

The following notes were written and handed out by Fred Waite, a former member of the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group, prior to a field meeting which he led on the 25th May 1994. Fred lived in Rectory Cottage at that time.

*Janet Jordan
September 2026*



Rectory Cottage (2005)

RECTORY PARK FIELD MEETING 25th MAY 1994

The park, which covers some 74 acres, was purchased by the Sutton Coldfield Council in 1939 from the Church Commissioners for the sum of £16,250.00. At the time of purchase, the Council was asked to enter into a covenant to preserve the park as open space. The Council refused this request but did issue a letter of intent to comply with the spirit of the request. Although some peripheral development has taken place, the park remains as an open space. The only serious threat to this was in 1922 when the park was considered as a site for the building of the new Girls' Grammar School. An area of 5½ acres was offered at a cost of £3,500.00, but this was rejected by the County Council in contradiction of Sutton Coldfield's wishes.

The park comprises two estates, **The Rectory** and **Hollyfield House**.

The Rectory was built in 1701 on land already in the possession of the rector. It was designed by Sir William Wilson, a pupil of Wren, and was built by William Smith. Wilson and Smith had previously worked together when building Four Oaks Hall. The cost of the house was £239. 11s. 9d with the rector supplying the land and timber. The dimensions of the house were 45ft long in front, 35ft deep and 23ft high, to the top of the wall.

A survey carried out in 1801 described the house as having: Four rooms on a floor and four garrets. A Pantry, three cellars, two dairies, coal house, brewhouse, laundry, back kitchen and a room over it. A well and pump, two gardens, orchard, fish pool, two pig sties two privies. A large tithe barn with two threshing floors and two large doors containing five bays. Another barn for hay with two large doors. A coach house with a dovecot over it, three stables, saddle house, two granaries, cheese chamber, wood chamber, stick house, kid house, rick yard, waggon hovel, cart hovel, cow house, cow shed, two fold yards, poultry house and chicken pens.

Although there are some photographs of the outside of the house, very little is known of its interior. An oak staircase ascended by easy stages to the garrets with a handsome balustrade up to the very top. The dining parlour had an oak wainscot, cupboards let into the walls, an exceedingly quaint fireplace with an elegant cut-glass mirror above the mantle flanked by brass sconces of the Queen Anne period. The alcoves and cupboards flanking the fireplace were characteristic of Wilson's design.

In 1833, the house was extended by adding a wing to the south side. At the same time the courtyard wall, orchard and pond were removed.

An Act of Parliament called *The Sutton Coldfield Rectory Act* was passed, transferring the Rectory and its estate to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, later to become the Church Commissioners. The rector vacated the house in 1909 and it was then let as a private residence. The upkeep of such a large house was considered to be uneconomic and it was decided to demolish it and develop the site for building.

The Rectory was demolished in 1936. At that time, the house was described as having thirteen bedrooms and a passenger lift.

