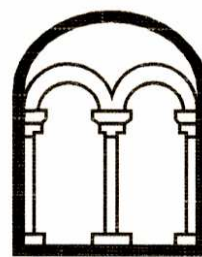


**15 SILVER STREET
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



**15 SILVER STREET
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements 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 Le Sage Associates, on behalf of House of Portland Investments Ltd. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders of the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council.

Fieldwork was carried out by Jo Barker (Project Supervisor) and Mark Phillips (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Jo Barker, Mark Phillips, Jackie Wells (Finds Officer) and Gary Edmondson (Project Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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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
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was appointed by Le Sage Associates, on behalf of their clients, House of Portland Investments Ltd, to undertake a programme of archaeological works to fulfil conditions attached to planning permission (12/01186/FUL) granted by Bedford Borough Council.

As the development lay within an area of high archaeological interest, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of 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). No brief was issued by the HET, but following discussions, Albion Archaeology formulated a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

The site is located on the north side of Silver Street, towards its west end, centred on grid reference TL 049408 498531, within the old town of Bedford. The plot is roughly rectangular in plan, extending 26m N-S from Silver Street to Hawes Court in the north. The current building was erected in approximately 1890, replacing an earlier brick building, which had served as a police station for the Borough Constabulary.

The archaeological works were undertaken between 16th and 22nd January 2013. Ground disturbance requiring archaeological observation comprised the hand excavation of two narrow wall footing trenches: one internal, towards the northern limit of the standing building and the second in the yard immediately to the north, comprising a small extension to the existing building.

The two trenches uncovered very similar deposits. A number of modern foundations and service trenches were identified cut into a layer of dark soil c. 0.7m thick. The dark soil was directly above the undisturbed geological strata, which lay at a depth of 1m below the modern ground surface. The dark soil is likely to have been formed as a result of the cultivation of garden plots. Continuous monitoring during hand excavation and scanning of the spoil produced only four sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of modern transfer-printed pottery. This could suggest relatively low levels of domestic activity nearby in the medieval period. The absence of modern debris in the soil suggests that cultivation had ceased by this time.

All of the exposed structural foundations and service runs were related to the modern use of the site. Where the underlying geology was exposed no evidence was found for earlier discrete features cut into it; nor was any evidence for large-scale disturbance such as cellars or quarrying found.

There is no potential for further analysis and reporting of the remains beyond the scope of this document, which will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (ref. albionar1-135048).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

A planning application for a rear extension and change of use for the first floor at 15 Silver Street, Bedford has been granted by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) (12/01186/FUL).

As the development lies within an area of high archaeological interest, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of BBC recommended that a condition was attached to the planning consent for the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation. This advice is 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).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Le Sage Associates to carry out the archaeological work. No brief was been issued by the HET, but following discussions, Albion Archaeology formulated a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2012a), setting out the procedures and methods to be employed during the project, in order to fulfil the planning condition.

Ground disturbance associated with the work was focused on the northern part of the plot, towards Hawes Court. This comprised the hand excavation of two narrow wall footing trenches; one for an internal wall near the northern limit of the standing building, with the second in the yard immediately to the north.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The site is located on the north side of Silver Street, towards its west end, centred on grid reference TL 049408 498531 (Figure 1), within the old town of Bedford. This side of Silver Street forms the southern side of a roughly square block of properties, situated a short distance from the River Great Ouse. The plot is roughly rectangular in plan, extending 26m N-S from Silver Street to Hawes Court in the north, by approximately 5m wide. The site is bounded by slightly larger plots to both the east and west.

The majority of the plot is occupied by buildings with only the northern margin open, extending to Hawes Court, a roughly E-W lane, which joins Harpur Street (formally White Horse Lane) but stops before reaching High Street in the east. The street front building is of brick, with ceramic roof tiles. This part of the street comprises buildings of various styles and materials.

The site lies at a height of *c.* 23m 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 Saxon and medieval settlement of Bedford. It is close to the N-S aligned High Street, which has been the main thoroughfare in Bedford from Saxon to modern times. It is also close to the putative 9th-century northern boundary of the town that shifted further north in a series of stages as the settlement extended in the following three centuries. For further information on the early post-medieval history see the WSI.

