

# Twibells Yard and Old Smithy Garage, Mobberley

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## An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

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## *Summary*

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This report presents the results of a desk-based archaeological assessment of land at Twibells Yard and Old Smithy Garage, Mill Lane, Mobberley, Cheshire carried out by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit and commissioned by Egerton Estates Ltd. The assessment consisted of a desk-top study and a site inspection.

Twibells Yard was the site of Mobberley Mill, a water-powered corn mill probably originating in the medieval period, which in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was rebuilt as a substantial textile mill. It went through a variety of uses (cotton spinning and weaving, silk thread production and finally crepe manufacture) before being demolished in 1891. The site was solely powered by water until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when this was augmented by steam. By the 1870s gas was being produced on the site for lighting the mill and associated workers' housing outside the Twibells Yard site.

The Old Smithy Garage site was named after a smithy which is known to have stood here since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was run by the landlord of the neighbouring Bull's Head public house. The site includes standing remains of the smithy comprising a one-bay two-storey gabled building, with a single-storey range to its rear, both probably erected between 1839 and 1876. These have undergone some modernization and form part of a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century garage complex.

The Twibells Yard site potentially contains remains relating to the development of the mill which are of regional significance.

The smithy buildings are considered to be of local significance.

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Egerton Estates Ltd to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of a proposed residential development on land at Twibells Yard and Old Smithy Garage, Mill Lane, Mobberley, Cheshire.<sup>1</sup>

The assessment has been undertaken as an initial stage of fulfilling a condition of a grant of planning permission by Macclesfield Borough Council (Planning Application No 00/0619P) to the effect that development is dependent upon prior implementation of a scheme of archaeological work which will ensure that a record is made of archaeological features of historic interest.

The aim of the assessment was to collate available information in order to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the archaeological potential of the site and inform the formulation of a strategy for any further archaeological investigation.

- 1.2 The study area examined for this desk-based assessment is shown in **Fig 1**. In keeping with standard practice for desk-based assessments in Cheshire, as set out in briefs prepared by Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning Service, this assessment also takes into consideration the broader locality in order to place the proposed development area within its wider archaeological and historical context.

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1) The assessment was carried out by Dr Peter Arrowsmith, UMAU.

## 2. Methodology Statement

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2.1 The assessment consisted of a desk-top study and a site inspection. Sources examined for the desk-top study have included:

- The Cheshire Site and Monuments Record (SMR) held by Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning Service
- Printed and manuscript maps
- Place-name and field-name evidence
- Published and unpublished documentary sources
- Published and unpublished maps
- Aerial photographs

Consultation was made of:

- Cheshire Records Office
- Knutsford Library

2.2 The site inspection aimed to relate findings of the desk-based study to the existing topography and land-use and to recover evidence not available from the desk-based sources.

2.3 Archaeological sites/areas of archaeological significance have been assessed using criteria laid down in PPG 16 and the possible impact of the proposed development identified.

### 3. The Setting

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#### 3.1 Location

The proposed development area comprises a plot of land on the west side of Mill Lane, Mobberley (Twibells Yard) at SJ 789 796 and a smaller plot on the opposite, east side of that lane (Old Smithy Garage). The Old Smithy Garage site is bounded on the east by the Mobberley Brook.

#### 3.2 Geology

The solid geology of the study area, as mapped by the OS Geological Survey (sheet 98) comprises Lower 'Keuper' Marl of the Triassic. As mapped by the OS Geological Survey, this solid geology is covered by glacially deposited boulder clay of which at least part and possibly all is overlain by a band of alluvium running along the Mobberley Brook.

#### 3.3 Topography

The study area lies at a height of c 50m AOD in the base of the valley of the Mobberley Brook. Allowing for recent earthmoving in the south-west of the Twibells Yard site, ground level with the study area is fairly level, with the exception of along the south-east boundary of that site where the ground slopes up by c 1m to Mill Lane. This last area is defined on the north-east by a modern brick wall projecting into the site (see 3.4), and was formerly occupied by a substantial mill building which stood on this site until 1891.

#### 3.4 Land-use

The Old Smithy Garage site is largely occupied by a standing building, with a concrete ground surface on the north. The Twibells Yard site contains two small building in its northern corner. The north-east of this site has a hard surface, roughly defined on the south-west by the remains of a modern brick wall. The south-west of the site is covered by soils, with some brick debris, which have undergone recent earthmoving. There are trees and other vegetation along the south-western and south-eastern boundaries of the site.

## 4. Archaeological and Historical Background

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### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The documentary and cartographic evidence shows that Twibells Yard was the site of Mobberley Mill (SMR 1247/1), a water-powered corn mill which in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was rebuilt as a substantial textile mill. Water-power to the site was provided by the Mobberley Brook. This was dammed by throwing an embankment across the valley floor to create an extensive reservoir. Mill Lane immediately adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the Twibells Yard site runs along the former mill dam, while the site of the reservoir is now a wooded area which extends south-eastwards from Mill Lane and is bounded on the north by the present course of the Mobberley Brook. When the water-powered mill was in use, the section of the brook immediately downstream of the reservoir (including to the rear of the Old Smithy Garage site) served as a byewash, ie a channel carrying away the excess of water not required for the mill. Its supply of water was provided by a headrace which must have passed through the reservoir dam and which continued on the other side of the mill as a tailrace which rejoined the Mobberley Brook (Figs 2 & 4).

The mill continued to be powered by water only until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when this was supplemented by steam. As a textile factory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mill went through several phases of usage, involving cotton spinning and weaving, the manufacture of silk thread, and finally of crepe. It ceased production in the late 1880s and the building was demolished in 1891.

Old Smithy Garage takes its name from the use of the site as smithy from at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until well into the 20<sup>th</sup>.

The following account details the evidence recovered for the history of the mill and the development of its buildings and associated features which stood in the Twibells Yard site, together with the evidence for the Old Smithy Garage site.

### 4.2 Mobberley Mill - Medieval to Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century

4.2.1 Oliver Bott, who published a gazetteer of corn mills in Cheshire in the 1980s, listed the earliest evidence for Mobberley Mill as dating from 1334 when a grant of land in Mobberley's open fields mentions 'le Mulnerudying', ie land near or belonging to a mill (Bott 1983, 60; Taylor 1950, 260 no 200). There is, in fact, documentary evidence for a mill in Mobberley over a century before this. However, identification of the mill of the study area in the medieval records for the township is made difficult by Mobberley's manorial history.

4.2.2 Domesday records that Mobberley was in existence as a manor in 1066, prior to the Conquest, when it was held by the freeman Dot. Following the Norman takeover of Cheshire, this became part of the extensive landholding in the county of Bigot de Loges, whose principal manor was at Aldford near Chester (Harris 1987, 359). By about 1200 the lords of Aldford had divided the manor of Mobberley into moieties or halves, one of which they retained and the other was held by a local lord (Ormerod 1882, 412).

