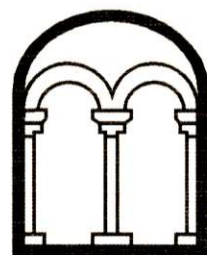


**CHURCH OF ST PETER
ARLESEY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Albion
archaeology



**CHURCH OF ST PETER
ARLESEY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Project: SPA3412
OASIS ref.: albionar1-348426
Museum accession no.: BEDFM 2019.43

Document: 2019/46
Version 1.0

11th April 2019

Compiled by	Approved by
Gareth Shane	Drew Shotliff

Produced for:
The Barry Wright Partnership

On behalf of:
St Peter's Arlesey PCC



Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Project Background	5
1.2 Site Location and Description	5
1.3 Archaeological Background	5
2. METHODOLOGY	6
3. RESULTS	7
3.1 Introduction	7
3.2 Trench 1 – French Drain South Side of the Nave	7
3.3 Trench 2 – South of Vestry	8
3.4 Trench 3 – West Side of the Tower	8
3.5 Trench 4 – North West corner of the Nave	8
4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	9
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	10

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location plan

Figure 2: All-features plan

List of Plates

Plate 1: Trench 1 – pilaster buttress foundation, looking east

Plate 2: Trench 1 – nave foundation, south side, looking north

Plate 3: Trench 2 – looking south

Plate 4: Trench 3 – looking east towards tower

Plate 5: Trench 4 – looking south-east towards north-west corner of chancel

The figures and plates are bound at the end of the document.



Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

Acknowledgements

The project was monitored by David Baker, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. The fieldwork was undertaken by Gareth Shane (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Gareth Shane. The figures have been produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.0</i>	<i>11/04/2019</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Albion Archaeology
 St Mary's Church
 St Mary's Street
 Bedford, MK42 0AS
 ☎: 0300 300 8141
 Fax: 0300 300 8209
 E-mail: office@albion-arch.com
 Website: www.albion-arch.com



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by The Barry Wright Partnership on behalf of St Peter's Arlesey PCC to:

- oversee groundworks associated with the excavation of new drains and repair of old drainage and
- investigate and record any archaeological remains that were uncovered during the works.

The attendance of an archaeologist had been requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) as a precaution against the discovery of archaeological remains during the building works. The DAA was contacted prior to the works in order to ascertain their requirements.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The Church of St Peter lies within Church End, Arlesey and is centred on grid reference TL 19191 37534 (Figure 1).

The following description is taken from Bedfordshire Historical Record Society volume on Bedfordshire churches and Pevsner. The Grade I listed building consists of a nave, chancel, north and south aisle, west tower and south porch. Part of the north wall of the nave is 12th-century in date. The chancel is 13th-century and the aisles began to be added in the late 13th century. The nave and aisles were extended westward in the 14th century. In the 15th century a chantry chapel was built on the south side of the chancel and a west tower was added. The tower collapsed in 1665 and in 1713 the west end of the church was repaired with a new belfry erected over this end of the nave (BHRC 1994; O'Brien and Pevsner 2014).

The Victorian restoration began in 1855 under the architect John Norton. The work involved the demolition of the chapel on the south side of the chancel, the erection of the present vestry and insertion of two new windows in the south side of the chancel. A new west tower was built in 1877, under the designs of architect Arthur W. Blomfield. There is a modern porch on the south side, three times the size of an earlier one (BHRC 1994; O'Brien and Pevsner 2014).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

Human occupation in the parish of Arlesey is of long-standing. St Peter's Church (HER1006) is Grade I listed (NHLE 1113817) and dates back to the early 13th century. Together with the parish churchyard (HER8849) it forms the core of the Church End medieval settlement focus (HER17108). The oldest standing grave stone dates to the 18th century but the churchyard is likely to have been in use since the church was established.



2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological work comprised the monitoring of the hand-excavation and improvement of an existing French drain on the south side of the church nave, the excavation of new drains and repair of existing ones surrounding the church.

The French drain trench was 1m wide and c.0.85m deep (Figures 2 and 3). All other new drains measured 0.3m wide and 0.7m maximum depth. Several existing drains were cleaned only and hence not monitored.

Archaeological monitoring took place during February 2019. The methods employed during the project complied with:

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of conduct* (2014) and *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014);
- Historic England's *The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (2015) and *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated From Christian Burial Grounds in England* (2005) and subsequent Ministry of Justice guidance;
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2017).

The excavation work was carried out by the building contractor under archaeological supervision. Where the fabric of the building was exposed a drawn and photographic record was maintained. Features and deposits of archaeological interest were cleaned and investigated where necessary by the supervising archaeologist.

