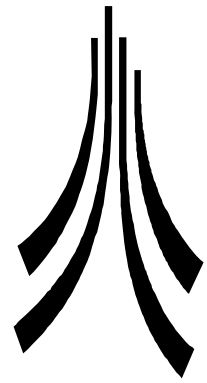


**LANCASTER**  
UNIVERSITY  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
UNIT



March 1996

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**BIRTLEY**  
**COUNTY DURHAM**

**Archaeological Assessment**

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commissioned and funded by:

**Turney-Wylde (Construction) Ltd**

Birtley Lane,  
Birtley  
Tyne and Wear

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Desk-based Assessment  
AWA 7545

Checked by Project Manager.	
...D. Cranstone.....	Date 6/3/96
Passed for submission to client.	
...R. N. ...	Date 7/3/96.

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March 1996

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*Appendix 1: Project Design*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks are due to the staff of the Literary and Philosophical Society Library (Newcastle upon Tyne), Tyne & Wear Archives, Gateshead Library, and Durham County Records Office, Northumberland County Records Office (Gosforth), and to Barbara Harbottle (Planning Archaeologist) for helpful information and advice during the SMR consultation.

Research and fieldwork was conducted by Iain Hedley who also compiled this report. Overall project management and editing was undertaken by David Cranstone.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, at the request of Turney-Wylde (Construction) Ltd, undertook an archaeological assessment of a site on the east side of Birtley Lane (NZ 2745 5545), Birtley, Tyne and Wear, in February 1996, prior to its proposed development.

The assessment comprised a search of existing archaeological records for the area, an appraisal of relevant published and manuscript documentation, and a field inspection of the land affected by the development. A report was compiled on the site which included recommendations for future strategies.

Dave's bit here.....

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) has conducted a desk-based assessment of the proposed development of a site on the east side of Birtley Lane, to a brief supplied by the County Archaeologist. A copy of the project design is appended.

The purpose of this assessment was to discover whether the site was built on at an earlier date, or if it was a late intake from the surrounding fields. In addition, the assessment investigated the likelihood of archaeological evidence for the early history of Birtley surviving in that area, and assessed the affects of terracing and levelling on potentially early deposits. The results of the assessment were then used to assess whether there was a requirement for intervention during the development of the site

The assessment consisted of a search of existing archives and historical records held by the Durham County Records Office, Northumberland County Records Office (Gosforth), Tyne and Wear Archives Service, and Gateshead Library. In addition, published historical sources were consulted in the library of the Literary and Philosophical Society (Newcastle upon Tyne). The Sites and Monuments Record was consulted and a visit made to the site of the proposed development.

Following the rapid documentary survey and field visit, a report was written in February 1996.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 Project brief

The work has been carried out in accordance with a brief supplied by the County Archaeologist. A project design was prepared by LUAU and is included in the present report (*Appendix*).

### 2.2 Documentary sources

The basis of the assessment are the archives held by Durham County Records Office, Tyne and Wear Archives Service, and Gateshead Library, together with maps ranging in date from the mid nineteenth century to the present day. In addition, published historical sources were consulted in the library of the Literary and Philosophical Society (Newcastle upon Tyne). The Carr-Ellison (Hedgeley MSS) deeds for Birtley, held at Northumberland County Records Office (Gosforth) were also consulted but were not found to relate to the study area.

Examination of other primary documentation is not considered appropriate to the scope of this assessment, and study in this area was limited to a rapid appraisal of the available sources potentially relevant to the evaluation of the study area. The sources used in this assessment are listed in the bibliography at the end of this report.

### 2.3 Field visit

The fieldwork was limited to a rapid inspection of the designated study area. The site is open and situated next to a public road, and no formal access arrangements were made by LUAU.

### 3. TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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#### 3.1 Geology and topography

The study area is situated on the east side of Birtley Lane (NZ 2745 5545) at the south east corner of Birtley, Tyne and Wear. The site is bounded on the north by modern housing, to the east by a Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Centre, to the south by school playing fields, and the modern Birtley Lane road to the west. The study area consists of an area of approximately 0.2 hectares and was formerly occupied by industrial buildings, traces of which survive in the west wall of the site and areas of concrete flooring.

