

## **An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the Albert Mill, Cromford Street, Oldham**



Site of Albert Mill

**Archaeological Research Services Ltd**  
**Report No. 2009/45**  
July 2009

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*In July 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) were commissioned by Gleeson Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site of the former Albert Mill and vicinity at Derker, Oldham*

*Through study of the historic map regression, a construction date of between 1844 and 1849 can be assumed for the Albert Mill and a date of between 1849 and 1854 for the Cromford Mill. The land prior to this period was open fields.*

*Since the construction of Alberts Mill and Cromford Mill the site has undergone many modification, expansions and demolitions over the years. Because of this the potential for archaeological evidence on the site is considered to be low to the eastern side (site 2) and very low on the western side (site 1), the former sites of Cromford Mill and Albert Mill respectively. No potentially significant archaeological features pre-dating the mill are thought to survive, given the extensive industrial development that has occurred on-site.*

*Given the results of the assessment though it may be possible that a watching brief be undertaken on further groundworks. This is considered more likely to produce archaeological features in site 2.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1. In July 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd) were commissioned by Gleeson Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the Albert Mill and vicinity, Cromford Street, Oldham (Fig. 1).

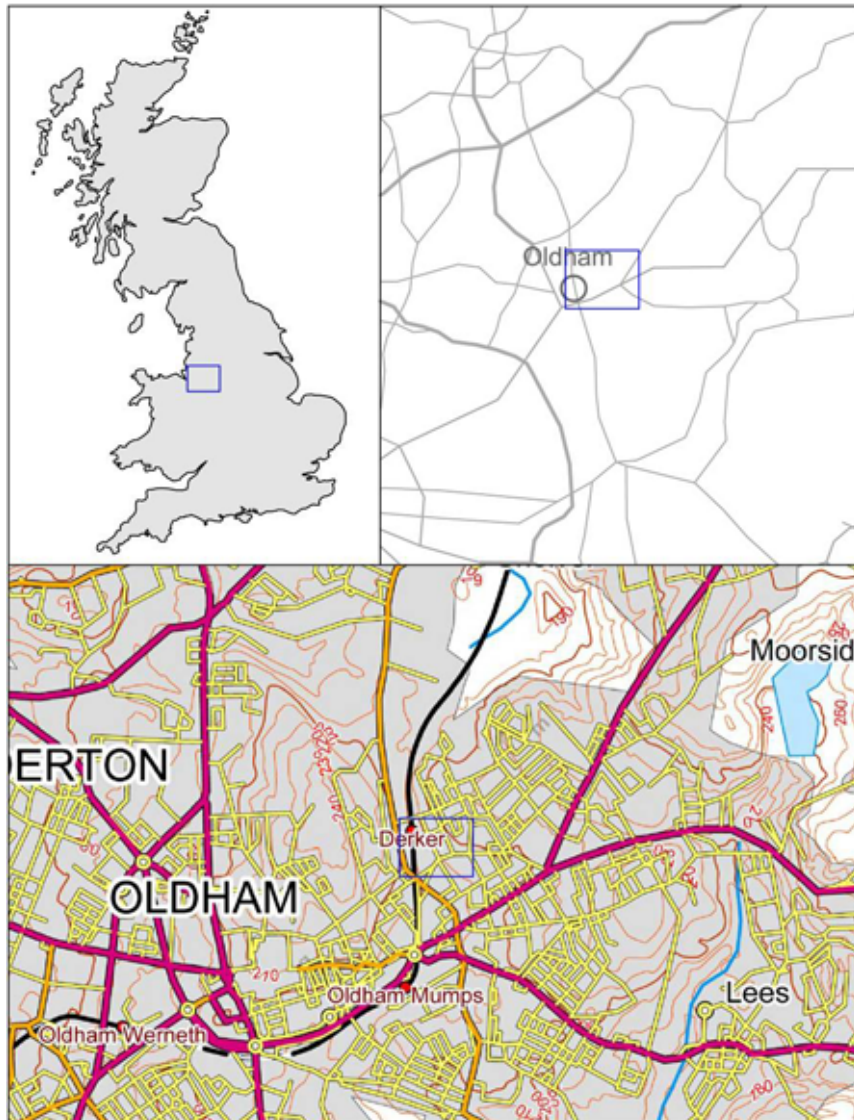


Fig. 1 Site location Ordnance Survey data copyright OS, reproduced by permission, Licence no. 100045420

### 1.1. Location and topography

1.1.2. The site is centred at SD 934058 (Fig. 2) just to the west of the A1. It lies approximately 19.3 kilometres north east of Manchester and adjacent to the Derker rail station.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

2.1. The information within this report has been gathered from a number of sources, both primary and secondary, in accordance with the project specification.

### *2.2. Historic Environment Record (HER)*

The HER held at the Greater Manchester Archaeology unit, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, was consulted in order to obtain information on the former mill, previous archaeological research in the area and other information relating to the site and its historical development in order to help assess the level of preservation and for the potential for archaeological remains to survive within the study area.

### *2.3. Archives Services*

The Oldham Local Studies and archives, Union Street, Oldham were consulted in order to study historic documents specific to the development area. Historic maps of the area were studied, along with building control plans and some trade directories relating to the use and development of buildings within the study area

### *2.7. Web sources*

All of the web sources listed below were consulted for this investigation:

Magic Maps: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

Archaeological Data Service: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/>

British Geological Survey: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>

Spinning the web: <http://www.spinningtheweb.org.uk>

## **3. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH RESULTS**

3.0.1 Very little information was gleaned with regard to the two mills present within the development area, Albert Mill to the west and Cromford Mill to the east. Both are only mentioned briefly in available documentary sources and both were extensively redeveloped from their cotton production heyday prior to final demolition.

