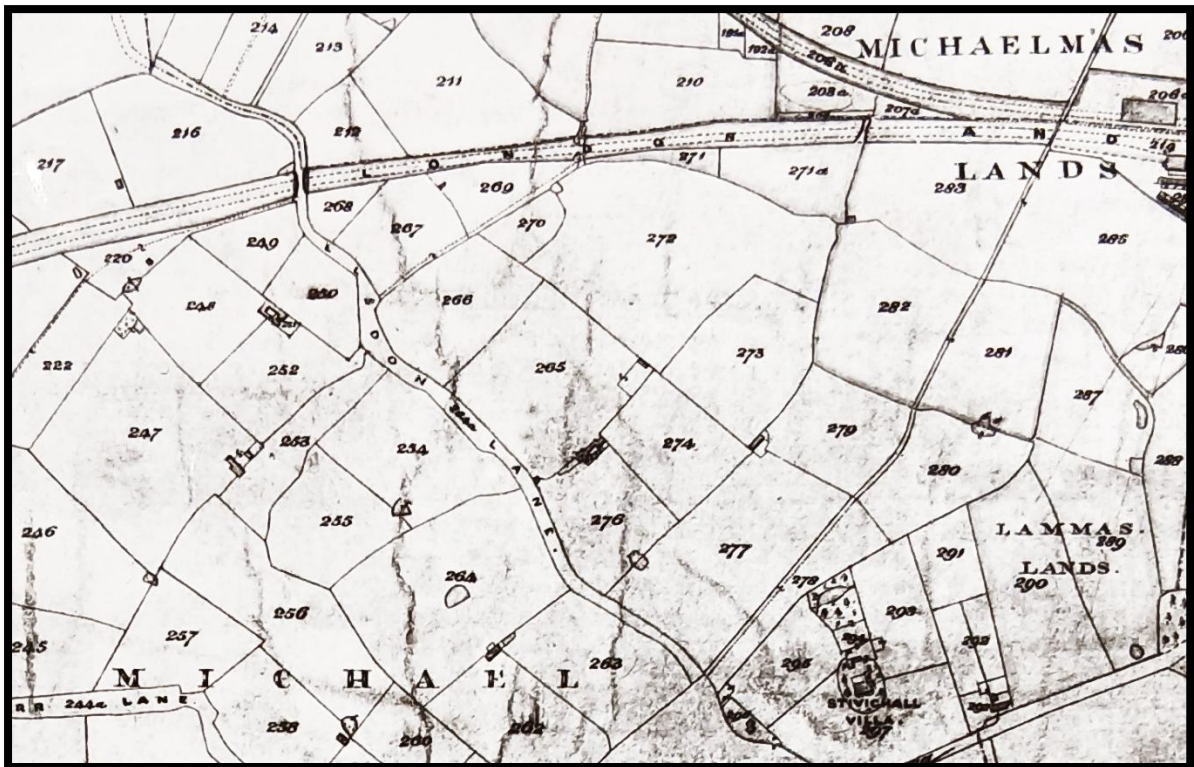


## The Gestation of Earlsdon?

The early development of Earlsdon as an estate laid out in 1852 is probably well known to many who take an interest in the local history of this area, but the years immediately prior to this foundation date may well be somewhat less familiar, which explains the focus of the notes offered here.

One obvious way to gain some insight into this period is to look at any local maps made at the time, in which regard we are fortunate to have such a map based on a survey carried out just five years earlier in 1847. This was made necessary by the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act, which allowed landowners to pay a cash sum to the Church of England instead of having to meet the obligation – the tithe – of handing over 10% of the agricultural produce derived from their holdings.

In order to determine what cash tithe might be payable, rather along the lines of the Domesday Book a survey was carried out to record the owner and occupier of each parcel of land, for which purpose a Tithe Apportionment map was produced assigning a number to each such parcel.