The British Geological Survey indicates that glacial drift deposits form the natural subsoil within the study area, overlying deposits of Carboniferous Coal Measures.

#### 3.2 Historical context

Birtley - the name means 'bright clearing' from the OE *beorhtan leage* (Mawer 1920, 23) - is situated within the pre-1974 County of Durham and belonged to the Bishopric of Durham until the Dissolution when it became Crown land.

Within the vicinity of the study area there is evidence of prehistoric activity, though no settlement sites have so far been recorded. Stray finds discovered during the extraction of clay for the Birtley Brick and Tile Works in the 1930s include a bronze winged axe and a portion of a perforated stone hammer (Bosanquet (ed) 1939, 97), and a bronze flanged celt (Raistrick 1932, 212). In addition, the site lies to the east of the old Great North Road which is of Roman origin and linked the forts at Chester-le-Street and Newcastle.

Birtley also has an important industrial history based around the coal, iron, brick and salt industries, which were largely responsible for the growth of the town towards the end of the nineteenth century.



## 4. ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

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### 4.1 History of the study area

#### 4.1.1 *Early history*

Birtley is first mentioned in 1099 when Ranulph Flambard, Lord Bishop of Durham, gave the Manor of Birtley to his nephew William (Letch 1970, 7). It is again mentioned in the Boldon Buke, compiled by Hugh de Pudsey the Bishop of Durham in 1188 (Greenwell 1852, 67), and was included in the Lincoln Valuation of 1291 (Mackenzie and Ross 1834, 117). There are a number of references throughout the following centuries to Birtley and those who held land within the manor, notably Bishop Hatfield's survey of 1318-34 (Greenwell 1856, 107). The manor of Birtley remained in the possession of the Bishopric of Durham until it became vested in the Crown following the dissolution of the collegiate churches in the first year of Edward VI (Mackenzie and Ross 1834, 117).

#### 4.1.2 *The seventeenth century*

By 1645 the whole Estate had been sold by the Crown, with several Estates granted to Robert Catchside and William Carr including lands and tenements at Birtley (Letch 1970, 9). In 1692 Birtley Old Hall (demolished in 1961 after a fire) was built by John Emmerson 120m north of the study area.

#### 4.1.3 *The nineteenth century*

The date of construction for the New Hall is unclear though it has been credited to John Dobson circa 1843 (Williamson and Pevsner 1983, 44). However, it was clearly in existence by 1821 when it was depicted on a plan of Birtley Township as measured and valued in that year, though signed 1835 (DRO D/X 1103/27), and occupied in 1828 by a Mr Skipsey (Letch 1970, 38) and by Benjamin Thompson in 1834 (Mackenzie and Ross 1834, 144). The 1821 plan marks the study area as a small square featureless paddock in the north west corner of an enclosed field. The parcel of land is recorded as belonging to Mr Warwick of Birtley Hall which implies a revision of the ownership information by 1835.

The tithe map of 1843 shows the enclosed field to be featureless and it is not until the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1857 that the study area appears developed. This map shows a Lodge, possibly belonging to Birtley New Hall, in the north west corner of the enclosed field enclosed within a rectangular boundary, probably a garth or garden. By the Second (1898) Edition the Lodge had been destroyed and replaced by a rectangular building fronting onto Birtley Lane (the frontage may survive in the west wall of the study area).

#### **4.1.4 The twentieth century**

The Third (1919) and Fourth (1939) Edition maps show the rectangular building as a drill hall, presumably fulfilling some military training function during the Great War. The military connection continued throughout the century. A building in the south east (outside the proposed development) continues to be used as a Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Centre. Sometime after 1939 the yard area was extended with new buildings added to the south and east.

