STONELY HOUSE, 37–41 MAIN ROAD, STONELY, ST NEOTS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

Albion archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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Compiled by	Edited by	Checked by	Approved by
Marco Capardoni	Tori Guy	David Ingham	Iain Leslie

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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. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose 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). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Tom Salkield of Atomica Ltd and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Lu Speariett of Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Marco Capardoni (Archaeological Supervisor). This report was prepared by Marco Capardoni and Tori Guy (Assistant Archaeological Manager) with contributions from Joan Lightning (Geomatics Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Manager). The brick was identified by Mark Phillips (Assistant Archaeological Manager). The project was managed by Tori Guy and Jeremy Oetgen (Archaeological Manager). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Iain Leslie (Operations Manager).

Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
BEDFORD, MK42 OAS
☎: 0300 300 6877 or 01234 294010
E-mail: h.cooper-reade@albion-arch.com
Website: www.albionarchaeology.co.uk

Version History

Version	*Issue date*	*Reason for re-issue*
1.1	*07/06/2024*	*Comments from the CHET*
1.0	*07/05/2024*	*n/a*

Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBM	Ceramic building material
CHER	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record
CHET	Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team
Client	Atomica Ltd
NHLE	National Heritage List for England

Non-Technical Summary

Atomica Ltd commissioned Albion Archaeology to carry out an archaeological trial-trench evaluation adjacent to a Grade II-listed building at 37–41 Main Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, as a condition of planning permission 22/00793/FUL. The condition had been applied on the advice of Cambridgeshire's Historic Environment Team, due to the potential for archaeological remains to be impacted by the planned demolition and building works.

The only archaeological features identified were dated to the 18–19th centuries or later. They comprised two wells and one large foundation trench backfilled that had been with rubble in preparation for an external surface. The features were probably associated with buildings, now demolished, that are depicted on the 1887 OS 25-inch map. One well had a vaulted cap and might have been reused as a soakaway, with drains feeding into it.

The archaeological remains identified are of negligible to local significance and do not have any further potential to address the research aims outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology report 2024/11). There was no evidence of any archaeological remains on the site dating from earlier than the 18th century.

Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service (ref. albionar1-522614). The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in accordance with the project's data management plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

Planning permission 22/00793/FUL was granted by Huntingdonshire District Council for the renovation and extension of a Grade II-listed building at 37–41 Main Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, including the demolition and reconstruction of outbuildings to its rear, and the erection of a dwelling, detached garage and associated works. Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, the following condition (no. 8) was placed on the consent on the advice of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET):

> *Condition.*
> *No demolition/development shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has implemented a programme of archaeological work that has been secured in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI), which has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition/development shall take place other than under the provisions of the agreed WSI, which shall include:*
>
> a. *the statement of significance and research objectives;*
> b. *The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works;*
> c. *The timetable for the field investigation as part of the development programme;*
> d. *The programme and timetable for the analysis, publication & dissemination, and deposition of resulting material and digital archives.*
>
> *Reason.*
> *To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any demolitions or groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely preservation and/or investigation, recording, reporting, archiving and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Atomica Ltd commissioned Albion Archaeology to prepare a WSI (Albion Archaeology 2024a) and to carry out an archaeological evaluation to the side and rear of the existing building, as the first stage of the programme of archaeological work. The CHET issued a brief (CHET 2023a) to set out the requirements of the evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report.

In addition to the archaeological trial trenching a separate brief (CHET 2023b) was issued for archaeological historic building recording of the extant buildings within the site. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake this work, preparing a WSI (Albion Archaeology 2024b) and historic building report (Albion Archaeology 2024c), which supplement this evaluation report.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The development area is located at TL 10906 67000, 37–41 Main Road (B645), Stonely, a hamlet less than a mile south-east of Kimbolton (Fig. 1). It covers an area of *c*. 0.18ha, directly opposite the junction with Easton Road and situated between and opposite other Grade II-listed buildings. The surrounding area is characterised by large residential properties fronting onto the surrounding roads. There are open fields to the rear of the site and a public right of way along its north-western boundary.

1.3 Topography and Geology

The development area lies at 34–35m OD, within a relatively flat landscape. The underlying geology comprises Oxford clay formation – mudstone with no superficial deposits[1].

