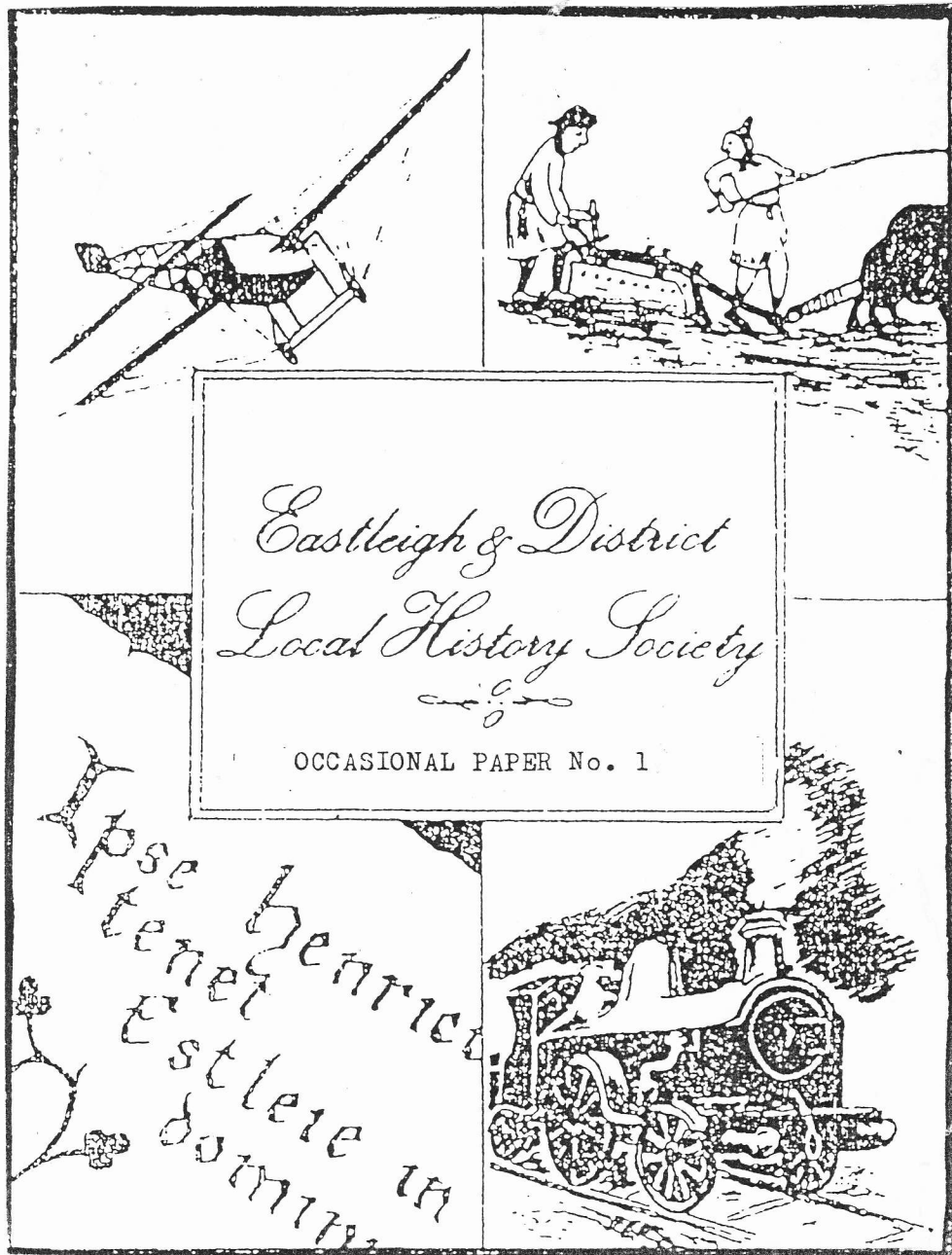


Was Bede's 'Ad Lapidem' at Woodside, Eastleigh?



