

**Archaeological Watching Brief  
on land to the rear of  
518 Lightwood Road  
Lightwood  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
NGR SJ 92128 41663**

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## **Non-technical summary**

*Cramp Sutherland Archaeological Services (CSARC) conducted an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of strip foundation trenches for a residential infill development in former gardens to the rear of number 518 Lightwood Road, Stoke-on-Trent. The site was located in an area of archaeological potential due to its proximity to a AD 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Roman coin hoard discovered in 1960.*

*Monitoring of the ground works was carried out in May 2012, but no archaeology was observed. The natural clay subsoil was generally encountered at relatively shallow depths, overlain by modern made ground which had severely impacted the site.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

**1.1** Full planning consent (ref. SOT/53390) to develop a backland site for a detached bungalow to the rear of 518 Lightwood Road, Lightwood, Stoke-on-Trent, was granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Stoke-on-Trent City Council, on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012. This application replaced an earlier one (SOT/52990) submitted in December 2011.

**1.2** The development area (DA) is close to a significant archaeological asset specified in the Stoke-on-Trent Historic Environment Record (SHER), and a condition for a watching brief to monitor the groundworks was advised by the LPA's Planning Archaeologist (Goodwin 2011). CSARC was commissioned by the developer, Mr. N. Hammersley, to undertake the project.

## **2.0 Site location & character**

**2.1** Lightwood is a residential suburb located 2.4 km south east of the centre of Longton, the southernmost of the six towns that form the modern city of Stoke-on-Trent (Fig. 1).

**2.2** The DA is centred on Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ 92128 41663. It encompasses a total area of c. 490m<sup>2</sup> located behind three semi-detached properties (514-518 Lightwood Road), on the corner of Woodpark Lane (Fig. 2). It is a former garden lot mostly laid to grass, except

for a 5.0m NE-SW x 5.50m NW-SE (27.50m<sup>2</sup>) concrete hardstanding in the southern corner.

- 2.3** The site is generally flat, but due to its situation below a ridge above a valley, there is a perceptible downward slope from NE – SW. Its boundaries are defined on all sides by wooden fencing panels, except the north west, which is hedgerow.

### **3.0 Archaeological and historical background**

- 3.1** There are no references in SHER to any archaeological finds or deposits within the specified parameters of the DA, but it is located 730m north west of the Lightwood Hoard findspot (PRN 01222). This is an important cache discovered in 1960 in the garden of 698 Lightwood Road (NGR SJ 9254 4101). It comprised 2,461 Late Roman coins, a pair of silver snake bracelets and part of a silver clasp. Mintmarks indicated that the hoard was buried after AD 276 (Mountford 1963, 17-36).

- 3.2** A handled beaker, possibly of Roman origin (PRN 01988), was found 300m to the south east of the DA (NGR SJ 9240 4150) in 1930. Approximately 1.0 km north east is a Roman road, the Ryknield Way, which broadly follows the line of the modern A50/Utttoxeter Road.

- 3.3** By the 13<sup>th</sup> century the DA was probably within the bounds of the short-lived New Forest that stretched between Tunstall, Weston Coyney and Trentham. It was created by royal decree in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century and disafforested in c. 1204 (Cockin 2006, 370). Subsequent references to assarting (the grubbing out of trees) infers encroachment on the common woodland waste (Young & Jenkins 1963, 243), probably to institute an open-field farming system.

- 3.4** By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the area surrounding the DA was a distinct territory known as Lightwood Forest, which extended from Longton to Rough Close, and between Blurton and Meir (Cockin 2006, 316). Despite the forest suffix, the land was probably either pasture or under the plough.