### **3.1. Prehistoric to Post-Medieval Period**

3.1.1 After discussion with the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester it was not deemed necessary to discuss sites in proximity to the development area which predate the development of the cotton mills. No evidence of any heritage assets predating the mill developments are located within the study area.

### **3.5. Post-Medieval to Present**

3.5.1. Albert Mill, Cromford Street was built some time between 1844 and 1849 (after consultation of the First Edition OS mapping, see map regression discussion below). The mill itself was extended in 1869. When the Albert Spinning Company took over in 1873, a further 5 extensions took place between 1875 and 1908. Although plans were drawn up in 1905 for building a second mill on the site, they were rejected and instead the original mill buildings were extended through 1914-16. Production had ceased on site by 1931, and its chimney was

felled on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1939. The site was re-opened in 1947 by the Oldham Tyre Cord Company and the mill once again underwent many extensions during the years it continued to operate. Finally, as tyre orders declined (mostly owing to competition from foreign importers) the mill saw a reduction in its labour force from 1977 until its eventual closure in 1981. In 1915 the recorded spindleage was 37,892 of Platts and other types and the plant was powered by an 800hp Buckley and Taylor engine in 1905 (Gurr and Hunt 1989).

- 3.5.2. The site was rapidly surveyed in 1986 when it comprised two structures. The first was a two-storey, late 19<sup>th</sup> century, brick building formed of 34 bays which had been heavily modified and extended. The northern extent of the ground floor was the oldest surviving part of the site. The second was a possible warehouse, four-storeys high composed of 6 bays. No power features or auxiliary buildings survived (Williams 1986)
- 3.5.3. Even less documentary evidence was available for Cromford Mill. This was built around 1884 and extended in 1903. It had ceased production by 1916 and was used as storage until 1983 when it mostly demolished (Gurr and Hunt 1989).

#### **4. MAP REGRESSION**

##### 4.2. *Map 1844 (Fig.3)*

This large scale map shows the area of Albert Mill and Cromford Mill as undeveloped fields at this time

##### 4.3. *25" to One Mile 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map 1849 (Fig.4)*

This first edition OS map shows the location marked as 'Albert Mill'. The mill buildings are illustrated as covering a small area in this map but to the west, within the study area boundary a small reservoir has been represented to the south-west in the area of the possible structure present on the larger scale first edition map. A small row of buildings exists centrally on the site, the remainder of the site looking to be open field. The rail line (present today) runs north south immediately west of the study area

##### 4.4. *6" to One Mile 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map 1854 (Fig.5)*

This edition OS map gives clearer detail to the study area. It is possible to discern individual buildings on the site, including the reservoir marked to the south west, and what is potentially a chimney (indicated by a small circle) located centrally in the Albert Mill. Cromford mill is also illustrated in great detail within the eastern section of the study area.

##### 4.5. *25" to One Mile 1<sup>st</sup> revision OS map 1888 (Fig. 6)*

Massive expansion has taken place by the time of this maps publication. The Albert Mill now fills the field it sat in on the last OS map, and an extra reservoir has been added. The same has happened in the eastern section of the study area, the small row of houses are still present but are now surrounded by larger mill buildings as well as another small row having been added to the north. Cromford Street is now labelled as such, but the individual mill names have been removed and the general area is now described as 'Mills'. The railway to the west has also been expanded, having more tracks and junctions added to coincide with the

growth in industry. Growth in industry has also had the knock on effect that housing, and small buildings/ businesses has increased rapidly in the area.

- 4.6. *6" to One Mile 1<sup>st</sup> revision OS map 1893 (Fig. 7)*  
This map now labels the mill as 'Albert Mill (Cotton)', and indicates that two of the structures to the west are now reservoirs. The potential chimney from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6" to One Mile map is now confirmed and is labelled with the abbreviated 'Chy'. The site of Cromford Mill has had some modifications to the eastern side of the study area. The small cluster of buildings present of the previous map have now been removed and replaced with terraced housing. The central portion of the Cromford Mill is now listed as being a reservoir.
- 4.7. *25" to One Mile 2<sup>nd</sup> revision OS map 1900 (Fig. 8)*  
This map only has minor alterations to the 1<sup>st</sup> Revision map of 1888. A narrow row of buildings has been added to the very eastern extent of the study area
- 4.8. *6" to One Mile 2<sup>nd</sup> revision OS map 1906 (Fig. 9)*  
This map shows no changes to the Albert Mill, and although structurally the same, Cromford Mill is now listed as being 'Cromford Warehouse'.
- 4.9. *25" to One Mile 3<sup>rd</sup> revision OS map 1922 (Fig. 10)*  
The study area has not been altered in this map from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Revision map of 1900.
- 4.10. From studying the map regression it appears that Albert Mill was built between 1844 and 1849. The site then followed a series of expansions over later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **5. SITE VISIT**

- 5.1 A site visit was made on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009 during heavy rain. The Albert Mill area (Site 1), had had all buildings demolished and site levelling works undertaken prior to the site visit. It appears that the terracing on site (Fig. 11) was already present and the demolition and site clearance works did not remove amounts of undisturbed land. The demolition and site levelling did appear to have removed all traces of previous structures present on the site (Figs. 12) however. It is not thought likely that any significant archaeological features relating to the former Albert Mill will be present on site. This is in line with the 1986 survey which showed that the power unit for the mill had already been removed by this time, leaving a heavily modified original shell of the former mill.
- 5.2 No evidence of the former Cromford Mill was visible and the site appears to have been demolished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (see map regression above). The northern part of Site 2 is covered in shrubs and undergrowth (Fig. 13), whilst the southern part of the area is occupied by modern light industrial units, some of which are no longer in use. A row of terrace housing, built in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, is located at the eastern extent of this part of the study area.



