

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Great Budworth

Archaeological Assessment



2003



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GREAT BUDWORTH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Vince Devine & Jo Clark

1 SUMMARY

Great Budworth is a small, picturesque village comprising just a handful of timber framed buildings, clustered around the church of St Mary and All Saints. The size of the settlement of Great Budworth today is only slightly larger than it would have been during the medieval period. It is believed to have been the site of a medieval fair.

1.1 Topography and Geology

Great Budworth lies on a slope c 50m AOD in mid-Cheshire, 500m to the north-east of Budworth Mere and 4km north of Northwich. The underlying solid geology comprises Lower Keuper Marl, above which are glacio-fluvial deposits of sand and gravel with a band of boulder clay to the north (Institute of Geological Sciences, 1977). The soils developed on these deposits are typical brown sands, which are suited to arable and pasture, and are graded classes 2-3 (Furness 1978, 80).

The A559 runs just to the west of the village, and has been important from at least the 18th century and connects Warrington with Northwich.

1.2 Administrative Unit

In the 19th century the township of Great Budworth covered around 875 acres (Ordnance Survey Reference Book, CRO). It lay within the Hundred of Bucklow and the large ecclesiastical parish of Great Budworth, which included 21 townships (including Great Budworth) and the parochial chapelries of Lower Peover and Witton (Dunn 1987, 28). It was also part of the Frodsham Deanery (ibid, 14).

Today Great Budworth is a Civil Parish and lies within the Borough of Vale Royal.

1.3 Place name

Budworth is first recorded in 1086 as *Budewrde*, meaning *Budda's* enclosure (Dodgson 1970, 108). It also occurs as *Budeswurda* (c 1115), *Bodeworth* (1291) and *Boodworth* (1547) (ibid).

2 SOURCES

2.1 Historical

Useful references to Great Budworth are contained in Boyd (1951), the county histories of Hanshall (1817), Ormerod (1882), Hodson (1978) and Scards (1981) and 19th century trade directories (Kelly etc.).

There are a number of primary sources in the County Record Office (CRO), including Parish Registers from 1558 and deeds from 1692 onwards, however their analysis is beyond the remit of the present survey.

2.2 Cartographic

Budworth is depicted on the county maps of Saxton (1577) and Speed (1610). Burdett's county map of 1777 is the first to show an outline plan of the village and the surrounding road network, but the only plan to show the township in detail prior to the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map surveyed 1876-7, is the tithe map of 1846.

2.3 Archaeological

Before the present assessment there were 24 entries within the settled area in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR), which are depicted on Figure 1. Where sites and finds have been identified from the CSMR, the relevant reference is provided. The present survey has identified five new records.

The only archaeological work known to have taken place at Great Budworth is an excavation at the medieval church of St Mary and All Saints during the construction of storm drainage. This work demonstrated that cemetery soils of a comparatively recent date survived to considerable depths in the churchyard. Human bone was encountered but it was loose and disarticulated (LUAU, 1999).

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

3.1 Prehistoric

A Neolithic polished stone axe, made of dark green Borrowdale tuff, was found in the general area of Great Budworth in 1921 and is held by Manchester Museum (CSMR 667; Harris and Thacker, 1987, 53). Also, 0.25km to the north-west of the town and adjacent to Dene House, lies the site of a Bronze Age round barrow (CSMR 808).

3.2 Roman

There have been no Roman finds within the settlement of Great Budworth, and until recently just one find was known in the surrounding area – a Roman coin found 1km to the south of the village (CSMR 674). However, an evaluation carried out in 1998 by Earthworks Archaeological Services in the vicinity of Aston Park, to the north-east of Great Budworth, revealed part of a previously unknown Roman settlement dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Finds included pottery sherds, coins, lead weights and an enamelled brooch (Earthworks, 1998).

3.3 Early Medieval

At Domesday (1086), William Fitz-Nigel held Great Budworth, including a hall, a priest and a mill. The manor was small and according to Higham this suggests, despite the large number of townships included in the ancient parish of Great Budworth and the priest mentioned at Domesday, that Great Budworth is not likely to have been an ancient centre or to have had a mother church (Higham 1993, 159).

