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# **A50 Phase 2.**

**Normacot to Blythe Bridge,  
Stoke-on-Trent.**

**Desk-top Assessment and Proposal  
for an Archaeological Watching Brief**

Stoke-on-Trent City Museum Archaeology Unit.  
Report No.40

July 1995

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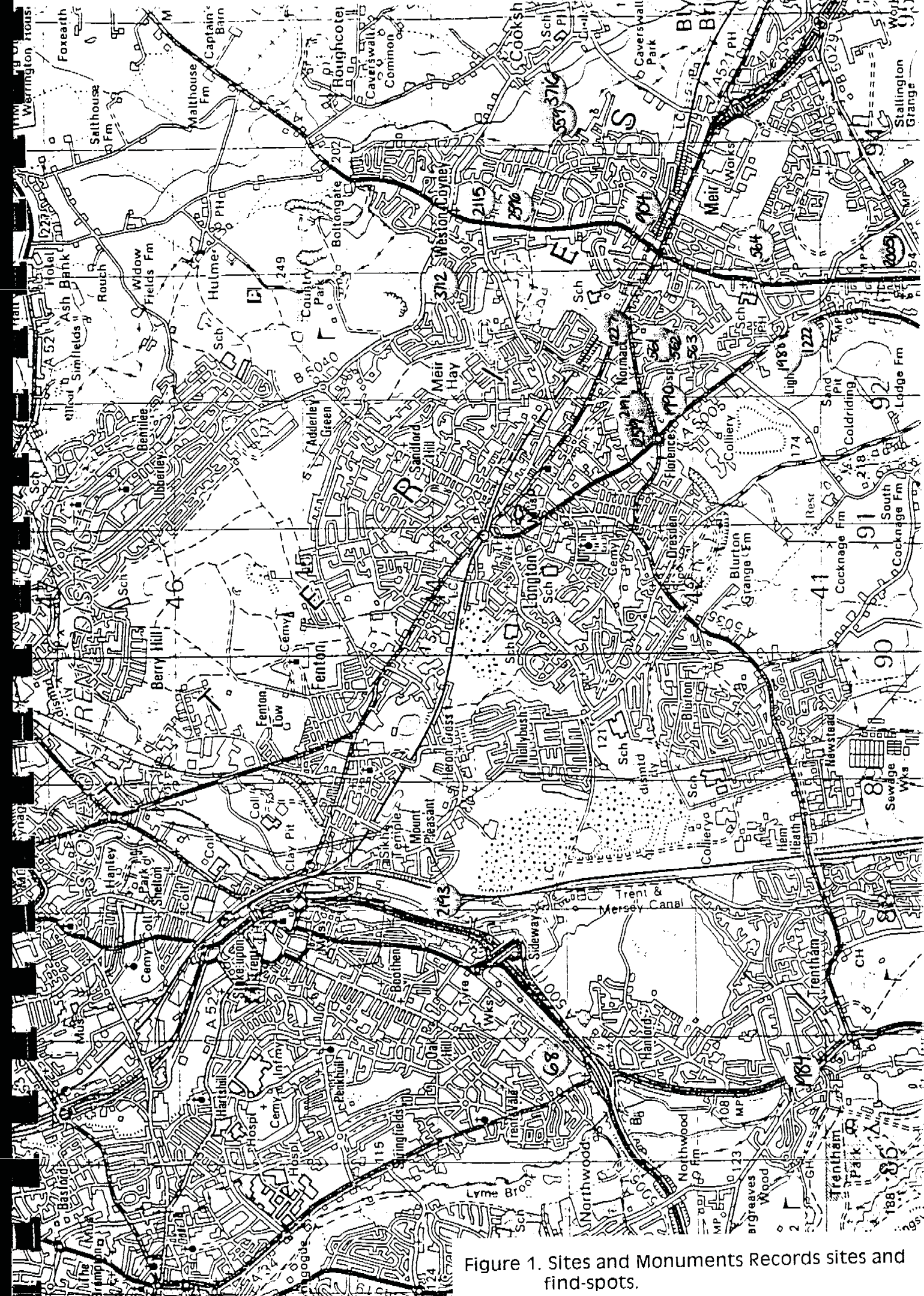
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## **1.0 Introduction.**