## **6. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

- 6.1. In order to discuss the site more clearly, the study area has been split into sections 1 and 2, number 1 being the site of the Albert Mill and 2 being Cromford Mill. Through study of the historic map regression, a construction date of between 1844 and 1849 can be assumed for the Albert Mill and a date of between 1849 and 1854 for the Cromford Mill. By visiting the site and using aerial photography (Google Earth), it was obvious that the layout of the mill, prior to its recent demolition, did not resemble that of the historic OS maps. This would indicate that the oldest section of the mill, to the south of area 1, had already been demolished or modified as part of the extensive expansions after the mill was re-opened in 1947 as a tyre manufacturer. The results of the 1986 survey re-enforced this conclusion.
- 6.2. The Cromford Mill (in area 2) was short lived in its working use, having been decommissioned as of 1916 and later used predominantly as a storage warehouse. The large rectangular building (which used to be the mill and later the warehouse) has been recently demolished and exists today as a patch of stones over grown with weeds. The terraced housing in the area which survives today dates to around the 1950s. The earlier terraced housing which occupied the west and north of area 1 has been demolished.

## **7. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL**

- 7.1. The archaeological potential for area 1 of the study area is very low. Substantial terracing of the site prior to the construction of the original mill, and the subsequent demolition and modifications which took place over the years mean it is unlikely that any significant archaeological remains would survive. No useful information on ground levels of the mill areas was available for study. Topographic survey was limited to the buildings surroundings and does not show a significant change in site levels before and after demolition.
- 7.2. The archaeological potential for area 2 of the study area is considered to be low. Prior to the mill being built the site was occupied by fields. The subsequent building and demolition of the mill, terraced housing, and now more modern industrial trade building would mean it is unlikely that any significant archaeological remains would survive in this area, but it is thought that they would be more likely to survive than in area 1.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1. The potential for archaeological evidence on the site is considered to be low and very low. Given the results of the assessment though it may be possible that a watching brief be undertaken on further groundworks. This is considered more likely to produce significant archaeology in area 2

## **9. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT**

- 9.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.

- 9.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

## **10. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY**

- 10.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

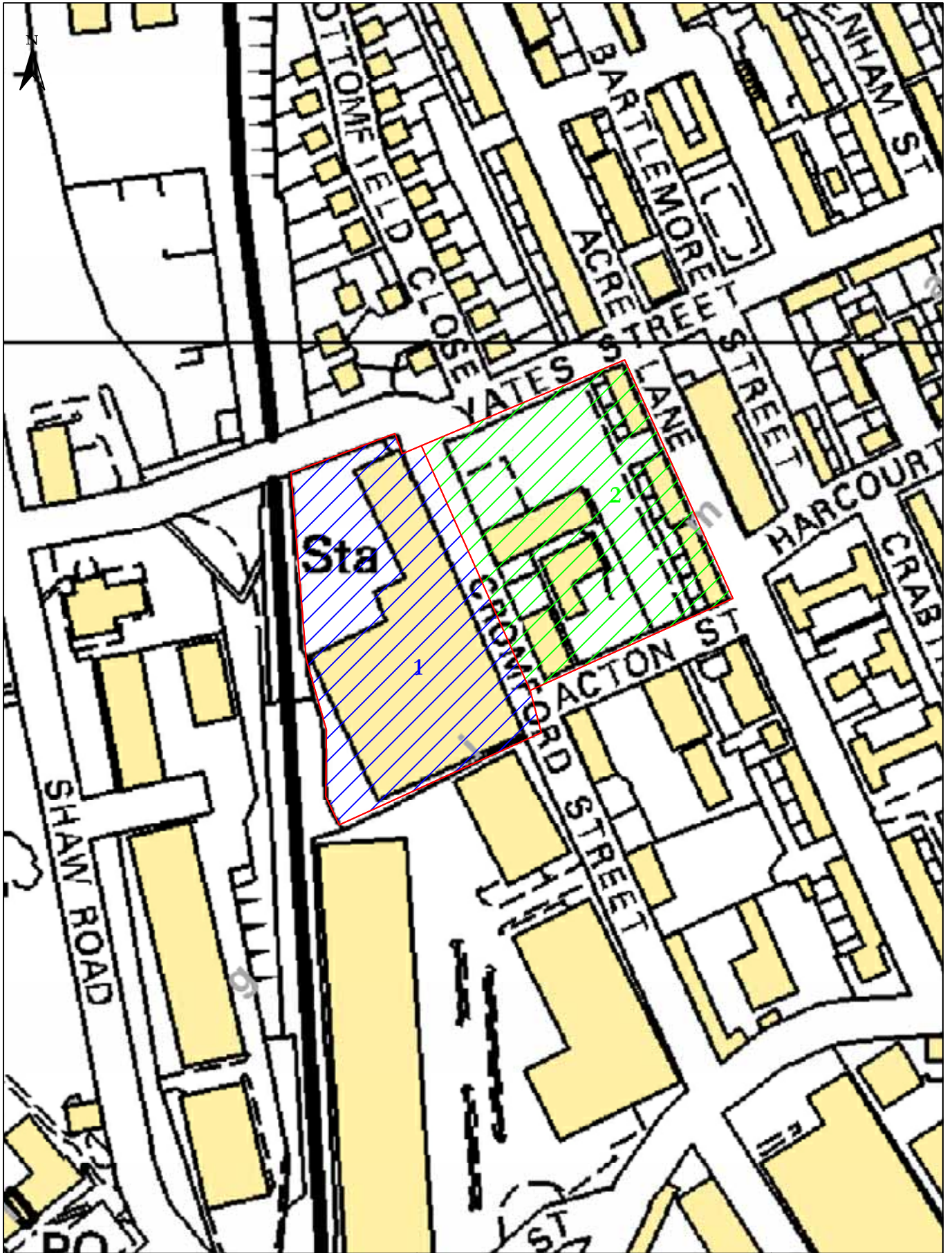
## **11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**




