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2 Straits Green, Gornal, Dudley,
West Midlands

An Archaeological Desk- Based
Assessment 2007

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2 Straits Green, Gornal, Dudley, West Midlands
An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

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For Mr P. Rann

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SUMMARY

An archaeological desk-based assessment of land at 2 Straits Green, Gornal, Dudley, West Midlands (NGR SO 9055 9154), was undertaken in January 2007 on behalf of Mr P. Rann. This report was commissioned in advance of a residential planning application to Dudley MBC.

The study area is located on the fringe of the Black Country in an area that developed during the 18th and 19th centuries into a semi-rural, semi-industrial landscape. There is evidence of buildings on the land from 1826, and the local area is known for its history of nail making. In 1826 a house, shop, garden, warehouse and stable were recorded as having been within in the study area.

At the time of the assessment a pair of early to mid-19th-century semi-detached houses occupied the study area together with a former privy. Dry stone walls defining a smaller plot than the study area, are also 19th-century in date. None of these structures was of special architectural or historic interest, but the boundary walls made a significant contribution to the character of the historic landscape in this locality.

No evidence was found for the survival of significant below-ground archaeology.

2 STRAITS GREEN, GORNAL, DUDLEY, WEST MIDLANDS

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2007

1 INTRODUCTION

In January 2007 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of land at 2 Straits Green, Dudley (hereafter referred to as the study area). The work was commissioned by Mr P. Rann as part of a discussion in advance of the planning application of a proposed residential redevelopment.

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

The assessment conformed to a brief produced by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Appendix B), and a written scheme of investigation (Birmingham Archaeology 2007), 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, GEOLOGY AND PRESENT CHARACTER

2.1 Location

The study area is located southwest of Sedgley, and northwest of Gornalwood, in Dudley, West Midlands, and is centred on NGR SO 9055 9154 (Fig. 1).

2.2 Geology

The underlying solid geology consists of coal measures (part of the South Staffordshire coal field), and red sandstones of the Triassic (VCH I; Barnett 1975).

2.3 Present Character

The site forms an irregular ellipse aligned northeast – southwest with Straits Green to the northwest (Fig. 2). The present character of the area is residential, and the study area itself is occupied by a pair of semi-detached houses and associated outbuilding, set within gardens.

The houses are contained within an early to mid-19th-century building constructed of red brick, now painted, and roofed in slate (Plate 1). This two-storey, two-bay building is aligned roughly northeast–southwest facing southeast away from the road, with two centrally placed segmental–arched doorways on the southeast side containing late 20th-century doors (Plate 2). The windows are also of 20th-century date, but are set within original openings, those at ground-floor level having segmental-arched heads (Plate 3).

Within the study area a smaller compound surrounding the house itself is bounded to the front and rear by a fence and dry stone wall (plates 1, 4 and 5). Two other small enclosures towards the southeast form the rest of the study area. These are grassed, and incorporate trees including fruit trees. To the northeast of the house is a former privy, heavily overgrown at the time of the site visit, and mostly obscured (Plate 6). The house and gardens are recorded in the Dudley MBC Historic Building, Sites, and Monuments Record (SMR 12505).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal 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 site and its immediate environs and placing it in its local, regional and national context.

More specific aims were:

- To compile a summary history of the development and land use within the study area
- To assess the historical/archaeological development of the assessment site and the existing buildings and stone wall boundaries and provide a description of any surviving architectural/archaeological features.
- To assess the archaeological potential of the study area using the PPG 16 Annexe 4 criteria taking account of, where possible, the location, type, likely date, nature and depths of the remains.
- To assess the degree of disturbance or destruction to potential archaeological remains by existing or previous structures or events.
- To assess the possible impact of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.
- To place the site within a local context referring to other similar local sites where appropriate.
- To contribute factual data to the knowledge on the history and archaeological development of Dudley.
- To assist the client in advancing towards having enough information in order that a planning application can be submitted.

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 Dudley Archives and Local History Service office and the library of the University of Birmingham. The Dudley Historic Building, Sites and Monuments Record, the main source of archaeological information for the Borough 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

The study area is in a semi-rural location on the edge of the Black Country (VCH II). Coal was an important feature of the surrounding area. In 1665 there were about fourteen coalmines within ten miles of Dudley, and by 1861 there were two hundred collieries on the South Staffordshire coalfield alone (SCC 1968).

Because of this, although to a large extent rural, the area has had an element of industry connected with it for many hundreds of years. The study area itself is not close to the centre of any of the local villages, but would have been in contact with them, most notably Sedgley (the location of the parish church) and Lower Gornal (the closest village).

5.1 Prehistoric

A Neolithic stone axe was found to the north of the study area (SMR 4120). A 'salt way' ran through Dudley to Sedgley and beyond (Barnett 1975), and so may have passed the site a couple of kilometres to the east. No excavations are recorded in the vicinity.

5.2 Roman

The study area is approximately 13 miles (21 km) south of Watling Street, and 12 miles (19 km) west of Ryknield Street. No local Roman remains or excavations are listed in the SMR.

5.3 Anglo-Saxon

The local place names of Dudley, Himley and Sedgley indicate an Anglo-Saxon presence in the area before the Normans controlled the lands (Barnett 1975), but there are no known remains of this period in the local area. There are no excavations detailed locally either (Dudley HBSMR).

5.4 Medieval

From the medieval period the study area lay on the edge of the manor of Sedgley. It was also close to the Pensnett Chase, one of four in Staffordshire, dating from the 13th century. Although chases like this were often hunting grounds, and deer were present in the areas of Sedgley, Dudley and Himley, the owners of Pensnett Chase accrued much of their wealth by coal mining and forging as early as the end of the 15th century (Birrell 1991).

