

**The City Hospital
Grounds,
Winson Green,
Birmingham: A Desk-
Based Assessment**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 1008
October 2002

**The City Hospital Grounds, Winson Green, Birmingham:
A Desk-Based Assessment**

by
Malcolm Hislop

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>

The City Hospital Grounds, Winson Green, Birmingham: A Desk-Based Assessment

1.0 Summary

In October 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the City Hospital grounds at Winson Green, Birmingham. The work was commissioned by the BWB Partnership, in advance of the proposed development of part of the site. The Study Area was part of Birmingham Heath in the Middle Ages, and remained undeveloped until the 18th century when the Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton Turnpike was constructed to the south, and the Birmingham Canal to the north. In 1798 the Study Area comprised four fields and shortly afterwards a windmill was built. This was dismantled in 1849 when the site was chosen for a new Workhouse. The Workhouse was designed by the Birmingham architects J.T.Bateman and G.Drury and was opened in 1852. Substantial additions were made in the 1860s, and in the 1880s a new Infirmary was constructed to the designs of the architect W.H.Ward. The workhouse was demolished in 1992.

2.0 Introduction

This report encapsulates the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment carried out in October 2002 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of the BWB Partnership. The purpose of the work was to assess the archaeological potential of part of the City Hospital grounds in advance of its proposed development. The client was particularly concerned about the antiquity of a chapel which old maps show to have lain within the development area, and the possibility of human burials connected with it.

The work adheres to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

3.0 Site Location

Birmingham is built on a narrow Keuper sandstone ridge extending from Sutton Coldfield in the northeast to the Lickey Hills in the southwest. The ridge falls away sharply on both sides, and the Study Area is located on rising ground beyond the western scarp of the ridge, approximately two miles to the northwest of Birmingham City Centre (Figure 1); it lies within the City Hospital grounds which are bordered by Dudley Road to the south, Western Road to the east, the Birmingham Canal to the north, and by housing to the west (Figure 2). The Development Site is situated in the southeast corner of the grounds, centred on NGR SP04858775, and is currently occupied by the hospital car park. Although this assessment was commissioned to research only the proposed area of development (hitherto known as the Development Site), the work has, in fact, involved a study of the whole of the City Hospital grounds (hitherto known as the Study Area).

4.0 Objectives

- To define the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains in the area of proposed development.
- To determine the need for further archaeological assessment by field evaluation in advance of consideration of development proposals.
- To determine the need for preservation of archaeological remains and/or further archaeological work in advance of, or during, development.

5.0 Method

An inspection of the Study Area was carried out in order to assess current conditions and to evaluate the survival of upstanding archaeological remains. Documentary research of primary and secondary sources, including maps, was undertaken at Birmingham Central Library Local Studies and Archives, and at Birmingham University. Birmingham City Sites and Monuments Record, the primary source of known archaeological information for the city, was also consulted.

6.0 Historical Development

Pre-18th Century

During the Middle Ages the Study Area was part of the manor of Birmingham. An idea of its character can be gained from the survey of the lordship of Birmingham made in 1553 (Bickley and Hill 1890). This differentiates between the 'borough' which occupied the southeast corner of the parish, and the 'foreign' to the north and west which consisted of wastes and heath. The Study Area lay within the 'foreign' and was part of Birmingham Heath, an area of common land. Immediately to the south lay Rotton Park which had been enclosed by the lords of the manor, the de Birmingham's, by 1307 (Jones 1978, 1). In 1327 it is recorded that there were a few herd's cots at a place called Wynesdon, probably Winson Green (Jones 1978, 1), but there is no evidence of any development of the Study Area itself prior to the 18th century.

18th Century

By 1727 the road from Birmingham to Dudley, which forms the southern boundary of the Study Area, was said to be greatly used for the carriage of iron goods, coal and lime (Stephens 1964, 27), and in 1760 the road was turnpiked as part of the Dudley, Birmingham and Wolverhampton Turnpike (Stephens 1964, 27). In 1767 a subscription was opened for a new canal from Birmingham through Wolverhampton to Aldersley on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The Act for the Birmingham Canal was passed the following year, and James Brindley was appointed engineer; the canal was opened to traffic in 1770 (Hadfield 1985, 63-5).

The canal appears, following a meandering course, across John Snape's Map of 1779 (Figure 3), defining the Study Area to the north. Snape shows the Study Area itself as part of Birmingham Heath, which is distinguished as a blank area, contrasting with

the fields that surround it. On the Birmingham Heath Inclosure Map of 1798 (Figure 4) the Study Area comprised four large fields, the two easternmost being the property of Lionel Colmore Esq., whereas two westernmost belonged to the Guardians of the Poor. The two northern fields were divided from the two southern ones by a track described as a 'public footway' in the Birmingham Heath Inclosure Award (*BRL* 662128). The track extends northwest-southeast across the site before returning to the southwest along the line of what is now Western Road. No buildings of any kind are depicted.

19th Century

Brindley's Birmingham Canal is an example of a contour canal, an early type, whose course was determined to a great extent by the topography. It was described as 'little better than a crooked ditch' by Thomas Telford, when, in 1824, he was commissioned to make improvements (Stephens 1964, 34), which included a substantial reduction of the length by cutting off numerous meanders. Telford's improvements occasioned the preparation of a plan of part of the Study Area (Figure 5). This plan shows that the area was still devoid of buildings, except for a windmill situated in the northern corner of the southeastern field, and a small rectangular structure, probably a cottage, adjoining it to the east. This smock mill, which had been in existence since 1814 at the latest, was dismantled in 1849 when the decision was taken to erect a new Workhouse on the site (McKenna 1983-4, 96); it is commemorated in 'The Old Windmill' public house which stands on the south side of Dudley Road opposite the hospital.

The proposed design of the Workhouse was set out in a report (*BRL* 51529/30) prior to construction work commencing in 1849. The designers were the Birmingham architects J.T. Bateman and G. Drury (Morrison 1999, 95); the builder was John Glenn of London. The new Workhouse opened in March 1852 (Stephens 1964, 322) and is depicted on Piggot Smith's map of 1855 (Figure 6), and on Blood's map of 1857 (Figure 7). The maps are supplemented by a plan of the Workhouse, apparently of similar date (*BRL* nc, Figure 8). These documents show that the new Workhouse was contained within the two eastern fields depicted on the map of 1798, i.e. those owned by the Guardians of the Poor at that time.

The Birmingham Union Workhouse is an example of a corridor-plan building, a type that was popular between 1840 and 1870 (Morrison 1999, 85-102). At Birmingham, the two-storey main block was cruciform in plan; three of its arms contained a central access corridor designed to contribute to the segregation of different classes of inmates (*BRL* 51529/30). The communal dining hall was contained in the eastern arm and the building was surrounded by segregated exercise yards which were enclosed on their outer sides by accommodation ranges, those of the women were to the south and those of the men to the north. South of the main complex was an E-shaped school block, and to the north an H-shaped infirmary block. The main entrance to the complex was on the east side.

Beyond the southern extremity of the central arm of the school block, and on the same alignment, was a detached chapel. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had provided for a Church of England chaplain to hold divine service each Sunday at workhouses. Regarding burial of the dead, it was usual for corpses to be sent back to

their own parishes, though occasionally a workhouse might have had its own cemetery (Morrison 1999, 99). No evidence has been discovered to suggest that Birmingham Union Workhouse maintained a cemetery within its grounds, and it is even more certain that the chapel did not have burials associated with it. A perspective drawing published in *The Builder* for 31 January 1852 (reproduced in Morrison 1999, 95), for instance, shows that the school childrens' exercise yards lay to either side of the chapel.

In July 1865 a report was prepared by the Birmingham architects Martin and Chamberlain giving particulars of proposals to substantially increase the accommodation at the Workhouse (*BRL 407926*). Till's map (Figure 9) shows that some important additions had been made by 1884, including a major extension to the western arm of the cruciform core that involved expansion into the northwestern field, and some new buildings within the southwestern field. Also by this date a new smallpox hospital and a gasworks had been constructed at the north end of the Study Area, against the canal.

