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A report on a programme  
of archaeological works

# ***Marches Archaeology***

**Manor Hall  
Withington  
Gloucestershire**

**Report on an archaeological  
desk-based assessment**

November 2002

*Archaeological Consultants and Contractors*

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**Manor Hall  
Withington  
Gloucestershire**

**NGR: SP 031 151**

**A report on an archaeological  
desk-based assessment**

**Report by**  
Jane Kenney

**Contents**

Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Aims and objectives
- 3 Methodology
- 4 Description of the site and the geological background
- 5 The archaeology and history of Withington parish
- 6 Field inspection
- 7 Archaeological potential
- 8 Conclusions
- 9 References

**List of illustrations**

- Fig. 1 Location of Withington with archaeological sites marked  
Fig. 2 Location of development site and adjacent features  
Fig. 3 Plan of Withington Roman villa and drawing of mosaics  
Fig. 4 Inclosure map for Withington (1819) with detail of village inset  
Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey County Series map, 1st edition, 1880  
Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey County Series map, 2nd edition, 1900  
Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey County Series map, 3rd edition, 1925  
Fig. 8 Plan of proposed development

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*Summary*

*A desk-based assessment and field inspection was carried out on land proposed for development south of Withington village. This revealed the richness of the area in prehistoric and Roman sites, but identified no known archaeological sites within the development area. However, the proximity of the development area to a Roman villa and another Roman site, and its suitability for occupation in the prehistoric periods made it possible that so far unknown archaeological deposits exist on the site. The aerial photographs and a very slight earthwork visible on the site suggest that there may be buried archaeological features. It is recommended that a geophysical survey be carried out over the whole development area, followed by evaluation trenches, to fully assess the archaeological potential of the site. The impact of the proposed development on the setting of the site of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Withington Roman villa is likely to be considered minimal.*

## **1 Introduction**

A planning application has been submitted to the local planning authority for permission to erect an indoor riding school and associated landscaping (ref. CD.5260/I/P). The site is centred at NGR: SP 031 151 (see Fig. 1).

The proposed development area is close to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Withington Roman Villa (SAM 200), registered on the local Sites and Monuments Record (ref.: no. 31) as a site of archaeological interest. The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor has advised that further information is required before the archaeological implications of the application can be adequately assessed and has recommended that an archaeological desk-based assessment be carried out.

Nigel Cant Planning, on behalf of the client, commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services requested by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor. The commission was based on a Project Proposal provided by Marches Archaeology and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This proposal forms a written scheme of investigation for the archaeological works.

## **2 Aims and objectives**

The purpose of Desk-based Assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as

“to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research”.

The aim of this study is to inform the planning process of the likelihood of the survival of archaeological deposits within the study area. It will also aid in the formulation of a strategy to mitigate damage to any potential deposits.

### **3 Methodology**

The desk-based study involved the consultation of primary and secondary sources. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Gloucestershire was consulted, and the County Record Office was visited to access the relevant maps and secondary sources. Copies of aerial photographs were obtained from the National Monuments Record. Of the available photographs the only ones to show the site are listed in the references. Due to copyright restrictions these cannot be reproduced in this report, but copies are held with the project archives.

The study included the following sources:

Ordnance Survey maps; inclosure award map; previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work; written non-archaeological sources; air photographs; geological information.

A tithe map was made for Withington parish, but neither the SMR nor the Record Office held a copy of it. Parts of the tithe map copied for other uses were available in the Record Office but none covered the development area. The SMR numbers given in the text refer to the unique identifying number of the relevant site in the Sites and Monuments Record. SAM numbers refer to sites on English Heritage's list of Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

A site visit was undertaken on 19th November 2002, when an archaeologist walked over the site to inspect it on the ground for earthworks or other indications that archaeological deposits may be present. Photographs were taken to record the present condition of the site. The site of Withington Roman villa was inspected from the road and from a footpath running to the woods above it, to assess the possible impact of the proposed development on the setting of this scheduled ancient monument.

This report details the aims, methods, and results of the project. A non-technical summary and details of the location and size of the archive have been included.

#### **4 Description of the site and geological background (Fig. 1)**

Withington is a small Cotswold village lying south-east of Cheltenham, next to the River Coln. The river rises near Brockhampton and meanders south-west through a broad valley, which narrows as it meets the Oolitic limestone near Chedworth. The village lies at about 160m OD, while the hills to the west and the east rise to 289m and 233m OD, respectively.

The underlying geology of the surrounding hills is Inferior Oolite, capped on the higher ground by fullers' earth and Great Oolite, but the valley itself is on Upper Lias clays and Midford Sand (Murray and Hawkins 1973; Herbert 2001, 249). On the western side of the valley, at the junction between the geological deposits, is a line of springs, which lies at much the same level as the development site.

The area proposed for development covers c.1.5 hectares, and is located to the south of the village, adjoining the eastern side of the minor road to Chedworth. The site is at an altitude of c.160m OD, on a natural terrace on the western side of the river its flood plain. An ornamental lake and a string of ponds have been created to the north and north-west of the site, and these are surrounded by woodland. The house, now known as Manor Hall, but previously called Halewell Close, stands c.300m north of the northern boundary of the proposed development site.

The site is roughly triangular in shape (Fig. 2), comprising the northern part of the field with land parcel number 1500. This same field includes Wall Well, a natural spring, on its eastern boundary. The ponds to the north are also fed by a spring.

#### **5 The archaeology and history of Withington parish (Fig. 1)**

Withington is a large rural parish including several outlying hamlets, some of which were previously villages in their own right (Herbert 2001, 248). The village is of Saxon origin, although a continuity of occupation from the Roman period has been suggested by Finberg (1955). Between AD 674 and 704 Aethelred, king of Mercia, and Oshere, underking of the Hwicce, granted land in Withington for the foundation of a monastery. However, prior to this date the location already had a name, 'Widiandun', and therefore occupants, so the origin of the settlement could be much earlier (Morgan 1973, 97; Herbert 2001, 259, Finberg 1955, 9, 22). There is no mention of the monastery after AD 774 and the manor became a possession of the bishops of Worcester, who held it until it was transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1860. The latter held the parish until 1926 (*ibid*; Verey and Brooks 1999, 48).

The early medieval documents give the name as 'Widindun', Wythyndon' or 'Widiandun' (Herbert 2001, 248; Finberg 1955, 22). In 1086 Withington was part of the hundred of 'Wacrescumb' (Wattlescomb), but by 1221 it was within Bradley hundred (Herbert 2001, 273). In the Domesday Book Withington is recorded as having 30 hides and 16 villagers (Morris 1982 (3,5)).

There was considerable prehistoric activity in the area. A prehistoric ridgeway track (SMR no. 3998) ran along the hills to the west of Withington, meeting the Jurassic Way at the northern end of Withington ridge. A fragment of stone axe found at Foxcote, and two flint axes and an arrowhead found next to the Chedworth section of the ridgeway indicate that it was in use as early as the Neolithic period (Finberg 1955, 9-10). The line of the track was

used as an Anglo-Saxon boundary and referred to as 'the old stone way' (Herbert 2001, 248). In a survey of AD 1299 it is known as 'the Ridgeway', and by 1635 was the 'market way' from Withington to Cheltenham. The track was the main north-south route through the parish until the straight road was built in about 1815 at the base of the ridge, as part of the enclosure of the parish (Herbert 2001, 251).