- 3.5 Yates' county map of 1775 (Fig. 3) shows the junction of Lightwood Road (identified as Stone Road) and Woodpark Lane. The latter route, known by the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Bog Lane (Staffordshire Past Track), is depicted as a cartway or track leading to the hamlet of Cold Ridings on the Cocknage Road.
- 3.6 A plan of Lightwood Forest, drawn in 1797, is the earliest map with an assured date to show the rectangular field enclosure containing the DA itself (Fig. 4). An enclosure map recording the holdings of local landowners, of unknown date but possibly 1794 (SRO, D593/H/3/128), describes the field as leasehold land held by Benjamin Bridgwood. It comprised 29 acres (11.8 hectares) in total, but there is no field name or explanation of how it was being utilised.
- 3.7 The 1883 OS map shows no discernible changes (Fig. 5) and the site remains unaltered until the 1937 OS map, which reveals residential ribbon development either side of the DA (Fig. 6). The DA itself does not seem to have been directly impacted, as the 1937 map ostensibly shows a vacant, rectangular plot behind numbers 516-518. In the 1954 edition this space has been sub-divided into individual gardens for the host properties.
- 3.8 In 1986, a planning application (SOT/18609) permitted construction of a double garage for number 518, accessible from Woodpark Lane, at the southern end of the DA. Aerial imagery denotes that it was extant in 2003 but gone by 2006, and a parcel of land behind number 516 appropriated as garden for 518.
- 4.0 Methodology**
- 4.1 A watching brief is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during any work carried out for non-archaeological reasons (IfA 2008).
- 4.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with the Planning Archaeologist's specification (Goodwin 2011) and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)

produced by CSARC (Cramp 2012). It also adhered to current best archaeological practice and the relevant national codes of conduct, standards and guidance advocated in the *By-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists* (IfA 2008).

**4.3** Within the limitations of the development, the specified aims and objectives of the project were to:

- monitor the removal of topsoil and/or overburden,
- inspect exposed sub-soil horizons for any archaeological features or deposits,
- examine the spoil heaps for archaeological material,
- mitigate the effect of the development on any existing archaeology, through preservation by record.

**4.4** The watching brief was conducted on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. Written records in the form of site notes, annotated sketches and *pro-forma* context sheets were made, augmented by high-resolution colour digital and 35mm monochrome print photography to record specific stages of the fieldwork.

**4.5** An ordered archive comprising data collated during the course of the project will be deposited by CSARC at *The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery*, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent (site code **LWR 12**, accession number **2012.LH.58**).

## **5.0 Results of the watching brief**

**5.1** The strip foundation trenches excavated during the watching brief were typically 0.60m wide for external bearing walls and 0.45m for internal partitions. The pre-determined formation level was no less than 0.30m into the solid natural geology. All the trenches were opened with a 360° tracked midi-excavator using GP and ditching buckets (Plate 1).

**5.2** Site constraints obliged the regular removal of excavated spoil. It was visually inspected as often as possible, but no archaeological components were observed.

- 5.3** Preparatory groundwork commenced with the stripping of the topsoil/turfline (**100**) across the designated area. This horizon consisted of a friable dark grey/brown, silty loam that extended approximately 0.10m-0.15m below ground level (bgl), with occasional inclusions of small, angular stones.
- 5.4** Removal of the topsoil horizon exposed an underlying brown/black silty clay layer of made ground (**102**). Across most of the DA it was between 0.20m-0.30m thick (Plate 2), but along the south-west side of the site it increased to approximately 0.80m (Plate 3). This substrate was interpreted as a levelling layer and primarily comprised re-deposited soils, ceramic building material (CBM), scrap metal and domestic refuse, including a crisp packet dated 1991.
- 5.5** The reinforced concrete hardstanding (**101**) in the southern corner of the site was revealed to be 0.15m thick and directly overlay (**102**). Along its north-west-facing edge, a significant concentration of demolition material was encountered in (**102**). This comprised a number of partial and complete slotted concrete posts for fence panels, as well as some scaffold poles, and a considerable amount of red brick rubble and precast concrete paving flags (Plate 4).
- 5.6** The undisturbed natural (**103**) was encountered directly below the made ground layer, at depths of about 0.30m-0.45m bgl, except to the south west where it was at least 1.0m bgl. This subsoil comprised a firm, yellow/orange clayey sand, with moderate inclusions of small to medium size rounded pebbles. Small irregular patches of pinkish red mottling and streaking were also observed within the natural.
- 6.0 Finds analysis**
- 6.1** Four pieces of machine-made kiln furniture used in ceramic production were encountered in context (**102**), comprising two thimbles and two incomplete stilts. The initials of an unidentified manufacturer, 'C & I', were impressed on the arm of one stilt and a thimble marked 'G & C' suggests it may emanate from Gimson & Co., who operated in Fenton from 1861 to 1994. However as



the items were incorporated within a modern levelling sequence, they were not considered to hold any potential for further analysis.

