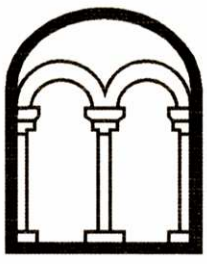
45–47 MILL STREET
BEDFORD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Albion
archaeology



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Contents

List of Figures

The figures are bound at the back of the document.

Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements 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.

The project was commissioned by Parmma Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke (Bedford Borough Council's Senior Archaeological Officer).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Williams and Allan King. This report was prepared by Adam Williams, Jackie Wells and Gary Edmondson. The illustrations are by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
CI*f*A	Chartered Institute *for* Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
HET	Historic Environment Team of BBC
SAO	Senior Archaeological Officer of BBC
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

Non-technical Summary

Planning consent was granted by Bedford Borough Council for the conversion of two 19th-century Georgian buildings from their previous use as offices to residential properties at 45-47 Mill Street, Bedford (14/02/2403/FUL). As the development lies with an area of high archaeological interest, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition was attached to any planning consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation. An archaeological condition (No. 3) was attached to the permission in order to mitigate any archaeological impacts associated with the construction of an extension to the rear to the property.

However, the foundations of the extension were built without any archaeological mitigation having taken place. Accordingly, a mitigation strategy was formulated for the investigation of an area beyond the standing building and for monitoring of any ground reduction associated with the conversion of the cellar of the standing building.

The archaeological works were undertaken in late November 2015, initially focusing on the open-area investigation to the south of the building. Below modern deposits associated with the existing tarmac car park, the investigation revealed a sequence of deposits including a sewer pipe and a brick and limestone wall, probably associated with the standing building. A modern garden soil was above a thin spread of brick and limestone rubble, possibly associated with the construction of the standing buildings rather than demolition of an adjacent structure. This was above an earlier cultivation soil, which contained a small assemblage of finds including late Saxon and medieval pottery. Below this, some 1.85m below the present ground level, was a pit which contained residual late Saxon pottery as well as 13th–14th-century pottery. This feature could not be fully excavated due to the rapid ingress of groundwater. This pit is likely to be the source of the material recovered from the overlying cultivation soil.

The findings corroborate previous discoveries in the area; pitting of a similar date was revealed in the area immediately to the west during investigations undertaken in 1971. This may suggest pitting in the backlands of properties fronting the routeway to the north. Cultivation soils have been revealed in the area to the south, towards Castle Lane, whilst historic maps show the central part of the area defined by Castle Lane and Mill Street was open.

An initial site visit which examined the cellar area suggested the presence of archaeological deposits surviving below the modern sand make-up for the cellar floor, which was some 2m below the existing ground level. However, during the initial stage of ground reduction within the cellar, it quickly became apparent that the depth of existing foundations was not sufficient to allow further ground reduction; this was abandoned and no further archaeological work was required.

Despite modern disturbance, the investigation has revealed medieval archaeological features preserved beneath extensive cultivation deposits, which probably originated in the later medieval period. Due to the thickness of these deposits, only a small area could be investigated beneath the cultivation deposits. This revealed a pit, but it is not clear how dense the features were, due to a combination of the limited size of the investigation area and high water table.

The records and finds from this investigation have been fully analysed for this report, which will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-225599). The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2015.73).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Planning permission (14/02403/FUL) for conversion of two 19th-century Georgian buildings 45–47 Mill Street, Bedford from their previous use as offices to residential flats was granted by Bedford Borough Council (BBC).

As the development lies within an area of high archaeological interest, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of BBC recommended that a condition was attached to any planning consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation. This advice was in accordance with national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, as well as policies in the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2002) and the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural issues Plan (2008).

An archaeological condition (No. 3) was attached to the permission in order to mitigate any archaeological impacts associated with the construction of an extension to the rear to the property. The foundations of the extension were built without any archaeological mitigation having taken place. Following discussions between the client, his agent and the Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) of BBC, a strategy was formulated for an appropriate programme of archaeological works. Its two components comprised an open-area excavation in the area to the south of the standing building and the monitoring of any ground reduction associated with the conversion of the cellar. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), approved by the SAO, detailed the methodology to be employed to address the planning condition.