## **4.2 The Maps**

### **1821 Plan of Birtley Township (DRO D/X 1103/27)**

This was the earliest map uncovered during assessment. Although the map is signed by Ralph Coulthard in 1835, it is based on measurements and valuations recorded in 1821. The study area is marked by a small square paddock in the north west corner of an enclosed field. This parcel of land is recorded as belonging to Mr Warwick of Birtley Hall. No features are shown within the paddock. The paddock is bounded to the north by buildings and to the west by a road leading to Birtley Salt Works, the modern Birtley Lane.

### **1846 Tithe map and apportionment (DRO EP/CS 3/3)**

The 1846 tithe map was produced some 25 years after the measurement and evaluation of Coulthards map and differs greatly in style. (A sketch of the original is reproduced in the appendix). The paddock of 1835 is not shown and the study area appears featureless. The apportionment describes the land use as grass and Mr Warwick of Birtley Hall as the landowner. Some modification of the field may have taken place as the field measurement is slightly smaller than that stated on the earlier map.

### **1857 First Edition Ordnance Survey map (25 inch to the mile)**

By 1857 a rectangular building referred to as 'Lodge' occupied part of the study area together with an enclosure that presumably contained a garden. It is at this point that the village begins to show signs of expansion, including the building of the first church which was consecrated in 1849 (Fordyce 1857, 624).

### **1898 Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (25 inch to the mile)**

The lodge appears to have been demolished by 1898 and replaced by a long narrow rectangular building fronting directly onto Birtley Lane. The building may have survived as part of the works recently demolished on the site. The building lies within a paddock or yard which otherwise appears to be featureless. The remainder of the study area continued to be part of the large enclosed field. The

map also shows for the first time the development of industrial housing, with planned streets, within Birtley village itself.

#### **1919 Third Edition Ordnance Survey map (25 inch to the mile)**

The rectangular building continued to occupy the site in 1919 though the south and east sides remained undeveloped. The building is called Drill Hall and may have had a military use during the Great War.

#### **1939 Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey map (25 inch to the mile)**

By 1939 the building has been extended to the east though is still referred to as the Drill Hall. The New Hall has been demolished by this date and replaced by a Golf Club clubhouse.

### **4.3 Field visit**

A brief field inspection of the study area was undertaken. Concrete flooring covers most of the site though this is considered to be fairly shallow. This part of the site has clearly been terraced into the gentle natural slope, the Birtley Lane frontage being slightly made-up while much of the area has been cut into the natural slope. The terrace is bounded to the east by a steep scarp, beyond which the natural topography appears to be undisturbed.

## 5. DISCUSSION

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The origins of the manor of Birtley are at least as early as 1099 and possibly earlier. Despite the numerous references to the manor throughout the intervening centuries, no tangible evidence of the nature and extent of settlement at Birtley has been found prior to the early nineteenth century. However, nineteenth century maps indicate that the village formed a small and irregular settlement along the modern Birtley Lane and Fell Bank, Birtley Old Hall forming the only indication of an original nucleus. There is a surprising lack of early development along the Roman road line (the modern Durham Road). The village developed rapidly during the mid and later nineteenth centuries, due to industrialisation.

The study area lies immediately outside the area of settlement on the earlier nineteenth century maps, and there is no evidence for occupation before the building of the Lodge (between 1846 and 1857). There is no indication that the settlement had ever been more extensive (though the possibility cannot be positively excluded).

The site inspection indicates that field conditions are suitable for the preservation of any archaeological deposits along the east site of the study area, and perhaps along the Birtley Lane frontage (beneath later levelling-up).

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

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This desk-based assessment has been unable to demonstrate the presence of archaeological activity within the study area prior to the mid nineteenth century. There is also little positive evidence of significant archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity.

There are therefore no known archaeological grounds for objection to the proposed development, and it is not considered that a systematic programme of evaluation would be justified in view of the poor potential outlined in this assessment.

