

**An Archaeological Desk-based
Assessment of Land at the
Former Marie Corelli School,
Stratford-upon-Avon,
Warwickshire. 2004**

Project No. 1173
March 2004

**An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land
at the Former Marie Corelli School
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. 2004**

By
Chris Hewitson

For further information please contact:
Birmingham Archaeology
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: bham-arch@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.barch.bham.ac.uk/bufau>

**An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of Land
at the Former Marie Corelli School,
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. 2004**

<i>Summary</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 LOCATION OF STUDY AREA	1
3 OBJECTIVES	1
4 METHOD	2
5 PRESENT CHARACTER OF THE SITE	2
6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
7 CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES	3
8 EVIDENCE FROM THE SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD	3
9 CONCLUSIONS	4
10 PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	4
11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
12 REFERENCES	5
12.1 CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES	5
12.2 TEXTUAL SOURCES	5

FIGURES

- 1 Site location
- 2 Site boundaries
- 3 1888 Ordnance Survey Map. 6" to the mile
- 4 1922 Ordnance Survey Map. 6" to the mile
- 5 1938 Ordnance Survey Map. 6" to the mile
- 6 Stratford Corporation Map of 1807

PLATES

- 1 Looking to the southwest from school entrance
- 2 Looking to the northeast from playgrounds
- 3 Looking to the northwest from playgrounds

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF LAND AT
THE FORMER MARIE CORELLI SCHOOL,
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, WARWICKSHIRE. 2004**

Summary

A preliminary desk-based assessment was carried out in March 2004 by Birmingham Archaeology on the site of the former Marie Corelli School, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (NGR SP 1850 5580). The work was commissioned by George Wimpey West Midlands Limited in advance of potential redevelopment. The work comprised an examination of available maps and other documentary sources, in addition to a walkover survey. The site appears to have been agricultural land associated with the former Mount Pleasant Farm from the later 18th century. From this date it had consisted of open fields, prior to these being replaced by an orchard. The school appears to have been built on the orchard land in the late 20th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

This desk-based assessment has been prepared by Birmingham Archaeology on behalf of George Wimpey West Midlands Limited in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the former Marie Corelli School and grounds. The aim of the report is to provide a basic summary of known historical and archaeological information, based on existing data. As such, this assessment comprised a consultation of available maps and other documentary sources, in addition to a walkover survey. The assessment adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

2 LOCATION OF SITE

The site of the former Marie Corelli School is centred on NGR SP 1850 5580 (Fig. 1), in the parish of Bishopton, Stratford-upon-Avon and comprises the school, surrounding buildings and metalled play areas but not the large proportion of the playing fields. It is bounded by Drayton Avenue to the north, Bishopton Junior and Infant School to the west, residential properties to the south and the line of a right of way and the Shottery Brook to the east. The school and its associated buildings are presently disused (Plate 1).

3 OBJECTIVES

- To define the likely extent, presence, date, survival and significance of archaeological remains on the site.
- To determine the need for preservation of *in-situ* archaeological remains, and/or further archaeological work in advance of, or during, development.

4 METHOD

A walk-over site survey was undertaken involving an external examination of the school and grounds due for redevelopment in order to identify any surviving earthworks and/or other evidence that may be of archaeological significance. In addition, the effect of any later landscaping and building activities, which may have impacted on any early archaeological features and deposits was noted.

The Warwickshire County Record Office was consulted for all relevant historic maps and secondary sources. An inspection of documentary data drawn from the Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was undertaken which examined the area contained within a 500m radius of the site, in order to establish the presence of relevant historical or archaeological remains in the surrounding area. In addition, Birmingham University Library was visited to examine any other relevant documentary sources.

5 PRESENT CHARACTER OF THE SITE (Fig.2)

The site slopes gently from south to north with a gradual incline towards the stream running past the eastern boundary of the site. The present entrance to the site lies on Drayton Avenue to the north and comprises a tarmac surfaced drive and a parking area. The land surrounding this area appears to have been landscaped and slopes gently towards the main building. Several mature sycamore trees surround the area to the front of the school.

The buildings are modern pre-fabricated and flat-roofed forming a series of classroom wings dating to the 1960s or 1970s. Adjacent, to the east and west are three buildings. One, a modern temporary built annexe lies to the west. The other two are located at the front of the school and appeared to house a boiler room and sub-station.

