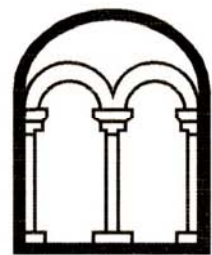


**LEIGHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
TENNIS/NETBALL COURTS
LEIGHTON BUZZARD
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Project: LMS2753
Luton Museum Entry Number: LTNMG 1164
OASIS ref.: albionar1-225078

Document: 2015/194
Version 1.1

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Richard Gregson	Robert Wardill	Drew Shotliff

18th January 2016

Produced for:
Capital Projects
Community Services
Central Bedfordshire Council



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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.

Acknowledgements

The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Gregson (archaeological Supervisor) and Victoria Hainsworth (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Richard Gregson with contributions from Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). The figures have been produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	19/11/2015	n/a
1.1	18/01/2016	Corrections and amendments requested by CBCA

Key terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BLARS	Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
PDA	Proposed development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CB/15/03060/REG3) for the construction of two combined tennis/netball courts in playing fields at Leighton Middle School, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire.

As the site is located in an area with the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist recommended a condition be attached to the permission requiring a programme of archaeological investigation be carried out.

Leighton Middle School lies next to the River Ouzel near the centre of Leighton Buzzard. The proposed development area is located to the south of the school, centred on grid reference SP 91805/24798. It lies adjacent to the Clipstone Brook which feeds into the Ouzel, in the western corner of the existing sports fields.

Trial trenching took place between 26th and 27th October 2015. It comprised the excavation of two trenches, both 2m wide and 30m long.

The deposits within the two trenches contrasted significantly from each other.

Trench 1, on lower ground, contained a series of alluvial deposits and a possible palaeochannel, indicating a fluvial or flood plain environment. Above the alluvium were two layers of similar composition that may have accumulated through the dumping of material scoured from the river Ouzel or the Clipstone Brook. The upper of these two layers, which extended further west than the lower one, was truncated in the west of the trench by the probable remains of a rectangular pond shown on the 1804 plan of the estate.

Trench 2 contained a buried subsoil layer overlain by two thick make-up layers. The lower make-up layer contained material that may have related to the demolition of the Prebendal House in the early part of the 19th century. The upper deposit contained sand and gravel possibly brought in from one of the quarries in the area.

Based on the depths of overburden recorded in the trial trenches, the groundworks for the development should not impact on any archaeological remains that might exist below it.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CB/15/03060/REG3) for the construction of two combined tennis/netball courts in playing fields at Leighton Middle School, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire.

As the site is located in an area with the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) recommended a condition (2) be attached to the permission requiring a programme of archaeological investigation be carried out. This advice is in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2015) was produced in response to a brief (CBC 2015) issued by the CBCA.

This document details the results of the archaeological trial trench evaluation. It appraises the significance of any heritage assets with archaeological interest found to be present within the proposed development area (PDA) and assesses the impact of the proposed scheme.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

Leighton Middle School lies next to the River Ouzel near the centre of Leighton Buzzard. The proposed development area (PDA) is located to the south of the school centred on grid reference SP 91805/24798. It lies adjacent to the Clipstone Brook which feeds into the Ouzel, in the western corner of the existing sports fields.

The ground level for each of the two tennis/netball courts lies at c. 82.5m OD and c. 83.8m OD respectively, with a slope in between.

The superficial geology of the area comprises alluvium of clay, silt and sand which overlie sandstone of the Woburn Sands Formation.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The bulk of the following background information has been taken from the CBCA brief (CBC 2015).

The town of Leighton Buzzard almost certainly has its origins in the Saxon period and the early settlement is likely to have developed around the bridging point over the River Ouzel in or around the 7th century AD. At present there is no direct earlier Saxon evidence from inside the core of the town, however, two Saxon cemeteries have been recorded to the immediate north (HER 1 and 3) of the town and contemporary material has been found at Grove Priory (HER 1870) to the south.

Leighton (Buzzard was added sometime after the late 13th century) is well recorded in later Saxon and medieval documents and they indicate that it was a Royal Manor which had the right to hold a weekly market by the time of the



Domesday survey in 1086 AD. The Thiodweg (HER 10843), a Saxon trade route, also runs through Leighton and its earliest mention is in a charter dating to AD 926, adding further weight to a Saxon origin for the town. In addition, recent archaeological investigations on North Street indicate that domestic Saxo-Norman activity (10th–11th centuries) relating to this early settlement does survive within the modern town (PCA 2014).

There was also an ecclesiastical presence within Leighton by Domesday with the Bishop of Lincoln holding 4 hides including the church. This estate was centred on the Prebendal Manor, the site of which is located to the immediate north and east of the development site (HER 11056). It is likely that one of the early focal points of the town was the Bishop's property and the church, and while the present church of All Saints (HER 1088, NHLE 1321404: Grade I) dates from the 13th century, it almost certainly overlies an earlier building.

