



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**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 edge of motor racing circuit		
Planning proposal:	Construction of 3 industrial units, and associated parking		
Planning application ref/date:	S/2002/0827/P		
Dates of fieldwork	20 September to 25 September 2002		
Client:	Carillion Building Post Room 24 Birch Street Wolverhampton WV1 4HY		
Contact name:	R.J.Massey		
Telephone:		Fax:	

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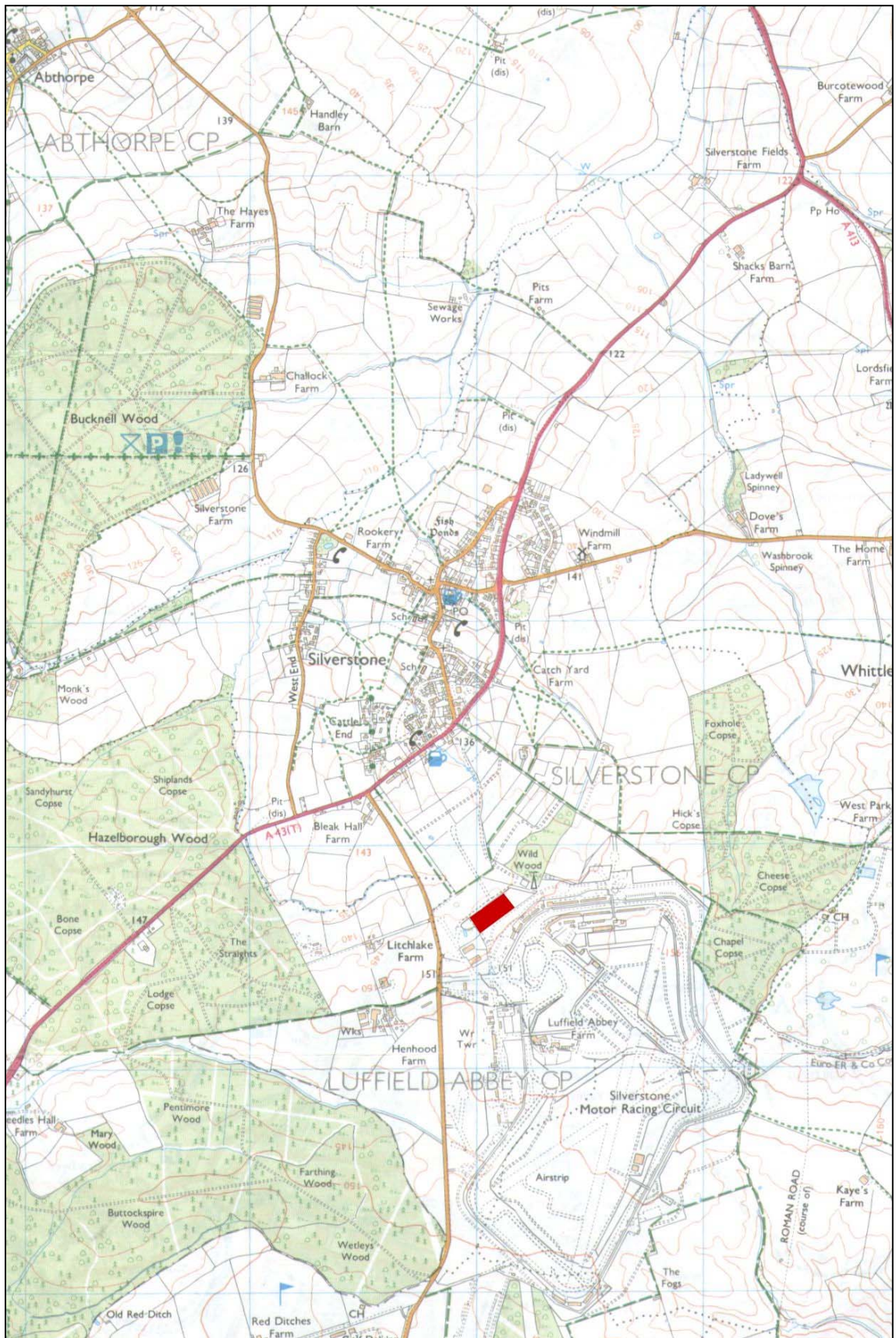
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**Figure 1:** General location (scale 1:25,000)

