THE SARACEN'S HEAD 13 ST PAUL'S SQUARE BEDFORD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Albion archaeology





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Prepared for Boothville Roofing and Construction Ltd

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Preface

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.

Acknowledgements

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Boothville Roofing and Construction Ltd. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke, Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) of the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council.

Fieldwork was carried out by Slawomir Utrata (Project Supervisor) and Mark Phillips (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips, Jackie Wells (Finds Officer) and Gary Edmondson (Project Manager). The figures were produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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1.0	3rd October 2012	n/a
1.1	15th October 2012	Incorporating comments from SAO

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
HER	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Record
HET	Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
SAO	Senior Archaeological Officer
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Boothville Roofing and Construction Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological works during refurbishment of The Saracen's Head, 13 St Paul's Square, Bedford. As the development lies within an area of high archaeological interest, the Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) of the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) recommended that a condition for archaeological mitigation was attached to any planning consent. This advice was in accordance with national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and Bedford Borough Council's local planning policies.

The Saracen's Head lies to the north of St Paul's Church on the north side of the River Great Ouse, within the old town of Bedford, centred on grid reference TL 05007/49737. Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken between 15th and 17th August 2012. All of the works which required monitoring were located in an open yard at the rear of the building. The groundworks comprised ground reduction and the excavation of an L-shaped trench to form foundations for a single-storey extension. Excavation of a lift pit within the building did not penetrate archaeological deposits.

The underlying geological strata consisted of sands and gravel river terrace deposits.

Four pits were identified. The earliest appeared to be two deep pits [11] and [17], with vertical or near vertical sides which continued below the base of the trench. Both contained similar horizontally layered fills, with small amounts of charcoal and limestone fragments. Pit [11] contained early medieval pottery suggesting a date in the 12th or 13th century. Pit [17] contained a single sherd of early medieval pottery and fragments of plain roof tile in its lower fill. A large pit [14] with a shallow, concave profile appeared to cut the upper edges of pits [11] and [17]. Fragments of modern glazed 'sanitary ware' found in the upper part of this feature could be intrusive material from modern drainage cuts above. The partial remains of a small feature [9] found at the west end of the trench are interpreted as the remains of a pit.

Layers of dark soil above the pits are interpreted as the product of garden cultivation. The lower part of the cultivation soil appeared to truncate the tops of the underlying pits, reflecting the effect of repeated working and mixing of the soil layer. It is likely that the garden soil represents activity in garden plots at the rear of the properties. It is not closely dateable but it is likely that any garden plots in this area would have gone out of use by the early 19th century, as the density of buildings increased.

The absence of any evidence for burials is significant. The investigations at Nos 14-15a and in St Paul's Square in 1987 demonstrated the presence of an extensive late Saxonearly medieval cemetery extending to the north of the church. The area monitored at The Saracen's Head appears to have been situated outside of the cemetery, which suggests that its northern boundary lay a short distance to the south.

The results of the work add to our overall knowledge of the development and layout of the early medieval town and the survival of archaeological deposits. However, the limited extent of the observations and the small artefact assemblage mean that the results are not capable of supporting further analysis.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

This report details the results of archaeological works undertaken by Albion Archaeology during refurbishment of The Saracen's Head, 13 St Paul's Square, Bedford. The building work, carried out by Boothville Roofing and Construction Ltd, included the construction of an extension in an open area at the back of the building and internal alterations.

As the development lies within an area of high archaeological interest, the Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) of the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) recommended that a condition was attached to any planning consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation. This advice was in accordance with national policies contained in the *National Planning Policy Framework* as well as policies in the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2002) and the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008).

