

Land off Bowling Green Lane Cirencester Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
CgMs Consulting

CA Project: 5742
CA Report: 16024

January 2015



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Cirencester
Gloucestershire

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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	15 January 2016	Christopher Leonard	Cliff Bateman	Internal review		

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land off Bowling Green Lane
Location:	Cirencester, Gloucestershire
NGR:	SP 02275 03135
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	11–13 January 2016
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Corinium Museum
Site Code:	BOWL 16

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in January 2016 on land off Bowling Green Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Five trenches were excavated.

One ditch containing Middle to Late Iron Age pottery and two ditches dating from at least the Roman period were identified. The latter were revealed partway down the eastern slope of the Churn valley, and although their function remains unclear, the silty nature of their fills suggests that they may have been used to transport water.

On the higher, flatter ground in the central and eastern extent of the site an undated ditch was identified, along with three modern quarry pits.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2106 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for CgMs Consulting on land off Bowling Green Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 02275 03135; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken in support of a planning application that is being submitted to Cotswold District Council (CDC) for development of the site.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2016) and approved by Charles Parry, the archaeological advisor to CDC. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (Gloucestershire County Council 1995). It was monitored by Charles Parry, including a site visit on 12th January 2016.

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 4.6ha in extent and comprises agricultural land. It lies on the eastern side of a valley of the River Churn, which is located some 200m away. The eastern extent of the site comprises a flat hilltop, lying at around 130m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The western third falls steeply from east to west to 120m AOD. The north-west corner also slopes down to Lower Bowling Green Farm. The topography of the southern third has been significantly altered by quarrying.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Limestone of the Forest Marble Formation. Deposits of White Limestone Formation occur to the north and west of the study site, and a geological fault is located along the southern boundary. Alluvium and First terrace river gravels are present to the west, overlying the limestone (BGS 2016). Limestone brash was encountered at a typical depth of 0.4m below present ground level in all trenches.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The application area has been subject to an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment and to geophysical survey (CgMs 2015 and AS 2015 respectively).

- The assessment established that no archaeological heritage assets of the highest significance (designated or nationally important) are recorded within the site (CgMs 2015).
- 2.2 The site is located approximately 500m north of the Roman settlement of *Corinium* and within 400m of two known Roman roads, Ermin Street to the southwest and The Whiteway to the east, and probably formed part of the agricultural hinterland of the Roman town. The settlement of Stratton, 700m to the west on the opposite side of the valley, has Saxon origins and is known to have had two mills on the River Churn during the medieval period.
- 2.3 The assessment concluded that, based on current evidence, there was a low potential for significant prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval activity within the application area. However, it did note the current site had been subject to quarrying, which may have truncated or removed any unknown archaeological features that may have existed.
- 2.4 The preceding geophysical survey identified a linear anomaly following the contour of the site along the western side, with a possible continuation close to the southern boundary. Within the eastern part of the site it revealed a cluster of pits that may have had some association with quarrying, but were well defined and contained a moderately enhanced fill, indicative of a potential archaeological origin. Weaker and magnetically variable responses with irregular morphologies related to former quarrying were identified primarily in the north eastern part of the site. There was also evidence of relatively modern quarry infill within the south-western part of the site. Other positive linear and discrete anomalies were located; however, these lacked a coherent or well defined morphology only possibly related to cut features (AS 2015).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in accordance *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014). This information will enable CDC to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict

between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 5 trenches, each measuring 30m by 1.8m, in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). A proposed sixth trench, Trench 6, was not excavated as it was inaccessible at the time of the fieldwork. The location of Trench 1 was moved slightly to the south to avoid underground services and a large depression caused by quarrying. All changes to the methodology contained in the WSI were approved by Charles Parry. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual*.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*; no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 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 will be deposited with Corinium Museum, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix E, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.



