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**A259**  
**NEW ROMNEY BYPASS**  
**5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
**DESK STUDY**

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**RESEARCH TRUST**

A Report on the Archaeological Implications  
of the Proposed By-Pass for  
New Romney, Kent  
A259

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report concerns the line of the proposed A259 by-pass for New Romney and the approach roads, as shown on Maps 1-3, together with a corridor of land approximately 500 m. wide on either side.

1.2 The corridor of interest runs close to the present town of New Romney, and between the settlements of Old and New Romney. Today Old Romney is a hamlet and New Romney is a small-size town. But in the early Middle Ages "Romenal" was a port of national importance, one of the original Cinque Ports. At Domesday (1086) it was one of the eight largest towns in Kent.

1.3 No archaeological surveys have been carried out in the corridor of the proposed road, but the archaeology of this strip of land is without doubt closely related to the history of the town and port.

1.4 The corridor of interest lies entirely within the Level of Romney Marsh proper. It is close to the sea and most of it is now, and always has been, below the level of the highest tides.

1.5 In the last few thousand years great changes in this coastline have occurred. These had profound and often rapid effects on settlement patterns and human occupations.

1.6 As a result of the changes in the coastline, the marsh was subject to prolonged periods of inundation, during which the sea deposited a significant variety of sediments over the area, and successive horizons of human occupation have been buried by and encased in layers of geological sediment.

1.7 Any permanent occupation of the Marsh has depended essentially on an efficient system of land drainage. Major and minor drainage channels have always also served as both field and property boundaries. The history of these channels reflects the human use and occupation of the Marsh.

1.8 On account of the proximity of salt water, certain specialised activities, including fishing, catching of eels, and salt extraction, took place on the Marsh. Archaeological evidence of salt-extraction in the late Bronze Age and early Roman period has recently emerged from several locations on the marsh - near Lydd, Dymchurch and in Newchurch parish, all now buried beneath composite layers of later sediments. There is also documentary evidence of salt-working in the Saxon and medieval periods. Salt works are inferred by place names not far from the corridor of interest.

## 2. THE GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Romney Marsh has been subject in prehistoric and historic times to great changes in the coastline. These created inlets behind the coastal shingle barrier, which became the focus of human activity. Facing the Continent, ports grew up which were of national and international importance. Romney was one of these.

2.2 The Marsh was also subject to periodic widespread inundations by the sea, which sealed certain archaeological horizons and buried them beneath layers of marine sediment.

2.3 In an area subject to radical and sometimes rapid environmental changes, the geological record contains palaeo-environmental information essential to the understanding of conditions of past human activities and settlement.

2.4 Because of the particular water-logged nature of the Marsh, it is very probable that organic remains, of both natural and man-made origin may have been preserved within the geological deposits.

2.5 For all these reasons, it is essential that any archaeological assessment should include reference to the geological context, both to the evidence of past conditions within the corridor of interest itself, and the evidence of geographical circumstances in the surrounding area at different periods.

2.6 General geological evidence shows the following:

2.6.1 In prehistoric and possibly in Roman times this part of Romney Marsh developed in the shelter afforded by a massive shingle barrier beach which lay to the east of New Romney, on a line roughly between the present towns of Lydd and Dymchurch (Eddison 1983).

2.6.2 While the shingle ridge was intact on the seaward side, the area behind it was occupied by a tidal lagoon.

2.6.3 The shingle barrier eventually weakened. The sea broke through it, roughly on the latitude of Romney, driving the detached ends (or spits) of the shingle bank inland. New Romney stands on the northern spit, and the B2075 road runs northwards from Lydd up the southern spit.

2.6.4 This breach in the shingle barrier gave rise to a large tidal inlet in the neighbourhood of Romney, which for a time was also the estuary of the Rother. The date at which this inlet opened up is uncertain. No evidence has been found to suggest that it was open in Roman times. Indeed, the fact that the local fort of the Saxon shore built in A.D. c 275 was at Lympne suggests otherwise. There is no doubt, however, that the inlet did provide the sheltered haven which made Romney a pre-eminent port in the eleventh century.

2.7 The only detailed geological work carried out in this area to date is that of the Soil Survey (Memoir No. 4, 1968). The following information is taken from that source.

2.8 Romney Marsh is divided by the Soil Survey into "Old Marshland" and "New Marshland" - according to the amount of calcium carbonate remaining in the soils.

2.9 The area of the corridor of interest falls into three geological provinces, as follows (see Map 1):

2.9.1 The New Romney spit, which consists predominantly of shingle and sand. The spit was driven landwards and extended southwards by the waves. The date at which this occurred is not known.

2.9.2 Behind this spit lies an area of "Old Marshland", an early land surface which had probably become dry by mid-Saxon times. The geology here is complex, but the Soil Survey interpreted it as a high salt marsh surface with creeks draining northwards into a tidal lagoon in the centre of Romney Marsh. In the area of Jesson Farm (TR 082276) 1.3 km to the north of this corridor, a Late Iron Age/Early Roman land surface has been proved about one metre below the surface. There is no evidence to show whether or not this buried land surface continues beneath the Romney corridor of interest - but the possibility should be borne in mind.

2.9.3 The area south-west of the Ashford Road is "New Marshland" (with an inlier of older land surface between Islesbridge and the Wallingham Sewer). This newer land-surface drained towards the east.

2.9.4 The Ashford Road marks a sharp boundary between these two land surfaces of different ages and the Soil Survey has suggested that this road runs along the top of an early sea-defence wall.

## SUMMARY

2.10 In pre-historic and possibly in Roman times the Romney area developed in the shelter of a massive shingle beach, which extended from Lydd past Dymchurch. North of New Romney is an area whose land-surface appears to have developed behind the barrier, with creeks draining towards a lagoon in the centre of Romney Marsh. This land surface is crossed by 2 km of the proposed new road.

2.11 In the light of evidence from elsewhere, it is possible that a Late Iron Age/Early Roman land surface exists approximately 1 m below this surface, particularly at the northern end of the proposed by-pass.

2.12 The period of relative tranquility behind the shingle barrier was brought to an end when the sea severed the barrier and broke through on to the Marsh. The date of this event is unknown, but it may have been in the late Roman-early Saxon period.

2.13 Two events then happened simultaneously:

2.13.1 The sea drove the remaining shingle landwards and built up the bank of shingle and sand upon which New Romney was later built.

2.13.2 The sea also opened up a tidal inlet, capturing the Rother as it did so. For some centuries the tides flowed in and out of this inlet, up to Old Romney and beyond. This inlet is represented by the "New Marshland", to be crossed by nearly 1 km of the proposed new road between Islesbridge and the Ashford Road.

2.14 Finally, this estuary silted up. It appears from documentary evidence that this may have occurred mainly in the thirteenth century.



### 3. THE TOPOGRAPHICAL RECORD.

3.1 The following features are considered under this heading: principal marsh drains (known in this locality as sewers); ditches; the Rhee Wall; roads; and elevated mounds.

#### 3.2 Main sewers.

3.2.1 The only main sewer in the corridor of interest is the New Sewer, which is crossed by the proposed access road linking the northern roundabout with Brodnyx and St Mary-in-the-Marsh. This sewer conveys water from the direction of Old Romney to an outfall through the Dymchurch Wall at St Mary's Bay. It cuts across numerous earlier ditches, and it therefore a relatively new feature of the landscape. Since it does not appear on the Tythe Maps it is understood to have been constructed later than 1843.

#### 3.3 The ditches.

3.3.1 The present system of field ditches has evolved over many centuries. They probably evolved originally from salt marsh creeks when the present land surface was permanently occupied.

3.3.2 In the past there were a considerably greater number of ditches than there are today. In certain areas close to New Romney the ditches used to be much more closely spaced, providing small enclosures, suggesting inhabited areas. These ditches show up on aerial photographs, see Map 2, and are discussed in para 4.5 of this report.

### 3.4 The Rhee Wall.

3.4.1 The Rhee Wall is one of the most pronounced and important features of the landscape of Romney Marsh. It is a nearly straight double-walled feature which crosses the Marsh for seven miles from Appledore to within 400 m. of the present built-up area of New Romney.

3.4.2 The Rhee was a canalised watercourse enclosed between an earth bank on either side. In the Islesbridge area the whole feature was about 40 m. wide.

3.4.3 The Rhee channel silted up and had to be repeatedly dug out, the spoil being piled up on the flanking walls (see documentary references to "digging in the Rhee" in the early 15th century, Vollans 1988). Hence the whole feature is now elevated about 1 m. above the general surface of the Marsh.

3.4.4 Documentary evidence shows that the section between Old and New Romney was built after a Royal Decree in 1258, the section between Appledore and Old Romney having been built somewhat earlier (Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 28th June 1258).

3.4.5 The same document shows that the Rhee was built to convey both fresh and salt water from Appledore to scour out and prevent the accumulation of silt in the harbour of Romney, which was threatened with extinction at that time. At first it had only been necessary to introduce this flow of water into the Romney inlet at Old Romney. The 1258 document shows that as a result of obstructions (and presumably silting) it was then necessary to extend the embanked channel to the outskirts of New Romney. The Islesbridge section therefore appears to have been constructed in or shortly after 1258.

3.4.6 The present A259 runs along the top of this elevated feature from Brenzett to Islesbridge.

3.4.7 Although the banks of the Rhee have already been flattened by farming practices and previous road improvements, it is likely that the lower courses of the flanking walls and sedimentary evidence of the channel remain undisturbed beneath the present surface.

3.4.8 The proposed roundabout at the south end of the New Romney by-pass will be erected on the line of the Rhee Wall, and is likely to affect the full width of the structure.

