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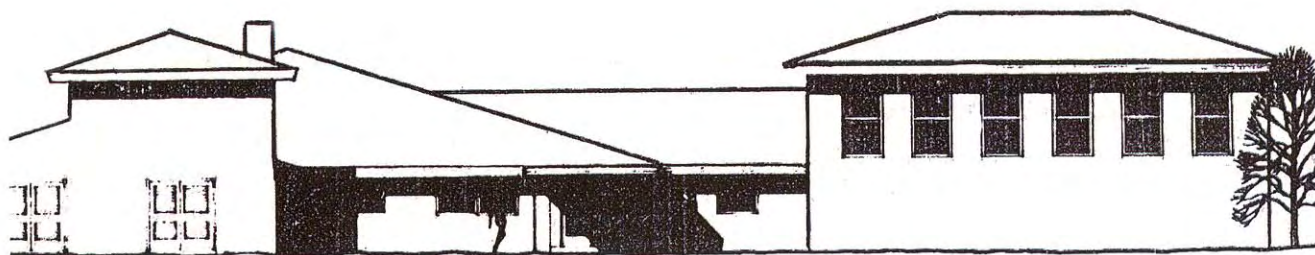


THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Ridge Hill Hospital, Wordsley,
Dudley MBC,
West Midlands**

Desk-based Assessment

2007



Frontispiece: Architect's conjectural vision for Ridge Hill Hospital

Checked by	
Supervisor.....	date.....
Project Manager.....	date.....



Project No. 1612

May 2007

**Ridge Hill Hospital, Wordsley, Dudley MBC,
West Midlands**

Desk-based Assessment 2007

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RIDGE HILL HOSPITAL, WORDSLEY, DUDLEY, WEST MIDLANDS

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SUMMARY

In May 2007, Birmingham Archaeology carried out a desk-based assessment of Ridge Hill Hospital, Wordsley, Dudley MBC, West Midlands. The work was commissioned by DTZ Consulting and Research on behalf of Dudley Primary Care Trust in order to highlight the archaeological implications of a proposed residential development at the site. A search was made of all readily available published and unpublished documentary records, including maps, illustrations and archaeological and geotechnic records, primarily at Dudley Archives and Local History Centre. Dudley Sites and Monuments Records 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 a site with little development on it until the construction of the hospital buildings in the late 1970s. The only tangible evidence for development here prior to this was the existence of a brick kiln in the late 18th and early 19th-centuries, whilst earthworks on Cooknell Hill may be related to the Second World War period. The development of Ridge Hill Hospital at the study area in the late 1970s was the first major development in an area historically almost exclusively utilised as pastureland. This hospital development radically altered the landscape and topography of the study area, with plateaus being created for buildings, pools being drained, and a stream running through the site being culverted. Recommendations are made for future archaeological work.

RIDGE HILL HOSPITAL, WORDSLEY, DUDLEY MBC, WEST MIDLANDS AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, 2007.

1 INTRODUCTION

In May 2007 Birmingham Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of Ridge Hill Hospital, Wordsley (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by DTZ Consulting and Research, on behalf of Dudley Primary Care Trust in advance of a proposed residential development.

This report outlines the results of the assessment, which was carried out between the 8th and 14th of May 2007, 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 2007) in accordance with guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (DoE 1990).

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

Ridge Hill Hospital is situated in an area known as Buckpool which lies approximately two miles north of Stourbridge, Dudley Metropolitan Borough, West Midlands, centred on NGR SO 8825685133 (Fig 2) (Plates 1 to 6). It occupies an irregular-shaped, northwest to southeast orientated site, of approximately 13 hectares. The site is bound by Wordsley Brook and Brierley Hill Road to the south, Cooknell Hill to the west, Auckland Road to the east, and the former Wordsley Hospital to the North. The main point of access to the site is from Brierley Hill Road to the south.

According to the 1967 Solid and Drift map (sheet 167 Staffordshire) the underlying geology consists of lower mottled soft red sandstone flanked to west by Cooknell Hill which is made up of Breccia or Clent group red marls, breccia and sandstone.

