

**Martineau Galleries,
Birmingham:**

**An archaeological desk-based
assessment 2004**

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Martineau Galleries, Birmingham: An archaeological desk-based assessment

Summary

In June 2004 Birmingham Archaeology carried out a desk-based assessment for Drivers Jonas, on behalf of Land Securities, in advance of the proposed redevelopment of Martineau Galleries, Birmingham (NGR SP07318 87030). The study area is located on the outskirts of the medieval town and is partially within the boundary of the Priory of St. Thomas. Although subjected to intensive development, particularly the creation of Corporation Street in the late 19th century, and the later construction of the Inner Ring Road and 1960s and 1970s commercial buildings, recent archaeological excavation within the city centre has demonstrated that important archaeological remains may survive as isolated islands between areas of later disturbance. Therefore, it is recommended that several levels of archaeological mitigation, including evaluation and watching briefs are undertaken prior to, and during, the commencement of any groundworks.

1.0 Introduction

In June 2004 Birmingham Archaeology carried out a desk-based assessment for Drivers Jonas, on behalf of Land Securities ahead of the proposed development of the Martineau Galleries in Birmingham City Centre (hereafter called the study area, Figs. 1 & 2). This report provides a detailed assessment of the above and below-ground archaeology within the study area for integration into the broader Environmental Impact Assessment of the Martineau Galleries redevelopment scheme. The assessment adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

A previous desk-based assessment compiled by Litherland and Mould (1997) encompassed some of the current study area (Fig. 3). This report summarises this earlier document and provides a revised set of recommendations for an archaeological response in the light of recent archaeological discoveries. In addition, a new area to the east of Dale End (currently Dale House and properties to the south) was included within the remit of this report.

2.0 Site location

The study area (centred on NGR SP 07318 87030) is located within the centre of Birmingham, to the north of New Street and to the east of St. Philip's Cathedral. The site is bounded by Corporation Street, Priory Queensway, Moor Street Queensway, and Bull Street. The site is bisected by both Albert Street and Dale End.

3.0 Geology

The study area is located to the west of the Birmingham Fault on a narrow Keuper Sandstone Ridge of the Triassic age. The drift geology comprises sand and gravel bands of glacial origin (OS Drift Geology sheet 168).

4.0 Objectives

The general aims of this assessment were:

- 1) To determine the likely survival and significance of archaeological remains within and around the proposed development site, in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.
- 2) To summarise the previous archaeological desk-based study (1997) and to re-assess the recommendations made within.
- 3) To expand the search area to include the new areas to the east of Dale End.
- 4) To identify the requirement (if any) for field evaluation to investigate areas of possible archaeological remains potentially affected by development.

5.0 Method

For this assessment, the term archaeological remains consists of features of archaeological, historical, and architectural value, and can include standing buildings, earthworks, buried remains, palaeoenvironmental evidence, the sites of historical events or historical associations, historical landscape elements, and artefact scatters.

The assessment comprised a site inspection and a search of primary and secondary sources and maps held by Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record, Birmingham Local Studies Library and Birmingham University Library.

For simplicity, this assessment will divide the site into zones defining areas of archaeological potential (Fig. 4).

Sources

Primary and secondary sources were consulted at:

- Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record
- Birmingham Central Library and the University Library
- Birmingham Archaeology

Maps

The following historic maps were consulted during the course of this assessment:

- '1553' a conjectural map map compiled by Hill and Bickley in 1890
- 1731 (Westley)
- 1751 (Bradford)
- 1778 (Hanson)
- 1781 (Hanson)
- 1808 (Kempson)
- 1828 (Piggott Smith)
- 1887 (OS)
- 1951(OS)
- 1969(OS)

Those maps reproduced as figures in this report have been overlain by the study area. With some of the earlier maps, the location of the study area is approximate due to a lack of recognisable landmarks.

6.0 Archaeological and historical context

At the time of the Domesday Book Birmingham was a small agricultural settlement. The pre-urban framework was dominated by the topography of the land, in particular the Rea valley, its associated floodplains and subsidiaries and crossing in Digbeth, and the elevated sandstone ridge. Following the granting of its market charter in 1166, Birmingham rapidly became the principle market town for the immediate region (Holt 1985). The convergence of several important regional routes, including roads to Coventry, Warwick, Wolverhampton, and Worcester, was also in factor in the rapid growth of the town, which was characterised by successive development of land parcels along the primary roads, such as Dale End, together with the construction of new roads, such as Moor Street, between intersections of the existing network (Baker *et al.* 1995).

In 1285, the Priory and Hospital of St. Thomas was founded at the northern limit of the medieval town, in keeping with typical urban development of the period (Cullum 1993). The precinct was located to the north-west of Dale End, and its south-eastern limits probably extended into the western part of this study area (Fig. 5).

By 1300, the population of medieval Birmingham had expanded to around 1,500, accompanied by an increased demand for housing plots and space for markets and industrial activity (Holt 1985). Both Holt and Baker suggest that much of the historic central zone of Birmingham was probably laid out before c.1400.

Situated on the northern fringes of the medieval town, subsequent development within the study area was characterised by a series of large-scale interventions, probably beginning with the dissolution of the Priory in 1536. It is likely that development between 1550 and 1700 was limited to the established properties fronting Dale End and Bull Street, with the Priory lands not being sold off until after the Civil War. The creation of The Old Square in the 1700s represented a planned Georgian accretion to the town. By the late 19th century, The area around Old Square had deteriorated, prompting Chamberlain's Improvement Scheme, including slum clearance and the insertion of Corporation Street. In this light, the construction of the dual carriageway (Priory Queensway) and its associated retail development in the 1960s and 70s, including the construction of Dale House, can be seen as the latest in a series of large-scale development projects in the area.

Recent archaeological evidence

No archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the study area. However, a number of archaeological projects within the immediate and local environs have produced evidence suggesting there is a potential for archaeological remains to be present within the development area, although it can be demonstrated that there is a high probability of heavy truncation and modern disturbance.

Two comprehensive archaeological assessments of Masshouse (Watt 2001) and Digbeth (Mould 1999) have thoroughly documented the development of the land directly to the east of this study area. Within these areas, several archaeological excavations have identified important archaeological remains.

Archaeological excavation and observation was undertaken during groundworks replacing the existing carriageway at Masshouse Circus, located approximately 150m east of the study area (Krakowicz and Rudge 2004). Several 18th -century brick structures were identified fronting onto Chapel Street, together with human remains from the churchyard of St. Bartholomew's Chapel. These human remains were encountered at a depth of 1.55m below the existing ground surface. However, an archaeological evaluation on land just to the north failed to identify any other archaeological deposits (Goad 2003).

Excavations carried out by BUFAU as part of the Bullring redevelopment have discovered occupation and activity dating from the 12th and 13th centuries up to the present day, including evidence of industrial and commercial activity. Excavations at Moor Street (Mould forthcoming) revealed archaeological deposits survived despite heavy truncation caused by modern building. While other excavations carried out in the Digbeth area have demonstrated the survival of archaeological deposits from the medieval and post-medieval periods, usually as islands between later cellarage, foundations and other truncation, for example at Hartwell Garage, Digbeth (Burrows *et al* 2000).

Archaeological work comprising two trenches within the southeastern corner of the junction of Bordesley Street and Park Street (Tavener 2000) (SMR 20619) revealed a buried soil containing pottery dating to c.1700 and a medieval jug handle. This site lies just outside the southern border of the study area.

Therefore, recent archaeological excavations in the City Centre have demonstrated that there was a continuation of the use of property boundaries from the medieval period onwards, suggesting good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and features. Also, despite the fact that, in some cases, earlier deposits have been truncated or removed by 19th- and 20th-century cellarage and the digging of building foundations, the survival of archaeological deposits dating from the medieval and post-medieval periods, as islands between later disturbance, has effectively been demonstrated.

7.0 Archaeological profile of Martineau Galleries

This section provides a comprehensive archaeological assessment of the study area using historical documents in conjunction with cartographic and photographic sources. The section is divided into the following sub-headings: Present character, Archaeological profile, Archaeological potential, and Recommendations for an archaeological response.

Present character

The study area is approximately 3.5 hectares in area and slopes significantly from Corporation Street down towards Dale End and Moor Street. It is dominated by 1960s and 70s concrete structures with mixed commercial and retail properties, including Dale House, a combination of retail premises and a multi-storey car park to the east (Plates 1 and 2). A small area of disused land, including tarmac standing and grass, surrounds Dale House to the east and north.

No Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Grade 1 listed buildings are located within the study area or its immediate environs.

Archaeological profile

Medieval primary sources are scarce for Birmingham, and the lack of records regarding the Priory of St. Thomas is no exception, although it can be established that land was endowed in 1286, with the priory dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle and the hospital dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr (Thomas of Canterbury). It was of Augustinian foundation, consisting of a free church, hospital, graveyard, rabbit warren, cherry orchard and a house for the clerk (Hill and Dent 1897).

The precise location of the priory buildings and the extent of the land remains unclear, particularly when considering the modern urban framework. However, in line with other monastic foundations, particularly those with associated hospitals and graveyards, the priory was usually founded on land immediately outside the medieval town (Butler 1993), and close to its own water supply (Cullum 1993). The priory is depicted on the 1553 conjectural map by Hill and Bickley, although this is to be taken cautiously as it was drawn up in 1890 from a variety of written sources (Fig.5). It shows the priory and the associated land, some of which falls into the confines of the study area. It also highlights a number of regularly-spaced medieval burgage plots fronting onto Dale End and Chapel Street under "Various holdings" and "Ancient holdings" as well as land owned by the Phillipps family, and the late Gild further to the west. In Bickley's translated survey of Birmingham 1553 (1890), it states, "*John Elyott....held considerable properties under the Gild, including Dale House, Dale End, where he doubtless lived, and property on Chapel Street and English Market*".