The Domesday Survey records that:

The same William holds BUDWRDE [Great Budworth] and Pain (Pagen) [holds] of him. Edward held it as a free man. There [is] 1 hide that pays geld. The land is for 2 ploughs. In demesne is ½ plough and 1 serf, and a priest and 2 villeins and 1 bordar with 1 plough, and a mill serving the hall (aula). There [are] 1½ acres of meadow. T.R.E. it was worth 6s., now 8s.

(Harris and Thacker, 1987, 357)

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 The Manor

At Domesday, William Fitz-Nigell, Baron of Halton held Great Budworth of the Earl of Chester and one Pagan held it of him (Ormerod 1882, 605). In about 1174 Gilbert Brito fitz Hugh fitz Pagan granted to Adam fitz de Dutton eight bovates of land in *Buddwrthe*, whilst between 1172 and 1190 a further bovate of land in the vill was granted to Adam de Dutton (Ormerod 1882, 605). During the 13th century the ‘town’ was possessed by Geoffry de Dutton, who later granted a third of his Budworth estate to Norton Priory to pray for his soul (ibid, 605).

3.4.2 Settlement

Little survives by way of documentary record to indicate the nature and extent of settlement at Great Budworth. A mill was recorded at Great Budworth during the Domesday Survey (1086), however no further references are made to this during the medieval period.

3.4.3 Economy

Agriculture was no doubt the staple of the local economy and the tithe map of 1846 shows a large number of long, narrow fields in the surrounding area, which are typical of enclosed expanses of former open fields. Data for Cheshire towns is rare because in the medieval period the shire was exempt from national taxation, having its own taxation system, the Mize. In the Cheshire Mize of 1405, Budworth paid 21s 4d (Booth 1985), the lowest sum paid in the whole of the Bucklow Hundred.

Sylvester and Nulty (1958, 27) record a medieval fair at Great Budworth. Further, Ormerod (1882, 605) records that the settlement ‘...hath yearly two fairs, one on Candlemas day, 2 febuarii; the other on our Lady-day, 25 Martii: the toll whereof belongeth to the King’.

Fishing rights on the local meres provided an important supply of fish to Norton Priory (Boyd 1951, 17). In 1371, 2s was paid for ‘...having a boat on the water’ at Budworth Mere, and in 1536 the fishery at Budworth Mere was worth 1s (Hewitt 1929, 186).

3.4.4 Religion

The fate of the possible early medieval or early Conquest church, suggested by the priest at Domesday, is unknown. The church was formerly dedicated to God and All Saints, which later changed to St Mary and All Saints (Richards 1947, 170). The present church was planned in the 14th century and included a broad nave with wide aisles, a three-bay chancel, a western tower, and a long lady chapel, which formed a transept on the north side. Of the 14th century church a number of features survive including the north nave arcade, the east wall of the tower, the east wall of the tower, the east wall of the nave and the chancel walls. The church evidently underwent remodelling during the 15th and 16th century, as sums of money were left to the building in 1498 and in 1527 towards the construction of the church and the rood-screen (ibid, 171). Nearly all of the church is embattled, and nothing is ornate (Pevsner and Hubbard, 1971, 227).

In 1715 Bishop Gastrell recorded that the building contained the two chapels of St Mary's in the north transept, in which the families of Dutton and Leicester had burial rights, and the Arley chapel in the south, which was exclusively appropriated to the Arleys of Warburton (Richards 1973).

Included in the large ancient parish of Great Budworth were two dependent chapelries at Witton and Lower Peover, which appear to have been post Conquest accretions (Higham 1993, 158). The rights of the church were granted to Norton Priory by William, Constable of Cheshire, about the end of the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) (Ormerod 1882, 606).

3.4.5 The Surrounding Landscape

In the surrounding area are a number of medieval sites, including Belmont moated site and fishponds, 1km north-west (SAM 13496; CSMR 668/1/1, 668/1/2), Marbury Hall manor house, 1.7km south-west (CSMR 2274/1/1), and the site of a medieval watermill, 2km south-west (CSMR 677/1).