1.2 Site and Development Description

The site is located within the heart of Bedford, towards the eastern end of Mill Street, centred on grid reference TL 518379 498329 (Figure 1). Mill Street (formerly School Lane) extends eastwards from a crossroads with the High Street (aligned N-S) and Silver Street to the west. The site is located on the southern side of the street, with the roughly rectangular land parcel extending almost to Castle Lane in the south, a short distance from the River Great Ouse. The plot is roughly rectangular in plan — up to 13m wide at the street frontage, and extending some 31m to the south, where the plot tapers to around 10m. The street frontage is aligned slightly obliquely to Mill Street, with an off-set to the north from the adjacent properties (Figure 3: image 1).

The site is bounded by modern office blocks to the east and west, and backs onto Castle Hill Garage (Bedford) Ltd to the south. The street front is occupied by the two yellow brick three-storey buildings, with a later brick extension to the rear in the east, which is retained by the development. The rear parts of the street-front properties have a stone cellar with brick and stone chimney stack. The floor of the cellar was to be replaced as part of the scheme following ground reduction in this area.

To the rear of the buildings was a tarmac car park which extended to the eastern and southern limits of the property (Figure 3: image 2). Access to Mill

Street was provided via the adjacent property to the west, with a common passageway at the western margin of that property.

The site is at a height of *c.* 28m OD, with a slight slope down to the south, towards the river. The geology of the area comprises river terrace deposits of sand and gravel, overlying limestone of the Great Oolite series. Mill Street is on the boundary of the First Terrace Deposits (Felmersham Member) and Second Terrace Deposits (Stoke Goldington Member) of the Great Ouse Valley Formation, with the south side of Mill Street being within the First Terrace Deposits (BGS 2010).

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is considered to be within the core of the Saxon and medieval settlement of Bedford. It is close to the N-S aligned High Street that has been the main thoroughfare in Bedford from Saxon to modern times. It is also close to the putative 9th-century northern boundary of the town that shifted further north in a series of stages as the settlement extended in the following three centuries.

Probably in the medieval period, and at least by 1610 (based on the John Speed map), a routeway on roughly the same alignment as Mill Street, Silver Street and Midland Road had been established. It went E-W across the north of the town, meeting at a central crossroads with the High Street. In contrast, the 19th-century routeway was off-set either side of the junction with the High Street, between Mill Street and Silver Street. In the early medieval period there is a suggestion that the area between Bedford Castle and Mill Street was marshy ground.

Speed's 1610 map indicates that most of the southern side of Mill Street (known at this time as Mill Lane) was lined by buildings fronting the street, with large rectangular land parcels extending southwards to Castle Lane. The area of the current site (on the line of a projected continuation of the N-S element of Castle Lane) was built-up, with a marked gap in the development further eastwards. In contrast, the northern side of Mill Street was much less densely developed at this time, with three clusters of street-front houses.

Thomas Jeffreys' map of 1765 indicates almost continuous development of street-front buildings, extending along the western half of the south side of Mill Street (still called Mill Lane), with a rectangular building extending N-S at the eastern limit of the developed area — possibly correlating with the current site. Beyond this, the street frontage was vacant, with the Dissenting Meeting House, being located roughly centrally within the eastern part of the land block defined by Mill Street and Castle Lane. The north side of Mill Lane continued to be less developed, with street-front buildings confined to the eastern and western margins. The central area, including the area opposite the current site, was devoid of development at this time. The junction with the High Street and Silver Street (labelled as Gaol Street) was symmetrical. Roper's map of 1807 indicates intermittent development along the south side of Mill Lane, though with a cluster of street-front properties extending along the central area of the lane, in the vicinity of the site. The area to the south

appears to have been subdivided into a series of land parcels — probably garden plots, with two distinct blocks being defined between the buildings fronting Mill Lane and Castle Lane.

The 1882 first edition OS map indicates the change of name to Mill Street. The map shows that by latter part of the 19th century, both sides of Mill Street had been extensively developed. The site is clearly defined, being occupied by a street-front building correlating to the standing building, with two N-S extensions to the rear at the eastern and western margins of the property. A large building occupied the opposing Castle Lane frontages with the area between being open. The plan also indicates considerable variation in the width of Mill Street, with a marked constriction developing eastwards from the current site; this may account for the slightly oblique line of the street-front buildings.

