

# Cirencester Excavations III

## HOUSES IN ROMAN CIRENCESTER

Alan McWhirr

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**COTSWOLD  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

## HOUSES IN ROMAN CIRENCESTER



1. The Beeches Allotments prior to realignment of Beeches Road (Aerofilms Ltd. 1963)

## CIRENCESTER EXCAVATIONS III

# HOUSES IN ROMAN CIRENCESTER

by  
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ASHCROFT HOUSE

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

The debate on the use of microfiche in excavation reports rages on. Volume II of our series contained five fiche and most of the finds were included in them, some would say 'relegated' to them! This experiment had mixed results and several people wrote to us expressing concern about the use of fiche. To help overcome the problem that some were finding in using fiche, we produced photocopies of the camera-ready copy used for making the fiche and sold sections to those requiring printouts.

In deciding how best to present Volume III we originally decided to use fiche, but not to the same extent as we did in Volume II. However, HBMC requested that more material should be presented as fiche, a request not supported by our Executive Committee.

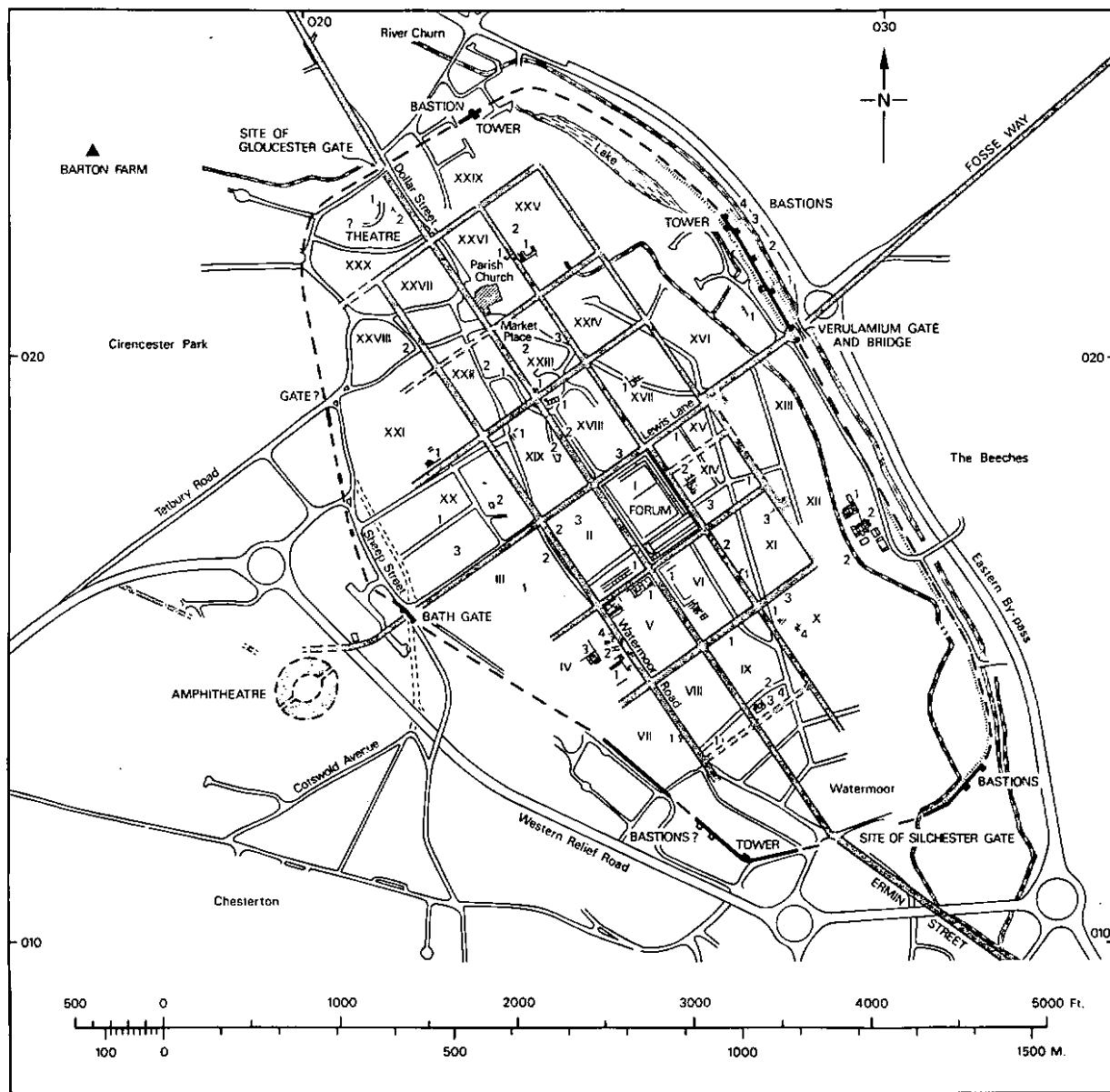
A compromise solution has emerged following discussions with Alan Sutton and Richard Bryant, of Alan Sutton Publishing. Rather than use any fiche we have chosen to produce sections of the report at a reduced print size. We have used the printed text as produced by the computers used to handle the text, thus eliminating the costly exercise of photo typesetting. By using this technique all that is needed to read some sections is a magnifying glass, whereas with fiche it is necessary to use a reader, the nearest of which may be several miles from a person's home – after all, most homes have a magnifying glass!

