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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## **Nettleton Moor**

**Land adjoining A46 Caistor - Lincoln Road**

**NGR: TF 095 990**

**LCNCC Museum Accn. No: 133.97**

**Site code: NM 97**

## **Archaeological Desktop Assessment**

**Report prepared for**

**EcoSurveys Ltd**

**LAS Report No. 462**

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### **Summary**

*Prehistoric artefacts have been found in the vicinity of the application site and Romano-British pottery has been found 100m to the east. No archaeological finds have been reported from the application area itself and site conditions are not ideal for archaeological evaluation.*

### **Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by EcoSurveys Ltd in June 1997 to prepare a desk-based assessment centred on a plot of land, 26ha in extent, west of the A46 Trunk Road at Nettleton Moor, Lincs (Figs. 1 and 2; Pl. 1). There is a proposal to site caravans within the area, serviced by facilities which may cause ground disturbance. The application area lies within Nettleton parish, about 80m south of Holton-le-Moor parish.

### **Method**

Research for this assessment was conducted by Naomi Field and Geoff Tann between 12th June and 16th June 1997 and included:

- Searches of SMR information held by Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record
- Searches of documentary and cartographic archives held at the Lincolnshire Archives Office
- Examination of published sources held by Lincoln Central Library local studies collection
- Consultation of the national air photograph libraries maintained at Cambridge and Swindon
- Inspection of part of the site from a walk-over visit on 16th June 1997.

### **Topography and Geology**

The underlying geology at Nettleton is rock of the Mercian mudstone group, above Sherwood sandstones. Ironstone was mined at Nettleton Top between 1929 and 1969 (Wright 1993, 114).

The application area is flat land at the base of the Wolds scarp, at a height of about 37m OD (Nettleton Top is at 130m OD). The surface geology is wind-blown sand, which has been quarried extensively on Nettleton Moor and Nettleton Hill.



## Archaeological and Historical Background (Fig. 2)

In Nettleton parish, archaeological material from the Mesolithic (c. 8000 BC), Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods has been reported, in addition to later finds and three deserted medieval settlement sites. The situation of the parish extending from the high ground to the foot of the Wolds scarp, on light soils and with a stream, seems to have favoured occupation and the adjacent Caistor High Street, a prehistoric and Roman route across the Wolds, made access to upland and coastal salt producing areas possible. Roman pottery kilns at Nettleton would have been well positioned to exploit this trade as well as the nearby small Roman town of Caistor.

250m SE of the application area, a Neolithic polished stone axe (Group VI from Great Langdale) was found in 1975 (SMR 50207). Other flints have been reported from the vicinity although few details are available (SMR 50206). The RCHM(E) record undated cropmarks, possibly prehistoric, at the same location (SMR 51574).

Romano-British pottery, 3rd and 4th century in date, was recovered in April 1952 after the field east of Brackenfield was ploughed (SMR 50130). The extent of this scatter is not known. At Stope Hill Farm, 0.7km to the SE of the application area, Romano-British pottery has been found, apparently associated with cropmarks of small square fields and a NE-SW aligned trackway (SMR 50887, 50888, 50904).

The present village at Nettleton is based around the church (St. John the Baptist), but other medieval settlements of Draycote (TA 101 003), Hardwick (TF 121 983) and Wykeham (TF 120 973) are known to have existed within the parish (Everson 1993, 91). Earlier settlement is reflected by the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in about 1855, which produced skeletons, a hanging-bowl, beads and a spearhead (Leahy 1993, 41) and the 6th century settlement found at Nettleton Top (Field and Leahy 1993).

At the time of the 1086 Domesday Survey, land in the estate of Nettleton [Neteltone] in Yarborough wapentake was held by 5 individuals: the Bishop of Bayeux (with 2 mills), Roger of Poitou (also with 2 mills), Erneis de Burun (1 mill), Durand Malet (3 mills and a church), and Leueua (with another mill). No woodland is mentioned in the entries (Foster and Longley 1924).

