



Proposed Track, Pit and Paddock Amendments Silverstone Racetrack, Buckinghamshire

Report on a Programme of Archaeological Watching Brief and
Strip, Map and Sample





**PROPOSED TRACK, PIT AND Paddock AMENDMENTS,
SILVERSTONE RACETRACK,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**Report on a Programme of Archaeological Watching Brief and
Strip, Map and Sample**

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

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**Report on a Programme of Archaeological Watching Brief and Strip, Map and
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Summary

Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Silverstone Circuits Ltd (the Client), through their agent Terence O'Rourke Ltd (the Consultant), to undertake a programme of archaeological works on land that has been granted planning permission (09/01099/APP and 08/0744/APP) by Aylesbury Vale District Council for development that comprise circuit alterations and new pit and paddock at the Silverstone Racetrack, Buckinghamshire (hereafter, 'the Site') (**Figure 1**). The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 467395 241895.

This report contains the results of the archaeological watching brief and Strip, Map and Sample fieldwork carried out on selected areas of the proposed development that were identified from a previous archaeological evaluation (WA 2009). The evaluation revealed features dating to the late Iron Age/ Early Romano-British, Post-medieval and modern eras.

The programme of works consisted of two phases. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken the 16th, 17th, 21st and 22nd of December 2009 and 4th and 5th of January 2010. The strip, map and sample fieldwork was undertaken from the 25th of January to the 5th of February 2010.

The watching brief comprised of three areas, c0.3ha in total, within the proposed track amendment area located towards the centre of the Site. One area was archaeologically blank and two areas revealed six undated ditches, five aligned north-east south-west and one east-west, of which one might correspond with a ditch of Romano-British date that was recorded in the previous archaeological evaluation within Trench 9. The watching brief area also exposed a number of modern drainage systems and a substantial area of disturbance.

The strip, map and sample excavation area originally comprised of a square area, 0.4ha in total, however was reduced and segmented due to the location of live drainage services. The excavation exposed a very high level of modern disturbance as a result of airfield and racing circuit installations. No archaeological features were identified.

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Acknowledgements

The programme of archaeological works was commissioned by Jon Hawkings (the Client) of Silverstone Estates Ltd through their agent John Trehy (the Consultant) of Terence O'Rourke and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to them in this regard. Wessex Archaeology also gratefully acknowledges the advice of Sandy Kidd (County Archaeologist for Buckinghamshire County Council) who monitored the project.

Buckingham, the principal contractor and groundwork staff from R K Civil Engineering, plant subcontractor, are also thanked for their help and assistance.

The watching brief fieldwork was directed by Jon Smith and Julia Sulikowska assisted by Tom Wells, Nicola Mulhall and Piotr Orcewski. The strip, map and sample fieldwork was directed by Rebecca Fitzpatrick assisted by Neil Fitzpatrick, Simon Flaherty, Matt Fenn and Dan Joyce. The animal bone was assessed by Jessica Grimm. The illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer. This report was compiled by Rebecca Fitzpatrick. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Caroline Budd.

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**Report on a Programme of Archaeological Watching Brief and Strip, Map and
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Silverstone Estates Ltd (the Client), through their agent Terence O'Rourke Ltd (the Consultant), to undertake an archaeological watching brief and programme of strip, map and sample on land at the Silverstone Racetrack, Buckinghamshire (hereafter, 'the Site') (**Figure 1**). The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 467395 241895 and is the subject of development proposals that comprise circuit alterations and new pit and paddock complex.
- 1.1.2 Planning permission for the track amendments and new pit and paddock were granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) Aylesbury Vale District Council (track amendments planning reference no. 09/01099/APP and new pit and paddock planning reference no. 08/0744/APP) and was subject to an archaeological condition requiring a staged programme of archaeological work to be carried out in advance of the development. The requirement for an archaeological watching brief and programme of strip, map and sample on selected areas of the proposed development was identified following a previous archaeological evaluation (WA 2009a). The requirement was specified in the Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief issued in December 2009 by the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, advisor to the LPA (BCAS 2009).
- 1.1.3 The programme of archaeological works was required in order to provide a means of preservation by record of any archaeological remains which may have existed in the proposed development areas.
- 1.1.4 Written Schemes of Investigation (WSI) were prepared by Wessex Archaeology (December 2009b and January 2010), detailing the strategy, methodology and standards to be employed during the archaeological works. The documents submitted were in keeping with the relevant standards and guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists and were approved by BCAS's archaeological adviser to the LPA prior to the commencement of fieldwork.
- 1.1.5 The archaeological watching brief fieldwork was conducted from the 16th, 17th, 21st and 22nd of December 2009 and 4th and 5th of January 2010. The subsequent strip, map and sample was undertaken from the 25th of January to the 5th of February 2010.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is located in the south-western part of the Silverstone circuit, between Club Corner and Maggotts Curve. The Site lies at approximately 153m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) on a relatively flat, gentle, west and south-west facing slope. It comprises an area of grass and gravel trap between the existing racetrack and a stretch of former runway.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the Site comprises Oldhaven, Blackheath, Woolwich and Reading and Thanet Beds (Geological Map of Great Britain. Sheet 2 1957).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 In advance of the development, an Environmental Impact Assessment was prepared by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU 2001). Moreover, Luffield Priory lay within the area studied by the Whittewood Project, a multi-disciplinary archaeological and historical study (Jones and Page, 2006). The results of these studies, together with a map regression prepared by Wessex Archaeology for the *Evaluation Report* (WA 2009a) (**Figure 3, a-e**), are summarised below.

