

**MANOR FARM HOUSE,  
BENHAM PARK, MARSH BENHAM  
WEST BERKSHIRE**

**NGR: SU 4356 6757**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
AND WATCHING BRIEF**

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## SUMMARY

On 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on land at Manor Farm House, Benham Park, Marsh Benham, Newbury, West Berkshire (NGR: SU 4356 6757). A subsequent desk-based assessment was undertaken in September 2008. The work was commissioned by Giles Bennett Design on behalf of the occupants, Mr. and Mrs D. Male.

Planning permission has been granted by West Berkshire Council for the conversion of an outhouse associated with Manor Farm House, Benham Park, Marsh Benham (planning reference: 07/00358/FULD). A condition requiring a programme of archaeological recording has been attached to the planning permission in accordance with Planning and Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) and the archaeological policies of West Berkshire Council.

The archaeological assessment involves a desktop study of presently available archaeological and historical and other relevant information, in accordance with Planning and Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). Such a report usually represents the first stage of the pre-planning permission archaeological investigations recommended in PPG16, to allow a full assessment of the implications of any development proposal and an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy to be identified and implemented. In this case, however, the assessment report was undertaken after site works had begun in order to inform the results of the watching brief and in an attempt to partially mitigate the consequences of the unmonitored works which have taken place on the site.

Demolition of the conservatory structure and the outbuilding on the north side of the farmhouse had already taken place prior to the notified commencement of the watching brief. The monitored groundworks comprised the reduction of the interior of the former outbuilding and the cutting of two new wall footings, Trenches A and B.

The archaeological assessment indicated that there was a low potential for the recovery of finds or features pre-dating the Post-medieval period. The assessment further indicated that the present building complex around Manor Farm was of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, rather than originating as utility buildings associated with the 18<sup>th</sup> century construction of Benham Park, although the earlier buildings certainly predated the Park. Indeed, the possible connection of the names Manor Farm and Manor House, suggest the earlier buildings of the complex were associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century house in Marsh Benham village, not with the house and the park to the east of the study area. It is clear that the later 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of the complex formed the kitchen gardens. It is not known if the earlier buildings, none of which appear to have been retained when the 19<sup>th</sup> century kitchen gardens were constructed, had any connection to the function of the Park. The assessment therefore highlighted the potential for the recovery of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century building remains pre-dating the existing late 19<sup>th</sup> century building complex, as well as evidence for the use and construction of the kitchen gardens. Impact of the new development on the character of the park is considered low.

The watching brief did not reveal any archaeologically significant finds, features or deposits pre-dating the probable late 19<sup>th</sup> century construction of the kitchen gardens. No evidence pertaining to the existence of earlier structures was present. No artefactual or ecofactual evidence was present within the watched area. There was no clear evidence pertaining to the function of the structure observed during the watching brief.

Although the subsoils across the site were not completely intact, they were only marginally truncated, demonstrating that the lack of archaeological deposits was most likely a true representation of the archaeological record within proposed development area.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### *Archaeology*

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### *CBM*

Ceramic Building Material.

### *Medieval*

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *circa* AD 1500.

### *Natural*

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case, 3<sup>rd</sup> terrace river gravels.

### *NGR*

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### *OD*

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey

### *Post-medieval*

The period from *circa* AD 1500 onwards

### *Roman*

The period from AD 43 to AD 410

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on land at Manor Farm House, Benham Park, Marsh Benham, Newbury, West Berkshire (NGR: SU 4356 6757). A subsequent desk-based assessment was undertaken in September 2008. The work was commissioned by Giles Bennett Design on behalf of the occupants, Mr. and Mrs D. Male.
- 1.2 Planning permission has been granted by West Berkshire Council for the conversion of an outhouse associated with Manor Farm House, Benham Park, Marsh Benham (planning reference: 07/00358/FULD). A condition requiring a programme of archaeological recording and assessment has been attached to the planning permission in accordance with PPG16 and the archaeological policies of West Berkshire Council.
- 1.3 The archaeological assessment involves a desktop study of presently available archaeological and historical and other relevant information. Planning and Policy Guidance note 16, Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) encourages a consideration of the survival of any archaeological remains present on the site where development is being considered. Such a report usually represents the first stage of the pre-planning permission archaeological investigations recommended in PPG16, to allow a full assessment of the implications of any development proposal and an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy to be identified and implemented. In this case, however, the assessment report was undertaken after site works had begun in order to inform the results of the watching brief and in an attempt to partially mitigate the consequences of the unmonitored works which have taken place on the site.
- 1.4 This archaeological assessment was compiled in accordance with the principals of PPG16 (DoE 1990). In addition, it fulfils the general requirements of a desktop assessment as set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk Based Assessment* (1994).
- 1.5 The study area includes the area defined in Figure 2, plus a 500m area around it. This allows the assessment to study the potential of the site and its possible impact on associated monuments.
- 1.6 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001) and the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2007), approved by the Archaeological Officer of West Berkshire Council.
- 1.7 This document presents the findings of the archaeological assessment and watching brief works and conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

## **2 SOURCES FOR THE ASSESSMENT**

- 2.1 The information available in the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has been consulted. A total of 28 HER records have been identified in the vicinity of the study area (Figure 4, Appendix 1).
- 2.2 West Berkshire Heritage Service, Berkshire Record Office, Newbury District Library, Reading Central Library and the National Monuments Record (NMR) have been consulted for cartographic and other historical data. Regional and national journals have also been examined for relevant information. Historic aerial photographs were not examined, but online modern resources have been reviewed.
- 2.3 No geotechnical evidence was available for the site.

## **3 SITE LOCATION**

- 3.1 The study area comprises what was an extant brick-built building which formed the northern end of the existing Manor Farm House, which is currently in domestic use (Figure 3). The area of the proposed new build measured approximately 15m by 6.5m and was rectangular in shape (Figure 20). To the north the building was bounded by an existing brick wall which was to be retained, to the west it was bounded by gardens and to the east was a modern gravelled driveway.
- 3.2 The study area is located on the western edge of Benham Park (grade II Registered Park and Garden, GD1072), to the west of Newbury, to the east of Marsh Benham and to the south of Stockcross. Manor Farm House is part of a small complex of buildings of 19<sup>th</sup> century and later date which lie within walled gardens associated with Benham Park. The land around the study area comprises landscaped parkland. The site is within the parish of Speen which is in Faircross Hundred, although Benham itself is in the Hundred of Kintbury Eagle, and lies in the Kennet Valley. The River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon Canal are located approximately 700m to the south of the study area and the Bath Road (A4) is located approximately 500m to the north.
- 3.3 The application area lies at approximately 85m OD. The solid geology consists of Chalk, overlain by Alluvium or River Terrace Deposits (British Geological Survey, 1977).

## **4 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The approved planning application was for the demolition of the conservatory, attached as a 'lean-to' type structure to the east elevation of Manor Farm and the conversion of the outbuilding attached to the northern end of the building complex (Figure 3). The conversion of the outbuilding involves the demolition of the southern wall, demolition of the majority of the eastern wall for

approximately 3.4m at its southern end, reduction of the western wall to foundation level and reduction of the inside to ground level (Figure 20).

- 4.2 The brief prepared by Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Museum Service specified ‘No demolition/site works/development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works (including building recording (level 3)).’ It was understood by Foundations Archaeology at the conception of the project that the building recording element of the project had been undertaken by and was the responsibility of the architectural practice (Giles Bennett Design) managing the development programme. The demolition works had already been carried out when Foundations was asked to visit the site. The watching brief element of the project, which required the monitoring of the groundworks for the conversion of the outbuilding, was undertaken by Foundations in November 2007. A subsequent requirement, in line with the original brief issued by West Berkshire Museum Service, required a desk-based assessment of the application area in lieu of the initial requirement for building recording.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Although the area assessed involves only the study area itself, as outlined in Figure 2, this report provides a broad overview of the surrounding area, to place the site in its landscape and historical context.
- 5.2 Although significant finds and features are present from the near vicinity of the site, there is no evidence to suggest significant remains which would be affected by the proposed or completed development are present within the site boundary. A single archaeological investigation has been carried out in the vicinity of the site. This was an evaluation undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 1994 as part of works associated with the construction of the Newbury bypass (west of Newbury). Three trenches were excavated but the water level was too high to complete the evaluation and no archaeological features were noted.
- 5.3 **Evidence for Prehistoric activity:** The application area lies within an area of archaeological importance as defined by West Berkshire. The site lies within the Kennet Valley, which in this area has been described as of ‘International Importance’ for the recovery and recording of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic remains. Such remains are mostly found within the deposits associated with the deposition of the River Terrace deposits that form the geological drift substrate across the valley. Palaeoenvironmental evidence from these periods may also be present within such deposits.
- 5.4 There are seven individual Historic Environment Records in the vicinity of the study area, six of which are findspots. The seventh record details the site of a late Neolithic/Bronze Age round barrow (MBW 3742) situated 800m to the southwest of the study area, which was destroyed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by peat diggers. In the same area a human skull and deer antler (MBW 10731),



possibly of Neolithic date (Peake), were found in the peat. Record MBW 10696 was a 'Jet buckle found in peat' 600m to the northeast of the study area. Findspots MBW 11608, 11609, 11612 and 11614 were flint flakes found during fieldwalking in the fields 500-1000m to the northeast of the study area. No prehistoric finds have been discovered within 500m of the site.

- 5.5 **Evidence for Roman Activity:** No Roman finds or features are known from within the study area. A hoard of coins was found by soldiers during the Second World War 450m to the east of the site (MBW 10738). This hoard was dispersed among the soldiers and locals at the time.
- 5.6 **Evidence for Saxon/Medieval Activity:** There is no evidence for Saxon activity in the vicinity of the site. There is documentary evidence for a deer park in AD 1349 (MBW 16177) in the manor of William de Hastings. It is possible that this deer park was succeeded by the later 18<sup>th</sup> century landscaped park which is still present as Benham Park, but no conclusive evidence exists at present to confirm this. William de Hastings possessed extensive land holdings in the area.) Approximately 600m to the northeast of study area, fieldwalking has recovered Medieval pottery sherds (MBW 11609 and 11612) in fields between the A4 and the B4000.
- 5.7 Speen parish, which contains the site in the Medieval period, was divided into three tithings, the townships of Benham, Bagnor and Speen. Benham originally consisted of Marsh Benham and Hoe Benham. Some lands here, which had been granted in 956AD by King Edwy to his servant Elfsy, were given by the latter to the abbey of Abingdon. In 960AD the lands were re-granted by King Edgar to Wulfric. In the time of Edward the Confessor Marsh Benham was held in alod by three thegns. After 1066AD, the land was granted to Humphrey Vis de Lou, who also held Speen. The manor reverted to the king again sometime before 1158-9. Domesday records that two hides were held of Humphrey by Ansetil and two by William. For the next 350 years, the lands were granted by various monarchs to numerous individuals, the manor changing hands and being reclaimed by the king/queen almost every generation. A notable owner was William de Valence who was granted the manor in 1251; from then on it became known as Benham Valence. Also, as mentioned above, William de Hastings was bequeathed the manor by the Earl of Pembroke, who received it in 1348. At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and into the 15<sup>th</sup> century the de Greys held the manor, until it was sold to John Roger around 1406. The manor passed to John Roger's son in 1428, then to his wife and was held by the family until 1518.
- 5.8 **Evidence for Post-Medieval Activity:** By 1630 the Craven family were in possession of the manor, bought by Sir William Craven. A house and park existed at this time, the house being present in the same position as the existing Benham House, although little is known of it. Two Historic Environment Records exist for the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The West Lodge gate piers (MBW 15772, Grade I listed) date to c. 1662-1678 and are in the northwest corner of Benham Park. In Marsh Benham, the Manor House, a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building still stands (MBW 3760) although it was extensively

restored in the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century and the only original build left visible is at the west end around the external chimney.

- 5.9 The earliest cartographic evidence existing showing a park and house is 'An Accurate Survey of Speen Mannour..Belonging to..The Duke of Chandos' of 1730's-1740's date. Unfortunately for the purposes of this study, the map does not extend far enough west of the house and the study area is not represented.
- 5.10 The oldest map to show the study area is John Rocque's map of the county of Berkshire 1761 (Figure 5) which shows the whole of the park area, but at rather a small scale. It is possible, however, to identify the house and the study area to its west. The area around the house is not obviously landscaped, in strong contrast to Hampstead Park which is shown to the southwest. Also in contrast to Hampstead Park, the park area is not named as a park, but merely as 'Benham Place'. The boundaries of the present park are not clearly defined and much of the area surrounding the house has more in common with the depictions of the cultivated fields around Marsh Benham and Speen than with a landscaped park. There are, however, some elements of landscaping, such as the tree-lined avenue which leads from the road on the (now) western edge of the park towards the main house. The study area on this map comprises an area roughly similar to that of the modern day: a north-south aligned sub-rectangular 'enclosure'. A road bounds its western and northern sides which forks on its northwest corner, it is bounded to the south by a stream and demarcated from the field to its east by what could be a wall. The area seems to be divided into four by east-west divisions, within which are several buildings surrounded by what could be gardens. The largest building is a u-shaped structure with a small, square building to its north. These buildings stand within a separated area which probably corresponds to the position of the study area. It is not clear at this date what relationship the study area has to the house and its park.
- 5.11 In 1772 the sixth Earl of Craven employed Henry Holland, who had recently gone into partnership with Launcelot Capability Brown, to replace the house in Benham Park. The original house was demolished and the new built between 1772-5. This house is known as Benham Park or Benham House (and will be referred to as the latter within this report to avoid confusion with the actual park) and is a Grade II\* listed building (MBW 3761). At the same time Launcelot Brown designed and laid out the landscaped park around the house. The park is known as Benham Park or Benham Valence Park and is a Registered Park and Garden, GD1072 (MBW 6280). The newly built house and park are depicted on the 1775 estate map (Figure 6). Here we see a detailed view of the Park and the Benham House with its associated buildings. The study area lies outside the boundary of the park, although it is interesting to note that the lake Brown developed also lies outside the park boundary on this map. With reference to this map, it would be possible to surmise that at this point the study area complex of buildings was a part of the village of Marsh Benham, rather than associated with Benham Park.
- 5.12 The study area on the 1775 map falls within the previously identified 'enclosure'. The shape of the 'enclosure' is very similar as on the earlier

Rocque map. Here the area is clearly divided into four parts with buildings present in the central two parts. The area of the site contains four buildings, two on the eastern boundary, one 'c' shaped one close to the centre and a fourth on the western boundary. An overlay of the study area on this group of buildings strongly implies that the existing buildings are not the same as those portrayed on this map.