Before enclosure, the application area lay within Nettleton Common Moor, a 690 acre (276ha) field, which extended west of the Rasen road to the South Kelsey parish boundary. Early enclosure appears to have been restricted to the present village site, with some enclosed plots beside Nettleton Beck west of the village. In advance of the 1791-5 enclosure process Lord Eardley prepared a survey, but the Commissioners commissioned a second survey as lesser landowners contested the privately produced version. The enclosure plan and award show that



all the area of the present application area was held by Lord Eardley after Enclosure (Russell and Russell 1987, 113-118).

When the 1st edition OS 1" [1:63,360] map was published in 1824, the application area was marked as open ground within three fields. A later electrotpe revision which includes the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, with a branch-line crossing Holton le Moor shows the same features on the application area but as this version may only contain major revisions its reliability is uncertain (Fig. 3; OS 1862).

Some development had occurred by 1885: Long Wood is marked on the First Edition 6" map , with a central curving track leading from premises labelled 'Crankmires'; a straight track leads along the northern edge of those premises, and two small buildings are marked in enclosures on the northern side of the track (Fig. 4; OS 1892). A W, signifying a well, is marked at that point on the Second Edition 6" map, by which date 'Crankmires' had become 'Home Farm' (Fig. 5; OS 1907).

Ordnance Survey maps show a building on the site of the present dwelling 'Brackenfield' since at least 1885 (OS 1892). The house was then known as 'Crankmires', which seems to have derived from the descriptive elements for boggy land and the bird species crane (cranuc, cronuc: OE a crane) (Smith 1956, 111). Although most of the woodland now appears fairly dry, a markedly wet area north of the track occupies the site of a pond.

By 1905 the place-name had changed to 'Home Farm' which it remained until losing its status as a farmhouse (OS 1906). 'Brackenfield' is marked on the 1984 map (OS 1984).

No MOD defensive features were identified from the assessment or from the site visit despite the site's position beside a major road between Grimsby and Lincoln.

### **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the application area or within its vicinity. The designation of Long Wood by West Lindsey District Council as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) is not associated with any archaeological interest.

### **Air Photographic coverage**

An oblique view of the northern part of the application area, taken in July 1976, is held in the LAS collection of air photographs (Pl. 1). The photograph shows rough scrub and grass occupying most of a field behind dwellings and commercial premises fronting onto the A46. The field is crossed by numerous vehicle paths, some leading to a large building. There is a density of vehicles close to that building, although lone and small groups of vehicles are visible on most



of the field. To the north of the field is grassland containing a triangular plot of mature trees and an embanked water-filled former sand quarry; these features lie beyond the application area.

The index of air photographs in the collection held by the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography (CUCAP) was consulted. Archaeological sites identified from the collection maintained by the National Monuments Record at Swindon have been sketch plotted at 1:10,000 scale by the RCHM(E) Lincolnshire Mapping Project and these plots were examined at the Lincolnshire SMR. There are no recorded features within the application area.

### **Site Visit**

The application area consists of oak and birch woodland (with open areas of bracken), rough gorse scrub, the premises of Arctic Trailers (with land to the rear containing scrap vehicles) and a NW-SE track. Existing garage premises and adjoining properties fronting the A46 are not within the application area.

The wood contains clearings over which thick bracken has established itself, and little of the ground surface remains visible (Pl. 2). Shallow ditches sub-divide the wood but the course of these could not be followed. Where paths have formed through the undergrowth, an uneven ground surface can be seen. In places this appeared similar to very slight ridge and furrow, aligned west-east, but it was not extensive enough to establish whether it represents a formerly cultivated field. It possibly reflects land preparation processes for the plantation. The woodland has no major enclosing bank and is not apparently on the site of medieval woodland. Identified common species were oak and birch, with infrequent ash; a honeysuckle shrub was seen.

The northern edge of the wooded area is delineated by an unmetalled track, about 4.5m wide with small ditches on either side (Pl. 3). To the north of this track, immediately beyond the application area and within the grounds maintained by The Woodland Trust is a mostly backfilled small pond which may have extended by 5m into the application area.

North of the track, most of the plot is open rough ground with patches of gorse (Pls. 4-6). This land has been used for vehicle dismantling, vehicle circuits and rubble and soil tipping. Two small clusters of 20th century bricks were seen but these did not seem to be the remains of a demolished structure. Soil heaps line part of the western hedge boundary. The west-east sub-division (partly hedged) has a substantial bank (with a concrete vehicle-loading ramp) which may have been altered fairly recently. A lesser parallel ditch was seen about 10m to the north.