One of the first known of these lords, Patrick de Mobberley, founded a small Augustinian priory here at a date believed to be between 1198 and 1206. The priory proved unviable. In about 1240 it was annexed to Rocester Abbey in Staffordshire, and by the 14<sup>th</sup> century had ceased to exist (Barraclough 1988, 298-9 no 300; Dunn 1981, 83-4). However, among its surviving charters is one believed to date from 1228-40 by which Sir Gilbert de Barton, a successor of Patrick de Mobberley, granted to Mobberley priory the tithes from the mill (Ormerod 1882, 419, 425 no 25; Dunn 1981, 82). This is the earliest evidence so far recovered for a mill in the township.

In 1359 the de Mobberley moiety of the manor was bequeathed to John Leycester of Tabley. In 1378 he in turn granted it to John Dumbill and his wife Cicely, on condition that after their death one third of the estate should pass to Leycester's younger brother Raufe (Ormerod 1882, 412-3). This included a third share of a water-mill, which can reasonably be supposed to have been the mill site documented in connection with this same moiety in 1228-40.

Raufe de Leycester's portion of the manor was in turn passed on to his descendants, the Leycesters of Toft, who still held this third of a moiety in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ormerod 1882, 414) but after the late 14<sup>th</sup> century no evidence has been found for this portion including part of a mill. The other two-thirds of the same moiety passed from John Dumbill and Cicely through a succession of different families, until by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century they were in the possession of the Talbots of Grafton, the earls of Shrewsbury (Ormerod 1882, 409, 414-5).

The Talbots' share of the manor included a site named as 'Mobberley Mill', which in 1616-17 along with Mobberley Hall and its demesne was sold by George Talbot to Andrew Carrington of Mobberley. Carrington in turn sold this estate to various buyers with the mill being bought by the Legh family of Booths in neighbouring Knutsford (Ormerod 1882, 417). In 1672 a list of the freeholders of lands in Mobberley noted that, among the lands formerly owned by the Talbots, 'Peter Legh of Booth, esq. hath Mobberley mill' (Ormerod 1882, 418), while in 1662 there is documentary evidence for the same Peter Legh owning a plot of land called 'the little yard' adjoining the north end of 'Mobberley Milne' (Taylor 1950, 263 no 220).

- 4.2.3 The Leghs of Booths had anciently been lords in Mobberley, for in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the family had been given the other moiety of the manor by the lords of Aldford. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries there is evidence that this moiety was itself associated with one or more mills in the township. A survey of the estates of John de Legh in 1355-6 recorded that he had no hall or demesne in Mobberley but 'several rents, a water-mill and a moiety of another there' (Ormerod 1882, 495 n 'b'). In 1369-70 a survey taken after the death of Isabella, the widow of John de Legh, listed among the land which she had held after her husband's death a water-mill in Mobberley 'above the water called the Mylbrook' (Ormerod 1882, 495 n 'b'). The Leghs' moiety of Mobberley subsequently passed by marriage to the Radcliffes of Ordsall Hall near Manchester. Surveys taken after the death of John de Radcliffe in 1422 and Alexander Radcliffe in 1476-7 both listed a water-mill among their estate in Mobberley (Ormerod 1882, 415-6).

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Radcliffes sold off their lands in Mobberley, the lordship of their moiety being bought by Robert Robinson, a Manchester clothier (Ormerod 1882, 415). The 1672 list of freeholders in Mobberley gives details of the Robinsons' possessions in the township, but makes no mention of them owning a mill, nor does it



list a mill among the possessions of the other freeholders of land formerly belonging to the Radcliffes (Ormerod 1882, 418).

However, there are references to a mill in the ownership of the Robinsons' successors, the Wright family of Offerton and Mottram St Andrew, whose Mobberley estate in 1768 included a water-powered corn mill. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this was identified by the Cheshire historian Thomas Helsby as the mill within the present study area (Ormerod 1882, 420 n `b') and in 1839 the Mobberley tithe award lists the owners of the study area as the `devises in trust of the late Thomas Wright' (CRO EDT 274) (**Table 1 & Fig 4**).

- 4.2.4 The identification of the mill of the study area within the early documentary sources is further complicated by other factors. One of these is that none of the known early sources clearly refers to the location within the Mobberley township of the mill or mills being mentioned. Indeed the earliest explicit evidence recovered for a mill within the study area is provided by Burdett's map of Cheshire surveyed in the 1770s, which shows a water-powered mill on the Mobberley Brook at this point, this being the only water-powered site within the township shown on this map.

Other evidence points to there being a mill here by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dam Head Farm, located c 250m to the south-east of the study area, is sited on the south side of the former mill-pond after which it was probably named (**Fig 2**). The farmhouse itself is a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century building (SMR 1250/1), and the Mobberley parish records for 1672 include the burial of Margaret Strettle, widow, of Dam Head (Hulme 1909a, 31). In the same year the list of freeholders in Mobberley included the name of John Holland of the Dam-head; that document also recorded that George Talbot of Grafton has sold the tenement of John Strettle of the Dam-head to one Perine of Manchester in 1617, and that this tenement had been bought in 1650 by William Holland (Ormerod 1882, 418).

- 4.2.5 Another complication in identifying this mill in the early sources is the existence of a second known mill site within Mobberley by 1672, when the list of freeholders names `Roger Worthington of Hield Mill' among the owners of land formerly in possession of the Talbots (Ormerod 1882, 418). Heald Mill (SMR 2622/1) was situated on the Mobberley Brook c 1.7km downstream of the study area by the junction of Smith Lane and Slade Lane. On the evidence of Burdett's map it was no-longer in use by the 1770s and may possibly have ceased to function by 1675. The Mobberley parish register of that year records the burial of `Debora Warburton, killed in the Corn Mill with the stone' (Hulme 1909a, 31), the lack of qualification perhaps indicating that only one mill was operating in Mobberley at this date. The site was later recalled by the continuing use of Heald Mill as a local place-name and by a group of `dam' and `mill' field-names adjacent to the mill site (CRO EDT 274).

There is also a third mill site at Mobberley, c 2.7km downstream from the study area, although this particular site would appear to have been relatively late. Known as the New Mills, it is shown on maps from 1819 and is said to have been built in 1812 (SMR 2621/1; Bott 1986, 29; Women's Institute 1952, 69).

- 4.2.6 Despite the absence of explicit evidence to this effect, there are good grounds for supposing the mill site within the study area to be medieval in origin. The first is the unequivocal fact that there was at least one corn mill within the medieval township, coupled with the likelihood that corn mill sites once established frequently remained in

use over long periods of time. In addition the study area lay close to what may loosely be termed the historic core of the township. This included the parish church, documented by c 1200 and possibly of Anglo-Saxon origin (SMR 1248/1/1; Higham 1993, 161), located c 0.5km north of the study area; and also the site of the manor house of the de Mobberley and Talbot moiety, also believed to have been the site of the short-lived priory, c 0.6km north of the study area (SMR 1248/3/1 & 1248/2/0).