Observations by Hutton, and later by Hill and Dent, suggest that the Priory precinct buildings were constructed of local red sandstone, and were possibly located on the site of the later Georgian Square marked on Westley's map of 1731 (Fig.6). It was also noted by Hill and Dent that the chapel may have been located on the site of the 18th century Upper Minories: "*part of its walls still remained buried under the shop on the south side of that street occupied by Mr.Berill*". However, it is unclear if these walls were *in situ* or merely consisted of reused stones from Priory buildings after its dissolution in 1549. It was, however, noted that the architect took great care to preserve the walls during reconstruction of these properties.

Although it remains unclear if the Priory had a cemetery, the possibility should not be discounted when assessing the archaeological potential of the study area. Reports of a graveyard between the Square, the Coach Yard, and Bull Street, were noted by Hill and Dent (1897) when discussing the construction of the Old Square and the laying

out of Corporation Street. A skeleton found near the Minories appears to have lain within the walls of the chapel. The rabbit warren and cherry orchard, as illustrated on the 1553 conjectural map would have been located outside of the Priory precinct, possibly corresponding to the cherry orchard mapped by Westley in 1731.

Dissolution of the Priory took place in 1549. Although it is unclear at what date the buildings were dismantled, stone and other building material was probably systematically robbed and reused from this date. The majority of the Priory lands were sold off after the Civil War by the Holte family of Aston Hall. The land within the study area was situated on higher ground, slightly away from, but within easy reach of the town centre, making it highly desirable to Georgian building speculators, such that by 1731 it had several characteristics of a planned Georgian development.

According to Westley's map of 1731 Chappell Street was now also called Bull Street, a name originating from the Bull Tavern (Whybrow and Waterhouse 1976). The only evidence for the location of the priory is the street names of Upper and Lower Priory. The character of the Old Square and its local environment was typified by a high number of formal and ornamental gardens, as was the parcel of land between Dale End and Moor Street. In contrast, the properties to the south of Bull Street were much more tightly packed, matching more closely the medieval burgage plot boundaries illustrated on Hill and Bickley's conjectural 1553 map. Further to the south, the former priory cherry orchard was partially divided into backplots, with only a small part of the orchard surviving, divided by a lane that will later be called Cherry Street.

Bradford's map of 1750 (Fig. 7) demonstrates that building activity continued within the study area at some pace. The study area became a victim of its own success as the demand for property remained unquenched. The results were the sacrifice of gardens and backplots to development. On the frontages of Dale End, the properties were now more tightly packed with lower status housing in court arrangements, although the east frontage properties on Moor Street were slightly less densely arranged with larger backplot gardens to the rear. To the south of Bull Street, the western portion of Cherry Street was straightened with a number of properties built along its frontage. Its former northeasterly course continued as Crooked Lane.

Hanson's map of 1778 does not show any major changes to the study area (Fig.8). Hanson's map of 1781 is also schematic in representation. Kempson's map of 1808 (Fig. 9), although schematic, shows the removal of Welch Cross from the southern end of Dale End, also depicted are the Stork Hotel and the Saracen's Head close to the Old Square.

The major development depicted on Piggott Smith's map of 1828 is the construction of the Church of St Peter to the east of Dale End, and located within the study area (Fig. 10). The ecclesiastical parish records describe the Church as a Greek Revival building with a cupola and a doric portico designed by Rickman and Hutchinson, consecrated in 1827. It was gutted by fire in 1831 and restored and reopened in 1837, acquiring its own urban parish in 1847. It is unlikely that there was a graveyard associated with the church. The Ordnance Survey map of 1887 (Fig. 11) depicts trees to the north and west of the building, but gives no indication of a cemetery, and the incomplete ecclesiastical parish records do not give any indications that burials took place. The church closed in 1899 and was converted into a YMCA hostel.

In the late 19th century the study area was completely re-designed by Joseph Chamberlain (Upton 1993). The insertion of Corporation Street obliterated the earlier plot pattern and replaced it with a Parisian-style boulevard (Fig. 12). Approximately 600 buildings were demolished, 375 of these domestic houses. This clearance followed on from similar projects undertaken in 1845-54 for the stations at New Street and Snow Hill. This wholesale, large-scale clearance was justified as the removal of insanitary slums under the 1875 Act of Parliament to allow corporations the power to acquire, demolish and redevelop such areas. The insertion of Corporation Street also involved the demolition of a number of timber-framed buildings and Regency-style properties on Bull Street. All traces of domestic housing largely disappeared, being replaced by larger scale Victorian commercial development in keeping with one of the major manufacturing and trading cities of the British Empire.

The cut and shut tunnel for the Great Western Railway station at Snow Hill also cuts the study area entering it at the junction of Dale End and High Street, and continues west to Union Passage.

Development within the study area remained relatively static for the first half of the 20th century, until the 1960s when the area was subjected to a number of large-scale re-developments, beginning with the construction of the Inner Ring Road (Fig. 14). A project of massive scale, the new scheme was an attempt to ease congestion within the city centre. During the construction of the Priory Queensway, the site of The Old Square was sunk below the new road level, although the Lower Priory stretch had to be built up to compensate for the downward slope from Upper to Lower Priory and to Dale End.

Dale House, currently accounting for the eastern part of the study area, was built in the mid 1970s as retail premises and a multi-storey car park. This construction would have involved major groundworks, although it is possible a large volume of material was imported onto the existing ground level to compensate for the downward slope from Dale End to Moor Street.

Archaeological potential

Over the last few years, the profile of archaeology of Birmingham has risen considerably. Intensive fieldwork at several locations within the town centre has revealed significant archaeological survival despite heavy truncation and modern ground disturbance. The archaeology can provide an important source to supplement the documentary evidence, with, in general terms, the older the archaeological remains, the more important the evidence becomes. The origins of medieval Birmingham are still not fully understood, with documentary evidence being so scarce. The study area also has clear potential for investigating the early settlement and expansion of the medieval town as well as the development of the town outskirts, including the Priory of St. Thomas and Hospital (which itself is a rare resource). The archaeology of the study area also has the potential to catalogue the progression from medieval market to Chamberlain's late-19th century shopping boulevard, with particular reference to intensive structural activity on the street frontages.

With no record of any previous archaeological fieldwork undertaken within the study area, coupled the absence of any geotechnical information, various sources, including historical accounts, site inspection, and modern foundation plans, were used in conjunction with the baseline survey to assess the archaeological potential.

No geotechnical information was found by the present assessment so to assess any alterations of ground level within the study area, a comparison of ground level information focused in and around the study area was undertaken. Using a variety of historical Ordnance Survey maps, the levels were compared for Corporation Street, Bull Street, Moor Street and Dale End. The results are demonstrated below.

Street	Location	1889	1890	1918	1951	1969	1997	2004
<i>Bull Street</i>	Corporation St	132.89	132.89				134.70	134.70
	Dale End		127.71				127.40	127.40
<i>Dale End</i>	Priory Queensway	124.66	124.66					
	Union Street		128.01	128.01			127.40	127.40
<i>Corporation St</i>	Priory Queensway		132.28	132.28			132.22	132.22
	Union Street	134.11	134.11	133.50			133.50	133.50
<i>Albert Street</i>	Dale End	124.96			126.93	126.93		
	Moor Street	119.78			119.66	118.15		

The figures represented are heights AOD in metres.

Most of the significant changes in ground level appear to correspond to the modifications in and around Corporation Street and the construction of the Inner Ring Road.

We can infer from the history of street block development and the historical maps that modern cellarage has undoubtedly damaged archaeological features and deposits within the study area, particularly along the street frontages of Dale End and Bull Street. However previous urban excavations in the Midlands and further south in Bristol (*Colls forthcoming*) have demonstrated that often archaeological deposits do survive as isolated islands within areas of truncation caused by cellars or later disturbance such as piling. This may be relevant within the study area.

The study area is best defined using the following zones of archaeological potential (Zones 1-10; Fig. 4).

Zone 1: Comprises the disused land to the east of Dale House (Plates 1 & 2). Site inspection indicated that this area is presently undeveloped, suggesting it may be at the existing ground level prior to the construction of the Moor Street Queensway. As suggested on the historical maps, this area falls mainly into the backplots for the properties fronting onto Moor Street. Subsequently the potential for medieval archaeological deposits existing may be high, particularly as truncation due to cellarage should be minimal.

Zone 2: Comprises the properties fronting onto Dale End, to the south of Dale House. This area is some distance from the main areas of disruption associated with the construction of Corporation Street and the Inner Ring Road. The property boundaries appear to have remained relatively static, certainly as depicted on the 1887 Ordnance Survey map. It is possible they respect early medieval burgage plots fronting onto

Dale End; therefore, the archaeological potential may be considered to be quite good, although truncation due to cellarge will have to be assessed.

Zone 3: Consists of the length of Dale End. This road, one of the earliest medieval roads in Birmingham, is thought lie close to the eastern limit of the medieval town. The comparison of height data suggests no significant alteration in ground level has taken place. Truncation, with the exception of modern services, should be low, with a high potential for surviving archaeological features and deposits.

Zone 4: Consists of the line of Bull Street from Dale End to Corporation Street (Plate 3). Height data suggest the ground has been raised at Corporation Street but lowered at Dale End. Bull Street was widened by 14 ft in the early 20th century (Birmingham Sites Files 97/98) suggesting early structures may survive beneath the existing road surface.

