

# birmingham archaeology

SOUTH CAR PARK AND  
SURROUNDING AREA,  
UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DESK-BASED  
ASSESSMENT  
2008

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



Project No. 1746

By

Eleanor Ramsey

For

The Estate Management Office  
The University of Birmingham

*For further information please contact:*

Alex Jones (Director)  
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](mailto:bham-arch@bham.ac.uk)  
Web Address: <http://www.barch.bham.ac.uk/bufau>

**SOUTH CAR PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**  
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2008**

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## **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out in January 2008 for the South Car Park and surrounding area at the University of Birmingham (centred on NGR SP 0505 8337) in advance of considering options for the redevelopment of the area. The assessment was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology on instruction from the Estate Management Office of the University of Birmingham. The site is located at the corner of Bristol Road and Edgbaston Park Road.*

*There is no evidence recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record for any activity in the area prior to the post-medieval period, though sites of all periods have been recorded elsewhere on the University Campus. The study area is located in the vicinity of the Bourne Brook, so there is the potential for burnt mounds to be present within the study area in undisturbed areas.*

*Cartographic evidence suggests the site was undeveloped until the 20th century. The first recorded landuse within study area boundary is of tennis courts and allotment gardens, which were replaced by a large multi-storey car park and open car park sometime before 1970.*

*It is likely that within the majority of the site, the construction of the former multi-storey car park has truncated any archaeological deposits.*

## **SOUTH CAR PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

### **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2008**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In January 2008 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the south car park and surrounding area, University of Birmingham (hereafter referred to as the study area, Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the Estate Management Office of the University of Birmingham in advance of considering options for redevelopment.

This report outlines the results of the assessment, which was carried out in January 2008, and which was prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (IFA 1999).

The assessment conformed to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2008, Appendix 1) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

#### **2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY**

The study area is located to the south of the University Campus at the corner of Bristol Road and Edgbaston Park Road, Edgbaston, and is centred on NGR SP 0505 8337 (Fig. 2). The development area comprises approximately 1.5 hectares and includes the former car park and its environs. An area of 100m from this boundary has been included in this assessment in order to show features recorded outside the study area, but which may continue within it.

The Birmingham Fault crosses directly through the study area from northeast to southwest, with underlying geology of Bromsgrove Sandstone to the north and Mercia Mudstone to the south. The drift geology comprises alluvial deposits that may be present to the south of the site within the adjoining area.

The Bourne Brook flows west to east to the south of the study area.

The present character of the study area is open car park with grassed areas, roads and pathways, with evidence of landscaping and a model mine to the west.

#### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

More specific aims were to:

- Identify any archaeological constraints so they can be considered at an early stage in the design process.

This information will be used to inform a mitigation strategy for future archaeological work on the site (see Section 8 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 Birmingham Central Library and the Library of the University of Birmingham. The Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record, the main source of archaeological information for the city was also consulted (Figs. 3 and 4).

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**

There are no recorded entries on the Sites and Monuments Record that are present within the study area. There are no listed buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the study area. There are a few entries listed in the vicinity of the study area. The study area is adjacent to the southwestern boundary of the Edgbaston Conservation Area (Figs. 3 and 4).

### **5.1 Prehistoric**

There are no recorded entries within vicinity of the study area on the Sites and Monuments Record for this period. However, there is perhaps some potential for burnt mounds to be located in the vicinity of the Bourne Brook 50m – 100m to the south of the study area. South Birmingham is an area which has produced evidence for a significant concentration of these Bronze Age monuments, which are important in themselves, and as an indicator of contemporary settlement (Hodder 2004). Three burnt mounds were identified in proximity to the Bourne Brook approximately 1km to the west of the study area. These were revealed in 1988 during clearance works on Vincent Drive for the Psychiatric Hospital (SMR 01682 not illustrated).

### **5.2 Roman**

There are no recorded entries within the vicinity of the study area recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record for this period. Approximately 500m to the west are the Roman Forts at Metchley, Scheduled Ancient Monument 31520 (Fig. 3). These forts were occupied from the mid 1st century to the 2nd century, and had a *vicus* on the west side (SMR 02005, SMR 05611 not illustrated).

The presence of the forts means that in Roman times Edgbaston was the most important place in the Birmingham region. Three roads led to and from the forts, including Ryknield Street. This road was aligned roughly north south through this area, with a third road approaching Metchley from the south-west (Slater 2002). None of the roads are in the vicinity of the study area.

### **5.3 Anglo-Saxon**

There are no recorded entries within the vicinity of the study area on the Sites and Monuments Record for this period. An Anglo-Saxon spearhead dating to the 10th or 11th century was

found during sewer works in 1977 in the vicinity of Harrisons Road, approximately 1.3km to the northwest of the study area (SMR 20204 not illustrated).

The name Edgbaston itself is derived from a farmer's personal name *Ecgbeald*, and means Ecgneald's farm, which is possibly located in the area of Edgbaston Hall (Slater 2002, 5).

#### 5.4 Medieval

There are no recorded entries within the vicinity of the study area on the Sites and Monuments Record for this period. The site abuts the Edgbaston Conservation Area, which includes Edgbaston Hall Park (SMR 03951 not illustrated). Much of the park is currently used as a golf course, however, within the park are remnants of ridge and furrow likely to be of medieval origin (SMR 20394 not illustrated) and a series of lynchets probably of a similar date (SMR 20395 not illustrated). A number of fishponds or stews (SMR 20396 not illustrated) along with Edgbaston Pool (SMR 20590 not illustrated) are also likely to be medieval.

(<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/conservationareas.bcc>).

Edgbaston is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as granted to William, son of Ansculf, together with most of the surrounding manors in Warwickshire and Staffordshire, including Birmingham. The land first passed to the Barony of Dudley, and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century came under the lordship of the de Birmingham family. The chapel (St Bartholomew's Church) was built sometime in the 1270s beside the manor, approximately 1.5km to the northeast of the study area (Slater 2002, 7).

#### 5.5 Post-medieval

Sites recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record that are present within the 100m zone around the study area comprise University House to the northeast (Grade II Statutorily Listed Building No. 390, Fig. 4) and the Great Hall and Quadrant Range to the northwest (Grade II\* Statutorily Listed Building No. 1209, Fig. 4).

The study area is adjacent to the Edgbaston Conservation Area (Figs. 3 and 4).

Outside the 100m zone is an 18th century bronze equestrian of King George I attributed to J van Ost the Elder, located approximately 200m to the north of the study area (SMR 03796; Grade II Statutorily Listed Building No. 1212, Fig. 4). Also outside the zone is the Barber Institute (SMR 01386; Grade II Statutorily Listed Building No. 1210; Figs 4), a Grade II listed building which was designed by architect Robert Atkinson and completed in 1939.

Edgbaston Hall Park lies to the northeast within the Edgbaston Conservation Area. This park is a late 18th century landscaped park which is now used as a golf course (SMR 03951 not illustrated). It is within the Edgbaston Conservation Area 15 (Fig. 3), an area described as 'characteristically green, exclusive and suburban, the nature of its development primarily, though not now wholly, residential.'

(<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/conservationareas.bcc>)

In around 1772 the route of the Birmingham to Bristol turnpike road was altered and now ran along the line of the present Bristol Road. It joined the old road at a point near the present junction of Edgbaston Park Road (<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/conservationareas.bcc>)

## 6 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

The earliest map consulted was the 1701 survey of the Lordship of Edgbaston by William Deeley (not illustrated). Although the study area lies just outside the area mapped, it does show the route of the former road that ran from Birmingham to the east before it was turnpiked. A map of the Parliamentary Boundaries of the Borough of Birmingham 1832 possibly shows a building on the corner of Edgbaston Park Road and Bristol Road, with a small stream coming off the Bourne Brook linked with Edgbaston Pool (not illustrated). The Gun Barrels Public House is annotated as Gun Barrel Grinder Tavern on Guests Map of 1855 (not illustrated).