If the mill was of medieval origin, it may be the case that this was the mill site which was documented in 1228-40 as part of the moiety of the de Mobberleys and which following the sale of the Talbots' property in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century came into the possession of the Leghs of Booths. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, through a process not recorded in the sources, it would then have passed into the hands of the Wrights of Offerton and Mottram St Andrew, whose successors are firmly attested as the landowners of the study area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- 4.2.7 No documentary evidence has been found for structural details of the pre-19th century corn mill.
- 4.2.8 The 1672 list of freeholders mentions two properties as being close to Mobberley Mill: 'John Davenport, for Mosse's house by the mill: a small cottage' and 'Richard Strehull's cottage; formerly Hobson's house by the mill' (Ormerod 1882, 418). One of this properties might be the building on the opposite side of Mill Lane, now known as Old Smithy Cottage. This is a cruck-framed building of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date, now Listed Grade II (SMR 1248/0/2). The 1839 title award shows that there was a cottage on Mill Lane within the Twibells Yard site opposite the Old Smithy Garage (**Table 1 & Fig 4, no 74**). This had been demolished by 1876, by which date the textile mill had been extended over this site.

### 4.3 The 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Mill

#### 4.3.1 *The Cotton Mill, c 1820*

The history of the mill site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was transformed from a corn mill into a substantial textile factory is largely known from the account of the local historian Herbert Hulme, writing in the 1900s. According to his narrative,

'The corn mill in the village was turned into a cotton mill by a gentleman named William Chapman, but he was compelled by agreement to keep the bottom floor for grinding corn...Afterwards a manufacturer named Hughes became the lessee and enlarged the premises, and in addition to cotton spinning, commenced the weaving trade as well' (Hulme 1909b, 32).

A later account gives a different account of the mill's early use as a textile factory:

'In 1812 and for some years afterwards the family of Chapman kept the mill, and the bottom floor was used for grinding corn, and the upper rooms for weaving. The a man named Hughes was the tenant, and enlarged the premises for spinning and weaving. After Hughes, Chapman again became the proprietor, and carried on cotton spinning only - weaving by Hughes apparently having proved a failure' (Women's Institute 1952, 68).

John and Edward Hughes are listed as cotton spinners at Mobberley in a trade directory of 1828-9, which also mentions that within the township 'there is a large cotton factory for doubling fine yarn' (Pigot & Co 1828-9, 27, 29). This is presumably a reference to their mill and provides the earliest evidence for the rebuilding of the corn mill as a multi-storey cotton mill. Taken in conjunction with the claim that the mill was enlarged some years after 1812. (see above), it suggests that this rebuilding occurred c 1820.

By this date corn milling on the site appears to have ceased. The 1828-9 directory lists a corn miller at Mobberley, but this was John Burgess whom the 1839 tithe award places at the New Mills (Pigot & Co 1828-9, 28; CRO EDT 274). At Mobberley Mill, the resumption of the tenancy by William Chapman had occurred by 1834 when he is listed as a cotton spinner in Mobberley (Pigot & Co 1828-9, 27-29; 1834).

#### 4.3.2 *Improvements to the Power System, c 1830s - 1855*

Continuing his narrative, Hulme wrote that

'Up to this period (about the middle of the last century) the power had been dependent upon water from the Pool, until Eckersley got possession, and he, too carried on the business of spinning only. Eckersley introduced an engine as an auxiliary to the water wheel - just as is the case now as Booth Mill Water Works. Part of the building was then not in use, viz., that part once devoted to weaving. Eckersley sold the mill by auction, and it passed to Oliver, of Bollington, who built a new engine house and water wheel combined, at the bridge side, and started the spinning of fine counts for the Nottingham market, but it was not a success' (Hulme 1909b, 32).

John Hill Eckersley must have taken over the mill between 1834 and 1839 when he was listed in the Mobberley tithe award as occupant of the site, which is itself described in the award as a cotton mill (**Table 1 & Fig 4**). He was still listed as a cotton spinner in Mobberley in 1850 (Bagshaw 1850, 562). The occupancy by Oliver of Bollington and his improvements to the power system should date to the first half of the 1850s, since a directory of 1860 noted of Mobberley that 'a short distance to the south of the church is a cotton factory, which has been unworked for the last five years' (White 1860, 965).

<i>Owner</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Description</i>
Devises in trust of the late Thomas Wright	William Green	72	Bull's Head public house
ditto	ditto	78	Croft
ditto	ditto	32	Smithy and garden
ditto	Sarah Beard	31	Cottage and garden
ditto	Mary Norbury	74	Cottage and garden
Devises in trust of the late Thomas Wright & their lessee Henry Hill Eckersley	Henry Hill Eckersley	73	Cotton mill
ditto	ditto	75	Cottages
ditto	ditto	76	Coal yard
ditto	ditto	77	Cottage

**Table 1:** Owners, occupants and descriptions of property in and adjacent to the study area in the Mobberley tithe award, 1838 (CRO EDT 274). For the location of these properties see **Fig 4**.

#### 4.3.3 *Silk Production, 1860s*

After referring to the short-lived occupancy by Mr Oliver, Hulme continued by noting that

‘It was next occupied by Messrs Kay and Robinson, under lease from Mr W. J. Harter, and this firm carried on the manufacture of Victoria and Albert crepe’ (Hulme 1909b, 32). This omits the fact the Kay and Robinson originally used the mill for a different purpose. In 1892 the Rev H Leigh Mallory wrote of the mill that ‘about thirty years ago it was turned into a silk mill, and afterwards used for making the Albert crepe’ (Mallory 1892, 94). Helsby in 1882 also alludes to the use of the site for silk production, describing it as a ‘silk mill and cotton mill, called “Mobberley Mills”... now in the occupation as a considerable crepe manufactory, of Messrs. Robert Henry Kay and Alfred Tho. Richardson - the former gentleman a merchant in Manchester’ (Ormerod 1882, 420, n`c’). The directory evidence shows that Kay and Richardson had taken over the mill by 1864 when they were listed as silk throwsters, ie manufactures of silk yarn, at ‘Mobberley silk factory’ (Morris & Co 1864, 316). Similarly, in 1869 they appear as silk throwsters as ‘Mobberley Silk Mills’ (Slater 1869, 127).

#### 4.3.4 *Crepe Manufacture, 1870s and 1880s*

The use of the mill for silk manufacture appears to have come to an end by 1874 when Kay and Richardson were listed as crepe manufacturers at the site which had resumed its old name of ‘Mobberley Mill’ (Morris & Co 1874, 551). Similarly the site is identified as a crepe mill on the OS map, surveyed in 1876 (**Fig 4**). The staple of the mill during this final period of use was black crepe. The firm are reported to have also attempted to produce the material in white, but were unable to find a satisfactory method of bleaching (Women’s Institute 1952, 69).

In Cheshire, at least, the use of the site for crepe production may have been unique, for a county directory of 1878 has one entry under the heading of crape manufacturers, and that is for Kay and Richardson at Mobberley Mill (Kelly & Co 1878, 500).

The rarity of the trade is also implicit in the different accounts of the firm’s demise. According to Hulme, ‘Mobberley people always believed that the Germans sent work men to copy their manufacture of this article - at all events the trade slipped away’ (Hulme 1909b, 32). A later account recalled that ‘In 1887 the trade had gone, the machinery was sent to Germany and two Mobberley men went with it to show the Germans how to work it’ (Women’s Institute 1952, 69). The Rev H Leigh Mallory in 1892 reported of the end of the mill that ‘three years ago it was vacated, and in 1891 was pulled down’ (Mallory 1892, 94). The mill pond was then infilled and planted with trees, the site being shown as such on OS mapping of 1897.

