

Archaeological Desktop Study  
of land at  
**OLIVERS AND FAIRHOLME GARDEN CENTRES,  
LANGSTONE, GWENT.**  
for  
Alfred McAlpine Homes South West Ltd.



Report No. 405/1997



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

Land at  
OLIVERS AND FAIRHOLME GARDEN CENTRES,  
LANGSTONE, GWENT.

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 3762 8987

Client: Alfred McAlpine Homes South West Ltd.

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September, 1997.

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Plate 2 Greenhouses, east side Olivers site

Plate 3 General view of the garden centre

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services were commissioned by Alfred McAlpine Homes South West Ltd to carry out a desktop study on land at Langstone, Gwent known as Olivers and Fairholme Garden Centres. The study was required to form part of a planning application to develop the site for housing.
- 1.2 The study involved the examination of all readily available documentary, cartographic and photographic evidence and the Regional Sites and Monuments Record. A visual inspection of the site was carried out to assess the likely impact of the development on the nearby Scheduled Ancient Monument. However, it was not possible to obtain permission to visit the Fairholme property nor to gain access to the fields immediately south of the site.
- 1.3 The study was undertaken by Rod Burchill during late August and September 1997.
- 1.4 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services would like to thank staff at the Gwent County Record Office and the National Library of Wales for their assistance, GGAT for providing details from the Sites and Monuments Record and Mr Oliver snr. of Olivers Garden Centre for his cooperation during the site visit.

## 2. THE SITE (Fig.1)

- 2.1 The study area is currently occupied by two garden centres, Olivers and Fairholme (centred on ST 3762 8987).
- 2.2 The study area lies on the south side of Old Chepstow Road immediately south of the A48 Newport to Chepstow trunk road. The site, in a valley of red Mercian Mudstone (Keuper Marl) at around 24m aOD, is bounded on the north by a public highway (Old Chepstow Road), west by a hedge and ditch with modern housing beyond and south by a brook with fields and the M4 Motorway. Immediately southwest of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (PRN 00247G) comprising a group of earthworks, interpreted as a stock enclosure.
- 2.3 The site slopes gently to the south and is laid out to paths and gravel standings for the display of the centre's stock-in-trade. The east side of the Oliver property is occupied by a number of greenhouses with the area adjacent to the road laid out to car parking.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- 3.1 A search of the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (curated by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust) located no record for archaeology within the site itself.
- 3.2 Immediately southwest of the site at ST3742 8978 are two L-shaped earthen banks separated by a ditch (Scheduled Ancient Monument PRN 00247G) (**Fig.1**) and originally described as a settlement moat (Ordnance Survey 1957). Limited excavation of the Monument by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust on the route of a new sewage pipeline revealed the northern, inner bank to consist of a single deposit of homogeneous grey-brown clay 8.82m wide surviving to 0.9m above the original ground surface; it appeared to be of one phase and was interpreted as up-cast for a retaining bank created by the initial cutting of the ditch (Maylan 1991). The less substantial southern or outer bank was different and had been built up from four distinct and separate layers and had probably been derived from the cleaning of the ditch. The northern side of the visible earthwork was delineated by a brook. The excavation recovered no datable material, but analogies with similar features excavated at Langstone Court (Alcock 1965) and elsewhere suggest that the monument is medieval in date, although a post-medieval date is not ruled-out. The feature was interpreted as a stock enclosure using the bank and ditch to retain the livestock. Palaeoenvironmental evidence gathered during the excavation suggested that the enclosure had stood in open pasture-land.
- 3.3 Some 500m southwest of the site lies Langstone Court (ST 370 895) which contains the remains of a motte and bailey castle, partly excavated by L.Alcock (1965).

#### 4. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

- 4.1 A search of documentary material within the Gwent County Record Office (GRO), National Library of Wales (NLW) and other collections found no historical references to the site earlier than 1846
- 4.2 The Langstone tithe map, surveyed in 1846 (GRO D871.2) and its accompanying award (NLW) showed the site to be contained wholly or partly within three fields 45, 46 and 48 and Scheduled Ancient Monument PRN 00247G to be within field 127 (Fig.2).

