

MA in LOCAL HISTORY

DISSERTATION

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**“The Development and Persistence of Roads,
Tracks and Major Paths in the Area of Epsom:
An Exploratory Review”**

by

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The overall objective of this Dissertation is to present an historical analysis of the development and evolution of roads, tracks and major paths (collectively "routes") in the former Epsom civil parish (created in 1894 on the bounds of the former ecclesiastical parish and absorbed into the later Epsom Rural District and successor Borough of Epsom & Ewell). It seeks to examine the patterns of routeway development from the earliest evidence up until around 1850 (when railways reached the town) and their causes (including landscape and human geography/settlement factors); and to explore the evidence and reasons for persistence of ancient routes into the suburban era. The divide of 1850 is only approximate, as inevitably, much of the evidence for routeway change in the earlier period relies heavily upon extant evidence in the subsequent development of street patterns in the later suburban town – itself also influenced by the arrival of rail lines.

A short introductory Chapter places Epsom in its regional historical perspective, followed by three further Chapters addressing the following aims:

1. To examine critically the key source materials available to the local historian examining the processes of formation, growth and extinction in the route network in this area (and, by extension, in general). This work includes an overview of changes in cartographic representations in maps of the area, to assess how these affected the way in which map users understood the area.
2. To assess the situation of Epsom parish and its historic route network, within its local topographic and geological context, seeking to establish the degree to which this constrained and fashioned transport links.
3. To examine and analyse the historical geography contributing to the development of the route pattern. This analysis works backwards from the core period for initial ex-

amination – roughly between 1838-1870 (chosen as the key watershed when large-scale maps of reliable quality became available, railways arrived and the open common fields were enclosed).

Each Chapter discusses the key deductions and judgements derived directly from the analyses undertaken. A short final Chapter draws together a summary of the key points arising.

Throughout, illustrative figures are included alongside the text which refers to them. However, a separate Appendix of photographic Plates is attached. References for relevant specific Plates are made throughout the text.

Unless otherwise necessary for clarity of view (and clearly indicated), all maps are oriented to the north.

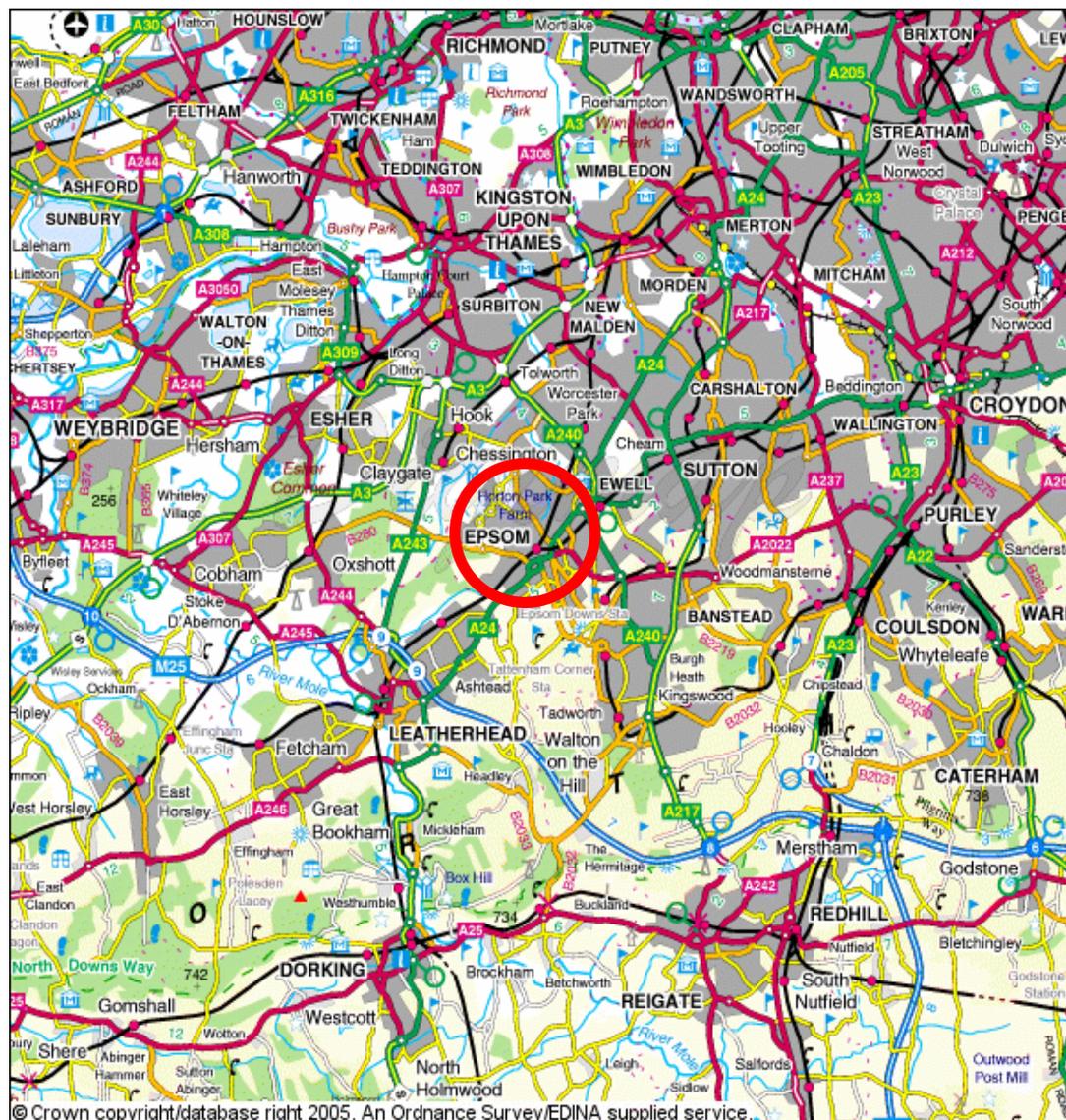
CHAPTER 1: EPSOM AND ITS ROUTE NETWORK IN CONTEXT

For most of its history, Epsom was known by its Anglo-Saxon name, Ebbisham. The most popular theory is that this derives from “Ebbi’s ham”, Ebbi a Saxon woman of unknown background, and ‘ham’ - meaning village. A charter of 993 shows the Abbot of Chertsey in possession of the manor at Ebbi’s hamlet which he claimed his predecessors had held since the seventh century¹.

Regional Setting

Figure 1.1 shows Epsom in its modern setting. The former town is now effectively at the

FIGURE 1.1: DISTRICT AROUND EPSOM, 2006 (Source – Ordnance Survey)



outer edge of Greater London, connected into the continuous built-up suburban area at its southwest extremity. Further growth outwards has been constrained since the enactment of Green Belt legislation in the mid-1950s.

Figure 1.2 (derived from Norden's Surrey map) shows Epsom in Surrey, with reference to major market towns and other local centres in the late fifteenth century². Note that the area containing the four northernmost market towns is now part of London, not modern Surrey. Note also the low intensity of urban development at the time; despite proximity to London, much of Surrey was still remote and sparsely populated.