3.5 Post Medieval

3.5.1 The Manor

At the Dissolution, Norton Priory's manorial moiety was confiscated by the Crown and later sold to a London gentleman, John Grimsdich. The other moieties were passed to a number of parties, until 1666 when they were eventually amalgamated (except for a small part) by Warburton of Arley (Ormerod 1882, 605).

3.5.2 Settlement

At about 1600, a school was founded at Great Budworth, by John Dean, Rector of St Bartholomew's the Great (Ormerod 1882, 610). The school building (CSMR 669/2) is located in the churchyard of the church of St Mary and All Saints.

During the mid-17th century the population was severely affected by plague, when the mortality rate of the parish was almost twice the national average (Philips and Smith 1994, 10).

3.5.3 Economy

The Cock Inn was mentioned in a lease of 1534 (Boyd 1951, 19-20) and in 1641 William French was recorded as an innkeeper along with three Alesellers. During the 18th century five inns were recorded, which is a relatively large number and suggests a commercial function for the settlement, possibly as a staging post on a coaching route (MacGregor 1992, 23-4).

A small textile industry may have been established at Great Budworth as it is recorded that, during the 18th century, a number of 'paupers' were employed in spinning, the production of flax and the dyeing of fabrics (Boyd 1951, 31).

During the early 18th century potatoes, turnips and strains of cultivated grasses and clover were introduced to the Great Budworth area (Scard 1981, 71). Five farmers were recorded as residents in the mid-19th century and a small number of trades and professions were practised by the local residents, including five shopkeepers, four boot and shoemakers, three tailors, and two saddlers (Bagshaw 1850, 530).

3.5.4 Religion

The architectural fabric of St Mary's and All Saints Church appears to have survived any substantial remodelling during the post medieval period, even though Parliamentarian troops did destroy the church organ in 1647 (Ormerod 1882, 173). After the Dissolution, Henry VIII gave the rectory of Great Budworth to Christ Church in Oxford in 1546, and Ormerod recorded that the College of Christ Church continued to be the patron of the church of St Mary and All Saints (1882, 606). The church steeple was begun in 1528 and finished in 1583 (Ormerod 1882, 607).

The interior of the church underwent restoration in 1869, when 'unsightly galleries of the north aisle, and at the west end were taken down, and the floor of the nave and the aisles...lowered to its original level' (Ormerod 1882, 607).

The parish of Great Budworth had a long line of Puritan ministers dating back to 1604 and was also '...riddled with independents, Quakers and Anabaptists' (Hodson 1978, 32-3). Anabaptists are recorded from 1649, with Baptists 'conventicles' reported in 1669, and there was a significant Quaker community in 1669 (Hodson 1978, 35-7). A Methodist Church on Smithy Lane is shown on the OS First Edition map of 1876.

3.5.5 Population

The population in 1664 has been estimated as 345 (MacGregor 1992). From 1801-1971 population data is available from the census returns, which are printed in the Victoria County History (Harris 1979, 202-240) and for 1981 and 1991 census data has been reproduced under Class Licence Number C01W0000125 with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO.

1801	463	1901	476
1811	504	1911	486
1821	501	1921	486
1831	586	1931	447
1841	677	1951	412
1851	643	1961	367
1861	613	1971	403
1871	614	1981	350
1881	532	1991	382
1891	510		

3.5.6 Transport and Communications

A major routeway passes to the east of Great Budworth, en route from Warrington to Middlewich via Northwich following the route of the King Street Roman road. This 'old route' may have been turnpiked between 1726 and 1730 (Harrison 1886, 80).

3.5.7 The Surrounding Landscape (Figure 1)

Sites in the surrounding area include the late 19th century Anderton Boat Lift, 2.5km south-west (SAM 93; CSMR 666/1), and a number of post medieval salt works c 1.5 km to the south of Great Budworth (CSMR 2513/1, 2514/1, 2514/1/1, 2517/1). There are also a number of 17th-century Grade II listed buildings in the area, for example Juniper Lodge 1km west (CSMR 671), the Cock Inn 1km north-west (CSMR 670/1) and Lanes End Farm House, 1km south-east of Great Budworth (CSMR 682/1).

