

# **Epsom Water Works, East Street, Epsom, Surrey**

**An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment  
for St James Homes Ltd**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code ESE99/85

**December 1999**

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## **An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

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### **Introduction**

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of the Epsom Water Works site located on the north side of East Street, Epsom, Surrey (TQ 2115 6125) (Fig 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Clive Bird of St James Homes Ltd, 102 The Green, Twickenham, Middlesex, and comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

### **Site Description, Location and Geology**

A Thames Water Pumping Station currently occupies the site, covering an area of approximately 1.9 hectares. The site lies to the north of Epsom and is bounded to the north-west by a railway line, to the south-west by a leisure centre, to the north-east by terraced housing and a college, and to the south-east by East Street and the rear of two properties (Fig 2). The majority of the site is located on river gravel but possibly with Woolwich or Reading Beds immediately adjacent to East Street (BGS 1981). The site lies at a height of approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum.

The majority of the site is open space with the rear areas covered by scrub and the central areas by grass and hard standing. A modern structure lies on the south-western side. Close to the front of the site is a large brick-built structure constructed or enlarged in 1926 with several small buildings of similar style nearby. The East Street frontage is taken up by two access roads.

### **Planning Background and Development Proposals**

Planning permission is to be sought for the redevelopment of the site for housing. There are no definitive plans of the development proposals at this time.

*Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) provides guidance relating to archaeology within the planning process. It points out that where a desk-based assessment has shown that there is a strong possibility of significant archaeological deposits in a development area it is reasonable to provide more detailed information

from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be devised:

Paragraph 21 states:

‘Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out...’

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed further guidance is provided. *Archaeology and Planning* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

‘...Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation...’

Paragraph 18 states:

‘The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its’ setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...’

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e. fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:

‘Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.’

Further guidance is provided by the Epsom and Ewell District-wide Local Plan (EELP 1997):

Policy BE1:

‘The Borough Council will identify, protect and preserve the sites of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and County sites of archaeological importance and their settings. Where these sites and their settings are affected by development proposals, there will be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.’

Policy BE21:

‘The council will not normally grant planning permission for development affecting areas of high archaeological potential unless the application for permission is accompanied by an archaeological field evaluation. On any site where remains have been revealed by a field evaluation or by chance, the Borough Council will normally require developers to provide for preservation or for proper and timely investigation and recording, in accordance with a written scheme approved by the Borough Council.’

Explanatory paragraph 6.7.3 points out that, ‘Many parts of the Borough have never been systematically surveyed from an archaeological point of view...’ and, ‘... the Council will encourage developers of larger sites (those exceeding 0.4 ha) to undertake an archaeological field evaluation and to submit details with their planning application...’.

The site lies just to the north-east of the town centre area of high archaeological potential (EELP 1997, map 4).

## **Methodology**

The assessment of the site was carried out by the examination of pre-existing information from a number of sources recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists paper ‘*Standards in British Archaeology*’ covering desk-based studies. These sources include historic and modern maps, the Surrey Sites and Monuments Record, geological maps, and any relevant publications or reports.

## **Archaeological Background**

A search was made of the Surrey Sites and Monuments Record on 2nd December 1999 for a radius of 500m around the site, the results are summarised in Appendix 1 and the locations of the entries are shown on Figure 1. The search revealed nine entries for this area, with no entries within the development area itself.

The only entry for the Prehistoric period within the study area is a documentary reference to Dead Hills or Furze Hills [Fig 1, 3]. This most probably refers to a gallows but could equally refer to the site of a round barrow or even a combination of both. However, there is no other information about this location. The remaining entries relate to Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval finds.

The Roman period is dominated by Stane Street, which is the road from London to Silchester (Margary 1973, route 15) [9]. The course of the road is projected and is thought to lie some 500m to the east of the proposal site. Other Roman finds are recorded, including single finds such as a 2nd century AD coin of the Emperor Hadrian [7]; three 1st century AD urned cremation burials [1] which came from a location only 150m to the south-east; and several inhumation burials of either late Roman or Saxon date [5].

Evidence for the Saxon period is ambiguous. There is a single entry for this period [2] referring to six inhumations but, as these burials lacked grave goods, their chronology is uncertain and a date of either the 6th century or the 10th–11th century AD date has been suggested.

Entries of Medieval date were restricted to the church of St Martin's with its 15th century tower [4] and a nearby dene hole [6]. The final entry is for the site of an ice house that was once a listed structure but has now been levelled [8].

The proposal site lies beyond the historic core of the town but the status of the settlement as a town is of relatively recent date (O'Connell 1977). During Medieval times Epsom was a village. The place name evidence with an ending *-ham* (*Epsam* in 1610) suggests a Saxon origin.

At a more general level, the proposal site does not lie in an area rich in finds and many periods are sparsely represented (Bird and Bird 1987). The most notable finds belong to the Roman period and comprise entries for several burial sites, some of which lie within the study area, and a major site to the north at Ewell (op cit, fig 7.7). There is also a cluster of findspots of Mesolithic flintwork from an area to the north-east of Epsom (op cit fig 3.4). Recent fieldwork in the general area of Epsom and within the town itself has added further finds and sites to the Sites and Monuments Record, such as Prehistoric flintwork and post-Medieval deposits (Robertson 1997), and late Bronze Age features (Saunders 1996).