There was a market in nearby Dudley from before 1261, which lasted until after the year 1500 (Palliser & Pinnock 1971). The area became industrial, even if only on a small scale, from the late medieval period. The first recorded mining of coal in Staffordshire was in nearby Sedgley in 1273 and there was probably a forge here at this time (Greenslade & Stuart 1998). It is also recorded that the villeins in the manor were paying dues by cash to the lord, instead of providing farming services, by 1300. This would suggest an area of craftsmanship (Greenslade & Stuart 1998).

5.5 Post-medieval

The area was industrial, if only on a small scale, from the beginning of the 16th century. Systematic coal extraction was in operation in Sedgley from at least 1558, and nail making was common (Barnett 1975). The village of The Straits and Straits Green was a straggling collection of housing, with workshops usually accommodated in outbuildings. A road from The Straits to Dudley originated around this time as nailers travelled to sell their wares (Barnett 1975). It is also thought that the nail makers would keep a limited number of livestock as a subsistence measure, rather than for a farming purpose.

At one time a scythe making industry was also present around The Straits, where local red sandstone was used to sharpen the blades (Barnett 1975). The closest coal extraction to the site was south of Turner's Hill from about 1621, which later became the Straits Green Colliery that was in operation until 1962. This was located roughly half a kilometre to the northeast of the study area.

At the time of a survey of the parish of Sedgley in 1826, the land use in the area was recorded in an accompanying apportionment book. The study area was used by William Barnitt, whose property is listed as a warehouse and stable, and by Dennis Flavell, who had a house, shop,

and garden. At this time in the Dudley area the term shop would most probably mean 'workshop', rather than commercial premises. Across the road there lived Edward Kirby, who owned a 'pleck' (a small plot of land) and other stables and plecks were situated to the south.

From the first half of the 20th century onwards evidence is seen on Ordnance Survey maps that the area was becoming more residential. Fields surrounding the study area show division into housing plots, and the construction of detached houses. A chapel of convenience was built for the growing population on the corner of The Straits and Straits Green around the year 1900.

Two extant buildings from the early 19th century are recorded in the SMR as being local to the study area, one of which is now demolished (SMR 7521 & 7522). These are red brick terraced built houses similar to the example in the study area. Straits Green Colliery, a few hundred metres to the northeast of the study area is also listed in the SMR (7556), as well as another colliery to the southeast (SMR 7562). Both are described by way of documentary evidence, and not from excavation.

6 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

6.1 Previous archaeological work

No previous archaeological work is believed to have been carried out in the vicinity of the site. No excavations are detailed in the Dudley MBC HBSMR.

6.2 Historic map regression

The Yates map of Staffordshire of 1775 shows habitation in the area of 'Strate' at the time, but does not indicate that there was a building on the study area (VCH XX). However, given the small scale and limited accuracy of the map, it is probable that buildings were not necessarily portrayed accurately.

The earliest large scale map of the area is a Parish map of Sedgley dated to 1826 (Fig. 3). It shows that the study area, which is recognisable, was part of Lower Gornal, but the term 'Straits' was not used, in whatever spelling. There was a building in roughly the same location as the present dwelling, apparently built up along the frontage. The end of the building along the frontage to the east appears to be detached from the main building. This is roughly in the same place as the outbuilding seen later. There were no boundaries marking a garden or similar around the property, although a small paddock is sectioned off from the rest of the field west of the house by a field boundary running from Straits Green south, then west to The Straits. All of the remainder of the land within the study area was open fields at this time.

The first edition of the 1: 2500 Ordnance Survey map (1882) shows an L shaped building at the location of the present dwellings (Fig. 4). The main body of the building on the map appears consistent with that of the present building, being set back from the road. There was also one associated outbuilding, square in shape, which lay to the east of the main house, fronting onto Straits Green. A boundary around the property was semi oval in shape, separating it from two fields to the south and west. There was also what appears to be a ditch or track way following the boundary from the western intersection with the road (Straits Green) down a little way to the south. The field to the south of the property was planted with deciduous trees, and this could possibly have been an orchard.

By the time of the first revision (1903) not much had changed, except that the field to the south of the study area was now cut through by a 'Tramway' (light railway or 'mineral line')

leading to the colliery to the northeast of Straits Green itself (Fig. 5). A well is marked to the south of the square outbuilding.

By the 2nd revision (1919) the ditch or track way along the western part of the oval shaped boundary had been removed, although the boundary still remained intact (Fig. 6). The main building was by now the rectangular shape that remains today, with the north part of the 'L' next to the road having been removed. The square outhouse fronting onto Straits Green had been removed, and another outbuilding had been constructed on the eastern boundary, mainly in the field to the east, close to where the modern garage is today. The 'Tramway' in the field to the south had been removed.

No changes appear on the 3rd revision of 1937 (Fig. 7).

The 1961 OS 1:2500 map shows the rectangular building standing in the same position, but the outbuilding to the east had been removed, and a new one constructed close by. This is the modern garage building present today. The oval shaped boundary surrounding the property had been removed. The boundary of the property now extended to its current extent, with another residential boundary to the southeast.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Below Ground Archaeology

The assessment has found no evidence of below-ground archaeology other than the possible foundations of an earlier dwelling below the present one.

7.2 Above Ground Archaeology

No internal examination could be made of the houses during the site visit, but it is evident from the external evidence that they make up an early to mid-19th century structure. It is, however, difficult to be certain as to whether this building represents the one shown on the 1826 map or whether it is a replacement. The fact that two occupants were recorded as being on this site at one time may support the earlier date. The 1826 apportionment points to there having been a workshop here in the early 19th century, but this is not supported by the cartographic evidence, the assumption must be that it was incorporated within the dwelling. Much of the 19th-century character of the building has been retained including the original window and door openings, despite these having received later fittings. However, it has no special architectural or historic interest, and its significance lies in its local historical context.

