

**LAND AT GREYFRIARS
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH
EVALUATION**

Albion
archaeology



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EVALUATION**

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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.

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Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

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



Non-Technical Summary

A planning application is to be submitted for the creation of a surface car park on land at Greyfriars, Bedford.

Because the site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a pre-determination archaeological trial trench evaluation be carried out.

The proposed development site is located to the west of the suggested boundary of the Saxon and medieval core of the historic town and east of the Greyfriars Franciscan Friary. It also lies on the possible course of the Saffron Ditch, an important early landmark and boundary in the development of the town.

During the 19th century a planned street grid was laid out and various residential terraces together with industrial/commercial buildings were constructed in the area. Later during the 1960s this part of the town was extensively remodelled — the 19th-century structures were demolished and two tower blocks were constructed on the present site.

The trial trench evaluation confirmed that the foundations of the former tower blocks at the site were substantial enough to have destroyed any potential archaeological remains at their locations and that some deeper foundations were associated with the 19th-century development of the area. The works also found that a considerable depth of overburden was present across the site. However, no archaeological remains of significance were identified.

Although no significant archaeological remains were found, their presence at the site cannot be ruled out as preservation beneath the overburden, outside the footprints of the former tower blocks, is a possibility. However, the current development proposals are unlikely to impact these potential remains because of their likely depth.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

A planning application is to be submitted for the creation of a surface car park on land at Greyfriars, Bedford.

Because the site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a pre-determination trial trench evaluation be carried out.

This recommendation is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, which was published on 27 March 2012.

The HET (HET 2012) subsequently issued a brief detailing the requirements for the archaeological works.

1.2 *Site Location*

The site of the proposed car park lies in the centre of Bedford between Beckett Street and Greyfriars and is centred on national grid reference TL04574 49942 (Figure 1). The site is open, fairly level at 27m OD, and currently under grass following the recent demolition of two residential tower blocks.

The geology of the area comprises river terrace sands and gravels of the Ouse Valley Formation.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The proposed development site is located in an area of archaeological interest, immediately to the west of the suggested boundary of the Saxon and medieval core of the historic town (HER10530) and east of the Greyfriars Franciscan Friary (HER268).

One of the main branches of the Saffron Ditch, a natural watercourse likely to have been canalised and re-routed on numerous occasions, is projected to run across the south of the site on an east-west alignment from a spring/pond located on Conduit Road to the west (HER14989). To the east of the site the ditch turns to run north-south down to the River Great Ouse and forms the boundary of the Saxon and medieval town. Although outside the core of the town, the ditch flows from the direction of two sites of medieval activity: the Friary mentioned above and a medieval moated site further to the west (HER15396).

Cartographic and aerial photographic evidence indicates that this part of Bedford has seen significant development. During the 19th century a planned street grid was laid out and various residential terraces together with industrial/commercial buildings were constructed. Later during the 1960s this part of the town was extensively remodelled — the 19th-century structures were demolished and number of tower blocks constructed. It is thought that the 19th-century dwellings did not have cellars; therefore, whilst they would have caused some disturbance to earlier archaeological remains, there is still potential for relatively large undisturbed areas to survive between the foundations. The foundation design of the two tower blocks which formerly occupied the site is not known but the potential for remains within these



footprints is likely to be low. Large parts of the site surrounding the blocks were open and undeveloped and may have been relatively undisturbed.

Excavations undertaken elsewhere in the town, in areas subject to modern development, have demonstrated that remains of Saxon and medieval date can survive relatively well preserved.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal objective of the trenching evaluation was to determine whether archaeological remains were present at the site and, if so, to determine their date, nature, extent, condition, and significance. This information would be used to inform decisions with regard to the impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains present, and to help in the formulation of appropriate mitigation measures to protect remains either by preservation or excavation.

The main research potential of the proposed development site lies in its location close to the historic town core and the outlying Franciscan Friary. Any surviving deposits or features dating to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods may contribute to the understanding of the origins and development of the town.



2. METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching took place between 3rd and 6th December 2012. Five 1.8m-wide trenches were opened within the proposed development area (Figure 1). Trenches 1 – 3 were 25m long, although a 6m-wide gap was left in Trench 3 to avoid a power cable. Trenches 4 and 5 were shortened to 10m and 20m respectively to avoid further buried services and the canopy of a tree.

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.

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 100 for Trench 1, and 200 for Trench 2 etc. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

A full methodology is provided in the project WSI (Albion Archaeology 2012).

The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (1998)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2006)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition</i> (2011)
• HET	<i>Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Greyfriars, Bedford, Bedfordshire</i> (October 2012)
• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation</i> (updated 2008) and <i>finds</i> (updated 2008)



3. RESULTS

Features and deposits found during the investigations are described below and shown on Figure 2. Detailed data on all features and deposits can be found in the appendix.

3.1 Trench 1

Topsoil (100) comprising dark grey brown clay silt was present to a depth of 0.4–0.7m below ground level. This overlay layers (101-103) containing a large amount of brick rubble associated with the demolition of the Victorian buildings in the 1960s.

At the northern end of the trench the remains of cellars [105, 106] or deeper brick foundation remained partially intact.

Two service trenches [107, 109] associated with the former buildings crossed the trench on a NW-SE alignment. The deeper of these [109] extended beyond a depth of 1.2m

Undisturbed geological deposits (104) were encountered at a depth of *c.*1.2–1.3m below ground level. They comprised mid grey brown silty clay.

No archaeological features of significance were present within the trench.

3.2 Trench 2

Topsoil (200) comprising dark grey brown clay silt was present to a depth of 0.3m, overlying a 0.2m thick layer of levelling gravel (201).

At the north-west end of the trench the concrete foundations of the demolished 1960s tower block [207] and a demolition layer associated with the earlier Victorian housing (203) were revealed.

The south-east end of the trench revealed layers (202, 203) containing a large amount of brick rubble associated with the demolition of the Victorian buildings. The remains of a brick foundation wall (211) and a possible paved surface (212) were also present. Clay layer (204) may be associated with the build up of ground prior to construction in the 19th century. Beneath these later deposits a 0.25m-thick buried subsoil (205) was observed.

Undisturbed geological deposits (206) were encountered at a depth of *c.*1.2m below ground level at the south-east end of the trench. They comprised mid brown grey clay with reddish silty inclusions.

No archaeological features of significance were present within the trench.

3.3 Trench 3

Topsoil (300) comprising dark grey brown clay silt was present to a depth of 0.3m, overlying a 0.2m-thick layer of levelling gravel (301).

The south-east end of the trench was excavated to a depth of *c.*0.5m. At this level a tarmac road surface (306), cobbled gutter (305) and path (304) were revealed along with a possible lamp post base [307] and the brick foundations of a building (313) running along the former street front.

The north-west end of the trench revealed the concrete foundations of the 1960s tower block (310). These were observed to a depth of at least 1.2m below ground level. A large drain pipe, (309) aligned NE-SW parallel to the



foundations, was observed at a depth of 1.2m. The intrusions associated with the tower block were cut through a layer of made ground (302) at least 0.75m thick, probably associated with the demolition of the 19th-century buildings.

Undisturbed geological deposits were not encountered.

No archaeological features of significance were present within Trench 3

3.4 Trench 4

Topsoil (400) comprising dark grey brown clay silt was present to a depth of 0.35m. This overlay layers containing a large amount of brick rubble (401) measuring up to 0.5m thick. These represent the remains of the 19th-century foundations and their demolition. A clay layer (402) is probably made up ground raising the level prior to the construction of the 19th-century buildings.

A buried subsoil (403), similar to that observed in Trench 2, comprised a grey brown silty clay, up to 0.35m thick. This overlay brown grey clay geological deposits (404), with reddish silty inclusions, at a depth of *c.* 1.1m.

No archaeological features of significance were found within the trench.

3.5 Trench 5

Topsoil (500) comprising dark grey brown clay silt was present to a depth of 0.4m.

