

**14 Minerva Court
Cirencester
Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Oakley Planning & Conservation Ltd
on behalf of
Mrs J. Mahon


CA Project: 3996
CA Report: 13101

May 2013

14 Minerva Court
Cirencester
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

CA Project: 3996
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date	9 May 2013
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Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)

Fig. 2 The site, showing location of groundworks (1:1000)



SUMMARY

Project Name: 14 Minerva Court
Location: Cirencester, Gloucestershire
NGR: SP 0253 0169
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 12 March 2013
SMC: S00048210
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Corinium Museum
Site Code: MVA 13

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with construction of a conservatory at 14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, however several sherds of residual Roman pottery and Roman ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from modern deposits.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2013 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Oakley Planning and Conservation on behalf of Mrs J. Mahon at 14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 0253 0169; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the construction of a conservatory. The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.
- 1.2 The programme of archaeological works was undertaken to fulfil condition 'e' attached to a letter (ref S00048210 dated 4 October 2012) from Ms Charlotte Long, English Heritage, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), granting Scheduled Monument Consent for the erection of a conservatory.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2012) and followed the *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2009), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (GCC 1996) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991), the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).
- The site**
- 1.3 The site measures approximately 84m² and is located to the south-east of the centre of modern Cirencester. It comprises the garden to the rear of the existing residential property. The property itself lies within Minerva Court and is surrounded by further residential properties, gardens and access roads. The rear garden lies at approximately 111m AOD.
- 1.4 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as Cornbrash Formation Limestone of the Jurassic Era, overlain by superficial deposits of river terrace gravel of the Quaternary Era. The natural substrate was not encountered during groundworks.



Archaeological background

- 1.5 The development area is sited in an area of high archaeological potential that falls within a notification area of Scheduled Monument Glos. 361 (*Corinium* Roman Town). In particular, it lies within *insula II* (see Fig. 2) which is located immediately to the south-west of *insula I* which contained the basilica and forum (Holbrook and Salvatore 1998, Fig. 6). The southern part of *insula II*, to the south of the development area, is thought to contain a *macellum* (a covered market trading in meat, fish, fruit vegetables and bread (Wacher 1961, 9)). The northern part of *insula II* (where the development area is located) is thought to contain the remains of a bathhouse (Holbrook 1998, 188 and Fig. 82). Archaeological watching brief undertaken during the construction on Minerva Court identified walls and surfaces (Wilkinson 1987) consistent with this proposal, which is also supported by antiquarian evidence including the discovery of a fine sculptured torso of Minerva (Henig 1993 no. 85) 30m to the north-east of the development area (Holbrook 1998, Fig. 82).
- 1.6 Within the northern part of *insula II* Roman deposits have been identified at depths of 3ft to 4ft (0.9m to 1.2m) (Brown 1969, 229). This is consistent with results from Coach House Mews where archaeological evaluation identified pennant sandstone courtyard surfacing associated with the forum at 0.8m to 1m below present ground level (107.67m to 107.84m AOD). Again these results are consistent with previous observations within the forum (CA 2004).

Archaeological objectives

- 1.7 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

Methodology

- 1.8 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2012). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising the excavation



down to 0.4m below present ground level (bpgl) for a raft foundation within the area shown in Fig. 2.

- 1.9 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.10 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 will be deposited with Corinium Museum 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)

- 2.1 A dark brownish grey sandy silt, 103, containing fragments of modern ceramic building material (CBM) and residual Roman CBM and pottery, was revealed at an average depth of 0.25m below present ground level. This was overlain by a thin layer of light grey silty sand, 102, averaging 0.05m in thickness which contained a small quantity of modern pottery. This was sealed by 0.15m of light greyish yellow sand and gravel bedding 101. Covering the majority of 101 were concrete paving slabs 100, apart from in the eastern part of the trench where a topsoil border, 104, was present.
- 2.2 No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks.

The Finds

- 2.3 Artefactual material was recorded from two deposits; the largest quantities from layer 103 (appendix B).
- 2.4 Pottery and ceramic building material of Roman type were recorded together with modern pottery and glass from deposit 103. The condition of the Roman material is good, with minimal abrasion apparent. This being the case, the presence from deposit 103, in quantity, of later post-medieval/modern pottery and other material (glass, clay pipe), is perhaps indicative of recent disturbance of Roman horizons.



