

**10 HITCHIN STREET
BIGGLESWADE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION**

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. 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.

The project was commissioned by VE Parrott (Oakley) Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner, Wes Keir and Gary Edmondson. This report has been prepared by Ian Turner, Gary Edmondson and Jackie Wells, with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Albion would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the staff of VE Parrott (Oakley) Ltd, particularly David Moore and Paul Goodfield. We would also like to acknowledge local historian and author Ken Page who provided useful information about the site.

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Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the site, describing its location, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the trial trenching methodology and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 provides a synthesis of the results and assesses their significance. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.



Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
Client	VE Parrott (Oakley) Ltd
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record



Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology have been commissioned by VE Parrott (Oakley) Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation in advance of development of the plot of land previously occupied by the Black Bear Inn, Hitchin Street, Biggleswade. As part of the planning permission a condition for a programme of archaeological investigation (condition 10) was attached to the planning permission (CB/09/05761/FUL). The site is hereafter referred to as the Development Area (DA).

The DA lies within an archaeologically sensitive area within the core of medieval Biggleswade. As a result, CBC's Archaeologist (CBCA) advised the Local Planning Authority that a condition should be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation.

The first stage, an evaluation, was undertaken between 6th and 9th April 2010. The investigation revealed that a significant part of the street frontage area had been disturbed by the former Black Bear Inn, with a series of cellars occupying the footprint of the building, with additional cellars to the rear. An inn has occupied this site since at least 1661. Extensive terracing associated with modern deposits (up to 0.6m) affected the area west of the street front building. Despite this truncation, a series of deposits dating from the medieval and post-medieval period were revealed.

Residual prehistoric artefacts comprising a flint flake and a small sherd of late 'Belgic' Iron Age pottery were recovered from later features near the street frontage. The significance of these is uncertain. The earliest feature was a small area of cultivation soil situated immediately to the west of the former inn. The date of the activity is uncertain, although it may have been associated with a substantial recut boundary ditch, aligned roughly north-south, which is oblique to the current street, some 8.5m to the east. The undated ditch fills were derived from an unstable cultivation soil. A late medieval pit truncated the cultivation soil. Only part of this feature survived between wall footings of the former inn. Immediately to the west of the ditched boundary was an extensive pit, probably a quarry at least 12m long. As well as 17th-18th century artefacts, the deposits contained medieval material. The pit appears to have been carefully and systematically infilled, with evidence for levelling of the extensive dumped deposits. A capping layer of imported ironstone sand at least 0.25m thick was compacted to seal the area. To the rear of the DA a series of extensive intercutting post-medieval pits were revealed, below extensive terracing associated with modern deposits. The fills of these features contained a mixture of residual medieval artefacts as well as post-medieval material.

Despite modern disturbance the DA contains considerable, although fragmentary heritage assets. It has the potential to provide limited insight into Biggleswade's past. Medieval and earlier undated deposits are likely to survive in a fragmentary state. The ditches would also appear to be relatively early, when at least part of the site was open. Although the extensive quarry pit is later than the first documentary evidence for the Black Bear Inn and associated outbuildings, they are unlikely to be contemporary. This may suggest that the quarry and associated fills are part of a systematic effort to clear and rebuild the area of the town affected by the Great Fire of 1785. This would also imply that the inn was affected by the fire. The intercutting pits to the rear may be associated with the inn, being located in the western part of the site, known as Bear Garden, which extended to St Andrews Street. There was no evidence of graves or disturbed human remains, similar to those reported in the early 1980s from the area immediately to the west of the DA.

The project archive will be accessioned with Bedford Museum (Accession number BEDFM 2010.16).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Albion Archaeology have been commissioned by VE Parrott (Oakley) Ltd to undertake the first stage of a programme of archaeological investigation at 10 Hitchin Street, Biggleswade – a plot of land formerly occupied by the Black Bear Inn. Planning permission (CB/09/05761/FUL) has been granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for the construction of seven flats with supported living. The site is hereafter referred to as the Development Area (DA).

The DA lies within an archaeologically sensitive area in the core of the medieval town of Biggleswade. As a result, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a condition (number 10) should be attached to the planning permission, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation. On 9th March 2010, the CBCA issued a brief (CBC 2010a), outlining a three-staged approach to a programme of archaeological work:

- Stage I – archaeological field evaluation;
- Stage II – appraisal of the results of the archaeological field evaluation;
- Stage III – implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording (if required, following completion of Stage II).

The CBCA also issued a brief (CBC 2010b) detailing the requirements of the Stage I archaeological field evaluation and reporting of the results (this document).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The DA is located on the west side of Hitchin Street, a short distance south of the Market Place, centred at grid reference TL (5)18925 (2)44471 (Figures 1 and 2), within the Biggleswade Conservation Area. The roughly rectangular plot of land extends approximately 30m west from the street frontage by *c.* 16m wide: an area of approximately 480sqm. The DA is bounded by the street in the east, with walls defining the boundary with adjacent properties to the north and west. Well established trees also mark the western boundary of the site. The southern side of the site is bounded by a narrow path, formerly known as Bear Alley.

The DA lies at a height of *c.* 30m OD, occupying relatively flat ground in the valley of the River Ivel, which flows approximately 140m to the west. Following a fire in 2008 the buildings were demolished. The DA has recently been fenced and cleared of rubbish, revealing extensive areas of hard standing comprising concrete and tarmac beyond the footings of the former buildings. The building at the street frontage was cellared, with cellarage and associated structures located to the rear of the main building.

The DA is within a roughly north-south band of Quaternary 1st and 2nd River Terrace Deposits, comprising silt, sand and gravel. These overlie the Woburn Sands Formation (British Geological Survey, Sheet 204, Solid and Drift,



1:50,000). The limited areas of superficial geological deposits exposed were silts and sands.

1.3 **Archaeological Background**

Biggleswade is one of the historic Bedfordshire towns studied in the Extensive Urban Survey which provided an archaeological assessment, summarising current knowledge (Albion 2003).

Although the valley of the River Ivel has been utilised since prehistoric times, there is scant evidence for any activity in the vicinity of the DA. Despite being situated near a Roman Road (HER 505), the only evidence for activity in Roman times consists of isolated findspots, located some distance from the site. Roman pottery vessels were discovered in 1843 (HER 177) and a coin recovered during the digging of a trench (HER 14650).