Prehistoric

- 2.1.2 Dense woodland and location on the heavy clay soils would have made the area of Silverstone circuit fairly unattractive for settlement. Evidence of Bronze Age activity is suggested on early maps, where a bell barrow was mapped in the eastern part of the circuit. The monument was excavated by W. G. Grimes during construction works for the airfield in 1941 and was described as ‘much disturbed’. An oval cropmark, located to the north east of the circuit was provisionally interpreted to be of Iron Age date.

Romano-British

- 2.1.3 The Roman road between Towcester and Alcester is known to have run on a north-south alignment, approximately 250m to the east of the Silverstone estate boundary. Another road joined this to the south of the circuit, near Stowe.
- 2.1.4 Some traces of the artificial embankment that carried the road survive as earthworks or soilmarks. Cropmarks, identified as rectilinear enclosures, and coin and pottery finds associated with the road have also been found.

Medieval

- 2.1.5 The Domesday Book mentioned the settlements of Lillingstone Dayrell and Lillingstone Lovell, which are located to the east of the Silverstone circuit. In the later medieval period, a part of the Silverstone estate lay within the royal forest of Whittlebury (**Figure 3e**). Evidence of agricultural activity in the circuit area, evident as medieval ridge and furrow earthworks and possible rectilinear field boundaries (**Figure 2, a-b**), is also dated to the late medieval period.

- 2.1.6 The Benedictine priory of Luffield was founded in 1118, but remained small and suffered an early decline. In 1494, due to poverty, it was annexed to the college and hospital of St. George, Windsor. After the Dissolution, the monastic buildings decayed, were robbed of their stone and were eventually replaced by Luffield Abbey Farm, shown on the earliest maps of c. 1600. (Whittlewood Forest map, here reproduced from its 1725 copy, **Figure 3e**).
- 2.1.7 Antiquarian reports indicate that the priory lay astride the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire county boundary, with the church in Northants and conventual buildings in Buckinghamshire. By c. 1760, only a small part of the buildings survived as a ruin recorded by Browne Willis. The monastic cartulary has been published by the Bucks Records Society (Elvey 1968 and 1975).
- 2.1.8 The direct archaeological evidence for the priory itself is very limited and still largely comprises aerial photographs believed to show the sites of former monastic buildings and also ditches possibly associated with the priory. Skeletons and weapons are known to have been found in the vicinity of the Farm. In 1967, a discovery of two inhumation burials was mentioned, but no precise location of the graves was recorded.
- 2.1.9 The Chapel of St. Thomas Becket is known to have been located to the east of the priory from 15th century. By the late medieval period it was converted into cottages.

Post-medieval

- 2.1.10 In the post-medieval period, the Site lay at the periphery of several parishes and there is little evidence of intensification of settlement. Early maps (**Figure 3, a-e**) show that the area surrounding Luffield Abbey Farm was occupied by fields, mostly pasture and that this situation did not change until the Second World War.
- 2.1.11 Four ponds were shown on 1833 map (OAU 2001) in the area of the Farm. Three of them were backfilled by the 1880s and the largest remained in use until the Second World War. No trace of the ponds remains on the ground today.

Modern

- 2.1.12 The Farm grounds were incorporated within the Silverstone Airfield, which opened in March 1943 as a base for Bomber Command Operation Training Units (**Figure 2b**). After the war, the airfield was converted into a racing circuit and the British Grand Prix was held there in 1948.

2.2 Recent Investigations

- 2.2.1 A recent archaeological evaluation (**Figure 1**) was carried out by Wessex Archaeology in November 2009 (WA 2009a), which identified archaeological features in six of the 12 excavated trial trenches. The features comprised a series of ditches, which were likely to be pre-airfield land boundaries.

2.2.2 Due to the relative paucity of dating from these features the date of origin was unclear but they were likely to relate to post-medieval field boundaries as identified by historic mapping. Two ditches, a stone drain and a pit were identified in Trench 1 (**Figure 1**). None of these features contained any dating evidence however, the alignment of the ditches is believed to correspond with a field boundary shown on the 1856, 1885 and 1900 historic mapping. One ditch, identified in Trench 9 (**Figure 1**), may represent the former Luffield parish boundary, which is thought to date to the medieval period. Also within Trench 9 a further ditch was identified which contained Romano-British pottery and may date to this period. In general the evaluation gave no indication of domestic activity on the Site and suggested that the area had been utilised as agricultural land in the past, an interpretation that is supported by the historic map evidence.

3 AIMS

3.1 General

3.1.1 The aim of the archaeological works was to establish the presence or absence, location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the Site, and to mitigate any threat posed to them by the construction activity through preservation by record.

3.2 Specific

3.2.1 The specific aim of the watching brief was to clarify the plan, function and date of the features previously recorded between Trenches 5 and 10 (**Figure 1**) (WA 2009a). Particular attention was to be paid to the areas of cropmarks previously identified by the Environmental Impact Assessment (**Figure 1**) (OA 2009), which are currently obscured by the existing track, and to the continuation of the two ditches recorded in Trench 9. One of which contained Romano-British pottery and the other appeared to follow the line of the original parish boundary, which may date to the medieval period.

