

31 HADRIAN CLOSE  
SEA MILLS  
BRISTOL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 1988  
CA REPORT: 05116

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Signed:	.....
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## SUMMARY

**Site Name:** 31 Hadrian Close  
**Location:** Sea Mills, Bristol  
**NGR:** ST 55073 75776  
**Type:** Evaluation  
**Date:** 23-24 June 2005  
**Location of Archive:** Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery  
**Site Code:** SMB 05

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in June 2005 at the request of Court Building Services (West) Ltd at 31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol. In compliance with an approved WSI (CA 2005), one trench was excavated within the proposed development area.

Romano-British features, comprising a ditch, a hearth pit and two pits, were identified cutting a layer of weathered natural substrate. These features appear to have gone into disuse between the late 1st and mid 3rd centuries, a period that saw Sea Mills change from a Roman military post to a trading port. These features were sealed by at least 0.66m thickness of overlying modern deposits.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2005 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Court Building Services (West) Ltd at 31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol (centred on NGR: ST 55073 75776; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the construction of dwellings on the site.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by Mr R Jones, Bristol City Council Archaeologist, the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and with a subsequent detailed WSI produced by CA (2005) that was approved Mr Jones. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects II* (EH 1991). It was monitored by Mr Jones, including a site visit on 24 June 2005.

### ***The site***

- 1.3 The site lies on the west side of Sea Mills within a residential area and comprises land attached to an existing prefabricated dwelling. It is bounded by neighbouring properties to the north, by the Portway Road to the east and by Hadrian Close to the south and west (Fig. 2).
- 1.4 The underlying geology of the area is mapped as Mercian Mudstone of the Triassic era (BGS, 1974). The site lies at approximately 15m AOD.

### ***Archaeological background***

- 1.5 Archaeological interest in the site arises from its location within the Romano-British town of *Portus Abonae*. Previous work in the vicinity of the current site has identified features and deposits associated with Romano-British settlement, including street alignments, building remains, inhumations and evidence for quarrying (Bennett, 1985, 1). In particular, a north-east/south-west aligned Romano-British street has been identified immediately north of the current site, along with masonry remains that may indicate the location of former buildings fronting the street and extending south towards the present site. At least one inhumation has been identified within

the grounds of the adjoining property, 30 Hadrian Close, with a further inhumation being evidenced 20m to the southwest of the site (ibid, Fig. 2).

### **Archaeological objectives**

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

### **Methodology**

- 1.7 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of one trench measuring 9m in length by 2m in width (see Fig.2 for location and extent). The trench was excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Excavation Recording Manual* (1996).
- 1.8 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), but none suitable for such sampling were encountered. All features and spoil were visually scanned for artefacts in accordance with CA Technical Manual 3: *Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation* (1995) but none were recovered.
- 1.9 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 site archive (including artefacts) will be deposited with the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery.

## 2. RESULTS

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix 1. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix 2.
- 2.2 The earliest deposit encountered comprised natural Mercian Mudstone substrate 102. This was overlain throughout the trench by deposit 110, a thin layer of weathered natural substrate which contained charcoal flecks and a sherd of Romano-British pottery. This latter deposit was cut by three pits and a ditch, all of which contained fills from which Romano-British pottery sherds were recovered.
- 2.3 Pits 103 and 116 were heavily truncated with only their bases surviving. The fills of these pits, 104 and 117 respectively, appeared to derive from topsoil and contained sherds of Romano-British pottery.
- 2.4 Pit 105 appeared to represent a hearth pit. In agreement with Mr Jones, the majority of this feature was left *in situ*. The lowest exposed fill, 109, appeared to be an *in situ* lens of burnt natural substrate. This was overlain by gritty yellow mortar 108 that probably formed a bedding layer for the remains of a surface of flat-laid stones, 107, many of which were scorched red. Romano-British pottery was recovered from within the stone surface. The pit appeared to have been backfilled after use with a mix of redeposited topsoil and stone rubble, 106, possibly from the demolition of structures associated with the hearth pit. Romano-British pottery and a lump of iron slag were also recovered from this deposit.
- 2.5 Ditch 111 comprised a straight length of north-west/south-east orientated ditch. The earliest fills of the ditch comprised two initial silting fills, 114 and 115, which were overlain by a dump of stones, 113, possibly derived from a bank associated with the ditch. The final fill appeared to be a homogenous silting deposit derived from topsoil material. Romano-British pottery was recovered from these deposits.
- 2.6 The Romano-British features were all sealed by up to 0.56m of modern dumped material, layers 101 and 118, which were themselves overlain by the existing topsoil and turf layer 100.

