

**Land at  
Moreton-on-Lugg,  
Herefordshire:  
An Archaeological Desk-  
Based Assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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by  
Kirsty Nichol and Sarah Watt

*For further information please contact:*  
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513  
Fax: 0121 414 5516  
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk  
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

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## **Land at Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological assessment was carried out in September 2002 in advance of redevelopment proposals for the former Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) Depot at Moreton-On-Lugg, Herefordshire (centred on NGR SO 5007 4648). The work was commissioned by Great West Investments Ltd, and was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in September 2002. The area affected by the proposed development was the site of one of the first US Army bases built in Britain in 1942. Prior to this the land had been open farmland. The supply depot was originally constructed in connection with Operation Bolero which was the prelude to Operation Overlord and the liberation of Europe. It involved the massing of troops and hardware on the mainland in order to mount large-scale attacks against the Germans across Europe by the allies. The site consisted of a mixture of Romney and Nissen huts, and was initially used for the storage of engineering and medical supplies. The huts were laid out around a small railway network connected to the mainline by a spur. Long platforms ensured the speedy entraining of both troops and supplies. Following the end of the war the base was restructured and the majority of the storage huts were replaced with three large depots which were supplied by extensions made to the World War II railway system. An extensive building programme was also undertaken in the early-mid 60s, with renovation and refurbishment of existing buildings being undertaken in the ensuing period.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

This archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) as part of the consideration of a planning application submitted by Great West Investments Ltd for land at Moreton-on-Lugg in Herefordshire (Fig. 1). The location of the site, hereafter referred to as the study area, is shown on Fig. 2. The aim of the report is to provide a summary of known and potential archaeological information for the study area, based on existing data, in order to enable appropriate archaeological mitigation strategies to be devised if required. 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 (Fig. 2)**

The study area, covering approximately two hectares, lies immediately to the north of the village of Moreton-on-Lugg (NGR SO 5007 4648) within a former army base, and is bounded by the Moreton-on-Lugg/Wellington parish boundary to the north. Other boundaries define the extent of the army base, separating the study area from fields to the east and west. The A49 runs north-south along the western edge of the study area, and a

watercourse forms the southern boundary. The study area contains a spur of the railway line serving the military base, and former army buildings. The northeastern part of the site contains Long Coppice, a wooded area which is not part of the redevelopment proposals. The River Lugg runs to the east of the study area,

### **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 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.

### **4.0 Method**

A site inspection of the study area was carried out, and an appraisal of the standing buildings was also undertaken in order to understand the development and sequence of buildings on the site. The appraisal involved a visual inspection of each structure with written analytical notes, and a photographic record of key elements was made (Appendix I). Documentary research included consulting the Herefordshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), the primary database of known archaeological and historical sites for the county. Primary and secondary sources, including historic maps, were examined at the Herefordshire County SMR, and at the Herefordshire County Record Office, and documents and plans held at the site were also consulted.

### **5.0 Geology and Topography**

The drift (Quaternary) geology of the study area comprises alluvium. Several episodes of alluviation are known to have taken place in the vicinity.

### **6.0 Site Inspection**

The site inspection revealed that elements of relic landscape survived around the periphery of the study area. A stream, lined by old willow trees, runs along the southern edge of the study area, and a small section of old field boundary, the bank and ditch of which survived, was noted on the eastern boundary of the site (Plate 1). No other field boundaries were discernible within the study. However, undulations in the adjacent field, to the east, and in the open recreation area that currently occupies the central part of the study area were noted. There were also scorch marks visible (Plate 2) that appeared to match the layout of the roads and railway associated with the WWII US supply base. The only surviving elements of this phase of occupation appeared to be sections of the railway system, and a gate post of economy concrete on the southern boundary of the

site. The site had been substantially rebuilt in the early post war period, with a second extensive building programme being undertaken in the 1960s.

## 7.0 Cartographic Information

A range of historical maps was examined in order to build up a picture of the history of the study area from the late-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Maps dating from this time may give clues as to earlier usage, perhaps from the medieval period, in field names and patterns.

*Copy taken from a plan of the Moreton Property as it was in the year 1777 (Fig. 3)*

This map showed the study area to have been subdivided into mostly rectangular fields, with an irregular curving boundary to the east (surviving today) running along the edge of Long Coppice. This forms a continuous boundary extending down towards the village, and probably represents the course of a stream or ditch, particularly as it joins the watercourse along the southern boundary. If this was the case, it may have been used to drain or irrigate the area of Long Coppice, which, at that time, was called *Long Weeds*, indicating a marshy area (*Long* referring to its shape). This field also contained two sub-enclosures named *Old Lands* and *Hopyards*. The latter may refer to the name of the owner/occupier, as other fields within the study area were known as *Norbage*, *Symonds*, *Crow and Collins*, although it may have been used to produce hops.

The central western part of the study area comprised *New House Field* and *New Orchard*, presumably associated with Brook House Farm on the western side of the A49. A further enclosure in the southwest corner of the study area was known as *Ryegrass*. Other fields to the east of the study area also incorporated the name *Weeds*, providing an indication of the character of the land in this area. The two fields in the north were named *Lower Ground* and *Aspen Pleck*. At this time, the area of the current Long Coppice (*Long Weeds*) did not extend to the northern boundary of the study area, but did extend further south than it does now.

*A New Map of the County of Herefordshire from a survey by Henry Price, 1817*

This map is relatively small scale, but the study area is shown. There appears to have been a large square building or enclosure at its northern end. Wellington Marsh lay to the north of the study area, again emphasising the wet nature of the landscape here. Brook House is shown in its current location.

*Ordnance Survey 1 inch:1mile, Sheet No. LV, 1832*

No detail of the study area is shown on this small-scale map, but two watercourses are shown to have run from the south. One forming the southern boundary of the study area, and the other forming the parish boundary with Wellington (the northern border of the study area).

*Map of the County of Hereford from a survey by Bryant, 1835*

Brook House had become Brook Farm by this date. Moreton Bridge is marked where the watercourse flowing east-west (across the southern edge of the study area) flows beneath the A49. No other details are shown.

*Undated Plan of Moreton Court Estate*

Moreton Court is shown on both the 1832 and 1835 maps in the village of Moreton-on-Lugg. This particular map probably dates to either the late-18th or early 19<sup>th</sup>-century. It shows the study area at a large scale and provides the field names for the area. Brookhouse Farm is still in the same location, just outside the study area, and had been extended. To the northwest of the study area, three buildings are shown within two small enclosures. These sit within a larger field known as *Ox Pasture*. This field also contained a pond. The two large fields to the south were known as *New Orchard or Thirty Acres* and *Home and Marlboro' Field* respectively, the former being arable and the latter meadow. Long Coppice is shown as a wooded area, which, at this time, with the exception of a narrow band of land, extended to the northern border of the study area. It no longer extended as far south as it did in 1777. Fields to the east of it, outside the study area, incorporated the name *Weeds*. Some field boundaries existing in 1777 had by this time been removed to create more regular enclosures. The former *Lower Ground* and *Aspen Pleck* were now a single field.

*Moreton-on-Lugg Tithe Map, 1845 (copy transcribed by Geoff Gwatkin 1999) (Fig. 4)*

*Ox Pasture* had once again become two separate fields. *Marlboro' Field* had become *Marbridge Meadow*, the element *Mar-* can refer to a boundary. The buildings to the northwest are labelled House and Garden. Long Coppice was then named *Withy Bed*, which again attests to the marshy nature of the land here. Withies are willow trees, coppiced for annual or biannual harvest, which are grown in withy beds. The last remaining such industry in Britain is in the Somerset Levels wetlands.

*Ordnance Survey First Edition, Sheet 26 NE, 1890 (Fig. 5)*

This map shows the study area containing four large fields and Long Coppice. The fields on the Moreton side of the parish boundary were clearly larger and more regular than those on the Wellington side. Some of the field boundaries in Wellington Marsh may have doubled as drainage ditches to carry excess water to the stream following the parish boundary.

