. (Report No.2011/67)
- Albion Archaeology 2011b, *Pirton Gatehouse, Pirton, Hertfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Building Recording, Historic Building Monitoring and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. (Report No.2011/83)
- Bailey, J., 1979, *Timber Framed Buildings: A study of medieval timber buildings in Bedfordshire and adjoining counties*
- Blanchflower, J. 2011, *Historic Research and Documentary Evidence*, in Albion 2011a
- Bridge, M., 2011, *Pirton Grange, Shillington Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire: Tree-Ring Analysis of Timbers from the Gatehouse* (Research Department Report Series 33-2011)
- Brown, R. J, 1986, *Timber framed buildings of England*
- Emery, A., 1996, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300-1500*
- Hall, L, 2007, *Period House Fixtures & Fittings 1300–1900*
- Heritage Directory 2010, *Historic Farmhouse & Cottage Doors: Heritage Directory Note*
- Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust, 1997, *Pirton Grange, Apsley End, Shillington, Herts: Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Brief*
- Hertfordshire County Council, 2011, *Design Brief for Archaeological Building Recording and Historic Buildings Monitoring and Recording & Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*
- Lucus, G., 1908, *Visit to Pirton Grange*, Trans. of the East Herts Archaeol. Soc. Vol IV, pp 33-42
- Page, W. (ed), 1912, *Victoria County History of Hertford: Vol. III*, 1912 pp.44-51,
- Pevsner, N. & B Cherry, B., 1977, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire: p271*
- Pirton Local History Group, 2005, *Portrait of Pirton – Century of Change*



Smith, T.P., 1975, Rye House, Hertfordshire and Aspects of Early Brickwork in England. *The Archaeological Journal*, vol. 132:111-150

Wayne, J. (ed), 1987, *A Foot on Three Daisies – Pirton's Story*. (Pirton Local History Group)

North Hertfordshire District Council website:-

[www.northherts.gov.uk/index/leisure\\_and\\_culture](http://www.northherts.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture)

Pirton History Group website:- [www.pirtonhistory.org.uk](http://www.pirtonhistory.org.uk) Motte & Bailey Project:  
Helen Hoffton 2007 (Pirton History Group website)



## 4. APPENDICES 1:

---

### 4.1 APPENDIX 1: HISTORICAL RESEARCH (*Jane Blanchflower*)

#### 4.1.1 Methodology

Searches were made of documents held by the Hertfordshire Local Studies Library, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record and the National Monuments Record. A number of other possible sources of information were followed up including contact with the North Hertfordshire archaeological officer and the Pirton Local History Group.

Maps of Pirton held by Hertfordshire Archives were studied in order to undertake a map regression exercise. The earliest map showing Pirton Gatehouse is the 1819 Inclosure Map. Earlier maps of Pirton exist but not in sufficient detail to show the gatehouse.

#### 4.1.2 Historical Background

The village of Pirton has been described by English Heritage as "one of the most important historic sites in Hertfordshire with its well preserved village and castle earthworks." The following brief summary of the history of Pirton parish and its hinterland is included to give an overall understanding of the site and its significance.

The parish of Pirton lies on low ground in the north west of Hertfordshire, at the edge of the Bedfordshire plain. The greater part of it is only about 60m above the ordnance datum, but the ground rises considerably and in the north west, where Pirton Grange is situated, (where it meets the Chilterns), it has a height of 120m. The Icknield Way forms part of the southern boundary of the parish. The parish covers an area of about 2,500 acres. The Victoria county History notes that population was originally entirely agricultural, the chalk land being particularly suitable for corn growing (Page, ed., 1912).

Several important pre-historic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites have been identified in Pirton, but it is for its medieval (1066-1500) monuments that the village is especially noted. The village lies in the middle of the parish and it was fortified by a ditch which may date from before the Norman Conquest (1066). About 10 acres was enclosed and this area was later used for a motte and bailey castle, with two baileys. The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire (Page, 1912: Vol.3 pp.45-51) states that the castle is thought to date from the 12th century and was probably dismantled by Henry II, after which the mount may have been used as a look-out and meeting place for the villagers, becoming known as Toot Hill ('Tots' or 'Tuts' were Saxon look-out hills or beacon sites). However, Helen Hoffton (Pirton History Group website, Motte & Bailey Project 2007) concludes that the motte and bailey was constructed by Ralph de Limesy after the Norman Conquest (1066) but before 1090. The church, which was rebuilt in 1877, has the remains of its 12th century tower and is situated within the bailey of the former castle. An excavation at the Fox public house, revealed evidence of a 10th-12th-century Saxon/Norman settlement and an earlier church.



To the south east of the castle and church is a large grassed area known as 'The Bury', which contains the earthwork remains of the now deserted part of the ancient village of Pirton. Both the Castle and The Bury are nationally important and, like the moated Pirton Grange site, are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The parish also contains well-preserved remains of medieval 'ridge and furrow' ploughing in several fields surrounding the village.

Pirton first appears in official records in the Domesday Book (1086) when it was known as 'Peritone', meaning 'homestead of pears' (*A Foot on Three Daisies – Pirton's Story* ed. J Wayne, pub. Pirton Local History Group 1987). The population at Domesday was about 200, and the village was probably quite prosperous with four water mills.

The Manor of Pirton which, before the Norman Conquest, was held by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, was awarded to a Norman knight, Ralph de Limesy. It was eventually divided into three manors: Pirton, Doddingselles and Rectory. Rectory Manor was created by Ralph de Limesy when he granted the church at Pirton to the Priory of St Mary at Hertford. The present manor house, known as Rectory Farm, dates from the 16th century but was much altered in the 18th and 19th century.

At the end of the 12th century the Limesey family were followed by the Oddingselles. The remainder of the Manor of Pirton was divided between the two Oddingselles sons, William and Hugh, in the 13th century. William took the portion including the old manor house (now known as Docwra Manor) which was called the Manor of Pirton. Thomas Docwra of Putteridge bought the manor in the 16th century and erected a new manor house at High Down. In the north-east gable of the stables at High Down is a shield of the Docwra arms, the date 1504 and the name of Thomas Docwra-Miles who was prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

Hugh Oddingselles took the portion which became known as the Manor of Doddingselles and included Burge End and Hammond's Farm. Eton College bought the Manor of Doddingselles in the 1530s and the land and property was leased to local tenants. By the end of the 18th century, the Delme-Radcliffes of Hitchin Priory owned both manors.

The village is now outside the motte and bailey, mainly on the north west side. The principal houses in the parish of Pirton are Pirton Old Hall (at the south end of the village), Hammond's Farm (a quarter of a mile north of the church), Rectory Farm (a moated house a quarter of a mile to the west of the church), The Grange (on the western edge of the parish), Pirton Hall (built just to the south east of The Grange by the Hanscombe family in 1879) and High Down (about three-quarters of a mile south west of the village).

It is interesting to note the dominance of certain families in the parish. Hammond's Farm, which dates from about 1600, takes its name from the Hammond family who occupied the property in the 17th century and it descended from John Hammond to



William Hanscombe. The Hanscombe family also owned The Grange and the late 19th century Pirton Hall. Pirton Old Hall (early 17th century) and High Down (late 16th century) were both associated with the Docwra family.

Until the 19th century, the economy of the village was based on agriculture with six open fields divided into half-acre strips. It was mainly arable farming, growing wheat, barley, oats, peas and beans, the barley supplying the malting trade in Hitchin. The commonfield system continued until the fields were enclosed by an Act of Parliament in 1818. The inclosure award and map are held by the Hertfordshire Record Office (HRO: 51346 award & PC528 map).

As Luton developed as the centre of the hat trade in the middle of the 19th century, Pirton became a straw plaiting village. However, this trade declined by the beginning of the 20th century because of cheap imports from abroad. One hundred years ago, there were five bakeries, seven pubs and nine shops but only the *Fox*, the *Motte and Bailey* and the combined village stores and post office remain. The farmhouses and barns have mostly been sold as residential property and the fields are farmed by business farmers from outside the village. Like many Hertfordshire villages, Pirton is now a commuter village.

Pirton has a large number of historic buildings, 54 of which are listed. At least three former manor houses lie within the village: Rectory Farm, Hammonds Farm and Docwra Manor. Rectory Farm has a Grade II\* listed 16th century tithe barn. A group of fine medieval and Tudor timber-framed buildings exist at Great Green and Burge End. 'Three Gables' at Bury End was originally a medieval hall house with cross wings.

The village underwent a period of rapid population growth in the early 19th century from 500 at the beginning of the century to 1023 in 1861. New houses were built to accommodate this rising population, most of which were terraces of characteristic Arleseay white brick made from local gault clay. The next significant phase of Pirton's development occurred after the First and Second World Wars when the municipal housing estates of Davis Crescent and Danefield Road were constructed. During the latter part of the 20th century, the development of the village mainly consisted of infill within the existing envelope.

The parish of Pirton is situated within North Hertfordshire, a region established during the local government re-organisation of 1974. However its boundaries were determined by older units, principally Hitchin Rural District Council, established in 1894. This in turn was created by the amalgamation of Hitchin Poor Law Union, which had been created in 1834. Hitchin Half-Hundred, Broadwater Hundred, Odsey Hundred and part of Edwinstree Hundred formed part of North Hertfordshire. These hundreds were established in the 10th century giving a geographical coherence for more than a millennium.

### Sources

Victoria County History of Hertford: Vol. III, 1912 pp.44-51, ed. William Page  
Pirton History Group website:- [www.pirtonhistory.org.uk](http://www.pirtonhistory.org.uk)



North Hertfordshire District Council website:-

[www.northherts.gov.uk/index/leisure\\_and\\_culture](http://www.northherts.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture)

Motte & Bailey Project: Helen Hoffton 2007 (Pirton History Group website)

#### 4.1.3 Map Regression

Pirton Grange gatehouse (NGR TL 1228532994) is situated on Shillington Road in the hamlet of Aspley End, north west of Pirton village, North Hertfordshire. The postal address is Pirton Grange, Pirton Road, Shillington, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3HB. It is part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument that encompasses the moated site of Pirton Grange.

