

Walmley Ash Lane

By Barbara Webb

Beyond the Woods.

'Walmley and Beyond the Woods' was one of the old quarters of the town of Sutton Coldfield which lay in the extreme north-west of the ancient Hundred of Hemlingford, an administrative subdivision of the shire of Warwickshire. Within this area known as Beyond the Woods lay hamlets, farms, smallholdings and estate lands in the century, with a series of interconnecting lanes, including Walmley Ash Lane.

Field walking in the Beyond the Woods area over a number of years has revealed evidence of ancient settlements. Mesolithic flints, Roman and Medieval pottery and coins have been found. Domesday documentation reveals land ownership here under the Saxons.

Walmley Ash Lane (grid reference SP147929 to SP157928) once meandered through open countryside. Its position, in the south-eastern corner of Sutton Coldfield, meant that its inhabitants lived nearer to the villages of Minworth, Curdworth and Water Orton than to the town of Sutton Coldfield. Ash Farm, at that time, was over the boundary and within the hamlet of Minworth.

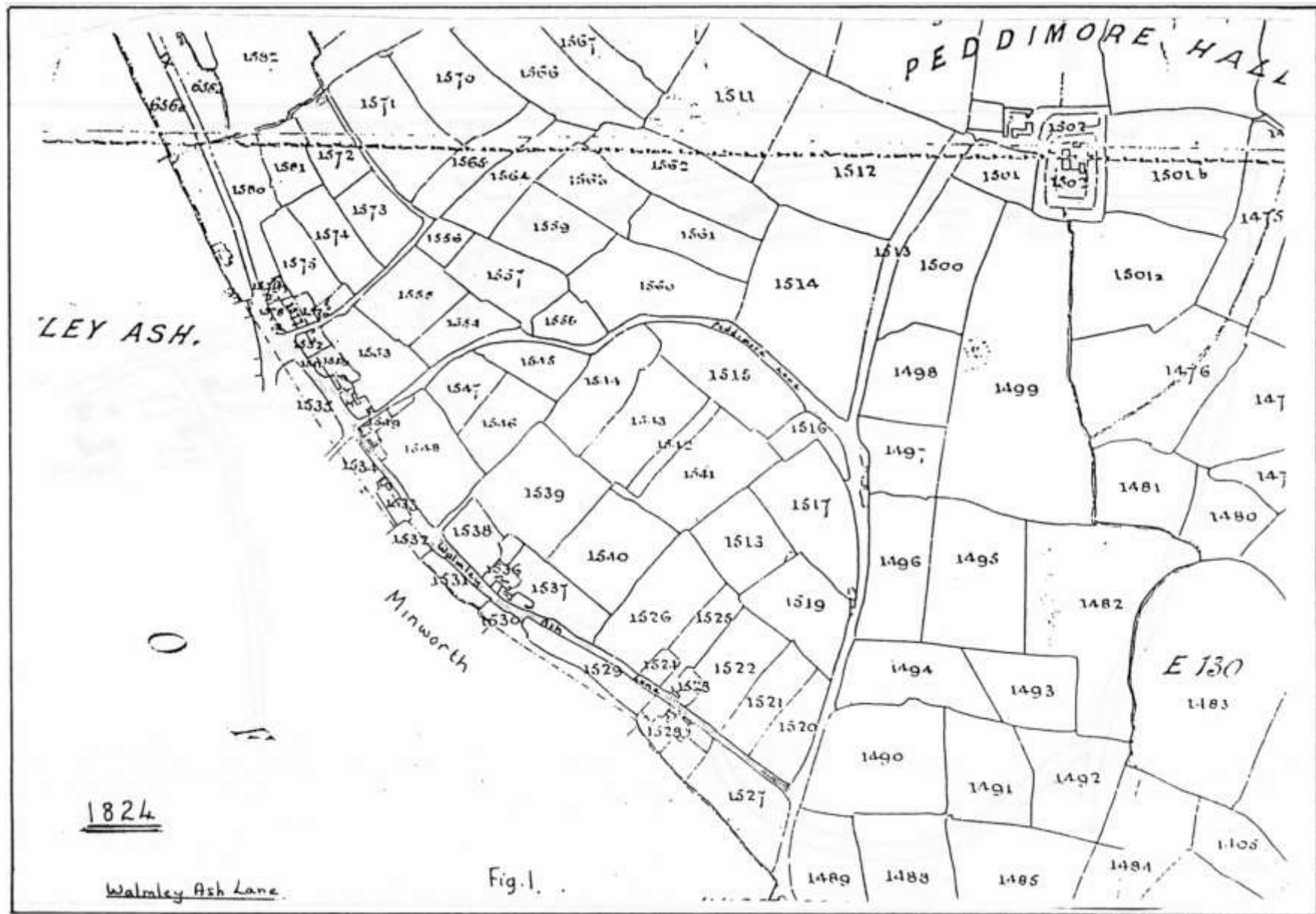
The beginning of the 19th Century.

Walmley Ash Lane is sited within an historic landscape, but how can we discover who lived there at the beginning of the century? Land tax returns of 1773 reveal the names of residents in Walmley and Beyond the Wood who paid the tax. It does not identify which particular house the tax-payer lived in.

