



THE UNIVERSITY
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**Development of the GEC
Alstrom Site,
Lichfield Road,
Stafford.
An Archaeological Desk-
Based Assessment
2002**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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Project No. 978
October 2002

**Development of the GEC Alstom site
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by
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Development of the GEC Alstom site, Lichfield Road, Forebridge, Staffordshire. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment. 2002

Summary

A desk-based assessment was carried out on a site proposed for redevelopment in the Forebridge area of Stafford (centered on NGR SJ 92602240) on behalf of The Symonds Group Ltd for Liberty Mercian Ltd. The area is situated very close to the probable site of the medieval leper hospital of St. Leonard. It was thought possible that the burial ground associated with the hospital might extend into the area proposed for redevelopment. The desk-based assessment was carried out to determine the possibility of burials to the south of Lichfield Road. Both primary and secondary documents and maps were consulted. The results of the assessment show that there is some argument as to the exact site of the cemetery as well as the location of the leper hospital. The boundaries of the burial ground could not be determined. The map evidence suggests that there were burials to the north of Lichfield Road and the discovery of human remains during building work confirms this. It would seem unlikely that a major road would cut through a cemetery, however, there is a possibility that human remains may be encountered during the redevelopment. It is therefore recommended that any ground works in the zone immediately to the south of Lichfield Road should be monitored with an archaeological watching brief.

1.0 Introduction

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) carried out a desk-based assessment in September 2002 on a piece of land in the Forebridge area of Stafford. The assessment was conducted on behalf of The Symonds Group for Liberty Mercian Ltd., prior to a planning application to redevelop the land. It was thought that a burial ground associated with the medieval Leper Hospital of St. Leonard, located to the north of Lichfield Road, might also extend over the road into the development area. The boundaries of the medieval cemetery being unknown, the assessment examined the available cartographic and documentary evidence in order to determine whether the proposed development would include part of the burial ground. The scope of this assessment is specifically focused on the area adjacent to Lichfield Road and the possible location of the burial ground.

This work follows a brief prepared by David Wilkinson, Stafford Borough Archaeologist, (Wilkinson 2002) and adheres to the guidelines set out in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

2.0 Location of the Study Area (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

The development site (centered on NGR SJ 926 224) is in the Forebridge area of Stafford, to the south of the town centre, outside the medieval town walls (see Fig 1). The site boundaries are the Stafford to London Railway Line to the south, The

Lichfield Road to the north and east and Garden St, Salt Avenue and Sabine St to the west. The site comprises of industrial buildings, open grassed areas and open tarmac and concrete areas. This assessment is specifically concerned with the small area just to the south of Lichfield Road (see Fig 10), from opposite St. Leonard's Avenue to the railway line, where the burial ground may extend. This area mostly contains industrial buildings. Along the edge of the road are tarmac car parks and access ways. Directly opposite St. Leonard's Avenue is an open grassed area.

3.0 Objectives

The specific objectives of this assessment were:

- to determine whether the burial ground to the leper hospital extended over Lichfield Road, into the area proposed for development,
- to assess the likely extent and survival of archaeological remains, particularly human burials within the proposed development area, and
- to identify the need, if any, for further archaeological work prior to the redevelopment.

4.0 Methodology

Documentary research was undertaken of both primary and secondary sources and maps held by Staffordshire County Records Office, The William Salt Library (Stafford) and Lichfield Records Office. The Parish Records for Stafford Castle Church were consulted, but no burial records survive as the chapel and hospital were destroyed either before or during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century. A map regression exercise was carried out to try and locate the original boundaries of the burial ground and examine the changing course of Lichfield Road.

5.0 The Study Area in its Archaeological and Historical Context

Stafford lies in the valley of the River Sow, on its north and east banks. The earliest archaeological evidence for settlement in the Stafford area dates to the prehistoric period and continues through the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods to the present day. Evidence for urban settlement is not found before the Anglo-Saxon period. A *burh* was constructed by Aethelflaed in AD. 913 and developed into a commercial centre with a mint (AD. 924-1189), market and pottery manufacturing industry. It became the county town in the eleventh century. The Domesday Book records Stafford as being the biggest town in the county with a timber wall encircling 128 houses. During the medieval period the settlement expanded beyond the town walls to the north and the south (Bailey unpub).

The Forebridge area lay outside the South Gate (now called Green Gate) not far from the walls, to the south of the bridge crossing the River Sow. It was probably settled some time in the medieval period, the name Forebridge or Forbrugge being in use by 1288. The medieval leper hospitals of St. John and St. Leonard and The House of the Austin Friars were all built in the Forebridge area. Burial grounds were associated

with them. They were all destroyed either during or before the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s, during Henry VIII reign.

The development area appears to have been open pasture or heath land up until the beginning of the twentieth century, containing only a few houses. It was part of the parish of Castle Church from before 1546 until c.1835 when it became part of Stafford Borough. The parish originally consisted of the vills of Burton, Castle, Forebridge, Hyde Lea, Rickerscotc, Rowley, and Silkmore (Wilkinson 2002).

During the twentieth century there was extensive development in the area with industrial buildings and associated car parking. Siemens Bros. & Co. Ltd built a large factory on the site in 1901, which was taken over and expanded several times over the twentieth century (Wilkinson 2002). It is probable that the open areas would preserve any archaeology.

6.0 A Detailed Assessment of the Site

6.1 Cartographic Evidence

The earliest maps found date to 1600, 1610 and 1788 (Figs. 2 - 4). They show Forebridge as a small settlement just outside the town walls. They do not extend far enough to show the location of St. Leonard's or the burial ground. St. John's Hospital should appear on these maps but is not shown. This suggests that the buildings had gone by 1600. It is possible that St. Leonard's had also gone by this time. These maps also show the course of Lichfield Road, which does not appear to have altered over the centuries. Greengate Street, Lichfield Road, Wolverhampton Road and Friars Road all closely align with modern Ordnance Survey maps when superimposed. As these maps do not extend far enough to encompass the development area, it is possible that Lichfield Road could have had a slightly different course in the seventeenth century. This could mean that part of the burial ground might be to the south of the modern road. It would seem more probable that Lichfield Road has maintained the same course since the burial ground was in use.

The site of the burial ground does not appear depicted on any map until the 1889 First Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5), when it is located to the north of The Lichfield Road between St. Leonard's Avenue and the railway line. The 1902 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 6) depicts '*the burial ground*' written on the south side of Lichfield Road, but it appears to relate to a cross on the north side. The cemetery may have been placed here on the map due to the fact that human remains were recovered during the building of houses here in the nineteenth century (Cherry 1890, 88). No record of the location of the burial ground or hospital is depicted on a local town map of Stafford dated to 1937 (Fig. 7), although the 1938 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 8) depicts the location in the same place as the 1889 First Edition map.

The maps show that the study area was open heath land right up until the beginning of the twentieth century with The Hough being the only building there. The 1902 OS map shows the new industrial development covering the study area, including the area where burials may be. There is no evidence from the maps that the areas of open tarmac and grass within the study area were disturbed prior to or during the development and any archaeology may be preserved below these areas.

