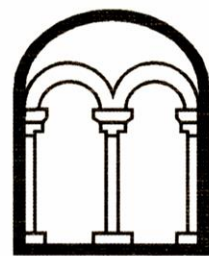


**CHURCH WALK
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND
PUBLICATION**

Project: CW2828
Luton Culture accession no.: LUTNM 2020/8
OASIS ref. no.: albionar1-244753
HER search ref. no.: 201819/299

Document: 2020/40
Version 1.1

14th May 2020

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Produced for:
Central Bedfordshire Council



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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. This document should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council).

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Acknowledgements

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Andrew Halcrow of Central Bedfordshire Council. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist). Fieldwork was undertaken by Ernie Rizzo and Lewis Busby (Archaeological Supervisors) and Tori Guy (Project Officer). The project was also managed by Tori Guy, and all Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

This report was prepared by Ernie Rizzo and Tori Guy with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.1	14/05/2020	CBCA Comments
1.0	22/04/2020	N/A



Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CBM	Ceramic building material
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
NGR	National Grid Reference
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
SM	Scheduled Monument
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) replaced a series of lighting columns, associated cabling and ducting at Church Walk, Church Close and within the grounds of the Priory Church of St Peter in Dunstable.

The lighting columns, cabling and ducting were located within the core of the Roman town of Dunstable, partly within the precinct of the medieval Augustinian Priory (a scheduled monument) and within the closed churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter. The nature of the lighting replacement work was such that it had the potential to impact on archaeological remains, including human burials.

For this reason, the CBC Archaeologist (CBCA) recommended that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication was required and issued a brief for those works (CBC 2015).

Within the churchyard, the excavations were of such a limited depth that the only archaeological features identified were the top of two probable grave cuts. As no dating evidence was recovered, the age of the graves was not determined, but it is likely they are no more than c.250 years old. Additionally, a number of disarticulated human skeletal remains were identified. Fragments of gravestones below the current ground level were identified; they did not appear to be associated with any visible graves but this may have been due to the shallow depth of the trenches. There is potential that archaeological remains pertaining to the Roman, medieval and post-medieval settlements within Dunstable survive below the monitored groundworks.

The trenches within the grass verges of the car park revealed landscaping and overburden layers to a depth of c.0.5m. This was similar to other excavations in the priory precinct (Warren 1994). Again, there is the potential that archaeological remains survive below the excavated depth.

No excavations within the car park itself revealed more than modern construction layers.

Whilst the monitoring revealed no archaeological remains relating to the Roman, medieval or post-medieval settlement south-east of the crossroads of Watling street and Church Road/West Street and within the churchyard, there is potential that archaeological remains survive below the monitored areas.

This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (OASIS ref. no.: albionar1-244753) and the project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture (accession no. LUTNM 2020/8).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) planned to replace a series of lighting columns, associated cabling and ducting at Church Walk, Church Close and within the grounds of the Priory Church of St Peter in Dunstable. The project was under the overall management of CBC's Community Services – Highways.

The lighting columns, cabling and ducting were located within the core of the Roman town of Dunstable, partly within the precinct of the medieval Augustinian Priory (a scheduled monument) and within the closed churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter. The nature of the lighting replacement works was such that they had the potential to impact on archaeological remains, including human burials.

For this reason, it was the CBC Archaeologist's (CBCA) recommendation that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication was required and a brief for those works was issued (CBC 2015). This brief had expired before the work began but the CBCA confirmed (H. Firth pers. comm. 21/03/2019) that it still adequately described the required programme of archaeological works.

The recommendation was in accordance with national planning guidelines in the form of paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019), which states that:

Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

It was also in accordance with Central Bedfordshire Council's Policy DM13 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to prepare a written scheme of investigation (Albion 2016), setting out how any archaeological remains encountered as a consequence of the proposed development would be dealt with. An updated version of the WSI was issued on 25/03/2019.

1.2 Site Location and Description

Dunstable lies in the south-west of Central Bedfordshire and is centred on the crossroads of two ancient routes, now the A5 and A505. The Priory Church lies to the immediate south-east of the crossroads and Church Close comes directly off the A505, leading to Church Walk, the Priory Church and the Priory Gardens (Figure 1).



Topographically, Dunstable is situated at the foot of the Chiltern Ridge and the priory church and Church Walk lie on undulating ground ranging from 145–149m OD. The underlying solid geology of the area is Holywell Nodular and New Pit Chalk Formations of the Late Cretaceous period. No superficial geology is recorded (British Geological Survey 2020). The site of the works was centred on NGR TL 020218.

1.3 **Archaeological Background**

The archaeological and historical background of the site and its context is presented in detail in the brief issued for this development (CBC 2015). In addition, up-to-date data from the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER) was also obtained (search ref. 201819/299). The most salient information from both is reproduced below.