Volume II with its five fiche was an experiment and consequently received conflicting reviews. The use of reduced print size in an excavations report is again an experiment and no doubt there will be those who object. However, the CEC is conscious of the need to produce reports which can be used by both full-time and part-time archaeologists at a price which most can afford.

## INTRODUCTION

This third volume in the *Cirencester Excavations* series has been devoted to excavations that have produced evidence for Roman town houses in *Corinium*. The major part of the volume is devoted to a report of excavations conducted in Beeches Road between 1970 and 1973, which have produced interesting details of town buildings constructed in the fourth century A.D.

At the same time as post-excavation work was proceeding on The Beeches Road sites, a request was received from the Department of the Environment (now English Heritage – Historic



2. Cirencester: Roman Town Plan

Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) to take over the publication of an excavation conducted by Miss Mary Rennie in Cirencester in 1958. This was readily agreed to as the site seemed an obvious one to be published alongside the Beeches. In considering how best to publish both of these sites the opportunity was taken to review other excavations previously carried out by the Cirencester Excavation Committee, which had produced evidence of similar buildings. Three other such sites were identified and these have been grouped together to form Part II of this volume.

As Parts I and II were a collection of excavation reports all of which were concerned with private buildings, almost certainly houses, it was decided to add a third part to the volume bringing together all the evidence for Roman houses in Cirencester. This Gazetteer includes details of buildings, some of which were found many years ago as well as brief outlines of buildings uncovered during recent excavations by the Committee. Inclusion of a site in this Gazetteer does not mean that fuller publication is not intended, but the advantages of having such details all together in one volume are clearly obvious.

Future volumes in this series are planned and *CE IV* is well advanced and is devoted to the Abbey and Saxon Churches of Cirencester dug between 1964 and 1966. The fifth volume is likely to be devoted to a number of major sites from the Roman town centre including the basilica and forum and buildings from adjacent *insulae*. The Roman defences are also expected to appear in this volume.

The bulk of this volume was processed on Leicester Polytechnic's mainframe computer, a Burroughs 6800, using RUNOFF, a text handling package. The rest was dealt with using the Committee's Apple IIe and Applewriter.

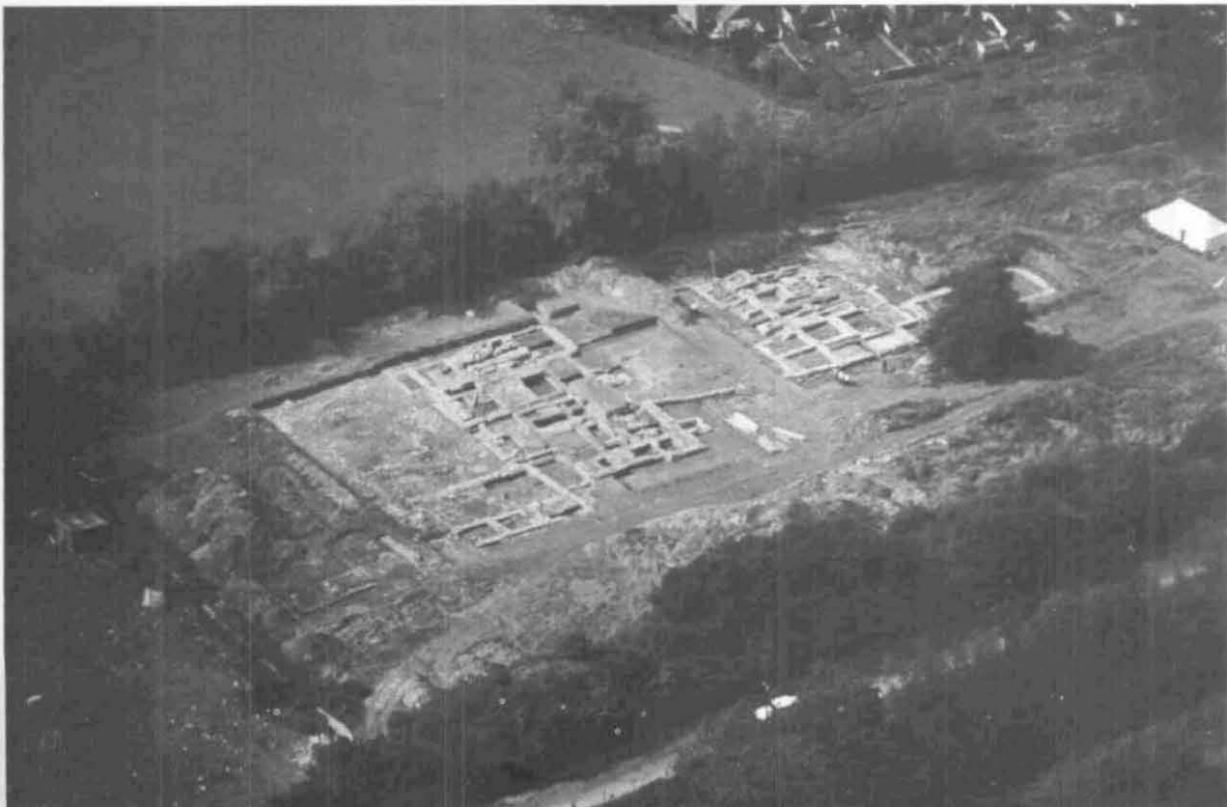
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Beeches Road site had for many years been allotments and trial excavations were carried out in 1970 on a number of plots which had become vacant. Without the help and co-operation of those remaining allotment holders, work in 1970 would not have been possible. The landowner, Mr Richard Chester Master, willingly gave permission for excavations to take place and was a stalwart supporter of our work throughout subsequent seasons.