3.5. The line of the proposed road crosses three local roads, namely St Mary's Road, Hope Lane (at one time known as Cockreed Lane) and Ashford Road, and one track which leads from New Romney to Old Romney.

3.5.1 Each of these roads, which fan out from New Romney in directions between west and north, clearly linked the important centre of New Romney with its hinterland. Each links a known inland centre of medieval occupation with that town and port. It is therefore likely that all these roads are of medieval, and possibly earlier, origin.

3.5.2 All these roads appear on one of the earliest maps, All Souls CTM 417a/6, dated 1592.

3.5.3 With the exception of the track to Old Romney these roads follow sinuous courses and cross the older marshland. It seems likely that they evolved from tracks which came into use when the Marsh was occupied in Saxon times. To maintain efficient drainage, all ditches would have needed to have been cleansed regularly; the spoil thrown out alongside would have provided a slightly raised tract which would have provided a useful routeway, drier than the surrounding fields.

3.5.4 The Ashford Road, which passes close to the ruined church of Hope All Saints, is particularly windy. It skirts the New Romney estuary and the Soil Survey suggested it ran along the top of a sea defence wall which contained that estuary.

3.5.5 The track towards Old Romney runs up the centre of the New Romney estuary and has a much straighter course than the other roads. It is likely that this important route from New Romney to Old Romney and points further west is somewhat later than the other roads to New Romney. Nevertheless, it was an important route by land while the Rhee (the present main road) was still a water channel.

3.5.6 A search made for evidence of other roads or trackways has been unproductive, except for one branch shown on the All Souls map CTM 417a/6 which lead straight off the bend in the Hope Road towards Hope Farm.

3.6 Mounds. Between Ashford Road and Islesbridge the landscape is marked by conspicuous mounds.

3.6.1 These mounds, which are irregular in size and shape, rise up to some 2 metres above the surrounding marshland.

3.6.2 These mounds were mapped in detail by the Soil Survey in the 1960s, and that information subsequently provided to the author of this report. This information is reproduced on Map 2, although complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

3.6.3 The mounds, with one exception, are confined to the New Marshland, i.e. the New Romney inlet of the sea. The one exception is just beyond the edge of that estuary, on the north side of the Ashford Road.

3.6.4 Two mounds are crossed by the line of the proposed road, between the Ashford Road and the track to Old Romney.

3.6.5 The Soil Survey noticed that some of the mounds had very steep sides, and appear to have been undercut by water-channels. This could have occurred when ebb tides scoured the base of the mounds, possibly in storm events.

3.6.6 The origin of the mounds has been much debated, and no firm conclusion has been reached as to whether they are natural features or of man-made origin. The most likely suggestion is that they are spoil heaps of a large-scale salt extraction industry. This is supported by their restriction to the New Romney estuary, and also by Domesday reference to local salt-workings (see para. 7.6.2).

3.6.7 Since the mounds are confined to the New Romney inlet, which is believed to have been open to the sea until at least 1250, it seems likely that they are medieval in date.

#### 4. THE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

4.1 A number of aerial photographic surveys have been conducted over the Marsh. All known surveys carried out between 1945 and 1987 are listed in Section 18 of the Romney Marsh monograph (Eddison and Green 1988). Since that date a further, coloured, survey has been carried out on behalf of KCC.

4.2 For the purposes of this report, a sample of the surveys have been consulted, as follows:

1.	July 1945	OS 61	held at CKS, Maidstone
2.	Apr. 1946	RAF 106/G UK	held by R.M.Res.Trust
3.	1967	KCC 6"	Runs 5 & 6 (KCC)
4.	1972	KCC 1:10,000	Runs 16 & 17 (KCC)
5.	1990	KCC	Lines 36 & 37 (KCC)

4.3 All these series emphasize the regular rectangular street pattern of the medieval planned town of New Romney.

4.4 All the series also show clearly the dominant feature of the Rhee Wall, with its double walls extending from the direction of Old Romney to Islesbridge, and continuing across a field in a straight line to TR 056244. Near the eastern end there is a side channel which leads to the head of a horseshoe-shaped feature, presumably part of the harbour works of the port.

4.5 Details of disused ditches not shown on the base map have been assembled from several of the aerial photographs and are shown on Map 2.

4.5.1 These indicate past small enclosures to the west of the Wallingham Sewer, on the east side of the Ashford Road, and on both sides of St Mary's Road in the neighbourhood of Brodynx Farm.

4.6 Interest focuses on a large field between the Ashford Road and Hope Lane, which may be evidence of a medieval extension of the built-up area of New Romney (1972 Series, Run 5 Print 0673 and Run 6 Print 2836). This field is crossed by the line of the proposed by-pass, and by a proposed new road linking the Ashford Road with Hope Lane.

4.7 A "blotchy" effect shown on the 1967 and 1990 series in a large field at TR 071262, south-east of St Mary's Road opposite Brodynx Farm may indicate similar occupation. This field is also crossed by the proposed by-pass.

4.8 Small (tenement?) enclosures are shown on the 1967 and 1990 series in the Playing Field south of Cockreed Lane.

## 5. THE SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD, KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

5.1. The Sites and Monuments Record (S.M.R.) has been consulted to determine what previously known archaeological sites lie in or near the corridor of interest.

5.2 Four 1:10,000 sheets have been searched for information relevant to the corridor of interest. Information has been extracted as follows. The numbers printed in bold correspond with the numbering of the sites on Map 3.

5.3 Sheet TR 02 NE  
Two sites occur within the corridor of interest, as follows:

1. TR 02 NE 15 NGR TR 06552532  
A large moated site and remains of a field system, together with a linear earthwork which cuts across the former. These features were levelled post 1946 to provide playing fields at Cockreed Lane.  
ADDED NOTE: other features in the playing fields are evident on aerial photographs, see para. 4.8.

2. TR 02 NE 16 NGR TR 05592557  
One field of ridge and furrow was identified in 1987 from Aerial Photograph RAF CPE/UK 1752 F4022, dated 21.9.46

One further site, somewhat further removed, may be relevant to the occupation of this area:

3. TR 02 NE 2 NGR TR 06482798  
The church of St Mary the Virgin at St Mary in the Marsh. This church is of Norman foundation with a Norman tower. The body of the church is variously reported as being built c. 1270 - c. 1300.

5.4 Sheet TR 02 NW

Three sites on this sheet have some relevance to the corridor of interest, although none of them occur within the corridor:

4. TR 02 NW 5 NGR TR 13492519

The church of St Clements, Old Romney, variously described as containing work of late 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.

ADDED NOTE: Sources not quoted in the SMR have suggested to the Romney Marsh Research Trust that a) the dedication to St Clement indicates a c. 1000 foundation (T. Tatton-Brown, local archaeologist), and b) that the arcade created by pushing through the original south wall is a Saxon-style structure (Dr Brian Roberts, Historical Geographer, University of Durham). These together suggest a foundation some two centuries earlier than the late 12th century.

5. TR 02 NW 8 NGR TR 04072544

The site of St Lawrence's Church, which had been destroyed before the middle of 16th century. Debris of a building and remains from a graveyard can be seen in the field. Recent metal detector finds comprise two medieval buckles, six coins of Edward I, and a copper alloy Roman coin.

6. TR 02 NW 10 NGR TR 04942581

The standing ruin of the church of Hope All Saints. The SMR indicates a date of 12th or 13th century. The building had fallen into decay by 1573 and was in ruins by 1663.

ADDED NOTE: A survey of the fabric in 1988 by the Romney Marsh Research Trust suggests a date of c.1140, and a construction with definite similarities to the tower of St Nicholas, New Romney. It is suggested that the two buildings were constructed at much the same time by the same team of labourers.

TR 02 NW 11 NGR TR 149258

Beresford and Hurst (1954) failed to find any trace of a deserted medieval village near Hope All Saints. A metal detector found medieval buckles and coins dating from Edward the Confessor to Henry III near the church. Other finds included a Roman coin, coins dating from John and Henry III, and a papal bull of 1191-98.

ADDED NOTE: In 1988 the field between the church and the Ashford Road was field-walked by the Romney Marsh Research Trust. Apart from three sherds which were probably of late Bronze Age or early Roman date, a large assemblage of medieval pottery indicated a site occupied between the mid 13th and mid 15th centuries. Absence of post-medieval pottery pointed to desertion of the site, possibly by 16th century.

7.           ADDED NOTE: Details of the site of a further medieval church, St Michael's, Old Romney (TR 036257) were not noted from the SMR. Little is known about this church.

5.5    Sheet TR 02 SE  
Three sites have been selected from the records of this sheet as being of relevant interest:

8.           TR 02 SE 1                   NGR TR 06522475  
St Nicholas Church, New Romney. This is the only surviving church of the five that are said to have existed in medieval New Romney. The earliest structure is said to be dated c.1160.

ADDED NOTE: Members of the Romney Marsh Research Trust consider on grounds of stylistic comparison with Canterbury Cathedral that the first building phase of St. Nicholas' dates from c. 1140, proving that the town was founded no later than that date.

9.           TR 02 SE 2                   NGR TR 06462493  
The site of St Martin's Church. This may have been the site of the oratory mentioned in a Saxon charter of A.D.741 (see para. 7.3). It was certainly a large medieval church, which had fallen into decay in 1511 and was pulled down in 1549.

10.          TR 02 SE 3                   NGR TR 06312472  
The site of St Lawrence's church. This is the site of a small medieval church, which is said to have had no room for a graveyard. It was in disrepair in 1511 and was probably pulled down between 1533 and 1539.

