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**Trent Valley Road,  
Lichfield, Staffordshire:**

**an archaeological desk-based  
assessment**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



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**Trent Valley Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire:  
an archaeological desk-based assessment**

by  
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## Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Summary.....   | 1 |
| 1.0 Introduction.....                                | 1 |
| 2.0 Site Location.....                               | 1 |
| 3.0 Objectives .....                                 | 1 |
| 4.0 Method.....                                      | 2 |
| 5.0 Geology and Topography .....                     | 2 |
| 6.0 Archaeological and Historical Context.....       | 2 |
| 6.1 Prehistoric to Roman .....                       | 2 |
| 6.2 Saxon.....                                       | 3 |
| 6.3 Medieval.....                                    | 4 |
| 6.4 Post-medieval to 20th Century .....              | 4 |
| 7.0 Site Inspection (Fig. 3) .....                   | 5 |
| 8.0 Conclusions and Provisional Recommendations..... | 6 |
| 8.1 Below-Ground Archaeology .....                   | 6 |
| 8.2 Above-Ground Archaeology.....                    | 6 |
| 8.3 Provisional Recommendations.....                 | 6 |
| 9.0 Acknowledgements.....                            | 6 |
| 10.0 References.....                                 | 7 |

## List of Figures

(Historic maps are aligned with north at the top of the page)

- Fig. 1 General location map
- Fig. 2 Study Area
- Fig. 3 Study Area with zones
- Fig. 4 William Yates's Map of Staffordshire (1775)
- Fig. 5 Greenwood's Map (1820)
- Fig. 6 Map of the City and Borough of Lichfield (1838)
- Fig. 7 Tithe map for St. Michael's, Lichfield (1849)
- Fig. 8 1882 Ordnance Survey
- Fig. 9 1902 Ordnance Survey
- Fig. 10 1923 Ordnance Survey

## **Trent Valley Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire: an archaeological desk-based assessment**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out in July 2001 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of Lovell, as part of an application for planning permission. The planning application involves the demolition of existing factory buildings at Trent Valley Road, Lichfield, in Staffordshire (NGR SK 1313 0978), and the construction of new houses. The assessment examined the available documentary and cartographic evidence to identify any areas of potential archaeological interest. No archaeological information on the site was provided in the Design Brief. The assessment found no evidence for archaeological remains existing on the proposed development site, and its archaeological potential was considered to be low.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

This archaeological assessment has been prepared by BUFAU on behalf of Lovell in advance of an application by them for planning permission involving demolition of existing buildings on the site, and the erection of new houses. The site is located in Lichfield in Staffordshire (Fig. 1). The aim of the report is to provide a summary of known and potential archaeological information for the site, based on existing data, in order to enable appropriate archaeological mitigation strategies to be devised. The assessment is written in accordance with a Design Brief prepared by the Staffordshire County Archaeologist, and adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

### **2.0 Site Location**

The site, hereafter referred to as the Study Area, is situated to the northeast of the centre of Lichfield in Staffordshire (NGR SK 1313 0978). The Study Area is bordered by a railway to the south, and beyond that, Burton Old Road, a public footpath to the east, the backs of residential plots on Trent Valley Road to the north, and a playground to the west (Fig. 2).

### **3.0 Objectives**

The objectives of this assessment were to determine the likely survival and significance of archaeological remains within the Study Area, to identify the need for any further

archaeological work in advance of the proposed development, and to identify potential requirements for any *in situ* preservation of archaeological remains.

#### **4.0 Method**

A brief inspection of the Study Area was carried out in order to assess current conditions and to note any visible features of potential archaeological interest. Documentary research of primary and secondary sources, including maps, was undertaken at Staffordshire County Record Office and Lichfield Joint Record Office. The Staffordshire County Sites and Monuments Record, the primary source of archaeological information for the county, was also consulted.

For convenience of description, the Study Area has been divided into two zones, A and B (Fig. 3).

#### **5.0 Geology and Topography**

Lichfield lies on Keuper Sandstone. The high ground of Cannock Chase lies to the west, and to the east are the valleys of the Trent and the Tame. The ground slopes down about 30m from the northwest of the city to the sandstone shelf on which the cathedral stands. St. Michael's church, to the west of the Study Area, stands on a spur at Greenhill, part of a ridge which lies south and east of the city centre (Greenslade 1990).

The Study Area has possible drift cover of sand and gravel deposits overlying solid strata of the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation, comprising red-brown sandstones, with occasional pebbles and mudstones (Cartwright 2000).

#### **6.0 Archaeological and Historical Context**

##### ***6.1 Prehistoric to Roman***

No sites of this date were recorded on the SMR for the Study Area.

In prehistoric times, Lichfield lay in the middle of forestland, an extensive area of open woodland which supported a small population in small areas of clearance (Gould 1976).

A scatter of Mesolithic flint fragments, including a flake and four broken blades, have been found in St. Michael's churchyard, about 800m to the southwest of the Study Area, and may indicate the site of a flint industry (SMR 2637). The flints were found within the disturbed context of a medieval, or possibly earlier, cemetery, where seven phases of burial were found, including one crouched burial and 48 extended inhumations (Wilson

1978). Another area of flint chips was found during metal-detecting at Streethay, to the north of the Study Area (SMR 5126). Several undated, but possibly prehistoric cropmarks have been observed to the north of Streethay, including a ring ditch, a linear feature, and an enclosure; a soilmark just west of Fulfen Wood, about 1.2km to the east of the Study Area (SMR 2080) has also been observed on aerial photographs. Traces of a Neolithic settlement were discovered on the sandstone terrace occupied by Lichfield Cathedral.

Three Roman coins, of Severus Alexander, Constantine I and Constantine II, were found at Ash Grove in 1969, about 100m to the west of the Study Area. To the south of the city of Lichfield, Roman Ryknild Street meets Roman Watling Street at *Letocetum*, modern Wall, which originated as a 1<sup>st</sup>-century A.D. fort and developed as a civilian settlement in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Ryknild Street (SMR 5155 and 1144) passes about 500m to the east of the Study Area. The street was built across existing fields, suggesting that there was settlement here prior to its construction (Greenslade 1990). Scattered finds of Romano-British date have been found in Lichfield city, although nothing to suggest significant occupation.