The key used to unlock some of the history of this area in the century, was the 1824 *Corn Rent* survey, with its accompanying *Apportionment Book*. On the survey map (fig. 1) each property and field is numbered, and in the apportionment book the size of each property is recorded in acres, roods and perches, and the names of the owner and the occupier are given. The sizes of the properties indicated large and small farms, houses, and tenements. The owners' and occupiers' names gave life to the lane, especially when they could be linked to dwellings that still remain today. Table A records all the fields and buildings in the lane in 1824 — with their owners and occupiers. The map of the lane shows where the people lived (fig.2).

The People in the Lane in 1824.

We only have four owner-occupiers: Mary Swift, Henry Brookhouse, William Deakin and John Wright. John Wright owned just over five acres of land and the tenements and gardens where William Ames and Benjamin Weaver lived, and he had more land to the east of the map. William Deakin's house was divided into two, Joseph Morris shared the other half and they shared a garden. William also owned just over six acres of land. Henry Brookhouse owned more land than appears on the map, to the north-east and north-west of his farm, and in addition he owned the tenements and



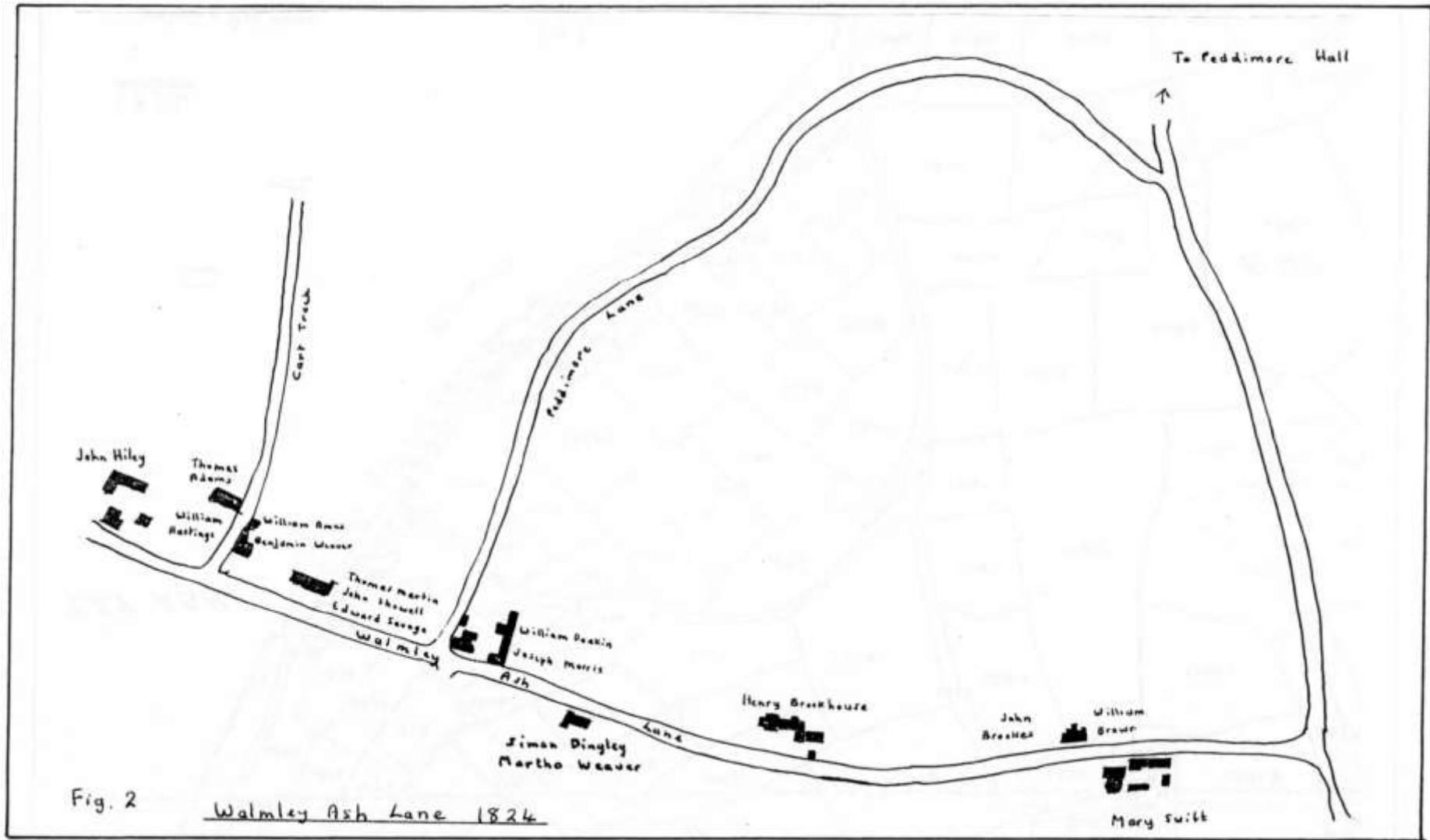
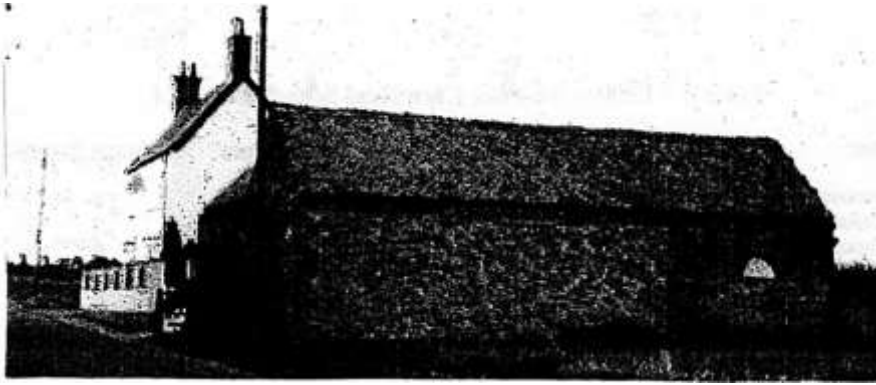