Cooknell Hill has been described as a significant geological feature;

“The stream sections and quarry combined with the road exposures create a superb area for teaching many aspects of local geology. Marls of the Eruria formation and sandstones can be found in the flanks of the stream, red and purple Clent Breccias in the adjacent footpath following the stream and dune bedded sandstones of Bridgnorth Sandstone Formation can be seen in the old quarry. The Gornal conglomerate of the Kidderminster Formation is excellently exposed at the roadside. Dip and scarp features can be seen, as well as branches of the Boundary Faults” (Dudley 2005, 3.3.3)

The present character of the study area is of undulating areas of landscaping and mature woodland interspersed with roadways, footpaths, and levelled out plateaus, where the largely one-storey hospital buildings stand. Topographically the site forms a plateau at the northern edge of the site towards the site of the former Wordsley Hospital. The site then generally falls on both sides towards the stream that runs through the centre of the site and the entire study area falls increasingly steeper towards the south boundary formed by the steep valley sides of Wordsley Brook. The site also rises significantly to the west to form Cooknell Hill, which is a rather prominent feature in the surrounding landscape (Fig 3).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective was to define the likely extent, survival and significance of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed development by collating existing archaeological and historical information for the site, 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 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 Centre, Birmingham Central Library, and the Library of the University of Birmingham. The Dudley 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 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

A search of the Dudley MBC Sites and Monuments Record (Fig 4) shows that there has been no previous archaeological work carried out at the study area. A number of phases of archaeological work have been carried out at the neighbouring Wordsley Hospital site, (SMR 7547 and SMR 7669) including a Historic Buildings Assessment (Upson 2004), and a programme of Historic Building Recording (Hislop, Kelleher, and Lobb 2007). These have revealed a site with a long history of providing eleemosynary and healthcare services to both the poor and the local community. A number of the standing buildings on the site have achieved Local listing status ensuring that they will be preserved and utilised in any future development.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

6.1 Prehistoric

There is no evidence for prehistoric presence/activity in the Wordsley area. Archaeological field-walking has failed to uncover any prehistoric objects/artefacts (John Hemingway pers. comm.)

6.2 Roman

There is no evidence for any Roman presence/activity in the Wordsley area.

6.3 Anglo-Saxon

An understanding of Anglo-Saxon activity/presence in this area can be derived from the onomastic evidence. W.H. Duignan, (1902, 176) the authority on Staffordshire placenames, traces the development of the placename Wordsley from the Anglo-Saxon personal name Wulfweard, i.e. Wulfweard's lea, lea meaning untilled land used as pasture, the unenclosed parts of a manor, which might be grassy, bushy, woody, or varied. This interpretation is corroborated by Watts (2004, 352). The first recorded mention of Wordsley in any form is as Wuluardeslea in the 12th century (Duignan 1902, 176). The Domesday Book (1086) records

that Wordsley was part of manor owned by Edward the Confessor containing Kingswinford and Penkridge (Greenslade and Stuart 1984, 17).

6.4 Medieval

Following the Norman Conquest, the manor, which Wordsley formed part of, was inherited by William the Conqueror. In the 13th-century the whole area of the parish of Suineford (modern day Kingswinford) north and south of the Stour was “wooded, with farms and villages set in clearings made at the best sites” (Chandler 1988, 37). Wordsley was by far the largest centre in the parish, with perhaps “sixty or seventy houses or cottages. Its original nucleus was near the brook, probably at the crossroads formed by Mill Street, Watery Lane and Brewery Street (Chandler 1988, 41). Cockin notes that by the 16th-century a small village may have developed at Wordsley, and by the 17th-century houses had been built along the modern High Street (Chandler 1988, 41).

6.5 Post-medieval

The settlement at Wordsley continued to grow as the population expanded with the development of a very early glassmaking industry in the mid to late 18th-century. This industry, which continues today, was sited at Wordsley mainly because it had all of the necessary raw materials, i.e. coal, fireclay sand, and potash, needed for the production of glass and glass products (Raven 1988, 395). This industry was given further impetus when the Stourbridge canal was driven through in 1779, giving it access to a wider lucrative market and contributed to Wordsley being one of the “most significant seats” of the industry in the country (Godfrey and Richardson 1978, 23). In 1834, it was believed that the Glassworks of Messrs Webb and Richardson at Wordsley was “the oldest in the country” History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Staffordshire 1834, 267). In addition to the glassmaking industry, Wordsley also had an ironworks, and a number of coal mines in its immediate vicinity, whilst the manufacturing of nails in the Kingswinford Parish is said to have begun at Wordsley. Despite this development and increase in population, much of the land around Wordsley remained undeveloped, and by the early 20th century it still had more than half of its land under plough (VCH 1967, 229). In the 18th-century much of the land in the vicinity of the study area was sold to the Earl of Dudley “under one of the Enclosure Acts” (Smith 1994, 24). One of the most significant developments at Wordsley in the early 19th-century was the construction of the workhouse to the north of the study area. This was further expanded in the 1830s, 1870s, and was completely rebuilt in the early 20th-century.

