



THE UNIVERSITY
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**Easthill Farm,
Fradley Park,
Staffordshire.**

An Enhanced Archaeological
Desk-based Assessment. 2002

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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Easthill Farm, Fradley Park, Staffordshire: An Enhanced Desk-Based Assessment.

Summary

An enhanced desk-based assessment was carried out on an area proposed for development as part of the Fradley Business Park. The assessment was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in September 2002 on behalf of JMP Consultants. The study area covered Easthill Farm and associated fields to the south of Wood End Lane (centered on NGR SK14401200). A previous desk-based assessment had been carried out in 1995 over a larger application area, which had failed to consider any impact of development on this part of the site in any detail. Whilst sites to the northeast of this application have been investigated archaeologically, these have been mostly associated with activity on the gravel terraces associated with the Rivers Trent and Tame. This proposed development is located on an area of Keuper Marl, which has not been studied to any great extent. The results of the assessment showed that, despite its proximity to substantial prehistoric settlement and the former Roman Road (modern A38), there was no evidence of archaeological remains in the study area. As the area had been open farm land for centuries, if any archaeology is present, it could be well preserved. It is recommended that at a minimum an archaeological watching brief be carried out during groundworks to identify and record any archaeological deposits that may be encountered.

1.0 Introduction

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) carried out an enhanced desk-based assessment and site visit in September 2002, on an area of land to the south of Fradley, Staffordshire. The assessment covered Easthill Farm and surrounding land to the south of Wood End Lane. It was carried out on behalf of JMP Consultants prior to an application for a development containing industrial units, warehousing and parking. A desk-based assessment had been previously carried out by Lyndsay Archaeological Services in 1995. This covered a much larger application area. In light of the lack of detailed investigation for the current application area and the considerable amount of archaeological work that has been carried out in the region since 1995, Staffordshire County Council recommended that the existing desk-based assessment be enhanced. No evidence of surviving archaeology had been identified in or near Easthill Farm in the original desk-based assessment.

This work was carried out in accordance with guidance from Bill Klemperer, Principal Historic Environment Officer, Staffordshire County Council, and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' 1999 *'Standards and Guidance for archaeological desk-based assessments'*.

2.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 & 2)

The area proposed for development lies to the northeast of Lichfield, near to and just south of the village of Fradley, in the parish of Alrewas (Figs 1 & 2; centred on NGR

SK14401200). The study area lies close to the former Roman Road, Ryknield Street (modern A38) and near to areas of prehistoric activity associated with the gravel terraces of the Rivers Trent and Tame. The area is currently farm land, surrounding the buildings of Easthill Farm. It is close to a former wartime airfield and a post-medieval brick manufacturer.

3.0 Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of this assessment were to determine the potential and survival of archaeology in the area proposed for development.

Records and maps in the Staffordshire Records Office (Stafford) were consulted along with the Staffordshire SMR. A previous desk-based assessment of a larger area, which included the proposed development site, was also consulted (Lindsay Archaeological Services 1995).

A site visit was made to assess the character of the site, its potential for preserving archaeological remains and the possible impact of any development upon any archaeological deposits.

4.0 Geology and Topology (Fig. 2)

The place name of the nearby village of Alrewas means 'alder swamp', suggesting that the area was very wet in the past. However, the study area is on a slope, rising up to a flat plain on which the airfield is situated. With the northeastern corner being the highest part. This probably made the area drier than some of the surrounding land and possibly more suitable for habitation.

The underlying geology of the site is Keuper Marl (Fig 2). This will probably be at a depth of 0.5 to 1.5 metres, overlain by a derived subsoil. The northern part of the site is also overlain by a gravel deposit referred to as 'Older River Gravel' and the southern part of the site has a narrow band of 'First Terrace' gravel deposit running along the edge (terms from 1:63360 Geological Survey Map, 1905). Keuper Marl generally forms a series of mudstones, characteristically red brown in colour which are interbedded in places with stronger more permeable grey siltstones and light coloured fine sandstones. A geophysical survey was carried out in 1965, in the area north of the study area over the river gravel. Gravel terraces in the surrounding area have been studied extensively prior to aggregate quarrying, but the Keuper Marl has not been archaeologically investigated to any great extent.

5.0 The Study Area in its Archaeological and Historical Context

No archaeology has previously been discovered directly within the study area. However, the archaeology of the area directly to the northeast of the study area has been studied extensively over the past few decades. The quarrying of gravel in the Trent and Tame valleys has led to evaluation and/or excavation of most of the area around the confluence of these two rivers (Figure 3). This is continuing to be investigated (Buteux 2002) and ongoing archaeological work in the quarries (Coates 2002). There is a lack of excavation further south, probably associated with the lack of gravel deposits.