The SAO issued a Brief outlining the archaeological requirements and methodology to be employed during the works to fulfil the planning conditions (BBC 2012).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Boothville Roofing and Construction Ltd to undertake the archaeological works. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Albion to detail the procedures and methods that would be used to comply with the requirements of the Brief (Albion 2012). This was approved prior to the commencement of groundworks.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The Saracen's Head is located to the north of St Paul's Church, on the north side of the River Great Ouse, within the old town of Bedford. It is within a row of properties on the north side of St Paul's Square, centred on grid reference TL (5)05007 (2)49737 (Figure 1). As well as facing St Paul's Church to the south, the row of properties is on the southern side of a roughly square block of properties, extending to Silver Street in the north.

The site is roughly rectangular in plan, approximately 26m N-S by 10m wide although the width tapers to the north (Figure 2). To the east the site is bounded by a gated passageway and on it western side by the new Corn Exchange building.

The site lies at a height of c. 27m OD, with a slight slope down to the south, towards the river. The geology of the area comprises river terrace deposits of sand and gravel overlying limestone of the Great Oolite series.



1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site is considered to be within the core of the late Saxon and medieval settlement of Bedford. It is to the north of the church of St Paul's which itself is thought to have been built on the site of an earlier Saxon minster.

At Nos 14-15a St Paul's Square, adjacent to the east side of The Saracen's Head, a number of Saxon burials were identified during building work and previous excavations in St Paul's Square in 1987 also uncovered burials of late Saxon-medieval date, which formed part of a once larger St Paul's churchyard (Figure 3).

Archaeological involvement at Nos 14-15a St Paul's Square began after the building inspector noticed human remains in the builder's trenches. The refurbishment works involved the removal of the internal walls and the floors. Steel work to support the new internal structure required the excavation of trenches for foundation pads. The trenches measured nearly 1.5m square and were cut down to the top of the grave fills. The cemetery deposits and deeper cutting features were excavated archaeologically. The strata that had been excavated by the builders were recorded in section.

The results of the archaeological works are summarised in Figure 3, which shows the distribution of graves and other features. The burials are thought to be part of a larger cemetery, probably related to a Saxon minster. The earliest phase of the site consists of a cemetery. The deepest graves were cut into the clean undisturbed geological strata. It proved difficult to identify the grave cuts of burials found higher up the profile as they lay within a homogenous layer of only slightly modified subsoil. Excavation within small trenches has resulted in a discontinuous view of the cemetery; many of the burials could only be partially uncovered with the remainder lying beyond the excavation area. The individual graves were aligned east-west and were arranged in closely set parallel rows running north-south. The only finds from the grave fills were residual sherds of middle Saxon pottery. The cemetery went out of use and was succeeded by occupation. Some of the graves were cut by pits containing domestic debris dating from the 10th / 11th centuries to the 15th / 16th centuries. The medieval pits were sealed by a thick layer of garden soil, which in turn was cut by post-medieval pits and wall foundations.

The excavation in 1987 at St Paul's Square was conducted in advance of work to resurface the area. The results are summarised in Baker 1987, 7-9. Ground reduction of approximately 0.5m uncovered well preserved medieval and later remains. In the area closest to The Saracen's Head, on the north side of St Paul's Square, the remains consisted of numerous medieval burials which were overlain by the remains of medieval butchers' shops (the shambles). These were in turn overlain by the foundations of the original Corn Exchange which was demolished in the 1900s. The eastern side of the square contained evidence for the medieval fish market (Fish Row). The shops here overlay large pits, possibly cess or quarry pits. The north-east corner of the square contained medieval stone and timber features associated with layers of ash and metal-working slag.



Historical maps show the development of the area over time. John Speed's map of 1610 is a small-scale map which appears to be topographically correct with stylised representations of the buildings. The land divisions shown are likely to date back to the establishment of the Saxon *burh*, although their exact positions may have shifted slightly over time. Speed's map shows the square of land which contains the site. At this time it appeared to be built up on three sides with buildings shown on the street frontages facing south (St Paul's), east (High Street) and north (Silver Street.), with the western side (*Sheps Chepping* corresponding to Harpur Street) being undeveloped. The interior was apparently subdivided into a number of plots, with at least five land parcels being defined.