Zone 5: Consists of the line of Corporation Street (Plate 4). Although the possibility of heavy truncation is great (modern services and subways), there is a moderate archaeological potential for *in situ* features and deposits to be present, particularly at greater depth.

Zone 6: Consisting of the lower end of the Priory Queensway, this area was located within the grounds of the Priory of St Thomas. The raising of the modern Priory Queensway to compensate for the downward slope may have enabled some archaeological deposits to have survived here.

Zone 7: Consisting of the line of Moor Street Queensway, this area approximately follows the line of the earlier Moor, or Mole Street. Although heavily truncated, early archaeological features and deposits may survive at greater depth.

Zone 8: Consists of an area centred on the Old Square. The potential for archaeological features and deposits is difficult to assess. The area is located within the medieval Priory grounds, but has been subjected to significant development in the 18th century and during the laying of Corporation Street and the Priory Queensway. The level of truncation during these periods of intense activity is difficult to assess at present, but indications suggest archaeological potential for this area is low.

Zone 9: Consists of the footprint of Dale House, and what was the location of the Church of St. Peter. Although the engineering schematics for construction are not available, a 1970s building of this type would have undoubtedly consisted of substantial concrete piling and major groundworks. It is possible that archaeological deposits survive as isolated islands between modern disturbances.

Zone 10: Consists of the commercial properties bounded by Dale End, Bull Street, Corporation Street, and Priory Queensway. The area is located within the limits of the medieval town. Truncation due to cellarge, under-ground parking, services, and loading bays, is likely to be high. There may also be ground contamination from an earlier chemical works in the zone. The potential for archaeological features and deposits is low.

Recommendations for an archaeological response.

The recommendations listed below provide a summary of the archaeological mitigation which may be required should the proposed redevelopment of Martineau Galleries be approved. The recommendations listed below are summary inferences based on the archaeological potential within the study identified during the course of this assessment. The specific nature of the mitigation strategy would be dependent upon any additional information, such as geotechnical surveys and proposed building designs, and would need approval from Dr Mike Hodder, the planning archaeologist for Birmingham City Council.

The importance of the documentary, cartographic, and photographic evidence for the study area should not be overlooked, especially as much of the above ground character has been systematically cleared during periods of intensive development. Therefore one recommendation is that a more extensive study of the above sources is carried out as part of the mitigation for the study area, potentially to be carried out in conjunction with any archaeological fieldwork. There is also potential for a web-site to be made cataloguing the new development and contrasting it with Chamberlain's plans for Corporation Street for which there is a very thorough and very earlier set of photographic records of the structures demolished as part of that scheme. Experience at the Bullring has demonstrated that archaeological and historical matters can raise a lot of good publicity for a potential developer and serve to popularise and publicise the proposed redevelopment.

For below ground investigations, the following levels of archaeological response are recommended:

Zones 1-4: As detailed above, there is high potential for archaeological features and deposits within these areas to provide evidence for the development of the medieval town and outskirts, through the 19th century alterations, to present day. It is recommended that these areas are subject to standard archaeological evaluation using sampling with trenches prior to the commencement of any groundworks on site. Depending on the results of these preliminary investigations, more intensive archaeological recording may be required in advance of groundworks. This might be carried in conjunction with geotechnical observations.

Zones 5-8: There is potential for archaeological deposits and features to survive in these areas, however, the level of truncation during the insertion of Corporation Street and the inner ring road is difficult to assess. It is recommended that a lower form of archaeological evaluation is undertaken prior to the commencement of groundworks here. This may take the form of test pits to investigate the level of truncation and archaeological survival. Depending on the results of these preliminary investigations, more intensive archaeological recording may be required in advance of groundworks.

Zones 9-10: Given the amount of truncation and ground disturbance potentially present in these areas, the potential for *insitu* archaeological deposits is low. However, both areas represent the locations of important archaeological sites. Zone 9 was the location of the Church of St. Peter, and much of, if not all, of Zone 10 was situated within the grounds of the Priory of St. Thomas. So the archaeological potential for these areas cannot be discounted. It is recommended that any groundworks in these

areas be intensively monitored by a qualified archaeologist, with contingency strategies ready to implement should significant archaeological features or deposits be encountered.

On completion of any fieldwork, it may be appropriate for the preparation of a post-excavation report to summarise the results of the archaeological works in accordance with the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991), with view to further analysis leading to publication in a local archaeological journal.

8.0 Acknowledgements

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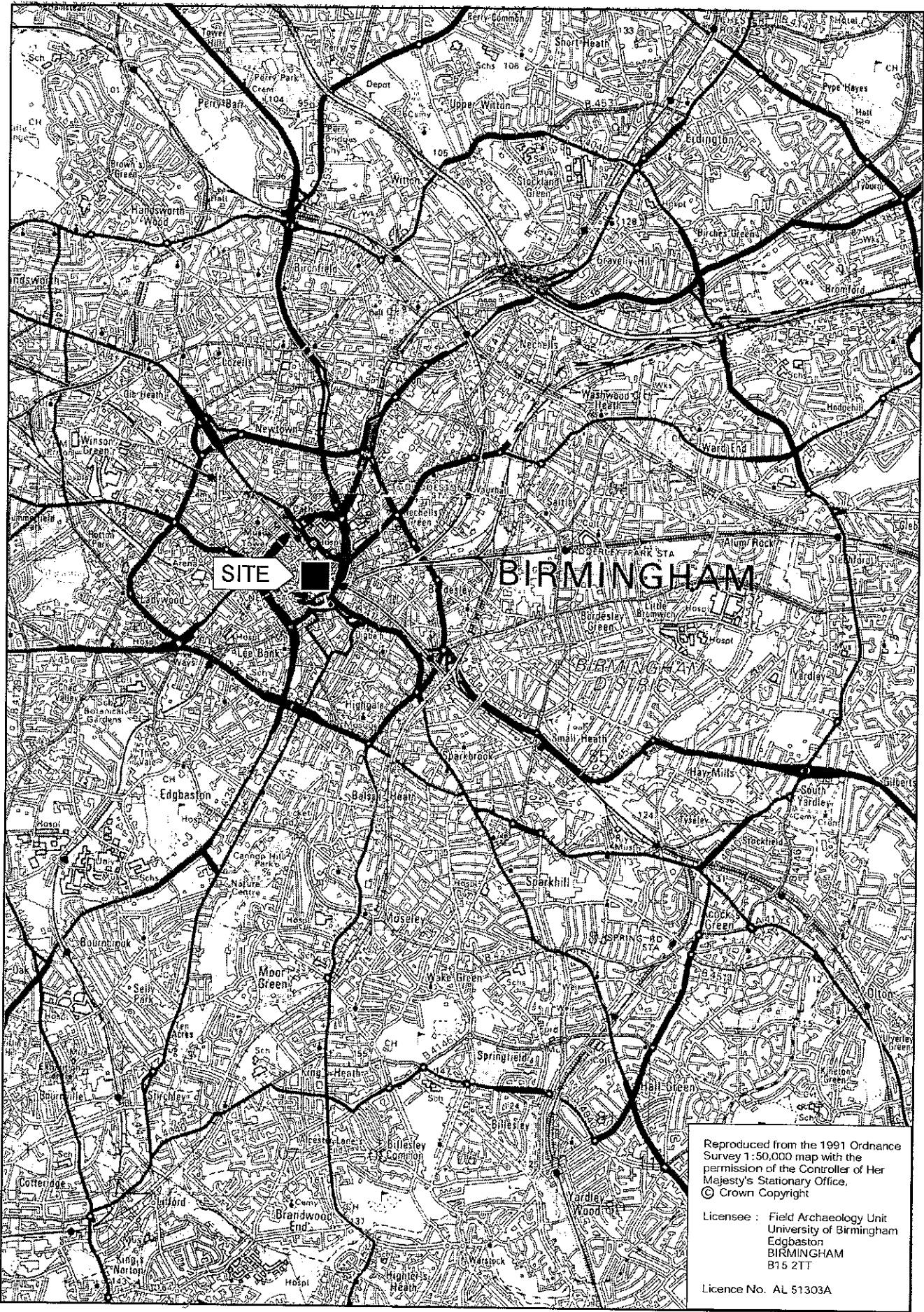


