

LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
UNIT



September 1997

**COUNTY HOTEL GARAGE,
COUNTY STREET,
LANCASTER**

Desk-based Archaeological Assessment Report

County Hotel Garage,
County Hotel,
Lancaster

Desk-based Archaeological Assessment Report

Report no 1997-98/ 006 /7739

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SUMMARY

A desk-based archaeological assessment was undertaken by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, on behalf of Harrison and Pitt, of the County Hotel Garage site, County Street, Lancaster (SD 471617). The site lies to the south-west of Lancaster Castle, a medieval foundation sited over the remains of a series of Roman forts on Castle Hill and, a short distance to the west of the site in the Westfield Memorial village, remains of Roman burials were discovered in the 1930s. Therefore an assessment of documentary and cartographic sources was required by Lancashire County Archaeology Service in order to inform the planning process.

The documentary and cartographic evidence did not reveal sites of archaeological significance recorded in, or immediately around, the designated area. The present buildings on the site appeared to date from the mid-nineteenth century when the plot was first developed. Prior to that time the plot was depicted as open ground which may also indicate a similar level of activity for this area during the medieval period.

On the basis of the sites and artefacts identified to date it would appear that the area may well lie outwith the bounds of both the Roman and the medieval settlements, despite its proximity to the site of the forts and castle. The discovery of Roman burials nearby (some 150m to the west of the site) reinforces the suggestion that this area lay beyond the area of Roman settlement (as practice was to site cemeteries beyond the bounds of the civilian settlement).

It may well be that the area to the west of the Castle Hill remained relatively undeveloped until more recent times, although the lack of evidence for prehistoric activity does not mean that none exists. However, whilst an excavation in 1981 between the site of the burials and the designated site did not reveal evidence of a cemetery continuing eastward this does not entirely preclude the possibility for the discovery of Roman, or other remains, on the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to AJ White (Lancaster City Museum) for his help and comments and also to the staff of Lancaster University library for their assistance.

This report was compiled by Denise Drury and edited by Jamie Quartermaine who also acted as project manager.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 A desk-based archaeological assessment has been undertaken by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU), in September 1997, on behalf of Harrison and Pitt in order to inform a planning application for the redevelopment of the site. The designated site lies on the west side of Lancaster (SD 471617) (Fig 1), close to the site of Westfield Memorial village where Roman cemetery deposits have been found.
- 1.1.2 The site lies some 250m to the south-west of Lancaster Castle (now in use as a prison), a medieval foundation sited over the remains of the Roman forts on Castle Hill. The site occupied the south-west corner of a block of land formed by West Road, Station Road, Fairfield Road, and County Street (Fig 2), to the rear of the former County Hotel (which faced the adjacent railway station).
- 1.1.3 The purpose of the assessment was to collate evidence relating to the site in order to assist the determination of its archaeological potential. This report details the results of that appraisal, including a short gazetteer of sites in the immediate vicinity of the designated area, together with map illustrations of the more recent development of the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK-BASED SURVEY

- 2.1.1 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in response to a verbal request from Lancashire County Archaeology Service (LCAS). This involved the rapid assessment of a range of sources concentrating on the information contained in the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record (LSMR), with reference to local histories, early maps and primary documentation as was reasonably available. A comparison of changing site use was made, based largely on the Ordnance Survey coverage, and secondary documentation was utilised where appropriate. Sources of information, in addition to the LSMR, included the local library and the University library and map room, as well as records held by LUAU.
- 2.1.2 A rapid desk-based compilation of geological and topographical information was undertaken, including any available engineering or borehole data.
- 2.1.3 A gazetteer of archaeological sites in the vicinity of the designated area (c250m radius) has been compiled (section 4) with references to the sites on and around Castle Hill included in the main text (section 3.3).

2.2 FIELD INSPECTION

- 2.2.1 A brief visit was made to inspect site conditions, accompanied by a basic photographic record.

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full project archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited in the County Record Office with a copy of the report made available to the LSMR.

3. DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Only very limited evidence of prehistoric activity has been recovered in Lancaster, chance finds in the area include worked flints, of Neolithic or Bronze Age character, which may simply indicate a transient population. Whereas the discovery of a Neolithic bowl (on Church Street) and Bronze Age funerary urns (various sites in Lancaster town centre, Bowerham, and Lancaster Moor) would suggest more settled communities the potential occupation sites remain unknown (Penney 1981).
- 3.1.2 Castle Hill was occupied by substantial Roman fortifications from the first to the fourth centuries AD. A fort was established at the end of the first century AD, subsequently refurbished in the first half of the second century and then remodelled in the fourth century on a new alignment, parallel to the river, probably to protect a harbour. To the east of Castle Hill, Church Street has long been acknowledged as an important part of the Roman *vicus* (extramural civilian settlement) with discoveries of Roman material noted from the eighteenth century onwards. In 1988 and 1992 large, open area excavations at the Mitchells Brewery site, on Church Street, revealed a complete sequence of Roman occupation, beginning at the end of the first century AD (Newman *et al* 1996).
- 3.1.3 However, the full extent of the extramural settlement remains unclear although the discovery of funerary material, noted during construction in the environs of St Thomas' church (Penny Street) to the south, to the east in Cheapside (LSMR 2003), and to the west in the Westfield Memorial village (LSMR 445) did suggest some limits. More recently excavations at the site of the Market Hall have demonstrated that this area lay to the south of the core of the Roman extramural settlement (Drury forthcoming), and the discovery of disturbed cremations on Penny Street (near St Thomas' Church) have reinforced the suggestion that a cemetery lay to the south of the settlement (LUAU 1996).
- 3.1.4 Following the Roman occupation, little is known of Lancaster apart from isolated archaeological finds and place-name evidence. Early medieval Lancaster developed into two dependent vills of the manor of Halton, mentioned in Domesday Survey, one based on the Castle Hill area (*Chercaloncastre* or Church Lancaster) and the other (*Loncastre*) perhaps in the Stonewell area at the eastern end of present day Church Street. Market Street (*Markahastrete*) was established by the thirteenth century.
- 3.1.5 It would seem that Lancaster passed through a period of stagnation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, during the eighteenth century there was an increase in trade via the port, particularly with the West Indies, and a growth in population, which gave rise to the physical expansion of the town and an increase in building density. This growth resulted in much

redevelopment, including infilling of vacant plots and the excavation of cellars under many buildings.

