

The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns

An Extensive Urban Survey

CUNETIO

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Towns are an important component of the historic environment which have developed over many hundreds of years and are under constant development pressures. The archaeological resource within our historic towns is an invaluable and irreplaceable source of data about past societies and the evolution of our culture. Despite these factors the archaeology of many towns, especially the smaller market towns, is poorly understood.
- 1.2** An increase in the amount of archaeological and historical data available and changes in legislation, such as the introduction of Planning Policy Guidance note No16, have meant that a reappraisal of the situation is now due. The Extensive Urban Survey of Wiltshire has been commissioned by English Heritage, as part of a National programme, to address the need for a new assessment of urban archaeology in the county. The current structure of the historic county of Wiltshire is two-tier, with the County Council working in conjunction with the four District Councils (Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire) and the new unitary authority of Swindon – historically part of the county. The survey aims to map the development of all of Wiltshire’s and Swindon’s historic towns (Fig. 1) and to assess the extent of the surviving archaeology and built heritage. It is also proposed that the threat of development on the historic environment within the county’s towns will be examined.
- 1.3** The origins of urban centres in England reach back to the Iron Age. During the Roman occupation new urban centres were linked by an efficient road system. In the Saxon period, defended towns and royal boroughs were developed and later medieval towns grew around markets as economic conditions improved or were ‘planted’ as planned new centres.
- 1.4** As far as is known the first towns in Wiltshire appeared during the Romano-British period but all the known examples are now greenfield sites, although some may have given rise to nearby settlements. Most modern towns in the county have their roots as Saxon villages or defended settlements such as Cricklade and Wilton. Many of the villages grew into small towns after the Norman invasion, often focussed around a castle or market and in the early thirteenth century ‘planted boroughs’, in which individual plots of land were sold by the major landowner.
- 1.5** The definition of a town for inclusion in the survey follows the criteria laid out in Heighway (1972), by which the settlement must possess certain characteristics such as defences, a mint, a market, a street plan, or a judicial centre, and demonstrate such urban attributes such as high population, a diversified economic base or a central or key location. For the purposes of the survey, however, the towns should meet these criteria historically, even if they no longer do so. This allows, for example, the inclusion of the five Roman towns in the county, and settlements such as the village of Heytesbury, which was developed as a planned town in the 13th century, but which did not succeed as an urban centre. The full list of 34 towns included in the survey and the criteria for inclusion are included as Appendix 1 and 2. Cunetio satisfies at least three of the criteria: it has

evidence of urban defences (*criterion i*); it has evidence for an internal street plan (*criterion ii*) and the town occupied a strategic position on the road network (*criterion vi*).

- 1.6 The area of study in each town is defined by the size of the town as it stood in 1945, encompassing both the historic core of the town and the older industrial and suburban development (Fig. 2). There is an emphasis on the earlier material, and the later Victorian and 20th century development are covered here only briefly. Although more detailed than Haslam's report, in most cases each study remains a brief summary of the data and a guide to the location of more detail for other researchers.
- 1.7 The research into each town will be encapsulated into two reports: a summary and assessment of the data gathered and an outline strategy for future management of specified sections of the urban area. This first report is intended to provide a clear and up-to-date synthesis of the available archaeological and historical data for Cunetio, with an assessment of the main areas of historic settlement in the town and of the potential and sensitivity of the archaeologically important areas. The assessment reports are compiled from three main data streams: geographical and geological sources for the location and topographical summary; secondary historical sources for the historical outline; recorded archaeological data for the sites and finds information.

2. HISTORICAL SOURCES

- 2.1 This is a desk-based study, using material available within the County Council research facilities in Trowbridge namely the Sites and Monuments Record; The Trowbridge Reference Library; the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office; and the Wiltshire Buildings Record. Historical data are generally drawn from secondary sources, normally the Victoria County History and histories of the individual towns, based on recommendations or specific requirements.
- 2.2 The use of primary sources in the Record Office is usually restricted to maps but sometimes other pictorial material is used. These sources are consulted to accurately locate individual entities and to trace the growth of the settlement.
- 2.3 In the case of the Roman towns however, as a result of the limited amount of information available, data has been drawn directly from survey or excavation reports, supplemented by data from the SMR.

3. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The Roman town of Cunetio lies approximately 1.5 kilometres to the east of Marlborough, and 500 metres south east of the village of Mildenhall. The town of Marlborough is thought to have had Saxon and certainly Medieval origins. Marlborough has been dealt with in another report researched by the Extensive Urban Survey and it is hoped that these two reports will emphasise the rich archaeological landscape in this area.

3.2 The settlement of Cunetio is situated in the valley of the River Kennet on the south bank of the river at the foot of the steep valley escarpment. It lies on a slight shelf on the north facing slope, largely enclosed in a single plot called ‘Black Field’. Chopping Knife Lane runs along the southern edge of the site and the western edge of the site is bounded by the road leading south out of Mildenhall.

3.3 Forest Hill overlooks Cunetio from the south west and the Savernake forest lies to the south of the site. The underlying geology consists of alluvium, river terrace gravels and upper chalk.

4. HISTORICAL OUTLINE

4.1 After the Roman invasion in AD 43, a large number of the major towns we know today were created using the already existing pattern of Iron Age communities in Britain. This ensured that the new province could be governed effectively by the Roman Empire . Cunetio would have been in the territory of the native tribe known as the ‘*Atrebat*es’ whose centre of government under the Roman occupation was at Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*).

4.2 Cunetio is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, a Roman document dating to the 3rd Century AD giving routes throughout the Roman empire and the distances between the various named settlements on those routes.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN THE AREA OF THE TOWN

5.1 A comprehensive report was produced by Mark Corney in 1997 listing the archaeological evidence discovered at Cunetio and the archaeological activity undertaken in the area of the town. This report indicates that a substantial amount of archaeological work has been carried out at the site in the 19th and 20th centuries, and includes aerial photographic survey, excavation and geophysical survey.

5.2 The following is a list of known archaeological events that have taken place at Cunetio. This list is drawn from information in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Excavations Register, and the fieldwork reports kept in the County Archaeology Section in Trowbridge. Other events have been added as a result of incidental mention in one of the above sources, and where there is enough information to acquire a general idea of the location of the event. The numbers refer to the map included in this report (Fig. 3).

Event	Year	Site Name/Location	Event Type	Excavator	Reference
1	1860	Black Field/Unlocated	Excavation	Unknown	Thomas 1955-6
2	1880	Black Field	Observation (cropmarks)	Reverend Soames	Thomas 1955-6
3	1912	Black Field/200 feet south of the south-east angle of the town wall	Excavation	J.W. Brooke	Brooke 1922 Annable 1966
4	1956	Black Field/defences	Excavation	F.K. Annable and I. Anthony	Thomas 1955-6

5	1958	Black Field/defences	Resistivity survey	F.K. Annable and A.J. Clark	Anon 1958-60
6	1958	Black Field/east wall of the defences	Excavation	F.K. Annable and A.J. Clark	Anon 1958-60
7	1959	Black Field/north wall of the defences	Excavation	F.K. Annable	Anon 1958-60
8	1960-1	Black Field/west entrance	Excavation	F.K. Annable	Anon 1963
9	1960-1	Black Field/north west corner of the defences	Excavation	F.K. Annable and A.J. Clark	Anon 1963
10	1963	Black Field/beneath footings of west wall	Excavation	F.K. Annable	Anon 1964
11	1964	Black Field/north of west gate	Excavation	F.K. Annable	Anon 1965
12	1975	Black Field	Rescue excavation	F.K. Annable	Annable 1977-8
13	1997	Cunetio (area west of defences from SU 2151 6958 to SU 2069 6914)	Excavation	Wessex Archaeology	Wessex Archaeology. Unpublished client report 1998 (CAS)
14	1998	The Bothy, Werg Mill, Mildenhall (SU 2145 6955)	Evaluation	AC Archaeology	AC Archaeology. Unpublished client report 1998 (CAS)