The original lighting columns were located along Church Walk and Church Close, both of which are within Dunstable Conservation Area, covering the core of the Roman and medieval towns (HER 135 and 16986). Some of the columns were also within the precinct of the Augustinian Priory (HER 131) which is a Scheduled Monument (SM BD3, NHLE 1004676).

The Roman town at Dunstable (HER 135 and 11284) recorded as *Durocbrivae* or *Durocbrivis*, appears to have developed around the crossroads between the prehistoric routeway known as the Icknield Way (HER 353) and Watling Street (HER 5508), one of the main arterial roads in Roman Britain. *Durocbrivae* may have been one of a series of *mansios* (stopping points/staging posts) along Watling Street. Numerous small archaeological investigations have revealed evidence for cobbled road surfaces, wells, timber buildings, boundary features, industrial activity and a large late Roman cemetery (HER 11284). The core of the Roman town seems to have radiated out for a distance of around 400m from the Icknield Way/Watling Street crossroads. In a number of locations evidence for Roman activity has been found within the Priory precinct (see below).

The decline of *Durocbrivae* is likely to have taken place sometime during the 5th century, following the official withdrawal of Roman rule from Britain. At present there does not appear to have been any continuity between the Roman and Saxon settlements. This is a circumstance that is not, however, unusual, and as Saxon activity in Dunstable has been found in the north-western part of the modern town (for example Marina Drive, HER 152) it is possible that the focus of the Saxon settlement was simply shifted away from the centre of the Roman town.

In approximately 1119, Henry I founded the medieval town (HER 16986) in Dunstable and, like the Roman settlement, it was focussed on the Icknield Way/Watling Street crossroads. The town had a planned market place and was laid out in burgage plots, some of which may be preserved in the surviving property boundaries today, particularly along High Street South. Medieval features including kilns, pits and ditches dating to this period have been recorded at a number of locations (Albion Archaeology 2003) and recent archaeological investigations along the Great Northern Road (Albion



Archaeology 2014) suggest that the medieval occupation may have extended for some distance south of the crossroads. Documentary sources, now supported by archaeological evidence, suggest that Henry I also had a royal residence within the town (HER 148) located on the northern side of Church Street.

Around 1131/32, Henry I established the Augustinian Priory of St Peter (HER 131, SM 3, and NHLE 1004676). Located on the opposite side of Church Street to his residence, the Priory was endowed with significant lands and properties within the town and surrounding area. The upstanding remains of the Priory buildings include the nave of the Church of St Peter (HER 132, LB 2/1, NHLE 1114581), part of the Gatehouse (HER 6329, LB 724/2/61, NHLE 1321391) and the undercroft at Priory House (HER 6311, LB 1/17, NHLE 1114593). Other buildings within the precinct would have included claustral ranges, an infirmary, barns, a buttery, workshops, a bake house and a brew house. Among the Priory's properties in the surrounding area were the Totternhoe stone quarries and in addition to the ecclesiastical buildings many of the Priory's domestic properties were built from Totternhoe stone (clunch).

Archaeological evidence for the Priory has been recorded in a number of locations, both within Priory Gardens (adjacent to Church Walk/Church Close) and along High Street South. A conjectural plan of the Priory precinct was put forward by local antiquarian Worthington G. Smith in 1904 and the Manshead Archaeological Society who have undertaken a number of small archaeological investigations within Priory precinct believe that it represents a largely accurate depiction of the layout of the site. Details of the most relevant archaeological investigations to this project are briefly summarised below.

In 1970, a trench was dug across part of Priory Meadow to re-lay part of a main electricity supply cable. The excavation was found to cut through part of a burial ground — probably the monks' cemetery (at least 18 burials were recorded), and some building remains of the Priory period (1132–1540). The building remains comprised substantial Totternhoe stone walls, mostly with their ashlar facing stripped away. At least one wall at the south-west end of the trench coincided with a Roman ditch and may have been part of the foundations for the south transept. A ditch lay beneath the remains associated with the Priory at the south-western end of the trench; it was of a substantial size and contained early Roman pottery (Hagen 1972).

In 1983, the Manshead Archaeological Society undertook a small evaluation on the land to the rear of the Saracen's Head on High Street South. The investigation demonstrated the presence of a large cellared storage building (*cellarium*) which has been interpreted as possibly being part of a bake house or brew house, because three small ovens and a fireplace were recorded *in situ*. The Manshead investigations also indicated that after the Dissolution of the monastery in 1540 the cellars had been converted into a limekiln (Mathews 1984).

In 1986, following the removal of a hedge to the south-west of the war memorial in Priory Gardens evidence for a large, probably medieval, well and



an area of post-medieval metalling was recorded (Warren 1987). Evidence for the re-use of Totternhoe stone from the Priory was recorded by the Manshead Archaeological Society in 1988, while the foundations for the former toilet block (adjacent to High Street South) at Priory House were being excavated (Warren 1988).

