14 Ashcroft Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

For

Shires

CA Project: 2859
CA Report: 09073

May 2009

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

14 ASHCROFT ROAD
CIRENCESTER
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 2859
CA REPORT: 09073

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date	7 May 2009
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date	7 May 2009
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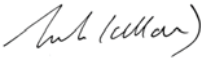
signed	
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SUMMARY

Project Name:	14 Ashcroft Road
Location:	Cirencester, Gloucestershire
NGR:	SP 0227 0182
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	29-30 April 2009
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Corinium Museum
Site Code:	ARC 09

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in April 2009 at 14 Ashcroft Road. One trench was excavated.

The evaluation revealed *in situ* Roman deposits at a depth of 0.9m below present ground level. The earliest deposits have been interpreted as layers of street-washed silt resulting from the use of Roman Street L of Corinium Roman town which lies 9m north-west of the site. These deposits were sealed by layers of demolition material consistent with a phase of disuse and collapse prior to the accumulation of 'dark earth' deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In April 2009 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Shires at 14 Ashcroft Road (centred on NGR: SP 0227 0182; Fig. 1). The excavation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the construction of a single storey extension to the rear of the present property.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a communication from Charles Parry, Senior Archaeological Officer, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), archaeological advisor to Cotswold District Council (CDC) and with a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2009) and approved by Charles Parry. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (GCC 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).

The site

1.3 The site is located at the end of a row of terraced houses in the central part of Cirencester. The property fronts onto Ashcroft Road to the south-east and is bounded to the south-west by 16 Ashcroft Road, to the north-west by a bowling green and to the north-east by an electricity substation (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 110m AOD.

1.4 The proposed development encloses an area of approximately 15m^2 and comprises an area of hard-standing to the rear of the property.

1.5 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as Kellaways Sand Member of the mid Jurassic era, overlain by limestone gravel First Terrace Deposits of the River Churn (BGS 1998). These deposits were not encountered during the evaluation.

Archaeological background

1.6 The site falls between (and therefore outside) notification areas of Scheduled Ancient Monument Glos. 361 (*Corinium* Roman Town). However, research indicates that the proposed development is sited in an area of high archaeological

potential. It lies in the north-western quadrant of the Roman town of Corinium and is situated just to the south-west of the line of the Roman Street L between its junctions with Street H to the south-west and Street I to the north-east. Street L ran to the north of, and almost parallel to, the present course of Ashcroft Road and formed the north-western boundary of *insula XXa* and *XXb* in this part of the town (Holbrook and Salvatore 1998, 21).

1.7 Previous archaeological investigation to the west of the site at 52-54 Ashcroft Road has revealed the remains of the metalled surface of Street L at approximately 1m below present ground level (bpgl) and a building which would have fronted onto the north-western side of the street (CAT 2000a). Excavations at 3-7 Ashcroft Road revealed Roman street surfaces surviving at depths of between 0.5m to 0.85m bpgl. These correlate with the projected line of *inter insulae* Street I (CA 2005). Just to the south of the site at the Ashcroft Centre excavations showed deposits consistent with Roman demolition dated to the 4th century AD at a depth of 0.85m bpgl (CAT 2000b).

Archaeological objectives

1.8 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist CDC in making an informed judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource, and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.

Methodology

1.9 The fieldwork comprised the hand excavation of one trench measuring 1.5m square to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon. All excavation and subsequent recording was undertaken in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).

1.10 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) however, no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation* (1995).

1.11 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with Corinium Museum along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix D, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. RESULTS

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix C.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

2.2 The earliest deposit encountered in the trench was 1008, a layer of sandy silt and this was exposed in a sondage at a depth of 1.34m below present ground level (bpgl). This deposit contained fragments of tile and an iron nail of Roman date and due to the location of the trench, 9m south-east of Roman Street L, this deposit may be result of a build up of street-washed silt which eroded from the surface of the street. This deposit was sealed by 1007 a deposit of similar character which may also have represented street-washed silt.

2.3 Deposit 1007 was overlain by 1006 which comprised limestone fragments within a yellow brown silt matrix and which contained fragments of Roman pottery and tile dating to the mid 1st to Late 2nd centuries AD. This deposit appeared to represent a phase of demolition and/or levelling and was partially covered by a further demolition deposit 1005 which comprised crushed limestone and abundant tile fragments within a loose red brown silt matrix. Deposits 1005 and 1006 were overlain by a silty deposit, 1004, which contained sherds of Roman tile and pottery dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. The top of this deposit was located at a depth of 0.9m bpgl and appeared to represent an interface between the demolition deposits and the 'dark earth'. This layer was sealed by reworked 'dark earth' deposit 1003 which contained pottery of 18th and 19th-century date as well as Roman pottery sherds. Reworked 'dark earth' 1003 was overlain by modern garden soil layer 1002 which was covered by make-up layer 1001 for the existing concrete surface 1000.