The current properties forming 15/15a Silver Street were erected in the 1890s, originally having living accommodation above. They replaced an earlier two-storey brick building with slate roof (Wildman 1995, 54), which is depicted on the 1854 Gas map of Bedford (Figure 2: Map 1) and the 1882 first edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2: Map 2). From 1856 this building served as a Police Station for the Borough Constabulary. The main building extended *c.* 7m from the street frontage, with ancillary buildings further to the north. The different shading of these on the 1854 Gas map indicates that they were of contrasting construction, probably timber.

The 1924 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map shows the building to occupy the full width of the plot at the street frontage, though tapering to the rear, with a narrower building occupying the eastern side of the plot (Figure 2: Map 3). The western side of the plot was open, extending to Hawes Court.

Recent work at the south side of Silver Street at 20-22 revealed a variety of features (Albion Archaeology 2012b). This included an extensive cultivation layer which sealed a series of earlier features.

1.4 Project Objectives

The immediate objective of the archaeological fieldwork was to monitor all sub-surface groundworks associated with the development that had potential to reveal archaeological remains.

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 adjacent to the Saxon core and within medieval core of the settlement had potential to add to the understanding of the origins and development which is a local and regional research theme (Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 70).



2. METHOD STATEMENTS

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

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

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. 2012.56). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (albionar1-135048).



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The monitored groundworks were undertaken intermittently between 16th and 22nd January 2013, in accordance with the works programme of the groundworks contractor. Initial monitoring work was undertaken inside the building during the excavation of an E-W aligned wall footing for a new stair well (Figure 3: Trench 1). The second stage of monitoring was undertaken in the rear yard. The exterior trench consisted of ground reduction and a strip footing for a small extension (Figure 3: Trench 2).

The results are discussed in terms of the footing within the building (Trench 1) and the trench for the extension in the yard to the north (Trench 2). The features are, where possible, discussed chronologically from earliest to latest. Context numbers are referred to in the text with cuts shown in square brackets [**] and fills and layers in curved brackets (**). Plans and sections are presented in Figure 3.

3.2 Undisturbed Geological Strata

Where exposed, the geological strata consisted of mid yellowish brown clayey gravel (31). It was visible in the base of both trenches at a depth of 0.9–1m below the modern ground surface. The top of this gravel formed an approximately level interface with an overlying deposit of cultivation soil (see below).

In both trenches the undisturbed gravel was seen most clearly in that part of the trench which lay closest to the eastern boundary of the site. Further west, in the base of both trenches, the deposit was more mixed — probably representing the interface between the gravel and the overlying cultivation soil.

3.3 Trench 1: Area within the Standing Building

3.3.1 Floor slab

The internal floor slab consisted of concrete (1) laid over a make-up layer (2) (Figure 3: Section 2 a/b, Figure 4: Images 1 and 2). The composition of the floor which included a vapour control layer and expanded metal mesh shows that the floor has been replaced in the modern period, i.e. in the last few decades.

3.3.2 Foundations of the existing building

The foundations of the east and west sides of the current building were observed at either end of the trench. The foundations at the east side of the building [8] consisted of a stepped brick plinth on top of a concrete strip foundation extending down to the undisturbed gravel (Figure 4: Image 1). The wall at the west side of the building was built over a relatively shallow concrete strip footing [18].



3.3.3 Foundations of earlier structures

Evidence of earlier structures consisted of a N-S aligned concrete foundation [12] in the middle of the trench and a square or rectangular concrete pier [9] with remains of brickwork at the top (Figure 3: Section 2b, Figure 4: Images 1 and 2). The full western extent of the pier was not apparent due to disturbance associated with service trenches in this area.

It is not possible to determine the structural function of the pier. The pier base was similar in appearance/composition to the other modern foundations found in the trenches. It is not clear, however, what it was supporting. The N-S aligned foundation [12] appears to correspond to the western side of the long narrow building which is shown to the rear of the property on the 1924 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2: Map 3).

3.3.4 Services

The ground under the floor slab was cut by service trenches containing glazed earthenware and bitumen pipes [6], [14] and [16].

3.3.5 Cultivation soil

A deep layer of soft, dark brown or black silty soil was found across the whole trench, (5) and (11), (Figure 3: Section 2a/b, Figure 4: Images 1 and 2). It was up to 0.6m thick and was cut by all of the modern intrusions for services and foundations. The layer contained a moderate concentration of small stones, occasional fragments of charcoal and a few fragments of animal bone. A single sherd of transfer-printed earthenware was recovered from approximately half-way down the profile. The base of the layer was lay 1m below the modern ground surface on undisturbed gravel (31). The thickness and nature of the deposit would indicate a cultivation soil, probably hang-dug garden plots.