By the time the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map was published in 1887 (Figure 10), the buildings in the southwest field had been extended into a substantial new infirmary. A perspective drawing of the new building, by the architect W.H. Ward appeared in *The Building News* for 3rd February 1888 (Figure 11). The Ordnance Survey map also shows a new Nurses' Home to the north of the Infirmary, new boys' and girls' schools, and new male epileptic wards. Within the Development Site were two new buildings: one immediately southeast of the chapel, and a 'Boy's Home' towards the southeast corner of the site. An annotated plan of the Workhouse (*BRL 949654*, Figure 12) shows that the building to the southeast of the chapel was the master's house. This plan must have been compiled somewhere between 1884 and 1888, for it shows the two new buildings but not the new infirmary.

20th Century

By 1908 (Figure 13) the Boys' Home within the Development Site had gone; it was, perhaps intended to be of a temporary nature. Elsewhere, minor changes had been effected, such as the construction of a corridor linking the Nurses' Home with the Infirmary, and a new building had been built immediately south of the male epileptic wards. Further changes undertaken between 1904 and 1918 (Figure 14) were likewise of a minor character. The workhouse was demolished in 1992.

7.0 Conclusion

This assessment suggests that until the 19th century exploitation of the Study Area was almost entirely confined to pasturage, and that, on map-based evidence, pre-19th century archaeological deposits are unlikely to be encountered. Indeed the only substantive development appears to be the Workhouse of 1849 and the succeeding hospital complexes. The Development Site was formerly occupied by a greater part of the southern, E-shaped, block of the Workhouse, including the chapel, as well as the Master's House and Boys' Home of *circa* 1888. Regarding the chapel, there is no reason to suspect that human burials are likely to be found within its vicinity or elsewhere within the Development Site.

8.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Dr Malcolm Hislop and edited by Dr Iain Ferris who also managed the project. Nigel Dodds prepared the figures. Thanks are due to Dr Mike Hodder and to the staff of Birmingham Central Library Local Study and Archive departments for their assistance.

9.0 Sources

Primary Sources

Birmingham Heath Inclosure Award (*Birmingham Reference Library* 662128).

Descriptive Particulars for the Proposed New Workhouse for the Parish of Birmingham (*Birmingham Reference Library* 51529/30).

Plan of Birmingham Workhouse circa 1855 (*Birmingham Reference Library* nc, included in *Birmingham Poor Law and Workhouse* Birmingham City Library n.d., Vol.3).

Report of Messrs. Martin and Chamberlain, the Architects on the Proposed Increase of Workhouse Accommodation and the Erection of Separate Schools, July 1865 (*Birmingham Reference Library* 407926).

Plan of the Birmingham Workhouse circa 1880 (*Birmingham Reference Library* 949654).

Report in Reference to the New Workhouse Infirmary, 1889 (*Birmingham Reference Library* 209871).

Report on the Cost etc. of the New Workhouse Infirmary, April 1890 (*Birmingham Reference Library* 209872).

Secondary Sources

Hadfield, C. 1985. *The Canals of the West Midlands*, 3rd edn.

IFA. 1999. *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment*.

Jones, J.M. 1978. *Round Dudley Road*.

McKenna, J. 1983-4 'Birmingham Windmills', *Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions* 93, 91-102 at 96.

Morrison, K. 1999. *The Workhouse*.

Skipp, V. 1983 *The Making of Victorian Birmingham*.

Stephens, W.B. 1964. *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick Vol.7: The City of Birmingham.*

Cartographic Sources

- 1779 John Snape
- 1798 Birmingham Heath Inclosure Map (Birmingham City Library, 662127)
- 1825 Plan of the proposed line of alteration to the Birmingham Canal (Birmingham City Library, 411581)
- 1855 J.Piggot Smith, Street Map of Birmingham.
- 1857 Charles Henry Blood, Map of Birmingham and its Environs.
- 1884 William Till, Street Map of the Borough of Birmingham.
- 1887 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Sheets 122, 123, 138 and 139.
- 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet 139.
- 1904 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet 139.
- 1918 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet 139.
- 1918 Kelly's Directory Map of Birmingham.

Contents

1. Summary
2. Introduction
3. Site Location
4. Objectives
5. Method
6. Historical Development
7. Conclusions and Recommendations
8. Acknowledgements
9. References

Figures

1. Location map
2. The Study Area and Development Site
3. The Study Area in 1779
4. The Study Area in 1798
5. Part of the Study Area in 1825
6. The Study Area in 1855
7. The Study Area in 1857
8. Plan of the Workhouse *circa* 1855
9. The Study Area in 1884
10. The Study Area in 1887
11. Perspective of the New Infirmary 1888
12. Plan of the Workhouse *circa* 1887
13. The Study Area in 1904
14. The Study Area in 1918

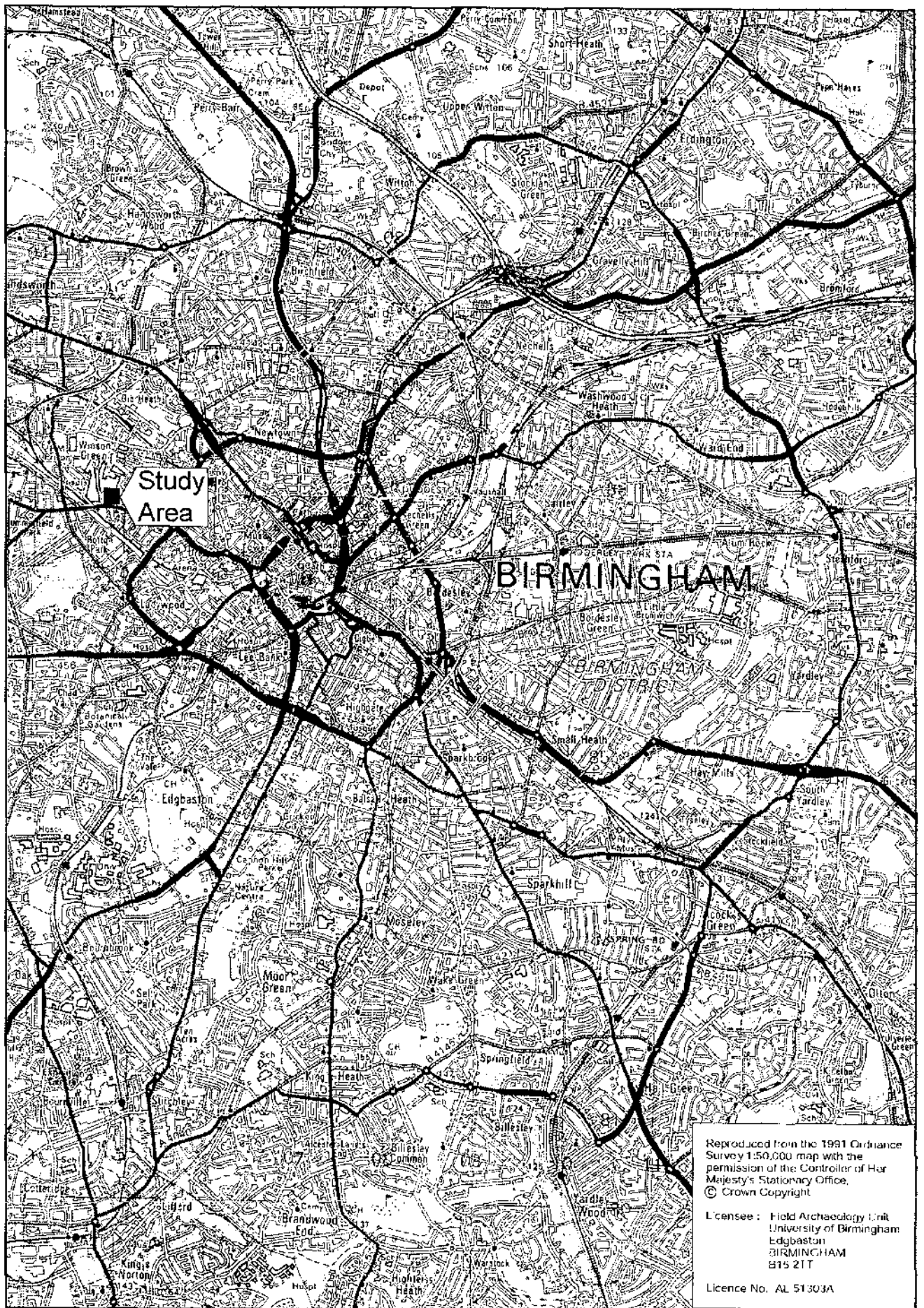


Fig.1 (Location Map)

