

Stratford Golf Club Stratford upon Avon Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



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Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 19101
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Stratford Golf Club
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Site Code: SG19
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National Grid Reference: SP 2150 5519
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SUMMARY

Archaeological observation was undertaken during the ground reductions for a new training room and driving range bays on behalf of Stratford on Avon Golf Club. There was potential for archaeological remains as significant Roman archaeological findings were recorded when the course was constructed in the 1920s and 1930s.

The ground reductions were deliberately kept to a minimum for a raft foundation and did not penetrate archaeological levels hence no archaeologically significant remains were disturbed and no finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission was granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council for the construction of a new single storey building containing a training room and driving range bays at Stratford on Avon Golf Club, Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 7BQ (planning ref 19/000832/FUL).
- 1.2 A condition of the planning permission required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Authority.
- 1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation detailing a programme of archaeological work was approved by the planning authority the work was carried out on the 25th July 2019.
- 1.4 This report presents the results of that work. The project report will be submitted to OASIS (id archaeol27-365101) and will be accessible in the grey literature library at the Archaeology Data Service. The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidelines (2014).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located on the south of the River Avon and south of Tiddington Road. The golf course, approximately 1.3 hectares, extends from properties on Loxley Road, to the south, to properties on Knights Lane to the east. The proposed new building is centred on National Grid Reference SP 2150 5519 (Fig 1) and located to the north east of the existing Club House and close to the northern boundary of the site.
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Mercia mudstone with superficial deposits of Wasperton sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2019).
- 2.3 The surrounding topography includes very discrete evidence of ridge and furrow to the east despite the golf course having been heavily landscaped.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The archaeological background to Stratford Golf Club has recently been catalogued (Wessex Archaeology 2018) although a more nuanced version is provided below.
- 3.2 The importance of the Tiddington Road area began to emerge in the 18th century when labourers collected Roman coins in the fields to the south of the Tiddington Road. In the 1920's the Secretary to the Birthplace Trust, F C Wellstood, investigated the cemetery at 77 Tiddington Road and carried out excavations when the Golf Course was laid out (Palmer 1982). Wellstood also began the excavation of the migration period cemetery at Alveston Manor Hotel in 1934, undertook more work on sites on the south side of the Tiddington Road in 1937, with other work at 102 Tiddington Road and finally, in 1939, at 86 Tiddington Road (Palmer 1982). These excavations were the basis of the concerted pre-development excavations which have been undertaken from 1979 to the present day.
- 3.3 The Avon Valley was undoubtedly an important feature in the prehistoric landscape, providing a route-way and line of communication across the landscape that by the end of the Neolithic period (c.2200 BC) was a focus for ceremonial monument building and burial. The monuments we know about tend to be grouped in clusters, which may best be considered as complexes, perhaps used by individual communities, and which were in use over may hundreds, if not thousands of years (Garwood 2011, 10; Palmer 2007, 2013). Large complexes at Barford, Charlecote (Ford 2007) Longbridge (Warwick) and Church Lawford have been revealed as cropmarks on the wider Avon terraces, or have been remained hidden until recorded during prospective archaeological investigations such as the hengiform complex at Bidford on Avon (Jones *et al* 2019). Pit groups which probably represent locations where ritualised activity took place are more widespread and not necessarily restricted to valley bottoms (c.f Church Lawford and Salford Priors (Palmer 2000, 2007, 2010a, 2013).
- 3.4 The valley remained important in the earlier Bronze Age (c.2200 BC – 1500 BC), with some of the monument complexes remaining a focus for burial whilst burial mounds were created on the valley slopes. There is still no evidence for settlement in the valley before the 1st millennium BC, with a generally low incidence of flint tool finds (Barfield unpublished), even when areas are concertedly fieldwalked (Jones and

Palmer 1998). Settlement evidence is equally as elusive in the wider region (Garwood 2007). Whilst this remains something of an archaeological enigma which has elicited models of the period based on a mobile, presumably herding, population, it is clear that the valley was an arena for activity, if not permanent or semi-permanent settlement for at least three millennia from 4000 BC.

