77 Victoria Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

For

Earle and Ludlow Ltd

CA Report: 04026

February 2004
77 VICTORIA ROAD
CIRENCESTER
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 1705
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SUMMARY

Site Name: 77 Victoria Road
Location: Cirencester, Gloucestershire
NGR: SP 0287 0157
Type: Evaluation
Date: 2-4 February 2004
Planning Reference: CT4489/D
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Corinium Museum
Site Code: VIC 04

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in February 2004 at the request of Earle & Ludlow Ltd at 77 Victoria Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. In compliance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (CA 2004), two trenches were excavated within the proposed development area.

The evaluation has characterised the archaeological potential of the site and has indicated that in situ Roman deposits, including a wall and opus signinum floor sealed beneath late Roman demolition rubble, survive at a depth of 0.6m (106.79m AOD) below the modern ground surface.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February 2004 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Earle & Ludlow Ltd at 77 Victoria Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 0287 0157; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the construction of 12 new flats (CT4489/D).

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief for archaeological field evaluation (GCC 2004) prepared by Charles Parry (Senior Archaeological Officer, Gloucestershire County Council), the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and with a subsequent detailed WSI produced by CA (2004) that was approved by Mr Parry. The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999), the Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire (GCC 1995) and the Management of Archaeological Projects II (EH 1991).

The site

1.3 The site, measuring 0.05ha in area, is centrally located within Cirencester on flat land at approximately 107m AOD. The area is currently utilised as a carpark with buildings ranging along the north, west, and east sides. To the south lies gardens belonging to the properties fronting onto Victoria Road (Fig. 2).

1.4 The underlying geology of the area, mapped as alluvium recently deposited within the Pleistocene period (GS 1946), was not encountered during the evaluation.

Archaeological background

1.5 Research indicates that the proposed development is sited in an area of high archaeological potential. In particular, it lies within the Roman town of Corinium (insula X), and a short distance from a postulated intra-mural street (Street D, Holbrook and Pamment Salvatore 1998, Fig 7). Substantial remains of Roman buildings, including mosaics, were revealed in the immediate vicinity in 1895 and again in 1922 during development along Victoria Road (McWhirr 1986, 247-8). Roman walls have also been observed in the school grounds to the east of the site.
1.6 Archaeological evaluation and subsequent watching brief previously undertaken at the current site identified *in-situ* Roman demolition debris 0.5m below the existing ground surface (CAT 1998 and 1999). A stamped tile fragment (AVERI) was retrieved during the watching brief.

**Archaeological objectives**

1.7 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date, significance and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist the Local Planning Authority in making an informed judgement on the likely impact upon the archaeological resource by the proposed development.

**Methodology**

1.8 The fieldwork comprised the hand excavation of two trenches each measuring 1.5m². Due to the presence of modern services, and with the approval of Mr Parry, trench one was reduced to 1m². The excavation followed the CA Technical Manual 1: *Excavation Recording Manual* (1996).

1.9 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive (including artefacts) will be deposited with Corinium Museum.

2. **RESULTS**

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds can to be found in appendices 1 and 2. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix 3.

**Trench 1 – Fig. 3**

2.2 The earliest encountered deposit was sandy mortar 106 identified 0.6m below present ground level (BPGL) (Fig. 3). Excavations through this deposit produced Roman-British artefacts including pottery and tile, with work failing to exceed the
limits of this deposit (1m BPGL). This deposit was truncated by modern drainage trench 104 that in turn was sealed by make-up and concrete layers for modern tarmac surface 101.

_Trench 2 – Fig. 4_

2.3 Opus signinum floor 209 was located along the west edge of the trench at a depth of 0.85m BPGL (106.65m AOD). Comprising red mortar with crushed tile and tessara, the floor proved substantial in depth as a small sondage 0.3m in depth failed to exceed the limits of this feature. Along the eastern edge of this floor was a quarterround moulding although silty clay 212 separated floor 209 and wall 208 (see Fig. 4). Floor 209 was overlain by a thin layer of pea-grit 211, which in turn was sealed by clay deposit 210, which abutted the west face of wall 208.

2.4 Wall 208 consisted of three courses of unbonded limestone blocks, although its full depth was not exposed. It was aligned north-west to south-east and survived solely within the northern confines of the trench. It was sealed by demolition rubble 207 which contained late Roman artefactual material.

2.5 Overlying deposit 207 was cultivation soil 206, which in turn was sealed by a second distinct soil horizon 205. This was overlain by thin mortar surface 204 that was covered by make-up layers and hard-core for the existing tarmac carpark.

_The Finds_

2.6 Pottery retrieved from Roman demolition deposits 106 and 207 is dated to the late Roman period (after 250 AD) although residual sherds of first and second century pottery was recovered. No artefactual material was retrieved from surface 209 or wall 208.

_The Biological Evidence_

2.7 Although assessed for their palaeoarchaeological potential, no deposits were sampled during the course of this evaluation.
Fig. 1  Site location plan
Fig. 2  Location of test pits (1:500)
Fig. 3  Test pit 1, plan and section (1:20 and 1:10)
Fig. 4  Test pit 2; plan and section (1:20 and 1:10)