6. ARCHAEOLOGY: SITES AND EVIDENCE

6.1 *Prehistoric (Fig. 4)*

6.1.1 There have been several discoveries of Iron Age material in the area of the Roman town. Iron Age coins have been found at various locations (**CU036-7, CU041, CU068-9**). In 1951 an Iron Age cemetery was discovered close to the river Kennet (**CU040**).

6.2 *Roman (Figs. 5-8)*

6.2.1 The presence of a Roman town near Mildenhall was well known to 19th century antiquarians and it is clear that the area was very rich in finds dating to the Romano-British period. Sir Richard Colt Hoare was well aware of the Roman town and named the site of Forest Hill ‘Upper Cunetio’ and Black Field as ‘Lower Cunetio’ (1821).

6.2.2 The Reverend Soames (1881) discussed the number of coins from the area of the town and stated that he thought more than one hundred were brought to him annually. He mentioned that it was possible to distinguish the lines of the main streets and thoroughfares of Cunetio and that it was “the site of a very considerable Roman town”.

6.2.3 Regular ploughing has revealed from an early date the presence of a number of Roman features (Corney 1997). This encouraged a number of early excavations, usually of wells. Aerial photography has clearly indicated the extent of the Roman town complete with two sets of defences, a street plan, building plots and other features such as pits (Fig. 5).

- 6.2.4** There is considerable evidence of the Roman road network in the area (Fig. 6). The town lies on the main Roman road from Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*) to Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) which also passes through another of Wiltshire's Roman towns, Verlucio. Cunetio also lies on a north-south road which leads from Wanborough (*Durocornovium*) to Winchester (*Venta Belgarum*). Four other Roman roads are also believed to have serviced Cunetio at some time (Corney 1997).
- 6.2.5** The road approaching from Silchester is thought to have had two routes, not necessarily used at the same time (**CU74, CU81**, see Corney 1997, 339). The line of the road passes very close to the south-west corner of the stone defences and cannot have functioned once these had been constructed. Evidence for both routes can be seen on the ground to the south-east of the town in the form of well defined terrace-ways where the roads climb the escarpment out of the Kennet valley.
- 6.2.6** To the south of the site, about 1km distant in Savernake Forest, the routes from Old Sarum and Winchester meet. These then run down the escarpment along the modern track known as Cock-a-Troop Lane (**CU079**, *ibid*). The line of the northern road to Cirencester via Wanborough is well established to the north of the River Kennet and is aligned to meet with these roads leading from the south of the town.
- 6.2.7** Excavation has revealed that Roman occupation at Black Field began in the 1st century AD. A large amount of Claudio-Neronian pottery (c AD 43-68) has been retrieved and a number of military finds have been discovered. These include part of a cheek-piece, bronze mounts from a belt, a fragment of a possible buckle and also several Republican coins and early types of brooch. These all suggest the settlement may have had an early military origin.
- 6.2.8** The town was fortified, possibly throughout most of its life (Fig.7). A set of substantial earthwork defences has been revealed at the site, consisting of a bank and at least two ditches (**CU074**, Corney 1997, 341). These take the form of a double ditched sub-rectangular enclosure with rounded corners at the south-west and south-east angles. During excavation the profile of this ditch was found to be v-shaped. The northern edge of the enclosure has not yet been discovered but is believed to lie close to the line of the later stone defences (Thomas 1955-6).
- 6.2.9** Four possible entrances have been identified. The clearest of these exists on the southern defences some 60m from the south-west corner, where the ditches are interrupted by a 10 metre wide causeway that carries a metalled street. Another entrance has been located on the western side of the enclosure and two further entrances occupy the eastern side. Corney (1997) suggests that a late 2nd century or early 3rd century date seems likely for these defences from comparisons with other sites in the roman Britain.
- 6.2.10** These defences were levelled at some point before the stone walls were constructed. It appears that the ditch was filled in before the stone defences were constructed -

excavation has revealed the later wall overlaps the ditch in several places (Thomas 1955-6).