11.          Grid Ref TR 058248. The Hospital of St Stephen and St Thomas, with a chapel. In existence in c.1180. In 1481 the Hospital passed to Magdalen College, Oxford. The notes on this site have been added with reference to historical documents, and without consulting the SMR.

5.6    Sheet TR 02 SW  
This sheet was searched for sites which might be relevant to the corridor of interest. None were found.



6.           **ADDITIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFORMATION**

6.1           Further information is available from members of the Romney Marsh Research Trust, as follows. The numbers in bold type correspond with the numbers on Map 3.

12.           A find spot of early medieval and medieval pottery is reported at TR 050252 (AR RM 16).

13.           A find spot of medieval pottery is reported at TR 169263 (AR RM 25).

14.           The sluices of Romney harbour, first those built after 1258 and secondly those of 1410, which are believed to have been larger, are understood to have been in the general area of TR 055247.

15.           The field at general grid reference TR 058252, immediately south-west of the Ashford Road, contains considerable interest for metal detectorists, one of whom described it as containing "little humps of medieval middens". This field will be crossed by the proposed by-pass.

16.           In 1991 some eighteen medieval buildings in the town of New Romney were surveyed by the Romney Marsh Research Trust. Three were found to date from c. 1300 but, contrary to previous reports, none are now believed to date from before the great storms of 1250 and 1287.

## 7. THE HISTORICAL RECORD

7.1 Romney Marsh has an exceptionally rich archive of historic documents which begin in the Saxon period, and of maps which date from 1589. These provide very valuable indications of the archaeological potential of the corridor of interest.

7.2 The principle source of records relating to the corridor of interest stem from the history of the town and port of Romney, but unfortunately it is not clear before c. 1140 whether "Romney" was at the site of the present-day hamlet of Old Romney, or at the town of New Romney, or stretched out somewhere between the two.

7.3 A Saxon charter (= deed) dated A.D.741 records the existence of a fishery at the mouth of the river Limen (i.e. the Rother) together with the fishermen's houses and an oratory dedicated to St Martin. If this oratory was the predecessor of the medieval church of St Martin, then this settlement on the strand bears witness to the early occupation of the site of New Romney, and indeed to its physical existence in mid-eighth century. There is, however, considerable doubt about this interpretation because the record does not mention Romney by name.

7.4 A mint was established at a place known simply as "Romenal" in c.1000, pointing to a settlement of considerable status - but of unknown location.

7.5 In mid 11th century the port was granted the profits of its own courts in return for providing a service of ships and seamen for Edward the Confessor. This was the basis of the Confederation of Cinque Ports, of which Romney was one of the five founding members.

7.5.1 On his campaign in 1052 Earl Godwin annexed ships and men from Romney, and took control of the port. Similarly, immediately after the Battle of Hastings in 1066 William the Conqueror visited and made sure he had control of the port. Both indicate the paramount importance attached to Romney at that time.

7.6 Late 11th century records in the Domesday Book (1086) and the Domesday Monachorum (c. 1100) show that Romney lay in the Hundred of Langport, i.e. the Long Port, or estuary.

7.6.1 It was a town with 156 burgesses, which put it among the eight largest towns in Kent.

7.6.2 Evidence of salt working in the Romney area is provided by 7 salt-houses in Langport.

7.6.3 Records of the Domesday churches are confused. St. Lawrence (which had sites in both Old and New Romney) is mentioned, as is St Martin's (New Romney) and possibly Hope All Saints. Although St Clements at Old Romney is not listed, it bears an early 11th century dedication and was probably founded then.

7.7 Evidence from a number of sources shows that during the early medieval period there were a remarkable number of churches in the Romney area: three close to Old Romney; five within New Romney; and Hope All Saints, half way between the two. The existence of such a large number of churches so close together points to a flourishing, populated area.

7.8 It was not until c. 1140 that Old Romney was first referred to as *Vetus Romenal*, evidently to distinguish it from the town which was now flourishing (whether or not it was a new foundation at that date) further down the estuary.

7.9 Building of the elegant Romanesque church of St Nicholas in New Romney began in c.1140.

7.10 Hope All Saints was one of the wards of the medieval borough of New Romney, and there was undoubtedly a very close, day-to-day relationship between the two in the thirteenth century, and possibly earlier (information from Andrew Butcher, medieval historian at the University of Kent). Structural surveys by the Romney Marsh Research Trust indicate that Hope and St Nicholas may have been built at the same time, by the same group of craftsmen.

7.11 Romney Marsh was subjected to catastrophic effects of repeated storms and inundations in the 13th and early 14th centuries.

7.12 In 1258 the port of Romney was said to be "perishing" (Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 28th June 1258). (Silting presumably accelerated during the outstanding storms of that decade). The Rhee Wall was therefore extended from Old Romney almost to New Romney, to bring water to scour out the harbour installations there. The flow of this water was controlled by a sluice at or near the harbour, as well as two sluices further up the Rhee. The fact that the king undertook great works to preserve the port of Romney emphasises that it was still of national importance at that date.

7.13 The population of New Romney increased throughout the 12th century and probably reached a peak in about 1250. In 1400 the population of New Romney stood at around 4000. From 1350 to 1450 the population of the town, together with the rest of Romney Marsh, suffered from the repeated impact of disease. In the early fifteenth century the Rhee watercourse was allowed to dry up, and the harbour must have silted up. The town was in decline.

#### MEDIEVAL DOCUMENTS

7.14 The historical records contain numerous medieval holdings, which indicate that the area was thickly settled. Many of these are now "lost sites" which can only be located approximately from the documents. The records are held principally in the CKS at Maidstone and in the Archives of Canterbury Cathedral.

7.15 The following all indicate medieval salt working in the area;

7.15.1 Salt pans were recorded near the hospital of St. Stephen and St Thomas, New Romney, and also near "the river called Rhee" in c. 1220 (Magd. Coll. Oxon charter, c. 1220).

7.15.2 Honeychild Manor paid a tithe of salt in the 13th century.

7.15.3 Dudemanswick in Hope included Saltelond in 1326 (Cal. Pat. Roll).

7.15.4 A saltcote was located next to the Romney Sluice of 1410.

7.15.5 Salt-pits, rented by Romney Corporation in the fifteenth century, were located upon the "Gorst", which may have been on the Warren, near the proposed Romney Warren Link. This area is marked generally as number 17 on Map 3.

7.16 There is nineteenth-century evidence of two brick-works very close to the line of the proposed road:

7.16.1 The Tythe Map for the parish of Hope All Saints (1843) marks a Brickyard at TR 061252, behind a group of houses at the junction of Ashford Road and Cockreed Lane (marked 18 on Map 3).

7.16.2 The Tythe Map for the parish of St Mary in the Marsh (also 1843) records that a large field centred at TR 072265 was known as Brickiln Field (marked 19 on Map 3).

## 8. SUMMARY

8.1 The proposed road scheme crosses an area of exceptional archaeological sensitivity, involving the highly important complex of Old and New Romney.

8.2 Documents provide a historical framework for the town from an exceptionally early date, illustrating a town and port of outstanding importance. There was probably an 8th century settlement in the area. By the 11th century "Romenal" was a port of national importance with a mint, but its location at that date is unknown. In early medieval time Romney was flourishing, with the remarkable number of nine churches in the area. In the 13th century extraordinary measures were taken, as a result of royal intervention, to keep the harbour open. In 1400 the population of New Romney alone stood at 4,000.

8.3 There remain, however, major gaps in this framework, notably spatial ones, which have major implications for the archaeological potential of the corridor of interest. These are as follows:

8.3.1 Where was "Romenal" before c.1140 ?

8.3.2 Did the occupied area of medieval New Romney extend further north-west than it does today or, alternatively, are there abandoned scattered occupation sites in the corridor of interest? In either case, the history of the sites is of great potential.

8.3.3 Where was the sheltered haven upon which the town was based, together with its harbour installations?

### 8.4 The Archaeological Potential

8.4.1 Romney was clearly a place of outstanding importance, and has a documented history beginning at an exceptionally early date.

8.4.2 Because the population of New Romney diminished in the later Middle Ages, and there has been very little recent expansion on the west side of the town, there is a high probability that medieval occupation sites remain in the state in which they were abandoned.

8.4.3 The likelihood of medieval occupation layers interspersed with natural deposits (either the results of marine inundation or wind-blown sand) offers the possibility of sealed sites. Unlike other major centres where occupation was continuous, there may be sites which were abandoned, very rapidly, and which are therefore uncontaminated by later occupation.

8.4.4 In conditions particular to an area like Romney Marsh, there is a high probability that organic materials of both natural and man-made origins (which would have decayed in other areas) will have survived here.

8.5 Since neither the location of the early town and port of Romenal, nor the extent of the large medieval settlement of New Romney is known, the line of the proposed by-pass and the corridor of interest must be seen as of prime archaeological importance.

## REFERENCES

Two publications have coordinated information on the history and evolution of Romney Marsh. They are as follows:

Green, R.D. 1968. Romney Marsh. Soil Survey memoir no.4 Rothampstead, Herts.

Eddison, J. and Green, C.P. 1988. Romney Marsh, Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, monograph no.24.

In the above monograph see particularly

Cunliffe, Barry: Romney Marsh in the Roman Period

Brooks, Nicholas: The Early Middle Ages

Tatton-Brown, Tim: The Topography of the Walland Marsh area between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries.

Vollans, Eleanor: New Romney and the 'River of Newenden'.

Other references include:

Scott Robertson, 1880: Romney - Old and New. Archaeologia Cantiana vol xiii, 349.

Eddison, J. 1983: The Evolution of the Barrier Beaches between Fairlight and Hythe. Geogr. Journal 149, 39-53.