4 PLAN COMPONENTS

The settlement has been divided into 7 components (prefixed by **COM**). These have been tentatively sub-divided by period, although there is a need for a great deal of further work to define the date of these plan components more closely. Many would have spanned more than one period but are discussed under their earliest likely date of occurrence. In some cases tightly defined plan components can be identified. In others only a general area can be delineated and a tighter definition can only be achieved by further fieldwork.

Plan components commence with the early medieval period. Post medieval Great Budworth has been identified from the OS First Edition 6": 1mile map surveyed in 1876.

EARLY MEDIEVAL c 540-1066 (Figure 2)

COM 1 - Church?

MEDIEVAL c1066-1540 (Figure 2)

- COM 2** - Tenements, south of High Street
- COM 3** - Tenements, north of High Street
- COM 4** - Tenements, north of School Lane
- COM 5** - Market Place?

POST MEDIEVAL c 1876 (Figure 2)

COM 6 - Settlement

MODERN c 2000 (Figure 2)

COM 7 - Settlement

4.1 Early Medieval (Figure 2)

The identification of a priest at Great Budworth by the Domesday Survey (1086), suggests that there was a church in the township of either early medieval or conquest date. The likely location for this is the site of the medieval church of God and All Saints, later St Mary's and All Saints, which is depicted as **COM 1**.

4.2 Medieval (Figure 2)

It is uncertain when the church at Great Budworth (**COM 1**) was founded. The fabric of the present church of St Mary's and All Saints can be dated back to the 14th century. However, it is recorded that c 1135, William, Constable of Cheshire and Baron of Halton, gave the church of Great Budworth to Norton Priory. Therefore, the church was founded in the 12th century at the latest. The relationship and continuity between this medieval church and the potential early medieval institution is unknown. In the north of the churchyard stands the 'Old Schoolhouse', which was founded c 1600 for Sir John Deane.

Medieval tenements have been identified in **COMs 2, 3 and 4**. **COM 2** identifies an area of tenements running south from the High Street. Here houses align the street frontage and much of the component is divided into long, narrow tenement plots. There is also a 'back lane', which runs to the rear of the tenements and is a typical characteristic of planned medieval settlement.

A similar pattern is displayed to the north of the High Street in **COM 3**. Here houses also align the frontage and long, narrow tenement plots persist in part of the component, although this pattern was disturbed by the construction of the 17th century Old Hall. Tenements in **COM 3** also share a common rear boundary, which along with the regular plan and back lane of **COM 2**, suggests that there may have been an element of town planning in medieval Great Budworth.

The tenements located to the north of the church (**COM 4**) are less regularly planned and houses align the frontages of both School Lane and Church Street. However, the close proximity of this component to the church of St Mary and All Saints suggests that settlement may have been located here from an early period.

Although no market charter is known for Great Budworth, a medieval fair is believed to have been held, which might mask other informal marketing. Certainly the morphology of the town suggests a market place at the east end of High Street. Here the road widens into a characteristic triangular shape, which on the OS First Edition map is particularly noticeable, as is the open space directly north-west of the

churchyard. This possible market place, which is located within close proximity of the church, again a common feature of medieval markets, is identified as **COM 5**.

4.3 Post Medieval (Figure 2)

The extent of Great Budworth as identified from the OS First Edition 1876 map is depicted as **COM 6**. Settlement apparently underwent small scale expansion during this period, with development to the south of the church and a scattering of development in the surrounding area. Included in this development is a smithy to the north on Church Street (number 45), which is a mid-17th century cottage and listed Grade II, and the Old Hall, which is a 17th-century house on the north of High Street and also listed Grade II. A number of other cottages on the High Street also date from the 17th century.

4.4 Modern (Figure 2)

The extent of modern Great Budworth c 2000 has been identified as **COM 7**. Only small scale development has occurred at Great Budworth: to the north along Smithy Lane and Westage Lane.

