



**Little Totmonslow Farm,
Tean, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire.
An Archaeological Desk-
Based Assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

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Contents

	Summary	1
1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Location	1
3.0	Objectives	2
4.0	Methodology	2
5.0	Geology and Topography	2
6.0	Present Character	2
7.0	Archaeological and Historical Background	3
8.0	The Study Area	5
8.1	Archaeology	5
8.2	Cartographic Evidence	5
8.3	Documentary Evidence	6
9.0	Discussion	6
10.0	Conclusions	7
11.0	Acknowledgements	8
12.0	References	8
	Illustrations	

Illustrations

Figure 1	Location of the Study Area
Figure 2	The Study Area; showing sites listed on the Staffordshire SMR and location of 'humps'
Figure 3	Extract from the Tithe Map of Draycott-in-the-Moors (1837)
Figure 4	First edition Ordnance Survey map
Figure 5	Third edition Ordnance Survey map
Plate 1	Front garden, looking towards Draycott Road
Plate 2	Back garden, looking towards rear of house
Plate 3	Front of house
Plate 4	Rear of house looking south-west
Plate 5	Humps in adjacent field, looking west-north-west

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Summary

A desk-based assessment was commissioned by Laurence R. Jay on the site of a replacement dwelling house at Little Totmonslow Farm, Tean, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SJ 9926/3982). The desk-based assessment was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in April and May 2002. The aim of the assessment was to assess the nature of the archaeological resource contained within the site and its level of survival, with special regard to a barrow known to have existed in this area, so that an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy can be drawn up. The assessment consisted of an appraisal of the available archaeological and historical information for the site and a walkover survey of the site and its immediate surroundings. The assessment concluded that the development site may contain archaeological remains of several periods and that the existing farmhouse on the site is of architectural interest. This assessment recommends that the farmhouse be further investigated prior to its demolition and that a watching brief be maintained on any building works that involve ground disturbance.

1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a desk-based assessment which was commissioned by Laurence R. Jay in connection with an application for planning permission for building works at Little Totmonslow Farm, Tean, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SJ 9926/3982). The assessment was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in April and May 2002. The assessment sought to establish the archaeological potential of the development site and to assess the level of impact that the proposed development would have upon any buried archaeological remains. The assessment paid special attention to attempting to establish more firmly the location of a barrow, known as 'Totman's Low', which is known to have existed in this area. The assessment follows a brief issued by Staffordshire County Council and was conducted in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

2.0 Location

Little Totmonslow Farm, hereafter referred to as the Study Area, lies around two and a half miles south-west of Cheadle on the western edge of the village of Totmonslow in the Staffordshire Moorlands district (Figure 1). The Study Area lies midway between the larger villages of Upper Tean and Draycott in the Moors on the Unoxeter - Stoke-on-Trent road. The extent of the Study Area is shown on Figure 2.

3.0 Objectives

This assessment aims to assess the archaeological potential of the Study Area and establish whether or not the Study Area is likely to contain significant archaeological remains. It is known from antiquarian accounts and place name evidence that a barrow, 'Totman's Low', existed in this area and this assessment, therefore, very specifically aims to establish whether this barrow was actually situated within the bounds of the Study Area.

4.0 Methodology

The following sources were consulted during the course of this assessment;

- records held by the Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- historic maps and documents and indexes held by the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archives offices at Lichfield and Stafford
- Ordnance Survey maps
- Published and unpublished secondary sources held by the William Salt Library, Stafford, and the University of Birmingham Library

Discussions with Chris Wardle, the Heritage Data Manager of Staffordshire County Council, suggested that the area is poorly covered by aerial photography and that further research on aerial photographs was, at this stage, not necessary. A walkover survey of the site was conducted as part of this assessment.

