

**15, Somerset Place  
Bath  
Bath and North East Somerset**

*Archaeological Watching Brief*



*for*  
Liz Harrison

*on behalf of*  
Mr and Mrs R. Skelt

CA Project: 5610  
CA Report: 15739

October 2015



15, SOMERSET PLACE  
 BATH  
 BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Archaeological Watching Brief

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## SUMMARY

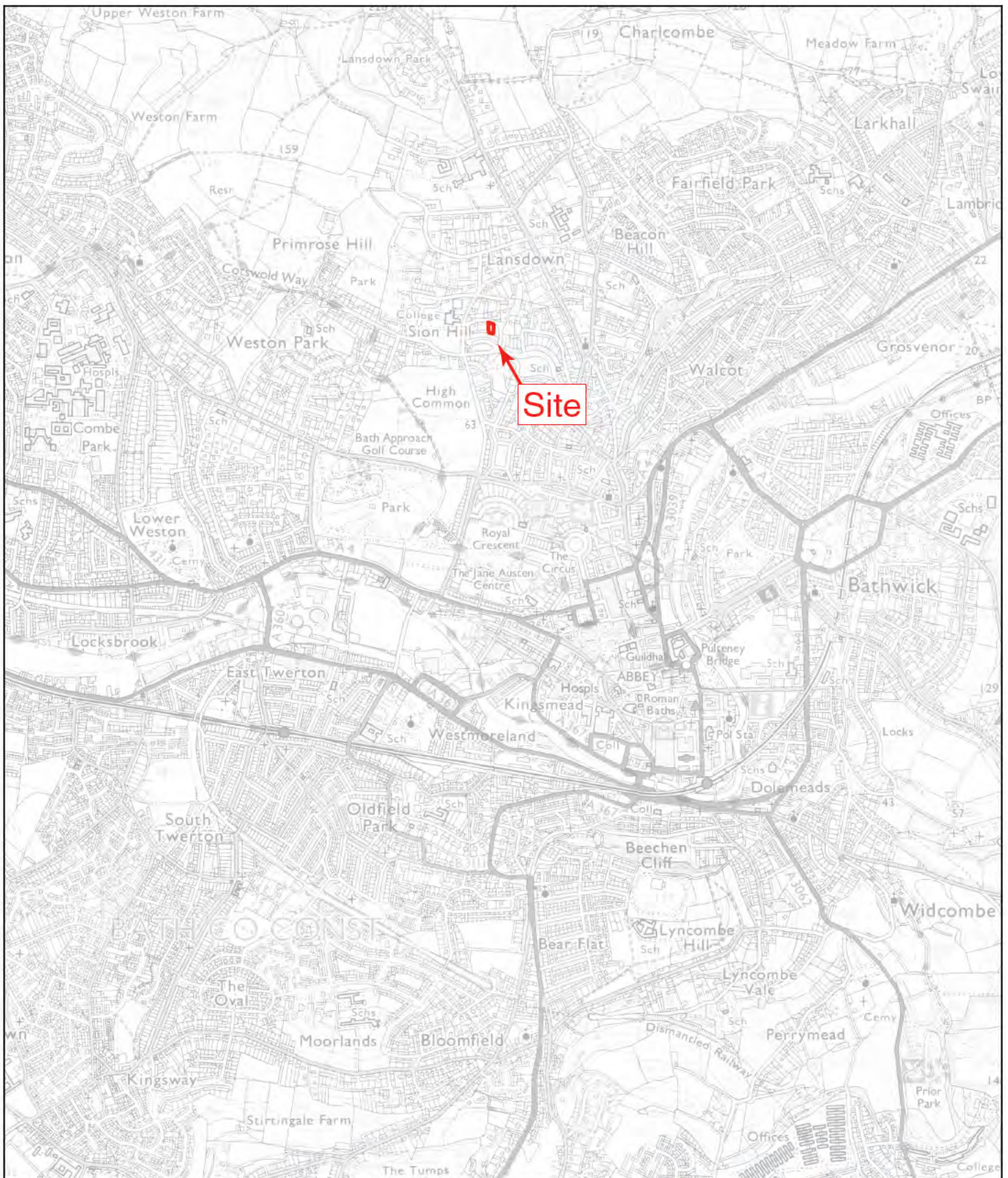
<b>Project Name:</b>	15, Somerset Place
<b>Location:</b>	Bath, Bath and North East Somerset
<b>NGR:</b>	ST 74428 66105
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date:</b>	18 September 2015
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	07/03377/FUL
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with The Roman Baths Museum, Bath
<b>Accession Number:</b>	BATRM 2013. 9
<b>Site Code:</b>	BSP 14

