

**Watermoor Flood Defence  
Cirencester  
Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief



*for*  
**The Environment Agency**

CA Project: 3975  
CA Report: 12355

December 2012

# Watermoor Flood Defence Cirencester Gloucestershire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

CA Project: 3975  
CA Report: 12355

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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Watermoor Flood Defence  
**Location:** Cirencester, Gloucestershire  
**NGR:** SP 0310 0129  
**Type:** Watching Brief  
**Date:** 13 November – 12 December 2012  
**SMC:** S00019338  
**Location of Archive:** To be deposited with Corinium Museum  
**Site Code:** WTM 12

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with construction of flood defences at Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the post-medieval/modern period was recovered.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2012 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for the Environment Agency at Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 0310 0129; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a requirement of the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) granted by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (ref. S00019338; dated 24 November 2011) for construction of flood defence works within the site. The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the SMC and with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2012) and approved by Hugh Beamish, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage South-West Region. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (Gloucestershire County Council 1996), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006). It was monitored by Hugh Beamish.

### ***The site***

1.3 The proposed flood defences route runs for approximately 170m, and involves construction of a clay flood bank north of, and brick flood walls south of, City Bank Road, Cirencester. The site is located adjacent to the canalised course of the River Churn, and includes an area of communal open ground in the northern part of the site adjacent to a recreation ground and allotment gardens. The area was formally part of a wider network of watermeadows, but is now largely scrub (CA 2011, 9). The site also encompasses areas of garden adjoining properties at The Willows, City Bank Road.

1.4 The natural substrate is mapped as mudstone of the Forest Marble Formation of the Jurassic Period. Superficial deposits comprising alluvial clay, sand, silt and gravel may also be present (BGS 2012). The natural geological substrate was not



encountered during the course of the watching brief, due to the relatively shallow depth of all four excavated areas. The site is relatively flat and lies at approximately 105m AOD (Fig. 2).

### **Archaeological background**

- 1.5 The development area lies within the Scheduled Monument of the Roman Town of *Corinium* (county ref. GC 361). Archaeological interest in the site arises from its location immediately adjacent to the south-eastern confines of the defensive circuit of the Roman town and its Silchester Gate. Elsewhere in Cirencester the town defences have been well defined and comprise an earth bank and stone wall, a berm, and in places two external ditches. However, in the study area the town defences appear to be less elaborate, comprising a narrow stone wall and single external ditch, augmented by the naturally marshy conditions in the vicinity (CA 2011, 2).
- 1.6 Previous archaeological investigations within the northern part of the site suggest that the area north of City Bank Road was located within the Roman town walls but was not settled in the Roman period (CAT 1990). Instead, the northern part of the site remained as an area of low-lying river valley until the alteration of the River Churn's course which led to the formation of marshland. These waterlogged conditions indicate a high potential for well-preserved organic remains at depth, and Roman organic remains have previously been recorded in the site vicinity (op. cit., 10).
- 1.7 The projected course of two Roman trackways cross the northernmost field in which the clay bund will be sited. A watching brief to the west of this area recorded a possible Roman trackway at a depth of c. 0.8m below ground level (BGL), orientated on a south-west to north-east alignment which could potentially extend into the northern part of the site. A Roman causeway to the east of this was revealed at a depth of c.1.4m BGL, also orientated on a south-west to north-east alignment, and could potentially extend into the central part of the site (CA 2011, 12).
- 1.8 The site of a medieval mill, Langley's Mill, is recorded immediately west of the site. The exact location of the medieval mill is not known, although it is likely to have stood in the vicinity of the current Brambles Mill i.e. immediately west of the proposed line of the flood defences north of City Bank Road. A medieval stone



culvert and the former course of the River Churn were recorded in the vicinity of the northern and central part of the site. There is potential for unrecorded medieval structural remains to occur within the site, and for waterlogged medieval remains and deposits associated with the former watercourse (CA 2011, 15).