Observations and measurements were recorded on *pro forma* recording sheets and a digital photographic record was made of the works.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Four trenches were monitored. Trench 1 comprised the French drain on the south side of the nave. Trench 2 connected to this just south of the vestry. Trench 3 was located on the west side of the tower, with Trench 4 on the north-west corner of the nave.

Individual deposits/features were recorded on site as contexts (numbers in round brackets (***)) in the following text.

3.2 Trench 1 – French Drain South Side of the Nave

This trench was excavated along the south side of the 13th-century nave.

The nave wall is supported by three buttresses, the middle one of which effectively splits the drain in two with each portion measuring *c.*8.75m long, 1m wide and 0.6–0.9m deep. During these works foundations and previously buried lower portions of the buttresses were exposed. The buttresses were shown to have been repaired with differing materials to the wall fabric (Plate 1). They are likely to be 16th-century or later in date (British History online).

3.2.1 Nave foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the nave foundation to its full depth, including 0.1m into a mortar bedding layer beneath the foundation (104). The foundation comprised roughly hewn, randomly coursed clunch separated by light grey-yellow sandy mortar. Individual stones ranged in size from *c.*160mm x 40mm to 400mm x 250mm (102) (Plate 2), visible to a height of *c.*0.5m, above which the wall fabric is obscured by patchy render (as is the case for the majority of the nave).

During these hand-excavations the remains of two red-brick drains were found (103). They are likely to represent the gullies for previous downpipes (Plate 2) and are likely to be no earlier than late Victorian in date.

3.2.2 Graveyard soil

The outside vertical trench face revealed 0.2m of gravel (100), representing the French drain fill. Directly beneath this lay 0.4m of loose mid-grey silt (101), representing backfill from previous drainage works. This graveyard soil produced a single disarticulated human femur, which was left on site for reburial.

3.2.3 Buttress foundations

The pilaster buttress foundations on the south side of the nave were exposed during excavation of the French drains. The foundations on all three comprised large unshaped clunch stones (Plate 1), the largest measuring 500mm x 600mm. The multiple repairs made to the buttresses on both sides of the church mean the date of the foundations is difficult to determine. The buttress foundations were not exposed to their full depth during the monitored drainage works.



3.3 Trench 2 – South of Vestry

A drain was excavated 1.5m south of the vestry, connecting the east end of Trench 1 with an existing soakaway 3m south of the chancel (Figure 2.). The trench was 5m long x 0.3m wide x 0.6m deep.

The overburden comprised dark brown silty graveyard soil (106) to a depth of 0.2m. Beneath this was loose mid-grey silty soil (107) with occasional large limestone fragments, measuring < 0.25m; it contained an existing ceramic drain. One fragment of human bone was recovered and left on site for reburial.

3.4 Trench 3 – West Side of the Tower

Trench 3 was excavated east-west, perpendicular to the 19th-century tower. It was 2.6m long x 0.3m wide x 0.45m deep and ran from the tower wall through the tarmac path to form a T-shaped, 1.4m-long north-south end. This end of the trench cut through the edge of the graveyard to connect with an existing drain (Plate 4; Figure 2). None of the tower foundations were exposed and no human remains were disturbed.

The uppermost deposit in Trench 3 comprised shingle filling of the existing French drain (100) to a depth of 0.10m. Stratigraphically beneath this was cemetery soil (106) tipping towards the tower wall and found only at the east end of the trench. The drain abutted the tarmac path (108), which was bedded on firm, yellow sand (109) to a depth of 0.26m. Directly beneath this lay mid-brown-grey silty graveyard soil (110), which was excavated to a depth of 0.19m.

3.5 Trench 4 – North-west Corner of the Nave

Trench 4 was aligned NW-SE and was excavated from an existing drain close to the north-west corner of the nave. It extended for 5m to meet an existing manhole (Plate 5; Figure 2). The first 2.6m of this trench, from the manhole, broke new ground but thereafter followed an existing pipe trench to the north-east corner of the nave (Plate 5).

The trench cut through tarmac (108) to a depth of 0.08m. Directly beneath this lay graveyard soil (106) to a depth of 0.7m. A single human bone was recovered from this material and left on site for reburial. No graves were disturbed and no church fabric was exposed during the excavation of this trench.



4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Four trenches were observed and recorded around the exterior of the church. The excavation of the French drain on the south side of the nave exposed the full depth of the foundation, allowing its form of construction and state of preservation to be recorded.

