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Archaeological evaluation at
118-120 London Road, Gloucester

SO 84317 18936



110 Archaeology

April 2004

118-120 London Road, Gloucester

Archaeological evaluation report

SO 84317 18936

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118-120 London Road, Gloucester

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SUMMARY

110 Archaeology carried out a field evaluation at 118-120 London Road, Gloucester on land formerly occupied by an Esso garage. The investigation consisted of three trenches, each measuring approx. 1.8 m wide and totalling 12.5 linear metres. The results of the evaluation revealed a thick deposit in southeast quadrant of the site representing the former Roman burial ground from which a 1st-2nd century Roman pot was recovered containing an inhumation cremation. The evidence suggests that this deposit and associated burials may extend along the southern boundary of the site. A medieval ploughsoil was observed sealing the Roman deposits and this was in turn overlain by post-medieval garden soils. Undated stratified deposits recorded in Trench 2 showed that archaeological remains may also exist in the west side of the site whilst Trench 3 revealed substantial modern disturbance and redeposition in the east quadrant of the application area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work (Fig.1)

110 Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an impact assessment on potential archaeology at 118-120 London Road, Gloucester. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a specification written by Sarah Watt of CgMs for an archaeological evaluation. The investigation is required by the Gloucester City Archaeologist prior to an application for planning consent for the development of the site (ref: 03/00781/FUL & 03/00782/FUL). As the area of the proposed development lies within a former burial ground associated with Roman occupation, there was a high potential for the survival of archaeological deposits. This document details the results of the investigation.

The site is centred at National Grid Reference 384317 218936 and is located approx. 1km north east of the city centre in the Wotton area. The area of the application site is roughly rectangular in shape and approximately c.0.17 hectares in extent. It is bounded to the north by London Road and to the east by a new housing development. To the south a wall separates the site from a plot of land associated with No.120 London Road and, to the west, a narrow tarmac lane leading to No.120 borders the site. West of the lane is a row of terraced housing, comprising Nos.100-118 London Road.

1.2 Geology and topography

The site lies on the Wotton hillock S4 gravel cap, dated to 80,000 BP. Jurassic sand and gravel deposits were recorded on lias clay at 2.2m deep on the plot of land adjacent to the site to the east.

A geotechnical survey of the site was carried out by Crossfield Consulting Limited (March 2003). Two of their window sample boreholes were drilled within the evaluation area, and one lay just outside it. In the southwest corner of the Site (WS4), made ground was encountered beneath a tarmac surface to a depth of 1.70m. Below this, a firm green brown grey clay was encountered. In the north east corner of the site (WS1), made ground was encountered to a depth of 1.10m. Beneath this was a stiff blue grey mottled green grey-fissured clay. The window sample (WS3), which lay just outside the evaluation area in the north west corner of the site encountered, made ground to a depth of 0.90m, beneath which was stiff light green grey mottled brown clay.

The site consists of a former service station on a hard standing and tarmac ground surface. Overall, the ground slopes gradually to the west, and the ground level of the site is substantially higher than that of the lane to the west. The site's boundary comprises modern brick walling and railings against London Road.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric

Woolly Rhinoceros hones were recorded at a depth of 1.9m on the plot of land immediately to the east of the Site.

Roman

London Road, on which the Site is situated, follows the line of Roman Ermine Street. Although there are no records of Roman remains on the site itself, it lies within the area of Wotton Roman Burial Ground and an area rich in finds of this period.

Romano-British burials were found opposite the site in the graveyard of the former St. Mary Magdalene's Chapel in 1856 (UAD 129) and, in 1886, three skeletons, probably of Roman date, were found laid east-west at the back of No.110 London Road, to the west of the site. A watching brief carried out here in 1998 also uncovered a possible Roman inhumation beneath medieval ploughsoils (UAD 1069). Further Roman features, including an inhumation, were found to the rear of No.3 Denmark Road in 1987 (UAD 853) and, in 1991, another watching brief on this site uncovered eight Romano-British inhumations and six cremations, plus a collection of samian bowls and plates (UAD 934). A watching brief (UAD 1406) at St. Catherine's Church in 1998 to the northeast of the Site found Roman cremations, an inhumation and a possible monument foundation.

The area of land immediately to the east of the Site was recently developed for residential use. A 4th century coin, an inhumation and a flanged bowl (UAD 37) were found on the site, probably in the mid-19th century. In 1993, a field evaluation uncovered a Roman cemetery, probably dating to the 1st century AD. A subsequent watching brief on the same plot of land, but to the east of the evaluation area (UAD 1040), found a further four Roman inhumations, including an infant and a child. Recent excavation by Foundations Archaeology prior to residential development found 50-60 Roman burials and associated artefacts.

Medieval

There are no records from the medieval period recorded on the site itself, although there are a number of recorded sites within the vicinity. Medieval cultivation layers and plough soils have been observed to the east and west of the site. Also to the west of the site, the remains of a medieval building and a large pond were found during a watching brief at St. Margaret's Almshouses (UAD 945) in 1992. No remains of the medieval St. Mary Magdalene's Hospital building on the plot to the east of the site have been found, possibly having been destroyed by modern cellars and clearance.

