

An Archaeological Watching
Brief at Building 3,
Drayton Manor Business Park,
Tamworth, Staffordshire
2005

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by Birmingham Archaeology on behalf of G W Interiors Limited during January and February 2005 at Drayton Manor Park, Tamworth, Staffordshire (centred on NGR SK 019770135) as a condition of planning permission for the construction of a new car park adjoining Building 3. The work was required by Staffordshire County Council which considered the area to be of possible archaeological significance as it is situated within the confines of Drayton Manor Park which has medieval origins. In particular, it was considered possible that the remains of a large house, with associated formal gardens, shown on the 1775 Yates map of the park, might be present within the development area. No evidence of the house, ancillary buildings or formal gardens was detected during the watching brief and no evidence of any other archaeologically significant features or deposits was detected, and no finds were collected.

1.0 Introduction

This report details the results of a watching brief carried out on land at Drayton Manor Business Park, Tamworth, Staffordshire (Fig. 1). The work was required by Staffordshire County Council as a condition of planning permission for the construction of a car park. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology under commission from G W Interiors Limited.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Specification prepared by Staffordshire County Council (Staffordshire County Council 2004) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (Birmingham Archaeology 2005). The project adhered to the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994).

2.0 Site location

The proposed development site is located at Drayton Manor Business Park, Tamworth, Staffordshire (Fig.1; NGR SK01977 0135). The site lies southwest of Tamworth at 70m AOD, approximately 1.25km to the west of the River Tame. The proposed development area lies within the Business Park adjacent to Building 3 (Fig. 2).

3.0 Archaeological and historical background

Drayton Manor Business Park is situated within the former estates attached to the historical manor of Drayton, which takes its name from the nearby village of Drayton Bassett. Drayton Bassett was recorded in the Domesday survey as having nine villagers and three small smallholders with four and a half ploughs (Staffordshire SMR, 02441).

Domesday also describes two mills (SMR 02305) at Drayton. In origin, Drayton Manor was a medieval settlement surrounded by an extensive medieval deer park (SMR 04281), dating from at least the 13th century. The exact location of the medieval manor house itself is uncertain but watercolour paintings of Drayton manor, dating to 1789 and 1791 (Figs. 3-4) show a large building of probably 15th/16th century date (SMR 01126). This was likely to have succeeded an earlier medieval building located on the site or nearby.

The 15th century manor house was replaced by a magnificent manor house built by the first Sir Robert Peel around 1795 (Fig. 5, SMR 01126). The house became the home of the second Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister, and hosted royalty on a number of occasions, in particular Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1843. The second Robert Peel enlarged and enhanced his father's house and added magnificent gardens. The house is no longer standing, apart from its clock tower. A theme park now occupies the former landscape park and gardens (SMR 40193) surrounding Drayton Manor. A map of 1775 by William Yates (Fig. 6) indicates the presence of a large house in the vicinity of the application area although the exact location of this structure is unknown. The house is located just outside the park grounds. An avenue of trees is shown leading to the house from the east, suggesting formal grounds and a building of some significance (Staffordshire County Council 2004).

4.0 Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to accurately record any archaeological features or deposits which might be affected by the groundworks. More specifically, it was intended to provide information relating to the remains of a house shown on a map of 1775, in addition to any associated structures or deposits.

5.0 Method

The archaeological watching brief involved:

- Archaeological monitoring during the removal of soil and overburden.
- Inspection of the subsoil for archaeological features.
- Rapid cleaning and hand-testing of any features/possible features identified.
- Archaeological monitoring during the machine excavation of subsoils.
- Examination of spoil heaps for archaeological finds

Groundworks within an area of approximately 70m by 30m were observed (Fig. 2).

Recording was by means of pro-forma record cards, supplemented by plans and sections at an appropriate scale, in addition to colour and monochrome print photography.

6.0 Results

The natural subsoil, which was yellow/brown clayey sand with small and medium-sized pebbles, was located at a depth of approximately 0.4m below the modern ground level. The upper horizon of the natural subsoil was marked by numerous tree-bowls and evidence of considerable root activity. The latter had been sealed by modern topsoil and turf. No archaeological features or possible features could be observed. No finds were collected.

