



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Land off Habberley Road,
Wribbenhall, near
Bewdley, Worcestershire:**

**An archaeological desk-based
assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 697
May 2000

**Land off Habberley Road, Wribbenhall, near Bewdley, Worcestershire: an
archaeological desk-based assessment**

by
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**Land off Habberley Road, Wribbenhall, near Bewdley, Worcestershire an
archaeological desk-based assessment
Site No: WSM 29225**

Summary

A desk based assessment was carried out as a condition of planning permission for David Wilson Homes. The assessment concerned land off Habberley Road in Wribbenhall just to the east of Bewdley in Worcestershire, and examined the available documentary and cartographic evidence in order to identify any areas of potential archaeological interest. Potential earthworks referred to in the Brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council were located during a site visit and were deemed to be of probable low archaeological potential, perhaps early- 20th century in date. However, the possibility remains that they are of an earlier date.

1.0 Introduction

This archaeological assessment has been prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) as a condition of planning permission set by Worcestershire County Council. The site off Habberley Road is being assessed ahead of residential development proposals by David Wilson Homes. This, the first phase of archaeological assessment, comprised desk-top research into the potential of the development area. The assessment adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999), and *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by BUFAU (Appendix 1) and approved by Worcestershire County Council.

2.0 Site Location

The site is located in Wribbenhall to the north-east of Bewdley across the River Severn (NGR SO 79707600; Fig.1). The site, comprising 3.5 hectares, is bounded along its south-eastern edge by Habberley Road and by Trimpley Lane in the north-east. The western and north-western sides are bounded by residential development (Fig.2).

3.0 Objective

The objective of this assessment was to determine, as far as possible, the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains within the proposed development area, and the impact of the proposed works on the site.

4.0 Method

Documentary research was undertaken of primary and secondary records and maps held in Worcestershire County Record Office, Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record, and The University of Birmingham Library.

5.0 Geology and Topography

The centre of Bewdley and the suburb of Wribbenhall both lie on land which slopes gradually down from either side of the River Severn. The underlying geology is Mercian Mudstone. The local soil in Wribbenhall is a well-drained reddish sandy and coarse loamy soil (Buteux, 1996).

6.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

6.1 Historical Context

Although Bewdley is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, Wribbenhall is referred to as Gurbchale, the Norman spelling of Wrbehale, the name by which the village was known in 1215. It is mentioned as a berewick of Kidderminster, the berewick appearing to have covered both sides of the river. The monks of Worcester had a small estate at Wribbenhall, which they claimed had been given to them by King Offa. By 1240 Wribbenhall was known as Wrubenhale. Around AD 1300, the area to the west of the River Severn came into the possession of the house of Mortimer, whose owner named it 'Beaulieu,' from which came the corruption Bewdley. Wribbenhall lies within Kidderminster Foreign and functioned as a suburb of Bewdley from medieval times onward, despite the fact that it was separate from the borough of Bewdley. The only surviving building from the medieval period is a 14th-century hall off the Stourport Road. During medieval times there were probably other buildings and industries along the river and the main route to Kidderminster. However, there is little extant medieval documentary evidence for this area. The original church in Wribbenhall was built in 1701, but this was pulled down after the building of a new church in 1879. In post-medieval times the main industries were tanning, weaving and metalworking, trades which probably took place in the backyards of tenement blocks.

In the 11th century, the Bewdley side of Wribbenhall was given to Worcester Monastery, but the present Wribbenhall remained in the hands of the Crown till Henry II gave it to his cupbearer, Manser de Biset. It then came into the possession of the Bumells and then the Barons of Abergavenny. Lord Foley, of Witley, purchased it from them and it was then passed into the hands of Lord Ward, who became Earl Dudley. In 1901 Wribbenhall was constituted a separate civil parish.

Adjacent to the development site is an area (described as a small hamlet in VCH) known as Catchems End. It is not clear on the various maps where the exact bounds of this area are and the site may or may not lie within the site of Catchems End. Catchems End is said to have been the limit of the sanctuary of Bewdley. In the 15th

century the borough of Bewdley was included in the county of Shropshire, whereas in the 14th century it was usually described as being in Worcestershire. This doubt concerning which county the borough belonged to caused it to be a refuge for fugitives and criminals. Thus the name Catchems End presumably referred to the extent these fugitives could go before being caught.

6.2 Known Archaeological Sites and Finds

All sites referred to in this section lie within a 1000 metre radius of the development site. The SMR numbers and their locations are shown in Fig.3.

Prehistoric

The landscape surrounding the site has produced evidence for activity from the Mesolithic Period. Flints from this period have been found (WSM 15308/9, 15311) north-west of the site near Lightmarsh Farm. Findspot 15308 produced finds of Mesolithic, Roman and Medieval date. Mesolithic flints have also been found at Hoarstone Farm, which is also to the north-west of the site, and at findspot 15300, in the same field as a Roman enclosure.

Roman

Several findspots of Roman pottery have been identified in the surrounding landscape. These were at sites all located to the north and north-west of the site (WSM 15302/5/6/8). Metal-detecting on Crundalls Lane near Hoarstone Farm produced a Roman coin from the time of Constantine (346-354 AD) and an undated ring (WSM 5446). WSM 15300 records the existence of a Roman enclosed settlement and two Roman ovens at Hoarstone Farm.

Saxon

No Saxon sites are recorded in the SMR.

Medieval

Several mounds have been identified in Wribbenhall and its vicinity. Only one of these (WSM 12015), located north-east of Crundalls Farm and north-west of the site, has been dated and this to the medieval period. Other mounds in the area have not been excavated or dated. Two of these (WSM4106/7) lie south-east of Hoarstone Farm, which is situated to the north of the site. WSM 4106 is described in the SMR records as consisting of two small mounds, possibly originally just one, about 20 feet high, the south-western end being revetted by a low wall of cut sandstone blocks. WSM 4107 is described as being small, steep-sided, about 20 feet in height, and situated on a rising outcrop of sandstone. Another undated mound (WSM 4108) lies south-west of Hoarstone Farm and is described as small and oval-shaped and sited on gradually rising natural ground. An outcrop of natural sandstone appears to be vertically-faced on the northern, eastern and southern sides of the mound. The presence of these mounds has led to the speculation that they might belong to a prehistoric barrow cemetery but this has not been proven. Equally, the mounds may be medieval. A mound also lies east of the modern church at Wribbenhall (WSM 12650), which lies south-west of the site.

An early medieval cremation was found between these mound sites (WSM 15302) and has been carbon-dated to the period AD 663-773. This find may lend credence to

the possibility of the nearby mounds being of medieval date rather than prehistoric. Jackson, R.A. (1996) speculated that because the cremation was considered to be pagan, 'possibly contemporary, pagan burial sites may be represented by the undated mounds in the area...'

