LAND ADJACENT TO COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, TRINITY ROAD, CIRENCESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

C.A.T JOB: 563
C.A.T REPORT: 98857

JANUARY 1998

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GLOSSARY

ARCHAEOLOGY
For the purposes of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains, from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CONTEXT
The simplest level of excavated archaeological data, i.e. a context could be the cut of a ditch (shown as [1]), or its fill (shown as (2)).

NATURAL
Defined in archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, e.g. Lower Lias clay, river terrace gravels etc.

NGR
National Grid Reference given from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD
Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

POT-SHERD
A fragment of a pottery vessel.

ROMANO-BRITISH
Term used to describe a fusion of indigenous late Iron Age traditions with Roman culture, often abbreviated as ‘R-B.’

SMR
Sites and Monument Record.
SUMMARY

In November 1997 Cotswold Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Cotswold District Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the depth and preservation of archaeological deposits within an area which might possibly be developed for a car park.

The proposed development is located in an area of high archaeological sensitivity. The Roman town wall runs through the south-east of the study area, and there are Roman buildings to the north-east within insula IV. A recent evaluation by Cotswold Archaeological Trust has identified Roman deposits under the Cotswold District Council Offices to the north-west.

Roman deposits were encountered in all seven of the test pits. These deposits were covered with a varying depth of overburden, which ranged from a minimum of 0.13m above the town wall rampart on the town wall, to between 0.57m and 1.13m to the rear of the rampart.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report represents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted between the 5th-7th January 1998 on land adjacent to the Cotswold District Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. The site is centred on NGR SP 4167 2220 (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The archaeological evaluation sought to assess the depth and preservation of archaeological deposits within an area which might be developed for a car park to the south-east of the Council Offices. The site is currently occupied by playing fields of Paternoster School, and falls within a notification area of scheduled ancient monument Gloucestershire No. 361: Corinium Roman Town.

1.1.3 On the 19th September 1997 an application was submitted to the Department of Culture Media and Sport for scheduled monument consent to construct the car park. Following the advice of English Heritage the Department subsequently requested that further information be supplied, in the form of an archaeological evaluation under the terms of Class 7 of the Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994. A specification for such an evaluation was prepared by Cotswold Archaeological Trust and approved by both English Heritage and Gloucestershire County Council.

1.1.4 The evaluation was conducted in compliance with the Standard and Guidance of Archaeological Field Evaluations (IFA 1997); the Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire; and the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP 2) issued by English Heritage.

1.1.5 The study area is currently used as a playing field by Paternoster School and is under mown grass. It is bounded to the north-east by Paternoster School and
the Parsonage, to the south-east by the access road to Trinity Church, to the south-west by Trinity Road, and to the north-west by the former workhouse building which is now occupied by Cotswold District Council.

### 1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology of the study area comprises Quaternary alluvial deposits relating to the River Churn, which vary from gravels to silts and clays (Wilkinson 1996, 6).

1.2.2 The study area sits at the foot of the north-east to south-west slope of Querns ridge. The current ground surface slopes downwards from south-west (108m OD) to north-east (107m OD) reflecting the presence of the Roman town wall running north-west to south-east through the south-west edge of the site.

### 1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 Prior to this evaluation, an archaeological assessment was carried out by Cotswold Archaeological Trust (Wilkinson 1996). It is not intended to repeat this background information in detail as that report is available in its entirety. However, the principal conclusions can be outlined as follows.

1.3.2 The importance of Roman Cirencester is well attested. The site falls on and within the circuit of Roman defences. Previous excavations have also revealed a street alignment along Watermoor Road to the north, and a series of buildings within *insula IV* on the Paternoster House and Paternoster School sites. The Roman buildings under the latter lie within 30m of the study area.

1.3.3 The southern corner of the study area was subject to an archaeological excavation by Baddeley in 1922. A 60m length of the extant earthwork was exposed confirming that it did overly the Roman town wall (Baddeley 1922). Photographs published at the time suggest that the top of the defensive wall
was covered by between 0.30m and 0.50m of overburden (Holbrook 1994, Fig. 21).