7.0 Discussion

No evidence to suggest the former presence of a house or associated structures and gardens was observed during the watching brief. It is possible therefore that the large house shown on the 1775 Yates map (Fig. 6) was not located within the application area.

The house depicted on the 1775 map may have been a 15th/16th century house as shown on the watercolour paintings of the park of 1789 and 1791 (Figs. 3-4). This building may represent the location of an early manor house at Drayton Manor. However, cartographic evidence demonstrates that this building was not in existence by 1887 (Fig.7). The location of the manor appears to have shifted westwards and the location of the original building subsumed within lands associated with the later Park Farm.

Cartographic evidence shows that the application area was situated in open ground between 1887 and 1956 (Figs. 7-9). Numerous trees are represented on the 1887 map in the vicinity of the watching brief area. The presence of such trees was represented by the tree bowls recorded during the watching brief. However, no formal arrangement of these features, relating to the avenue of trees present on the 1775 map, or other features associated with formal gardens were recorded.

It appears likely that Robert Peel's late eighteenth century house was remodelled and rebuilt on a different site to the original Drayton Manor as depicted on the map of 1775 and possibly in watercolour paintings of the period (Figs. 3, 4 & 6). Robert Peel's substantial building (e.g. Fig.5) was to be demolished, altered and incorporated into later buildings during the twentieth century (Figs.8-9). The fact that no structural remains were recorded relating to the earlier manor house within the application area suggests that this building was not located here, but may well have existed within the immediate vicinity.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by GW Interiors who carried out the groundworks. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out by Helen Martin who also wrote this report. The project was managed by Alex Jones on behalf of Birmingham Archaeology and the report edited by John Halsted. The project was monitored by Stephen Dean, Historic Environment Officer, on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Thanks are due to Suzie

Blake of Staffordshire SMR for the provision of SMR data. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds.

9.0 References

Birmingham Archaeology 2005 *Building 3, Drayton Manor Business Park, Coleshill Road, Fazeley, Tamworth. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Birmingham Archaeology.

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief, IFA*

Staffordshire County Council 2004 *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Building 3, Drayton Manor Business Park, Coleshill Road, Fazeley, Tamworth*, Staffordshire County Council.

