



THE UNIVERSITY
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**Land at The Green,
Forebridge, Stafford:**

**An Archaeological Desk-Based
Assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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**Land at The Green, Forebridge, Stafford:
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

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Summary

A desk-based assessment was carried out in advance of proposed development of land at The Green in Forebridge, Stafford, (centred on NGR SJ 92370 22800) by the Tyler-Parkes Partnership. The assessment examined the available documentary and cartographic evidence and identified areas of potential archaeological interest. A site inspection was also made. It was found that the site is the supposed location of the 14th-century Austin Friary, although the exact location and extent of the Friary is not known. The site also contains a Grade II Listed Building and an industrial building of either late 18th or early 19th-century date.

1.0 Introduction

This archaeological assessment has been prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) ahead of development proposals by the Tyler-Parkes Partnership. The report sets out the results of an archaeological desk-based study of land to the west of Wolverhampton Road in Forebridge, Stafford. The location of the site, hereafter referred to as the Study Area, is shown on Fig. 1. The aim of the report is to provide a summary of known and potential archaeological information for the area, based on existing data. The assessment adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

2.0 Location of Study Area

The Study Area is located to the south of the medieval town of Stafford, on the south side of the River Sow in the suburb of Forebridge. It is bordered by housing to the south, southeast, and southwest, and by industrial buildings to the northwest. Bailey Street forms the northeastern border, at its junction with Wolverhampton Road (Fig. 2).

3.0 Objectives

The objective of this assessment was to determine the likely survival and significance of archaeological remains within and around the Study Area, in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate. The desk-based assessment was intended to identify the need for any further archaeological work in advance of the planning application, and to identify potential requirements for any *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains, or for their recording in advance of, or during, development (Section 10.0). Final mitigation decisions, however, rest with Staffordshire County Council.

4.0 Method

A site inspection of the Study Area was carried out and documentary research of primary and secondary records and maps held by Staffordshire County Record Office, the William Salt Library in Stafford, and the University of Birmingham Library was undertaken. Staffordshire County Sites and Monuments Record, the primary source of known archaeological information for the county, was consulted. All sources consulted during the assessment are listed in Section 12.0 below.

5.0 Geology and Topography

The Hopton Fault runs north-south two miles to the east of Stafford. Forebridge is on the 'downthrow' side of the fault, where there are deep deposits of marl of the Stafford Halite formation. Thick beds of alluvial soil standing on the marl bedrock are in the area of the Wolverhampton Road. Narrow mounds of alluvium exist from The Green towards St. Leonard's Avenue (Imm 1994).

6.0 Site Inspection

A brief site visit was made in order to determine current land-use and conditions, and to identify any buildings or features of historical or archaeological interest. For convenience of description, the Study Area has been divided into three Zones, A, B and C, and the buildings have been numbered 1-6 (Fig. 3).

Zone A

This area functions as a carpark behind No. 1, The Green. It is bounded by a high brick wall and is surfaced mainly with very large concrete slabs, although the area adjacent to Building 1 to the north is surfaced with tarmac. The concrete slabs are laid very unevenly. It is not possible to tell whether this unevenness is due to the level of the ground beneath or perhaps to subsidence or collapse. This area could represent the site of the St. Austin's Friary. The northwestern corner contains a small semi-circular area of grass and one or two trees, and perhaps represents the area of garden shown on the historical Ordnance Survey Maps (see Section 8.0).

This Zone contains two buildings. Building 1 is No. 1, The Green, and is a Grade II Listed Building. It appears to be of early 19th-century date in the Gothic Revival style. It has three storeys visible on its northeastern elevation. It is constructed of red brick, with rustification on its northwest elevation. It has a two-storey extension to the southeast, and bracketed window pediments. The southwest elevation has a crenellated roof, and only two storeys are visible.

Building 2 is a modern office building, now empty.

Zone B

Zone B is surfaced with tarmac. It is bounded in the east by a brick wall. It contains a large building, which is composed of two discrete blocks, which are numbered separately here for purposes of description.

Building 3 comprises the western half of the block, and appears to be either late 18th or early 19th-century in date. The western elevation is visible, and shows the building to be two storeys high and built of red brick. It has a tiled roof. Over half of the windows have been blocked in. They have arched blue brick headers on the first floor, and larger red and blue-brick headers on the ground floor. A large double-doorway exists in the centre of the wall. The south-facing gable end appears to have had its top section rebuilt at some time. The building stands empty and, as seen through a window, the wooden first floor seemed to be intact.

Building 4 forms the eastern half of the block. This building appears generally to be later than Building 3, but some rebuilding seems to have taken place, at the southern end especially. The eastern elevation has had all its openings blocked-in and has been completely painted over. A part-wooden extension has been built out from the northern end. It seems possible that part of this building may have been of a similar date to Building 3, but perhaps has been substantially rebuilt later in the 20th century.

Zone C

This area is mostly surfaced with the same large concrete 'slabs' as in Zone A. It contains two buildings. Building 5 is a long modern building, consisting of one low storey with a large sloping roof. A concrete ramp stands to the east of it. Building 6 is also a modern brick building. A high brick wall forms the southern boundaries.

7.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric

Mesolithic flint tools dating from 5000BC have been found in the town of Stafford, and a possible Iron Age causeway was found at Queensway in 1976, but no prehistoric archaeology is recorded for the Study Area itself.

Roman

Several small sherds of pottery dating from the Romano-British period have been found within the old walled area of Stafford, but nothing has been found which might indicate the presence of a Roman settlement in the town. A Roman coin of Faustina Junior, who died in 175 AD (SMR 2196), was found in Forebridge. The nearest known Roman settlement to Stafford was that at Penkridge, to the south.

Saxon

During the 7th century, there was a settlement on a well-drained promontory of sand and gravel on the north side of the River Sow (Imm 1994). However, the Domesday Book of 1086 does not mention the existence of a settlement to the south of Stafford's defences. In Saxon and early Norman times, the River Sow was crossed by a ford. A road leading southwards out of Stafford was first mentioned about 1200.

Medieval

Forebridge was originally part of the parish of Castle Church, which became separate from Stafford by at least 1546. The name Forebridge is presumably intended to reflect its location in front of the bridge into Stafford. Three main roads crossed the parish

and met near the Green Bridge over the River Sow, just north of the Study Area; these roads are the Newport Road, Lichfield Road, and Wolverhampton Road.

Forebridge has been so-called since 1288, and is the area of land immediately south of the Green Bridge. The settlement first developed around The Green, first mentioned in 1304, a knoll of ground which was slightly higher and drier than the surrounding marshy land. By 1327, it was a separate vill with nine inhabitants. The Green contained most of the population of the parish in 1403. Eight cottages near The Green were burnt down in this year, and were not rebuilt (Imm 1994). The Hospitals of St. John and St. Leonard, and the house of Austin Friars, were all situated at Forebridge; the house of Austin Friars is thought to have been sited within the Study Area. The Hospital of St. John probably stood to the east of the Study Area, at the junction of White Lion Street and Lichfield Road. Tenements for the poor were erected around the hospital. There were also tenements, with attached gardens and crofts, around The Green in 1543.

Enclosure was taking place in Castle Church from the late 14th century. In 1543, the only surviving common field in Forebridge was the Green Field, which lay between the road from Stafford to Radford Bridge and the Wolverhampton Road. The Green Field, not to be confused with The Green or Green Common to the west, lay to the southeast of the Study Area.

The Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record identifies only one archaeological site within the Study Area itself. This is the site of the Austin Friary (SMR 777). Stafford contained several important monasteries. The Franciscans, or Grey Friars, had a monastery outside the north walls of the town. The Austin, or Black, Friars of St. Thomas, had their religious foundation outside the south walls in Forebridge. The Austin Friary was founded in 1344. It owed its existence to Ralph, Lord Stafford, who gave the Order a piece of ground 'upon the Green in the south suburb called 'Forbrugge,' whereon to found a church, dormitory, rectory and other necessary buildings' (Roxburgh 1948). The Patent Rolls from 1344 describe a Grant of Friary for the Austin Friars, stating that Ralph, Lord of Stafford, had a licence 'to found a house of Austin Friars...and to endow the prior and friars with five acres of land...licence also...of a well in Forbrugge...for them to make an underground aqueduct from and to the church and houses' (Lambert 1933). In 1539, during the Dissolution, the monastery was dissolved and its contents and fabric sold off. Its site was granted to Thomas Neve and Giles Isam.

Cherry (1890) states that 'in the district of the Green Brewery are still to be seen the remains of ancient walls.' Apparently, a brewer, Mr. John Bishop, used a number of the stones in the Brewery foundations after digging them up when making a garden rockery. Some of them, it is claimed, constituted 'the remains of ancient pillars' (Cherry 1890). The Brewery stood within the Study Area, in Zones B and C (Fig. 3).

In the late 19th century, human remains, and the foundations of a massive wall, were discovered during the excavation of cottage cellars in the Friars, presumably just to the west of the Study Area (Lambert 1933). A well with a human skeleton at the bottom of it was also found in a garden on The Green bordered by Friars Walk and Wolverhampton Road, probably to the north of the Study Area. It is possible that this is the well referred to in the Patent Rolls.

Many human skeletons were also dug up below the modern Territorial Drill Hall (Lambert 1933). It is not clear whether the Drill Hall referred to is the one immediately outside the northwestern boundary of the Study Area, or the one on Newport Road. Lambert (1933) suggests this may have been a cemetery for the Friary. He also mentions that the eastern area of the Friary was occupied 'until recently' by the Stafford Brewery - this is within the Study Area. Roxburgh (1948) refers to an excavation in April 1929 at the Grapes Hotel on Newport Road, which uncovered many human remains. Roxburgh refutes the theories of some historians (possibly Lambert) who associated the remains with a burial ground of the Austin Friars, suggesting instead that they belonged to a cemetery attached to the Hospital of St. John. His evidence for this was the fact that the bones were lying in a north-south direction instead of with their feet to the east, as they were likely to have been if they had belonged to the Friary. He mentions that the priory of the Austin Friars stood on the site now occupied by the buildings of Eley's old brewery (Zones B and C, Fig. 3).

Lambert also writes, 'According to an Abstract of the Inquisition on Edward Stamford...who died on the 24th of May 1598, he had a croft called Fryers Orchard, les fryers felde and meadow and tithes and the site of the Austin Friars of Stafford with the cemetery all held in chief...' This would tend to indicate that a cemetery for the Friary did exist.

Post-medieval

In 1642, during the Civil War, the Parliamentary Committee at Stafford ordered the inhabitants of The Green to demolish any of their buildings that stood within musket shot of the town walls. In 1680, however, most of the parish's population was still living around The Green, where there were about 30 or 40 houses. Part of the former estate of the Austin Friary was taken over with plots of cultivated land, perhaps market gardens.

An act for draining and enclosing Forebridge was passed in 1800 and the Award made in 1851. A network of drains into the Sow was built under the Award, the first of these running through Broad Meadow to The Green. By 1851, the Green Field and Green Common remained unenclosed. When it was enclosed, five acres on the Lichfield Road were allotted to the Castle Church parishioners and became known as the Green Common.

Forebridge saw extensive housing development from 1840 onwards. The Green Wakes began on The Green, causing local householders to make complaints about the noise and lights. The Wakes were discontinued around 1890. In 1878, a part of The Green which was still wasteland was enclosed, and another part of The Green was laid out as a garden.

The Brewery in the Study Area, of which Buildings 3 and 4 in Zone B may once have been a part, was in existence by the late 19th century. At this time, it appears to have consisted of about five or six buildings. By 1902 it had expanded, the buildings having been extended to the south. It is referred to variously as The Green Brewery (Cherry 1890), Stafford Brewery (Lambert 1933), Eley's Brewery (Roxburgh 1948).

8.0 Cartographic Information

c.1610 Speed's Map of Stafford (Fig. 4)

This map shows a row of houses along the Bailey Street/Wolverhampton Road frontage. The Austin Friary had of course been taken down by the time this map was produced, and there is nothing shown on the map that could be interpreted as showing its position, although Lambert (1933) has suggested that the Friary should be by the bridge in the approximate location of the number 29.

1732 Richard Drakeford's Estate in Forebridge and Baswich (Fig. 5)

It is not entirely clear exactly where the location of the Study Area is on this map. The map shows 'The Green-Fields' to the west. Some land is shown as being split into enclosed parcels belonging to various people, but the majority of the area south of 'The Road' is not occupied.

1775 Yates's Map of Staffordshire (Fig. 6)

This shows the Lichfield Road and Wolverhampton Road to the south of the town of Stafford. Around the junction of these two roads with Newport Road are some houses shown in block form, indicating fairly substantial suburban development in this area.

c.1800 Map of Several Estates belonging to Sir William Jerningham in the...Manor of Forebridge (Fig. 7)

This map shows several buildings within and around the 'triangle' before Wolverhampton Road and Lichfield Road join, to the immediate northeast of the Study Area. Some of the land occupied by the site, appears to have been owned by James Webb. No buildings are shown within the Study Area.

c.1830 Map of Castlechurch Parish (Fig. 8)

The Study Area is shown to contain several buildings. A row of buildings is shown along what is now the Bailey Street frontage, and one of these buildings may possibly represent No. 1, The Green, a Grade II Listed Building. The land within the Study Area and the surrounding area is enclosed in parcels of land of varying sizes and shapes. No buildings are shown within the Study Area beyond the street frontages.

1851 Forebridge Drainage and Enclosure Award and Map (Fig. 9)

The land within the Study Area has not been enclosed. Green Common has been enclosed to the west, and Green Field to the southeast, but nothing is shown in the area of the Study Area. Drains have been cut along the Newport Road, and 'Kitchen Meadow Drain' runs down through Green Common.

1875 Description and Plan of Forebridge (Fig. 10)

Although this map appears to be little more than a sketch plan, buildings can be seen along the Bailey Street and Wolverhampton Road frontages, and one or two beyond them, which may or may not be included within the Study Area boundaries.

1882 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 11)

The majority of the Study Area appears to be composed of garden plots or allotments. To the northeast of the Study Area is marked, 'The Green.' In the northern central area is a Brewery, consisting of several large buildings. Immediately to the east of this, 'St. Austin's Friary (Site of)' is marked. A row of houses exists along the Bailey Street and

Wolverhampton Road frontages. In the southern part of the Study Area, a 'Play Ground' is marked; Parkers Croft Road, entering the Study Area from the east, continues southwards along the western side of the playground, and buildings are shown on this frontage, and around the southern edge of the playground. Several other small houses or outbuildings lie to the west of the playground. Part of the southwest border of the Study Area follows an existing boundary wall, which appears to represent a field boundary shown on the map from 1830. Other boundaries also seem to respect the 1830 boundaries.

1901 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 12)

The Brewery still occupies the central area of the Study Area, although it has been extended to the south. A well is shown within the Brewery yard. The only area of garden still depicted is in the extreme north of the Study Area behind the building representing No.1, The Green. It is probable that one of the buildings associated with the Brewery represents Buildings 3 and 4, still extant on the Study Area. Two other larger buildings exist to the west of Parkers Croft Road.

1923 Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 13)

The Brewery has expanded further, and the well is still shown in the yard behind it. A few more buildings are shown to the west of Parkers Croft Road, and two new buildings in what was once the playground. The area of garden still shown in 1903 is no longer shown as such but still remains as a separately-enclosed area of land.