Closer to the frontage with the A46 is a substantial brick building; to the north of this is open woodland (Pl. 7). The workshop premises of Arctic Trailers are aligned parallel to the A46, with small rear extensions including a diesel tank (Pl. 8). Overhead electricity supply cables lead from these premises to the rear of the adjacent petrol filling station and garage.



## **Discussion**

Current and recent land use may have adversely affected the survival of any archaeological features which may have existed on the site, although artefact survival is less likely to have been affected.

Prehistoric activity on the sandy soils in the vicinity seems to have been widespread, with Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts recorded from nearby and it is unlikely that the application area is completely devoid of prehistoric archaeological remains.

No archaeological finds have been reported from the application area itself although Romano-British pottery was found after ploughing the field east of the A46 in 1952 (SMR 50130). Roman remains may extend into the application area.

Rabbit burrowing in the sandy soil was observed during the site visit, especially on the northern side of the area. In places this may have destroyed any archaeological deposits, but no archaeological remains were seen in the disturbed soil by the burrow entrances. Vehicle ruts will have damaged upper deposits west of the Arctic Trailers buildings.

The planting of Long Wood at some time after 1818, but before 1885, will have resulted in tree root disturbance to any deposits present, even in areas which are clear at present. There may also be additional disturbance caused by throw-holes from uprooted trees.

Spillage of fuel, especially diesel, from the scrap vehicles stored on part of the application area may have caused soil contamination. This would affect any archaeological evaluation. Broken glass is also present across large expanses of the open ground.

## **Impact of Proposed Development on Archaeological Remains**

It is assumed that proposals for development as a caravan park would entail some clearance of existing buildings, ground cover and debris from the site. Groundworks connected with the construction of new buildings and provision of services will result in below-ground disturbance on parts of the site. The extent of this disturbance will not be clear until full proposals are presented.

## **Archaeological Mitigation**

The archaeological potential of the site is unclear on available information. It is possible that further evaluation of the site may be required prior to determination of any planning application.

There are three main techniques which are regularly used for archaeological evaluation:

fieldwalking, geophysical survey and evaluation trenches



### **Fieldwalking**

Fieldwalking is normally carried out on land which has been recently ploughed or sown, to retrieve artefacts such as worked flint or pottery whose spatial distribution can indicate zones of occupation beneath the ground surface. This kind of survey can only be carried out on recently ploughed land or where crops are not well advanced and is not appropriate for the ground conditions of the site in question.

### **Geophysical Survey**

It is possible to define areas of human activity by means of magnetic survey, Topsoil is normally more magnetic than the subsoil or bedrock from which it is derived. Human activity (e.g. use of fires, deposition of rubbish etc) further enhances the magnetic properties of soils locally and further enhances the contrast with the geological background.

Whilst results will vary according to the local geology and soils, under favourable conditions areas of suspected human activity can be accurately located. This allows them to be targeted for further investigation, for example by means of machine-excavated trenches. Magnetic survey has the added advantages of enabling large areas to be assessed relatively quickly and is non-destructive, causing minimum/nil ground disturbance.

Unfortunately, most of the woodland and gorse areas are too dense for geophysical survey and bracken growth in the cleared areas may be too thick. In addition, metal items in the scrapyard area would probably adversely affect instrument readings.

### **Excavation**

It might be possible to evaluate the archaeological potential of parts of the site by means of evaluation trenches. These would have to be confined to the areas outside the woodland. This would help to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains and the degree of disturbance to the proposed development site.

### **Watching Brief**

Monitoring of groundworks by an archaeologist or team of archaeologists, during site clearance and groundworks may be required.