1.3.4 Evaluation of the north range of the workhouse buildings prior to an application to extend the Council Offices confirmed the presence of Roman deposits in this area. These deposits have been tentatively characterised as internal floor surfaces and a possible yard surface (Keynon 1997, 10).

1.3.5 After the Roman period the study area remained as open fields until the present day.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the following.

(i) the depth at which any surviving Roman deposits occurred in the various areas proposed for development, and the degree of build up of ‘dark earth’ above them.

(ii) the extent and depth of overburden sealing the archaeological deposits, and the degree of truncation of these by later disturbance.

1.4.2 Seven test pits were excavated in the positions shown (Fig. 2). Test pit 1 was located to sample the footprint of a proposed extension to the current Council Chamber. The remaining six test pits were located in the school playing field to sample the area affected by the proposed car park.

1.4.3 The test pits were excavated entirely by hand by suitably experienced archaeologists. All measured 1.00m x 1.00m.

1.4.4 All recording was undertaken in accordance with the CAT Technical Manual 1; Site Recording Manual. A full written record was compiled and all test pits were photographed and drawn at an appropriate scale. Levels taken on site
were related back to an OS bench mark on Trinity Church with a value of 108.00 m.

1.4.5 All artefacts recovered were retained for processing and analysis in accordance with the CAT Technical Manual; *Treatment of Finds immediately after Excavation* and are listed in Appendices 1 and 2. These will be deposited, with the landowner’s consent, in the Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

2. EVALUATION RESULTS

2.1 Seven test pits were excavated as outlined above (Fig. 2). Natural gravel was not encountered in any of the test pits as excavation was halted either at the upper surface of significant archaeology, or at an arbitrary depth determined by the height of the water table. All of the test pits produced varying amounts of nineteenth-century and residual Roman pottery. Stratified deposits of Roman date were identified in all of the test pits.

2.2 Descriptions of all contexts, finds, and levels are contained within Appendices 1 to 4. Brief descriptions of significant features are presented within this section.

*Test Pit 1*

2.3 Roman deposits in the form of demolition rubble or possible wall tumble (110) were identified 1.37m below the surface in this test pit. These deposits were entirely sealed by two layers of dark earth and/or post-Roman plough soil (108)/(109). These layers were in turn overlaid by deposits associated with the demolition of the workhouse (107), and the wall footings of a workhouse outbuilding (106) (Fig. 2).
**Test Pit 2**

2.4 Excavation of this test pit was halted at a depth of 1.03m as the water table was encountered at this point. Investigation using an auger located possible Roman deposits (206) at a depth of 1.40m. These deposits were sealed by a layer of dark earth/post-Roman plough soil (202). Above this layer there was evidence of post-medieval disturbance, in the form of ditch cut [204].

**Test Pit 3**

2.5 Roman deposits were encountered at a depth of 0.57m. These took the form of homogenous sands and gravels (302) which had probably weathered from the rear of the town wall rampart (Fig. 3). These deposits were overlaid by a homogenous layer of dark brown clay silts (301). No differentiation was visible between dark earth/ploughsoil and topsoil.

**Test Pit 4**

2.6 Excavation of this test pit was halted at a depth of 0.91m as the water table was encountered at this level. Investigation using an auger located (at a depth of 1.10m) a probable layer of Roman demolition rubble (406). This deposit was sealed by four layers of dark earth/post-Roman plough soil (402), (403), (404), and (405), beneath topsoil (401).

**Test Pit 5**

2.7 Roman demolition rubble, or a possible crude surface (507) was encountered at a depth of 0.95m in this test pit. This layer was cut by one ditch running north-west to south-east [508], the fill of which (509) appeared to be sealed by the dark earth/post-medieval plough soil (504). Both (504) and (507) were cut by post-medieval pits [505] and [510].

**Test Pit 6**

2.8 The top surface of the rampart backing for the town wall (603) was encountered at depths which varied from 0.13m at the south-west side of the pit to 0.39m at the north-east (Fig. 3). Overlying this was a layer of subsoil (602) and topsoil (601). Similar stone slabbing has been identified at several
locations around the town wall rampart suggesting that it does not provide localised stepped access to the rampart walk (an ascensus), but rather acts as a widespread revetment of the rampart bank constructed to reduce the effects of erosion and slippage (Holbrook 1994, 70).