In the rear garden of no. 2 Priory Road, Dunstable, nearly twenty skeletons were recorded in 1993 during a watching brief undertaken as part of a garage construction. These burials were considered at the time to lie outside the Priory precinct, although it was suggested that they were medieval in date and may have been workers involved in the construction of the Priory. Other features recorded included an earlier ditch and a layer of Totternhoe stone, the later probably related to the post-Dissolution demolition of the Priory (Warren 1993). In 1994, interpretation boards were installed within the Priory precinct at a number of locations. Observation of this work by the Manshead Archaeological Society demonstrated the presence of made ground at all of the locations (Warren 1994).

In 2002, a garden survey and the excavation of a number of small test pits on the land to the rear of 21-23 High Street South revealed a number of archaeological features including two possible beam slots. Most of the artefacts recovered dated to the Roman period, with a small amount of medieval pottery recovered from an irregular feature recorded closest to the northern boundary of the site. Archaeological features were recorded as existing 0.7m below the contemporary ground level (Hudspith 2002).

Traces of a wall core were recorded in close proximity to the southern side of the church during a scheme of lighting works for the Priory Church in 2003. A trench dug on the northern side of the building (close to the lighting columns) at the same time, did not produce any archaeological remains (Warren 2004). In 2005, the Manshead Archaeological Society recorded a variety of remains to the south of the Priory Church, during the removal of a hedge. These remains included post-Dissolution demolition layers and several indications of foundation of varying thicknesses indicating internal and external walls. Further possible evidence for post-Dissolution layers was recorded in 2006, during the installation of five lighting columns and associated cabling alongside the path that runs from the Priory Gateway to Priory House (Hudspith and Hills 2006).

In 2010, a programme of refurbishment works was undertaken at the Priory Church. The works comprised: alterations to the paved area outside the main west door to construct a new set of steps and disabled access ramp; the excavation of two small concrete pad footings inside the main door (prior to the construction of a new glass vestibule inside); the refurbishment of the existing entrance lobby to provide for lavatory facilities; and the formation of a refreshment area at the west end of the north aisle. Archaeological remains observed during construction works outside the west entrance comprised the foundation cut for a 15th-century south-western buttress and clunch and tile fill associated with the foundation and underpinning. Made ground and



levelling layers were also recorded as were some disarticulated human remains (Albion Archaeology 2010).

In 2012, a GPR survey and limited trial trenching to the rear of the Saracen's Head indicated the presence of buried structures, including the foundations of a possible 19th-century stable block and a series of large re-used blocks of Totternhoe stone, likely to have come from the medieval Priory (Archaeological Solutions 2012). A trial trench evaluation to the rear of 59 High Street South in 2014 also found further evidence of a clunch-built foundation wall. Given that it is on a similar alignment to the precinct wall of the Priory, it has been suggested that it represents part of that structure (KDK Archaeology 2014).

A number of investigations have also been undertaken within the grounds of Priory Middle School (now Priory Academy) to the south-east of the Priory Church. These interventions have demonstrated the presence of archaeological deposits dating to both the Roman and medieval periods. The most recent work in 2015 for a programme of extensions attached to the school did not record any archaeological remains (Albion Archaeology 2015). However, in 2005 a trial trench evaluation undertaken prior to the erection of a new science block on the northern side of the school grounds demonstrated the presence of post-medieval and medieval boundary features, a medieval furrow and two earlier undated ditches (Albion Archaeology 2005). To the west, north-east and north of the main school buildings, a number of small investigations by the Manshead Archaeological Society have produced evidence for at least one Roman ditch, a number of medieval features and later property boundaries (Hudspith and Warren 1993; Warren 1995 and Hudspith 2004a and 2004b).

Trial holes excavated within the north and south aisles of Priory Church (Heritage Network 2015) revealed post-medieval and modern disturbance as well as the top of a burial vault.

Archaeological investigation of an extension and soak away at the rear of the Old Palace Lodge Hotel on Church Street recovered evidence of 1st–2nd-century Roman occupation and limited post-medieval activity in the form of garden features and a well (KDK Archaeology 2018).

Archaeological investigations carried out at 11-15 High Street South (Compass Archaeology 2018) revealed a range of archaeological features dating from the Roman to post-medieval periods. They included a 12th–14th-century, tile-laid oven and a sunken stone-lined tank, possibly a mikveh (Jewish ritual bath) or a monastic well/water feature. A range of features dating to the 16th century in the form of wells and pits were also uncovered during the investigations. Abutting the boundary with High Street South, a sequence of cellars of 17th–19th-century date was also revealed.

1.4 Project Objectives

The works had the potential to uncover archaeological remains that could address a number of research objectives identified in the research framework



for Bedfordshire (Oake et al 2007) and the revised framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011).

Church Walk is located within the Roman, medieval and post-medieval centre of Dunstable and the lighting columns and associated trenches had the potential to reveal archaeological deposits relating to those periods.

