

**PARSONAGE HOUSE, CHURCH LANE
FARN DISH
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING
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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 and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Geoff Saunders, Archaeological Officer of Bedford Borough Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Wesley Keir and Christiane Meckseper (Project Officers) and Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Christiane Meckseper and edited by Gary Edmondson (Project Manager) with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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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 methodology for the project and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 is a bibliography.



Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

AO	Bedfordshire Borough Council's Archaeological Officer
Client	Rolton Group Ltd.
DA	Development Area
HER	Bedfordshire Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
HET	Borough Council's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted for the dismantling of an existing stable and erection of a games room with associated works in the grounds of Parsonage House, Church Lane, Farndish. The development area lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity — the core of the medieval settlement — and accordingly an archaeological condition requiring a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording during the development works was attached to the planning consent.

The following stages of groundworks were monitored during the development:

- 1. Excavation of four geological and soakaway test pits;*
- 2. Ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches in the footprint of the proposed games room;*
- 3. Excavation of a service trench from the new games room to Parsonage House;*
- 4. Foul water drainage, Klargestar septic tank and excavation of sub-surface irrigation system;*
- 5. Excavation of a trench to accommodate a ground source heating coil.*

No archaeological features predating the 19th, or possibly the 18th century, were revealed on the site. No archaeological features were uncovered in the area of the paddock to the east of the new games room (Stages 1, 4 and 5).

Several pits and areas of ground disturbance were recorded in Stages 2 and 3, located in the garden of Parsonage House. These are most likely to be associated with garden and landscaping works and possibly the construction of a new patio for the house.

The oldest feature revealed was the narrow foundation for a limestone wall within the footprint of the new games room. This lines up precisely with the small stable block previously located on the site. However, the construction of the foundation suggests a wall of greater antiquity and it is possible that it is more closely related to the foundations of a larger, more elongated stable block or outhouses along the eastern boundary of the present-day garden, which are shown on a map of Farndish dating to 1800.

The same map shows ridge and furrow cultivation in the area surrounding the Church of St Michael and Parsonage House. Therefore it is likely that most of the deposits revealed during the groundworks are agricultural soils.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM: 2010.43).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission was granted for the dismantling of an existing stable and erection of a games room with associated works in the grounds of Parsonage House, Church Lane, Farndish (10/01306/FUL). The development area (DA) lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity — the core of the medieval settlement — and accordingly an archaeological condition (Condition 3) was attached to the planning permission. This is in accordance with the guidance provided in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*.

A brief for the archaeological work was issued by the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council (2010), detailing the requirements for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording during the development works. In response to the brief, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2010) and agreed with the HET.

Archaeological monitoring of the construction works took place between September 2010 and March 2011. The results are presented in this report.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The village of Farndish is situated close to the north-western edge of Bedfordshire, on the upper western side of a tributary of the River Nene.

Parsonage House lies to the east of the church at the northern margin of the current village (Figure 1). The house occupies the north-western part of the site, with the stable to the south-east. The central area of the land parcel is occupied by trees, which line the driveway. To the east is a triangular paddock.

The DA is located in the south-eastern corner of the garden of Parsonage House. Services associated with the new building extend eastwards into the adjacent paddock. The garden is separated from the paddock by a modern wooden fence and a border planted with low shrubs.

The site is centred grid reference SP (4)92873 (2)63682 and occupies gently sloping ground at c.75m OD, descending to the south-east.

The valley side exposes a series of deposits in the vicinity of Farndish, with the site located in a band of Upper Lias clay, with alluvium to the south and east (British Geological Survey Wellingborough England and Wales sheet 186).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

Little is known about the heritage assets and, in particular, the archaeological potential of the area. A 1km radius search of the Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record revealed approximately 45 previously recorded sites. Most of these date to the post-medieval period, comprising buildings or structures such as water pumps.



Parsonage House (HER 8060) is a Grade II listed building. It was formerly a vicarage and is first referred to in a document of 1607. An adjacent well (HER 13052) is shown on the 1901 25-inch OS map. The site is situated adjacent to the medieval church (HER 1055) and associated churchyard (HER 8949); the earliest surviving burial monument dates to 1678.

