



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM

**45-47 Swan Lane,  
Evesham, Worcestershire  
2002**

**Archaeological Desk-Based  
Assessment**

*Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 1024**  
December 2002

**45-47 Swan Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire**  
**Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

by  
H. R. Martin

*For further information please contact:*  
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513  
Fax: 0121 414 5516  
E-Mail: [BUFAU@bham.ac.uk](mailto:BUFAU@bham.ac.uk)  
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

## Contents

Summary	1
<b>1.0:</b> Introduction	1
<b>2.0:</b> Background to the project	2
2.1: Objectives	2
2.2: Method	2
<b>3.0:</b> Site description	2
<b>4.0:</b> Background to site	2
4.1: Historical background	2
4.2: Archaeological background	3
<b>5.0:</b> Detailed history of the site	4
<b>6.0:</b> Conclusion	5
<b>7.0:</b> Acknowledgements	6
<b>8.0:</b> References	7

## Figures

- Fig. 1:** Site location
- Fig. 2:** Modern plan of Study Area
- Fig. 3:** 1827 Nathan Izod, All Saints and St. Lawrence and St. Peter's (Enclosure)
- Fig. 4:** 1827 Nathan Izod, Stylised plan of Evesham Town
- Fig. 5:** 1840 2<sup>nd</sup> OS Map Evesham
- Fig. 6:** 1885 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham
- Fig. 7:** 1891 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham
- Fig. 8:** 1905 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham
- Fig. 9:** 1924 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham
- Fig. 10:** 1938 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

**45–47 Swan Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire**  
**An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment**

**Summary**

*A desk-based assessment was carried out in December 2002 on a site at 45–47 Swan Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 04004400, tenement plot WSM20753) ahead of proposed redevelopment of the site. The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential in the historic core of the medieval town of Evesham. Archaeological deposits of this period and the post-medieval period may be present. The assessment involved examination of available maps and other documentary and archaeological sources for the site itself and its surrounds. The results of the search suggested that the site is likely to have been on the northern periphery of the planned town first inaugurated by the abbey in the twelfth century. Swan Lane is likely to have represented the northern limit of the medieval town and was probably laid out in the fourteenth century. The map evidence indicated that the site was not subjected to extensive nineteenth century building activity and the potential for 'in situ' archaeological deposits is, therefore, good.*

**1.0: Introduction**

This archaeological assessment has been prepared by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on behalf of KingsOak who are developing a site at 45-47 Swan Lane (hereafter referred to as the Study Area), Evesham which is currently occupied by a two-storey brick building and twentieth century warehouse. The site is centred around national grid reference SP 04004400 (Fig. 1) in the county of Worcestershire. The assessment involved consultation of available maps and other documentary and archaeological sources.

The site of the proposed development lies in an archaeologically sensitive area within the historic core of medieval Evesham and may contain evidence relating to the planned layout and expansion of the town by the abbey from the twelfth century onwards. It is envisaged that such evidence may be in the form of property boundaries for medieval burgage plots fronting onto Swan Lane, and associated features relating to occupation, commerce and industry during this period. During the post-medieval period Evesham continued to be a prosperous market town, and evidence from this period may also be present within the proposed development area. Such evidence might offer the opportunity of an enhanced understanding of the economic and social development of the town from the medieval into the post-medieval period.

The desk-based assessment was carried out in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists for desk-based assessments (IFA 1999).

## **2.0: Background to the project**

### 2.1: Objectives

The desk-based assessment was aimed at obtaining information relating to the following:

- ★ date of the occupation and layout of Swan Lane within the medieval context of Evesham as a planned town
- ★ phases of activity which may have predated this
- ★ the economic and social background to the development of the Swan Lane site in the medieval and post-medieval periods
- ★ activities which may have been carried out on the site during the medieval and post-medieval periods, e.g. industrial/commercial
- ★ the extent of later, i.e. nineteenth and twentieth century, development which may have impacted on any early archaeological features and deposits
- ★ determining the location of trial trenches

### 2.2: Method

The Worcestershire SMR and all relevant historic maps and secondary sources, including archaeological reports on excavations in the vicinity of the site, were consulted.

## **3.0: Site description**

The Study Area is located on the west bank of the River Avon approximately 0.5 miles from Evesham town centre. It is bounded to the south by Swan Lane and to the east by Rynal Place. Adjoining the site on the west are a number of tenements (Fig. 2). The Study Area is currently occupied by two buildings which are due for imminent demolition. The western part of the Study Area is occupied by a two storey brick building and the eastern part by a single storey steel framed warehouse.

The soil type on the western bank of the Avon belongs to the clayey alluvial soils of the Uffington Series and further east, stagnogleyic argillic brown earths of the Bishampton Series have been recorded. The underlying geology consists of solid deposits of Lower Lias of the Jurassic Age. Superficial deposits of alluvium and Third Terrace River Gravels are also present in the vicinity of the site (Candy 1999a, Geotechnics Ltd 1999).

## **4.0: Background to the site**

### 4.1 Historical background

There is limited evidence for the early occupation of Evesham. A single residual piece of flint excavated on an evaluation in Mill Street was identified as Mesolithic or Neolithic in date (Fagan et al. 1994). Other excavations have yielded artefacts of Iron Age and Roman date, however the evidence is not definitive (Dalwood 1996). The construction of the minster church of Evesham in 700 AD may have taken place on the site of an older church described in the early twelfth century by William of Malmesbury as being “the work of the Britons” (Candy 1999a, Dalwood 1996).

Although the town owes its origins to the foundation of the abbey by Egwine, Bishop of Worcester in 700 AD, Evesham did not begin to develop as a settlement until the eleventh century when, in 1055, the town was granted a port and market, which is assumed to be located at Merstow Green at the main gate of the Abbey (VCH Worc Vol II 372). By the twelfth century the character of the settlement was developing its urban form. A documentary source of the late twelfth century divides the town into four parts *Evesham, Ruinhulle, Berton* and *Novus Burgus* and records a total of 234 tenants. By the mid fourteenth century the main thoroughfares of the town had been established. The focus had shifted northwards from the abbey and was centred on the funnel shaped Market place (High Street) and grid-like pattern of streets which included Bewdley Street, Bridge Street, Oat Street and Cowl Street (Candy 1999a, Dalwood 1996).