*Table 1: extract from Tithe Award*

Field No	Owner	Occupier	Field Name	Use
45	Montague	W.Baker	Ox Pasture	Arable
46	Montague	W.Baker	Break in Ox Pasture	Pasture
48	Reedwell	W.Morgan	Seven Acres	Pasture
127	Montague	W.Baker	? Grenth Vatch Beaufort with part of fold and road added	Pasture

- 4.3 The Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1883 edition shows the site contained within a single large field 207 (Fig.3)
- 4.4 The 1920 edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 shows little change from 1883. Development had taken place to the north of the study area and a new length of road (now the A48) constructed (Fig.4).
- 4.5 Further housing development took place along the line of the A48 and Old Chepstow Road but the topography of the site remained relatively unchanged until its development for horticultural use in the 1950's.
- 4.6 The Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1968 includes the earthworks to the south of the brook with the area to the west of the site occupied by modern housing (Fig.1).
- 4.7 Local anecdotal evidence suggested that there was no memory of the earthworks having extended to the north of the brook.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The available historical and cartographic evidence suggests that the site had been agricultural until its post-war development as a nursery.
- 5.2 No archaeological features or finds had been recorded for the site itself. However, on the south side of the brook and immediately southwest of the site is an earthwork, Scheduled Ancient Monument PRN00247G. This has been interpreted by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust as a stock enclosure.
- 5.3 None of the evidence examined suggested that the earthwork extended north of the stream beneath the modern housing or into the site itself. Moreover, the earthworks are separated from the land to the north by the steeply banked brook which forms the southern boundary of the housing development and the site.
- 5.4 The western boundary of Olivers Garden Centre is formed from a hedge and a deep ditch. Only a small piece of the scheduled earth bank survives on the eastern side of the earthwork (**Fig.1**) and it is not clear if this is part of the inner or the outer bank. Consequently the possibility that the ditch forming Olivers' western boundary is a reuse of the scheduled monument earthwork ditch cannot be precluded.

## 6. CONTRACTORS ADVICE

- 6.1 It is unlikely that development for housing of Olivers or Fairholme Garden Centres will have a detrimental impact on, or cause any further damage to, Scheduled Ancient Monument PRN00247G.
- 6.2 The monument does not survive above ground level beyond the area shown in Figure 1 nor is there any evidence that it extends into the proposed development site. However, in the unlikely event that it does extend onto the proposed development site the extensive landscaping to which the site has been subject since its use as a nursery and garden centre is likely to have removed evidence of any earthworks in this area. Bristol and Region Archaeological Services advises a minimum response and suggests that contractors groundworks be monitored by an archaeological contractor in order to record any surviving archaeological features associated with the earthworks. It is suggested that such monitoring might be restricted to the west side of Olivers' ground (Fig.5).

## 7. SOURCES CONSULTED

Collections of Gwent County Record Office (GRO)

Collections of National Library of Wales (NLW)

Collections of National Museum of Wales

Collections of Newport Museum Service

Regional Sites and Monuments Record (GGAT)

Alcock, L. 1965 Excavations at Langstone Court, *Medieval Archaeology* 9 193

Maylan, N. 1991 Langstone Villa, *Archaeology in Wales* 31 44-47

Ordnance Survey 1957 Archaeological Record Index.