3.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 The general solid geology of the Lancaster area is Namurian grey mudstones and siltstones with intercalated sandstones; the overlying drift geology has not been surveyed.
- 3.2.2 The site lies toward the foot of a steep west-facing slope, lying some 250m to the south-west of the site of Lancaster Castle (sited over the remains of the Roman fort) situated on Castle Hill. The western slope of the hill is relatively steep at the top, with the gradient becoming less pronounced toward the base where the land slopes down towards the area known as the Marsh and the River Lune.
- 3.2.3 The designated area lies to the west of Lancaster railway station, on the Preston to Carlisle line (which has been terraced into the hill slope) within a plot bounded by Fairfield Road, County Street, West Road, and Station Road. The site itself occupies the south-west corner of this block of land, to the rear of the site of the former County Hotel (which faced the railway station).

3.3 SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

- 3.3.1 A search of the Lancashire Sites and Monuments record (LSMR) produced a number of sites, of all periods, in the general vicinity of the designated area, although none pertain to the site itself. Of specific interest is the proximity of the area to the site of the Roman fort and medieval castle located above the site on Castle Hill (some 250m distant) and also evidence of Roman activity discovered during excavations in the Westfield Memorial village (c150m to the west of the site). The LSMR search only revealed one prehistoric find spot recorded in the locale, a flint scraper which was recovered from Vicarage Fields (LSMR 480).
- 3.3.2 A series of Roman forts was located on Castle Hill (Site 07), parts of which have been excavated (LSMR 448), dating from the first to the fourth century AD (Shotter 1990). It has been suggested that a motte and bailey preceded the existing structure although this has not been proven. The medieval castle (presently in use as a prison) was constructed in the southern part of the forts (LSMR 448); the Norman keep has been dated to c1080-90 with fortifications added in the following century (Site 08), although this has been disputed (Wood 1995). The site on Castle Hill was thus the focus of both the Roman and medieval settlements although these seem to have spread largely to the east and south, governed presumably by the topography. Excavations in and around the area of the Castle have revealed evidence of the Roman occupation including its defences, the Wery Wall (in Vicarage fields, LSMR 449), an

inscribed stone altar (LSMR 469), and coin hoards at the site of the vicarage (LSMR 476) and in the churchyard (LSMR 477).

- 3.3.3 The finds on Castle Hill include those associated with St Mary's Church, such as nine early medieval crosses (LSMR 447) dating largely to the ninth century and suggesting a major religious centre there prior to the Norman Conquest. The church itself is largely fifteenth century but formed part of a priory on this site founded at the end of the eleventh century by Roger of Poitou, who also established the castle, moving his *caput baronial* from Halton (Farrer and Brownbill 1914). Although the precinct in part coincides with the north-western extent of the earlier Roman fort, still visible as earthworks, no structures other than the church survive (LSMR 451 and 2311). A grammar school was established nearby in the thirteenth century (LSMR 450) and was replaced by a new building on the west side of the churchyard in the late seventeenth century, remaining until a new grammar school was established in the mid-nineteenth century (off East Road).
- 3.3.4 Sherds of Roman pottery (Site 06) were discovered during excavations in a garden on Castle Park (LSMR 2016), to the immediate south of the Castle, but, there is some suggestion that these may have included discards from a private collection.
- 3.3.5 Material evidence of Roman activity has been found to the west of the Castle site including an iron spearhead and several coins (Site 04) recovered during the construction of the junction of the North Western and Carlisle railways (LSMR 474) and a large amount of pottery and other material found at the site of one of the railway stations in 1849-50 (Site 05) (LSMR 475) (although whether this referred to finds from the Castle station or that of Green Ayre, to the north-east of Castle Hill is unclear).
- 3.3.6 Human remains (six skeletons) and an iron ring (Site 01) were found at the Westfield War Memorial Village in 1934 (LSMR 445). The site is thought to date from the Roman period based on the discovery of Samian ware and other Roman remains in association with the burials. The ring, originally identified as Iron Age in origin, is no longer considered to provide sufficient evidence of Iron Age occupation (AJ White pers comm).
- 3.3.7 Excavations (Site 02) were carried out in 1981 (LSMR 3501) to the east of the Westfield village (some 50m to the west of the designated site) in order to determine the extent of a possible Roman cemetery on the western side of the fort, based on the discovery of the burials in 1934. These recovered only a few abraded sherds of Roman and medieval pottery. A fuller description of the inhumations discovered at the south-east corner of the Westfield Memorial Village in 1934-5 by Spence and North was also given in the report of the 1981 excavations; this comprised the remains of five adults and a child (Chandler 1982, 11-2). The results of the later excavations suggested that the cemetery uncovered in 1934-5 did not extend further to the north-east. The small quantity and amount of wear on the Roman and medieval pottery recovered indicated that the area lay beyond the cores of both the Roman and medieval settlements. In addition, the report included a reference to a local antiquarian, Thomas Dalzell, who recorded in 1869 the discovery of a Roman

earthenware bottle found at Kellet Croft (Site 03), bounded by Meeting House Lane, West Road and Fairfield Road (Chandler 1982, 11).

- 3.3.8 The discovery of Roman artefacts, as detailed in Shotter and White's gazetteer of finds (1990, 40-46), largely reflect the finds recorded on the SMR in the vicinity of the designated area.
- 3.3.9 There was relatively limited development to the south and south-western side of the castle area prior to the nineteenth century and the coming of the railway. The Friends Meeting House at the western edge of the town (on Meeting House Lane) was established in 1709 (LSMR 4651). However, there was some activity on this side of the town, as demonstrated by the presence of a windmill (LSMR 4647) as shown on Yates' map of 1786 and which was depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map as a corn mill (now known as Windmill Street). The land beyond the railway line, as depicted on the OS 1st edition map, was occupied by the Luneside Bowling Green (LSMR 4649) (on or adjacent to its position on the current mapping) and the archery ground on Kelsey Street (LSMR 4650).
- 3.3.10 More recently the area has been greatly changed with the establishment of the railway, which skirts the western side of Castle Hill. The railway line from Green Ayre to Castle Station was opened in 1849, when the Lancaster and Preston railway was linked to Carlisle (LSMR 4686, 10263, 10608, 10609). The railway line was terraced into the hill slope and Castle Station was built on the eastern portion of Kellet Croft.
- 3.3.11 In the local directories there is limited evidence of particular relevance to the site. Fairfield Road, appeared to be residential, occupied by only two to three properties from the end of the last century to at least the middle of this century, with no mention of properties on County Street (Cook 1896; Anon 1933-4). The later development of the area is clearly depicted in the sequence of mapping from the nineteenth century onward, which demonstrated the progressive infilling of land between the town and the Marsh, particularly following the construction of the railway.