Biggleswade is recorded in Domesday Book, though it is thought to have had Saxon origins. There is evidence for town planning in the late 12th or early 13th century (Albion 2003). The settlement developed in the 13th-14th centuries, being granted a market in the 13th century and gaining town status in the 14th century. By 1631 it was an established trading centre with five annual fairs, indicating that it was well connected as a result of its location on the Great North Road (a former Roman road). The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER) identifies a significant number of sites, principally buildings, in the vicinity of the DA. However, the only surviving building dating to the medieval period is the Church of St Andrew (HER 1018), whilst HER 17124 refers to the medieval core of the town. Historical maps suggest that the Market Place may originally have been considerably larger (*pers com.* Stephen Coleman), with a suggestion that the irregular blocks of buildings lining the southern side of the market represent later encroachment. This could suggest that Mill Street originally defined the south-west corner of the Market Place with the DA situated on the western side. Archaeological investigations in this area (BCAS 1995) revealed scant traces of medieval activity, comprising stakeholes. This may not be unexpected for a market place, for which very good access is a key feature.

The town developed in the later post-medieval period when the centre became the focus of three turnpikes. The Biggleswade-Stevenage Turnpike opened in 1720; the Biggleswade-Alconbury Turnpike opened in 1725; and the Biggleswade-Potton-Ramsey Turnpike opened in 1755. The Great North Road connected London to the north, bringing significant traffic to the town. This period also saw the River Ivel being made navigable, bringing traffic from Kings Lynn. This greatly enhanced commerce in the market town, encouraging the development of brewing. At its height the town had fifty inns or pubs.

In 1785 a Great Fire destroyed a significant part of the town, although the full extent of the destruction is uncertain. The fire did extend to the vicinity of the DA, affecting the northern part of the street. The Baptist Meeting House at the junction of Hitchin Street and Foundry Lane (HER 2069) was rebuilt at this time; whilst the George Inn, a short distance to the north, also appears to have burnt down (Page 1995: 57). In the late 18th century Hitchin Street was known as



Holme Street and Langford Street (Albion 2003, 17); both are settlements to the south of Biggleswade.

The earliest document referring to the Black Bear (HER 2051) is a deed of 1661, at which time the street was known as Holme Street (Page 1995: 57). The Tithe Map of 1838 shows the Bear Inn as it was then — an L-shaped building at the street frontage, extending to the west in the north, with access to the rectangular plot in the south-east corner (Figure 2). Outbuildings, depicted in grey, are ranged along the northern and western sides of the site. Part of the southern side, adjacent to Bear Alley (identified in a deed of 1868 held in BLARS X440/559) is open. An 1858 deed indicates that these buildings included stabling, stores and sheds as well as an open skittle alley. The 1868 deed indicates that the site was owned by the Manor of Biggleswade. A similar arrangement of buildings can be seen on the adjacent plot to the south of Bear Alley. This was another inn. The form and close proximity of these suggests that they are coaching inns, with stabling to the rear, which probably developed in response to increasing coach trade.

Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps of 1884, 1901 and 1926 show remarkably little change to the site, apart from buildings lining the southern margin adjacent to Bear Alley. It is likely that the building occupying the site until recently was the one depicted on the 1838 Tithe Map.

1.4 Project Objectives

The trial trench layout (Figure 3) was designed to assess the archaeological potential of the DA in the most efficient manner possible, whilst ensuring an adequate stand-off from adjacent buildings and boundary walls, in accordance with the Boundary Wall *etc.* Act 1996. The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature of the archaeological remains in this sensitive area;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- if there was any evidence for prehistoric or Roman occupation of the site;
- if there was any evidence for the Great Fire or an earlier building on the site.

Due to significant disturbance of the periphery of the site, associated with the recently demolished buildings, the focus of trenching was on the central area, beyond the disturbance.



2. METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching took place between 6th and 9th April 2010. Both the proposed trenches were opened (Figure 3). Trench 1 was roughly L-shaped, examining the rear of the former street front building, extending westwards to examine the central area of the DA. Trench 2 was aligned roughly north-south, investigating the western part of the area.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- IfA's *Code of Conduct (1999a)*;
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (1999b)*;
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (2001)*;
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects (1991)*.

The location of the trenches was marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. After the concrete was broken-out, overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to either the top of archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The bases and sections of all trenches were cleaned by hand in order to clarify the nature of potential archaeological remains. The deposits and any potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn, and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1 and 200 for Trench 2.

The CBCA visited the site on 7th April, with the trenches subsequently being backfilled following completion of the investigation.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Following a general discussion of the modern overburden and geological strata, the archaeological features are described by trench. This is necessary as there are contrasts in the nature and intensity of activity between the front and rear of the site. Archaeological features will be discussed, where possible, in chronological order from earliest to latest. This will use stratigraphic and finds data, as well as inferred sequence. Detailed information on all deposits and archaeological features can be found in Appendix 1 (Section 6). Information on finds and from the ecofact samples is integrated into the following discussion.

3.2 Ground Levels

The current ground rises slightly from the street frontage to the rear of the DA. At the street frontage it is *c.* 29.76m OD, rising to 30.15m OD on the tarmac at the southern end of Trench 2. These levels are similar to those of the adjacent land beyond the DA.

3.3 Modern Deposits/Overburden

The ground levels are deceptive as both trenches revealed similar extensive deposits of modern material, generally *c.* 0.6m thick, above which are concrete and tarmac surfaces (100)-(101) in Trench 1 and (200)-(201) Trench 2 (see Figure 4: sections 2-4). It would appear that the ground level in a significant part of the site had been mechanically reduced to a formation level before the ground was made-up, using material brought into the site, probably to form a base for the concrete and tarmac external surfaces.

