

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

**LAND AT
CRAIGHILL NURSERIES, KNIGHTON, LEICESTER**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL**

**SITE CENTRED AT:
NGR SK 5979 0168**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY

- 1.1 This archaeological desk-based assessment has been researched and prepared on behalf of Miller Homes (East Midlands) Ltd by Margaret Bennett-Samuels, and edited by J Forbes Marsden, of CgMs Consulting.
- 1.2 The assessment considers land at Craighill Nurseries, Craighill Road, Knighton, Leicester. The site is approximately 1.79 acres in extent and is centred at National Grid Reference SK 5979 0168 (Figs 1 and 2). It is located in the City of Leicester, but was until 1851 a chapelry in the ancient parish of Leicester St Margaret, becoming an independent parish in 1866 before becoming part of the borough of Leicester in 1892 (Youngs, 1991, 229, McKinley, 1958, 443). The site is bounded on all sides by residential development.
- 1.3 In accordance with government guidance on archaeology and planning (PPG16) this assessment draws together the available archaeological, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site.
- 1.4 The assessment comprises an examination of evidence in the Leicestershire County Record Office and the Leicester Historic Environment Record (HER), considers the results of nearby archaeological investigations, incorporates published and unpublished material and charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise.
- 1.5 As a result, the assessment enables relevant parties to assess the archaeological potential of the site and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and/or archaeological solutions to the potential identified.

2.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) 'Archaeology and Planning', providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.
- 2.2 In considering any planning application for development, the local planning authority will be guided by the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, by current Development Plan policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.3 The strategic development plan policy framework is provided by the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan, adopted in 1996. The Plan contains the following policy which provides a framework for the consideration of development proposals affecting archaeological and heritage features.

'Environment Policy 1: Historic Environment

Measures will be taken to identify, protect, preserve and enhance areas, sites, buildings and settings of historic or architectural interest or archaeological importance. Development within Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance the character and/or appearance of the area.

Proposals for development on, in, or adjacent to archaeological or other historic sites and buildings will be considered against the need to ensure their preservation and setting.

Development will only be acceptable where it would not adversely affect any scheduled ancient monument or other nationally important archaeological site, or its setting or amenity value.

Where a known site of county or local significance is to be affected, development may be acceptable if it allows its preservation in situ, or, where this is impractical, its investigation and recording.

Development will only be acceptable in areas of archaeological potential if proper evaluation of the archaeological implications of the proposed development has been undertaken and taken into account.'

- 2.4 The local plan policy framework is provided by the City of Leicester Local Plan, adopted in 2006. The relevant policy is as follows:

'POLICY BEO1: Preservation of the City's Archaeological Heritage

The City's archaeological heritage will be preserved where appropriate by:

- a) requiring an archaeological assessment and evaluation of a site to assist in the determination of any planning application, where that application would affect a site of known or potential significance; and*
- b) refusing planning permission for development which would seriously damage archaeological remains, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other nationally important sites, their setting or character; or*
- c) negotiating amendments to submitted schemes to preserve archaeological remains in situ and generally minimise the impacts by appropriate siting, foundation design and location of services and associated landscaping; or*
- d) imposing conditions and/or seeking agreement with developers to ensure that sites of archaeological interest are excavated and recorded and the results disseminated, or are subject to appropriate archaeological investigation and recording during development, where preservation in situ is not merited.*

- 2.5 This assessment therefore aims to clarify the specific archaeological potential of the proposed development site, and identify any archaeological constraints that would preclude its allocation for development.

3.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

3.1 Geology

3.1.1 The site lies in an area of mixed boulder clay and limestone, which runs eastwards from Welford Road to the east side of the village of Oadby (McKinley, 1958, 443). It lies in a developed area and therefore its soils are unrecorded (SSEW, 1983).

3.2 Topography

3.2.1 The site is flat, lying at approximately 84.5m AOD.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Timescales used in this report are as follows.

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	450,000 BC	-	12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 BC	-	4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 BC	-	1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 BC	-	600 BC
Iron Age	600 BC	-	AD 43

Historic

Roman	AD 43	-	410 AD
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD 410	-	1066 AD
Medieval	AD 1066	-	1485 AD
Post Medieval	AD 1485	-	1700 AD
Industrial	AD 1700	-	1900 AD
Modern	AD 1900	-	Present

4.2 Examination of data provided by the Leicester Historic Environment Record (HER) and published sources shows that a number of archaeological sites exist within the study area (Figure 3 and Appendix 1). It is the aim of this assessment to review the data available for the study area, and to use this to construct a predictive model of the site's archaeological potential.

4.3 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Battlefields or Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in the study area. There are several listed buildings in the study area. These include College Hall and a number of other buildings on the university campus to the east of Knighton Road; Old Hall and its stables; Oram Cottage; and the church of St Mary Magdalene. All are listed Grade II.

4.4 Prehistoric and Roman

4.4.1 No early prehistoric remains are recorded from the study area. Just outside the study area is the findspot of the top and bottom stones of a late Iron Age beehive quern, which may be from two separate querns (MLC687). The findspot was located approximately 550m south-west of the site.

4.4.2 The site lies approximately 3km south-east of Leicester, which was an important commercial centre during the Roman period. There are however relatively few records of Roman remains in the study area, and the findspot of a late Roman coin approximately 500m south-east of the site is more likely to represent a casual loss rather than a site of concentrated activity (MLC1228).

4.4.3 So too would the findspot of a denarius of Hadrian in the foundation of cottages demolished in the 1930s immediately south of the site (MLE1270), were it not for the reported find of five pots, said to have been found whilst the car park of the nearby Cradock Arms was being extended (MLE1781). Unfortunately the finds do not appear to have been reported at the time, and thus their Roman origin cannot be considered certain.

4.5 **Saxon/Medieval**

4.5.1 There are no records of Saxon remains in the vicinity, and the earliest documentary reference to Knighton appears to come from 1086, when Domesday Book notes it as *Cnihtetone*, which is taken to mean the farmstead or enclosure of the household servant of a lord or knight (Ekwall, 1991, 282). In Domesday Book the settlement is listed as part of the landholding of the Bishop of Lincoln, and it comprised arable land and meadow, supporting a population of twenty villagers and four freemen (Morgan, 1979, 3/2), indicating a population in the region of 95-100.

4.5.2 In 1143 it was leased to Robert le Bossu, Earl of Leicester. After a complex series of transactions involving Robert, his successors, the bishops of Lincoln and Leicester Abbey, to which Robert had granted the property, it was eventually returned to the see of Lincoln by or in 1218, and it remained their property throughout the remainder of the medieval period (McKinley, 1958, 443).

