

**Land Off Coventry Road,
Burbage, Leicestershire:**

**An archaeological desk-based
assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**Land off Coventry Road, Burbage, Leicestershire:
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Summary

A desk-based assessment was carried out as a condition of planning permission for Hinckley and Bosworth District Council in conjunction with their archaeological advisors at Leicestershire County Council, ahead of development proposals by Miller Homes. The assessment concerned land off Coventry Road in Burbage, Leicestershire, and examined the available documentary and cartographic evidence in order to identify any areas of potential archaeological interest. The site was deemed to have a low archaeological potential.

1.0 Introduction

This archaeological assessment has been prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) as a condition of planning permission by Hinckley and Bosworth District Council ahead of proposed residential development (99/01076/FUL) by Miller Homes. The 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) and approved by Anne Graf, the County Archaeologist for Leicestershire.

2.0 Site Location

The site is located in Burbage, Leicestershire (NGR SP4391, Fig.1). Burbage is situated about 14 miles south-west of Leicester and 1 mile south of Hinckley. The site is located at the corner of two roads, Coventry Road bordering the northern edge of the site and Rugby Road along the western side. Extending north-east from the north-east corner of the site is some residential development. The site is currently used as grazing land for horses. To the south and east are fields (Fig.2).

3.0 Objectives

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 the Leicestershire County Record Office and The University of Birmingham Library. The Leicestershire County Sites and Monuments Record also provided information for the site and the surrounding area within a c.500 metre radius.

5.0 Geology and Topography

The County of Leicestershire contains a large section of the great central plateau formed by Trias and Lower Lias. The western half of the County, in which Burbage is situated, is mainly covered by Trias with small patches of older rocks here and there. Mercia Mudstone (formerly known as Keuper Marl) covers the county west of Leicester with the exception of these small areas. It forms an undulating plain, which is well suited to cultivation. Burbage is situated on a ridge and the site itself slopes up to the north. The difference in height from south to north on the site is about 3.5m.

6.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric

Neolithic flints have been found at Mickle Hill near Aston and at Burbage and in a ploughed field at Burbage a bronze axe was ploughed up by a farmer (Campton, 1937). In the housing estate c.100m to the west of the site, a large Iron Age pot sherd was unearthed in a private garden (SMR 49SW AH), which may suggest some Iron Age occupation in this area. A Late Bronze Age or early Iron Age occupation site (SMR 49SW BY) is known to exist within the medieval village core of Sketchley, which is situated to the north-west of the site.

Roman

Watling Street Roman Road (SMR 49SW Y) runs northwest-southeast to the south of the site and provides the county boundary between Leicestershire and Warwickshire. However, the line of the road is too far (c.150m) from the site for there to be any real possibility of roadside Roman settlement evidence on the site. A Roman occupation site is known to exist about 500m to the east of the site (SMR 49SW BG). In 1864 a large heap of animal horns, believed to have been of the Roman period, were found in Burbage, 'three feet below the surface, in cutting a drain' (Berry, 1864) but it is not known where. This find would perhaps indicate the presence of some form of tanning industry, which may instead be datable to the medieval period.

Some late 1st-century or early 2nd-century pottery was found at Lychgate Lane in Burbage (Pickering, 1934).

Saxon

The name Burbage is thought to come from the Old English 'Burh' meaning fort and 'baec' meaning ridge or 'baece' meaning spring. Gelling (1984) suggests 'fort ridge'

is appropriate to Burbage as the town is situated on a low ridge. Other historians have suggested that the spring interpretation is appropriate as underground springs are abundant in the area of the old village.

In 1043 Burbage was held by Earl Leofric who was the ruler of the kingdom of Mercia. The monastery of Saint Mary's was founded at Coventry and at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, the Abbey of Coventry held Burbage. The Domesday Book describes Burbage as having '...two ploughs; and twenty villeins with two bordars and two serfs have eight ploughs.' The population was recorded to be 24. The description shows Burbage to be a small farming community. In 1100, the Manors of Aston Flamville, Burbage and Sketchley were given to Robert de Flamville. The parish church of St. Catherine of Alexandria dates to the 13th century but the tower foundations are believed to date from the Saxon period. The original building probably has no other above-ground remains.

Medieval

After Robert de Flamville, the Hastings family held Burbage until their direct family line died out in 1374. In 1416 Reginald de Grey, who held the Manor at that time, was given the title of 'Lord of Hastings.' The Grey family remained Lords of the Manor from 1408-1935. In 1377 the Poll Tax Return records a population of 64. In 1563 the Diocesan Population Return records 57 households. Evidence for enclosure without Parliamentary Act in Burbage first dates from 1603-4 (VCH, II, 255).

