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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in June 2002 by Foundations Archaeology at 7 City Bank View, Cirencester. The watching brief involved the archaeological monitoring of groundworks for the construction of an extension to the existing building.

Archaeological deposits dated to the Roman period were identified. A stone surface running east-west was interpreted as a probable path or consolidation layer running along the inside of the rampart bank of the town defences. This would have provided internal access to the rampart. It is also possible, however, that this feature constitutes a continuation of a stone causeway identified during evaluation works in 1990 to the northeast of the study area. The stone surface was overlaid by accumulative deposits dated to the Roman period.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose 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.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c.* AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

OS

Ordnance Survey

Post-medieval

The period from *c.* AD 1500 onwards

Romano-British

Term used to describe the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated between AD 43 and *c.* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2002 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at 7 City Bank View, Cirencester. The work was commissioned by Mrs Buntun, in response to a condition of planning permission to build an extension.
- 1.2 The watching brief was concerned with an area of land between the existing building and City Bank Road upon which the extension was to be constructed. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994), Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: *Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region) and the Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2002).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological watching brief and conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 No. 7 City Bank View (NGR: SP 0300 0121) is located on the south-east side of Cirencester at the junction of City Bank View and City Bank Road. The site is situated at a height of *circa* 106m OD. The area of the extension is positioned between the existing building and City Bank Road. Prior to the commencement of building works this was a level garden area.

3 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The town of Cirencester lies in southeast Gloucestershire towards the southern end of the Cotswold Hills. The geology within the town perimeter is predominately Quaternary gravels (Darvill & Gerrard, 1994).
- 3.2 Cirencester is widely recognised as being of archaeological and historical importance, with extensive archaeological remains.
- 3.3 Cirencester was an important Romano-British town, which is believed to have become a provincial capital or *civitas*.
- 3.4 No. 7 City Bank View lies just within the southeast Romano-British town defences to the east of the Silchester Gate. The line of the town wall was located on the south side of City Bank Road. This has been confirmed by archaeological investigations at 121 Watermoor Road (Barber 1992 in Holbrook 1998, 59), while at 10, City Bank Road a possible external tower was identified just forward of the likely course of the wall (King 1990 in Holbrook 1998, 58). No archaeological work has examined the actual rampart bank in this area as it lies under City Bank Road.

4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains.
- 4.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the following specific objectives as stated in the Project Design (Foundations Archaeology 2002).
- i) to define, identify and record any archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible.
 - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site.
 - iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The layout of the groundworks is shown in Figure 2. Sections A and B were excavated by hand whilst a machine was used to excavate the upper Post-medieval/modern deposits of Section C, after which it was excavated by hand.
- 5.2 The excavation of Section C was hampered by the presence of a telegraph pole and a loose collapsing section on the south (pavement) side. Consequently, with regard to Health and Safety issues, there was limited access to this section and the archaeological deposits were contaminated by later material falling in.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The trench for the building extension was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.65m below the level of the pavement on City Bank Road. Natural deposits were not exposed within the foundation trenches. A series of layers dated to the Romano-British period were identified, which were overlaid or cut by Post-medieval and modern deposits.

Roman deposits

- 6.2 Layer (101) was the earliest deposit exposed during the groundworks. It was a compact grey orange blue clay silt which contained gravel and very occasional small fragments of limestone, flecks of charcoal and a fragment of ceramic building material. This layer was at least 0.26m thick. There was no visible evidence of any layering within this deposit, which was largely beneath the present day water table. It was overlaid by (102).

- 6.3 Layer (102) was a 0.08m thick very compact mid orange and grey clay silt gravel deposit with five sherds of pottery and a fragment of ceramic building material. It was overlaid by (103).
- 6.4 Layer (103) comprised limestone rubble in a compact blue grey clay silt. The top of the layer had the appearance of a trampled surface, particularly in Section C where the stones were up to 0.20m in size and laid relatively flat. In Sections A and B the layer thinned out to the north. A fragment of ceramic building material and a single sherd of pottery, was recovered from this layer along with two iron nails. A patch of coarse grey orange sand was present within this layer at the east end of the trench defined by Section C. The bottom of the layer contained less rubble. It was overlaid by (104).
- 6.5 Layer (104) was up to 0.20m thick and consisted of a mid green grey sandy clay silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and ceramic building material. This layer thinned out towards the north (Sections A and B) and was overlain by (105).
- 6.6 Layer (105) was a 0.12m thick dark grey black clay silt with occasional fragments of ceramic building material and charcoal and two sherds of pottery. It was overlaid by (106).

