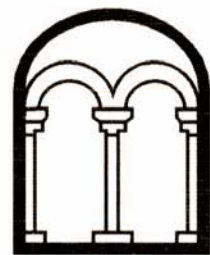


**COPLOWE BARN
BLETSOE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



**COPLOWE BARN
BLETSOE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Produced for:
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Preface

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

The project was commissioned by Clare and Giovanni Goduti of Coplowe Barn, Bletsoe. The archaeological works were monitored by Vanessa Clarke, Historic Environment Team Officer (HET) of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) on behalf of the Local Planning Authority and by Nicholas Carter, Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments of English Heritage (EH). Albion Archaeology would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Steven Campbell-Clarke of ARK Architectural during the implementation of the project.

Fieldwork for this project was undertaken by Marcin Koziminski (Archaeological Supervisor) and Adrian Woolmer (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Marcin Koziminski with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). It was edited by Jeremy Oetgen (Project Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
BBC	Bedford Borough Council
Client	Clare and Giovanni Goduti
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EH	English Heritage
HER	Bedford Borough's Historic Environment Record
HET	Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd edn, 2001
WSI	Albion Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent were granted for the construction of a detached garage and garden store at Coplowe Barn, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire.

Because the development area is located within the bounds of Bletsoe Castle, a scheduled monument (SM 20409, HA 1012365), a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works prior to construction.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the initial stages of works — a trial trench evaluation. The results of the archaeological evaluation will inform future decisions concerning the development of a strategy to mitigate any effects the development might have upon any heritage assets identified within the development area.

The Coplowe Barn site is bordered by Coplowe Lane in the south, the buildings of Bletsoe Castle Farm in the north and east and a plot of pasture land in the west. Coplowe Barn is part of the 19th-century farm buildings of Bletsoe Castle Farm and was converted to residential use in 1997. The development site covers a total area of 0.16ha and is centred on grid reference TL 0250 5828.

Bletsoe is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086, suggesting that it is a manor with at least late Saxon origins. The first historical reference to the castle occurs in 1327 when a licence from the King was obtained to embattle the existing manor house.

Coplowe Barn lies some distance to the south of the moated site of the Bletsoe Castle. It is part of a farm complex that stood on the site, probably from the 17th/18th century onwards and was considerably extended or rebuilt in the 19th century. In the 19th century Coplowe Barn formed the eastern side of a larger farm courtyard complex.

The trenching works revealed remains of modern activity associated with this 19th-century farm complex, of which Coplowe Barn is the only building to survive. The remains of a stone courtyard surface or an access track leading to it were revealed in Trench 1. Layers of stones in Trenches 2 and 3 were not as elaborate and are more likely to represent a spread of demolition debris, which may, as a result of use / trampling, have become a mediocre yard surface outside the farm complex. These deposits seem to have been laid on top of layer of former subsoil. The only artefacts recovered from the trenches were fragments of modern (post-1750) brick and tile.

All the encountered remains are considered to be of no more than local significance, providing physical evidence of activity within and around the existing Bletsoe Castle Farm. They also contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the later phases of occupation on the scheduled monument. However, they cannot elucidate the nature of the Saxon or medieval use of the site.

The foundations for the garden store and garage will have a limited impact on the post-1750 deposits. They will have no impact on the Saxon or medieval elements of the scheduled ancient monument.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission and scheduled monument consent were granted for the construction of a detached garage and garden store at Coplowe Barn, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire, henceforth referred to as the development area.

Because the development area is located within the bounds of Bletsoe Castle, a scheduled monument (SM 20409, HA 1012365), a condition (2) was placed on the planning permission (13/00199/FUL) requiring the implementation of an archaeological evaluation and, if necessary, further mitigation, to be implemented prior to the development taking place. The same condition was stipulated in the separate Scheduled Monument Consent (English Heritage ref: S00060342) issued by English Heritage (2013).