- 5.13 There are a total of four Historic Environment Records dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Within the Park, the probable location of an icehouse (MBW 17836) is recorded. On the A4, to the north of Benham House is a grade II listed milestone (MBW 5929). To the south of the study area runs the Kennet and Avon Canal, which was constructed between Newbury and Kintbury in the years 1794-97 (MBW 5855, 5858).
- 5.14 The Ordnance Survey maps of 1877-82 (Figure 7) and 1880 (Figure 8) show the 'enclosure' as much altered in shape from that of the earlier illustrations. The area is much wider and seems to have expanded east into the park. There is also a change to the area north of the 'enclosure' where a field boundary marked on the estate map no longer exists by 1880. This is suggestive of changes to the boundary of the park and possibly by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the study area was within the bounds of the Park. It remains unclear when exactly the study area became part of the park and it can only be narrowed down to between 1775 and 1877. It is known, however, that landscape changes to the park were made by William Andrews Nesfield in the 1870's and it certainly seems possible that the 'enclosure' around the study area was incorporated into the park at this time.
- 5.15 There are clear changes to the complex of buildings within the enclosed area between 1775 and 1880. The arrangement and shape of the buildings is entirely different on the later map. This observation, along with the changes in the overall 'enclosure', indicates that the buildings that appear on the 1880 map were not those present at the time of the Launcelot Brown creation of Benham Park, but that they were later alterations built sometime between 1775 and 1877.
- 5.16 The study area falls within what are referred to as the 'kitchen gardens' which are described as 'enclosed and divided into several sections by 3m high brick walls' (Register of Parks and Gardens, 1998; MBW 17837). No precise date for the gardens is offered. The boundaries within the enclosed area on the 1880 OS map show some similarities to those marked on the 1775 estate map. The division to the north of the most southerly glass house (above the words 'Gas House') which dog legs south to the east of the glass house appears to be in the same position as the lowest division of the 'enclosure' on the 1775 map. Consequently, this 18<sup>th</sup> century division may have been retained during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century developments of the enclosed area. This suggests that the other east-west divisions on the 1775 map may also have been retained in the developments of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it is impossible to say if they lie in the same position or not. It is possible that the 3m high brick walls are of 18<sup>th</sup> century date, although, as discussed above, the associated buildings are not likely to be.

- 5.17 It is clear on the 1880 OS map that the study area lies within working gardens; the enclosed area contains several glass houses and clearly laid out gardens. The building now known as Manor Farm House is first represented cartographically at this time. An 'L' shaped glass house is attached to the north end of Manor Farm, on the east side of the outbuilding for conversion. A building is also present on the northwest corner of the outbuilding and a brick wall runs across its northern end, which is one of the brick wall divisions mentioned in paragraph 5.16. Four further east-west aligned structures are present to the west of the Manor Farm building, as well as a north-south aligned structure a little further to the west and three glass houses to the east of Manor Farm. A building and two further glass houses are present in the northernmost division of the enclosed area. A glass house lies to the south of Manor Farm, just north of the Gas House.
- 5.18 A further four Historic Environment Records have been recorded for the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After 1806 a stone monument was erected in Benham Park by the Margravine (formerly Lady Craven) to her late second husband, which was removed in 1828 (MBW 17768). To the east of the Park lies the position of a mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead which was documented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but is no longer in existence (MBW 17365). Also within the park is Benham Park Mill (MBW 17834) which is a corn mill built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but disused by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. MBW 6063 is the Great Western Railway branch line which is of 19<sup>th</sup> century construction.
- 5.19 The arrangement of buildings within the enclosed area as shown on the Ordnance Survey plans (Figures 8-12) did not change between 1880 and 1913. By 1913 the building complex has changed character slightly, in that the density of structures around Manor Farm has been reduced, although a new glass house complex has been built to its north. On the OS map of 1938 (Figure 13) the building on the northwest corner of Manor Farm and the two east-west buildings immediately south of it have disappeared and two new buildings are present between Manor Farm and the northern glass houses. No change to Manor Farm is shown. By 1961 (Figure 14), one of the new buildings in 1938 to the north of Manor Farm has gone (although this could be a mistake on the part of the cartographer as the building seems to be present in 1969), as has a glass house to its east. Again, no change is noted to Manor Farm itself. During World War II Benham House was requisitioned for military use, but was unoccupied by 1946, and remained so for twenty years. No change to the building complex occurs between 1961 and 1969 (Figures 14 and 15), but the OS map of 1971 (Figure 16) does not show the glass houses to the east of Manor Farm or the small east-west building to its west.
- 5.20 Benham Park was sold in 1982 to an international, commercial company, Norsk Data to be their headquarters. The company constructed new office blocks close to the house, demolished the stables and partly renovated the grounds
- 5.21 By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the service buildings and bothies of the kitchen garden were converted to domestic accommodation. Major changes have

occurred within the 'enclosure' by the time of the 1990-1 OS map (Figure 17). New houses were built; in the southern enclosure 'Benham Gardens' was built and the building to the west of Manor Farm was converted into 'Garden Cottage' and 'Diamond Cottage' and the study area became 'Manor Farm House'. The glass house attached to the east of Manor Farm was demolished by this time and a new 'lean-to' type conservatory had been built in its place; this is the building that was demolished as part of the current planning application. No changes are shown on the 1994 and 2008 OS maps (Figures 18 and 19). By 1998 the grounds were in divided ownership.

- 5.22 **Undated Activity:** Three Historic Environment Records note activity of unknown date in the vicinity of the site. To the north of the study area, demarcating the northern edge of the Registered Park runs the A4, an east-west section of the London to Bath road through Speen (MBW 5928). Within the Park are two features seen as cropmarks on aerial photographs. Approximately 200m west of the study area is a possible enclosure (MBW 17828) and 300m to the northeast of the study area is a possible field boundary comprising a bank and ditch (MBW 17829).
- 5.23 The assessment therefore suggests that the main potential of the site was for the recovery of below ground evidence which might clarify presence and function of any buildings associated with the designed landscape. This in no way prejudiced the works against the recovery of finds or features relating to other periods.

## 6 SITE INSPECTION

- 6.1 A visual inspection of the site was undertaken on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and supplemented by the observations of Giles Bennett Design. The inspection of the site was not done with the intention of informing an archaeological building recording exercise, therefore it necessarily lacks some detail.
- 6.2 The outbuilding attached to the northern end of Manor Farm House comprised approximately 90m<sup>2</sup>. To the west/front of the house is a gravelled driveway and to the rear of the house are gardens.
- 6.3 Manor Farm and its outbuilding were built of local red orange brick. The main, central part to Manor Farm was constructed in Flemish bond, with vitrified headers, although the outbuilding was built in Flemish Garden Wall bond and did not have the distinctive pattern given by over-fired bricks. The difference in bond could suggest the structures were built at a different time, although it may simply show the different functions of the buildings.
- 6.4 The southern wall of the outbuilding attached to the house and the northern wall may have been a part of a high brick garden wall. The western wall contained five entrances, two doors, the northernmost one a garage door, and three sash windows. It is not possible to say which of these openings were original, although it is likely that a garage door was not. No openings were

present in the east facing elevation. The pitched roof was clad in plain clay tiles (Giles Bennett pers. comm.).

- 6.5 Internally, the roof was a timber, queen post truss construction (Giles Bennett pers. comm.). The structure was divided into three rooms by two single course brick walls. The northernmost room was a garage and the remaining rooms were used for storage.

## 7 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

- 7.1 Based on the results of the archaeological assessment the perceived archaeological potential of the site can be summarised as follows:
- 7.2 **Prehistoric:** The potential for the recovery of finds and feature of prehistoric date is low. There is some evidence for Prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, although the closest is 500m away, therefore the potential for the discovery of features of such date is unlikely, although stray finds may be present within the study area. It is unlikely that the groundworks would penetrate deeply enough into the substrate to have any impact on the potential Mesolithic or Palaeolithic remains which are thought to be present within the Kennet Valley area.
- 7.3 **Roman:** There is low potential for the recovery of finds or features of Roman date in the study area. The only known Roman activity within 500m of the study area was a hoard of coins.
- 7.4 **Saxon:** Although Benham village was in existence in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there is no evidence of Saxon settlement in the vicinity of the study area.
- 7.5 **Medieval:** The potential for the recovery of finds or features from the Medieval period is low. There is evidence that a deer park existed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century within the parish, but remains of this are not likely to have affected the study area. There is no evidence that the buildings within the study area had Medieval origins. If any activity of this date is present, it would probably be in the form of agricultural use of the land, although if it was within the deer park, it is likely to have remained pasture or woodland.
- 7.6 **Post-Medieval:** The site contains a high potential for the preservation of remains of this date, particularly associated with the function of the buildings as part of the designed landscape. The study area lies within what are known as the 'kitchen gardens' which would have serviced Benham Park. It is clear that from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the study area was part of the kitchen gardens, however, it is dubious what role the buildings of the complex played before this date. Pre-1880 the buildings in and around the study area were in a different arrangement and the enclosed area around them was a different shape. In addition, the study area is shown as lying outside the Park on the 1775 estate map. The most likely conclusion is that, during the 1870's changes to the landscaped park by Nesbit, the original buildings in the study area were demolished and the kitchen gardens were constructed. This conclusion is

supported by the type of building present on the site today. It is further interesting to note that the name 'Manor Farm' could give it a connection to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Manor House (MBW 3760) in the hamlet southwest of the study area (Duncan Coe pers. comm.), suggesting an origin for the earlier buildings of the complex, unassociated with the house and park to the east.

- 7.7 In his landscape report, Michael Brown (Brown, 1983, pp.14) states that the study area, '*..appears to have been the site of the home farm and other buildings which predated the 1775 rebuilding of Benham House...it appears from Rocque's map..that it (the study area) may have existed in one form or another for a considerable time and is likely to date at least from medieval time.*' In accordance with the above conclusions, Brown's statement that the buildings within the study area may date to Medieval times is suspect and it seems very likely that the existing complex of buildings post dates 1775. As mentioned, however, some elements of the 'enclosure' containing the study area may predate 1775, such as the position of some of the land divisions, although none of these elements will be directly affected by the new build. There is still the possibility that below ground evidence of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, which may or may not have been associated with the function of the Park, may be present in the study area.
- 7.8 Also mentioned within Brown's report is the setting issue. It is noted that the study area is visible from the Benham House and therefore any significant changes to the area could have a visual impact on the estate. Issues with regard to the setting of the park, however, would have been considered within the original planning application. As a general rule, demolition of existing structures and replacement with structures of similar bulk does not represent an adverse effect.

## **8 AIMS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF**

- 8.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. The exercise also sought to establish the relationship of the buildings in question to the Registered Park and in particular, to assess any below ground evidence in an attempt to clarify the nature and function of the buildings.
- 8.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the following specific objectives.
- i) to define, identify and record any archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible.
  - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site and to relate these, where possible, to the function of the buildings.

iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

## **9 METHODOLOGY OF THE WATCHING BRIEF**

- 9.1 Demolition of the conservatory structure and the outbuilding on the north side of the farmhouse had already taken place prior to the notified commencement of the watching brief. The monitored groundworks comprised the reduction of the interior of the former outbuilding and the cutting of two new wall footings, Trenches A and B. These are shown on Figure 20.
- 9.2 All groundworks were undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, with the exception of the southern end of Trench B, which was hand excavated by the building contractor. All excavation took place under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist.
- 9.3 When features or deposits of potential archaeological significance were noted, they were closely examined, defined, manually excavated (where appropriate) and recorded.

## **10 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS**

- 10.1 The northern and eastern walls of the outbuilding had been reduced to ground level and were to be reutilised as footings for the new build. Evidence for a western wall, where the new footings were to be excavated, was present only at the southern end of the outbuilding between the western end of Trench A and the existing dwelling. The complete absence of footings in the remainder of the area suggests that the outbuilding was open to the west, or had been constructed on above ground foundations or post pads. During the watching brief, two below ground level arches were seen on the western side of the eastern wall foundation (Figure 22). They comprised open, rough brick arches.
- 10.2 During the initial strip of the site to formation level, natural ground was exposed in the southern two thirds of the development area, encountered at a depth of 0.65m from the modern ground surface (see Figure 20). The natural deposits were overlain by subsoil (102) at the southern end of the area. This comprised a clean, friable mid brown clay sand with few to occasional small, sub-angular flint inclusions, up to 0.25m thick. In the southern two thirds of the area, the natural was overlain by (101), a layer of brick rubble, up to 0.65m thick. The bricks were not frogged, and were of a light orange pink colour with remnants of light beige mortar attached to some bricks; these were visually identical to the bricks used in the construction of the existing house.
- 10.3 Trench A measured 6.2m long, 0.60m wide and 0.60m deep, was east-west aligned and was excavated in the southern half of the area. Natural ground was exposed within this trench, overlain by up to 0.25m of subsoil (102). A pipe trench was situated along the centre of the trench, running parallel to the



trench. No archaeological finds, deposits or features were present within this trench.

- 10.4 Trench B measured 12.40m in length and 0.80m in width, was north-south aligned and was situated on the western side of the area. It was 0.50m deeper than the level of the reduced strip (east facing section) and was 1.25m deeper than the top of the modern gravelled driveway to its east (west facing section). The east facing section showed natural ground, whilst the west facing section showed modern make-up layers of yellow flint gravels (103) which comprised the construction of the driveway. Layer (103) was 0.80m thick and directly overlay natural ground. Two drain runs were present crossing the trench at its northern end. No archaeological finds, deposits or features were present within this trench.

## 11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The archaeological assessment has indicated that there was a low potential for the recovery of finds or features pre-dating the Post-medieval period. The assessment further indicated that the present building complex around Manor Farm was of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, rather than originating as utility buildings associated with the 18<sup>th</sup> century construction of Benham Park. It is clear, however, that the later 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings of the complex formed the kitchen gardens, although it is not known if the earlier buildings had any part of the function of the Park. Indeed, the possible connection of the names Manor Farm and Manor House, suggest the earlier buildings of the complex were associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> century house in Marsh Benham village, not with the house and the park to the east of the study area. The assessment has therefore highlighted the potential for the recovery of building remains pre-dating the existing late 19<sup>th</sup> century building complex as well as evidence for the use and construction of the kitchen gardens. A visual inspection of Manor Farm suggests the surviving buildings are of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 11.2 Impact of the new development on the character of the park is considered low. Much of the kitchen garden elements have already disappeared and the new development is little different in size and character from the original.
- 11.3 The watching brief did not reveal any archaeologically significant finds, features or deposits pre-dating the probable late 19<sup>th</sup> century construction of the kitchen gardens. No evidence pertaining to the existence of 18<sup>th</sup> century structures was present. No artefactual or ecofactual evidence was present within the watched area. In general, visibility and recording conditions were good.
- 11.4 The absence of subsoil (102) from the southern two thirds of the study area suggests that the ground was levelled when the original outbuilding was built, thereby removing the subsoil from the southern part of the area. The natural slope of the ground rises gradually to the north, indicating that the outbuilding would have been marginally terraced into the slope. The natural was partly overlain by a layer of brick rubble, probably used as a levelling layer for a

floor surface within the original outbuilding, which appeared to be contemporary with Manor Farm House. The west facing section of Trench B showed also that the area had previously been stripped to natural ground as the make-up for the existing driveway lay directly on the natural deposits.