Fig.1

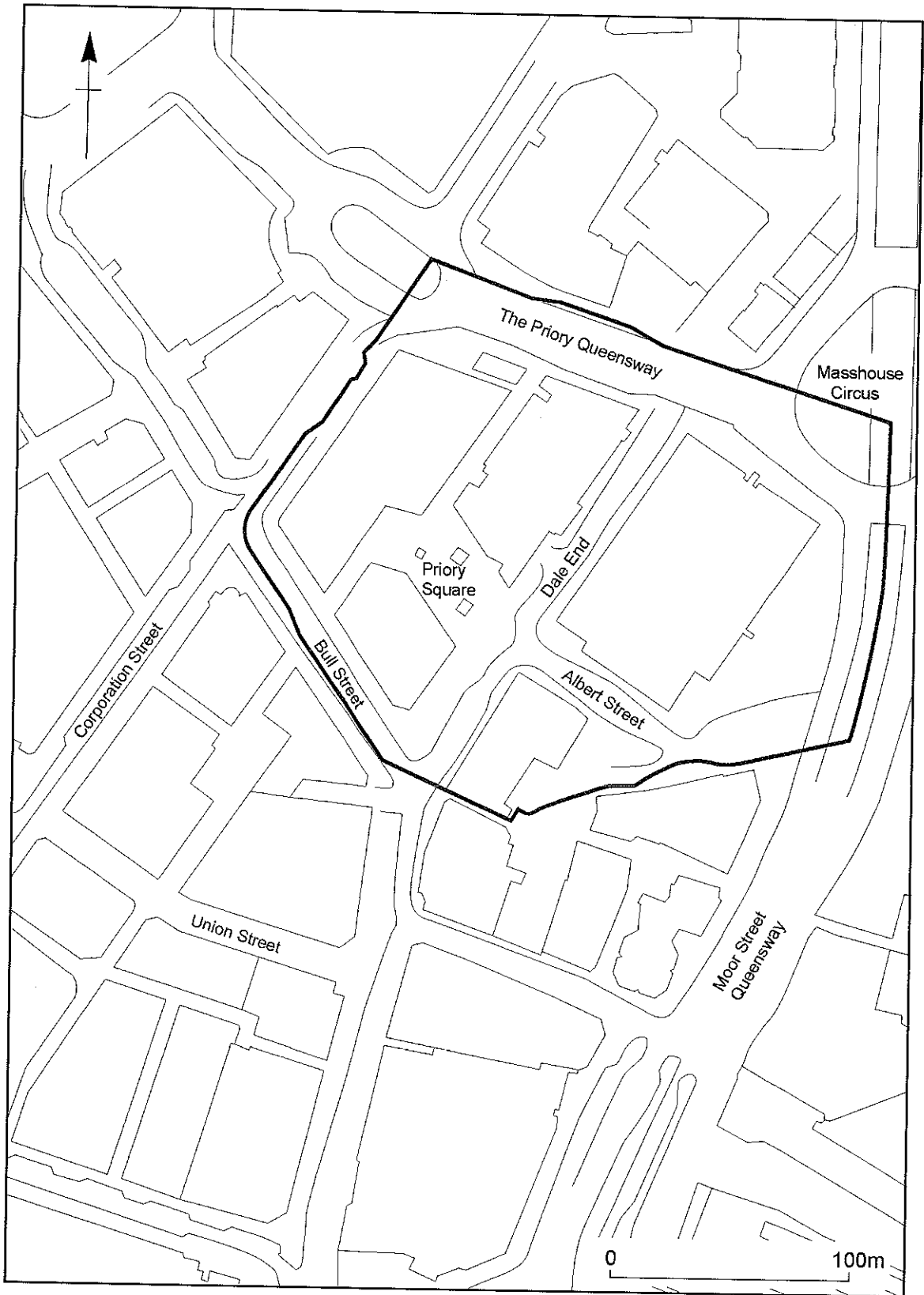


Fig.2

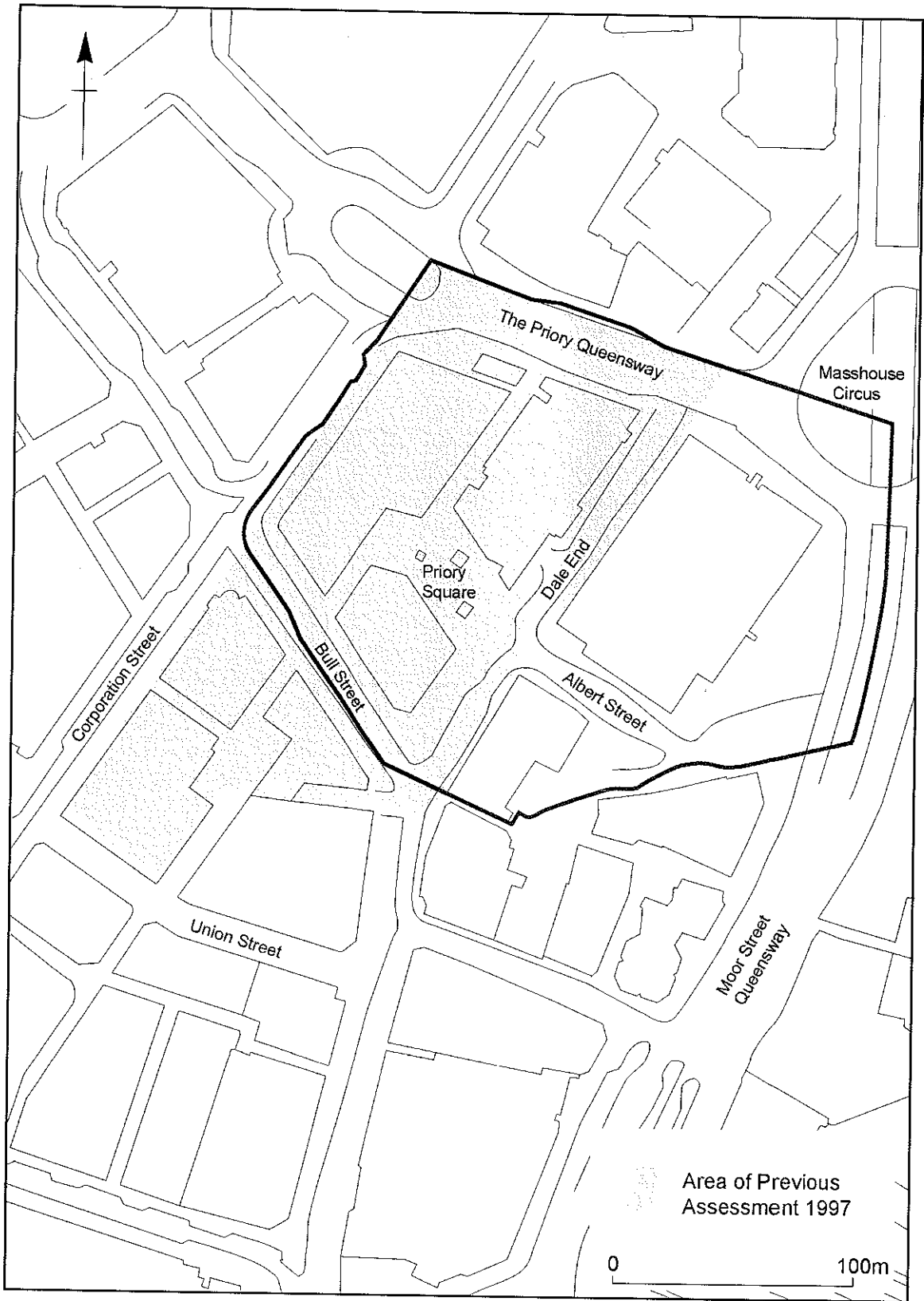


Fig.3

