1 KING’S WALL
MALMESBURY
WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

CA PROJECT: 2379
CA REPORT: 08049

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Signed: 

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SUMMARY

Site Name: 1 King’s Wall
Location: Malmesbury, Wiltshire
NGR: ST 93350 86935
Type: Watching brief
Date: 30 May 2007
Planning Reference: 06/03131/FUL
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes
Site Code: KWM 07

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in May 2007 during groundworks associated with the rebuilding of a collapsed section of retaining wall at 1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

The removal of the collapsed portion of wall revealed a longitudinal section through a series of clay and sand layers which appeared to form a bank. This section appeared to be a continuation of the deposits identified behind the neighbouring portion of the wall, which had collapsed in 2006, and which was also the subject of archaeological investigation. Its position outside the line of the stone town wall and similarity in composition to a layered rampart discovered during investigations at the East Gate site suggests that this bank may be part of a rampart which formed a portion of Malmesbury’s defences. Work elsewhere in Malmesbury has dated the main rampart sequence to the Iron Age.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2007 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Ms J. Meakin at 1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury (centred on NGR: ST 93350 86935; Fig. 1).

1.2 The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to the planning consent for the rebuilding of a collapsed section of retaining wall (Planning ref: 06/03131/FUL). The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the reconstruction of the wall.

1.3 The archaeological fieldwork was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2007) and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) acting on the advice of Ms Sue Farr, Assistant Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council (WCC). The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2001) and the Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation (WCC Archaeology Service 1995).

The site

1.4 The portion of the collapsed retaining wall that was to be rebuilt occupies a section of the frontage of 1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury. The wall was previously approximately 2.2m high and constructed of randomly coursed rubble stone. The repair included the insertion of concrete to form a foundation and reconstruction of the rubble stone wall face. The foundations were 1.2m deep and 1.2m wide. The site lies at approximately 80m AOD.

1.5 The underlying geology of the area is mapped as cornbrash, rubbly limestone of the Upper Jurassic (BGS 1970).

Archaeological background

1.6 During rebuilding of the neighbouring section of wall at 77 High Street, Malmesbury, a portion of a clay and sand bank interpreted as part of the Iron Age defensive rampart around the town was uncovered (CA 2008).
The site lies 8m to the south and 2m below the base of the 12th-century stone town wall. The historical, archaeological and topographical context of the defences of Malmesbury has very recently been reprised in detail (Longman 2006). Reference should therefore be made to that report for detailed information. In summary, the defences of Malmesbury apparently have their origin as part of what became a multivallate hillfort dating to the Iron Age, with its origins in the Early Iron Age. Successive alterations, remodelling and enhancement of the defences took place during the second half of the first millennium BC. Remains of a complex sequence of ramparts and some associated evidence for external ditches were recorded during investigations by Cotswold Archaeology in 2006 to the south of the East Gate to the town, also known as the Holloway Gate (CA 2006). There is documentary evidence for a 7th-century monastery at Malmesbury and it is believed that the town had renewed defences by the late 9th century AD, when the town is mentioned in the Burghal Hidage of King Alfred; evidence of a substantial bank and ditch from the 10th or 11th century was recorded on the line of the Anglo-Saxon defences during works to the south of the East Gate site (Longman 2006). Following the Norman Conquest, the town defences were again reconstructed and enhanced, attributed to Bishop Roger of Sarum in the early 12th century, including the construction of a substantial stone wall. There is archaeological evidence of subsequent modifications and improvements in the late 12th and/or early 13th and 15th centuries. In the post-medieval period the defences, which had fallen into disrepair in the late medieval period, were again reconstructed during the Civil War, before being slighted by Parliamentary forces. In the later post-medieval period, the walls were rebuilt and altered piecemeal by property owners along the length of the wall.

**Methodology**

The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2007). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks, comprising the removal of the collapsed wall, and the excavation of a 1.2m wide trench behind the line of the collapsed wall (Fig. 2).

