

**16 ST PETER'S ROAD,  
CIRENCESTER,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**

**NGR: 402229 201707.**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

April 2024

A. Hood BSc MCIfA



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**

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April 2024  
Report No. 1631

**Quality Assurance**

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## SUMMARY

On 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at 16 St Peter's Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (NGR: 402229 201707). The project was commissioned by the landowner Findlay Simpson.

The archaeological works comprised the monitoring and recording of an area of ground reduction and the subsequent excavation of a foundation trench, both of which were associated with the construction of a single storey extension to the rear of 16 St Peter's Road.

The watching brief identified the presence probable Victorian / Modern made ground or in-fill, to a depth of up to 0.75m (108.87m aOD) below the Modern ground surface. No archaeological features or finds were present within the monitored area. However, it should be noted that the groundworks did not reveal the entire extent of stratified deposits.

The excavation revealed the foundations of the rear of the property, the lower parts of which consisted of regularly shaped limestone blocks. It is possible, although not proven, that these stones were re-used Roman building materials.

## 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 AD 1066 and 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. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

### OS

Ordnance Survey.

### Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

### Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, which can be sub-divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,000 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,000 BC to c. 2,500 BC; *Copper Age (Chalcolithic)* – c. 2,500 BC to 2,200 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,200 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

### Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

### Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 16 St Peter's Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (NGR: 402229 201707). The project was commissioned by the landowner Findlay Simpson.
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI (2023) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 1.3 The Cifa code of conduct was adhered to throughout.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission (Reference **23/03277/FUL**) was granted for the construction of a single storey rear extension to 16 St Peter's Road, Cirencester. A condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission.
- 2.2 The development footprint is located immediately to the rear of No. 16, approximately 16m to the northwest of St Peter's Road. It consisted of a small rectangular plot, which measured approximately 6m by 2.5m. The topography within and around the site was generally flat at around 110m aOD. The underlying geology is recorded as *Cornbrash Formation* – limestone, which is overlain by *River Terrace Deposits, 1* – gravel (BGS Online Viewer).
- 2.3 The study area is located in the town of Cirencester and within Cirencester South Conservation Area. The site is situated within the Roman town walls, close to Bath Gate. The footprint of the development is located immediately to the southeast and wholly outside of the area designated as a Scheduled Monument. Previous investigations within this part of the town have indicated that Roman roads, mosaics and walls are likely to be located within very close proximity of the current development works (Darvill, T. & Gerrard, C. 1994. *Cirencester: Town and Landscape*). The site lies outside the post-Roman towns until the Post-medieval period (*ibid.*).
- 2.4 Previous archaeological watching briefs were carried out at 17 St Peter's Road in 1989 and 1991. The 1991 development (GHER 9885) revealed the upper levels of the Roman rampart at a depth of around 0.35m below the existing ground level.
- 2.5 Closer to the site, an evaluation to the rear of No. 30 St Peter's Road (GHER 22104) revealed a layer of Roman demolition debris at 0.44m (109.09m aOD) below the existing ground. This deposit was dated to 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and it was sealed by a post-Roman 'dark earth' layer.

- 2.6 Further evidence for Roman demolition deposits have been found at Nos. 18 and 9 St Peter's Road, at between 0.80m (108.14m aOD) and 0.67m (108.8m aOD) below the Modern ground surface.
- 2.7 The Ordnance Survey 3<sup>rd</sup> edition map (1898-1939) indicates that a 'Roman altar and reliefs' were found to the north of the site and, in 1905, a 'Roman bath' was found to the west.
- 2.8 The site therefore contained the potential for evidence of Roman and later activity. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of data relating to other periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits, as well as to ensure that significant archaeological remains were identified and appropriately mitigated.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
  - To attempt to characterize the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
  - Where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
  - To produce a site archive for deposition with *Corinium* Museum and to provide information for accession to the Gloucestershire County Council HER.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 All groundworks that had the potential to impact upon archaeological deposits were undertaken whilst under the constant observation of an archaeologist.
- 4.2 Where machine excavation was required, this was used only for the removal of non-significant overburden. Plant comprised a tracked 360° mini-digger, which was mostly equipped with a toothless grading bucket; although, it was necessary to utilise a toothed bucket, where Modern rubble deposits/footings were present.

- 4.3 All archaeological excavation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the approved WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The groundworks excavation area, which measured 5.70m long by 2.30m wide, was mechanically reduced to a depth of 0.40m below the Modern ground surface. A foundation trench, which was 0.40m wide, was subsequently excavated along the southwest and northwest perimeter, as shown in Figure 2. The foundation trench extended to a depth of 0.75m (108.87m aOD) below the Modern ground surface.
- 5.2 The lowest revealed deposit consisted of variable grey brown soft clay silt (103), up to 0.50m thick, which contained occasional stones and occasional fragments of brick. This was intermittently overlain by a thin layer of limestone fragments and gravel (102), up to 10m thick, which was subsequently overlain by a layer of mixed loose soil and stone (101), up to 0.15m thick. No archaeological features or finds were present within the excavated area.
- 5.3 The area reduction works partly exposed the foundation footings of the house. The lower part of the footings consisted of at least two courses of regularly shaped limestone blocks, which were bonded by a grey beige mortar. These were distinct from the overlying brick footings. It is entirely possible, although not proven, that these stones were reused Roman building materials, which were incorporated into the basal foundations for the house (Photograph 1).