- 11.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank Dickie Dennis-Andrew of Gleeson developments Ltd, for facilitating our work. Thanks are also expressed to Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester Andy Myers.

## **12. REFERENCES**


A.Gurr, D. Hunt, J. 1989. *The Cotton Mills of Oldham, brief history and gazetteer. 3rd ed.* Oldham Education and Leisure Services

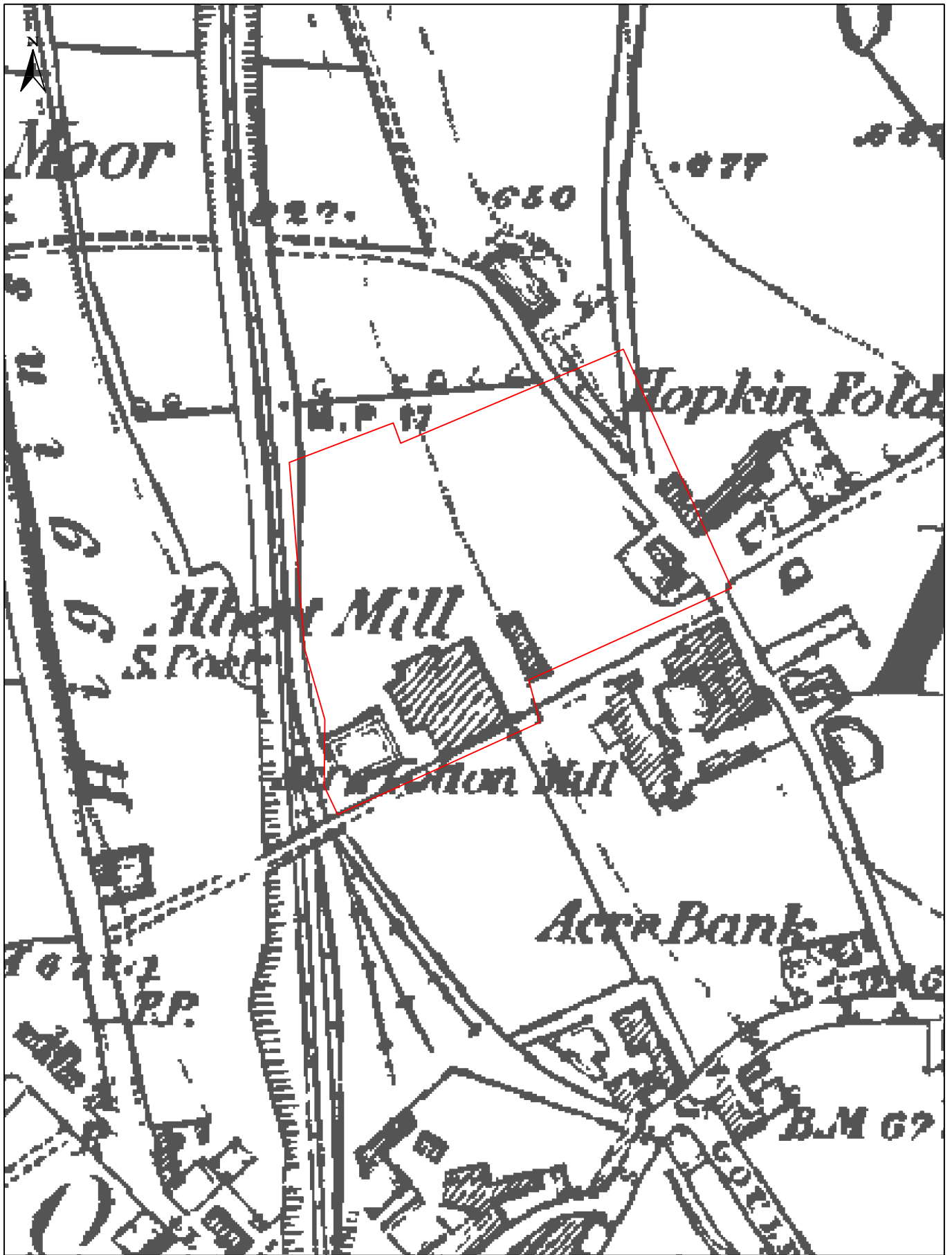
Williams, M. 1986. The Greater Manchester textile Mill Survey, Oldham. Unpublished document