### **The finds**

- 2.7 A quantification of retrieved finds is available as Appendix 3. Quantities of pottery, animal bone, ceramic building material, slag and oyster shell were recovered during the current works. The earliest pottery retrieved comprises late 1st century AD South Gaulish Samian, recovered from fills 104 and 114, identified as Dragendorff form 27 cups. A further sherd of South Gaulish Samian recovered from fill 106 is identified as a Dragendorff form 22 dish, also dateable to the late 1st century AD. The remaining Roman pottery is dateable to the earlier Roman period (before 250AD) and comprises Dorset Black-Burnished ware, grog tempered ware, white slipped flagon, greyware, red-slipped micaceous ware and Dressel 20 amphora. Forms, where identifiable, also support an early Roman date and include a ring-necked flagon recovered from fill 113 and bead rim cooking pots from fills 106 and 115. Three sherds of 19th century white china were recovered from modern deposit 101.
- 2.8 Animal bone was recovered from five deposits. Fill 106 contained a limb bone from a chicken as well as fragments of rib and limb bones from cow-sized and sheep-sized specimens. Fill 113 contained the largest quantity of bone fragments of a cattle skull and hind limb, a pig scapular and sheep/goat metapodial, as well as fragments of rib and limb bones from cow-sized specimens. Fill 114 contained a humerus from a juvenile sheep which may have been chopped and a cow-sized rib. Fills 115 and 117 contained only cow-sized fragments of ribs and limb bones, none of which could be identified to species. The animal bone is in fairly good condition although mild weathering is visible on the surface of the bones and some show modern breaks. The species identified include the usual domestic ungulates as well as domestic fowl. Some bones from contexts 106 and 114 appear to have been chopped through. This is the only evidence of butchery.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that archaeological deposits survive within the proposed development area and are sealed by a minimum of 0.66m depth of modern deposits. Despite truncation of the site, probably during post-war construction of the existing dwelling, Romano-British features comprising a ditch, a hearth pit and two pits, were present. These features went out of use between the late 1st and the mid 3rd centuries. By this time, *Portus Abonae* had ceased to be a

purely military site, having had a growing civilian presence from the early 2nd century onwards (Ellis, 1987, 99-100). *Portus Abonae* is likely to have had a continuing military role through much of the 2nd century however, most probably as a frontier post with policing, administrative and supply capabilities (Ibid, 101). By the 3rd century, *Portus Abonae* had become a civilian town drawing its prosperity from its port. Although the features identified on site represent a small sample of the Roman occupation, it is possible that they relate to the 2nd century phase of military and civilian activity on the site and were deliberately backfilled when the town was demilitarised.

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Hart, assisted by Andrew Loader. The report was written by Jonathan Hart with illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth Hargreaves. The archive has been compiled by Jonathan Hart, and prepared for deposition by Edward McSloy. The project was managed for CA by Clifford Bateman.

#### 5. REFERENCES

- BCC (Bristol City Council) 2005 *31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol: Brief for archaeological field evaluation*
- Bennett, J *Sea Mills; the Roman town of Abonae: excavations at Nazareth House 1972* CBMAG monograph 3
- BGS (British Geological Survey) 1974 *Geological survey of England and Wales, solid and drift geology, 1:50,000 series. Sheet 264: Bristol*
- Cotswold Archaeology 2005 *31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills, Bristol: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*
- Ellis, P 1987 'Sea Mills, Bristol: the 1965-1968 excavations in the Roman town of Abonae', *TBGAS* **105**, 15-108



## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1	
100	Topsoil: grey-brown sandy silt with modern inclusions such as clinker and modern pottery and glass
101	Modern dumped layer: grey-brown sandy silt with stone rubble, modern glass and pottery and lenses of clinker
102	Natural substrate: mudstone
103	Probable pit (or ditch terminus?). very truncated but with flat base. 0.84m diam. x 0.02m deep
104	Fill of 103: mid grey-brown sandy silt
105	Hearth pit: contained <i>in situ</i> deposits likely to represent industrial activity. 1.6m diam. x >0.35m deep
106	Upper fill of 105: backfill derived from redeposited mid grey-brown topsoil with occasional burnt and unburnt stones. 0.38m thick
107	Possible stone surface within 105: flat-laid stones, some with burnt surfaces laid onto 108.
108	Mortar layer within 105: compact gritty yellow mortar
109	Lowest exposed fill of 105: burnt natural substrate?
110	Layer: weathered natural substrate cut by Romano-British features. 0.05m-0.12m thick
111	Ditch: U-V-shaped profile. 1.4m wide x 0.56m deep
112	Upper fill of 111: mid grey-brown silty clay silting or backfill. 0.32m thick
113	Fill of 111: unburnt stones within a dark grey-brown silty clay matrix. Possibly backfill and possibly derived from banked material. 0.22m thick
114	Fill of 111: mid orange-brown silting fill. 0.1m thick
115	Lower fill of 111: mid red-brown silting fill derived from natural substrate. 0.04m thick
116	Pit: very truncated but with flat base. 0.6m diam. x 0.1m deep
117	Fill of 116: mid grey-brown silty clay
118	Modern dumped layer: redeposited natural. 0.118m thick