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

Existing knowledge of the site and the surrounding area is summarised in the search report from the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) that was appended to the CHET brief (2023a). Designated heritage assets are identified in the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), which is available from Historic England.[2]

The site is located at the core of the historic settlement of Stonely, *c.* 35m west of St Margret's Church (NHLE 1210868) and lies within the wider medieval landscape of Kimbolton parish.

The CHER records evidence dating from the palaeolithic through to the Roman period. This includes flint artefacts found during field walking along a gas pipeline *c*.600m to the south of the site and at Stonely Priory *c*.700m north-east of the site (CHER 00426; CHER 00427; CHER 0429E). Cropmarks dating from the later prehistoric to Roman period include a possible ring ditch (CHER MCB29989) and sub-square enclosure (CHER MCB18663). A single sherd of Roman pottery was found at Stonely Priory (CHER 00429D).

Several elements of the wider medieval landscape have been recorded. The site of Stonely Priory, a house of Austin Canons founded in the 12th century, is located *c*.700m north-east of the site (CHER 00429A). The priory site is now marked by a partially preserved moat around the 17th-centruy Grade II listed Priory Cottage. Medieval ridge and furrow (CHER 10858, MCB18641), some of which survive as earthwork remains, extend south towards Stonely House. A curvilinear hollow way of probable medieval date (MCB29973) was recorded as an earthwork on historic aerial photographs and remote sensing data; this was mapped as part of the Bedford Borough National Mapping Programme project (Adams and Crowther 2019). Located between Stonely village and Town Hill, the hollow way was visible as a *c*.14m-wide ditch extending north-east in a curve between blocks of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation for *c*.475m from TL10599 67422 to TL 10948 67724. Although the

[1] British Geological Society Geology Viewer (BETA) [online], https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk [accessed 12/02/2024]
[2] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list [accessed 12/02/2024]

earthworks are now mostly levelled, recent remote sensing data shows that the hollow way still remains as a slight earthwork.

Circa 2km to the north-west, within Kimbolton Park, is the medieval motte castle earthwork, known as Castle Hill (scheduled monument NHLE 1015013). It is set within the managed parkland of Kimbolton Great Park, although undesignated the landscape dates from the 16th century (CHER 00255).

Post-medieval remains shown on the first-edition ordnance survey map include the site of a former pound recorded on common land adjacent to Main Road, *c*.350m northwest of Stonely House (MCB26765). Also on Main Road, *c*.260m north-west of the site, was the now-demolished 19th-century village Mission Room (MCB26764). There were several nearby clay extraction pits and brickworks (e.g., MCB29974, CHER11374).

Main Road was a well-used trading route, becoming a turnpike with the passing of the Stonely Turnpike Act in 1755 (Sharp 2003). A 19th-century milestone erected by the Bedford and Kimbolton Turnpike Trust (MCB18327, NHLE 1211227) is located approximately 100m east of the junction with Easton Road. The milestone is inscribed '62 miles from London'.

Several of the properties in the vicinity of Stonely House are also listed. Of those, the houses immediately northwest of Stonely House (No. 35 Main Road NHLE 1290201) and opposite (No. 52 Main Road NHLE 1211225) are of a date range spanning the late 18th and 19th centuries: No. 52 dating to the late 18th century and No. 35 to the 1860s. As with Stonely House, all are described as being constructed in local brick.

No previous intrusive archaeological work has taken place within or adjacent to the site.

Stonely House itself was first listed in 1983 (NHLE 1211218); it was built in the late 18th- or early 19th-century, with later 19th-century additions to the rear comprising two brick-built cottages (Alan Joyce Architects 2022; Albion Archaeology 2024b). It was constructed 'in the architectural fashions of the Georgian period' as described in the Stonely Conservation Area Character Statement. There was a range of outbuildings to the rear of the house, with the coach house and stable demolished in 2017 following storm damage.

The 1st edition OS 25-inch map[3] (published in 1887 and surveyed between 1883 and 1885) shows Stonely House very much in its current form, along with a range of buildings leading from the road to the rear of the current plot, between Stonely House and April Cottages. The approximate location of these buildings has been transcribed and georeferenced for this report (Fig. 4); they are not shown on the 2nd edition ordinance survey map[4] (published 1902, surveyed in 1900).

