

BEECH HURST

Butlers Green Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex

A report prepared for
Mid Sussex District Council

by
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BEECH HURST

BUTLERS GREEN ROAD
HAYWARDS HEATH
WEST SUSSEX

TQ 323238

Beech Hurst is a recreational public park laid out in the grounds of a now demolished mid-Victorian house. Parts of the basic layout of the original gardens have been retained together with some of their features.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The route of the 'London-to-Portslade Way' Roman road runs across the estate from the car park in the northwest to the southwest corner of the parkland and exiting into Bolnore Road (2004 Ordnance Survey map).

As can be seen from its '1809 Book of Plans', the Warden Sergison estate owned the land at Beech Hurst, it forming part of Great and Little Haywards Farms. The 1843 tithe map shows the estate was divided into a network of small fields.

While it is not known exactly when the house was built, its first owner was the Rev. Horatio Hickey and he and his family were in residence in the early 1860s. Later residents included a Rev. John Milner, who lived there during the 1870s; Robert Burnside, a schoolteacher who occupied Beech Hurst in the 1880s until he became bankrupt in 1887; Alfred Densham resided there in the 1890s and early 1900s; and by 1915 the owner was Henry Mansfield Knight.

In World War I, Beech Hurst became a military convalescent home for Haywards Heath Hospital, which stood just opposite the house's main entrance. In 1920 William Johnston Yapp purchased Beech Hurst from Henry Knight for £10,500. Yapp had made a considerable fortune through his tobacco company 'Carreras', but in addition to being an industrialist, Yapp was also a philanthropist. He made donations to worthy causes and during the 1930s he would open his garden to the public on Alexandra Rose Day. This philanthropic interest extended to William Yapp's family as one of his daughters adopted Sybille Kreutzberger, a young German-Jewish refugee fleeing from Nazi Germany. Miss Kreutzberger later became Joint Head Gardener with Pamela Schwerdt at Sissinghurst.

During World War II, Beech Hurst was requisitioned to serve as an Army camp. William Yapp moved to Tunbridge Wells and it was there that he died in 1946 at the age of 84. Yapp left approximately £4.4 million in his will and had set up a considerable trust fund for the welfare of his employees. This fund continued for 21 years until 1967. At that point the remaining funds were split into two new charitable trusts - The Yapp Welfare Trust' and The Yapp Education and Research Trust'. In 1999 these were combined to form a single trust - The Yapp Charitable Trust'. Approximately £250,000 is given annually by the Trustees in the form of about 100 grants to aid

small charities in the UK.

In accordance with William Yapp's will, the Trustees wished to gift the house and gardens to Cuckfield Urban District Council 'for the benefit of the inhabitants of the urban district of Cuckfield'. The house and gardens were handed over to Cuckfield UDC (now the Mid Sussex District Council) in 1950, together with a sum of £3000 for the restoration and adaptation of the house and grounds for their use as a community centre. The grounds were adapted to become a public recreation ground with a miniature railway, two bowling greens, tennis courts, a miniature golf course and tea rooms. The park opened c1954. However, some time in the previous two years the house was largely demolished and replaced by a brick-built arcaded quadrangle. The billiard room and stable block were, however, retained.

By 2003, the billiard room and stable block were taken down and replaced by a restaurant complex leased to Brewsters Inns. The arcaded quadrangle remains intact. At present in 2005, the public recreation grounds at Beech Hurst, together with its amenities, remain in the trusteeship of Mid Sussex District Council.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES

The Beech Hurst estate covers 14.8 acres (5.5 hectares). It is situated on the western outskirts of Haywards Heath and lies on the south side of the Haywards Heath to Cuckfield section of the A272. The land here rises slightly from the road to where the main house originally stood and then slopes down to the south to give extensive views towards the South Downs.

The northern boundary of the Beech Hurst estate runs parallel with the A272, while its east and west boundaries follow north-south lines to the adjacent properties - Elfinsward (now replaced by Haywards Heath Police Station) to the east, Parkfield and an adjoining field to the west. The southern extent of the estate tapers to its east side and is bounded by Bolnore Road.

The existing brick wall on the western section of the north boundary formed the wall of the kitchen gardens. It thought that originally a brick wall of a slightly lower height then extended as far as the Elfinsward boundary. At some time, possibly under the ownership of Cuckfield UDC, parts of this wall to the east were completely removed and the remaining walling lowered. These areas are now planted out with shrub beds. The 1874 OS map shows a narrow belt of deciduous and coniferous trees with an adjacent perimeter path following the line of the east, south and west boundaries of the estate. The 1910 OS map shows more trees had been planted along the eastern boundary. In 2005 this boundary has retained its belt of deciduous and coniferous trees together with a path adjacent to the boundary with Haywards Heath Police Station which is laid to grass and little used.

To date, there is in the southeastern corner of the estate a 4ft.(1.2m.) high Victorian iron gate which possibly formed part of the original iron boundary fence. The southern boundary has lost its

perimeter path and is planted with a mixture of trees, shrubs and hedging but with fewer ornamental varieties than existed in 1952 (Fig.1). The clump of trees in the far south-west corner shown on OS maps 1874-1938 still exists, whilst an access drive (post-1938) from Bolnore Road into the parkland has been constructed in this corner which runs north to the miniature railway workshops. (Curiously, the tree belts of the south and west boundaries are not shown on the 1910 OS map.)

The western boundary shows in the early 1950s (Fig.2a) a line of mature trees. Figure 2b, August 1952, shows these trees to have been cut back significantly. To date, this belt contains a number of horse chestnut and other deciduous trees.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The original entrance to the house was situated in the north boundary wall (OS maps 1874-1938), and its position appears to correspond approximately with the main entrance today (2005). A subsidiary entrance in the far north-west corner of the estate leads to the estate cottages.

