

New Footpath and Decking Chedworth Roman Villa Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
The National Trust

CA Project: 6838
CA Report: 19031

February 2019



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A	14 February 2019	Peter Busby	Steven Sheldon	Draft		Cliff Bateman
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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	5
4. METHODOLOGY	6
5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3).....	6
6. DISCUSSION.....	7
7. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	7
8. REFERENCES.....	8
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	10
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	11

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)
- Fig. 2 The site, showing location of observed groundworks, identified archaeological features and previous archaeological works (1:250)
- Fig. 3 Photographs



SUMMARY

Project Name:	New Footpath and Decking
Location:	Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire
NGR:	405258 213485
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	21 and 22 January 2019
Planning Reference:	Cotswold District Council; planning reference 18/02416/FUL
SMC:	S00199035
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with the National Trust
Site Code:	CRVY19

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the resurfacing of an informal footpath at Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire.

An artefactually undated limestone wall, most probably representing part of a Roman boundary formerly depicted on a late 19th-century plan of the villa complex, was partially exposed at a depth of 0.2m below present ground level. An undated deposit, containing frequent limestone fragments and mortar flecks, was also identified abutting this wall and suggests that it was subject to at least partial demolition, although the date and extent of this postulated demolition remains unclear.

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



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2019 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for the National Trust at Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire (centred at NGR: 405258 213485; Fig. 1). Planning permission for the installation of a new area of raised decking adjoining an existing classroom and the resurfacing of an informal footpath was granted by Cotswold District Council (CDC; planning reference 18/02416/FUL). Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was subsequently granted, in a letter (ref. no. S00199035; Scheduled Monument GC 57) dated 6 December 2018 from Ms Melanie Barge, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England (HE) on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, conditional (condition b) on a programme of archaeological work, comprising a watching brief. Following consultation between the National Trust and HE it was determined that archaeological monitoring would be limited to groundworks associated with the resurfacing of the footpath and would not be required during the installation of screw piles to support the decking associated with the existing classroom building.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2019) and approved by Ms Barge. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014)

The site

- 1.3 The proposed footpath and decking is approximately 0.2ha in extent and is mostly located within Scheduled Monument *Chedworth Roman Villa* (National Monument 1003324). However, parts of the proposed decking lay outwith the designated Scheduled Monument. The site lies at approximately 175.5m AOD, with the ground levels rising up to 177m AOD immediately to the west and dropping away to 169m AOD immediately to the east.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Aston Limestone Formation - Limestone of the Jurassic era (BGS 2019). No superficial deposits are recorded (*ibid.*). The natural substrate was not revealed during the current works due to the limited depth of the groundworks undertaken.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Chedworth Roman villa is situated 12km north of Cirencester; a major urban centre during the Roman period and a provincial capital during the 4th century AD. The villa was excavated in 1864, following chance finds of pottery and *tesserae* in the area, although the presence of the villa was known by local woodsmen for some time beforehand. The villa has been open for public viewing since its excavation and was purchased by the National Trust in 1924. Several small-scale excavations were undertaken at the villa during the 20th century including; investigations of the northern bath suite, inner courtyard and eastern corridor.
- 2.2 The current published model for the development of the villa is largely based on the work of Richmond between 1958 and 1965 (Richmond 1959) and Goodburn between 1979 and 1983 (Goodburn 1984). Neither of these investigations were fully published. The conventional view of the villa is that it was occupied from the early 2nd to late 4th centuries AD. Current understanding is that the villa complex originated as three separate blocks in the 2nd century AD. These blocks were subsequently incorporated into a single building around both inner and outer courtyards in the later Roman period. The villa comprised areas at different levels; the North Wing stands on a terrace partially recessed into the hillside and the South Wing lies at a lower level on the valley bottom (RCHME 1979).
- 2.3 A programme of investigative surveys was carried out between 1994 and 2006 in order to further the understanding of the site. Recent work suggests that the consolidation into a single building occurred as a major change in the 4th century AD rather than as a gradual development (TNT 2009).
- 2.4 Archaeological evaluation to the south of The Lodge identified the remains of a possible sub-division within the courtyard of the villa and a probable robber trench possibly indicating the eastward continuation of the southern wall of the southern range of the villa (CA 2009a).
- 2.5 Archaeological evaluation and subsequent watching brief within the access road to the south of the villa complex identified a buried Roman soil horizon overlain by colluvium and the metalled surface of a 19th century trackway. Victorian stone-built culverts were also identified (CA 2008 and 2010).

