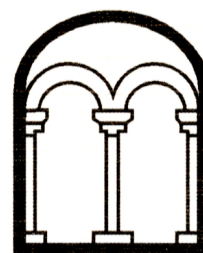


**PRIORY LOWER SCHOOL
GREYFRIARS
BEDFORD**

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

Albion
archaeology



**PRIORY LOWER SCHOOL
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INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND
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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Project Background	4
1.2 Site Location and Description	4
1.3 Archaeological Background	4
2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	6
3. METHODOLOGY	7
3.1 Methodological Standards	7
3.2 Observation, Investigation and Recording	7
4. RESULTS	8
4.1 Introduction	8
4.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits	8
4.3 Modern Features	8
4.4 Archaeological Deposits	8
5. CONCLUSIONS	9
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
7. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY	11

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: All-features plan and sections

The figures are bound at the back of the report.



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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The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders (Bedford Borough Council Archaeologist). The fieldwork was undertaken by Iain Leslie (Project Officer), Slawek Utrata (Project Supervisor) and Anna Rebisz-Niziolek (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Kathy Pilkinton (Project Supervisor). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
CBM	Ceramic building material
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Record
HET	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (16/00903/DC3) for a single-storey extension for an additional classroom and alteration to an existing classroom at Priory Lower School, Greyfriars, Bedford was granted by Bedford Borough Council (BBC).

Due to the high archaeological potential of the permitted development area (PDA) a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy. The Historic Environment Team of Bedford Borough Council specified that the mitigation strategy should consist of detailed archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks associated with the development.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the monitoring which took place between 1st November 2016 and 5th January 2017. It comprised initial ground reduction followed by the excavation of foundation trenches.

Observation of the construction works revealed limited archaeological evidence. The PDA had been heavily disturbed by previous building and drainage works with both drains and foundations visible in all trenches. The only features of note were a dark waterlogged deposit underlying the modern building remains and overlying a possible ditch or depression in the geological horizon.

Speed's 1610 map of Bedford indicates that the PDA lies on the outskirts of the early medieval settlement, in what is likely to have been fields and marshlands. The Saffron Ditch, the western boundary of the Saxo-Norman town or burh, also crosses the land to the east of Greyfriars. While there is no evidence to suggest a feature big enough to represent the Saffron Ditch itself within the PDA, the waterlogged alluvial deposits identified on site may represent associated deposits possibly deriving from flooding of water meadows or marshes.

Deposits identified on the PDA may indicate land-use prior to the post-medieval settlement of the area. However, no archaeological remains of significance were revealed within the PDA and there is no further potential to address specific regional research aims.

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession number BEDFM 2016.53). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-258517).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission (16/00903/DC3) for a single-storey extension for an additional classroom and alteration to an existing classroom at Priory Lower School, Greyfriars, Bedford was granted by Bedford Borough Council (BBC).

Due to the high archaeological potential of the permitted development area (PDA), in particular for human remains, a condition (no. 6) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy. This was done on the advice of BBC's Historic Environment Team (HET), in accordance with the guidelines provided in the National Planning Policy Framework, and in accordance with Saved Policies BE24 & BE25 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002, Policy CP23 of the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008).

The HET specified that the mitigation strategy should consist of detailed archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks associated with the development (BBC 2016).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to prepare the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2016) in accordance with the requirements of the planning condition, and to carry out the subsequent programme of archaeological works.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Priory Lower School lies in the centre of Bedford to the immediate east of Greyfriars and north of Alexandra Place (Figure 1). It is surrounded by residential development dating to the 19th and mid-20th century. The original Priory Lower School building itself dates from the 19th century. The school is centred on grid reference TL 0449 4990.

The underlying geology is Felmersham sand and gravels over Limestone and Argillaceous Rocks of the Great Oolite Group (British Geological Survey 2016).

The development comprised the construction of a one-storey extension to an existing building. The extension measured 7.61m x 7.65m. The groundworks comprised strip foundations and the installation and re-routing of services. A new ramp and replacement paving were installed for another classroom to the immediate north-west.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

Data from the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) within a 250m radius around the school was reviewed during preparation of the WSI.

Priory Lower School lies to the south of the site of a Franciscan friary (HER 268), founded c. 1238 and dissolved 1538. The Franciscans were known as the 'grey friars'. A deed of 1539–40 granting the friary to John Gostwyk mentions a



church, belfry and burial ground on the site. John Speed's 1610 map of Bedford shows a range of buildings around three sides of a courtyard, with a tower in the middle of the north range and a wall running northwards to an arched gate on Bromham Road.

Parts of the cloisters and refectory were still extant in the early 19th century and photographs show the buildings still in use as part of a farm in the 1890s, but the remains were demolished in 1899. The second edition OS map of 1900 still marks the “site of priory” and the “priory recreation ground” to the north of the school.

Other archaeological finds in the vicinity of the school are a collection of Palaeolithic implements (HER 546), including 14 hand-axes and a number of retouched and unretouched flakes, found south of Bromham Road.