In the 1960s the last of Burbage's medieval buildings was demolished. The Moat House, originally built in the late 16th-century, was situated on the site of a homestead moat. Another building replaced this one at the turn of the 19th century and was used as the Rectory. Other buildings dating from the Elizabethan period were the Old Grange, the Elizabethan Cottage, and the Old Town Hall. Burbage appears to have remained a fairly thinly populated agricultural community. The medieval village core of Sketchley (SMR 49SW BJ) exists about 200m to the north-west of the site, as does the site of a medieval chapel (SMR 49SW W).

Post-Medieval to 20th-Century

In 1670, 58 households in Burbage were eligible for paying the Hearth Tax. By 1801 there was a population of 1098. In 1811, of the 229 families in the village, 98 were working on the land and the remainder were involved in trade, manufacture or handicrafts.

In the 19th-century, Burbage became one of the rural centres for the hosiery industry south-west of Leicester. Framework knitters were working in Burbage in 1812 and in 1840 the manufacture of stockings began to increase steadily, although the majority of men were still working on the land. By 1844 there were 450 knitting frames in the village. By 1932 this operation had expanded into seven hosiery firms. In 1871, a decrease in population may probably be attributed to a migration to manufacturing towns.

Several major building programmes have taken place in Burbage, the first in the 1890s, and then in the mid-1920s-30s the areas around Sketchley Road, Coventry Road, Three Pots and Lychgate Lane were developed. This was followed by a further period of building in the 1950s. Three Pots Inn, built in the 1890s or earlier and used as a coaching inn for travellers along Watling Street was situated south-west of the site. It was demolished in the 1930s when a new building was erected.

6.0 Cartographic Information

A general large-scale map of the Country Five Miles Round Hinckley, taken from a book published in 1787 (Nichols, 1787), shows the area of the site. No enclosures are marked on this map. 'Three Potts' is marked south of the site area along with several buildings along Watling Street.

The 1841 Tithe map of the Parish of Burbage (Fig.3) shows the site in the approximate location of fields 669 and 670. In the accompanying Tithe Award, these fields were both owned and occupied by John Pinchback and were known as 'Second Saint Mary's' and 'First Saint Mary's' respectively and were both arable land. The field to the west of these, No. 671, was known as 'Saint Mary,' and was owned by Burbage Surveyors of the Highways and occupied by Henry Roe. This too was arable land. To the east, fields 668 and 667 were known as 'First Burbage Field' and 'Second Burbage Field' and were pasture and arable respectively. Field 672 contained a house, outbuildings, a garden and 'First Wales Close,' and 678 and 679 were 'First Burbage Meadow' and 'Second Burbage Meadow'. The field-name 'Saint Mary' may be an allusion to the ownership of the Manor of Burbage by the monastery of Saint Mary's in the 11th century. A different road arrangement to the present one is shown around the site. Rugby Road and Coventry Road did not then exist. Instead, a road named Three Pots ran along the line of the present Wolvey Road then turned to the north-east, cutting across the north-west corner of the present site and then joining the line of the present Coventry Road. It is not clear where the name Three Pots originates from. There was a Three Pots Inn in the late 19th century, but it is not known whether the inn was named after the road or *vice versa*.

The 1903 Ordnance Survey map (Fig.4) shows the site (field no. 305). Nothing is shown in the field where the site is located. However, the road Three Pots, here forming the northern boundary of the site, cuts through the north-west corner of the development site. A possible small pond is shown just outside the south-west corner of the site. Other ponds exist to the south and south-east of the site in the surrounding fields. A collection of buildings exists at the junction of Three Pots with the present Rugby Road, just to the south-west of the site

The 1925 Ordnance Survey map (Fig.5) shows the same arrangement of roads. On the site, the only change from the 1903 map is a dotted line running parallel to the southern border of the site. Between this line and the border four trees are shown. This perhaps represents a line of temporary fencing, possibly to keep animals away from the trees. A pond exists just outside the southern edge of the site.

The 1938 Ordnance Survey map (Fig.6) shows nothing on the site. The pond outside it to the south is still existent. Some residential development has taken place outside the north-east corner of the site and a larger amount along the west side of Three Pots.

The 1963 Ordnance Survey map shows no change to the site. The field adjacent to it to the west is now marked as a playground and there is more residential development to the east of the site. The north-south section of Three Pots is now known as Wolvey Road and the north-east section, Coventry Road.