#### 4.3.5 *Building Development*

The available information on the mill structures is derived from the 1839 Mobberley tithe map, the 1876 OS map (**Fig 4**) and photographs taken prior to demolition (**Plates 1-3**).

From this evidence the mill, as originally built as a cotton factory, was twelve bays long. Norris describes its as a four-storey building (Norris 1965-6, 67), but the photographs

suggest that there may have been a fifth, in addition to the use of the attic as a workspace or for storage. As well as the cotton mill, the 1839 tithe award shows the Twibells Yard site containing cottages and a coal yard (**Table 1 & Fig 4**). On the west it also included the tailrace, which appears to have been culverted close to the mill.

By 1876 the mill had been enlarged at its northern end. The photographs show that this included a three- or four-storey extension to the mill, and an engine house and chimney. It was at this end of the mill, ie 'at the bridge side' that in the 1850s Mr Oliver built 'a new engine house and water wheel combined'. The 1876 map also shows that two large detached buildings had been added at the rear of the mill. These also appear on the photographs which show them to have been of two or three storeys. The more easterly of the two either incorporated or was built on the site of the earlier building to the rear to the mill shown on the 1839 map. This more easterly building also lay over the site of the tailrace as shown on that map. It is possible that by this date this tailrace was either redundant or had become of secondary importance. To the north-west of the study area, immediately beyond Spout Lane, the alignment of the tailrace had been modified since 1839. If projected into the study area, that new alignment would have crossed the mill towards its north-east end, ie in the area of the 1850s wheelhouse and engine house. In other words, when that new wheelhouse was built a new headrace and tailrace may have been built to the north-east of the earlier race.

In the northern angle of the mill site, the 1876 map shows a circular gasometer, with an unnamed rectangular structure to its north-east along Mill Lane. The latter may possibly have been a retort house in which the gas was produced. The primary function of this on-site gas manufacture was presumably to light the mill, but it was also used to light the row of mill worker's houses, called Hall Bank, built in 1864 (Women's Institute 1952, 69; Anon 1981).

After the mill was demolished, the gasometer and possible retort house continued to be shown on maps into the 1950s, and by 1908 two new smaller buildings had been added to this part of the site (**Fig 3**). This area had been cleared by the late 1960s by which date the present standing buildings had been erected in the northern corner of the study area by Mill Lane.

#### 4.4 Old Smithy Garage

4.4.1 The earliest evidence recovered for the Old Smithy Garage site is the 1839 tithe award, which describes this as a smithy and shows two buildings here along Mill Lane (**Fig 4**). The more southerly of the two may be the same building shown here on an old photograph; a pitching eye in its gable shows the upper floor to have been used as a hayloft (**Plate 5**). This building has since been demolished and replaced by a garage structure.

The more northerly of the two buildings shown on the 1839 tithe map corresponds with the position of a one-bay two-storey gabled structure still standing by Mill Lane. That building, which includes a wide blocked arched entrance in its north ground-floor elevation, may, however, be a later rebuild. By 1876 an extension had been added to the rear, which an old photograph shows to have been of a single-storey (**Plate 4**). On the north elevation, this can be seen to form part of the present building, and although that elevation has been heavily whitewashed there is no obvious break in the bonding

between the two-storey and one-storey brick elements, suggesting that they are of the same phase of construction. A modern first floor has been added on the east side of the single-storey element, and a modern garage structure built on the east, as well as the south side of the complex.

- 4.4.2 The earliest known association of the smithy is not with the property which lies adjacent on the north, Old Smithy Cottage, but with the Bull's Head public house on the opposite side of the lane. In the 1839 Mobberley tithe award, the occupant of Old Smithy Cottage was a Sarah Beard, but the smithy was listed as occupied by William Green, the occupant of the Bull's Head (**Table 1 & Fig 4**). As late as 1864, William Green was named in a directory not only as landlord of the Bull's Head, but also as a carpenter and wheelwright (Morris & Co 1864, 316). The site was still a smithy in 1952 (Women's Institute 1952, 70), and for a period it functioned as both smithy and garage (**Plate 5**).

## 5. Significance of the Archaeological Resource

5.1 Although there are a wide number of methodologies for assessing archaeological significance, that with the greatest legal standing is the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments, outlined in Annex 4 of PPG16 (DoE 1990 Planning Policy Guidance 16). These criteria are period, rarity, documentation, group value, survival/condition, fragility, diversity, and potential.

### 5.2 **Period**

Known sites within the study area are a 19<sup>th</sup>-century textile mill on the site of an earlier corn mill, probably of medieval origin, and a smithy site, in existence by the 1830s and with a standing building of probable later 19<sup>th</sup>-century date (pre-1876).

### 5.3 **Rarity**

Any remains relating to a medieval or post-medieval corn mill might be considered of regional rarity, with few milling sites of these periods having been excavated in the North-West.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century textile mill was the only example of its type within the Mobberley area, and on this basis its remains can be considered to be of at least local rarity. In the case of any remains relating to the power system and gas manufacture at the 19<sup>th</sup>-century textile mill, the scale of rarity might rise to regional. These are elements which have often been lost in standing mills of the period, and there have been relatively few instances of the examination of surviving below-ground remains. In addition, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century rural textile mills of this size appear to have been fewer than their urban counterparts, and of those rural mills probably only a minority were established on sites previously used for corn milling. Mobberley Mill may therefore be one of relatively few textile mill sites in which a transition was made from the relatively small-scale industry of corn milling to the much larger production of textiles, with an attendant requirement of adopting and expanding the existing power supply. In historic terms, the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century use of the mill for the manufacture of crepe may have been of national rarity, although it is uncertain as to what extent, if any, this particular form of manufacture will have left an imprint on the archaeological record.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century smithy building can be considered of local rarity.

### 5.4 **Documentation**

The use of the mill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is reasonably well documented through cartographic evidence, the accounts of local historians, and trade directories. The documentary evidence for the mill at an earlier date is more circumstantial, but may record milling on this site from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Old Smithy Garage site has been traced in the documentary record from the 1830s.

### 5.5 **Group value**

As an early corn mill, Mobberley Mill could be considered as forming part of a group with other integral sites within the township, including the parish church, the priory site, and the site of the medieval Mobberley Hall. The priory site has been subject to geophysical survey, but otherwise no modern archaeological investigations are known to have been carried out within this group of sites.

The group value of the Old Smithy Garage site is deemed to be low, although it has a historical connection with the Bull's Head public house.

### 5.6 **Survival/condition**

The extent to which below-ground remains survive within the study area is unknown.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century smithy building still standing on the Old Smithy Garage site has been fitted with modern windows, and internally appears to be divided by modern partitions.

### 5.7 **Fragility**

See section 6 of this report.

### 5.8 **Diversity**

The known sites relate to corn milling, textile production in a variety of forms, and smithing.