The historic maps suggest that the perimeter wall around the houses was built between 1826 and 1884. In itself it has no special architectural or historic interest, but it forms a significant historic marker within the local landscape.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by Eclipse Architects, on behalf of Mr P. Rann. Thanks are due to Mr Rann and to Andrew Denham of Eclipse Architects for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project, to the staff of Dudley Archives and Local History Service, and to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council who provided the HBSMR data. The report was written by Paul Collins BSc, MA and edited by Malcolm Hislop BA, PhD, MIFA who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology. Bryony Ryder prepared the illustrations.

9 SOURCES

9.1 Textual Sources

Barnett, F. A. 1975, *A History of Lower Gornal*, a Dudley Teachers' Centre publication.

Birrell, J. 1991, 'The Forest and the chase in Medieval Staffordshire', *Staffordshire Studies* III (1990-91), 23-50.

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Staffordshire County Council (SCC) 1968, *Coal Mines in Staffordshire*, Staffordshire County Council Local History Source Book No. G3.

VCH. *The Victoria History of the County of Stafford* vols. I (1908), II (1967) & XX (1988).

9.2 Cartographic Sources

1775 Yates' map of Staffordshire

1826 Parish map of Sedgley

1882 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

1903 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

1919 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

1937 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

1943 Ordnance Survey 1: 2500

10 APPENDIX: DUDLEY MBC BRIEF

10.2 APPENDIX: DUDLEY MBC BRIEF



BRIEF FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESKTOP ASSESSMENT

November 2006

2 STRAITS GREEN, DUDLEY

Archaeological Officer: Mr P Boland, Principal Conservation Officer/Borough Archaeologist, Dudley MBC, Directorate of the Urban Environment, 3 St James Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1HZ. Tel: (01384) 814190; Fax (01384) 814141; email:- pete.boland@dudley.gov.uk

Client: Rann, Farmer & Dunn

Agent: Andrew Denham, Eclipse Architecture, 40 New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

Nature of Proposed Development: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new dwellings

Planning Application Number: **Pre-application discussion**

Site Location and Description

The study area is bounded on its west side by Straits Green and on its south side by The Straits. Located within the study area is a detached 19th century red brick cottage with associated outbuildings and with a small fruit orchard.

Planning Background

PPG 16 and Unitary Development Plan policies HE8 and HE11 indicate that there should be a presumption in favour of the preservation of important archaeological features and sites. The best means of determining the existence and quality of such features is by documentary study and, in the case of standing buildings or landscape features, a detailed survey of the existing fabric, if necessary, by selective field evaluation. The desktop study therefore represents the first stage in this process.

A planning application for the site was submitted – P06/1912, however it was subsequently withdrawn until further information regarding the significance of the existing building and its curtilage was provided.

Historical Background

The study area is on the Council Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments record as HBSMR 12505. The existing cottage is marked on the 1883 Ordnance Survey Map and according to the 1826 Parish map a building occupies the site. By the time of the production of the second edition Ordnance Survey map in 1902 a mineral railway line is shown to run along the east edge of the property. It appears to be running from the Straits Green Colliery marked on the HBSMR as 7556.

Aims and Objectives of the Assessment

The aims of the assessment are as follows:-

To compile a summary history of the development and land use within the study area.

To assess the Historical/archaeological development of the assessment site and the existing buildings and stone wall boundaries and provide a description of any surviving architectural/archaeological features.

To assess the archaeological potential of the study area using the PPG 16 Annex 4 criteria taking account of, where possible, the location, type, likely date, nature and depths of the remains.

To assess the degree of disturbance or destruction to potential archaeological remains by existing or previous structures or events

To assess the possible impact of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.

To place the site within a local context referring to other similar, local sites where appropriate.

To contribute factual data to the knowledge on the history and archaeological development of Dudley.

To assist the client in advancing towards having enough information in order that a planning application can be submitted.

Methodology

The archaeological desktop assessment will be undertaken with reference to the standards and guidance described in the Institute of Field Archaeologists document *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (1999).

A detailed Project Design must be submitted to the Historic Environment Team for approval. The Project Design must be compiled in full collaboration with the specialists who will be employed in the project team.

The archaeological and historical importance of the assessment area and any material archaeological and/or architectural will be investigated in the context of the local, regional and national significance with reference to and consideration of (where available and appropriate)

An external visual inspection by means of a site visit.

Dudley Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record (HBSMR)

Geological maps

Available trial pit and borehole data

Plans and maps of the assessment site and its environs

Aerial photographs

Historical documents held in museums, libraries or other archives, in particular the Dudley Archives and Local History Service, and any other relevant sources e.g. early maps, topographical drawings, leases, wills, rentals, plan books etc.

Where available, unpublished research reports and archive, held by archaeological contractors/consultants prior to deposition in publicly accessible museum archives

Data held by the Agent/Client.

Photographic Data

Survey drawings

Previous Planning History held on file with Dudley MBC.

Appropriate archaeological and historical journals and books

Trade and Business Directories

Planning files relevant to the immediate planning history of the site

English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme (MPP).

Archive

A full copy of the archive, to include all notes made on site, as well as the negatives of the photographs and the photographs themselves should be deposited with Dudley Historic Building Sites and Monuments Record (HBSMR). An appropriate HBSMR number should be obtained prior to the commencement of the project and placed on the back of all photographs.

Digital copies of the report and any photographs or plans created during the fieldwork should be deposited with the Dudley HBSMR on CD ROM. Submission on other digital media should be agreed in advance. Photographs taken during the assessment should be delivered as JPEG or uncompressed TIFF format files, each image forming a discrete file. All digital submissions should include adequate documentation of metadata. Further guidance on the creation of digital archives and metadata can be obtained from the Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>).