## 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 (Zeervat 2002).

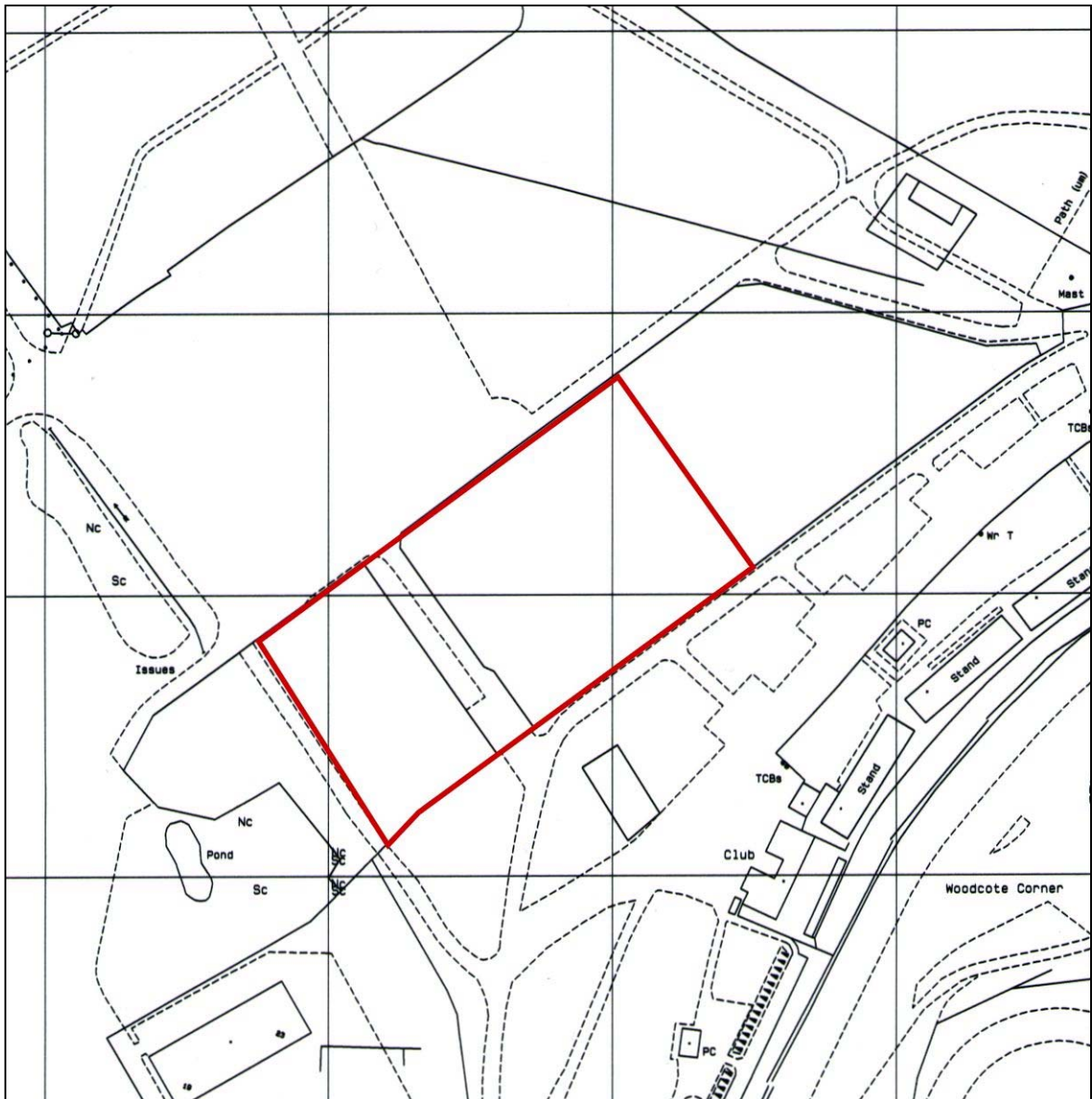
1.2 The watching brief at Silverstone circuit was commissioned in response to a PPG16 (archaeology and planning) planning condition imposed by the local planning authority, South Northamptonshire Council. The condition was placed due to the proximity of the development area to the medieval Luffield Priory, 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.  
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**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<sup>th</sup> 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.