The second edition OS map of 1900 is less clear, but appears to show extensive development of the site. A similar picture can be seen on the 1924 and 1938 editions of the map.

In 1971 the vicinity of the site was the subject of a series of archaeological investigations (Baker 1974). These indicated a marked contrast in the areas immediately to the east and west of the current site. Immediately to the west a *c*. 9m by 5m area (Trench 19; Figure 1) was excavated against the street frontage. Below *c.* 1m of deposits (including wall footings associated with activity on the site in the last 100 years) a sequence of stone wall footings (fronting the street) was revealed. The earliest building (Building 1) possibly dated to the later medieval period. Below this was a sequence of pits, including some that produced large assemblages of 13th-century pottery. These cut into dark deposits, which the excavator thought might have formed in marsh-like conditions, possibly associated with a postulated stream which was thought to flow roughly parallel with the southern side of Mill Street. At a depth of *c*. 2.5m dirty river gravels were revealed, defining the undisturbed geological strata.

Two investigation areas were opened immediately to the east of the site, along the street frontage (Trenches 21 and 20; Figure 1). Below approximately 1.3m of dumped deposits associated with 19th-century artefacts, brick footings were revealed above undisturbed geological strata, with no evidence for earlier activity. These deposits were thought to be associated with works on the adjacent Bunyan Meeting House in 1849, particularly the excavation of a cellar.

A single trench fronting Castle Lane, situated immediately to the south of the site (Trench 22; Figure 1) was also investigated. Below 19th-century demolition deposits, limestone wall footings were revealed, which were thought to date to the 19th century. Below this was a buried soil profile which contained a small quantity of Saxon and Saxo-Norman (St Neots ware) pottery. A thin band of sand and gravel above limestone was revealed at *c*. 1.5m below the existing ground level. This is a marked contrast to the

thickness of deposits found on the Mill Street frontage, less that 50m to the north.

1.4 Project Objectives

The main component of the investigation was the opening of an area to the rear of the property, roughly centrally within the tarmac car park. The aim was to investigate the sequence of pre-modern deposits in this area to either the maximum safe limit of investigation or to the geological strata, depending on depth. Previous works in this area indicated that undisturbed geological strata were at a depth of *c.* 2.5m below existing ground level.

The second component, associated with ground reduction within the cellar of the building, was the investigation of any exposed deposits. A small test pit, dug by the contractors in the south-east corner of the cellar to examine the walls, revealed some 0.12–0.15m of make-up deposits associated with the existing tiled floor. Below this was a dark deposit, which appeared to be the fill of a feature rather than deposits associated with the postulated stream.

Research frameworks that have been devised for the region are 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 location of the site within the Saxon and medieval core of Bedford had potential to add to the understanding of the origins and development of the town, which is a local and regional research theme (Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 70). It was thought that the sequence of activity recorded to the north-west could continue into this area, with associated activity in the backlands of the property.

The research objectives were to be refined as the project progressed to ensure that they remained relevant to the nature of any archaeological remains revealed.

2. METHOD STATEMENTS

The project comprised two components: an open-area investigation to the south of the standing building and the monitoring of any ground reduction within the cellar. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion 2015).

2.1 Methodological Standards

The project adhered throughout to the standards 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* (ver. 2.8, 2010)
• CI*f*A	*Charter and by-law*; *Code of Conduct* (2014)
	Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (2014)
	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2014)
• EAA	*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (2003)*
• Historic England (formerly English Heritage)	*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide (2015)*
	Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, (2nd edn, 2011)

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The archaeological works were undertaken in late November 2015, commencing with the open-area investigation. The excavation took the form of a 5m by 4m trench, initially machine excavated to 1.2m below ground level (BGL) and then stepped-in by at least 1m, with machining continuing to the top of the archaeological deposits (*c.* 1.85m BGL) where excavation continued by hand to a total depth of 2.3m BGL.

Monitoring of the ground reduction in the cellar of the existing building commenced on 26th November 2015; however, it soon became apparent that the existing depth of the foundations was not sufficient to allow ground reduction without additional engineering work; it was decided that this component of the building conversion would be curtailed.

In the following summary contexts in brackets refer to deposits on site. Cut features are in square brackets, e.g. the foundation cut [7] for a wall footing (8); deposits or layers are in curved brackets e.g. modern cultivation soil (5). Figure 2 shows the all features plan and associated sections, whilst Figures 3–6 contain selected images. Finds information is integrated into the text.