Blood's map of 1857 shows both the public house and the stream that runs roughly parallel to the Bristol Road. There is little development in the area as a whole, though residential development can be seen to be creeping along the Bristol Road from the city centre (Fig. 5).

The Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (Fig. 6) shows the study area as open fields close to the corner of Bristol Road and Edgbaston Park Road. To the south is the Gun Barrels Inn, a T-shaped building with outbuildings to the north. The area to the west described as a rifle range. A gravel pit is located to the north of the study area. The line of the stream close to the road is no longer present, and has likely been diverted or culverted by this point.

By the Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition in 1904 (Fig. 7), much of Selly Oak was developed with terrace housing, though the study area itself shows no change from the earlier mapping. University Road is present running westwards from Edgbaston Park Road.

By 1918 (Fig. 8) the Great Hall and Quadrant Range, Chamberlain Tower and University House had all been constructed. The gravel pit identified on earlier maps is now annotated Old Gravel pits, with a second gravel pit present to the north of the Great Hall, possibly used in the construction of the University itself. There is evidence of landscaping adjacent to the Great Hall, and to the west of the Study Area in the area of the previous rifle range. There are more buildings constructed to the north of the Gun Barrels Inn, though in the study area there is still no development.

By the 4th Edition Ordnance Survey (Fig. 9) substantial amounts of development had taken place around the area, and the study area was now turned into tennis courts and allotment gardens (annotated on later maps), with a bowling green immediately to the west of the Gun Barrels Inn. By 1957 a small building had been erected at the eastern extent of the tennis courts (Fig. 10), and by 1970 a multi-storey car park occupied the site (Fig. 11).

The Gun Barrels Public House remained essentially unaltered at least until this date. The current building is a modern building on the site of the original inn.

## 7 WALKOVER SURVEY

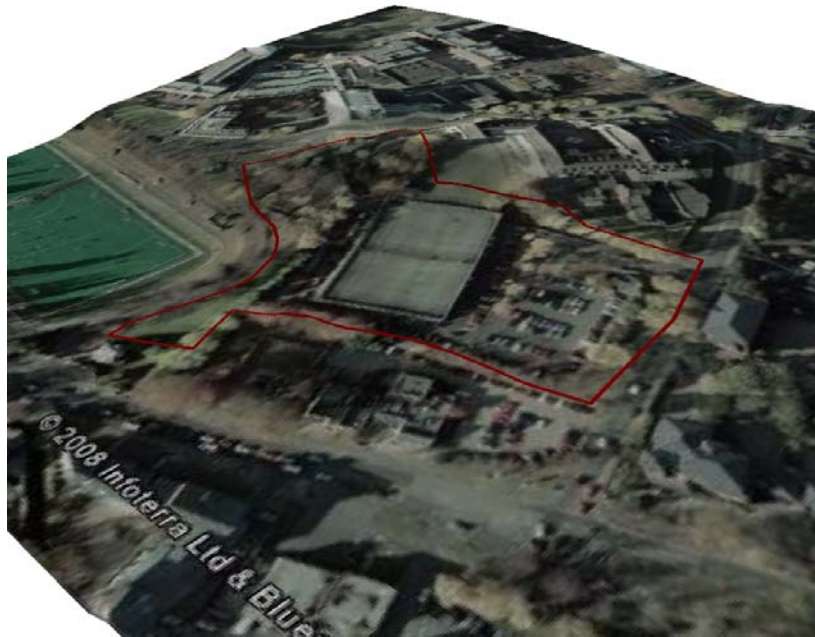


Plate 1 – The study area looking northwest  
Vertical Exaggeration x 2 (see also Fig. 12)

The walkover survey identified the extent of truncation in the area of the site that had formerly been the multi-storey car park. The ground level of the car park in this area is significantly below the ground level of the area surrounding it to the north, and also below the ground level to the east and west, suggesting in areas massive truncation prior to the construction of the car park. Clearly, no archaeological deposits would have survived this levelling-down.



Plate 2 Area of previous multi-storey car park looking southeast



Plate 3 Area of previous multi-storey car park (on the right) looking south

The car park area to the east adjacent to Edgbaston Park Road is of a similar level to the road itself, and may suggest that little truncation has taken place in this area.



Plate 4 – Car park adjacent to Edgbaston Park Road looking southwest

Outside the study area it was noted that the area of the Gun Barrels Public House, beer garden and former bowling green is lower than the southern end of the car park, suggesting either this area was terraced down to create the flat bowling green, or the southern end of the car park was built up.





Plate 5 Outside the study area - Gun Barrels beer garden and former bowling green looking southwest

The area to the west of the demolished multi-storey car park is also landscaped with paths, roads and grassed areas, though it is difficult to say which areas have been built up and which areas have been truncated down.



Plate 6 Area to the west of the previous multi-storey car park looking south

The extent of the model mine in the area was not ascertained, though it is possible it has caused severe truncation in places.





Plate 7 Top of model mine



Plate 8 Model mine shaft

## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly unlikely that there are any archaeological remains surviving within the area of the previous multi-storey car park. There is the potential for burnt mounds and environmental deposits to be present outside this area associated with the previous course of the Bourne Brook in areas where no truncation has occurred. It is therefore suggested that no archaeological mitigation would be required for the majority of the study area, though an archaeological watching brief may be required by Birmingham City Council for areas surrounding the previous multi-storey car park.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by the Estate Management Office of The University of Birmingham. Thanks go to Dr Mike Hodder, Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham City Council. The assessment was undertaken by Eleanor Ramsey who produced the written report. The report was edited by Alex Jones who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

## 10 SOURCES

### 10.1 Secondary Sources

Birmingham Archaeology 2008 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: South Car Park and Surrounding Area, University of Birmingham*

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*

Hodder, M, 2004 *Birmingham: The Hidden History*

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*, rev. edn.

Slater, T. 2002 *Edgbaston: A History*

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/conservationareas.bcc> Last accessed 30/01/2008

## **10.2 Cartographic Sources**

1701 Survey of the Lordship of Edgbaston by William Deeley

1832 Map of the Parliamentary Boundaries of the Borough of Birmingham

1855 Guest's Map of Birmingham

1857 Blood's map of Birmingham

1890 Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500

1904 Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1:2500

1916-18 Ordnance Survey 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1:2500

1937-1939 Ordnance Survey 4<sup>th</sup> Edition 1:2500

1957 Ordnance Survey Edition 1:2500

1970 Ordnance Survey Edition 1:2500

Google Earth Image © Infoterra Ltd and Bluesky

## **Appendix 1 – Written Scheme of Investigation**

## **WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT**

### **SITE NAME: SOUTH CAR PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

#### **PART 1: PROJECT SPECIFIC**

##### **1.0: PLANNING BACKGROUND**

The Estate Management Office of the University of Birmingham are currently considering options for the redevelopment of the former South Car Park area, and its immediate surrounds.

##### **2.0: LOCATION**

The extent of the proposed development is shown on the attached plan. For completeness, the desk-based assessment will also include consideration of those recorded archaeological sites located within 100m of the present site boundary.

##### **3.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

No archaeological information is currently available. It is suspected that below-ground archaeological deposits will have been scoured out in the area of the former South Car Park, although some archaeological deposits may survive in the adjoining area.