As well as providing communications routes, the hills around Withington were important throughout the prehistoric period as the location of funerary monuments. The earliest of these are the long barrows, Sale's Lot and the Withington long barrow (SAM 32374, SMR 159). The latter is closest to the proposed development site, being situated on the hills only 1km to the south (SP 0305 1415). It is visible as a mound 58m long, 18m wide and up to 2m high, with two parallel ditches, 3m wide, now entirely infilled. The barrow is orientated east-north-east to west-south-west, and positioned just below the crest of an east facing hill. One very disturbed chamber can be seen towards the south-western end of the barrow, and there are traces of unrecorded excavations (O'Neil and Grinsell 1960, 94).

Sale's Lot long barrow (SP 048 158) was excavated in 1963-5, and proved to be a long cairn, composed of stones, rather than an earthen barrow. Contrary to the summary in Verey and Brooks (1999, 743), which describes the barrow as being built over earlier tombs, the excavator is clear that the monument was built in a single phase (O'Neil 1966, 8). The principal chamber and forecourt, at the eastern end of the barrow, were enclosed in a penannular stone structure, referred to as a rotunda. Two shallow cist graves had been inserted beneath the tail of the barrow. Darvill (1999, 31, 33) claims that the barrow covered the remains of an earlier house, but again the excavator is clear in her assertion that the postholes were related to a structure in the forecourt, post-dating the barrow's construction. The structure possibly dated to the middle Neolithic, as Peterborough sherds were found in the occupation deposits (*ibid*, 9). Continued respect for the monument is indicated by a later Beaker burial inserted in the mound. An Iron Age pot sherd and two Romano-British tile fragments were also recovered from the mound (O'Neil 1966; RCHME 1976, 131).

A Neolithic tanged flint arrowhead (SMR no. 3993) found in field south of Cassey Compton Road in 1951 (approx. SP 041 154), represents other activity of the Neolithic period (Terry 1951, 142).

The Bronze Age is represented by round barrows, again on the hilltops. In Withington Woods is a bowl barrow (SAM 32375, SMR 160), located just below crest of a north-east facing hill (SP 0280 1439). It measures 13m in diameter and 1m high, and is surrounded by an infilled ditch, 2m wide. Disturbance in top of mound indicates unrecorded excavation. Other round barrows lie along the same ridge, one in Chedworth Woods, and one at St Paul's Epistle, near Kilkenny.

Just north of the Withington Woods round barrow is a cross ridge dyke (SMR 4803), also probably dating to the Bronze Age. These dykes are believed to have divided livestock ranges or defined other significant boundaries. The dyke starts on the edge of steep re-entrant valley and runs across the ridge in westerly direction (SP 0276 1445-0238 1440). There is a ditch on its southern side. There was some debate as to the significance of the feature before it was identified as a cross ridge dyke. Finberg (1955, 11) describes it as 'traces of fortifications' and the Royal Commission was unsure whether it was an antiquity at all (RCHME 1976, 131).



The Iron Age is poorly represented in the area, which seems unusual considering the quantity of Roman activity here. The only site is a group of pits containing Iron Age artefacts, and possibly representing a settlement. It is located near Foxcote Manor (SP 0138 1803) and later pits containing Romano-British pottery indicated the continued use of the site (RCHME 1976, 131).

The Cotswolds were heavily occupied in the Roman period with numerous villas. In 1976 the Royal Commission (1976, xxxiv) could list 25 known villas and 13 more suspected ones. The Coln valley in particular has Romano-British occupation, including villas, distributed along its length. Eagles (1973, 91) postulated that the density of occupation may have been due to the use of the Whiteway, a ridgeway from Cirencester to Compton Abdale, as a route linking the valley directly to Cirencester. The Whiteway probably began as a prehistoric trackway, but seems to have been a minor Roman route, and is identified with a ridgeway called 'cnictes ferweye' in an Anglo-Saxon survey of the parish (Herbert 2001, 248).

The Withington Roman villa (SAM 200, SMR 31) (Fig. 2) was discovered in 1811 during ploughing in a field called Old Town or Withington upon Wall-Well; Wall Well being a spring rising nearby. The site was excavated in 1811-12 revealing remains suggestive of a tripartite corridor villa, including a hypocaust under apsidal rooms, possible baths, and 8 rooms with tessellated floors including mosaics depicting Orpheus surrounded by beasts, and Neptune with sea creatures (Fig. 3). The villa appears to have been destroyed by fire in the 4th century AD (Lysons 1815, 118-121). Eight Roman coins were recovered from the excavation, the latest dating to the reign of Constans (AD 333-50) (Finberg 1955, 23), and a hoard of over 1200 3rd and 4th century coins was later found in the area (RCHME 1976, 132).

The site lies on a north-east facing slope (SP 0311 1486) within a field at present under pasture, but previously arable. When the field is ploughed a thick scattered of building debris is turned up. When Lysons excavated the villa (Lysons 1815) he noted that the soil at the eastern end was shallower and the eastern parts of the villa buildings had been destroyed. Subsequent ploughing of the site can only have increased the area of destruction.

The Withington villa is surrounded by other villas and their estates; Chedworth to the south, Compton Grove to the east, and Whittington to the north. Finberg (1955) claims that this means that the boundaries of the Roman estate can be defined with some confidence, and that, for the most part, they are likely to have followed the line still taken by the parish boundary, but with the river Coln as the eastern boundary. This is the area described as the bishop of Worcester's estate in the late Saxon period, and was the land given to the monastery in the 7th century. It is therefore claimed that the modern parish boundary is practically identical to that of the Roman estate and Saxon parish, with the addition of Cassey Compton east of the river, originally a separate parish (Herbert 2001, 248; Finberg 1955). Withington and its neighbouring villas seem to have continued in use until the 4th century, but Finberg (1955, 23) finds it likely that the estates continued to function into the 6th century, when they were taken over in their entirety by the Saxons.

The Chedworth villa was discovered in 1964. The original building was constructed in the late 2nd century AD as three separate blocks set in a rectangle, open to the east. There was a bath suite in the north range, supplied by water from a spring. The villa was enlarged in the 4th century, when the blocks were joined into a single large complex. The tessellated floors in 15 of the rooms also date to the 4th century (Eagles 1973, RCHME 1976, 24-8).

Not far from the Chedworth villa is a possible Romano-British settlement in Chedworth Woods (SP 0612 1307) (RCHME 1976, 28). This is of particular interest as there may also be a Romano-British settlement near the Withington villa (Fig. 2). Settlement debris (SMR 2146), including hypocaust tiles and pottery, has been found along the edge of a modern arable field, now under pasture, on each side of spring at Wall Well (SP 0329 1493-0337 1478) (RCHME 1976, 132).

Roman funerary activity is preserved in Foxcote Hill barrow (SP 0108 1734), a large round cairn excavated in 1863, which contained an extended inhumation in the centre, buried with an iron object. 300-400 Roman coins were also found, nearly all 4th century, and possibly contained in a pot (O'Neil and Grinsell 1960, 137; RCHME 1976, 131). O'Neil and Grinsell assume that the burial is intrusive in a Bronze Age round barrow, but the Romano-British also used barrows. There were 14 flint flakes found, but some were still *in situ* in the old ground surface under the barrow (Bird 1877, 335-6). It seems likely that those from within the barrow itself were residual, making it possible that the barrow was constructed in the Roman period.