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with renewal of the garden at the rear of 15, Somerset Place after major refurbishment of the house.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest older than the construction of the crescent in 1790-1821 were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

The gardens behind the crescent were laid out on a steep slope and some were terraced into it. No evidence of such terracing was seen in No. 15. This was typical of most of the gardens which followed the natural gradient, with just one low retaining wall at the foot of the garden. This is how the gardens are represented in the earliest reliable plan of the gardens, the first edition OS 25" mapping of 1886.





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**PROJECT TITLE**

15 Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset

**FIGURE TITLE**

Site location plan

0 1km

Reproduced from the 2004 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeology Ltd 100002109

DRAWN BY JB PROJECT NO. 3573  
 CHECKED BY PD DATE 20/03/2015  
 APPROVED BY MC SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2015 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Liz Harrison Garden and Landscape Design on behalf of Mr and Mrs R. Skelt at 15 Somerset Place, Bath (centred on NGR: ST 74428 66105; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken as part of a long term monitoring programme to fulfil a condition (number 7) attached to a planning consent for groundworks relating to the reconstruction and redesign of the rear garden of the Grade I Listed house (Planning ref: 07/03377/FUL). The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.
- 1.2 The crescent was very badly damaged during the 1942 air raids on Bath and externally restored. The entire crescent then became part of the educational establishment that became Bath Spa University. This has now been sold off to a private developer, who has restored the surviving original houses (approximately half of the crescent survived the destruction, including no. 15) and fitted out the shells of those reconstructed after bombing as flats.
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of Richard Sermon, the Bath and North East Somerset Archaeological Officer, which were incorporated in condition 7 of the planning consent and with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2012) and approved by the LPA acting on the advice of Mr Sermon. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2009) 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**