4.5.3 Later documentary evidence indicates that an open field system operated in Knighton during the medieval period, but no details appear to have survived regarding its extent. It is possible that the site lay within Knighton's open fields, but given its proximity to the village, it is equally possible that it lay within the settlement during the period, forming part of a croft or close.

4.5.4 The extent of the medieval and post-medieval settlement has been estimated, apparently from the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1885 (MLE1353). This estimation places the southern half of the site within the extent of the medieval and post-medieval settlement. The only record of medieval remains in the area is the find

of a 'small jug', presumed to be medieval, which comes, however, from a location more central to the medieval settlement, approximately 150m east of the site (MLE857).

4.6 **Post Medieval and Industrial**

- 4.6.1 Knighton remained a property of the bishops of Lincoln until 1547, when the manor was granted to Edward VI. In 1564 Nichols notes that there were 17 families in Knighton (Nichols, 1810, 236), which would equate to a population in the region of 75-80, indicating a slightly smaller settlement than it had been in 1086. Elizabeth I gave it to Matthew Farnham of Quorndon and Sir George Turpin of Knaptoft, but thereafter its descent is obscure, and it is likely that the manorial rights were forgotten or extinguished. By the late eighteenth century, the chief landowners were the Cradock family, descended from Edmund Cradock, a Leicester woollen-draper who had bought land in Knighton in 1720 (McKinley, 1958, 443). The Cradock Arms, which stands at the junction of Knighton Road and Newmarket Street, is named after the family.
- 4.6.2 Knighton's open fields were enclosed in 1756, and 17 proprietors received allotments from the 1,520 acres available for distribution after land for roads, houses and gardens were subtracted. The 17 proprietors included 3 members of the Cradock family, who received c. 700 acres between them, nearly half the available land. There were at this date four open fields, called Stockwell, Safforn, Goldhill and the Breach Field, as well as the Cow Pasture, which comprised about 100 acres of meadow and pasture, and several 'ancient closes' were also re-allotted under the enclosure award (McKinley, 1958, 444).
- 4.6.3 Unfortunately, the enclosure map does not seem to have survived, and the earliest surviving map for the area appears to be Prior's map of 1777 (Figure 4). Although rather difficult to interpret precisely, Prior's map appears to show settlement concentrated along Chapel Lane and a track which at that time passed along side the Hall to join Knighton Road at its junction with Ratcliffe Road. In addition to this, settlement also appears to have existed along what are now Newmarket Street and the lower section of Craighill Road, and along Knighton Road between its junction with Chapel Lane and Queens Road, although the section of Knighton Road which lies approximately between its junction with Queens Road and its junction with Ratcliffe Road does not appear to be shown. Assuming this interpretation to be correct, the site lay at that date in undeveloped land north of Newmarket Street.

- 4.6.4 Nichols notes that '*in 1801, Knighton contained 65 houses, in which there were the same number of families; consisting of 163 males, 174 females; in all, 337; of whom 31 were wholly employed in agriculture, and 119 in trade, manufactures, and handicraft*' (Nichols, 1810, 237). McKinley observes that framework-knitters are mentioned at Knighton during the eighteenth century, but notes that they had disappeared by 1844 (McKinley, 1958, 444).
- 4.6.5 By 1831 Knighton contained 79 houses with a population of 383 (Jordan, 2003, 105), and the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1" map of 1835 shows modest expansion within the settlement. By this date the section of Knighton Road between its junction with Queens Road and Ratcliffe Road appears to have been established (Figure 5). The Grange appears to be shown, although it is not named as such until 1931, and a building is shown to its west, accessed by means of a track off the lower section of Craighill Road. The track appears to have bisected the site, which otherwise is shown as undeveloped, with The Grange to the east. No documentary or cartographic references to The Grange have been found, and it is considered likely that it was a farmhouse, which appears to have been shown on Prior's map of 1777. Although its name may suggest a site dating back to the late twelfth century, when Robert le Bossu granted Knighton to Leicester Abbey, no evidence has been found which suggests that this was the case, and it is equally possible that it was named The Grange after it went out of agricultural use.
- 4.6.6 By 1841 Knighton's population had expanded to 465, and by this time, development had begun within the north of the township. White states that '*the north side of the chapelry is a pleasant suburb called Stoneygate, edging the racecourse of Leicester [located at Clarendon Park], and having several handsome houses, occupied by manufacturers &c who have their places of business in that town*' (White, 1846, 399). Suburban development accelerated in the northern part of the parish through the mid-Victorian period. A horse-drawn tram service began operation in 1875, and by 1881 the population had increased to 1,827 (White, 1877, 260; White, 1887-8, 259).
- 4.6.7 However, the village itself remained essentially rural in character, as depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1885 (Figure 6). This map shows The Grange in far greater detail, comprising the house itself, facing onto Knighton Road, with a rectangular range of outbuildings to the west, probably comprising stables and/or barns. Behind this was a small enclosure, possibly a kitchen garden, accessed by means of a track from the southern section of Craighill Road. This track bisected the site, which comprised portions of two paddocks, the southernmost of which contained

a pond. Open fields lay to the north, and to the south lay cottages fronting onto Newmarket Street, which at that time was known as New Street.

4.7 **Modern**

- 4.7.1 A photograph of Newmarket Street from 1900 is of interest in that it shows the character of the area, although it does not show the site itself. Taken from the eastern end of the street and looking west, it shows cottages to both sides of the street, with gardens on the southern side of the junction of Knighton Lane and Newmarket Street, containing greenhouses (Figure 7).
- 4.7.2 The Second Edition Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1904 shows no further changes within the site (Figure 8). Although suburban development continued in the northern part of the township, the village retained its rural character, and it would seem likely that The Grange remained in use as a farm, since at that date there remained several fields separating it from the suburbs to the north.
- 4.7.3 However, by 1931 development had encroached to within a single field of the site, as shown on the Ordnance Survey 6" map of that year (Figure 9). The map also shows development to the south and west, and by that date Craighill Road had been extended northwards and straightened. It was at that date known as Lorne Road South. The Grange is named as such for the first time on the 1931 map. By this time it must have gone out of use as a farm since no agricultural land was left in the vicinity, and it is by no means impossible that it was at this time that the house was given its rather 'high status' name. Its courtyard of farm buildings had been remodelled, and the track which connected them to Craighill Road had been relocated and straightened, creating a link between Craighill Road and Knighton Road. A wall or fence had been built, subdividing the northern of the two paddocks within which the site was located, and an outhouse had been built against the northern site boundary. Two curved walls or fences had been constructed in the southern part of the site.
- 4.7.4 By 1938 Northcote Road and the northern section of Craighill Road had been constructed, with dwellings to both sides, creating residential areas to the north and west of the site, as shown on the Ordnance Survey 6" map of that year (Figure 10). By this date, a large building, possibly a glasshouse, had been built within the south-western portion of the site.
- 4.7.5 The Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1950 shows a further building in the south-western portion of the site (Figure 11). Since that date, The Grange has been demolished, and

its site redeveloped for residential use, and the site has until recently been used as a nursery and garden centre, as shown on Figure 2.

