



Planning, Transport
and Environment

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County Exeter	
OS Reference S429	
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**AXMINSTER BYPASS 1990
TRIAL EXCAVATIONS AT
JACKLEIGH COTTAGES, WYKE LANE**

by

S.J. Simpson

Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit

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INTRODUCTION

Trial excavations were undertaken at Jackleigh Cottages (SY29769695) in January 1990 to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site in advance of the construction of the A35 Axminster Bypass, scheduled to begin in Summer 1990. Excavation of the site was recommended in an assessment of the effects of construction on possible archaeological sites (Weddell 1989), based on previous documentary research (Weddell and Holbrook 1987). The position of Jackleigh Cottages, the road alignments and documentary references suggested that the site might have medieval or possibly Roman origins.

1. THE SITE

An enclosed area of approximately 650 square metres was investigated. It lies adjacent to Wyke Lane (Fig. 1), a narrow country lane leading from the Musbury road south of Axminster to the small hamlet of Wyke Green. The name Wyke is derived from *vicus*, later the Anglo-Saxon *wic*, indicating a small settlement.

The course of Wyke Lane, thought to be of some antiquity, appears to curve and divert around the site. A sharp right-angle to the south of the site also suggests the former presence of buildings which necessitated a diversion of the route.

Another routeway, of potentially Roman origin, is suggested by a straight pathway leading from Woodbury Lane along the eastern side of Woodbury Farm to Abbey Gate Lane (Fig. 3). This pathway is on the same alignment as the Roman fort at Woodbury Farm and crosses Wyke Lane in front of Jackleigh Cottages. Wyke Lane follows the Roman alignment for a short way.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jackleigh Cottages were once part of the tenement of Week Chapel, which held a substantial amount of land during the 16th century. Week Chapel itself lay within the Domesday manor of Wyke. Although its early history is not clear, the site of Week Chapel may represent the original manorial focus with its demesne and (as the name and 14th-century documents suggest) chapel. Documentary research based on field- and personal-name evidence, suggested that Jackleigh was centred on the Week Chapel site and was likely to produce archaeological evidence of medieval or earlier date. Wyke Manor was dismembered from the late medieval period onwards, at which time Higher Wyke Farm may have become the major dwelling site. The later history of Jackleigh Cottages is associated with the adjacent Jackleigh Farm. Two cottages existed on the site by the early 19th century, then called Higher Jackleigh (Weddell and Holbrook 1987).

3. THE EXCAVATIONS

Excavations were undertaken to assess whether Jackleigh Cottages lay on the site of the manor house of Week Chapel, or the chapel itself, and whether there were any Roman remains associated with the straight pathway alignment.

The site of Jackleigh Cottages and gardens was available for early examination. A small excavating machine was used to clear undergrowth, and subsequently to excavate trenches across the former garden area of the cottages, removing garden soil to a depth of 0.24-0.40m down to a subsoil of pale yellow clay with gravels. An area of 49 square metres was opened to the north of the cottages. To the east, a strip of land over 28m long and between 2.20-3.40m wide was excavated. A trench 11m long and a minimum of 1.60m wide, was then excavated adjacent to the eastern boundary. Three trenches, a maximum of 4m long, were cut running west at right angles to the larger trench. Only unstratified finds from the 19th century and features caused by garden activity were revealed.

The cottages, abandoned approximately 20 years ago, were constructed of local stone and probably dated to the early 19th century. Now standing to a maximum height of 1.58m they were infilled with stone debris from the upper part of the building, and were not excavated although a plan was made and the remains photographed.

4. THE WATCHING BRIEF

The area of Jackleigh Cottages was monitored during road construction and inspected after topsoil stripping. No additional features of archaeological significance were observed.

5. THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive will be deposited in RAM Museum for permanent storage under the project number 418. Contents:

Site context sheets	3
A4 site plan sheets	6
Photographs:	
Colour transparencies	25; Nos 418/19-41, 113-14
B/W contact sheets	3; Films 1671/24-36; 1678/2-17; 1772/4-5
& negatives	(31)
Colour prints	3; Film 2097/31-3

Context descriptions

- 501 Topsoil: garden soil. Dark brown loam. D = 0.24-0.40m.
- 502 Subsoil: yellow clay with flints.
- 503 Fabric of cottages, largely local chert or flint, occasional blocks of greensand(?), occasional brick both modern sized 19th-century bricks and occasional small bricks; bonded with buff sandy lime mortar.

The finds

- Context 501 Three sherds of pottery (total weight: 40gms), 1 sherd Bristol stoneware (after 1830 AD), 1 rim sherd of a transfer-printed dish/plate (after 1780

AD) and 1 sherd of Chinese porcelain (mid-late 18th century).

Context 503 One nearly-complete hand-made brick (of ?local manufacture), post-medieval (not closely datable). Weight: 770gms.

CONCLUSIONS

The trial excavations quickly demonstrated that Jackleigh Cottages did not lie directly on a site occupied before the post-medieval period, and that the Bypass was unlikely to affect the ancient site of the manor house and chapel of Week (Wyke). This result leaves the question of the location of the manor house and chapel open. Mr F.H. Chappel of Higher Wyke Farm reported at the time of the excavations that he found stone and pottery in a field lying to the south of Jackleigh Cottages at SY29709670. This might indicate the site of the ancient manor house.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This excavation was carried out by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit for the Department of Transport. Funding for fieldwork and the preparation of the research archive and reports was provided by English Heritage. We are grateful to the landowner, Mr F.H. Chappel for his assistance. The project was supervised by S.J. Simpson and administered by C.G. Henderson. The watching brief was undertaken by A. Stead. Drawings are by R. Parker. The finds were processed by G. Langman.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oliver, G.H. 1840 *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Devon*. Vol. 1.

Weddell, P.J. 1989 *A35 Axminster Bypass: Proposals for Archaeological Recording*
EMAFU Report No. 89.12.

----- and Holbrook, N. 1987 *Report on Trial Excavations and Documentary Research*
EMAFU report No. 87.06

Project Numbers

- 1000 Fortress Plan
- 1001 Roman & Medieval Exeter : plans
- 1002 Administrative maps and plans
- 1003 Exeter : general cartographic
- 1004 O.S. 1:500 plans
- 1005 Chamber Map Book plans
- 1006 Parishes/Suburbs cartographic
- 1007 Exeter Tithe Maps
- 1008 Devon Tithe Maps
- 1009 Reconstruction Drawings
- 1010 Miscellaneous Architectural
- 1011 Exhibition Material
- 1012 Plymouth. Cartographic & Documentary

Publications

- 1100 E.A.R. Vol I (P.T.B.) 1979
- 1101 E.R.F.T. 1980
- 1102 E.A.R. Vol III (JA) 1984
- 1103 E.A.R. Vol IV pottery illustrations
- 1104 Bath house plans (P.T.B. Thesis)
- 1105 JA Misc. publications/pottery illustrations
- 1106 D.A.S. General
- 1107 Devon Archaeology I 1983
- 1108 " " II 1984
- 1109 " " III 1985
- 1110 " " IV 198?
- 1111 Webster: Fortress into City
- 1112 Bath-house leaflet
- 1113 Limes Publication
- 1114 DAS exhibiton & other misc prints
- 1115 Devon Archaeology IV
- 1116 E.A.R. Fortress Project