5 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Above Ground Remains

Most of Great Budworth is included in a designated Conservation Area. There are 49 listed buildings within the village. Of these, the church of St. Mary and All Saints is Grade I, the Old Schoolhouse is Grade II* and the remainder are Grade II. The latter group include an early-18th century set of stocks, 17th and 18th century houses and the 19th century George and Dragon Inn (Department of the Environment 1986). There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Great Budworth.

The historic character of Great Budworth is evident and there are a large number of listed buildings within what remains a small village.

5.2 Below Ground Remains

The limited work carried out at Great Budworth has meant that it is impossible to assess the nature and extent of archaeological deposits in the town. However, the lack of modern development and the fact that post medieval development was not at all intensive suggests that earlier deposits may well survive undisturbed in the village.

6 PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

6.1 General

The study of Great Budworth forms part of a national research priority to examine the origins and development of medieval small towns and rural markets (Priority H5; English Heritage 1997, 49). Work at Great Budworth would also fit into a number of priorities particularly the following processes of change:

- PC6 The late Saxon to medieval period
- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c1300-1700AD) (English Heritage 1997, 44-5)

6.1 Early Medieval

- Establish whether there was an early medieval church, and examine its foundation date.
- Establish the date, location and extent of early settlement.

6.2 Medieval settlement

- Establish the foundation date of the church, establish its form and phases of construction.
- Establish precise location of settlement areas and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish the nature of buildings and activities on settlement plots; determine whether there is an element of planning in the layout of the tenements of Great Budworth.
- Examine evidence of trade and industry.
- Establish whether there was a medieval market place.
- Establish where the medieval fairs were held.

6.3 Post Medieval

- Establish the nature of buildings and activities on settlement plots and date their phases of expansion and contraction.
- Examine evidence of trade and industry and establish its date and nature.

7 SOURCES

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7.2 Maps

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Ordnance Survey First Edition Sheet 26, Surveyed 1876-7

8 ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Great Budworth and The Surrounding Area