Reporting Arrangements

The fieldwork should be followed by a report to accompany the photographic record for submission to the Local Planning Authority as early as possible. The report should be produced in A4 format with foldouts no bigger than A3 using colour where appropriate. At least two copies of the report should be sent, either by the client or by the contractor undertaking the above works to the Local Planning Authority. It should include:

Aims of the work and a summary of the results;

Details of sources consulted;

Historical Evidence;

Archaeological Evidence

Conclusions and Recommendations

Plans, maps, photographs and any other illustrations to support the text of the report.

A copy of the report must also be sent to the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record in Wolverhampton.

Publication

Summaries of work carried out must be sent to the relevant period society journals and to the local archaeological society journals for inclusion in their yearly summaries of work and also to CBA West Midland's for inclusion in their annual publication 'West Midlands Archaeology.'

Bibliography

DoE, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning, Planning Guidance Note 16.*

DoE, 1994, *Archaeology and Planning, Planning Guidance Note 15.*

English Heritage, 1991, *Management of Archaeological Projects.*

English Heritage, 2000, *Metric Survey Specifications for English Heritage*, London, English Heritage.

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments.*

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1990, *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage.*

29th November 2006

NB This brief remains valid for three months from the above date. If the work covered by this brief has not been commenced within this period it may be necessary to revise the brief in the light of new information and priorities

