



Morville Hall, Morville, Shropshire:  
an archaeological and historic landscape survey

Huw Sherlock  
2006



## archenfield archaeology ltd

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Archenfield Archaeology Ltd is a multidisciplinary archaeological consultancy, offering a complete range of archaeological advice and services to the public and private sector. We specialise in giving archaeological advice to developers, housing associations and private individuals. We also undertake archaeological intervention, from monitoring to full-scale excavation; building survey; landscape and geophysical surveys and community-based historical and archaeological projects.

*Morville Hall, Morville, Shropshire: archaeological and historic landscape survey  
2006*

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Summary.....   | 5  |
| 1.0 Introduction.....  | 6  |
| 2.0 Geology and land use.....                                    | 7  |
| 2.1 Geology .....  | 7  |
| 2.2 Land use .....   | 7  |
| 2.3 Land owners and tenants.....                                 | 11 |
| 3.0 Historical and archaeological background .....               | 12 |
| 3.1 Historical background .....                                  | 12 |
| 3.2 Archaeological background.....                               | 16 |
| 4.0 Aims and objectives.....                                     | 16 |
| 5.0 Methodology .....  | 17 |
| 6.0 Cartographic regression .....                                | 18 |
| 6.1 The estate.....  | 24 |
| 6.2 The gardens and farm buildings.....                          | 24 |
| 7.0 Walk-over survey .....                                       | 29 |
| 7.1 Management of surviving archaeological features.....         | 50 |
| 8.0 The buildings .....  | 53 |
| 8.1 Recommendations for the management of farm buildings.....    | 60 |
| 9.0 Conclusions .....  | 62 |
| 10.0 Archive deposition .....                                    | 64 |
| 11.0 Publication and dissemination proposals.....                | 64 |
| 12.0 Bibliography.....   | 64 |
| Copyright.....   | 65 |
| Appendix – Tithe apportionment for Morville and Aston Eyre ..... | 66 |
| Index of names .....   | 70 |

## Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Site location .....  | 6  |
| Figure 2: Land use in the Morville Estate in 1840 .....  | 8  |
| Figure 3: Landowners in 1840.....  | 9  |
| Figure 4: Occupiers in 1840 .....  | 10 |
| Figure 5: Current land use .....   | 11 |
| Figure 6: Map of Aldenham Park 1722. ....  | 18 |
| Figure 7: The 1840 redrawn tithe map with (inset) Morville Hall and remnants of strip fields ..... | 19 |
| Figure 8: Copy of Sales Particulars 1865 .....   | 20 |
| Figure 9: 1884 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition OS map with National Trust boundary.....                    | 21 |
| Figure 10: 1902 OS map with National Trust boundary .....  | 22 |
| Figure 11: 1926 OS map showing the National Trust boundary.....                                    | 23 |
| Figure 12: Extract from the 1884 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition OS map.....                               | 25 |
| Figure 13: Extract from the 1902 OS map.....   | 26 |
| Figure 14: Extract from the 1902 OS map.....   | 26 |
| Figure 15: Field boundary changes between 1884 and 2006 .....                                      | 27 |
| Figure 16: Building changes between 1864 and 2006 .....  | 28 |
| Figure 17: Walk-over survey .....  | 29 |
| Figure 18: Building survey.....  | 53 |
| Figure 19: Extract from the 1st Edition OS map.....  | 63 |

## Plates

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Plate 1 – SMR No: 55602 – trackway .....                      | 32 |
| Plate 2 – SMR No: 55619 – field boundary/ditch/trackway ..... | 32 |
| Plate 3 – SMR No: 55626 – trackway .....                      | 32 |
| Plate 4 – SMR No: 55627 – trackway .....                      | 32 |
| Plate 5 – SMR No: 55634 – trackway .....                      | 32 |
| Plate 6 – SMR No: 55639 – earthworks .....                    | 32 |
| Plate 7 – SMR No: 55642 – trackway .....                      | 32 |
| Plate 8 – SMR No: 55646 – trackway .....                      | 33 |
| Plate 9 – SMR No: 55648 – trackway .....                      | 33 |
| Plate 10 – SMR No: 55651 – trackway .....                     | 33 |
| Plate 11 – SMR No: 55653 – trackway .....                     | 33 |
| Plate 12 – SMR No: 55670 – trackway/terrace .....             | 33 |
| Plate 13 – SMR No: 55605 – remains of laid hedge .....        | 36 |
| Plate 14 – SMR No: 55608 – bank.....                          | 36 |
| Plate 15 – SMR No: 55609 – lynchet .....                      | 36 |
| Plate 16 – SMR No: 55610 – ridge and furrow.....              | 36 |
| Plate 17 – SMR No: 55612 – lynchet .....                      | 36 |
| Plate 18 – SMR No: 55614 – ridge and furrow.....              | 36 |
| Plate 19 – SMR No: 55617 – bank.....                          | 36 |
| Plate 20 – SMR No: 55622 – lynchet .....                      | 36 |



|  |    |
|--|----|
| Plate 21 – SMR No: 55623 – boundary.....                                       | 37 |
| Plate 22 – SMR No: 55630 – boundary.....                                       | 37 |
| Plate 23 – SMR No: 55632 – boundary.....                                       | 37 |
| Plate 24 – SMR No: 55636 – linear bank.....                                    | 37 |
| Plate 25 – SMR No: 55637 – boundary.....                                       | 37 |
| Plate 26 – SMR No: 55645 – lynchet .....                                       | 37 |
| Plate 27 – SMR No: 55685 – ha-ha .....   | 37 |
| Plate 28 – SMR No: 55604 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 29 – SMR No: 55606 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 30 – SMR No: 55607 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 31 – SMR No: 55615 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 32 – SMR No: 55616 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 33 – SMR No: 55621 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 34 – SMR No: 55625 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 35 – SMR No: 55628 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 36 – SMR No: 55629 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 37 – SMR No: 55635 – charcoal burning platform.....                      | 40 |
| Plate 38 – SMR No: 55611 – spring.....   | 43 |
| Plate 39 – SMR No: 55631 – cistern .....                                       | 43 |
| Plate 40 – SMR No: 55638 – brick walling .....                                 | 43 |
| Plate 41 – SMR No: 55640 – weir .....  | 43 |
| Plate 42 – SMR No: 55641 – platform.....                                       | 43 |
| Plate 43 – SMR No: 55644 – bridge.....   | 43 |
| Plate 44 – SMR No: 55650 – stone bridge.....                                   | 43 |
| Plate 45 – SMR No: 55681 – hydraulic ram .....                                 | 43 |
| Plate 46 – SMR No: 55681 – detail of gargoy head .....                         | 43 |
| Plate 47 – SMR No: 55696 – weir .....  | 43 |
| Plate 48 – SMR No: 55600 – tree stump (possible yew) .....                     | 45 |
| Plate 49 – SMR No: 55601 – mature tree (possibly lime) .....                   | 45 |
| Plate 50 – SMR No: 55618 – relict avenue of oaks.....                          | 45 |
| Plate 51 – SMR No: 55620 – pollarded oak .....                                 | 45 |
| Plate 52 – SMR No: 55633 – three yew trees.....                                | 45 |
| Plate 53 – SMR No: 55613 – quarry clay pit .....                               | 47 |
| Plate 54 – SMR No: 55624 – possible quarry .....                               | 47 |
| Plate 55 – SMR No: 55643 – spread of iron working residue .....                | 47 |
| Plate 56 – SMR No: 55649 – ridge and hollows.....                              | 47 |
| Plate 57 – SMR No: 55652 – ridge and hollows.....                              | 47 |
| Plate 58 – SMR No: 55674 – terrace behind Morville Hall.....                   | 47 |
| Plate 59 – SMR No: 55647 – two ponds to the rear of the hall.....              | 49 |
| Plate 60 – SMR No: 55647 – detail of stonework around edge (of Plate 60) ..... | 49 |
| Plate 61 – SMR No: 55692 – small pond .....                                    | 49 |
| Plate 62 – SMR No: 55692 – detail of possible steps (of 62).....               | 49 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Plate 63 – SMR No: 55695 – large linear pond (looking south-west) .....                  | 49 |
| Plate 64 – SMR No: 55695 – large linear pond (looking south-east) .....                  | 49 |
| Plate 65 – SMR No: 55656 – Victorian Dutch barn .....                                    | 58 |
| Plate 66 – SMR No: 55657 – kitchen garden structure .....                                | 58 |
| Plate 67 – SMR No: 55658 – kitchen garden structure .....                                | 58 |
| Plate 68 – SMR No: 55659 – walled garden .....   | 58 |
| Plate 69 – SMR No: 55660 – walls and gate piers .....                                    | 58 |
| Plate 70 – SMR No: 55675 – coach house .....   | 58 |
| Plate 71 – SMR No: 55682 – garden cottage (west elevation) .....                         | 58 |
| Plate 72 – SMR No: 55682 – garden cottage (east elevation) .....                         | 58 |
| Plate 73 – Morville Hall – front elevation (Ref 4187_1_16) .....                         | 58 |
| Plate 74 – SMR No: 55683 – north pavilion (Country Life, 1952, 465) .....                | 58 |
| Plate 75 – SMR No: 55683 – north pavilion .....  | 58 |
| Plate 76 – SMR No: 55684 – south pavilion .....  | 58 |
| Plate 77 – SMR No: 55684 – detail of the cupola .....                                    | 59 |
| Plate 78 – SMR No: 55689 – remnants of one side of the stable courtyard .....            | 59 |
| Plate 79 – SMR No: 55689 – detail of the handmade latch-lifter .....                     | 59 |
| Plate 80 – SMR No: 55690 – stone stable block .....                                      | 59 |
| Plate 81 – SMR No: 55691 – converted stable block .....                                  | 59 |
| Plate 82 – SMR No: 55693 – the converted barns and dovecote .....                        | 59 |
| Plate 83 – SMR No: 55693 – roof of the dovecote .....                                    | 59 |
| Plate 84 – SMR No: 55694 – southern elevation of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century barn ..... | 59 |
| Plate 85 – SMR No: 55694 – the west elevation .....                                      | 59 |
| Plate 86 – SMR No: 55694 – the north elevation .....                                     | 59 |
| Plate 87 – SMR No: 55694 – the roof .....  | 59 |
| Plate 88 – SMR No: 55694 – the decorated jowel post (55694) .....                        | 59 |

## Summary

*Archenfield Archaeology carried out work on behalf of the National Trust at Morville Hall, Morville, Shropshire. The estate has been in possession of the Trust since the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1965 when it was gifted by Miss Audrey Prestwich Bythell.*

*The project included a walk-over historic landscape survey of the estate and a brief survey of all of the standing buildings, except for the hall itself, and was undertaken during a number of site visits between April and May 2006. The survey revealed 60 previously unidentified sites and added significant detail to a further 17 records, including aspects of the evolution of the agricultural buildings and almost certainly the original rear entrance to the farm complex.*

*The historic landscape survey revealed a number of interesting features including a relict field system and evidence of past woodland industry. The survey has shown that the survival of archaeological features is high, in particular in Aston Hill Wood and the surrounding fields where a complex of tracks, charcoal burning platforms and a possible saw pit were identified. Furthermore a fragmentary field system, of medieval or earlier date, was identified on the north-facing slope below the woodland. Evidence of an iron working industry was also revealed in a small woodland plantation to the north of the estate which may be a continuation of an industry previously identified at Aldenham Hall, approximately 1 kilometre to the north of Morville.*

## 1.0 Introduction



**Figure 1: Site location<sup>1</sup>**

Morville is a small village approximately 3 miles west of Bridgnorth, Shropshire. It lies in a shallow depression. The village and Morville Hall are skirted on the south by the Mor Brook. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century Morville comprised the hall, its buildings, the church, Morville Farm and a small number of houses and cottages along the Shrewsbury road. Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century council housing development north of the school and along the Ludlow Road has enlarged the village, but Morville's historic buildings and landscape survive. The Morville conservation area was designated in 1994 and includes the majority of these buildings and the landscape.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced under Crown Copyright by licence granted by The National Trust

<sup>2</sup> *Morville Conservation Area Statement by Bridgnorth District Planning Committee, 1994*

The estate comprises 55.60 hectares (137 acres) of land, 11.50 of which are held alienably. A further 17.40 hectares (43 acres) next to the hall were added in 1985.

Archenfield Archaeology conducted a walk-over survey at Morville Hall for the National Trust. A brief survey of all of the standing buildings was also carried out. These involved detailed photography and notes and sketches of the archaeological features and buildings on the estate. The fieldwork was conducted between April and May 2006.

## **2.0 Geology and land use**

### **2.1 Geology**

The estate at Morville is underlain by Devonian rocks, the marls of the Dittonian and Downtonian series, with the occasional limey 'cornstone' horizon.<sup>3</sup> The valley of the Mor Brook with narrow alluvial flats and terraced banks cuts through the estate, initially running north/south but turning south-eastwards towards its confluence with the River Severn. To the north, sandy soils of the Newport series predominate where the estate overlies glacial sand and gravel drift. To the south, the estate is dominated by the north-facing Devonian scarp of Aston Hill Wood, which lies on complex brown earths of the Bromyard-Eardiston series. The site ranges in altitude from 85 – 195 metres above sea level.<sup>4</sup>

Several species of fossil fish have been located in this area and the nearby Devil's Hole SSSI, designated for its exposure through the Old Red Sandstone of the Silurian-Devonian boundary, provided a good range of these fossils. The stream beds of Aston Hill Wood have provided a number of early fish fossils

### **2.2 Land use**

Most of the land is agricultural with improved and semi-improved pasture and small areas of arable cropping. There are extensive woodlands, the largest being Aston Hill to the south and Yew Tree Dingle at the west end of its slope. Yew Tree Dingle is a mature open-canopied woodland and the eastern end of Aston Hill Wood is ancient semi-natural woodland. The area was clear-felled following an outbreak of Dutch elm disease and replanted with a mixture of native and non-native trees. The property retains a number of enclosures with permanent pasture most of which have been agriculturally improved. Small fragments of unimproved grassland remain primarily on the steep banks above the Mor Brook. There are other small streams crossing the estate which are of minor interest.

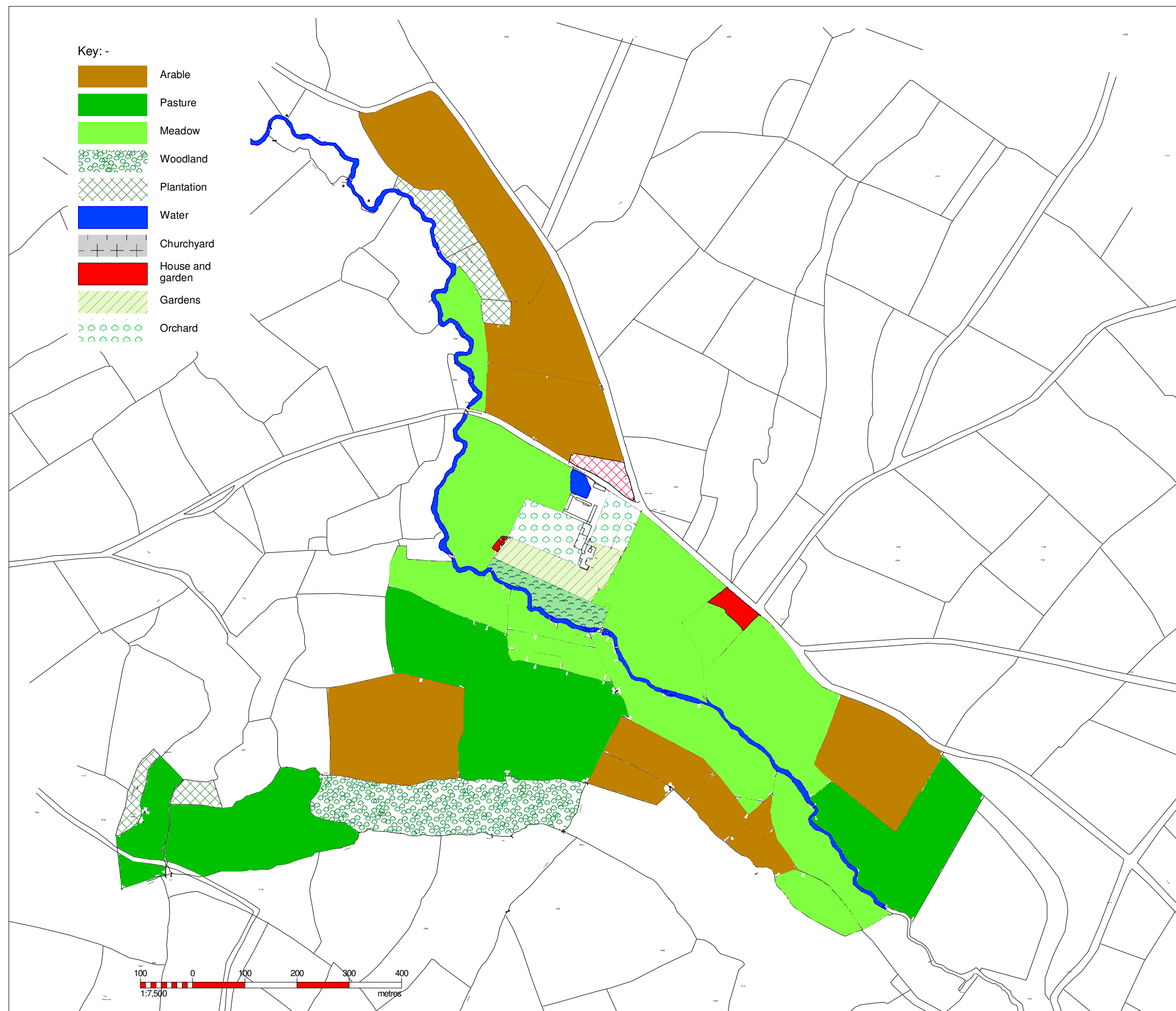
The Morville Estate contains a number of ponds, including an ornamental canal, previously a stew pond associated with the medieval priory. To the east of the hall the large field around the church has a strong parkland quality. An 18<sup>th</sup> century ha-ha, created as part of the Georgian remodelling, divides the field from the formal forecourt of the house. The lines of yews which enclose the gardens and the canal at a lower level are also survivors of the 18<sup>th</sup> century layout. To the south the gardens immediately around the house are largely 20<sup>th</sup> century which have been restored since the late 1980s; in the background is the Mor Brook valley. To the north is Aldenham Hall and estate and a rural rolling landscape.

The variety of land use through time has meant that the archaeology has been preserved in some areas better than others. In the last 100 years the advent of large agricultural machinery has seen archaeology disappearing at an alarming rate as large tracts of previously uncultivated land are put into arable cultivation. At Morville this is clearly seen in the two fields immediately below Aston Hill Wood; the western field has been ploughed using modern machinery to improve the pasture but the eastern field has not. The quantity of archaeology surviving in each field is completely different. The eastern field preserves old field boundaries, ridge and furrow as well as other features.