Finds of medieval pottery have been found in O.S. field no. 0166 (WSM 15308), north-west of the site.

Post-Medieval

Finds from this period have been uncovered in a field lying about 100m from the northern corner of the site (WSM 15305). Other post-medieval finds (WSM 15306, 15308/9) have been found to the north-west, in the same areas as Mesolithic and Roman findspots. Post-medieval fishponds also exist to the south-east of Wribbenhall (WSM 8045). Most of the post-medieval finds probably relate to the manuring of arable land.

7.0 The Site

The site currently consists of a large late-19th-early-20th century house, Warstone House (Plate 1), situated at the northern end, with various outbuildings behind it to the north. No written or documentary evidence was found for the house itself. To the south of the house is garden land belonging to it. The house is built on raised ground and the garden has been terraced off with a brick revetment wall to make level ground for a croquet lawn (Plate 2). The garden is enclosed by a fence which encircles the raised ground in the south and beyond it to the east and south is grass land. This land slopes generally downwards to the south and east. A clump of trees is sited at the north end, just outside the garden enclosure. Six of these trees appear to be encircling a very slight circular mound, which may be some kind of garden feature or may be an earlier earthwork (Plate 3). It is, however, difficult to ascertain whether this is a natural feature which has been deliberately accentuated by the planting of trees or whether it is man-made. The Ordnance Survey maps show the site of this mound as perhaps being enclosed. To the east of the house, south of the driveway up to it, are the just visible remains of a possible field boundary or hollow-way (Plate 4), running from Habberley Road up to the mound on which the house sits. This can also be seen on the aerial photograph of the area and some of the maps (see below). The land along the south-eastern side of the site slopes down quite steeply down to Habberley Road; this slope was likely to have been created when the road was built (Plate 5).

The cottage known as Springhill Farm on the maps still exists (and is currently in occupation) in the extreme north-west section of the site, but all the land that used to belong to it as orchard and garden land to the south is now a residential development. This area seems to have been part of the area known as Catchems End.

8.0 Cartographic Information

A plan of property for sale at Catchems End dated 1848-9 did not show the land north of Habberley Road.

The Tithe map and apportionment from 1851 (Fig. 4) shows the site with a single building in the north-west corner, enclosed by a roughly semi-circular boundary. The site seems to be represented by a similar area and shape to that which it has in the present day. A footpath follows the western boundary of the site. Adjacent to the site at the north-west corner is another large building. The tithe attributes no field number or name to the site, although the field just to the north of it (71) is known as 'The Shepherds Close', and was owned by Jane Crane, occupied by Henry Crane and used as arable land. Fields 72 and 73 were known as 'Near Shepherds Close' and 'Big Paddock' respectively. Near Shepherds Close was also owned by Jane Crane and was arable. Big Paddock was owned by John Nichols, occupied by James Millward and was also arable land.

A map from 1862 shows the District of Wribbenhall but has very little detail and does not show anything on the site.

The 1883 Ordnance Survey map (Fig.5) shows a building in the north-west corner of the site, enclosed within the same boundary line as that on the tithe map of 1851. The house is labelled as 'Springhill House.' The boundary line enclosing the house is marked as an earthwork and there are other small outbuildings, possible gardens and a footpath, laid out around the building. The footpath continues along the western edge of the site. Trees also extend along the western border of the site and the field to the west, adjacent to the site, is labelled as Catchems End; the same building lies in the extreme north-west as that shown on the tithe map, labelled 'Springhill Farm,' and the rest of this field appears to be an orchard. On the eastern side of Habberley Road are houses with narrow strips of land extending back from the road.

A map of 1902 (Fig.6) shows land to be sold at auction. Although the site is just outside the area of land to be sold (which latter includes the site adjacent to it in the west) it shows the site clearly. Springhill House is still in the north-west corner sitting on a raised earthwork, along with four small outbuildings, a footpath and various trees. The footpath curves down off the embankment and runs along the western boundary of the site. Various other trees are dotted about across the rest of the site. The land is shown as belonging to E.W. Barton Esq. The fields to the north, numbered 1117, 1118 and 1119, correspond to fields 73, 71 and 72 respectively on the tithe map and are here all known as Big Paddock. Field 169 is described as 'Ricket's Heath'. The extreme north-west area of the development site, which encompasses Springhill Farm, is shown for sale, along with two immediately-adjacent enclosures, fields 1115 and 1116. These are noted respectively as a House, Homestead, and Garden, and as an Orchard and Garden (Fig.7). The area denoted as Catchems End is here located in the fork of the roads to Stourbridge and Kidderminster, to the east of where the O.S. map had marked it. In the Sale Catalogue, Springhill Farm is referred to as 'Valuable and Improving Property at Catchem's End' with eight enclosures of land (Fig. 8).

The 1903 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 9) shows the house in the north of the site now labelled as Warstone House and a tree-lined driveway running from Habberley Road up to the house. It shows the earthwork that the house sits on and also that the enclosure around the house, although still retaining its original enclosure boundary, has been added to since the 1883 map to include more garden land to the south, much as it appears today. Also, in the area of the possible slight mound just south of the garden enclosure a small oval enclosure is shown, with five trees encircling it on the

2000 Wores. County SIMR Recorded Archaeological Sites in the
Wribbenhall Area

Textual Sources

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Appendix One

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land off Habberley Road, Bewdley, Worcestershire Written Scheme of Investigation WSM 29225

1.0 Introduction

This document comprises a specification for an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site comprising the land off Habberley Road in Bewdley, Worcestershire. It has been prepared in accordance with the Brief provided by Worcestershire County Council on 10th April 2000, and with government advice contained in *DoE Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*. The site is being assessed ahead of development proposals by David Wilson Homes. Four stages of archaeological assessment are proposed. First, SMR and other assessment into the potential of the development area, leading to the production of a desk-based assessment. Secondly, an instrument survey will be undertaken conforming to a level 2 record as defined in '*Recording Archaeological Field Monuments – A Descriptive Specification*' (RCHME 1999). This stage will then progress to a geophysical survey. Stages 3 and 4 will comprise Trial Trenching and the production of a final report. Individual specifications will be prepared for stages 3 and 4 once stages 1 and 2 have been carried out.

2.0 Site Location

The site is located at NGR SO 79707600 off Habberley Road in Bewdley. Habberley Road runs approximately southwest-northeast and the site lies against the northwestern edge of the road, comprising an area of 3.5 hectares. The planning application states that the current land-use on the site is a residential curtilage.