During the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age the focus of activity appears to have been at Catholme, c. 7km away to the northeast, and at the confluence of the Trent and the Tame Rivers. There is also a Neolithic causeway enclosure to the north of Fradley (SMR 1337- Scheduled Ancient Monument). Little is known about the prehistoric land use in the study area. Crop marks are visible in the surrounding area for Bronze Age burial mounds and prehistoric ditches and pit alignments (SMRs 1338, 4238, 4242, 4272) and a hoard of axes and spearheads has been recovered (SMR 1584). Excavations to the northeast of the study area have revealed extensive prehistoric activity at Catholme, Fisherwick, Barton Under Needwood and in Whitemoor Haye Quarry (Bartlett 1999, Coates 1998, 1999, Hancocks and Coates 1999, Hughes 1991, Hughes and Coates 1999, Jones 1992, Losco-Bradley 1984, Losco-Bradley and Wheeler 1984, Lupton 1995, Miles 1969, Smith 1976, Vine 1982). The excavations at Whitemoor Haye have produced evidence of an extensive ritual area dating to the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (Coates 2002).

The study area is close to Ryknield Street and could be the focus of Roman activity. Romano-British farmsteads have been found in the area, at Alrewas (O'Brien 1974, 35), Fisherwick (Smith 1974, 36-40) and Shenstone. There are Iron Age field systems and double ditched trackways visible as crop marks to the west of Fradley, and excavations at Whitemoor Haye Quarry have identified extensive Iron Age farming settlements and Romano-British field systems (Coates 2002).

The Trent and Tame valleys were the heartland of Mercia which was the most powerful of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms until the Danish invasion of 874 (Lyndsay Archaeological Services, 1995, appendix 5.5). There is a large Anglo-Saxon settlement to the northeast of Easthill Farm at Catholme (Losco Bradley 1974, Losco-Bradley and Kinsley 2002). Ryknield Street (A38) continued to be used in the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Domesday Book records Stafford as being taxed for 500 hides making it one of the less well off counties. At this time the Manor of Alrewas belonged to King William I, and is recorded as having 24 acres of meadow, 1 league of woodland and a fishery (Morris 1976). This suggests that Easthill farm was probably open land at this point. Alrewas is within the boundary of Cannock Forest. In 1350 much of the area was deforested with the exception of areas left for hunting called Hays. Fradley was one of these Hays and Alrewas Hay was the largest of them. Agriculture in the area during the medieval period consisted of multiple field systems, rather than a few large communal fields to a manor. Alrewas and Fradley had more than 20 areas of open fields in 1300 (Smith 1980, 7). Ridge and furrow has been recorded in the area but not to any great extent and not close to the study area.

Post-medieval activity has been noted to the west of Westhill farm, close to the study area. A brick kiln has been identified along with large quantities of discarded brick. Quarrying for marl took place within the study area for the factory, but only to a limited extent. The pits are clearly marked on the 1884 OS map (see Fig **). Easthill farm was built at some time in the eighteenth century, prior to 1775. Most of the study area has remained untouched throughout the post-Medieval period.

6.0 Detailed Assessment of the Study Area

6.1 Cartographic Evidence

The land around Easthill Farm appears to have been open farm land throughout the post-medieval period. The 1775 map has the southern boundary of Fradley Heath running just to the north of the study area along what is now Wood End Lane. The study area was already farm land at this time with buildings shown on the map where Easthill Farm is today. It was then called Hill Farm and incorporated both Easthill and Westhill farms. An 1800 survey and the 1810 Enclosure Map of Fradley Heath (Stafford Record Office, ref: Q/RDC62) show no change in the study area. The 1843 Tithe Map also shows no changes to the land. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey dates to 1884 (Fig. 4). Easthill Farm is now shown as a separate farm, most of the field boundaries remain the same now as they did in 1840. Marl clay pits are marked on the this map, presumably dug out for use in the brick kiln. These are still visible on the 1902 and 1923 OS maps (Fig. 5 and 6). The modern OS map (Fig. 2) shows a change in land use to the north of Easthill Farm. A large R.A.F airfield was built in the 1940's. This does not appear to have affected the land use to the south of Wood End Lane. The nature of the land use throughout the post-medieval period would not have disturbed any underlying archaeology except in the small areas where Marl was quarried for brick manufacturing.

6.2 Sites and Monuments Records

The results from the Staffordshire SMR show extensive archaeology in the surrounding area from the Neolithic period. However, there are no references within the study area or in close proximity. A study of the aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record at the Air Photographs Library in Swindon and the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) conducted in 1995 (Lindsay Archaeological Services 1995) found that there were no photographs taken of the site, which showed crop marks or earthworks. The lack of crop marks may be attributed to the nature of the underlying geology.

6.3 1995 Walk-Over Survey

A 'Walk Over Survey' was conducted by Lindsay Archaeological Services in February 1995 to determine the presence of any archaeology. No evidence was found. One piece of Roman pottery was discovered, but no medieval and very few post-medieval finds were recovered. There was no evidence of earthworks or crop marks (*ibid.*). A post-medieval brick factory was identified to the west of Westhill Farm. The quarrying of marl clay for this factory took place within the study area, but only to a very limited extent, which is clearly marked on the OS maps.

6.4 Present Character

The northern half of the site, bounded by Wood End Lane, forms a generally flat plateau. The southern half of the site (Plate 1) slopes considerably down to a stream and area of ponds (Plate 2), which defines the southern extent of the site. The eastern side of the site is defined by modern retail units and banked spoil, which appeared to be associated with the clearance of these areas prior to the construction of the units. The western part of the site is also defined by retail units.

