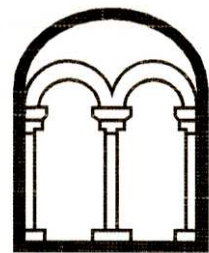


**BASSMEAD MANOR
WOODLAND WEDDING AREA
STAPLOE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



**BASSMEAD MANOR
WOODLAND WEDDING AREA
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BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Compiled by	Edited by	Approved by
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Robinson & Hall LLP

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P Squire Ltd



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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. This document should not be relied upon or used for any other project 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).

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Acknowledgements

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Robinson and Hall LLP on behalf of P Squire Ltd. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke (Senior Archaeological Officer) and Geoff Saunders (Archaeological Officer) of Bedford Borough Council.

Fieldwork was carried out by Ernie Rizzo (Project Supervisor). This report was prepared by Ernie Rizzo and edited by Benjamin Carroll (Assistant Archaeology Manager). Figures were created 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>21/07/2020</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CifA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record (of Bedford Borough Council)
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NMP	National Mapping Programme
OD	Ordnance Datum
PDA	Permitted development area
SAO	Bedford Borough Council Senior Archaeological Officer
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-technical Summary

Robinson and Hall LLP received planning permission (19/02537/FUL) for the change of use of agricultural land to an outdoor wedding area (with associated structures and landscaping) and erection of a 'honeymoon pod' at Bassmead Manor, Staploe, Bedfordshire, PE19 5JB.

On the recommendation of Bedford Borough Council's Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO), a condition was attached to the planning consent (Condition 4), requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Robinson and Hall LLP to undertake an initial archaeological field evaluation, the results of which are set out in this report, in order to assist the SAO in advising the local planning authority (LPA) on the potential archaeological impacts of the development and on any further mitigation works that might be required.

The archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on 24th June 2020. It comprised five trial trenches, measuring c.10m x 1.8m, placed within the footprint of the proposed woodland wedding area. The trenching revealed a small number of modern archaeological features—a 19th-century pit and the remains of a surface from an agricultural trackway.

Given the limited nature of the recovered data, the revealed remains are considered to be of negligible heritage significance with no potential to address regional research objectives.

A summary of the evaluation results will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (ref. no.: albionar1-388731). The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession number BEDFM 2020.14).



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission (19/02537/FUL) for the change of use of agricultural land to an outdoor wedding area (with associated structures and landscaping) and erection of a ‘honeymoon pod’ at Bassmead Manor, Staploe, Bedfordshire, PE19 5JB.

The following condition (no. 4) was attached to the permission:

No development shall take place including tree planting until an archaeological mitigation strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The archaeological mitigation strategy shall include a timetable and the following components (the completion of each to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority will result in a separate confirmation of compliance for each component): -.

- (i) fieldwork and/ or preservation "in situ" of archaeological remains;*
- (ii) a post-excavation assessment report (to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork);*
- (iii) a post-excavation analysis report, preparation of site archive ready for deposition at a store approved by the Local Planning Authority, completion of an archive report, and submission of a publication report (to be completed within two years of the completion of fieldwork).*

The archaeological mitigation strategy shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and timings.

REASON: To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely investigation, recording, reporting and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with policy 41S and according to national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019). The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the timing of compliance is fundamental to the development permitted and that the permission ought to be refused unless the condition is imposed in this form.

Given the permitted development area’s (PDA) potential to preserve archaeological remains from the prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, the Borough Council’s Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) advised that the first stage of work required to address the archaeological condition should comprise archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the archaeological trial trenching (Albion Archaeology 2020) and to undertake the fieldwork. The results of the trial trenching are set out in this report to assist the SAO in advising the Local Planning Authority on



the potential archaeological impacts of the development, and on any further mitigation works that might be required.

1.2 **Site Location and Description**

Bassmead¹ Manor lies in the north of Bedfordshire, in the parish of Staploe, c.3km west of St Neots (Cambridgeshire) (Figure 1). Access to the site is from the south, along an access drive off the Staploe to Upper Staploe road.

