

the Field Estate Auction 15th October 1873 the two plans drawn by local architect William Henry Cox Fisher

In 1813, Elizabeth GREGORY, daughter of an Oxfordshire vicar, inherited the Arundel estate – also called The Field estate – from James ARUNDELL of Stroud, via a tenuous and bitterly-disputed cousinly link. In 1815, Little Elizabeth married the Revd John Cunningham Calland Bennett Popkin HAWKINS (whom it is easier to call JCCBPH) and it took several court cases before JCCBPH managed to wrestle any kind of control from the trustees. He immediately began selling off chunks of The Field estate, although we only know the details of some of the transactions. When he died in November 1871 he instructed his solicitor son Richard to arrange for all entails to be removed so that the complete hillside could be sold for the benefit of the twelve surviving HAWKINS children. And so it was. All of Richard HAWKINS papers are in the Oxfordshire Archives.

The area of land bought in February 1873 by William COWLE from the HAWKINS siblings, is shown on the sketch plan below shaded in pink. Superimposed on the February plan are the boundaries of the 103 Lots put up for auction in October 1873. In order to get a safe gradient for the new access road up from the turnpike (Field Road) William Cowle arranged to swap some land with the FISHER family who owned the land on the western side. We think that the swapped plot is the area marked on the auction plan as belonging to Major Fisher, though we have not found any documentary evidence. But by October 1873 the new Field Road did exist, and it does cross land not originally bought by William Cowle (see Lot 1 of the plan).

We do know that the area around Field House had been outside the estate for some hundreds of years. It is possible that JCCBPH sold the pasture-land south of Field House (bounded by Bowbridge Lane on the east) after 1825 but nothing has yet surfaced to say when or to whom.

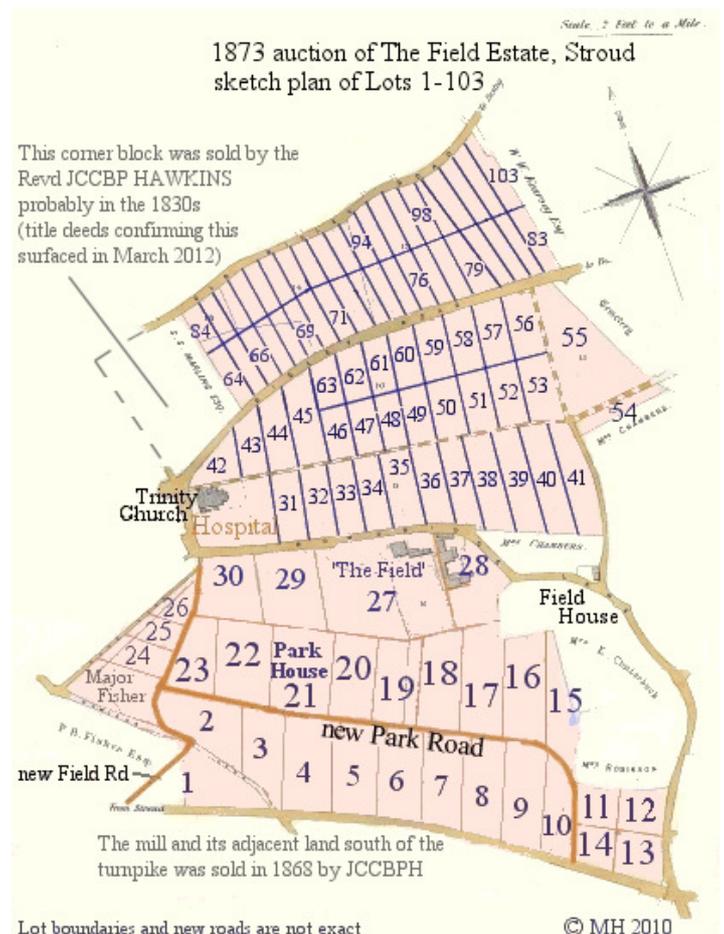
We have original documents for the two large plans drawn up for the October 1873 auction but the copy for the lots above Bisley Road (Lots 31 to 103) is very damaged and fragile.

Here instead is a sketch, which combines both plans into one.

All the lots were sold as intended, although William COWLE held on to some of them for himself. He had Park House built for himself and his wife on Lot 21, and lived in The Field until building work was completed.

He also held on to Lot 28, where he built two large and elegant villas called Berkshire and Devonshire, on Bowbridge Lane. On Park Road he built two more pairs of very similar semi-detached villas: Brunswick and Grosvenor; Richmond and Westminster. All six houses were let to tenants and formed part of his estate when he died in 1899.

The FISHER family held on to the small triangle between Field Road and the turnpike. By 1881 the houses of Lower Dorington Terrace had been built, but within the boundary of the vertical line appearing to divide Lot 1, as you can see from this snippet from the 1883 OS map. The Fishers soon built a pair of cottages in a similar style adjoining this new terrace and as you drive round the roundabout near Waitrose now, it is hard to see the join. (The land on which Waitrose was built also in fact belonged to the HAWKINS family; it was one more chunk sold off by the Revd J C C B P HAWKINS once he had gained control of his wife's inheritance.)



1883 OS map