3.0 Archaeological Background

The proposed development site does have some archaeological significance. Earthwork features which may relate to garden or parkland use of the site exist on the site itself. In the landscape surrounding the site, there is evidence for activity from the Mesolithic period to the modern day. Mesolithic flints have been found (WSM 15308/9) and three potential tumuli, none of which has ever been excavated (WSM 4106-3). Finds of Roman pottery (WSM 15302, 15305, 15308) and a coin of Constantine (WSM 5446) have been discovered. Medieval activity is indicated by finds of medieval pottery (WSM 15308) and tile (WSM 15307), plus a cremation carbon-dated to the period AD 663-773 (WSM 15302). Several finds of post-medieval date have also been discovered (WSM 15303, 15305, 15308/9) and may exist within the development site. Where this evidence has been found in the area surrounding the development site, it is still possible that any archaeological sites associated with the finds may continue into or infringe on to the development site itself.

4.0 Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

4.1 Objectives

The objective of the archaeological desk-based assessment is to determine the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains within and around the proposed development site, in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate. The desk-based assessment will identify the need for, and extent of, further archaeological work in advance of the planning application, as proposed for Stages 3 and 4 of the work, and will identify potential requirements for any *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains, or for their recording in advance of, or during, development. The instrument survey will record the earthworks on the site in accordance with the aforementioned RCHME guidelines.

4.2 Method

The desk-based assessment will comprise an examination of all relevant primary and secondary sources, including published and unpublished written records, illustrations and maps. All sources consulted during the assessment will be listed in the report. The assessment will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999). The Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record will be consulted, along with the Worcestershire County Record Office.

5.0 Staffing

The desk-based assessment will be monitored for BUFAU by Iain Ferris (BA, MIFA, Unit Director and Research Fellow) and will be carried out by Sarah Watt (BA, PGDipArchaeol, PIFA).

6.0 Report

The results of the archaeological desk-based assessment will be presented in an illustrated report. Copies of the report will be forwarded to the Worcestershire County Sites and Monuments Record and to the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire County Council.

7.0 Archive

The archive will conform to the guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects and will be deposited with an appropriate repository, approved by the Planning Archaeologist, within a reasonable time of completion.

8.0 Timetable

it is anticipated that the desk-based assessment will commence on April 13th and will be completed by April 28th.

Approximate time breakdown of tasks:

Consultation of primary and secondary sources: 2-5 days

Preparation of report text: 2 days

Production of illustrated report: 1 day

Site Survey: 2-3 days

Site Plan Preparation: 1 day

9.0 General

All project staff will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Code of Conduct* and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, 12th April, 2000.