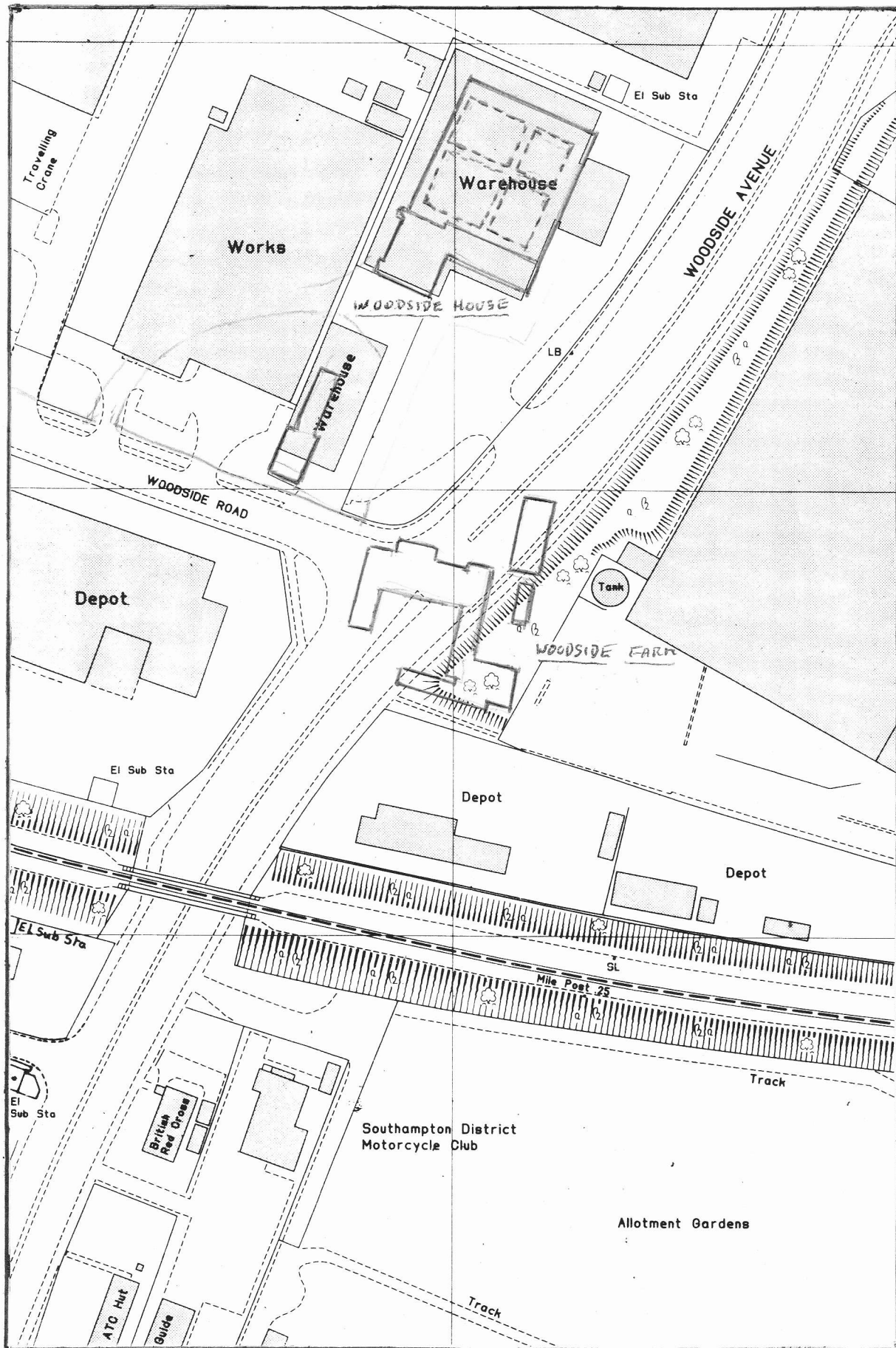
Ad Lapidem

But intermediate between Venta and Clausentum occupying an approximately halfway position was Ad Lapidem - a station of some kind - a place of rest, strength, refreshment, reinforcement, maybe an emporium, and general centre for the neighbourhood.

Ad Lapidem has generally been identified with Stoneham as indeed it was. Its exact position seems however to have eluded explorers - though apparently for the reason that they have sought for it amidst the Stoneham of the Middle Ages - the north and south Stonehams known to the past six centuries.

Yet neither at north or south is the original village - which is rather 'Woodside' situated at Eastleigh's doorstep. Without a shadow of a doubt Ad Lapidem is to be identified with Woodside.

A Drewitt



EASTLEIGH & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
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An examination of A Drewitt's identification of Woodside, Eastleigh, with the original site of Stoneham and the Roman 'station' of Ad Lapidem.