Fig. 2

Walmley Ash Lane 1824

Table A - Extract from the Corn Rent Schedule of 1824

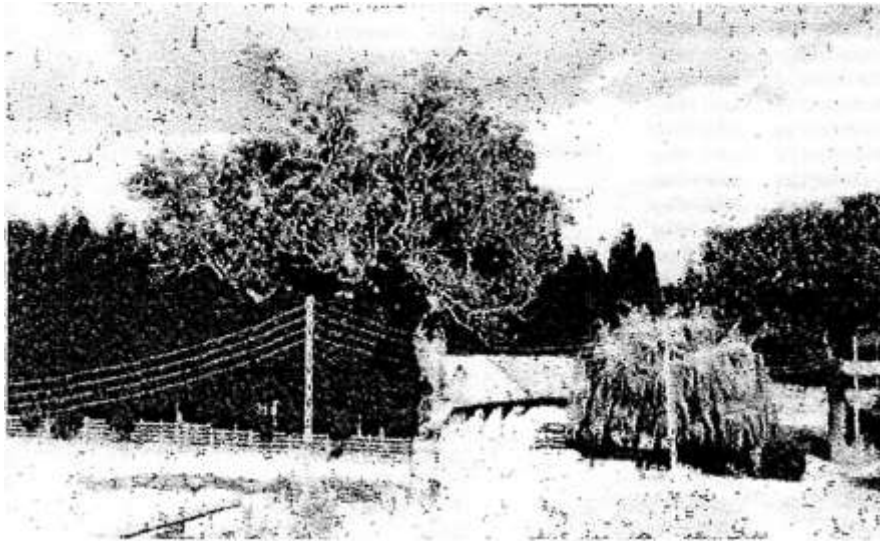
<u>Owner</u>	<u>Occupier</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Property name</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Roods</u>	<u>P</u>
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1515	Peddimore Lane Close	3	1	2
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1531	Little Meadow	0	2	2
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1534	Croft	0	1	38
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1543	Hacknels	2	2	27
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1536	House, bldgs & garden	0	2	32
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1537	Back Meadow	1	2	9
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1538	Broom Croft	0	3	39
Henry Brookhouse	Henry Brookhouse	1540	Middle Close	3	1	2
Henry Brookhouse	Simon Dingley	1533	Tenement & garden	0	0	24.5
Henry Brookhouse	Mafia Weaver	1533	Tenement & garden	0	0	24.5
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1532	Part of close	0	1	1
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1535	Pt. of Roundabout	0	2	9
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1539	Hacknells	3	1	13
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1558	Yew Tree Croft	1	0	19
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1562	Smithfield	3	1	35
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1542	Third of meadow	0	0	34
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1585	New Leasow	5	3	32
Hon. B.P.Noel	William Jenkins	1593	Ridding	5	0	34
Thomas Rochford	Thomas Martin	1550	3 tenements with	0	2	31
Thomas Rochford	John Showell	1550	barn, buildings			
Thomas Rochford	Edward Savage	1550	and croft			
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1553	House Close	1	3	38
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1554	Far Close	1	0	28
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1555	Middle Close	2	1	27
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1556	Croft	0	3	10
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1565	Long Croft	1	3	38
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1566	3 acres	3	2	35
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1567	2 acres	2	1	15
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1569	The Moor	2	1	4
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1570	Far Moor Close	3	1	14
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1571	Near Moor Close	3	1	18
Thomas Rochford	Joseph Dixon	1572	Brook Close	1	2	2
Thomas Rochford	Richard Knight	1574	Walmley Croft	1	3	0
Thomas Rochford	Richard Knight	1575	Croft	1	1	27
Thomas Rochford	Richard Knight	1581	Croft	1	0	33
Thomas Rochford	Thomas Adams	1523	2 tenements	0	0	26
Thomas Rochford	William Hastings	1523	and gardens	0	0	26
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1520	Lower Piece	1	3	7
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1521	Middle Piece	1	2	2
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1522	House Piece	2	2	19
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1526	Upper Piece	1	0	21
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1527	Meadow	2	0	7
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1528	House, bldgs. £ gdn.	1	0	21
Mary Swift	Mary Swift	1528	The Moor	1	1	11
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1516	Shoulder of Muton	0	3	31
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1518	First Close	1	3	30
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1519	Second Close	2	1	37
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1541	Hacknells	3	1	29
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1577	Rickyard and croft	0	0	25
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1578	House, buildings	0	0	30
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1579	and garden	0	0	30
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1580	Croft	1	2	22
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1557	Close	2	0	39
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1559	Yew Tree Close	2	0	22
George Wakefield jnr.	John Hiley	1560	Peddimore Lane Piece	3	2	31
Warden and Society	John Brookes	1599	Croft	1	0	24
John Wright	John Wright	1517	Broad Leasow	3	3	1
John Wright	John Wright	1573	Walmley Close	1	3	28
John Wright	William Ames	1551	Garden	0	0	14
John Wright	William Ames	1552	2 tenements and	0	0	21
John Wright	Benjamin Weaver	1552	gardens	0	0	21
William Deakin	William Deakin	1549	Pt. House & gdn	0	0	30
William Deakin	Joseph Morris	1549	Pt. House & gdn	0	0	30
William Deakin	William Deakin	1548	Far Close	3	0	7
William Deakin	William Deakin	1545	Little Close	1	3	10
William Deakin	William Deakjn	1546	Yew Tree pieces		1	10
William Deakin	William Deakin	1547				