6.2 Historical and Archaeological Profile

If the burial ground was to the north of the road then it could have covered quite a large area without necessarily extending to the south. There are possible boundaries marked on the map, Lichfield Road to the south and the Spital Brook to the north and east, with the hospital to the west. This is quite a large area for the cemetery to have covered and there may have been no need to expand into the land in the development area. There is no evidence from the tithe map, which shows the whole area as heath land in 1841. The size of the burial ground is unknown. The hospital appears to have been in use from the 12th or 13th century until the early 16th, so it is potentially quite extensive. However, there were several other burial grounds in the area and another leper hospital. It is not known how big St. Leonard's was but leper hospitals tended to be fairly small. Lepers also could live for many years so it is unlikely that there were vast numbers of burials every year. The burial ground probably contained hundreds rather than thousands of bodies.

There seems to be some argument in the secondary sources as to the exact location of St. Leonard's hospital. The location of St. John's seems secure as the foundations were still visible in 1889 when the first OS map was produced (Cherry 1890, 88). The location of St. Leonard's is less certain and seems to rely on the fact that a public house was built reusing medieval stone from the hospital on the corner of what is now St Leonard's Avenue. The masonry could of course have been moved from a nearby location. Lambert (1932) believes the hospital was located further along The Lichfield Road to the west of what is now Queensville Avenue as there was originally a field there which was called Chapel Leasow, which means chapel pasture. However this only suggests that the field was near to the hospital not the location of it. There is now a subway built through the corner of St. Leonard's Avenue so any evidence of the buildings has probably been destroyed.

Lambert (1932, 10) also believes that there were three hospitals in the area. He suggests that instead of being a 'Lazar hospital of St. Leonard' as referred to by other authors, there was in fact two hospitals, St. Leonard's and St. Lazarus'. He also puts the location for this third hospital and associated burial ground to the south of The Lichfield Road close to the railway line. He suggests this as the location as The Staffordshire Historical Collection (Mazzinghi 1906, vol VIII (II), 51) states that St. Lazarus was by the Spital Brook. Spital Brook Pool was located in the corner of the study area where The Lichfield Road meets the railway line, however, the Spital Brook itself runs under the road and through the area where St. Leonard's and the burial ground are marked on the Ordnance Survey maps. It is more likely that the pool was named after the brook and that there was no hospital by the pool.

The archaeological evidence suggests that the location of the burial ground is to the north of The Lichfield Road as marked on the OS maps. Bones were dug up c.1830 with a silver chalice between suspected site of St. Leonard's and the railway. Human remains were also found when building Nos. 69 & 70 Lichfield Road during 1800's (Cherry 1890, 88). On May 31st 2002 human bones were found at 81 Lichfield Road during the building of a wall. They were very shallow (c.45cm) and probably medieval (Wilkinson 2002). There is no record of any remains being found during building work to the south of the road. If the burial ground had continued to the south

of Lichfield Road or if the road has moved to a more northerly course since the medieval period, burials could have occurred along the southern edge of the road.

6.3 Present Character

A walkover survey of the study area showed that along the edge of the road there are car parks and access roads, as well as open grass areas. There are very few buildings within 20 metres of Lichfield Road (See Plates 3-5). There is a good chance that any archaeology in this area would have survived. The probable location of St. Leonard's is now cut through by a subway (Plate 2), which will have destroyed any building remains in that area.

6.4 Archaeological Potential

The documentary and cartographic evidence has proved inconclusive. No information survives as to the exact location of the medieval leper hospital and associated burial ground. There is evidence to suggest that the burial ground was somewhere to the north of Lichfield Road. The names Chapel Leosowes and the Spital Brook suggest a hospital in the area and the discovery of human remains in the area marked on the OS maps as the burial ground concur. However, the Spital brook runs on both sides of the road. Also the area to the south appears to have been open heath, so there would have been land available if the hospital ran out of space to the north. Therefore it is plausible that burials occurred to the south of the road. It would seem likely that Lichfield Road would have formed one of the boundaries to the cemetery rather than running straight through it. However, it is possible that burials occurred on both sides of the road or even that the burial ground was entirely to the south of the road and a change in its course has caused a few burials to be found on the north side.

If the burial ground did extend into the development area there is a good chance of survival. The walkover survey showed that there is little disturbance along the edge of Lichfield Road and human remains may be preserved here.

7.0 Recommendations

The research for this assessment has proved inconclusive for a positive location of the burial ground. However, all the documentary, cartographic and archaeological evidence that exists lends itself to the hypothesis that Lichfield Road defined the boundary of the former burial ground. As this hypothesis remains unproved, a precautionary measure of an archaeological watching brief during intrusive ground works in the area of Zone 1 (see Fig. 10) is recommended. Whilst the probability of encountering articulated human remains is low, there is a slightly higher probability of encountering disarticulated human remains in the immediate vicinity of Lichfield Road, if this was the former boundary of any burial ground.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The research was carried out by Emma Hancox, who also wrote this report. It was edited by Gary Coates, who also managed the project. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations.

The work was commissioned by Symonds Group Ltd on behalf of Liberty Mercian Ltd. Howard Jones, from Symonds Group Ltd., liased on the project for the client.

We are grateful for the advice of David Wilkinson, Stafford Borough Archaeologist, who also monitored the project on behalf of the local planning authority.

Thanks are due to the staff of The William Salt Library, The Staffordshire Records Office and The Lichfield Records Office.

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Maps

c.1600 Map of Stafford Town. From Stafford Maps- Local History Source book.

c.1610 Map of Stafford Town. From Stafford Maps- Local History Source book.

1788 Map of Stafford. From Stafford Maps- Local History Source book.

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1851 Enclosure Map. Stafford Record Office.