FIGURE 1.2: EPSOM IN ITS CONTEXT IN HISTORIC SURREY

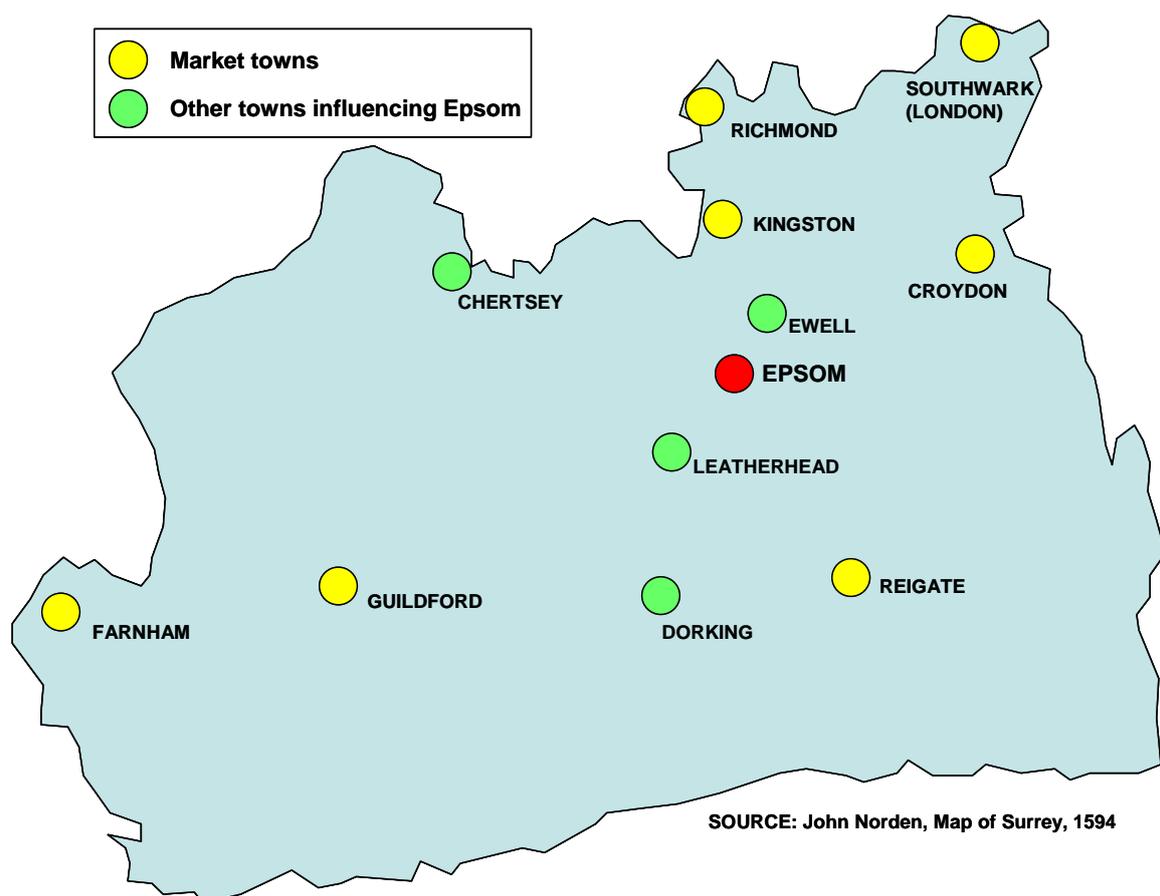
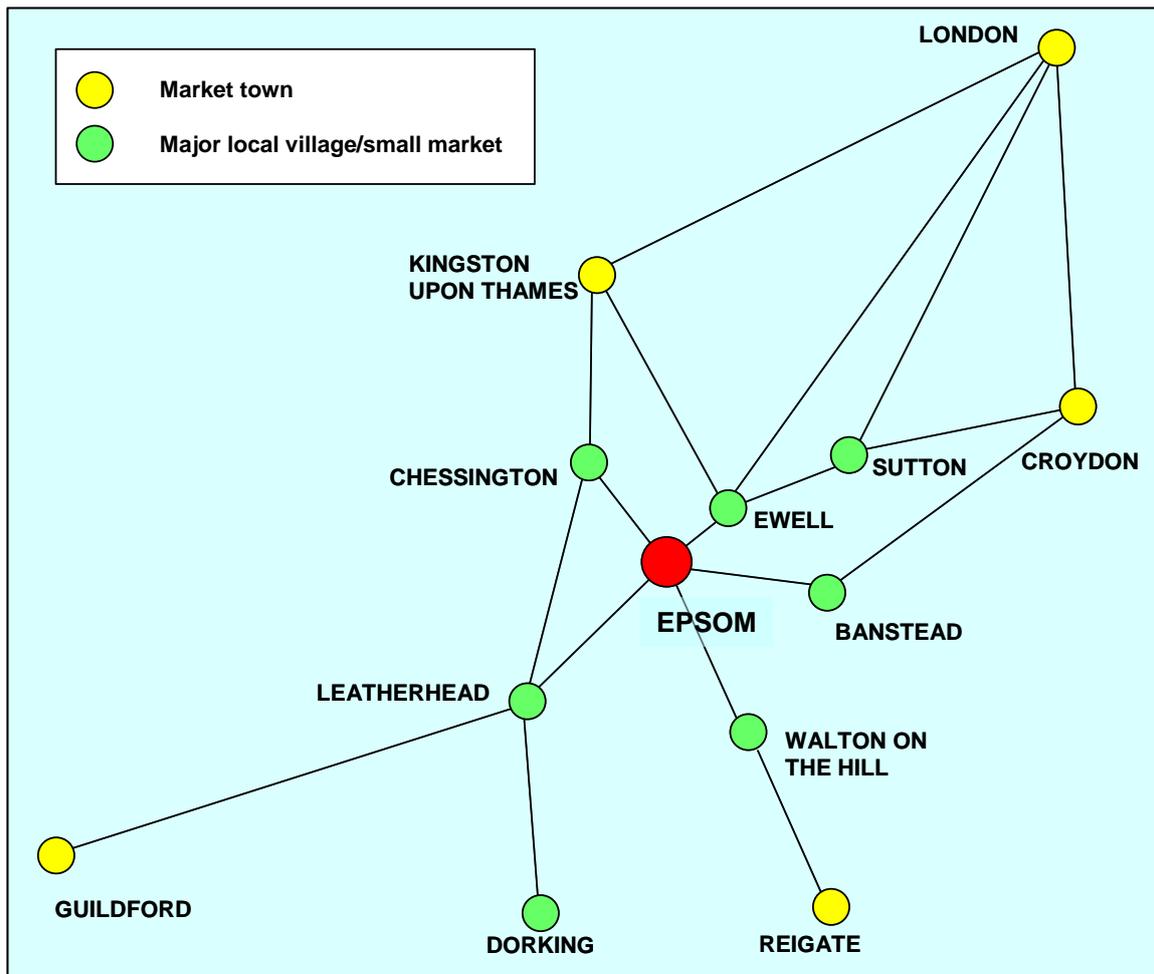


Figure 1.3 shows late-Tudor Epsom's (still "Ebbisham") key links to main market towns and other villages of local significance². At this time, Ewell and Leatherhead had minor local markets; Ebbisham was only a small agricultural settlement around its parish church. It is

possible the main road from Ewell to Leatherhead did not even pass through the hamlet, but by Epsom Court (manor) some half a mile to the north (see section 4) – which may indicate that traffic to the Manor was of greater significance than to the village.

**FIGURE 1.3: KEY NETWORK LINKS FOR EPSOM
(BASED UPON JOHN NORDEN'S SURREY MAP, 1594)**



In the seventeenth century, Epsom underwent a dramatic transformation following the discovery of the supposed therapeutic properties of a well on Epsom Common to the west (see Section 3). The spa town which grew to service a growing tide of visitors developed west of the early village and transport demand grew rapidly, culminating in the mid-eighteenth century in the creation of a turnpike road connecting to London and Kingston via Ewell.

Figure 1.4 shows the district at the time of the original Ordnance Survey one-inch (Mudge) survey of 1816³. The contrast between the essentially isolated small town of the early nineteenth century and the crowded suburban surroundings of today is very marked.

FIGURE 1.4: SITUATION OF EPSOM - FROM THE 1816 OS (MUDGE) SURVEY

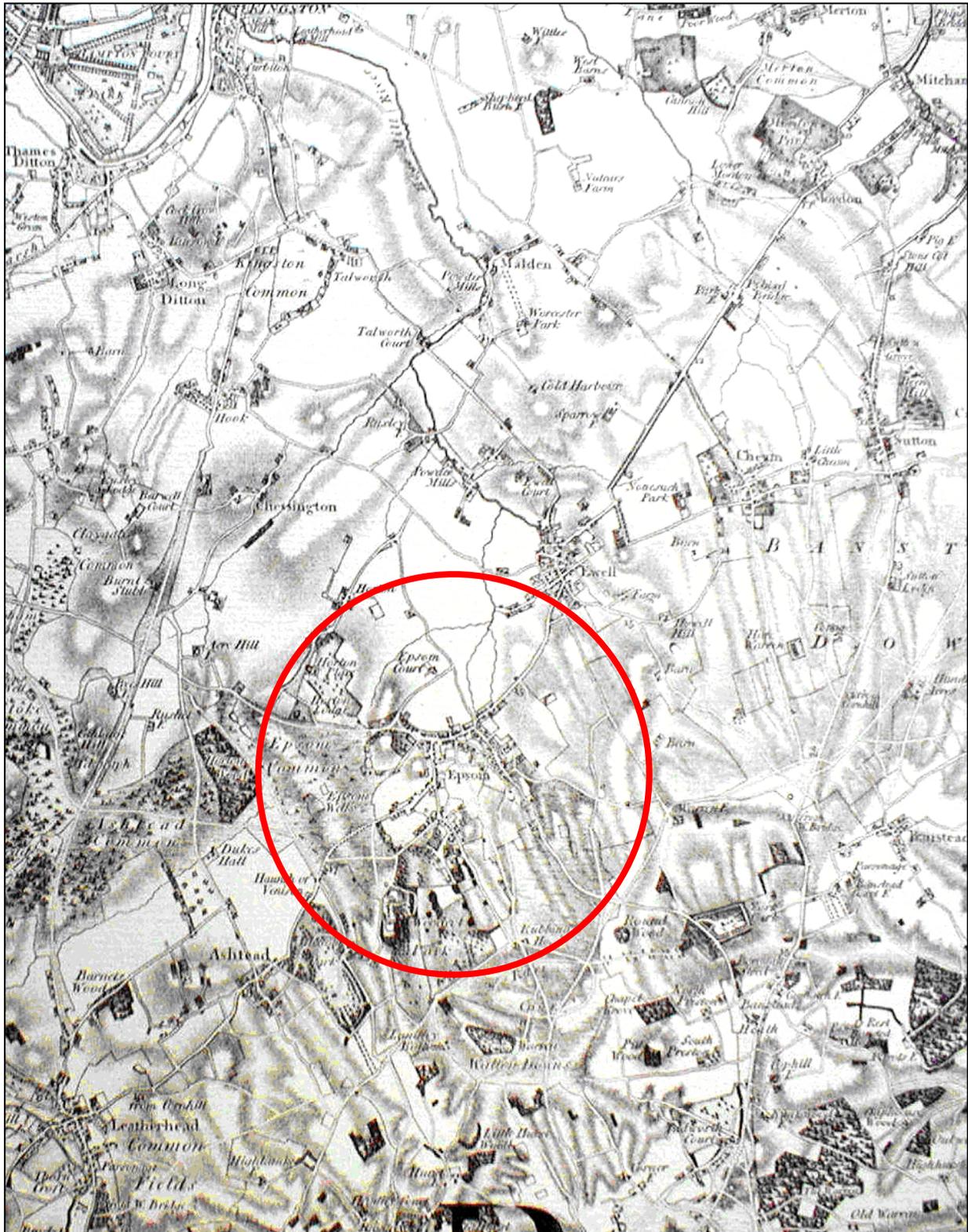


Figure 1.5 shows the old Civil Parish of Epsom overlaid on a map of the modern borough of Epsom & Ewell⁴. Note that the boundary on the south and west is largely unchanged from the historic parish.

FIGURE 1.5: EPSOM CIVIL PARISH OVERLAID ON A MAP OF THE MODERN BOROUGH OF EPSOM & EWELL



The map and overlay in Figure 1.6 show the main historic roads of the district, set against the background of the modern OS 1:50,000 map⁵. The digits against each road are used elsewhere to provide a point of reference for the reader.