3.2.2 The specific aim of the programme of strip, map and sample was to clarify the plan, function and date of the features previously recorded in Trench 1 (**Figure 1**) (WA 2009a) and to confirm the presence of the parish boundary as indicated by the 1856 historic mapping (**Figure 1**).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Programme of works strategy

4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in compliance with the methodology set out in the WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation and Recording (Wessex Archaeology 2009b and 2010) and standards set out on the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (as amended 2008) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2009).

4.2 Fieldwork

Watching Brief

4.2.1 All construction activities within the area between Trenches 5 and 10 (as indicated on **Figure 1**) that had the potential to expose archaeological remains were subject to archaeological monitoring. In the main, this entailed all excavations required for the track amendments and the installation of drainage trenches.

Strip, Map and Sample

4.2.2 The Strip, Map and Sample works were undertaken in advance of construction and originally comprised a square area measuring 0.4ha situated towards the centre of the proposed pit and paddock footprint (as indicated on **Figure 5**).

4.2.3 Prior to machine stripping within the strip, map and sample area the presence of below ground services were visually tracked from four man-holes. As a result a network of live drainage systems were identified within the strip, map and sample zone. The projected route of each service was mapped and a minimum distance of 2m was kept either side of the known live drainage systems as required by the Health and Safety Advisor of the Principal Contractor.

4.2.4 All areas of the investigation were stripped of topsoil and/ or gravel, by the earthworks contractors, using 360° tracked mechanical excavators equipped with toothless ditching buckets. All excavations were monitored by a qualified archaeologist. All features archaeological or otherwise were recorded in plan using a Leica GPS 1200 and tied into the ordnance survey National Grid.

4.2.5 All features were characterised and dated through excavation of an appropriate sample. The features were fully recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro-forma* recording system. All artefacts were retained from excavated contexts.

4.2.6 A photographic record of the programme of works was maintained throughout.

4.3 Health and Safety

4.3.1 All work was carried in accordance with Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4.3.2 Prior to the commencement of the field work a site-specific Risk Assessment was produced. All staff involved in works signed and complied with this document.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The excavation of the watching brief and strip, map and sample areas produced ranging results.

5.1.2 The watching brief areas revealed a series of undated ditches pertaining to field boundary systems, one (**Figure 4**) of which may correlate with a Romano-British ditch identified in the previous evaluation. The remaining features all comprised modern linear water drainage services and general patches of modern disturbance.

5.1.3 The strip, map and sample area exposed very high levels of modern disturbance and included a network of water drainage services.

5.2 Site Wide Deposits

5.2.1 The watching brief areas (**Figure 4**) displayed a consistent soil sequence throughout. This comprised a mid grey brown silty clay loam topsoil/ turf **1401** to a depth of between 0.15m and 0.29m, overlying a light/ mid orange brown clay with flint subsoil **1402** to a depth of between 0.40m and 0.61m that in turn overlay the natural geology **1403** of variable mid orange brown to light yellow grey clay and sand with gravel and chalk inclusions.

5.2.2 The strip, map and sample area (**Figure 5**) was located on gravel associated with the race track, towards the south-east, and grass, towards the north-west. The gravels consisted of pea-shingle **1418** overlying a clay base **1419** to a depth of approximately 0.50m. The perceived secondary use of the gravel trap is as a sump for an area that has a known high water table. The area located in grass consisted of an upper turf layer **1401** overlying a modern levelling layer **1417** that sealed a lower topsoil surface **1420** in which modern drainage services were cut. Beneath **1420** the subsoil **1402** was present overlying the natural geology **1403**.

5.3 Archaeological Features

Early Romano-British

5.3.1 Ditch **1406** (**Plate 1**) was exposed within the watching brief area (**Figure 4**). The feature was north-east south-west aligned with moderate concave sides and gentle concave base. It measured 1.1m in width and 0.53m in depth. This feature was filled with two deposits, a lower light-mid orange brown clay with silt deposit **1408** interpreted as redeposited natural and mid-dark red brown silty clay loam, **1407**, the latter which contained animal bone. Ditch **1406**, within the watching brief footprint, is undated although there remains a tentative link due to its projected alignment with **913** (**Plate 2**) recorded in Trench 9 of the *Evaluation* (Wessex 2009a) which was dated to the Early Romano-British period.

Undated

5.3.2 Ditch **1404** (**Figure 4**), north-east south-west aligned, was excavated and measured 0.5m wide and 0.12m in depth with moderate concave sides and flat base. This feature was filled with **1405** a mid orange brown redeposited natural fill. This ditch was evident in two of the watching brief areas.

- 5.3.3 An undated north-east south-west aligned shallow ditch **1409 (Figure 4)** was also excavated. It measured 0.55m wide and 0.09m in depth and contained a single redeposited natural deposit **1410** of light-mid orange brown clay with silt.
- 5.3.4 In the north-east part of the watching brief area a north-east south-west aligned ditch **1411 (Figure 4 and Plate 3)** that measured 1.18m wide and 0.40m in depth was exposed. This feature was filled with **1412**, a single mid grey/brown orange silty clay fill. The ditch was truncated by a modern clay pipe land drain.
- 5.3.5 Two further ditches were exposed within the largest watching brief area (**Figure 4**). One north-east south-west aligned linear **1424** was located to the far west of the area and measured 0.30m in plan. The other linear **1425** was east-west aligned and located at the far east of the area this measured approximately 1.3m wide in plan. Due to adverse weather conditions these were mapped and were not sampled.