*Ordnance Survey Second Edition, Sheets 26.11, 26.12, 26.15 and 26.16, 1902*

The house in the northwestern corner was named Marsh House. A sluice lay in the far southeastern corner of the study area, at the point where the two watercourses meet. The stream that runs south, forming the eastern border of the study area, is shown to run only a short distance into Long Coppice.

*Plan of the Layout of the Moreton On Lugg Depot (Reference CE CMD 154/7/43) 1943*

A spur from the mainline railway loops northeast and then southwards. Three blocks of huts are visible, accommodation for the troops to the south with supply stores, serviced by the railway, located within the study area and to the north.



A black and white vertical aerial photograph from 1970 (SO 50 46, Ref.68166) was examined in the SMR. This photograph shows a large area of rows of nissen huts in the area to the north of the study area and two large areas within the study area containing blocks of more modern army buildings. It appears that the land has been quite heavily re-landscaped. The only possible feature of below-ground interest observed on the photograph is a circular soil or grass mark in the southwestern area of the army complex.

## **8.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

### **8.1 Previous Archaeological Work (Fig. 6)**

The only sites listed on the Herefordshire County SMR as being within the study area are those sites relating to the former military base on the site. These are discussed further in the following section.

The vicinity of the study area has produced a wealth of archaeological information, from the Palaeolithic to the post-medieval period. Worcestershire Archaeological Service, formerly Hereford and Worcester County Council Archaeology Section, have carried out a series of archaeological investigations at Wellington Quarry, Marden, immediately to the north of the present study area (SMR 5522).

In 1987, an evaluation on the site (Clarke, Taylor & Woodiwiss 1988) found prehistoric activity dating from the mid to late Iron Age (3rd-1st century BC). Also the remains of Romano-British stone buildings, perhaps dating to the late 2nd century AD, possibly representing part of a farm or villa complex. Evidence for farming activity included a large quantity of animal bone and a corn drier. Most of the evidence dated to the late 3rd century but continued well into the 4th century AD. This Roman settlement extended over 4 hectares. Alluvial deposits, occasionally exceeding 1m in depth, were also recorded. The report concluded that a period of extensive alluviation had followed the abandonment of the site, implying large inundation which had major implications for settlement patterns in the Lugg Valley as a whole. The alluvium increases the potential for good survival of Roman and prehistoric deposits and also environmental remains, such as snail shells, although it also serves to preclude the usefulness of geophysical survey and aerial photography.

In 1989, a programme of salvage recording (Edwards 1989) identified a buried ground surface, represented by a thin black layer through the yellow alluvium, which may have been Iron Age in date. The Roman material was consistent with the results of the 1987 excavation. Three major phases of alluviation were identified, two of which occurred prior to the Roman period, and the third sealed the Roman deposits. It was noted that prehistoric deposits may be located as deep as 2m below the modern ground surface. A second phase of salvage recording (Shelley 1989) identified large Roman ditches and two Bronze Age ring ditches, implying the possible existence of a previously unknown barrow cemetery.

In 1990, a third phase of salvage recording was carried out (Edwards 1990) which found further evidence of Roman activity, on a different alignment from that previously recorded. There was also evidence for a post-Roman field system, separated from modern deposits by a layer of alluvium immediately underlying the topsoil. Two human skeletons, dated to between the Bronze Age and post-Roman period, were also discovered. An extensive area of peat was also observed in the alluvial sequence. Sampling and pollen analysis suggested a possible Mesolithic date. A small flint assemblage can probably be assigned to the second or third millennium BC.

In 1992 a fourth phase of salvage recording was undertaken (Brown 1992). A Bronze Age pit containing burnt bone, pottery and flint was identified close to the ring ditches found in 1989 (see above). A Roman pit was also found, and three medieval ovens as well as other features containing well-preserved plant remains.

In 1993, a fifth phase of salvage recording (Fagan *et al*) revealed a group of Neolithic or Bronze Age pits containing pottery and flint. A significant quantity of charred plant remains was also recovered from prehistoric deposits. Roman deposits included the remains of two human cremation burials, pits and boundary ditches. The area may have represented the agricultural hinterland of the Roman settlement.

The sixth phase of salvage recording took place in 1995 (HWCC 1995). Neolithic and early Bronze Age flints indicated some occupation, and a substantial, but undated, stone and timber feature was interpreted as a causeway built across a previously-identified palaeo-lake.

The seventh season of salvage recording (Napthan 1996) identified a single Roman ditch. Later in 1996 an evaluation was undertaken at the quarry (Jackson *et al* 1996), which included an area just to the northeast of the present study area. This work identified four zones of high archaeological interest associated with deposits of prehistoric and Roman/medieval date. Prehistoric deposits were interpreted as relating to seasonal occupation. Activity in the southern area (closest to the present study area) may relate to high status or ritual activity. This area also contained deposits of Roman or medieval date, including features which may have been associated with water management. Deep deposits, including a layer of peat, lay in a depression which appeared to be related to a laterally migrating watercourse of glacial or early post-glacial date. It was concluded that there was a high potential for sampling of the organic peat deposits to provide information on the early prehistoric environment. A large quantity of pottery was recovered, including sherds dating from the Early Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods. Early pottery associated with human remains in one deposit may have been the result of ritual deposition.

Phases eight and nine of the salvage recording took place in 1997 (Napthan *et al* 1997). This work identified an important phase of Neolithic activity, including at least one Beaker burial and other features of probable domestic origin. The Maritime Beaker grave is of national significance as they are very rare, and its significance is enhanced by the

exceptional wealth of grave goods with it. Quantities of Iron Age material and early Roman ditches were also recorded.

The interim statement for Phase 9 of the work (Griffin 2001) refers to a large palaeochannel found running roughly north-south across the site. This and other channels on the site were thought to represent the long-term migration of the River Lugg across the valley floor. More importantly, a wheel pit, and the foundations of the wheelframe, for a watermill were found during this phase of the work. The timbers were dated by dendrochronology to the late 7th – early 8th century AD (Griffin 2001) making the mill one of the earliest of the medieval period to have been found in the country.

## 8.2 Historical Profile of Study Area

It is clear from the wealth of surviving archaeological deposits on the adjacent site at Wellington that this landscape has been occupied fairly intensively since early prehistoric times. There is therefore the potential for the current study area to contain similar archaeological deposits which would contribute to the picture of the prehistoric and later landscape. The cartographic evidence suggests that the study area was in use as arable and pasture land certainly from the late 18th century, and that some form of withy industry may have been taking place in the area now known as the Long Coppice in the eastern part of the study area. The study area appears to have remained in agricultural use until World War II when it was brought into use as a military base.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941 Japan drew the reluctant US into the war, with Germany and Italy declaring war on America just a few days later. Operation Bolero, the prelude to Operation Overlord and the liberation of Europe, commenced the following year. It involved the mass movement of US troops, supplies and hardware to bases in England, from which a large-scale attack on German positions throughout Europe could be staged. American supplies arrived through west-coast ports and were deployed to large supply bases across southern Wales and the West Country. This left the British supply network operating without hindrance in the South East. The Crown requisitioned 120 acres of land (at £60 per acre) in 1942, for use as a storage depot and military camp (Anon 1973, 4). It is believed that construction work was initially begun by US troops, but was interrupted when American troops were sent to North Africa, French Morocco and Algeria, as part of Operation Torch in early November 1942.

During the latter part of the war the site was used as a Medical Equipment store, becoming a motor transport sub-depot for the Chilwell Organisation at the end of the war (Ibid). The earliest plan of the base, dating to 1943, depicts two main blocks of huts and a complex of smaller hutments to the south of the site. The hutments were grouped in blocks of six and seven and were probably living quarters for individual fighting units (Fig. 7). The storage units were located to the north of the accommodation, Block 1 (comprising 46 huts) was located within the Study Area and Block 2 (comprising 88 huts), some of which are still visible on the ground today, was situated to the north of the study area. The huts were set out around a small railway network that connected all areas of the site and included shunting areas. According to the 1943 plan the base was to

provide c.400,000 square feet of open storage in spaces between the huts, and 510,000 square feet under cover (Blocks 1 and 2). The size of the huts (35' by 96') is also annotated on the plan, and there is a reference to their being Romney and Nissen type huts (Ibid). Block 1 was used for the storage of medical and engineering supplies. All medical supplies were stored under cover and the huts had concrete bases. Of those huts associated with the storage of engineering equipment only forty per cent had concrete bases, with the majority of supplies being kept in the open.