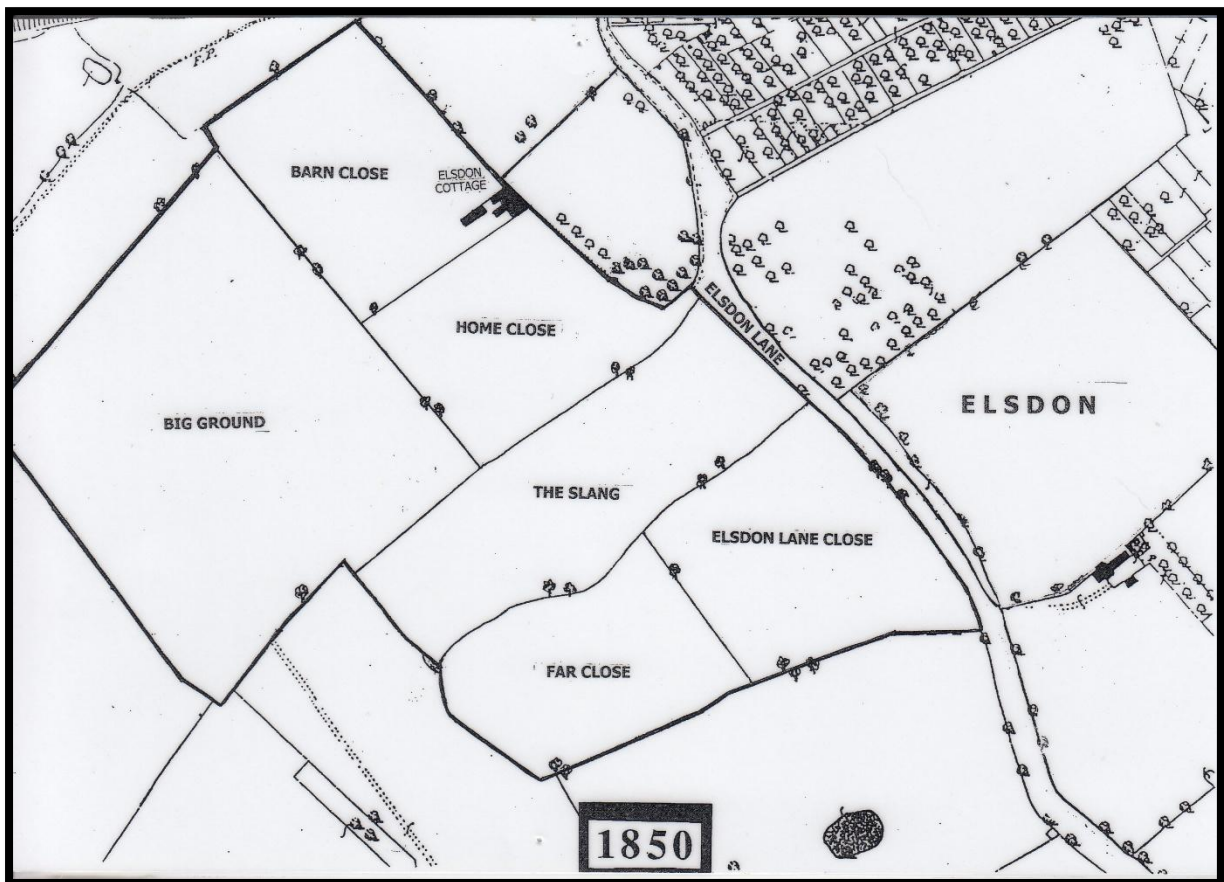


A. *St Michael's Tithe Map 1847, available also at Coventry Archives CCA/4/4/1/57*

The map is not the easiest to study – please down scroll to the end of this document for a larger version for those who might wish to print a copy – but some features will hopefully

be familiar. In the top right-hand corner is Coventry's railway station dating back to 1838, from which can be seen the new line leading off north towards Nuneaton (still under construction at the time the map was surveyed) with the mainline to Birmingham heading west. Also, spanning this railway line there is a bridge on Elsdon Lane, which today we know as Earlsdon Avenue North.

To help identify the six fields upon which a few years later the new Elsdon estate would be set out, it might be helpful to consult a simpler map which was produced by members of the Earlsdon Research Group in order to locate these fields which lay to the west of Elsdon Lane:



*B. The six fields which would be purchased for the new Elsdon estate*

As is probably well known to the reader, these fields had previously been farmed by John Moore, who built Elsdon Cottage in 1830 and lived there until his death in November 1846. By the time the 1847 Tithe Map was drawn up, we know that these fields had been bought by a local cow dealer called William Pickering.

