MILLSTONE COTTAGE, BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

NGR: SP 162 209

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Report No. 385

December 2004

 MLB01wb.fa.wb
109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SUMMARY

In January 2001 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological recording during the construction of a new double garage and potting shed to the rear of Millstone, Lansdown, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire at NGR: SP 162 209 (centred). The project was commissioned by the landowner Mrs Briars.

The watching brief revealed significant Romano-British deposits from the Later Roman period. These were in the form of a building, with at least two possible phases of construction and a late phase of Romano-British activity once the building had been abandoned. The latest phase involved the construction of three walls, which were on a different orientation to the original Roman building. No contemporary floors were present with the last phase, so it is probable that this represented a change of land usage within the study area. This activity can be dated near to the end of the Roman occupation of Britain.

A small assemblage of animal bone and pottery was recovered during the watching brief. The assemblage present was typical for a domestic dwelling in a small Roman town such as Bourton-on-the-Water.

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

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 *circa* AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case, clay and sand/gravels.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

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

OS

Ordnance Survey

Romano-British

Term used to define the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated AD 43 to *circa* AD 410.

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January 2001 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Millstone, Lansdown, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire at NGR: SP 162 209 (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by the landowner Mrs Briars.

1.2 The project involved the observation of groundworks associated with the construction of a new double garage and potting shed, which replaced the existing single garage (application ref. CD7482/A). This was done in accordance with the principals of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of Gloucestershire County Council.

1.3 The works were undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2001). The project was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region).

1.4 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The development site was located within a known area of Roman settlement.

2.2 Bourton-on-the-Water was a small Roman town situated near to the intersection of two Roman Roads, the Fosse Way and Ryknild Street. A number of Roman buildings have previously been investigated in Bourton-on-the-Water.

2.3 The main archaeological potential for the site was therefore for Romano-British activity. This did not prejudice the watching brief to the recovery of features from other periods.

3 AIMS

3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring 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.

3.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the objectives as stated in the Project Design (2001).

i) to define, identify and record any archaeological deposits on the upper and lower terraces, 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.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The groundworks involved the excavation of the garage footings by mechanical excavator to a depth of one metre. Significant archaeological remains were encountered at depths of approximately 0.30 to 0.70m (128.09m to 127.67m OD) from the modern ground surface. Natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 1m (127.56m OD) from the modern ground surface. All archaeological deposits present within the footings were hand excavated and recorded by experienced archaeologists. Excavation of the footings was subsequently completed by mechanical excavator, working under constant archaeological supervision.

4.2 Spoil tips were scanned for unstratified finds across the entire study area.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The watching brief revealed substantial Romano-British deposits throughout the footprint of the new build. These deposits were overlaid by (102), a mid brown clay loam subsoil, between 0.30 and 0.40m thick. This was overlaid by (106), a hardcore layer 0.10m thick, which was only present in the western footing for a length of 7m. This was directly sealed by (105), a black cinder layer 0.10m thick, this was also only present for a length of 7m. This and the rest of (102) were then sealed by (101), a dark grey brown clay loam topsoil and turf between 0.10m and 0.20m thick. One copper alloy Nummus coin with an issue date of 388-402AD was recovered from the spoil.

5.2 Layer (133) was the base archaeological deposit encountered within the footing trenches. This directly overlaid the natural clay and gravels and was present for a length of at least 4m from the northern end of the footings, with a thickness of up to 0.30m. The layer was a mid orange brown silty clay, with occasional limestone chips and charcoal flecks. No other artefactual evidence was present within this context and it probably represented a buried soil horizon, which pre-dated the construction of the Roman building. This layer was then overlaid by rubble floor (103/109), layers (111), (138) and was cut by wall [112].

5.3 Ditch [136] was the earliest cut feature encountered within the new footings and occurred in the western trench footing, but was not present in the eastern footing. The ditch was orientated east-west, cut through the natural clay/gravels and was sealed by wall cut [112] and layer (114). The linear had a U-shaped profile, with a minimum length of 0.60m, a width of 0.94m and depth of 0.21m. The feature contained (137), a mid grey brown silty clay fill, which contained frequent gravel and charcoal fleck inclusions, as well as four sherds of Roman pottery, with a date range of 2nd to 4th century AD, a mandible fragment of a sheep/goat and a few tiny fragments of iron working slag.