Bassmead Manor is located within a medieval moated enclosure, which is a scheduled monument (NHLE 1012067). There are several different buildings on the island within the moat. In the north-west corner is the Bassmead Manor farmhouse, a Grade II* timber-framed building dating from the 15th century (NHLE 1321617). Along the south side of the island are an 18th-century timber-framed barn and 19th-century brick-built farm buildings, which are now used for weddings. A modern L-shaped range of buildings in the south-west corner of the island forms part of the wedding venue. The north-east corner of the island is occupied by late-20th-century farm buildings. Externally the moat is bordered to the north and west by a small area of woodland, Home Wood. The land to south and east is under arable cultivation.

The PDA is currently part of an arable field. It covers area of c.3,570m², centred on OS grid reference TL 1409 6125. It is located just outside the moated enclosure, on its eastern side. The proposed development consists of landscaping and tree-planting works to form a new outdoor woodland wedding area.

The PDA lies on the western side of the Great Ouse Valley on the slightly higher clay lands. The moated site lies at c.47m OD near the top of a gentle SE-facing slope, which overlooks the hamlet of Staploe and the Duloe Brook, a tributary to the Great Ouse.

The superficial geological deposits consist of Oadby Member, Diamicton². This formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period, under ice age conditions (glacial till). The underlying bedrock is Oxford Clay Formation, Mudstone. This is a sedimentary deposit which formed approximately 157 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period in a shallow marine environment.

1.3 **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The application was accompanied by a heritage statement (based on a 500m-radius study area) that summarised the archaeological and historical background to the PDA (Albion Archaeology 2019).

Historical map evidence shows that the PDA was a mixture of pasture and horticultural land from at least the later 17th century onwards. The northern half of the PDA falls within a field referred to in a map of 1671 and sales particulars of 1851 as the 'Home Meadow'. The southern half of the PDA

¹ Or Basmead in early records

² Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2019]



falls in a parcel of land referred to in 1671 as 'The old Hopp Ground' and which is recorded as an orchard on maps and in documents between 1763 and the early 20th century.

Archaeological monitoring of development works in the area immediately south of the PDA identified three undated ditches on similar alignments to those of present-day landscape features (Albion Archaeology 2015).

Possible evidence of prehistoric activity from the study area consists of enclosure cropmarks, interpreted as dating from the Iron Age or Iron Age/Roman periods. Of interest is NMP 1613796/HER 16762, a curvilinear cropmark located adjacent to the south-west corner of the PDA; it interpreted as a sub-circular enclosure *c.*24m across with an entrance opening on its south-west side. It may be associated with further cropmarks *c.*200m to the north-east of the PDA, which have been interpreted as an extensive Iron Age to Roman settlement (HER 496). Archaeological investigation on the latter in 1935 found pits and ditches that contained Roman pottery (Simco 1984, 118).

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database includes records of five Roman coins in the study area (HER 20344, 20345, 20346, 20347, 20349). These are recorded as being found a short distance to the north-west of the PDA, within the area shown on historical maps as Home Meadow.

One find dating from the Anglo-Saxon period is recorded from the study area: a copper alloy chatelaine³ (HER 20226) found *c.*400m to the south of the PDA.

Non-designated medieval heritage assets recorded in the study area include:

- Hook Wood and Home Wood (HER 8597), areas of ancient woodland, possibly remnants of the medieval woodland;
- Ridge and furrow in Staploe Parish (NMP 1612287/HER 2240) (Figure 2), consisting of small blocks of earthworks identified across the parish, representing remnants of the medieval open-field system that remained in use until parliamentary enclosure in 1797;
- The PAS database contains two medieval find-spots from the study area — HER 199933, a 13th-century silver penny found *c.*300m west of the PDA; and HER 20219, a late medieval silver penny of Henry VII found *c.*450m south of the PDA.

1.4 **Project Objectives**

The principal purpose of the archaeological field evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA;
- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

³ A set of short chains attached to a woman's belt, used for carrying keys or other items.



This information will be used by the SAO and the LPA to evaluate the significance of the potential impact of the permitted development on any archaeological remains that might survive within the site.

This report examines the significance of the results with reference to regional research frameworks. The relevant documents for the region are provided by Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Essex) (Brown and Glazebrook 2000) and Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011).

In addition to these regionally focussed documents, work has also specifically been done on the county of Bedfordshire: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al* 2007).



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
• Bedford Museum	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> (2010)
• ClfA	<i>Charter and by-law; Code of conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i> (2014)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation. 2nd ed.</i> (2011)

2.2 Trial Trenching

The trial trenching was undertaken on 24th June 2020. Five trial trenches measuring c.10m x 1.8m were excavated within the footprint of the proposed woodland wedding area (Figure 2).