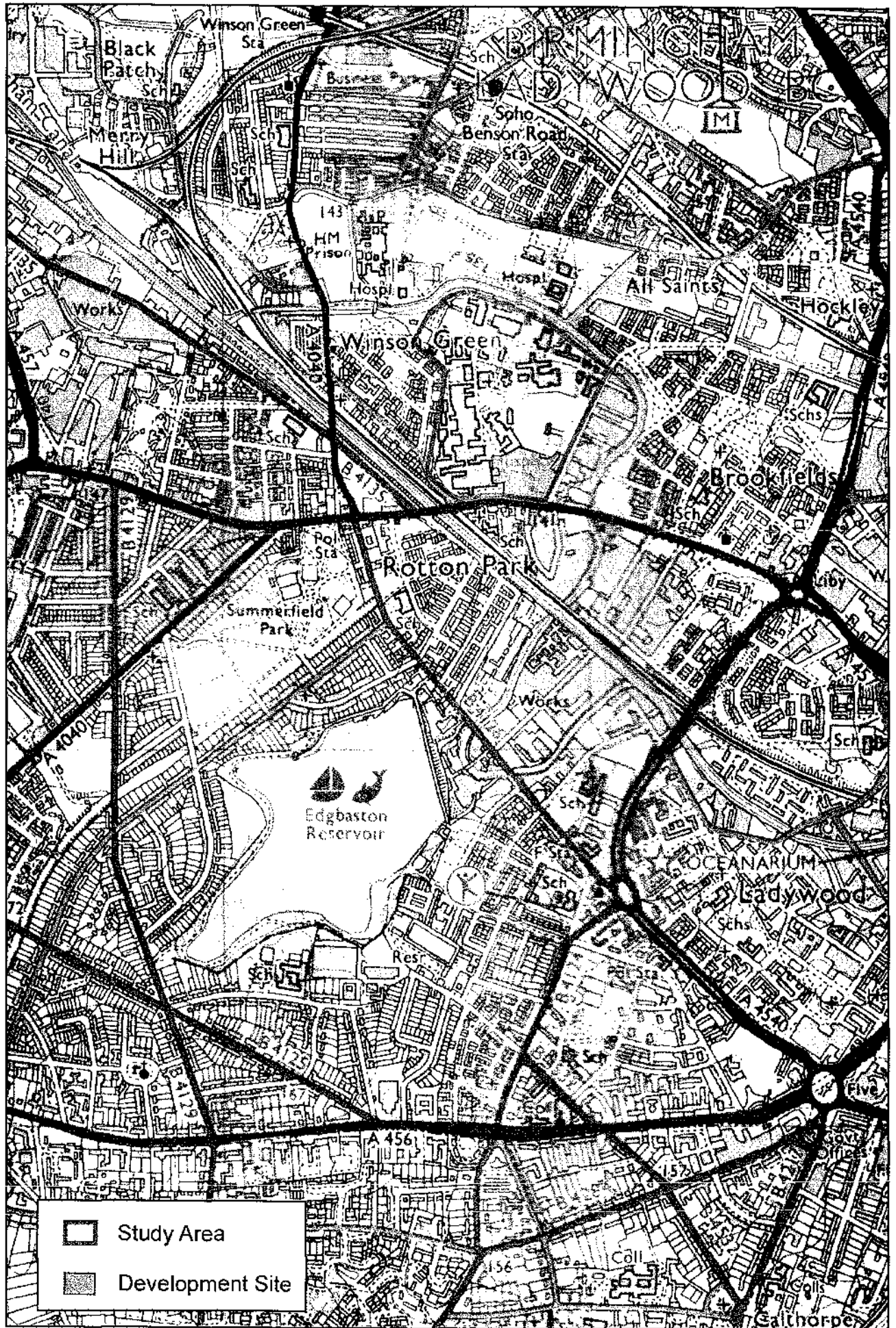


Fig.2 (Study Area and Development Site)

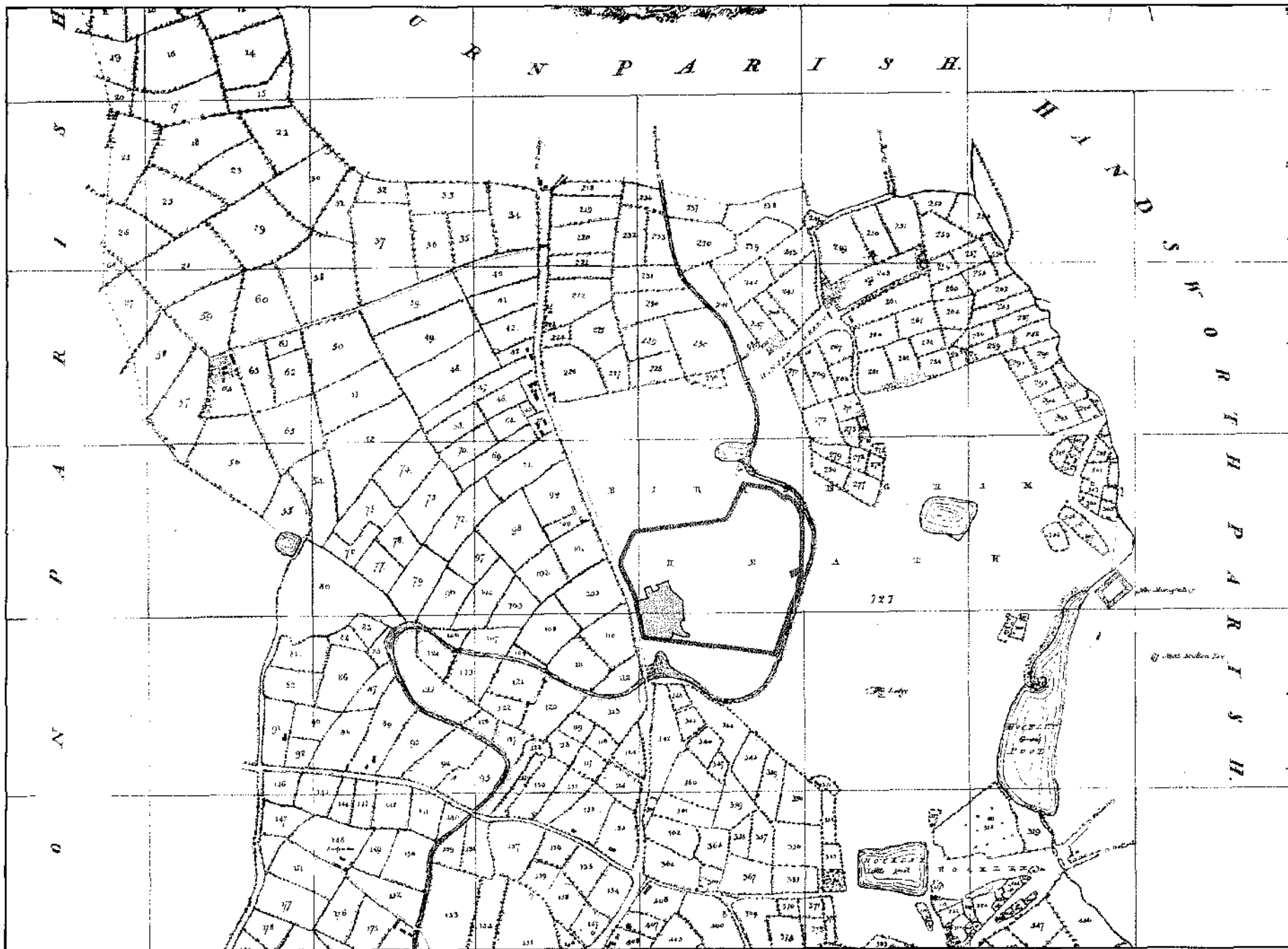


Fig.3 (The Study Area in 1779)