The prosperity of Evesham grew during the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries with the manufacture of cloth and textiles providing its economic base. A weekly market and three annual fairs were held, and in the early fourteenth century Evesham had a role in the export of wool to Flanders and Florence (VCH Worc Vol II, 381). In 1540, Evesham became crown property and the abbey church and claustral range were demolished. A royal charter in 1605 established the government of the borough. The economy of the town continued to flourish and was facilitated by work on the River Avon to make it navigable between Tewkesbury and Stratford-upon-Avon. Wharves were constructed on either side of the bridge in order to cope with the increase of river traffic. Agricultural produce, silk and, increasingly, the manufacture of leather goods became mainstays of the eighteenth century economy (Candy 1999a, Dalwood 1996). Many of Evesham's traditional industries were in decline by the nineteenth century although a survival in market gardening and the production of cloth, bone manure, linseed oil is recorded (VCH Worc Vol. II382). The construction of the railway in 1850 did much to boost the profile of the town.

#### 4.2 Archaeological background

The Study Area is near to areas which contain a number of sites recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record and to the locations of a number of previous archaeological investigations within the historic centre of Evesham.

There are several references to mills in Evesham (HWCM 20785, HWCM4571, HWCM 17026). A mill was built by the bridge (located to the east of the current site) opposite Bengeworth by Abbot Roger (1159-1160). In the early thirteenth century there is also mention of a malt mill in Evesham, and, prior to the Dissolution, Evesham was equipped with two more mills; a fulling mill in the suburb of Bengeworth and a shearing mill in Evesham itself (VCH Worc Vol II, 381). Mills were still in use in Evesham in the nineteenth century and a mill is shown by the bridge on the 1827 plan (Fig. 4). This structure is referred to as Avon Mill (corn) on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1885). Trial trenching in the area (Candy 1999b) revealed that although much of the site had been subject to deep disturbance, archaeological deposits survived in the eastern part of the site, probably relating to the post medieval mill (though its origins were medieval).

Archaeological evidence relating to the medieval period and the post-medieval period has been encountered during a number of excavations within the historic centre of the town. Of particular importance to this report was an evaluation undertaken at 1 Swan Lane (Lockett 2001, WSM30295) which resulted in the discovery of a large, circular pit of medieval date which contained layers of ash and other dumped material interpreted as resulting from domestic activities. At the junction of High Street and Swan Lane, investigation revealed that a building there (WSM5244) had stone from the demolition of the abbey incorporated into its cellar and walls. A pit containing twelfth to fifteenth century pottery was also found here. An evaluation carried out at 19 Cowl Street (Lockett 2001), which is situated to the south of the current site, uncovered pits that contained medieval and post-medieval cess, as well as domestic and industrial waste, which indicated substantial occupation. At 26 Cowl Street deposits, features and structures of medieval and post-medieval date, including walls, foundations and postholes were found (Lockett 2001). At 23-25 Mill Street, deposits of twelfth to thirteenth century date related to the subdivision of medieval burgages were recovered (Fagan 1994)

### **5.0: Detailed history of the site**

The earliest map showing the site is the Enclosure map surveyed by Nathan Izod in 1827 (Fig. 3) depicting the parishes All Saints and St Lawrence. It illustrates the main streets, the course of the River Avon and labels the surrounding fields according to ownership or use. No ownership or allocation is noted on the map for the Study Area itself, but to the north it appears to have been bordered by land used as meadow, orchard and garden. An accompanying stylised plan of the same date (Fig. 4) depicts the main streets of the town but records only a limited number of buildings. Part of the Study Area is occupied by what appears to be a small rectangular structure, fronting onto Swan Lane opposite its junction with Chapel Street. A boundary is also depicted running north-south on the eastern side of the structure. The 2" OS Map dating to 1840 (Fig. 5) records no buildings along that section of Swan Lane occupied by the Study Area. However, it depicts buildings along the northern side of the western half of Swan Lane, up to its junction with High Street, and, therefore, it has to be assumed that if any were present at this time along the northern side of the eastern half they would have been shown.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map 1885 (Fig. 6) shows a large L-shaped building set back from Swan Lane. It adjoins ancillary structures on the west, and a small L-shaped structure on the north. The north-south aligned eastern boundary shown on the 1827 plan is also depicted on the 1885 map. However, a north-south aligned western boundary has also been added. It is worth noting that this has created a long narrow plot, at a right angle to the road, which is characteristic of the layout of medieval burgages. The Study Area appears to be located within an orchard. The frontage is open and there is an access route to the rear of the property along the eastern boundary.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map of 1891 (Fig. 7) the L-shaped building depicted on the 1885 map is still present and is now annotated as a school. A further building now occupies the southeastern corner of the site on the frontage of Swan Lane. In the vicinity, extensive orchards are still present, although the strip of land immediately adjacent, on the west, is now partially occupied by buildings.

By the early twentieth century when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map of 1905 (Fig. 8) was produced no changes have occurred in the Study Area itself, now annotated Infant School. However, the block of land to the west, depicted as orchard on the 1891 map, is occupied by buildings fronting onto Swan Lane with long, narrow backplots in the rear. The adjacent plot on the immediate west of the Study Area is occupied by a substantial rectangular building but the areas north and east of the Study Area still appear to be largely orchard. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS Map of 1924 (Fig. 9) shows the building on the northern boundary to have been demolished and allotments on land to the rear. The Masons' Hall marked on the 1924 map may refer to the L-shaped building located in the Study Area. The 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map of 1938 (Fig. 10) indicates considerable change. A second L-shaped building now occupies a strip of land occupying the eastern half of the Study Area (possibly an addition to an earlier plot). A new road defines this eastern plot which is wider than those laid out previously. Buildings have replaced the orchards to the northeast and north, although to the east there is still open ground.

In general the map evidence suggests that the Study Area was not extensively built upon during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, the eastern half of the Study Area does not appear to have been extensively built upon until at least 1938 when for the first time the presence of an L-shaped building is marked on the OS map (Fig. 10). This may mean that the Study Area has not been subjected to substantial disturbance prior to the erection of the twentieth century buildings. It therefore follows, that the potential for *in situ* archaeological remains and features within the Study Area is greatly increased. The long narrow shape of the plots of land fronting onto the eastern half of Swan Lane, which are depicted on the later maps, suggests continuity from an earlier layout characteristic of medieval burgages. Confirmation of such continuity might be located during trial trenching on the site.

## **6.0: Conclusion**

In view of the fact that Evesham had its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period with the establishment of the minster church in 700AD (Dalwood 1996) and the later granting of a port and market in 1055 by King Edward (Dalwood 1996), it is possible that evidence related to the development of an associated settlement might be recovered from the Study Area. Later, medieval activity may, however, have removed earlier deposits.