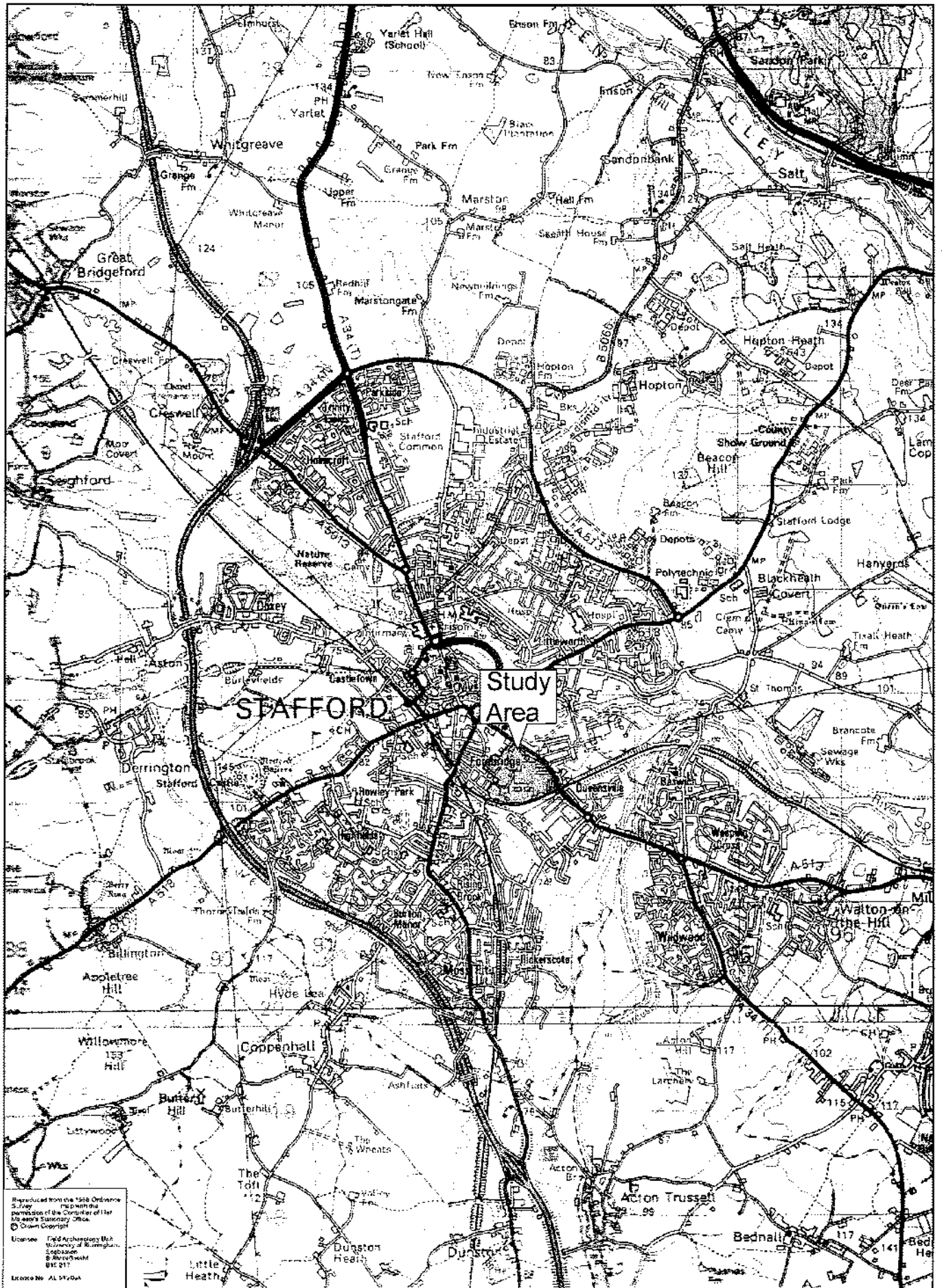
1889 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map. Stafford Record Office.

1902 Ordnance Survey Map. Stafford Record Office.

1937 Map of Stafford. From Stafford Maps- Local History Source book.

1938 Ordnance Survey Map. Stafford Record Office.

1998 Ordnance Survey Map



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 BE 217
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Fig.1