The 1982 Ordnance Survey map shows that the arrangement of the roads around the site has been altered. The section of Three Pots that cut across in a north-easterly direction has gone and been replaced by a shorter east-west stretch, Three Pots Road, which links Wolvey Road with a big new road, Rugby Road. This has given the field encompassed by the site more area in its north-west corner, where Three Pots used to be. The building of Rugby Road has also destroyed most of the field that was immediately adjacent to the site in the west. The old western boundary of the site field is now beneath the Rugby Road.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the documentary and cartographic evidence, it would appear that the development site does not have great potential for archaeological deposits. It was in use as arable land in 1841, but no evidence could be found for its use prior to that. The field names that refer to Saint Mary could, as aforementioned, be an allusion to the monastery of Saint Mary's that owned the Manor of Burbage in the 11th century; this is often the case where fields are named after saints. Occasionally fields with the names of saints may adjoin or be the property of a church or chapel of that dedication or may allude to the celebration of a feast-day (Field, 1993) but there is no evidence for there ever having been any religious building on the site. It would appear that the only below-ground remains known to exist on the site are those of the old Three Pots road in its north-west corner. The evidence for archaeological deposits in the surrounding area are few and quite widely scattered. There is the possibility that an Iron Age occupation site may have existed to the west of the site. However, this theory is based on the recovery of one Iron Age pot sherd.

A decision on whether further archaeological field assessment will be a mitigation requirement ahead of development rests with the County Archaeology Service as advisors to the planning authority.

9.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Sarah Watt, and edited by Iain Ferris. The figures were prepared by John Halsted.

10.0 References

Maps

Ordnance Survey:

1903 25" Sheet XLII.12
1925 25" Sheet XLII.12
1938 25" Sheet XLII.12
1963 25" SP 4291-4391
1982 25" SP 4391

Other:

1787 The Country Five Miles Round Hinckley. *Taken from Nichols, 1787*
1841 Tithe Map and Award for the Parish of Burbage in the County of Leicester

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Appendix

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land off Coventry Road, Burbage, Leicestershire Written Scheme of Investigation

1.0 Introduction

This document comprises a specification for an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site comprising land off Coventry Road in Burbage, Leicestershire. It has been prepared in accordance with government advice contained in *DoE Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*. The site is being assessed ahead of development proposals by Miller Homes (99/01076/FUL).

2.0 Site Location

The site is located off Coventry Road in Burbage. Coventry Road runs approximately southwest-northeast and the site lies against the south-east edge of the road, comprising an area of 2.280 hectares. It is bordered in the west by Rugby Road. There is some residential development outside the north-east corner of the site. The site appears to be vacant and there is a pond just outside its south-west corner.

3.0 Archaeological Background

The proposed development site is apparently likely to contain important archaeological remains but no background information has been provided about these.

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 necessary archaeological work linked to the planning application, and will identify potential requirements for any *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains, or for their recording in advance of, or during, development.

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 Leicestershire County Sites and Monuments Record will be consulted, along with the Leicestershire 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 Leicestershire County Sites and Monuments Record and to the Planning Advisory Section of Leicestershire 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 May 23rd and will be completed by June 2nd.

Approximate time breakdown of tasks:

Consultation of primary and secondary sources: 1.5 days

Preparation of report text: 2.5 days

Production of illustrated report: 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, 19th May, 2000.