The Situation in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

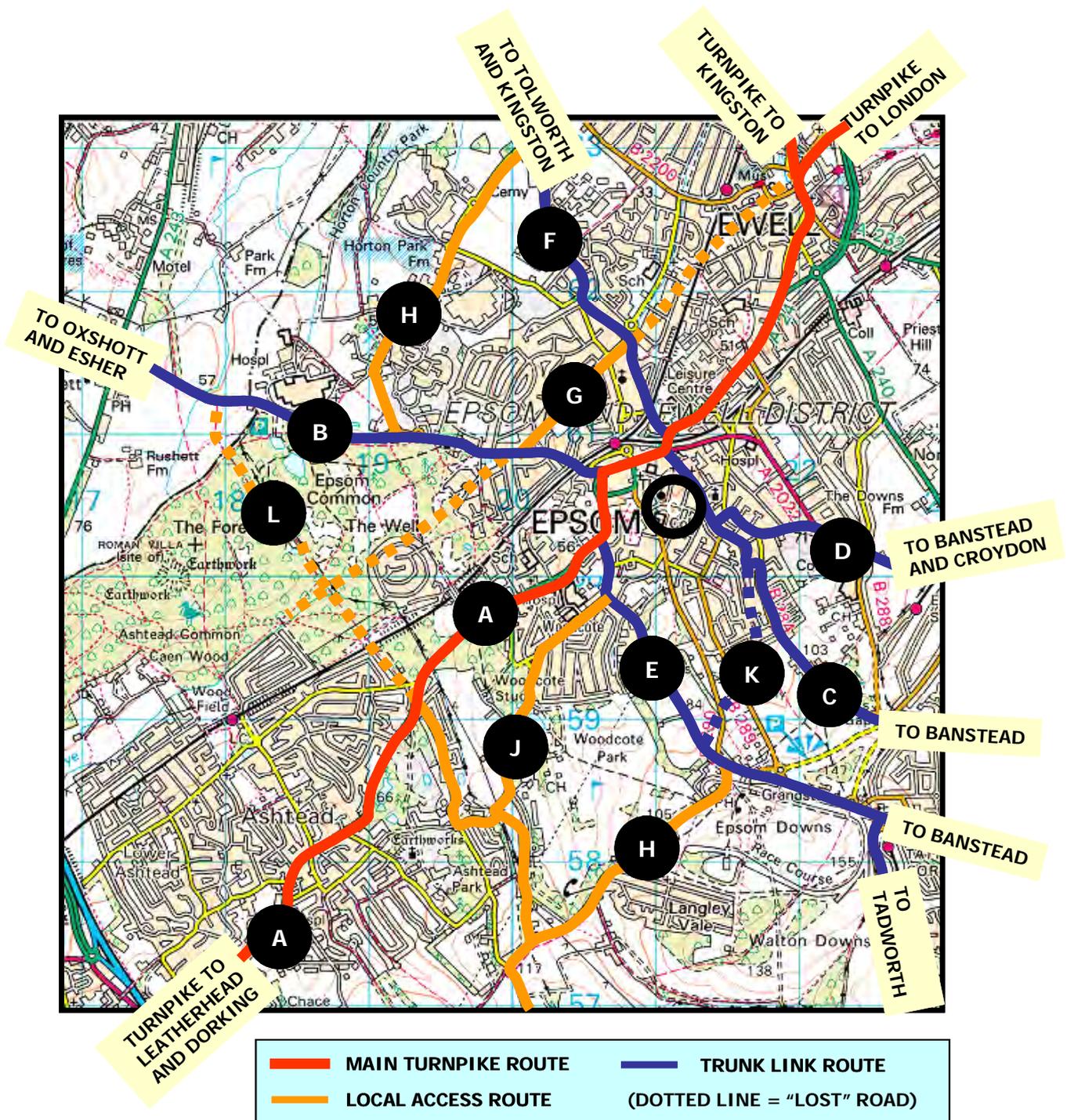
"A straggling street, an undue proportion of inns, a large pond, pump, and a magnificent brick clock case, make up – with a few more touches not necessary to be given here – the picture of the metropolis of English racing, and the fountain of Epsom Salts. For three hundred and sixty four days in the year a cannon ball might be fired from one end of Epsom to the other without endangering human life, on the three hundred and sixty fifth, or Derby Day, a population surges and rolls, and scrambles through the place, that may be counted in millions⁶.

Charles Dickens, 1851)

This is most definitely a contemporary commentary, as Dickens describes his journey to Epsom on the train. Whether it is a fair description of the normal activity level in the town is more questionable. Well before the railways, Epsom was a major staging post for coaches heading for Dorking, Horsham and the coast. At the peak of the coaching age in the 1830s, considerable numbers of coaches passed through en route between London and various destinations (as just one example, six Horsham-London coaches daily in each direction)⁷. Perhaps – as often with Dickens - one should make allowance for rhetorical licence.

1850 was chosen as the rough end-point for the present study for three reasons. First, it is at this time that the railways arrived in Epsom, cutting through the central area on high embankments (and with two deep cuttings through hills just southwest of the town and to the east on the Croydon line – *Plate 22*) all of which served broadly to create a permanent schism between the northwest and southeast of the old Parish. They also delineated a wedge-shaped area northeast of the town, between the two separate lines from Wimbledon

Figure 1.6: KEY HISTORIC ROADS/TRACKS
(Base Map: Epsom District (OS 1:50,000), 2005)



A: TURNPIKE FROM LONDON TO HORSHAM	B: ROAD TO OXSHOTT/ESHER (WEST HILL/RUSHETT LANE)	C: CHURCH ST - OLD ROAD TO BANSTEAD/TADWORTH
D: COLLEGE ROAD – OLD ROAD TO BANSTEAD/SUTTON/CROYDON	E: CHALK LANE – OLD LOCAL LINK TO DOWNS/BANSTEAD	F: HOOK ROAD – LINK ROAD TO KINGSTON (VIA TURNPIKE)
G: COURT LANE – OLD LINK TO EPSOM COURT (MANOR)	H: HORTON LANE – OLD LOCAL LINK TO HORTON MANOR	J: WILMERHATCH LANE – OLD LINK TO WOODCOTE ESTATE
K: LOST ROAD FROM OLD EPSOM TO EPSOM DOWNS	L: LOST LINK ROAD VIA COMMON TO MALDEN RUSHETT	

and Croydon. The limited number of crossing places (railway bridges) built through the embankments became fixed nodal points through which road traffic would always have to funnel (*Plate 21*). The map at Figure 1.7 (drawn on the base of the 1866 OS map) highlights the new railway lines (blue) and crossing points (red).

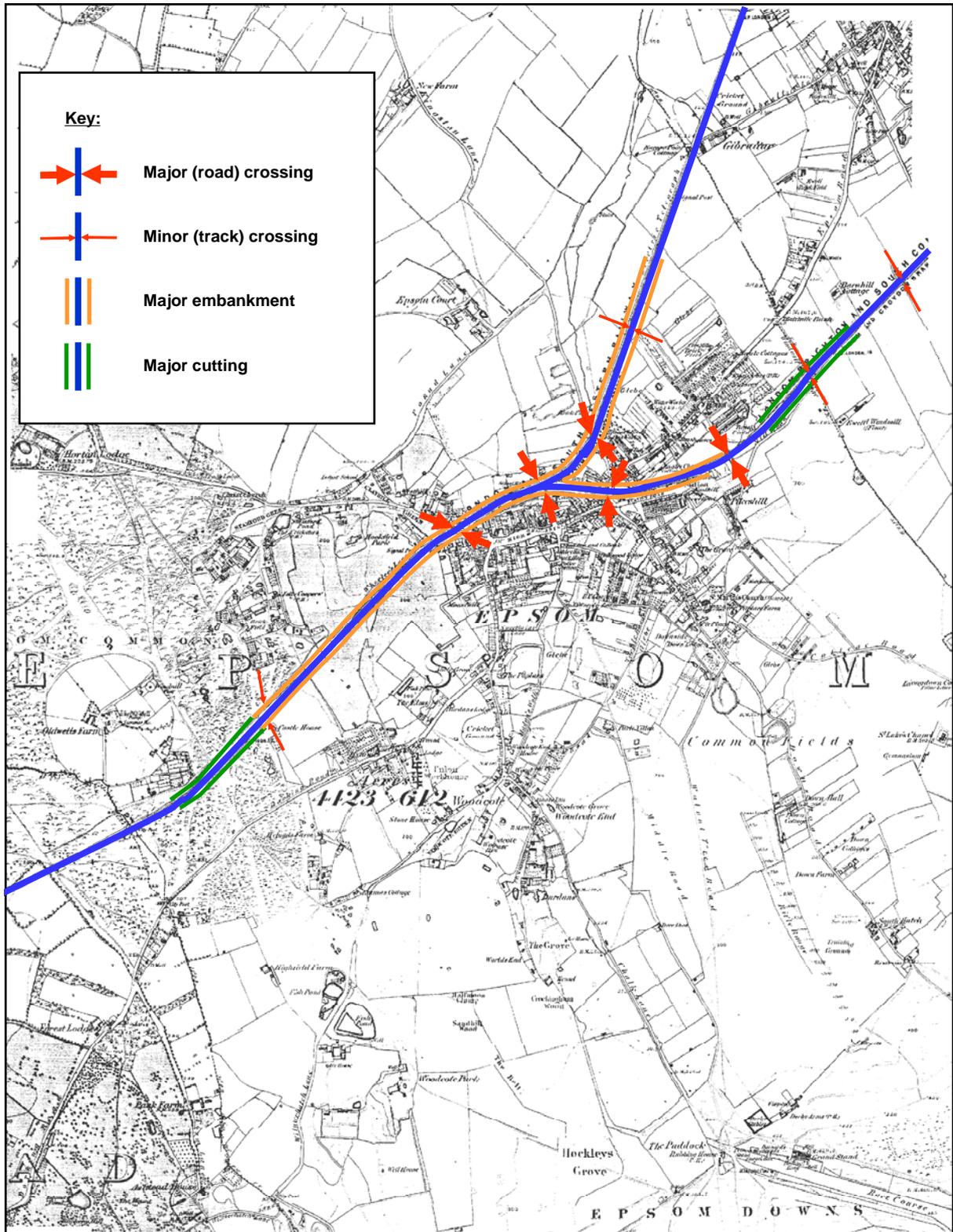
The second major rationale for the choice is that it was around 1850 that accurate, large-scale maps of Epsom first became available, capturing the remaining vestiges of the ancient route pattern. Four are of particular importance:

- The Epsom Tithe Map of 1838⁸.
- “Plan of the Town of Epsom” by Lee and Stevenson, Civil Engineers, 1852⁹
- The Epsom Enclosure Map of 1867¹⁰.
- Large-scale Ordnance Survey maps. The 25-inch series was surveyed in 1866-7.

The third and less crucial factor is that the period around 1850 marks a general transition: from a time for which detailed records of all kinds are in limited supply; to the modern era when copious minutes and records of all official and public activities become the norm, with a plethora of maps, plans and photographs offering extensive coverage of the sequence of changes in the town and surrounding area – and of the transport links supporting these. Before this, much has to be deduced or inferred from limited documentary sources.