<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd Baltic Business Centre Saltmeadows Road Gateshead NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title: Figure 2: Site location and boundary</p>	<p>Key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Study area</li> <li> Area 1</li> <li> Area 2</li> </ul>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing This Drawing © A.R.S. Ltd</p> <p>Ordnance Survey data if applicable © Crown Copyright, all rights reserved reproduction with permission. Licence No. 100045420</p>
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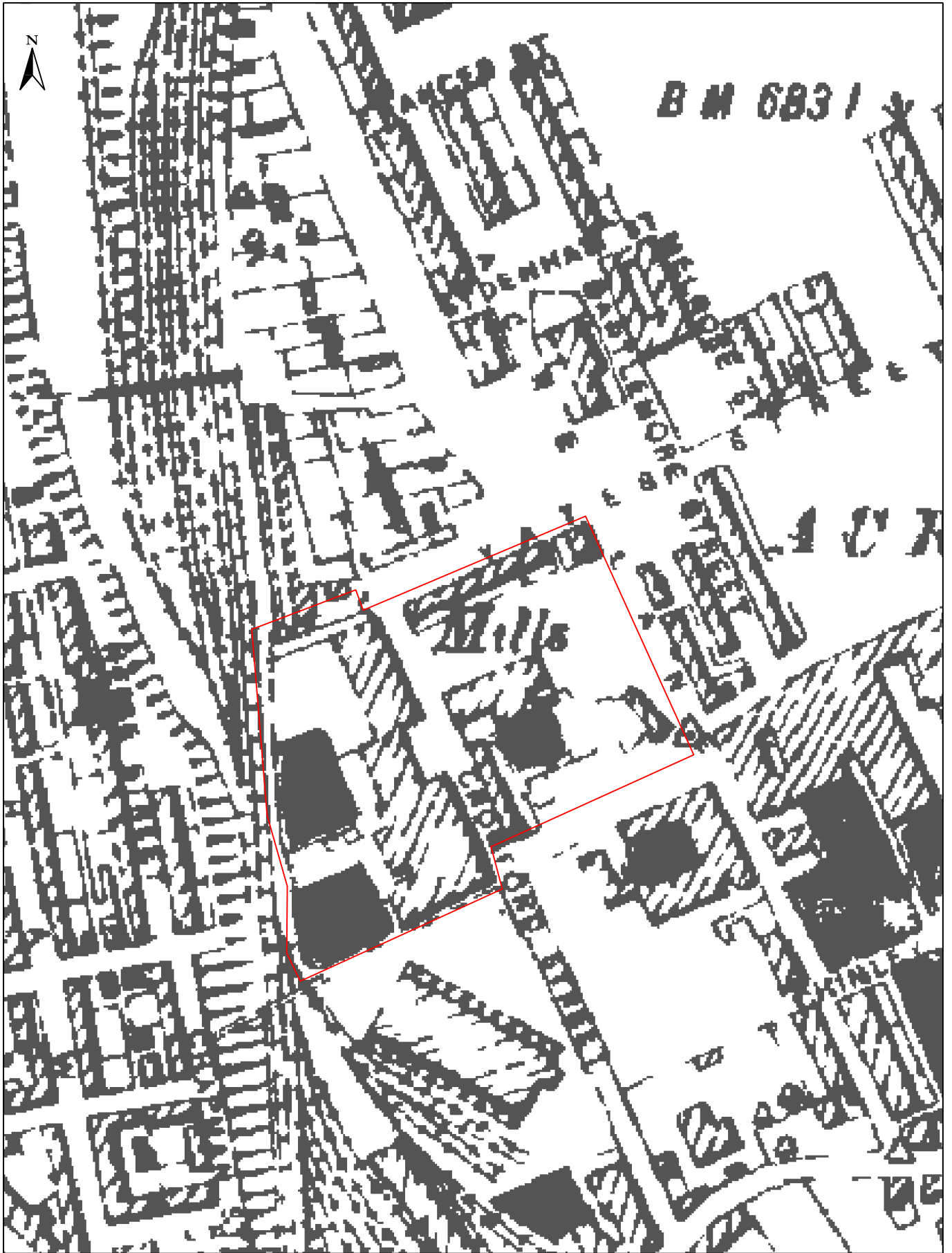
<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd Baltic Business Centre Saltmeadows Road Gateshead NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title: Figure 3: Map of 1844</p>	<p>Key:  Study area</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing This Drawing © A.R.S. Ltd</p>
<p>Site Code: ALB09 Drawing Ref: Report Fig. 3 Date: 22nd July 2009 Drawn: DA Scale: N/A</p>	<p>Notes: A map dated 1844 which had no name or date. Shown not to scale</p>		<p>Ordnance Survey data if applicable © Crown Copyright, all rights reserved reproduction with permission. Licence No. 100045420</p>