## APPENDIX 2: 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 18m AOD spot height located on the Portway opposite Roman Way.

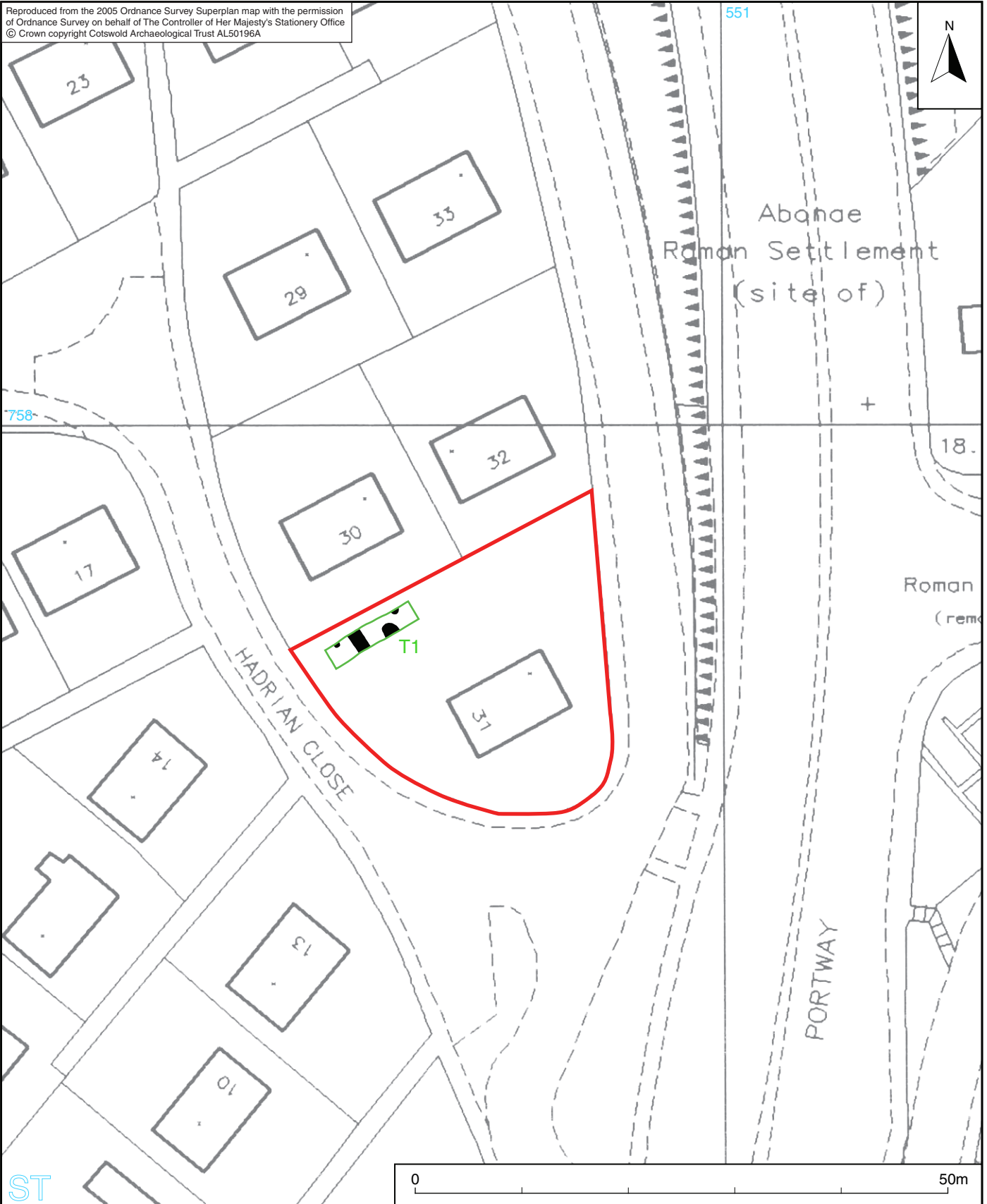
	Trench 1
Current ground level	0.00m (15.92m)
Top of archaeological features	0.66m (15.26m)
Top of natural substrate	0.66m (15.26m)