In the early post war period (1953-54) the base was almost completely restructured and rebuilt. The accommodation blocks to the south of the study area were demolished and the huts located within the study area (Block 1) were replaced by three large storehouses (Sheds A, B and C, Fig. 8). The entrance to the base was also moved at this time, however one of the original roads has continued in use (Plate 3). Sections of the original 1940s rail network have also continued in use and were extended to include the new storehouses (Plate 4). This redevelopment is reflected in the types of sleeper used, those for the main line, and the central line up to the loco shed are concrete with an open central section. This is conducive with a WWII date, as concrete was in very short supply and savings were made wherever possible. The later extensions to the east (to Sheds A and B) and west (to Shed C) were solid in section and had 'STENT' moulded into them.

Following the disbanding of the Motor Transport Stores sub Depot in 1961 the base became home to the Western Command Ordnance Depot (Ibid). Sheds A, B, and C were all refurbished at this time and several new structures constructed across the site, these included a Loco shed, guard house, canteen, offices, kennels, and paint and gas stores. Detailed plans regarding layout and services of these buildings were found in the archive held at the site. New structures were also added to the complex in the 1980s when a petroleum store, and armoury were constructed, and the 1960s paint store was converted into the bomb disposal unit (Fig. 8). The site was used during the Falklands conflict and the addition of these later structures may have been associated with this event.

## **9.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Preservation was good on sites to the north due to the marshy nature of land in this area, and the protective layers of alluvium encountered on the flood plain of the Lugg. However, the study area lies on slightly higher ground, above the marsh and the flood plain of the river. This, and the greater distance of the site from the river than those excavated to the north may mean that preservation, certainly of paleoenvironmental deposits, may not be as good within the study area. However, this location was often favoured from the Iron Age onwards and the apparent lack of development within the study area prior to the construction of the military base also indicates the potential good survival of archaeological deposits. In addition to this, the types of structure built as part of the WWII development were constructed on simple concrete rafts, the footings of which would not have impacted greatly upon below-ground deposits.

During the post war period, however, the study area was extensively re-landscaped, with many trees being planted across the site. Scorch marks and undulations are visible across the open recreation area, but it seems likely that these are associated with the WWII occupation rather than being earthworks of any antiquity. It is also unlikely that any surviving remains from this period would enhance our understanding of how the depot functioned during WWII, and there is obviously much better preserved, indeed standing, examples of this type of hutment to the north of the study area. However, it is possible that prehistoric remains and it may be appropriate for a programme of targeted trial trenching to be undertaken prior to future redevelopment taking place. This may be dependant upon the nature and extent of the proposed building plans and the final finished levels of these proposals.

## 10.0 Acknowledgements

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Maps

Copy taken from a plan of the Moreton Property as it was in the year 1777  
A New Map of the County of Herefordshire from a survey by Henry Price, 1817  
Ordnance Survey 1 inch:1mile, Sheet No. LV, 1832  
Map of the County of Hereford from a survey by Bryant, 1835  
Undated Plan of Moreton Court Estate  
Moreton-on-Lugg Tithc Map, 1845 (copy transcribed by Geoff Gwatkin 1999)  
Ordnance Survey First Edition, Sheet 26 NE, 1890  
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Plan of the Layout of the Moreton On Lugg Depot (Reference CE CMD 154/7/43) 1943

Aerial Photographs

Black and white vertical aerial photograph from 1970 (SO 50 46, Ref.68166),  
Herefordshire SMR

## **APPENDIX 1** Brief building descriptions of key structures by date

### ***1940s***

#### Railway Lines

Identifiable by hollow sleepers.

#### Gate post

Appears to be economy concrete, only one remaining.

#### Sewage works

Economy concrete foul drain.

### ***1950s***

#### Shed A (Plate 5)

Built in 1950s but re-clad in the 1990s. 1989 roller shutter doors added. 1991 roof refurbished. 7 bays aligned north-south.

#### Associated Offices

Set of three offices. Single storey. Brick with concrete render. Set on concrete bases. Metal-framed windows.

#### Shed B (Plate 6)

No longer extant.

#### Associated Offices (Plate 7)

Set of three offices and toilets. Single storey. Brick with concrete render. Set on concrete bases. Metal-framed windows.

#### Shed C (Plate 8)

Open plan industrial shed of steel truss and post type (Plate 9). 10 bays long, height 5.5m and 18.5m wide with 3 main internal divisions. Asbestos cement sheet superstructure. Continuous roof lights. Blockwork dado wall for a perimeter concrete floor. North end of the platform constructed in precast moveable concrete blocks (Plate 10) similar to the concrete of the sleepers.

#### Railway Lines

Extensions to 1940s design to include new sheds. Identifiable by solid concrete sleepers.

#### Bridge and Drain (Plate 11)

Two rough-built concrete, circular-section, conduits.

### ***1960s***

#### Loco shed (Plate 12)

Brick, flat roofed. Pair of inspection pits (Plate 13). Steel frame with hexagonal cut-in roof supports. End gables all brick, English bond. Side walls with infill windows above. Side walls are ½ brick thick with steel cladding. Offices to east.



MT Section (Plate 14)

7 bays. Steel-frame shuttered doors, offices to the south.

Electric supply

Brick, flat roofed.

Stores for fire picket

Single storey block of four stores. Brick gables, breeze block and render walls. Steel sheet roof.

PSA Offices/Kennels

Brick and breeze block

Guardhouse

Single storey. Brick and panels. Flat roof.

Offices

Two-storey, brick and panels.

Canteen

Single and two-storey. Brick, flat roof.

Paint Store/Bomb disposal

Single storey. 8 bays long. Steel frame. Brick walls at gables (1½ bricks thick), steel panels, 2 balanced steel doors to the frontage.

Gas Store

Single storey. 4 bays long. Brick gables, breeze block walls. Corrugated steel roof.

*1980s*

Petrol Store

Brick base with steel frame and steel cladding. Sliding door in centre of western elevation. Open, fenced, compound to the south.

Weapons Store

Single storey. Brick. Felt roof. Steel inner frame.