**A259**  
**NEW ROMNEY BYPASS**

**6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
FIELD SURVEY**

**SOUTH EAST  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES**

FAU

Field Archaeology Unit

A259(T)  
NEW ROMNEY BYPASS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

A Report  
on Behalf of  
JMP Consultants Ltd

By  
Chris Place BA  
South Eastern Archaeological Services

November 1992

Project Number 1992/58

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Department of Transport (DoT) intend to upgrade the A259(T) between Dymchurch and New Romney. This report is concerned with the Romney Bypass(the scheme) section of the project; approximately 4.5km including side roads.

1.2 EC Directive 85/337/EEC (The Directive) requires full environmental assessment (EA) of development projects which are likely to have significant direct and indirect effects on the environment as a result of their nature, size or location. The directive makes provision for the EA of road schemes.

1.3 EA of road schemes is enabled in England and Wales by modifications to the Highways Act 1980 (SI 1988 No.1241; The Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988). The range of road schemes liable to EA is detailed in DoT Departmental Standard HD 18/88. It has been deemed that the scheme under consideration falls within a category requiring EA.

1.4 The Directive and DoT HD 18/88 require that the Environmental Statement contains, *inter alia*, sufficient data to assess the main effects that the scheme is likely to have on the environment and a description of the measures proposed to mitigate adverse environmental effects.

1.5 The EA included provision for the archaeological evaluation of the land affected by the scheme.

1.6 The purpose of a programme of evaluation is, therefore, to identify areas of archaeological interest, to determine their importance, and assess the likely environmental impact of the scheme on the archaeological heritage.

## 2.0 Previous Archaeological Work in the Area.

2.1 Little archaeological work had been undertaken on Romney Marsh prior to 1985. Since that date major excavations have taken place at Broomhill Farm (Camber) and on the site of Brett's new quarry to the south-west of Lydd. Surface artefact collection (SAC) has been undertaken around Old Romney and on the line of the proposed Breznett (A2070) road. Extensive SAC has also now been undertaken in the north-east of the Marsh. Much of this recent work has served to indicate the inadequacy of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). (NB This is not a reflection on the compilers and curators of this record but an indication of the paucity of fieldwork in the area.)

2.2 A desk top assessment of the scheme and it's surrounding area has already been undertaken by Jill Eddison (Eddison 1992a). This has included an examination of aerial photographs, a study of the documentary sources and a consideration of unpublished discoveries. Only the main conclusions are presented here and the reader is directed to the assessment report for detailed discussion.

2.2.1 Eddison notes the importance of considering the area in it's geological context. Romney Marsh is an area of reclaimed marshland which has been categorized as either Old or New Marshland. Both areas are characterized by thick marsh and marine deposits which represent the fine balance between the fortunes of land and sea. In such a context it is important to recognize the potential for the burial of important archaeological and palaeo-environmental deposits. The example of a late Iron Age Romano-British "land surface" at Jessons Farm is quoted (Eddison 1992a, 2.9.2). The discovery of early Bronze Age axes at an unrecorded depth in a quarry near Lydd (Needham 1988) should also be noted.

2.2.2 With the exception of the Rhee Wall no proven archaeological sites and monuments are known along the line of the proposed route.

2.2.3 Possible medieval salt production is suggested by the presence of irregular mounds, up to 2m high, between the Ashford Road and Islebridge. If these mounds are man made then it is likely that they post date c AD1250. It is thought that this area was open to the sea until at least this date.



2.2.4 Numerous infilled and plough levelled ditches have been noted on air photographs and are sketched on Map 2 of Eddison's report. Of some importance is Eddison's suggestion that the features between the Ashford Road and Hope Road may represent an extension to the built up area of medieval New Romney. It is possible that excavation might provide data to confirm this supposition.

2.2.5 It is suggested that the line of The Ashford Road, following as it does the boundary between Old and New Marshland, may define the line of an early sea defence wall. The New Marshland would represent the area of an estuary and the Old Marshland the contemporary land surface.

### 3.0 The Field Evaluation

3.1 The brief for the field evaluation was based upon recommendations resulting from the desktop assessment and was generally accepted by the Kent County Archaeologist.

3.1.2 The county archaeologists' comments regarding machine trenching were noted. However, such work was not acceptable to the DoT and has not, therefore, been undertaken.

3.1.3 The state of drainage ditches in the area of study made it impracticable to systematically investigate them as suggested in Eddison's recommendations. Therefore, this work was not undertaken.

3.1.4 The majority of the land to be affected by the scheme was known to be arable with areas of established pasture also recorded. Archaeological data collection was therefore, based on SAC in ploughed areas and both systematic and purposive test pitting in pasture. In addition the area of land take was surveyed for any unrecorded earthworks.

### 3.2 Surface Artefact Collection

3.2.1 Artefacts present in the ploughzone are indicative of past human activity. Their systematic collection and record can reveal patterns of discard which may help to define and locate such areas of activity.

3.2.2 This systematic study requires a ploughed surface that has undergone a degree of weathering for optimum artefact retrieval. Therefore, it cannot be undertaken in areas of crop, stubble or pasture.

3.2.3 The land take "corridor", including the side roads, was sequentially divided into 25m collection units. Within each collection unit 3 transects, 12.5m apart and parallel to the centre line of the "corridor", were walked and any surface artefacts collected. Within each collection unit the artefacts from the transects were amalgamated to provide the total for each artefact class.

### 3.3 Test pitting

3.3.1 In areas unavailable for SAC it was initially proposed to hand dig 1mx1m testpits every 25m (1 per collection unit) to sample the topsoil for artefacts, though this was later adjusted to one every 12.5m to increase the number of samples. Unfortunately the clay content of the soil made sieving impossible, thus all artefact retrieval was by hand.

3.3.2 Purposive test pitting was undertaken in one field to assess the nature of a plough levelled mound thought to be associated with medieval salt production.

### 3.4 Geoarchaeological Assessment

3.4.1 The Geological Service Facility (GSF)(Institute of Archaeology, London)is undertaking work into the sedimentary context of the area. Unfortunately this work was not available prior to the completion of this report.

#### 4.0 The Results

4.1 In total there were 196 collection units along the line of the scheme (including side roads). Of these, 168 (85%) units were in arable land and 27(14%) were under pasture; 1 unit was classed as urban.

4.1.1 Within the arable land, 50 units were ploughed, 67 were harvested but unploughed, and 51 were still under crop. In total 50 units were sampled by surface artefact collection(100% of the available land, but only 30% of the potential land).

4.1.2 Of the 27 collection units under pasture 23(85%) were sampled by test pitting.

4.1.3 Evaluation by the above two techniques was, therefore, undertaken on 37% of the route. The remainder is effectively unevaluated.

4.1.5 Post medieval artefacts (excluding pottery) were recorded and discarded. They are not considered further. No pre-post medieval class of artefact other than pottery was recovered. Pottery, therefore, is the only class of artefact considered further. It is not possible to directly compare test pitting and SAC results and they must, therefore, be considered separately.

#### 4.2 The Pottery (Drawings 1-15)

4.2.1 Thirty-three fabrics have been recognized and described from pottery collected along the route. This includes one sherd of Roman colour coated pottery. The remainder can be divided into four broad chronologically based groups , two medieval and two post-medieval. The four groups are:-

4.2.1.1 Earlier Medieval: AD 1100-1350

4.2.1.2 Later Medieval: AD 1200-1500

4.2.1.3 Earlier Post-Medieval: AD 1400-c1650

4.2.1.4 Later Post-Medieval: AD 1650 onwards.

4.2.2 The infrequency of Early Post Medieval pottery suggests that it is best displayed as present or absent rather than as a standard deviation. LPM pottery, being essentially modern is not illustrated.

#### 4.3 Surface Artefact Collection Results

4.3.1 Twenty-nine sherds of earlier medieval (EM) pottery were collected. The restricted size of the collection renders the significance of the distribution hard to assess. However there is a distinct concentration (+6sd) at transects 491 and 492 .

4.3.2 One hundred and twenty-four sherds of later medieval pottery were collected. Concentrations (+2 or +3sd) were collected at transects 22 (chainage 525.000), 28 (675.000), 37 (900.00) and 492.

4.3.3 Only 8 sherds of earlier post medieval pottery were recovered from the route. This does not appear to be an important component in the collection.

#### 4.4 Systematic Testpitting Results

4.4.1 Compared with SAC, test pitting represents a very small sample size. In addition only one substantial "run" of testpits was excavated (transects 111-124) and this compounds the difficulty involved in interpreting the results and discerning any patterns.

4.4.2 Only two earlier medieval sherds were recovered during test pitting; both at chainage 550.000 to 575.000.

4.4.3 A total of 40 sherds of later medieval pottery were recovered during test pitting. The importance of the area between chainage 550.000 and 600.000 is confirmed, as is a concentration (+3sd) at transect 119 (chainage 2950.000 to 2975.000).

4.4.4 Only one sherd of earlier post-medieval pottery was recovered from test pitting, and it is therefore impossible to draw any conclusions except that the low frequency recorded by SAC appears to be confirmed.

4.4.5 The single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered from testpitting at chainage 1550.000 to 1575.000.

#### 4.5 Purposive Testpitting

4.5.1 The three test pits dug into the potential saltern did little to elucidate its structure or possible function. A simple section was revealed consisting of a topsoil of variable depth (up to 38cm) on top of a compact silty clay. However, medieval pottery was recovered.

#### 4.6 Earthwork Survey

4.6.1 With the exception of the possible salterns already noted, there were no other earthworks on the line of the preferred route.

## 5.0 Areas of Archaeological Interest

5.1 On the basis of the results from the field evaluation and a consideration of the desk top assessment, areas of archaeological interest can be proposed.