The village of Pirton is shown on 16th and 17th century maps of Hertfordshire but these are not of sufficient scale or detail to show Pirton Grange or its gatehouse. Pirton Grange is named on John Warburton's map of 1725 which was subscribed to by the 'nobility and gentry of Hertfordshire'. The Grange is also named on Bryant's map of 1822.



1818 Inclosure map of Pirton Parish, Surveyor T Brown (HRO PC528)

Pirton Grange Gatehouse, Pirton, Hertfordshire:

Historic Building Recording, Documentary Research and Archaeological Monitoring



The Hertfordshire Record Office does not hold the Tithe map for Pirton but the Inclosure map of 1818 shows Pirton Grange Farm in the ownership of James Hanscombe. This is the earliest map showing a plan of the buildings. The Grange, domestic buildings (bakehouse etc) and gatehouse are shown, and they are listed in the award (HRO 51346) as 'House, gardens and moat: one acre and thirty-five perches'.

The Inclosure map shows Pirton Grange Farm, situated in the extreme north west corner of the parish of Pirton with the county boundary (Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire) running along the north and west edges of James Hanscombe's land. The county boundary follows the course of a tributary of the River Hit which runs down the west side of the Hanscombe property. Pirton Grange is situated in the hamlet of Aspley End, some two miles north west of the village of Pirton.

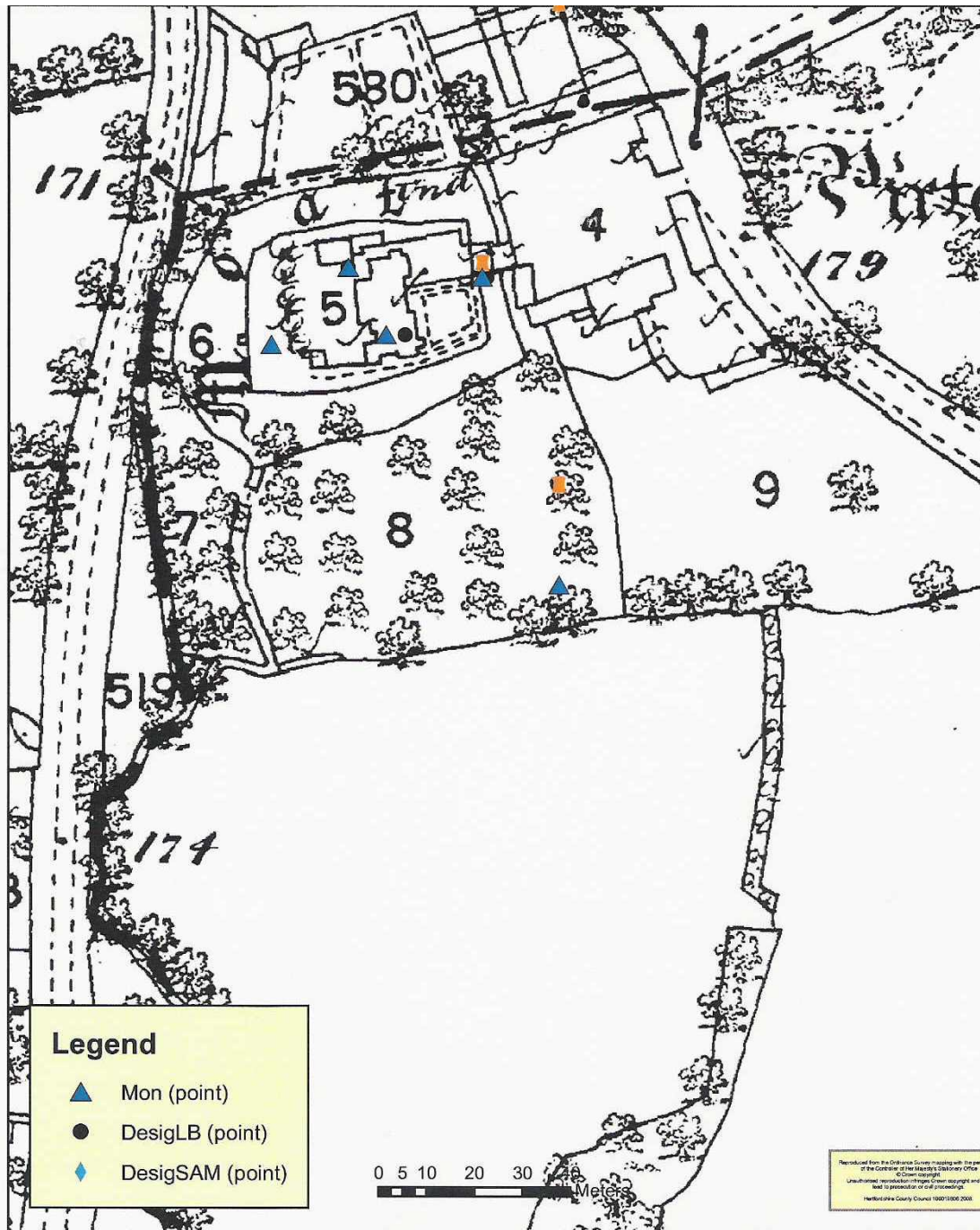


**1818 Inclosure Map detail showing Pirton Grange Farm (HRO PC528)**

The Inclosure map shows a moat plan similar to that which exists today, with a settling pond at the north west corner and a rectangular pond to the south west. This pond is shown on later maps as connected to the small river to the west, with a sluice which must have been used to regulate the water level of the moat. This map shows the house more or less centrally placed on the island with a substantial L-shaped range of buildings to the north and west. These were likely to have been a domestic range including the bakehouse which is still in existence. The gatehouse is shown bridging the eastern section of the moat at its northern end, so it is not directly opposite the Grange itself.



There is a farmyard with four substantial barns, cart lodges etc to the east, immediately outside the moat and several smaller buildings in the field to the south of the farmyard. The Shillington Road is named to the north east, adjacent to the farmyard and a section of the Pegsdon road is shown to the west of the river.



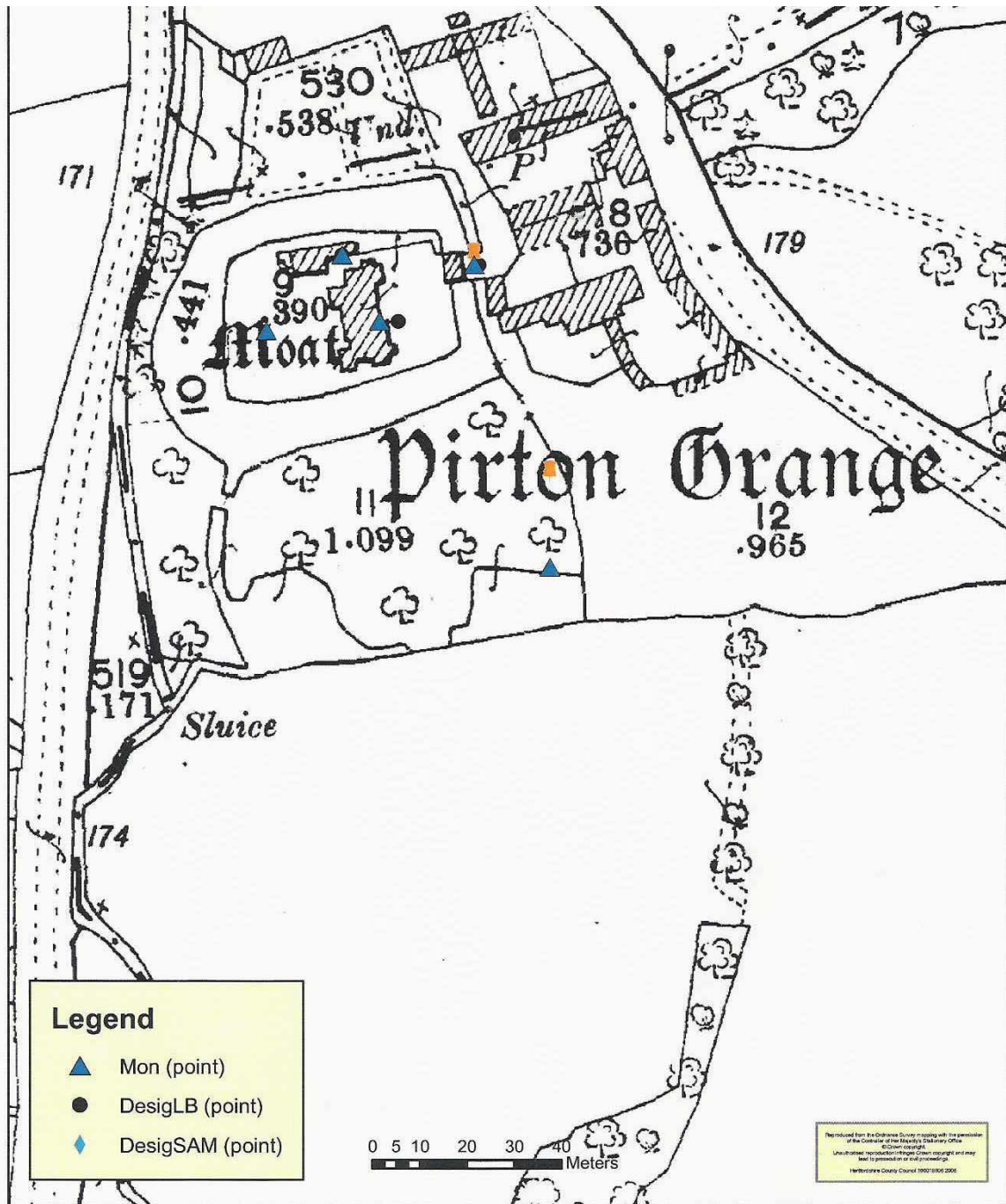
1882 First Edition OS (Reproduced by kind permission Herts Historic Environment Record [HER])





The first edition OS map shows some changes in the footprint of the Grange itself and the range of domestic buildings to the west of the Grange have gone, although the bakehouse and an adjacent building to the north of the house have been retained. The gatehouse is shown and a garden path (dotted line) is marked in the south eastern quarter of the island. The watercourse to the south west of the moat has been extended and canalised so that it joins the river to the west and it is bridged between enclosures 7 and 8.