The Roper map of 1807 map shows that properties have been built on all four sides of the block. Some of these properties have been extended and a few new buildings have been built inside the interior of the block. The greatest density of infilling appears to taken place in the north-east quarter where no 13 is situated. However, the remainder of the interior is still mostly undeveloped. A passageway on the east side of 13 St Paul's Square had been established by 1807, possibly following an old land division.

The 1882 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows that by latter part of the 19th century, the area within the block had been extensively developed with little open ground remaining.

1.4 Project Objectives

The objective of the archaeological fieldwork was to monitor all sub-surface groundworks with the potential to reveal archaeological remains, and to investigate, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered within them.

Research frameworks that have been devised for the region are *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011) and specifically for Bedfordshire: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al* 2007).

The location of the site within the Saxon core and medieval core of Bedford gives it the potential to add to the understanding of the origins and development of the town, which is a local and regional research theme (Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 70).



2. METHODOLOGY

All ground disturbance associated with the development, in particular wall footings and service trenches, which had the potential to reveal archaeological remains, were archaeologically monitored. When archaeological remains were encountered, groundworks were suspended to allow recording and investigation of the deposits. Excavated soil was regular checked for finds. The SAO was regularly updated on the progress of the work.

Prior to the start of the groundworks, it was anticipated that works with potential to reveal archaeological remains would be the wall footings for a new extension at the rear of the building, service trenches associated with that extension and the foundations for an internal lift.

During the course of the building work archaeological monitoring and recording was only required during the excavation of the foundations for the extension at the rear of the property. An existing concrete foundation in the location of the lift proved sufficient for the planned works and no archaeological deposits were exposed. The service trenches adjacent to the new extension were laid within existing intrusions where the previous services were removed and no archaeological monitoring was required.

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

•	Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2 nd ed,
		2001).
•	English Heritage	Management of Research Projects in the Historic
		Environment (MoRPHE) (2009)
		Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory
		and practice of methods, from sampling and
		recovery to post-excavation (Second Edition) (2011)
•	IfA	By-Laws and Code of Conduct (2010)
		Standard and Guidance for Excavation (2008)
		Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological
		Watching Brief (2008)

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. 2012.47). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (albionar1-131906).

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2012).

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3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken from August 15th–17th 2012. All of the works which required monitoring were located in an open yard at the rear of the building. The groundworks comprised ground reduction and the excavation of an L-shaped trench to form foundations for a single-storey extension. The trench was 0.6m wide and 0.7m deep. The surface of the entire yard area was reduced by approximately 0.1m, removing the modern concrete surface and make-up deposits. A further 0.3m was removed in the south-east of the yard for the floor of the new extension.

3.2 Results

The archaeological features and sections in this area are illustrated in Figure 2. In the follow description the features are as far as possible, discussed chronologically from earliest to latest.

3.2.1 Undisturbed geological strata

These deposits were found c. 0.9m below the modern ground level, consisting of a mid orange-brown sandy deposit and patches of grey to light yellow-brown sandy gravel (5) (Figure 2: light yellow on sections 1-2). The uppermost part consisted of the orange sandy component whilst the gravel deposits occurred in the base of the trench, 0.7m below the ground surface. Comparatively little of the geological strata survived in section, as it had been removed by extensive pitting (see below).

3.2.2 Pit [11]

This was located in the northern arm of the trench (Figure 2: light blue feature - section 1, images 3-5). Its sides were vertical and the base continued below the base of the trench. The shape in plan is uncertain, the alignment of its east and western sides suggest that it was aligned NNE-SSW.

Two fills were observed in section. The upper fill (12) was dark grey, slightly sandy silt with occasional small stones and flecks/fragments of charcoal. The lower fill (13) was mid yellow-brown clay loam with frequent small stones as well as a small number of medium-sized lumps of limestone. The boundary between the two fills was horizontal. This could indicate that the lower fill had time to settle, although had the feature remained open for more than a short time, the sides would have weathered as they were cut through the sandy geological deposits.