- 3.5 There is evidence, albeit circumstantial and in the form of undated cropmarks, to suppose that the application site lay within a well-used Neolithic and Bronze Age landscape. Concentrations of cropmark ring ditches occur on the west side of Stratford and the south-east side of Tiddington village, of which one adjacent to the Home Guard Club has recently been excavated, although the results are not yet available (Busby and Holt 2016). The expansion of Stratford's housing stock along the Tiddington Road and the construction of the golf course (before the development of aerial photography for archaeological prospection) probably masks other archaeological sites of this period. There is scant sign of them in the, admittedly small, areas that have been archaeologically examined, although Neolithic pottery was found residually at New Place in Stratford (Mitchell 2012).
- 3.6 It has been widely assumed that permanent, farming, settlement in this part of the valley is likely to have originated in the later Bronze Age (c.1000 BC). Pit alignment cropmarks to the east of Tiddington seem to suggest the development of boundaries similar to examples investigated elsewhere that have been interpreted as defining land-units or estates such as at Salford Priors (Palmer 2000), Church Lawford (Palmer 2007), and nearby across the river at Hampton Lucy (Palmer 2010b). The wider valley region has been characterised as dotted with farmsteads, usually enclosed but interspersed with unenclosed settlements associated with linear boundaries, predominantly based on a few key sites excavated on gravel terraces where cropmarks were previously recorded. Recent research has suggested that more complex nucleated sites developed on non-gravel geology's (Coton Park, Brailes, Oxhill). This realisation (Palmer 2017) not only illustrates just how little we do know about how the landscape was used in the 1st millennium BC but also creates an opportunity to re-model the character of the sites that have already been investigated. One of the main problems has been, and remains, the chronology of the sites and the prospect of short-lived settlement migration.

- 3.7 At Tiddington the earliest reasonably well-dated evidence to date, subject to the results of the 2016 excavations east of the Home Guard site, came from the NFU site which yielded two distinct pit groups of mid-Iron Age date (Booth 1996) which were interpreted as evidence for distinct farmsteads (Palmer 1982). Given the absence of evidence for any other function this was a reasonable conclusion which has been repeated for similar, subsequent work along the road (Palmer and Jones 2008, Palmer 2010). A concentration of Iron Age pottery from an excavation at 102 Tiddington Road in 1937, within the cemetery excavated at 77 Tiddington Road and in the former Loxley Lane gravel pit could also be from pit groups. The absence of evidence for buildings or enclosures on these sites is curious and cannot reasonably be explained by later truncation when Roman features subject to similar levels of denudation survive so well. Four 'grain storage' pits were also reported from the excavations at New Place, whilst a large Iron Age 'burial urn' is reported from the Tiddington Road and pottery is provenance to the Loxley Lane gravel pit at the SBT (Mitchell 2012), although it is not certain if these have been correctly dated.
- 3.8 Tiddington has been synonymous with Roman settlement since the Wellstood excavations at the golf course in the 1920s and 30s which recorded significant stone buildings and burials amongst other features. Excavations in the early 1980's at the unpublished NFU and Reading Court sites (Palmer 1982) now lie within the area Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (1003741), which is listed as a Roman Settlement but described in the listing as a 'Roman Small Town'. The extent of the settlement was hypothesised in the early 80s on the assumption that the Tiddington Road followed the pre-Roman route along the river's edge and that the Roman settlement developed either side it. A substantial enclosure ditch excavated at the NFU was posited as the easternmost corner, and the supposed Roman cemetery excavated at 77 Tiddington Road the westernmost extent as burials inside the town were illegal at that time (Palmer 1982). This appears now to be a fallacy driven by a need to tidy up the edges and present an anachronistic facsimile of what a Roman town or village should look like in plan.
- 3.9 That there was intensive settlement at the east end of the purported expanse of settlement remains is not in question but the varying results now available further to the west strongly suggest that it was not one homogenous settlement which began in the 1st century AD and was abandoned in the late 4th century and it was almost certainly not enclosed within a continuous ditch. Whilst it is not uncommon for Roman

settlements to develop off-grid (Palmer 2003; Hodgson 2011) the key sites that could best elucidate the issue, NFU and Reading Court, remain, regrettably, unpublished. Of particular importance is the possibility that the evidence could be more nuanced and relate to the establishment of a villa estate developed from poly focal Iron Age and early Roman settlement. The pottery assemblage from the area is characteristically not urban and not basic rural (Jerry Evans pers comm). A similar model was posited at Salford Priors (Palmer 2000).