At the rear of the site in Trench 2, a series of deposits were revealed indicating a series of alterations to the site in recent times (Figure 4: section 4) involving terracing into the ground and associated importation of materials to raise the ground level. It is not clear if cut [206] and deposits (202-205) and wall (207) define an earlier phase of modern landscaping. As the wall was sealed by tarmac (200), it may suggest an earlier phase possibly defined by wall (207) in the west. The sloping profile of the wall footing (207) is probably due to settling of the underlying pit fills. It is not clear if this was a load-bearing wall of an outbuilding, although no obvious attempt to underpin or buttress it was identified. It is not clear if concrete surface (203) was associated with this wall. Layer (208) is an imported soil, possibly representing an attempt to landscape the area and create a garden; possibly the Bear Garden referred to in documents. Wall (231) also extended to the base of the tarmac and defines the southern extent of a series of modern make up deposits, suggesting it is also modern.

Earlier phases of modern deposits were identified, with levelling layers (112) and (113) composed of light yellow white and mid grey brown silty sand. These deposits were associated with the later extension to the rear of the inn (Figure 4: section 1).



3.4 Undisturbed Geological Strata

A similar sequence of geological strata was revealed in both trenches, comprising a more homogeneous reddish brown to brown orange silty clay upper deposit (106)/(229), up to 0.32m thick. Most of this deposit had been removed across the area of investigation. Below this was a mottled deposit (107)/(230), which contained moderate chalk flacks and small chalk lumps.

3.5 Trench 1: Archaeological Features

A variety of features were revealed extending along most of the length of the trench (Figure 3).

3.5.1 Prehistoric artefacts

A small sherd of late 'Belgic' Iron Age pottery was recovered from the fill of a later pit (see 3.5.4 below) which may indicate that it derived from the DA. However, the fragment of a flint flake recovered from the infilled quarry pit (see 3.5.5 below) may have been brought to the site from elsewhere.

3.5.2 Cultivation soil

Immediately west of the street front building, at the northern limit of Trench 1, a small area of mid orange brown silty sand (105), up to 0.25m thick, was revealed (Figure 3, Figure 4: section 1 and Figure 5: image 1). No artefacts were recovered from this deposit. Its thickness suggests it may be a former cultivation soil, possibly the source of the material filling the recut boundary ditches (see 3.5.3 below).

3.5.3 Undated recut boundary ditch

Two parallel roughly north-south ditches [114] and [116], aligned obliquely to the current street, were identified some 8.5m to the west (Figure 3). The ditches were at least 1.4m long, fading out to the north, possibly due to later disturbance by a modern manhole. However, no trace of the ditches could be detected, which may suggest that they terminated in the trench. In section the possibly later eastern ditch [114] was more substantial: 1.05m wide with a concave profile 0.35m deep; it marginally truncated the western ditch [116] (Figure 4: section 2 and Figure 5: image 2). The ditches contained similar mid brown clay fills with the earlier ditch containing a small amount of animal bone. No datable artefacts were recovered from these features. The fill appears to have accumulated naturally from an unstable cultivation soil, possibly layer (105).

3.5.4 Late medieval pit

Situated immediately west of the street front building, pit [108] truncated cultivation soil (105). Only a curving segment of the pit survived; it had been heavily truncated by the foundations of the Black Bear Inn (Figure 3 and Figure 5: image 1). The pit was at least 1.25m long by 1.05m wide and 0.7m deep with irregular sides and a flat base (Figure 4: section 1). It contained three deposits (109), (110), (111) that varied from mid orange sand to dark brown grey sandy silt with moderate charcoal fragments and a moderate amount of late medieval pottery in a variety of fabric types. These deposits would appear to have been deliberately deposited soon after the pit had been dug. A small sherd of residual Iron Age pottery was also recovered from the fill. The ecofact sample <3> from the lower



fill (109) contained very small quantities of charcoal and charred grain. A variety of artefacts — all in very small quantities — included hammerscale, glassy slag and fuel ash slag, a tiny fragment of green glass and a single fragment of mortar. Tiny fragments of bone, both burnt and unburnt, were also present. This would suggest that a small amount of rubbish, derived from a variety of activities was dumped into the pit.

3.5.5 Post-medieval quarry pit

Extensive pit [104] extended from the western edge of boundary ditch [116] westwards, extending beyond the margins of Trench 1 (Figure 3). It had a gently sloping eastern side and was at least 12.25m long, 2.3m wide and at least 0.45m deep (Figure 4: section 3). The quarry pit appeared to respect the location of the recut boundary [114], [116] (see 3.5.3 above). It is possible that early quarry [216] defines the western extent of this pit in Trench 2.

The fills would appear to have all been deliberate dumps, which were deposited in a controlled manner over a short period of time. The main fills (103) and (118) were mid grey brown clay silt deposits with frequent charcoal flecks. These were separated by a thin band of light yellow grey sand (119) and a minor lens (120) (Figure 4: section 3 and Figure 6: images 3 and 4). A variety of artefacts were recovered including over 300g of brick and tile, over 250g of pottery, as well as clay tobacco pipe, animal bone and a residual flint flake. Whilst the upper deposit contained a mixture of later medieval and post-medieval pottery, only late medieval pottery was recovered from the lower fill (118). A sample from this deposit <1> contained very small quantities of charcoal and carbonised grain. Other artefacts included very small quantities of fragmentary burnt and unburnt bone and a single fish vertebra fragment. A sample from the upper fill <2> contained sparse charcoal flecks as well as a variety of artefacts including a stone fishing weight (RA 3) and small quantities of hammerscale and iron slag. The distribution of pottery is not thought to be significant, with the later medieval material being residual, rather than indicating a feature which was open for an extended period of time. There is no evidence to indicate a significant lapse of time between deposition of the main fills with only a thin band of redeposited clay (119) separating them in the east. The extensive and roughly level infilling, particularly deposit (103), suggests that the material was spread as it was dumped into the pit.

3.5.6 Capping layer

A distinctive and extensive band of ironstone sand (102), with frequent ironstone lumps had been spread across the partly infilled quarry [104] as well as the recut boundary ditches [114] and [116] (Figure 4: sections 2, 3 and Figure 5: image 2 and Figure 6: image 4). This deposit was very compact, indicating deliberate ramming of the material. The deposit was at least 0.25m thick, the upper boundary being the result of later truncation. Several large animal bones, probably horse, were recovered from the deposit.