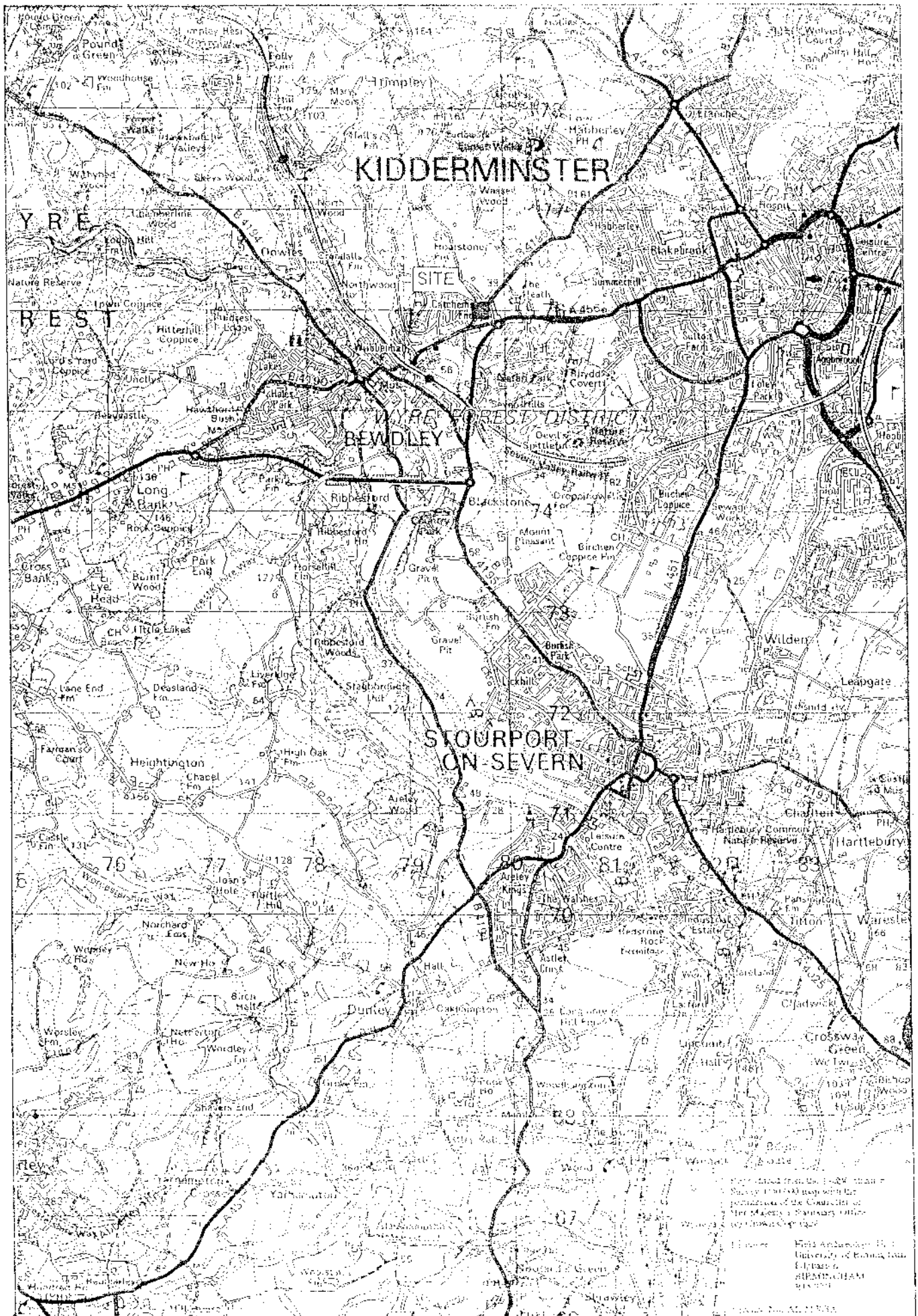


Fig.1

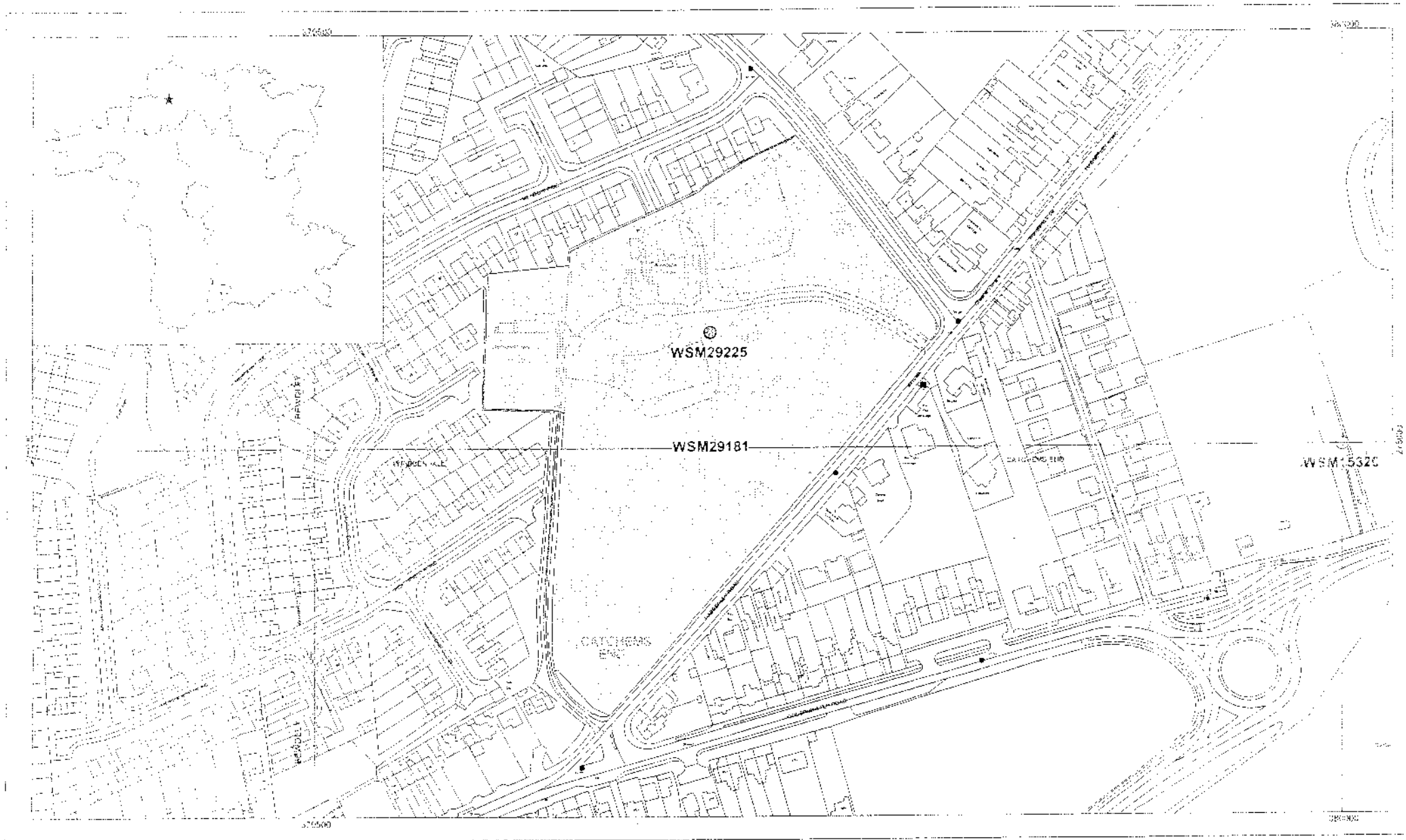


Fig.2

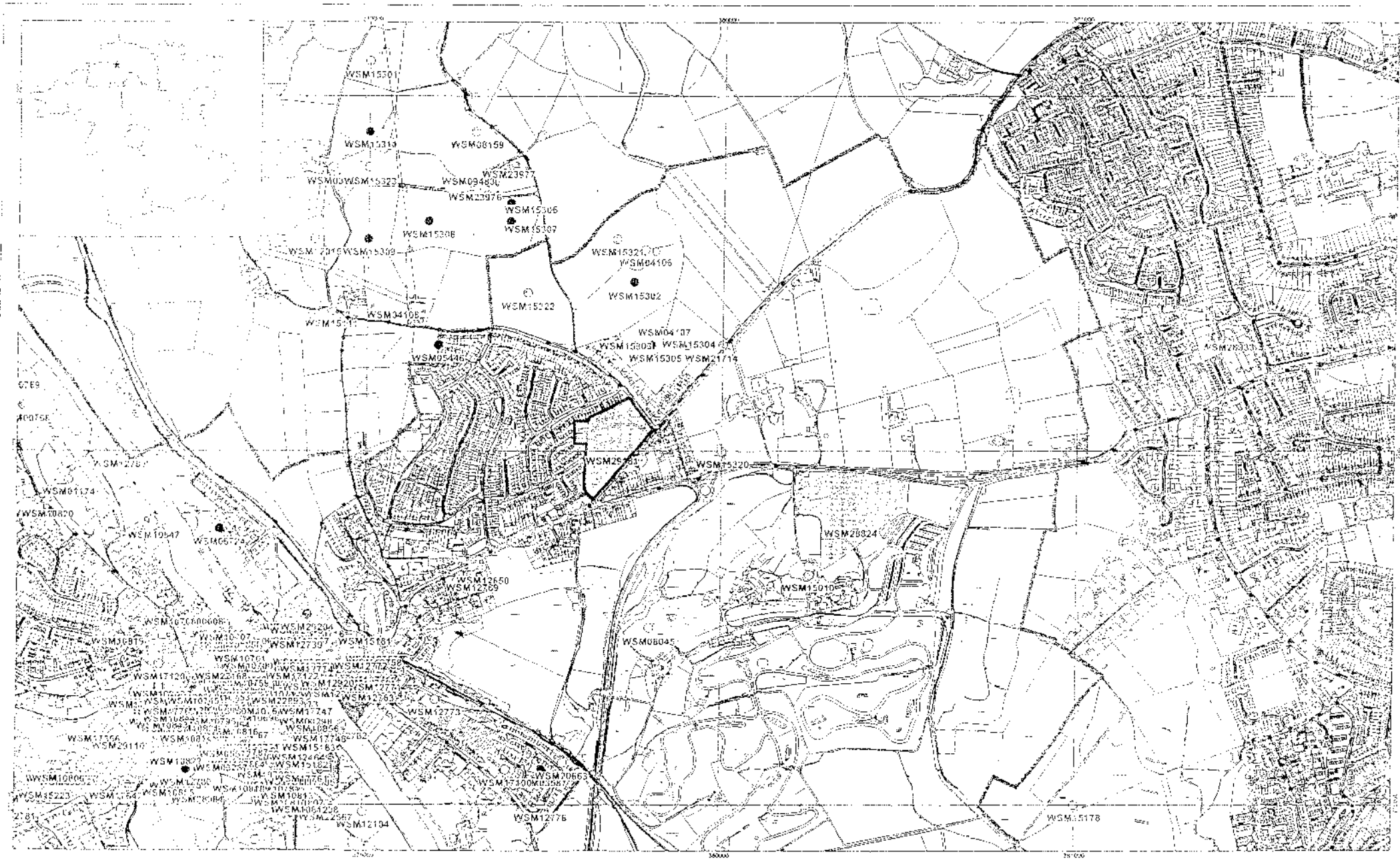


Fig.3



Fig.4

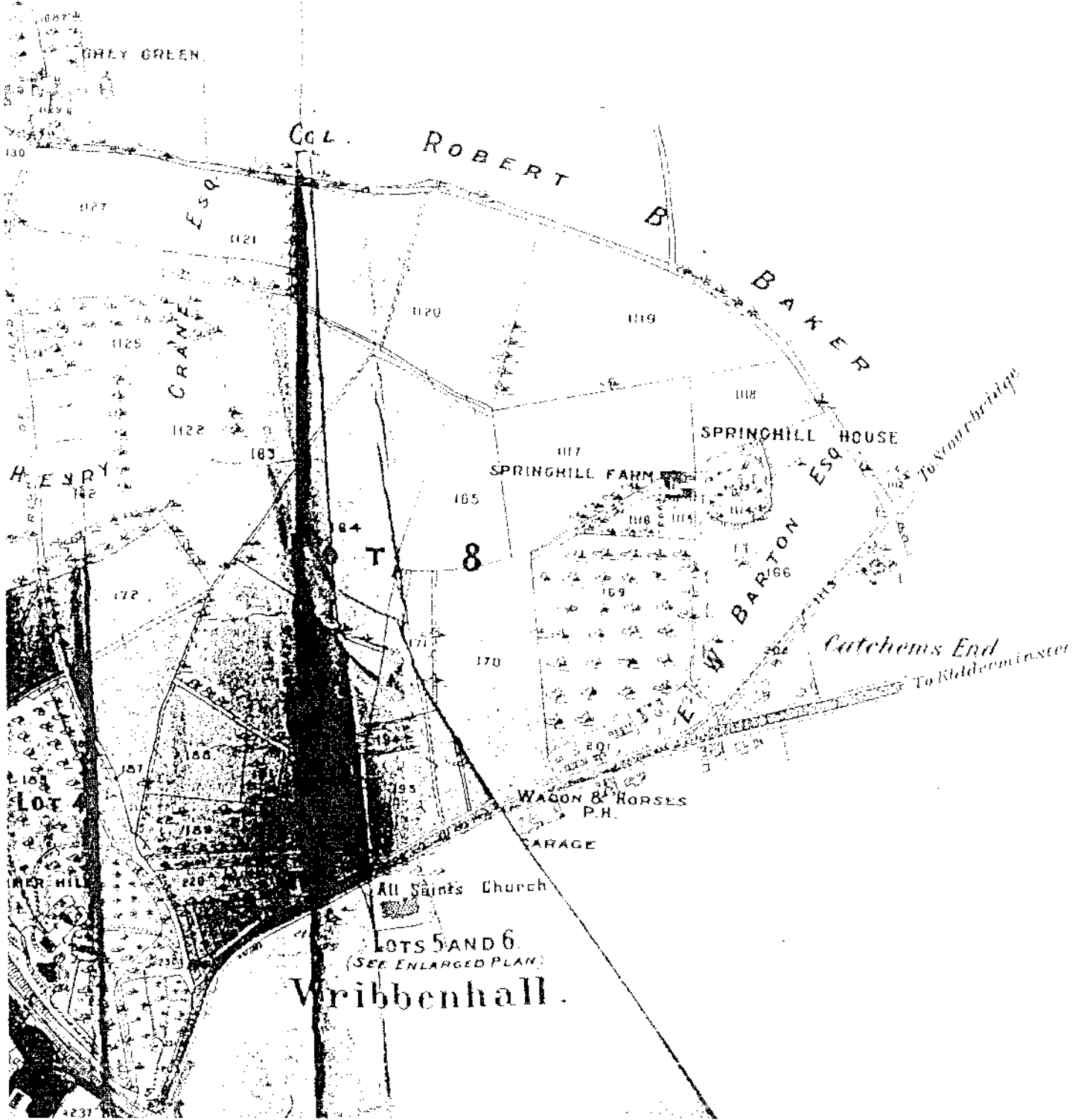


Fig.6

PARISH OF KIDDERMINSTER FOREIGN.

A **COTTAGE**, standing back from the Kidderminster main road, approached by a dirt road, in the Parish, locality, lanes, and close between; the **CONDUCTIONS** comprising Store with Loft over two **PIPERIES**, an Open Shed, stable with Loft, and Wash-house; together with a good **GARAGE** and **OFFICE**. There are also a well and pump. Nos. part 220 and 225 on Plan. Area, **2r. 26p.**, or thereabouts.

Let to Mrs. Elizabeth Mayler, upon annual tenancy, at £14 per annum.

An Enclosure of Land

(Nos. 172 on Plan), known as **Little Shaw Hedge**, containing an area of about **6 acres**, let upon monthly tenancy to allotment tenants, and producing about £16 5s. net per annum, the rents being payable in advance, the rates being paid.

Schedule.

PLAN NO.	NAME OF ENCLOSURE.	CULTIVATION.	AREA.
E. T. BARNES, Esq., Tenant.			
170	Close	Arable	5 846
