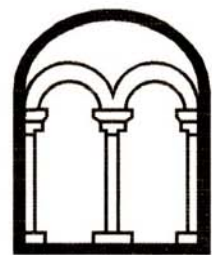


URSULA TAYLOR LOWER SCHOOL  
HIGH STREET  
CLAPHAM  
BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

**Albion**  
archaeology



**URSULA TAYLOR LOWER SCHOOL  
HIGH STREET  
CLAPHAM  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

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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 Geoff Saunders (Bedford Borough Council Archaeologist). The fieldwork was undertaken by Kathy Pilkinton (Archaeological Supervisor) and Allan King (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Kathy Pilkinton. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).*

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| 1.0            | 21/09/2016        | n/a                        |

## Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BLARS  | Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service |
| BBC    | Bedford Borough Council                             |
| BBC AT | Bedford Borough Council Archaeology Team            |
| CIfA   | Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists       |
| HER    | Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Record |
| WSI    | Written Scheme of Investigation                     |



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Bedford Borough Council submitted a planning application (16/00963/DC3) for the demolition of a temporary two-classroom unit and the provision of a new two-storey, six-classroom building in a different location at Ursula Taylor Lower School, High Street, Clapham, Bedfordshire.*

*The school is located on the site of the medieval Clapham Manor and adjacent to the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury which has Saxon origins. Previous archaeological investigations within the school grounds and to the north of the school found substantial medieval remains, dating from the 12th century onwards, as well as Iron Age remains.*

*For this reason the Bedford Borough Council Archaeology Team advised that a programme of archaeological work should be carried out in advance of construction.*

*Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the trial trenching, which took place on 25th August 2016. It comprised the excavation of one trench, measuring 22m x 1.8m, positioned diagonally across the footprint of the proposed building.*

*The trial trench revealed layers associated with car park construction directly above natural clay deposits. The small amount of ground outside the limit of the existing car park retained topsoil and a subsoil that appeared largely undisturbed.*

*Although the area of the car park had been previously stripped down to natural deposits, there was not a large amount of truncation compared to the undisturbed deposits at either end of the trench. This suggests that there was the potential for any substantial archaeological remains to survive.*

*However, trenching within the footprint of the proposed building revealed no archaeological remains.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 **Project Background**

Bedford Borough Council submitted a planning application (16/00963/DC3) for the demolition of a temporary two-classroom unit and the provision of a new two-storey, six-classroom building in a different location at Ursula Taylor Lower School, High Street, Clapham, Bedfordshire, MK41 6EG.

A heritage statement was submitted as part of the planning application, assessing the impact of the proposed development in terms of its surrounding built heritage environment (Scape Group Ltd 2016).

The school is located on the site of the medieval Clapham Manor and adjacent to the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury, which has Saxon origins. Previous archaeological investigations within the school grounds and to the north of the school found substantial medieval remains, dating from the 12th century onwards, as well as Iron Age remains.

For this reason the Bedford Borough Council Archaeology Team (BBC AT) advised that a programme of archaeological work should be carried out in advance of construction. This is in accordance with *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* (March 2012).

The first stage of this programme of work is an archaeological field evaluation, comprising the excavation of a trench across the footprint of the new building.

### 1.2 **Site Location and Description**

Clapham is a village located *c.* 2.5 miles to the north-east of the centre of Bedford on the banks of the River Great Ouse. Ursula Taylor Lower School lies in between residential development on the northern side of Clapham High Street (Figure 1). The Church of St Thomas of Canterbury lies adjacent to the school in the north-east and the field and farm buildings of Church Farm lie to its north.

Clapham lies on low, level ground in the valley of the Great Ouse adjacent to the river. The school site is at a height of *c.* 35m OD and is centred on grid reference TL 0328 5246. The underlying geology comprises Stoke Goldington Member And Felmersham Member Sand And Gravel (formed in the local environment previously dominated by rivers) over Kellaways Formation - Sandstone, Siltstone And Mudstone bedrock.