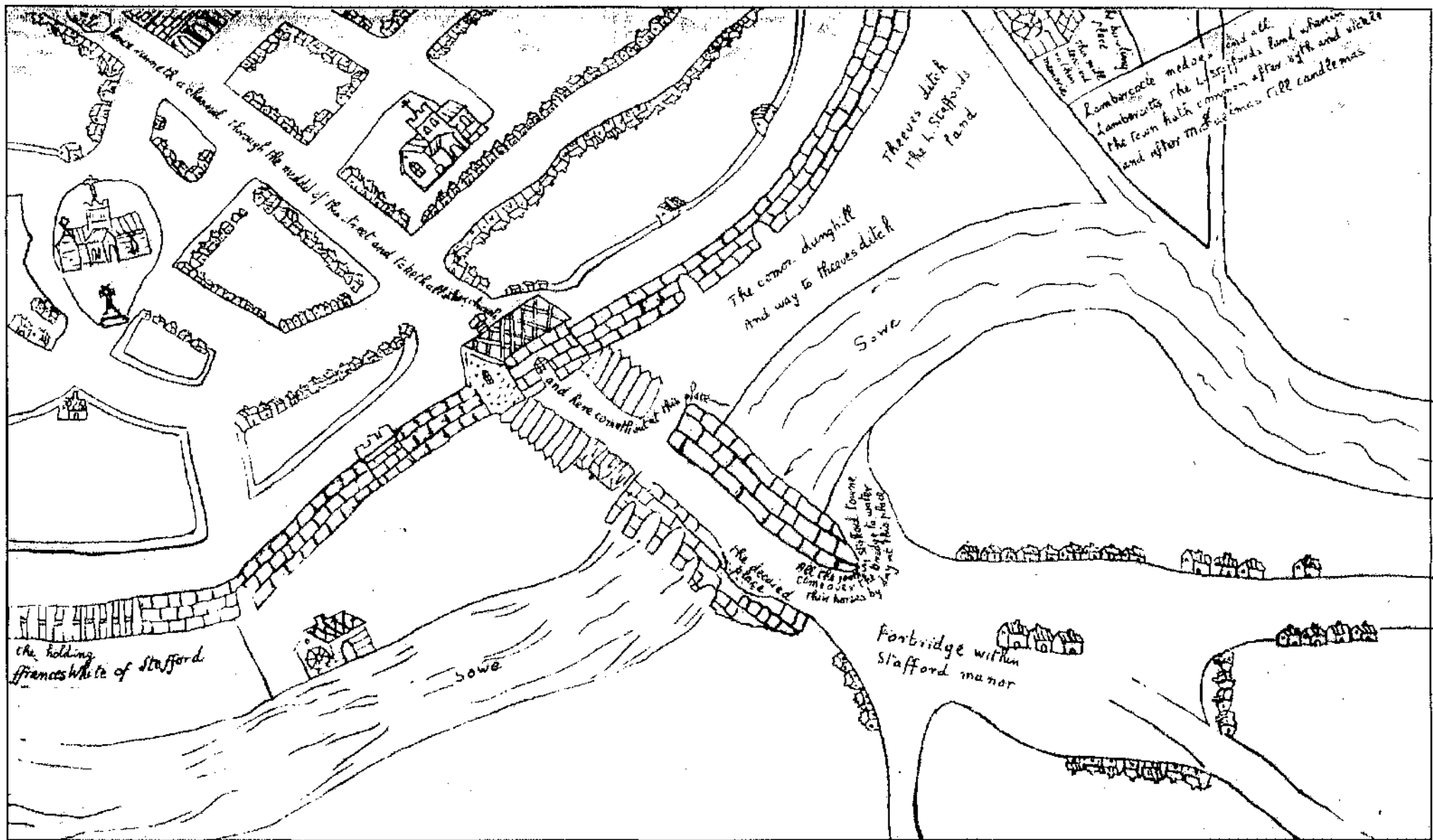


Fig.2

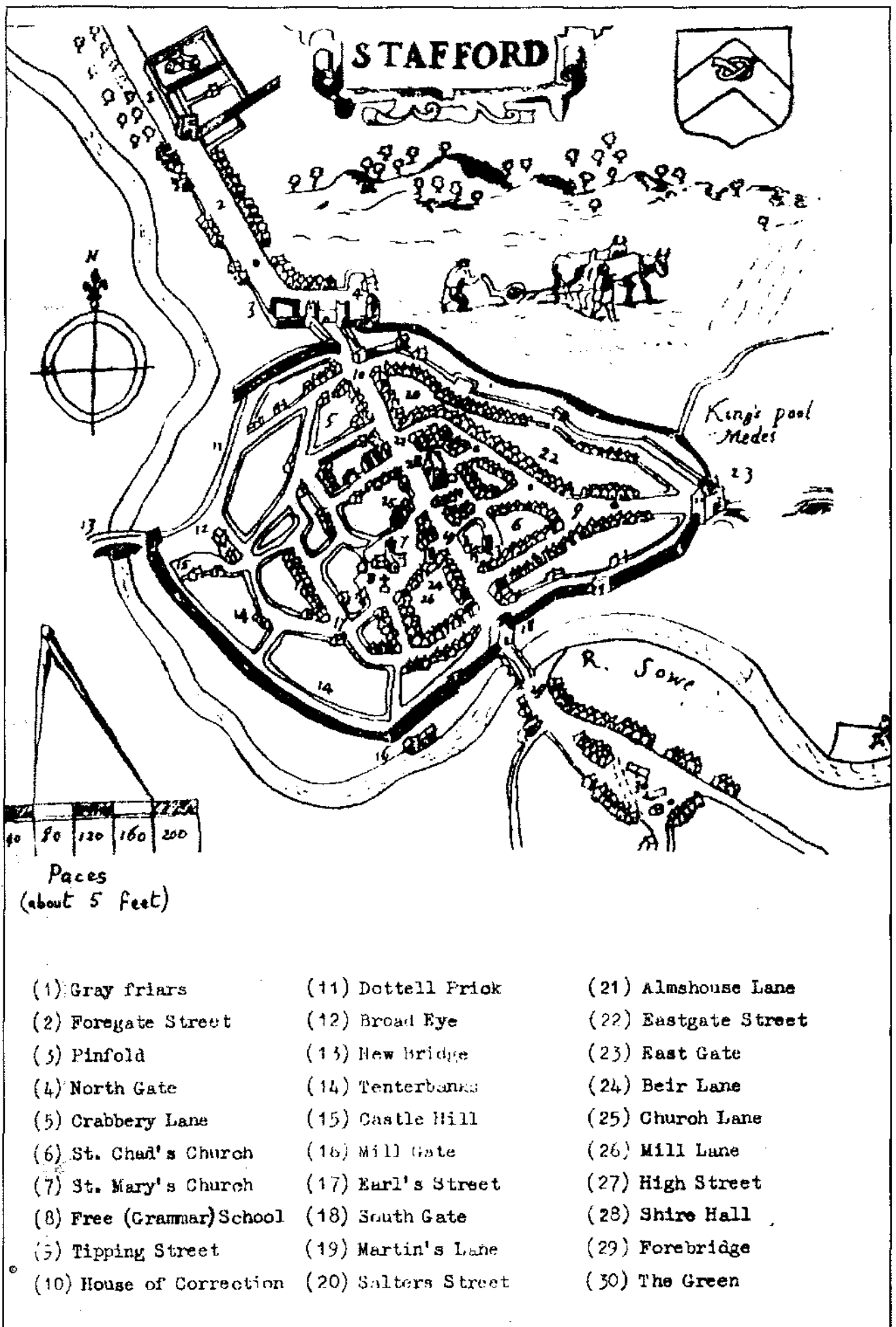