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### Maps

'Plan of Birtley Township: an account of property in Birtley Township having a right on Birtley Fell, as measured and valued in 1821', plan signed Ra. Coulthard, 1835 (DRO D/X 1103/27)

Tithe map and apportionment of Birtley, 1846 (DRO EP/CS 3/3)

Ordnance Survey First to Fourth Edition (25 inches to the mile)

## 8. ILLUSTRATIONS

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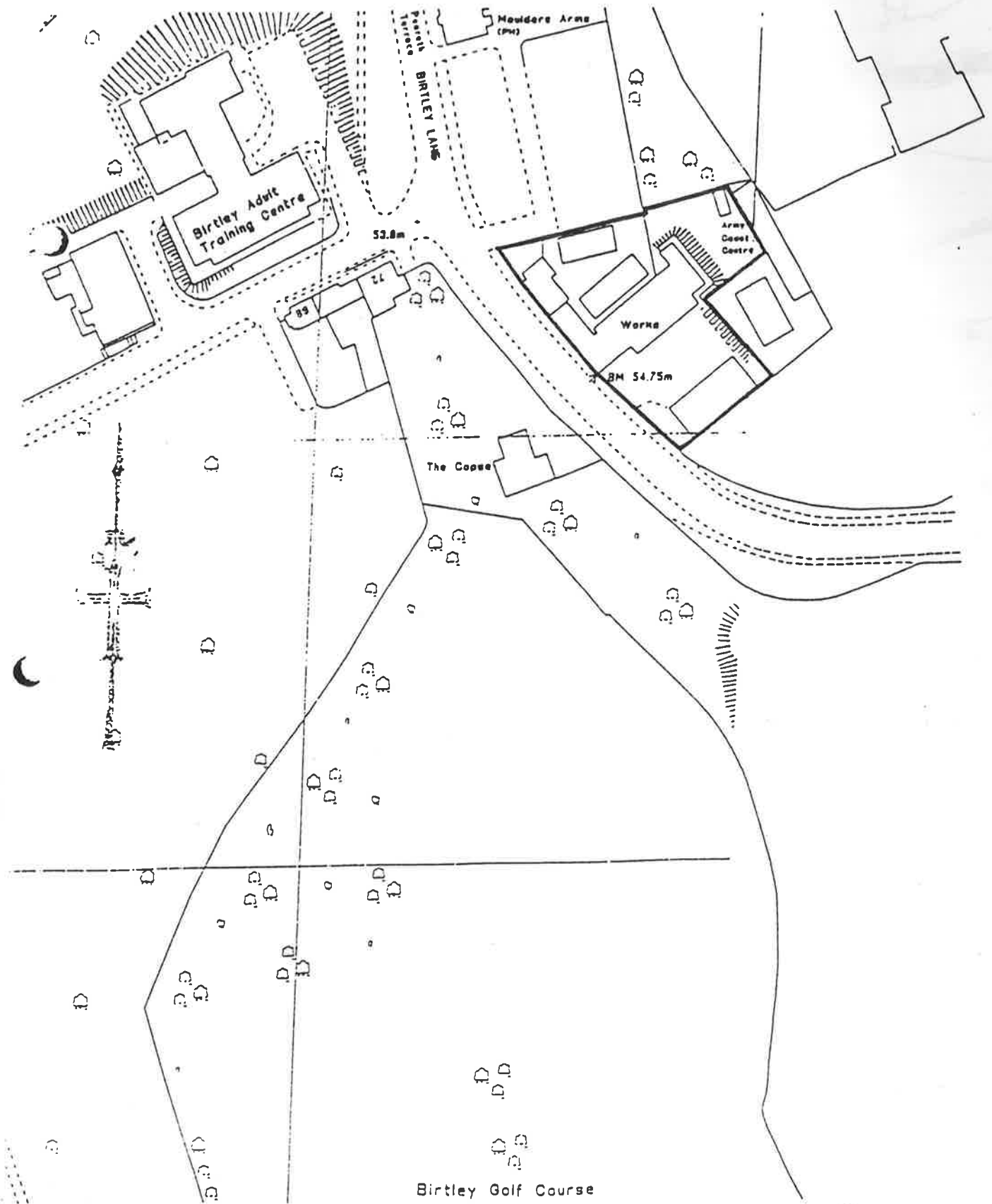