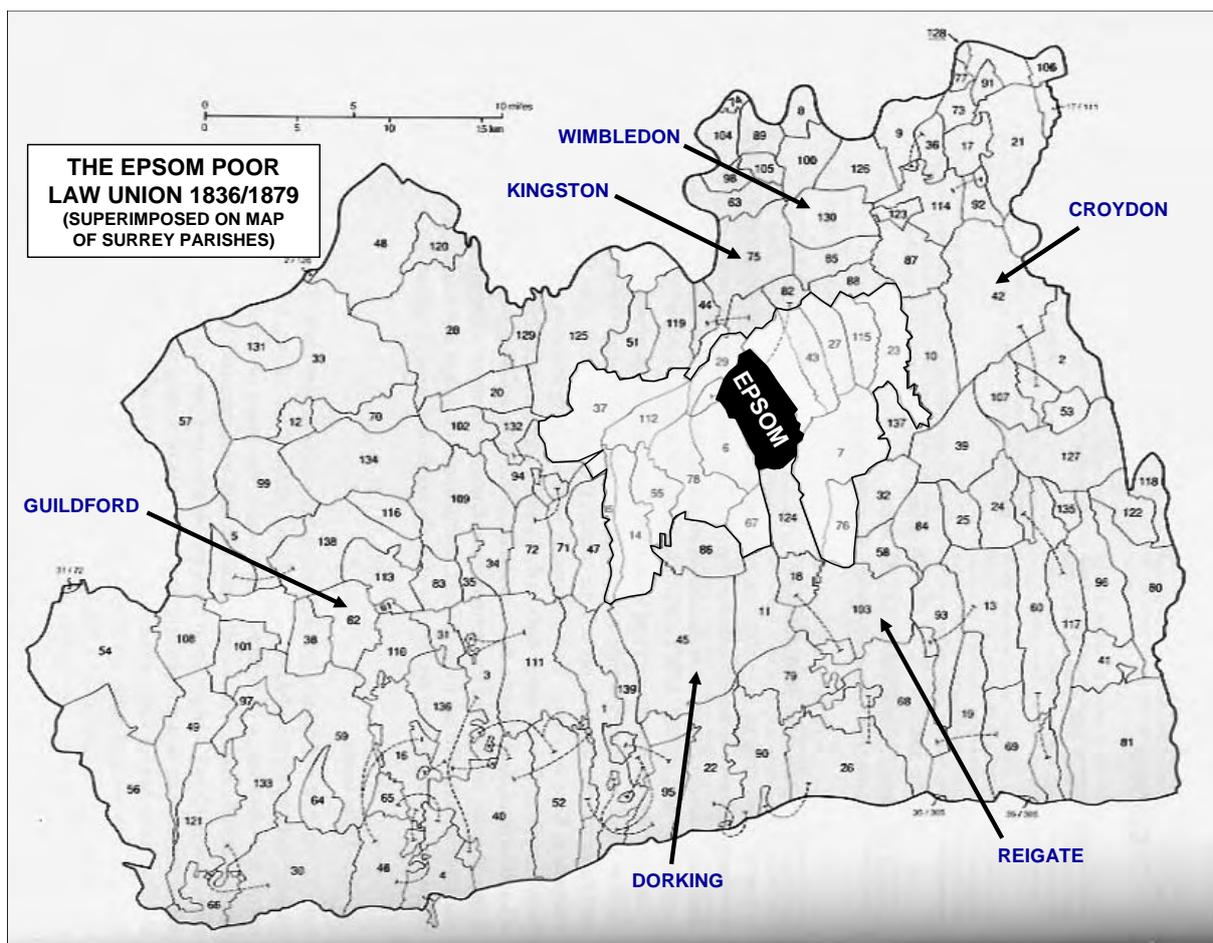
The crossing points installed by the railway companies substantially reflected (but also fossilised) pre-existing key routes which they had to respect. The concentration around the town centre confirms its prior importance as the main nodal point for the developing network of routeways within and through the district. This is confirmed by the extremely limited provision of major crossing points (for wheeled traffic; there are various foot crossings) outside this central area (*Plate 22*).

FIGURE 1.7: EPSOM – RAILWAYS AND CROSSING POINTS (1866)



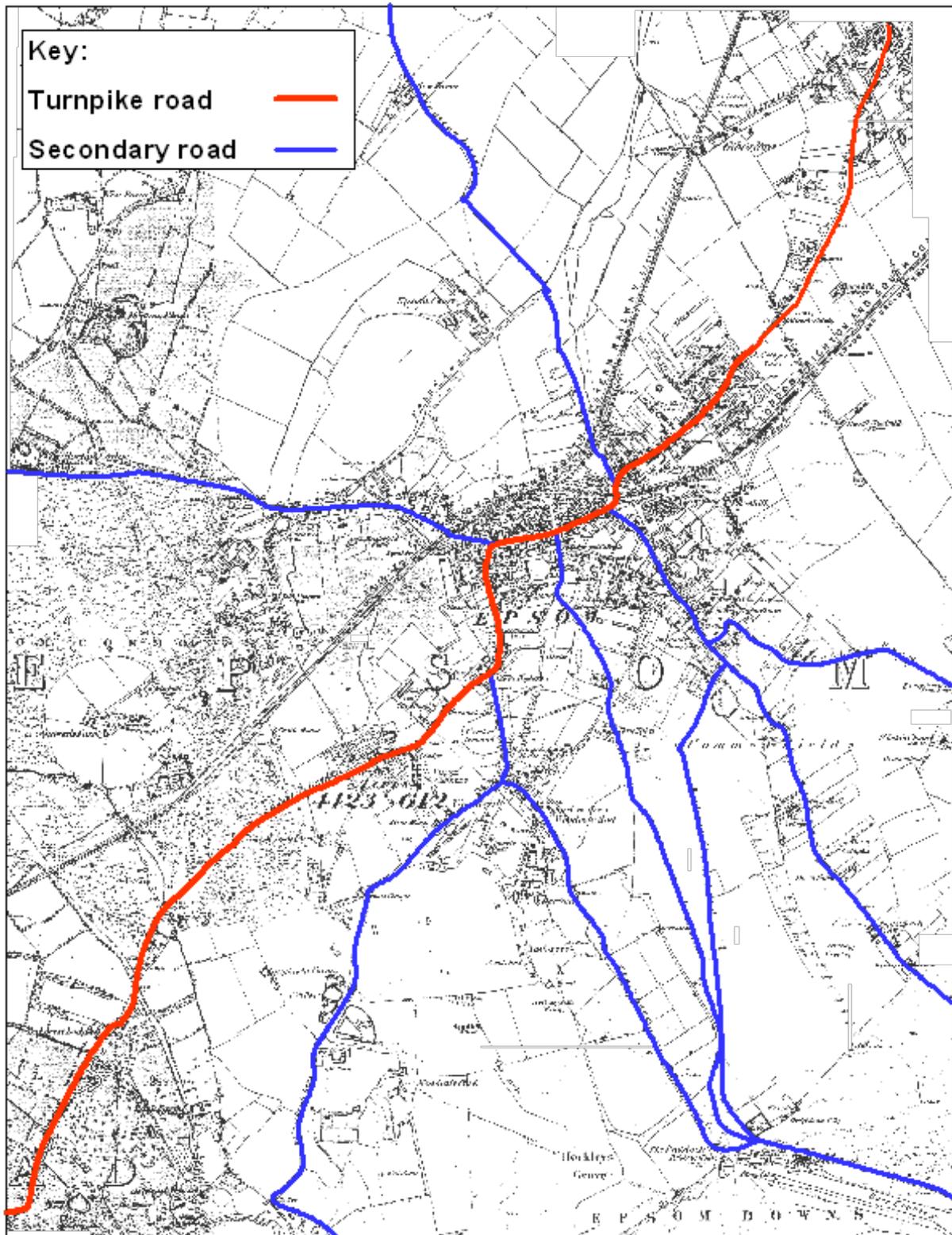
This high degree of concentration reflects Epsom's contemporary importance as the major focal town in its part of (largely rural) Surrey. As illustration, the Epsom Poor Law Union formed in 1836 encompassed 15 constituent parishes: Ashted, Banstead, Great Bookham, Little Bookham, Carshalton, Cheam, Cobham, Chessington, Cuddington, Epsom, Ewell, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Stoke D'Abernon, Sutton (Headley was added in 1879). This was a very extensive area with a population (1831 census) totalling 15,723 – of which Epsom itself (3,231) constituted over 20% - chiefly in the town itself¹¹. Figure 1.8 demonstrates the point¹².

FIGURE 1.8: EPSOM POOR LAW UNION IN 1836



So at this time (around 1850), as indeed today, roads in the parish focused upon the town centre, as Figure 1.9 demonstrates.

FIGURE 1.9: MAIN ROADS AS AT 1866 (BASE MAP ORDNANCE SURVEY)



The most significant route (red on Figure 1.9) is the London-Dorking Turnpike, linking Epsom to Tooting, and proceeding southwards to Dorking via Leatherhead. From 1756, when the Epsom-Tooting section was set up by special Turnpike Act¹³, this constituted the major route through the town - and, as the A24, still does today. It was administered by the Epsom and Ewell Turnpike Trust, which also managed link roads from Ewell to Kingston (now the A240), and across Ewell Common Fields (also the A240) to the Reigate Turnpike Road (now the A217) on Burgh Heath¹⁴. With the exception of a twentieth century by-pass around the east of Ewell, these roads still largely follow the exact lines of the original turnpikes. It is unfortunate that all early records of this Trust have been lost.

The two main roads north and west of the town are (west) the lane (now West Hill) towards Malden Rushett on the old Kingston-Dorking turnpike (now the A243) and (northwest) Kingston Lane (now Hook Road – *Plate 21*) towards Chessington and Tolworth. South and east, several roads lead up onto Epsom/Banstead Downs (*Plate 9*), three of them notably converging on the Racecourse (lower right of Figure 1.9). A contemporary small-scale map capturing this basic layout in simple schematic form is that produced for the report of an 1849 public enquiry into sanitary conditions in the town (Figure 1.10 on the following page)¹⁵. This was a simplified version of the contemporary OS one-inch map.

What this map does not show is the network of minor tracks and paths which criss-crossed the area. One of the best sources for these – but only for the southeast part of the parish – is the 1869 Enclosure Map, examined in more detail in Sections 2 and 4.

