

birmingham archaeology

Cinderford Pipe Bridge
Rehabilitation, Gloucestershire

An Archaeological Desk-Based
Assessment
2006

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Cinderford Pipe Bridge Rehabilitation, Gloucestershire

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment 2006

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For

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CINDERFORD PIPE BRIDGE REHABILITATION, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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SUMMARY

In November 2006, Birmingham Archaeology carried out a desk-based assessment of land along the course of Cinderford Pipe Bridge, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 648 138). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water in order to highlight the archaeological implications of the proposed rehabilitation of the pipeline. A search was made of all readily available published and unpublished documentary records, including maps, illustrations and archaeological and geotechnic records, primarily at Gloucestershire County Records Office. Gloucester County Sites and Monuments Record were 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. The assessment revealed an area that succinctly exhibits the development of railway transport in the Forest of Dean area. There were a number of industrial enterprises in the vicinity of the study area, these were instrumental in the adoption and development of the transport infrastructure, which initially started as tramroads, developed into tramways, and later into rail tracks. Numerous footpaths (on the site of former tracks) and embankments in the study area are related to these transportation enterprises. Letcher's Bridge, a 19th-century tramway bridge is also extant in the study area. It has been recommended that any future work at the study area should take into account the presence of these relict industrial features.

CINDERFORD PIPE BRIDGE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2006.

1 INTRODUCTION

In November/December 2006 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the area along the course of the Cinderford Pipe Bridge, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd in advance of a proposed rehabilitation of the pipeline.

This report outlines the results of the assessment, which was carried out between the 27th of November and the 1st of December 2006, 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 brief produced by Gloucestershire County Council (Appendix 1), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2006) (Appendix 2), 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) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (DoE 1994).

2 SITE LOCATION

The study area is located at Bilson Green, in the Forest of Dean, on the Western Edge of Cinderford, Gloucestershire. It forms an irregular area of approximately 0.5 hectares centred on NGR SO 648 138, which is traversed by the east-west pipeline (Figs. 2 and 3) (Plate 1).

The underlying geology consists of coal measures.

The present character of the study area is of grassland, marshland, and scrubland, interspersed with a network of footpaths, pathways, and embankments, which form part of Cinderford Linear Park. These, in the main, delineate former tramroads and railway tracks. Cinderford/Soudley Brook flows through the eastern section of the site. An east-west pipeline traverses the site on a former railway embankment. The study area is bounded to the east by the Forest Vale industrial estate. To the northeast are the Cinderford Sewage Works, which partially lie within the area of interest. To the southeast is a scrap yard, which encompasses Oaklands House, the 19th- century station master's house. To the north and south is the Cinderford Linear Park amenity area, whilst the Forest of Dean bounds the study area to the east.

3 OBJECTIVES

The overall objective was to define the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development, so that the archaeological implications of the proposed work could be assessed. This information will then be used to inform the design and decision-making process.

4 METHODS

A search was made of all readily available published and unpublished documentary records, including maps, illustrations and archaeological and geotechnic records, primarily at Gloucestershire County Records Office. Gloucestershire County Sites and Monuments Record were 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 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Forest of Dean area has a long history of human occupation and exploitation. Iron Age hillforts and Roman settlements attest to the attractiveness of the natural resources of the area. Iron ore, ochre, and charcoal were all extracted and exploited historically. The Tudors used the forest exclusively as Royal hunting grounds, and little development was allowed to take place. The forest authorities strove to protect the Royal Demesne from interlopers intent on utilising its resources. Unauthorised cabin settlements grew up in the 18th century. These “encroachment” cottages were occupied by “ironworkers, charcoal burners, and others while their operations were in progress or until they were expelled by the forest authorities” (Herbert 1996, 300). Permanent villages and hamlets grew out of these illegal settlements, and numerous collieries, ironworks, and associated industries developed. These operations reached their zenith in the 19th century when they “spawned an intricate network of tramroads and railways” (Herbert 1996, 326), which enabled them to transport their produce throughout the region. It was at this time when the first town in the forest, Cinderford, developed.

Cinderford is the largest town in west Gloucestershire. It took its name, first recorded in 1258, from the slag of early ironworks in the area (Smith 1964, 217). This onomastic evidence suggests that iron ore has been mined and smelted in the Cinderford area from at least the mid 13th century. The river ford, which forms the suffix of the town’s name, was replaced by a bridge in 1674, during improvements in the area www.aboutbritain.com/towns/cinderford.asp. A Bronze Age axehead found at the Steam Mills area of Cinderford, to the northeast of the study area, suggests that the district was populated in prehistoric times (Forest of Dean Newspaper 1993, 10).

The Cinderford Ironworks at Bilson Green, which had the “first coal fired iron furnace to be built in the forest”, opened in 1795, proved to be the chief reason for the development of Cinderford in the early 19th century (The Forest of Dean Newspaper 1993, 10). The town developed “almost haphazardly as a settlement for colliery and iron foundry workers” (Verey and Brooks 2002, 304). The ironworks, coal, and iron mining industries, provided a stimulus for employment and housing development, and the nucleus of the town was laid out in the mid 1800s “on a fairly conventional plan” (Herbert 1996, 293). Coal was the principal industry, and collieries could be found on each side of the study area (Fig. 4). Foxes Bridge Colliery (early 19th-century) was to the south, Bilson Colliery (early to mid 19th century) to the north (SMR 12340, Fig. 3), Crump Meadow (early 19th century) and Lightmoor (1823) Collieries to the west, and Prospect Deep Coal Pit (late 19th century) within the southeast corner of the site (SMR 10710, Fig. 3). Furthermore a forge, which was standing idle, to the southeast of the study area, was acquired by James Russell in 1856 and became known as Forest Vale Ironworks (Herbert 1996, 343).