Post-medieval

In 1796 the site lay within an enclosure associated with the former St. Mary Magdalene's Hospital. By 1843, a large domestic building stood on the site, surrounded by gardens and there was another smaller building at the eastern edge of the site, close to St. Magdalene's Hospital. The hospital had been demolished by 1886 and replaced with a building named Wotton Lawn. The land was then the property of the United Hospitals of St. Margaret, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Kyneburgh, which lay to the west. A couple of small outbuildings had been built on the site by 1902. On the basis of the historic map evidence it appears that the site saw few episodes of major disturbance during the period 1796 to 1936. As the site is shown in 1799 to have fallen within the same plot of land as the former St. Mary Magdalene's hospital, and later belonged to the United Hospitals situated to the west, it may have seen very little, if any, development disturbance during the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The land had been built on by 1843 with one large building and a smaller outbuilding at the boundary with the plot to the east. After 1936, the land was occupied by the Esso service station.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- i clarify the presence/absence, location and extent of archaeological deposits on the Site;
- ii identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition, depth, significance and quality of any surviving remains within the site.
- iii assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.

2.2 Site specific

A priority of the evaluation was to establish the nature of the historic land usage, paying particular attention to the possible presence of Roman burials extending onto the site from the adjacent cemetery to the east. As the site lies in the centre of an area in which Roman burials and other deposits have been found, a specific aim of the evaluation was to determine how far such deposits extend within the site itself.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample size and scope of fieldwork (Fig.2)

The evaluation represented a 5% sample of the area of likely survival of archaeological deposits, and consisted of three trenches excavated to a width of 1.5 m and totalling 12.5 linear metres. Trench 1 was located in the south-east corner on the site; Trench 2 in the north-west corner of the site and Trench 3 excavated in the north-east corner.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) Guidance and Standards relating to archaeological evaluations. All were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision to width of 1.50 m by a mechanical excavator (JCB). The trenches were cleaned by hand and investigated for archaeological features.

4 RESULTS:GENERAL

4.1 Soil and ground conditions

The underlying soil type consisted of a natural clay and gravel overlain by a thick sandy silty-clay deposit. Upper soils consisted of dark loamy garden soils. Ground conditions were dry during the evaluation.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

The results from Trench 1 shows that significant archaeological deposits survive *in situ* within the southern east quadrant of the application area and are likely to extend along the south half of the site. These deposits are well stratified and include Roman cemetery deposits and inhumations sealed by partially disturbed medieval and post-medieval layers.

Disturbance associated with the development of the previous garage appears to have been confined to the areas sampled by Trenches 2 and 3. The results from Trench 2 indicate that stratified deposits survive on the west boundary of the site below the level of the former garage remains. Underlying layers (201 and 202), although undated, could represent archaeological deposits. The only layer to be dated was layer 203 through its association with a red brick wall, indicating the level of late post-medieval activity.

In Trench 3, archaeological deposits appear to have severely truncated; natural clay is overlain by redeposited modern debris.

4.3 Presentation of results

The results of the evaluation are described trench by trench, from the earliest to the latest deposits. The descriptions of the deposits refer to the individual trenches

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits (Figs. 3, 4, 5)

Trench 1 (Figs. 3 and 5)

Trench 1 measured 4.50 m long and 1.80 m wide and was located in the southeast corner of the site, orientated north south.

In Trench 1 there is a marked change in the underlying geology from the Terrace gravel deposit (106) in the north end of the trench to a yellowish-brown lias clay (104) for the remainder of the trench. The difference between these two geological layers is marked by a sharp drop in height of at least 0.40 m suggesting a natural ridge orientated east to west across the site. The surface of the lias clay recorded at 22.27 m OD in the east section and 22.04 m OD in the west section further suggest also that a gentle sloping west in the south-east corner of the site.

Overlying both the natural gravel and clay was a single homogenous layer (102) consisting of a light yellowish-brown sandy-clay approximately 0.50 m thick. The surface of this layer was first observed at a height of approx. 22.70 m OD and is interpreted as the surviving Roman burial ground deposit.

The northern edge of this layer was clearly defined in both east and west sections of the trench, sealing the lias clay and butting up and slightly over the sloping southern edge of the natural gravel. The layer extended south through out the length of the trench and was traced west for a further 2 m where layer 102 was observed falling

sharply to a thickness of about 0.20 m above the lias clay. This appears to have resulted from later truncation rather than a natural sloping of the Roman landscape.

Observed within the deposit was a frequent inclusion of medium sized fragments of abraded oolitic limestone. The layer also contained some fragments of animal bone, human bone and Roman pot suggesting the layer represents a continuation of the Roman burial ground recorded in the area adjacent to the east side of the site. A single cremation inhumation (111) within a 1st century Roman pot was also discovered within layer 102 at the south end of the trench. There was no obvious pit associated with the burial of the pot; evidence of this event has not survived. The presence of abraded Roman pot and fragments human and animal bone indicates former disturbance from ploughing associated with the post-Roman period (below).