Even if the boundaries of the medieval parish preserved the limits of the Roman estate the centre of occupation moved north, from the site of the villa and Wall Well, to the present location of the village. The rectangular area named as Stocks Hay on the inclosure map (Fig. 4 inset) was probably an early green around which the Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement formed (Herbert 2001, 252). It appears that the village of Withington was originally two villages that merged. The eastern settlement, east of the river at Brockhole End, existed in 1086, so the origin of both settlements is pre-conquest (Finberg 1955, 14). Withington is listed by Aston and Viner (1981) as an accepted shrunken medieval village (SMR 9675).

The medieval village had an open field system, and much of the arable land had already been taken into cultivation by 700 AD, when the monastery was founded. The area to the north of the village was the best ploughland, and would have been the first to be cleared. It seems likely that the occupants of the Roman estate also used this best land, and that these northern fields were probably cleared and cultivated from the Roman period onwards (Finberg 1955, 23). It is possible that the land by the river south of the village, especially the area close to the villa, where the development site is located, was also cleared and cultivated from this period.

New assarts (woodland clearances) are mentioned in a survey of 1299, mostly on the high ground to the south-west of the village (Herbert 2001, 249). Three faint ridges (SMR 4805) crossing what is now pastureland, may be medieval lynchets relating to the cultivation of this area after clearance. The area of the development site formed part of the communal ploughland called Wood Field (Fig. 4), the name of which is suggestive of an assart, implying that it was not cleared until the 13th century. However, as discussed above, its position close to the villa makes its cultivation in the Roman period likely. Whether the woodland regenerated in the post-Roman period, or whether the field name refers to the proximity of woods, rather than to its origin as a recent clearing, the available documentary and map evidence is inadequate to determine.

A large part of the uplands would have remained commonland, and sheep would have been an important part of the economy from the Roman period, and throughout the Saxon and medieval periods (Verrey and Brooks 1999, 743). The woods along the southern edge of the parish would have been managed and provided timber and forage. Most of the woods were

felled in during the First World War, but were replanted in the Second World War (Herbert 2001, 249).

Some of the existing buildings in this picturesque village date from the late medieval period, although changes in house names and the use of one name by several buildings at different periods makes their history a little confusing. Three buildings have made a claim to be the manor house. On the 1900 and 1925 OS maps the house known as Withington House in 1880 (or Withington Court, now The Court), was referred to as Withington Manor (Figs. 5, 6, 7). Manor Hall, previously Halewell Close, has also occasionally been referred to as Manor House. However, the genuine manor house is the building that has been called Manor Farm since the late 19th century (Herbert 2001, 259). The Manor House (SMR 4800), a grade II listed building, was a possession of the Bishop of Worcester. It was in existence in late 13th century, and the south facing block dates to 1453, although most of the existing structure dates mainly to the 16th to 17th centuries. The rear of house dates to 1750, and there are other later additions (Versey and Brooks 1999, 75, 742). To the north-west of the Manor House is a 17th century dovecote (SMR 4850) (*ibid*, 742).

The church is a grade I listed building dating from the 12th century with 15th century additions in the perpendicular style. Both nave doorways of the late Norman church survive, but the interior was restored and 'largely spoiled' in 1871-3 (Versey and Brooks 1999, 740-1; Herbert 2001, 276). The church was described by William Cobbett in the early 19th century as 'like a small cathedral', and indicative of the previous wealthier status of the village (Stourton 1972, 16). By the early 18th century the church was dedicated to Saint Michael, but in 1227 it had been the church of Saint Mary (Herbert 2001, 276).

The Old Rectory (SMR 14090) was originally a medieval parsonage built c.1430, which stood in the churchyard (Versey and Brooks 1999, 67). Dendrochronological analysis of its roof and first floor timbers dated them to AD 1429. The layout of the 18th formal gardens survives and the pond may have originated as a medieval fish pond (Versey and Brooks, 741-2)

Other notable buildings in the village include the Corner House and Old Forge (formerly a single building), which contain a 15th century hall. Court House (alias Withington House or Withington Court) was a copyhold farmhouse in the 17th century, extended in 1753 (Herbert 2001, 252)). Mill House dates to the 16th to 17th centuries and the Mill Inn to the 18th century, both have been largely rebuilt (Versey and Brooks 1999, 88, 210-1). The ruins of a possible medieval building (SMR 4874) exist near Upcote Farmhouse, at SP 0220 1590, where building foundations of limestone rubble have been located.

Manor Hall originated as a two storey, late 15th century hall, the original roof of which survives with its king-post roof trusses. The south wing is 17th century, but most of the appearance of the house is due to alterations in the 1920s. The size and quality of the late medieval range suggests that it was built for the lord of the manor, i.e. the bishop of Worcester, probably after 1476. By 1637 it was probably part of a leasehold farm. At inclosure the farm based on this farmstead received most of Wood Field, including the development site. After the mid 19th century the house was known as Bennetts' Farm. It was sold with a large part of the manor estate in 1926 to RJ Gunther, who enlarged it and renamed it Halewell Close, after the nearby spring. Gunther created the lake by the river and the string of ponds in the 1960s for sport fishing. Gunther's estate was broken up on his death in 1967 (Herbert 2001, 250, 254, 259, 270; Versey and Brooks 1999, 742-3).

The wealth and population of Withington decreased in the 19th century, and it declined from a small town to a village. William Cobbett attributed this decline to the introduction of machinery to the blanket making industry resulting in the redundancy of many people in the area who had previously worked in the industry (Stourton 1972, 17).

The present layout of the landscape dates from the start of parliamentary inclosure in 1813. This was confirmed by an award in 1819 (Fig. 4). The straight road north of the village was built in this period (Herbert 2001, 251). The latest major development in Withington was the construction of the Midland and South Western Junction Railway (SMR 4944), an independent line from the Midlands to Southampton. The company was formed in 1884, it was taken over by GWR in 1923, and the line closed in 1961.

## **6 Field inspection**

The site was visited on 19th November 2002, when it was under improved grassland. The grass was fairly short and favourable for the recognition of even very slight earthworks. The field had previously been ploughed. Upstanding earthworks are unlikely to survive under long term ploughing, and little could be seen. In the northern part of the development site, where a new fence, not shown on the plan, crosses the site, slight parallel furrows were noticed (Fig. 2 (a)). These were less than 0.1m deep and the distance between them varied from 3m to 10m, though most were about 7m apart. They ran parallel to the road. It was considered possible that they were the remains of medieval ridge and furrow, but the aerial photographs show that the ridge and furrow ran north-east to south-west across the field (see Fig. 2 (b) for sketch transcription). It is probable that the features seen were caused by recent cultivation processes.

The RAF aerial photographs show traces of medieval ridge and furrow surviving across much of Wood Field east of the road. They are not clear within the development area, but the crop varied from that in the rest of the field and probably obscured the furrows, which are likely to still survive as slight buried features. The aerial photographs showed divisions in the neighbouring field (Foreheads) that are indicated on the tithe map (Fig. 2 (c)), and lynchets in the steeper part of the field to the south, registered in the SMR as no. 4805. They also show that the electricity pylon has been moved since 1946. Its previous position is shown approximately on Fig. 2 (d) in case its remains confuse any subsequent archaeological evaluation of the site.