3.5.7 Modern wall foundations for the street front building

The earliest foundations were the most substantial, constructed of three courses of red brick, bonded with yellow sandy mortar (Figure 3). These defined the cellared



area. Later additional structures were observed butting up to the rear (western) wall of the original building; they comprised red brick, two courses wide, bonded in white mortar (Figure 7: image 5). A range of small buildings, including the kitchen, with footings oblique to the original building, extended westwards along the northern limit of the DA. Later alterations to the rear wall of the original building included the insertion of a concrete lintel above the remodelled underground passage to the cellar flap.

The cellar beneath the street front building and voids created to the west of the structure during the recent demolition were backfilled with loose brick and timber from the demolition.

3.6 Trench 2: Archaeological Features

Trench 2 contained a complex sequence of features and deposits dating from the post-medieval period. Only a small area of undisturbed geological strata was revealed in the base of the trench (Figure 3 and Figure 4: section 4). A series of modern deposits extended up to 0.65m below the present ground surface; these are discussed in 3.3 above.

3.6.1 Intercutting post-medieval pits

A sequence of four intercutting pits [209], [214], [216] and [228] extended along the length of the trench (Figure 3, Figure 4: section 4 and Figure 8: images 6 and 7). Only the base and lower western extent of the earliest pit [216] survived, penetrating a short depth into the lower, mottled geological strata. Following quarrying, this appears to have been open for a period of time, allowing a primary fill (217) to accumulate. It is not clear if this was the result of the collapse of the upper edge of the pit, or if it indicates a longer period of abandonment, prior to backfilling (218). The backfill contained *c.* 40g of 17th-18th century pottery and almost 600g of brick and tile as well as part of a glass wine bottle and an iron knife blade. It is possible that these pits are the continuation of quarry pit [104] in Trench 1, defining its western extent.

The intermediate pit [214] was severely truncated by later activity including substantial pit [209] to the west. The stony fill of [214] contrasted with adjacent deposits, indicating it was material brought to the site to infill the pit. Quarry pit [209] was at least 0.84m deep continuing both to the west and south of the trench and also below the level of investigation. A series of deposits were identified, indicating deliberate backfilling. Generally, the fills were relatively dark in colour, varying from mid to dark grey brown, with a distinctive thin band of redeposited geological strata (211) possibly forming a temporary capping during infilling (Figure 4: section 4). Almost 600g of pottery and over 1kg of brick and tile were recovered from the fill. The pottery was predominantly 17th-18th century in date, including material from Potterspury in Northamptonshire and Staffordshire slipware. Residual medieval pottery was also present, predominantly 14th-16th century in date, as well as a small intrusive piece of 19th century pottery.

The central and northern parts of the trench contained a series of deposits, including areas of redeposited geological strata (Figure 8: image 7), which are



backfills of another pit. This is presumed to be later than those to the south as it cuts across the thin band of undisturbed geological strata, although it may define the continuation of an irregular pit.

3.7 Finds Summary

3.7.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a finds assemblage comprising mainly pottery, ceramic building material and animal bone (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Tr.	Feature	Feature type	Context	Spot date*	Finds Summary
1	102	Capping layer	102	Undated	Animal bone (1.5kg)
	104	Quarry pit	103	Post-medieval	Pottery (203g); brick (336g); ferrous slag (34g); vessel glass x2; fishing weight (RA 3); clay tobacco pipe (2g); animal bone (5g)
	104	Quarry pit	118	Late medieval	Pottery (63g); worked flint (2g); animal bone (25g)
	108	Pit	109	Late medieval	Pottery (88g); ferrous slag/hammerscale (3g); window glass (1g); mortar (1g); shell (1g); animal bone (38g)
	116	Ditch	117	Undated	Animal bone (15g)
	121	Modern intrusion	122	Post-medieval	Pottery (68g); roof tile (14g); clay tobacco pipe (2g)
2	208	Imported soil layer	208	Modern	Pottery (8g); clay tobacco pipe (1g); coal (6g)
	209	Quarry pit	212	Post-medieval	Pottery (581g); roof tile & brick (1kg); clay tobacco pipe (1g) copper alloy lace sheath (RA 1); shell (8g); animal bone (40g)
	216	Quarry pit	218	Post-medieval	Pottery (39g); roof tile & brick (590g); iron knife blade (RA 2) vessel glass x1
	225	Make-up layer	225	Post-medieval	Brick (1.3kg)
	228	Quarry pit	221	Post-medieval	Roof tile & brick (352g)

* - spot date based on date of latest artefact in context

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and feature

3.7.2 Pottery

Seventy-nine pottery sherds, weighing 1.1kg were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. Sherds are small, with an average weight of 13g, and moderately abraded. Sixteen fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Ceramic Type Series, currently held by Albion Archaeology. Fabrics are listed below (Table 2) in chronological order.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context/Sherd No.
<i>Late Iron Age</i>			
F39	Grog and mica	1	(109):1
<i>Early medieval</i>			
B07	Shell	4	(109):1
C59A	Coarse sand	2	(103):1, (109):1
C67	Mixed inclusions	1	(109):1
<i>Late medieval</i>			
E01	Reduced sand	25	(103):10, (109):7, (118):5, (212):3
E01D	Reduced sand (red margins)	3	(103):1, (109):1, (212):1
E02	Oxidised sand	11	(109):6, (118):2, (212):3
E03	Smooth oxidised sand	3	(109):2, (212):1
<i>Post-medieval</i>			
P01	Glazed red earthenware	11	(122):6, (212):3, (218):2
P19	Mottle/speckle-glazed ware	1	(103):1
P30	Staffordshire slipware	12	(103):12
P53	Potterspury slipware	1	(218):1
<i>Modern</i>			
P43	Pearlware	1	(212):1



P45	Transfer-printed ware	1	(208):1
P50	Stoneware	1	(212):1
P55	White earthenware	1	(208):1

Table 2: Pottery type series

An undiagnostic, highly abraded late 'Belgic' Iron Age grog tempered sherd (8g) occurred as a residual find in late medieval pit [108].