##### **4.0: SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

The purpose of the archaeological desk-based assessment is to identify any archaeological constraints, so that these can be considered at an early stage in the design process.

##### **5.0: STAFFING**

The project manager will be Alex Jones and the researcher/report author will be Eleanor Ramsey.

## **PART 2: GENERAL**

### **A: AIMS**

The general aim of an archaeological desk-based assessment is to collate existing archaeological and historic information relating to a proposed development site and its immediate environs, to enable informed decisions to be taken regarding any further archaeological input which may be required as a proposed development proceeds through the planning process.

### **11 B: SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY**

A walk-over survey would be undertaken (within the University Campus only) to check the possible impacts of present land-use on zones of archaeological potential. The walk-over will also enable surface features such as upstanding earthworks to be identified, photographed and sketch-plotted.

The following sources will be consulted:

- The relevant Historic Environment Record (HER), including aerial photographs available in the HER
- Historic maps and documents available in the County/Borough Record Office
- Published secondary archaeological and historical information
- Published data available in the Local Studies Library
- Geotechnical data

Aerial photographs held in other collections will not be consulted or re-plotted.

### **12 C: REPORT FORMAT**

The desk-based assessment report will contain:

- An introduction to the project, including a definition of the assessment scope and sources consulted.
- Description of the archaeological context of the proposed development site.
- Description of the archaeological potential of the proposed development site, including site conditions and features of possible interest, noted during the walkover survey
- Assessment of the archaeological potential of the proposed development site, identifying any zones of archaeological, or possible archaeological potential
- Proposals for further archaeological work (if appropriate)
- A simplified plan showing the location of features of possible interest identified during the walkover survey (if applicable)
- A selection of historic maps
- A plan showing possible zones of archaeological potential (if applicable)
- Colour plates showing the current land use

### **13 D: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

- Birmingham Archaeology is a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA)
- All Birmingham Archaeology staff will follow the Code of Conduct of the IFA at all times.
- The desk-based assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the standards laid down in the 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments' (1999)
- The desk-based assessment will follow the specific guidelines and requirements laid down in the Design Brief prepared by the relevant Planning Archaeologist (if prepared).

### **14 E: HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- A Risk Assessment will be undertaken before commencement of the walkover survey.