Ash Cottage — east elevation



The Georgian House — Forge Farm



Bungalow built on the site of
Walmley Ash Cottage

gardens where Simon Dingley and Martha Weaver lived. Benjamin Weaver and Martha Weaver may have been related. Mary Swift has a house and a total land holding of thirteen acres two roods and ten perches.

The other tenements and farms were owned by The Honourable Berkeley Plantagenet Noel, Thomas Rochford, The Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield and George Wakefield Junior. In Thomas Rochford's tenements lived John Showell, Thomas Martin, and Edward Savage. They also had a barn and croft — much larger tenements than those belonging to Henry Brookhouse. John Hiley had the farmhouse and buildings and farmed George Wakefield junior's land. In John Scott's tenements lived John Brookes and William Brown — they too had gardens. Gardens would have been essential to the tenants — they could grow vegetables and fruit to help feed their families, keep a few hens and most probably a pig.

In 1820 Thomas Rochford and Henry Brookhouse were Overseers of the Poor. On February 14th 1820 it was ordered that Benjamin Weaver's wife should have seven yards of linen towards clothing her children. John Brookes, in 1822, was awarded a payment of one shilling a week; his widow, in 1828, was awarded three shillings a week and given two shifts and two aprons to enable her two daughters to go out into service. In April 1832 the Overseers gave John Showell one pound towards burying his brother. These payments show that at least three families in the lane were poor and in need.

Changes affecting Walmley Ash Lane

Between 1824 and 1856 there were many changes in tenants and land and property ownership in Walmley Ash Lane (table B).

Under the new Poor Law of 1834 the parishes of Sutton Coldfield, Curdworth, Minworth and Aston were joined to form the Aston Union. The 1839 Aston Union Rate Book contains valuations of all properties liable to poor rates. These valuations were used as the basis for the 1856 Parochial Valuation with its detailed map and schedule. Figure 3 shows Walmley Ash Lane with its Valuation numbers; the schedule records the dimensions of houses and outbuildings.

To explain some of the changes it was necessary to refer to the rate books for 1848 - 54. These revealed that both Thomas Rochford and Joseph Dixon, his tenant, had died, and by matching land areas it was discovered that 19 acres 1 rood and 38 perches of this land were purchased by George Wakefield and added to William Hiley's farm. Henry Brookhouse junior's house and just over three acres of land had been purchased by the Corporation, and George Wakefield had acquired the remaining 8 acres. Henry Brookhouse senior had retained his house and 17 acres of land but the Corporation had taken over the remaining 117 acres.

The Langleys — Ash Cottage and the Georgian House.

We have a new family in the lane — the Langleys. James was a master-bricklayer, employing four men, and he had a servant waggoner (1851 Census). The 1856 map shows that he lived at Ash Cottage, a two-storey house with a workshop 73' x 12', barn, stables, cow- and cart-house, all owned by Alice Brooks. She was also named