Medieval pottery comprises seven undiagnostic sherds (32g) in locally manufactured sand and shell tempered fabrics of 12th-13th century date. Pottery datable to the 14th-15th centuries comprises twenty-eight sand tempered sherds (182g) in the late medieval reduced ware tradition. A number of kiln sites are known both from documentary and archaeological evidence, located within Bedfordshire (Riseley, Everton, Flitwick, Heath and Reach), Buckinghamshire (Great Brickhill) and Northamptonshire (Higham Ferrers). Fourteen oxidised sand tempered sherds (64g) datable from the late 15th century also occur. Vessel forms are jars, one with a thumbled rim, and a jug. The medieval assemblage derived from the fill of pit [108], and occurred as a residual component in post-medieval quarry pit [104].

Post-medieval pottery (481g), associated mainly with Trench 2 quarry pits, comprises locally manufactured glazed red earthenware (11 sherds), slipware from Staffordshire and Northamptonshire (12 and one sherd respectively) and a single sherd of mottle/speckle-glazed ware. Diagnostic vessel forms are mainly large bowls and shallow dishes.

Pottery of 18th-19th century date comprises single sherds of pearlware, transfer-printed ware, stoneware and white earthenware (total weight 283g), recovered from quarry pit [209] and imported soil layer (208).

3.7.3 Ceramic building material

Abraded ceramic building material (36 pieces, weighing 3.7kg) derived mainly from quarry pits [104], [209], [216] and [228]. The assemblage includes oxidised sand tempered brick fragments and pieces of late medieval/post-medieval flat roof tile, the latter ranging in thickness between 13-17mm. A possible unglazed pavioir (thickness 30mm) and a hand made gault clay brick fragment measuring 92mm wide and 40mm deep were also collected.

3.7.4 Other finds

Non-ceramic artefacts comprise an incomplete, repaired copper alloy lace sheath (RA 1) datable from the early to mid-13th to mid-14th century (quarry pit [209]), an undatable iron knife blade (RA 2: quarry pit [216]), and a stone fishing net weight (RA 3), broadly datable to the medieval period (quarry pit [104]). Three olive green glass fragments deriving from post-medieval wine bottles and a sliver of undatable window glass were collected, along with four post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem fragments, one with a stamped heel. Ferrous slag (37g), some associated with the smelting process, and three tiny fragments of flake and spheroidal hammerscale (total weight 1g) derived from pits [104] and [108]. The latter also yielded an undatable mortar fragment (1g). A broken worked flint flake (2g) was collected from pit [104].



3.7.5 Ecofacts

The faunal assemblage comprises twenty-two fragments weighing 1.7kg, and occurs in medieval, post-medieval and undated features. The majority derived from undated capping layer (102), which contained six incomplete long bones likely to derive from a horse. The remaining fragments are small, although bone preservation is generally good. Diagnostic elements are long bone, rib and mandible fragments of indeterminate species, and a single bird bone. Mussel and oyster shell fragments (9g) were recovered from pits [108] and [209].



4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 *Summary*

The investigation revealed that a significant part of the street frontage area had been disturbed by the former Black Bear Inn, with a series of cellars occupying the footprint of the building, with additional cellarage to the rear. Extensive terracing associated with modern deposits (up to 0.6m thick) affected the area to the rear of the inn, with sewers and associated manhole inspection hatches extending to a deeper level. Despite this truncation a series of deposits provide a snap shot of the development of the site. Although the earliest part of the sequence is undated, evidence of late medieval and post-medieval activity was revealed, shedding light on significant periods in the history of Biggleswade.

Residual prehistoric artefacts, comprising a flint flake and a small sherd of late 'Belgic' Iron Age pottery, were recovered from later features near the street frontage. Whilst the sherd of pottery may have been derived from contemporary deposits in the vicinity, it is likely that the flint was brought to the site as part of the material dumped to infill a 17th-18th century quarry.

The earliest feature was a small area of cultivation soil situated immediately behind the street front building. The date of the activity is uncertain, although it may have been associated with a substantial recut boundary ditch, aligned roughly north-south, which is oblique to the current street, some 8.5m to the east. The undated ditch fills were derived from an unstable cultivation soil. The boundary alignment contrasts with current boundaries, which are probably relics of the medieval town, while the cultivation soil indicates a pre-urban landscape. This may suggest a date prior to the development and planning of the medieval settlement, which occurred from the 12th-14th centuries.

The cultivation soil was truncated by a late medieval pit providing evidence of a variety of activities in the vicinity – possibly located towards the street front and subsequently destroyed by cellars. It is not clear if the ditched boundary continued to exert an influence at this time. Documents indicate that the Black Bear Inn was established by 1661. It is not clear if this inn survived the Great Fire of 1785. Circumstantial evidence suggests that it may not have done; the fire is known to have affected buildings in the immediate vicinity. Pottery indicates that at least one large pit was excavated in the 17th-18th century, extracting the upper geological strata, with the cavity being systematically and rapidly backfilled with a series of deposits. It is unlikely that the inn could have been functioning whilst this activity was underway. Given the date and mixture of artefacts, this activity could be associated with clearance and reconstruction following the Great Fire of 1785. A capping layer of imported ironstone sand, at least 0.25m thick was compacted to seal the area. Such extensive activity would need to have been done with the permission of the Lord of the Manor – later deeds for tenants of the inn indicate that pit digging was explicitly forbidden.



4.2 Preservation and Significance

Despite modern disturbance, the DA has produced some evidence, albeit fragmentary, for the survival of heritage assets, which have the potential to provide a limited insight into aspects of Biggleswade's past. There are a few areas beyond the cellars where evidence for medieval activity may survive. To the rear of the street front building, the pits and particularly the extensive quarry would appear to relate to the Great Fire, a notable but poorly documented event in Biggleswade's history. The intercutting pits to the rear may be associated with the inn; they are located in the western part of the site, known as Bear Garden, which extended to St Andrews Street. In summary, the nature and date of the features have limited local significance relating to the medieval and later medieval life of the town.