Fig. 1



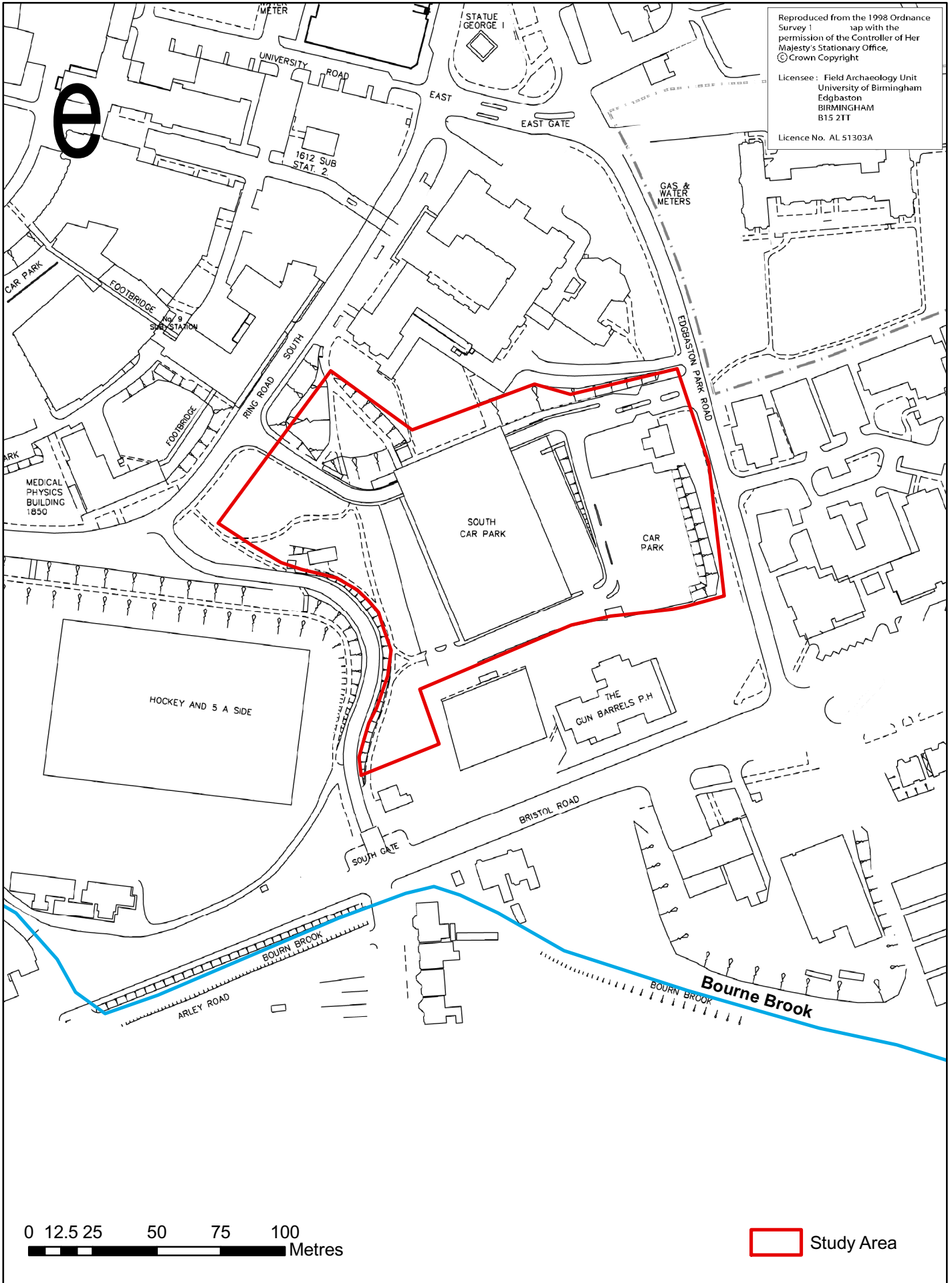


Fig. 2



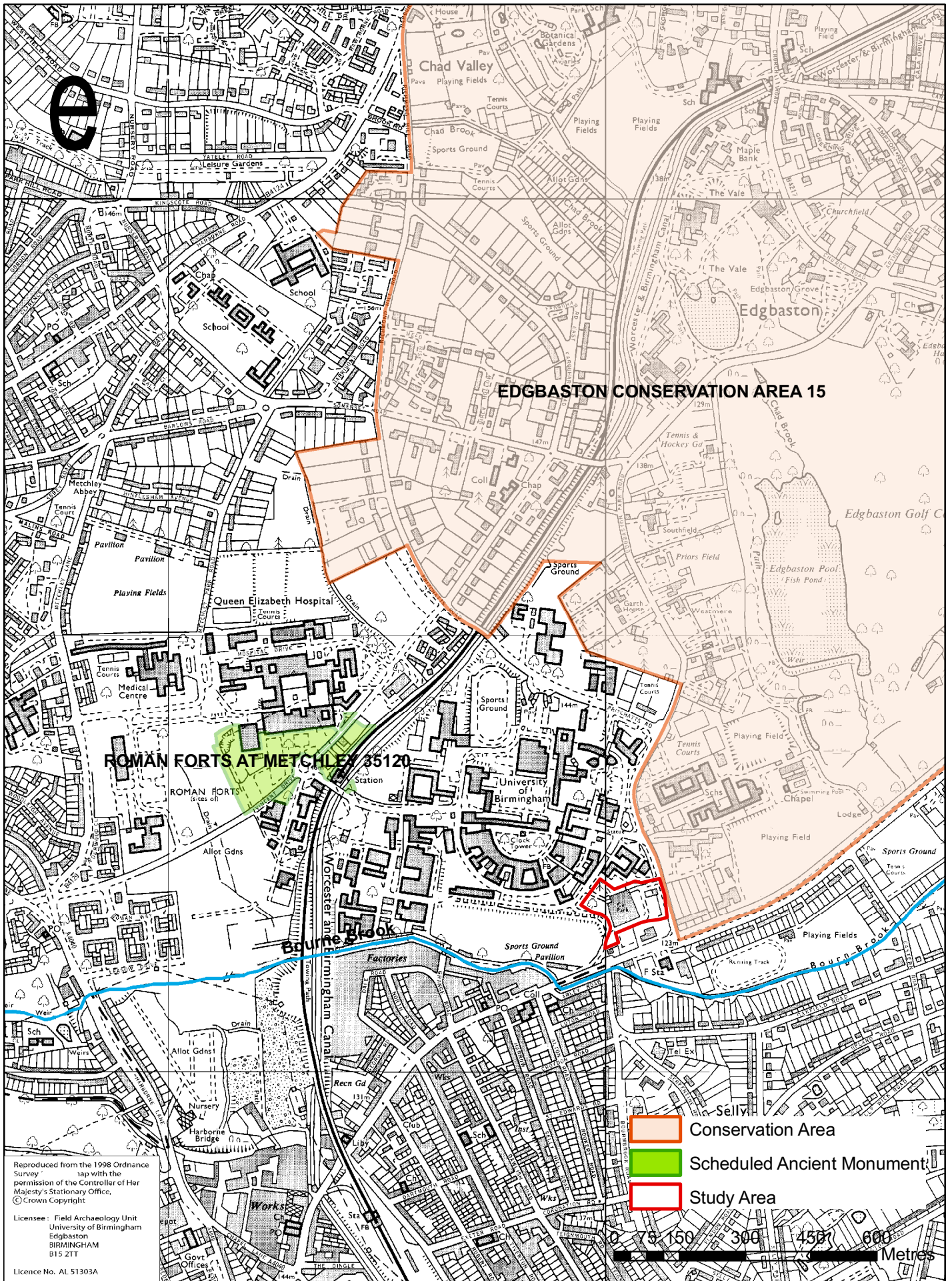
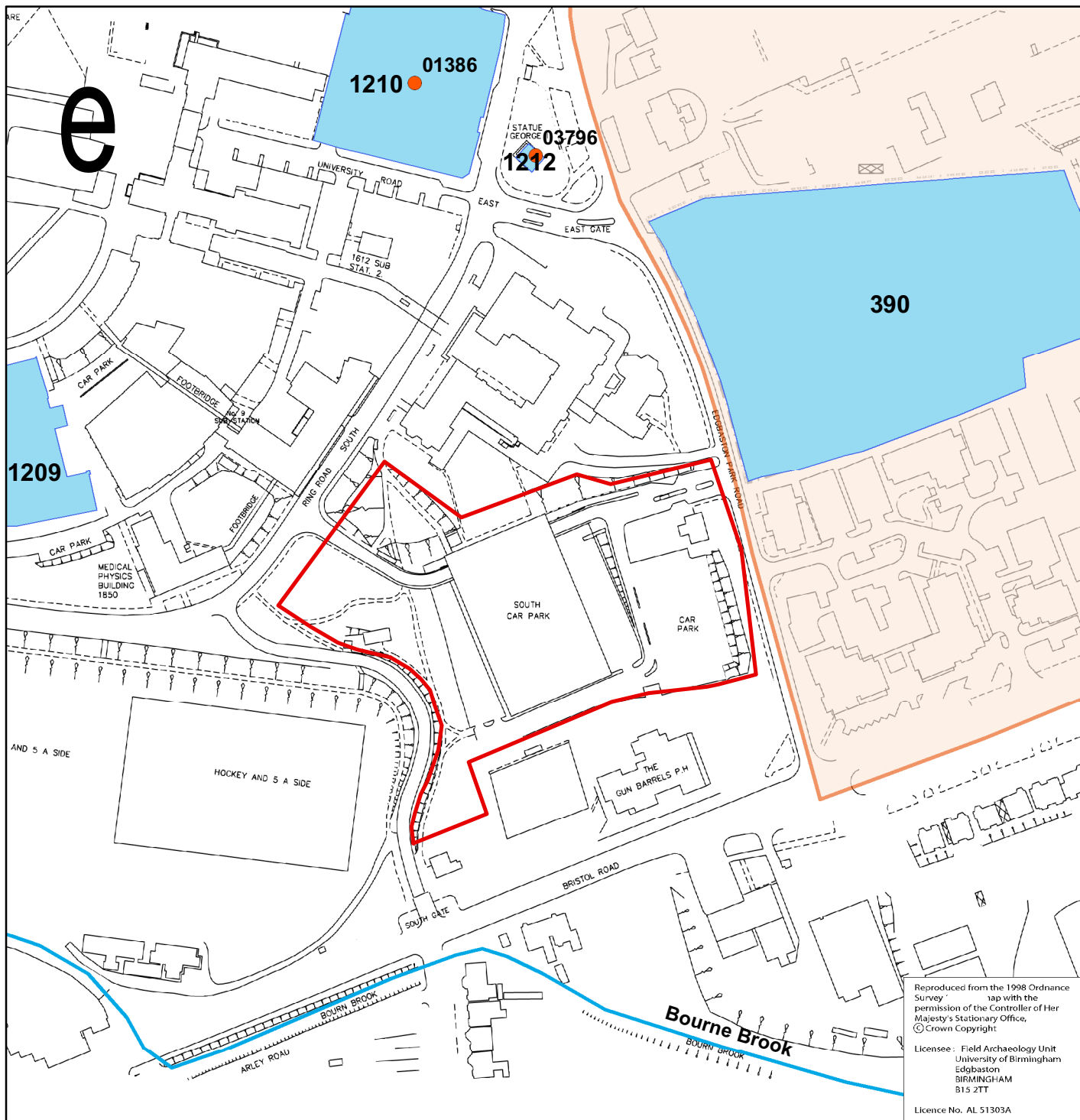


