



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, KEMPSTON, BEDFORDSHIRE

Precautionary Archaeological Attendance, Observation, Recording and Reporting

Albion Archaeology Project No: AS 1222

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Introduction

In late March and early April 2007 a series of trenches were excavated as part of improvement work at All Saints' Church, Kempston, Bedfordshire (NGR: TL 015 480). The Diocesan Archaeological Advisor advised that the work should be monitored by an archaeologist, with provision for recording any significant structures, deposits or articulated human remains that might be revealed.

Albion Archaeology was invited by the project architect, The Victor Farrar Partnership, acting on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to undertake archaeological monitoring of the ground disturbance during the work. The latter comprised the insertion of an electrical cable for improved lighting and the addition of a stone edging to the existing system of paths through the cemetery before the paths were re-surfaced.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Beswick and Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisors) with the project managed by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager). This report has been prepared by Ian Turner; the figure was produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

Site location and description

All Saints Church (HER1166) is situated within a large churchyard at Kempston Church End, the historic core of the original Kempston village, now a small hamlet off the A5134, c. 900m to the west of modern, suburban Kempston (Figure 1).

The churchyard is located at 30.64m OD and is bordered to the east by river Great Ouse, which flows from north to south at this point.

Fieldwork

The observation of the trench excavation works took place on the 21st, 22nd, 27th, 28th March and the 2nd and 12th April 2007. Excavation of the trenches was carried out by the site contractors with an archaeologist in attendance to examine the trenches when fully excavated (See Figure 1 for location of the trenches).



Historical background

Parts of All Saints' Church date to the 12th century. Kempston is thought to have been an important settlement of pre-conquest date and there may be Anglo-Saxon work in the masonry of the chancel (Pickford v.77, 395).

There were probably three churches in Kempston at the time of the conquest — at Box End, East End and Church End (Kempston Parish History). These churches were probably originally seigneurial chapels which were eventually gifted to the Church. It has been suggested that Church End was a substantial focus of settlement around the start of the 12th century. However, there are no records of any buildings or dwellings at Church End at this time. The medieval settlement pattern within Kempston as a whole was characterised by a series of inter-connecting hamlets or 'ends' all of which were probably in existence by the 15th century.

Archaeological excavations in the vicinity have produced extensive evidence for Roman settlement.

Trench locations

The electrical cable trench was 300–400mm wide and 300–500mm deep. The trench for the stone block path edging was 300–400mm wide and c. 250mm deep. The trenches followed the existing system of paths that run from the south gate and from the south cottage archway to the church porch, chancel south door and tower (Figure 1, Plates 1 and 3).

Results

The limestone foundations of a former churchyard boundary wall were identified running north-west to south-east across the path between the main gate and the church (Figure 1 and Plate 2).

No other archaeological features were visible, either in section or plan, within the trenches.

The topsoil was comprised of dark grey brown sandy silt and was 140mm thick. One small sherd of greyware pottery, of either Roman or medieval date, was observed in the topsoil in the south-west trench of the path leading from the church porch to the tower, 5m from the porch end of the trench.

Beneath the topsoil a subsoil deposit of mid grey brown silty sand with moderate small and medium stones was observed. This layer was at least 130mm thick.

The undisturbed geological deposit was revealed in the base of the electrical cable trench. It comprised light grey brown silty clay with occasional small stones and chalk flecks.

Conclusions

The foundations of a probable former churchyard boundary wall, identified in the electrical cable trench, indicate that the cemetery was extended to the south-west.



A map of 1804 illustrates this earlier boundary, in line with the south-west edge of the line cottages to the south of the church, indicating that the extension to the cemetery is 19th century or later.

No burials or other archaeological features were revealed in the course of the work.