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6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 2.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.85 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To investigate ground behind demolished street front building.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Concrete	Modern concrete and tarmac surface. Thickness 0.17m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Make up layer	Friable dark brown clay silt frequent small-medium ceramic building material, occasional small charcoal Deposit was up to 0.45m thick, being associated with terracing [123]. The deposit contained small coal fragments.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Levelling layer	Friable light yellow brown silty sand The ironstone sand deposit was up to 0.25m thick, and contained animal bone and frequent ironstone fragments.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
104	Quarry	sides: concave dimensions: min breadth 2.3m, min depth 0.45m, min length 12.25m Cut of a large quarry pit. Base and full extent of the feature not observed as the feature extends beyond the limits of the trench.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Upper fill	Friable mid brown grey clay silt frequent small-medium ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones Deposit contained tile, pottery, animal bone, vessel glass and clay tobacco pipe fragments. Ecofact sample <2> contained small quantities of charcoal, possible charred grain fragments as well as glass, coal and RA 3 a worked stone.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
118	Lower fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt frequent flecks charcoal Deliberate backfill within quarry pit. The deposit was at least 0.16m thick and contained pottery and animal bone fragments and a flint flake. Ecofact sample <1> contained small quantities of charcoal and charred grain as well as fuel ash slag and a fragment of a small fish vertebra.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
119	Fill	Friable light grey yellow silty clay The lens was a maximum 0.04m thick , tapering down to the east. This is below (103) and above (118).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
120	Lens	Plastic light yellow grey clay occasional small stones A small lens of material within (103).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Buried topsoil	Friable mid orange brown silty sand moderate flecks charcoal, occasional small stones This deposit was located towards the street frontage, surviving below the later extension to the building. The deposit was c.0.25m thick, suggesting that it was an old cultivation soil.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Natural	Friable light brown orange sand Sand with some silt in the matrix. Upper band of geological strata c.0.32m thick. This equates to (229) in Trench 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Natural	Friable light orange white silty sand moderate small stones Lower geological strata similar to (230) in Trench 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Pit	Sub-circular sides: irregular base: flat dimensions: min breadth 1.05m, min depth 0.7m, min length 1.25m Curving edge in plan, surviving between two perpendicular wall footings of Black Bear Inn and associated cellar.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Lower fill	Friable mid orange grey sandy silt moderate small charcoal, occasional small-medium stones Deposit was up to 0.45m thick and contained pottery and animal bone fragments. Ecofact sample <3> contained a small fragment of glass as well as small quantities of charcoal, charred seed, hammerscale and fuel ash slag.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
110	Secondary fill	Loose mid orange sand occasional small stones A thin lens of re-deposited geological strata up to 0.05m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111	Upper fill	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt moderate small charcoal, occasional small stones The deposit was up to 0.32m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	Levelling layer	Friable light yellow white silty sand frequent small-medium stones A levelling layer associated with the extension of the Black Bear Inn to the west. The 0.05m thick deposit was confined to a small area, suggesting that it was not a fill of the earlier pit [108].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 2.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.85 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To investigate ground behind demolished street front building.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
113	Levelling layer	Loose mid grey brown silty sand frequent medium ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones A levelling layer up to 0.28m thick, associated with the extension of the Black Bear Inn to the west.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
114	Ditch	Linear N-S sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.05m, min depth 0.35m, min length 1.4m More substantial ditch in the east, which appears to be the later recutting of [116].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
115	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
116	Ditch	Linear N-S sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.7m, min depth 0.24m, min length 1.4m Initial and less substantial form of boundary. The eastern extent appears to have been lost to later recutting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
117	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones Deposit contained animal bone fragments.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
121	Modern intrusion	Linear sides: vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.4m, min depth 0.92m, max length 4.1m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
122	Fill	Friable mid grey brown silty sand Deposit contained tile, pottery and clay tobacco pipe fragments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
123	Modern intrusion	Horizontal machine cut surface beneath make up layer (101)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 9.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To examine area to rear of known buildings.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Tarmac	Black Deposit was 0.06m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Make up layer	Compact yellow brown sandy silt frequent small stones The deposit was up to 0.16m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Make up layer	Friable mid brown silty clay Confined to area east of wall (207). The deposit was up to 0.21m thick. This may be the same as (225).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	External surface	Concrete Confined to area to east of wall (207). Possibly a contemporary surface.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Wall	This would appear to be a cut which levelled part of the site with a deeper part for the wall.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Fill	Mid brown silty clay This would appear to be part of the fill of a wide wall construction cut.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Fill	Compact yellow brown silty sand Contains fine pea gravel. Levelling layer which extends into the base of the wall cut [206].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Wall	Unfrogged yellow bricks, bonded with white mortar. The wall is not vertical, subsiding down to the west. Sealed by modern tarmac (200).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
208	Dump material	Imported garden soil up to 0.21m thick, confined to area west of wall (207). The deposit contained pottery, clay tobacco pipe stem fragments and coal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
209	Quarry	Linear N-S sides: vertical dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.84m, min length 1.8m Latest in sequence of three pits.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
210	Fill	Dark grey brown silty silt Lowest exposed fill of [209] at least 0.08m thick. Merges into (212) to east.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
211	Fill	Compact yellow brown silty clay moderate flecks chalk Slopes down to east, up to 0.11m thick, tapering with depth. Redeposited geological strata - possible capping deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
212	Fill	Dark grey brown clay silt frequent small stones Extensive deposit up to 0.51m thick in the east, being more stoney than (213) above. This contained pottery, tile, oyster shell and animal bone fragments and RA 1 a copper alloy lace sheath. Extensive backfilled deposit which accumulated rapidly.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
213	Upper fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt The deposit was roughly horizontal in profile 0.33m thick, being softer and less stoney than (212) below.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
214	Pit	Linear N-S base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.63m, max depth 0.4m, min length 2.2m Only concave base survives sloping down to the west. Intermediate pit in sequence of three intercutting pits. Function uncertain.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
215	Fill	Dark brown grey clay silt frequent small stones, occasional medium stones This deposit is much stonier than other deposits in the vicinity. Deliberate backfill.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
216	Quarry	Linear N-S sides: vertical base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.m, min depth 0.42m, min length 3.6m Only lower western side and base survive, continuing eastwards beyond the trench. Earliest of three pits. This may be a continuation of the large pit [104] in Trench 1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
217	Lower fill	Mid grey silty clay The fill is up to 0.12m thick, mottled with lesser red brown patches. Primary fill, derived from erosion/collapse of upper edges.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 9.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To examine area to rear of known buildings.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
218	Upper fill	Dark grey brown clay silt moderate small stones Deposit is up to 0.34m thick and contained pottery, Ceramic Building Material, vessel glass as well as RA 2, an iron knife blade. Deliberate backfill.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
225	Make up layer	Mid brown silty clay Upper step in vicinity of manhole. Deposit contained an unfroged brick. Possibly same as (202).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
226	Manhole	Linear NW-SE sides: vertical base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.55m, min length 3.25m Cut for manhole and associated sewer pipe, located in the northern part of the trench.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
227	Manhole	Brick-lined manhole and sewer pipe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
228	Quarry	Linear N-S sides: vertical dimensions: min breadth 2.m, min length 7.5m Extensive feature occupying central and northern part of trench - filled by (219) - (224).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
219	Fill	Compact mid grey clay silt frequent small stones Revealed in base of trench at northern end of narrow band of geological strata.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
220	Fill	Friable red brown silty sand Deposit revealed in base of trench. Redeposited geological strata - very soft.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
221	Fill	Mid grey sandy clay occasional small stones Deposit revealed in base of trench. Ceramic Building Material fragments recovered from the surface of the deposit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
222	Fill	Mid red brown silty sand occasional flecks chalk, occasional small stones Deposit revealed in base of trench.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
223	Fill	Yellow brown silty clay frequent flecks chalk Deposit revealed in base of trench. Redeposited geological strata.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
224	Fill	Light red yellow silty sand Redeposited geological strata. Identified in northern margin of trench.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
229	Natural	Red brown silty clay Upper horizon of geological strata, forming a narrow linear band between pits [209] and [216].	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
230	Natural	Firm yellow brown silty clay moderate flecks chalk Lower band of geological strata, with mottled patches of red and white sand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
231	Wall	Wall of yellow unfroged bricks, which crosses the trench obliquely.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

