CHURCH COTTAGE PARK ROAD, MELCHBOURNE BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION







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Produced for: Mr M Robson

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Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. 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.

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The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner and Wiebke Starke (Archaeological Supervisors). This report was prepared by Ian Turner with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). It was edited by Wesley Keir and approved by Drew Shotliff.

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Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
HER	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Record
HET	Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



A planning application (11/00752/FUL) for the construction of a single-storey sunken extension, new garage and hardstanding and connecting access paths has been submitted to Bedford Borough Council (BBC). As the development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of BBC recommended that a condition was attached to planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the first stage of archaeological work comprising trial trenching of the site in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2012). This document presents the results of the trial trenching, which will be used to assess the archaeological potential of the site and determine the need for a programme of mitigation.

Church Cottage is located within the core of the medieval settlement of Melchbourne (HER17080) and within an enclosure defined in part by an earthwork ditch (HER15210). This enclosure contains the parish church (HER2332) together with the possible site of the early medieval manor.

The trial-trench evaluation revealed remains dating from the Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval periods within the area of the proposed development.

Medieval features were revealed in Trenches 2 and 3. These comprised an early medieval pit and ditch in Trench 2 and a later medieval/early post-medieval (AD1400-1600) ditch in Trench 3. An undated pit and ditch were also revealed in Trench 2, though they were stratigraphically earlier than the early medieval ditch.

Post-medieval features consisted of a large pit in Trench 3 and a ditch also visible as a shallow depression on the ground surface in Trench 1. Remnants of a possible cobbled surface dating to the post-medieval period were also revealed overlying the medieval features in Trench 2.

In addition, several residual sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery were revealed, suggesting activity of this date in the vicinity.

The presence of these remains within the confines of three small trenches, suggests there is a high potential for the survival of further features of these periods in the immediate vicinity. Given that the site is thought to lie within a manorial enclosure (BCC2011), evidence of activity of the Saxo-Norman to early post-medieval periods is of particular interest in light of regional research themes regarding the development of the medieval manor and evolution of settlements (Cooper, ed. 2006; Medlycott 2011, 70; Oake 2007, 14).



1.1 Planning Background

A planning application (11/00752/FUL) for the construction of a single-storey sunken extension, new garage and hardstanding and connecting access paths has been submitted to Bedford Borough Council (BBC). As the development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of BBC recommended that a condition was attached to planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This advice was in accordance with *Planning Policy 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*.

The programme was set out in a brief (BBC 2011) issued by the HET and comprised the following stages of work:

- 1. archaeological field evaluation.
- 2. appraisal of the results of the archaeological field evaluation.
- 3. implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording (if required, following completion of second stage).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the first stage field evaluation comprising trial trenching of the site in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2012).

This document presents the results of the trial trenching, which will be used to assess the archaeological potential of the site and determine the need for a programme of mitigation.

1.2 Site Location

Church Cottage is a detached grade II listed property located off Park Drive, Melchbourne, immediately to the south of the Church of St Mary Magdalene, at grid reference TL02882 65359.

The planned building works are located in the gardens to the south of the house and cover an area of approximately $270m^2$ (Figure 1).

The plot is relatively level at approximately 75m OD with the underlying geology being Oxford Clay.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Church Cottage is located within the core of the medieval settlement of Melchbourne (HER17080). Melchbourne is recorded in Domesday Book and historical evidence indicates that the settlement was much more extensive than it is today. Areas of probable former occupation are marked by earthworks to the north and north-east of the site (HER1810 and 9663).

Church Cottage and its gardens lie within an enclosure defined in part by an earthwork ditch (HER15210). This enclosure contains the parish church (HER2332) together with the possible site of the early medieval manor. It has been suggested that the site represents a manorial enclosure centred on an early Anglo-Saxon/medieval church and manor complex (BCC2011).

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal objective of the evaluation was to determine whether archaeological remains were present at the development site and, if so, to establish their extent, condition, nature and significance.

The broader objective of the project was to add to the knowledge and understanding of the origins and nature of settlement in the area and to produce an archive report that fully describes the archaeological works.