5.0 Geology and Topography

Totmonslow lies at the southern edge of the northern upland area of Staffordshire at the beginnings of the South Pennine foothills (see Palliser 1976, figure 3). The Study Area itself lies on the northern side of the Blithe Valley, on a south-facing slope near the crest of an interfluvial ridge between two tributary streams of the River Blithe. The underlying geology of the Study Area is Sherwood Group Sandstones, cross-bedded with pebbly sandstone and mudstone bands (British Geological Survey, Sheet 124 Ashbourne).

6.0 Present Character

A walkover survey of the Study Area and immediately-adjacent fields was carried out at the end of April 2002. The Study Area is divided laterally into two garden plots, with a house and outbuilding lying roughly central between the two (Figure 2). The front garden is presently overgrown with very long grass and seems to contain a lot of rabbit holes (Plate 1). The back garden is reached by a path on the western side of the house (Figure 2). The path has been terraced into the ground immediately to the west and rear of the house. The back garden is also very overgrown and contains a rather dilapidated-looking orchard and very long grass (Plate 2).

The house is reached by a steep, narrow driveway from the road, the course of this driveway being responsible for the dog-leg visible in the western boundary of the Study Area (Figure 2). The house is in a very poor state of repair and parts of the roof have collapsed. The house is a two-storeyed building and has a symmetrically composed front (Plate 3). The windows seem to have been later insertions and not those of the original construction. Later extension work is visible in places at the rear of the building (Plate 4). Inspection of the brickwork on the building indicates that hand-clamped, not machine-made, bricks have been used in some sections. The style of the house and the nature of the brickwork in the core of the house indicates that it was constructed in the late eighteenth century (Dr. Malcolm Hislop, pers.comm.).

The immediately-adjacent fields were inspected as part of this assessment. The field immediately to the west of the Study Area contained two shallow humps of approximately circular shape, on the crest of the ridge (Plate 5). It is unclear whether these are man-made features or of natural origin.

7.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

This part of Staffordshire has received very little attention from historians and archaeologists in the past. It also lies in one of the hundreds not yet covered by the Victoria County Histories.

The Staffordshire Moorlands contain a high proportion of the prehistoric barrows which survive as earthworks within Staffordshire. It is known from antiquarian accounts and placename evidence that a barrow, of probable prehistoric date, existed at some location in the village of Totmonslow up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The precise location of this barrow and what shape it was is now unknown.

Roman activity in north Staffordshire is relatively poorly documented. Roman settlements are known at Rocester, which has been subject to several programmes of excavation – principally by BUFAU, and at Chesterton in Stoke-on-Trent. Few other settlements are known. The southern boundary of the Study Area is formed by the Roman road which runs from Little Chester, Derby, via Rocester to Chesterton (Road No. 183 in Margary 1973). It is argued that a Roman fort was sited at Draycott-in-the-Moors, immediately east of the Study Area, as it lies midway, and a day's march, between Rocester and Chesterton (Draycott-en-le-Moors Village Website). Pottery and bone, attributed a Roman date by the antiquarian Stebbing Shaw, were found in Upper Tean in 1728 (VCH i, 193). The Study Area lies in an area of documented Roman activity.

Physical evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement in north Staffordshire is patchy and settlement in this area is mainly documented by placename evidence. Totmonslow itself is an Anglo-Saxon placename so there was probably a settlement of some kind in the area in the Anglo-Saxon period. Anglo-Saxon period activity in this area is further

documented by the fact that Totmonslow was the moot point for one of the hundreds of Staffordshire. This hundred eventually took its name from its moot, becoming known throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods as Totmonslow Hundred. It is probable, therefore, that the area was settled in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Little is known of Totmonslow and the surrounding villages in the medieval period. There is no record that Totmonslow was ever a parish in its own right and it seems to have been one of many smaller settlements included in the parish of Draycott-in-the-Moors from the medieval period to the present day. The landscape around Tean, including the Study Area, seems to have been of a mixed character. Some of the land around Tean lay in the woods of the Baron of Stafford and the remainder was moorland (Moxon 1972, map 2). It is unclear whether the Study Area lay in the moor or the wood, or both. A village existed at Totmonslow at some stage in the medieval period, as attested by Erdeswicke's *Survey of Staffordshire* compiled in the late sixteenth century. Erdeswicke states that "Totmanslow is a small village, once very considerable, now famous only for a barrow", which suggests that the village was subject to depopulation within living memory of the date of his survey's composition. There is, as yet, no information on the extent of the medieval village at Totmonslow and, therefore, it is not possible to state whether the Study Area lies within the built-up area of the medieval settlement. The area around Totmanslow seems to have been farmed by at least the close of the medieval period, as 'medieval-type' field boundaries are visible as the basis for many of the enclosed fields visible on the Draycott-in-the-Moors Tithe Map (1837, see Figure 3).