The pit was cut into undisturbed geological strata (5) and was truncated by a garden soil layer (8). It appeared to be cut by the western edge of pit [14]. Pottery indicates an early medieval (12th or 13th century) date for the filling of this feature. A coarse, sand-tempered jar rim (fabric type C01¹), weighing 113g, was recovered from the upper fill (12) (image 10). The vessel has a diameter of

¹ Fabric type defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology.



240mm, and is decorated with a horizontal applied thumbed strip on the neck. Lower fill (13) yielded three sherds (103g) from a fine-walled, shell-tempered vessel (fabric B07).

3.2.3 Pit [17]

This feature was situated in the eastern arm of the trench (Figure 2: light blue feature - section 2, images 7-9). Its northern edge was near vertical and its base lay below the base of the trench. In plan only the northern edge was visible, the other sides continuing beyond the limit of excavation.

Three fills were recorded. The uppermost fill (18) was dark yellow-brown sandy loam with a moderate concentration of small stones. The intermediate fill (19) was dark grey, slightly sandy silt with occasional small stones and small fragments of limestone. It contained a moderate amount of charcoal flecks and fragments. The lowest fill (20) was mid yellow-brown silty sand which contained frequent small fragments of limestone and some fragments of flat roof tile. The upper surface of fill (20) was level with stone fragments and roof tile forming a distinct horizon at its upper surface. As with pit [11], the vertical sides show that the feature could not have remained open for a significant period of time, although a level fill horizon in the lower part of the section looks as though it may have had time to settle.

The pit was cut into undisturbed geological strata (5). It was truncated by a garden soil horizon (8) and appeared to be cut by the southern edge of pit [14]. Two shell-tempered pottery sherds (fabric B07:39g) recovered from the intermediate fill are dateable to the early medieval period (12th or 13th century). A sandy/calcareous flat roof tile (70g) in the lowest fill is not closely dateable, although is likely to be of late medieval or post-medieval origin.

3.2.4 Pit [14]

This feature was located at the junction of the northern and eastern arms of the trench (Figure 2: light green feature - sections 1-2, images 5-9). It appeared to be rounded in plan with shallow sloping sides and a flat base which coincided with the base of the trench at c. 0.7m below ground level.

Two fills were identified. The upper fill (15) was dark grey silty loam with occasional small stones and flecks of charcoal. The asymmetric basal fill (16) which sloped down from west to east was dark clay loam with occasional small stones. It also contained lenses of re-deposited sandy natural and a few large blocks of limestone were observed at the edges of the feature. This may have been the result of dumping from one side. Lenses of re-deposited sandy geological strata in the lower fill reinforce the impression of a rapidly dumped deposit rather than a gradual accumulation.

This feature was cut into the sandy part of the geological strata, stopping where it came to the gravel deposit at the base. It appeared to be cut into the edges of pits [11] and [17], situated on either side, although this relationship was rather indistinct. The upper part of the pit appeared to be truncated by an overlying layer of garden soil (8), although again this relationship was poorly defined. The



recovered finds comprise an indeterminate animal long bone fragment (142g) and two pieces (94g) of thick, mass-produced earthenware, probably 'sanitary ware', with a white and yellow glaze, suggesting a modern date for the feature. It is possible that the earthenware was intrusive material, derived from disturbance by the service trench which ran along the upper part of the trench. The original function of the pit may have been to extract the sandy deposit at the top of the geological layers as the base of the pit stopped at the gravel layer below; however, the function and dating remain uncertain.

3.2.5 Possible pit [9]

Feature [9] was observed only in section (Figure 2: light green feature - section 1, image 3). Part of its eastern side survived but the remainder had been truncated by the construction of a brick wall, associated with the adjacent property to the west. The portion which remained was relatively steep with a concave profile.

The single fill (10) was dark grey sandy loam with occasional small stones. No artefacts were recovered.