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in common with the rest of the eastern region, further research is needed on the origins and development of small towns, their inter-relationships with their hinterlands and early town planning from the Saxon through to the early post-medieval periods (Ayers 2000, 27–32, Oake 2007, 11 and 14; Medlycott 2011, 47–48, 58 and 70, 79).

For Dunstable, despite the sporadic identification and investigation of medieval deposits, little is yet known about the character of the medieval town. In addition, whilst the Augustinian Priory is still prominent in the townscape of Dunstable, its layout and development are not well understood (Oake 2007, 15).

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- whether there was any evidence for Roman and/or medieval settlement features;
- whether there was any evidence for the layout and development of the Augustinian Priory.

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature and date of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- Local environmental conditions via recovering paleo-environmental remains.

The research objectives outlined in this section were not exclusive. Any evidence recovered relevant to other objectives identified in the published research frameworks were added to the objectives included in the WSI during the course of the project.



2. METHOD STATEMENTS

2.1 Implementation

Archaeological observation of the groundworks was undertaken between 21st September 2019 and 13th November; a total of 13 site visits were made.

The works within the churchyard of St Peter's Church and the scheduled Augustinian Priory comprised constant and continuous monitoring of the groundworks. All work adhered to the requirements of both the scheduled monument consent (ref. no.: S00128141) and Church of England Faculty (no. 0123).

The excavations were carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket operated under close archaeological supervision. Where machine excavation was not possible, i.e. around tree roots, established services and gravestones, hand excavation took place.

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of artefacts.

2.2 Standards

The following standards were adhered to throughout the project.

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
• Luton Culture	<i>Procedure for preparing archives for deposition with Luton Culture</i> (2013)
• CBC	<i>Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at Church Walk, Dunstable, Bedfordshire</i> (2015)
• CIfA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
• Gurney, D.	<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> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , (2nd edn, 2011)



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All significant deposits and features found within the trenches and associated excavations are summarised below and shown in Figures 2 and 3. A representative selection of photographs is also presented in Figure 4. All features and deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence. Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***) . The trenches were inspected when possible by the CBCA prior to their backfilling. All new lamppost numbers are referred to using the client's numbering system (i.e. Z***).

The works consisted of the excavation of new ducting cable trenches which were c.0.2–0.4m wide and c.0.3–0.5m deep. Additionally, there was the need to install new access chambers or feeder pillars, which were dug as necessary along the route of the cable. For ease of discussion the results of the archaeological observation are discussed by area: within the closed churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter; within the scheduled Augustinian Priory Precinct; and within Church Close, the car park and associated green space (Figures 1 and 2).

3.2 Churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter

The trench within the churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter was planned to follow the northern edge of the current SW–NE path through the churchyard. However, between lighting columns Z005 and Z006 it was relocated along the southern edge due to the close proximity of gravestones/ledger stones on the northern side. The length of the trench totalled c.148m, with the eastern c.45m on the south side of the footpath. Overall, this stretch included four lighting columns (Z003–Z006) and one access chamber (Figure 2).

The excavated overburden across the churchyard area comprised a c.0.2m-thick topsoil (1) of dark grey-brown silt. It sealed a subsoil (2) of dark brown, clay-silt, observed to a maximum depth of 0.45m below the current ground level. There were instances between lighting columns Z004 and Z005 where a second subsoil-like deposit (8) was observed. It comprised a grey-brown chalk-silt and may be a levelling/landscaping layer associated with the use of the churchyard during the post-medieval period.

Identified within both subsoils were fragments of disarticulated human skeletal remains, which included femur, tibia, other long bone, scapula, vertebrae, rib and hand/foot phalanges (Table 1). The bones were most likely brought to the surface due to the root action of nearby trees, and as there was no evidence of articulation, it was determined that they were individual fragments and not parts of *in-situ* burials.

Inclusions of grey-white chalk rubble were identified within the topsoil (1) around the Priory Church itself (between lighting column Z003 and the north-west corner of the church), suggesting that either natural material had been



relocated from another area, or the natural geology had been disturbed within the graveyard. At no point was the chalk bedrock encountered within the churchyard.

Two potential grave cuts were identified within the cable ducting trench (Figure 3). The eastern potential grave cut [4] cut subsoil (2) and was sealed by topsoil (1), whereas the eastern potential grave cut subsoil (8) and was sealed by subsoil (2). This may suggest that a landscaping event happened between the two burials.

Potential grave [4] was located between lighting columns Z005 and Z006, c.20m west of Z006. The visible cut was c.1m wide; however, the length, depth and orientation were unknown due to the small percentage visible in the trench. It can, however, be presumed that the grave was aligned east-west.

The second potential grave [6] was identified c.22m north-east of lighting column Z004. Its visible extents measured c.0.9m wide; however, as with cut [4], the length, depth and alignment were not discernible.

Both grave cuts had vertical sides and were filled with mid-orange-brown clay-silt (5) and (7) respectively, which contained frequent chalk inclusions and fragments of human remains (Table 1).

