

Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath, Bath & North-East Somerset.

An Archaeological Watching Brief.



CONTEXT ONE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD

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Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath, Bath & North-East Somerset.

An Archaeological Watching Brief for Wessex Water plc

by



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COAS reference: COAS/WBF/07/FYB

National Grid Reference: ST 75157 64732

Roman Baths Museum and Pump Room Accession No. BATRM 2007.18

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May 2007

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Non-technical summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks for a replacement sewer at the Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath (NGR ST 75157 64732), over three days between the 2nd and 4th of April 2007. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc.

The investigation was advised by Mr Richard Sermon (Archaeological Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Council), following a consultation request by Mr Mark Weller (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc).

Groundwork excavations revealed a layer of 19th/20th century flagstones overlying a late 19th century backfill deposit from the existing sewer pipe trench. Contemporary stone buttresses supporting the buildings on either side of the trench were observed at the eastern and western ends.

Finds recovered from the Watching Brief comprised a small assemblage that spanned the Roman to late post-medieval periods although most of the material dated to the late 17th century and later. All the artefacts were recovered from the backfill of the existing trench and are undoubtedly residual.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks for a replacement sewer at the Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath (NGR ST 75157 64732) (hereafter referred to as the Site), over three days between the 2nd and 4th of April 2007. The project was commissioned and funded by Wessex Water plc.
- 1.2. The investigation was advised by Mr Richard Sermon (Archaeological Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Council), following a consultation request by Mr Mark Weller (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc). The Site lies in the centre of Bath, a World Heritage Site since 1987, and is specifically located within Character Zone 1, as set out in *Archaeology in the City of Bath Supplementary Planning Guidance* (2004):

"Zone 1: The Central Area.

The Roman and medieval settlement overlaid by later Georgian development and largely confined within the City walls. The archaeological resource is mixed and complex with evidence of human settlement and activity associated with the hot springs and the rise of urbanism. Key sites include the Roman Baths and temple, Bath Abbey, the medieval street layout and some significant Georgian grand gestures."

- 1.3. Furthermore, in 1982, an archaeological investigation revealed a Roman occupation layer (**SMR No. MBN4626**) beneath the cellar floor of the Friends Meeting House itself.
- 1.4. Given the recorded archaeological data for the environs, it was considered that archaeological features/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these would be damaged or destroyed by the development. However, as the nature or presence of such features/deposits had not been proven on the basis of currently available information, it was determined that a reasonable archaeological response would be to carry out a Watching Brief during all ground disturbance.
- 1.5. At the request of Mr Richard Sermon (Archaeological Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Council) COAS issued a *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief: Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath & North-East Somerset* (March 2007) which provided a strategy for the archaeological works. This was submitted to and approved by Mr Sermon prior to the commencement of the Watching Brief.
- 1.6. The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1), General Policy and Principles*, 1997 and *Planning Policy Guidance: Note 16 (PPG16)* issued by the DoE in 1990. The recommendation also conforms to Policy 19 of the *Bath & North-East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Joint Replacement Structure Plan* (adopted September 2002), and Policy BH.12 of the *Bath & North-East Somerset Local Plan Revised Deposit* (adopted December 2002). In addition, the recommendation conforms to *Archaeology in Bath and North East Somerset: Supplementary Planning guidance* (adopted 2004), and *Archaeology in the City of Bath: Supplementary Planning guidance* (adopted 2004).
- 1.7. This report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological and historical setting of the site, and presents the results of the Watching Brief.

2. Definition and objectives of a Watching Brief

2.1. An Archaeological Watching Brief is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as:

“...a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.” (IFA rev.1999).