9.0 Conclusion

The documentary and archaeological evidence relating to the 14th-century Austin Friary indicates that the site of the Friary is likely to be, at least in part, situated within the Study Area. The Friary was demolished in 1539 and much of its fabric was sold off. However, it is likely that some of the building foundations remain intact. Excavations within the vicinity have revealed human remains, which may be associated either with the Friary or with the medieval St. John's Hospital, and stones thought to be from the Friary buildings have also been found, but no clear picture of the exact location and extent of the Friary has developed. It is possible that some stones from the Friary buildings may have been used in the foundations of the former Brewery that stood in the Study Area - it is not clear, however, whether or not these stones were dug up from within the Study Area. If parts of the Brewery foundations remain intact, these stones, possibly remains of pillars (Cherry 1890), may be buried within the Study Area.

Locating and investigating the site of the Austin Friary would be very important to the study of this area of medieval Stafford.

10.0 Provisional Recommendations

Some provisional recommendations are made here for further archaeological recording or investigation to be carried out ahead of development works on the site. Fig. 3 shows the locations of the areas for which recommendations have been made.

These recommendations are made on the basis of the results of this assessment, and are subject to approval by the Staffordshire County Archaeologist.

- **Building Recording**

Buildings 3 and 4 in Zone B should be subject to a brief appraisal, including a photographic survey, in order to ascertain whether or not they can provide any information about the late 19th- or early 20th-century brewing process.

- **Watching Brief**

It is possible that the Brewery building foundations may incorporate stone from the former Austin Friary. A Watching Brief should be carried out during all groundworks in Zones B and C.

- **Trial-Trenching**

A programme of trial-trenching should be carried out in those areas in all three Zones directly affected by development, in order to try to determine the location of the site of the medieval Austin Friary. The location of any trenches should be agreed with the Staffordshire County Archaeologist.

11.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Sarah Watt and edited by Catharine Mould. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds. Thanks are due to Chris Wardle of the Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record, to the staff of the Staffordshire County Record Office and the William Salt Library, and to the Tyler-Parkes Partnership for commissioning the study.

12.0 References

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Maps

Ordnance Survey

- 1882 First Edition 25" Sheets 37.11 and 37.15
1901 Second Edition 25" Sheets 37.11 and 37.15
1923 Third Edition 25" Sheets 37.11 and 37.15

Others

- c.1610 Speed's Map of Stafford
- 1732 Richard Drakeford's Estate in Forebridge and Baswich
- 1775 Yates's Map of Staffordshire
- c.1800 Map of Several Estates belonging to Sir William Jerningham in the...Manor of Forebridge
- c.1830 Map of Castlechurch Parish