A number of foundations remain intact within Trench 5. A shallow brick foundation at its north-east end [511] and a deeper limestone foundation extending below 1.2m [504] were cut through a silty clay layer (501). This layer was up to 0.7m thick and contained frequent building rubble; it is probably associated with the build-up of ground prior to 19th-century construction.

The remains of a brick well or soakaway [507] associated with the Victorian buildings was also present.

A buried subsoil (502), similar to that observed in Trenches 2 and 4, was located towards the north-east end of the trench. It comprised grey brown silty clay, up to 0.35m thick, which overlay brown grey clay geological deposits (503), with reddish silty inclusions, at a depth of *c.* 1.1m

No archaeological features of significance were found in Trench 5.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The trial trench evaluation confirmed that the foundations of the former tower blocks at the site were substantial enough to have destroyed any potential archaeological remains at their locations and that some deeper foundations were associated with the 19th-century development of the area. The works also found that a considerable depth of overburden was present across the site. However, no archaeological remains of significance were identified.

Deposits potentially containing archaeological remains were not reached across every trench because of their probable depth and the presence of significant amounts of modern building remains, i.e. compacted rubble, concrete and brick foundations, road surfaces etc., which proved difficult to remove.

Where it was possible to remove all overburden, it was found that layers potentially containing archaeological remains were located at depths of 1.1–1.2m below ground level. This depth of overburden comprised modern demolition rubble along with buried soils suggesting that the ground level has been significantly raised during and since the redevelopment of the area in the 19th century.

Although no significant archaeological remains were found during the trial trenching, their presence at the site cannot be ruled out as preservation beneath the overburden, outside the footprints of the former tower blocks, is a possibility. However, the current development proposals are unlikely to impact these potential remains because of their likely depth.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2012. *Land at Greyfriars, Bedford, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report no. 2012/168.

HET 2012. *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Greyfriars, Bedford, Bedfordshire*. October 2012.



6. APPENDIX: CONTEXT DETAILS



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.2 m. Max: 1.2 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0453849973

OS Grid Ref.: TL0453449948

Reason: Assess potential survival/presence of archaeology

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown silty clay Thickness: 0.4 - 0.7m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Demolition layer	Friable dark brown grey clay silt frequent small-large CBM Thickness: <0.75	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Make up layer	Friable mid grey brown silty clay Thickness: <0.75m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Make up layer	Loose mid brown yellow sandy gravel Thickness: 0.55m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Natural	Firm mid brown grey silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Foundation	Remains of probable brick cellar or footings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Foundation	Remains of probable brick cellar or footings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Service Trench	Linear NW-SE dimensions: max breadth 0.35m, max depth 0.85m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Backfill	Friable dark brown grey silty rubble frequent small-large CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Service Trench	Linear NW-SE sides: vertical dimensions: max breadth 1.1m, max depth 0.75m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Backfill	Loose dark brown grey silty rubble	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.15 m. Max: 1.2 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0455449958

OS Grid Ref.: TL0456949939

Reason: Assess potential survival/presence of archaeology

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Thickness: 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Levelling layer	Loose mid brown grey gravel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Demolition layer	Friable mid brown grey silty clay frequent small-large CBM, frequent small-medium stones Thickness: 0.45m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Make up layer	Firm mid brown grey silty clay occasional small-medium CBM Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Make up layer	Plastic light yellow grey clay Thickness: 0.15m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Buried subsoil	Firm mid grey brown silty clay Thickness: 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Natural	Firm mid brown grey silty clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Foundation trench		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
208	Foundation	Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
209	Surface	Tarmac	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
210	Demolition layer	Rubble frequent large concrete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
211	Foundation		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
212	Surface		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0454849938