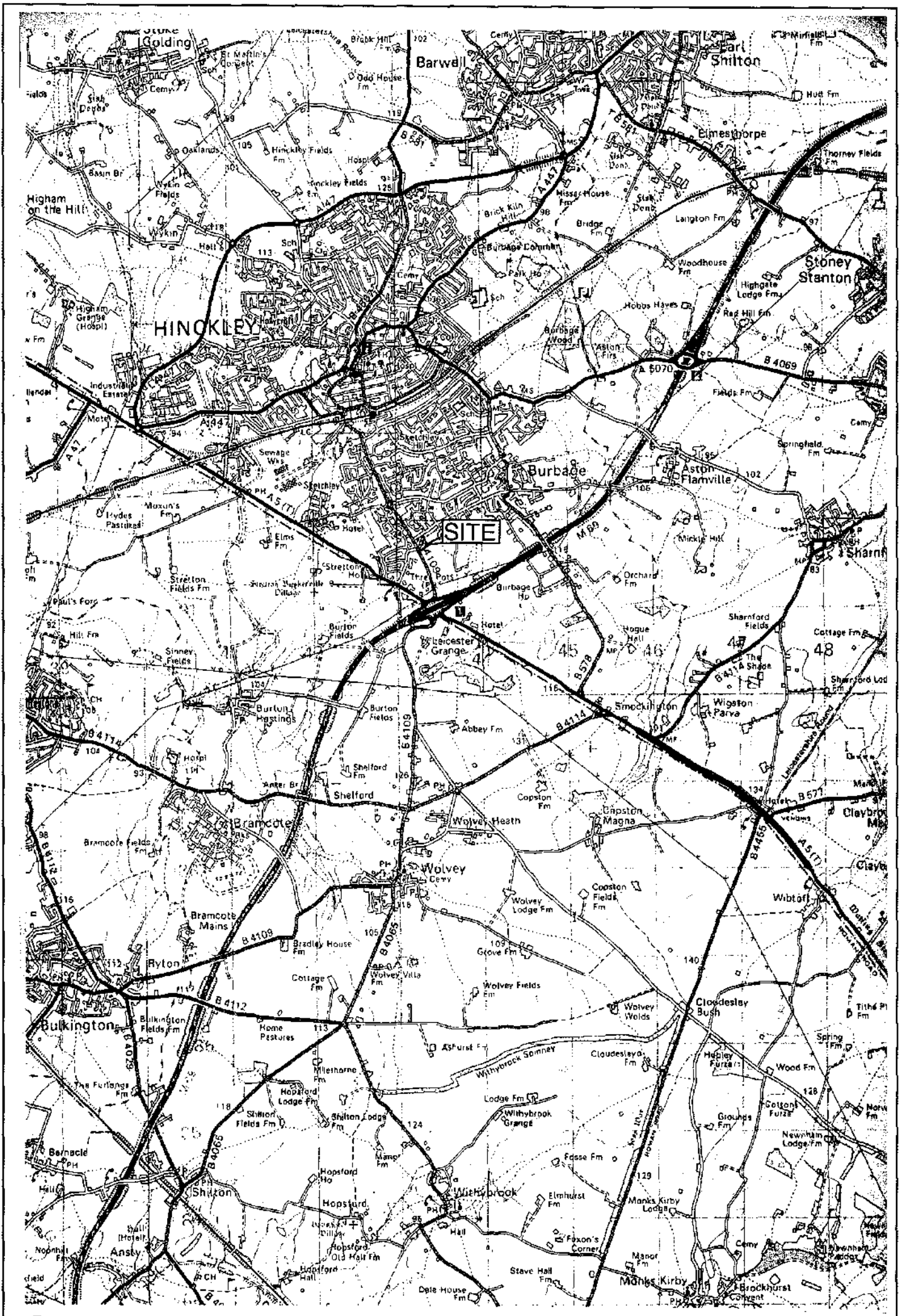


FIG.1