South of the main school building was a terraced area containing two large tarmac play areas, approximately 100m (E-W) by 50m (N-S). A cherry tree grove stands between this area and the annexe building to the west. A single willow tree stands to the rear of the school (Plates 2 & 3). To the east of the main school building the land slopes gently west to east towards the line of the Shottery Brook.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies on the outskirts of the borough of Old Stratford, within the parish of Bishopton and just north of the parish of Shottery. Stratford takes its name from the crossing of the Avon by the Roman road that ran from Rykniel Street at Alcester to the join the Fosse Way, presently the Alcester Road (SMR MWA4757). The town itself was first established in 1196 by John of Coutances, the Bishop of Worcester and was later granted market status by Richard I (Bearman 1997). After the Reformation the running of the affairs of the town passed from the church to Stratford Corporation.

Up until the last fifty years and the arrival of the tourist industry, the town has survived economically, principally by the means of its market. Indeed, the size of Stratford did not grow rapidly until the late 18th century with the turn-piking of the

local roads and the arrival of the canal and railway in the 19th century. It was not until the mid-19th century and the establishment of the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust that the area achieved significant renown as a tourist destination.

7 CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

The earliest cartographic evidence available for the site relates to a map by J. Eagle, dated to 1807 of the fields owned by the 'Stratford Corporation Estate' (Fig. 6). This map appears to be a copy of the tithe map of 1786, currently unavailable at the Warwickshire Record Office. However, the tithe apportionments have been replaced by field names for many of the surrounding fields. The site itself lay within the boundaries of Mount Pleasant Farm and at this time was open arable farmland bordered by a field boundary to the north and west with the stream to the east.

The farm was extant throughout the 19th century and is shown on the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey County Series of 1888 (Fig. 3). The field boundaries had altered slightly, compared to the Stratford Corporation map and the field in which the site is present has been divided equally east-west, creating a southern boundary that would appear to correlate with the southern boundary of the school fields. The course of the public right of way is depicted for the first time running north-south up the eastern edge of the site close to the bank of the Shottery Brook.

By the time of the 1922 edition of the 6" OS map the farm had been renamed Ayscoughe (Fig.4). The southern boundary of the site had been removed and the area planted as an orchard. The only other change in the surrounding area is the establishment of the Bellevue Hospital to the west, an isolation hospital for smallpox.

The 1938 edition of the OS map (Fig. 5) depicts the housing plots along the Alcester Road coinciding with the expansion of Stratford. However, no alteration had occurred to the site at this time and it remains primarily as an orchard, presumably until the construction of the current housing estate in the post-war period.

The lay out of the housing estate appears to have been influenced by the location of the previous field boundaries. For example, Drayton Avenue appears to follow the line of the field boundary that curved around to the Bellevue Hospital in the east.

8 EVIDENCE FROM THE SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

The principal archaeological evidence relates to the Roman road from Alcester to Stratford (SMR MWA4757) that lies approximately 200 to 300m south of the site following the line of the present day Alcester Road. This later became a turnpike road between 1750 and 1775 as part of the Evesham road network (SMR MWA4786). The presence of activity associated with the Alcester Road is probably unlikely due to the distance between site and road. Although there is some low potential for the existence of Roman remains.

The source of the Bishopton Spa is located 400m north of the site adjacent to the canal (SMR MWA1556). First noted by Dr Charles Perry in 1744 it was being used for curative purposes by 1800. In the 1830s proposals were put forth to establish a

resort here and the spa was opened in 1837. It later closed in 1855 before reopening once more in 1868.

9 CONCLUSIONS

The site appears to have been open farmland, associated with Mount Pleasant Farm throughout the 19th century. By the early part of the 20th century the farm has changed its name to Ayscoughe and had become primarily orchard land. This situation continued until the school was built on the site in the later 20th century. The right of way that runs parallel to the eastern boundary of the site had been established by at least the late-19th century.

The land use of the site has clearly been agricultural up until its conversion to a school in the late-20th century. Its close proximity to the former farm of Mount Pleasant suggests localised influence dating back at least until the 18th century.

The potential for the existence of prehistoric archaeological remains is minimal. There is, however, a slight possibility of outlying Roman activity associated with the Roman road on the line of the Alcester Road to the south.

A significant amount of landscaping has occurred within the site of the school. The area of the school buildings and immediate surround, in particular the area directly to the north, has witnessed the greatest reduction of the original land surface and any possible archaeological features may have been truncated. However, the area beneath the tarmac play area, the open spaces to the west and by the stream to the east have some potential for preservation of any putative archaeological remains.