Modern

- 5.3.6 Within the watching brief area, towards the east, a number of modern features were identified and surveyed (**Figure 4**). The linear features were interpreted as drainage ditches and a substantial linear-like feature, north-west south-east aligned was identified as a modern service trench. In conjunction with this two small areas of disturbance were identified.
- 5.3.7 The strip, map and sample area (**Figure 5**) also exposed a network of modern service trenches and linear features related to modern drainage. The locations of undated ditches recorded in Trench 1, of the previous evaluation, were projected across the area and particular care was taken to reveal and investigate their alignments. As a result the potential archaeological features were confirmed as modern drainage trenches and discrete areas of modern disturbance.
- 5.3.8 Two small features, **1421** and **1423 (Figure 5)**, in the south-west corner of the strip, map and sample area were hand excavated and revealed to be discrete patches of modern disturbance. A north-west south-east aligned linear feature was also investigated and confirmed as a geological anomaly.

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 The watching brief produced a paucity of finds and included a total of seven animal bone fragments retrieved from ditch **1406**. All were identified and interpreted as cattle bone.
- 6.1.2 No finds were recovered from the strip, map and sample programme of works.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the fieldwork.

8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1.1 The archaeological programme of works exposed a very limited number of archaeological features, all of which related to agricultural/ drainage field boundary ditches.
- 8.1.2 The alignment of Ditch **1406** suggests it is the same as Ditch **913**, found in Trench 9 of the evaluation (WA 2009a). Ditch **913** produced pottery dating to the Romano-British period. However no datable artefacts were recovered from **1406**. A similarly aligned feature was mapped as a field boundary in 1856, 1885 and 1900. The pottery evidence recovered in the evaluation may suggest the boundary remained in use from the Romano-British period onwards but it is thought more likely that the artefacts recovered from **913** were residual.
- 8.1.3 No evidence relating to Ditch **908**, previously recorded in evaluation Trench 9 and formerly identified as a cropmark shown in the Environmental Impact Assessment (OAU 2001), was identified in the watching brief area. The feature is therefore more likely to discontinue prior to entering the area of proposed track amendments.
- 8.1.4 The field boundaries/ drainage ditches revealed elsewhere within the watching brief area remain undated. It is likely that they date to the post-medieval period or later.
- 8.1.5 The absence of any archaeological features within the strip, map and sample area may be a result of modern truncation and disturbance of the ground level at which archaeological features were observed elsewhere on the Site. The disturbance may be associated with service installations dating from the 1940's airfield activity or the more recent racing circuit development. No evidence was found pertaining to the Parish boundaries that are shown on historic maps. Modern truncation is likely to have destroyed any such features that may have existed within the strip, map and sample area.
- 8.1.6 Given the low archaeological potential and significance of the results of the archaeological works it is proposed that a summary report be prepared and sent to the editors of South Midlands Archaeology and Records of Buckinghamshire.

9 ARCHIVE

- 9.1.1 The project archive, containing site documentation, written and drawn records, photographic images, specialist reports and digitally captured data, is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Salisbury office, under the site code 72961. In due course the archive will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum under the accession number: AYBCM: 2009.198.
- 9.1.2 The completed project archive will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (UKIC 1990).

- 9.1.3 Details of the Site will be submitted online to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) database.

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- Site boundary
- Watching Brief area
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- Parish boundary (1856)
- Field boundary (1856)