Specific research objectives will be formulated if the remains uncovered during the trial trenching warrant a further stage of archaeological work to be carried out. These research objectives will be determined by the nature of the archaeological remains present at the site and will be linked where possible to the published research frameworks for the region (Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake *et al.* 2007; Medlycott 2011).



The trial trenching took place on 25th and 26th January 2012. Three trenches with a combined length of 10m were opened within the footprint of the proposed new building and associated path to the south.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever were encountered first.

The bases and sides of the trenches were cleaned by hand. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. All features were assigned a unique context number commencing at 101 for Trench 1, and 201 for Trench 2. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2011). The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

•	Albion Archaeology	Procedures Manual: Volume 1. Fieldwork (2nd
		edn, 2001).
•	Bedford Borough	Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition
	Council	in Registered Museums in Bedford (1998)
•	EAA	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of
		England (2003)
•	English Heritage	Management of Research Projects in the Historic
		Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide
		(2006)
•	IfA	By-Laws and Code of Conduct
		Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field
		Evaluation (updated 2008)



All significant deposits and features found within the trial trenches are described below and shown on Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5. Detailed data on all features, deposits and artefacts can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

3.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

3.1.1 Overburden and undisturbed geological strata

The overburden comprised a 0.10m thick deposit of dark grey sandy silt and leaf matter (100) overlying a 0.20m thick dark grey brown clay silt topsoil (104). Below the topsoil was a 0.20m thick layer of mid grey brown clay silt subsoil (105).

The undisturbed geological deposit was light brown orange clay with small white sandstone inclusions (106).

3.1.2 Archaeological features

Trench 1 contained a ditch [101] aligned WNW to ESE measuring at least 1.7m wide and 0.65m deep which cut the topsoil (104).

The primary fill (102) of the ditch contained brick and pottery of postmedieval date (1500-1750), as well as a small sherd of modern pottery that is considered to be intrusive. This deposit was overlain by a large amount of modern brick and roof tile fragments which had been used to backfill the ditch (103). A shallow depression visible on the current ground surface marks the location of this ditch.

3.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

3.2.1 Overburden and undisturbed geological strata

The overburden comprised a 0.20m thick layer of dark brown grey clay silt topsoil (200) above a 0.16m thick levelling layer of light grey brown redeposited clay (201).

Below this a 0.17m thick clay layer (202) was visible which contained large rounded stones and post-medieval pottery sherds and brick fragments. Stones of this nature were not observed in any other layers which may suggest they are the remnants of a cobbled surface. This layer sealed the features described below (Section 3.2.2).

The undisturbed geological deposit was light brown orange clay with small white sandstone inclusions (213).

3.2.2 Archaeological features

Trench 2 contained two ditches and two pits, of which one ditch and one pit contained pottery dating to the early medieval period.

A shallow curvilinear ditch [203] terminated beside an irregular shaped pit [205] containing Saxo-Norman and early medieval pottery. Both features

were truncated by a ditch [208] aligned WNW-ESE containing similarly dated pottery. The upper deposit (210) of the ditch contained large rounded stones which may be deliberate back-filling associated with the later, post-medieval layer (202), mentioned above (Section 3.2.1).

Ditch [208] also truncated a further, small pit [211] containing no artefacts on the eastern side of the trench.

3.3 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

3.3.1 Overburden and undisturbed geological strata

The overburden comprised a 0.25m thick layer of dark brown grey clay silt topsoil (300) lying above a 0.20m thick levelling layer of light grey brown clay silt (301).

The undisturbed geological deposit was light brown orange clay with small white sandstone inclusions (307).

3.3.2 Archaeological features

The trench contained a ditch [302] aligned NW-SE that was truncated by a large pit [305] to the east.

The ditch measured 1.1m wide and 0.48m deep and contained pottery sherds of 13th to 15th-century date and ferrous slag within in its primary fill (303). Its upper-most fill contained pottery and roof tile of late medieval to early post-medieval date (1400-1600) as well as a small intrusive piece of modern roofing slate. Residual amounts of Saxo-Norman pottery were contained in both deposits.

