



THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO.

Larkins Farm, Knowsley

Project Design

May 2026

1: Introduction

Steven Price of The Archaeology Co. has been commissioned to prepare a Project Design for a fieldwalking / metal detector survey and archaeological monitoring and recording at Larkins Farm, Knowsley. Condition 5 of planning application (23/02676/FUL) states:

No development shall take place until a scheme has secured for the implementation and submission of a report on a programme of archaeological works. That programme of archaeological works should be undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to works taking place. The WSI must include:

- a. A phased programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;*
- b. A programme for post-investigation reporting to include production of a final report of the significance of the below-ground archaeological interest;*
- c. Provision for appropriate publication and dissemination of the archaeology and history of the site;*
- d. Provision for archive deposition of the report, finds and records of the site investigation; and*
- e. Nomination of a competent person or persons / organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.*

Reason: In order to preserve archaeological records of the site.

The works are for the “installation of solar farm, organic boundary fencing, 1no sub station, 1no transformer building, site service access, associated landscaping and bio-diversity improvements”. This document forms the project design which outlines the programme of work required to undertake this monitoring.

2: Site Location

The site lies to the southern side of the slip road from the M57 northbound to the East Lancashire Road westbound, to the north of Larkins Farm. The postal address is Larkins

Farm, Gellings Lane, Knowsley, Knowsley L34 9EN and the NGR is SJ 41491 96307. The surrounding land is a modern housing estate. The underlying geology is Chester Formation Sandstone, with superficial deposits of Devensian till (BGS 2023).

3: Historical Background

The site is shown on the 1847 tithe plan as several enclosed fields all owned by the Earl of Sefton and occupied by Robert Atherton. Larkins farm is not shown, although Randles Bridge Farm is shown to the north of the site (although unnamed). This situation remained the same on the 1850 OS mapping, with Gravel Pits shown to the north and the land remaining undeveloped. The 1893 OS map shows a similar situation, although the field boundaries had been altered to create more regular rectangular field systems. By 1908 several boundaries had been removed to create larger fields and by 1927 more boundaries had been removed to create large open fields. This remained the situation through much of the 20th century. The current Randles Bridge Farm was not shown on the 1939 OS mapping suggesting it was built after this time and likely replacing the original Randles Bridge Farm following the construction of the M57.

The site appears to have been undeveloped over its life. Several prehistoric artefacts have been discovered in the surrounding area, most notably a perforated stone adze head near Randles Bridge Farm. Others include flints at Croxteth Park and to the north of Stand Farm.

4 Aims and objectives

The objectives of the field walking and metal detecting are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, and date. It is also to identify any 'hot spots' of archaeological activity to inform the subsequent monitoring and recording.

Archaeological monitoring and recording is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. The

monitoring and recording will provide an opportunity for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard (ClfA 2023).

The Northwest Regional Research Framework (2026) was consulted with the following questions relevant to this field survey:

PH01: How can we maximise potential recovery of lithics?

PH04: How can we enhance existing datasets for Prehistory in the region?

5 Fieldwalking and Metal Detector Survey

For both the fieldwalking and metal detecting, the field will be split into a series of parallel transects set out 10m apart. The transects shall be set out using GPS and marked with temporary markers. The metal detecting shall be undertaken along each transect by sweeping the search head as close to the surface as possible and allowing for a 30% overlap in order to produce a consistent sample, covering a width of c. 1m either side of the transect. An appropriate working offset will be employed to either side of any upstanding metal fences, powerlines or other obstructions, in order to avoid unnecessary interference.

Where metal detector readings are produced, artefacts shall be removed from the ground using a spade and trowel. All holes will be filled and levelled after the removal of material. All finds of potential archaeological significance, from both field walking and metal detecting, shall be plotted using a GPS, and labelled with a unique ID number. Artefacts of modern date will be collected and bagged together by transect to give a representative sample of the 'background noise' across the site.