Two buried gravestone fragments were encountered during the trench excavation; their location was noted and they were reburied *in situ*. The broken base of a headstone was identified to the east of Z004 (Figure 3). It was c.0.15m wide and 0.1m thick with no visible markings. Its full length was not exposed as it extended beyond the excavated trench. A grave ledger was identified north-east of Z003 (Figure 2). The corner was exposed during the excavations; it was c.0.45m by 0.3m and did not show any evidence of writing or marking. Only small parts of these gravestones were exposed, and it was not possible to see if they were associated with a grave cut.

North of the Priory Church of St Peter, c.18m south-west of lighting column Z004, a new access chamber was installed. The excavation of ground required was on the north side of the cable trench and measured c.2.5m by c.1.5m and c.0.6m deep. No archaeological features were observed, although human skeletal remains were recovered, suggesting graves were in the vicinity. The bone fragments identified included fragments of rib and long bones.

Directly north-west of the Priory Church of St Peter the trench revealed an area of highly disturbed ground, due to the presence of iron pipes, services and multiple current and defunct electrical cables (Figure 2). Within the disturbed area an east-west aligned brick wall was identified (Figure 2). It comprised unfrogged brick and an orange-yellow mortar. Its location within the modern disturbance and composition suggest a modern date. It was left *in situ*.



3.2.1 Human bone summary

Dispersed, fragmentary human bone was identified during the excavations within the Churchyard of St Peter's Church. Whilst none was identified as being associated with an *in situ* burial or within a specific location, it was noted that human bone appeared to become more concentrated within the vicinity of established trees.

Identified bone comprised femur, tibia, fibula and other long bone fragments; scapula, vertebrae and rib; along with hand/foot phalanges and two fragments of skull vault (Table 1). All bone was fragmentary, apart from smaller bones such as from the hands and feet.

In line with the Church of England Faculty, the location of the remains was recorded and the bones were reinterred on site.

Context	Human bone (quantity)
1	Vertebrae (1) Long bone (2)
2	Tibia (3) Femur (1) Long bone (5) Scapula (1) Rib (3) Hand/foot phalanges (1) Skull vault (2)
5	Long bone (2) Rib (1)
7	Tibia (1) Fibula (1)
8	Long bone (2) Vertebrae (1)

Table 1: Human bone quantity by context

3.3 Augustinian Priory Precinct

Excavations on the grass verge to the south of the car park, between Z007 and Z008 measured c.43m in length (Figure 2). Two access chambers were also installed at the eastern end; they were 0.6m by 0.4m. The excavations revealed a c.0.2m-thick brown-grey silt topsoil (9), which sealed a c.0.25m-thick brown-grey silt subsoil (10). Below this, a layer of construction levelling/landscaping (11) was observed along the length of the trench; it consisted of grey-brown silt-clay with inclusions of modern ceramic building material (CBM), tarmac and chalk. It is probably modern in date, most likely associated with the construction of the car park, directly to the north. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were revealed during the monitoring within this area.

No trench excavations took place to the west of lighting column Z008 as previously installed cable ducting was still useable.



3.4 Car Park, Church Close and Associated Green Space

West and north-west of the Priory Church of St Peter and its churchyard, three lengths of cable ducting trench were excavated within the area of the car park, Church Close and grass verges (Figure 2). These followed the planned route of the cabling work between lighting columns Z001–Z002 and Z013–Z015, and those between Z007, Z008, Z012 and Z013. The trenching between Z013 and Z015 was located on the tarmac car park, with all other trenching on the grass verges and a small amount of road.

The cable trench between lighting column Z001 and Z002, east of Church Close, measured *c.*21m and extended a further *c.*4.5m east and *c.*11.5m south of Z002. It included the installation of a mini feeder pillar to the east of lighting column Z002 (Figure 2). The cable trench was connected to cabling within the closed churchyard at its southern end. This length of trench revealed a grey-brown silt topsoil (13) above a grey-brown silt subsoil (14). It in turn sealed a brown-grey clay-silt make-up layer (15) with tarmac and CBM fragments, most probably modern landscaping of the verges around the road and car park. The excavations at the entrance to the churchyard revealed foundation stones for the churchyard wall; they appeared to be neatly worked Totternhoe stone (clunch) (Figure 4). The stones were probably reused and may have potentially derived from the original priory buildings.

The trench on grass verging to the west of Church Close between Z007 and Z013 measured *c.*34m long, with a further *c.*10m on tarmac across the entrance to the car park joining it to the northern access chamber within the Augustinian Priory Precinct. There was one lighting column in this stretch, and four access chambers were installed; they were 0.6m by 0.4m. The trench revealed deposits of grey-brown silt topsoil (16), and a brown-grey clay-silt make-up layer (17) with tarmac and CBM fragments, suggesting the landscaping of the verges was contemporary. No natural geology or archaeological features were observed.

