

# CPR

CONSULTANTS



*Landscape Architecture ~ Landscape Planning ~ Landscape Assessment ~ Landscape Research*

**SITE : WOODFOLD PARK, MELLOR, NR. BLACKBURN.  
CLIENT : REILLY DEVELOPMENTS LTD.**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT RELATING TO LANDSCAPE ISSUES.**

**INTRODUCTION.**

This Introductory Statement outlines the recommended approach to dealing with all the landscape requirements of Woodfold Park. This information is necessary to satisfy two things, namely, the landscape conditions attached to the Planning Permission to develop the site also the landscape clauses of the draft 106 Agreement. The main headings of the landscape consultancy for the site are as follows.

- Historic landscape survey and assessment.
- The context of the historic landscape in relation to the development proposals.
- Comprehensive survey information relating to the existing landscape.
- Landscape assessment of the surveyed features.
- Landscape design as part of the development proposals, based on historical research.
- Landscape Management Plan for short, medium and long term management of the site.

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## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

The first stage of the preparation of the management plan and strategy involves the undertaking of a full historic landscape survey and assessment for Woodfold Park. This will focus in particular upon the area which is the subject of the present application, but it is impossible to understand the evolution of the present landscape unless the historic park in its entirety is given appropriate coverage. The current division of the park does not reflect the historic bounds, and most of the source material which will be used in the survey deals with the park as a whole. The survey and assessment will therefore take the wider perspective for the historical analysis while concentrating upon the application area for the fieldwork and present landscape assessment.

A basic introduction to the historical development of the Woodfold landscape was provided by the English Heritage description which accompanies its entry in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. As with all such reports, the EH description is necessarily a summary of the development, not a complete and detailed account, and it concentrates particularly upon describing the present state and the existing features of the park. The survey and assessment which is now to be carried out will build upon that introductory essay but will provide a more detailed and complete description of the processes of creation and change, using the documentary and printed sources held at Blackburn Central Library and the Lancashire Record Office, and the full range of Ordnance Survey maps and plans, as well as minor secondary references in published works. This will be integrated with analysis of the present landscape, showing how it has evolved and the historical provenance and significance of the key features of the present park. This element of the research is based in large measure on fieldwork investigation which both precedes and follows the documentary research, to ensure that the survival or otherwise of features mentioned or indicated in documents and maps is investigated, and that the features identified in field work are researched from archival sources.

The report will therefore provide a descriptive account of the landscape history of Woodfold Park, from the period before it was established as a park in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the present day. It will assess the present condition of the landscape in the context of its historic character and historical development, and provide a full background paper to support the proposals for landscape restoration and conservation.

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## **CONTEXT OF THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.**

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The historical research will form the basis for decision making for landscape matters. It will prioritise landscape elements in terms of historical importance so that the development proposals can take into account this important research. The new landscape design will reflect these findings as much as possible while taking into account the requirements of the new proposals. The historical research is likely to reveal characteristics about the site which will have a bearing on decision making in the landscape design process, e.g. areas of wet land, former footpath routes, significant feature trees, boundaries of garden features, different land uses.

## **COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY INFORMATION RELATING TO THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE.**

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A comprehensive land survey will be carried out indicating existing individual trees where appropriate, perimeters of groups of trees, walls, footpaths, roads and other garden or landscape features. Spot heights and/or contours will be indicated to understand the implications of the development proposals on the levels of the landscape.

## **LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF SURVEYED FEATURES.**

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The survey information will simply be a plotting exercise this section provides a qualitative assessment of the landscape elements. e.g. Arboricultural assessment of individual and groups of trees, based on BS. 5837. Condition and status of former and existing garden features e.g. footpaths, walls, railings, planted areas, important views or vistas, lawns or open areas. The relative importance of these features can then be taken into account in the landscape design process.

## **LANDSCAPE DESIGN.**

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All of the work instigated in the previous sections will form the basis of good landscape design to complement the building proposals, also the proposals relating to the open parkland landscape. The landscape design drawings will indicate the new layout with detailed schedules of new plantings and other features. Proposed levels will be indicated where required so that new features can relate to important existing fixed levels such as building floor levels and the base of significant existing trees to remain. The design work will also clarify any trees which may need to be felled or pruned. Important individual trees or groups of trees to remain will have exclusion zones to their maximum crown spreads so that development proposals do not threaten their health. The Client recognises the importance of successful landscape design and implementation to provide valuable settings to the new buildings.

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## **LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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The landscape design to the site will combine new and historic features which will require active management into the future. The Landscape Management Plan will be based around the following main headings.

- Management Objectives, divided into short, medium and long term objectives.
- Management Tasks and Schedules, designed to satisfy the objectives.
- Monitoring of objectives and schedules to take into account the changing dynamics of the landscape.

Landscape Management activities will be clearly stated according to the relevant schedule with a time frame included. This will need to be linked to the phasing of the building construction and the occupancy of the site.

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**THE LANDSCAPE  
HISTORY  
OF  
WOODFOLD PARK  
near BLACKBURN**

**CPR Consultants**

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**for Reilly Developments Limited**

**August 2002**

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## THE LANDSCAPE HISTORY OF WOODFOLD PARK

### 1. The background to the development of the estate

- 1.1 There is very little surviving documentary or archival evidence relating to the landscape of Woodfold Park before the late eighteenth century, and only a limited amount of information about the previous ownership of the estate, its component properties and its surroundings. This produces a major problem in terms of the longer perspective on the landscape, because it becomes much harder to identify the earlier components of, for example, field patterns and woodland distribution which were adapted by the designers of the park at the end of the eighteenth century.
- 1.2 There are also major difficulties in analysing the detailed development of the landscape during the nineteenth century, because the archives of successive owners of the estate have not survived or are untraceable. The Lancashire Record Office and Blackburn Central Library, for example, do not hold any archives for the Sudell family, builders and first owners of the Hall and park. That means that there are no contemporary designs, drawings or plans prepared in advance of laying-out the park and building the house. Neither are there account books, estate papers or other material which would shed light on the construction work itself. Blackburn Central Library holds the Thwaites archive, which was deposited in the 1980s by the Thwaites brewery company. This archive is clearly very incomplete. It includes a considerable number of account books recording rentals and other financial business of the Woodfold Estate Company, but the company's affairs were concerned largely with urban and industrial property in this part of Lancashire and elsewhere, rather than with the park (which, since it was not let or tenanted, raised no rent income).
- 1.3 The Thwaites collection does include a few maps of the estate, but these are of little help in determining the detail of the landscape or, more particularly, in dating changes which took place between 1828 and 1878 [when it was bought by Daniel Thwaites]. There are two late nineteenth century large scale plans

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(one undated, one of 1884) which give a generalised impression of the property, but they are less informative than the 1893 25-inch Ordnance Survey sheets. The records include a valuation of the estate in 1855 (not accompanied by a plan and giving little detail of relevance to landscape analysis) and a copy of the 1831 plan of the house which appeared in the printed sale catalogue of that year. As far as can be established, no other Thwaites archives of this period survive locally, and none can be located elsewhere, though it is possible that papers do exist in private hands.

- 1.4 Blackburn Central Library has two essential sources: the sale plan and catalogue of the Sudell estates which was prepared for the first sale of property in 1828, after the bankruptcy of the owner, Henry Sudell, and the 1831 sale plan and catalogue which covers the disposal by Sudell's daughters of the remainder of the estate. Together these two catalogues give a valuable picture of the estate a quarter of a century after its creation, with maps which are essential to an understanding the original layout. The absence of records from later in the nineteenth century, with the exception of the 1848 and 1893 OS maps, means that the dating of the post-sale changes is almost impossible. However, in retrospect it is indeed fortunate that the degree of change in the landscape of Woodfold was remarkably limited, so that the basic form and structure of the park remained unaltered for almost 150 years. This means that the absence of documentary sources is perhaps less serious than would have been the case if there had been a degree of frequent change.
- 1.5 There are also printed and published works produced by local historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A key problem here – not confined to this case – is that the later historians tended simply to reuse and lift wholesale the comments and interpretations of their predecessors. The result is that most of the evidence in twentieth century histories is derived from Abram's monumental history of Blackburn. Abram was a leading local historian and newspaper editor, and had a close personal knowledge of people such as Daniel Thwaites, so a high degree of reliability can be placed on his account.

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It is clear that almost every newspaper article on Woodfold<sup>1</sup> is based largely on Abram's material.

- 1.6 Nineteenth-century histories of Blackburn and the adjacent townships make the reasonable assumption that the original 'manor house' of the manor of Mellor was the substantial sixteenth-century property called Stanley House, situated approximately 1.5km ENE from the present Hall, on the summit of the low ridge behind the park and overlooking the valley of Arley Brook. This property derived its name from the Stanley family, recorded as owners of the estate in the reign of Henry VIII, and their successors. Although Stanley House was subsequently in the estate purchased by Henry Sudell and eventually owned by Daniel Thwaites, it is apparent that Woodfold Park was 'superimposed' on the existing landscape south of Stanley House and the two properties remained completely separate.
- 1.7 No surviving archive material is sufficiently detailed for any full assessment of the pre-1795 landscape to be possible. However, it is clear that at least some of the later Woodfold Park was within the estate usually known as Arley, centred on what is now Arley Farm and the property of the Aspden family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is some documentary evidence to trace the history of this estate back to the early medieval period. The *Victoria County History* recites an extract from the Towneley manuscripts<sup>2</sup> about a late thirteenth century grant of land referring to the area of *Ereley* bounded by *Elisburn* [the present Arley Brook] and also mentioning a 'long ridding'. *Ridding* is a dialect term which describes land cleared from woodland by 'ridding' (or uprooting) trees, and it is particularly associated with the period from about 1100 to 1350. The implication is that the Arley area (and hence Woodfold) was thickly wooded in the early medieval period and that during the thirteenth century clearance was taking place. This would be entirely characteristic of what is known of the landscape elsewhere in the Blackburn area in this period. Typically, woodland was cleared to make

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<sup>1</sup> Blackburn Central Library has a bound file of newspaper cuttings from the 1930s onwards  
<sup>2</sup> a collection of medieval deeds transcribed by Christopher Towneley and Richard Kuerden in the late seventeenth century, and now in Manchester Central Library

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pasture and a limited amount of arable, and was occupied by new farms established on the recently-created agricultural land.

- 1.8 The name **Woodfold** is much older than the present house and park. The 'fold' element derives from the Old English word *feld*, and in this context means 'open land'. This name therefore means 'an area of cleared ground within a substantial woodland', which accords well with the suggestion that woodland clearance was in progress here in the early middle ages, since the name Woodfold is certain to be post-Conquest in date. Further evidence of such clearance is given in a court record of 1284, in which members of the Shorrocks family of Shorrocks Green [see below, 1.11] were alleged to have felled over 300 oak trees in their wood, which must have covered the area of the present Woodfold Park.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.9 The earlier histories are unanimously of the opinion that there was no previous house on the site and that when he built Woodfold Hall Henry Sudell had chosen 'virgin land'. The suggestion is reinforced by the specific evidence of William Yates's one-inch to one-mile survey of Lancashire, published in 1786. The map is particularly helpful because it just predates the development of the park and so gives us a view, although its small scale means that it lacks the detail of the earlier landscape which we would ideally require. It confirms that although the area was given over to farmland (and several farms are identifiable within or very close to the later park) there was no house on the site of Woodfold Hall itself. On the north side of Arley Brook the map marks existing properties at Green Hurst, Shorrocks Green and Stanley House, while south of the brook were Shorrocks Hey, Arley Oak, and Wood Fold.
- 1.10 The old farm known as **Greenhurst** stood at GR 634289, on the western edge of the present park. It was shown on the 1848 OS 6-inch map, but had been demolished by 1893 when the 25-inch map was surveyed and its eastern fields had been incorporated within the grasslands of Woodfold Park. It is shown,

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<sup>3</sup> This case is noted in the *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, vol.vi, p.262 n.18

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but not named, on the 1828 sale plan for part of the Woodfold estate, but is not marked on the 1831 plan since it lay beyond the lots which were being sold.

