

**LAND AT THE BELL PUBLIC HOUSE
HIGH STREET
WESTONING
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Project Background	4
1.2 Site Location and Description	4
1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background	4
2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	6
3. METHODOLOGY	7
4. RESULTS	8
4.1 Introduction	8
4.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits	8
4.3 Undated Tree-throw	8
4.4 Post-medieval Ditch	8
4.5 Modern Postholes	8
4.6 Modern Dog Burial	9
4.7 Pitting	9
5. SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS	10
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	11
7. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES	12
8. APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY	16
8.1 Introduction	16
8.2 Ceramics	16
8.3 Other Finds	16

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site and trench location

Figure 2: Evaluation results

The figures are bound at the back of the report.



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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The project was commissioned by Gray and Sons Builders Ltd and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Gregson (Archaeological Supervisor) and Slavomir Utrata (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report was prepared by Richard Gregson with figures produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). Finds reporting was by Jackie Wells (Finds Officer).

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
BCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (CB/11/04549/FULL) and listed building consent (CB/11/04550/LB) have been granted for the alteration and extension of The Bell Public House, High Street, Westoning and the erection of three detached dwellings on adjacent land.

Because the site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist recommended that an archaeological field evaluation should be undertaken in order to assess the potential impact of the proposed scheme on heritage assets that might be present within the development area. The archaeological field evaluation took place between 15th and 18th April 2013 and comprised the excavation of three 10m-long trial trenches to the north of the Public House.

A post-medieval ditch and a tree-throw were recorded in Trench 1. In the east of the site there were several modern features including two postholes, a dog burial, and a large area of pitting that covered the southern half of Trench 2 and the whole of Trench 3 to depths of between 0.66m and 2.5m.

None of the remains revealed by the trial trenching are of any great antiquity. They are of negligible significance and have no potential to address regional research objectives.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission (CB/11/04549/FULL) and listed building consent (CB/11/04550/LB) have been granted for the alteration and extension of The Bell Public House, High Street, Westoning and the erection of three detached dwellings on adjacent land.

Because the site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity (see Section 1.3), the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) recommended that a condition (7) be attached to the permission requiring a programme of archaeological works be carried out at the site of the new dwellings. This recommendation is in accordance with *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*. It was recommended that the programme should comprise the following stages:

- Stage 1 – Archaeological field evaluation
- Stage 2 – Appraisal of the results of the field evaluation. If significant archaeological remains are present at the site, then a mitigation strategy will be devised to preserve or further investigate remains that will be impacted by the development
- Stage 3 – Implementation of the mitigation strategy

This report represents the findings of the Stage 1 evaluation which was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion 2013) prepared in response to a brief issued by the CBC Archaeologist (CBC 2012).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The Bell Public House lies to the north of the village of Westoning on a triangular plot of land at the junction of the High Street and Greenfield Road. The planned new dwellings are located in an area of open ground to the north of the existing pub building, which is centred on grid reference TL 0343 3268 (Figure 1).

The topography of the area comprises a shallow valley through which the River Flit flows northwards, passing to the west of the village. The site itself lies on relatively flat ground at *c.* 77m OD on a band of Gault Clay. The clay appears to lie on the east side of the village; to the west the geology predominantly comprises Lower Greensand.

1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

The Bell Public House lies on the eastern edge of the medieval core of Westoning (HER17009). The pub building itself (HER6020) is Grade II listed and comprises an early 17th-century timber-framed structure, reworked in the later 19th century.

At the time of the Domesday survey (1086) the Manor of Westoning was held by King William as part of his manor of Hitchin in Hertfordshire (Page 1912). It is not mentioned in the Bedfordshire survey, although it was assessed as belonging to the Bedfordshire hundred of Manshead. The manor remained as



royal demesne until the late 12th century, after which it passed through the hands of various families.

To the west of the village are a scheduled medieval moat and fishponds (HER233 and SM20407) and the 12th-century church of St Mary Magdalene (HER5389). The construction of the moat has been attributed to William Inge, who acquired the manor of Westoning in 1297 and who also rebuilt the church in the early 14th century. The area around the church and manor house is perhaps the most likely location for the earliest settlement focus in Westoning. However, a number of archaeological investigations in the area have failed to confirm this (BCAS 1993, 1995, 1997, Heritage Network 2010).