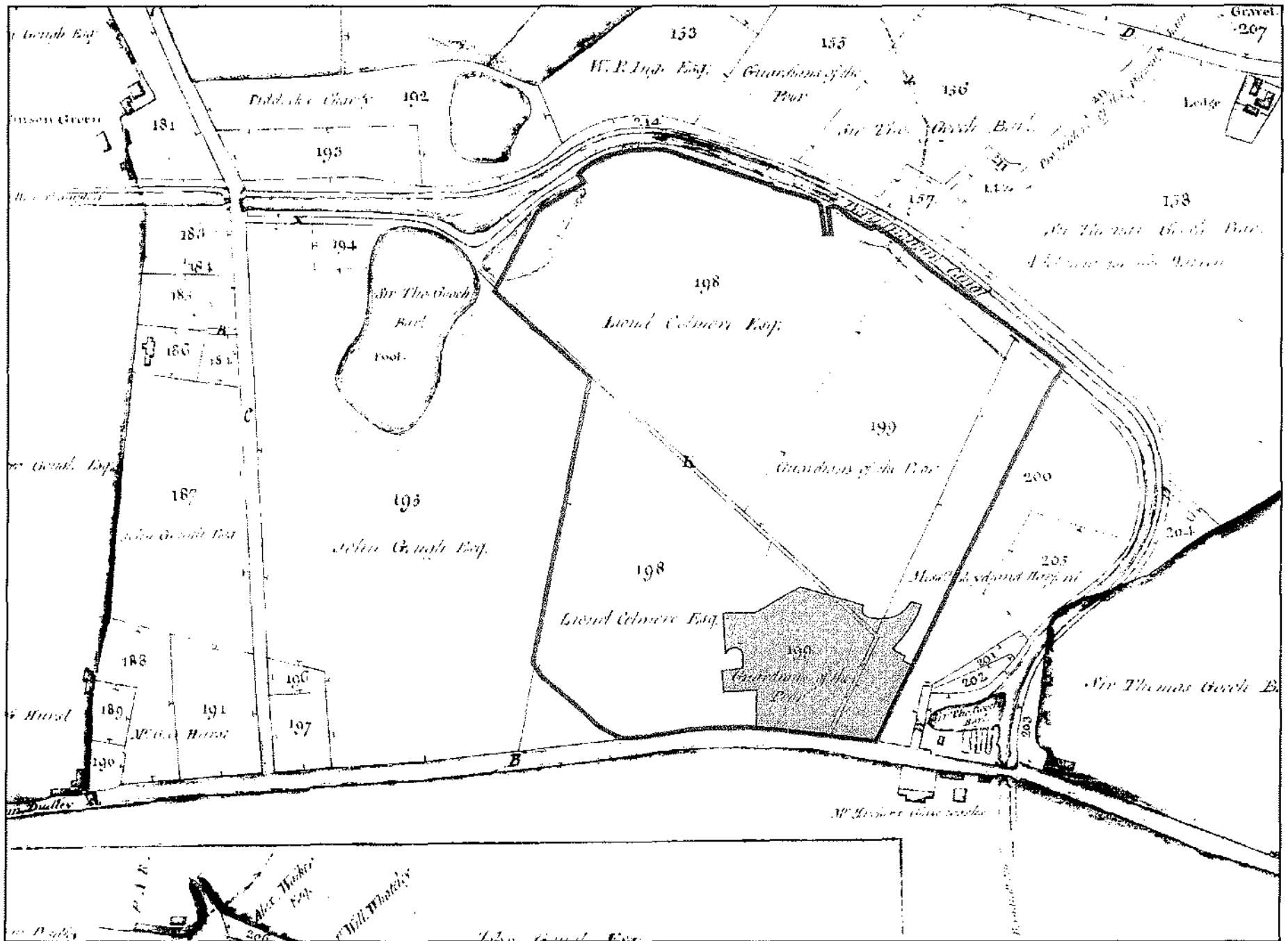


Fig.4 (The Study Area in 1798)

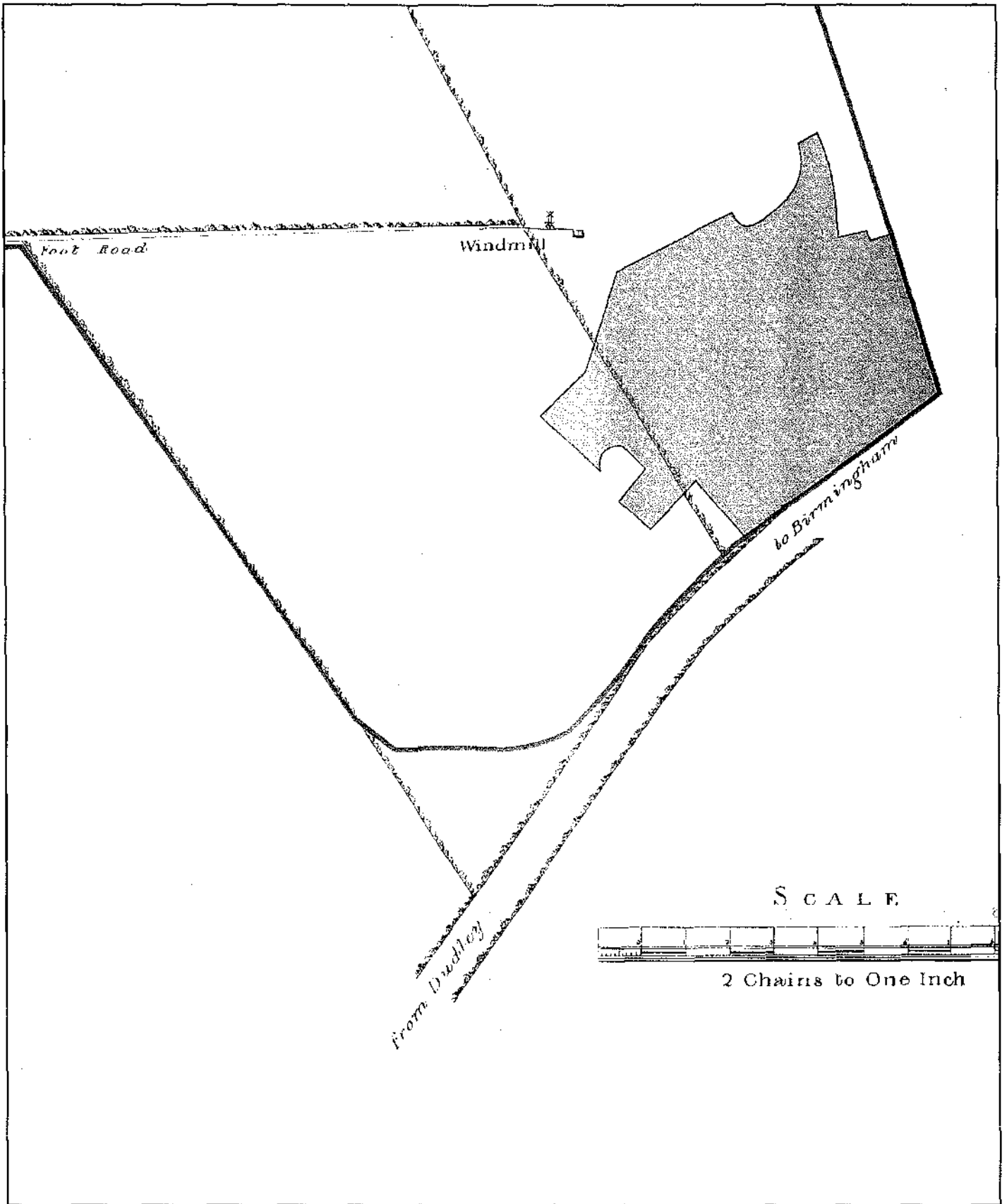


Fig.5 (Part of The Study Area in 1825)