The farm buildings have undergone minor changes with the addition of another building between the south east corner of the gatehouse and the north west corner of the southern barn and the small buildings in the field to the south (9) have gone.



1898 Second Edition OS (Reproduced by kind permission of Herts HER).



The main changes since 1882 are the construction of two ponds in the field to the south of the moat. The watercourse entering the south west corner of the moat has been enlarged to the east to form an irregularly shaped pond and another pond has been created in the south east corner of the same field. A sluice is marked where the water course (canal) joins the river. A small outbuilding on the island, to the south west of the Grange, has gone and two adjacent open-fronted buildings have been constructed in the centre of the farmyard, almost opposite the gatehouse.



1924 OS Scale: 25in : 1 mile, Herts Sheet VI 11 (Herts Local Studies Library)

The 1924 OS map shows no significant changes to the buildings or moat but a track now leads south from the farmyard between fields 11 and 12. Pirton Hall, which was built for the Hanscombe family c.1880 by the architect T C Sorby, is visible on

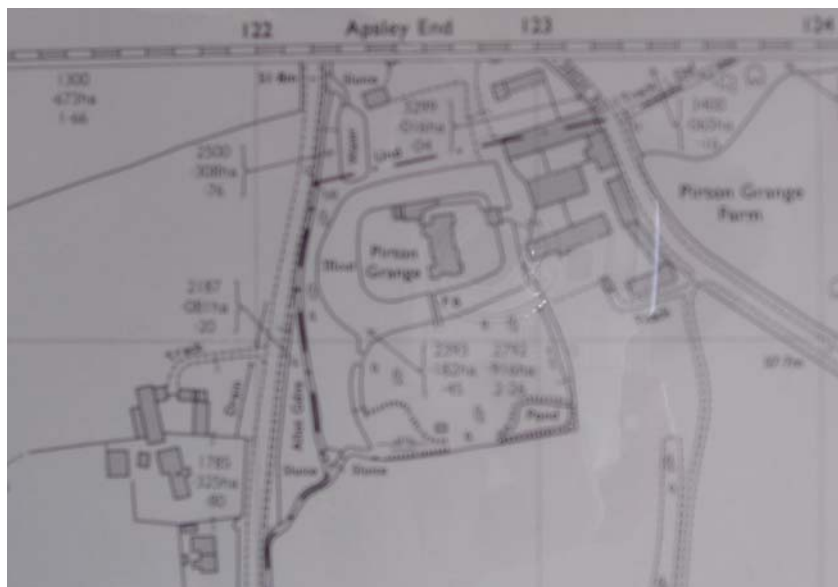


the right, to the east of Shillington Road. After the Hanscombe family had moved to Pirton Hall, the Grange was let to tenants.



1960 OS Scale: 6 in : 1 mile, TL 13 SW (Herts Local Studies Library)

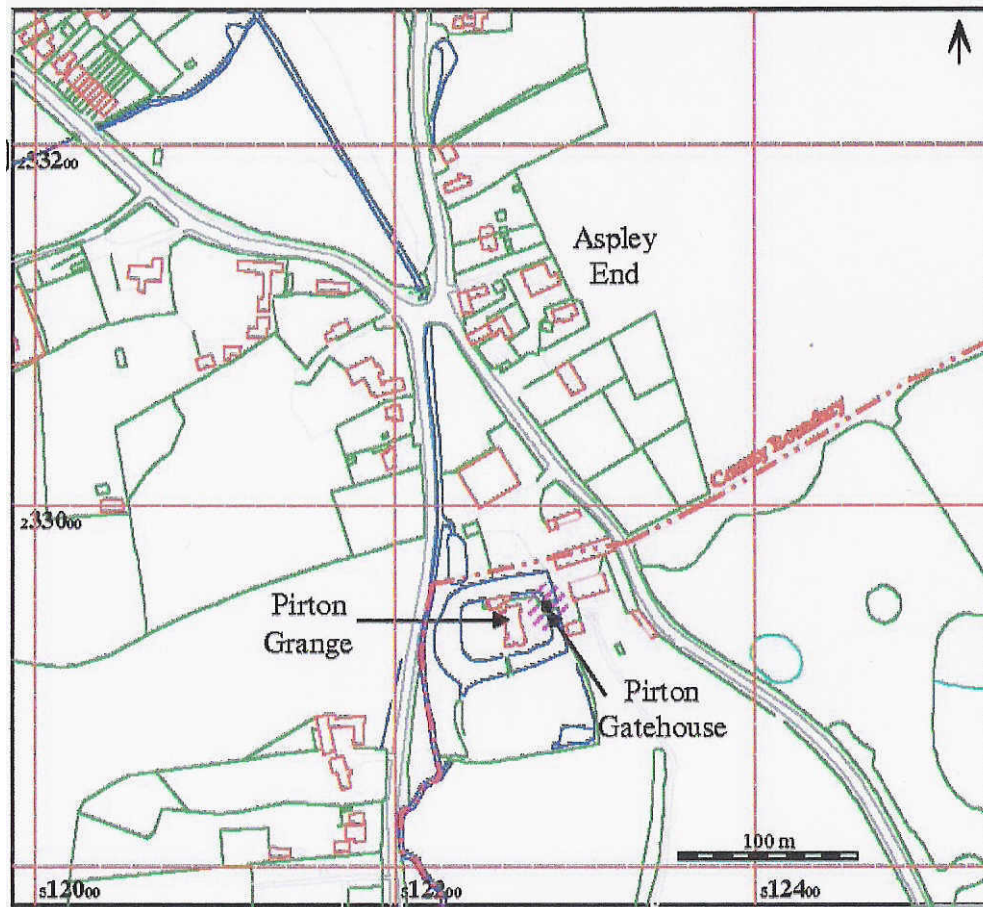
The 1960 map does not reproduce well owing to its scale, but the footprint of the Pirton Grange buildings appears unchanged from 1924 and the two ponds are shown in the field to the south of the moat.



1979 OS Scale: 1 : 2500 (Herts Local Studies Library)

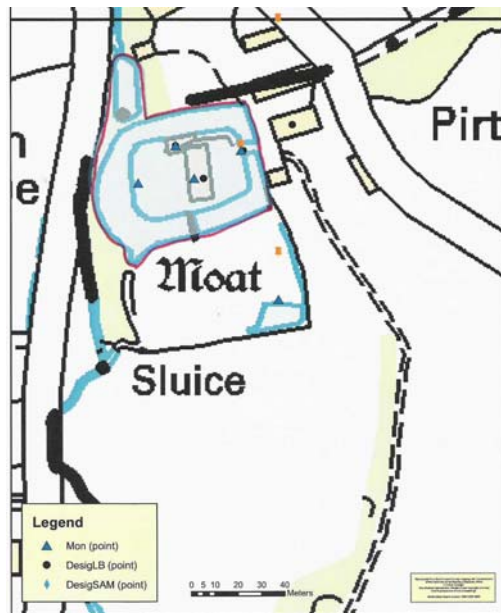


The only significant change shown on the 1979 OS map is the disappearance of the small farm building to the south east of the gatehouse, between the gatehouse and the large barn on the south side of the farmyard.



**2011 OS showing site location (Crown copyright, Central Bedfordshire Council Licence 100049029 2011)**

The 2010 OS map shows the Grange, bakehouse moat, gatehouse and farm buildings. The barn on the south side of the farmyard has gone and the pond which formed part of the watercourse leading from the river has been filled in. The other pond still exists at the south east corner of the same field.



**Pirton Grange: Scheduled Ancient Monument Setting (red line) (Reproduced by kind permission of Herts HER).**

#### 4.1.4 Results of documentary research

There is little direct documentary evidence for Pirton Grange gatehouse although a number of secondary sources describe the ownership of the site. An article in *The Builder* of 1878 gives an account of renovations carried out at Pirton Grange by the architect T C Sorby and a contemporary report on the visit of the East Herts Archaeological Society to the site in 1909 provides a detailed description of the site with reference to the gatehouse. The gatehouse is shown on a number of 19th century photographs are held at the Hertfordshire Records Office and a number of more contemporary references relate to the building's status on the Buildings at Risk' Register. There is also reference to archaeological work carried out in the late 1990s.

Pirton Grange passed from Lawrence Eyton (Northamptonshire) to Matthew Hanscombe of Shillington Bury, Bedfordshire in 1582 (Lucas 1908) and remained in that family until the late 19th century when they moved to a brand new home, Pirton Hall, and let the grange to tenants. In the more recent past Pirton Grange was owned and farmed by the Elms brothers. A Miss Vera Davies was the last tenant before the Grange was sold to the present owners (Pirton Local History Group 2005).

The East Herts Archaeological Society visited Pirton Grange in June 1909. The visit was described by Geoffrey Lucas who noted that the house was 'done up' in 1878 under direction of the architect T C Sorby. It was around this time that the hanscombe family commissioned Sorby to design and build a 'New Grange' at Pirton.