Early maps of the village indicate that Westoning may have developed from more than one focal point. The locations of these foci are likely to have been: 1) in the vicinity of the parish church and manor house; 2) along Church Road and around its junction with Tyburn Lane, where the layout also suggests the presence of a green or market place; and 3) along the Toddington to Flitton road. It is possible that the granting of a weekly market and annual fair in 1303 (Page 1912) influenced the development of the village. If the market was held in the vicinity of Church Road and Tyburn Lane, which is the most centrally placed of the three foci, it might have drawn settlement towards that area, possibly to the detriment of the other two foci (Keir 2010).

An archaeological evaluation followed by area excavation carried out in 2008 at Westoning Lower School, c. 100m to the south of The Bell, revealed numerous postholes, gullies and ditches, representing the remains of two phases of medieval activity. The earlier phase comprised the partial outlines of three probable buildings, dated by pottery to the 12th–13th centuries. Their location suggests that a road on the line of the present-day High Street was already in existence at this time. By the beginning of the 14th century, the buildings appear to have been abandoned and were replaced by ditches demarcating a NE–SW boundary. These had become completely infilled by the end of the 15th century, from which time the site appears to have been used as farmland until the construction of the school in the early 20th century (Keir 2010).



2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The principal purpose of the evaluation was to gather information on possible buried heritage assets at the site:

- To determine the date, nature, extent and condition of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- To determine the relationship of any remains to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to characterise contemporary environmental conditions.

The archaeological background of the area indicated that the evaluation was most likely to uncover remains associated with rural settlement of medieval or possibly Saxon date. The main research objective of the project was therefore to characterise the form and function of any such evidence found at the site. This is a key area of interest as highlighted in the county and regional research agendas (Medlycott 2011, 70; Oake *et al* 2007, 14; Wade 2000, 24-25).

To achieve this objective the works specifically looked for:

- Structural or other evidence for occupation;
- Artefact/ecofact evidence indicating the nature of activity in the area – settlement, agricultural, industrial etc.



3. METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching took place between 15th and 18th April 2013. An initial layout of three 10m-long and 2m-wide trenches located within the footprints of the three new dwellings was agreed with the CBCA (Figure 2).

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The spoil heaps were also scanned for artefacts recovery.

Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 101 for Trench 1, 201 for Trench 2 *etc.* Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). The trenches were inspected by the CBCA prior to their backfilling.

The project adhered throughout to the standards and requirements set out in the following documents:

- Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd edn, 2001).
- Bedford Borough Council *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford* (2010)
- EAA *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003)
- English Heritage *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide* (2009)
 Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition (2011)
- IfA *By-Laws and Code of Conduct*
 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (updated 2009) and *finds* (updated 2008)

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (Accession No. LUTNM:2012/43). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref: albionar1-141591) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.



4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Three trenches were opened to the north of the public house within an area that had formerly been its car park. The trenches were located within each of the footprints of the new dwellings to be built on the site. The results of the trial trenching are summarised below, and shown on Figure 2, with archaeological features discussed in chronological order after a description of the overburden and undisturbed geological deposit. A full list of contexts is provided in Appendix 1.

4.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The tarmac car park surface (307) had been removed across most of the site before the start of the trial trenching. Where it survived at the east end of Trench 3, it was 0.20m thick.

The depth of overburden varied across the site from 0.5–0.62m. Below the removed tarmac surface there was a 0.21m-thick make-up layer (100, 203, 300) that varied from mid grey brown to dark brown grey in colour and from silty sand to sandy silt in composition.

In Trench 1 and the northern half of Trench 2 there was 0.3m of topsoil (101, 200) below the car park make-up layer. It comprised dark brown grey or grey brown sandy silt. Below the topsoil was a 0.26m-thick subsoil (102, 201) comprising mid grey brown or mid brown orange silty sand.

In the southern half of Trench 2 and the in the whole of Trench 3 topsoil and subsoil had been removed by an area of pitting [213, 308], dug to a depth of 0.66–2.5m.

The undisturbed geological deposits, mid brown orange silty sand (103, 202, 306), were similar in all of the trenches.

4.3 Undated Tree-throw

A tree-throw [106] was recorded at the western end of Trench 1. It was 2.75m long, 2.05m wide and up to 0.05m deep. It had shallow concave sides and an uneven base. It contained mid orange grey silty sand.

4.4 Post-medieval Ditch

A NNE-SSW aligned ditch [104] was recorded towards the eastern end of Trench 1. It was 1.55m wide and 0.7m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It contained mid brown sandy silt. Artefacts recovered from it included fragments of animal bone, coal and post-medieval roof tile.

4.5 Modern Postholes

Two square postholes [206], [210] were recorded towards the southern end of Trench 2, in the same area as an animal burial [208]. They were 0.23m and 0.3m wide. They contained dark brown grey to very dark grey sandy silt. Fragments of modern concrete were recovered from posthole [206], while posthole [210] contained the remains of a timber post.