- 6.2.11** Aerial photography has revealed a set of later stone defences in Black Field and excavation has shown that these are of monumental proportions. The footings of the south wall have been found approximately one foot beneath the present ground surface and measure 18 feet and 6 inches in width (Thomas 1955-6). The foundations of the east wall were found to be 16 feet wide and the superstructure of the wall was approximately 12 feet wide (Anon.1958-60).
- 6.2.12** The western wall of the town was traced in the excavations situated in the small upper paddock flanking Cock-a Troop Lane. A rectangular area of stone flooring measuring 20 feet by 10 feet was discovered. Three monumental stone blocks were found resting partly on the pavement area and are thought to be the vestiges of the lowermost footings of the side walls which probably formed a single arched gateway into the town. This western gateway was originally constructed to cater for wheeled traffic but its design was altered with the insertion of metal posts and a wicker gateway (Anon. 1963).
- 6.2.13** From the results of the excavations carried out by Annable and Clark in 1964 it appears that the stone defences were constructed soon after AD 360 and that they consisted of a stone circuit with more than twelve bastions and a monumental south gateway as well as the western pedestrian gateway. The date also was confirmed by the excavation of a small ditch located to the north of the west gate. A coin retrieved from the primary fill of the ditch was found to date to AD 360 (Anon. 1965).
- 6.2.14** Cunetio's alignment has been governed by the route approaching from Silchester. Another parallel road has been discovered to the north of this route and at least seven streets have been found to lie at right angles to it. It is thought that the setting out of the street plan took place after AD 100 and possibly at two different stages as the western third of Cunetio has a different and irregular street pattern (Corney 1997, 344).
- 6.2.15** At least twenty buildings have been revealed by means of aerial photography (Figs. 5 & 8). These also indicate signs of town planning as they can be seen to front onto the roads. A large south-facing courtyard building can be seen in the centre of the town. This structure measures approximately 60m by 40m and consists of twenty four rooms grouped in three ranges as well as a south-facing courtyard. The location suggests it may have held an official function and Corney (1997) believes it may have functioned as a '*mansio*' or Roman posting station for official travelers.
- 6.2.16** Twelve of the known buildings have been discovered within the boundary of the later stone defences. Only one of these, situated in the north-west corner of the town, has been investigated archaeologically (**CU043**). This was found to measure 50m by 25m and has a winged corridor form with an apse on its north side. Excavation has revealed a part of this apsidal room and a substantial amount of painted wall plaster suggesting that the building had a high status.