[3] Huntingdonshire XX.12 [online] https://maps.nls.uk/view/114489875 (accessed 22/04/2024)
[4] Huntingdonshire Sheet XX.SE [online] https://maps.nls.uk/view/100890803 (accessed 22/04/2024)

1.5 Research Aims

Existing evidence suggested that the development area had high potential to contain archaeological heritage assets dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods. The objective of the trial trenching was, therefore, to determine, the location, geoarchaeological context, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. An adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened was studied.

The evaluation results were used to:

a) document the character, nature, date, condition, and significance of the archaeological resource;
b) define the nature and extent of any mitigation works that might be required.

This report on the archaeological trial trenching examines the significance of the results with reference to regional research frameworks. The relevant research frameworks, including the East of England Research Framework (Research Frameworks Network 2024). None of English Heritage's current guidance and advice documents[6] were considered directly relevant for assessing the significance of the evaluation results.

[6] https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/a-z-publications/ [accessed 06/02/2024]

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2024a), including the appended Selection Strategy and the Data Management Plan.

2.1 Standards

The project adhered throughout to the standards set out in the following documents:

Albion Archaeology	*Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (3rd edn, 2017)
Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers	*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14
Cambridgeshire County Council	*Deposition of archaeological archives in Cambridgeshire* (2020)
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	*Charter and By-law* (2022)
	Code of Conduct (2022)
	Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (2020)
	Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2020)
	Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (2020)
Historic England	*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide* (2015)
	Animal Bones and Archaeology: Guidelines for Best Practice (2014)
	Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2011)
	Geoarchaeology: Using earth sciences to understand the archaeological Record (2015)
	Human Bones from Archaeological Sites: A guideline for best practice for producing human osteological assessments and analytical reports (2004)

2.2 Archaeological Trial Trenching

The trial trenching took place on 18th April 2024 and comprised one 20.5m long, L-shaped trench (Fig. 1). At the request of the CHET, this targeted buildings recorded on the 1st edition OS map (Fig. 4).

The trench was opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All features were excavated and recorded by the Albion Archaeology Supervisor. Spoil from the trench was checked by eye for artefacts, but none were found. Due to the extent of modern disturbance across the trench, systematic metal-detecting was not feasible.

Lu Speariett of the CHET was informed of the results by telephone and email, and confirmed remotely that the trench could be backfilled once recording was complete.

2.3 Archiving

All records and materials produced will be archived to the standards outlined in the CHET's *Deposition of archaeological archives in Cambridgeshire* (2020) and deposited into Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Storage Facility (the CHER event number as cited on the cover page of this document). If required, permission in principle will be sought for transfer of title of all finds from the landowner to the CHER; however, no finds will be retained as part of this project archive.

3. RESULTS

This section briefly describes all archaeological deposits and features found within the trial trench. These are identified by the 'context' numbers assigned to them during site recording; where cited in the text, the numbers are distinguished by square brackets [***] for the cut of a feature, and round brackets (***) for a fill or deposit. Detailed descriptions of individual contexts are provided in the table below; this should be consulted for further information on alignment, composition of deposits, dimensions *etc*. A detailed plan of the trial trench can be found on Figure 2, with section drawings and photographs on Figure 3.

Trench	1	**Length (m)**	20.5	**Width (m)**	1.9	**Depth to Arch. (m)**		**Min**	0.50	**Max**	0.55
Orientation	N–S	**OS Grid Ref.**	510912 267003			**Reason for trench**	To assess archaeological potential				
	E–W		510906 266996								