5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-4)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A, B and C. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix C.
- 5.2 The natural geological substrate, comprising limestone brash, was encountered at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.4m in all of the trenches. With the exception of the western end of Trench 1, where a colluvial layer was present, the natural substrate was overlain by a thin subsoil layer, which was in turn sealed by up to 0.24m of topsoil.
- 5.3 Generally the correlation between the results of the evaluation and the preceding geophysical survey was very good. Ditches that were identified during the survey were recorded in Trenches 1, 3 and 4, and modern quarry pits in Trenches 2 and 3. A possible ditch suggested by the geophysics in Trench 5 could not be identified during the evaluation.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 & 3)

- 5.4 Two north-east/south-west aligned ditches were identified near the centre of the trench. Ditch 104 (Figs 2 and 3, section AA) was more than 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep with steep sides and flat base. It contained two silt fills: lower fill 105 had a higher frequency of stone inclusions and contained pottery dating to the Roman period and residual late prehistoric pottery, while upper fill 106 contained very few inclusions.
- 5.5 Ditch 105, which was cut on its south-west side by ditch 107, was 2.34m wide and 0.38m deep, also with steep sides and a flat base. The ditch contained a single silt fill, 108, which contained a moderate number of stones within the fill, mostly concentrated near the base of the feature. A sherd of Black-burnished ware, dating to the 2nd to 4th century and animal bone were recovered from the fill.

Trenches 2 and 3 (Figs 2 & 3)

- 5.6 Ditch 303 (Figs 2 and 3, section BB) was located near the north end of Trench 3 and was aligned broadly east/west. It was 0.62m wide and 0.2m deep with almost vertical sides and a flat base. The ditch contained single silt fill 304 that contained a

large proportion of stones, probably derived from weathering of the ditch sides, but from which no finds were recovered. The ditch corresponded to a short, linear geophysical anomaly, one of many such anomalies in this area of the site that had no clear function.

- 5.7 A 2.7m diameter quarry pit, 305, was identified close to the centre of Trench 3. As the pit was observed to cut through the subsoil it was determined to be modern and was not excavated. Two further large pits, 203 and 205 cutting through the subsoil in Trench 2 and were also not excavated.

Trench 4 (Figs 2 & 4)

- 5.8 Ditch 403 (Figs 2 and 4, section CC), located near the western extent of the trench on a north-east/south-west alignment, was 1.29m wide, 0.55m deep with steep sides and a flat base. The initial fill of the ditch was a grey clay deposit, 404, which was sealed by brown silt fill 405 from which Middle to Late Iron Age pottery was recovered.
- 5.9 The geophysical evidence indicates that ditch 406 was a continuation of ditch 104. Within Trench 4 it was in excess of 0.9m wide, 0.33m deep and contained a single stoney fill, 407, from which Roman pottery was recovered (Figs 2 and 4, sections DD and EE). The ditch was cut on its western side by ditch 408, which was a continuation of ditch 107 and was 1.46m wide and 0.47m deep. The ditch contained an initial stoney clay fill (409), from which Roman pottery, ceramic building material (CBM) and animal bone were recovered. This was covered by two successive silt fills (410 and 411) from which Roman pottery and CBM were recovered.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 Artefactual material recovered during the evaluation was recorded from seven deposits. This material dates to the Iron Age and Roman periods. Quantities of the artefact types recovered are given in Appendix B. The pottery has been recorded according to sherd count/weight per fabric. Where possible, Roman fabric codes are equated to the Cirencester pottery type series as defined by Rigby (1982); where applicable National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes are also given in Appendix B (Tomber and Dore 1998).

Pottery

Late Prehistoric

- 6.2 Pottery of this date range (which spans the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age) totals four unfeathered bodysherds (15g) from fill 105 of ditch 104 and fill 405 within ditch 403. The sherds from the former deposit are residual alongside Roman pottery. Although the average sherd weight of 4g is low, suggesting a high degree of fragmentation, condition is moderate to good in terms of edge abrasion and surface preservation.
- 6.3 Represented fabrics comprise types with flint (FL), calcite (CAL), oolitic limestone (LS) and quartz, quartzite and organic material (QQO) as the main inclusion. In the absence of form or decoration dating to the Middle to Late Iron Age is based upon fabric and firing characteristics. Pottery recorded in Middle to Late Iron Age deposits from excavations at Kingshill North, Cirencester included comparable calcite and oolitic limestone-tempered fabrics (Timby 2011, 48). The site at Kingshill North is approximately 1.5km east of Bowling Green Lane.