OS Grid Ref.: TL0456749922

Reason: Assess potential survival/presence of archaeology

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt Thickness: 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Levelling layer	Loose mid brown grey gravel Thickness: 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Demolition layer	Firm mid brown grey silty clay frequent medium-large CBM Thickness: 0.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Make up layer	Loose sand frequent small-medium CBM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Surface	Pavement of old street. Dark grey brick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Surface	Cobbled gutter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Surface	Tarmac Buried road surface	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
307	Posthole	Lamp Post	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
308	Fill	Sandy concrete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
309	Drain		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
310	Foundation	Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
311	Foundation	Gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
312	Manhole		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
313	Foundation		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
314	Service Trench	Linear dimensions: max depth 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
315	Backfill	Orange sand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.1 m. Max: 1.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0459949934

OS Grid Ref.: TL0460849938

Reason: Assess potential survival/presence of archaeology

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Thickness: 0.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Demolition layer	Loose mid grey silty gravel frequent small-large CBM Bricks across top of later may represent the remains of foundations. Thickness: 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Demolition layer	Firm mid grey silty clay moderate small-medium CBM Thickness: 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Buried subsoil	Firm mid grey brown silty clay Thickness: 0.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Natural	Firm mid brown grey silty clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.9 m. Max: 1.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0459849918

OS Grid Ref.: TH0461549929

Reason: Assess potential survival/presence of archaeology

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Thickness: 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Demolition layer	Friable dark grey brown sandy clay frequent small-large CBM Thickness: 0.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay occasional flecks CBM, occasional flecks charcoal Thickness: 0.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
503	Natural	Firm mid blue grey silty clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
504	Foundation trench	Linear sides: vertical dimensions: max breadth 0.3m, max depth 0.7m, max length 1.9m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
505	Wall	Limestone Remains of foundation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
506	Backfill	Friable dark grey blue silty clay occasional small CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
507	Well	Circular dimensions: max diameter 1.25m Construction cut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
509	Backfill	Loose mid yellow orange sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
510	Fill	Loose rubble	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
508	Well		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
511	Foundation		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