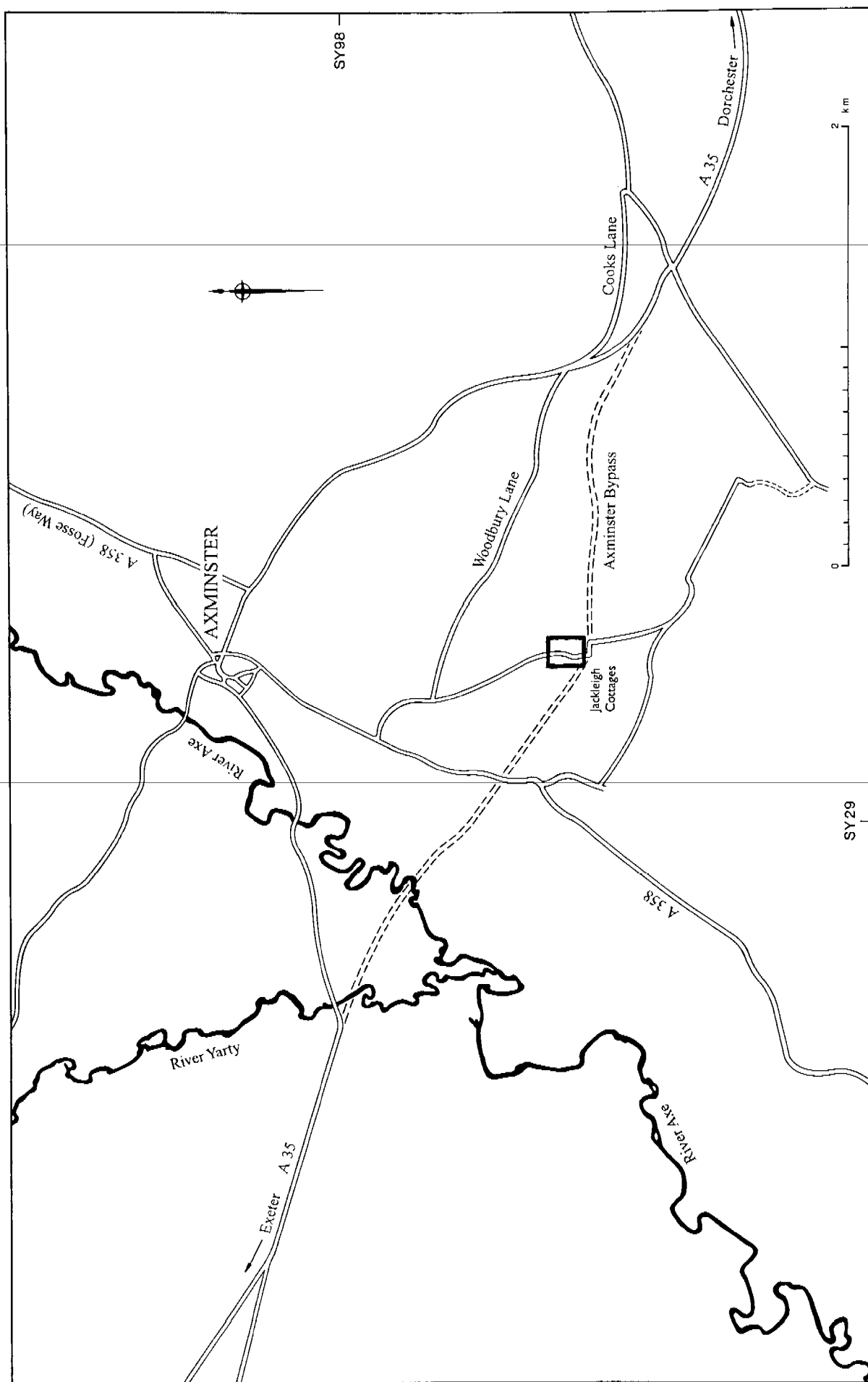


Fig. 1 Location of site.