Trench 4 was moved c.4m to the south to avoid a live electrical service and a large tree trunk.

All topsoil and overburden were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision.

All excavation and recording were carried out by experienced Albion staff. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. All features and deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 etc. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. The trenches were inspected on 24th June by Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for



the recovery of archaeological artefacts. A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2020).

The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession number BEDFM 2020.14). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-388731) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All archaeological deposits and features found within the trial trenches are summarised in this section. Where site recording numbers have been used, they are distinguished by different bracket styles to indicate whether they are a feature number [***] or fill/layer numbers (***). Context numbers reflect the trench number, e.g. [404] is the cut of a pit in Trench 4.

Detailed descriptions of every individual context are provided in Appendix 1; this should be consulted for information such as alignment, nature of fills, dimensions etc. The trench locations are shown on Figure 1, with a more detailed plan and section presented on Figure 2. Selected site images are shown on Figures 3–4.

Archaeological features were identified in two trenches—a modern pit and the remains of a modern surface from an agricultural trackway. Datable artefacts were observed in two of the trenches, but not retained, indicating activity from the 19th century onwards.

Several land drains were recognised within all but one trench (Trench 4); they were aligned either N–S or E–W on a similar alignment to the modern field boundaries.

3.2 Overburden

The overburden was consistent within Trenches 1–3 and 5, comprising a topsoil layer of dark brown silt, 0.12–0.25m thick, overlying a layer of mid-brown silty clay subsoil, which was 0.18–0.25m thick.

To the south-east of the PDA, within Trench 4, the overburden varied slightly. A 0.26m-thick buried topsoil layer, comprising mid-brown silt with chalk inclusions, was situated between the topsoil and subsoil layers.

3.3 Archaeological Remains

3.3.1 19th-century pit

A sub-circular pit [404] was revealed towards the centre of Trench 4 (Figures 2 and 4). It was 0.95m in diameter, at least 0.25m deep, and contained a friable, light orange-brown sandy silt deposit that included fragments of modern (19th-century) glazed pottery.

3.3.2 Modern trackway surface

A broadly N–S aligned modern trackway surface (503) was revealed in Trench 5 (Figures 2 and 4). It was c.1.8m wide and contained a loose, orange-brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized stones and modern brick debris.



4 CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological field evaluation revealed evidence of agricultural activity in the PDA dating to the 19th century onwards, including a pit and the remains of a trackway surface.

The 19th-century pit [404] was probably associated with agricultural activity in the vicinity of the Manor to the south-west, which would have been operating as a farm during this period.

The N–S aligned trackway (503) in Trench 5 contained a substantial amount of modern brick debris and would have been associated with the farm.

Given the limited nature of the recovered data, the revealed remains are considered to be of negligible heritage significance with no potential to address regional research objectives.



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6 APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL51407/26177

OS Grid Ref.: TL14065/61270

Reason: Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable brown silt occasional small-medium stones 0.12m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay moderate small-medium stones 0.18m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Firm orange brown sandy clay moderate small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.40 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL14081/61262

OS Grid Ref.: TL14093/61265

Reason: Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable brown silt occasional small-medium stones 0.2m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Subsoil	Firm mid brown sandy clay moderate small-medium stones 0.25m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Natural	Firm orange brown sandy clay moderate small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.20 m. Width: 1.90 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL14083/61255

OS Grid Ref.: TL14083/61245

Reason: Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable brown silt occasional small stones 0.25m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay frequent small-large stones 0.2m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Natural	Firm orange brown sandy clay frequent small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Trench: 4**

Max Dimensions: Length: 11.10 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.5 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL14071/61221

OS Grid Ref.: TL14101/61239

Reason: Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Topsoil	Friable dark brown silt occasional small stones 0.14m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Buried topsoil	Friable mid brown silt occasional flecks chalk, occasional small stones 0.26m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay occasional small-medium stones 0.1m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Natural	Firm orange brown sandy clay moderate small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Pit	Sub-circular sides: steep dimensions: min depth 0.25m, max diameter 0.95m Not fully excavated - Modern feature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Fill	Friable light orange brown sandy silt occasional small stones Modern c.19th glazed ceramic pottery found - observed but not retained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.38 m. Max: 0.42 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL14101/61239