The nave foundation comprised randomly coursed, roughly hewn clunch stone, sat upon a bedding layer of mid-brown-orange, loose sand with limestone fragments. The latter represents the ‘outer edge’ of a deposit placed within the foundation trench and tamped down to form a construction base.

In addition, the near full depth of the pilaster buttresses was exposed and recorded. The buttresses sat on large unshaped limestone blocks and had been subject to multiple repairs, using differing materials.

Four other drainage trenches exposed little that was unexpected of a typical churchyard — mixture of modern disturbance (where old drainage works were improved and renewed) or graveyard soil occasionally revealing disarticulated human bone in the areas that broke new ground.

No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork is required. This report will be uploaded to the Oasis website (ref. no. albionar1-348426). The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no. BEDFM 2019.43).



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

BHRS 1994, *Bedfordshire Churches in The Nineteenth Century, Part 1: Parishes A to G*, Volume 73

British History online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol2/pp261-265> .
[Accessed 25th March]

O'Brien, C and Pevsner, N, 2014, *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London

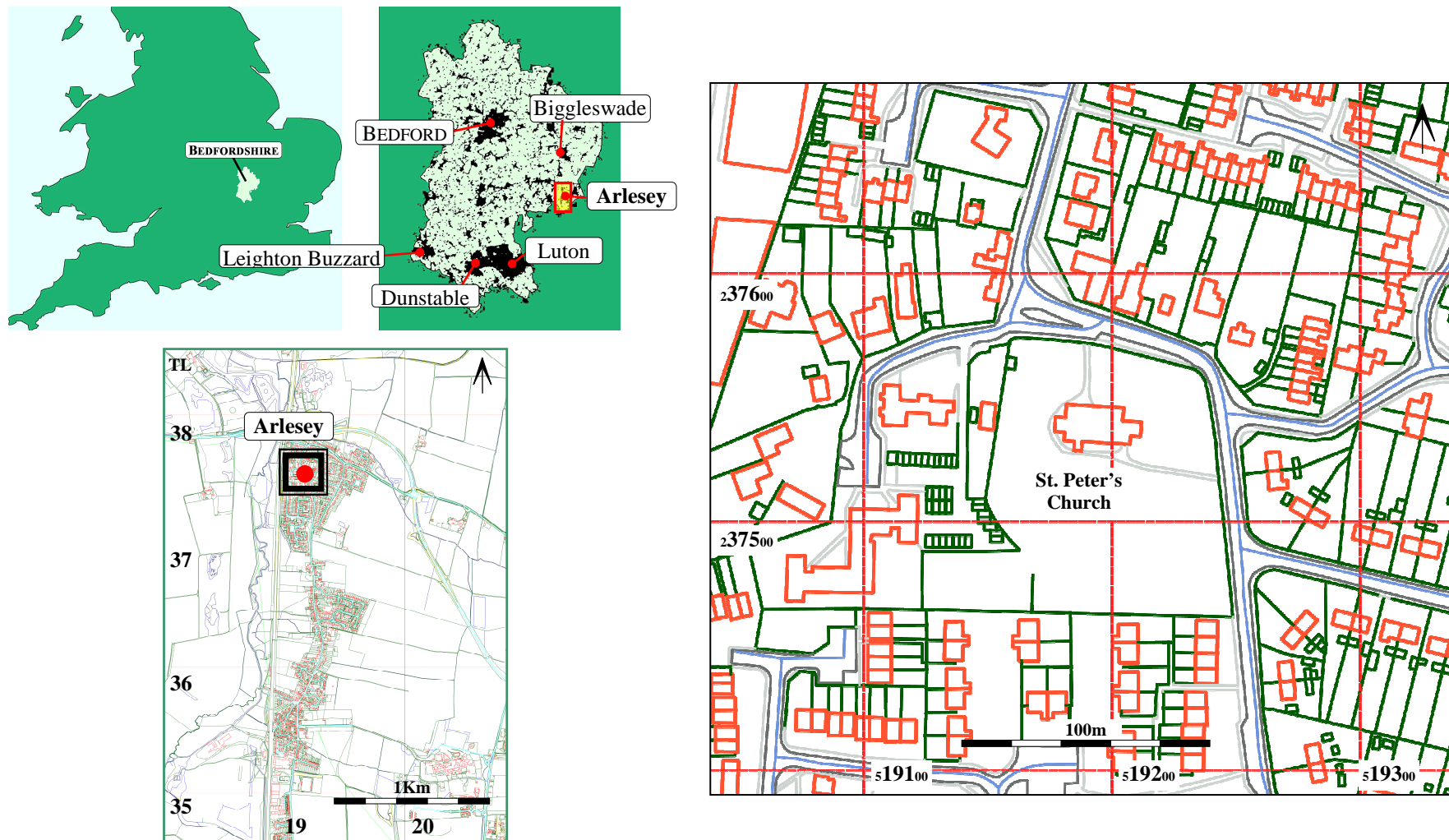


Figure 1: Site location plan

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)