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

## APPENDIX 3: FINDS

Context	Description	Count	Wt (g)	Spot-date
101	Pottery; china Tile	3 1	3 42	C19+
104	Pottery; Samian Drag 27	1	5	LC1
106	Pottery; Samian Drag 22, greyware, misc micaceous red slipped ware Animal bone; cow-sized, sheep-sized, chicken Misc ceramic building material Slag	10 4 1 1	55 16 2 22	C2
107	Pottery; Dressel 20 amphora, misc micaceous red slipped ware	4	639	MC1-C3
110	Pottery; course grog tempered	2	101	MC1-C2
112	Pottery; Dorset Black-Burnished ware, greyware	3	25	RB
113	Pottery; Black-Burnished ware, grog tempered ware, ring neck flagon Animal bone; cow, sheep/goat, pig, cow-sized Oyster shell Fired clay Misc ceramic building material	6 27 1 1 1	137 340 3 100 26	LC2-MC3
114	Pottery; Samian Drag 27?, black micaceous ware, grog tempered ware Animal bone; sheep/goat, cow-sized Mortar	7 2 1	17 28 5	LC1-C2
115	Pottery; Black-Burnished ware Animal bone; cow-sized Slag	15 4 1	150 21 108	C2-EC3
117	Pottery; misc oxidised fabric Animal bone; cow-sized	2 3	45 7	RB





ST

- site
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills,  
Bristol

FIGURE TITLE

**Trench location plan, showing  
archaeological features**

SCALE

1:500@A4

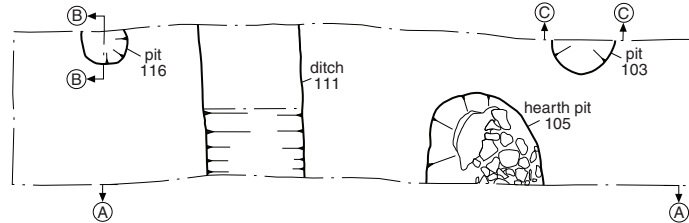
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1988

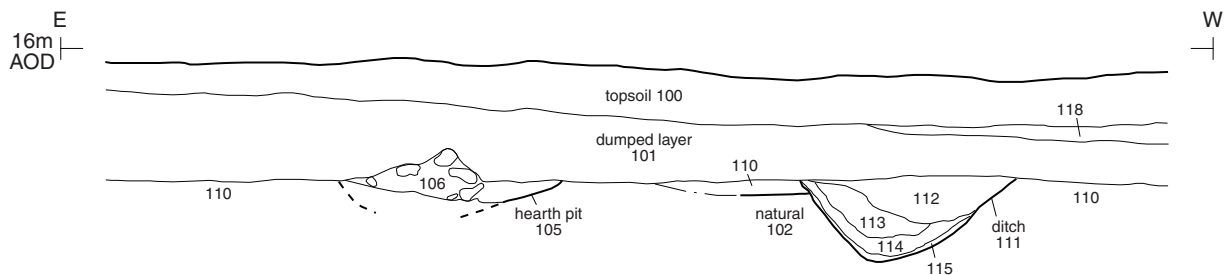
FIGURE NO.

**2**

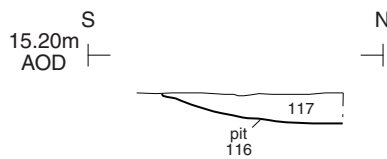
Trench 1; Plan (1:100)



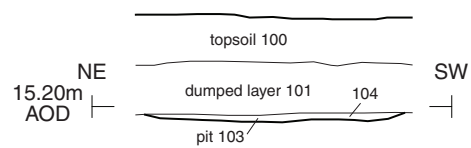
Trench 1; Section AA (1:50)



Trench 1; Section BB (1:20)



Trench 1; Section CC (1:20)



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

31 Hadrian Close, Sea Mills,  
Bristol

FIGURE TITLE

**Trench 1; Plan and Section**

SCALE @ A4

as shown

PROJECT NO.

1988

FIGURE NO.

**3**