### **Conclusion**

The archaeological potential for the proposed development site is considered to be medium to high in terms of likely exploitation of the land in the prehistoric and Roman periods, with low potential for medieval remains. However, modern land use may have significantly reduced the potential for the survival of undisturbed archaeological remains below ground. The impact of the proposed development is unclear at this stage but it is possible that archaeological evaluation may be required prior to determination of any planning application. Current ground conditions



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- OS 1862 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1" map, Sheet 86 (surveyed 1824, electrotype revision with railways).
- OS 1892 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6" [1:10,560] map, Lincs. Sheet 28NE (surveyed 1885, reprinted 1904).
- OS 1906 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" [1:2,500] map, Lincs. Sheet 37.4 (surveyed 1886, revised 1905).
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## APPENDIX 1

### Gazetteer of Archaeological Remains in the Vicinity of the Application Area

NGR	SMR	Description
<b>Nettleton</b>		
TF 1001 9904	50130	Romano-British pottery, 1952
TF 099 999	50206	prehistoric flints
TF 099 988	50207	Neolithic polished stone axe, 1975
TA 1004 0012	50218	Bronze Age flints, 1943
TF 0992 9880	51574	?prehistoric cropmark enclosure
<b>Holton-le-Moor</b>		
TF 096 980	50887	cropmarks of enclosures and trackways
TF 0965 9815	50888	Romano-British pottery, Stope Hill Farm, 1884
TF 0968 9825	50904	cropmarks of rectangular ditched enclosures

#### Abbreviations:

NGR: National Grid Reference

SMR: Lincs. County Sites and Monuments Record Primary Record No.





Fig. 1 Location of proposed development site, Nettleton. Based on the O.S. 1: 50,000 map. Crown copyright ©, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL50424A