**1.1** The new A50 trunk road through the southern area of the City of Stoke-on-Trent, will ultimately span the 7 miles from Queensway (A500) to meet up with the present A50 dual-carriageway at Blythe Bridge. Phase 2 of the scheme covers one mile from Normacot to Blythe Bridge, passing through Meir following the route of the present A50. (NGR SJ 9250-4260 to NGR SJ 9425-4180)

**1.2** The construction of the new road will involve the excavation of a tunnel at the Meir crossroads. The depth of this and other excavated areas will provide archaeologists with the chance to observe the nature, extent, quantity and quality of any buried archaeological features.



## 2.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.

### 2.1 Prehistoric

Evidence for human activity in the prehistoric period has been recovered through chance finds unearthed in the Stoke-on-Trent area of which the earliest dated finds are from the late Neolithic period or early Bronze Age, c.2,000 BC, such as beakers and barbed and tanged arrowheads. A number of sites in the North Staffordshire area have been dated to the Mesolithic Period, such as Ossom's Cave, and it is possible that human activity was taking place in the Stoke-on-Trent in this period, but that the evidence has not been unearthed.

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Stoke-on-Trent lists the following in the immediate area:

**PRN 00561** Bronze Age Stone Axe fragment. NGR SJ 9236-4242

**PRN 00562** Bronze Age Collared Urn. NGR SJ 9235-4238

Both of these objects were found in a sand pit in Normacot to the south of the A50 route, and are some of the earliest dated finds from the Stoke-on-Trent area.

Also unearthed in the area:

**PRN 01984** Neolithic/Bronze Age axe hammer, found at Trentham, NGR SJ 8655-4155.

### 2.2 Roman

A **Roman road** from Derby (Little Chester) to Stoke-on-Trent passes through Blythe Bridge, Meir and Longton along the present Uttoxeter Road (A50). (Margary 1957, 41-3) The road, listed on the SMR as **PRN 01227**, cannot be traced beyond Stoke due to later development, yet it is probably heading towards Chesterton which is 3.5 miles away to the west.

The Roman settlement and fort at Chesterton has been dated to the late-1st or early-2nd century AD with excavations revealing Roman artefacts including samian ware, a pottery torso of Venus and a glass bead. (**PRN 01771**, NGR SJ 8312-4907) Holditch Roman settlement is also in this area, (**PRN 01769**, NGR SJ 8400-4840). Excavation in 1994 revealed a metalled road running north-south and what appears to be a sequence of timber buildings extending from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.



Fieldwork in the Newcastle-under-Lyme area in the 1960's is thought to have traced the route of the Roman road from Stoke towards Chesterton or Holditch. Sections were cut through what was thought to be the Roman road at various points along its route, at the site of Wolstanton High School and Wolstanton Golf Course. The excavations unearthed a sandstone road and a number of finds including a Carnelian ring seal and fragments of Roman pottery and glass. (Goodyear and Charlton 1967, 27-33)

At Longton the road is thought to follow the Uttoxeter Road as far as Meir then passes the town centre north of the present A50 near Sutherland Road.

A Roman pottery kiln has been unearthed and excavated at Trent Vale in Stoke-on-Trent, **PRN 00068**, NGR SJ 8679-4312. The single kiln dated to the mid- to late-1st century, was abandoned with all of the pottery still inside. Another area of the city where Roman artefacts have been uncovered is Bucknall to the north-west of the A50 Phase 2. Here, a very large amount of Roman potsherds have been found, dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. (**PRN 01991**, NGR SJ 9007-4689, **PRN 05045**, NGR SJ 9000-4680 and **PRN 05046**, NGR SJ 9001-4887)

A very important hoard of Roman coins was unearthed one mile south-west of the present A50 at Lightwood Lane in 1960. (**PRN 01222**, NGR SJ 9250-4100) The hoard consisted of 2,461 Roman coins in an earthenware pot, along with a pair of silver bracelets and a fragment of a silver clasp found alongside. (Mattingly 1963, 19) The hoard, bracelets, clasp and pot are now in the permanent collection at Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and are on display in the archaeology gallery.