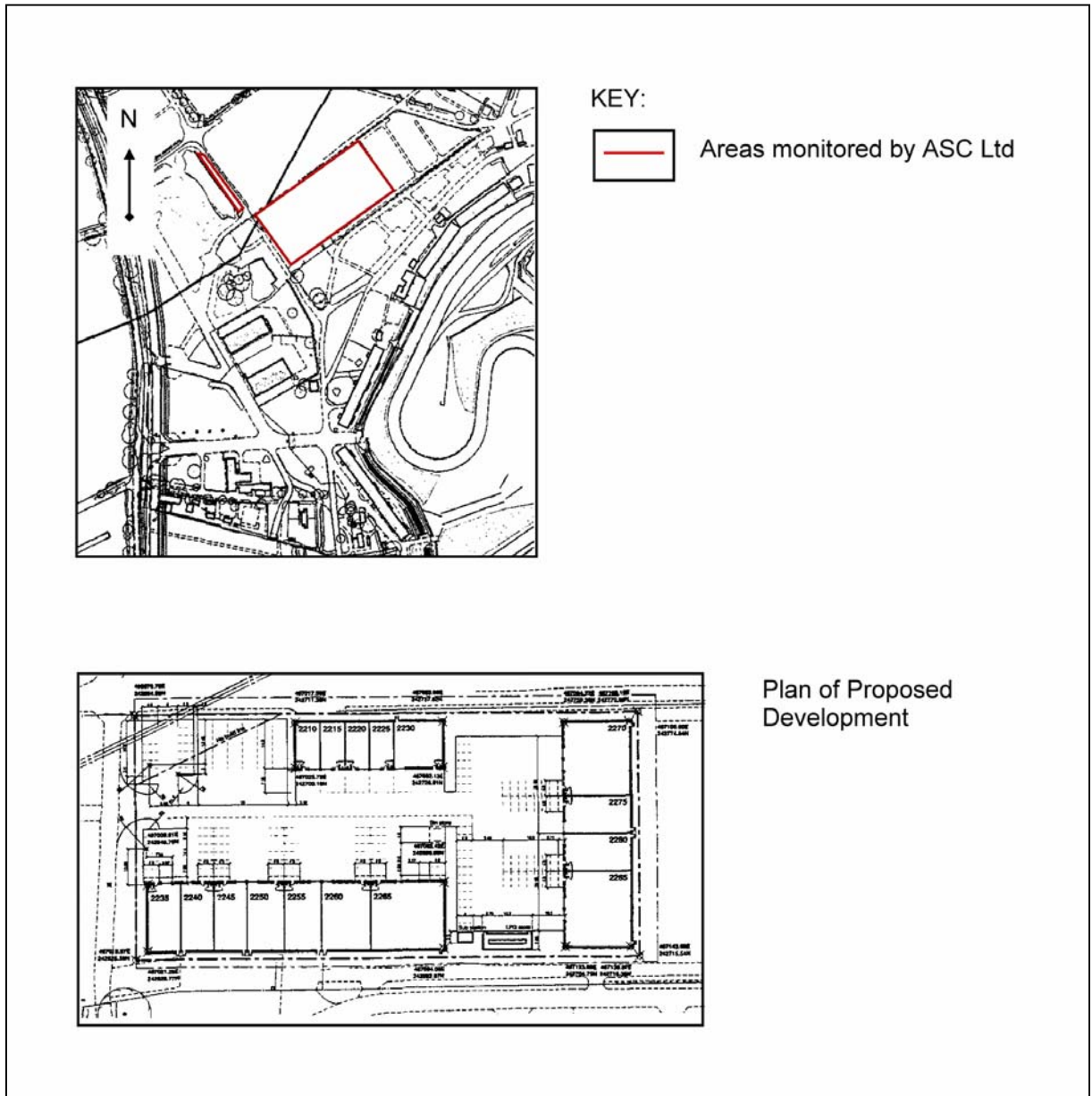


Figure 3: Plan of Proposed Development



**Plate 1:** Development Area, facing southwest



**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.

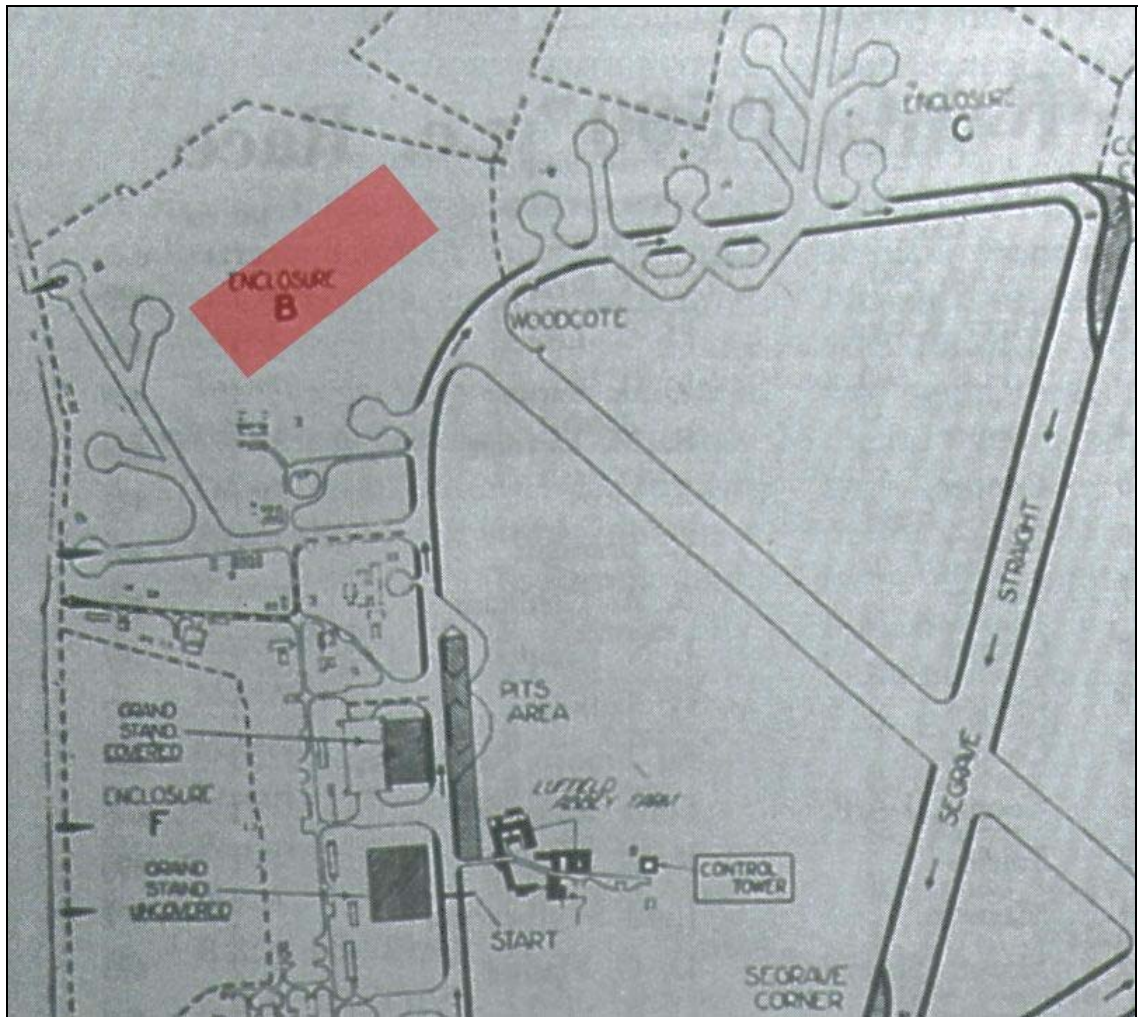


**Plate 5:** Base of tarmac access road after removal, facing north



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





**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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Lovell, E 2001 *Silverstone: An Historical Mosaic*. Gemini (Towcester)

Morris J.1979 *Domesday Book: Northamptonshire*. Phillimore (Chichester).