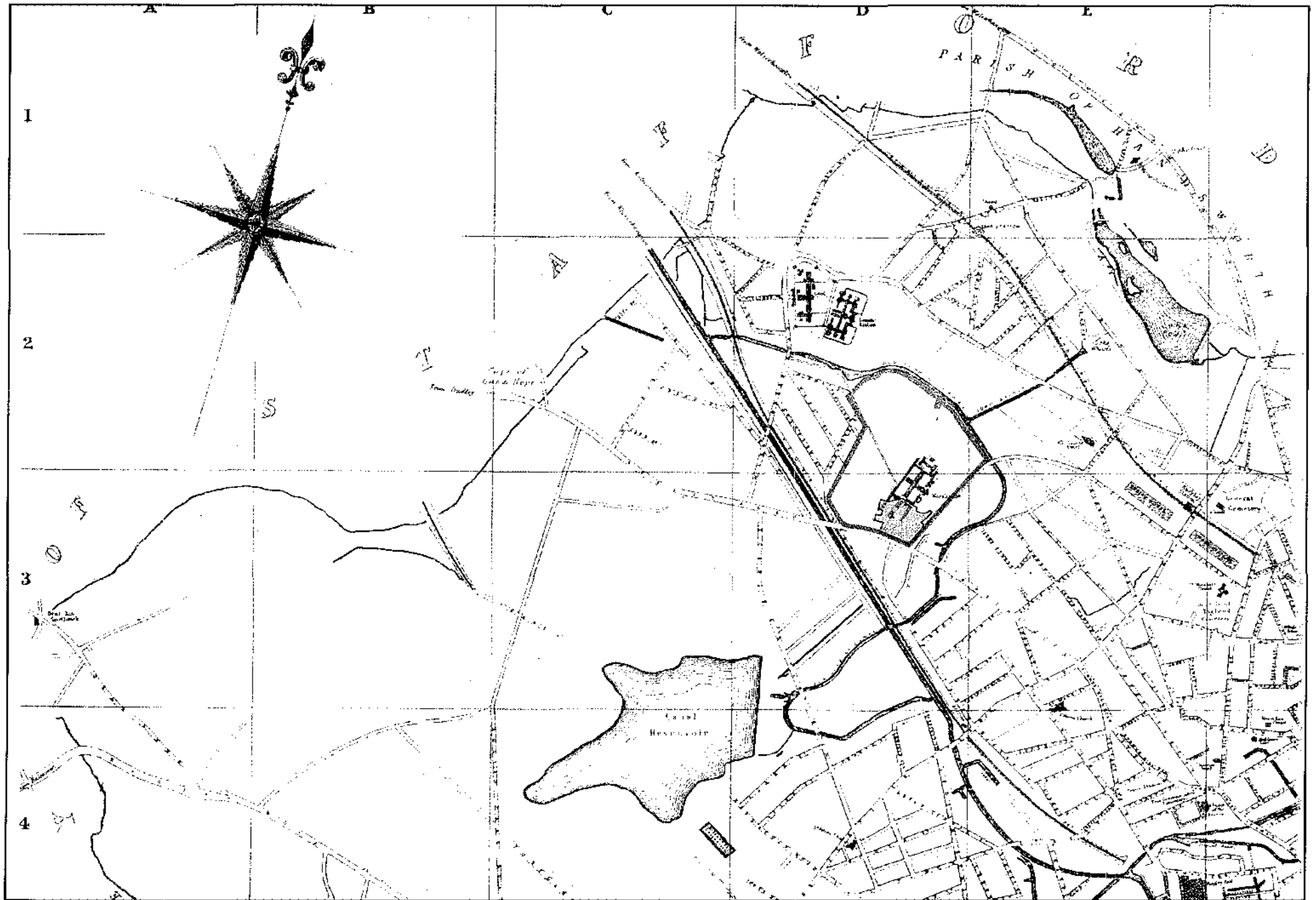


Fig.6 (The Study Area in 1855)

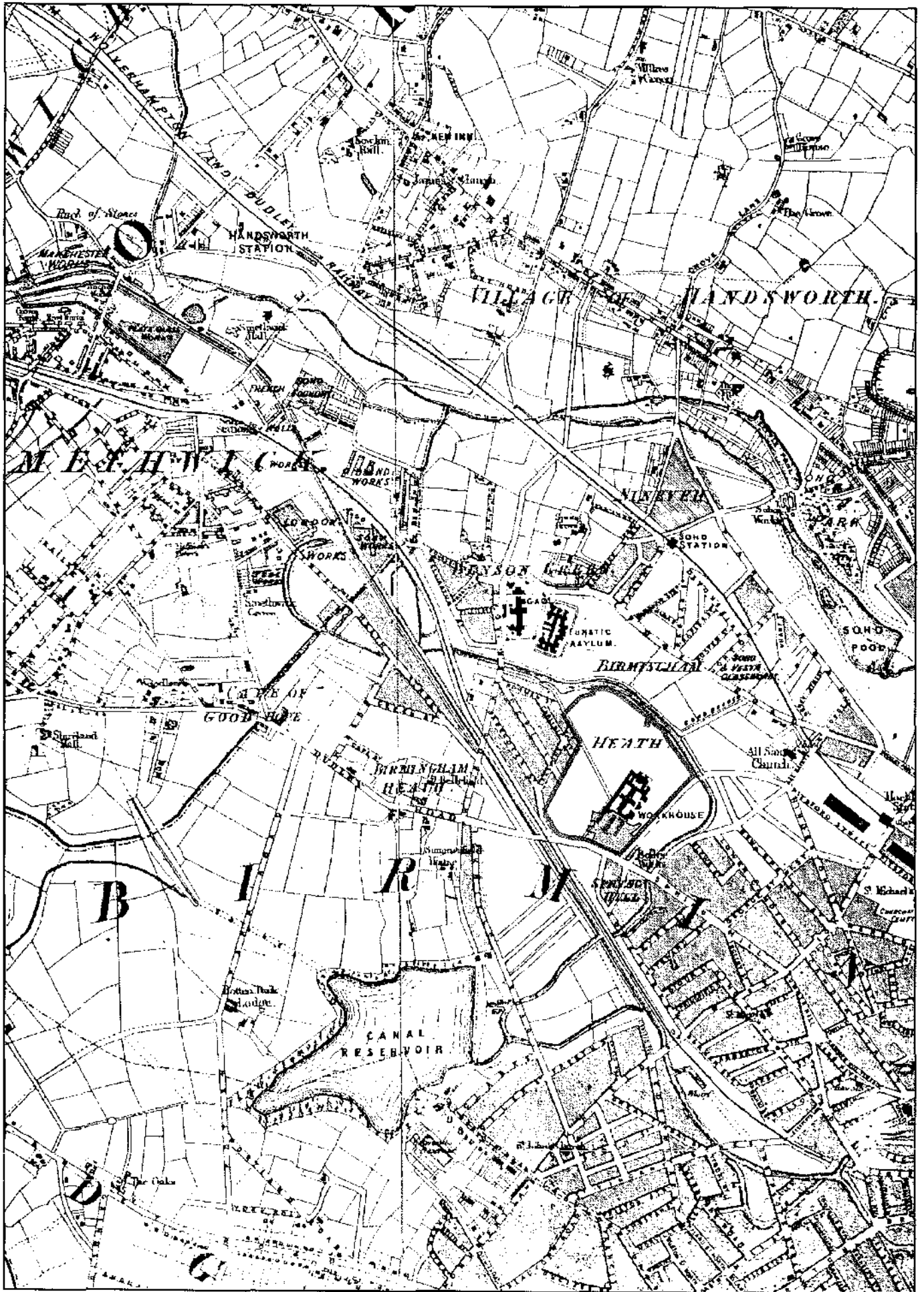
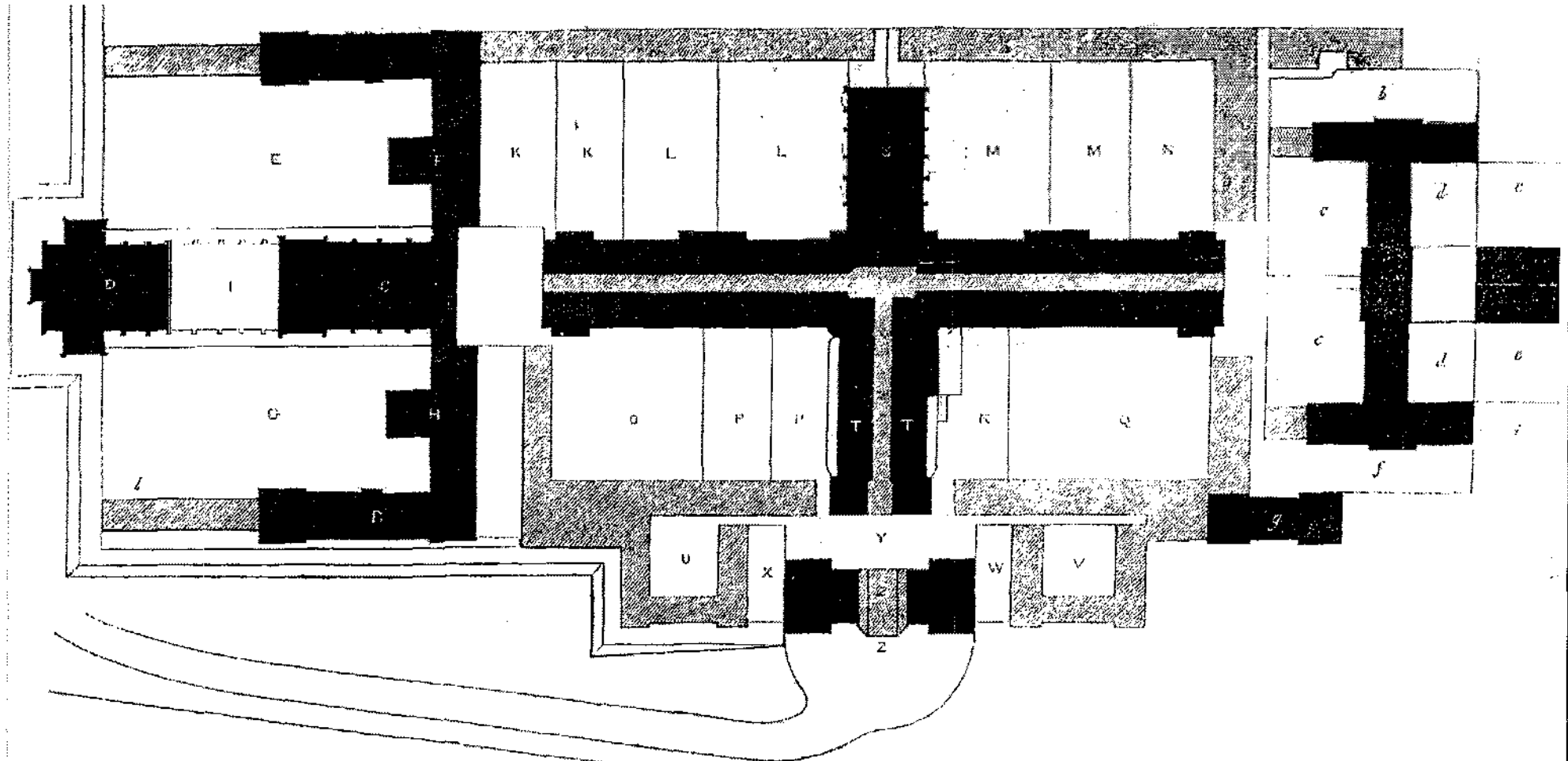