3.4 Trench 2: Area to the Rear of the Property

3.4.1 External yard surface

The existing concrete yard surface (20) was laid over a mixed layer of soil and brick rubble (21) (Figure 3: Section 1 and Figure 5: Image 4).

3.4.2 Foundations

Two concrete foundations were recorded within the trench [26] and [28] (Figure 3). Both were aligned with the walls of the standing buildings and appear to be the result of over-digging during construction.

Foundation [26], a concrete strip footing in the NE corner of the trench (Figure 5: Image 4), was aligned with the north wall of a small extension at the rear of the property, which contained a lobby and toilet. Foundation [28] was a large N-S aligned concrete footing which formed a continuation of the western side of the property. It was at least 0.8m wide and 0.8m deep (Figure 3: Section 1). The size of this foundation contrasts with the smaller foundation [18] seen in Trench 1, which formed part of the same wall-line.



3.4.3 Services

The trench was crossed by two converging service trenches containing sewer pipes, aligned NW-SE, [22] and [24]. It was not always possible to define the cut associated with a service pipe, the fill of the trench and adjacent cultivation soil being identical in appearance.

3.4.4 Cultivation soil

The trench contained a layer of very dark soil up to 0.7m thick (Figure 3: Section 1, Figure 5: Images 3 and 4). It lay directly above the undisturbed geological strata in the base of the trench and was cut by the foundations and service trenches (Figure 5: Image 4). A few fragments of animal bone were observed and a small amount of pottery dating from the Saxo-Norman and early medieval periods was recovered. The deposit contained no other occupation debris.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The two trenches uncovered very similar deposits. A number of modern foundations and service trenches were identified cut into a layer of dark soil c. 0.7m thick. The dark soil was directly above the undisturbed geological strata, which lay at a depth of 1m below the modern ground surface.

Where the geological strata were clearly exposed, no evidence was found for earlier cut features. However, negative features could survive if present because most of the modern intrusions lay above the level of the geological strata and no evidence for large-scale disturbance such as cellars or quarrying was found.

The dark cultivation soil is likely to have been formed as a result of the hand digging of garden plots at the rear of the properties on Silver Street. The soil is too thick for a ploughsoil, whilst its colour suggests enrichment through the addition of organic matter into a regularly mixed deposit. Continuous monitoring during hand excavation of the footings and scanning of the upcast soil produced four sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of modern transfer-printed pottery. This could suggest relatively low levels of domestic activity during the medieval period and the absence of modern debris suggests that cultivation of the soil had ceased by this time. It is possible that the sherd of transfer-printed pottery was intrusive as it was not always easy to identify later intrusions into the cultivation soil

All of the structural foundations and service cuts identified were related to the modern use the site with no evidence for earlier buildings. The foundations were made entirely of concrete with small rounded pebble aggregate which is consistent with 20th-century practice.

There is no potential for further analysis and reporting of the remains beyond the scope of this document, which will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (ref. albionar1-135048).



5. APPENDIX 1: FINDS SUMMARY

5.1 Introduction

The investigation produced a small finds assemblage comprising pottery and animal bone. The material was examined to ascertain its nature, condition and where possible its date range (Table 1).

Tr.	Feature	Description	Context	Date range	Finds Summary
1	5	Dark cultivation layer	5	Undated	Animal bone (3g)
	11	Dark cultivation layer	11	Modern	Pottery (13g)
2	30	Cultivation layer	30	Early medieval	Pottery (26g)

Table1: Artefact summary by trench and feature

5.2 Pottery

Five pottery sherds weighing 39g were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. The pottery is generally fragmented, with an average sherd weight of 8g, and survives in fair condition. Five 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).

Fabric Type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context/Sherd No.
<i>Saxo-Norman</i>			
B01B	St Neots-type ware (fine)	1	(30):1
<i>Early medieval</i>			
B07	Shell	1	(30):1
C03	Fine sand	1	(30):1
C04	Coarse sand	1	(30):1
<i>Modern</i>			
P45	Transfer-printed ware	1	(11):1

Table 2: Pottery Type Series

Saxo-Norman (c. AD900–1150)

An undiagnostic body sherd (3g) of wheel-thrown, shell-tempered St Neots-type ware (fabric B01B) occurred as a residual find in cultivation layer (30). Sooting on its external surfaces suggests use as a cooking pot. The ware is likely to be locally manufactured, although no specific production centres are known.