- 11.5 Although the subsoils across the site were not completely intact, they were only marginally truncated, demonstrating that the lack of earlier archaeological deposits was most likely a true representation of the archaeological record within proposed development area. This does not preclude the possibility of surviving archaeological deposits in the immediate vicinity of the study area.
- 11.6 Evidence which could have suggested function of the outbuilding were restricted to the levelling layer of brick rubble under the floor of the outbuilding, the brick arches in the eastern wall and the absence of a foundation wall on the western side of the building. The levelling layer tells us little, except how the structure was constructed. The arches are a feature often associated with structures such as granaries and suggests they could have been for ventilation. As mentioned above, the absence of a foundation wall on the west side of the building could suggest that the original structure was open on this side, however, there is no further evidence for this. As a result, there was no clear evidence pertaining to the function of the structure observed during the watching brief.
- 11.6 The watching brief has indicated a negligible-low potential for archaeological remains pre-dating the Post-medieval period to occur within immediate vicinity of the study area. The main potential within the site area remains the designed landscape of Benham Park.

## 12 NATURE OF THE RECORD

- 12.1 The stratigraphic archive for the site consists of the following elements:
- Source Material (copies of historical maps and HER search data)
  - Context Sheets
  - Photographs
  - Record Sheets
- 12.2 The on-site methodologies used to recover any evidence were set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Foundations (2007), approved by the West Berkshire Archaeological Officer on behalf of West Berkshire Council. In summary the following excavation methods were utilised; observation of all groundworks associated with the construction of the new building. All site recording was undertaken in accordance with the WSI. The records are available in the archive.
- 12.3 Following the completion of the Watching Brief an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive has been compiled in accordance with Appendix 3 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage

1991). This archive is currently held at Foundations Archaeology and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum within six months.

- 12.4 A summary of the contents of this report is available from Project OASIS at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>

### 13 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### 14 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank the occupants Mr. and Mrs Male, Giles Bennett of Giles Bennett Designs and Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Council for their assistance during the course of the project.

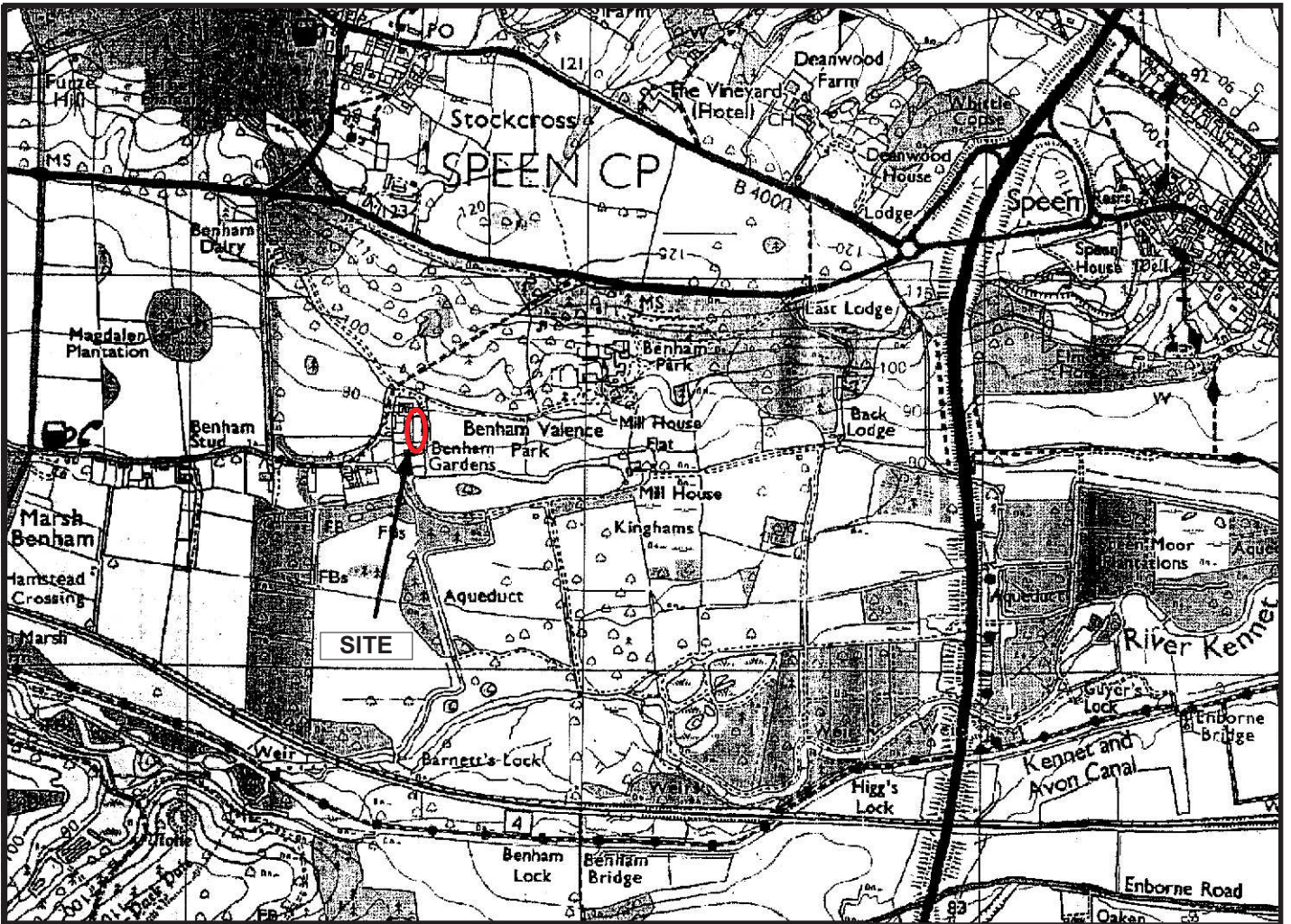
**APPENDIX 1: HER Table**

HER RECORD TABLE  
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HER No (MBW)	NGR	SITE NAME	TYPE OF RECORD	PERIOD	DESCRIPTION
3742	SU 440 670	Speen Moor Round Barrow	Round Barrow	Prehistoric	a late Neolithic to late Bronze Age round barrow destroyed in first half 18th century by peat-diggers.
3760	SU 43400 67490	Manor House, Marsh Benham	Building	Post-Medieval	17th century timber framed building.
3761	SU 44020 67740	Benham Park (house)	Country House	Post-Medieval	Grade II* listed 18th century mansion built for sixth Earl of Craven in 1772-5. Late 19th and 20th century additions.
5855	SU 44349 66650	Kennet & Avon canal, Benham/Higgs to Benham Bridge Lock	Canal	Post-Medieval	Canal built 1794-1797. Newbury to Kintbury section.
5858	SU 43131 66804	Kennet & Avon canal, Benham Bridge/Benham to Hamstead Lock	Canal	Post-Medieval	Canal built 1794-1797. Newbury to Kintbury section. Somewhere in this area a private wharf was constructed by 1823.
5928	SU 43500 68130	A4 Bath Road	Road	n.d.	Section of London to Bath road through Speen.
5929	SU 44170 67990	Milestone	Milestone	Post-Medieval	Grade II listed milestone of 18th century date.
6063	SU 42915 66979	Newbury to Kintbury Railway Line	Railway	Post-Medieval	Section of Great Western Railway branch line, 19th century.
6280	SU 43924 67425	Benham Park (park)	Landscaped Park	Post-Medieval	Registered 18th century landscaped park GD1072, designed by Capability Brown in 1770's.
6433	SU 44500 67500	Benham Valence Park bypass route	Event	-	Three archaeological evaluation trenches excavated in advance of bypass works, to west of Newbury. Water level too high for trenching. No archaeology found.
10696	SU 44000 68000	Speen, 'about 4 mile from Newbury'	Findspot	Prehistoric	Unsources reference to 'Jet buckle found in peat'.
10731	SU 440670	Benham Marsh find	Human Remains	Prehistoric	Human skull found under peat with deer antler. Peake dates it to Neolithic and refers to 2 skulls.
10738	SU 44000 67600	Benham Valence Park Hoard	Coin Hoard	Roman	A hoard of coins found by soldiers during WW2, dispersed.
11608	SU 43800 68050	Field between A4 and B4000	Findspot	Prehistoric	Flint Flake found fieldwalking.
11609	SU 44100 68100	Field between A4 and B4000, north of Benham Park	Findspot	Prehistoric/Medieval	Flint flake and Medieval pottery found fieldwalking.
11612	SU 44300 68130	Field between A4 and B4000, south of Foley Wood	Findspot	Prehistoric/Medieval	Flint flake and Medieval pottery found fieldwalking.
11614	SU 44560 68090	Field between A4 and B4000, north of East Lodge of Benham Park	Findspot	Prehistoric	Flint Flake found fieldwalking.

HER RECORD TABLE  
MFH07

SMR No (MBW)	NGR	SITE NAME	TYPE OF RECORD	PERIOD	DESCRIPTION
15772	SU 43924 67425	Benham Park West Lodge Gate Piers	Gate Piers	Post- Medieval	Two gate piers c. 1662-1678, Grade I listed.
16177	SU 43921 67558	Benham Deer Park	Park	Medieval	Documentary evidence for a deer park in the manor of William de Hastings in 1349
17365	SU 44575 67383	Site of Unnamed Farm, Speen Moor	Farmstead	Post- Medieval	Farmstead documented in late 19th century but no longer in existence. Mid to late 19th century
17768	SU 44 68	Site of mausoleum to the Margrave of Anspach, Speen	Mausoleum	Post- Medieval	A stone monument erected the the Margravine after 1806, removed 1828.
17828	SU 43367 67683	Feature in northwest part of Benham Park	?Enclosure	n.d.	Possible enclosure of unknown date seen as cropmark in aerial photographs.
17829	SU 43716 67936	Feature in north part of Benham Park	?Field Boundary	n.d.	Possible field boundary of unknown date seen as bank and ditch cropmark in aerial photographs.
17834	SU 44114 67502	Benham Park Mill	Corn Mill	Post- Medieval	Corn mill within parkland, disused by beginning of 20th century. 19th century.
17836	SU 43890 67689	Site of Benham Park Ice House	Ice House	Post- Medieval	Location of probable late 18th or 19th century ice house.
17837	SU 43557 67594	Benham Park Walled Garden	Walled Garden and Glasshouse	Post- Medieval	Former kitchen gardens for 18th century manor.



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**FIGURE 1: Site Location**

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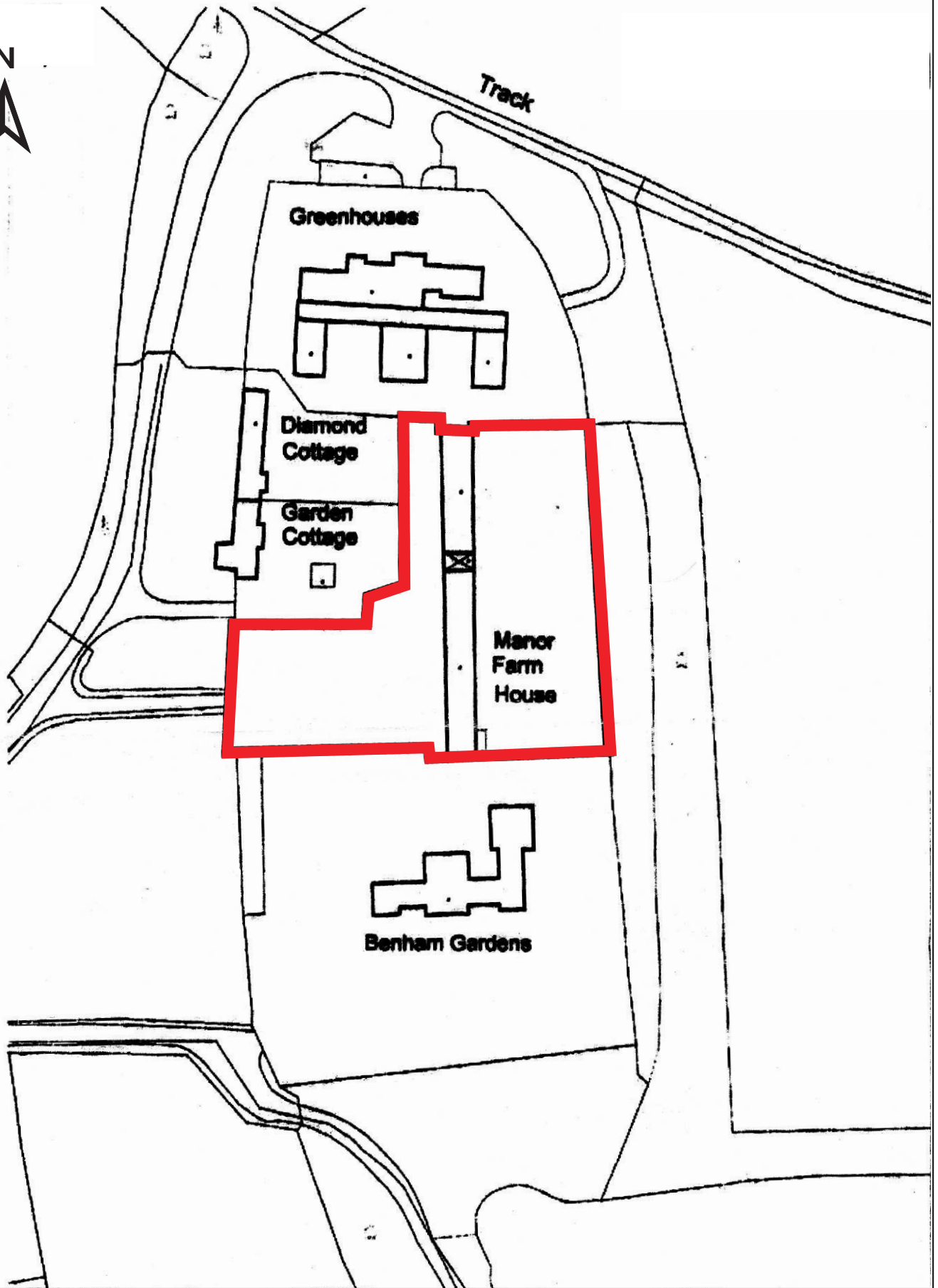