1.11 **Shorrock[s] Green** was the name of a small hamlet which occupied the area between what is now Woodfold Park Farm and the entrance gate onto Further Lane. The evidence of the 1786 map indicates that it was not a nucleated settlement and it appears to have consisted of four or five small farms and attendant cottages. The most important of these properties was the farm which was held originally by the Shorrock family and which is recorded as early as the fourteenth century. From the late seventeenth century the property was held by the Clayton family of Blackburn. The 1848 6-inch map shows the name Shorrock Green, but applies it to the properties where Huntsman's Cottages now stand. By that date the new model farm at Woodfold Park Farm, which included the stables and carriage houses for the Hall, had replaced the other area of cottages previously included within Shorrocks Green.

1.12 In 1786 the name **Wood Fold** was applied to the farm which is now *Old Woodfold*, on the south side of the valley, and this is clearly where the origin of the name of the estate and house. As noted above, this is an old name, probably dating back to the early medieval period. When Henry Sudell acquired these properties in the mid-1790s and was looking for a title for his new estate, this name must have seemed attractive and suitably gracious. The entire area of [Old] Wood Fold Farm was purchased and so it was acceptable to give its name to the whole of the property.

## 2. Henry Sudell and his successors at Woodfold Park

2.1 Henry Sudell, the creator of the park and builder of the house, was a man of major importance in Blackburn. Setting himself up in great style and splendour in a large country estate was for this ambitious and somewhat flamboyant figure a demonstration to the wider world (as well as to his neighbours) of his significance and status. Sudell's career is reasonably well-documented in published sources, because his great initial success and immense wealth was followed by a spectacular and notorious bankruptcy. He

was born posthumously in 1764 at Sudell House in Blackburn, the son of a prominent family which had fulfilled a leading role in the town for several generations. In 1785 he attained his majority and, by what was from his point of view a happy chance, the death of his two uncles very soon afterwards meant that he came into a large inheritance. This he augmented firstly by zealous attention to his business activities, developing a key role as a leading cotton entrepreneur and financial manipulator in the first phase of Blackburn's growth as a centre of the textile trade; and secondly, by a judicious marriage to Maria Livesey in 1796.

- 2.2 In 1796, to mark that important step in his life, he purchased a large area of land on either side of the Arley Brook, together with the lordship of the manor of Mellor, from the heirs of William Higginbotham and Edward Bolton.<sup>4</sup> Sudell immediately drew up plans for the creation of a splendid new mansion house and a large landscaped park. The architect was said to be James Wyatt, though this is open to question, but the designer of the landscaped park is not known.
- 2.3 Work on the construction of the new house started at the beginning of 1797. The tender for the main construction work had been advertised locally in October 1796 and contracts were let in late November.<sup>5</sup> The house was probably completed in the second half of 1798, at the same time as work on the creation of a very extensive landscaped park was well under way. Contemporary writers usually give 1798 as the date of building, implying that this was when work was finished and the house ready for occupation. This is not the place to give an architectural assessment of the house, except to note that it was decorated internally to an exceptionally high standard, and that this mansion was genuinely impressive – it was without question one of the finest late eighteenth century houses in north-west England.

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<sup>4</sup> The manor of Mellor had passed through a succession of hands in the second half of the eighteenth century, and its sale was allegedly forced by the impoverishment of the families with a legal interest in the property and title.

<sup>5</sup> The tender notice, originally in the *Blackburn Mail*, is printed in G.C. Miller, *Blackburn: the evolution of a cotton town* (Blackburn Corporation, 1951) p.366-367

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2.4 By 1800 the entire project had been completed, the house was occupied and the park had been established in its full splendour, extending up the slopes on both sides of the valley of Arley Brook. The site was perfect in terms of the requirement of landscaping and aesthetic principles. It had a strong natural topography, which gave vistas and perspectives. It had slopes, woodland and water, it faced south and the gentle curve of the valley of Arley Brook produced the ideal form for parkland. It also had the benefit of a sharply-defined ridge in front and behind so that the views in the two key directions – from the house and of the house – were crisply-framed. The other great virtue of the site was its location, only four miles from the town of Blackburn which was thus very accessible. Like most wealthy Lancashire merchants of this period, Sudell wanted to live close to work. The poor reputation of Lancashire itself, associated with grime and pollution, was a couple of generations in the future. So Woodfold, close to Blackburn yet in the depths of the country, was a choice location. Contemporaries recalled how Sudell lived in ‘almost regal state’ and would drive into town, via Billinge Scar, in a magnificent coach drawn by four horses and attended by liveried servants.

2.5 Towards his employees Sudell was a famously generous man by the standards of the time, distributing seasonal largesse at Christmas and reputedly being the last to lower wages and the first to rise them again at times of crisis or depression. This somewhat casual attitude to money, attractive though it seems to us, was perhaps in part responsible for his nemesis. The massive expenditure on Woodfold may also have led in the long run to financial difficulties. Sudell invested abroad, very unwisely, and in 1826, when the Lancashire cotton trade went through the first of its great nineteenth-century financial and commercial crises, his fortunes turned catastrophically sour. In July 1827 he was declared bankrupt with debts of £134,000 and assets of only £60,000, and later that year began the moves to sell a substantial part of his property. The humiliation was such that he left Blackburn at night, went to live in Bath, and as far as is known never visited his home town again: he died in Bath at the age of 92 in 1856.

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- 2.6 In 1828 the first part of the property was sold, comprising the land south of Arley Brook and the southern half of the park which lay in the township of Samlesbury. This land was bought by Sudell in the mid-1790s but he had no other legal interest except as owner. In the remainder of the estate, however (that part in Mellor township), he was also lord of the manor. That half was reserved from the 1828 sale on the grounds that it had been legally settled on his daughters. However, the family clearly preferred to liquidate all its assets in Blackburn, and in 1831 the daughters, via local agents, completed the sale, ending the involvement of the Sudells with the Woodfold property. The property sales of 1828 and 1831 are, from the historian's point of view, of great value because the two sale plans and catalogues give us our first detailed description of the house and park.
- 2.7 The purchaser in both cases was another local man, John Fowden Hindle, but he died in 1832, shortly after the second sale. The estate then passed intact to his son, another John Fowden Hindle, who lived at Woodfold until his death in 1849. John Fowden Hindle II was a prominent local businessman and textile merchant, and in 1844 served as High Sheriff of Lancashire: Woodfold, with its status and architectural magnificence, was a worthy home for a man so prominent in county society and the financial affairs of the region's leading industry. On his death the whole property was inherited by his brother, William Hindle, who died in 1853. It then passed jointly inherited to his two daughters, one of whom, Mary Jane, wife of George Frederick Gregory, was the sister-in-law of Daniel Thwaites, the wealthy brewer of Blackburn. The Gregorys did not live at Woodfold, which instead was let out to a series of tenants during the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. However, Mary Jane Gregory is said eventually to have persuaded her brother in law to buy the estate, to sort out what is tactfully referred to as 'a family difficulty', and in 1878 the purchase of 836 acres was completed.
- 2.8 Daniel Thwaites was born in 1817 at the family's small brewery in Eanam, Blackburn. He built the business up, so that by the 1860s it had become the most important industrial concern in the area apart from the cotton mills, and was now one of Lancashire's leading breweries. Thwaites was the leading

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citizen of the town, active and influential in the politics of the new borough council and serving as MP for Blackburn in 1875-1880. He, too, wanted to establish himself as a country gentleman and, unlike Sudell, could take advantage of a ready-made estate and a large and impressive country house on the doorstep: although Blackburn was expanding rapidly the Woodfold estate was far enough from the centre to be unaffected by industrial pollution or the visual intrusion of mills and chimneys, while the Woodfold estate and other large suburban or edge of town houses and grounds ensured that this north-west sector was to remain relatively inviolate. It was then, as it still is, the most prosperous, exclusive and 'protected' part of greater Blackburn. Thwaites was a great improver in the tradition of enlightened landowners, investing heavily in rebuilding farms and cottages, undertaking tree-planting, hedge-planting, road building and drainage throughout his estate, and adopting a paternal and benevolent attitude to his tenants which was often noted by contemporaries.

- 2.9 He rarely lived at Woodfold, however, since he and his wife decided to hold the estate almost 'in trust' for their only child. Daniel Thwaites died in 1878, and the Woodfold estate, together with the many other properties which he had owned in Mellor, Samlesbury, Blackburn and Darwen, and the lordship of the manor of Mellor, passed to his young daughter, Elma Amy Thwaites. In 1888 she married Robert Armstrong Yerburch, MP for Chester, and Mrs Yerburch, a well-known local figure, remained as lady of the manor and chatelaine of Woodfold until 1939. When the Second World War broke out she left Woodfold, to live in the family's other house near Castle Douglas in Galloway, and never returned - she died in 1946. The Woodfold estate was inherited jointly by her surviving son, Robert, who had been raised to the peerage as Lord Alvingham, and his two nephews, sons of his deceased brother Guy. During the war the house had been kept in running order, housing evacuees among other uses, but none of the family wanted to live there again - it was regarded as very antiquated and there were problems such as inadequate water supplies and no electricity - and so in 1947 it was offered for sale. There were no purchasers, and in 1949 the contents were removed, the saleable assets stripped, and the shell left to deteriorate.

- 2.10 The park, which had long been neglected, was already in relatively poor condition. After 1949 the land on the south side of the brook continued – as it had been throughout the previous century and a half - in full agricultural use as part of the tenanted Old Woodfold Farm. However, that on the north side – the former open parkland adjacent to the house – experienced continued decline. This had always been a grazed park, with most of the grassland under non-intensive agricultural use, but the upkeep of the fencing and walls and, in particular, the maintenance of the woodland including the pleasure grounds north of the house, was of necessity a key element of estate management.
- 2.11 After 1949 very little maintenance was undertaken. The grassland was let out to neighbouring farmers and grazed, thus some of the fencing was kept in repaired, but the woodland became completely overgrown and no maintenance of any sort was undertaken. The pleasure grounds and walks began to disappear in the undergrowth; the perimeter railings, already damaged by the removal of some for wartime salvage, started to disintegrate; the buildings on the estate, such as the orangery and the hothouse conservatory in the kitchen garden, became ruinous; and in the park the fine trees lay where they fell in gales or as they died of old age. The field drains were no longer kept in repair, so that in parts of the park the grassland became increasingly wet (probably reverting to its original condition) and this problem was greatly exacerbated in the late 1960s when a new gas pipeline was laid across the park, severing many of the field drains which led to large-scale waterlogging in the area west of the house.
- 2.12 The house itself was derelict and roofless by the early 1960s, at which point articles began to appear in the local press lamenting its fate, while the owner, Lord Alvingham, and his agents, started to propose schemes for new uses for the land and house. Restoration as a hotel was a recurrent favourite, while the conversion of the park to a golf course was also raised on a number of occasions. The abandoned house and the orangery had both been designated as Grade II listed buildings by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in August 1952, while in 1995 the park was included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens as a Grade II site. The fate of both the house

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and the landscape was therefore increasingly seen as a matter of heritage and conservation importance, as well as a planning issue. It is in this context that the present report on the development of the historic landscape has been prepared as a prelude to the forthcoming restoration of the house and other historic structures and the reuse of the park.

### 3. The park and its plan

3.1 As already noted, there was no house on the site of Woodfold Hall. Henry Sudell purchased several hundred acres of farmland, mainly given over to pasture though with a limited amount of arable. There were also patches of woodland, their precise boundaries now unknown. The implication of the early nineteenth century descriptions is that there was a significant survival of older woodland in the valley of Arley Brook. Given the very steep slopes, particularly south of the ornamental bridge, and the deeply-incised nature of the lower section of the valley between the bridge and Alum Scar, this is very probable, for this stretch can never have been used for agriculture and in such circumstances woodland survival is characteristic. The conversion of pasture and meadow to grassed parkland was a relatively easy process, while the topography of the area (with prominent ridges to the north and south offering long views down to a deep valley) gave a strong underlying basis for the new landscape. Nonetheless, a substantial amount of civil engineering work was undertaken in order to reshape the landscape in certain key areas.