The conditions are in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012), Saved Policies BE24 & BE25 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002, and Policy CP23 of the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2014) for the project was prepared in response to a brief for the archaeological work issued by the Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) (HET 2013), detailing the requirement for a programme of archaeological field evaluation in advance of any construction works.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs Clare Goduti to carry out the trial trench evaluation. The results of the evaluation are presented in this document and they will inform future decisions concerning the development of a strategy to mitigate any effects the development might have upon any heritage assets identified within the development area.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

Bletsoe lies *c.* 5 miles to the north of Bedford and *c.* 0.5 miles east of the A6 main road from Bedford to Northampton. The River Great Ouse lies less than 1 mile to the west. Bletsoe Castle lies a short distance to the east of the village on the west-facing slope of the river valley (Figure 1).

The development area, including Coplowe Barn, is bordered by Coplowe Lane in the south, the buildings of Bletsoe Castle Farm in the north and east and a plot of pasture land in the west. Coplowe Barn is part of the 19th-century farm buildings of Bletsoe Castle Farm and was converted to residential use in the late 1990s.

The development site covers a total area of 0.16ha and is centred on grid reference TL 0250 5828. It lies on a west-facing slope between 55m and 60m OD. The underlying geology consists of Oxford Clay Formation Mudstone with no superficial deposits recorded¹.

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC [2014].



1.3 Archaeological Background

A heritage asset assessment of the site was produced to accompany the planning application (H-H Heritage East 2013). Coplowe Barn is part of the 19th-century farm complex of Bletsoe Castle Farm, which lies within the boundary of the scheduled monument of Bletsoe Castle (National Heritage List for England ref 1012365).

The place name of Bletsoe is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086, suggesting the existence of a manor with at least late Saxon origins. The first historical reference to the castle occurs in 1327 when a licence from the King was obtained to crenellate the existing manor house.

The moated area is almost square in plan and surrounded by a ditch measuring up to 25m wide by 3.5m deep with an outer bank 2m high and 5m wide. The western arm of the moat has been partly infilled; the southern corner lies beneath Bletsoe Castle Farm, which includes a 17th–18th-century Grade II listed barn.

A watching brief during the conversion of barns at the farm recorded a number of layers interpreted as the upper layers of the infilled moat, 1.10m below the ground surface. These lay below layers with residual pottery dated to the 12th–13th-century and later made ground (Albion 1993). Moat layers were also recorded below The Stables and Gig House in the western corner of the Bletsoe Castle Farm yard (H-H Heritage East 2013).

In the late 16th century the site was converted from a fortified moat into a more comfortable residential house with landscaped gardens and a bridge across the moat. A square earthwork to the east of the castle is thought to date from this period; it may represent part of a formal garden. Around the castle are the remains of earthworks from a medieval field system, enclosed by a boundary bank.

The earthworks are a scheduled ancient monument but the scheduling excludes the Grade II* listed Elizabethan manor house, Grade II listed barn and Grade II listed 16th-century bridge and the farm workers' cottages adjacent to Coplowe Lane. However, the ground beneath those buildings is included in the schedule.

Coplowe Barn lies some distance to the south of the castle moat. It is part of a farm complex that stood on the site, probably from the 17th/18th century onwards, and was considerably extended or rebuilt in the 19th century. In the 19th century Coplowe Barn formed the eastern side of a larger farm courtyard complex, of which it is the only building to survive.

Further archaeological investigations within the Bletsoe Castle Farm complex to the north revealed no archaeological remains other than evidence for concrete hard-standing within the farm (*ibid* 2013).

The majority of the farm buildings of Bletsoe Castle Farm, including Coplowe Barn, were converted to residential use in the recent past.



1.4 Project Objectives

The general research aims of the archaeological investigations were to:

- Establish the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to surrounding contemporary landscapes.
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.
- Establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
- Establish scientific dating potential.

Research frameworks that have been devised for the region are Research and Archaeology: A framework for the Eastern Counties: Research Agenda and Strategy (Brown and Glazebrook 2000), 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 origin, character and development of medieval sites, in particular those with Anglo-Saxon origins is a research aim that is highlighted in the local research framework (Oake et al 2007). However, within Bedfordshire investigations of medieval sites tend to have concentrated on villages and nucleated settlements at the upper end of the rural settlement hierarchy. Oake states that it is other elements of the medieval settlement patterns, like isolated moated sites, “Ends”, church/manor complexes and magnate enclosures all require more detailed study (Oake 2007, 14).