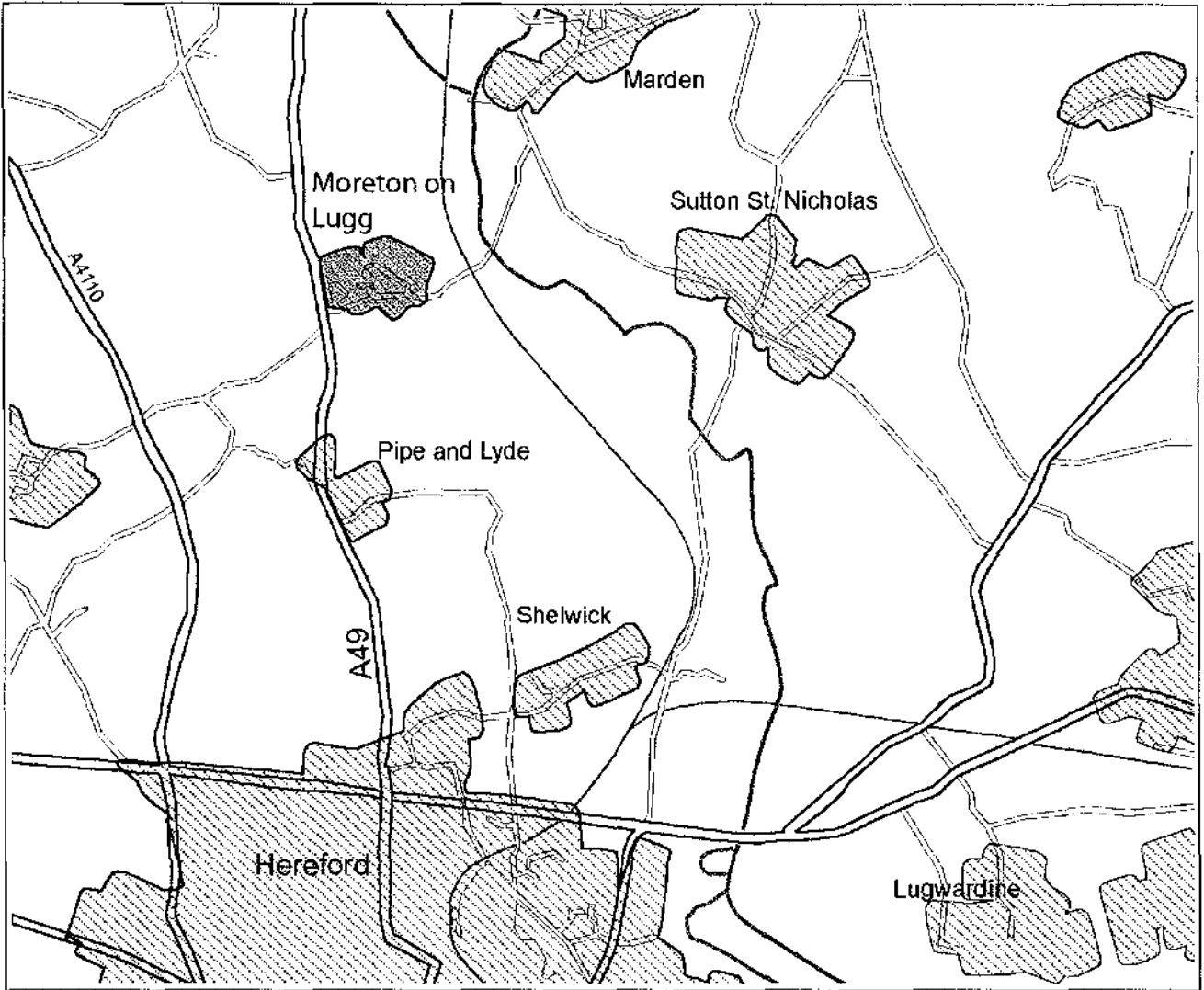


Fig. 1

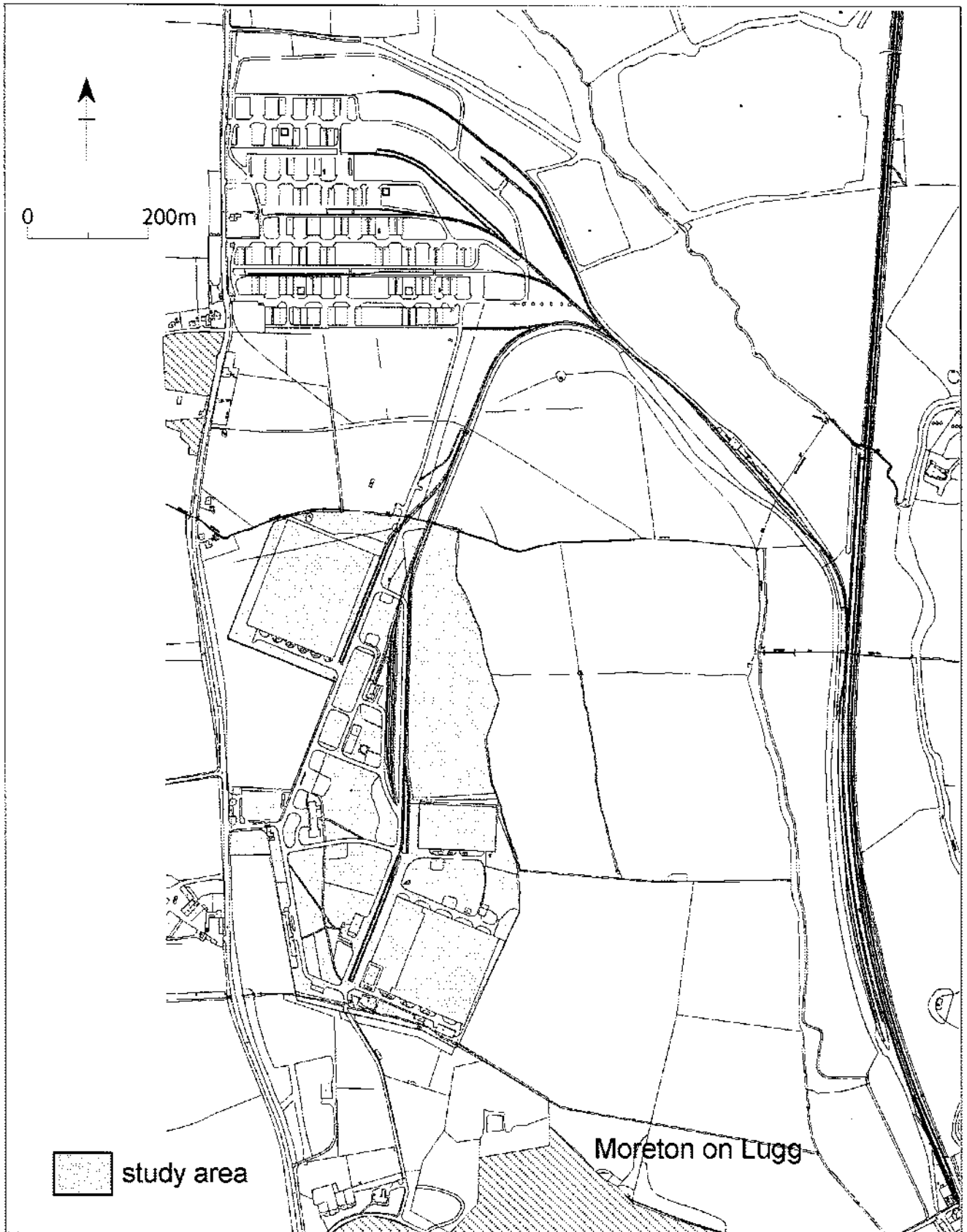


Fig. 2

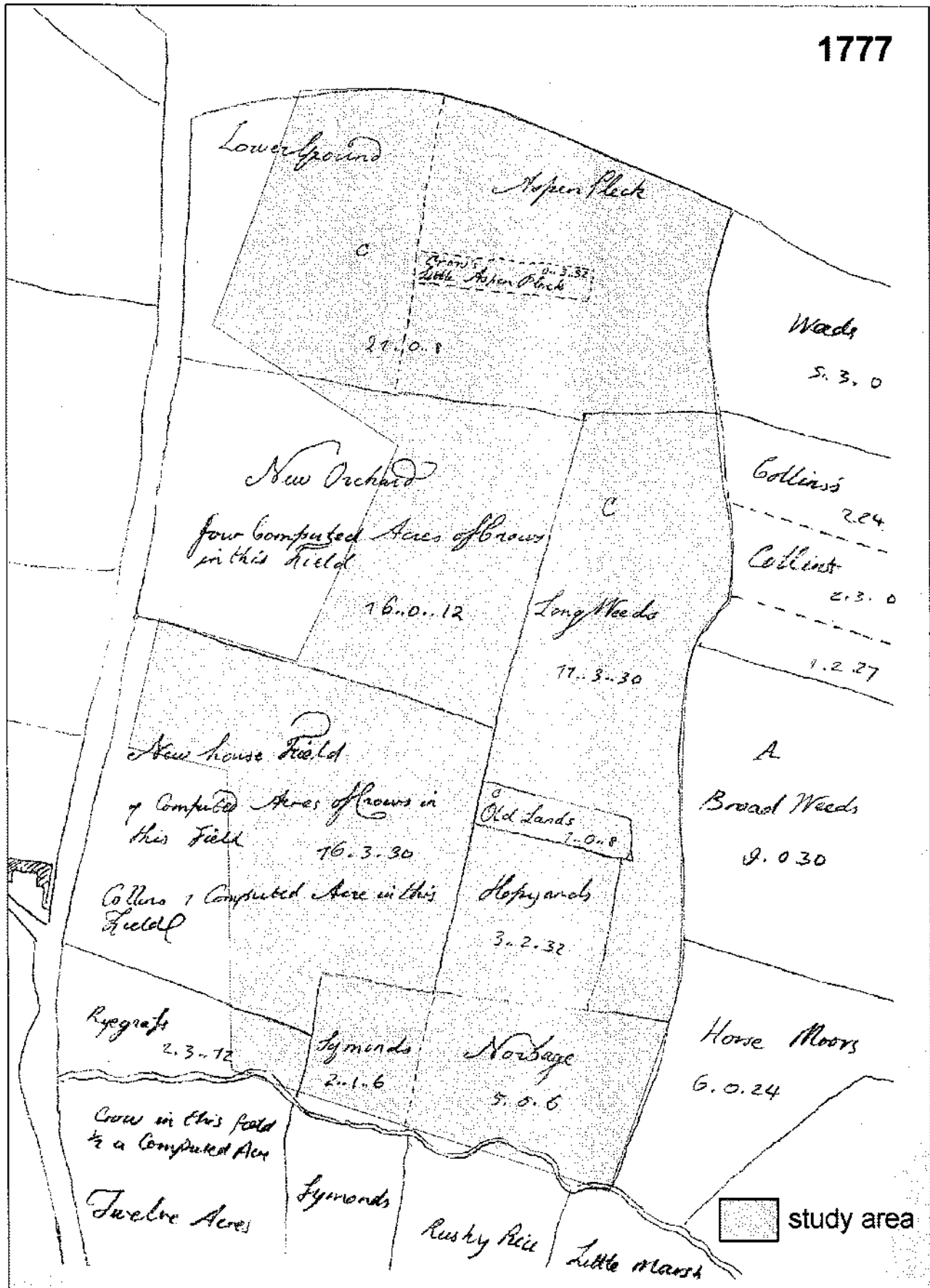