Figure 2: The Development of Great Budworth

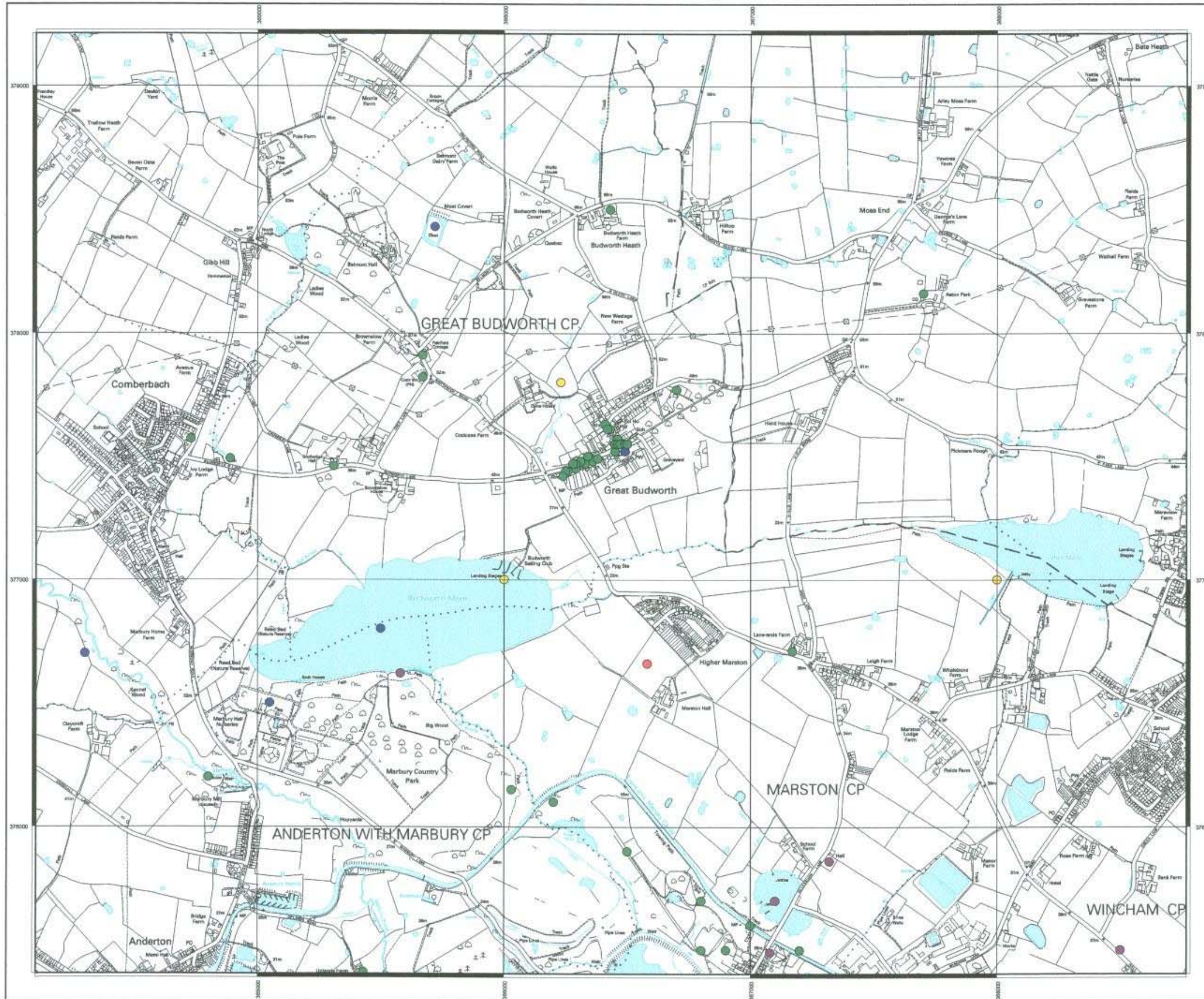


Figure 1
Great Budworth and the Surrounding Area

- Sites and Monuments**
- Prehistoric
 - Romano-British
 - Early Medieval
 - Medieval
 - Post Medieval
 - Modern