Based upon the evidence gathered for this report it is reasonable to infer that the site at 45-47 Swan Lane is likely to contain archaeological deposits which relate to the medieval town of Evesham. The grid-like layout of roads to the east of High Street, of which Swan Lane is the northernmost, appear to have been the result of urban planning initiated by the Abbey. Excavations in Cowl Street and Mill Street have revealed deposits of twelfth and thirteenth century date during which time there may have been a gradual expansion of the medieval town towards the north. This saw the laying out of Oat Street in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and the laying out of Swan Lane in the fourteenth century (pers. comm. Glyde). It may be that Swan Lane represents the northern limit of the last phase of expansion of the medieval town. Dating evidence from an evaluation at 45-47 Swan Lane would be particularly important in establishing a more secure



chronology for this medieval expansion in Evesham. It is also envisaged that 45-47 Swan Lane may yield evidence relating to a variety of activities which may have been taking place there during the medieval period. Pertinent to this, is the proximity of Swan Lane to the market place to the west. This location was likely to have meant that a number of commercial and industrial activities connected with the nearby market were carried out in the buildings along the Swan Lane frontage. Another factor which may also have influenced the sort of activities taking place in the buildings along Swan Lane was its proximity to the river Avon. This would have made it a favourable location for a number of industrial and manufacturing processes which required a water supply, such as textile production, fulling or tanning. In this regard, it is well attested from documentary sources that cloth was produced in the town from the twelfth century and during the fourteenth century the town was exporting wool. Caps, gloves and stockings are all recorded as textile industries in medieval Evesham (Dalwood, 1996).

During the late medieval period there appears to have been a contraction in the size of the town when population declined and Swan Lane was abandoned (pers. comm. Glyde). Archaeological material from the Study Area may help to confirm this and, moreover, may contribute to an understanding of the social and economic forces influencing the town at the end of the medieval period.

During the earlier post-medieval period the economy of the town began to prosper again and one of the results was the construction of wharves next to the bridge to cater for increased river traffic. Any post-medieval assemblages and deposits which might be encountered in the Study Area could serve to enhance the overall understanding of the town in its post-medieval context. In particular, the nature of the transition from the later medieval period, which saw an abandonment of Swan Lane, to the earlier post-medieval period, which saw increased prosperity in Evesham, might be clarified. One of the questions to be addressed, for example, is whether the late medieval abandonment involved a wholesale and rapid desertion of properties along the Swan Lane frontage, rather than a more protracted, piecemeal desertion, and then a subsequent period of demolition prior to rebuilding during the earlier post-medieval era.

Given its location fronting onto Swan Lane, the Study Area has the potential for providing evidence concerning the date, layout, function and development of burgage plots along its medieval frontage. This, in turn, will add to a growing corpus of knowledge on the social and economic development of the medieval town as a whole.

## **7.0: Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by KingsOak. Thanks are due to Paul Stanford of KingsOak for his assistance during the project. The project was monitored by Mike Glyde, planning archaeologist, on behalf of Worcester County Council. Thanks are due to Deborah Overton of the Worcester SMR for her assistance. The documentary research was undertaken by Helen Martin who also wrote this report. The report was edited by Kirsty Nichol, who also managed the project for BUFAU, and the illustrations were prepared by Bryony Ryder.

## 8.0: References

Candy, J. 1999a *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the site of Stocks Lovell Factory, Mill Street, Evesham* Bufau Report No. 624

Candy, J 1999b *An Archaeological Evaluation at the Former Stocks Lovell Factory Site, Mill Street, Evesham* Bufau Report No. 624

Dalwood, II 1996 *Archaeological Assessment of Evesham, Hereford and Worcester* The Central Marches Historic Towns Survey

Fagan, L., Hurst, J. and Pearson, E. 1994 *Evaluation at 23-25 Mill Street, Evesham* (County Archaeological Service, Worcs.)

Geotechnics Ltd 1999 *Geotechnical report* Geotechnics Ltd, Coventry

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999 *Standards and Guidance for Desk Based Assessments*

Lockett, N. & Jones, L. 2001 *Evaluation at 19 Cowl St., Evesham, Worcestershire* Archaeological Service, WCC Rep. No: 914

Lockett, N. & Jones, L. 2001 *Evaluation at 1 Swan Lane, Evesham* WAS internal report 885

VCH Worcs. Vol. II Willis-Bund, J. W. (ed.)

