

**THE GARDEN HOUSE  
BATTLEDEN  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

**Albion**  
archaeology





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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.*

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## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-technical Summary**

*Planning permissions (CB/13/04094/FULL and CB/13/04923/FULL) were granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for alterations and additions to the Garden House, Battlesden.*

*As the development had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, conditions were attached to the planning permissions. These required that a written scheme of archaeological investigation should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) before any development could take place and that the development should only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.*

*Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place between 19th May and 14th July 2014. Groundworks observed included areas of ground reduction and footing trenches excavated to the north-east, east and south of the Garden House.*

*Several brick structures were revealed during the groundworks; they are likely to be associated with the 19th-century Garden House. They included the brick footings of greenhouses marked on the OS first edition 25-inch map of 1881 and a well lying near to the corner of the original 19th-century footprint of the house. As physical evidence of structures directly associated with the Grade II listed Garden House and Battlesden Park, the recording of these remains is of particular interest; research into the origins and history of the smaller parks and gardens of Bedfordshire, along with identifying their surviving features, has been identified as an important area for further research (Oake 2007, 15–16). No earlier features were revealed, though an undated ditch was revealed a little further to the south-east of the house. The substantial depth of ground reduction that appears to have taken place during previous groundworks and landscaping associated with the construction of the Garden House, particularly on the north-east side of the house, indicates that there is little potential for the survival of archaeological features that pre-date the construction of the house in the latter part of the 19th century.*

*The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. LUTNM: 2015/2). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-176723).*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permissions for development at the Garden House, Battlesden were granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

- CB/13/04094/FULL was for the demolition of existing outbuildings and the construction of a new detached outbuilding comprising garage, studio, gymnasium and storage.
- CB/13/04923/FULL was for work on the house comprising single-storey side extensions, erection of front porch, dormers to side elevation, erection of a new wall, steps and entrance gates and internal alterations.

As the development had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) recommended that conditions be attached to the planning permissions (CB/13/04094/FULL condition 3 and CB/13/04923/FULL condition 2). The conditions required that a written scheme of archaeological investigation should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) before any development could take place and that the development should only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme. These recommendations were in accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce the written scheme of investigation (Albion Archaeology 2014), which was approved by the CBCA, and to undertake the archaeological work for the development affecting the house itself (CB/13/04923/FULL). The results of this fieldwork are set out in this report.

The development of the detached outbuilding (CB/13/04094/FULL) has not yet begun. The accompanying archaeological work will be undertaken in due course and the results will be the subject of a separate report.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Development Description*

The Garden House is part of Battlesden Park to the west of Battlesden village, which lies off the A4012 Hockliffe Road in the southern part of Bedfordshire, between Milton Keynes and Luton. The Garden House lies to the south of the now demolished 19th-century Battlesden manor house and immediately to the south-west of the parish Church of St Peter and All Saints (Figure 1).

The Garden House lies on the southern edge of a spur of land which slopes gently down towards the south and east and forms part of the Greensand Ridge. The southern main façade of the house overlooks a walled kitchen garden. The land slopes down to the A5 highway in the south, where it largely consists of arable



fields and pasture with small areas of woodland and a pond. The house itself lies at c. 130m OD and is centred on grid reference SP 95873 29078.

The underlying geology consists of Oadby Member diamicton over Gault Formation mudstone (British Geological Survey 2014).

The archaeological works discussed in this report focused on areas to the north-east and south-east of the Garden House itself, where development involved the extension and alteration of the existing dwelling.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The archaeological and historical background to the site was previously reviewed in heritage assessments submitted in support of the planning applications for the works (Albion 2013a and 2013b). These assessments examined data in the CBC Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 500m-radius study area as well as historical maps, records and secondary sources.

#### **1.3.1 Prehistoric and Roman**

No prehistoric or Roman heritage assets were identified in the study area examined in the heritage assessment.

#### **1.3.2 Saxon and medieval**

The settlement of Battlesden originated in the Saxon period, being first recorded in Domesday Book of 1086. The name Battlesden is believed to be derived from the Old English personal name *Badel* and its meaning would therefore be Badel's Hill (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 115–16).