Following the survey, finds shall be plotted on plan using the GPS co-ordinates to show areas of high archaeological presence. The assemblage shall be assessed by E & F Foulds Artefact Specialists to give an overview of its potential to meet the research aims of the

project. Frederick Foulds is a lithic analyst who specialises in the Lower Palaeolithic to Bronze Age lithic assemblages of the British Isles. Elizabeth Foulds is a finds specialist for a variety of prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval artefacts, including iron, copper alloy, and lead.

5. Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

Method

An archaeologist shall be present during all ground disturbance associated with the development, including ground clearance and foundation trenches. Ground excavation is to be carried out with a toothless ditching bucket in level spits under archaeological observation. The attending archaeologist will be able to direct the machine to stop to allow inspection, excavation and/or recording of potential archaeological features. Where archaeological features are deemed to be present, they shall be archaeologically exposed and recorded. All features will be fully exposed, cleaned and recorded in situ, within the limits of the monitored area.

All possible features and deposits will be examined and investigated. Any encountered archaeological remains will be cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form, condition and, where possible, date. These shall be cleaned by hand before being recorded. Other discrete features, such as ditches and pits, shall be half sectioned and linear features 10% sampled (at least). Where there are intersecting features, these intersections shall be targeted.

Context sheets shall be used for recording on site features. Photographic recording shall take the form of digital photography (DSLR 10 Megapixel minimum). An appropriate photo scale shall be present in each of the shots and a photo register compiled, recording the direction and subject of each shot. A plan of the excavated areas shall be drawn at 1:50 scale and a site plan produced tied into the NGR. For complex features, details will be drawn at 1:20 and sections also produced at the same scale. All features shall be located in plan at 1:20 scale and levels taken.

Finds recovery and sampling programmes will be in accordance with best practice (following Campbell *et. al.* 2011 and Historic England “Geoarchaeology” 2015) with advice taken from the MEAS planning archaeologist. Random bulk sampling of the lower contexts shall be performed, as well as areas identified as having a high amount of artefacts from the metal detector survey. All well sealed and datable contexts shall be sampled (up to 40L). Course sieving on site shall be used for this purpose. Features identified to be associated with specific activities will be prioritised, such as knapping sites, cesspits, kilns, etc.

All finds are to be recorded by context. Significant “small finds” should be located within three dimensions to the nearest 10mm and bagged and labelled separately, numbered and a simple description made so that they can be identified within the assemblage. Finds storage during fieldwork and any site archive preparation will follow professional guidelines (UKIC). Any single find or finds assemblage that can be classified as Treasure under the Treasure Act 1996, will be reported as required by the provisions of that Act.

The staff involved with recovery, treatment, packing and subsequent analysis of archaeological material are familiar with accepted methods for its care and storage. All finds and samples shall be collected, processed and sorted. They shall then be quantified and recorded for the report. Finds shall be labelled, packed and stored in accordance with National Museums Liverpool Archives measures (2022).

Human remains are not expected to be present, although if found they will, if possible, be left in-situ covered and protected while a burial licence is obtained. The removal of human remains will only take place in compliance with environmental health regulations and following discussions with, and with the approval of, the Ministry of Justice. If human remains are identified, the planning archaeologist and police will be informed immediately. Where a licence is issued, all human skeletal remains must be properly removed in accordance with the terms of that licence. The treatment of human remains will be in accordance with the requirements of CiFA “Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains” (2017) and Historic England guidance (2017).

Post excavation shall involve the assessment of the archaeological results, including the digitisation of drawings and the compilation of specialist sample and finds report. Finds

shall be cleaned and processed before being photographed. Any special finds should be photographed separately.

Should the monitoring and recording warrant a more detailed investigation, then work shall be halted and the MEAS planning archaeologist (Alison Plummer) will be informed, to discuss any additional investigation. Any requirement of further investigation will be subject to agreement with the planning archaeologist and an additional project design.