The Finds and Palaeoenvironmental Evidence

2.4 Quantities of pottery, ceramic building material, an iron object, animal bone and oyster shell were recovered from five deposits (Appendix B).

2.5 Pottery and/or ceramic building material of Roman date was recovered from all listed deposits (Appendix B), although material from the uppermost horizons 1003. The pottery from demolition/levelling layer 1006 consists of a rim sherd from a South Gaulish samian dish (form Drag. 18 or 18/31) and a bodysherd from a white-slipped flagon. An Early Roman (later 1st or 2nd century AD) date is suggested on the basis of the types represented. Ceramic building material form this deposit consists of large fragments of flanged (*tegula*) and curving (*imbrex*) roof tile in a similar, distinctive, fabric with limestone inclusions. Pottery from the stratigraphically later deposit 1004 comprised abraded and broadly dateable (2nd to 4th centuries AD) bodysherds in Dorset Black-Burnished ware and North Wiltshire type greyware. Quantities of Roman ceramic building material comprising smaller fragments of roofing tile were recovered from deposits 1002, 1003 and 1008. A probable iron nail shaft was recovered from deposit 1008.

2.6 Later post-medieval (18th to earlier 19th-century) dating for 'dark earth' deposit 1003 is suggested by a sherd from a large bowl in a black-glazed earthenware. Two sherds of Roman pottery from this deposit consisting of a rim sherd from a conical flanged bowl in Dorset Black-Burnished ware and a sherd of Roman shell-tempered ware, probably date to the 4th century AD.

2.7 Small quantities of animal bone were recovered from three deposits (Appendix B). The identifiable species (sheep, cow, horse and chicken) are typical for the domesticated range across the Roman and later periods. No evidence for butchery or obvious pathology was noted.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The stratigraphic sequence identified during the evaluation indicated that *in situ* deposits of Roman date survive at a depth of 0.9m bpgl (109.36m AOD). The earliest Roman deposits encountered during the evaluation consisted of street-washed silts. A similar stratigraphic sequence was identified during excavations at

Bingham Hall, Cirencester in 2002 which identified archaeological features sealed by layers of silt resulting from use and urban debris building up on and alongside Ermin Street (Havard and Watts 2008). The layers of street-washed silt were sealed by three layers of Roman demolition material which probably resulted from the collapse of disused buildings. The latest demolition deposit was more silty in consistency than those below it and may represent an interface between the demolition and the 'dark earth' deposit. The 'dark earth' itself is commonly found in excavations in Cirencester (frequently containing post-medieval pottery and therefore reworked) and signifies the collapse of the infrastructure of the Roman town of Corinium in the fifth century and the return of the land to low-status occupation and agriculture (Faulkner 1998). Given the limited exposure of the Roman deposits, interpretation is necessarily speculative. However the level of the *in situ* Roman deposits is comparable to those identified at 52-54 Ashcroft Road and the Ashcroft centre which lie to the west and south of the site respectively.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Philippa Mitcheson, assisted by Caroline Butler. The report was written by Philippa Mitcheson. The finds report was written by Ed McSloy and the illustrations were prepared by Rachel Kershaw. The archive has been compiled by Philippa Mitcheson, and prepared for deposition by Victoria Taylor. The project was managed for CA by Laurent Coleman.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
1000	Deposit	Concrete surface			0.09	
1001	Deposit	Intermittent hardcore: make-up deposit for concrete surface			0.1	
1002	Deposit	Dark brown silty clay: garden soil			0.3	
1003	Deposit	Dark brown clay silt: 'dark earth'			0.6	C18-C19
1004	Deposit	Red brown silt: demolition layer			0.12	C2-C4+
1005	Deposit	Crushed limestone and abundant tile fragments within a loose red brown silt matrix: demolition layer			0.11	
1006	Deposit	Limestone fragments within a yellow brown silt matrix: demolition deposit			0.12	C2+
1007	Deposit	Loose orange sandy silt: street washed silt			0.09	
1008	Deposit	Loose grey sandy silt: street washed silt				RB+