170 ✓	Bicket's Heath	Garden and Orchard	6 220
1115	House, Homestead, and Garden	Buildings, etc.	1558
1116	Orchard	Orchard and Garden	6 76
1118 ✓	Big Paddock (part of)	Pasture	2 001
Part of Crandall's Farm, Mrs. E. S. SUTCLIFFE, Tenant.			
1117 ✓	Big Paddock	Arable	5 174
1119 ✓	Big Paddock	Arable	7 054
1120 ✓	Grey Green Piece	Arable	9 115
164 ✓	Middle Shaw Hedge	Arable	7 519
164 ✓	Great Shaw Hedge	Arable	8 286
165 ✓	Brook Meadow	Pasture	3 052
171 ✓	Upper Brook Piece	Pasture	2 198
194	Cottage and Garden	Buildings, etc.	1 543
195 ✓	Lower Brook Piece	Pasture	2 620
E. B. WORTH, Esq., Tenant.			
Part 220	Lodge and Garden	Buildings, etc.	1 265
190	Plantation and Drive	Road, &c.	1 065
189	Paddock	Pasture	1 615
Mr. G. A. TOLMAN, Tenant.			
191	Field	Arable	6 130
188	Field	Arable	2 997
191	Close	Pasture and Orchard	1 641
192	Close	Pasture	1 843
Part 220	House, Homestead, and Garden	Buildings, etc.	1 762
Mrs. E. MAYLER, Tenant.			
Part 220	Cottage Buildings and Orchard	Buildings, etc.	1 250
220	Garden	Garden	1 570
Allotment Tenants.			
172 ✓	Little Shaw Hedge	Garden	5 990
			82 284
			A. R. P.