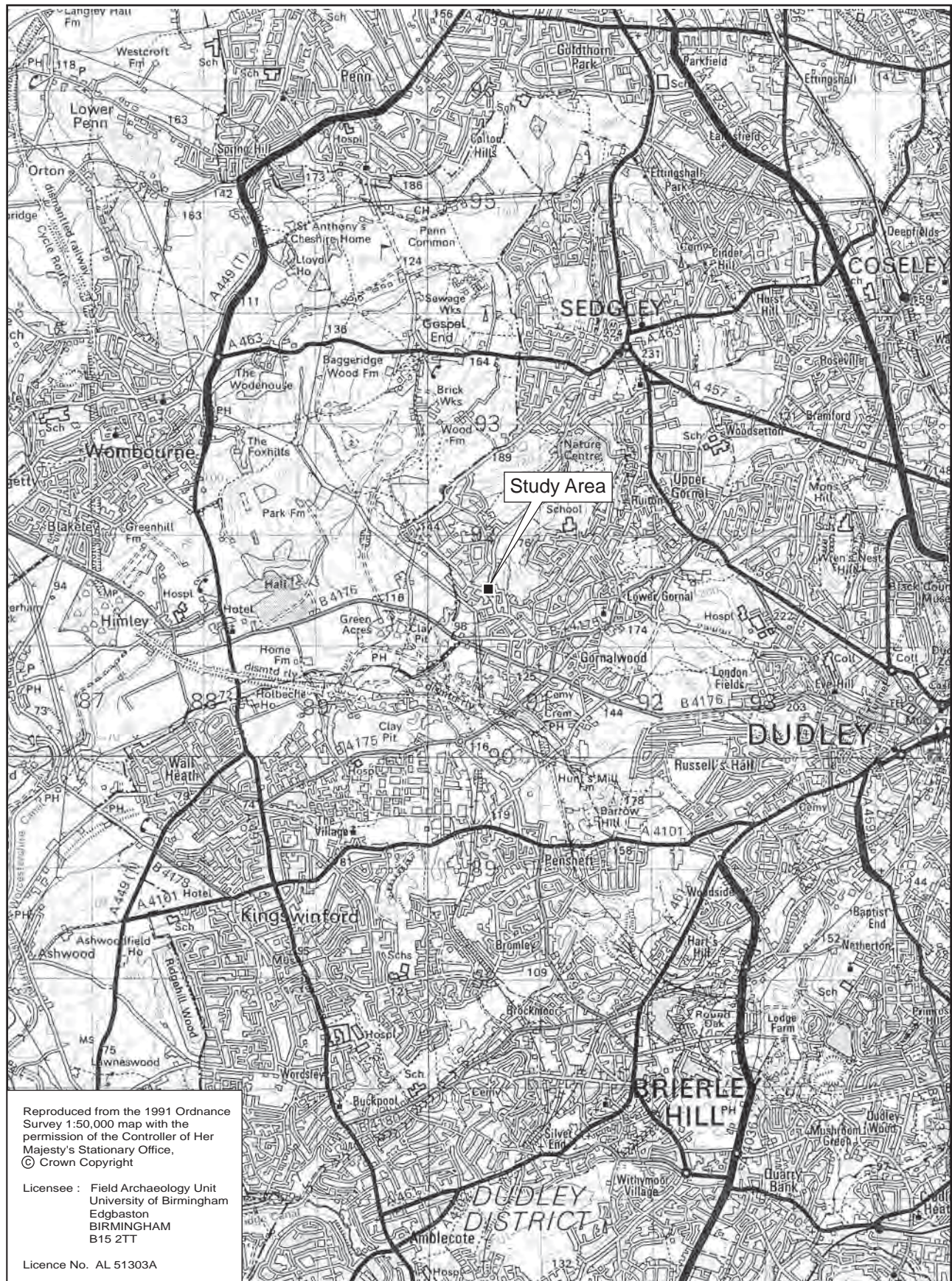


Fig.1

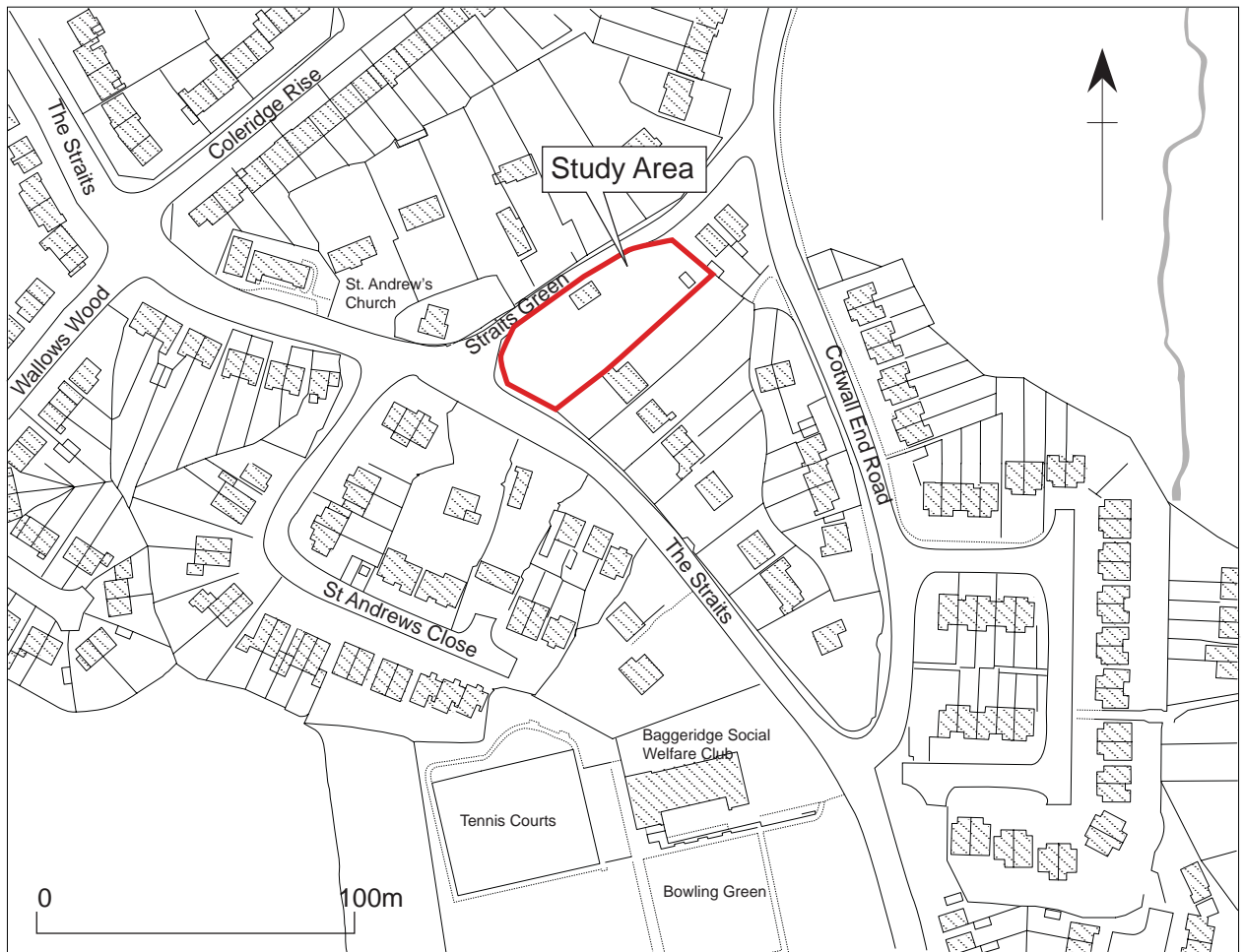


Fig.2