Chapter 1 Endnotes

- ¹ Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, website <<http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Leisure+and+Culture/Local+history+and+heritage>> referenced 29/01/06
- ² (Drawn from) Norden John, Map of the County of Surrey (London, 1594).
- ³ Ordnance Survey, First Series map of Surrey, 1816 (extracted from the Edina Digimap historic maps website <<http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/main/historic.jspk>>, 23/10/05)
- ⁴ Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, website <[http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/epsom/tourism.nsf/f577767eb56de7c280256a5b002e95a6/4795a15cac15d4a980256bf1005912c0/\\$FILE/Borough%20map%20EEBC%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/epsom/tourism.nsf/f577767eb56de7c280256a5b002e95a6/4795a15cac15d4a980256bf1005912c0/$FILE/Borough%20map%20EEBC%5B1%5D.pdf)>, referenced 06/11/05
- ⁵ Anquet Maps™, CD-ROM edition OS 1:50,000 series maps Great Britain, 2004
- ⁶ Charles Dickens, "A Sketch of Epsom on Derby Day", *Household Words*, London 07/06/1851
- ⁷ TP Hudson (Editor), *Horsham: General history of the town. A History of the County of Sussex: Volume VI Part 2, (1986)*, quoted on British History Online, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=18350>> referenced 18/06/06
- ⁸ George Smallpeice, *Epsom Tithe Map, 1838*, "surveyed by order of the Guardians of the Epsom Union", 1838 (SHS 3785/1)
- ⁹ Lee and Stevenson (Surveyors), "*Plan of the Town of Epsom*", London 1852 (SHS: 3796/1). Drawn up for the newly formed Epsom Sanitary Board
- ¹⁰ William D'oyley, *Epsom Enclosure Map and Award*, 1869 (SHS: QS6/4/66)
- ¹¹ Peter Higginbotham, *Epsom Workhouse*, Oxford University website, Oxford, 2000 <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/workhouse/Epsom/Epsom.html>> (extracted 29 September 2005)
- ¹² Modified map, constructed on the base of the map of Surrey tithe districts 1836, in: Kain JP, Oliver, RR, *The Tithe Maps of England and Wales* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p504
- ¹³ *An act for amending, widening and keeping in repair, the roads from Epsom through Ewell to Kingston-upon-Thames and Thames Ditton, in the County of Surrey* (Houses of Parliament, 1756 - copy at SHS: 388.1)
- ¹⁴ Surrey History Service (SHS: 2395/5/-), Epsom And Ewell Turnpike Trust - introductory section (Collection comprises Treasurer's Accounts for the Trust from 1830; no earlier records have yet been traced).
- ¹⁵ Charles Abdy, *Epsom Past* (Phillimore, Chichester, 2001)

CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SOURCES

This section discusses the various source materials available for this study, to examine their relative value to the local historian pursuing investigation and analysis of local routeway history. The categories addressed are maps; estate surveys; turnpike trust records; primary written sources; and physical evidence.

Maps

There are no extant map sources for Epsom preceding the Restoration period, when it suddenly evolved into a spa town to the west of the original hamlet of Ebbisham after the discovery of the medicinal qualities of Epsom Well. The local estates were apparently not significant enough to warrant expenditure on maps; conveyances are largely devoid of any plans until the second half of the nineteenth century (and generally even then). Estate surveys are examined later in this Section.

However, the town does feature in county maps appearing from around 1550. This Section provides a commentary on the key county maps prior to the arrival of the Ordnance Survey, and on the light they shed on Epsom's position in the transport network of the times. In the nineteenth century, several large-scale maps were produced for tithe commutation, drainage improvement and other practical purposes. These and early OS maps are examined for what they tell us about the evolution and portrayal of roads and minor routeways.

The earliest Surrey map of note is Christopher Saxton's of 1579 at a quarter-inch to the mile¹⁶. In common with several subsequent maps (most of which exhibit clear signs of plagiarism of prior published versions) the scale is small and road details no more than dotted lines for the most significant roads.

The first survey on something approaching a large scale, and with some local roads included, is John Senex' of 1729¹, at one inch to the mile¹⁷. Its accuracy improved on predecessors, but is still marginal in many areas (see Figure 2.1). Note the use of owners' names for large estates, rather than their place names – for example "Lord Baltimore" for the Woodcote estate, "Lord Guilford" for Durdans – a common mechanism to encourage sponsorship and purchase of the map by those with the funds to do so. This is a crucial reminder for the historian to consider the motivations of these early mapmakers.

The incentive to exaggerate the importance of sponsors' landholdings and general presence may well have been greater than for accuracy in other respects. As Harley noted in a key essay on the expressions of power in eighteenth-century English maps: *"The atlas-maker approached his data with a clear understanding of the rules by which the map image was to be produced – rules such as those of social status, consistent with the rules of*

FIGURE 2.1 - EPSOM AREA IN JOHN SENEX' MAP OF 1729



*society at large.... the process by which is revealed a terrain of internal power as clearly delineated in implied social relationships as the engraved lines of rivers and mountain ranges in the map image*¹⁸. Harley specifically singles out Senex as an example. His *New General Atlas*, from which the Surrey map is drawn, was funded by 1,061 subscribers. As Harley's analysis shows, over half of these were landed nobility, and fewer than a quarter other than "gentry"¹⁹.

The first comprehensive map of Surrey prior to the nineteenth century is John Rocque's of 1768 at two inches to the mile (Figure 2.2), probably surveyed in 1762-3. It was the first to provide real levels of local detail including field boundaries, a general indication of land use and – most useful here – a serious attempt to identify the significant local roads and tracks. As one prominent local historian has noted: *"one surprising feature of the map is the number of roads that appear: most of them in 1768 could have been nothing more than cart tracks and bridleways"*²⁰. As such, Rocque's detailed map is a vital resource, taken together with other sources, for the state of Surrey routes in the second half of the seventeenth century.

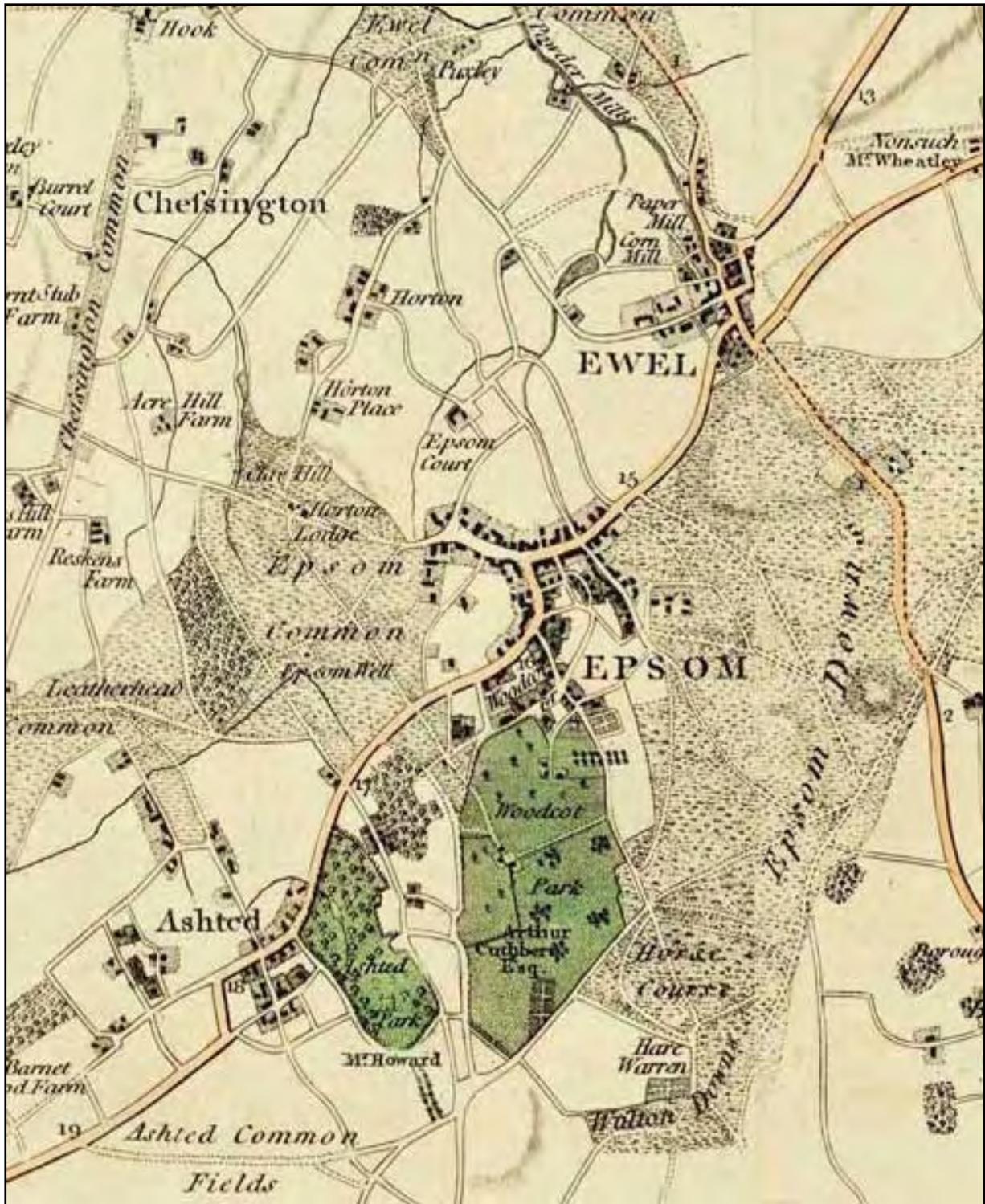
For all the quality of his maps, however, Rocque was as given as his predecessors to presentational tweaks to meet his customers' prejudices. Harley notes (in a section on "silences" in maps) Rocque's substantial bowdlerisation of his map of London and Westminster (1775), where he eliminated slum areas to produce *"an idealised view of the city which emphasises the gracious rurality of the main squares but fails to convey urban squalor"*²¹.

In 1777, John Andrews and Andrew Dury produced a new *Map of the Country Sixty Five Miles round London*, which they claimed to be from their own "Actual Survey", although it shows distinct elements of plagiarism from Rocque's earlier maps, perpetuating some of his errors²². However, the major contribution of this small atlas is as the clear basis for one of the most beautiful early maps, John Cary's 1786 1" per mile *Actual Survey of the country*

FIGURE 2.2 - EPSOM AREA IN JOHN ROCQUE'S MAP OF 1768 (PROBABLY SURVEYED 1762-3)



FIGURE 2.3 – EXTRACT FROM JOHN CARY'S MAP/ATLAS
" ACTUAL SURVEY OF THE COUNTRY FIFTEEN MILES ROUND LONDON"



fifteen miles round London (Figure 2.3)²³. Regarded by many as the finest of English cartographers, Cary's primary skill was as an engraver, and he drew on the growing body of more-or-less surveyed county maps then becoming available to produce maps of great clar-

ity and quality. In particular, his work emphasises transport with a sense of relative importance not previously achieved – note how major roads are picked out in colour for the first time and more clearly differentiated by their width on this map than in Rocque's. Note also Cary's inclusion (like Senex) of the names of key landowners (and actual/potential purchasers) – the map was dedicated to the gentry and nobility in the area around London.

