

Marches Archaeology

**CAMAS Building Materials
Station Road
South Cerney
Gloucestershire**

A report on a desk-based assessment

September 2001

Marches Archaeology Series 207

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Marches Archaeology

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**CAMAS Building Materials
Station Road
South Cerney
Gloucestershire**

NGR: SU 0520 9670

**A report on a
desk-based assessment**

Report by

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**CAMAS Building Materials
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**A report on a
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Summary

A desk-based assessment was carried out on land off Station Road, South Cerney to determine what effect development on the site would have on any archaeological remains.

The site is centred on NGR: SU 0520 9670 and is currently being used by CAMAS Building Materials. Westbury Homes Ltd wish to redevelop the site and build new houses on it. Marches Archaeology were commissioned by Hunter Page Planning to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site.

The cartographic evidence shows that until the site was used by CAMAS for its works the area had been agricultural land. It is likely that the site had been used for farming since the early medieval period when the village of South Cerney was established. Excavations within the village have shown that human settlement in the area has occurred since the Mesolithic period.

A site visit determined that much of the site has probably been surface stripped down to the gravel at the time of the works construction. However, a portion of the site has since 1924 become over grown with trees and bushes. The site visit did not establish if this area had been disturbed and could not rule out potential archaeological remains.

1 Introduction

The local planning authority received an application for the development of land off Station Road, South Cerney. The land is currently used by CAMAS Building Materials. The site is centred on NGR: SU 0520 9670 (Fig. 1).

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor suggested that further information was required before the archaeological implications of the application could be adequately assessed. The recommendation was that an archaeological desk-based assessment be carried out.

Hunter Page Planning, on behalf of their client Westbury Homes, commissioned Marches Archaeology to undertake the archaeological services required for the project. Westbury Homes intend to redevelop the land and build housing on the site.

2 Scope and aims of the project

The purpose of Desk-based Assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as:-

"to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site, including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality, in order to make an assessment of its worth in the appropriate context leading to the formation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource or for further investigation where the character of the resource is not sufficiently defined, or the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research".

3 Methodology

A site visit was made to locate any easily identifiable archaeology. The Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record was consulted. Primary and secondary sources were consulted. The following sources were also considered, as appropriate and subject to availability:

Ordnance Survey maps; Tithe maps; Estate maps and other historical maps; Previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work; Written non-archaeological sources; Air photographs; Geological maps; Borehole and other engineering data.

4 Archaeological and historical background

South Cerney is a village 6 kilometres (3½ miles) to the south of Cirencester near to the county border between Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The village is situated within the south-eastern foothills of the Cotswolds on the banks of the River Churn, which runs from near Cheltenham to Cricklade where it joins the river Thames. Alongside the river, for nearly the length of the village, is a mill stream.

The earliest evidence for settlement on the site of the village has been found at the The Cottage in High Street (SU 404745 197020) (GSMR: 20675). A small excavation in 1998-9 on the plot of four new houses revealed twenty one Mesolithic (10000-4000BC) flints. The flints which were resting on the natural gravel and included seven thumbnail scrapers and broken blades (GSMR: 20675/3). Further occupation of the site in prehistory was demonstrated by an overlying layer that contained Bronze Age (2500-700BC) pottery and a fragment of shaped bronze.

Evidence for settlement on the site of the village in the Roman period (AD43-AD410) has not been found. The local history group recorded that local people believed that stone coffins

supposedly of a Roman date had been found around South Cerney (Anon, n. d., 1). The Gloucestershire Sites and Monument Record has no entries for any Roman artefacts being found.

The earliest documented evidence for the village's existence is in an Anglo Saxon charter dated A. D. 909. The charter states that a man named Aelfsi seized the lands of a lady called Eatflaed. King Aethelred and the Witan [council] intervened and restored the lands to the woman. On her death, Eatflead bequeathed her land to the king. The charter records that the king gave 'fifteen hides at Cyrne' to the monastery at Abingdon. The people of South Cerney are very proud of this charter as the signs entering the village state this date. The local history group suggest that the boundaries set out in the charter are very similar to the modern parishes boundaries (Anon, n.d., 2).