3.2 Woodfold Hall was described in 1807 as 'a very magnificent house [which has] lately been erected, of bluish-grey stone, having in the centre a flight of steps with a portico supported by four massy columns of the Corinthian order'. The front elevation is the feature which always attracted enthusiastic comment and today, now that the rear of the building has been demolished, it remains its outstanding feature. A description written in 1825 refers to 'a handsome modern structure, built of freestone, and adorned with a portico in front, supported by four lofty columns of the Corinthian order, the base of which rest on the highest stone step of a flight which leads to the entrance'. The house was precisely positioned to take the fullest advantage of the magnificent

design for the front elevation. It faces south, with a view extending across the valley towards Billinge Scar and also along the valley to the north-east and south. The house also lies on a slight forward projection of the ridge, which makes a low natural platform slightly raised above the surrounding parkland but also clear of the woodland behind, so that the façade pushes forward into the park and its prominence is emphasised. The views of the house, from the valley, the park and the opposite slope, are the basis of the landscaping and the design of the park was very carefully structured to avoid detracting from that dramatic and stark architectural centrepiece.

3.3 The earliest plan which survives dates from 1828, but the engraving of Woodfold which appears in Corry's *History of Lancashire* (1825) is probably the earliest visual representation. It draws attention to the prominent front of the building and indicates that the basic form of the park which survives (albeit in battered condition) today – grassland, edged by woodland and dotted with carefully-placed individual trees, and with a lake in the foreground [now largely invisible in the woodland] – is identical with that of the original design. In other words, although the park has changed in detail there is a remarkable degree of similarity between the view of 1825, the plans of 1828 and 1831, and the present landscape. The design was extremely simple yet sophisticated: a great house, set against a backdrop of woodland on a steep slope, forming the dominant element in a massive sweep of grassland dotted with fine individual trees.

3.4 This design was created from scratch in 1797-1799. Contemporary writers referred to making of the park as enclosure, but this does not imply 'enclosure' in the usual sense.<sup>6</sup> Instead, it means that the grounds were encircled (and thus enclosed) by a new stone wall, which was said to be four miles in circumference and nine feet high. A more accurate term is employed by the *Victoria County History*, which notes that the land was 'imparked',<sup>7</sup> and that is the word which is usually employed today.

<sup>6</sup> That is, enclosed by the subdivision of waste ground or common fields – this was already enclosed land in that sense of the word.

<sup>7</sup> That is, created as a park by change from previous land uses

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3.5 The main road which is now the A677, Preston New Road, was not constructed until 1825. Until that time a network of country lanes gave access to this part of Mellor, and to the town of Blackburn. In the middle of the eighteenth century the road which is now Further Lane ran from Nabs Head, via the hamlet of Shorrocks Green, to Arley and on into Blackburn via Beardwood and Dukes Brow. It crossed the area of the later Woodfold Park in an indirect alignment which ran along the top of the slope behind Woodfold Hall – where its course is marked by the private lane running westwards from Woodfold Park Farm – then towards the Deer House, where it is still clear, and on to the site of the lodges at GR644296. before passing Arley Farm and heading for Beardwood.

3.6 The lane was inconveniently close to the site of the proposed house, and Sudell clearly did not want any public access across the estates which he had acquired. This public road was therefore diverted when emparking took place, in a classic example of the reshaping of the older landscape to accord with the aesthetic and social aspirations of the ambitious landowner. The new course took it from Raven's Wing in a long gentle curve, the present alignment of Further Lane, past the main northern entrance to the estate, and then alongside Lodge Wood. The new alignment is very clearly indicated on the 1831 sale plan and is prominent on the 1848 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map: on the former it is shown cutting through the pattern of earlier enclosed fields. The old lane was partly abandoned and incorporated within the grassland of the park, and partly downgraded to a private track. The section north of the house has been noted: east of Woodfold Park Farm it runs east from Woodfold Park Farm, first between walls and then as an open grassed track, past Deer House and into the small steep sided valley at its eastern end, before curving to join the later eastern drive to the house. I have not been able to trace a road order, confirming this rerouting, among the quarter sessions records.

3.7 The majority of the farmland on the north side of the valley was readily converted into open grassland. Any existing boundaries were removed to ensure an uninterrupted sweep extending for almost a mile, with the house and its fine portico as the centrepiece. Although no map survives to show the

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previous field pattern of this area, there are traces of tree alignments on the 1828 and 1831 sale plans and the 1848 and 1893 Ordnance Survey maps which indicate some at least of the boundaries. We also have a list of all the fields in the southern part of the park, as set out in the 1828 sale particulars:

**Parcel 99** [at the southern tip of the park] *had previously comprised* 'The Wood Fields, Higher Fields, Meadow, Orchards and Crofts, or parts of the same, now laid together and forming one Close of Arable Land' totalling just under 11 statute acres

**Parcel 102** [the land due south of the Hall including the two ponds on the top of the low ridge opposite the house] *had previously comprised* 'The Oller Carr, Two Bank Fields, Old Field, Higher and Lower Calf House, Meadow, Backside Meadow, the Well Field, and Eccles Field, or parts of them, now forming one Close of Pasture Land' totalling 20 acres

**Parcel 104** [on the edge of the present park south-west of the Hall] *had previously comprised* Barn Field, Croft, Backside Meadow, Marl Field, Two Acre, Long Field, Nab meadow, or parts of them now occupied as grass land' and totalling 10 statute acres

3.8 The name 'Oller Carr' is significant in landscape terms, since 'carr' is the dialect term for *overgrown wet ground*, and 'oller' is *alder*. The present condition of this part of the park suggests strongly that the ancient alder carr lay in the wet ground south-west of the hall, where a waterlogged and rush-grown shallow basin is still apparent. The particulars of these three parcels, with their previous subdivision into many small fields (in only 41 acres there were all or part of at least 22 previous fields) means that a highly fragmented and probably irregular field pattern, typical of medieval and early modern piecemeal private enclosure from waste or woodland, can be postulated with confidence.

3.9 In the valley itself plantation woodlands were created, probably extending and augmenting existing semi-natural woodland along the streamside and on the

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steepest slopes. Plantation woodlands were also established along the perimeter of the park, to provide a shelter belt and screen: these are very clear on the 1828 sale plan at the western side of the park, and on the 1831 plan at the eastern end adjacent to the lodges. The 1828 plan emphasises that the ornamental bridge which linked the north and south sides of the valley also represented a visual break: on the upstream side were plantation woodlands, but on the downstream side the map symbolises the much steeper and less accessible section of the valley, where planting was thicker.

- 3.10 In creating water features, so typical of landscaping schemes in the second half of the eighteenth century) the unknown designer was able to exploit the natural opportunities presented by Arley Brook. This was dammed and a continuous chain of three long lakes was created. These occupied almost all the valley floor for a distance of a mile, although the topography meant that the three lakes were very narrow. The ornamental bridge already mentioned crossed the brook at the head of the lowest lake, while further downstream were cascades and ornamental rock features to embellish the steep-sided valley. It was always intended that the two upper lakes would be visible from the park and house, so that no planting of trees took place on the north side of the valley above the bridge. These lakes are now almost entirely silted up, while the bridge and other stonework have suffered considerable damage and neglect over many years and are in poor condition.
- 3.11 On the south side of the valley the majority of the slope was retained as farmland, although it is reasonable to suppose that its general character was enhanced considerably by replanting of hedges, modest regularising of the field pattern, and the reconstruction of farm buildings. The key landscape feature on this side was, however, the construction of two ponds (now known as Jeffery Pond and White House Pond) which, somewhat daringly, did not occupy a stream valley but were constructed as 'perched ponds' on the edge of the slope above the valley of Arley Brook, retained by substantial earth embankments and winding along the contour. The lakes are at 120 metres OD, while the house is at approximately 125 metres OD on the other side of the valley: the slight difference is carefully chosen to ensure that when the park

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was laid out it was possible to look across the valley from the house and see a sheet of water at almost the same level. Equally, from the middle slope opposite the observer would look over a sheet of water and across a largely invisible valley, concealed behind the artificial lake and embankment, so that there would be an illusion that the house stood just above the lake surface. This is illustrated by an 1838 engraving which reveals the skilful visual trick of the designer.

- 3.12 The other key element in the overall design was the treatment of the areas near to, and behind, the great new house. The first message conveyed by the design, one still instantly recognisable today, is that there should be an absolute minimum of 'designed' landscape on the west, south and east sides of the house, to ensure that its dramatic and bold form remained undiminished. Thus, no planting of trees, no ornamental gardens, no other buildings, no complex patterns of paths and steps, would be permitted. It is remarkable that this forceful aspect of the design was virtually unmodified throughout the life of the house – the photographs of the 1920s and 1930s, its last period of splendour, emphasise that the view of the façade was as bare and 'minimalist' as it had been over a century earlier.
- 3.13 The decision to make this the basis of the overall design therefore required that any ornamental elements, together with outbuildings, service areas and other potentially intrusive features, would have to be very carefully placed and preferably concealed to avoid damaging the clarity of the view of the house in its immediate parkland setting. As a result, the 'footprint' of the Hall and outbuildings was exceptionally compact. The plan main building comprised a double square, the front one being centred on a stairwell and hall, the rear one designed around an open unroofed courtyard. The latter included not only the domestic offices, such as buttery, kitchen, scullery and servants' hall, but also 'processing' places such as the dairy and the brewhouse. Behind the rear courtyard block was a small semi-enclosed yard and circulating area, with a short range of outbuildings (including a laundry and kennel yard) on the opposite side, built into the slope of the hill – partly, no doubt, because the space was limited, but partly because this meant a greater degree of

concealment. As a result of this lack of space, and to avoid visual intrusion, the coach house, stables and other larger offices were built well away from the house, at the top of the slope and outside the main park at Woodfold Park Farm. The design was ingenious and sophisticated: crucially, the architecture and plan of the house, and the design of the park and grounds were conceived as one.

3.14 The 1828 sale plan is not sufficiently precise to allow the fine detail of the landscape to be assessed with confidence, but that of 1831 is of special value in giving details of the ornamental grounds. The land behind the house had been formed into a plantation woodland, distinguished by a wide variety of trees and shrubs (including horse chestnut, oak, beech, European lime, ash and holly), and through this woodland was woven a network of narrow curving pathways or walks. The woodland itself was carefully laid out with specimen trees in key locations, intended to provide a focus for visual interest, associated with lower planting of holly, hawthorn and yew (to which rhododendrons, now a dominating element in the lower planting, were added subsequently). The whole formed what was described as the 'pleasure ground', as noted in the 1831 sale catalogue: 'The Land immediately behind, and to the north-west of the Mansion-house has been laid out with great taste as a flower-garden and pleasure-ground, with warm and retired walks, sheltered by well-grown plantations and evergreen shrubberies'.<sup>8</sup> The location of the flower garden is uncertain, since the maps do not differentiate the uses within the pleasure-ground and the state of the woodland area now is so poor that no trace apparently remains. It may be, though, that the extensive drifts of naturalised daffodils within the central part of the woodland have their origins in bulb-planting undertaken as part of the early nineteenth century landscaping.

3.15 However, what is now called the Orangery, and was then known as the 'Green-House', was definitely in existence. It is referred to as a separate feature in the text of the sale catalogue and is shown on the 1831 map as a

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<sup>8</sup> 1831 Sale Catalogue [Blackburn Library]

rectangular building with a slight projection on its southern side, and with a smaller square building just beyond its northern corner. The 1828 plan, although on a much smaller scale and less detailed, also shows it as a rectangular structure. In 1848 the OS 6-inch map, labelling it as 'Hot House', shows a rectangular building with southern projection. This very fine building, listed as Grade II, was – according to the architectural description – built in the early nineteenth century. Its position is important, for although it now within the woodland, all the earlier maps emphasise that when built it was on the edge, set back from the park but behind an apron of lawn. The orangery therefore looked out across the park and the valley of Arley Brook and (no less important) it was prominent in views from the southern half of the park.