The majority of the land is scrub, at the time of writing, although it appeared to have recently been in use as agricultural land. The western part of the site had evidence of recently being cultivated, with the crop harvested (Plate 3).

The buildings of Easthill Farm are situated in the northeastern half of the proposed development (Plate 4). On initial inspection these appear to be 18th century in origin, with 19th and 20th century additions and alterations.

There was no evidence of earthworks that could reasonably be associated with archaeological deposits.

7.0 Archaeological Potential

There is no evidence for any archaeology within the study area. No crop marks or earthworks were identified and no finds have been discovered. The Staffordshire SMR contains no records of any past activity within or close to Easthill Farm. However, the farm is situated in an area of extensive prehistoric activity, as well as being close to a former major Roman Road (A38) and not far from the large Anglo-Saxon settlement at Catholme. It therefore remains possible that the study area may contain archaeological deposits, although this remains a low probability. As the area appears to have been forest, heath or farmland for several centuries, if any archaeology is present within the study area, there is a high possibility of good preservation.

8.0 Recommendations

Whilst there remains a possibility that archaeology survives within this study area, as there is no indication as to where it might be, it remains difficult to productively focus resources in identifying potential archaeological deposits.

The employment of geophysical surveys, in particular resistivity, could identify any buried features. Any application of this methodology should be focused to areas of the development, which would impact upon any archaeological deposits, i.e reduction of existing levels, foundation and service trenches. Any areas where existing levels will remain the same or be increased should be judged as adding protection to archaeological deposits, whether they exist or not, in these area.

A precautionary archaeological watching brief during groundworks should be considered as an alternative.

9.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Gary Coates and Emma Hancox. It was edited by Gary Coates, who also managed the project. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations and Ed Newton prepared the plates.

Bill Klemperer, Principal Historic Environment Officer, advised on the project on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Stafford Records Office.

Truda King liaised on the project, on behalf of JMP Consultants.

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Maps

1775 Yates Map

1800 Robert Wyatt

1810 Enclosure Map

1840 Tithe Map

1884 Ordnance Survey

1902 Ordnance Survey

1905 Geological Map

1923 Ordnance Survey

SMR No	Grid Ref	Description
646	SK12601286	Neolithic Stone Axe
896	SK20552055	Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
903	SK20552055	Roman Urn
905	SK20552055	Prehistoric Flint Arrowhead
940	SK15701364	Fradley Old Hall, Medieval Moated Hall
963	SK05551555	Medieval Deerpark
964	SK05551555	Medieval Watermill
978	SK12081386	Mound of Uncertain Date and Function
979	SK13471410	Neolithic Flint Axe
1333	SK13331498	Two Parallel Linear Ditches
1335	SK14551255	World War II Airfield, 5 Aircraft Hangers
1336	SK13901120	Cropmarks- Prehistoric Enclosure, Ring Ditch and Linears
1337	SK15401440	SAM, Neolithic Causeway Enclosure
1338	SK15871455	Double Ring Ditch or Enclosure
1339	SK15611418	Large Sub-Rectangular Enclosure
1340	SK15551395	Two Lines of Cropmarks
1341	SK15971231	Linear Cropmarks
1342	SK16901320	Double Linear Trackway, Ditched Enclosure
1343	SK16601262	Cropmarks- Linear Feature, Small Rectangular Enclosure
1584	SK05551555	Bronze Age Hoard, Two Axes & Two Spearheads
2089	SK13511255	Curborough, Deserted Medieval Village
2223	SK15921245	Coventry Canal Built 1788, Brindley
2894	SK12781352	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2895	SK13691380	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2896	SK13861391	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2897	SK14061399	Junction of Trent & Mersey Canal with Coventry Canal
2898	SK14421422	Lock and Bridge on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2899	SK14551430	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2900	SK15221471	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2901	SK16541495	Canal Inn on The Trent and Mersey Canal
2902	SK16521492	Lock on The Trent and Mersey Canal
3043	SK14861121	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3044	SK15371155	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3045	SK15961180	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3046	SK15911262	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3047	SK15601314	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3048	SK14611375	Bridge Across Coventry Canal
3548	SK12671210	Field Name on Tithe Map 'Moat Piece', Moated Site
3565	SK16111373	Cruck Framed Building
3573	SK15281395	Linear Features
3574	SK15571350	Possible Moat Around Fradley Old Hall
3576	SK16951233	Double Ditched Rectangular Enclosure, Possible Hut Circle
3578	SK16421122	Linear Feature, Pit Alignment
3591	SK15941352	Cruck Truss with Curved Blades in a Derelict Building
3736	SK12501150	Watermill on Yates Map 1775
4090	SK15761172	Cropmarks- Linear Features and Enclosures
4229	SK16201460	Cropmarks- Linear Feature and Semi-Circular Enclosure

SMR.No	Grid Ref	Description
4233	SK15001500	Cropmark- Linear
4234	SK14901400	Cropmark- Rectangular Enclosure
4238	SK13001450	Cropmarks- Two Circular Enclosures, Possibly Modern
4242	SK15801430	Cropmark- Possible Ring Ditch
4272	SK16501300	Cropmark- Linear Pit Alignment
5230	SK15701480	Trent and Mersey Canal, Built 1771, Brindley
20057	SK14631297	RAF Lichfield
20200	SK15831322	Ridge and Furrow
20199	SK16911472	Ridge and Furrow
40157	SK13311208	Ridge and Furrow
40199	SK17100990	Post-Medieval Garden