4.8 **Summary**

- 4.8.1 The proposed redevelopment site does not contain, and would not affect the setting of any Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Historic Battlefields. Although there are a number of listed buildings in the study area, all lie some distance from the site, and are screened from it by intervening buildings. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have no impact on their settings.
- 4.8.2 A relatively small number of archaeological records are noted from the study area, and the findspot of a Roman coin immediately south of the site (MLE1270) would, in isolation, be insufficient to suggest an enhanced archaeological potential for the site were it not for the rather doubtful reported find of five pots from the car park of the nearby Cradock Arms (MLE1781). Taken together though, and assuming the Cradock Arms record to be genuine, the two finds appear to indicate some potential for Roman activity in the vicinity.
- 4.8.3 The southern half of the site lies within the estimated extent of the medieval and post-medieval settlement (MLE1353). Newmarket Street appears to be depicted on Prior's map of 1777, and although the map appears to depict the site as undeveloped, it is difficult to interpret, and is unlikely to have shown the settlement with perfect accuracy. Since the site lies relatively close to Newmarket Street, it is possible that it has some potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.

5.0 SITE CONDITIONS AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Site Conditions

- 5.1.1 A site inspection was carried out in April 2007. It had until recently been in use as a nursery/garden centre, and it comprised glasshouses, brick buildings, a car park and an electricity sub-station.
- 5.1.2 At the time of the site visit, the glasshouses were in the process of demolition, as shown in Plates 1 – 4.

5.2 The Proposed Development

- 5.2.1 The site is currently the subject of a planning application for residential development, accessed off Eton Close.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The desk-based assessment has established that the southern half of the site has some potential for remains of the Roman and medieval/post-medieval periods.
- 6.2 Current evidence does not suggest that sites of national importance meriting preservation *in situ* will be present on the site and other sites of sufficient importance to merit *in situ* preservation appear highly unlikely.
- 6.3 In these circumstances, it is considered that it would be appropriate to implement a targeted watching brief in this area, to be carried out during groundwork, followed by the archaeological investigation and recording of any remains, and their subsequent analysis, reporting and archiving.
- 6.4 Since it is considered unlikely that any remains will be of sufficient importance as to preclude development, it is recommended that their preservation by record, in line with the above, should be secured by a negative planning condition in line with PPG16 paragraph 30.

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APPENDIX 1

Gazetteer of SMR Entries

SMR No.	NGR	Description	Period
MLC548	SK 5998 0122	C13 church restored 1894, listed Grade II	Medieval
MLC687	SK 594 016	Findspot of top & bottom stones of late IA beehive quern, possibly from 2 separate querns	Prehistoric
MLC857	SK 5986 0163	Reported find of 'small jug' presumably medieval	?Medieval
MLC1228	SK 602 014	Findspot of late Ro coin	Roman
MLC1270	SK 5986 0163	Findspot of denarius of Hadrian in foundation of cottages demolished c1933	Roman
MLC1353	SK 599 015	Med & Post-Med settlement of Knighton	Medieval Post Medieval
MLC 1416	SK 59641 01207	2 parallel parchmarks noted during drought, possibly indicating trackway	? Post Medieval - Modern
MLC1443	SK 5999 0157	Late C16 core encased within early C18 house with later additions, listed Grade II	Post Medieval
MLC1474	SK 5998 0130	C17 cottage, listed Grade II	Post Medieval
MLC1781	SK 59870 01646	Report of 5 pots donated to Leicester Museum	?Roman