Maps consulted

1775 Yates map

1887 Ordnance Survey

1937 Ordnance Survey

1956 Ordnance Survey

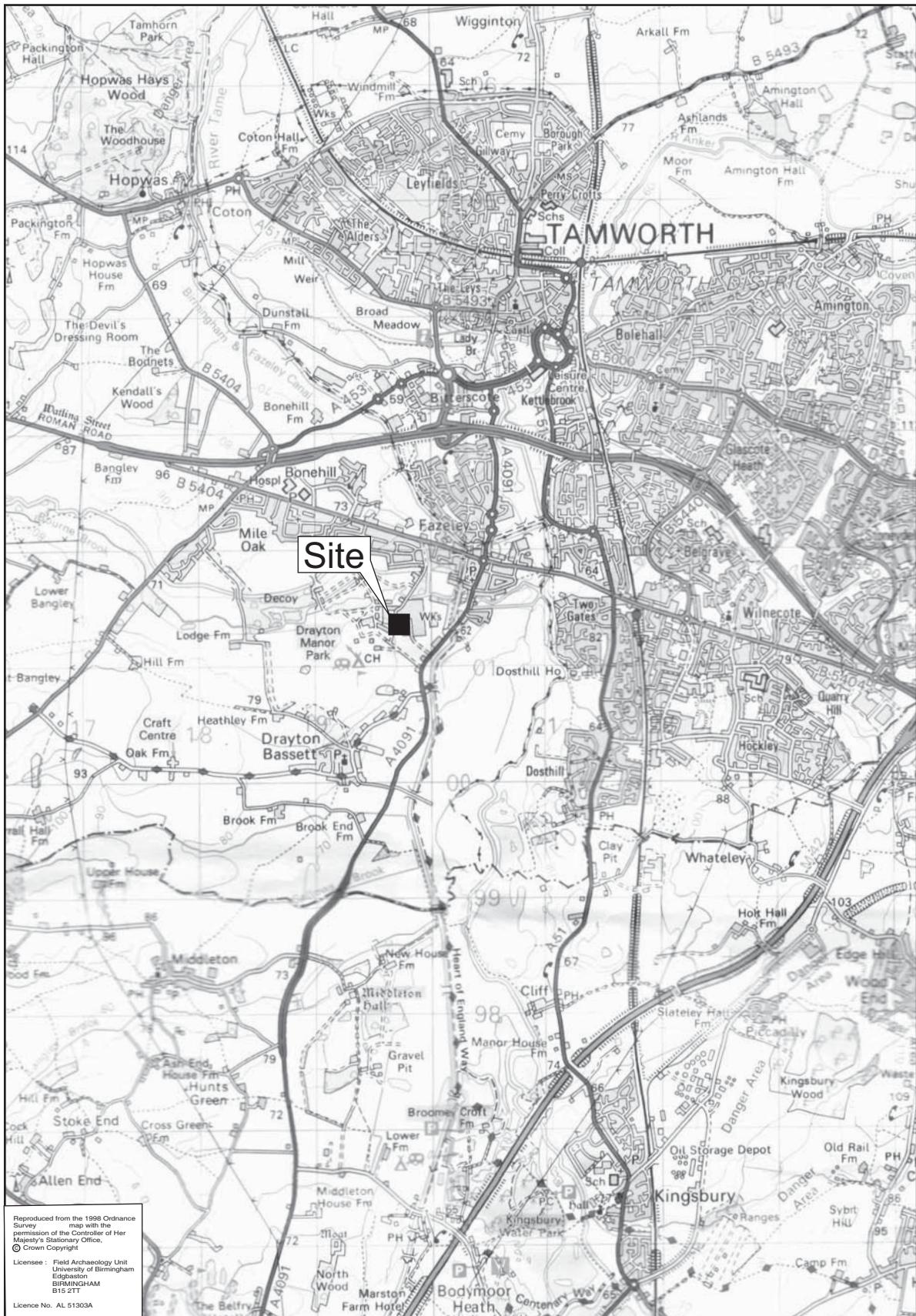


Fig.1