### Historic Maps

1827 Nathan Izod, All Saints and St Lawrence and St Peter's, Bengeworth (Enclosure)

1827 Nathan Izod, Stylised plan of Evesham Town

1840 2<sup>nd</sup> OS Map Evesham

1885 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

1891 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

1905 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

1924 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

1938 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS Map Evesham

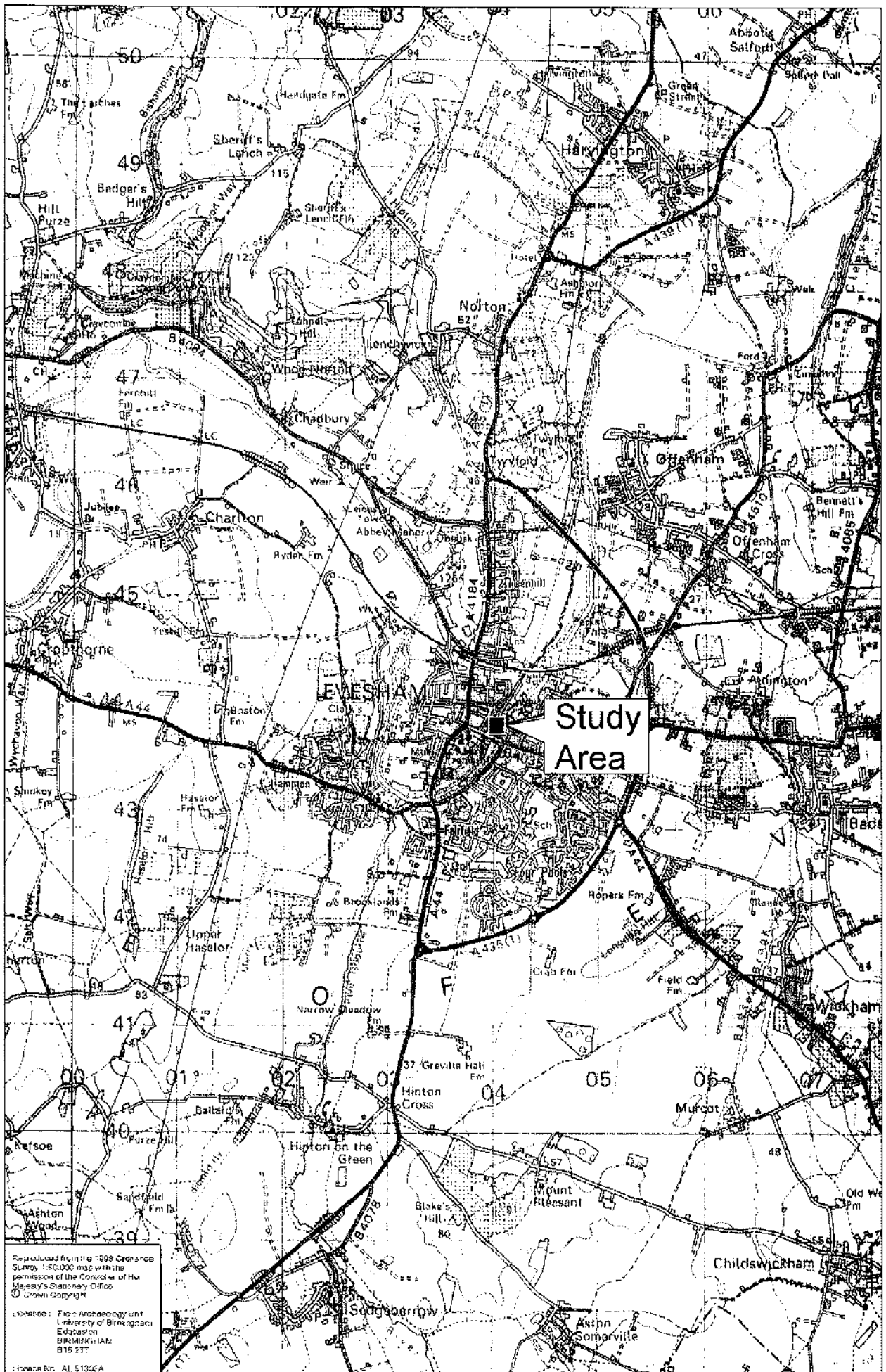


Fig.1

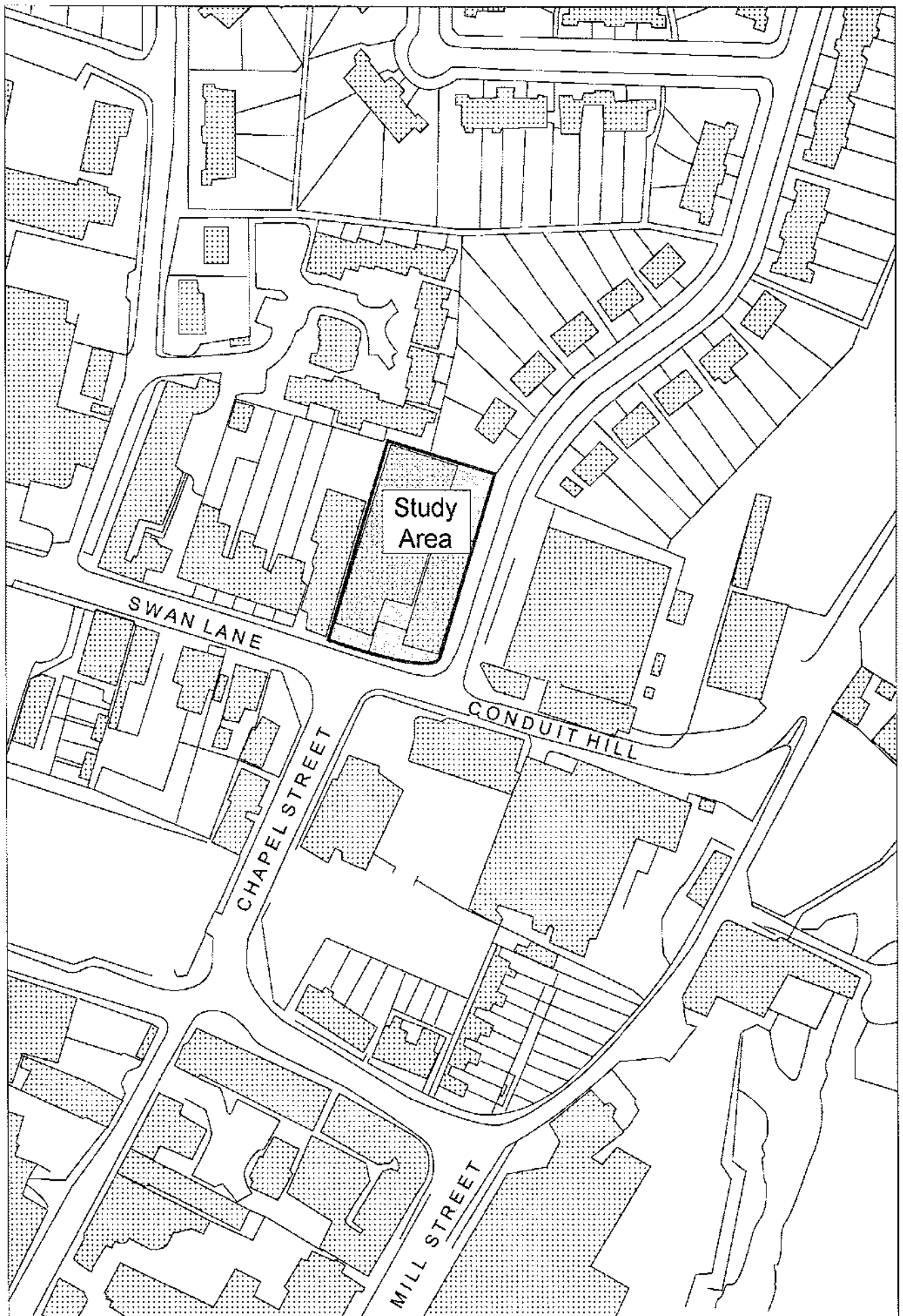
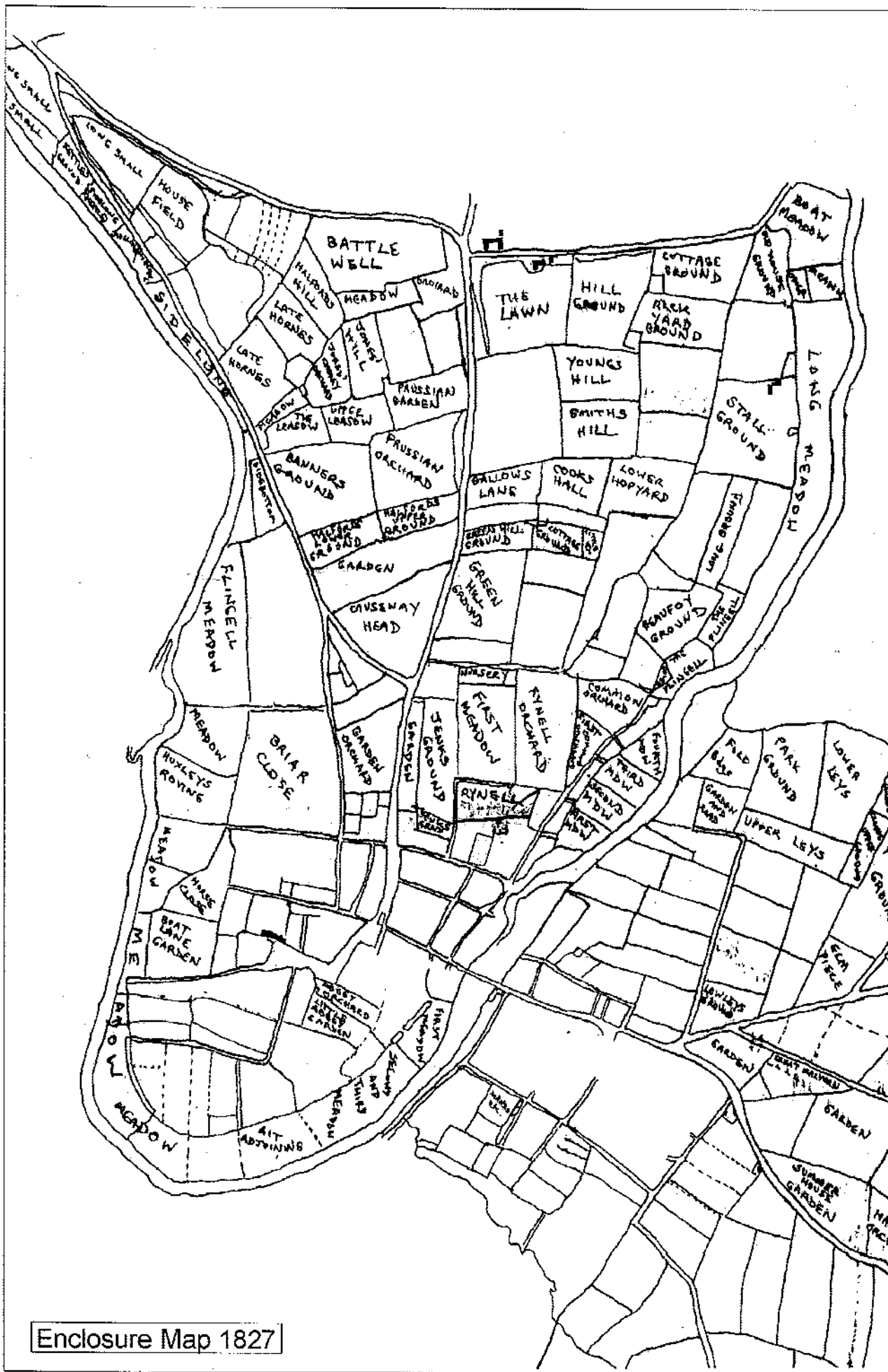


