

LAND AT 52 PARK LANE
BLUNHAM
BEDFORDSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



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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. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose 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). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

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Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the project, describing the site's location, its archaeological background and the aims of the archaeological work. Section 2 examines the archaeological and historical background to the project. The project methodology is summarised in Section 3, with the results of the archaeological works described in Section 4; Section 5 is the conclusion, whilst Section 6 is a bibliography. Detailed contextual data is contained in Section 7.

Key Terms

CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
DA	Development area
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (CB/15/03973/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of three new dwellings on land at 52 Park Lane, Blunham, Bedfordshire. The permission contained a condition requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by SDC (Anglia) Ltd to undertake an initial trial trench evaluation of the site.

The development area lies inside the inferred extent of the medieval settlement of Blunham and currently contains a post-medieval building (52 Park Lane), which is believed to date from the late 18th century.

Trench 1, at the west end of the site contained only modern features. The south-west part of the site had also been reduced in the 20th century to create a level terrace.

Trench 2, in the central part of site contained modern yard surfaces and make-up layer, a late 19th-century enclosure wall and two post-medieval pits with a limited artefact assemblage including one sherd of 17th/18th-century pottery.

Trench 3, at the rear of the existing house contained modern yard surfaces and make-up layers, above a cobbled yard surface and make-up above a post-medieval (c. 18th–19th century) garden soil layer.

Trench 4, in the north-east corner of the site, contained modern surfaces and make-up layers, a post-medieval soil layer and a possible well. The upper fills of the possible well contained fragments of plain roof tile and a few sherds of late medieval/early post-medieval pottery, suggesting that the feature went out of use in the 15th or 16th century.

The results of the investigation indicate limited potential for the survival of archaeological features pre-dating the later post-medieval and modern use of the site. The modern deposits and those associated with the 18th–19th-century use of the site are of very limited archaeological significance.

The possible well indicates some potential for the survival of deeper features cut into the underling geology, but the later activity is likely to have destroyed other, less substantial, contemporary features. Deposits dating from the late medieval/early post-medieval period could have some potential to address research objectives relating to the development of the village at this time, but any data-set is likely to be restricted by the relatively small investigation area available and also by the effects of later post-medieval and modern disturbance.

The significance of any archaeological impact by development of the central and west parts of the site is likely to be negligible. Depending on the nature of the foundations for the new dwellings on the Park Lane frontage, development there could have a moderate impact on archaeological deposits; the significance of this impact is likely to be slight



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Planning Background**

Planning permission (CB/15/03973/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of three new dwellings and related development, following demolition of existing buildings, dwelling and part boundary wall, on land at 52 Park Lane, Blunham, Bedfordshire, MK44 3NJ. The planning permission contained a pre-commencement condition (no. 6) requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation. The condition stated:

Condition 6

No demolition or development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation; that adopts a staged approach and includes post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: This condition is pre-commencement as a failure to secure appropriate archaeological investigation in advance of development would be contrary to paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that requires the recording and advancement of understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part). This condition accords with paragraph 141 of the NPPF; to record and advance the understanding of the significance of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development and to make the record of this work publicly available.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by SDC (Anglia) Ltd to prepare a written scheme of investigation (WSI) and to carry out a trial trench evaluation of the site. This report presents the results of the evaluation. The purpose of the report is to present the results of the evaluation and to provide sufficient information to enable the local planning authority to determine whether any additional stages of archaeological investigation are required.

1.2 **Site Location and Description**

The development area (DA) lies in the southern part of the village of Blunham, within Central Bedfordshire. The A1 (Great North Road) is situated 1km to the east, with the town of Sandy c. 2.5km to the south-east. The county town of Bedford lies c. 10km to the west. The DA is situated on the eastern arm of Park Lane, which forms a U-shaped loop, close to the parish church of St James or St Edmund (HER 1024).

The rectangular development plot covers an area of approximately 800m². The eastern side lies on the Park Lane frontage. The other sides are bordered by modern residential properties: Manor Court to the north; 50 Park Lane to the south; and 24 Park Lane to the west.



The built environment to the north, south and west of the DA, within the loop formed by Park Lane, is a relatively high-density residential area. The buildings comprise a mixture of late 20th-century properties interspersed with earlier buildings, with those immediately adjacent to the DA being modern. The area on the opposite side of Park Lane to the DA contains the medieval parish church and a former rectory.

Blunham lies in the valley of the River Ivel, with the river running approximately 150m to the east of the DA. The underlying bedrock consists of Peterborough Member mudstone. Superficial geological deposits below most of the village consist of river terrace gravels, clay, silt and sand, but also Oadby Member Diamicton¹. The DA lies on the eastern slope of a slight north-south ridge formed by a line of glacial till. The lowest part of the DA at the street frontage lies at height of 22.3m OD. The site is centred on grid reference TL 15215 51075.

1.3 Project Objectives

1.3.1 Primary objectives

The primary objective of the archaeological evaluation was to determine and understand the nature, function, character and significance of any archaeological remains in their cultural and environmental setting.

To achieve the above, the data collected during the fieldwork sought to determine the following:

- The date, nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the DA;
- The relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- The local environmental conditions (through the recovery of paleo-environmental remains).

1.3.2 Research objectives

The DA had the potential to address research themes identified in the local and regional research frameworks in relation to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. It was anticipated that the following topics could be relevant.

No archaeological remains of Saxon date have so far been uncovered in Blunham, but the Domesday entry for the manor implies that it could at least have late Saxon origins. Heritage assets of Saxon date are relatively scarce and are potentially significant in relation to the origins of the medieval settlement. Changes in the pattern of settlement during the middle Saxon period have been identified as a research topic (Oake 2007, 13). If any remains of this date were found, they might be of local to regional significance depending on their exact nature.

For the medieval period the research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements have been investigated in the county. The

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC 2017



potential of existing historic villages to reveal information on settlement structure and origin is high (Oake 2007, 14).

Archaeological evidence of the post-medieval period in Bedfordshire has been largely neglected in favour of earlier periods (Edgeworth 2007, 119–21). The DA, however, has the potential to address research objectives concerning post-medieval rural settlement patterns, in particular the development and layout of the village since the medieval period (Edgeworth 2007, 121–3). Also relevant to Bedfordshire is any evidence concerning rural industry and the traces it has left in the archaeological record (*ibid*, 119–21).