A low, broad ridge, *c.*0.2m high and *c.*23m wide was seen running down the middle of the field, again roughly parallel to the road (Fig. 2 (e)). In places it resembled a terrace rather than a ridge, and, although it could be a natural feature, it is possible that this ridge may be the remains of a trackway. The inclosure award map shows the road in its present location, and it is likely that it followed this route in the medieval and possibly Saxon period. If the feature is a trackway it is unlikely to post-date the Roman period. If the pottery scatter at Wall Well (Fig. 2) does represent a Romano-British settlement a track running up the valley from this settlement might be expected. The feature could not be seen on the aerial photographs, and excavation would be necessary to clarify its nature.

It was noted that the north-south field boundary to the east of the site was largely destroyed, being represented only by a line of isolated trees and bushes and a bank up to 0.3m high.

Although outside the development area the opportunity was taken to inspect Wall Well, which was flowing strongly. A stone basin with an overflow had been constructed in the spring, but these are probably of fairly recent origin. They could not be clearly seen as they were overgrown with moss.

The site of the Roman villa lies across the road to the south of the development site. The field in which it is situated is presently under pasture for cattle, but it clearly had been previously ploughed. The villa site does overlook the development site, but there is a fairly high hedge on the eastern side of the road, which would help to screen the view of the new development. The proposed extensive planting would also provide an effective screen.

## **7 Archaeological potential**

There are no known archaeological sites within the development area. The map regression shows that the site lay within one of the open fields (Wood Field) in the medieval and post-medieval period, and any archaeological remains dating to these periods would probably be restricted to traces of cultivation and occasional artefacts introduced by manuring. The aerial photographs indicate that the buried remains of ridge and furrow cultivation are likely to survive. It has been argued by Finberg (1955) that there was considerable continuity of landuse and parish boundaries from the Roman period through to the present day. The open fields north of the village are likely to have been cultivated in the Saxon period, and this may apply to the Wood Field. However, it is possible that this field was cleared from the woodland later than the others and may only date to the 13th century, although this would not exclude Roman or earlier cultivation on the site, if the woods had regenerated.

Important Roman remains lie close to the site, with the villa to the south-west and the finds scatter round Wall Well to the south-east, but the present development presents no direct threat to either of these. If the Wall Well site proves to be a settlement then features associated with it, such as roads or field systems, might be expected to continue up the valley into the development site. The only visible indication of this is a low ridge running down the field. This may be a natural feature, but the possibility that it is the remains of a trackway should be explored.

The presence of prehistoric monuments on the hills above the site shows that the area was occupied in earlier periods. The location of the settlements dating to this period is not known, but they might be expected to be on lowland near the river or springs. Iron Age sites are severely under represented in the known archaeological record. The extensive use of the valley in other periods suggests that sites of this period may exist, but have not yet been found. Although prominent scatters of Roman pottery, tile and building debris have been noted, there is no record of any methodical fieldwalking of ploughed fields in the area, which might identify prehistoric flint scatters. Such work would, almost certainly, reveal prehistoric and possibly Iron Age activity. The valley floor may have been too wet and wooded in the prehistoric period for occupation but it is likely that some settlement occurred along the spring line. The development site has a spring to the north, and Wall Well to the south-east, with the river to the east, but it is well above the level of flooding, making it an ideal site for prehistoric occupation.

### *Setting*

The setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments is considered to be important, even when the monument is not presented to the public. Monuments of all periods are not isolated features but part of a landscape and an understanding of their place in that landscape is important in interpreting the monument. Where monuments are isolated from their environment by surrounding development their location can no longer be appreciated on the ground, and some insight into the site may be lost. The Withington Roman villa (SAM 200) lies c.100m south-west of the present development site, and c.10m above it. The development plan (Fig. 8) shows that the manege is to be located close to the north-eastern boundary of the development area. Here the ground begins to slope down towards the spring and the chain of ponds. The actual height of the structure has not been given in the information supplied, but, as it is to be terraced into this slope, the structure is unlikely to be very intrusive in the landscape. The extensive tree planting intended should effectively screen the structure from view from the villa site. The remodelling of the remaining development area will also help to conceal the manege from view from outside, but will obscure the natural topography of the area. However, the development area represents only a small part of the present field, so that the topographical location of the Roman villa will still be easily understood. As the villa is a Scheduled Ancient Monument the impact of the development on its setting will be considered by English Heritage, on behalf of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, but it is likely that the impact will be considered to be minimal.

## **8 Conclusions**

The Coln valley is rich in archaeology of all periods, except the Iron Age, but is particularly notable for the Roman period. Map and documentary evidence suggests there is unlikely to be significant medieval or post-medieval archaeology on the development site, but the present state of knowledge is inadequate to determine its potential for earlier periods. Although it is unlikely that there is a major Roman site here it may contain evidence which would contribute to the understanding of the wider Roman landscape. The potential for prehistoric remains must be considered to be high, until proved otherwise. Iron Age settlements are frequently found in such valley bottom positions and the springs make it an attractive settlement location for any period. However, the Royal Commission notes that, although there are occasional exceptions, most Roman villas do not reoccupy previous Iron Age sites, so it cannot be assumed that there should be an Iron Age settlement site preceding the villa (RCHME 1976, xxxiv).

Fieldwalking to detect flint scatters would be an effective way to test for the presence of prehistoric sites, but this is best done over several years of repeated ploughing. Geophysical survey of the whole development area is highly recommended as this is a rapid and cost efficient way of detecting archaeological remains. However, it is highly dependant on soil and geological conditions and is not always effective, and in any case results need to be investigated by trial trenching before they can be fully understood.

It is suggested that a geophysical survey followed by a small number of evaluation trenches should provide sufficient information to enable the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor to give advice on the appropriate archaeological response to the proposed development. The final decision on the nature and extent of any further archaeological investigation rests with the Local Planning Authority's Archaeologist. It is strongly recommended that the client consult English Heritage for advice on the impact of the proposed development on the setting of the Roman villa.