There were, therefore, a number of site-specific research objectives which could be formulated for the site:

- Was there any evidence of the Saxon manor complex mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086?
- Was there any settlement along the Coplowe Road in the medieval period?
- Was there any further evidence for medieval industrial or settlement activity outside the castle moat?
- Was there any further evidence relating to the 19th-century farm complex that Coplowe Barn was a component of?



2. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching took place on 1st April 2014. Three trenches were opened, covering a total area of c. 22m² (Figure 2). The trench plan was agreed by the HET Officer before the trenching began.

The trenches were opened by a CAT 303 mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of archaeological horizons (Trenches 1 and 3) or undisturbed geological deposits (Trench 2). The spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts recovery.

The bases and sides of all trenches were cleaned by hand. Potential archaeological features were noted, cleaned and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits encountered were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 and 300 for Trench 3. Also levels were taken for each drawn section to establish whether the construction works may impact upon archaeological remains.

A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion 2014).

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

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• Bedford Museum	<i>Procedure for Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> (Bedford Museum 2010).
• 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> (updated 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>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation</i> (updated 2009)

The trenches were inspected by Vanessa Clarke (the HET Officer of the BBC) and Nicholas Carter (Assistant Inspector of EH) prior to their backfilling. During the inspection it was agreed that the extent of exposure of the archaeological remains was sufficient to achieve the objectives of the project (see Section 1.4 above).



3. RESULTS

All the deposits and features of archaeological interest are summarised below by trench. Their location and extent are shown on Figure 2. Detailed technical information on all archaeological features/deposits can be found in Appendix 1.

On completion of the archaeological fieldwork a geotechnical pit was machine-excavated in the south-eastern corner of Trench 2 to establish the nature of the underlying geological strata.

3.1 *Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits*

The overburden was consistent across the site. It comprised dark brown-grey clay silt to silty loam garden soil, varying in thickness from 0.13–0.29m from west to east.

Geological deposits, comprising blue-grey silty clay with yellow-brown staining, were uncovered in Trench 2.

3.2 *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was investigated to a depth of 0.25–0.38m below the existing ground level.

Beneath topsoil (100), Trench 1 revealed the following stratigraphic sequence of deposits (from top to bottom):

- dump material (101), up to 0.21m thick and resembling the overlying topsoil. It comprised dark brown-grey clay silt with moderate amounts of stone inclusions and was present only in the north-eastern corner of the trench;
- levelling layer (102), up to 0.2m thick and comprising yellow-brown silty clay with moderate stone inclusions. This layer probably predates the landscaping activity that took place after the farm courtyard had gone out of use;
- external surface (103), at least 0.05m thick and largely left *in situ* at the base of the trench. The surface comprised firm brown-grey silty clay, mixed with substantial amounts of small to large stones, including flat limestone slabs. The deposit contained infrequent roof tile and brick fragments of modern date (post-1750), a sample of which was recovered. These will not be retained in the project archive.

In addition, a NW-SE aligned modern service trench [104], 0.4m wide and more than 0.2m deep, was cut from the base of the topsoil through all the above deposits.

3.3 *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was investigated to a depth of 0.58m below the existing ground level.

Beneath topsoil (200), the following features and deposits were revealed in Trench 2 (from top to bottom):



- external surface (201), up to 0.2m thick and comprising firm brown-grey silty clay with moderate amounts of small to medium stone inclusions. This deposit was probably equivalent to surface (301) to the east. It contained a small amount of modern (post-1750) roof tile and brick fragments, a sample of which was recovered but which will not be retained in the project archive;
- blue-grey silty clay deposit of former subsoil (202), up to 0.16m thick and equivalent to layer (302) in Trench 3.

A modern, NW-SE aligned sewage pipe trench [204] bisected Trench 2. It was more than 0.35m deep by 1.25m wide and was part of the same feature as [303] to the east.

3.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was investigated to a depth of 0.32–0.43m below the existing ground level.