The land parcel containing Parsonage House is at the northern limit of the Farndish Conservation Area, whilst the paddock to the east is outside the Conservation Area.

The only prehistoric sites recorded in the area are located to the south and east. To the east lie HER 849, which comprises evidence for Iron Age and Roman occupation, and HER 12912, which represents a series of cropmarks, mostly enclosures of uncertain date. One of the cropmarks, a ring ditch, may be the remains of a prehistoric burial monument.

Situated some 800m west of the site is the route of a Roman Road HER 58, linking Irchester with Kempston, near Bedford. There are five other Roman sites located some distance to the south and east of the current site. HER 9075, a polygonal enclosure visible as a cropmark, appears to be associated with a scatter of Roman finds. HER 2650 comprises a scatter of pottery, tile and building stone, defining a building, possibly a villa. Another occupation site HER 848 may also represent a villa, although the two sites are in close proximity. HER 849 (see above) also contained evidence for Roman occupation. A possible ford has been identified to the north-east of the site (HER 11305).

Saxon activity is indicated by isolated findspots of Anglo-Saxon brooches (HER 14809) dating to the 6th century and a Saxon pinhead (HER 18213) dating to the 8th–9th century. Whilst the brooches were from an area some distance to the south-east of the current site, the pinhead was recovered a relatively short distance to the west.

The village is recorded in Domesday Book as *Fernadis*. Eight sites related to the medieval period include the church of St Michael and All Angels (HER 1055) which has its origins in the 12th century. The medieval core of the village (HER 16954) defines the linear settlement which extended along Irchester Road, located to the west of Parsonage House.

In the area immediately to the north are a series of earthworks (HER 2561). These comprise traces of ridge and furrow, characteristic of medieval arable cultivation, and house platforms, possibly associated with the medieval settlement. Aerial photographs indicate that the ridge and furrow extended up to Church Lane, although it is less well defined in the area adjacent to Parsonage House. HER 8820 also defines traces of ridge and furrow cultivation.

Other features of the medieval landscape comprise earthworks defining a pound (HER 13026) and a routeway (HER 13024). Documentary evidence suggests the presence of a rabbit warren (HER 13025), indicating an owner of some status.



1.4 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature of any archaeological remains that may be present;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological remains that were present.

The project had the potential to add to the knowledge and understanding of the origins and development of the settlement, being located close to a significant medieval building — the parish church — and adjacent to the key road through the settlement and the specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- if there was medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site;
- if there was any evidence for a Saxon precursor to the settlement;
- if there was any evidence for Roman or earlier activity on the site.



2. METHODOLOGY

During the course of the development the groundwork interventions that required archaeological monitoring consisted of the following components:

1. Excavation of four geological and soakaway test pits;
2. Ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches in the footprint of the proposed games room;
3. Excavation of a service trench from the new games room to Parsonage House;
4. Foul water drainage, installation of a Klargestar septic tank and excavation of sub-surface irrigation system;
5. Excavation of a trench to accommodate a ground source heating coil.

Ground reduction was undertaken by a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Any revealed deposits and potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The interventions and remains were subsequently photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence for each groundworks component, commencing at 10 for Test pit 1, 20 for Test pit 2, etc and 50 for the building footprint, etc.

A detailed methodology is set out in the Written Statement of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2010).

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

- IfA's *Code of Conduct* (2010)
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Field Excavations* (updated 2008) and *finds* (updated 2008)
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (2001)
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991)

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM: 2010.43).



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Several phases of groundworks were undertaken in the process of construction of the new games room. The first phase consisted of the excavation of four test pits in the paddock to the east of Parsonage House.

The location of the new games room is on the site of a now dismantled, small stable, the concrete foundation of which was removed before excavation for the new foundations took place. Several new services were installed for the new building; these extended from Parsonage House to the games room and from the games room into the paddock to the east (Figure 2).

The precise nature of each stage of the works is detailed below. The archaeological results are then summarized in a separate section. Context numbers were only given in those areas that contained archaeological features.

3.2 Test Pits

Four test pits were excavated in the paddock to the east of the garden of Parsonage House (Figure 2: TP 1- TP 4). Test pits 1 and 2 were dug to test the water filtration rate but Test pit 1 was aborted, due to presence of a land drain at a depth of c.1m. Test pits 3 and 4 were dug to test the nature of the geology.