- 2.6 Two phases of archaeological evaluation have been undertaken in the south-western part of the villa. An archaeological evaluation undertaken in 2009 identified Roman deposits and features associated with the above-ground villa structures (CA 2009b). A subsequent archaeological evaluation, undertaken in 2011, identified floor surfaces, a stone drain, wall foundations and the base of an oven of probable Roman date (CA 2011). It is possible that parts of the identified wall foundations and oven had been remodelled during the Victorian and/or modern periods (*ibid.*).
- 2.7 An archaeological watching brief (CA 2018), undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of the existing classroom, identified two undated deposits containing occasional flecks of charcoal and mortar within foundation pads excavated in the north-eastern corner of the classroom footprint. The function of these deposits remains unclear, although they may represent episodes of colluviation or a buried soil horizon. No further features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified (*ibid.*).
- 2.8 The presence of a possible Roman boundary wall running from the Nyphaeum, located in the north-western part of the site, to the rear of the west range of the villa complex has previously been suggested (TNT 2018) and is depicted on a plan of the villa complex produced by George Fox in 1886. The excavation of a trench immediately to the south-west of the Nymphaeum by the National Trust in 2018 (Fig. 2, Trench A) revealed the remains of a wall adjoining the Nymphaeum itself and was provisionally interpreted as forming part of the western boundary, as depicted by Fox (*ibid.*). The projected line of this wall appears to intersect the route of the proposed new footpath (see Fig. 2 of this report). However a further trench, also excavated in 2018 by the National Trust, to a maximum depth of 0.15m below present ground level (bpgl), only identified stone rubble containing modern artefactual material including tin cans and modern pottery (*ibid.*).

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

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2019). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising the removal of topsoil and turf prior to resurfacing of the informal footpath (see Fig. 2 for location and extent). Non-archaeologically significant deposits were removed by the contactors under archaeological supervision. Where mechanical excavators were used, these were equipped with a toothless bucket.
- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive from the watching brief is currently held by CA at their Kemble offices and will be deposited with the National Trust. 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.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

- 5.1 The earliest deposit encountered, at a depth of 0.2m bpgl, was north-south aligned wall 103 (northern end exposed at NGR: 405244.72 213482.12; southern end exposed at NGR: 405245.01 213479.69). It was of rough limestone block construction, bonded by yellow sandy mortar. It measured 0.55m in width and survived to a depth of at least 0.35m. It did not appear to continue across the entire width of the footpath strip, although this assertion is necessarily tenuous given the limited depth of groundworks undertaken. Butting wall 103 to both the east and west was partially exposed, undated, deposit 102. It comprised compact dark grey brown silt clay with abundant limestone and mortar fragments that may be indicative of demolition debris. The foregoing deposits were overlain by heavily root affected subsoil 101, which was in turn sealed by topsoil and turf.

- 5.2 No further features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material was recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The date of wall 103 remains unclear and its precise function remains equally uncertain, primarily due to the restricted view afforded by the limited depth and extent of the groundworks undertaken. Its alignment parallel to the west range of the villa complex suggests that it may be of Roman origin. However, it should be noted that a later date of construction/rebuilding of this wall cannot be wholly discounted at present given the absence of direct dating evidence recovered from it. The form and location of wall 103 suggests that it most likely represents part of a boundary or similar, the presence of which has previously been suggested in this location from at least the mid 19th-century. It remains possible, given its alignment, that it represents a continuation of a wall previously identified adjoining the Nymphaeum to the north (see *archaeological background* above).
- 6.2 The presence of compact stony deposit 102, partially exposed immediately to the east and west of wall 103, appears to indicate that this wall was at least partially demolished. The date and extent of this postulated demolition remains unclear due to the limited view afforded by the groundworks undertaken and the absence of dating material within deposit 102. However, a seemingly comparable deposit identified within an evaluation trench previously excavated immediately to the north (TNT 2018, Trench B), contained modern artefactual material suggesting that any possible demolition may have occurred in the relatively recent past.
- 6.3 The groundworks throughout the remaining parts of the footpath did not penetrate beneath the subsoil, consequently the survival of further archaeological features/deposits in these areas remains unproven, but possible.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Busby. The report was written by Peter Busby. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled

by Peter Busby, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Steven Sheldon.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2019 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 22 January 2019