3.4 CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 3.4.1 The earliest cartographic representation of Lancaster, in the early seventeenth century (Speed 1610), shows the area to the west of the castle as largely undeveloped with a road leading westward from the castle down to the River Lune (Fig 3).
- 3.4.2 The limits of development to the west of the town may be reflected in the limits chosen by the map makers in the following years. A measured plan of Lancaster dated 1684, by an unknown cartographer (reconstructed by Docton 1954), which may be more representative than Speed's map, does not cover the study area, and the roads leading in its direction, west from the castle, have only a few buildings fronting their routes. The line of the road later known as

'Meeting House Lane' was established on Docton's plan and was shown as the 'Lane into fields' which reinforces the suggestion of the lack of development in the area during this period. Mackreth's 1778 plan of Lancaster does not include the open ground to the west of the castle, and similarly Clark's 1807 map shows the roads leading to the west but again does not cover the study area.

- 3.4.3 It is Binns' map of 1821 which provides the first clear coverage of the ground lying west of the town and leading down to the River Lune. Between Meeting House Lane (leading onto what is now Westbourne Road) and Short Marsh Lane (now Castle Park leading onto West Road) there is open ground, known as 'Kellet Croft' beyond the boundary of the Friends Meeting House (Fig 4). The slightly curving western (tree-lined) boundary of Kellet Croft probably approximately reflects the line of Fairfield Road. A building was depicted to the west of that boundary fronting Short Marsh Lane.
- 3.4.4 To the west of Kellet Croft there was a series of open strips running between Meeting House Lane and Short Marsh Lane. A strip of open ground was depicted immediately to the west of Kellet Croft, and beyond that a strip of gardens and marked plots with open ground again shown to their west. Baines' map of 1824 again does not cover the area to the west of the Friends Meeting House.
- 3.4.5 The Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, beginning with the 1st edition 6" (surveyed in 1844-5), then provides a sequence which depicts the development of the area. On the 1st edition 6" map (Fig 5) the railway, crosses the eastern edge of Kellet Croft and was terraced into the hill slope. The area to the west of the rail line remained open with a track established toward the western edge of the field, and it may be that the line of this track more accurately reflects the later line of Fairfield Road.
- 3.4.6 The OS 1st edition 25" map of 1893 (Fig 6) shows a marked increase in development between the railway line and the area known as the Marsh. Fairfield Road and Station Road had been established between West Road and Westbourne Road, with an unnamed road (County Street) linking Station Road and Fairfield Road. An hotel had been established opposite the Castle Station and the layout of buildings to the rear of the hotel and grounds appear similar to those presently occupying the site. To the north of the hotel the remainder of the block of land was largely occupied by gardens and outhouses (possibly glass houses).
- 3.4.7 The designated area was occupied by two long blocks forming two sides of an elongated courtyard with an entrance at its southern end. The layout of the designated area remained the same on both the OS 1913 (Fig 7) and 1933 editions. The 1957 mapping shows a similar layout with some increased development in the adjacent areas of land.
- 3.4.8 An examination of the cartographic evidence indicated that the designated area had remained unoccupied until the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly this appeared to have been the case from the seventeenth century onward and this may well indicate that the land to the west of the town was

also undeveloped during the medieval period. The arrangement of the nineteenth century structures on the site appeared much as the present building layout.

3.5 FIELD INSPECTION, SITE CONDITION AND OTHER DATA

- 2.5.1 Access was not available to the site itself, however, it appeared (from the street) that there may have been some truncation of deposits if the buildings had been terraced into the slope to achieve a level surface. The general ground level drops approximately 2m east to west, from Station Road down to Fairfield Road. The buildings on the site were single or two storey construction, probably with strip foundations.
- 3.5.2 Plans provided by the Client indicate the location of underground petrol tanks and an inspection pit which will have caused disturbance to the site (Fig 8). Underground services will most probably have caused disturbance to deposits although no data on their location / depth was available. There was also no borehole data for the site.
- 3.5.3 No previous archaeological work has been undertaken on or adjacent to the site of the proposed development.

4. GAZETTEER OF SITES

A selected list of sites has been included (see Fig 2)

Gazetteer number 01
Site name Westfield Memorial village
SMR number 445
NGR SD 4700 6169
Description Six human burials discovered in Westfield Memorial village (in 1934) dating to the Roman period.

Gazetteer number 02
Site name Fairfield Road
SMR number 3501
NGR SD 4712 6172
Description Excavations carried out in 1981 which yield a few abraded fragments of Roman and medieval pottery.

Gazetteer number 03
Site name Kellet Croft
NGR SD 472 617 - for Kellet Croft
Description A reference to the discovery of a 'Roman earthenware bottle' at Kellet Croft by local antiquary Thomas Dalzell (1869). Exact find site unknown.

Gazetteer number 04
Site name Marsh Lane
SMR number 474
NGR SD 4716 6196
Description Roman material including an iron spearhead and coins recovered during construction of the railway.

Gazetteer number 05
Site name Castle Station / Green Ayre Station
SMR number 475
NGR SD 4719 6178

Description Roman pottery and other material recovered during the construction of either Castle Station or Green Ayre Station.

Gazetteer number 06
Site name Castle Park
SMR number 2016
NGR SD 4734 6175
Description Roman pottery recovered to the south of the Castle site.

Gazetteer number 07
Site name Castle Hill
SMR number 469, 476, 477, 2045
NGR SD 473 618
Description A series of Roman forts was situated on Castle Hill (from the first to the fourth century AD). A number of excavations and finds spots, associated with the Roman occupation, have been recorded in and around the site.