The main entrance drive led southwards to a carriage-turning area to the north side of the house (Fig. 3). To the south-west of this entrance drive lay the stable courtyard, whilst to the east of the drive there were plantings of deciduous and coniferous trees, curving pathways and areas of what appears to be lawn. The OS maps between 1874 and 1938 show various minimal changes in this area. At some time after 1938, probably when Beech Hurst came under the ownership of Cuckfield UDC and was adapted into a park, a new splayed entrance was added along the northern boundary to the east of the original entrance and a new approach driveway created. To date, this has now been closed off to vehicles.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The house was situated to the north of the estate and was a substantial building of a roughly square design. It was three storeys high, brick-built with stone surrounds to the windows and ornamental gables (Fig. 4, early 1950s). A decorative archway surmounted by a stone deer stood at the turreted, north-east corner of the house. On the south side of the house was a conservatory (OS map 1874) which by 1910 had been enlarged to cover two-thirds of this side (Fig. 4). A stable block lay to the west of the house (OS map 1874), but by 1910 the OS map shows that this had been altered and covered three sides of a courtyard. So far it has not been possible to establish why, shortly after April 1952, under the ownership of Cuckfield UDC, the house was demolished. As it had been used by the Army during World War II and after William Yapp's death in Tunbridge Wells in 1946, it may well have been left empty and in a poor state of repair for some years. The arcaded brick quadrangle (previously mentioned), was built in its place with a sunken

central lawn and the flower beds between the pillars were planted out. (Video 1960s.) The stable block and billiard room were retained and there were plans for the British Legion to use it as its clubhouse, but seemingly this never took place. The billiard room and part of the stable block were then used as tea-rooms and later as a restaurant. Some fifty years later Brewsters Inns took over the site and demolished these remaining buildings to construct a new restaurant complex including a Sussex-style barn which opened in 2003. To date (2005) the quadrangle with its two substantial wisterias remain.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The 1874 OS map shows a large open area of lawn to the south of the main house, roughly oval in shape with a perimeter path. To the west of this path and lawn, there was a wide belt of deciduous and conifer trees with a path running north to south and leading through to the kitchen gardens. To date, this belt of trees is still extant and contains a number of mature holm oaks together with rhododendrons and shrubs. The 1910 OS map shows how the pleasure grounds had now been extended east and southwards into the parkland. Fig. 5 shows the level lawn to the south of the main house with a short flight of steps and a grass bank leading down to the lower lawn to the east. These steps have now been removed. The 1910 OS map also shows there was no longer any access westwards through the tree belt to the kitchen gardens. The video of Beech Hurst (circa 1960s) shows a good selection of specimen planting including pines, a blue Atlas cedar, red acers and golden-leaved shrubs around the south and east perimeters of the lawn. The oak tree by the south-east corner of the house still stands in 2005.

The 1984 OS map shows a small pond to the east of the arcaded quadrangle. By 2005 this has disappeared and the area is now a small rock garden planted with mature red acers and pines; to the south of this area is a children's playground. Overall, the lawns and paths of the pleasure grounds still follow the 1910-1938 layout.

Terraces: The south facade of the house with its adjoining conservatory had a terrace bounded by a stone balustrade surmounted by large flower urns (Fig. 6, pre-dating 1917). From this, central stone steps led down to another terrace and then in turn another flight led down to the lawn. These lower steps had, by 1950, been altered to form a semi-circular design with a millstone set into the top step. To the east, a flight of steps descended to the lawn, whilst shallow steps led down to the perimeter path to the west. By 1950 the stone balustrading and urns were no longer present (Fig 4). At an unknown date a flight of steps has been added to reach the eastern lower lawn while the steps to the west had, by 2005, been changed to a slope. Apart from the upper terrace, which is laid with modern paving, the remaining terracing is extant. There is now access through to the western part of the estate, possibly created in the 1950s with the adaptation of the estate into a recreational facility.

Summer houses: Figure 6 (pre-dating 1917) shows a thatched, rustic summer house with four steps leading up to a central doorway with a yucca planted to either side. The position of this summer house could well be the small building marked on the 1910 OS map south-west of the

house and overlooking the lawn to the east. By World War II, Figure 7 shows that the same, or a very similar style summer house, has now been re-positioned south-east of the pleasure gardens to overlook the parkland. There appears to be a pool with a concrete liner in front of the summer house. The summer house seems to have remained here until at least 1984 (OS map). No trace of this now remains although there is a millstone set into the ground near its position.

In Figure 4 (circa 1950s) another summer house appears to have been attached to the western end of the conservatory on the south side of the house. In 2005 a similar building exists to the east of the tennis courts but is in a poor state of repair. Some 82ft (25m) south of this summer house another millstone has been set into the grass.

Pergola: Figure 6 (pre-dating 1917) shows a rustic wooden pergola planted with flower borders either side with possibly a clipped hedge to the right. The present pergola appears to be of the same design. In January 1952 (Fig. 8) the pergola was in a dilapidated state but three months later (Fig. 9) it had been repaired, possibly by the new owners, Cuckfield UDC, and to date runs the full length of the south side of the original kitchen gardens' beech hedge boundary.

In 1952 (Fig. 10), two circular beds can be seen to the south of the pergola and planted out formally with bedding plants and there is the base and column of, possibly, a sundial. However, in 2005 only the base remains standing upon an octagonal millstone. At the far western end of the pergola is a stone 'well-head'. The iron hoops no longer exist although their fixings are still visible in the top. On one side is an inscription with the initials 'A G F', dated 1843. No information has come to light as to the history of this particular garden ornament, except that the 'well-head' was not in its present position in the 1950s (Fig 9).

Rose Garden: Figure 6, (pre-dated 1917), shows an elaborate rose garden with climbing roses growing up over numerous tall, iron archways. As yet, it has not been possible to establish the exact location of this rose garden although it may have been situated at the south-eastern end of the pergola.

KITCHEN GARDENS

The kitchen gardens were set out in the north-west part of the site and the 1874 OS map shows two small glasshouses, an estate cottage (possibly lived in by the gardener), an orchard and a pump. By 1896 one can see from the OS map that the layout of these gardens had been altered - the area of orchard to the west of the house had been enlarged and was enclosed by a wall on its west and south sides. An additional estate house had also been built adjoining the estate cottage. By 1910, the OS map of that date shows more changes had taken place. The orchard had been moved south-west out into the parkland close to the western boundary and the number of glasshouses had been increased to six, some of considerable size (Fig. 6). Prior to World War II,

the area to the south of these glasshouses and bounded by beech hedges was used for growing vegetables while figs were grown along the kitchen gardens' north boundary wall.

