

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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NGR: TL 0492 4942
Report No: BA0436BC

BORDER ARCHAEOLOGY

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Report specification

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1. Non-Technical Summary

The evaluation was undertaken in an area of high archaeological sensitivity within the historic core of Bedford and the recent Extensive Urban Survey identified that the development area within the college site lies within the southern burh of Saxon Bedford.

Two trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed new School of Arts but no significant features or structures were revealed.

The proposed new site is partially occupied by an existing building, which at the time of writing will be refurbished and thus it is extremely unlikely that any further construction impact will be caused on the site.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Ash Design Consultants Ltd on behalf of Bedford College to undertake a programme of archaeological works in connection with a brief for a field evaluation issued by the Heritage and Environment Section, Bedfordshire County Council, who considered that the area being considered for development had considerable archaeological potential.

Copies of this report will be sent to Bedford College, Bedfordshire County Council, Ash Design and the Sites and Monuments Record.

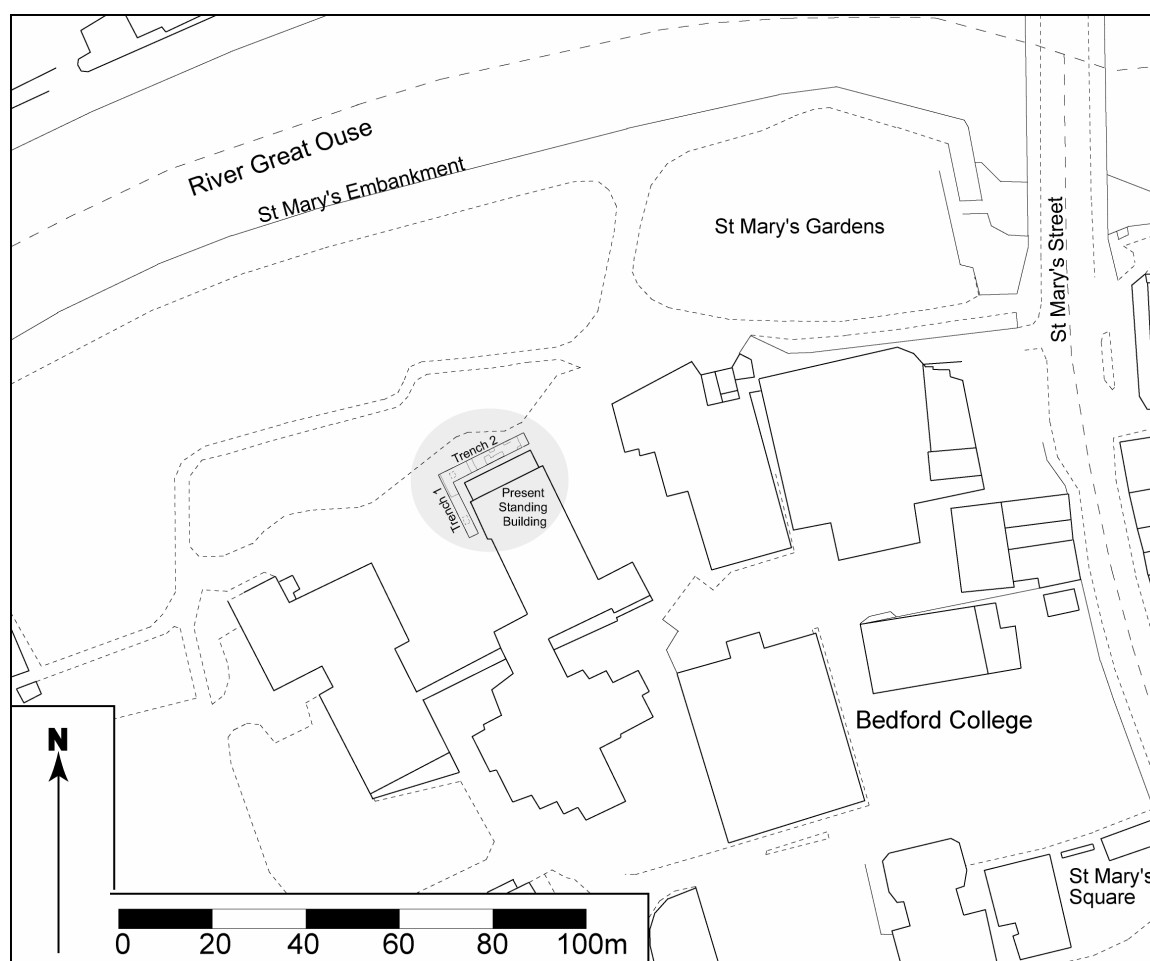


Fig. 1: Site location

3. Geology

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) classifies Bedford as an unsurveyed urban area; however, the soils to the E and W of the town lying either side of the River Ouse are of the EFFORD 1 (571s) soil association, which comprises well drained fine loamy soils often over gravel, associated with similar permeable soils variably affected by groundwater, the geology of these areas being river terrace gravel. To the N and S of

Bedford the soils are of the EVESHAM 3 (411c) association comprising slowly permeable calcareous clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils, with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey soils, the geology comprising Jurassic and Cretaceous clay.