FIGURE 2: Study Area Location



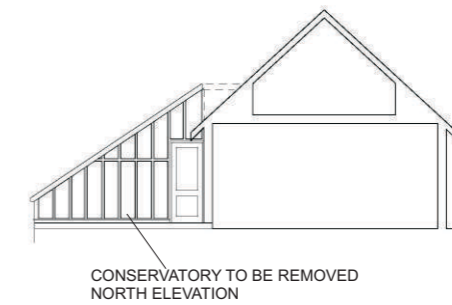
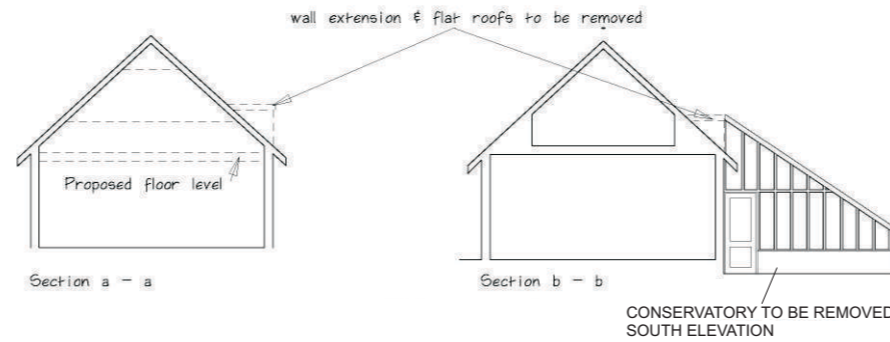
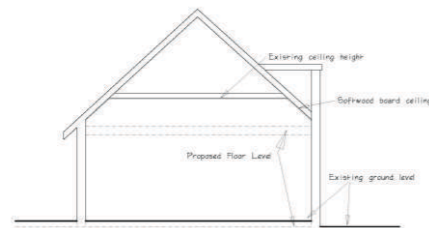
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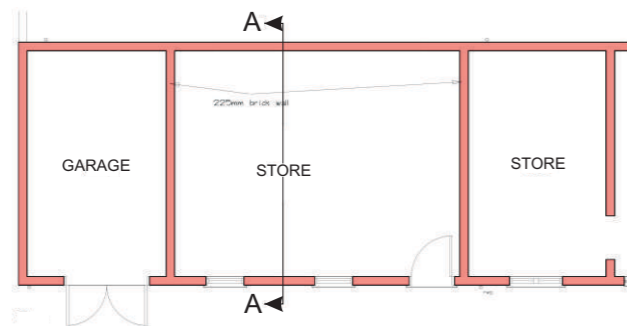
EXISTING EAST ELEVATION



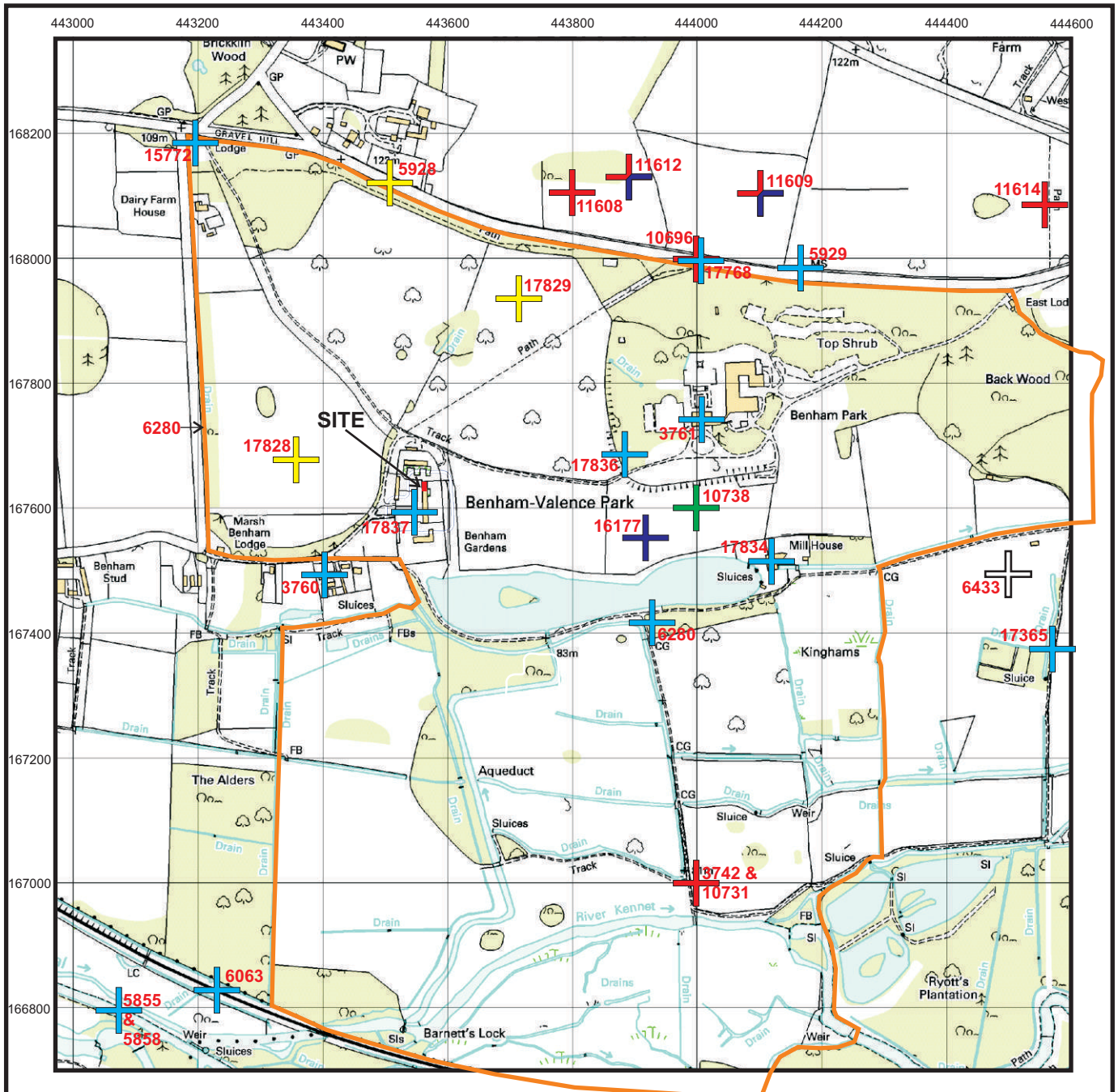
SECTION A-A THROUGH OUTBUILDING FOR CONVERSION



PLAN OF OUTBUILDING FOR CONVERSION

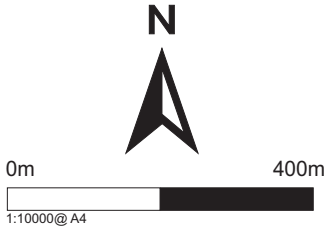


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<p><b>FIGURE 3: Plan and Elevations Before Commencement of Works</b></p>



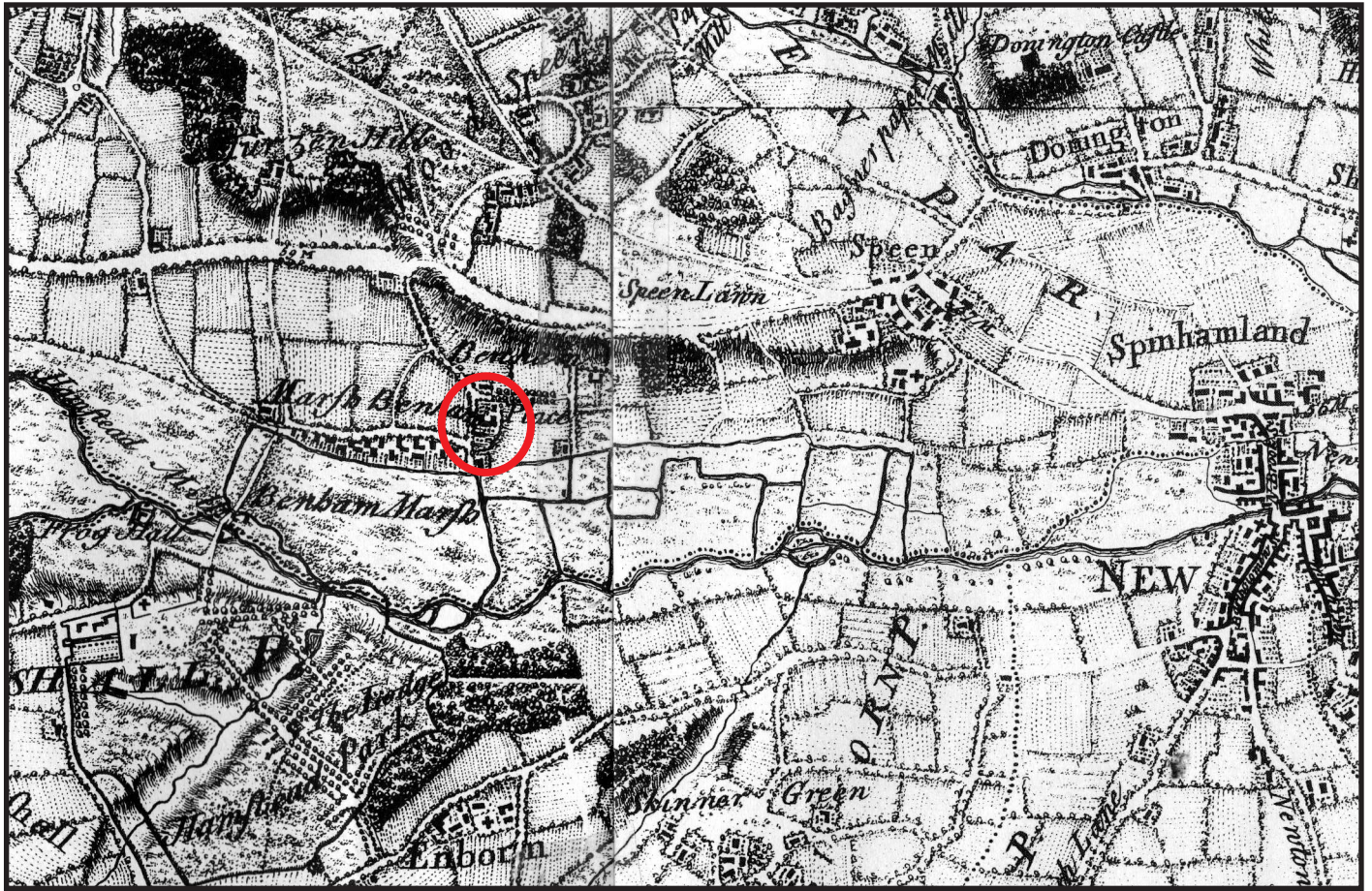
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- + UNDATED
- + EVENT, ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
- REGISTERED PARK AND GARDEN

**FIGURE 4: Historic Environment Record Map**



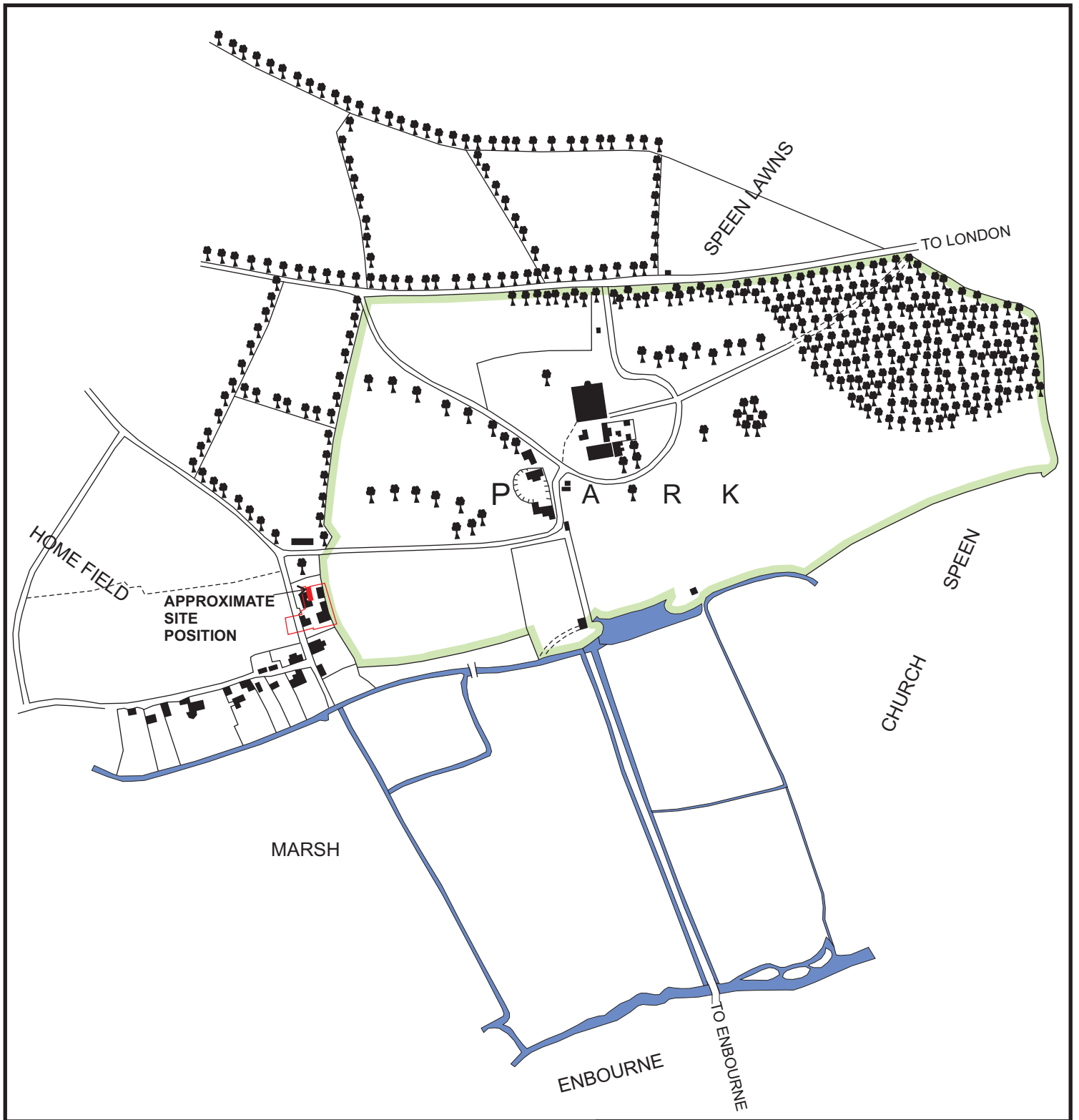
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**FIGURE 5: A Map of The County of Berkshire by John Rocque, 1761**