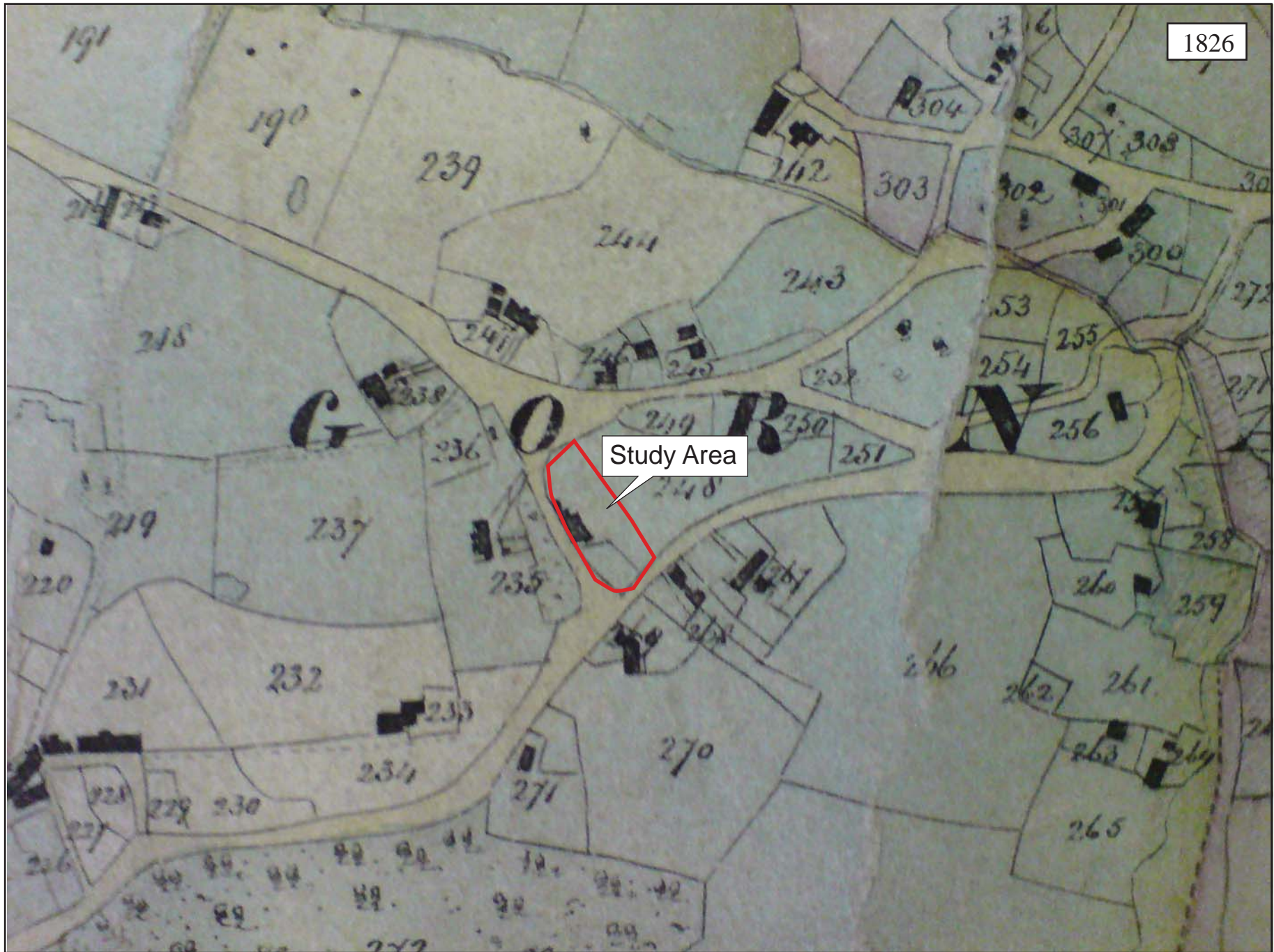


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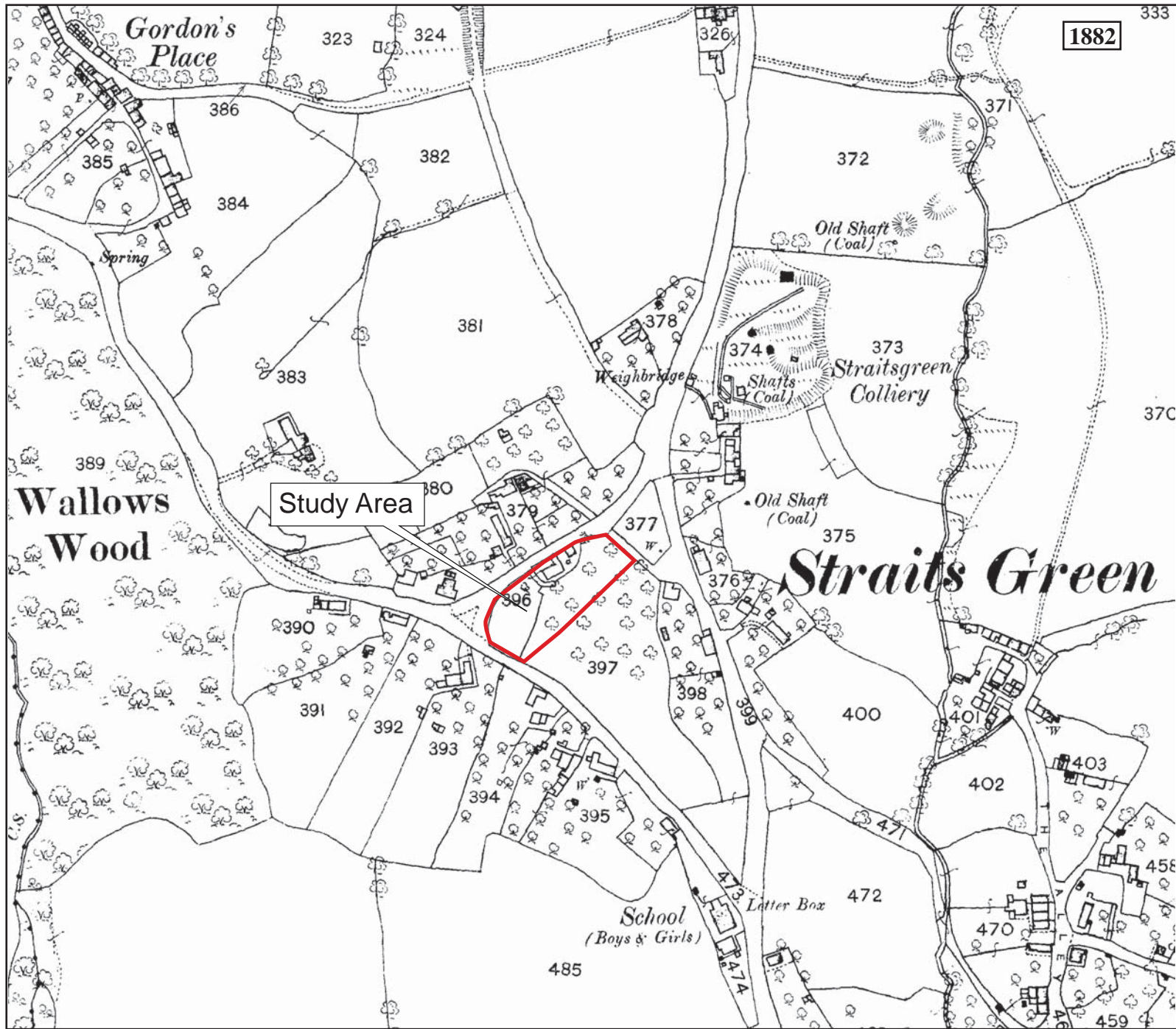