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RCHME (Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England) 1979 *Ancient and Historical Monuments in the County of Gloucestershire: Volume One, Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds*

TNT (The National Trust) 2009 *Chedworth Roman Villa. Brief for Archaeological Evaluations*

TNT (The National Trust) 2018 *Chedworth Roman Villa: Proposal Description & Impact Statement*

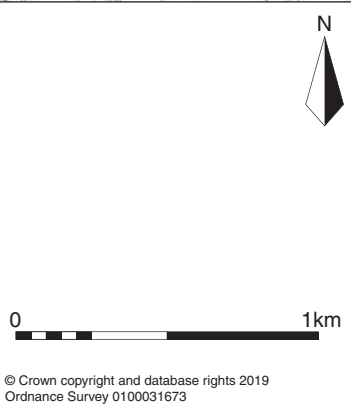
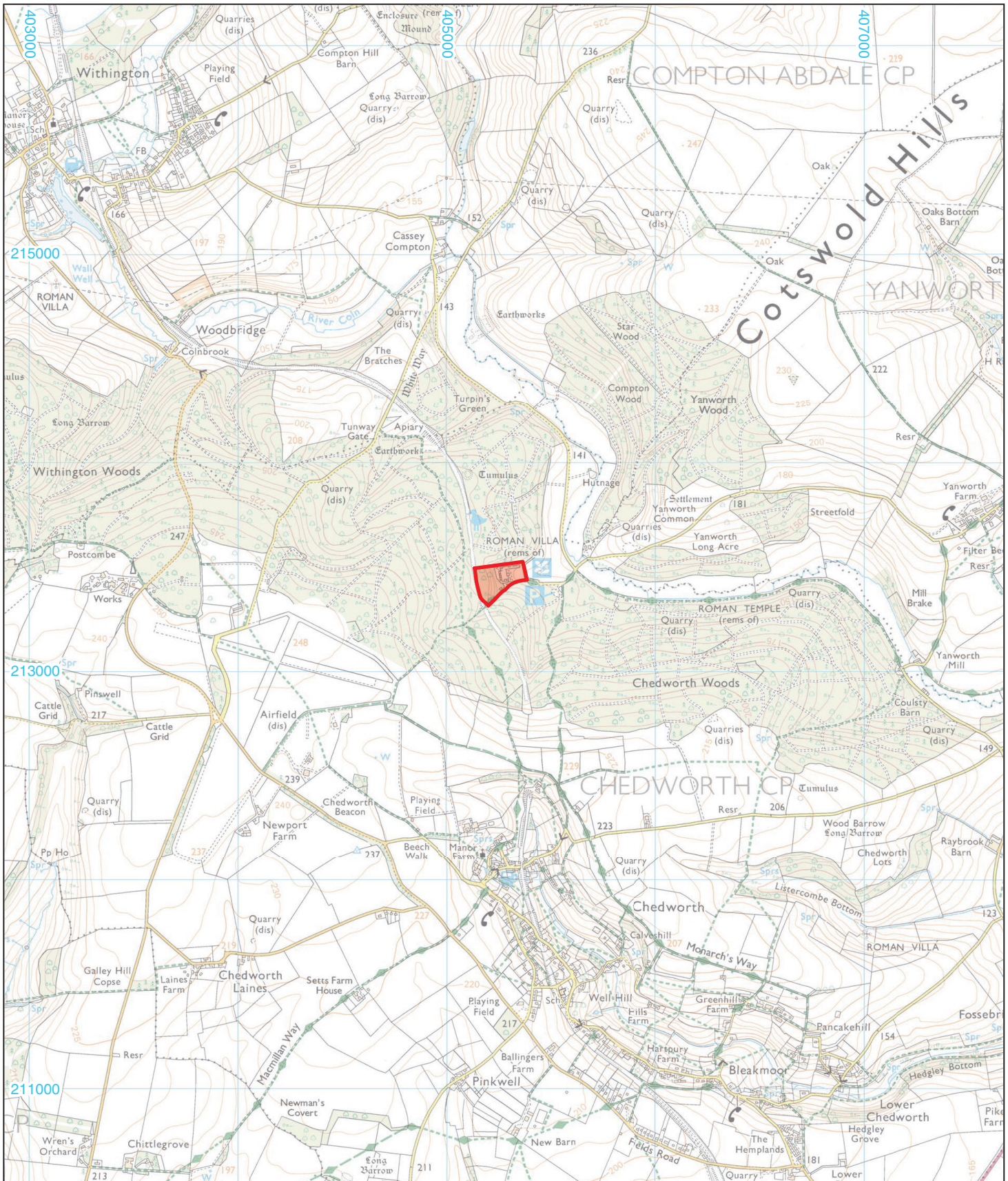


APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	Layer	Topsoil and turf	Dark grey brown silt clay	>26	>1.5	0.1
1	101	Layer	Subsoil	Mid red brown sand silt	>26	>1.5	0.1
1	102	Layer	?demolition deposit	Compact limestone fragments and yellow sand mortar flecks in a mid-dark grey brown silt clay matrix			N/A
1	103	Deposit	Wall	N/S aligned. Rough limestone block construction, bonded by friable yellow sandy mortar	>1.4	0.55	>0.35

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

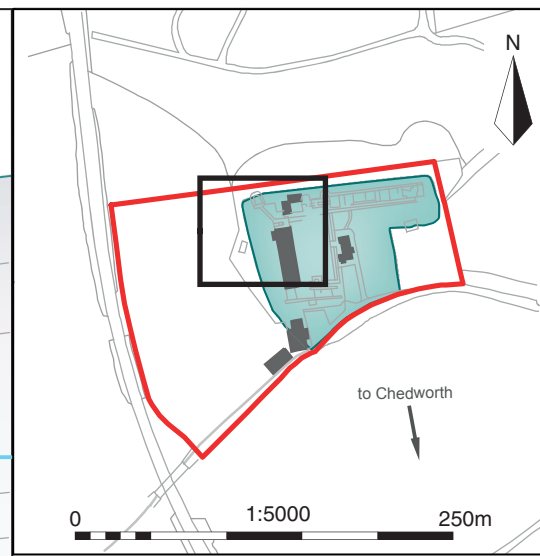
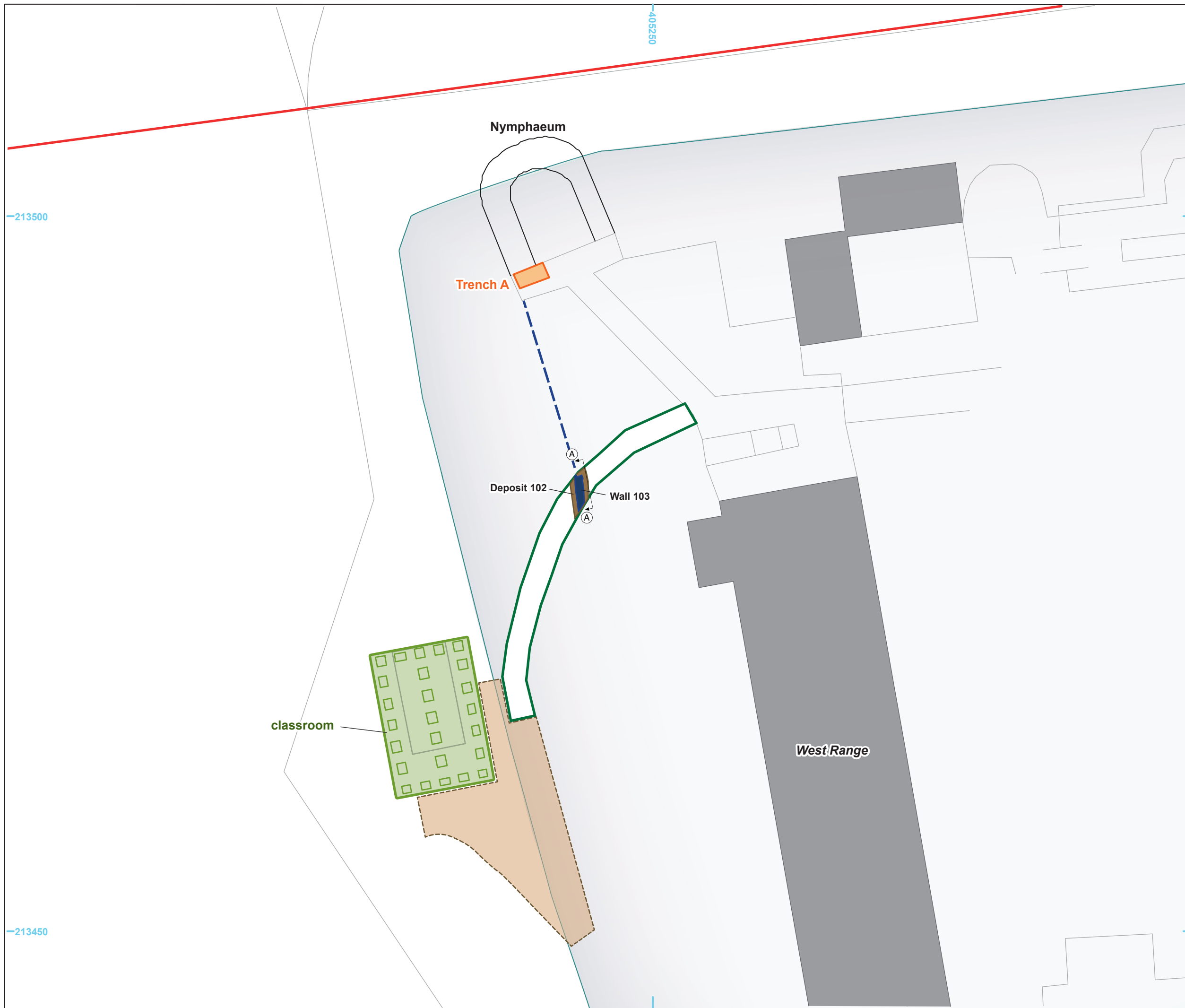
PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the resurfacing of an informal footpath at Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire.</p> <p>An artefactually undated limestone wall, most probably representing part of a Roman boundary formerly depicted on a late 19th-century plan of the villa complex, was partially exposed at a depth of 0.2m below present ground level. An undated deposit, containing frequent limestone fragments and mortar flecks, was also identified abutting this wall and suggests that it was subject to at least partial demolition, although the date and extent of this postulated demolition remains unclear.</p> <p>No further features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the groundworks, and no artefactual material was recovered.</p>	
Project dates	21 and 22 January 2019	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	Evaluation: CA 2008, 2009, 2011 Watching brief: CA 2010, 2018	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	c. 0.2ha	
Site co-ordinates	405258 213485	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Steven Sheldon	
Project Supervisor	Peter Busby	
MONUMENT TYPE		
	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive:	Content:
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	National Trust	Trench recording forms, context sheets, photographic register
Digital	National Trust	Digital photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief. CA typescript report 19031		




