

**MALMESBURY TOWN HALL
MALMESBURY
WILTSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

For

TAYLOR SEYMOUR ARCHITECTS

on behalf of

MALMESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

CA PROJECT: 2436
CA REPORT: 08064


SEPTEMBER 2008



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WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

CA PROJECT: 2436
CA REPORT: 08064

prepared by	Steven Sheldon, Project Supervisor
date	4 September 2008
checked by	Richard Young, Project Manager
date	9 September 2008
approved by	Mark Collard, Head of Contracts
signed	
date	12 September 2008
issue	01

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Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)

Fig. 2 The site showing location of groundworks (1:250)

SUMMARY

Project Name: Malmesbury Town Hall
Location: Malmesbury, Wiltshire
NGR: ST 9360 8720
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 14 November 2007 to 18 January 2008
Planning Reference: 07/00250/FUL
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes
Site Code: MTH07

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks and internal alterations associated with the construction of an extension at Malmesbury Town Hall.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material was recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between November 2007 and January 2008 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Taylor Seymour Architects on behalf of Malmesbury Town Council at Malmesbury Town Hall (centred on NGR: ST 933 871; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for an extension at the rear of the existing building (North Wiltshire District Council Planning ref: 07/00250/FUL). 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 a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2007) and approved by Ms Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Wiltshire County Council Archaeologist, archaeological advisor to the local planning authority, North Wiltshire District Council. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2001), *the Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation* (Wiltshire County Council Archaeology Service 1995) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

The Site

- 1.3 The site is currently occupied by the existing building and car park of Malmesbury Town Hall (Fig. 1). The site is bounded to the east by Cross Hayes Lane, Cross Hayes car park to the south, Market Lane to the west and Oxford Street to the north and lies at approximately 88m AOD.
- 1.4 The underlying geology of the area is mapped as cornbrash, rubbly limestone of the Upper Jurassic era (BGS 1970).

Archaeological background

- 1.5 The hilltop location of Malmesbury, with natural protection afforded by the surrounding looping branches of the River Avon, and steep slopes from the plateau on which the historic core of the town lies, has evidence of human activity from early prehistory. Excavations along the eastern side of the medieval town wall have uncovered a complex sequence of ramparts and ditches of a multivallate Iron Age

hillfort, first established in the Early Iron Age (Longman 2006). There is documentary evidence for a 7th-century monastery at Malmesbury. In the later 9th century the hilltop community which had developed around the monastery within the defences of the earlier, Iron Age hillfort, was included by King Alfred in his burh system of defences for the kingdom of Wessex. By the time of the Norman Conquest, the monastery and town formed a significant economic, social and religious centre. Nothing is visible above ground of this early monastery or associated urban community and little is known of its extent or physical arrangement (beyond the evidence of the street plan of the historic core), although the evidence suggest that it most likely lay at the northern end of the plateau, in the area occupied by the later medieval abbey precinct. Late Saxon burials were excavated in 1993 by AC Archaeology near the Market Cross itself (Hawkes 1993). The present day abbey was built in the 12th century and is the third built on or near the same spot at the north end of the hilltop. The town was of strategic importance during the English Civil War, being a strong defensive position on the road between Oxford and Bristol. As the site lies in the centre of Malmesbury, close to the Abbey and Market Cross, the proposed works have the potential to uncover archaeological features and deposits of prehistoric to medieval date.

Methodology

- 1.6 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2007). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising the reduction of the present ground level, the removal of existing flooring and the excavation of service trenches to the rear of the existing Town Hall. The proposed footprints for the new museum and remodelled Tourist Information centre, as well as the locations of the intrusive groundworks, are shown on Figure 2.
- 1.7 Written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.8 The archive is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. The site archive will be deposited with Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. RESULTS (FIG 2)

- 2.1 The excavation of drainage trenches 1 and 2 revealed a homogenous modern make-up layer (103 and 203), consisting of abundant brick and concrete fragments within a dark grey brown sandy silt matrix, at an average depth of 0.15m below present ground level (BPGL). This deposit was overlain by a layer of gravel and sand (102 and 202), which was in turn sealed by modern tarmac surface 101 and 201.
- 2.2 Deposits revealed during ground reduction in trench 3 consisted of a single modern make-up layer 302, comprising frequent concrete fragments within a light greyish brown sandy silt matrix, at an average depth of 0.20m BPGL. This deposit was sealed by a modern concrete pad 301.
- 2.3 The excavation of trench 4, to enable the construction of a new internal floor slab, revealed a yellowish brown sand 402 at an average depth of 0.05m BPGL. This deposit was sealed by flagstone floor 401.
- 2.4 The natural geological substrate was not revealed during the redevelopment of this site due to the relatively shallow nature of excavations. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material was recovered.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that structural remains associated with potential Prehistoric, Romano-British or medieval activity either do not extend as far as or were not exposed by the development, or that they may have been removed during previous development associated with the construction or expansion of Malmesbury Town Hall.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Alistair Barber and Steven Sheldon. The report was written by Steven Sheldon. The illustrations were prepared by Jemma Elliot. The archive has been compiled by Steven Sheldon, and prepared for deposition by Kathryn Price. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1970 *Solid and Drift Geology Sheet 251: Malmesbury*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2007 *Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Hawkes, J.W. 1993 *Archaeological Excavations in Malmesbury Market Cross, October 1993 – Summary Report* AC Archaeology unpublished report no. **7493/1/0**

