

Summary

Whitehead Gardens in Tottington is situated at the heart of the village on Church Street, providing an open green space for the community.

The Gardens aren't large, but they have an interesting history and contain memorials for 9 people, including those killed during WWI and memorials to those who served the community locally.

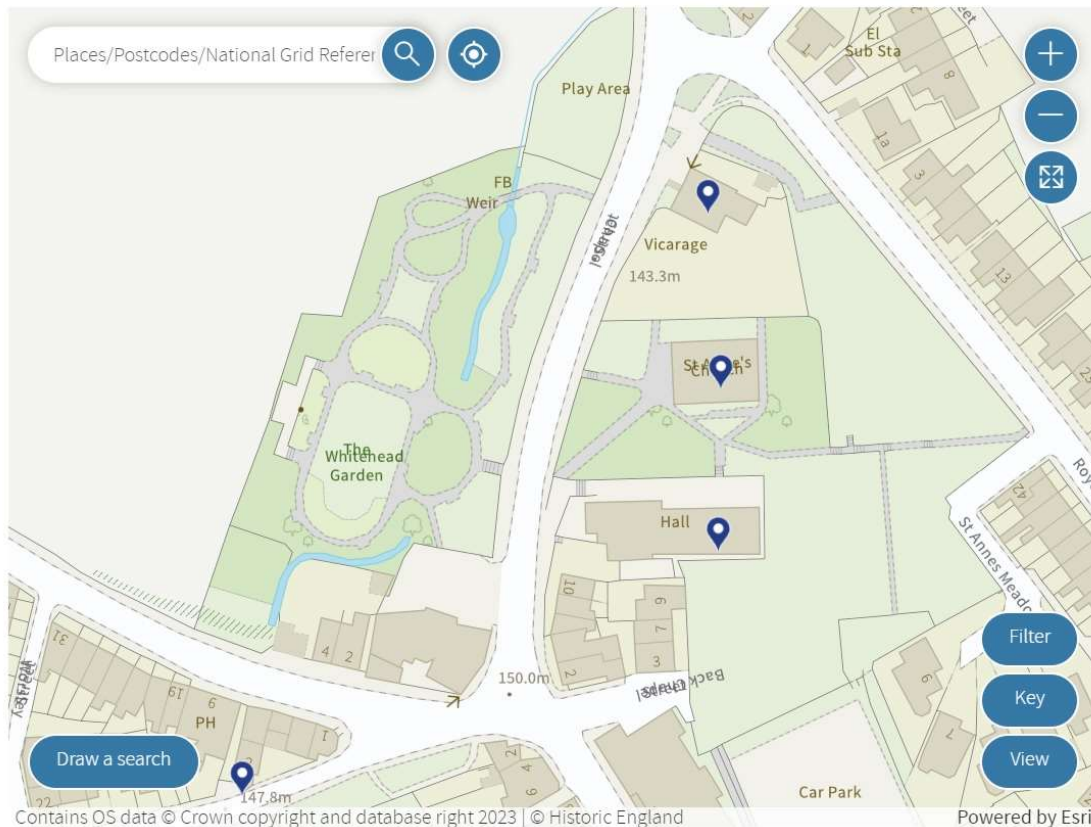
Heritage in Tottington

The maps in Appendix 1 are taken from the National Library of Scotland website and show the changes to the site between c 1840 and 1969. In date order, the maps show the following:

- 1840 shows a series of dwellings facing Chapel Street with a well to the west (which might help explain some of the current issues with water ingress onto the site from the adjacent field)
- 1893 – by 1893 the number of dwellings along Chapel Street has increased (and they are more visible and distinct on this coloured plan). The Red Lion Inn is one of the buildings in this row. The school and vicarage attached to St Anne's Church have both increased in size
- 1908 – there appears to be two pubs along Chapel Street/Turton Road junction by 1908 including the Red Lion Inn.
- 1930 – the layout of buildings appears very similar to the previous map but there is no mention of the Red Lion Pub. Additional buildings are present in the north (where the Alan Barton memorial is currently sited)
- 1938 – this plan still shows the buildings along Chapel Street along with outbuildings or sheds to the rear, near to the stream.
- 1956 – this plan shows the site after it had been cleared following the bombing in 1944. The only buildings remaining are those facing Turton Road, plus what appears to be outbuildings or sheds along the stream. The buildings to the north (in the Alan Barton Memorial area) are no longer present on this plan.
- 1969 – the layout of what we know as Whitehead Gardens are clearly visible on this plan; the semi circular paths and tree planting, and the small footbridge over the stream too. Most people in the village today, think of this site as a community garden, albeit one created from a shocking incident.