- 3.10 Wellstood appears to have reported the cemetery at 77 Tiddington Road as Roman because there was insufficient evidence to date it anything else; the east/west alignment and absence of pagan grave goods suggested it was Christian and it was the wrong side of the river to be medieval: That Roman pottery was recovered is likely to have sealed the case. Roman burials have been found at various sites within the purported settlement bounds (at 117: Palmer 1988, 2005; 119: Palmer 2010d; and the NFU site: Palmer 1982, with decapitations recorded at 119 and NFU) and Wellstood reported a small burial ground which included at least one decapitation on the golf course. Coins of the early 5th century from Tiddington attest to activity at the end of the Roman Empire in Britain and a 5th century brooch and earring found in 1914 on The Hill along Welcombe Road suggest sub-Roman activity on the north bank of the river (Mitchell 2012).
- 3.11 'Anglo-Saxon' evidence in the Tiddington Road area is principally concentrated at the burial ground at Alveston Manor Hotel excavated in 1934 by Wellstood (1938) by Ford in 1970 (1997) and by Jones (2002) and Jones and Greig (2010). Bill Ford produced a model for the chronology of the burials which began around 500 AD, steadily increased to the middle, and receded considerably by the end, of the 6th Century. Discounting a straightforward interpretation of the peaking and decline of the population, Ford offered, based on evidence from other Avon valley cemeteries, that 'the late 6th Century saw the ebb of old ideals and the flow of new which heralded the decline of rich burial habits'. He went on to suggest that a more likely explanation is that another cemetery yet to be discovered was founded sometime at or near the end of the 6th Century (Ford 1997). Anglo-Saxon skeletal material is recorded in the SBT archive as being found at Ryton Hill, near Hatton Rock, during road works in 1953.
- 3.12 The Wellstood archives contain references to Anglo-Saxon brooches and cremations at 77 Tiddington Road, which have since been relegated on the HER to having been

- confused with his Alveston cemetery finds. A watching brief during an extension to 77 Tiddington Road in 2009 recovered skeletal material which included a skull which was radiocarbon dated to the mid-Saxon period (Palmer 2009). Cranial analysis has suggested this individual was of African descent (Holst 2010). Unidentified skeletons deriving from Old Town in 1985 are recorded in the SBT archive (Mitchell 2012).
- 3.13 Ford recorded evidence for sub-Roman enclosure and settlement pre-dating the Alveston burial ground and Anglo-Saxon deposits have recently been found along the Tiddington Road at 117 and Rayford Caravan Park (Palmer 2010e). However, it has generally been assumed that the population migrated across the river to found Stratford since a 7th century minster was recorded in a charter and Holy Trinity was reportedly built on the site of the minster (Toulmin Smith 1907).
- 3.14 John Blair has pointed out an oval boundary feature visible on LiDar imagery that extends to the north of Holy Trinity's current boundary and excavations in 2010 recorded several inhumations in this area of which some dated between the 7th and 9th century's (Ives 2010). The currently excavated cemetery's only datable finds are contemporary with this date range but given the size of the cemetery, possibly more than a thousand, it would appear that it dwarfed the Stratford site.
- 3.15 The modern parish of Stratford straddles the River Avon but it is unclear when this boundary first appeared (Bassett 1996). Alveston and Tiddington are recorded in the parish of Alveston in 985 (VCH 1945) when it was held by Bishop's of Worcester. This seems to suggest that the currently excavated cemetery served an entity separated from Stratford by the Avon.
- 3.16 Burials recently excavated at Holy Trinity Stratford, date from the 9th Century (Mann 2016) but there is no other archaeological evidence for Stratford's population until the late Saxon period. This is not surprising given the total absence of pottery that can confidently be dated to the mid-Saxon period in the county and the assumption that mid-Saxon settlements lie beneath medieval development.
- 3.17 The evidence to date therefore suggests that there was a significant population in Alveston (and Tiddington) from at least the mid-Iron Age and it is possible that evidence for the otherwise elusive, aceramic mid-Saxon period can be unpicked from existing excavation archives.

3.18 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Fig 2) shows that the site was part of the post-enclosure agricultural landscape at that time.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed or disturbed by the development, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork in this report for dissemination.

- 4.2 An experienced archaeologist was present during the ground disturbance in accordance with the WSI.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The footprint of the proposed new driving bays and training room was stripped with a toothless ditching bucket, to a maximum depth of 0.43m.