At some point in the early medieval period (probably during the 12th century) the market was expanded, thereby improving the economic prospects of the town. It was this success which led to the creation of a new "planned" town. The new town was Y-shaped in form, encompassing Bridge Street, High Street, Lake Street, North Street and Hockliffe Street. These were carefully laid out in accordance with the natural topography, with the High Street, Hockliffe Street and Lake Street all meeting at the highest point in the town, creating the triangular market place. The intention was to draw all the traffic heading for the bridge over the River Ouzel together well before it reached the crossing point by deliberately funnelling it through the Market Square and the High Street, the town's main trading area (BCC 1996).

To date, there have only been a limited number of archaeological investigations in Leighton Buzzard. However, in addition to the works on North Street in 2014, archaeological remains dating to the medieval period, including a large pit were recorded on Lake Street in 2000 (HAT 2000). Later medieval and early post-medieval remains were found in 1996 on the land to the rear of 4 Market Square (BCAS 1996). Some archaeological investigation has also already been undertaken at Leighton Middle School (for the new building located to the immediate south of Bridge Street) which uncovered post-medieval boundary features and a horse skeleton (Albion Archaeology 2006).

The Bishops of Lincoln played an important role in the development of the town. Historic documentation (including some maps) give us a reasonable indication of the extent and location of the post-medieval Prebendal Manor House and some of the surviving buildings within the grounds of Leighton Middle School (notably the Music Room/Library, HER 4553, NHLE 1321402: Grade II*) were associated with that particular building. In the early 19th century, the Prebendal Manor was demolished and sub-surface remains relating to that building including demolition layers are known to survive within what is now the parish churchyard (BCAS 1999). The post-medieval Prebendal Manor was almost certainly a re-build of the earlier manor house constructed for the Bishops of Lincoln; however, we cannot be sure whether the medieval manor house was located in the same place within the estate as its successor.



The property that is now known as Leighton Middle School forms part of the former Prebendal Manor estate. In 1851, much of the land holding was purchased by John Dollin Bassett and in 1855 he built “The Cedars” as his family home (HER 4551, NHLE 1321405: Grade II). Bassett surrounded the house with landscaped pleasure grounds, by expanding on and improving the original designed landscape associated with the Prebendal Manor. In 1920, Bedfordshire County Council purchased The Cedars, with “The Cedars School”, opening in 1921. Following the re-organisation of the school system in Bedfordshire in 1968, The Cedars became an Upper School and was moved to larger purpose-built premises in Linslade in 1973. Since then the site has housed Leighton Middle School.

In 1984, the area to the south-east of the Church (which was formerly known as Church Farm/Tythe Farm) was landscaped in order to create an extension to the school playing field. Part way through the works an opportunity for archaeological observation of the earthmoving arose. By then, most of the few remaining farm buildings had been demolished. However, an underground brick-built feature *c.* 170 metres to the east of the development site was recorded. It was of late 19th- or 20th-century date and was probably part of the farmyard complex. It lay roughly north-south with the main southern part consisting of a barrel-vaulted chamber some 3.15m long and 1.55m wide. Dried organic material thought to be slurry or dung was visible at the bottom of the chamber. To the north of the main chamber was an unroofed continuation. This rectangular extension was said, by locals, to have been covered with slabs, presumably for access (and therefore exposed at the surface) unlike the buried vaulted chamber. A mechanism involving a handle and chain with cups, attached was said to have been used to remove the slurry.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the evaluation was to gather information on possible sub-surface archaeological heritage assets at the site. The archaeological trial trenching endeavoured to determine:

- the date, nature, and extent of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- the potential of any palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2015).

2.1 Methodological Standards

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 edition (2001)
ALGAO	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> , EAA Occasional Paper No. 14 (2003)
CifA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2014)
EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2009)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , 2nd edition (2011)
Luton Culture	<i>Procedure for Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition with Luton Culture</i> (2010 - with minor updates July 2013)

The project archive will be deposited at Luton Museum (Entry Number LTNMG 1164). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-225078) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

2.2 Trial Trenching

Trial trenching took place between 26th and 27st October 2015. It comprised the excavation of two trenches, both 2m wide and 30m long. The trenches were positioned to achieve an even coverage of the footprint of the proposed tennis/netball courts.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff with external specialists consulted as necessary. Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Trench 1 contained several layers of alluvium, a possible palaeo-channel, layers which may be associated with dredging and part of a rectangular lake. Trench 2 contained two make-up layers overlying buried subsoil which extended down to a depth of 2.17m at the north end of the trench and at least 2.4m at the south end.

All deposits revealed within the trial trenches are summarised below and shown on Figure 2. Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). Detailed information is provided within Appendix 1.

3.1.1 Overburden and geological deposits

Topsoil (100 and 200) in both trenches contained modern artefacts and was probably deposited within the last 200 years. It comprised dark brown-grey or grey-brown sandy silt. In Trench 1 it was 0.21m thick; in Trench 2 it was 0.3m thick.

