

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**MEADOW VIEW, CAERWENT GARDENS,  
CAERWENT, MONMOUTHSHIRE.**  
for  
Mr and Mrs Kidger



Report No. 1895/2007

By Stuart Whatley



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**MEADOW VIEW, CAERWENT GARDENS,  
CAERWENT, MONMOUTHSHIRE.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 4722 9044

Client: Mr and Mrs Kidger

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### Abbreviations

aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
BGS	British Geological Survey
c.	Circa
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
Km	Kilometre
m	Metre
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the construction of a new conservatory adjoining the residential property.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during the intrusive groundworks.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Kidger (planning reference DC/2007/00840) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a new conservatory for the standing residential house.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with the condition of planning consent (and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2007)).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken on the 22nd October 2007 under the supervision of Stuart Whatley who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with the National Museum of Wales and a copy of the report will be sent to the National Monuments Record maintained by CADW.

## 2. THE SITE

- 2.1 Caerwent (OS NGR 4722 9044) is located approximately 2.5km north of Caldicot, and 12km east of Newport, situated between two major link routes towards Cardiff; the M48 and the A48. The site is located in the western quarter of the modern settlement. It is outside the east gate of the original Roman settlement of *Venta Silurum*, to the west. It is bounded to the north by the main east-west route through Caerwent, originally a Roman road connecting Legionary Fortresses at Caerleon and Gloucester. Beyond the road is open land. To the east, south and west the site is bounded by other residential properties and associated gardens.
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Burtle Beds sands and gravels of the Pleistocene, which overlie Mercia Mudstone of the Triassic period.
- 2.3 The site lies within a Conservation Area.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is no evidence for a settlement at Caerwent predating the Roman Period (AD 43 – 410).
- 3.2 The settlement at Caerwent (*Venta Silurum*) formed an administrative centre (*Civitas Capital*) for the land of the *Silures*, a local tribe who had resisted conquest by the Roman military until the end of the 1st Century. Following their conquest, the Roman military constructed the military fortress of *Isca* (Caerleon) approximately 12km west of Caerwent.
- 3.3 Excavations of the Roman town during the 20th century uncovered evidence showing that the town was initially unfortified. In the 2nd century earthwork defences were added and then reconstructed in stone during the second half of the 3rd century. Spectacular bastions were added to the north and south side of the town walls during the 4th century.
- 3.4 All space inside the town walls was completely utilised by the 4th century and there is evidence that suburbs existed outside, especially to the east, where the remains of a substantial temple has been found. A number of villas and farmsteads have been found in the area around the town including those found at Castle Wood (1.6km north) and Caldicot Quarry (1.6km south).
- 3.5 During the post Roman period, the town appears to have become a religious centre, the town being the location of a monastery founded by St. Tathan/Tantheus. Evidence of a cemetery that is likely to be associated with the monastery has been found inside and to the east of the Roman town walls. A small settlement has survived at Caerwent throughout the medieval and post-medieval period to modern day.
- 3.7 A large amount of fieldwork has been undertaken in the vicinity. Within the Vicarage Orchard at NGR ST 4718 9046 a series of excavations in 1910 revealed a Roman building whose north wall was destroyed by the modern road (GGAT HER 03751g). Another excavation in the same year revealed a building, coins, and upper parts of two millstones, black pottery and 30 inhumations (GGAT HER 07719g).
- 3.8 In advance of the construction of a new housing development at Victoria Orchard, an excavation was undertaken. Revealed in the 1973 excavation was the extent of a presumed Dark Age cemetery previously excavated and published in 1911. The cemetery contained 118 inhumations which were aligned E-W, one in a slab-built coffin (GGAT HER 07720g).
- 3.9 In 1977, directly east of the site, within the Vicarage Garden (NGR ST 4724 9042) a small pit was uncovered containing a few medieval sherds and a few abraded Romano-British sherds. (GGAT HER 02345g).
- 3.10 Two watching briefs were undertaken by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust on land at rear of the Old Vicarage in 1997, at the location of NGR ST 4717 9035.



#### **4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2007). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of a single trench for foundations of a new conservatory extension to the current residential building known as Meadow View, Caerwent Gardens, Caerwent.