## 6.2 Saxon

There is very little archaeological evidence for this period in Lichfield, and no information for the Study Area. The dearth of Saxon pottery or stonework may indicate a forest economy which was based on wood and leather, but it is unlikely that no pottery was used at all (Gould 1976).

The name Lichfield indicates land attached to *Lwytycoed*, the Celtic name for the Roman town of *Letocetum*. *Caer Lwytycoed* means the defended town or fort of the grey wood, another indication of the forest origins of the area.

Lichfield was one of the estates granted to Wilfrid, bishop of York, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Lichfield may have been attractive to Wilfrid because of the presence of Ryknild Street, which linked the area to the northeast, or perhaps because there was already a church in the area (Greenslade 1990). Lichfield was made Chad's see, and his church probably stood on the site of the present cathedral. Lichfield became the ecclesiastical centre of the Mercian kingdom in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and grew in importance. King Wulfherc and King Coelred were buried at the cathedral.

Lichfield lay on the Danish side of Watling Street. The disruption caused by the Danish invasion in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century probably included the despoilation of the cathedral. By 1086 it was no longer a bishop's seat and had become a minster church. The name Lichfield, rather than referring to a single settlement at this time, seems to have referred to several settlements in the neighbourhood of the cathedral; one of these settlements may have been on the high ground at Greenhill near St. Michael's church, to the west of the Study Area, and another at Bech, southeast of Stowe and about 500m southwest of the Study Area, now recorded on the SMR as a deserted Domesday village (SMR 2625).

### ***6.3 Medieval***

The limits of the medieval town of Lichfield were marked by a ditch in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century (Greenslade 1990), and the Study Area lay about 1km to the east of this. At this time, Lichfield had been re-established as an ecclesiastical centre. A new town was laid out on a laddered grid plan, and a Sunday market began in 1153. The grid of streets was separated from the Cathedral by the pools and marshes that lay in the bottom of the valley. The Study Area was probably part of the open fields around the town. Trent Valley Road did not then exist. The stretch of Burton Old Road which follows the line of Ryknild Street was of importance by the 12<sup>th</sup> century as part of the route between the southwest and the northeast of the country.

In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Lichfield again became a see. Burgages outside the ditched boundary of the town may have indicated some suburban development, although this did not extend as far to the east as the Study Area.

### ***6.4 Post-medieval to 20th Century***

#### 18th century

From 1729 several roads in Lichfield were turnpiked, including the Lichfield to Burton road. It was distumpiked in 1879.

#### 19th Century

An Act for Enclosure of Lichfield City, St. Michael's parish, was passed in 1815, but neither the Award or the Map are available.

Trent Valley Road was built under an Act of 1832 as an extension of Church Street (Greenslade 1990). It bypassed the less direct route along Burton Old Road, which passes adjacent to the southwest corner of the Study Area, and continued to Streethay. Burton Old Road led to Burton via Ryknild Street. On a plan from 1838 (Fig. 6), it can clearly be seen how the new road was inserted through existing field boundaries, and how these boundaries were retained subsequently.

In 1838 (Fig. 6), Trent Valley Road was known as the New Road to Burton-on-Trent. The Study Area comprised two fields and extended southwards to the (Burton) Old Road. Few buildings are shown in the area, one being the Yew Tree fronting onto the southern side of the Old Road.

From 1847, when the Trent Valley Railway from Stafford to Rugby was opened along the northeastern boundary of the city, Trent Valley Road formed the link between the main railway station and the city centre. The South Staffordshire Line, which forms the southern boundary of the Study Area, was opened in 1849. At this time, the Study Area

comprised rectangular strips of land, two of which were meadow and pasture owned by the Earl of Lichfield and occupied by Martin Roberts. The fields were part of Crossfield, which was one of the open fields around the town. A Foot Road formed the eastern border of the Study Area, as it does today, and the boundary between the parishes of Lichfield and Streethay. The railway had not been constructed at the time the tithe map was produced in 1849 (Fig. 7), and the fields extended south to what is now the Old Burton Road. The land surrounding the Study Area to the west and south was similarly divided into rectangular strips of varying sizes. The tithe map indicates that the area had probably been part of several open fields known as Spearhill, Crossfield, Walkers Croft or Keeling Pit, and Boley. The subsequent rectangular enclosures are all named as being 'part of' one of these fields, and comprise mainly arable land with some gardens and closes.

By 1882 (Fig. 8), a terrace of six houses had been erected in the southeastern corner of the field that had been part of the Study Area but had been separated from it by the insertion of the railway. A pond existed within the study area, against the railway, and a very small enclosure lay against the western field boundary. A nursery with glasshouses lay to the north of the Study Area against Trent Valley Road, then known as Burton Road.

### 20th Century

In 1902 (Fig. 9), the public footpath forming the eastern border of the study area is shown to form the Municipal Borough Boundary between Lichfield and Streethay. The nursery had expanded. By 1923, some residential development had started to take place on the northern side of Trent Valley Road (Fig. 10). An aerial photograph from 1948 shows the site under three different crops with the pond against the railway in the south. The works building currently in the study area, was under construction in the 1950s. By 1966, it was a cardboard box works. A saw mill, plastic works and a bus depot lay to the east. By 1975, there was residential development to the west of the study area, and a storage tank in the north of the site.

## **7.0 Site Inspection (Fig. 3)**

**Zone A** comprises the northern area of the site and the works buildings. The northern border consists of a high laurel hedge, and the land is a tarmac car-parking area with a grass border by the hedge. No potential archaeological features were noted. The works buildings are modern and were built in the 1950s or later.

**Zone B** comprises the area to the south and east of the works building, including the access drive. Most of this zone was covered with hardstanding and had lorries parked in it at the time of the visit. Along the southern border was a man-made grassed bank running parallel to the railway, and the southwestern corner of the zone was overgrown with long grass and weeds. No potential archaeological features were noted.