Gazetteer number 08
Site name Castle Hill
SMR number 447, 448, 451, 2311, 450
NGR SD 473 618
Description Site of the castle, priory, and priory church on Castle Hill and associated finds.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

- 5.1.1 The desk-based survey of available sources has indicated that there may be some potential for the discovery of Roman and / or medieval remains on this site given its proximity to the site of both the fort and the castle on Castle Hill, some 250m distant. However, the area seems to have lain beyond the bounds of these fortifications and settlements, and thus it may well have remained relatively undeveloped.
- 5.1.2 The main concentration of Roman features and finds has been discovered in association with the forts and ancillary structures. The number of finds of Roman origin decrease on the western side of Castle Hill away from the immediate environs of the fort and while there were isolated finds spots in the general vicinity there does appear to be a lack of Roman remains. This could be due to the limited investigation of the area or it may reflect the fact that this area lay outwith the bounds of the fortifications and settlement. The discovery of the Roman burials in Westfield Memorial village (c150m distant) goes some way to reinforcing the latter suggestion. However, excavations between these burials and the designated site (c50m distant) did not reveal evidence for the continuation of a cemetery to the east, nor did it indicate a high level of Roman activity.
- 5.1.3 Similarly, Castle Hill and the area to the east was also the focus of the medieval settlement and again the area to the west may well have lain outside the core of the medieval town. The earliest mapping (1610), whilst only representative, suggests that the area to the west side of the Castle Hill was largely open ground, depicting only a road down to the River Lune. Subsequent town plans frequently excluded the area beyond the plot occupied by the Friends Meeting House (established 1709) although roads are depicted leading westward; one labelled 'Lane into fields' (1684) probably gives a fair indication of the type and level of activity on the western side of the town. Whilst the medieval history of the area remains unknown it would seem likely that, as in later periods, the land here was utilised for pasture / agricultural activity on the outskirts of the town.
- 5.1.4 The topography to the west of Castle Hill may well have influenced the type and level of exploitation of the land in all periods. The fairly steep slope of the western flanks of the hill have formed a natural break to development to the west with the lower-lying ground toward the 'Marsh' and the River Lune unattractive for settlement. Certainly the cartographic evidence from 1821 clearly shows an area of open fields with some limited development of plots, which appear to have been subdivided as gardens or allotments, together with a few buildings established on the thoroughfares out of town. At this time the designated area was part of Kellet Croft, and remained open ground in the 1840s.

- 5.1.5 The nineteenth century cartographic evidence provides a clear indication of the development of the area, showing the construction of the railway and the subsequent infilling of the land beyond. The buildings within the designated area, to the rear of the former County Hotel, as depicted in 1893, were laid out much as they are today.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.2.1 The area lies close to the focus of both the Roman and medieval settlement, but, there was only limited evidence for activity to the west of Castle Hill during these periods. It would appear that it most probably lay beyond the bounds of both fortifications and settlements, a point reinforced by the discovery of Roman burials nearby. Therefore, whilst the site may lay outwith the main area of occupation, evidence of other activity may survive, such as Roman burials, that may have taken place beyond the limits of the town. It is clear that in more recent times this area remained open and undeveloped, utilised for agriculture until the nineteenth century.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.3.1 In order to determine the potential for the survival of archaeological remains on the site it is recommended that a limited programme of evaluation trenching be undertaken, in advance of construction. The courtyard area would be suitable for such an investigation, although the presence of the petrol tanks at the southern end of the yard and any underground services will be limiting factors in the scope of the trial trenching.
- 5.3.2 The requirement for, and scope of, any further archaeological investigation on the site must be devised in consultation and agreement with the Lancashire County Archaeology Service.

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- Mackreth, 1778 *Plan of Lancaster*
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- Ordnance Survey, 1893 *1st edition 25" map*, sheet 30, Southampton
- Ordnance Survey, 1913 *25" map*, sheet 30, Southampton
- Ordnance Survey, 1933 *25" map* , sheet 30, Southampton
- Ordnance Survey, 1957 *1:2,500*, sheet SD4761, Southampton
- Soil survey of England and Wales, 1983 1:250, 000, *Soils of northern England, Southampton*
- Speed, 1610 *Map of Lancaster*

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1 Site location plan, 1:25,000
- Figure 2 Plan showing designated area and gazetteer sites (OS 1:2,500 map, 1957 map)
- Figure 3 Speed's map, 1610
- Figure 4 Extract from Binns' map, 1821
- Figure 5 Enlarged extract from 1st edition 6" map, 1847
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- Figure 8 Plan of site showing areas of known disturbance