Fig. 3

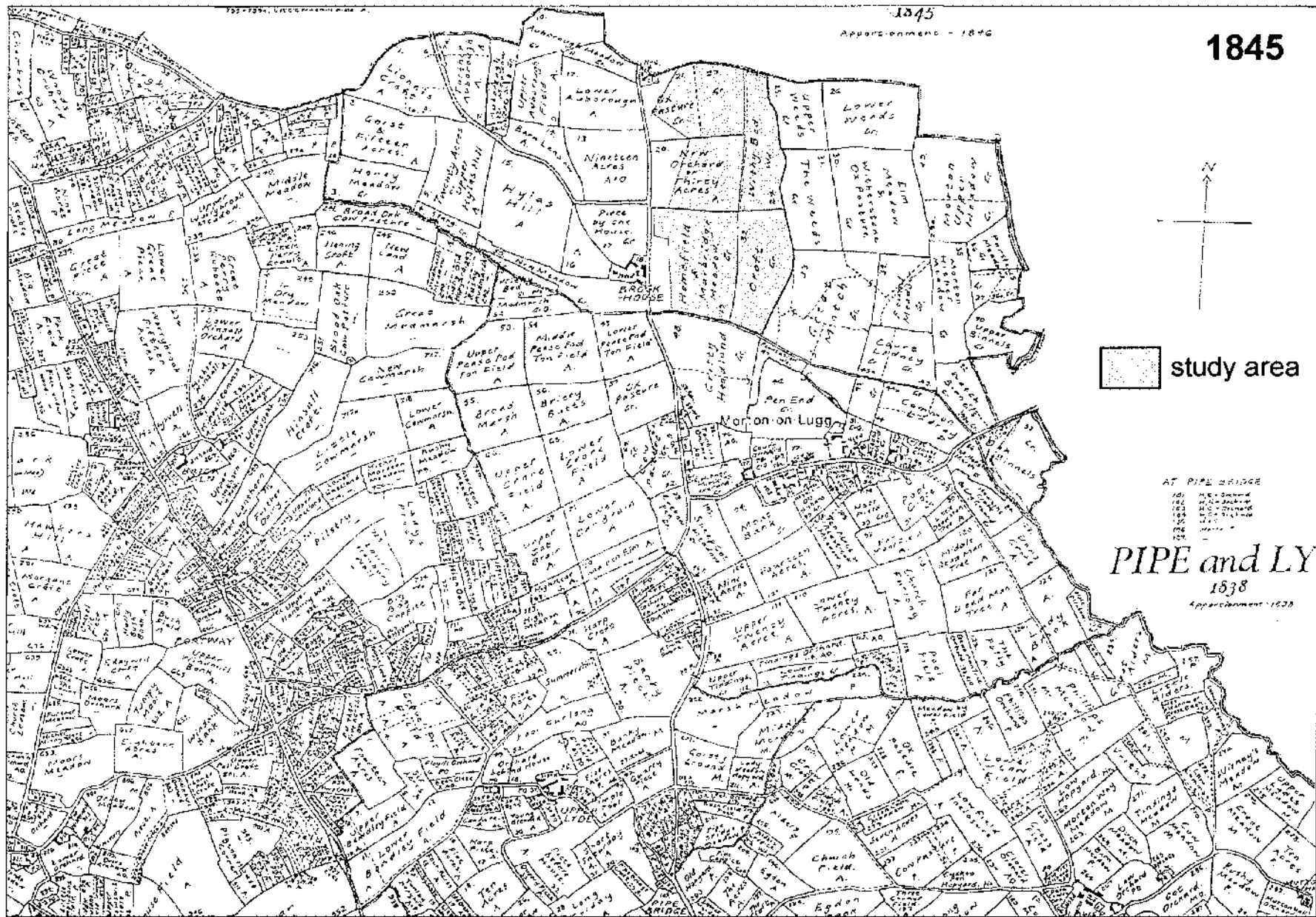


Fig. 4

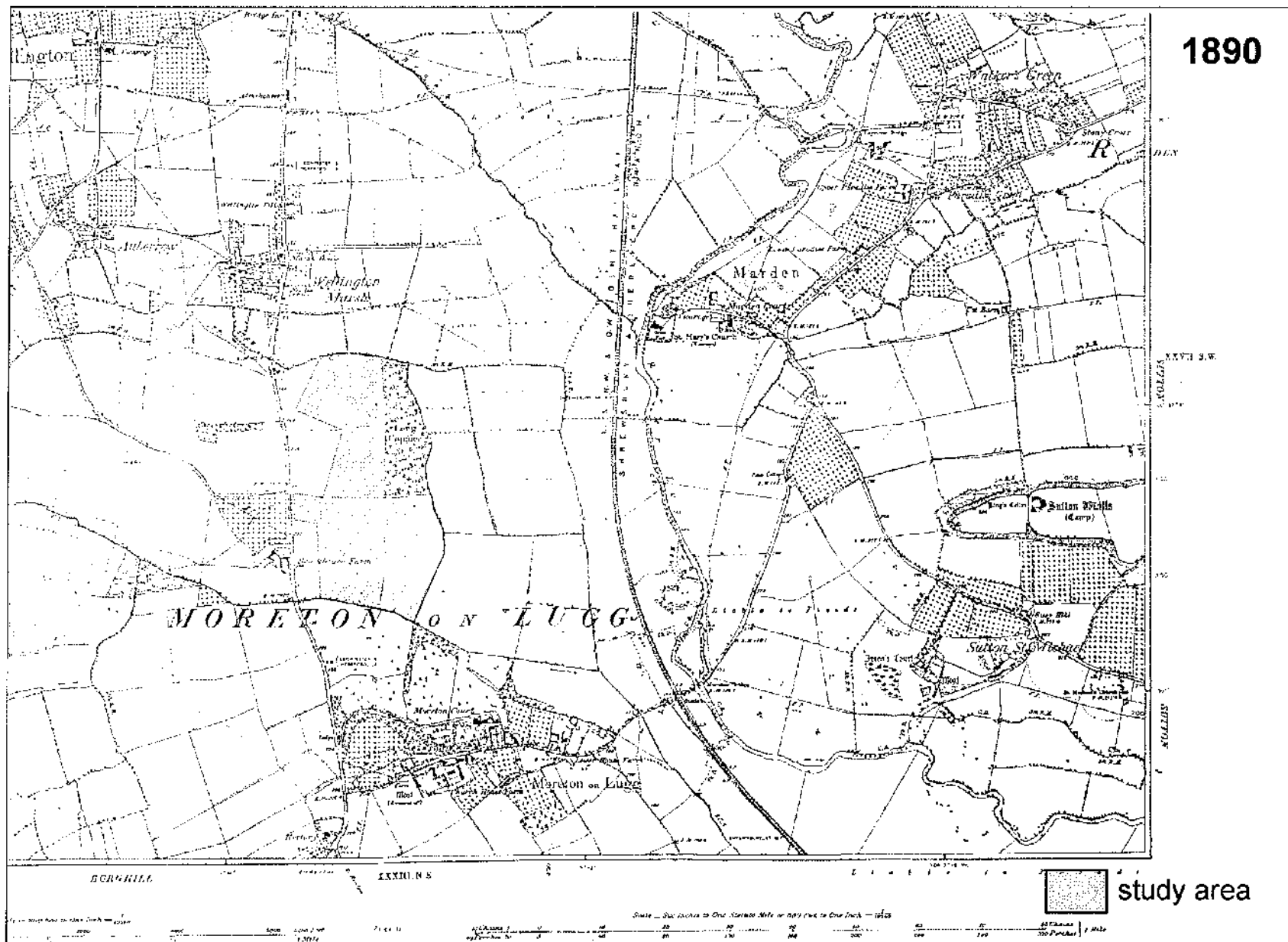