3.2 Open-Area Investigation

3.2.1 Overburden

Prior to excavation the area consisted of a tarmac car park (Figure 3: image 2). Ground reduction exposed several modern deposits consisting of tarmac (1), and associated made ground (2, 3, and 4) – grey hatched deposits on Figure 2: sections 1 and 2. These deposits covered the entirety of the investigation area and represent the levelling and subsequent construction of the modern car park surface.

3.2.2 Archaeological features and deposits

Recent deposits

Directly below the car park deposits and aligned N-S was a modern drain [11] that turned to the SE *c*. 3m from the northern edge of excavation (Figure 2: red/pink feature and Figure 4: images 3 and 4). In section this feature was defined by a series of backfill deposits (6), (26) and (12) (Figure 2: section 1). This drain appeared to pass under modern wall footing (8) — not unusual for this type of feature which need to maintain 'fall' or flow.

A modern garden wall, aligned roughly N-S, extended along the eastern side of the investigation area, comprising a cut [7], masonry footing, which mostly utilised horizontal limestone slabs (8), and traces of bricks in the south (25) (Figure 2 section 1 and Figure 4: images 3 and 4). The wall would have been a single brick wide, indicating that it was not part of a substantial building. The alignment was heading for the junction between the two 19th-century properties, although this area had been the focus of later building work and so no scar from the wall visible.

In the SE corner of the area the western edge of a pit at least 1.42m by 0.25m, extended a short distance beyond the limit of investigation. It had a concave profile [14] and was 0.49m deep (Figure 2 – mid grey feature and section 2). Its dark grey-black fill (15) contained frequent brick and tile inclusions. This suggests a post-medieval/modern date for the refuse pit, which was probably associated with localised demolition work. Initially this pit was thought to separate two elements of the upper cultivation soil, though it is considered more likely that the pit was actually dug into the soil profile, with subsequent cultivation removing the upper part of the pit, to giving the misleading impression that it was earlier than the upper component of the cultivation soil (5)

Upper cultivation soil

The upper garden soil appeared to consist of two components separated by a pit [14] and the construction cut [7] for the wall (Figure 2: sections 1 and 2). However, this is considered to be misleading — the result of cultivation of the upper element of the soil (5), leading to the removal of the upper part of these features. The upper element of the soil profile (5) was dark grey-black and up to 0.38m thick (Figure2: sections 1 and 2). The lower element comprised a black to grey brown deposit (10), (23) and (24), up to 0.42m thick (Figure 2: sections 1 and 2 and Figure 4: images 3 and 4). This material is thought to have been deposited as one event, although its source is uncertain. A small quantity of modern artefacts from this layer was sent directly to Bedford Museum in accordance with the methodology in the WSI.

Rubble layer

Sealed below the garden soil was a distinctive yellow deposit of sandy limestone material with frequent brick and tile rubble (13), which spread across most of the area (Figure 4: image 3). The deposit was up to 0.24m thick and would appear to have been deliberately spread on the former ground surface prior to creation of the later garden with imported material (pale yellow deposit on Figure 2: sections 1 and 2 and Figure 5: image 5). The lack of compaction or erosion of the limestone suggests that this was not an external surface. This material may have been associated with construction of the street-front properties, rather than demolition and levelling of adjacent structures; its composition suggests that it may have been associated with the lining of the cellar.

Earlier cultivation soil

The dark brown-black clay silt contrasted with the overlying rubble (13), defining an extensive deposit (17/16) up to 0.66m thick; its lower element (16) was light to mid brown-grey in colour (Figure 2: section 2 and Figure 5: images 5 and 6). Four pottery sherds (272g) and an animal limb bone fragment (46g) were recovered from the lower element (16). The pottery is local in origin, and comprises a single sherd of late Saxon St Neots-type ware (fabric B01[1]), two 12th–13th-century sand-tempered sherds (fabrics C01,

[1] Fabric types identified in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series

C05), and a sherd from a late medieval oxidised ware jug (fabric E02). The thickness of the soil would suggest the double digging of a cultivation plot.