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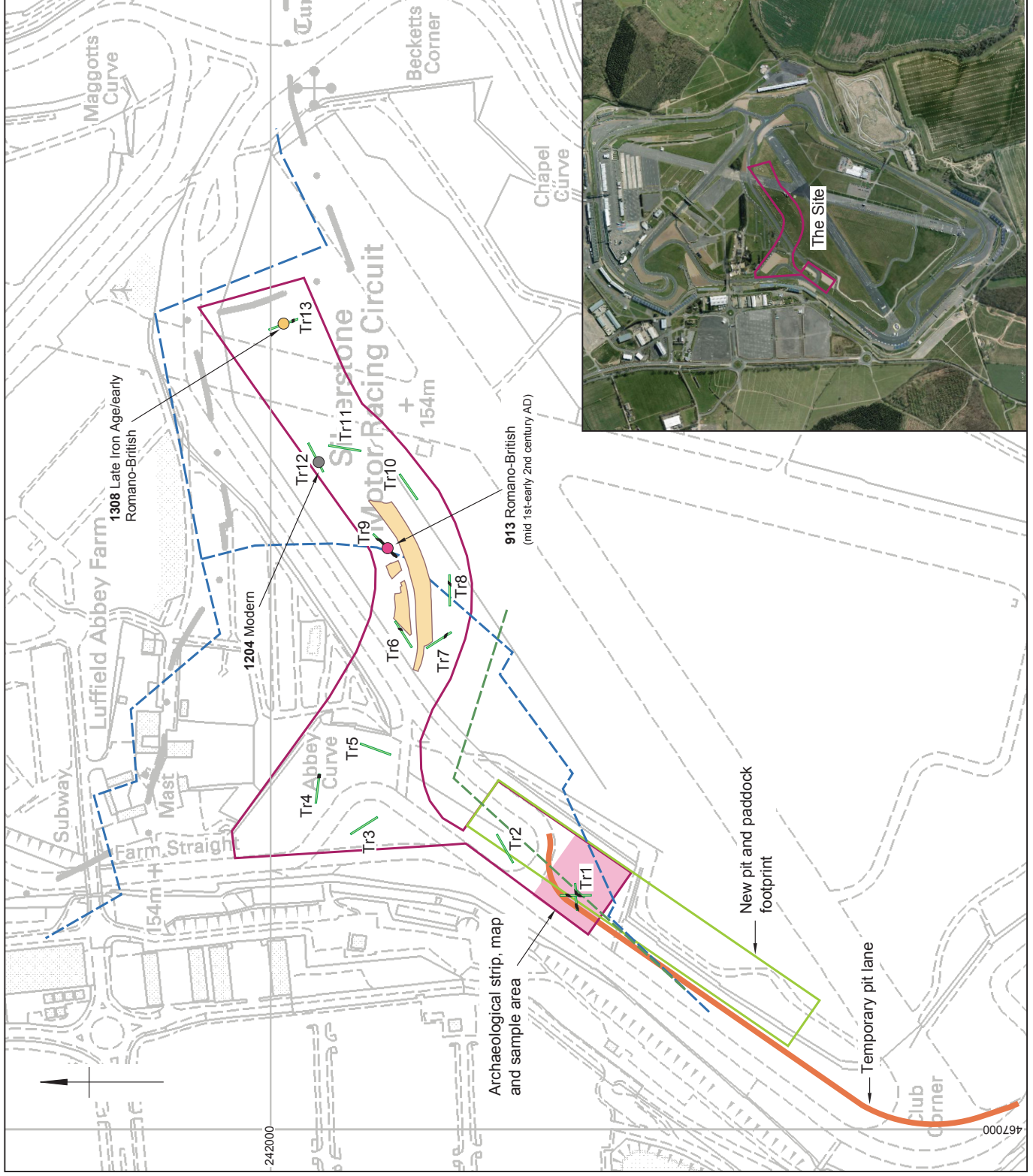
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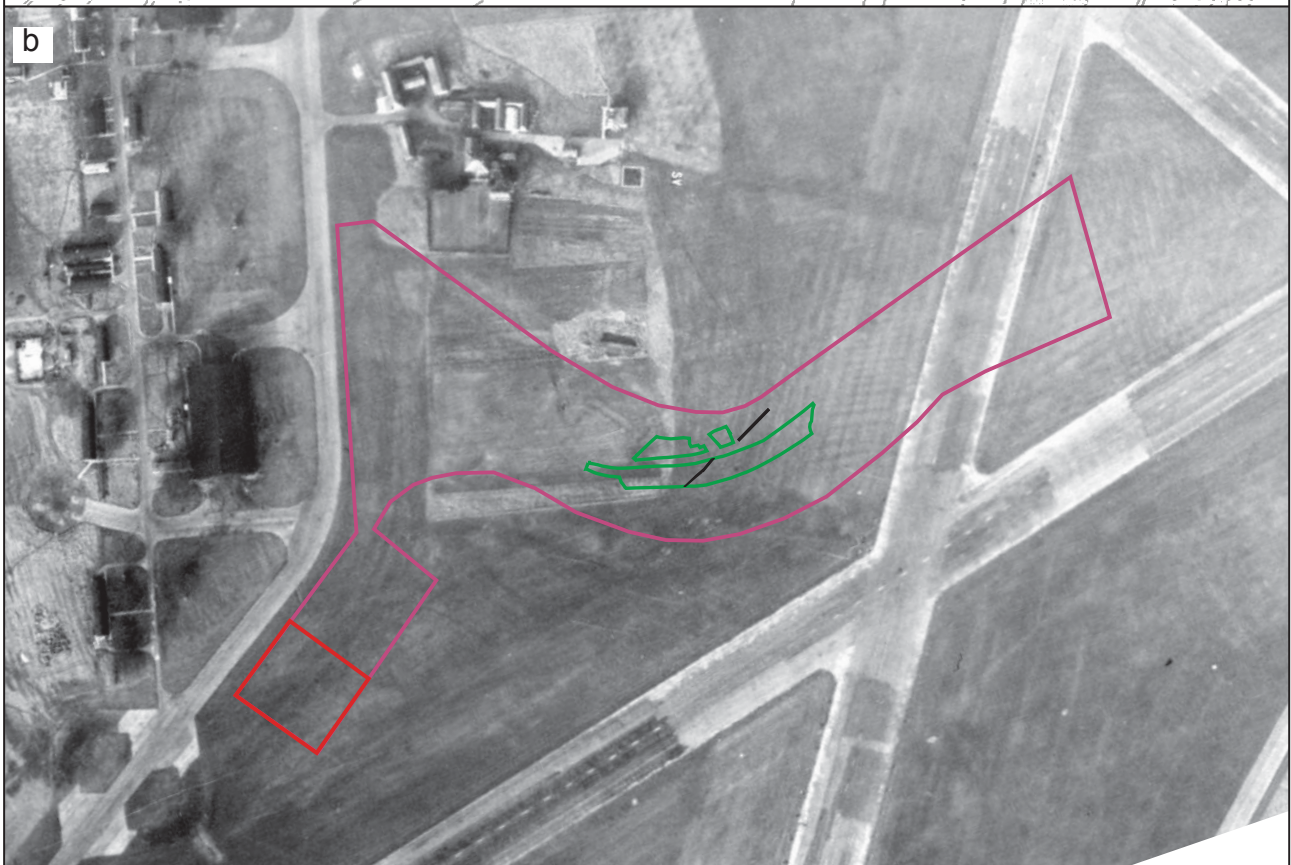