As industry developed and evolved in this area of Dean, new and improved methods of transportation of the extracted and manufactured product were also developed (Fig. 5). The

study area with its proliferation of tramroads, tramways, and railway lines gives an interesting insight into the development of this transport infrastructure in the 19th- century. Horse worked cast-iron tramroads were first proposed and mooted in the early 1800s as a means to transport coal to the pre-existing canal system (Paar 1965 18) (Hart 1971, 395). The second of these to be constructed in the Forest of Dean area, the Bullo Pill tramway, was laid between the Cinderford Valley and the Severn (Finberg 1975, 115). This was established between 1808 and 1809, and was mostly privately funded by the owners of the Crump Meadow Colliery and the Lightmoor Colliery. These tramroads were “tracks composed of L-type tram plates, for the passage of horse-drawn waggons with flangeless wheels” (Hart 1971, 333). These developments led to a widespread integration of industry and transport interests in the area, firstly with tramroads, then tramways, and subsequently railways. Incidentally, the study area exhibits all three of these developments. The Bullo Pill tramroad was renamed the Forest of Dean Tramroad in 1826. It was purchased by the South Wales Railway in 1849 who replaced the tramroad with a broad gauge railway in 1854 (Hart 1971, 229) (SMR 5704, Fig. 3). This was later to become part of the Great Western Railway. Despite this, sections of the tramroad continued to be utilised by various industrial concerns (The Forester 1998, 5), such as that running from Crump Meadow Colliery through the study area. The Forest of Dean railway subsequently ran under this tramway at Letcher’s Bridge, this was later taken over by the Great Western Railway.

The area to the north of Letcher’s Bridge, Bilson’s Yard was “one time the focus of most railway movements in the area” (Cinderford Town Council 1991). This was linked to Foxes Bridge Colliery by a rope worked broad gauge incline built in 1868, and to Crump Meadow Colliery to the west of the study area by a gravity worked incline built in the 1830s (SMR 4363 and 5705).

6 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

As noted above, the Forest of Dean was protected as a Royal Demesne and was used exclusively for hunting until the late 18th-century. Development was kept to a minimum, and there does not appear to have been any activity or settlement at the study area until a tramroad from Crump Meadow Colliery was laid down in the early years of the 19th-century. It is likely that the forest was cleared for this purpose around this time. The 1847 Tithe Map (Fig. 6) delineates this tramroad running through the study area and meeting another tram or train line (the Forest of Dean tramway) to the west of Bilson Colliery. This arrangement continued until the pit ceased production in 1929 (Cinderford Town Council 1991). There does not appear to have been any other activity or development at the study area by this time. The inhabitation/exploitation of this part of the forest is very much in evidence on this map. There are a number of enclosures to the west of the study area and a number of collieries to the north and east.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1880) delineates a much-changed landscape (Fig. 7). A train line dissects the centre of the study area, running from southeast to northwest. This had cut the tramroad in evidence on the tithe map, at the point where Letcher’s Bridge stands. This tramroad appears to have been built up on an embankment, which ran across the entire site; this embankment preceded the construction of the railway, and was probably suitably inclined to suit the needs of the colliery (Cinderford Town Council 1991). There were further train tracks looping through the northwest corner of the study area, and an embankment, which may denote the position of a former siding, which was terminated to the southwest by a building. These tracks run from Bilson Station to the north. Another section of tramroad looped around the Forest Vale Ironworks and a pond in the southeast corner. There was a series of embankments in the north and east of the study area. Oakfield Villa had been constructed to the west of the study area within the bounds of the current scrap yard.

Little change occurred between 1880 and the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map (1900) (Fig. 8), the loop of tramway in the southeast corner had been removed, there was a disused coal pit 'Prospect Deep Coal Pit' to the north of this. A spring is marked running from a sluice to the south of the disused Bilson Colliery. The Forest Vale Ironworks appear to have been removed. There are minimal changes on the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map (1925) (Fig. 9) apart for Bilson Halt being marked to the south of the study area.

The sections of track and tramroads were gradually removed in the mid to late 20th-century as the railways in this area became redundant. Cinderford Linear Park was opened in 1991 and the pipeline in question runs along the east-west embankment.

7 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

There has been minimal previous archaeological work carried out at, or within 200 metres of the study area. The Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record notes that an Archaeological Assessment was carried out at Cinderford Linear Park, by the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology service in 1991 (Parry 1991) (SMR 16657, Fig. 3). The assessment indicated that the area "contains an extensive group of post medieval sites and monuments related to the industrialisation of the area. From these sites and monuments it is evident that the industrial landscape of Cinderford agglomerated over a period of time".

8 DESCRIPTION OF THE ABOVE GROUND ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Very few standing remnants of this industrial landscape survive. The stone tramway sleepers (Plate 2), train tracks, railway sidings, and railway buildings have been removed; leaving embankments, footpaths, abutments, and Letcher's Bridge as the sole remaining vestiges of this era.

Embankments

The study area is characterised by a series of embankments relating to the tramroads and railway tracks that traversed it (Plates 3 and 4). These essentially take the form of those delineated on the 1925 OS map. Some, particularly those to the southeast may relate to industrial ventures such as the Forest Vale Ironworks or the Bilson Colliery. The most prominent of these traverses the study area from east to west; this was constructed to take the Crump Meadow Colliery horse drawn tramroad. Letcher's Bridge punctuates this to the west. This embankment currently carries the pipeline.

Footpaths

A number of footpaths run through the study area, these are part of the Cinderford Linear Park amenity area (Plate 5). These, in the main, trace the position of former tramways and rail lines. There are three main sections of path, the first of these runs east west from Valley Road. This is situated on an old tramroad, which ran from the Lightmoor colliery to the southwest and looped around the Forest Vale Ironworks. The second section of tramroad runs from east to west to the north of the present day scrapyards, this ran from the Crump Meadow colliery to the west. The main footpath on the Cinderford Linear Park runs from southeast to northwest, this is positioned on the former Great Western Railway track, and runs under Letcher's Bridge. The tracks and sleepers from the tramroads and railway tracks have subsequently been removed and replaced with a compacted surface for purposes of public amenity.