### 5.9 **Potential**

There is a possibility that water-logged deposits may survive on the site preserving organic remains.

5.10 On the above criteria, the Twibells Yard site may contain remains of regional importance, while the 19<sup>th</sup>-century standing remains within the Old Smithy Garage site can be considered of local importance. These levels of significance are based largely on the rarity of the known or possible remains.



## 6. Likely Archaeological Implications of the Development

- 6.1 The depth at which below-ground remains may survive on the site is not known. However, potentially damage to such remains might be caused by reduction or other disturbance of existing ground levels for the proposed development. This includes the digging of foundation trenches or service trenches. It also includes the reduction of ground levels by the removal of any contaminated soils.
- 6.2 The 19<sup>th</sup>-century smithy building will be taken down under the proposed development.

CRO - Cheshire Record Office

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### **Aerial Photographs**

*Held by Cheshire County Council:*

HSL UK 73 74 Run 36 1772 7 June 1973, black & white 1:10,000 vertical.

Macclesfield Run 9 42085 2 June 1985 colour 1:10,000 vertical.

# **TWIBELLS YARD AND OLD SMITHY GARAGE, MILL LANE, MOBBERLEY: PROJECT DESIGN FOR A DESK-BASED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 This project design is for an archaeological desk-based assessment for a development consisting of four two-storey dwellings and associated parking at Twibells Yard and Old Smithy Garage, Mobberley, Borough of Macclesfield (Application No 00/0619P). It has been drawn up on behalf of Egerton Estate Ltd by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, following consultation with the Cheshire County Council Planning Service Archaeological Officer (Development Control) (referred to below as the Planning Archaeologist) with regard to fulfilling condition no 11 of the grant of planning permission:

‘No development shall take place on the application site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason To ensure a record is made of any archaeological features of historical interest.’

- 1.2 The site is believed to be that of Mobberley Mill, which is first mentioned in documentary sources in 1334 and whose seventeenth-century successor was demolished in 1887. The building is depicted on the OS First Edition map of 1882 where the mill is shown immediately to the west of Mill Lane. To the east of Mill Lane lay a dam and a large mill pond, which has now been drained. There is also the possibility of an early gas works on the site. This is also marked on the map although the lettering is difficult to discern. Buildings or features associated with these two do not appear to survive above ground but may exist below the modern hardstanding which extends across much of the site.

## **2. The Assessment**

- 2.1 In order to help identify the archaeological resource on the site, a desk-based archaeological assessment will be undertaken. To put the development area into its archaeological and historical context, this will consider both the site itself and its broader locality.

The aim of the assessment will be to collate available information in order to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the archaeological potential of the site and inform the formulation of a strategy for any further archaeological investigation.

- 2.2 The assessment will involve a desk-based study and a site inspection.

The following sources will be consulted for the desk-based study:

- The Cheshire Site and Monuments Record (SMR)
- Printed and manuscript maps
- Place-name and field-name evidence
- Published and unpublished documentary sources
- Published and unpublished maps
- Aerial photographs
- Borehole and test pitting information, where available

The following archives will be consulted, both of which are known to hold documentary material relevant to the site:

- Cheshire Records Office
- John Rylands University Library of Manchester

In addition consultation will be made of Knutsford Library.

The site inspection will aim to relate findings of the desk-based study to the existing topography and land-use and to recover evidence not available from the desk-based sources.

2.3 A report will be produced which will describe the work carried out and the results obtained.

The report's contents will be:

- Non-technical Summary
- Introduction, including aims
- Methodology Statement
- Geological and Topographical Setting and Land-use
- Archaeological and Historical Background
- Gazetteer of Sites/Areas of Archaeological Potential
- Significance of the Archaeological Resource
- Likely Archaeological Implications of the Development
- Sources
- Map(s) showing Archaeological Sites/Areas of Archaeological Potential
- Index to Project Archive
- Copy of Project Design

2.4 The assessment archive will be deposited with an appropriate depository, on completion of the project.

2.5 The assessment will be undertaken for Egerton Estates Ltd by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit.

2.6 The assessment will be monitored by the Planning Archaeologist.

### **3. Further Work**

3.1 Depending on the results of the assessment, further work may be recommended by the Planning Archaeologist as necessary for fulfilment of the planning condition. This will be carried out in accordance with a separate project design, submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

### **4. Additional Information**

4.1 The assessment will be carried out by Dr Peter Arrowsmith, UMAU

4.2 UMAU Terms and Conditions:

The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit acts in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and observes the British Archaeologists and Developers Group

Code of Practice.

UMAU is comprehensively insured for all field survey, investigations and excavations under the Royal Insurance(UK) Ltd Public and Employers Liability Insurance-Victoria University of Manchester and its Subsidiaries.

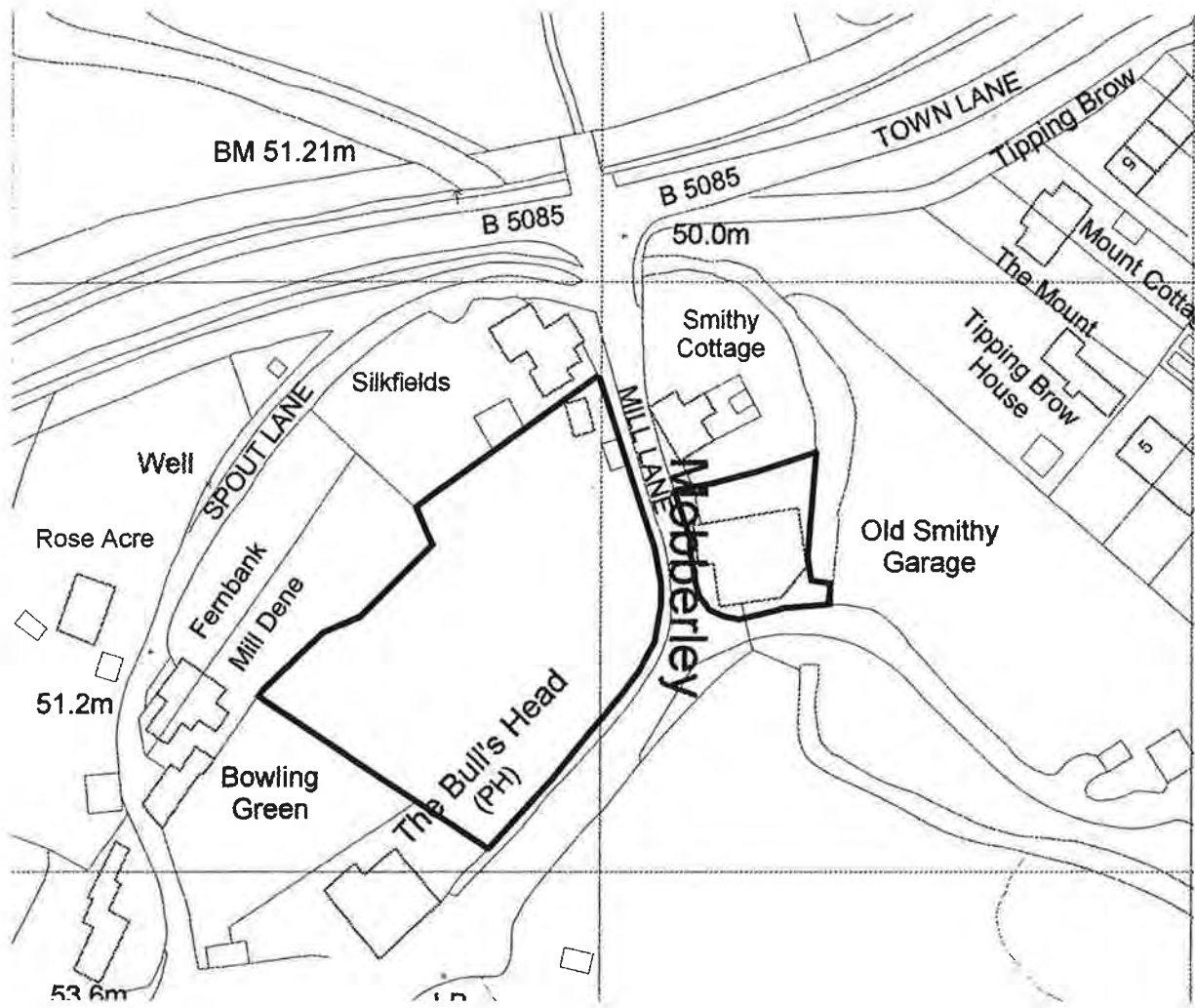
Professional Indemnity Insurance of ten million pounds is provided for UMAU through the University of Manchester and/or Vuman Ltd and/ or its Subsidiary and/or Associated Companies by Denham Direct Underwriters Ltd.