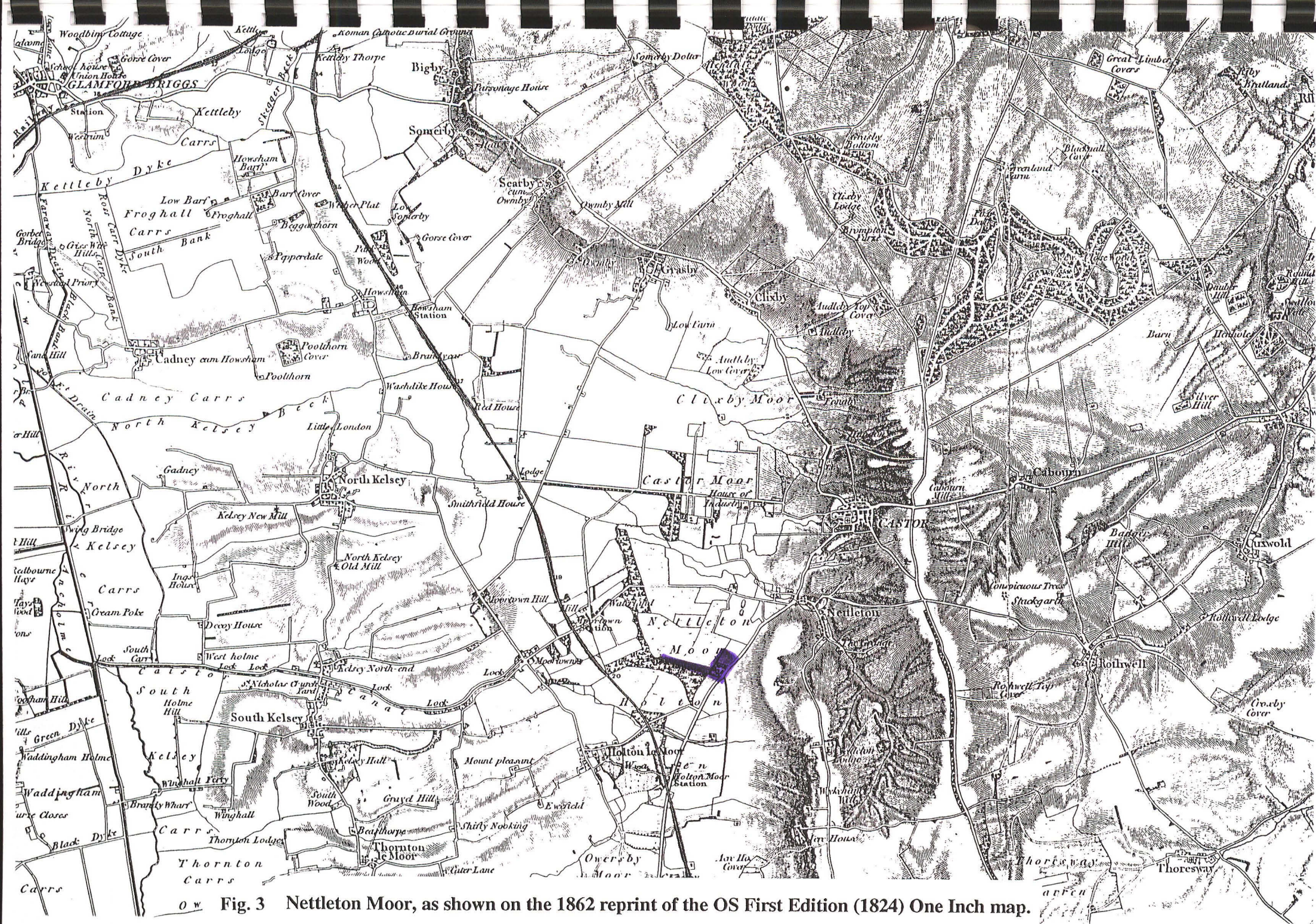