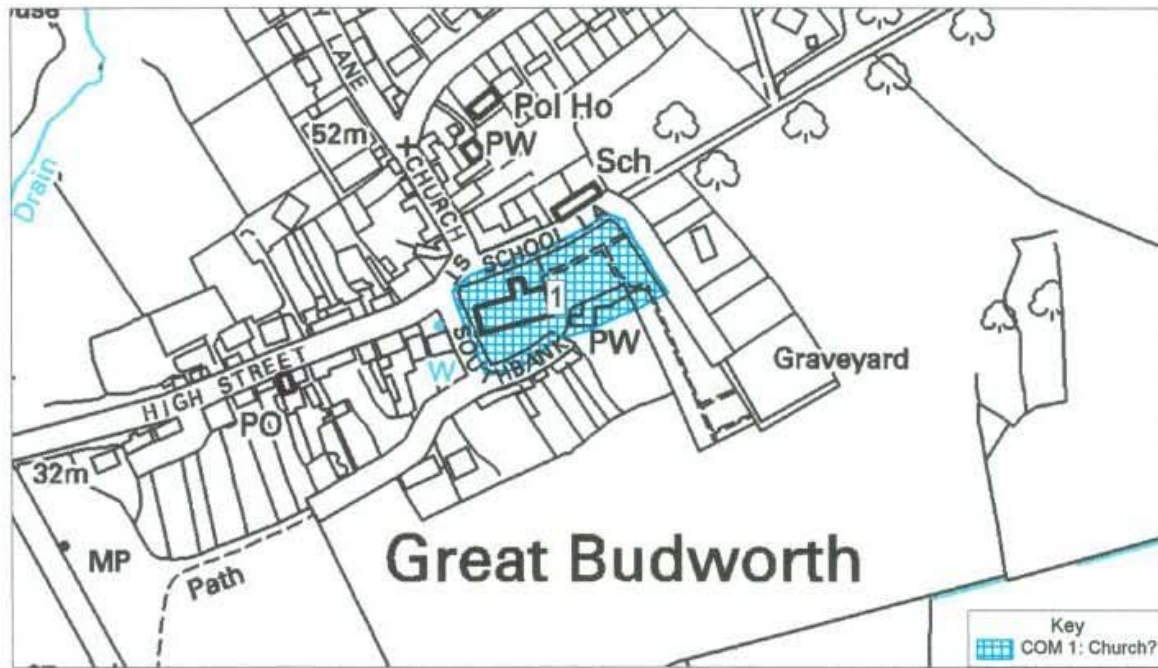
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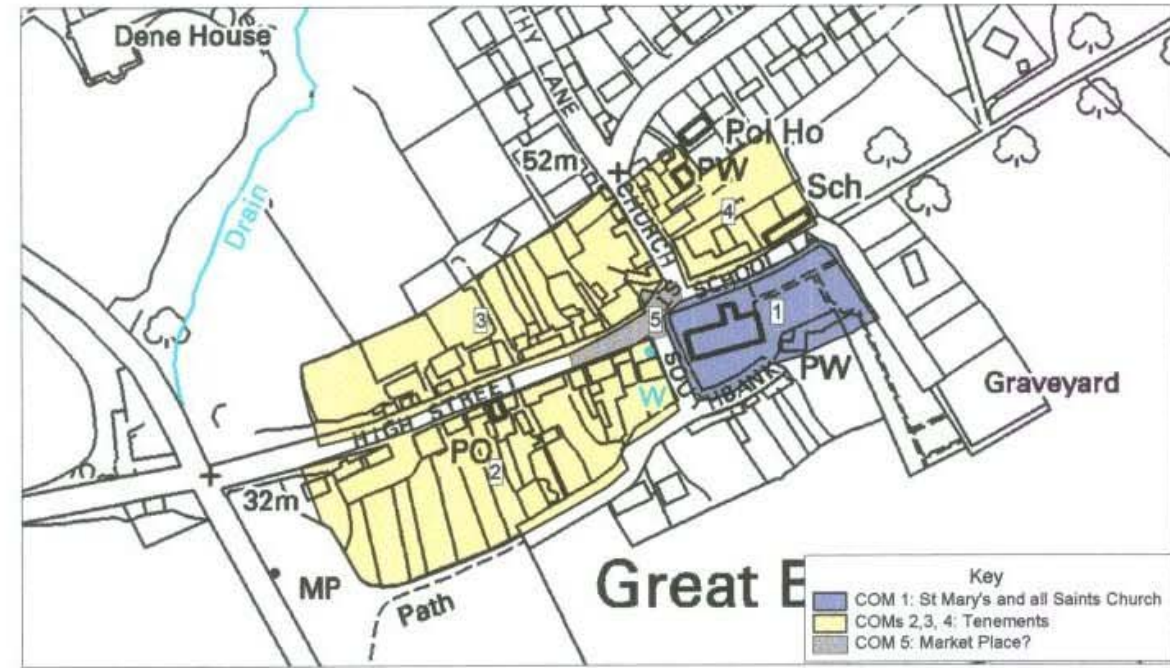
Figure 2: The Development of Great Budworth