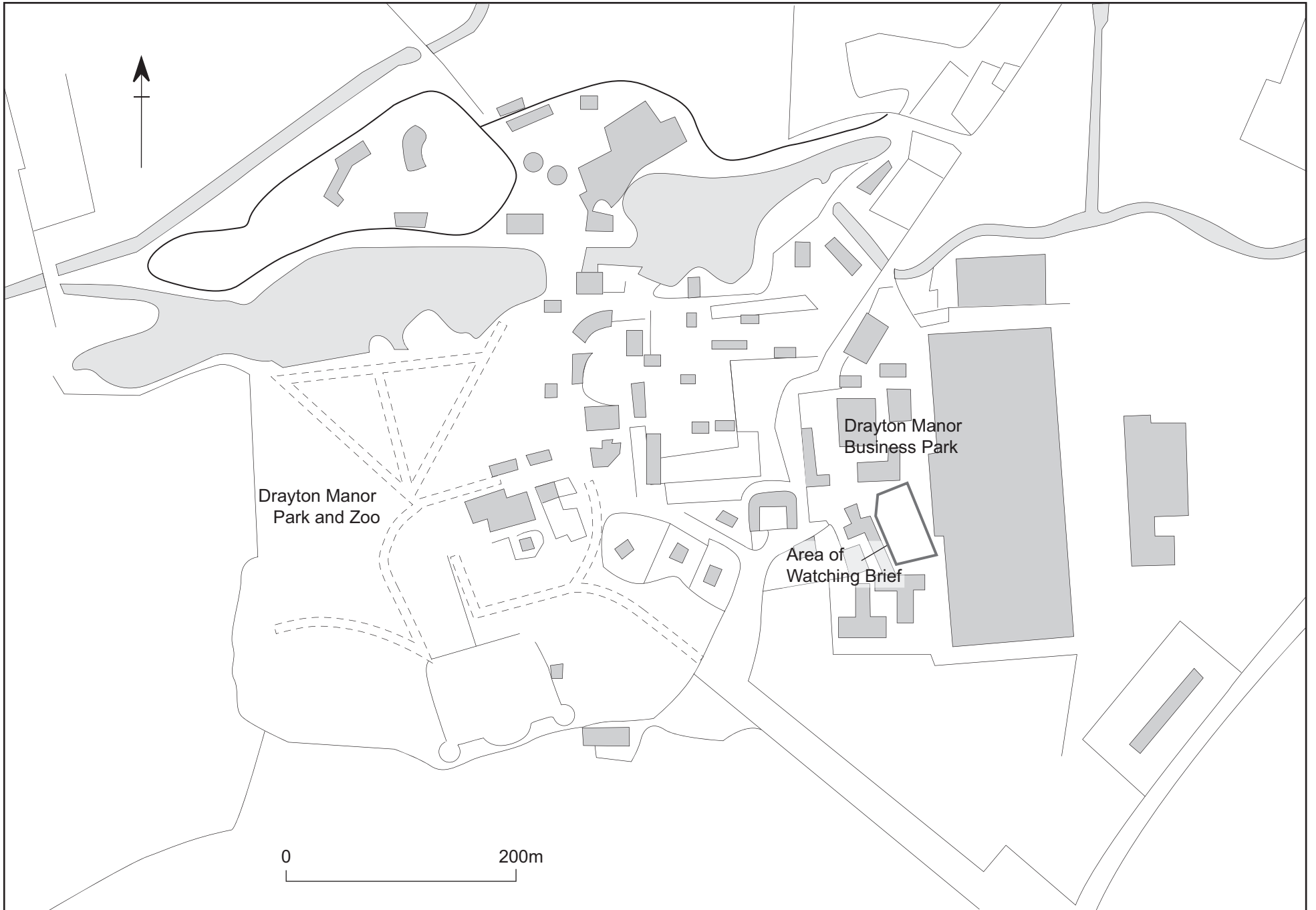


Fig.2



Fig.3

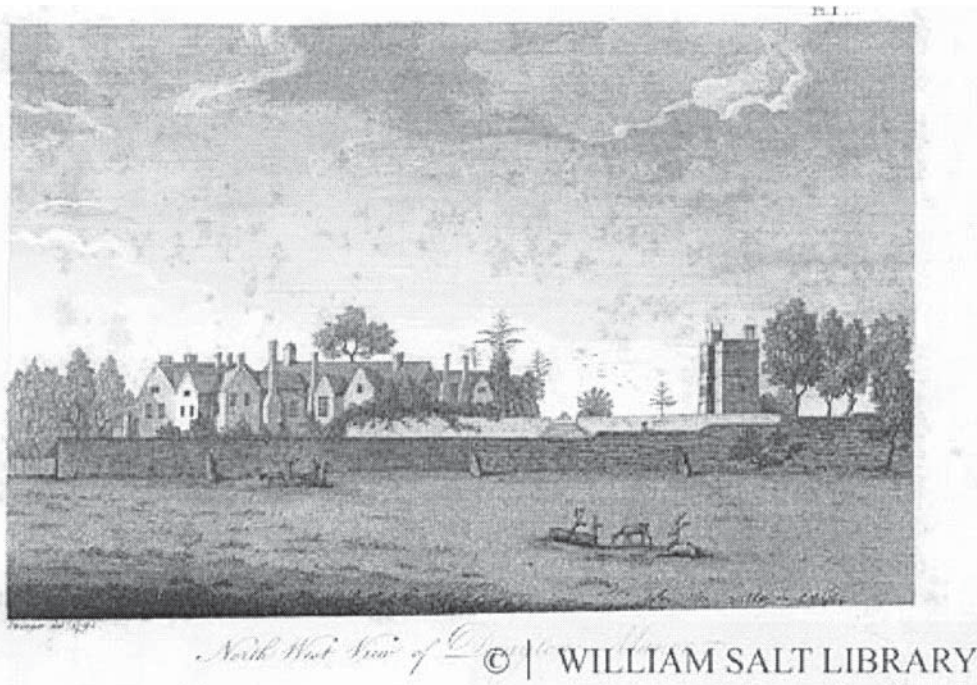


Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6 (1775)