- 6.2** A handful of undecorated potsherds, degraded fragments of saggar and some chunks of sanitaryware were found in context (**102**). These were also noted, but not retained.

## **7.0 Discussion**

- 7.1** The watching brief fulfilled the primary objectives of the project brief by monitoring all groundworks associated with the excavation of the footings for the development. The recorded sequence of deposits identified a uniform stratigraphic profile, which almost certainly extended across the remainder of the DA. The lower horizons of all the strata were clearly defined.

- 7.2** In general, the natural subsoil (**103**) was encountered at relatively shallow depths. The incremental thickness of the overlying made ground (**102**) along the south-western side of the DA presumably reflects a build-up of deposited material to compensate for the declivity of the natural ground.

- 7.3** Aerial photographs from 1963 and 1974 show no outbuildings to the rear of number 518. Levelling may therefore have been undertaken to facilitate the erection of the garage at some time after 1986. Hardstanding (**101**) most likely represents the floor and/or apron of the garage.

## **8.0 Conclusions**

- 8.1** The historic map evidence shows the DA was agricultural land from at least the 18<sup>th</sup> until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the area began to be developed. Although the cartography implied that the DA had not initially been affected by this suburban expansion, no identifiably pre-modern archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the watching brief.

- 8.2** The made ground (**102**) was probably deposited some time between at least 1986 and 1991, with a possible second phase of disturbance in 2003-06.

While the machine-made pieces of kiln furniture in (102) could date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they are probably residual deposits.

- 8.3** Despite the initial prospect of *in-situ* archaeology, the project demonstrated that recent landscaping has severely impacted the site and that it contributes nothing to understanding latent Roman or medieval activity in the Lightwood area.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

- 9.1** Thanks are extended to Stoke-on-Trent Planning Archaeologist, Jonathan Goodwin MifA; Staffordshire Record Office (SRO), Stafford; the client, Mr. Neil Hammersley; and the groundwork contractors, Rob and Dave, for their assistance and co-operation.

- 9.2** Map data is reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of H.M.S.O. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. License No. 1000551532.

## **10.0 References**

### ***Primary sources***

*A map of that part of Lightwood Forest in the parish of Trentham to be enclosed.* Date: 18<sup>th</sup> century (SRO, Doc Ref No D593/H/3/128).

*A plan of Lightwood Forest, Meir Heath and Meir Hay estates.* Date: 1797 (SRO, Doc Ref No D593/H/3/127).

*Map of Blurton, Cocknage, Newstead and Lightwood Forest in the parish of Trentham,* by Thomas Burton. Date: c. 1714 (SRO, Doc Ref No D593/H/3/30).