- 1.9 In that part of the site closest to City Bank Road it is very likely that *in situ* remains of the Roman town wall survive. There is no detailed record of the 1966 excavations within the site, although the remains of the Roman wall were described as 1m deep and 3m wide. From excavations elsewhere on the town defences, the *in situ* remains of the town wall may consist of coursed stone work and dressed stone at between 1.0m-1.5m below the material of the Roman bank (CA 2011, 2).
- 1.10 Excavation immediately outside the town walls recorded no defensive features or evidence of wall collapse; instead, an alluvial sequence containing Roman material (charcoal, Roman pottery and tile) was recorded at The Gables suggesting running water below the town walls (CAT 1996). It is possible these deposits relate to waste deposited outside the Roman town walls. A Romano-British ditch was recorded within the southern part of the site at The Willows within the marshy ground outside the town wall. A compacted gravel overlay the ditch and was perhaps linked to Roman attempts at consolidating the wet ground south of the town wall. Excavations 200m east of the site recorded a late Roman cultivation soil suggesting the area immediately outside the town walls was suitable for agricultural use by the Late Roman period (CA 2011).

### **Methodology**

- 1.11 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2012) and was targeted in areas where a high potential for archaeological remains was likely and where these remains would be significantly affected by development. The extent of watching brief areas was determined in consultation with Hugh Beamish, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage South-West Region. An archaeologist was present during all significant intrusive groundworks. This comprised machine excavation of a shallow trench within the field immediately north of City Bank Road, and deeper hand and machine-excavated trenches within gardens to the south of City Bank Road (Fig. 2).



- 1.12 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.13 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 which have been retained will be deposited with the Corinium Museum, Cirencester, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## **2. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)**

- 2.1 The natural geological substrate was not encountered within trenches 1 to 3 and area 4, due to the relatively shallow depth of groundworks. No features or deposits of significant archaeological interest were observed, and despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefacts pre-dating the post-medieval/modern period was recovered. Modern services and structures were encountered in trenches 1 and 2.

### **Trench 1**

- 2.2 At the limit of excavation, at 0.65m below present ground level (bpgl) a pale grey-brown silty clay 104 was encountered. The deposit, which appeared to be of alluvial origin, yielded no artefacts and remains undated. It was overlain by an uncompacted brown silty clay humic topsoil 103, 0.3m in thickness, containing a range of modern artefacts (not retained). An overlying dump deposit of ash and cinders 102, 0.2m in thickness, was sealed by a 0.1m thick layer of modern topsoil 101.

### **Trench 2**

- 2.3 Pale grey-brown, charcoal-flecked, silty clay 203 was encountered at the limit of excavation at 0.7m bpgl. A sherd of post-medieval pottery (not retained) noted on the surface of this deposit may be intrusive. It was sealed by a grey sandy clay soil, 0.2m thickness, containing modern artefacts (not retained) and was in turn overlain by 0.35m of modern topsoil 201.





### Trench 3

- 2.4 Modern topsoil 301 was noted at the limit of excavation at 0.5m bpgl. Construction trench 302 cut the topsoil and contained foundations, 303, that were approximately 7.5m in length, >0.55m in width and had a visible height 0.35m. Aligned north-west/south-east they were constructed from roughly dressed limestone blocks, reused, unfrogged red brick and concrete pieces. Topsoil and 303 were covered by modern turf 300.

### Area 4

- 2.5 At the limit of excavation, at 0.1m bpgl, modern topsoil 301 was encountered.
- 2.6 Three pieces of worked limestone were recovered as unstratified finds from within a dump of soil and vegetation on a concrete hardstanding immediately inside the entrance to the northernmost field. The pieces include a fragment of window moulding and stylistically all appear to be of post-medieval/modern date. Although the medieval and later site of Langley's Mill lies close to their point of discovery the derivation of these stone fragments remains uncertain.