## **8.0 Conclusions and Provisional Recommendations**

### ***8.1 Below-Ground Archaeology***

No former buildings within the study area are shown on the historical maps and no references were found to possible archaeological or historically significant features within it. Neither were any visible remains noted during the site inspection. However, given the study area's relative proximity to Ryknild Street Roman road, and the find of three Roman coins 100m or so to the west, there may be the potential for isolated finds of this date. During the medieval period, the study area is likely to have been part of the field system surrounding the town, as it remained into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An aerial photograph shows that it was still being cultivated into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***8.2 Above-Ground Archaeology***

No standing buildings of archaeological interest exist within Zones A or B.

### ***8.3 Provisional Recommendations***

The following provisional recommendations are intended to provide a framework for further archaeological mitigation which may be required. The recommendations are subject to approval or revision by the Staffordshire County Archaeologist. It should be noted that under government advice outlined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 there is a presumption in favour of preservation of significant features of archaeological or historical interest or, if this is not feasible, full recording in advance of development or demolition.

As the potential for archaeologically significant remains was considered to be limited, no further archaeological mitigation is likely to be required. However, it may be considered appropriate to maintain an intermittent watching brief during the development work.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

This report was written by Sarah Watt and edited by Simon Buteux. The figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds. Thanks are due to the staff of Staffordshire County Record Office and Lichfield Joint Record Office for their assistance.

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BUFAU

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c.1800 Map of Alrewas showing Open Meadows and ...Lichfield-Burton turnpike road  
1820    Greenwood's Map of Staffordshire  
Old Series Ordnance Survey 1" scale  
Old Series Ordnance Survey 2" scale  
1815    Map of the Commons and Waste Lands in Lichfield  
1838    Map of the City and Borough of Lichfield  
1849    Tithe map of St. Michael's, Lichfield  
1882    First Edition Ordnance Survey 25"  
1902    Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25"  
1923    Third Edition Ordnance Survey 25"