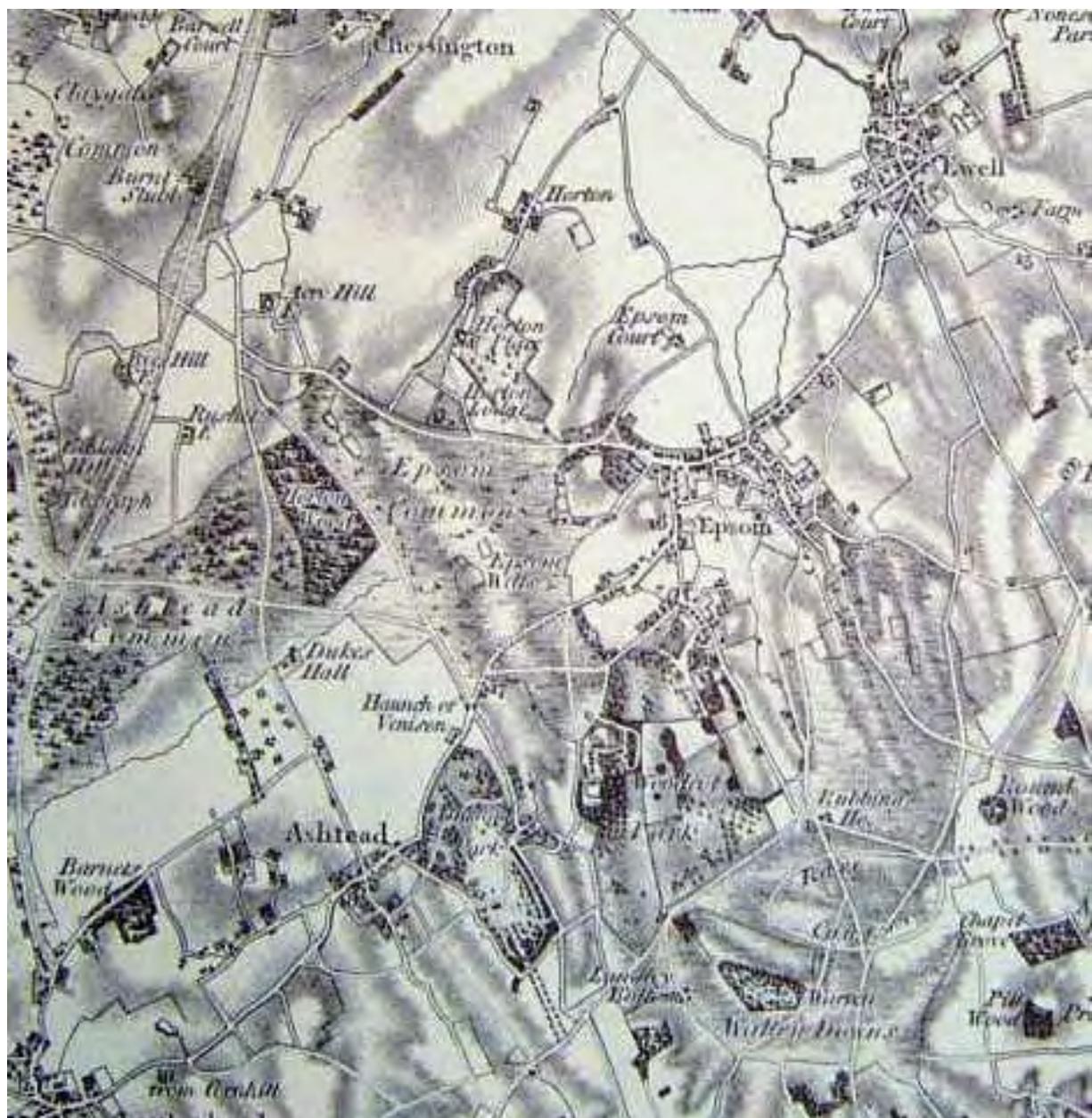
The next significant publication was a one-inch-to-the-mile, four-sheet Surrey map by Lindley and Crossley in 1793²⁴. Whilst neatly drawn, reduced from a 4-inch original and benefiting from some early survey data passed on from General Roy's nascent Ordnance Survey work, it is seriously flawed in regard to local roads, where it apparently draws heavily upon Rocque and sometimes misinterprets his work. It adds nothing new regarding the roads in Epsom.

Then in 1811, we have the first OS 1" map²⁵. It was by no means a perfect representation of the local detail. Nevertheless, it represents a standardised and generally accurate portrait of the layout around 1800. Figure 2.4 shows the main part of Epsom parish. A larger area from this map is shown in Figure 1.4.

The style of the first OS maps was not especially new, using some techniques of previous mapmakers to show land use and prominent slopes; the OS in its early days was particularly influenced by Cary's work. However, their generally crisp portrayal of the human geography, set within a more general attempt to portray the underlying topography using extensive hatching, represents a significant step forward. The other underpinning advance came from the extent of resources made available for accurate mapmaking due to the government's interest – from 1791 – in having the south of England (and later the rest of the country) comprehensively and accurately mapped in preparation for any French invasion²⁶.

This in itself needs to be remembered in using these early OS maps. They offer an unprecedented level of accuracy, from large-scale triangulated survey work. However, their primary purpose was military and this may have generated a new kind of bias in representation; there is a new and very strong focus on topography and the representation of heights and landscape. The degree of hatching and shading to illustrate slopes can lead to the obscuring of other features. Roads tend to be well represented, but lesser tracks and paths are often ignored in this early series.

FIGURE 2.4 – THE EPSOM AREA FROM THE 1811 OS 1" MAP

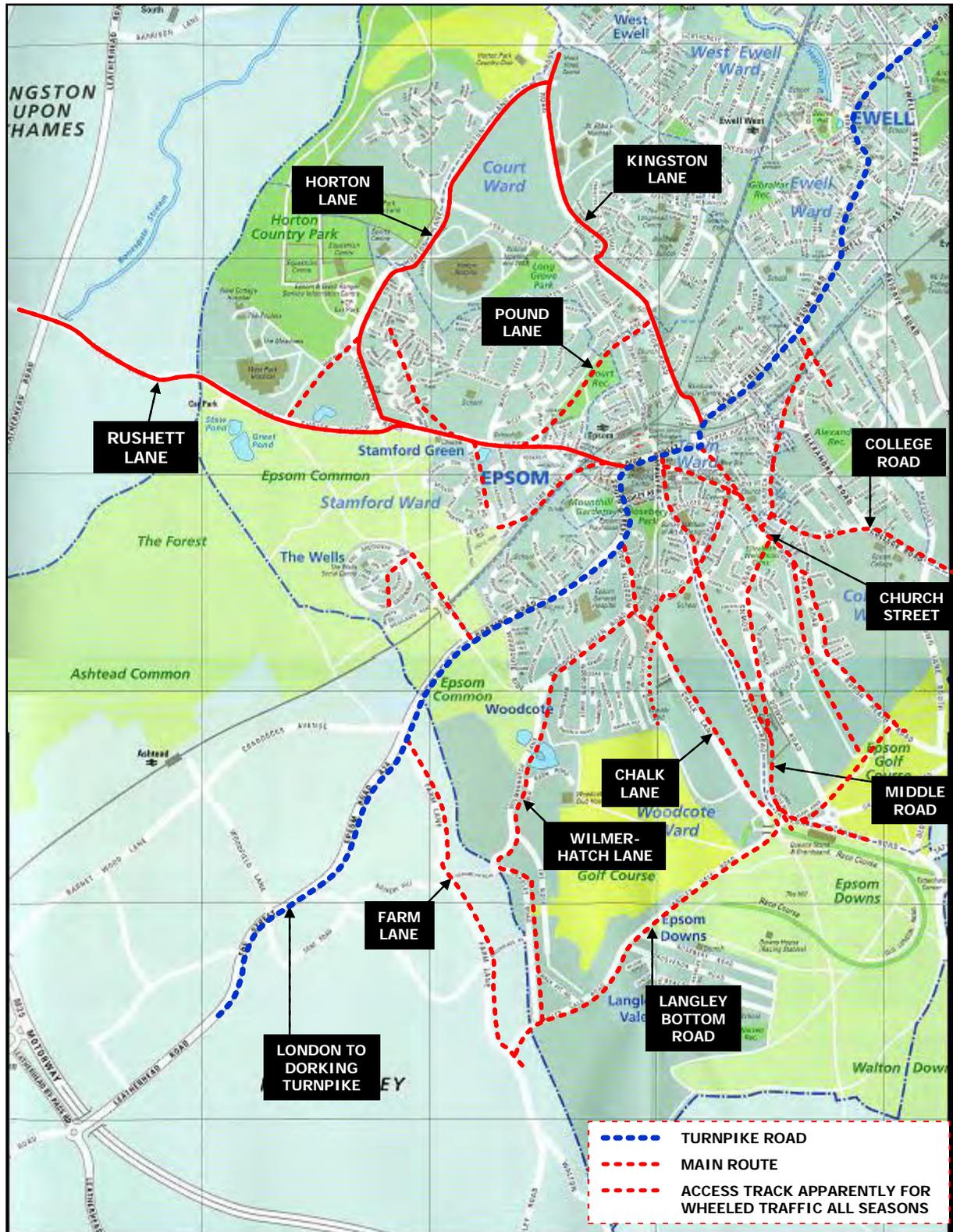


The first large-scale map of Epsom dates from 1838, when the requirements of the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act demanded a proper and accurate survey. The Tithe Map is a “first-class” one in the terms of the Tithe Act Amendment Act of 1837, drawn at a scale of 3 chains per inch (27” per mile) but unusual in being produced for a secondary purpose²⁷. The commissioners for the map were the Guardians of the Epsom Union (see Figure 1.8), formed under the 1836 Parochial Assessment Act to set up the new central Workhouse in Epsom. Since responsibility for both the new Poor Law administration and Tithe Commutation fell substantially to the local landed interest, killing two birds with one stone clearly appealed. Although primarily commissioned by the Guardians, the map was therefore drawn to the survey specifications of the Tithe Commission.