3.2.6 Cultivation soil layers (4, 7 and 8)

The whole area was covered by dark soil layers (Figure 2: light red - sections 1-2, images 4, 5, 7 and 9). At the west edge of the area, dark brown-grey clay silt (4), was observed in a narrow cut situated next to the western boundary of the site. This corresponds to dark soil seen across the rest of the area. In the trench this was differentiated into lower (8) and upper (7) layers (Figure 2: light red - sections 1-2). Layer (8) was dark grey/black sandy silt, c. 0.2m thick, with a moderate concentration of small stones and occasional small limestone fragments and charcoal. Layer (7) was dark grey silty loam with occasional small stones and charcoal flecks.

It is likely that these layers represent cultivation soil. The lower boundary of the soil appears to truncate the underlying pits [9], [11], [14] and [17].

3.2.7 Modern features

Modern features consisted of a concrete yard surface and associated rubble makeup, possible foundations and service trenches (images 1-7). Only the service trench [6] remained in section following the removal of the surface layers (Figure 2: sections 1-2). This contained a concrete layer (3) supporting a glazed earthenware pipe, which was covered with mixed brick rubble and concrete (2).



4. **CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 Archaeological Interpretation

The archaeological remains in the yard area at the north of the site comprised geological deposits, pits, garden cultivation layers and modern intrusions and surfaces (figure 2).

The underlying geological deposits consisted of a loose sand deposit above mixed sands and gravels which form part of the river terrace deposits.

Four pits were identified, cutting the geological deposit. The earliest of these appeared to be two deep pits [11] and [17], with vertical or near vertical sides which continued below the base of the trench. Both contained similar horizontally layered fills with small amounts of charcoal, limestone fragments. Pit [11] contained early medieval pottery suggesting a date in the 12th or 13th century. The width of the features at *c*. 2m would suggest that they were pits of uncertain function rather than trenches for the robbing of wall footings. Pit [17] contained a single sherd of early medieval pottery and fragments of plain roof tile in its lower fill. A large pit [14] with a shallow, concave profile appeared to cut the upper edges of pits [11] and [17]. Fragments of modern glazed 'sanitary ware' found in the upper part of this feature could be intrusive material from modern drainage cuts above. The partial remains of a small feature [9] found at the west end of the trench is interpreted as the remains of a pit.

Layers of dark soil above the pits are interpreted as the product of garden cultivation. The lower part of the cultivation soil appeared to truncate the tops of the underlying pits, reflecting the effect of repeated working and mixing of the soil layer. It is likely that the garden soil represents activity in garden plots at the rear of the properties. It is not closely dateable but it is likely that any garden plots in this area would have gone out of use by the early 19th century as the density of buildings increased. The Roper map of 1807 shows considerable infill in this area and the Dawson panorama, drawn in 1833, shows the area filled with buildings and yard areas.

4.2 Deposit Survival and Limitations of Evidence

The survival in this area was good, with features dating from the early medieval period cut into undisturbed geological deposits. These features had been partially truncated by post-medieval garden cultivation. In the area that was investigated the modern intrusions did not penetrate below the level of the cultivation layers although wall footings around the edge of the plot would be deeper.

All of the observations were made in a yard area at the north end of the building plot. The archaeological features were observed within a narrow foundation trench which was mainly excavated by machine. As a result the observations are limited to a small area at the rear of the plot and the finds recovery was limited by the method of excavation.



4.3 Significance of Results

The investigation has demonstrated the survival of intact medieval deposits in this area. Previous work in the adjacent property at Nos 14-15a St Paul's Square demonstrated the survival of medieval and post-medieval features inside the interior of the buildings on this side of the square. It is likely that the construction of the new Corn Exchange and associated basement, immediately to the west of The Saracen's Head would have had a more significant impact on archaeological deposits.