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)			Excavated	Finds present**
			L	W	T/D*		
100	**Topsoil**	Friable dark grey silty clay; frequent small stones	-	-	0.25	Y	-
101	**Subsoil**	Compact light yellow-brown silty clay; moderate small stones; occasional medium stones	-	-	0.3	Y	-
102	**Natural**	Compact mid green-grey clay	-	-	-	Y	-
103	**Well**	Circular; vertical sides	-	0.9	-	Y	-
104	Brickwork	Red plain bricks (230 x 110 x 70mm); lime mortar	-	-	-	-	-
105	Fill	Compact mid blue-grey clay lumps	-	-	0.18	Y	-
106	Fill	Friable mid red-brown silty clay; frequent flecks CBM	-	-	0.35	Y	Y
107	**Well**	Circular	-	1.2	-	-	-
108	Brickwork	Red plain bricks (230 x 110 x 70mm); lime mortar	-	-	-	-	-
109	Brickwork	Red plain bricks (105 x 65mm)	-	-	-	-	-
110	Fill	Friable dark grey silty clay; occasional medium CBM	-	-	0.4	Y	-
111	**External surface**	Unknown shape in plan; flat base	>6.7	>1.9	0.4	Y	-
112	Fill	Compact mid grey silty clay; moderate medium CBM	-	-	0.3	Y	-
113	Fill	Friable mid brown-red sand	-	-	0.08	Y	-
114	Fill	Friable light yellow sand	-	-	0.12	Y	-
115	Fill	Compact mid green-grey silty clay; moderate medium CBM	-	-	0.2	Y	-
116	Fill	Friable light yellow sand	-	-	0.2	Y	-
117	**Drain**	Linear, NE–SW	>0.75	0.1	-	-	-
118	Fill	Friable, mid grey silty clay	-	-	-	-	-
119	**Drain**	Linear, NE–SW	>1.2	0.3	-	-	-
120	Fill	Friable, mid grey-brown silty clay	-	-	-	-	-

* T/D = surviving depth of a cut feature or thickness of a deposit, not the depth below the existing surface.
** not retained

Topsoil (101) was present throughout the trench (*cf*. Fig. 3), in most places overlying subsoil (102), which contained a few fragments of brick, glass and pottery. The underlying geological stratum comprised mid-green-grey to light yellow-brown clay (102), which is consistent with the mudstone expected in this locality (*cf*. Section 1.3).

All the features identified – two wells, two drains, and a large cut feature that was probably a foundation for an external surface – were located near the west end of the

trench (Fig. 2). They dated to the 18th century or later and were probably associated with 19th-century buildings recorded on the 1st edition OS map (Fig. 4).

The external surface comprised a number of deposits within construction cut [111], which was at least 6.6m long and *c*. 0.4m deep, dug into the top of the geological deposits (Fig. 3: F and G). It was filled with five visible deposits (112)–(116), largely sandy with ceramic building material, which would have created a solid and well-drained external surface. Modern glass, pottery and fragments of wood were present; it also overlapped the footprint of one of the late-19th-century buildings (Fig. 4), and was probably constructed after its demolition.

Both wells were circular and lined with red, plain bricks that measured 230 x 110 x 70mm. These were handmade and are likely to date to the 18–19th centuries. They were not fully excavated; only the top was exposed to confirm their identification and record their location.

Well [103] was *c*. 0.9m in diameter and lay underneath the external surface [111]. The brick lining (104) lay *c*.0.3m below the base of the trench and was in regular courses bonded with lime mortar. The well had a mixed backfill which contained finds including a fragment of 18th- to early 19th-century cream-ware plate (20g); a domed base/lower body from a machine-made 19th-century wine bottle (263g); and an indeterminate iron object, possibly a structural fixing (259g). In line with the finds-retention policy in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2024a, Appendix 3), these items were not retained.

Well [107] was located 2m east of well [103] and had been constructed in the same manner. It was not fully visible in the trench but was *c*. 1.2m in diameter; it was not excavated below the base of the trench. Above the well were the remains of a vaulted cap (109) constructed with broken bricks, 105 x 65mm, and bonded by yellow mortar which contained frequent charcoal and coal inclusions. The structure of the vault was visible in the side of the trench but had partially collapsed, suggesting that the well was backfilled with a topsoil-like deposit after the cap had collapsed. The vault may have been an addition to the original well, perhaps to facilitate the addition of a pump or to convert the well to a soakaway.

Two drains – [117] and [119] – fed into well [107] (Fig. 2). They may have been surface-water drains leading from the late 19th-century buildings (Fig. 4), suggesting that the well was reused as a soakaway.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Summary of Results

The only archaeological features revealed in the trial trench dated from the 18th century or later. Two wells [103] and [107] were lined with 18–19th-century brick; one had a vaulted cap and may have later been used as a soakaway.

