

**THE WHARF,  
DROYLSDEN, TAMESIDE:**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DESK-BASED  
ASSESSMENT**

**2007**

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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out in March 2007 on land at Droylsden, Tameside (NGR SJ 903 979) in advance of proposed redevelopment. The assessment identified that the street frontages within the site boundary may have been occupied in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century and associated with urban growth around the Moravian settlement at Fairfield to the south. The canal was cut through in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and this, as well as advances in technology boosted the textile industry and population of the township in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Documentary and cartographic evidence shows that Droylsden Mill (SMR 3386.1.0), the first purpose built combined mill in the town constructed in 1839, was situated adjacent to the canal within the site boundaries. A row of terraced houses along the north side of Durham Street, also within the site boundaries, were constructed before 1848, as were a Wesleyan chapel and Sunday school. The mill complex underwent several alterations and additions, and the north of the site was occupied in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century by an iron foundry, an engineering works, and terraced housing and an inn. Although most of the buildings are no longer standing, there is the potential for the survival of below-ground remains associated with this important period in the regions history.*

## **THE WHARF, DROYLSDEN, TAMESIDE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2007.**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In March 2007 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of The Wharf, Droylsden (hereafter referred to as the study area). The work was commissioned by the Watkin Jones Group in advance of a proposed development of the site.

This report outlines the results of the assessment, which was carried out during March 2007, and which was prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (IFA 2001).

### **2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

The site is located at Droylsden, to the east of Manchester, and to the west of Ashton-under-Lyne. It is centred on NGR SJ 903 979 (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Manchester Road to the north, Market Street to the east, the canal to the south and southwest, and Edmund Street and the back of properties on Franklin Road to the west.

The present character of the site is a combination of industrial buildings, street frontages, carpark and open grassed areas (Fig. 2). Some of the standing buildings depicted on the modern plans have been demolished recently, though the floors and foundations of some of these buildings are still present. A geotechnical report conducted in March 2003 (Mott Macdonald 2003) also describes a playground and a swimming pool, and it is likely that the swimming pool relates to building 2 (no longer standing, Fig. 2).

The underlying geology consists of Carboniferous rocks covered by those of the Permo-Triassic period. The drift geology of the area is clay (Nevell, M. 1992, 8).

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The principle aim of the project was to assess the potential survival and significance of any archaeology, both above and below-ground, within the study area by collating existing archaeological and historical information for the site and its immediate environs and placing it in its local, regional and national context.

This information will be used to inform a mitigation strategy for future archaeological work on the site (see Section 7 below).

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

A search of all relevant and readily available published and non-published documentary sources, including historic maps and photographs, was carried out in the Tameside Local Studies Centre and the Library of the University of Birmingham. The Greater Manchester Sites