Two foci of medieval settlement are suggested within the parish, both on elevated spurs forming part of the Greensand Ridge. One (HER16875) corresponds to the area around Centre Farm, approximately 900m south-west of the development area. The second (HER16874) is centred on higher ground around the parish church and its possible extent includes the development area. No physical evidence for medieval settlement features has yet been recorded in this area. An archaeological evaluation undertaken in the grounds of Battlesden House in 2009 revealed no medieval features (Albion Archaeology 2009).

The parish church (HER 1017) and churchyard (HER 8854) lie immediately north-east of the development area. A church probably stood on the site as early as the 12th century and a 12th-century font still stands within the nave. The earliest parts of the current building date to the 13th century with additions and alterations undertaken in the following four centuries.

The medieval settlement focus appears to have included a manorial estate centre at Domesday. Lands surrounding the manorial estate were first emparked in 1334 as a deer park (HER 1370), parts of which now survive as Battlesden Park (see below).





### 1.3.3 Post-medieval

The majority of the known heritage assets near to the development area relate to Battlesden House and its development. The earliest surviving part of the manor house for which details survive (HER 9952) probably dated from the 16th century. The house was extended in the late 17th or early 18th century. In 1864 it was demolished and replaced by a new French Gothic châteaux style house (HER 9953). Battlesden House was demolished shortly after it came into the possession of the Duke of Bedford in 1885.

Parts of the estate are represented by a former stable block (HER 10015) which was converted into a house, a walled kitchen garden (HER 10012) and the Garden House (HER 4340). Battlesden Park (HER 9427) is a registered park and garden (English Heritage list entry 1000573). It was first enclosed in 1334 but was not formally laid out until the early 19th century.

The Garden House (Grade II listed) which was built c.1860 occupies the site of an earlier gardener's house that is shown on historical maps and engravings dating from the early 19th century.

## 1.4 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the development area;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes; and
- to recover contemporary palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The local and regional research contexts were provided by Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake *et al* (2007) and Medlycott (2011).

The development area lies within a possible focus of medieval settlement and therefore the focus of research objectives for the site lie in the Saxon and medieval period. The proximity of the parish churchyard also raised the possibility that burials might be present within the grounds of the Garden House, given the tendency of medieval churchyards to shrink over time.

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements, particularly with Saxon origins, have been investigated in the county (Oake in Oake *et al* 2007). Oake states a need for research into rural settlement on a micro-scale of investigation, in order to establish the chronology, structure and function of individual settlements as well as classes of settlement, ranging from the prehistoric to the medieval period. The need for investigation into the origins, development and dynamics of medieval rural settlement are also emphasised by Medlycott (2011) in the East of England Research Framework.

Specific objectives of the project were to investigate possible evidence for:



- Saxon/medieval/post-medieval activity and to establish the date range and character of the activity.

Other objectives were to have been devised during the project, in the event that the investigation produced evidence relevant to other themes identified in the published research frameworks.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place between 19th May and 14th July 2014. Groundworks observed included areas of ground reduction and footing trenches excavated to the north-east, east and south of the Garden House.

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked for artefact recovery.

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

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
ALGAO	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. EAA Occasional Paper No. 14</i> (2003)
CIfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation</i> (updated 2013)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i> (updated 2013)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (updated 2013)
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</i> , (2nd edn, 2011)
Luton Culture	<i>Procedure For Preparing Archaeological Archives For Deposition With Luton Culture</i> (2010 - with minor updates July 2013)

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2014).



### 3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Groundworks observed included the following (see Figure 2):-

- areas of ground reduction of up to 2m deep to the north-east and east of the Garden House in conjunction with the demolition and replacement of the existing retaining wall;
- a 1.2m-deep footing trench for a new porch on the north-east side of the house;
- ground reduction and footing trenches excavated up to 1.2m deep within the walled garden to the south and south-east of the house associated with the construction of the kitchen/utility block and terrace;
- a 3m-square and <5m-deep hole for a septic tank to the south-east of the kitchen/utility block.

The features and deposits observed are summarised below and shown on Figure 2. Numbers in brackets refer to features [\*\*] and deposits (\*\*\*) shown on Figure 2.