Undated – pre Victorian

- 6.7 Layer (106) was a dark black brown sand clay silt deposit. It was up to 0.50m thick and contained occasional small fragments of limestone, gravel and charcoal flecks. No finds were retrieved from this layer. It sealed the dated Roman deposits and was cut by foundation cut [107] for the existing late Victorian building.

Post-medieval – Late Victorian and Modern

- 6.8 Cut [107] was the foundation cut for the footings of the existing building. It was backfilled with brick and limestone rubble (108). Feature [107] cut layer (106) and was overlain by (109). Layer (109) consisted of a dark brown clay silt layer with frequent fragments of brick and stone rubble. It was overlaid by layer (110), a rubble levelling layer for the garden.
- 6.9 Cut [111] contained the limestone rubble foundation (112) for the property boundary wall along City Bank Road.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Roman remains were identified within the watching brief area in the form of horizontal layers.
- 7.2 Clay silt layer (101) was the earliest layer visible within the area. It was only partially exposed and appeared to be a natural accumulation of material. The

water table was just below the top of (101). Layer (102) was very compact and probably represents an attempt to consolidate the ground in preparation for stone surface (103).

- 7.3 Stone surface (103) appeared to be aligned roughly east-west, tailing off to the north and thus appeared to be parallel with the line of the town defences. The line of City Bank Road broadly follows that of the rampart of the Roman town defences and it is likely that surface (103) was constructed as a pathway to provide internal access to the rampart. There are no archaeological records of the width of the rampart along City Bank Road and City Bank (further east) as the archaeological work to date has only examined the remains in front of the rampart (N Holbrook 1998), but it clearly was not present at 7, City Bank View.
- 7.4 The presence of a pathway providing internal access to the rampart in this location may be related to the possible existence of external towers. A probable tower on the defences has previously been identified at 10, City Bank Road (King 1990 in Holbrook ed 1998, 58). It is also possible, however, that the stone surface represents a continuation of an early Roman causeway identified during evaluation work at the Abbey Nursery site (King 1990), which predated the layout of the Roman town defences. The causeway was approximately 3.5m wide and was on an east-north-east to west-south-west alignment, which can be extrapolated to the close vicinity of the study area. The watching brief has identified that the study area remains waterlogged at the depth of Roman deposits.
- 7.5 Layer (104) represents accumulative material over stone surface (103). There were few inclusions or finds within this layer suggesting that it might have accumulated naturally. Layer (105) was a dark 'soil', again with few finds or inclusions. The paucity of finds suggests that there was no occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site. This is not unusual despite being located within the town walls. King (1990) has noted that there appears to have been considerable open areas around the periphery of the town. Holbrook notes that it is only in the third or fourth century that the margins of the town were developed (Holbrook in Darvill and Gerrard 1994, 65).
- 7.6 No further datable activity was visible on the site until it was built on in the Victorian period.

8 REFERENCES

Darvill, T & Gerrard, C 1994 *Cirencester: Town and Landscape, an Urban Archaeological Assessment*. Cirencester: Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Holbrook, N. (ed) 1998 *Cirencester. The Roman Town Defences, Public Buildings and Shops*. Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd.

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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Mr & Mrs Bunton and Charles Parry for their assistance during the course of the project.

APPENDIX 1

The Pottery (Dr J. Timby)

The archaeological work at 7 City Bank View produced a small collection of eight sherds of Roman pottery weighing 61g and three fragments of ceramic building material. The pottery is not particularly diagnostic but would suggest a date in the earlier Roman period (2nd century) rather than later. The ceramic building material included two fragments from imbrices (roofing tile).