3.16 The 1831 map hints at the existence of the large deep depression which lies just west of the Orangery, and the 1848 map confirms its existence (the contour line is sharply indented into the hillside at this point). In 1848 this seems to have been treated as an extension of the open lawned area in front of the Orangery: that was certainly the case in 1893, when the 25-inch map shows a clearing here. The map of 1928, which shows a pathway circling the base of the depression, makes its use as a garden feature quite certain. The depression is clearly an artificial feature and, though now partly-overgrown and with wooded sides, has the appearance of a former quarry (or *delph* to use the local term). There is good reason to suppose that this was its origin, for the 1796 contract for the construction of the house stated that 'The Ashlar-stones and those for hewing are proposed to be got in a delf now open at Abbot-brow, near Abbot-house, within Mellor, but the inferior stones will be met with very near the intended situation of the house', and it is virtually certain that this depression is the excavation for the 'inferior stones' of 1797-1798. There is no reason to doubt that it was subsequently given a basic landscaping treatment and became a 'sunken garden' which formed part of the pleasure grounds, edged by ornamental woodland and linked with the rest by paths.

3.17 Other building materials may also have been won from the park itself. The long sweep of the grassland is interrupted by several roughly circular depressions and other excavations. There are also some ponds, one of which,



due south of the house on the crest of the next low ridge, is surrounded by large trees and is still water-filled. Others are now dry hollows and areas of wet ground. The origins of these ponds and other depressions is not certain, though it is certain that the larger ponds predate the creation of the park (the two south of the house are shown on the 1828 plan, but their form suggests much older field ponds or possibly marl pits). Such ponds are very characteristic features of the rural landscape in the area – on the south side of the valley almost every field has one. However, the more irregular depressions such as those due east of the house and between the house and the ponds may possibly be the result of excavation for building materials, as the 1893 25-inch map labels the latter as 'old clay pit'.

- 3.18 It is immediately apparent from the 1828 and 1831 sale plans that the western part of the site did not include the walled kitchen garden which is now its most important – though totally derelict – feature. The site of the kitchen garden was not wooded, and is shown on this map and – though in less detail – that of 1828 as a deep 'bay' of open ground edged on three sides by the plantation woods. The 1825 engraving of the Hall and park also shows this feature very clearly, with a continuous grassed slope extending down from the wooded ridge-top. The 1831 map makes a distinction between the estate –type planting on the northern side of the future kitchen garden and the ornamental planting on the north-east and southern sides, a distinction which is still detectable today.
- 3.19 On the Arley Brook a small watermill was situated near the southern tip of the park, on land now in other ownership and not part of the present development project. On the 1828 plan and in the accompanying sale particulars it is named as Maudlumm Mill and described as a 'bone mill'. It was associated with a 'fish lock', or fish-weir on the brook. The particulars note that 'the rapid flow of the Brook is interrupted, at intervals, by natural, as well as artificial obstructions, producing picturesque Waterfalls, capable, from the quick descent of the Stream, of considerable enlargement. Maudlumm Mill, an antient [*sic*] structure applicable to many useful agricultural, and other purposes, is worked by this Stream ... The wheel belonging to the Mill is in

good working order, and nearly new. It is 3 feet 6 Inches in face, and about 15 feet in diameter'. However, on the 6-inch OS map of 1848 this is shown as 'Mill, site of', implying that it was by then completely derelict. More recently a sawmill (now derelict) was built on the brook further upstream, just below the lowest of the three ornamental lakes. and associated with other features, the remains of which survive, including a hydraulic ram, cisterns and an aqueduct.

#### 4. Contemporary descriptions of the park and landscape at Woodfold

- 4.1 The ambitious, extensive and impressive emparkment of Woodfold, together with the architectural splendour of the new house, attracted the attention of contemporary observers and it became one of the sights of the area, suitable to be mentioned in county guides and histories in the same way as other major country houses and 'gentlemen's seats'. The earliest published description is probably that printed in John Britton's *Beauties of England and Wales*, which appeared in 1807:

'Henry Sudell, Esq., the proprietor and lord of the manor, has spared no expence in improving the grounds about this noble mansion, and in embellishing them with considerable expanses both of wood and water. The house stands near the northern boundary of the park, which is surrounded by a wall of hewn stone, four miles in circumference, nearly nine feet high, and mounted with a round coping at the top. The park contains some romantic glens, and fine plantations of young and old trees'.<sup>9</sup>

- 4.2 This brief account focuses on the key features – plantation woodlands, water and the walling of the park – and was plagiarised in several subsequent accounts of Woodfold. It is clear that contemporaries considered this to be much the most important and impressive park in mid-Lancashire, while the house – monumental, massive and in the most fashionable taste – was of equal

<sup>9</sup> John Britton, *The Beauties of England and Wales, or original delineation, topographical, historical and descriptive, of each county, vol. IX Lancashire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire* (1807) p.123

interest. The descriptions are in the characteristically fulsome and obsequious style which typified publications for which gentlemen such as Sudell were the target market, but there is no doubting the impression which Woodfold made upon contemporary observers.

- 4.3 This impact is apparent in the 1825 description from Corry's *History of Lancashire*, which also included the earliest known engraving of the house. Corry wrote that:

'the chief ornament to this township [Mellor] is Woodfold Park, the seat of Henry Sudell Esq. It is five miles in circumference, and richly adorned with woods, modern plantations, and all the beauties of the varied scenery presented by hill and dale, wood and water, still further embellished by the truly magnificent mansion of the owner ... The manor of Mellor has been much improved by this gentleman, and it is warmly to be hoped that his example will induce other opulent proprietors of land in this part of the County'.<sup>10</sup>

- 4.4 The section of the valley of Arley Brook which fell within the Woodfold estate satisfied the aesthetic need for a wilderness element within the landscape, to provide a sharp contrast with the smooth grassed slopes of the park and the regularity of the house itself. This was the 'romantic glen' of which Britton wrote, and the 1828 sale description waxes lyrical about its scenic charms:

'The banks of the Arley Brook form, with the rugged bed of that Rivulet, a deep and sequestered Glen, each side covered (except where composed of naked rocks), with fine overhanging Woods, beneath which, along the Northerly side of the Stream, and within the limits of this Lot [no.6], is a retired walk which, following the windings of the Brook for upwards of half a Mile, discloses, at various points, the most striking and romantic Scenery'.

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<sup>10</sup> J. Corry, *The History of Lancashire vol.2* (1825), p.346

4.5 This description – estate agent’s advertising – could have foreshadowed the loss of this landscape. Only three years after the publication of the description in *Corry’s History*, the world of Henry Sudell collapsed in bankruptcy and the estate was sold. There was clearly a considerable risk that the carefully-constructed landscape of the park would be significantly altered as a result: the sale was piecemeal and sections of the property could have passed into different hands, while the possibility of industrialisation was present in any locality in this part of the county. Had land ownership been fragmented the future of the park would have been seriously jeopardised but its good fortune was that the sales eventually resulted in purchase by Hindle. Even more fortuitous was that unified property in turn passed to Daniel Thwaites. Nonetheless, there were changes in detail and although no documentary evidence survives, it is possible to trace these from successive editions of the Ordnance Survey maps. These changes are considered below.

## 5. Changes to the landscape later in the nineteenth century

5.1 John Fowden Hindle II, who inherited at the end of 1832 from his father, was high sheriff of Lancashire in 1844 and clearly regarded Woodfold as a house and property to be upgraded and enhanced – it was the beneficiary of substantial investment during his period of ownership. Although nothing significant was done to the house – at least insofar as external appearance was concerned – the park was improved to take account not so much of changing taste, but rather of practical considerations. It is striking that although by 1850 Woodfold, with its ‘classic’ late eighteenth century architecture and landscape – was seriously unfashionable, nothing was done to reshape its overall character. Thus, no formal gardens were ever constructed, no Gothic elements intruded, and the aesthetic aims of the 1790s were not compromised.

5.2 The 1848 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map shows the **kitchen garden**, whereas the 1831 sale plan does not. The date of this feature can therefore be placed sometime between 1832 (when John Fowden Hindle II inherited) and 1845 (when OS surveying began). We cannot be more precise, but it is quite clear that the kitchen garden is a later insertion into the original landscape design.

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The steep south-facing slope here was terraced, to provide a more manageable form for cultivation, and a pair of retaining walls was constructed with a flight of steps between upper and lower levels. High red-brick side-walls with flat flagstone caps were built to the east and west: these survive in relatively good condition, though the capstones have fallen and broken in several places. The distinctive curving buttresses at the southern ends of the walls are an unusual and attractive feature, as is the surviving round-headed archway which gives access from the kitchen garden into the ornamental woodland. The northern edge of the site was provided with a high red-brick wall, against which were constructed a range of garden buildings, bothies and a central glazed hot-house (1848 term) or conservatory (1884 term). A well was built in the centre of the lower terrace and by 1893 a second small range of sheds and a glazed building (probably a potting shed) had been built further north, cut into the slope of the hillside. As was typical of kitchen gardens, the arrangement of paths, shown most clearly on the 1893 map, was neatly symmetrical and regular: there was order and beauty as well as utility.

- 5.3 The same period, roughly 1832-1845, saw changes to the **roads within the park** and, as a result, to the landscape of the grassland areas and the pleasure grounds. The sale plan of 1831 shows that at that time (and presumably, therefore, as part of the original design) the house was approached by a long curving drive which extended south from the realigned Further Lane just north of Shorrock Green. Here a substantial entrance gate with tall stone piers was built, and still survives. The drive then ran past Woodfold Park Farm, through an inner gate, and entered a turning circle or forecourt on the inner side of the perimeter wall. The drive then crossed the grassland southwards in a long curve before approaching the house from the south-east.
- 5.4 Another **drive** – at this time the more important - approached the house from the south, leaving the Pleasington Road at a pair of hexagonal lodges and then winding across the southern half of the park past Old Woodfold and down to the brook, which was crossed by an ornamental bridge at one end of which was a pair of stone gateposts with associated iron fencing. This section of the drive gave fine views across the valley to the house, which helps to explain

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why it was regarded as the main approach, while the route into Blackburn via Billinge Scar was, in the years around 1800, much more direct and convenient. For important visitors, and for the ambitious and confident owner, the sense of arrival when approaching the house from the south was particularly impressive. The view embraced the fine mansion on the opposite hillside, the wooded slopes, the vast expanse of grassland, the rich and well-ordered farms, and the lakes and streams of a great country estate.

5.5 By 1848, however, this pattern of routes had been extensively remodelled. A **second main approach** to the house now entered the park from the east, where an entrance lodge (usually known as the Mellor Lodge and now listed Grade II) had been built on the Blackburn to Preston turnpike road [Preston New Road] which was constructed in 1825. From the lodge a drive extended through plantation woodlands for almost half a mile to a second or inner lodge (now known as Middle Lodge and also listed Grade II). It then continued on a gently curving route contouring across the open grassland of the park towards the house. This is the present drive which, though largely disused, is still a prominent feature of the open parkland east of the house. Clearly it is not an element from the original design of the late 1790s, but reflects the changing aspirations of the estate's new owner in the 1830s. The building of Preston New road, which slashed across the earlier landscape north of the Woodfold estate, is crucial to this reorientation, because it provided an opportunity for an imposing new estate entrance, with gates and a lodge, to be constructed much nearer to Blackburn, with access to the fast new main road, and with a more public and impressive demonstration of the status of the estate than was afforded by the earlier access from the narrow irregularity of Further Lane or the back road through Billinge.