Linking together what is recorded in the Tithe Apportionment records, we can learn a good deal about the fields at the time of the survey, as set out below.

<b>No</b>	<b>Name of Property</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Use</b>
247	Big Ground	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	meadow
248	Barn Close	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	arable
251	Elsdon Cottage	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	house etc
252	Home Close	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	arable
253	The Slang	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	pasture
254	Elsdon Lane Close	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	meadow
255	Far Close	William Pickering	Thomas Adams	pasture

*C. Details of the Elsdon fields from the 1847 Title Apportionment Records*

(On one point of detail, while the claim has already been made above that the subsequent Elsdon estate would be laid out over six fields, the listing above contains seven entries as the land on which Elsdon Cottage stood was also included in the tithe apportionment exercise.)

As regards the two individuals identified above, we know from census returns and early trade directories that William Pickering is recorded variously as a cow dealer or an agricultural labourer living at 38 Far Gosford Street at least from 1851 until his death in 1892. Accordingly, while we do not know whether he actually lived in Elsdon Cottage, but if he did his residence there would only have lasted a relatively short time if at all.

For his part, Thomas Adams was recorded in the 1851 Census as a farmer and butcher living at 28 Spon Street, where he lived until his death in 1882. While it seems clear from the records above that Thomas Adams rented these fields from William Pickering, which we know amounted to approximately 30 acres, the 1851 Census has him farming 40 acres of land. One – admittedly only partial – resolution of this anomaly suggests itself if we return to the 1847 Tithe Apportionment Records, where Thomas Adams' name appears again farming two more fields which were owned by a Michael Adams:

<b>No</b>	<b>Name of Property</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Use</b>
249	Top Close	Michael Adams	Thomas Adams	arable
250	Bottom Close	Michael Adams	Thomas Adams	arable

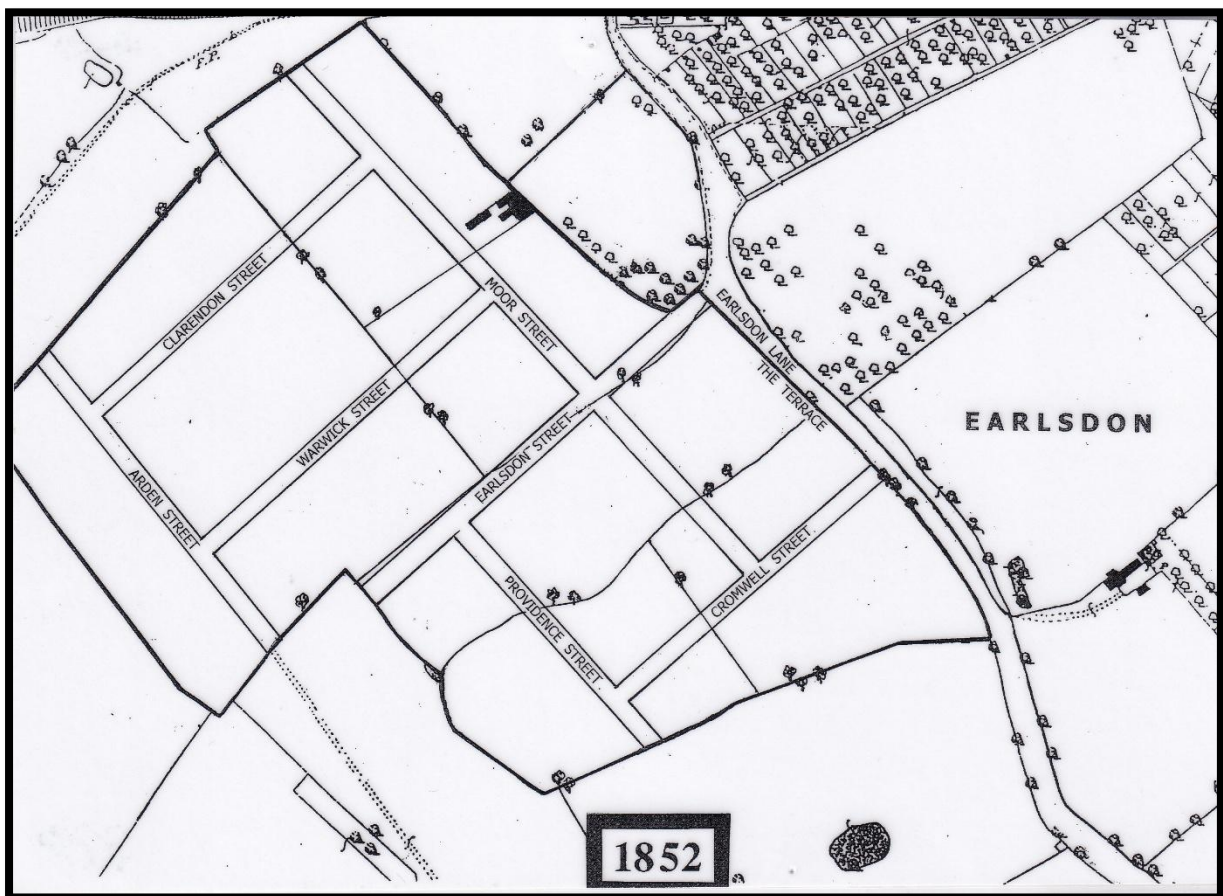
*D. Details of Michael Adams' fields from the 1847 Title Apportionment Records*