Test pits 1, 2 and 4 were 2.2m x 0.7m wide; Test pit 3 was 3.2m x 0.7m wide. The test pits ranged from 1.1–3m deep.

All test pits contained overburden, 0.4–0.45m thick, likely to have been derived from cultivation activity. A slightly lighter, brown subsoil, c.0.15m thick, most likely of colluvial origin, was discernible in Test pits 1 and 2.

Undisturbed geological deposits, generally consisting of firm orange-grey clay, were reached at c.0.4–0.45m below ground level (BGL). A stonier clay deposit, 0.15–0.3m thick, was visible within Test pit 3 at 0.45m BGL. Mudstone deposits were revealed at c.1.8m BGL.

No archaeological deposits or finds were revealed in any of the test pits.

3.3 Games Room Footprint

The new games room is located on the site of a now dismantled stable building. The foundation of the stable block consisted of a rectangular concrete pad 7.2m x 7.5m wide, that was broken up and removed prior to the ground reduction for the new building.

The proposed games room straddles the area of the dismantled stable building and a previously undisturbed, but undulating, part of the garden. Therefore, the footprint of the new building was reduced by 0.4–0.6m to create a level platform.



Overburden consisted of *c.*0.25m of garden soil and turf in the western part of the building footprint. In the eastern part it consisted of *c.*0.20m of made-up ground below the concrete slab. Undisturbed geological deposits consisted of a layer of ironstone gravel, 0.18m thick, above mid orange and yellow silty clay.

Archaeological features were revealed at a depth of *c.*0.25m BGL (Figure 3, Table 1). The features consisted of an L-shaped possible wall foundation [504], composed of limestone fragments, in the south-eastern part of the building footprint. In the west it had a distinctive terminus; in the north it continued beyond the limit of excavation. The foundation appeared to define the south-eastern corner of an earlier building.

Two pits were also revealed. Pit [506] was located near the northern edge of the new building footprint and pit [508] near the southern edge (Figure 3). The latter was truncated by the western end of wall foundation [504], indicating sequential activity in this area. The function of the pits is unclear.

Context	Type	Description	Measurements	Interpretation
504	Cut	Linear in plan, east-west alignment curving sharply to north-south alignment in east. Terminus in west. Vertical sides with flat base.	6.8m and 4m long 0.35m wide, 0.20m deep.	Wall or drain?
505	Fill	Friable dark greyish brown clayey silt with occasional small ironstone. Areas of frequent medium-sized limestone fragments.	as 504	Fill of [504]
506	Cut	Circular in plan with steep sides and a concave base.	0.49m in diameter, 0.18m deep.	Pit/posthole
507	Fill	Friable to plastic dark orange brown silty clay with moderate small ironstone, sandstone and limestone fragments, occasional coal flecks. One fragment of white glazed pottery (not kept).	as 506	Fill of [506]
508	Cut	Sub-circular in plan with steep sides and a concave to flattish base.	1.0m long 0.90m wide, 0.25m deep.	Pit
509	Fill	Friable dark orange brown silty clay with moderate limestone and ironstone fragments, occasional charcoal flecks and animal bone.	as 509	Fill of [508]

Table 1: Archaeological features revealed in footprint of new games room

3.4 Service Trench from Games Room to Parsonage House

A service trench extended from the new games room to the patio of Parsonage House (Figure 2). It was 1m wide and up to *c.*0.80m deep. Overburden consisted of a 0.18m-thick garden soil that lay above geological strata, comprising a layer of ironstone and orange clay.

Three modern pits were revealed in the section of the service trench below the overburden. These are described in Table 2. The northern part of the pipe trench



revealed several levelling layers that may be associated with the construction of the modern patio of Parsonage House.