Layer 102 was in turn overlain by 105, a mid. orangey-yellowish brown silty-clay very similar to layer 102, although slightly darker and with a less frequent stone inclusion. The deposit, interpreted as a medieval ploughsoil, measured a maximum thickness of 0.18 m in the north end of the trench tapering to of 0.05 m in the south end. Modern truncation appears to have removed evidence of this layer in the trench extension to the west. A large shallow feature (108); the remains of a former tree throw hole, appears to have cut the medieval plough soil layer 105 (Section 2, Fig.3). The hole has penetrated the upper half of layer 102 and is filled by 107. This was only slightly greyer than 102.

Sealing layer 105 and observed throughout the trench was deposit 101, consisting of a loose dark greyish-brown clayey-silt, rising from a thickness of about 0.20 m on the east side of the trench to about 0.30 m on the west side. Frequent large charcoal flecking within the deposit suggests considerable dumping of domestic waste. The deposit was interpreted as the post-medieval garden soil.

Overlying 101 and representing the modern ground level was the modern topsoil (100) a similarly dark greyish-brown clayey-silt.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

Trench 2 measured 4 m long and 1.80 m wide and was located in the northeast corner of the site, orientated north west to south east.

The natural light brown lias clay (200) was exposed in the base of the trench at a height of approx. 21.20 m OD.

Overlying this was layer 201, light yellowish-brown sandy gravel, 0.14 m thick and extending the length of the trench. The deposit was very clean containing no noticeable inclusions or finds and may represent the natural gravel deposit associated with the terrace gravels.

Sealing 101 was context 202, a 0.16 m thick layer of sandy clay stained black by contamination leeching from former fuel storage tanks.

This was overlain by a layer of orangey brown sandy clay (203) measuring 0.50 m thick. Layer 203, was similar in colour and thickness to layer 102 in Trench 1, but contained more gravel and there was no obvious inclusions or finds. There is the

possibility that this layer is contemporary with 102. The northeast end of this deposit was truncated by a partially exposed pit (207) measuring 1.10 m wide and 0.50 m deep, filled with a modern deposit (204). Cut into the surface of this layer in the southwest end of the trench a red brick wall (208) representing the corner of a former building was recorded to a depth of 0.40 m. No concrete foundations were observed in association with the wall. The brick structure suggests a late post-medieval date for its construction

Overlying layer 203 and sealing Wall 208 and Pit 207 in the sequence of deposits was layer 205, a layer of compacted modern demolition debris consisting of numerous fragments of red brick and crushed stone amounting to deposit 0.14 m thick. These are the remains of a red brick building present on the site prior to its levelling during the construction for the former Esso garage.

Sealing these underlying deposits and representing the structural layers associated with the former Esso garage was context 206. This consisted of three construction layers amounting to a thickness of 0.48 m, consisting of crushed limestone, overlain by stone aggregate and sealed by the tarmac hard standing.

Trench 3 (Fig. 4)

Trench 3 measured 4 m long and 1.80 m wide and was located in the north east corner of the site, orientated north west to south east.

The natural light brown lias clay (200) was exposed in the base of the trench at a height of approx. 21.80 m OD. Cut into the clay and observed only in the base of the trench was the partially exposed edge of a truncated pit backfilled with modern rubble and interpreted as the position of a fuel tank for the former garage. A single deposit 1 m thick consisting of redeposited modern debris considerably mixed and no stratification of deposits overlay this.

There were no stratified deposits; all archaeological remains had been previously removed. The evidence suggests substantial modern disturbance in this area of the site.

5.2 Finds

Of the three excavated trenches finds were recovered from Trench 1 only, and these are summarised below.

Pottery

A total of 27 sherds of Roman pot was recovered from layer 102 during the excavation and consisted of a variety of Roman pottery types. The assessment of this assemblage is outlined in Appendix 1.

Brick and tile

A total of five very abraded fragments of brick and tile weighing 59 g were recovered from layer 102.

Animal bone

A few fragments of animal bone were retrieved from layer 102 and have been sent to a zooarchaeologist for assessment.

Molluscs

One fragment of probable oyster shell weighing 10 g was recovered from layer 102.

Metalwork

A single iron nail was recovered from layer 102. The nail measured 75 mm long and weighed 8 g. The nail was slightly bent, with a flat worn square head and a pointed end. It was very corroded.

Slag

A total of four fragments of slag waste weighing 19 g were recovered from layer 102.

Human bone

Bulk assemblage

Approximately 14 fragments of human bone weighing 400g were retrieved from layer 102. An assessment of the assemblage is outlined in Appendix 2.

Inhumation Cremation (111)

An inhumation cremation (111) within a Roman pot (SF1) dated to the earlier Roman period (1st-2nd century) was also recovered from the fill (103) of a small sondage excavated within 102 to reveal the cremation pot. There was no evidence to suggest that a pit had been dug for the cremation pot, but it is likely that any pit would have been backfilled with the excavated soil almost as soon as it had been dug. The machine damaged the upper neck of the pot during excavation of the trench.