#### 3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The depth and nature of the observed overburden varied throughout the groundworks. The existing building had been constructed on a level terrace cut back into the hillside. This meant that the ground immediately adjacent to the north-eastern side of the building had already been reduced by up to 1.5m below the natural ground. As a result, a steep scarp rose to the north-east of the house in the vicinity of its north corner and a brick retaining wall ran along the majority of the north-east side. Demolition of the retaining wall and subsequent ground reduction allowed the hillside deposits to be recorded (Figure 2, sections 1 and 2). These comprised a 0.2m-thick topsoil (1), overlying dark brown silty clay deposits (2) and (3) that were up to 1m thick. Containing small fragments of brick and tile, these deposits are likely to have been re-deposited after the construction of the house. The top of the underlying geological deposits (5) appeared to slope back into the hillside (Figure 2, section 2), which might indicate that there had previously been some ground reduction to the north-east of the house associated with landscaping of the grounds. Less ground reduction had taken place next to the northern corner of the house, where buried topsoil (9) and subsoil (10) deposits still survived beneath a 0.2m-thick layer of brick rubble and the existing, 0.2m-thick topsoil layer.

The topography, which slopes down to the south-west, is likely to account for the smaller amount of ground reduction that appears to have previously been necessary within the region of the walled garden to the south of the house. Here, topsoil (13) and subsoil (14) deposits less than 0.6m thick were exposed during the groundworks.

The underlying geological deposits were observed at depths of *c.* 0.6–1.5m beneath the current ground surface and comprised a firm mid brown-grey clay (5) of *c.* 0.8m thickness, which overlay a blue-grey clay (7). The depths at which



these deposits were observed varied due either to the natural slope, which rises to the north-east, or ground reduction previously undertaken for the construction of the Garden House and its grounds. The largest depth of ground reduction was observed to the north-east side of the house, where the ground level appeared to have been reduced by up to 1.5m.

### **3.3 Brick Structures to the South and South-East of the Garden House**

The uppermost surviving parts of several brick structures were revealed during groundworks associated with the construction of the kitchen/utility block and creation of the terrace to the south and south-east of the Garden House.

Narrow, insubstantial brick foundations measuring 0.10–0.2m wide were revealed following the removal of topsoil to the south of the Garden House. Some of these appeared to define the back and one of the end walls of a rectangular structure (29), measuring at least 12m long and 2m wide (see photograph on Figure 3). Its location indicates that it is likely to be the remnants of greenhouses marked on the OS first edition 25-inch map of 1881 (Figure 4). A line of brick pads is likely to define the south-west, glazed side, of the structure. All the brick foundations appeared to have been laid upon a layer of silty clay and building rubble (16) used to make-up and level the ground.

The uppermost surviving part of a sub-rectangular brick structure measuring 3.5m x 2.5m across and 1.1m deep was revealed beneath topsoil to the north-eastern side of the greenhouse. It is most likely to be the remnants of a soak-away, water tank or cellar and had been backfilled with modern rubbish and building materials. Its position beneath the south-western wall of the existing outbuilding indicates it predates this late 20th-century extension and is most likely to be contemporary with the 19th-century features of the house.

### **3.4 Brick-Lined Well**

The upper 0.15m of a brick-lined well (11), 1.7m in diameter, was exposed beneath the existing paving slabs on the north-east side of the Garden House (see photograph on Figure 3). The brick lining lay partly beneath the foundations of the eastern extension to the house added in the 1980s. The well had been backfilled with grey-brown clay silt, stones and modern building rubble.

### **3.5 Undated Ditch**

The profile of a north-south aligned ditch [25/27] was observed within the sides of the pit excavated to contain the septic tank to the south-east of the Garden House. It appeared to be U-shaped in profile and *c.* 1m wide by *c.* 0.7m deep. It was filled with a dark brown silty clay, from which no artefacts were recovered. The ditch was overlain by up to 2m of make-up deposits, containing numerous fragments of modern bricks, associated with previous landscaping of the grounds.



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Several brick structures were revealed during the groundworks; they are likely to be associated with the existing 19th-century Garden House. They include the brick footings of greenhouses marked on the OS 25-inch map of 1881 and a well lying near to the corner of the original 19th-century footprint of the house. As physical evidence of structures directly associated with the Grade II listed Garden House and Battlesden Park, these are potentially of regional significance.

However, the remains are very fragmentary, comprising only the foundations of buildings long ago demolished, so their level of significance is much reduced. Nevertheless, the record of these remains and their description in this report is of interest for research into the origins and history of the smaller parks and gardens of Bedfordshire, which has been identified as an important area for further research (Oake 2007, 15–16).