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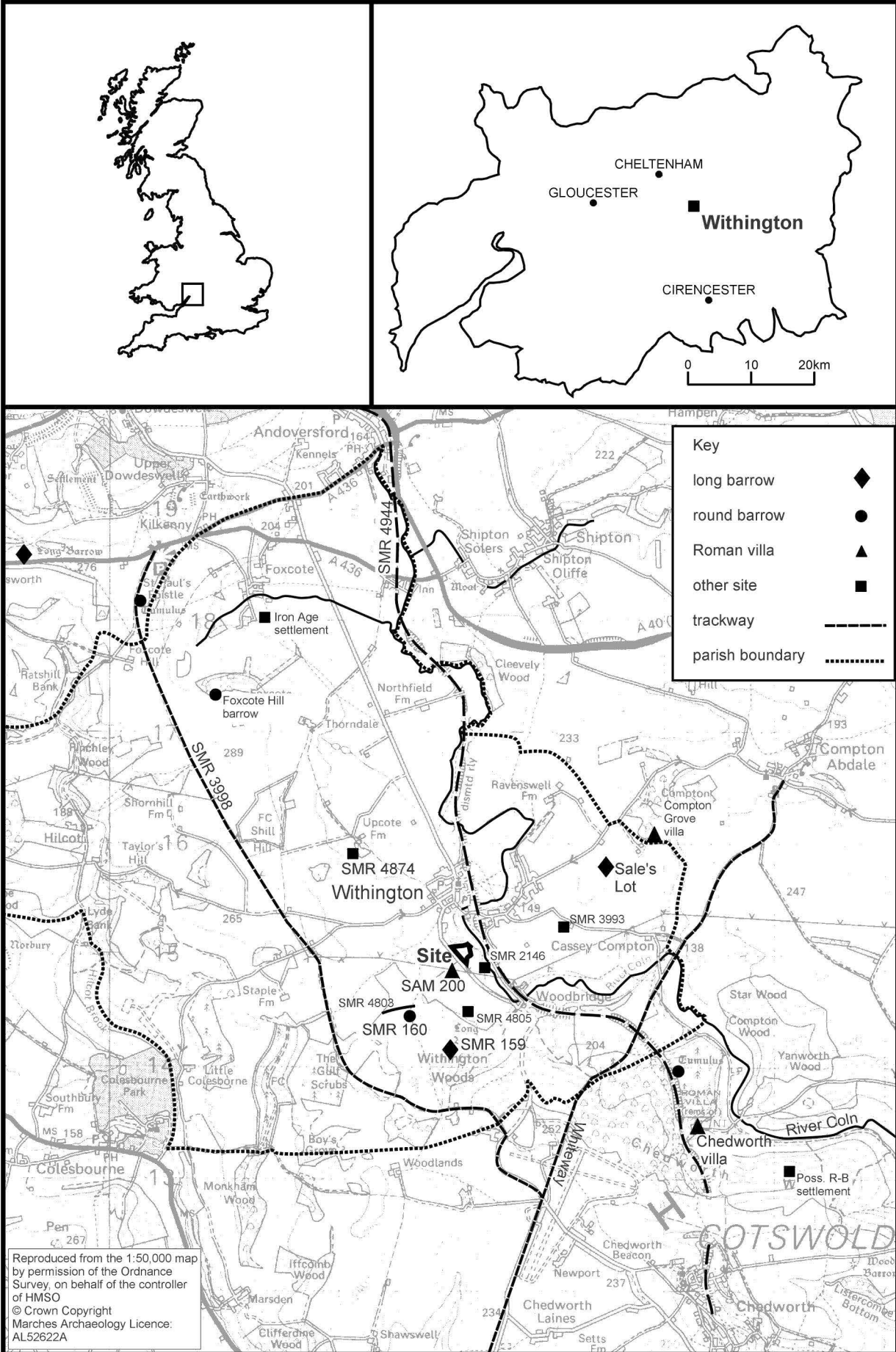
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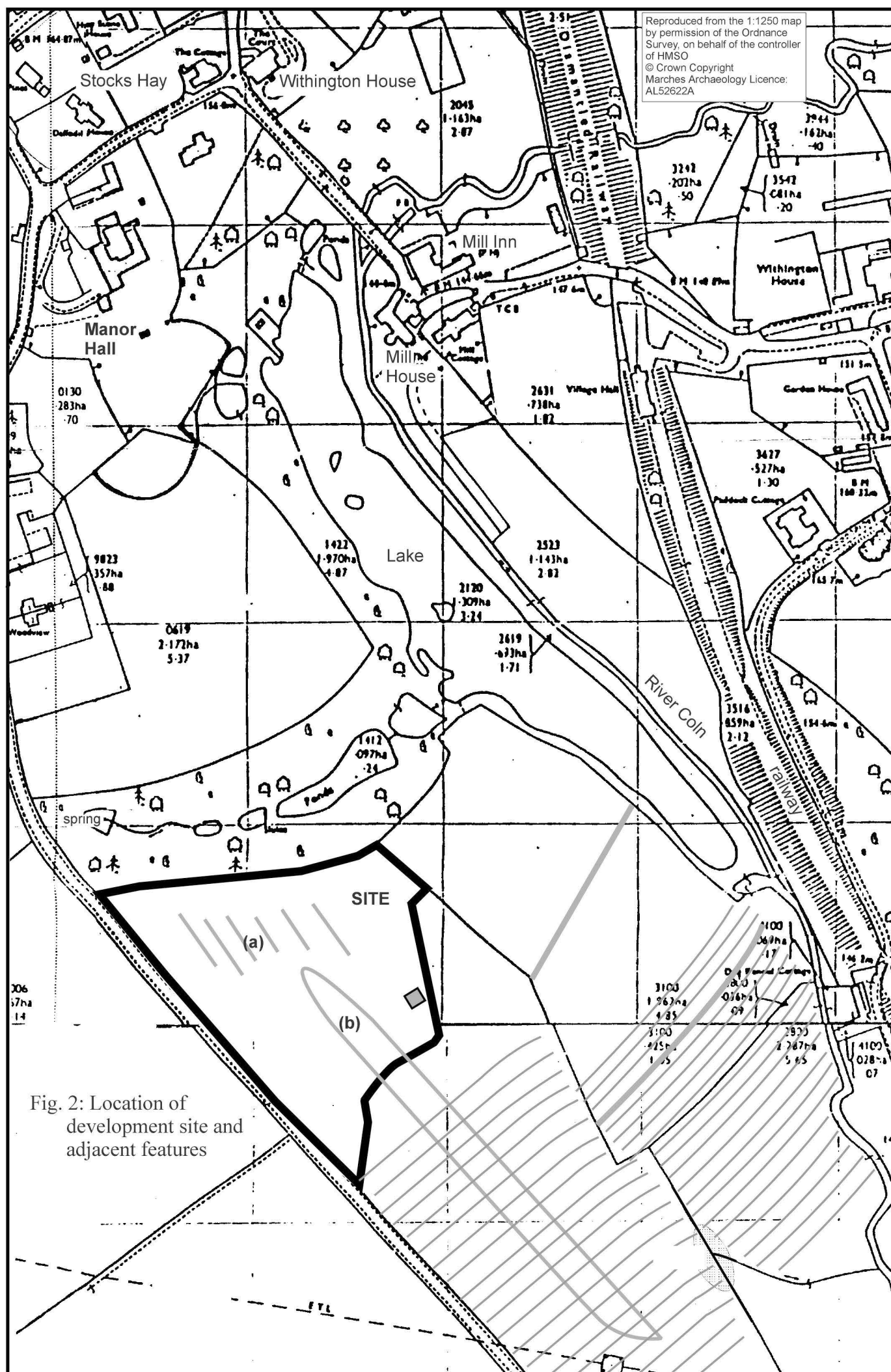