**Test Pit 7**

2.9 Roman deposits in the form of sands and clays which had probably weathered from the front of the town wall rampart ((710), (711), and (712)) were identified at a depth of 0.96m in this test pit (Fig. 4). Post-medieval make-up layers associated with the construction of Trinity Road overlaid the Roman deposits.

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

3.1 The principal objective of this evaluation was to determine the depth below ground level at which sensitive archaeological deposits survive. This was achieved in all seven of the test pits, although the accuracy of the results obtained through auguring in the case of test pits 2 and 4 is less than that where conventional excavation was possible.

3.2 The Roman deposits in test pit 1, located adjacent to the Council Chamber, were not disturbed by either the construction of the wall of the workhouse outbuilding or the construction of the council chamber in the 1970s.

3.3 In the playing field the shallowest deposits were found in test pit 6 on top of the town wall rampart, where the deposits were located 0.13m below the modern ground surface.

3.4 Elsewhere in the playing field the Roman deposits were located at depths of between 0.57m and 1.13m (Appendix 4) and they appeared to be in a good state of preservation.
3.5 The Roman deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation suggest that well preserved Roman buildings lie in the area between those known at Paternoster School and the rear of the town wall rampart, although, the precise nature of the occupation cannot be determined from this evaluation.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank Neil Uzzell and Christine Major of Cotswold District Council and Charles Parry, Archaeology Officer, Gloucestershire County Council, for their assistance during the course of this project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Laurent Coleman, Julie Martin, Tom Moore, and Jo Williams. The report has been compiled by Laurent Coleman and the illustrations prepared by Pete Moore.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Keynon, D. 1997 *Cotswold District Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire; Archaeological Evaluation* CAT Report No 97506

Wilkinson, K. 1996 *Cotswold District Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, Archaeological Assessment* CAT Report No 96373
Figure 1 Location plan
Figure 2 Location of test pits
Figure 3 Sections, test pits 3 and 6
Figure 4 Section, test pit 7
APPENDIX 1

Pottery Assessment

By Neil Holbrook

101 1 post-medieval sherd
107 1 post-medieval sherd
108 2 post-medieval/modern sherds
109 2 Roman sherds
   1 post-medieval sherd
110 1 Roman sherd
201 3 post-medieval/modern sherds
203 3 Roman sherds including 1 Dressel 20 amphora sherd and 1 Nene Valley colour-coat sherd
205 2 post-medieval sherds
301 6 post-medieval/modern sherds
302 17 Roman sherds including 1 BB1 sherd, 1 Savernake sherd, 1 Dressel 20 amphora sherd and 1 samian
401 6 post-medieval/modern sherds
402 8 Roman sherds
403 1 possible Iron Age sherd
   9 Roman sherds including 1 BB1 sherd
404 17 Roman sherds including 1 Savernake sherd and 1 samian sherd
405 5 Roman sherds including 1 Savernake sherd and 1 rusticated sherd
501 2 post-medieval sherds
502 4 Roman sherds including 1 Savernake sherd and 2 samian (1 Dr.27)
   1 modern sherd
503 4 post-medieval sherds
504 5 Roman sherds including 1 BB1 sherd (?3rd/4th c)
   1 Medieval sherd
   1 post-medieval sherd
506 13 Roman sherds including 1 BB1 sherd (3rd/4th c) and 5 samian sherds
507 5 Roman sherds including 1 Savernake sherd
<table>
<thead>
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<td>3 Roman sherds including 2 BB1 grooved, flat-rimmed bowl and 1 burnt mortaria sherd</td>
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<tr>
<td>601</td>
<td>3 post-medieval/modern sherds</td>
</tr>
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<td>4 Roman sherds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>702</td>
<td>1 post-medieval sherd</td>
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<tr>
<td>703</td>
<td>1 post-medieval/modern sherd</td>
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### APPENDIX 2

**Finds List**

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APPENDIX 3

List of Recorded Contexts

Note: Where possible stratigraphic descriptions are given from the earliest to the latest deposits. Cut features are designated by square brackets thus; [000]. All other deposits/layers are in round brackets; (000). All stated depths are given from the present ground level. Heights are based on a bench mark on Trinity Church recorded as 108.00mOD.