Beneath topsoil (300), the following features and deposits were revealed in Trench 3 (from top to bottom):

- external surface (301), up to 0.13m thick and comprising hard grey-brown silty clay with large quantities of small to medium stones and moderate amount of large limestone slab inclusions. Probably equivalent to deposit (201) to the north-west. The deposit contained a moderate amount of modern (post-1750) roof tile and brick fragments, a sample of which was recovered but which will not be retained in the project archive;
- former subsoil deposit (302), at least 0.04m thick and equivalent to layer (202) in Trench 2;

A NW-SE aligned modern linear [303] was cut into stone surface (301); it corresponds with sewage pipe trench [204] that leads to a manhole west of Trench 2.



4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 *Summary and Significance of Archaeological Remains*

The development area contains the remains of modern activity associated with the 19th-century farm complex, of which Coplowe Barn formed the eastern side but is now the only building to survive. A stone courtyard surface, or an access track leading to it, was revealed in Trench 1. Layers of stones in Trenches 2 and 3 were not as elaborate and are more likely to represent a spread of demolition rubble that, as a result of use / trampling, may have developed into a mediocre yard surface outside the farm complex. These deposits seem to have been laid on top of layer of former subsoil.

The only artefacts recovered from the trenches were fragments of modern (post-1750) brick and tile.

All the encountered remains are considered to be of no more than local significance, providing physical evidence of activity within and around the existing Bletsoe Castle Farm. They also contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the later phases of occupation on the scheduled monument. However, they cannot elucidate the nature of the Saxon or medieval use of the site.

4.2 *Assessment of the Likely Impacts of the Proposed Development*

At the time of writing it is understood that the construction of the proposed garage and garden shed will probably entail the following works:

- the garden store will require an excavation of 175mm below existing ground level, which will not extend below surface (103) revealed during the trial trenching;
- the double garage will be supported on a raft foundation and will require excavation to 575–775mm below the existing ground level. This will have a limited impact on the post-1750 external surface but will not have an impact on the Saxon or medieval elements of the scheduled ancient monument.



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6. APPENDIX 1 TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.13 m. Max: 0.13 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2497: Northing: 58304)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2495: Northing: 58302)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential prior to construction of a garden shed.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional small-medium stones Up to 0.13m thick deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Dump material	Friable dark brown grey clay silt moderate small-medium stones Up to 0.21m thick layer. Deposit present in north east corner only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Make up layer	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay moderate small-medium stones Up to 0.20m thick deposit. Machine excavated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	External surface	Firm mid brown grey silty clay frequent small-large stones With large limestone slabs; at least 0.05m thick. Deposit not fully excavated. Possible base of surface.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Modern intrusion	Linear NW-SE sides: vertical dimensions: max breadth 0.4m, min depth 0.22m, min length 1.8m Feature not fully excavated.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Fill	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 4.60 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.2 m. Max: 0.2 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2502: Northing: 58296)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2499: Northing: 58292)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential prior to construction of a double garage.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional small-medium stones Up to 0.2m thick deposit, moderately rooted.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	External surface	Firm mid brown grey silty clay moderate small-medium stones Up to 0.2m thick deposit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried subsoil	Firm mid blue grey silty clay With moderate dark orange brown staining. Up to 0.16m thick deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Firm mid blue grey silty clay With light yellow brown staining.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Service Trench	Linear NW-SE sides: near vertical dimensions: max breadth 1.25m, min depth 0.36m, min length 1.8m Sewer pipe trench.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Backfill	Firm mid yellow brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 4.60 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.24 m. Max: 0.28 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2505: Northing: 58293)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2502: Northing: 58290)

Reason: To assess archaeological potential prior to construction of a double garage.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty loam occasional small-large CBM, occasional small-medium stones Up to 0.29m thick deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	External surface	Hard mid grey brown silty clay frequent small-medium stones, moderate large stones Up to 0.13m thick, comprised flat limestone slabs. Same as (201).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Buried subsoil	Firm mid grey silty clay occasional small-medium stones With moderate dark orange brown staining. At least 0.04m thick deposit. Same as (202).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Service Trench	Linear NW-SE sides: near vertical dimensions: max breadth 0.7m, min depth 0.12m, min length 1.85m Feature not fully machine excavated. Same as [204]. Sewer pipe trench with manhole noted to west of Trench 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Backfill	Firm light yellow grey clay occasional small-medium CBM Redeposited natural.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