The specific objectives of the archaeological investigations were to determine:

- if there was any evidence for Saxon occupation on the DA;
- if there was any evidence for the layout, development and origins of the medieval village (Oake 2007, 14);
- if there was any evidence for the layout and development of the post-medieval village (Edgeworth 2007, 121–3);
- If there was any below-ground evidence relating to the post-medieval use of the DA (Edgeworth 2007, 119–23).

Should the investigation produce evidence relevant to other objectives identified in the published research frameworks, they would be added to the objectives during the course of the project.



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological and historical background to the development area has previously been examined in a heritage statement (Albion 2015). In order to put the results of the evaluation into context data from the heritage statement is reproduced below.

2.1 *Historical Map Data*

2.1.1 **1719: The Manor of Blunham (Figure 2)**

This map shows no detail in the inferred location of the development area (DA). It does, however, have the appearance of a schematic map rather than an accurate topographic survey. Two isolated buildings shown on the west side of the present Park Lane indicate occupation in the general vicinity of the DA. A large enclosed homestead plot to the north of the DA appears to correspond to the plot represented by Manor Court and 54 Park Lane (HER802). The church (HER1024) and the original Blunham rectory (HER9779) are illustrated on the east side of Park Lane.

2.1.2 **1799: Enclosure Map (Figure 3)**

This map (ref. L33/5) is an 1848 copy of the original 1799 enclosure map (ref. MA10). The map shows the current shape of Park Lane and appears to be a fairly accurate topographical representation.

It shows a plot which corresponds closely to the size, shape and position of the DA. The plot is labelled with the number 20. A building is shown on the street frontage in a position which corresponds to the location of the present house (HER3231).

The remainder of the area enclosed by the U-shaped loop of Park Lane is shown divided into plots with buildings on the street frontage of most. The land to the east and west of the Park Lane loop shows evidence of further subdivision. In the plot attached to the rectory (HER9779) the map shows long ranges of buildings along the frontage and sides of the plot, presumably representing stables and barns belonging to the rectory. To the south of Park Lane the map shows dashed lines for paths or subdivisions within the gardens attached to Blunham House (HER7044).

2.1.3 **1884: 25-inch Ordnance Survey (Figure 4)**

This map was surveyed in 1882. It is the first highly detailed, topographically accurate map.

In the DA the map shows the building on the street frontage with a range extending along the southern side of the plot from the rear of the house to form an L-shape. Buildings along the northern side of the DA form a detached range of outbuildings. A single symbol for a tree in the west end of the DA suggests its use as a garden or orchard.



In the area immediately north of the DA subdivisions shown on the previous map have been removed to create a larger plot now labelled as the “Manor House”. The plots lying to the south of the DA appear to have been reorganised and now show a subdivided building, probably representing very small cottages. A small building in the road, labelled as “Fire Engine House” (HER9778), has a small building attached to its western end, presumably representing the village cage or lockup (HER5571) prior to its relocation.

To the east of the DA, the original rectory (HER9779) has been replaced by the gothic style building (HER2485), constructed in 1873, which is now called the Old Rectory. The Rectory is shown surrounded by a landscaped garden with trees. The churchyard (HER8864) is shown largely as it remains today with trees along its western boundary and coniferous trees in the central area, with the mausoleum (HER12795) built at its south-east corner in 1805.

2.1.4 1901: 25-inch Ordnance Survey (Figure 5)

The map shows little change within the DA from the previous edition. The house and outbuildings along the south side of the plot appear unchanged. Some of the outbuildings shown on the north side of the plot have been removed and additional internal boundaries are shown.

In the wider area very little change is noticeable compared to the map of 1884

2.1.5 1926: 25-inch Ordnance Survey (Figure 6)

There are some changes to the DA, with the addition of further outbuildings along the north side of the plot and another building attached to the north side of the buildings along the southern boundary. The western end of the plot is shown as an open area in both 1901 and 1926.

The wider area shows relatively little change. Some additional boundaries and buildings are shown in the plot to the north of the DA. The plot that borders the west end of the DA has been subdivided by this time and additional houses constructed in its western half.

2.2 Archaeological Background

2.2.1 Prehistoric (before AD 43)

Prehistoric stone artefacts have been recovered from a gravel pit located 250m to the south-west of the DA. These comprise two hand-axes and two flint flakes (HER598) dated to the Palaeolithic period and a polished flint axe-head (HER14669) from the Neolithic period.

An archaeological investigation (EBD821) on land off Barford Road, 400m west of the DA, found an isolated gully which contained two sherds of Iron Age pottery (HER7749).

2.2.1 Roman (AD 43 to c. AD 400)

The suggested line of a Roman road (HER728) from Sandy to Sharnbrook was identified by the Viatores group (Viatores road no. 225). It lies 470m south-west



of the DA. The course of the road is largely conjectural, being based on modern roads, green lanes and hedgerows.

2.2.1 Anglo-Saxon (AD 400–1066)

A manor is recorded at Blunham in the Domesday Survey of 1068, suggesting Saxon origins for the village; but no finds dating from this period have been recorded in the vicinity of the DA.

2.2.2 Medieval (1066–1550)

At Domesday, the land which became the manor of Blunham was held by Baldwin, Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, who held 4 hides and 1 virgate of the King and a half-hide of the Countess Judith. A grant in 1314 allowed a Wednesday market and an annual three-day fair, but there is no further evidence for these after the 14th century. A second manor called Blunham Manor was in existence by the 13th century. The last record of it is in 1534 when it was held by St John's College, Cambridge (Page 1912, 228–33).

The DA is located within the southern part of the inferred extent of the medieval village of Blunham (HER17152). The medieval village appears to have consisted of a linear settlement along what is now the High Street with an expanded section at the south around the church. The Grade I listed parish church of St James or St Edmund (HER1024), is situated just over 50m east-north-east of the DA. The earliest parts of the building consist of the base of the tower (*c.* 1100) and chancel (13th century). The former brotherhood house at 54 Park Lane (HER802), located 40m to the north of the DA, is dated to the 16th century but may have origins in the late medieval period. Documentary evidence indicates the probable location of a medieval manor house (HER9794) on an island adjacent to the River Ivel, 200m east-north-east of the PDA.