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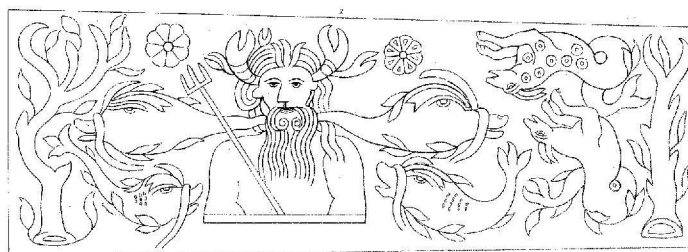
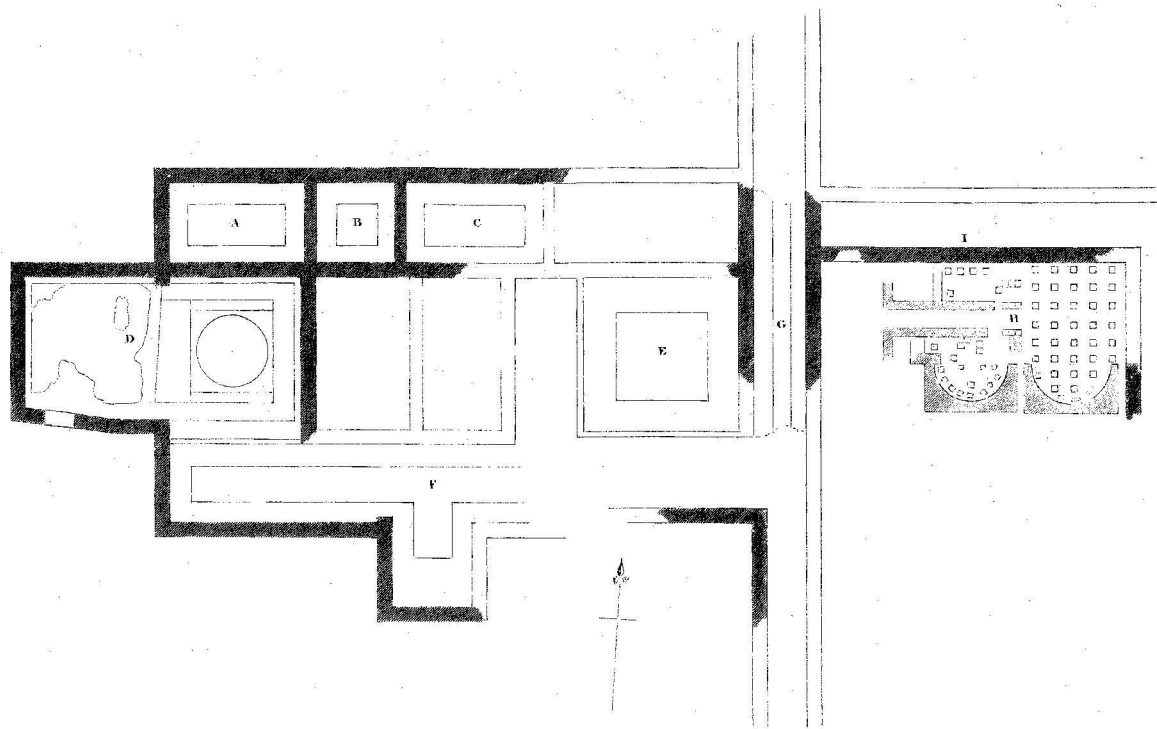
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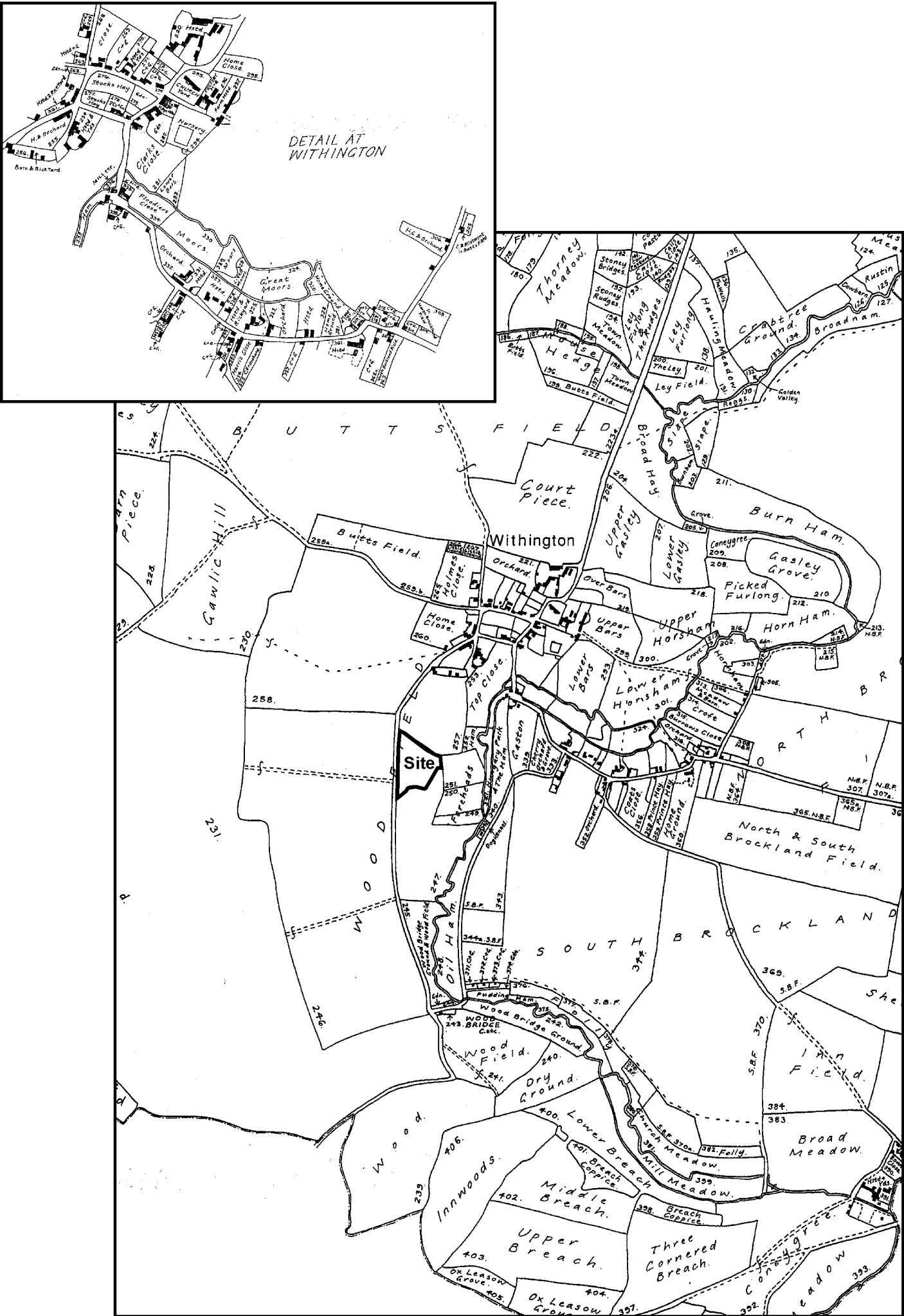