Other Roman artefacts unearthed in this area are listed on the SMR:

**PRN 00563** Lower stone of a rotary quern of millstone grit. May be post-Roman.  
NGR SJ 923-423

**PRN 00904** Roman copper coin found in garden soil, June 1982. NGR SJ 9356-4235.

**PRN 01988** Roman handled beaker found in gravel in a quarry, Lightwood.  
NGR SJ 9242-4146

**PRN 02191** Roman coin. An Antoninianus, probably a Galerius Maximus, but possibly a Valerian. NGR SJ 925-425.

**PRN 2193** A small bronze Roman coin of Constantine II (337-340) minted at Constantinople. Found in Fenton, NGR SJ 8835-4400.



### 2.3 Medieval

The place-name evidence for Meir (Mear, Mere or Meare) may indicate the presence of a body of water in the vicinity in earlier times, as Meir in Old English means a small lake. Meir Lane, therefore, may have been a trackway over a swamp or along the channel of a rivulet. (Ward 1843, 559)

Meir is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, but Normacot to the south-west and a settlement to the north are mentioned. Normacot is stated as having one plough in lordship, but no occupants, **PRN 02519** (NGR SJ 9220-4250), and a site close to Weston Coyney is stated as having 5 villagers with 2 ploughs, **PRN 02596** (NGR SJ 9355-4355).

John Ward claims that the settlement "has claim to considerable antiquity" and states that Gilbert de Mere and Thomas de la Mere held the Meir land in the 13th century. (Ward 1843, 560) The small hamlet of Meir was probably established sometime in the Medieval period at the crossroads where the Leek-Stone road met the Uttoxeter-Newcastle road. The land around the settlement would have been mainly agricultural with the inhabitants of the hamlet being engaged in this activity.

Also recorded on the SMR in the Meir area are:

**PRN 01990** Settlement or earthwork on Star and Garter Road with undated pottery unearthed. Period Unknown. NGR SJ 9235-4224.

**PRN 00564** Site of Normacot Grange, Medieval grange associated with Hulton Abbey. NGR SJ 9255-4155.

**PRN 00559** Earthwork of unknown period, possibly a motte. NGR SJ 9421-4303.

**PRN 02115** Medieval moated site and fishpond, Weston Coyney. NGR SJ 9357-4373.

### 2.4 Seventeenth Century

**Plot's Map of 1686** shows Meare Lane End on the site of what is now Longton town centre, with Meare shown as a separate hamlet to the east. No roads are shown on the map, only rivers, but the main road from Uttoxeter to Stoke and Newcastle would have been firmly established by this time. Blithe Bridge is also on the map and would also have been a small settlement at this time. The men and women who lived in these small communities were probably agricultural workers.



## **2.5 Eighteenth Century**

**Yates' Map of 1775** shows Meir to still be a small settlement, called Meer, along the Uttoxeter Road. Longton to the west is expanding with new roads and buildings having been erected, whilst Meir is still surrounded extensively by open ground and farmland. To the north of Meir, the map shows a watermill on Anchor Brook south of a large millpond near Park Hall, (**PRN 03712** NGR SJ 9280-4390). Also seen on the map is **PRN 03716**, a watermill near the village of Caverswall, (NGR SJ 9440-4320).

Longton at this time had established itself as a centre for the extraction of coal, being situated on the North Staffordshire coalseam. There is no documentary evidence of any coal mines working in Meir in the last few centuries, and as the area is on the edge of the productive coal measures it is possible that this industry was not undertaken.