2.2.3 Post-medieval (1550–1900)

The DA contains a one-and-a-half storey house (HER3231) dating from the 18th century. This was formerly Grade II listed but has been much altered and has been de-listed. The enclosure map of 1799 shows a building that corresponds to the present house along with outbuildings along the north and south sides of the plot (Figure 3).

The historic core of the village on the High Street and Park Lane contains a number of Grade II listed buildings. These range in date from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The HER records a number of undesignated post-medieval buildings in the vicinity, as well as the location of demolished buildings and structures dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries.

A map of 1719 shows houses along the eastern arm of Park Lane and a map of 1799 shows a house and associated homestead plot that corresponds to the present position and size of the DA.



3. METHOD STATEMENT

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below and detailed in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2016).

3.1 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 edn, 2001).
• 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 (formerly English Heritage)	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation. 2nd ed.</i> (2011)
• Bedford Museum	<i>Procedure for Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire. Version 2.8</i> (2010).

3.2 Trial Trenching

Four trial trenches, each measuring approximately 5m long by 2m wide were excavated. Minor variations from trench positions proposed in the WSI were necessary to avoid possible buried services and fixed surface obstacles.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff.

The fieldwork was undertaken between 25th and 27th January 2017. The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist monitored the investigation on 26th January 2017.



4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the following sections, contexts in brackets refer to deposits recorded on site. Each trench was allocated a block of numbers commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 etc. Cut features are represented with square brackets, e.g. [208], a pit in Trench 2; whereas deposits or layers are in curved brackets, e.g. (211) in the same trench. Figure 1 shows the locations of the trenches within the DA. Figure 7 is an all-features plan with sections. Selected photographs of the trenches are shown in Images 1–9.

The results are summarised below, integrating finds information, with details of the contexts in Appendix 1.

4.2 Modern Deposits

Modern deposits in all four trenches represent evidence of activity on the site during the 20th century.

4.2.1 Modern buildings

Trench 1 was excavated within the footprint of a recently demolished 20th-century timber-framed shed. The floor of the shed was on two levels and the north side of the evaluation trench was located on the change in level, providing a ready-made section through the floor construction of the building and the underlying geology (Figure 7, Section 1 and Images 1 and 2). Below the north-east part of the building, the ground had been raised by the addition of a layer (103) of re-deposited geological strata or subsoil. Evidence relating to the structure comprised the concrete floor (100) and a posthole [101]. The posthole was one in a row of postholes, located at the break in floor level, which formerly held internal roof supports.

4.2.2 Modern yard surfaces

The uppermost layers observed in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 consisted of tarmac or concrete surfaces above various construction layers to raise the ground. In Trench 2 the concrete yard surface (200) lay above gravelly deposits and tarmac layers (201). In Trench 3 the concrete surface (300) lay above banded made-ground (301), comprising layers of gravel. In Trench 4 the uppermost surface (400) consisted of tarmac on similar gravelly made-ground, above an earlier surface (401) consisting of tarmac above layers of crushed brick rubble, crushed stone and sand.

4.2.3 Modern garden soils

In Trenches 1 and 2, dark grey soil layers (104) and (202) represent the latest garden cultivation layer, which was sealed by the construction of the modern yard surfaces.

4.2.4 Interpretation of modern deposits

The outbuildings and yard surfaces were associated with the modern commercial use of the site. The daughter of the previous owner visited the site during the



investigation; she stated that her father had operated lorries from the site, which explains the presence of the substantial concrete yard surfaces.

4.3 Post-Medieval Deposits

The deposits assigned to this period and described below provide evidence for the use of the site during the 18th and 19th centuries.

4.3.1 Brick walls

Two brick walls were found in Trench 2 (Figure 7 and Image 3). Wall (212) was L-shaped in plan, extending for at least 5m from east to west before turning southwards for 1.5m. It was constructed from plain red bricks (dimensions 230mm x 110mm x 60mm) bonded with cream-coloured mortar. Another, shorter section of wall (213) was only partially exposed. It was a half-brick wall (i.e. 110mm wide) made from similar bricks to wall (212), which it appeared to abut at its north end.

Wall (212) appears to correspond to an L-shaped enclosure wall shown on the first edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, which was surveyed in 1882 and published in 1884 (Figure 4). It appears likely from the arrangement shown on the map that this wall enclosed a small stockyard attached to an outbuilding, located against the southern boundary of the property. Later maps show that the enclosure had been modified with the addition of internal walls by 1901 and that by 1926 the east-west aligned wall had been removed. The walls were overlain by the modern garden soil layer (202), indicating that they had been demolished in the modern period.

4.3.2 Posthole

A single posthole [310] in Trench 3 was recorded in plan (Figure 7). It was square, measuring 300mm across. It was filled with dark grey-black sandy silt (311), similar to the dark soil layer (305) found in the lower part of this trench (see below).

4.3.3 Pits

Trench 2 contained two intercutting pits [206] and [208], located in the eastern half of the trench (Figure 7, Section 2 and Image 4).

Pit [206] was the later feature, clearly cutting the other pit in plan. It was rectangular with straight, vertical sides and a flat base. Its fill (207) comprised mixed yellow-brown silty sand, probably re-deposited geological material, and smaller amounts of grey silt. This deposit contained a fragment of ceramic roof tile (6g) and a piece of pale green late medieval/post-medieval window glass (5g). The character of the fill suggests that it was deliberate infilling.

Pit [208] was partially uncovered at the south side of the trench. It was rounded in plan, with a concave profile in section (Figure 7, Section 2). The pit contained two fills comprising a dark grey upper deposit (209) and a light yellow primary fill (210) consisting of silty sand, suggesting it was formed by rapid silting. The upper fill (209) yielded a flat ceramic roof tile fragment (32g) and a small piece of coal (1g). The lower fill (210) contained a 17th/18th-century glazed earthenware



pottery sherd (4g: fabric type P01²) and a post-medieval window glass fragment (1g).

4.3.4 Cobbled yard and associated made-ground layers

A well-made cobbled surface (302) was found in Trench 3, directly below modern made-ground deposits (Figure 7, Section 3 and Image 6). The cobbled surface was constructed from a single layer of closely packed pebbles. Layers of blue-grey (303) and yellow-brown sandy silt beneath the pebbles appear to be associated deposits used to raise the ground level and form bedding for the cobbled surface.