Fig. 3



0 15 30 60 90 120 Metres

- Statorily Listed Buildings
- Conservation Area
- SMR Point
- Study Area

Fig. 4



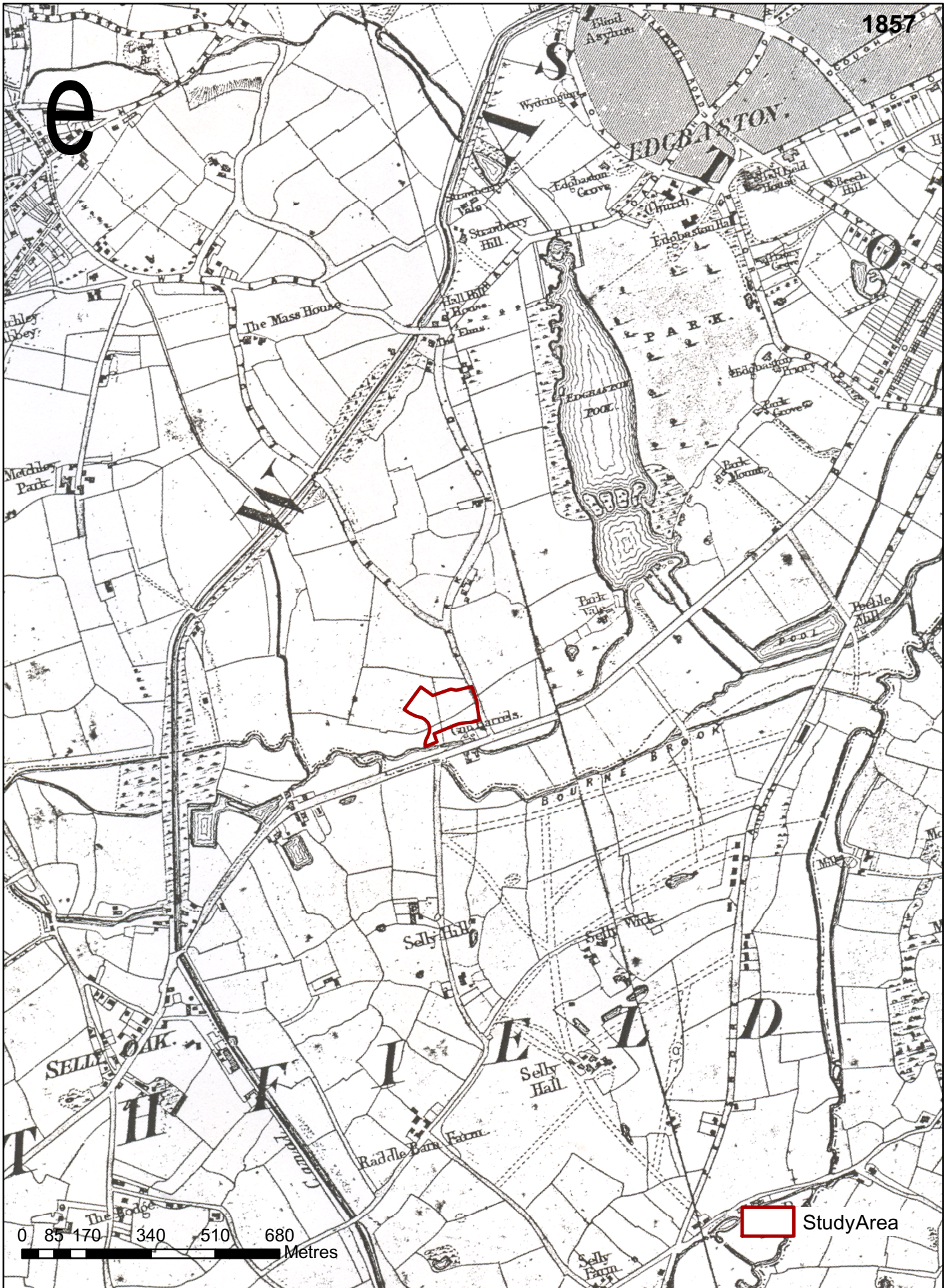


Fig. 5



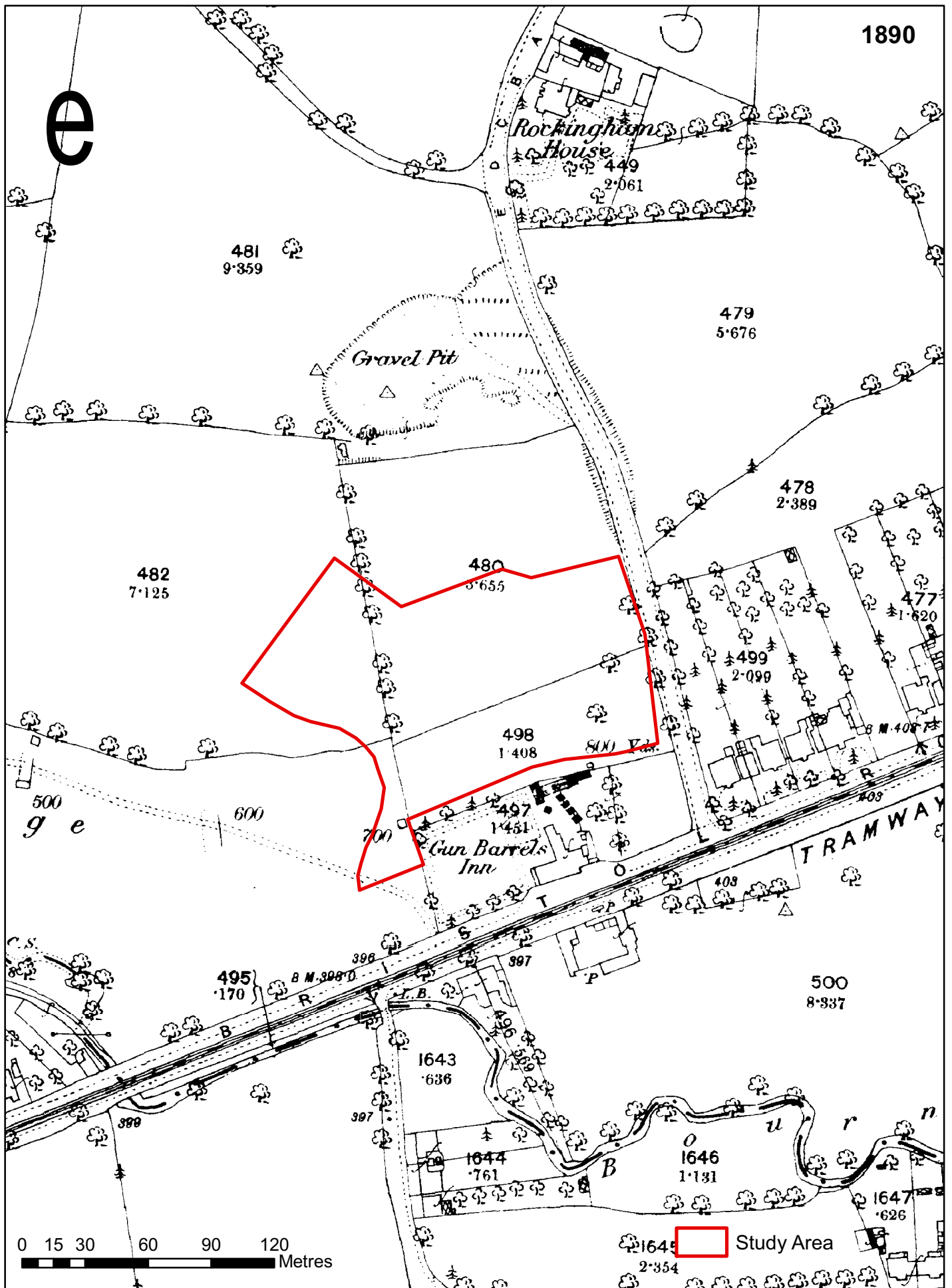


Fig. 6

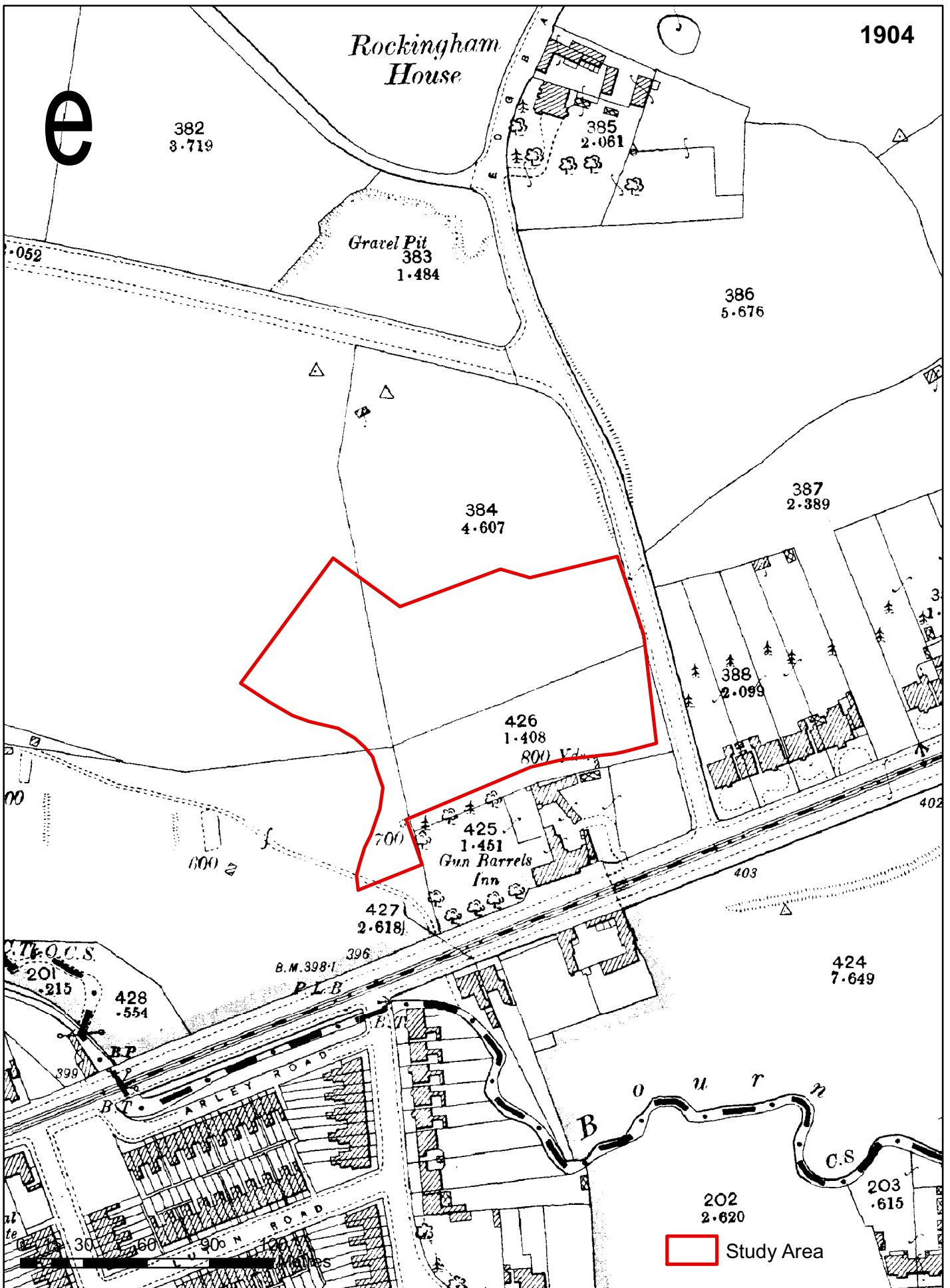