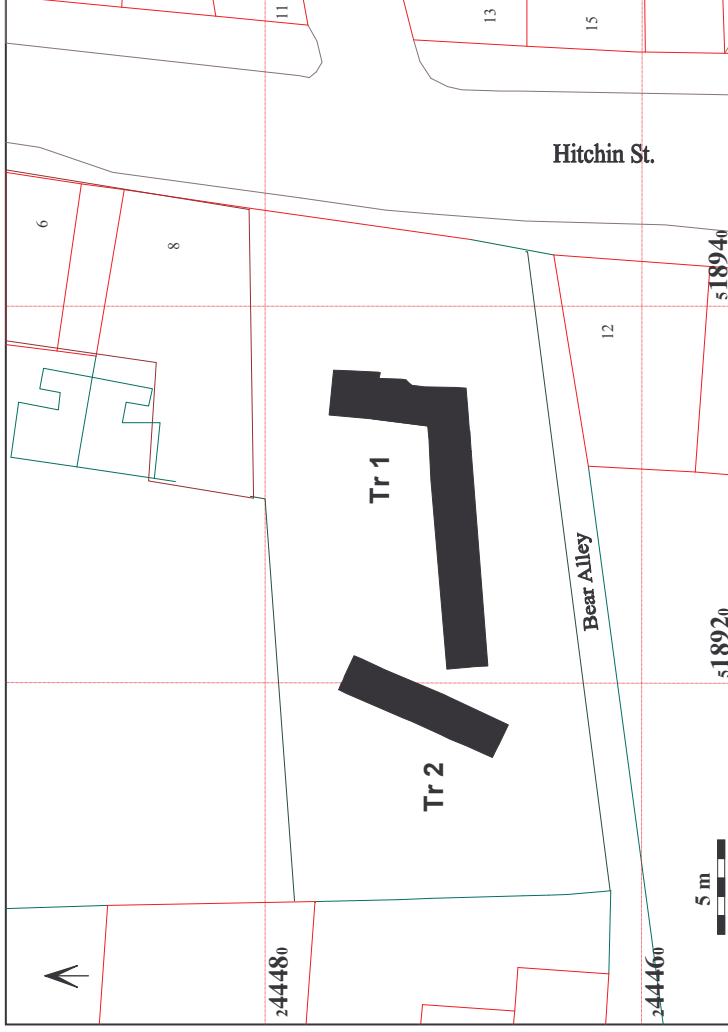
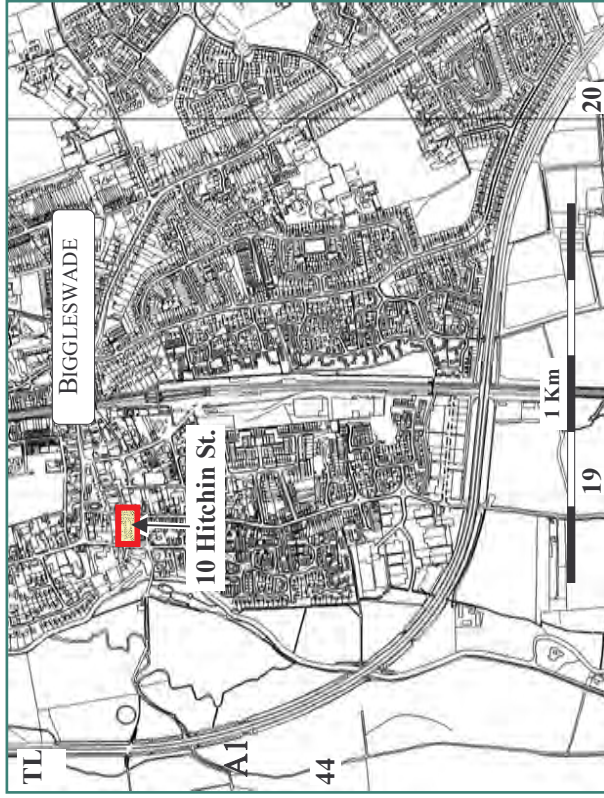
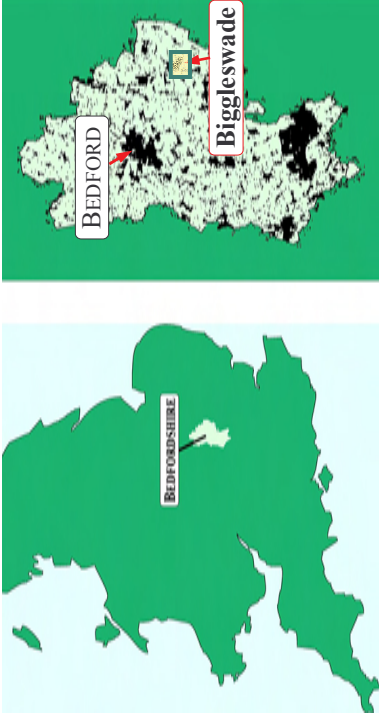