5.4 Layer (138) was a sandy coloured rammed surface of gravels and mortar 0.10m to 0.20m thick, which was only present beneath (128) and was probably constructed to provide a level surface for cobbled layer (128). This layer directly overlaid (133) and was only present in the east and central trench footings, for a length of over 6m.

5.5 Cobbling (128) was present in the east and central trench footings, for a length of 6m, was 0.05m thick and directly sealed (138). It was a rammed surface of small cobbles (up to 0.10m^3) and pea gravels, which yielded sixteen sherds of late 4th century Roman pottery and a handmade iron nail. The floor abutted wall [112], overlaid layer (138) and (133) and was sealed by deposit (141).

5.6 Layer (111) was present in the western trench footing. The deposit was only preserved in isolated patches but extended for a length of approximately 3m and had a depth of between 0.05m to 0.1m. The context consisted of a mixed green and white silty clay layer, which was slightly compacted and contained occasional inclusions of mortar, limestone chips and charcoal flecks. Also present within the fill were four Roman pottery sherds, with a date range of 2nd to 3rd century AD. This surface possibly provided a base layer onto which rubble floors (103) and (109) were laid.

5.7 Layer (103) was a limestone cobbled floor surface, which extended for a length of over 3.5m, was 0.10m thick and was only present within the northern trench footings, on the northwest side of wall [112]. The layer consisted of a single course of flat limestone pieces, with dimensions of up to 0.40m x 0.40m x 0.10m and cobbles in a mid brown clay loam (104) matrix. The fill contained a quantity of Roman pottery with a date of 3rd century AD+, as well as three fragments of animal bone (one sheep/goat, one cattle and one unknown) and a small piece of industrial waste. This layer abutted wall [112], was equivalent to layer (109) and was sealed by (132/114).

5.8 Layer (109) was present in the western trench footings, extended for a length of up to 5m and was between 0.10m and 0.20m thick. The layer consisted of a single course of limestone pieces, with dimensions of up to 0.40m x 0.40m x 0.10m and river cobbles, in a mid brown clay loam (110) matrix. The fill contained a

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

quantity of Roman pottery with a 4th century date. This fill also abutted wall [112], sealed (111) and (133) and was in turn sealed by (132).

5.9 Wall [112] was orientated northeast-southwest and was present in the west, central and north trench footings. The wall extended for a length of up to 7m, had a width of 0.55m and a preserved height of up to 0.45m. The wall cut was only present in the northern trench footing for a depth of 0.05m, the base fill of this was (124), a dry mortar/sand layer up to 0.05m thick, onto which the wall had been laid. No wall cut was visible for the rest of the wall and all layers associated with [112] directly abutted the stones of the wall, (113). The wall was constructed of roughly shaped limestone pieces (113), with dimensions of up to 0.20m x 0.20m x 0.40m. There was some evidence of facing on the outer stones of the wall and smaller stones were used as packing material within the centre of the wall. The wall survived for three main courses and, with the exception of the mortar at the base of the wall, was of 'dry-stone' construction. The wall was respected by floor layers (103), (109), (128) and overlaid part of ditch [136]. The wall stones were also abutted by the later floor surfaces (116), (118) and layers (114), (141), (135) and (134). The wall was then in turn sealed by subsoil (102) and deposit (132).

5.10 Deposit (114) was present in the central and western trench footings, extended for a length of over 4m, had a minimum width of 1.70m and was between 0.25m and 0.5m thick. The layer consisted of a mid grey brown silty clay fill and contained occasional large limestone pieces, a quantity of Roman pottery dated to the 4th century AD, nine animal bone fragments (three cattle, one sheep/goat and five unknown), two pieces of CBM, two handmade iron nails and an oyster shell. One coin was also present within this fill, which was an imported copper alloy Nummus with an issue date range of AD388 to 395. The deposit abutted the northwestern side wall [112], the limestone pieces within context (114) were similar the stones present in wall [112] and could represent slump/rubble collapse from the wall. This fill sealed floor (109), ditch [136] and the natural substrates, it was in turn sealed by subsoil (102). Deposit (114) was possibly contemporary or equivalent to deposit (132).