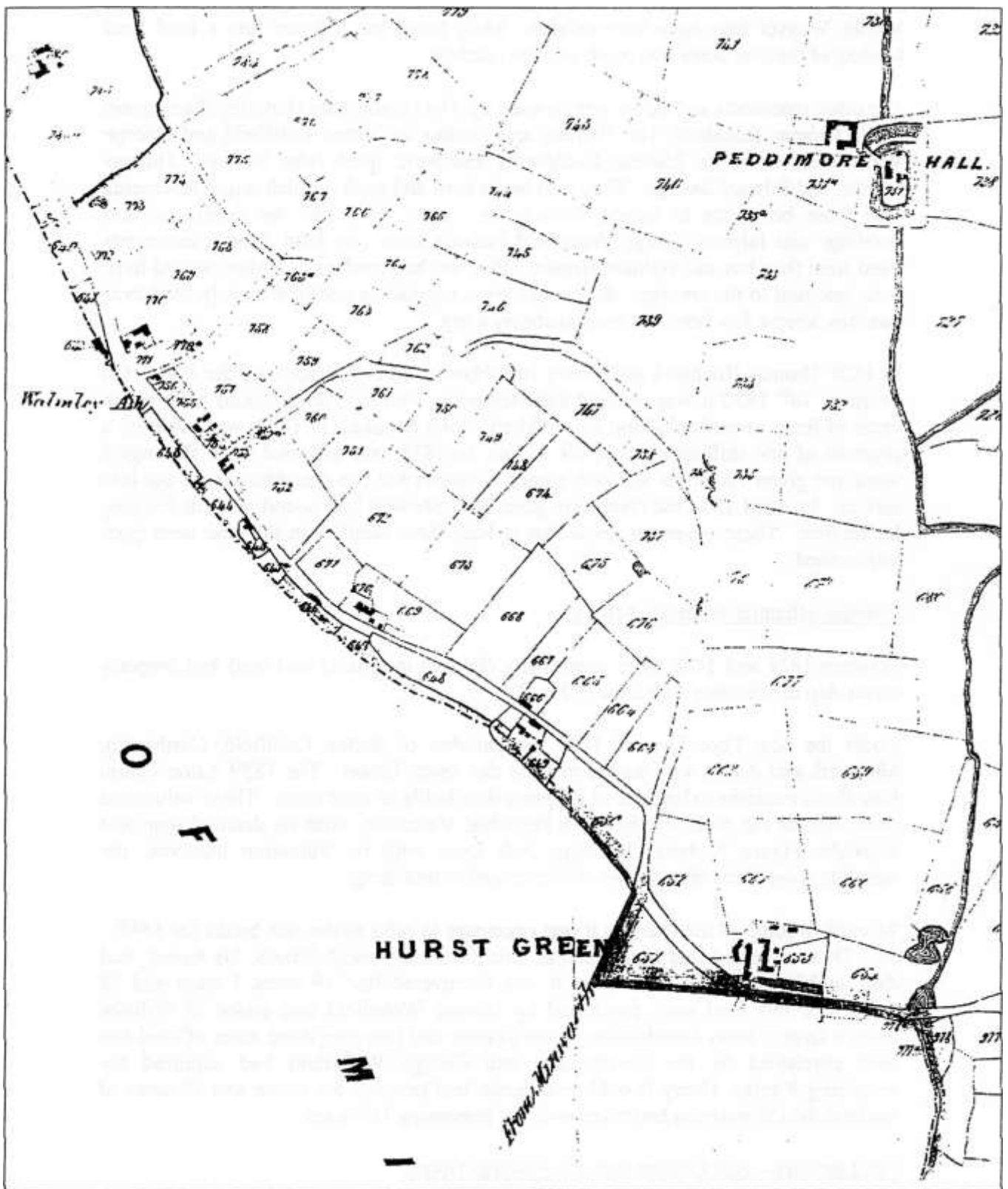
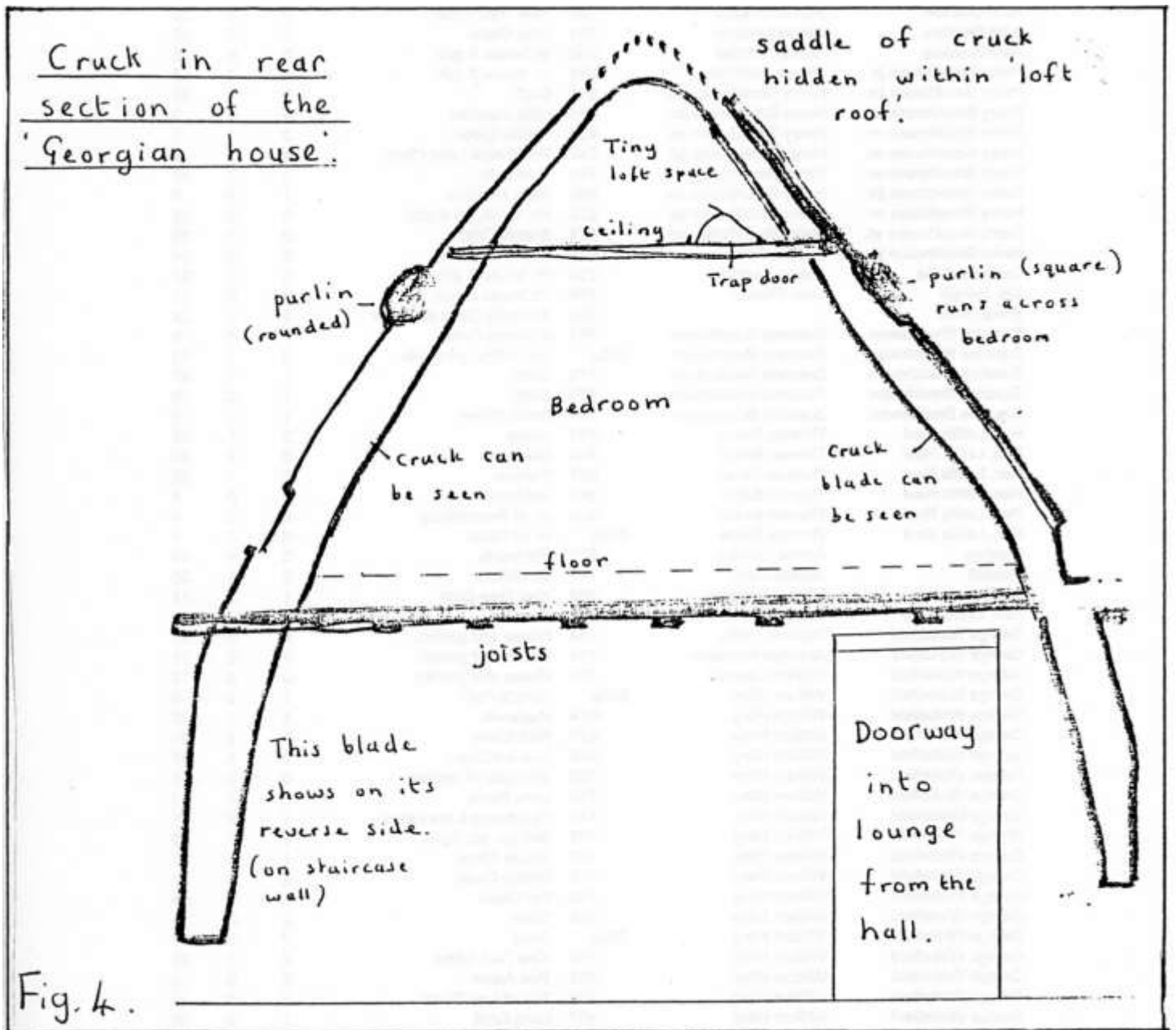