## **Historical Background**

The centenary of the Epsom and Ewell Corporation Water Department site was held in 1953 (Surrey Record Office) but no detailed records in the Thames Water Archives were present until after c. 1926. The waterworks were in local authority ownership at this time. However, the early editions of the Ordnance Survey (e.g. Fig 5) provide plans of the layout of the early waterworks. Few of the above ground structures survived the redesign of the site in the mid 20th century.

## **Cartographic and Documentary Sources**

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Surrey Record Office and the Thames Water Archive in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the sites' later history and whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area (Appendix 2).

The earliest map consulted for the area is Speed's map of Surrey dated 1610 (not illustrated) but this shows little detail of the settlement of *Epsam* and ,similarly, Seller's map of 1690 (not illustrated) shows little detail other than that the settlement is located on a main road. Senex's map of 1729 (not illustrated) shows the town at

a small scale and East Street can be identified. One structure is shown in the vicinity of the site fronting East Street but it is not possible to determine if this lay on or close to the proposal site.

Rocque's Map of Surrey dated 1762 (Fig 3) shows the site close to the margins of the town and the East Street frontage may have been occupied by a house and garden. The Epsom Tithe map dated 1843 (Fig 4) shows that the site was not occupied by structures and comprised two long narrow plots on the East Street frontage and the parts of two larger plots to the rear. The railway had not been constructed at this time.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1870 (Fig 5) shows that the original waterworks occupied a single long narrow plot with several structures and at least two wells located away from the East Street frontage. The rear part of the proposal site up to the railway boundary was unoccupied farmland and the eastern side of the site comprised a nursery with greenhouses. The western side was unoccupied.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1894–6 (Fig 6) shows the waterworks contained within the same plot of land but more densely occupied by structures and storage tanks. The rear was described as a nursery. The 1913 edition showed few changes and is not illustrated.

The Ordnance Survey 1932 revised edition (Fig 7) shows new houses close to the East Street frontage and the pump house (with a foundation stone dated 1926) has been built or added to an earlier structure. The site was still confined within the original plot occupied before 1870.

Several maps and plans for the site were obtained from the Thames Water archive. These plans are not as extensive as for some other water industry sites, which may indicate that many of the earlier records have been lost or transferred to an archive other than Thames Water when ownership of the works changed hands.

The plans that are present are not dated but all show the pump house, which has a foundation stone dated 1926, and most pre-date the creation of Thames Water. The site boundaries, which are the same as the present day, define a larger parcel of land than the 1932 Ordnance Survey map. These plans show that approximately half of the south-east part of the proposal site was densely occupied by water works features.

The pump house, offices and various ancillary structures are still upstanding but an area further to the north-west, originally occupied by a building and now grassed over, had been remodelled and was occupied by a large contact tank set into the ground. No profile of the tank was found but the need for steps down into it suggest a depth of 2m or more. A more recent contact tank on the west side of the site is partly set into the ground to a depth of 2m (above 43m AOD). Other plans show that the two access roads to the site are occupied by many services. An area on the south-west of the site currently in use as a car park was formerly a garden and

does not appear to have been used for invasive waterworks features. An area of the pumphouse has been basemented to provide access to the well heads.

In contrast, the rear areas of the site have been lightly used, with a borehole, water pipes, sewer pipes and a pond being the main disturbances (Fig 8).

## Listed Buildings

There are no listed buildings on the site.

## Discussion

This desk-based assessment has revealed that there are no known archaeological deposits on or immediately adjacent to the proposal site but there is some evidence of Roman activity in the general area. The site lies beyond the historic core of Epsom and was undeveloped farmland until the building of the waterworks in 1853. The study has shown that the area of the proposal site closest to the East Street frontage has been densely occupied by buildings, including subterranean structures and service runs. For this reason it is suggested that this area, which covers approximately half of the proposal site, has very low archaeological potential and does not need to be considered further.

In contrast, the areas to the rear of the proposal site have been lightly used and may have higher, but not necessarily high, archaeological potential. This part of the proposal site still has an area greater than the Surrey County Council threshold for intervention (0.4 ha). The evidence for the presence of important archaeological deposits on this part of the site is not strong and it is not clear if field evaluation can be justified. However, this position should be discussed further in consultation with the archaeological advisor to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (Surrey County Archaeologist). If such a discussion concludes that a field evaluation is required to confirm or refute the archaeological potential of the site and to provide information with which to draw up a scheme to mitigate the effects of redevelopment if required, a scheme for the evaluation will need to be drawn up and approved by the archaeological advisor to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (Surrey County Archaeologist) and implemented by a competent archaeological contractor, such as an Institute of Field Archaeologists Registered Organisation.

The nature of any archaeological deposits on the site is unlikely to meet the criteria set out in Annex 4 of PPG16 (1990) detailing guidelines for scheduling as ancient monuments which would require preservation *in-*

*situ*, and therefore any other archaeological remains can be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e. excavation) as a condition on the granting of any planning permission.

The absence of any listings of the waterworks buildings on the site suggests that they are not of any great architectural merit. However, should they be demolished it may be appropriate to conduct a photographic survey of them to Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) level 1.