Early medieval (410-1066) burials, from a similar period to the charter, have been found at the rear of The Royal Oak public house (GSMR: 20001/1) (SU 404631 186841). The excavations revealed that the 18th century public house was built on the site of a Saxon burial ground (GSMR: 20001/9). Initially a single undated inhumation was found in 1997 (GSMR: 20001/2) but further work in 1999 allowed for an excavation to take place. The excavation found five more inhumation burials that could be dated by three sherds of pottery to be early medieval (GSMR: 20001/5-8). One of the burials had two remains sharing the same grave cut (GSMR: 20001/7-8). The later of the burials was evidently buried in a wooden coffin with the earlier remains being dumped on top. Furniture from the coffin bears similarities with 10th century coffin brackets found at Saint Oswald's, Gloucester.

The earliest evidence from the post-Conquest era (after 1066) is found in the Domesday book compiled by the order of King William in 1086. The entry records that South Cerney was the

‘LAND OF WALTER SON OF ROGER

In GARDEN Hundred

Walter also holds (South Cerney). 14 hides and 1 virgate.

Archbishop Stigand held it. In lordship 2 ploughs;

25 villagers, a priest and 9 smallholders with 10 ploughs.

4 slaves; meadow, 100 acres; there were 3 mills at 30s.

The value was £16; now £12

This manor is claimed for St. Mary's Church at Abingdon, but all the County testified that Archbishop Stigand had held it for ten years during King Edward's lifetime. Earl William gave this manor to Roger the Sheriff, Walter's father' (Morris, 1982, 56,2).

The notes below the main entry appear on the original document to be compressed and look to be a later addition (Morris, 1982, 56, 2). The addition refers to the result of a lawsuit and mentions that Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury, also bishop of Winchester, had held South Cerney. Stigand, was a hero of the English resistance against the Norman conquerors after the battle of Hastings in 1066. King William sought the aid of the Pope in 1070 to defeat the

Archbishop. The result of William's plea was the loss of Stigand's lands and office (Anon, n. d., 2).

Walter de Pîtres (Pîtres is about 20km south-east of Rouen in Normandy) also recorded as holding land at Great Barrington (Morris, 1982, 56,1). His father, Roger, was sheriff of Gloucester until 1086 when Walter's uncle Durand of Pîtres, Constable of Gloucester Castle became sheriff. By 1095 Walter held most of his uncle's lands and had inherited the positions of Constable of Gloucester Castle and sheriff of Gloucester (Morris, 1982, 53).

Not all of the modern parish of South Cerney is included within the above record. Part of the parish lay in the manor of Ampney and Cerney which was the land of Ralph of Tosny (Morris, 1982, 45, 5). The record states that the land is held by Roger; thought to be Roger Baskerville (VCH vi, 184). The Cerney portion of land is thought to be Cerney Wick which was not re-united with South Cerney until 1285 (Morris, 1982, 56, 2).

Before 1139, Milo Fitzwalter, Earl of Hereford built a castle at South Cerney. The castle which survives only as an earthwork is located off the north west end of Silver Street. After the death of Milo's five grandsons, the estate was divided between three-coheireses; there was hence three manor houses in the parish (Verey and Brooks, 1999, 617).

The manor houses in the Medieval period are recorded in various land-holding registers. In the 12th century a manor was given to the Priory of Llanthony by Margery, one of the granddaughters. Also during the 12th century Robert, Earl of Gloucester sold a manor to Robert FitzHarding. In the 14th century the manor of South Cerney and Cerney Wick was bought by Lord Berkeley (Anon, n. d., 3).

The present village still has three manor houses surviving though non of the buildings date to the medieval period. The Manor House, Church Lane (NGR: SU 404950 197350) (GSMR: 19969) is dated by a plaque to 1766, but parts of the building dates to the 17th century. Excavations on the site revealed the stone foundations of an extensive building predating the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century (GSMR: 19969/2-4; Oakeshott, 1999, 207). Atkyns Manor at the west end of Church Lane (NGR: SU 404920 197310) was built in the 17th century, but excavations at the site have found evidence for a medieval barn (Verey & Brooks, 1999, 619; GSMR: 15479). The third manor, Chapter Manor, has had no excavations but it is likely that, as with The Manor House and Atkyns Manor, that the post-medieval manor house has been built on the site of an earlier manorial complex.