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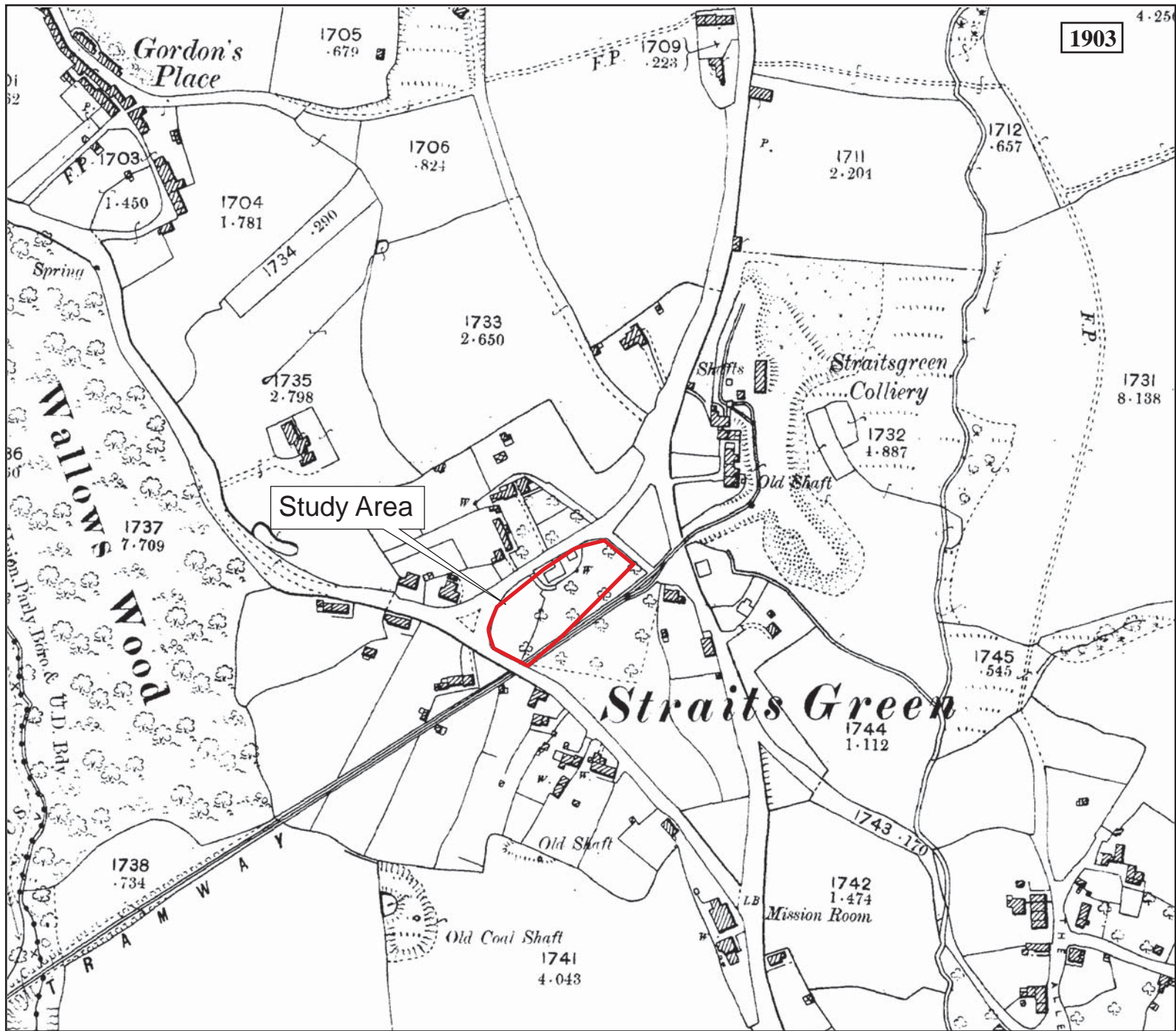