In his book, 'Eastleigh's Yesterdays', (1935), Drewitt stated his firm conviction that Ad Lapidem, a station of some kind which was situated on the Roman road about halfway between Venta (Winchester) and Clausentum (Bitterne) was Stoneham; and that the site was not that of the existing villages of North or South Stoneham but was that of Woodside.

He gave as his reasons the following:

- 1 The distances from Venta and Clausentum given in the Roman Itinerary for Ad Lapidem coincide with those for Woodside, and not with those for either North or South Stoneham.
- 2 The rectangular shape and dimensions of Woodside - the longer sides being to east and west, and evidently of a deliberate and set plan. Until quite recently too, there were signs of an embankment on the eastern side, although much worn down.
- 3 The position of the 'station' immediately on the Roman road from Winchester, via Otterbourne and Boyatt, to Bitterne with an entrance at either end.
- 4 The location of Home Farm, indicating the heart of the original Manor of North Stoneham.

Drewitt did not specify his sources for the above statements, but they bear a strong resemblance to those of AV Walters in the Hampshire Notes and Queries Vol IV (1889), whose article concerning the site of Ad Lapidem may be summarised as follows:

- 1 The itinerary of Richard of Cirencester placed the lost station of the Romans on the road 6 miles from Venta and 4 miles from Clausentum. These distances determined Woodside at North End to be the lost station.
- 2 This place furnished proofs of embankment and entrenchment, with the necessary spring of water. There is a low embankment all along the western side and at least part of the north end, and a hillock of about 3 or 4 feet high is plainly to be seen at its south-west corner where the south gate was.
- 3 It was unnecessary to look for foundations of walls and forts and buildings, where none existed because it was but a halting place and safe defence. The place must have been fenced in and stockaded, and have possessed a north and south gate.
- 4 The trench on the eastern side had been considerably sloped down and filled up.
- 5 The Romans occasionally erected walls and subordinate buildings without any deep foundations (St Luke, VI.49) and Josephus had related how quickly wooden buildings with palisades were erected in the Roman camps, utilising any natural advantages of the site.
- 6 The shallow bed of the little rill of water (since deviated, he imagined) on the eastern side of the oblong at Woodside must have been used by the Romans as a trench, which they must have deepened.
- 7 The length of this oblong on both its sides is about 210 yards, and its breadth at the north end about 108 yards, besides say 26 yards more for a certain plantation, while at the south end it is a few yards less.

8 The name Stoneham in all probability indicated some huge 'boulder stone' at that place, similar to those referred to by Milner in his History of Winchester. It must have been very remarkable and conspicuous.

An indication of the documentary evidence for the existence and location of Ad Lapidem is provided by the Victoria County History for Hampshire (1903) as a footnote to the section on North Stoneham.

"Antoninus Iter. Brit. (B.M. Reading Room, 984, G12) gives a place Ad Lapidem, 6 miles from Winchester and 4 miles from Clausentum. Ven. Bede, Ecc. Hist. IV, XVI, relates the martyrdom of two sons of Aliwald, king of Isle of Wight, 'ad Lapidem', near the mouth of the Itchen."

The Antonine Itinerary, which has long been used by scholars as the principal source of place names in Britain during the Roman period, is a road book giving routes throughout the Roman Empire, with the distances between places lying on them. It probably originated in the time of Caracalla (M. Aurelius Antoninus) c. 205 AD, but in its surviving form includes many later additions and amendments (OS Map of Roman Britain).

Professor A L F Rivet in an article in 'Britannia' (1970) on the British Section of the Itinerary mentioned that two earlier researchers, Parthey and Pinder, had used 21 manuscripts of the Itinerary, and had listed 17 more which they considered were derivatory. Later research, by Kubitschek and Cuntz, has shown that many of the manuscripts are derived from sources which are now know to be inferior. Otto Cuntz eventually selected seven for his publication, (Leipzig, 1929) which is used as the basis of modern works, including the OS Map of Roman Britain.

Among the manuscripts rejected by O Cuntz was that purported to be by Ricardus Corinensis (Richard of Cirencester), a 14th century monk. This manuscript came to light in the first half of the 18th century when a teacher of English in Copenhagen, Charles Julius Bertram, wrote to the English antiquarian Dr Stukeley, concerning the document which he claimed had recently come into his possession. Hailed by scholars of the day as genuine and providing much additional information about Roman Britain, it was subsequently shown by B B Woodward, Librarian of Windsor Castle, to be a forgery and almost certainly the work of Bertram himself. In a series of articles in the Gentlemens Magazine (1866-7) he demonstrated quite conclusively that the copy of the manuscript sent to Stukeley (no original was ever found among Bertram's effects) could not have been written in the 14th century, and that it was in fact based upon the writings of William Camden in the 16th century (see also Bertram, CJ in Encyclopedia Britannica).