4. Methodology

Two trenches were located within the proposed development area (each being tied into architects' plans of the site as existing) to form an L-shaped arrangement respecting the ground plan of the existing college building to the S and E.

The evaluation of each trench included a detailed stratigraphic record using a context numbering system. Due to the apparent uniform deposition of 19th and 20th century reclamation and demolition layers encountered throughout the evaluation it was deemed necessary to record only a representative sample of the trench sections.

A single temporary benchmark was established on the site (value 27.01m AOD) with reference to a known benchmark (value 29.79m OD) located on the eastern side of St. Mary's Road bridge.

5. Archaeological Evaluation

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to the SW of the existing building and measured 14.10m x 2.00m. Oriented NW-SE, the trench was excavated to a depth of 1.20-1.30m, a test pit (Test Pit 1) measuring 1.00m x 1.50m x 0.50m being inserted within the base of the trench at the SE end in order to ascertain the depth of deposits.

Excavation revealed a sequence of late 19th / early 20th century reclamation and post-construction / demolition layers, truncating which were numerous service trenches ([103], [108], [133], [148], [137], [139], [141] and [155]). Two sequences of building activity were also identified, the first of these taking the form of a deep-set concrete stanchion / foundation (118) truncating the above reclamation deposits and standing to a height of 25.72m OD (0.70m below existing ground level). Oriented SW-NE, (118) extended out from the SW-facing section and continued for c.1.60m before returning NW, being observed along the base and into the SE-facing section of the trench. These foundations within the NW end of the trench appear to have formed the internal part of a structure. The second phase of construction comprised the base five courses of a stretcher bonded red brick wall that appeared to follow and respect stanchion (118). Standing to a height of 0.36m, the wall probably represented a subsidiary wall that utilised (118), indicating modernisation or the addition of a standing building. It was difficult to assess the contemporaneity of the foundations due to the insertion of service cuts either side of wall (106).



Plate 1: SW-facing section of Trench 1 including Test Pit 1

Stanchion (118) appears to have formed a boundary demarcating associated activity of a probable internal area of a building and an earlier phase not associated with this structure. This was made apparent by two different types of deposit found at the base of the trench. The deposit on the internal side comprised a fairly homogenous layer (117) composed of lightly compacted ash and coke containing frequent large slag fragments. Found at 25.24m OD, it extended down for 0.28m to the base of the excavation and was observed throughout the entire base of the NW end of the trench. This may well represent an accumulative reclamation spread raising the internal surface of the building post the laying of stanchion / foundation (118).

The external deposit (153) found within the SE side of the trench was composed of tightly compacted light grey clays. Test Pit 1 was excavated within this portion of the trench to ascertain the depth and origin of the deposit, revealing a continuation of the deposit to the base of the test pit at 24.65m OD (1.72m below the existing ground surface). The emergence of groundwater at this depth prevented further excavation of the test pit. Occasional animal bone was recovered throughout the depositional profile of this deposit and frequent charcoal flecking was noted. No pottery was observed during the initial clean back of (153) or during the excavation of Test Pit 1, the deposit probably being riverine in origin, the accumulation resulting from water transgression / regression within the river zone. The inclusion of animal bone debris and charcoal within this deposit may represent an interfacial area of limited human habitation on the edge of the River Ouse. This deposit underlay a sequence of 19th / 20th century reclamation deposits comparable with those within the NE area of the trench.

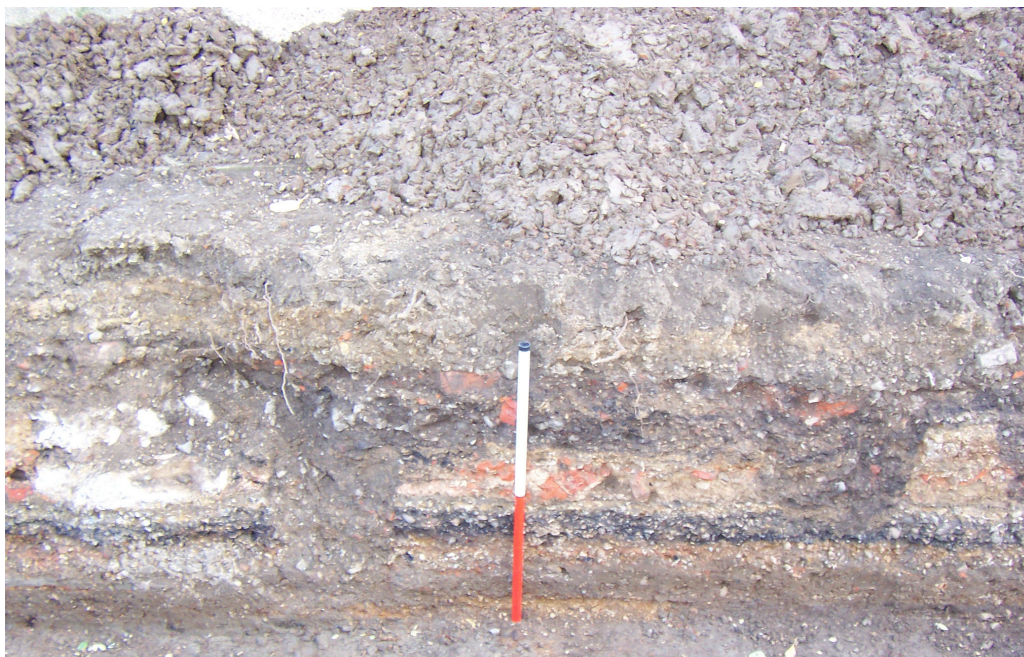


Plate 2: SW-facing section of Trench 1 indicating Section 1

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the NW of the existing building and was oriented NE-SW, measuring 19.00m x 2.00m x 1.20-1.30m. Test Pit 2, measuring 1.00m x 1.00m x 0.35m, was inserted within the base of the trench at the SW end.