The day to day work of supervising the excavations on sites CQ, CX and CY was undertaken by the late Eleanor Waite, Scott Anderson, Brian Gill, Martin Millett, John Robinson and Merlyn Vyner. At the close of the 1973 season when it was planned to complete the excavations, the beginnings of another building appeared at the southern end of the site (XII,3) and fortunately Richard Reece was able to stay on with a small team and investigate the upper levels of this building. His team included P. Grace, A.C. King, T.J. O'Leary, S. Roskams and M. Webber.

Photography was carried out by Robin Peers in 1970 and Colin Shuttleworth between 1971-3. Peter Grace surveyed the buildings and drew the initial plans upon which the published ones are based. Illustration of this volume has again been in the capable hands of Nick Griffiths who has been responsible for drawing the pottery, small finds and redrawing the plans and sections.

The processing of the finds on site was looked after by a number of people including the late Ann Anderson and Ian Lea. Post excavation work of the finds has been the responsibility of Janet



3. Aerial view of buildings XII,1 and XII,2 and the beginnings of XII,3 (J. Hancock 1973)

Keely and Linda Viner whose reports form the bulk of this report. Conservation work was undertaken by Ann Woods in the laboratories of the Archaeology Department of the University of Leicester. Many specialists have helped in the preparation of these reports and our gratitude is extended to them for their specific contributions, and to the following for their comments and advice: The Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, David Peacock, Ann and Scott Anderson, the late Dorothy Charlesworth, Brenda Dickinson, Mike Fulford, Cherry Goudge, Kay Hartley, Martin Henig, Caroline Ireland, Rob Perrin, Bernard Phillips, Val Rigby and David Wilkinson.

In all, the remains of some thirteen mosaics were noted and consequently the recording of them formed a major task during the excavations. We were very fortunate in having the services of David Neal who recorded every floor in minute detail and the results of his work have already appeared in print (in McWhirr 1973 and Neal 1981). Two floors were thought worthy of lifting completely and this was done by Carter Contracting Ltd with financial aid from the Cotswold District Council. They are now displayed in the Corinium Museum. Michael Orr lifted and restored a number of other sections of mosaic.

Finance for the excavations and post excavation work came mainly from the Department of the Environment, but significant contributions came from the Cotswold District Council, the former Cirencester Urban District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society and Cirencester Archaeological and Historical Society. The Haverfield Trust provided grants for certain aspects of the work. Donations on site also formed a significant part of our income and the work of the guides from the Cirencester Archaeological and Historical Society, under their organiser the late Miss D.M. Radway, was mainly responsible for this revenue.

Many archaeologists visited the excavations and the Director is indebted to them for discussing problems of interpretation and for their comments on several of the finds. The Committee has dealt with a number of people from the Department of the Environment, but at the time of these excavations Dr C.J. Young was our Inspector and linkman. Miss S.A. Butcher has long been associated with our work and following the excavations has taken a close interest in our post-excavation work. Without their help and friendship the task of digging and writing up would have been much more onerous. The support of the members of the Cirencester Excavation Committee is duly acknowledged and in particular one must mention the support of its Chairman, Professor S.S. Frere.

Finally, the Committee is indebted to Leicester Polytechnic for allowing Dr. McWhirr time to work on these excavations, for handling the payment of the research assistants and for providing facilities to enable the work to be completed efficiently. In particular, grateful thanks must be extended to the staff of the Computer Centre of Leicester Polytechnic who provided help and advice in the handling of this text by computer.