Medieval pit and earlier deposit

Pit [18] lay *c*. 1.85m below surface level and was overlain by deposit (16) (Figure 2 – brown / brown-hatched feature, section 2 and Figure 5: image 6). In plan, this feature was at least 1.56m N-S by 1.24m wide, with a curving southern extent; its western, eastern and northern limits lay beyond the trench. In section the pit had a concave southern edge (Figure 2: section 2), which was excavated to a depth of 0.28m before rapid ingress of groundwater prevented further work. An auger was used to determine the total depth of the feature at approximately 0.68m. The mid brown-grey clay silt fill (19) contained a piece of sand-tempered flat roof tile (45g), seven abraded animal limb bone and pelvis(?) fragments (112g), and three pottery sherds (42g). The latter comprise two late Saxon shell-tempered St Neots-type sherds (fabrics B01 and variant B01C) and a 13th–14th-century glazed sherd from a Brill-Boarstall ware jug (fabric C09), a regional fine ware import from Buckinghamshire.

Pit [18] cut a mid orange-grey gravelly silt deposit (20); the limited scope of the investigation area at this level and the ingress of groundwater prevented further characterisation of this deposit (Figure 5: image 6).

3.2.3 Cellar

During the initial site visit on 2nd October 2015, observations were made of a small test pit previously excavated by the contractors in the SE corner of the western cellar. The sections were cleaned up and photographed (Figure 6: image 7). This revealed an orange sand bedding layer up to 0.15m thick for the former tiled floor. Beneath this was a dark deposit which continued below the base of the southern cellar wall. This indicated that pre-cellar deposits survived some 2m below the present external ground level.

The contactors intended to reduce the floor level within the cellar in late November 2015, initially removing the orange sandy bedding layer for the former tiled floor. However, it quickly became clear that the potential ground reduction was restricted by the depth of the walls and so this work was not progressed (Figure 6: image 8).

3.3 Interpretation and Conclusions

Although the archaeological works were limited in scope, the open-area investigation to the rear of the standing building confirmed the results of earlier work in the vicinity, indicating that there is significant potential for archaeological deposits to survive despite modern disturbance. These deposits relate to the medieval and later development of the area.

The investigation revealed a series of deposits relating to the standing building, comprising a drain and a wall, which probably acted as a boundary between 45 and 47 Mill Street. The upper cultivation soil had been imported, possibly from excavation of the cellar where an extensive series of deposits and features must formerly have existed.

This area to the rear of the standing buildings would appear to have been used as a garden, with only a single pit [14] being identified, to the SE margin of the area. This pit contained frequent brick and tile fragments suggesting small-scale building works, with disposal of the waste material.

An extensive shallow rubble spread (13) composed of limestone and brick fragments separated the imported garden soil from an earlier cultivation soil. It is possible that the rubble was associated with the construction of the street-front properties, accumulating on the contemporary ground surface.

The lower cultivation soil was up to 0.66m thick, with the lower component containing late Saxon and medieval pottery, which was probably derived from the fill of the underlying pit. It is likely that this activity dates from at least the later medieval period, with a sequence of historical maps showing the central area of the land block defined by Mill Street in the north and Castle Lane to the south being open or forming large land parcels.

Sealed below the lower cultivation soil was a late medieval pit [18], which contained a small assemblage of 13th–14th-century pottery as well as residual late Saxon material.

Despite the size of the open-area investigation, only *c*. 3.5m^2 could be excavated below the thick cultivation soils, due to the need to step the trench side. Over half of this exposed area was taken up by a single large medieval pit. Similar pits had been found previously during the 1971 investigations in the area immediately to the NW. Pitting is characteristic of the backlands of properties, such as those fronting Mill Street. Given the small size of the investigation area, it is not possible to characterise the nature or density of the medieval activity further.

The records and small assemblage of finds from this investigation have been fully analysed for this report, which will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-225599). The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2015.73).