Excavation revealed a continuation of the 19th / 20th century reclamation deposits found within Trench 1, the lowermost of these being observed within the base of the trench at a depth of 1.20m below the existing ground surface (25.21m OD). The majority of the trench also indicated extensive development during or slightly after the area had apparently been reclaimed during the 19th and 20th centuries. Evidence of this development within the central and NE areas of Trench 2 was once again represented by a sequence of concrete stanchions and foundations (222)-(226), the heights of which ranged from 25.39m OD to 25.89mOD. Test Pit 2 located at the SW end of the trench was excavated into deposit (216), which was the same as deposit (117) within Trench 1, consisting of lightly compacted ash and coke containing frequent large slag fragments. The test pit revealed a continuation of (117) found within Trench 1 within all its sections and the base, the base being measured at 24.91m OD (1.46m below the existing ground surface). No deposits comparable to the clays (153) found within Trench 1 were observed at the base or in the sections of this trench.



Plate 3: Trench 2 looking NE including Test Pit 2

6. Summary

The trenching revealed no significant features / structures, the immediate area evidently having undergone extensive development during the second half of the 19th century and continuing well into the 20th century. The foundations observed during the evaluation probably relate to a series of adjoining buildings oriented NW-SE and best represented on the Ordnance Survey 1883 25 inch 1st edition map, which indicates structures within and to the S of a timber yard (**Fig. 6**).

The clay deposit (153) found within the base of Trench 1 probably represented an area prone to flooding prior to it being reclaimed for development from the mid 19th century. The paucity of artefactual finds within this deposit may further allude to this part of Bedford being very marginal and to the difficulty of sustaining long-term settlement until the need to utilise the waterfront for commercial use arose in the 19th century. The area

of development appears from maps of the 18th and early 19th century to have been part of a southern tributary system of the River Ouse.