Fig.2



Enclosure Map 1827

Fig.3

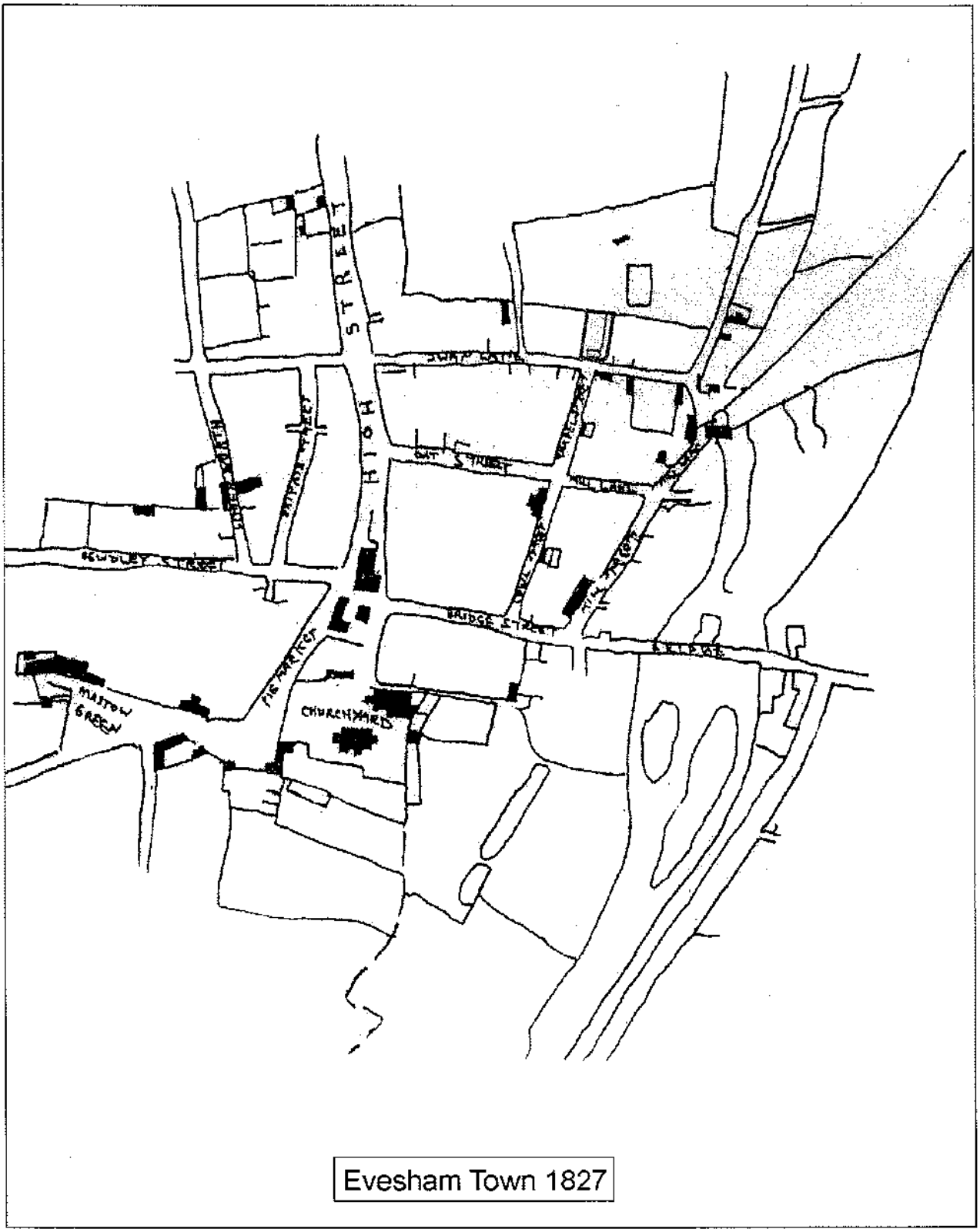


Fig.4

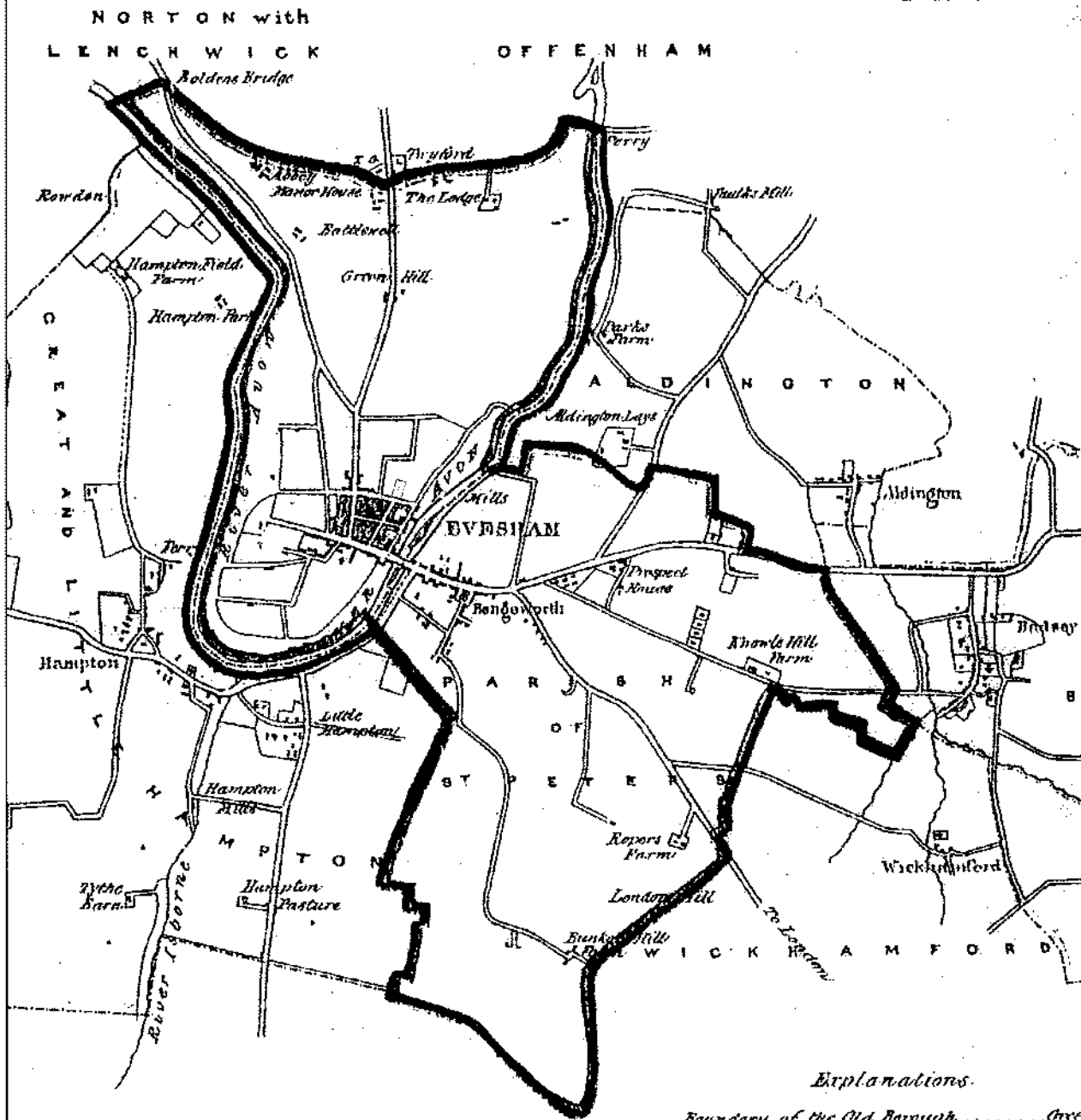
# EVESHAM

O.S. Two-Inch Map c.1840

W.R.O. B.A. 3676 xxxii

# EVESHAM

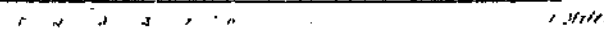
*Enlarged from Ordnance Survey*



*Explanations.*

- Boundary of the Old Borough* ..... Green
- Proposed Boundary* ..... Red
- Boundaries of Parishes or Townships* ..... Blue
- Rivers* ..... Blue