10 PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a lack of clear evidence to indicate significant activity pre-dating the 18th century within the area. It would therefore appear that the site is one of low archaeological significance and as such it may be unnecessary for further stages of archaeological work. Although the final decision on this rests with Warwickshire County Council.

11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by George Wimpey West Midlands Limited. Particular thanks are due to Ingrid Gelley and Chris Leeson for their assistance. Thanks are due also to Emma Jones of the Warwickshire SMR and the staff of the Warwickshire County Records Office for all their assistance. The documentary research was undertaken by Chris Hewitson who also carried out the walkover survey and wrote this report. Mark Hewson edited the report and managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology, and the illustrations were prepared by Bryony Ryder.

12 REFERENCES

12.1 Cartographic Sources

1807 Stratford Corporation Estate Map, J. Eagle

1888 Ordnance Survey County Series 6" to the mile

1917 Ordnance Survey County Series 1:2500

1922 Ordnance Survey County Series 6" to the mile

1938 Ordnance Survey County Series 6" to the mile

12.2 Textual Sources

Bearman, R (Ed.) 1997 *The History of an English Borough, Stratford-upon-Avon*
1196-1996, Sutton Publishing Ltd, Gloucester

VCH 1969 (*The Victoria History of the County of Warwickshire Volume 3*), Ed.
W.B. Stephens