Fig. 5

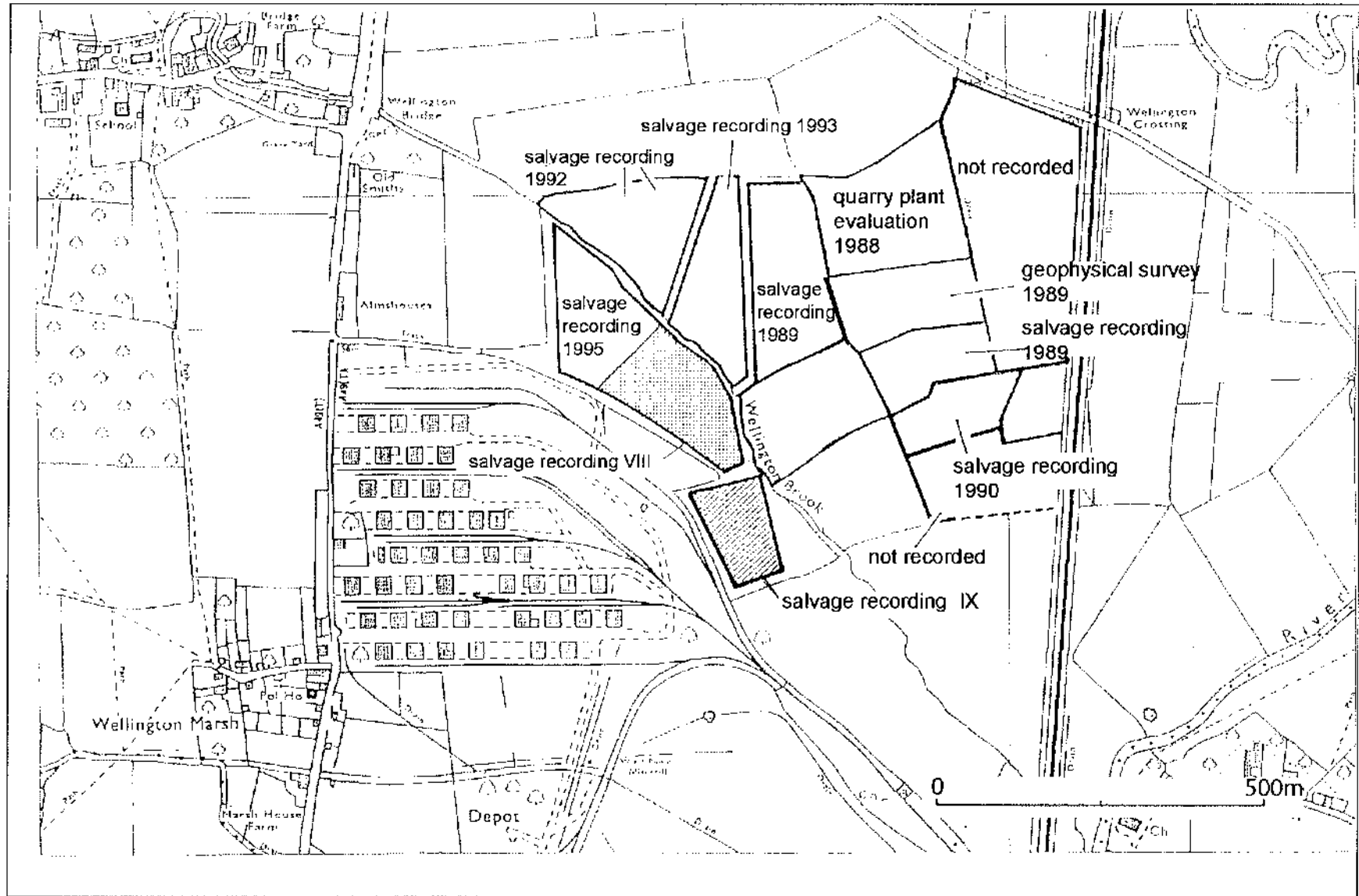


Fig. 6

1943

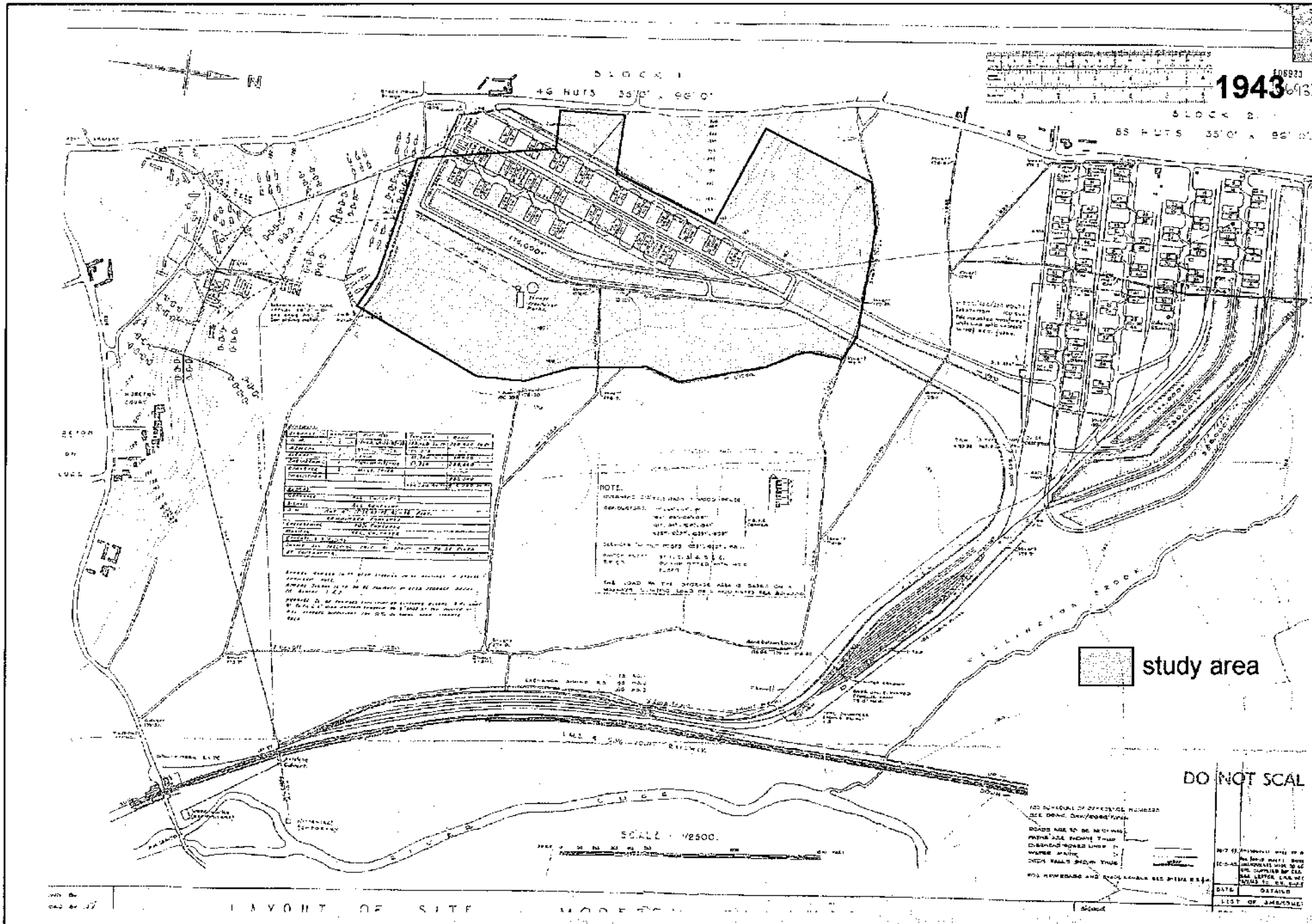


Fig. 7