An external surface [111] overlay well [103], suggesting that it was constructed after the well had gone out of use. The 1st edition of the OS 25-inch map[7] shows that the footprint of Trench 1 fell within an area between buildings which are no longer extant. It is possible that the building materials used to fill [111] came from the demolition of these buildings.

4.2 Significance of Results

The focus of the project was predominantly on potential medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains, including any evidence associated with the buildings shown on the 1st edition of the OS map. The two wells may have been associated with those buildings, with the materials used in their construction suggesting an 18–19th-century date, but they have no potential to offer further information on previous land-use within the site. The external surface may have contained material from the demolition of the buildings, but its presence does not add to what is already known though cartographic evidence.

The archaeological remains identified within the site are of negligible to local significance and do not have any further potential to address the research topics outlined in the Regional Research Framework[8]. There was no evidence of any archaeological remains on the site dating from earlier than the 18th century.

Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database in accordance with guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service (ref. albionar1-522614). The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in accordance with the project's data management plan (Albion Archaeology 2024a).

[7] https://maps.nls.uk/view/114489875 (accessed 22/04/2024)
[8] Research Frameworks Network [online], https://researchframeworks.org/eoe (accessed 19/04/2024)

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Albion Archaeology 2024a: Stonely House, Main Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation (unpublished report 2024/11)

Albion Archaeology 2024b: Stonely House, Main Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording (unpublished report 2024/12)

Albion Archaeology 2024c: Stonely House, Main Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Historic Building Recording (unpublished report 2024/50)

CHET 2023a: Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: Stonely House, 37-41 Main Road (unpublished report, 13/09/2023)

CHET 2023b: Brief for Archaeological Historic Building Recording: Stonely House, 37-41 Main Road, Stonely, St Neots (unpublished report, 13/10/2023).

Research Frameworks Network 2024: East of England Regional Research Framework [online], https://researchframeworks.org/eoe [accessed 19/04/2024]

Sharp, M. (2003) *Stonely Conservation Area Character Statement*. Huntingdonshire District Council