UMAU follows the University of Manchester's policy statement on Health and Safety and SCAUM guidelines on Health and Safety in Field Archaeology.

4.3 Contact:

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Tel: 0161-275 2317  
Fax: 0161-275 2315



**Fig 1:** Location map with study area outlined. Scale 1:1250.  
Based on modern OS mapping. Crown Copyright Reserved.

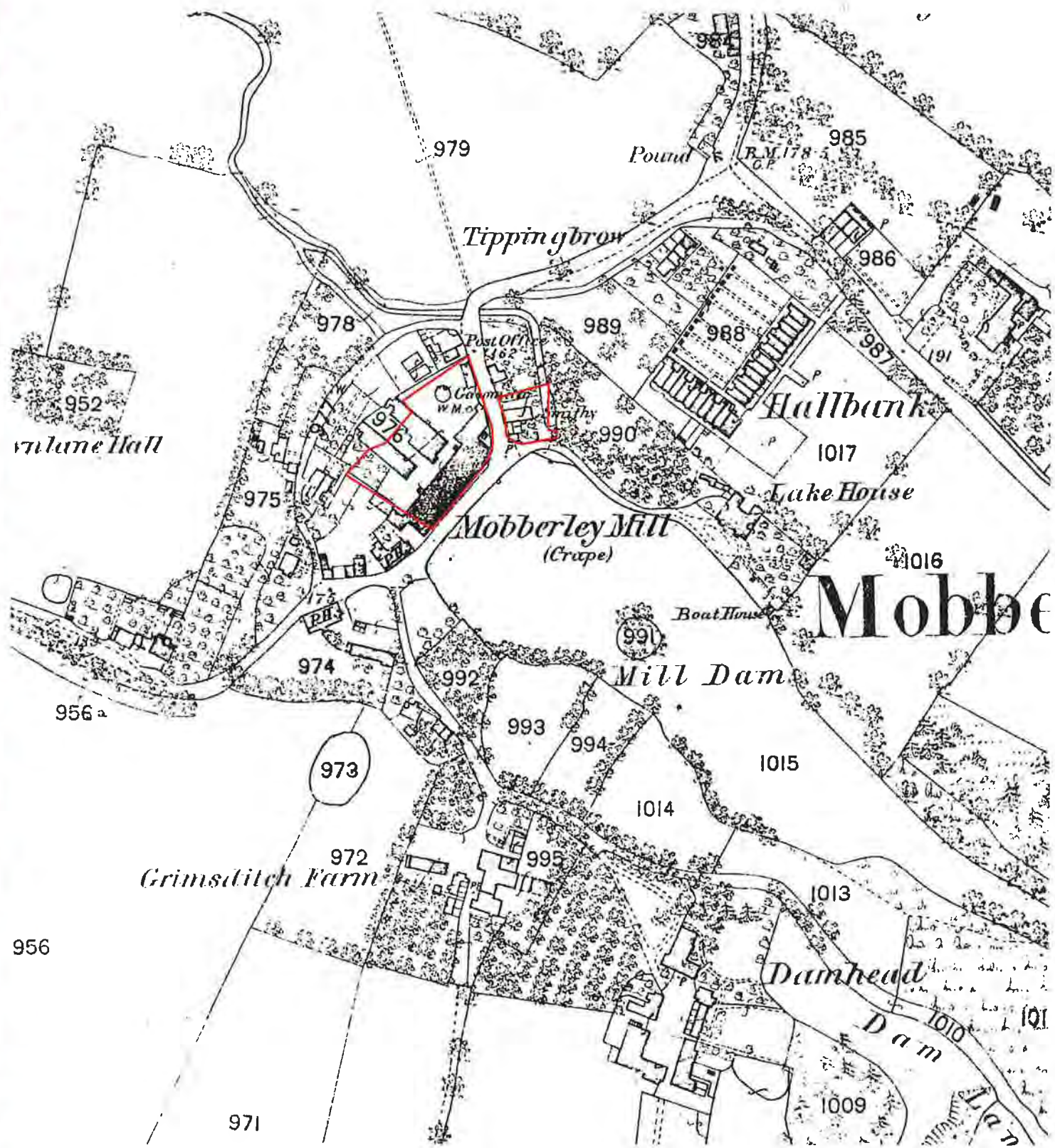


Fig 2: Detail of 1876 OS map, showing the study area (outlined) and its surroundings. Scale 1:2500.