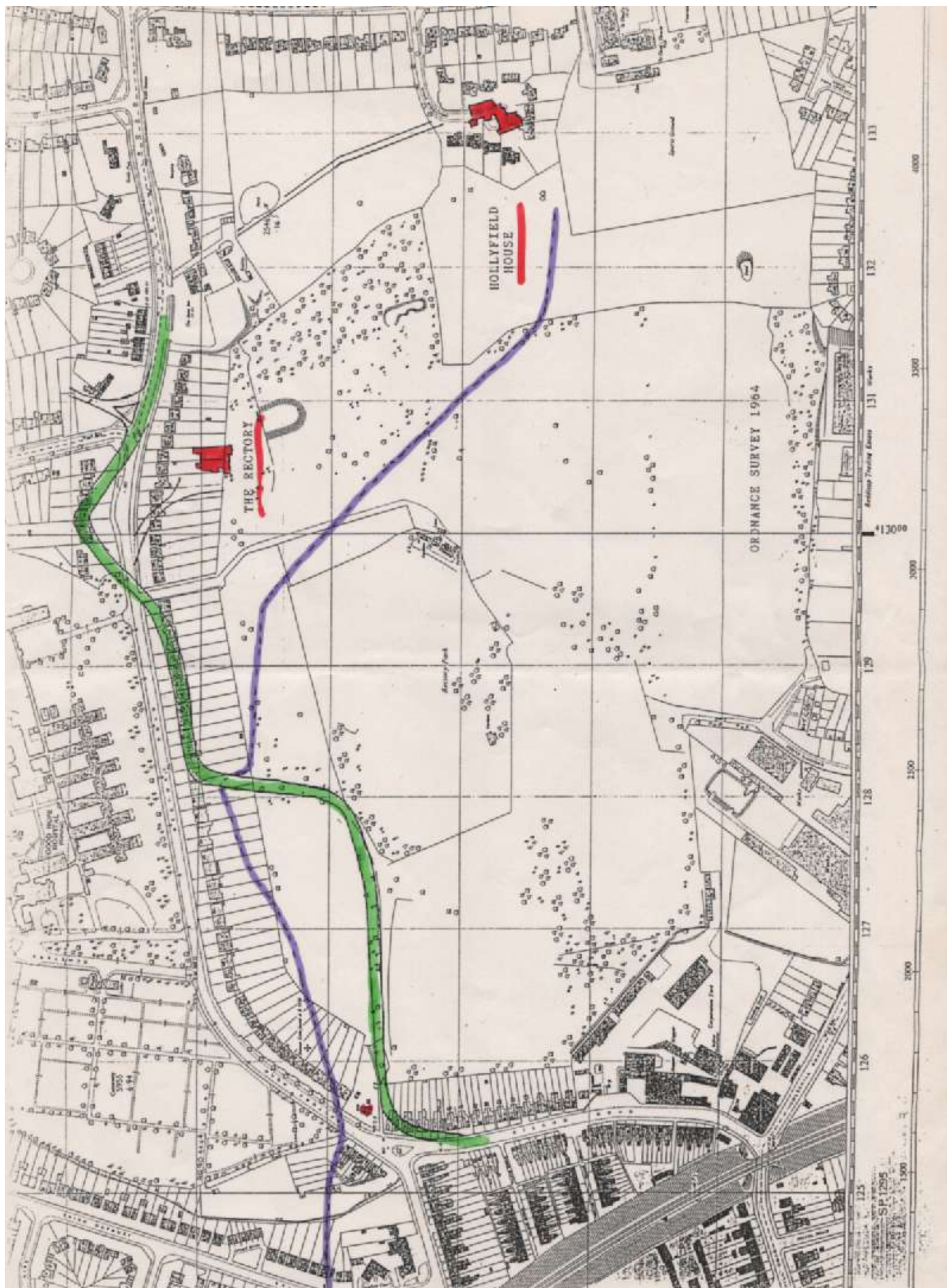
Rectory Cottage was originally built as a gardener's residence about 1820 on the site of a sheep dip. Prior to the realignment of Rectory Road, at the time it was extended up to the church, the cottage stood on the opposite side of the road. It was extended about 1880 by adding a wing to the rear. The house originally had two rooms up and two down but the extension provided an extra bedroom, a kitchen and a scullery. In 1919, the rent of the cottage was 4s 5p per week. It was sold by the Church Commissioners in 1951 for £1,100.00.