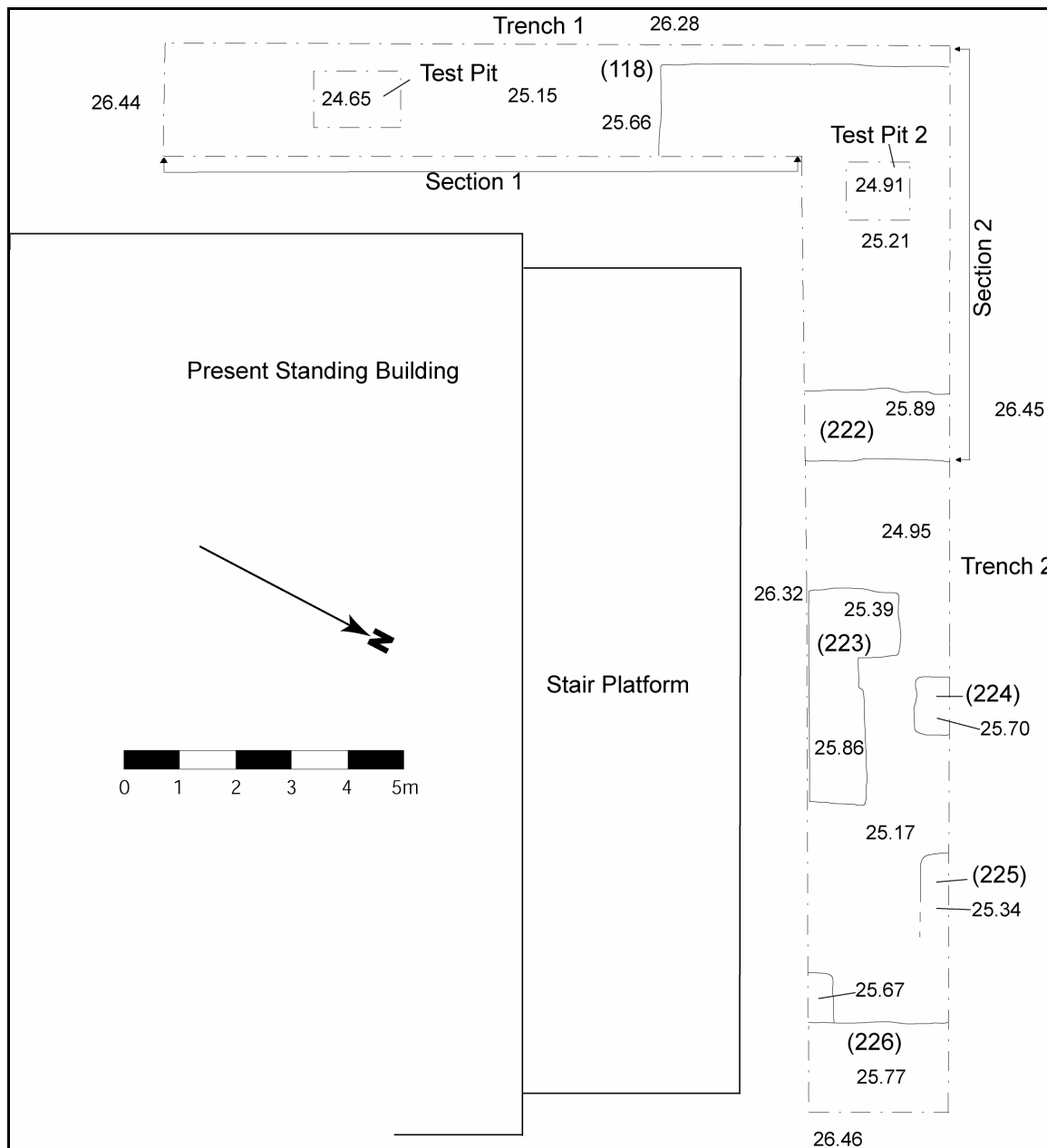


Fig. 2: Plan of trenches

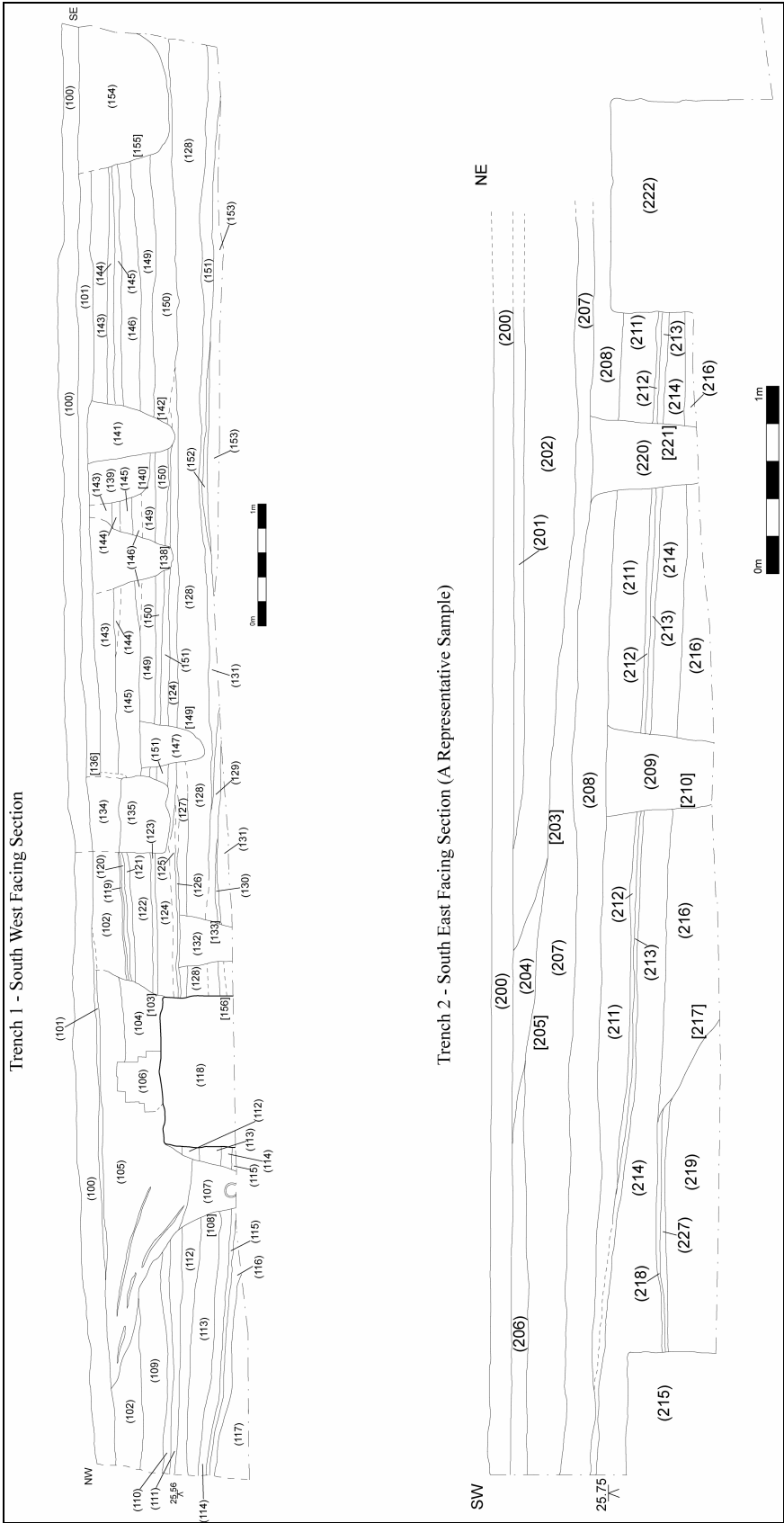


Fig. 3: Trench sections (Trenches 1 & 2)