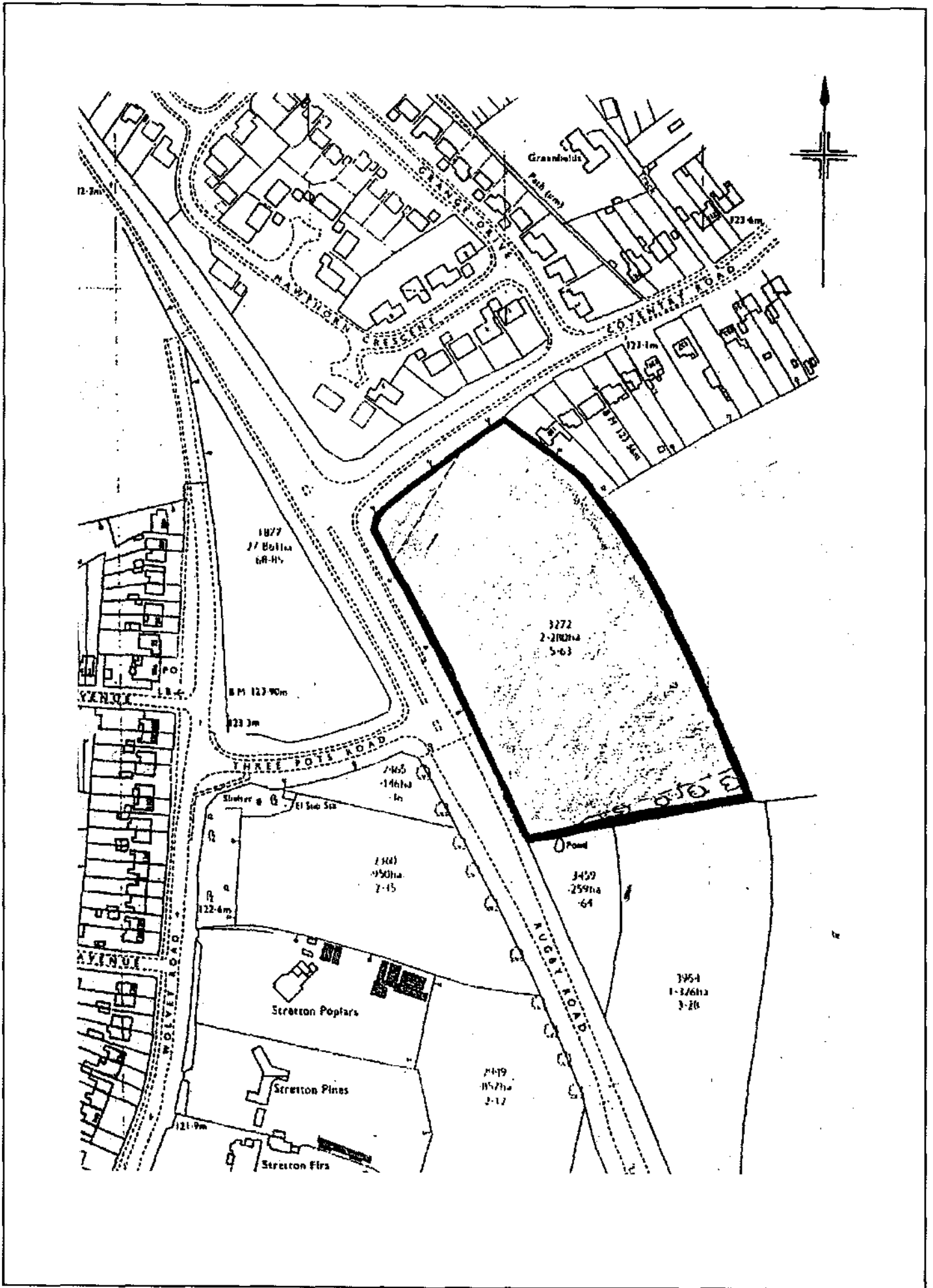


FIG.2

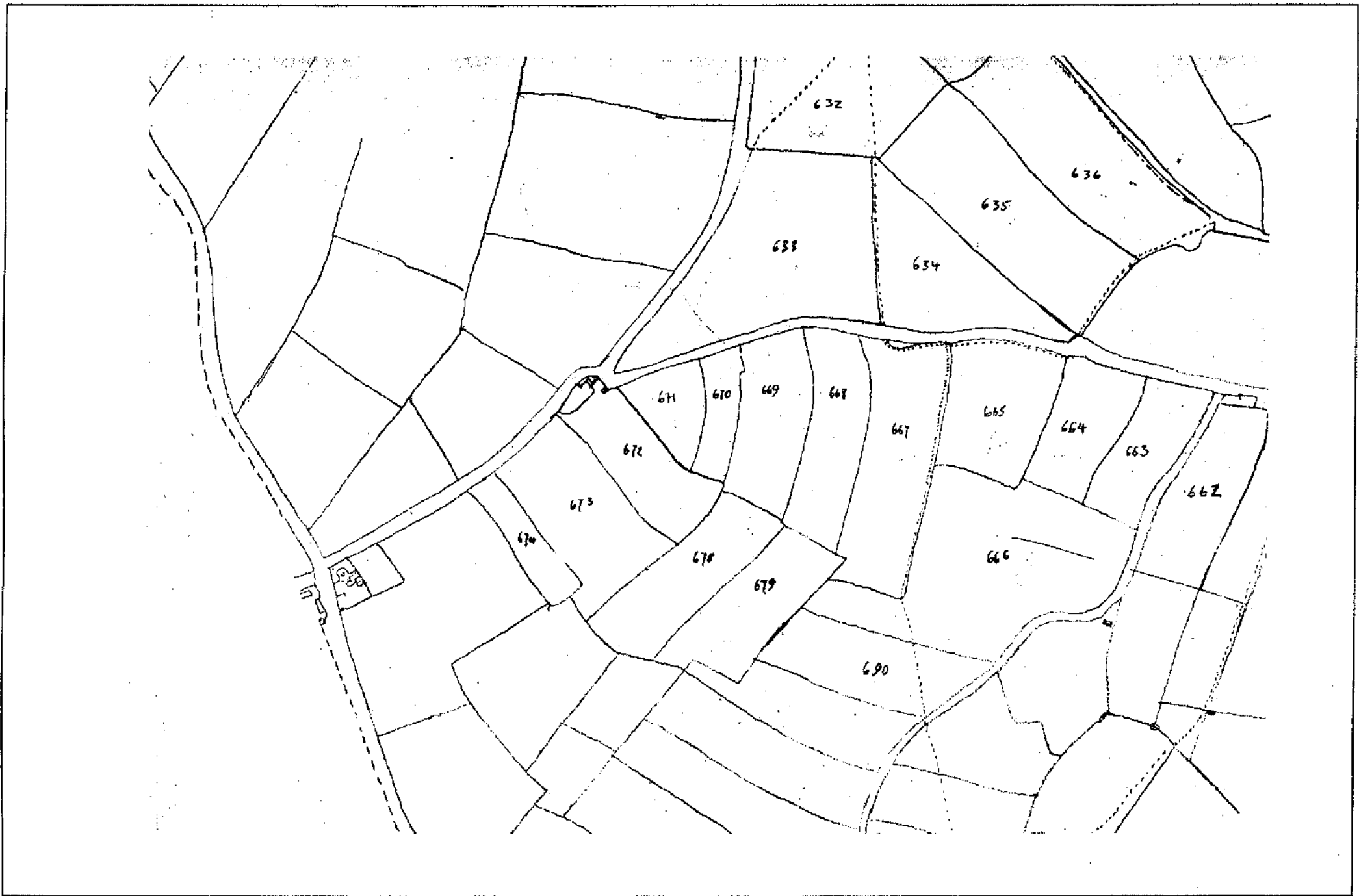