In Trench 4, a layer of yellow-brown sandy gravel (402) occupied a similar stratigraphic position to the made-ground deposits (303) and (304) in Trench 3. This appears to be a layer used to raise the ground level to the north of the house.

No dating evidence was recovered from the cobbled surface or the underlying layers of made-ground. It is conjectured that the surface was constructed during the 19th century and continued in use into the 20th century, until it was buried beneath deposits associated with the modern yard. The cobbled surface formed a yard at the rear of the house.

4.3.5 Layers

In addition to the cobbled surface and associated made-ground, a number of other layers were identified. They were quite varied and were formed by different processes. In the following description the layers are organised by trench for ease of reference.

4.3.5.1 Trench 2

The south half of this trench was excavated down to the level of the undisturbed geological strata and a sequence of layers was exposed in section (Figure 7, Section 2 and Image 4). The uppermost of the post-medieval deposits (203) was a thin (90mm) dark grey, moderately stony layer which contained late 19th-century domestic debris, including a moulded octagonal Victorian poison bottle in cobalt blue glass, and eight earthenware and stoneware pottery sherds (110g). The latter derive from flatware and a teapot with Chinese-style 'Blue Willow' pattern design (fabric P45), and a brown-glazed earthenware teapot (fabric P100). Below that was a relatively thin layer (204) of clean, re-deposited sandy clay derived from the geological strata. Below that was a deeper layer (205) of dark grey clay silt.

4.3.5.2 Trench 3

The section recorded at the north end of the trench shows a dark soil layer (305) near the base of the trench (Figure 7, Section 3 and Images 5 and 6). This consisted of dark grey or black silt with a few fragments of tile and a piece of clay pipe stem noted in section. Below this was a layer (306) of mid grey-brown sandy gravel immediately above the undisturbed geological strata (307), which consisting of light yellow sand.

² Pottery fabrics defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Types Series.



A dark layer (309) was noted in plan, when machining the base of the trench; some of this material was left *in situ* at the south end of the trench, where this deposit filled a shallow depression in the top of the underlying geological strata (Image 5). Two sherds of 'Blue Willow' pattern transfer-printed earthenware (21g) were collected from this deposit. A discrete layer of brick rubble (308) was recorded in the south end of the trench, filling a hollow in layer (309). The rubble consisted of a mixture of red and Gault brick.

4.3.5.3 Trench 4

This trench contained a dark soil layer (403) immediately above the undisturbed geological strata (Figure 7, Section 4 and Image 8). This consisted of dark grey slightly sandy silt with occasional small stones and charcoal with some fragments of brick and bottle glass noted in section.

4.3.6 Interpretation of post-medieval deposits

The main features of note in the post-medieval deposits were as follows:

A brick wall in Trench 2 appears to form part of an enclosure, shown on late 19th-century maps and probably a small stockyard associated with an adjacent outbuilding.

Two intercutting pits were found below the late 19th-century layers in Trench 2. They produced a very sparse artefact assemblage, including a single sherd of 17th/18th-century pottery (fabric type P01).

At the rear of the house, in Trench 3, a cobbled yard surface represents the most recent post-medieval feature in this trench. The yard probably remained in use until the 20th century, when it was buried beneath deposits used to raise the ground level and concrete or tarmac yard surfaces. In the base of Trenches 3 and 4 a dark soil layer appears to be the post-medieval garden soil (c. 18th–19th century); it contained small amounts of domestic debris and charcoal flecks.

4.4 Late Medieval / Early Post-Medieval Deposits

The only deposits dated to this period were found in Trench 4.

Sub-circular feature [405] was revealed in the east half of Trench 4 and is interpreted as a possible well. It measured 1.67m by at least 1.26m. It was excavated to a depth of 0.8m below the base of the trench, but was not bottomed; the presence of a brick sewer pit over the eastern edge of the feature and the proximity to the trench edge prevented any deeper investigation.

The excavated portion revealed that the feature had steep, near-vertical sides. The uppermost fill (406) (mid-yellow-brown sandy silt) contained thirteen fragments of flat ceramic roof tile (560g), four pieces of animal limb bone and rib (49g), an oyster shell (8g) and four pottery sherds (57g) of late medieval reduced and oxidised ware (respectively fabrics E01 and E02). Some fragments of Greensand or Ironstone were visible in the top of the fill, in the centre of the feature.



The lowest excavated fill (407) was dark grey sandy silt, which contained a small quantity of indeterminate animal bone fragments (12g), oyster and mussel shell (1g), six pieces of ceramic roof tile (76g) and four pottery sherds (16g) of late medieval oxidised ware (fabrics E02 and E03). The small amount of pottery recovered from these fills dates from the late medieval/early post-medieval transition (15th–16th centuries).

There was no evidence that the edge of the feature had been lined, but the adjacent geological stratum was soft and friable and would have required revetting to prevent collapse of the edges, if the feature remained open for any period of time.

4.5 Geological Deposits

A subsoil layer (105 and 214) seen in Trenches 1 and 2 consisted of a homogenous red-brown silty sand.

The unmodified geological strata (106, 211, 307 and 404) seen in the base of the trenches consisted of sand. These form part of sand and gravel river terrace deposits that were laid down in the Quaternary Period.

4.6 Artefacts Summary

Tr.	Feature	Description	Fill	Date range	Finds summary
2	203	Layer	-	Modern	Pottery (110g); vessel glass (13g)
	206	Pit	207	Late medieval+	Ceramic roof tile (6g); window glass (5g)
	208	Pit	209	Late medieval+	Ceramic roof tile (32g); coal (1g)
	208	Pit	210	Post-medieval	Pottery (4g); window glass (1g)
3	309	Layer	-	Modern	Pottery (21g)
4	405	Possible well	406	Late medieval+	Pottery (57g); ceramic roof tile (560g); animal bone (49g); oyster shell (8g)
	405	Possible well	407	Late medieval+	Pottery (16g); ceramic roof tile (76g); animal bone (12g); oyster & mussel shell (1g)

Table 1: Finds Summary

4.7 Ecofacts Summary

A sample taken from the lower fill (407) of possible well [405] contained a small rooty flot, with frequent flecks and small lumps (often abraded) of charcoal. Also present were very sparse fragments of charred cereal grains and possible weed seeds. The sample also contained small fragments of animal bone, pottery, ceramic building material and shell. Fragments of small mammal bone suggest that the deposit may have been disturbed by intrusive burrows.