2.2. The purpose of a Watching Brief is similarly defined by the IFA and is:

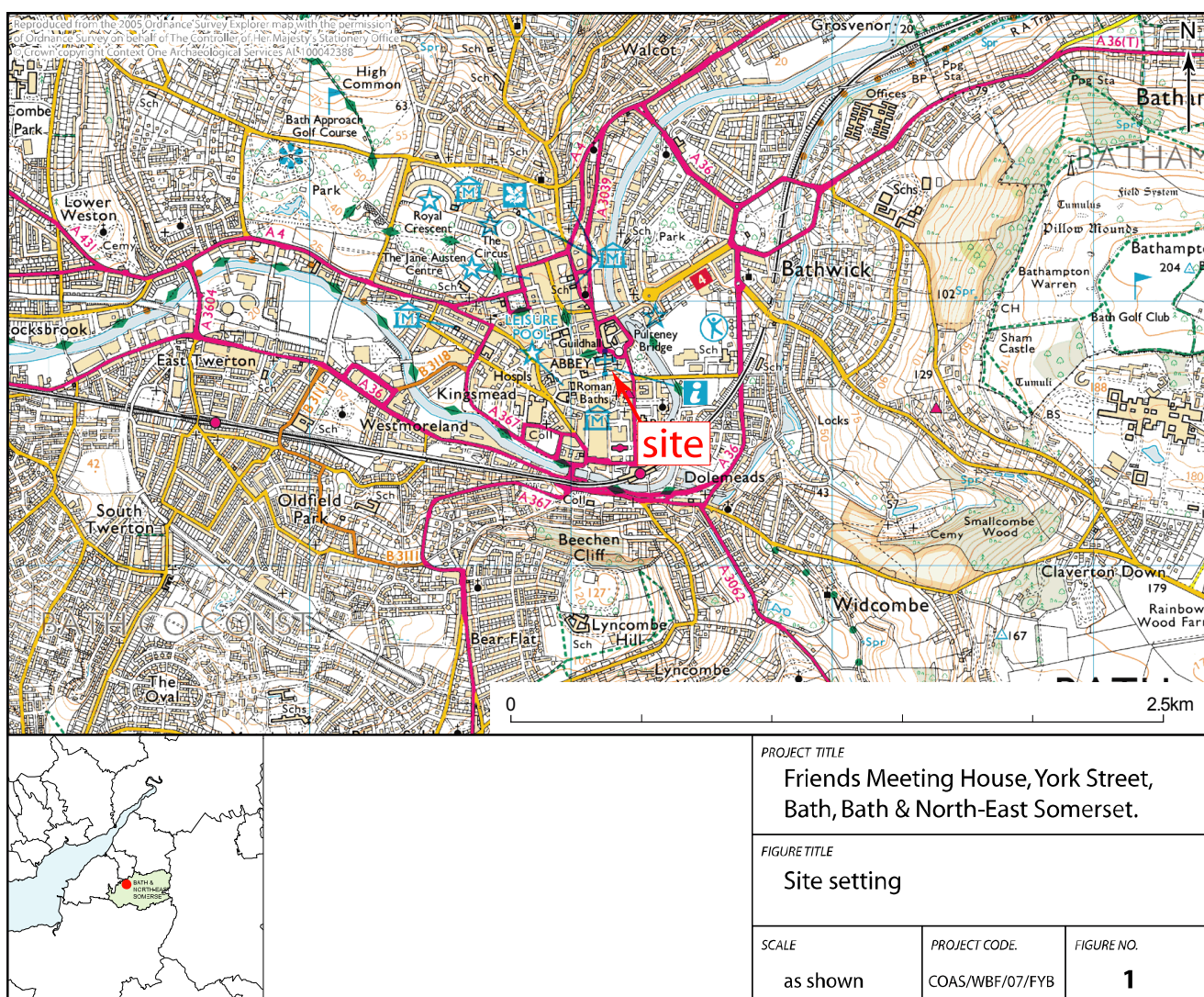
- *“To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, their presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.*
- *To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the Watching Brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.” (IFA rev.1999)*

2.3. The results of a Watching Brief are used to:

- produce a record of the location, nature and date of any archaeological remains encountered on the Site;
- add to the knowledge about the previous history of activity on the current site and its surroundings; and
- provide information to influence future planning decisions in the area.

3. Topography and geology

3.1. Bath is situated towards the centre of Bath & North-East Somerset. The Site (centred on NGR ST 75157 64732) is located c. 120m north-north-east of the Roman Baths (**Figure 1**) and occupies roughly level ground c. 25m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). According to the British Geological Survey (2001), the underlying geology is of Jurassic, Lower Lias and Inferior Oolite, and Carboniferous, Lower Westphalian, mainly ‘Productive Coal Measures’. The soils in this area are characterised by freely draining, slightly acid but base-rich sediments and freely draining, lime-rich sediments, over chalk or limestone (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), 2006).