4.6 Modern Dog Burial

Towards the southern end of Trench 2, in the same area as postholes [206] and [208], was a sub-rectangular dog burial [208]. The grave was 0.65m long, 0.35m wide and 0.07m deep, although it had been truncated by modern pitting (see below). It had near vertical or concave sides and a flat base. It contained the skeletal remains of a dog, surrounded by dark brown grey sandy silt. Modern artefacts were recovered from this deposit — a fragment of coal, a piece of window glass, a fragment of roof tile and a sherd of tin glazed pottery.

4.7 Pitting

A large area of pitting covered the southern half of Trench 2 [213] and the whole of Trench 3 [308]. Undisturbed geological sands survived below the pitting in Trench 2 at a depth of *c.* 0.65m. The equivalent depth in the eastern end of Trench 3 was *c.* 0.75m. However, in the western end of Trench 3 the pitting extended to a depth of 2.85m below the surface.

The deposits (204, 205, 302,303,304,305,309,310,311 & 312) within the pitting were up to 1.12m thick and varied from mid grey orange to dark brown grey in colour and from sandy silt to silty sand in composition. Artefacts recovered from them included fragments of roof tile, clinker and modern transfer-printed ware pottery.



5. SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS

The trial trench evaluation revealed a number of features within the trenches including a ditch, a tree-throw, two postholes, a dog burial, and a large area of pitting that was revealed in two of the three trenches.

However, all of the remains were either post-medieval (AD1500-1750) or modern (1750 onwards) in date. As such, they are later than the periods identified as being the main research areas for the site (see section 2) and, therefore, do not provide new insights into the development of the village of Westoning during the medieval period.

The features themselves are of little intrinsic value and have no potential to address regional research objectives.



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7. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.80 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.5 m. Max: 0.55 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3422: Northing: 32737)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3433: Northing: 32739)

Reason: To evaluate area.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Make up layer	Firm mid grey brown silty sand occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.12m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt moderate flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones 0.2m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Compact mid brown orange silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Ditch	Linear NNE-SSW sides: steep base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.55m, max depth 0.7m, min length 2.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Fill	Friable mid brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
106	Treethrow	Sub-oval sides: concave base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 2.05m, max depth 0.05m, max length 2.75m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Fill	Compact mid orange grey silty sand occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.80 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.51 m. Max: 0.66 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3436: Northing: 32736)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3440: Northing: 32726)

Reason: To evaluate area.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Firm dark grey brown sandy silt moderate flecks charcoal 0.19m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Subsoil	Compact mid orange brown silty sand occasional small stones 0.26m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Natural	Compact mid brown orange silty sand occasional small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Make up layer	Firm dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium stones 0.16m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Posthole	Square dimensions: max breadth 0.29m, max length 0.3m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Fill	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium concrete, occasional small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
208	Animal grave	Sub-rectangular NE-SW dimensions: max breadth 0.35m, max depth 0.07m, max length 0.65m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
209	Backfill	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
212	Animal skeleton	Femur, skull and other bones of a dog visible on surface.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
210	Posthole	Square dimensions: max breadth 0.23m, max length 0.24m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
211	Fill	Friable dark grey sandy silt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
213	Pit	base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 2.m, max depth 0.66m, min length 4.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Fill	Compact mid grey orange silty sand occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.17m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Primary fill	Compact dark grey silty sand occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.33m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.20 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.77 m. Max: 1.04 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3442: Northing: 32722)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 3452: Northing: 32724)

Reason: To evaluate area.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Make up layer	Firm mid grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.21m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Make up layer	Firm mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small stones 0.24m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Natural	Compact mid brown orange silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
307	Tarmac	0.20m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
308	Pit	sides: stepped base: uneven dimensions: min breadth 2.m, max depth 2.5m, min length 10.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Upper fill	Firm dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small CBM, occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones 0.26m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Upper fill	Compact mid brown orange silty sand occasional small stones 0.26m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Upper fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.33m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Fill	Firm dark brown grey sandy silt occasional small CBM 0.05m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
309	Primary fill	Firm mid grey brown silty sand 0.72m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
310	Lower fill	Firm dark brown grey sandy silt 1.12m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
311	Upper fill	Firm dark brown grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones 0.54m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
312	Upper fill	Firm light brown grey sandy silt 0.5m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



8. APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY

8.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a small finds assemblage comprising pottery, ceramic roof tile, animal bone and window glass (Table 1). Datable finds are of post-medieval and later origin.