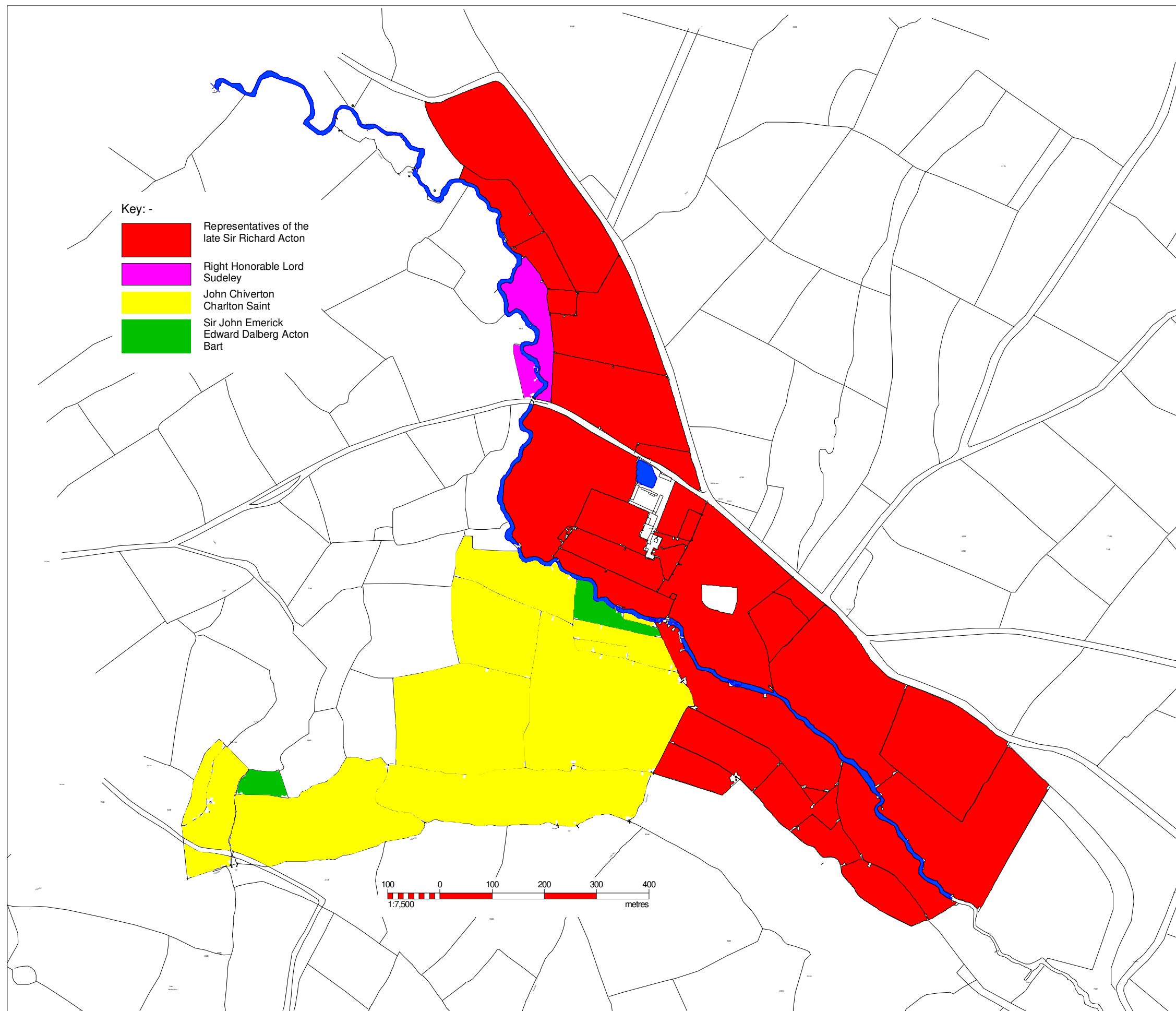
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>

<sup>4</sup> *Morville Hall Management Plan 1989*

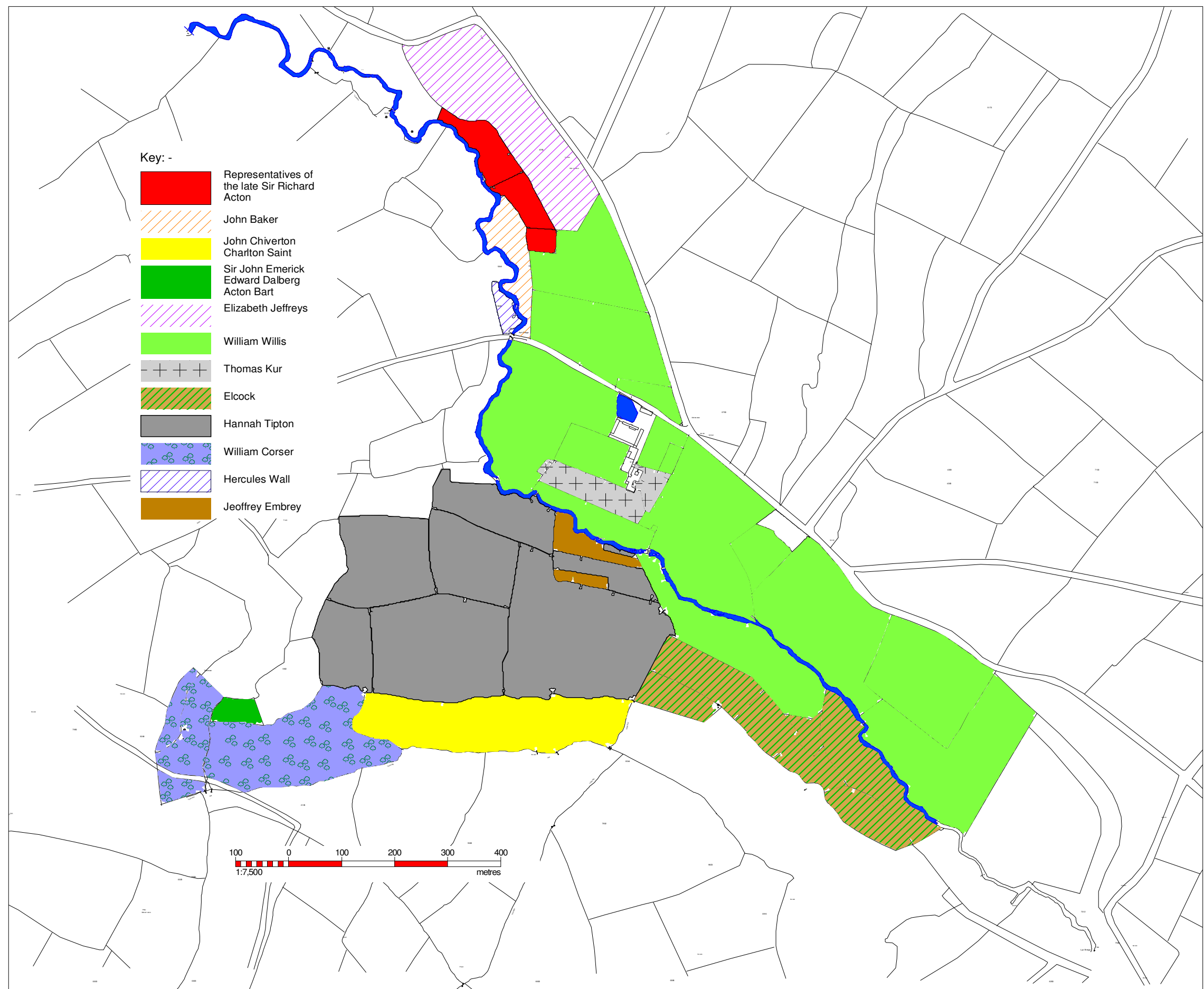


**Figure 2: Land use in the Morville Estate in 1840**



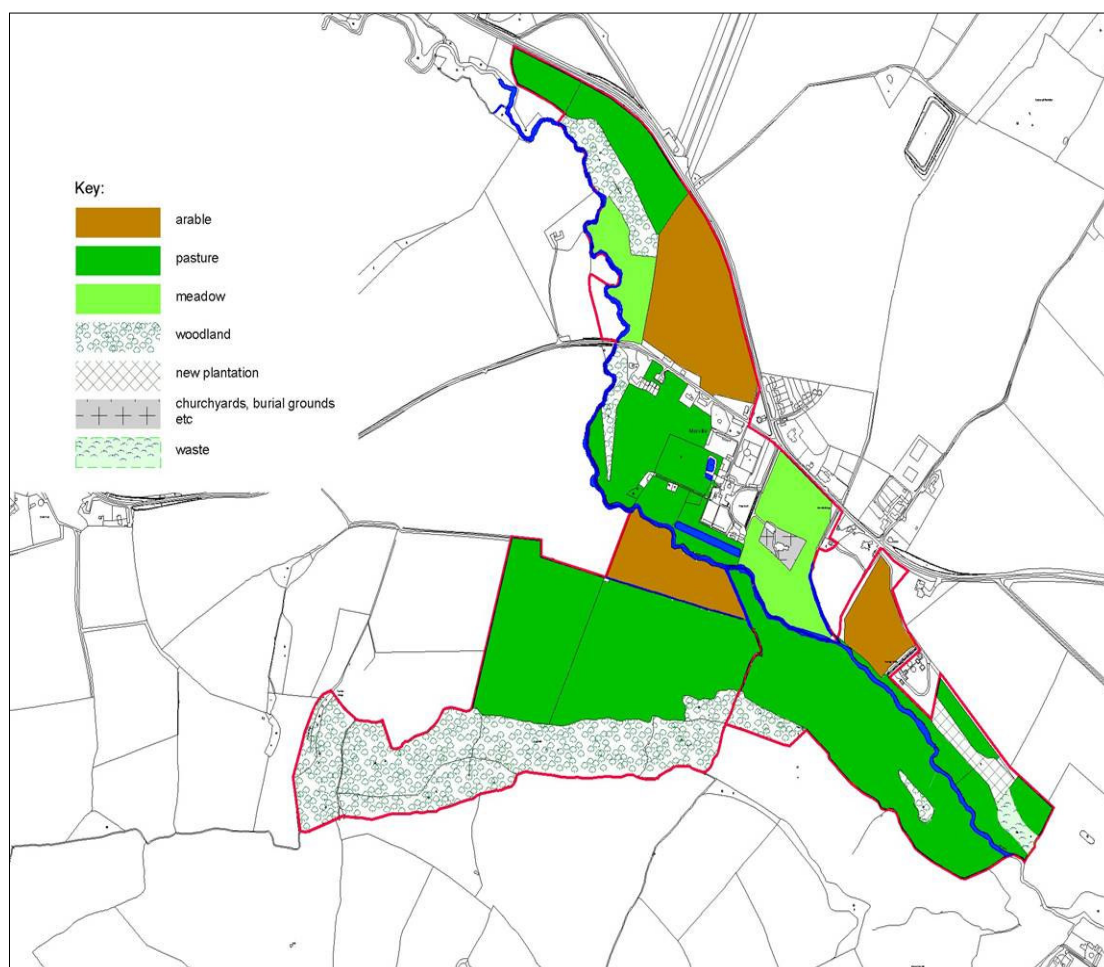
**Figure 3: Landowners in 1840**





**Figure 4: Occupiers in 1840**





**Figure 5: Current land use**

Within the gardens there are varied and attractive views, especially where the wooded ridge forms a backdrop. To the west on rising ground runs an 18<sup>th</sup> century garden wall, north of this is a large former orchard with remains of two ponds (also probably medieval).<sup>5</sup>

In 1840 much of the land along the Mor Brook was put down to meadow; in 2006 the land is pasture and although not strictly meadow has seen little change since 1840. Aston Hill Wood however has changed considerably over time. The western extent of this woodland was pasture in 1840, whereas it is now woodland with some scrub with field boundaries pre-dating 1840 being identified within it. To the north of the estate, the plantation still remains and the land use has stayed largely the same although one field has been put down to pasture since 1840. The land to the north of the Mor brook around Morville has remained very similar although the area of landscaped gardens has increased since the tithe when two of the fields surrounding the Hall were orchards. To the south-east of the estate the slope of Aston Hill was dominated by arable compared to pasture and some fields that are now regenerated woodland.

### **2.3 Land owners and tenants**

The pattern of ownership (Figure 3) in 1840 shows that much (80%) of the estate in Morville parish was owned by the Actons of Aldenham Hall. That part of the estate in the township of Aston Eyre was owned by John Chiverton Charlton Saint (who in fact owned almost 90 % of Aston Eyre). The major landowners of both parishes rarely retained any of the land in their own possession preferring to let. The two main tenants were William Willis and Hannah Tipton, between them renting over 85 % of the total Morville Estate.

<sup>5</sup> Morville Conservation Area Statement by Bridgnorth District Planning Committee, 1994  
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### 3.0 Historical and archaeological background

#### 3.1 Historical background

Morville Hall and the village of Morville are skirted on the south by the Mor Brook, a tributary of the River Severn. The name of the brook could originate from the ancient British word '*mawr*' meaning big; it is also suggested that the stream was once called the '*Memere*', possibly from a root meaning '*babbling*'. In Saxon times the village was known as Membrefeld; by the 12<sup>th</sup> century this had become Momerfeld; by the 16<sup>th</sup> century the place was Morfeld and Morfeilde – and further corruption changed this into Morvile and finally into Morville. The field which the Saxons called '*Member Field*' is probably the large sloping meadow in which the church now stands (Watkins-Pitchford, date unknown).

The Ordnance Survey List of Archaeological Sites mentions several cropmarks, enclosures, ring ditches and some postulated barrows. These are outside the study area but are in the parish of Morville. A number of scrapers, cores, microliths, blades and flakes were found in 1965 in a field on the west side of nearby Cuckoo Pit Wood. These, along with 50 flint artifacts from Morville Farm, (some have been described as Mesolithic) are now being kept in Ludlow museum. A geophysical survey conducted by Archaeophysica Ltd in 2006 revealed a possible prehistoric ditch with a clear entranceway which fits well with similar examples from the Iron Age (Roseveare, 2006). Small streams running through Aston Hill Wood have yielded fossil fish specimens of interest.

Work by Dr A W T Houghton in the 1950s identified a number of Roman roads in Shropshire. He suggests that one ran from Greensforge, where there was a Roman fort, to Newtown in Mid Wales. At Morville its course is postulated as coinciding with the modern B4368 from Monkhampton to the A458 to Bridgnorth; the road crossing the Mor Brook by the Ash Bridge and then going along Corvedale through Monkhopton and Aston Eyre. Excavations along parts of this route have confirmed its presence but it has not been proved that it went through Morville.<sup>6</sup>

Membrefeld was a royal manor in Saxon times and formed the '*caput*' (centre) of the Hundred of Alnothstree.<sup>7</sup> The manor at this time was wealthy, containing twelve hides of land involving eighteen '*berewicks*' (or members, probably in the shape of villages and hamlets) (Eaton, 1853, 26).

By the time of Edward the Confessor the considerable wealth of the Church went to the support of portionary churches of various kinds. In Shropshire, Morville and Bromfield were '*minster*' churches on royal manors with groups of clergy serving great parishes roughly co-extensive with hundreds. Many churches were well-endowed with several hides of land or more than one manor, particularly where they stood on estates of the crown as Morville did. The church at this time was a typical Saxon collegiate and was dedicated to St Gregory, apparently the patron saint of Morville (VCH, Shrewsbury Vol 2).

Domesday mentions only one church that existed at the time in Alnothstree Hundred – the Church of St Gregory – which provided eight canons to serve the outlying hamlets as was the custom at this time. It has long been assumed that the parish of St Gregory extended far beyond its manorial interests. The church held eight of the twelve hides of the Manor of Morville<sup>8</sup> (Eaton, 1853, 25).

Following the Conquest, in 1071, King William gave the Manor of Membrefeld with its 3,000 acres, to his cousin Roger Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, who had led the vanguard at Hastings. This grant placed in his hands all the royal and comital estates and dues, as well as the confiscated estates of many Saxon lords, including Earls Morcar and Edwin (VCH, Shrewsbury, Vol 2).

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<sup>6</sup> From notes by Phyllis Ireland, 1973

<sup>7</sup> Conjecturally, this hundred included Cold Weston; Astley; Little Astley; Norley; Crofte; Haughton; Kingslow; Harpsford; Billingsley; Rode; Stanley; Dunvall; Underton; Bridge Walton; Lye; Tasley; Henley; Colemore

<sup>8</sup> At this time the remaining four hides were of the King's demesne.

So the Earl now held the Manor and Hundred in capute of the Crown and undertook the duty or business of remodelling this ecclesiastical foundation. He had granted the church and five of its eight hides of land to his recent establishment, Shrewsbury Abbey, built to serve his castle there. With the other three hides he beneficed his own private chaplains for the duration of their lifetimes; following their deaths these hides would also revert to the Abbey. Of the remaining four hides he retained two hides in demesne; another two were held under him by Richard Pincerna (Domesday Philimore Edition).

In 1118 a church with a short chancel and an aisle-less nave was built by the monks of Shrewsbury. It is debatable as to whether the Norman church was built on the foundations of the Saxon structure as there is no trace of the collegiate church remaining. It appears more likely that the Saxon church was in the same field but nearer the road. Indeed, when a grave was being dug in 1859 on the north side of the present churchyard, and where there were no obvious signs of previous burials, the ground was found to be full of human bones. Saxon Christians had a strong prejudice against burying on the north side of any church and if these bones came from Saxon burials then it is assumed that they were made on the south side of the Saxon church (W Watkins-Pritchard, date unknown).

Morville was, and still is, in the diocese of Hereford. When this new church was consecrated by the Bishop of Hereford Geoffrey de Clive, following the ceremony a heavy thunder storm scattered the crowd which had flocked to the service. A party of five, three men and two women were returning home when a violent storm arose. One of the women was struck by lightening and was killed instantly; the other *'having been set on fire from the middle down to the soles of the feet, perished miserably'*. The three men escaped, but all five horses were killed (Eaton, 1853, 34).

In 1138 Robert de Behun, the next Bishop of Hereford, granted an appropriation of Morville Church to Shrewsbury Abbey and the church became a Benedictine priory, shorn of all its original influence, remaining subject to the Abbey until the Reformation. One prior and two monks were sent and charged with the spiritual welfare of the parishioners and to carry out *'a full discharge of the duties of hospitality there, in proportion to the local means'*. They also had to provide lodging for the Bishop on his journeys around the diocese (*ibid*, 36).

This was during the reign of Stephen; the Bishop provided new chapels<sup>9</sup> and apart from being places of worship they were refuges for the poor and oppressed and enjoins that all these chapels *'be still subject to the Mother Church at Morville, so that on great festivals, the people shall attend the latter, and the priest of the latter, if he so wills, have the bodies of the dead carried thither for burial'*. Because of this, de Behun was known to be a *'friend of the poor'*. He also stipulated that the endowments of the chapels always shall be at the disposal of the *'Mother Church'* (*ibid*, 37).

Around 1168 the church was deemed too small for the monks and their daily offices so it was enlarged. The north and south aisles were added and the chancel lengthened, piercing the side doors of the nave with three large arches. A square tower was erected against the west wall of the building for the reception of four bells.

However, the Manor of Morville began to lose its importance despite the church being a priory, or grange, and the centre of a large parish with all its subsidiary chapels. The castle of Bridgnorth built by Earl Robert de Belesme gradually took over as the centre of the region instead. Added to this, the abolition of the Hundred of Almodestrue caused Morville to sink into merely a member of the Hundred of Stottesden.<sup>10</sup>

That there was a village in medieval times is well documented and, although its exact location and that of the original church are not known, they are likely to be in the vicinity of the present church. Arthur Oswald, writing in *Country Life* in 1952, claims that the village grew up close to the point where the Mor Brook is joined by a tributary stream coming down from the north. The Ordnance Survey entry for the Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of Morville states that in draining the field around Morville Church, the land agent *'found it full of old foundations of the ancient village of Membrefeld'*.

<sup>9</sup> By 1138 this has taken place at Astley Abbots; Billingsly; Oldbury; Tasley. Soon others were added: Aldenham; Aston Ayres; Underton.

<sup>10</sup> Shropshire Lay Subsidy Roll, 1327

The fact that the church is some distance away from the present village leads to conjecture that the original village was demolished at some point prior to the late 1800s in order to improve the view from the hall. This theory is supported by the results of the recent geophysical survey which identified the probable remains of former structures along the road associated with the village (Roseveare, 2006, 8).

Previous to July 30<sup>th</sup> 1529 Richard Marshall, alias Baker, the 28<sup>th</sup> Abbot of Shrewsbury resigned. He received a pension of £40 per annum and to make up that sum a deed under the convent seal granted to him *inter alia* for term or life the 'Cell or Grange of Morville with all it lands, meadows, pastures and other hereditaments, both temporal and spiritual' (Eyton, 1853, 40). Richard Marshall himself actually resided in a tenement belonging to the priory, a house where the Acton Arms now stands. [Visitors to it claim that the building is haunted by the ghost of a Benedictine monk!] He had left Morville by 1545 and went to Bridgnorth where he died in 1558 (W Watkins-Pitchford, undated).

The passage of time brought no relief to the poverty and by the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the priory buildings were in great dilapidation. Between 1536 and 1542 John Leland the antiquary travelled along the road from Wenlock and made a brief note of what he saw, "From Wenlock to Morfielde village ... I saw a little Priory or Cell called Morfielde on the right hand as I entered the village".<sup>11</sup> In 1538 the priory was suppressed.

Today only the (much altered) church remains; there are no visible traces of any monastic buildings. The recent geophysical survey revealed buried structures associated within the assumed former burial ground and the north aisle of the church. These were recognised and identified as the most likely site of the priory. (Roseaveare, 2006, 8). The only remaining traces of the monastic establishment are a series of fish ponds or 'stews' which were altered to fit in with the formal landscaping between c1700 – c1850.

On June 16, 1545 a valuation of the estate was made by the Royal Commission and it reported that the incoming rents accounted to £30.0s.9d and the outgoings £16.10s.10¾. On December 4<sup>th</sup> of the same year the Crown granted the reversion of the church property to John Dudley, Viscount Lisle, Lord High Admiral, who disposed of it by deed a few weeks later to Roger Smyth of Bridgnorth and Morville, Bailiff of Bridgnorth 1545; and MP for the borough in 1547 and 1553 (Eaton, 1853, 41).