Very little is known about the village of Totmonslow in the post-medieval period either. By the date of the composition of the Tithe Map of the area (1837) the village seems to have consisted of only a few houses clustered around the junctions of Draycott Road and Breach Lane and the unnamed lane to Upper and Lower Newton. The village hardly grew from this date to the present day. The nature of the field boundaries visible on the Tithe Map show a mixture of medieval-type field boundaries and more rectilinear boundaries indicative of the parliamentary enclosures of the late eighteenth century. It is unclear precisely at what date these were enclosed, as no Inclosure Award or Plan survives for the parish of Draycott-in-the-Moors. The Tithe Award for Draycott-in-the-Moors, unusually, includes no information whatsoever on the state of cultivation of any of the parcels of land within the parish. It may be that the mixed arable and pasture farming currently seen in the area is similar to that practiced in the area in the nineteenth century. The Cheadle branch of the North Staffordshire Railway was cut through the Totmonslow area at the end of the nineteenth century. The station for Tean was situated on this line at Totmonslow, the line to Tean opened in 1892, and the remainder of the branch line opened in 1901 (VCH 1967, 319).

8.0 The Study Area

8.1 Archaeology

Only two sites are listed on the Staffordshire SMR for the Study Area.

SMR No. 01986

Site of Barrow

NGR SJ 993/398

A barrow is known to have existed at Totmonslow, references to it are found in many antiquarian accounts of Staffordshire and it was apparently still visible in 1844. NGR for the site is an approximate estimate of its location.

SMR No. 1227

Roman Road

NGR SJ 894/446 to SK 290/380

Roman road from Little Chester, Derby, to Chesterton, Stoke-on-Trent, runs via Rocester. Margary Road No. 183 traceable from Mackworth, Derby, to Blithe Bridge, near Stoke-on-Trent.

No other sites, apart from areas of ridge and furrow at Upper Tean, are listed by the Staffordshire SMR within one kilometre of the site.

8.2 Cartographic Evidence

The Tithe Map of the area, compiled in 1837, shows that the plot designated as the Study Area has not yet come into being (Figure 3). At this date the Study Area lies within a field owned by Anne Cope. No names of any of the fields in the entire parish of Draycott-in-the-Moors are given in the accompanying Tithe Award. No barrow is marked on the map. The information presented by the Tithe Map is confusing, as the building which currently stands on the site dates to the late eighteenth century, yet the building and the, apparently, associated plot in which it lies are not shown on the map. The Tithe Map of this parish is strange, in that it includes no information on the state of cultivation or names of any of the plots within the parish. It is possible that the map has been copied from an earlier plan of the parish.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area (1881) shows that the plot which defines the current Study Area has come into being by this date (Figure 4). The house, outbuilding and gardens within the Study Area are arranged in the same way as they are presently, showing that very little change to the plot and its internal divisions has occurred since the 1880s. The house is depicted as approximately square in plan, with a squat projection from the rear wall of the house near its northeast corner. The house is not named as Little Totmonslow Farm on this map. Many of the other buildings in Totmonslow, however, likewise go unnamed on the map.

No change in the arrangement of the house and its gardens is visible on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of the area (1903). By the time of the third edition Ordnance Survey map of the area in 1924 an orchard appears to have been planted in the back garden (Figure 5). The most noticeable change by 1924 is in the house itself. The first edition depicts the house as approximately square. On the third edition, however, it is a well-defined L-shape (Figures 4 and 5). This suggests that the house has either been rebuilt or extended to the rear between the 1900s and 1924.