Figures

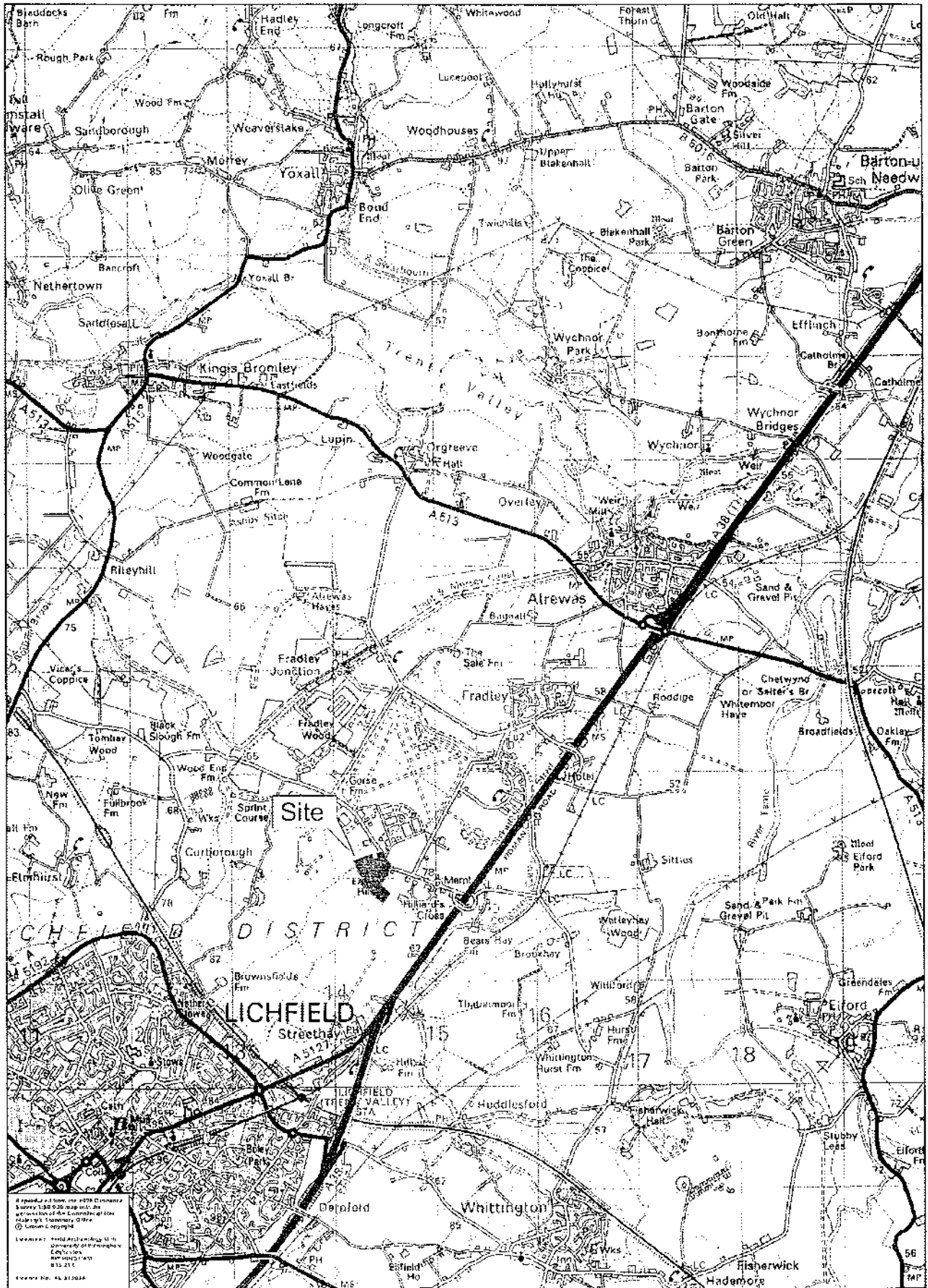


Fig.1