Soil Survey 1983 *The 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).


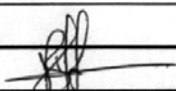
Zeepvat, B 2002 *A Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Land north of Silverstone circuit, Northamptonshire*. ASC Report STS02/1.


## 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

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>				
Project Name: LAND AT SILVERSTONE		Project Code: STS02		Date of visit: 20/09		
Location: NW OF SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT						
Client/Developer: CARLION AC						
Architect:						
Site Manager/ Farmer:			Phone:			
Development Type:						
Foundations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: DRY, CLOUDY.						
Observations: VISITED SITE FOR PRE-SITE MEETING.  TOPSOIL STRIPPING STARTED AT W END OF SITE. NORTH PART OF SITE COVERED WITH BRICK DEBRIS (FORMER PARKING AREA?), ABOVE NAT CLAY SUBSOIL. SOUTH PART TOPSOIL ONLY.  POSS RIDGE + FURROW VISIBLE AT W END OF STRIPPED AREA - RIDGES OUT AS YOU GO EASTWARDS. BURNT PATCH - MODERN. OTHERWISE, NO FEATURES OR FINDS.  TOOK DIGI PHOTOS OF SITE + STRIPPED AREA.						
Comments: STRIPPING EXPECTED TO CONTINUE ALL NEXT WEEK						
Completed by: 						
For sketch plan, use reverse					©ASC, 2000	

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>			
Project Name: <b>LAND AT SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT.</b>		Project Code: <b>STSO2</b>		Date of visit: <b>23/9/02</b>	
Location: <b>SILVERSTONE, NORTHANTS</b>					
Client/Developer: <b>CARILLION</b>					
Architect:					
Site Manager/Farmer: <b>MARK BRAMLEY</b>				Phone:	
Development Type:					
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Quarrying	Pipelines
Other (specify):					
Site & weather conditions: <b>FAIR / DRY</b>					
Observations: <b>ARRIVE 4.00 PM DEPART 5.00 PM</b> <b>NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OBSERVED.</b>					
<b>TOPSOIL STRIP OBSERVED ON 1ST QUARTER OF AREA.</b>					
<b>2 PATCHES OF MODERN RUBBISH - GLASS + BURNT WOOD OBSERVED IN SW OF AREA.</b>					
<b>TOPSOIL - 0.2m DEEP, MID BROWN SILTY CLAY, OCC CHALK GRAVEL, MEDIUM; OCC ROUNDED FLINT PEBBLES MEDIUM.</b>					
<b>NATURAL SUBSOIL - ENCOUNTERED AT 0.2m. LIGHT GREYISH BROWN CLAY, OCCASIONAL ROUNDED CHALK GRAVEL.</b>					
<b>SITE SLOPES c 1m FROM SOUTH → NORTH</b> <b>- NO POINT IN WATCHING WORKS AFTER TOPSOIL STRIP AS NO BURIED SOIL OR ALLUVIUM MASKING THE NATURAL.</b>					
Comments: <b>SCHEME OF WORKS</b>					
<b>→ TOPSOIL STRIP 23/9 (MON) → 25TH (WED)</b>					
<b>→ FOLLOWED BY LEVELLING OF SITE - MOVING MATERIAL FROM SOUTH OF SITE TO NORTH OF SITE.</b>					
<b>→ FOLLOWED BY EXC OF FOOTINGS.</b>					
<b>- TOLD MARK BRAMLEY THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO USE FLAT BLAD</b>					
Completed by: <b>SOE 23/9/02</b>					