Some hooks and eyes used for the supporting wires are still visible in 2005. In the 1950s the orchard area appears to have been extended east of the old stable (Fig. 11). Since the development of the recreation ground in 1950, the south part of the kitchen gardens that is bounded by beech hedging to the north, west and south, now encloses three modern tennis courts. This beech hedging appears to date from before World War II.

By 1984 the gardens of the Beech Hurst cottages in the north-west corner of the estate had been extended southwards. More recently, they have been considerably shortened which has allowed a boules pitch to be provided. The low building which ran east to west across the southern facade of these cottages had been used as sculleries but this has since been demolished.

PARKLAND

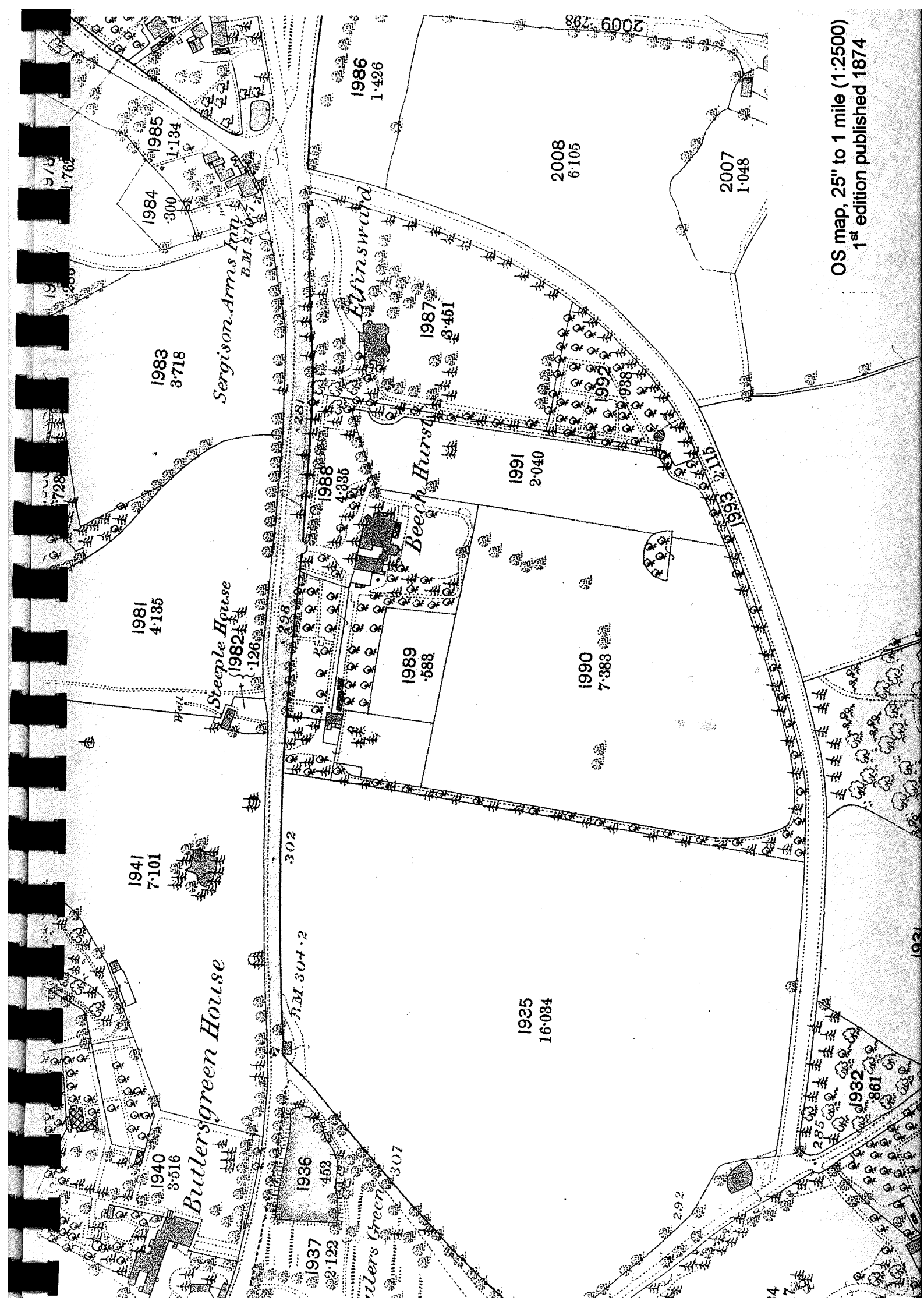
The parkland slopes north to south. The 1874 OS map shows that it covered approximately two-thirds of the estate. By 1910 the pleasure gardens had been extended further southwards into the parkland. Figure 1, 1950, shows this parkland consisted of grassland and a few trees. A clump of conifers formerly stood in the center of the parkland (OS maps 1896 and 1910); in the 1950s these had been replaced by deciduous trees. To date, these are underplanted with shrubs. When Cuckfield UDC took over Beech Hurst, it cut and levelled a portion of the parkland south of the pergola and kitchen garden in order to provide a level area for the miniature railway line and the laying of two bowling greens (Fig. 11). The old stable/piggery to the southwest of the bowling greens became the bowls pavilion.

A steep grass bank to the south of the bowling greens and railway track is the result of this levelling. The bank now leads down to the parkland, which has become a miniature golf-course. Steps lead up to a golf kiosk situated within the southwest promontory of the lawns.

In 1974 the Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society, with the Mid Sussex District Council's help, was able to extend the railway track into MDSC land beyond the original western boundary - the track is now half a mile in length. The miniature golf course was also extended westwards.

CONCLUSION

The Beech Hurst estate has remained intact for over 140 years and whilst there have been losses, most notably the house itself, gains have been made through provision of recreational facilities for the local community. These benefits have been made possible by the terms of William Yapp's will.