Recorded dimensions for inhumation 111:

Maximum external diameter of pot, 0.15 m.

Base diameter of pot, 0.06 m.

Height of pot, 0.15 m.

Total weight of unexcavated pot, 2.26 kg.

Vessel type; Severn Valley ware (TF 11B; Gloucester type fabric series).

In view of the proposed excavation of the site, specialist analysis of the cremation (111) may be undertaken during the post-excavation stage following completion of fieldwork. Alternatively 111 will be subjected to specialist analysis and report within 12 months of the completion of the evaluation in order to make the information available to the Gloucester Urban Archaeological database.

5.3 Environmental data

Layer 102 and the medieval ploughsoil defined the Roman occupation horizon by layer 105. No features suitable for ecofactual sampling were identified within these deposits.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

Trench 1

The results from Trench 1 showed the least amount of modern disturbance. The intrusive effects of later development were observed only in the west extension at the

south end of the trench where disturbance had removed medieval deposit 105 and truncated the underlying Roman layer 102.

Trench 2

The position of Trench 2, in the area of the former garage forecourt revealed stratified layers subjected to some modern intrusion. This was confined to a single modern pit and a later post-medieval building.

Trench 3

The results from Trench 3 suggests that the garage construction had removed any surviving archaeological deposits. In Trench 3 modern layers were not stratified suggesting more recent disturbance and there was instead considerable mixing of modern deposits. Observed cut into the base of the trench was the partial remains of a modern foundation associated with the garage construction and probably representing a former hole for the garage storage tanks.

6.2 Overall interpretation

The position of Trench 1 clearly demonstrates that archaeological deposits survive *in situ* in the south east corner of the site and that this survival is likely to extend along the south and east boundary of the site. A trial hole excavated in the south west corner of the site during remediation work recorded the surface of a light yellowish brown sandy clay, similar to 102 at a depth of 0.80 m below the existing ground level.

Trench 2 demonstrated that although undated, stratified deposits do survive in the north west side of the site. Although some modern intrusion has occurred in this area, there remains the potential for survival of archaeological deposits extending along the east side of the site, perhaps also along the site frontage.

The results from Trench 3 show that in the north east area of the site, archaeological deposits are likely to have entirely removed during construction of the former garage.

6.3 Summary of results

There was a visible sequence of stratified archaeological deposits within Trench 1. These consisted of a Roman burial ground deposit including a single inhumation cremation. Overlying this was a medieval plough soil, in turn overlain by Post-Medieval layers. The evidence suggests that these deposits survive in the southeast corner of the application area, perhaps extending along the east and southern boundary of the site.

The results of the evaluation show that considerable disturbance resulting from modern intrusion has occurred on the site during the construction of the former Esso garage, but that this is likely to be confined to the north half of the site in particular those areas where foundations for the garage building and the areas excavated during the construction of large holes for the petroleum storage tanks.

No major intrusive development appears to have been undertaken in that part of the site to the south and behind the former garage building.

A sequence of largely undisturbed stratified archaeological layers were recorded throughout Trench 2 and although the earlier layers recorded towards the base were mostly undated (201 and 202), there were some similarities with the Roman and medieval deposits recorded in Trench 1.

6.4 Significance

The results of the evaluation have confirmed the presence of Roman burial ground deposits associated with the Wotton Roman cemetery surviving in areas of the site. The Roman levels represent a continuation of the Roman burial ground recorded adjacent to the east side of the site during recent development where inhumations and cremations were discovered. There is the significant probability that further inhumations remain undisturbed in specific areas of the site where there is little later disturbance. The results suggests that this preservation may extend across the south and west edges of the application area and perhaps along the site frontage. A layer similar to 102 was observed during the excavation of a trench positioned within the south west corner of the site connected with remedial work in the later part of 2003.

Overlying medieval deposits, suggested by the presence of layer 105 (Trench 1) may also survive in these areas of the site, although there is a greater potential for the truncation of this layer.

6.5 Impact of development

When the locations of recorded Roman burials in the areas bounding the site are looked at as a whole, the site can be seen to lie in the central area between them, making it highly likely that the area of the Wotton cemetery would have encompassed the site. A high potential for survival is identified for those areas of the site that have not been subject to disturbance.

The impact of the proposed development will be determined by the nature of the development design. Any proposed design involving ground intrusion has the potential to disturb Roman inhumations and cremation deposits in the undisturbed areas of the site.

6.6 Archive Location

The archive resulting from the work will be deposited with the Gloucester City Museum.

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APPENDIX 1 THE POTTERY By Jane Timby

A small assemblage of 27 sherds of pottery weighing 370 g was recovered from just two contexts (102 and 103). Most of the material dates to the earlier Roman period (1st-2nd century); only two sherds are later medieval in date. The sherds are relatively well preserved with an overall average sherd weight of 22 g. The group was sorted according to the Gloucester City type fabric series and quantified (see Table 1). Context 102 produced 10 sherds amongst which was a sherd of Dressel 20 South Spanish olive oil amphora, a substantial part of a samian dish Curle 11, a sherd of Dorset black burnished ware and local Severn Valley wares. The samian dish is likely to date to the later 1st century but the group on balance suggests a *tpq* in the early 2nd century. Context 103 produced just four sherds of local source, which may be of later 1st or 2nd-century currency. The pottery is typical of that to be expected from Gloucester with a mixture of local, regional and continental imports.