Reporting

A draft report will be submitted to the MEAS Planning Archaeologist for comments within 6 weeks of the fieldwork finishing. The report shall include the following:

- A non-technical summary of the archaeological monitoring findings;
- Summary
- Introductory statements;
- Aims and objectives;
- The background to the field survey and watching brief, which will include an outline of the planning context;
- An outline of the methodology;
- Specialist finds and sample reports;
- Results of the field walking, metal detecting and monitoring;
- Conclusions including a statement of significance for any archaeological remains encountered;
- A location plan at 1:10,000 and site plan
- A set of measured scaled drawings showing archaeological features and the location of the monitored area tied into the NGR;
- A photograph register including the direction of shot as well as details of the subject;
- A copy of the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations form (OASIS);
- A catalogue of photographs and other archive items;
- Archive location; and
- Appendices containing a copy of the project design and other essential technical and supporting detail.

The work will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists “Standard for archaeological monitoring & recording” (2023) as well as Historic England’s guidance on field walking and metal detecting “Our Portable Past” (2018) and the Portable Antiquities Scheme “Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales” (2017).

6: Archive

The results of the project will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current Historic England guidelines (‘The Management of Archaeological Projects’ 2015); the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage’ (UKIC 1990); current ClfA ‘standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transportation and deposition of archaeological archive’ (published 2020); and National Museums Liverpool’s ‘Guidelines for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives to the Museum of Liverpool’ (December 2022). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the ClfA in that organisation’s code of conduct.

All documents and project files will be reviewed by Steven Price throughout the project lifespan. Material will be selected on the basis of its contribution to the overall aims of the project as set out in section 4. The selection of the archive will be undertaken by Steven Price. The selection process will be a single phase following the approval of the final report by the Planning Archaeologist at MEAS.

All digital data created over the course of this project will be collected, stored, and selected for final deposition. Only final copies of any born digital data will be deposited in the final project archive. Deselected material is expected to include duplicates and any non-final versions of data. In terms of photographic images, this would include blurred or light imbalanced images. Deselected material will be deleted following acceptance of the archive.

The archive will comprise the report and digital photographs. The paper archive, comprising the report, will be placed with National Museums Liverpool, within a reasonable time of completion of the project. The primary digital archive shall be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS), with a secondary digital archive provided on a PC compatible CD-ROM to National Museums Liverpool. As such, along with the report, a CD containing the digital photographs shall also be deposited. The primary digital archive, comprising the digital photographs shall be saved as tiff files following ADS guidance, and deposited with them, along with a digital copy of the report. A digital copy of the report will also be sent to MEAS. Finds shall be offered to National Museums Liverpool and stored according to their guidelines (2022).

As a minimum, a short (c.300) word summary of the project results shall be sent through to the editor of a suitable academic journal for inclusion in their annual round-up of fieldwork, with a copy forwarded to MEAS. The deadline for submission is usually the end of March in the year following completion of the fieldwork. Should further publication be required this will be discussed with the MEAS planning archaeologist.

7: Staff

The Archaeology Co. is nominated to carry out the works. Fieldwork will be undertaken by Pascal Eloy or Steven Price.

8: Timetable

Two weeks' notice prior to commencement of the works shall be given to the planning archaeologist (Alison Plummer). It is anticipated that the watching brief will be undertaken over a period of one week, and a report will be produced within six weeks of commencement.

9: Health and Safety

Health and Safety regulations and requirements cannot be ignored no matter how imperative the need to record archaeological information. Hence health and safety will take priority over archaeological matters. All mitigation considered for such issues will be reported to the Planning Archaeologist.

Full regard will be given to all constraints during the course of the project. A Health and Safety Statement, along with a risk assessment, will be provided. All site procedures shall be in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers.