In the 12th century a large church was erected in the village (NGR: 404990 197340). A late Anglo-Saxon carving set in the wall above the south doorway in All Hallows Church has been used tentatively with supporting evidence of a Saxon cross shaft to argue that an earlier church stood on the site (GSMR: 2357). The church was restored in 1862, but there are surviving Norman doorways and windows, including the south doorway. The church also has interesting features of the Transitional and Decorated periods (GSMR: 3238/1). Excavations near the church tower in 1999 revealed four or five inhumations of possible medieval date (GSMR: 3238/2).

Other excavations have found evidence for medieval activity and settlement around the village. An evaluation at Ponderosa, Upper Up, found two dry stone walls with 200 domestic pottery sherds dated between the 12th and 16th centuries. Among the artefacts was a medieval

spindle whorl (GSMR 20291). In 1998-9 excavations at the Cottage, High Street revealed ridge and furrow on the site dated through pottery to the Medieval period (GSMR: 20675/1). In the same year, 192 sherds of medieval pottery were found in an old vegetable garden at the Orchis, Silver Street (GSMR: 20674), while two trenches at The Brambles, Clarks Hay recovered 423 sherds of pottery (GSMR: 20676).

To the north of the CAMAS Buildings Materials site at the rear of 14 Station Road, which is a c.1600 cottage, was found the remains of medieval stone wall. It is suggested that the excavated area lay adjacent to a medieval kitchen (GSMR: 20677). A stone cross situated at the junction of High Street and Station Road has some 15th century elements (GSMR: 2360).

The earliest cartographic evidence showing the village is the County Map of Gloucestershire by Christopher Saxton. It indicates that the county border follows the line of the river Churn thus placing 'S. Sarney', as the village name was spelt, as straddling the county boundary (Anon, n. d., 7).

In 1608, James I made a survey of eligible men who could be brought to active service from the county of Gloucestershire. The returns show that 77 men were eligible for military service from South Cerney (Anon, n. d., 16; Smith, 1980). By this time the village people were performing their mumming play at Christmas time, which was a tradition that survived as a regular event until 1913 (Anon, n. d., 5,18).

The 1777 county map by Isaac Taylor shows the village in some detail (Fig. 2). The church, along with important houses, is shown larger than other less important dwellings. Two mills are shown, at each end of the village. The mills, known as Upper Mill (GSMR: 3267) and Lower Mill (GSMR: 3290), also appear on later 19th century maps. Hollow lane, now Station Road, is shown with the c.1600 cottages, as well as now demolished buildings on the south side of the road to the east of the unmarked Ham Lane. The buildings, as they mostly are today are built along the street line. The site, which is directly behind these plots is shown as undeveloped.

Along the north eastern edge of the parish the Thames and Severn Canal was dug in 1787. The canal was opened in 1789 giving the village access to coal; while the village exported cheese and butter from its many dairy farms (Anon, n. d., 5). An enclosure map dated to 1814, though it is based on a map of 1777 shows the canal. The site under investigation is shown clearly as farm land with the names of fields marked (Fig. 3). There are no buildings or developments encroaching upon the land.

The SMR records that a linear bank, described as a road on the 1814 Enclosure map and schedule could be earlier than the canals construction (GSMR: 12064). The Stroudwater canal dissects the linear feature and there appears to be no remains of a bridge.

An 1831 map of the Parish by R. Hall shows the same field layout as seen on the earlier enclosure map (Fig. 4). However, this map details the names of the landowners rather than the names of the fields.

The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey, printed c. 1875, shows the village in some detail (Fig. 5). The village has grown and there are more buildings along the existing roads. The fields on the site are shown to have a different layout to those seen on the earlier maps. Presumably

the land allocation was reformed in the period between the maps. The map is detailed enough to show trees and hedgerows in the fields that make up the site. The land is shown as open fields with no encroaching woodlands or archaeological features.