5.11 Layer (132) was present in the west and northern trench footing, extended for a length of 4.5m and was up to 0.45m thick. The layer consisted of a mid to dark grey brown silty clay fill, with occasional limestone pieces and charcoal flecks throughout. This was visually similar to (114) and was possibly equivalent to (114), but did not contain the high density of limestone rubble possibly from the partial collapse of wall [112]. The layer contained eight mid to late 4th century pottery sherds, one fragment of animal bone, with butchery marks and three small pieces of industrial waste. Layer (132) sealed wall [112] and floor (103/109), was cut by wall [107] and was sealed by subsoil (102).

5.12 Layer (135) was present in the west trench footing only and abutted the southeastern side of wall [112]. The deposit extended for 1.2m, was 0.35m thick

and consisted of a mid grey brown silty clay fill. The fill contained occasional limestone fragments and gravel inclusions. Layer (135) sealed the natural substrates and was in turn sealed by deposits (115) and (134).

5.13 Deposit (115) was present in the west and east trench footing and extended for over 6.5m, with a depth of up to 0.50m. The layer consisted of a compact mixed deposit of mid grey clay/silt clay, with very frequent river gravels. A lens of burnt material (140), 0.03m thick, was visible within this deposit, but it was only present in the west facing trench section of the eastern garage footing. No artefactual evidence was present within (115) or (140), but fill (115) was probably equivalent to (134) and possibly represented an early earthen floor surface within the structure. Deposit (115) overlaid the natural substrates and layer (135), was sealed by floor (116), (121), (126) and (128) and was cut by wall [123].

5.14 Deposit (134) was present in the west trench footing and extended for over 2m, with a depth of up to 0.40m. The layer consisted of a mid brown grey silty clay, with frequent gravels and occasional mortar patches. The fill was heavily root disturbed throughout, with burnt roots at the base of the fill and most likely represented a root disturbed (115). The deposit abutted wall [112], overlaid layer (135) and was sealed by floor surface (116).

5.15 Deposit (141) was present in the central trench footing and extended for over 4m, with a depth of up to 0.25m. The layer consisted of a mid grey brown silty clay fill, with occasional small limestone inclusions. The deposit abutted wall [112], overlaid floor (128) and was sealed by floor (118).

5.16 Layer (116) was present in the southwest corner of the west and south trench footings, extended for a length of over 5.80m and was 0.20m thick. The layer consisted of a limestone cobbled floor, with occasional river pebbles and burnt limestone inclusions. A small quantity of fill surrounded the stones, this consisted of a mid grey clay (117), which yielded one sherd of Roman pottery with a date range of 2nd to 4th century AD, one handmade iron nail and twenty eight fragments of animal bone (nine cattle and nineteen unknown), one of which showed signs of butchery. This floor surface overlaid (115/134), respected wall [112] and was overlaid by (102).

5.17 Layer (118) was present in the small eastern trench footing and the central footing, extended for a length of 4m and was up to 0.10m thick. The layer consisted of a limestone cobbled floor, with occasional river pebbles and burnt limestone inclusions. There were also rare patches of pea gravels. A small quantity of fill surrounded the cobbles, this consisted of a mid grey clay (119), which yielded Roman pottery of 2nd century+AD date. The cleaning over the cobbles was recorded as (120), which yielded late 3rd to 4th century AD Roman pottery and one fragment of pig skull. This floor surface overlaid (141) and floor (128), abutted the remaining top course of wall [112] and was overlaid by (102) and wall (139).

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

5.18 Layer (121) was present in the east and south trench footings, extended for a length of over 3.5m and was up to 0.14m thick. The layer consisted of a limestone cobbled floor, with occasional river pebbles and burnt limestone inclusions. There were also rare patches of pea gravel. A small quantity of fill surrounded the cobbles, this consisted of a mid grey clay (122), which yielded eleven sherds of Roman pottery with a late 4th century AD date and four fragments of animal bone (one cattle and four sheep/goat). This floor surface was most likely equivalent to (126), but the relationship between the two layers had been removed by wall [123]. The floor directly overlaid the natural substrates and (115), was cut by wall [123] and was sealed by (102).