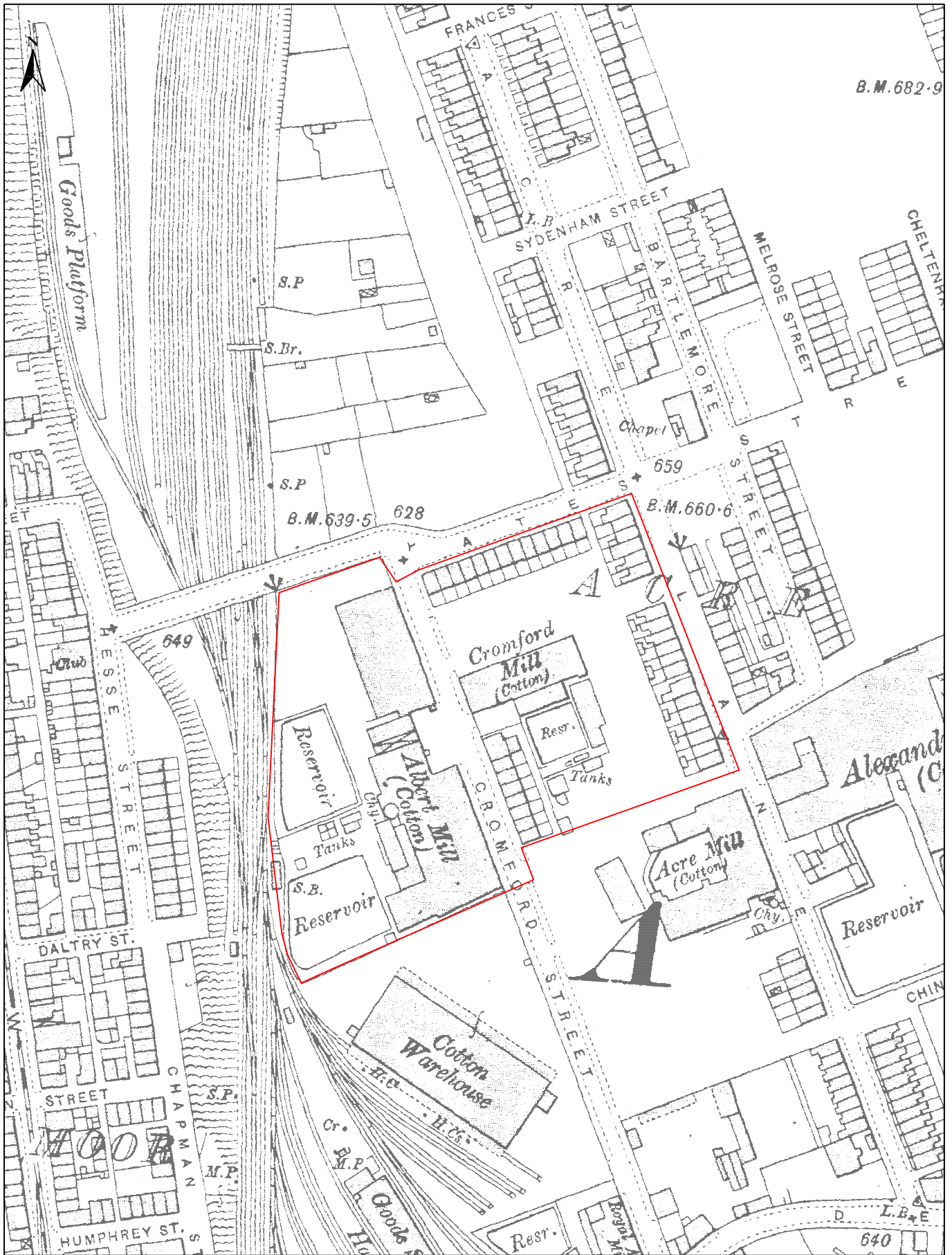
<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd          Baltic Business Centre          Saltmeadows Road          Gateshead          NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title:          Figure 4: 25" to One Mile 1st          Edition OS map of 1849</p>	<p>Key:</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing          This Drawing          © A.R.S. Ltd</p>
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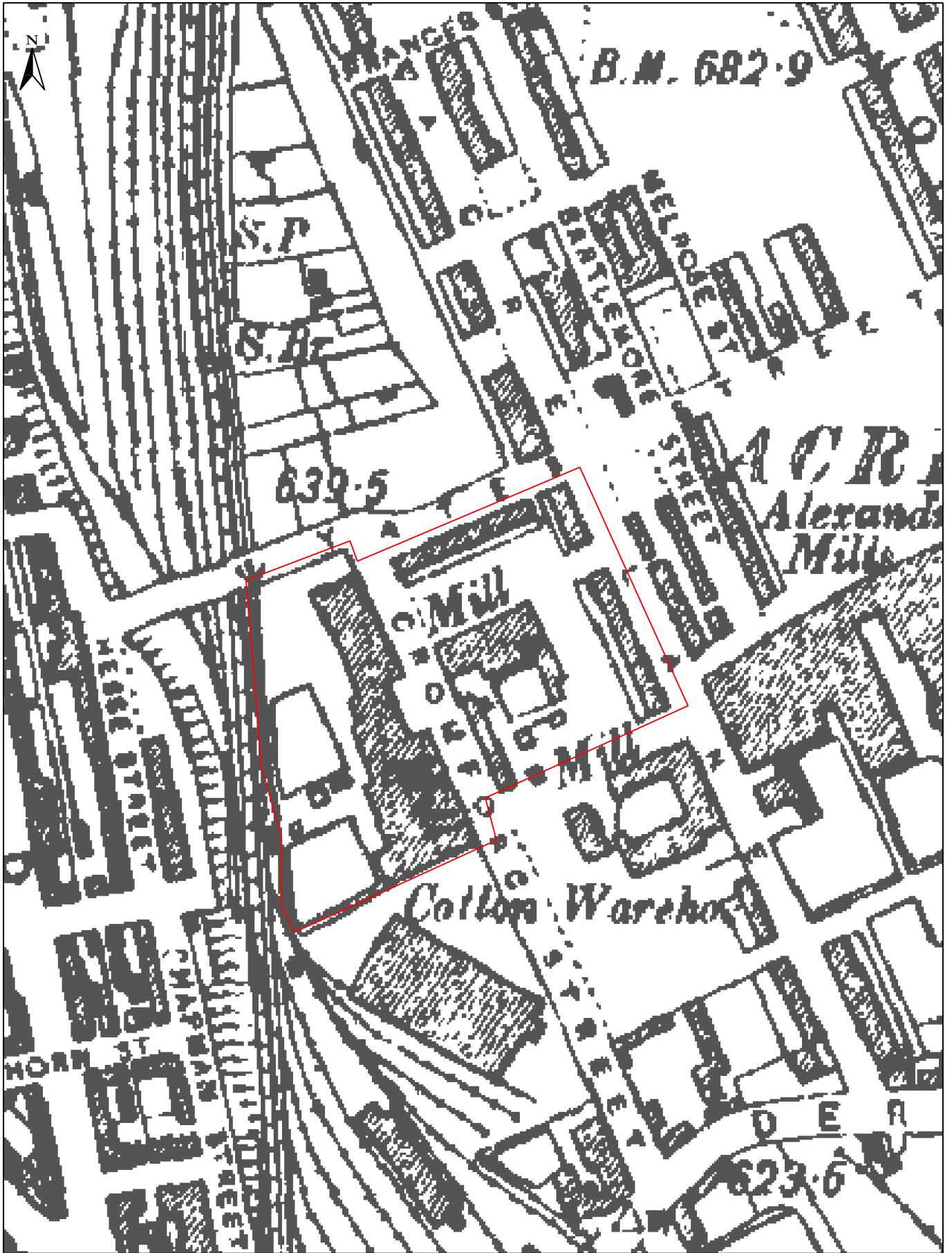