Listed Buildings

The map overleaf (taken from Historic England website) shows the locations of the listed buildings in the vicinity of the Gardens. More details of each of the buildings is detailed below, with the listing information taken directly from source at Historic England:



Church of St Anne

Grade II

List Entry 1163098

Listed on 4th October 1972

"II 1799. Rectangular and plain. Classical. Stone, with quoins and square wooden bellcote on west gable front, which has two arched windows with jambs, imposts and keystones above two arched doorways (with plain fanlights) framed by Tuscan pilasters supporting elementary cornice-pediments. Clock face in head of gable. Two tiers of four arched windows along sides similar to those of front. Later reticulated five-light Gothic east window. Interior has gallery on three sides, with Greek detail, on wooden piers. Wooden ceiling."

St Anne's Vicarage

Grade II

List Entry 1309322

Listed on 4th October 1972

"Early C19. On high bank, at right-angles to road, facing church. Stone. Two storeys. Three sash windows. Central round-arched doorway with traceried fanlight and open pediment above. Gable end to road has large buttress, quoins, cellar at ground level and small attic. Rear to Royds Street is of 3 storeys with old cellar window with thick glazing bars and round-arched star window with interlaced glazing bars."

National School

Grade II

List Entry 1067292

Listed on 4th October 1972

“Dated 1835 on tablet. Simple single-storey stone building. Four round-arched windows and two round-arched doorways, (one has been partially blocked to form a window), all with plain architraves.”

Lock-Up Abutting Number 2 Old Dungeon Inn

Grade II

List Entry 1356820

Listed on 29th January 1985

“Dated *1835' in bold relief numerals extending over whole door lintel. Constructed in angle between rear wing and rear of inn. Crudely rusticated stone, with dressed coping. Single storey. Iron bolted door of 6 panels (with large mortice lock and lion head above stone knocker) is set in bevelled corner. A primitive human face is carved on stonework on right side of door and key on left side. Roof of large slabs of stone with central vent. Originally managed by publican, then by village constable.”

Whitehead Gardens History

The Gardens were created in 1950 as a memorial to seven people who lost their lives in Christmas Eve 1944 in an enemy air raid. There is a large stone tablet inset into the wall of the 'stage' area which reads as below: The 'doodlebug rocket' landed on Chapel Street destroying several homes, killing 7 people and injuring 14 others.

Numbers 21 and 23 Chapel Street were destroyed, and 2 other properties and shop were severely damaged. In total 27 houses were affected and 8 of those had to be demolished. St Anne's Church opposite had nearly all the windows blown out.



THE WHITEHEAD GARDEN
THIS GARDEN WAS GIVEN BY
MR & MRS SD. WHITEHEAD
OF STORMER HILL
TO THE PEOPLE OF TOTTINGTON
TO BE ENJOYED BY THEM FOR ALL TIME
IN MEMORY OF THOSE NAMED BELOW
WHO WERE KILLED HERE BY A FLYING BOMB ON
24TH DECEMBER 1944.
NICHOLAS CONWAY
MARY ANN CONWAY
ELIZABETH DRAPER
JAMES DYSON
TERESA DYSON
ANN GREENHALGH
BERTHA GREENHALGH

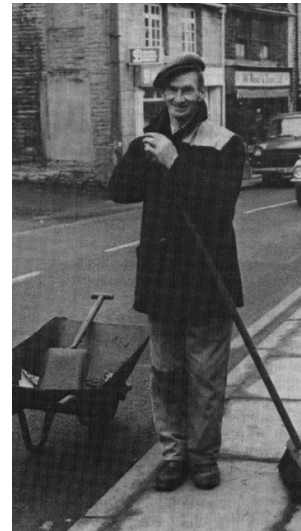
The following information is taken from the Wikipedia page:

“During the Second World War, Tottington was hit at 5:50 am on the morning of Christmas Eve 1944 by one of 45 V-1 flying bombs, launched from adapted Heinkel He 111 bombers flying over the North Sea. The 'Doodlebug' landed on a row of cottages in Chapel Street, killing two men and four women and injuring 14 others, one of whom died later.^[22] Numbers 21 and 23 Chapel Street were destroyed, while two neighbouring properties and a shop were severely damaged. The impact left a crater 30 ft deep, a total of 27 houses suffered serious structural damage, eight of which had to be demolished. St Anne's Church nearby had all its windows blown out, save for one behind the altar.^[23] The Whitehead family of nearby Stormer Hill Hall raised funds to have the area turned into a memorial garden, which was dedicated in 1950. The original brass plaque was stolen in 1975 and the gardens now feature a memorial stone dedicated to those lost.”