The trench between lighting columns Z013 and Z015 was located fully on tarmacked car park and during these excavations only modern car park construction layers were encountered.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological monitoring of cable duct trenching, access chambers and lighting columns was focussed on the south side of Church Road within the churchyard of the Priory Church of St Peter, the Augustinian Priory Precinct and the car park and associated verges to the west of the churchyard. Due to the location of these works, there was a high potential of revealing archaeological remains from the Roman core of Dunstable, the Augustinian Priory and the medieval and post-medieval settlement.

Within the churchyard, the excavations were of such a limited depth that the only archaeological features identified were the top of two probable grave cuts. As no dating evidence was recovered, the age of the graves was not determined, but it is likely that they are no more than *c.*250 years old. Additionally, a number of disarticulated human skeletal remains were identified. Fragments of gravestones below the current ground level were identified and left *in situ*. The gravestones did not appear to be associated with any visible graves but this may have been due to the shallow depth of the trenches. There is potential that archaeological remains pertaining to both the Roman, medieval and post-medieval settlements within Dunstable survive below the monitored groundworks.

The trenches within the grass verges of the car park revealed landscaping and overburden layers to a depth of *c.*0.5m. This was similar to other excavations in the priory precinct (Warren, 1994). Again, there is the potential that archaeological remains survive below the excavated depth.

No excavations within the car park itself revealed more than modern construction layers.

Whilst the monitoring revealed no archaeological remains relating to the Roman, medieval or post-medieval settlement south-east of the crossroads of Watling street and Church Road/West Street and within the churchyard, there is potential that archaeological remains survive below the monitored area.

This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website (OASIS ref. no.: albionar1-244753) and the project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture (accession no. LUTNM 2020/8).



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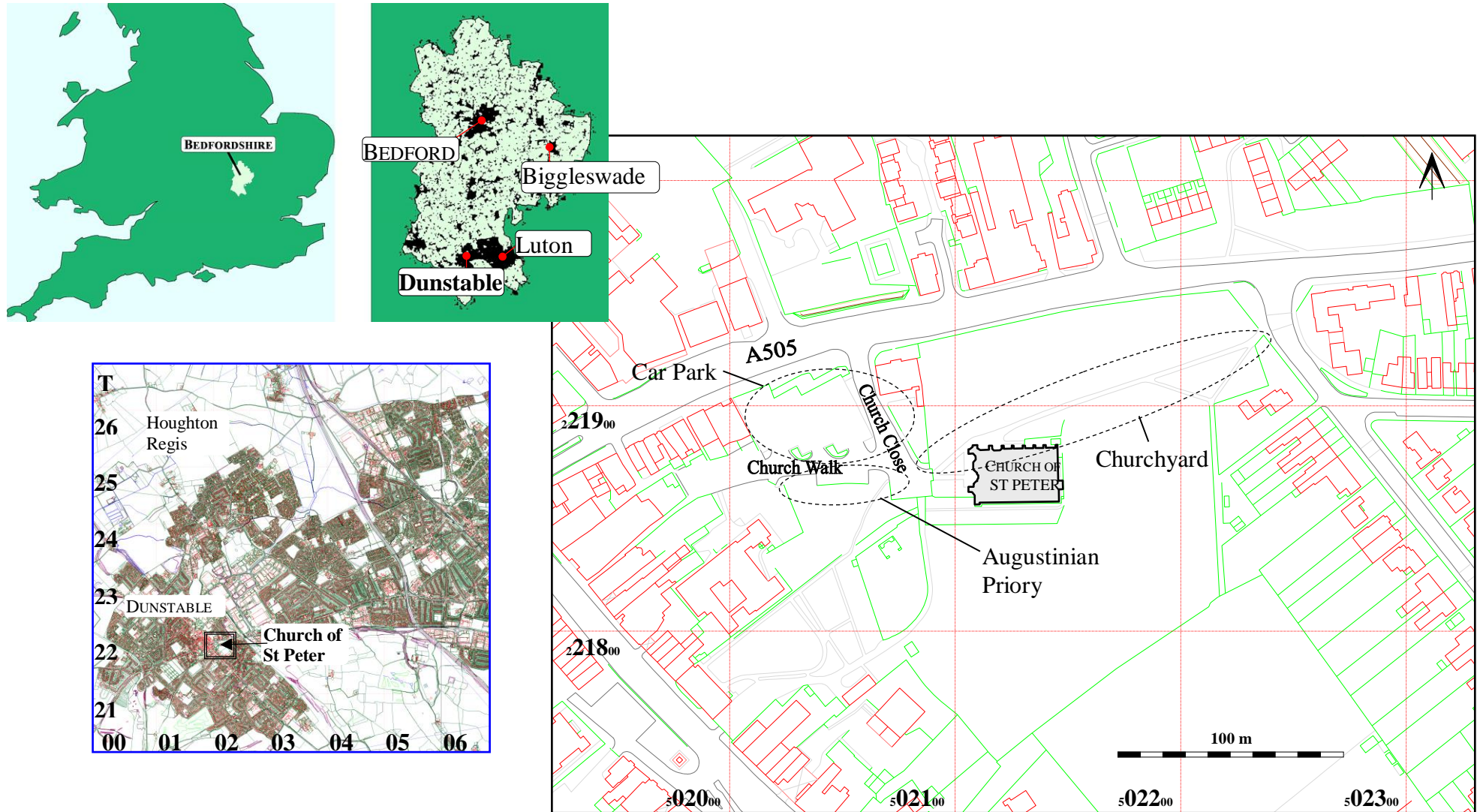