5.6 The **visual impact of the approach along the new drive** was carefully calculated. The visitor passed through woodland – which was in reality comparatively narrow and limited in extent, but offered glimpses into fields and pastures – and then came to the middle lodge. The sense of arrival was heightened by the enclosed feeling of this first phase, and then given drama by the emergence into a huge and uninterrupted sweep of grassland. The second

stage of the arrival involved a sequence of increasingly impressive vistas across the park, to which was added the view of the great house, seen 'side on' and thus projecting out into the park from the woodland screen behind. As the visitor drew nearer, the full scale and bulk of the house became apparent, and the almost theatrical effect of the façade was fully realised.

5.7 At the same time (the 1830s) as the new drive was constructed and a grand entrance to the estate and house was therefore provided, other changes took place. The earlier northern drive, which curved across the grassland south of Woodfold Park Farm, was now redundant. It was therefore abandoned and is not shown on the map of 1848. However, neither the new drive from Preston New Road nor the old main drive from the south park was suitable for 'inferior' uses, such as deliveries, servant traffic and household business, so an alternative – a tradesmen's access - had to be provided. At some point in the late 1830s, therefore, a **new service road** was built through the pleasure ground to the north of the house, winding through the plantation woodland from the yard just south of Woodfold Park Farm to the service area at the rear of Woodfold Hall. The new drive followed the alignment of one of the earlier winding paths, except at its northern end where it diverged towards Woodfold Park Farm.

5.8 The construction of this new drive might imply that the value placed upon this **woodland as a pleasure ground** was diminished, but the design of the new service road strongly suggests the opposite. Everything was done to ensure that it blended well with its surroundings. The drive, which survives intact along its entire length, was surfaced with setts and rammed stone and bounded by stone retaining walls approximately 1.0 metre in height. It is cut into the hillslope, probably to ease the gradient (it would have been used by laden carts delivering, for example, coal to the house) and for the same reason follows a sinuous course, but this also meant that it was sympathetic to the existing pattern of winding pathways through the woodland. The new drive was thus superimposed upon an existing pattern of paths, and the earlier landscape of the pleasure grounds, but was designed so that it appears part of the original design. Where it intersected the earlier pathways the stone retaining walls

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were curved back into the alignment of the pathways, so that the two elements were skilfully integrated.

- 5.9 Within the woodland the **details of planting** are obscure, though the existing trees and shrubs give a general indication of what was designed in the first half of the nineteenth century. The 1831 sale plan and the 1848 Ordnance Survey map both indicate an area of regular planting due north of the house at the top of the slope, where today there is a semi-open glade within the woodland. The map suggests short straight lines of trees and it is possible that this represents either an orchard or the remains of a small tree nursery laid out during the period of plantation development. Although the 1893 map delineates this area with a pecked line it does not distinguish it in any other way. It is however significant that whereas in 1848 a path of track led straight from the rear of the house to this area of woodland, by 1893 this has been truncated, as though direct access was no longer needed. In 1910 this area is shown as an irregular clearing, but in 1928, after the last major phase of improvement works on the estate, it had become a large rectangular open space and it seems probable – though at present unprovable – that it had been laid out as tennis courts.
- 5.10 The boundary between the woodland and grassland of the park was defined by a **low brick wall with stone capping**, topped by slender and closely-spaced iron railings. The two engravings, of 1825 and 1838, do not show this feature but since they were drawn from a considerable distance away that is not proof that the railings did not exist. The sale plans of 1828 and 1831 imply that the boundaries were 'hard': both use pecked lines to indicate unfenced boundaries elsewhere on the estate, but the woodland edge is shown with a solid line. This was certainly the case in 1848, and it is reasonable to suppose that the railings which survive in some stretches, though in a very poor condition, were in place by this time. For most of its length this boundary emphasised a very sharp contrast between woodland and grassland, but in front of the Orangery there was a lawned area so the low wall separated the enclosed space from the open park. The aim was clearly to give views out from the Orangery across the park but perhaps more importantly to give a view of the Orangery – this is very clear in the 1825 engraving, where the Orangery appears as a prominent feature.

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5.11 At the edge of the woodland west of the house, where the line of the wood projects somewhat into the park, was a **small aviary**. It is almost certainly an original feature of the landscaping, since it is apparently indicated on the 1828 sale plan and is certainly shown on that of 1831. It therefore belongs to Henry Sudell's grand design. The 1831 plan clearly shows a shallow semi-circular building with a small oval enclosure in front, on the very edge of the wood, and it has precisely this form today, though totally ruinous. Its architectural style shows similarities to that of the Orangery, on a much smaller scale – in particular, the curved iron glazing bars which formerly supported the roof.

5.12 In the edge of the grassland close to the aviary are the remains of **cisterns and wells** which supplied water to the house: 'The Premises are constantly and abundantly supplied with fine Spring and Cistern-Water'.<sup>11</sup> They tap natural springs in the hillside (which is extremely waterlogged along this stretch) and consist of stone-lined tanks with massive flat capstones, now partly broken and damaged. It is unclear when they were constructed, as they are not shown on the 1828 or 1831 sale plans or the 1848 OS map [which usually indicates such features and, for example, shows a well in the newly-built kitchen garden] – but as they were underground they may simply have been ignored on those maps. The wells are however shown on the 1893 25-inch map.

5.13 The 1825 engraving and the sale plans of 1828 and 1831 show the house with a driveway widening as a forecourt or **carriage sweep in front of the main entrance** and then continuing along both sides of the building. Beyond the driveway [presumably gravelled] the grassland extends in an uninterrupted sweep. The 1831 plan indicates that between the driveway and the house walls were narrow 'beds', but it is not possible to say what treatment these were given. In 1831 the driveway and carriage sweep appears to have been unfenced, but on the 1848 map it is shown with a solid line which implies that it was now edged (probably with iron estate railings). This arrangement was unchanged in 1893 but by 1910, when the second edition of the 25-inch map

<sup>11</sup> 1831 sale plan: description of house

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was published, a major change had taken place. A large roughly rectangular platform area in front of the house had been separated from the open parkland to form an enclosure, and the forecourt was unfenced once more. The iron-fenced enclosure which survives today is therefore a relatively recent addition to the parkland landscape, constructed sometime around 1900. There is no evidence that this enclosure was ever used for anything other than lawns, but it can be presumed that its purpose was to allow the creation of an expanse of smooth and mown turf in front of the house, rather than the rougher grazed grassland of the park.

- 5.14 Within the grassland areas of the park were many **individual isolated trees**, dotted across the slopes to give the classic impression of an English parkland landscape. The 1825 engraving emphasises this element in the overall view, although it also gives prominence to the several small copses within the park and hints at the survival of a line of substantial trees forming part of a thick hedgerow across the slope south of the house. This hedgerow stood on the line of the boundary between the townships of Mellor and Samlesbury, and was part of an older field boundary predating emparkment. It is shown as the northern edge of Lot 6 on the 1828 sale plan, because that sale the lands within Mellor were reserved to the Sudell family – the implication is that the boundary was still recognised. By 1848 the hedgerow had largely disappeared but the OS 6-inch map shows that a line of trees survived on the boundary sheltered in one of the gulleys running down to the brook. The same map shows very clearly that a straight line of trees extended across the park from a point close to the western edge of the kitchen garden south to the township boundary, and this is clearly the remains of an older field boundary. In contrast, such clearly-defined lines are not found in the eastern half of the park. The line of trees is still clear on the 1893 map but several had been felled in the inter-war period and today it is no longer apparent. Sometime between 1848 and 1893, probably simultaneously with the demolition of the farm buildings at Greenhurst on the western edge of the park, the remaining fields within the park curtilage south of the house were brought within the park itself by removing the hedges and boundaries, though keeping some of the hedgerow trees.

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5.15 At the north-east end of the park, east of **Huntsman's Cottages**, is a large rectangular field edged by strips of woodland. Although this is included within the curtilage of the park (and is within the boundary of the designated English Heritage area) it is clear from map evidence that it was never integrated with the park in visual or functional terms. This is probably because, as it lies behind the crest of the sloping grassland, it is largely invisible from the parkland and the approach drive. This field was, however, subject to one aspect of the landscaping implemented by Henry Sudell: at its eastern and western edges plantation woodland was created to provide a screen or shelter belt, and two small copses on the edge of the slope were planted to break the line of the crest. These wooded areas are shown on the 1831 sale plan and the 1848 OS map, though the land was not part of the 1828 or 1831 sales and it was specifically excluded from the definition of the park in 1831. It was eventually divided into two fields by a central plantation strip containing an elongated pond: the pond is shown in 1831 but the woodland appeared in stages during the later nineteenth century.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 The analysis of the historical development of the park and house at Woodfold reveals – despite the paucity of documentary evidence – that the landscape of the late 1790s is surprisingly intact in its general pattern, even though there has been much loss of detail. This is attributable to several factors: the first is the decision of Henry Sudell, in 1796, to design on a grand scale and to a very high standard, so that the landscape created was strong, simple and effective. By its very scale and effectiveness in visual terms, yet its practicality and efficiency in functional terms, it worked extremely well and so incentives for change were few. The next factor is that most of the succession of owners in the half-century from 1828 to 1878 were not in possession for sufficiently long to make a clear mark, or were very conservative in their aesthetic perceptions (as we may suppose was the case with John Fowden Hindle), or were not really resident (as was the case with Daniel Thwaites). This meant that such

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change as there was remained relatively modest and did not disrupt the form and character of the property.

6.2 The same conservatism was clear during the long period, 1878 to 1939, when the owner of the estate and lady of the manor was Elma Yerburch. She saw no need to change the inherited landscape and neither, crucially, did she wish to do what so many Lancashire landowners did in her time, namely sell up. All across the county, in the years from the 1880s onwards, estates such as this were being sold for building or industrial development, or were being handed over to borough councils for parks or public open space. Woodfold was saved not only because of the conservatism of its owner but also by a coincidence of geographical factors: it lay just beyond the northern edge of the Lancashire coalfield, thus escaping the development of mineral reserves which was to be the ruin of a number of major estates in this period; it was too far out from Blackburn to be affected by pressure for housing development in the Edwardian period and even between the wars; it did not have a main road frontage but lay away from the through roads (and so was less susceptible to pressure for industrial development or the speculative development of housing, including ribbon development); and it was in a rural district council area, not a borough, and so was not really appropriate to be handed over as a municipal park.

6.3 The final paradox is that its abandonment in 1949 was in a sense its saving. There is no doubt that if, as was hoped, the house and park had been sold for institutional use in the late 1940s, a wide range of changes would have been imposed. For example, sale as a hospital or boarding school (both typical fates of country houses at this time) would inevitably have led to road-construction, the development of many additional buildings, and the transformation of the park. Although obviously a great deal of physical damage resulted from the abandonment over the next half-century, the continued low-level agricultural use of the park helped to preserve its basic features.