Lucas's report describes the moat and the gatehouse and their relationship to the house. The moat was fed by a small stream which rose about a mile to the south east of the site. This stream entered the moat at its south-west corner, leaving at the



north-west. Lucas notes that there was another inlet at the south east and 'it looks as though there were at one time two entirely moated areas hereone to enclose and protect the windmill, which probably stood on the mound formed from the excavation of the moat and thrown up within the enclosed area.' (Lucas 1908) At the time of the visit the mound was grown over with fruit trees. The supply of water from the inlets kept the water in the moat fresh and as a result it had not been necessary to clean it out since 1880. The moat is describes as being between 26 and 35 feet wide and at one point up to 13 feet deep. Lucas also describes the moat as being partly straddled by a brick bridge and the projecting wooden and plaster gatehouse. The gatehouse, went by the name of the 'Lodge' and was for the use of a porter. Interestingly Lucas speculates that the gatehouse is 'a survival, or re-building, of its predecessor'.

*Folding doors open from the bridge into a space covered by an upper chamber for the Porter, reached by a staircase on the side and enclosed within the square of the lodge. The whole is built of timber, plastered over, and is on a brick foundation. Although the building is plain, still it is a real gate-house to a moated grange, and in that sense unique in this district. Mrs Hanscombe tells me that when cleaning out the moat in 1880, remains of old timber posts were found which distinctly showed grooves for the portcullis to work in, and in early days there would be a draw-bridge let up and down from the interior side of the moat and worked from the gate-house.'*

*....'Within the gateway is a court, once enclosed by walls, and across the court is a cobble-paved walk leading up at an angle to the front entrance. The position of the gate-house in reference to the house is interesting. It is not immediately opposite the entrance, but opposite the windows of the office end of the house, so that full view of it is obtained from them, and when the doors are open, across the bridge and into the stockyard beyond.'*

*.....'In 1878 the house was done up, the outside plastered over, with ornaments stamped on the plaster and with dark boards added to represent half-timbered work which is really underneath the plaster, and the chimney stacks have also been re-built.*

*High, old brick walls at one time surrounded the garden to the E, joining onto the gate-house and running up to the SE corner of the house, and a large barn to the W, running N and S with a yard between it and the house. All these were removed in 1878. Detached from the house is the dairy with granary over it, and with a little building containing a large oven attached to it, which may be on the site of an old cooking place, when much cooking was done in the open.'* (Lucas 1908)

Photographs in the Hertfordshire Record Office show The Grange and gatehouse before and after the 1878 alterations.



Photograph of The Grange Pre 1878



The Grange 1895: the garden walls have gone and the sides of the moat have been cleared of vegetation. The photograph shows repairs to the render on the south wall of the gatehouse. It has a tiled roof with decorative ridge tiles and there are wooden doors at its entrance in the east elevation, above which is a small window at first floor level.



Pirton Grange Gatehouse c.1930-50





## 4.2 APPENDIX 2: THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE (Jane Blanchflower)

### 4.2.1 List Description

PIRTON SHILLINGTON ROAD  
TL 13 SW (South side)  
Apsley End

1/179 Gatehouse at  
27.5.68 Pirton Grange

GV II\*

Gatehouse. C16 or early C17. Timber frame on recessed battered brick bridge structure over former moat. Roughcast at front with impressed decoration, exposed timbers on sides, similar at rear with pattern of chevron infill between studs. Steep old red tile roof. A small square 2-storeys gatehouse facing E. Wide E entrance with narrow architrave and C18 panelled double gates pierced by a wicket gate. Small 2-lights casement window over. Carriageway off-centre to S with enclosed stair to upper floor on N side. An unusual survival. Supports for former drawbridge found in excavation.

Listing NGR: TL1228532944

### 4.2.2 Historic Environment Records Relevant to the Gatehouse Restoration

#### 4.2.2.1 HER 1927

Moated site Pirton Grange  
SAM 11568: Pirton Grange moated enclosure and associated settling pond

Large rectangular water filled moat with fine gatehouse(11188) over moat and a complex of medieval and post medieval buildings on the platform (11187, 11189). The moat is 70m E\_W x 50m N-S and is fed by a leat to the south. It is visually one of the most impressive moated sites in Hertfordshire. Timbers for a drawbridge were supposedly revealed c.100 yrs ago when the moat was drained. Around 50 yrs ago the moat was 4.5m deep; today it is only 30cm deep. There is a fishpond (4706) 40m south of the moat

Cave-Penny, Helena (HCC) site report 21.1.86

#### 4.2.2.2 HER 11187

Pirton Grange, Shillington  
Large 15th century gatehouse, renovated c. 1879  
Listed II\*

Large two-storey house with attics, dating from the 15th C . Stands within a medieval moated enclosure (1927). House comprised crosswing. 16th C kitchen



block, 16th C or early 17th C crosswing with internal chimney, early 17thC short west extension to kitchen block with 5-sided bay window to room over. Kitchen block has ovolo-moulded 5-sided bay on the E side under a gabled tiled roof. A vaulted brick cellar was added to kitchen inscribe "JH 1724"

Timber-framed with plastered panels and painted boards fixed on top of many timbers, Steep old red tile roofs with decorative cresting to ridges. Tall square chimneys with corbelled tops. Re-sited smoke-blackened rafters in hall roof. Clasped-purlin roof to N crosswing. Axial floor beams indicate the neither crosswing was jettied. Restoration has uncovered the original leaded glazing in the side lights of the 5-sided bay window. Also, painted black letter inscription in chimney piece of large upper room, c. 1590-1610, with later bolection moulded panelling and fireplace.

The following internal work can be ascribed to c.1690: bolection moulded panelling to hall, chamber over, and chamber over south part. Fine staircase with closed string barley-sugar twisted balusters, square newels, moulded handrail and striking balustrade to landing. Stair lit by 17thC cross-window. 2 panels bolection moulded coors and plaster cornices. Bold bolection moulded architraves to doors. Other fireplaces early 19thC. The house was extensively renovated c. 1879 and given its present appearance.

Smith, J T 1993 Hertfordshire houses selective inventory

Rouce, E. Clive, 1989. Domestic wall and panel painting in Herts Archaeol. Journal 147, 423-50. 442.

#### **4.2.2.3 HER 4796**

Fishponds, Pirton Grange

Fishponds S of moat. According to the owner these are ornamental ponds dug in the late 1870s to give labour to people when the coprolite industry ended. They are still damp (see Cave-Penny)

HER 11186

Gatehouse Pirton Grange

SAM 11568

1880s – supports reportedly found

Put on Buildings at Risk Register in 2001

#### **4.2.2.4 HER 11189**

Dairy and Bakehouse, Pirton Grange

SAM 11568, Listed II

Bakehouse and outbuilding N of house at Pirton Grange (11187) backing onto the moat (1927) and facing south. The outbuilding is the taller and dates to early 17thC, a two-storey two-bay timber-framed structure on a high brick sill with red brick infill. It has a stair up to the cheese store on the upper floor, and three steps down into a semi-basement in the west bay, with shelving and dairy equipment.

The bakehouse was attached to the east side of the older building in the 18thC. It is a much narrower single-storey building in red brick chequered with dark headers, and has a large oven at the rear to the east end and fireplace. Both buildings have steep old red tile roofs. They are linked to the house by a covered way.



#### 4.2.3 The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire

N Pevsner & B Cherry, pub. Harmondsworth 1977, p.271

HLS 720.942 Acc. H506759728

*Pirton Grange, 2 miles NW. A courtyard house, inside a moat, of which 3 probably low ranges (except for the bakehouse and laundry) were pulled down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (The Builder 6<sup>th</sup> July 1878 mentions work by T C Sorby). The remaining range has a centre re-modelled c.1700 (hooded doorway and sash windows), symmetrical gables of c.1600 to the left and right, and a lower gabled bay at the left end of the front, E of it a timber-framed gatehouse astride the moat.*

#### 4.2.4 Portrait of Pirton – Century of Change

Pirton Local History Group 2005

HLS 942.581 PIR

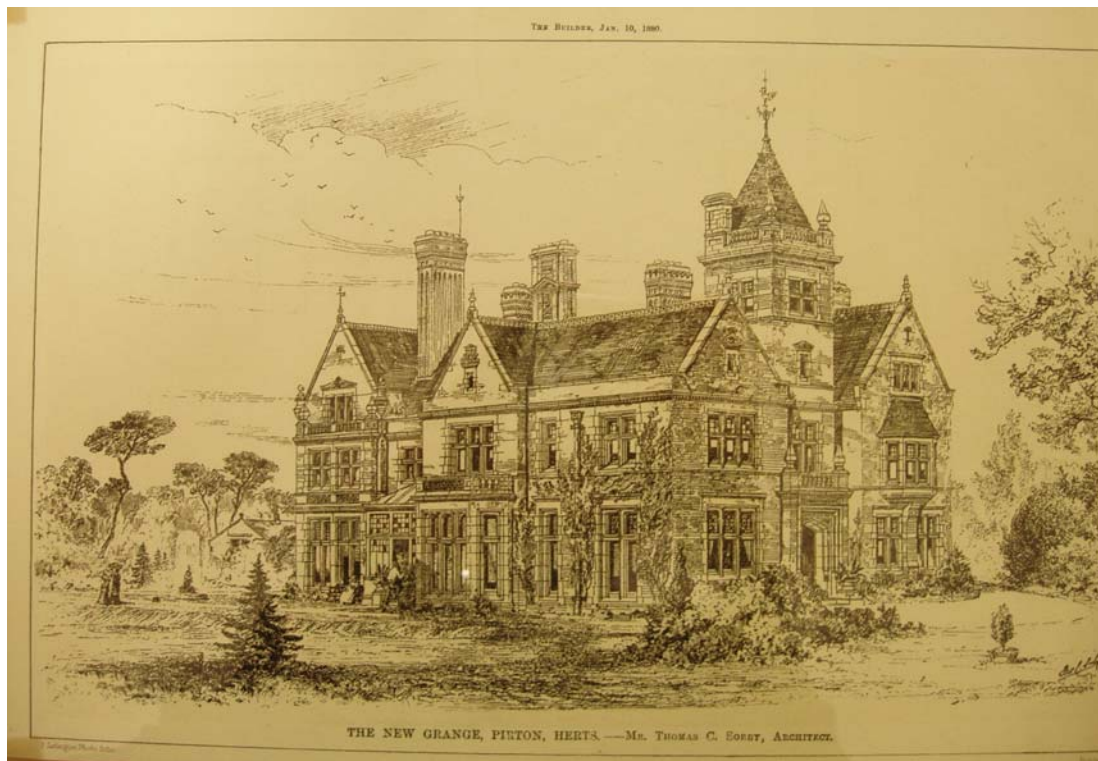
The section on farming has a photograph of Pirton Grange c.1980. The caption states: 'Pirton Grange, a moated farmhouse, lies just within the parish boundary and is the furthest farm from the village. Bought by Matthew Hanscombe in 1582 and remained in the family for 300 years until a large Victorian house, Pirton Hall, was built close by. The Grange was then let to tenants. Finally it was owned and farmed by the Elms brothers. Miss Vera Davies was the last tenant before it was sold to the present owners, Mary and Jim Moffat. In recent years it has been totally renovated by the Moffats and many early features revealed. The old barns have been converted into office units.'