The lack of coal and modern finds suggest that the deposit was of some antiquity, although given the relatively open structure of the deposit, the presence of burrowing animals and the abraded nature of the charcoal lumps, the plant remains have little analytical potential. The charred grains are too few in number to have any significance, particularly given the potential for animal disturbance.



5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 *Summary of Results*

Trench 1, at the west end of the site, contained only modern features. The south-west part of the site had been reduced to form a level yard, removing the topsoil, subsoil and part of the underlying geological strata to a level of *c.* 23m OD. This will have significantly reduced the potential for archaeological survival in this part of the site

Trench 2, in the central part of site contained modern yard surfaces and made ground deposits above a late 19th-century enclosure wall. This in turn was cut into a layer of redeposited geological strata, sealing two post-medieval pits that produced a small artefact assemblage, including one sherd of 17th/18th-century pottery.

Trench 3, at the rear of house contained: modern yard surface and made-ground; above a cobbled yard surface and associated deposits; above a post-medieval (*c.* 18th–19th-century) garden soil.

Trench 4, in the north-east corner of the site contained: 20th-century surfaces and made-ground deposits; above a post-medieval soil layer; above a feature interpreted as a possible well. The upper fills of the feature contained fragments of plain roof tile and a few sherds of late medieval/early post-medieval pottery, suggesting that it went out of use in the 15th or 16th century.

Overall, the trenches generally contain a sequence consisting of modern yard and made-ground deposits associated with the latest commercial use of the site. Most of the archaeological deposits below the modern made-ground were associated with the 18th–19th-century occupation of the site. The earliest evidence was a possible well in the north-west corner of the site, which contained a small amount of late medieval/early post-medieval pottery.

5.2 *Significance of Results*

The modern deposits and those associated with the 18th–19th-century use of the site are of very limited archaeological significance.

The possible well with infill deposits dated to the late medieval/early post-medieval period (15th/16th centuries) is potentially of more significance. However, it is likely that later activity will have truncated any other, less substantial, contemporary features. Deposits of this date could have some potential to address research objectives relating to the development of the village, but the data-set is likely to be restricted by the small size of the site and the effects of later post-medieval and modern disturbance.

5.3 *Impact Assessment*

The development of the site for new housing involves the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of three new dwellings.



One of the new dwellings will be located in the west of the DA, in the area investigated in Trench 1. A large part of this area was truncated during the 20th century to form a level terrace. Consequently, the potential archaeological impact of development in this part of the site is of negligible significance.

The central section of the site, investigated in Trench 2, will form the access and car parking for the development. This area is covered by at least 650mm of modern overburden. Development in this part of the site is likely to have a relatively low impact on the 18th–19th-century deposits revealed in the trench; the significance of this impact is negligible.

Two dwellings will be constructed on the Park Lane frontage in the east of the site. This area is covered by up to 650mm of modern overburden and a post-medieval buried soil, with the undisturbed geological strata at a depth of *c.* 700–750mm below the present ground surface. One late medieval/early post-medieval feature was found in Trench 4, cut into the underlying geological strata and truncated above this level by later activity. Depending on the nature of the foundations for the new dwellings in this area, development could have a moderate impact on archaeological deposits; the significance of this impact is likely to be slight.



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7. TRENCH SUMMARY



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 5.10 m. Width: 2.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15201: Northing: 51075)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15206: Northing: 51076)

Reason: To test for archaeological remains in the planned house plot at the west of the development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Internal surface	Concrete floor of demolished timber outbuilding. Up to 0.07m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Posthole	Sub-square sides: near vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.25m, max depth 0.57m, max length 0.53m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Fill	Mid yellow brown silty sand occasional large CBM, occasional small stones Construction backfill of posthole with a brick to support the base of the post (now decayed leaving void). Brick not recovered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Levelling layer	Mid red brown silty sand moderate small stones Clean, minerogenic deposit. Probably redeposited subsoil, which has been used to level up floor of demolished timber outbuilding. Maximum 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Buried topsoil	Dark grey sandy silt occasional small stones Former topsoil layer, buried beneath construction of floor for timber outbuilding. Deposit 0.2m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Subsoil	Mid red brown silty sand moderate small stones Subsoil layer 0.15m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Natural	Light yellow brown sand occasional small stones Geological deposit, part of sand and gravel river terrace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 6.20 m. Width: 2.20 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.7 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15216; Northing: 51076)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15223; Northing: 51076)

Reason: To test for archaeological remains in the central part of the development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	External surface	External concrete yard surface, 0.1m thick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Levelling layer	Modern yard made-ground deposit containing layers of gravel and tarmac, 0.18m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried topsoil	Dark grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones Buried topsoil layer - probable garden cultivation layer, 0.18m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Refuse deposit	Dark grey brown clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones Soil layer containing abundant modern pottery (selection recovered) and vessel glass. Deposit up to 0.09m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
204	Redeposited natural	Light yellow sandy clay occasional small stones Redeposited geological strata, used as levelling layer to raise ground, sealing area of pitting. Deposit up to 0.16m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Layer	Dark grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Dark layer with lighter patch of yellow-brown clay. Deposit up to 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Pit	Rectangular sides: vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.6m, min depth 0.17m, max length 0.7m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Fill	Mixed fill consisting mainly of light yellow-brown silty sand with mid-grey silt. Small quantities of ceramic roof tile and window glass were recovered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
208	Pit	Sub-circular sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.6m, min depth 0.5m, min length 1.6m Shallow bowl-shaped pit, cut by pit [206].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
209	Upper fill	Dark grey sandy silt occasional small stones The deposit contained ceramic roof tile, pottery, window glass and a small fragment of coal. Deposit up to 0.36m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
210	Lower fill	Light yellow brown silty sand Deposit up to 0.2m thick. Very small quantities of pottery and window glass were recovered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
211	Natural	Light yellow sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
212	Wall	Brick wall: former boundary wall in yard. Single brick wall (ie 9" wall). Plain red bricks, 230mm x 110mm x 60mm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
213	Wall	L-shaped section of brickwork, half brick wall 110mm wide - ie 4.5" wall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
214	Subsoil	Mid red brown silty sand occasional small stones Layer, similar in colour and composition to subsoil seen in Trench 1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 5.50 m. Width: 2.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.65 m. Max: 0.7 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15228: Northing: 51078)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15230: Northing: 51073)