7 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

As noted above, much of the area surrounding Wordsley remained as undeveloped pastureland until the 20th-century. With regard to the study area, cartographic evidence shows that the land was largely undeveloped until the construction of the hospital in the late 1970s. The only development of note prior to this is the existence of a brick kiln in the area in Fowler’s map of 1822 (Fig 5) (SMR 7692). The construction of this kiln in this area was presumably influenced by its proximity to Crag Pool, which would have provided a necessary source of water for the workings of the kiln. This kiln is likely to have been in existence since before the mid 18th-century as a Brick Kiln Close is recorded nearby in 1750 (Fig 6) (Dudley MBC Map 2006). Fowler’s map also shows Cooknell Hill as being under woodland, and shows the earliest phase of workhouse buildings to the north.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7) delineates that this brick kiln had gone out of use and had been removed by 1884. This map shows no further development in the study area. The Workhouse had expanded significantly by this time and there had been some major development around Wordsley village to the southwest. Little had changed by the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7) apart for the construction of the Kingswinford and Amblecote

Joint Hospital (Infectious Diseases) section, just outside the study area to the northeast. Major changes can be seen to the Workhouse buildings in the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7), the hospital buildings were encroaching further southwards towards the study area, which continued to lie undeveloped. This situation had not changed much by the time of the 4th edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7) in 1938. The Dudley SMR also records a series of earthworks (SMR 12358) on the top of Cooknell Hill, which have been interpreted by David Cox of the Black Country Society as a Second World War searchlight or anti-aircraft emplacement (From SMR entry 12358) (Fig 8).

It appears that the study area remained unchanged until the Ridge Hill Hospital development was constructed in the late 1970s. As part of this development it would seem that Crag pool and a further pool to the southeast was drained and the stream which runs through the site was culverted. Further landscape changes were carried out with flat plateaus created for the buildings with “the land mounded around them” (Dudley MBC 2005 3.3). The situation of these single storey structures within these manufactured hollows, surrounded by large landscaped areas ensures that the landscape is the “predominant feature of this site” (Dudley MBC 2005).

The hospital buildings which were constructed on this newly landscaped site, and which still occupy the site today, were at the forefront of hospital design and development in the late 1970s. The Ridge Hill development has been described as a “revolutionary project” and, as a “prototype garden village for mentally handicapped patients” (Fig 9) (County Examiner 13/06/1975, 43). The vision for Ridge Hill was to create a village-like atmosphere for the patients with living, learning, working, and recreational facilities for 120 mentally handicapped adults and 48 children in “the first venture of its kind in Europe” (County Examiner 13/06/1975, 43). The site was further developed in subsequent years with the construction of Pen Meadows Special School, and Gorstey Fields Nursing Home.

The Special School and Nursing Home continue to operate up to the present date; however the “garden village” housing for mentally handicapped patients has mostly been shut down.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment has revealed a site with very little development on it until the mid to late 20th century. The only tangible evidence for development here prior to this was the existence of a brick kiln in the late 18th and early 19th-centuries, whilst earthworks on Cooknell Hill may be related to the Second World War period. The development of Ridge Hill Hospital in the study area in the late 1970s was the first major development in an area historically almost exclusively utilised as pastureland. This hospital development radically altered the landscape and topography of the study area, with plateaus being created for buildings, pools being drained, and a stream running through the site being culverted.

According to the Wordsley and Ridge Hill Hospitals Development Brief (Dudley MBC 2005 3.3) there are a number of constraints for any future development of the site. These are largely environmental/landscape constraints, including the fact that part of the site is located within a Landscape Heritage Area, a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Green Belt, and a portion of it is in an area of Special Local Importance for Nature Conservation. Archaeologically, there are two main zones of potential, the first of these is on the bank of the former Crag Pool (which may be reinstated as part of a future development (Dudley MBC 2005, 91). As delineated above cartographic evidence has shown that a brick kiln was in existence here from the late 18th-century, it would be advisable that if any future development was to take place in this area that an archaeological watching brief be carried as a form of mitigation.

The second zone of archaeological potential is at the summit of Cooknell Hill. If this is to be developed in any future scheme it is advisable that an archaeological evaluation is carried out to help provide an understanding of the nature, extent, and survival of below ground archaeology. This should also be supplemented with a topographic/geophysical survey of the remains prior to evaluation. This would be more cogent as Kirsty Nichol of Birmingham Archaeology (pers. comm.) is sceptical with regard to David Cox's interpretation of these features as being Second World War gun or searchlight emplacements, which would incidentally take the form of those extant ones shown in the example provided (Fig 10).