- 6.2.17** Another building has been revealed about 35 metres to the east of the winged corridor structure which measures at least 25 by 15 metres and lies parallel to the north wall (CU044). Most of the other buildings known are rectangular in form and have a much simpler plan. At least eight have been found to exist on the same alignment as the north-west, south-east street system.
- 6.2.18** One building of particular interest lies to the south of the defences (CU095) and a large area of metalling lies to the north and the east of this structure. A coin hoard known as the 'Cunetio hoard' was discovered a short distance to the east of this building. Four other buildings also lie to the south of the defences, one close to the south west corner of the defences and two to the east. Corney (1997) suggests that a number of pits and ditched enclosures which have been traced to the west of the defences could represent further buildings, possibly of timber construction.
- 6.2.19** At least five wells have been recorded in Black Field, the earliest of which was discovered underneath the town's stone defences in 1963 in an area to the south of the west gate. This example contained pottery and a bronze military apron mount of mid-1st century date. Another two wells, one of which was excavated and found to date to the 2nd century AD, were noted by the Reverend Soames in 1860 but these remain unlocated.
- 6.2.20** A further water source was excavated by Brooke in 1912 and this well was found to contain an important assemblage of late Roman ceramics, post-dating c. AD 350 as well as 102 coins, possibly from a disturbed hoard dating to the late 370s or early 380s AD. The well was located close to the late stone defences, at a point approximately 70 metres south of the south-east angle and had been backfilled at a single date. A fifth well was discovered in 1956 below the south defences but was not excavated.
- 6.2.21** Very little cemetery evidence has been retrieved from the site. One single inhumation in a lead coffin was exposed during ploughing 120 metres south of the south east angle of the stone defences (CU033). This location lies just to the south of the road to Silchester and could indicate the presence of a Roman cemetery site (Annable 1977-8). Two superimposed east-west burials were also recovered to the west of Cunetio which are thought to date to the 1st or 2nd century AD. A 4th century cremation burial was also retrieved which is unusual as inhumation was the main form of burial during this period.
- 6.2.22** Excavations 50 metres to the NW of Cunetio at 'The Bothy' (CU098, Anon 1998) in Mildenhall revealed that Roman occupation also exists outside the defensive boundary of the town. Roman deposits were found below the present ground surface up to a depth of at least 1.1 metres. They are likely to represent demolition or levelling layers and are thought to date to the 2nd century AD (AC Archaeology 1998).
- 6.2.23** Work on a proposed pipeline (Fig 4, 013, CU099) also revealed several deposits on the outskirts of Cunetio. This investigation revealed that archaeological remains extend for at least 300 metres to the west of the defences of the late Roman town and that Roman activity extends as far north as the floodplain of the River Kennet.

6.2.24 Most of the evidence recovered dates to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. One feature of particular interest is a large ditch with a chalk rampart along its north eastern edge. This has been interpreted as a boundary feature and is possibly defensive (Wessex Archaeology 1998). Other occupation evidence included a well and a number of rubbish pits as well as some postholes. Several rubbish pits dating to the later Roman period were also discovered.

6.3 *Medieval (Fig 9).* Cock a Troop is known as Crokerstrope in AD1257. A small hamlet is shown on a 16th century copy of a 14th century map of the Savernake Forest (CU022). Medieval coinage has been found within the area of the Roman town (CU057). Durnsford Mill (CU060) and Werg Mill (CU059) are both of Medieval origin.

6.4 *Undated (Fig.10).* South-east of the town two square enclosures are recorded from aerial photographs (CU04, CU05). These may be of Romano-British date.

7 COMPONENTS OF THE TOWN (Fig. 11).

7.1 It is clear from the complexity of the Roman road system around Cunetio and also of the street grid itself that the development of the town was complex and undoubtedly evolved over a substantial period of time. In spite of the fact that the evidence from air photography is substantial and the information gained from excavations is very informative, it is difficult to be certain of the sequence of events.

7.2 **COM1 The 2nd century town.** This is defined by the earthen defences, defined by Corney (2001, 16) as 'a double-ditched sub-rectangular enclosure with rounded corners at the southwest and southeast angles'. The enclosed area seems to be roughly 6ha and possesses four possible entrances. Aerial photography has revealed buildings within this circuit, but it is not certain whether they belong with the early town. One of the most substantial structures visible from the air is sited towards the centre of the early defences and seems to correlate reasonably well with the part of the street-grid which belongs with this phase of the town. The northern line of the bank and ditch enclosure has not been discovered and it is possible to envisage that defences on the east and west sides ran to the edge of the river Kennet.

7.3 **COM2 4th century town.** This is defined by a very substantial circuit consisting of stone walls and projecting bastions and a clearly defined stone gateway in the middle of the southern side. The town possessed at least three gates and the dating evidence suggests a construction date late in the 4th century AD. There is an overwhelming impression that this layout is a radical departure from previous arrangements (Corney 2001, 18) The pre-existing street grid and approach road system appear not to have been accommodated in the new plan, and it may be there was a rapid reaction to the attacks on the Roman provinces of Britain in the late Roman period.