- 2.5 The Roman pottery from deposit 103 comprises mainly coarsewares of types commonly identified from Cirencester (Appendix B: table 2). Traded ware types include finewares from Oxfordshire and Lower Nene valley (Cambridgeshire) and coarsewares from Oxfordshire, Dorset and the east Midlands. Continental imports are present as samian vessels representative of each of the main Gaulish manufacturing regions. The majority of the pottery, including most or all of the regionally-traded wares, dates to the later Roman period, after *c.* AD 250. The presence of a sherd of east midlands type shell-tempered ware, indicates activity continuing into the second half of the 4th century. In common with the Roman pottery, the ceramic building material is not well broken up, or excessively abraded. Most material occurs in a similar, pale orange-firing and lightly medium fine fabric of a type common from Cirencester. Box flue tiles appear to be common, all with combed 'keying'. Roofing tiles (*tegula/imbrex*) are present only rarely.
- 2.6 A single medieval sherd was noted from deposit 103. This is of a local oolitic limestone-tempered coarseware type, which is abundant from medieval deposits in Cirencester and usually dated to the 11th to 13th centuries. The remainder of the post-Roman pottery all consists of unglazed orange-firing 'garden wares', of the type common from the later 18th century onwards. The quantities of clear window glass and green bottle glass from deposit 103 are of similar date.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above) the watching brief identified no archaeological deposits or features within the area of observed groundworks. However, the presence of residual Roman pottery and CBM within deposit 103 may indicate that archaeological deposits of this date have been disturbed in the recent past and survive below the formation level.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Tom Weavill who also wrote the report. The finds report was written by Ed McSloy. The illustrations were prepared by Jon Bennett.

The archive has been compiled by Tom Weavill, and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Laurent Coleman

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	100	Masonry		Surface	Concrete paving slabs	>3	>2.5	0.05	
1	101	Layer		Made ground	Light greyish-yellow sand and gravel bedding for 100	>3	>2.5	0.15	
1	102	Layer		Made ground	Light grey silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions	>3	>2.5	0.05	C18-C19
1	103	Layer		Made ground	Dark brownish-grey sandy silt with occasional modern CBM fragments	>3	>2.5	>0.20	C18-C19
1	104	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey silty clay garden soil above 101 in NE of trench	>3	1.0	0.15	

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Table 1: finds concordance

Context	Description	Count	Weight(g)	Spot-date
102	Modern pottery: unglazed earthenware (flowerpot)	2	10	C18-C19
103	Roman CBM*: imbrex; flue tile; tegula; misc	31	42	C18-C19
	Clay tobacco pipe	1	2	
	Post-medieval/modern glass: window glass; vessel glass	7	21	
	Animal bone			
	Roman pottery: EGSA; LEZ SA2; LGF SA; OXF WH; OXF RS; LOC GW; HAR SH; DOR BB1; LOC OX	2	131	
	Medieval pottery: oolitic limestone tempered	16	373	
	Post-medieval/modern pottery: unglazed earthenware (flowerpot)	1	4	
	Post-medieval/modern pottery: unglazed earthenware (flowerpot)	16	164	
	Roofing slate	1	5	

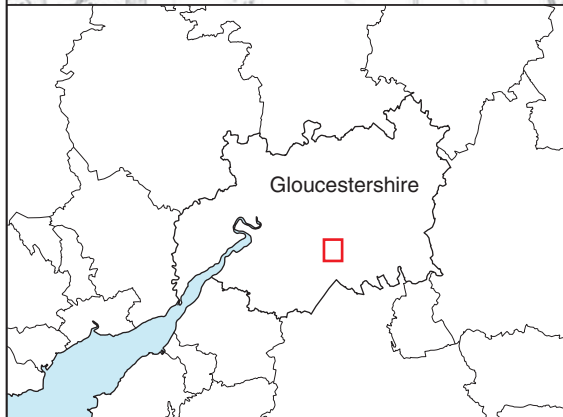
Table 2: Roman pottery summary (all deposit 103)

Type	Description	Count	Weight(g)	Notes
LOC GW	North Wilts greywares	3	32	Necked jars
LOC BS	Black sandy (Ciren 5)	1	22	
LOC OX	North Wilts oxidised	1	3	Beaker/small jar
HAR SH*	Midlands/Harrod shelly	1	20	jar
DOR BB1*	Dorset Black-burnished ware	1	10	
LNV CC*	Lower Nene colour-coated	1	6	rouletted beaker
OXF GW	Oxfordshire greyware	1	22	Necked jar
OXF WH*	Oxfordshire whiteware	1	122	
OXF RS*	Oxfordshire red-slipped	2	13	mortarium
LGF SA*	South Gaulish samian	1	6	
LEZ SA2*	Central Gaulish samian	1	33	Drag 33 cup
EGSA	East Gaulish samian	2	84	Drag 37; Drag 38 bowls
		16	373	

* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes (Tomber and Dore 1998)

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with construction of a conservatory at 14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire.</p> <p>No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, however several sherds of residual Roman pottery and Roman ceramic building material (CBM) were recovered from modern deposits.</p>	
Project dates	12 March 2013	
Project type	Watching brief	
Previous work	None	
Future work		
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	84m ²	
Site co-ordinates	SP 0253 0169	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Laurent Coleman	
Project Supervisor	Tom Weavill	
MONUMENT TYPE		
	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Corinium Museum	Pottery, glass, CBM
Paper	Corinium Museum	Trench sheet
Digital	Corinium Museum	Digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 <i>14 Minerva Court, Cirencester, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i>. CA typescript report 13101</p>		