Fig. 3 ~ The 1856 Parochial Val on Map · Walmley Ash Lane

Table B - Extract from the Parochial Valuation of 1856

Owner	Occupier	Number	Property name	Acres	Road	P
Alice Brookes	Michael Kitteridge	648	The Moor	1	1	11
Alice Brookes	Edward Langley	649	House, bldgs, yd. & gdn.	1	0	21
Alice Brookes	Edward Langley	650	Meadow	2	0	7
Alice Brookes	Mrs Langley	663	Lower Piece	1	3	7
Alice Brookes	Mrs Langley	664	Middle Piece	1	2	2
Alice Brookes	Mrs Langley	665	House Piece	2	2	39
Nice Brookes	Mrs Langley	667	Croft	1	2	26
Alice Brookes	Mrs Langley	668	Upper Croft Piece	3	0	3
Alice Brookes	James Langley	748	Close	0	2	22
Alice Brookes	James Langley	750	Far close	3	0	7
Nice Brookes	James Langley	751	Yew Tree Piece	0	2	25
Alice Brookes	James Langley	752	The meadow	3	0	7
Alice Brookes	James Langley	752a	House, buildgs,	0	1	20
Alice Brookes	James Langley	753	yard and gardens			
Alice Brookes	James Langley	760	Yew Tree Piece	0	2	25
Alice Brookes	James Langley	761	Little Close	1	3	10
Alice Brookes	Richard Walker	666	pt. house & gdn.	0	0	26
Henry Brookhouse jn.	James Anderton	645	pt. house & gdn.	0	0	25
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	644	Croft	0	1	38
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	646	Little meadow	0	2	2
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	673	Middle Close	3	1	2
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	747	Peddimore Lane Close	3	1	2
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	749	Hacknells	2	2	27
Henry Brookhouse jnr.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	669	Back Meadow	1	2	9
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	670	Ho. bldgs, yd & gdn	0	2	32
Henry Brookhouse sn.	Henry Brookhouse sn.	671	Broom Croft	0	3	39
Henry Brookhouse jnr..	William Palmer	645	House & garden	0	0	24
Trustees of the	James Kesterton	756	Pt. house & gdn.	0	0	21
late Joseph	John Showell	756	Pt. house & gdn.	0	0	21
Brookhouse		768	Walmley Close meadow	1	3	28
Susanna Brookhouse	Susanna Brookhouse	769	Walmley Croft	1	3	0
Susanna Brookhouse	Susanna Brookhouse	770a	Ho., bldgs, yd & gdn.		1	23
Susanna Brookhouse	Susanna Brookhouse	770	Croft	1	1	27
Susanna Brookhouse	Susanna Brookhouse	773	Croft	1	0	33
Susanna Brookhouse	Susanna Brookhouse	774	Brook Close	1	2	2
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	639	arable	2	1	36
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	640	Meadow	0	3	20
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	641	Pasture	0	1	22
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	642	buildings	0	0	3
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	643	pt. of Roundabout	0	2	9
Hon. Letitia Noel	Thomas Baker	645a	pt. of Close	0	1	1
Brookes	James Langley	672	Hacknells	3	1	13
Horsfall	Joseph Cook	744	Smithfield	3	1	35
Brookes	Hiley or Langley	762	Yew Tree Croft	1	0	14
Hon. Letitia Noel	Joseph Dixon	647	Croft			
George Wakefield	Thomas Atkins	754	House and garden	0	0	19
George Wakefield	Absalom Bannister	754	House and garden	0	0	19
George Wakefield	William Cawood	754	House and garden	0	0	18
George Wakefield	William Hiley	636a	Berry's Field	1	3	8
George Wakefield	William Hiley	674	Hacknells	3	1	29
George Wakefield	William Hiley	675	First Close	1	3	30
George Wakefield	William Hiley	676	Second Close	2	1	37
George Wakefield	William Hiley	738	Shoulder of mutton	0	3	31
George Wakefield	William Hiley	745	Long Piece	2	1	23
George Wakefield	William Hiley	746	Peddimore Lane Close	3	2	31
George Wakefield	William Hiley	755	Buildgs. yd. & gdn.	0	1	29
George Wakefield	William Hiley	757	House Close	1	3	28
George Wakefield	William Hiley	758	Middle Close	2	1	27
George Wakefield	William Hiley	759	Far Close	1	0	28
George Wakefield	William Hiley	763	Close	2	0	39
George Wakefield	William Hiley	763a	Croft	0	3	10
George Wakefield	William Hiley	764	Yew Tree Close	2	0	22
George Wakefield	William Hiley	765	Two Acres	2	0	0
George Wakefield	William Hiley	766	Top of Low Piece	2	0	24
George Wakefield	William Hiley	767	Long Croft	1	3	28