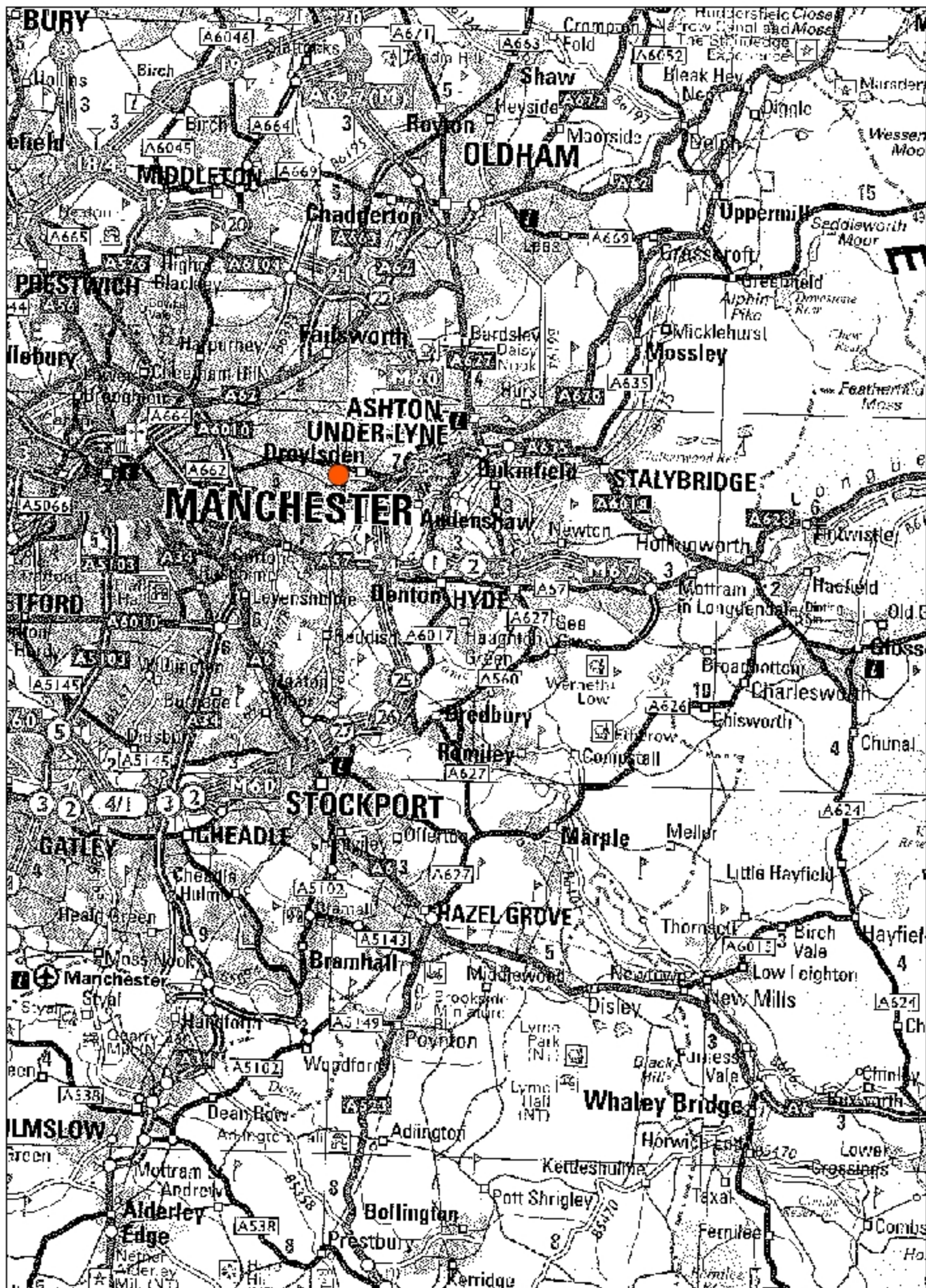


Fig. 1

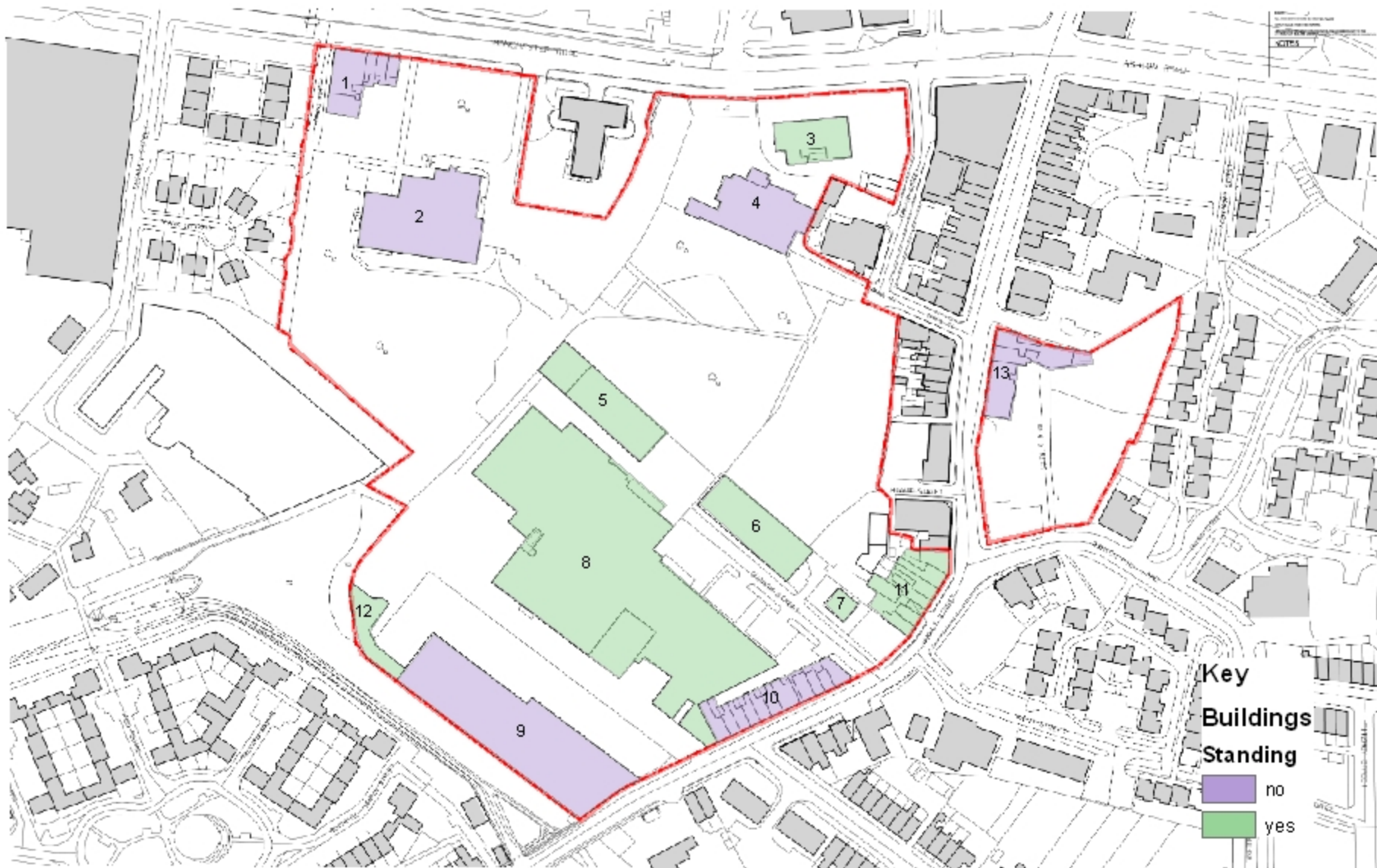


Fig. 2

and Monuments Record, the main source of archaeological information for the area was also consulted.

In addition, a walkover of the study area was undertaken in order to assess the topography and any above-ground archaeology, including standing buildings.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Manchester, known as 'Cottonopolis', had by the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed into the textile manufacturing centre of the world. With the transport revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries involving roads, canals and railways, Manchester was also transformed into a major transport interchange (McNeil and Nevell 2000, 7).

Although cloth manufacture had been an important industry in the Greater Manchester area prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the area had predominantly been an agricultural area, populated by isolated farmsteads, hamlets and market towns until this point (ibid. 2), with the textile industry being a domestic occupation (Nevell, M. 1993, 28). The national demand for textiles at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, along with technological innovations such as the steam-powered mill in the period 1780 to 1820, and power looms for weaving in the period 1820 to 1860, transformed the Greater Manchester area into a centre of the factory based cotton industry, with advances in fireproofing and architectural designs also represented in the archaeological record (McNeil and Nevell 2000, 2). The period also saw the emergence of specialist manufacturing centres and cotton towns, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Greater Manchester area also became a major engineering centre (ibid. 3).

The Greater Manchester area experienced a resurgence of the cotton industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with much larger mills being designed and constructed by specialist mill architects, with more efficient internal layouts (ibid. 2), while construction of new cotton mills in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were characterised by huge spinning mills containing over 100,000 spindles, often on new sites (ibid. 3).

### 5.1 Droylsden

As with much of Greater Manchester, there is little evidence of occupation and activity in the Droylsden area prior to the post-medieval and industrial periods. The township originally formed part of the manor of Clayton, which remained in the hands of the Byron family until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Nevell, M. 1991, 21). There is evidence for several medieval and early post-medieval farmsteads and buildings in the area, though none within the area of the site (Nevell, M. 1991, 143).

Prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, handloom weaving and bleaching of linen were extensive in Droylsden (Nevell, M. 1993, 28), though for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Droylsden was a rural community dominated by dispersed farmsteads with a village core developing at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the junction of Greenside Lane and Market Street (Nevell, M. 1993). From 1783 a second urban core developed around the Moravian settlement in Fairfield, to the south of the study area. The Moravians were a Protestant group who originated in Bohemia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and come first to Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first Moravian settlement in Tameside was founded at Chapel Hill in Dukinfield in 1743, and later they moved to land once forming Broad Oak Farm in Droylsden in 1783 (Nevell, M. 1993, 155). Yates's map of Lancashire 1786 (Fig. 3) depicts the meeting house to the south of the study area, and the cluster of buildings around Lane Head (Market Street) and Greenside.