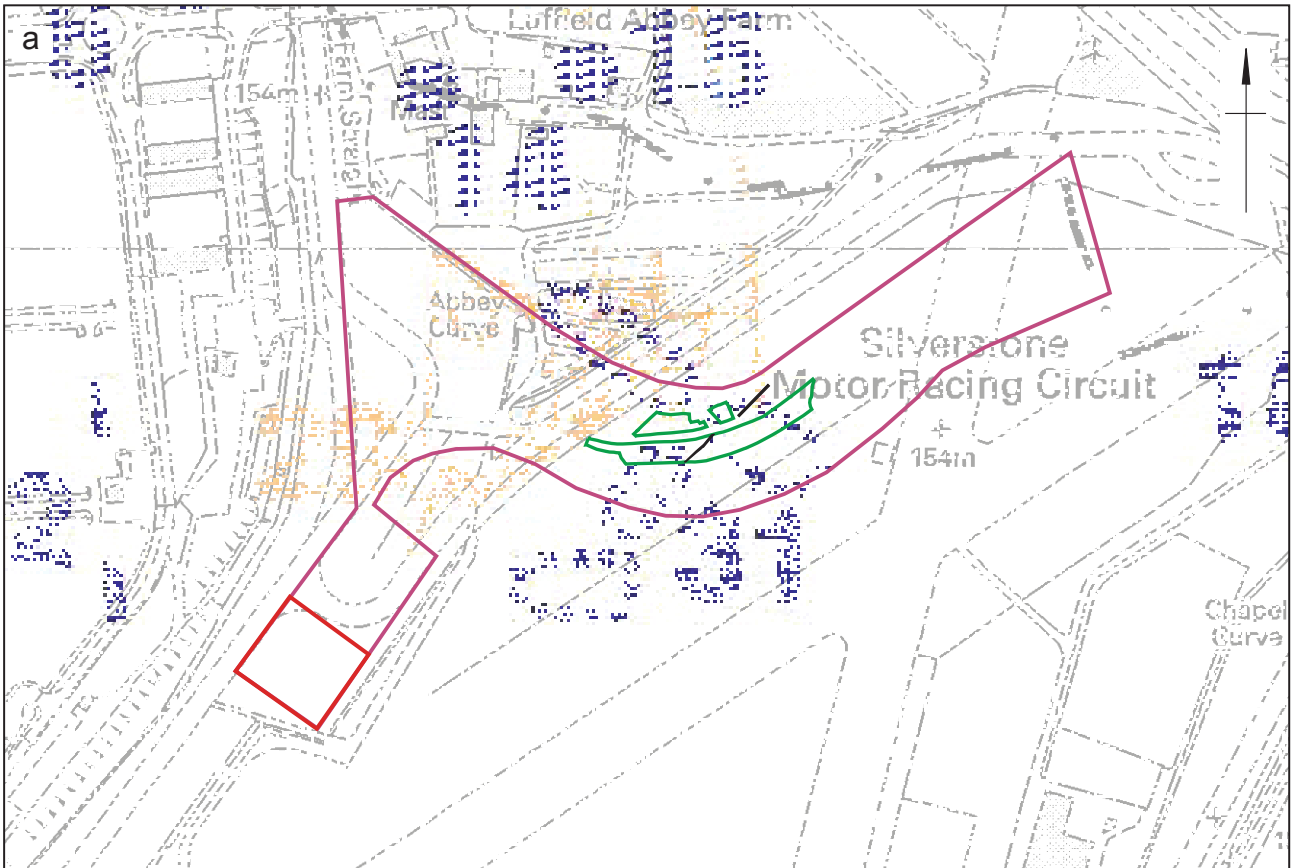
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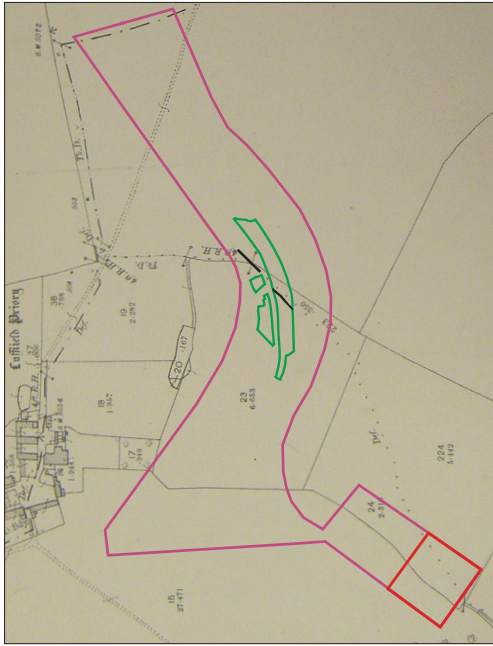
Site location plan