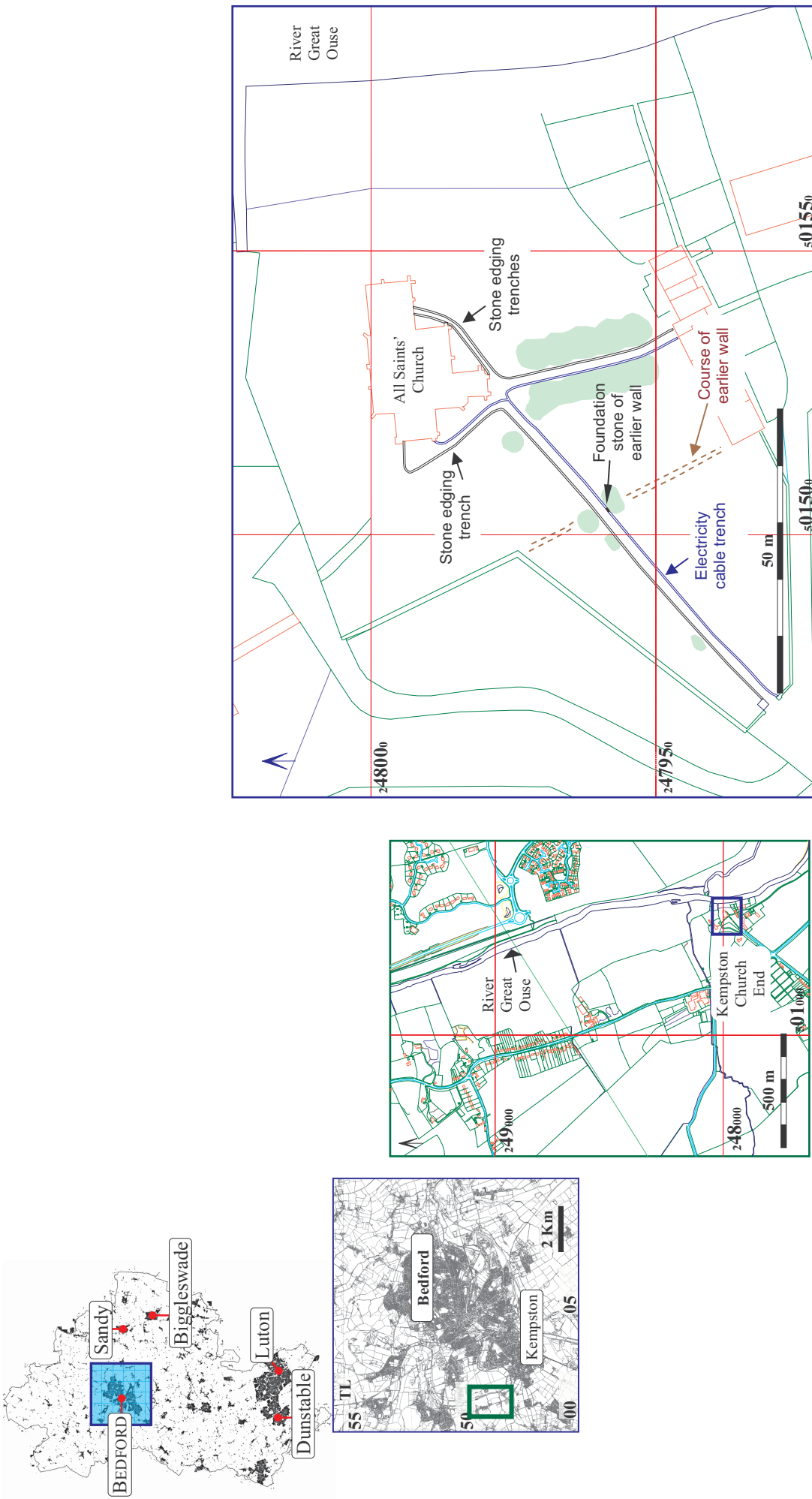


Figure 1: Site location map

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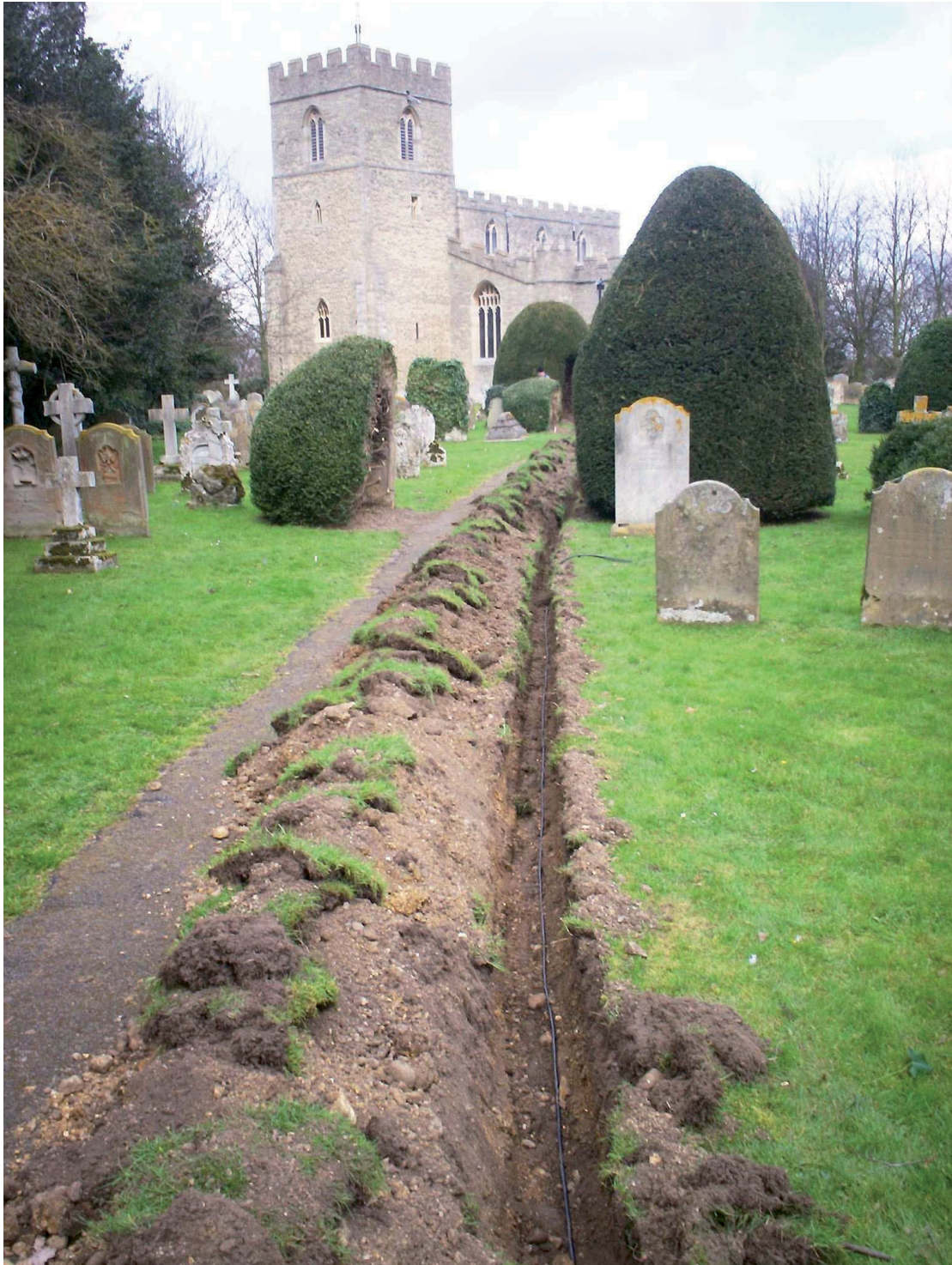


Plate 1: The electrical cable trench.
Looking north-east.



Plate 2: Foundation stone from earlier churchyard boundary wall.
Looking south-east, scale 30cm.



Plate 3: The trench for path edging stones.
Looking north, scale 1m.