5.19 Layer (126) was present in the east trench footings, extended for a length of over 3.5m and was up to 0.10m thick. The layer consisted of a limestone-cobbled floor, with occasional river pebbles and rare burnt limestone inclusions. A small quantity of fill surrounded the cobbles, this consisted of a mid grey clay (127), which yielded seven sherds of Roman pottery with a date of 3rd century+AD. This floor surface overlaid the earlier floor (128) and deposit (115), was cut by wall [123] and was overlaid by subsoil (102).

5.20 Possible wall (139) was orientated east-west, was only present in the short eastern trench footing and did not continue into the western trench footing. No wall cut was visible and the stones for the wall appeared to have been laid directly on top of floor layer (118). The wall was over 0.60m long, 0.25m wide and survived for a height of up to 0.12m. The wall comprised of flat irregular shaped pieces of limestone, with no obvious coursing and was of 'dry-stone' construction, probably representing an internal division. No dating evidence was present within (139), which was sealed by subsoil (102).

5.21 Wall cut [107] was orientated east-west, was present in the western trench footing and did not continue into the eastern footing. The cut had vertical sides with a flat base and was present for a width of 0.60m and a depth of 0.10m. The cut did not contain any obvious fill or packing material and was only wide enough to accommodate the stone wall. Wall (108) was constructed of flat, irregularly shaped pieces of limestone, which ranged from 0.05m x 0.10m x 0.10m to 0.05m x 0.20m x 0.20m in size. The wall survived to a height of 0.20m and contained two distinct courses. A total of thirty-four sherds of Roman pottery with a date of mid 3rd century+ and ten fragments of animal bone (one cattle, two sheep/goat, one with butchery marks, one pig, one horse of between 11 ¾ and 20 years in age and five unknown) were recovered from cleaning over the wall and from between the stones. The wall cut into layer (132) and was in turn sealed by subsoil (102).

5.22 Wall cut [123] was orientated east-west, was present only in the eastern trench footing and did not continue into the western footing. The wall cut was approximately double the width of the stone wall, at 1.15m wide and was 0.27m deep. The cut was vertically-sided with a flat base and contained limestone wall

(129) and fill (125). The wall was 0.66m wide and survived for a height of 0.22m. The wall comprised of large, flat, irregular shaped pieces of limestone (129), which ranged from 0.02m x 0.10m x 0.10m to 0.05m x 0.30m x 0.30m in size. The wall was not faced or obviously coursed and was of 'dry-stone' construction. Contained between the cut and the stone wall was fill (125), which consisted of a light brown grey silty clay, with frequent charcoal inclusions and two sherds of Roman pottery. The wall cut through subsoil (102), floor surfaces (121) and (126) and into deposit (115), it was then in turn sealed by topsoil (101).

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 All the artefactual evidence present within the watched area suggests that the site was first occupied during the middle to late Roman period.

6.2 The earliest feature present within the study area was ditch [136], which yielded pottery of a 2nd to 4th century date. This feature was sealed by wall [112] and so would appear to predate the earliest structure. However, as only one section of this ditch was present within the foundation trenches, it is difficult to be confident that it represents an unrelated phase of Romano-British activity in the study area or if the excavation of the ditch was an element of the construction of the building.

6.3 The first certain phase of construction revealed by the watching brief was wall [112]. The wall was of substantial size and was most likely the external wall for a structure. Feature [112] appeared to be contemporary with floor layers (103), (109), which are laid on the northwest side of the wall and (128), which was laid to the southeast. Floor layers (103) and (109) were equivalent to each other and were constructed of large limestone slabs and cobbles, whereas floor (128) consisted of a rammed surface of small cobbles and pea gravels. The difference between these two surfaces would suggest that (103/109) represented an outside yard or hardstanding floor surface and (128) was an internal floor surface for the Roman building. Floor surface (128) was not present in the western trench against wall [112]. This could suggest a different room usage for the southwestern area of the building, with layer (115) possibly representing a beaten earth floor.