Table 1: Catalogue of pottery

Context	Fabric code	Description	No	Wt (g)
102	10A	Dressel 20 olive oil amphora	2	91
102	8	South Gaulish samian, Curle 11	1	50
102	4	Dorset black burnished ware	6	22
102	11B	Severn Valley ware	6	107
102	23	Handmade Severn Valley ware	2	40
103	11B	Severn Valley ware	3	21
103	11A	Gloucester kiln ware	1	4
103	?25	Abraded sherd, possibly Gloucester kiln ware	1	4
103	4	Dorset black burnished ware	3	18
102		Medieval (green internal and external glaze)	2	13

Methods used were those of Cho *et al.*, Stewart and Ubelaker (Cho *et al.* 1996; Stewart 1979; Ubelaker 1989). One small bag was received, marked LRG 04 (102), from a site at London Road, Gloucester, which contained fragmented and commingled human and animal bones. The animal bone was removed and bagged for transmission to the zooarchaeologist. Despite being shattered, the bone is in extremely robust condition with cortices relatively un-eroded by soil or roots, and can be refitted and potentially repaired.

The human remains consist of a small piece of skull vault (the nuchal area), parts of the left side of the pelvis (fragments of acetabulum/ischial tuberosity, sciatic notch, iliac blade), lower left femur (femoral condyle and distal shaft fragments), left tibia (much of the shaft, albeit shattered) and two sections of fibula (mid-shaft tube, probably left, and distal shaft tube).

Number of individuals, sex and age

There is no duplication of parts and the bones are compatible in size with one another, so there is no reason to suppose that they come from more than one individual. The fusion of the distal femoral epiphyses show that the femur is that of an adolescent of over 15 years if female or 17 years if male, or an adult. The nuchal area of the skull (the attachment for the main muscles stabilizing the head on the neck) has a significant crest, which is a male characteristic.

Pathology

There are no pathological changes on the bones, although their preservation condition is such that pathology could be observed were it present.