Context	Type	Description	Measurements	Interpretation
603	Cut	Concave sides, possible flat base. Only recorded in section.	0.55m wide 0.25m deep	Foundation cut for levelling beneath modern block paving patio.
604	Fill	Friable mid grey clay silt with moderate medium stones.	Same as 603.	Probable levelling layer beneath patio.
605	Cut	Only recorded in section. Concave sides and base.	1.15m long >0.90m wide, 0.44m deep.	Modern pit, possible post-pit?
606	Fill	Friable light grey brown clay silt with occasional ironstone fragments. Contained modern glass and iron nail.	0.10m deep.	Primary fill of pit.
607	Fill	Friable dark black grey clay silt with occasional ironstone fragments.	0.34m deep.	Secondary fill of pit.
608	Cut	Only recorded in section. W side almost vertical, SE side shallow concave, flat base.	10.5m wide, 0.50m deep.	Possible landscaping of garden.
609	Fill	Friable mid orange brown clay with occasional large ironstone fragments and occasional modern artefacts (drain pipe fragments and brick fragments.).	Same as 608.	Fill of [608].
610	Cut	Only recorded in section. Concave base and sides. Truncates pit [608].	2.25m long, >0.90m wide 0.64m deep.	Modern pit.
611	Fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt with occasional ironstone fragments.	Same as 610.	Fill of [610].

Table 2: Archaeological features revealed in service trench

3.5 Foul Water Drainage, Septic Tank and Sub-surface Irrigation System

The design of the foul water drainage system was revised. Original plans showed the soakaway system to be in the form of an E-shaped trenching system, immediately to the east of the Klargestep septic tank. This was changed to a much larger, but shallower, rectangular area (Figure 2) and was associated with a build-up of ground, consisting of gravel and soil in order to aid drainage.

The area of ground reduction for the soakaway was 25m by 6m wide and 0.30m deep (Figures 2 and 4). Only the overburden was removed. This consisted of friable mid to dark brown loamy clay topsoil, above a subsoil of mid yellowish brown loamy clay with occasional small to medium limestone fragments.

No archaeological features were revealed and a scan of the soil bunds recovered no artefacts. The soils were more or less completely sterile.

The trench for the Klargestep septic tank measured c.2.0 in width and depth. It revealed a layer of overburden and subsoil, 0.35m thick in total, above yellow clay geological strata. No archaeological features were revealed.



Two more Klargesters tanks were installed but they were part of the raised area and were, therefore, situated above the old ground level.

3.6 Trench for Ground Source Heating Pump Coil

The trench was located to the south-east of the new games room and extended to the southern boundary of the paddock (Figure 2). It was 2m wide and 1.2m deep. Throughout most of the trench a layer of topsoil, 0.2m thick, lay directly above orange clay (Figure 5). In the northern part of the trench was a thicker, more disturbed layer of mixed topsoil and garden soil with occasional brick fragments. It was up to 0.8m thick and extended for c.10m southwards. It was above a layer of ironstone, which was 0.2m thick and extended a further 5m into the trench.

No archaeological features or artefacts were revealed.

3.7 Discussion

The groundworks at Parsonage House, Farndish, revealed no archaeological features pre-dating the 19th or possibly 18th century. No archaeological features were revealed in the areas of the foul water soakaway system and ground source heating coil trench in the paddock to the east of Parsonage House.

Man-made features in the form of possible pits and construction cuts were revealed during the groundworks for the construction of the games room and the service trench connecting it with Parsonage House. These are all located in the garden of Parsonage House and may relate to landscaping within the garden, which lies on uneven and undulating ground, construction of a new patio for Parsonage House and other, potential, gardening works.

The foundation of a narrow stone wall was revealed in the footprint of the new building. The foundation formed a rectangular alignment and continued northwards beyond the limit of excavation. When the drawing of the wall was overlaid with drawings of the now demolished stable block, they seemed to match precisely (Figure 3). However, the limestone structure of the wall seemed to be of greater antiquity than the modern concrete footings for the stable.

A map of the parish of Farndish, dating to 1800, shows an elongated, possible stable block or a row of outhouses, along the eastern boundary of the current garden. It is possible that the limestone wall foundation represents part of the footings for the southern part of these outhouses. Geo-referencing of a map of that date is difficult and it was not possible to achieve a precise fit. However, it is conceivable that the southern part of the 18th-century outhouses was reused when the more modern stable block was built.

If the wall foundation dates to 1800, then pit [508] that was truncated by the wall must be of post-medieval rather than modern date. However, its function is unclear.