10: Monitoring

The archaeologist on site shall keep Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) abreast of the works. They shall also be notified immediately of any significant findings. Non-compliance with the agreed project design shall be pointed out to MEAS by the archaeologist undertaking the work and the client at the earliest opportunity. Any variation to this project design will also be agreed in advance with the planning archaeologist. The planning archaeologist will also be granted access for the purposes of monitoring.

11: Insurance

Steven Price maintains Professional Indemnity Insurance to £1,000,000

12: Copyright

Full copyright shall be retained by the author until project completion, at which point it shall be transferred to National Museums Liverpool. The Project Completion form shall be submitted along with a full transfer of title and the Assignment of Copyright for the Archives.

Bibliography

BGS 2023 "Geology Viewer". Accessed online at:

<https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

Clfa 2017 "Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains"

Clfa 2020 "Standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transportation and deposition of archaeological archive"

Clfa 2023 "Standard for archaeological monitoring & recording"

Historic England 2015 "Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment"

Historic England 2018 "Our Portable Past"

National Museums Liverpool 2022 "Guidelines for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives to the Museum of Liverpool"

"National Planning Policy Framework" 2012 accessed online at www.communities.gov.uk

"North West Regional Research Framework" 2026. Accessed online at:

<https://researchframeworks.org/nwrf/>

Portable Antiquities Scheme 2017 "Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales". Accessed online at:

<https://finds.org.uk/getinvolved/guides/codeofpractice>

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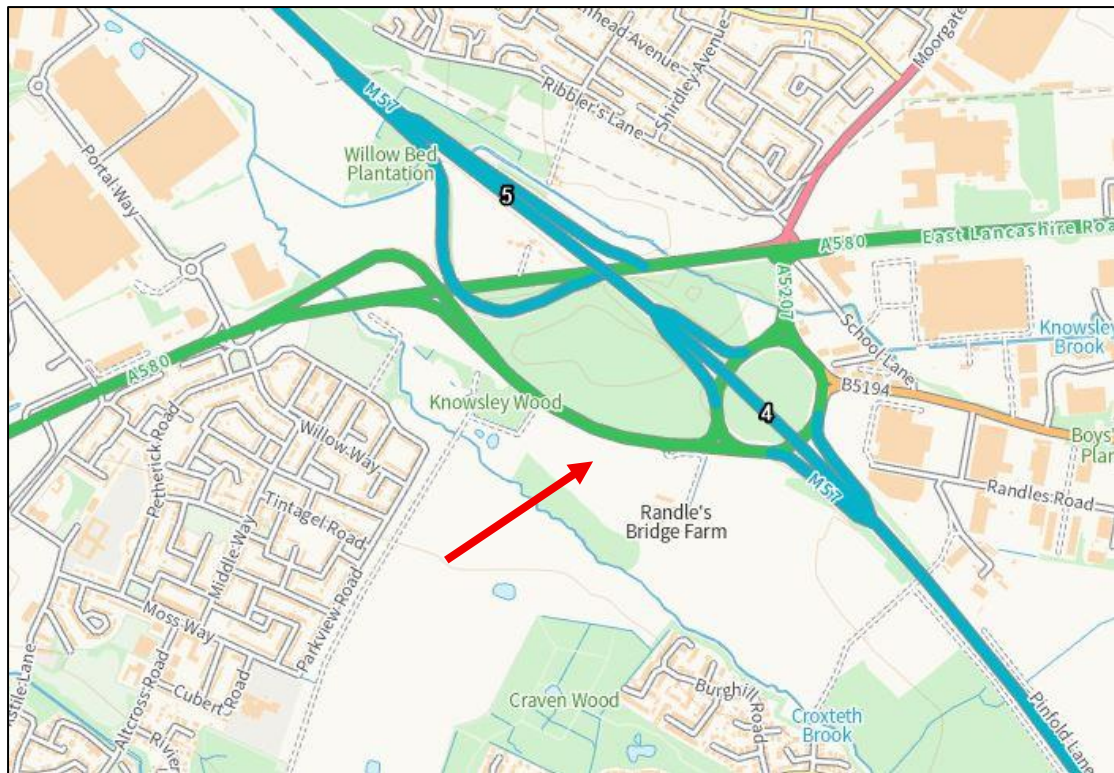