Photograph 1: Partly exposed house footings showing possible reused Roman building stones

## 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The watching brief identified the presence probable Victorian / Modern made ground or in-fill, to a depth of up to 0.75m below the Modern ground surface. No archaeological features or finds were present within the monitored area. However, it should be noted that the groundworks did not reveal the entire extent of stratified deposits.
- 6.2 The excavation revealed the foundations of the rear of the property, the lower parts of which consisted of regularly shaped limestone blocks. It is possible, although not proven, that these stones were reused Roman building materials.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but it will be deposited with *Corinium* Museum, in due course. A digital report/archive will also be submitted to OASIS/ADS. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal.

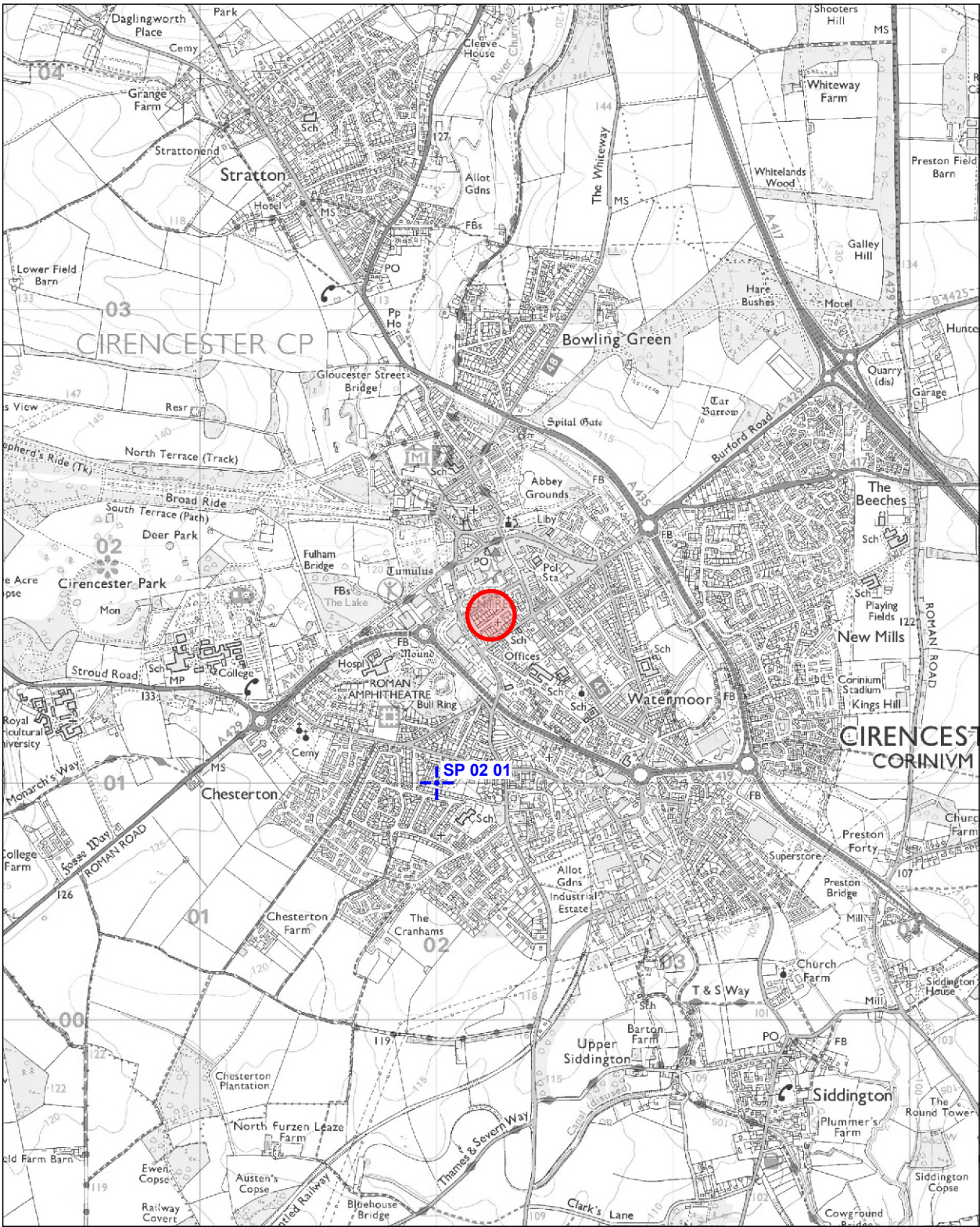
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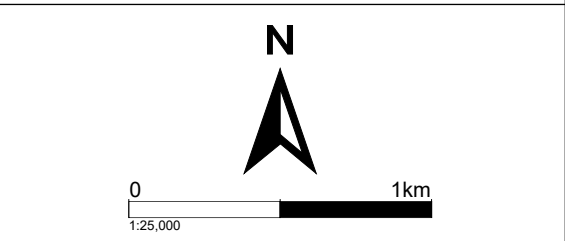
## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Rachel Foster of Gloucestershire County Council, Mr and Mrs Simpson, along with the groundworkers for their help during the course of the project.