Figure 1: Site location plan

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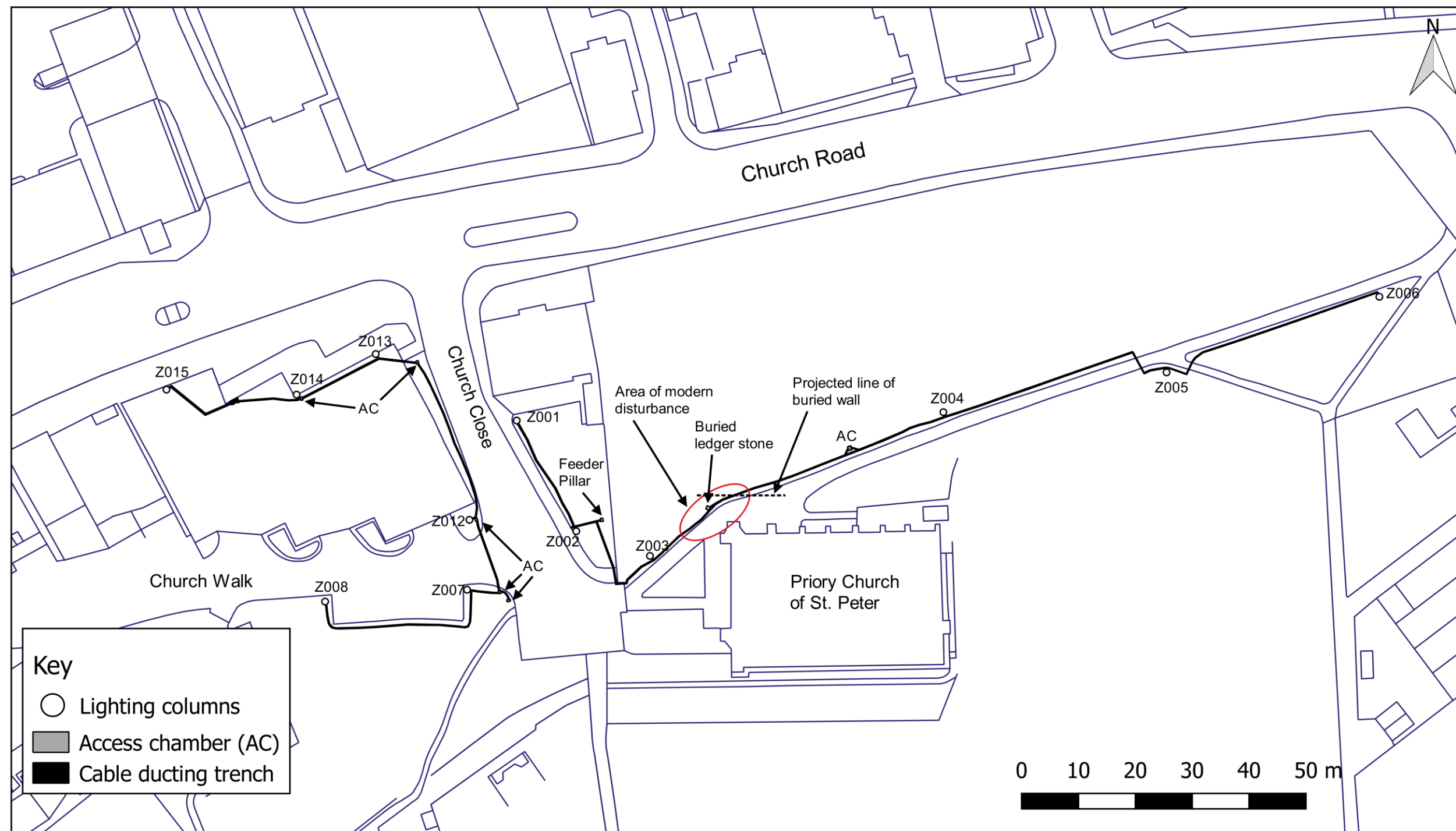
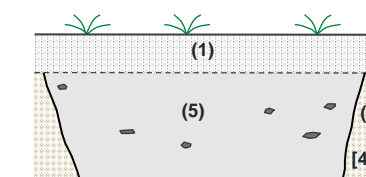
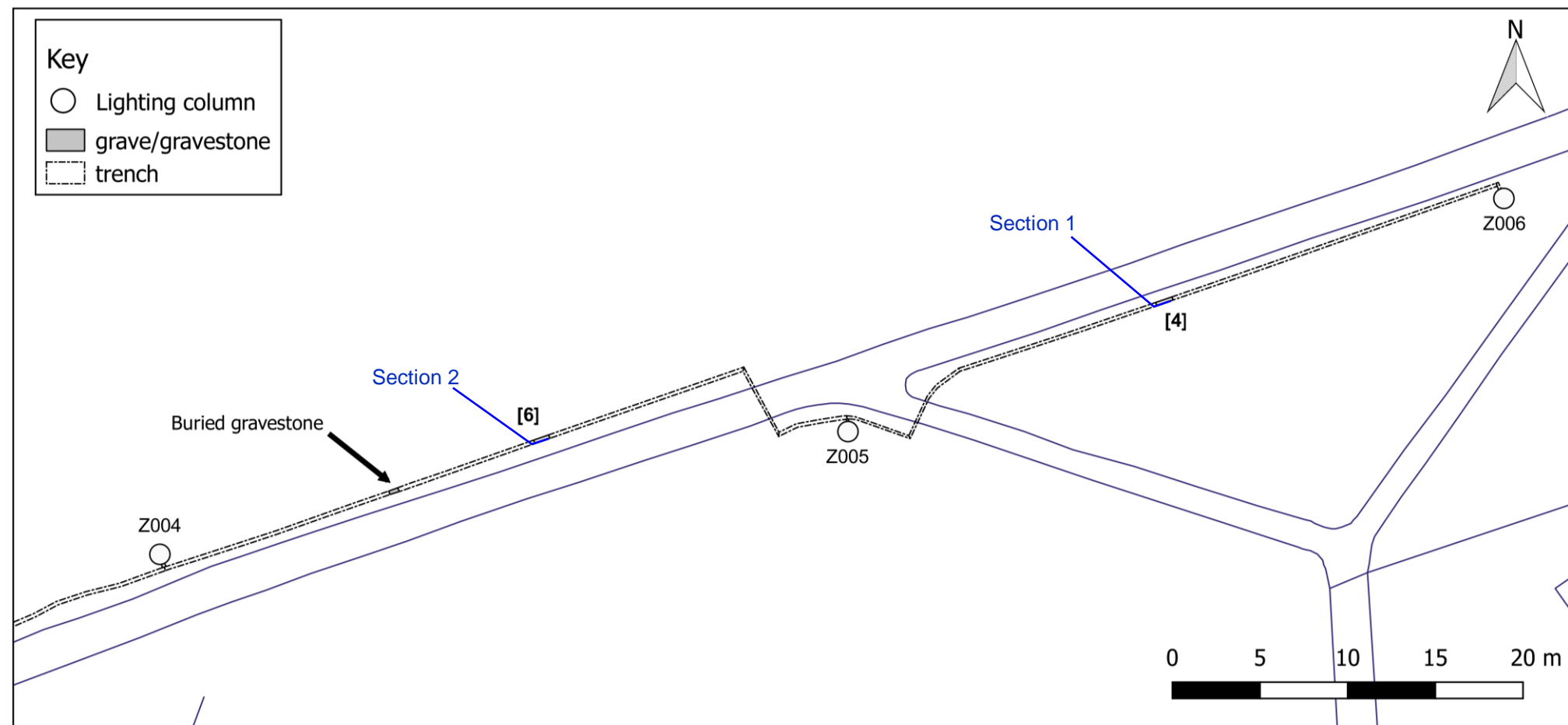
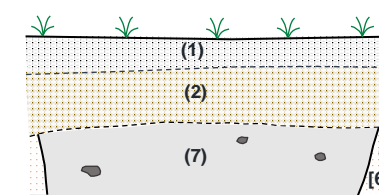


Figure 2: Cable ducting trench and lighting column locations

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Section 1



Section 2



Grave [4] looking south-east (1m scale)



Grave [6] looking south-east (1m scale)

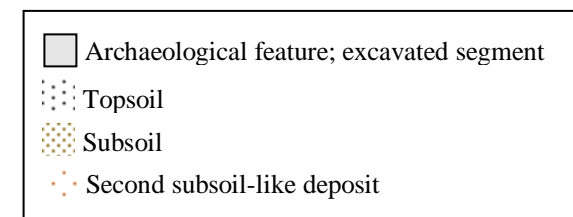


Figure 3: Grave locations and sections

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Example section east of Z002, looking south-east (1m scale)



Example trench through churchyard south-west of Z004, looking south-west (1m scale)



Example section in Augustinian Priory, looking south (1m scale)



Worked foundation stones at churchyard entrance (0.4m scale)

Figure 4: Selected photographs



Albion
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