Early Medieval

0 50 100 Metres

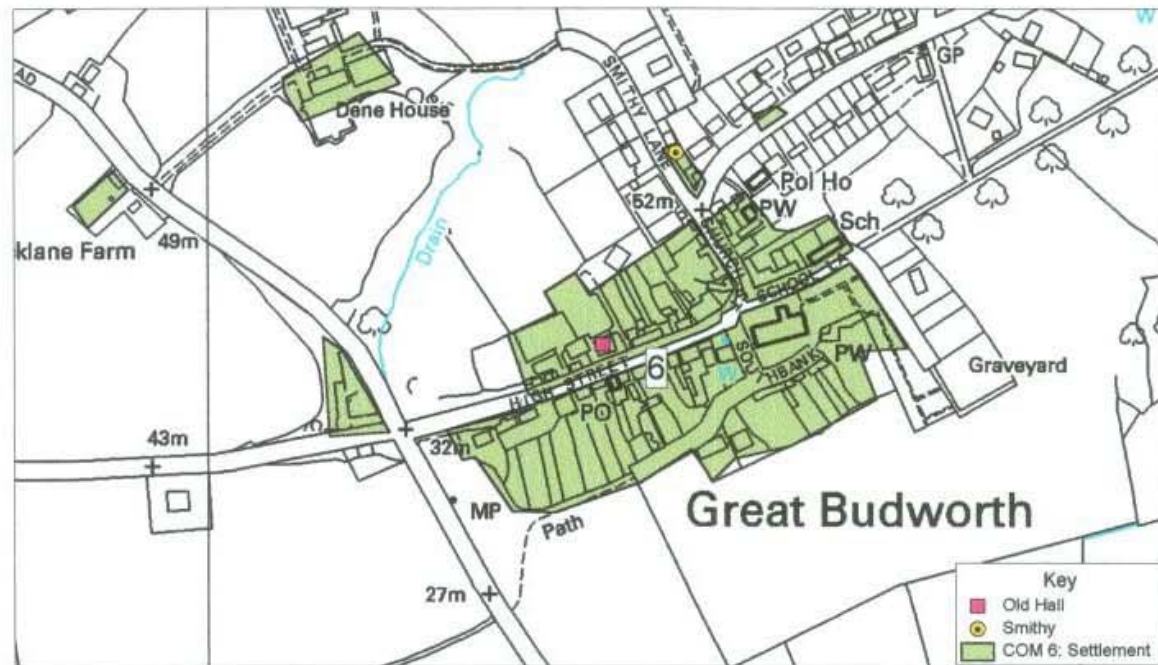
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Medieval

0 50 100 Metres

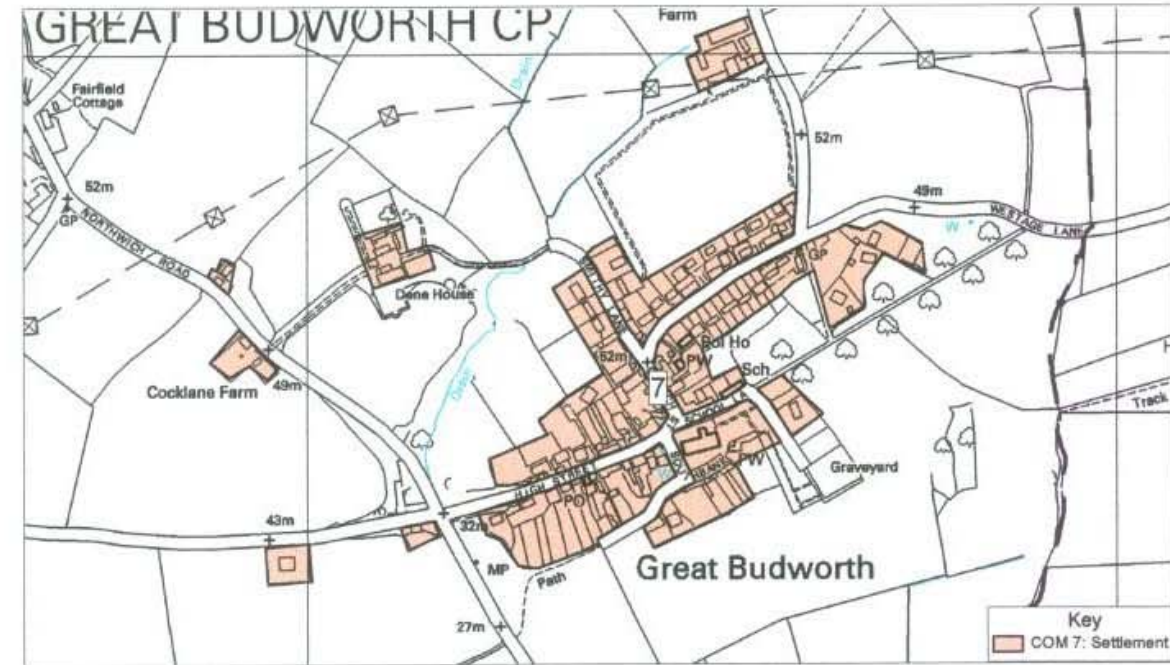
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Post Medieval c 1876

0 100 200 Metres

1:5500



Modern c 2000

0 200 400 Metres

1:8000

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