#### 4.2.5 Transactions of the East Herts Archaeological Society Vol. IV 1908-11 pp33-42

HLS on library shelf

This is an account by Geoffrey Lucas of a visit by the Society to Pirton Grange on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1909. Mr Lucas was an architect and he made a plan of the house which is included in the report. The gatehouse is shown on this plan.

The report contains a detailed description of the house and the moated site, including the gatehouse. Lucas states that the house was 'done up' in 1878. No mention is made of whether or not the gatehouse was also 'done up' but an article in 'The Builder' 6<sup>th</sup> July 1878 may elucidate this. This article gives an account of renovations carried out at Pirton Grange by the architect T C Sorby. It was around this time that the Hanscombe family commissioned Mr Sorby to design and build a 'New Grange' at Pirton. The Herts Record Office holds a drawing, dated 1879, of the 'New Grange' (see following details) and an article in 'The Builder' 10<sup>th</sup> January 1880 gives an account of the New Grange at Pirton, designed by T C Sorby. The New Grange was named 'Pirton Hall' and stands to the south east of Pirton Grange, on the east side of Shillington Road. The Hanscombe family moved to Pirton Hall when it was completed and retained ownership of Pirton Grange but let it to tenants thereafter.



The New Grange, Pirton. Architect: T C Sorby, drawing published in *The Builder* 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1880 (HRO CV PIR/9)

The following extract from the Transactions describes the moat, the gatehouse and its relationship to the house:-

p.40 'Pirton Grange is surrounded by a moat which is fed by a small stream which rises from a spring in the hills approximately a mile to the SE of the site. It enters the moat at the SW corner and leaves at the NW corner. There is another inlet at the SE and it looks as though there were at one time two entirely moated areas hereone to enclose and protect the windmill, which probably stood on the mound formed from the excavation of the moat, and thrown up within the enclosed area. The mound is now grown over with fruit trees.' **[this is likely to be the mound of burnt clay, probably created in the 1870s referred to in HER 1927 Pirton Grange Moat & HER 1927/4706 report by Ann Wells 16<sup>th</sup> May 1978]**

'Matthew Hanscombe bought the mill at the same time as he bought the house as it is mentioned in the title deed. Owing to these inlets the water in the moat is kept fairly fresh and sweet, in fact I am told that it has not been necessary to clean it out since 1880. The moat varies from 26-35ft wide and at one point is 13ft deep. The entrance to the property from the road on the side leads up to the wooden farm buildings and to the edge of the moat, across half of which a brick-built bridge is thrown. Beyond this, and projecting into the moat, is a wooden and plaster gatehouse. This gate-house, which goes by the name of the 'Lodge' and was for the use of the Porter, looks a simple building in its present condition, but it is a survival, or re-building, of it predecessor.



*Folding doors open from the bridge into a space covered by an upper chamber for the Porter, reached by a staircase on the side and enclosed within the square of the lodge. The whole is built of timber, plastered over, and is on a brick foundation. Although the building is plain, still it is a real gate-house to a moated grange, and in that sense unique in this district. Mrs Hanscombe tells me that when cleaning out the moat in 1880, remains of old timber posts were found which distinctly showed grooves for the portcullis to work in, and in early days there would be a draw-bridge let up and down from the interior side of the moat and worked from the gate-house.'*

*....'Within the gateway is a court, once enclosed by walls, and across the court is a cobble-paved walk leading up at an angle to the front entrance. The position of the gate-house in reference to the house is interesting. It is not immediately opposite the entrance, but opposite the windows of the office end of the house, so that full view of it is obtained from them, and when the doors are open, across the bridge and into the stockyard beyond.'*

*.....'In 1878 the house was done up, the outside plastered over, with ornaments stamped on the plaster and with dark boards added to represent half-timbered work which is really underneath the plaster, and the chimney stacks have also been rebuilt.*

*High, old brick walls at one time surrounded the garden to the E, joining onto the gate-house and running up to the SE corner of the house, and a large barn to the W, running N and S with a yard between it and the house. All these were removed in 1878. Detached from the house is the dairy with granary over it, and with a little building containing a large oven attached to it, which may be on the site of an old cooking place, when much cooking was done in the open.'*



#### 4.2.6 Historic Photographs

HRO Gerish Box 61 Pirton Prints



**Pirton Grange 1895 (HRO Gerish Box 61)** This shows the site after alterations to the Grange. The garden walls have gone and the sides of the moat cleared of vegetation.



**Pirton Grange & Gatehouse 1895 (HRO Gerish Box 61) detail showing Gatehouse**

The photograph above shows some repairs to the render on the south wall of the gatehouse. It has a tiled roof with decorative ridge tiles and there are wooden doors at its entrance (E elevation), above which is a small window at first floor level.



**Pirton Grange undated photograph (HRO Gerish Box 61)**

The undated photograph (above) of Pirton Grange is pre-1895 and it was taken before the alterations by T C Sorby in 1878 because the external elevations are still plastered over and the garden wall still exists. The wooden revetments along the south edge of the platform are visible. The photograph has been damaged at the top right corner.



**Pirton Grange undated photograph (HRO Gerish Box 61)**

*The above photograph is likely to have been taken at the same time as the previous one i.e. pre-1878. The style of dress is the same, the Grange has not undergone alterations and the garden wall is clearly shown. It shows the SE corner of the moat, looking NW.*



**Pirton Grange Gatehouse c.1930-50, (HRO PIR/1) photograph by H Hallar, N & E elevations**





Barn at Pirton Grange, undated photograph (HRO Hine 4). This is probably the seven-bay Listed Grade II late 16<sup>th</sup> century barn to the NE of the Gatehouse.

#### 4.2.7 Notes on Inscription at Pirton Grange

HRO AC 2713 Notes and photograph by E Clive Rouse, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1975  
 This item records an inscription over a fireplace in a large upper room at Pirton Grange. The painting is dateable c.1590-1610 and the source of the verses was not traced and it probably came from a pamphlet or chap-book of the period:-

‘What better fare than well content agreeing with they welthe  
 What better ghest than trustie friend in sicknes and in health  
 What worse despayre than lothe to dye for feare to go to hel  
 What greater faith than trust in God through Christ in heaven to dwell  
 Pray to God continually and learne to know him rightfullie.’

In the **Transactions of the E Herts Archaeological Society Vol.IV 1908-11 p33-44**, Geoffrey Lucas states that the title deed shows that Pirton Grange passed from Lawrence Eyton (Northamptonshire), to the Hanscombe family of Shillington Bury, Bedfordshire, in 1582. Matthew Hanscombe was a wealthy man who contributed £25 on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1588 for the defence of the country against the Spanish Armada.

#### 4.2.8 Stevenage Comet July 12<sup>th</sup> 2001 p.29

HLS held on microfilm.

This article reports the project to save Pirton Grange gatehouse:-



*‘Pirton Grange House is a rare example of a moated house from the 1400s and its later-built gatehouse is situated over the moat. Both the buildings, near Pirton, are grade II\* listed, making them among the most important historic buildings in the country.*

*Its owners have themselves renovated the Grange House with a £3,000 grant help from North Hertfordshire District Council. The present owners have also repaired a grade II listed dairy and bakehouse with another £1,250 from the council.*

*The next stage of the repair programme is the restoration of the gatehouse. It has roughcast render cladding to three sides and chevron pattern timber studs to the rear. This time English Heritage has promised financial aid.*

*It has been propped up with scaffolding and has major structural problems. It will also need other extensive repairs including re-roofing and works to the external render.*

*North Hertfordshire Council’s conservation and buildings at risk officer, Nigel Oxley said: “The buildings have to be protected. They are listed and because of their rarity it is important to look after them. They are an important part of our heritage”.’*

#### **4.2.9 Archaeological works 1997/8 (project brief)**

Correspondence file about work carried out in 1997/8 by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust. It is thought that the foundations of the gatehouse were exposed during this or associated works, however there is no report in the file. The file contains a project brief written prior to undertaking the work although this is mostly concerned with a scheme of repair works associated with the house itself.

The project brief includes the following information:

Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust

Pirton Grange, Apsley End, Shillington, Herts.

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Brief.