AXMINSTER: JACKLEIGH COTTAGES 1990

Location of Trenches

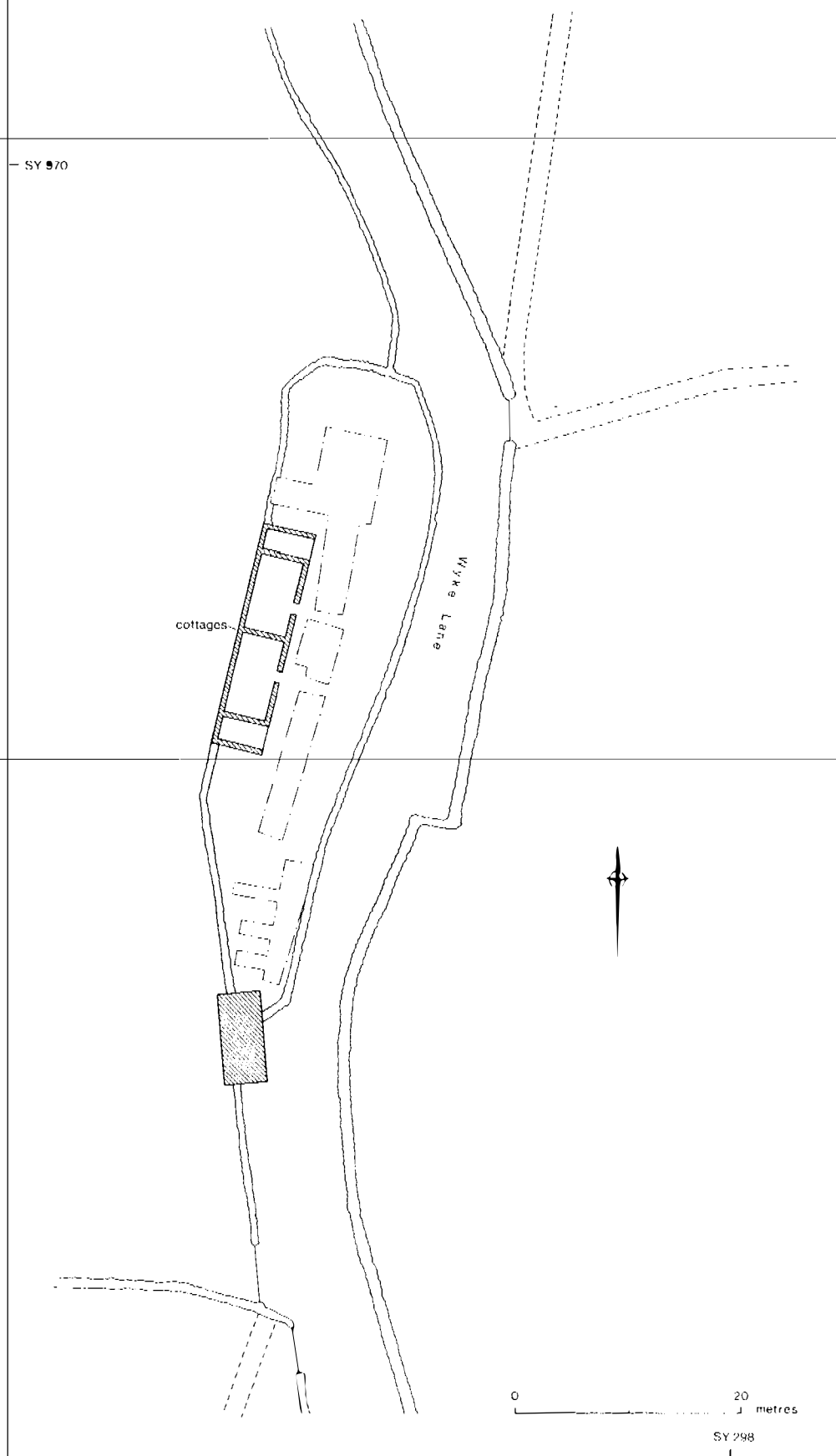


Fig. 2 Location of trenches.