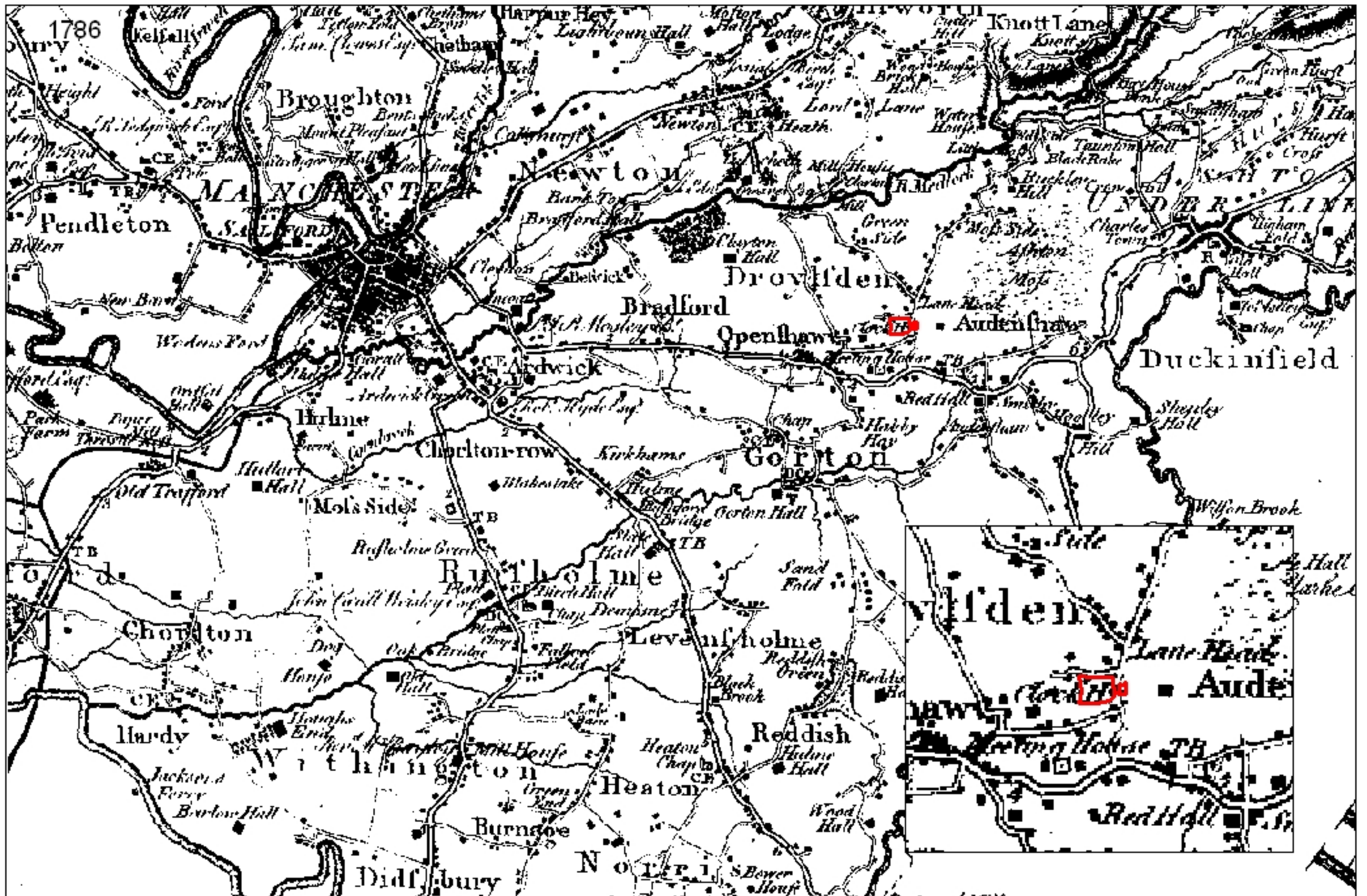


Fig.3



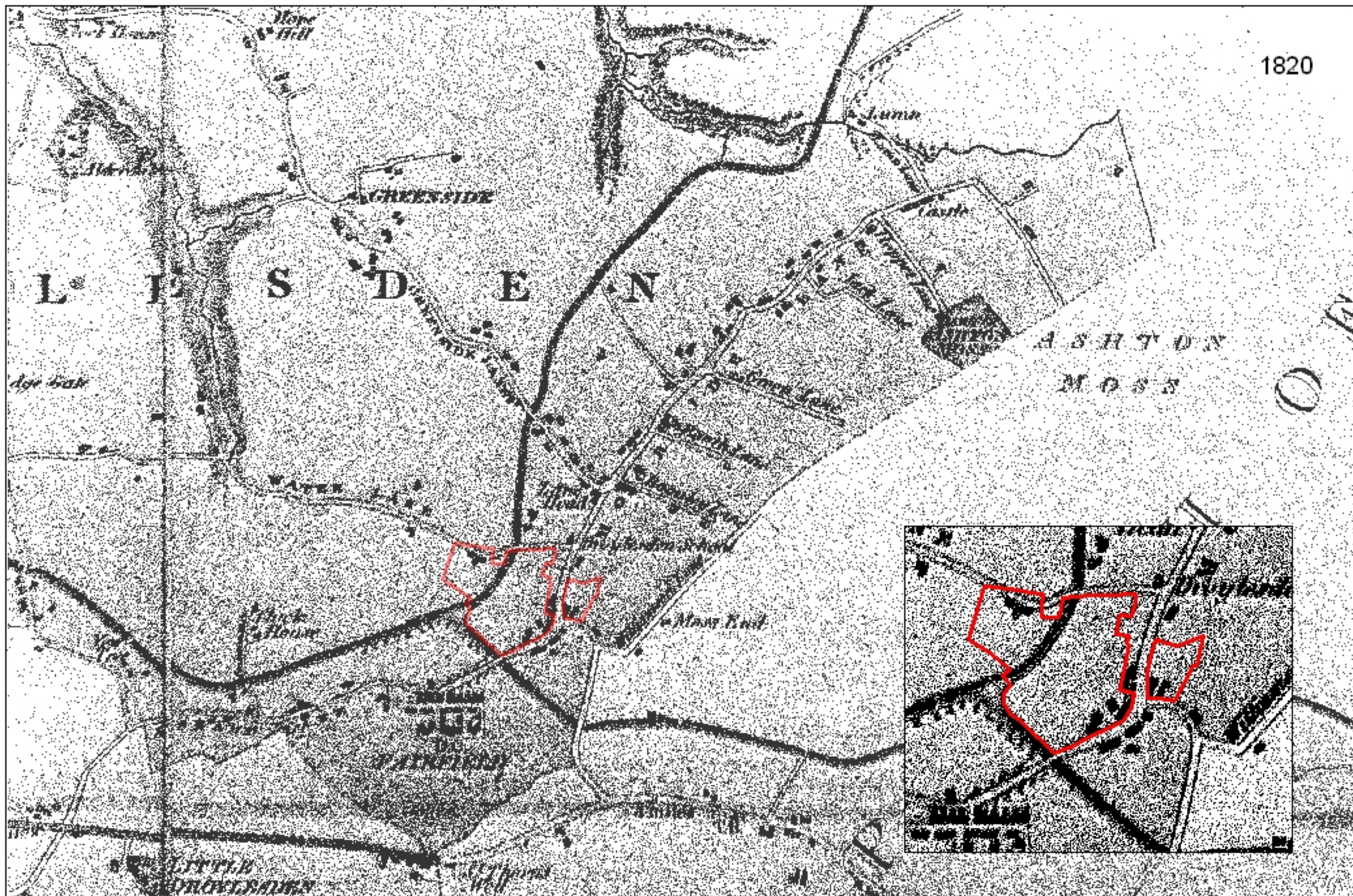


Fig.4

Droylsden experienced two phases of cotton expansion, the first of these between 1785 and 1806 during the pioneering period of the industry. The failure of the early industry in the area was probably due to the lack of suitable water and coal supplies and its relative isolation from the surrounding cotton centres (Nevell, M. 1993, 39).

The construction of the Ashton Canal, which runs eastwards from Manchester to Ashton-Under-Lyne, would have boosted industry and settlement in the Droylsden area. The original canal scheme was completed in 1796, running from Manchester climbing gradually westwards via 18 locks to Fairfield, Droylsden. From there one level section continued eastward to Ashton-Under-Lyne while another arm headed north climbing another 8 locks to Hollinwood. (<http://www.penninewaterways.co.uk/ashton/ac2.htm>).

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Ashton Canal prospered, and traffic was so great that the company started to convert the locks into double (twin) locks, although only the two locks at Fairfield (17 and 18) were completed. The introduction of the steam engine encouraged the building of many mills beside the new canals, and from the 1800s most new mills were built using steam as the sole source of power (Nevell, M. 1993, 31). In addition, most large mills used gas for lighting from the late 18th century, as gas was both safer and allowed longer working hours. ([http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/story/printer\\_friendly.asp?StoryUid=32&totSlides=20](http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/story/printer_friendly.asp?StoryUid=32&totSlides=20))

It is possible, however, that the lack of available resources continued to hinder the growth and expansion of the cotton industry in the area, and it was due to the increasing cost of setting up new businesses in Manchester and the decreasing number of suitable sites in Ashton that gave rise to the resurgence of the industry in Droylsden itself in the 1830s (Nevell, M. 1993, 39). The rapid introduction of new technologies in the period 1820-1860 may also have been influential in the development of the industry.

The population of Droylsden grew from 1552 in 1801 to 2855 by 1821 (Nevell, M. 1993, 154), and Johnson's map of Manchester and its environs c.1820 (Fig. 4) shows ribbon development along Moorside Street, and around the junction of Market Street and Ashton Hill Lane (ibid.). Pigot and Co's Directory of Cheshire etc (1828-29) describes Droylsden as

*'a township and rather populous village, in the parish of Manchester, four miles east of that town. Several respectable cotton printers, manufacturers and bleachers are established here.'*

Ashton New Road, which forms the northern boundary of the site was constructed by 1826, and is visible on Hennet's map of 1829 (Fig. 5). This road provided the town with the first direct road link with Manchester. (<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/corpgen2/droyhistory.htm>)

The introduction of factory-based cotton spinning and weaving in the 1830s prompted a population increase from 2996 in 1831 to 4933 in 1841 (Nevell, M. 1993, 154). Droylsden Mill (within the study area) was one of four establishments built along the Ashton Canal by 1845, and between 1841 and 1861 the population of Droylsden nearly doubled (ibid.). Pigot and Slater's Directory of Manchester and Salford (1841) also lists 15 shopkeepers, 18 inn/beer retailers, and 9 shoemakers at Droylsden.