These two fields lay between Barn Close and Home Close on the one side and Elsdon Lane on the other side, therefore not forming part of the land sold to William Pickering

and by extension not belonging to the original 1852 estate. At this time, they allowed access from Elsdon Cottage to the Lane, but much later on they would become the grounds of a large house called the Poplars, subsequently giving rise to the naming of Poplar Road in the Edwardian period.

Returning to the nineteenth century, as might be guessed the baptism records for Michael and Thomas show that they were brothers. Michael came to be owner of the two fields owing to his marriage to Mary Ann (née) Day, who had inherited them from her father John Day after his death in 1830. By 1851, Michael and Mary Ann were recorded living on Cross Cheaping, with Michael – like his brother and indeed their father before them – working as a butcher.

More broadly, just a year later in 1852, the period of gestation so to speak ended and the estate came into being with its new name of Earlsdon. Again drawn up by members of the Earlsdon Research Group, the final map below gives an indication of the relationship between the outlines of the original fields and the layout of the eight streets which made up this new estate, particularly interesting perhaps in the case of the orientation of Earlsdon Street:



*E. The new streets of the Earlsdon estate overlaid on the former field boundaries*

To return briefly to the older of the Adams brothers, Michael's involvement with Earlsdon was rather more significant than that of Thomas or indeed William Pickering. By way of justification for this claim, the 1861 Census reveals that Michael – now a Master Butcher – and Mary Ann Adams were by now living on Moor(e) Street in Earlsdon with their three children and a further three servants.

More intriguingly, it has even been suggested that in 1854 Michael Adams bought the Bowling Green Inn – Earlsdon's first pub – and converted it into a private house, this being the very same building which John Moore had originally built in 1830 to serve as his farmhouse. Whatever was the case here, by 1871 Michael – now a widower – was living once more in Coventry, this time at 9 Trinity Terrace off Radford Road where he lived until his death in 1883.

For a number of reasons, such as the isolation of the new estate and the economic difficulties in the wider area during the 1860s, it was the case that a significant number of early Earlsdon residents like Michael Adams Earlsdon left the estate after some years and returned to live instead in the city centre.

In spite of such teething problems, however, Earlsdon survived its at times difficult infancy and due in part to the involvement of the individuals identified above it went on to thrive towards the end of the nineteenth century, ultimately as their legacy becoming the district we recognise today.

David Porter, Earlsdon Research Group

June 2026

*All the maps and tithe data used here are taken from Earlsdon Research Group holdings*

*For those who might wish to print a larger copy of the 1847 Tithe Apportionment map referred to earlier, please visit the following page*