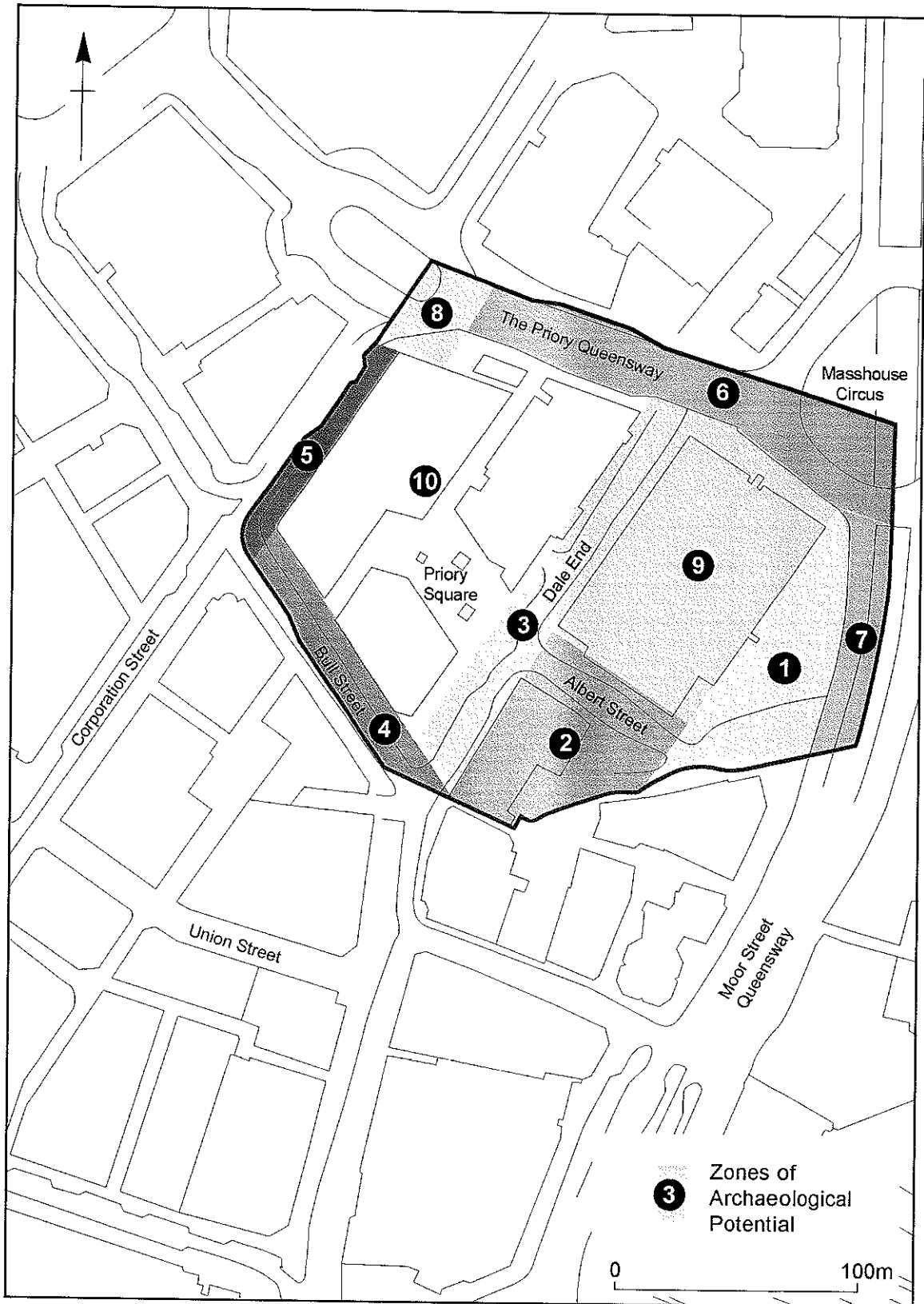


Fig.4

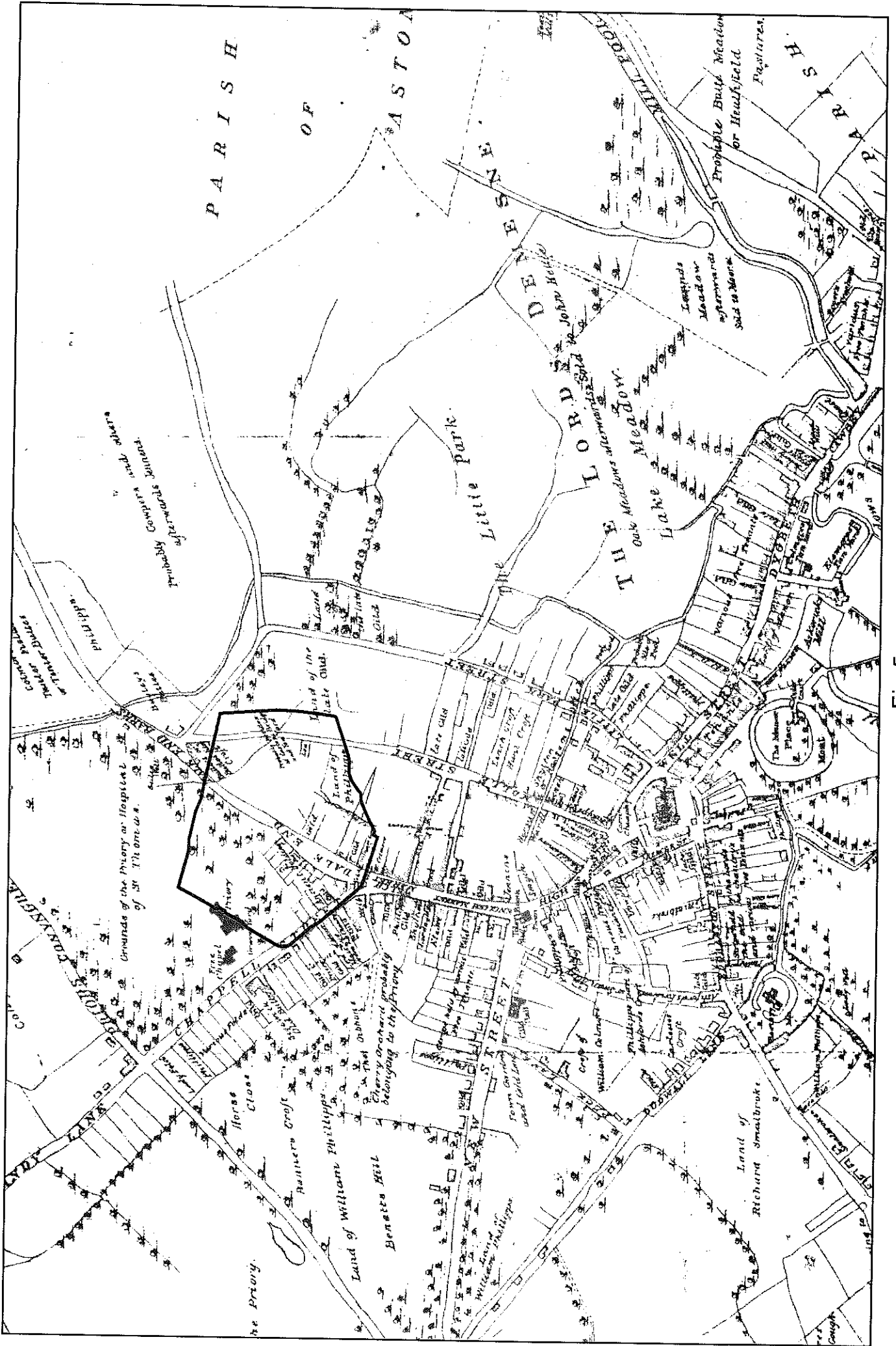


Fig. 5

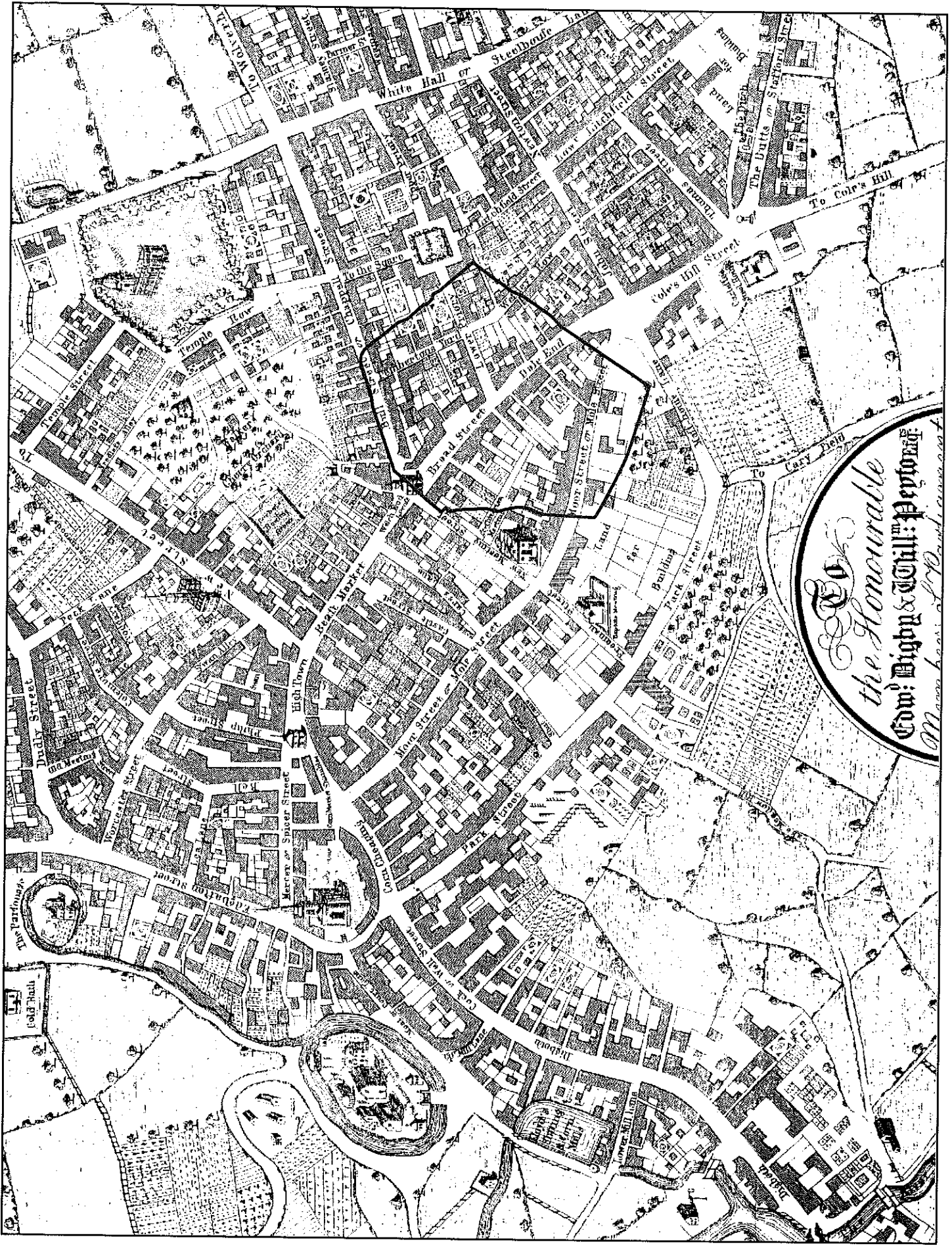