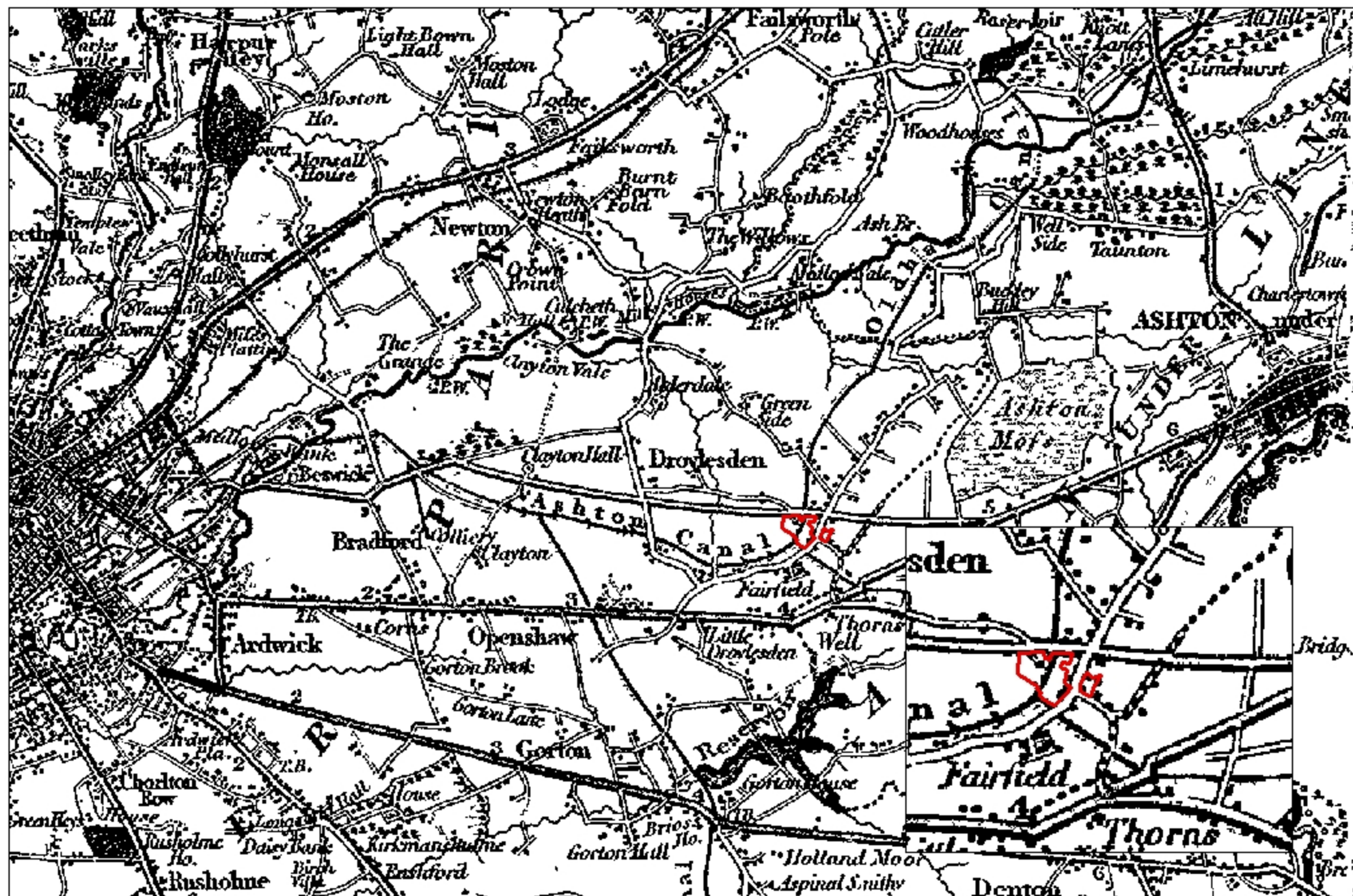


Fig.5

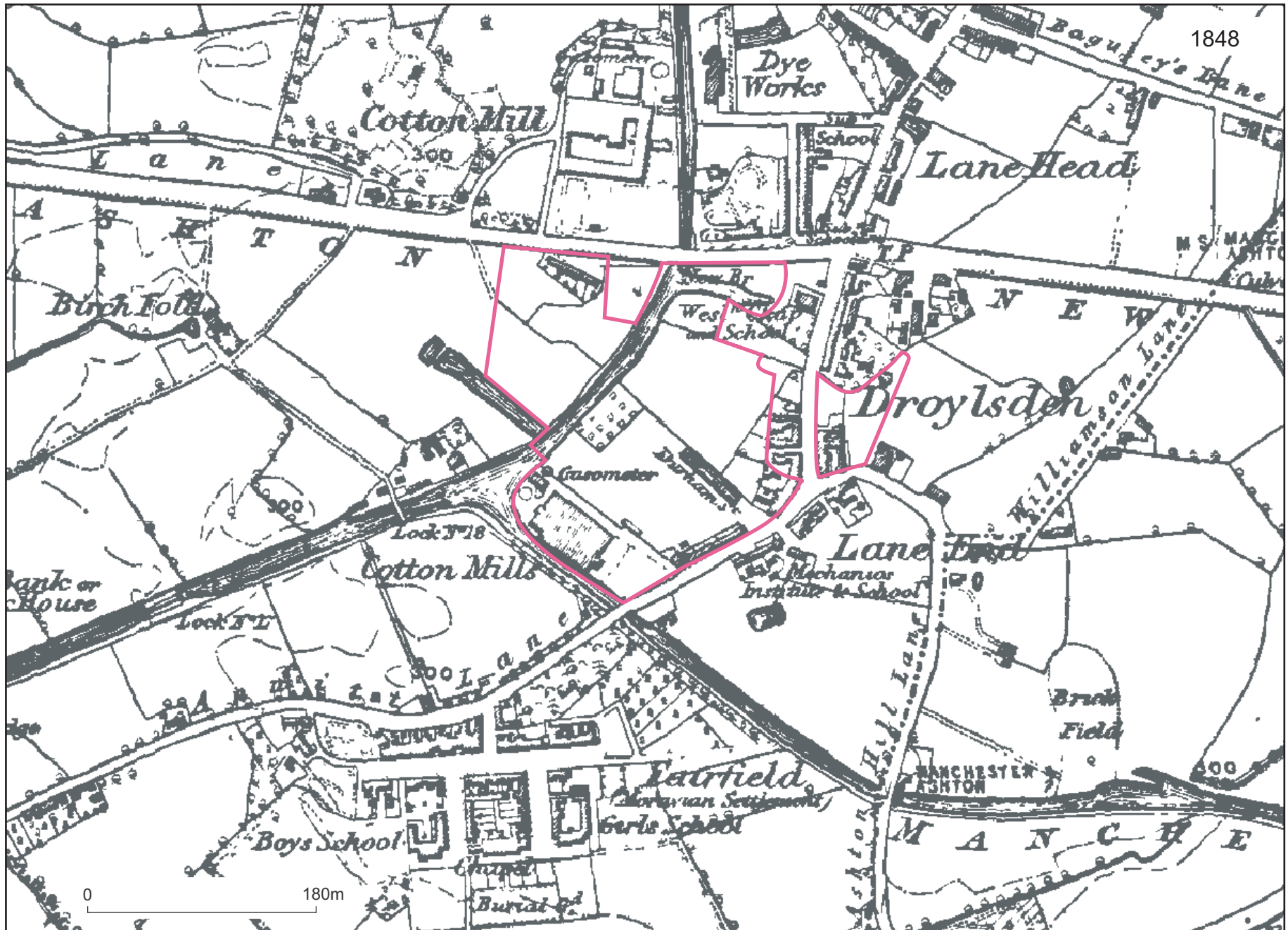


Fig.6

Droylsden Mill and associated gasometer is depicted on the Ordnance Survey 6" edition of 1848 (Figs. 6 and 7). A school and Wesleyan Methodist chapel are annotated, and terrace housing along the north side of Durham Street is also depicted on this map.

By the early 1860s there were seven cotton mills and three finishing works in Droylsden, most of which were combined mills (Nevell, M. 1993, 40). The area was subject to another population boom in the period between 1881 and 1901, with urban developments and new streets constructed either side of Market Street (ibid. 154).

## 5.2 The Study Area

The earliest map consulted was Yates's map of Lancashire 1786 (Fig. 3). The newly constructed Moravian Meeting house is recorded on this map, as are several buildings on either side of the roads through Droylsden, though Openshaw is depicted as a much more densely settled area. It is possible that a building is present at the northwest of the study area.

Wilson's map of 1805 (not illustrated) does not show much detail, though buildings fronting the corner of Market Street are depicted on this map. Johnson's map of Manchester and its environs 1820 (Fig. 4) also shows the many buildings fronting either side of Market Street at the southeastern side of the study area, though shows no buildings fronting the canal. It is possible that the buildings depicted in the northwest corner of the study area are the terraced houses present on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Although Hennet's map of 1829 (Fig. 5) also lacks detail, Ashton New Road was constructed by this time.