Pottery sherds, brick and roof tile of post-medieval date were recovered from the upper fill of the pit which continued beyond the sides and eastern end of the trench and was not excavated.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The trial-trench evaluation has revealed remains dating from the Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval periods within the area of the proposed development.

Medieval features were revealed in Trenches 2 and 3. These comprised an early medieval pit and ditch in Trench 2 and a later medieval/early post-medieval (AD1400-1600) ditch in Trench 3. An undated pit and ditch were also revealed in Trench 2, though they were stratigraphically earlier than the early medieval ditch.

Post-medieval features consisted of a large pit in Trench 3 and a ditch also visible as a shallow depression on the ground surface in Trench 1. Remnants of a possible cobbled surface dating to the post-medieval period were also revealed overlying the medieval features in Trench 2.

In addition, several residual sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery were revealed, suggesting activity of this date in the vicinity.

The presence of these remains within the confines of three small trenches, suggests there is a high potential for the survival of further features of these periods in the immediate vicinity. Given that the site is thought to lie within a manorial enclosure (BCC2011), evidence of activity of the Saxo-Norman to early post-medieval periods is of particular interest in light of regional research themes regarding the development of the medieval manor and evolution of settlements (Cooper, ed. 2006; Medlycott 2011, 70; Oake 2007, 14).

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Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.50 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.1 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0286065338

OS Grid Ref.: TL0286365337

Reason: Assess archaeological potential in area of proposed path

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Loose dark grey brown sandy silt Deposit contains frequent rotting leaves a build up of seasonal deposit from the tree canopy from wooded area immediately to the south. Layer was 0.10m thick	-	
101	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.7m, min depth 0.55m	\checkmark	
102	Primary fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt occasional small stones	\checkmark	\checkmark
103	Backfill	Loose dark grey brown sandy silt frequent large CBM Deposit comprised a backfill of brick and roof tile fragments of modern date (post 1750).	\checkmark	\checkmark
107	Upper fill	Loose dark grey brown sandy silt Deposit contains rotting leaf material - associated with layer (100) - a build up of seasonal deposit from the tree canopy from wooded area immediately to the south.		
104	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt Layer was 0.20m thick.	\checkmark	
105	Subsoil	Friable mid grey brown clay silt occasional small-medium stones Layer wa 0.17m thick.	s 🗸	
106	Natural	Firm light brown orange clay moderate small stones Layer contains small white sandstone fragments		

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 2.85 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.22 m. Max: 0.73 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0286865355

OS Grid Ref.: TL0286765352

Reason: Assess archaeological potential in area of planned extension

Context:	Туре:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt Layer was 0.20m thick	\checkmark	
201	Redeposited natural	Light grey brown clay Re-deposited natural clay with small white sandsto inclusions. Layer was 0.16m thick.	ne 🗸	
202	Layer	Firm mid orange brown silty clay occasional large CBM, frequent large stones Layer contains frequent large round / oval stones towards bottom of layer. Layer 0.17m thick.	\checkmark	
203	Ditch	Curving linear sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.6m min depth 0.25m, min length 2.m	, 🗸	
204	Fill	Firm dark green grey clay silt moderate flecks charcoal, occasional small stones	\checkmark	
205	Pit	sides: irregular base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 0.48m, min depth 0.35m, min length 1.38m	\checkmark	
206	Primary fill	Firm mid grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stor	nes 🗸	
207	Main fill	Firm mid green grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-large stones	\checkmark	
208	Ditch	Linear ESE-WNW sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.73m, min depth 0.28m, min length 1.5m	\checkmark	
209	Main fill	Firm dark green grey clay silt moderate flecks charcoal, occasional small-large stones	\checkmark	
210	Backfill	Firm mid green grey clay silt frequent large stones Probable deliberate backfill - possibly contemporary with layer (202)?	\checkmark	
211	Pit	sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.4m, min depth 0.12m, min length 0.5m	\checkmark	
212	Fill	Friable mid orange brown silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small medium stones	-	
213	Natural	Firm light brown orange clay occasional small stones Layer contains small white sandstone fragments.		

Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.70 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.38 m. Max: 0.75 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0286565347

OS Grid Ref.: TL0286965346

Reason: Assess archaeological potential in area of planned extension

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Loose dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Layer was 0.25m thick	\checkmark	
301	Levelling layer	Plastic mid grey brown clay silt frequent medium CBM, moderate small- large stones Layer was 0.20m thick	\checkmark	
302	Ditch	Linear NW-SE sides: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.1m, min depth 0.37m, min length 1.7m	\checkmark	
303	Primary fill	Plastic mid grey brown clay silt occasional small-medium stones Deposit contained moderate amounts of metal working slag.	\checkmark	\checkmark
304	Main fill	Plastic mid grey brown clay silt moderate small stones	\checkmark	\checkmark
305	Pit	dimensions: min breadth 1.6m, min length 2.2m A large pit that continues beyond the eastern end and sides of the trench. The pit contained artefacts post-medieval date and was not excavated.	of	
306	Upper fill	Friable mid grey brown silty clay moderate large CBM, occasional small-mediur stones	n 🗌	\checkmark
307	Natural	Firm light brown orange clay occasional small stones Layer contains small white sandstone fragments.		

Introduction

The evaluation produced a finds assemblage comprising mainly pottery and ceramic building material. Small quantities of ferrous slag, animal bone and non-ceramic artefacts were also recovered (Table 1). The material was examined to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Tr.	Feature	Description	Context	Spot date*	Finds Summary
1	101	Ditch	102	Post-medieval	Pottery (7g); brick (9g)
	101	Ditch	103	Modern	Pottery (101g); roof tile (321g); vessel glass (15g)
2	202	Redeposited natural	202	Post-medieval	Pottery (204g); brick (156g)
	205	Pit	207	Early medieval	Pottery (70g)
	208	Ditch	209	Early medieval	Pottery (188g)
3	302	Ditch	303	High medieval	Pottery (75g); ferrous slag (599g); animal bone (9g)
	302	Ditch	304	Late/post-medieval	Pottery (129g); roof tile (13g); roof slate (2g);
					animal bone (51g)
	305	Pit	306	Post-medieval	Pottery (32g); brick and roof tile (789g); animal bone (7g)

* - spot date based on date of latest artefact in context

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and feature

Pottery

Fifty-four pottery sherds, weighing 806g, were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. The pottery is moderately fragmented, with an average sherd weight of 15g, and survives in fair to good condition. Fifteen fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology (Table 2). The majority of the assemblage is datable to the early medieval period, with smaller quantities of Saxo-Norman and post-medieval origin.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context/Sherd No.
Saxo-Norman			
B01	St Neots-type ware	8	(207):2, (209):3, (303):2, (304):1
B01A	St Neots-type ware (orange)	4	(209):1, (304):3
B01C	St Neots-type ware (mixed)	5	(209):2, (303):3
B04	St Neots-type ware (coarse)	2	(209):2
C12	Stamford ware	3	(303):1, (304):2
Medieval			
B07	Shell	17	(207):3, (209):10, (304):4
B09	Lyveden/Stanion ware	2	(303):1, (304):1
C05	Sand (red margins)	1	(209):1
C59B	Sand	1	(209):1
C61	Sand (calcareous inclusions)	1	(304):1
E02	Late medieval oxidised ware	2	(102):1, (304):1
Post-medieval			
P03	Black-glazed earthenware	4	(202):3, (306):1
P33	Tin-glazed ware	1	(202):1
Modern	-		· · ·
P38	Creamware	2	(103):2
P45	Transfer-printed ware	1	(102):1

Table 2: Pottery type series

The earliest pottery comprises nineteen sherds of 9th-11th century St Neotstype ware (fabric B01 and its variants), with most sherds datable to the later end of this range. Vessel forms are an everted rim jar (diameter 200mm) and a bowl with a diameter of 340mm. Some sherds have sooted exterior surfaces, suggesting their use as cooking pots. Three glazed sherds of Stamford ware (C12), one deriving from a jug, derived from the fills of ditch [302]. Stamford ware was used principally for tablewares, and provides a contrast to the utilitarian kitchen wares of the St Neots-type tradition. The Saxo-Norman pottery occurs as residual material in later features.