Fig. 6

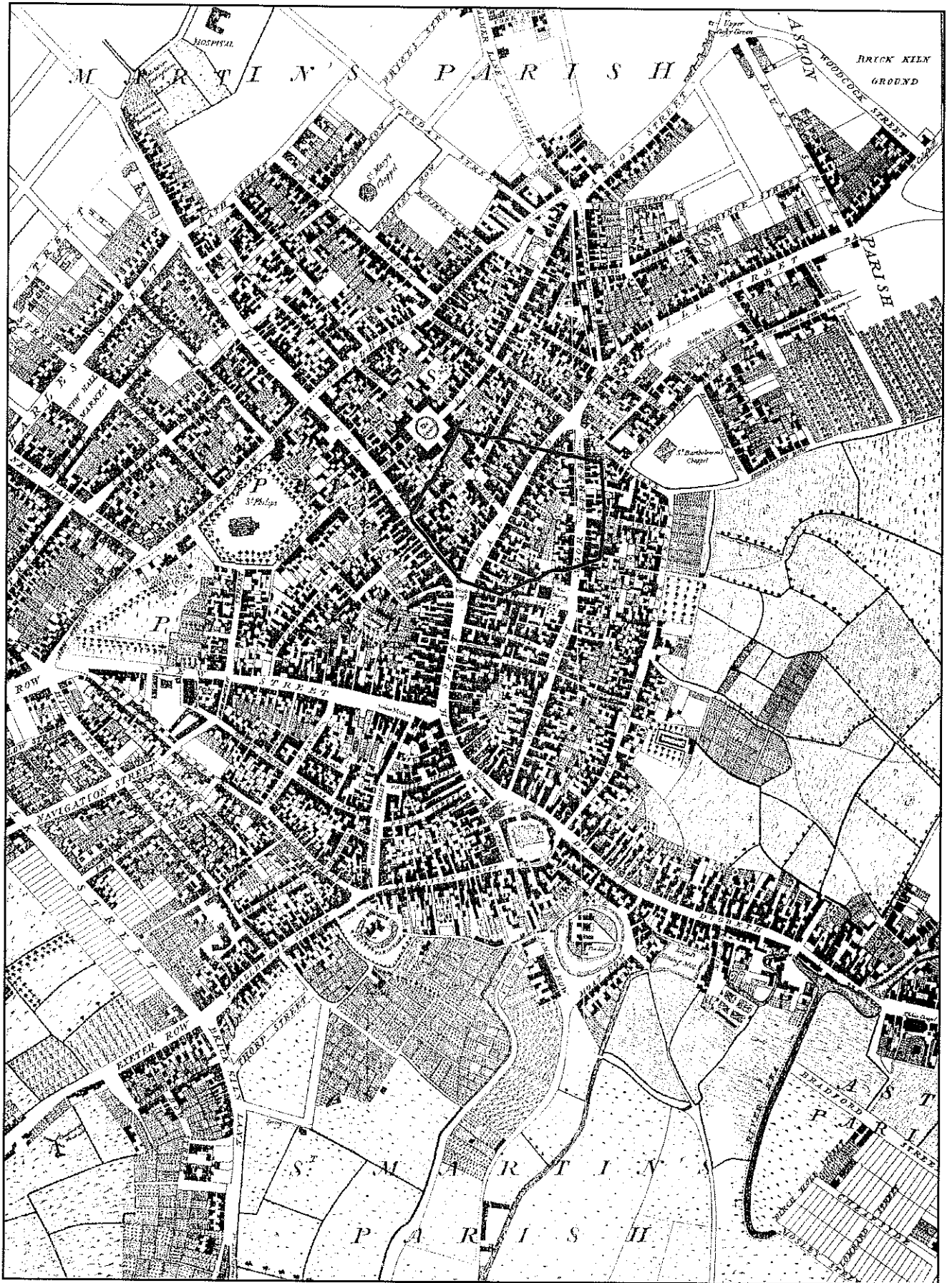


Fig.8

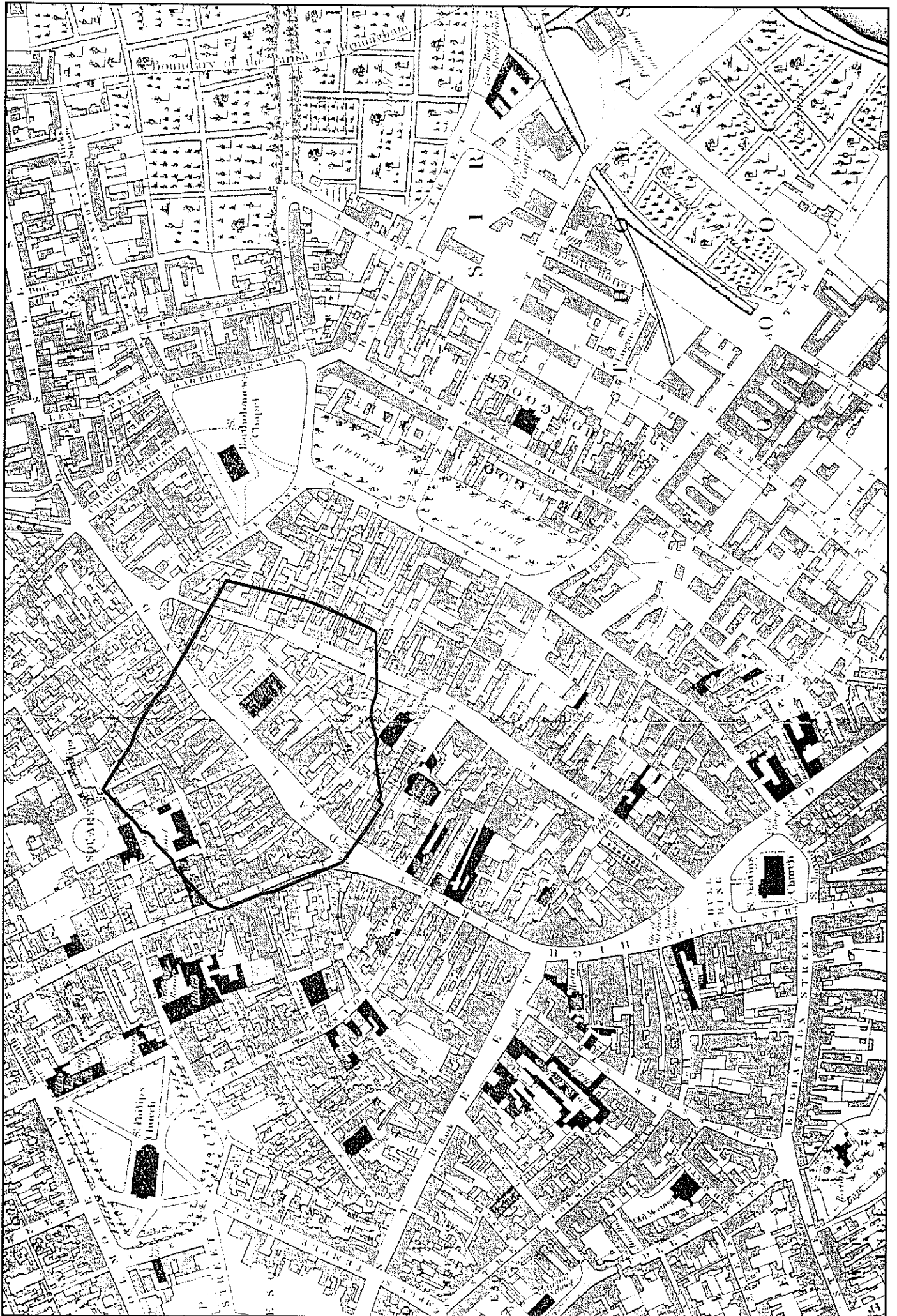


Fig. 10