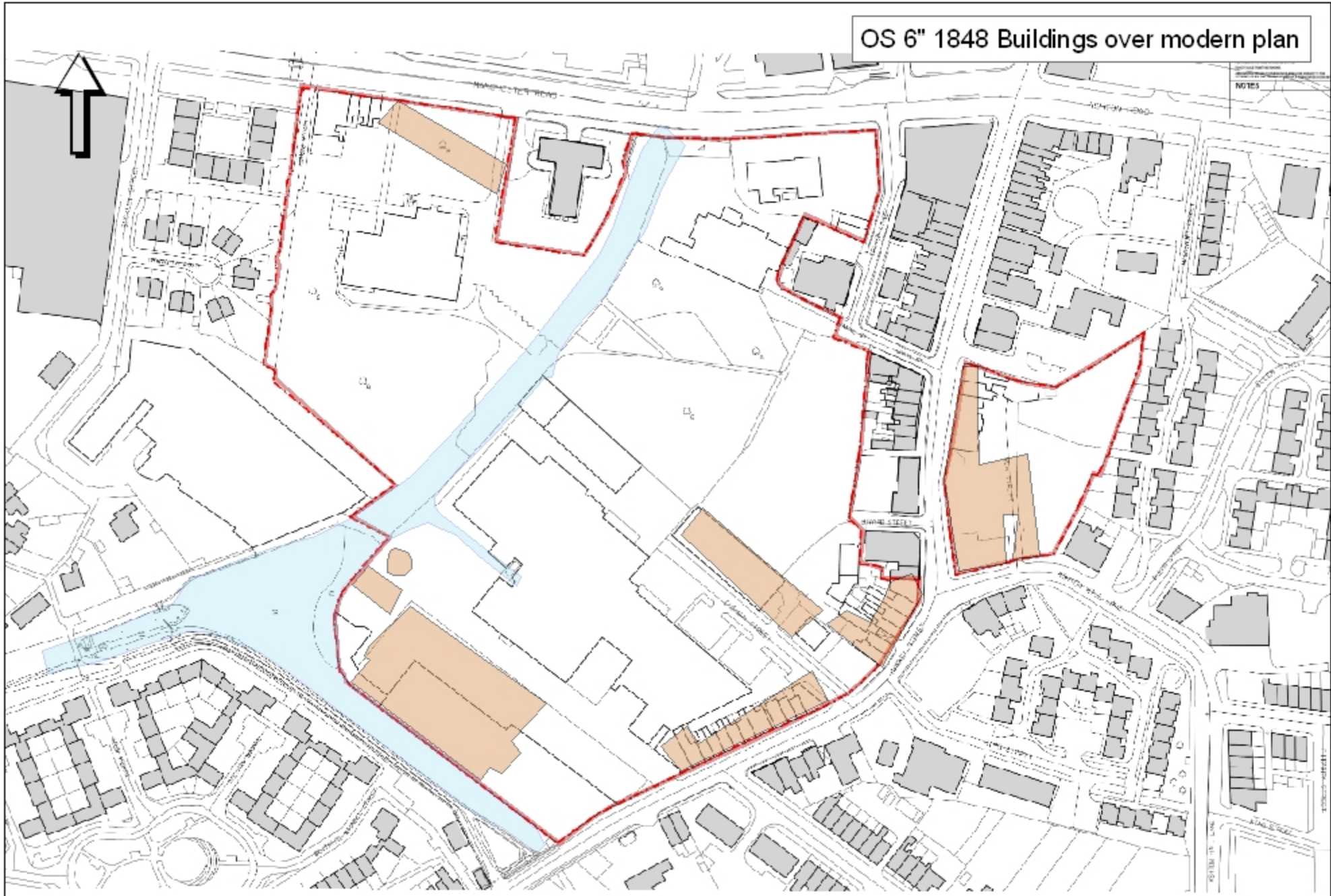
The Ordnance Survey 6" Edition of 1848 (Figs. 6 and 7) shows in more detail the previous buildings within the study area. Fronting the canal to the south of the study area a large building annotated 'Cotton Mill' is depicted, with separate buildings, one annotated gasometer, present to the northwest. These buildings are the original Droylsden Mill buildings (SMR 3386.1.0). Built in 1839 by Messrs Worthington, Benson and Co, it was the first purpose-built combined mill in the township (Nevell, M. 1993, 40). It became Ashworth Hadwen and Co by 1853 (SMR3386.1.0). Originally it was a large site, with two spinning mills (No.1 having 5 storeys and a basement, built of brick), a 2 storey office building, a 2 storey warehouse, engine house and boiler house. The two mills have both been demolished (ibid.).

Durham Street is also shown on this map, though there are only buildings present on its northern side. A Wesleyan Chapel and School are annotated within the northeastern corner of the study area, though their precise location is unclear. A building to the immediate east of the site in this area is later annotated as a Sunday School. Buildings are also depicted to the east of Market Street, and to the north of the study area along the previous road line.

By the time of the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1893-4 (Fig. 8), the area is substantially more developed, with several buildings and structures present within the study area. The mill buildings have been expanded and a basin present within the mill complex, and additional terraced housing is present to the south of Durham Street. There are also buildings, housing and an inn to the northwest of the study area at Edmund Street, Victoria Street and Green Lane. To the northeast of the study area the Methodist chapel and Sunday school are present, as is a building immediately to the south of these, later annotated as an Iron Foundry. To the east of Market Street there is terraced housing, with New Street running through this part of the study area.

There are very few changes illustrated between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1908-9 (Fig. 9), though there are changes depicted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1922 (Fig. 10). On this map, the buildings in the northwestern part of the study area at Green Lane have