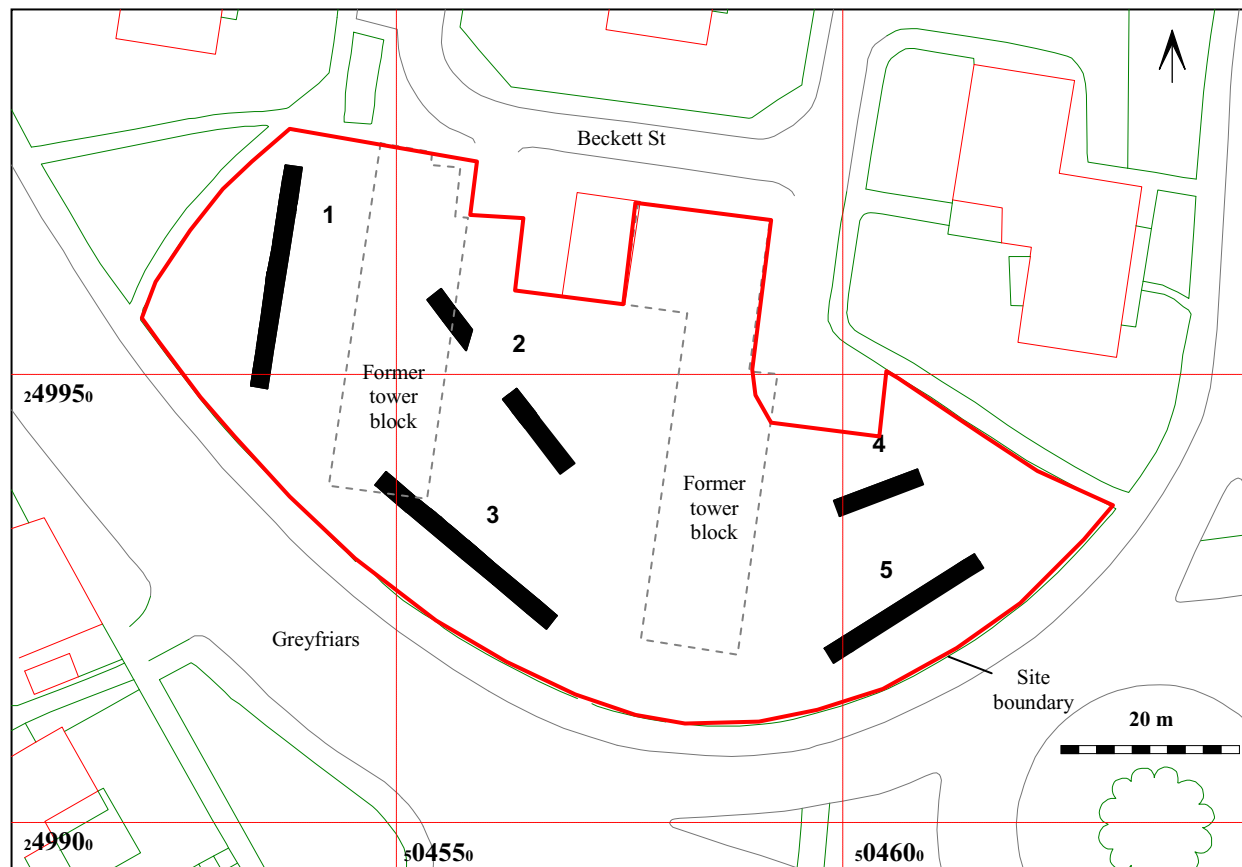
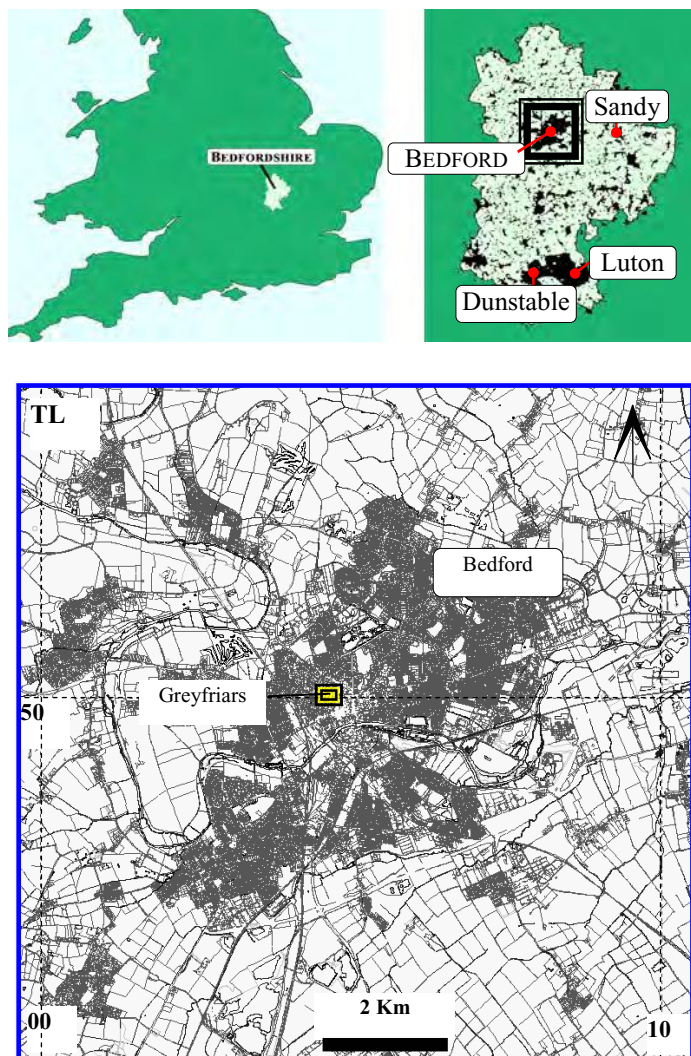


Figure 1: Site and trench location plan.