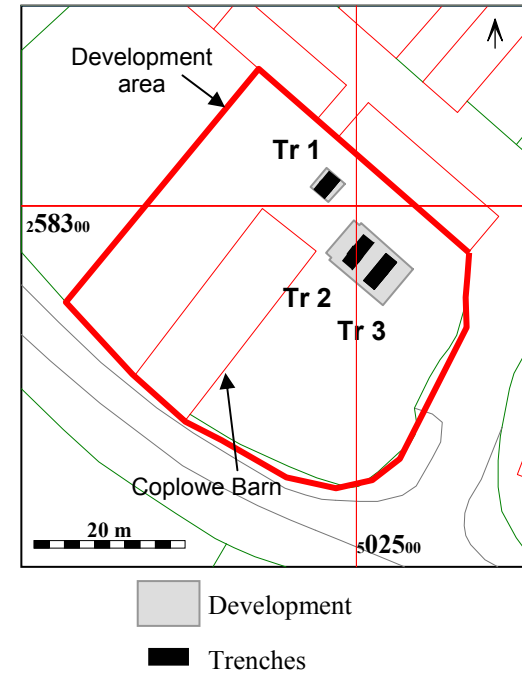
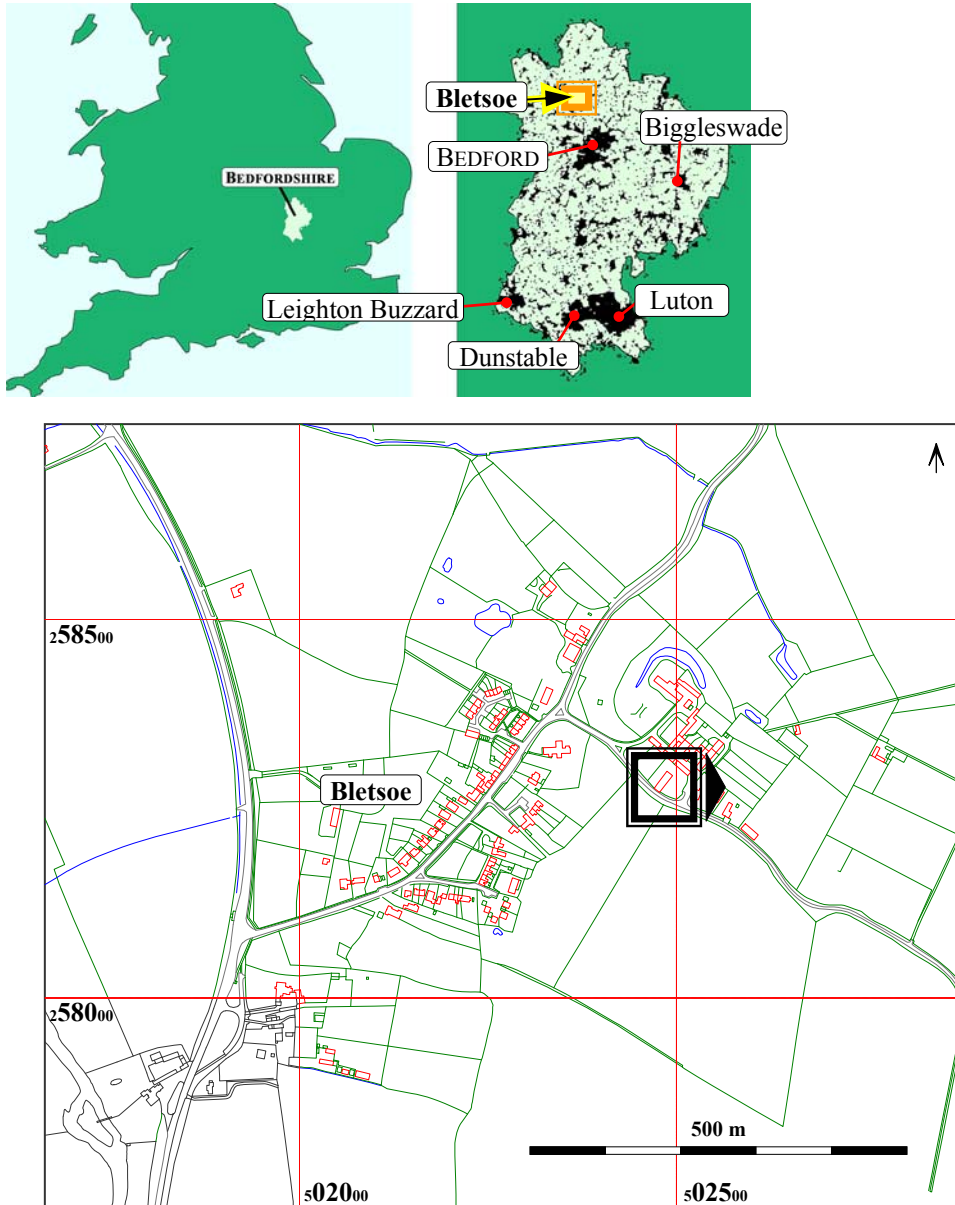
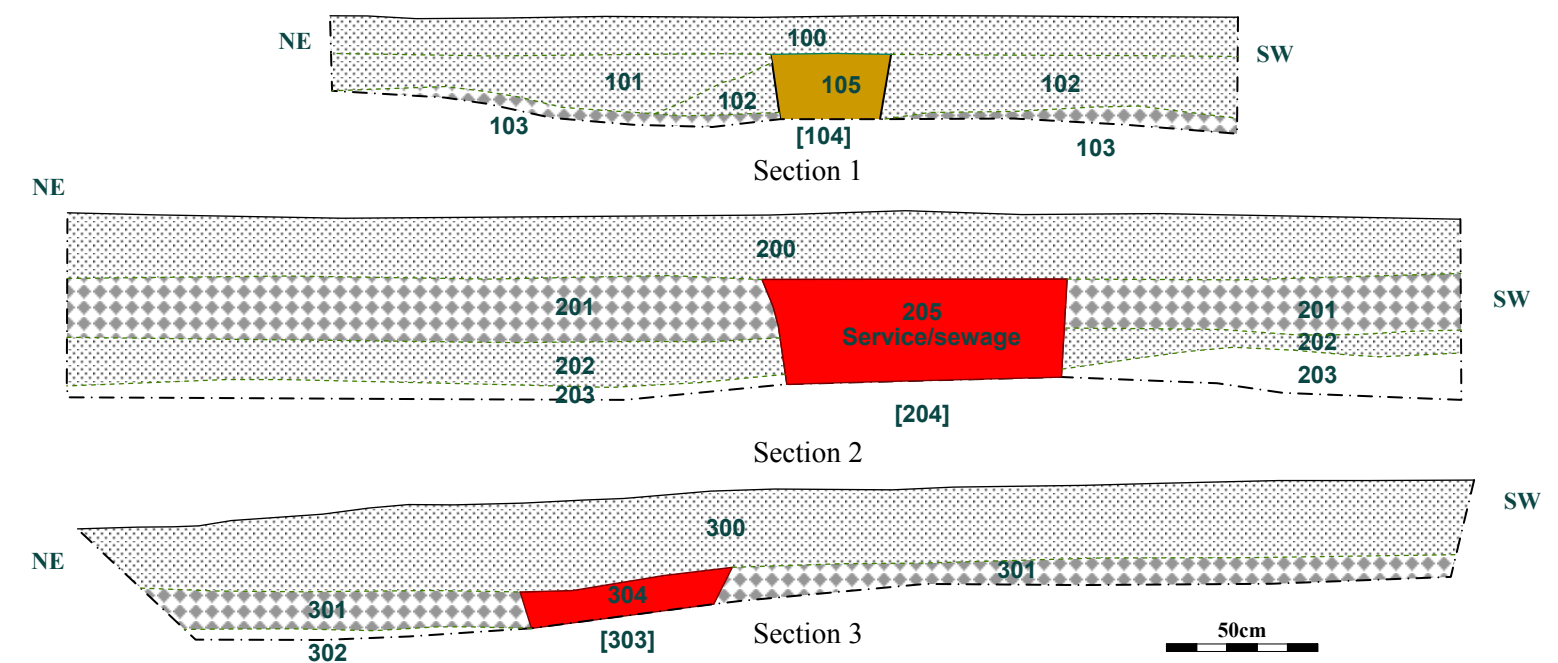
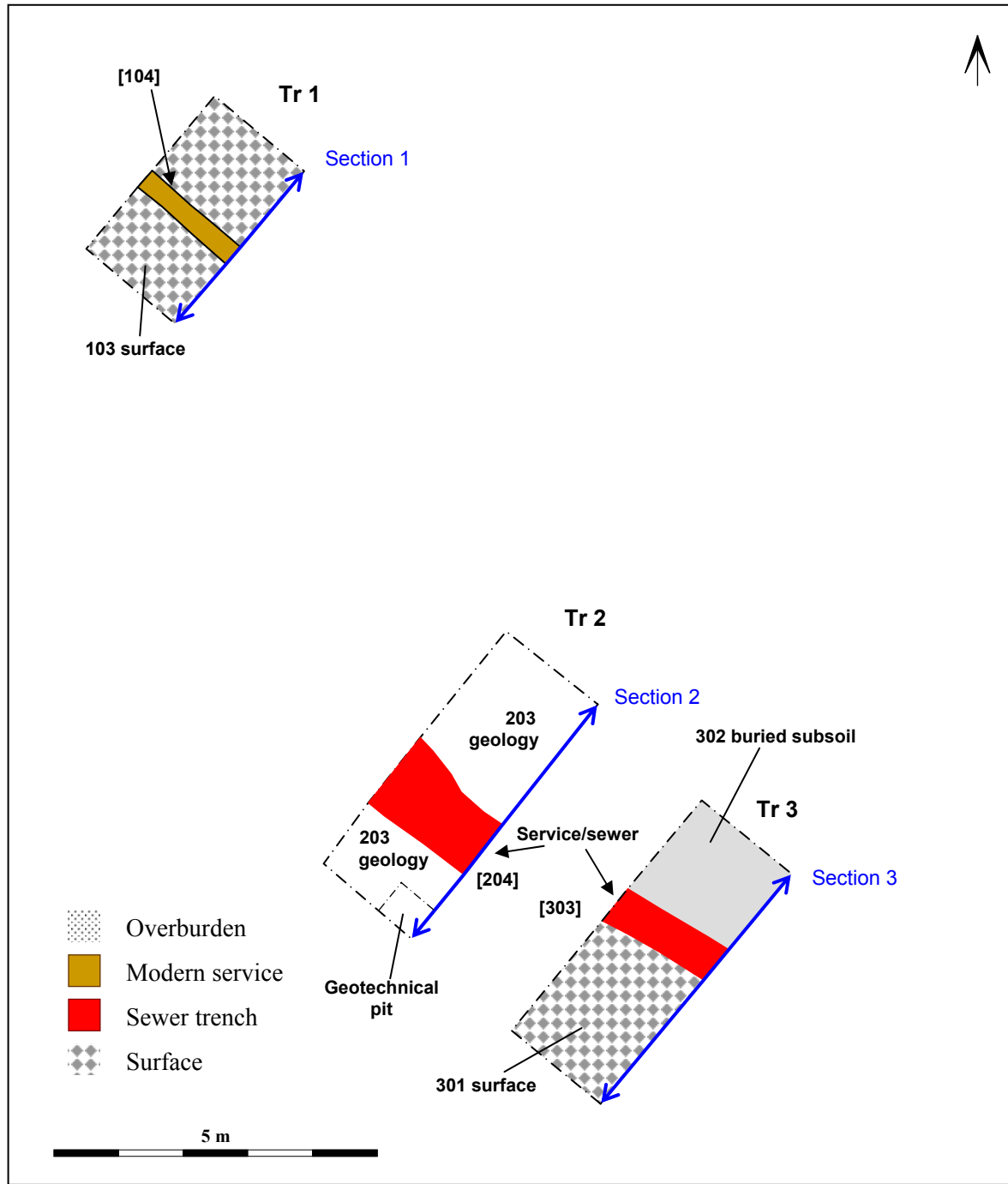


Figure 1: Site location

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Tr 1. Looking SE. Scale 1m



Tr 2. Looking E. Scale 1m



Tr 2. Looking NE. Scale 1m



Tr 2. Geotechnical pit – looking SE. Scale 1m



Pre-excavation – Trenches 2 and 3

Figure 2: All features

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