The absence of any evidence for burials is significant. Despite the disturbance from later pits, considerable areas of undisturbed geological strata were revealed, with no trace of graves being observed. The investigations at Nos 14-15a in St Paul's Square in 1987 demonstrated the presence of an extensive cemetery which extends to the north of the church. The area beneath Nos 14-15a contained dense rows of burials, towards the present street frontages, with at least three phases of burial identified in some of the trenches. However there was no definite evidence for graves in the northern part of the site. The area monitored at The Saracen's Head would appear to have been situated outside of the cemetery, which suggests that the northern boundary of the late Saxon-early medieval cemetery lay a short distance to the south (Figure 3).

The results of the monitoring works add to our overall knowledge of the development and layout of the early medieval town and the survival of archaeological deposits. However, the limited extent of the observations and the small artefact assemblage mean that the results are not capable of supporting further analysis.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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6. APPENDIX 1 – ARTEFACT SUMMARY

Three pits produced eight pottery sherds, a piece of ceramic roof tile, and an animal bone fragment (Table 1). The material generally survives in good condition; pottery sherds have an average weight of 43g, and are not particularly abraded. With the exception of two pieces of modern glazed earthenware, the pottery is datable to the early medieval period (*c.* 1150-1250).

Feature	Context	Date Range	Finds summary
11	12	Early medieval	Pottery (113g)
11	13	Early medieval	Pottery (103g)
14	15	Modern	Pottery (94g); animal bone (142g))
17	19	Early medieval	Pottery (39g)
17	20	Late medieval/post-medieval transition	Ceramic roof tile (70g)

Table 1: Artefact Summary by feature



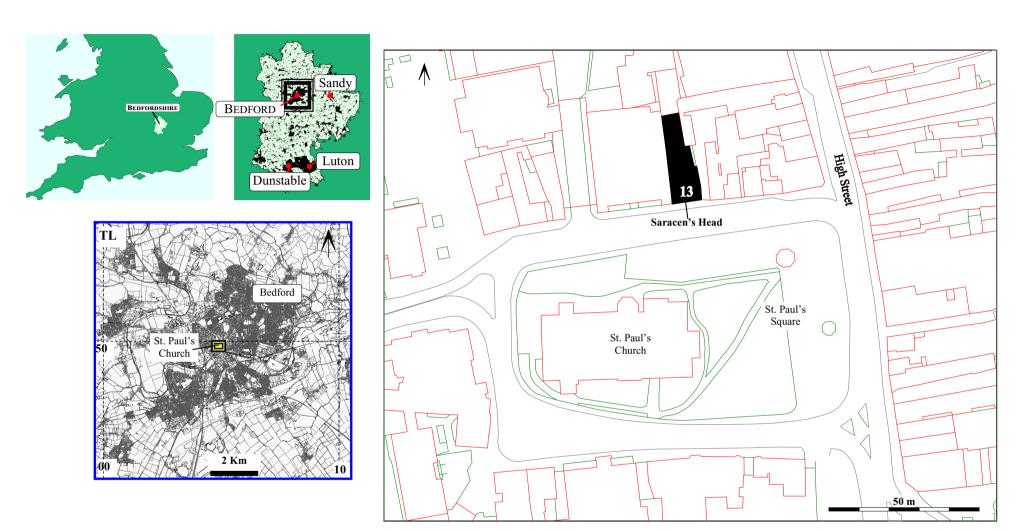


Figure 1: Site location.