Topsoil was generally very thin, c.0.20m. The northern part of the ground source heating coil trench and Test pit 3 both showed thicker layers of overburden. It is likely that this is associated with previous disturbance of the ground, possibly



when the elongated outhouse block was built, or with landscaping and levelling of the eastern part of the garden.

The map of 1800 also shows ridge and furrow cultivation in all the fields surrounding the church of St Michael and Parsonage House. The topsoil and subsoils recorded throughout most of the groundworks, therefore, most likely represent cultivation soils.



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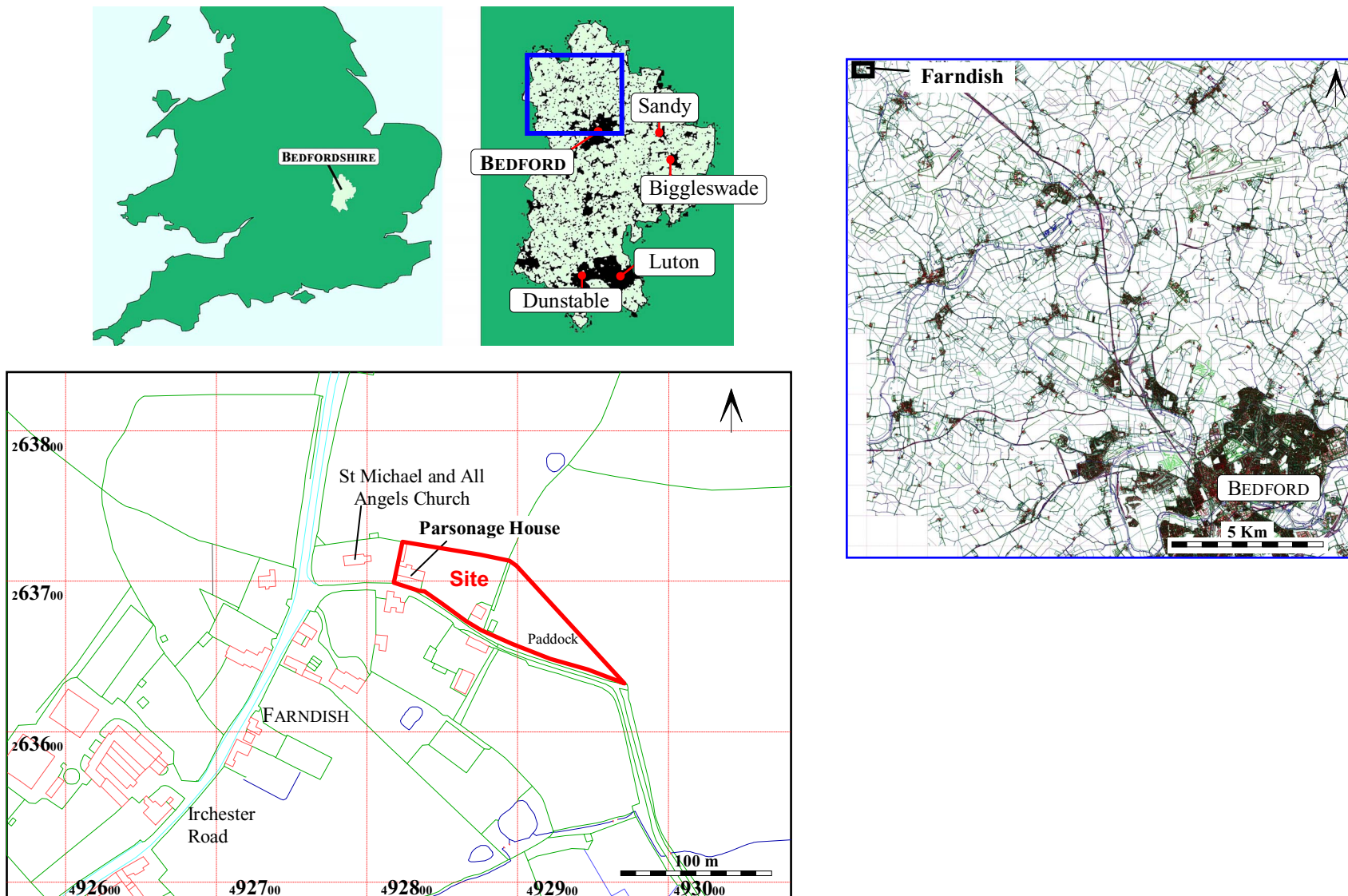