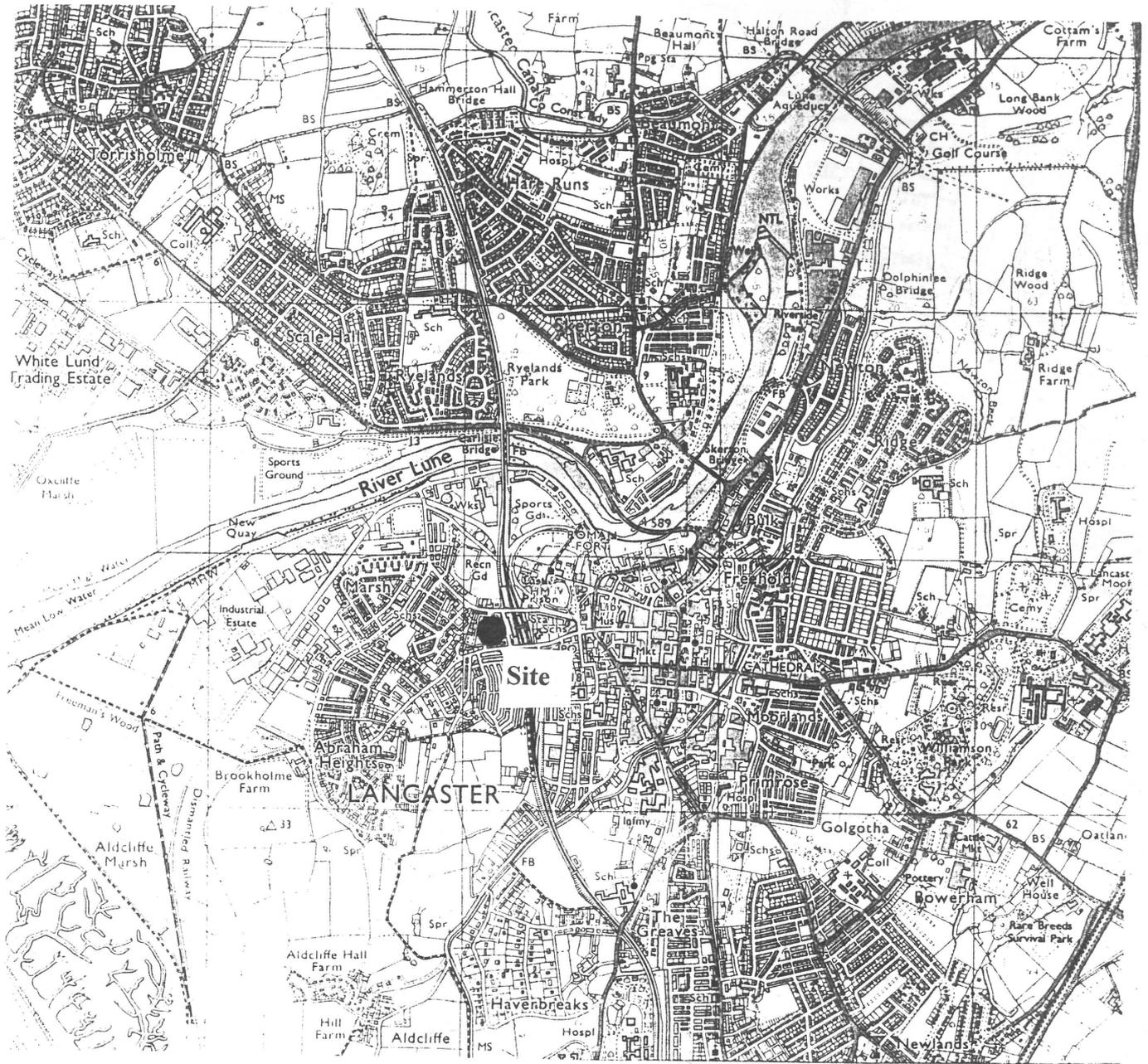


Fig 1: site location plan

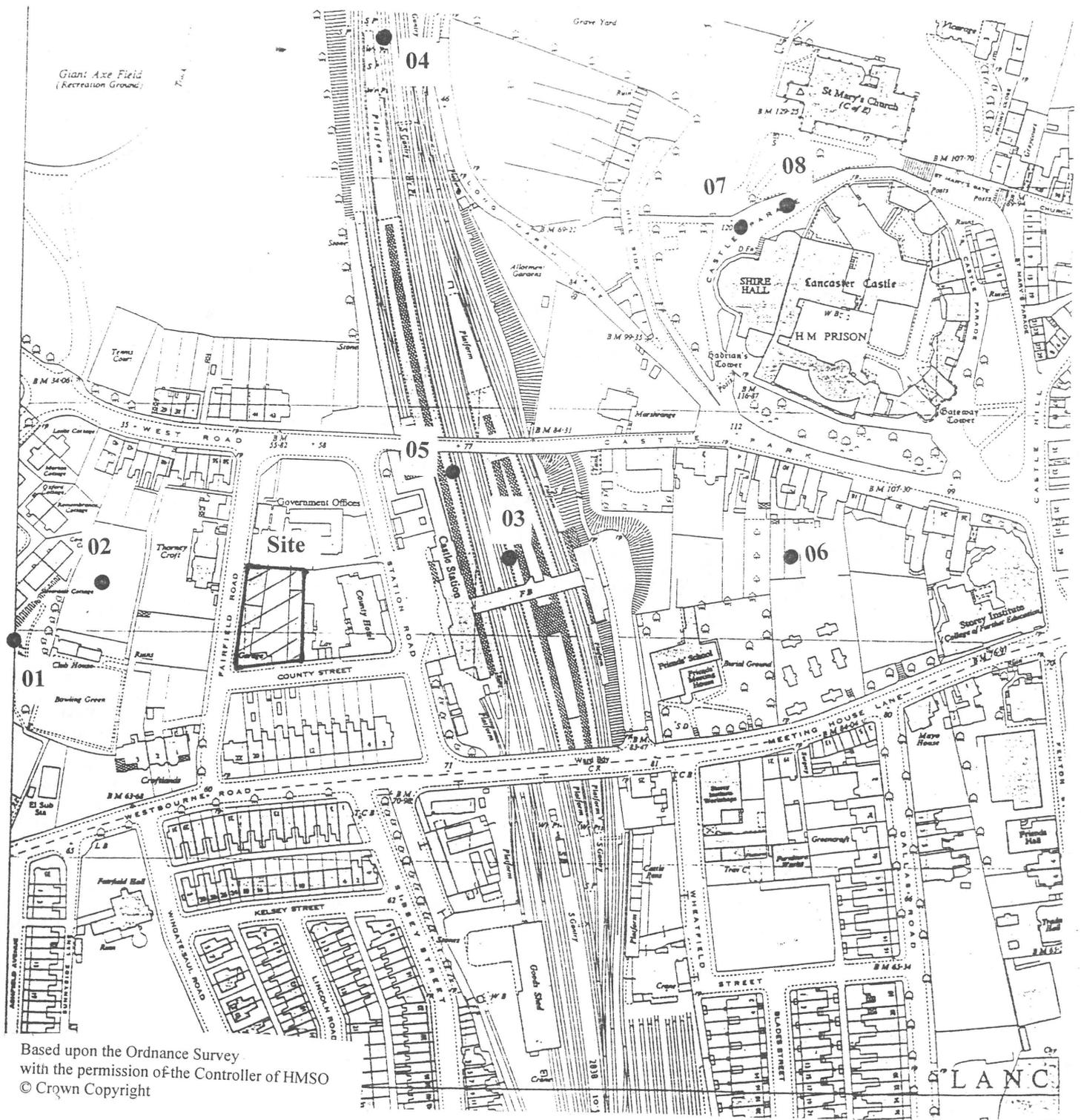


Fig 2: plan showing designated area and gazetteer sites (OS 25" map, 1957)