Figure 1: Location Plan (OS Licence Number: 100057911)

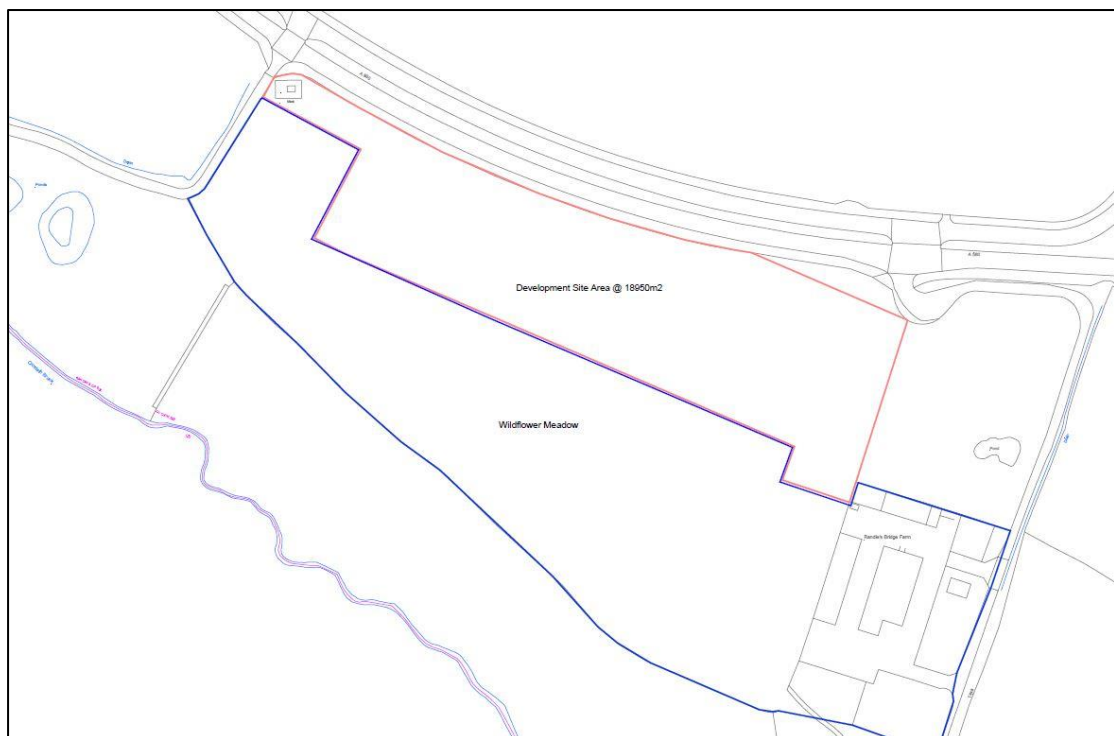


Figure 2: Site Plan (Courtesy of client)