### 1.3 **Archaeological Background**

Clapham is a settlement with Saxon origins as it is first mentioned in historical documents in the 10th century when Aethelstan Mannesunu gave Clapham to his wife in dower with reversion to Ramsey Abbey. Thereafter, it changed hands several times and at the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 was in the possession of Miles Crispin (Page 1912).

The Grade I listed Church of St Thomas of Canterbury (NHLE 1114251), which lies to the immediate north-east of the school, has a Saxon tower with a Norman



top storey. The nave arcades date to the late 13th century but the church was extensively restored in 1862. The church provides the focus for the medieval settlement of Clapham (HER 17067).

The old manor house of Clapham Manor (HER 3879) stood close to the west side of the church tower. Excavations from 1973 to 1975 found substantial remains of buildings dating to the 12th century onwards. The earliest phase consisted of a timber hall that was rebuilt in stone in the mid-13th century. Other buildings were constructed at this date, including a large dovecote that seems to have collapsed suddenly due to waterlogging of the ground and erosion of the building stone.

The house was extended during the 14th century but part was destroyed by fire. The whole house was again altered *c.* 1500 when the hall was partly demolished and rebuilt with additional rooms. A large cellar was added next to the kitchen, and new cobbled floors laid. The Manor was sold to Richard Taylor in 1627 and remained in the Taylor family until 1708 when the heiress of the family married Lord Ashburnham. The house survived until *c.* 1730, when it seems to have lost status and was partly demolished and rebuilt. This house was demolished in 1871.

The school site was excavated in 1987, prior to development work, and again in 1994 (HER 15607). The aims of the investigation were to record the site of the manor house and the adjacent later 18th-century house. When the site was excavated it produced evidence from the Mesolithic through to the medieval period.

The earliest activity was represented by three irregular, Mesolithic pits containing flintwork. Other finds of this date were found unstratified across the site and included a range of cutting flakes.

The late Iron Age was represented by a number of small rectangular fields, defined by NW-SE running enclosure ditches. The enclosures included ones with post-built entries and others which featured shallow gullies as opposed to ditches. To the south-west a roundhouse was present. The boundary ditches were probably later redefined, as seen by re-cutting of the ditches and post holes cut into the ditch silts. A small quantity of Roman artefacts may indicate that settlement continued into the Roman period.

The medieval activity was split over two locations. The earliest evidence was found adjacent to the manorial range where a number of structural remains were recovered; they included a length of wall above a rubbish pit. Within this area drainage gullies and a cobbled surface bounded by three post holes were also present. In the area further west another cobbled surface and demolition debris was recovered; there was also evidence for gravel quarrying.

Further excavation in 1994 found one ditch that seemed to relate to the Iron Age enclosure ditches. Several medieval boundary ditches of two phases were found to the south of the site. They were comparable in date to the early phases of manorial activity recorded in earlier excavations. There was also evidence for



considerable ground disturbance to the north of the site, caused by pre-development works prior to any archaeological investigations.

Geophysical survey, fieldwalking and trial trenching to the immediate north of the school, on land north of Church Farm, recorded evidence for settlement activity of Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval date. Most of the features in the southern part of the site, close to the school, were medieval (HER 16471, HER 16153, EBD311). Metal detecting at Church Farm also produced a thin bronze spoon and two bronze Roman coins (HER 15953).

Church Farm, to the north of the school, is 19th-century in date (HER 9106). The farm buildings comprise a rear barn with three forward-projecting cattle sheds.

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The principal purpose of the evaluation was to gather information on possible sub-surface archaeological heritage assets within the PDA.

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 may 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 2016).

### 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)   |
| Bedford Museum     | <i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> (2010)  |
| CIfA               | <i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i> (2014)   |
|                    | <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2014)   |
|                    | <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</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) |

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession number BEDFM: 2016.43). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-255706) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

### 2.2 Trial Trenching

The trial trenching took place on 25th August 2016. It comprised the excavation of one trench, measuring 22m x 1.8m, positioned diagonally across the footprint of the proposed building.