Fig.3

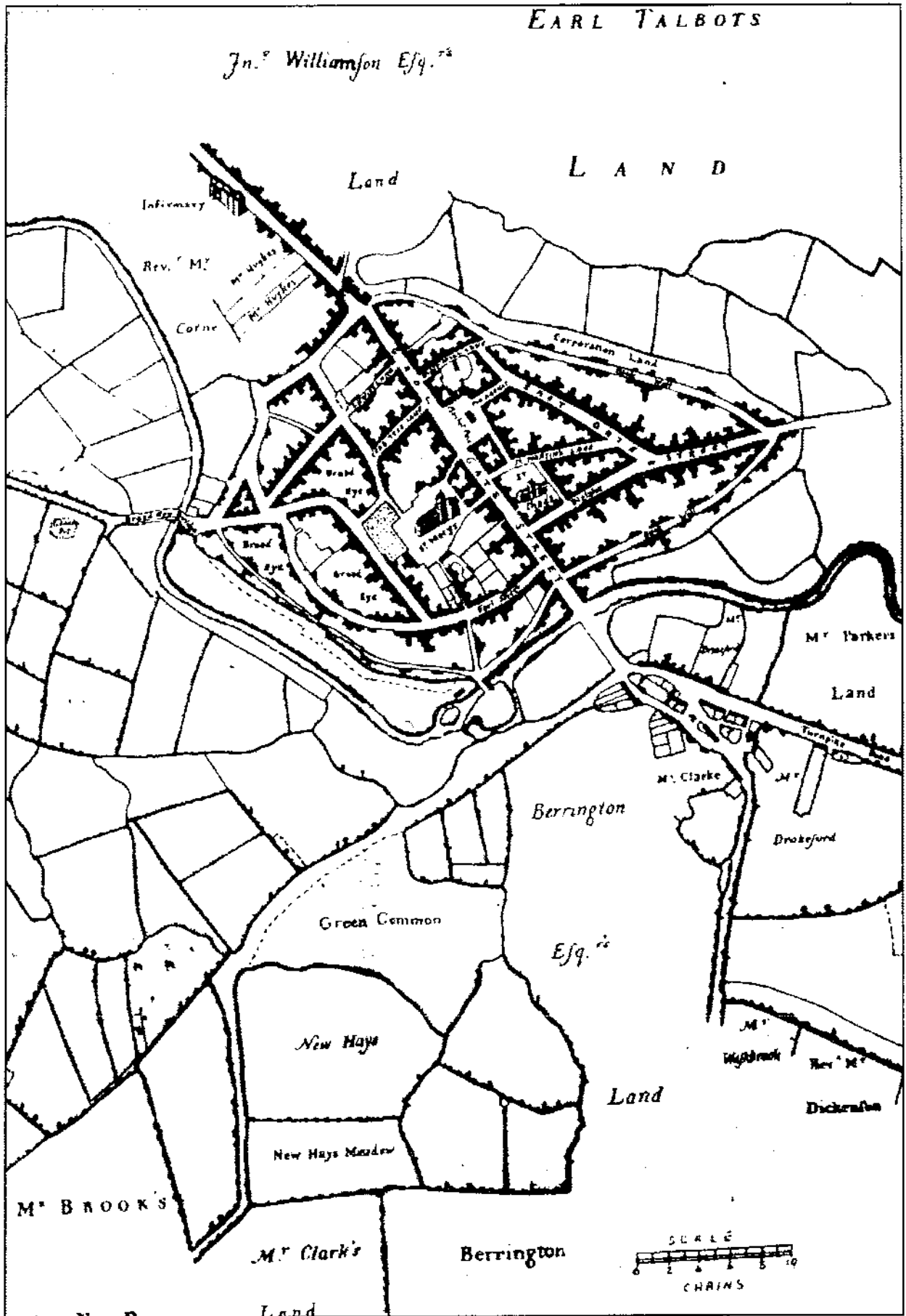


Fig.4