Fig.7 (The Study Area in 1857)

PLAN OF BIRMINGHAM WORKHOUSE.



SCALE OF FEET

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| A Master's House | G Girl | N Disorderly Men | T Stores, Domestic Offices, and Government Apartments | X Female Probationers | e Sick |
| B Mistress's House | H School | O Able Women | U Female Tramps | Y Court | d Dirty |
| C Dining-hall, &c. | I Infants | P Disorderly Women | V Male Tramps | Z Board-Offices | e Fever |
| D Chapel | K Probationary Children | Q Able Men | W Male Probationers | a Lying-in Ward | f Epileptic |
| E Boys | L Infirm Women | R Kitchen Court | | b Epileptic | g Flour-mill |
| F School | M Infirm Men | S Adults' Dining-hall | | | |

Fig.8 (Plan of the Workhouse circa 1855)

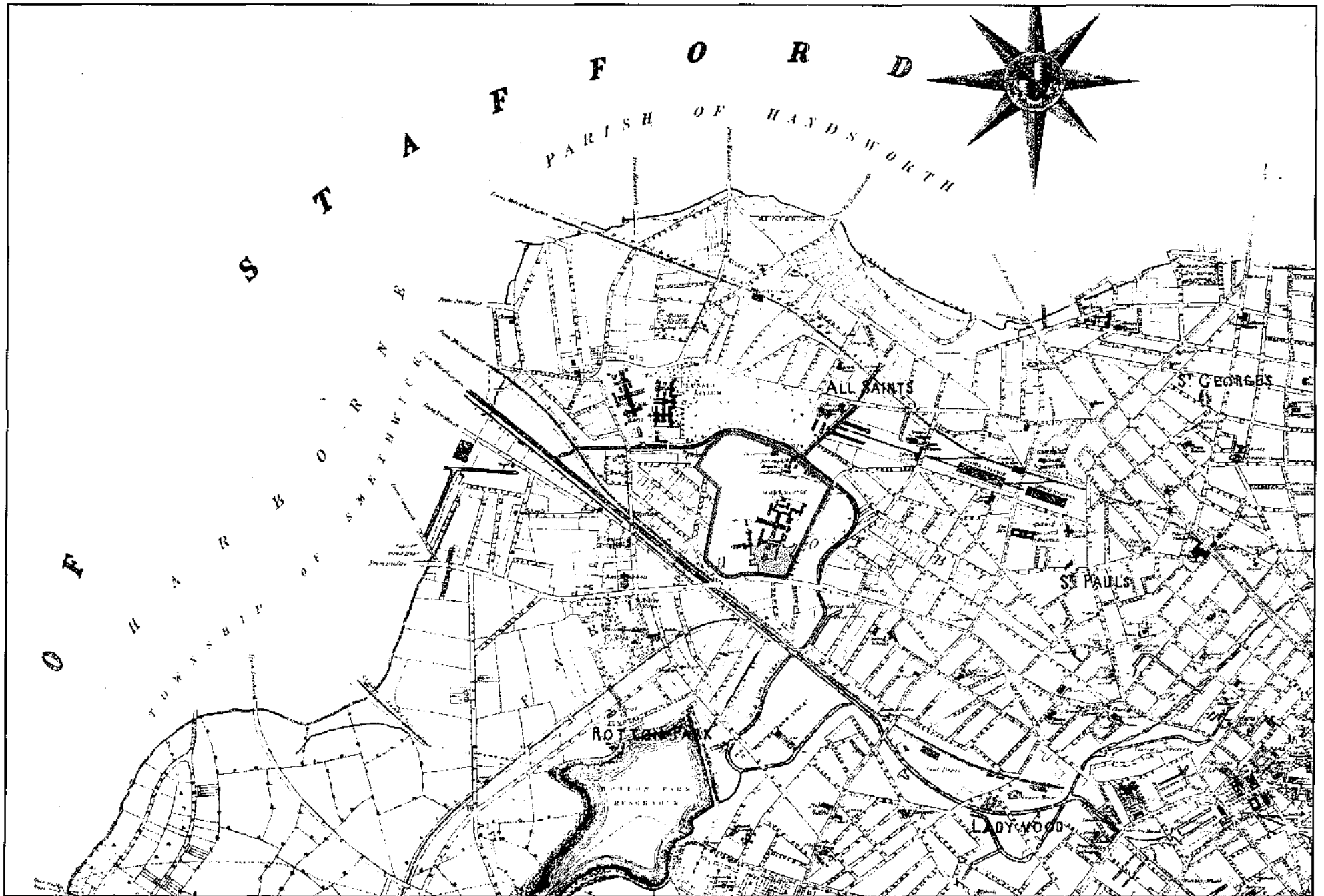


Fig.9 (The Study Area in 1884)