24th March 1997

##### Page 1

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

*3.1 Pirton Grange is a partial survival of a courtyard moated house of the 15th as only the South Wing remains; the main open hall stood to the north. A chimney stack and upper floor may have been inserted at the beginning of the 17th century, and a short wing was added later in that century. Around 1700 the hall roof was raised and three tall windows were inserted and a staircase was added to the West of the South wing. In the early Victorian period the Grange underwent modification with many fireplaces being replaced. However substantial restoration took place in the late 19th century (Smith, 141) leaving the building much as it is seen today.*

*3.2 The site is situated within a moat with bridge and gatehouse with other outbuildings although at least on large barn and walls were removed during the restoration of 1878 undertaken by T.C. Sorby (The Builder, 6 July 1878). The buildings on site after 1878 included a detached dairy with granary over and a separate building which contained an oven.*



Page 3

**7 PROGRAMME OF WORK**

*Commencing 1st April 1997*

*External repairs:*

- *Scaffold southern half of the house*
- *Remove roof tiles and re-felt roof and renew batons*
- *Remove render to the front of the property*
- *Remove pebble dash to the rear of the property*
- *Demolish Victorian extension*
- *Excavate service trench and foundations for new extension*
- *Repair external timbers*
- *Repair/renew windows*
- *Re-point chimney stack*
- *Re-roof and re-render*
- *Build new extension*
- *Move scaffold to the northern half of the house and execute the external repairs described above*

*Internal repairs:*

- *Remove defective plaster to ceiling and walls*
- *Remove and replace floors, as appropriate*
- *Remove and renew wiring, as appropriate*
- *Remove and renew plumbing, as appropriate*

The NMR also holds a reference to work reported in the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Newsletter No. 19, 1997 which would appear to summarise the results of work associated with the clearance of the moat. It is unclear whether these works were undertaken in connection with the brief issued by North Hertfordshire District Council in 1997.

The NMR reference refers to the description of works in the newsletter: "Monitoring of clearance of the moat showed it to be unusually deep, and revealed structural details of the bridge crossing it"



### 4.3 APPENDIX 3: ARTEFACTS (Holly Duncan)

A comb (Registered Artefact 1) was found during the building repair works beneath floor boards in the north-east corner of the upper storey of the gatehouse.

Single piece, double-sided comb (ivory?) of thin, but slightly lentoid cross-section. Comb ends are straight. One row of fine closely cut teeth (c.11 teeth per 10mm) and one row of more coarsely cut teeth (5 teeth per 10mm). The central solid zone is plain but the teeth on either side have been cut to form a gently concave/convex curve. Length 67mm; depth 46.5mm; thickness 3mm.

This comb would appear to best conform to Dunlevy's Class J combs (1972, 23), although it is a bit shorter than the average length and depth (average length 90mm; average depth 80mm and thickness 4mm). Dunlevy comments that Class J combs seem to have been popular between the 16th and the 18th centuries. These combs were used to comb out hair and wigs and to remove nits. Several similar ivory combs were recovered from Norwich dating to the 16th and 17th century, one in particular (Margeson 1993, fig. 35, no. 419) is close in size to the Pirton Gatehouse example.

Dunlevy, M 1972, 'Some comb forms of the Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries'.  
*North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, volume 15, 22-27

Margeson, S 1993, *Norwich Households Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Norwich Survey Excavations 1971-78* East Anglian Archaeology 58

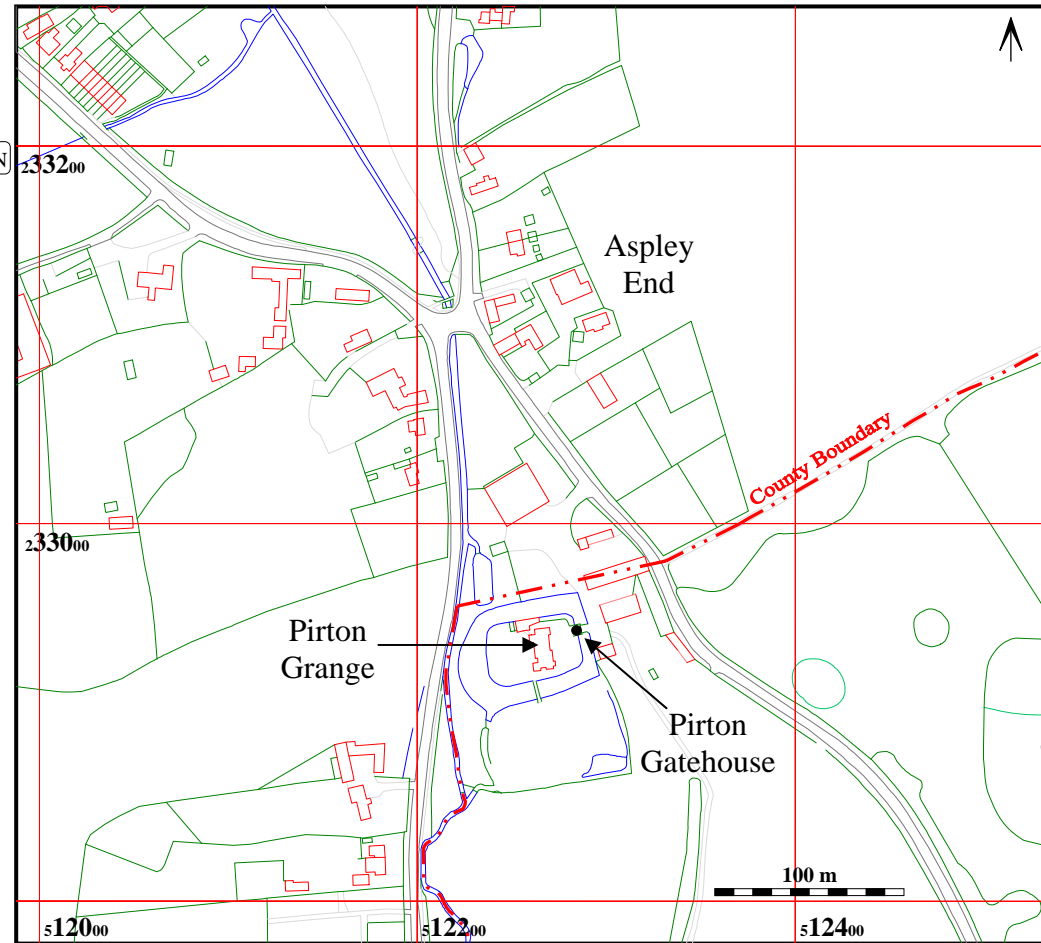
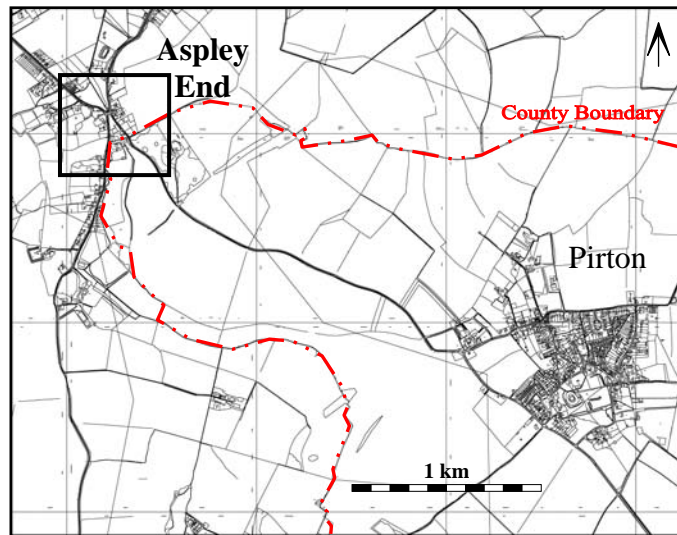
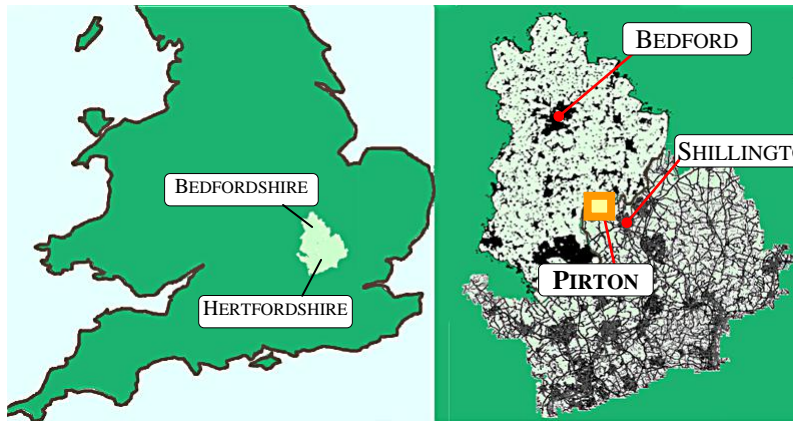


#### 4.4 APPENDIX 4: OASIS SUMMARY FORM

OASIS ID	albionar1-139174
PROJECT DETAILS	
Project name	Pirton Gatehouse Restoration
Short description of the project	The gatehouse at Pirton Grange is a grade II* listed building located in the hamlet of Apsley End, north west of Pirton in North Hertfordshire. It stands on the eastern side of a rectangular moated enclosure. The large timber-framed house which is situated in the centre of the enclosure dates from the fifteenth century with later additions. The gatehouse was put on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2001. Albion Archaeology undertook historical building recording and archaeological monitoring undertaken during repairs to the building carried out between 2011 and 2012 with the aid of an English Heritage repair grant. Assessment works carried out prior to the repairs included an impact assessment (Albion 2011a), historical research (Blanchflower 2011) and tree-ring analysis (Bridge 2011). A programme of archaeological monitoring of below ground works and historic building recording was carried out during the repairs according to the requirements of English Heritage and the local planning authority brief. Precautionary archaeological monitoring of below ground disturbance during the works produced no significant results, although a bone comb was found during building works. The comb will be retained by the landowner
Project dates	Start: 02-01-2011 End: 30-09-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	PG1741 - Contracting Unit No. NHLE 1012348 - SM No.
Type of project	Building Recording
Monument type	GATEHOUSE Medieval
Significant Finds	COMB Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	""Measured Survey"" , ""Photographic Survey"" , ""Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure""
Prompt	Listed Building Consent Planning condition
PROJECT LOCATION	
Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE PIRTON Pirton Gatehouse Restoration
Study area	1000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 1228 3294