Early medieval (c. AD1150–1250)

Three early medieval sherds (23g) derived from cultivation layer (30). They comprise a shell-tempered, wheel-thrown rim sherd of 12th–13th-century date (fabric B07), known to derive from production sites on the Beds./Bucks./Northants. borders. Two locally manufactured contemporary sand-tempered sherds (C03; C04) also occur. No diagnostic vessel forms occur.

Modern (post-AD1750)

One sherd of a transfer-printed ware plate (13g) derived from dark cultivation layer (11).



5.3 Animal Bone

Four animal bone fragments (3g) were collected from dark cultivation layer (5). They are too fragmentary to be identified to species, although one may be a rodent limb bone.



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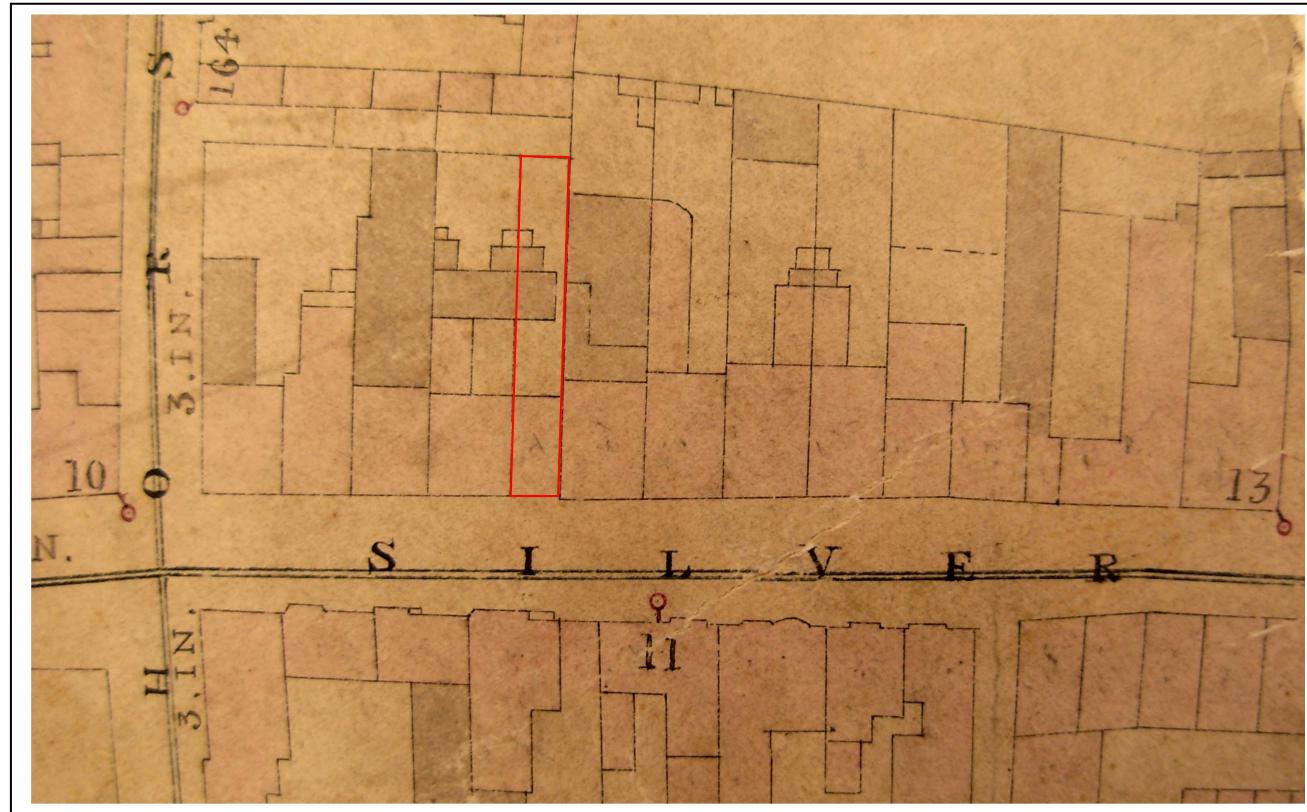
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Figure 1: Site location plan

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Map 1: Detail from the 1854 Gas map of Bedford