Tr.	Feature	Description	Context	Spot date*	Finds Summary
1	104	Ditch	105	Post-medieval / modern	Ceramic roof tile (193g); animal bone (456g)
2	206	Post hole	207	Modern	Mortar (252g)
	208	Dog burial	209	Modern	Pottery (24g); ceramic roof tile (40g); window glass (6g); coal (4g); dog skeleton
3	308	Pit	310	Modern	Pottery (2g); ceramic roof tile (20g); clinker (2g)

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and feature

8.2 Ceramics

Two pottery rim sherds (26g) and four pieces of flat roof tile (193g) were recovered. The fills of dog burial [208] and pit [308] respectively contained single sherds of 17th- to early 18th-century tin-glazed earthenware (fabric P33)¹ and 19th-century transfer-printed ware (P45).

Single modern flat roof tile fragments derived from the same features, and two post-medieval pieces from ditch [104].

8.3 Other Finds

Small pieces of clinker (2g) and coal (4g) were collected from pit [308] and grave [208]. The latter also contained a modern window glass fragment (6g) c. 2.5mm thick. Modern mortar fragments (252g) with a coarse aggregate bound in a friable off-white matrix derived from post hole [206].

In addition to the dog skeleton recovered from [208], ten fragments (46g) deriving from animals of indeterminate species were collected from ditch [105]. Bone elements are limb and foot bones, the latter represented by a phalanx and astragalus.