The trench was opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All excavation and recording were 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

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#### 3.1 *Introduction*

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

#### 3.2 *Overburden and Geological Deposits*

Topsoil (100) comprised grey-brown clayey silt, c. 0.3m thick; it was only present at the ends of the trench, outside the limits of the current car park.

Subsoil (101) comprised mid brown-grey clayey silt, 0.2m thick. Fragments of concrete were present suggesting a small amount of surface disturbance during the previous works on site.

The larger part of the trench revealed construction layers associated with the existing car park (102–105). These were directly above undisturbed geological deposits, suggesting that the topsoil and subsoil had been removed during the construction of the car park.

Undisturbed geological deposits comprised mid red-brown silty clay (106).



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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The trial trench revealed layers associated with car park construction directly above natural clay deposits. The small amount of ground outside the limit of the existing car park retained topsoil and a subsoil that appeared largely undisturbed.

Although the area of the car park had been previously stripped down to geological deposits, there was not a large amount of truncation compared to the undisturbed deposits at either end of the trench. This suggests that there was the potential for any substantial archaeological remains to survive.

However, trenching within the footprint of the proposed building revealed no archaeological remains.



## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Page, W. 1912, 'Parishes: Clapham', in *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London, 1912), pp. 128-132. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol3/pp128-132> [accessed 28 June 2016].

Scape Group Ltd, 2016, *Proposed New Two Storey Six Classroom Provision At Ursula Taylor Lower School High Street, Clapham, Bedford, MK41 6EG: Heritage Statement*.



## 6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 22.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.75 m. Max: 0.8 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 30221: Northing: 47930)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 29228: Northing: 45925)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

| Context: | Type:           | Description:   | Excavated:                          | Finds Present:           |
|----------|-----------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 100      | Topsoil         | Friable dark grey brown clay silt Thickness: 0.31m   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 101      | Subsoil         | Friable mid brown grey clay silt moderate small-medium concrete Thickness: 0.2m                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 102      | Tarmac          | Thickness: 0.1m  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 103      | Foundation      | Friable dark grey brown clay silt frequent large concrete Thickness: 0.77m                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 104      | Levelling layer | Loose mid yellow brown sandy gravel Thickness: 0.15m   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 105      | Make up layer   | Loose light yellow grey sandy hardcore frequent small-medium CBM, frequent small-medium concrete Thickness: 0.4m | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 106      | Natural         | Firm mid red brown silty clay  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