1941
7-101

1981
4-135

1983
3-718

1984
300

1985
1-134

Butlersgreen House

1940
3-516

Steeple House
(1982)

Sergison Arms Inn
B.M. 2707

302

B.M. 304.2

1936
452

1937
2-122

Willers Green
307

1989
588

1988
4-385

Beech Hurst

1987
3-451

1986
1-426

1925
16-034

1991
2-040

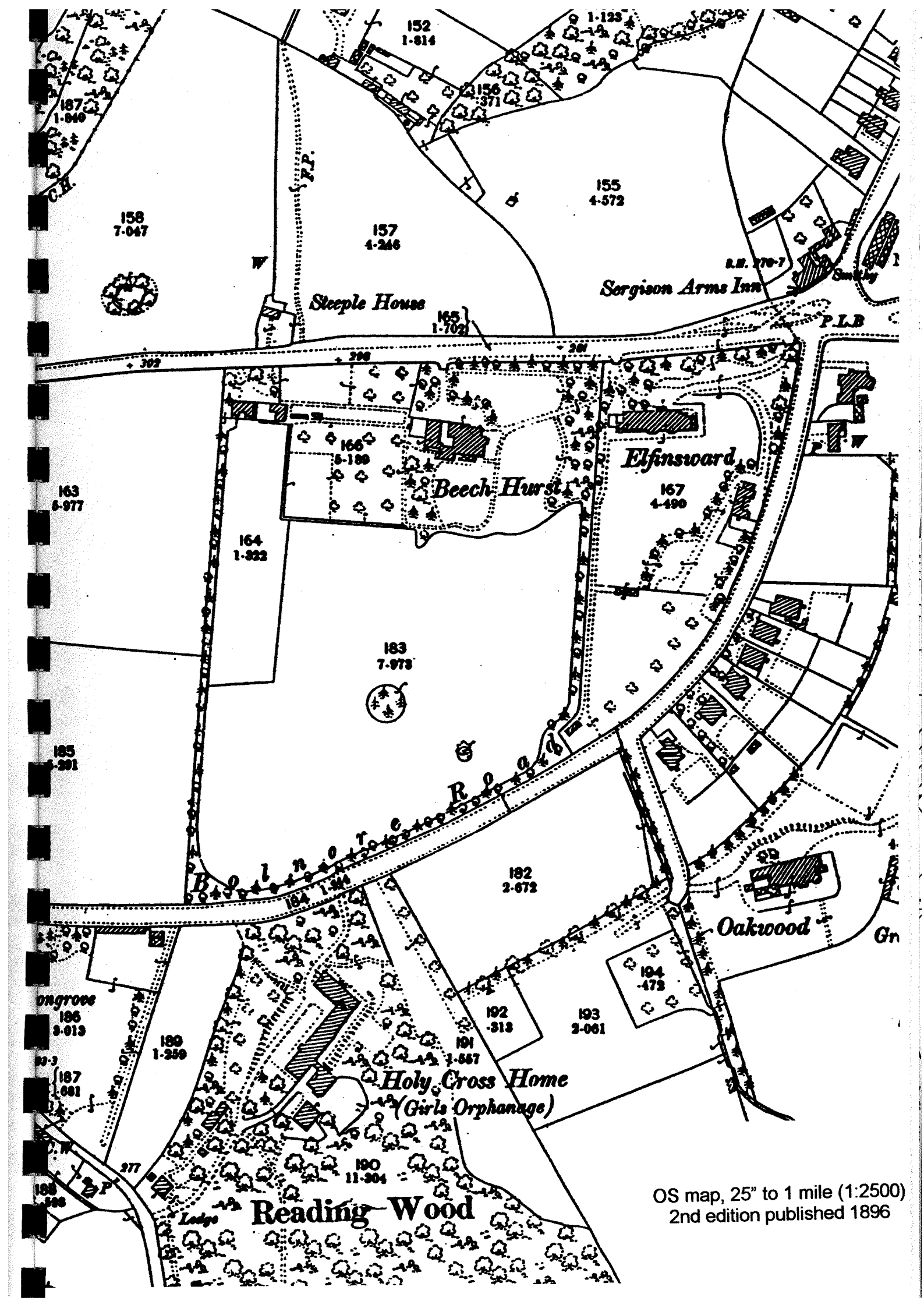
1990
7-388

2008
6-105

2007
1-048

1932
861

OS map, 25" to 1 mile (1:2500)
1st edition published 1874



152
1-814

155
4-572

158
7-047

157
4-246

Steeple House

Sorgison Arms Inn

165
1-702

Beech Hurst

Elfinsward

163
6-977

164
1-322

167
4-490

183
7-973

185
4-301

182
2-672

Oakwood

ongrove
186
3-913

189
1-238

187
1-081

Holy Cross Home
(Girls Orphanage)