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

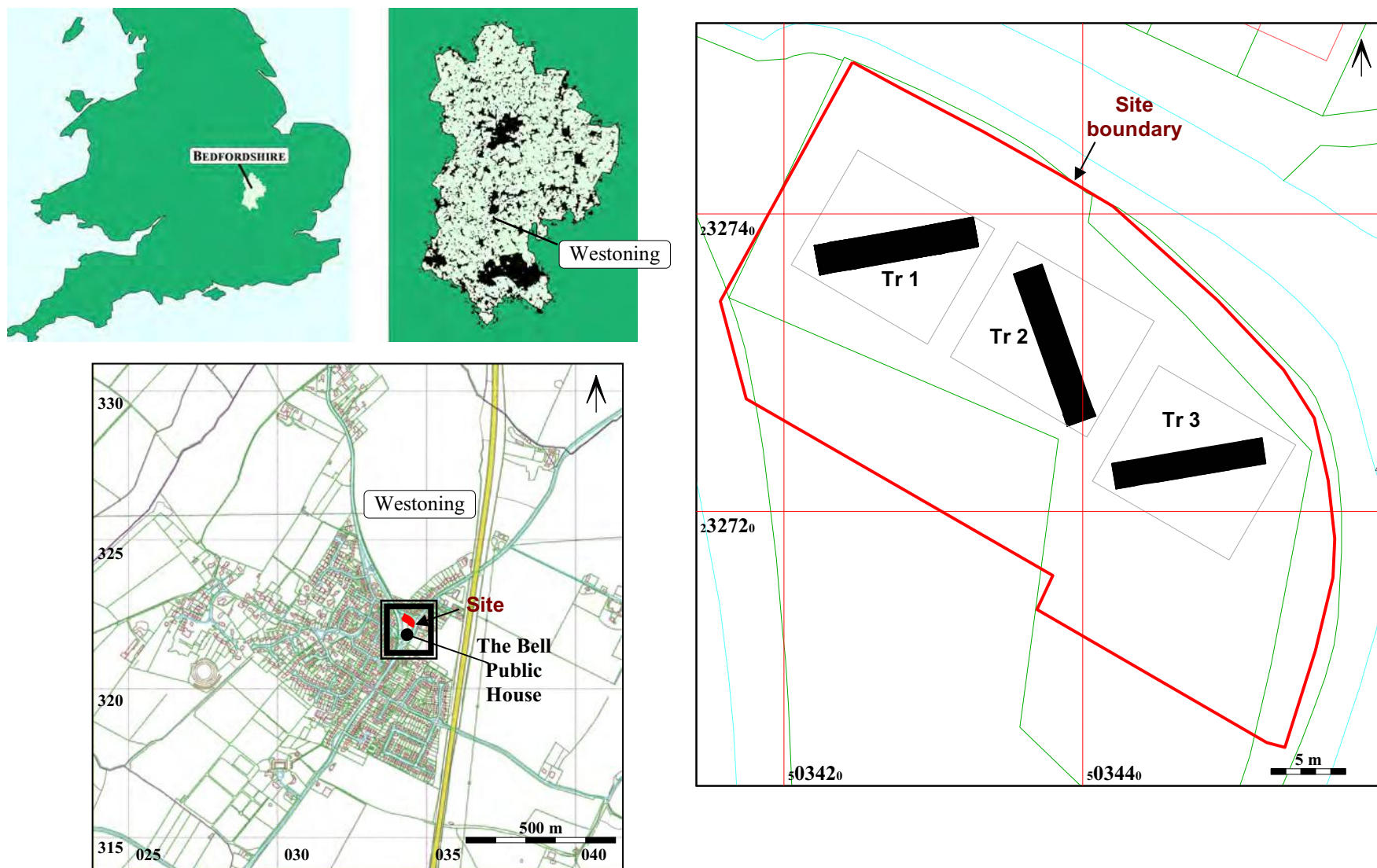
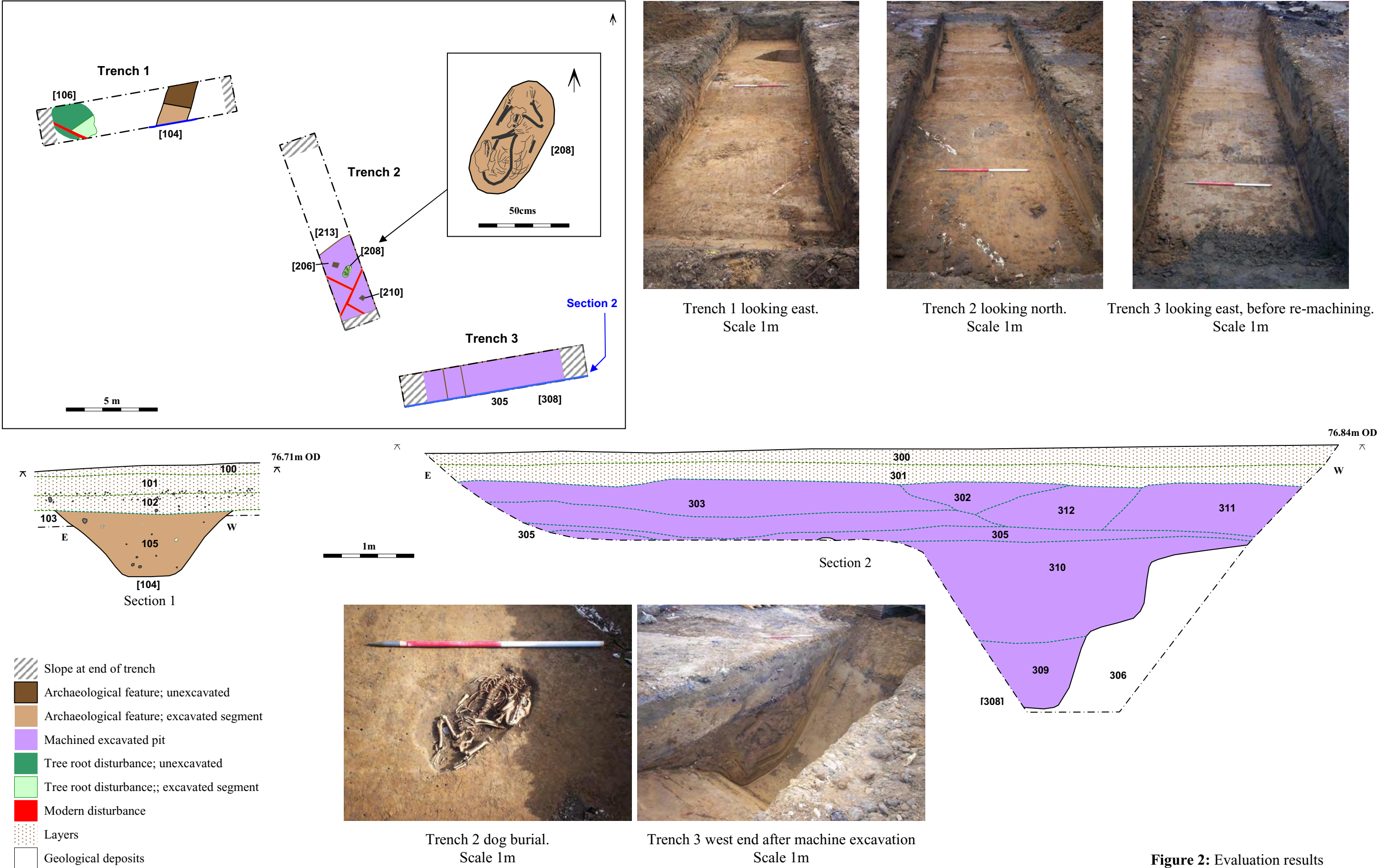


Figure 1: Site and trench location

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