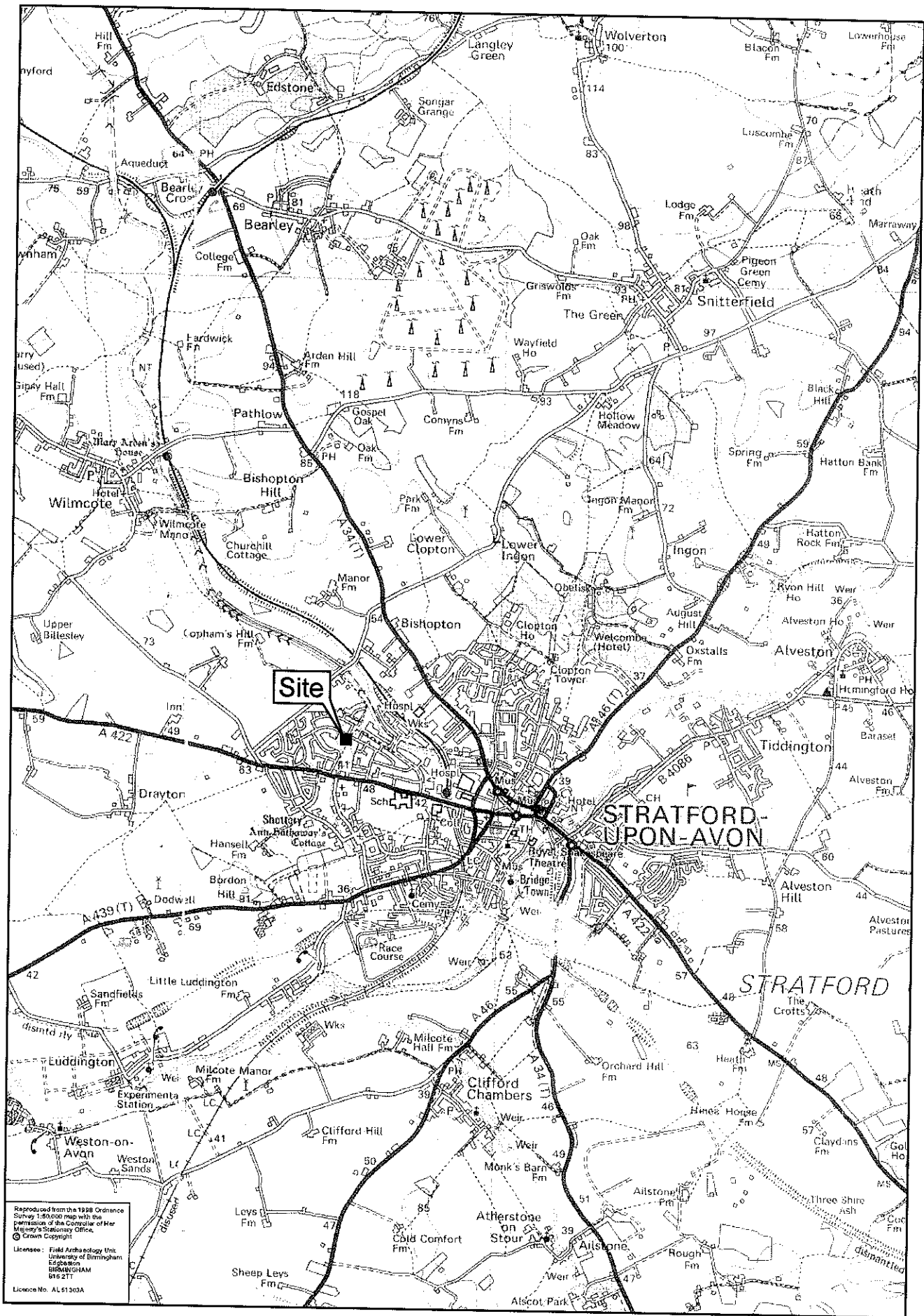


Fig.1

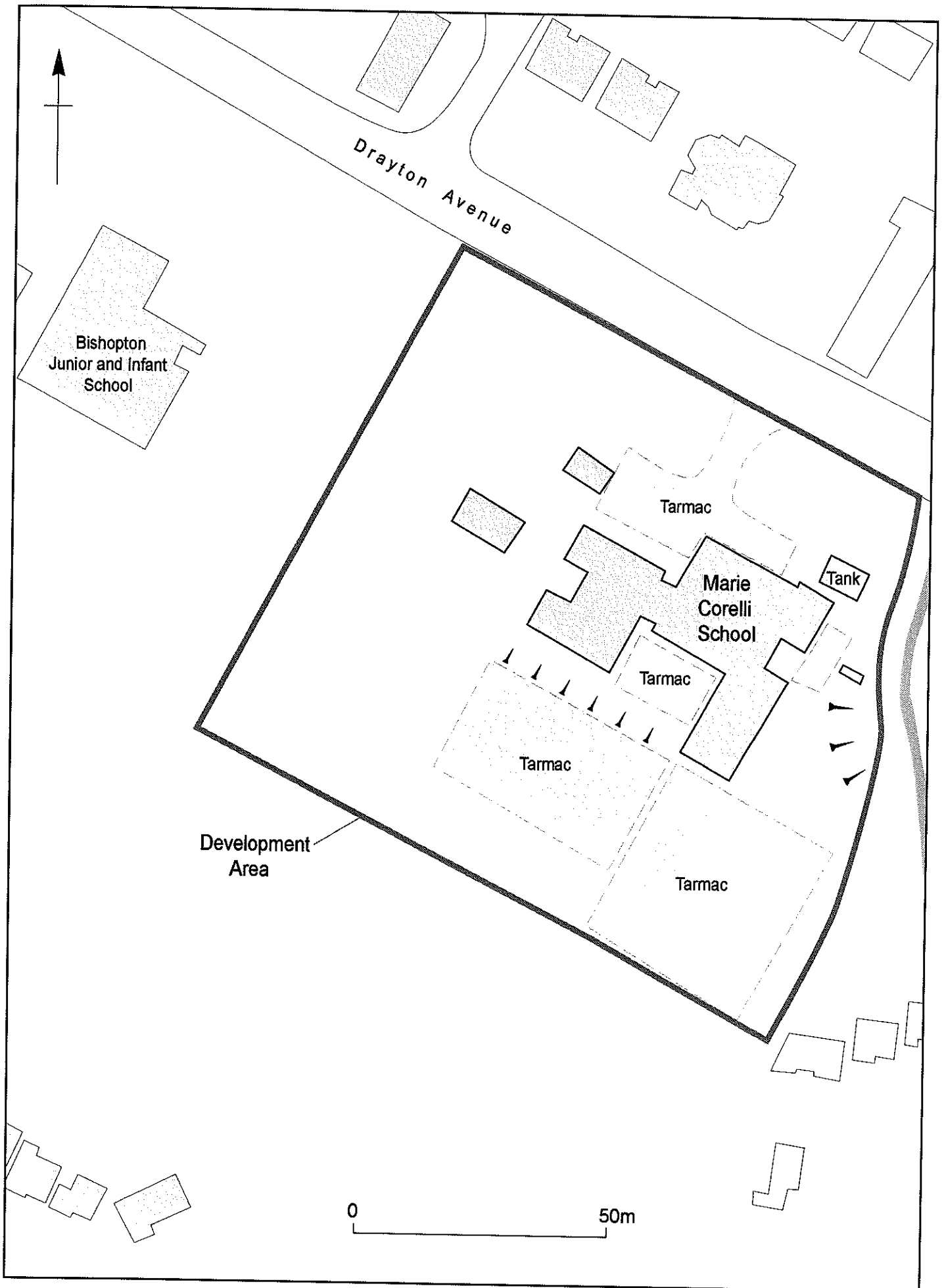