8.3 Documentary Evidence

The existence of a barrow at Totmonslow is indicated by its placename. Totmonslow includes the old English placename element *hlāw* or 'low' which means barrow or mound (Paffard 1996, 5). The name 'Totmonslow' has been interpreted as meaning 'Totman's burial mound' (Paffard 1996, 18). The mound must have been a significant earthwork in the Anglo-Saxon period for it to have given rise to the name of this area. It is unclear whether the passing resemblance of 'Totman' to the German for 'dead man' (töt mann) is merely superficial. Totmonslow may, therefore, mean 'dead man's burial mound'.

The existence of a barrow at Totmonslow is mentioned by many of the antiquarians who operated in Staffordshire from the sixteenth century onwards. The earliest mention of the barrow is in Sampson Erdeswicke's *Survey of Staffordshire* in the late sixteenth century. Erdeswicke describes the barrow as that of a "Saxon commander" (1844, 254). The barrow is also mentioned by William Dugdale, an antiquarian more commonly associated with Warwickshire, who recommended it as worthy of visiting to an unknown acquaintance in a letter of 1680 (reproduced in Greenslade 1982, 163). Redfern mentions a field called 'Tumulus Field' near Upper Tean and this may be a reference to the barrow at Totmonslow, but he is not specific enough to be certain of this (1863, 452). It is evident that the barrow was still visible into the mid-nineteenth century. Garner's *Natural History of Staffordshire* and the records of the Ordnance Survey both state that there was still a sign of the mound in 1844 (Source: Staffordshire SMR No. 01896). No further documentary references to the barrow are found in subsequent works, including the list of earthworks in Volume 1 of the Victoria County History of Stafford or in the gazetteer of barrows in Staffordshire prepared by Gunstone (VCH 1968; Gunstone, 1965).

9.0 Discussion

The preceding sections have demonstrated that the landscape around the Study Area has seen activity from the Neolithic or Bronze Age to the present day. It is plausible that the buried archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval dates may exist within the Study Area. The current lack of much general or specific contextual information on the area makes it difficult to further quantify this

archaeological potential into an accurate estimate of the likelihood of buried archaeological remains in the Study Area.

That a barrow of probable prehistoric date existed in this area is well evidenced by placename evidence and by antiquarian accounts, but it has not proven possible to locate this monument any more securely using the evidence presently available. The present guess as to the location of the barrow is simply an estimate, and, therefore, it remains possible that the barrow could lie wholly or partly in the Study Area. It is worth noting that two humps in the ground were noted during the walkover survey in the field immediately west of the Study Area, but it is not clear whether these are man-made or natural humps.

The Study Area may lie within the settled bounds of the medieval village of Totmonslow. If medieval deposits relating to the village are located in the Study Area they are significant, as little is known of the extent and nature of the village, and any information yielded will help to clarify this.

It is unlikely that extensive buried post-medieval deposits will be encountered within the Study Area. The Study Area seems to have been farmed and not settled until the later eighteenth century. The layout of the buildings and the nature of land-use in the Study Area seem to have remained constant from the 1880s to the present day. The standing buildings in the Study Area may benefit from further study prior to their demolition, in order to establish their date and sequence of development.

10.0 Conclusions

This study has, unfortunately, failed to establish a more definite location for the barrow at Totmonslow. The foregoing discussion has, however, demonstrated that the Study Area may potentially contain archaeological remains of all periods from prehistoric to post-medieval. It must be stressed that any archaeological remains of the prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, or medieval periods which are encountered in the Study Area are significant as they are periods which are not well-represented archaeologically in this part of Staffordshire. This Study has also suggested that the standing buildings in the Study Area may warrant further attention before their proposed demolition.