FIG.3

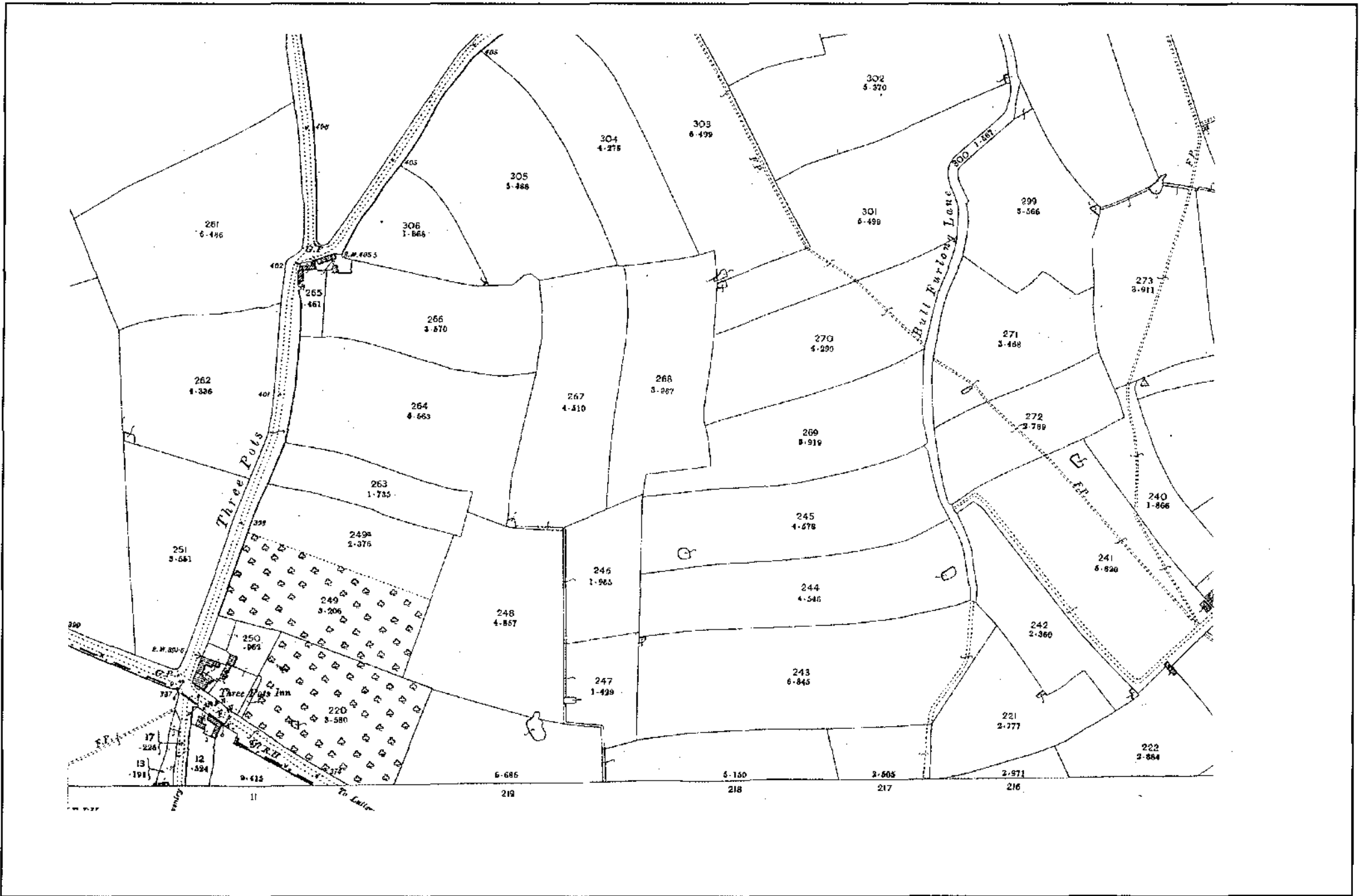