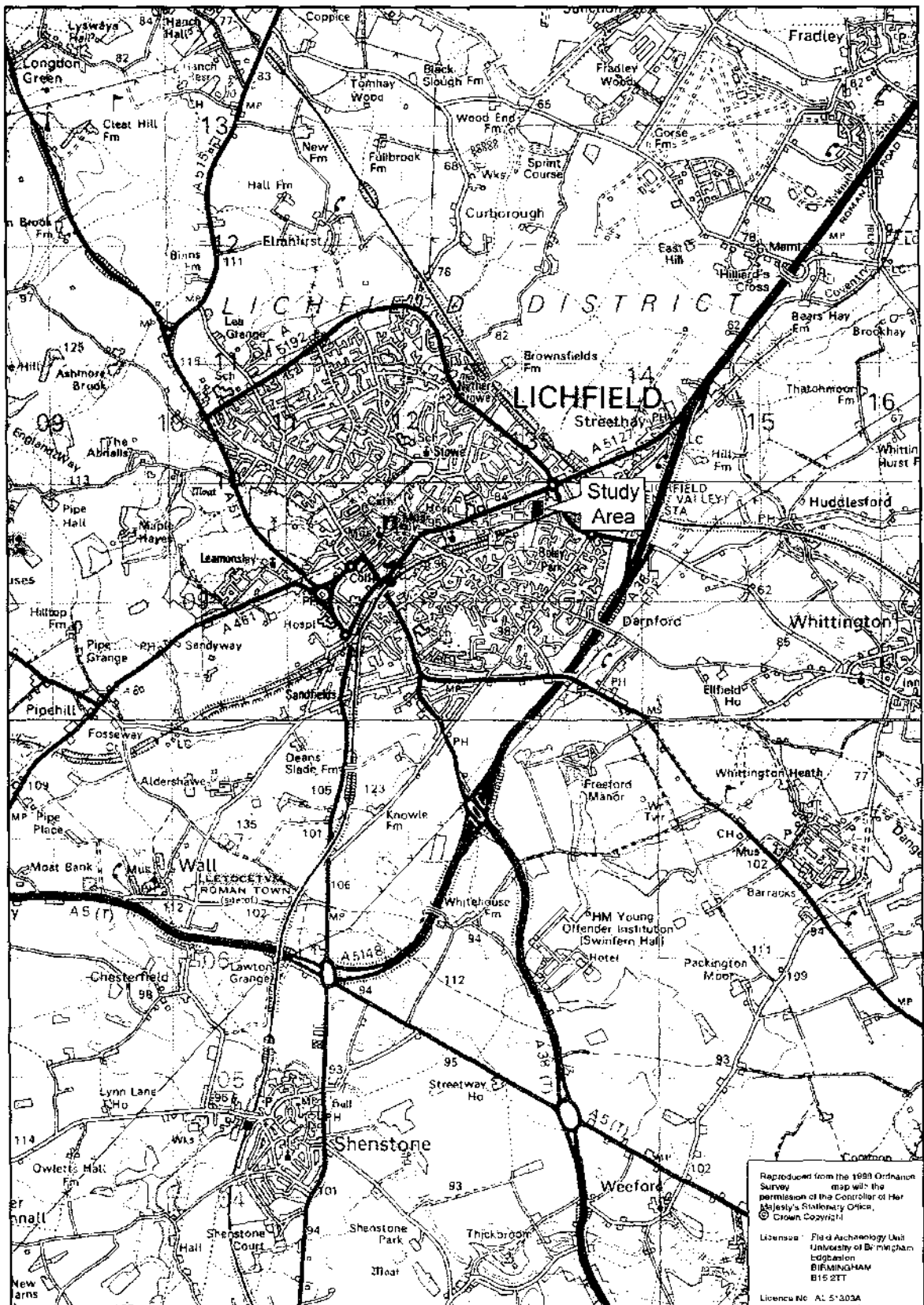


Fig.1

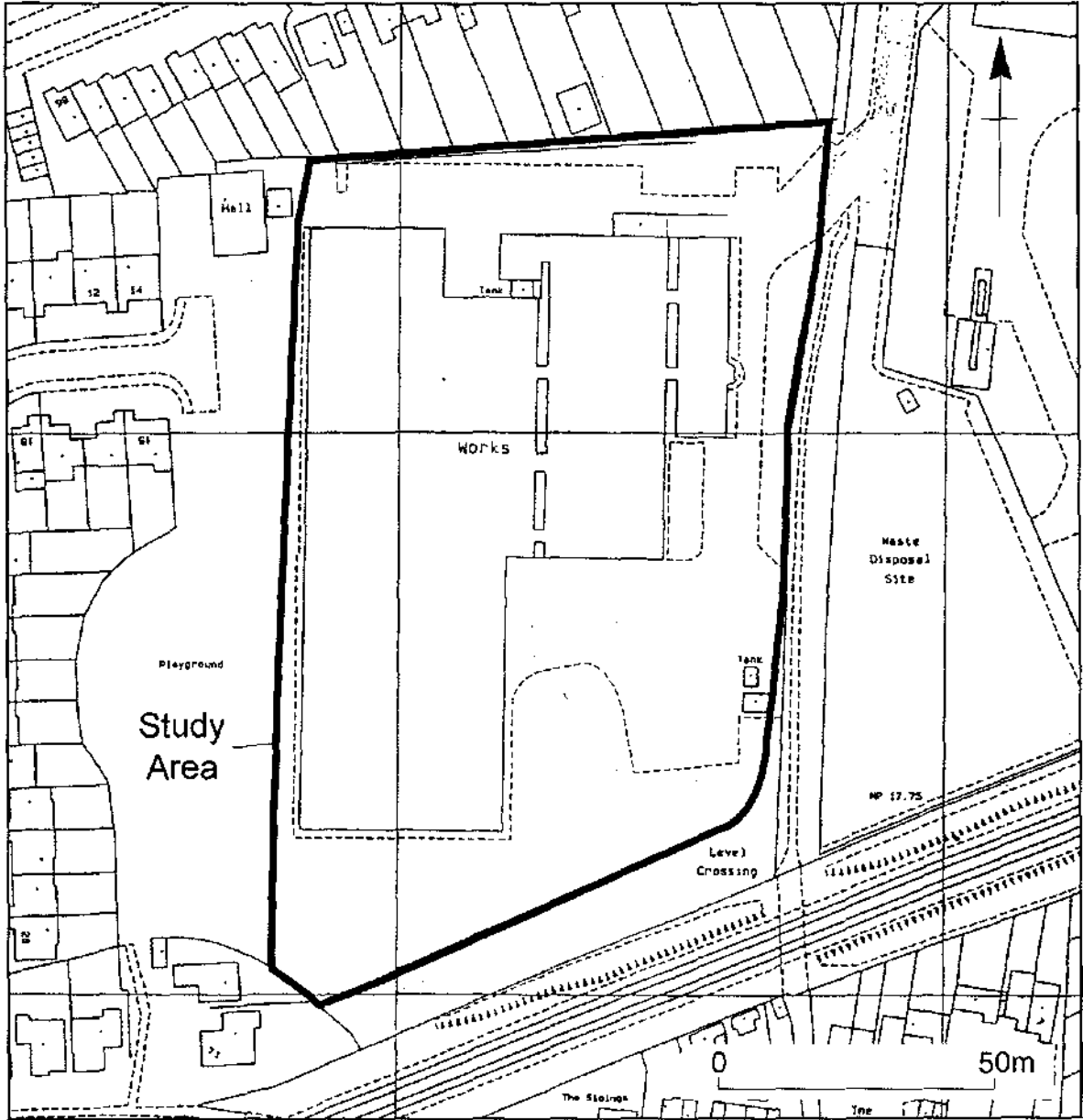


Fig.2