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by DTZ Consulting and Research, on behalf of Dudley Primary Care Trust. Thanks are due to Gareth Smith and Penny Williams-Debuis for their co-operation and assistance throughout the project. Thanks also go to John Hemingway who monitored the project on behalf of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. The assessment was undertaken by Shane Kelleher who also produced the written report which was illustrated by Bryony Ryder and edited by Malcolm Hislop who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology.

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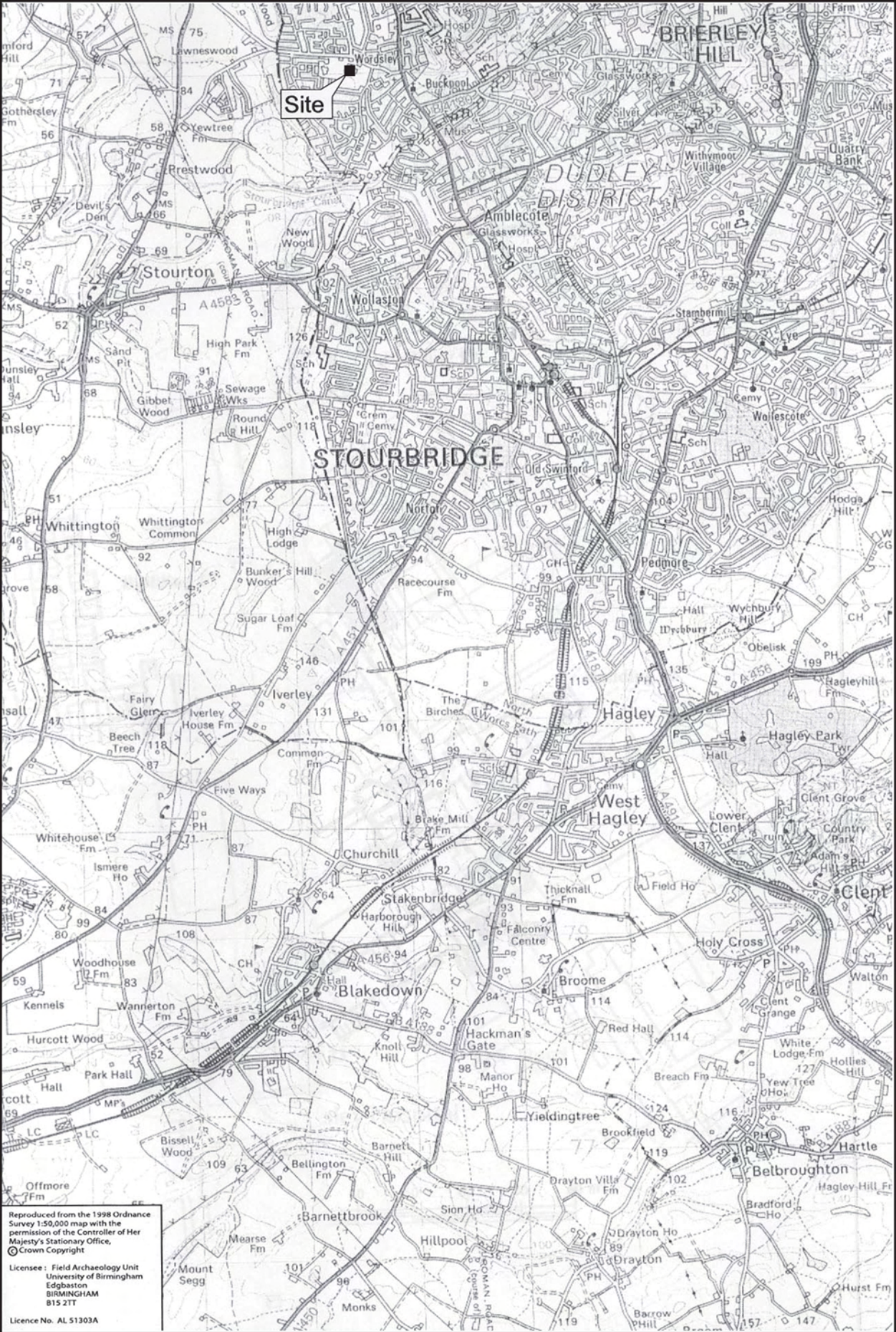
1903 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Staffordshire.