Figure 3: 1841 tithe plan



Figure 4: 1850 OS Map Lancashire Sheet 100

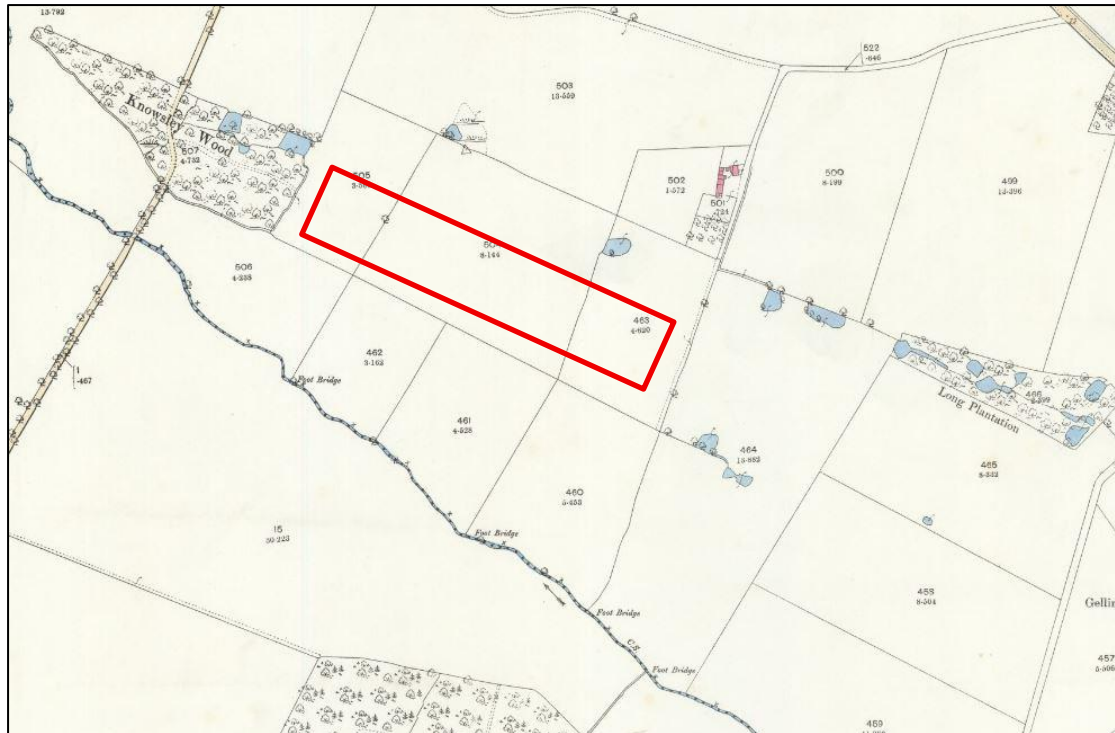


Figure 5: 1893 OS map Lancashire Sheet C.13

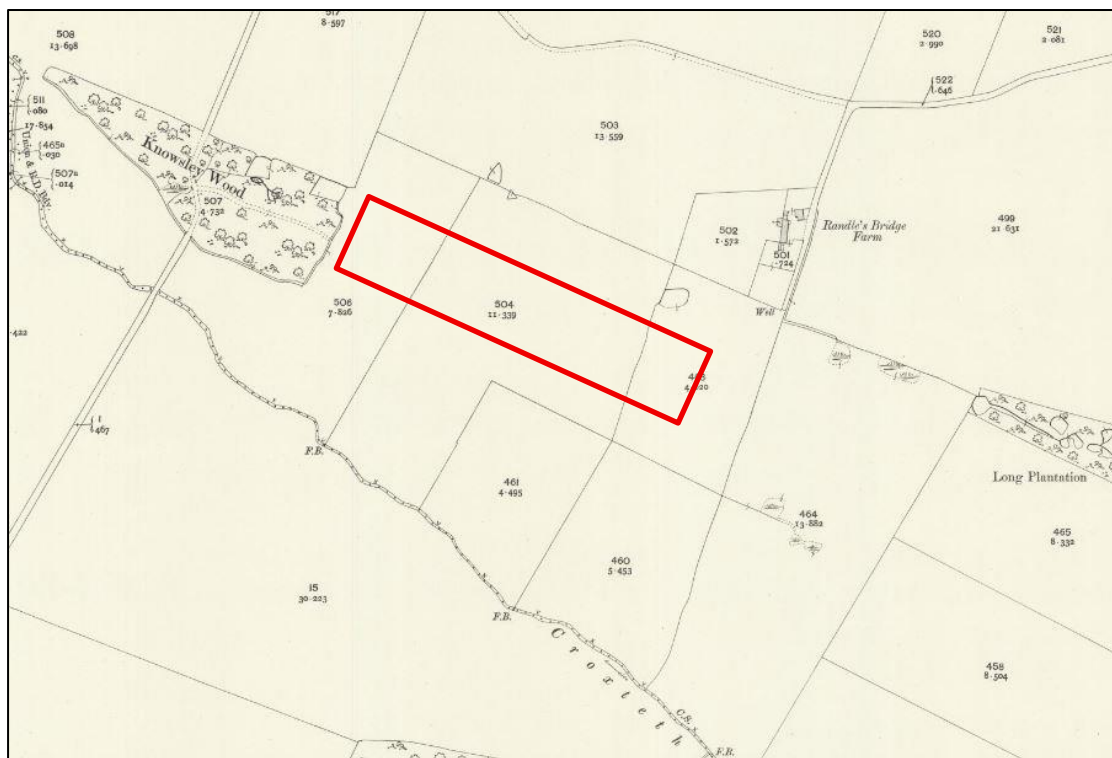