<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd          Baltic Business Centre          Saltmeadows Road          Gateshead          NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title:          Figure 6: 25" to One Mile 1st          Revision OS map of 1888</p>	<p>Key:</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing          This Drawing          © A.R.S. Ltd</p>
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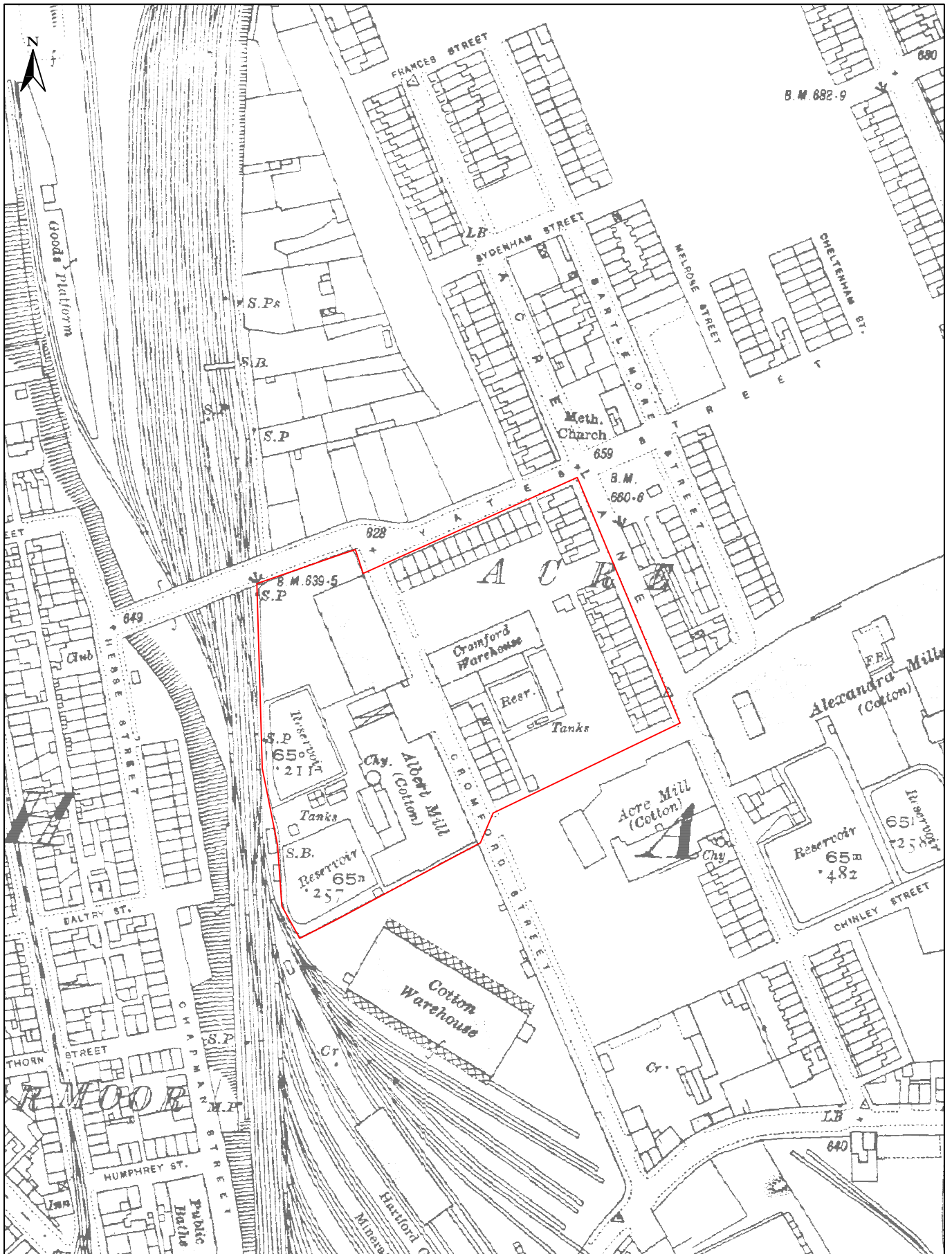