Reason: To test for archaeological remains in the planned house plot at the south-east of the development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	External surface	Concrete yard surface up to 0.07m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Levelling layer	Banded layers of modern made-ground above cobbled yard surface. Max.0.28m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	External surface	Well-made and worn cobbled surface comprising closely packed rounded pebbles. The deposit was up to 0.08m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Levelling layer	Mid blue grey sandy silt Max. 0.15m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Levelling layer	Mid yellow brown sandy silt moderate small stones The deposit was up to 0.12m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Buried topsoil	Dark grey black silt occasional small-medium CBM, occasional small stones Deposit up to 0.1m thick. The ceramic roof tile fragments were not retrieved.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Layer	Mid grey brown sandy gravel Deposit up to 0.1m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
307	Natural	Light yellow sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
308	Dump material	Brick rubble comprising fragments of red and Gault bricks. Deposit up to 0.3m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
309	Layer	Dark grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones Variable deposit with darker patches. This was up to 0.3m thick and contained a small quantity of modern pottery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
310	Posthole	Square dimensions: max breadth 0.3m, max length 0.3m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
311	Fill	Dark grey black sandy silt occasional small stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 5.00 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.75 m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15230: Northing: 51081)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15235: Northing: 51083)

Reason: To test for archaeological remains in the planned house plot at the north-east of the development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	External surface	Tarmac above made-ground comprising gravel. These deposits were up to 0.2m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	External surface	Tarmac above made-ground comprising layers of crushed brick, stone and sand. These had a combined thickness of 0.15m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Levelling layer	Mid yellow brown sandy gravel Deposit up to 0.21m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Buried topsoil	Dark grey sandy silt occasional small-medium CBM, occasional flecks chalk, occasional small-medium stones Deposit up to 0.24m thick. The ceramic tile was not retrieved.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Natural	Light yellow sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Well	Sub-circular sides: near vertical dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.8m, max length 1.7m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
406	Upper fill	Mid yellow brown sandy silt occasional small CBM, occasional small stones With patches of light yellow sand (redeposited natural sand). The deposit was at least 0.38m thick, with pottery, ceramic roof tile, animal bone and small fragments of oyster shell being recovered.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
407	Fill	Dark grey sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones The deposit was at least 0.42m thick, with a variety of artefacts being recovered, comprising pottery, ceramic roof tile, animal bone as well as small fragments of oyster and mussel shell. Sample <1> was taken from this deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

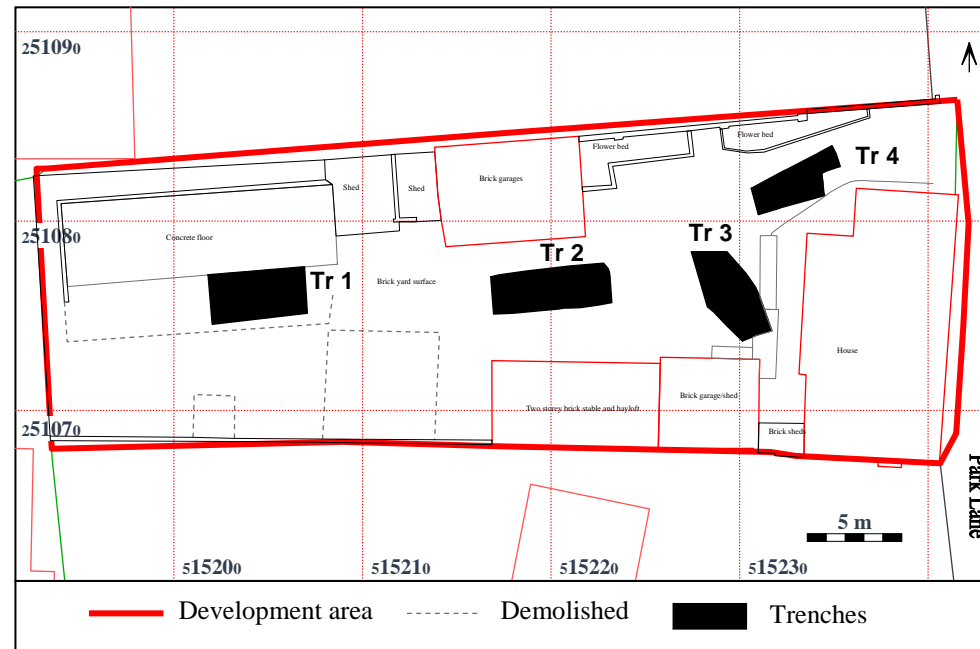
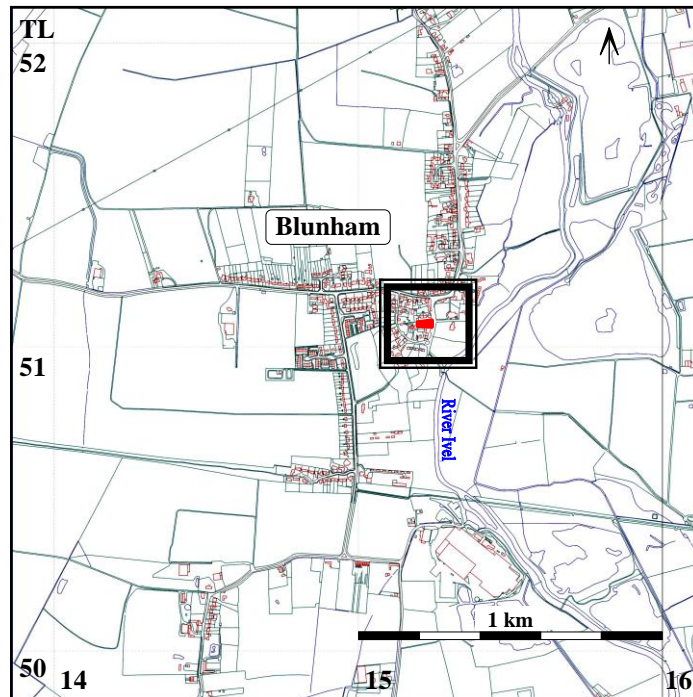
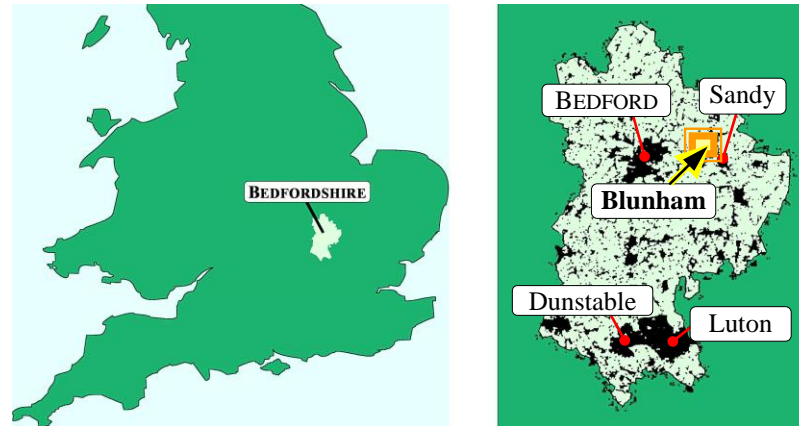