## References

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PPG16, 1990, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning, HMSO  
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Saunders, M J, 1996, Manor Hospital, Christchurch Road, Epsom, An archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 96/39(ii), Reading



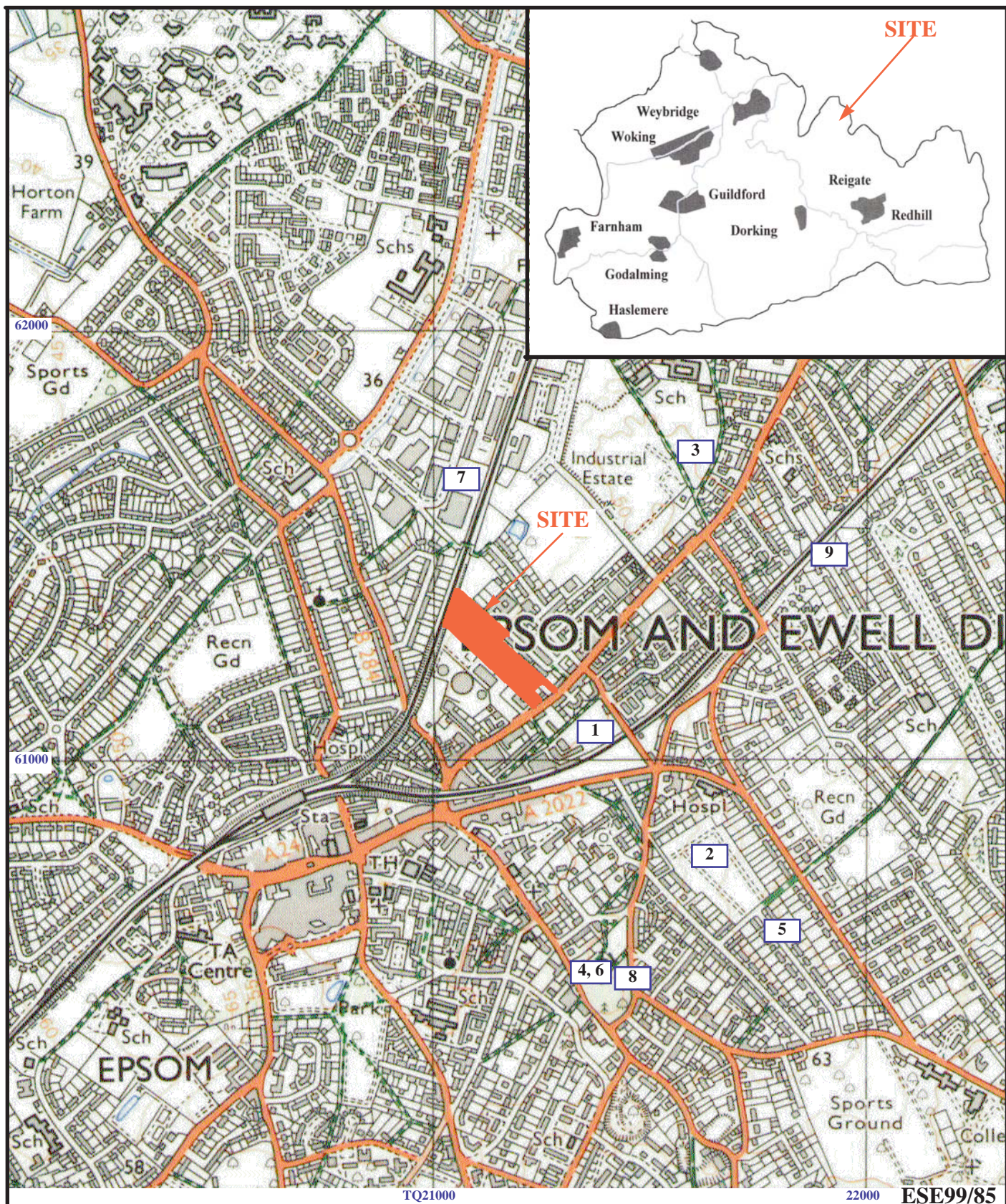
## APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Record entries within a 1km search radius of the proposal site

<i>No</i>	<i>SMR Ref</i>	<i>Grid Ref (TQ)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	1105	2154 6121	3 cremation urns	Roman (1st century AD)	Associated with coins of Claudius and Trajan
2	1107	2163 6077	and at least 2 coins	Middle or Late Saxon	
3	1113	2170 6165	6 inhumation burials	Post-Medieval or Bronze Age	At 'Dead Hills', documentary source only
4	1115	2139 6052	Gallows or round barrow	Medieval	St Martin's
5	1118	2179 6062	Church	Late Roman or Saxon	
6	1119	2140 6053	inhumation burials	Medieval?	By church
7	1126	21068 61660	Dene hole	Roman (2nd century AD)	Sestertius of Hadrian AD 119
8	1928	2143 6049	Coin	Post-Medieval	Listed gde II, now demolished?
9	3726	21 61	Ice house	Roman	Stane Street

## **APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted**

1610	J Speed, Map of Surrey
1690	Seller, Map of Surrey
1762	J Rocque, Map of Surrey (Fig 3)
1843	Epsom Tithe map (Fig 4)
1848	Ordnance Survey 1"
1870	First Edition Ordnance Survey, Surrey sheet XIX.1 25" (Fig 5)
1896	Second Edition Ordnance Survey, Surrey sheet XIX.1 25" (Fig 6)
1913	Third Edition Ordnance Survey, Surrey sheet XIX.1 25"
1932	Ordnance Survey, Surrey sheet XIX.1 25" (Fig 7)
c. 1950	Epsom and Ewell Corporation Water Department (Fig 8)





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Figure 1. Location of site within Epsom and Surrey  
showing SMR entries within a 500m radius.