Written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual (2007). Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other samples from
Archaeological Sites (2003) but no deposits were sampled during the course of this evaluation. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation (1995).

1.10 Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the finds and site archive will be deposited with the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes.

2. RESULTS

2.1 This section outlines the results of the watching brief. A full description of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 The removal of the collapsed wall revealed a longitudinal section through the deposits beneath the garden of 1 King’s Wall. The earliest deposit encountered was a layer of yellowish green clay, 108. This was sealed by a further five, mixed silty clay layers, 107 to 103. These layers were densely packed and survived to a height of 1m. The uppermost layer, 103, contained a large quantity of limestone fragments. The layers were visible throughout the exposed section revealed by the removal of the retaining wall and would appear to form part of a bank. These layers were sealed by 1.85m of garden soils, 102 and 101, containing pottery from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Finds

2.3 No finds were recovered throughout the course of the works, however 19th and 20th-century pottery was noted in deposits 101 and 102, but could not be retrieved due to the instability of the section face.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The removal of the collapsed portion of wall revealed a longitudinal section through a series of clay and sand layers which appeared to form a bank. This section appeared to be a continuation of the deposits identified behind the neighbouring portion of the wall, which had collapsed in 2006, and which was also the subject of archaeological investigation. The bank is situated 5m to the south of the face of the stone town wall, whilst the top of the bank lay approximately 4m below the base of the stone wall. The large differential in height and the distance between these
features would suggest that the bank encountered here is earlier in date than the medieval stone wall phase of Malmesbury’s town defences. Its position outside the line of the stone town wall and similarity in composition to the layered rampart construction discovered during investigations at the neighbouring site and elsewhere in the town suggests that this bank forms part of a rampart which constituted a section of Malmesbury’s defences. Although no dating evidence was recovered from the rampart observed during the watching brief, work elsewhere in Malmesbury has dated the rampart sequence to the Iron Age (Longman 2006).

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

4.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Jon Hart. Kate Cullen compiled this report. The illustrations were prepared by Jemma Elliott. The archive has been compiled by Kate Cullen, and prepared for deposition by Teresa Gilmore. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1970 *Solid and Drift Geology Sheet 251: Malmesbury*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2006 *Malmesbury Town Wall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design*. CA typescript report 07034

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2007 *1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2008 *77 High Street, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Archaeological Watching Brief* CA report 07005

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deposit:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Topsoil: Dark brown sandy silt. 1.14m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Mid greyish brown, silty clay. 0.7m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Dark greyish brown, silty clay, abundant medium-large stone fragments. 0.12m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Dark grey brown silty clay with occasional small limestone fragments. 0.16m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Mid yellowish brown, silty clay. 0.16m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Mid greyish brown, silty clay, occasional charcoal flecks and small limestone fragments. 0.14m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Mid yellowish green and greyish brown mixed silty clay. 0.4m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Light green silty clay. &gt;0.46m thick.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 3: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using the benchmark located at 77 High Street, Malmesbury, Wiltshire (75.16m AOD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trench 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current ground level</td>
<td>0.00m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(78.25m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of rampart</td>
<td>1.75m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(76.50m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit of excavation</td>
<td>3.20m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(75.05m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level, lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.
Site location plan

1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury
Wiltshire

Drawn by: JE
Scale: 1:25,000@A4
Project: 2379
Figure: 1

Reproduced from the 1998 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office. Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeological Trust 100002109.
The site, showing location of groundworks

1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury
Wiltshire

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

1 King’s Wall, Malmesbury
Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

The site, showing location of groundworks

DRAWN BY

JE

SCALE

1:500@A4

PROJECT NO

2379

FIGURE NO

2

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site

previous archaeological investigations

supposed line of Malmesbury Town Wall
Section AA, 1 King's Wall

Section BB, 77 High Street

Composite section: AA and BB