

**St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton:
A Site Appraisal**

2005

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St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton Site appraisal 2005

Introduction

This report provides an appraisal of land at St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton. The appraisal was commissioned by Wolverhampton City Council who were granted planning permission for Highway Maintenance and Improvement Works. This was prompted by the possibility that human burials and burial vaults from St Peter's New Cemetery may be encountered during the work. Accordingly the planning permission includes a condition requiring a scheme of archaeological works to be undertaken to excavate and record any human burials ahead of and/or during the development. The site lies immediately west of the University of Wolverhampton at SO 913989.

Results

The majority of proposed development (shown in red) is within an area previously assessed and partially excavated in 2001-2002 by Birmingham Archaeology (Fig.1). This was undertaken for the University of Wolverhampton in advance of an extension to the Harris Learning Centre. The eastern half of the Harris Learning Centre excavation area (shown in green) was contained within the south-western corner of the former St Peter's burial ground (shown in yellow). The western half lay in an area previously occupied by a road known variously as The Street Alley (1750), Horse Fair (1827-71) and St Peter's Square (1901-present day). There were also gardens on the west side of this road in 1750 and houses by 1842. The excavation took place within the boundaries of St Peter's new burial ground and recorded 152 human burials dating to the mid-19th century.

The University of Wolverhampton occupies a large area to the north of the proposed development of which part is made up of the 19th century burial ground. Clearance of the burials took place in the 1970s, however, it is not known whether all or just part of the site has been cleared. Of the seven vaults previously excavated six were empty, however, there is a possibility therefore that burials may remain towards the northern limit of the development area, immediately to the west of the university buildings.

Issac Taylors map of 1750 (Fig.2) suggests that the south part of the development area may have been within, or formed part of the boundary for the land of the Deanery Hall, which was developed to serve St Peter's. By 1842 the Tithe map (Fig.3) shows buildings were constructed in this area, it is possible therefore that remains of 19th century buildings, or earlier structures associated with the Deanery, may be encountered during groundworks.

The 2001-2002 excavation exposed remains on the eastern side of St Peter's Square. Areas to the west of St Peter's Square may contain remains of structures known (from Issac Taylors map of Wolverhampton, Fig.2), to have been in existence in 1750, although the layout of the road has been altered in recent years. This area continued to be occupied by houses throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century. The Health of Towns map surveyed in 1852 (Fig.4), shows a row of terraced housing, with yards to the rear, a pub called the Freemasons Arms and further buildings along Horse Fair. By the 1st edition OS map of 1889 (Fig.5), the pub and adjoining buildings, and a part of Horse Fair have been removed. The terraced houses opposite the burial ground, within the proposed development area, are still standing in 1938, and appear

on the OS map of this date (Fig.6). By this date a wholesale market occupies the corner of St Peter's Square and Wulfruna Street.

Conclusions

It is possible that burials may be encountered along the northeast side of the development area, in areas outside the 2001-2002 excavation area (shown in green, Fig.1). This however would depend on the nature and depth of the proposed works. The western side of the development area remains outside the former burial grounds and it seems likely that any development proposals in this area may encounter structural remains relating to 19th and 20th century terraced housing (area shaded blue).