Fig.7 (1887)

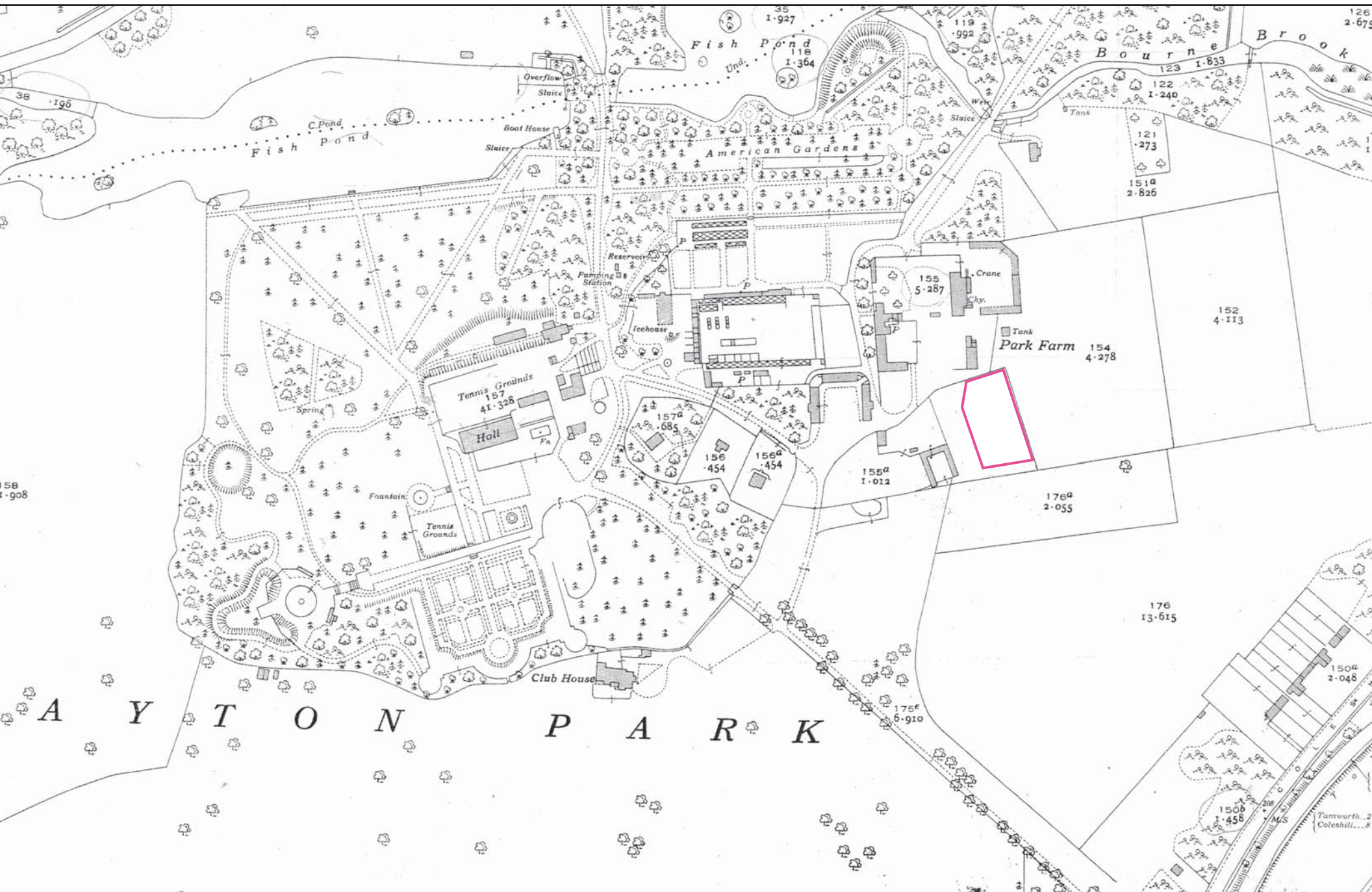


Fig.8 (1937)