Map 2: Detail from first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1882



Map 3: Detail from third edition Ordnance Survey map of 1924

Figure 2: Historical maps

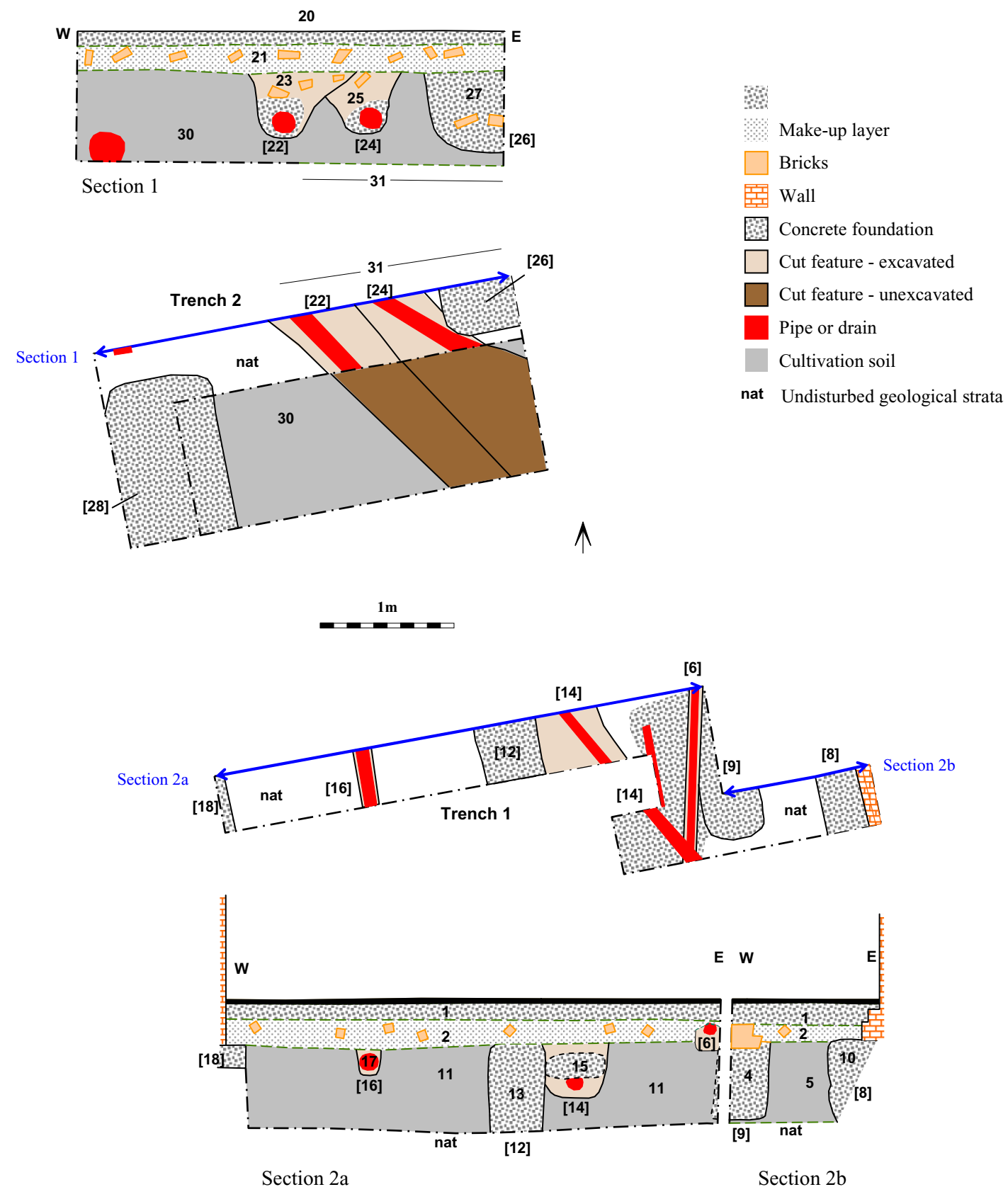
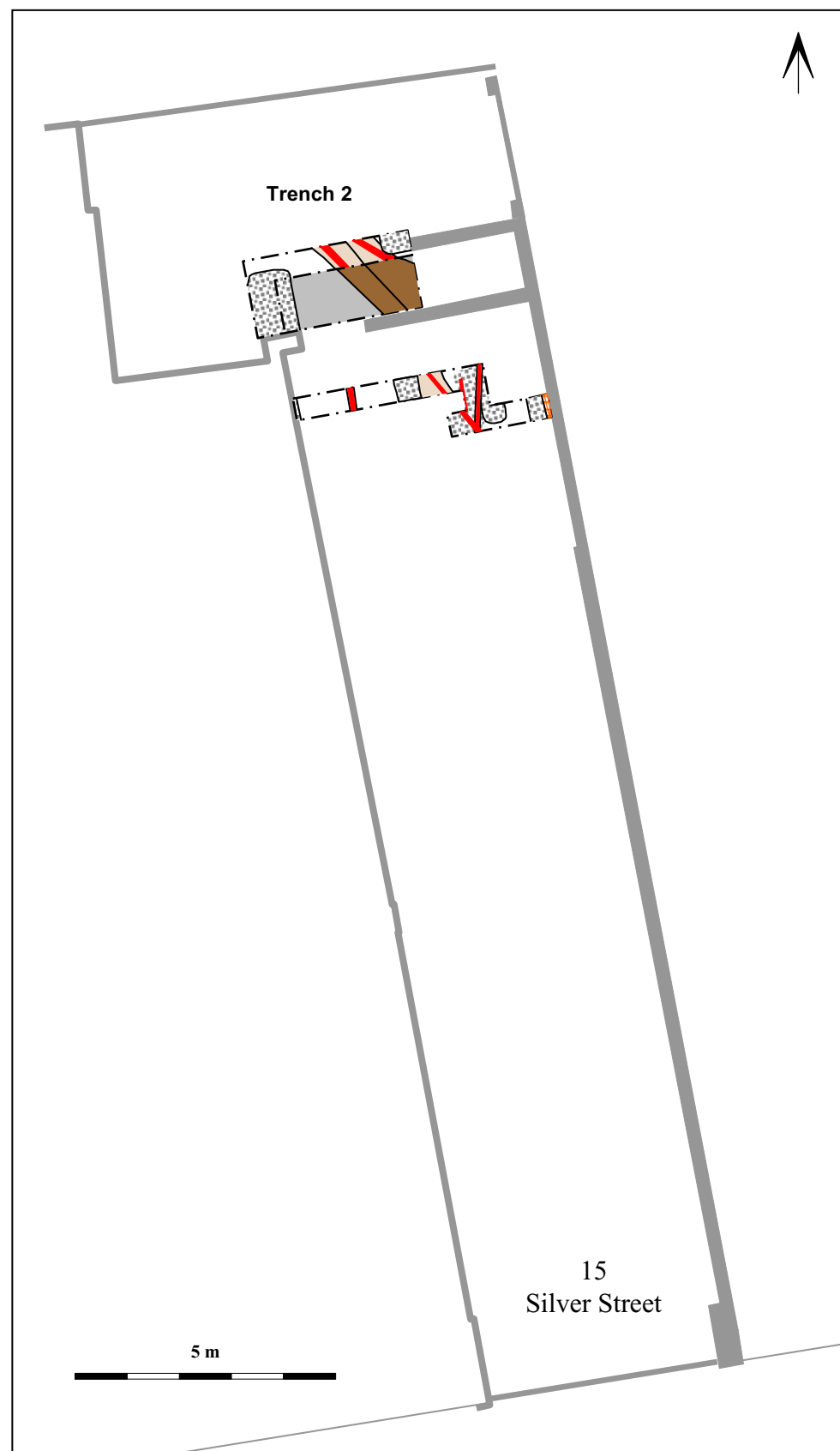


Figure 3: All features plan and sections



Image 1: Eastern end of Trench 1 looking north (scale 40cm)

The image shows concrete pier [9] in the centre, wall foundation [8] at right-hand side and dark soil layer (5) between.



Image 2: Central part of Trench 1 looking north (scale 40cm)

The image shows sewer trench [14] in the centre, the concrete foundation of a former wall [12] immediately to the left and dark soil (11) to either side.

Figure 4: Trench 1: Selected images 1 and 2



Image 3: General view of Trench 2 looking NE



Image 4: Eastern end of Trench 2 looking north (scale 40cm)

The image shows concrete foundation [26] at the right and service trenches [22] and [24] in the left hand half, all cutting the dark soil layer (30) which is visible in the base of the trench.

Figure 5: Trench 2: Selected images 3 and 4



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