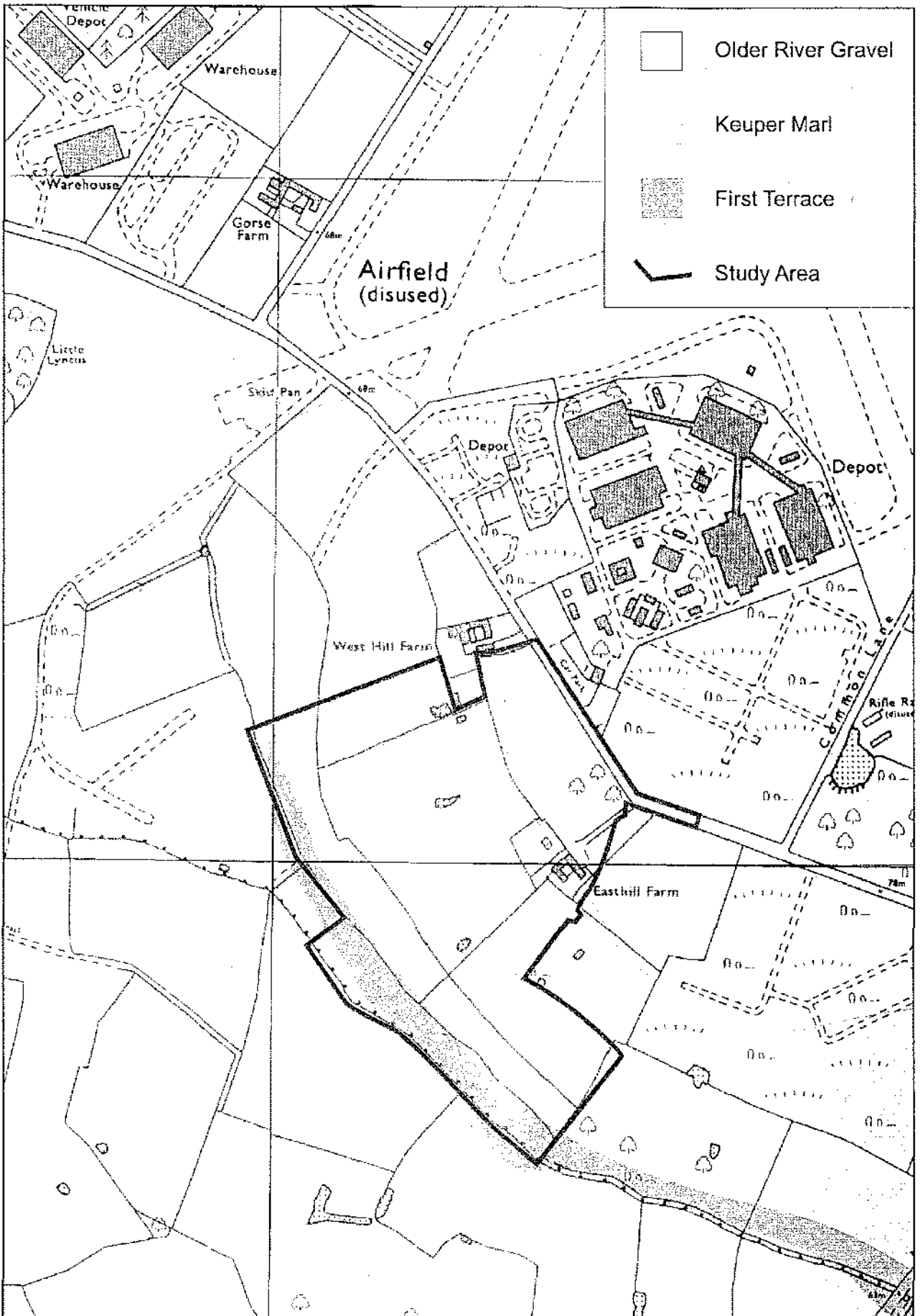


Fig.2

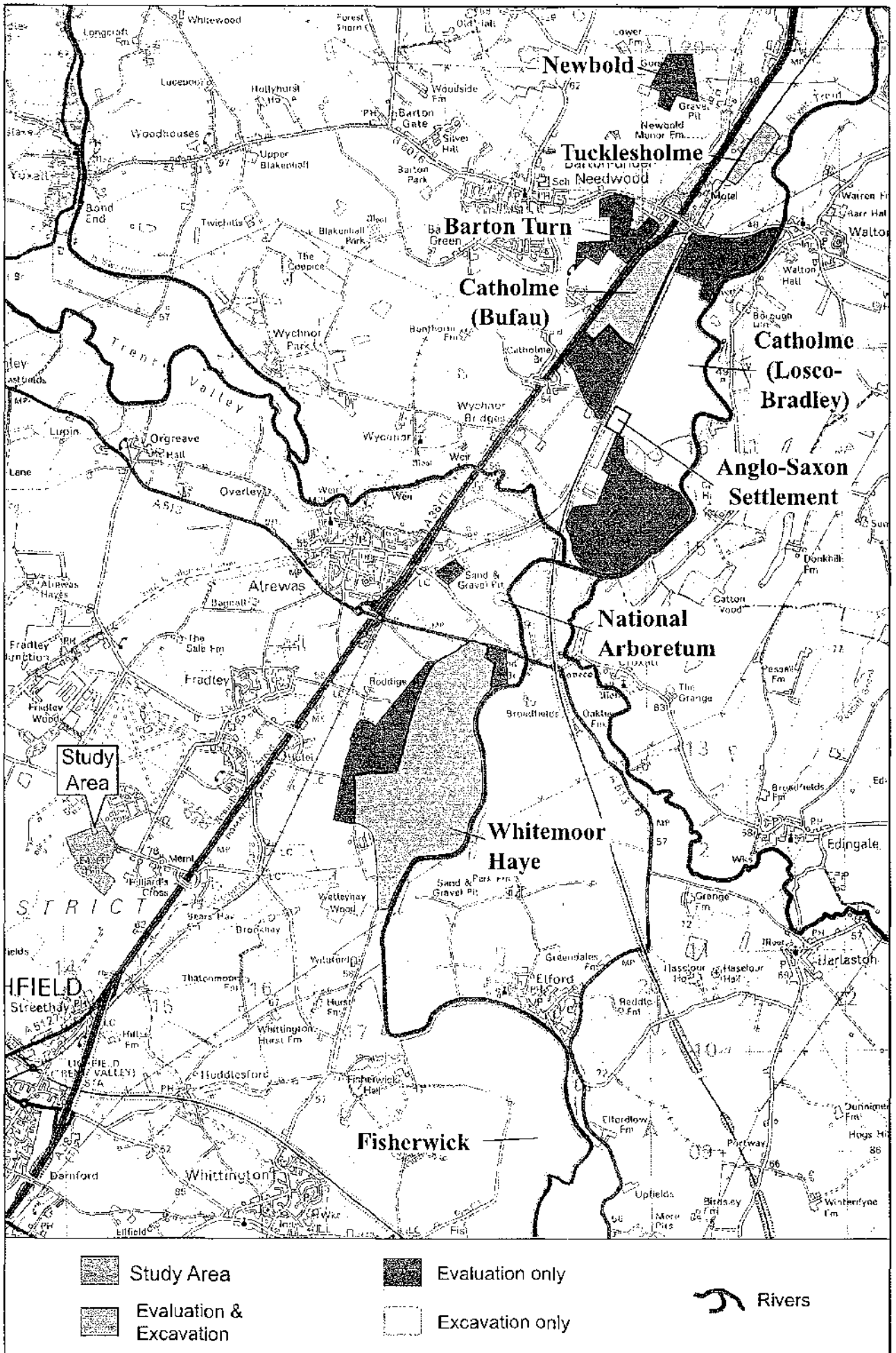