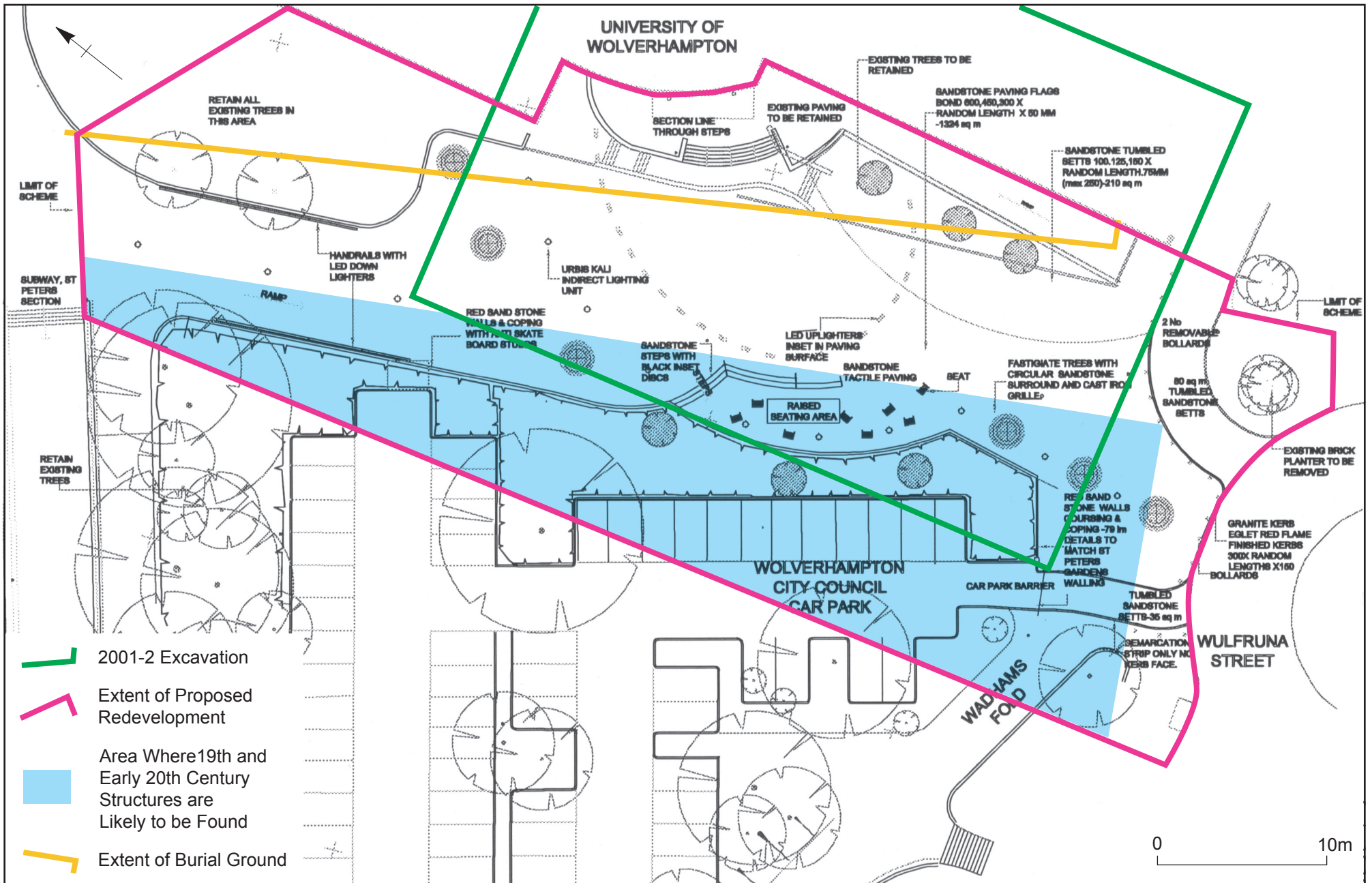


Fig.1