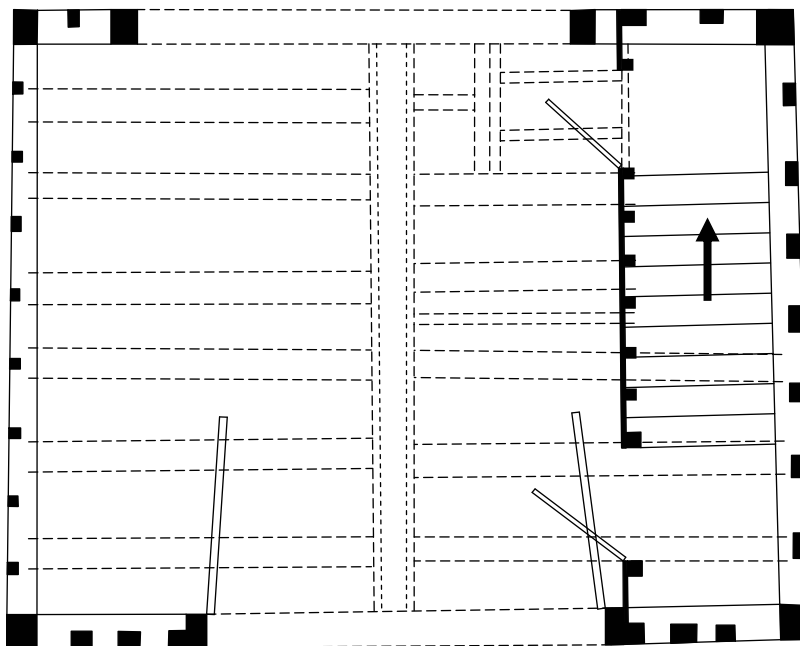


PROJECT CREATORS	
Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Hester Cooper-Reade/Mark Phillips
PROJECT ARCHIVES	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	North Hertfordshire Museum Service
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	North Hertfordshire Museum Service
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Drawing", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"
Paper Archive notes	To be stored at Albion Archaeology until deposition
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Pirton Grange Gatehouse, Pirton, Hertfordshire: Historic Building Recording, Documentary Research and Archaeological Monitoring
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Phillips, M'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Blanchflower, J'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Duncan, H'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Cooper-Reade, H'
Other bibliographic details	2012/95
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Albion Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Bedford
Description	A4 comb bound report with colour figures and plates.



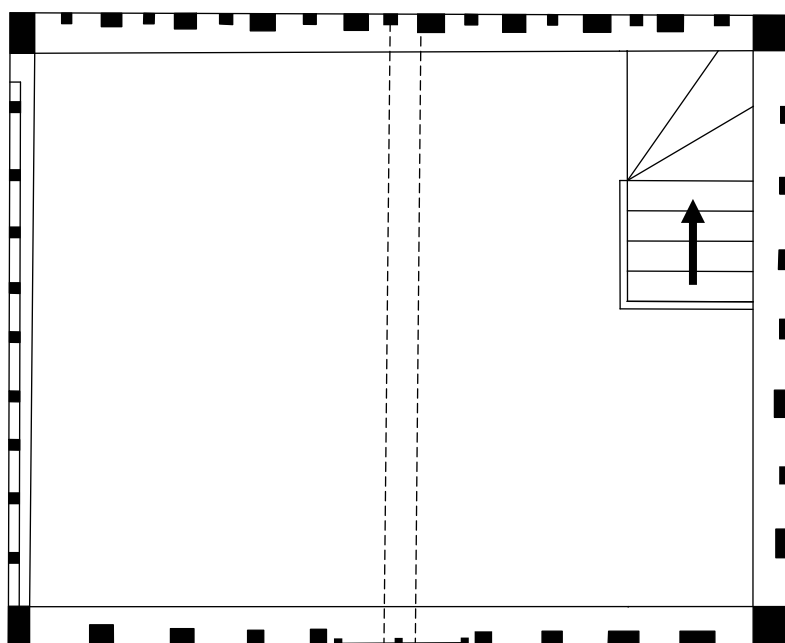
**Figure 1: Location plan**

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2011)



**Figure 2: Ground floor plan** (scale 1:50)

\* Dashed lines show overhead detail.

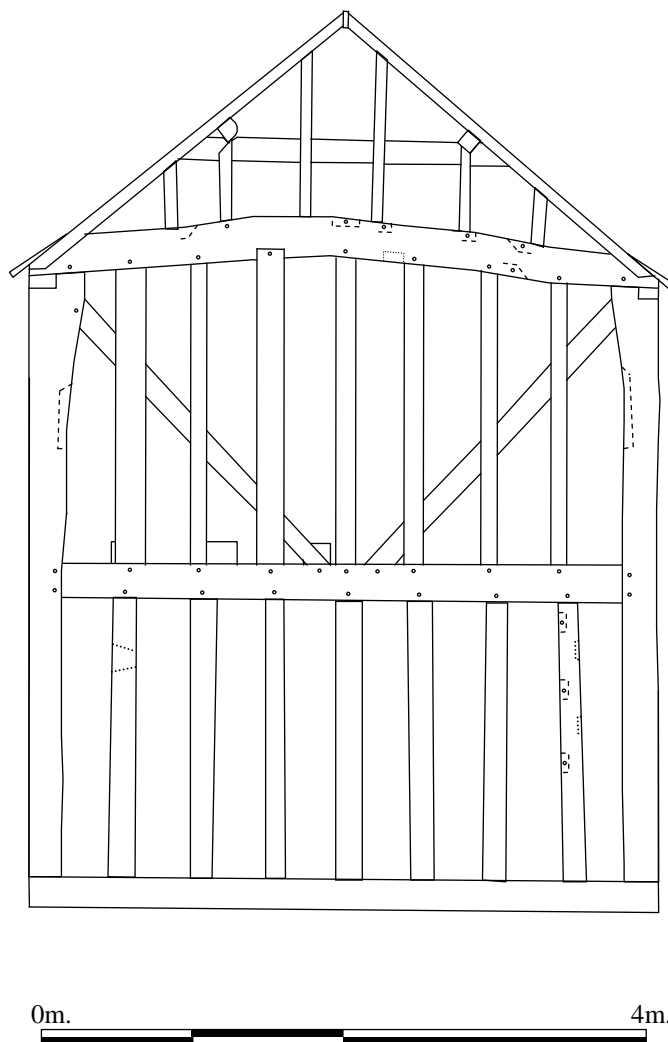


**Figure 3: First floor plan** (scale 1:50)

\* Dashed lines show overhead detail.