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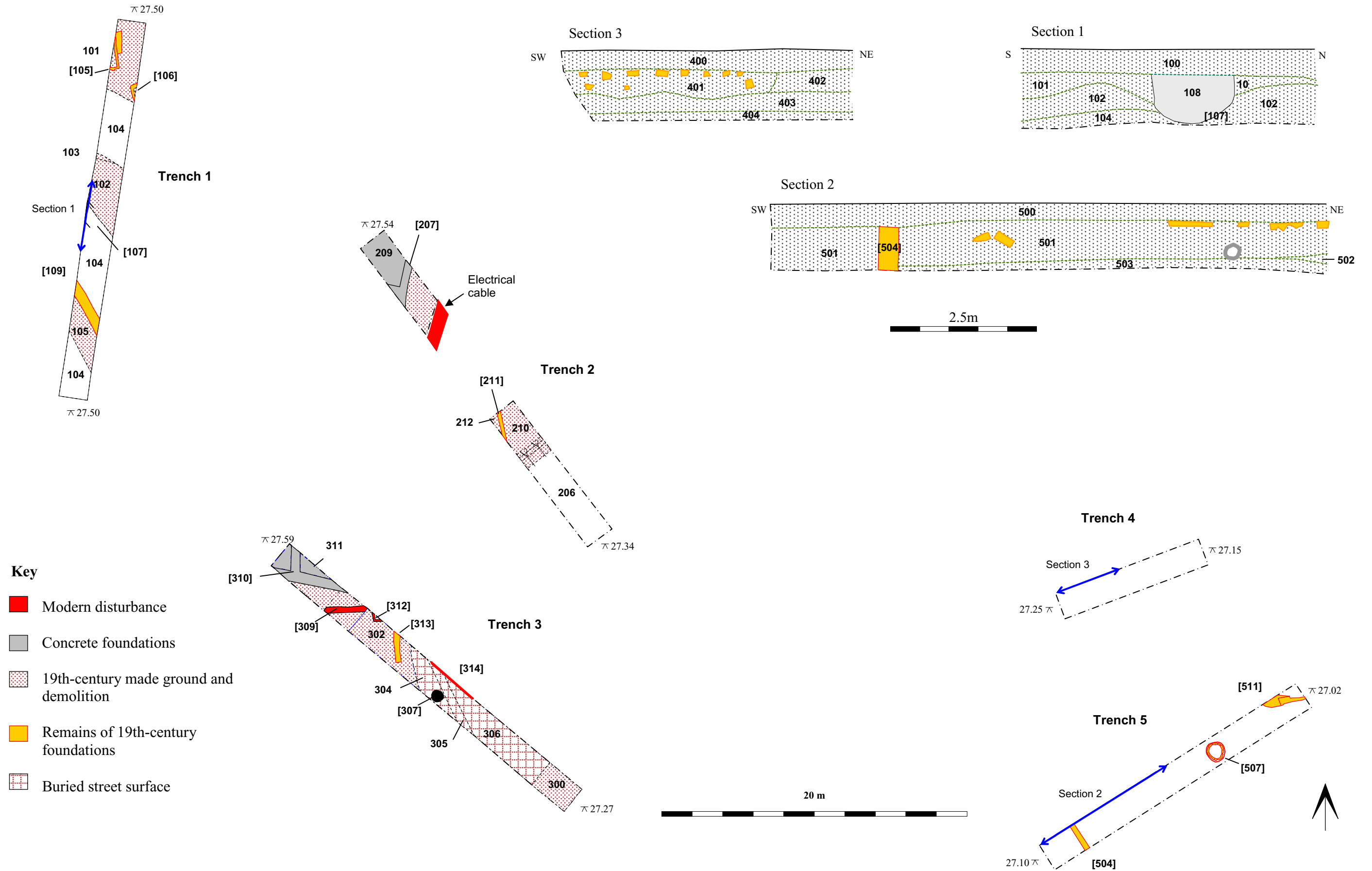


Figure 2: Trenching results



Trench 1: Remains of Victorian foundations [105]



Trench 4: view from the east end of trench



Trench 5: 19th-century well/soakaway [507]



Trench 3: Extant road (306) gutter (305) and path (304) viewed from the south-east

Figure 3: Selected photographs



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