<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd          Baltic Business Centre          Saltmeadows Road          Gateshead          NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title:          Figure 7: 6" to One Mile 1st          Revision OS map of 1893</p>	<p>Key:</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing          This Drawing          © A.R.S. Ltd</p>
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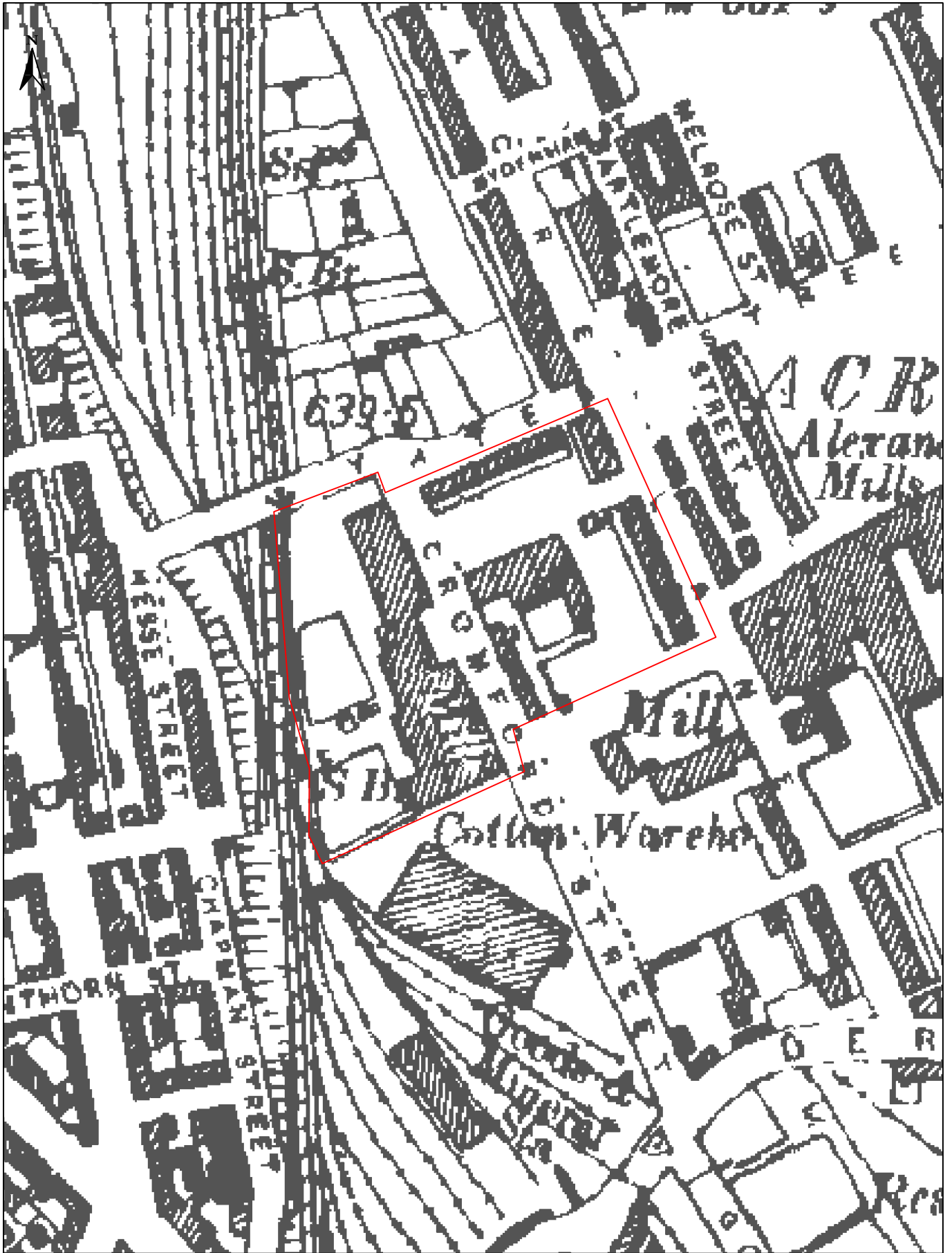




<p>Archaeological Research Services Ltd          Baltic Business Centre          Saltmeadows Road          Gateshead          NE8 3DA</p>	<p>Title:          Figure 8: 25" to One Mile 2nd          Revision OS map of 1900</p>	<p>Key:</p>	<p>Copyright/ Licencing          This Drawing          © A.R.S. Ltd</p>
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Fig. 11 Area 1 showing demolition.



Fig. 12 Area 1 showing demolition.



Fig. 13 Area 2 showing site of former mill.