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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in June 2003 by Foundations Archaeology at 20 Blake Road, Cirencester. The watching brief involved the archaeological monitoring of groundworks for the construction of a lobby and separate kitchen extension to the existing building.

The monitoring work identified a wall or possible floor surface, dated to the Post-medieval period. Residual Medieval and Post-medieval artefacts were also recovered from the watched area.

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.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

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.

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 *circa* 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 *circa* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2003 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at No. 20 Blake Road, Cirencester (NGR: SP 023 024). The work was commissioned by Mr L. Chapman in response to a condition of planning permission (Application Ref: CT.2596/1/V).
- 1.2 The watching brief was concerned with two areas of land immediately to the front and rear of No. 20 Blake Road upon which a kitchen extension and separate lobby area were 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, revised 2001), *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region) and the Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2003).
- 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. 20 Blake Road (NGR: SP 023 024) is located on the northern side of Cirencester immediately to the south of *Spital Gate* and in the vicinity of the *Abbey Grounds*. The site is situated at a height of *circa* 109m OD. The area of the kitchen extension is positioned at the front of the building, facing Blake Road. The area of the lobby is situated at the rear of the building.

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. 20 Blake Road lies within close proximity to the *Abbey Grounds* and *Spital Gate*.

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 2003).

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. Both trenches 1 and 2 were excavated manually, initially by the on-site contractors and then by an experienced archaeologist, once significant deposits had been identified.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 **Trench 1** was a 'C' shaped footing trench located at the north-west end of the building and was excavated onto yellow/grey gravels at an average depth of 0.98m (108.28m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were directly sealed beneath a dark brown organic clay silt (101), 0.20m thick and a yellow/brown re-deposited natural/topsoil mix (102), 0.49m thick. Both of these contexts contained frequent CBM fragments, as well as Post-medieval and modern pottery sherds. Layer (102) was sealed by context (105), a dark brown clay sand silt topsoil, 0.15m thick. No archaeological deposits or features were identified.
- 6.2 **Trench 2** was an 'L' shaped footing trench located at the south-east end of the building, and was excavated to an average depth of 1.04m (108.22m OD) from the modern ground surface. Natural deposits were not revealed as sufficient depth for the foundations had been reached.
- 6.3 Context (209) consisted of a layer of tightly packed limestone blocks, up to 0.32m thick, (average block size = 0.18m x 0.14m x 0.06m) aligned south-west/north-east. Contained within and abutting the matrix of (209) was fill (208), a dark grey clay gravel, 0.20m thick, which yielded a single sherd of 12th century *Minety Ware*, one sherd of 17th/18th pottery, occasional CBM and occasional charcoal flecks. Both contexts (208) and (209) comprised the fill of [210], a linear cut, aligned south-west/north-east which extended across the trench. Due to on-site constraints, this context was not fully excavated.

- 6.4 Contexts (208), (209) and [210] were directly sealed by layer (207), a light brown/beige clay gravel, up to 0.38m thick, which yielded a single piece of industrial waste, one sherd of 13th century *Minety Ware* and one 17th century pottery handle.
- 6.5 Context (206) was the base layer of the southeastern section of the trench. The fill consisted of a mixed rubble material, with CBM, modern pottery and glass inclusions and was present for a depth of up to 0.46m.
- 6.6 Context (206) and (207) were sealed by (203), which consisted of mixed rubble material, with CBM, modern pottery and glass inclusions, up to 0.42m thick.
- 6.7 Contexts (207), (203) and (206) were cut by [204], a linear pipe trench, up to 0.64m wide, aligned north-east/south west and associated with a nearby man hole. Feature [204] contained fill (205), a rubble back-fill, up to 0.80m deep, which in turn contained a single piece of re-deposited limestone block (209).
- 6.8 Overlying contexts (203) and (205), was layer (202). The deposit comprised a brown/orange clay/gravel mix, which contained frequent CBM fragments and was up to 0.22m thick,
- 6.9 Layer (202) was sealed beneath topsoil (201), up to 0.08m thick, which consisted of a dark brown clay silt humic topsoil and contained occasional CBM fragments.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In general, both Trenches 1 and 2 exhibited extensive Post-medieval/modern disturbance.
- 7.2 Significant Post-medieval remains, in the form of a wall or possible floor surface (209), were identified at the north-west end of Trench 2. This context was associated with a Post-medieval packing fill (208) and was sealed by a Post-medieval layer (207). Due to on-site conditions, an associated cut [210] could not be fully investigated. Medieval pottery sherds recovered from contexts (207) and (208) were likely to be residual. The lack of any modern pottery and glass associated with (208), (209) and (207) indicates that the dating of context (209) is relatively secure.
- 7.3 Context (209) had been highly disturbed by the construction of No. 20 Blake Road. The occurrence of a re-deposited limestone block (209) in back-fill (205) indicates that pipe cut [204] is likely to have impacted upon (209) beyond the north-eastern extent of Trench 2.

8 REFERENCES

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

Foundations Archaeology 2003. *No. 20 Blake Road, Cirencester: Watching Brief Project Design*. Unpublished Report.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Mr L. Chapman and Charles Parry for their assistance during the course of the project.