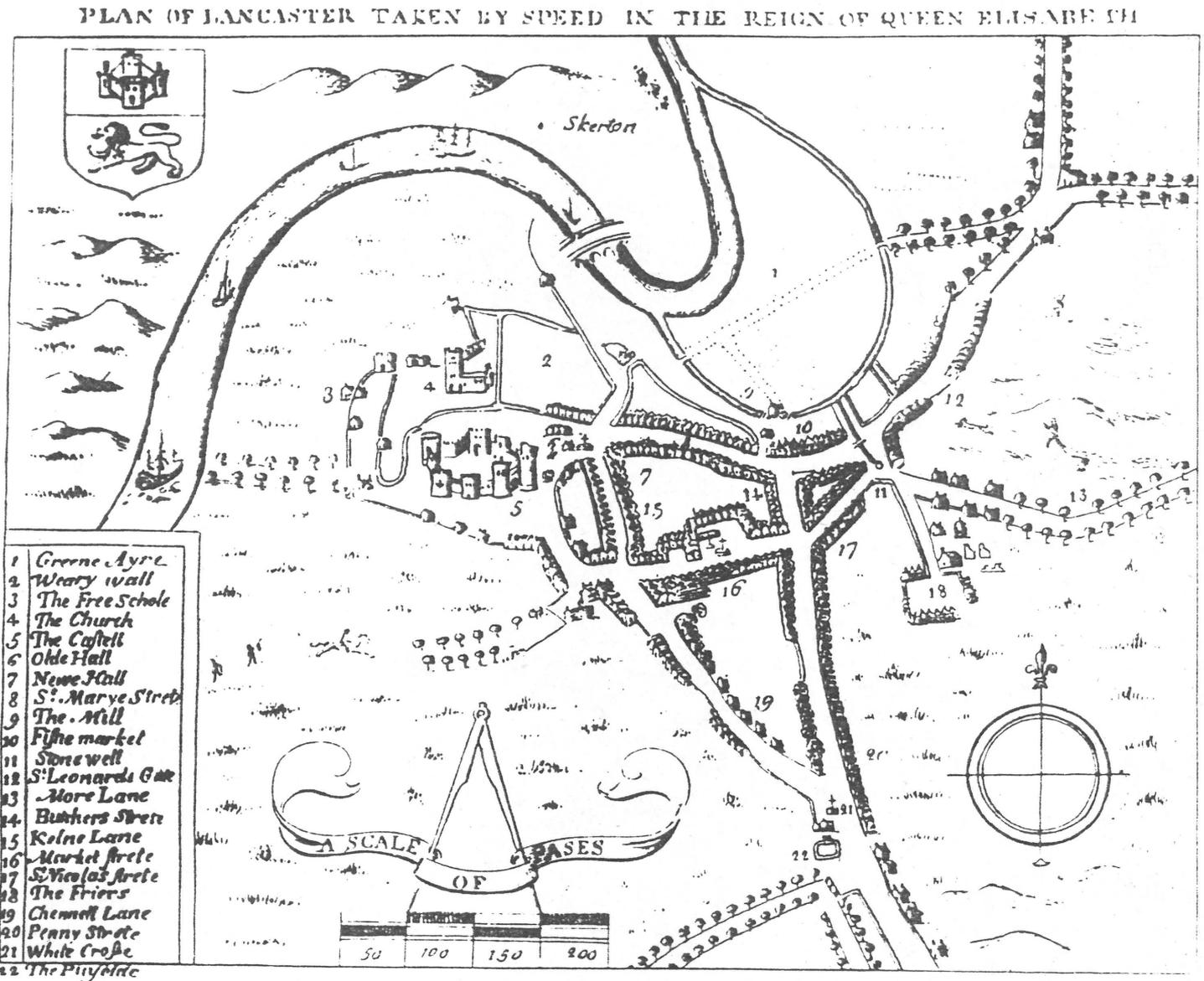


Fig 3: Speed's map of Lancaster, 1610

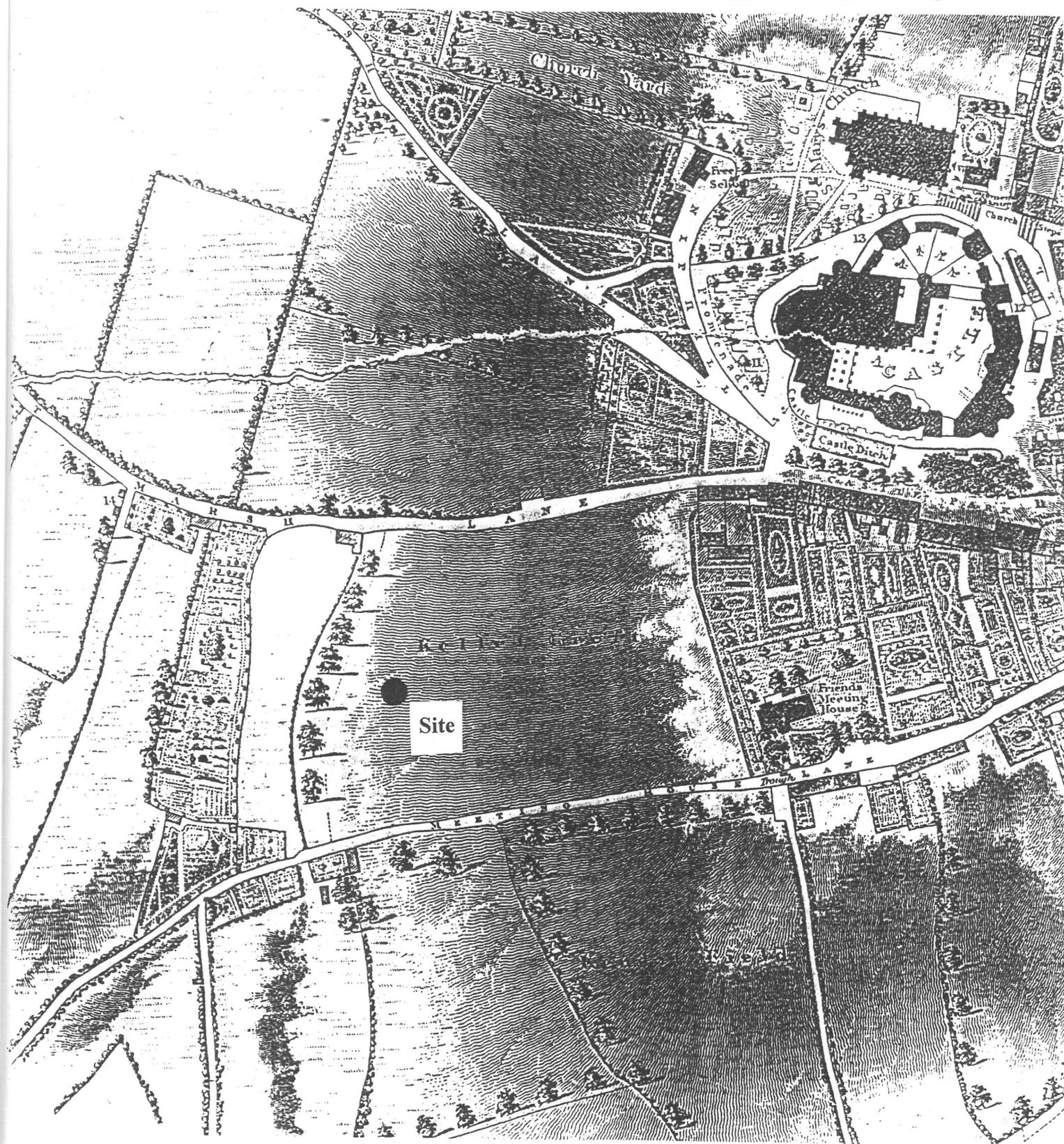


Fig 4: extract from Binns' map, 1821