Workmen extending a house in Bromham Road in 1884 found a large quantity of broken pottery within a feature lined with stones and Roman tile (HER 249). The sides of the feature showed clear signs of burning. It is likely to have been part of a hypocaust system or possibly a kiln.

The Saffron Ditch, the western boundary of the Saxo-Norman town or *burh* lies to the east of Greyfriars, suggesting that the PDA lies outside the early medieval settlement. The remains of a square medieval moated site (HER 15396), which has mostly been built over, is located to the north-west of the PDA, south of Bromham Road. This may have been part of the wider settled medieval landscape around Bedford, separated from the town by agricultural fields.

Bedford expanded considerably in the latter half of the 19th century and the roads between Greyfriars, Bromham Road and Ashburnham Road became lined with residential properties and industrial premises, workshops and a gas works. Priory Lower School itself dates from the 19th century (HER 7240).

Prior to a small housing development trial trenching occurred at the site of the former St Bede's School on Bromham Road (HER 16363, EBD 199). Three of the four trenches uncovered archaeological features, including postholes, pits, ditches and structural remains. All the features were dated to the post-medieval or modern periods.

A watching brief undertaken during the excavation of a service trench at Gwyn Court in Rosier Street revealed a stone-lined well of possibly 19th-century date (HER 16112, EBD302). The well was of dry-stone construction and was slightly corbelled towards the top; it would have been surrounded by 19th-century housing and was probably constructed at that time.



2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the archaeological investigation was to make a full record of any archaeological remains impacted by the development, and to place them within their cultural and environmental setting. The general aims of the archaeological fieldwork were to:

- monitor all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains; and
- investigate the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of archaeological deposits encountered within them;
- record any human remains that might be encountered within the groundworks.

Due to the proximity of the PDA to the Franciscan friary to the north, the specific research aim of the investigations was to establish whether any archaeological features or artefacts relating to the friary were present on the site.

Dependent on the nature of any remains that were revealed, specific research aims would have been derived from regional research frameworks (e.g. Brown and Glazebrook 2007; Oake et al. 2007; Medlycott 2011).



3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion 2016).

3.1 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> , 3rd edition (2017)
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 an archaeological watching brief</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> (2015)
	<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 2016.53). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-258517) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.

3.2 Observation, Investigation and Recording

Monitoring of construction groundworks took place between 1st November 2016 and 5th January 2017. An area of 7.61 x 7.65m was initially stripped to a depth of 0.5m (Figure 2). Foundation trenches measuring 0.6m wide and c. 1.8m deep were then excavated around the perimeter of the area; a 0.55m-wide and 1.6m-deep trench was also excavated through the centre. The south-east foundation trench was filled with concrete before observation could be undertaken.

All mechanical excavation was carried out by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket operated by an experienced driver under archaeological supervision.



4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

All deposits revealed during the monitoring 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. All observations were made from the top of deep, narrow trenches and measurements given for deposits are estimated.

4.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

There was no topsoil or subsoil present at the site. The ground was heavily disturbed due to former development. Upper deposits (1), (2), (5) and (24) consisted largely of demolition and levelling layers comprising clay, sand, gravel that contained frequent fragments of modern building material. These were present across the site after the initial ground reduction.

Undisturbed geological deposits (10) comprised mid-orange to yellow-grey clay. They were identified from the top of the trench below the water table at a depth of c. 1.4m.

4.3 Modern Features

A number of modern features were identified. Large foundation trenches [6], [8] and [21] were backfilled with mortar, rubble and silt. A manhole [26] and drainage pipes [15] were associated with former buildings.

4.4 Archaeological Deposits

Potentially alluvial deposit (19) comprised dark grey-brown silty clay and showed evidence of waterlogging. It was heavily truncated by modern building disturbance but survived best along the north-west side of the area where it was observed to be approximately 1m thick (Figure 2, Section 1).

A possible cut feature [14] was partially visible at the base of the trench. The observed upper fill (13) showed signs of waterlogging and comprised dark blue-grey clay. This may represent the remains of a ditch or merely a depression within the underlying geological deposits.

No artefacts were recovered from any of the deposits or features.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Observation of the construction works revealed limited archaeological evidence within the PDA. No archaeological features relating to the friary or artefacts were found.

The PDA had been heavily disturbed by previous building and drainage works with both drains and foundations visible in all trenches. Conditions on site, i.e. the depth and stability of the trenches, also made the identification of features and recovery of artefacts difficult.

The only features of potential archaeological interest were a waterlogged deposit underlying the modern building remains and overlying a possible ditch or depression in the geological horizon.

Speed's 1610 map of Bedford indicates that the PDA lies on the outskirts of the early medieval settlement, in what is likely to have been fields and marshlands. The Saffron Ditch, the western boundary of the Saxo-Norman town or *burh* also crosses this area to the east of Greyfriars. While there is no evidence to suggest the presence of the Saffron Ditch on the PDA, the waterlogged alluvial deposits identified may represent associated deposits, possibly deriving from flooding of water meadows or marshes.

Deposits identified on the PDA may indicate land-use prior to the post-medieval settlement of the area. However, no archaeological remains of significance were revealed and there is no further potential to address specific regional research aims.