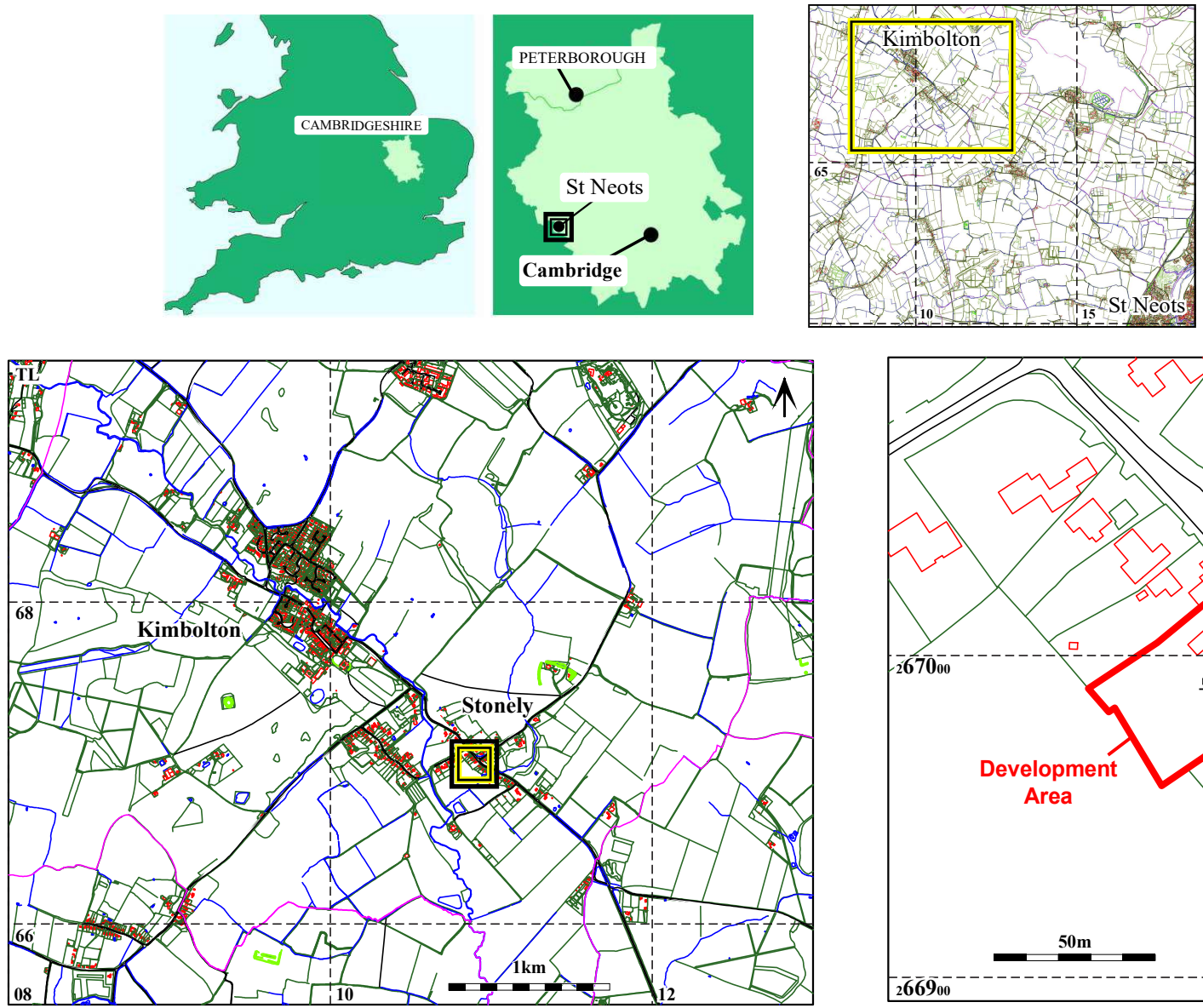


Figure 1: Site location

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. AC0000851074 (2023)