- 5.2 Natural geology was not reached (Fig 3). The former driving bay foundations (3) were retained below the level of the new raft. A layer of yellowish brown sandy loam subsoil (2) was 0.26m thick and was overlain with turf and dark brown sandy loam topsoil (1) 0.17m deep. No finds of archaeological significance were recovered from either layer.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The raft construction for the new training room and driving bays has not impacted on any significant archaeological remains.

- 6.2 Subsoil formed by medieval and possibly earlier ploughing has provided a significant buffer to protect buried remains along this part of the Avon terrace, which in places is 0.75m thick.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

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BGS British Geological Survey Geology of Britain Viewer
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed August 2019.

Ordnance Survey 1889 *First Edition 1:2500 map*

Wessex Archaeology 2018 *Land at Stratford-on-Avon Golf Club, Warwickshire, Archaeological desk-based assessment 210520.1*



1. Pre excavation with existing building foundations (3)



2. Area Stripped, looking NE



3. Representative section of area

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Depth(m)	Comment
1	Dark brown sandy loam	0.17m	Topsoil and turf
2	Yellowish brown sandy loam	0.26m +	Subsoil
3	Hardcore and bricks	>0.35	Existing Driving Range

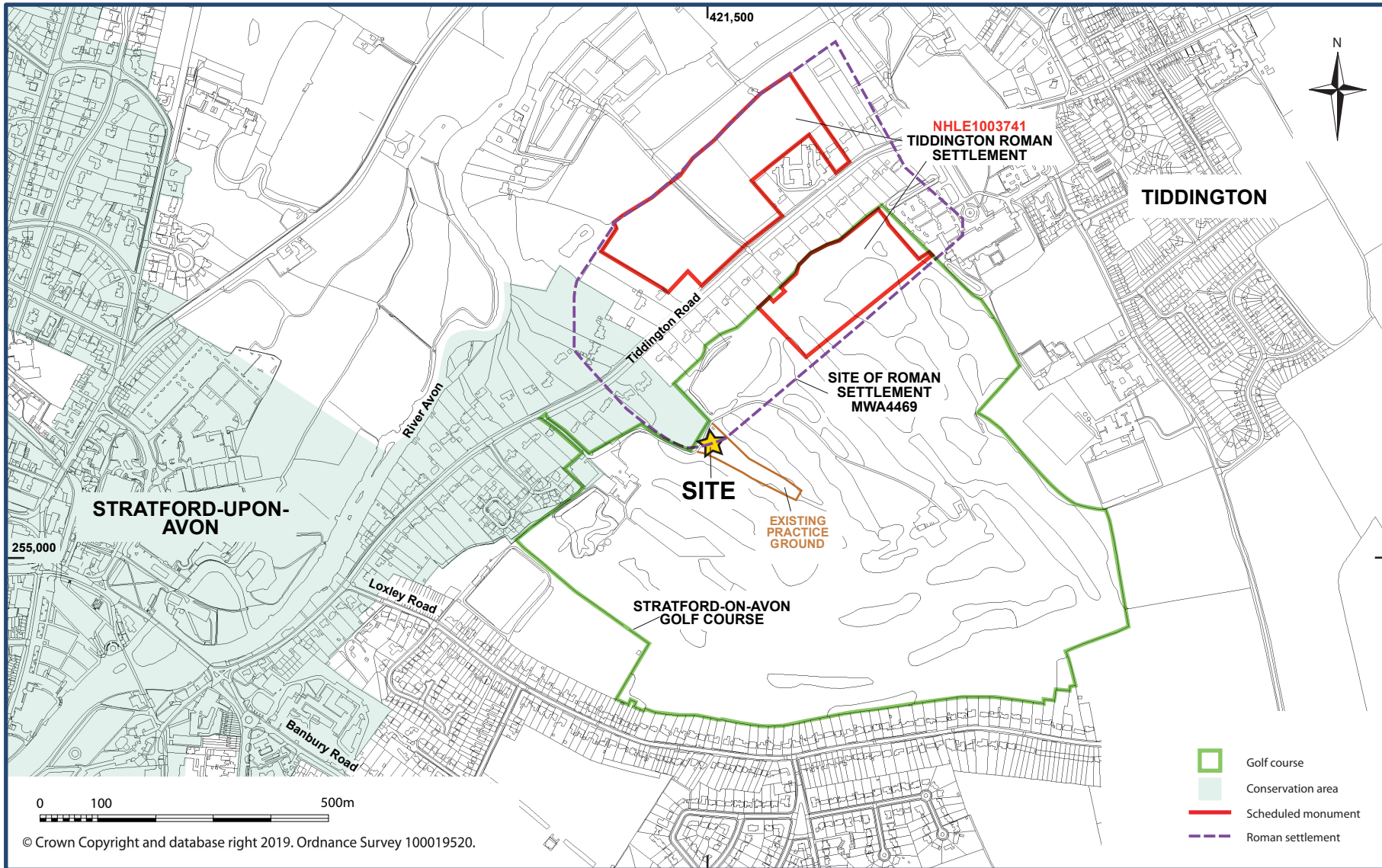


Fig 1: Location of site

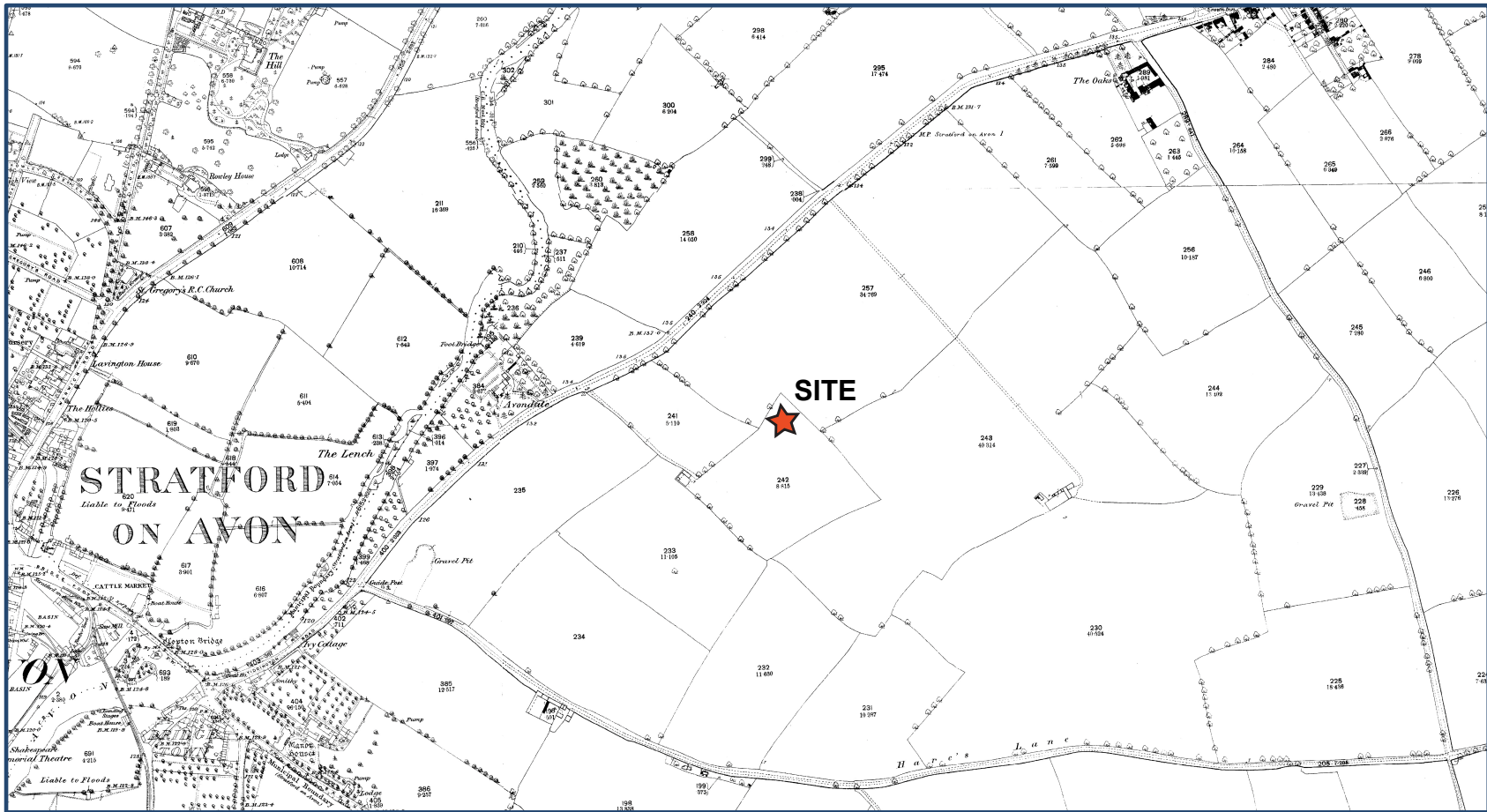


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886

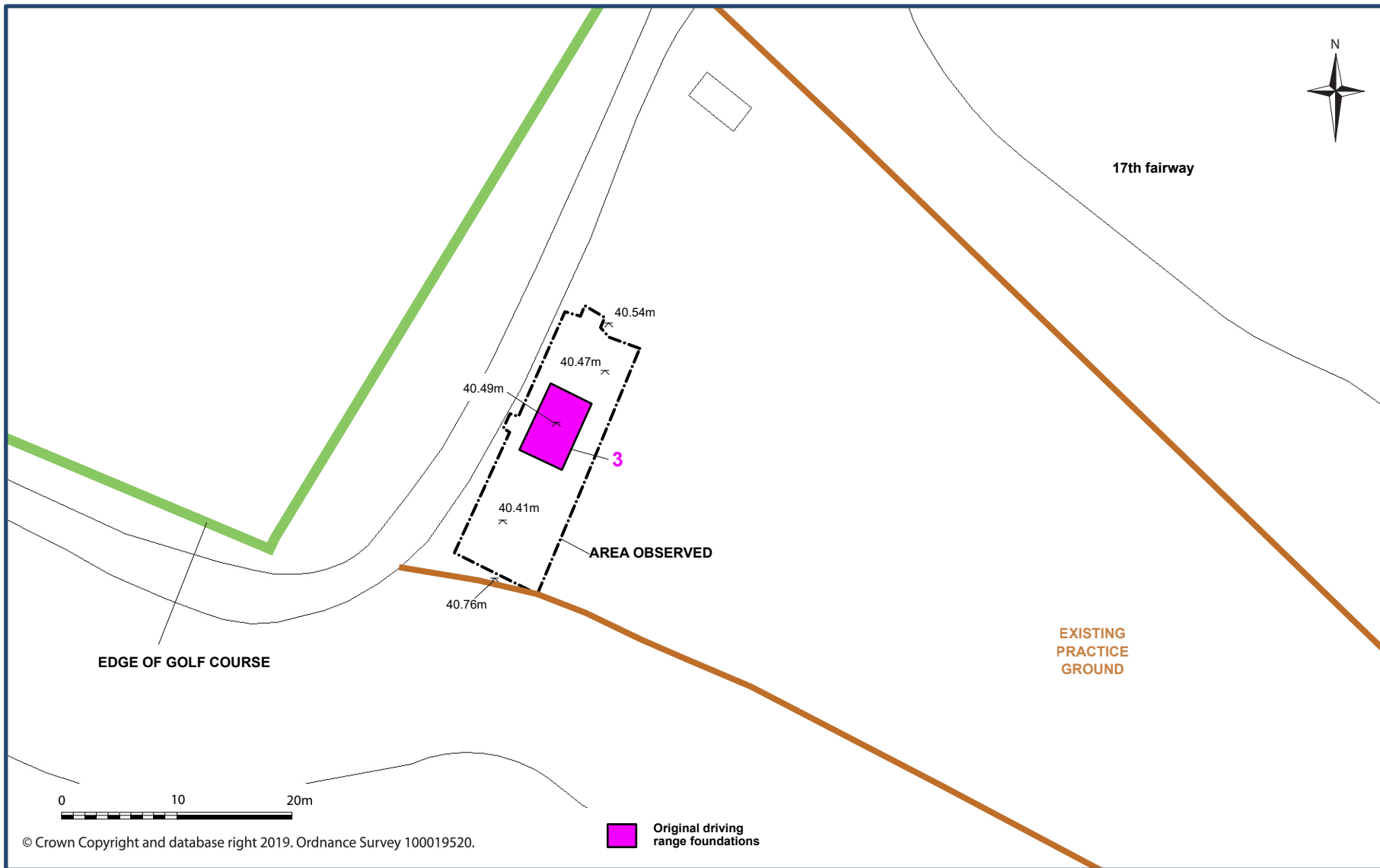


Fig 3: Location of area observed