1851 Forebridge Drainage and Enclosure Award and Map (Map 11)

1875 Description and Plan of Forebridge

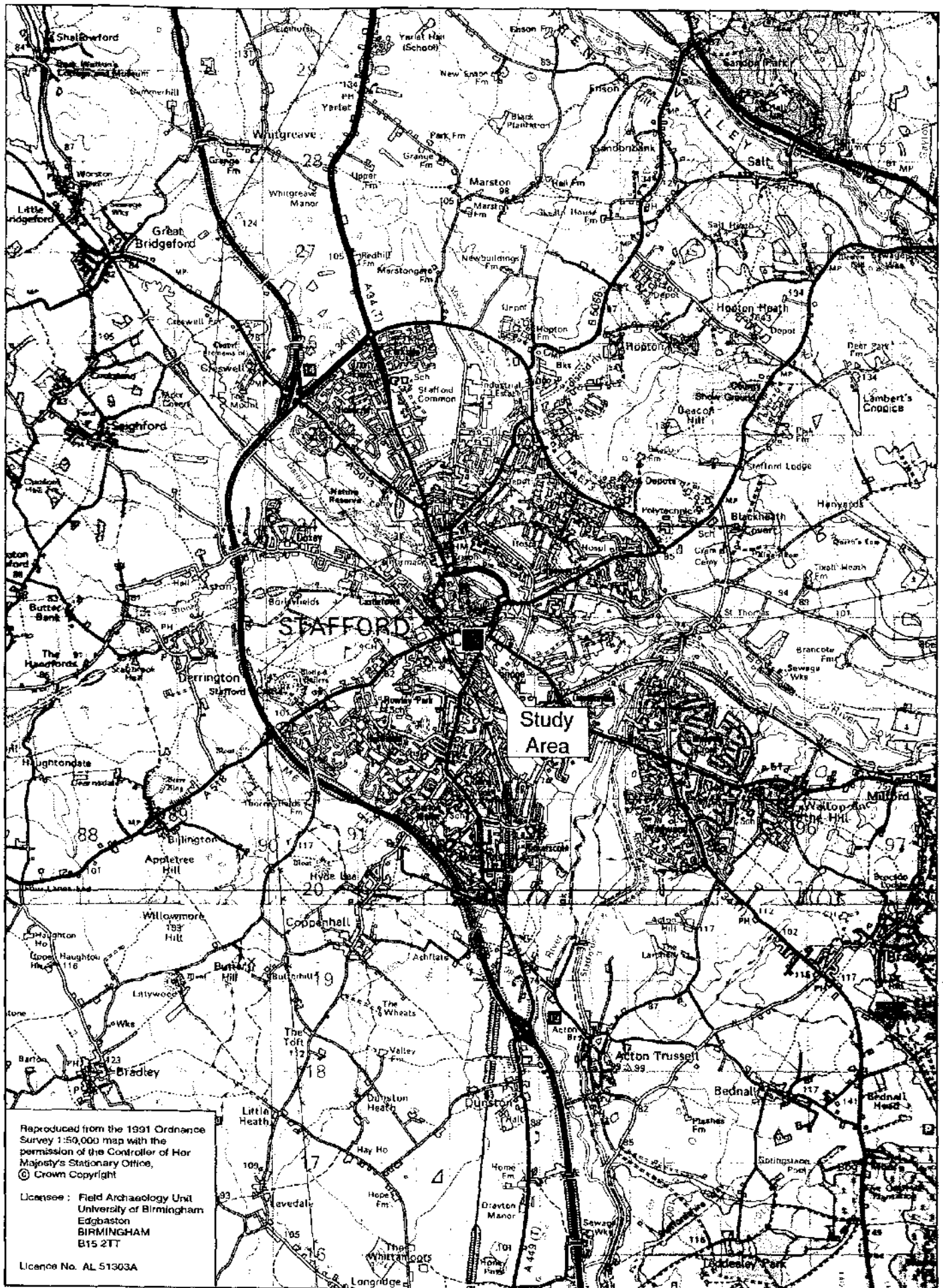