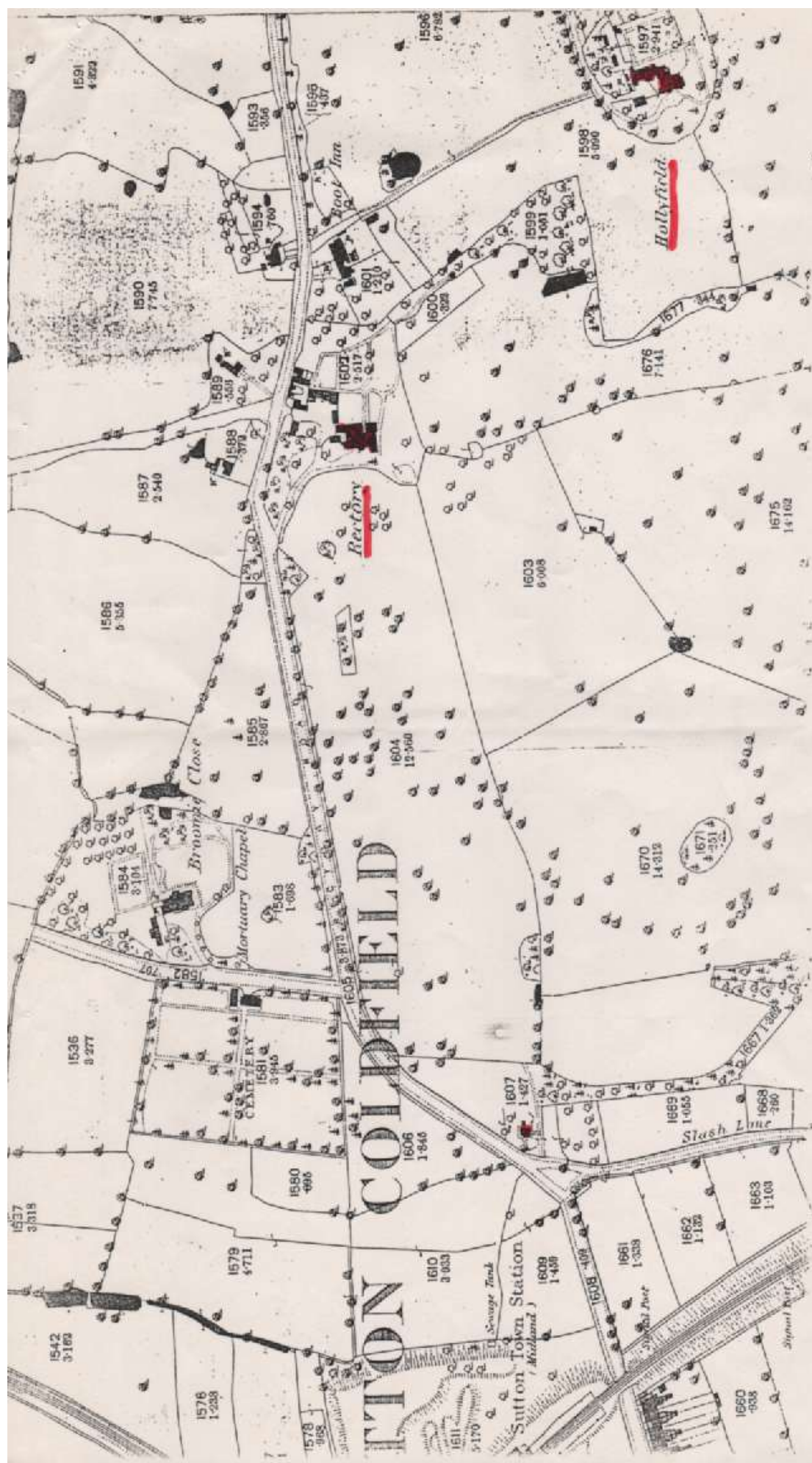
The Cricket Club was formed in 1847 by Canon WK Riland Bedford who had become a keen player whilst at college. The ground was laid out by the Canon close to the Rectory. A thatched pavilion was built in 1890 but unfortunately was burnt down in 1970. At one time a ditch ran between the two pitches and it was said that following a storm the ditch would fill to 3ft. Often an unsuspecting fielder would emerge soaked to the skin having chased a ball over the boundary. The ground is shared with the hockey club and is leased from the Council.