5.1.1 Chainage 000.00. The Rhee Wall. No field evaluation was undertaken at this site as the modern A259 runs along the top of it. Therefore, no comment can be made on it's character, nature, extent or quality at this location. It is, however, of undeniable importance in the historic development of New Romney and the Marsh.

5.1.2 Chainage 525.000 to 700.000. There appear to be two centres within this area; 525.000 to 575.000 and 675.000 to 700.000. Some earlier medieval pottery is present though the majority of the collection is later medieval. This area coincides with one of the possible salterns indicated in the desktop assessment.

5.1.3 Chainage 900.000 to 925.000. A concentration of later medieval pottery which appears to coincide with one of the possible salterns indicated in the desktop assessment.

5.1.4 Chainage 925.000. Potential early sea defence now followed by the line of the Ashford Road. There is no unequivocal evidence for an archaeological feature here. In common with the Rhee Wall evaluation would have been impossible.

5.1.4 Chainage 925.000 to 1075.00 and Hope lane Diversion. Eddison suggests that this area may contain an extension to medieval New Romney. Evaluation was not possible. However, very little medieval pottery was collected from chainage 1100.00 to 1300.000

5.1.5 Chainage 1550.000 to 1575.000. Later medieval pottery recovered during test pitting.

5.1.6 Chainage 2950.000 to 2975.000. A concentration of later medieval pottery recovered during test pitting.

5.1.7 Transects 491 and 492 St. Mary's Road Link. A marked concentration of earlier and later medieval pottery

## 6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The work undertaken has proved beneficial in defining areas of artifact concentrations, and other areas of archaeological interest. These areas of interest may represent evidence for, *inter alia*, medieval settlement and are worthy of further evaluation. Such work is required to further characterize the archaeological resource and provide sufficient data on its nature and quality and, therefore, the impact of the scheme. With this information decisions can then be made as to the form that any mitigation measures should take.

6.2 The inability to undertake evaluation along all of the route is an important consideration. It seems likely that as of yet undiscovered artifact concentrations are present in unevaluated areas. Mindful that only 40% of the scheme has been evaluated, it might not be unreasonable to suggest that twice the number of artifact concentrations are likely to be present.

6.3 The field techniques utilized have only evaluated the surface of the land. Evidence has been presented that indicates that important archaeological and palaeo-environmental remains are likely to be present at some depth below the surface. The evaluation cannot provide information on the presence/absence, nature, extent or quality of any such remains.

6.4 It would appear advisable, therefore, to make provision to complete the initial evaluation at some stage. On the basis of these results secondary evaluation as envisaged in para 6.1 should be undertaken to achieve the objectives of the Environmental Assessment.



## 7.0 Bibliography

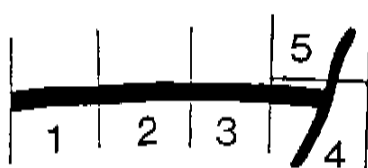
Eddison, J. (1992a) A Report on the Archaeological Implications of the Proposed Bypass for New Romney, Kent.

Needham, S. (1988) A Group of Early Bronze Age Axes from Lydd. in Eddison J., and Green C. (eds) Romney Marsh Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation. pp77-82.

A259 NEW ROMNEY BYPASS  
POTTERY DISTRIBUTION DRAWINGS

# SHEET LAYOUT

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NR2  
NR3  
NR4  
NR5

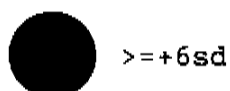


SCALE: All Plans at 1:2500

## DISTRIBUTION PLANS:

Drawing Nos. 1-5 Early Medieval Pottery  
6-10 Late Medieval Pottery  
11-15 Early Post-Medieval Pottery

## KEY:



$\geq +6sd$



+5sd



+4sd



+3sd



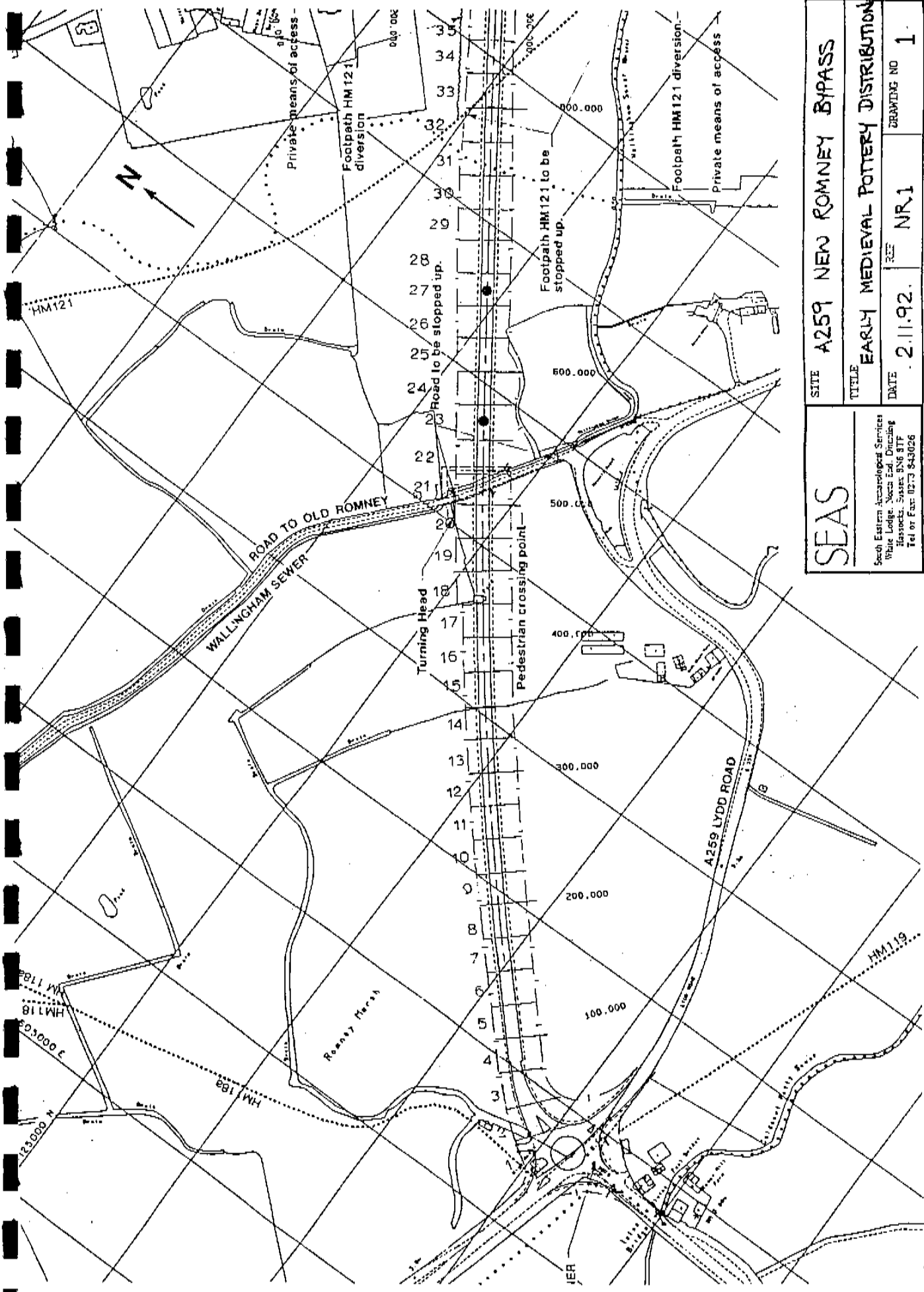
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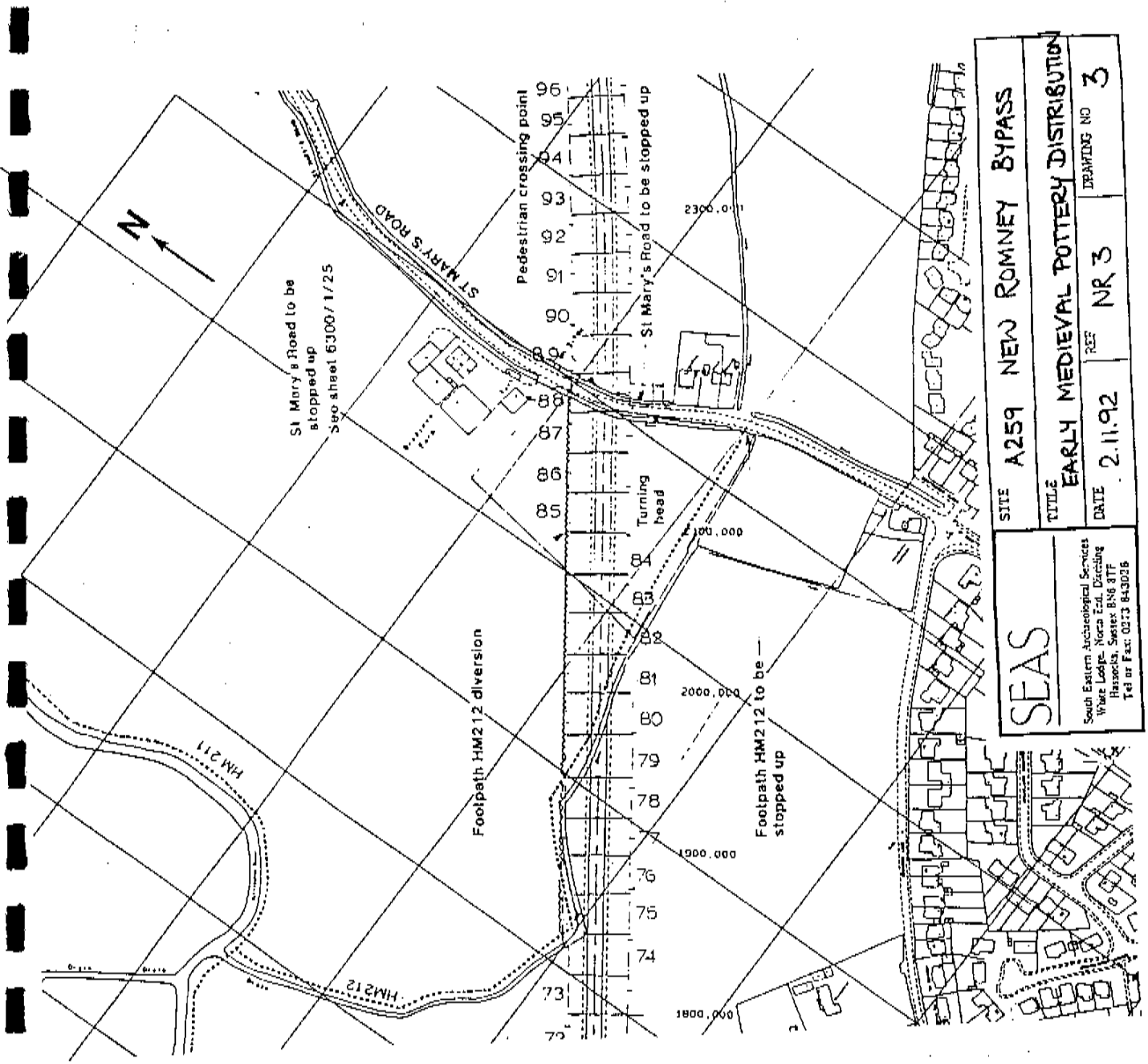
Presence of Early Post-Medieval Pottery