Roman

- 6.4 A total of five unfeathered bodysherds (35g) of Roman pottery was retrieved. The low average sherd weight (7g) and poor to moderate condition indicate the pottery has been well broken up.
- 6.5 Reduced coarseware fabrics probably of relatively local manufacture include: fine greyware (GWF), black-firing, sand-tempered fabric (TF5) and grog-and-quartz tempered fabric (GTQZ). The greyware is of broad Roman date and the other two fabrics tend to feature earlier in the Roman period, during the later 1st and 2nd centuries.
- 6.6 A sherd of Savernake Grog-tempered ware (TF6) from fill 105 of ditch 104 is also dateable to the mid 1st to 2nd centuries. This ware type was manufactured at Savernake Forest and other centres in Wiltshire (Tomber and Dore 1998, 191). Fill 108 within ditch 107 produced a sherd of Dorset Black-burnished ware, which was produced in the Poole Harbour area, Dorset. When found outside the county it typically dates to the 2nd to 4th centuries (Davies *et al.* 1994, 107).

Ceramic Building Material (CBM)

- 6.4 Single fragments of ceramic building material, in poor to moderate condition, were recorded in fills 409 and 410 of ditch 408. Both are Roman in date but are too fragmentary for further classification.

7. THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Animal Bone

- 7.1 A small assemblage of nine moderately well preserved fragments (130g) of animal bone was recovered from fills 108 and 409 from ditches 107 and 408, respectively, in association with artefacts dating to the Roman period. A total of five fragments (54g) consisting of three metapodials, a tibia (both bones of the lower limbs) and a loose molar were identified as Sheep/goat (*Ovis aries/Capra hircus*) and all recovered from ditch fill 108. The remaining four fragments in the assemblage were unidentifiable. No evidence of butchery in the form of chop and/or cut marks was observed.

8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1 The correlation between the results of the evaluation and the preceding geophysical survey was good. All of the archaeological features identified during the evaluation were predicted by the geophysics and only two targeted geophysical anomalies, a curvilinear ditch in Trench 3 and a linear feature in Trench 5, could not be identified in the field. It is therefore likely that the geophysical results in the unevaluated areas of the site constitute an accurate reflection of the archaeology in those areas.
- 8.2 The earliest feature identified during the evaluation was ditch 403, which was dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age by pottery recovered from its fill. The geophysical survey showed the ditch extending outside the proposed development area on a broadly north/south alignment. No other features shared an alignment with this ditch, consequently it is difficult to ascertain a function to it, although it is possible that it may have formed part of a system of land boundaries immediately above the valley floor. Residual late prehistoric pottery found in ditch 104 further attests to pre-Roman activity close to, or within, the current site.

- 8.3 The geophysical survey shows ditch 104/406, and associated recut 107/408, as a meandering linear feature, closely following the contours of the valley side. It is also possible that the geophysical anomaly targeted by unexcavated Trench 6 represents a further, southern, continuation of this ditch. Roman pottery was retrieved from all of the interventions across these ditches and the uppermost fills, particularly those in Trench 4, were notably silty and lacking in stone inclusions, suggestive of a build-up of water-borne sediments.
- 8.4 The function of this ditch remains undetermined. Its location partway down the valley slope suggests that it was unlikely to be a settlement or boundary ditch, which would most probably be better situated on the top or along the base of the slope. However, such an interpretation cannot be wholly discounted, with the water-borne sediments representing the final, natural infilling of the feature.
- 8.5 An alternative interpretation is that the ditch was purposefully designed to transport water along the valley side. Between Trenches 1 and 4, a distance of approximately 160m, the bases of the ditches gradually drop by 0.08m between ditch 104 and 406 and by 0.55m for ditch 107/408 (see Appendix D).
- 8.6 The site is located on a hill overlooking Cirencester, approximately 12m higher than the core of the Roman and subsequent medieval/post-medieval settlement, and would therefore have been able to exploit the known springs in the Stratton area and/or possibly water from the Churn itself (Holbrook and Salvatore 1998, 25). It is possible that the identified ditches could have formed an open aqueduct providing a source of potable water for the Roman settlement at *Corinium* or for the medieval abbey. Alternatively, the channelled water may have been utilised as a source of power for a mill, although this latter interpretation is perhaps the least plausible given the opportunity to exploit the nearby River Churn as evidenced by the mills at Stratton and Barton.
- 8.6 It is well documented that major Roman settlements demanded a large supply of water. Roman aqueducts were often large-scale engineering projects: the aqueduct supplying Dorchester being culverted for much of its 15km course (Putnam 2007, 65). By contrast, and perhaps more comparable, an aqueduct feeding Exeter along the Longbrook Valley remained as an open-cut leat until it was close to the town's defences (Webster 1988, 114-15). No evidence for an extra-mural water supply has previously been recorded at Cirencester, although a timber water pipe has been