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(reproduced at 1:12500)  
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S E R V I C E S



## Epsom Water Works, East Street, Epsom Surrey, 1999

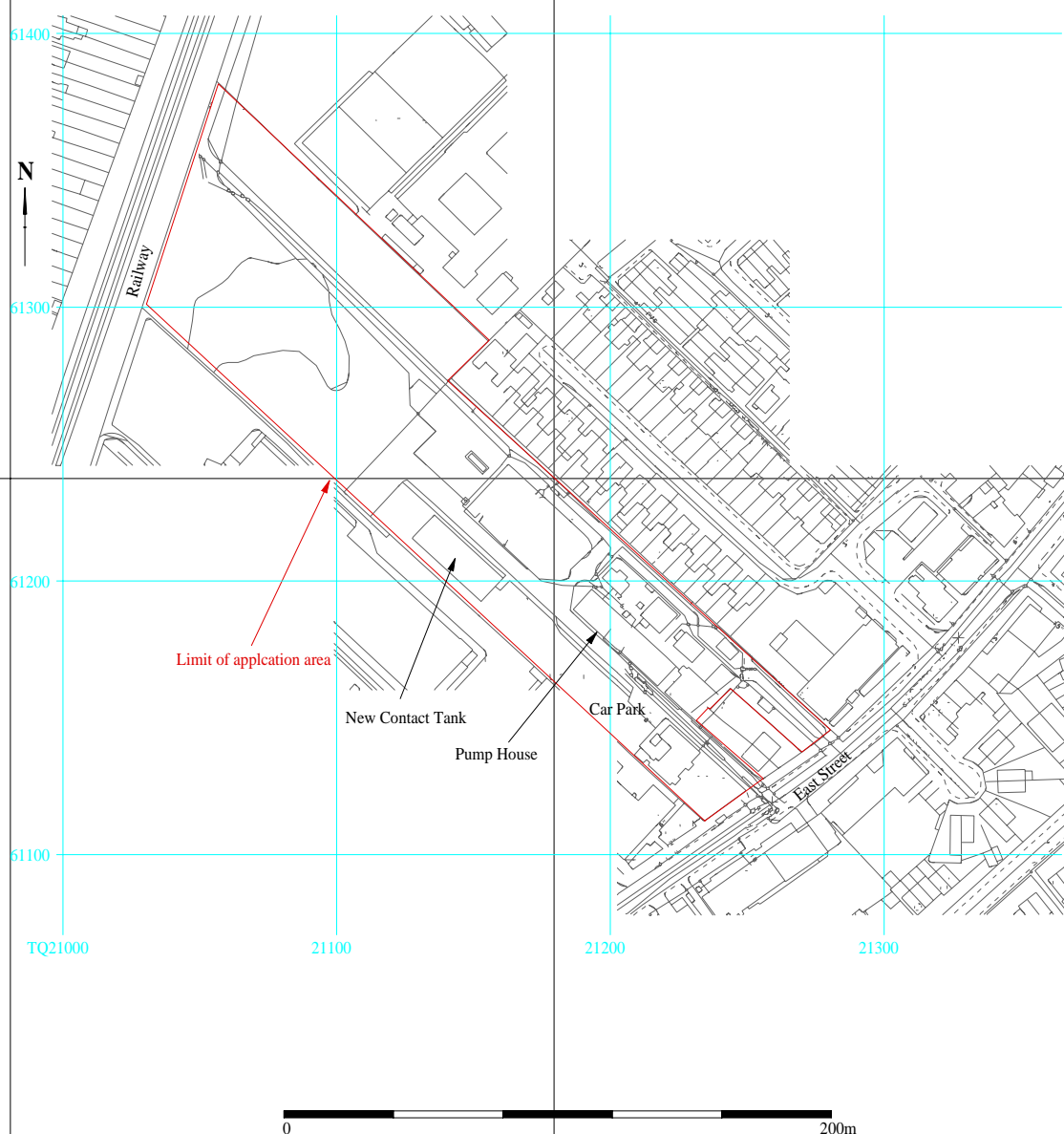
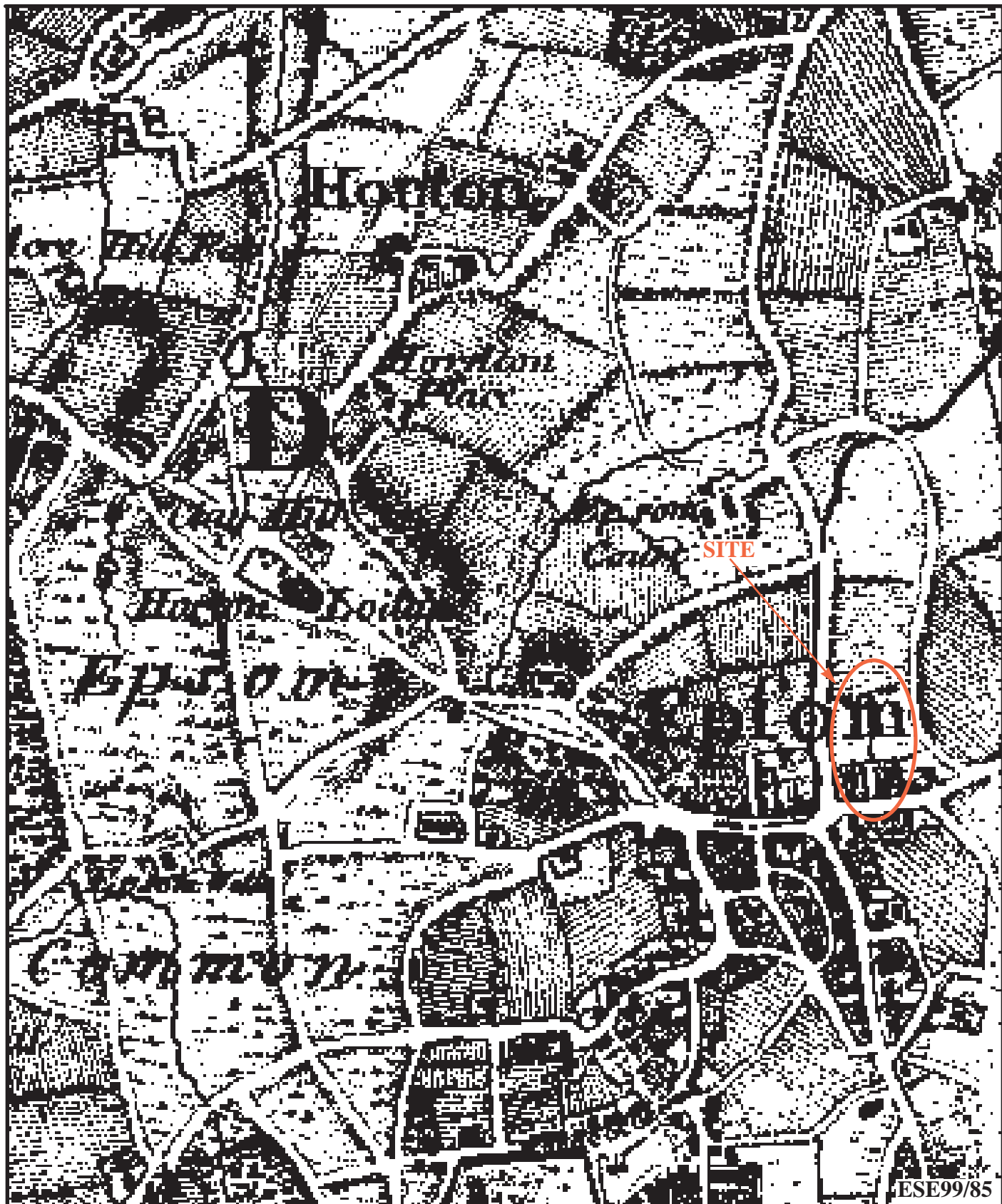