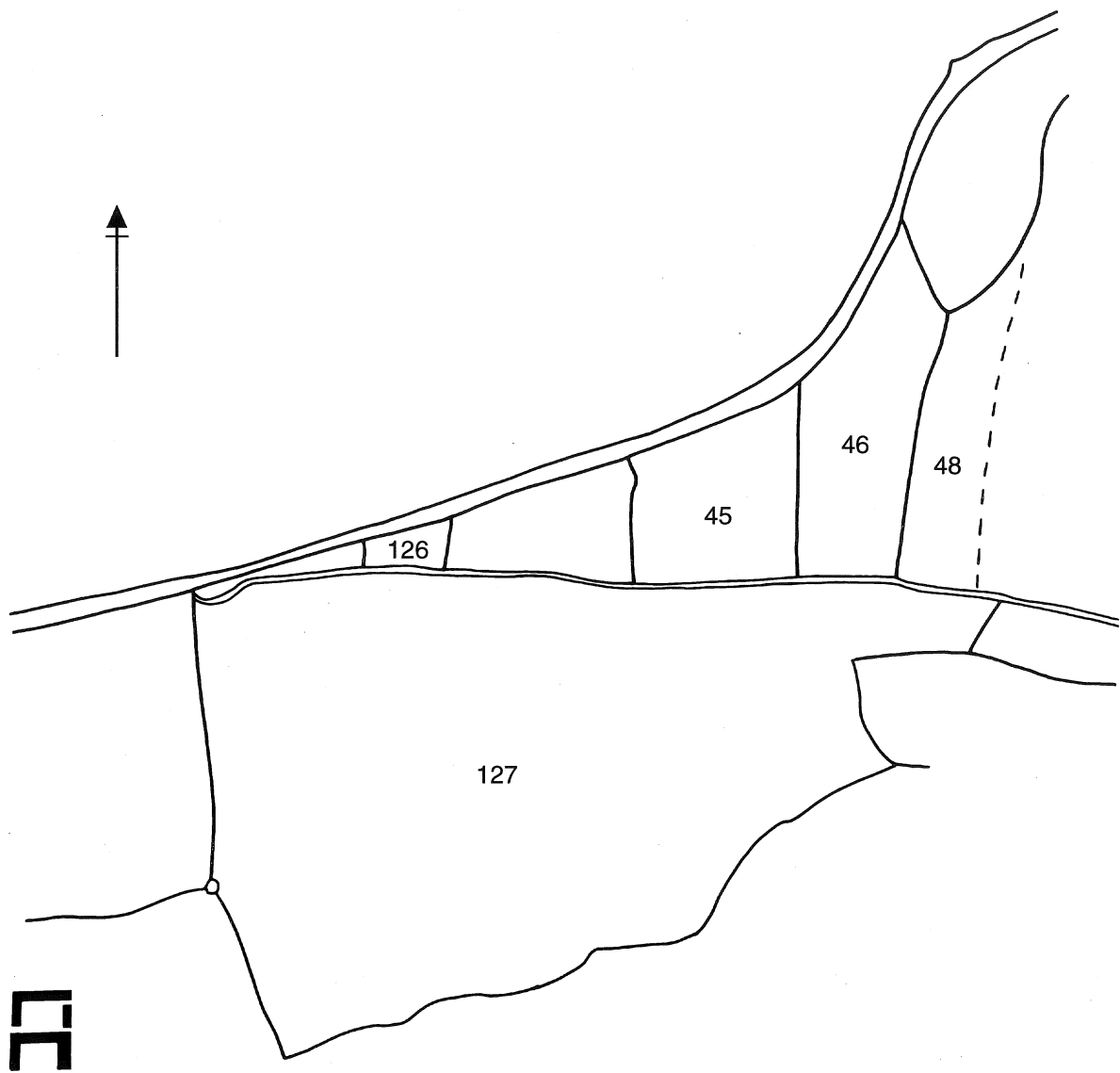


Fig.2 1846 tithe map

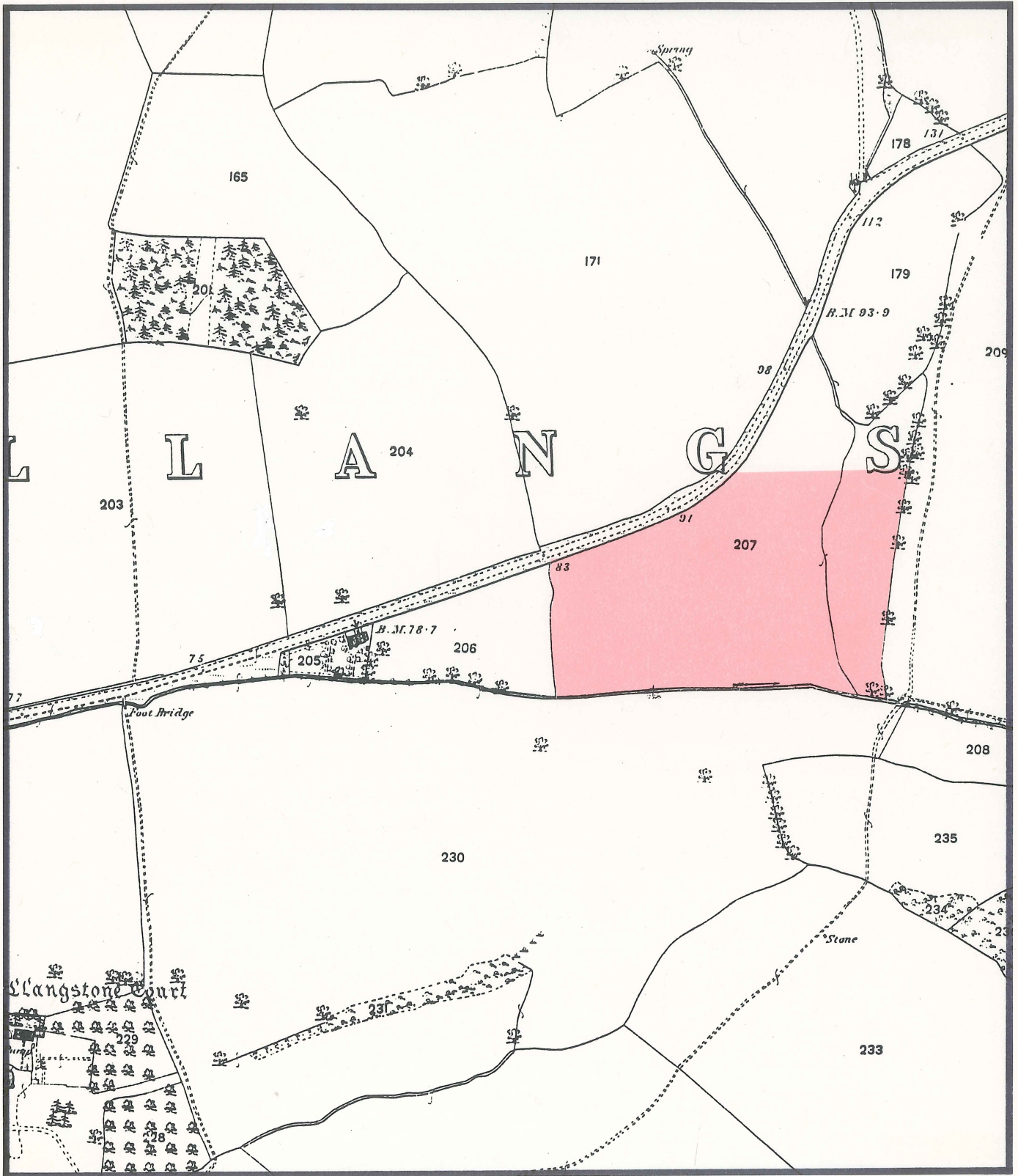