Owner	Occupier	Number	Property name	Acres	Road	P
George Wakefield	William Hiley	771	Ho. outbdgs. yd & gdn	0	2	11
George Wakefield	William Hiley	772	Croft	1	2	22
George Wakefield	William Hiley	775	Near Moor Close	3	1	18
George Wakefield	William Hiley	776	Far Moor Close	3	1	4
George Wakefield	William Hiley	777	Three Acres	3	2	35
George Wakefield	William Hiley	778	Two Acres	2	1	15
George Wakefield	William Hiley	782	The Riddings	2	1	21
George Wakefield	William Hiley	790	Eight Lands	1	3	21



1856 Descriptions of houses in Walmley Ash Lane.

Walmley
Ash Farm
William Hiley's
home.

Home shared by
Thomas Atkins
Absolom Bunnister
William Cawood

The Georgian
House.
Once Mary Swift's
home - now the
Langleys.

Yew Tree
Cottages now
Henry Brookhouse's
Farm.

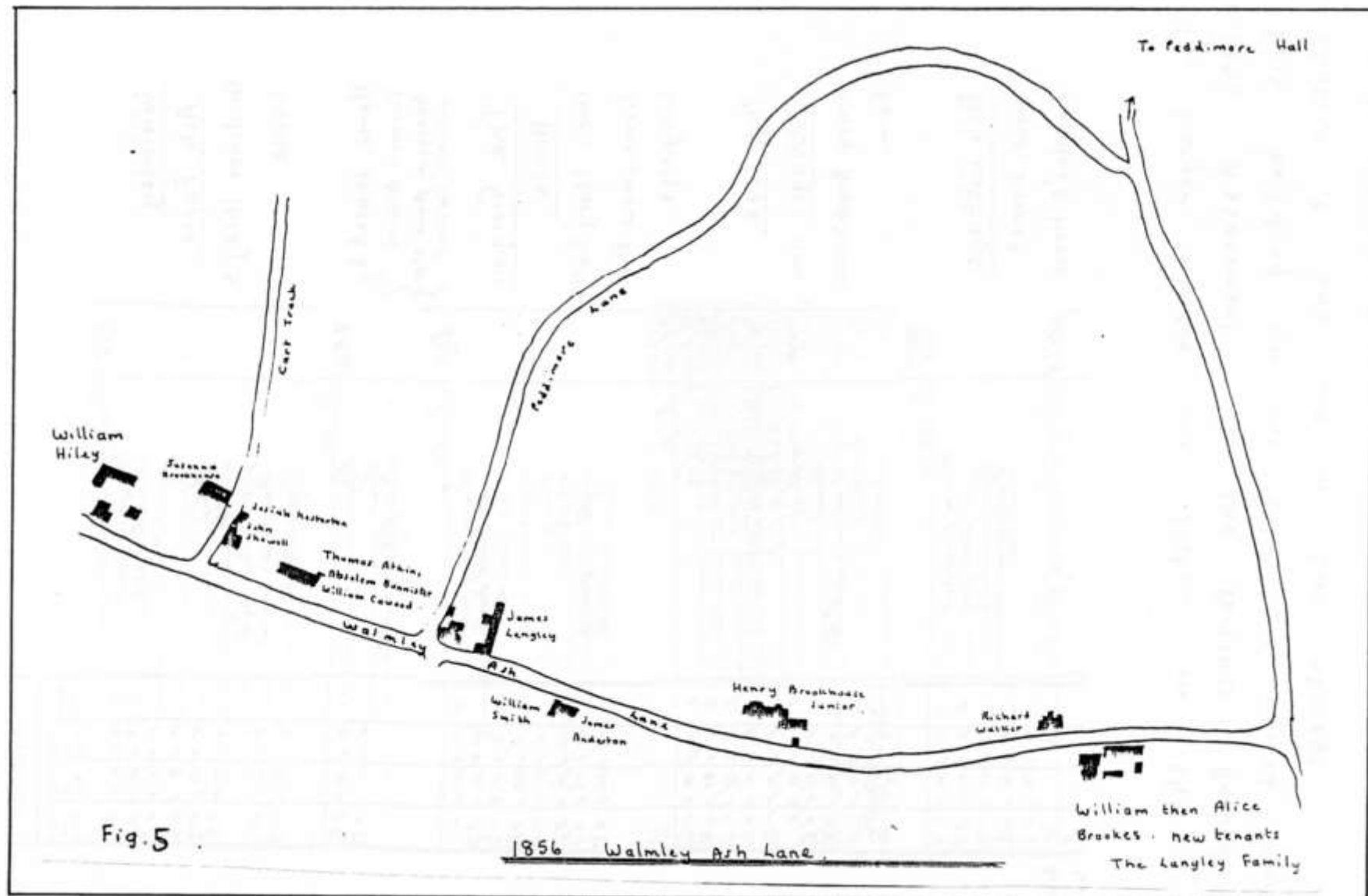
Ash Cottage
now James
Langley's home.