The deposits below topsoil varied considerably between Trenches 1 and 2. In Trench 1 there was a sequence of alluvial layers overlain by other layers possibly associated with medieval scouring of the nearby river or brook. In Trench 2, which was c. 1.3m higher, there was buried subsoil overlain by two thick make-up layers. The deposits in both trenches are described in further detail below.

Overall, the depth of overburden varied from 1.75m in Trench 1 to more than 2.4m in Trench 2. Below this was an undisturbed geological deposit (114 and 203) that comprised mid orange-brown or brown-orange sandy silt.

3.1.2 Alluvial deposits, possible palaeochannel and dredging deposits in Trench 1

The lower deposits within Trench 1 comprised a series of alluvial layers (103,106,107,108,109 and 113) some of which were truncated by and some of which overlay a possible palaeochannel [110] located at the west end of the trench. The lower deposit (112) of the palaeochannel [110] contained three animal bones (21g) probably deriving from a dog. The deepest alluvial deposit (103) at the east end of the trench was notably darker in colour, siltier and contained six animal bone fragments (77g: limb bone; skull fragment and pig incisor) and two locally manufactured early medieval pottery sherds (19g: fabric types B01A and C03¹). One sherd derives from the thumb base of a jug.

Layer (103) was sampled and for environmental remains. The flot contained frequent charred cereal grains, often surviving as fragments, a small numbers of weed seeds and small abraded charcoal lumps, with mineralised charcoal lumps also being present in the residue. Occasional snail shells were also present in the flot and residue.

¹ Fabric types defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series.



The fact that some of these alluvial deposits, including one of the lowest (103), contained fragments of early medieval pottery suggests that the fluvial environment that formed them was active during the medieval period. The interleaving of some of the alluvial deposits with a possible palaeochannel [110] suggests a landscape prone to flooding in which a river or brook was altering course over time.

Above the alluvial layers were two siltier deposits (104, 105) that both contained freshwater shell fragments. The upper of these (104) also contained two pieces of ceramic roof tile (57g). The lower one (105) also contained a 12th- to 13th-century pottery sherd (13g: fabric C59B). The presence of the shell fragments may indicate that these deposits were dumps of material scoured from the nearby river or brook.

3.1.3 Post-medieval rectangular pond in Trench 1

Some of the deposits (108, 106 and 104) at the west end of Trench 1 were truncated by a large feature [101]. This feature was 1.4m deep and extended east for 10m from the western end of the trench indicating that it was at least 10m across. Its position (Figure 3) roughly matches a N-S aligned rectangular pond shown on the 1804 plan of the Prebendal House and gardens (Figure 4). The south west corner of the pond was shown adjacent to the Clipstone Brook and may have been attached at that corner, possibly by a sluice gate. A building, possibly a boat house is shown on the map in the north-east corner of the pond.

The Prebendal House was demolished in 1810. Many garden features appear to have been demolished at the same time, as shown on Bevan's map of 1819 (Figure 5). The body of water that had been the rectangular pond on the 1804 plan is shown on the 1819 map as a fully attached spur coming off the Clipstone Brook.

No pond is shown on the 1848 Tithe Map (Figure 6), suggesting that it was backfilled between 1819 and 1848. The mixed deposit (102) within the pond contained some unfrosted bricks and roof tiles. These are consistent with it having been backfilled in the first half of the 19th Century.

3.1.4 Buried subsoil and make up layers in Trench 2

Below the 0.3m deep topsoil (200) in Trench 2 were make-up layers (201 and 204) overlying buried subsoil (202) which in turn, overlay the undisturbed geological deposit (203). The excavation of the trench began at the northern end where the combined depth of topsoil, make up layers and buried subsoil was 2.17m. Because of the thickness of these overburden deposits, it was decided not to dig the entire trench to this depth, but rather to dig just the north and south ends to check that the depth of overburden was consistent. The southern end was dug to a depth of 2.4m without reaching buried subsoil (202) or the undisturbed geological deposit (203). This suggested that the original land surface sloped down to the south. (See the section drawings shown in Figure 2 to compare variations in deposits between the northern and southern ends of the trench).

Overall, the buried subsoil (202) comprised mid grey-brown sandy silt and was 0.45m thick. Above this were the two make-up layers. The lower one (204)



comprised dark brown-grey silty clay with occasional fragments of ceramic building material and large stones. It was 0.5m thick. The upper one (201) comprised light orange-yellow sandy gravel and was 1.25m thick.

It is possible that the two different make-up layers were simply different batches of material deposited in the same general episode of landscaping. However, they may have been the result of two quite separate periods of groundworks. If this was the case, the lower make-up layer's (204) composition may suggest that it was the result of the dumping of locally sourced material, possibly mixed with some demolition debris. This may mean that it was contemporary with the demolition of the Prebendal House between 1804 and 1810. The upper make-up layer (201) was mainly sand and gravel which could indicate that it had been brought in from one of the quarries that sprang up around Leighton Buzzard in the 19th and 20th centuries.