Railway Buildings

Letcher's Bridge is the only surviving standing structure in the study area remaining from this industrial age (Figs 10 and 11) (Plates 6 to 9). This survives as two stone abutments and currently supports the pipeline over the former Forest of Dean railway line. This was built to accommodate the construction of the railway line, and carried the Crump Meadow Colliery horse drawn tramroad over the newly laid track. The abutments are of cut sandstone laid to courses with a lime mortar. Where this is eroded in places on the southeast abutment, a rubble sandstone core is exposed. Letcher's Bridge was named after Marcus Letcher, a Cornishman employed by the Forest of Dean Railway, he became "Bilson Junctions first station master in Broad Gauge days" (Cinderford Town Council 1991).

To the north of Letcher's Bridge, and on the edge of the study area is a series of earthworks, which mark the position of Bilson's Yard, a railway goods station built by Forest of Dean Railway, which was later to become part of the Great Western Railway (Fig 12, Plate 10).

To the east of the study area within the scrapyards is the former station master's house (The Forester 1993, 9), this stone built dwelling is of a mid to late 19th-century date (Plate 11). It was part of the Oakfield Villa complex shown on the 1880 OS map.

Other features of note

The concrete/tarmac bases for four, now removed, mid to late 20th-century structures are found to the east of centre in the study area, these were accessed by a tarmac road (now blocked) (Plate 12).

9 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

These relict industrial features are reminders of a former age of great activity. The well-preserved group of pathways, embankments, and abutments makes a significant visual impact on the study area, tells the story of the development of industry in the area, and forms an interesting sondage into the development of railway transport. As much of the industrial and transport heritage of the area has been lost to subsequent development, these features must be considered as important aspects of the archaeology and history of the locality, and all efforts should be made to take them into consideration in any proposed development of the study area.

10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment has revealed a site with a rich history in the development of rail transport in the Forest of Dean area. The evolution of rail transport, and its importance to primary industry in the 19th-century is exhibited at the study area. The various footpaths, embankments, and structures at the study area are remaining vestiges of these endeavours, and every possible effort should be made to retain them. It is highly recommended that the design of any future rehabilitation works to the pipeline should take into account the significance of these archaeological elements. However, should permission be granted to the contrary, it is recommended that a programme of archaeological recording take place. Depending on the extent of works this should include topographical survey, archaeological evaluation, watching briefs, and historic building recording.

11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd. Thanks are due to Caroline Mokrani for her co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to Charles Parry who monitored the project on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council. The assessment was undertaken by Shane Kelleher. Shane Kelleher produced the written report, which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by Malcolm Hislop who also monitored the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

12 SOURCES CONSULTED

12.1 Primary Sources

12.2 Secondary Sources

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

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*.

Finberg, HPR 1975 *The Gloucestershire Landscape* London, Hodder and Stoughton.

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Herbert, N.M. 1996 *A History of the County of Gloucester Volume V: Bledisloe Hundred, St. Briavels Hundred, The Forest of Dean*. London, Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research.

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

Paar, H.W. 1965 *The Great Western Railway in Dean*, Newton Abbot, David and Charles.

Parry, C. 1991 *Cinderford Linear Park, Cinderford. Preliminary Archaeological Assessment*, Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service.

Smith, A.H. 1964 *The Placenames of Gloucestershire, Part Three: The Lower Severn Valley and the Forest of Dean*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Verey, D and Brooks, A 2002 *Gloucestershire: Vale and Forest of Dean Pt. 2 (Pevsner Buildings of England)* London, Yale University Press.

12.3 Media and Internet Sources

Cinderford Town Council 1991 *Cinderford Linear Park* Information Board, located at Bilson Halt, Cinderford.

Forest of Dean Newspaper 12/03/1993 p. 10 *Cinderford- an eyesore on the landscape*.

The Forester 17/09/1993 p. 9 *Linear Park Revisited*.

The Forester 20/03/1998 p. 5 *The Changing face of Cinderford*.

www.aboutbritain.com/towns/cinderford.asp consulted 9:15 am 29/11/06.

<http://www.forestofdeanuk.net/livnhist/slide057.htm> consulted 9:30 am 29/11/06.

12.4 Cartographic Sources

1847 Tithe Map of Joy's Green, Ruardean Woodside, and Ruardean Hill (from Herbert, N.M. 1996).

1880 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map Gloucestershire Sheet XXXI.15.

1900 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map Gloucestershire Sheet XXXI.15.

1925 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Map Gloucestershire Sheet XXXI.15.