The Smyth family (or its Latinised form, Faber) had been quite an important Shropshire family. Walter le Smith was mentioned in 1086 and a John Smith between 1095 and 1100. In the Chartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey in 1258 Emma, daughter of William Faber, and Richard her brother dispose of land at Deepdale in Morville. Richard Smith (Faber) was one of the jurors representing Bridgnorth at about this date. There is mention of Robert and Geoffrey Faber before 1252 and Robert, son of Geoffrey Faber, of Little Bruge, grants land by deed around 1296 (Leach, 1891, 3).

Roger Smyth's purchase of Morville is set forth in the following deed:

*"The King, for a fine of £4.17s. grants to John, Viscount Lisle, that he be fine to be levied at Westminster grant the premises before recited and the reversion of Marshall's interest therein to Roger Smyth of Bridgnorth, to hold to the said Roger and his heirs of the King and his heirs by accustomed services. Given at Westminster, 18<sup>th</sup> February, anno 37".*

Thus the property passed from clerical to lay proprietorship and the Smyths became the medieval lords of the manor.

Roger Smyth was one of the Bailiffs of Bridgnorth at this time and was Member of Parliament in 1547 and 1553. He not only bought the reversion of the property of Morville but he also obtained a grant of the tithes of the dissolved collegiate church of St Mary Magdalaine in Bridgnorth and other properties in the neighbourhood. He sold the Manor and Advowsoon to the Billingsgate family. That Roger Smyth was a not too scrupulous speculator in landed

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<sup>11</sup> From Shropshire Magazine, 1958  
archenfield archaeology ltd AA\_87 Morville Hall, Shropshire archaeological and historic landscape survey

property has been well documented and in his later years was stripped of any benefits due to him from his burgess-ship. He died about 1565 and his son George inherited the estate in 1562 or 1563 (*ibid*, 4).

The exact date of the construction of the hall is not known. The pilasters of the main block surmounted by ball ornaments of stone are disguised buttresses which, as houses were seldom built with buttresses after the early years of Elizabeth's reign, makes it more likely that the work can be attributed to Roger Smyth and not his son. The original E-plan [typically Elizabethan] building of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was of two storeys and was constructed of small roughly square blocks of local grey sandstone. The walls of the older part of the house are some three feet thick with the spaces between the two faces filled in with rubble. Some of this rubble has been found to be carved with mouldings and ornaments of early 13<sup>th</sup> century date, almost certainly from the monastic buildings. There is clear evidence that there was originally a great hall – the first floor in the main range has been inserted at a little above the middle of its height and the room on the right has also been partitioned off.<sup>12</sup>

One clue as to the date of construction is found in some moulded plasterwork in the kitchen ceiling. A Tudor rose, portcullis and fleur-de-lis are arranged in a symmetrical eight-pointed pattern with four small compartments in each of which is a cartouche with the Prince of Wales feathers. A heart in the middle bears the word 'JESU'. These heraldic devices are similar to one at the Gatehouse at Upton Cresset and in the hall at Wilderhope Manor, both fairly near Morville, indicating that the work was carried out from the same team of craftsmen using the same mould. In 1580 when George Smyth owned Morville there were ties between Morville and Upton Cressett as his mother was a Cressett. Wilderhope is eight miles from Morville and initials of its hall ceiling date it between 1583 and 1593 and so it can be conjectured that the ceiling at Morville was constructed around the same time.<sup>13</sup>

George Smyth died in 1600 and was succeeded by his son, John. John's son, another George Smyth, was a Member of Parliament in 1623 and inherited Morville in 1636. His son John was killed during the Civil War at Edghill in 1642 fighting for the Royalists, and the male line of the family died out. The estate reverted to his father's sister Jane who had married Arthur Weaver of Bridgnorth, whose initials with the date 1683 are over the south door of the church. The estate then went into the Weaver family for the next 130 years (W Watkins-Pritchard, date unknown).

In c1748 Arthur Weaver III (another Member of Parliament for Bridgnorth) commissioned the modernisation and enlargement of the house, giving it much of its Georgian appearance. William Baker of Ludlow Butter Cross fame carried out the conversion. The mullions were changed to sashes, the oak panelling inserted and the giant Doric half-columns and pilasters to the fronts of the two wings were added to disguise the 16<sup>th</sup> century buttresses. Around 1770 – 80 a second phase of alteration was carried out, probably by Arthur Blayney who inherited Morville in 1762. The third storey was added, as was the porch and the three-sided bay window (*ibid*).

In 1767 Susannah Weaver, daughter of Dr Anthony Weaver, married Henry, Viscount Tracy and this conveyed Morville to the Tracy family. Her only surviving child the Honorable Henrietta Susannah Tracy married her cousin Charles Hanbury who enlarged his name to Hanbury-Tracy and was afterwards raised to the peerage as Lord Sudeley. In 1814 Lord Sudeley sold the hall and about 116 acres of land to Sir Frederick Richard Edward Acton, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet of that name who lived at neighbouring Aldenham Park. His son Sir John Emerich became the first Lord Acton of Aldenham in 1869. For a century Morville Hall formed part of Acton's Estate at Aldenham to the north of the village, although instead of living there he rented it out. The Acton Estate rental books for 1824 describes Morville Hall '*this very good substantial and comfortable mansion house replete with many conveniences*' (*ibid*).

Population in the parish declined in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – the church records show that in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Morville was a self-contained village with most of the population engaged in agriculture. The decline in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was partly caused by

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<sup>12</sup> Country Life – August 22, 1952

<sup>13</sup> Country Life – August 22, 1952  
archenfield archaeology ltd AA\_87 Morville Hall, Shropshire archaeological and historic landscape survey

the Industrial Revolution as people moved to new cities such as Birmingham. More recently commuters have moved back into the parish with the result being barn conversions and enlargement of agricultural labourers' cottages. In 1851 the parish contained 2,778 acres of land, rateable at £4,299.5s.2d.<sup>14</sup>

The Actons sold the estate in 1936 to Mr Bayliss who was followed by Dr W J S Bythell. In 1965 Miss A P Bythell gave the house and 140 acres of surrounding land to the National Trust. Her niece now lives in the hall and in recent years the house and gardens have been carefully restored.

### 3.2 Archaeological background

The archaeological landscape around Morville is comparatively unknown as there has been very little archaeological work carried out on the estate. Prior to this survey, in May 2006, Archaeophytica Ltd carried out a geophysical survey. This has identified the probable site of the Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) and that of the priory. The conclusions include the statement: *"The most significant result was the probable identification of former structures along a road and presumably an element of Morville village demolished somewhere in the late 1800s"*. And that *"The recognition of buried structures within the former extent of the medieval burial ground and associated with the north aisle of the church means that the most likely site of the priory has been identified ..... this should remove any ambiguity as to its location"* (Roseveare, 2006, 8). Prior to this the site of the priory was identified by the Shropshire Sites and Monuments Record as being where the hall now stands.<sup>15</sup> Others placed it near to, or within the field adjacent to, the present church.

In 1992 the National Trust produced an archaeological report on the South Pavilion, known as the 'Brownie House'. This pavilion, along with an almost identical north pavilion, were originally believed to have been built by William Baker, who remodelled the hall in 1788-9. However there were elements believed to associated with the Tudor mansion layout and the purpose of this survey was to investigate the development of the building and to make recommendations relevant to repair and adaptation. The evidence subsequently suggested that the pavilion was early 17<sup>th</sup> century rather than late 16<sup>th</sup> but it was unable to confirm that there was any re-used material from the priory.

In 1989 features in the former orchard of the Dower House were recorded by Jeremy Milln of the National Trust ahead of the creation of the new gardens.

### 4.0 Aims and objectives

The aims of the project were:-

- to carry out documentary research
- to conduct a walk-over survey of the estate and to record any archaeological or historical features
- to assess the wider landscape context of the house and gardens
- to make notes to level I (RCHME) standard of the standing buildings
- to conduct a photographic survey of all the major components of the buildings
- to produce a report on the findings to add to similar reports from other disciplines

The objectives of the project were: -

- to improve the information base for the property
- to highlight gaps in knowledge meriting future research
- to help inform decisions on future management and conservation
- to contribute to the interpretive material available to visitors
- to engage with the tenants and enhance the shared sense of ownership

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<sup>14</sup> Bagshaw's Directory

<sup>15</sup> SMR Ref: SA 603

## 5.0 Methodology

- cartographic regression included field boundary changes, land use and field names, (using modern OS data, OS 1884 6" map and the tithe map) with additional manuscript and estate maps where possible.
- documentary research included a Sites and Monuments Record search, papers, reports, articles, letters, photographs etc
- a walk-over survey using a global positioning system (GPS) was undertaken. This covered the whole area of the estate and all visible features relating to landscape improvements and agricultural and woodland development were recorded using the National Trust's own Sites and Monuments database. Identified features were plotted onto OS digital mapping and reproduced at a variety of scales.
- a photographic record was made of features and these were labelled to correspond with National Trust SMR numbers
- all data were entered into a Microsoft ©Access relational database

### Building survey methodology:-

- photographs were taken using a digital SLR camera using general views of the exterior of the buildings, and selective internal views and any detailed coverage deemed to be fitting with the character and setting of the building. The photographic survey was conducted in accordance with the stipulations laid down in 'Recording Historic Buildings' (RCHME 3rd ed. 1996), to meet the requirements for a level 1 building recording project.
- notes to level I (RCHME) standard of the standing buildings were made
- a photographic survey of all the major components of the building was conducted. To meet this requirement photographs were to be taken using a 35mm SLR camera using digital format of general views of the exterior of the building. The photographic survey was to be conducted in accordance with the stipulations laid down in '*Recording Historic Buildings*' (RCHME 3rd ed. 1996), to meet the requirements for a level 1 building recording project.
- the buildings and their setting were assessed and analysed by suitably qualified archaeologists
- a plan, based on the modern Ordnance Survey Superplan data, was produced to show building materials and initial phases of buildings
- photographs indicating architectural features and alterations were taken using a Digital SLR camera
- the buildings were visited during the period May 2006
- all photographic records and drawing numbers were recorded on the relevant data capture documents in accordance with Archenfield Archaeology's standard site recording procedures
- Archenfield Archaeology conforms to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology. All projects are, where applicable, carried out in accordance with IFA Standards and Guidance or Draft Standards and Guidance.

### Processing methodology:-

- all data were entered into a Microsoft ©Access relational database
- basic records of each vernacular building were entered on the National Trust's SMR database. For the purpose of this survey it was considered sufficient to record from external descriptions only and to the standard of the listed building entry (where available).



## 6.0 Cartographic regression

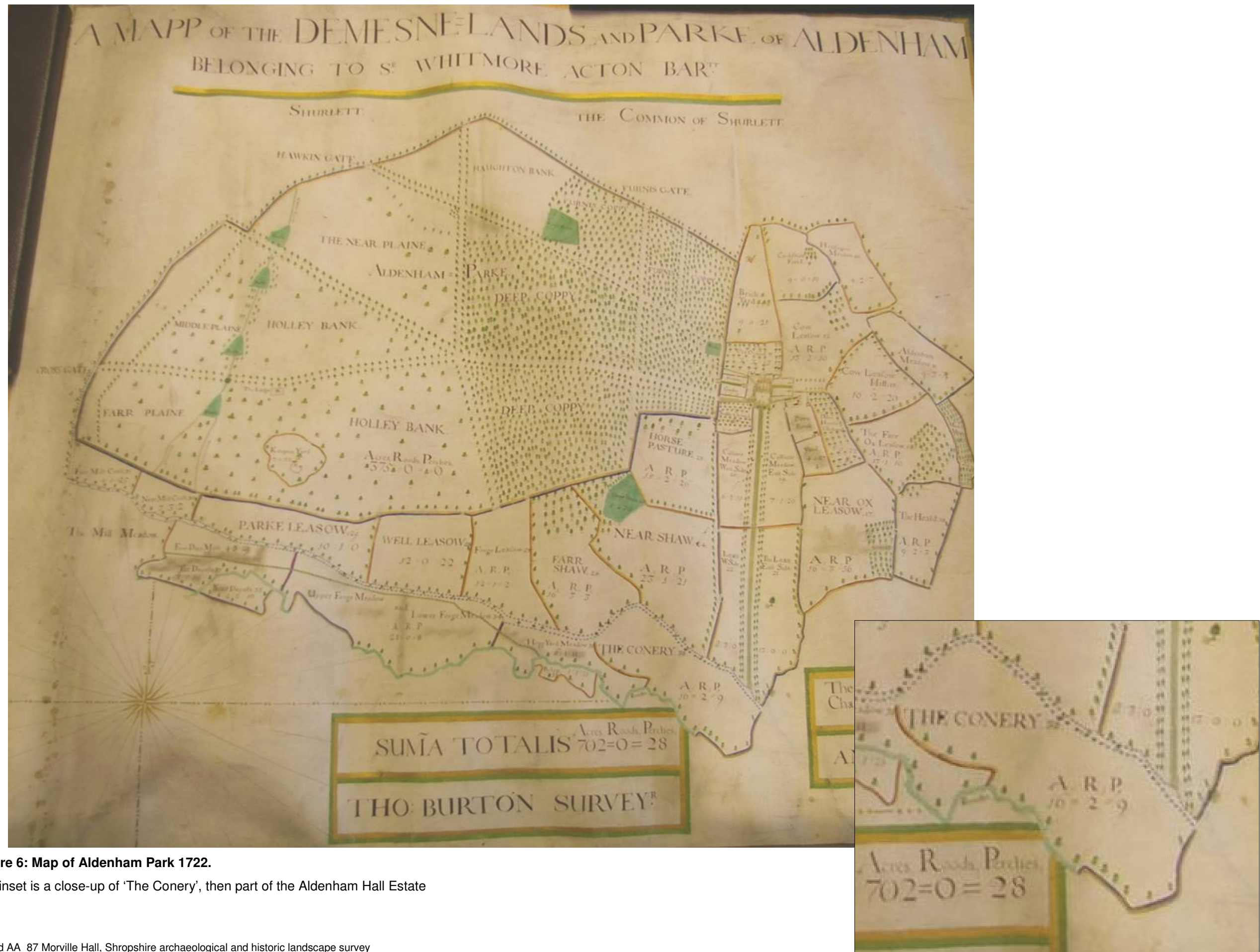


Figure 6: Map of Aldenham Park 1722.

The inset is a close-up of 'The Conery', then part of the Aldenham Hall Estate



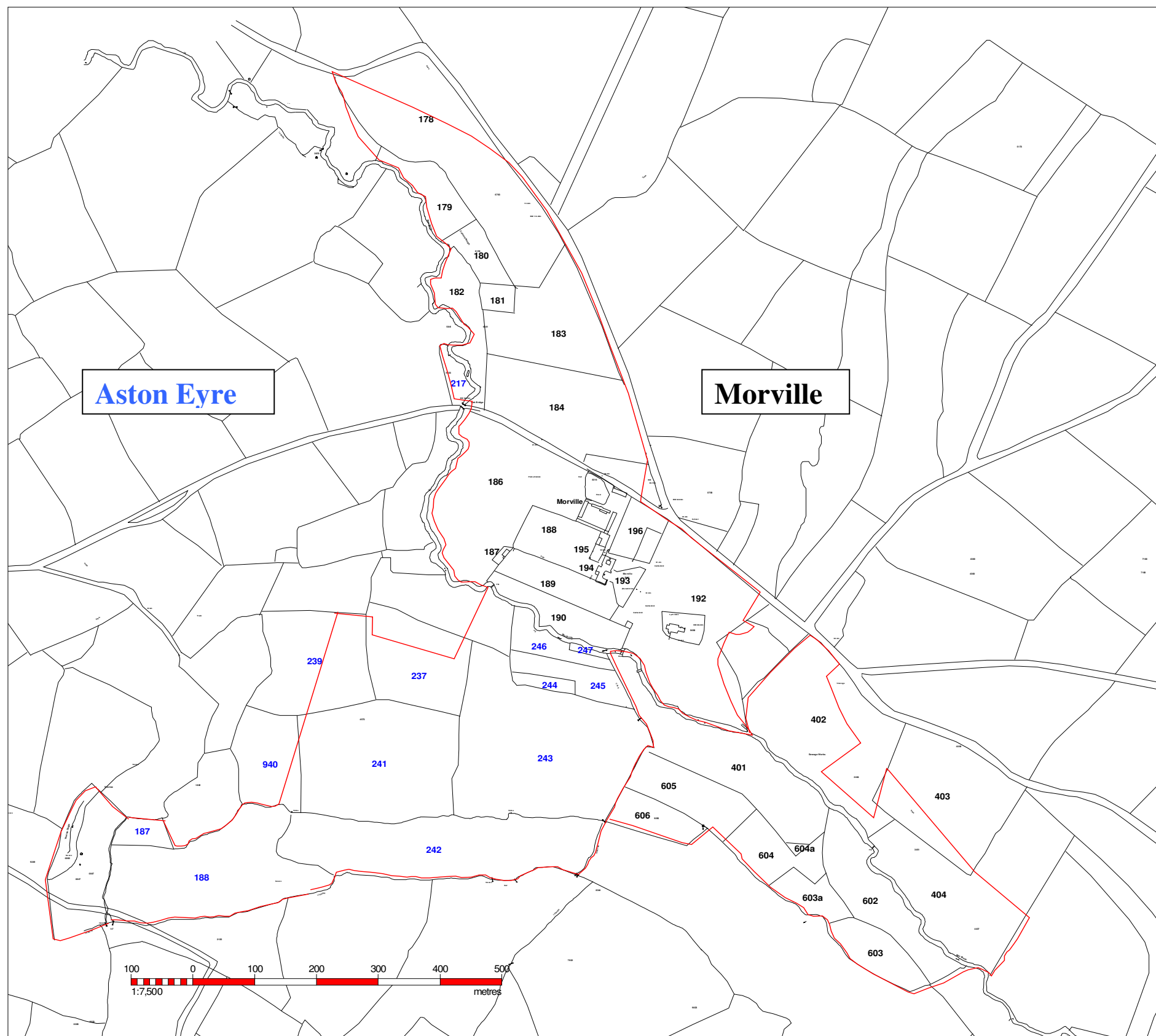


Figure 7: The 1840 redrawn tithe map with (inset) Morville Hall and remnants of strip fields

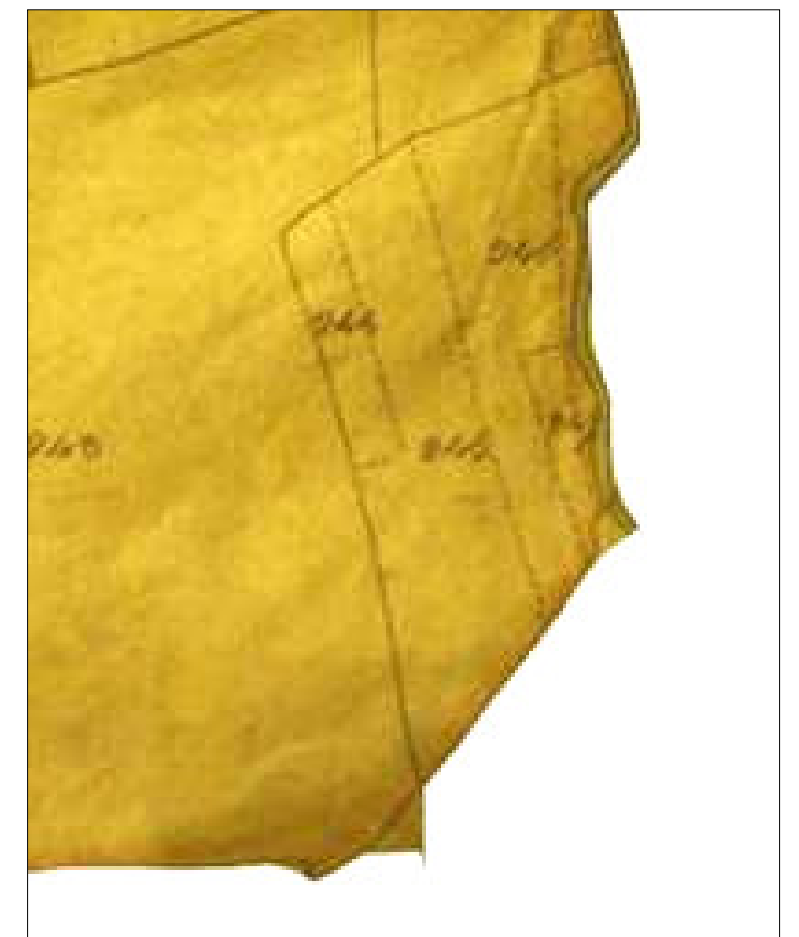
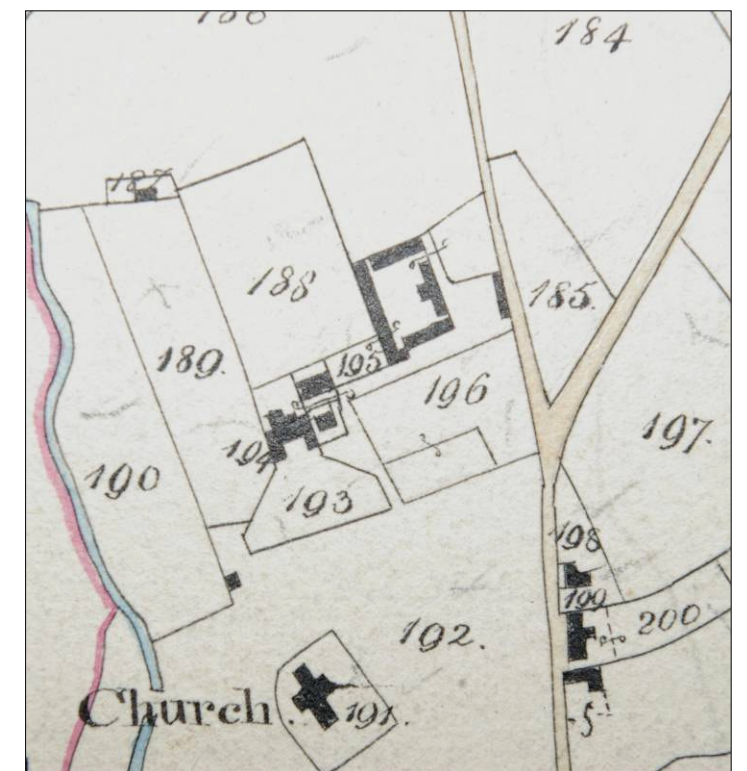