3.2 Conclusions

The deposits within the two trenches contrasted significantly.

Trench 1, on lower ground, contained a series of alluvial deposits and a possible palaeochannel, indicating a fluvial or flood plain environment. Above the alluvium were two layers of similar composition that may have accumulated through the dumping of material scoured from the River Ouzel or the Clipstone Brook. The upper of these two layers, which extended further west than the lower one, was truncated in the west of the trench by the probable remains of a rectangular pond shown on the 1804 plan of the estate (Figure 3).

Trench 2 contained a buried subsoil layer overlain by two thick make-up layers. The lower make-up layer contained material that may have been related to the demolition of the Prebendal House in the early part of the 19th century. The upper deposit contained sand and gravel possibly brought in from one of the quarries in the area.

The sequences of alluvial deposits and possible palaeochannel in Trench 1 are useful in demonstrating that that the area was within an active flood plain. The later dumps of material possibly scoured from the river or brook may mark the beginning of low-lying land in this area being built-up during or after the medieval period.

Other remains such as those of the infilled pond in Trench 1 and make-up layers in Trench 2 reflect changes to the grounds of the Prebendal House during the 19th century.

Although these deposits are of local significance to the development of the grounds from the medieval period through to the 19th century, their depth means that any potentially more significant remains that may lie beneath them will not be impacted upon by the development as proposed.



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5. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.61 m. Max: 1.75 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 91772; Northing: 24798)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 91802; Northing: 24795)

Reason: To evaluate area.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones 0.21m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
101	Pond	Linear N-S sides: irregular base: concave dimensions: min breadth 10.m, max depth 1.4m, min length 2.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Backfill	Loose mid orange brown silty sand moderate small-large CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
103	Alluvium	Firm dark blue grey clay silt occasional small-medium stones 0.4m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
104	Dump material	Firm mid green grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones 0.44m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
105	Dump material	Firm mid green grey clay silt occasional small stones 0.37m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
106	Alluvium	Firm mid grey orange silty clay occasional flecks CBM, moderate small stones 0.25m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Alluvium	Firm mid brown orange silty clay occasional small stones 0.24m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Alluvium	Firm mid brown grey silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones 0.28m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
109	Alluvium	Firm mid blue grey silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones At least 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Palaeochannel	Linear NW-SE sides: concave dimensions: min breadth 9.6m, min depth 1.m, min length 2.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111	Upper fill	Firm mid blue grey sandy clay occasional small CBM, occasional small stones 0.45m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
112	Lower fill	Firm dark grey silty clay occasional small stones At least 0.55m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
113	Alluvium	Firm mid blue grey clay silt occasional small stones 0.08m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
114	Natural	Firm mid brown orange sandy silt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 2.17 m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 91814; Northing: 24803)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 91815; Northing: 24773)

Reason: To evaluate area.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Make up layer	Loose light orange yellow sandy gravel 1.25m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal 0.45m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Friable mid orange brown sandy silt occasional small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Make up layer	Firm dark brown grey silty clay occasional small-large CBM, occasional large stones 0.5m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