identified within the town in close proximity to the *Verulamium* Gate (Holbrook and Pamment Salvatore 1999, 25). Whether this pipe utilised water from the nearby Churn or from an aqueduct remains undetermined. It should also be considered unlikely that this pipe was the only source of water serving the town.

- 8.7 Historic records document a new water supply to Cirencester's medieval abbey from at least the 13th century when the Abbey acquired the Leatherwell spring to pipe water to its refectory (ibid.). The location of this spring remains undetermined, although documentary evidence suggests that it may have been in the Stratton area.
- 8.8 The remaining identified features are interpreted as quarry scoops/pits, the exception being undated ditch 303 identified on the flatter crest of the valley.

9. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Christopher Leonard, Danielle Adams and Lizzie Raison. The report was written by Christopher Leonard and the finds report was written by Jacky Sommerville. The illustrations were prepared by Sam O'Leary. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Cliff Bateman.

10. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown grey clay silt. Occasional limestones			0.24	
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt. Common small limestones			0.14	
1	102	Layer		Colluvium	Mid orange brown clay silt. Occasional limestones	7	1.8	0.31	
1	103	Layer		Natural	Limestone brash				
1	104	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Steep sides and flat base	>1.8	>0.5	0.5	
1	105	Fill	104	Ditch fill	Lower fill. Dark grey brown sandy silt. Frequent limestone	>1.8	>0.5	0.22	MC1-C2
1	106	Fill	104	Ditch fill	Upper fill. Mid orange brown sandy silt. Occasional limestone	>1.8	>0.5	0.28	
1	107	Cut		Ditch cut	NE/SW aligned. Steep sides and flat, sloping base	>1.8	2.34	0.38	
1	108	Fill	107	Ditch fill	Mid orange brown sandy silt. Frequent limestone, occasional charcoal and shell	>1.8	2.34	0.38	C2-C4
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Same as 100			0.2	
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Same as 101			0.15	
2	202	Layer		Natural	Same as 103				
2	203	Cut		Quarry pit					
2	204	Fill		Quarry fill					
2	205	Cut		Quarry pit					
2	206	Fill		Quarry fill					
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Same as 100			0.23	
3	301	Layer		Subsoil	Same as 101			0.1	
3	302	Layer		Natural	Same as 103				
3	303	Cut		Ditch	E/W aligned. Steep sides, flat base	>1.8	0.62	0.2	
3	304	Fill	303	Ditch fill	Mid red brown clay silt. Frequent limestone	>1.8	0.62	0.2	
3	305	Cut		Quarry pit					
3	306	Fill	305	Quarry fill					
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Same as 100			0.21	
4	401	Layer		Subsoil	Same as 101			0.22	
4	402	Layer		Natural	Same as 103				
4	403	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Steep sides, flat base	>1.8	1.29	0.55	
4	404	Fill	403	Ditch fill	Lower fill. Mid blue grey silt clay. Occasional limestone	>1.8	1.29	0.14	
4	405	Fill	403	Ditch fill	Upper fill. Mid grey brown clay silt	>1.8	1.29	0.41	MIA-LIA
4	406	Cut		Ditch	NE/SW aligned. Steep sides, flat base	>1.8	>1.5	0.33	
4	407	Fill	406	Ditch fill	Mid yellow brown sandy silt. Common limestone	>1.8	>1.5	0.33	RB
4	408	Cut		Ditch cut	NE/SW aligned. Steep sides, flat base	>1.8	1.65	0.47	
4	409	Fill	408	Ditch fill	Lower fill. Dark brown grey clay silt. Frequent limestone	>1.8	1.65	0.15	RB
4	410	Fill	408	Ditch fill	2nd fill. Mid brown grey sandy silt. Occasional limestone and shell	>1.8	1.46	0.16	RB
4	411	Fill	408	Ditch fill	Upper fill. Mid orange brown sandy silt. Occasional limestone and shell	>1.8	1.65	0.2	RB
5	500	Layer		Topsoil	Same as 100			0.21	
5	501	Layer		Subsoil	Same as 101			0.09	
5	502	Layer		Natural	Same as 103				