Hollyfield House has unknown origins. Riland Bedford in his History of Sutton Coldfield says that it was built as a hunting lodge and was previously known as New House and Red House. It is shown as New House on the 1834 Ordnance Survey. It was much enlarged by William Smith of Middleton. A later occupant was Henry Addenbroke, partner to Holbeche and Deputy Steward of the Corporation.

During the Second World War, Hollyfield was home to the Home Office Pensions Dept. and was a store for the Fire Service. It was vacated in 1947 and remained empty. It was considered as suitable for conversion into a home for the elderly but a survey revealed that it would cost £7,000.00 to convert it for 20 residents. Other suggestions were for a community centre and conversion into flats to house the staff of the District Surveyor. All of these schemes were rejected and the house was eventually demolished in 1949; the demolition was carried out for free in return for the materials.

The following material was also handed out with Fred Waite's notes. There were no source references supplied.





COPI.
BOROUGH OF SUTTON COLDFIELD.

Telephone
Sutton Coldfield 2273.

R. WALSH.

Solicitor.

1/1

Town Clerk.

Council House,

Sutton Coldfield.

18th October, 1938.

7. 144 53.

Dear Sirs,

Further to our telephonic communication of yesterday, I am to inform you that my Council are not prepared to enter into any covenant to preserve the land, the subject of negotiations, as an open space.

For the reasons stated yesterday, namely, that in the first place the land was negotiated at an open market value, and that they cannot anticipate future requirements of the Borough. I am instructed, however, to inform you that as an expression of intention my Council intend to continue the use of the land as an open space.

Although there are no proposals contemplated at the moment, there is a possibility that, with a view to helping to meet loan charges, the frontage land to Hollyfield Road, which you required to be included in the sale, might be used for building purposes.

Whilst the above cannot be included in legal form, yet my Council's intention is as above stated.

I shall, therefore, be glad to have your confirmation of the settlement of this matter, and to receive draft contract at your early convenience.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) R. Walsh.

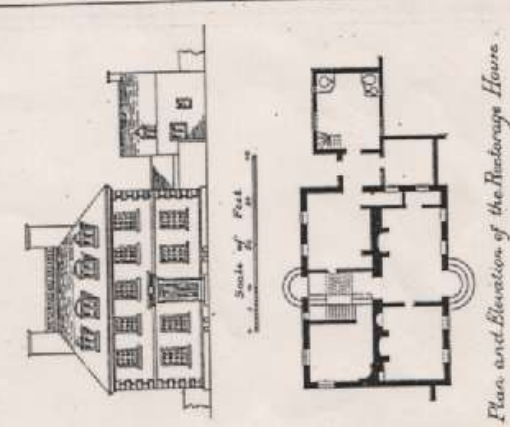
Town Clerk.

Messrs. Smiths, Gore & Co.
7 Little College Street,
Westminster Abbey,
London, S.W.1.