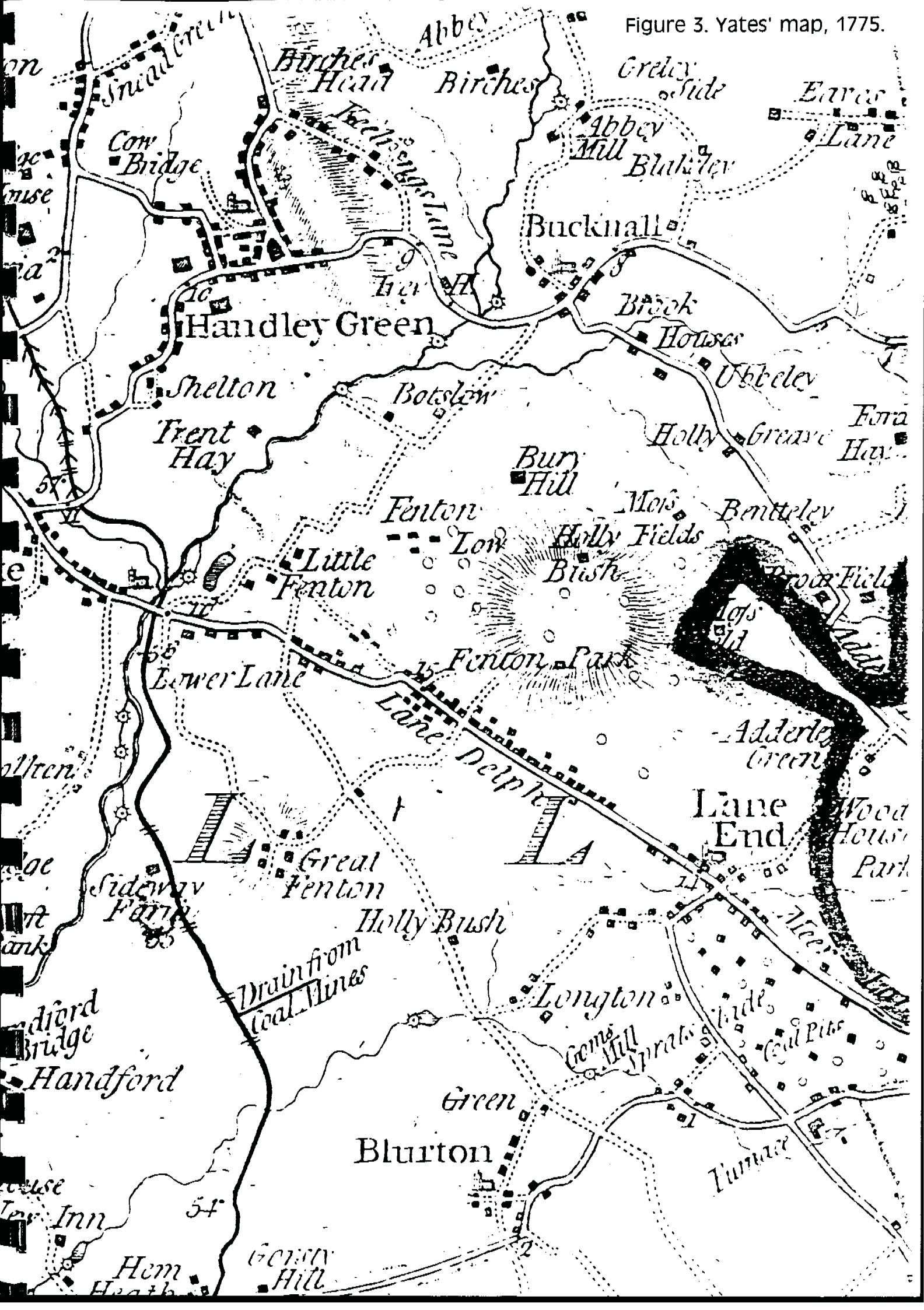
## **2.6 Nineteenth Century**

A reservoir supplying water to Longton was built at Meir in 1817 by the Duke of Sutherland, indicating the increased need for better sanitation and public health in the town that was becoming rapidly over-crowded. Meir in contrast was still throughout the nineteenth century a small ribbon settlement of houses along the main road.

**Rawlinson's Map of 1850** shows that many of the main roads have now been established with Meir being a small community situated around the crossroads that still exists today. The road to the north passes agricultural land, farms and cottages on its way to Leek, with the southern road also passing through farmland and close to Normacot Grange. The road to the west passes through the now firmly established town of Longton, with the eastern route heading towards Uttoxeter and small hamlets such as Blythe Bridge. Caverswall Wood covers most of the land between the north and east roads.