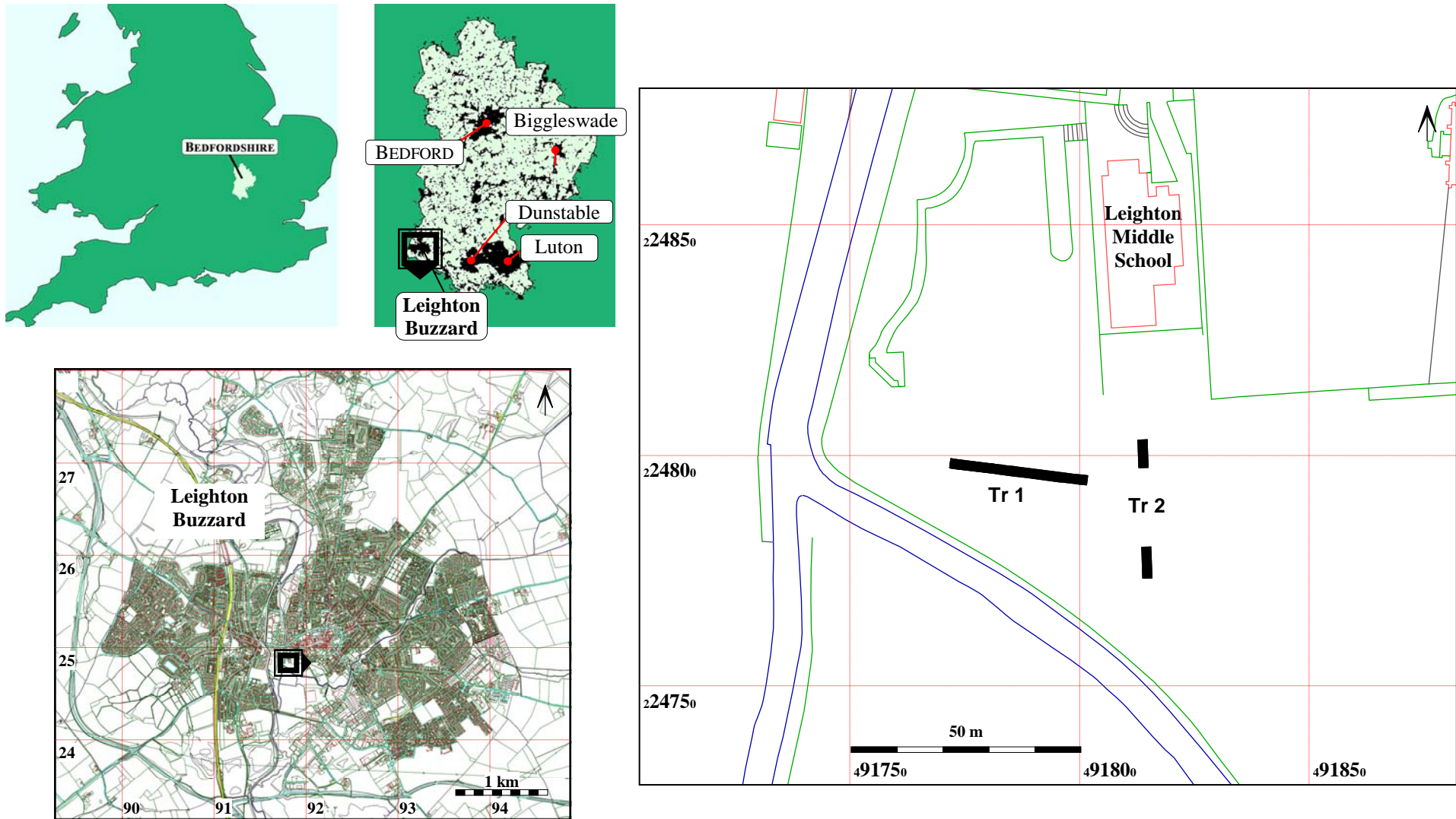


Figure 1: Site location

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