No earlier features were uncovered, though an undated ditch was revealed *c.* 12m to the south-east of the house. Otherwise, the substantial depth of ground reduction that appears to have taken place during previous groundworks and landscaping associated with the construction of the Garden House, particularly on the north-east side of the house, indicates that there is little potential for the survival of archaeological features that pre-date the construction of the house in the latter part of the 19th century.

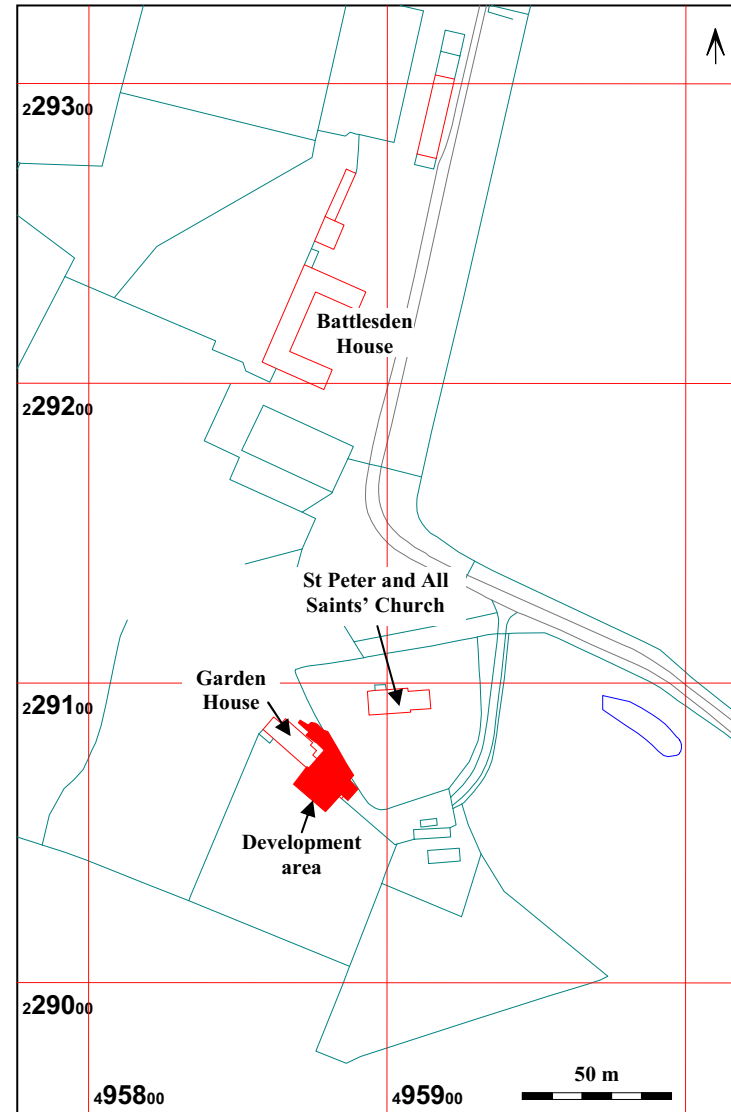
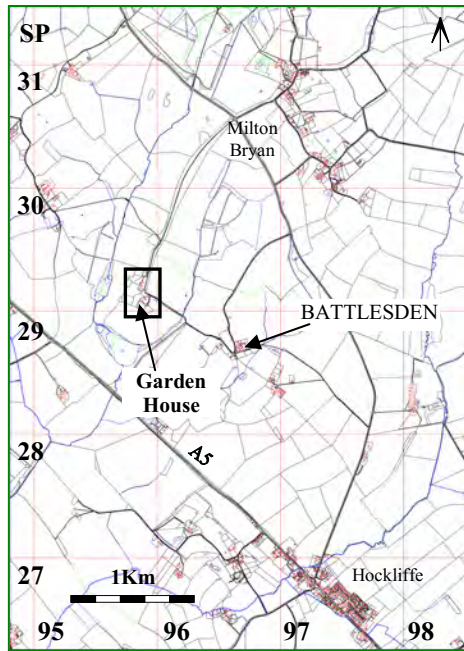
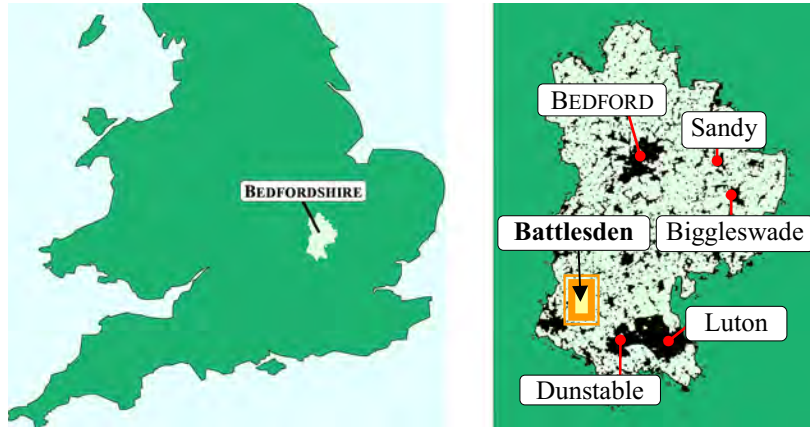
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## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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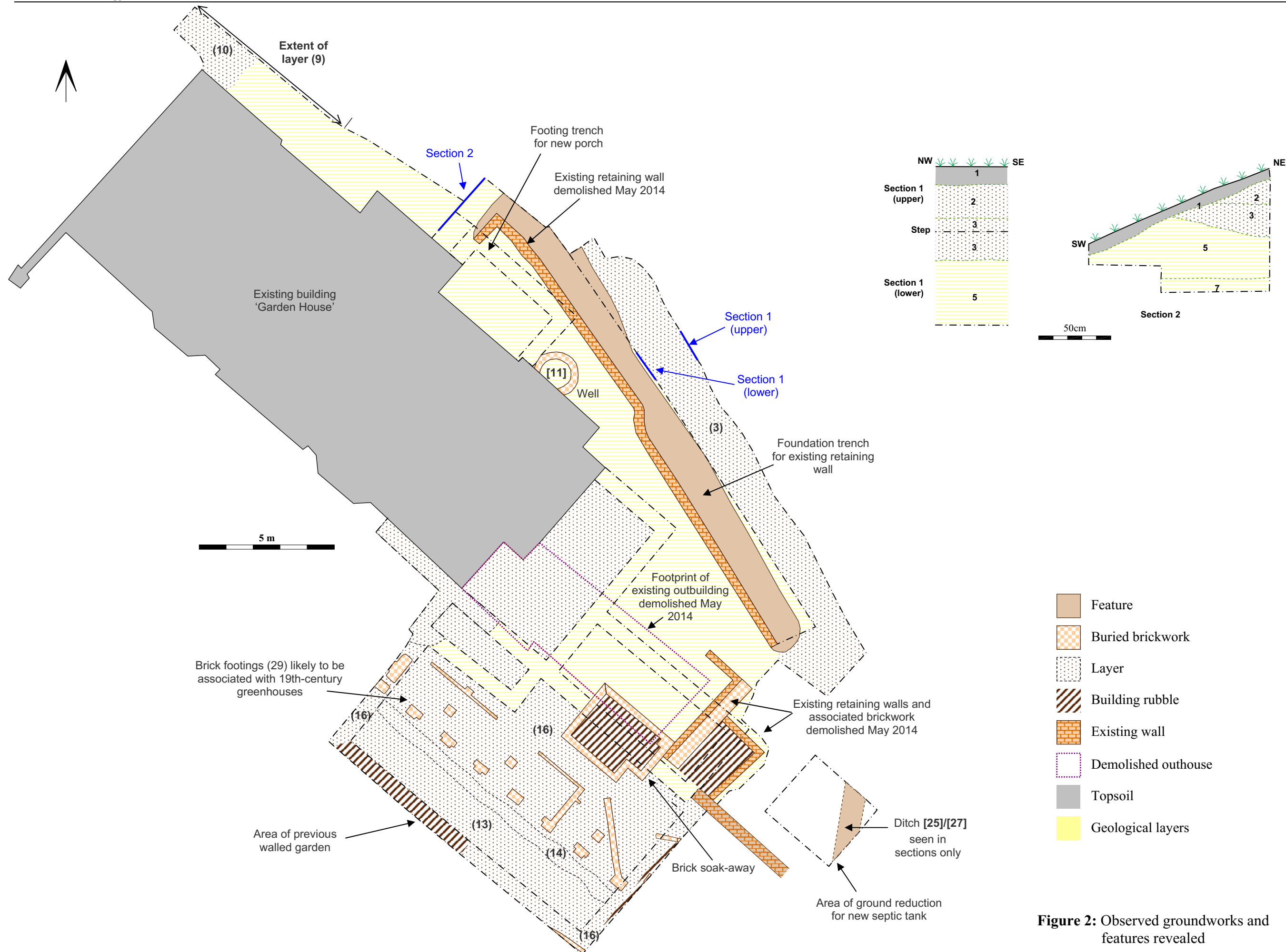
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**Figure 1: Site location**