		BUILDINGS.			
		Stores High	Width in feet	Length in feet	Sqrd of 100 ft
771	<i>Buildings</i>				
	House front part	2	16.0	31.0	5
	House back part	2	13.4	15.1	2
	Lean to		6.0	15.0	0.75
	Piggery		6.0	10.3	0.57
	Barn		16.1	13.9	2.25
	Stable		14.7	15.1	2.20
	Old Wagon Shed Barn, and (Pighouse) Hoggin's Row		11.5	18.6	11.5
784	<i>Buildings</i>				
	House	-1	13.2	8.0	2.5
	Lean to Shed of Piggery and Barn		6.0	13.2	0.75
649	<i>Buildings</i>				
	House front part	2	16.8	30.1	5
	House back part		14.8	21.6	3.2
	Lean to		14.9	5.6	0.75
	Cowhouse		12.0	22.9	2.75
	Piggery		6.0	12.0	0.75
	Cowhouse		12.9	20.3	2.65
	Stable and Cart Shed Barn and Stable		10.6	26.6	2.75
670	<i>Buildings</i>				
	House	1	9.9	13.6	1.35
	Lean to	2	19.3	21.7	4.25
	Lean to	2	16.2	29.5	4.75
	Lean to		6.0	16.2	0.75
	Lean to		5.2	7.9	0.42
	Stable	1	14.0	14.3	2.0
	Barn Barn and Stable		11.6	16.5	1.95
752 753	<i>Buildings</i>				
	House front part	2	15.9	30.0	4.75
	House back part	2	9.6	22.0	2.15
	Barn and Stable		13.0	10.4	1.35
	Workshop and Cart House Workshop		12.0	16.0	1.95
p. 666	<i>Side of House, and Garden</i>				

Richard Walker's
home.

The larger houses are listed in the 1856 Assessment of the Parishes Record. Each building on the site is named and whether it has one or two storeys.

Table B. 1856



as the owner of Mary Swift's house, where Edward Langley was now the tenant and the fields were rented by Mrs. Langley. The 1861 census shows James, Catherine and Edward living in the Georgian house. Catherine was six years older than her husband James, who appears in the rate books as a builder and later a farmer. The 1871 census shows James with a new wife and a 12-month old son. The registers at St. John's Church, Walmley (newly built in 1845) revealed that Catherine died aged 64 in December 1867 and is buried there.

James's new wife was Mary Ann. They were not married in Walmley but at St. Andrew's, Bordesley, Birmingham on 25th July 1869. They went on to have four children; James died on 28th May 1879 aged 67. On census day, 1881, Mary's mother was staying with her — Mary Hiley, so Mary Ann was the daughter of Mary and William Hiley, and the Langleys and Hileys were related. Mary Ann continued farming, helped by her stepson Edward. She left the Georgian House in 1892/3 when it was sold to Mr. Dorner.

Walmley Ash Farm.

In the 1841 census Sarah Hiley, aged 75, is listed as the farmer. Her husband, John, had died on September 1835 aged 74; both their gravestones are in Curdworth churchyard. They were married on 1st January 1789, in St. Martin's Church in the Bull Ring, Birmingham; they had eleven children who were all baptised at Holy Trinity Church, Sutton Coldfield. Sarah is listed in the rate books as occupier of the farm until 1848, when her son, William Sanders Hiley, took over; Sarah died aged 86 on January first 1860. William married Mary fellows and had five children, (their daughter Mary Ann later married James Langley), they named their eldest son William and he and his wife Harriet had nine children.

The Georgian House —where Mary Swift lived in 1824.

Research has revealed that the Georgian front of the house was added to an even older structure. It has a cruck frame with a smoke-blackened saddle, leading to the conclusion that it was originally a medieval open hall house, according to the archaeologist Dr. M Hodder. (fig.4). The rear of the house may date back to the 16th century — renovation has uncovered huge timbers hidden behind ceiling plaster, many alterations from previous centuries, and a large bread oven. The present owner was born in Walmley Ash Cottage (there is now a bungalow on the site), where John Brookes lived in 1824, and then, after her marriage, she lived in the small cottage where Simon Dingley lived in 1824.

Four linked agricultural workers' houses known as Emily Cottages were built in the 1880's, and construction of Marne Cottages, six workers' houses, began in 1914.



Walmley Ash Cottages



Ash Cottage — west elevation



Yew Tree Cottages