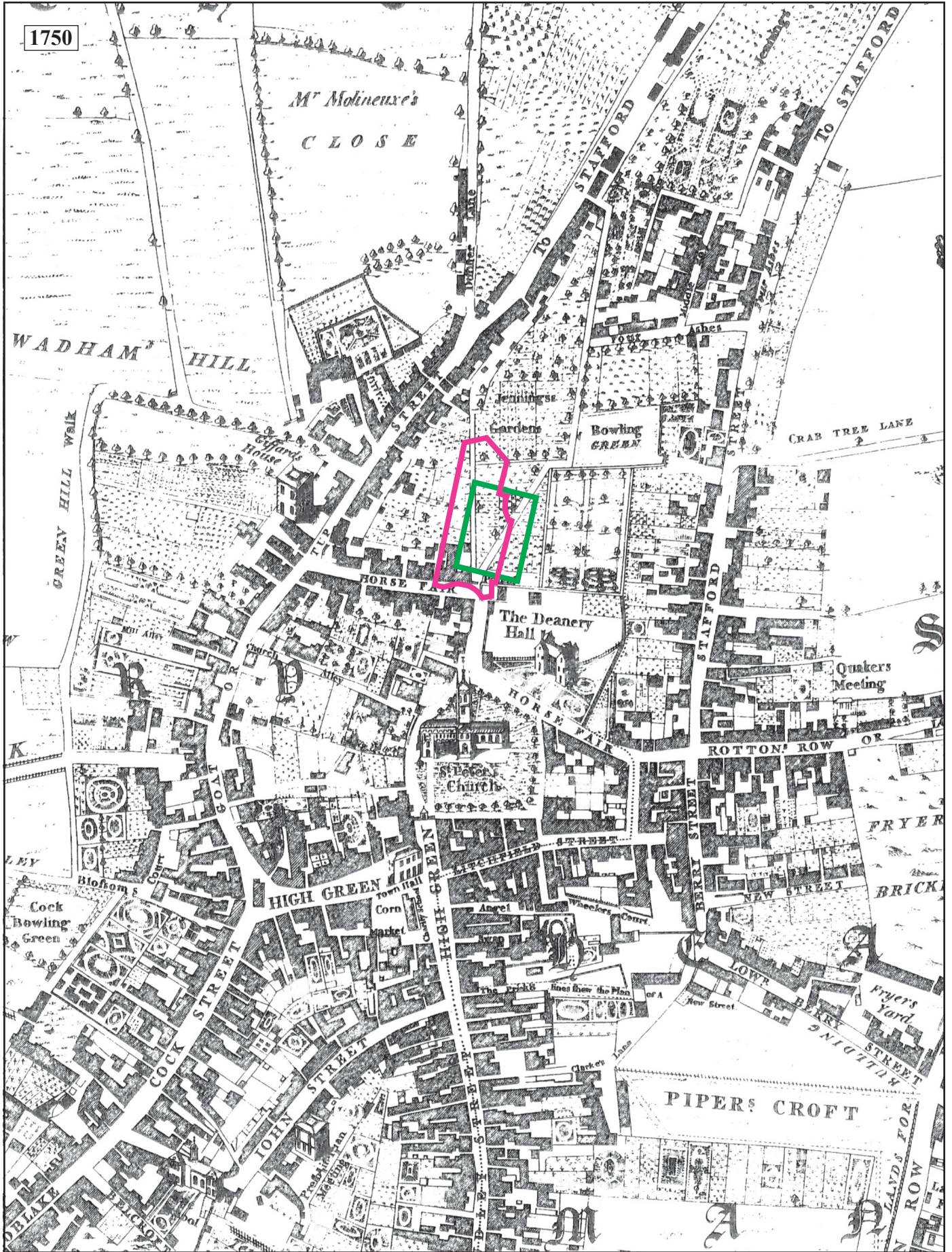


Fig.2

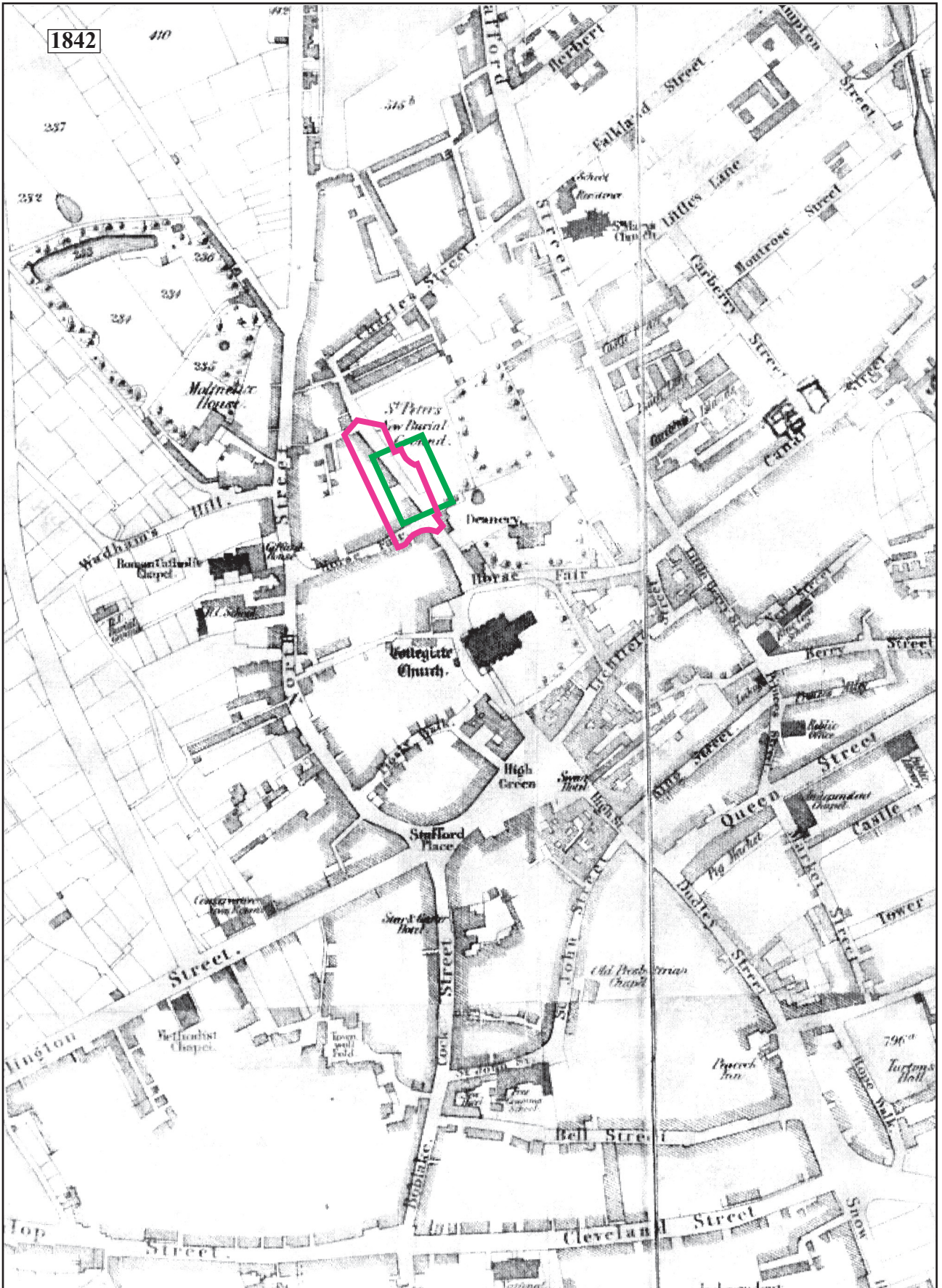