1996 Cinderford and Ruspidge Transportation in 1880 (from Herbert, N.M. 1996).

1996 Forest of Dean Industry and Railways in 1880 (from Herbert, N.M. 1996).



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Fig.1

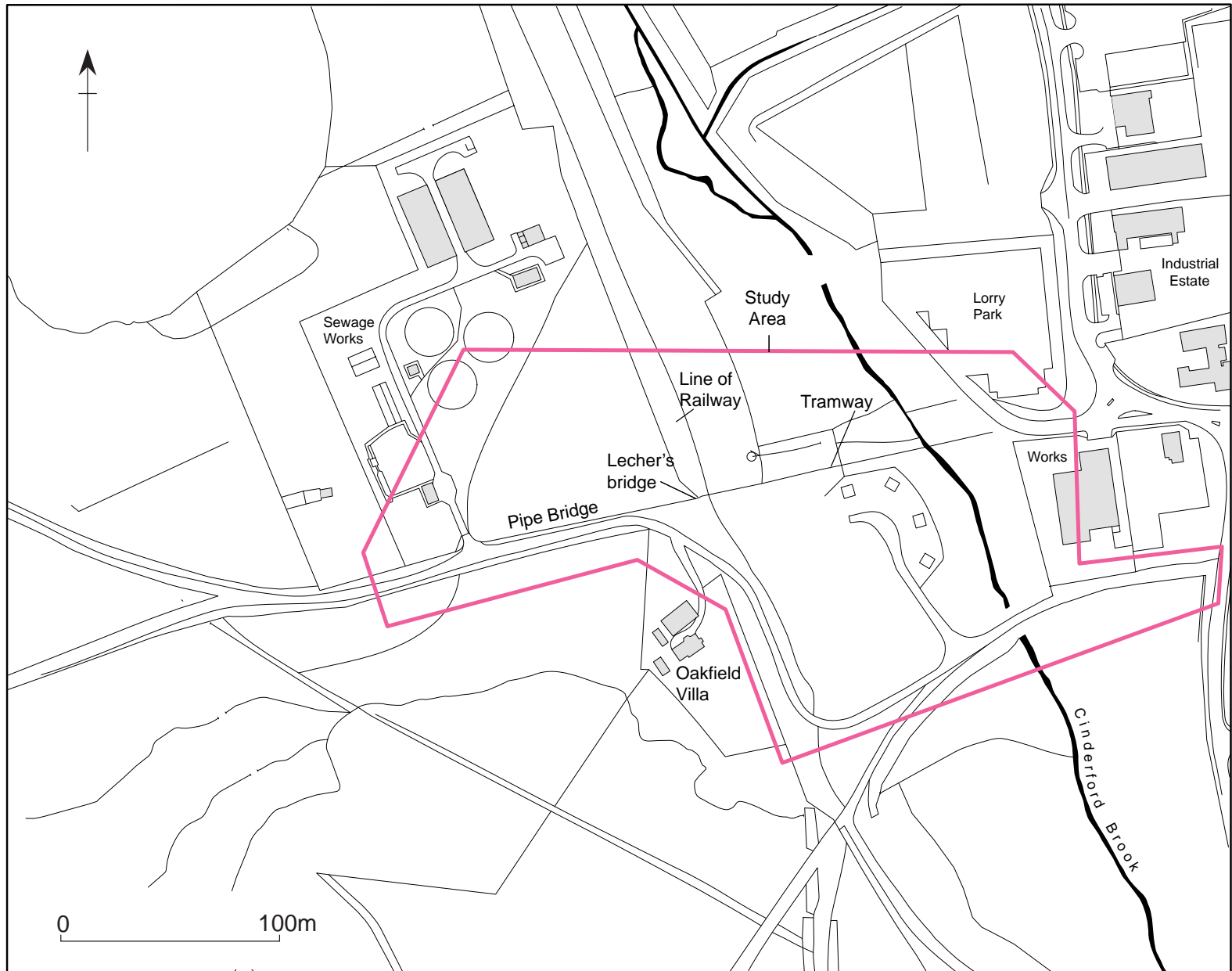


Fig.2

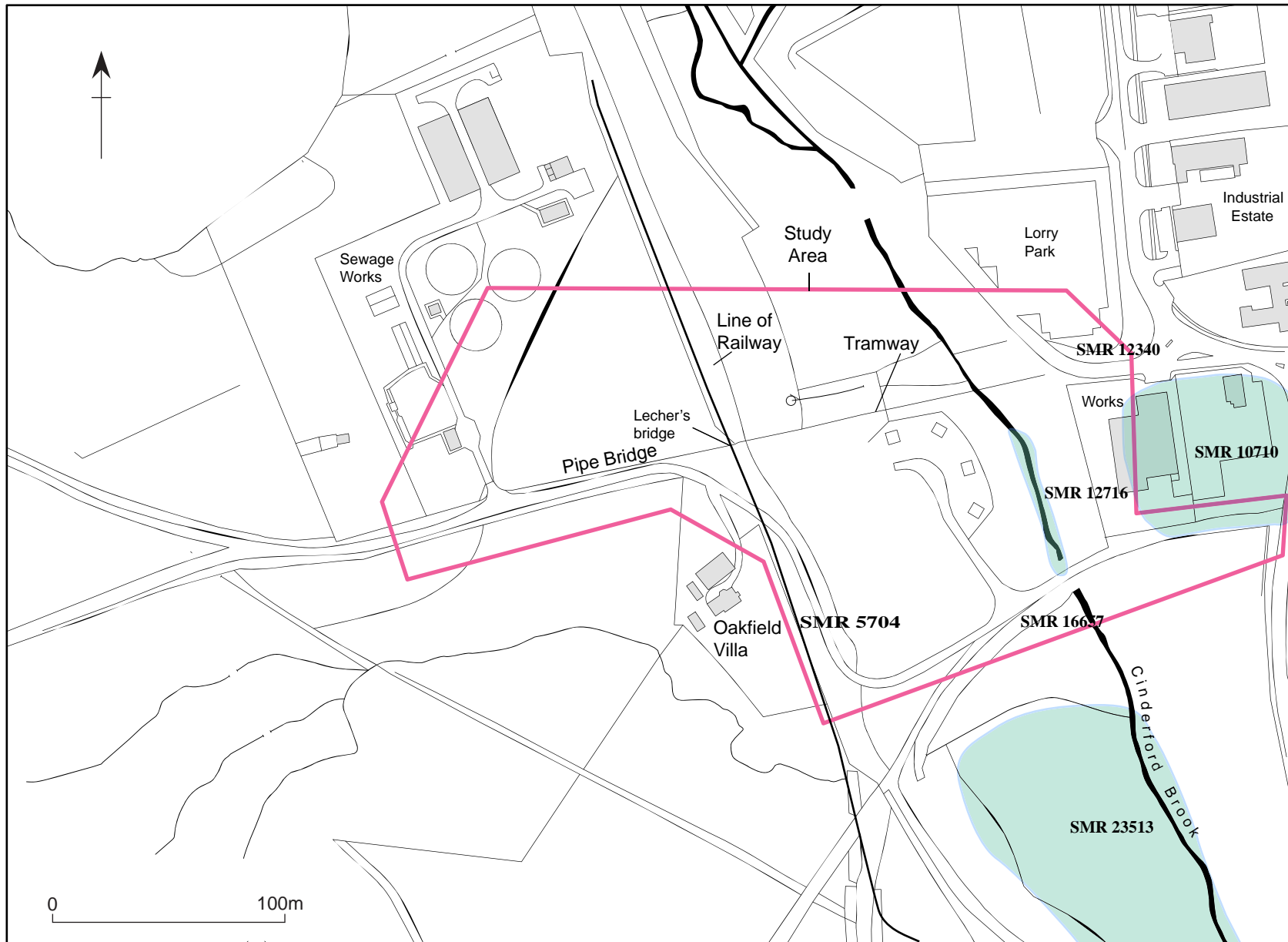


Fig.3

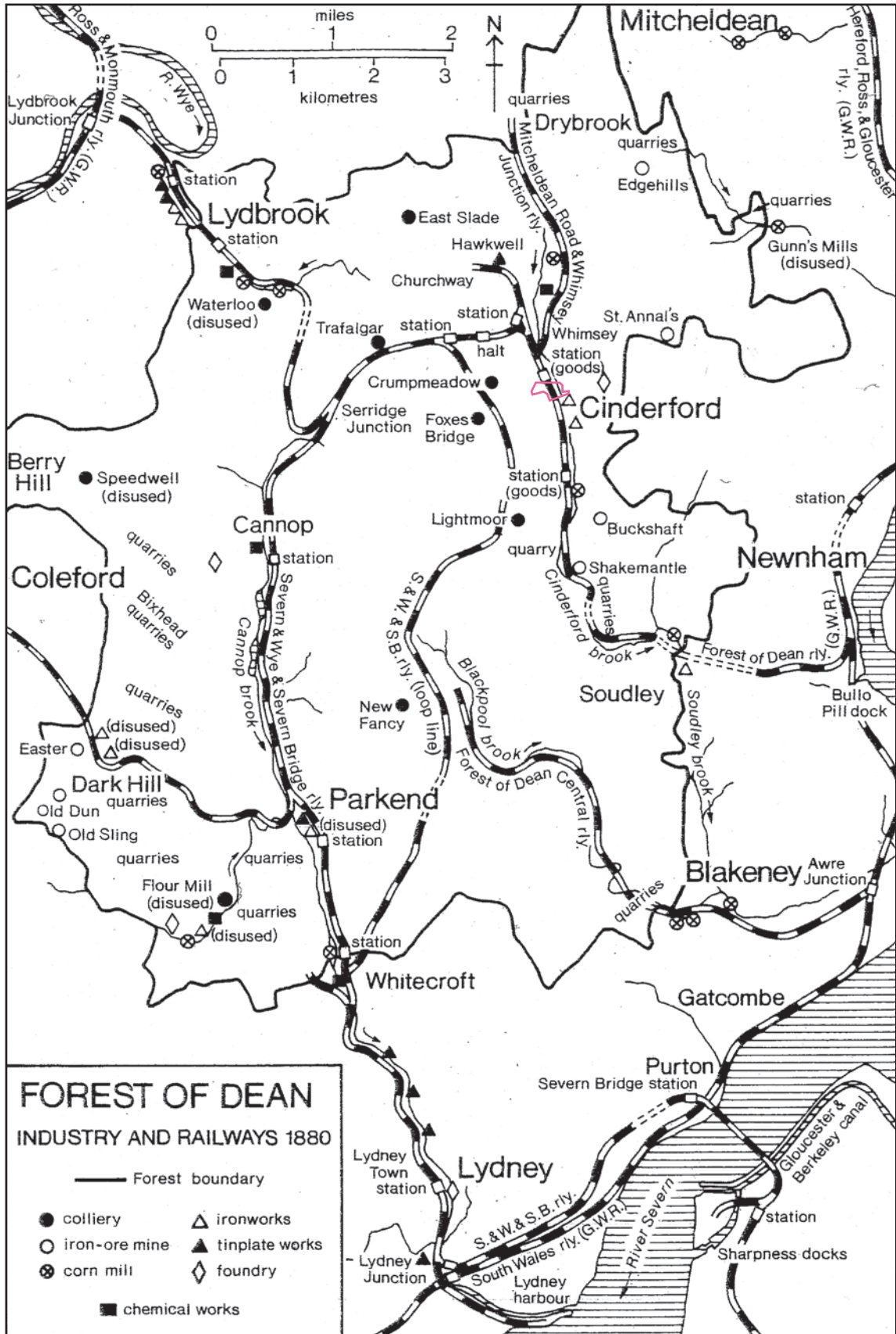


Fig.4

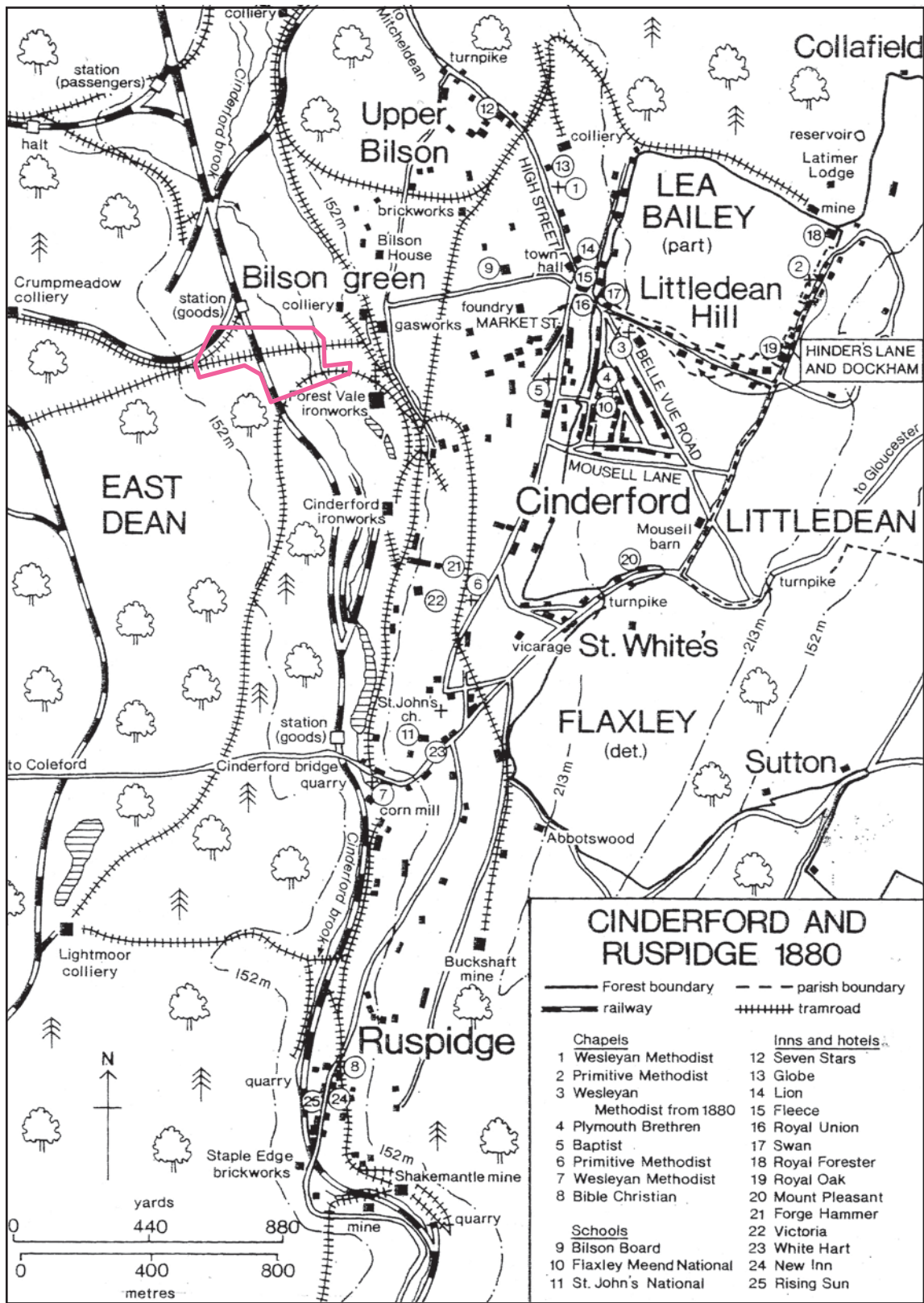


Fig.5

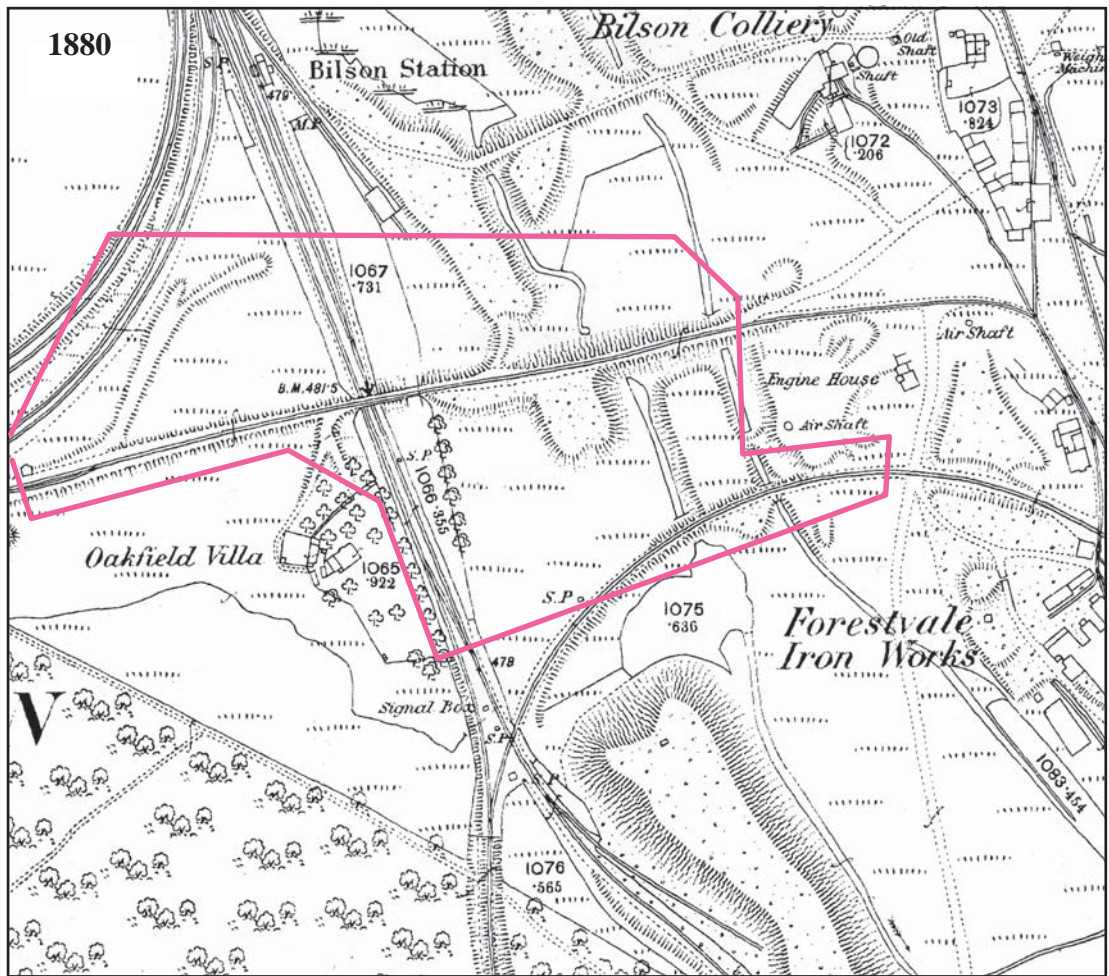


Fig.7

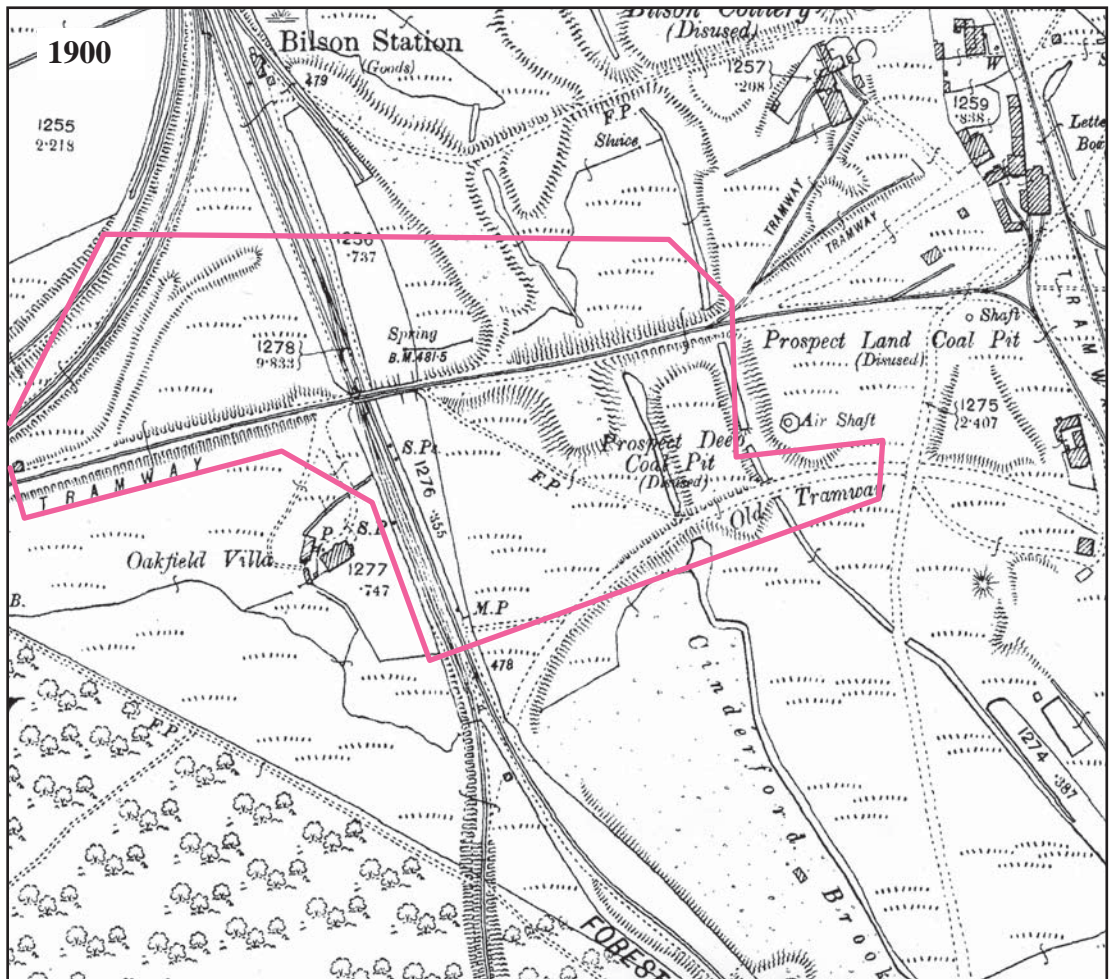


Fig.8



Fig.10

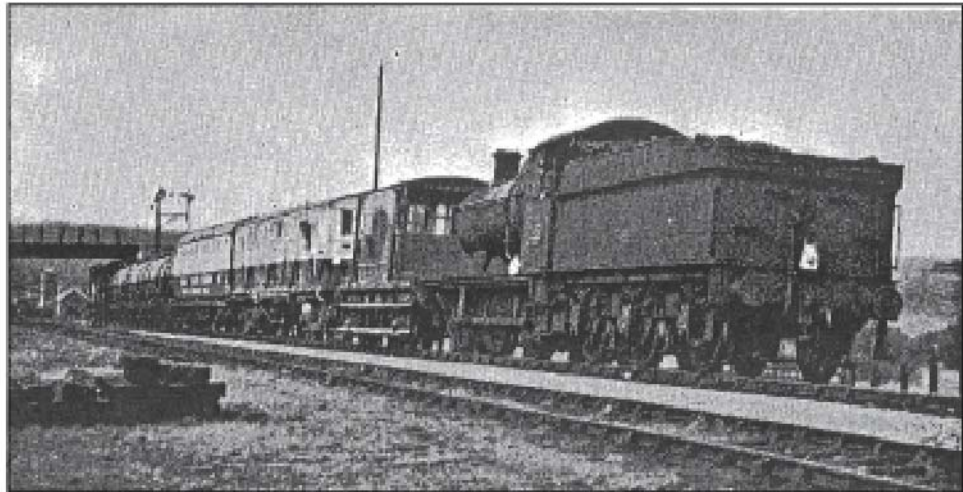


Fig.11

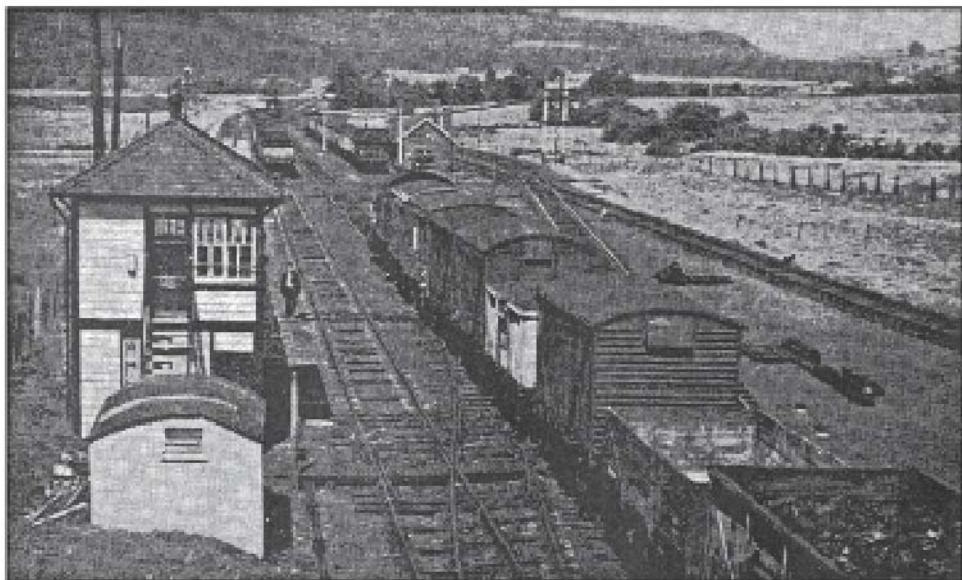


Fig.12



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12

APPENDIX 1

Brief for a desk-based archaeological assessment
Prepared by Archaeology Service, Gloucestershire County Council

1 Introduction

A desk-based archaeological assessment is required in order that a preliminary statement of the archaeological implications of the proposed development can be made. The desk-based assessment will make full and effective use of existing information to establish the archaeological significance and potential of the site.

All work should be carried out in accordance with:

- o this standard brief,
- o any site-specific requirements (section 3 below)
- o the relevant published standards and guidance produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

