



Plots

Plots were measured in rods. Plots measured 20 rods (1 rod equals 16 and a half feet or 5 metres)

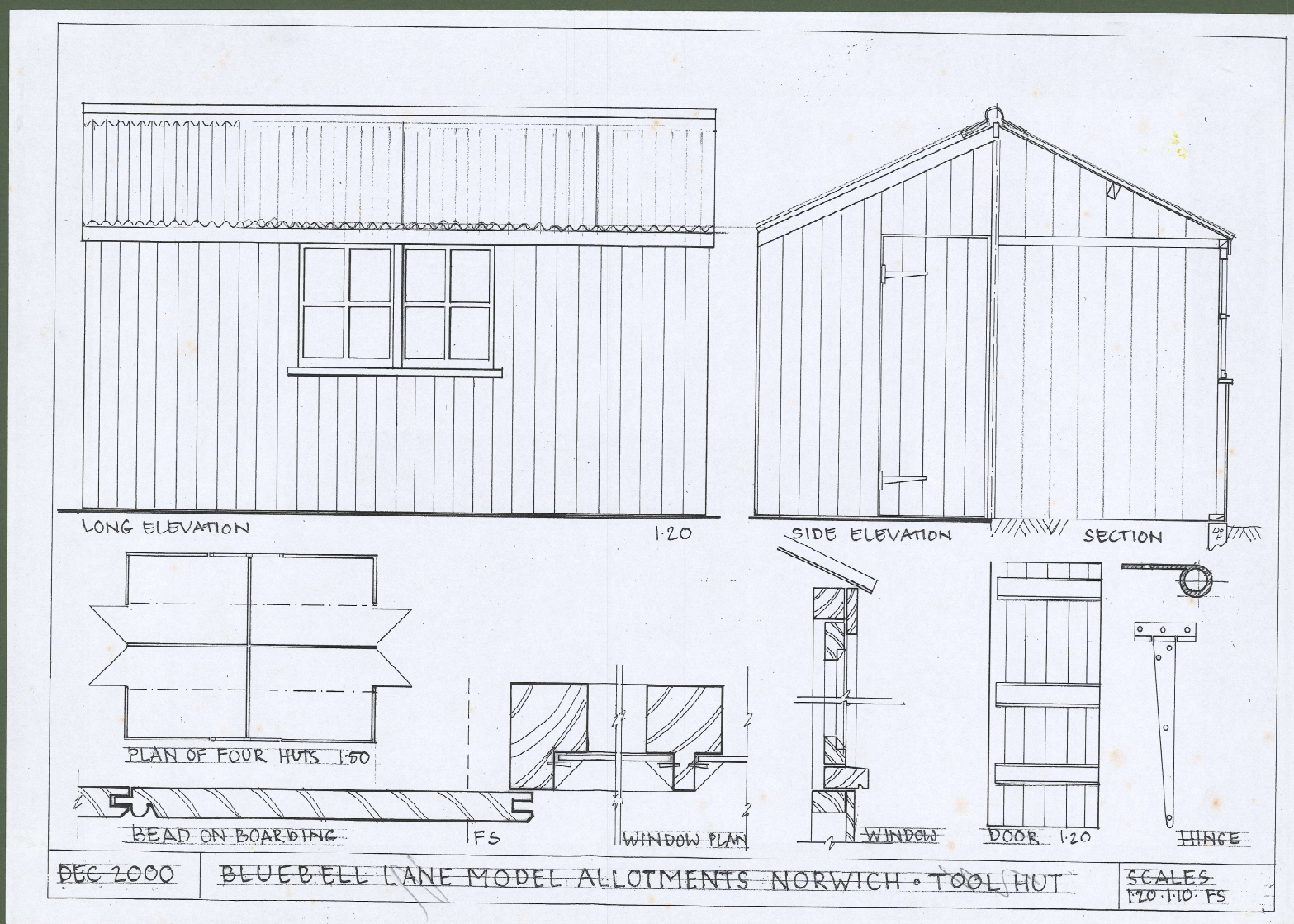
What is/was a rod?

In medieval times English ploughmen used a wooden stick with a pointed tip to spur or guide their oxen. The rod was the length of this stick.

Each plot was numbered in the cement blocks on the road side edge of the plot.

See if you can uncover your number and if possible the edge of your plot.