It was this forgery which included Ad Lapidem in the Itinerary. The section of the Iter from Regno to Londinio via Clausentum and Venta Belgarum ie. from Chichester to London which is now accepted as genuine, does not mention Ad Lapidem; and both Drewitt's and Walters' arguments based on the Itinerary are thereby invalidated. Drewitt was perhaps unfortunate that the Victoria County History should include information already shown to be spurious some forty years before it was published.

Bede's History of the English Church and People completed in 751 AD appears to be the original source for the existence of a place called Ad Lapidem. The Venerable Bede was a monk in the monastery of St Paul at Jarrow in Northumbria. Much of his history was based on specified documentary sources and is remarkably accurate, but of necessity he had to rely on the assistance of various provincial bishops. He mentioned in particular Bishop Daniel of the West Saxons, who had provided information about that province and the Isle of Wight (Penguin Classics edition).

The Victoria County History again appears to be somewhat misleading in its reference to Bede when it puts Ad Lapidem near the mouth of the Itchen. The relevant passage from Book IV, Chapter XVI reads:

"..... crossed to the adjoining province of the Jutes where they were conveyed to a place called Ad Lapidem not far from a monastery in a place called Hreutford"

Hreutford is Saxon for Reed-ford (later becoming Hreodbryog in a charter of 956 AD, VCH) and is now known as Redbridge (Penguin Classics edition).

The source of this rather misleading reference may possibly be found in 'Venerabilis Baedae Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum' by G H Moberley (1869); a corrected edition of the Latin text first published by Smith (1722). The actual passage reads:

"..... siquidem imminentibus insulae hostibus, fuga lapsi sunt de insula, et in proximam Jutorum provinciam translati, ubi cum delati in locum qui vocatur Ad Lapidem"

A footnote reads "Ad Lapidem, perhaps Stoneham, a mile above Southampton, up the Itchen". Although both North and South Stoneham are about a mile above the northern boundary of Southampton they are over four miles up the Itchen, and North Stoneham is not even on the Itchen. However, the text makes no mention of the river, and the reference to it in the VCH cannot be used to ascertain the location of Ad Lapidem.

Both Glover, in his unpublished book on Hampshire place names (Cope Collection, Southampton University) and Ekwall in the Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names were of the opinion that Stone near Fawley was the more probable location of Ad Lapidem. Ekwall thought that the name might be derived from a stone marking the passage from Hampshire to the Isle of Wight. However, Stoneham is only about 4½ miles from Redbridge, whereas Stone is about 10 miles and one would have thought much too close to the island from which the princes were fleeing for their lives.

Drewitt and Walters thought that the name must derive from some outstanding feature of stone, as did Ekwall, but 'Stan-' is a common element in place names frequently occurring near Roman roads, as I D Marqary noted in 'Roman Ways in the Weald' (1949) and may well indicate merely the presence of the stony highway laid down by the Romans. This seems far more likely than Grundy's assumption that it was derived from a Roman milestone which may have been situated at North Stoneham, bearing in mind that such stones were not uncommon along Roman roads (G B Grundy, 'The Saxon Land Charters of Hampshire with Notes on Places and Field Names' Archaeological Journal, 1921-27).

Milner's History of Winchester referred to the number of sarsen stones found around Winchester, but there is no mention of a large one in the area of Stoneham as suggested by Walters, and Grundy's analysis of the available charters of Stoneham, dated 932 and 1045 AD provides no indication of any outstanding feature of stone. There is a reference to a white stone in the boundary in the later charter, but these were commonly used to mark boundaries, and there is nothing to suggest that this was of such importance as to give the name to the area.

The Latin name is of course no evidence for a Roman origin. Bede wrote in Latin as was usual at that time, and there is nothing to show whether he used an existing Latin name or simply used a Latin form of a readily translatable Saxon word.

Figure 1 overleaf is a detail from the North Stoneham Tithe Map of 1846, at a scale of 12 inches to a mile, showing the shape of Woodside and its relationship to the Roman road. The projected line of this road is south from Little Boyatt Farm along a track and field boundary, and it lies some 200 yards east of the house and garden.

Crawford in an article in the Hampshire Field Club Papers and Proceedings Vol. 16 (1944-7) identified the area described by Walters with the garden of Woodside House from the dimensions given.