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Site

STOURBRIDGE

DUDLEY DISTRICT

BRIERLEY HILL

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Fig.1

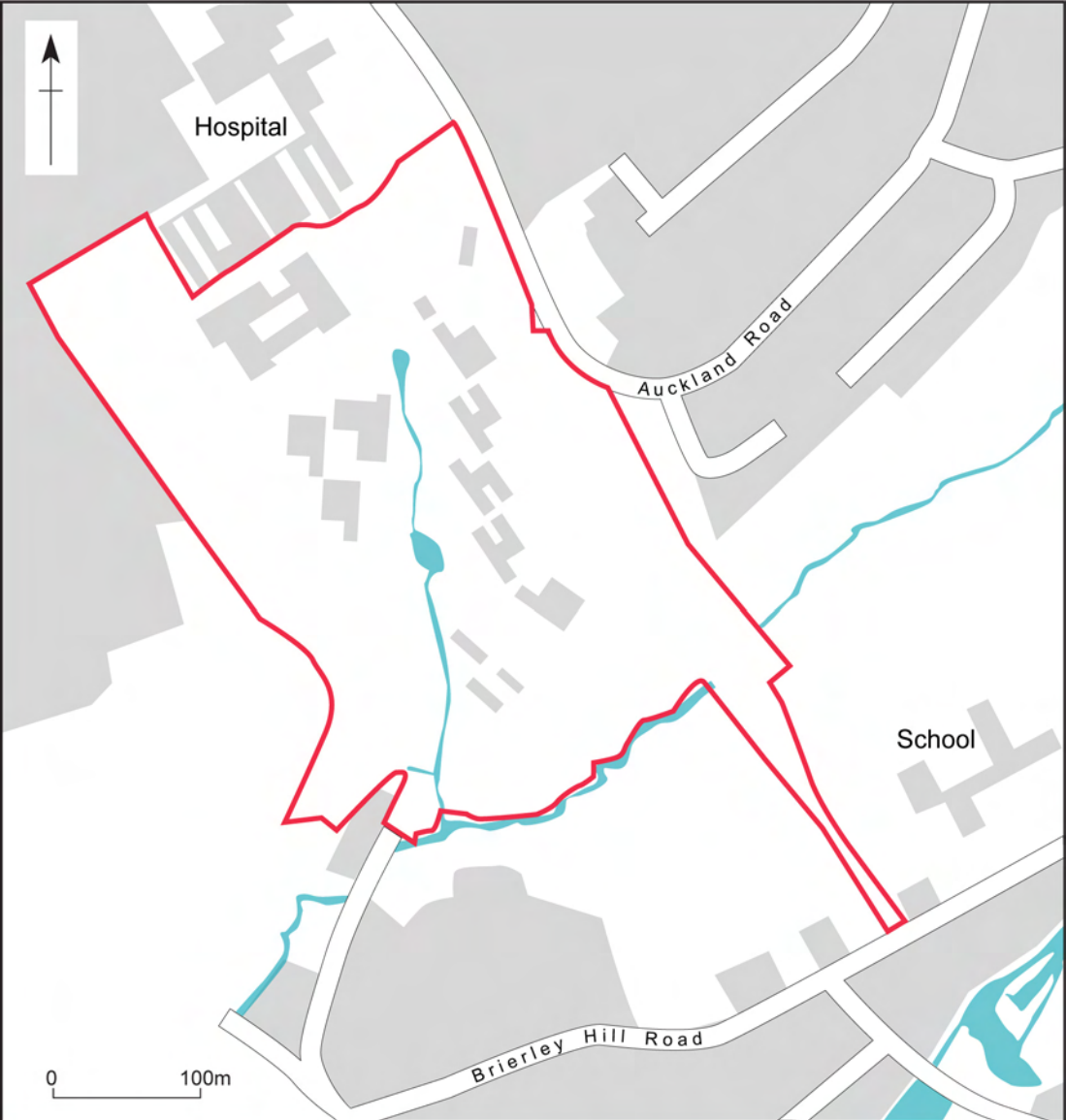


Fig.2



Fig.5

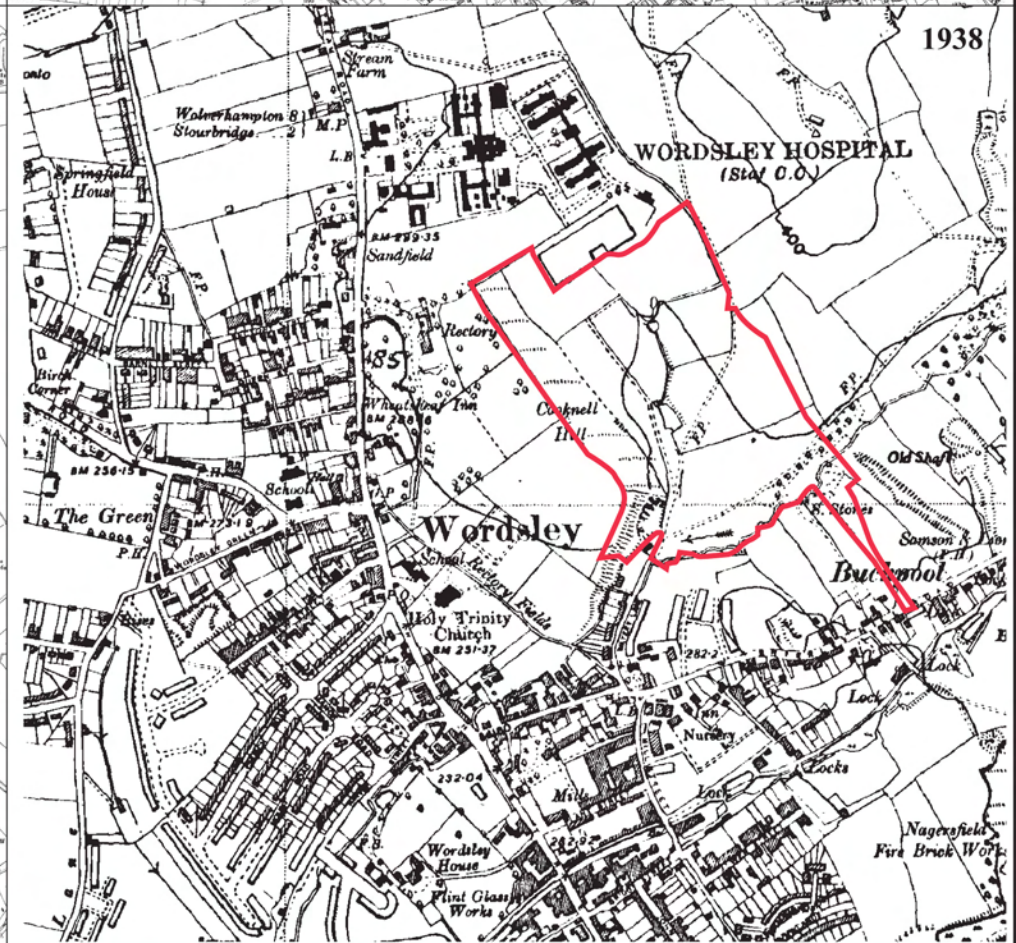
