

**ST PAUL'S CHURCH  
ST PAUL'S SQUARE  
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION  
AND INVESTIGATION**

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on behalf of  
St Paul's Church  
Parochial Church Council



## 1. Introduction

Albion Archaeology was invited by the Michael Dales Partnership Limited, acting on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to monitor groundworks associated with building and renovation works at St Paul's Church, Bedford. The archaeological works were to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor) and Adam Williams (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Ian Turner and Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

## 2. Site description

St Paul's Church is located on St Paul's Square which is situated in the centre of Bedford, approximately 100m to the north of the River Great Ouse and the Town Bridge (Figure 1).

The church is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference TL 04985 49680 with the ground height in the vicinity being around 27m OD.

## 3. Archive

The archive for the site comprising original records, photographs, plans and supporting documentation will be deposited with Bedford Museum under the accession number BEDFM 2009.27. A copy of this report will also be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service's online OASIS database.

## 4. Historical Background

St Paul's Square lies at the heart of the historic core of Bedford. The origins of St Paul's Church may go back as far as the 8<sup>th</sup> century and there was certainly an important church on the site by the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Documentary evidence records settlement at Bedford from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, however, archaeological evidence puts the origins of the town in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Burials of this date have been recorded from St Paul's Square to the north of the current boundary of the churchyard.

## 5. Description of Building Works

The building works took place in two locations (Figure 2). Within the church, in the area of the Trinity Chapel, repair of around 67m<sup>2</sup> of flooring was carried out. This involved the relocation of five memorial stones and the replacement and/or repair of existing Victorian tiles (Photographs 1-3). Outside the church at the west end, the works comprised the removal of paving slabs, limited ground level reduction and excavation of trenches for the rerouting of drainage pipes and the installation of a level access between the churchyard gate and west door.

The groundworks requiring archaeological monitoring took place between 6<sup>th</sup> January and 25<sup>th</sup> February. Excavation of the pipe trenches, removal of tiles and slabs and all ground reduction was carried out by the site contractors with an archaeologist in attendance to monitor the works.



## 6. Results

### 6.1 The Trinity Chapel

Floor tiles and rubble levelling material was removed to a depth of around 0.20m below the original floor level (Photograph 4). Below this, a layer of mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional inclusions of post-medieval mortar, brick and glass was revealed. A series of modern brick-lined trenches for pipes were found beneath the floor tiles. No archaeological features or structures of interest were revealed during this work.

### 6.2 The West End

Removal of paving slabs in the vicinity of the west entrance revealed a crushed stone levelling layer over grey brown sandy silt deposits (Photograph 5). The reduction of the ground level in this area by *c.*0.10m revealed a truncated, uneven and undulating portion of brick pavement measuring 2.5m long and 1.35m wide (Photographs 6 and 7). The pavement was located between the west door and churchyard gate and comprised modern (post-1750) red/orange brick.