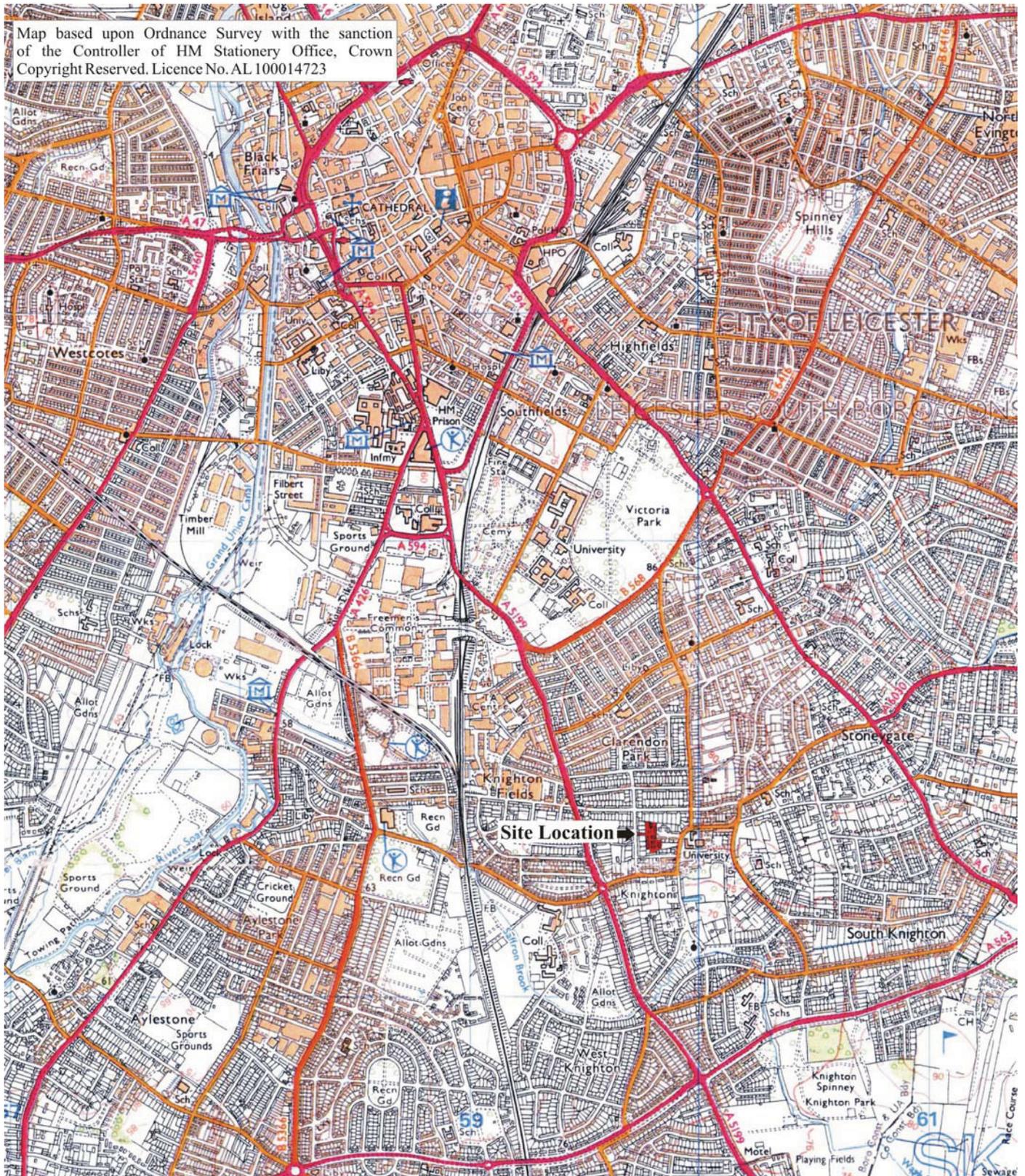


Figure 1
Location Plan 1:25000

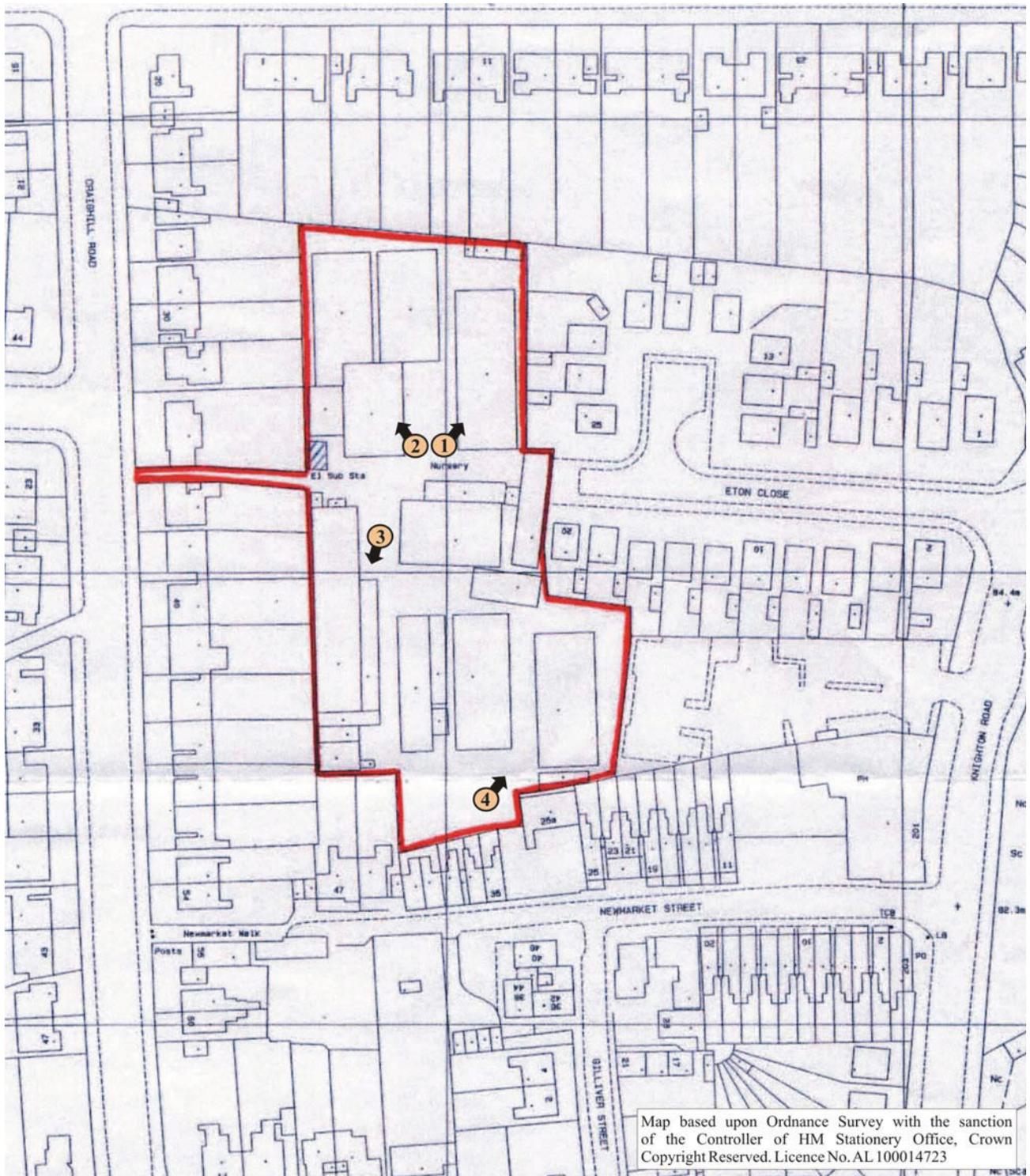


Figure 2
Site Plan (not to scale)