Fig.10 (Study Area in 1887)

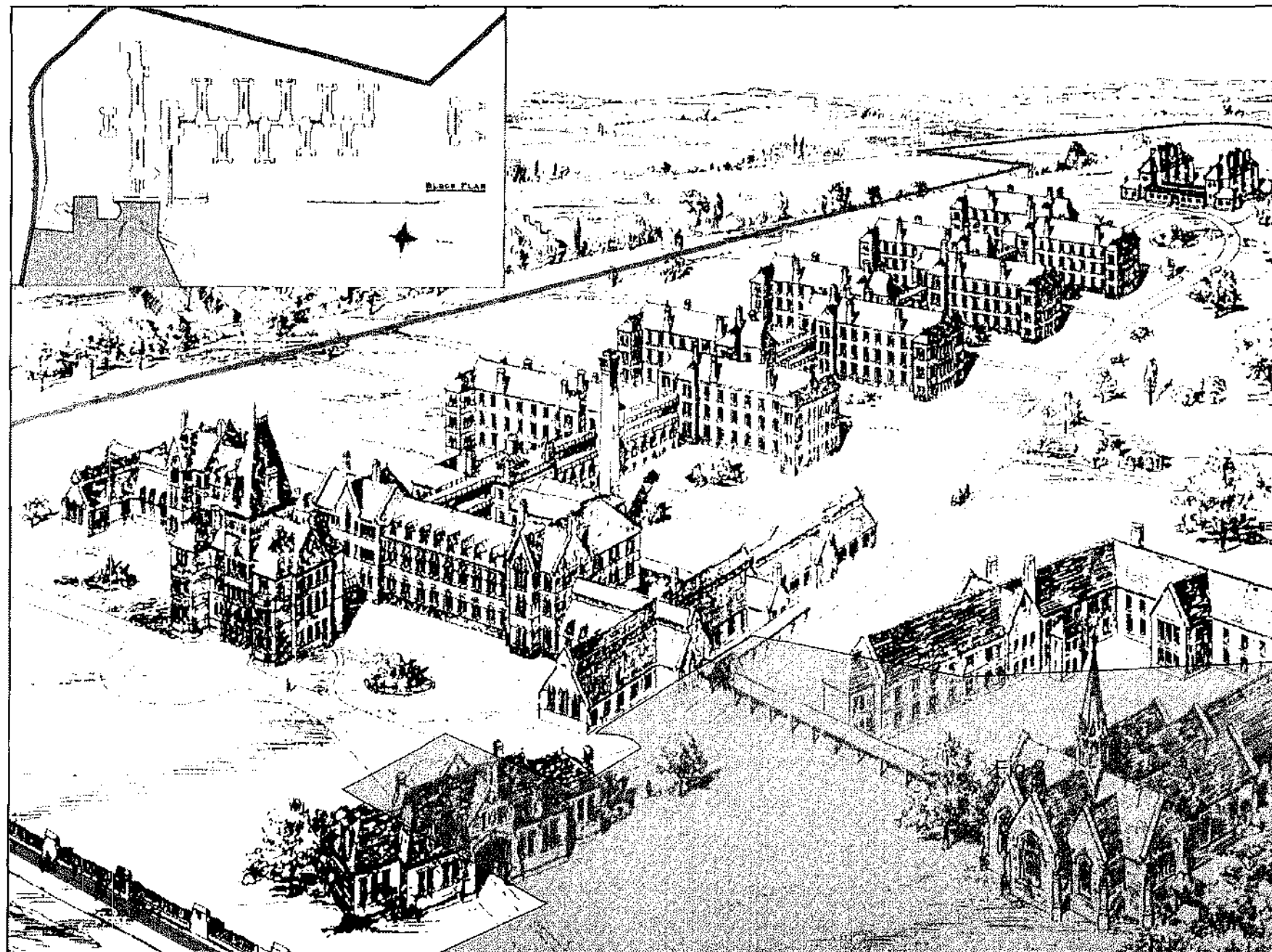
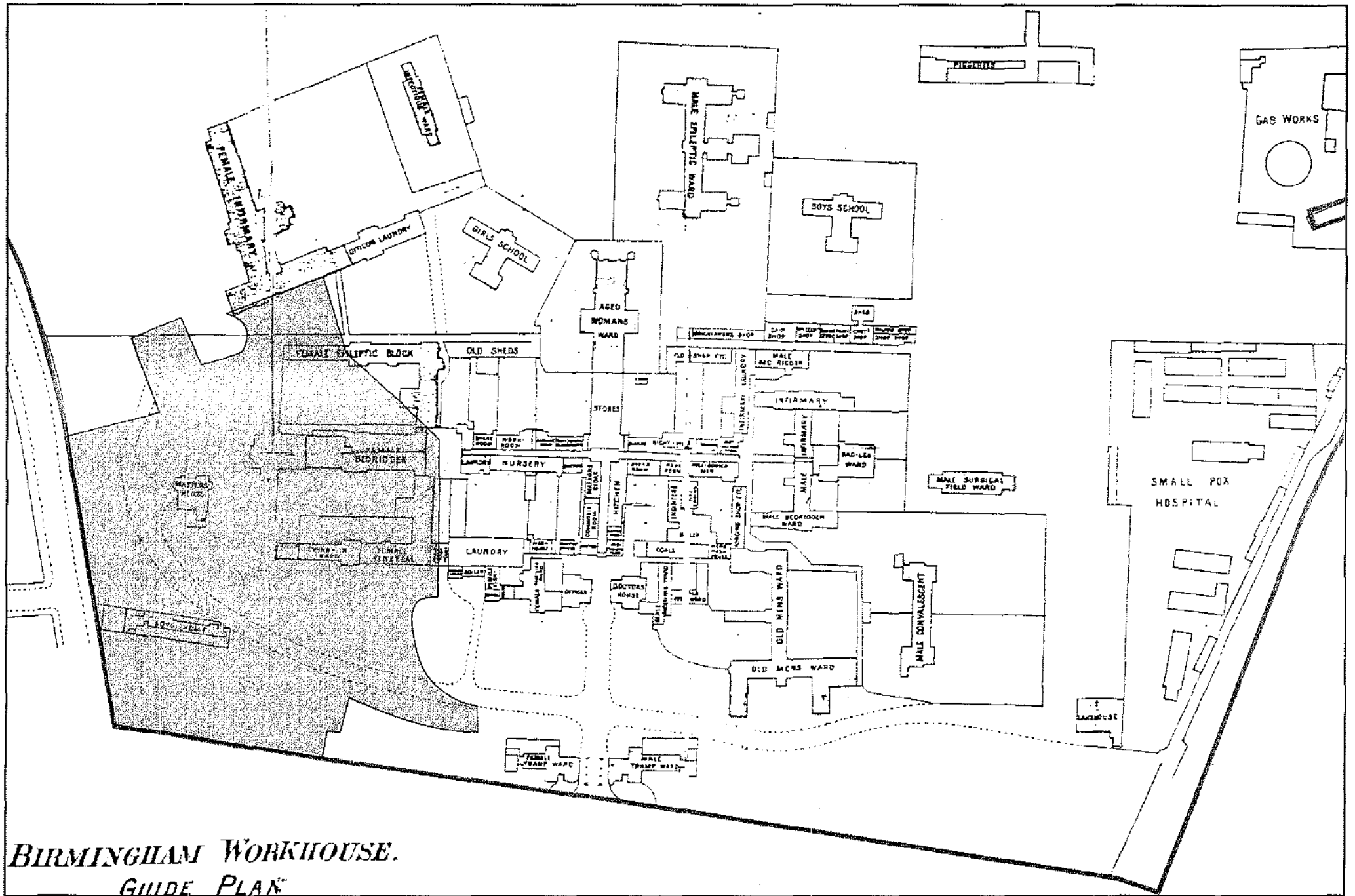