Fig. 7

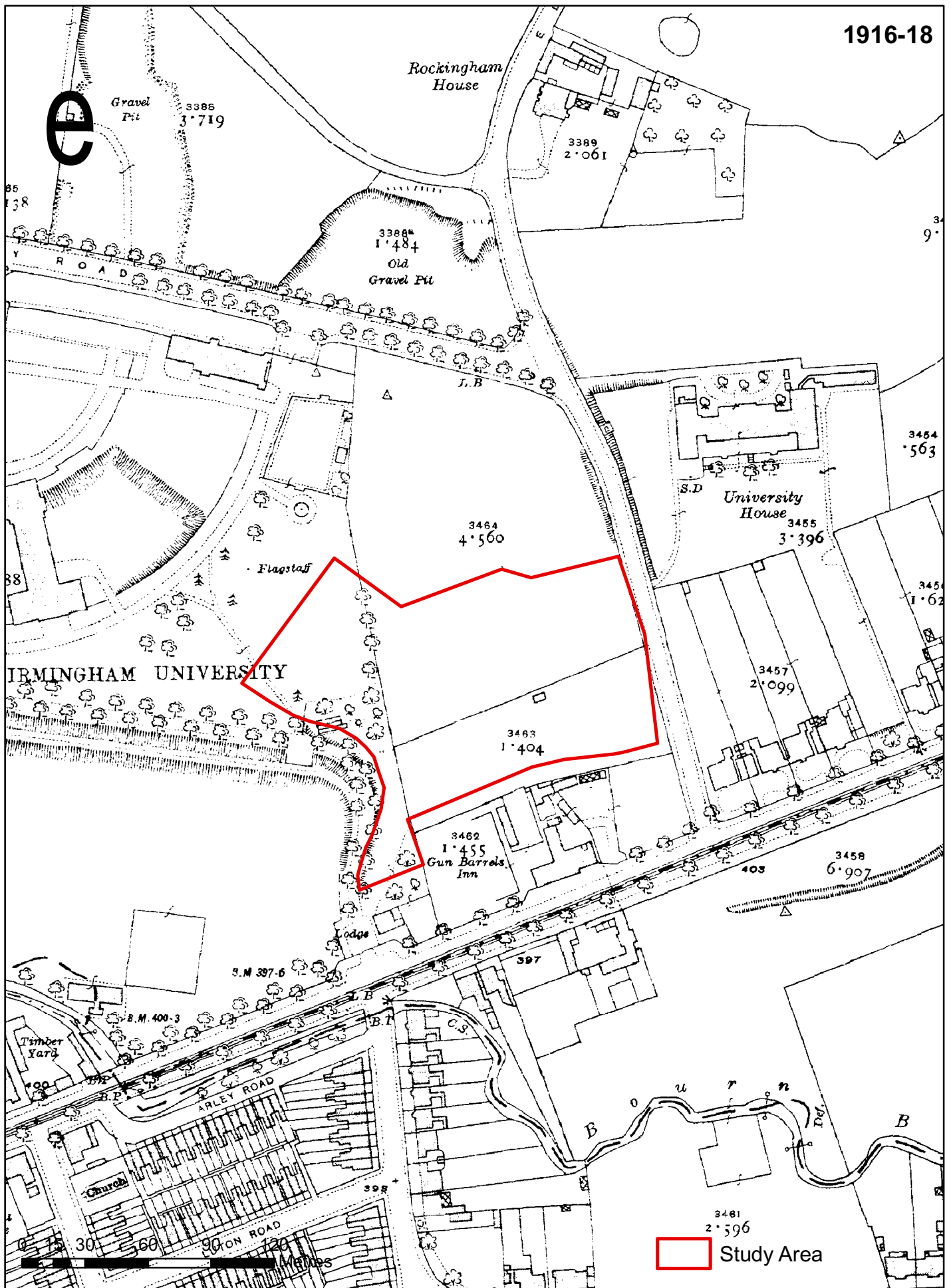


Fig. 8

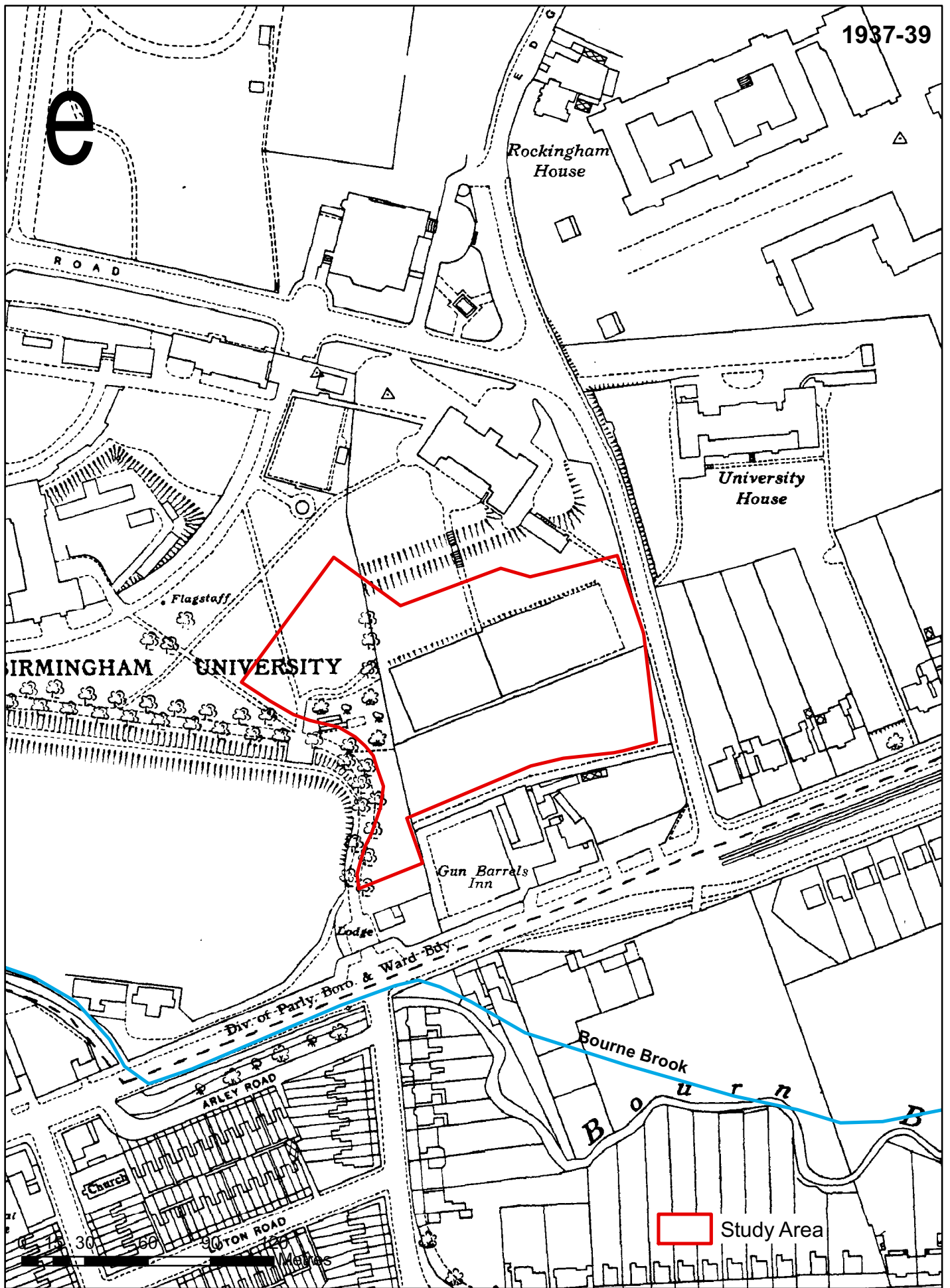


Fig. 9



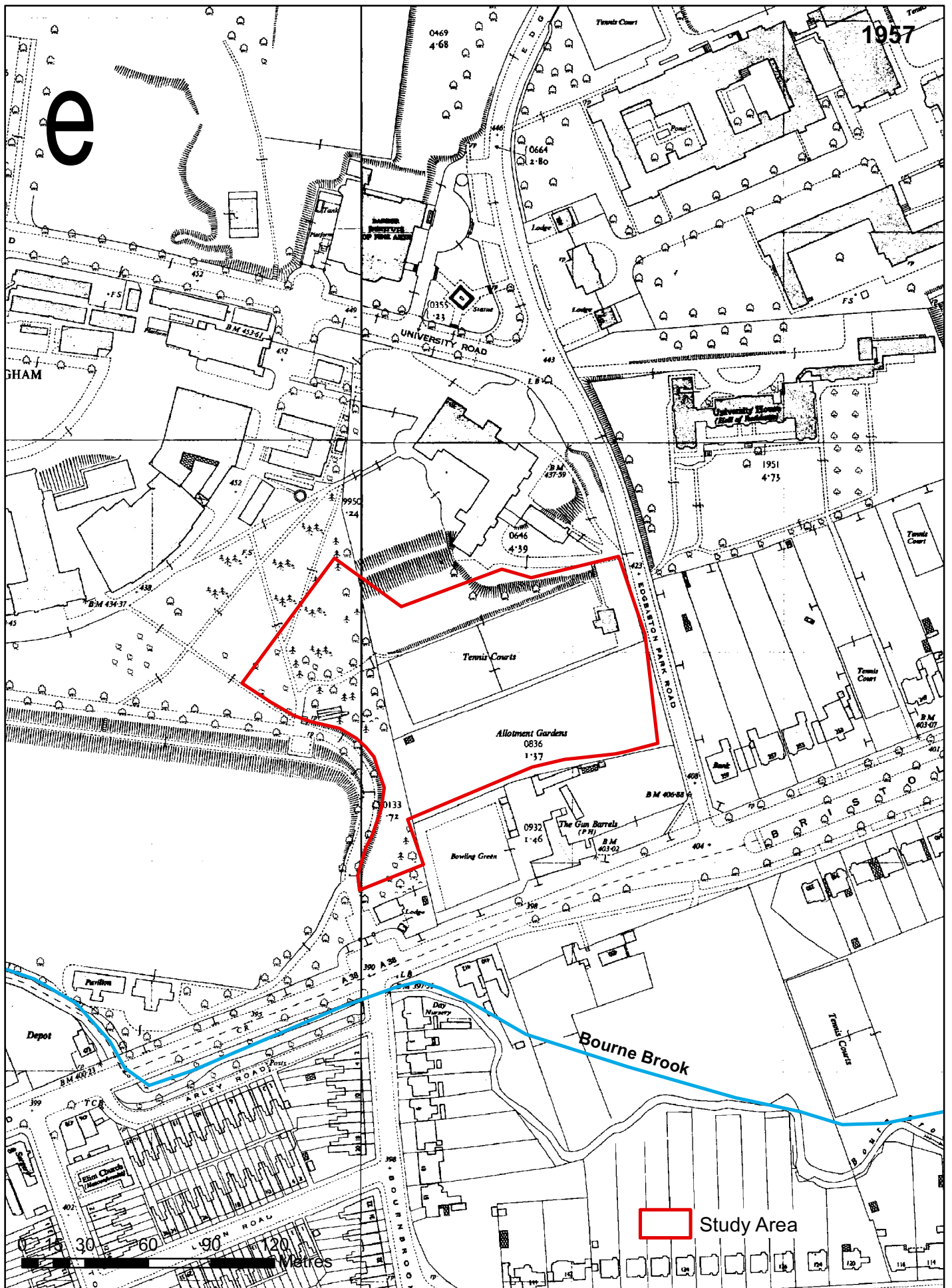