Figure 6: 1908 OS map Lancashire Sheet C.13



Figure 7: 1927 OS map Lancashire Sheet C.13

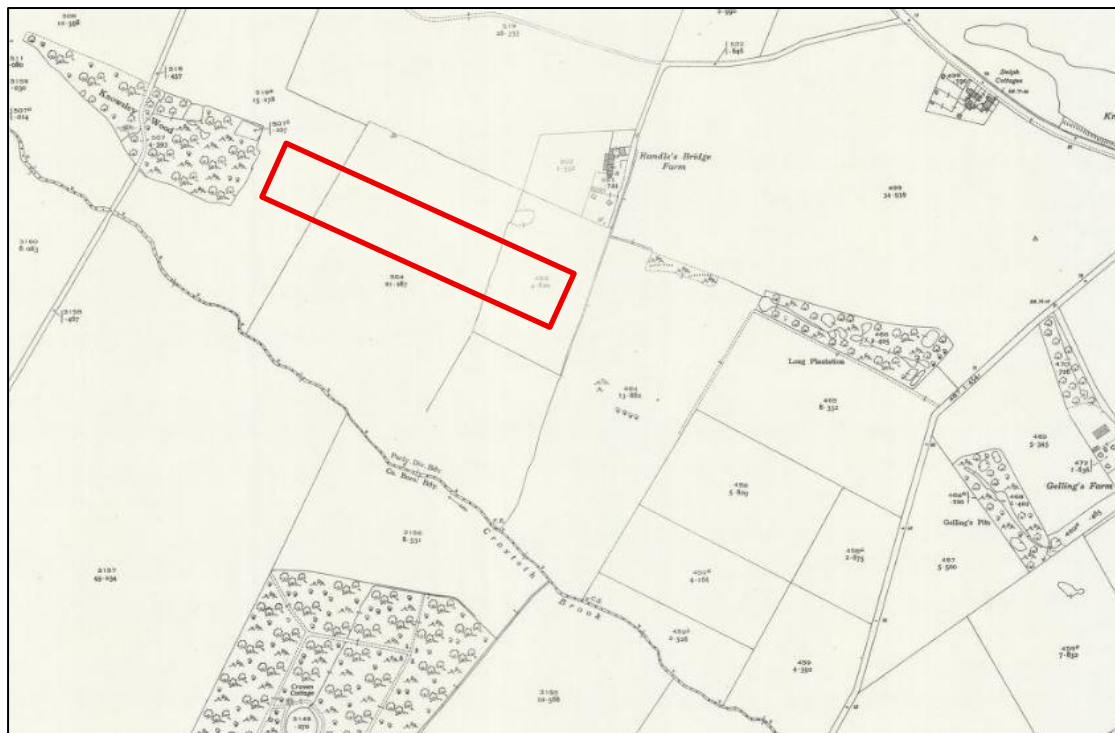


Figure 8: 1939 OS map Lancashire Sheet C.13