Figure 1: Site location plan

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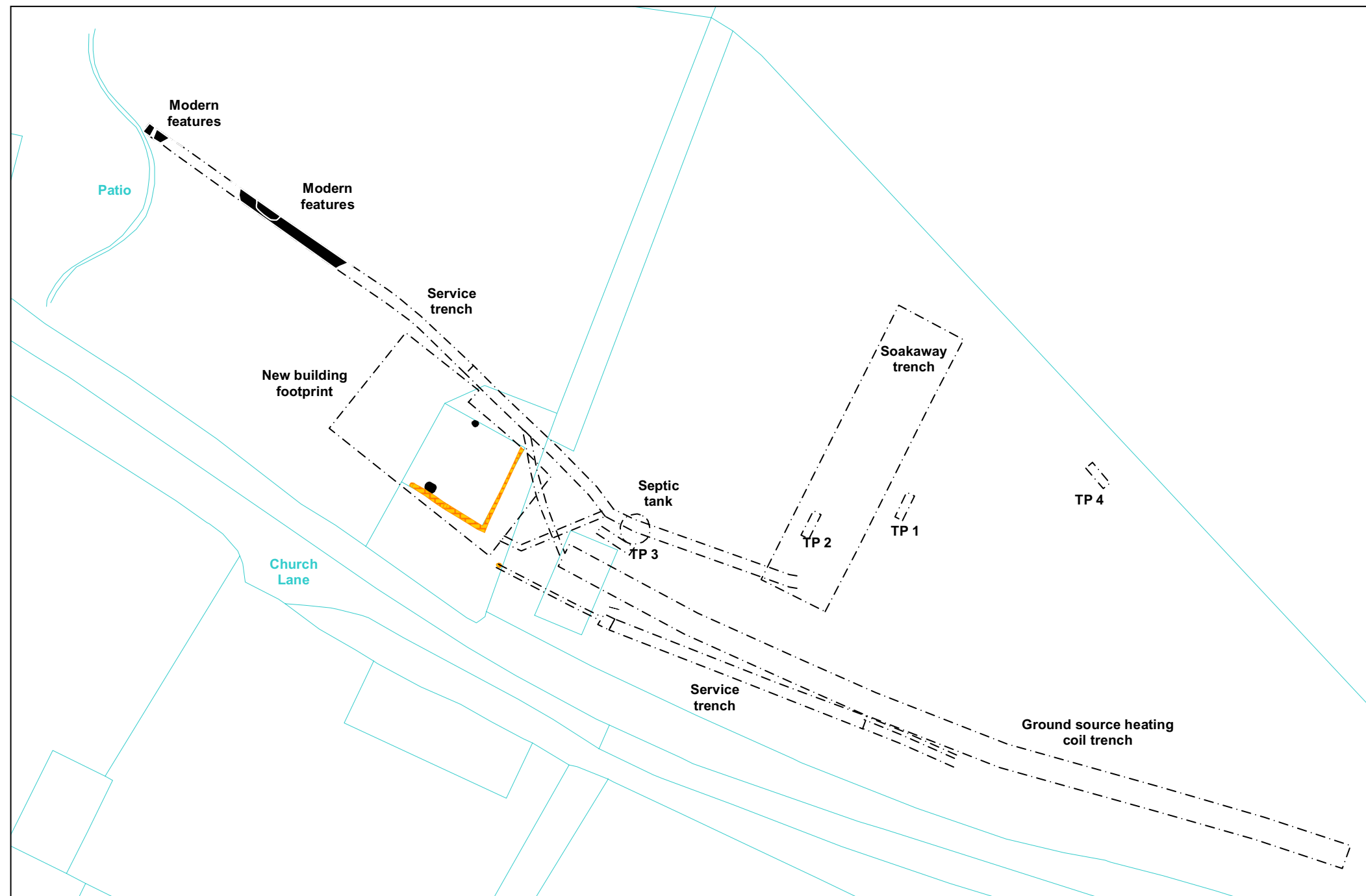