FIG.4

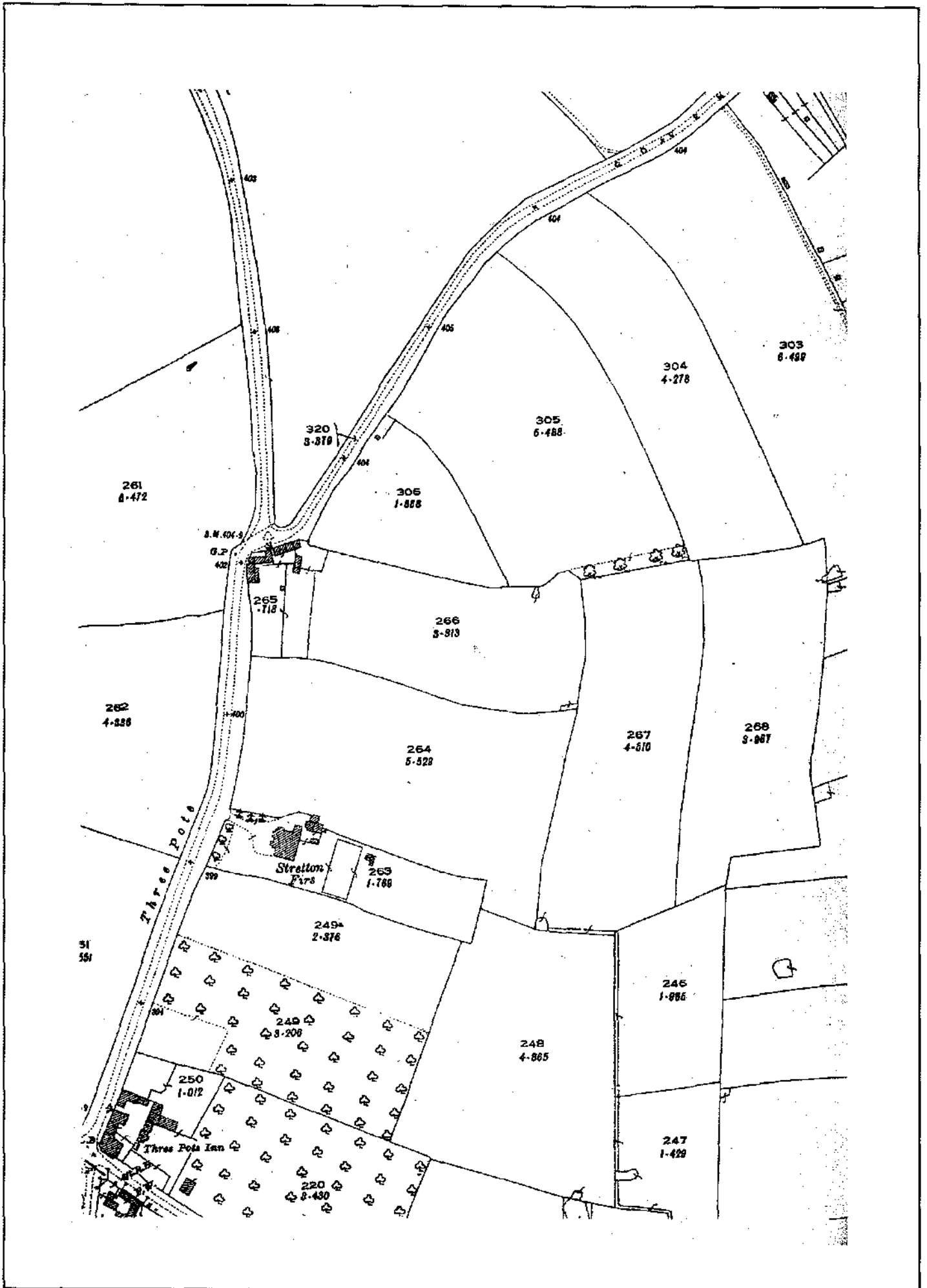


