

# <u>Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd</u>

# WATCHING BRIEF LAND NORTH OF SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

On behalf of Carrillion Building

Joe Abrams BA AIFA



October 2002

ASC:STS02/2

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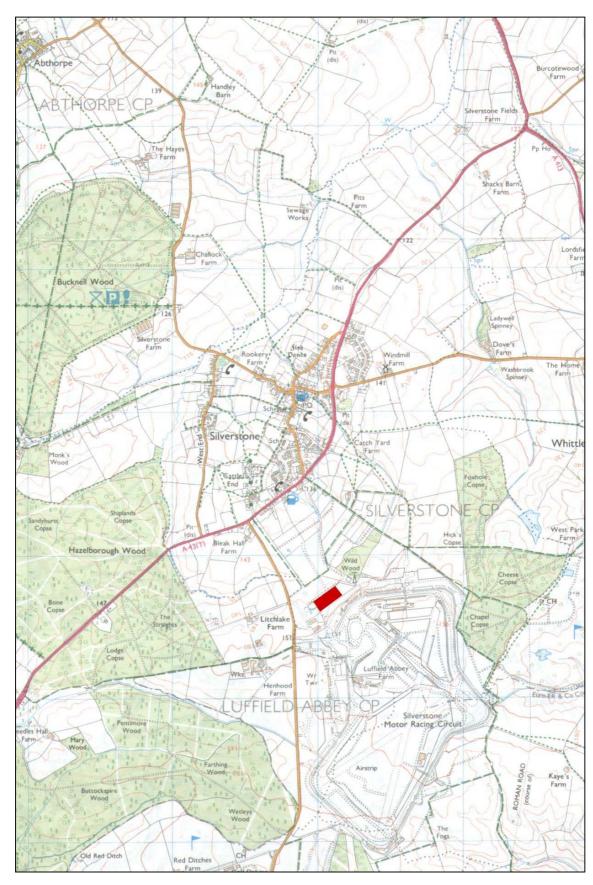


## **SITE DATA**

ASC site code:	STS02	Project No:	420
County:		Northamptonshire	
District:		South Northants	
Village/Town:		Silverstone	
Parish:		Silverstone CP	
NGR:		SP 6706 4270	
Total extent of site:		1.12ha	
Present land use:		Former airfield: now on ed	dge of motor racing circuit
Planning proposal:		Construction of 3 industria	al units, and associated
		parking	
Planning application	ref/date:	S/2002/0827/P	
Dates of fieldwork		20 September to 25 September 25	mber 2002
Client:		Carillion Building	
		Post Room	
		24 Birch Street	
		Wolverhampton	
		WV1 4HY	
Contact name:		R.J.Massey	
Telephone:		Fax:	

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Based upon the 1999 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map, with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.  $\odot$  Crown Copyright ASC Ltd - Licence No. AL10005154

Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## **Summary**

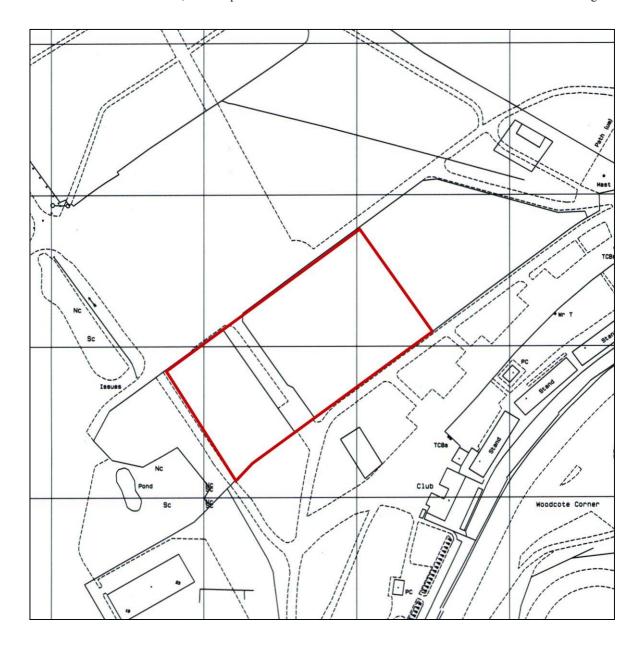
During September 2002 a watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for the construction of three industrial units and associated parking, on land north of Silverstone Circuit, Northamptonshire. No significant archaeological features were recorded during this project.

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The project was commissioned Carillion Building, and was carried out according to a brief prepared by Myk Flitcroft, Archaeological Planning Officer, Historic Environment Team, Northamptonshire County Council, and a written scheme of investigation prepared by (Zeepvat 2002).
- 1.2 The watching brief at Silverstone circuit was commissioned in response to a PPG16 (archaeology and planning) planning condition imposed by the local planning authority, South Northamptonshire Council. The condition was placed due to the proximity of the development area to the medieval Luffield Priory, c.500m to the southeast, and because it is located within the medieval royal forest of Whittlewood. It was expected that any archaeological remains present within the development area would have been severely damaged or destroyed by the groundworks associated with the construction of industrial units, car parking and associated services.