Fig.1

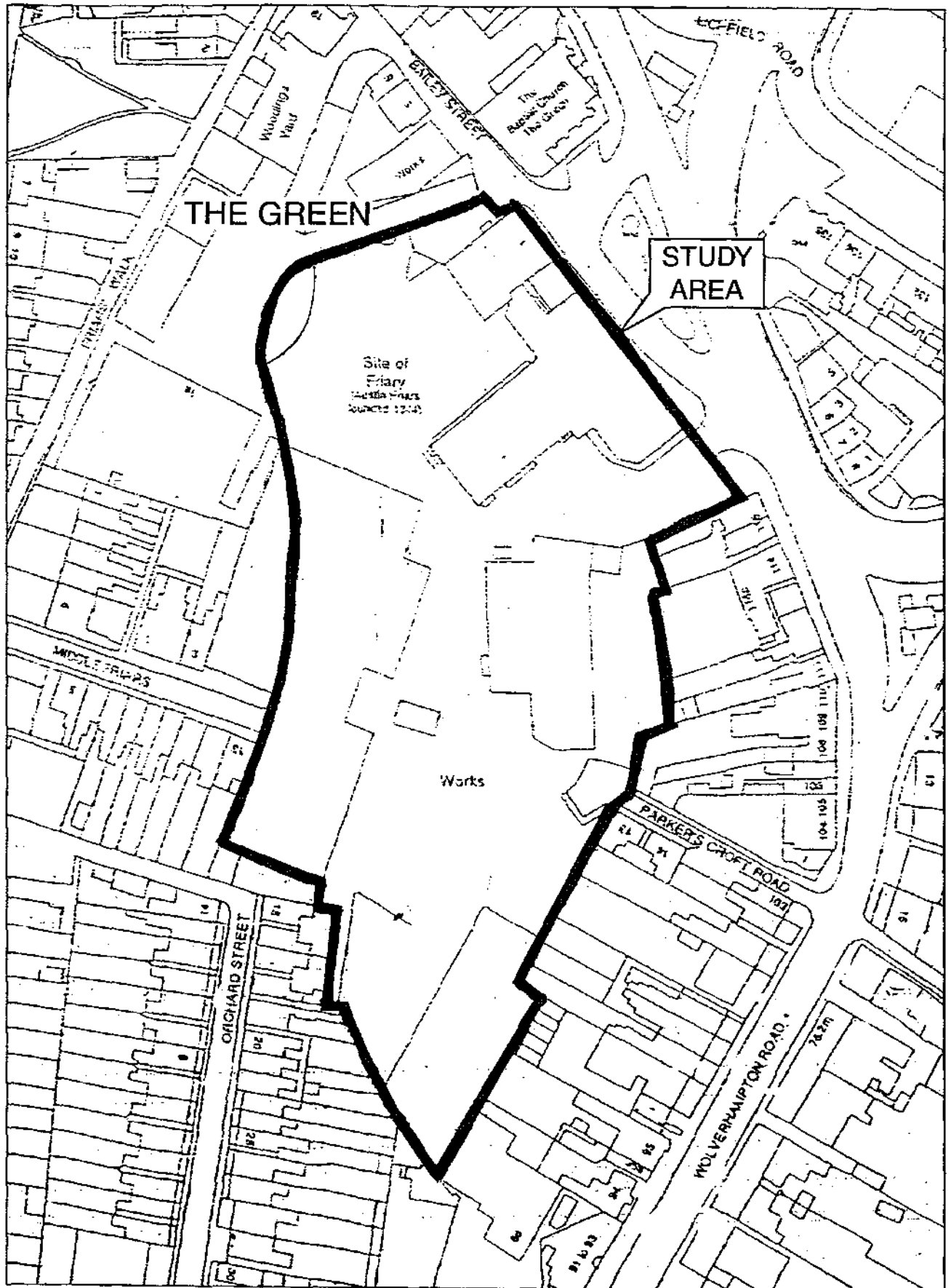


Fig.2

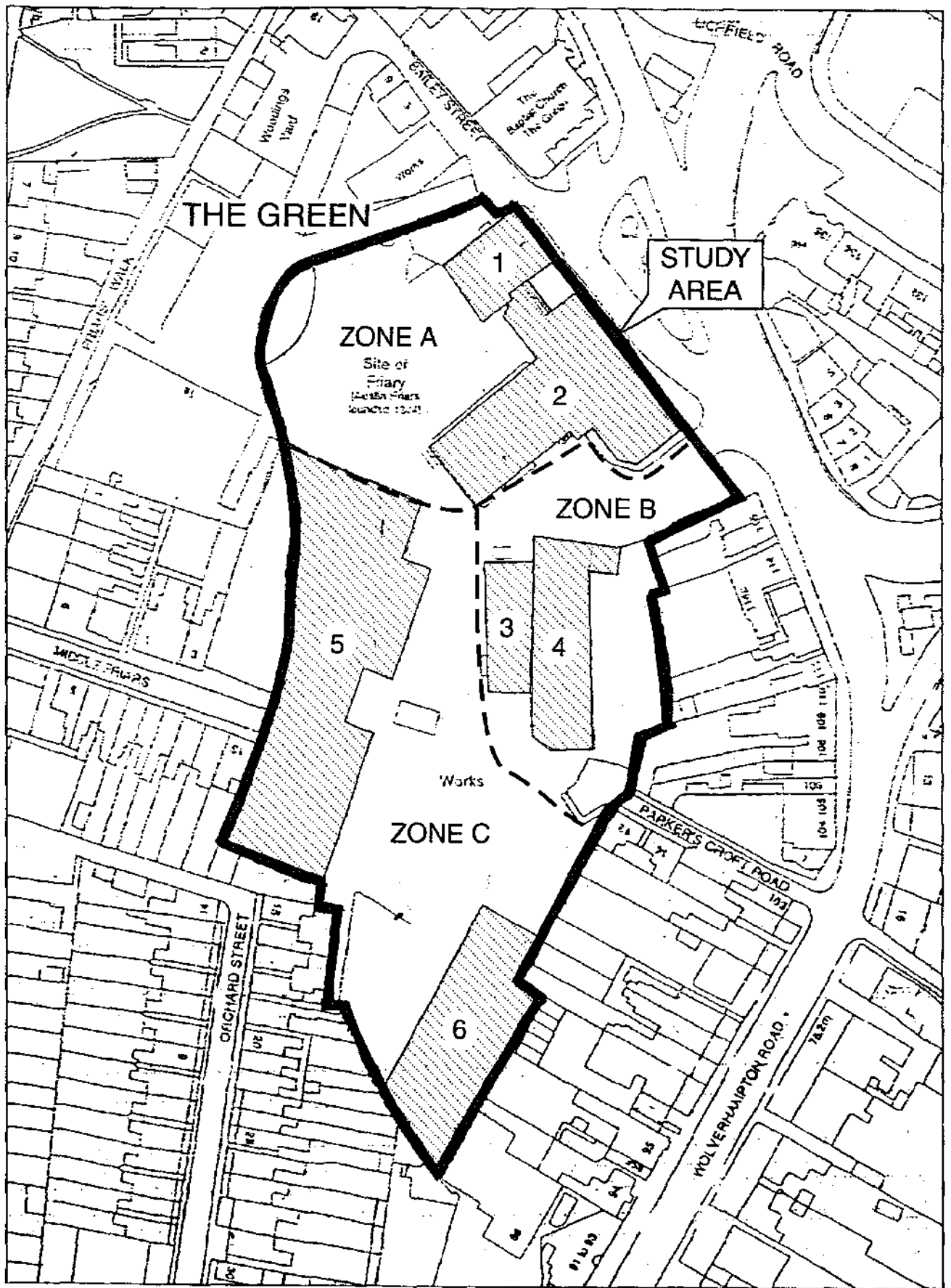


Fig.3

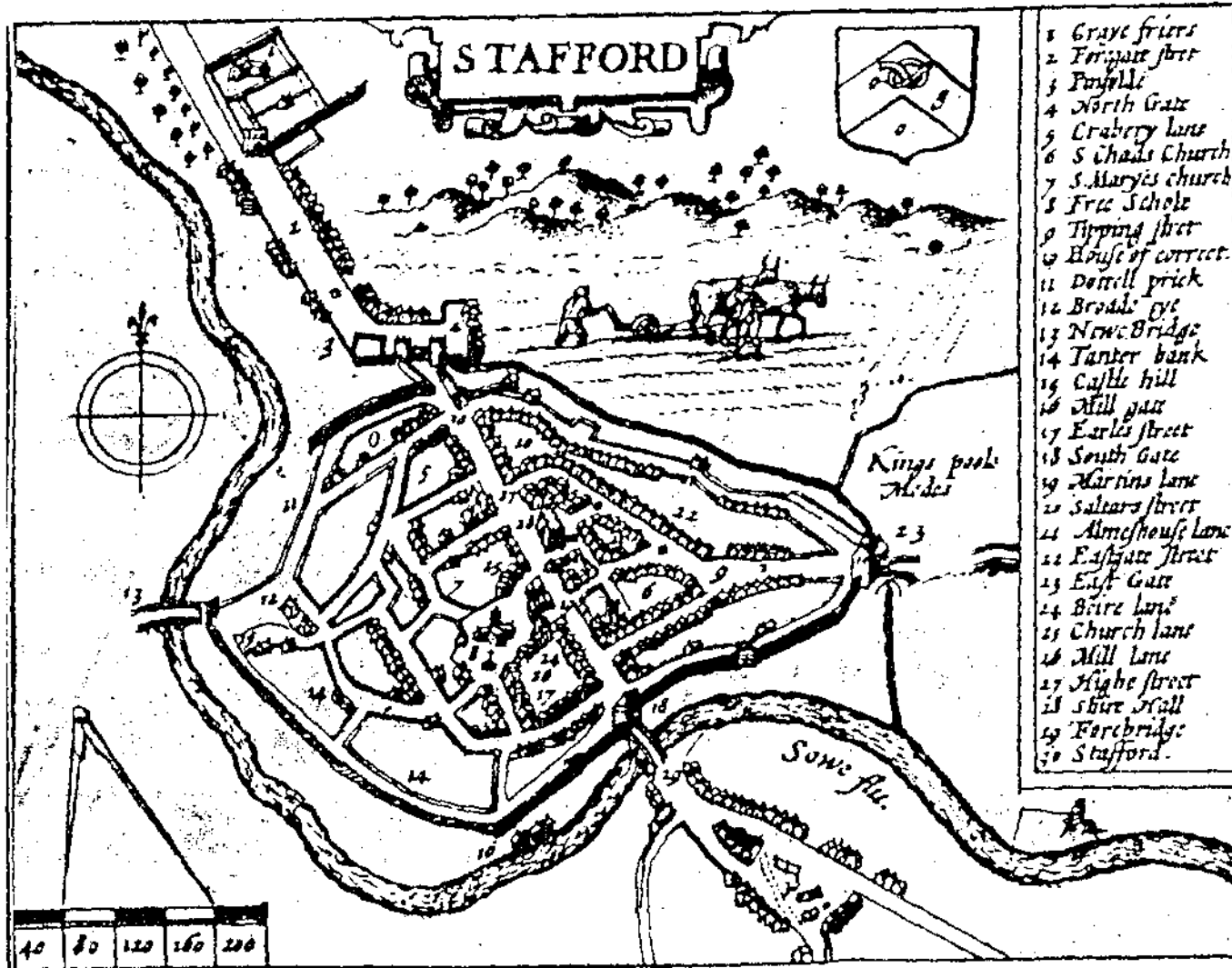