Work on a rail line between Andover in Hampshire and Cheltenham started in 1873. An amalgamation of several small companies formed the Midland and South Western Junction Railway to run the line (GSMR: 4944). The Railway does not appear on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, it first appears on the 1900 2nd edition (Fig. 6). The company built a station at South Cerney. The station went through several names including Cerney and Ashton Keynes (Anon, n. d., 5). After its opening in 1883 the company suffered financial trouble in the 1890s. With financial help from the Midland Railway the company survived until 1923 when it was taken over by the Great Western Railway. After a steady decline the line was closed in 1961.

The 2nd edition maps (Figs. 6, 7, 8), along with evidence of the 1st edition show that the site had seen no new developments since the land was reallocated in the 19th century. The 1900 map shows a field in the north east corner of the site as having been used for an allotment (Fig. 6). Though the later maps do not record this it is possible that this practice continued until the site was became CAMAS Building Materials. An area to the west of Ham Lane on the 1903 and 1924 maps (Figs. 7, 8), not on the site, is shown as having gravel extraction taking place.

In more recent times the fields to the south and west of the site have been extracted for gravel. The large quarries have been left open and allowed to fill with water (Fig. 9). The extinct quarries have been designated as the Cotswold Water Park.

5 Description of the site

The site has been used as a manufacturing works for building products which are derived from the extracted materials that are found in rich abundance in the area. The works were still in production during a site visit on 14th September 2001. The layout recorded on the Ordnance Survey maps before 1924 has been almost completely removed from the site.

The edge of the site is characterised by intermittent mounds of recent origin where soil has been pushed out of the way. At the west of the site are the works buildings, just to the east of Ham Lane. The construction of these buildings has removed an unknown amount of the surface materials.

To the east of the buildings the site has been allowed to become overgrown. If gravel extraction has taken place on this part of the site earlier there was no specific indications of it, though there are some heavily overgrown earthworks on the eastern edge of the site. The trees in this area are well established though the map evidence clearly shows that they were not there before 1924 (Fig. 8). Running through the middle of the site is a steep sided, flat bottomed open drain marked on the SMR map as a drain (Fig. 9). The spoil has been mounded to the east of the trench.

Dividing the works from the overgrown area is a wide linear trench. The trench is evidently used to help drain the site and contains wet mud and patches of standing water. The surrounding area, away from the works and overgrown area, has seen extensive disturbance

from the quarrying work, the topsoil has been removed and the gravel layers below have been exposed. Young trees and grass have started to encroach on these areas.

6 Discussion

Until recent times the site was agricultural, as most land around South Cerney had been since early medieval times. Until the construction of the CAMAS works in the 20th century the site had, according to the cartographic and documentary record, no developments encroaching upon it. Probably the most significant factor on the land in the post-medieval period before the works construction was the reallocation of land in the 19th century which changed the field boundaries and meant that hedges and trees were removed and new hedges were planted.

The construction of the CAMAS works removed all hedges on the site and the topsoil west of the ditch. Gravel has been pushed to the edge of the working area forming mounds. There was no indication that topsoil remained below redeposited gravel in the western part of the site. It is quite likely that this part of the site was surface stripped down to the underlying gravel at the time of the factory's construction.

The land beyond the factory's working area appears to have been quarried or become overgrown. The overgrown area beyond the irrigation ditch is well established but was farm land until at least 1924. Whether this area has been quarried and then backfilled was not determined. If it has just been allowed to become overgrown then the area is the most likely part of the site to have archaeological deposits still *in situ*. If deposits survive in this area of the site then there will have been heavy disturbance from tree and bush roots.

7 Conclusions

The documentary and cartographic evidence has shown that the area occupied by CAMAS Building Materials, Station Road site had not been developed until the works construction. The land around South Cerney from the establishment of the village in the early medieval period has been used as agricultural land. Though gravel extraction occurred before 1924 it did not establish itself as a major encroachment on the land until more recently. The site has been affected significantly by these encroachments though archaeological deposits could still survive in the overgrown part of the site at the east.

8 Sources consulted

Abbreviations:

GSMR: Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record.

NGR: National Grid Reference

VCH: Victoria County History

Publications consulted

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