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**Figure 2:** Observed groundworks and features revealed



Brick-lined well [11] (30cm scale)



View of brick footings (29) revealed in the walled garden area (1m scale)



View of ground reduction to the south-east of the house (1m scale)

**Figure 3:** Selected photographs of the groundworks



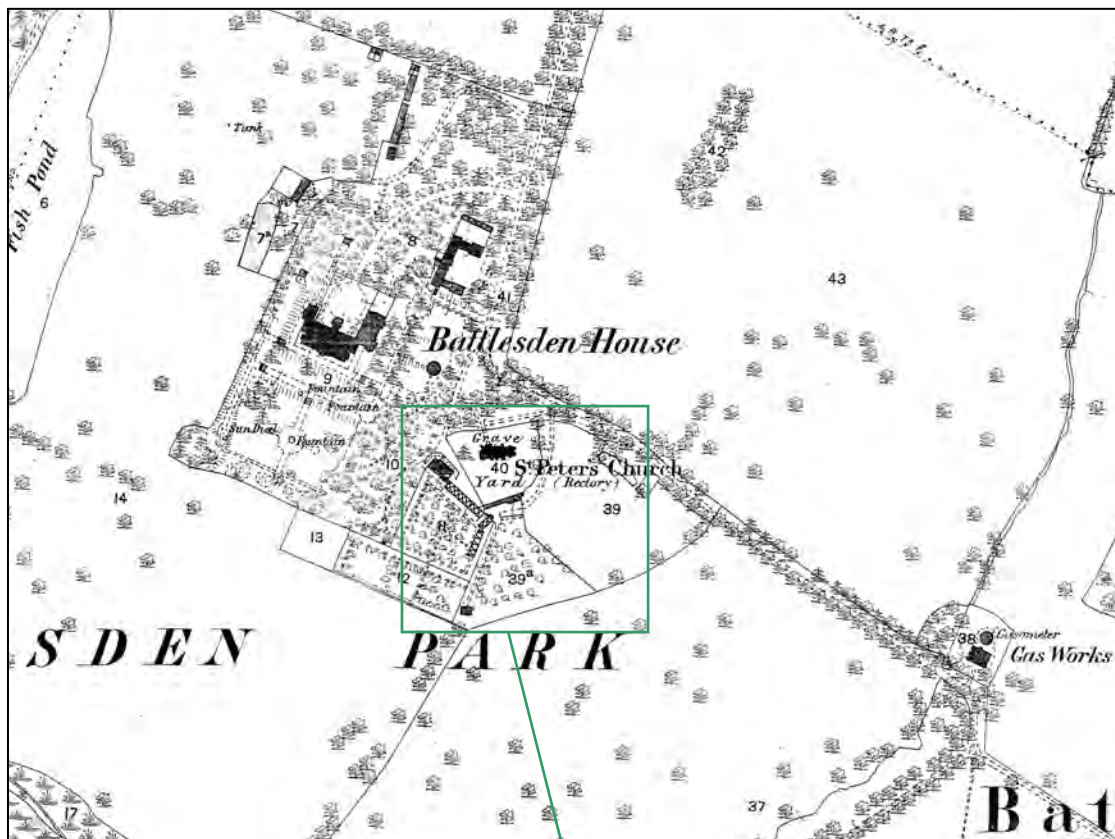


Figure 4: First edition 25-inch OS map 1881

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