Fig.4

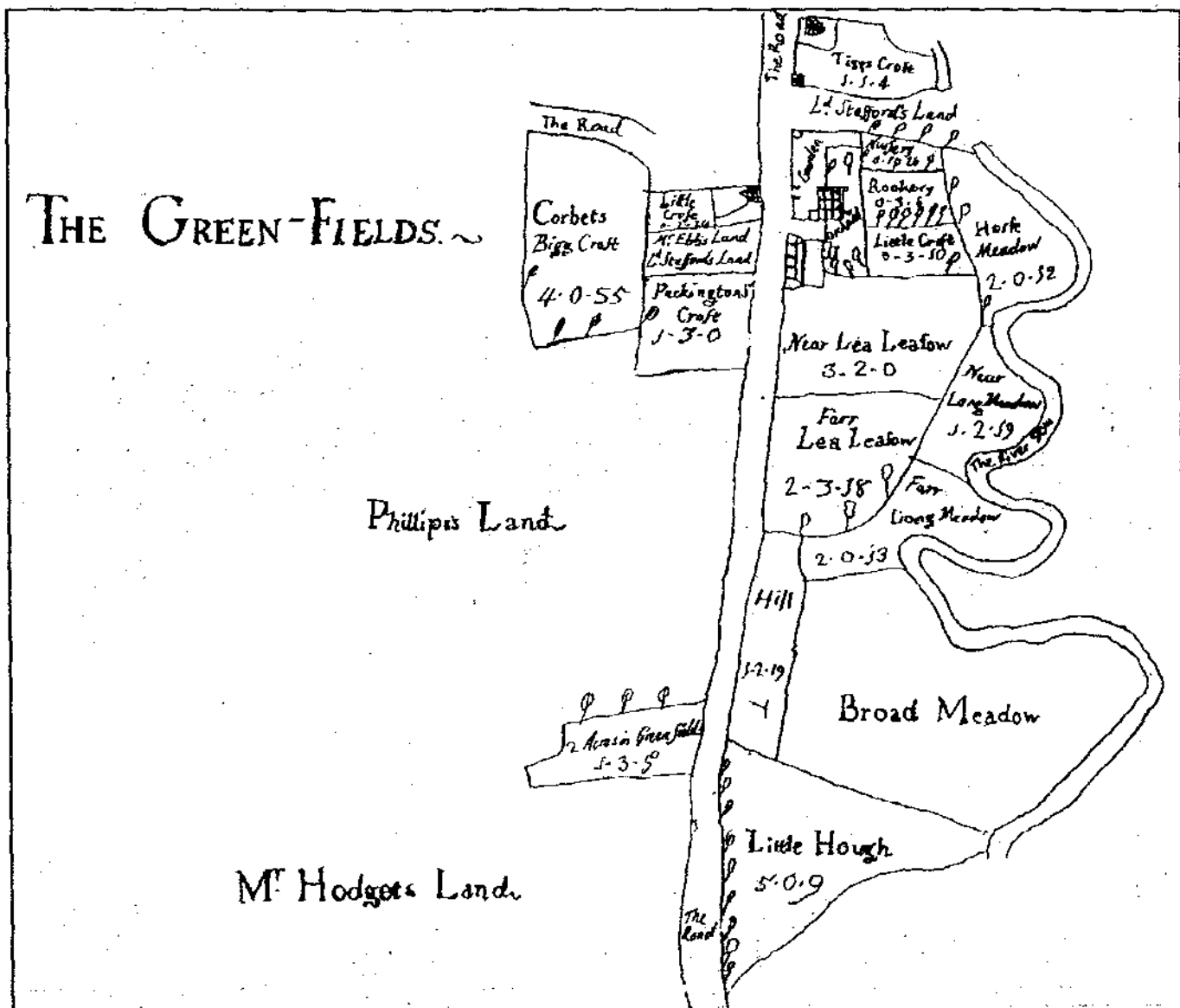


Fig.5

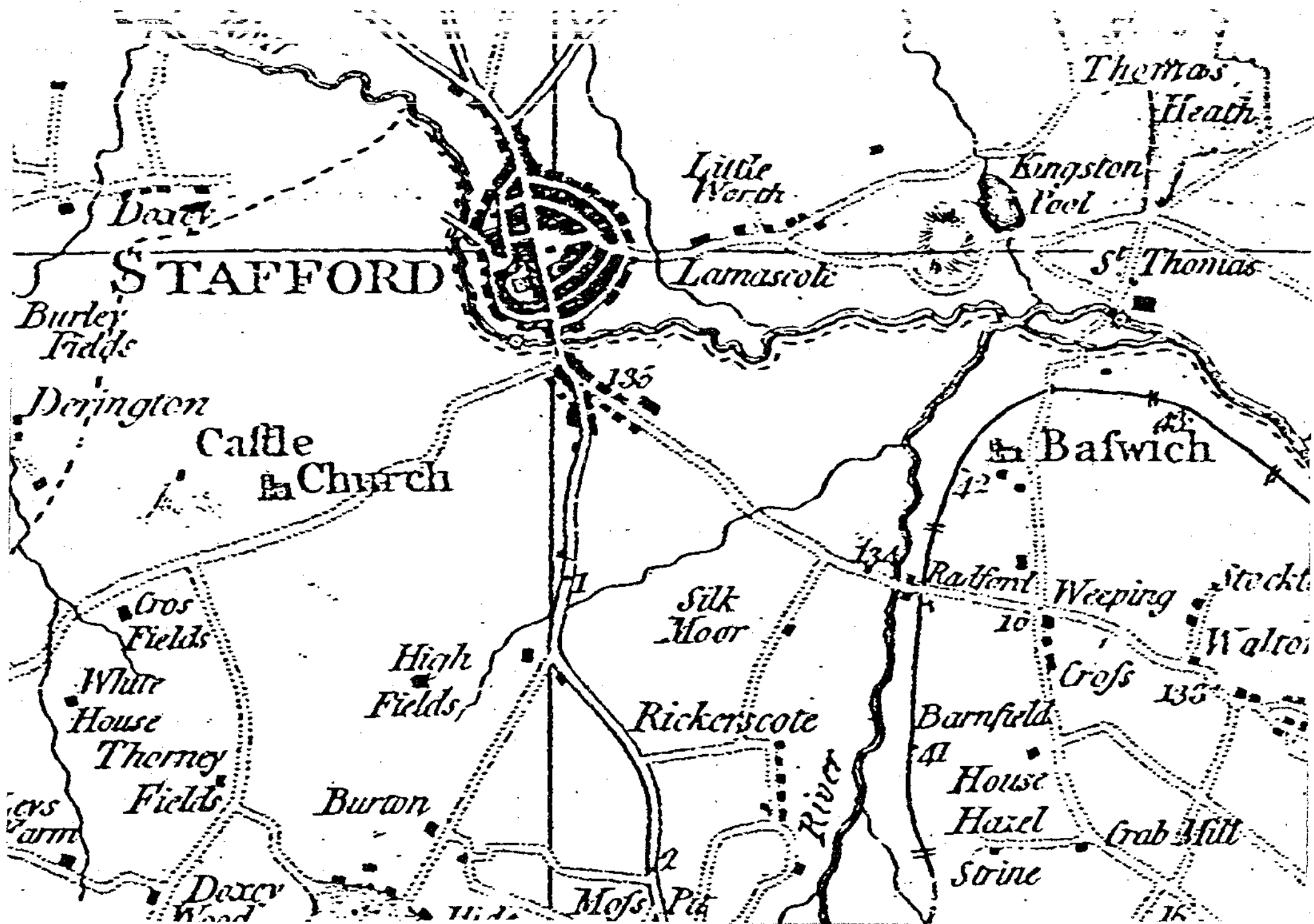


Fig.6