Fig.11 (Perspective of the New Infirmary)



*BIRMINGHAM WORKHOUSE.
GUIDE PLAN*

Fig. 12 (Plan of the Workhouse circa 1887)

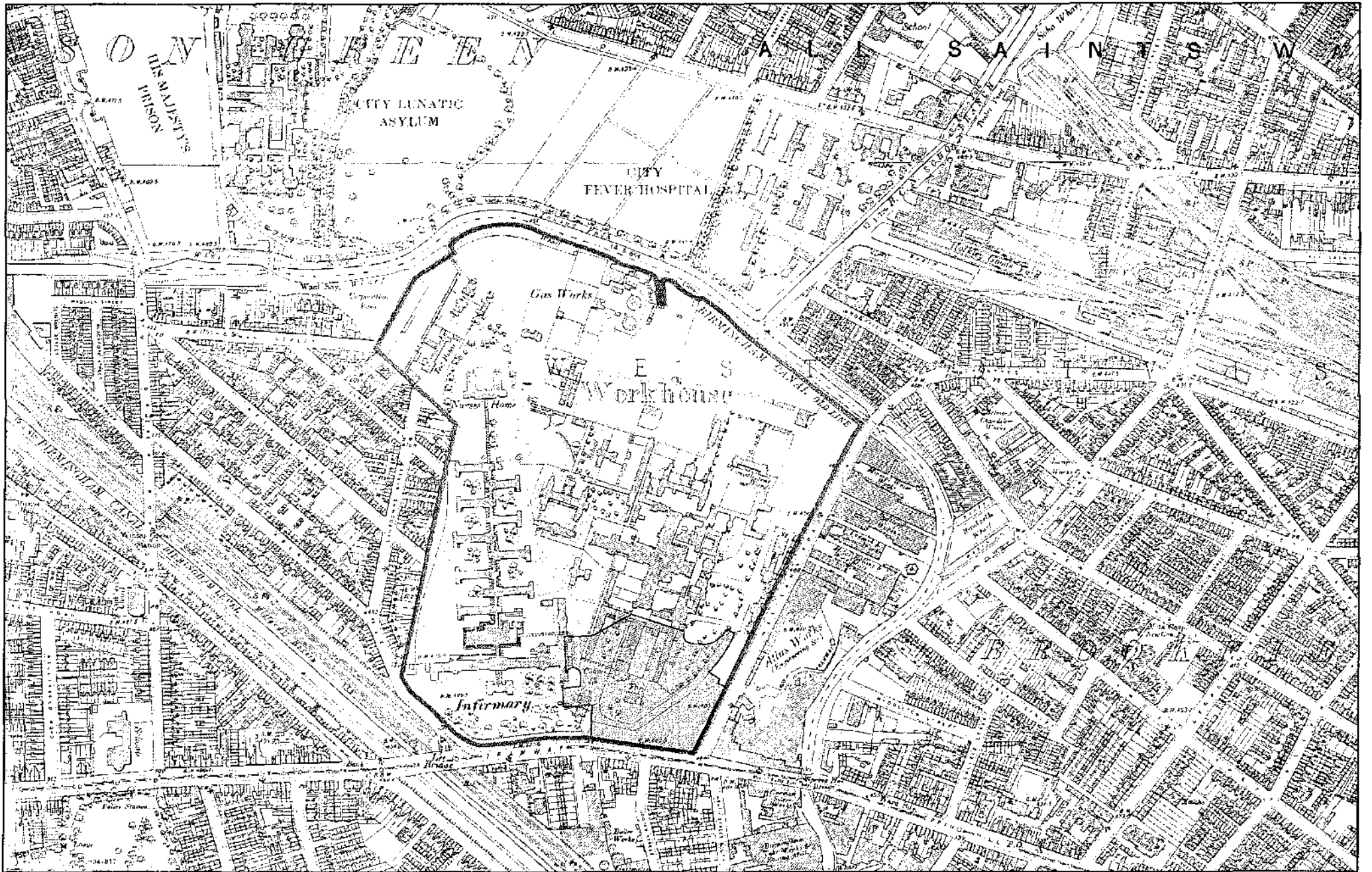


Fig.13 (The Study Area in 1904)

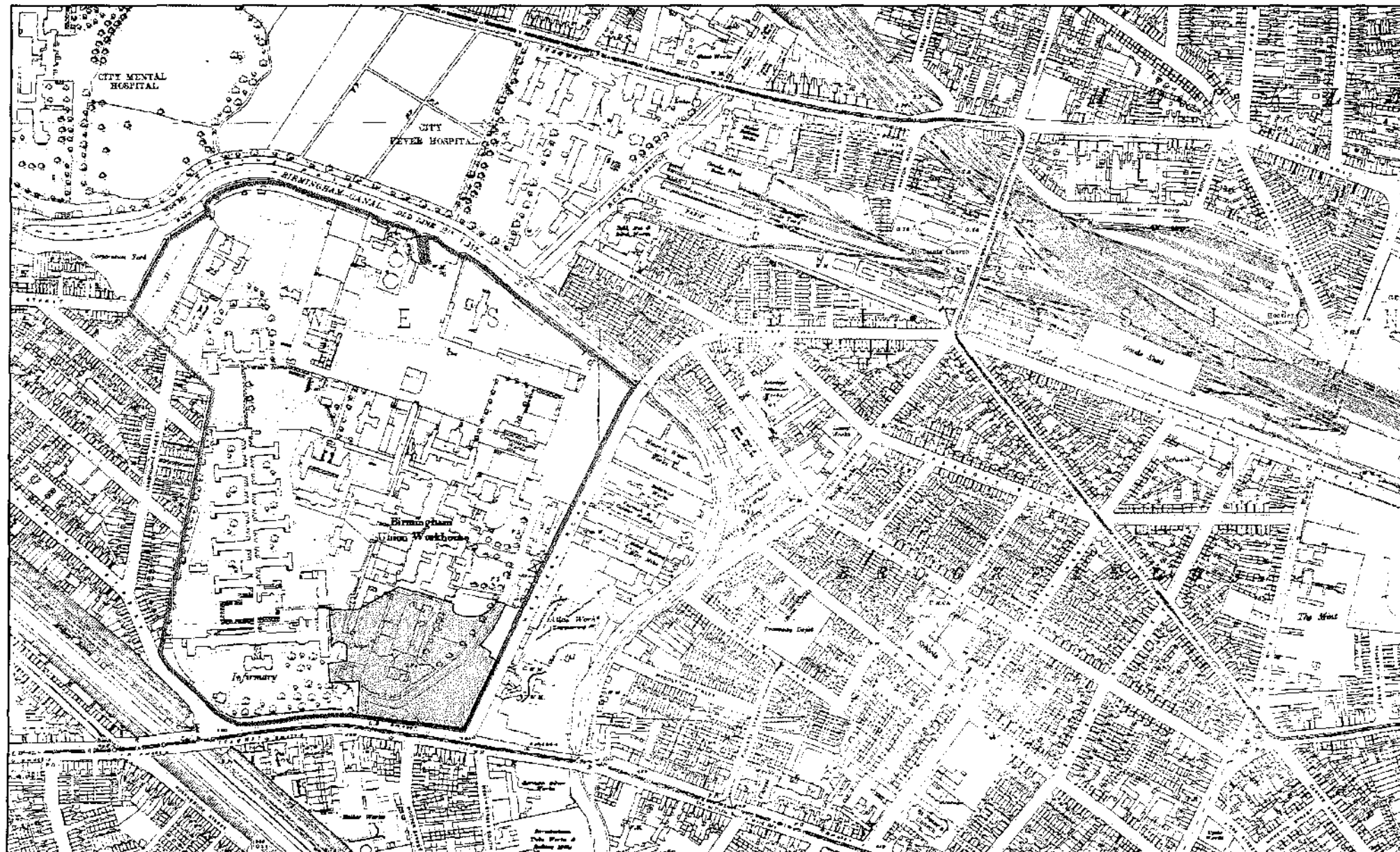


Fig.14 (The Study Area in 1918)