Fig 5: enlarged extract from OS 1st edition 6" map, 1847

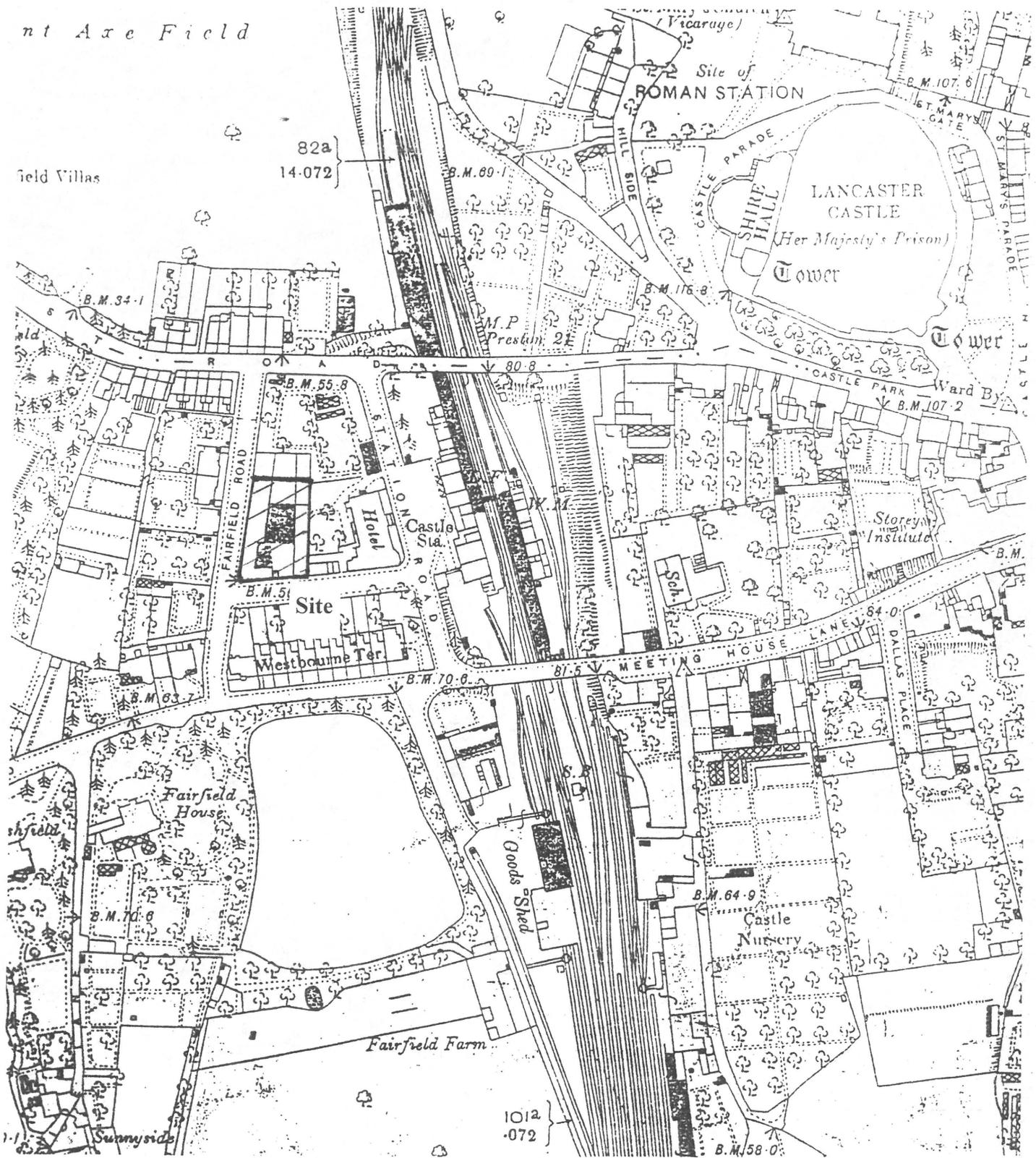


Fig 6: OS 1st edition 25" map, 1893

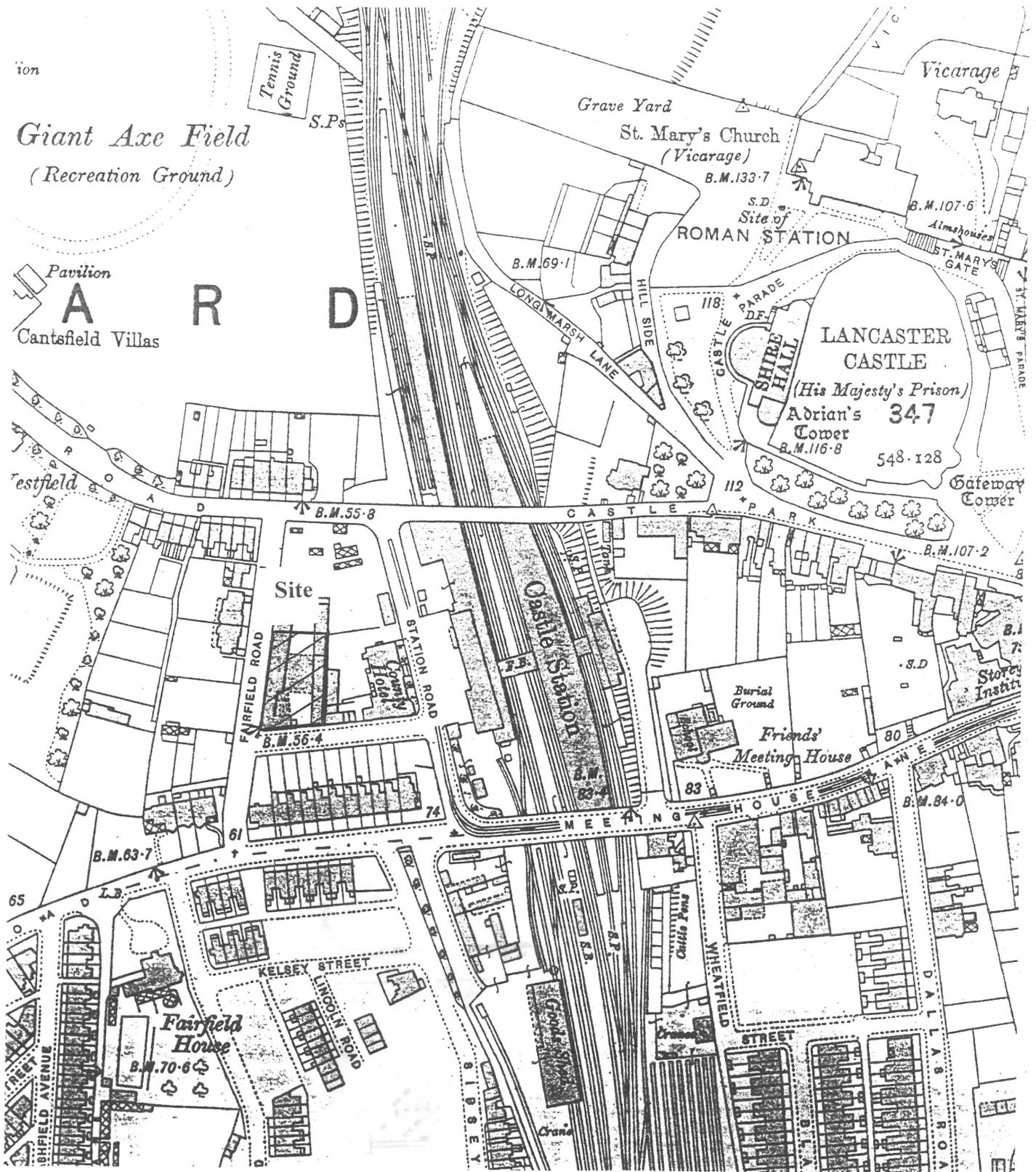