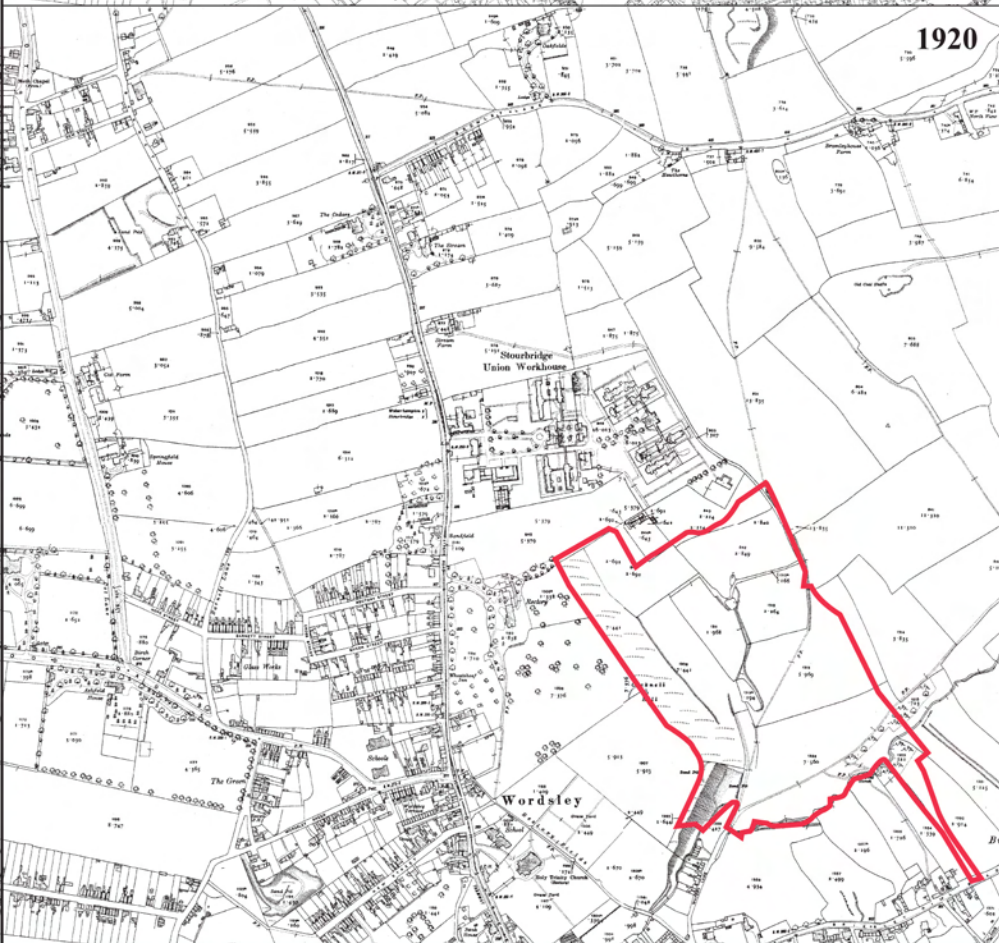
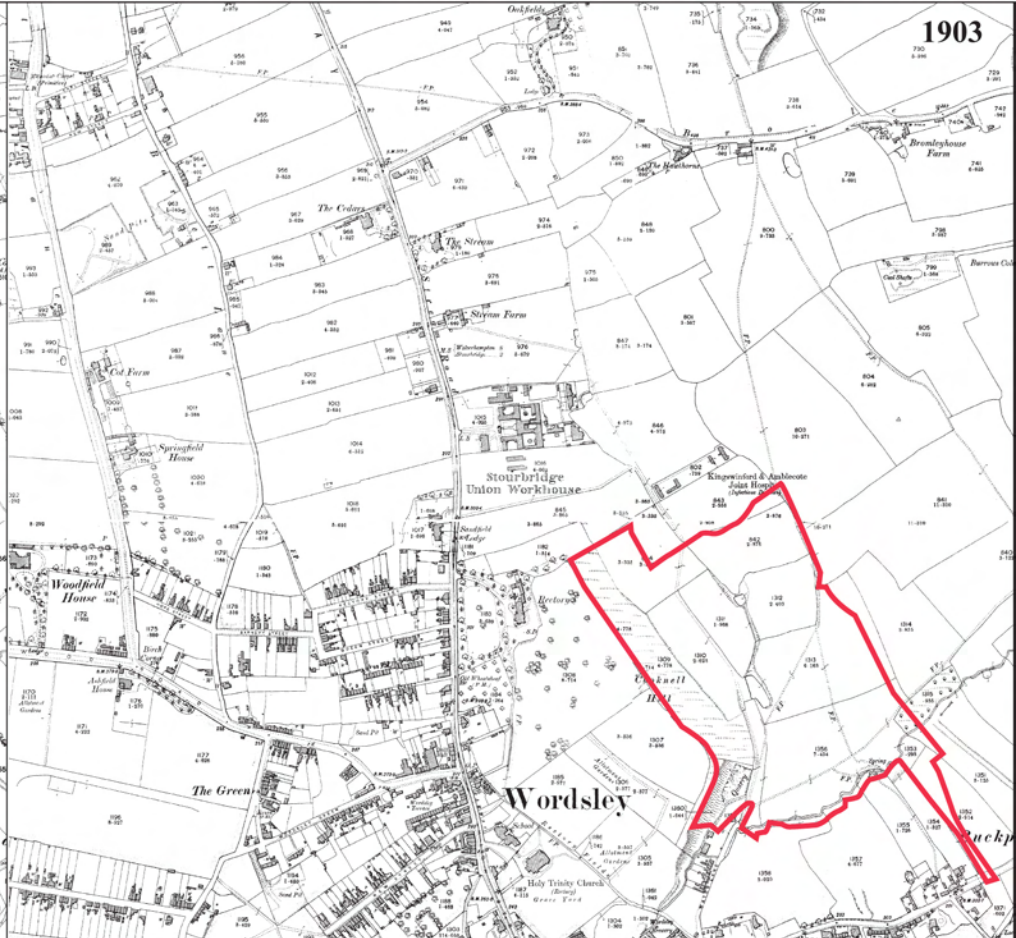
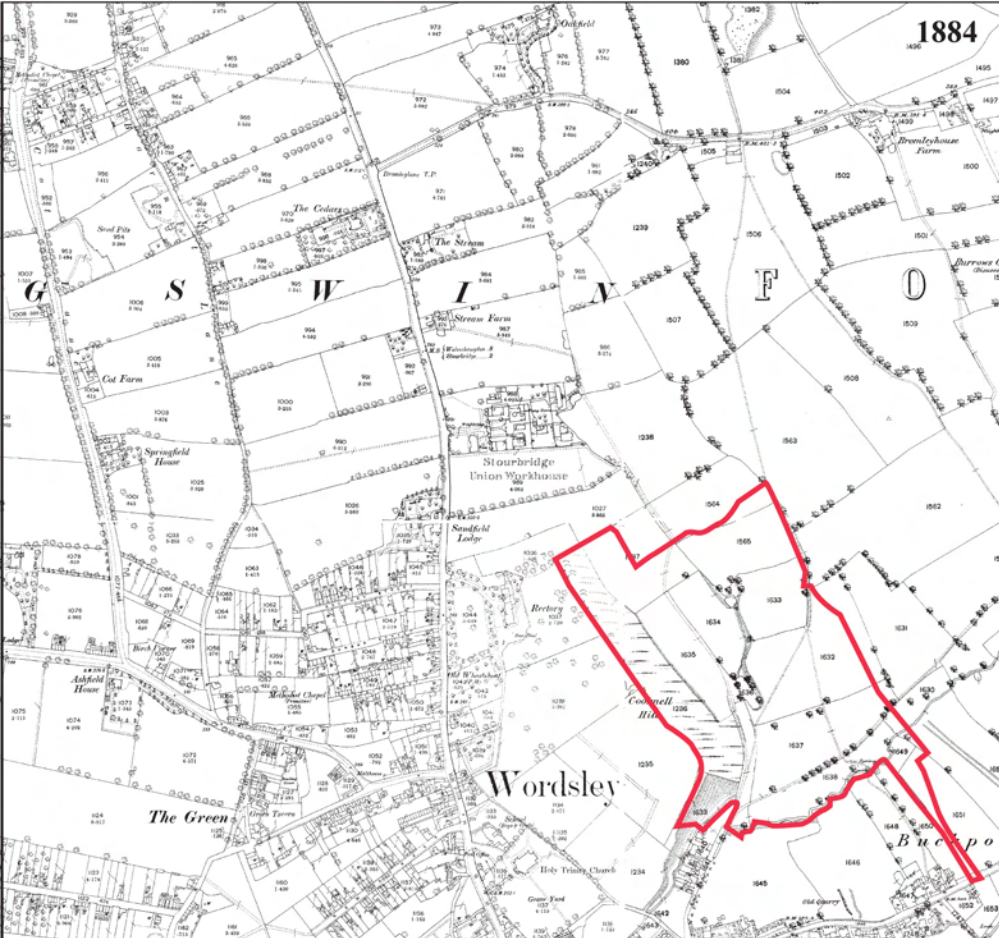