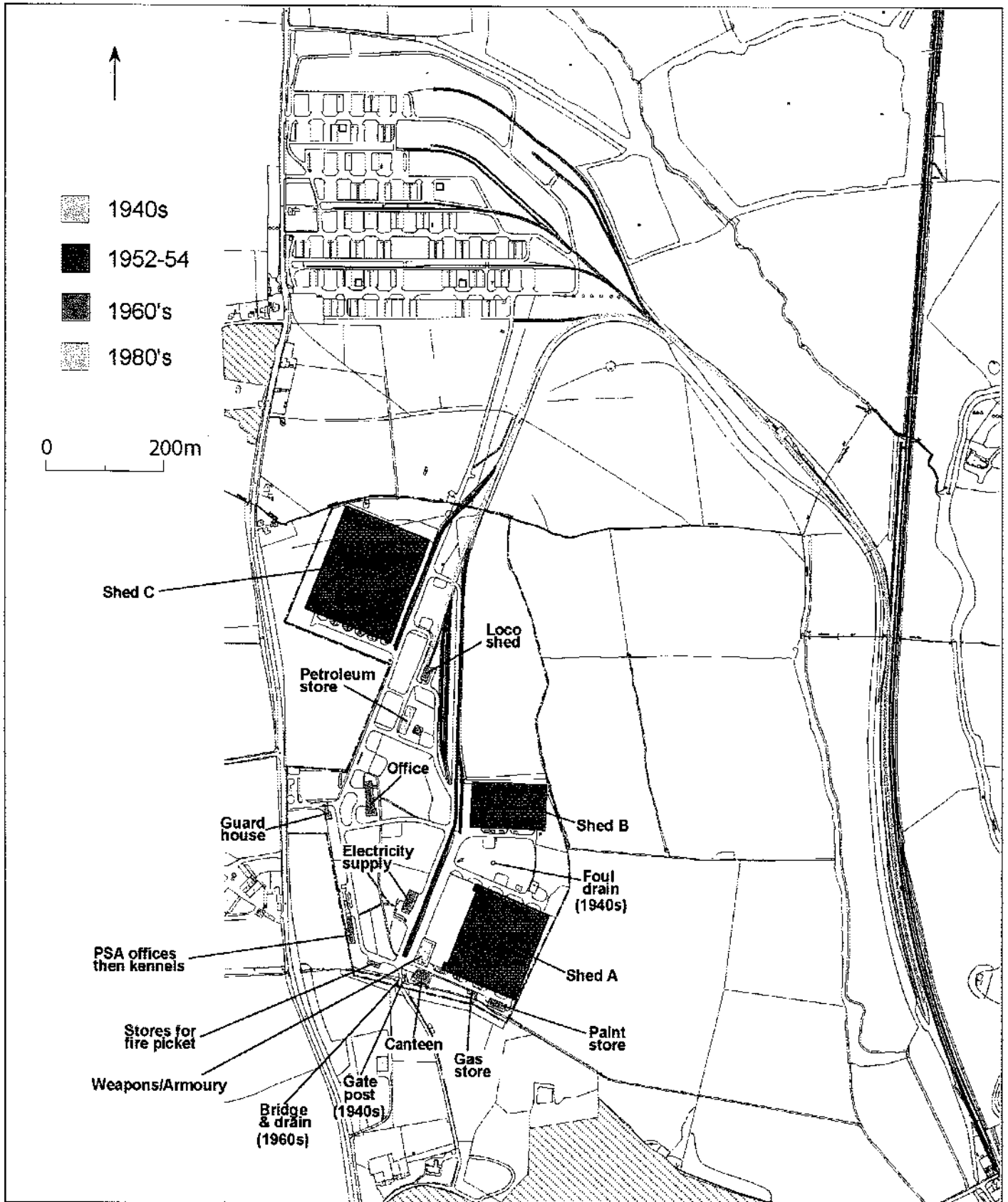


Fig. 8



Plate 1.



Plate 2.

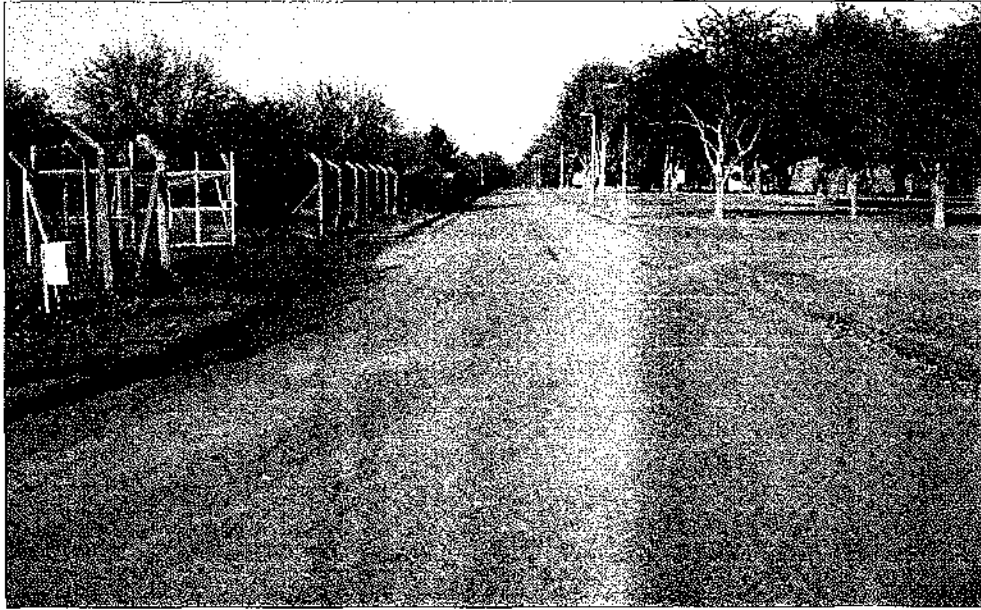


Plate 3.