4. Archaeological Background

- 4.1. The archaeological background for the Site has largely been drawn from secondary sources. This comprised a data search of archaeological records held by Bath and North East Somerset Council as part of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).
- 4.2. A Roman occupation layer (**SMR No. MBN4626**) was observed beneath the cellar floor of the Friends Meeting House in 1982 during an archaeological investigation into the depth of archaeological deposits present on Site.
- 4.3. Located in the centre of historic Bath, the Site lies within an area designated Character Zone 1 (as defined in *Archaeology in the City of Bath Supplementary Planning Guide*, 2004). The archaeology in this area is noted as being both mixed and complex, with the potential for any groundworks to expose archaeological remains spanning from the Roman (AD43 – AD410) to the Georgian periods (AD1714 – AD1830).

5. Methodology

Wessex Water methodology

- 5.1. A hand dug trench was excavated (c. 3m long by c. 1.5m wide by c. 2.9m deep) on the southern side of the building, to locate the existing sewer pipe to be replaced (**Figure 2**). The width of the trench was defined by the southern wall of the Friends Meeting House to the north, and by the northern wall of the adjacent building, to the south.

Archaeological methodology

- 5.2. The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) in October, 1994 (rev. September, 1999). COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* issued by the IFA in October, 1997, and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990, rev. September, 2000), at all times during the course of the investigation. The current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

Trenching



- 5.3. Excavation of the trench was carried out under archaeological supervision. A representative profile was recorded using a COAS *pro-forma* profile log sheet to illustrate the stratigraphic and physical characteristics of the deposits encountered.
- 5.4. A photographic record of the Watching Brief was prepared involving the use of monochrome photographs and digital images. This included working shots to illustrate the general nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 5.5. Artefacts collected from archaeological features/deposits were bagged using a combination of the site code and context numbers. Bulk finds such as post-medieval and modern brick and tile were not collected although location, type and frequency were recorded.
- 5.6. All finds from the site were retained for processing and conservation where necessary, in preparation for further analysis and archiving. A specialist report of the artefact assemblage was compiled utilising both descriptive and tabular formats (see section 7.)

6. Results

- 6.1. The following deposits were encountered (deposit numbers are enclosed by standard brackets). A representative profile of the deposit matrix was taken at the eastern extent of the trench (**Figure 2**). A simple sequence of 19th/20th century flagstones (100) overlying 19th century backfill (101) was observed throughout the trench.
- 6.2. A number of the flagstones (100) had been set into mortar. The backfill (101) which overlay the existing sewer pipe consisted of soft silt/clay/sand, with a moderate amount of small to large, rounded and angular stone inclusions.
- 6.3. Perpendicular to the walls of the existing buildings, stone buttresses were observed in the lower section of both the eastern and western extents of the trench.

6.4. An assemblage of 26 artefacts was recovered from the Watching Brief, including pottery, glass, Ceramic Building Material (CBM), clay pipe, wall plaster, stone and metal objects. These are discussed in section 7.



 trench location  profile location	PROJECT TITLE Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath, Bath and North-East Somerset		
	FIGURE TITLE Detailed site setting showing location of replacement sewer and profile		
	SCALE as shown	PROJECT CODE COAS/WBF/07/FYB	FIGURE NO. 2

7. The finds

- 7.1. With the exception of metalwork, finds recovered from the watching brief were washed and marked, where possible, with a code issued by the Roman Baths Museum and Pump Room identifying the site (BATRM 2007.18), followed by the context number. The finds were separated into artefact types and quantified by context number, quantity and weight in grams. This data is presented as a table (**Table 1**). Bulk finds, such as post-medieval and modern brick/tile and slate were noted on the profile log sheets and context sheets but not collected. A request will be made to the site owner(s) through Wessex Water plc to transfer the title of all finds recovered to the Roman Baths Museum and Pump Room. All finds recovered will be returned to the site owner(s).

Metalwork

By Kayt Matthews (COAS)

- 7.2. A single metal object was collected from context (101), a copper alloy spoon (23g) measuring 145mm in length. The maker's marks once evident on the reverse of the handle tip have corroded over time and are illegible. Nevertheless, in form, it can be identified as a 'fiddle' spoon of 18th / 19th century date.