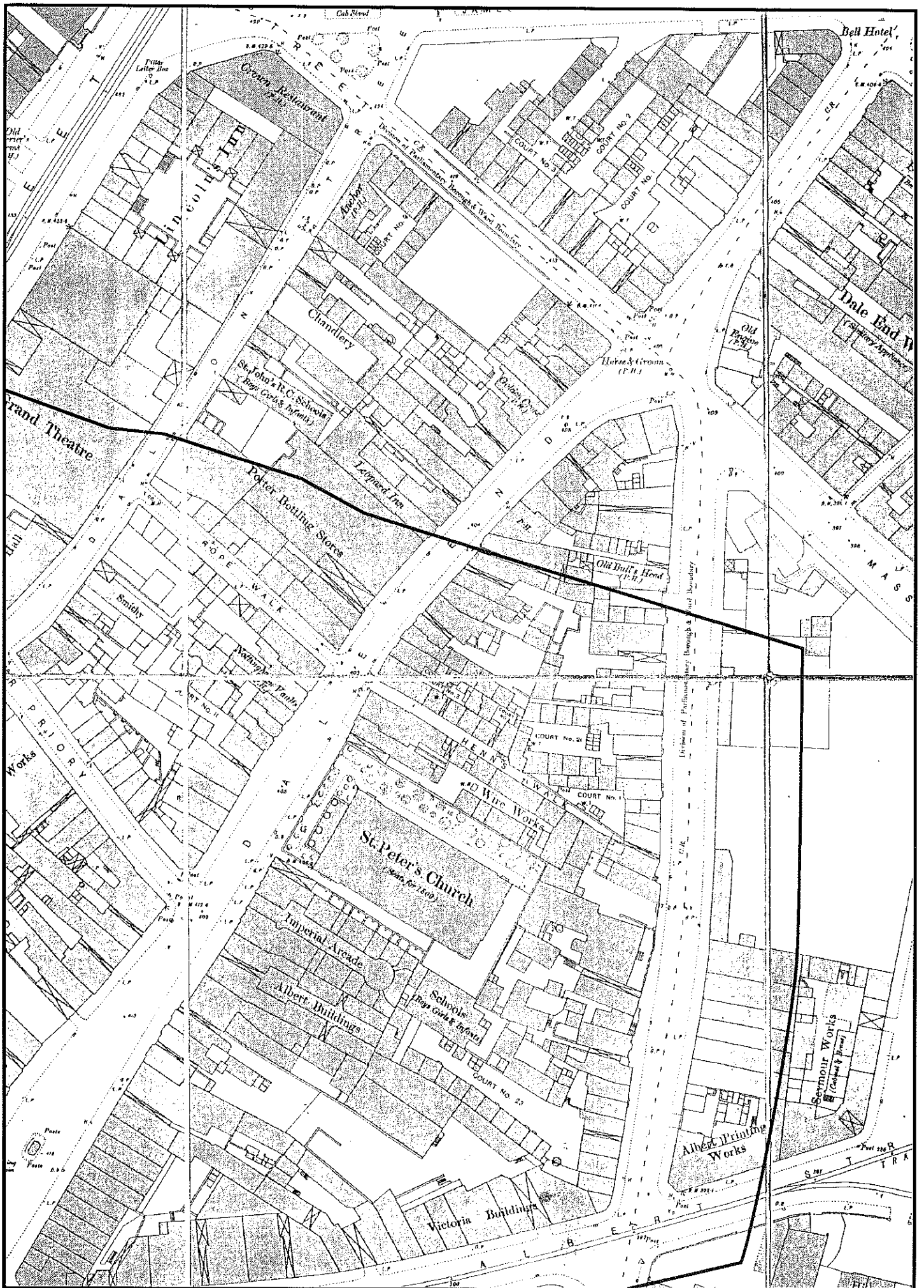
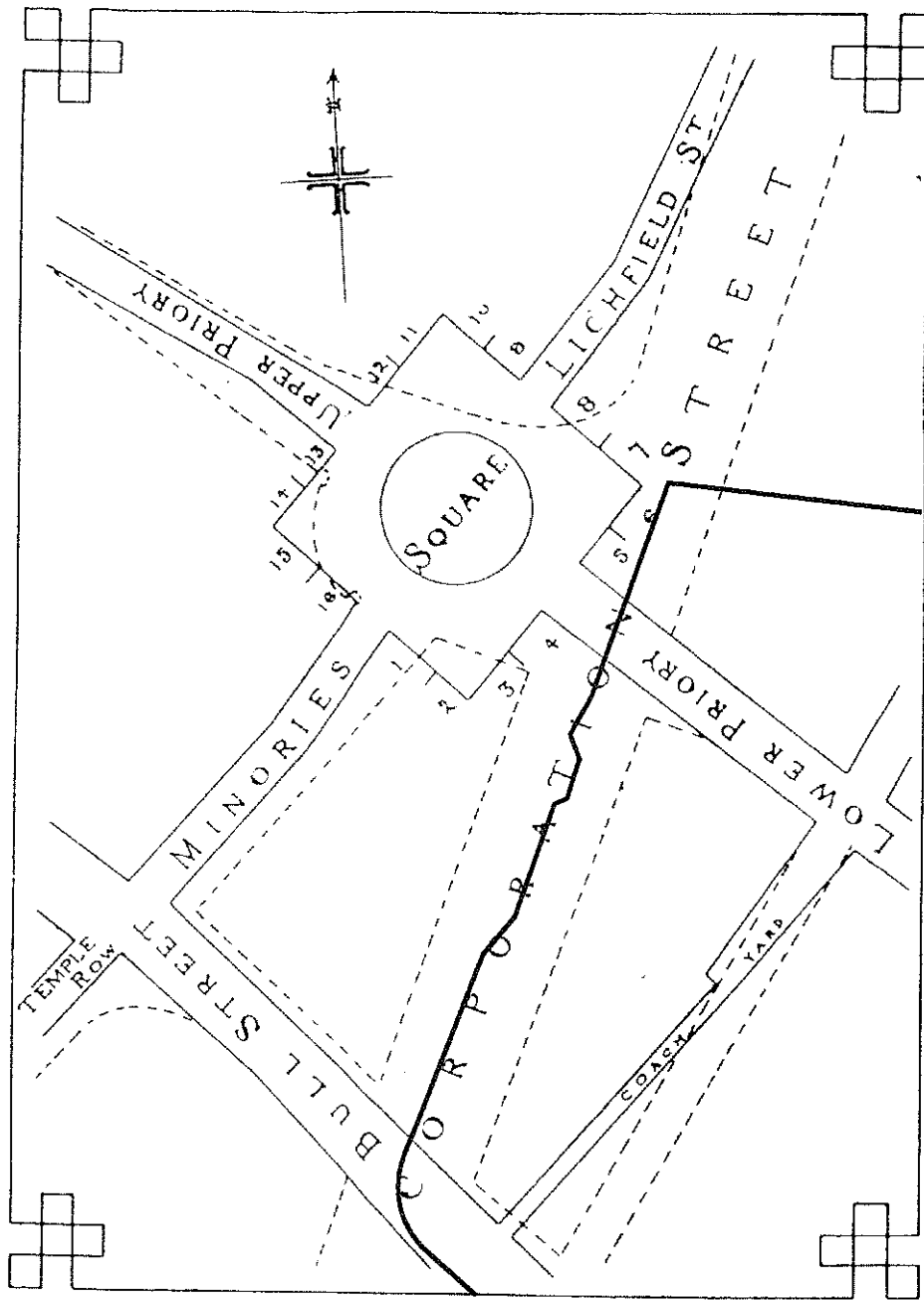


Fig.11



THE OLD SQUARE. 1797 and 1897.