OS Grid Ref.: TL14110/61242

Reason: Assessment of Archaeological Potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Friable brown silt occasional small stones 0.20m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Subsoil	Firm mid brown sandy clay moderate small-large stones 0.22m at thickest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Natural	Firm orange brown sandy clay moderate small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
503	Trackway	Loose mid orange brown sandy clay frequent medium stones Contained modern brick debris - observed but not retained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

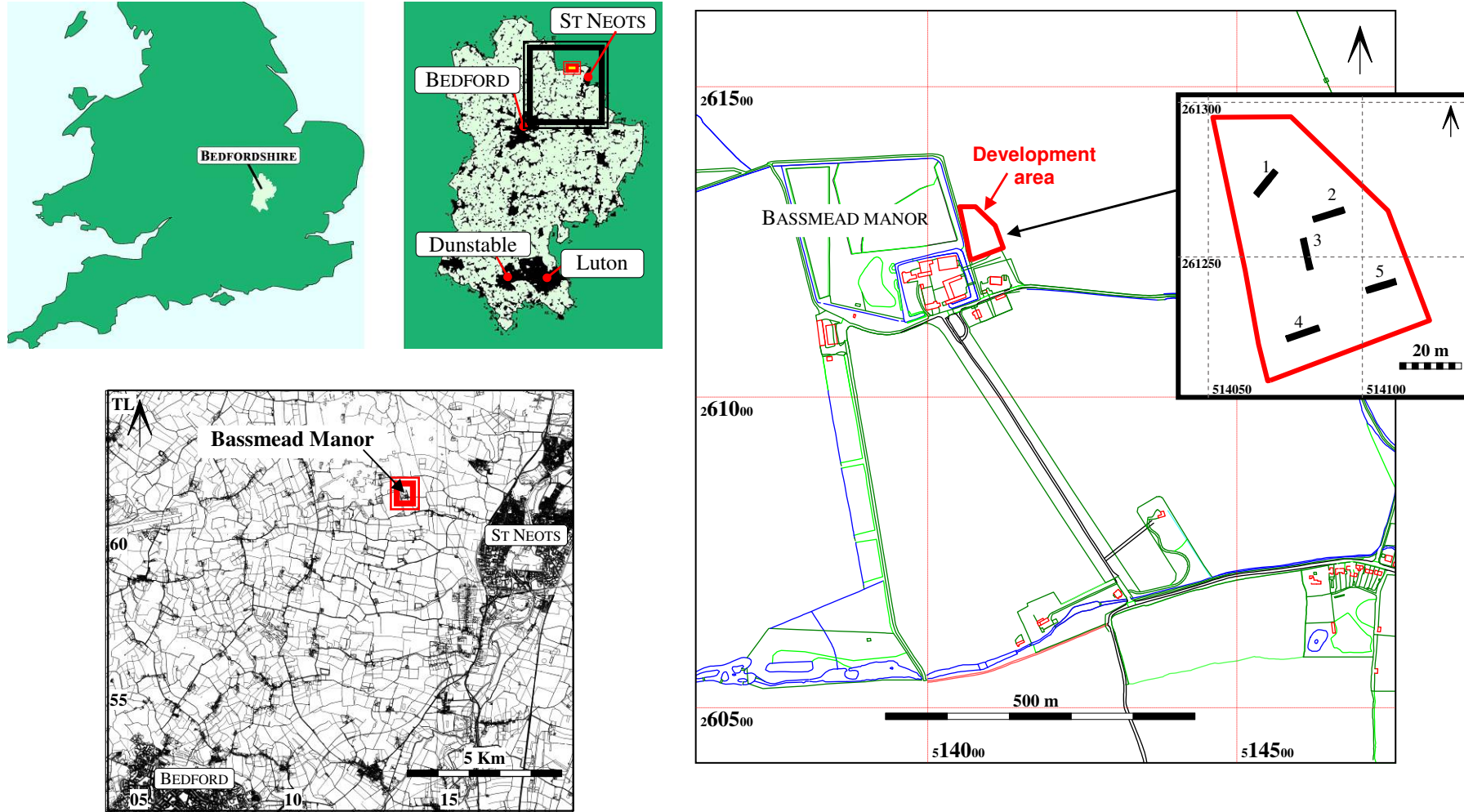