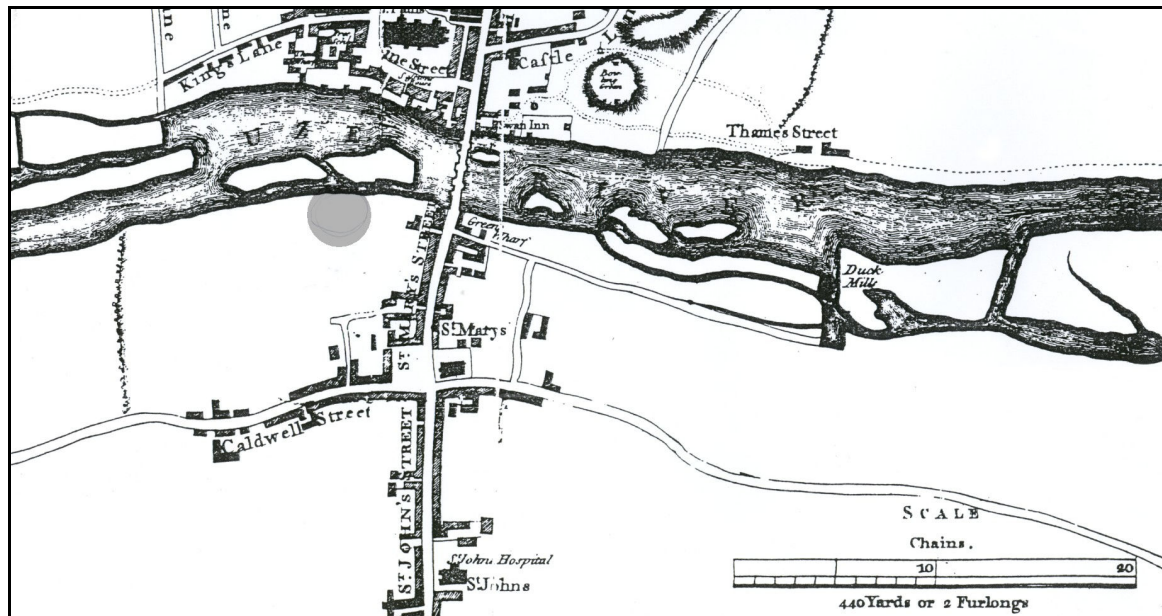


Fig. 4: Map of Bedford (Thomas Jefferys) 1765

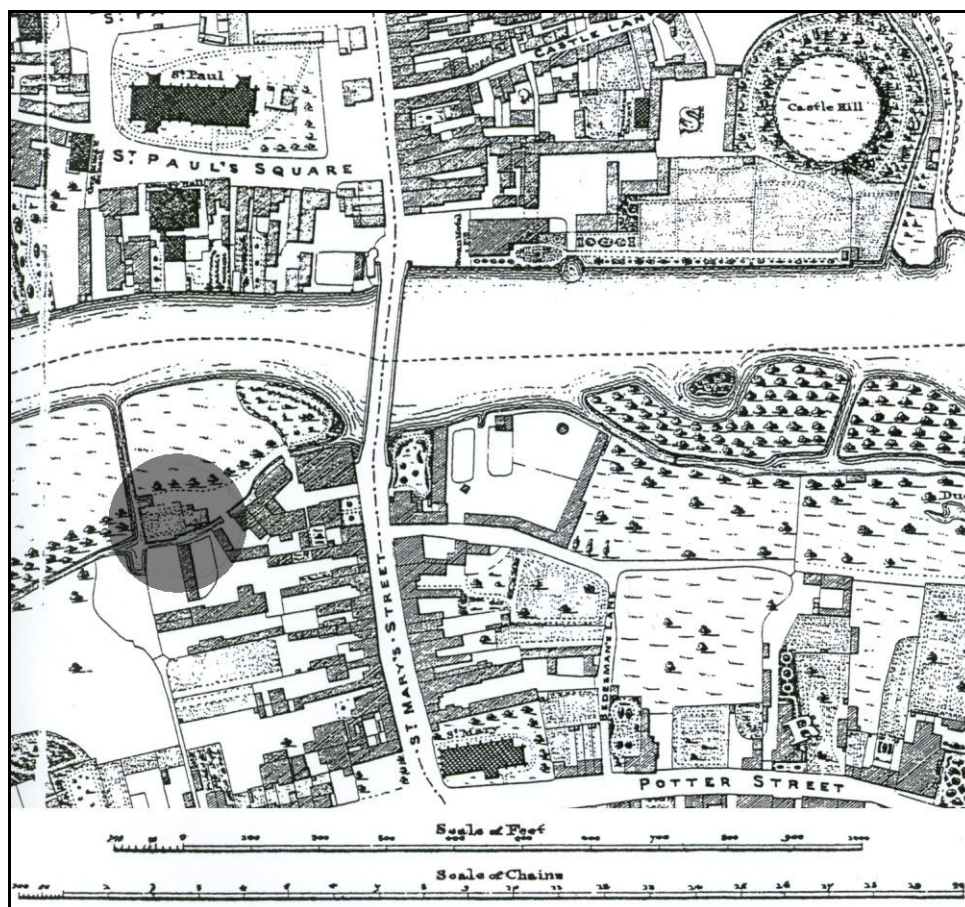


Fig. 5: Map of Bedford (M Reynolds) 1841

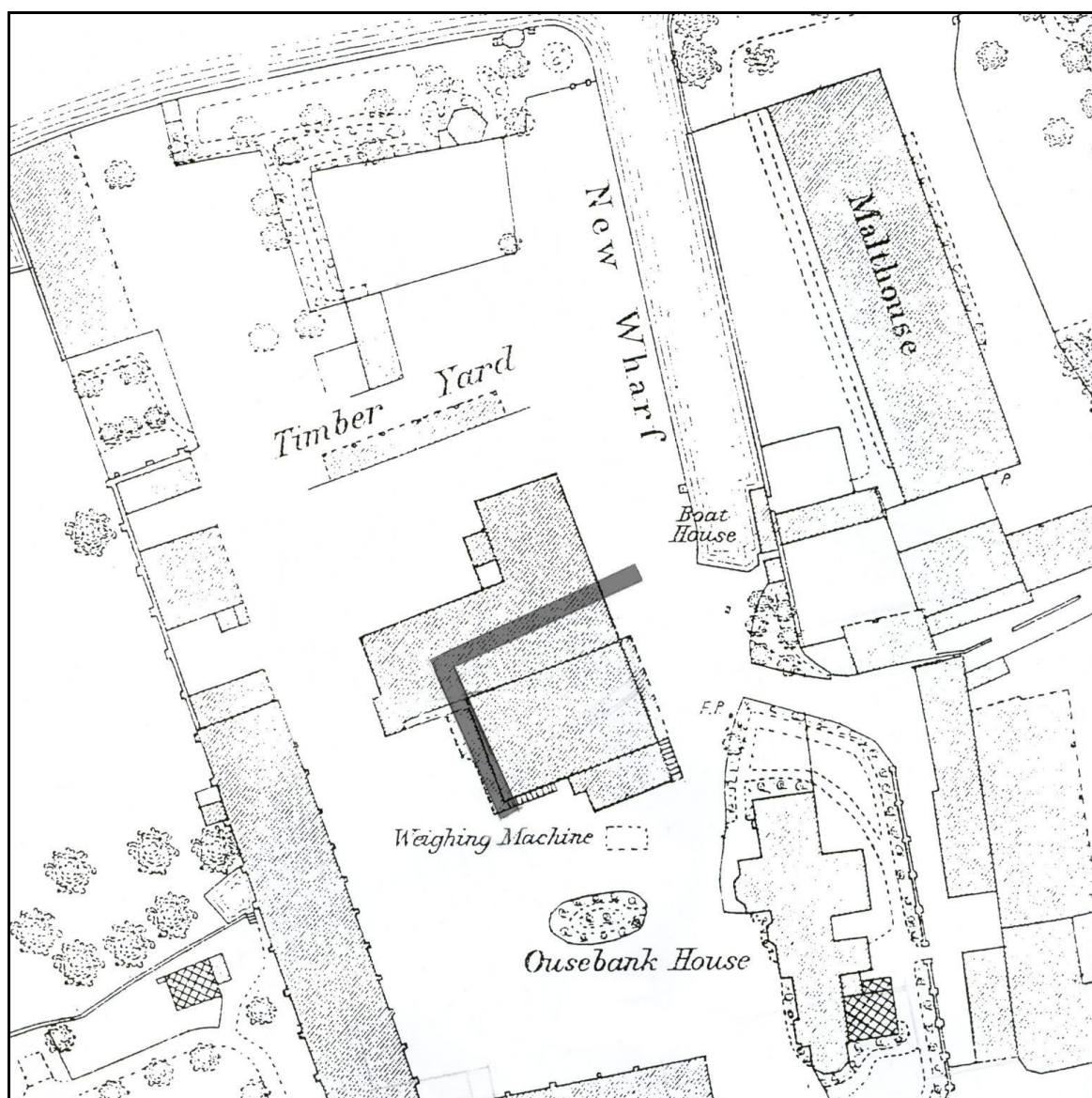


Fig. 6: Ordnance Survey 1883 25 inch 1st edition map

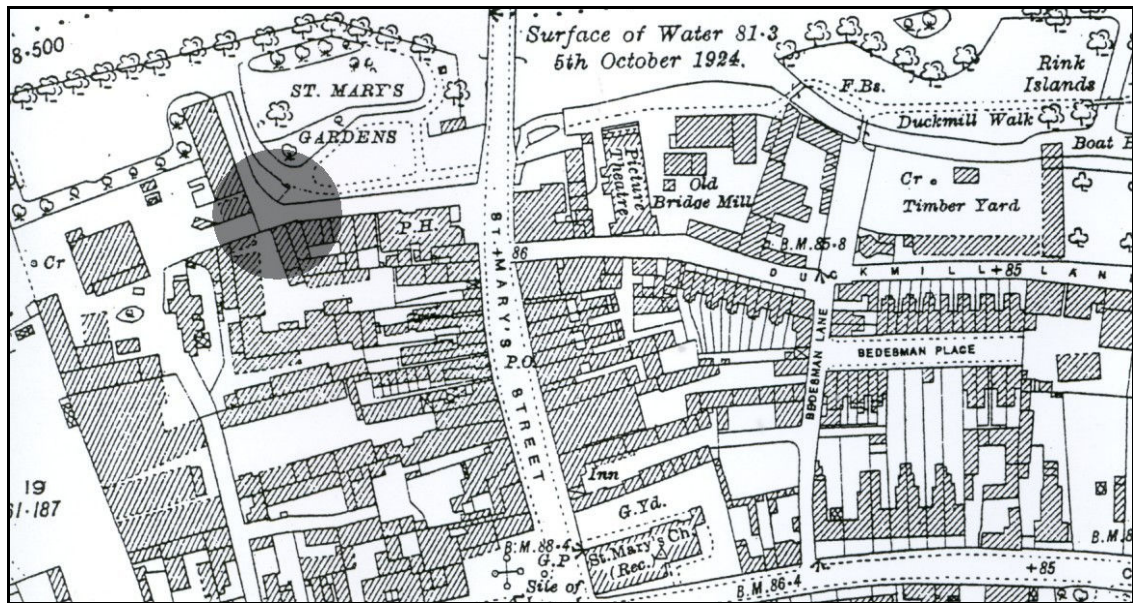


Fig. 7: Ordnance Survey 1926 25 inch 3rd edition map

Appendix 1 Context Register

Trench 1

Context	Description	Height (m) OD
Context No 100	Concrete	26.58
Interpretation	Concrete surface	
Context No 101	Thin layer of aggregate sub base	26.27
Interpretation	Deposit to make up ground prior to concrete being laid.	
Context No 102	Mixed deposit with inclusions of CBM, cut by [103], [136] and [155]	26.27
Interpretation	Early 20th century deposit to level ground surface.	
Context No 103	Fairly steep sided cut, base of cut is (118). Filled by (104)	26.27
Interpretation	Cut for insertion of services.	
Context No 104	Loosely compacted fill of [105]	26.05
Interpretation	Fill of cut for insertion of modern services	
Context No 105	Fairly loosely compacted, mixed deposit with visible tipping lines	26.17
Interpretation	Early 20th century deposit, perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 106	5 courses of a stretcher bonded red brick wall.	26.07