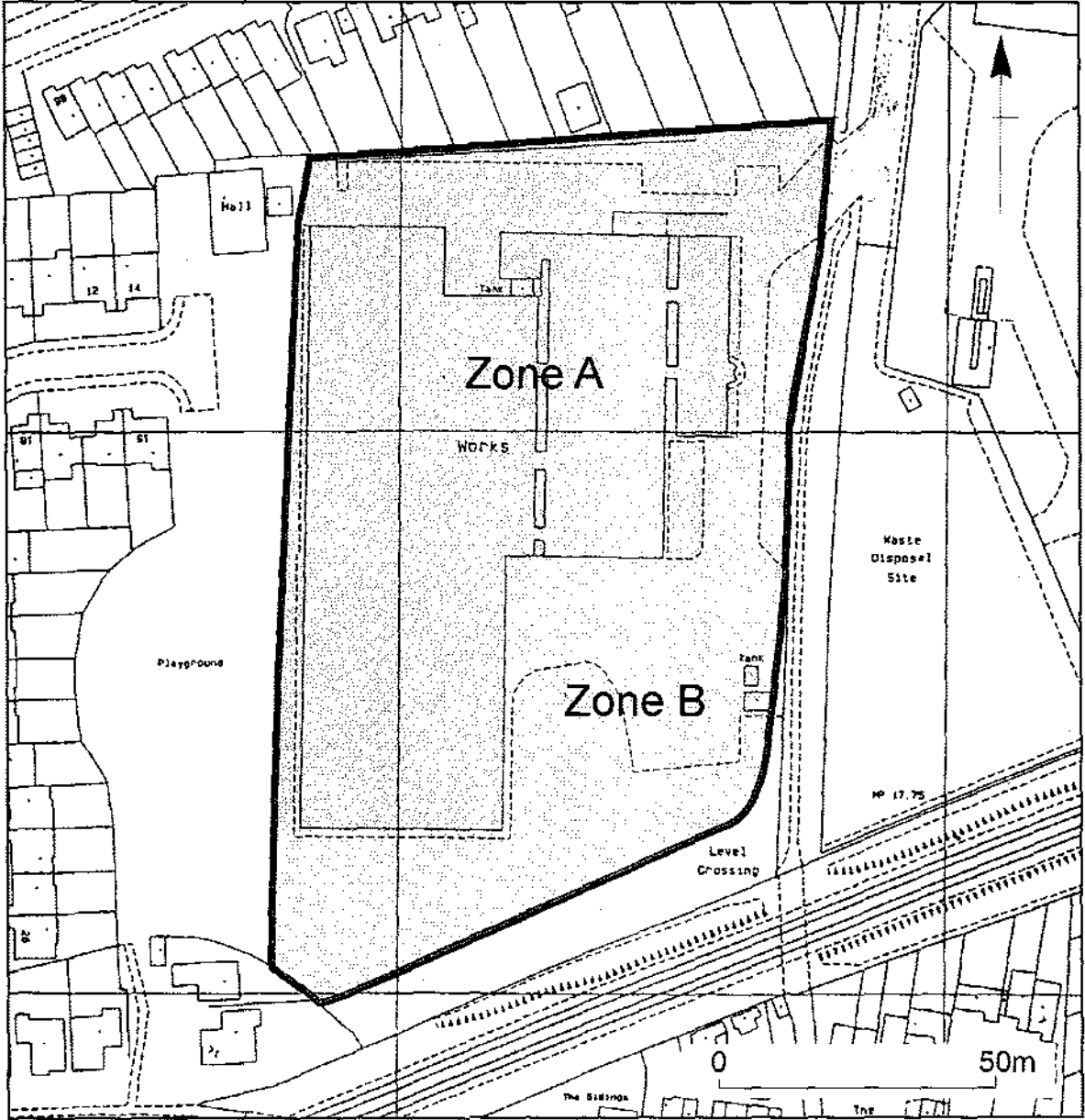


Fig.3

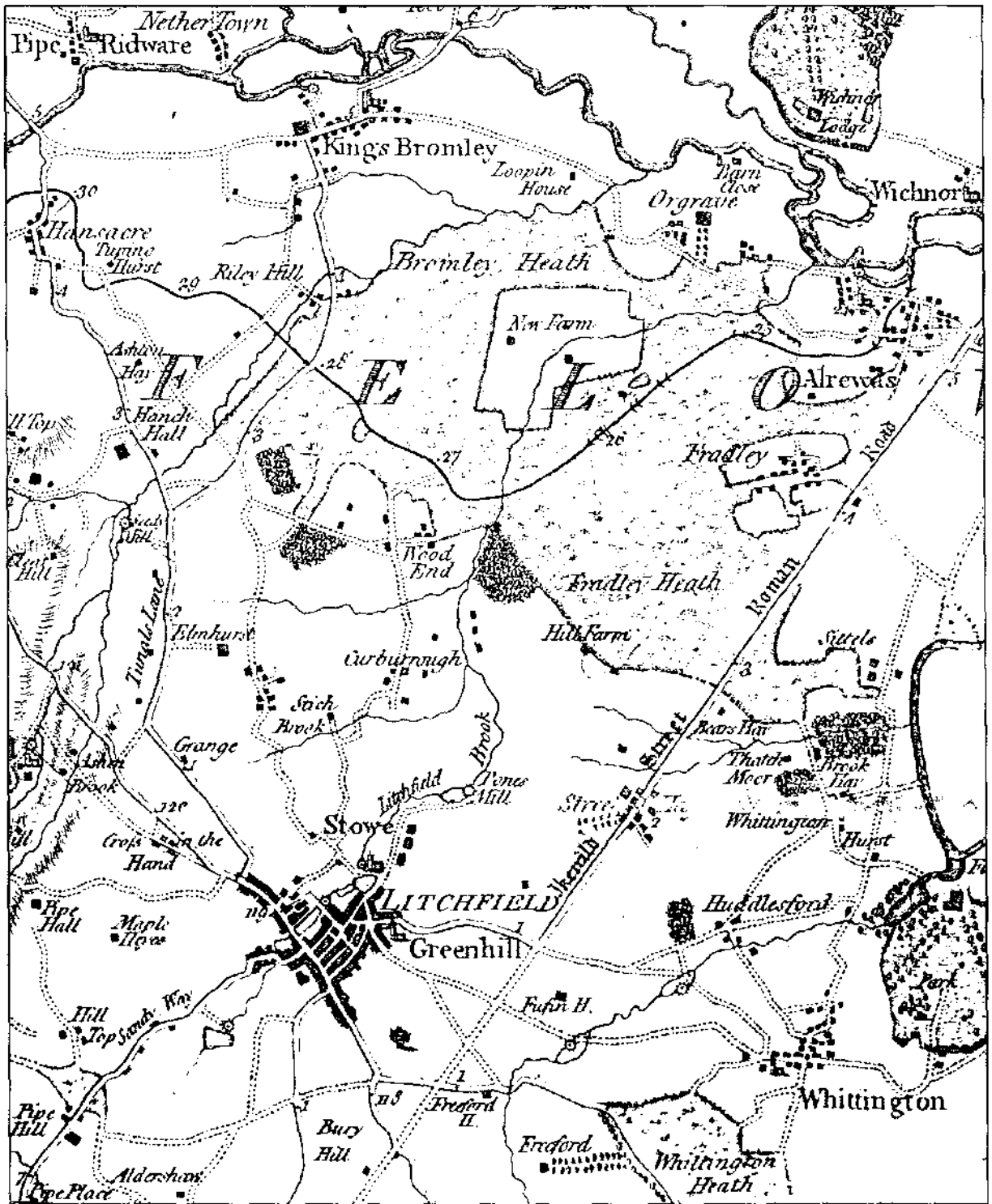