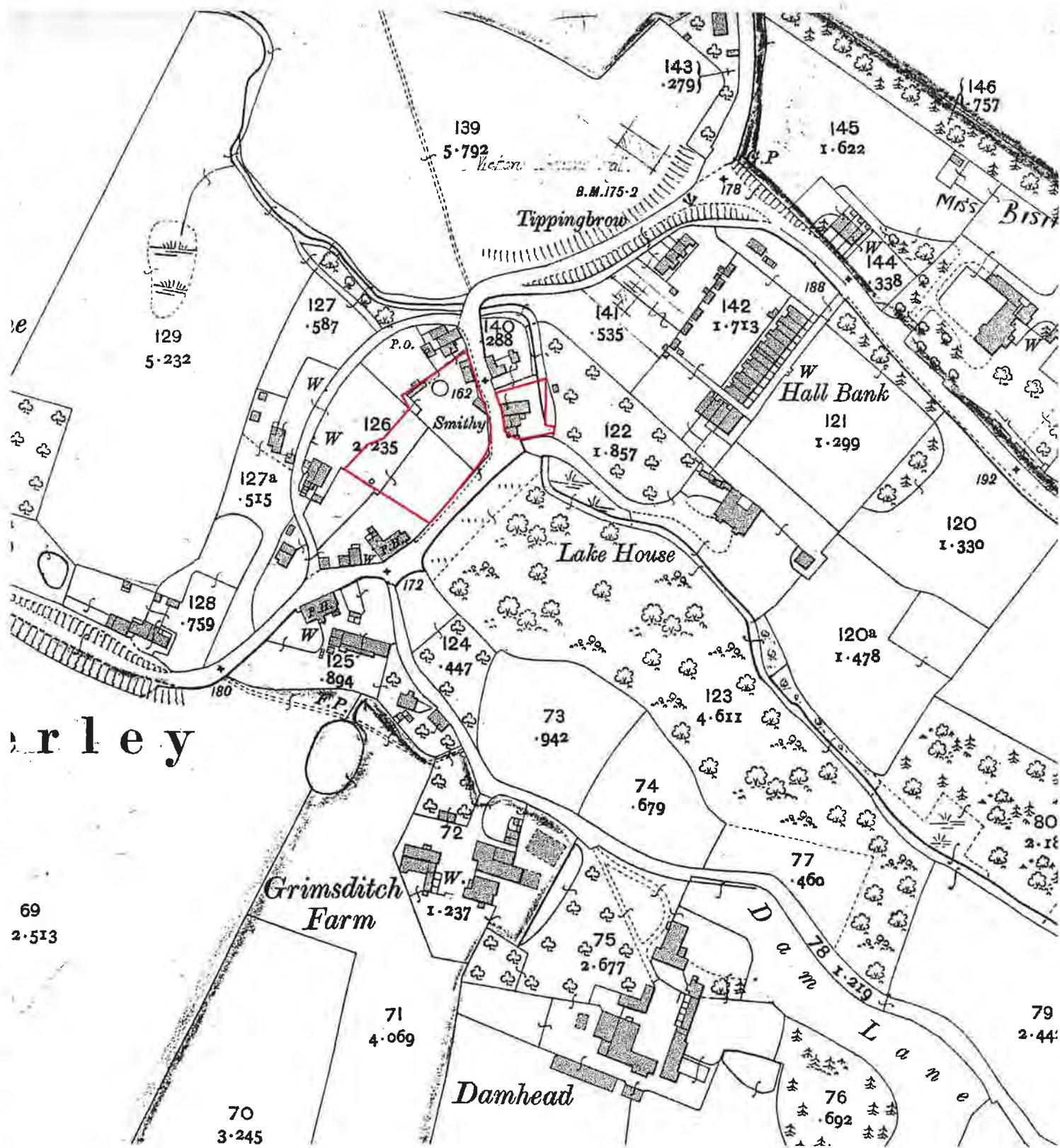


Fig 3: Detail of 1908 OS map, showing the study area (outlined) and its surroundings. Scale 1:2500.

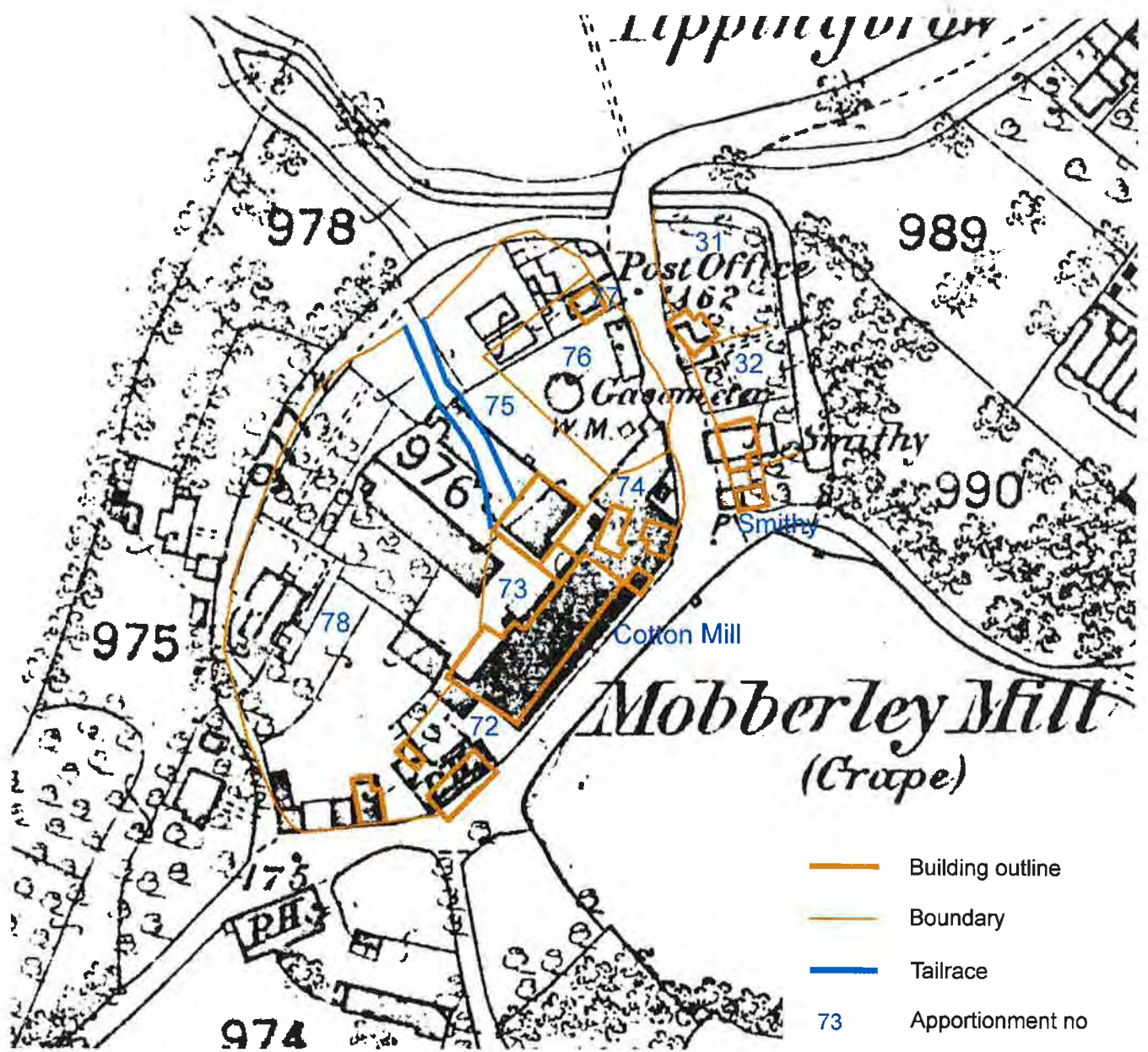
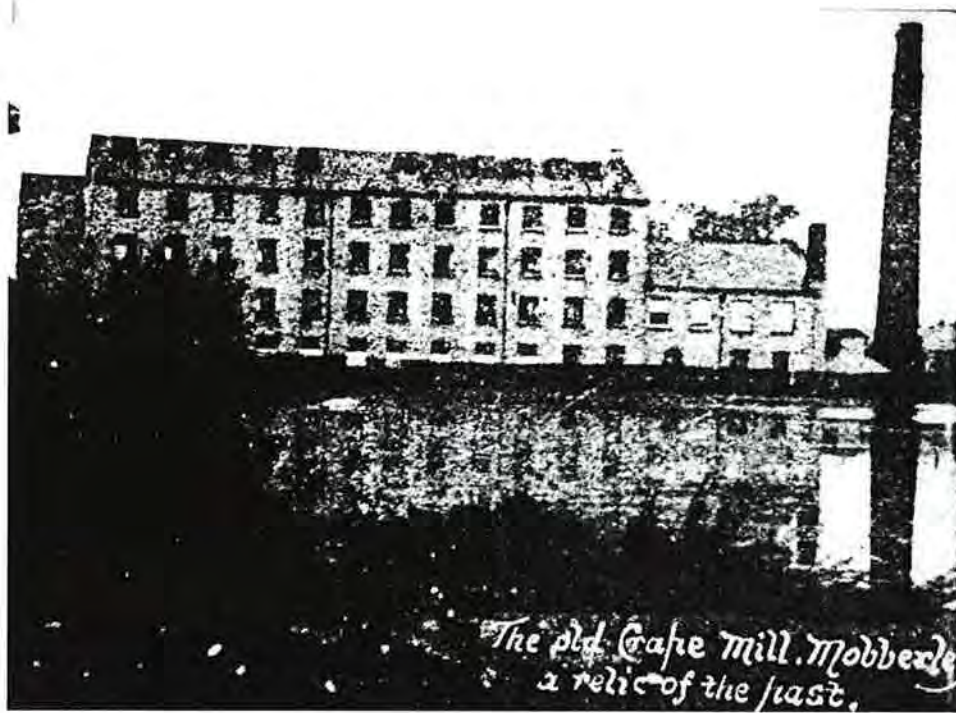