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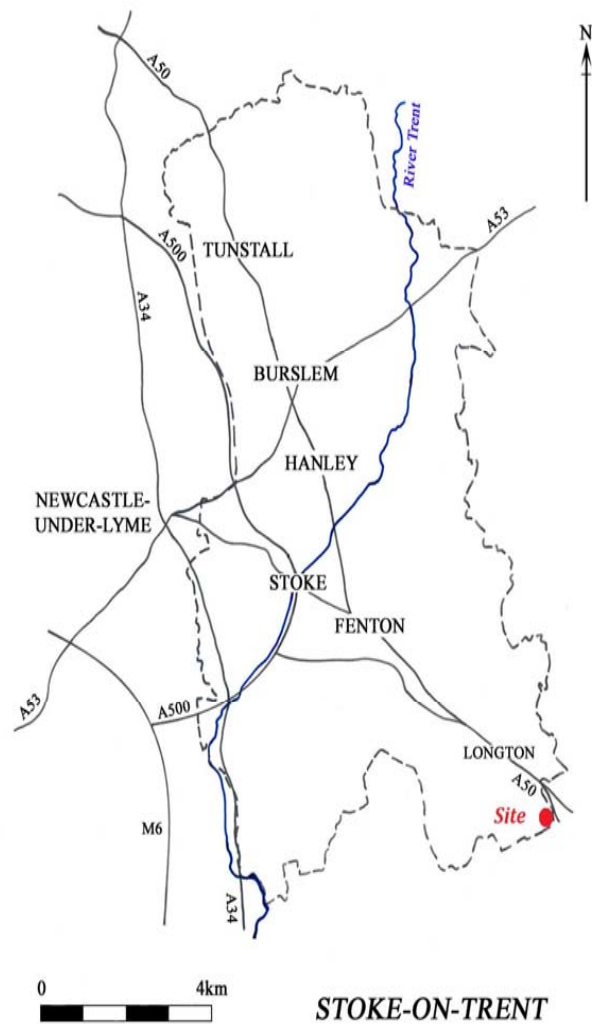
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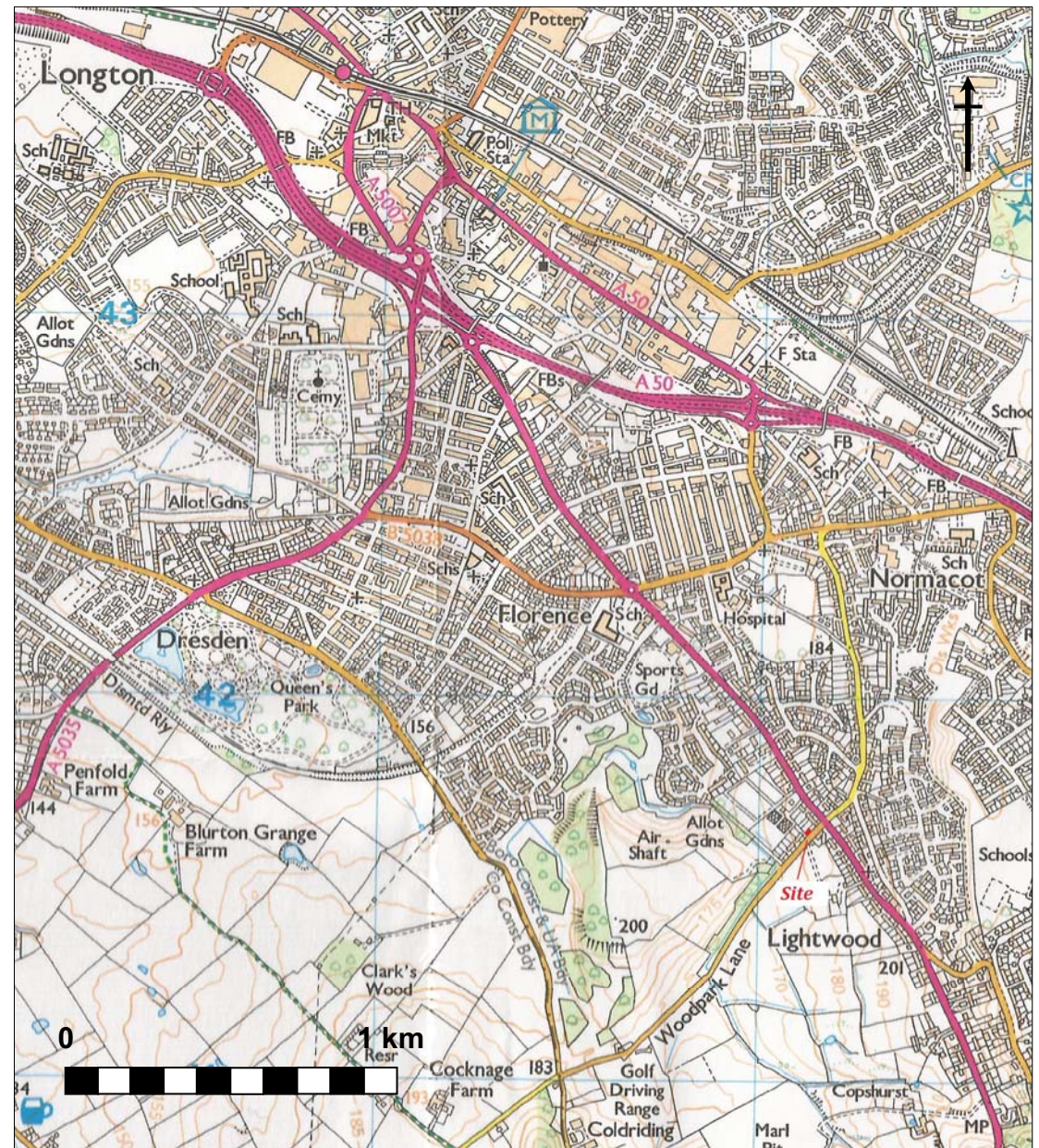
*Staffordshire Past Track*.