7.4 **COM3 The extra mural settlement.** The scatter of buildings visible from the air and also the extensive area of streets and lanes indicate a wide zone over which habitation

clearly spread at some period. There are several possible interpretations. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that this is the early form of the town's development culminating in the construction of the earthen defences perhaps in the late 2nd century AD. It would imply that the original foundation was prosperous and successful but along with other Romano-British towns was reorganised with fortifications prior to AD200. Little is known of the nature of this widespread occupation.

- 7.5 COM4 Roman road system and street grid.** There is an extensive array of streets, lanes or roads cutting across the area of both defended circuits and to the east, south and west of the main area of the town. Part of the system seems to be formally organised on a grid, other parts more organic and possibly indicative of lanes accessing the surrounding countryside. No evidence of an outer circuit of defences encompassing these features has come to light.

8 CUNETIO IN ITS WIDER CONTEXT

- 8.1** A great deal of prehistoric evidence has been found in the vicinity of Cunetio. Several Neolithic finds have been retrieved from the village of Mildenhall, including a fragment of an axe head and other flint tools. Additionally, the prehistoric enclosure at Forest Hill overlooks the Roman town and it has been suggested that the enclosure may represent an '*oppidum*' or hillfort (Corney 1997). The enclosure covers an area of approximately eleven hectares and it is located on the edge of the north-facing escarpment overlooking the River Kennet.
- 8.2** The site is believed to be associated with other Iron Age finds in the area, for example, a nearby cemetery site located approximately 400 metres to the west of Cunetio. This consists of eight burials, some in flexed postures. A large amount of coinage dating to the Iron Age period has been found close to Black Field and Forest Hill, and other earthworks close to the western edge of Savernake Forest may be associated with this Iron Age occupation. The discovery of the 'Marlborough bucket', a high status cremation burial, was also made less than 1 kilometre to the north west of Cunetio.
- 8.3** Sir Richard Colt Hoare, a 19th century antiquarian, suggests the two settlements at Forest Hill and Cunetio may be linked in some way and as a result he named Forest Hill 'Upper Cunetio' and Black Field 'Lower Cunetio'. Aerial photography has revealed a Roman building inside the Iron Age enclosure, which with further investigation may prove to be a Roman villa. Colt Hoare recorded several Roman finds from inside the enclosure in 1805. These included a bronze statuette, bronze spoons, coins, a cremation burial and a tessellated floor as well as other structural remains
- 8.4** It is known that to the south of Cunetio in Savernake Forest an important local pottery industry was established in the pre-Flavian period, probably as a result of a military stimulus. This pottery has a wide distribution in Wiltshire and it is believed that Cunetio may have acted as the main marketing centre for the industry (Corney 1997).

9 ASSESSMENT

9.1 Summary of Research

- 9.1.1** Research has been carried out at Cunetio over an extensive period of time ranging from the 19th century until the 1970s. The majority of the research carried out at the site was co-ordinated by F K Annable and AJ Clark with the help of volunteers from the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. This research has involved a programme of seasonal excavation, located with the help of aerial photographs.
- 9.1.2** A great deal of this research has concentrated upon the defences of the town, particularly the later stone walls surrounding the settlement. Some excavation of the earthen defences has taken place but not a great deal. Additionally, three wells have been excavated, one of which has proved to be a particularly useful chronological tool when dating the features above it, and one of the buildings inside the town has been investigated.
- 9.1.3** Corney's report (1997) has provided a comprehensive analysis of the work carried out at the site. This publication has provided the basis for the Extensive Urban.