Interpretation	Later phase of building activity, perhaps modernising or extending building phase represented by (118)	
Context No 107	Loosely compacted fill of [108]	25.56
Interpretation	Fill of cut for insertion of services	
Context No 108	Steep sided cut, base of cut not fully excavated. Filled by (107)	25.56
Interpretation	Cut for insertion of services.	
Context No 109	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (110), (111), (112), (113), (114), (115), and (116).	25.86
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 110	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (111), (112), (113), (114), (115), and (116).	25.71
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 111	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (112), (113), (114), (115), and (116).	25.64
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 112	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (111), (113), (114), (115), and (116).	25.55
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 113	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (111), (112), (114), (115), and (116).	25.48
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 114	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (111), (112), (113), (115), and (116).	25.39
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 115	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (111), (112), (113), (114), and (116).	25.32
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 116	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM, ash and slag. Similar to (109), (110), (111), (112), (113), (114), and (115).	25.30
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 117	Homogenous deposit comprising lightly compacted ash and coke with frequent inclusions of large slag fragments.	25.24
Interpretation	Internal area of building demarcated by (118)	
Context No 118	Concrete stanchion, orientated SW-NE. Extending from SW facing section for c. 1.6m before returning to the NW.	25.72
Interpretation	The earliest phase of building recognised within this trench.	
Context No 119	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (120), (121), (122), (123), (124), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136].	26.07
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 120	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (121), (122), (123), (124), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136].	26.06
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	
Context No 121	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (122), (123), (124), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136].	26.04
Interpretation	Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	