192
3-18

193
2-061

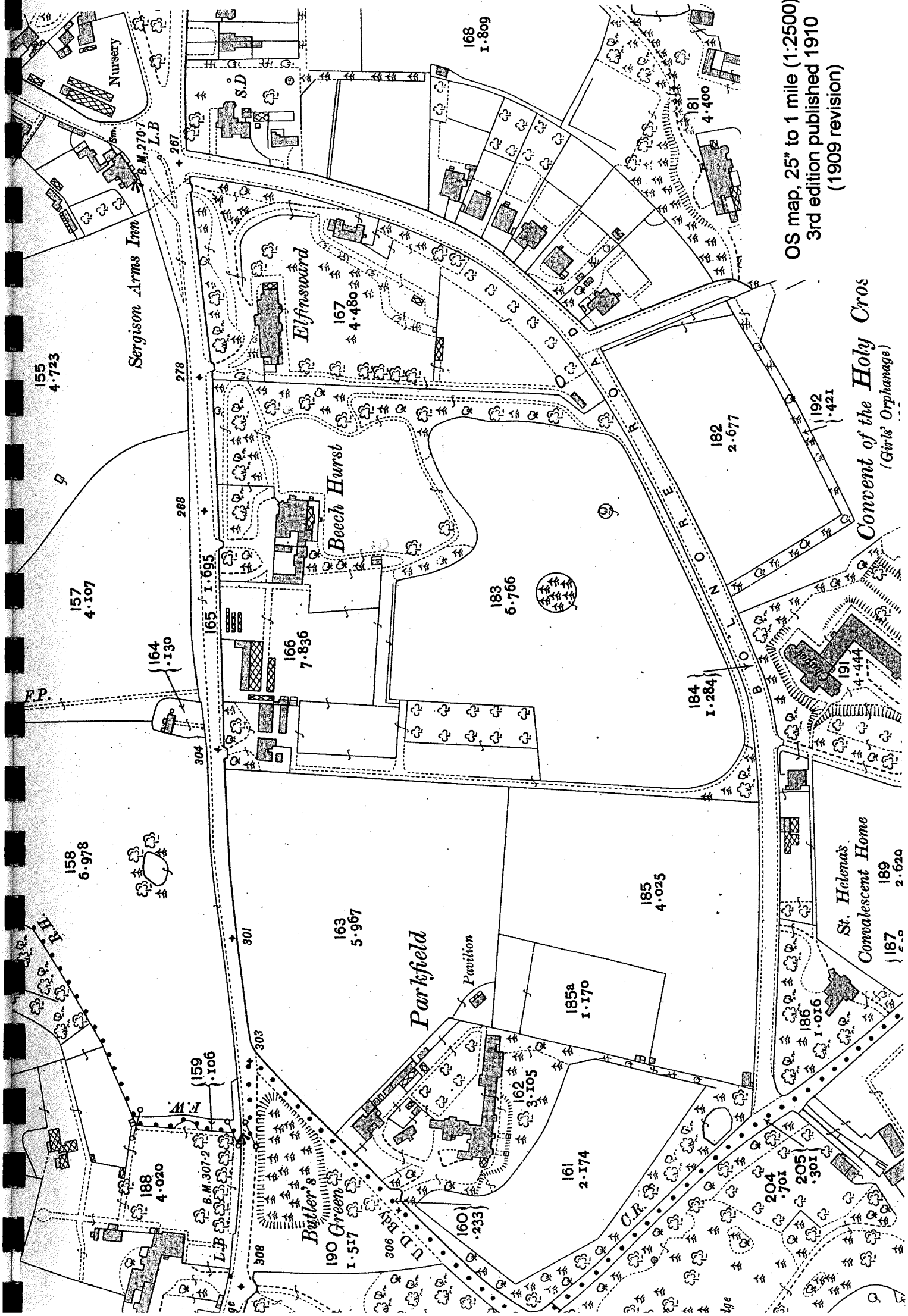
194
4-473

188
2-298

190
11-304

Reading Wood

OS map, 25" to 1 mile (1:2500)
2nd edition published 1896



OS map, 25" to 1 mile (1:2500)
 3rd edition published 1910
 (1909 revision)

Convent of the Holy Cross
 (Girls' Orphanage)

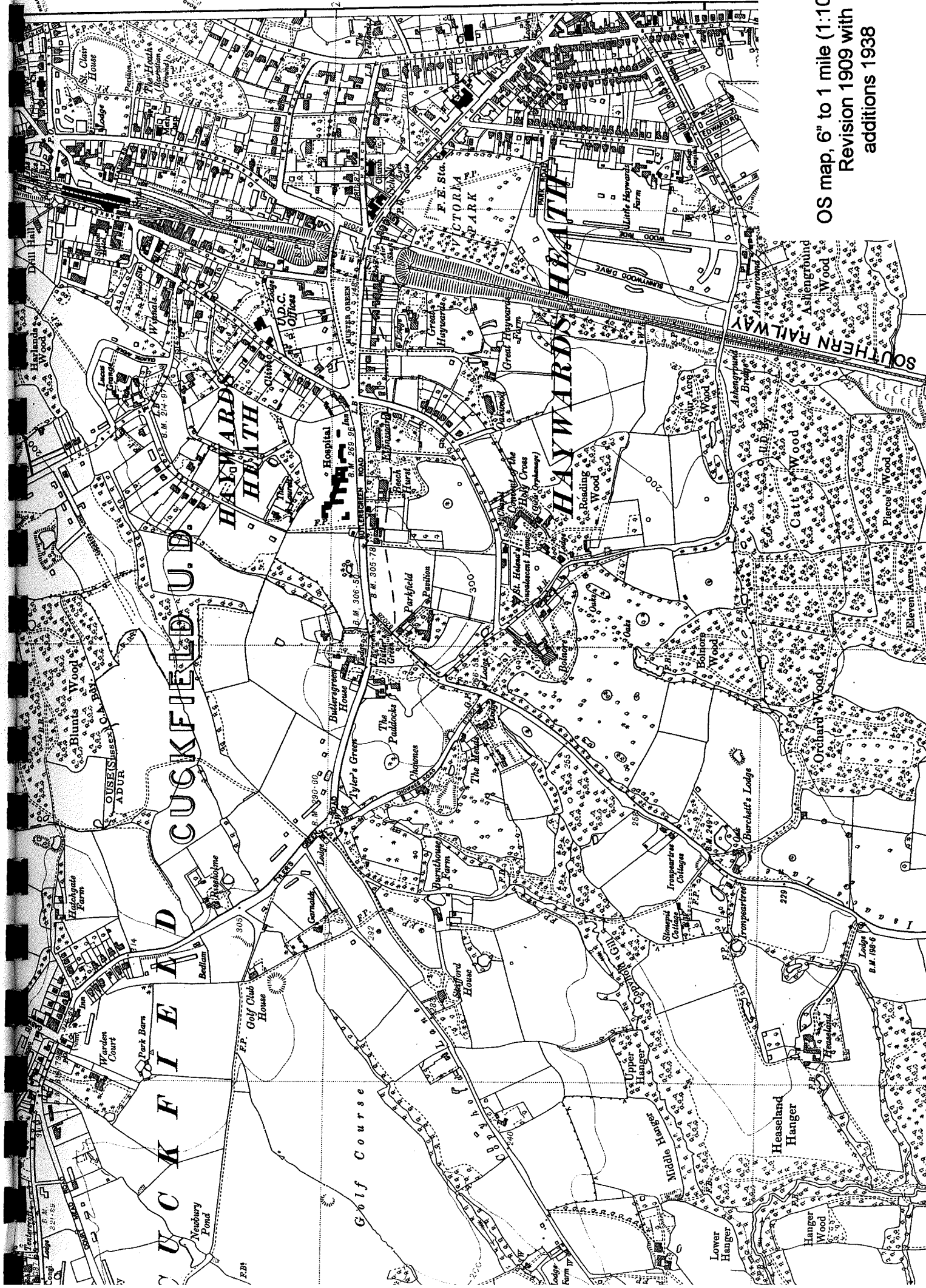
St. Helen's
 Convalescent Home

LAT. 51° 0'