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Finds Concordance:

Context	Description*	Count	Weight(g)	Spot-date
1002	Roman? CBM: brick or tile	1	120	-
	Animal bone: chicken longbone; ?horse metapodial	2	101	
	Oyster shell	2	32	
1003	Post-medieval pottery: black-glazed earthenware	1	79	C18-C19
	Roman pottery: Dorset Black-Burnished ware (TF74); Roman shell-tempered ware (TF 115)	2	79	
	Animal bone: cow-sized vertebra; sheep-sized vertebra	2	53	
	Oyster shell	1	26	
1004	Roman pottery: Dorset Black-Burnished ware (TF 74); ?north Wilts greyware (TF 98)	3	20	C2-C4
	Roman? CBM: *imbrex*	1	60	
1006	Roman pottery: South Gaulish samian (TF 154A); white-slipped flagon fabric (TF 9)	2	10	MC1-C2+
	Roman? CBM: *tegula*, *imbrex*	2	604	
1008	Roman? CBM: *tegula*	2	109	RB
	Fe object: bar or nail shaft	1	-	
	Animal bone: cow rib; sheep-sized longbone	5	29	

* 'TF' codes refer to the Cirencester pottery type series (see Rigby 1982)

APPENDIX C: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

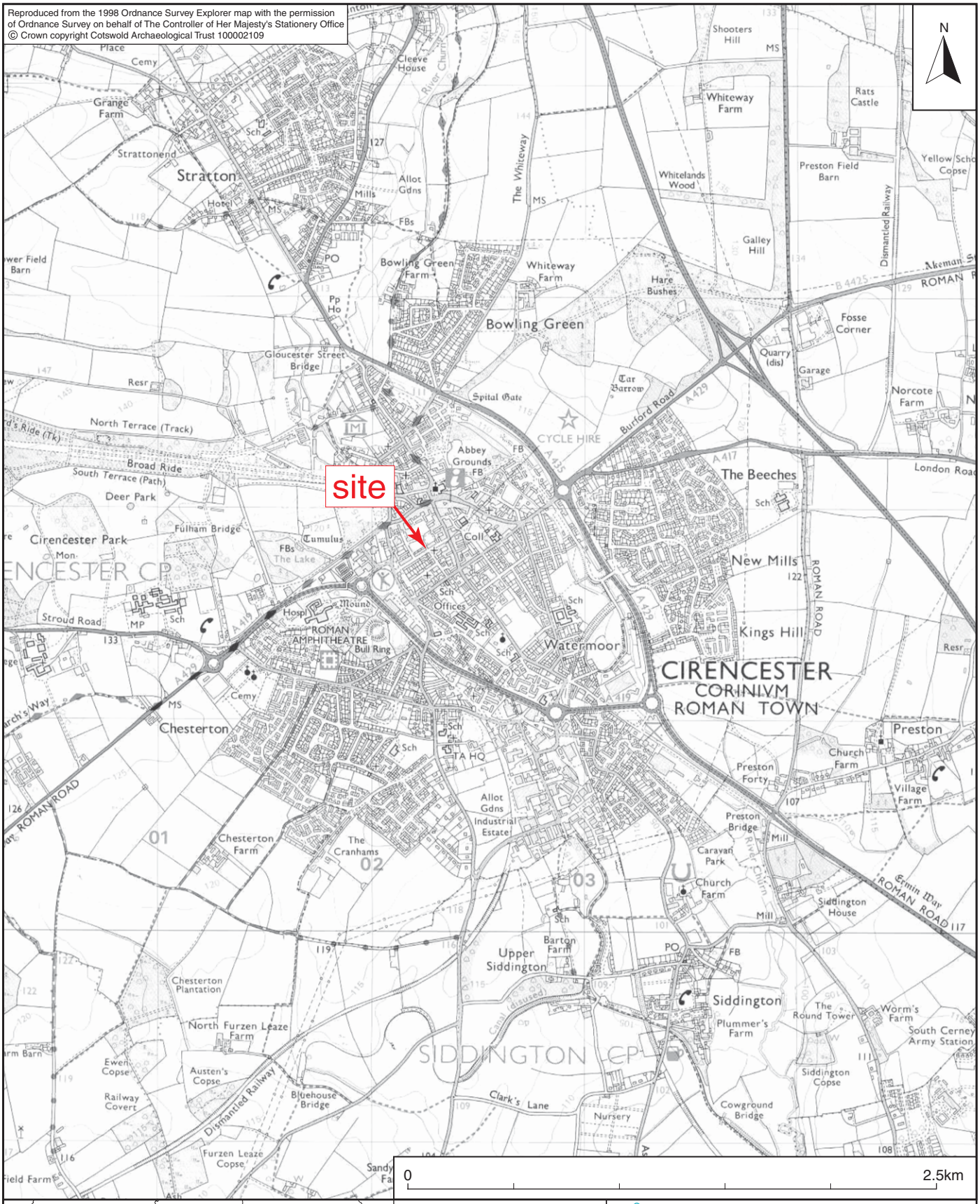
Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using the benchmark located at 64 Cricklade Street, Cirencester (110.9m AOD).