6.4 As the reconstruction and conversion of the house, restoration of the landscape and insertion of appropriate new built elements within the park begin, it is

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important to note the key features of the landscape so that their protection and restoration form part of the new design and development. The 'checklist' below indicates in basic summary form how restoration work can be fully sympathetic to the inherited landscape of the area, and how it will make a very positive contribution to the success of the scheme now being started:

- the restoration of the pleasure grounds – this will involve very extensive clearance of secondary tree growth, fallen and dead trees, and undergrowth in the woodland areas – a detailed staged survey of the woodland is already under way, with the identification of trees for retention being determined not only by their physical condition but also by their relevance to the original planting schemes; and replacement with appropriate species where necessary, including the re-creation of the form of earlier shrub planting (involving a major reduction and upgrading of invasive rhododendrons which have seriously diminished the quality of large areas of the woodland)
- the pleasure ground restoration will also require the clearance, restoration and reopening of the network of paths, which can be identified from the 1831 and 1848 maps as well as surviving evidence on the ground: these paths will then form the basis of the future leisure use of this woodland
- the major restoration of woodland in the area around the Orangery, including the re-establishment of the lawned frontage which is part of the original design, and the re-creation of the sunken garden in the former quarry (with a lawned interior and pathways, and shrub planting on the slopes in accordance with the evidence of earlier planting schemes which can be obtained from the surviving specimens)
- replacement in appropriate fashion of the characteristic railings which formerly edged the woodland along almost the entire distance from Woodfold Park Farm to the Kitchen Garden: this is a vital element in any scheme, because of its landscape and historical significance. The replacement needs to include the restoration of the walls with stone cappings which are found along the length of the wall, though much damaged and ruinous – substantial

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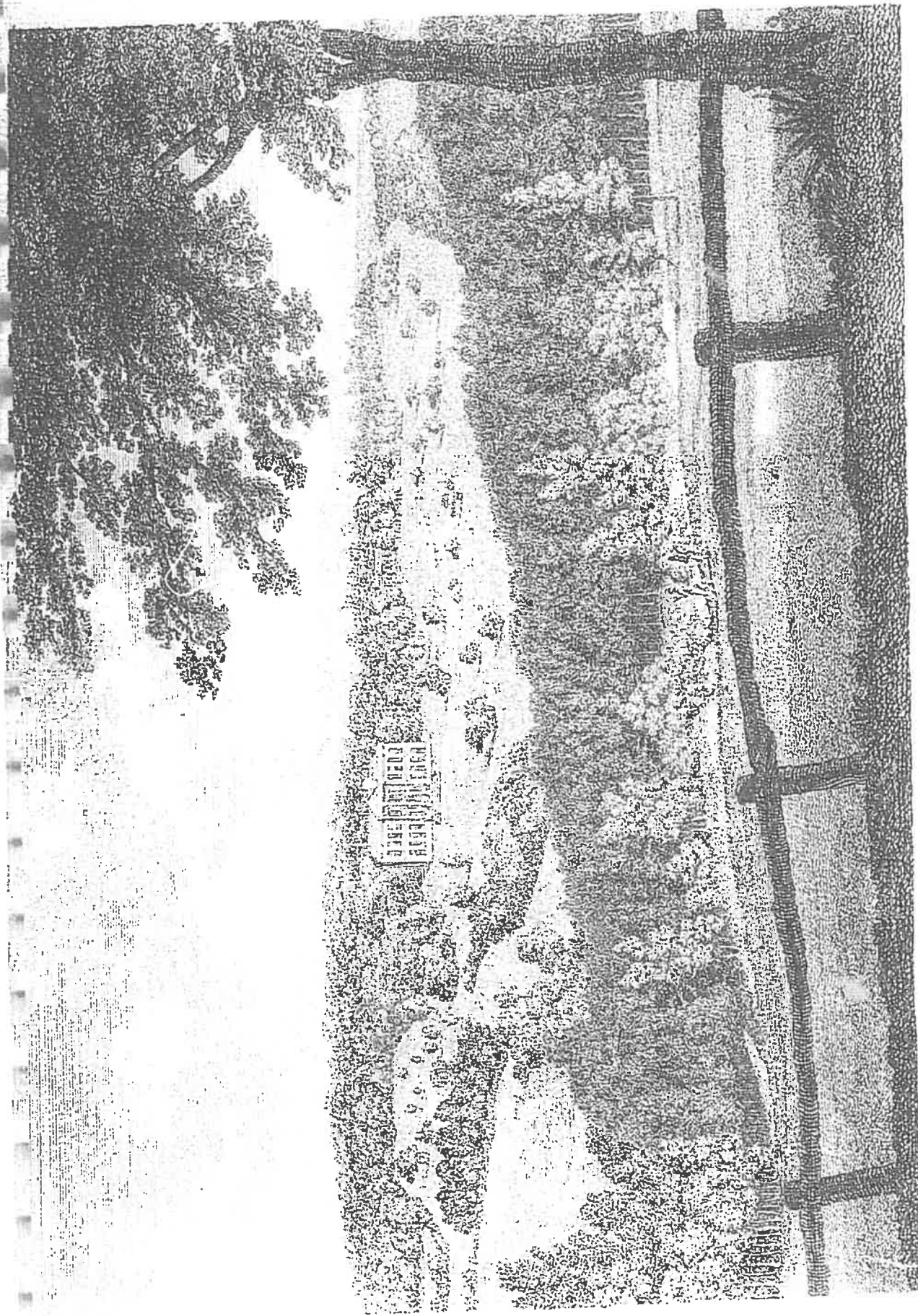
quantities of shaped capstones survive in the undergrowth adjacent to the wall and these should be reused if possible.

- basic restoration of the aviary, though without the original roof glazed structure: its restoration could form part of a more general scheme involving the adjacent walling and the woodland areas immediately behind: the aviary would be a possible location for a seating area, since it offers fine views across the park, though full restoration of the structures is not feasible – consolidation is the only feasible option.
- restoration and conservation of the red-brick stone-capped walls around the kitchen garden as part of the residential development of this area: it is very important that these walls are consolidated and restored to full standard, including the archway and other features, and that the stone capping conforms to the styles of the surviving sections: it is also important that the gardens of the houses to be built within the garden should be separated by red-brick walls with stone capping in a similar style, rather than with stone walling
- ensuring that the area around the house is treated in full accordance with the spirit and execution of the 1798 design, without flower beds or other intrusive features and with minimal designed landscape
- ensuring that the materials used for the surfacing of drives, parking areas and pathways are as appropriate as possible – minimising the use of tarmac and concrete, maximising the use of gravel, setts, cobbles or rammed stone surfacing
- restoration of pathways and other features in the woodland areas of the valley of Arley Brook [depending on the future ownership of these parts of the estate]: these are identifiable from map and field evidence. Part of the plan involves developing new access routes, using footpath alignments dedicated as public rights of way, in conjunction with future owners and managers of the estate and its component parts such as the valley woodlands, and these two

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elements can be integrated as one phase of the project, including restoration as required of paths in Arley Brook valley below the ornamental bridge

- maintaining the grassland in good condition by regular grazing, and potentially enhancing it by the same method
- potentially creating new ecological habitats in parts of the grassland, including possible pond restoration and wetland formation in fringe area. The very poor condition of parts of the park [especially on the slope below the kitchen garden and west of the house] means that continued though gradual reversion to wetland, a process already well under way, is probably the only realistic option.
- undertaking a programme of tree replacement within the park using the evidence of older Ordnance Survey maps [especially 25-inch of 1893] and the 1825 engraving, together with the field evidence of tree remains, to identify the sites of earlier trees now lost: this element will be especially important in the area closer to the house, where visual gain and historical benefits are clear.
- careful landscaping around the newly-built properties and the new structures behind the restored house, and in the area of the kitchen garden development, involving use of appropriate materials; exclusion of visually-intrusive elements such as garden sheds; use of appropriate surfacing; and planting of suitable species in woodland and garden areas using arboricultural survey of existing woodland as a guide



WOODFIELD PARK  
The Seat of Her Most Excellent Majesty

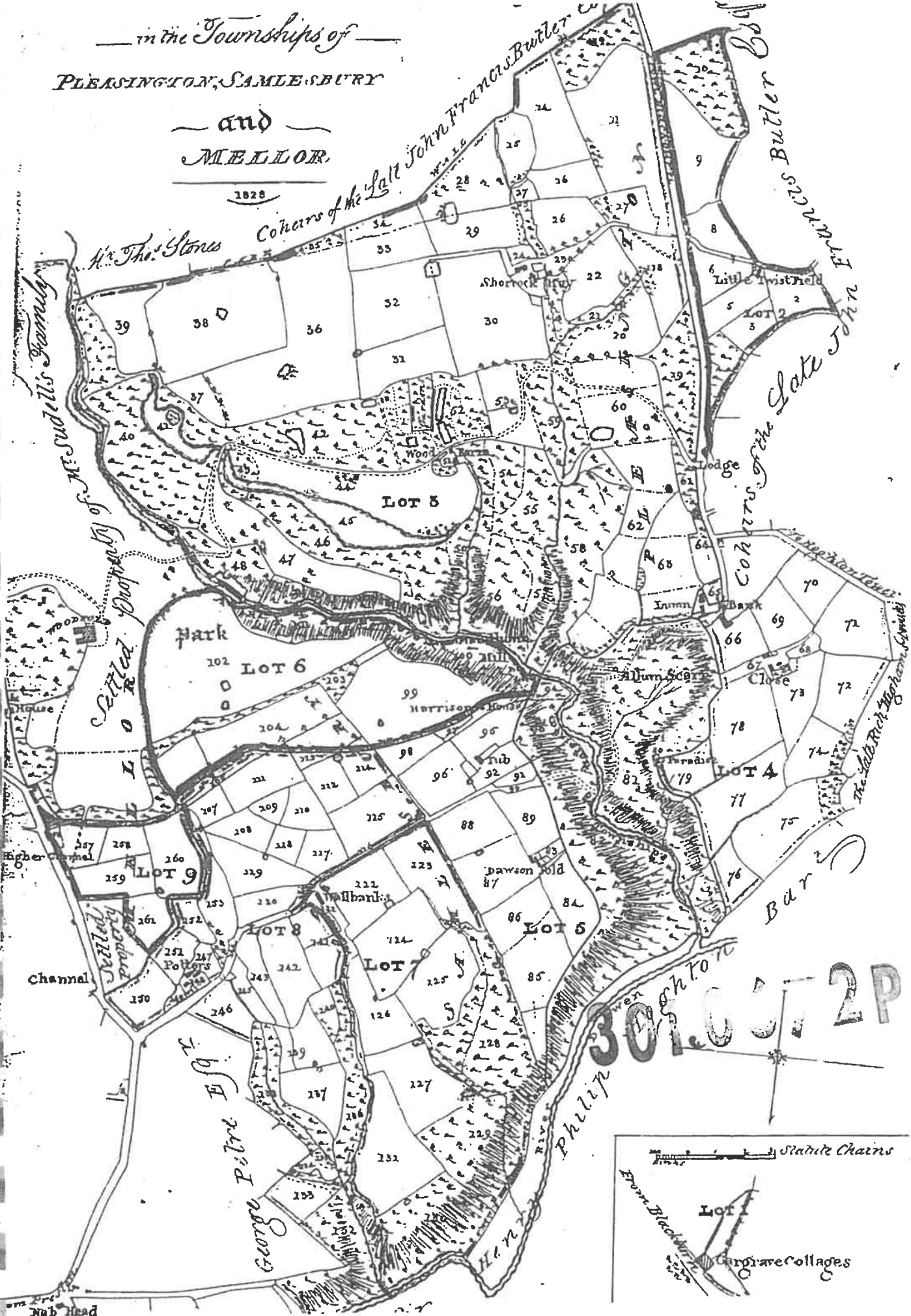
Engraved by J. G. Heath and Co. from a drawing by J. G. Heath

1840



in the Townships of  
 PLEASINGTON, SAMLESBURY  
 and  
 MELLOR.