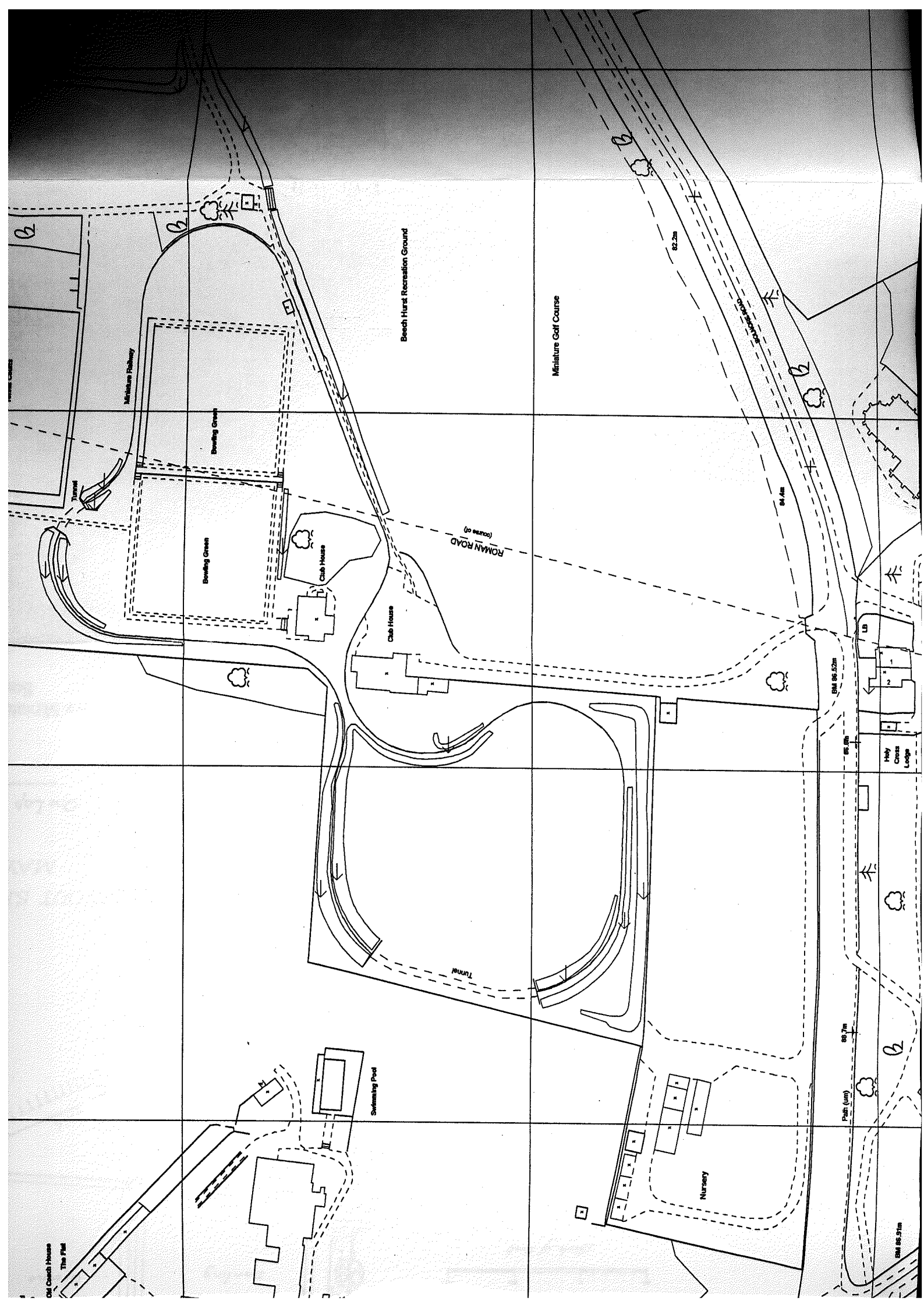
XXVI. S. E.

Partly Div.

30'



OS map, 6" to 1 mile (1:10560)
 Revision 1909 with
 additions 1938



Beech Hurst Recreation Ground

Miniature Golf Course

Miniature Pathway

Bowling Green

Bowling Green

Club House

Club House

ROMAN ROAD
(course of)

82.2m

84.4m

86.8m

88.7m

89.52m

Path (unit)