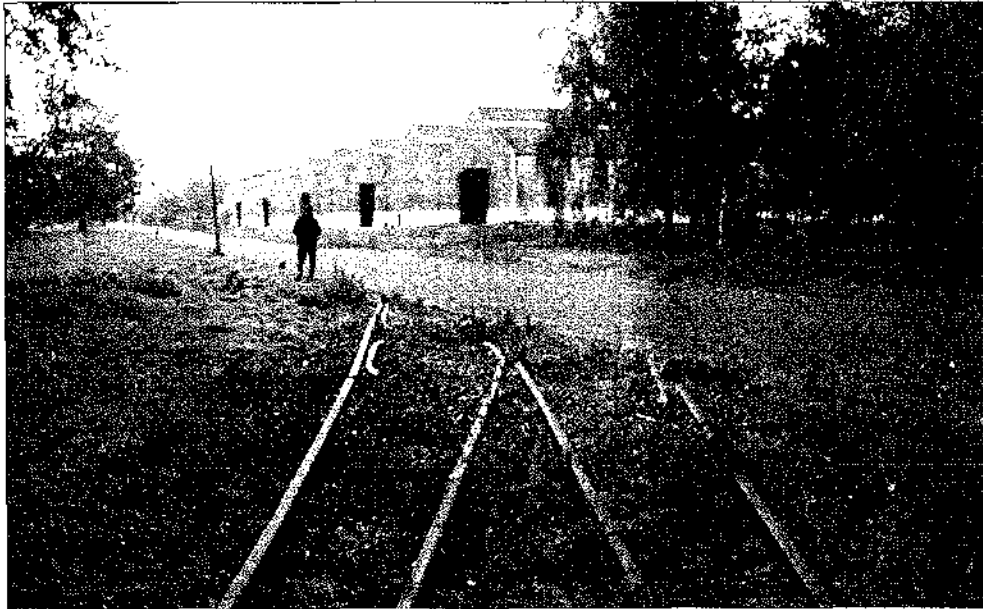


Plate 4.

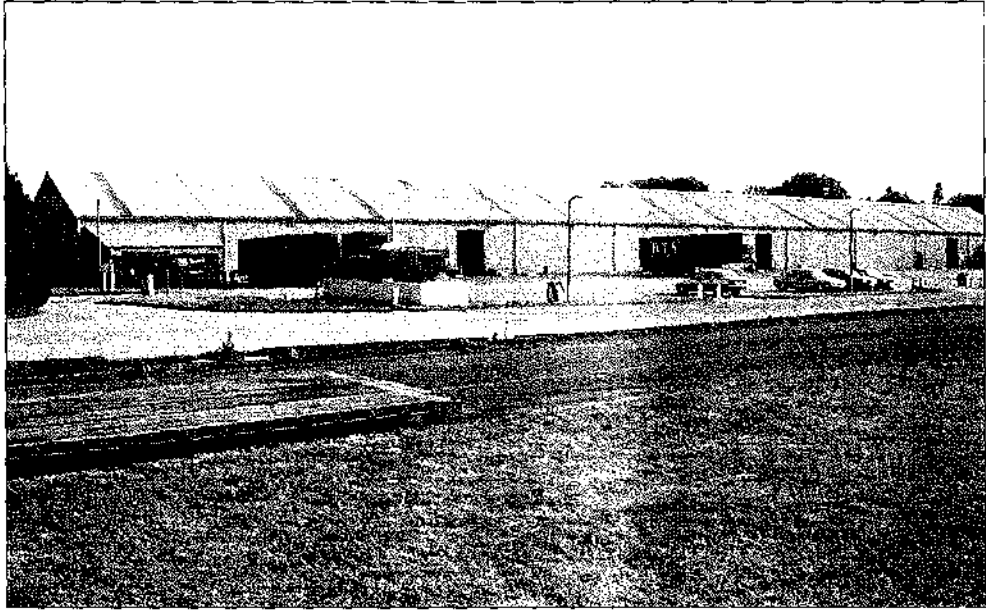


Plate 5.



Plate 6.



Plate 7.



Plate 8.

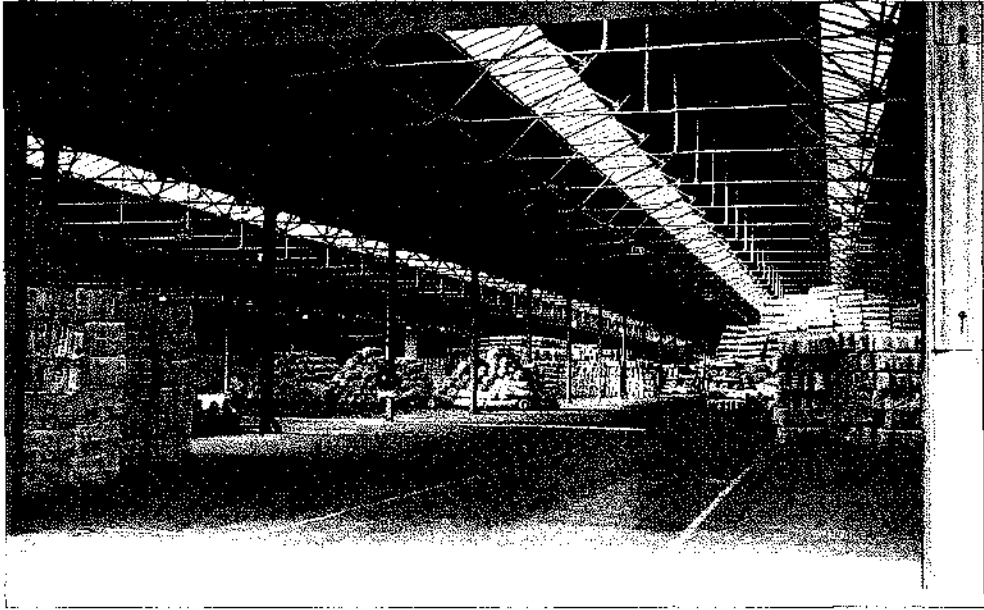


Plate 9.

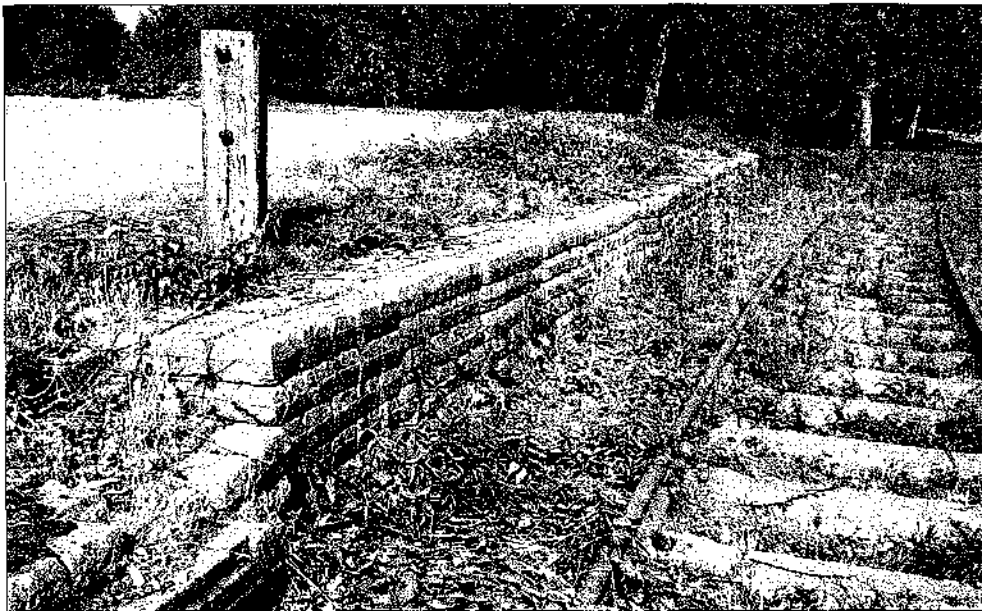


Plate 10.