Fig.3 1883 Ordnance Survey map

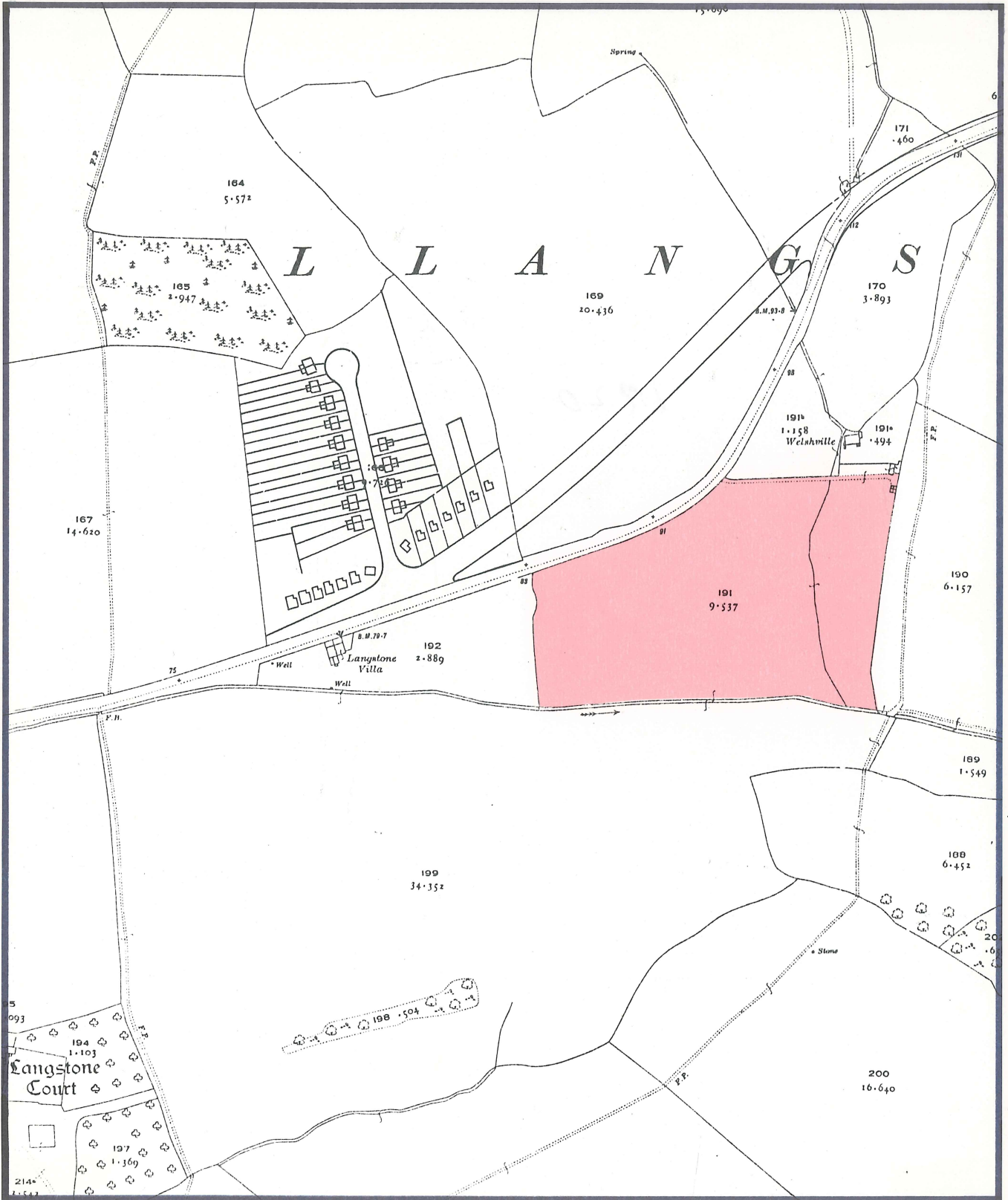


Fig.4 1920 Ordnance Survey map