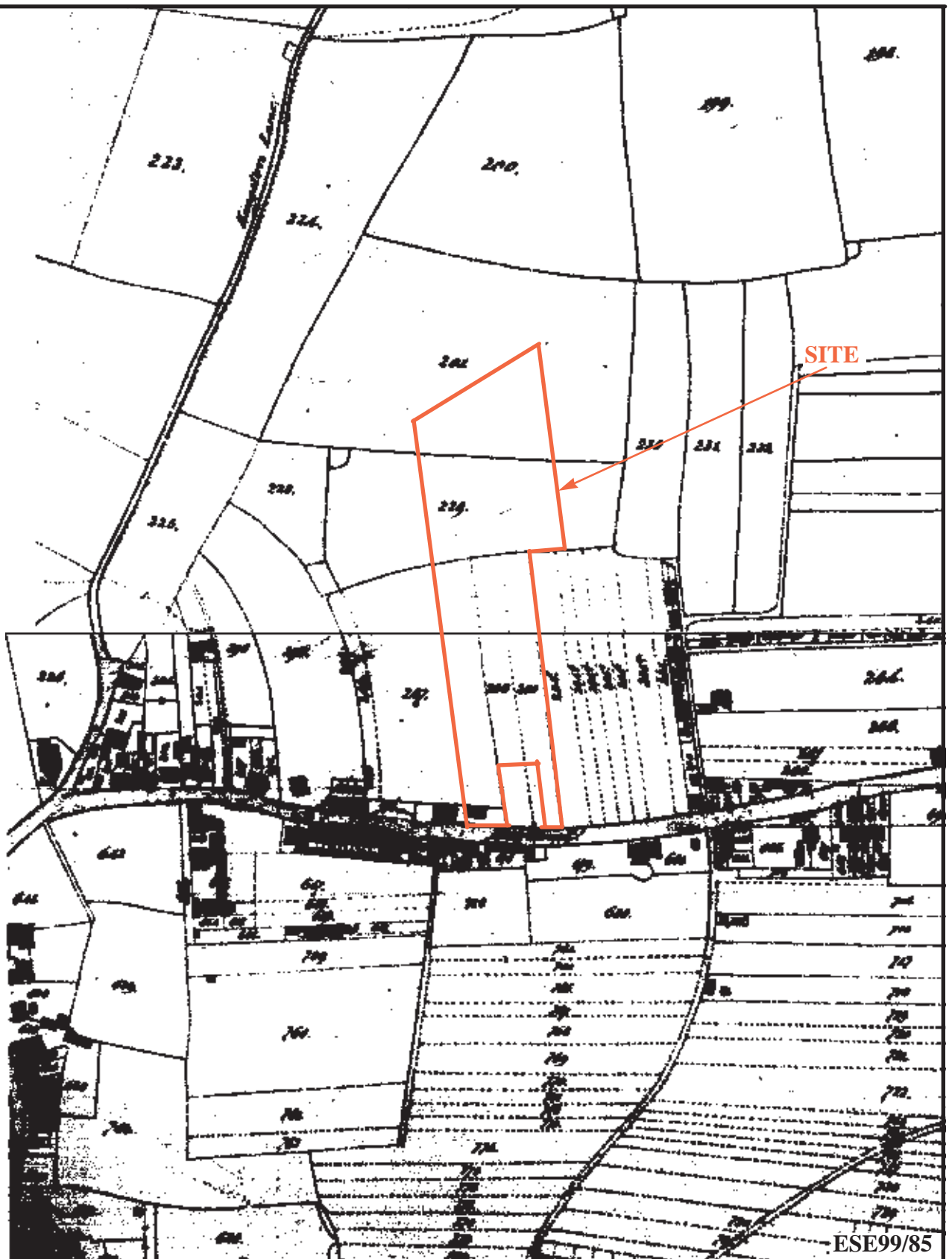
Figure 2. Location of site showing current land use.