Figure 2: All groundworks interventions

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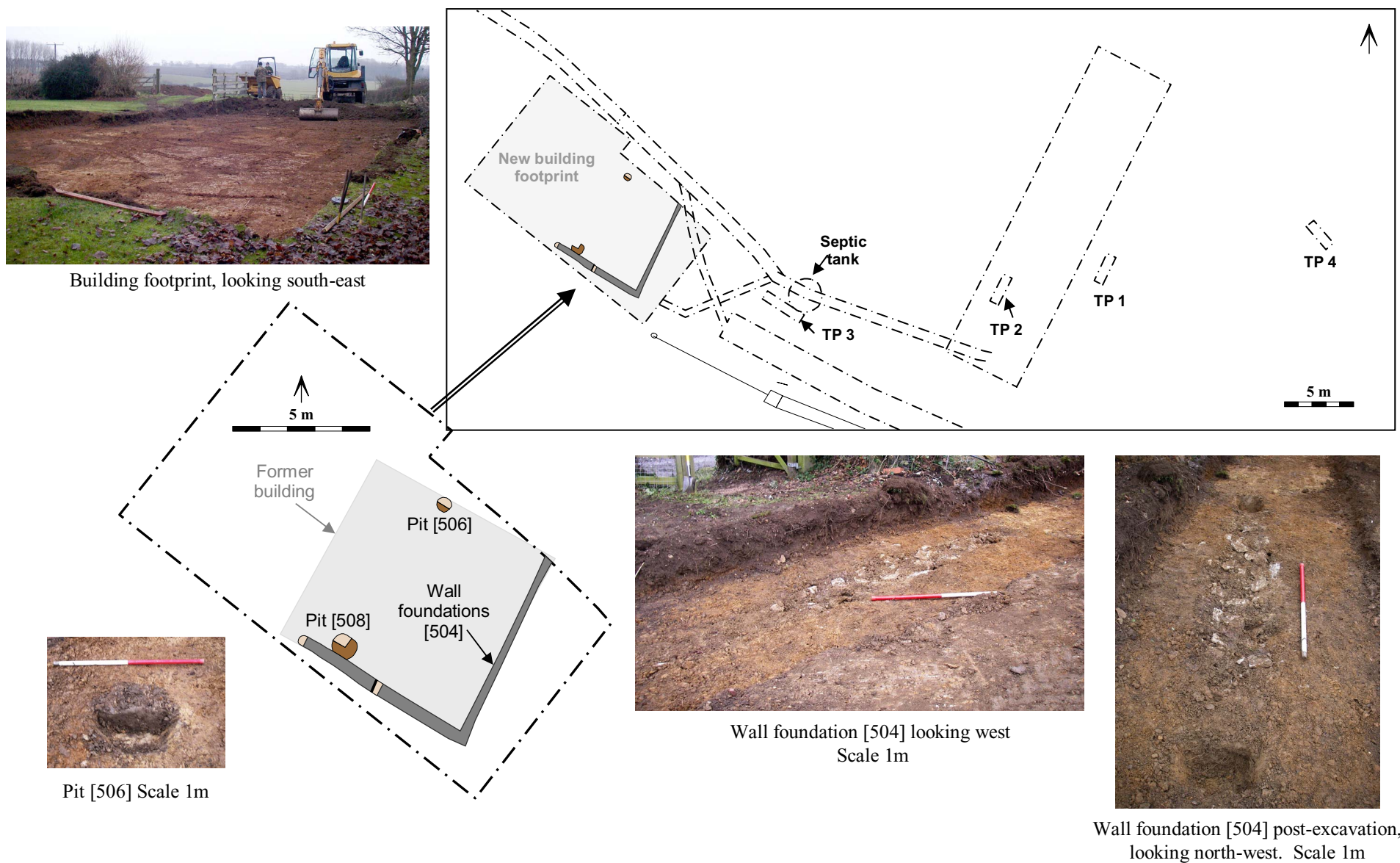


Figure 3: New building footprint - all features plan



Figure 4: Area of soakaway trench, stripped of topsoil



Figure 5: Ground source heating coil trench, looking north towards new games room. Scale 1m