Rentals		£	s.	d.
E. T. Barnes, Esq., Spring Hill Farm		45	0	0
Mrs. E. S. Sutcliffe, part of Crandall's Farm		45	0	0
E. B. Worth, Esq., Lodge and Paddock		7	0	0
G. A. Tolman, House and Land		12	12	0
Mrs. Mayler, Cottage		14	0	0
Small Tenants, Cows, &c.		16	0	0
		£151	0	0

Note: There is a right of way to lot 4 over the drive forming part of this lot until Lady Day, 1955.

Appraised Value (proportion of £1 14s. 6d.) value for the year 1901, £2 58. 3d. Land Tax paid for the year 1901, £1 58. 3d.

Valuable and Improving Property

AT CATCHEM'S END,

HEREBY

AN EXCELLENT SMALL FARM

KNOWN AS

“SPRING HILL FARM,”

With **HOUSE** and **FARM BUILDINGS**, having a frontage to the Kidderminster main road, **EIGHT ENCLOSURES OF LAND**, **PART OF CRUNDALL'S FARM**, with a frontage to the Kidderminster main road, and a Four-roomed **COTTAGE** (together with a well built **COTTAGE** and **GARDEN**, upon the main road;

A COTTAGE

upon the main road, with the Stabling and Outbuildings, and **FOUR ENCLOSURES OF VERY PRODUCTIVE LAND**, forming a Market Garden; and a

Cottage, Garden and Orchard

On the main road, and an **ENCLOSURE OF ALLOTMENT GARDEN LAND**; the whole comprising an area of

82a. Ir. 5p.,

OR THEREABOUTS.

“Spring Hill Farm,”

At Catchem's End, comprising a convenient House, containing Parlor, Sitting Room, Kitchen (with range), Scullery, Cellar, and Larder, with three Bedrooms.

The **FARM BUILDINGS** include Barn, Fitted Fruit Room, Feed Cistern, Open front Feeding Shed, with feed roller, large Open-front Cart Shed, Two-stall Stable having Loft over, Root House, Piggeries with Fowl Loft over, a four-tie Cow House with Loft over, two Piggeries (Pigeon Coop over), Enclosed and Covered Pig Run, together with a Cart Shed and a Loose Box. There are a well and pump in Scullery, and also a rain-water cistern, with pump.

THE LAND is in excellent condition, a great part is planted with fruit trees, and the holding forms a large and productive Market Garden. The House is only a short distance from the Kidderminster road, and is accessible by a good cart road.

Let to E. T. Backer, Esq., J.P., for a term of seven years from 25th December, 1902, at a rent of £40 per annum.

A **FOUR-ROOMED COTTAGE** (in enclosure No. 164) in the occupation of Charles Spillman, with a large productive Garden enclosed by stone wall, and having well and pump; and

Eight Enclosures of Sound Arable and Pasture Land,

As present part of Crundall's Farm.

Let with Crundall's Farm to the said tenant, at £2 10s per annum. Appraised amount 1887, £43.

A well built plain **COTTAGE** (in present enclosure No. 164) upon the main Kidderminster road, upon the All Saints' Church, containing four Rooms, with Wash-house, Coal Place, Garden, well and pump. Estimated to be worth a rent of £7 5s 0d, and appraised at £7 7s 0d, but at present let upon a lease for seven years, commencing 1st January 1901.

Area of land about 1r. 2p.

A **FADDOCK**, (No. 163) (at present let with "Summer Hill"). Area of land about 1a. 2r. 19p. Appraised rent £2.

A **COTTAGE** upon the main Kidderminster road, near the East Lock, containing Parlor, Sitting Room, Kitchen (with range), Hall, Bed Rooms and Scullery, with Double-bay Barn, a two-stall stable with Loft over, Garden, well and pump, and a Cart Shed in enclosure, together with **Four Enclosures** of very productive **Land**, used as a Market Garden.