Fig.2

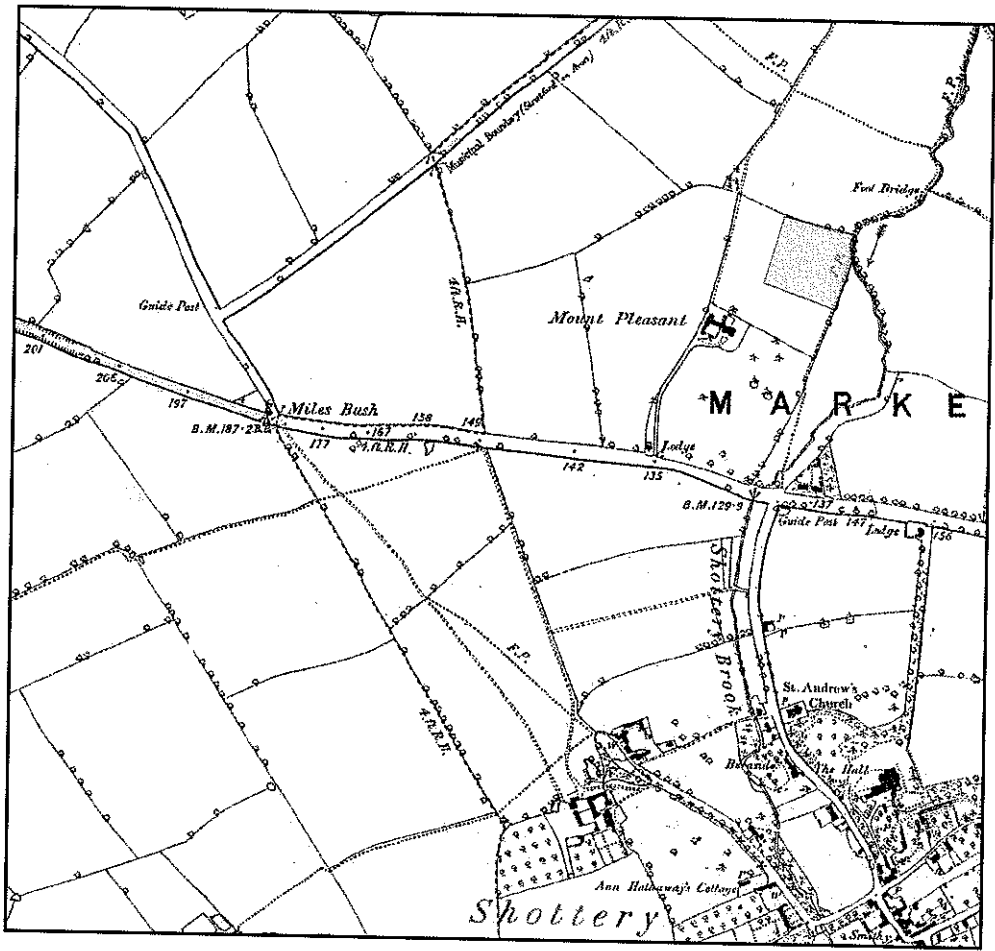


Fig.3 (1888)