It is proposed that, since the development is only on a very small-scale and since the archaeological potential of the site is high but unquantified, the appropriate way of mitigating the threat to the archaeology proposed by the development is for a watching brief to be maintained on any building works which involve ground disturbance. It is further recommended that the standing buildings be further appraised to assess whether any building recording work is appropriate prior to demolition.

11.0 Acknowledgements

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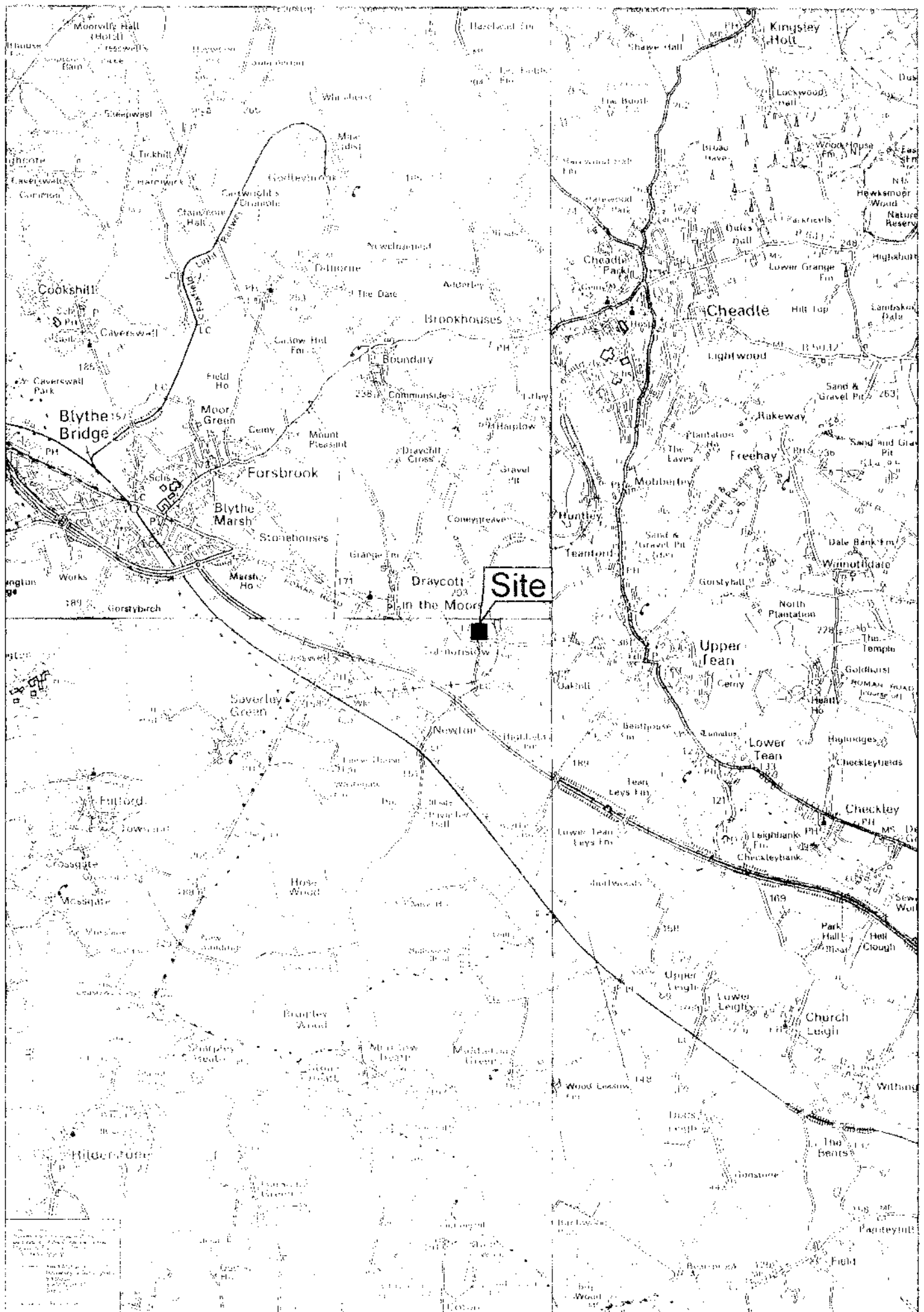