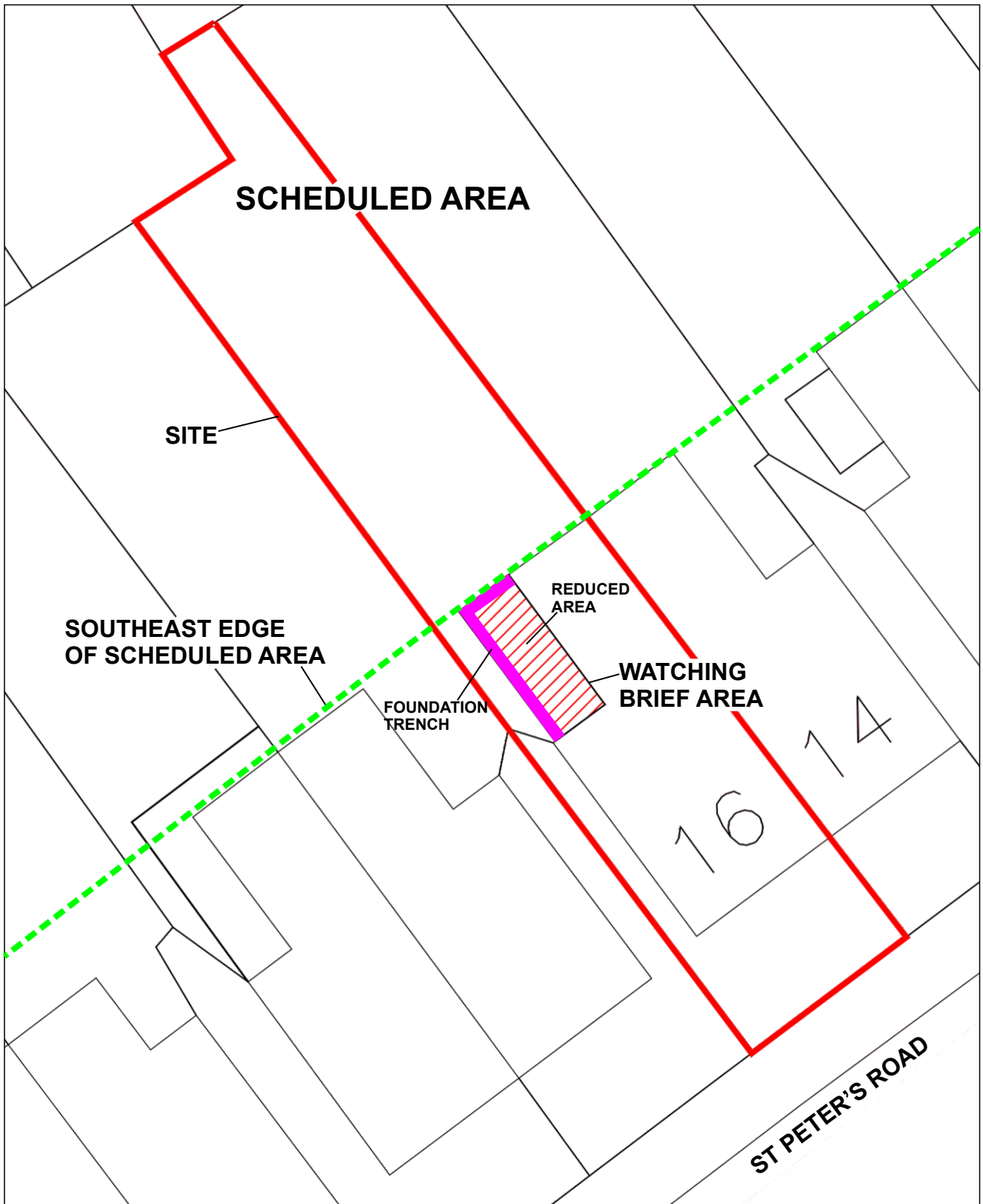


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**Site Code: SPC23**  
**Accession Code: tbc**



**FIGURE 1: Site Location**



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**Site Code: SPC23**  
**Accession Code: tbc**

N

0 10m  
1:200

**FIGURE 2: Site Plan**