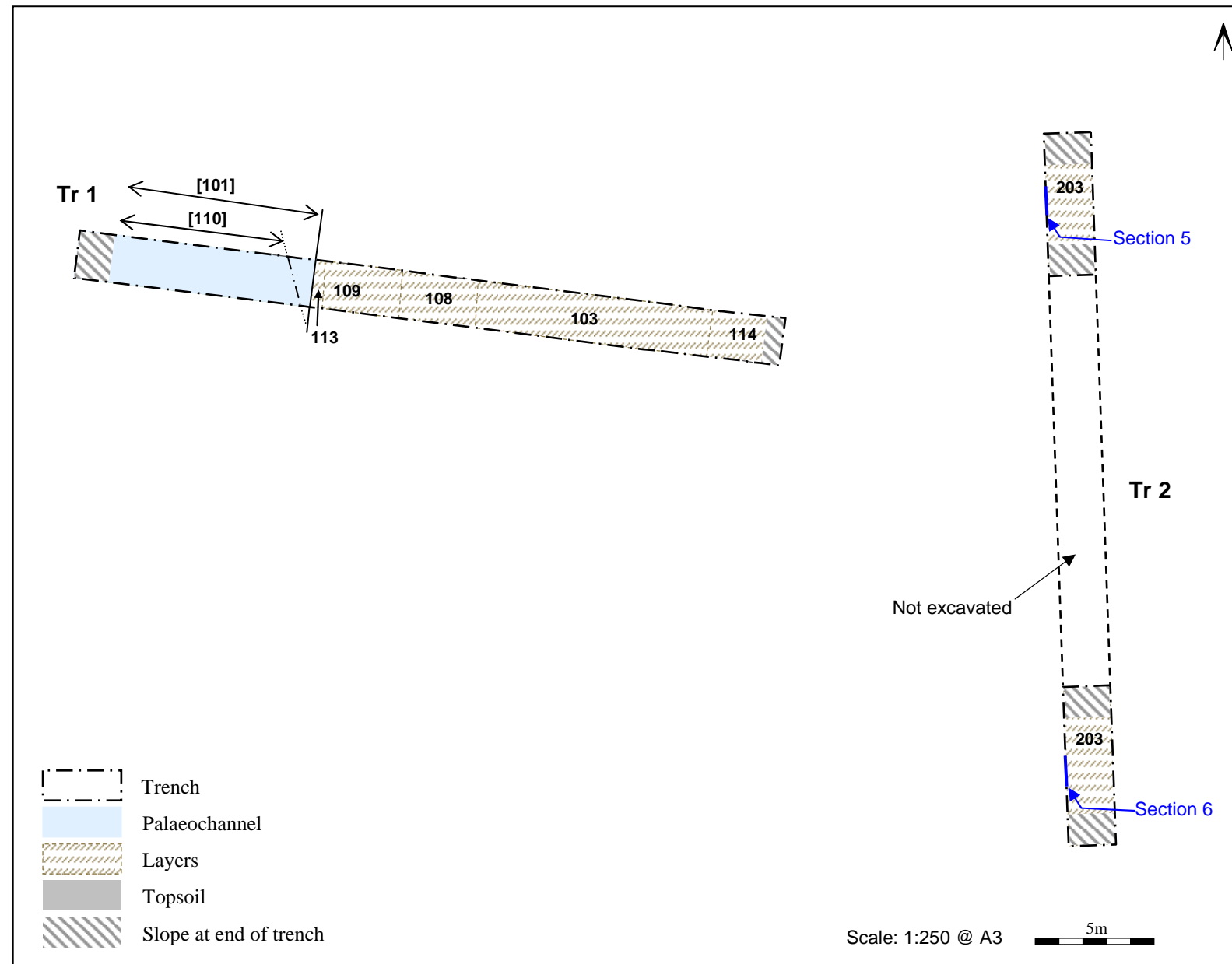
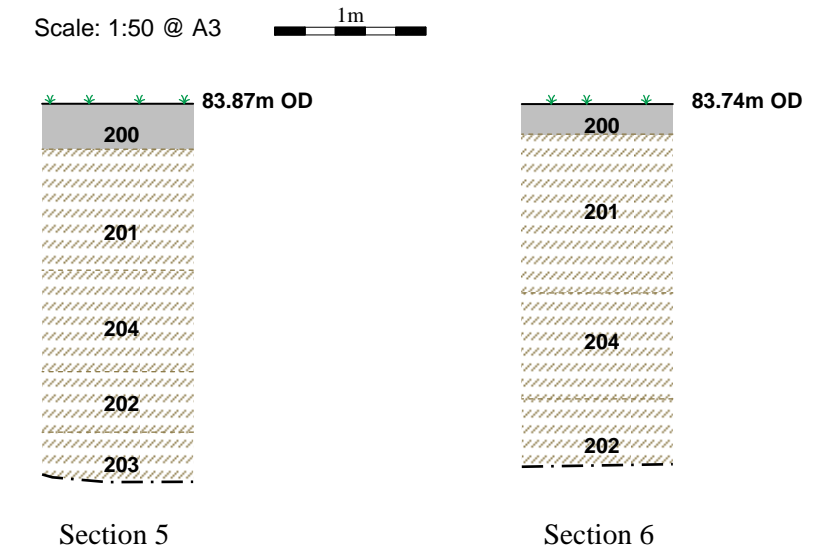
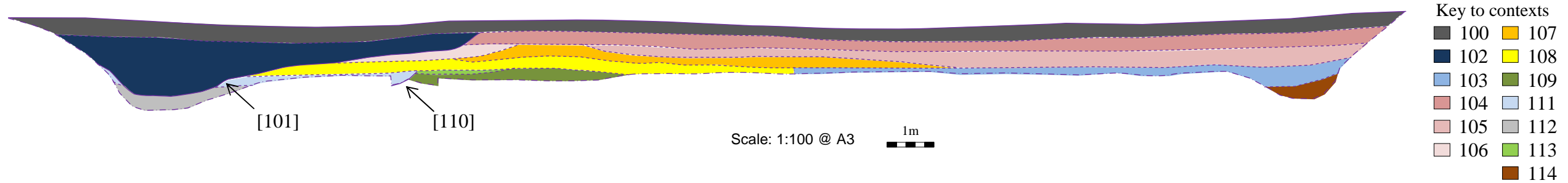