## 3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area, the watching brief identified no archaeological features, with the exception of modern services and structures, within the area of observed groundworks. In this respect the results are comparable with those from a watching brief at 2 The Willows which recorded only modern disturbance to a depth of 0.45m bpgl (GCC 2001, 4).
- 3.2 The absence of Roman artefacts and of archaeological deposits demonstrably of Roman date may indicate that structural remains associated with the Roman town defences either do not extend as far as, or were not exposed by, the flood defence works or that they have been removed by previous development south of City Bank Road at The Willows. Previous archaeological investigations in the site vicinity suggest that a later Roman widening of the town walls does not appear to have occurred in the site vicinity, probably due to the marshy conditions outside the town walls which augmented the man-made defences (CA 2011). However, alluvial silty



clay deposits encountered throughout trenches 1 and 2 at the limit of excavation, at approximately 0.65 to 0.7m bpgl, appeared comparable in depth and composition to silts containing Roman artefacts at 0.43 to 0.64m bpgl encountered 50m east of the site during evaluation at The Gables (CAT 1996). It is conceivable that these silts, noted at the limit of excavation and consequently uninvestigated, may represent the accumulation of flood deposits outside of the town wall during or after the Roman period.

- 3.3 The fragments of worked limestone recovered from within a dump of soil and tree branches above the concrete hardstanding in the northernmost field appear to be of post-medieval or later date and of unknown derivation. The humic topsoil, 103, encountered in trench 1 is likely to relate to the site's use as a nursery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (CAT 1990b).

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Alistair Barber, Jamie Wright and Daniel Sausins. The report was written by Alistair Barber and Daniel Sausins. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive has been compiled by Alistair Barber and Daniel Sausins, and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

#### 5. REFERENCES

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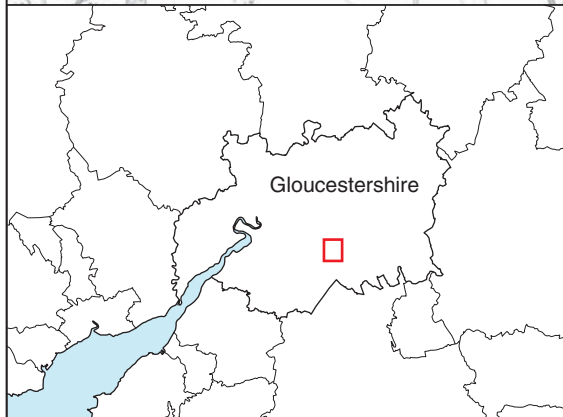
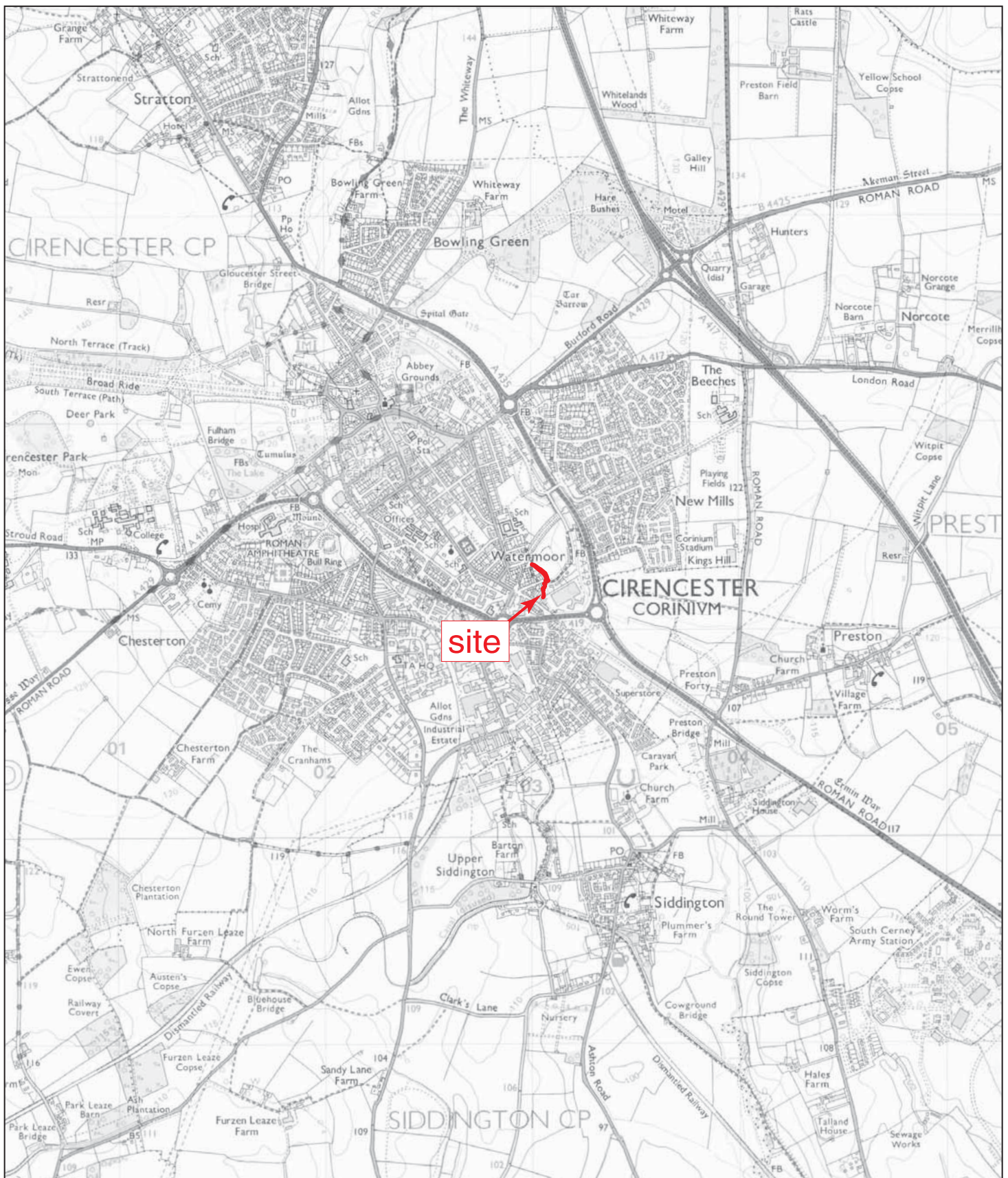


## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth /thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	101	Layer		topsoil	Brown clay-silt			0.1	
1	102	Layer		dump deposit	Ash and cinders			0.2	
1	103	Layer		dump deposit	Brown silt-clay			0.3	
1	104	Layer		alluvium	Grey-brown silt-clay			>0.04	
2	201	Layer		topsoil	Brown clay-silt			0.35	
2	202	Layer		subsoil	Grey sand-clay			0.2	
2	203	Layer		alluvium	Grey-brown silt-clay			>0.15	
3	300	Layer		turf	Mid grey-brown organic turf			0.17	
3	301	Layer		topsoil	Dark brown-black loamy clay			0.31	
3	302	Cut		construction trench	Steep sides		0.65	>0.35	
3	303	Masonry	302	foundations	Concrete, brick and limestone		0.55	>0.35	
3	304	Fill	302	backfill	Mid brown-grey gritty silt clay		0.2	>0.35	
4	400	Layer		topsoil	Mid brown loamy clay			>0.1	
4	401	Layer		disturbed topsoil	Mid brown-black loamy clay with modern rubble			>0.1	

**APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Watermoor Flood Defence, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with construction of flood defences at Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire.  No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the post-medieval/modern period was recovered.	
Project dates	November-December	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	Field evaluation (CAT 1990) Watching Brief (GCC 2001) Desk Based Assessment (CA 2011)	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	0.12ha	
Site co-ordinates	SP 0310 0129	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	English heritage	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Alistair Barber, Jamie Wright and Daniel Sausins	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>	none	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	none	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Corinium Museum	Worked stone
Paper	Corinium Museum	Trench Recording Forms, Photographic Registers
Digital	Corinium Museum	Digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 <i>Watermoor Flood Defence, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report <b>12355</b>		



site



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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Watermoor Flood Defence, Cirencester  
 Gloucestershire

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan

PROJECT NO. 3975	DATE 18-12-2012	FIGURE NO.
DRAWN BY LG	REVISION 00	1
APPROVED BY PJM	SCALE@A4 1:25,000	

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3



4

3 View of Area 4, showing completed groundworks, looking north-west

4 View of Area 4, showing completed groundworks, looking north



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PROJECT TITLE

Watermoor Flood Defence, Cirencester  
 Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.

3 & 4