#### 1.3 Setting

- 1.3.1 The site is a rectangular shaped plot approximately 1.12ha in size. It is located c.1km southwest of the village of Silverstone, within the parish of Silverstone CP at NGR SP 6706 4270.
- 1.3.2 The elevation of the site is approximately 147m OD. The land slopes gently to the northwest away from the slightly higher ground upon which Silverstone circuit is located. The development area is bordered by the circuit's perimeter fence to the south, by gravel car parking areas to the north and west and by open grassland to the east.
- 1.3.3 The natural soils of the area are derived from clay and the underlying geology is classified as belonging to the Ragdale association (Soil Survey 1983, 712g), described as 'slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils'. The underlying geology comprises a chalky till.



Based upon an Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 Superplan, with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright ASC Ltd - Licence No. AL100015154

Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:2,500)

## 2 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 2.1 Silverstone is an area of significant archaeological and historical interest. The presence of a settlement is recorded in the Domesday survey, which states that the village was part of Foxley Hundred.
- 2.2 The most notable evidence for prehistoric activity within the vicinity of the site are the records made during the excavation of a bell-barrow undertaken by the War Ministry in 1941. The bell-barrow produced no prehistoric finds, but was dated to the Bronze Age by its morphological similarities with other better dated examples from elsewhere in the country (Lovell 2001). The excavation site was located within an RAF aerodrome south of the village of Silverstone. Following the end of WWII this aerodrome was converted to the now world famous Grand Prix motor racing circuit. The development area is immediately northwest of the racing circuit and therefore finds from the prehistoric period were considered a possibility.
- 2.3 There have been various stray finds from the village dating to the Roman period. These include various artefacts including pottery sherds from a possible kiln in Little London, and cobbled surfaces and masonry from possible building foundations in various gardens in the village (Lovell 2001).
- 2.4 Luffield Priory was constructed in the  $9^{th}$  century close to the site of the Bronze Age barrow mentioned above. The site of this important ecclesiastical centre lies c.500m to the southeast of the site.
- 2.5 While it was anticipated that the site had the potential to reveal remains of a variety of periods, the focus of interest in the watching brief lay in the medieval period, during which the area was part of the medieval royal forest of Whittlewood. A royal hunting lodge was established at Silverstone during the early medieval period, although the exact location of this is not known. This was used throughout the medieval period by royal hunting parties.
- 2.6 The development area lies within land which was exploited throughout the medieval period for timber and hunting. Other industries included charcoal burning and iron working. It was expected that traces of land boundaries or archaeological features relating to these industrial activities may have been recorded during this watching brief.

#### 3 Aims & Methods

- 3.1 The aim of the watching brief were (2):
  - To consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains which were liable to be threatened by the development.
  - To produce an accurate and full record of the archaeology present, such that a permanent record will be made and the results presented in such a way that they may be re-examined and interpreted in the future.
- 3.2 The work was carried out according to the brief, which required (3):
  - A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording during the construction of three industrial units, car parking and associated services.
- 3.3 The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Watching Briefs, and the relevant section(s) of ASC's Operations Manual.
- 3.4 Each site visit was recorded on ASC's Site Monitoring Sheets (Appendix 1). A photographic record (B&W prints, colour slides and digital photographs) was also maintained throughout the watching brief. A plan of the development provided by the client (Fig. 3) was used as the basis for recording the location of archaeological features and finds.

#### 4 Results

- 4.1 Four visits were made to the site, during which the following groundworks operations were monitored:
  - Removal of topsoil and tarmac access roads from the development area
  - Removal of topsoil from the service run northwest of the development area.

It was thought that the development area may have contained archaeological features related to the medieval/ post-medieval woodland boundaries and for earlier, pre-woodland activity (Flitcroft 2002). Such activity often leaves behind archaeological evidence in the form of fencelines, boundary ditches and tree boles following tree clearance. No features of this type were observed, which may suggest that the land has been subject to landscaping and truncation in the modern period prior to the current development.

One possible remnant of ridge and furrow agriculture was observed at the western end of the development area. However this appeared to have been heavily truncated and only the base of the feature was visible. In this case it was impossible to positively identify whether or not this was a furrow, or to ascertain its date.

Several modern features were observed during the watching brief. These included a burnt patch containing charred wood and broken glass in the southwestern corner of the development area. Two modern drain covers and associated pipe trenches were also observed crossing the development area in a broadly north-south alignment.

The topsoil was a mid brown silty clay containing occasional chalk gravel, occasional rounded flint pebbles and was uniformly shallow at 0.2m deep. Below this was the natural subsoil, a light greyish brown clay containing occasional chalk gravel. It was noted that this natural subsoil was extremely compacted. It is suggested that such compaction is often associated with land which has been subject to truncation during the modern period. A map (Fig. 4) of the first circuit of the Grand Prix, 1948, clearly shows that the development area was located within enclosure B. It is possible that groundworks associated with the original conversion of the RAF aerodrome into a Grand Prix circuit may have impacted on the development area.