Figure 8: Copy of Sales Particulars 1865 <sup>16</sup>



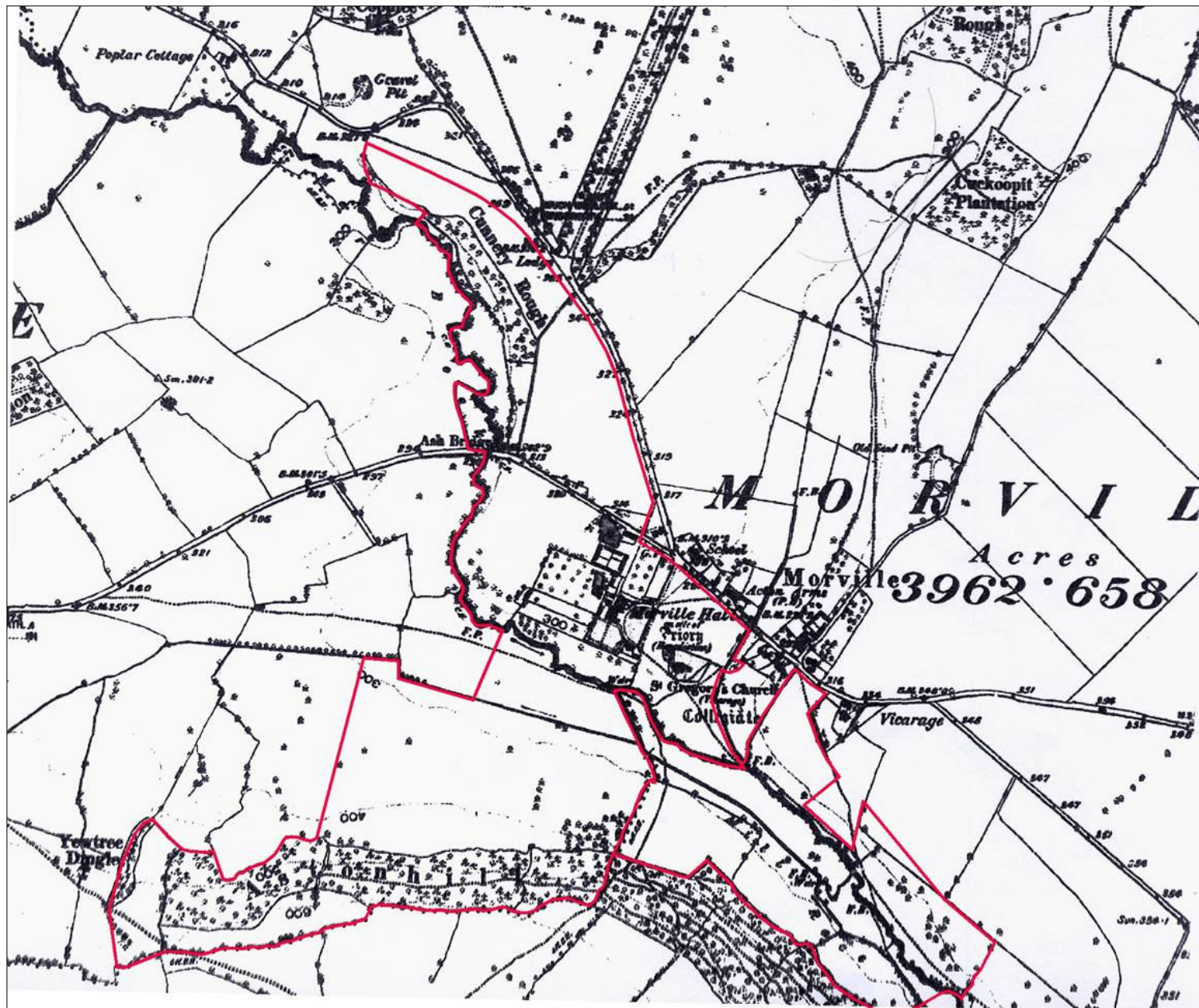
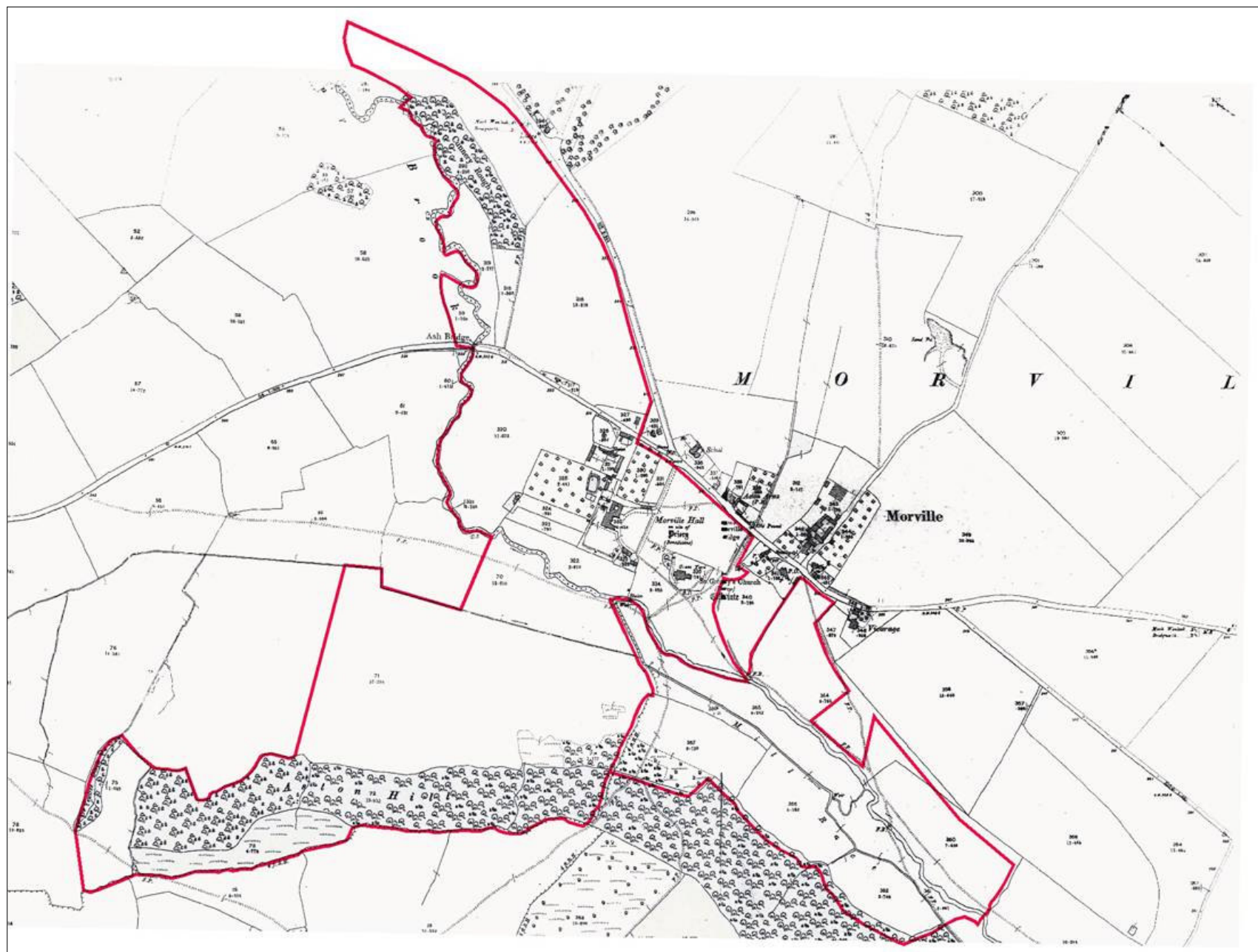
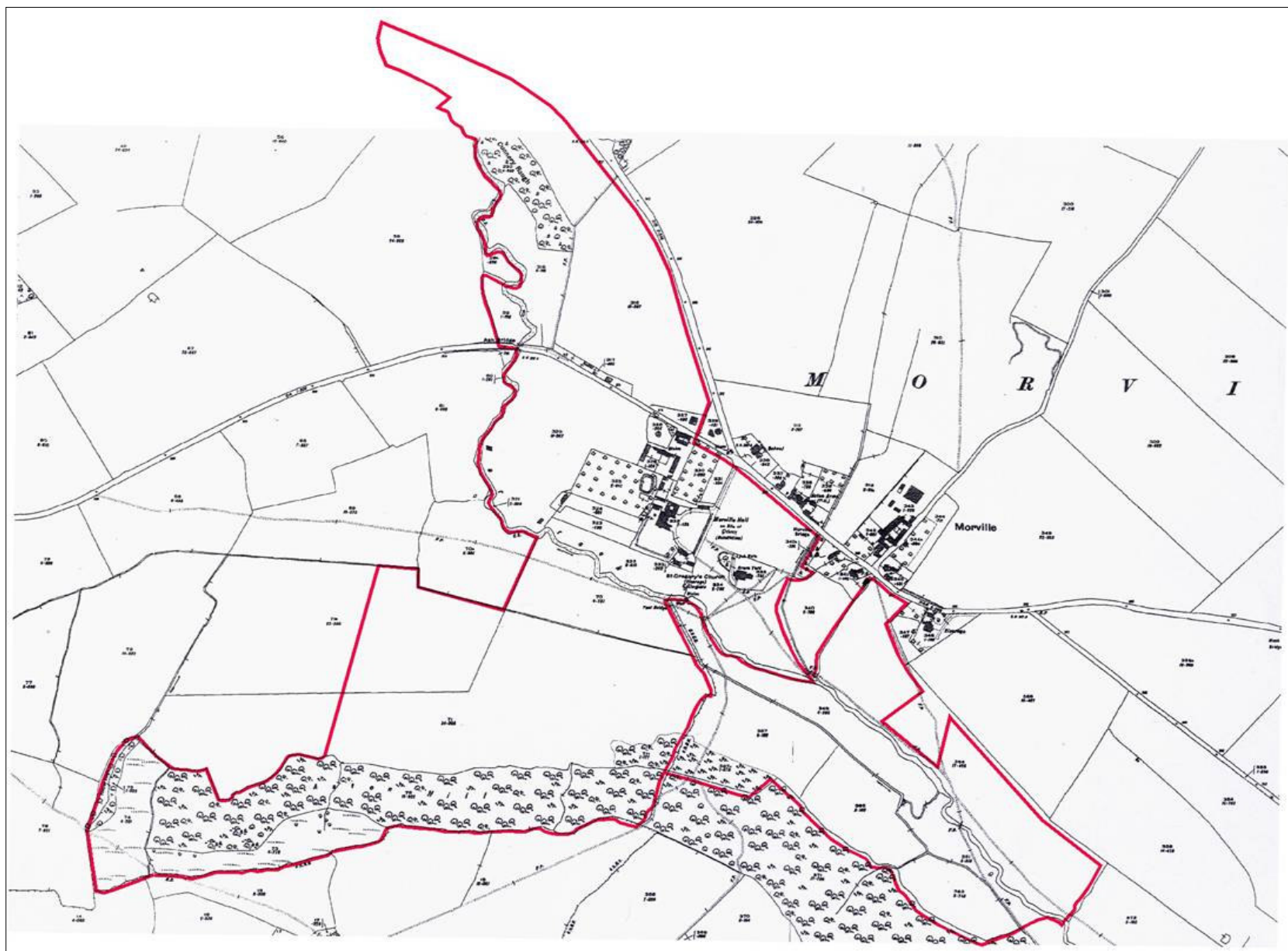


Figure 9: 1884 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map with National Trust boundary



**Figure 10: 1902 OS map with National Trust boundary**





**Figure 11: 1926 OS map showing the National Trust boundary**

## 6.1 The estate

Figure 3 shows the results of a survey carried out in 1722 on behalf of Sir Whitmore Acton by Thomas Burton. The area covered is the demesne lands and park of Aldenham Hall<sup>17</sup>. It is the earliest known map connected with Morville although as it was drawn up before the Actons purchased Morville in 1814 and therefore little of the Morville Estate was surveyed. The map includes the alignment of the avenue leading to the front of Aldenham Hall and the deer park to the west. The inset called '*The Conery*' was at this time part of Aldenham Estate and is now part of the Morville Estate.

A set of sales particulars from 1865 (Figure 8) contained one lot that now belongs to the Morville Estate. This consisted of two small fields immediately to the north of the B4368 at Ash Bridge. It also features a rather schematic drawing of the hall and church in relation to the fields but these cannot be viewed as a true representation.

The field boundaries on the 1840 tithe map (Figure 7) show that the last remnants of the medieval method of strip farming are near to the heart of the estate (tithe numbers 244 –247). Most of the fields have been since consolidated to form larger fields.

The 1884 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (Figure 9) is the first really accurate mapping of the Morville Estate. The removal of any field boundaries appears to have taken place between 1840 and 1884. The eastern boundary of field 241 on the tithe still exists as a substantial earthwork<sup>18</sup>, although no longer a current boundary but is shown to have been removed by 1884. The parish boundary that runs along the southern part of the estate (also representing the boundary of the National Trust holdings) still retains its original shape and is one of the main constants through time. This too can be seen as a physical earthwork along the edge of the wood.<sup>19</sup> There is a mill leat shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition but not on the tithe map. It seems likely that many of the fields along the Mor Brook, recorded as meadows on the tithe, were water meadows, some of which may have been served from the leat itself when the water was not needed to power the mill.

The changes in field boundaries between the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map and the 2006 map (Figure 12) show the Morville Estate to be dominated by leats and streams that have changed little over the last 122 years. The woodland boundaries have been maintained throughout this period and particularly the eastern end could date back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the south-eastern part of the estate most of the boundaries were in recent years removed for a sewage treatment works that has meant a complete change in the layout. Just outside the north-western perimeter of the estate the fields have also changed considerably with smaller fields becoming amalgamated to form much larger fields.

The field on the north-facing slope of Aston Hill on the other hand has been split into four which has had an impact on the varied survival of archaeology across this area as different areas have escaped cultivation.

## 6.2 The gardens and farm buildings

This survey has led to the discovery of the original entrance to the rear of the hall into the stable courtyard and through the stone barn<sup>20</sup>. The converted barns<sup>21</sup> together with the small brick building opposite<sup>22</sup> are all that is left of an organised courtyard of four barns shown on early mapping. The stone barn was built with a ginnel through the centre of it with hay lofts on either side. This lines up perfectly with the entrance to the courtyard of barns shown clearly on the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map (Figure 12)

The area around the hall itself has changed little with only the removal of two boundaries running roughly east/west and a slight reorganisation of the orchards into

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<sup>17</sup> The total measurements of the Aldenham lands and park were 702 acres, 0 rods and 28 poles  
<sup>18</sup> NT SMR 55608  
<sup>19</sup> NT SMR 55630  
<sup>20</sup> NTSMR No 55694  
<sup>21</sup> NTSMR No 55691 and 55693  
<sup>22</sup> NTSMR No 55689

formal garden to the north of the hall. The area of ground immediately in front of the hall has been landscaped. The eastern edge of the area was raised slightly above the surrounding ground to create a platform and is bounded by a ha-ha. (Roseveare, 2006, 3).

The agricultural buildings to the rear of the hall show a model farm arrangement typical following the intensification of agriculture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Enclosure acts brought together wasteland and remaining open fields into farm complexes for increased productivity which led to attempts to improve and standardise the farmyard plan. The main incentive for the improvement of production came with the rising trend of prices between 1750 and 1813, as the population grew from 5.7 million to over 10 million (Lake, 1989, 102).

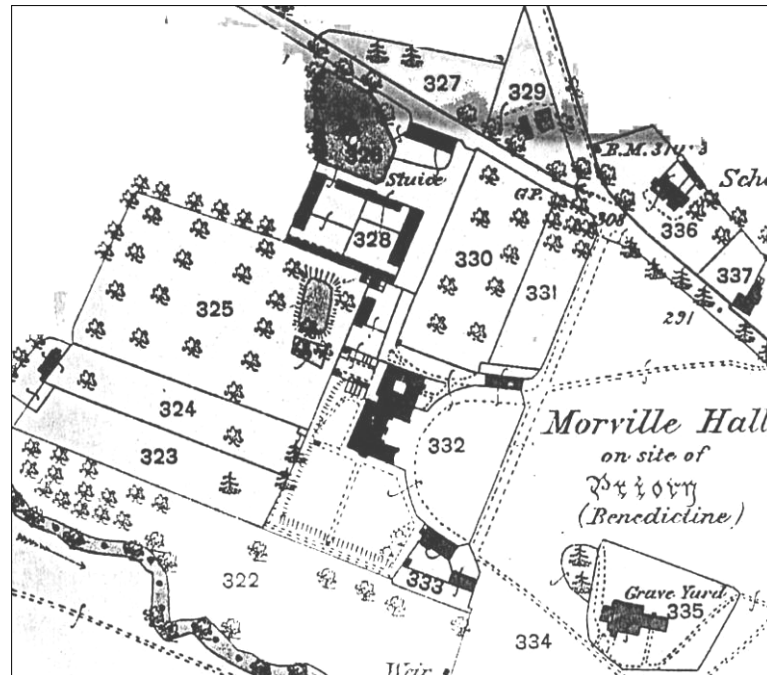
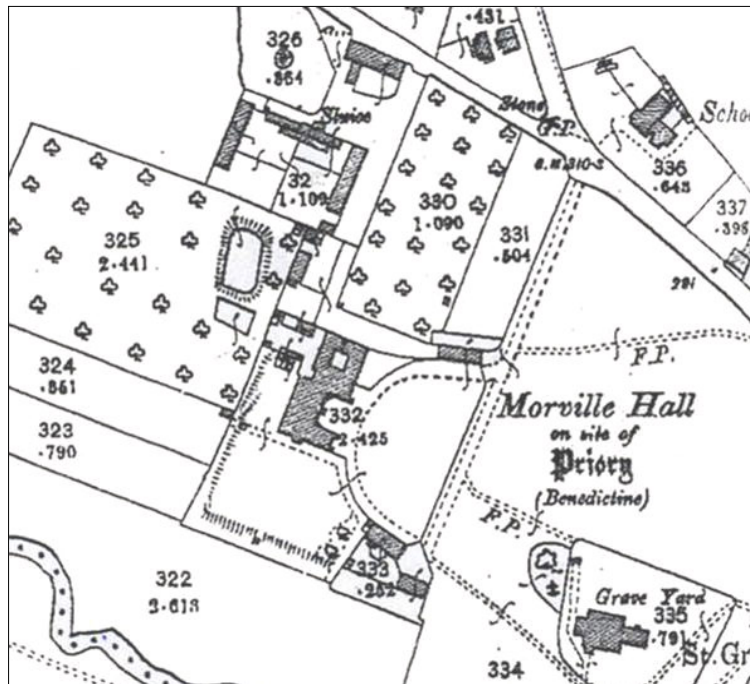


Figure 12: Extract from the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map

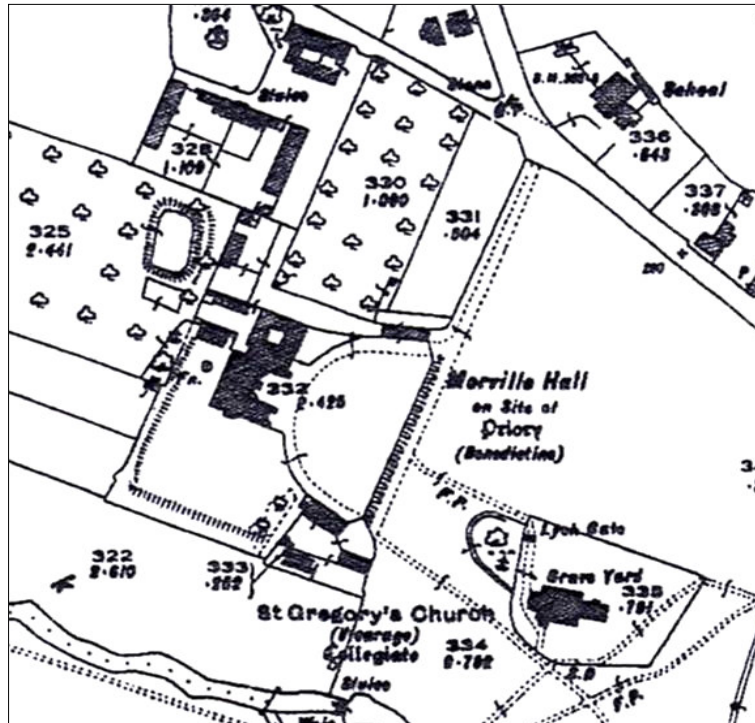
By 1902 (Figure 13) a number of changes had been made in the courtyard. Almost an entire building on the southern side was removed. Also a large Dutch barn was also erected to the north of the B4368, together with an extension to the stone barn fronting onto it. The 1926 OS map (Figure 14) shows only one further major change, the addition of a further extension to the barn fronting the main road, this time running parallel with it. Both of these extensions have since been removed.