Epsom Water Works, East Street, Epsom, Surrey,  
1999

Figure 3. Rocque, 1762.

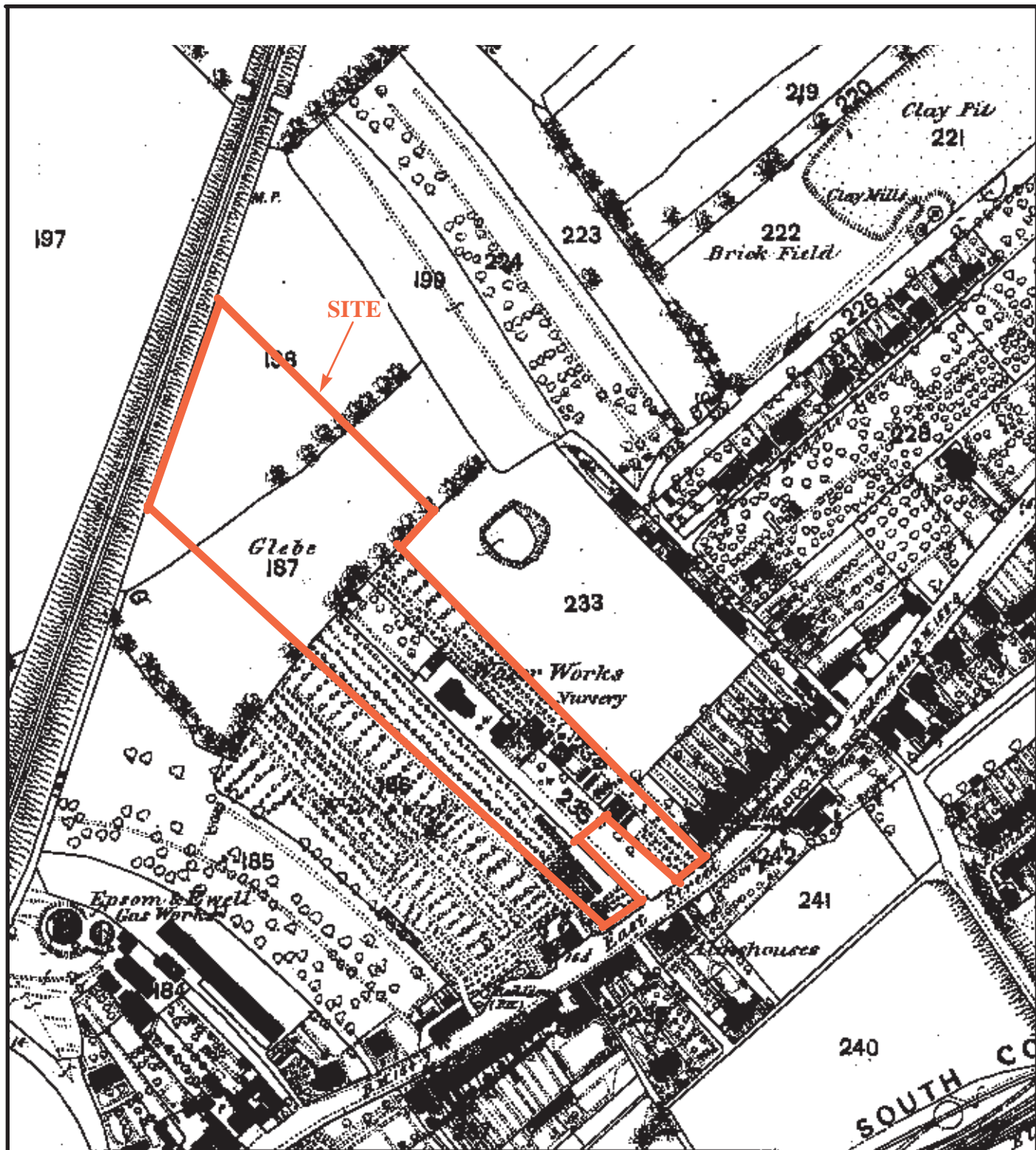
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1999