URL <<http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk>> [date accessed: 15/06/12].

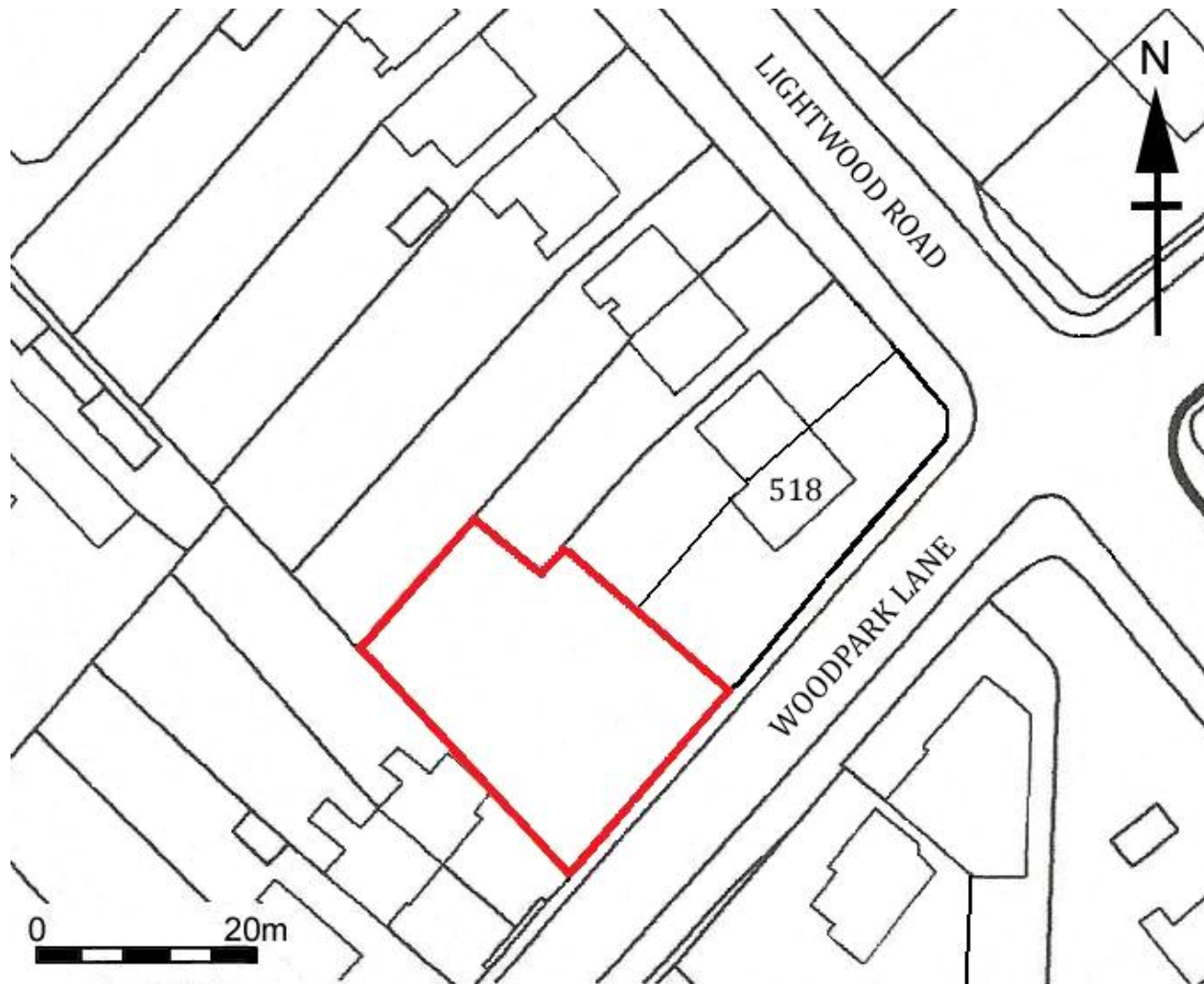


**FIG. 1**

Site location