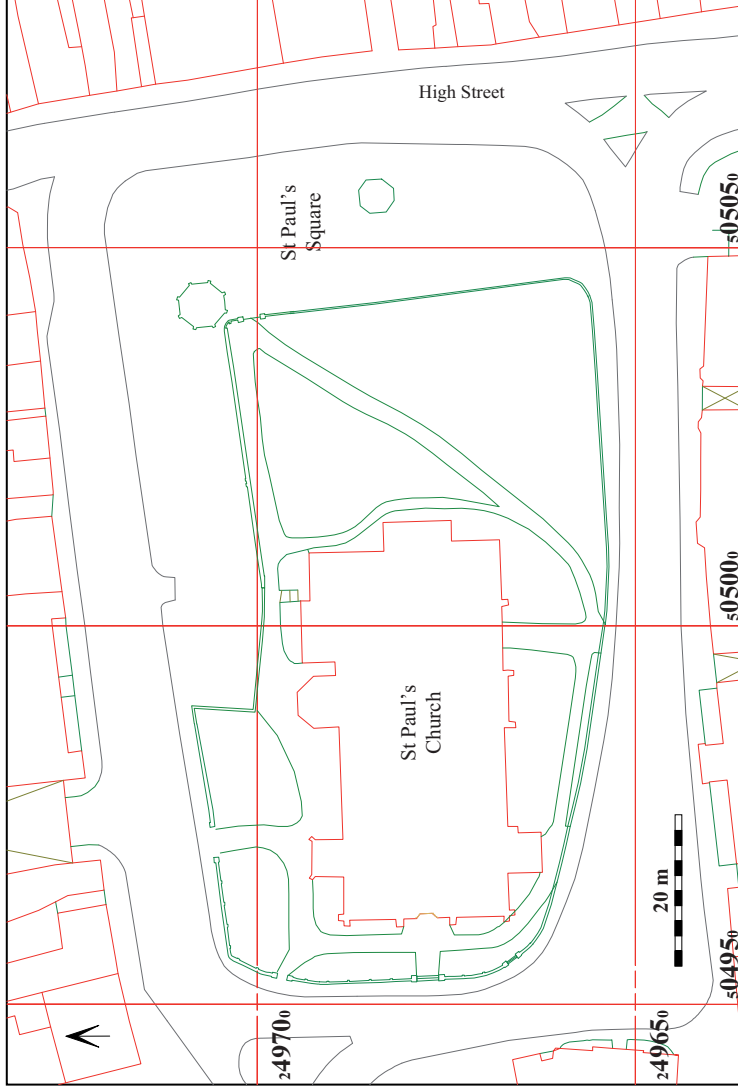
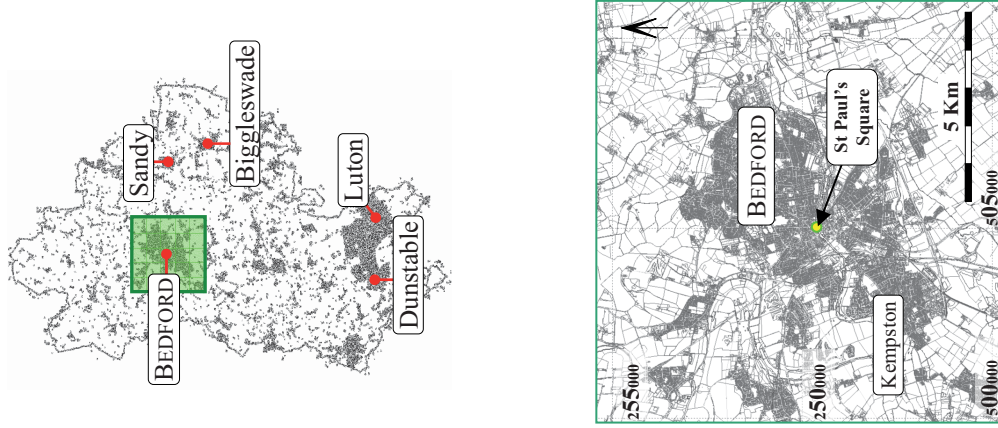
The pipe trenches ranged from 0.4m to 0.5m deep and 0.35m to 0.5m wide and had a combined length of 26m (Photograph 8). A pit for the installation an inspection chamber was also excavated at the north-west corner of the church (Photograph 9). It measured 2.2m long, 1.8m wide and 0.75m deep.

The pipe trenches and inspection chamber pit were cut through the extant gravel surface and a deep topsoil deposit of mid grey brown sandy silt containing fragments of post-medieval clay pipe, roof tile, brick and occasional fragments of possible human bone. This disturbed deposit was the same as that revealed beneath the paving stones and crushed stone in the vicinity of the west door. In the inspection chamber excavation the deposit continued beyond its maximum depth of 0.75m.

No features or structures of interest were revealed in the pipe or inspection chamber excavations at the west end of the church.