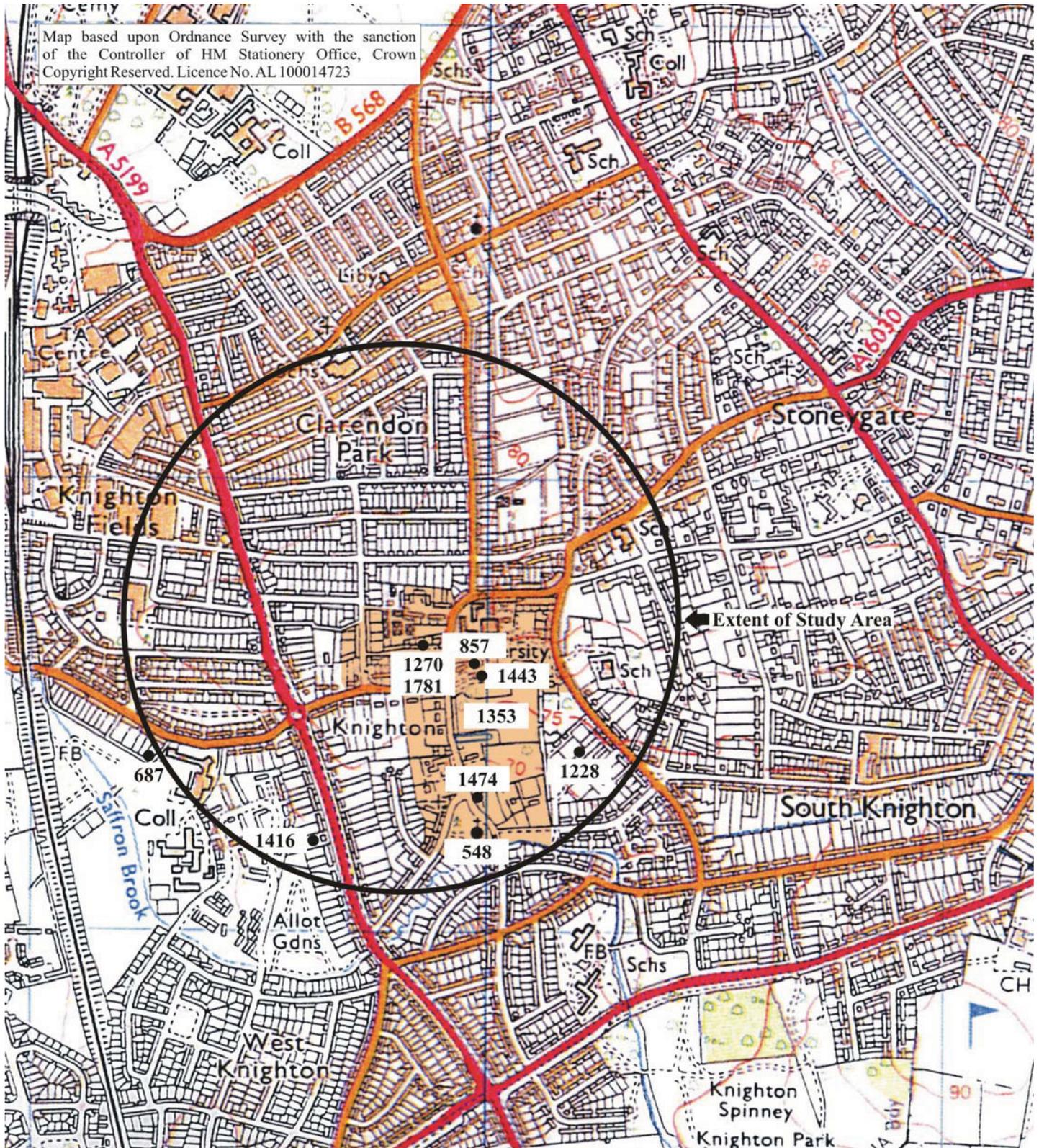


Figure 3
SMR Data 1:12500

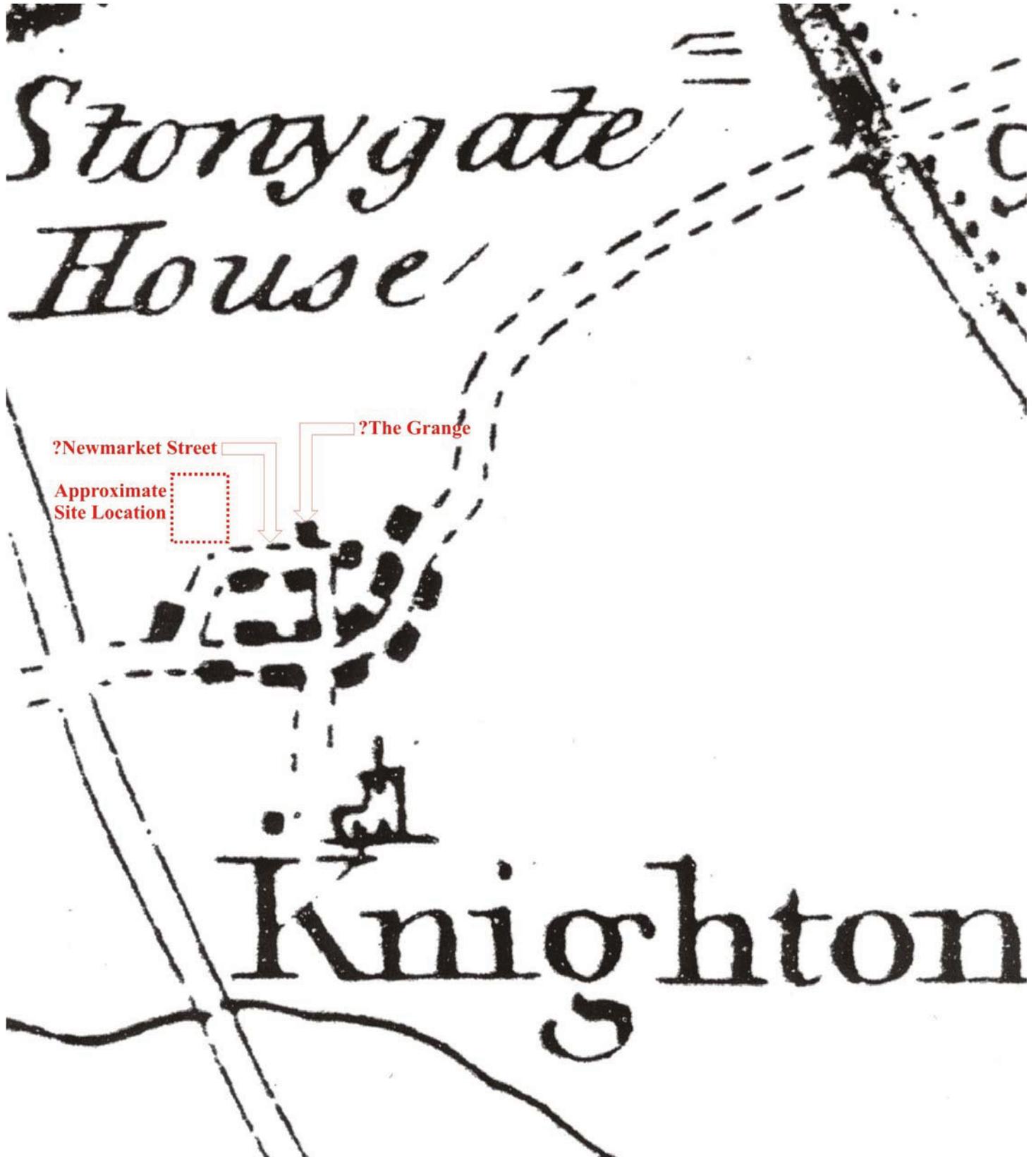


Figure 4
Prior's map, 1777



Figure 5
First Edition Ordnance Survey 1" map, 1835