Scale of 2 inches to 1 mile



*Robt. A. Dawson*  
*Lieut. Col.*

Fig.5

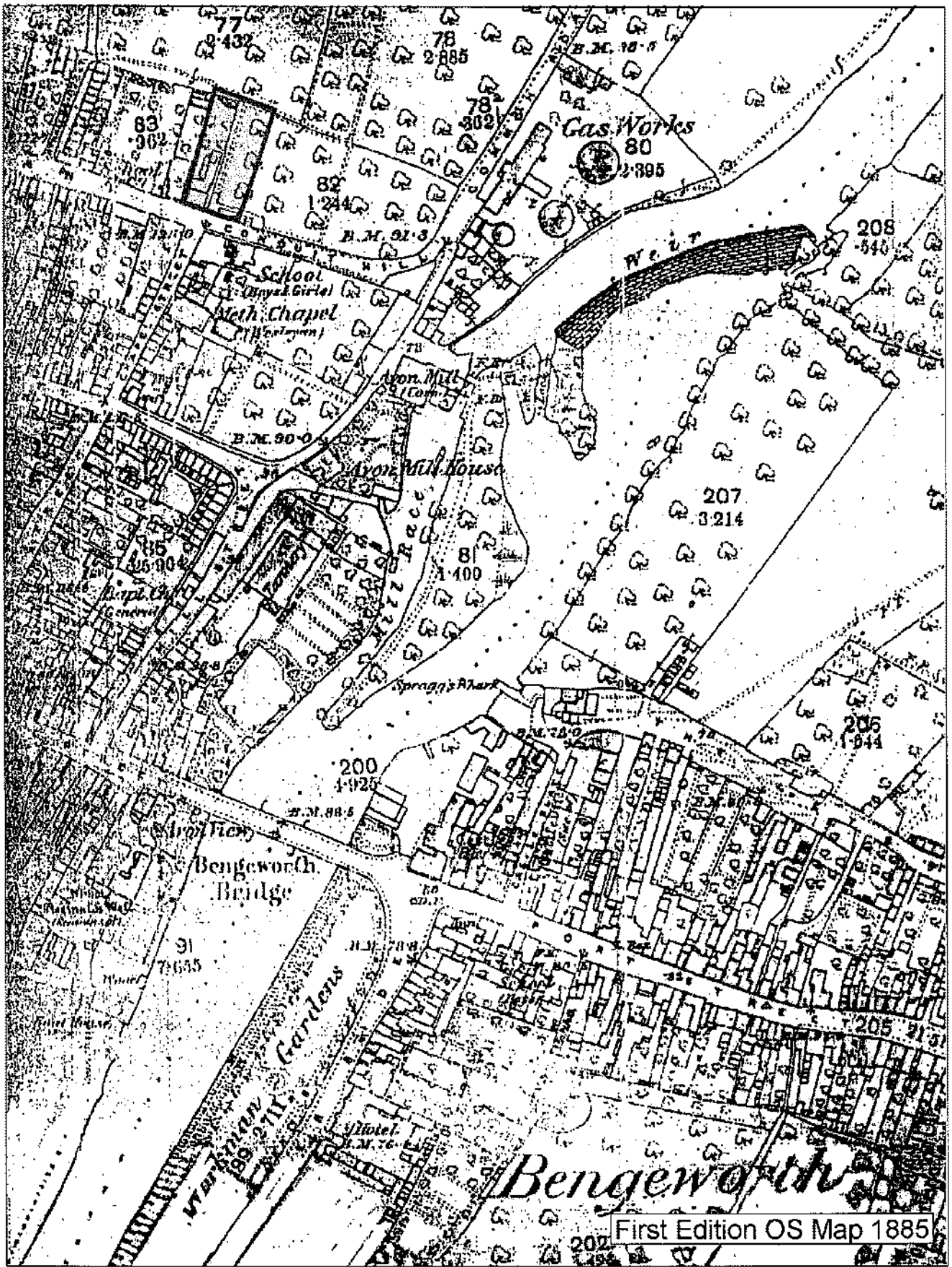


Fig.6





Fig.7