FIG.5



FIG 6

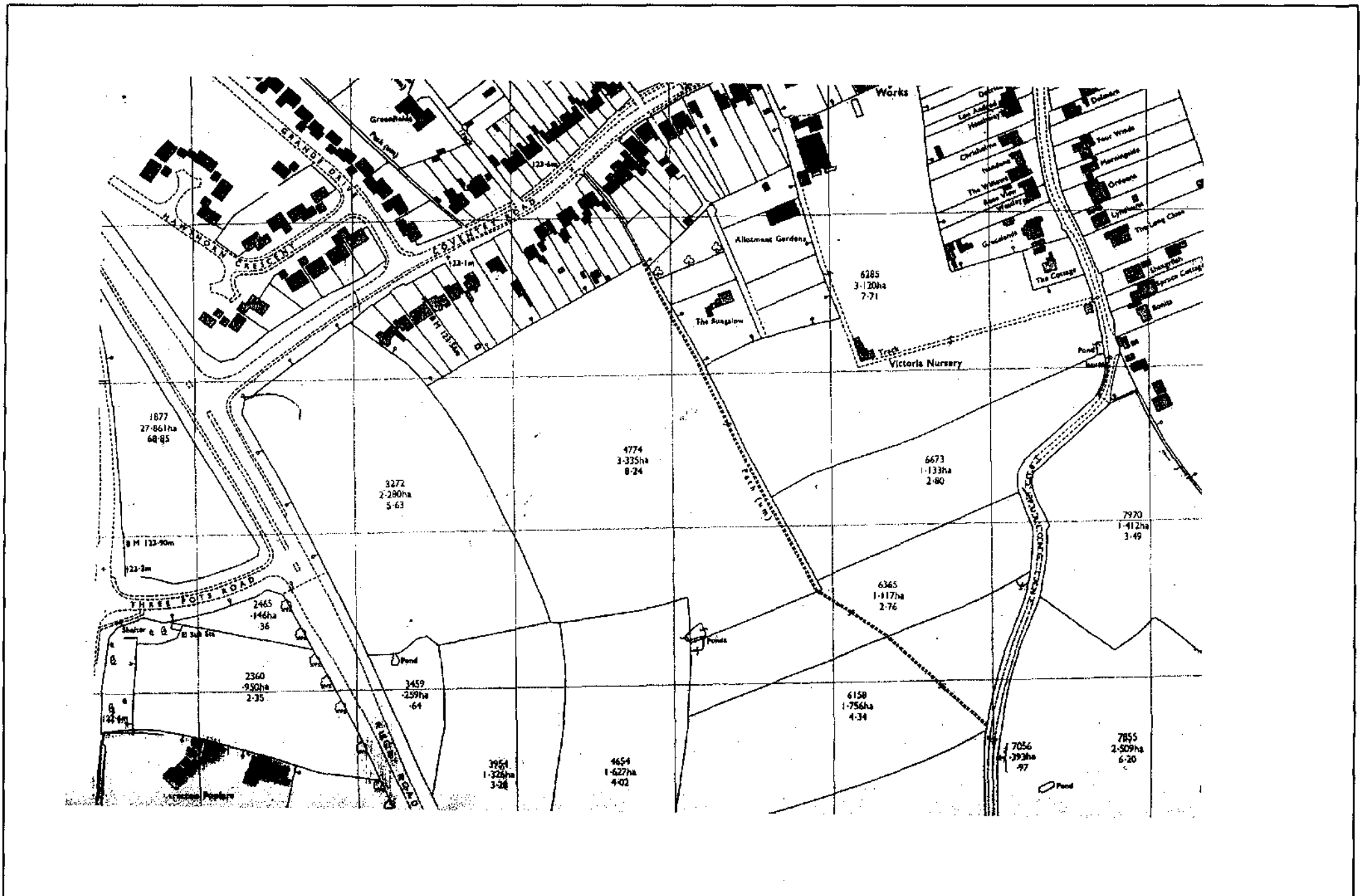


FIG.7