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PROJECT TITLE

14 Minerva Court, Cirencester
Gloucestershire

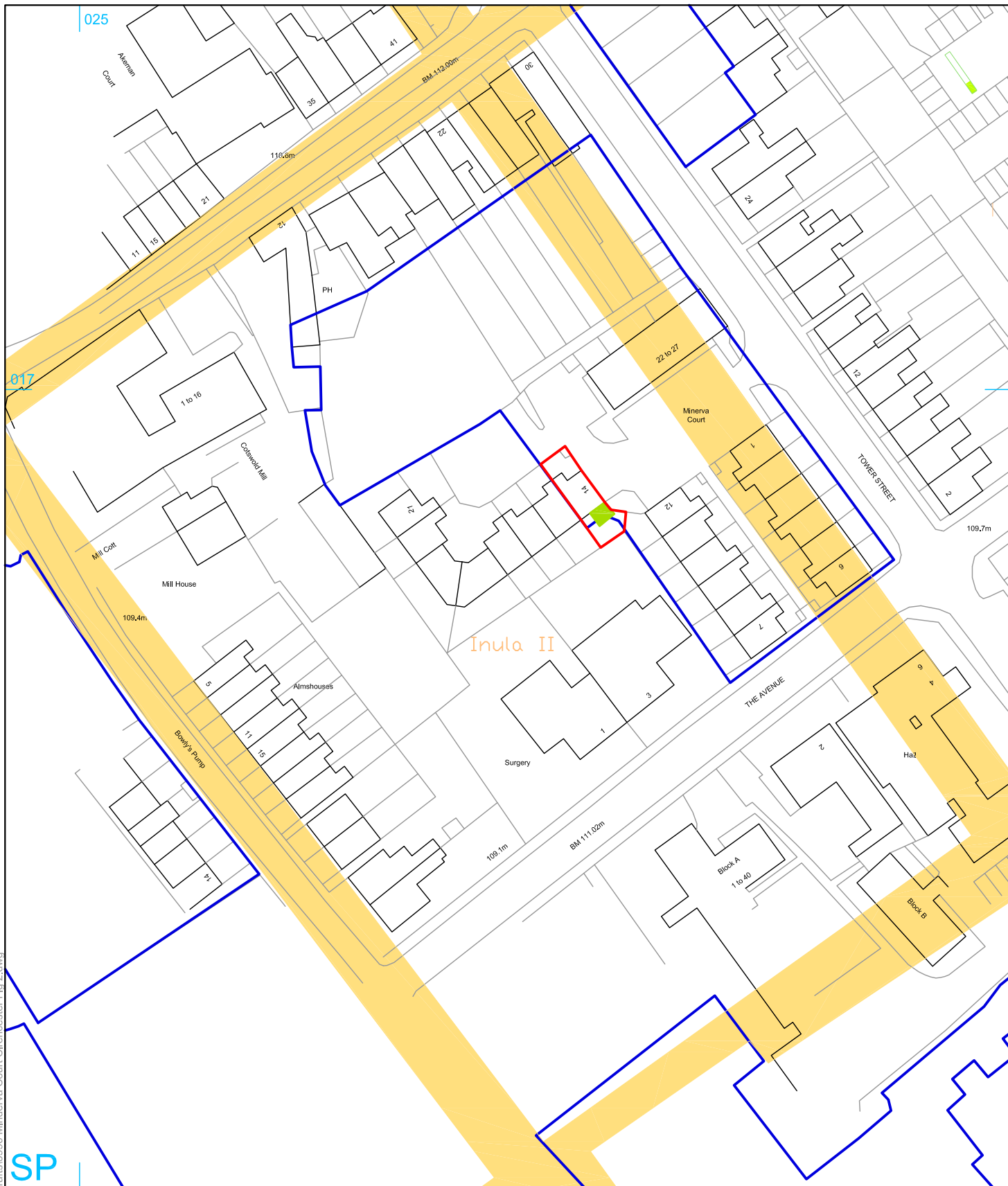
FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

PROJECT NO. 3996 DATE 22-03-2013
DRAWN BY JB REVISION 00
APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:25,000


FIGURE NO.


1



SP

- site
- location of groundworks
- Scheduled Monument
- projected Roman street plan







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PROJECT TITLE
 14 Minerva Court, Cirencester
 Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE
 The site, showing location of
 groundworks

PROJECT NO. 3996	DATE 24-04-2013	FIGURE NO.
DRAWN BY JB	REVISION 00	
APPROVED BY PJM	SCALE@A4 1:1000	2

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