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

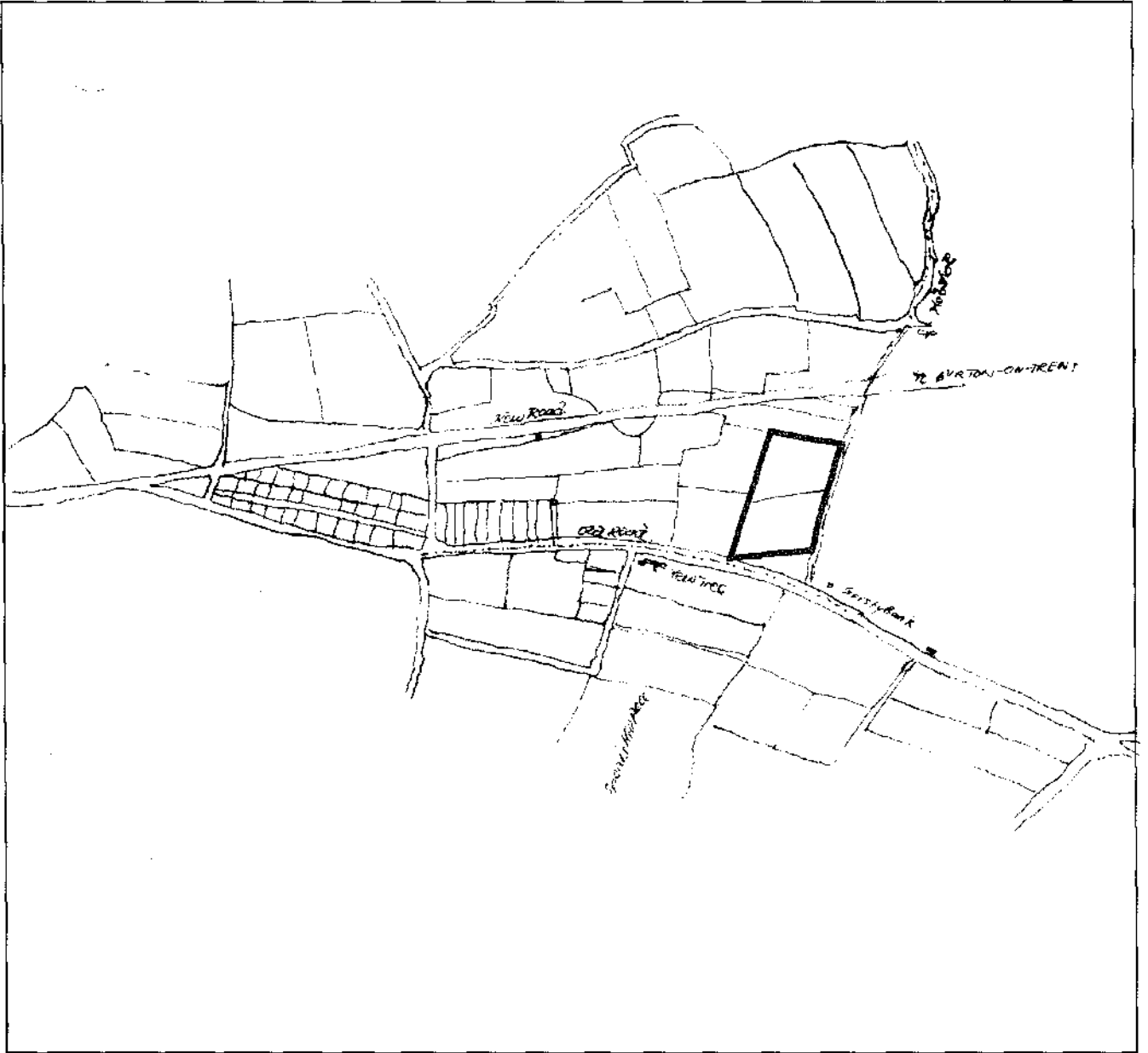


Fig. 6