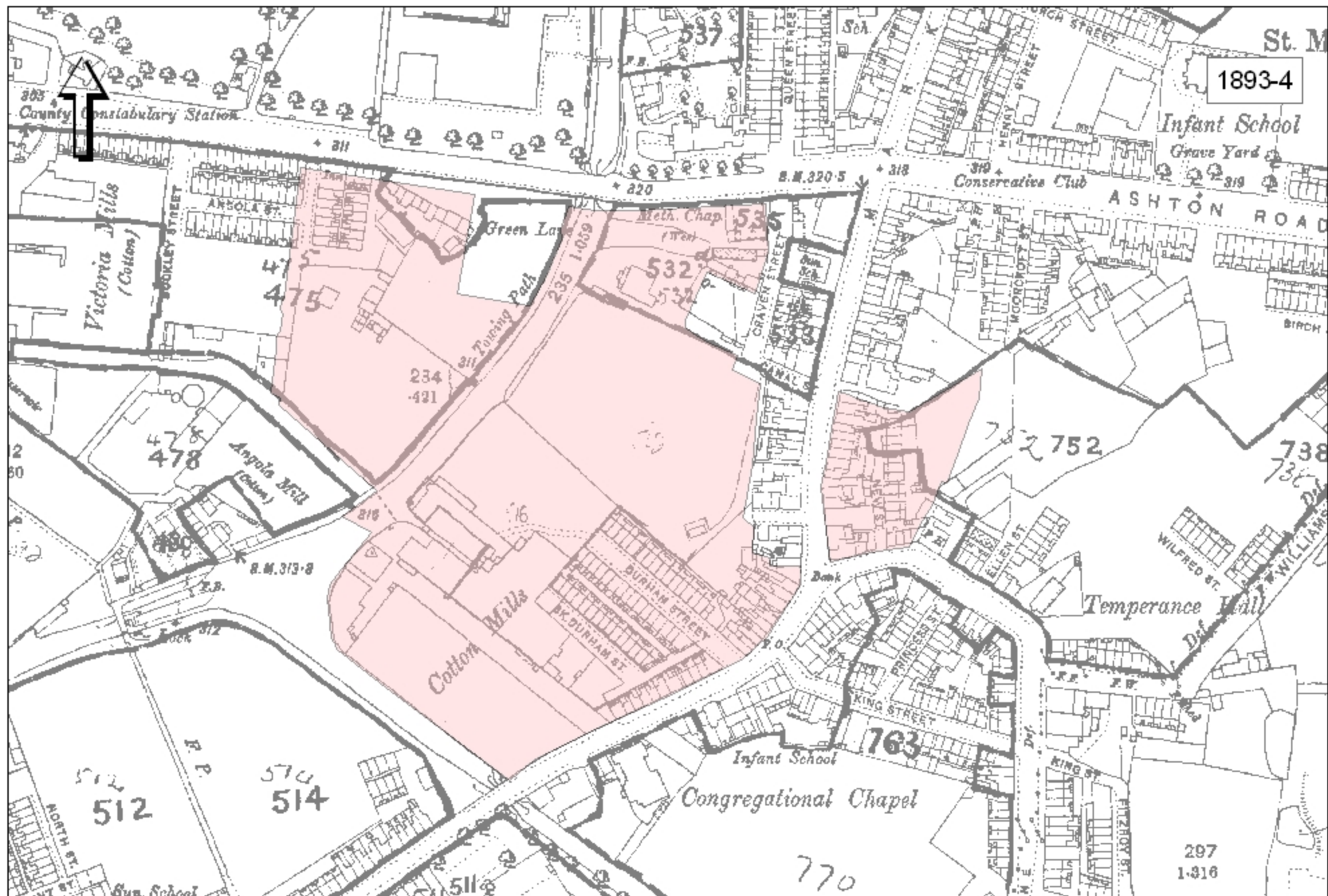
OS 6" 1848 Buildings over modern plan



0 12.5 25 50 75 100  
Meters

Fig. 7





0 15 30 60 90 120  
 Meters

Fig. 8

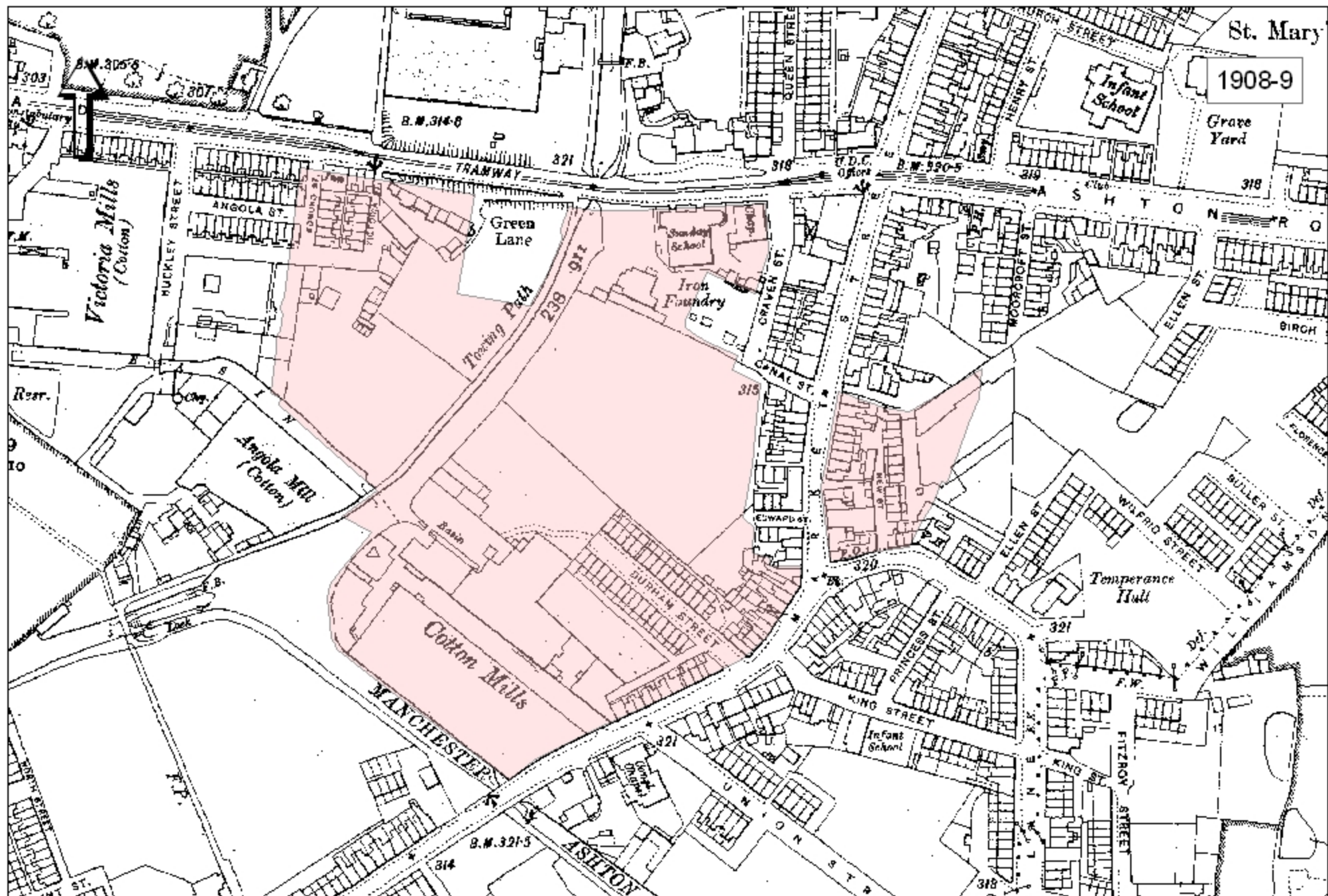


Fig. 9

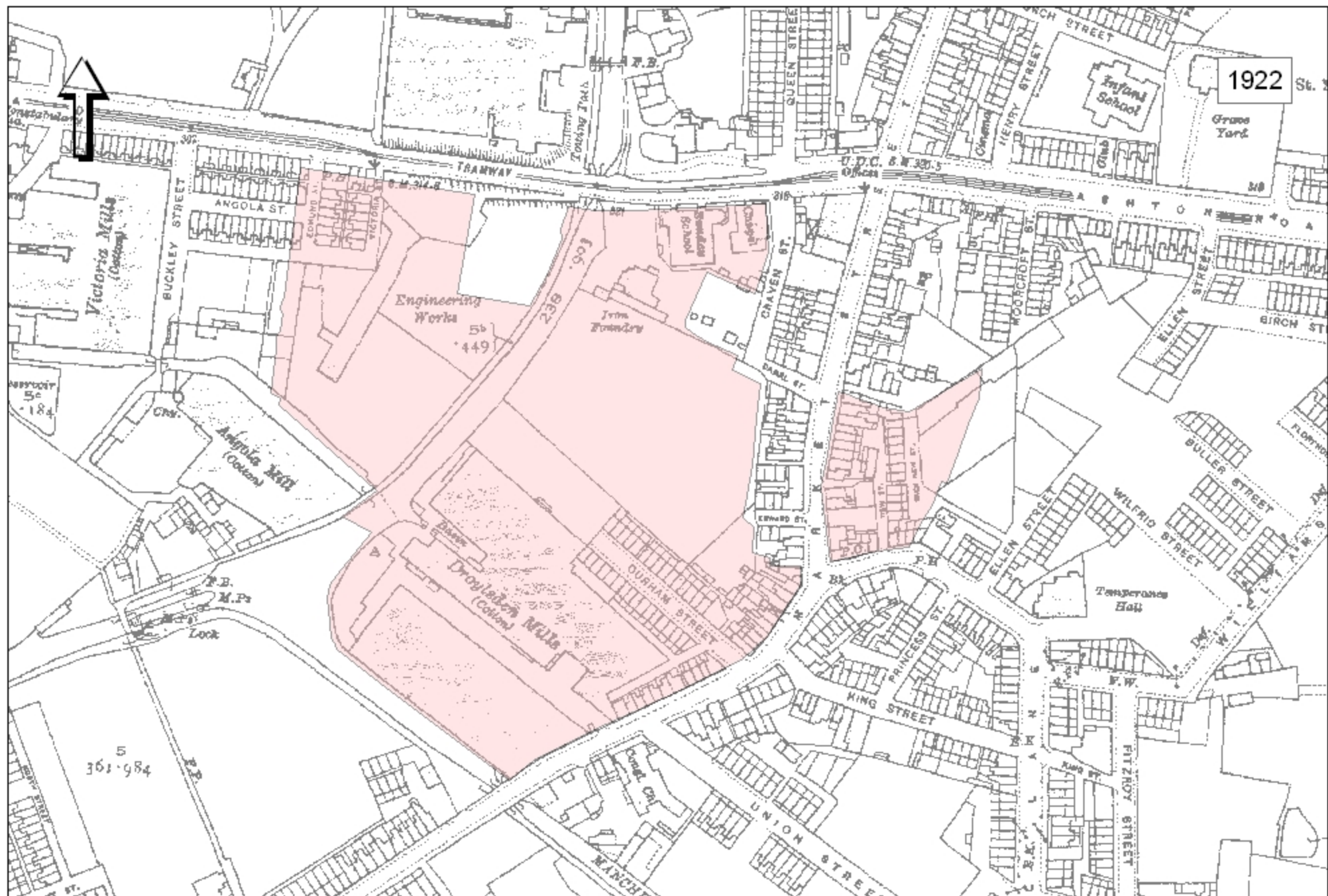


Fig. 10

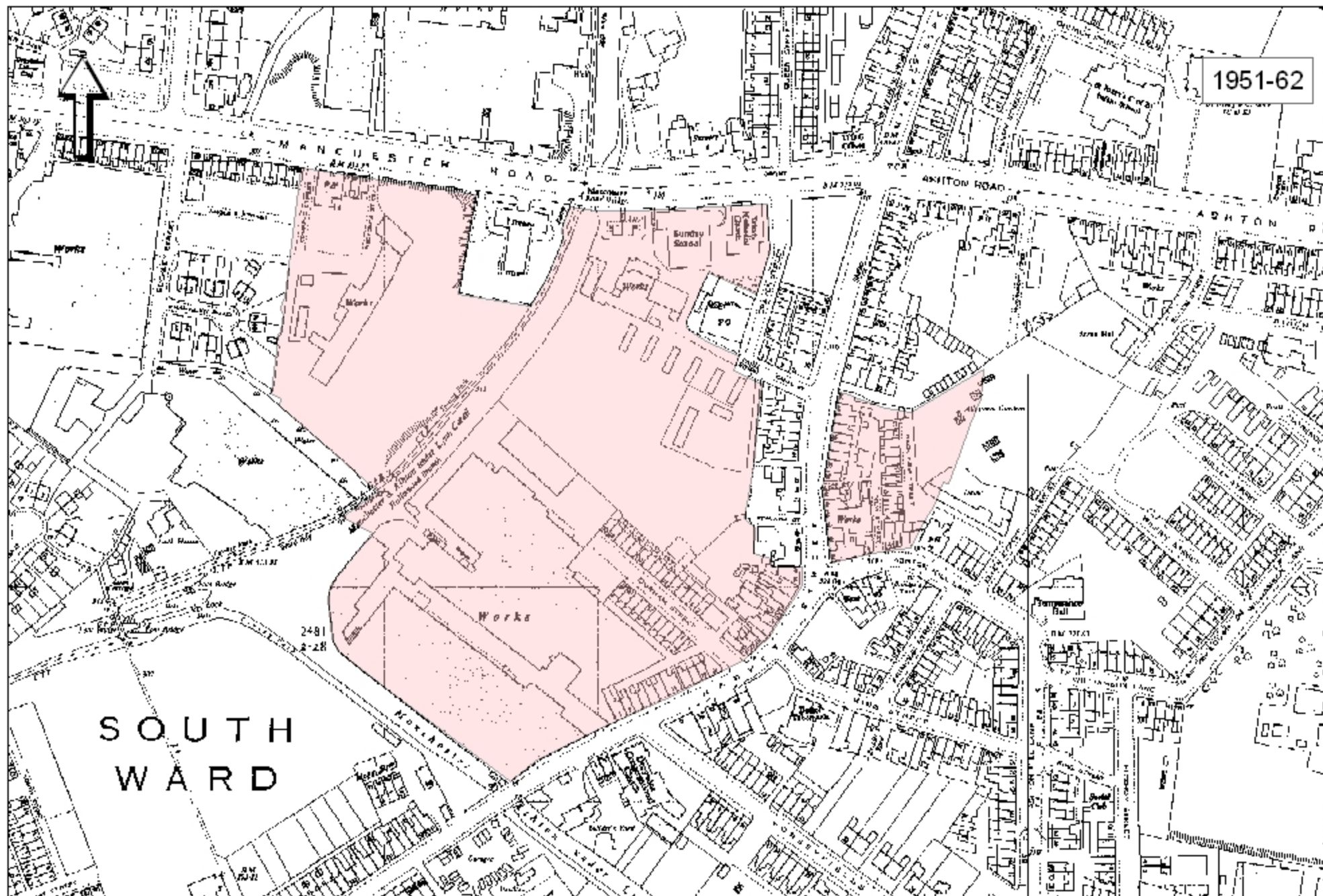


Fig. 11



been superseded by a long Engineering Works building. There are also additions and alterations depicted to the mill buildings of Droylsden Mills, though these seem to be predominantly to the rear of the buildings.

The Ordnance Survey Edition of 1951-62 (Fig. 11) shows a few extensions to the engineering works and iron foundry (now labelled works), and more alterations and an additional building to the north of the previous mill complex (also now labelled works).

## 6 WALKOVER SURVEY

The study area comprises a combination of industrial buildings, street frontages, carpark and open grassed areas (Fig. 2). Several of the buildings depicted on the developer plans have been demolished.



Plate 1 – Previous location of buildings 1 and 2

1 – Buildings identified as public house and terrace housing from 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1893-4 (Fig. 8). No longer standing, likely to have been demolished recently.

2 – This building no longer standing, however, it is later than the OS Edition of 1951-62 (Fig. 11), and was possibly the site of the swimming pool identified in the geotechnical survey conducted in 2003.

3 – This building is still currently standing, and has been used as a Methodist chapel. It is on the site of an earlier Sunday School, annotated on the Ordnance Survey 6<sup>th</sup> Edition and illustrated on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of 1893-4 (Figs. 6 and 8), however, current building is modern.



Plate 2 – Building 3



Plate 3 – Floor and foundations building 4

4 – This building is no longer standing. It is on the site of a series of buildings, visible on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1893-4 (Fig. 8) and described as an Iron Foundry on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1908-9 (Fig. 9). The later building again appears from the mapping evidence to have been substantially altered, if not completely rebuilt.