**1878 Ordnance Survey Map** - The settlement has changed little in the last twenty years with Meir still being a ribbon development along the northern side of Meir Road with agricultural land to the south. The map shows terraced houses, pubs, a bowling green, a school and a Primitive Methodist Church, so this is a community, although somewhat small, and not just a group of houses. The North Staffordshire Railway (Uttoxeter Branch) passes close to the community to the north of the road with the railway passing through a tunnel near the crossroads. This line was constructed in 1848, with Longton station being opened at the same time. (Jenkins 1963, 228) The location of the railway to the road would have prevented expansion of the settlement to the north, apart from immediately to the north of the crossroads.

Figure 3. Yates' map, 1775.





## 2.7 Twentieth Century

**1900 Ordnance Survey Map** - The land to the south of the road is still almost exclusively agricultural, but the settlement has expanded to the north of the Uttoxeter Road, up the road to Leek. Here, a few streets of terraced houses have been established, such as Cornelius Street and Bright Street, as well as Station Road which leads to Meir Station. It is possible that the land to the south of the Uttoxeter Road was not available at this time for building and was being retained as agricultural land, preventing expansion in this direction. To the east of the main settlement of the crossroads is a pumping station and a reservoir, and beyond this is another row of terraced houses and a Brick Works. It is possible that these houses and the works were associated, with the workers living close-by. Blythe Bridge at this time is also a small community, but the houses are very much larger than those in Meir. The houses along the north of Meir Lane are probably workers houses, with Blythe Bridge being a much more exclusive place to live.

It was during the twentieth century that Meir developed from a small ribbon development to a large housing area, on both sides of the busy A50. In 1922 Meir became part of the County Borough when the boundaries were expanded eastwards. (Jenkins 1963, 260) Extensive house building began in the area in the 1930's. (Jenkins 1963, 264) Meir aerodrome was opened in 1935, and during the Second World War a large aircraft factory was built adjoining the airport. (Warrillow 1960, 114) The site of the airstrip, which is no longer in use is listed on the SMR, **PRN 20051**, NGR SJ 9300-4050.



Figure 4. Rawlinson's map 1850



Figure 5. 1878 Urquhart map of the area.