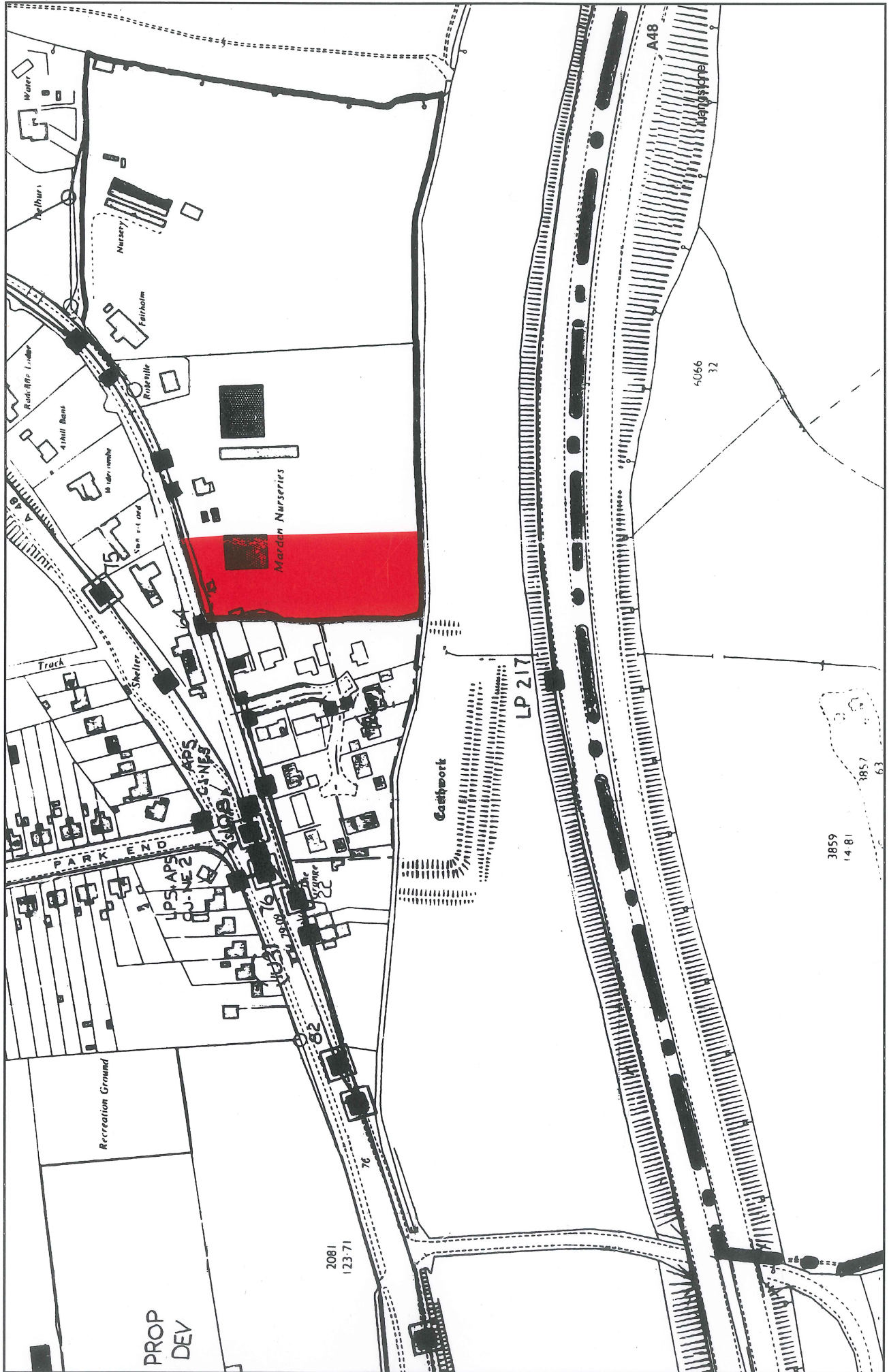


Fig.5 Area of proposed watching brief shown in red





Plate 1 Car Park adjacent to Old Chepstow Road



Plate 2 Greenhouses, east side of Olivers site



Plate 3 General view of the garden centre