Figure 1



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▭ Site boundary ▭ Watching brief area ▭ Strip, map and sample area — Romano-British feature 	<p>Digital data reproduced from Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Terrence o'Rourke Ltd. AL: 100017826. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.</p>			
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Location of watching brief and strip, map and sample areas in relation to a) Cropmarks (OAU 2001)
b) 1947 aerial photograph



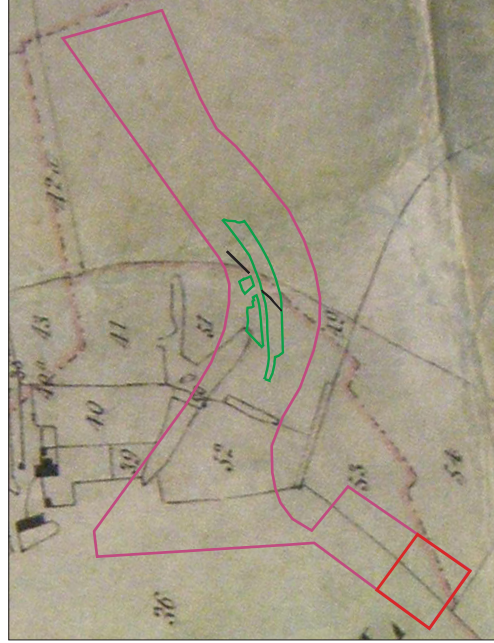
a) 1900 25" OS map



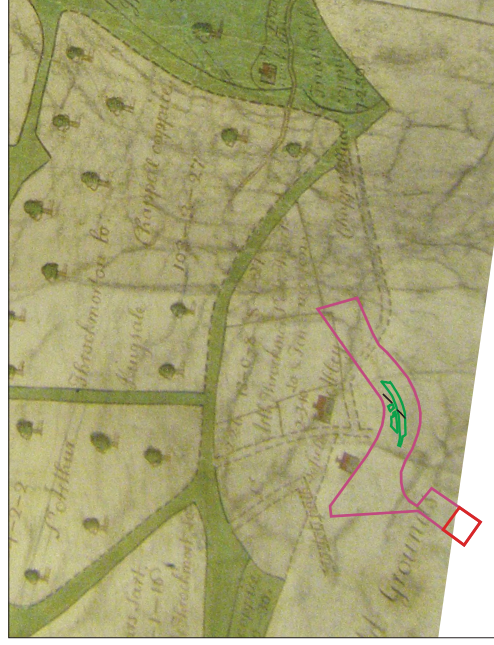
b) 1885 25" OS map