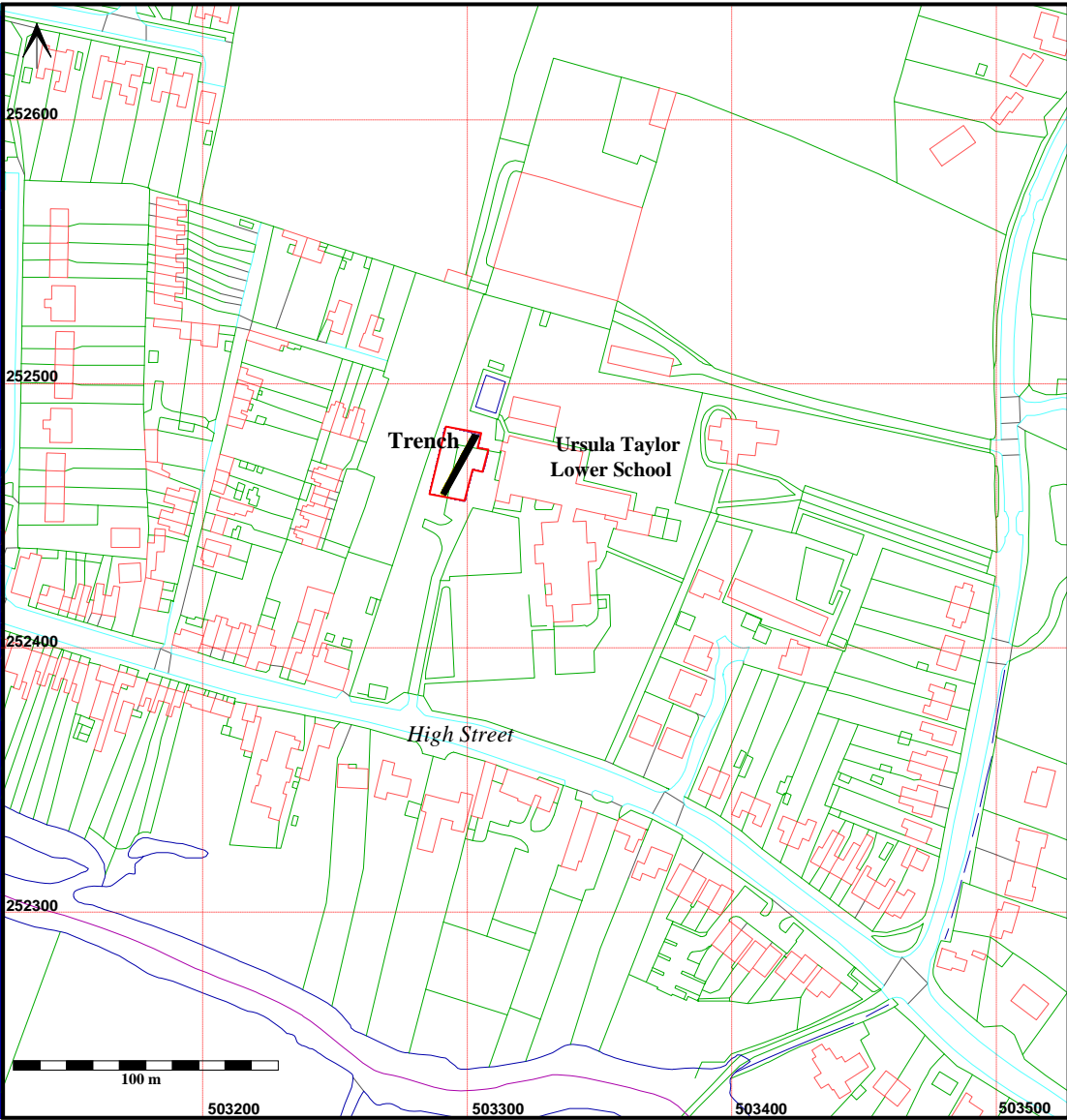
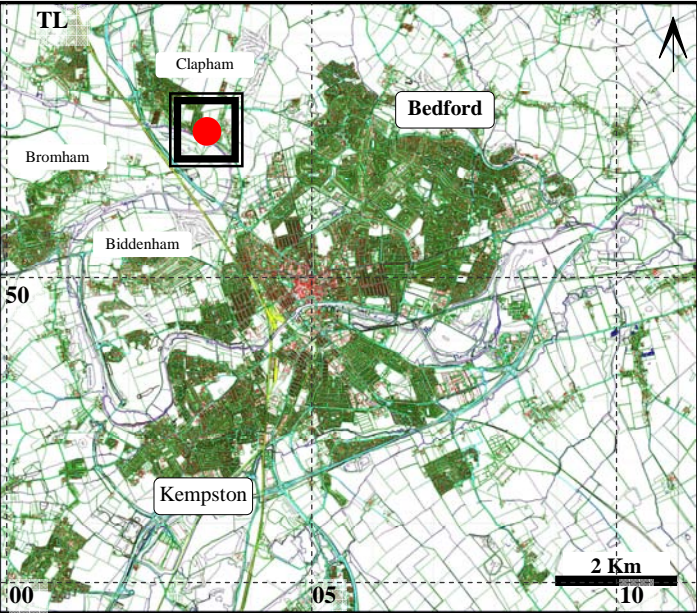
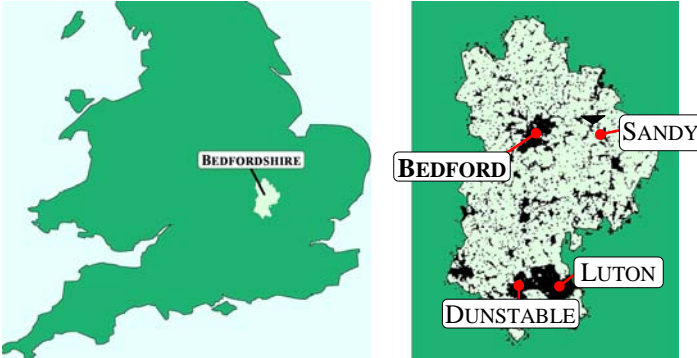
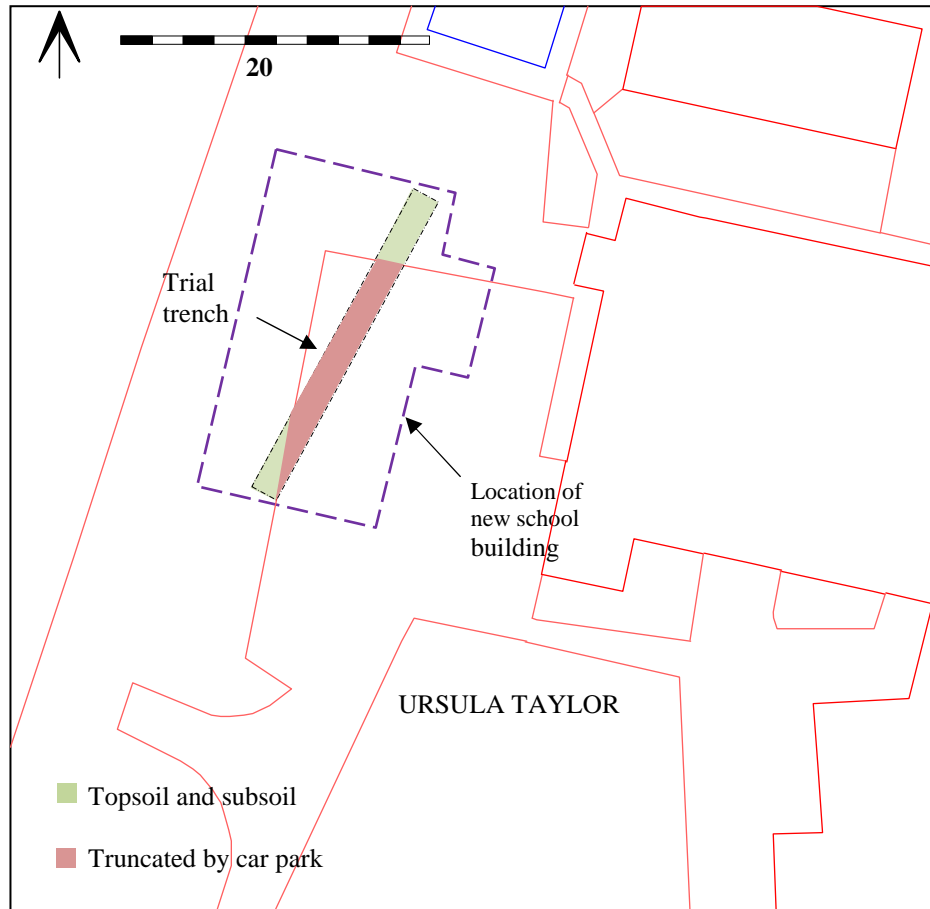


Figure 1: Site location

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Photograph showing trench from south (2m scale in background)



SE-facing section showing car park construction (2m scale)

**Figure 2: Trench plan and photographs**

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