Fig.5

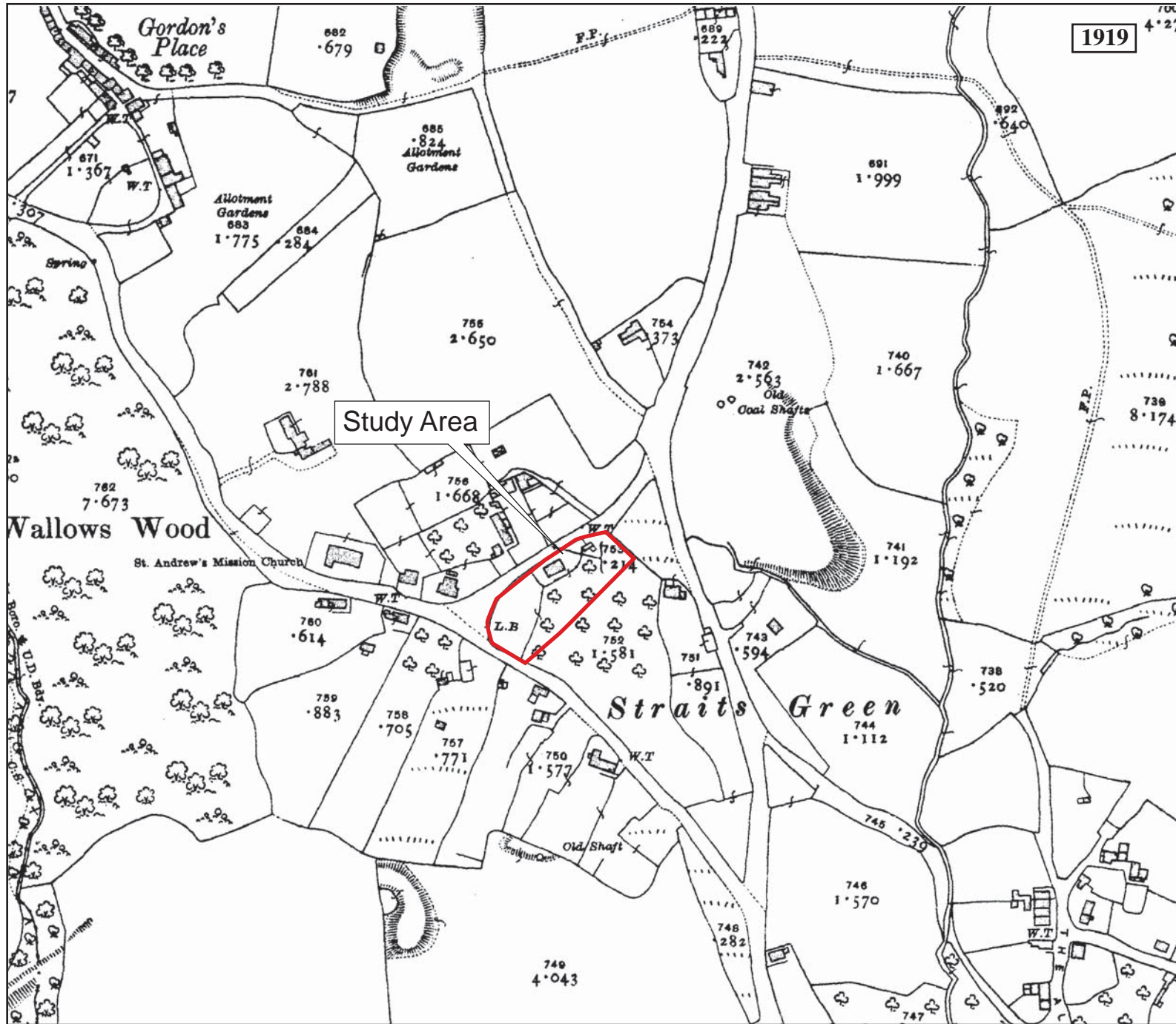


Fig.6

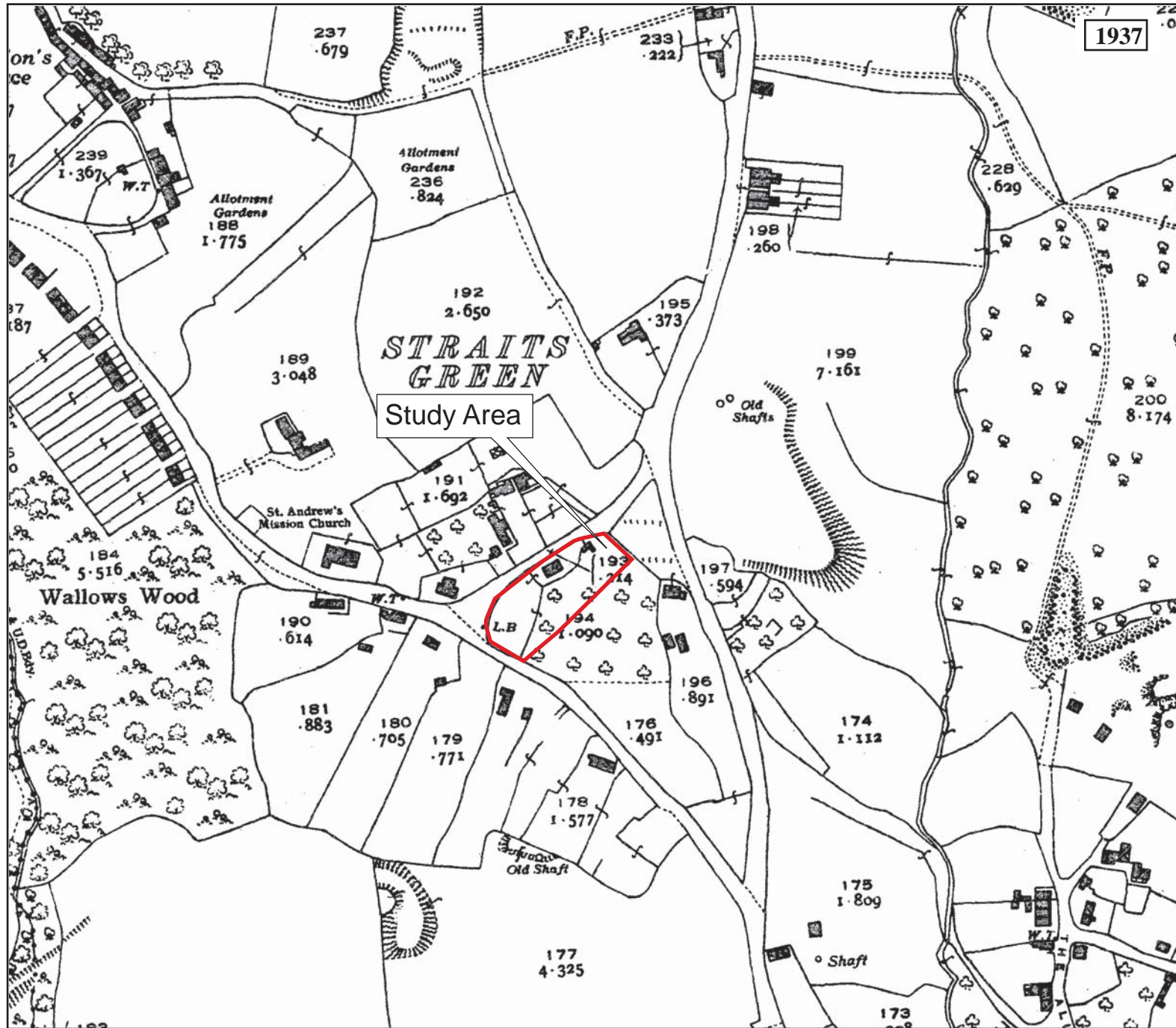


Fig.7



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6