Figure 2: Trenching results



SSE facing section of Trench 1



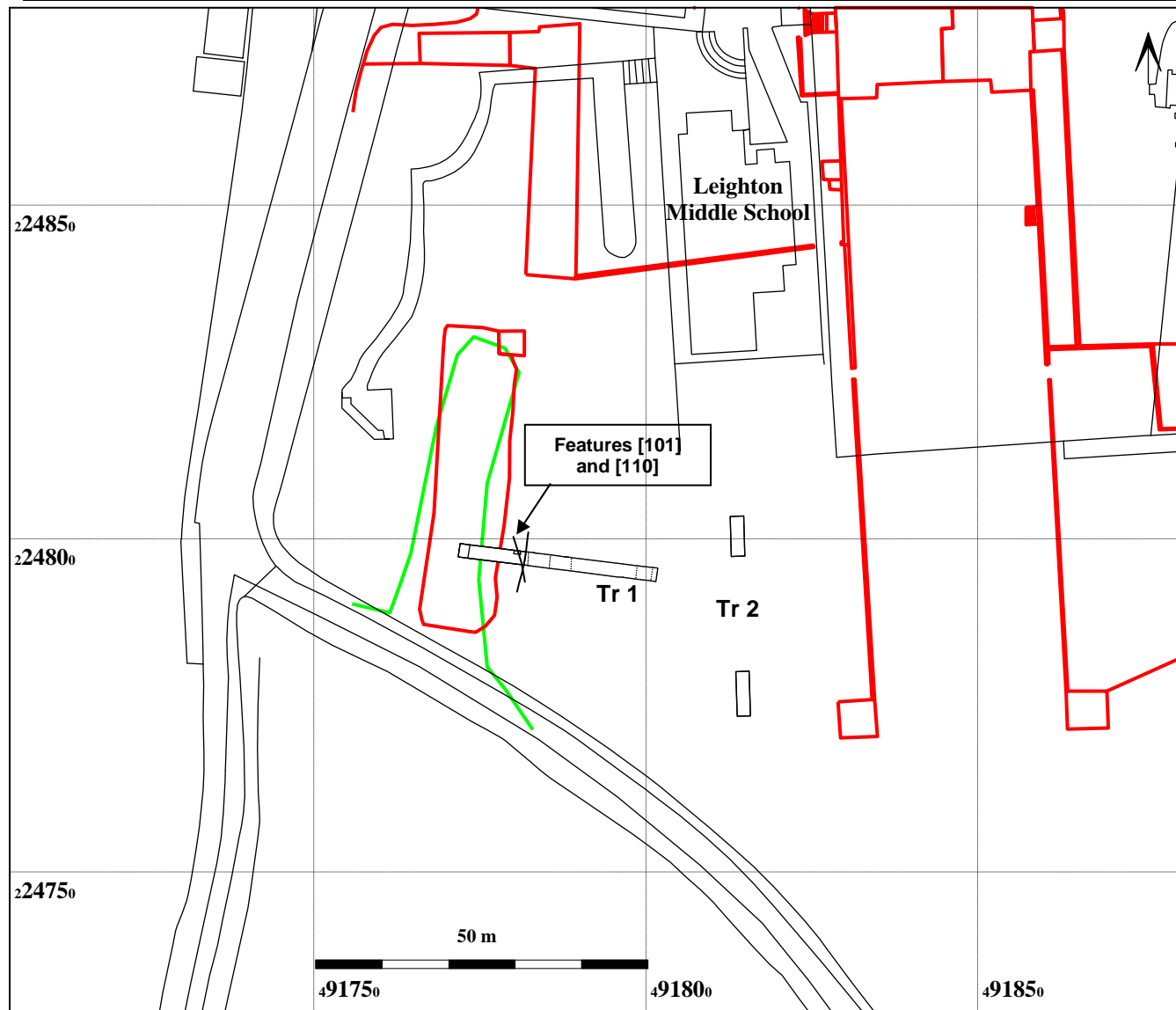


Figure 3: Trench 1 and features [101] and [110] in relation to former water feature on historical maps

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- Traced from 1804 plan of Prebendal House and Grounds (position approximate)
- Traced from 1819 Bevan map (position approximate)