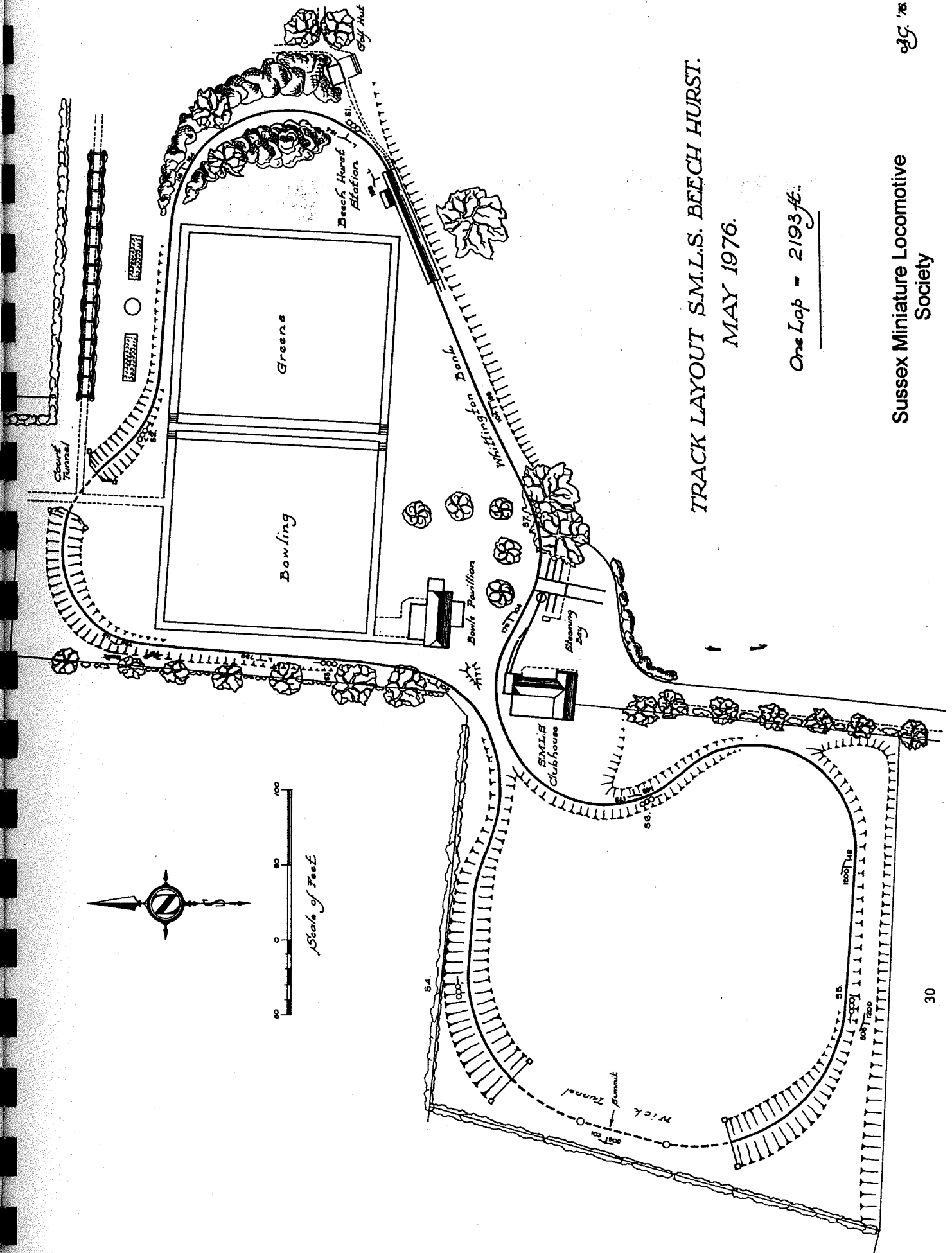
89.52m

Nursery

Swimming Pool

Old Church House
The Flat

Holy Cross
Lodge



TRACK LAYOUT S.M.L.S. BEECH HURST.

MAY 1976.

One Lap = 2193 ft.

PLATES

**Credits for the following individual photographs/postcards are due to:
Figs. 1, 2a, 2b, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11: The Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society;
Figs. 3, 5, 6: D. Tucker; Fig. 7: I. Staynes.**



Figure 1 - View to south overlooking parkland. August 1952.



Figure 2a - Western boundary. Early 1950s.

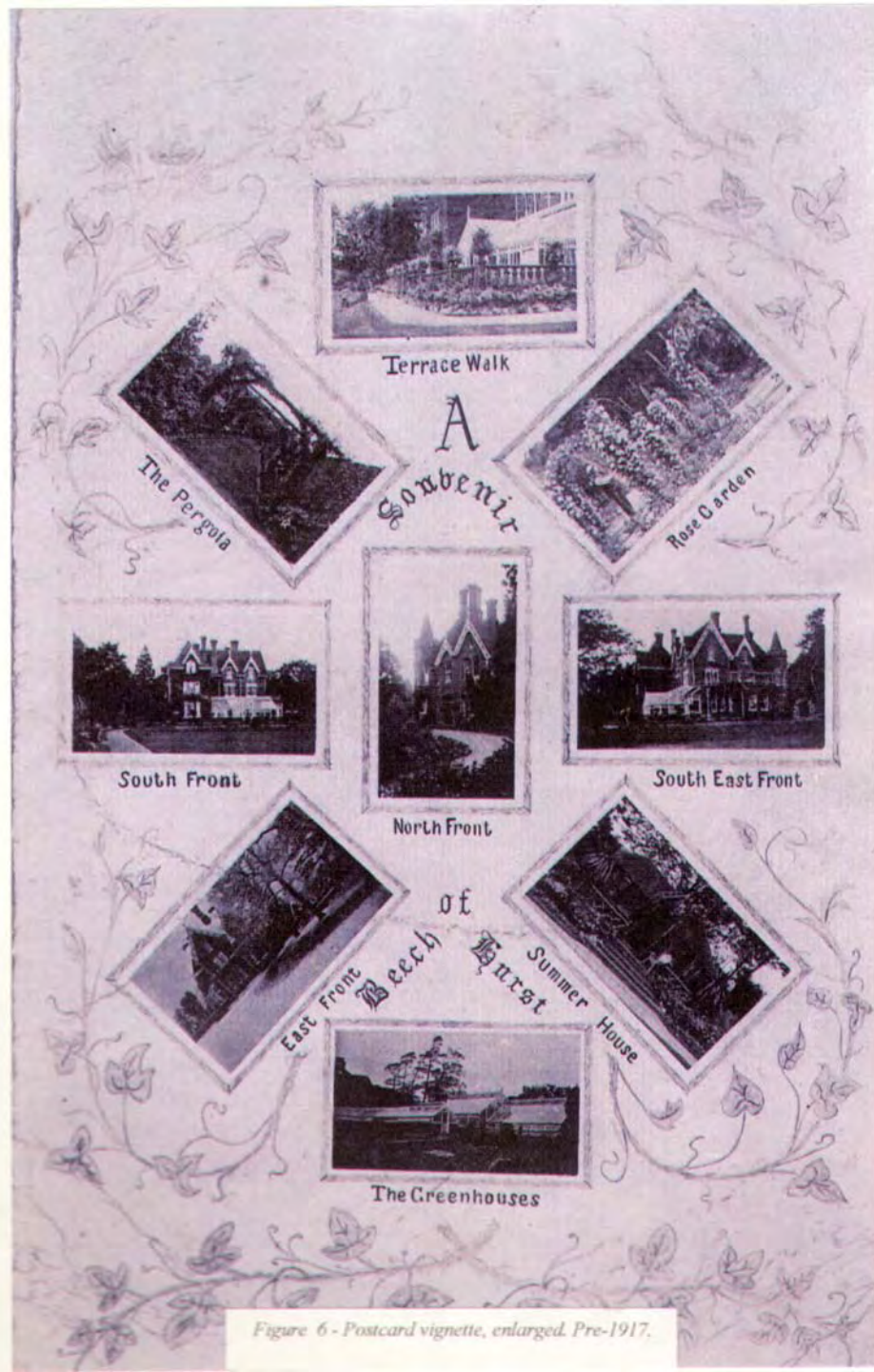


Figure 6 - Postcard vignette, enlarged. Pre-1917.