Alan Barton Memorial Garden

The area to the north of Whitehead Gardens is known locally as the Alan Barton Memorial Garden, in memory of local man Alan Barton who was employed by the then Tottington UDC. According to a quote from Lancashire Life in 1980, he was known as the “happiest and best known man in town”. He was a road sweeper for a significant period of time and was known by and to everyone in the village. He was also a member of Tottington’s Brass Band.

The photo to the right is taken from Lancashire Life from 1980 and is of Alan Barton, going about his daily work.



The image above left shows the memorial plaque set into the wall (hidden behind the flowers). Image from Google Maps

Councillor Johnson Memorial

William (Bill) Johnson was known as 'Mr Tottington' and served as Ward Councillor for 44 years, as Mayor twice and also served two terms as chairman for the former Tottington Urban District Council. He was awarded an MBE. He stepped down in May 2004.

Mr Johnson died on 6th July 2012 age 89 after a long illness. The plaque and a tree were planted in the Alan Barton Memorial Garden in to commemorate his long service in 1989 after 30 years' service.

The photographs below show the memorial plaque and tree – the tree has sadly died in recent years.



Proposals

The proposals have been worked up in partnership with Mike Bent from Bury Parks Department, the Rotary Club of Tottington and Bury West and Tottington and District Horticultural Society and have been put to public consultation over several years as the project developed.

The project aims:

1. To extend and make safe the existing 'stage/dais' area. This area is raised from the ground without good access or barriers for safety though it has hosted events and activities up until the Covid Pandemic. By improving access to this area and altering the layout slightly to ensure level ground, the hope is that this area will once again be used by the local community for events and activities such as brass bands etc. More details are given in the separate document 'Events in Whitehead Gardens'. This work will involve the relocation of the stone tablet memorial to the front and centre of the altered 'stage' area. It will be surrounded by ornamental planting (as is currently intended though the beds are not maintained).

It is also worth noting that the land on which the gardens were created was sold to Tottington UDC "for the purpose of being used as public walks or pleasure grounds". And as known in the recent past that this dais area has been used for small local community events and activities, and that families have used it as such since the inception of the garden, so we feel the proposals are entirely appropriate in this context. Please see Appendix 2 for an extract of the Covenant.

2. To upgrade all paths and install more seats, litter bins and signage, working alongside the Parks Department to agree the specification and locations of these.
3. Tree works – after discussing the proposed works with both Mike Bent and Les Beardwood at Bury Council's Parks Department, it has been agreed that these works should not be carried out in the short term. The arboricultural survey has highlighted some trees of concern, but these will be picked up by the Council's own Tree Team as required during the appropriate seasons over the coming years; only as required for safety. There are some trees causing concern in the area of the Gardens known as 'Alan Barton Memorial' which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (reference TPO number 22, G1, including Sycamore, Horse Chestnut and Elm, confirmed on 26.03.1981). An application for consent for works to these trees will be submitted nearer the time as and when funding is secured for the project and works are likely to take place.
4. Planting the proposed planting scheme for the Garden has been checked, tweaked and approved by the Horticultural Society. The aim is to introduce more year round colour, interest and diversity to the gardens which in turn will benefit a wider range of fauna.
5. Memorial Tree for Cllr Johnson – we have had support from Mrs Johnson to state she would be happy for the memorial to be relocated to a new location where it will get more light. She has offered to provide a new cherry blossom tree to replace the current one which has failed in support of these alterations.
6. Alan Barton Memorial Garden – the works proposed in this northern section of the garden include cleaning the stone plaque, tree works to remove and crown lift those which are failing, and which were highlighted in the arboricultural survey as requiring works. It is also proposed to install a new seat and ideally a small timber sculpture (part of a series around the entire garden area), giving people a space to sit and reflect.

Engagement with Community and Families

Following discussions with the Conservation Officer at Bury Council, Proffitts and the Rotary Club of Tottington & Bury West carried out further activity to try to engage with families and friends of those impacted by the events of 1944, to gauge their feeling on the proposals.