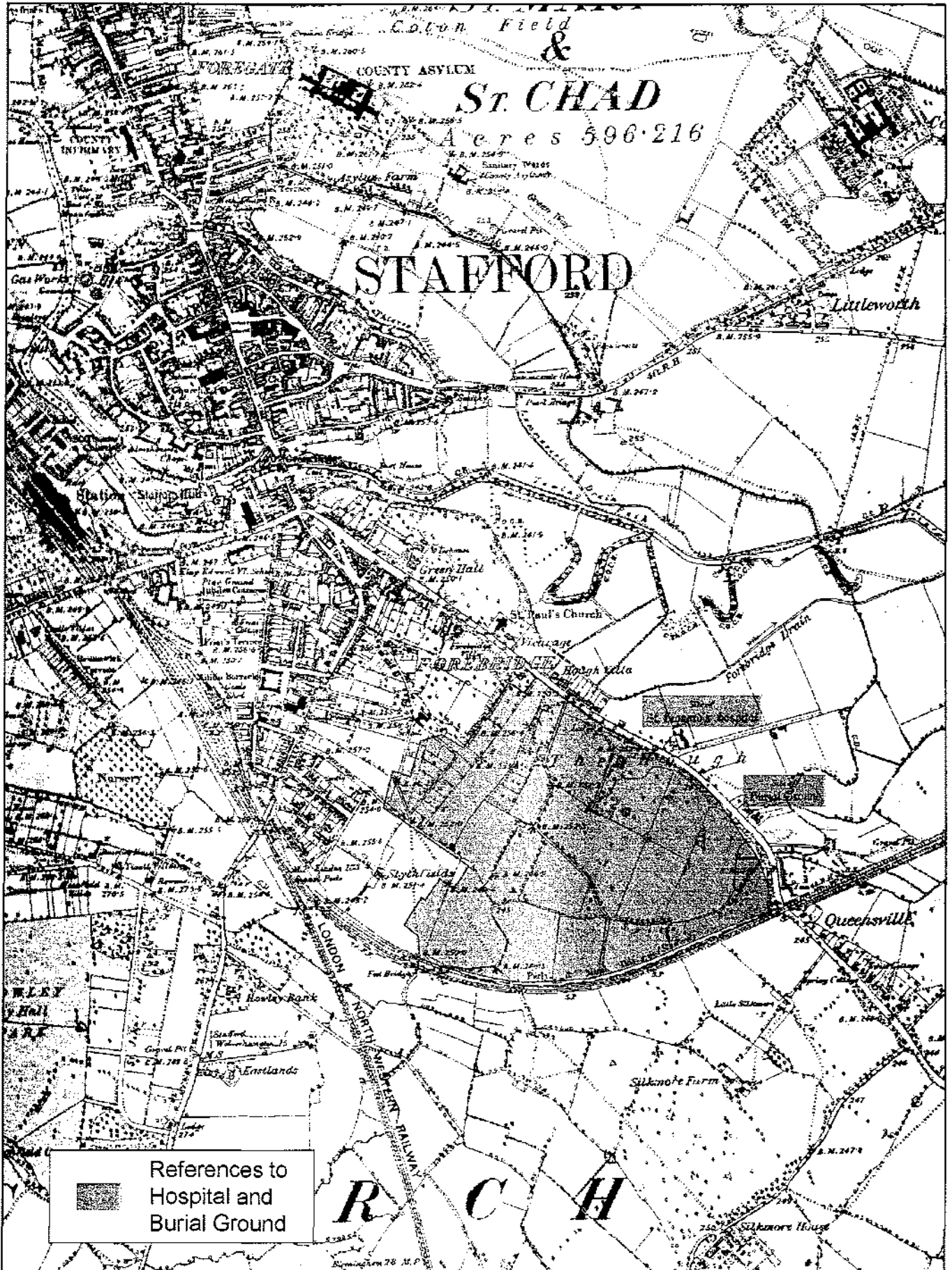
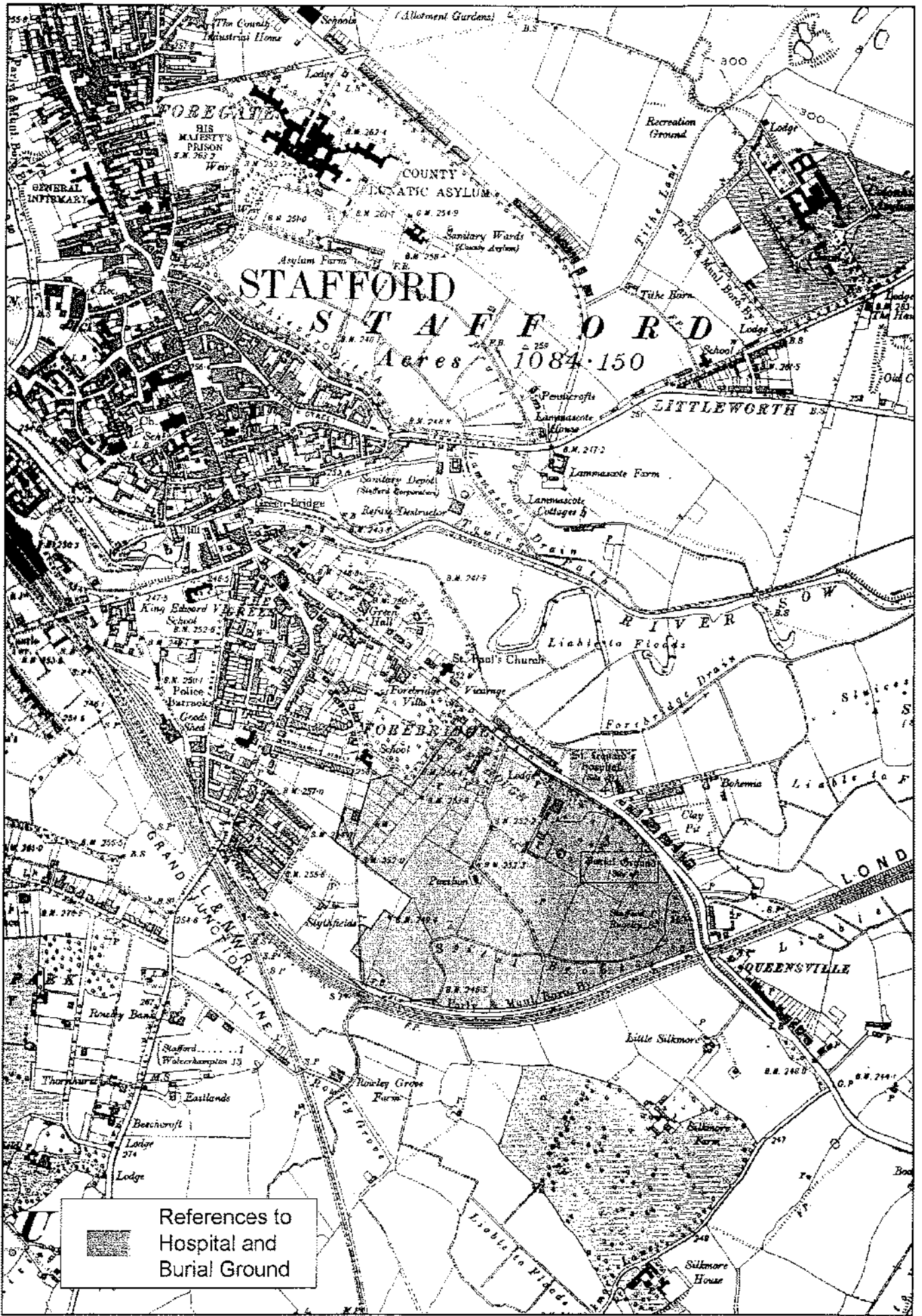