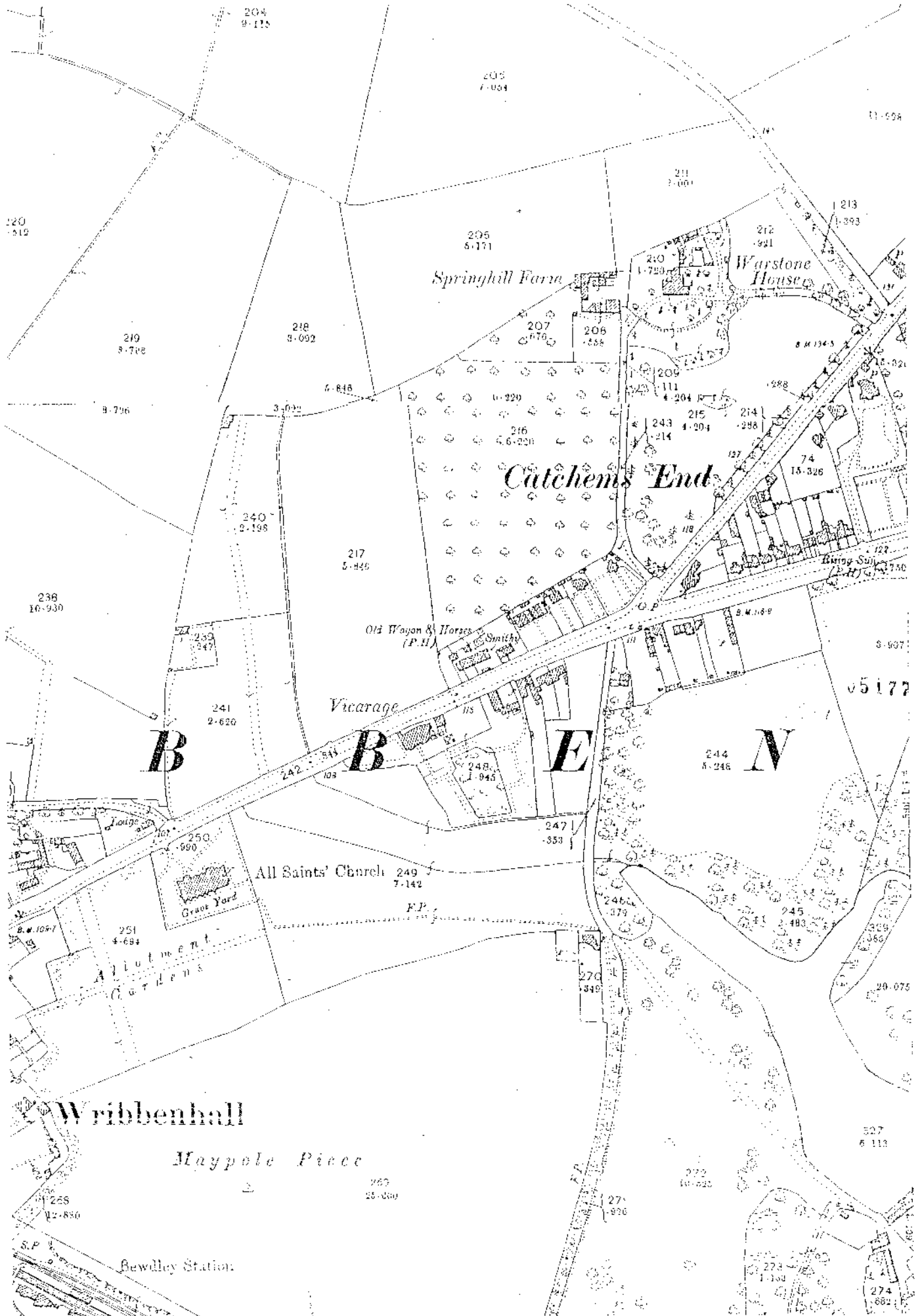


Fig.9

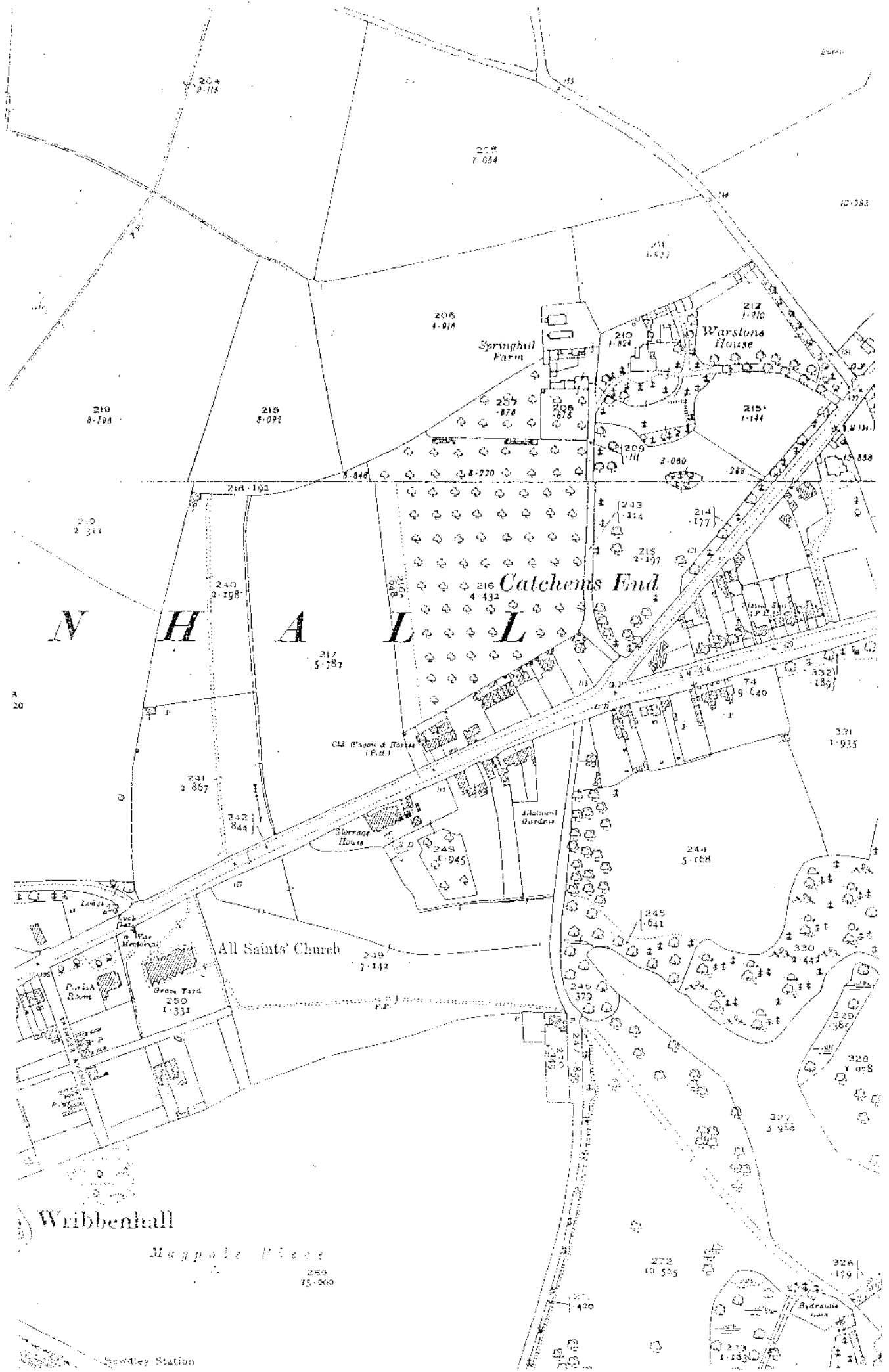


Fig.10

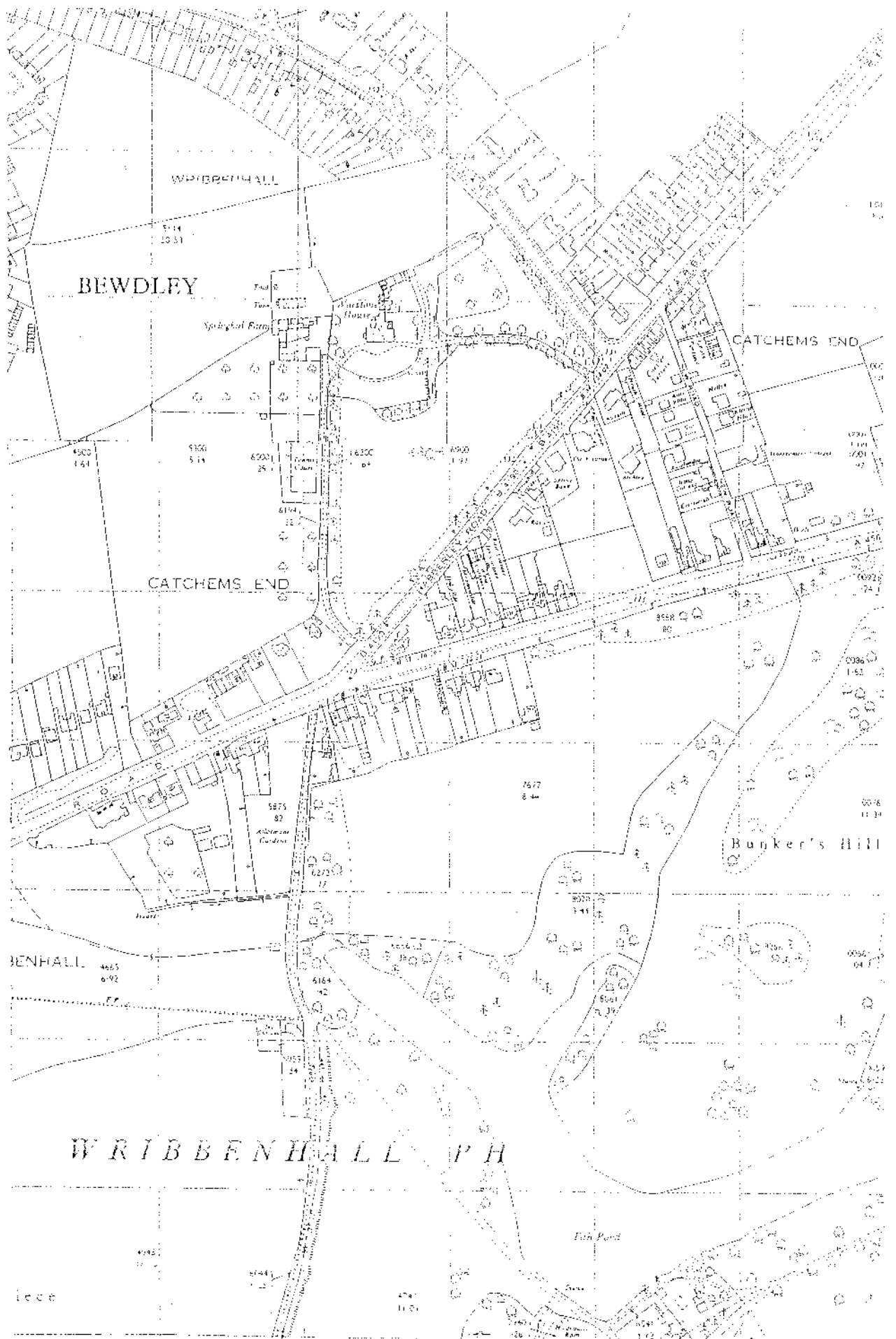