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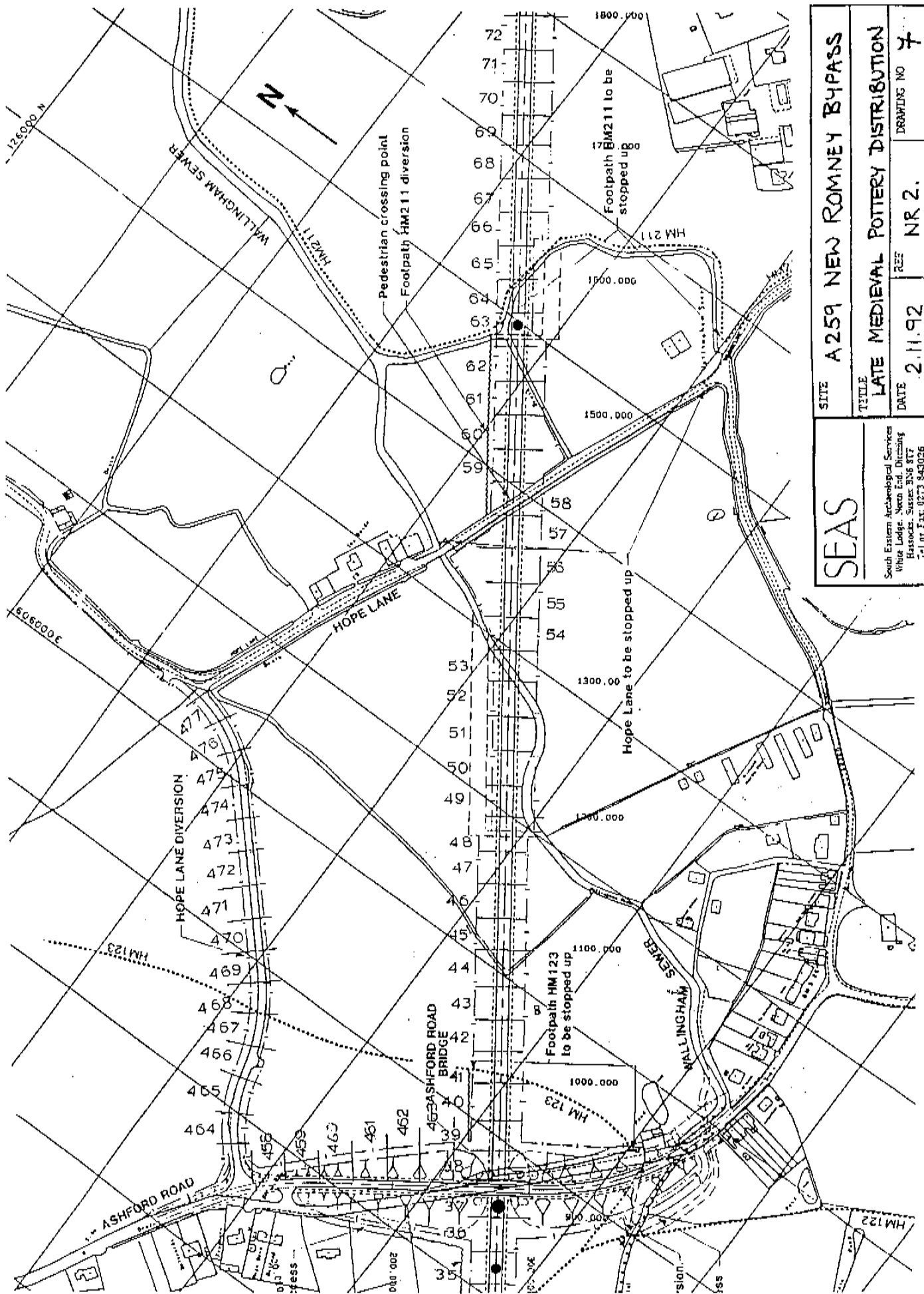
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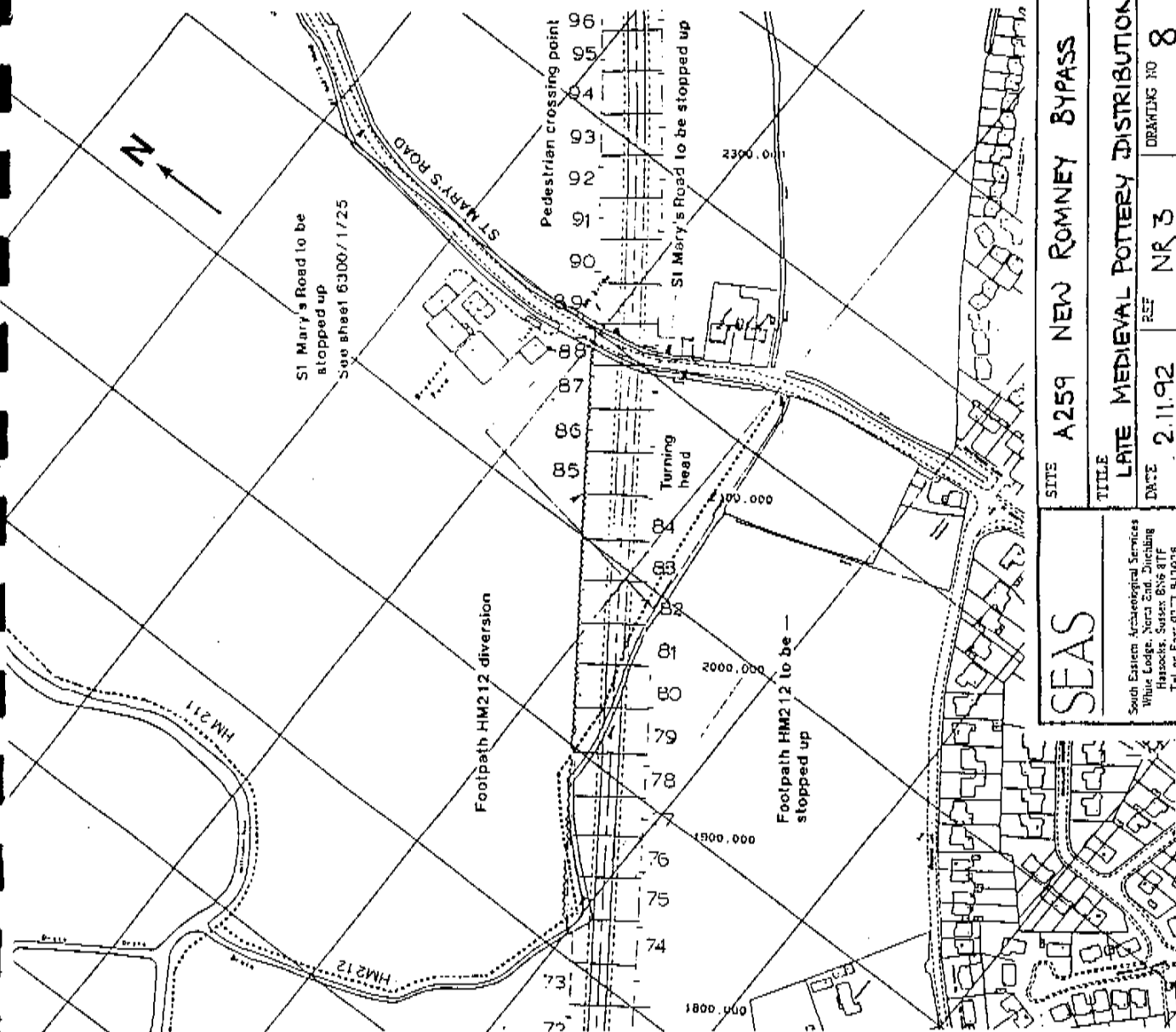
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