	Trench 1
Current ground level	0.00m (110.26m)
Top of Roman deposits	0.9m (109.36m)
Limit of excavation	1.5m (108.76m)

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level; lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.

APPENDIX D: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in April 2009 at 14 Ashcroft Road. One trench was excavated. The evaluation revealed *in situ* Roman deposits at a depth of 0.9m below present ground level. The earliest deposits have been interpreted as layers of street-washed silt resulting from the use of Roman Street L of Corinium Roman town which lies 9m north-west of the site. These deposits were sealed by layers of demolition material consistent with a phase of disuse and collapse prior to the accumulation of 'dark earth' deposits.	
Project dates	29-30 May 2009	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	N/A	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M^2/ha)	$15m^2$	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SP 0227 0182	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Laurent Coleman	
Project Supervisor	Philippa Mitcheson	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Corinium Museum	Pottery, CBM, animal bone
Paper	Corinium Museum	Trench sheet, context sheets, photographic registers, levels register, permatrace plans and sections, WSI, black and white negatives and colour slides
Digital	Corinium Museum	Digital photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2009 *14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation* CA typescript report no. **09073**		



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE
14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester
Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

DRAWN BY	*SCALE*	*PROJECT NO.*	*FIGURE NO.*
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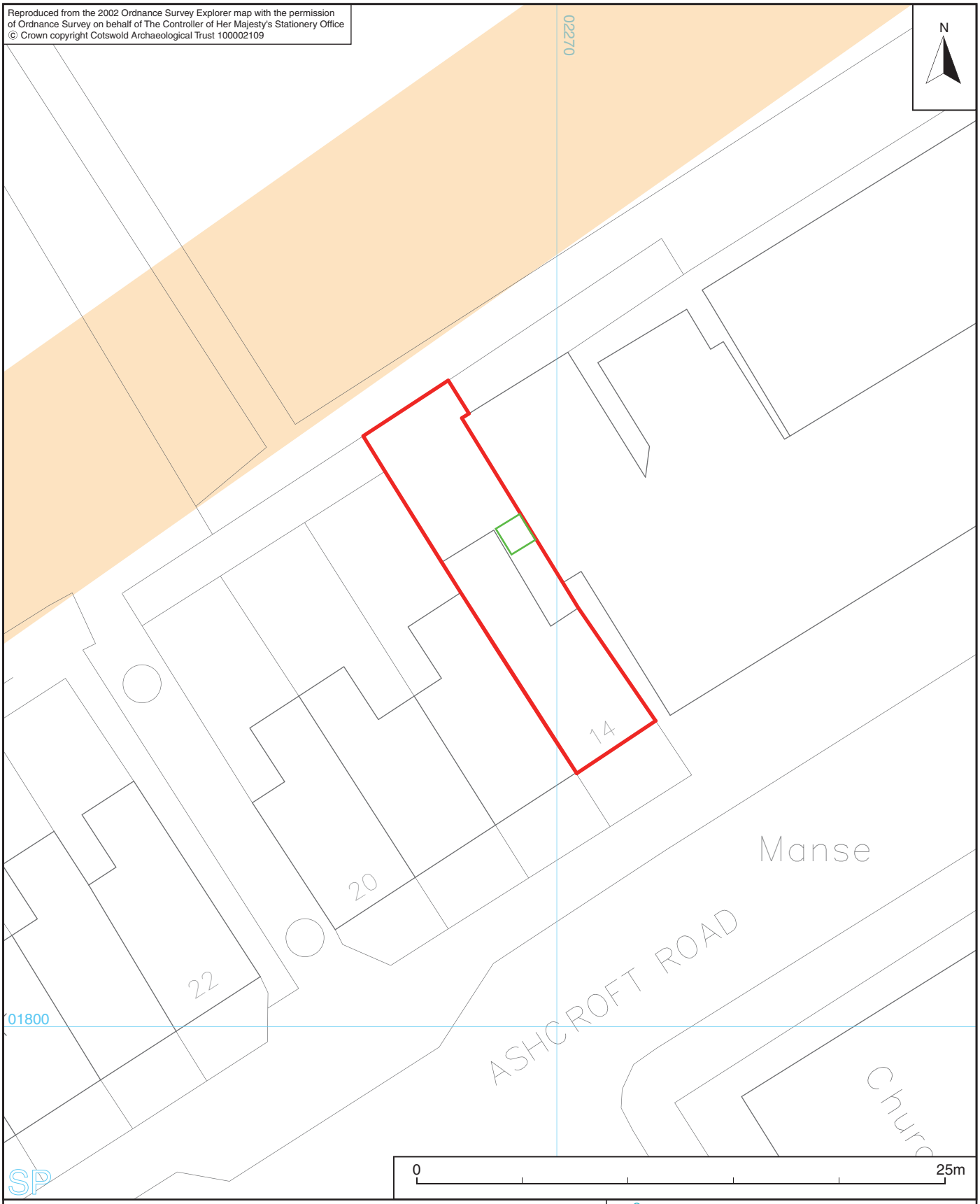