Twenty sherds are datable to the 12th-13th century, and derive mainly from pit [205] and ditch [208]. They comprise 17 wheel thrown shell tempered sherds (B07) likely to derive from production centres on the Beds./Bucks./Northants. borders. Locally manufactured sand tempered wares complete the assemblage (types C05, C59B, C61). An everted rim shelly jar with a diameter of 200mm is the only diagnostic vessel.

Two undiagnostic sherds of 13th-14th century Lyveden/Stanion ware (B09), an import from Northamptonshire, were recovered from ditch [302]. Two late medieval oxidised ware sherds (E02), one deriving from a glazed jug, occurred as residual finds in post-medieval ditches [101] and [302].

17th-century pottery comprises black-glazed and tin-glazed earthenwares, mainly deriving from large shallow bowls. Three sherds of creamware and transfer-printed ware datable to the 18th century were recovered from ditch [101].

Brick and Tile

Sand tempered post-medieval building material comprises six amorphous pieces of brick and three flat roof tile fragments (total weight 1.2kg), the majority deriving from pit [305]. The peg tiles measure 13mm in thickness; one has a circular peg hole with a diameter of 14mm, and one a rectangular peg hole measuring 10 x 8mm.

Other Finds

The upper fill of ditch [101] contained an intact clear glass 'DADDIES' sauce bottle stopper, datable to the late 19th - early 20th century. A piece of roofing slate (2g) and undatable ferrous smelting tap slag weighing 599g were recovered from the fills of ditch [302].

Animal Bone

Twenty-two animal bone fragments, weighing 67g, were collected, the majority deriving from ditch [302]. Individual pieces are small, with an average weight of 3g, although relatively unabraded. Elements identifiable to species are a molar and mandible fragments from a young dog, and an avian long bone. Other pieces comprise an unfused metapodial, a phalanx, a chopped vertebra and long bone fragments of indeterminate species.