He believed that Walters actually saw the bank and ditch in places only. When Crawford visited the site in 1942 he was unable to see anything but ordinary field banks. He commented that Walters had a theory to prove, and that anything he may have seen was more likely to have been of an agricultural origin.

Figure 2 is a plan, drawn to the same scale as the detail of the Tithe Map, of the 'mansiones' or Roman posting stations which had been found at Alfoldean and Hardham on the Roman road running north from Chichester. Alfoldean covered an area of only 2½ acres, while Hardham was similar in plan but bigger, covering just over 4 acres. These posting stations were rectangular enclosures surrounded by a rampart, through which the road ran centrally, and containing buildings to cater for the needs of traffic, similar to the coaching stations of a later era. Such stations were designed to split up a journey into convenient stages, usually about 12 miles, and it seems unlikely that one would be necessary on the 11 mile stretch of road between Bitterne and Winchester as suggested by Drewitt and Walters.

It should be noted too that the Roman road at Woodside does not pass through the suggested site of the station (I D Margary, Roman Ways in the Weald).

Excavations at Alfoldean have revealed pottery and other items, and this emphasises another big weakness in the arguments of Drewitt and Walters. The site of Woodside House and garden is within the industrial estate, and is now largely covered by buildings and a road. Although the laying of foundations and service supply pipes have necessitated much excavation of the area no traces of the supposed previous occupation have been reported.

Walters' arguments that foundations should not necessarily always be found do not appear to have much substance. His reference to the description by Josephus, the historian of the Jewish wars, of wooden buildings and stockades is not really relevant as Josephus was referring to campaign camps which were erected during a hard fought military expedition. And his reference to the Bible, St Luke VI, 49, is scarcely credible since the passage is in fact a parable on the dangers of building on insecure foundations.

Drewitt's final point that the situation of Home Farm shows the original heart of the Manor of North Stoneham also appears to lack substance. The name Home Farm seems to occur no earlier than the Tithe Map of 1846. Earlier surveys of the Manor make no mention of Home Farm, and there appears to be no reason to suppose that this particular farm was in fact the demesne farm of the Manor.

From this examination of Drewitt's arguments one seems bound to conclude in the absence of archaeological evidence to the contrary that there is no basis for supposing that a Roman camp of any sort was at Woodside, nor has any real evidence been found to identify the site of Bede's Ad Lapidem.

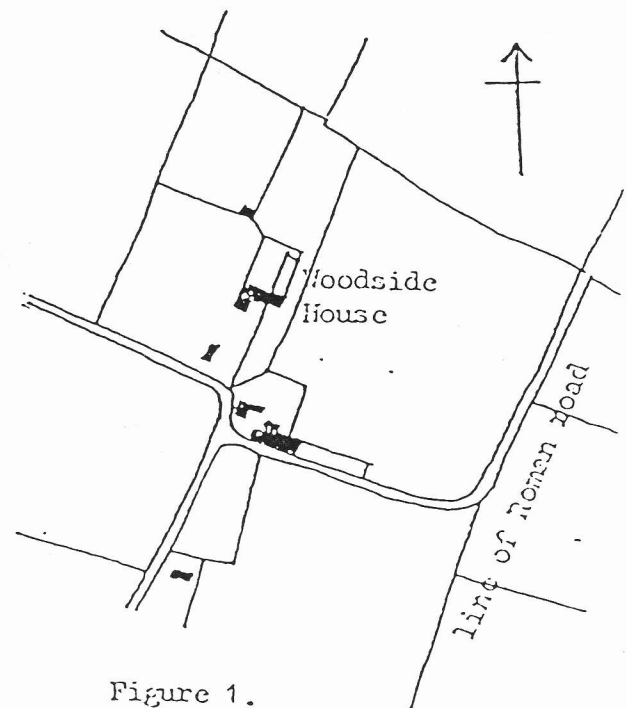


Figure 1.