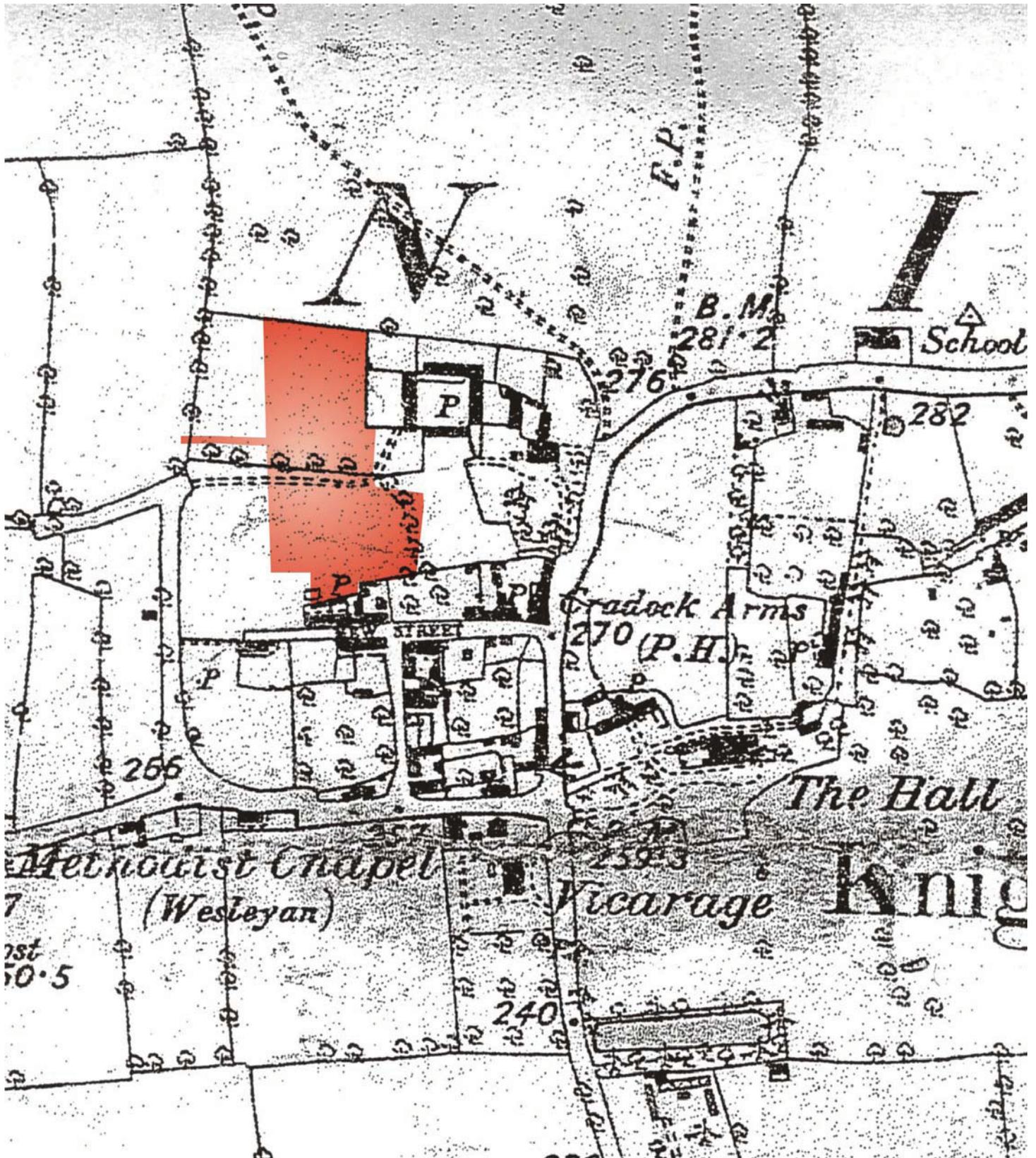


Figure 6
First Edition Ordnance Survey 6" map, 1885



Figure 7
Newmarket Street, 1900

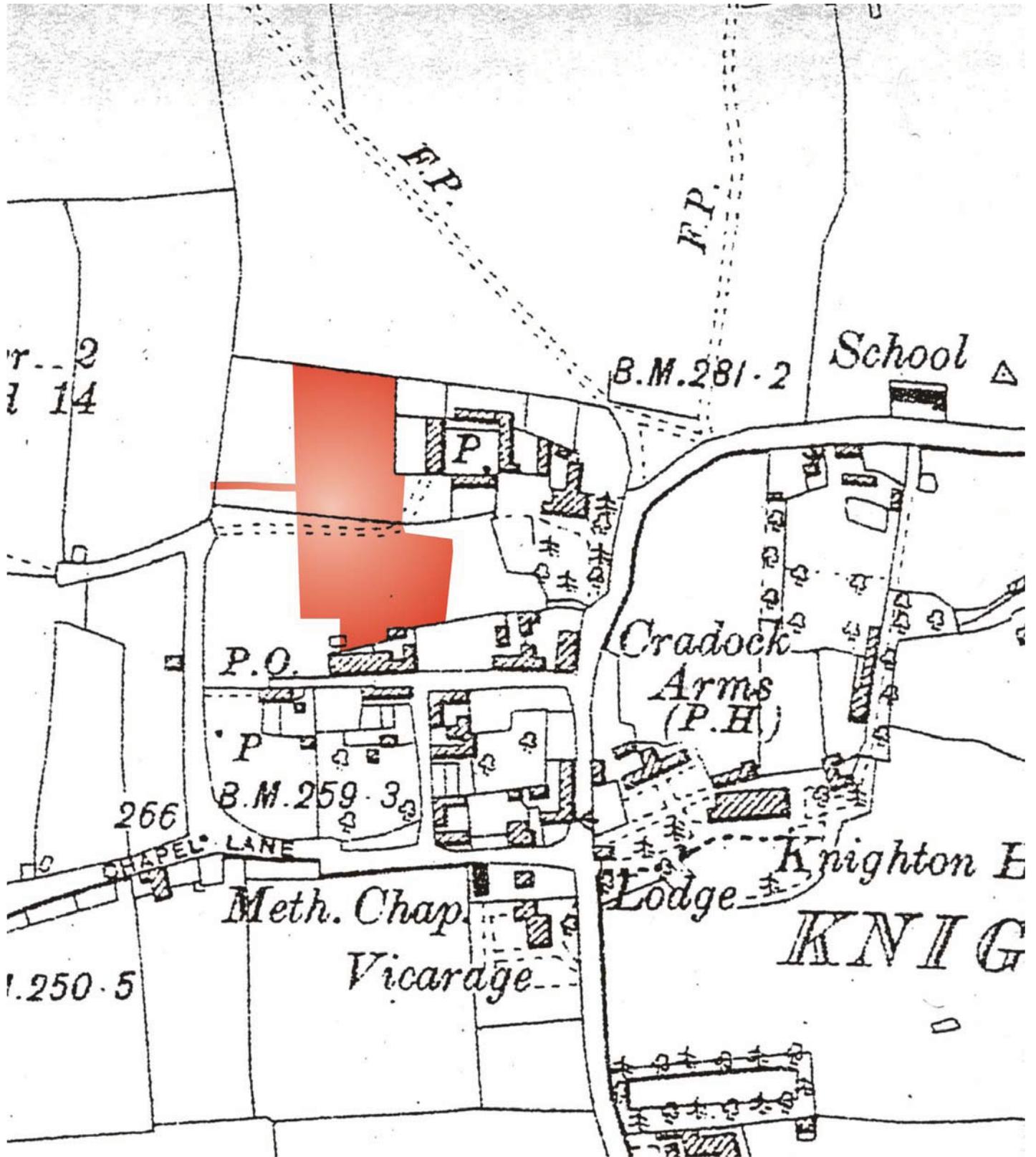


Figure 8
Ordnance Survey 6" map, 1904