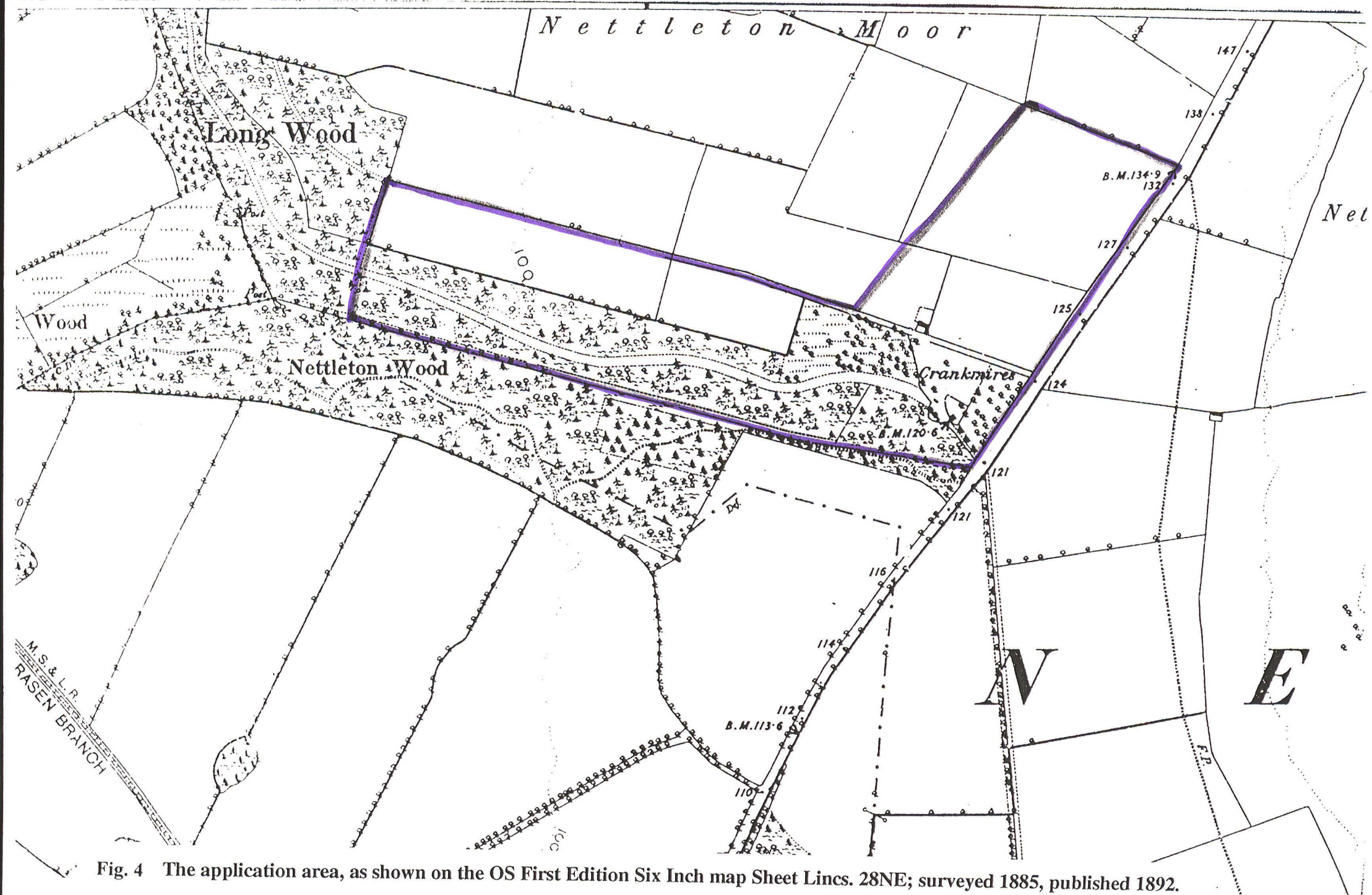