Figure 4. Tithe map 1843.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



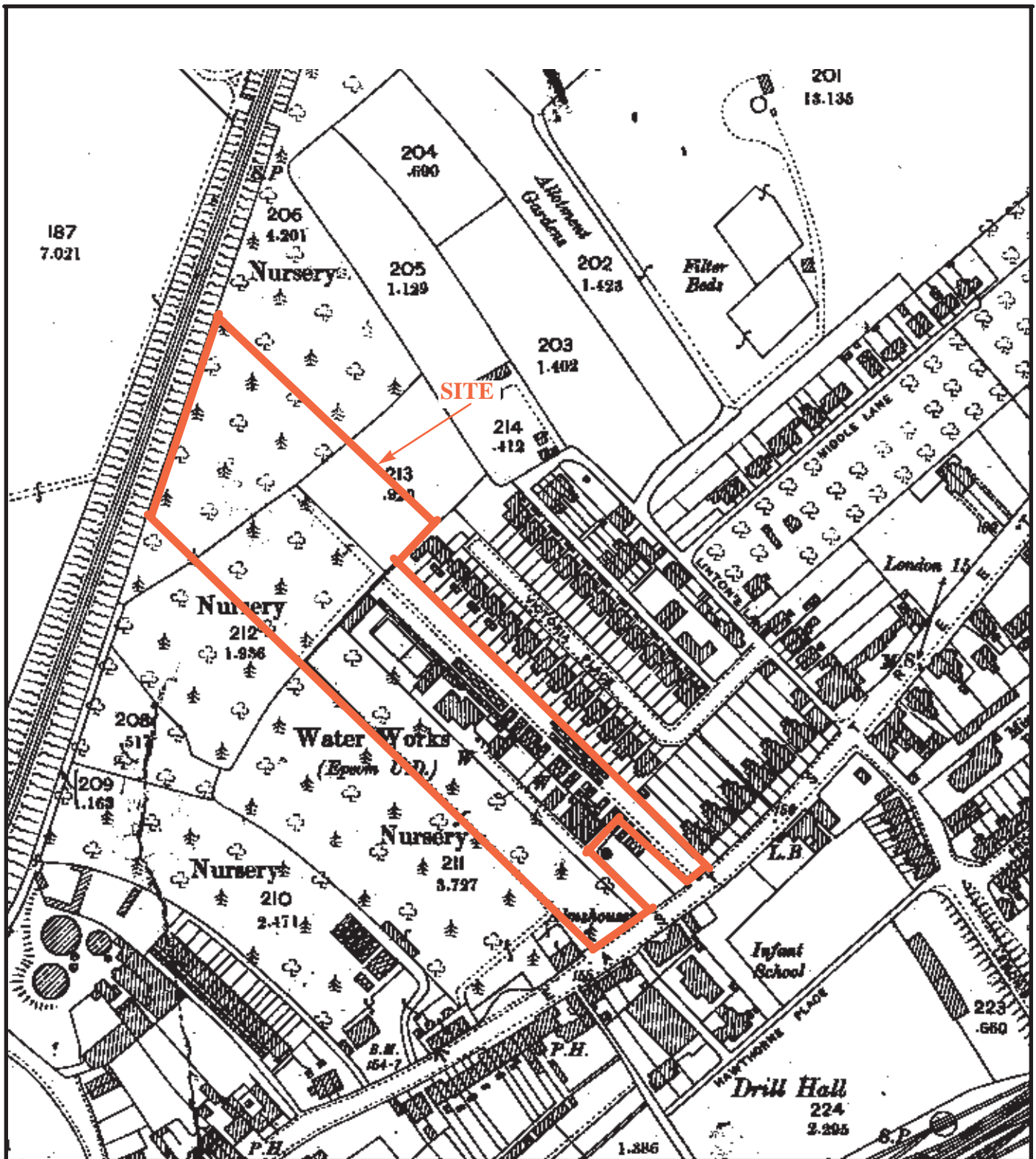
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Figure 5. Ordnance Survey, 1870.

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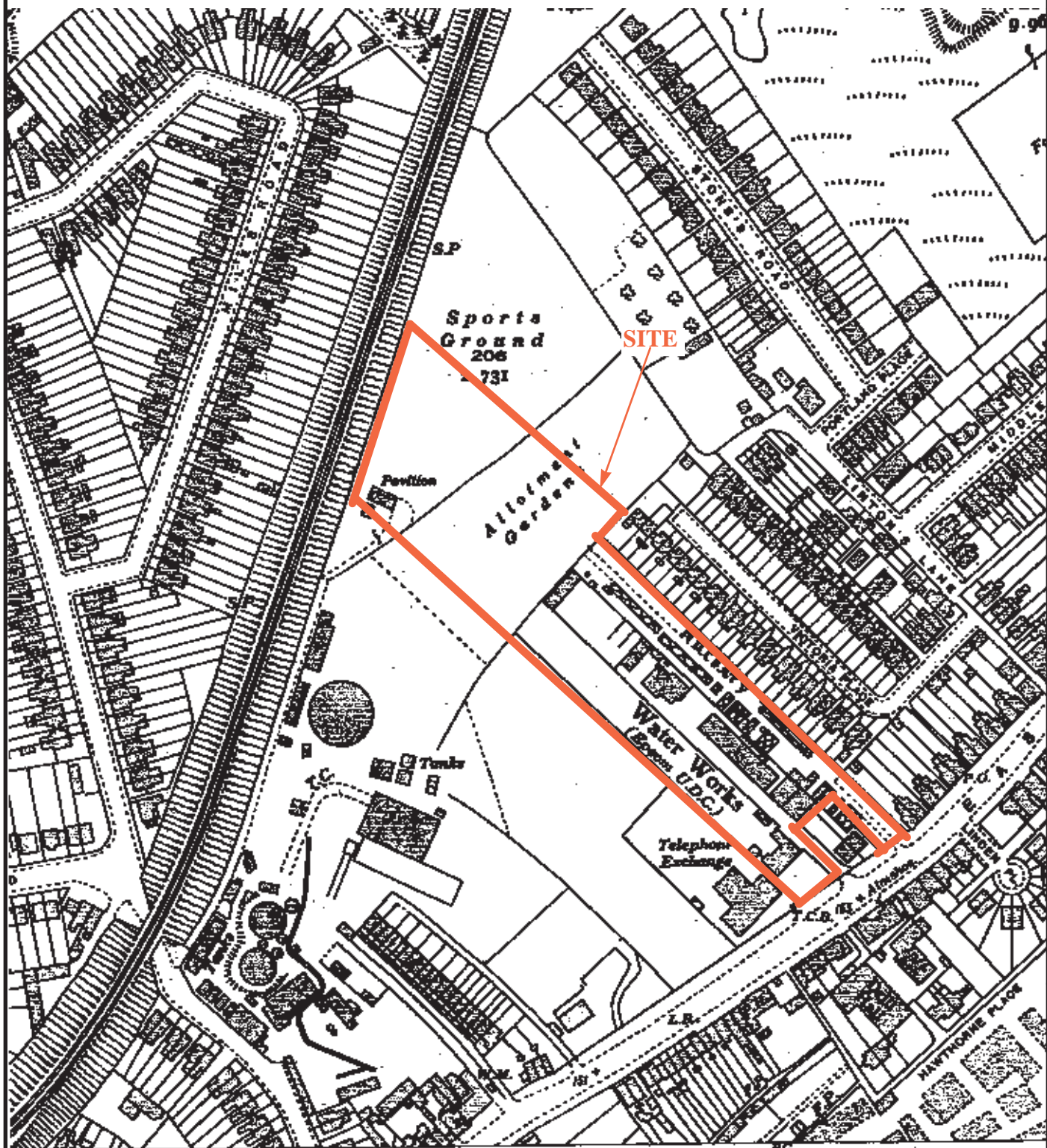
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Figure 6. Ordnance Survey, 1894-6.