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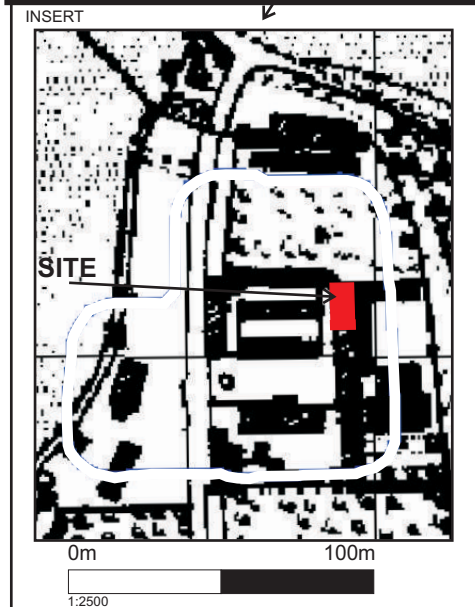
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**FIGURE 6: A Map of Benham Manor, 1775**



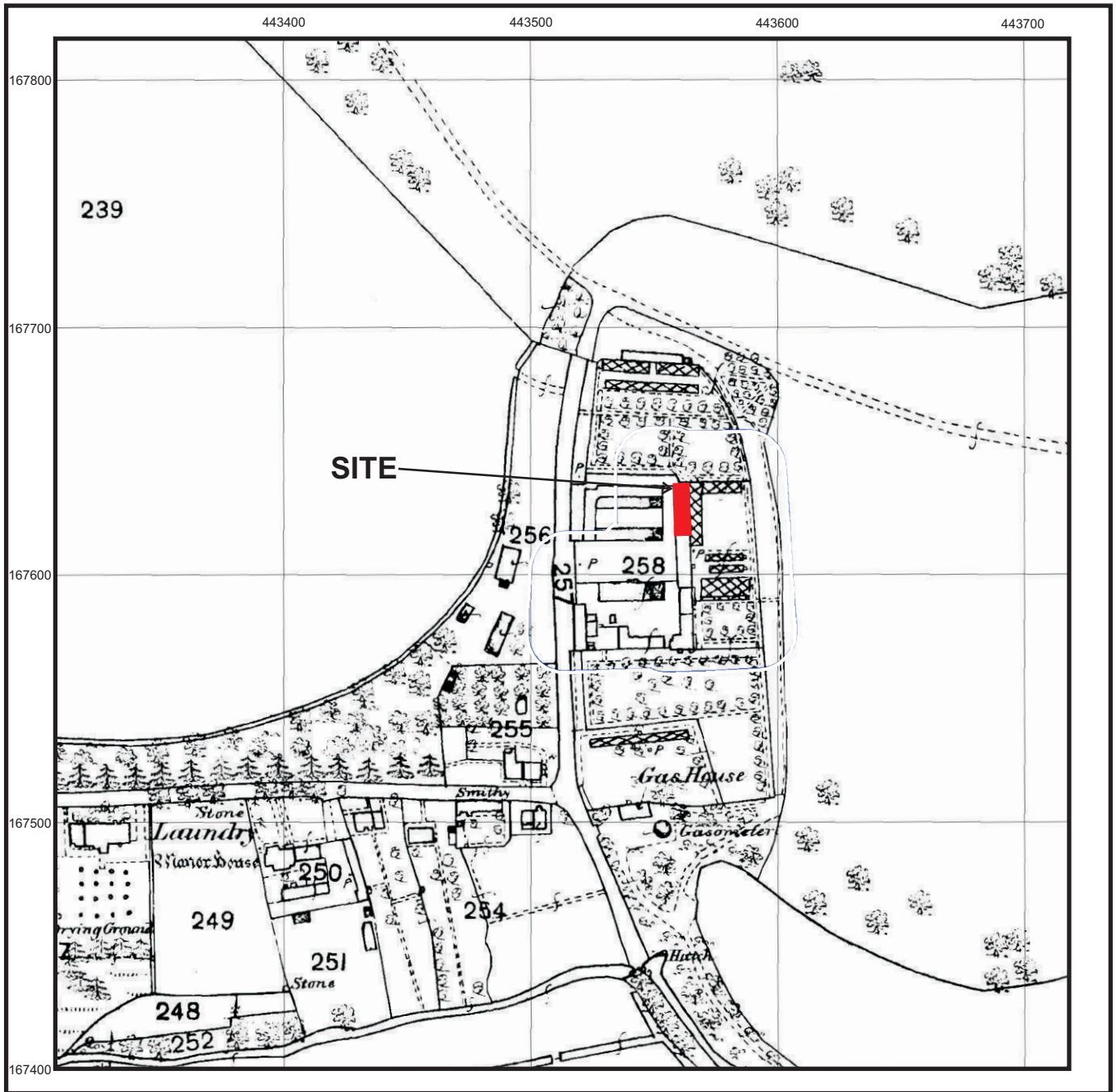
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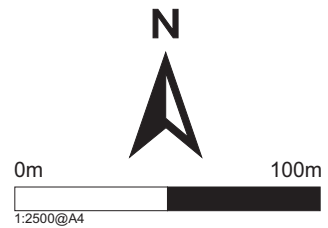
**FIGURE 7: Ordnance Survey Map, 1877-82**



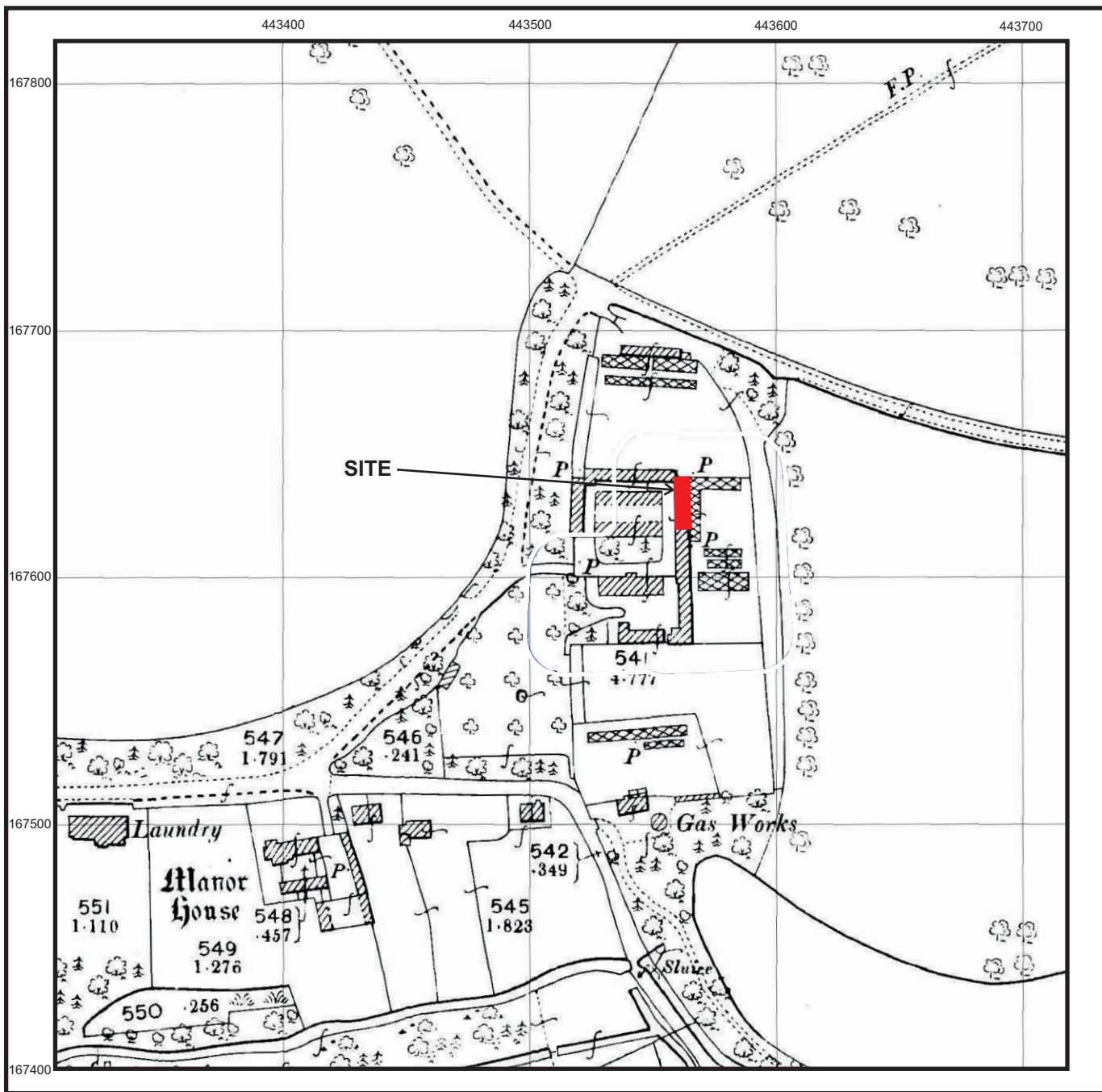
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**FIGURE 8: Ordnance Survey Map, 1880**



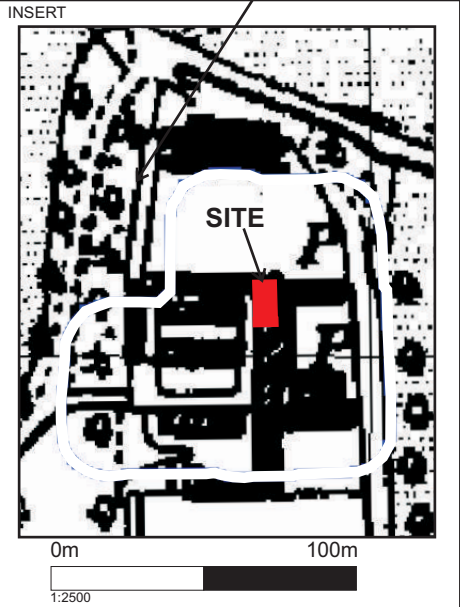
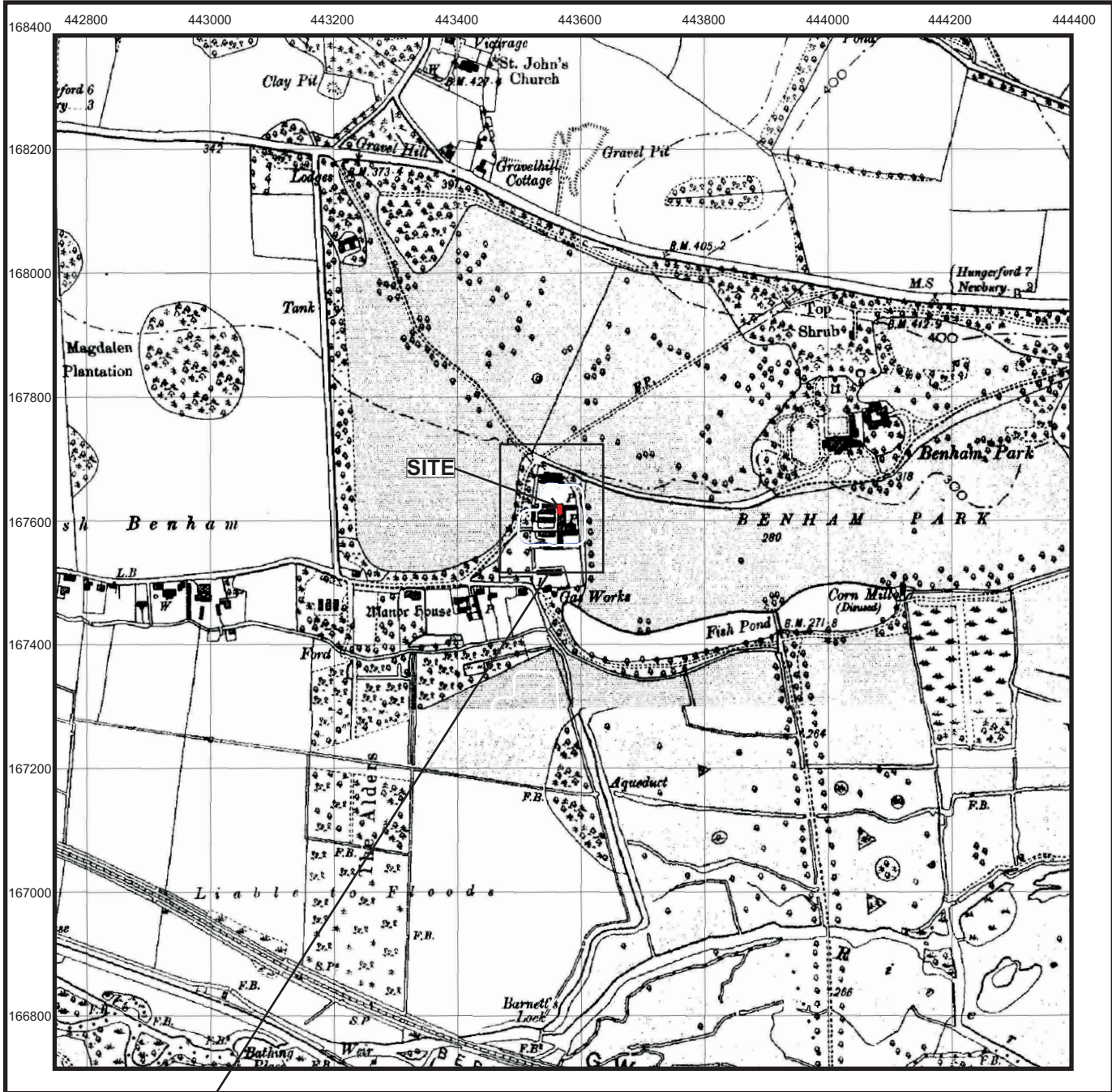
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**FIGURE 9: Ordnance Survey Map, 1899**