Fig. 3 Nettleton Moor, as shown on the 1862 reprint of the OS First Edition (1824) One Inch map.







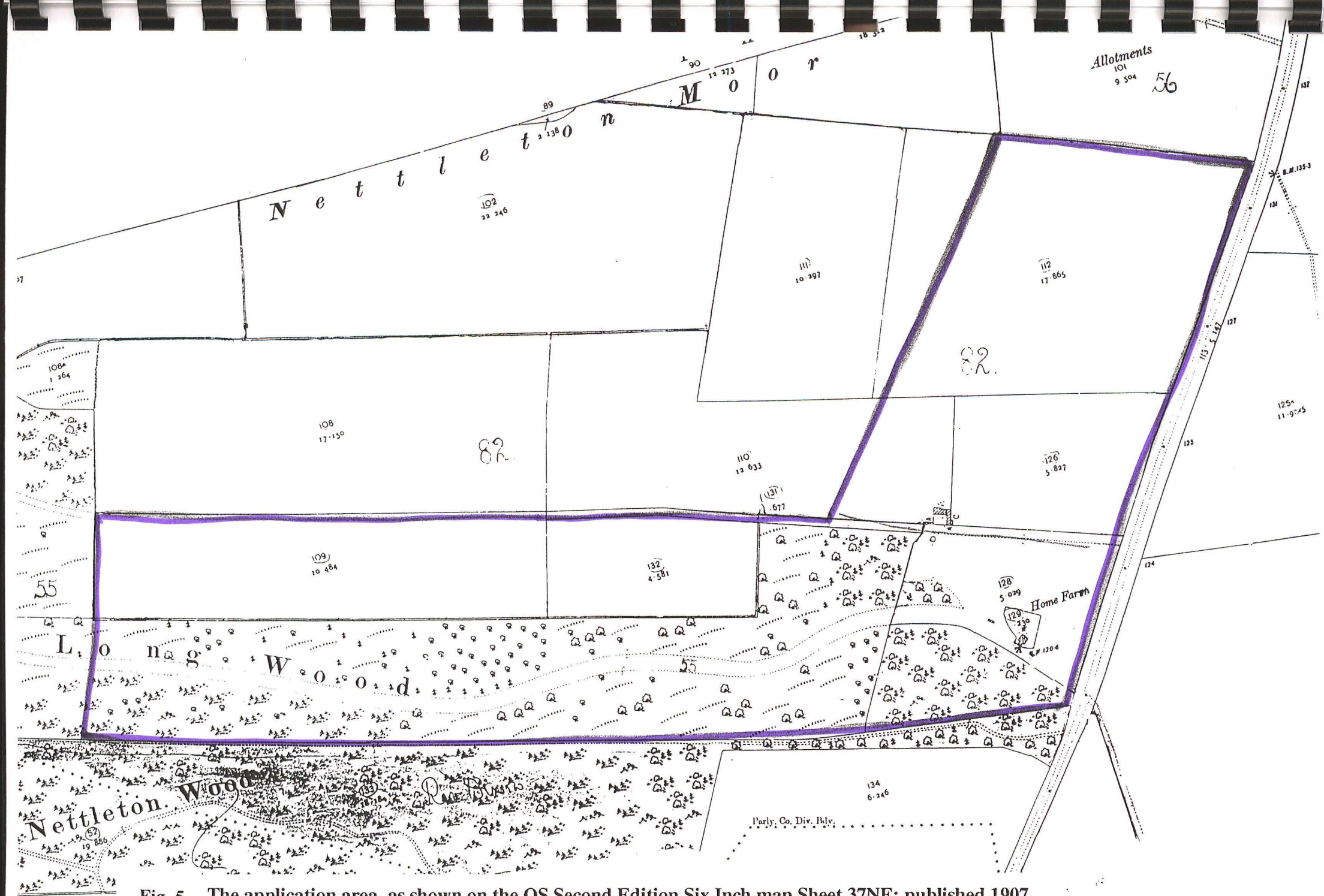
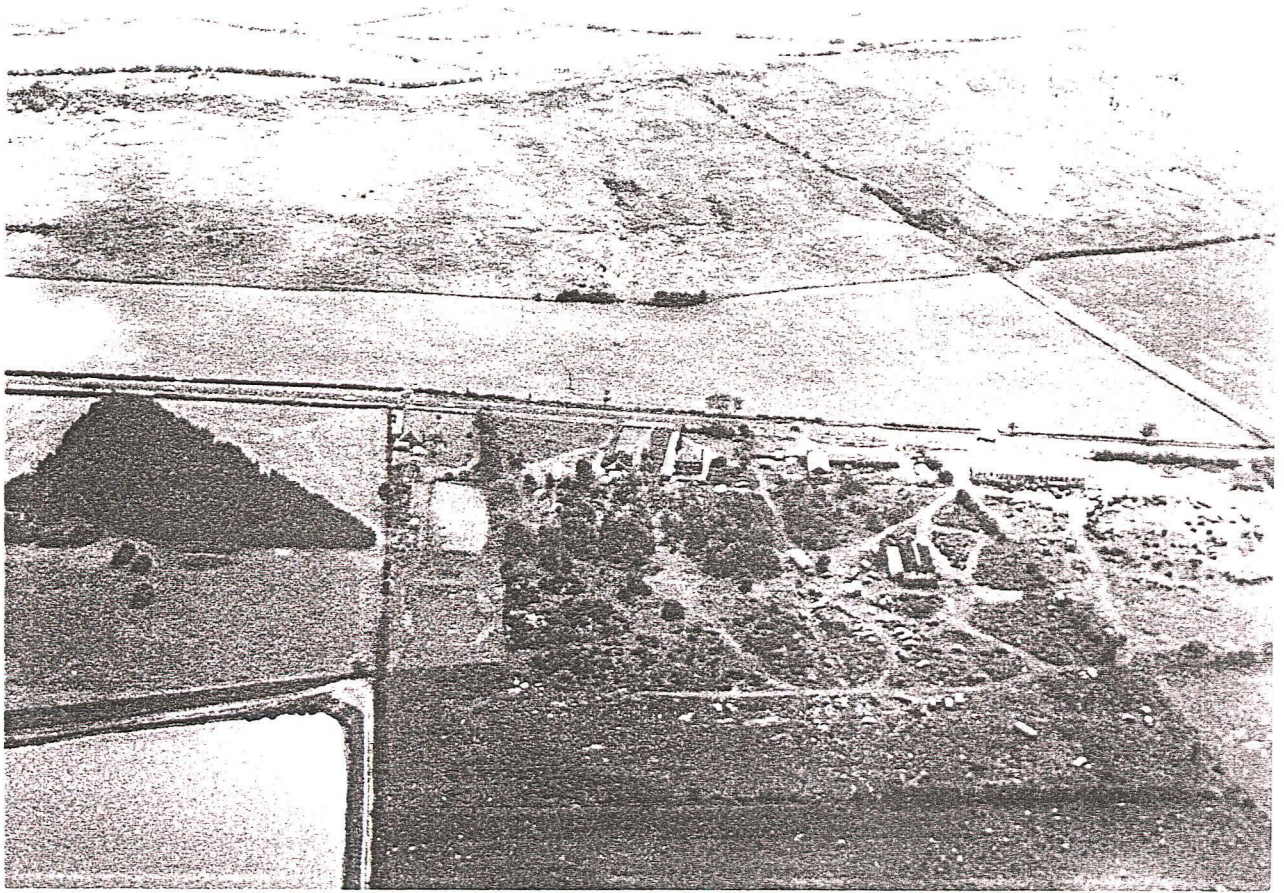


Fig. 5 The application area, as shown on the OS Second Edition Six Inch map Sheet 37NE; published 1907.