Fig. 4: Inclosure map for Withington (1819) with detail of village inset (redrawn by GG Watkins)

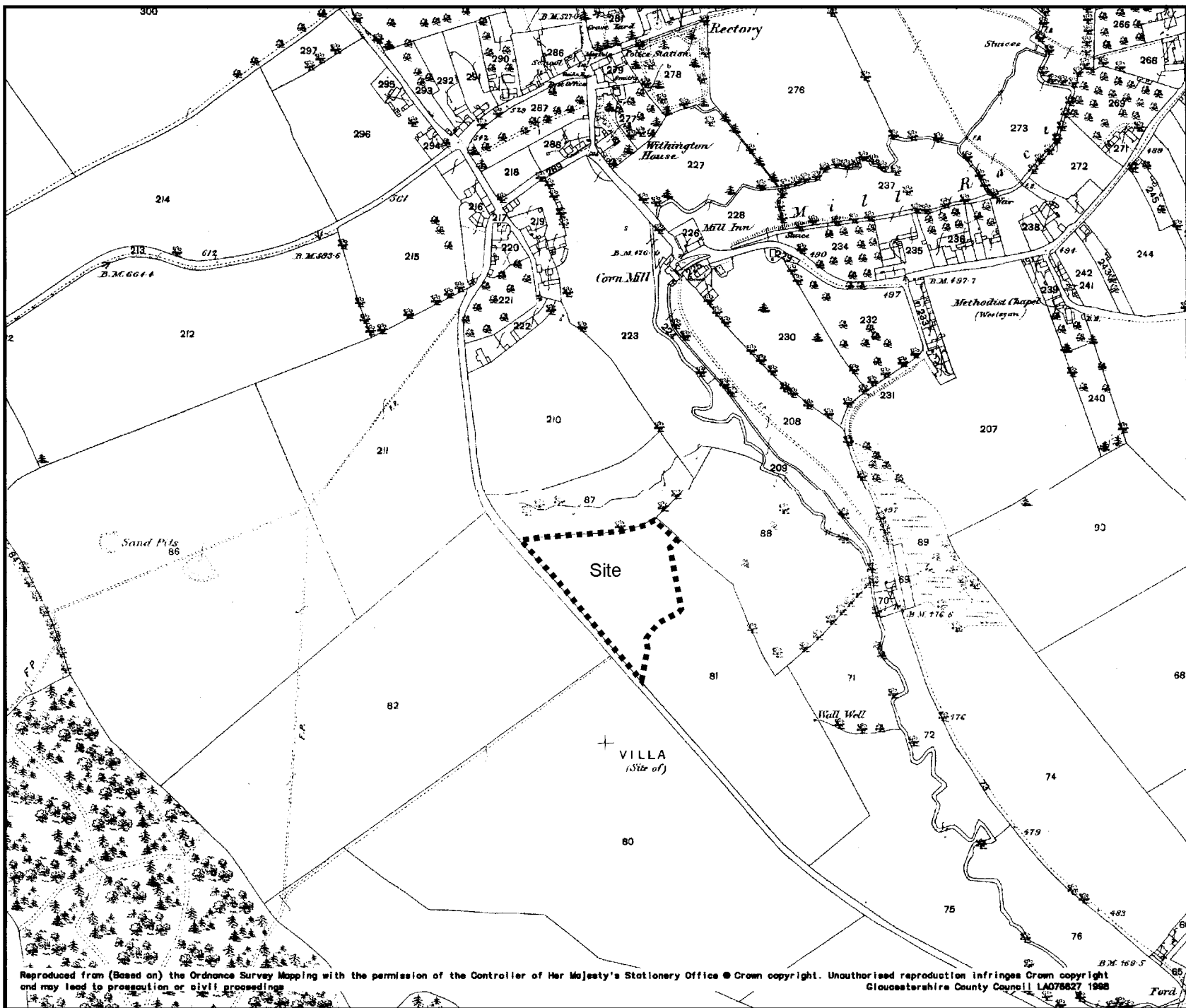


Fig. 5: Ordnance Survey County Series map, 1st edition, 1880

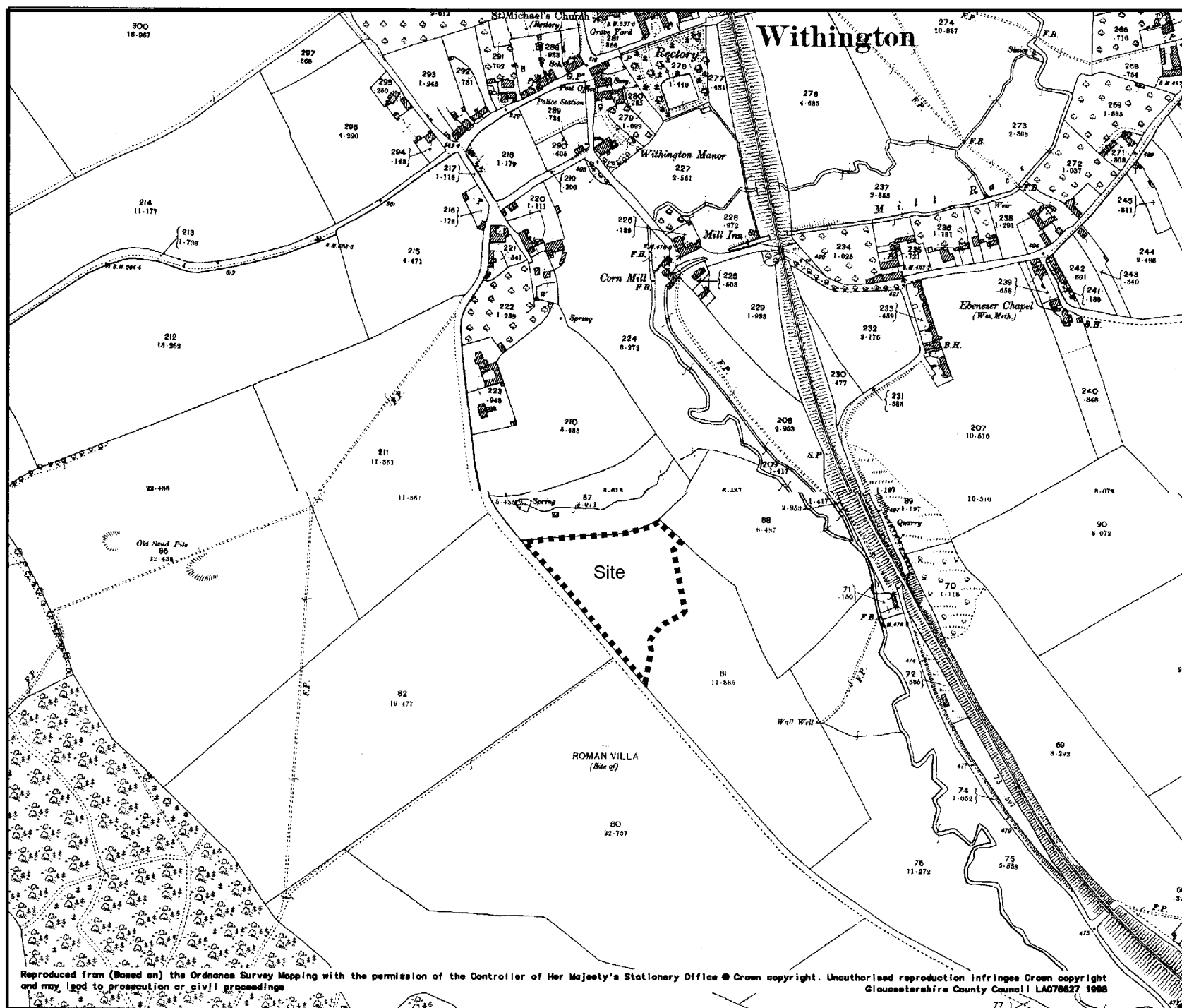