Father Paul Cannon at the Church of St Anne was able to include a flyer requesting further information into their parish newsletter which is distributed not only in the church but sent electronically to over 600 people (encompassing Guardian Angels in Elton, St Hilda's in Tottington and St Joseph's in Ramsbottom).

In addition to this, the Minister at Tottington Methodist Church endeavoured to track down a family who may have had links to Whitehead Gardens and they also read out a notice in Church.

A post was sent out via Facebook which was widely shared and a press release submitted to the Bury Times requesting further information.

These activities resulted in a positive response from people who were family members of the original families affected by the bombing.

A local resident Gillian Fort contacted Proffitts following being notified about the project by Michelle Brocklehurst (Minister at Tottington Methodist) to say her mother Margaret Wood who was 12 at the time, survived the bombing and moved to Holcombe Road following the incident. She sadly passed away in 2022 but Gillian feels she would have been thrilled the works are proposed to improve the Gardens. Gillian and her sisters spent many hours 'performing' for her mother on the 'stage' area and in turn, went there with her own children and now grandchildren.

Another resident Elaine Foote (nee Nuttall) contacted Proffitts with regards to Mary Conway, aged 101, who belongs to St Hilda's Church in Tottington. Mary is the cousin of Elaine's father and she has kindly shared some information and photographs both of Mary and of press cuttings at the time and notes written by her father Edward Nuttall regarding the events of 1944. Her father was on Christmas leave from Winwick Hospital and witnessed the event. His aunt and uncle were killed but cousin Mary survived.

Elaine is supportive of the proposals and has kindly agreed to share some of her information for interpretation within the gardens.

The Rotary have also been in regular contact with the Whitehead Family (who donated the land to create the gardens) to keep them updated with the proposals and progress as the project moves forward. They have been supportive of the proposals and look forward to the transformation of the site.

A representative responded to The Rotary to say:

“Dear Chris, many thanks for this. We are delighted that the gardens are being cared for. The proposed improvements sound excellent and I know that my grandparents would be pleased that their gift, a memorial to the villagers who died in the WW2 bombing, is appreciated. All the best”.

Conclusions

We feel the proposals put forward will enhance the Gardens, not just in terms of accessibility, amenity and biodiversity but also will enhance the history of the site; bring it back into the forefront for sections of the community (new arrivals to the village, young people etc), who may not be aware of the history of the site and impact the events of 1944 had on the village.