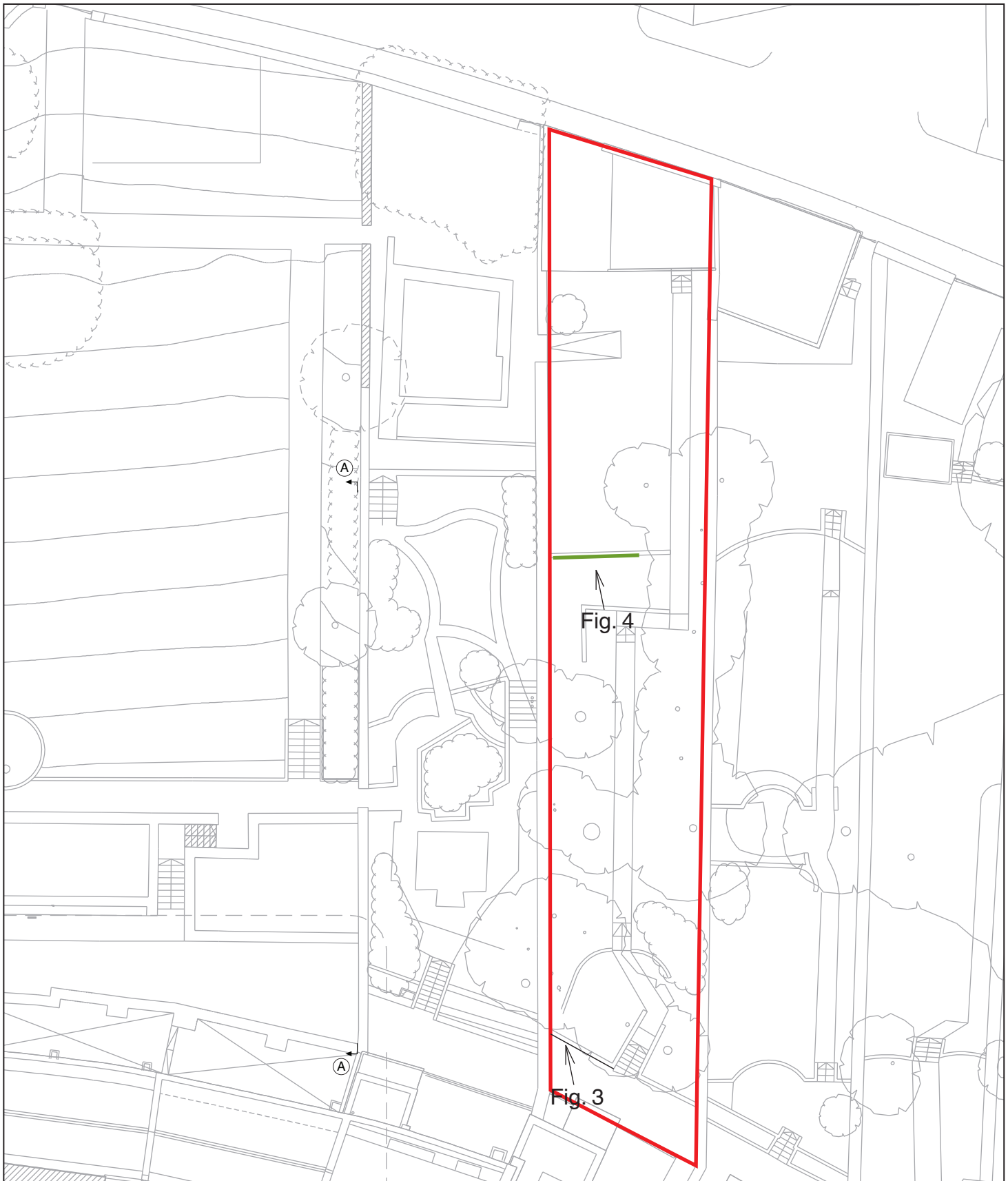
- 1.4 The site is a long and relatively narrow walled garden rising up the slope at the rear of the Grade 1 Listed house (Fig. 2), one of nine surviving Georgian houses in a crescent otherwise almost destroyed in the 1942 bombing raids. The façades of the destroyed houses were rebuilt in replica in the 1950s with modern structures behind. The site lies roughly half way up the south-facing valley side of the Avon between 107.5m and 116m AOD (the river is at approximately 16m AOD). The southern retaining wall sits at the northern edge of a major negative terrace containing the





basements of the Listed house. The steep slope continues south of the broad pavement in front of the crescent (supported by vaulted cellars) in a steep private garden. The ground also drops away to the west where St Winifred's Lane follows the shallow combe formed by an old, now culverted, stream.

- 1.5 The site is a parallelogram of c. 350m<sup>2</sup> and was until recently a private garden, with flower beds, and winding paths, It had been extensively altered since its mapping in 1886.
- 1.6 The geology of the Avon Valley is complex but the site falls wholly on the underlying Bridport Sand Formation, a sedimentary sandstone bedrock formed approximately 176 to 183 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. These rocks were formed in shallow seas with mainly siliciclastic sediments (comprising fragments or clasts of silicate minerals) deposited as mud, silt, sand and gravel. This formation is locally and previously termed the Midford Sands, as they are here essentially a sandy, not a rocky deposit. This deposit was seen immediately under the topsoil in the three areas where the ground was disturbed for shallow footings to low bed-retaining walls.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The garden was laid out in approximately 1820 when this end of the crescent was completed, and was first mapped in reliable detail in 1886 (OS 1886, see Fig. 11 in Ross 2006). Little was left of the early layout except the stone boundary walls which have been partly rebuilt recently.
- 1.7 Roman and Iron Age archaeological remains have been noted in an arc on the north and north-west side of the site, but beyond the boundary. The most prominent of these are the remains of an extensive but scattered Roman inhumation cemetery. This essentially defines Archaeological Character Zone 29, Sion Hill, in the BANES Supplementary Planning Guidance (BANES c. 2004). Evidence that the cemetery extended as far as the site is limited to the re-use of a coffin in the garden wall of 16 Somerset Place, and another used as a garden ornament in the garden of one of the modern houses at the rear of 5 and 6 Somerset Place. It is presumed that these were found during the original building works, but they may have come from further north. The closest burials recorded *in situ* were in the garden of the Hermitage,