Fig 1 The Study Area



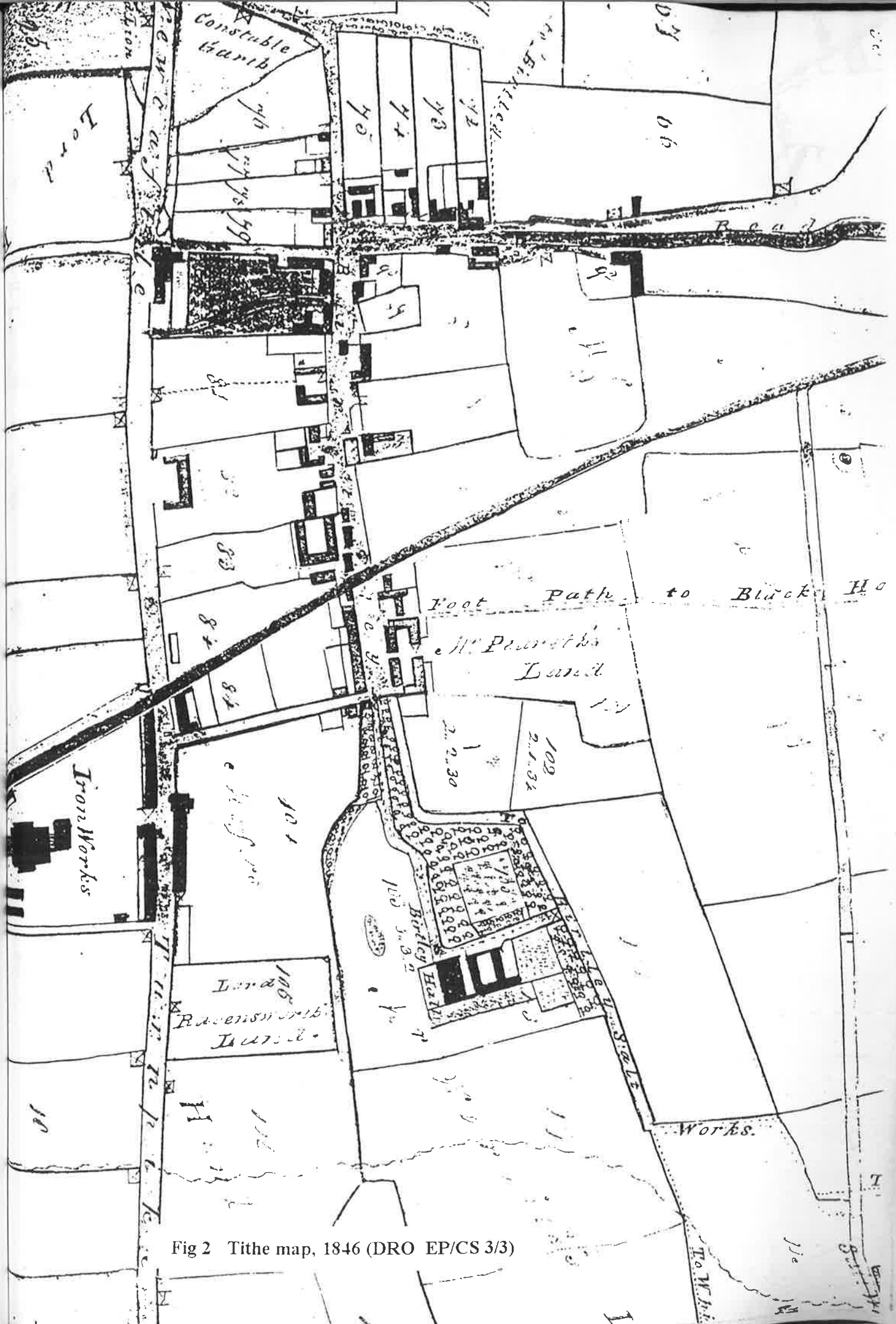


Fig 2 Tithe map, 1846 (DRO EP/CS 3/3)





Fig 4 Second Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1898 (25 inch to the mile)