site

evaluation trench

line of Roman street L

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE
14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester
Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

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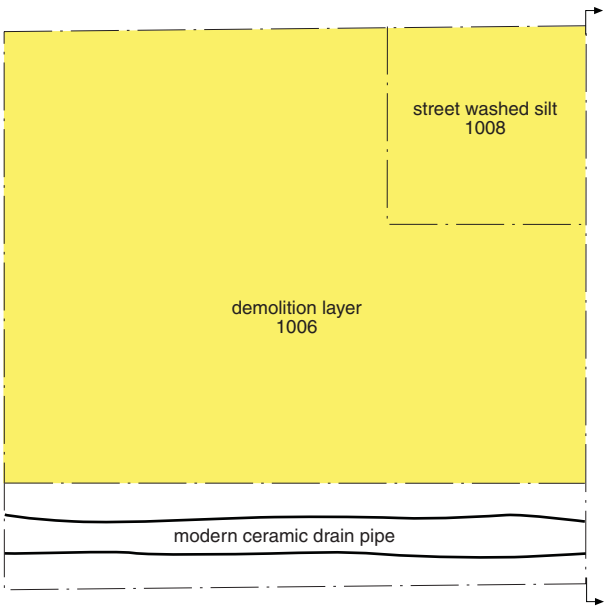

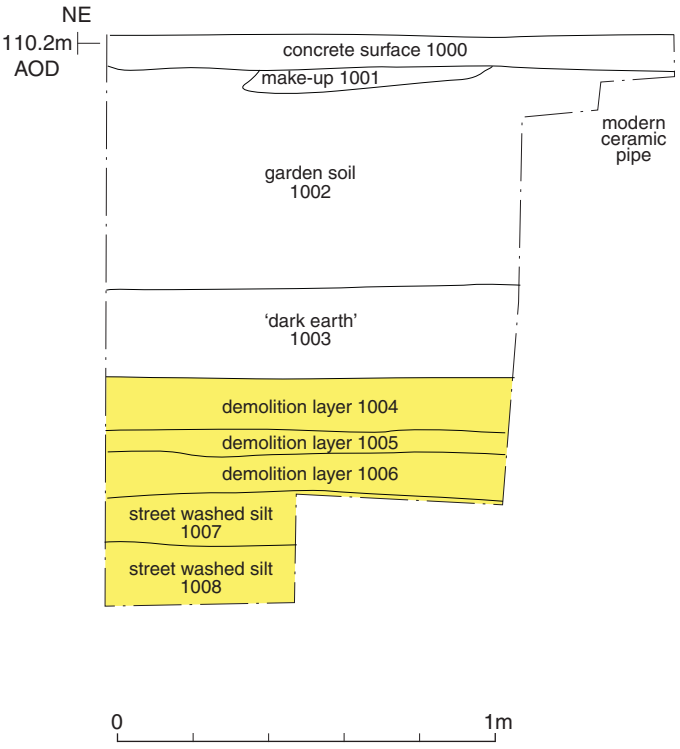

Trench 1, facing south-east

Roman

COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE
14 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester
Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench 1: plan, section and photograph

DRAWN BY	*SCALE*	*PROJECT NO.*	*FIGURE NO.*
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