Figure 1: Site location and trench plan

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Figure 2: Detail from 1838 Tithe Map

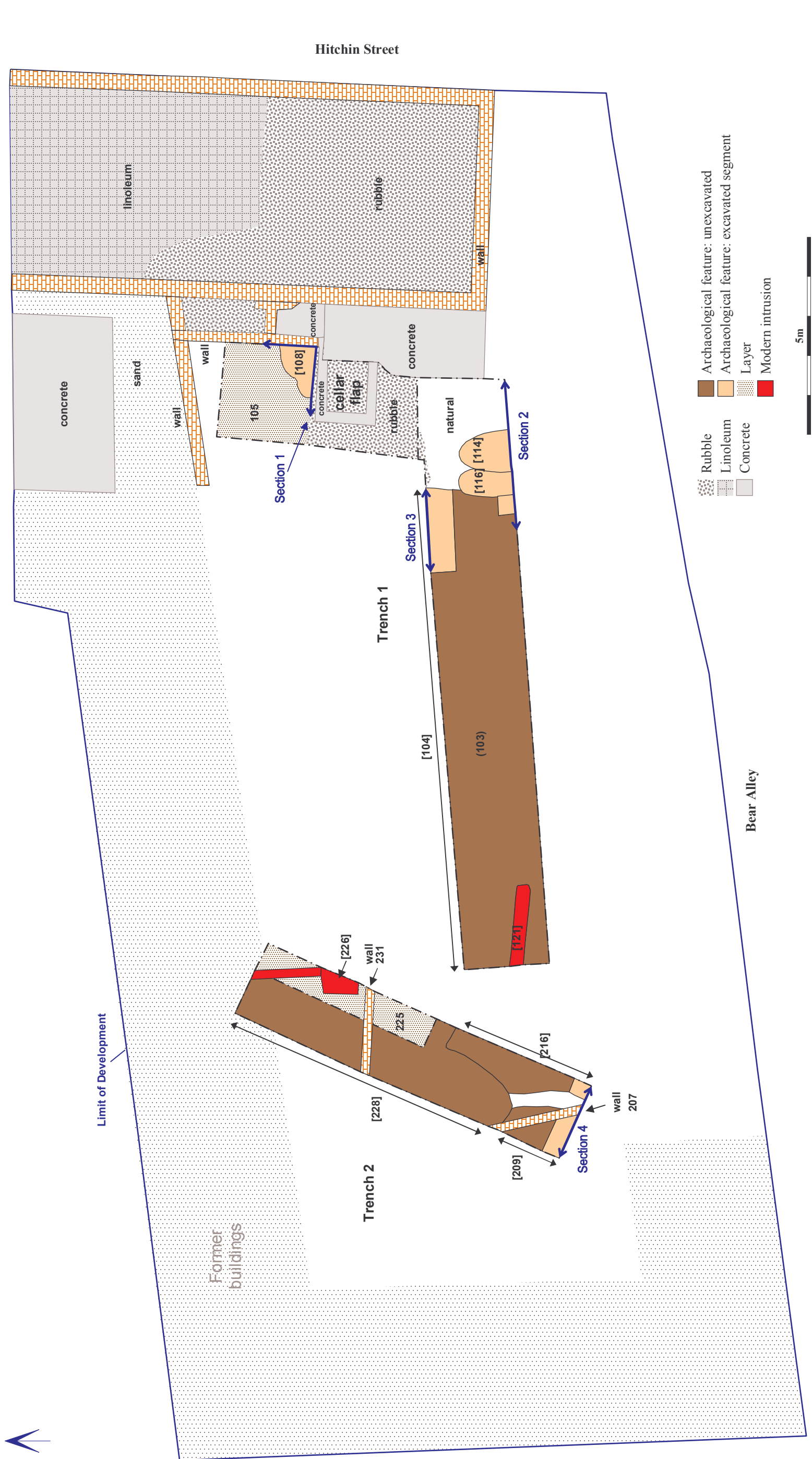


Figure 3: All features and deposits



Figure 4: Selected sections



Image 1: Segment of late medieval pit [108], surviving beyond the footing of the Black Bear Inn. The dark deposit against the wall to the left of the image is cultivation soil (105). Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.



Image 2: Undated ditches [114] and [116] sealed below yellow ironstone sand (102). Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 5: Trench 1 - Images 1 and 2



Image 3: General view of main segment of Trench 1, looking towards the Hitchin Street frontage, showing the dark grey fill (103) of post-medieval quarry [104], with patches of the capping layer of ironstone sand (102).



Image 4: Detail of deposits in Trench 1, comprising c.0.6m thickness of modern banded material, above the ironstone sand (102), with the brown grey fill (103) of quarry pit [104]. Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 6: Trench 1 - Images 3 and 4



Image 5: Detail of wall footings defining the rear of the Black Bear Inn. The thick wall on the left of the image is the original back wall of the cellar, bonded with yellow mortar with an extension to the right, made of a different type of brick, bonded with white mortar. This area corresponds to the bar on a 1907 plan. The oblique blocking wall nearest the camera is part of the kitchen which continued to the right.

The concrete slab at the top of the image is in the vicinity of an external pump shown on the 1907 plan. Immediately to the right of this is medieval pit [108] under excavation. Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 7: Trench 1 - Image 5



Image 6: Southern section of Trench 2 showing modern deposits sealing a series of intercutting post-medieval pits [209], [214] and [216]. Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.



Image 7: General view of Trench 2 looking southwards towards Bear Alley. Scale 1 metre in 0.5m divisions.

Figure 8: Trench 2 - Images 6 and 7