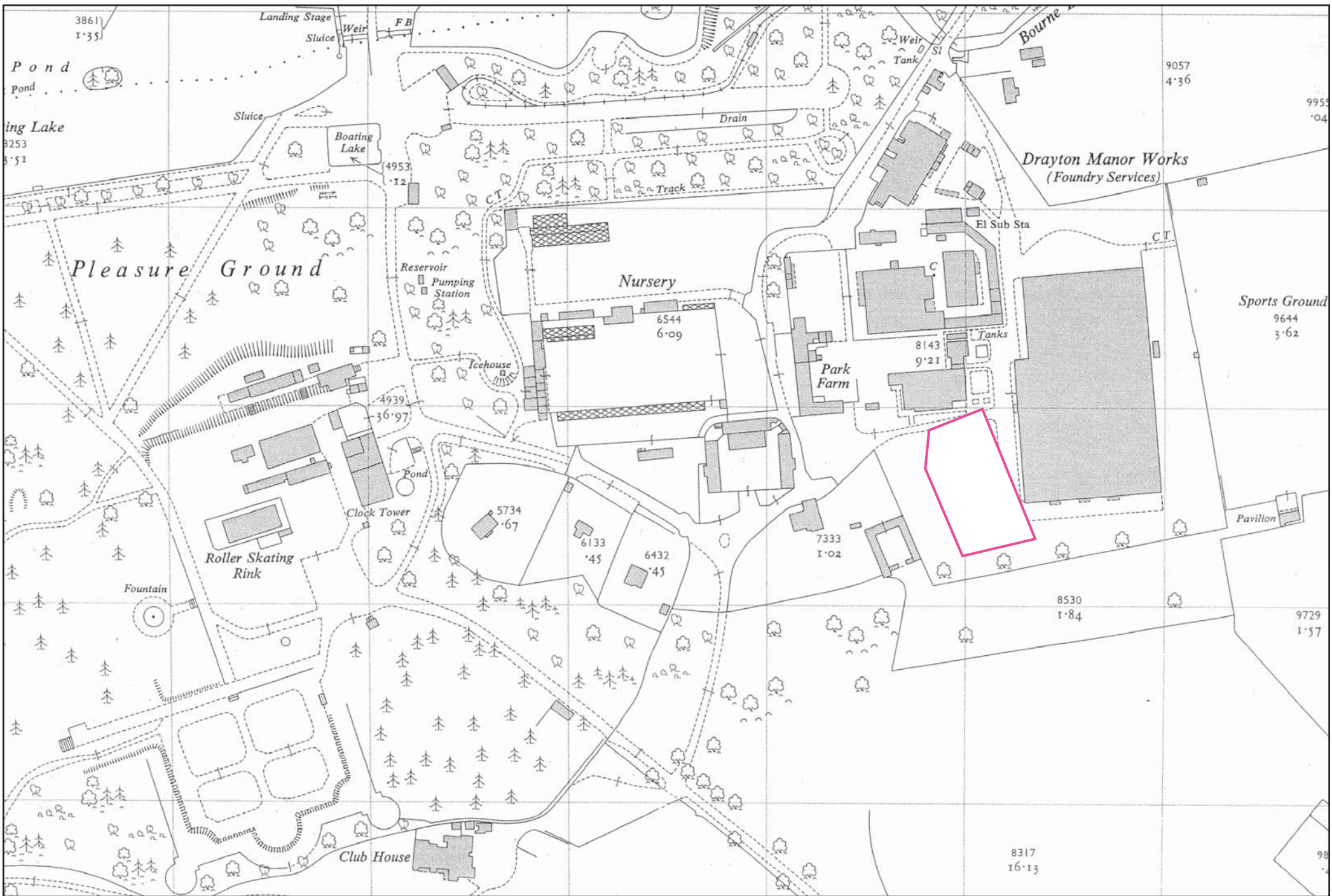


Fig.9 (1956)