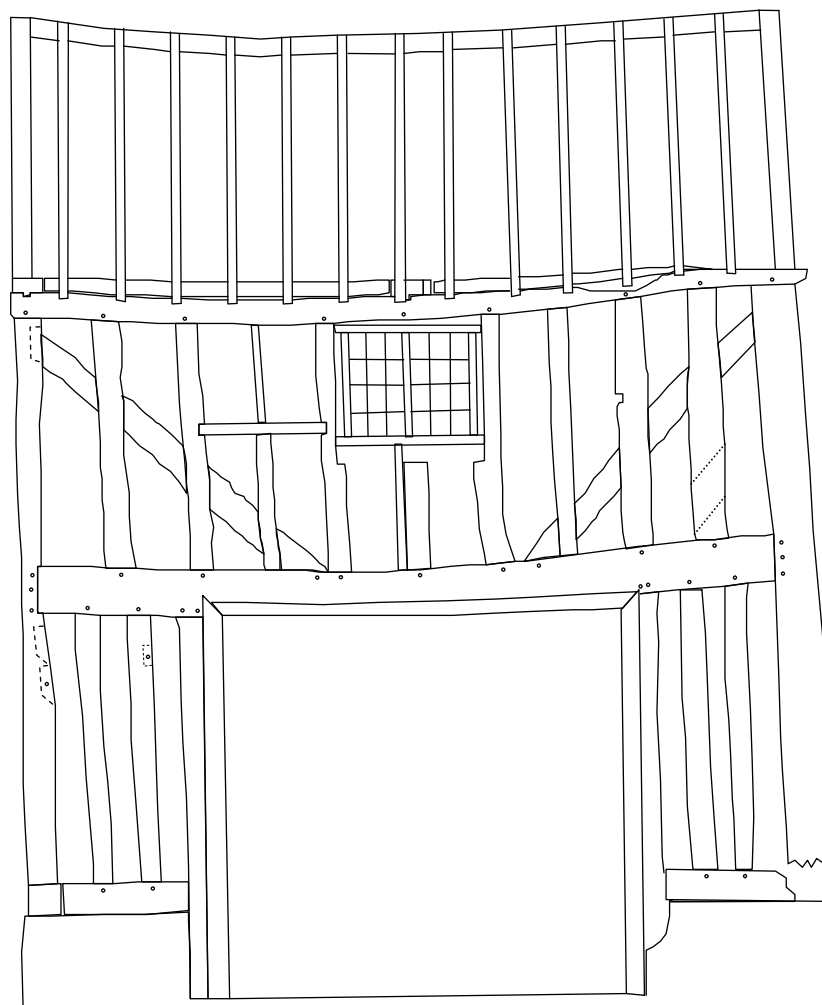






**Figure 4: North elevation (scale 1:50)**

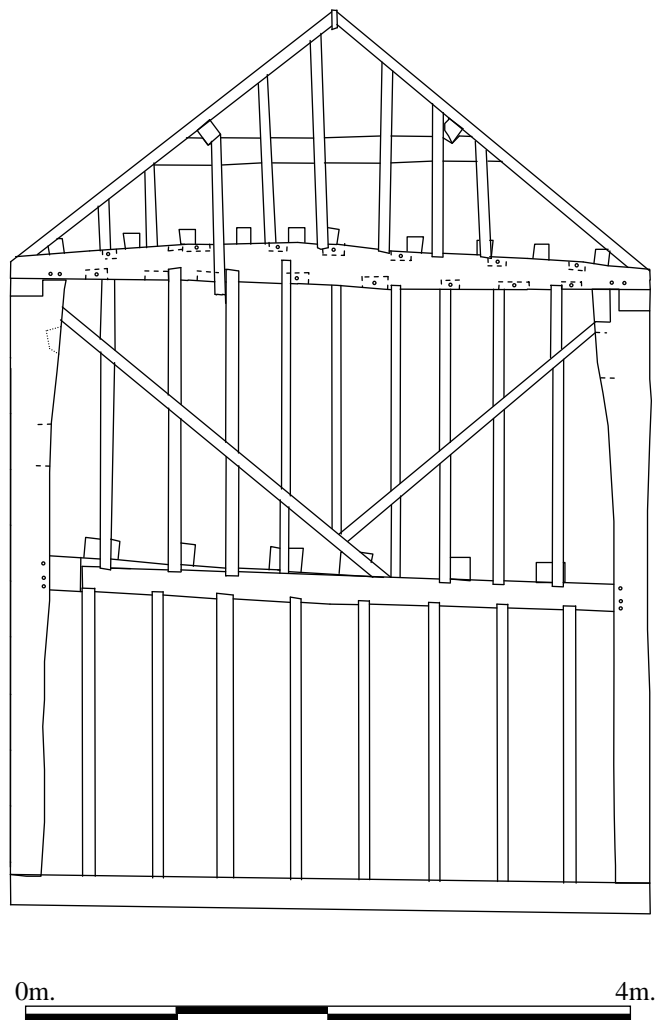
\*Dashed lines show empty mortise holes. Dotted lines indicate depressions cut into face of timber.



0m.  4m.

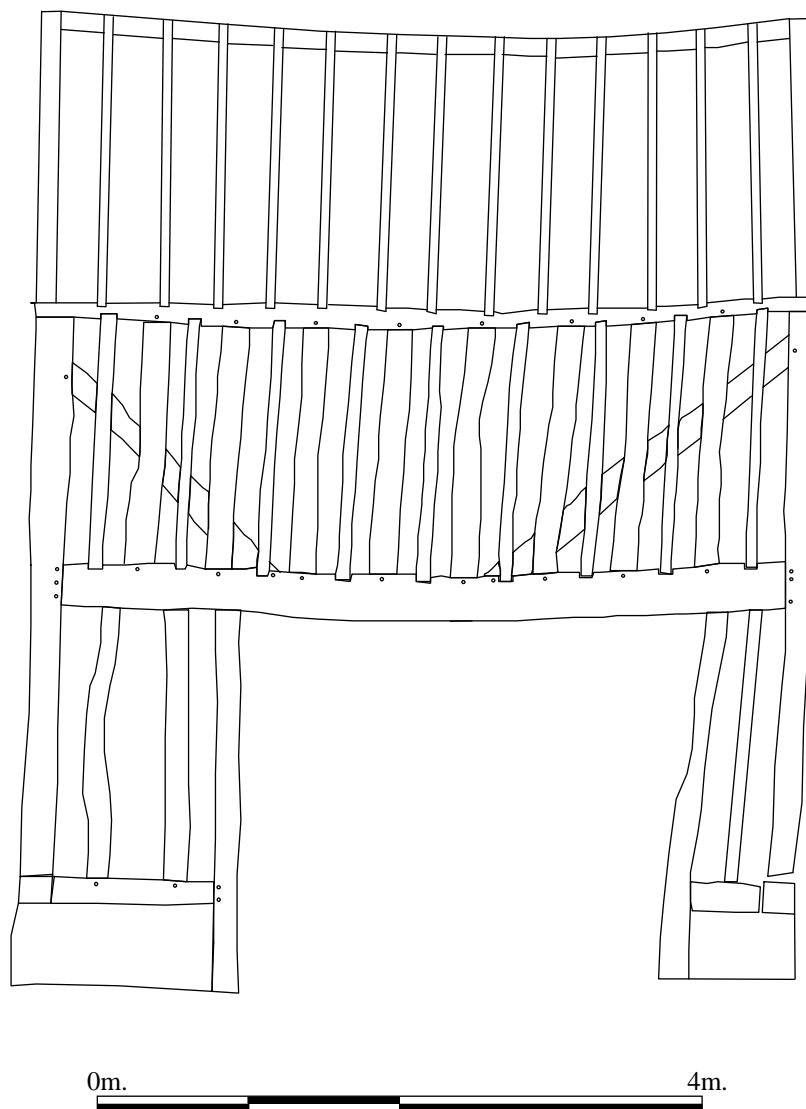
**Figure 5: East elevation** (scale 1:50)

\*Dashed lines show empty mortise holes. Dotted lines indicate depressions cut into face of timber.



**Figure 6: South elevation (scale 1:50)**

\*Dashed lines show empty mortise holes. Dotted lines indicate depressions cut into face of timber.



**Figure 7: West elevation** (scale 1:50)



**Plate 1: East elevation**



**Plate 2: East elevation**  
(After partial removal of plant growth and external render)



**Plate 3: West elevation**



**Plate 4: West Elevation**

(After removal of plant growth and partial stripping of external render)



**Plate 5: West elevation showing pargetting**  
(Showing designs impressed in the cement render inside the top row of chevrons)



**Plate 6: South elevation**



**Plate 7: North elevation**



**Plate 8: Ground floor interior**  
(General view of the interior looking towards the north east)





**Plate 9: Ground floor interior, detail**  
(Door to stairs)



**Plate 10: Ground floor interior, detail**  
(Latch on door to stairs)



**Plate 11: Ground floor interior, detail**  
(Door to storage space under stairs)



**Plate 12: Ground floor interior, detail**  
(Latch on door to storage space under stairs)



**Plate 13: First floor interior, north wall**



**Plate 14: First floor interior, east wall**



**Plate 15: First floor interior, south wall**



**Plate 16: First floor interior, west wall**



**Plate 17: First floor interior, detail**  
(Showing stave holes and empty mortise at west end of north tie beam)

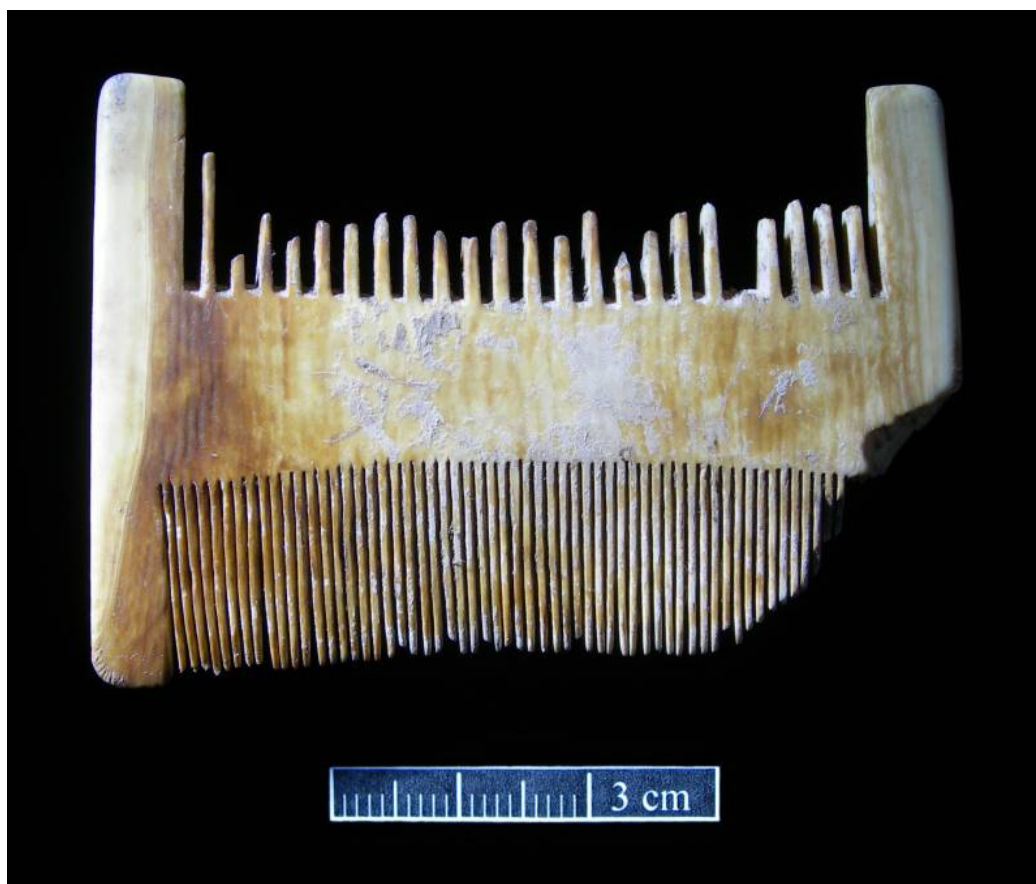


**Plate 18: First floor exterior, north east corner**  
(Showing plaster filled mortise in the white-washed face, below the diagonal brace)



**Plate 19: Central tie beam, detail**

(East end of tie beam after removal showing a double dovetail in underside)



**Plate 20: Comb, Registered Artefact 1**

(Comb found under floor boards, see Appendix 3: Artefacts)



**Albion**  
archaeology



Albion Archaeology  
St Mary's Church  
St Mary's Street  
Bedford  
MK42 0AS

**Telephone** 01234 294000  
**Email** [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
[www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)