1828



Scale Chains  
 From Blackburn  
 Lot  
 Orange Collages



NOTES & E

M<sup>r</sup> I. S. E. 1

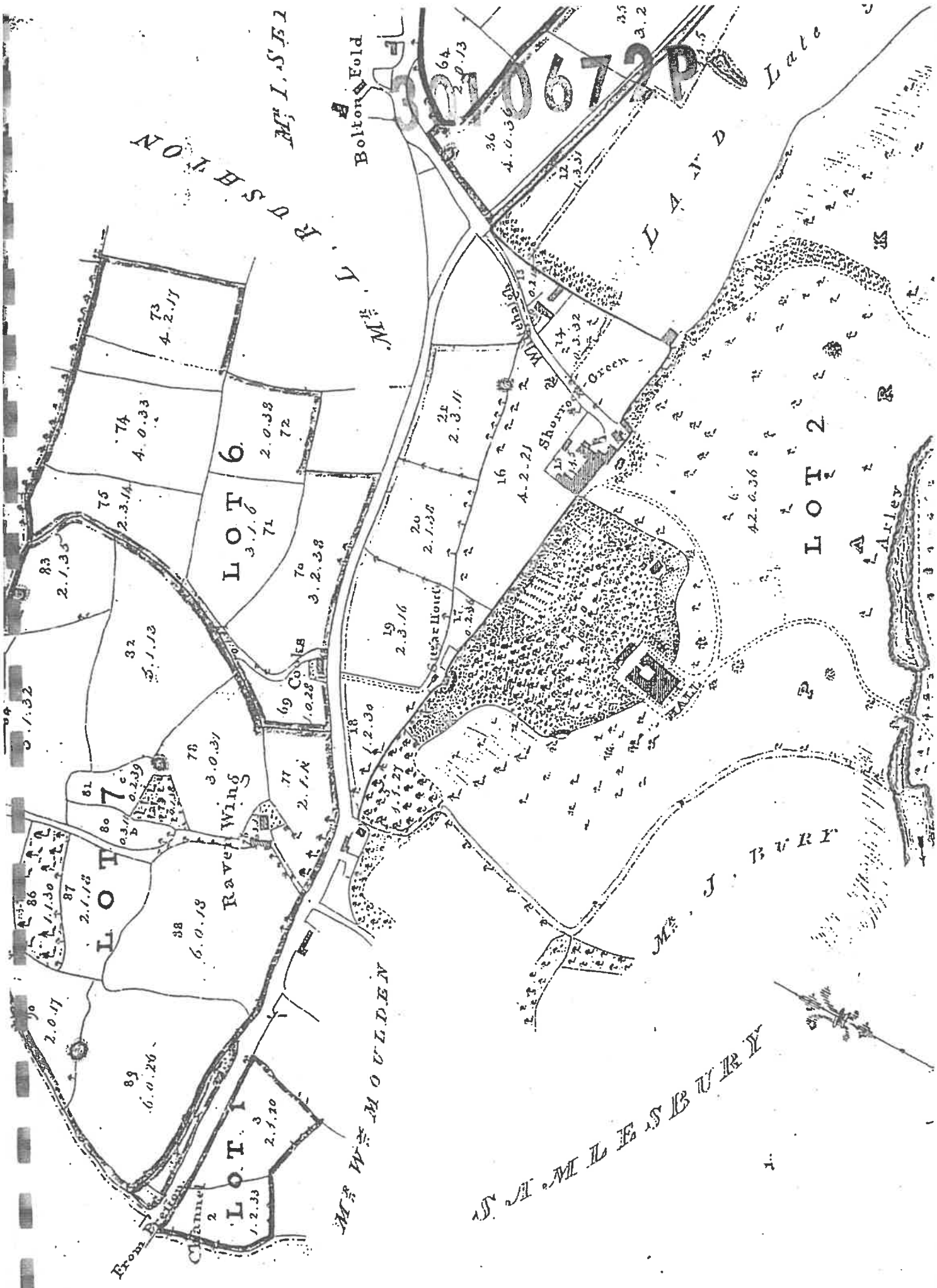
Bolton Fold

M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> MOULDEN

M<sup>r</sup> J. BURY

LAND

Lake



M<sup>r</sup> V. S. E. 1

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Shore

Green

LOT 2

Larley

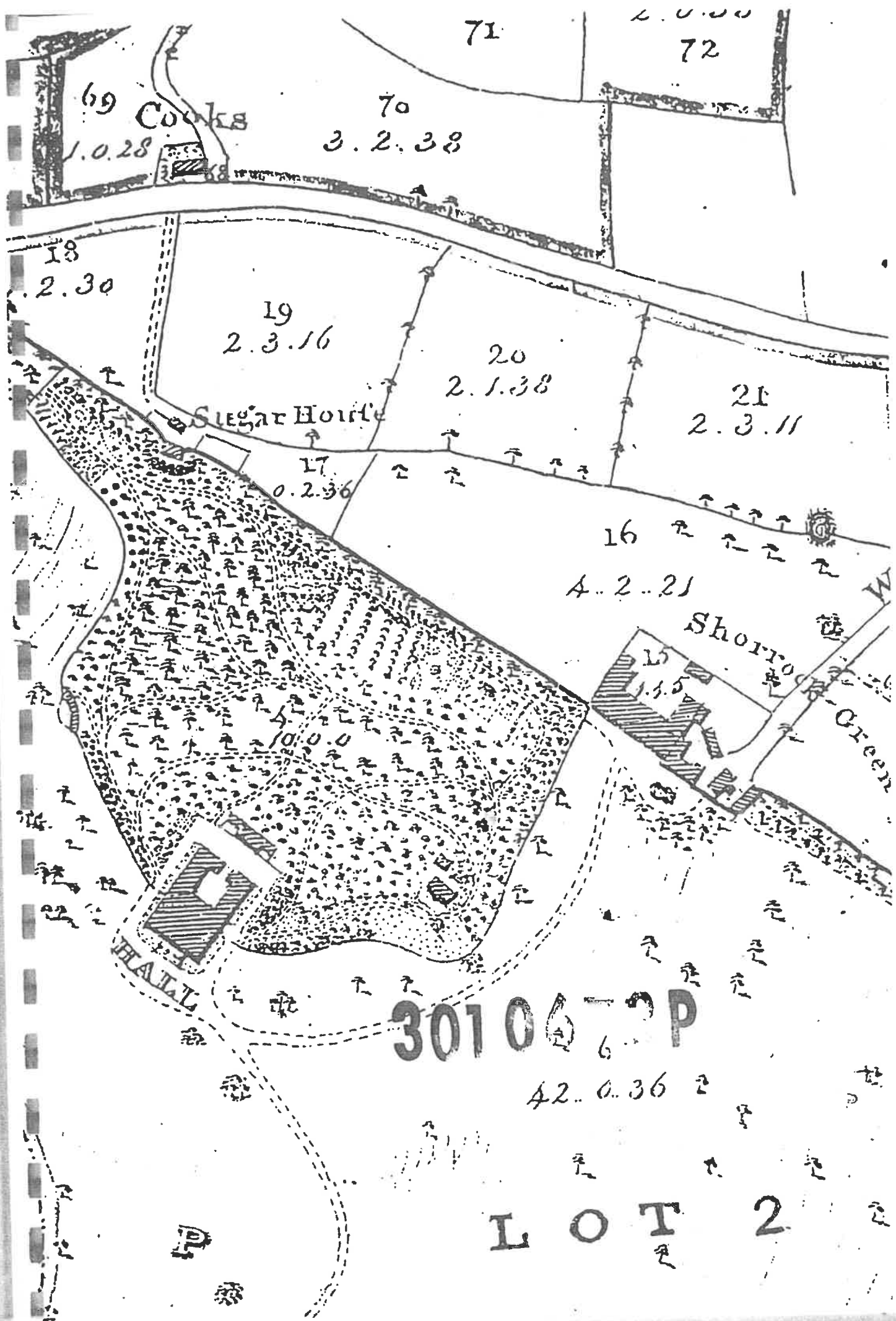
Channel  
From Bolton

LOT 7

Ravel Wing

LOT 6

M<sup>r</sup> J. BURY



69 Cooks

1.0.28

70  
3.2.38

71

2.0.00

72

18  
2.30

19  
2.3.16

20  
2.1.38

21  
2.3.11

Sugar House

17  
0.2.36

16  
4.2.21

Shorrocks Green

15  
1.1.5

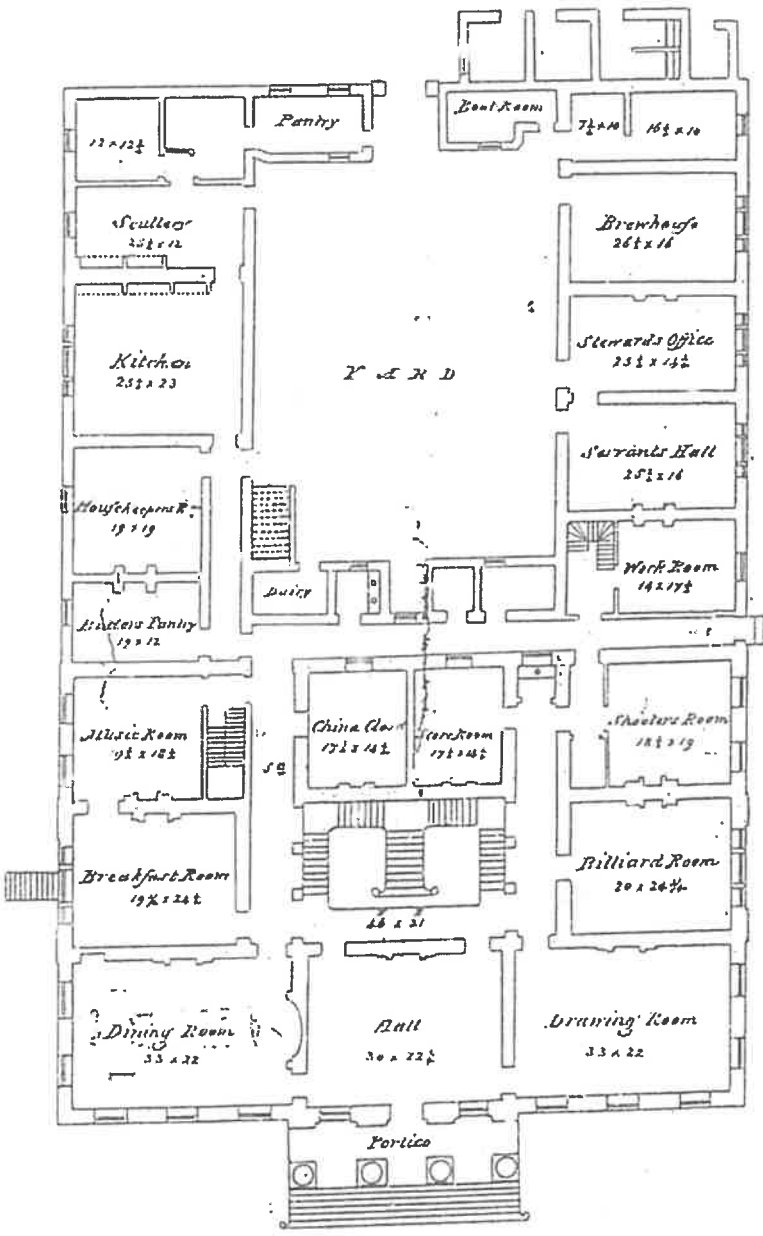
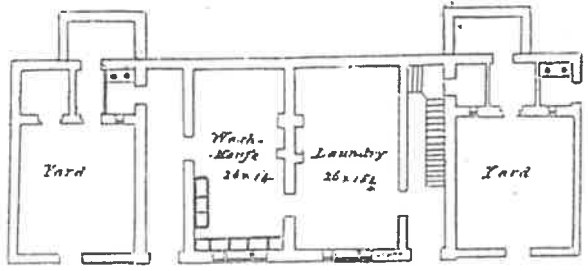
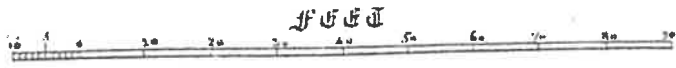
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LOT 2