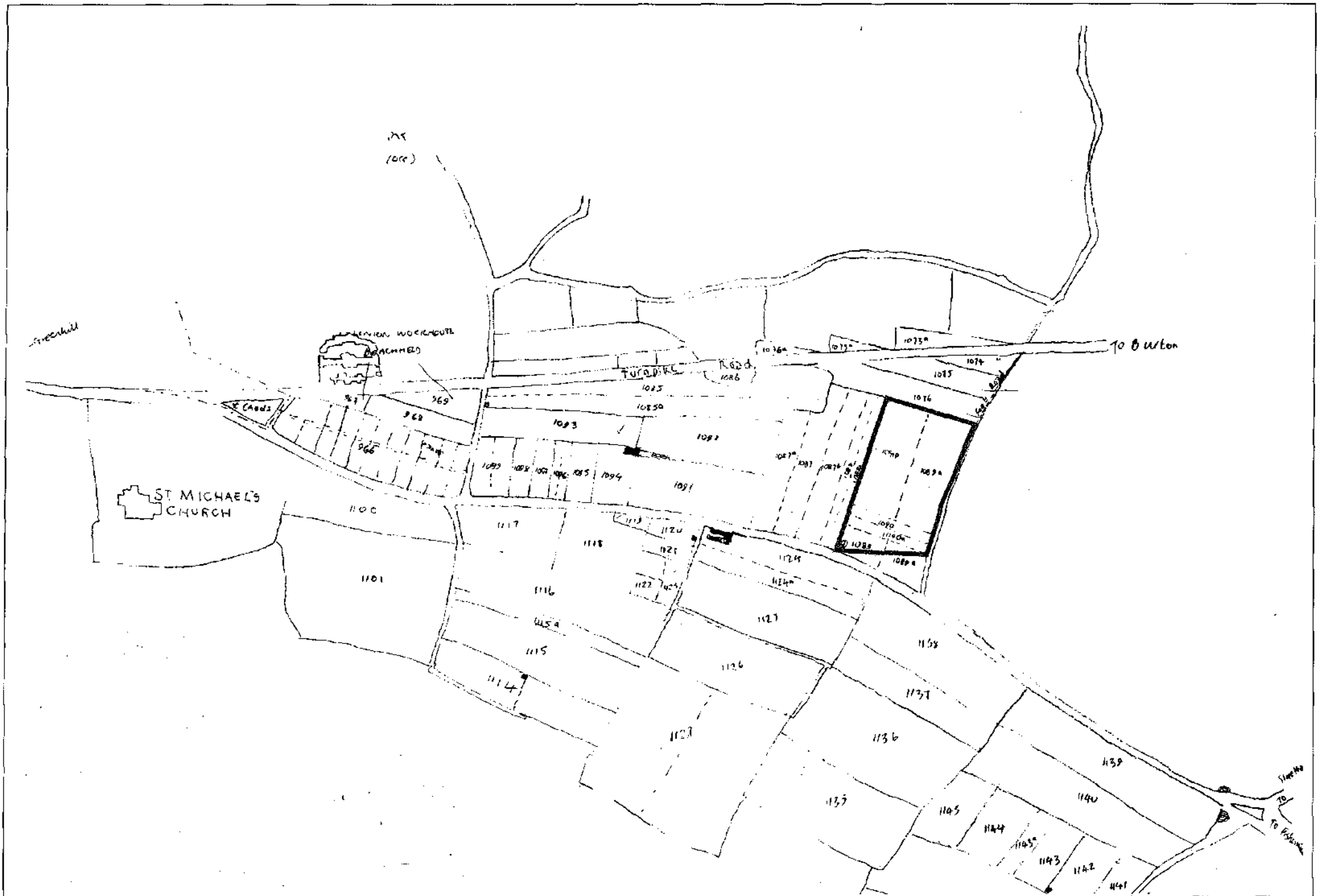


Fig.7

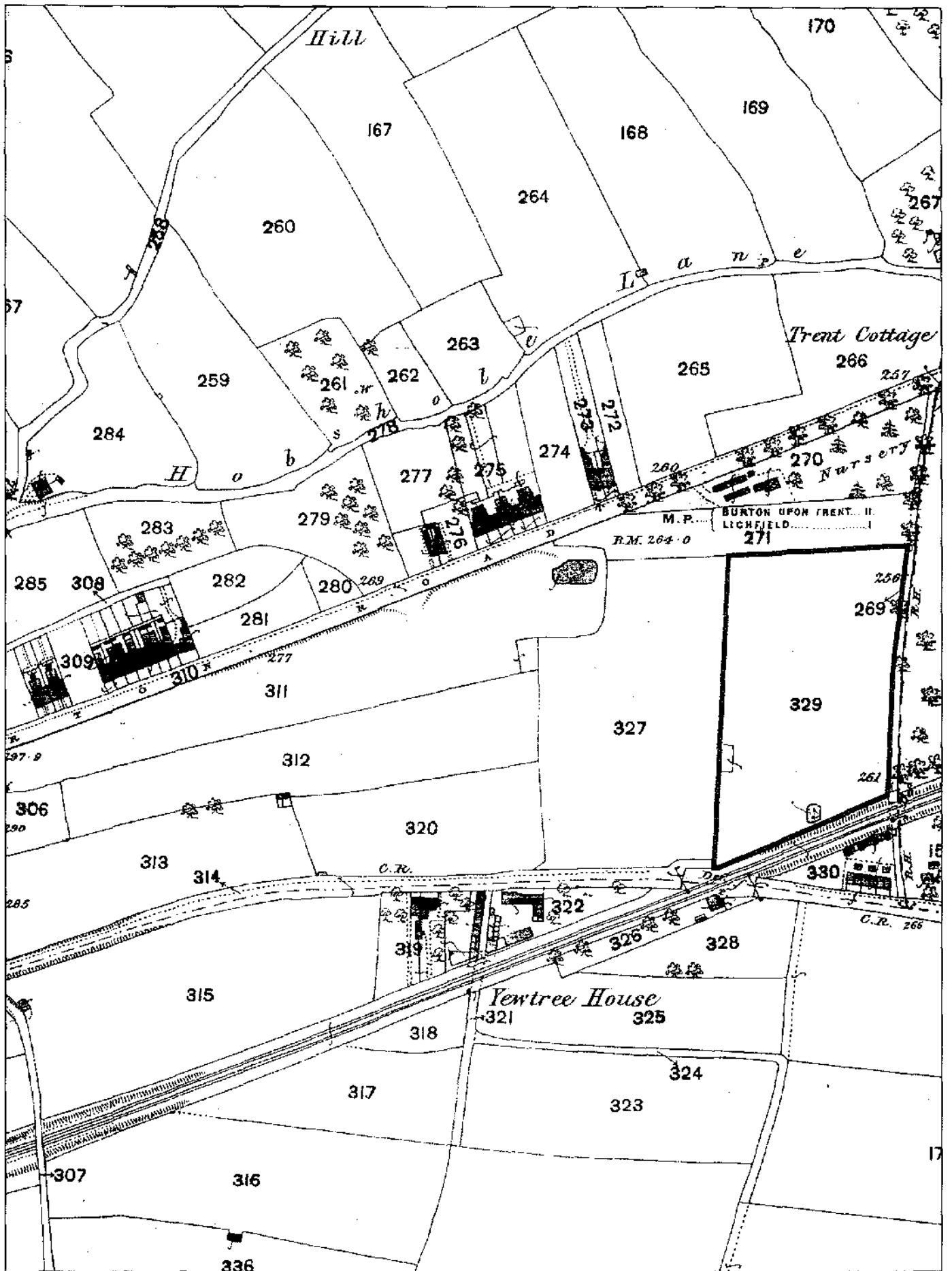


Fig. 8