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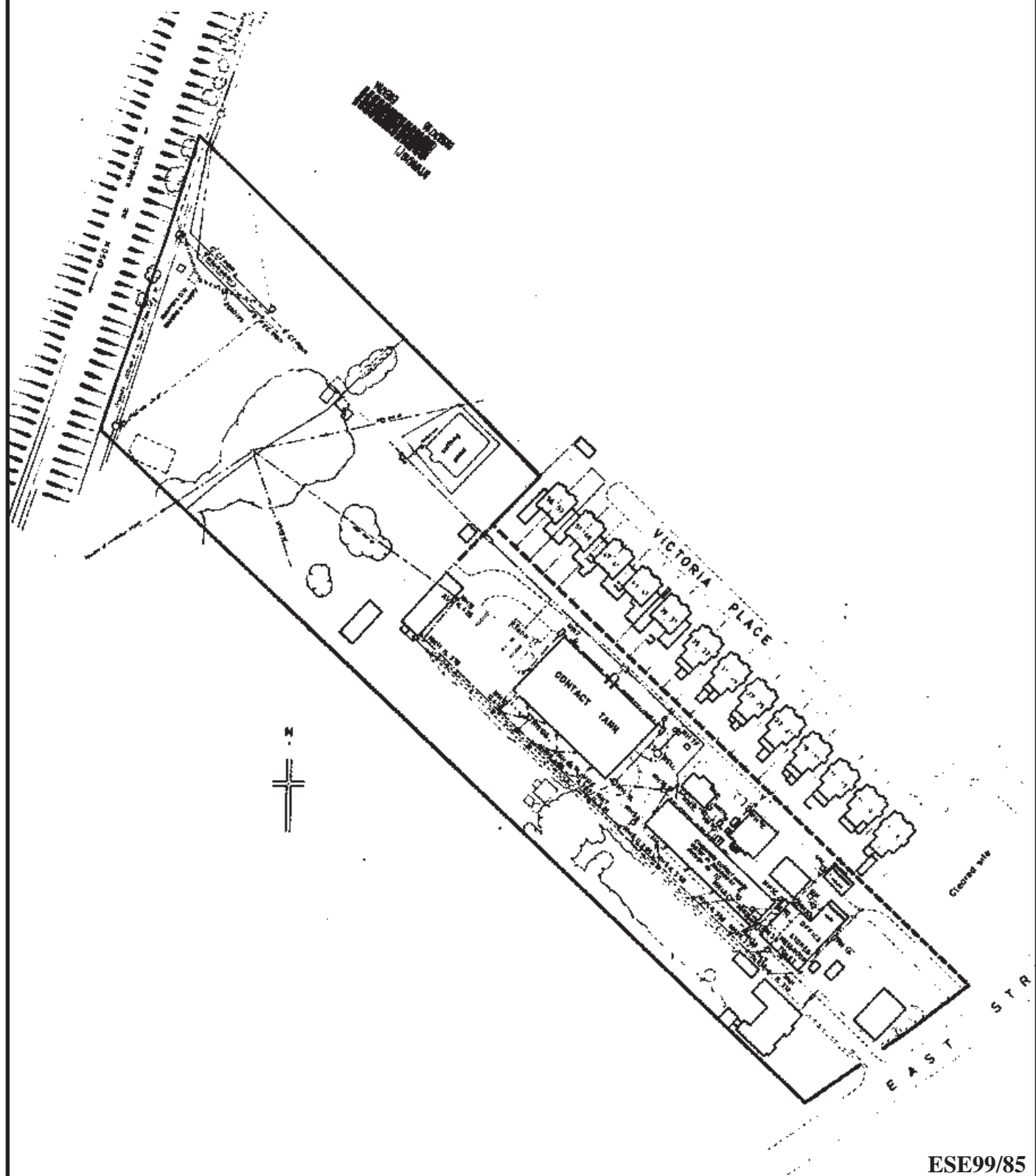


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Figure 7. Ordnance Survey, 1932.

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Figure 8. Epsom Works Drainage Layout, Thames  
Water Authority, 1950 (?).

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