So  
Brick & Tile Works



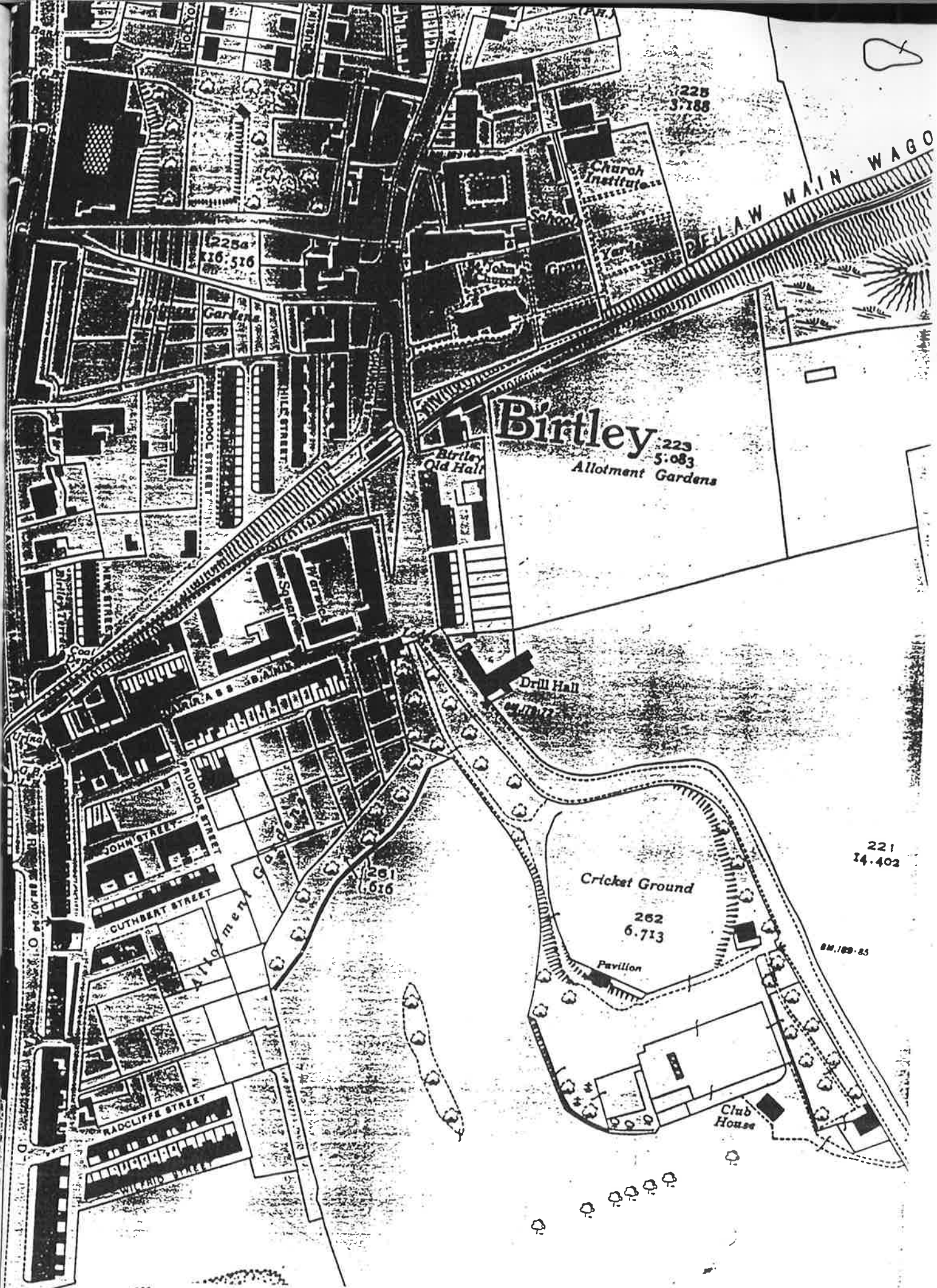


Fig 6 Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1939 (25 inch to the mile)

## APPENDIX 1 PROJECT DESIGN

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