In advance of commencement of the desk-based assessment the consultant should prepare a written scheme of investigation or project design and submit this for approval by the County Archaeologist.

2 Standard requirements

2.1 Sources of information

The desk-based assessment should survey published and archive sources of historical, archaeological, geographical, topographical and environmental data relevant to the area of the development. Sources consulted should include:

- o The County Sites and Monuments Record
- o In the case of Gloucester City, the City Historic Environment Record
- o The National Monuments Record of English Heritage
- o Geological Maps
- o All Ordnance Survey maps of the site and its environs
- o Tithe, Apportionment and Parish maps (where available)
- o Estate maps of the area (where available)
- o Other historical maps and documents held in the County Records Office, local museums, libraries or other archives (where relevant)
- o Appropriate archaeological and historical journals and books
- o Unpublished research reports and archives, including those held by relevant museums and local societies.
- o Aerial photographs
- o All available borehole and trial pit data from the site and its immediate environs
- o Any further geophysical and/or geotechnical data available
- o A site inspection should be carried out and information relating to current landuse and any other factors which might affect the nature and survival of the archaeological resource (eg in an urban context the presence of cellars, basements etc) should be collected.

2.2 Report preparation

The information gathered from the above sources should be summarised in a report, prepared in a readily reproducible format, and including the following:

- A summary of the archaeological and historical information about the site
- A comprehensive list of sources consulted, giving full bibliographic details. Where sources referred to in 2.1 above have not been consulted, the reasons for this should be fully detailed.
- Mapped information should include: (with OD levels where available and appropriate):
 - All historic environment designations including Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens
 - Other relevant environmental designations eg Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc
 - Other archaeological sites, historic buildings or other features of the historic environment.
 - Areas and sites where levels of archaeological interest are likely to have been destroyed by past and present buildings and features (such as building foundations, cellars, basements, inspection pits, storage tanks, deep floor slabs, etc)
 - In urban situations, and on other sites where archaeological levels are likely to be complex, information should be mapped in such a way as to best express the likely depths of archaeology across the site and areas where it may have been destroyed. Deposit modelling should be undertaken where there is sufficient information.