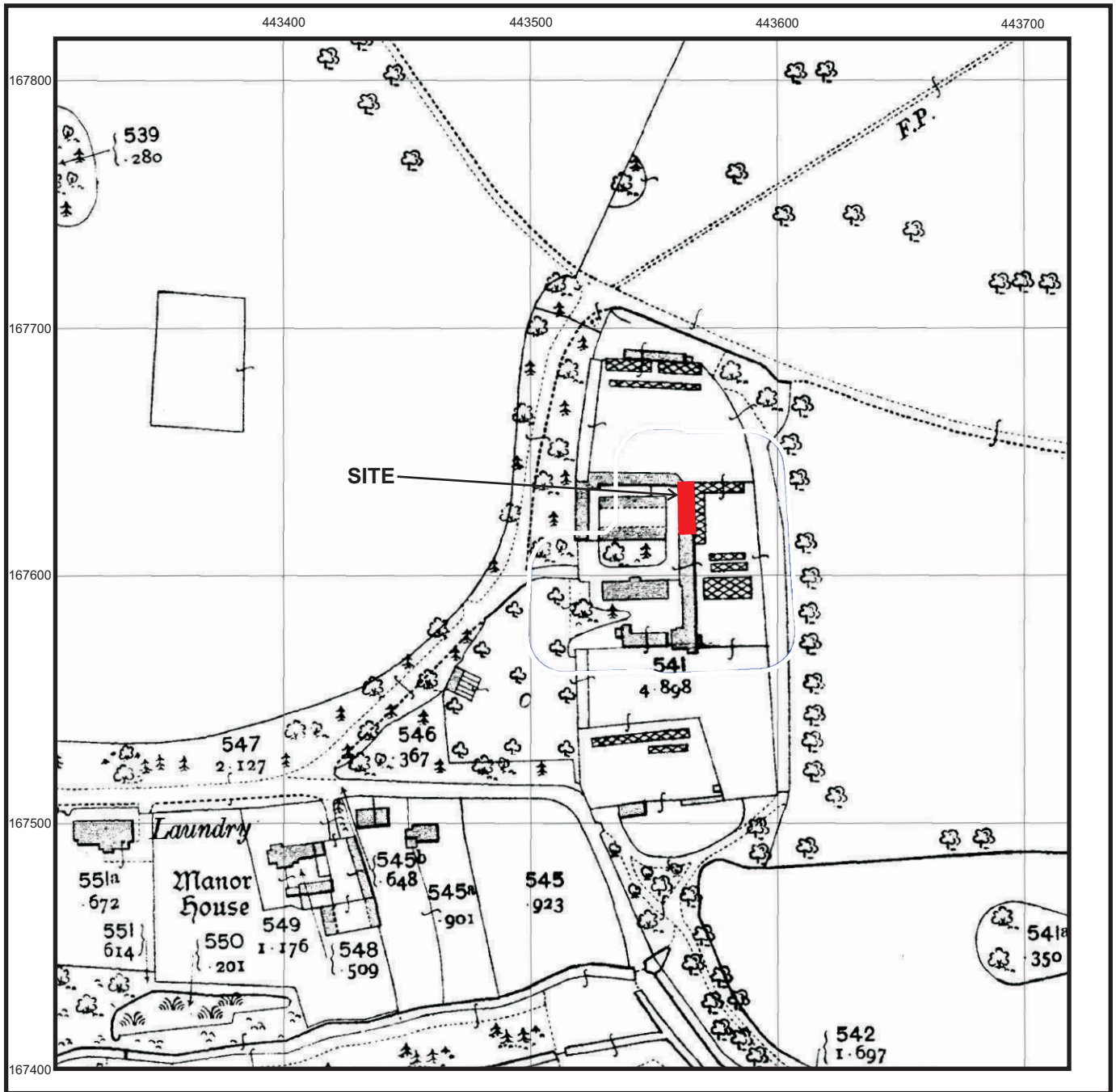


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**FIGURE 10: Ordnance Survey Map, 1900**





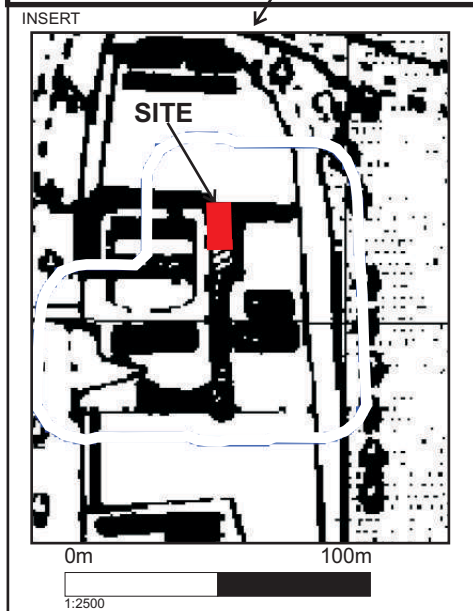
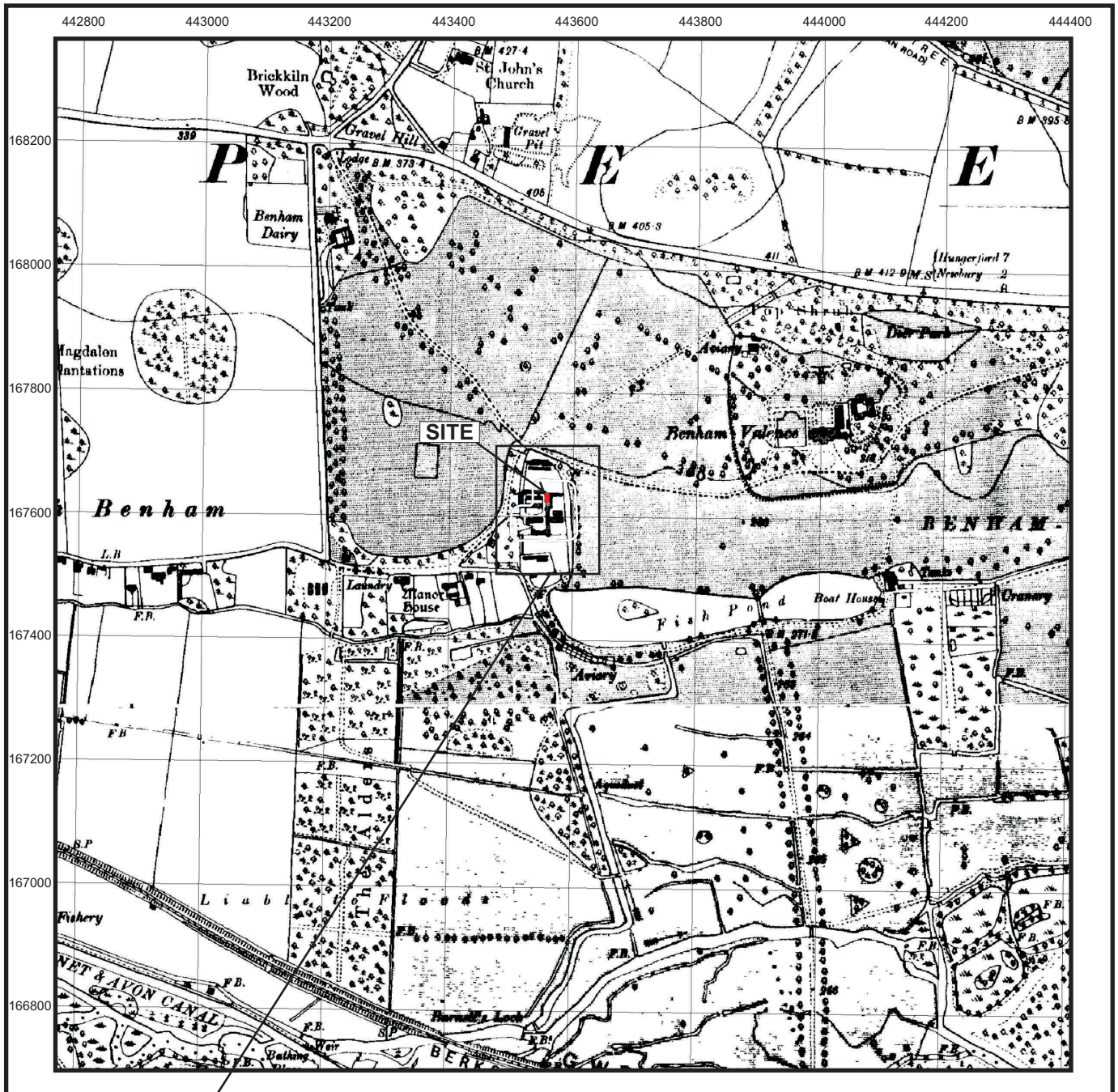
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FIGURE 11: Ordnance Survey Map, 1911



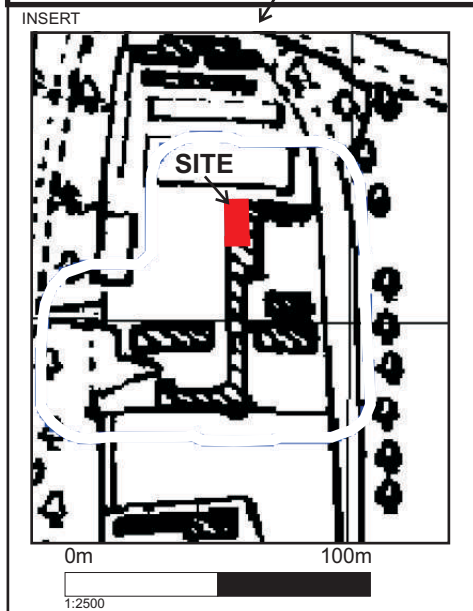
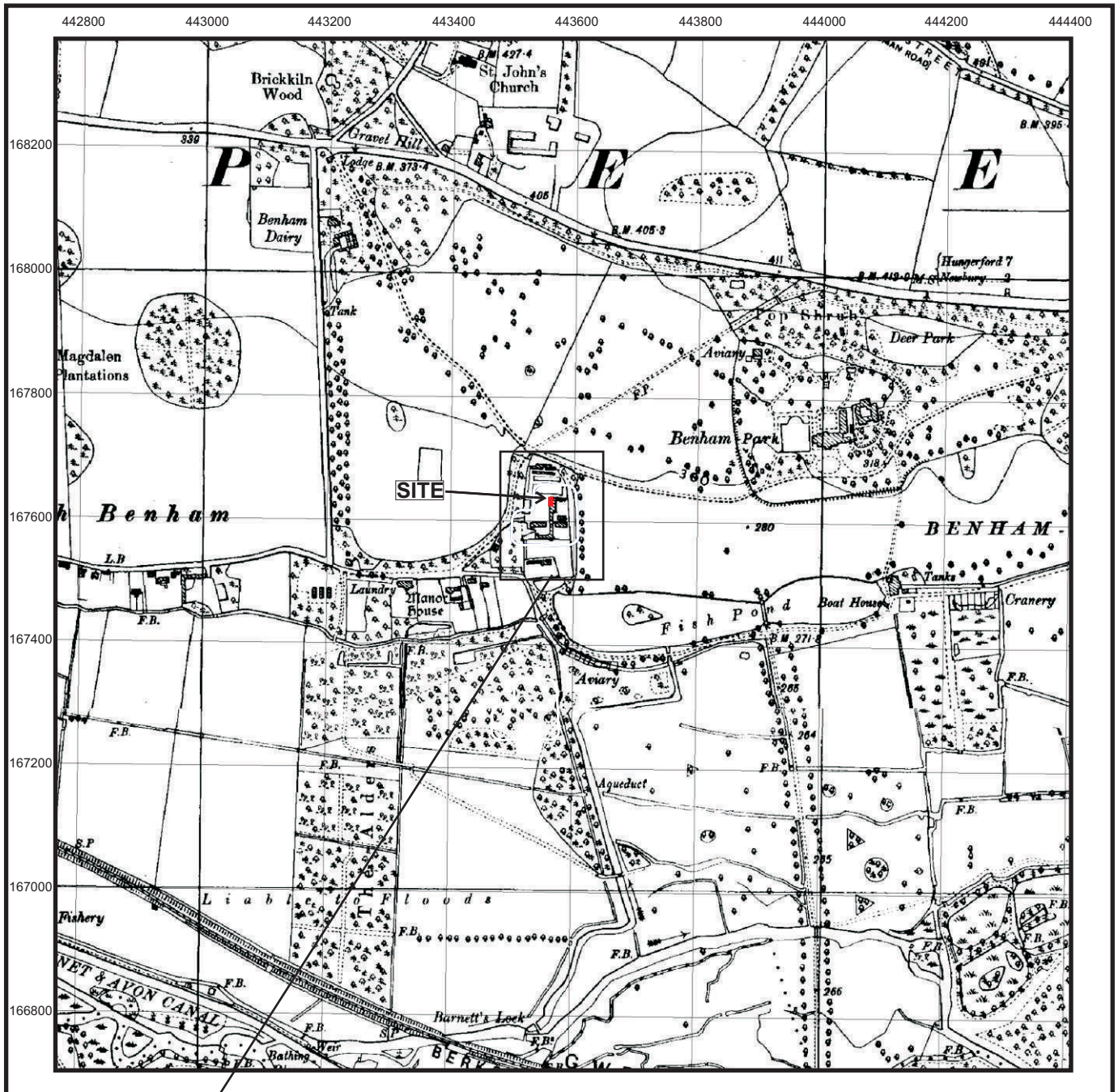
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**FIGURE 12: Ordnance Survey Map, 1913**



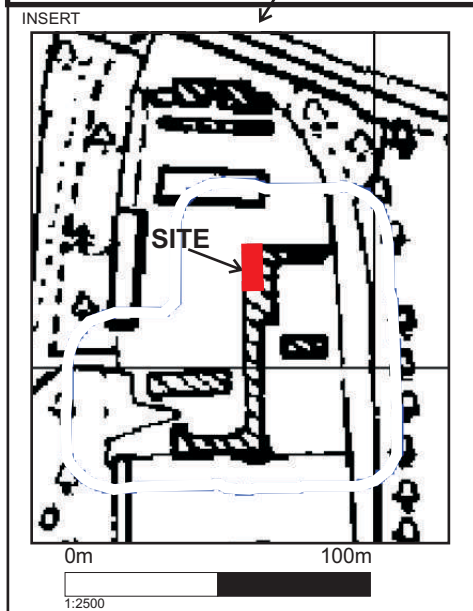
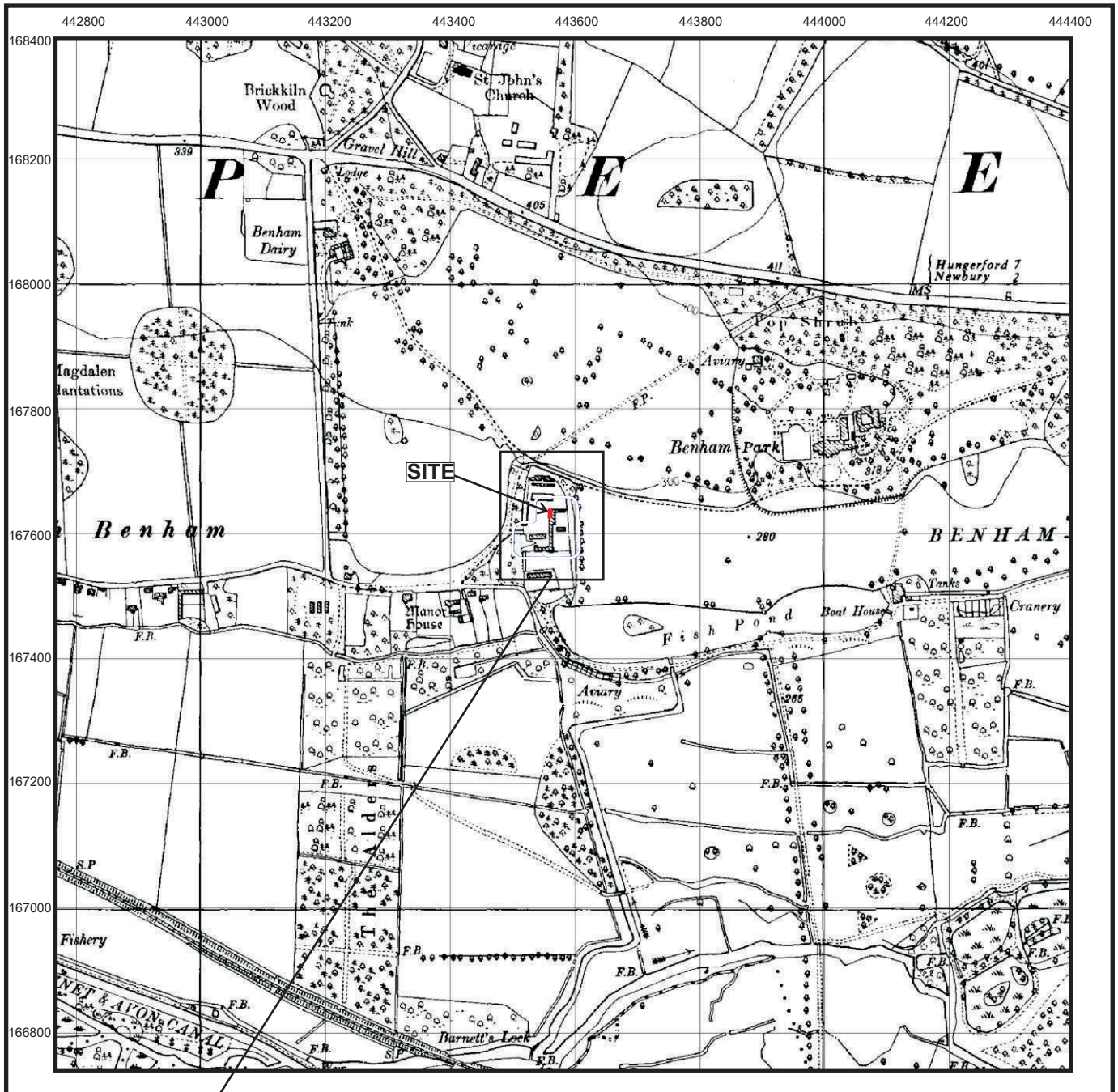
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**FIGURE 13: Ordnance Survey Map, 1938**