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PROJECT TITLE
 New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire
FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan
DRAWN BY EE **PROJECT NO.** 6838
CHECKED BY DJB **DATE** 29/01/2019
APPROVED BY SS **SCALE@A4** 1:25,000
FIGURE NO.
1

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- Site boundary
- Scheduled Chedworth Roman Villa Monument
- Area of observed groundworks
- Structure
- Deposit
- Projected line of the west boundary wall (after NT 2018)
- Previous evaluation trench (NT 2018)
- Previous watching brief area (CA 2018)
- Decking



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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 The site, showing observed groundworks, identified archaeological features and previous archaeological works

<small>DRAWN BY</small> EE	<small>PROJECT NO.</small> 6838	<small>FIGURE NO.</small>
<small>CHECKED BY</small> DJB	<small>DATE</small> 29/01/2019	2
<small>APPROVED BY</small> SS	<small>SCALE@A3</small> 1:250	



Wall 103, looking south (1m scale)



Wall 103 and deposit 102, looking west (1m scale)



Wall 103, looking north towards Nymphaeum (1m scale)

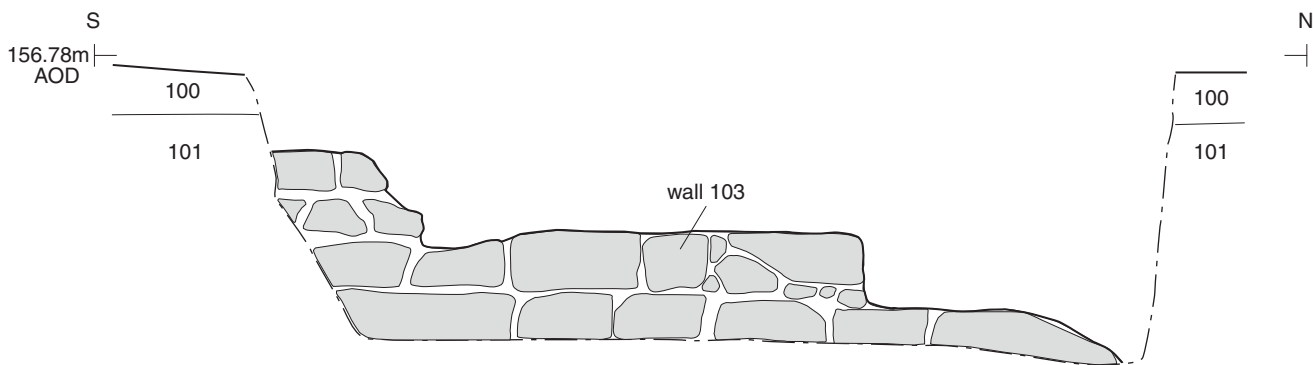

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PROJECT TITLE
 New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth
 Roman Villa, Gloucestershire

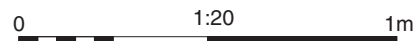
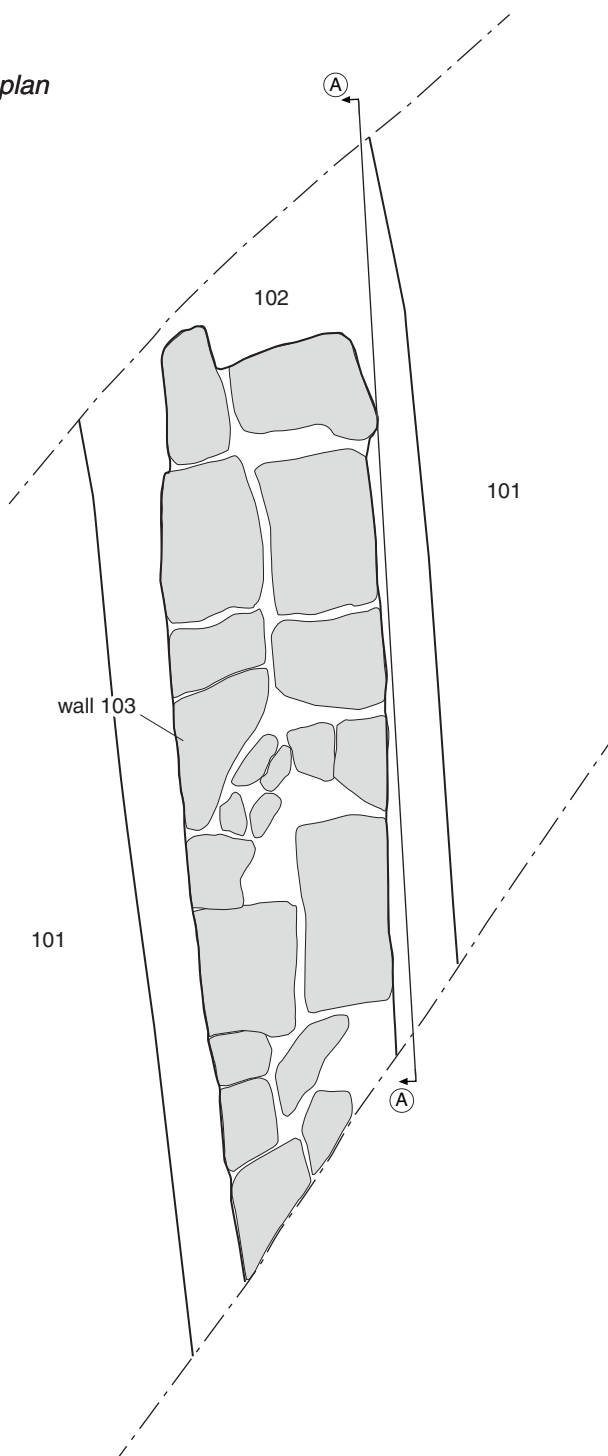
FIGURE TITLE
 Photographs

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	29/01/2019	3
APPROVED BY	SS	SCALE	@A3 NA	

Section AA



Wall 103, plan



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PROJECT TITLE

New Footpath and Decking, Chedworth Roman Villa, Gloucestershire

FIGURE TITLE

Wall 103, section and plan

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	29/01/2019	
APPROVED BY	SS	SCALE@A4	1:20	4

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