Figure 1

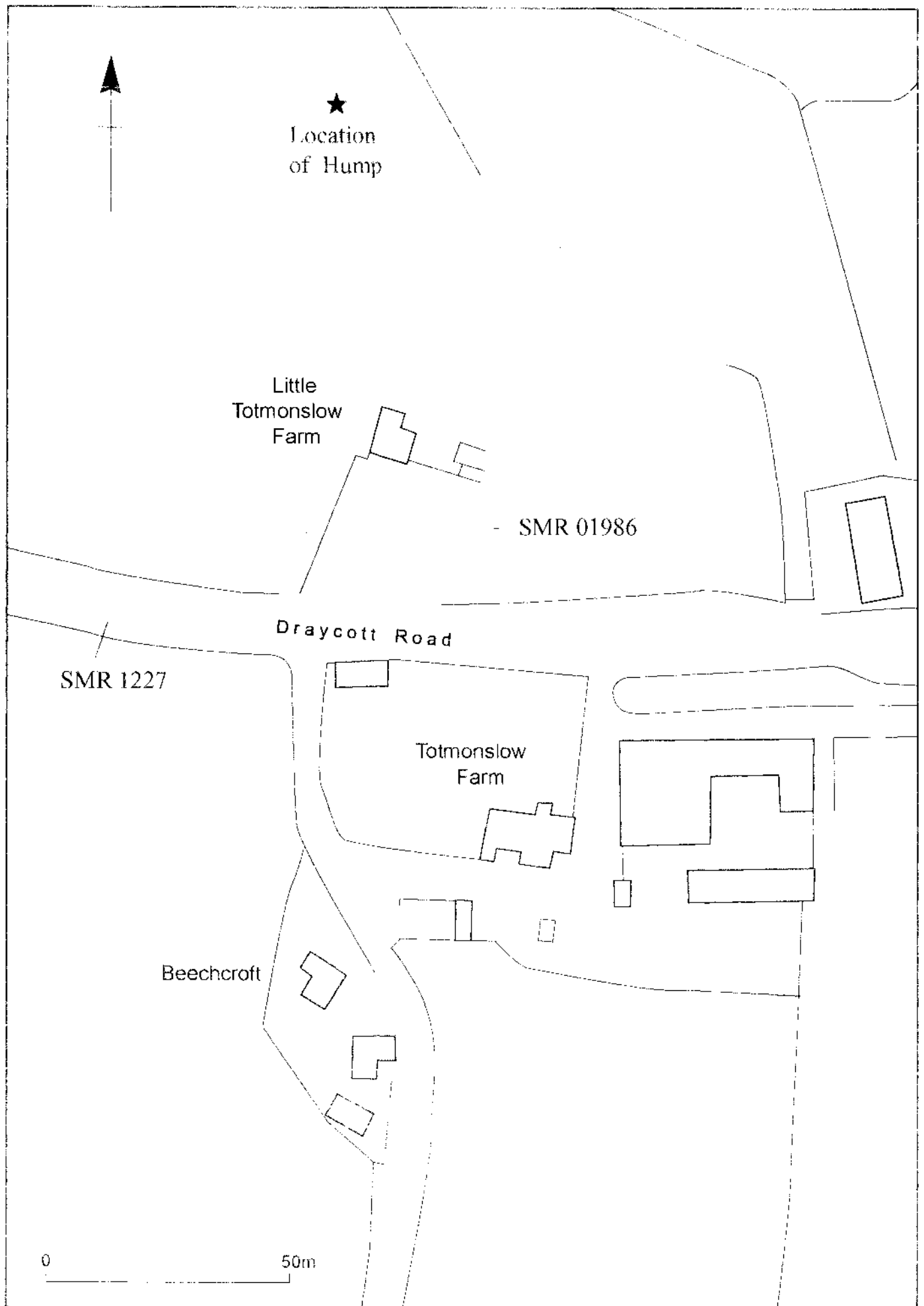


Figure 2



Figure 3 (Tithe 1837)