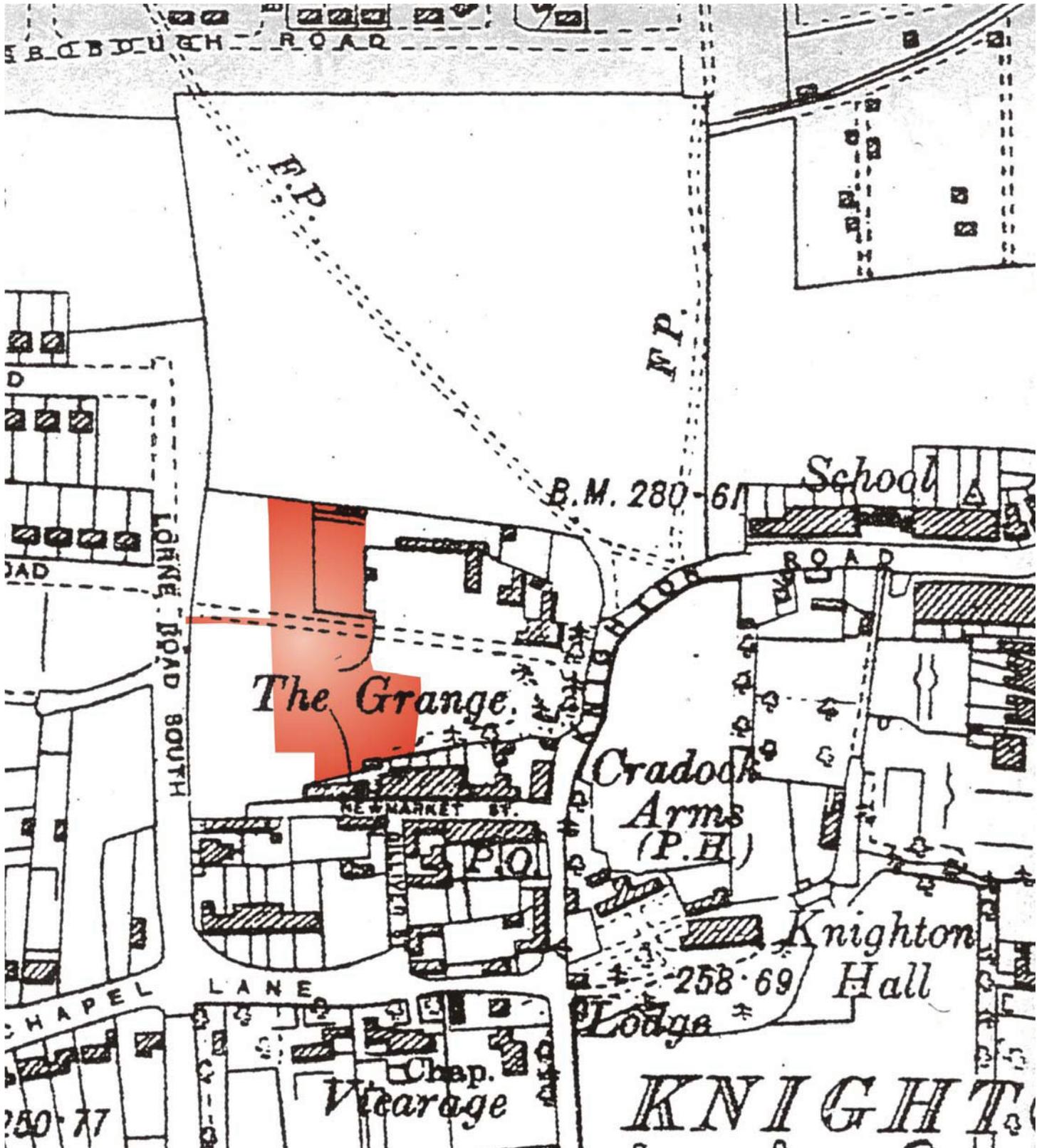


Figure 9
Ordnance Survey 6" map, 1931

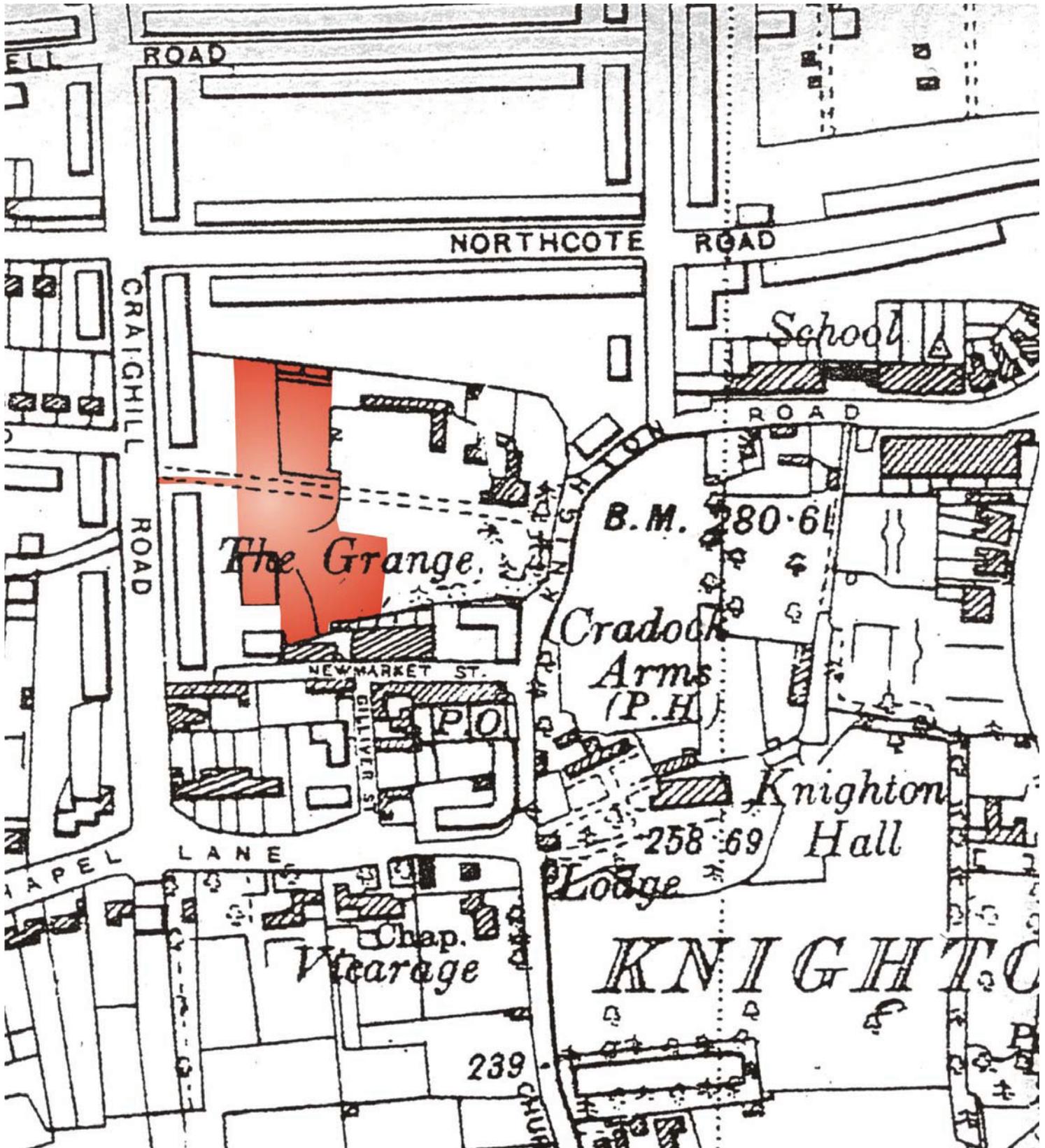


Figure 10
Ordnance Survey 6" map, 1938

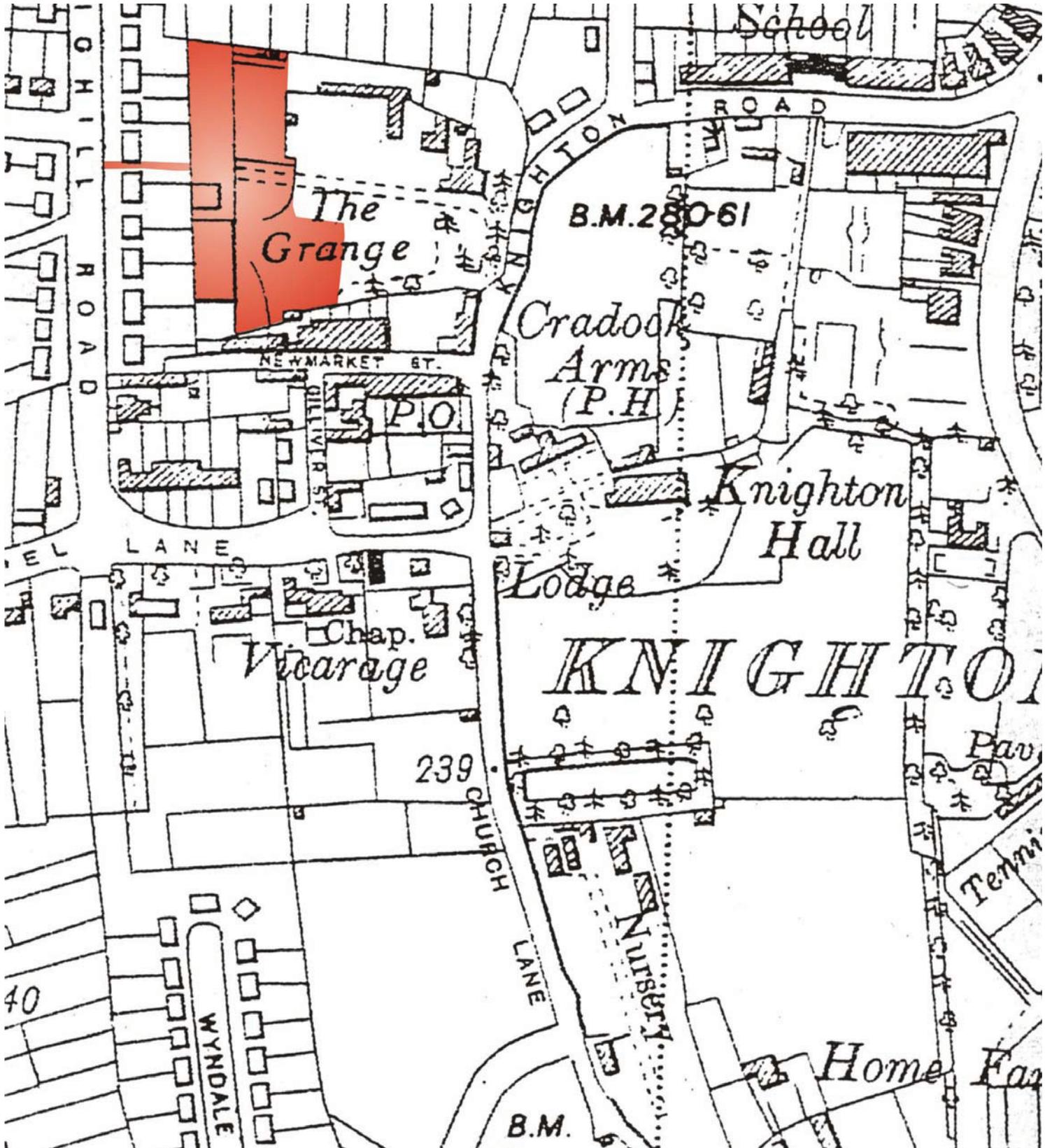


Figure 11
Ordnance Survey 6" map, 1950



Plate 1: North-eastern portion of site



Plate 2: North-western portion of site



Plate 3: South-eastern portion of site



Plate 4: South-western portion of site