## **5. RESULTS**

- 5.1 All groundworks were carried out using a 1.5 tonne 360° mechanical excavator, using a toothless grading bucket.
- 5.2 A U-shaped foundation trench measuring 3.1m x 4m x 3.1m was observed being excavated at the rear of the Meadow View residential property. The trench was approximately 0.7m wide x 0.6m deep. The earliest deposit encountered was sandy clay subsoil deposit 101. This was located between the depths of 0.3-0.6m below the surface. Overlying the subsoil was topsoil deposit 100, a dark brown silty clay deposit that varied in thickness between 0.3-0.4m thick. This was the surface deposit located in the trenches 2.5m east of the standing building.
- 5.3 Abutting the building was floor surface 102, a concrete paving-slab floor. The floor was 0.2m thick and overlay sub-base 103 containing compacted angular sandstone 0.2m thick. Beneath the sandstone sub-base was buried topsoil deposit 100, which in turn overlay subsoil 101. Excavation ceased at 0.6m below the surface within the subsoil.
- 5.4 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed. There were no artefacts predating the modern period recovered during intrusive groundworks at the site.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of the intrusive groundworks. The lack of archaeological deposits was due to the shallow depth of the excavation, as only subsoil was encountered. It may also be due to the fact the ground was truncated by previous development of the area.

## 7. PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Stuart Whatley who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by Stuart Whatley. The project was managed by Bruce Williams.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

### Maps

Ordnance Survey Plan of Roman Caerwent	1:50,000 plan, Cardiff & Newport. Landranger Map, 2002 1:500ft (1:150m), Plate 3. In <i>Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club 1893-96</i> .
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### Published Material

Martin, A. 1894.	Caerwent in <i>Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club 1893-96</i> . Exeter. 41-55.
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### Unpublished Material

BaRAS 2007	Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological watching brief at Meadow View, Caerwent Gardens, Caerwent, Monmouthshire.
Gwent Glamorgan	Historic Environment Record Information for Meadow View Gardens, Caerwent.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank Mr and Mrs Kidger for their assistance and co-operation and Neil Maylan of Glamorgan Gwent for his advice.

## APPENDIX 1: Extracts from Planning Policies Relating to Archaeology

### Planning Policy Wales, revised March 2002

#### Section 6.5: Development control and the historic environment

##### *Archaeological remains*

- 6.5.1 The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining a planning application, whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled. Where nationally important **archaeological remains**, whether scheduled or not and their settings, are likely to be affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in-situ. In cases involving lesser archaeological remains, local planning authorities will need to weigh the relative importance of archaeology against other factors, including the need for the proposed development.
- 6.5.2 The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their proposals for development with the local planning authority at an early stage. Archaeological assessments commissioned by developers (sometimes as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment) can help to provide information on the archaeological sensitivity of a site before submitting a planning application. If important remains are thought to exist at a development site, the planning authority should request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. The results of any assessment and/or field evaluation should be provided as part of a planning application. If this information is not provided, authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information, or whether to refuse permission for inadequately documented proposals.
- 6.5.3 Where local planning authorities decide that physical preservation in-situ of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the case and that development resulting in the destruction of archaeological remains should proceed, before granting planning permission the authority needs to be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of the remains and the publication of the results. Archaeological investigations should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the planning authority.
- 6.5.4 Local planning authorities may impose conditions to protect a monument and require that an archaeological watching brief is carried out. In order to secure the provision of an appropriate archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of remains, a negative condition may be imposed prohibiting the carrying out of development until such time as works or other action (for example, an excavation) have been carried out by a third party.
- 6.5.5 Archaeological remains may only become apparent when development has commenced. Where such remains are deemed by the Assembly to be of national importance, the remains may be scheduled. In these circumstances, developers would need to seek separate Scheduled Monument Consent before continuing work. The local planning authority or the Assembly may revoke planning consent if deemed necessary.

### Welsh Office Circular 60/96 'Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology'

#### *Planning Applications*

##### (b) Archaeological Assessments

12. These consultations will help to provide developers with advance warning of the archaeological sensitivity of a site. As a result they may wish to commission their own archaeological assessment by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant. This need not involve fieldwork. Assessment normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information: it can make effective use of records of previous discoveries, including any historic maps held by the local authority archive and local museums and record offices, or of geophysical survey techniques. In some circumstances a formal Environmental Assessment may be necessary.