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2000






**A.S.C. LTD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD**

Project Name: LAND AT SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT		Project Code: STS 02	Date of visit: 24/9/02
Location: SILVERSTONE, NORTHANTS			
Client/Developer CARILLION			
Architect:			
Site Manager/ Farmer: MARK BRAMLEY		Phone:	
Development Type:			
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: SUNNY / DRY			
Observations: ARRIVE 12.00 PM DEPART 1.30 PM			
TOPSOIL STRIP - NORTHERN HALF OF SITE, WORKING FROM THE EAST.			
FLAT BLADED BUCKET USED. NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OBSERVED.			
MODERN SERVICE RUNS ASSOCIATED WITH DRAINS OBSERVED, OCCASIONAL GREY/BROWN SUB CIRCULAR VARIATIONS IN THE NATURAL WERE OBSERVED.			
OVERALL IMPRESSIONS:			
→ TOPSOIL VERY THIN, NO BURIED SOIL OR SUBSOIL WAS PRESENT BETWEEN THE TOPSOIL AND GEOLOGICAL SUBSOIL. HAS THIS PIECE OF LAND BEEN TRUNCATED IN THE RECENT PAST? SEVERAL TARMAC PATHS WERE RECORDED.			
→ NOT EVEN TRUNCATED FEATURES WERE PRESENT.			
Comments: - ARRANGED TO RETURN WED 25/9 TO SEE THE LAST PART OF THE SITE TOPSOIL STRIPPED. SHOULD FINISH c 1:00 PM. WILL RING & DISCUSS WITH MAX FLITCROFT AT THIS POINT.			
Completed by: JOE 24/9/02			

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2000

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>			
Project Name: <b>LAND AT SILVERSTONE CIRCUIT</b>		Project Code: <b>STS 02</b>		Date of visit: <b>25/9/01</b>	
Location: <b>SILVERSTONE, NORTHANTS</b>					
Client/Developer <b>CARILLION</b>					
Architect:					
Site Manager/ Farmer: <b>MARK BRAMLEY</b>				Phone:	
Development Type:					
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Quarrying	Pipelines
Other (specify):					
Site & weather conditions: <b>SUNNY / DRY</b>					
Observations: <b>ARRIVE 10.50 AM DEPART 12.30 PM</b>					
<b>- WATCHED LAST PHASE OF TOPSOIL STRIP.</b>					
<b>NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OBSERVED. AS WITH PREVIOUS VISITS SHALLOW TOPSOIL 0.20m REVEALED MID BROWNISH ORANGE NATURAL CLAY. ALSO OBSERVED REMOVAL OF 3 TARMAC PATHS/ROADS CROSSING SITE - NO ARCH.</b>					
<b>ALSO, OBSERVED OTHER GROUNDWORKS:</b>					
<b>1) TOPSOILING FOR SERVICE RUNS TO BE FULLY EXC AT A LATER DATE</b>					
<b>2) DRAINAGE CUTS ADJACENT TO SITE ACCESS ROAD. MEASURED c 65 m LONG x 3.6 m WIDE x 0.1 -&gt; 0.2 m DEEP. NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OBSERVED.</b>					
<b>OCC MOD GLASS + METAL PIECES PRESENT IN TOPSOIL NATURAL GEOLOGY + TOPSOIL (SAME AS) MAIN AREA.</b>					
<b>SERVICE CUT ALIGNED NW - SE ADS TO PRESENT TARMAC ROAD USED AS SITE ACCESS.</b>					
Comments: <b>ASKED NOREEN WHAT OTHER GROUNDWORKS WILL HAPPEN ON SITE.</b>					
<b>1) LEVELLING MAIN AREA -</b>					
<b>2) CUTTING SERVICE TRENCHES + DRAINAGE</b>					
<b>3) RE-CUTTING / CLEANING DITCH.</b>					
Completed by: <b>JOE ABRAMS 24/9/01</b>					
For sketch plan, use reverse				©ASC, 2000	