The main buildings connected to the hall have changed very little. The south-western corner of the hall was removed between 1926 and the present day. The agricultural buildings to the rear on the other hand have changed drastically; the organised layout typical of agricultural complexes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century has been completely lost. The southern and eastern barns that formed the courtyard have been all but demolished. The only surviving element of these buildings is at the eastern end of the southern building. A small building to the rear of the south pavilion has also been removed but it is likely that this was merely a privy building or small storeroom.



**Figure 13: Extract from the 1902 OS map**

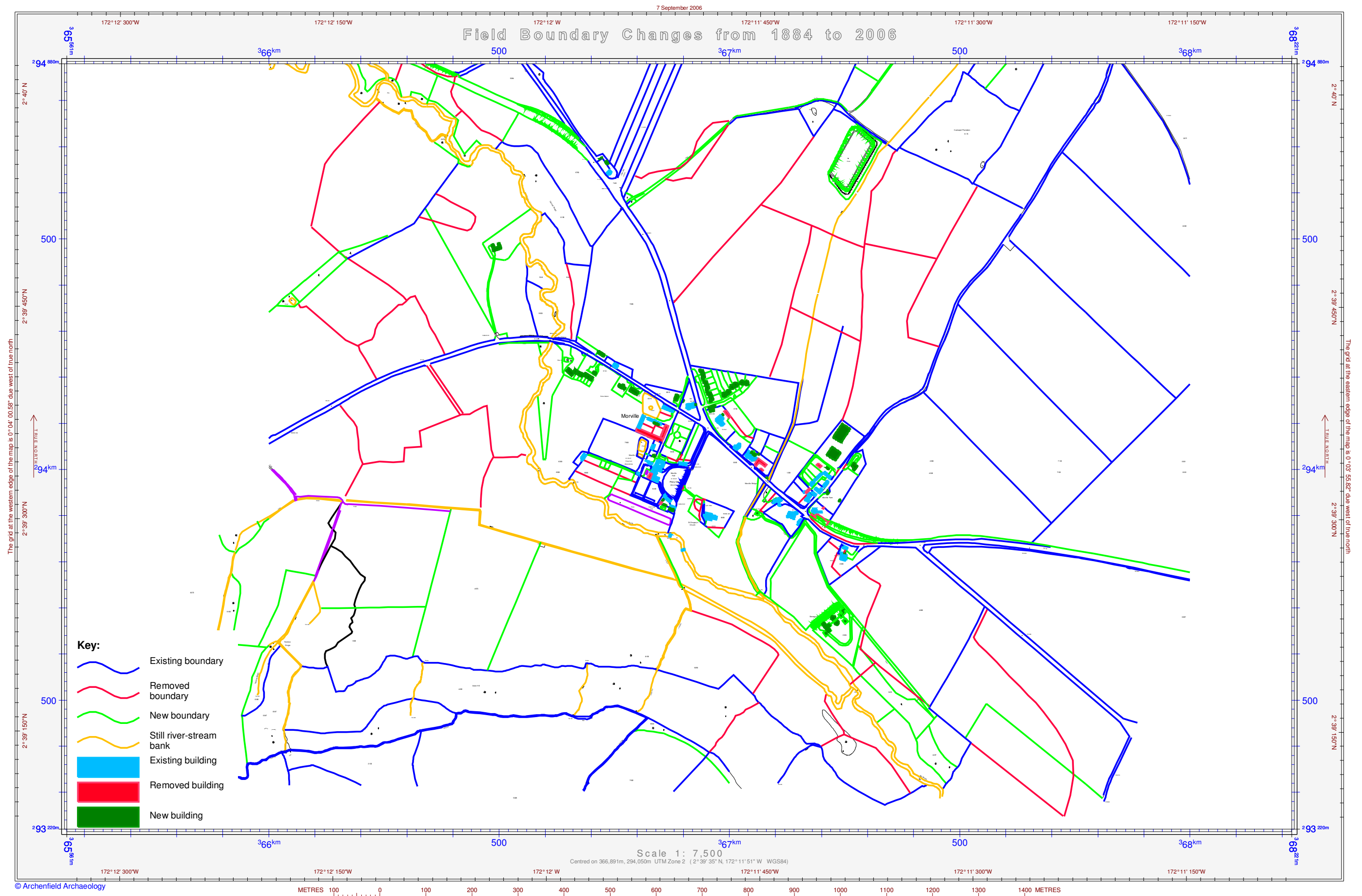
This survey has led to the discovery of the original entrance to the rear of the hall into the stable courtyard and through the stone barn<sup>23</sup>. The converted barns<sup>24</sup> together with the small brick building opposite<sup>25</sup> are all that is left of an organised courtyard of four barns shown on early mapping. The stone barn was built with a ginnel through the centre of it with hay lofts on either side. This lines up perfectly with the entrance to the courtyard of barns shown clearly on the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map.



**Figure 14: Extract from the 1902 OS map**

<sup>23</sup> NTSMR No 55694  
<sup>24</sup> NTSMR No 55691 and 55693  
<sup>25</sup> NTSMR No 55689





**Figure 15: Field boundary changes between 1884 and 2006**

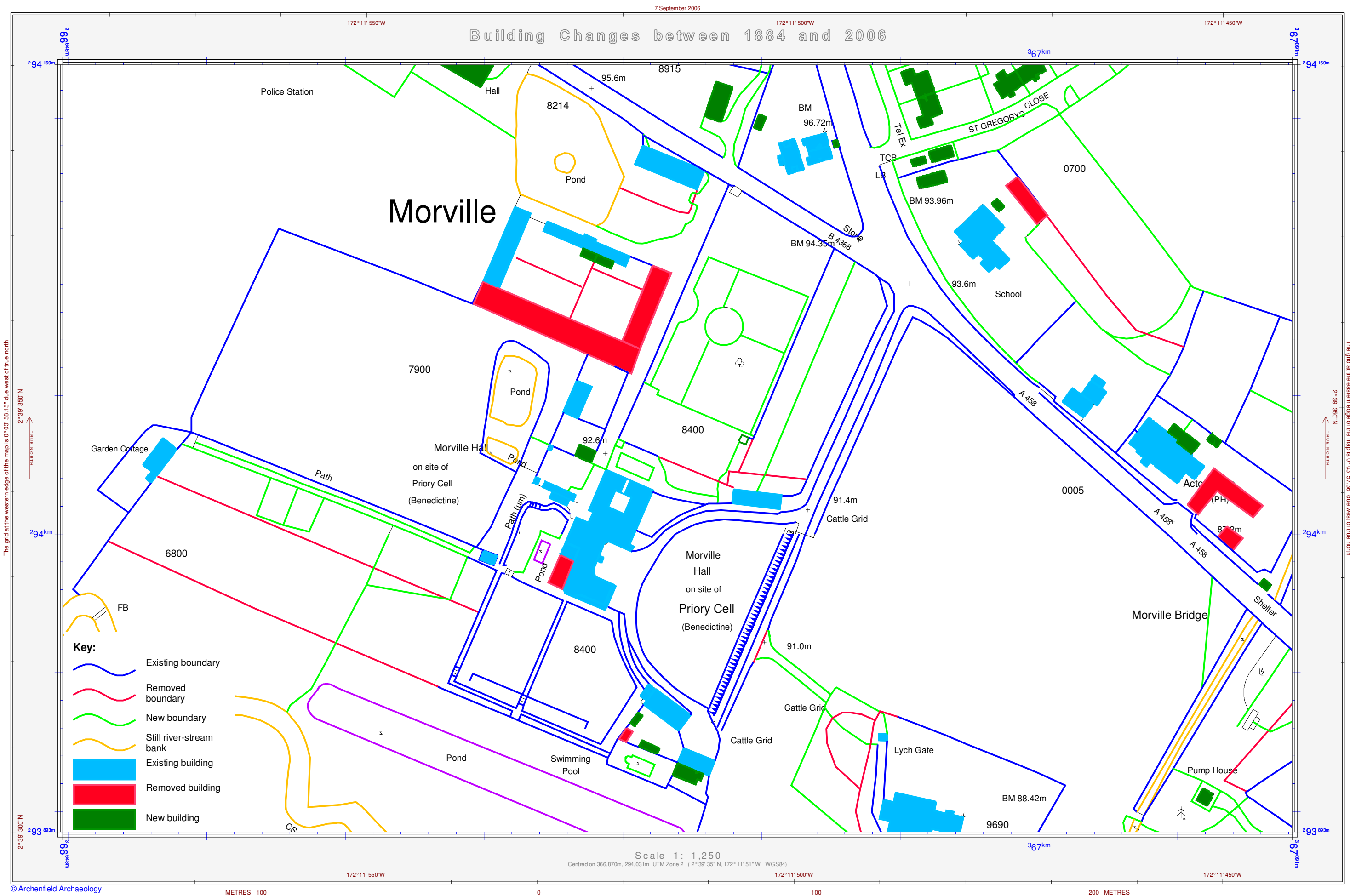
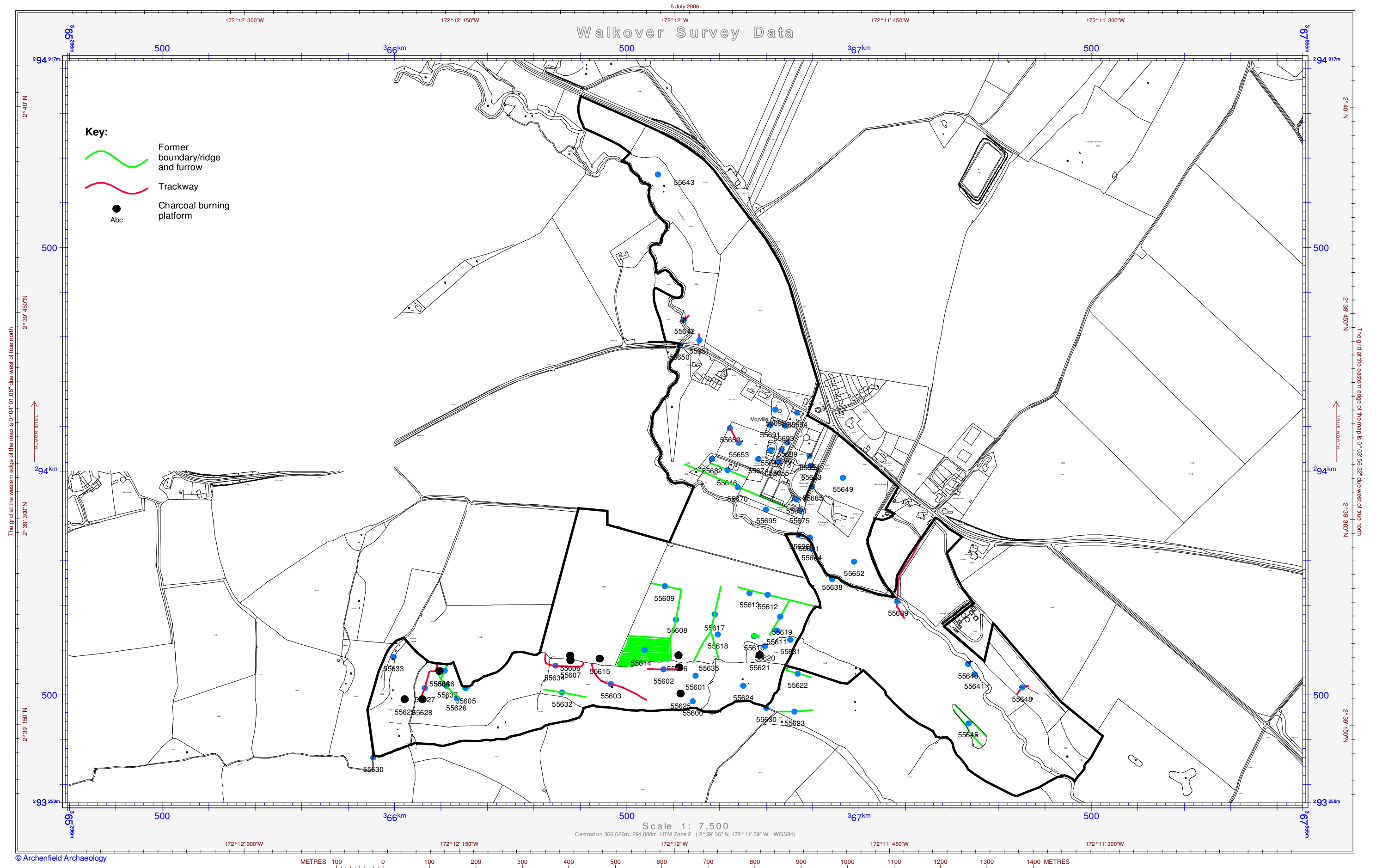


Figure 16: Building changes between 1864 and 2006

## 7.0 Walk-over survey



**Figure 17: Walk-over survey**

## Trackways

**SMR No: 55602**

**SO 366579 293557**

**Plate 1**

Trackway on north-facing slope, running roughly east/west and visible for about 50 metres. In some places the wheel ruts are quite visible. There is some hazel coppicing in the vicinity; the trackway terminates at a charcoal burning platform.

**SMR No: 55603**

**SO 366466 293524**

**Plate 2**

Trackway on north-facing slope. It runs for approximately 40 metres east/west and then turns abruptly down the slope for a further 30 metres or so. At this point it would have been quite a noticeable hollow way before it was partly destroyed by later cultivation. It is near to a visible charcoal burning platform.

**SMR No: 55619**

**SO 366807 293633**

**Plate 3**

Former field boundary/trackway and an old oak tree, almost certainly representing a former field boundary. Further down-slope, the feature turns into a wide ditch (0.30 metres deep and 2.50 metres wide).

**SMR No: 55626**

**SO 366130 293495**

**Plate 4**

Trackway running east/west across a north-facing slope, roughly 50 metres long and 4 metres wide and obscured by vegetation. At the western end it becomes level and gradually peters out.

**SMR No: 55627**

**SO 366065 293515**

**Plate 5**

This is a disused trackway which runs up a north-facing slope. Roughly 50 metres long and 4 metres wide, it is rutted in places and heavily obscured by woodland. The track passes alongside a post-medieval charcoal burning platform and terminates at the woodland boundary at its northern end (down-slope) and at the southern end (up-slope) it peters out.

**SMR No: 55634**

**SO 366409 293596**

**Plate 6**

Linear trackway running from the northern edge of woodland up-slope and following the contour across the slope. At its southern edge the track is terraced into the hillside and has a low bank approximately 0.50 metres high running along its length. It is cut approximately half-way along its length by a large valley that has all but eroded the track at this point. Presumably the trackway was feeding the charcoal-burning platforms which are now outside the wood.

**SMR No: 55639**

**SO 367093 293683**

**Plate 7**

This is a complex series of earthworks which includes a trackway running across a slope at the southern side of the brook, in an (approximately) north-north-west/south-south-east direction. The track crosses the brook where the bed has been artificially built-up and continues beyond the northern bank of the brook running between two field boundaries. At the southern bank of the brook the track is terraced into the hillside on its southern side and ranges in height from 0.50 – 2 metres deep. Two large mounds of earth next to the trackway might be excavated material from the bank of the brook which formed the ford.

**SMR No: 55642****SO 366631 294343****Plate 8**

This trackway is approximately 2.50 metres wide, slopes down to the brook and is terraced into the slope. On its eastern side it is approximately 0.70 metres deep and on its western side 0.20 metres. There is quite a substantial drop at the end of the track possibly caused by erosion. A large deposit of gravel which now forms an island could quite possibly be an attempt to artificially raise the level of the river bed for fording, but on the other hand it could be natural.

**SMR No: 55646****SO 366687 294028****Plate 9**

Trackway/former field boundary running for at least 70 metres towards the original front door of the building to the rear of Morville Hall and continuing into the vineyard. It consists of a terrace on its northern side and a bank on its southern side and is roughly 0.30 metres high. The profile of the track is 'u'-shaped.

**SMR No: 55648****SO 367366 293520****Plate 10**

Trackway on south-facing slope, roughly 30 metres long, 5 metres wide and 1.50 metres deep. The trackway has clearly been utilised over a long period of time because of its depth.

**SMR No: 55651****SO 366655 294308****Plate 11**

Trackway roughly 30 metres long and cut into the west-facing bank above the Mor Brook. The terrace on the northern side of the track is roughly 1.50 metres high, gently curving into the field before petering out. On the western side of the track is a sub-circular feature, roughly 5 metres deep and 15 metres wide, whose exact function is unclear. It may represent a former clay pit or it could be a modern construction for access to the field.

**SMR No: 55653****SO 366722 294096****Plate 12**

This is possibly the remnants of a trackway. A very faint depression, roughly 25 metres long on a north-west/south-east alignment and obscured by fruit trees, the feature peters out to the south-east, terminating near a hedge to the north-west.

**SMR No: 55670****SO 366677 294017****Plate 13**

This feature runs roughly east/west along a break in the slope south of Morville Hall. It is approximately 200 metres long and 2.50 – 3 metres wide with a terrace on its northern side. The purpose of this feature is uncertain: it could be a trackway or terrace, but it does not appear to run anywhere in particular as would be expected from a carriage track. It may well be associated with a formal garden layout. A second terrace runs parallel with this one at the bottom of the slope giving the natural slope a stepped appearance and could be the remnants of a leat that served the stew ponds from the Mor Brook (Milne, 2005).





**Plate 1 – SMR No: 55602 – trackway**



**Plate 2 – SMR No: 55603 – trackway**



**Plate 2 – SMR No: 55619 – field boundary/ditch/trackway**



**Plate 3 – SMR No: 55626 – trackway**



**Plate 4 – SMR No: 55627 – trackway**



**Plate 5 – SMR No: 55634 – trackway**



**Plate 6 – SMR No: 55639 – earthworks**



**Plate 7 – SMR No: 55642 – trackway**





**Plate 8 – SMR No: 55646 – trackway**



**Plate 9 – SMR No: 55648 – trackway**



**Plate 10 – SMR No: 55651 – trackway**



**Plate 11 – SMR No: 55653 – trackway**



**Plate 12 – SMR No: 55670 – trackway/terrace**

## Former field boundaries and other linear features

**SMR No: 55605**

**SO 366141 293530**

**Plate 14**

The remains of a laid hedge, consisting of two trees; one of these was spliced when it was young and laid horizontally against the second tree. The hedge is situated in the corner of the wood and is aligned with the present field boundary abutting the wood. A parallel boundary represented by a scatter of coppiced hazels lies approximately 30 metres to the east running south-west/north-east from the present boundary

**SMR No: 55608**

**SO 366494 293573**

**Plate 15**

A bank on a north-facing slope approximately 6 metres wide, 150 metres long, 0.40 metres high and aligned roughly north/south. There is a kink half way along, which gives the feature a vague 's' shape, although the bank either side of this kink is quite straight with a slight depression either side suggesting that it may have been an earthen bank. At the southern end it becomes more difficult to trace as it approaches the wood, and at the north it terminates at a lynchet (SMR No: 55609) which may be contemporary. To the west of this boundary is a large area of ridge and furrow (SMR No: 55614) which does not continue outside the other two features suggesting it could have been part of the same field system.