6.4 Floor layer (128) was sealed by floor layers (118) and (126). This would indicate either a repair to the existing property or a new build over an abandoned structure. Floor layers (116), (118), (121) and (126), were all similar in construction and would appear to be contemporary or possibly equivalent surfaces. These floors respect wall [112], which might suggest that these contexts constitute a repair to the existing building. Floor (116) was situated in the southwest area of the building, which did not have an earlier cobbled floor surface. Excavation in this area yielded a quantity of animal bone, one of which had possibly been hung by a hook prior to smoking. It is possible that this part of the building was a kitchen, with the lens of burnt material (140) representing a hearth area for the earlier

phase, but it most likely represented a dumped deposit, rather than the result of *in situ* burning, as there was no visible evidence of heating within the clay of context (115). The absence of *in situ* burning for a hearth is more likely to be the result of the small quantity of floor surface revealed within the garage footings, than the absence of a fire.

6.6 Context (114) was located against the northwestern side of wall [112], which represented the external side of the structure. This deposit appeared to contain collapse from this wall suggesting its deposition post-dated the destruction/ abandonment of the building. The context was either sealed by or contemporary to (132), which was in turn cut by [107]. The coin present in (114) had an issue date of AD379-395, which would provide a *Terminus Ante Quem* near the end of the Roman occupation of Britain for the construction of wall [107].

6.7 Wall [123] cut through floor layers (121/126), which indicated a later phase of construction on the site. Although no wall cut was present for feature (139), the wall sealed floor layer (118), which would indicate a later phase of construction to the floor. Wall [107] cuts through context (132), which sealed floor/yard (109), this also indicates that [107] was a later phase of activity. Walls [107], [123] and (139) were all east-west aligned and sealed or cut through earlier deposits, indicating a later phase of Roman activity. The limited evidence available indicates that an earlier building (represented by wall [112] on a northeast/ southwest-northwest/southeast orientation) had been demolished and replaced with a series of east-west walls. No north-south walls or floor surfaces were identified during the watching brief, which might be associated with this later walling and it is possible that these related to later land divisions, rather than a structure.

6.8 The pottery evidence and coin from (114) suggest that this latter phase of activity occurred at the end of the Roman occupation. The postulated replacement of a domestic structure may be indicative may be indicative of retraction of settlement at Bourton-on-the-Water, but may equally suggest no more than that the focus of occupation at the site had relocated outside the confines of the garage footings and that the east-west walls are related to ancillary structures which either did not have, or for which no evidence survived, of floor surfaces. Further work in the area would be required to prove this hypothesis.

6.9 The animal bone assemblage contained all the main domestic species. In most cases the age of the animal could not be determined but five individual fragments had butchery marks, which indicated that the animals had been processed for meat and marrow.

6.10 Very small quantities of industrial waste were revealed from within the Romano-British deposits, in the form of iron slag. There was no evidence to suggest that this activity was taking place on-site, but there may have been iron-working in the

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

near vicinity. The animal bone and pottery assemblages suggest a domestic rather than an industrial usage for the site.

6.11 Preservation conditions on site were very good and the watching brief produced a high level of significant archaeological deposits from a very small area. This would indicate a very high potential for further important remains within the site. Any further construction within the vicinity of the study area would require close archaeological monitoring.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Foundations Archaeology, 2001 *Millstone, Lansdown, Bourton-on-the-Water: Project Design*. Unpublished

Gloucestershire County Council, 2000 *Millstone, Lansdown, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire: Replacement of Existing Single Garage with Double Garage and Potting Shed*. Unpublished

IFA 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. Institute of Field Archaeologists. Unpublished

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Charles Parry of Gloucestershire County Council, Jane Timby, Emma-Jayne Evans, Nicholas Wells of Numismatic Services and Mrs Briars for their assistance with this project.

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

APPENDIX 1: POTTERY REPORT

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

APPENDIX 2: COIN REPORT

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk

APPENDIX 3: ANIMAL BONE REPORT

109 Albion Street, Swindon SN1 5LP
Tel/Fax 08700 780 555 email: info@foundations.co.uk