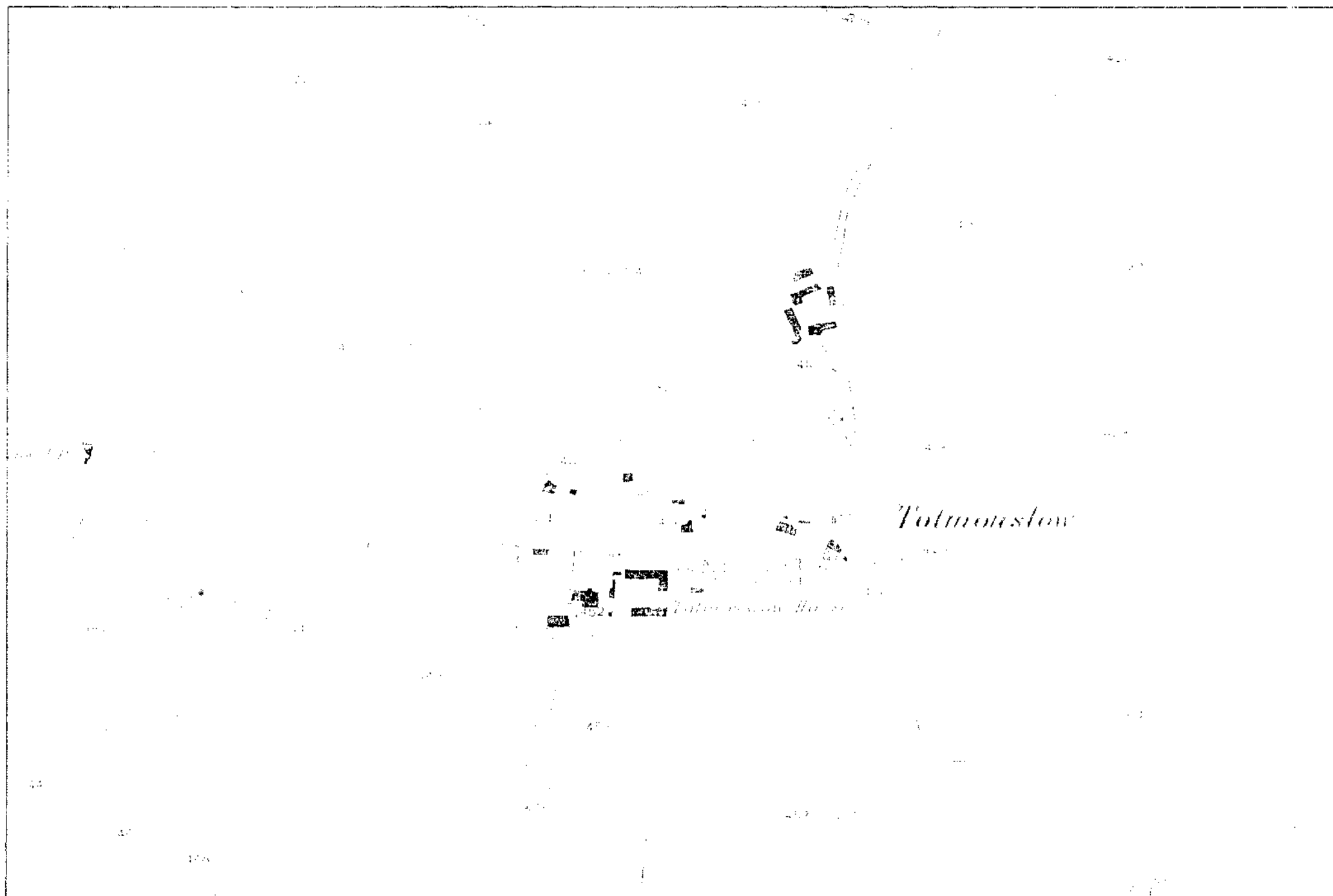


Figure 4 (1881)