9.2 Growth of the town

9.2.1 Evidence for 1st century occupation:

- 9.2.1.1** The growth of Cunetio appears to be complex. It seems likely that the settlement originated as a result of a military presence in the valley of the River Kennet and may have been the site of an early fort. The proximity of an Iron Age enclosure and possible '*oppidum*' to the Roman settlement also suggests that there may have been a military interest in the area.
- 9.2.1.2** The plan of the 'pre-wall' defences has been described as typically 'playing card' shaped, which often indicates the presence of a fort or military camp. Corney (1997) argues that the size of the Roman enclosure at Cunetio is too large to be an early fort, especially when compared to other military settlements in southern Britain built immediately after the conquest. He agrees that an early fort would have been needed in this area to control the crossing of the River Kennet but proposes that the remains may lie undetected beneath the already known 'pre-wall' defences shown on aerial photographs.
- 9.2.1.3** Corney (1997) suggests Cunetio may have then developed as a '*vicus*', a civilian settlement associated with a fort. Such a settlement would have depended upon trade with the fort and if one had existed at Cunetio the presence of the soldiers and the road network would have helped the town to thrive. The pottery industry in the Savernake Forest may also have been associated with the town at this time.
- 9.2.1.4** The discovery of the first century well beneath the stone defences of the town confirms that the settlement was in occupation during this period. The presence of

Samian ware in this well also is a good indication that a military presence could have been established at the site at this time, as imported pottery is usually associated with the Roman army in the period which immediately post dates the Roman invasion in AD 43.

9.3.1 Evidence for 2nd and 3rd century occupation:

9.3.1.1 Cunetio appears to have become a fully civilian, well-established settlement at least by the 2nd century AD. The town was given new defences consisting of a bank and at least two ditches. It seems that the town had a planned street system and stone built houses at this stage. The need for defences suggests that the town had reached a high status or at least contained buildings or functions that needed to be defended adequately. The presence of a large building with a courtyard in the centre of the defended area suggests there may have been at least one official building at this time as well.

9.4.1 Evidence for 4th century occupation:

9.4.1.1 The final stage of development at Cunetio and possibly the most dramatic is likely to have occurred in the late 4th century AD when the stone defences were built and the town enlarged. Such a radical alteration in town planning suggests that Cunetio had reached a considerably high status in the later years of its existence.

9.4.1.2 The fact that expensive stone defences were built so late in a town's lifetime indicates that extensive re-planning took place at Cunetio. The stone walls do not respect the line of the earlier earthen defences and this confirms a change in the town plan and also an enlargement in the town, which is rare for this late date. Corney (1997) states that such an operation could only have occurred under the instruction of a high authority.

9.5 *The Archaeological Potential*

9.5.1 One of the principal aims of this phase of the Extensive Urban Survey is to examine the archaeological potential of the town to assist with the development of a management strategy in the later phase of the project. Whilst all of the core town may be considered important archaeologically, it is necessary to try to highlight those areas of greater interest, either because of the importance of the remains or because better than average preservation is expected there.

9.5.2 The most significant issue relating to the town of Cunetio is perhaps the relationship between the wide area of settlement recorded from air photography and the core area defended first by an earthen bank and ultimately by a stone wall. It has been suggested above that there is a strong possibility that this extensive occupation represents an early town prior to the construction of the defences, but no archaeological investigation has investigated this issue.

- 9.5.3** In relation to the development of this extra mural zone, further investigations need to be conducted into its content. It may be that parts of the street grid were set out speculatively and that some of the streets are more in the nature of country lanes reaching out to surrounding farmsteads.
- 9.5.4** As yet the earthen defences have not been formally dated although a 2nd century date is most likely. There is also the question of the manner in which these defences linked to the river Kennet and possibly implications for riverside habitation which the circuit may have attempted to include and defend.
- 9.5.5** The core of the town is a substantial building closely relating to the street grid. There is every likelihood that this is a formal public building, perhaps a mansio. Investigation of this structure would cast considerable light on the status and quality of life within the town.

10. SOURCES

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