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yards

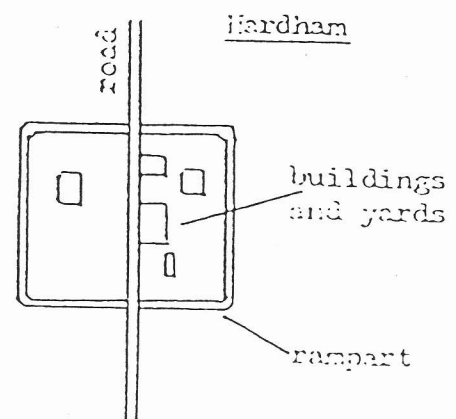
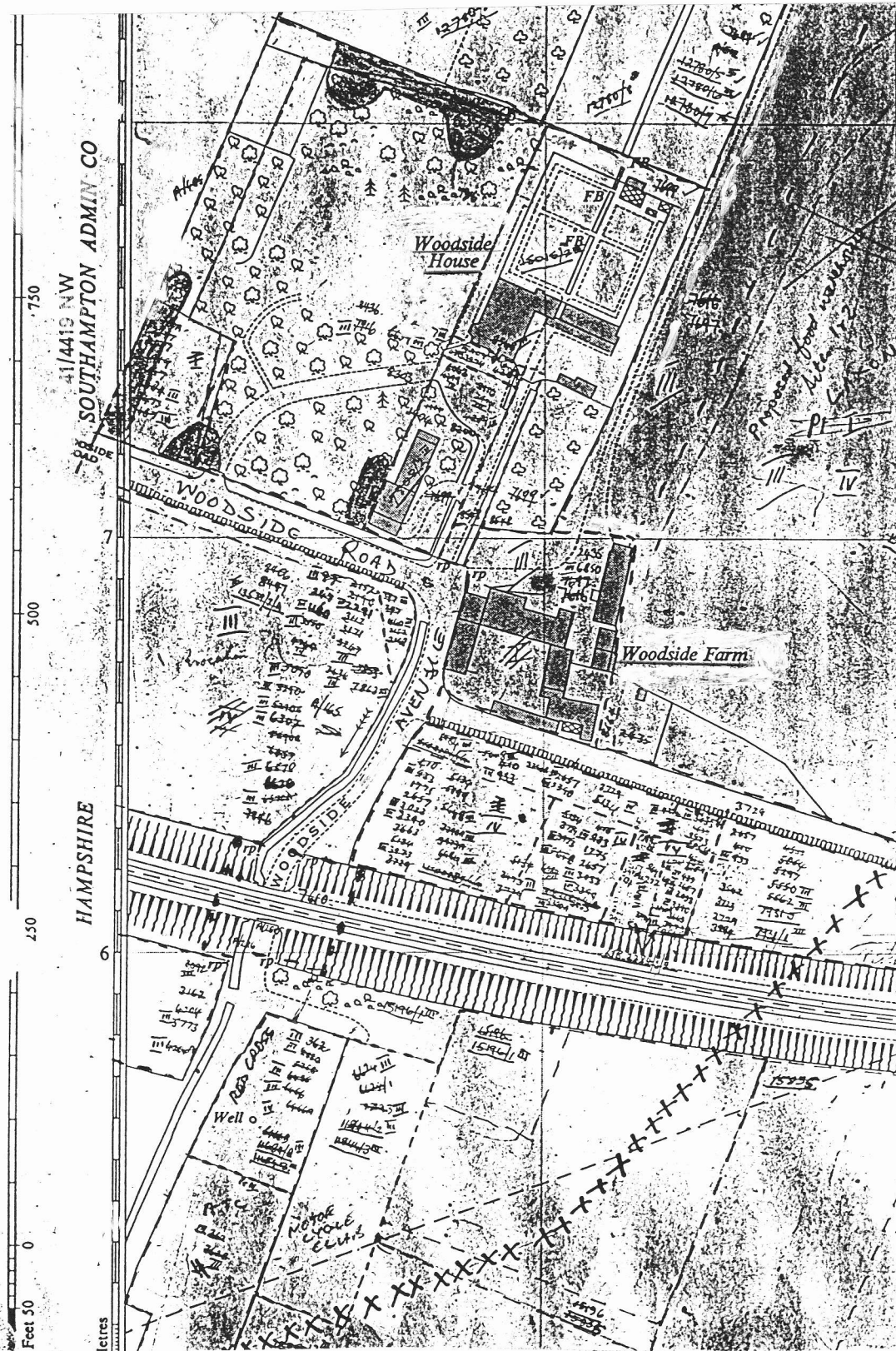


Figure 2.

Acknowledgements

Thanks must be given to Norman Barber for his helpful criticism, and for bringing to my attention the articles by Walters and Crawford; and to the Hampshire Record Office for allowing me to copy the North Stoneham Tithe Map and providing me with information about Home Farm; and to Southampton University Library, the source of most of my references.

P C Payne
20 January 1977



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