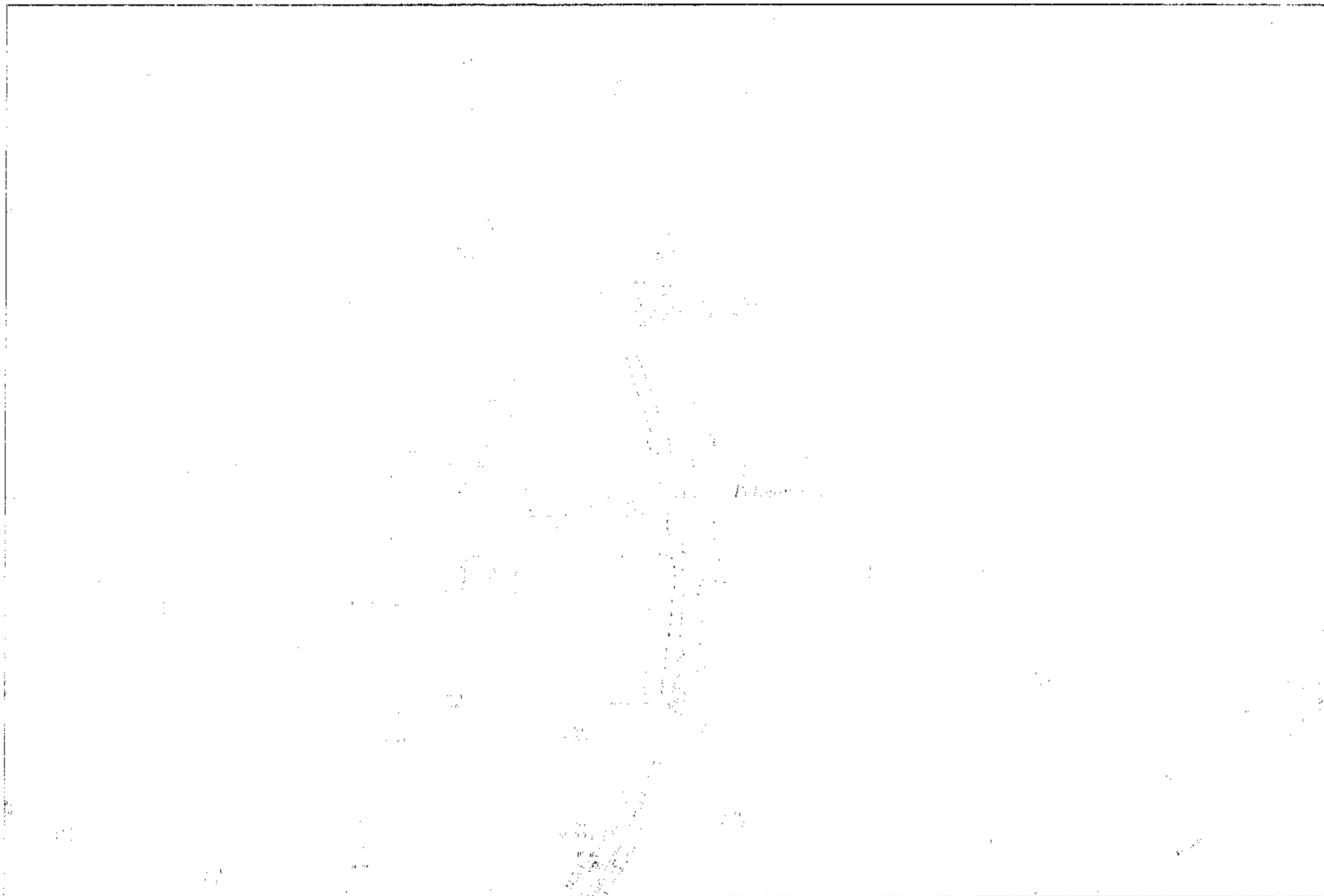


Figure 5 (1924)



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5