FIGURE 2.5 – EXTRACT FROM 1838 TITHE MAP (CENTRAL AREA)



**FIGURE 2.6 - MAJOR ROADS AND TRACKS MARKED ON THE 1838 TITHE MAP
(OVERLAID ON MODERN BOROUGH MAP)**



The Tithe Map is immensely valuable as a source for roads, tracks and – where decipherable – field paths, although it is not as detailed in peripheral areas as in those nearer the centre of the town. Figure 2.5 shows a section as illustration, and Figure 2.6 plots the major roads and tracks shown on it, overlaid on a map of the modern borough²⁸. It should be recognised that the Tithe Map is not concerned with topography – its primary purpose was to establish ownership boundaries precisely and clearly. This it does very effectively indeed.

After 1838, the Board of Guardians increasingly fulfilled additional powers under successive Acts as they evolved towards the Rural District Council eventually formed in 1894². The Public Health Act 1848 provided for improved drainage and sanitary planning, and Epsom

FIGURE 2.7 – EXTRACT FROM 1852 DRAINAGE SURVEY MAP, SHOWING THE DEVELOPING AREA EAST OF THE HIGH STREET



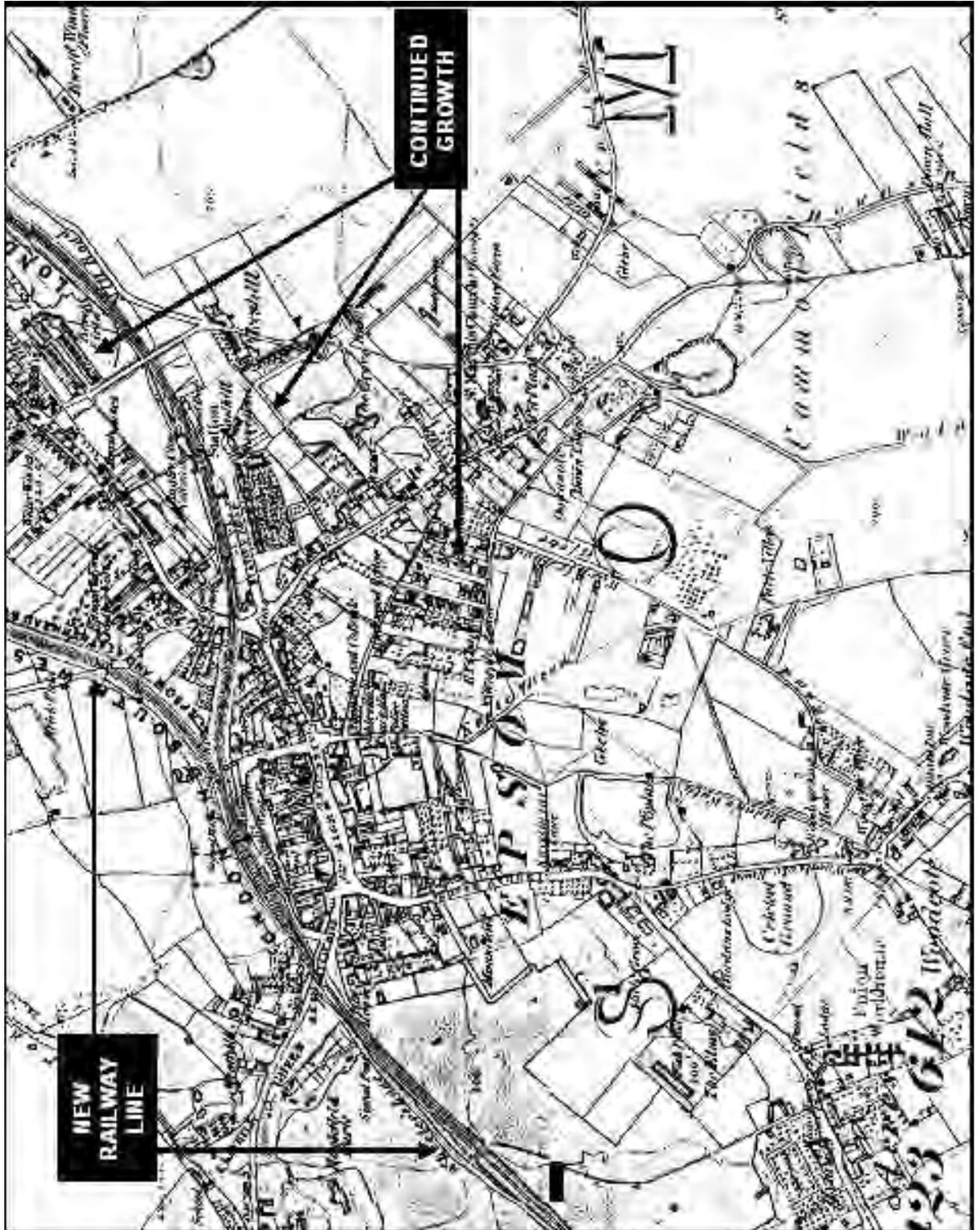
² It is interesting to note that when the Council formed in 1894, it initially continued to meet at the same times and with the same members as the Rural Sanitary Authority, dating from 1872, and used the same minute book.

was the first Surrey parish to implement it. A Local Inquiry was held in 1849 and a Board of Health created in 1850, with considerable duality of membership and process with the Guardians. A small-scale sketch map from the Inquiry report is shown in Figure 1.8. Of greater value, however, is an 1852 large-scale map of the central area drawn up in by civil engineers for the Board of Health as a precursor to major drainage works²⁹. At 24" per mile, and with a strong focus on roads, this provides a useful picture of the changes in the town after 1838. The extract in Figure 2.7 shows the area to the east of the old High Street, where new roads have been rapidly developed around the recently built (then terminus) station of the new Croydon railway line.

The next great step forward was the publication of the First County Series OS six-inch maps, which for Epsom was in 1866. A large-scale reproduction of this map is enclosed separately with this dissertation as the primary reference map for the mid-nineteenth century. Figure 2.8 shows a small area extracted for comparison to the previous maps above. Note the arrival (in the early 1850s) of the second railway line from Wimbledon and the extension of both lines southwest to Leatherhead.

It is interesting to compare this 1866 map with the 1869 Enclosure Map (Figure 2.9, which shows the northeastern part of the area in Figure 2.8) to see the speedy expansion of the town to the east and south. The (relatively new) Station Road shown in the 1866 map is by 1869 already extended into the new Alexandra Road, opening up new building land on the old Common Fields – a major new development owing nothing to the historic road pattern, and a clear sign of the pressures of suburban development the railways brought. Many of the enclosed plots recorded in this extract from the map are already sized and configured as building plots – those numbered 47 to 55 on the south side of Alexandra Road are good examples which align closely to modern house plots. (Section 4 examines the Enclosure Map in greater detail).

FIGURE 2.8 – CENTRAL AREA IN THE 1866 SIX-INCH OS MAP



The treatment of topography in these various early large-scale maps is interesting. Contour mapping was as yet unknown. The Tithe Commutation and Enclosure surveyors had no interest in representing land height anyway; the task for both was to show where the surveyed land plots were, not how they were configured in the vertical dimension. The 1852 drainage map has a different agenda. Topography is of vital interest when installing drains, and the surveyor used extensive height benchmarking along roads and likely drainage routes for this purpose, although the use of contours or colour differentiation for heights has not yet arrived. The 1866 OS map makes do with occasional spot heights, particularly along the roads. It is surprisingly difficult to assess the detailed lie of the land away from roads, as the spot height interval is so great – a very interesting contrast to the 1811 one-inch OS map, whose purpose demanded clear indication of militarily significant heights.

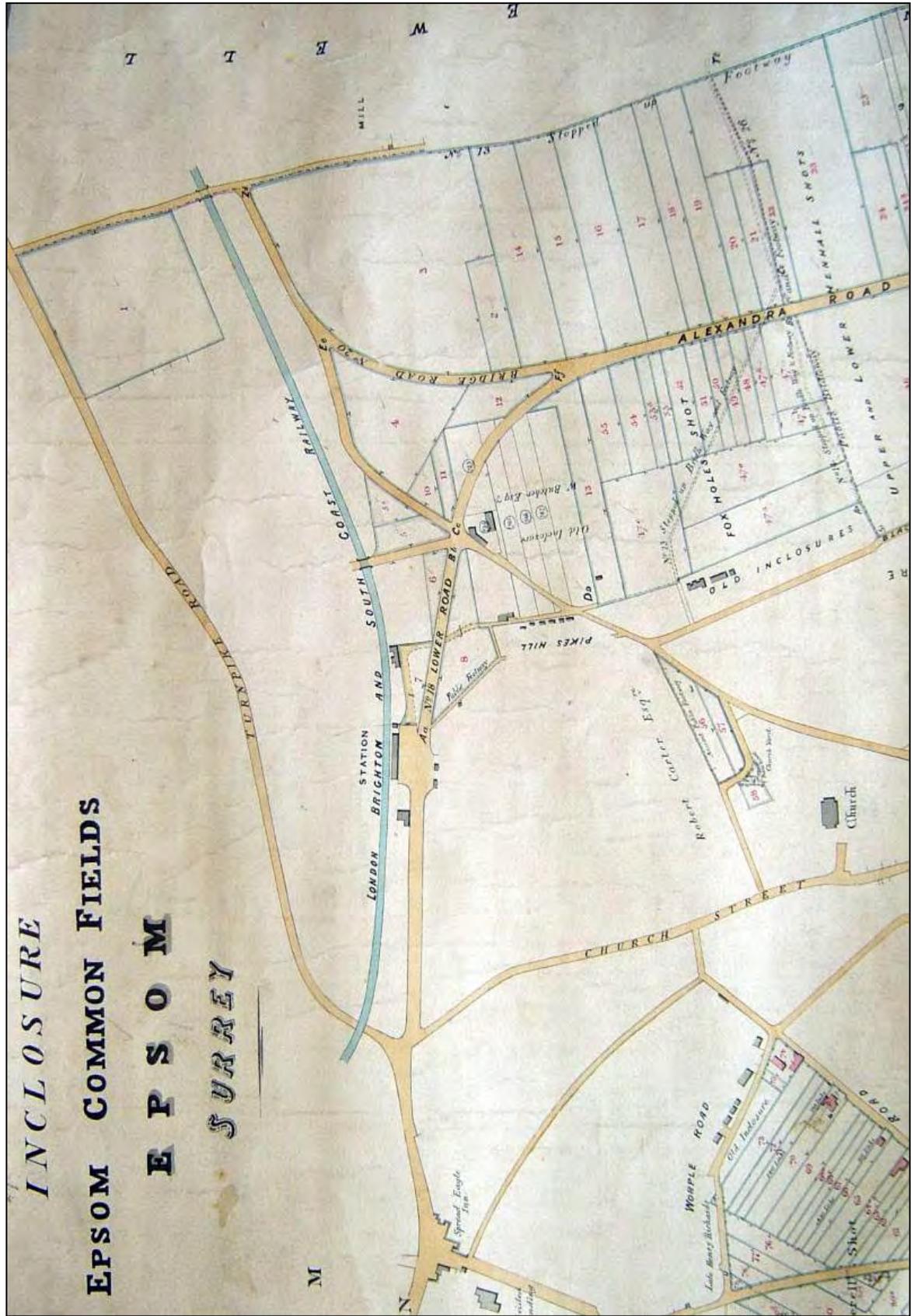
Land Surveys

There are two extant surveys of the Manor of Ebbisham, from 1680³⁰ and 1755/56³¹. Neither includes any map or plan, being lists of copyholds and freeholds in the manor. Some roads are mentioned as property boundaries in the latter – confirming for instance the existence of the ancient roads of Church Street, Chalk Lane, Worple Way (now Road) and Clayhill (now West Hill).