Fig.3

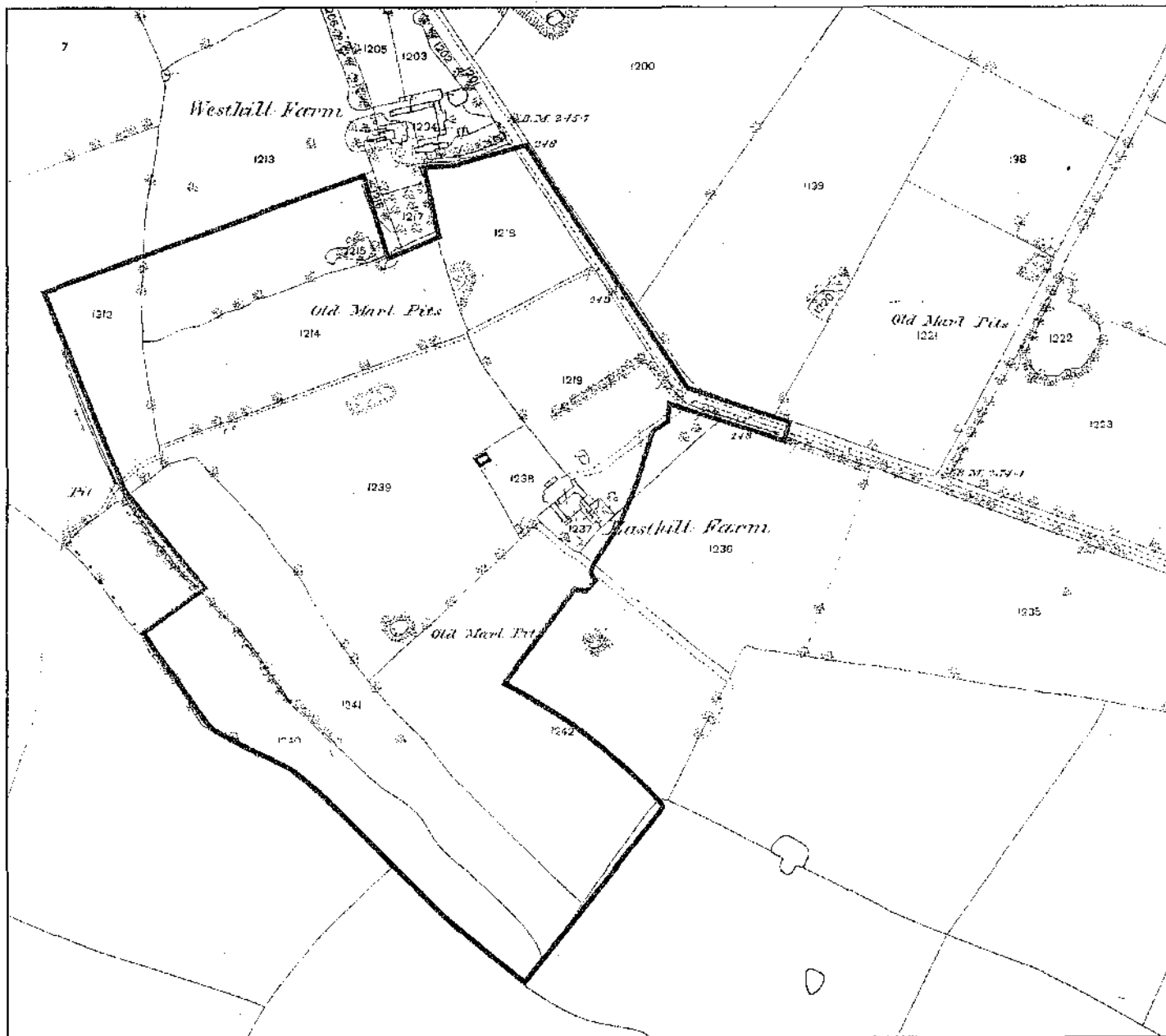


Fig.4 (1884)