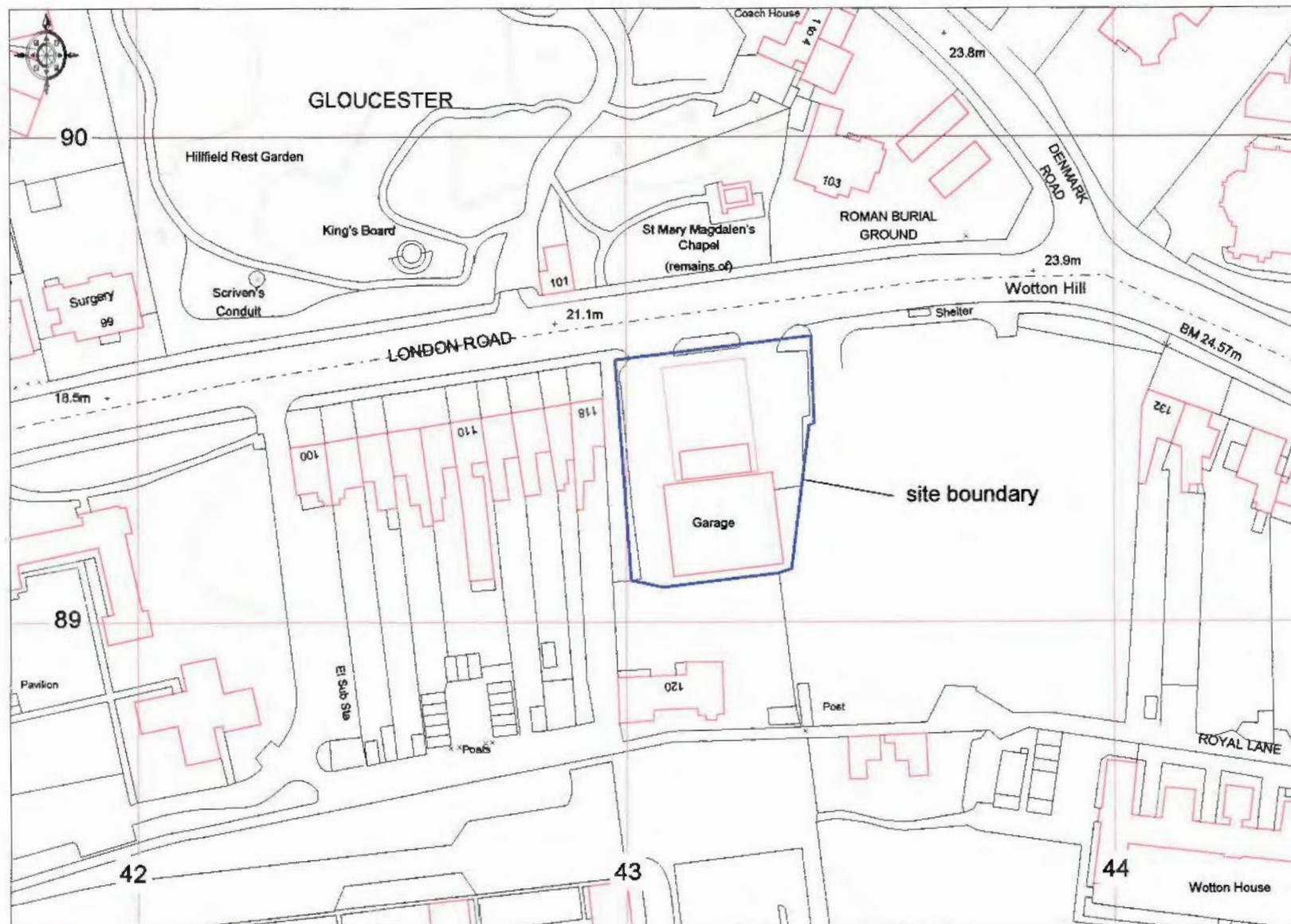
Recommendations

If a reasonably-sized assemblage can be recovered, with at least the major part from relatively undisturbed contexts, the good preservation of this material indicates that full analysis could obtain considerable demographic and pathological data. This will not only contribute to our knowledge of Roman-period burials in this area but will add to the current evidence from Gloucester Roman cemeteries to provide a valuable comparison with cemeteries of similar date elsewhere in Britain and abroad¹.

Should the skeletal material be meagre, very badly fragmented or in disturbed contexts, it is recommended that only a summary report is needed, due to the considerable quantity of Roman-period skeletal material in the country — although pathological changes should still be fully documented.

¹ This author is currently working on the 'Cemeteries of Imperial Rome' project (British Academy and Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge) which includes 'centre-periphery' comparisons between cemetery populations of 1st and 2nd Century Rome and Britain.