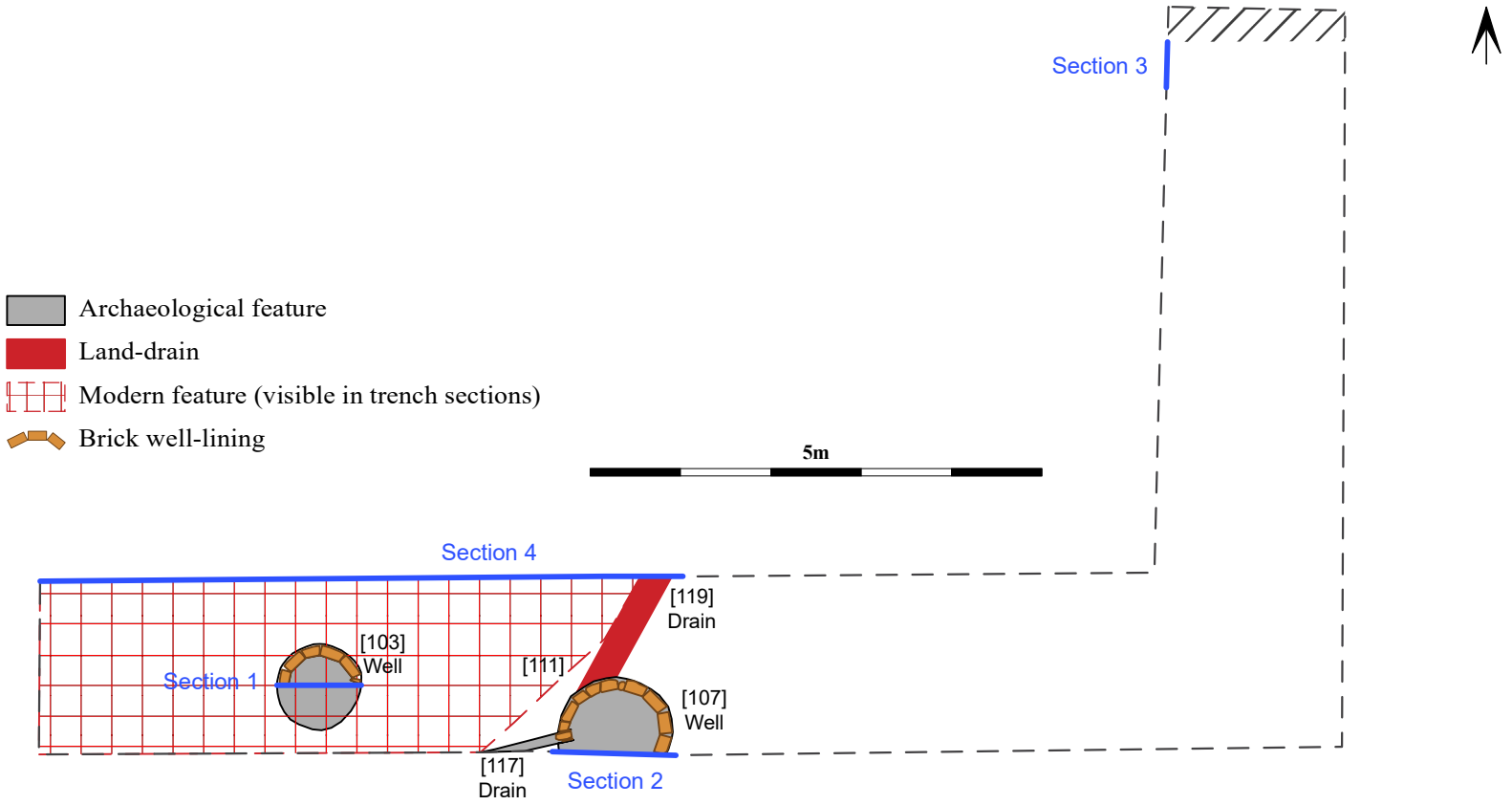
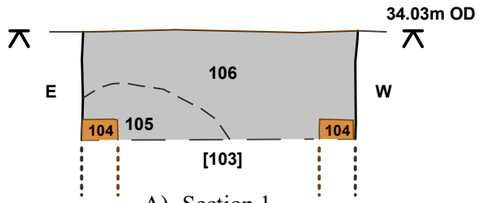
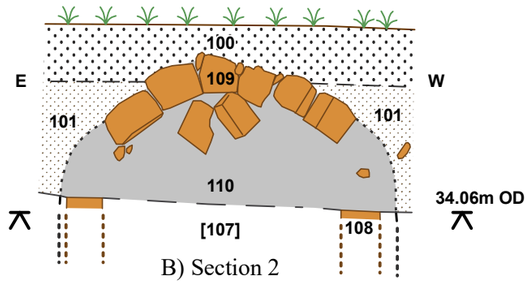