**SMR No: 55609**

**SO 366616 293736**

**Plate 16**

Lynchet on north-facing slope at the terminus of a north/south bank (SMR No 55608) which might have been part of the same field system. The lynchet runs roughly east/west and is about 40 metres long ending to the west at the modern field boundary. (It has been destroyed by cultivation beyond this). At the eastern extremity the bank of the lynchet is roughly 1.50 metres high

**SMR No: 55610**

**SO 366774 293631**

**Plate 17**

A small ridge and furrow system (four ridges are visible) covering an area of approximately 20 metres east/west and 10 metres north/south. The ridge and furrow is situated on the north-facing slope, terminating to the east in a natural depression and petering out to the west. The ridges are roughly 0.20 metres high and are very narrow at only 0.80 – 1.0 metres which is not typically medieval, however it is not impossible for this system to have originated from that time.

**SMR No: 55612**

**SO 366850 293710**

**Plate 18**

Lynchet on the north-facing slope, following the edge of the river terrace, 0.30 – 0.40 metres high and about 150 metres long. The feature terminates at its eastern end at the field boundary and to the west where it is cut by natural depressions that were probably made by water action.

**SMR No: 55614**

**SO 366595 293620**

**Plate 19**

Area of ridge and furrow aligned east/west along the contour of the north-facing slope inside a former field boundary. There are 21 ridges, each approximately 50 metres long, 1.50 metres wide and 0.20 metres high, the furrows being approximately 0.50 metres wide. The ridges are bounded on the northern and eastern extremities by earthworks<sup>26</sup> and the western side by the current boundary. The earthworks almost certainly originally continued west into the next field but this field has been improved and therefore any earthworks have been destroyed by cultivation. The southern edge corresponds with the edge of the wood.

**SMR No: 55617**

**SO 366681 293643**

**Plate 20**

A linear bank approximately 150 metres long, aligned north/south with a slight kink. At the top it is 2.50 metres wide and 0.20 – 0.30 metres high with two very small flanking ditches. There is a possible (ephemeral) track branching off halfway up the bank.

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<sup>26</sup>

SMR No: 55609



**SMR No: 55622      SO 366893 293549      Plate 21**

Lynchet half way up the north-facing slope. Roughly 1.50 metres high and at least 80 metres long, the lynchet continues outside the study area. There is number of coppiced hazels along the crest of the lynchet. Connects to a former field boundary aligned north/south and indicated by a slight bank and a line of trees.

**SMR No: 55623      SO 366834 293473      Plate 22**

A boundary running roughly from east to west on a level terrace at the top of a hill. There are about 10 coppiced hazel trees on top of a slight bank which is approximately 100 metres long. The boundary leads to a corner of a field at its western end.

**SMR No: 55630      SO 365954 293360      Plate 23**

Boundary bank running east/west along the southern extent of woodland on high ground immediately south of Morville Hall. The bank is approximately 0.50 metre high and 1.50 metres wide and is topped by very mature coppice stools of hazel and blackthorn. These are spaced at roughly five metre intervals. It has a modern post and wire fence running along its crest.

**SMR No: 55632      SO 366320 293512      Plate 24**

A linear boundary bank orientated east/west and ending where it meets a deep stream channel. Consists of a low bank approximately 0.30 metres high with a small ditch 0.20metres deep on its southern side. The feature runs along the crest of Aston Hill and has 16 mature coppice stools running along it with a further six in the vicinity.

**SMR No: 55636      SO 366101 293552      Plate 25**

A low linear bank with a flanking ditch on its eastern side. The bank is made from the spoil from the excavation of the ditch and is approximately 50 – 60 metres long. Both features are one metre wide. The bank disappears at its northern end just before the edge of a wood; on its southern end it meets another bank (SMR 55637).

**SMR No: 55637      SO 366141 293493      Plate 26**

A linear boundary bank running roughly north-east/south west, approximately 100 metres long, 1 metre wide and 0.50 metres high. The boundary is made from quarried material from two flanking ditches which are approximately 0.30 metres deep. It peters out at either end either through erosion or hill wash.

**SMR No: 55645      SO 367198 293478      Plate 27**

This lynchet on a north-facing slope is approximately 50 metres long and 6 metres high. Although it is very substantial its shape, in plan it has been distorted by the insertion of two water pipes causing leakage which subsequently cut through it. The lynchet was probably originally a natural river terrace further emphasised by both ploughing and small-scale quarrying. A modern drainage ditch roughly 0.80 metres wide and 0.40 metres deep cuts along the base of the lynchet.

**SMR No: 55685      SO 366896 293958      Plate 28**

Ha-ha running in front of the house is roughly north to south forming the eastern boundary of the semi-circular front lawn and driveway. It is constructed from roughly coursed limestone and is one metre high. The external ditch is approximately 2 – 2.50 metres wide.





**Plate 13 – SMR No: 55605 – remains of laid hedge**



**Plate 14 – SMR No: 55608 – bank**



**Plate 15 – SMR No: 55609 – lynchet**



**Plate 16 – SMR No: 55610 – ridge and furrow**



**Plate 17 – SMR No: 55612 – lynchet**



**Plate 18 – SMR No: 55614 – ridge and furrow**



**Plate 19 – SMR No: 55617 – bank**



**Plate 20 – SMR No: 55622 – lynchet**





**Plate 21 – SMR No: 55623 – boundary**



**Plate 22 – SMR No: 55630 – boundary**



**Plate 23 – SMR No: 55632 – boundary**



**Plate 24 – SMR No: 55636 – linear bank**



**Plate 25 – SMR No: 55637 – boundary**



**Plate 26 – SMR No: 55645 – lynchet**



**Plate 27 – SMR No: 55685 – ha-ha**



## Platforms

**SMR No: 55604                      SO 366097 293553                      Plate 29**

Possible charcoal-burning platform on the north-facing slope, abutting the field boundary on the northern edge of the wood. The platform measures roughly 6 metres north/south and 12 metres east/west. There are two coppiced hazels two metres to the north-east. A possible boundary bank runs behind it on a north-west/south-east orientation.

**SMR No: 55606                      SO 366378 293588                      Plate 30**

Charcoal burning platform just outside the wood on the north-facing slope which is approximately 8 metres east/west and 6 metres north/south. The terraced area on the north side is roughly 0.80 metres high. This platform lies about 10 metres down slope of another charcoal burning platform which is just inside the wood <sup>27</sup>

**SMR No: 55607                      SO 366381 293585                      Plate 31**

Platform just inside Aston Hill wood. The dimensions are difficult to determine because of the trees, but the platform roughly measures 6 metres east/west and 8 metres north/south. It is situated on the north-facing slope, and is roughly 10 metres to the south-west of platform 55606 (above). The terraced area is roughly 0.60 metres higher than the platform because the area within the field boundary has been flattened by cattle.

**SMR No: 55615                      SO 366442 293581                      Plate 32**

A large charcoal burning platform, now outside the woodland boundary, has been terraced into the hill on its southern side. Its measurements are roughly 6 metres north/south and 8 metres east/ west. The material from the terracing has been piled in front of the platform to create an artificial terrace which is one metre high. The soil here contains burnt clay and large amounts of charcoal.

**SMR No: 55616                      SO 366612 293608                      Plate 33**

A large charcoal burning platform, now outside the woodland boundary, has been terraced into the hill on its southern side. Its measurements are roughly 6 metres north/south and 8 metres east/west. The material from the terracing has been piled in front of the platform to create an artificial terrace which is roughly 1 metre high. The soil here contains burnt clay and large amounts of charcoal.

**SMR No: 55621                      SO 366786 293589                      Plate 34**

A large charcoal burning platform, now outside the woodland boundary, has been terraced into the hill on its southern side. Its measurements are roughly five metres north/south and six metres east/west. The material from the terracing has been piled in front of the platform to create an artificial terrace which is roughly 0.60 metres high. The soil here contains burnt clay and large amounts of charcoal.

**SMR No: 55625                      SO 366616 293503                      Plate 35**

A large charcoal burning platform terraced into the hill on its southern side. It measures roughly 5 metres north/south and 6 metres east/west. The material from terracing has been piled in front to create the artificial terrace which is roughly 0.60 metres high. The soil is very dark in comparison with the surrounding soils.

**SMR No: 55628                      SO 366069 293489                      Plate 36**

A charcoal burning platform on a north-facing slope roughly 8 metres by 8 metres. The material from creating the terrace has been piled on the northern (down-slope) side and forms a slight bank about 0.20 metres high. It sits alongside a disused trackway to the west.

**SMR No: 55629                      SO 366022 293490                      Plate 37**

A level platform on a north-facing slope roughly measuring 10 metres east/west (obscured by vegetation) and 8 metres north/south. It is alongside a stream gully.

**SMR No: 55635                      SO 366609 293561                      Plate 38**

Charcoal burning platform approximately 7 metres in diameter and terraced into the hillside on its southern side and is on the north-facing hillside near the edge of the woodland. The

<sup>27</sup>

SMR No 55607

woodland edge has numerous coppiced hazel stools. The terrace is approximately 0.50 metres tall and dumped material forms the terrace. The soil inside the platform is much darker than surrounding soil and contains charcoal and burnt clay.





**Plate 28 – SMR No: 55604 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 29 – SMR No: 55606 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 30 – SMR No: 55607 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 31 – SMR No: 55615 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 32 – SMR No: 55616 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 33 – SMR No: 55621 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 34 – SMR No: 55625 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 35 – SMR No: 55628 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 36 – SMR No: 55629 – charcoal burning platform**



**Plate 37 – SMR No: 55635 – charcoal burning platform**



## Structures

**SMR No: 55611**

**SO 366823 293644**

**Plate 39**

Lined spring on the north-facing slope, measuring approximately 6 metres in length and 0.40 metres wide. Sleepers are placed horizontally in the ground and the feature is edged with blue engineering bricks. It is largely covered with mud. It is possible that a cistern exists below the sleepers although this was not visible.

**SMR No: 55631**

**SO 366852 293623**

**Plate 40**

This is a brick-built water storage cistern measuring approximately 3 metres north/south and 1.50 metres east/west. The cistern is made of heavily-fired blue brick (English Bond), each measuring 200 x 80 x 60 mm, the main walls are 19 courses high. It has a vaulted roof and is divided into two by a central wall 0.80 metres in height and made of English Garden Wall Bond bricks. This dividing wall is terraced into hillside on its southern side; the roof is made from massive horizontal limestone slabs. At the northern end there is a copper pipe sticking out. Immediately in front of the structure there is a large storage tank approximately 2 metres deep which still holds some water. Approximately 15 metres north-east of the main structure is a small outlet which is almost certainly an overflow. There is approximately 0.50 metres of water still visible in the cistern although the bottom is silted.

**SMR No: 55638**

**SO 366942 293752**

**Plate 41**

An area of brick walling running roughly east/west-north/south at the edge of the brook. It is unclear how much of this walling is *in situ* – it seems to have been disturbed by the brook and there is also some collapsed brickwork within the brook itself. The bricks are unfrogged and look to be of 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century date. This feature could have been a mill due to the proximity of the brook and depth of the meander next to it.

**SMR No: 55640**

**SO 367243 293585**

**Plate 42**

A weir running roughly north/south across the brook consisting of large limestone blocks up to 0.75 metres in diameter. The structure is approximately 12 metres in length and 1.50 metres wide. Because of erosion it is not possible to ascertain how many courses high the structure was originally.

**SMR No: 55641**

**SO 367258 293557**

**Plate 43**

Fairly level platform roughly 7 metres square and is situated 10 metres east of the weir across the brook. The platform has large amounts of both eroded bricks and stones sticking out from it. It lies next to an area where the brook becomes slightly wider, represented by a scatter of coppiced hazels.

**SMR No: 55644**

**SO 366912 293817**

**Plate 44**

This is a bridge over the brook near Morville Hall. Initially the bridge was constructed from rubble-work limestone bonded with mortar. The original arch of the bridge was squared stone; only six courses remain on the southern side of the arch. An arch of coursed red brick bonded with concrete in a Flemish bond was later added. At the southern side a number of the lower courses of squared stone were also added. Other later additions have also been made to the buttresses of the bridge in both stone and concrete. The bridge has a small weir on its eastern side.

**SMR No: 55650**

**SO 366600 294200**

**Plate 45**

An ashlar stone bridge approximately 10 metres high and 8 metres wide with an arch about six metres high and six metres wide. On the north and south-facing sides there are keystones and about 16 voussoirs. The bridge has been repaired internally with red brick. The bank on either side of the bridge has been revetted with stone walling. Stone pillars stand at each side of the bridge and on either side of the brook (four in total). On the south side, 0.50 metres above water level are iron hinges, indicating that originally there were gates on the bridge.

**SMR No: 55681**

**SO 366898 293855**

**Plates 46 & 47**

A cast-iron hydraulic ram which consists of a large vacuum ball with an embossed stylized lion-like face on one side (0.08 metres in diameter). The ball itself is roughly 0.50 metres in diameter and 0.40 metres high. 'MANCHESTER SIR WH BAILEY (AND SON?)' is written on the side of the ball and 'CALI' – the start of a word, the rest of which is obscured by lichen and

moss. The pipe runs from this roughly in an easterly direction, probably to the manhole which is about 20 metres away, which may or may not be contemporary. One metre to the north is a stone wall/structure with a metal pipe protruding from it but it is unclear whether or not this is associated with the ram. The ram was made in about 1890 and installed by Dr Bythell sometime between 1936 and 1960 to restore the flow of water to the stew pond<sup>28</sup> to the west.

**SMR No: 55696**

**SO 366879 293867**

**Plate 48**

Weir across brook and accompanying masonry. The east side of the weir is arc-shaped and the water falls about a meter down a step, and then a further 0.50 metres to the current brook level. Either side of the weir there are stone walls roughly 1.20 metres high and 4 metres long; the southern one is obscured by undergrowth. The northern wall is roughly 10 metres long, 0.60 metres thick with a return wall orientated north/south and extends into the bank. It is fronted with concrete and has a pipe protruding from it. The wall is roughly 3 metres high at its highest point.

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<sup>28</sup>





Plate 38 – SMR No: 55611 – spring



Plate 39 – SMR No: 55631 – cistern



Plate 40 – SMR No: 55638 – brick walling



Plate 41 – SMR No: 55640 – weir



Plate 42 – SMR No: 55641 – platform



Plate 43 – SMR No: 55644 – bridge



Plate 44 – SMR No: 55650 – stone bridge



Plate 45 – SMR No: 55681 – hydraulic ram



Plate 46 – SMR No: 55681 – detail of gargoyle head



Plate 47 – SMR No: 55696 – weir



## **Veteran Trees**

**SMR No: 55600**

**SO 366642 293486**

**Plate 49**

Half a tree stump (probably a yew) on the north-facing slope is all that remains of this tree which has been cut down and appears to have been burnt. The stump stands to a height of approximately 1.30 metres and is about 2 metres in diameter. There is a charred, moss covered branch lying to the south-west of the stump. The tree could have been part of an ornamental landscape.

**SMR No: 55601**

**SO 366648 293543**

**Plate 50**

Two mature trees, possibly lime, set approximately 25 metres apart on the north-facing slope. The south-westernmost tree is covered in graffiti, mostly from the 1950s.

**SMR No: 55618**

**SO 366696 293635**

**Plate 51**

This is possibly a relict avenue, now consisting of five oaks aligned with the southern door of Morville Hall. The western row of oaks consists of four trees and only one on the eastern side.

**SMR No: 55620**

**SO 366797 293609**

**Plate 52**

A pollarded oak growing against a fence roughly 1.50 metres in diameter and beginning to rot internally

**SMR No: 55633**

**SO 365998 293585**

**Plate 53**

There are three yew trees running along the edge of a stream gully known as 'Yewtree Dingle' which may represent a former parkland boundary. The trees are approximately 1 – 1.50 metres in diameter.





**Plate 48 – SMR No: 55600 – tree stump (possible yew)**



**Plate 49 – SMR No: 55601 – mature tree (possibly lime)**



**Plate 50 – SMR No: 55618 – relict avenue of oaks**



**Plate 51 – SMR No: 55620 – pollarded oak**



**Plate 52 – SMR No: 55633 – three yew trees**

Other earthworks

SMR No: 55613                      SO 366764 293726                      Plate 54

This small feature, which could be a quarry, a clay or saw pit or a scoop, is approximately 3 metres in diameter. The spoil thrown on the northern side (down-slope) forms a bank 0.30 – 0.40 metres high. Although its exact function is unknown, its depth (0.50 metres) suggests that it is archaeological rather than a tree throw.

SMR No: 55624                      SO 366751 293520                      Plate 55

A possible quarry on a steep slope above a level terrace. This could be natural outcropping and slippage measuring approximately 100 metres east/west and is 15 metres high.

SMR No: 55643                      SO 366567 294663                      Plate 56

A large ash tree has fallen over and pulled up the earth attached to the root mass exposing a large spread of differing metalworking residues, only 0.30 metres are visible but it almost certainly deeper. Although there is no evidence of any associated structure it is almost certainly near a site where there was once a furnace as there is such a vast quantity of it. The layer is clearly very compact as the tree could not get any roots deeper than 0.30 metres into the ground; the root system was forced to spread outwards rather than down. The site is situated at the bottom of a valley alongside a stream which could have been diverted or utilised to power such a venture. Approximately 1.50 kilometres to the north-north-east of this there is a 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century iron blast furnace, originally powered by water which may be associated with and contemporary to this spread<sup>29</sup>

SMR No: 55649                      SO 366965 293985                      Plate 57

This is a series of ridges and hollows, very ephemeral and not forming consistent, tangible shapes. They probably represent a mixture of house platforms, boundaries and tracks associated with the deserted medieval village (DMV) believed to have been in this area. The earthworks are spread over a field to the north of the church and they continue into the field south of the church. Long pasture obscures the relief, but the features are no more than 0.20 – 0.30 metres high. This field is known to have been ploughed during the Second World War and the field would have been levelled when Morville Hall was built. Furthermore the Ordnance Survey List of Archaeological Sites from 1979 states that the land agent found the field *‘full of old foundations of the ancient village of ‘Membrefeld’ whilst undertaking drainage.*<sup>30</sup>

SMR No: 55652                      SO 366989 293798                      Plate 58

A series of ridges and hollows spread over an area roughly 60 metres north/south and 100 metres east/west and located on the southern side of the church. They are very similar to the features on the northern side.<sup>31</sup> No distinct pattern can be discerned as they are obscured by long pasture but it is likely that they also represent house platforms, boundaries and tracks associated with the presumed deserted medieval village (DMV). The features are approximately 0.20 metres high, the most distinct being a linear ridge about 30 metres long, orientated north-east/south-west, and 40 metres to the south-east of the church.

SMR No: 55674                      SO 366783 294027                      Plate 59

Large terrace orientated north/south immediately behind Morville Hall and measuring 36 metres north/south and 19 metres east/west. It is terraced into a slope on its western end to a maximum of 1 metre. There is a set of modern brick steps leading up to an area where the tennis courts used to be until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century before being ploughed up. A summer house/changing room was in the area directly opposite the steps.

<sup>29</sup>                      Ordnance Survey - Archaeological Sites No 8, 1979

<sup>30</sup>                      Ordnance Survey- Archaeological Sites No 21, 1979

<sup>31</sup>                      SMR No: 55649





**Plate 53 – SMR No: 55613 – quarry clay pit**



**Plate 54 – SMR No: 55624 – possible quarry**



**Plate 55 – SMR No: 55643 – spread of iron working residue**



**Plate 56 – SMR No: 55649 – ridge and hollows**



**Plate 57 – SMR No: 55652 – ridge and hollows**



**Plate 58 – SMR No: 55674 – terrace behind Morville Hall**

## Ponds

**SMR No: 55647                      SO 366807 29405                      Plates 60 & 61**

A pond to the rear of Morville Hall which is divided into two by a large bank which is probably monastic in origin relating to the Benedictine priory cell or grange. This theory is supported by the 1970s OS records which state that the ponds do not fit into the formal 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape. The smaller pond is to the south and the larger to the north and both are considerably silted, although they do still retain some water. The western edges of the ponds are terraced into the natural slope of the hill, whereas the material quarried from the pond has been piled up on the eastern side to build up the level of the ground. Along the eastern edge there is a small area of eroding stonework sticking out of the bank which could be part of a stone revetment wall. The smaller fish would probably have been moved from the smaller pond to the larger one as they developed as was typical at the time these ponds were in use.<sup>32</sup>

**SMR No: 55692                      SO 366828 294125                      Plates 62 & 63**

Irregularly shaped pond roughly 60 metres north/south by 34 metres east/west with a circular island roughly 10 metres in diameter at the centre. There is an area of stone and brick rubble on the south side, and two large stones roughly 0.60 metres across flanked by a slab which could be the remains of steps. A modern pipe has been inserted through this. The pond occurs on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map and there is no reason why it should not be seen in a similar light to the previous entry (SMR No 55647), as monastic ponds are often found in groups of three. Similarly the ponds get progressively smaller north/south suggesting that fish of different sizes would have been moved between the three. The size of a pond was directly related to its function - the larger ones are usually thought to have had a storage capability; the smaller ones were usually shallow and connected with fish cultivation and breeding practises.<sup>33</sup>

**SMR No: 55695                      SO 366829 293898                      Plates 64 & 65**

Large linear pond (stew pond) running parallel to the main house. The pond is roughly 145 metres long north-north-west/ south-south-east and 13 metres wide and is considerably choked by a non-native vegetation species and requires attention.