-  site boundary
-  area of observed groundworks
-  service trench
-  Photo viewpoint



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15 Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset

**FIGURE TITLE**

The site, showing location of groundworks



west-north-west of the site (found 1808: BANES UAD and OS mapping), and at the east end of Hermitage Road, north-west of the site in 1998 (BAT archive, Roman Baths Museum), both approximately 120m away. Structural remains of Roman date have been noted at the west end of Hermitage Road.

- 4.1 Winifred's Well, a presumed medieval holy well, is located on the western edge of the Crescent over a natural spring and may have been associated with a chapel. Its location near to Roman remains may also be significant.

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 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.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

#### *Methodology*

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2012). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks. These comprised removing retaining walls and their footings to allow the construction of new retaining walls on the same sites, removing stone steps (to be reinstated) and the construction of a shallow electricity and water pipe trench along the western side of the garden (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2013).

## 5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)

- 5.1 There were only three areas of disturbance to be monitored (Fig. 2). The first was the site of a low retaining wall which was removed and rebuilt at the foot of the garden, at the northern edge of a small paved yard, next to the house.
- 5.3 This revealed a 0.6m tall face of Midford sand that had been cut away on the east and the cut filled with a loose, very clean deposit of coarse limestone gravel and coarse sand (Fig. 3). This gravel appeared to be a dumped layer, but the origin of the cut was unclear. Given the exposure of brash seen in the second exposure (below 5.4), this may be a glacial erosion event. Both the sand and the gravel were covered by a mid grey-brown clayey loam.
- 5.4 Further up the slope two further shallow terraces were cut for low bed-retaining walls (Fig. 2). These revealed what appeared to be the brash over the inferior oolite, 0.5m below garden surface. If so this is a little lower down the hillside than expected, but would provide a source of the gravel seen in the first exposure. It was overlain by a mid grey-brown clayey loam, above which was the present garden soil (Fig. 4).



Figure 3. Exposure at south end of garden, looking N, scales 1m

5.5 No artefacts of any kind were seen in any of the excavated areas.

## 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above), the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits and the presence of the buried clay loam horizon, suggests that this part of the hillside remained as pasture and possible arable at times, for the bulk of its history, until development and the laying out of gardens in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Roman cemetery may well be restricted to an area north of Somerset Lane



Figure 4. Exposure near centre of garden, looking N, scales 1m

## 7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Davenport. The report was written by Peter Davenport. The illustrations were prepared by Peter Davenport. The archive has been compiled by Peter Davenport, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Simon Cox.

## 8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer*  
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 15th September  
2015

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2007 *Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset:  
Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief and Historic  
Building Recording*



**APPENDIX A: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	15, Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset: Archaeological Watching Brief	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with renewal of the garden at the rear of 15, Somerset Place after major refurbishment of the house. No features or deposits of archaeological interest older than the construction of the crescent in 1790-1821 were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered. The gardens behind the crescent were laid out on a steep slope and some were terraced into it. No evidence of such terracing was seen in No. 15. This was typical of most of the gardens which followed the natural gradient, with just one low retaining wall at the foot of the garden. This is how the gardens are represented in the earliest reliable plan of the gardens, the first edition OS 25" mapping of 1886	
Project dates	18 September 2015	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	WB	
Previous work	None on site. WB on buildings and adjacent garden by CA 2014	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	15, Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)		
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	ST 74428 66105	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Simon Cox	
Project Supervisor	Peter Davenport	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>		
<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		
Paper	Roman Baths Museum, Bath	
Digital	Roman Baths Museum, Bath	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA 2015 15, Somerset Place, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset: Archaeological Watching Brief Typescript report <b>15739</b>		

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