Figure 1: Site location plan

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Figure 2: 1719: The Manor of Blunham
(scale and position of DA approximate)



Figure 3: 1799: Enclosure Map
(scale and position of DA approximate)



Figure 4: 1884: 25-inch Ordnance Survey map

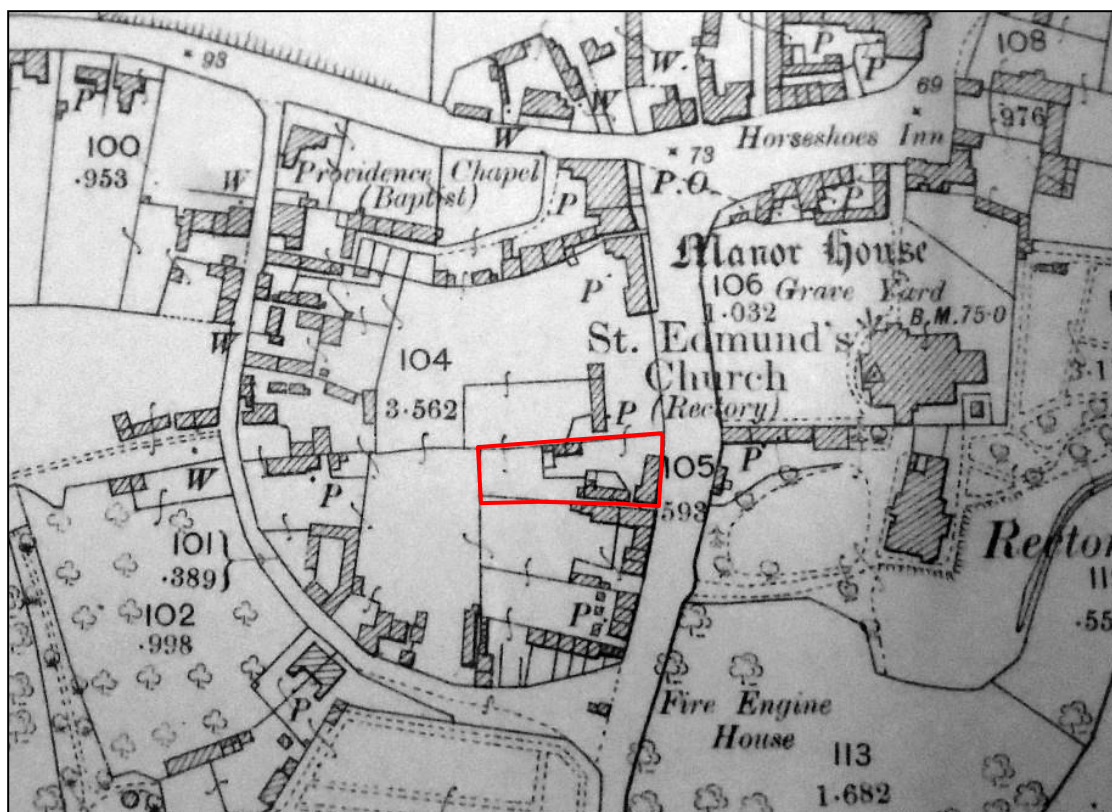


Figure 5: 1901: 25-inch Ordnance Survey map

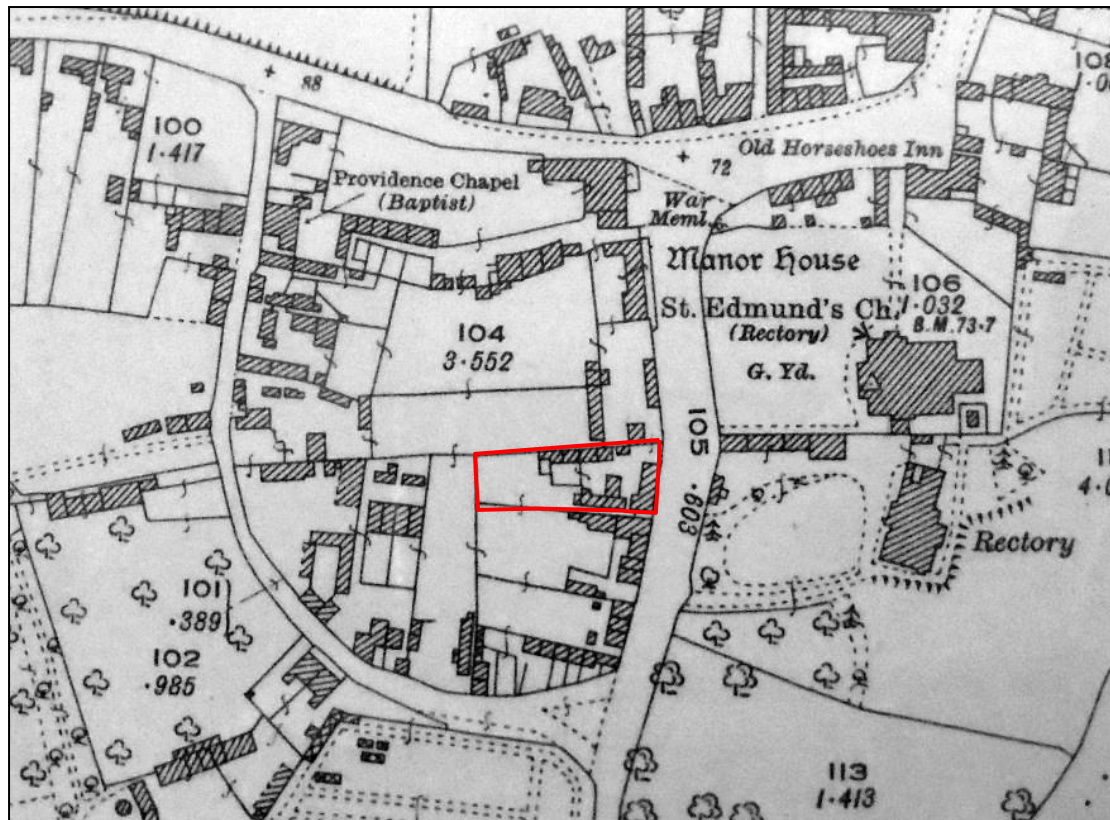


Figure 6: 1926: 25-inch Ordnance Survey map

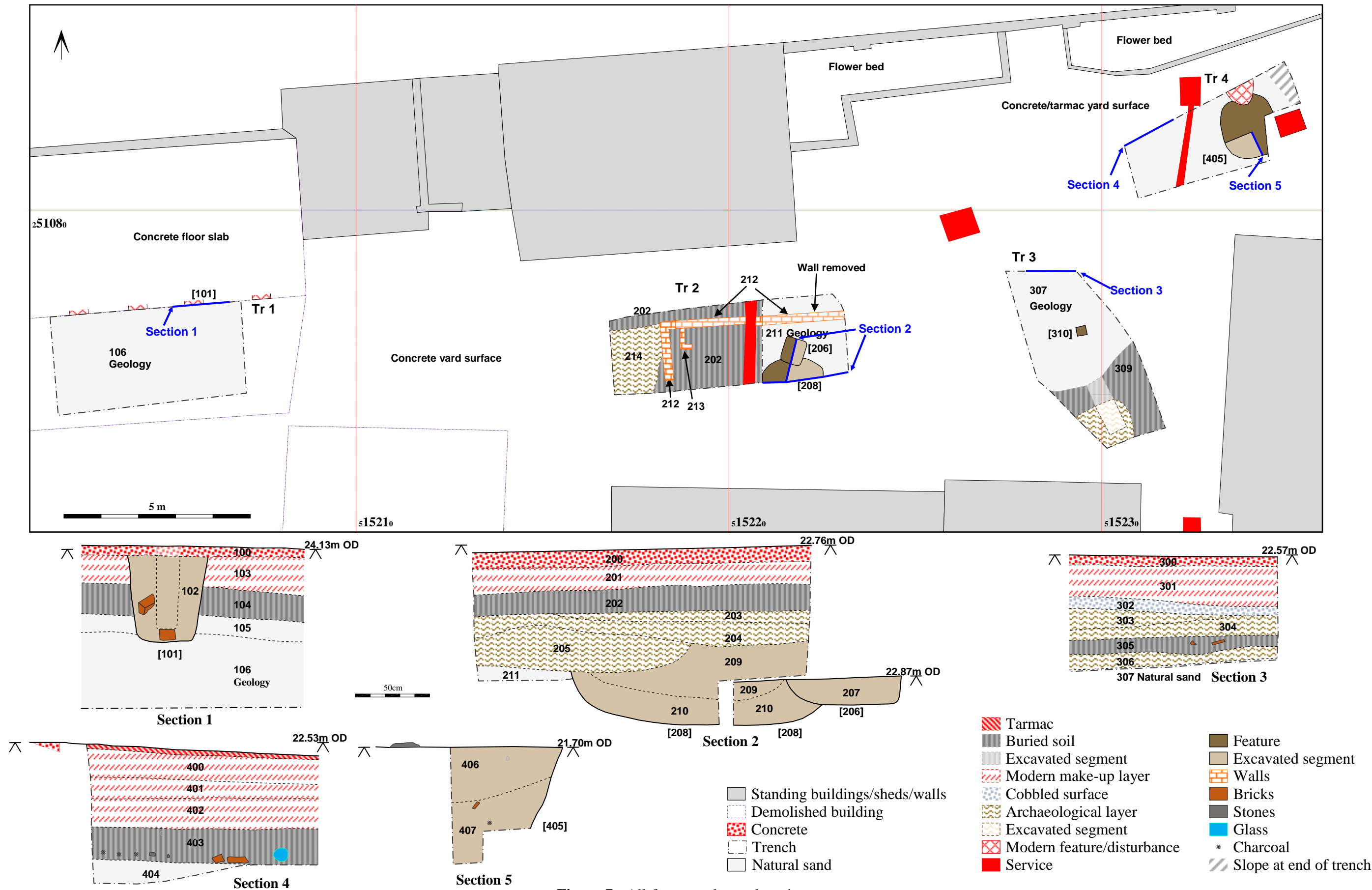




Image 1: Trench 1, looking north-east

Shows difference in ground level at the west end of the site resulting from the truncation of the south-west corner of the site. Scale 2m



Image 2: Trench 1, Section 1

Shows dark grey buried topsoil layer (104) below a levelling layer (103) of re-deposited sand, used to form a level base for a timber building. The light yellow-brown sand layer (106) in the lower part of the section is the undisturbed geological stratum.

Scale 1m



Image 3: Trench 2, looking east
Showing remains of 19th-century brick
walls (212) and (214). Scale 1m



Image 4: Trench 2, Section 2

Looking south, showing east end of trench after it was machined down to the underlying sand geology, exposing two intercutting pits [206] and [208]. Scale 1m



Image 5: Trench 3, looking north-west

Shows the natural sand (307) with layers (308) and (309) in the foreground. Scale 1m



Image 6: Trench 3, Section 3

Shows modern surface and make-up layers above cobbled surface (302) with a dark, buried soil layer (305) at the base of the trench. Scale 1m



Image 7: Trench 4, looking east

Shows possible well [405] in eastern half of trench. Scale 1m



Image 8: Trench 4, Section 4

Shows north side of trench with modern surfaces and make-up layers above a buried soil layer (403) in the base of the trench. Scale 1m



Image 9: Trench 4, showing feature [405]

The south-west quadrant of possible well [405], was excavated to depth of 0.8m below the base of the trench. Scale 1m

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