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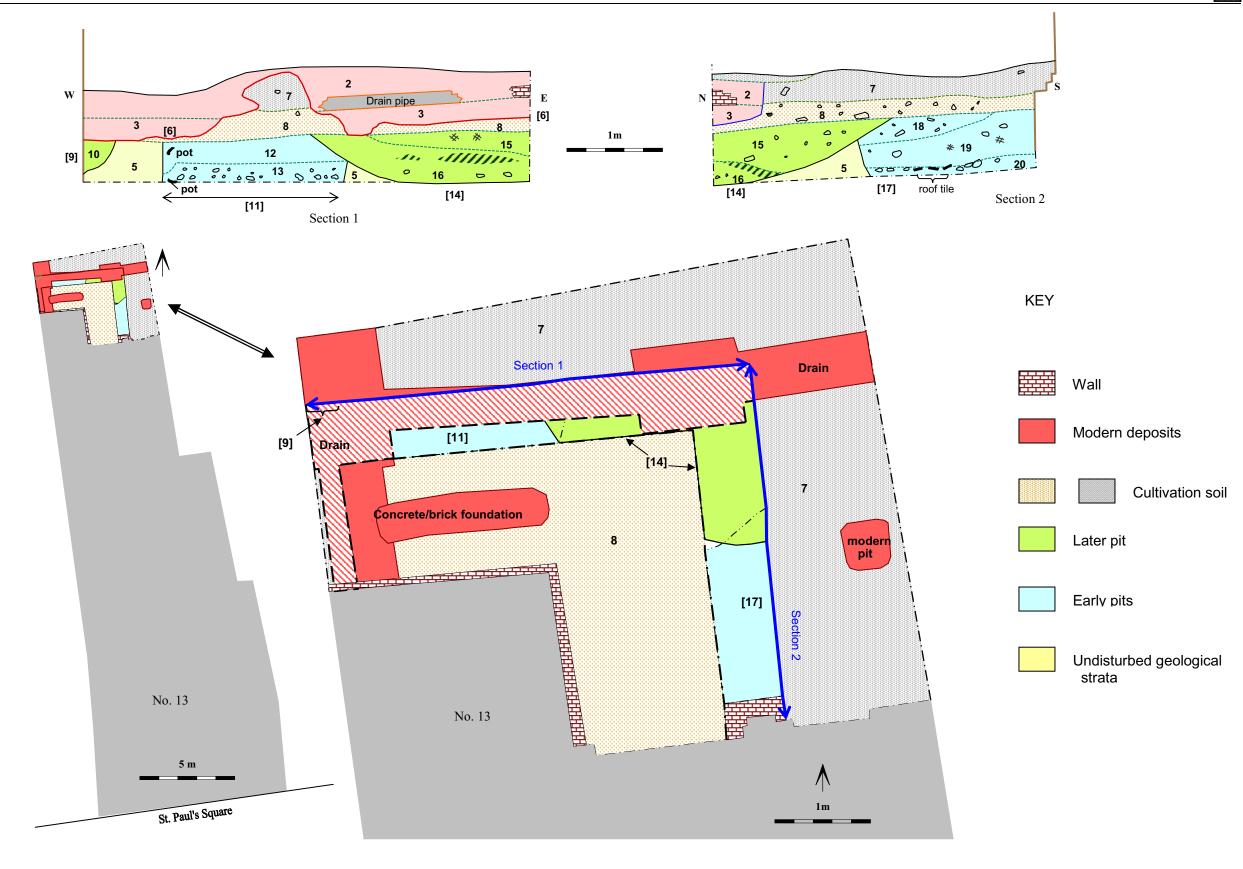


Figure 2: All features plan and sections





Figure 3: Archaeological background

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Image 1: General view of yard area prior to start of works (looking north)



Image 2: General view showing removal of modern drains (looking north-





Image 3: Section 1, west end of section looking north Scale 1m in 50cm divisions



Image 5: Section 1, east/centre part of section looking north Scale 1m in 50cm divisions



Image 4: Section 1, west/centre part of section looking north Scale 1m in 50cm divisions



Image 6: Section 1, east end of section looking north Scale 1m in 50cm divisions





Image 7: Section 2, northern half of section looking east Scale 1m in 50cm divisions



Image 9: General view of eastern arm of trench showing section 2 looking north-east



Image 8: Section 2, southern half of section looking east Scale 1m in 50cm divisions



Image 10: Early medieval pottery from context (12), pit [11]. Fabric type C01 240mm-diameter rim



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