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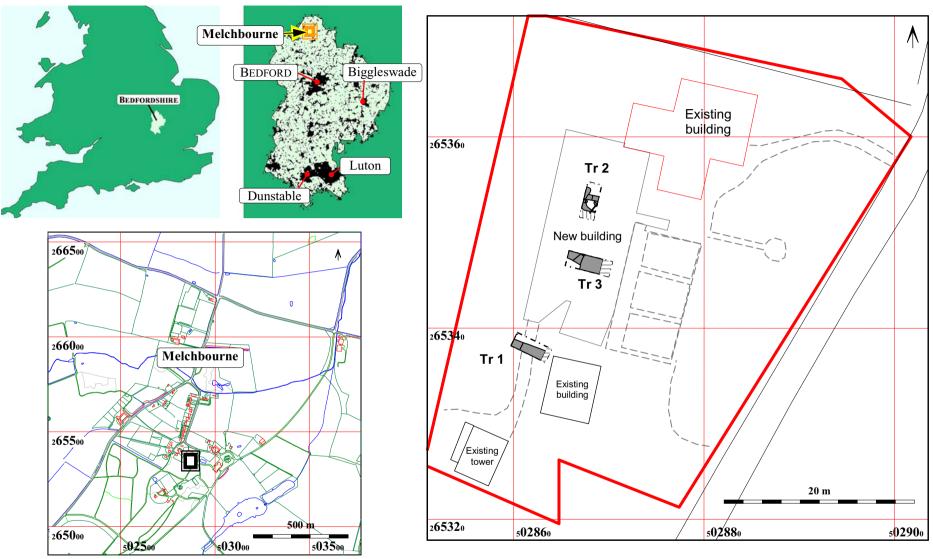
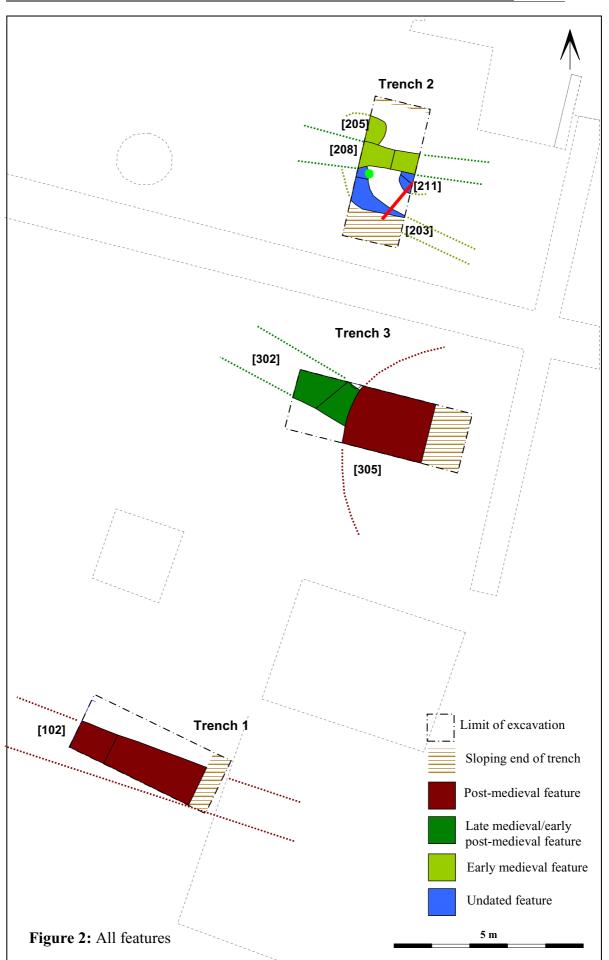
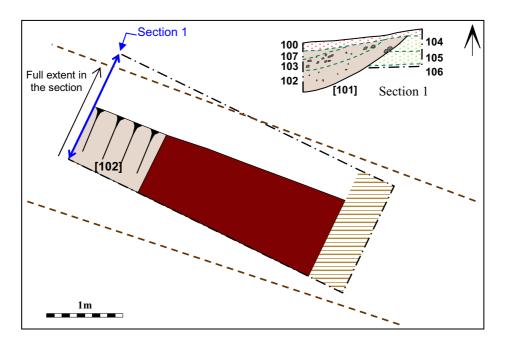