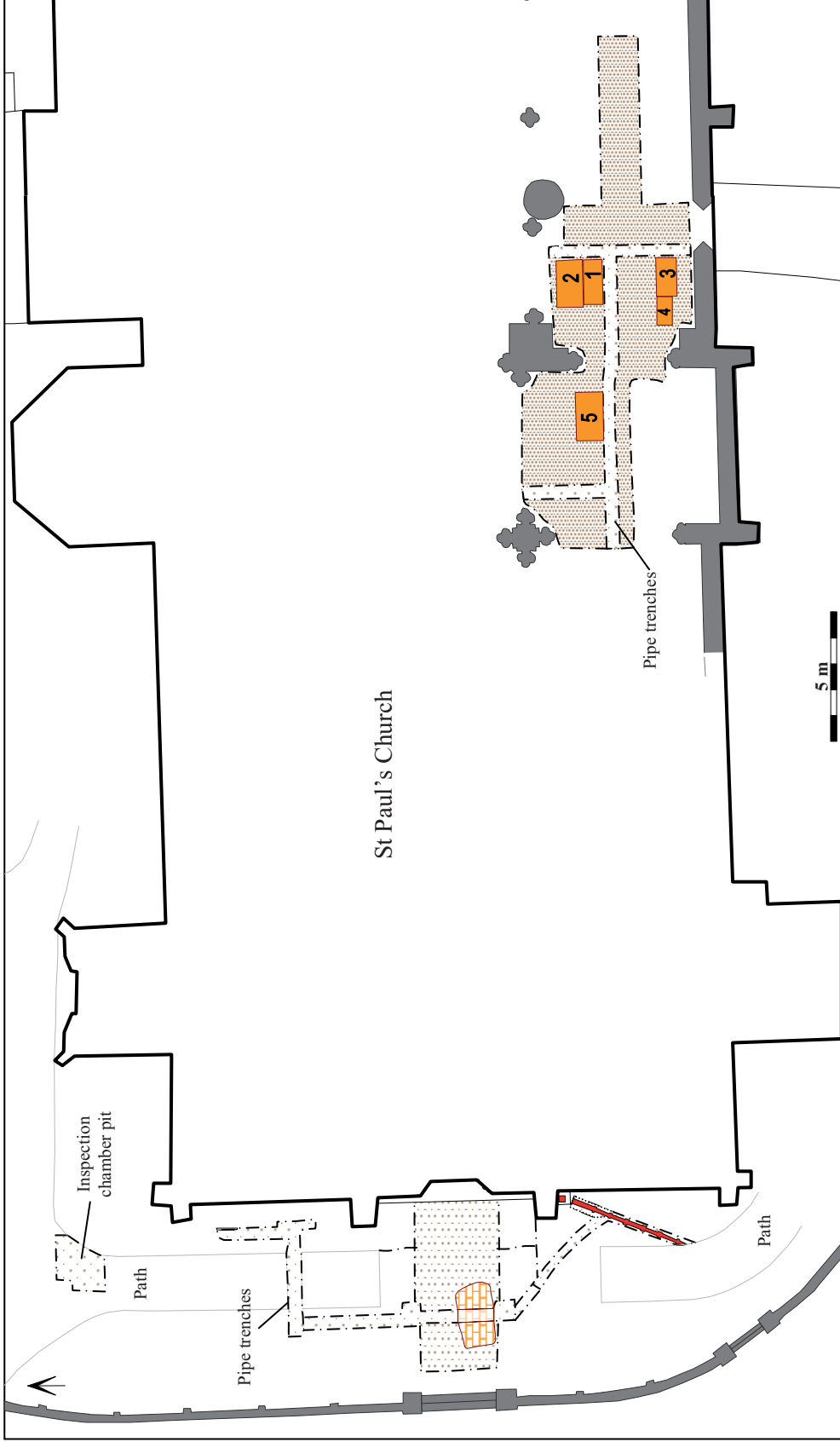
## 7. Conclusion

The groundworks associated with the internal church renovations revealed no deposits or features of architectural or archaeological interest. Outside the west entrance, excavations for drainage pipes and the installation of a level access identified a disturbed topsoil deposit in excess of 0.75m deep and a small portion of brick pavement of possible Victorian date. This portion of pavement probably represents the remains of an earlier paved route between the churchyard gate and west door.



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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- Limit of excavations**
- Limit of excavations
  - Area of ground level reduction
  - Memorial stones
  - Brick pavement
  - Existing drain pipe
- Memorial stone inscriptions**
1. *In memory of Mary W. Thomas/William Thomas who died September 14<sup>th</sup> 1801? aged 75 years*
  2. *James Thomas*
  3. Inscription illegible
  4. Inscription illegible
  5. Inscription illegible

**Figure 2:** Plan of works

## 8. Photographs



1. Trinity Chapel: Tiling prior to removal



2. Trinity Chapel: Tiling detail



3. Trinity Chapel: Tiling prior to removal



4. Trinity Chapel: Tiling removed



5. West End: Removal of paving slabs





6. West End: Ground reduction in front of west door



7. West End: Remains of brick pavement



8. West End: Excavated drain trenches



9. West End: Excavation for inspection chamber