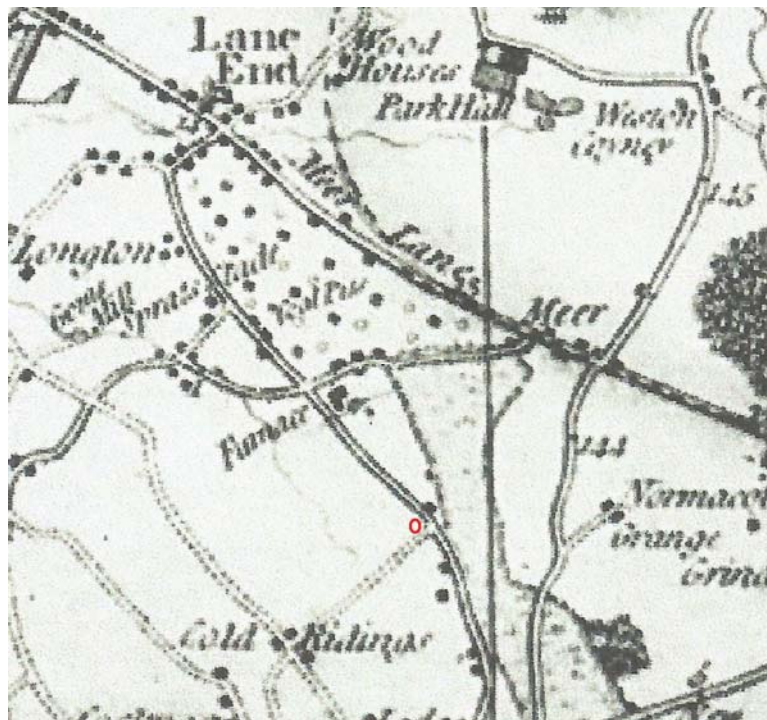






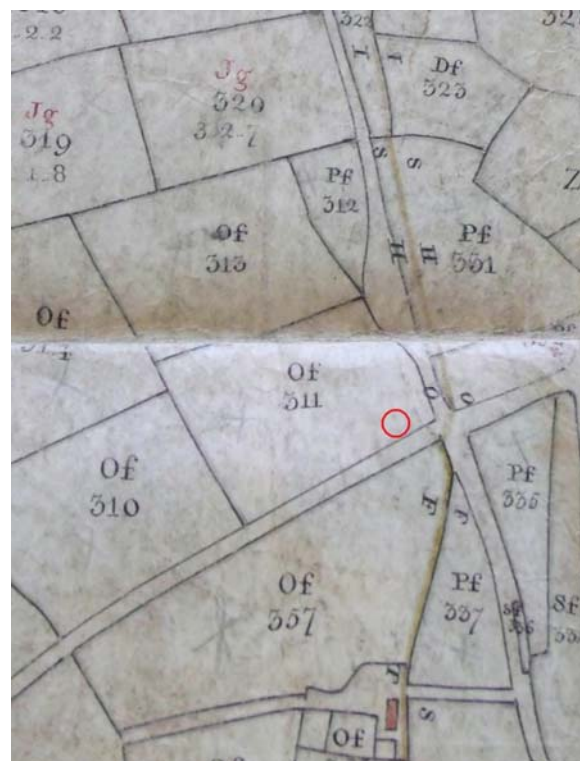
**FIG. 2**

Site plan, with the boundary of the development area outlined in red.