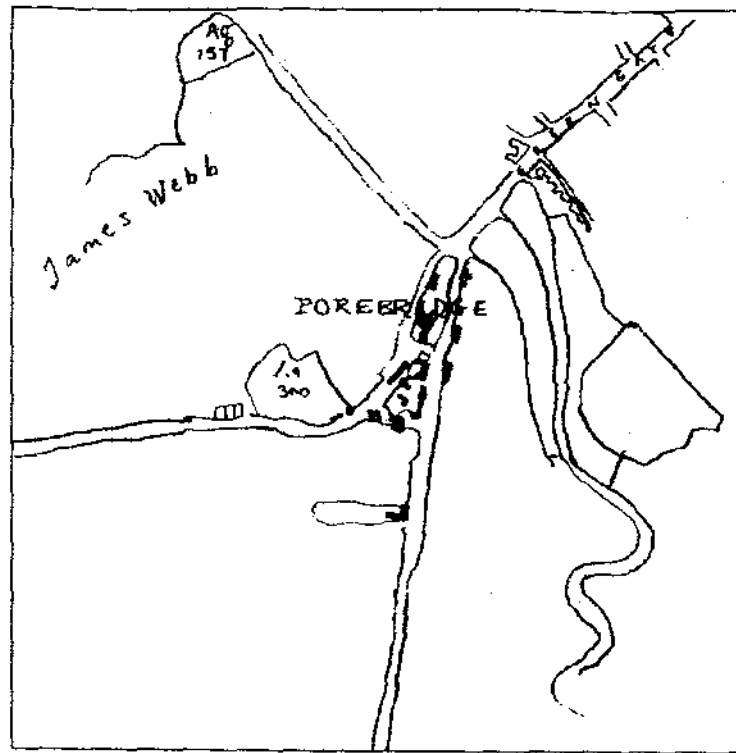


Fig.7

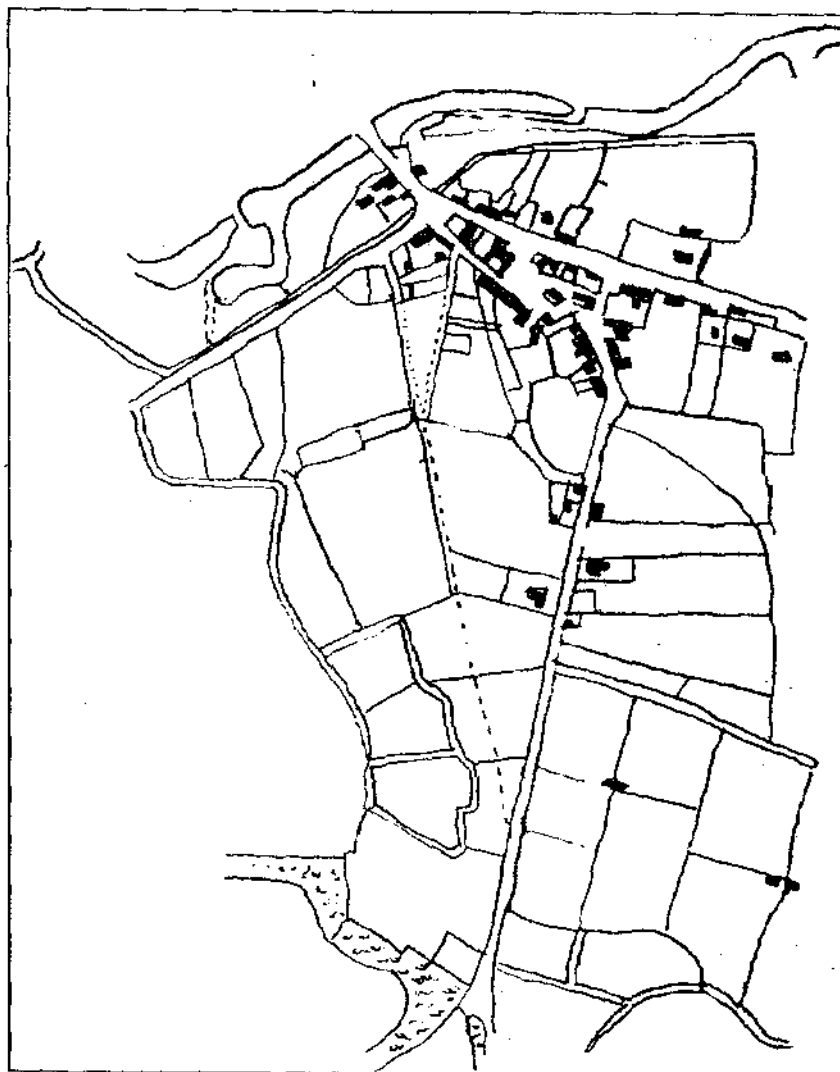


Fig.8

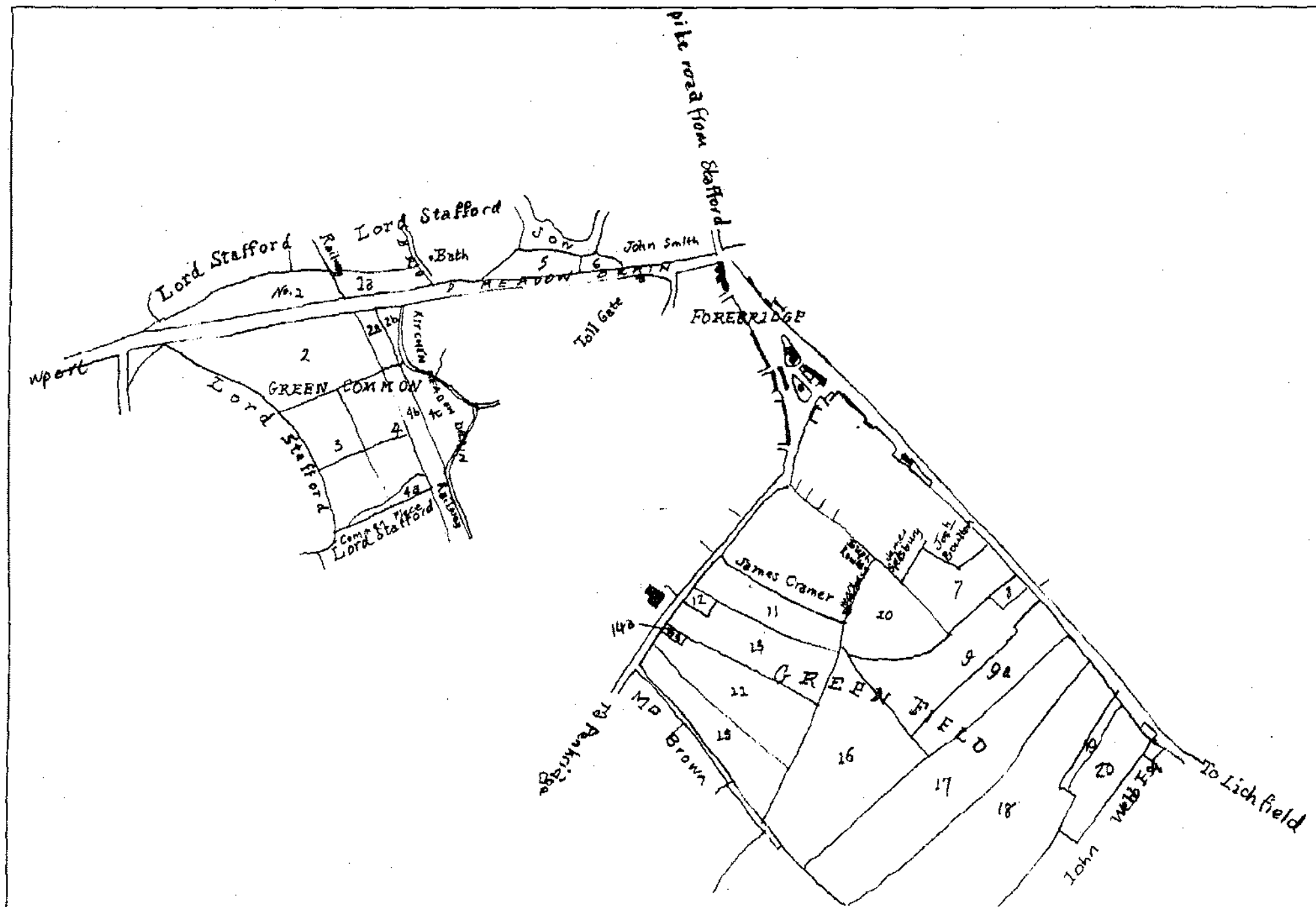


Fig.9