5 – This building is still currently standing. It is first depicted on the Ordnance Survey Edition of 1951-62 (Fig. 11).



Plate 4 – Building 5

6 – This building is still currently standing, it is however modern, and on the site of a terrace of houses along Durham Street. These houses are depicted on the Ordnance Survey 6" Edition of 1848, with additional housing on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map 1893-4 (Fig. 8), and are likely to have been workers houses for the cotton mills. It is possible that the foundations of the earlier buildings survive underneath the present modern building.



Plate 5 – Building 6



Plate 6 – Building 7

7 – This building is still currently standing, and likely contemporary with building 6. It is also on the site of the earlier terrace houses along Durham Street.

8 – This building is a large multiphase building associated with the expansion of the original cotton mills in the area. Alterations are evident from both the cartographic evidence, and the walkover survey. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map 1922 (Fig. 10) corresponds best to the present building outline.



Plate 7 – Building 8



Plate 8 – Building 8

9 – This building is no longer standing apart from the southwestern wall fronting the canal, which is likely to be the original wall of the 1840s structure. The building depicted on the Ordnance Survey mapping sequence is much larger than the building depicted on the modern map, and it is possible that these buildings were subject to modern alteration.





Plate 9 – Building 9

10 – These buildings are no longer standing, though as the area is now grassed over, and according to local knowledge, the demolition was conducted several years ago. They are depicted on the Ordnance Survey 6" Edition of 1848 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1893-4, as well as potentially representing the buildings in the area shown on the earlier maps (Johnson's map 1820 Fig. 4).



Plate 10 – Building 10

11 – These buildings are still currently standing. They display several phases of alteration and addition, although earlier fabric may be incorporated into their present structures. Again, these buildings may be partly those depicted on the earlier mapping, including Johnson's map of 1820 Fig. 4).