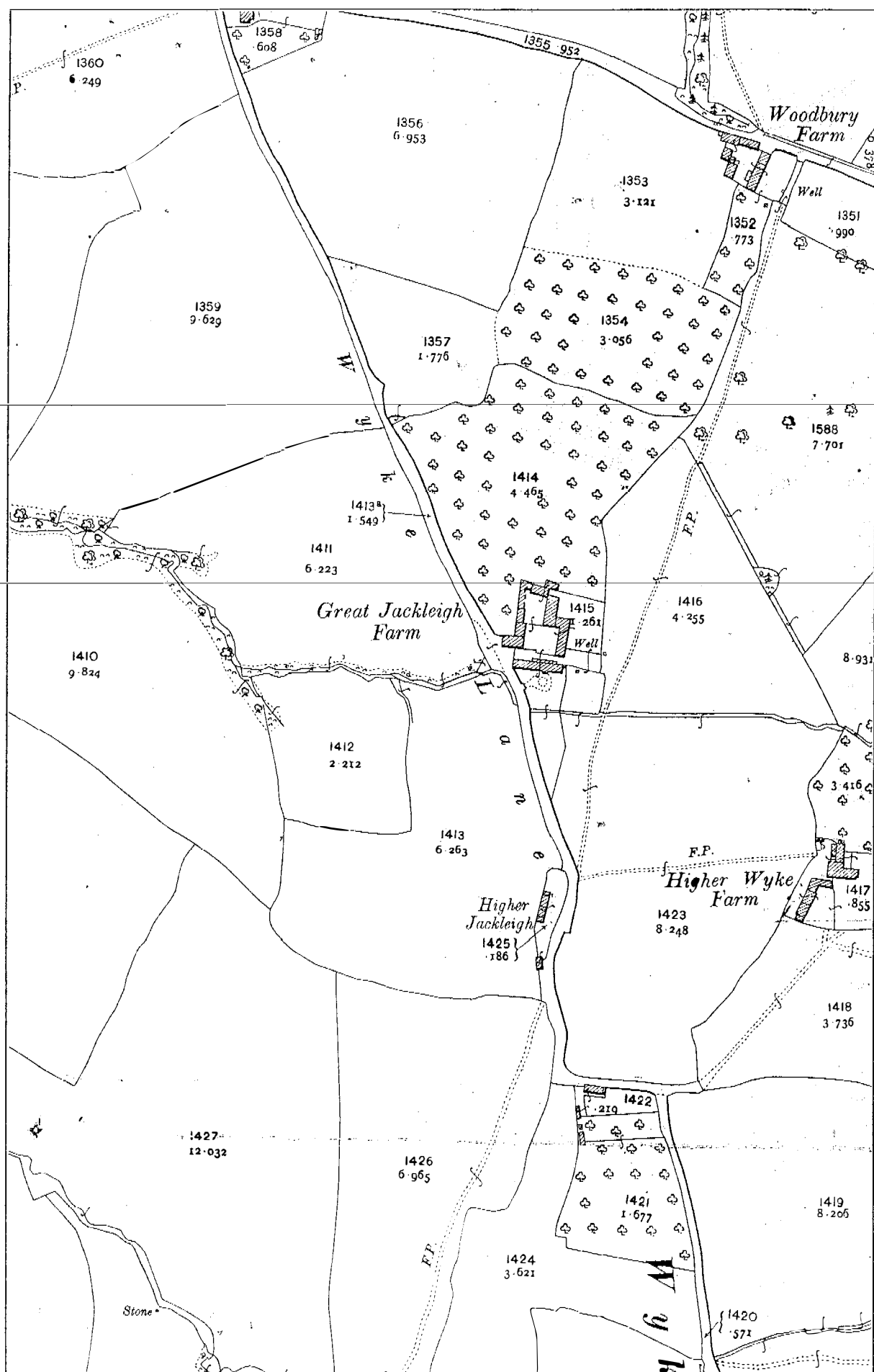


Fig. 3 1904 OS map showing straight pathway on Roman alignment leading from Woodbury Farm to Abbey Gate Lane.



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