Archaeological evaluation at 118-120 London Road, Gloucester

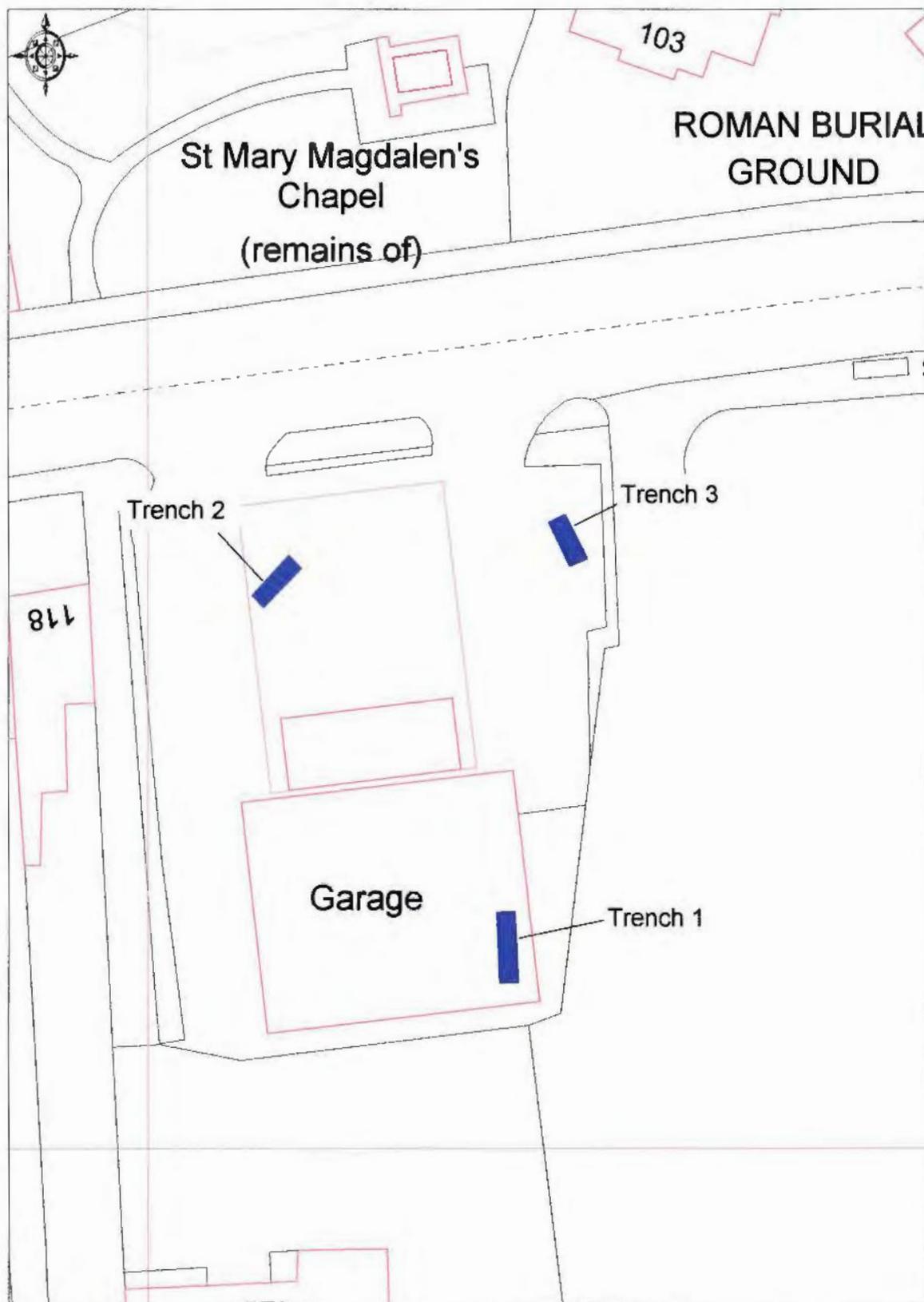


Ordnance Survey

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Figure 1: site location

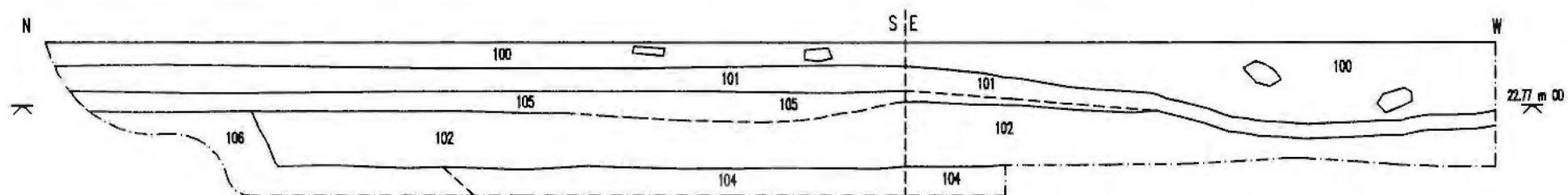
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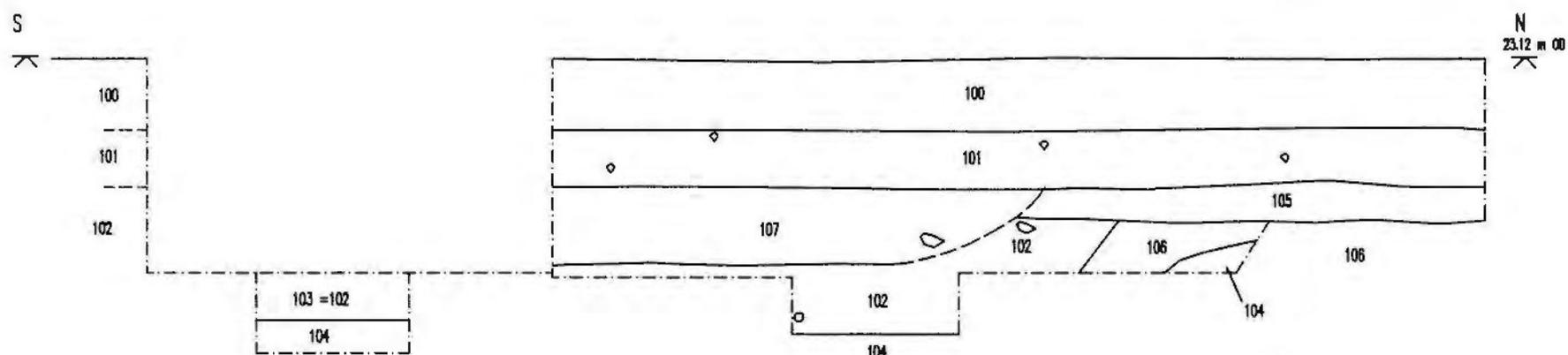
OS Ordnance Survey

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Figure.2: Trench location plan