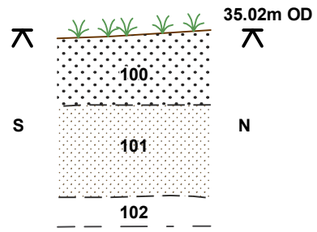
Figure 2: Plan of all features



A) Section 1



B) Section 2



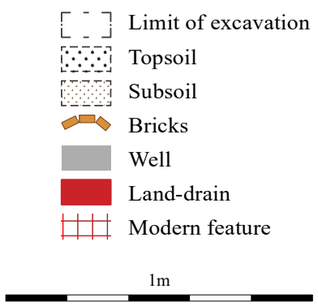
C) Section 3

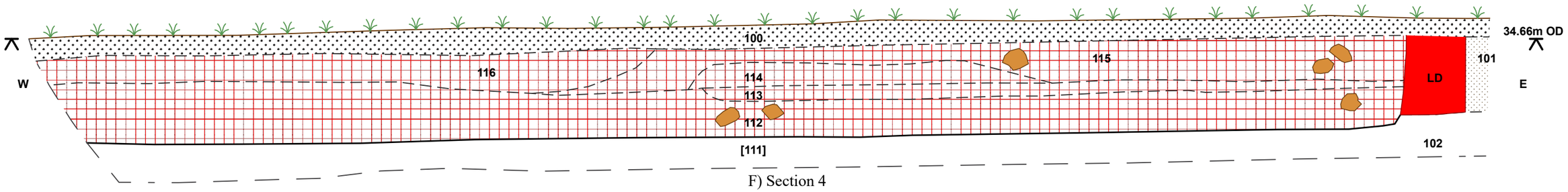


D) Well [103] looking south. Scale 40cm



E) Well [107] looking south. Scale 1m





F) Section 4



G) Feature [111] looking north. Scale 1m

Figure 3: Section drawings and selected photographs

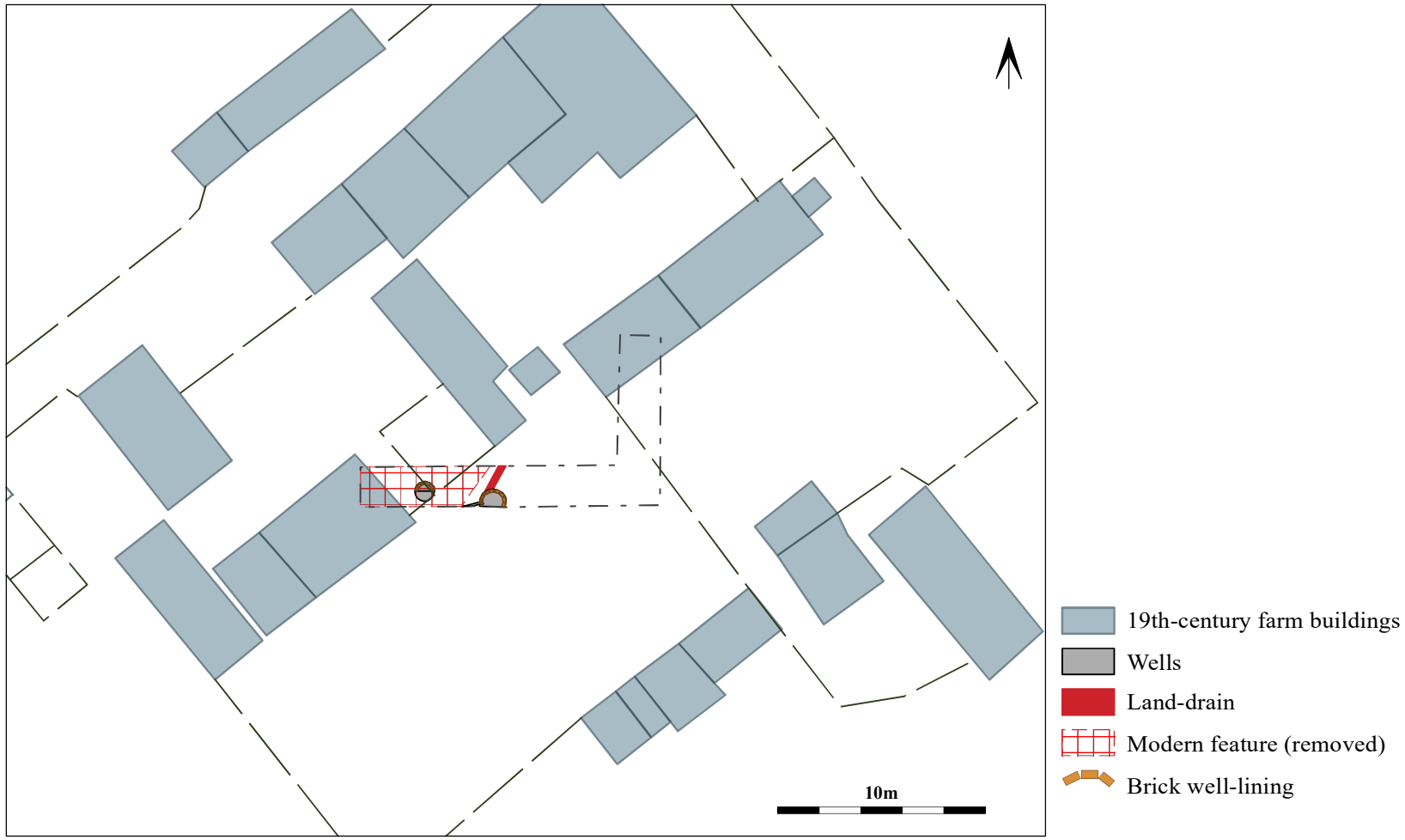


Figure 4: Approximate location of archaeological features in relation to structures depicted on OS 25-inch to 1 mile map of 1887 (surveyed 1883–1885)

Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church,
St Mary's Street,
Bedford,
MK42 0AS

Telephone 0300 300 8141
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com