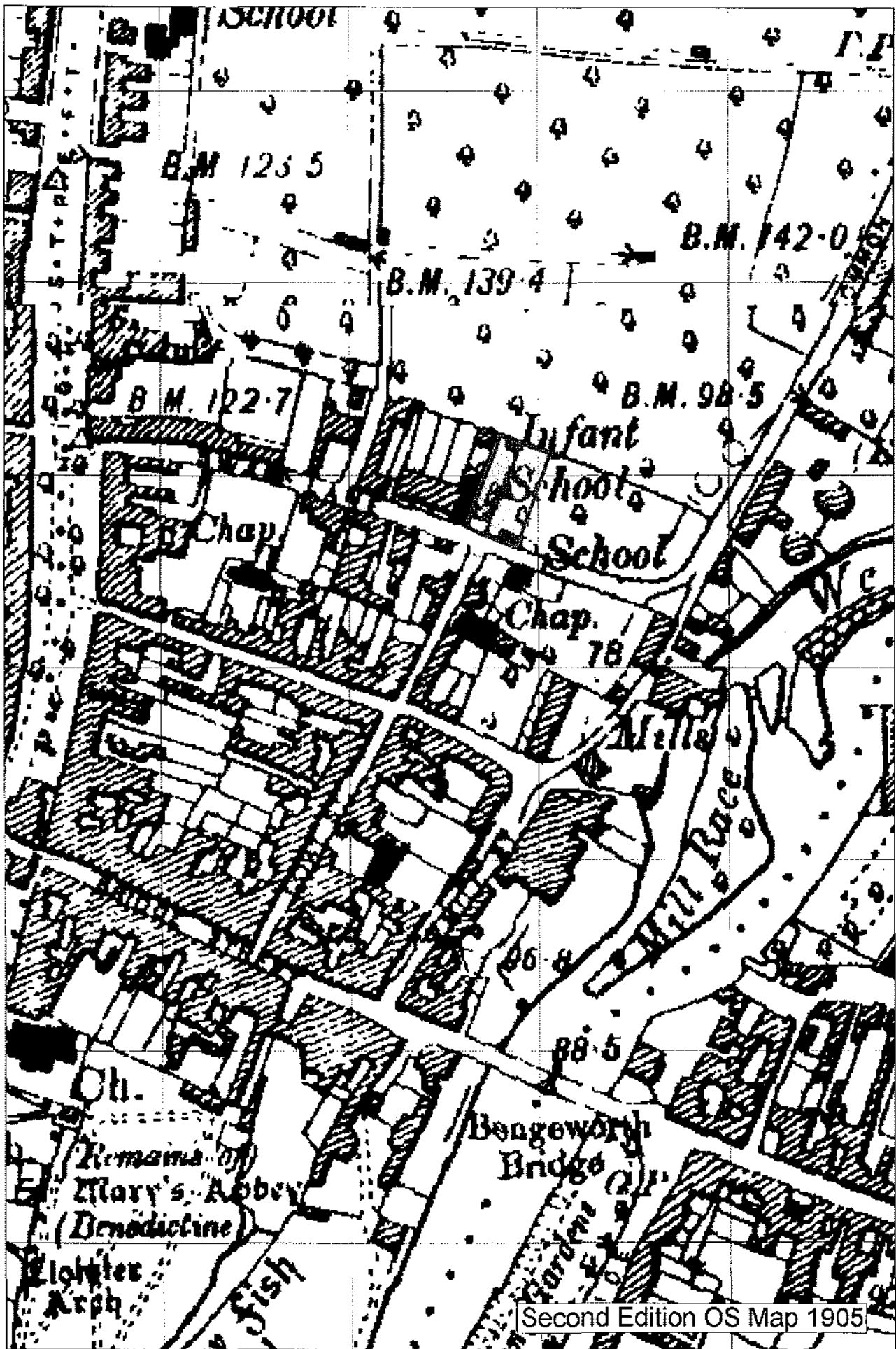


Fig.8

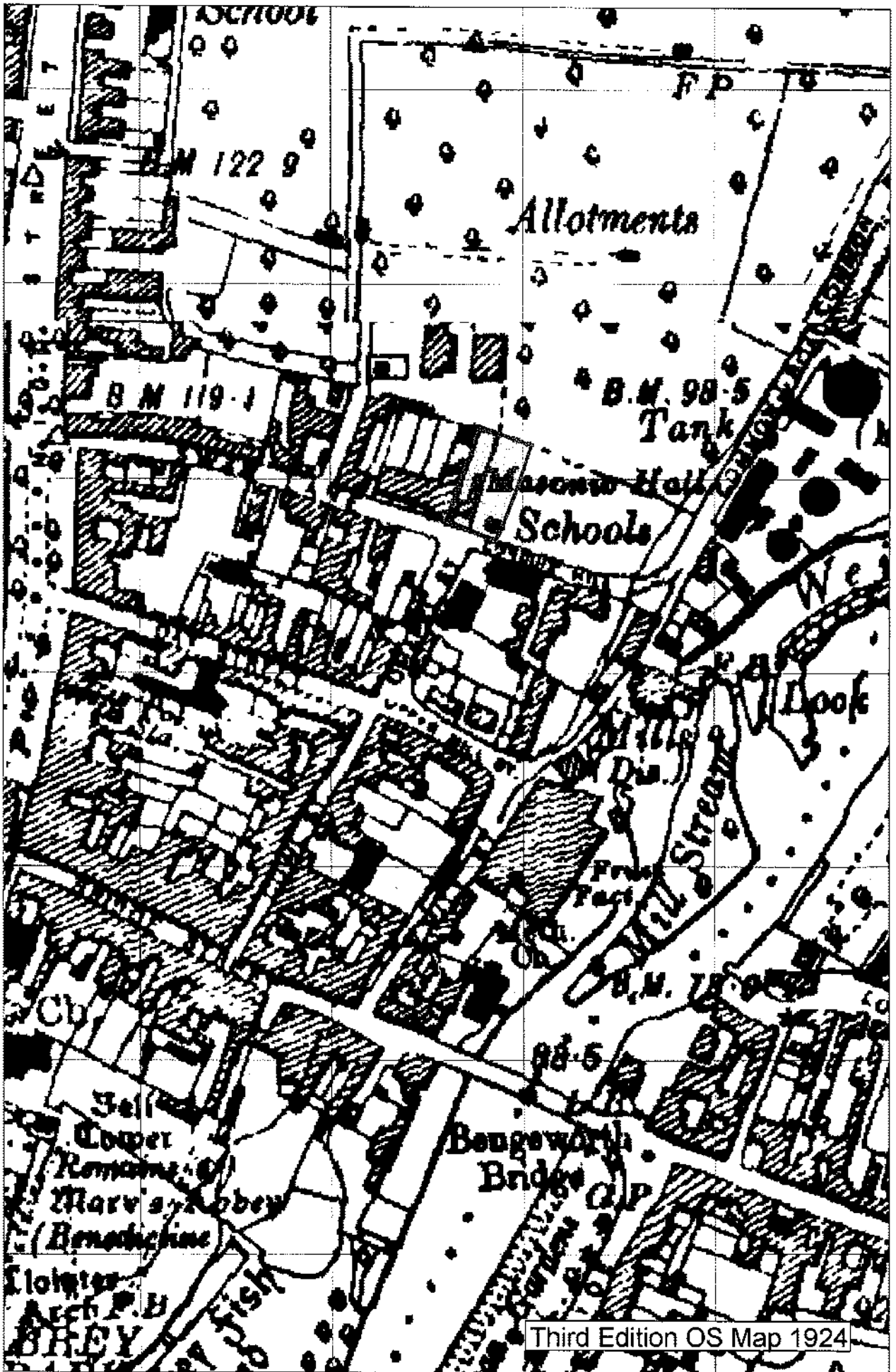


Fig.9

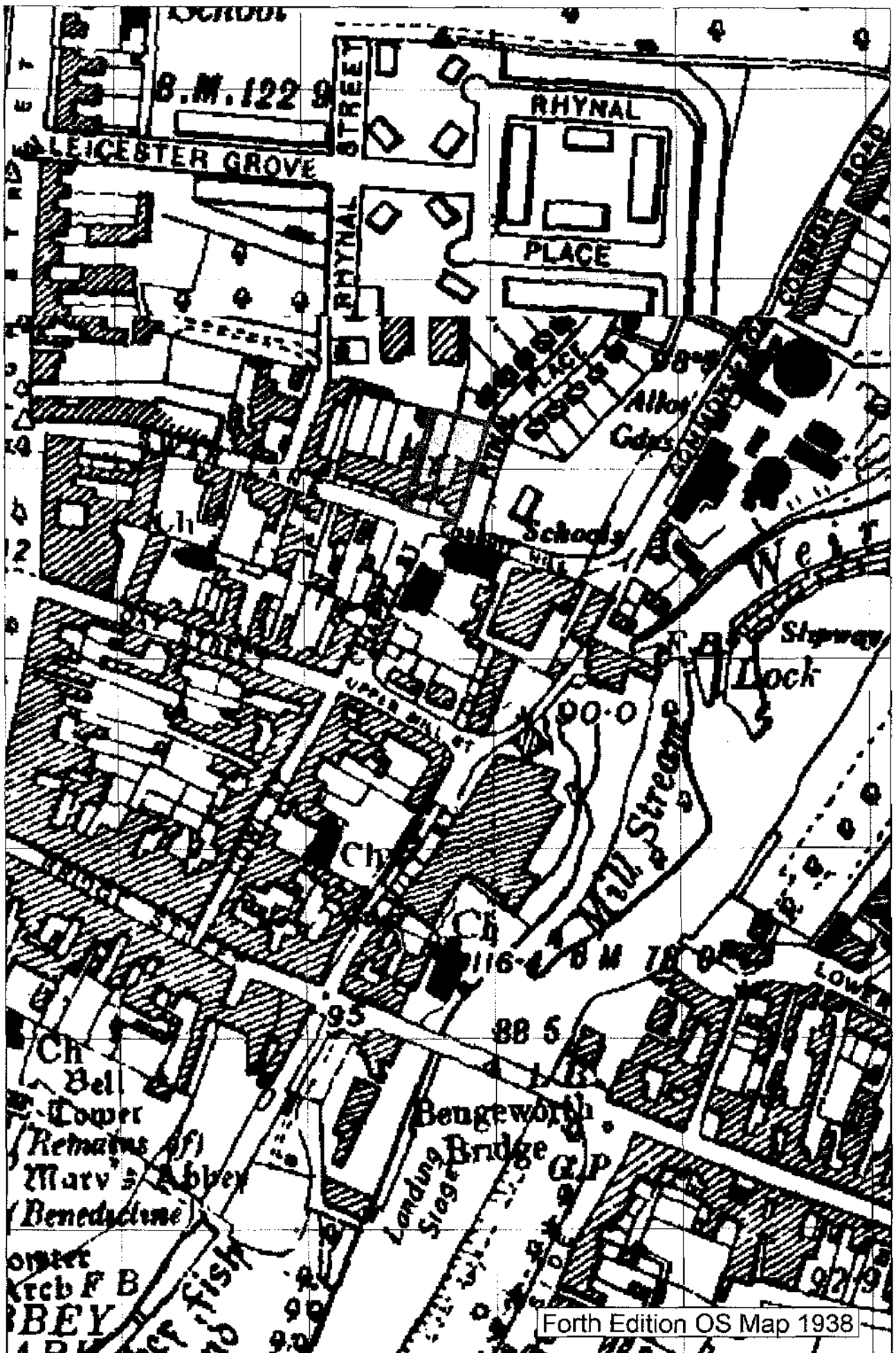


Fig.10