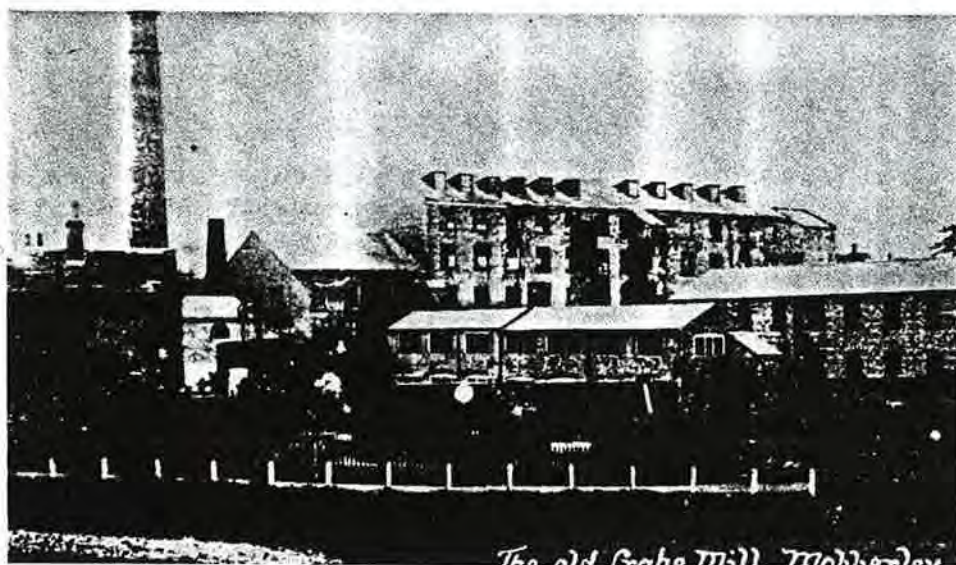
Fig 4: Detail of 1876 OS map. Overlaid are the buildings in and adjacent to the study area as shown on the 1839 Mobberley tithe map; for the key to the apportionment nos see Table 1 of this report. Scale 1:1250.



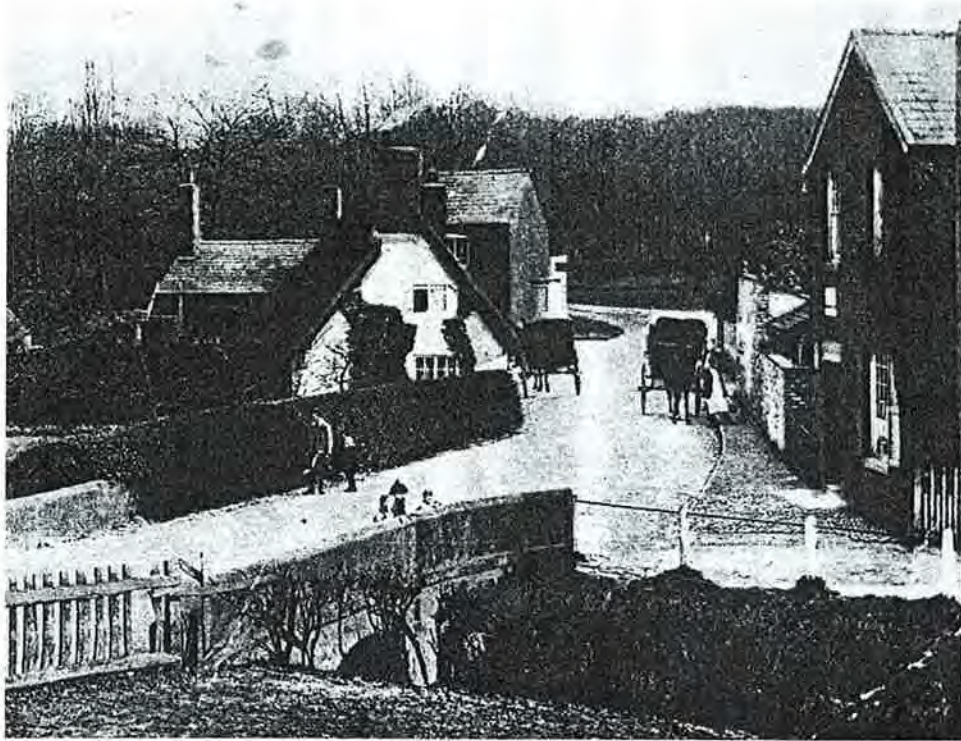
**Plate 1:** Old photograph of Mobberley Mill viewed from from south-east across mill-pond (Anon 1981).



**Plate 2:** Old photograph of Mobberley Mill viewed from north-east (Anon 1981).



**Plate 3:** Old photograph of Mobberley Mill viewed from north (Anon 1981).



**Plate 4:** Old photograph of Mill Lane, viewed from north, with the buildings on the Old Smithy Garage site in the centre rear, behind Old Smithy Cottage (Anon 1981).



**Plate 5:** Old photograph of Mill Lane, viewed from south, with the buildings on the Old Smithy Garage site on right, and Old Smithy Cottage in centre (Anon 1981).