Test Pit 1 Modern ground surface 107.88m OD

(110) Roman demolition layer or wall tumble, not excavated, medium yellow orange mortar and gravel with limestone blocks upto 0.1m x 0.3m in size, covered by (109), 1.37m in depth.

(109) Dark earth/post-Roman ploughsoil, dark grey brown sandy silt, frequent inclusions of limestone and RB tile/brick fragments, covered by (108), 0.11m thick.

(108) Dark earth/post-Roman plough soil, dark grey black sandy silt, less frequent limestone inclusions, covered by (107), 0.09m thick.

(106) Wall footings of demolished workhouse outbuilding, light yellow grey limestone blocks 0.2m x 0.2m to 0.2m x 0.5m in size and mortar bonded, 0.61m deep and 0.51m thick.

(107) Possible demolition layer from workhouse outbuilding, light grey brown clay silt, frequent inclusions of limestone fragments and charcoal, covers (106), covered by (104), 0.62m thick.

(104) Modern make-up layer, light orange brown clay, covered by (103) and (105), 0.09m thick.

(105) Modern make-up layer, ligh grey yellow gravel sand, covered by (103), 0.15m thick.

(103) Modern demolition layer, dark orange brown silty clay, frequent limestone fragment inclusions, covered by (101) and (102), 0.25m thick.

(102) Modern make-up layer, medium yellow brown gravel sand, covered by (101), 0.15m thick.

(101) Topsoil, dark grey brown sandy silt, 0.16m thick.

Test Pit 2 Modern ground surface 107.15m OD

(206) Possible Roman layer investigated by auger due to height of water table (1.03 m), medium grey silty sand, covered by (203), located at a depth of approximately 1.40m.

(203) Dark earth/post-Roman ploughsoil, dark grey brown silty clay, frequent limestone and RB brick/tile inclusions, covered by (202), approximately 0.70m thick.

(202) Post-medieval building material, light brown yellow sandy gravel, brick and limestone fragments, cut by [205] and covered by (201), 0.20m thick.

[204] Cut of post-medieval ditch, orientated south-west to north-east, steeply sloping sides and concave base, filled by (205), 0.35m in width and 023m in depth.

(205) Fill of [204], medium grey brown sandy clay, covered by (201).
(201) Topsoil, dark grey brown silty clay, 0.54m thick.

Test Pit 3  Modern ground surface 107.22m OD

(302) Roman deposit probably comprising material weathered from rear of rampart, 25% sampled to establish date of deposit, medium yellow brown silty clay, covered by (301), 0.57m in depth.

(301) Topsoil, dark brown clay silt, 0.57m thick.

Test Pit 4  Modern ground surface 107.27m OD

(406) Possible Roman layer investigated by auger due to height of water table (0.91m), medium brown yellow gravel sand, covered by (405), located at a depth of approximately 1.10m.

(405) Dark earth/post-Roman plough soil, medium grey brown clay silt, covered by (404), 0.06m thick.

(404) Dark earth/post-Roman plough soil, dark grey brown clay silt, covered by (403), 0.20m thick.

(403) Dark earth/post-Roman plough soil, dark grey brown clay silt, frequent inclusions of small limestone fragments, covered by (402), 0.17m thick.

(402) Post-Roman ploughsoil, medium grey brown silty clay, covered by (401), 0.15m thick.

(401) Topsoil, dark grey brown clay silt, 0.33m thick.

Test Pit 5  Modern ground surface 107.42m OD

(507) Roman demolition rubble or possible crude surface, medium yellow grey sandy gravel with inclusions of limestone fragments 0.02m to 0.20m in diameter, covered by (506) and cut by (505), (508), and (510), 0.95m in depth.

(506) Dark earth/post-Roman ploughsoil at interface with (507), dark grey brown clay silt, abundant limestone pea grit, covered by (504) and cut by (505), (508), and (510), 0.04m thick.

[508] Ditch cut orientated north-west to south-east, sides gently sloping and base not fully excavated, filled by (509), 0.45m in width and 0.14m in depth.