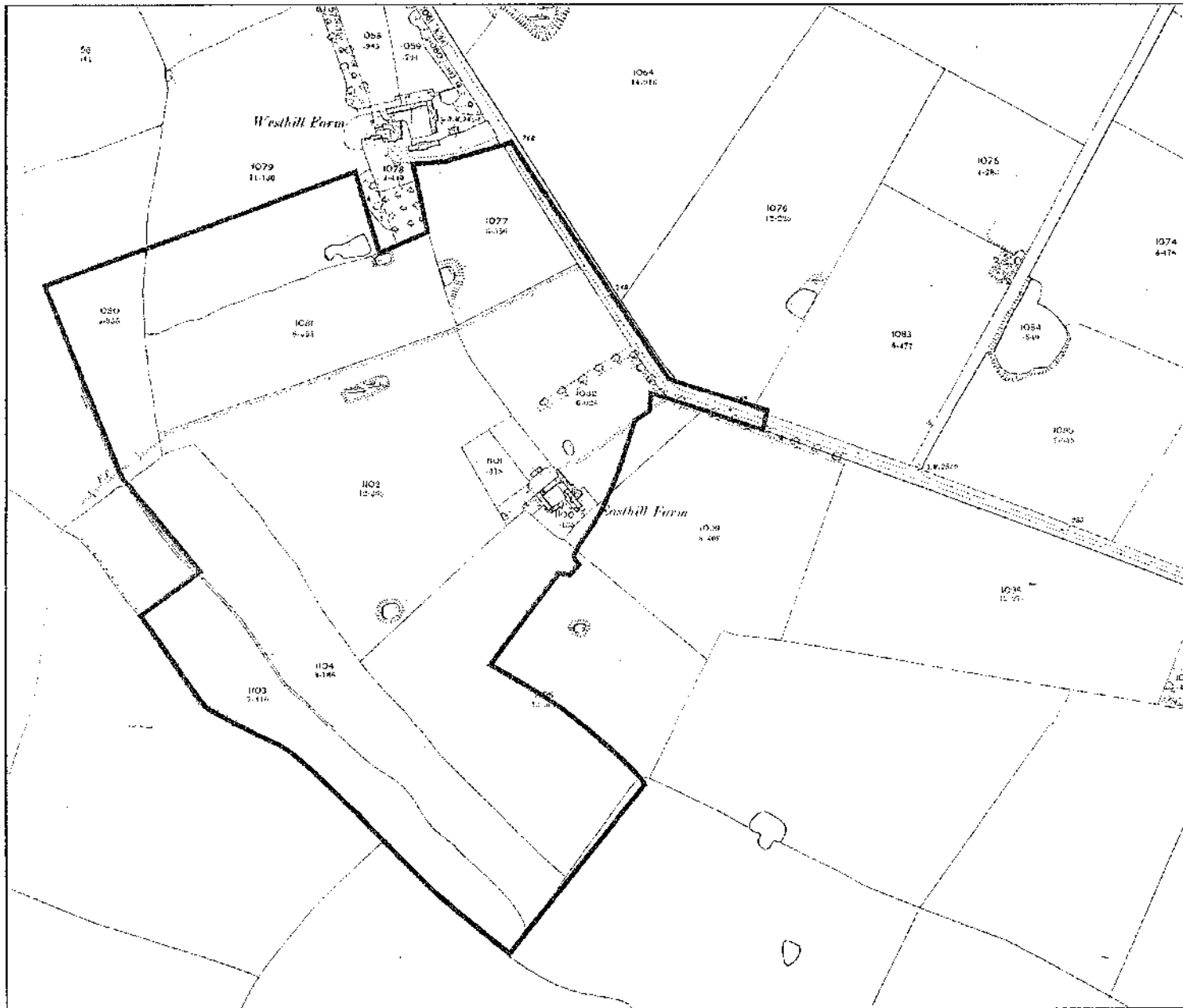


Fig.5 (1902)