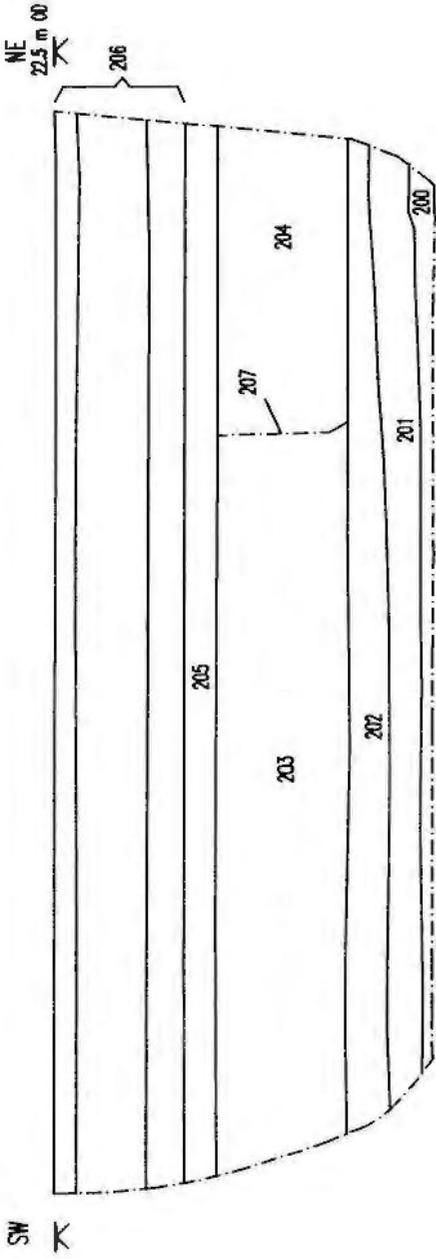
Trench 1 Section 1



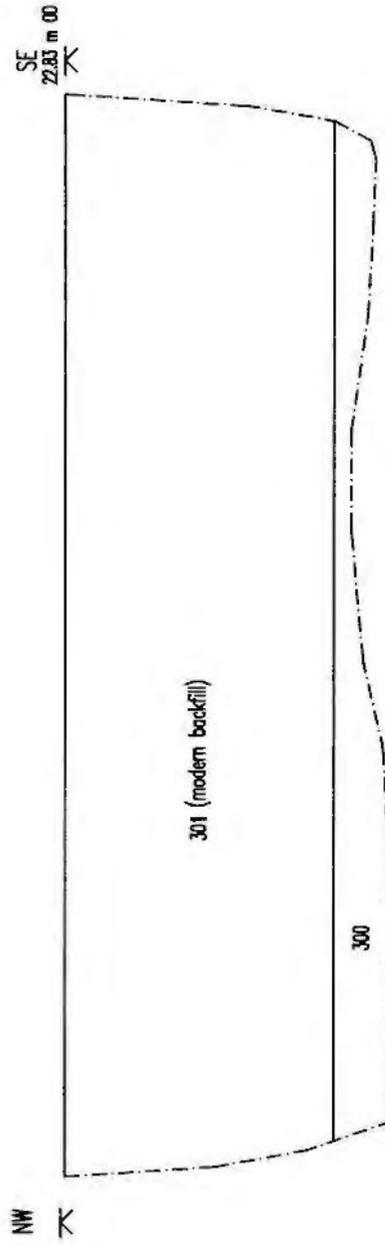
Trench 1 Section 2



Figure 3

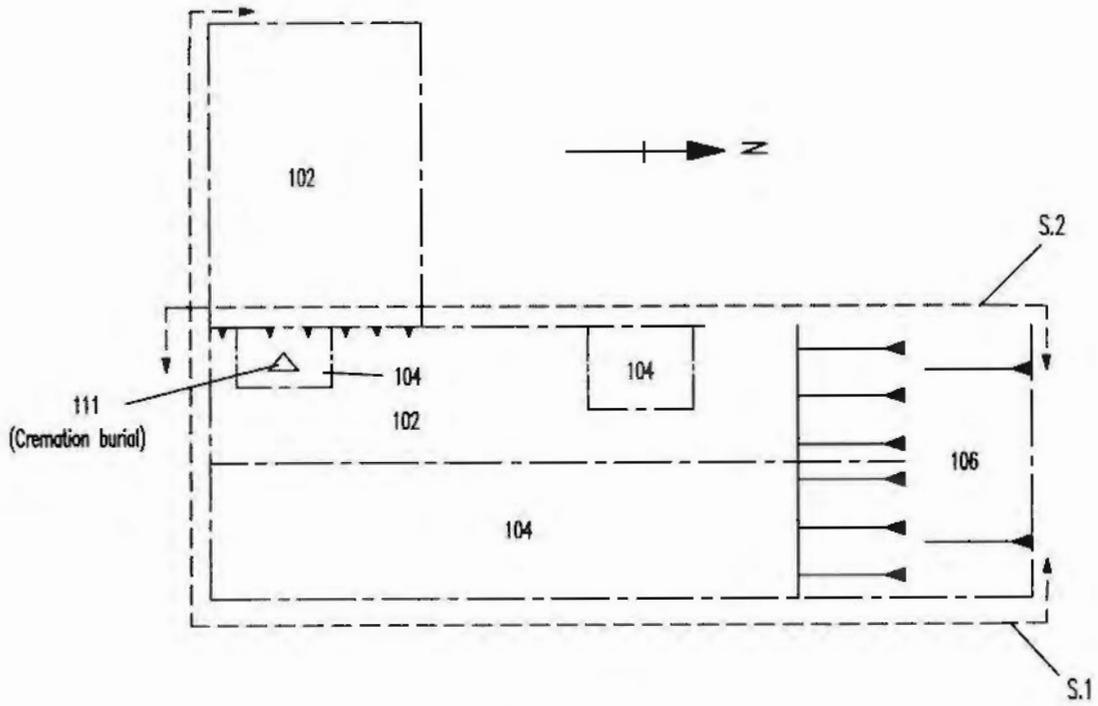


Trench 2 Section



Trench 3 Section





Trench 1 Plan



Scale 1:50