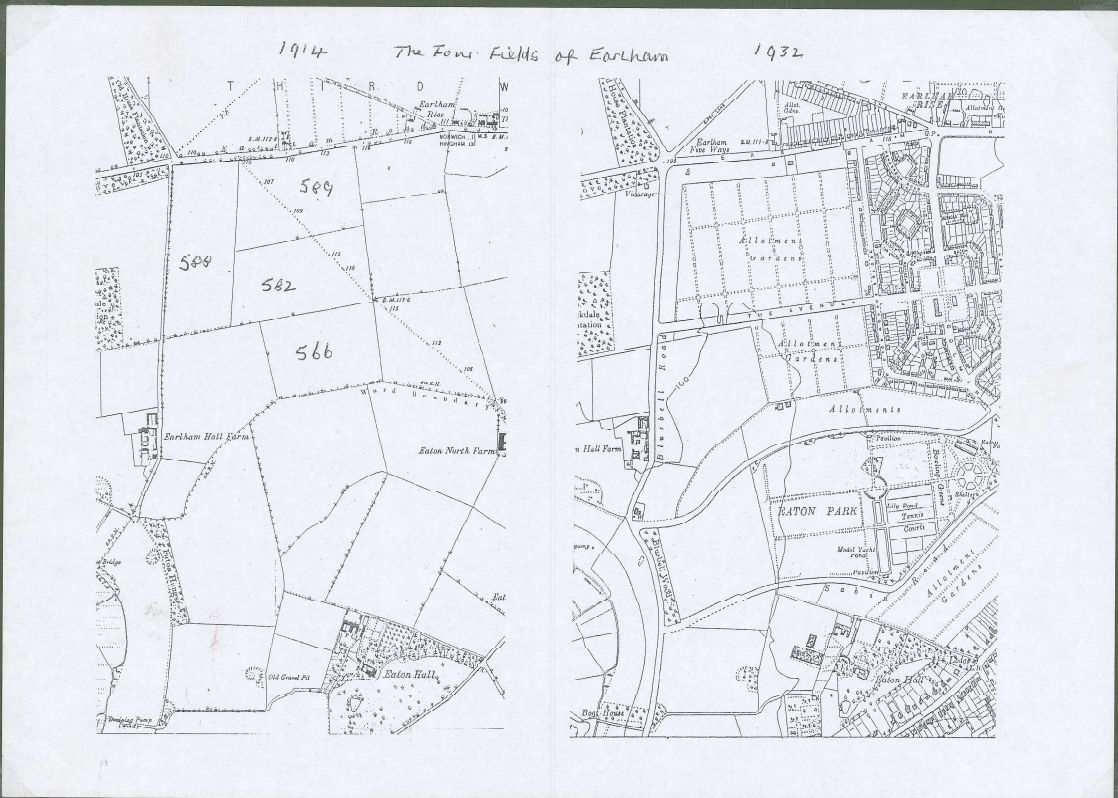
Sheds

The sheds were placed at the junction of four plots. Remember the plots were much bigger when they were first laid out. Each plot was 20 rods, a double line of 10 rods, which was reckoned to be sufficient to produce food for a family over a year.

The sheds were made by the local firm Boulton and Paul and intended to store eight foot canes suitable for growing and supporting runner beans.

Many sheds are still in use today although time has taken its toll on the wood. They are still a useful marker for defining the length and width of the original plots





Sandys-Winsch's legacy

In the thirty three years as Parks Superintendent he brought about a profound change to the appearance of the city.

He made new parks from rubbish dumps, rough ground and a trench training ground where soldiers were prepared for fighting in the First World War.

Model Allotments, the first in the country, were another example of his progressive thinking.

Bluebell Model Allotments

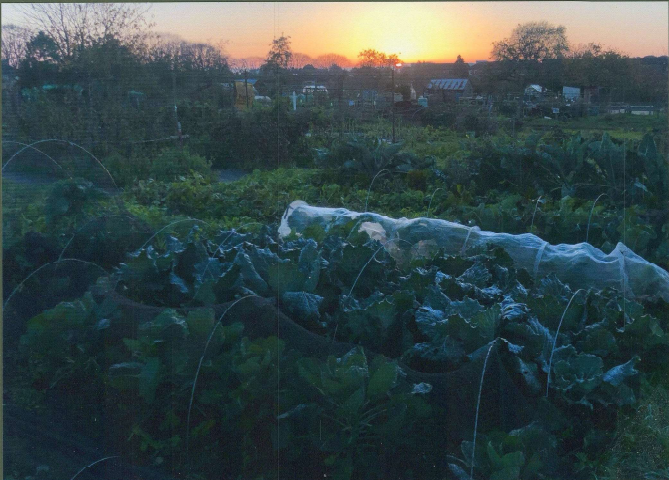
In 1923, the Captain recommended that the Norwich Corporation purchase the four sandy fields, 70 acres which became the current site of Bluebell Model Allotments north and south, at a cost of £7,500.

Although planned as one site, the Corporation decided to use some of the land for housing and laid out The Avenues, a road running from the Ring Road to Bluebell Road.

Laying out the site involved making the roads, erecting sheds, planting fruit trees and laying on water. It employed 70 men for 20 weeks at an estimated cost of £8,000.

Early Difficulties

At the Norwich Corporation Allotments committee minutes of 10th June 1924 the parks Superintendent reported that there was:
"difficulty in obtaining material to carry on the employment scheme of laying out the allotments and the work may not be completed before August, that tenants who take plots be permitted to occupy such land rent free up to 29th September 1924."





Who was Captain Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch?

Captain Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch, a native of Cheshire, was appointed Parks Superintendent to Norwich Corporation 1919.

From an early age he was interested in gardening and often accompanied his parents' gardener.

He gained a scholarship to Cheshire Horticultural and Agricultural College in 1905 and was awarded a gold medal for his research work in botany and entomology.

After some practical experience in nursery work, he worked with the renowned landscape architect Thomas Mawson. In later years, this work had a strong influence on his time as Parks Superintendent in Norwich.

In July 1914 he was called up to fight in the First World War, first in the Royal Field Artillery, later as a fighter pilot in the Royal Flying Corps and finally in the Army of Occupation.

Those who worked with him in Norwich remember him with affection although he could be a stern taskmaster and terse; no doubt a reflection of his early military career.



Norwich Bluebell Model Allotments

A Brief History of Allotments

Allotments have been in existence for hundreds of years, with evidence pointing back to Anglo-Saxon times.

The system we recognise today has its roots in the nineteenth century when the land was given over to the labouring poor for the growing of food. This was desperately needed due to the rapid industrialisation of the country and the lack of a welfare state.

In 1908 The Small Holdings and Allotments Act came into force, placing a duty on Local Authorities to provide sufficient allotments, according to demand.

It wasn't until the end of the First World War that land was made available to all (through the Allotments Act of 1922) as a way of assisting returning servicemen instead of just the labouring poor. This enabled unemployed and low waged men to grow food for their families.

In 1921 the problem of unemployment was a large one which required major schemes of relief work. The stage was set for the development of Norwich Parks and for Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch, the designer of Bluebell Model Allotments.