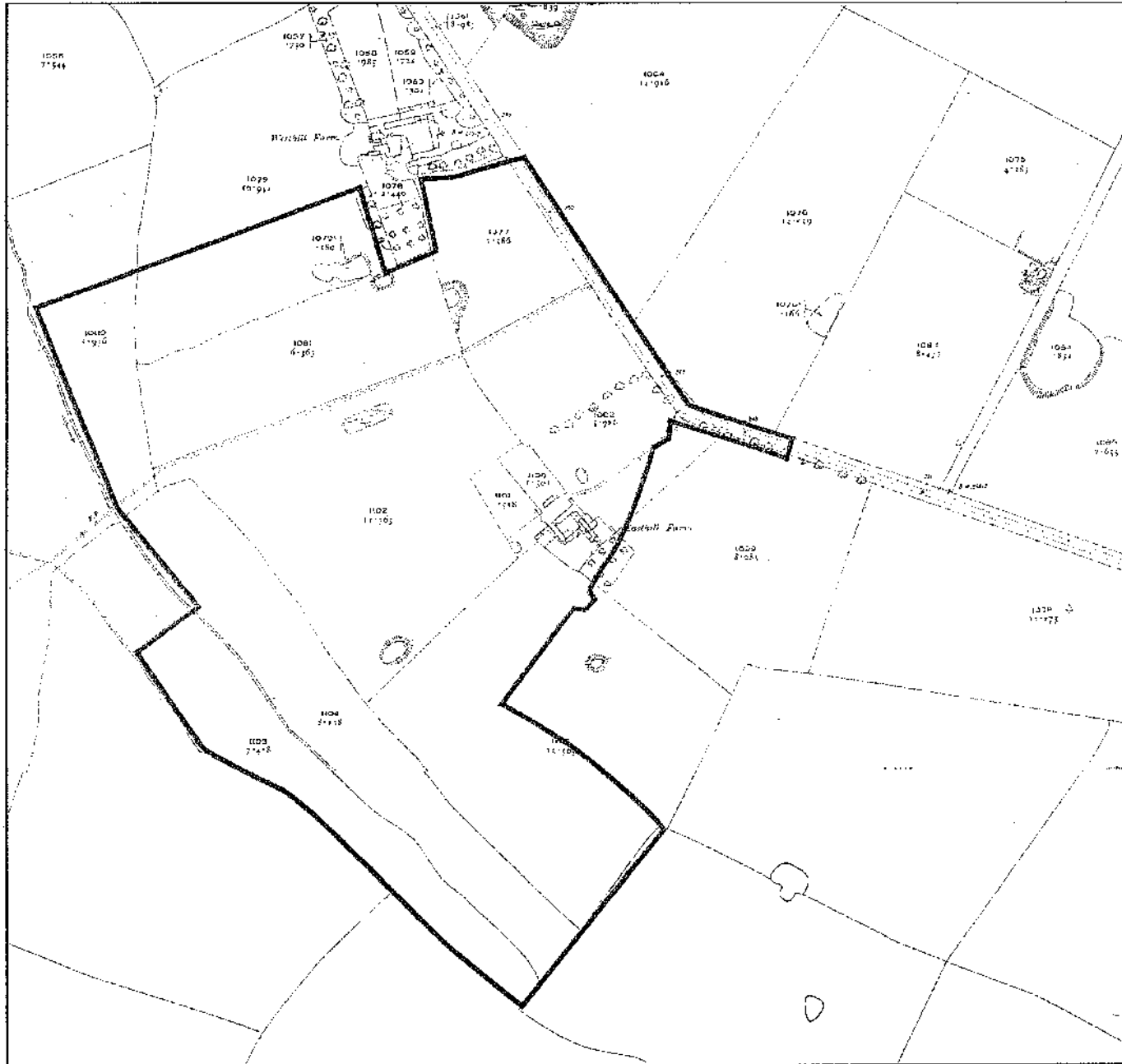


Fig.6 (1923)

Plates



Plate 1.



Plate 2.

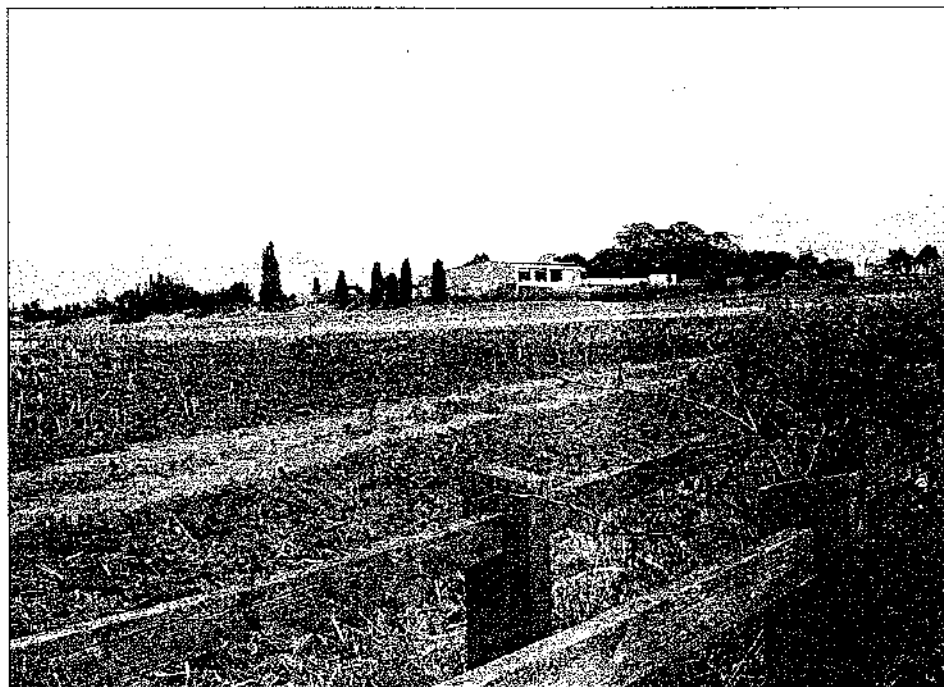


Plate 3.



Plate 4.