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<sup>32</sup> Ordnance Survey Archaeological Sites, No 8

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.eng-h.gov.uk/mpp/mcd/sub/fsh3.htm>





**Plate 59 – SMR No: 55647 – two ponds to the rear of the hall**



**Plate 60 – SMR No: 55647 – detail of stonework around edge (of Plate 60)**



**Plate 61 – SMR No: 55692 – small pond**



**Plate 62 – SMR No: 55692 – detail of possible steps (of 62)**



**Plate 63 – SMR No: 55695 – large linear pond (looking south-west)**



**Plate 64 – SMR No: 55695 – large linear pond (looking south-east)**



## 7.1 Management of surviving archaeological features

The survival of archaeological features varies across the estate dependent upon the types of farming in recent times. A good example of this is two fields immediately below Aston Hill Wood; the westernmost field contains no visible archaeological remains whereas the field to the east of it contains numerous earthworks forming a relict field system. This is because the westernmost field has been ploughed in the recent past for improved pasture whilst the other has not. Little of the estate is currently under arable cultivation and because of this there are large quantities of surviving earthworks. The fields that are under arable cultivation however would benefit from an accurate fieldwalking survey to find any evidence of occupation in this area, and to see if it would be comparable to prehistoric sites identified to the south along the ridge of Aston Hill Wood.<sup>34</sup>

Some infilling of negative earthwork features has clearly occurred. One example is the leat shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map which has disappeared along much of its route but again modern disturbance is minimal.

The land does not seem to have suffered unduly from over-grazing, and the features that were evident appeared to be in generally good condition. The main threat to the archaeological features is livestock movement, in particular a large charcoal burning platform.<sup>35</sup>

### Recommendations for future management

Clearly the ideal pattern of use to allow for the optimum preservation of the type of earthwork features present across the estate is the continuation of the grazing regime currently in operation. There is no need to change the farming regime however on the arable land but deeper ploughing is not recommended.

The following notes are taken from *'Farming the Historic Landscape Caring for Archaeological Sites in Grassland'*, English Heritage, 2004:

Although grassland it is a highly beneficial form of land management for the preservation of archaeological sites, it is important to recognise that damage can still occur as a result of certain farming activities.

#### Damage can be caused by:

- careless use of farm vehicles
- grassland improvements
- land drainage works
- scrub or bracken encroachment
- burrowing animals
- new fencing, pools or scrapes, and tree planting
- livestock are capable of erosion on and around archaeological sites, either through poaching or creating soil erosion scars. This can happen through over stocking, but more commonly through movement or gathering points.

#### Options to consider:

- re-site gathering points for livestock
- regular movement of mobile feeders
- locate, or adjust existing shelterbelts to avoid archaeological sites
- exclude livestock from damaged areas to allow erosion scars to recover
- reduced livestock around archaeological sites in wet conditions
- adjust stocking levels to minimise the potential for damage

#### Use of farm vehicles

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<sup>34</sup> NMR\_NATINV-113092

<sup>35</sup> SMR number 55621

Farm vehicles can cause particular damage through the creation of wheel ruts on grassland sites and archaeological features. Waterlogged soil conditions, steep slopes and new routes, can accentuate the problem.

**Options to consider:**

- alternative routes away from archaeological sites
- creation of a single permanent route. This may require major works, so archaeological advice should be taken

**Grassland Improvement**

Grassland sites can be a haven for wildlife, particularly when they survive in unimproved pasture. Such sites often contain rare plants, and should be included in the management plan for the archaeological and ecological conservation.

If the grassland needs to be improved, methods should be used that cause minimal disturbance.

**Options to consider:**

- control weeds, and if re-seeding, use minimal cultivation techniques
- land drainage works
- a well-maintained land drainage system can be beneficial to archaeological preservation, helping to prevent water-logging, poaching by livestock, and the silting up of ditches etc. The installation and maintenance of drainage features can be damaging to archaeological sites. Old tile drains buried at depth can disturb archaeological deposits, and to repair these, excavation may be required. New land drains may dry out previously waterlogged deposits, effecting the preservation of archaeological deposits including organic artefacts and environmental remains.
- access points outside archaeological areas for maintenance without the need for excavation
- installation of any new drains away from archaeological sites
- scrub or bracken encroachment
- scrub can cause damage to archaeological sites through root penetration. Bracken can also cause damage archaeological sites through developing a thick layer of rhizomes below the ground. The control of bracken cover also maintains the visibility of archaeological earthworks.

**Possible solutions:**

- control scrub by cutting and treating
- increase grazing (where appropriate) to help control scrub

## **Burrowing animals**

Earthworks are prone to burrowing animals that can disturb the shape and form of features and archaeological deposits below the surface. Burrow tunnels can collapse and livestock can increase the erosion around burrow entrances.

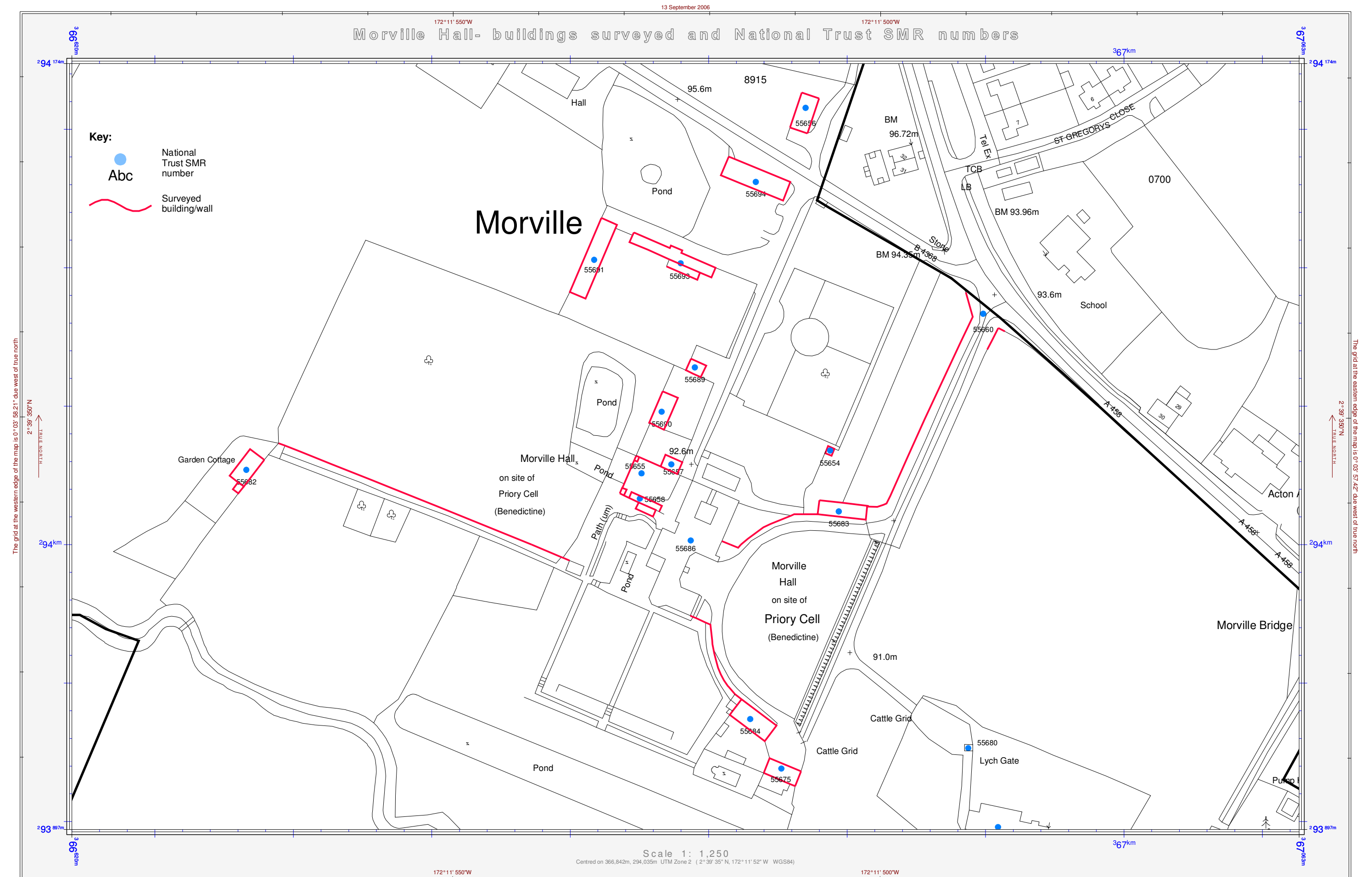
### **Options to consider:**

- the repair of areas of erosion caused by burrowing animals
- it is important to note that some burrowing animals are protected by law, e.g. Badger Act 1991 and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. If badgers are disturbing archaeological sites, advice should be taken from local authority archaeologists, or national heritage bodies.
- new fencing, ponds or scrapes, and tree planting
- disturbance of the ground through any of the above (or other activities) can cause damage to underlying archaeology. As well as the planting of trees, the growth of roots can cause damage to archaeological deposits.
- erect fences away from archaeological sites
- do not dig place ponds or scrapes on archaeological sites
- do not plant trees on archaeological sites

The future management of the farm and the requirements of the tenants in terms of their long term business plan need to be integrated into the Countryside Stewardship Agreement. Full recognition of the nature and type of archaeological features present on the farm together with the baseline statement of the current state of preservation and land use on and around the sites should be included in the detailed schedule of management for each land parcel.

It should also include a working practice that seeks to minimise the impact that productive farming has on the preservation of the archaeological and ecological features of the grassland fields. A balance should be reached whereby the land remains productive for farming, but not at the expense of the features currently preserved in the survey area.

## 8.0 The buildings



**Figure 18: Building survey**



**SMR No: 55656      SO 366883 294154      Plate 66**

**Dutch barn – late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

A large steel-framed Dutch barn with eight vertical steel frames and four simple trusses. The roof is covered with corrugated iron, the sides are open and the barn is currently used for storing bails of straw. The cartographic evidence points to the barn being built in the 18 years between 1884 and 1902.

**SMR No: 55657      SO 366836 294028      Plate 67**

**Kitchen garden structure – 19<sup>th</sup> century**

A small rectangular brick structure associated with, and built into, one corner of, the kitchen gardens. It is constructed from red brick in an English Garden Wall bond with an asbestos roof.

**SMR No: 55658      SO 366828 294014      Plate 68**

**Kitchen garden structure – 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Lean-to brick structure attached to the southern wall of the kitchen garden. The structure has a central gabled doorway. It is constructed from bricks in a Flemish bond and is in excellent condition. The roof has terracotta tiles.

**SMR No: 55659      SO 366753 294013      Plate 69**

**Walled garden – 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

Stone garden wall running between the rear of Morville Hall and the garden house, forming one boundary of the formal gardens. The wall is made from local stone and has been repaired with brick at numerous points along its length, including the addition of three bricks supports for structural integrity. There is also some re-used stonework in this wall, that almost certainly originated from the old priory.

**SMR No: 55660      SO 366947 294087      Plate 70**

**Wall and gate piers of Morville Hall – 18<sup>th</sup> century**

Grade II listed rubble stone walls extending westward from the drive entrance and flanking the west side of the drive. There are a pair of ashlar gate piers with ball-head finials flanking the drive entrance.

**SMR No: 55675      SO 366876 293917      Plate 71**

**Coach house – 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

A three-bay building with a hipped roof behind a parapet. The primary build is of stone but the southern elevation has a brick façade which is a later addition. All other features, doors, latch-lifters seem original. The roof has three ball finials on the northern elevation and two on the southern. The northern elevation has four piers with large doors that have angled hinges. The roof is stone-tiled with lead flashing. The interior has a cobbled floor. Both east and west elevations have one small central window. The building is generally in excellent condition although because of slight subsistence the lintel of the north-western door is water damaged. The rear of the building has a series of lean-to buildings attached .

**SMR No: 55682      SO 366683 294027**

**Plates 72 & 73**

**Garden cottage – 17<sup>th</sup> century**

The building has roughly-coursed limestone blocks with quoined edges with a slate-tiled roof. The northern end of the building has a small brick extension with a window and door on the west elevation and a window on the east.

West elevation: this originally had a central doorway which has been blocked and a window inserted. There is a brick-arched pediment with a window either side, the southern one is now blocked. The first storey has very irregular fenestration – there is a window to the north which was converted into a smaller window before being completely blocked. To the south there is a small two-light casement window. The doorway and window both have arched pediments.

North elevation: the gable end external chimney stack made of stone with later brick repair to the top and later another external brick stack added onto it. Four windows are visible, two are now blocked.

East elevation: there are infilled windows on the ground floor. The original doorway which was slightly off-centre is now blocked with brick and there are partially blocked windows either side, that are now brick arched pediment windows with brick infill around. The first floor originally had three windows but the central window has been blocked with stone. There are yellow-brick dentils.

South elevation: Stone internal chimney stack and a slightly off centre blocked doorway, now a small window. The first floor has one large and one small blocked window.

**The pavilions**

General – The two buildings are not parallel to each other but are splayed outward. This makes the house more conspicuous from the road and enables the church to the south-east visible from the front windows of the house. They are very simple two-storey, four bay buildings constructed from local grey sandstone and tall rectangular windows. The hipped roofs are behind parapets which have ball finials and large octagonal cupolas. There are other numerous changes and modifications which have been carried out at different times over the centuries.

**SMR No: 55683      SO 366897 294012**

**Plates 75 & 76**

**North pavilion – 17<sup>th</sup> century**

This was a house built for the coach man and head groom. The front door is a false door. The east wall has a single window on the upper floor with no sign of repairs or infills. The north elevation has four windows on the first floor; the middle left example has been repaired with red brick. The ground floor has two doors, the central has a large stone lintel possibly re-used from an earlier building. Of the two windows on the south ground floor, one is just to the left of the left hand door and the other is near the right hand side. The west wall has a single window on the first and ground floors and a door with a stone arch on the right hand side. The building is roughly 17.50 by 5.50 metres.

**SMR No: 55684      SO 366865 293937**

**Plates 77 & 78**

**South pavilion – 17<sup>th</sup> century ('brownie house')**

A detailed description of the pavilion is included in an archaeological report by the National Trust archaeologist, J Milln and will not be reproduced in this report.

**SMR No: 55689      SO 366845 294064**

**Plates 79 & 80**

**Brick building – 18<sup>th</sup> century**

This building was a stable block with a stable door on the southern elevation. It measures approximately 7.50 metres east/west and 4.50 metres north/south but was originally much larger (as shown on 1st edition mapping) and is also much altered. There are two bays and a modern roof which is hipped on its eastern side. The eastern elevation has a limestone plinth which continues northwards where the rest of the building has been demolished.

**SMR No: 55690      SO 366833 294048**

**Plate 81**

**Stone stable – 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century**

A single-storey stone building with a relatively modern pantiled roof which has some re-used timbers. It is orientated north/south and measures approximately 13 metres long by 6 metres wide. There are two internal walls of red brick, dividing it into three, but with no connecting doors between the rooms. On the eastern elevation the southernmost room is open and the other two rooms have a door each of roughly 1.20 metres in width. The door of the middle room is a stable door. The building was probably a stable block with a cart store and is now used for storage.

**SMR No: 55691      SO 366807 294102      Plate 82**

**Barns – 18<sup>th</sup> century**

Originally a stable block at the rear of Morville Hall, the barns were converted into housing in the early 1990s. The walls are bricks of Flemish bond with a terracotta-tiled roof. The eastern elevation would have opened up onto the central courtyard. There are seven stable doors on the ground floor; the first floor was almost certainly a granary or hay store. These buildings have been granted a 99 year lease from the National Trust

**SMR No: 55693      SO 366808 294103      Plates 83 & 84**

**Barns with dovecote – 18<sup>th</sup> century**

These barns with a central dovecote formed one side of the courtyard of barns; two sides of which have been removed. The roof of the barn is terracotta-tiled. The dovecote is now disused but maintains much of its original character. The roof timbers show evidence of a fire, especially the central supporting beam which is almost entirely burnt through. The rafters and possibly the roofing material (slates) are modern replacements. The barns have been much altered and now form garaging.

**SMR No: 55694      SO 366867 294131      Plates 85; 86; 87; 88 & 89**

**Barn – 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

The overall dimensions of this barn are roughly 24 metres east/west by 7.50 metres north/south. It is constructed from a mixture of both local stone, brick and weatherboard. All the quoins of the primary building are massive and well-wrought, as are the lintels for the doors and windows

The roof is in very good condition although in the western end there are a few dislodged tiles that are allowing rainwater to enter the building. The terracotta tiled roof is supported by six king post trusses with angled struts and two tiers of trencled purlins. The purlins and wall plates are joined with scarf joints. All the trusses retain their carpenters' marks although they are all narrow chiselled examples and are therefore post-medieval in date.

There is a blocked entranceway/passage through the middle of the barn which is constructed of brick and weatherboard infill that continues to roof level. This appears to align with the original entrance into the stable courtyards and therefore possibly represents an earlier entrance to the rear of Morville Hall.

Structural breaks on the north and south elevations continue up as far as the gable ends, each having a central square opening on the first floor. It seems likely that the central section of the barn was open to the roof with first floor hay lofts on either side. The absence of a bridging beam running at right angles to the main axis of the barn in the middle makes it likely that these lofts would have been supported by vertical posts bearing the weight of the main bridging beam and joists. The gables also retain evidence of joist holes.

Northern elevation: also has a small door on the western end that appears to be a later addition

Western elevation: is covered externally with large quantities of privet, but from the inside two blocked ventilation slots on the ground floor and a square central opening on the first floor can be seen.

Southern elevation: the walls either side of the infilled middle section are stone. The western end has a small window and door and the eastern end has a central door and two equally spaced windows. In the interior of the western end there is also a later brick spiral staircase and three timber jowelled wall posts to the A-frames above that have cavetto (concave) decoration at the top that turns into ovolo (convex) moulding at the bottom.

Eastern elevation: this has a central opening on the first floor which appears to retain the original door and hinges.

It appears that much of the original character of both the east and west sections of the barn contain much of their original character except for the blocked central doorways. The ground floor of the building is currently used as storage and has been altered in recent years. The first floor is at present completely disused.