Fig.3

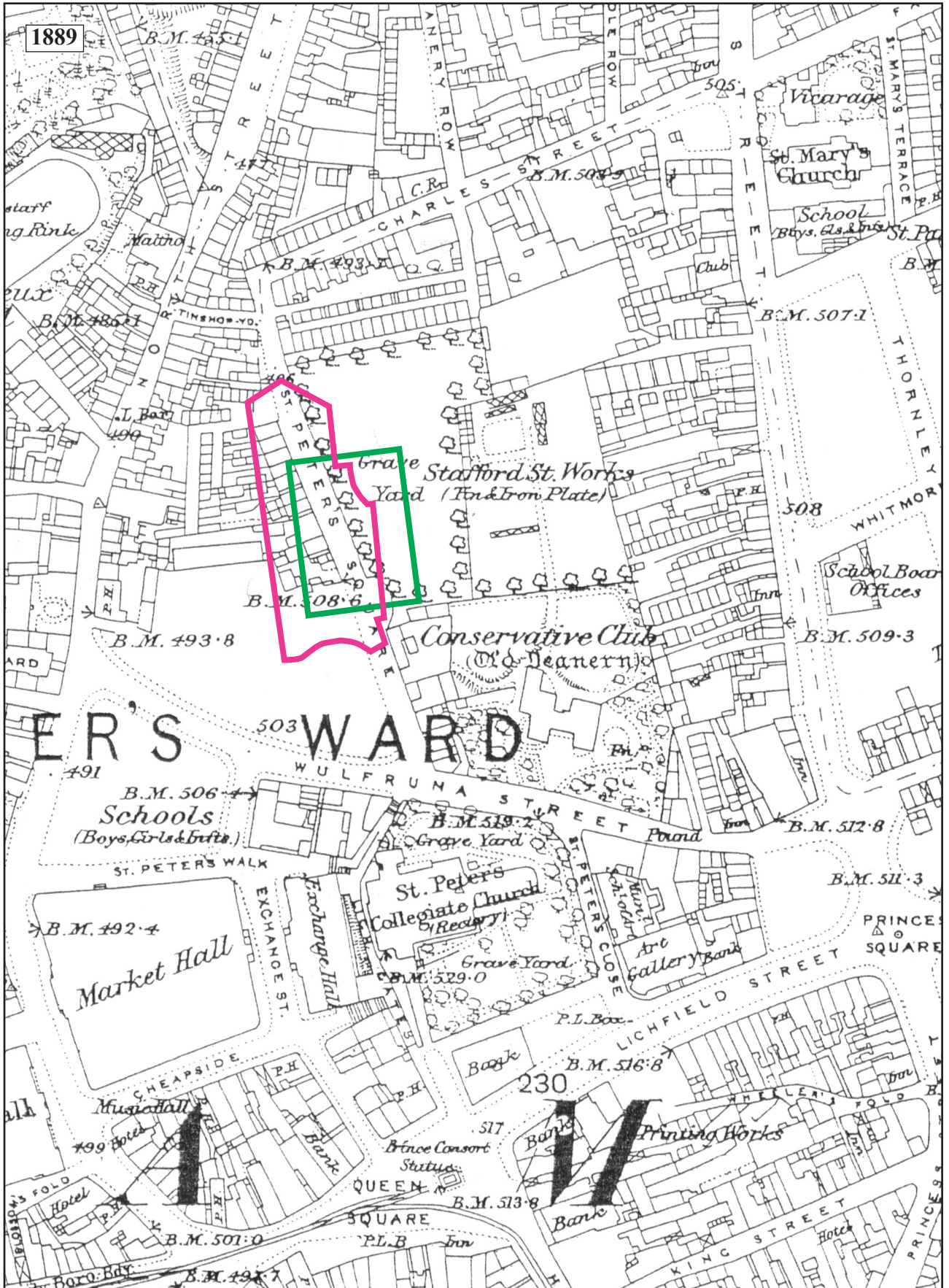