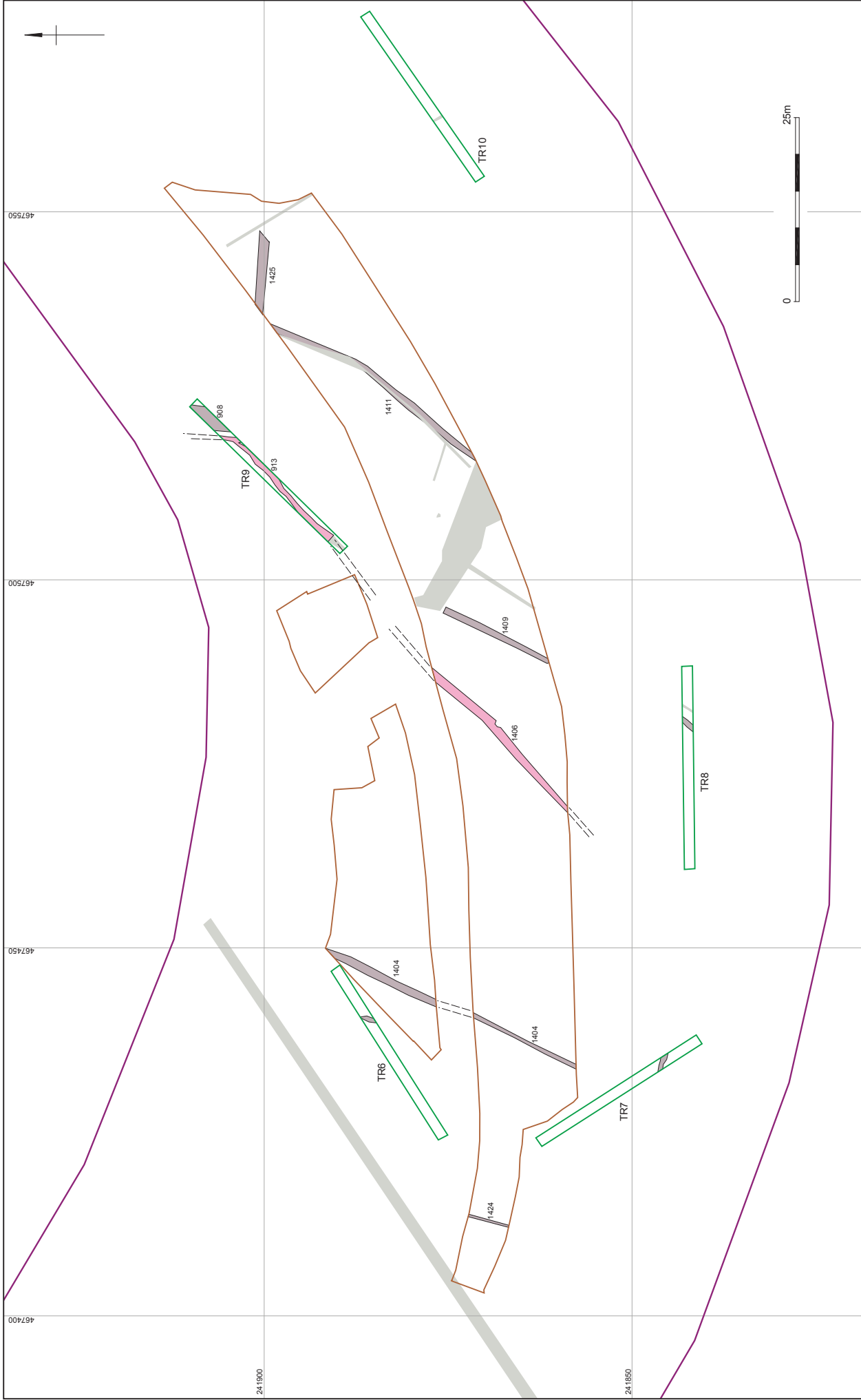
c) 1856 Silverstone Parish map



d) 1856 Luffield Abbey and Parish fields map

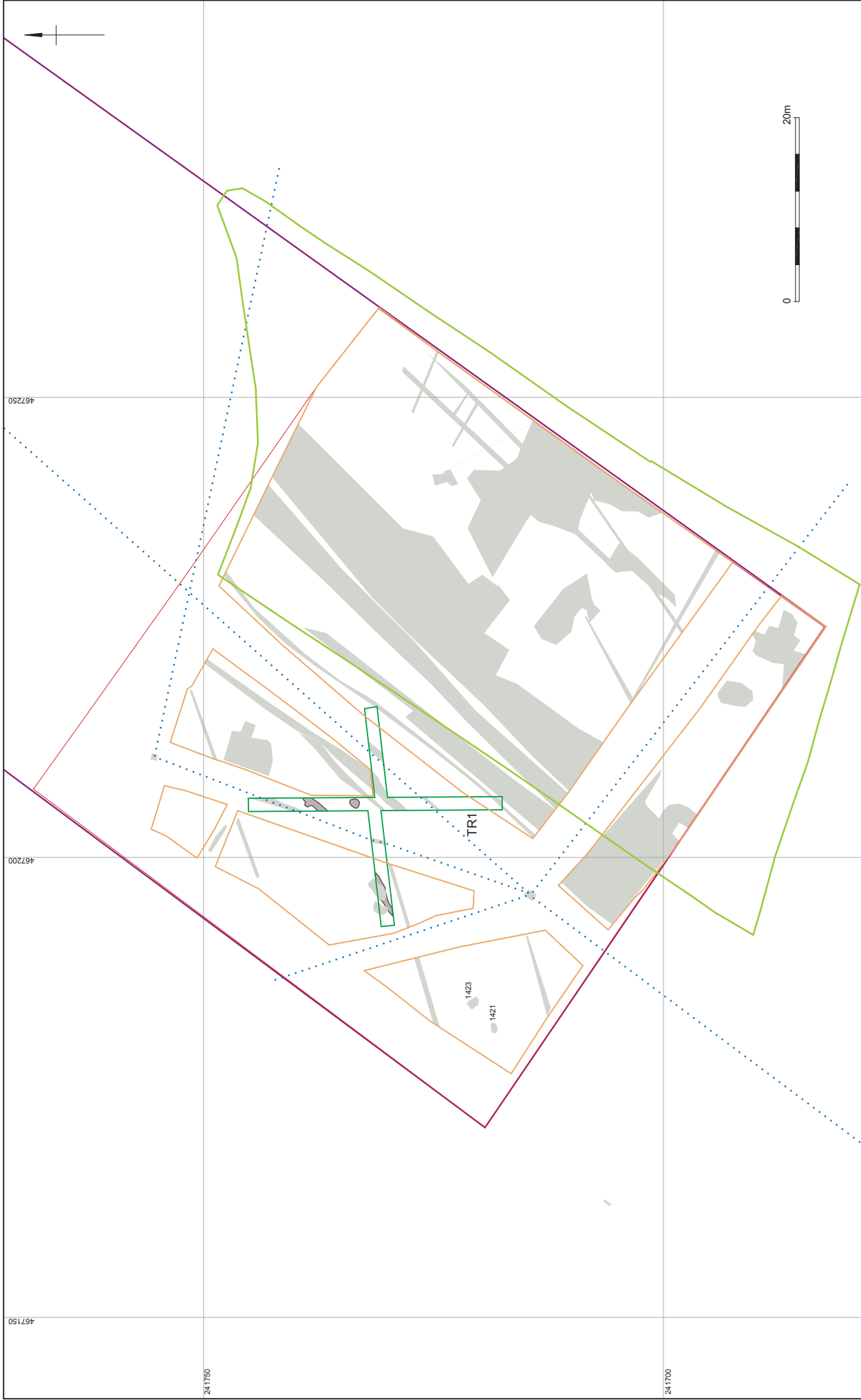


e) 1725 Whittlewood Forest map (copy of early 17th century map)



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Plan of watching brief area Figure 4



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Plan of strip, map and sample area

Figure 5



Plate 1: South-west facing section of ditch 1406



Plate 2: South-west facing section of ditch 913



Plate 3: South-west facing section of ditch 1411

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