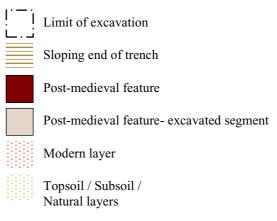
Figure 1: Site location

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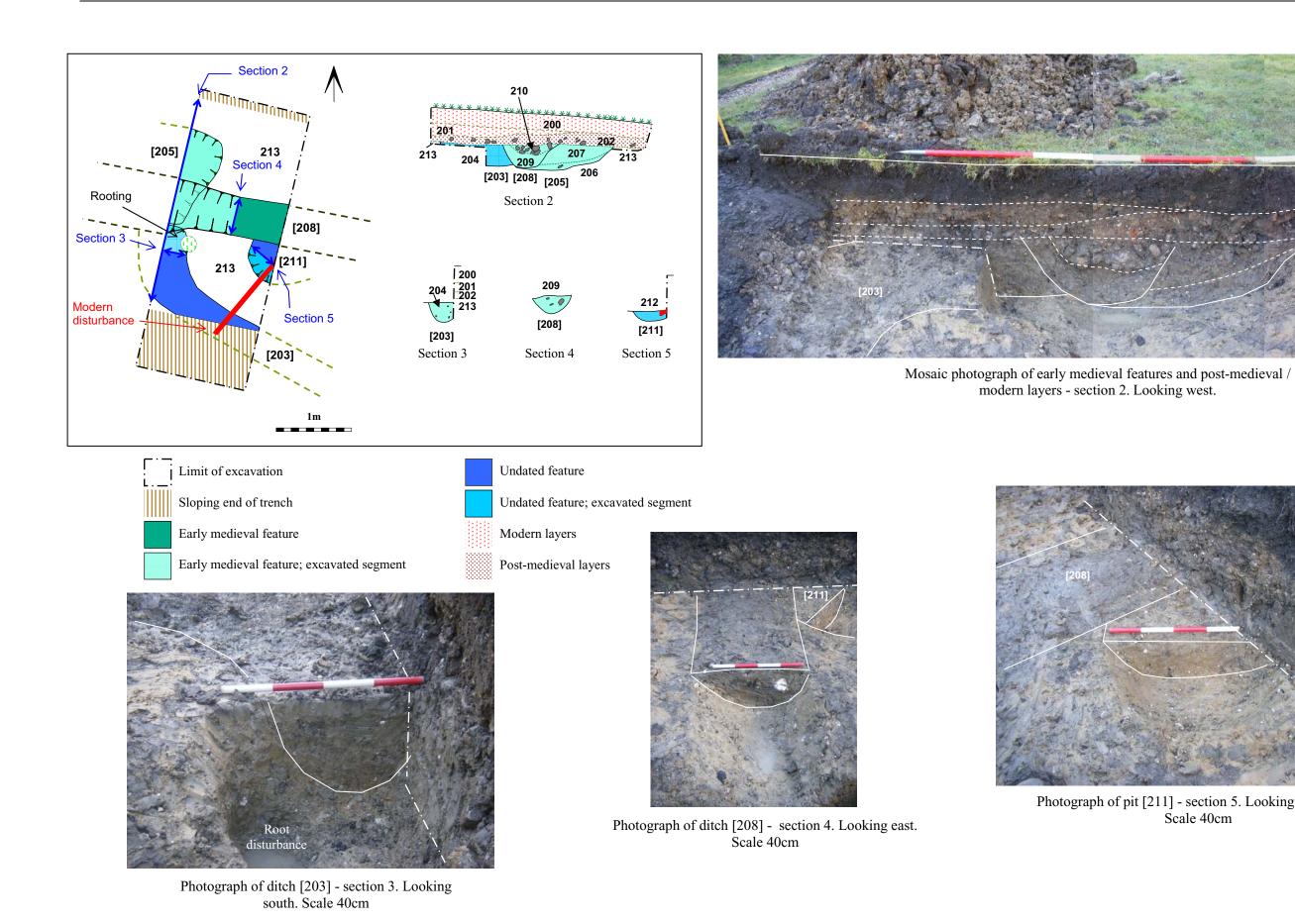








Photograph of post-medieval ditch [102]. Looking north-west. Scale 1m. **Figure 3:** Trench 1



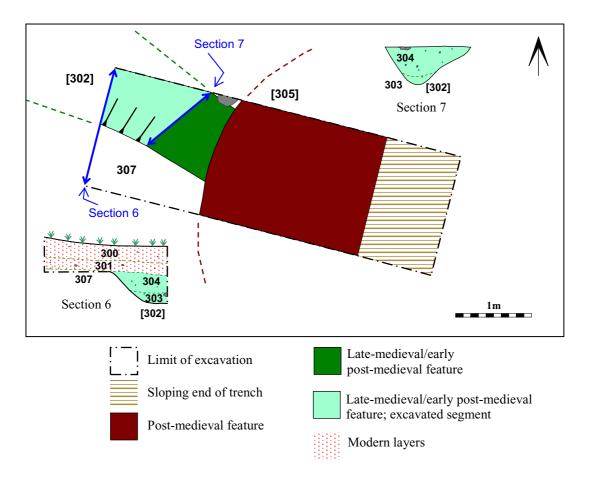
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Photograph of pit [211] - section 5. Looking north-east. Scale 40cm

Figure 4: Trench 2





Photograph of ditch [302]. Looking west. Scale 1m.

Photograph of ditch [302] and pit [305]. Looking east. Scale 1m.

Figure 5: Trench 3