Fig.12

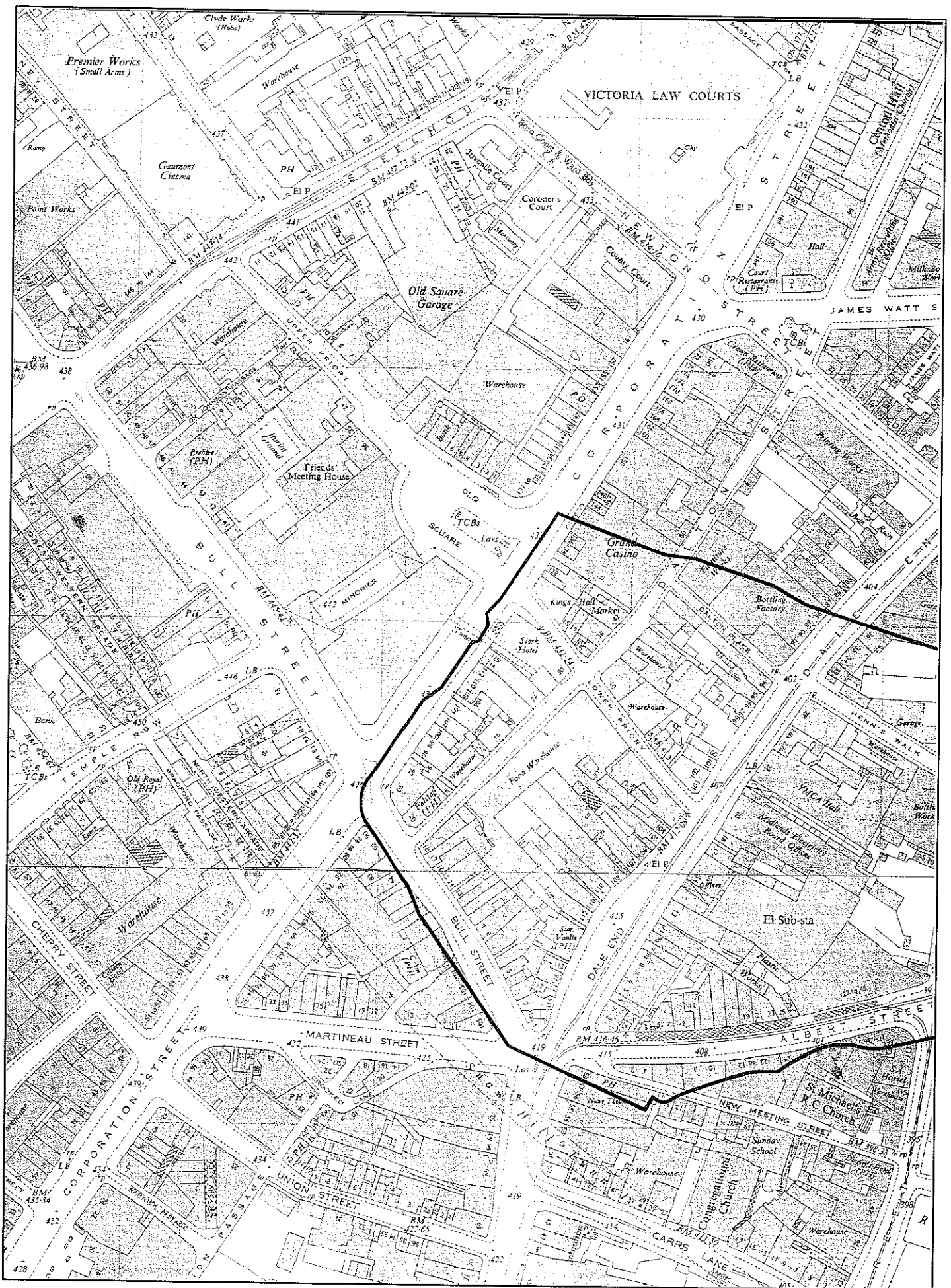


Fig.13

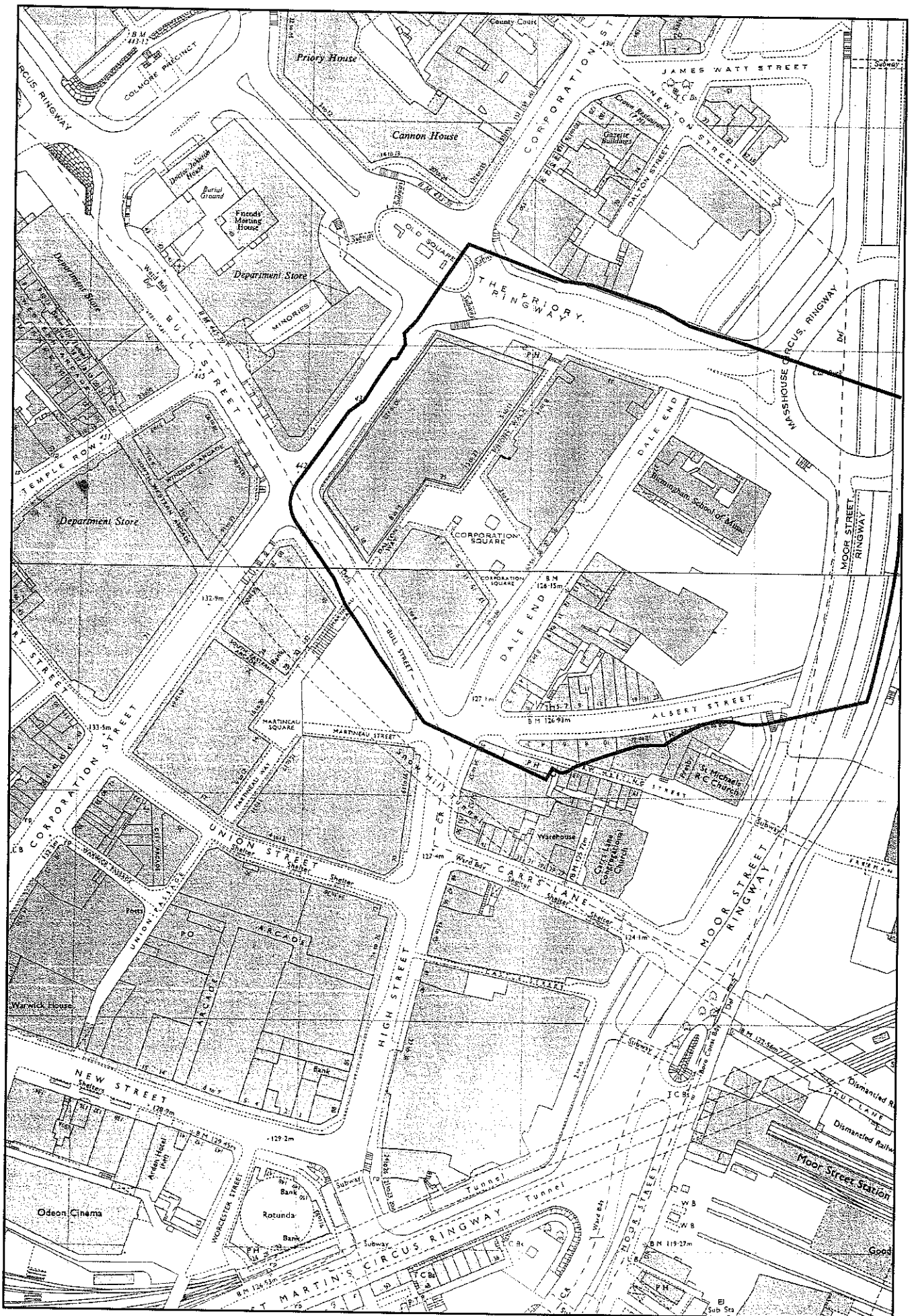


Fig.14



Plate 1



Plate 2

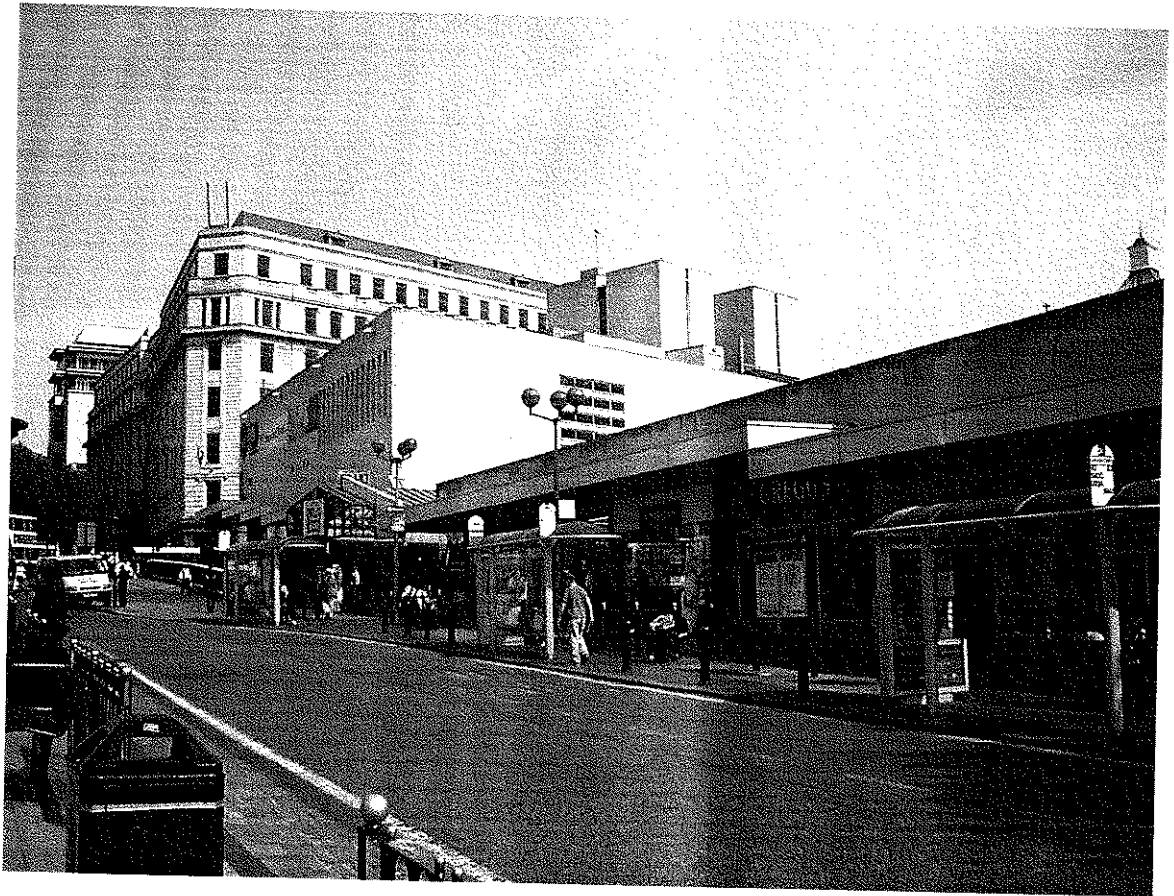


Plate 3

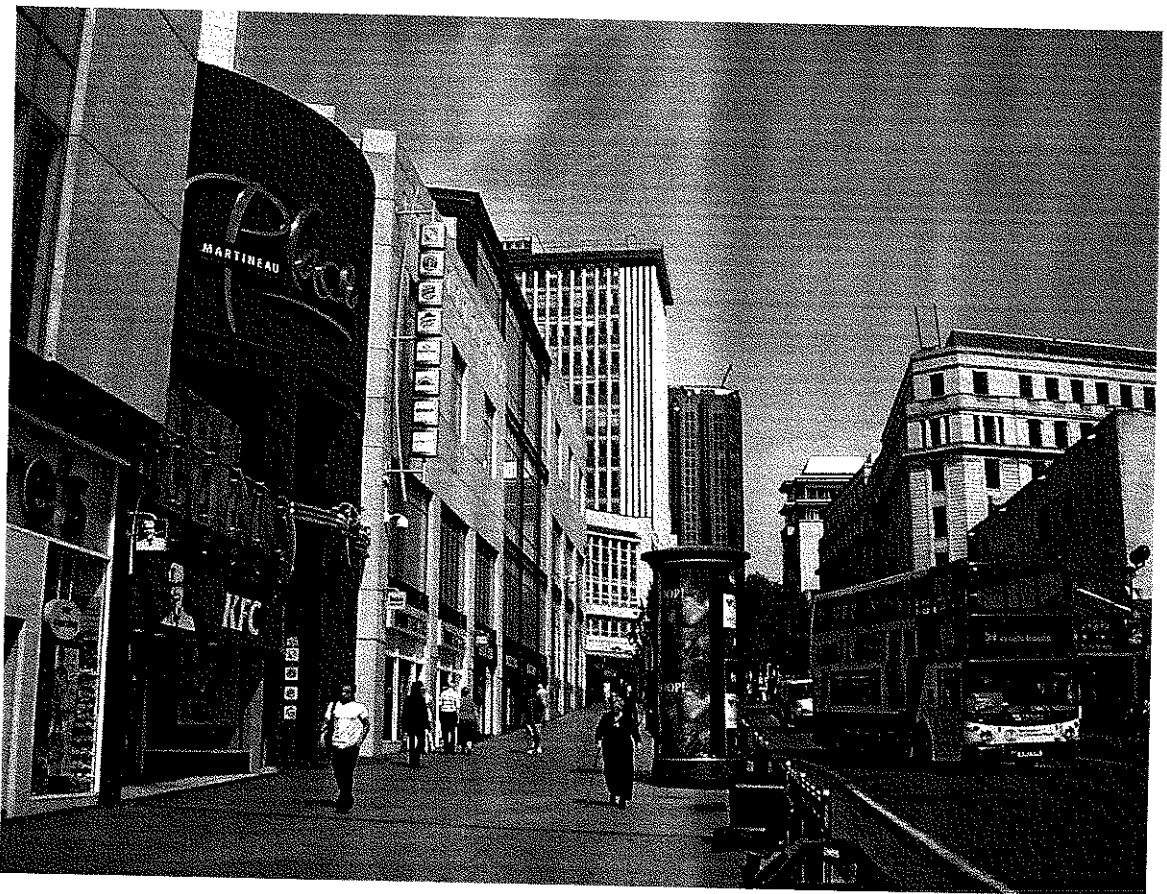


Plate 4