Fig.5

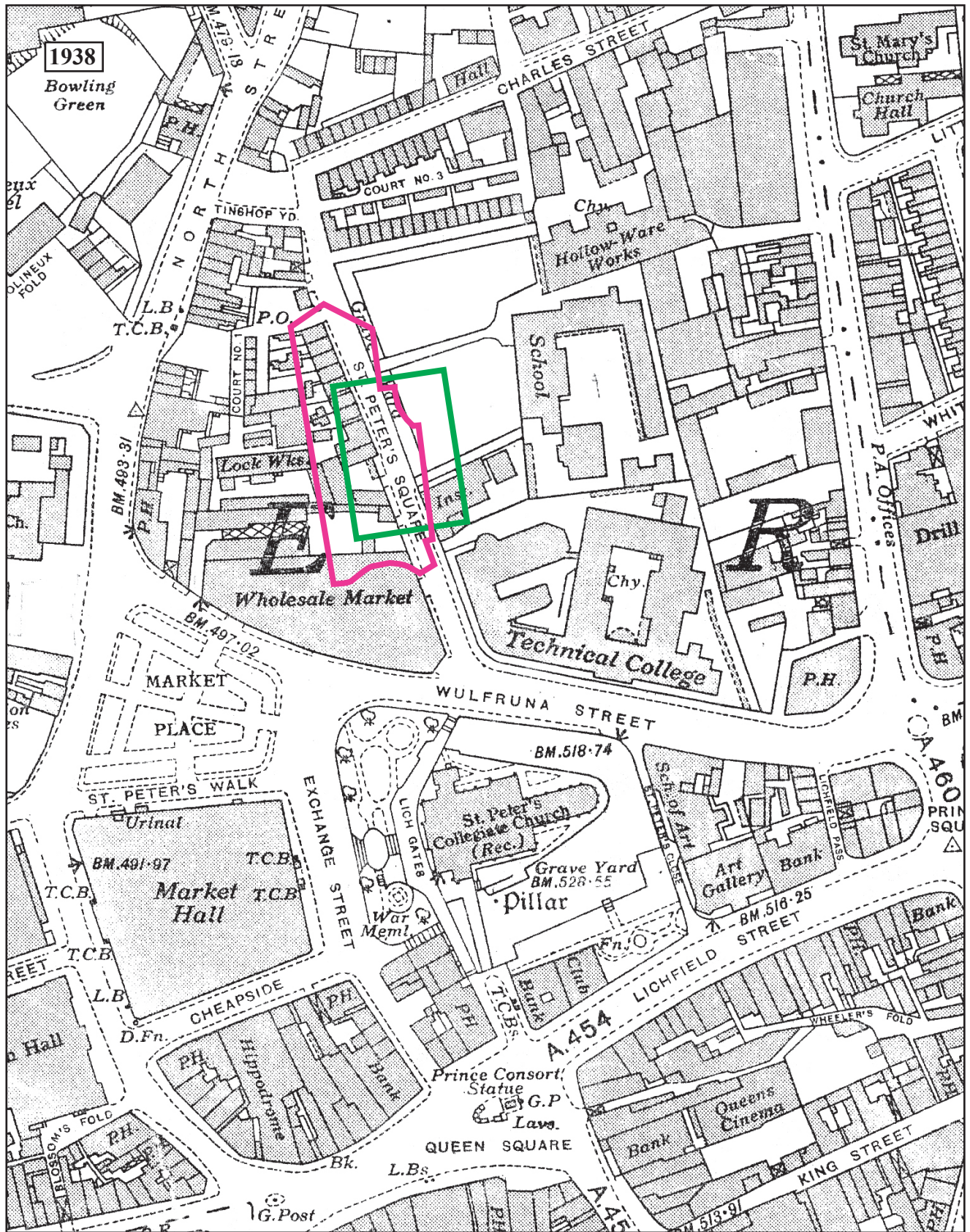


Fig.6