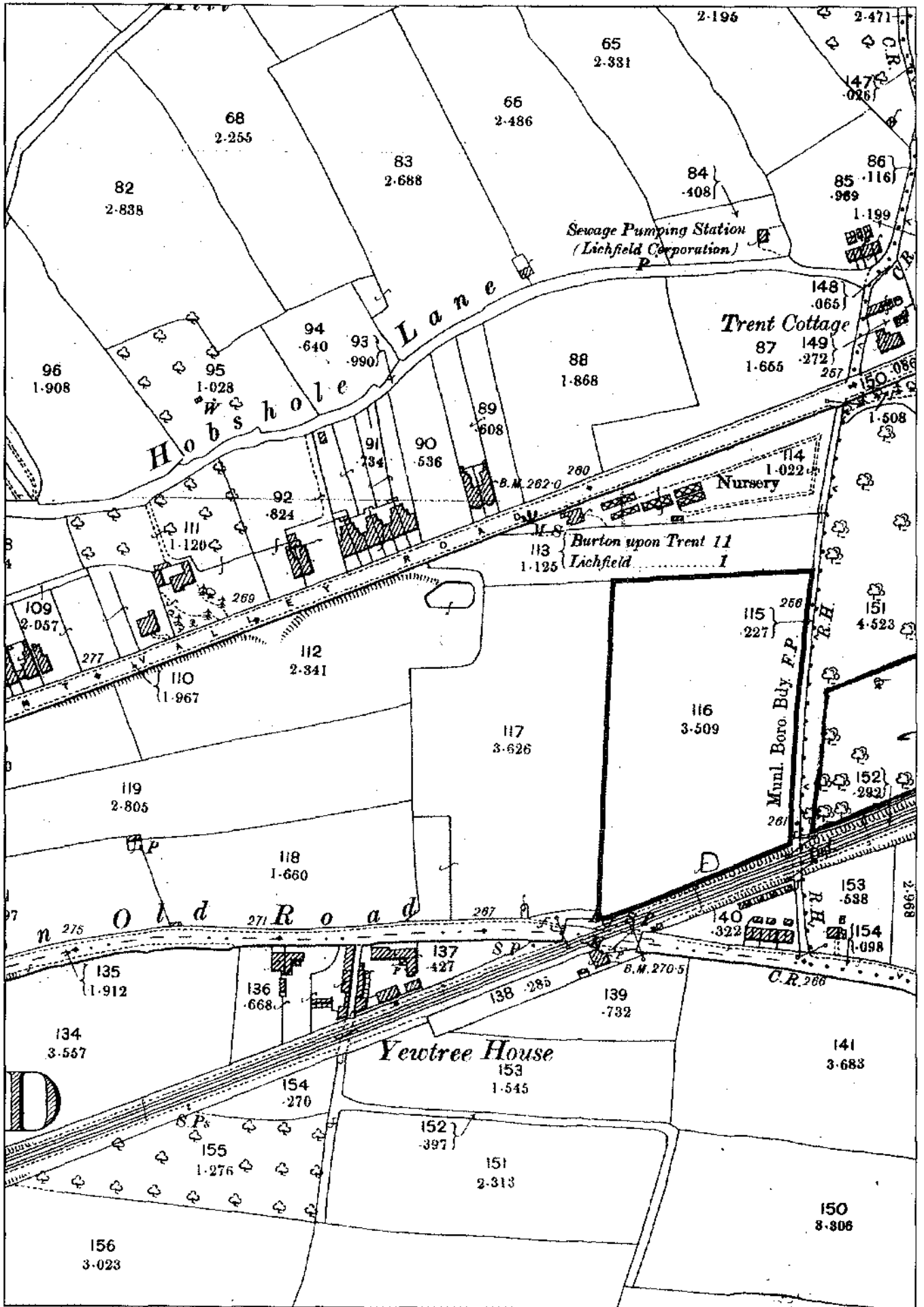


Fig. 9

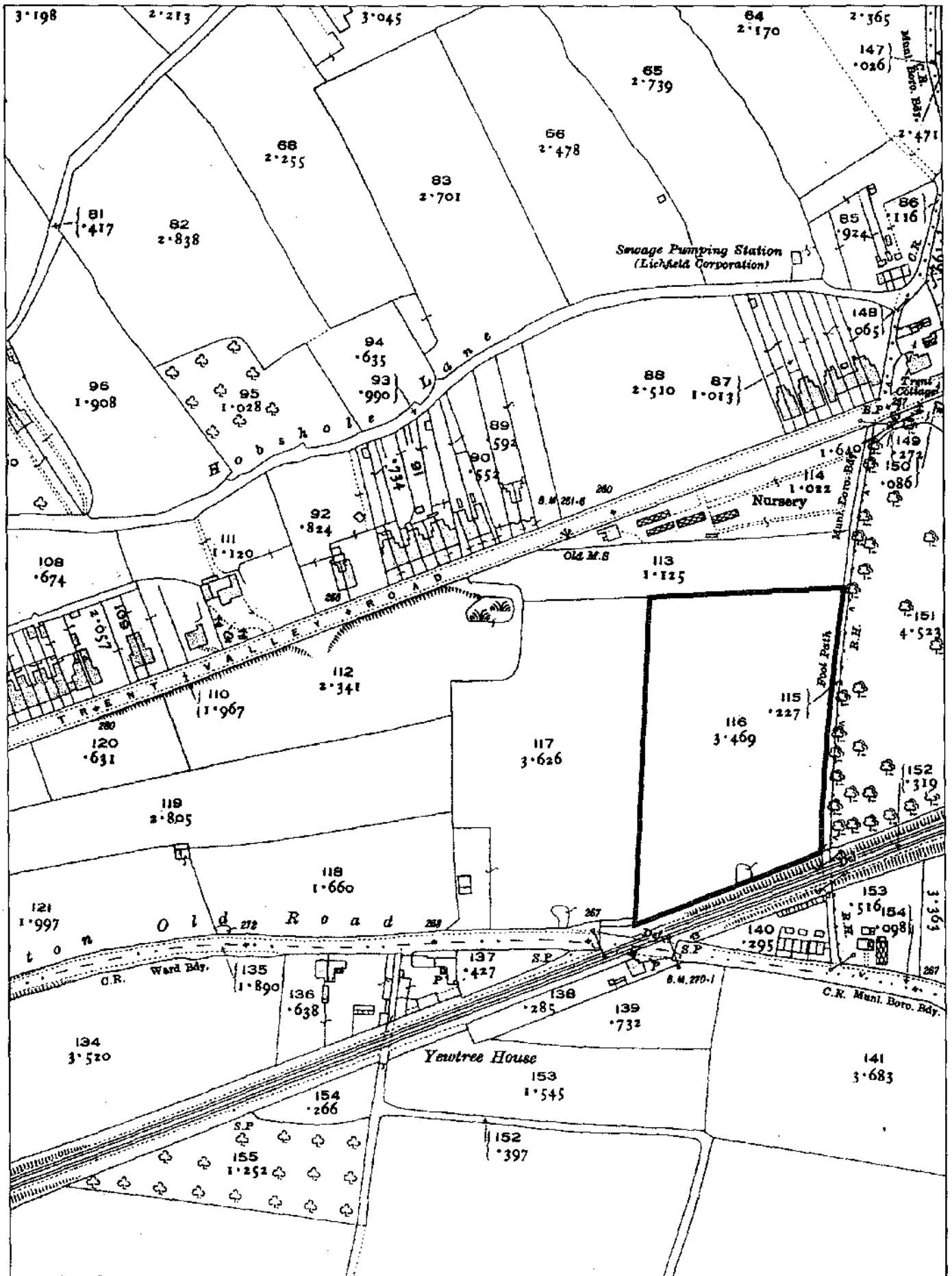


Fig. 10