Fig 7: OS 25" map, 1913

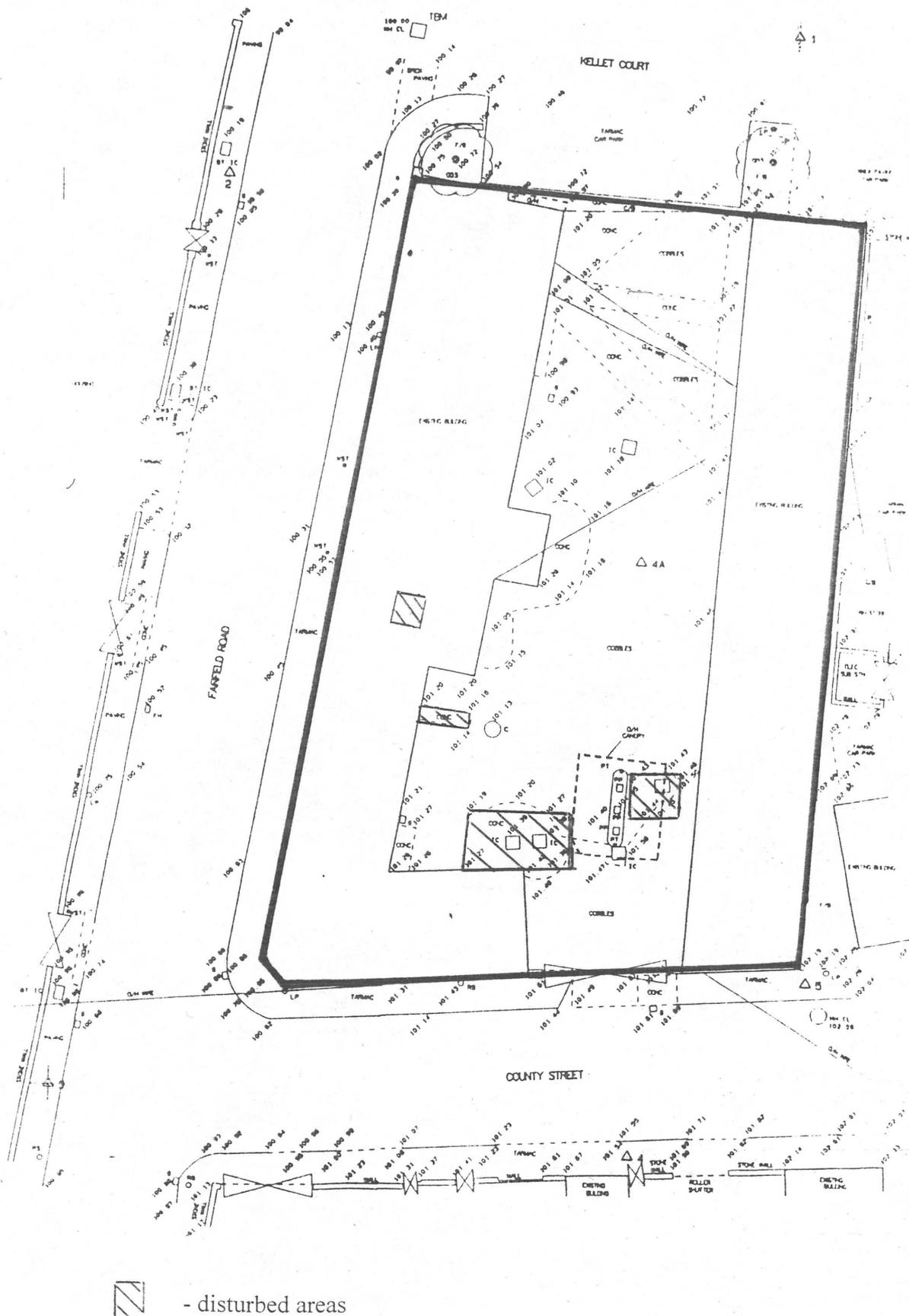


Fig 8: plan showing designated area in detail and showing areas of known disturbance (provided by Client)