(509) Fill of [508], medium dark grey brown clay silt, covered by (504).

(504) Dark earth/post-Roman ploughsoil, dark grey brown clay silt, cut by [505] and [510], 0.68m thick.

[510] Post-medieval pit cut, sides steeply sloping and base unexcavated, filled by (511), dimensions unknown.

(511) Fill of [510], dark grey brown clay silt with abundant limestone fragments 0.02m to 0.04m in diameter, cut by [505].

[505] Post-medieval pit cut, sides steeply sloping and base unexcavated, filled by (503) and cuts (511), dimensions unknown.

(503) Fill of [505], post-medieval building rubble, light grey yellow sandy gravel, abundant
limestone pebbles 0.02m to 0.04m in diameter, covered by (502).

(502) Layer of post-medieval make-up covering (503), medium grey brown clay silt, covered by (501), upto 0.70m thick.

(501) Topsoil, dark grey brown clay silt, 0.25m thick.

**Test Pit 6**

Modern ground surface 108.15m OD

(603) Inside edge of Roman town wall rampart, large sub-angular limestone blocks in matrix of gravel, silt, and smaller cobbles, covered by (602) and (601), depth of 0.13m at south west to 0.39m at north-east.

(602) Subsoil, medium grey brown clay silt, covered by (601).

(601) Topsoil, dark grey brown clay silt.

**Test Pit 7**

Modern ground surface 108.40m OD

(712) Roman layer, medium grey brown sandy silt, covered by (711), unknown thickness.

(711) Roman layer, light orange yellow, covered by (710), 0.08m thick.

(710) Roman layer, medium grey brown clay silt, covered by (709), 0.03m thick and 0.96m deep.

(709) Post-medieval layer, red brown clay sand, covered by (708), 0.13m thick.

(708) Post-medieval make-up, medium yellow brown limestone fragments in matrix of sandy clay, covered by (707), 0.14m to 0.32m thick.

(707) Post-medieval make-up, medium yellow brown sandy clay, covered by (706), 0.02m thick.

(706) Post-medieval make-up, light yellow brown sandy gravel, covered by (705), 0.13m thick.

(705) Post-medieval make-up, light pink grey sandy gravel, covered by (704), 0.02m thick.

(704) Post-medieval layer, medium grey brown sandy clay, covered by (703), 0.02m to 0.09m thick.

(703) Post-medieval layer, dark black brown silty sand, covered by (702), 0.06m to 0.23m thick.

(702) Post-medieval layer, medium orange brown clay silt, covered by (701), 0.10m thick.

(701) Topsoil, dark medium brown clay silt, 0.20m thick.
## APPENDIX 4

### Table of Comparative Depths of Principal Deposits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test pit</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Surface</td>
<td>0.00m (107.88m)</td>
<td>0.00m (107.15m)</td>
<td>0.00m (107.22m)</td>
<td>0.00m (107.27m)</td>
<td>0.00m (107.42m)</td>
<td>0.00m (108.15m)</td>
<td>0.00m (108.40m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water table</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.03m (106.12m)</td>
<td>1.28m (105.94m)</td>
<td>0.91m (106.36m)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman level</td>
<td>1.37m (106.51m)</td>
<td>1.40m (105.75m)</td>
<td>0.57m (106.65m)</td>
<td>1.10m (106.17m)</td>
<td>0.95m (106.47m)</td>
<td>0.13m (108.02m)</td>
<td>0.96m (107.44m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum depth</td>
<td>1.37m (106.51m)</td>
<td>1.03m (106.12m)</td>
<td>1.28m (105.94m)</td>
<td>0.94m (106.33m)</td>
<td>0.95m (106.47m)</td>
<td>0.39m (107.76m)</td>
<td>1.14m (107.26m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upper figures are depths below modern surface, lower figures in parentheses are reduced OD levels.

Asterisks indicate where no deposit of the type was identified in the pit.
Fig. 1 Location plan
Fig. 3  Known archaeological features within the study area & its immediate environs
Fig. 4 Study area in relation to known Roman archaeology
Fig. 5. The proposed development plotted on original workhouse plan (OS 1/500 map, 1875)
Fig. 6 The location of the proposed evaluation test pits