Longman, T. 2006 'Iron Age and Later Defences at Malmesbury: Excavations 1998-2000', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Natur. Hist. Mag.* **99**, 104-164

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

No.	Type	Description	Depth (m)
101	Layer	Tarmac	0.05
102	Layer	Gravel/sand below 101	0.1
103	Layer	Make-up layer below 102	>0.75

Trench 2

No.	Type	Description	Depth (m)
201	Layer	Tarmac	0.05
202	Layer	Gravel/sand below 201	0.1
203	Layer	Make-up layer below 202	>0.75

Trench 3

No.	Type	Description	Depth (m)
301	Layer	Concrete pad	0.2
302	Layer	Make-up layer below 301	>0.3

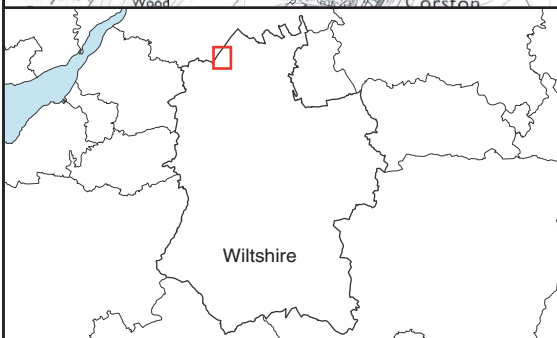
Trench 4


No.	Type	Description	Depth (m)
401	Layer	Flagstone floor	0.05
402	Layer	Sand	>0.1

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks and internal alterations associated with the construction of an extension at Malmesbury Town Hall. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material was recovered.	
Project dates	November 2007-January 2008	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	N/A	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	c. 400m ²	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	ST 9360 8720	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Wiltshire County Council Archaeology Service	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Young	
Project Supervisor	Alistair Barber and Steven Sheldon	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Paper	Wiltshire Heritage Museum	Trench Recording Forms, Site Plan, Colour Slides, Black and White Prints
Digital	Wiltshire Heritage Museum	Digital Photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2008 Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury, Wiltshire: <i>Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report 08064		

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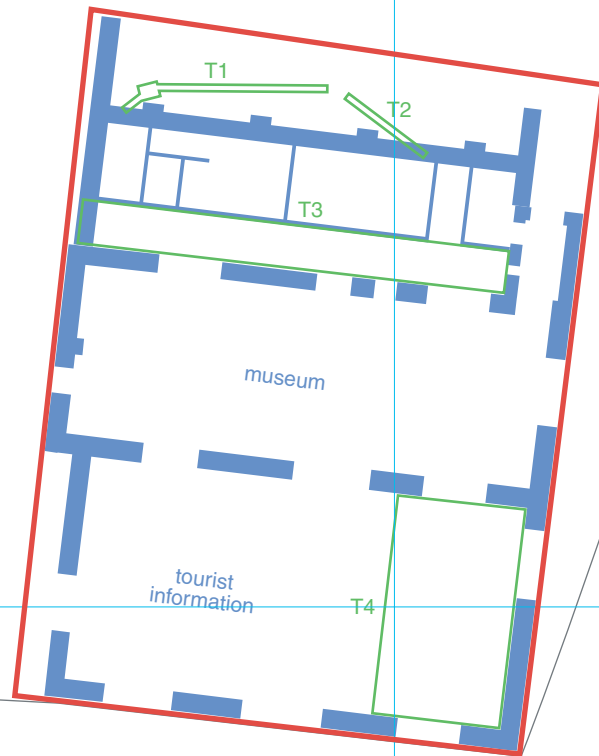
 COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY			
PROJECT TITLE Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury Wiltshire			
FIGURE TITLE Site location plan			
DRAWN BY	SCALE	PROJECT NO.	FIGURE NO.
JE	1:25,000@A4	2436	1



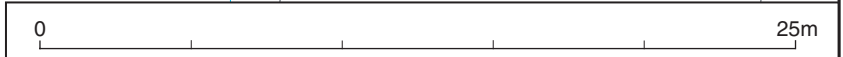
OXFORD STREET




CROSS HAYES LANE

872



ST



-  site
-  groundworks observed
-  museum footprint



COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

PROJECT TITLE

Malmesbury Town Hall, Malmesbury
Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE

**The site showing location
of groundworks**

DRAWN BY

JE

SCALE

1:250@A4

PROJECT NO.

2436

FIGURE NO.

2