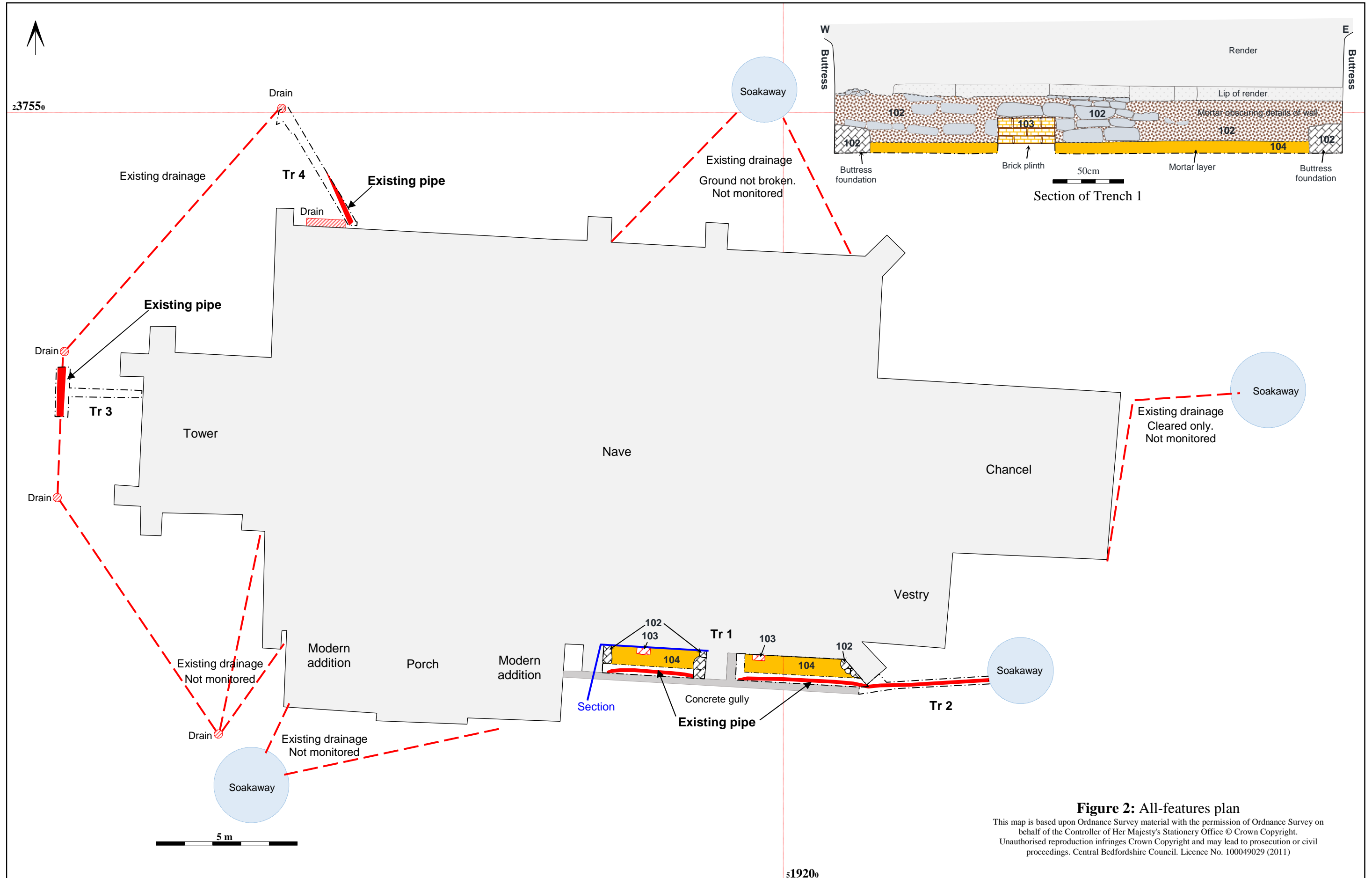


Figure 2: All-features plan

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)



Plate 1: Trench 1 – pilaster buttress foundation, looking east (1m scale)



Plate 2: Trench 1 – nave foundation, south side, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 2 – looking south (0.5m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 3 – looking east towards tower (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 4 – looking south-east towards north-west corner of chancel



Albion
archaeology



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

Telephone 01234 294000
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com