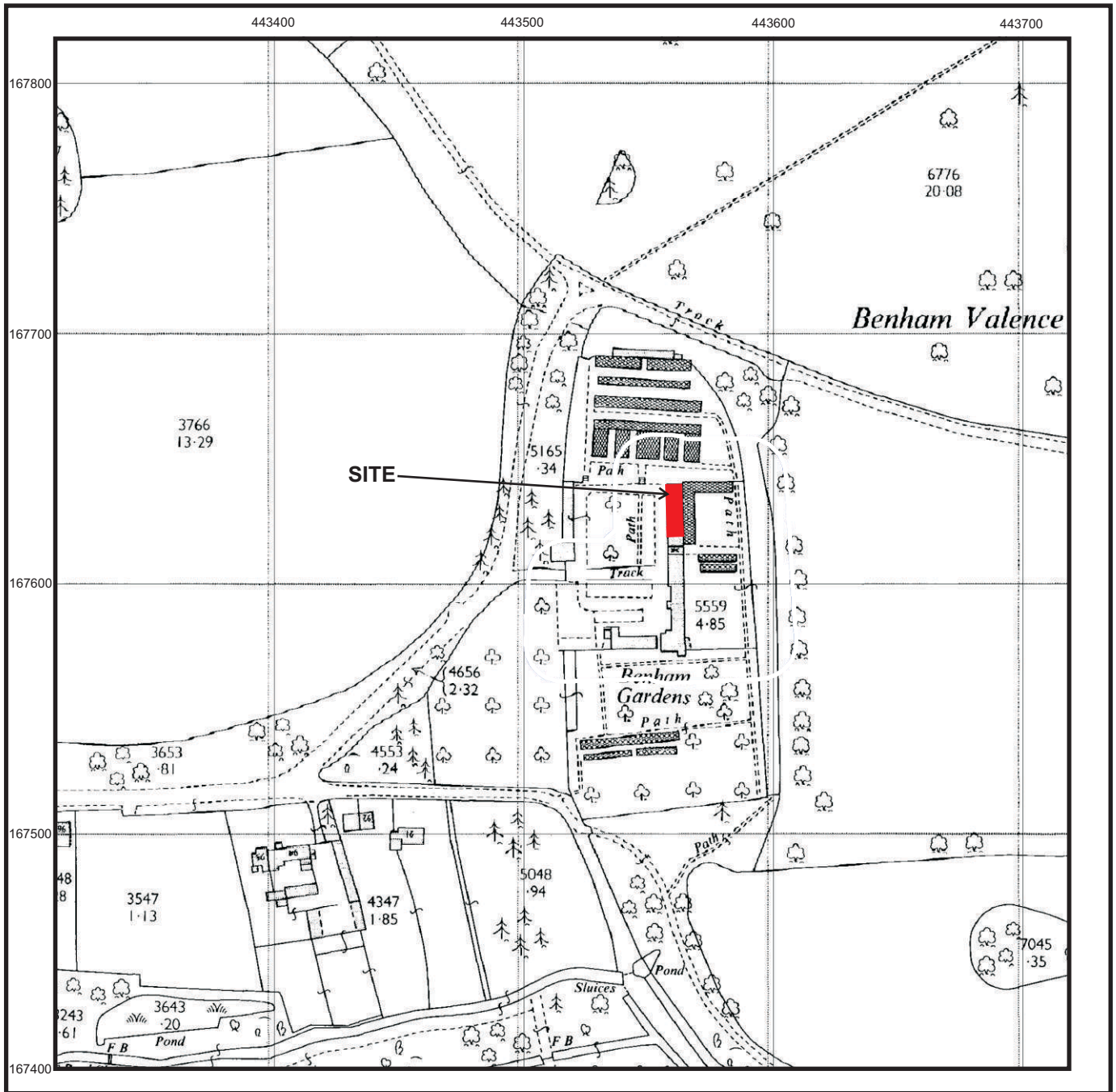


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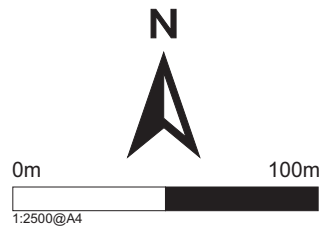
**FIGURE 14: Ordnance Survey Map, 1961**



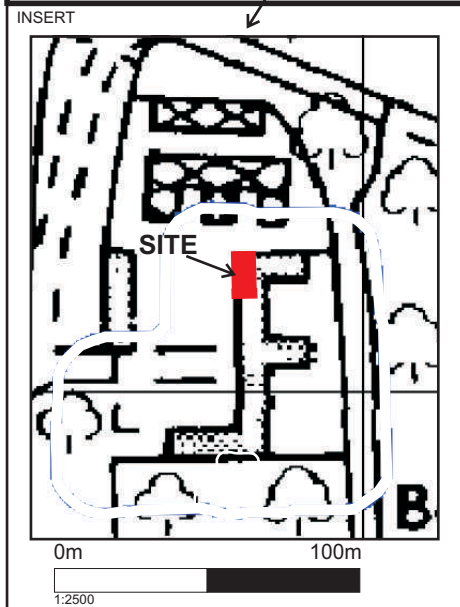
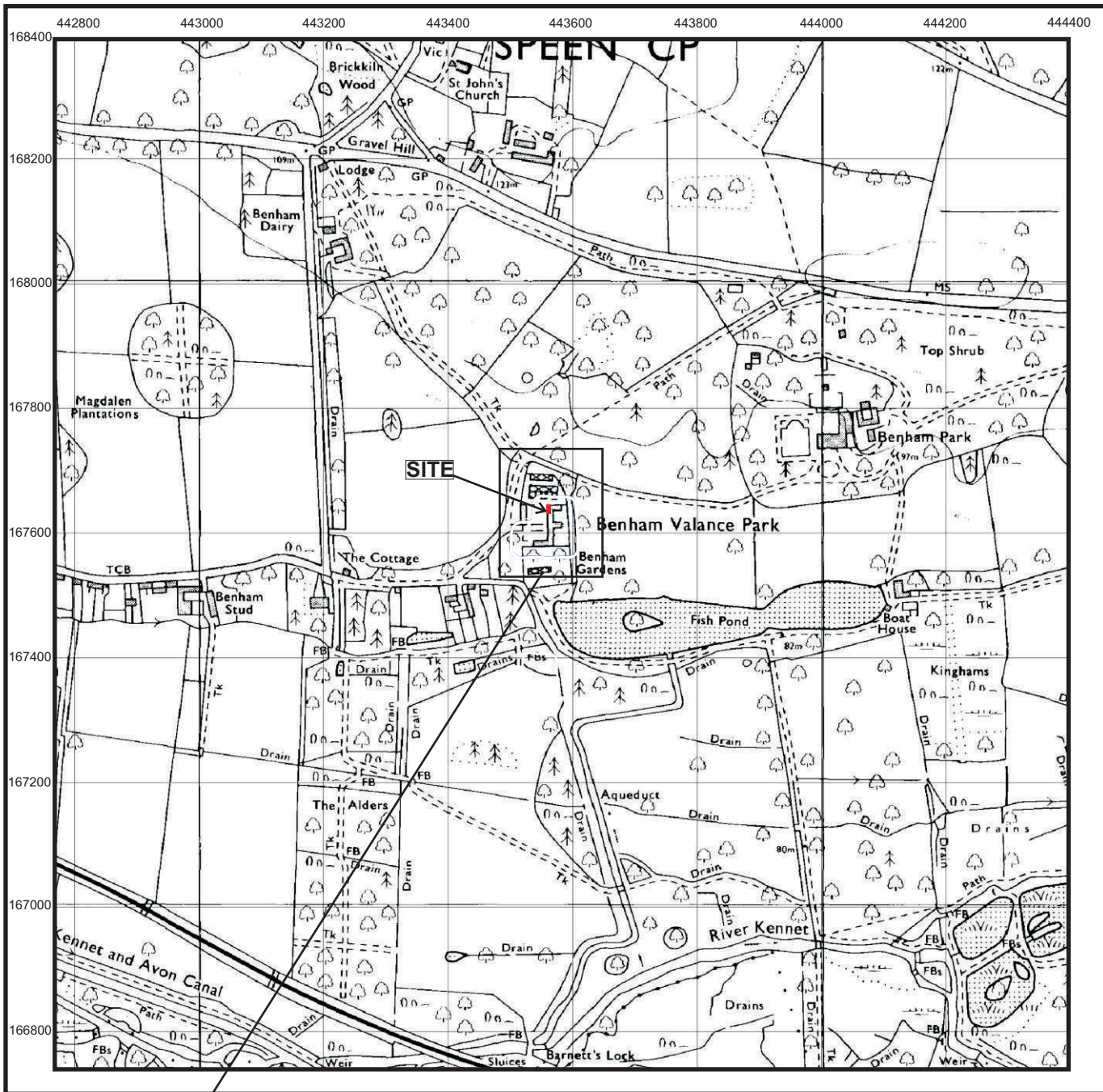
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**FIGURE 15: Ordnance Survey Map, 1969**



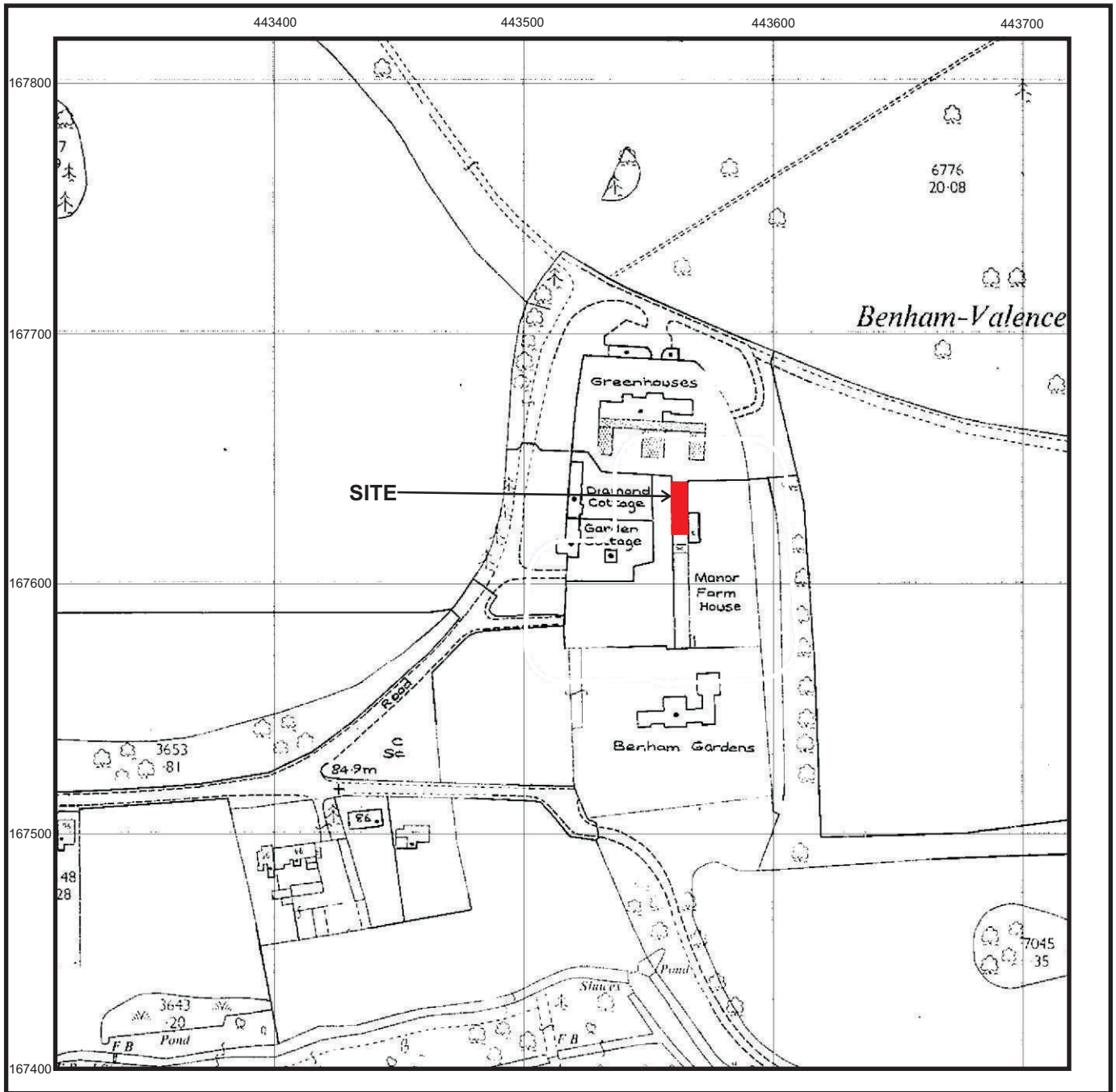
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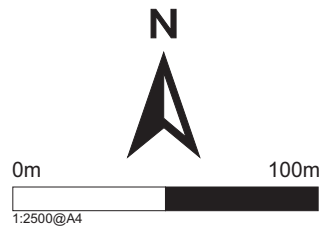
**FIGURE 16: Ordnance Survey Map, 1971**