Reference:

Moore S. 2005 *Spoons 1650-2000* Shire Publications Ltd

Stone

By Dr. Cheryl Allum (COAS)

- 7.3. Two parts of a water receptacle were recovered from context (101), measuring 0.35m long by 0.28m wide and 0.19m deep, although one quarter of the object is missing. The exterior faces are predominantly cut straight, although one edge has a wide chamfer. The inside of the object is rectangular, the short sides slope to a 0.05m wide base whilst the long sides are straight. Most of the faces have been manually sawn, although some faces have diagonal tooling and the internal base has rough chiselling, typical of Roman or medieval workmanship. The inside of the receptacle has a water mark approximately half-way up caused by iron oxidation, indicating that it was used over a prolonged period of time. The fabric is a locally available fine-grained creamy white oolitic limestone.

Other finds

- 7.4. A total of 24 artefacts were recovered from the watching brief comprising 8 pottery sherds, 5 glass bottle shards, 6 pieces of ceramic building material, 4 clay pipe fragments and one piece of wall plaster.
- 7.5. All the material was collected from the late 19th century backfill of the existing sewer pipe and is residual. This includes pottery and ceramic building material from the Roman and Medieval periods although the majority of artefacts are 17th century in date or later. A catalogue of this assemblage has been tabulated in **Table 1**.

Object Number	Context Number	No.	Weight	Period	Comments
Pottery					
-	101	2	20g	Roman	Samian
-	101	1	17g	Medieval	Coarse earthenware
-	101	1	18g	17 th /18 th century	Tin glazed ware drug jar sherd
-	101	2	223g	17 th - 19 th century	Trailed slipware
-	101	1	69g	17 th - 19 th century	Scraffito

Object Number	Context Number	No.	Weight	Period	Comments
-	101	1	34g	17 th - 19 th century	Staffordshire type slipware
Glass					
-	101	1	7g	c.1600 - 1850	Free blown clear glass bottle neck
-	101	1	178g	c.1630 - 1720	Dark green wine bottle body sherd
-	101	1	35g	c.1650 - 1700	Dark brown wine bottle neck
-	101	1	25g	c.1850 - 1940	Clear sewing machine oil bottle sherd
-	101	1	105g	1884 - 1897	Base shard of aqua coloured mineral water bottle
Ceramic building material					
-	101	2	258g	Roman	Box flue tile
-	101	1	790g	Roman	Brick
-	101	1	538g	Roman	Tegula
-	101	1	82g	Roman	Heavily abraded fragment
-	101	1	430g	Medieval	Brick
Clay pipe					
-	101	1	4g	c.1610 - 1640	Bowl fragment
-	101	1	8g	c.1660 - 1680	Bowl
-	101	1	2g	c.1690 - 1880	Stem with spur
-	101	1	2g	c.1840 - 1880	Bowl fragment
Wall Plaster					
-	101	1	35g	-	-

Table 1. Finds by context

- 7.6. A request has been made to the Roman Baths Museum and Pump Room Museums and Art Gallery to receive the finds. These will then be marked with an archive accession number issued by the Museum, identifying the site, followed by the context number.

8. Discussion and conclusions

- 8.1. Groundwork excavations revealed a layer of 19th/20th century flagstones overlying a late 19th century backfill deposit from the existing sewer pipe trench. Contemporary stone buttresses supporting the buildings on either side of the trench were observed at the eastern and western ends.
- 8.2. Finds recovered from the Watching Brief comprised a small assemblage that spanned the Roman to late post-medieval periods although most of the material dated to the late 17th century and later. All the artefacts were recovered from the backfill of the existing trench and are undoubtedly residual.

9. Archive

- 9.1. The site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 2 monochrome photographs and 13 digital images in .jpg format, one COAS *pro-forma* profile log sheet and a photographic register. Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with the relevant receiving authority within 12 months following the submission of this report.

9.2. Copies of the Watching Brief report will be deposited with:

Wessex Water plc
Claverton Down Road
Claverton Down
Bath
BA2 7WW

Planning Services
Bath & North East Somerset Council
Trimbridge House
Trim Street
Bath
BA1 2DP

9.3. As part of our commitment to public archaeology, an e-report will be available to view online or download as an Adobe Acrobat™ file from the COAS website at www.contextone.co.uk/bath_&_ne_somerset.htm following entry onto the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) where it will become a publicly accessible document.

10. COAS acknowledgements

10.1. Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Mr Mark Weller (Environmental Scientist, Wessex Water plc), for his kind assistance throughout the course of the investigation, and Mr Richard Sermon (Archaeological Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Council), for curatorial advice.

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rev. 1999**

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**Multi Agency Geographic
Information for the
Countryside (MAGIC),
2006**

<http://www.magic.gov.uk>