(c) Field Evaluations

13. Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer's own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, the planning authority should request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. Such an evaluation, normally a rapid and inexpensive operation involving ground survey and/or small-scale excavation and trial trenching, is quite distinct from full archaeological excavation but it should be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeologist. Evaluations of this kind help to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains that exist in the area of a proposed development and indicate the weight which ought to be attached to their preservation. They also provide information useful for identifying potential options for minimising or avoiding damage.

14. Local planning authorities should expect developers to provide results of such appraisals, assessments and/or evaluations as part of their application for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance. If developers are not prepared to do so voluntarily, the planning authority may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information. Authorities will need to consider refusing permission for proposals which are inadequately documented.

[The Circular then goes on to discuss the next stages of dealing with the archaeological resource during consultations by planning authorities and the preservation of archaeological remains in-situ or the preservation of archaeological remains by record.]

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
100	Topsoil. Dark brown silty clay. Trench 1.
101	Subsoil. Red brown silty clay. Trench 1. Underlies topsoil 100.
102	Mixture of concrete and paving slab floor. Trench 1. Overlies 100.
103	Sub-base for floor 102. Overlies 100. Trench 1.



Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:50,000

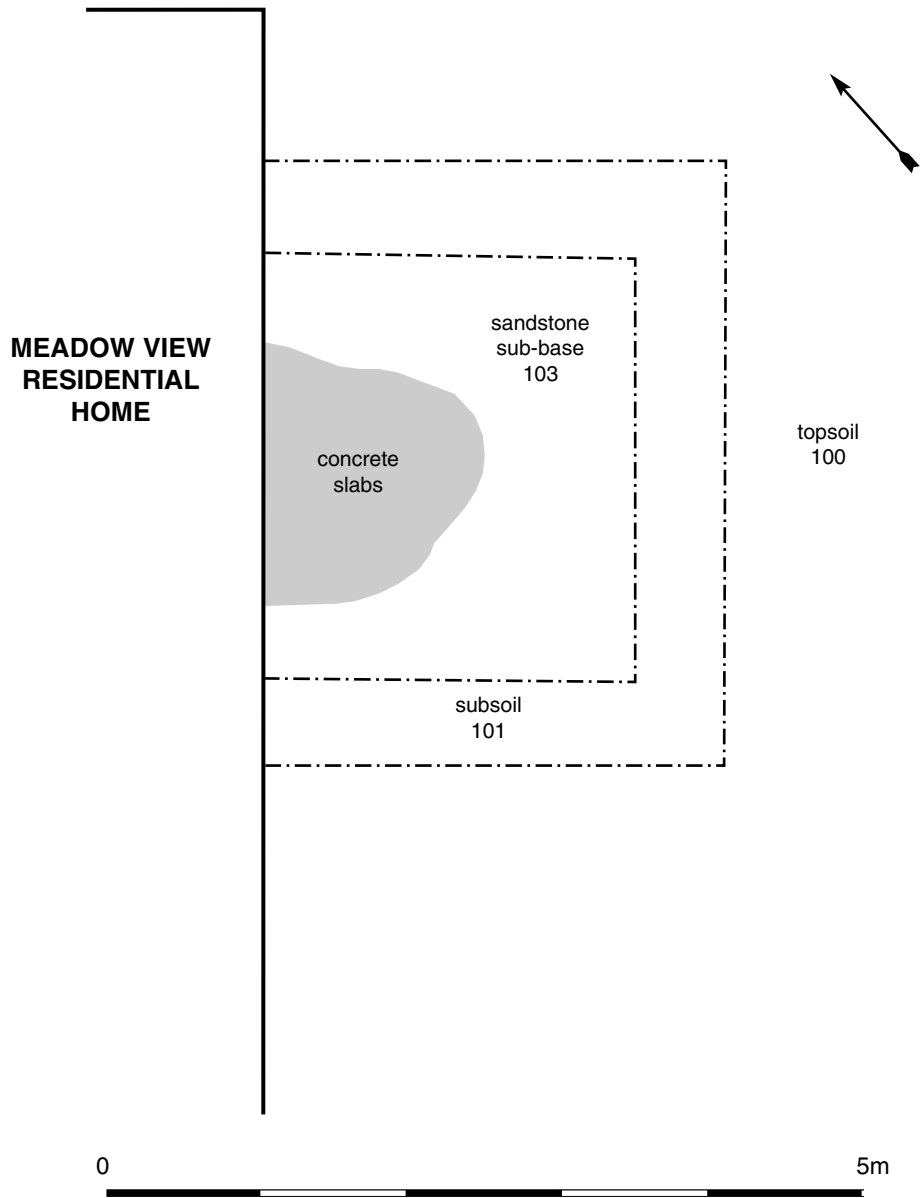


Fig.2 Plan of Trench 1, scale 1:50



# CAERWENT.

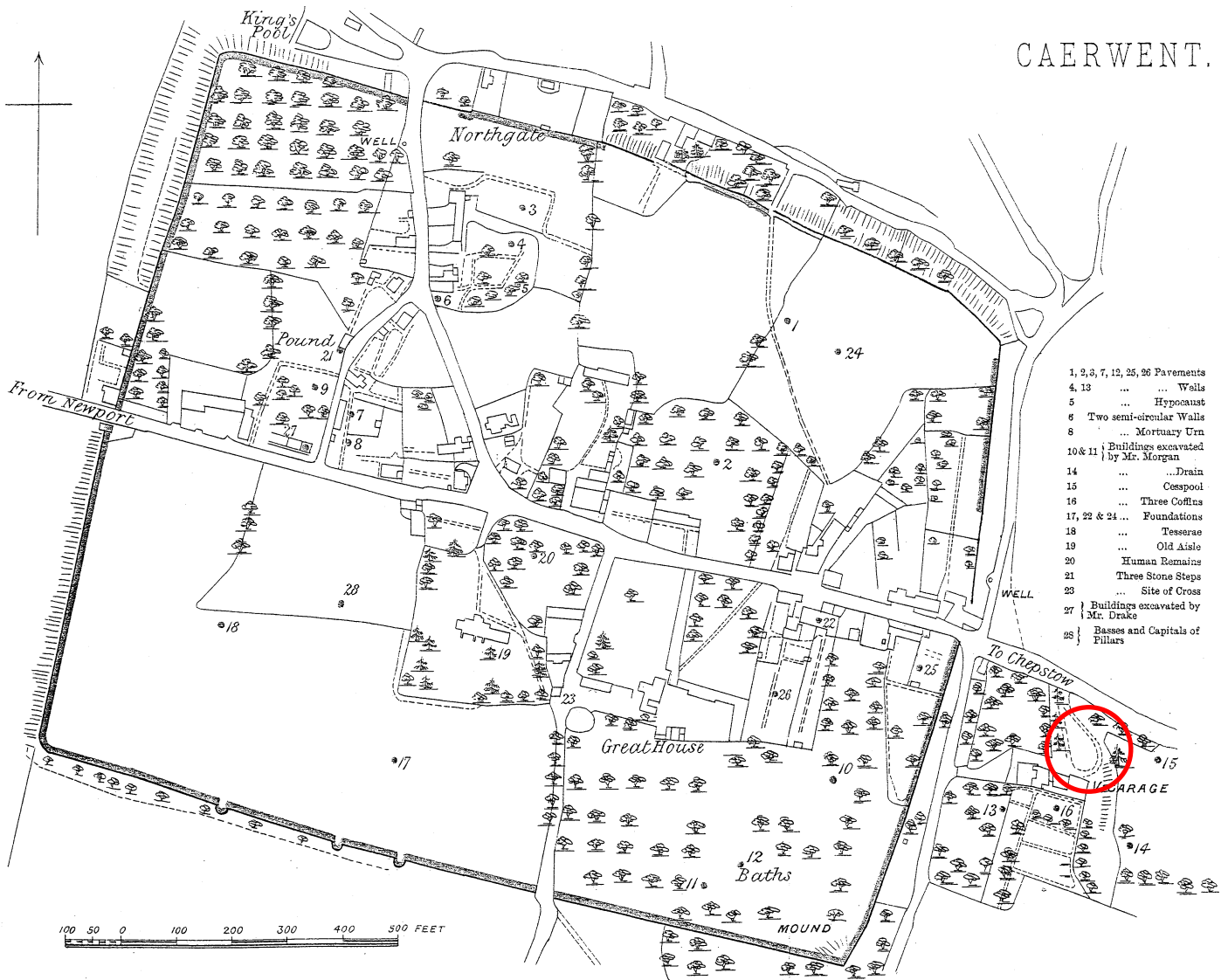


Fig.3 Plan of Caerwent, showing Roman remains, 1894



Plate 1 Trench 1A, looking north-west



Plate 2 Trench 1B, looking north-west



Plate 3  
Trench 1 C, looking north-east