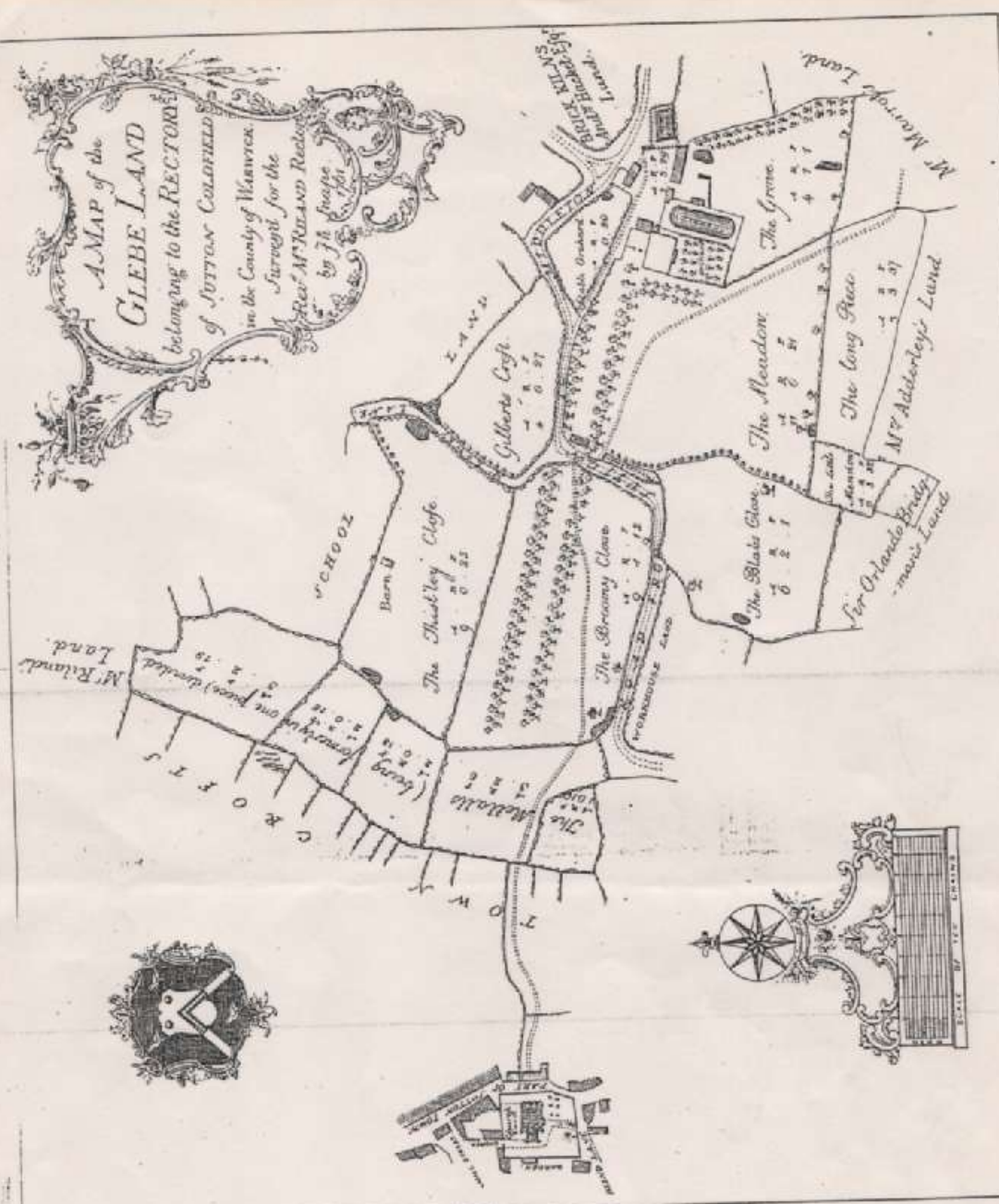
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The Mettally.	A. R. P.
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Plan and Elevation of the Rectory House.



7 Little College Street.
Westminster Abbey, F.W.I.

11th February, 1936

Dear Sir,

F. 14403

Sutton Coldfield Rectory Estate

RECEIVED

H.A. Richards, The Old Rectory, Rent £80. per annum

This house was let to Mr. Richards at a yearly rent of £120 on an agreement for a lease for a term of 10 years from the 24th June, 1927. The rent was reduced to £80 from Christmas, 1932, in the circumstances explained in our report of the 4th May, 1933.

The Old Rectory, as will be seen from the photographs in part 1 of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners file of papers, is a large residence. The house has on the ground floor, lounge hall, drawing and dining-rooms, library, rear hall, cloakroom, two kitchens, cook's pantry, butler's pantry, and a passenger lift to the first floor. On the first and second floors there are thirteen bedrooms, dressing-room, bathroom, tank and box rooms.

If the house is to remain occupied an outlay of about £180 will have to be incurred in repairing the roof and chimneystacks, providing and fixing nine new windows, and in executing various other repairs and renewals, including the painting of the exterior of the premises. Mr. Richards, however, has offered to leave this month to avoid any expenditure being made by the Commissioners.