Fig.7



Fig.8

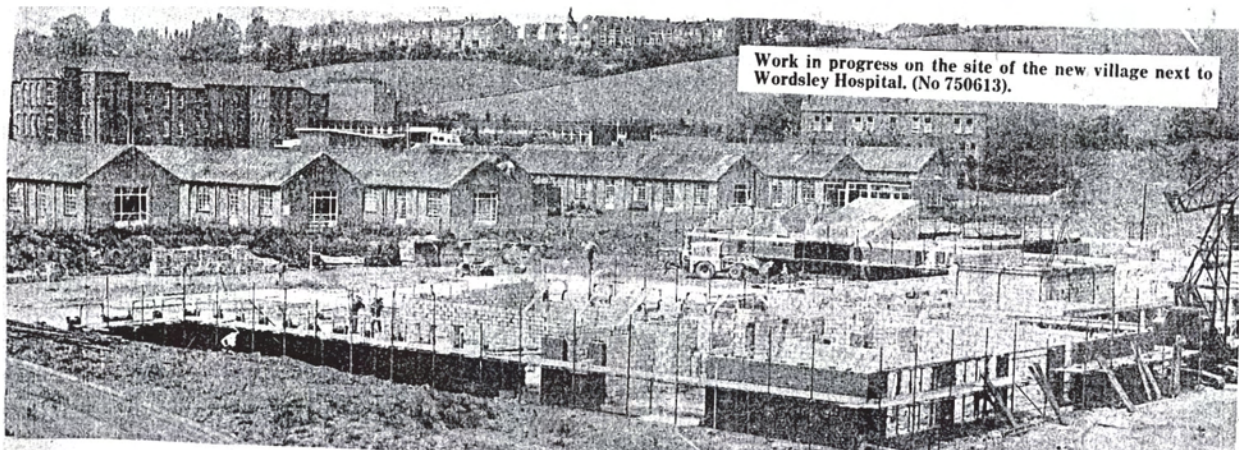


Fig.9



Fig.10



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6