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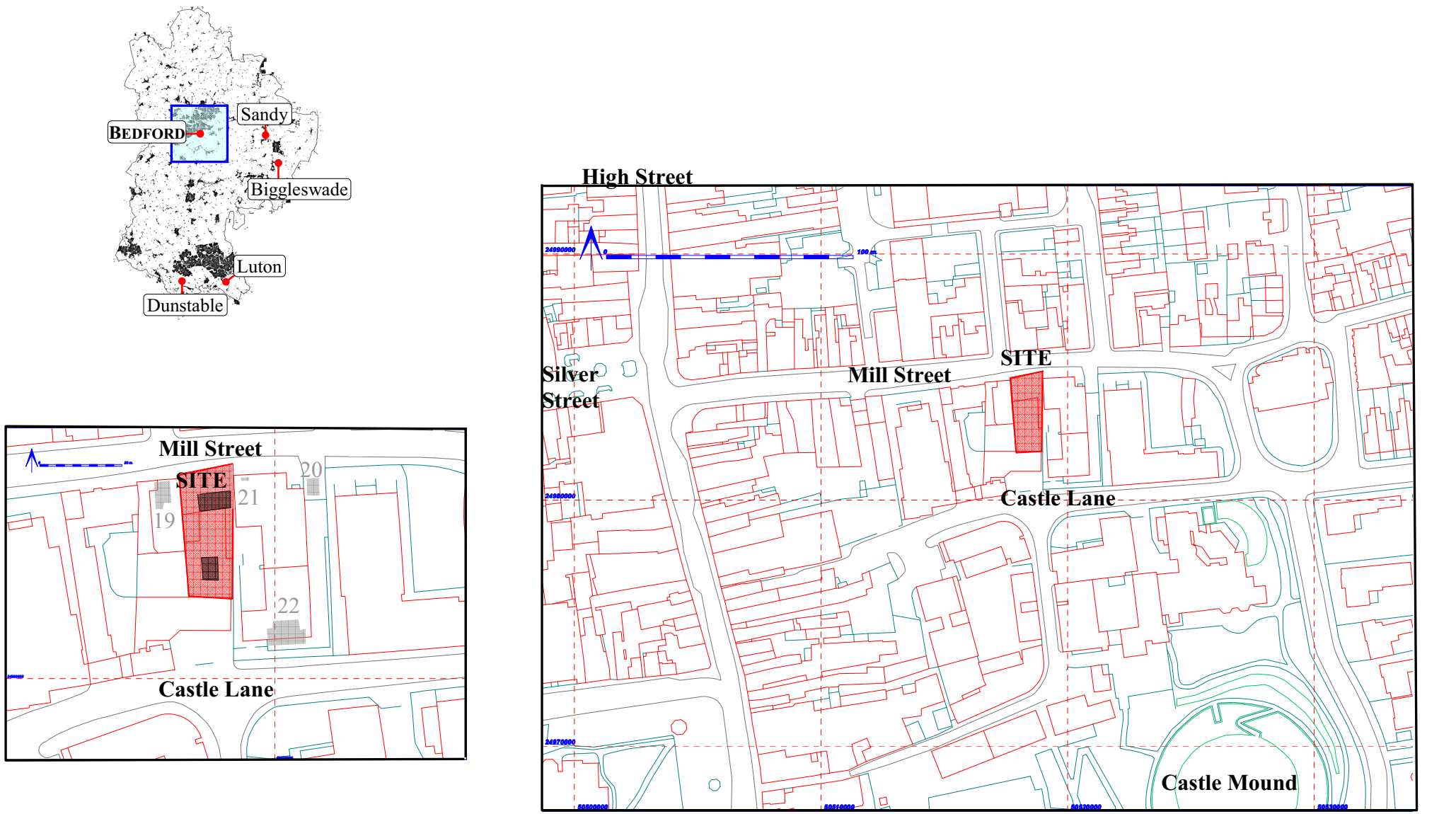
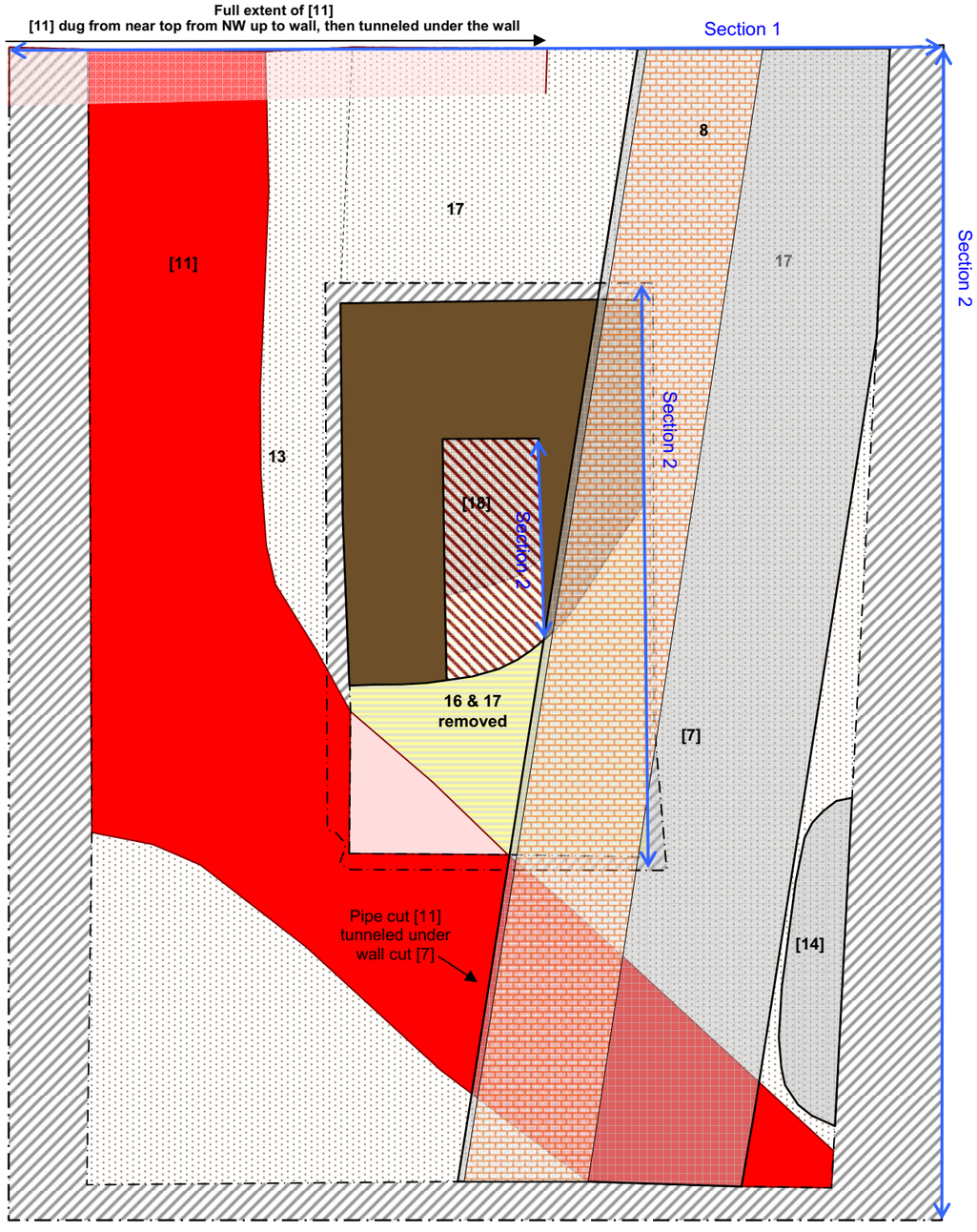