Context No 122 Interpretation	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (121), (123), (124), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136]. Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	25.99
Context No 123 Interpretation	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (121), (122), (124), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136]. Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	25.81
Context No 124 Interpretation	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (121), (122), (123), (125), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136]. Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	25.77
Context No 125 Interpretation	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (121), (122), (123), (124), and (126). Cut by [103] and [136]. Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	25.64
Context No 126 Interpretation	Mid brown homogenous deposit with some inclusions of ash, slag and CBM. Similar to (119), (120), (121), (122), (123), (124), and (125). Cut by [103] and [136]. Lens within a sequence of deposits perhaps to level ground surface.	25.60
Context No 127 Interpretation	Homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM. Similar to (128), (129), (130) and (131). Cut by [133]. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.58
Context No 128 Interpretation	Homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM. Similar to (127), (129), (130) and (131). Cut by [133]. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.51
Context No 129 Interpretation	Homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM. Similar to (127), (128), (130) and (131). Cut by [133]. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.34
Context No 130 Interpretation	Homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM. Similar to (127), (128), (129) and (131). Cut by [133]. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.28
Context No 131 Interpretation	Homogenous deposit with some inclusions of CBM. Similar to (127), (128), (129) and (130). Cut by [133]. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.26
Context No 132 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [133] with cast iron water main. Fill of cut to insert water main	25.58
Context No 133 Interpretation	Fairly steep sided cut, base of cut not fully excavated. Filled by (132) Cut for insertion of services.	25.58
Context No 134 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [136]. Upper fill of cut to insert services.	26.34
Context No 135 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [136]. Lower fill of cut to insert services	26.06
Context No 136 Interpretation	Steep sided cut with flat base. Filled by (134) and (135). Cut for insertion of services.	26.34
Context No 137 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [138]. Fill of cut to insert services.	26.32
Context No 138 Interpretation	Fairly steep sided cut with flat base. Filled by (137). Cut for insertion of services.	26.32
Context No 139 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [140], cut by [142]. Fill of cut to insert services.	26.32
Context No 140 Interpretation	Fairly steep sided cut with flat base. Filled with (139) and cut by [142]. Cut for insertion of services.	26.32
Context No 141 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [142]. Fill of cut to insert services.	26.32
Context No 142 Interpretation	Fairly steep sided cut with gently curved base. Filled by (141). Cut for insertion of services.	26.32
Context No 143 Interpretation	Black homogenous deposit comprising ash and coke. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	26.32
Context No 144 Interpretation	Mid - dark brown homogenous deposit with moderate inclusions of CBM. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	26.18
Context No 145 Interpretation	Black homogenous deposit comprising ash and coke. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	26.12
Context No 146 Interpretation	Orangey brown deposit with moderate inclusions of CBM. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	26.08
Context No 147 Interpretation	Loosely compacted fill of [148]. Fill of cut for insertion of services	25.90
Context No 148 Interpretation	Steep sided cut with curved base. Filled by (147). Cut for insertion of services.	25.90
Context No 149 Interpretation	Mid brown deposit with moderate inclusions of CBM. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.94
Context No 150 Interpretation	Black homogenous deposit comprising ash and coke. Deposit perhaps representing demolition deposits or deposits to level ground surface.	25.78
Context No 151	Mid - dark brown homogenous deposit with moderate inclusions of CBM.	25.40

Interpretation	Late 19th century reclamation deposit.	
Context No 152	Dark brown deposit with occasional inclusions of CBM and ash.	25.40
Interpretation	Late 19th century reclamation deposit.	
Context No 153	Tightly compacted light grey clay with occasional inclusion of animal bone and frequent charcoal flecking.	25.36
Interpretation	Inter-tidal riverine deposit.	
Context No 154	Loosely compacted fill of [155].	26.27
Interpretation	Fill of cut for insertion of services	
Context No 155	Fairly steep sided cut with gently curved base. Filled by (154).	26.27
Interpretation	Cut for insertion of services.	

Trench 2

Context	Description	Height (m) OD
Context No 200	Concrete	26.39
Interpretation	Ground surface.	
Context No 201	Tarmacadam	26.27
Interpretation	Earlier ground surface	
Context No 202	Concrete rubble. Fill of cut [203].	26.27
Interpretation	Sub base for construction of hard-standing ground surface.	
Context No 203	Fairly gently sloping cut with flat base. Filled by (202).	26.27
Interpretation	Cut for insertion of sub base for hard-standing ground surface.	
Context No 204	Loose sand deposit, fill of cut [205].	26.27
Interpretation	Deposit for preparation of laying hard-standing surface.	
Context No 205	Gently sloping cut with flat base. Filled with (204).	26.27
Interpretation	Cut for insertion of sand in preparation of laying hard-standing ground surface.	
Context No 206	Mid brown homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [205].	26.27
Interpretation	Deposit to level ground surface.	
Context No 207	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [205] and [207].	26.21
Interpretation	20th century demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 208	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [221].	26.01
Interpretation	20th century demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 209	Loosely compacted fill of [210].	25.77
Interpretation	Fill of cut to insert services.	
Context No 210	Steep sided cut filled by (209). Full depth not excavated.	25.77
Interpretation	Cut to insert services.	
Context No 211	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [210] and [221].	25.81
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 212	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [210] and [221].	25.73
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 213	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [210] and [221].	25.70
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 214	Homogenous deposit with frequent inclusions of CBM. Cut by [210] and [221].	25.80
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 215	Concrete stanchion	25.65
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	
Context No 216	Homogenous deposit with a high frequency of slag inclusions. Cut by [210] and [221]. May be the fill of probable cut [217] and the same as (117) noted in Trench 1.	25.50
Interpretation	Internal area of building demarcated by concrete stanchions.	
Context No 217	Possible cut filled by (216). Cut not very clear but appears to be fairly gently sloping sides. Full depth not excavated.	25.50
Interpretation	May represent a phase of dumping to create a level ground surface.	
Context No 218	Homogenous deposit with moderate inclusion of CBM. Cut by [217].	25.51
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 219	Homogenous deposit with moderate inclusion of CBM. Cut by [217].	25.45
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	
Context No 220	Loosely compacted fill of [221].	25.85
Interpretation	Fill of cut to insert services.	
Context No 221	Steep sided cut filled by (220). Full depth not excavated.	25.85
Interpretation	Cut to insert services.	
Context No 222	Concrete stanchion	25.89
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	
Context No 223	Concrete stanchion	25.39
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	



Context No 224	Concrete stanchion	25.70
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	
Context No 225	Concrete stanchion	25.34
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	
Context No 226	Concrete stanchion	25.77
Interpretation	Represents earliest phase of building recorded in this trench.	
Context No 227	Homogenous deposit with moderate inclusion of CBM. Cut by [217].	25.48
Interpretation	Demolition deposit perhaps used to make up ground level.	