Fig. 10



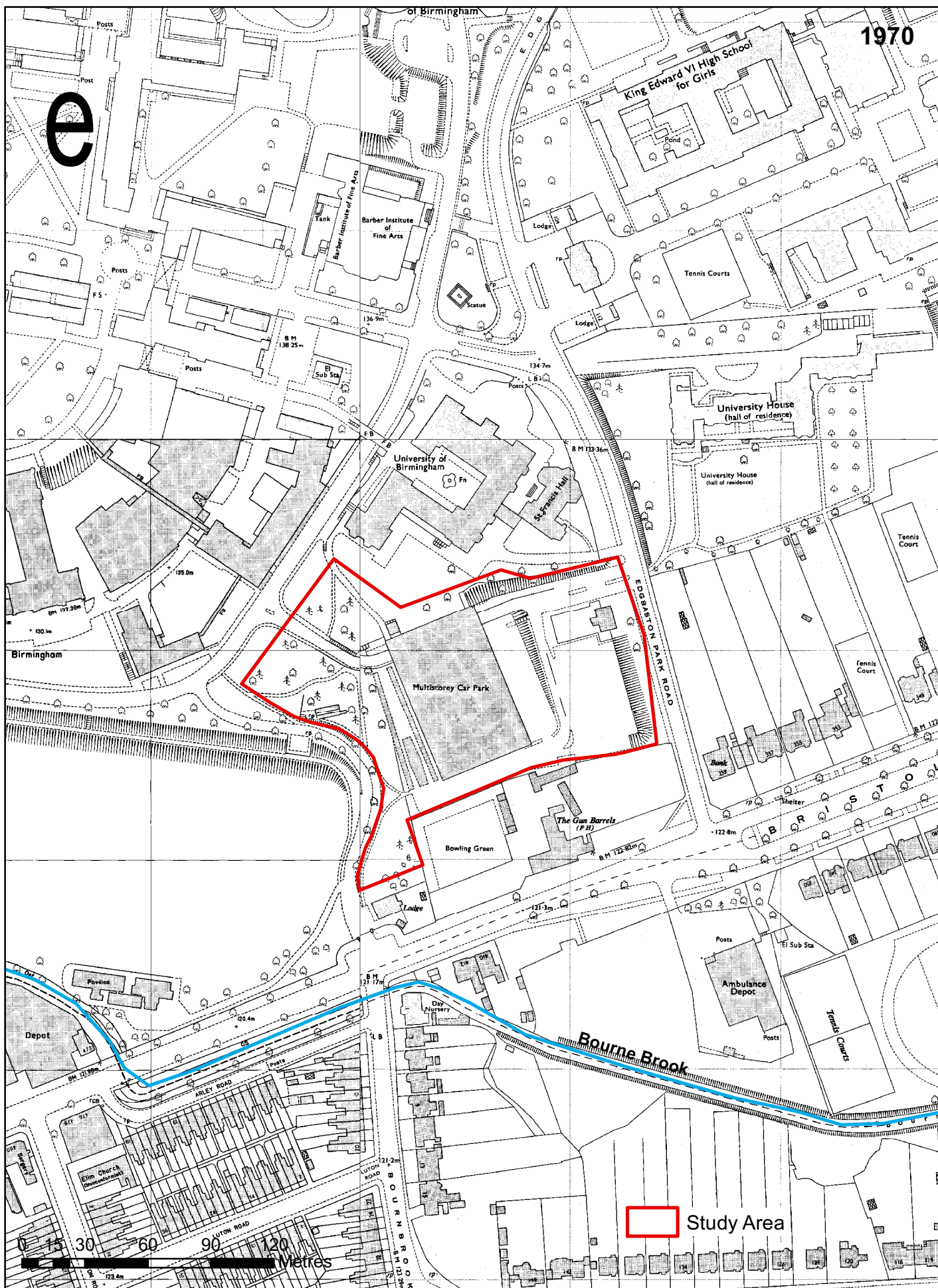


Fig. 11

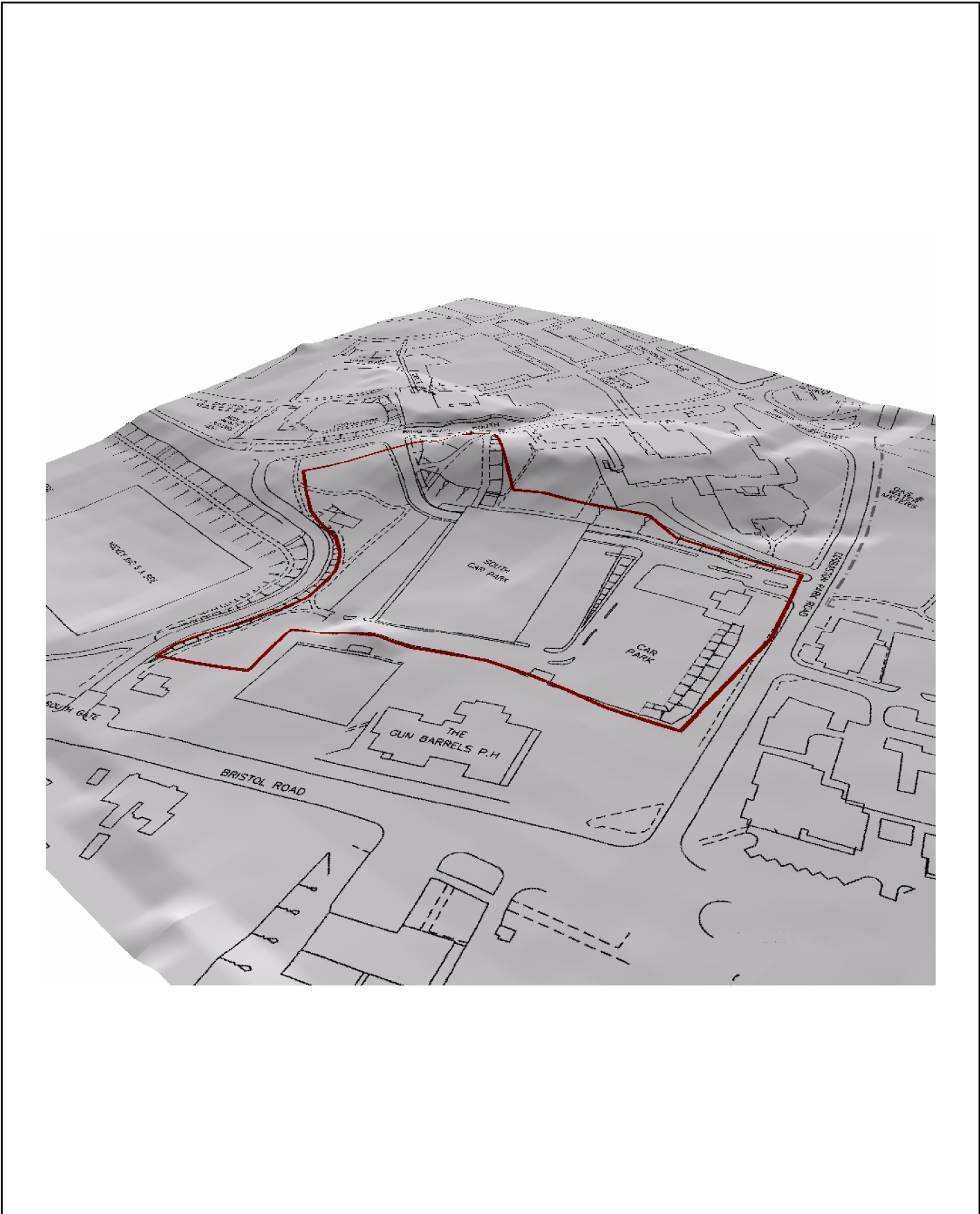


Fig. 12