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Category	Description	Fabric Code/ NRFRC*	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
105	Late prehistoric pottery	Flint-tempered fabric	FL	1	3	MC1-C2
	Late prehistoric pottery	Oolitic limestone-tempered fabric	LS	1	3	
	Roman pottery	Savernake Grog-tempered ware	TF6/ SAV GT	1	6	
108	Roman pottery	Dorset Black-burnished ware	TF74/ DOR BB1	1	1	C2-C4
405	Late prehistoric pottery	Calcite-tempered fabric	CAL	1	3	MIA-LIA
	Late prehistoric pottery	Quartz, quartzite and organic-tempered fabric	QQO	1	6	
	Fired clay			1	0	
407	Roman pottery	Greyware (fine)	GWF	1	16	RB
409	Roman pottery	Grog-and-quartz tempered fabric	GTQZ	1	9	RB
	Roman ceramic building material	Fragment		1	15	
410	Roman ceramic building material	Fragment		1	79	RB
411	Roman pottery	Black-firing, sand-tempered fabric	TF5	1	3	RB

* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes in bold

APPENDIX C: THE PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

Table 1: Identified animal species by fragment count (NISP) and weight and context.

Cut	Fill	O/C	LM	Total	Weight (g)
107	108	5	1	6	77
408	409		3	3	53
Total		5	4	9	
Weight		54	76	130	

O/C = sheep/goat; LM= cattle sized mammal;

APPENDIX D: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

	Ditch 104	Ditch 107	Ditch 406	Ditch 408	Trench 6
Current ground level	0.00m (119.74m)	0.00m (119.89m)	0.00m (119.65m)	0.00m (119.48m)	0.00m (119.71m)
Top of cut	0.32m (119.42m)	0.34m (119.55m)	0.45m (119.20m)	0.45m (119.03m)	0.00m (0.00m)
Base of cut	0.78m (118.96m)	0.72m (119.17m)	0.77m (118.88m)	0.86m (118.62m)	0.00m (0.00m)

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level; lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.

APPENDIX E: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land off Bowling Green Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Short description	<p>One ditch containing Middle to Late Iron Age pottery and two ditches dating from at least the Roman period were identified. The latter were revealed partway down the eastern slope of the Churn valley, and although their function remains unclear, the silty nature of their fills suggests that they may have been used to transport water.</p> <p>On the higher, flatter ground in the central and eastern extent of the site an undated ditch was identified, along with three modern quarry pits.</p>	
Project dates	11–13 January 2016	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (CgMs 2015) Geophysical Survey (Archaeological Surveys 2016)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Bowling Green Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire	
Study area	4.6ha	
Site co-ordinates	SP 02275 03135	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator		
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Cliff Bateman	
Project Supervisor	Christopher Leonard	
MONUMENT TYPE		
	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	Corinium Museum	Ceramics, animal bone, CBM
Paper	Corinium Museum	Context sheets, trench recording sheets
Digital	Corinium Museum	Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Land off Bowling Green Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 16024		

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