Fig. 6: Ordnance Survey County Series map, 2nd edition, 1900

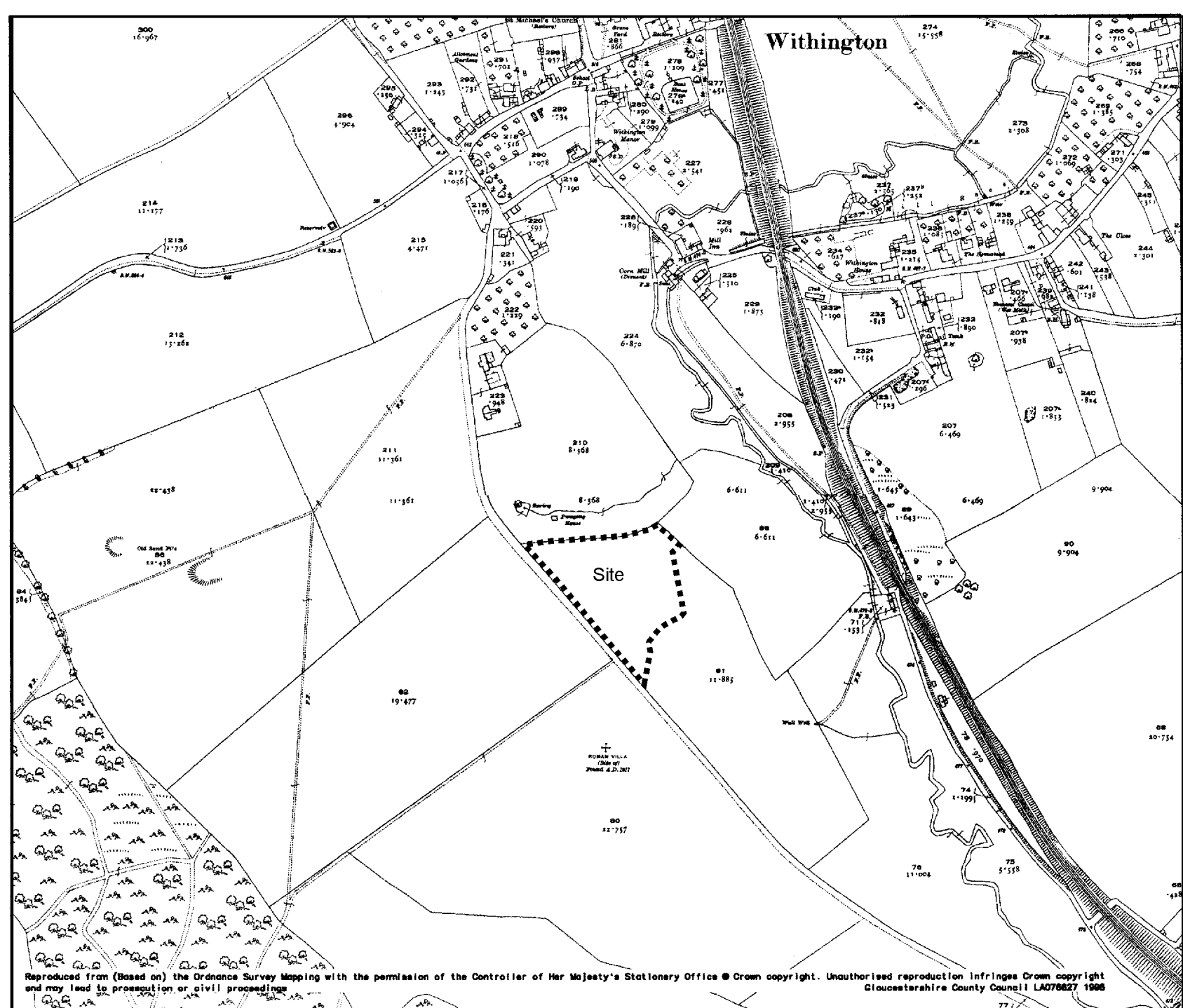


Fig. 7: Ordnance Survey County Series map, 3rd edition, 1925

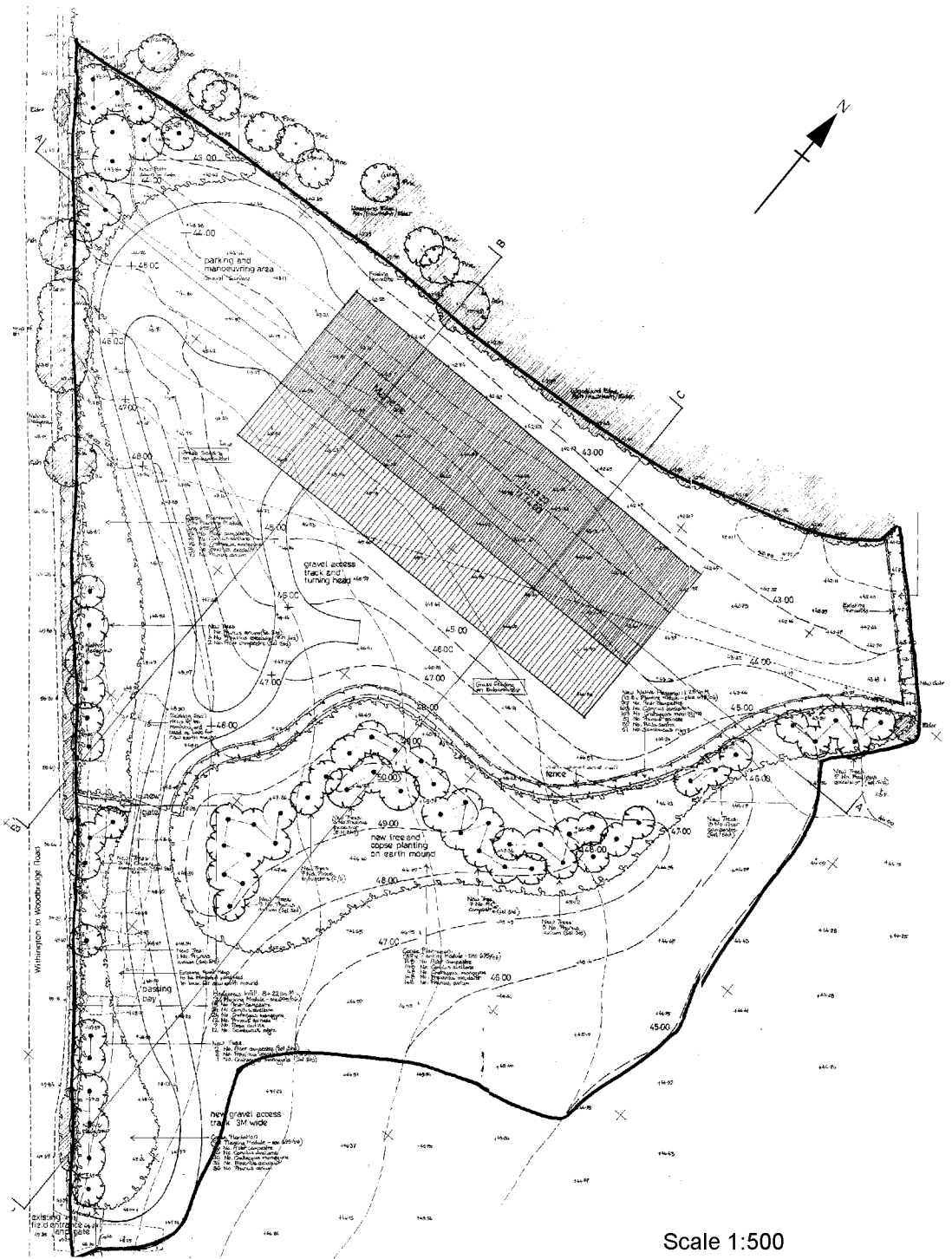


Fig. 8: Plan of proposed development  
(drawn by The Appleton Group and supplied by the client)