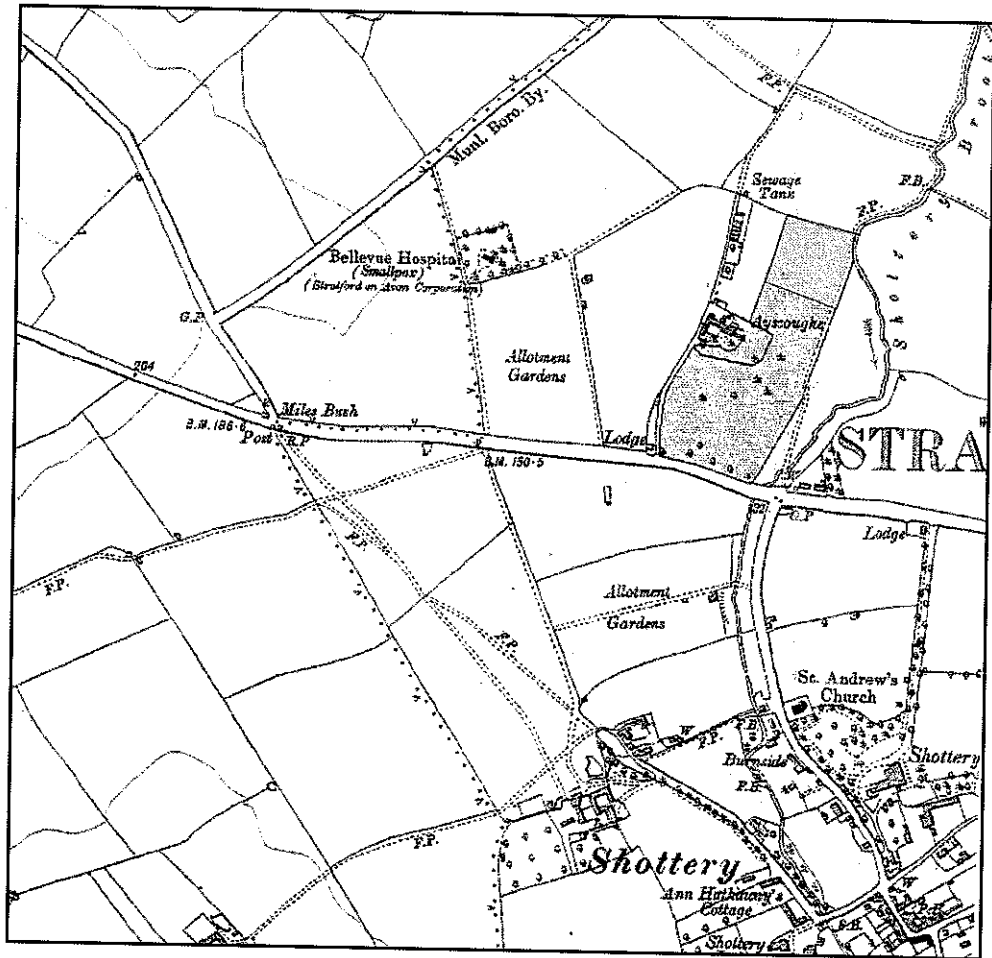


Fig.4 (1922)