Pl. 1 Air photograph showing part of the application area. Looking east (2920/21; 24/7/1976 PE; copyright reserved).

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Pl. 2 Bracken-covered clearings within Nettleton Wood (looking SW).

Pl. 3 Track to the north of Nettleton Wood (looking east towards the A46).







Pl. 4 Rough ground and scrap vehicles to the rear of the Artic Trailer building (looking east).

Pl. 5 Gorse and scrubland towards the northern side of the application area (looking north).





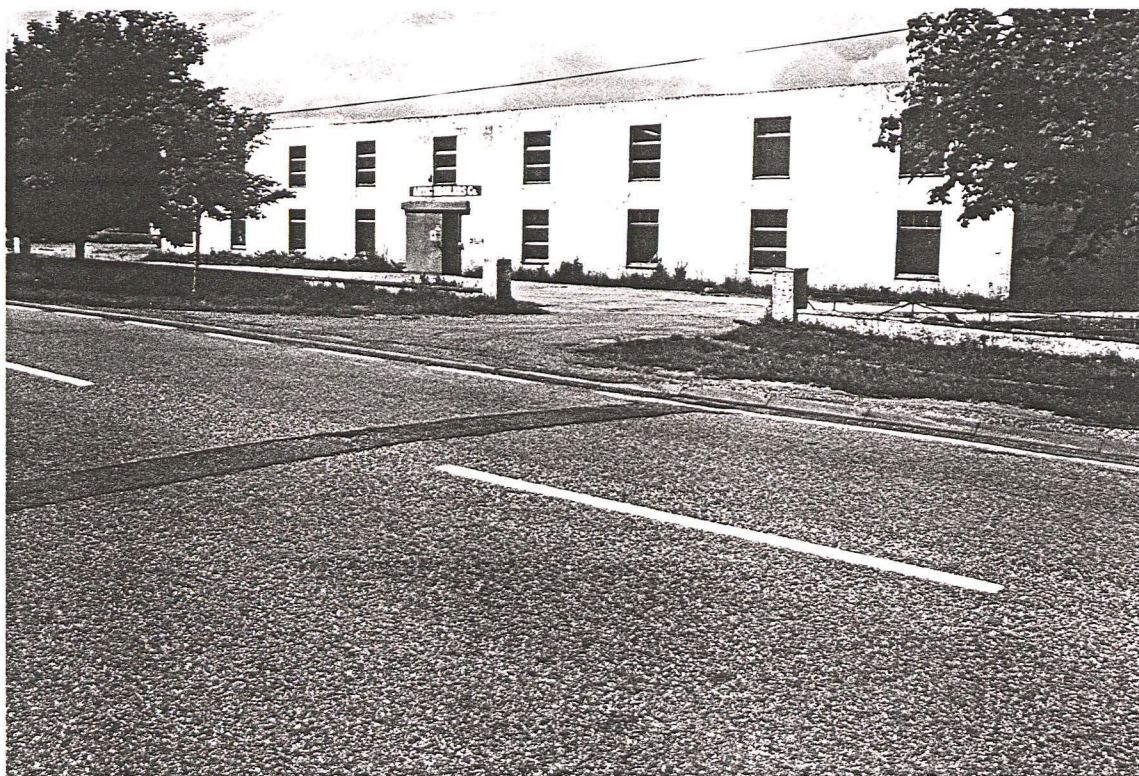


Pl. 6 Bracken, sandy soils and brick rubble (centre foreground) in NW corner of the application area (looking NW).

Pl. 7 Brick building to rear of Artic Trailer building (looking NE).







Pl. 8 Artic Trailers building and A46 frontage of part of the application area (looking west).

Pl. 9 Sand deposits exposed at the entrance to a rabbit burrow, northern edge of application area.