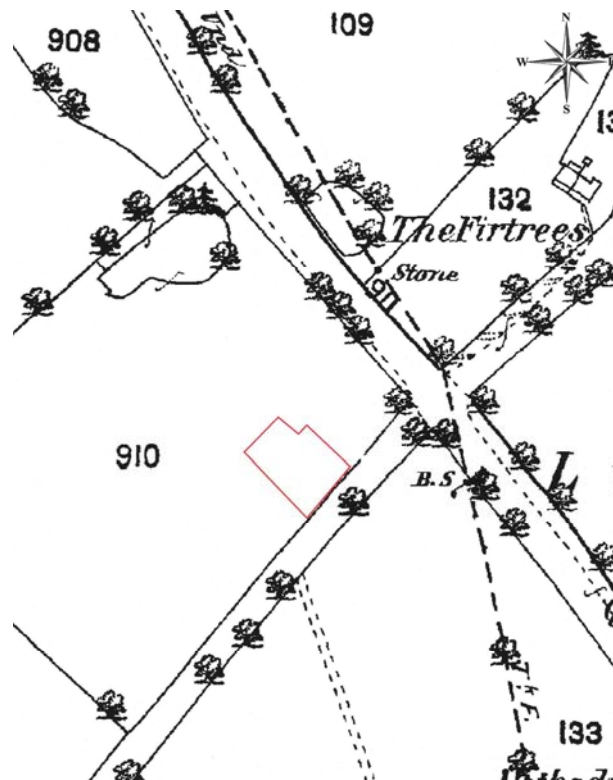
**FIG. 3**

Extract from Yates' county map of 1775, with approximate location of development area indicated by red circle.



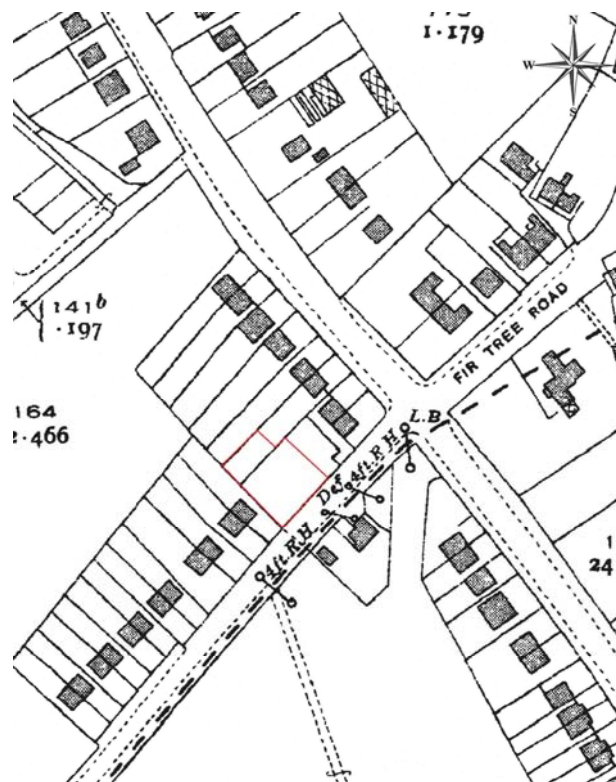
**FIG. 4**

Extract from a map of 1797, showing the approximate location of the DA. It is unclear what 'Of' stands for.



**FIG. 4**

Extract from the 1883 OS map, with the development area outlined in red.



**FIG. 5**

Extract from the 1937 OS map.





**PLATE 1**

General view across the site after topsoil strip, facing north west.



**PLATE 2**

Representative view of stratigraphy, with made ground (102) overlying natural (103), facing south west (scales: 0.25m & 0.50m).





**PLATE 3**

View facing south west, showing incremental depth of made ground (102) (scale: 0.50m).



**PLATE 4**

View facing north east, showing mixed rubble in (102) adjacent to concrete hardstanding (101), on right.