

Woking Palace or Old Hall, Old Woking Scheduled Ancient Monument No 125 TQ 0296 5704

The manorial moated site of Woking Palace is situated on the alluvial flood plain of the original uncanalised course of the river Wey about 1.5km downstream from the parish church of St Peter, Old Woking (of Norman and later date). The few remaining 14th to 17th century stone and brick ruins have suffered greatly from vandals, but the moats, banks and two rectangular stew ponds are still in a fair state of preservation, although much overgrown.

Domesday Book records the Manor as being held by Edward the Confessor and William I. Thereafter it passed in and out of Royal hands until James I granted it to Sir Edward Zouch. Eventually the Palace was allowed to fall into decay, and it is thought that some of the material was used to build a new house for the Zouch family on the site of the later Hoe Place.

Around 1912 an excavation of Woking Palace was carried out, but not published, by the then owner, the second Earl of Iveagh. The only references to this excavation are in a note on 'Zouch's Pillar at Hoe Bridge, Old Woking' (Onslow 1930) and a footnote in the relevant volume of the King's works (Colvin 1982).

The 25in 1914 OS map shows features which do not appear on earlier or later editions. Enquiries made at the National Monuments Record (Southampton Branch) revealed that, when the 1914 edition was being prepared in December 1912, a note was made that 'several foundations have (since 1895) been excavated, and are now shown on trace'. The tracing has been destroyed, but the remains shown on the published 1914 plan are certainly those revealed in the excavation.

Mr D J G Howard of Burhill Estates Co Ltd kindly arranged for the papers of the Iveagh estate to be searched, and has given permission for the publication of the plan of the moated site prepared by Charles E Lovell, ARIBA, of Gravesend in April 1912 (fig 1). This shows features which, with a few minor exceptions, correspond to those shown on the 1914 OS map, and is almost certainly a record of the excavation carried out sometime before April 1912, by the second Earl of Iveagh (then the Hon Rupert Guinness). Unfortunately this is the only record of the excavation which has come to light. Searches elsewhere have produced nothing.

At the present time the ownership of the site is the subject of negotiation between Burhill Estates Co Ltd and Woking Borough Council. It is hoped that a satisfactory conclusion will soon be reached, and that it will be possible to conserve and protect this important site for the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PLAN OF THE RUINS at WOKING PARK FARM

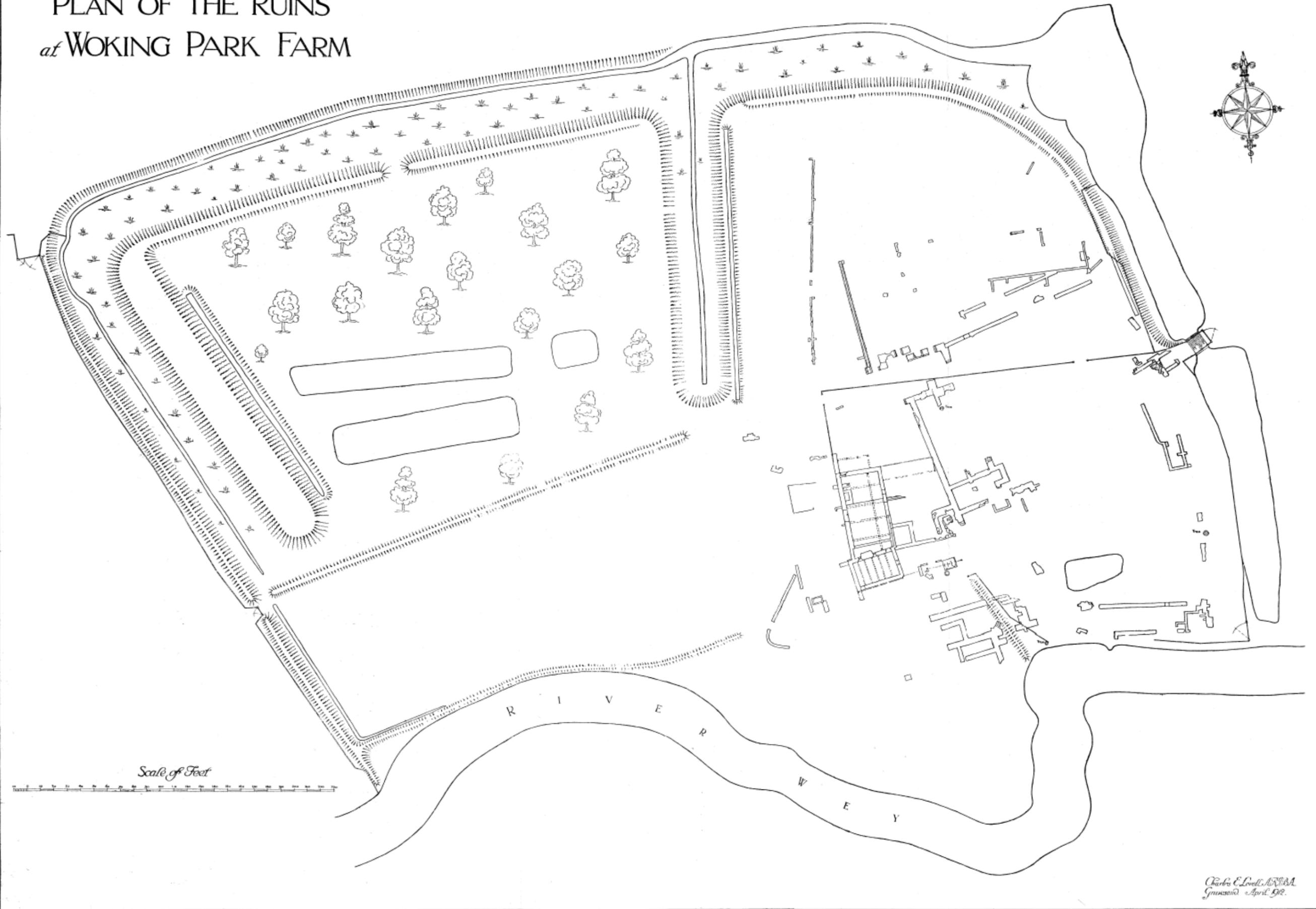


Fig 1. Woking Palace: plan of excavation in April 1912

Charles E. Lovell, A.R.C.S.
Gimmswood April 1912.