Plate 11 – Building 11



Plate 12 – Building 11



Plate 13 – Building 11

12 – This building is still standing. From the cartographic evidence it is possible that this is a later extension to the mill building depicted on the OS 6" edition of 1848 (Fig. 6). It is part of the cotton mill complex depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1893-4 (Fig. 8).



Plate 14 – Building 12

13 – These buildings are no longer standing. The mapping sequence suggests that they had been subject to much alteration and additions over the years.



Plate 15 – Area to the south of building 13



Plate 16 – Building 13

The rest of the study area is currently open grassland and carparking.





Plate 17 – Car park to the north of building 6



Plate 18 – Grassed area to the north of building 5

## 7 DISCUSSION

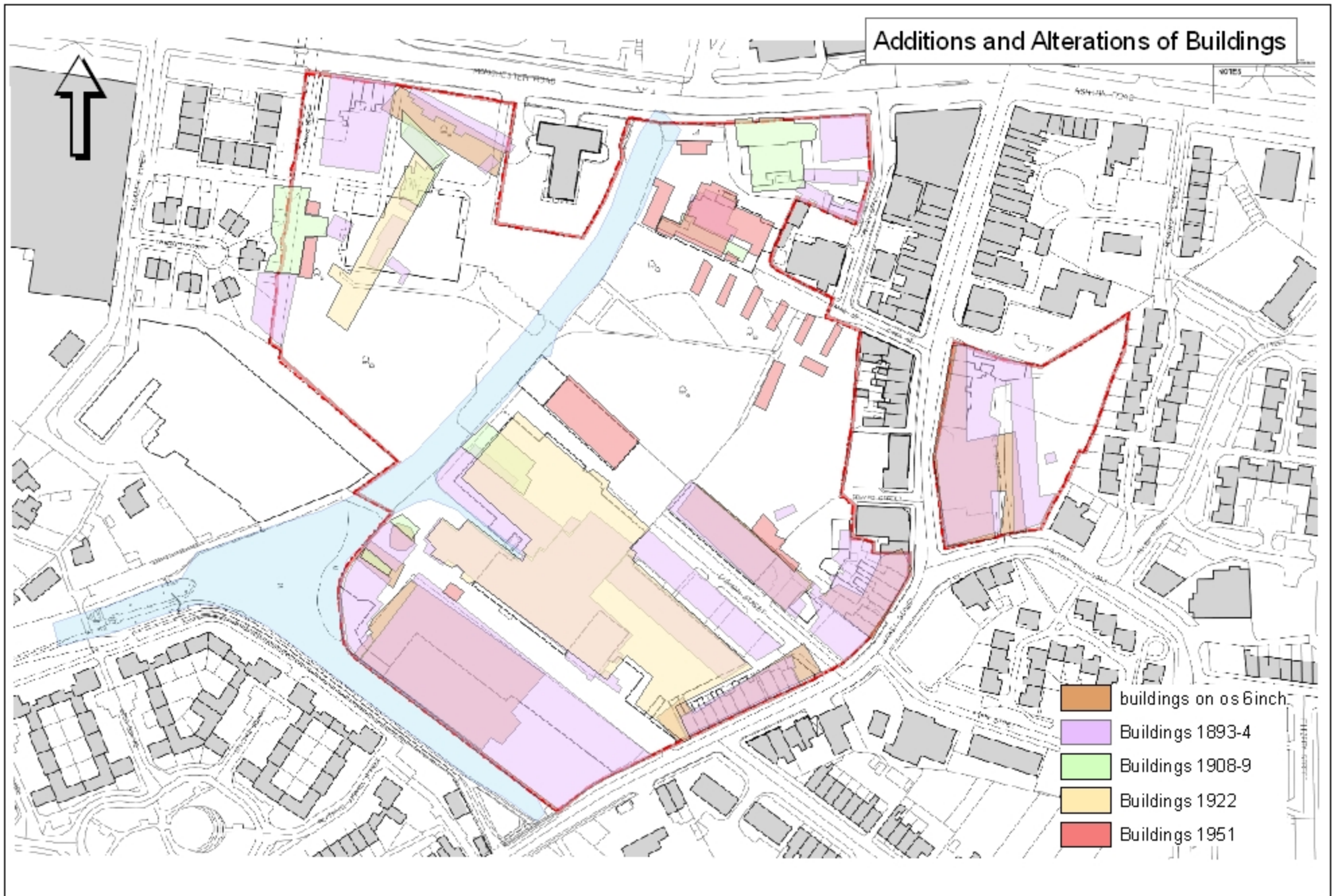
While there is evidence for several medieval and early post-medieval farmsteads and buildings in the area, none are known within the site. No features that might relate to the presence of deposits pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century were recorded. The earliest known activity within the site boundaries relates to buildings along the eastern edge of the main site, fronting Market Street. These are shown on Johnson's map of 1820 (Fig. 4), however buildings shown on maps of this period are typically schematic, and are likely to be indicative of the presence dwellings, rather than representing measured structures. There are also buildings identified fronting the road in the northwest of the study area. These buildings predate the development of the Droylsden Mill site adjacent to the canal. The buildings that are remaining in this area (Building 11 Fig. 2) are typically early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and some elements may be depicted on Johnson's map. However, a more precise date would require a detailed survey. Likewise, the foundations of the buildings to the south, (Building 10 Fig. 2), and to the north (Fig. 12) may have survived demolition provided the footings were not 'grubbed out'.

The main buildings associated with the first combined mill built in Droylsden have been demolished and replaced by more recent buildings. It may be possible that elements of the mill have been incorporated into the present buildings and there is the potential for earlier foundations, and the base of the steam engines and gasometer to survive as below-ground deposits. There is also the potential for below-ground archaeological structures such as crane bases and other canal related infrastructure that is not depicted on the maps to survive adjacent to the canal in areas where no buildings are present (Fig. 12).

Building 3 (Fig. 2) is still standing and has recently been used as a chapel. There is no graveyard associated with this chapel. However, this is not the same chapel building as depicted on the Ordnance Survey editions of 1848 (Fig. 6) and 1893 (Fig. 8). Given the limited space of the original chapel, and the subsequent phases of building (Fig. 12), the potential for the presence of human remains associated with the original chapel seems unlikely.

The former route of Water Lane is depicted across the northern extent of the study area on Johnson's map of 1820. This route was replaced by 1848 by the Ashton New Road (Fig. 6), however the buildings associated with Water lane are depicted on the Ordnance Survey of 1908 (Fig. 9) and appear to have been demolished within the following ten years. These would

# Additions and Alterations of Buildings



0 12.5 25 50 75 100  
Meters

Fig. 12



have lain to the north of Building 2 (Fig. 2), and it is possible that footings from these structures survive (Fig. 12).

It is possible that cellars and footings relating to the terraced housing along Durham Street also survive below more recent buildings. Although not industrial structures in their own right, workers housing of this period have an important contribution to make in understanding the history of the industrial period in a wider context. Like many other cities during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Greater Manchester area developed rapidly as cheap urban building projects were completed to house the labour for new industries. Much of this housing has now been demolished as part of slum clearance programs; however the cellars associated with these types of buildings have been highlighted as a possible resource (Newman and McNeil, 2005). The potential for the survival of cellars and footings in these areas is unknown as these may have been truncated by more recent development. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the engineering industry emerged from the cotton industry and it is possible that footings associated with the iron foundry and engineering works still remain.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project was commissioned by the Watkin Jones Group. Thanks are due to Watkin Jones for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also to Norman Redhead, Assistant County Archaeologist, who monitored the project for Greater Manchester Archaeology Unit. The assessment was undertaken by Eleanor Ramsey who produced the written report which was edited by Richard Cuttler who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## **9 SOURCES**

### **9.1 Primary Sources**

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<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/corpgen2/droyhistory.htm>

[http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/story/printer\\_friendly.asp?StoryUid=32&totSlides=20](http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/story/printer_friendly.asp?StoryUid=32&totSlides=20)

### **9.3 Cartographic Sources**

1786 Yates's Map of Lancashire

1805 John Wilson Plan of Droylsden Highways

1820 Johnson's Map of Manchester and its Environs

1829 Hennet's Map of Lancashire

1848 Ordnance Survey 6"

1893-4 Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500

1908-9 Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1:2500

1922 Ordnance Survey 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1:2500

1951-62 Ordnance Survey Edition 1:2500