Fig.11



Plate 1



Plate 2

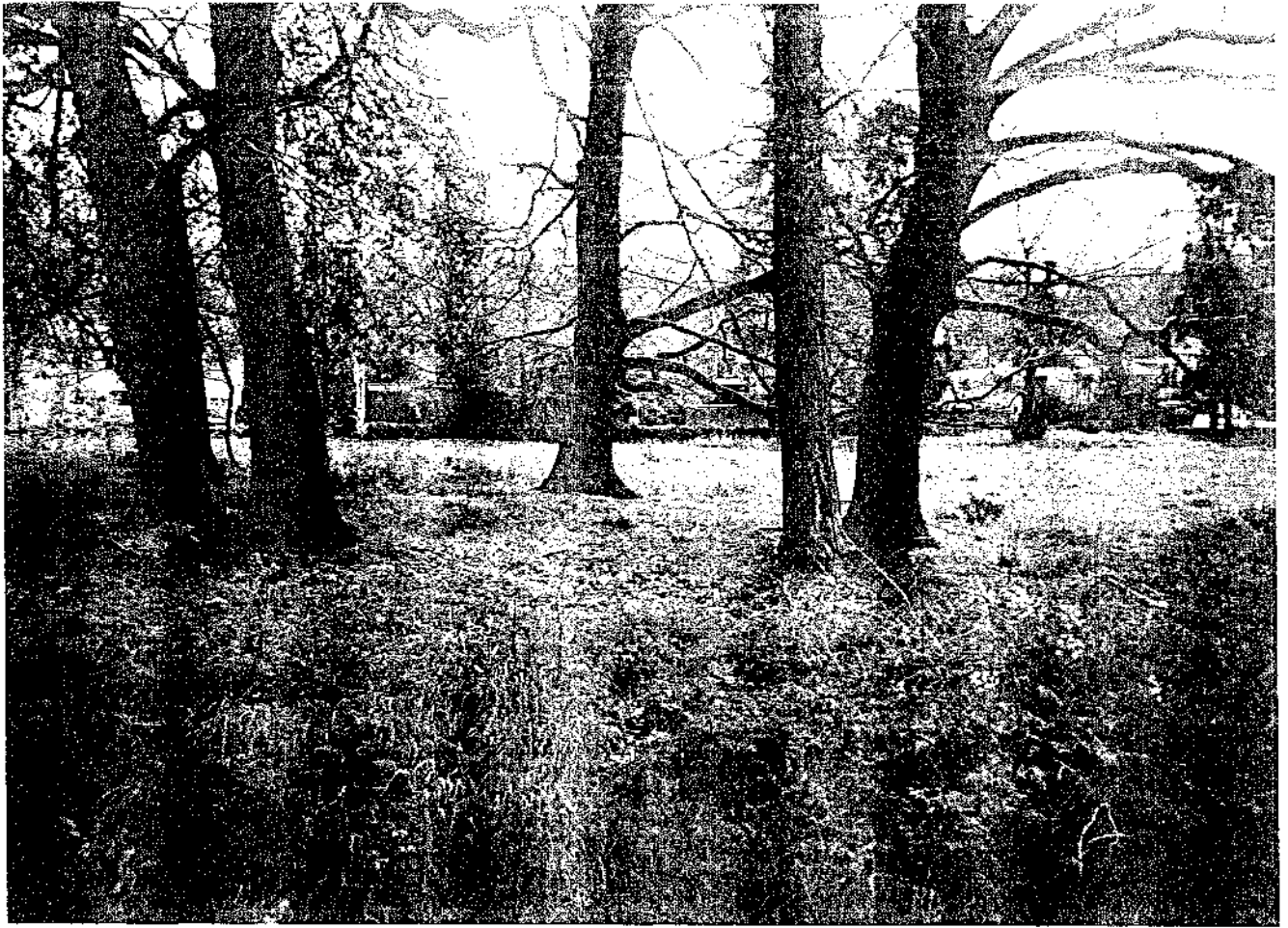


Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5