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7. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Levelling layer	Friable yellow brown sandy silt occasional small-medium CBM, frequent small stones. Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Modern disturbance	Hard mid orange blue silty clay occasional small stones. Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Levelling layer	Clay gravel moderate small-medium CBM. Thickness: 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Modern intrusion	Irregular sides: near vertical base: flat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Fill	Mid yellow brown clay gravel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Modern intrusion	Sides: vertical base: flat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay occasional small-medium CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Natural	Firm mid grey orange clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Modern intrusion	Sides: vertical base: flat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Fill	Dark grey brown clay silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Feature	Top visible at base of trench. Possible ditch.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Fill	Dark blue grey clay . Possibe waterlogging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Modern intrusion	Linear sides: irregular base: concave . Pipe trench	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Backfill	Gravel . Mixed backfill with gravel around pipe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Foundation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Fill	Rubble	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Layer	Dark grey brown silty clay . Possible alluvium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Foundation	Linear NE-SW sides: vertical base: flat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	Backfill	Firm dark green grey silty clay occasional small-medium mortar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Make up layer	Dark grey silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Manhole	Sides: steep base: flat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Manhole	Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Figure 1: Site location

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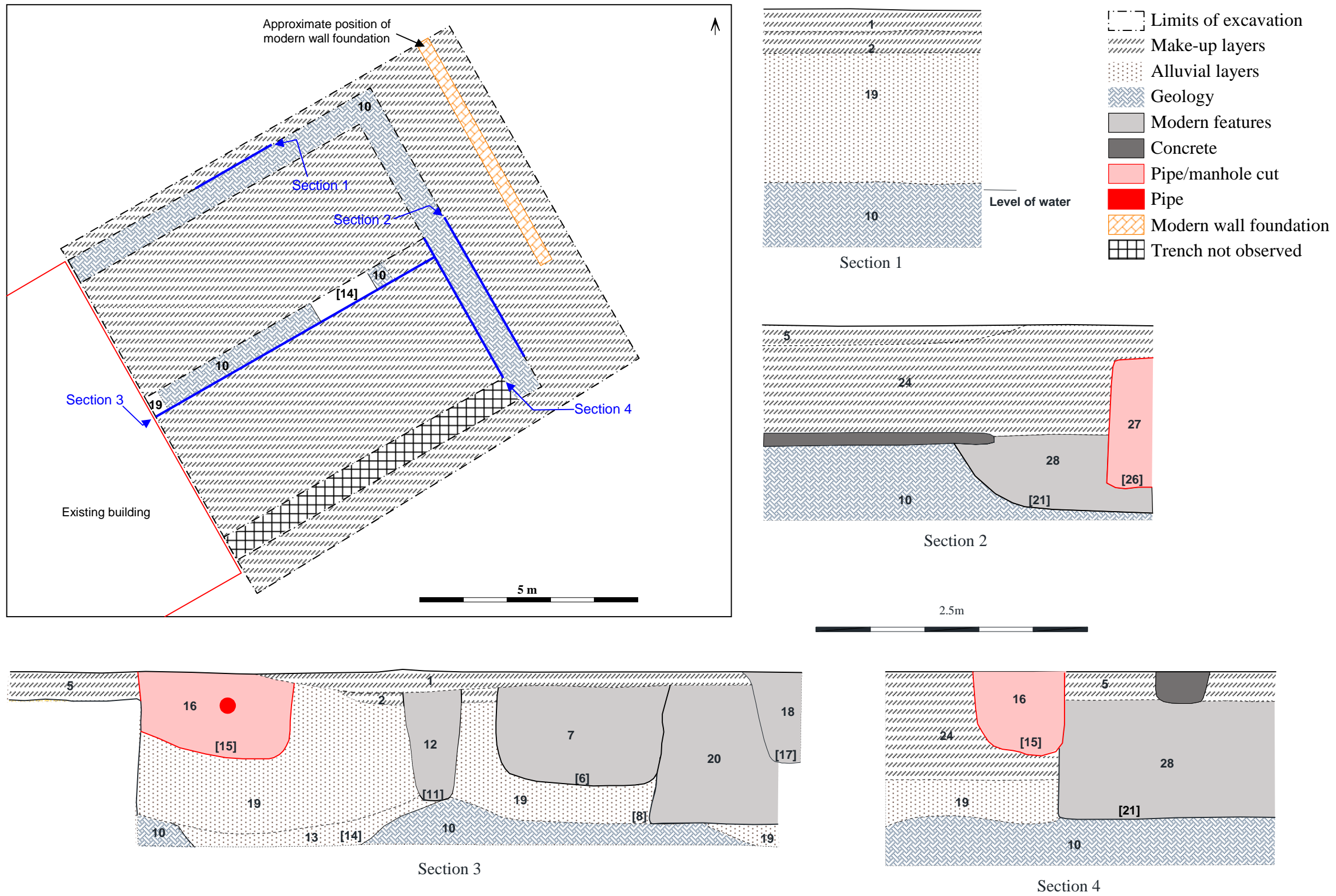


Figure 2: All-features plan and sections

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