Appendix I – extracts of historic maps taken from National Library of Scotland



Stormer Hill

Bleach Works

B.M. 486.3

Well

L E A N D I N G

Mile

Lane

B.M. 467.7

Parsonage

S. Anne's Church

Per. Curacy

Old Doctors

Lane

Well

National School

B.M. 493.7

Constabulary Station

Smithy's

Well

Stony Brow

B.M. 497.1

Well

B.M. 531.4

Club Row

Methodist Chapel

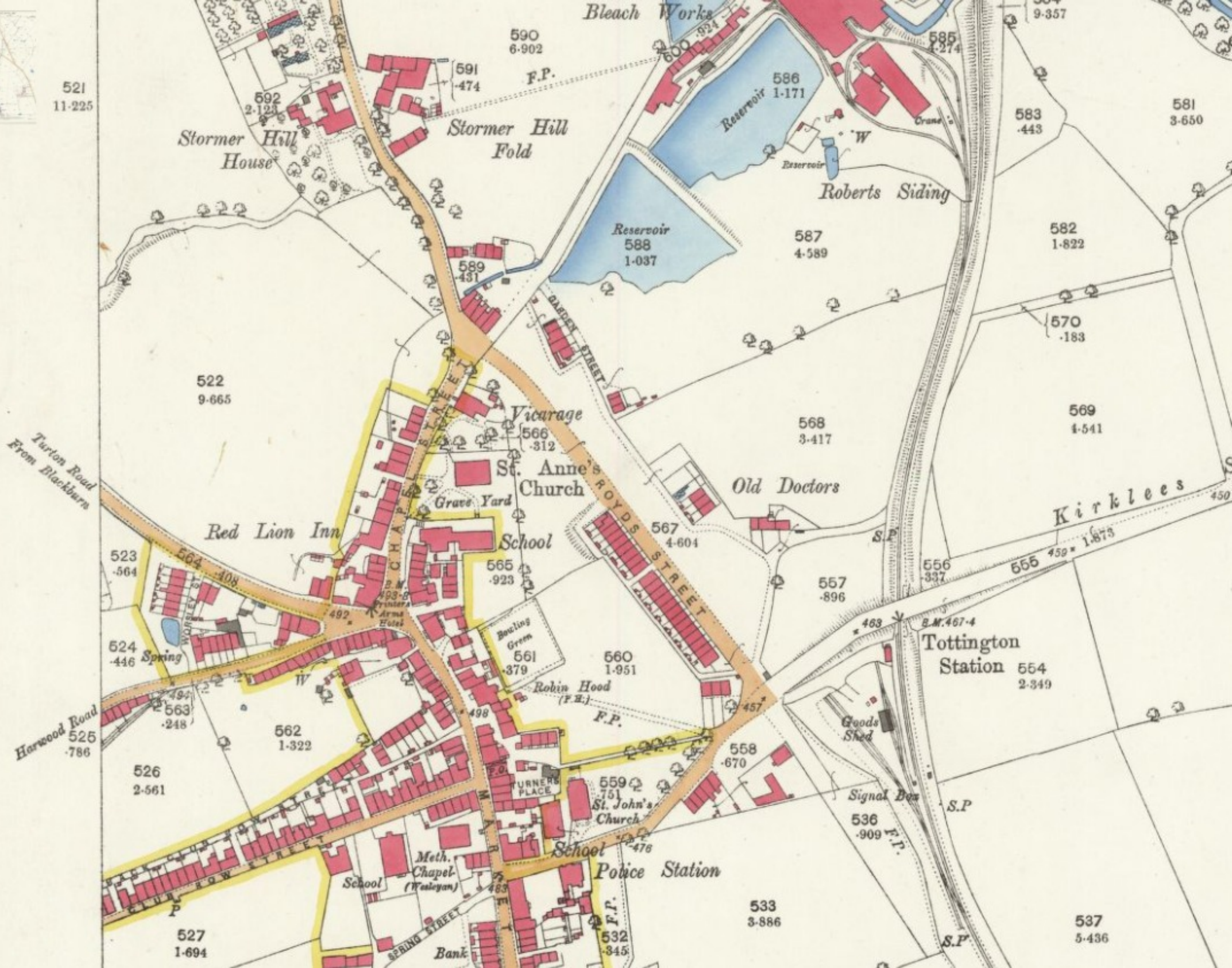
Tottington

Hall

The Ends



521
11-225







Quakers Field

Stormer Hill Fold

F.P.

Reservoir

Roberts Siding

Filter Beds (Dis.)

Resr.

Stormer Hill Works

Recreation Ground

Pavilion Recreation Ground

Ch.

School

B.M. 467.00

P.H. Brewery F.P.

Ch.

Railway Foundry

Pol. Sta. B.M. 483.77

U.D.C. Offices

Tottington Station

Goods Shed

Progress Poultry Farm

TOTTINGTON ROAD

Broadfield

Hawthorn Terrace

Stormer Hill House

Stony Brow

B.M. 520.57

604.59

Wesley's Farm Spr.

Wesley Place

Black Brook

Reers.

F.P.

VICTORIA ST.

CHAPEL STREET

B.M. 493.42

CLUB ROW

SPRING ST.

ROYAL STREET SOUTH

HAWTHORN AVENUE

Spring





Appendix 2 – extracts and information from the Deed of Covenant

The land was sold to Tottington UDC “for the purpose of being used as public walks or pleasure grounds subject to the rights of the Lord of the Manor of Tottington.....” These rights relate to mines and mineral which may or may be underneath the land forming the site of Whitehead Gardens.

The covenants, which Tottington UDC and by extension Bury MBC became obliged to perform and observe and which are set out in the above mentioned conveyance are as follows:-

- (a) To maintain and keep in good ornamental condition and repair the gardens and pleasure grounds for use as public walks or pleasure grounds on the site of the said pieces of land and property hereby conveyed and will maintain and keep in good order and condition the fences on such property and
- (b) To erect within six months (if not already done) from the date hereof and forever thereafter maintain along the boundaries of the land between the points marked “A” and “B,” “B” and “C,” “C” and “D,” “D” and “E,” and “E” and “F” and edged red on the said plan drawn hereupon a substantial stockproof (against cattle or sheep) fence and will forever maintain such substantial stockproof fence to the satisfaction of the Vendors