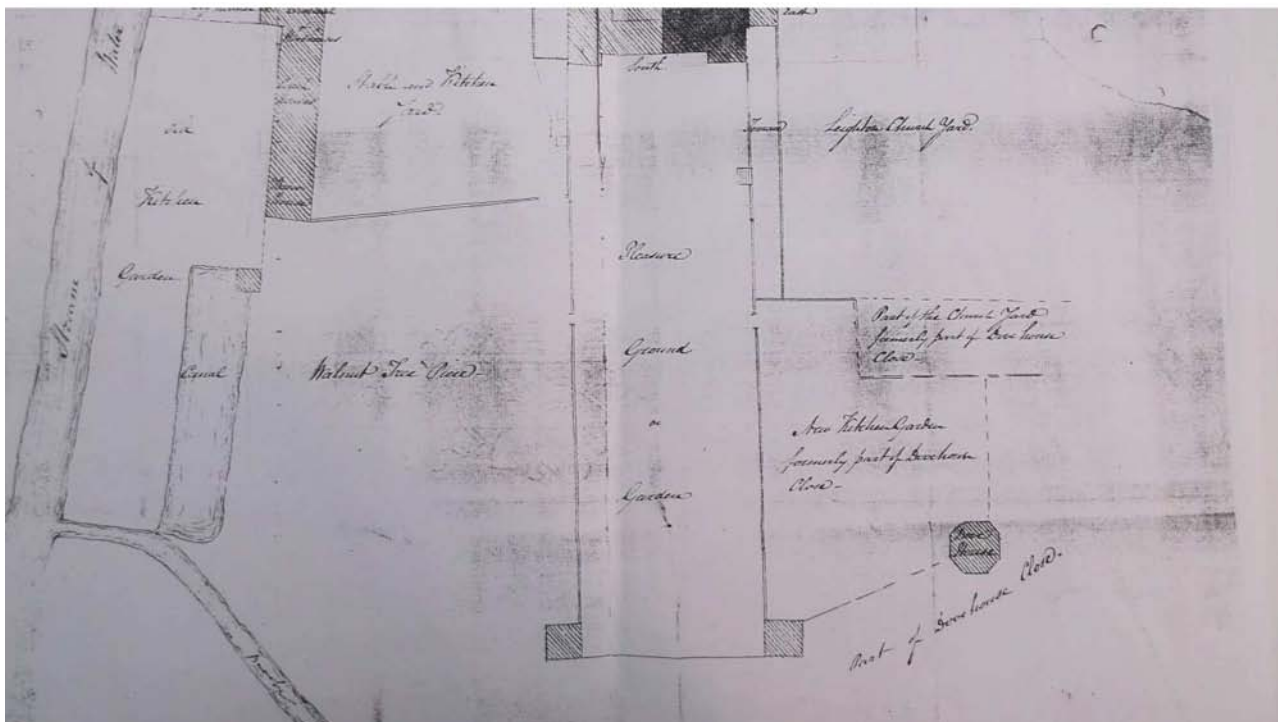
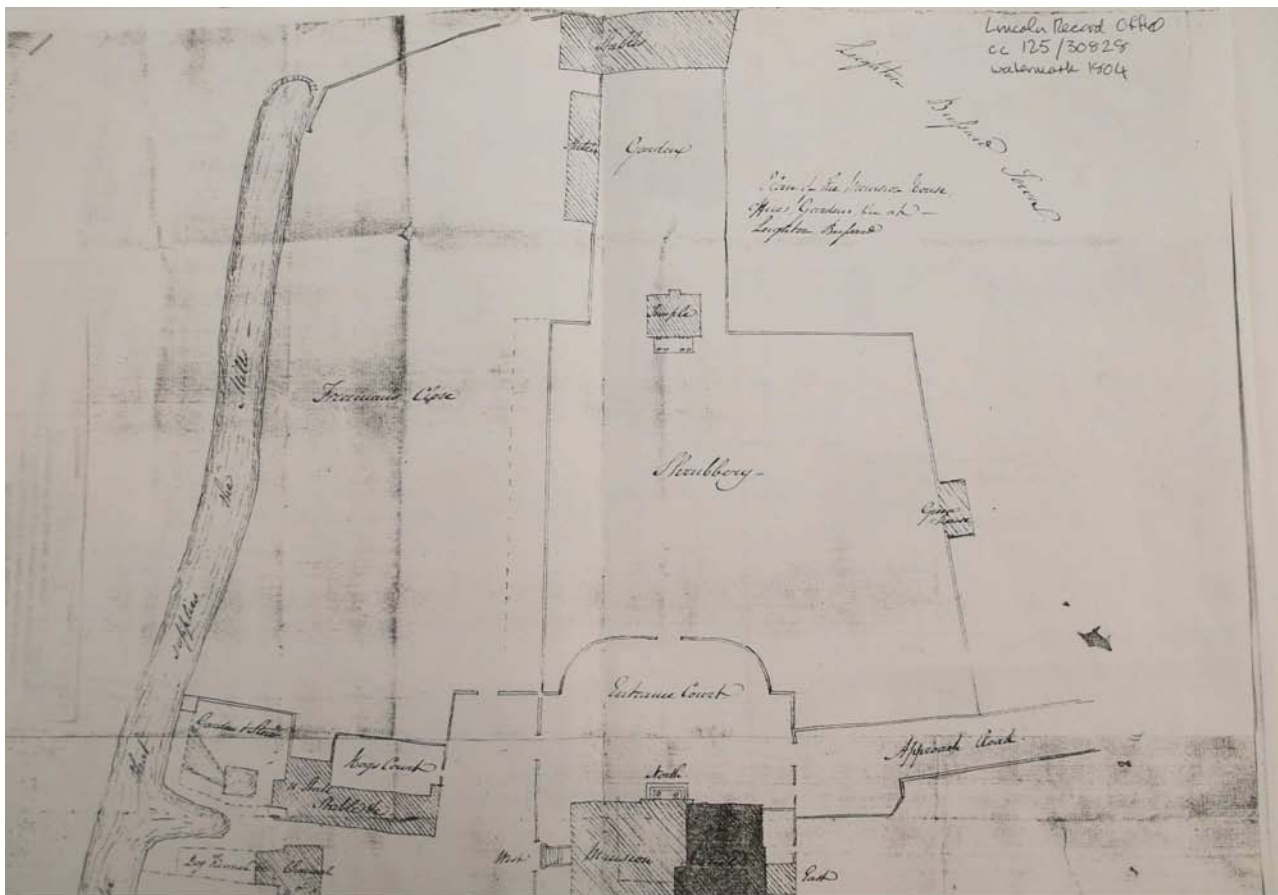


Figure 4: Plan of Prebendal House and grounds, 1804



Figure 5: Bevan's map, 1819



Figure 6: Tithe map, 1848



South end of Trench 2



East end of Trench 1

Figure 7: Evaluation images

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