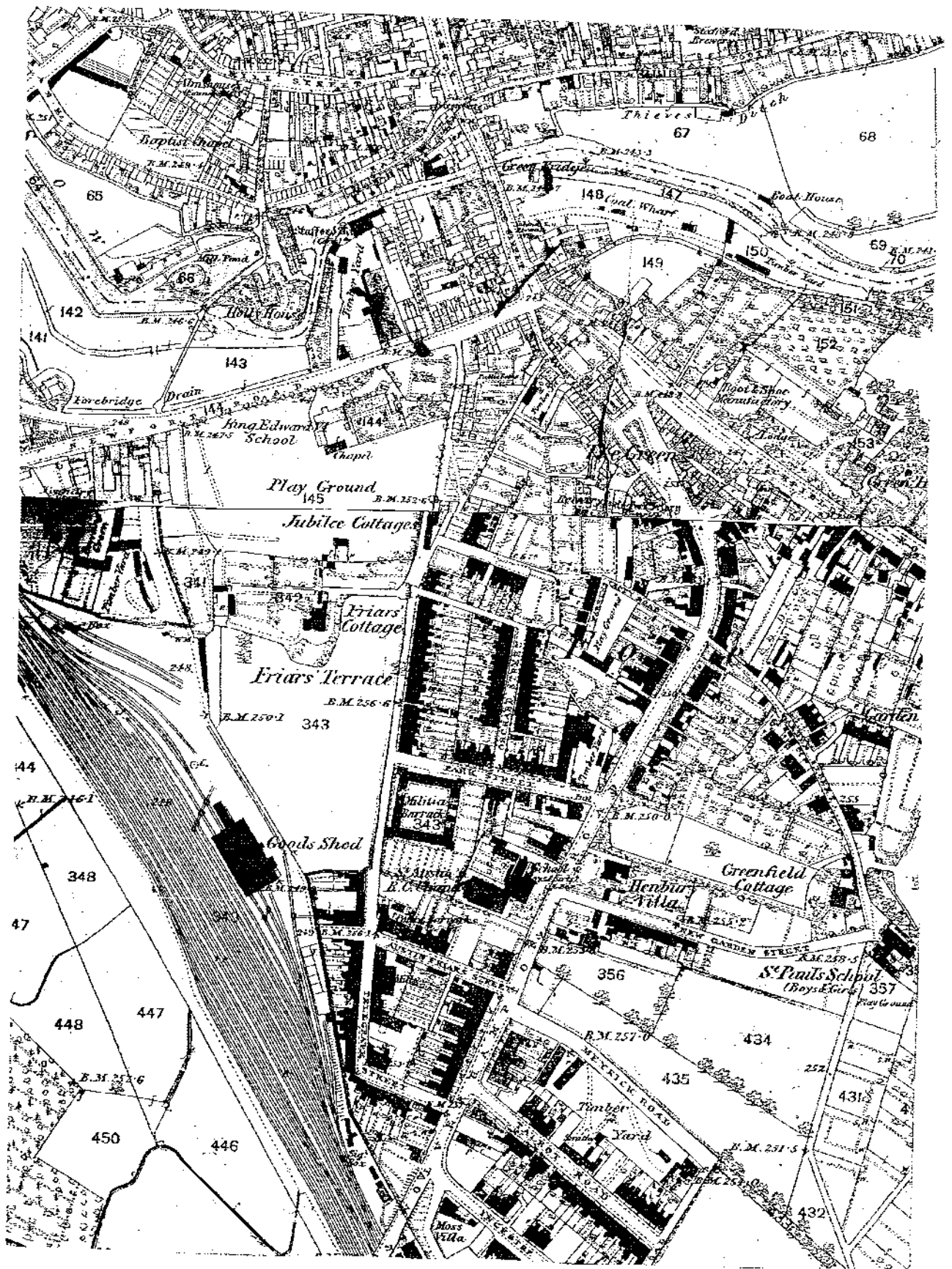


Fig.11

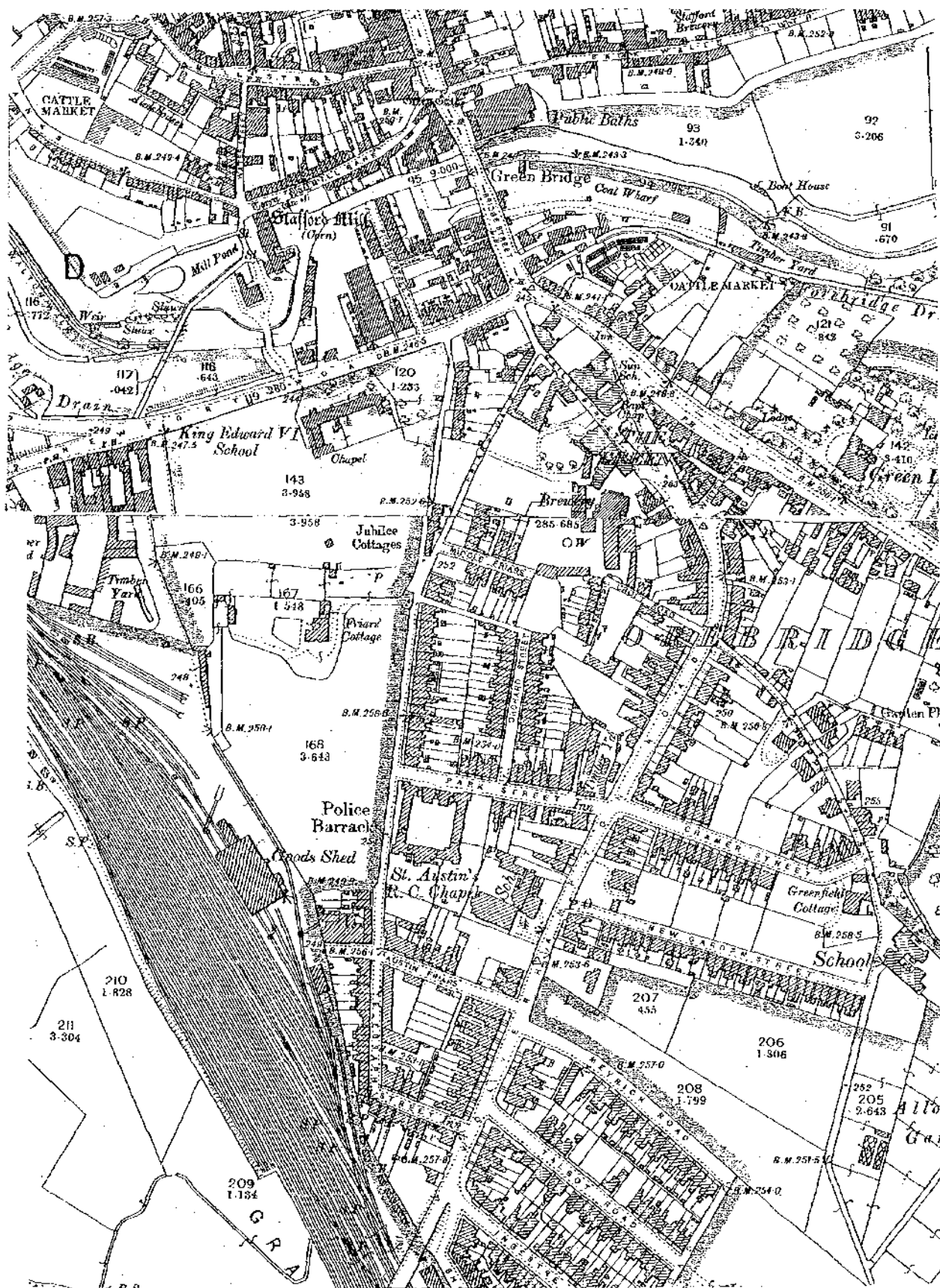


Fig.12

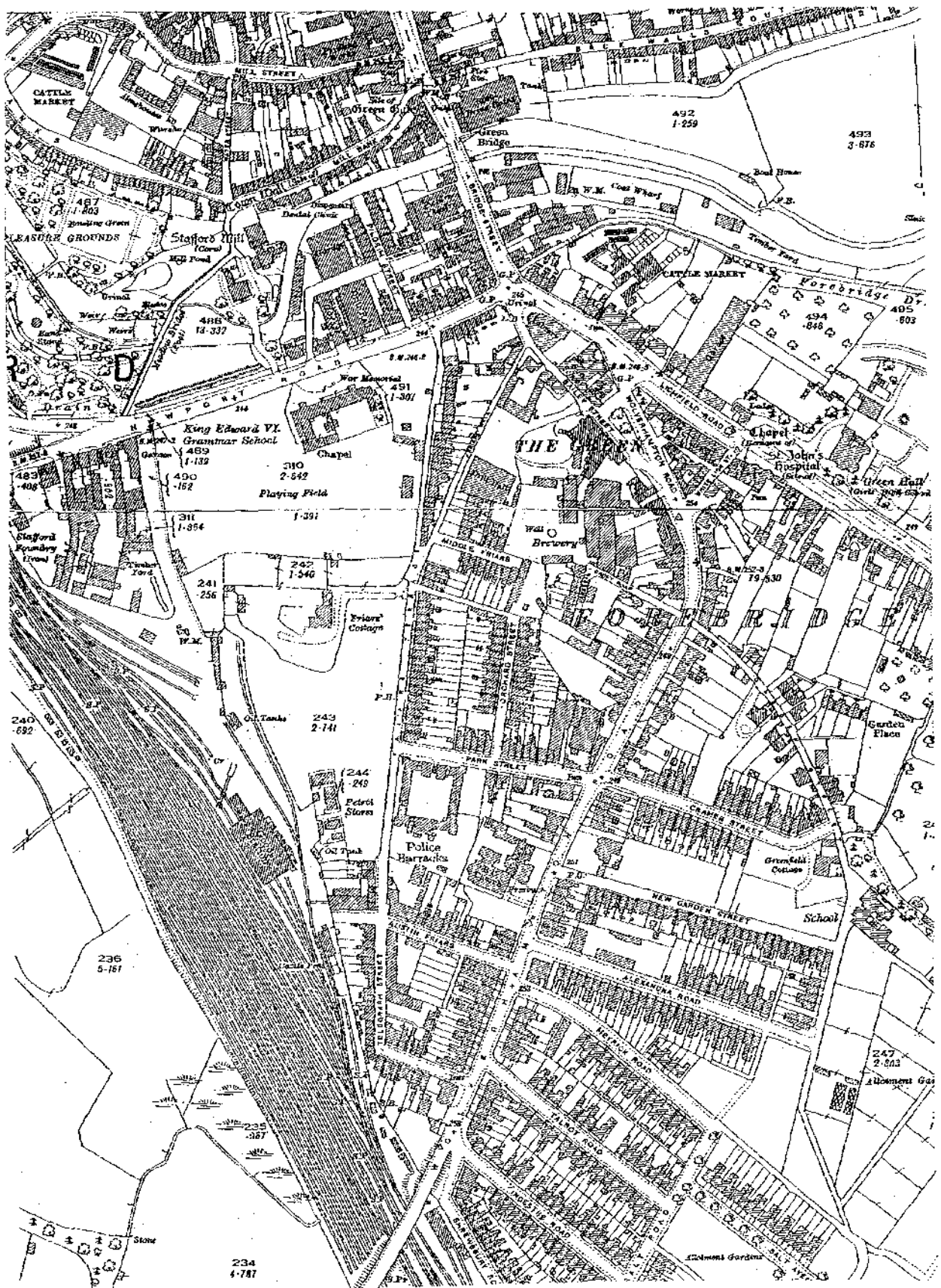


Fig.13