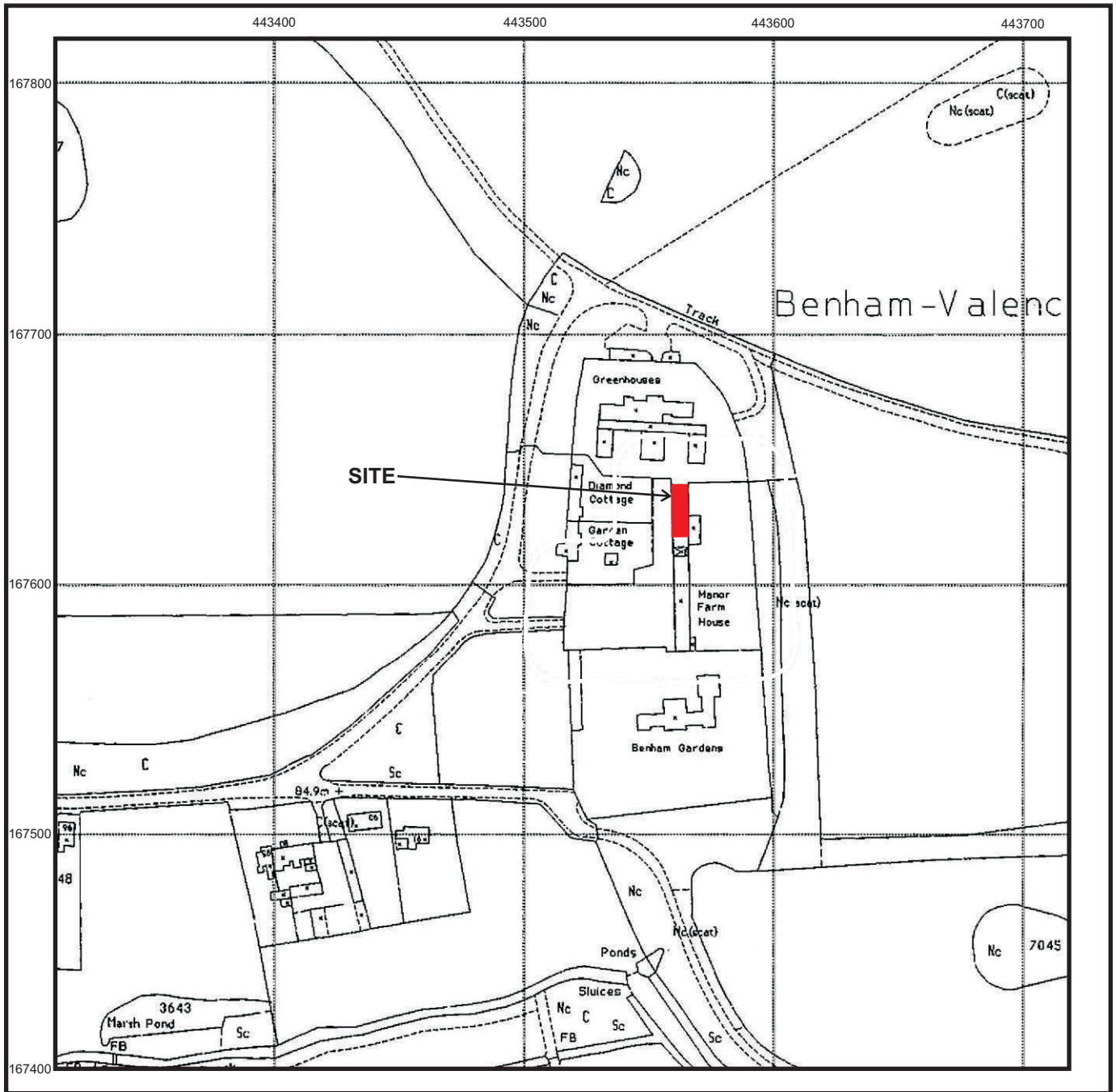
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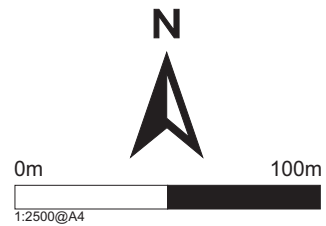
**FIGURE 17: Ordnance Survey Map, 1990-1**



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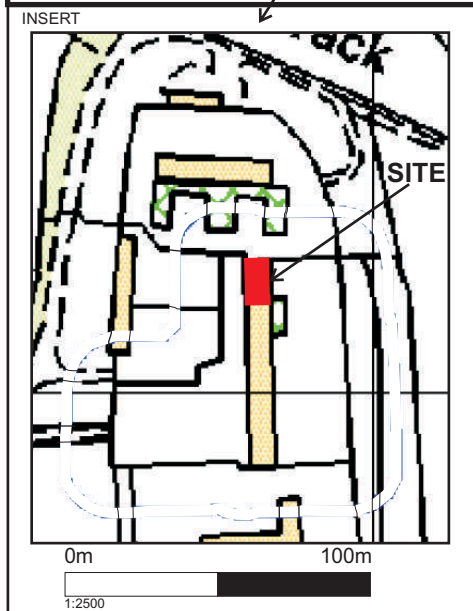
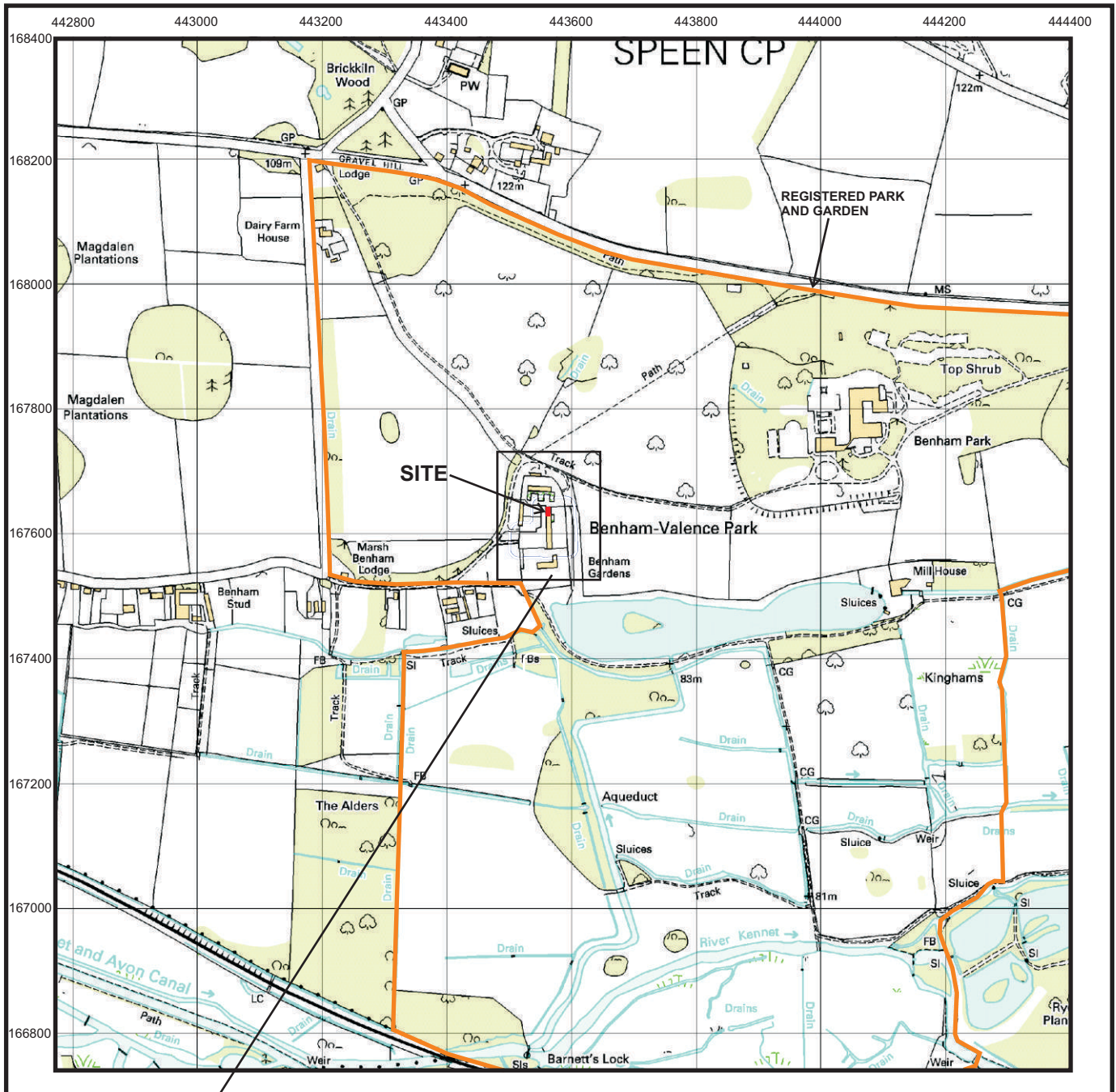
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**Accession Code:**



**FIGURE 18: Ordnance Survey Map, 1994**





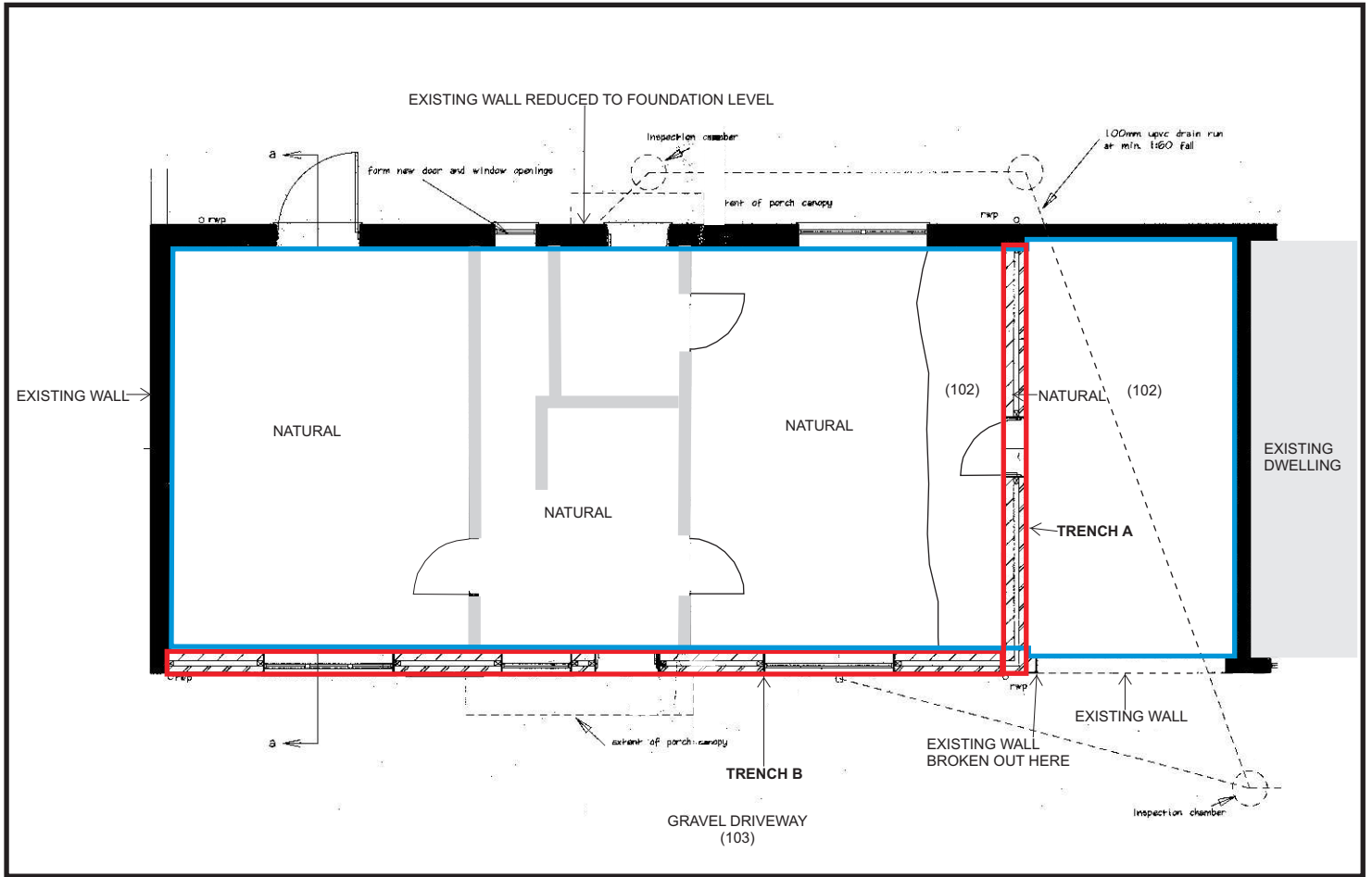
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N

0m  400m

1:10000@ A4

**FIGURE 19: Ordnance Survey Map, 2008**



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— SITE AREA

— TRENCHES

■ PROPOSED FOUNDATIONS

0m 4m

1:100@A4

**FIGURE 20: Foundation Plan**



NORTHEAST FACING SHOT OF FRONT (WEST FACING ELEVATION) OF MANOR FARM HOUSE BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF WORKS. THE SITE IS SITUATED AT THE 'BACK' OF THE PHOTOGRAPH



WEST FACING SHOT OF THE REAR (EAST FACING ELEVATION) OF THE NORTHERN END OF MANOR FARM HOUSE BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF WORKS. THE SITE IS SITUATED ON THE RIGHT OF THE PHOTOGRAPH. THE GLASS BUILT BUILDING (CONSERVATORY) WAS ALSO SUBSEQUENTLY DEMOLISHED.



NORTH FACING SHOT OF THE CONSERVATORY BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF WORKS.

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<b>FIGURE 21: Photographs</b>



**SOUTH FACING SHOT OF EXCAVATED AREA**



**EAST FACING SHOT OF BRICK ARCH IN NORTHERN WALL,  
TRENCH A TO THE NORTH**

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**FIGURE 22: Photographs  
During Watching Brief**