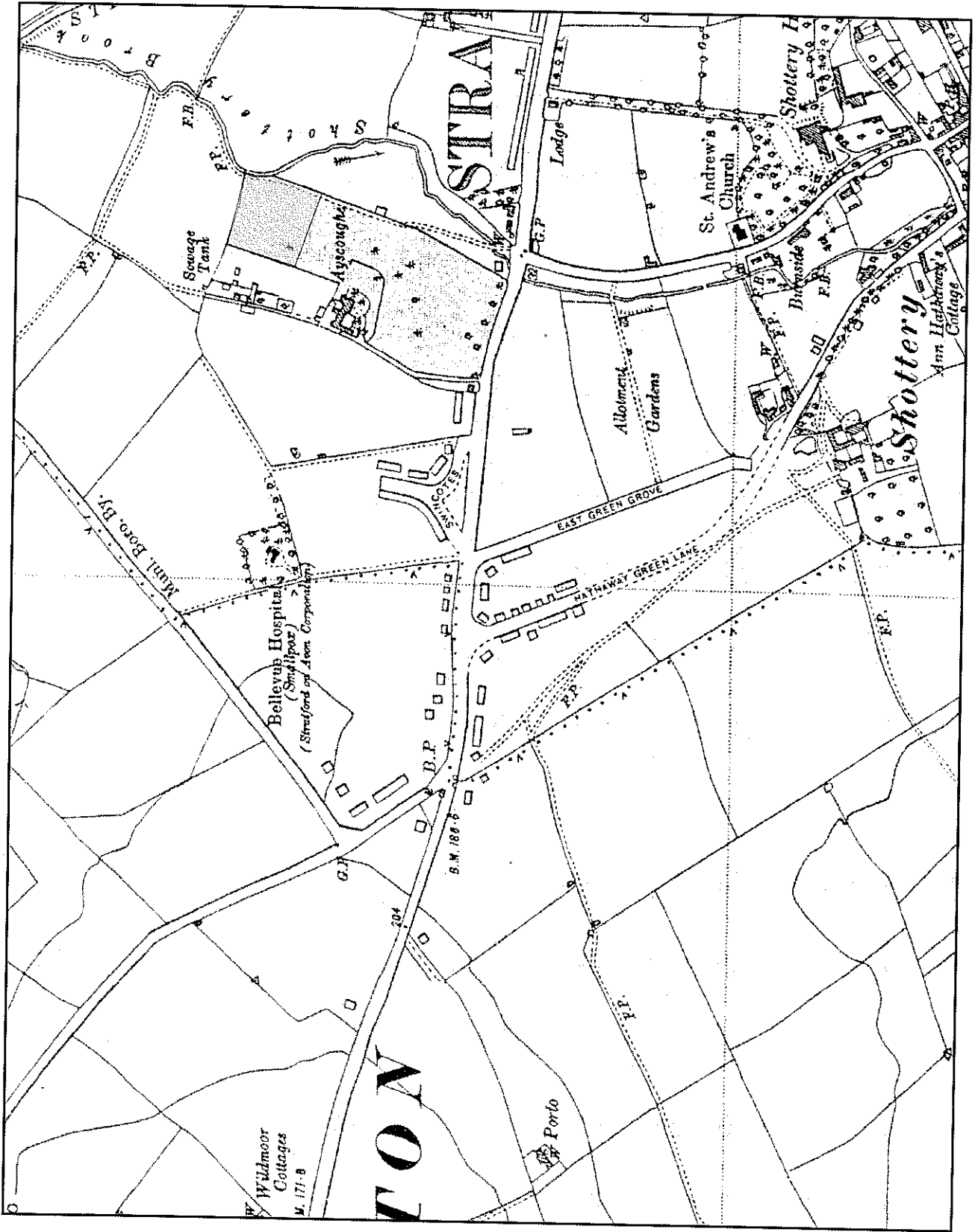


Fig.5 (1938)