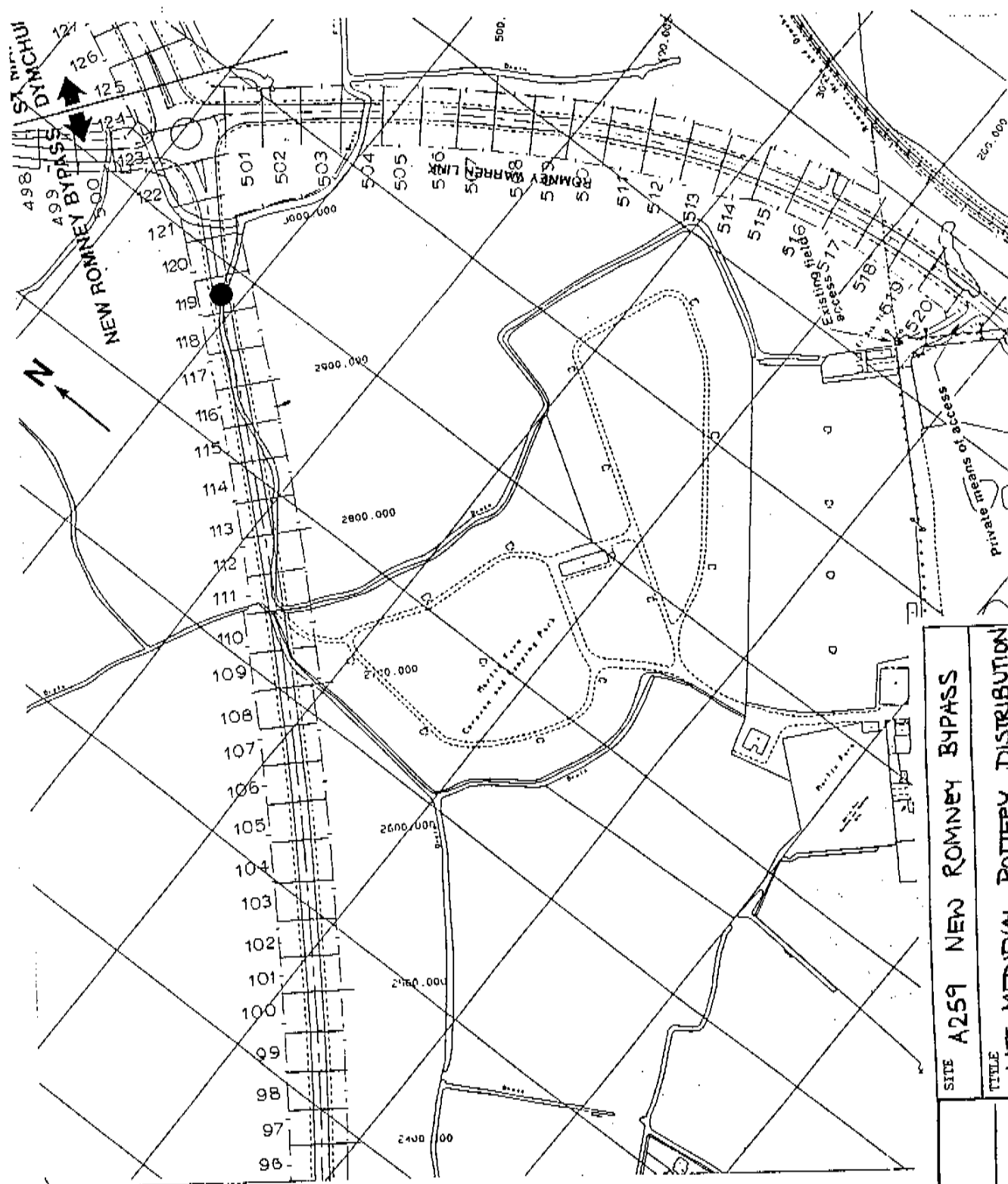
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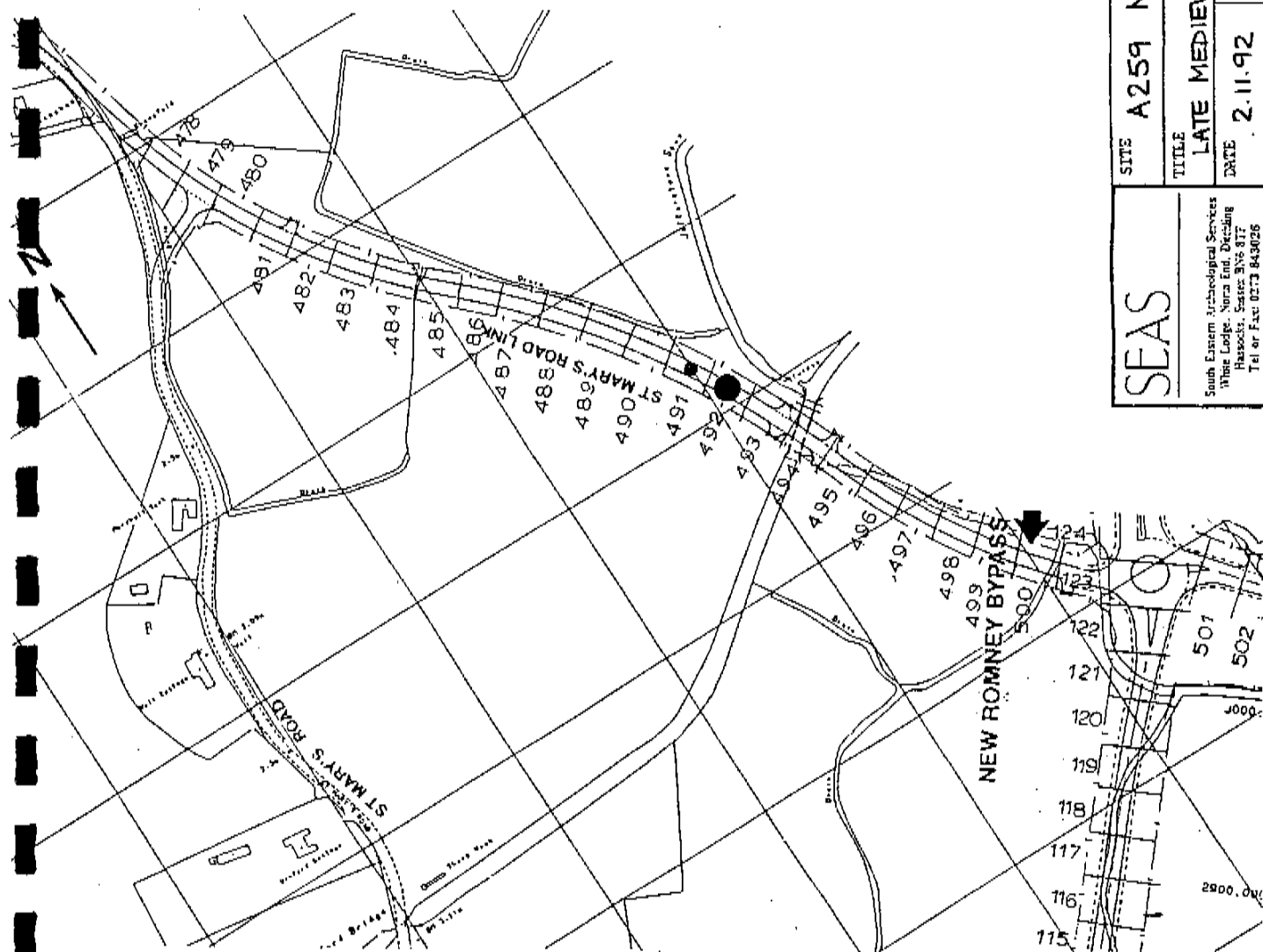
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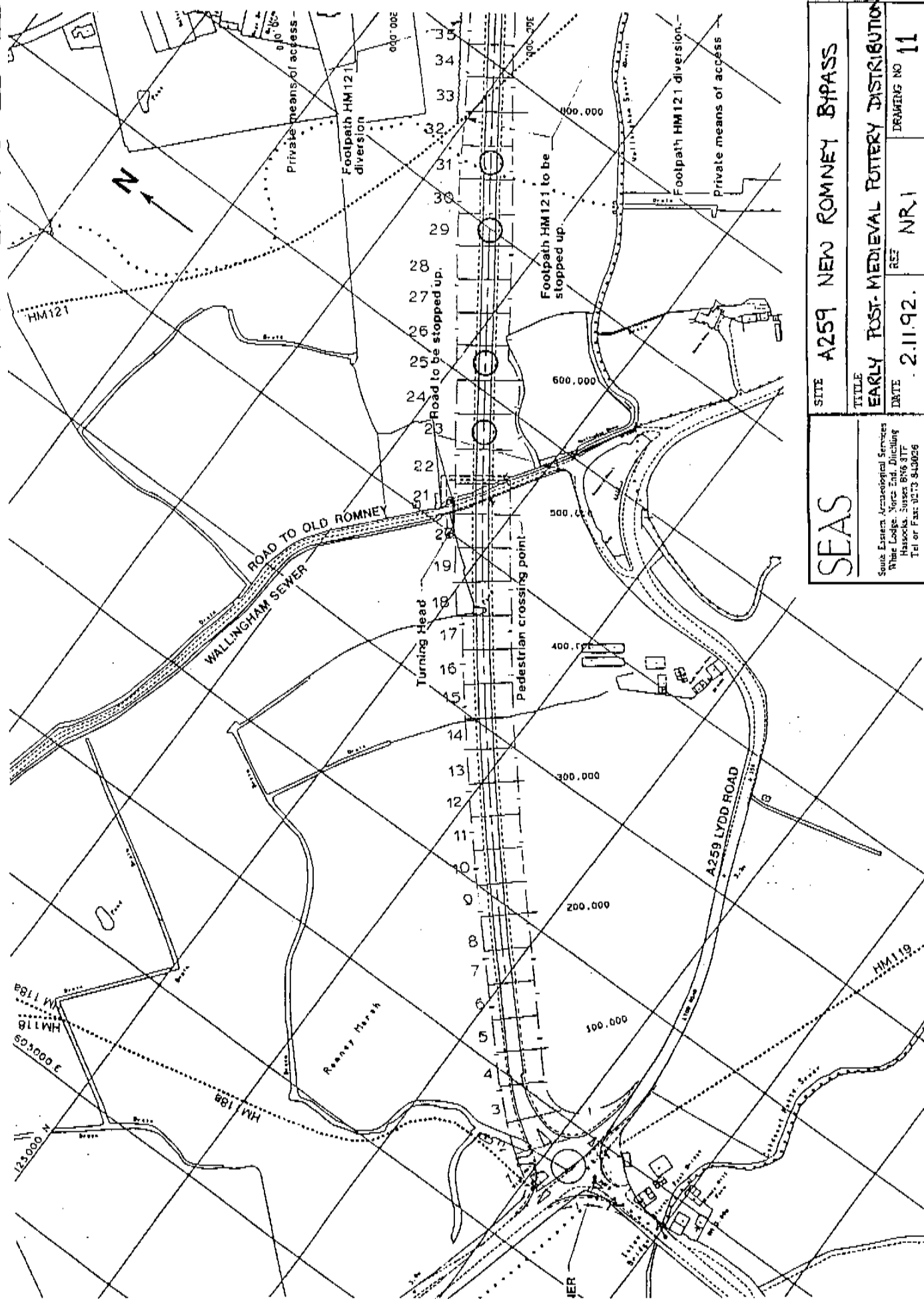