Figure 1: Site location plan (with inset showing location of 1971 archaeological investigations)



Trench plan

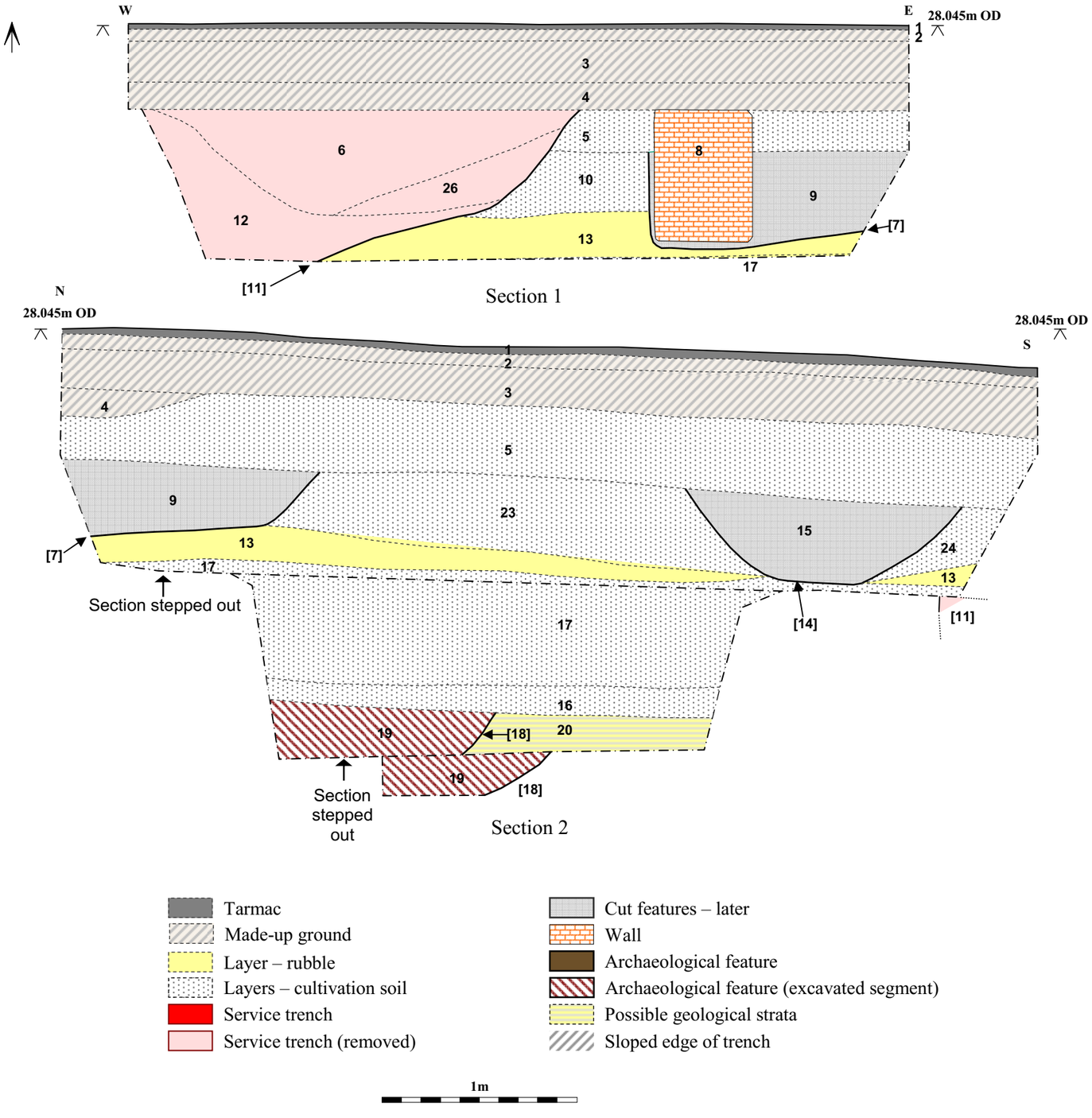


Figure 2: All features plan and sections

Image 1: View down Mill Street, looking eastwards, with the yellow brick building of 45-47 Mill Street, off-set from adjacent modern properties.

Image 2: View of open area to the rear of the site during the initial stage of the investigation. This image is looking towards the SE corner of the site.

Figure 3: Selected images 1 and 2

Image 3: Initial phase of machining of the open area looking south, with a modern drain to the west. The yellow rubble spread (13) extends across the rest of the area. The limestone and brick wall [7] is visible in the southern section.

Image 4: View of the northern part of the area during the initial phase of machining. In this area the wall footing [7] is composed entirely of limestone. The dark upper cultivation soil (5/10) is above the yellow rubble spread (13).

Figure 4: Selected images 3 and 4

Image 5: General view of area showing two substantial cultivation soils below modern deposits. They were separated by the yellow rubble deposit (13) visible in the base of the section just above the first step. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Image 6: View of pit [18], which was revealed below the lower cultivation soil. The water table was high, hampering investigation at this depth — some 1.85m below the present ground level. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 5: Selected images 5 and 6

Image 7: Small test pit dug by contractors in SE corner of cellar of western property, measuring *c.* 0.6 by 0.3m and showing dark deposits continuing beneath southern cellar wall.

Image 8: General view of eastern half of cellar of western property, showing stone walls and brick and stone chimney stack. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 6: Selected images 7 and 8

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