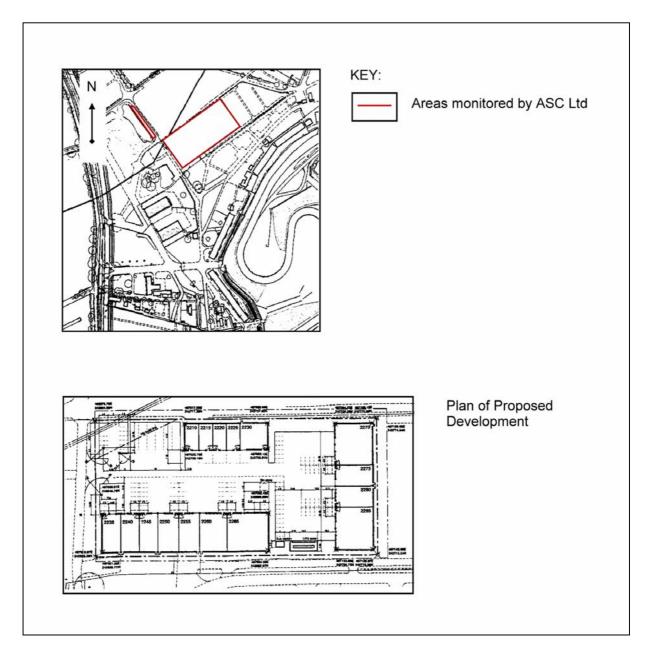


Figure 3: Plan of Proposed Development



Plate 1: Development Area, facing Plate southwest Development



**Plate 2:** Southeastern corner of Development Area, facing east



**Plate 3:** Central part of Development Area facing northwest



**Plate 4:** Topsoil stripping on the service run, northwest of main Development Area.

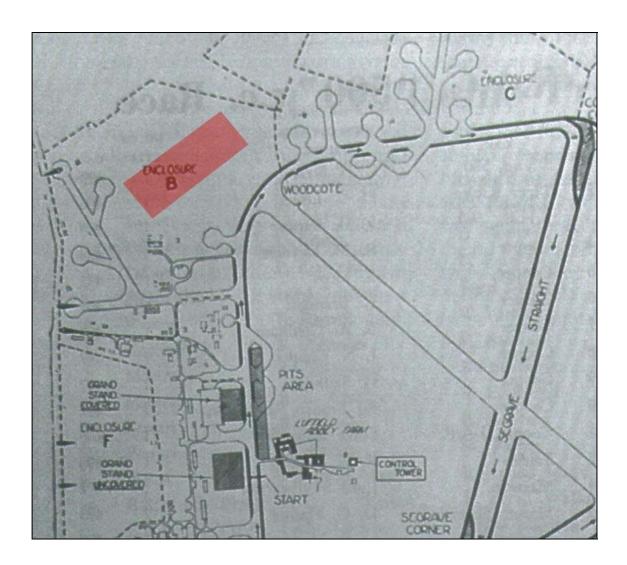


**Plate 5:** Base of tarmac access road after removal, facing north



**Plate 6:** Northeastern corner of Development Area, facing west.

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**Figure 4:** Plan of first Grand Prix circuit, 1948. The development area was within Enclosure B (not to scale).

#### 5 Conclusions

5.1 No significant archaeological features were recorded during this watching brief. It is suggested that truncation during the modern period, possibly during the construction of drainage runs and tarmac access roads or during the conversion of the RAF aerodrome into a Grand Prix circuit, may have resulted in the destruction of any archaeological features contained in the subsoil.

## 6 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Carillion Building for commissioning ASC to undertake the watching brief. Thanks are also extended to Mark Bramley (Site Manager) for on-site support. Myk Flitcroft (Archaeological Planning Officer) is due thanks for monitoring the site on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Joe Abrams and Bob Zeepvat, report preparation was undertaken by Joe Abrams of ASC Ltd.

## 7 Bibliography

- Flitcroft, M 2002 Replacement Industrial Units, Land North of Silverstone Circuit, Northamptonshire: Brief For Archaeological Watching Brief. Northamptonshire Heritage, Northamptonshire County Council.
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Zeepvat, B 2002 A Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Land north of Silverstone circuit, Northamptonshire. ASC Report STS02/1.

#### 8 Archive

- 8.1 The project archive comprises:
- 1. Four Archaeological field monitoring Sheets
- 2. Report (this document)
- 3. Photographs
- 4. CDROM
- 5. Project Design
- 6. Brief

## **Appendix 1: Field Monitoring Sheets**

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1) LEVELING MAN AREA. 2) CUTTING SERVICE TREMPHS. + DRAIN AGE	WILL
2) CUTTING SERVICE TREMPES -+ DRAIN AGE	
3) RE-CUTTING/CLEANING ONTH.	
Completed by: Sof ABRAMS 24/9/01	

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