- The identification of any gaps in existing knowledge which may be needed to be filled before a full assessment of the archaeological potential of the site can be made.

Two copies of the report should be submitted to Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service.

3 Site specific requirements

There are no site-specific requirements.

Archaeology Service, Environment Department
Gloucestershire County Council, 2006

APPENDIX 2

Cinderford Pipe Bridge Rehabilitation: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

1.0 Introduction

This written scheme of investigation describes a desk-based assessment to be undertaken along the course of the Cinderford pipe bridge, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, in order to highlight the archaeological implications of the proposed rehabilitation of the pipeline to be undertaken by Severn Trent Water. This document has been based on a brief issued by the Archaeology Service of Gloucestershire County Council to which the project personnel will adhere.

2.0 Site Location

The study area is at Bilson Green, in the Forest of Dean, on the western edge of Cinderford, Gloucestershire. It forms an irregular area of approximately 0.5 hectares centred on NGR SO 648 138 which is traversed by the east-west aligned pipeline.

3.0 Objectives

The overall objective is to define the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development, so that the archaeological implications of the proposed work can be assessed.

4.0 Methods

A search will be made of all readily available published and unpublished documentary records, including maps, illustrations and archaeological and geotechnic records, primarily at Gloucestershire County Records Office. Gloucester County Sites and Monuments Record will also be consulted, and a site inspection made.

5.0 Staffing and Standards

The project will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Malcolm Hislop BA, PhD, MIFA, and the principal fieldworker will be Shane Kelleher BA, MA, MA. Both are specialists in buildings archaeology, and experienced documentary researchers. All staff will be appropriately qualified for their roles in the project.

The work will be carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*, and *Code of Conduct*.

6.0 Reporting

The results of the desk-based assessment will be presented in a report including the following information.

- Non-technical summary
- Introduction
- Site location

- Objectives
- Methods
- Historical and archaeological background
- Historical development of the study area
- Previous archaeological work
- Descriptions of the standing remains
- Statement of significance
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Sources consulted
- Appropriate illustrations including historic maps

Birmingham Archaeology
November 2006