Figure 1: Site location plan

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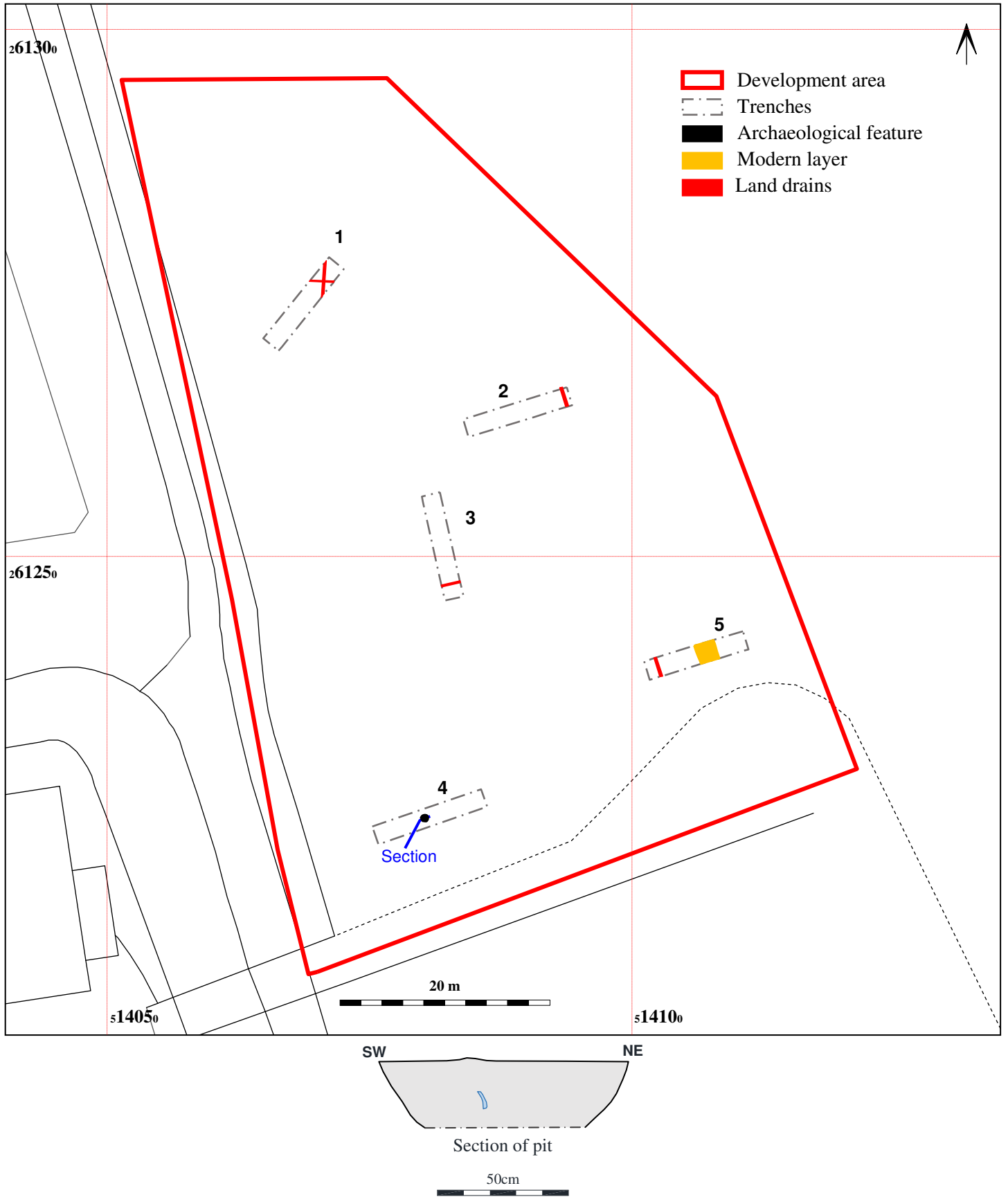


Figure 2: Detailed all-features plan and section

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Trench 1: Looking north-east (scale 1m)



Trench 2: Looking east (scale 1m)



Trench 3: Looking south (scale 1m)

Figure 3: Photographs of Trenches 1–3



Trench 4: Looking west (scale 1m)



Trench 5: Looking east (scale 1m)



Trench 4 pit [404]: South-facing section (scale 0.4m)
(Not fully excavated)



Trench 5 trackway (503): Looking north (scale 1m)

Figure 4: Photographs of Trenches 4–5

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