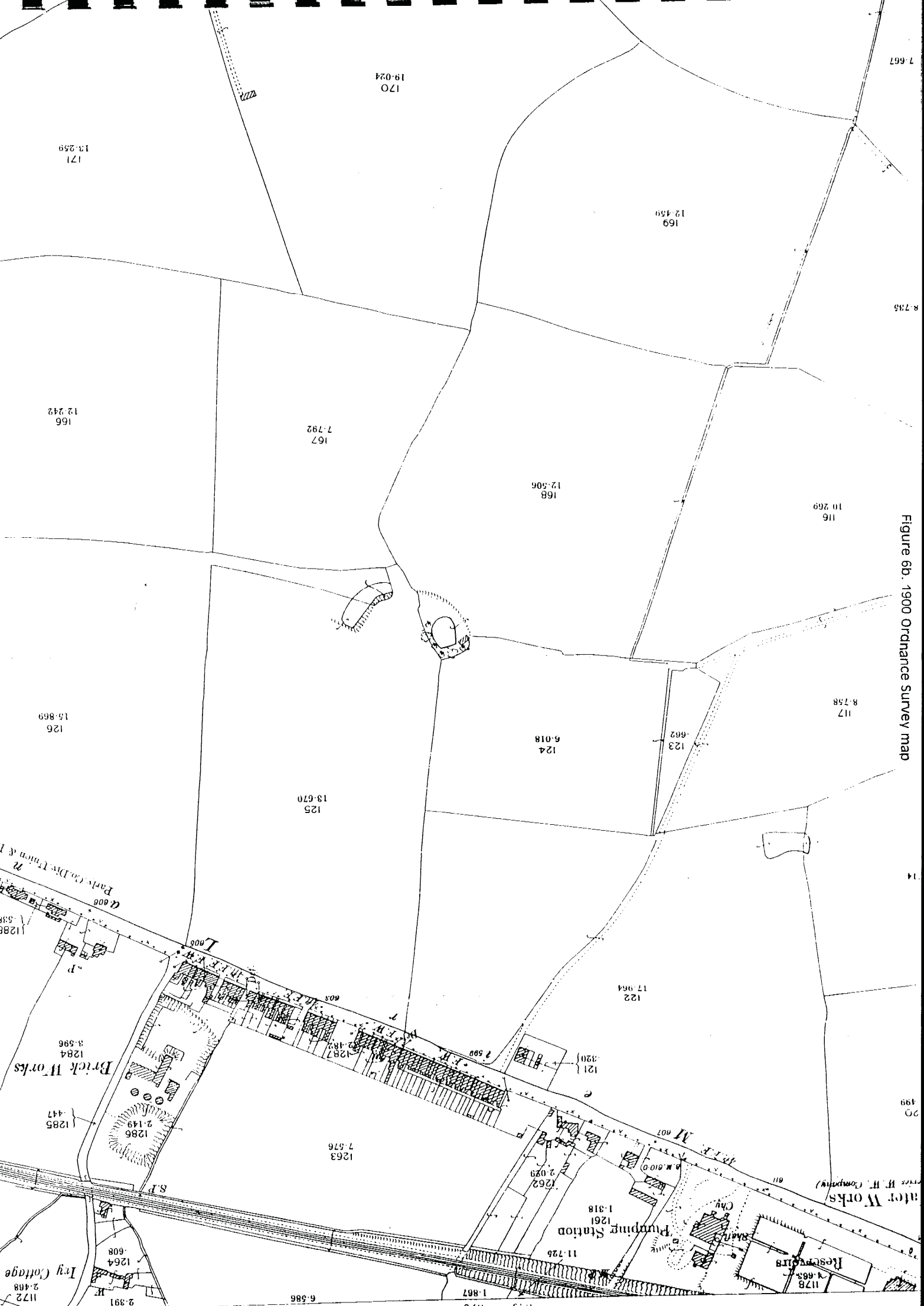


Figure 6b. 1900 Ordnance Survey map

### **3.0 Conclusions**

**3.1** The Roman road is of great importance to the study of the settlement and occupation of the Romans in Staffordshire and around the Stoke-on-Trent area. Information on their presence has been gained through archaeological evidence such as chance finds, the investigation of the Roman road in Stoke, excavation of the Roman pottery kiln at Trent Vale and investigations into the Roman settlement at Chesterton. However, despite this information, the nature of the Roman's presence in the Stoke-on-Trent area is still little understood, so it is important to add to the evidence at every opportunity. Therefore, although the Roman road may undoubtedly have been damaged by development, this will be the last opportunity to record any surviving remains prior to destruction. Also, despite the knowledge of the route of the Roman road, the possibility of linear development along the road during the Roman period has not yet been investigated and it is important that any evidence of this is also recorded.

**3.2** Although Meir seems to have developed as a settlement in the Medieval Period, it is doubted whether any evidence of this period would have survived due to redevelopment of the area along the road over the last few centuries. Also, chances of evidence for the early industrial development of the city of Stoke-on-Trent is considered low, as the settlement is on the periphery of the six towns and was not developed beyond the main road until the twentieth century, as the map evidence shows.

## **4.0 Specifications**

**4.1** Although the area through which the new road is being built is of archaeological interest, it does not seem necessary for an archaeologist to be seconded to the construction site full-time for the duration of the earthmoving. The archaeological involvement in the road construction should, therefore, take the form of a watching brief, with a suitably qualified archaeologist making regular visits to the site during the bulk earthworks.

### **4.2 General Aims**

The general aim of the watching brief is to allow the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established with sufficient accuracy in advance of ground works. A further aim is to provide an opportunity, if needed, 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 a treatment to a proper standard.

### **4.3 Scope of work and methodology**

Due to the unpredictable nature of the archaeology, it is desired that an archaeologist is available to undertake an intensive watching brief. This requires the archaeologist to be available at all times, although not necessarily present during all groundworks. The archaeologist will need to be available at short notice and is required to make at least daily site visits during early construction and groundwork operations.