Fig.5



STAFFORD
S T A F F O R D
 Acres 1084.150

References to
 Hospital and
 Burial Ground

Fig.6

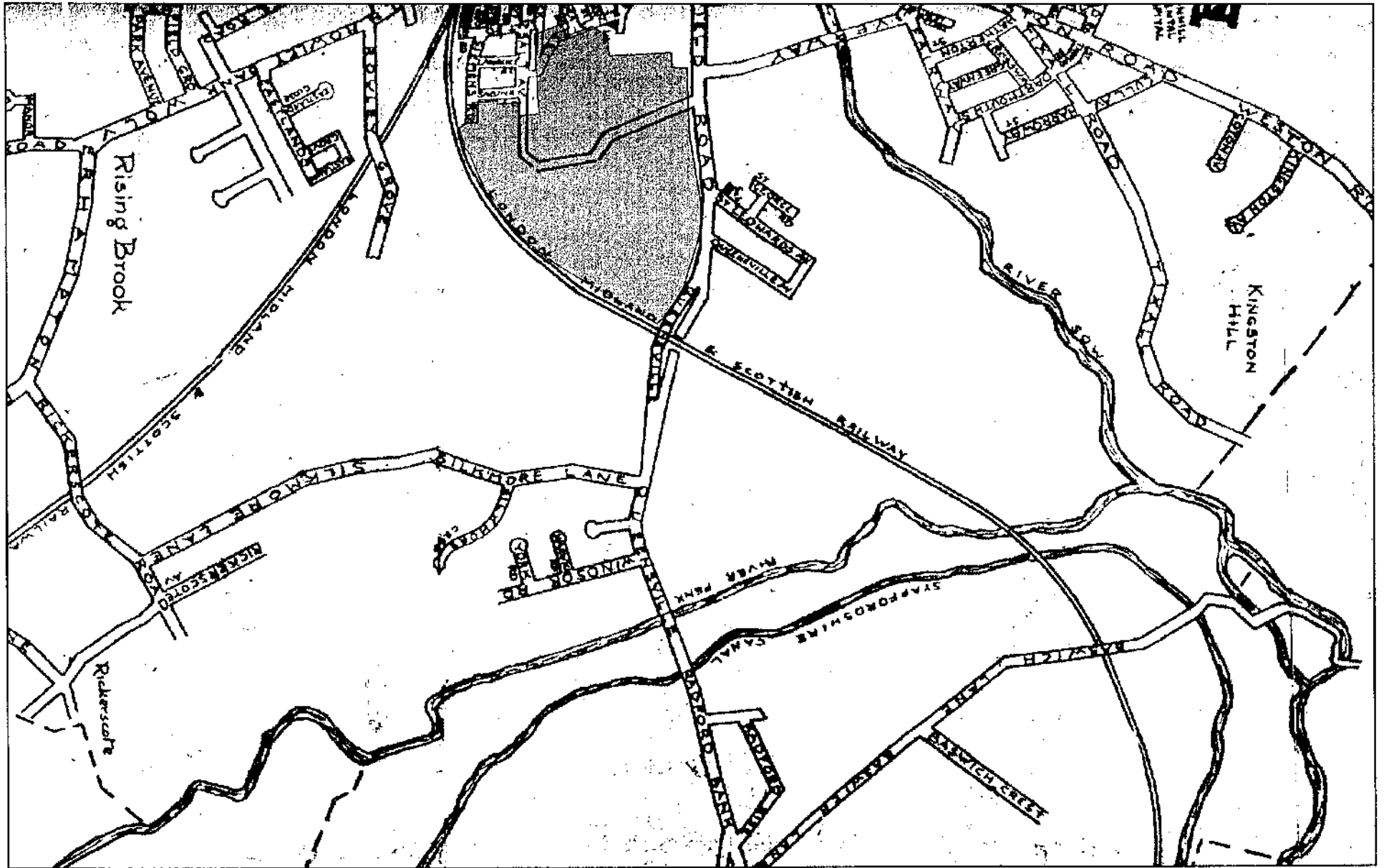


Fig.7

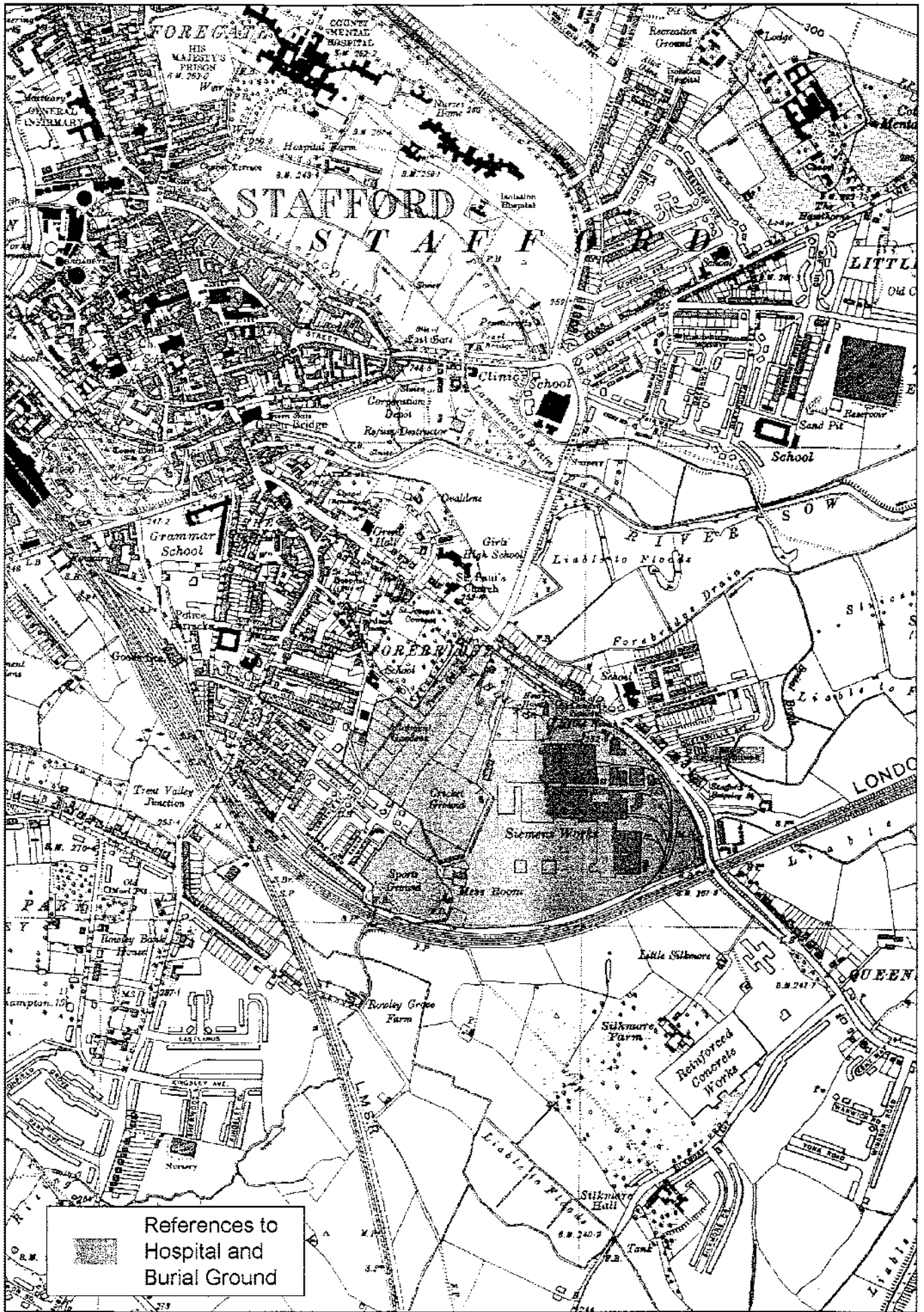


Fig 8