Figure 2b - View looking towards western boundary. August 1952.





Figure 4 - The southern facade of the house. Early 1950s.

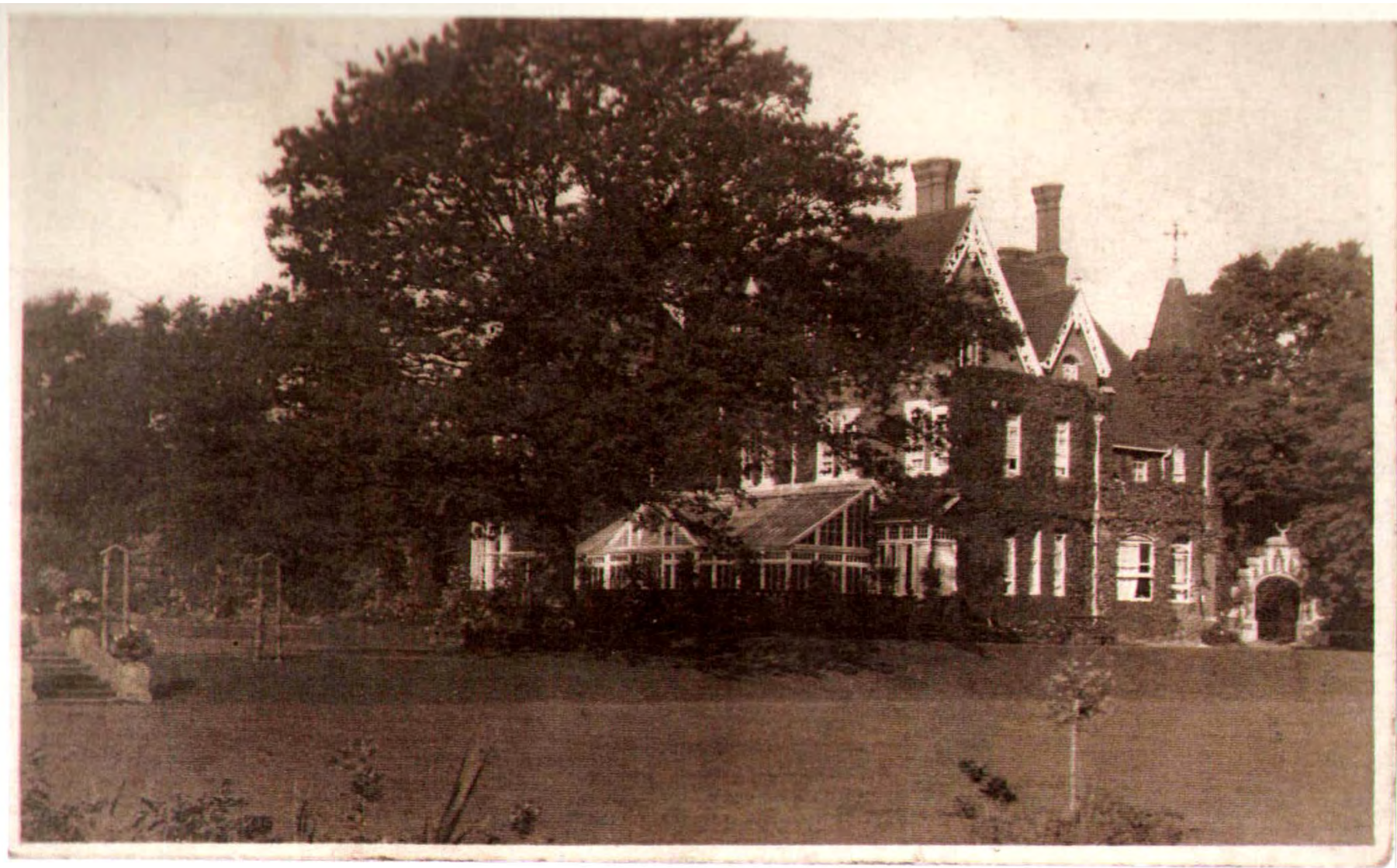


Figure 5 - View of the south and east facades of the house. Circa 1920s.



Figure 7 - Summer house. World War II.



Figure 8 - View to north-east. January 1952.



Figure 9 - View looking north-west. March 1952.



Figure 10 - View looking east. April 1952.



Figure 11 - View looking south-east, showing bowling greens and possibly part of orchard. Early 1950s.

REFERENCES

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W. Ford and A. C. Gabe *'The Metropolis of Mid Sussex'*, 1981.

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Clarke's: Mid Sussex Directory and Year Book 1915.

Maps

West Sussex Record Office:

Tithe map, 1843 TD/E.91 Cuckfield Parish.

OS maps:

25" to 1 mile (1:25000)
1st Ed published 1874
2nd Ed " 1896
3rd Ed " 1909
(Revised 1910)

6" to 1 mile (1:10560)
Published 1909 (Revised 1938)

50" to 1 mile (1:1250)
Published 2004

Archival items

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1809 Book of Plans, Warden Sergison estate.

Bill of Sale - R. Burnside. Ref: 1885-1887 AMS29, Add Mss 26549.
10.

Mid Sussex District Council Planning Department:

Refs: G50/67 cc 29.6.50. G70.179 cc 14.7.70.

Census Returns: 1861, 1871, 1891, 1901.

South-East Film and Video Archive - video clips of Beech Hurst 1950-1960s.

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APPENDIX 1

Selection of photographs of Beech Hurst from the early 1950s,
by courtesy of the Sussex Miniature Locomotive Society.



EAST EMBANKMENT

APR '52



SITE LOOKING W



EAST EMBANKMENT

APR 52



SNOW

JAN '52