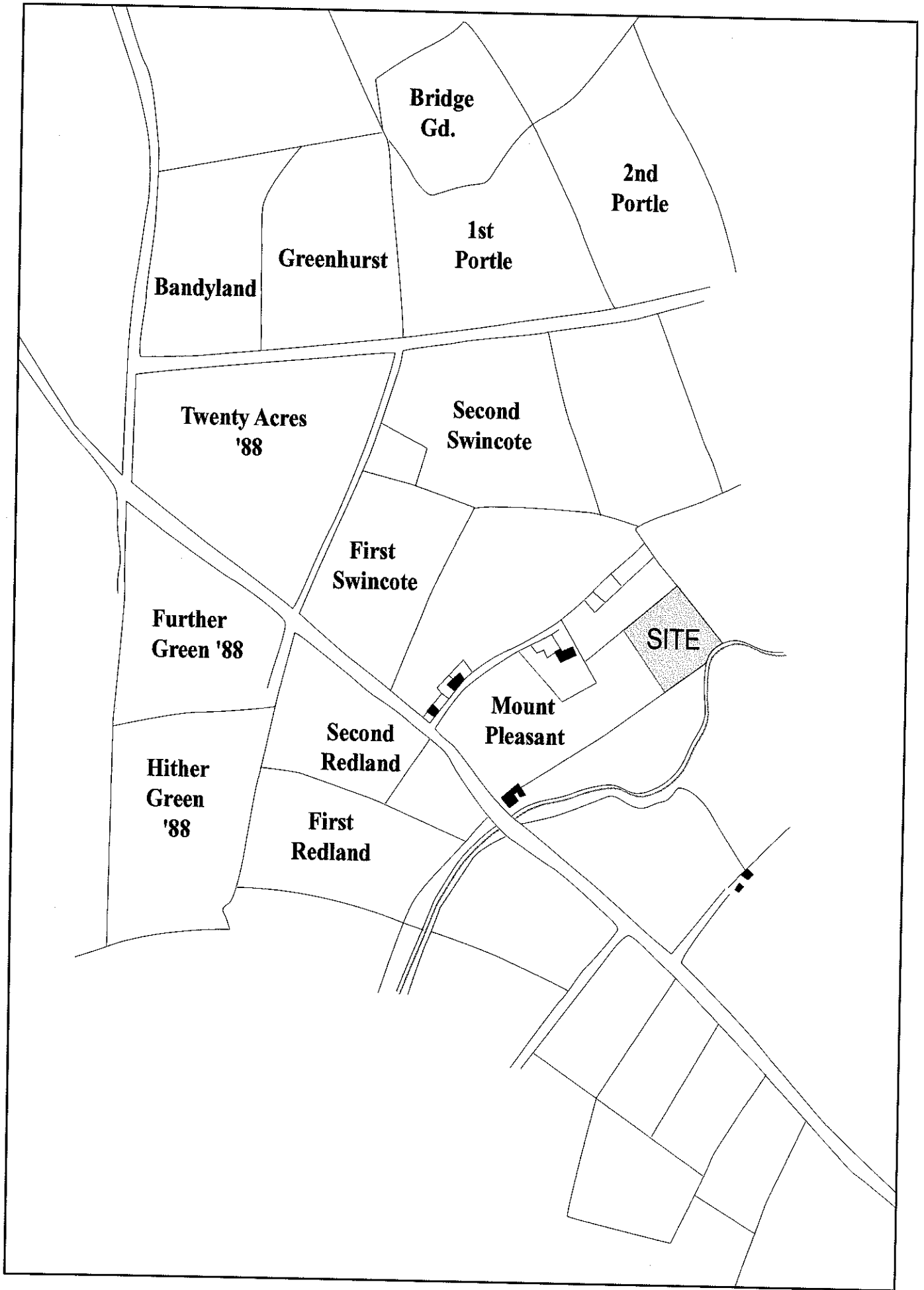


Fig.6 (1807)



Plate 1

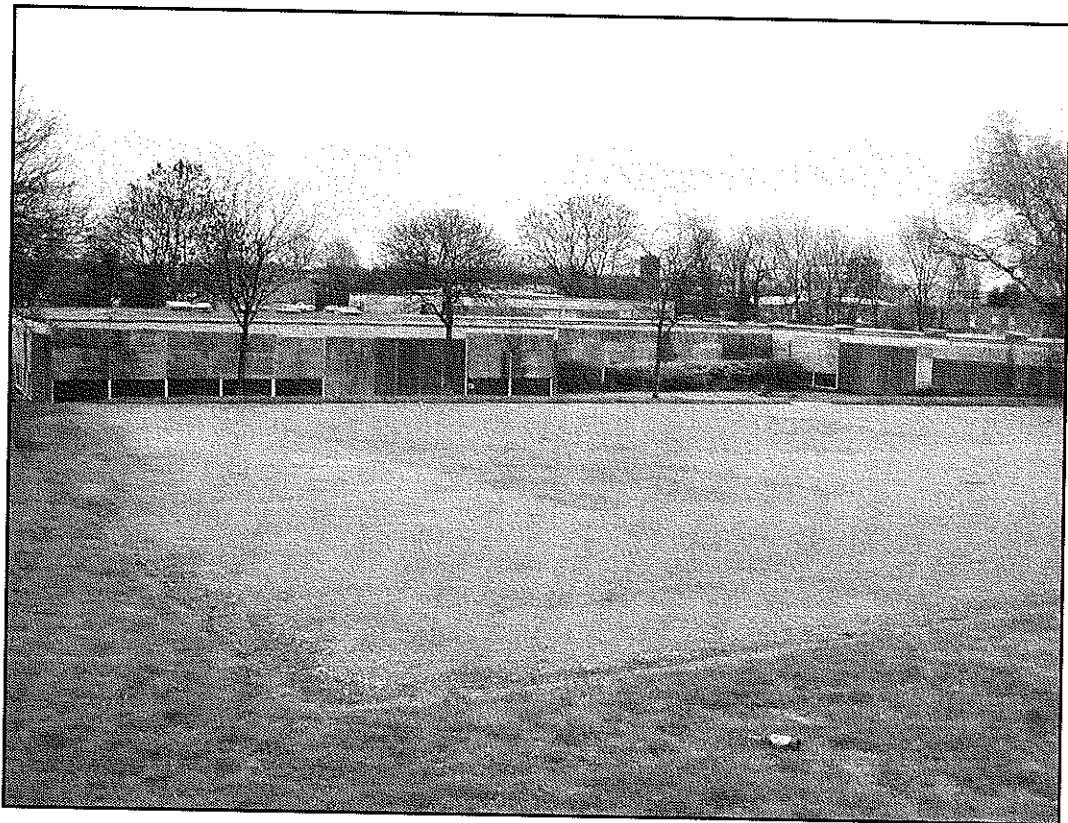


Plate 2



Plate 3