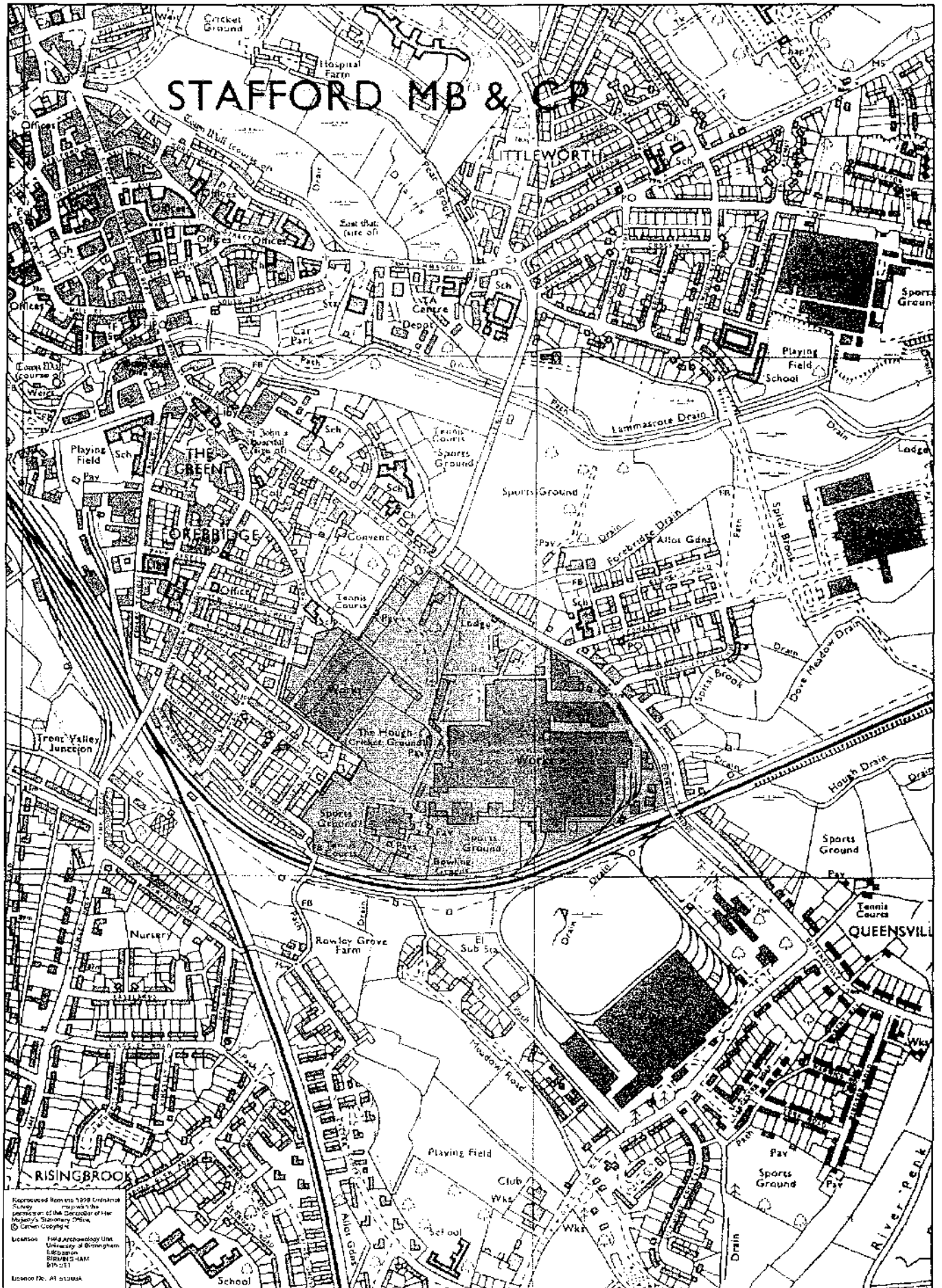


Fig.9

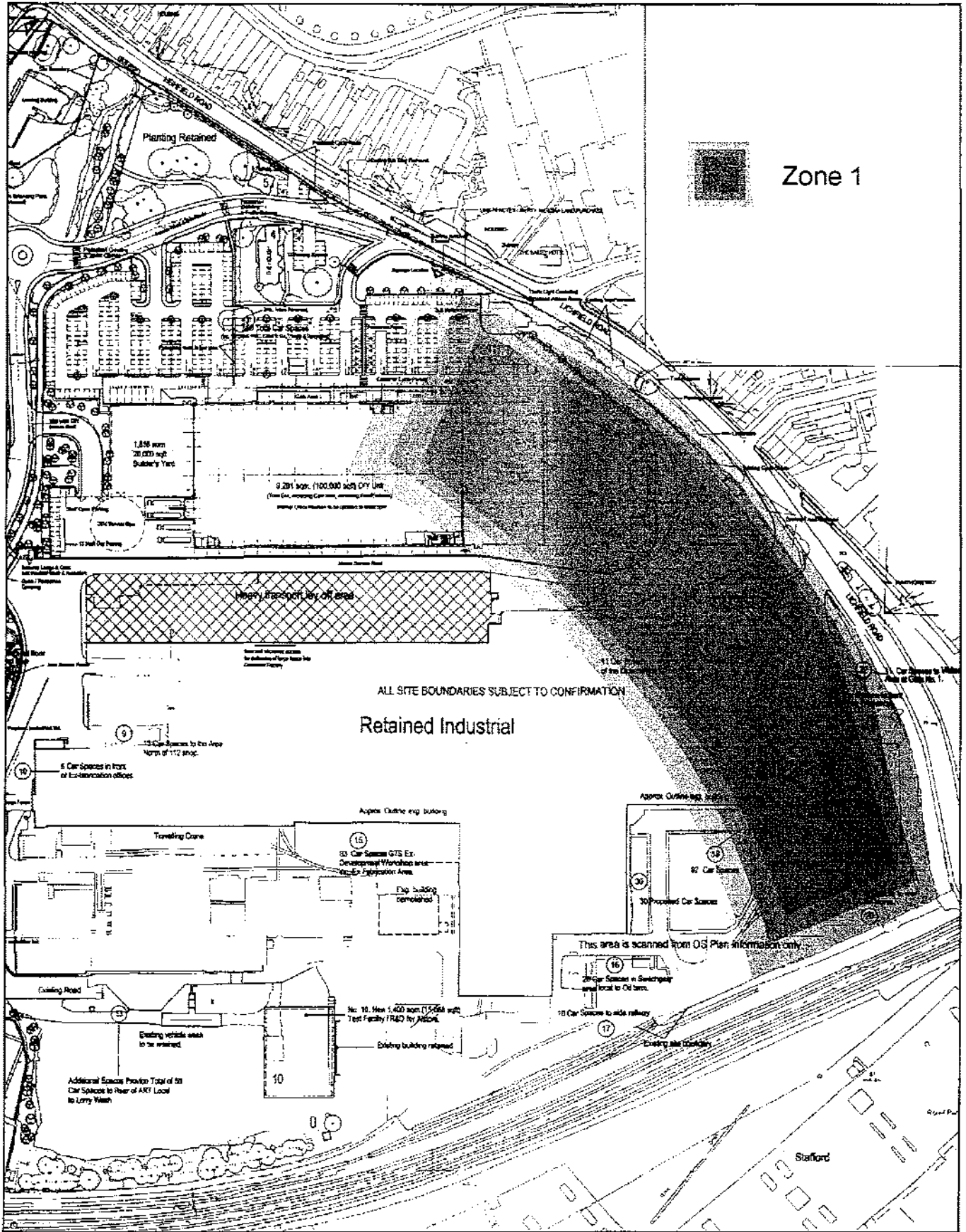


Fig.10



Plate 1

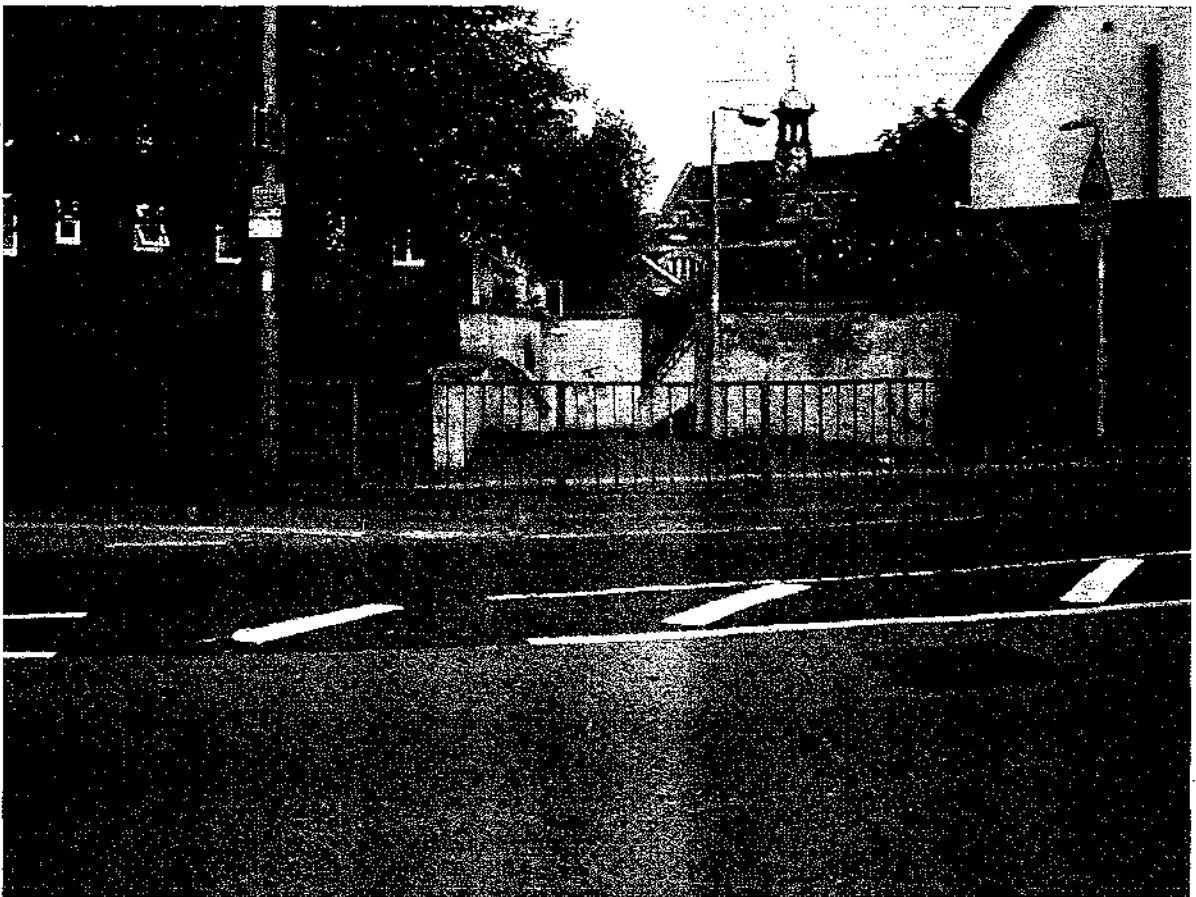


Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5