Plate 65 – SMR No: 55656 – Victorian Dutch barn



Plate 66 – SMR No: 55657 – kitchen garden structure



Plate 67 – SMR No: 55658 – kitchen garden structure



Plate 68 – SMR No: 55659 – walled garden



Plate 69 – SMR No: 55660 – walls and gate piers



Plate 70 – SMR No: 55675 – coach house



Plate 71 – SMR No: 55682 – garden cottage (west elevation)



Plate 72 – SMR No: 55682 – garden cottage (east elevation)

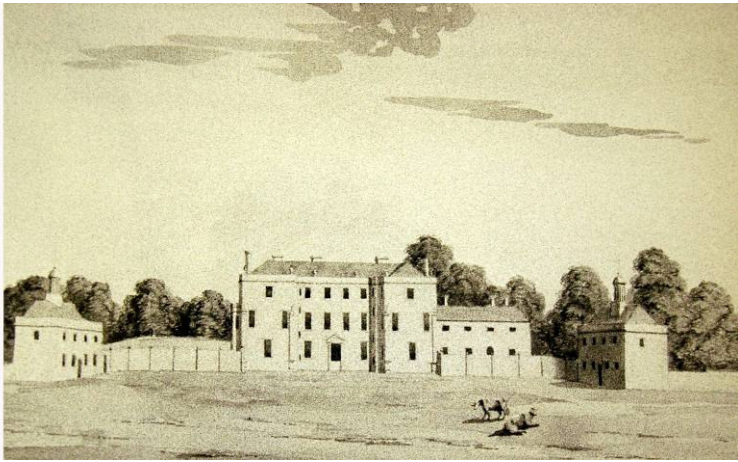


Plate 73 – Morville Hall – front elevation (Ref 4187\_1\_16)



Plate 74 – SMR No: 55683 – north pavilion (Country Life, 1952, 465)



Plate 75 – SMR No: 55683 – north pavilion



Plate 76 – SMR No: 55684 – south pavilion





Plate 77 – SMR No: 55684 – detail of the cupola



Plate 78 – SMR No: 55689 – remnants of one side of the stable courtyard



Plate 79 – SMR No: 55689 – detail of the handmade latch-lifter



Plate 80 – SMR No: 55690 – stone stable block



Plate 81 – SMR No: 55691 – converted stable block



Plate 82 – SMR No: 55693 – the converted barns and dovecote



Plate 83 – SMR No: 55693 – roof of the dovecote



Plate 84 – SMR No: 55694 – southern elevation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century barn



Plate 85 – SMR No: 55694 – the west elevation showing the vegetation that is causing damage to barn (55694)



Plate 86 – SMR No: 55694 – the north elevation; the large blocked entranceway can be seen in the middle (55694)



Plate 87 – SMR No: 55694 – the roof supported by king post trusses with angles struts (55694)



Plate 88 – SMR No: 55694 – the decorated jowel post (55694)



## **8.1 Recommendations for the management of farm buildings**

### **Condition of the building stock**

The following recommendations are based on *Farming the Historic Landscape, Caring for Farm Buildings*, published by English Heritage, 2004.

### **Traditional farm buildings**

The history of the agricultural development of the British countryside is reflected in the traditional farm buildings that scatter the landscape, with the buildings being as important to the landscape as the changing field patterns and boundaries associated with them. These buildings and field patterns are locally important, reflecting the changing geology, and farming practices that vary across the country.

### **Care for historic buildings**

- wherever possible, farm buildings should be kept in active use, as this maintains the buildings' function
- they are a vital element in defining the character of the countryside
- they are a historical and archaeological asset for understanding the morphology of farming in an area
- they may be listed buildings, or lie within the curtilage of a listed building, and so be legally protected
- they often house wildlife
- farm buildings have the potential for alternative uses, and protecting such buildings may be beneficial for future projects

### **Listed buildings**

Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conversation Areas) Act 1990. Such buildings are considered to have special architectural and historic interest.

It is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised works and penalties can be heavy. If there is any uncertainty for the need for Listed Building Consent, advice must be sought from the Local Authority Conservation Officer.

### **Maintenance and Repair**

Water damage and erosion can be one of the biggest hazards to buildings. Regular inspection, maintenance and repair of buildings are essential to traditional buildings. The maintenance and repair of roofs, gutters and down pipes helps preserve timber frames and trusses, weatherboards and wattle-and-earth walled buildings, mortar washing on stone walls and the general degradation of all buildings fabrics.

Climbing plants such as ivy can keep buildings damp and prise through masonry, brick and timber joints. It can hide defects that will deteriorate.

Most of the buildings at Morville are in very good repair, the only building that needs some attention is SMR No 55694; the western end of this barn is covered with ivy. It is suggested that the ivy be killed and removed as it is starting to affect the building by pulling apart joints in the stonework. On the west facing elevation there is a single opening on the first floor which is obviously letting in the weather and the floor inside has been affected by rot because of this. However in general the overall fabric of the buildings are well-maintained and in good condition.

Repairs should be undertaken in a sensitive way using appropriate materials, styles and techniques. Where possible, repairs to existing features should take preference to replacement. The use of appropriate material is essential. Wrong materials can have a negative effect, for example, by using cement mortars instead of lime mortars on historic masonry can result in spalling and erosion. Inappropriate materials and techniques may also affect the character and interest of the building.



Advice on this and other issues regarding the renovation work to the barns must be sought from the local Conservation Officer. No work should start until the necessary listed building consent has been granted and a program of further detailed recording of the barns has been completed to the recommended Royal Commission standards.

### **The need for information**

Effective conservation or restoration requires a thorough understanding of the building complex, with consideration of the standing buildings, and the potential for sub-surface archaeology.

Careful analysis of the buildings can reveal evidence of alterations and adaptations. Disused/reused joints and peg holes in timber provide some of the archaeological evidence for identifying changes in buildings. The proper recording and reporting on such features may be required prior to any restoration or redevelopment. The estate complex as a whole should also be considered, as its development through time shows the changing functions, adaptations and styles that have led to the present set of buildings.

Major conservation projects should be informed by the use of specialist, such as architects, structural engineers, and building contractors, with experience in conservation and development using tradition techniques.

### **Wildlife**

Farm buildings can be home to protected wildlife, such as owls and bats.

Owls were encouraged to nest in some farm buildings (especially barns) to provide 'pest' control, and some later brick barns (e.g. Merry Hill Barns, Haywood, Herefordshire) used a circular owl hole for decoration on the gable end of the barn that fronted the road.

The value of wildlife to farm buildings needs to be considered for both historical and legal reasons. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects bats and their roosts. It is illegal to disturb bats and/or their roosts, and to obstruct access into buildings they use.

## 9.0 Conclusions

There is little evidence of prehistoric occupation for the Morville Estate although recent geophysical survey revealed the presence of two large enclosure ditches (Roseveare, 2006). The presence of numerous flint scatters in the area around Morville also shows that there was some activity in the area. Further field walking exercises would probably result in additional evidence of activity.

Evidence for Roman occupation in the area is rather ephemeral. A number of Roman roads have been identified in Shropshire. One road ran from a Roman fort at Greenforge to Newtown in mid Wales and it is possible that the modern B4268 from Monkhampton to the A458 in Bridgnorth follows the line of this road. However the exact course of this road is very difficult to follow and although excavations along parts of the route have confirmed its presence it has not been proved that it went through Morville. If it did it seems likely that it would have crossed the Mor Brook by the Ash bridge before going along Corvedale through Monkhopton and Aston Eyre. Archaeological monitoring of any future groundworks in the area this may help to prove (or disprove) the theory.

The survey has shown that the survival of archaeological features is high, in particular in Aston Hill Wood and the surrounding fields. Here a complex of tracks, charcoal burning platforms and a possible saw pit were identified, showing that it was managed woodland in the past. Furthermore a fragmentary field system, of medieval or earlier date, was identified on the north-facing slope below the woodland. Although landscape features are notoriously difficult to date without using other archaeological methods (such as fieldwalking and excavation), the relict field system does seem to contain some elements of ridge and furrow indicating a medieval origin.

The proposed site of the deserted medieval village (DMV) (*'Membrefeld'*) around the church does seem to be the likely place and this is supported by an Ordnance Survey entry of 1979 which states that the foundations of the ancient village had previously been found there by a land agent. A geophysical survey carried out in May 2006 discovered and plotted a series of banks and structures along a road presumably associated with the old village demolished sometime prior to the late 1800s. The foundations of the priory were recorded as being within the former extent of the medieval burial ground and associated with the north aisle of the church, thus removing speculation as to its exact location. The ponds immediately behind the hall conform to the pattern of medieval monastic fish ponds with three progressively larger ponds in close proximity to one another.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century major restoration work was carried out on Morville Hall and its surroundings. This Georgian remodelling consisted of two phases of work. The two pavilions were added, making the building more conspicuous from the road and enabling the church to be seen from the front windows of the hall. The addition of a top storey left few external features of the original building – the turret stairs however could not be disguised so easily even with the addition of Georgian windows and the cornice carried across their tops.

In 1814 Lord Sudeley, the then owner of Morville, sold the hall and about 160 acres of land to Sir Frederick Richard Edward Acton, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet of that name, who lived at neighbouring Aldenham Park. The landscape around Morville Hall provided little evidence of managed parkland associated with either Morville or Aldenham Hall. A few veteran trees dotted around the estate may well have been purposely planted to add to the character of the estate but only one line of trees<sup>36</sup> is suggestive of a relict avenue where two trees frame the hall. This could be related to the two rows of elms planted in front of Morville Hall to lead the eye to a pyramidal obelisk, or rather to a board painted to look like one (Mercer, 2003, 198). It seems likely that the relationship between the two estates were limited as although the Actons owned Morville it was treated as a separate entity within its own grounds as it was let to a succession of tenants between 1814 and 1930.

At the time of the tithe in 1840, Morville Hall was not being leased however and was held in hand by the Acton family, who appear to have used it as a private chapel.

<sup>36</sup>

NTSMR No 55618

Since the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map, a number of field boundaries have been moved to the west of the hall, and to the south the large open landscape of the north slope of Aston Hill Wood has been enclosed.

The building survey has shown that all the buildings at Morville are generally in good condition. An important development is the discovery of the original entrance to the rear of the hall into the stable courtyard and through the stone barn<sup>37</sup>. The converted barns<sup>38</sup> together with the small brick building opposite<sup>39</sup> are all that is left of an organised courtyard of four barns shown on early mapping. The stone barn was built with a ginnel through the centre of it with hay lofts on either side. This lines up perfectly with the entrance to the courtyard of barns shown clearly on the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map.



Figure 19: Extract from the 1st Edition OS map

<sup>37</sup> NTSMR No 55694  
<sup>38</sup> NTSMR No 55691 and 55693  
<sup>39</sup> NTSMR No 55689



## 10.0 Archive deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of the original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Archenfield Archaeology.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

## 11.0 Publication and dissemination proposals

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and Hereford City Library.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

The complete photographic record, including the negatives, will be retained by Archenfield Archaeology.

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### Appendix – Tithe apportionment for Morville and Aston Eyre

| Parish of Morville |   |                    |  |                      |            |            |            |                   |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|--|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| number             | Landowner                                     | Occupier           | Name and description of lands and premises | state of cultivation | quantity a | quantity r | quantity p | to Lord Sudeley £ | to Lord Sudeley s | to Lord Sudeley d | to Sir John Acton £ | to Sir John Acton s | to Sir John Acton d | Impropriator £ | Impropriator s | Impropriator d |
| 178                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elizabeth Jeffreys | Cummary                                    | arable               | 13         | 2          | 0          | 4                 | 11                | 0                 |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 179                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | On hand            | Plantation                                 | plantation           | 1          | 2          | 37         | 0                 | 1                 | 9                 |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 180                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | On hand            | Conery Rough                               | plantation           | 1          | 0          | 26         | 0                 | 1                 | 0                 |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 181                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | On hand            | Plantation                                 | plantation           | 0          | 3          | 12         | 0                 | 0                 | 0                 |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 182                | Right Honorable Lord Sudeley                  | John Baker         | Meadow with 1/2 Brook                      | meadow               | 2          | 3          | 32         | 0                 | 12                | 0                 |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 183                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis     |  | arable               | 6          | 3          | 33         | 0                 | 0                 | 0                 | 1                   | 4                   | 0                   |                |                |                |
| 184                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis     |  | arable               | 7          | 2          | 22         |                   |                   |                   | 1                   | 8                   | 0                   |                |                |                |
| 185                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis     | Stackyard                                  |                      | 1          | 0          | 10         |                   |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 186                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis     |  | meadow               | 10         | 3          | 39         |                   |                   |                   | 2                   | 2                   | 0                   |                |                |                |
| 187                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Thomas Kur         | House and garden                           |                      |            |            | 15         |                   |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |
| 188                | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis     | Orchard                                    | orchard              | 2          | 2          |            |                   |                   |                   | 0                   | 8                   | 0                   |                |                |                |
| 189                | Representatives of                            | Thomas             | Garden                                     |                      | 2          | 2          | 20         |                   |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |                |                |                |



|      |   |                |                                  |         |    |   |    |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
|------|---|----------------|----------------------------------|---------|----|---|----|---|----|---|---|----|---|--|--|--|
|      | the late Sir Richard Acton                    | Kur            |                                  |         |    |   |    |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 190  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Rough                            |         | 2  | 2 | 17 |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 192  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | The Church Meadow                | meadow  | 10 | 3 | 13 |   |    |   | 2 | 19 | 6 |  |  |  |
| 193  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Thomas Kur     | Pleasure Ground in Front of Hall |         |    | 2 | 38 |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 194  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | On hand        | Old Hall now used as a Chapel    |         |    |   | 18 |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 195  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Farm House Buildings Fold etc    |         | 1  | 3 | 26 |   |    |   |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 196  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Orchard and Garden               |         | 1  | 2 | 13 |   |    |   | 0 | 5  | 0 |  |  |  |
| 401  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Meadow with 1/2 Brook            | meadow  | 6  | 3 | 16 |   |    |   | 1 | 5  | 0 |  |  |  |
| 402  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Pound Leasow                     | meadow  | 11 | 0 | 2  | 1 | 13 | 0 |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 403  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Pound Leasow                     | arable  | 8  | 2 | 20 | 2 | 19 | 6 |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 404  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | William Willis | Scald Hill with trees            | pasture | 12 | 1 | 12 | 1 | 10 | 6 |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 602  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock         | Mill Meadow                      | meadow  | 5  | 3 | 19 | 1 | 10 | 0 |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 603  | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock         | Wallery Meadow                   | meadow  | 3  | 1 | 0  | 0 | 10 | 0 |   |    |   |  |  |  |
| 603a | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock         | The Little Piece                 | arable  | 1  | 3 | 28 | 0 | 10 | 0 |   |    |   |  |  |  |

|                   |   |                 |                                |            |    |   |    |   |    |   |  |  |  |   |    |    |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------|----|---|----|---|----|---|--|--|--|---|----|----|
| 604               | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock          | The Wieri Piece                | arable     | 2  | 2 | 26 | 0 | 15 | 0 |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| 604a              | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock          | Bylet                          | meadow     | 0  | 0 | 15 |   |    |   |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| 605               | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock          | Freezeland Piece               | arable     | 3  | 3 | 10 | 0 | 15 | 0 |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| 606               | Representatives of the late Sir Richard Acton | Elcock          | Sideland Piece                 | arable     | 2  | 2 | 30 | 0 | 10 | 0 |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| <b>Aston Eyre</b> |   |                 |                                |            |    |   |    |   |    |   |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| 187               | Sir John Emerick Edward Dalberg Acton Bart    | Himself         | Acorn Hill plantation          | plantation |    | 2 | 36 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 0 | 2  | 0  |
| 188               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Williams Corser | Rough Hill                     | pasture    | 11 | 1 | 35 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 2  | 2  |
| 217               | Lord Sudeley (Glebe)                          | Hercules Wall   | Ashbridge piece with 1/2 Brook | meadow     | 1  | 1 | 9  |   |    |   |  |  |  |   |    |    |
| 236               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Hannah Tipton   | Rush Meadow with 1/2 Brook     | meadow     | 4  | 3 | 34 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 15 | 6  |
| 237               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Hannah Tipton   | The slade and Rushy Meadow     | pasture    | 5  | 3 | 36 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 12 | 2  |
| 239               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Hannah Tipton   | six leys and Rushy piece       | pasture    | 7  | 1 | 35 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 14 | 4  |
| 240               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Hannah Tipton   | Four leys                      | arable     | 4  | 1 | 23 |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 9  | 10 |
| 241               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Hannah Tipton   | Big white lye                  | arable     | 11 | 1 | 7  |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 13 | 10 |
| 242               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint Esquire         | Himself         | Aston Hill coppice             | wood       | 12 | 1 | 2  |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 1  | 6  |
| 243               | John Chiverton Charlton Saint                 | Hannah Tipton   | Parsons leys                   | pasture    | 15 | 1 | 0  |   |    |   |  |  |  | 1 | 8  | 6  |

|     |  |                    |  |        |   |   |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |
|-----|--|--------------------|--|--------|---|---|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|
|     | Esquire  |                    |  |        |   |   |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |
| 244 | Sir John Emerick<br>Edward Dalberg<br>Acton Bart | Jeoffrey<br>Embrey | Dole in<br>Townsend<br>meadow                      | meadow | 1 | 1 | 24 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 245 | John Chiverton<br>Charlton Saint<br>Esquire      | Hannah<br>Tipton   | Dole in<br>Townsend<br>meadow                      | meadow | 2 | 1 | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| 246 | Sir John Emerick<br>Edward Dalberg<br>Acton Bart | Jeoffrey<br>Embrey | Dole in<br>Townsend<br>meadow<br>with 1/2<br>Brook | meadow | 2 | 1 | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| 247 | John Chiverton<br>Charlton Saint<br>Esquire      | Hannah<br>Tipton   | Dole in<br>Townsend<br>meadow                      | meadow | 2 | 1 | 16 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 2 |



## Index of names

- Abbot of Shrewsbury, 13  
 Acton Arms, 13  
 Acton Estate, 15  
 Acton, Lord, 15  
 Acton, Sir Frederick Richard Edward, 60  
 Actons, the, 15  
 Aldenham Hall, 24, 60  
 Aldenham Park, 15, 60  
 Alnothstree , Hundred of, 11  
 Ash bridge, 60  
 Ash Bridge, 11, 24  
 Aston Eyre, 10, 11, 60  
 Aston Hill, 24, 35, 38, 49  
 Aston Hill Wood, 6, 10, 11, 49, 60  
 Bailiff of Bridgnorth, 13, 14  
 Baker, William, 14  
 Bayliss, Mr, 15  
 Benedictine Priory, 12, 47  
 Billingsgate family, 14  
 Birmingham, 15  
 Blayney, Arthur, 14  
 Bridgnorth, 11, 13, 14, 60  
 Bridgnorth Castle, 12  
 Bromfield, 11  
 Burton., Thomas, 24  
 Bythell, Dr W J S, 15  
 Bythell, Miss A P, 15  
 Charlton Saint, John Chiverton, 10  
 Church of St Mary Magdelaine, Bridgnorth, 14  
 Civil War, the, 14  
 Conery, the, 24  
 Confessor, King Edward the, 11  
 Conquest, the Norman, 11  
 Corvedale, 11, 60  
 Cuckoo Pit Wood, 11  
 de Behun, Robert, Bishop of Hereford., 12  
 de Belesme, Robert, Earl of, 12  
 de Clive, Geoffrey, Bishop of Hereford, 12  
 Deepdale, 13  
 Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of Morville, 13  
 Devil's Hole, 6  
 Domesday, 11  
 Doric, 14  
 Dower House, 15  
 Dudley, John , Viscount Lisle, 13  
 Edghill, 14  
 Edwin, Earl, 12  
 Elizabethan, 14  
 Emerich, Sir John, 15  
 Faber [latinsed form of Smyth], 13  
 Faber, Emma., 13  
 Faber, Geoffrey, 13  
 Faber, Richard, 13  
 Faber, Robert, 13  
 Faber, William, 13  
 Georgian, 14  
 Greenforge, 60  
 Greensforge, 11  
 Hanbury, Charles, 14  
 Hanbury-Tracy, 15  
 Henry, Viscount Tracy, 14  
 Hundred of Almodestrue, 12  
 Hundred of Stottesden, 12  
 Industrial Revolution, 15  
 le Smith, Walter, 13  
 Leland, John, 13  
 Lisle, Viscount, 13  
 Ludlow Butter Cross, 14  
 Manor of Membrefeld, 11  
 Marshall, Richard, alias Baker, 13  
 medieval, 12, 14, 55  
 Member of Parliament, 14  
 Membrefeld, 13, 60  
 Monkhopton, 11, 60  
 Montgomery, Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury, 11  
 Mor Brook, 6, 10, 11, 13, 31  
 Morcar, Earl, 12  
 Museum, Ludlow., 11  
 Newtown, Mid Wales, 11  
 Norman church, 12  
 Pincerna, Richard, 12  
 Reformation, the., 12  
 Robert, son of Geoffrey Faber of Little Bruge, 13  
 Roman fort, 11  
 Roman roads, 11  
 Royal Commission, 13, 59  
 Saxon, 11, 12  
 Saxon burials, 12  
 Saxon church, 12  
 Severn, River, 6, 11  
 Shrewsbury Abbey, 12  
 Shrewsbury Abbey, Chartulary of, 13  
 Sir Whitmore Acton, Bar<sup>t</sup>, 24  
 Smith, John, 13  
 Smyth family, 13  
 Smyth, George, 14  
 Smyth, Roger, 13  
 Smyth, Roger, of Bridgnorth, 13  
 St Gregory's Church, 11  
 Stephen, King, 12  
 Sudeley, Lord, 15, 60  
 Tipton, Hannah, 10  
 Tracy, Henrietta Susannah, 14  
 Tudor, 14  
 Upton Cresset, 14  
 Weaver family, 14  
 Weaver, Arthur, 14  
 Weaver, Susannah, 14  
 Wenlock, 13  
 Wilderhope Manor, 14  
 William, King [the Conqueror], 11  
 Willis, William, 10  
 Yew Tree Dingle, 6