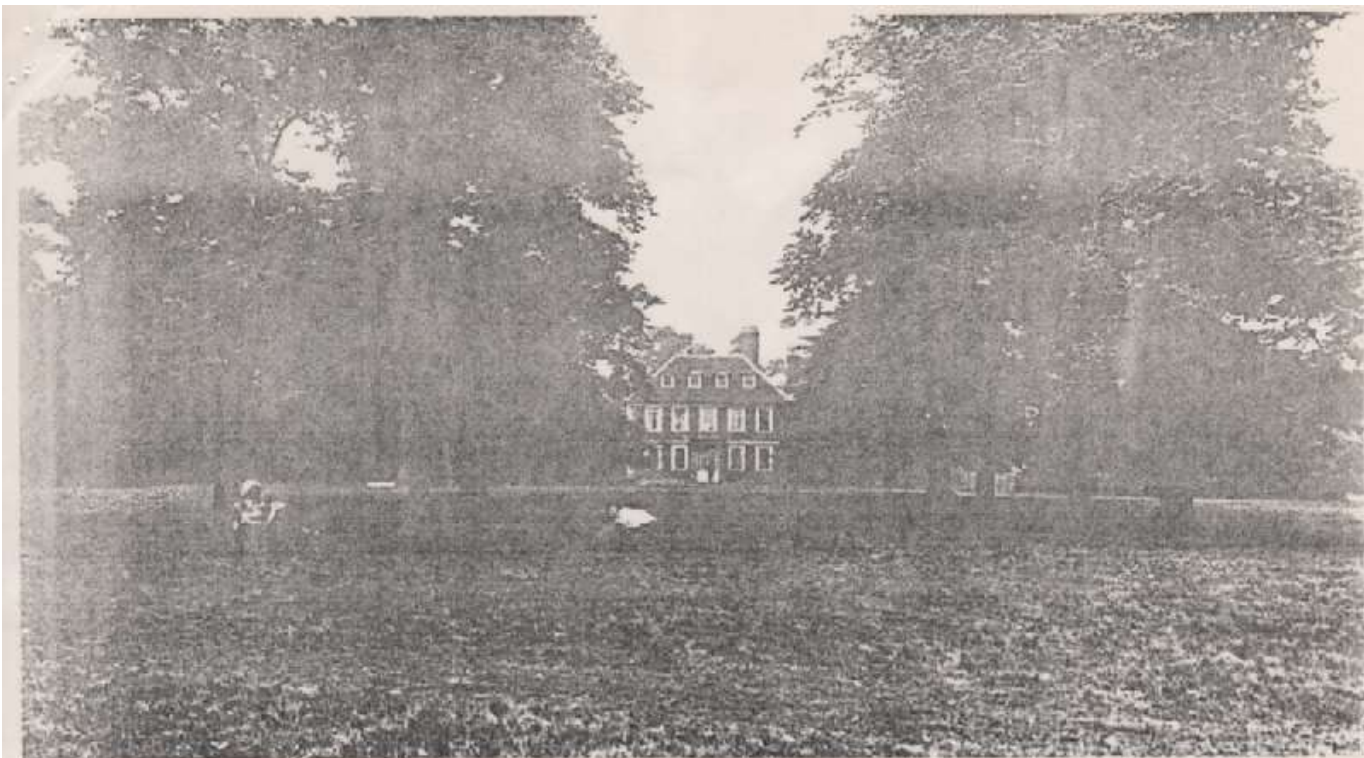
After conferring with our local agents, Messrs William Fowler Bewlay & Co., the late Rector's Agents, we have come to the decision that the house is too large for post-war circumstances, especially in the district in which it is situate, that there is

The Secretary,

Ecclesiastical Commissioners

little/





Canon Bedford playing with his son.



The Rectory Park, Sutton Coldfield. Speight Photo.



The Cricket ground.
Rectory Park, Sutton Coldfield.
Speight Photo.