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Shorro

Well

Well

Cook's House

Hot House

Hot House

B. M. 184

Woodfold Park

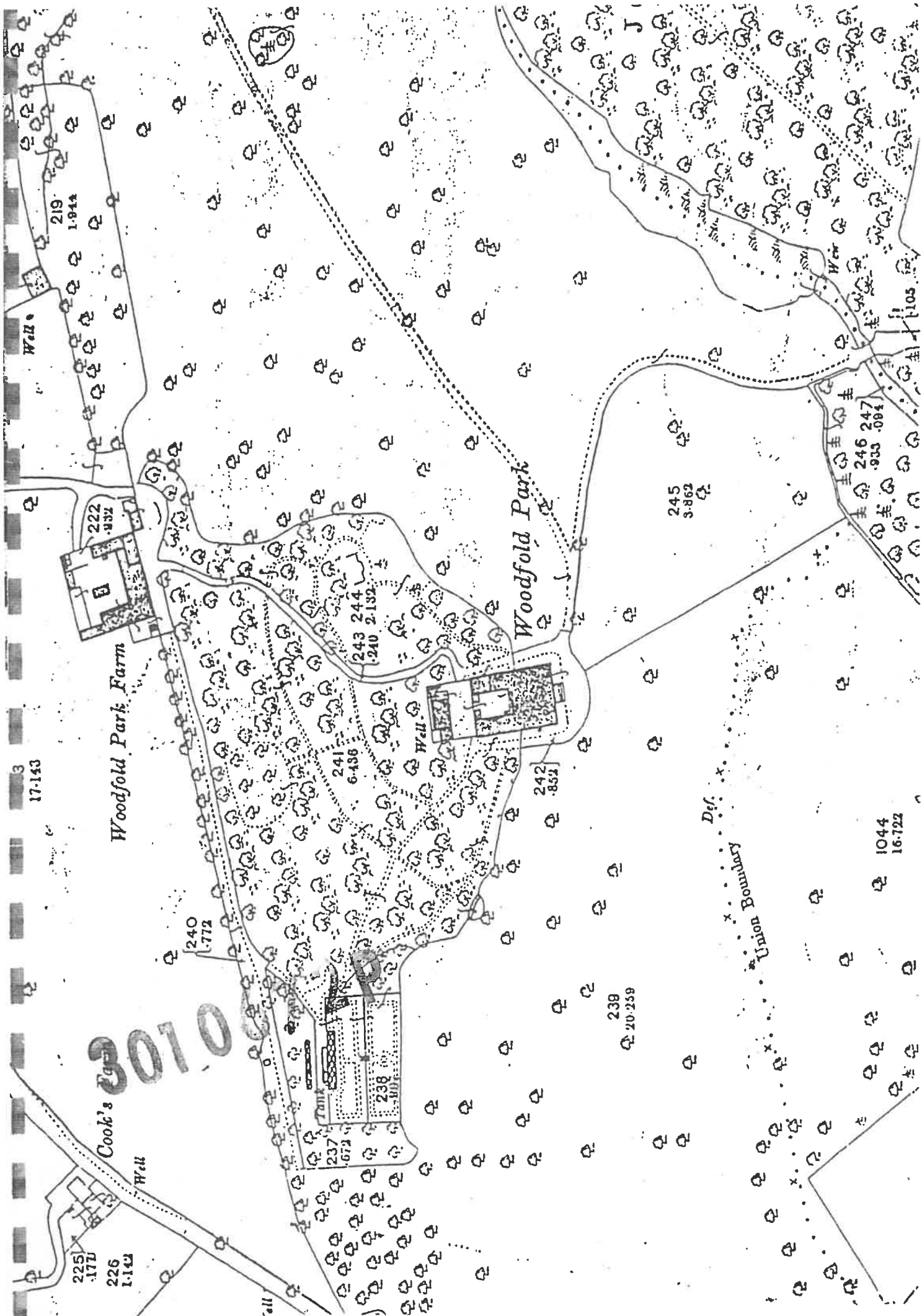
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Greenhurst







2010

Woodfold Park Farm

Woodfold Park

Cook's

Dip. x  
Union Boundary

17-143

219  
1-944

222  
932

240  
1772

243 244  
1-240 2-132

241  
6-436

242  
852

238  
1-107

237  
673

225  
177

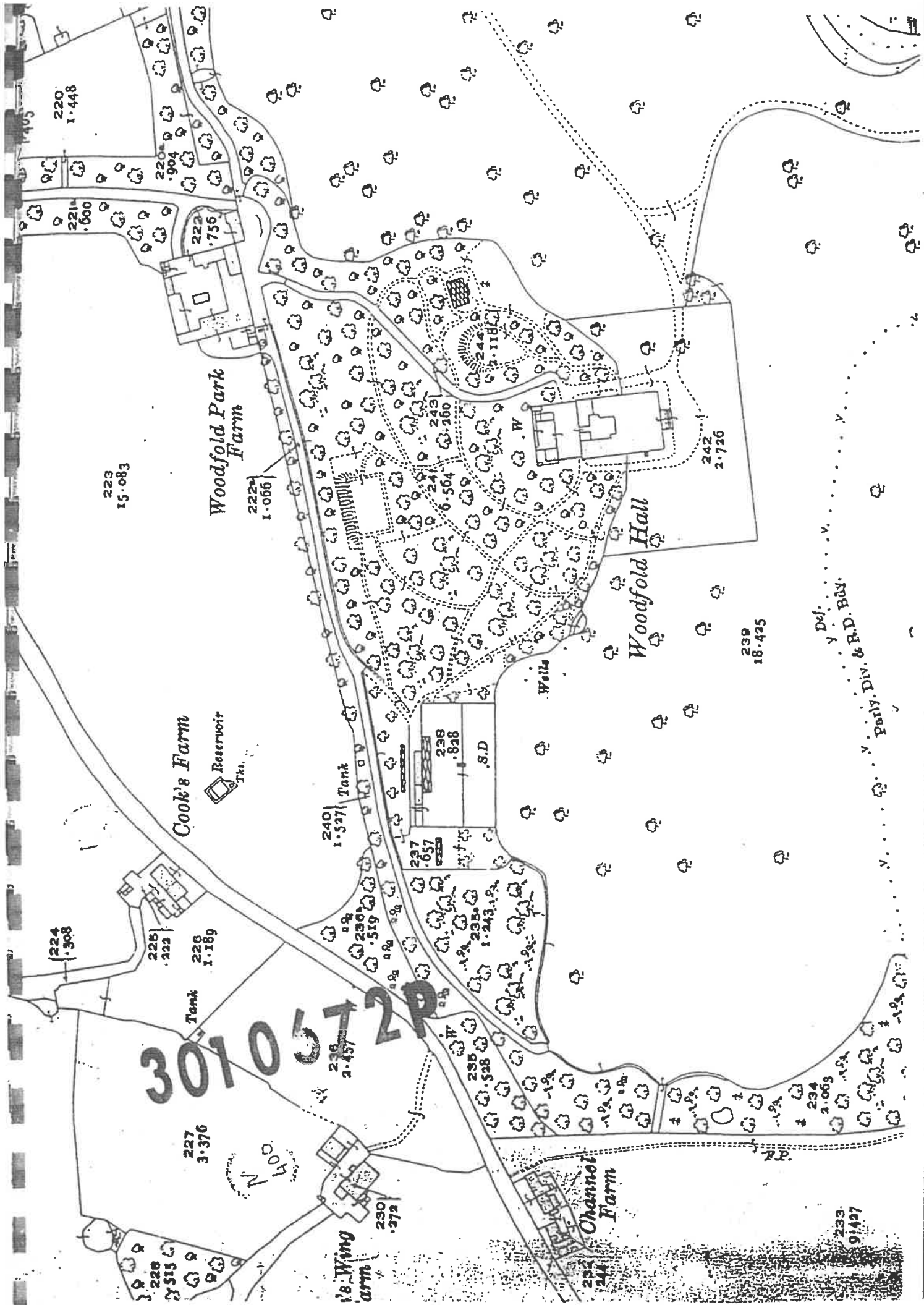
226  
1-142

238  
20-259

245  
3-862

246 247  
933 094

1044  
16-722



223  
15.083

Woodfold Park Farm

2224  
1.066

Woodfold Hall

242  
2.726

239  
18.425

Cook's Farm

Reservoir  
Tkt.

240  
1.527  
Tank

238  
.828  
S.D.

Wells

225  
.222  
Tank

226  
1.189

227  
3.376

400  
N

**3010572R**

237  
.657

236  
.519

235  
1.243

234  
2.063

233  
9.127

235  
.528

234  
2.063

233  
9.127

Wing Farm

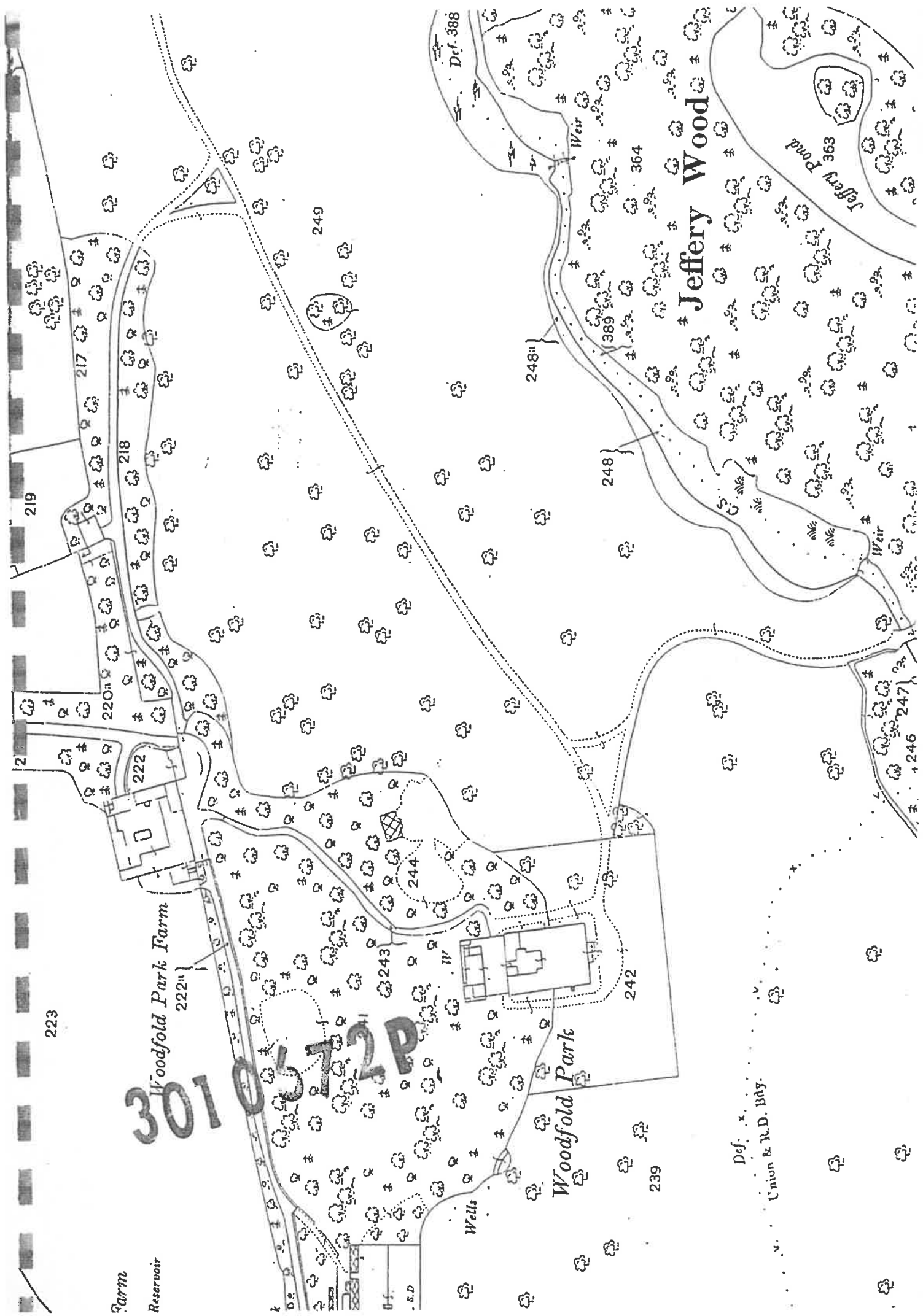
230  
.372

Channel Farm

231  
1241

Def. v. Party, Div. & R.D. Bd.

233  
9.127



Farm  
Reservoir

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Def. x. Union & R.D. Bdy.

Woodfold Park Farm

Woodfold Park

Jeffery Wood

Jeffery Pond

Def. 388

249

248

248

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242

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246

239

Wells

S.D.