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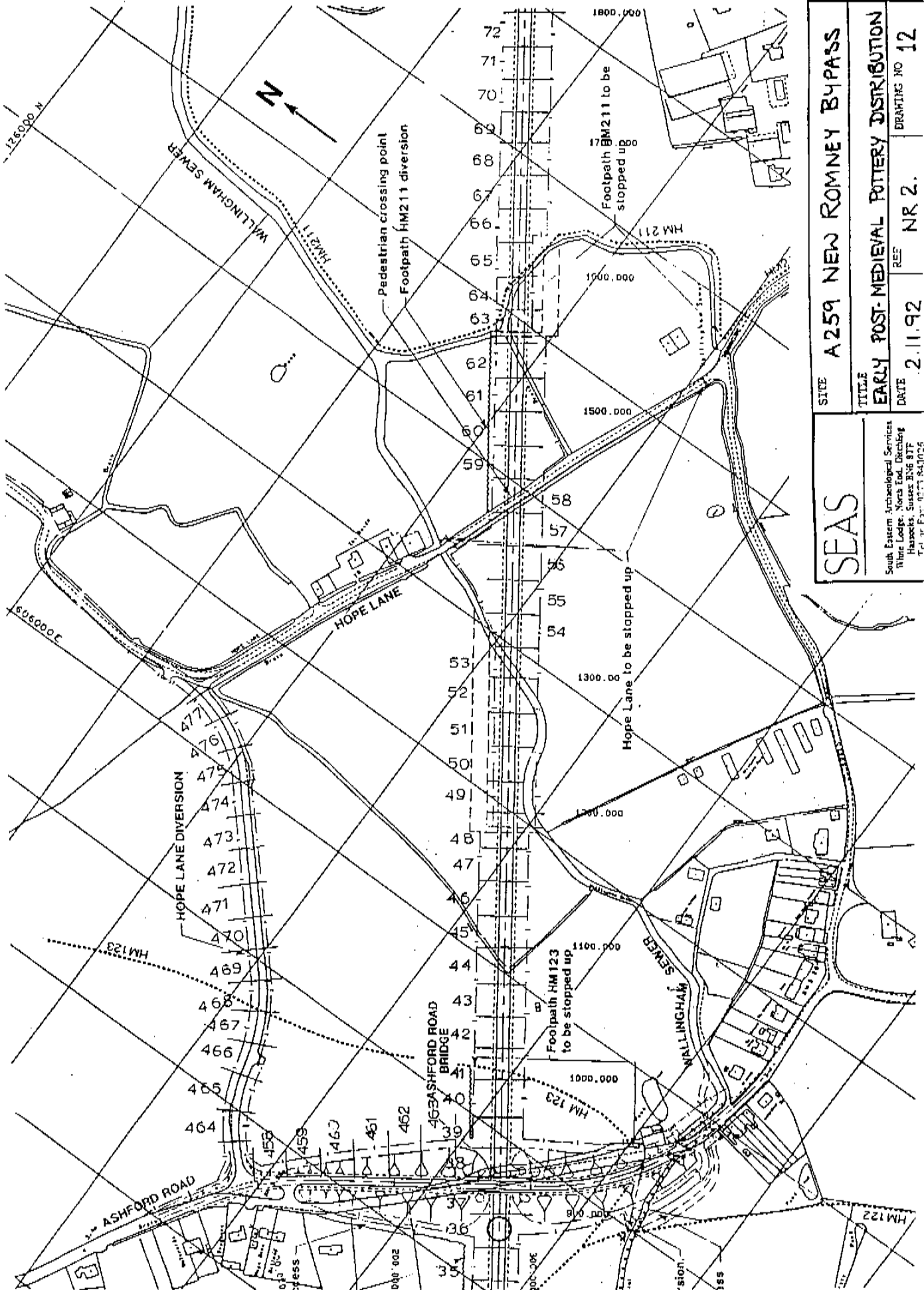
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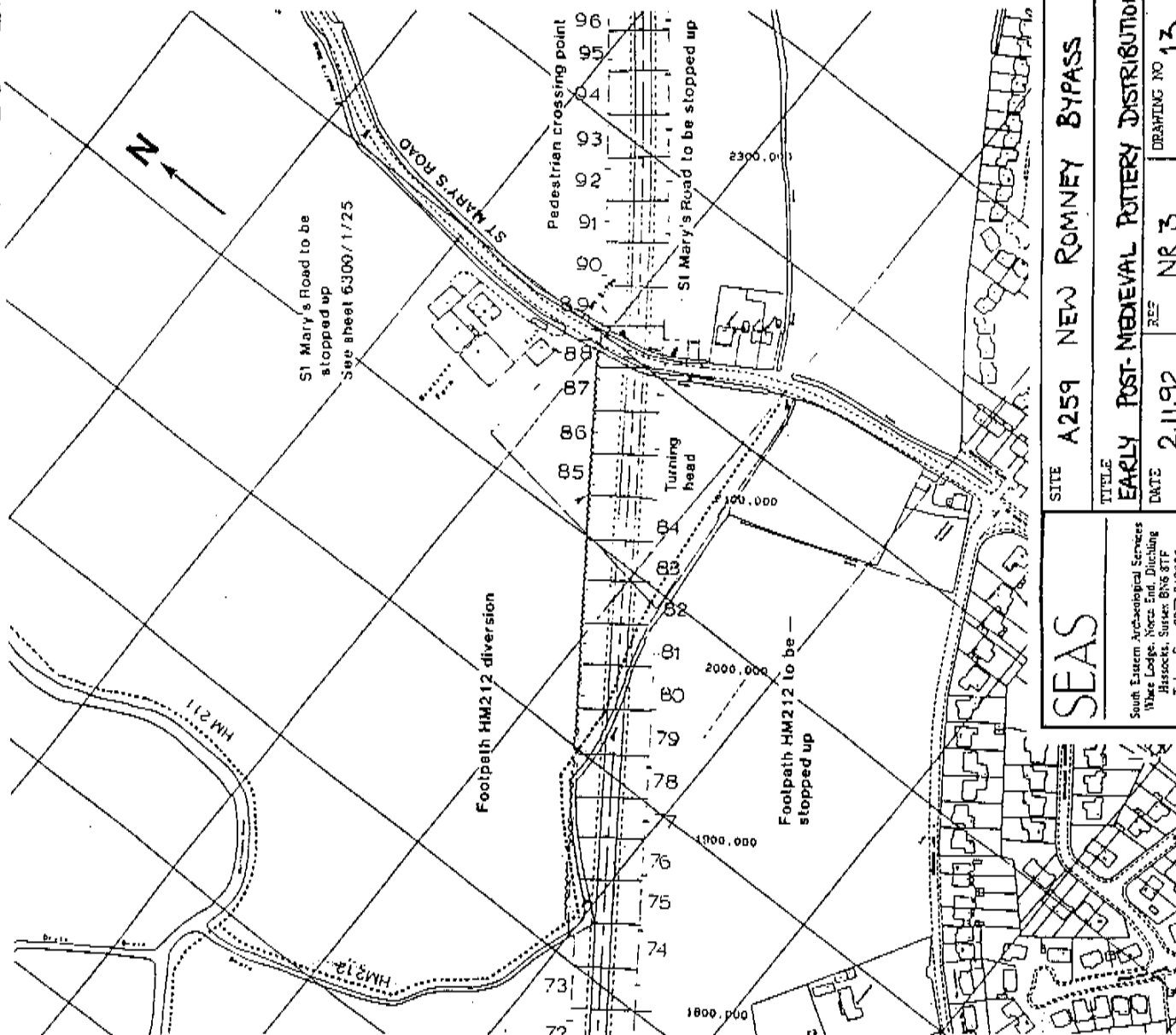
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