An adequate level of recording by scale plans, sections and photography will be undertaken and these records will form part of the site archive. Recording systems must be approved by the City's Field Archaeologist.

**4.4** The requirements of Health and Safety cannot be ignored no matter how imperative the need to record archaeological information; hence health and safety will take priority over archaeological matters. Archaeologists must observe all safe working practices, whether required by their own policies or those of the principle development contractor, and they should ensure that health and safety arrangements are agreed by all relevant parties before commencement of work.

On arrival on site the archaeologist(s) should report to the site manager or other identified representative of the principle contractors or developer, and conform to their arrangements for notification of entering and leaving the site.

An archaeologist should keep a record of the date, time and duration of all visits and the number of staff concerned and any actions taken.

#### **4.5 Monitoring**

All work must be monitored through a liaison between the appointed archaeological organisation and the City Field Archaeologist. Of particular importance in monitoring will be the significance of deposits related to the pottery industry, such as waste tips.

Monitoring costs by the City must be agreed at the outset of the project.

Procedure for signalling unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries:

If the watching archaeologist believes a particularly significant discovery to have occurred, she/he should inform the City Field Archaeologist and site manager who will liaise with the appointed archaeological organisation over the best course of action, including matters related to publicity.

#### **4.6 Post fieldwork methodologies**

All retained artefacts and ecofacts must be cleaned, conserved and packaged in accordance with the requirements of the recipient museum. This is the City of Stoke-on-Trent Museum and Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3DE.

The project archives must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the recipient museum.

All analytical and assessment work must be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced staff.

All staff must be fully aware of the project specification and should fully understand the work required of them. Identification, dating and the significance of post-medieval pottery must be discussed with the appropriate specialists at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.

The results of the watching brief should be disseminated in a reasonable time through the production of a written and illustrated report.

#### **4.7 Report**

The report should contain a non-technical summary, an introduction, the aims and objectives of the project, methodology, results, conclusions, archive deposition and appendices, figures and references as required.

The results should be set out as a series of summary objective statements describing structural data and associated finds. Descriptive material should be clearly separated from interpretative comments. Results should be amplified where necessary by the use of drawings and by supporting data.

The conclusions should sum up and interpret the results and put them into context (local, national or otherwise). It is stressed that accurate conclusions will require a specialist interpretation in terms of the significance to the origins and development of the pottery industry.

#### **4.8 Archives, ownership and deposition**

The requirements for archive deposition must be addressed at the outset of the project. The proposed recipient museum must be contacted at the beginning of the project. Archive deposition must take account of the requirements of the recipient museum.

Ownership of objects rests with the landowner, except where other law overrides this (eg. Treasure Trove, Burials Act 1857). The nominated archaeological organisation must make suitable arrangements with the landowner for the donation and deposition of objects, etc. to the recipient museum.

#### **4.9 Other procedures**

Material copied or cited in reports should be duly acknowledged; and all copyright conditions (such as those for Ordnance Survey maps) observed.

All aspects of publicity must be agreed at the outset of the project between the commissioning body and the archaeological organisation or individual undertaking the project.

All archaeologists undertaking work must respect the sponsor's or client's requirements over confidentiality, but the archaeologist must endeavour to emphasise their professional obligation to make the results of archaeological work available to the wider archaeological community within a reasonable time.

An archaeologist or archaeological organisation undertaking such projects must ensure that they have adequate insurance policies, Public Liability, some relevant form of civil liability or Professional Indemnity.

**4.10 Further information can be obtained from**

W.Klemperer, Field Archaeologist,  
City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW  
Tel: 01782 202173

Ms. C.Sheale, A50 Phase 1B Archaeologist,  
City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW  
Tel: 01782 202173

Tony Bailey, Planning Officer,  
Department of Planning and Architecture,  
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Tel 01782 744241



## 5.0 Acknowledgements

5.1 This report was written by Katey Sheale, of Stoke-on-Trent City Museum Archaeology Unit, under the direction of W.D. Klemperer, City Field Archaeologist.

5.2 Assistance has been provided by Phil Stanton, Highways Agency and Kevin Weir, Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick.

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