Unfortunately, the earlier survey, of particular interest as dating from around the time the town was transformed and moved west to become a spa, refers to road boundaries only vaguely as “the highway” or “King’s highway”. The “highway... from Ebbisham to Leatherhead” is mentioned, but it is not clear whether this followed the line taken by the later turnpike road.

The 1837 Tithe Map was prepared in conjunction with a full survey of occupation and ownership for tithe commutation purposes. The Apportionment (published in 1841) provides

FIGURE 2.9 - EPSOM COMMON FIELDS ENCLOSURE MAP OF 1869 – NORTHEAST AREA



comprehensive details of tenancies, but adds nothing to Map in terms of the state of roads and tracks at the time³².

White in his 1920s book quotes a vulgar Latin extract from a cartulary of Chertsey Abbey in 1495 (which unfortunately research for this Dissertation has failed to trace)³³. This is a recorded circuit by one of the monks of the Ebbisham Parish bounds, providing some tantalising but indefinite clues to main routes radiating from the village at that date. Further consideration of this reported document is set out in Section 4.

Turnpike Trust Records

The history of turnpike roads is a potentially extensive study in its own right, and the subject has been covered elsewhere (see "Tame, SG" in Bibliography). For the purposes of the present study, turnpikes are treated on a par with other local routes.

Had the early archives of the Epsom And Ewell Turnpike Trust (formed in 1755) survived, these could have provided a valuable record of the main road through Epsom before its construction. Unfortunately, the only traceable records date from 1830 onwards and, being the accounting books, are of primary interest to the economic historian. Tame records that the earlier records were lost in a nineteenth century fire in the Surrey county archives³⁴.

The original Turnpike Acts still exist, although the originals and much accompanying materials were destroyed in the 1834 fire at the House of Commons. The two associated Acts of significance to Epsom were those dealing with the Horsham to Ebbisham Road (note the antiquated form of the name still used) and the Epsom to Ewell and Kingston Road³⁵. Turnpike Acts are a useful source of evidence of the intentions and details of those involved. As enabling acts, they are not in themselves definitive in regard to precise routing and the relationship to pre-existing roads, since these were determined subsequently through survey process.

Amongst secondary sources there has been extensive coverage of the economic impact of turnpikes - see Bibliography: works cited for Albert, Barker and Pawson. Bogart's recent work is also of interest³⁶.

Primary Written Sources

Lacking local maps in any detail prior to about 1760, analysis of the configuration and state of the route network requires support from contemporary written sources. These are limited. Early references do occur in the records of Chertsey Abbey, but these are scattered, and – with the exception of 1495 scrap discussed above and in Section 4, those for which references are traceable are concerned only with basic records of sub-letting and tithes.

After the Dissolution in the 1530s, the manor passed through various ownerships, and the primary records available are occasional legal transfers – none of which, unfortunately, holds any form of map or description of roads – and the Court rolls of the Manor. These latter items are only extant from 1663, and were the subject of a very comprehensive and time-consuming analysis by Dr Lehmann in the 1980s³⁷. Lehmann succeeded in unravelling the huge sequence of property dealings recorded between 1663 and 1925, when the District Council acquired the Manor. To this extent, he was able to confirm the continuity of the base street pattern in the town centre from 1663, but only a limited amount is recorded outside this area.

There are several commentaries and travellers' descriptions of the town from around the mid-seventeenth century onwards – Pepys, Toland, Fiennes and Dorling (details in Bibliography) are all of value in establishing a sense of the local conditions, including road state, but not in assessing likely route configurations. What does become clear from these descriptions is that Epsom and other towns in the Surrey clay belt were substantially cut off outside the summer months for all but the determined traveller prior to the turnpiking of main roads from the mid-eighteenth century.

Physical Evidence.

Given the limitations described above for other evidential sources, analysis of early route-ways must depend heavily upon observation of physical manifestations still observable on the ground today.

First and foremost must be fieldwork on the ground; as Hoskins said, the historian *"dealing with the period before... written documents... is forced to use this visual evidence"*³⁸. The present study commenced with maps, but without surveying the ground, conclusions would have been limited, and in many cases wrong. With the earliest useful maps being under 250 years old, assessments of the antiquity of present routeways are crucially dependent upon fieldwork. Key examples of useful evidence are the appearance of tracks – for example, whether they show signs of old lateral drainage ditches, perhaps indicating early origins; and hedgerows, where they exist. The "Hooper's Rule" approach to old hedges - 100 years' age per woody species - can provide a valuable indication³⁹. In outlying areas of Epsom, undisturbed by suburban development, this is a crucial guide to the existence of ancient routes (*Plate 3*). Boundary ditches and banks are also indicative where they bound a route (*Plate 12*), although one has to be careful in some areas. For instance, the ill-advised efforts to plough and plant Epsom Common during the 1940s created a number of deceptive modern drainage ditches and banks, now overgrown.

Of particular interest are the Corporation of London coal tax marker posts dating from the 1860s. These were set up around London at the boundary of the Metropolitan Police District under the Coal and Wine Duties (Continuation) Act of 1861 at points at which duty had to be paid on coal and wine being brought into the city. Martin Nail did the definitive work on those in Epsom Parish, of which there are fifteen; several are in locations where there now is only a rough path or minor bridleway⁴⁰. There may be issues of definition or priority by the commissioners charged with placing the markers, but it is fair to assume that the pres-

ence of a marker is prima facie evidence that a route of at least minor significance existed at the time (*Plates 13, 14*).

Local Histories

Epsom has attracted many local historians, antiquarians and memoir-writers. The most useful are listed in the Bibliography. In general, they are more interested in personalities, nobility and buildings than in roads and tracks. The notable exception is Reginald White, whose work is cited several times herein - although perhaps as frequently to question his conclusions as to build upon them. Nonetheless, all these works are useful in providing a sense of atmosphere, particularly contemporary memoirs such as those of Dorling and Andrews. These, and more recent compilations of old photographs, provide a sense of how the urban part of the parish, at least, felt and looked. White's photographs of old trackways (all taken prior to 1927), along with a small number in other works, are invaluable in providing a visualisation of several ancient routes lost in subsequent suburban development.

Chapter 2 Endnotes

- ¹⁶ Christopher Saxton, *Map of Surrey, Sussex, Kent and Middlesex* (from his County Atlas, London 1579)
- ¹⁷ John Senex, *A New Map of the County of Surrey Laid down from an Actual Survey*, (London, 1729)
- ¹⁸ JB Harley, "Power and Legitimation in the English Geographical Atlases of the Eighteenth Century", in *The New Nature of Maps* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2001) p117
- ¹⁹ Harley, *Power and Legitimation...*, pp119-121
- ²⁰ Charles Abdy, *Epsom and Ewell in historic maps of Surrey* (Nonsuch Antiquarian Society Occasional Paper No. 42, Ewell, 2003)
- ²¹ Harley, "Maps, Knowledge and Power", in *The New Nature of Maps*, p69
- ²² John Andrews & Andrew Dury, *A Map of the Country Sixty Five Miles round London* (London, 1777)
- ²³ John Cary, *Actual Survey of the country fifteen miles round London* (London, 1786)
- ²⁴ Joseph Lindley & William Crosley, *Map of the County of Surrey* (London, 1793)
- ²⁵ Ordnance Survey, (*Old Series*) first edition, Sheet 8, "Engraved at the Drawing Room in the Tower, under the Direction of Col. Mudge" (London, 1811)
- ²⁶ Ordnance Survey, website history section (extracted 19/02/06)
<http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/media/features/introos/index.html>
- ²⁷ Edward Owen & Robert Lewen (surveyors), *Epsom Tithe Map & Tithe Apportionment* (London, 1838 & 1842, Diocesan copies in SHS Archives 864/1/55 and 864/1/56)
- ²⁸ FWT Studios, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council borough map (London, 2003)
- ²⁹ Lee and Stevenson, Civil Engineers, *Plan of the Town of Epsom* (London, 1852 - SHS ref 3796/1)
- ³⁰ Anon, *Manorial Survey Book, Manor of Ebbisham* (1680, handwritten, SHS archive K31/4/1)
- ³¹ Anon, *Manorial Survey, Manor of Ebbisham* (1756, handwritten, SHS K31/4/2)
- ³² Owen & Lewen, *Epsom Tithe Apportionment*, 1842
- ³³ Reginald White, *Ancient Epsom*, pp42-45

-
- ³⁴ SG Tame, *The Role of turnpike roads in the Surrey economy 1690 to 1841* (self-published 1998 - SHS/Shelf Location 388.1) p1
- ³⁵ *An act for amending, widening and keeping in repair, the roads from Epsom through Ewell to Kingston-upon-Thames and Thames Ditton, in the County of Surrey* (Act of Parliament, 1755, 28 Geo.II. Cap.45)
- ³⁶ Dan Bogart, "Did Turnpike Trusts Increase Transportation Investment in Eighteenth-Century England?", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 65/02, June 2005, pp 439-468)
- ³⁷ HL Lehmann, *The Residential Copyholds of Epsom* (Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, 1987)
- ³⁸ WG Hoskins, *Local History in England* (3rd Edition, Longman, London, 1984), p145
- ³⁹ Max Hooper, *Hedges and Local History* (Standing Conference for Local History, London, 1971)
- ⁴⁰ Martin Nail, *City Posts (Coal Posts) in Epsom & Ewell And Banstead*, (Nonsuch Antiquarian Society, Ewell, 1964)

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTRIBUTION OF TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY TO THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF ROUTES

This Section considers a number of key aspects of the physical geography of the Epsom area as causal factors for the pattern of local route development.

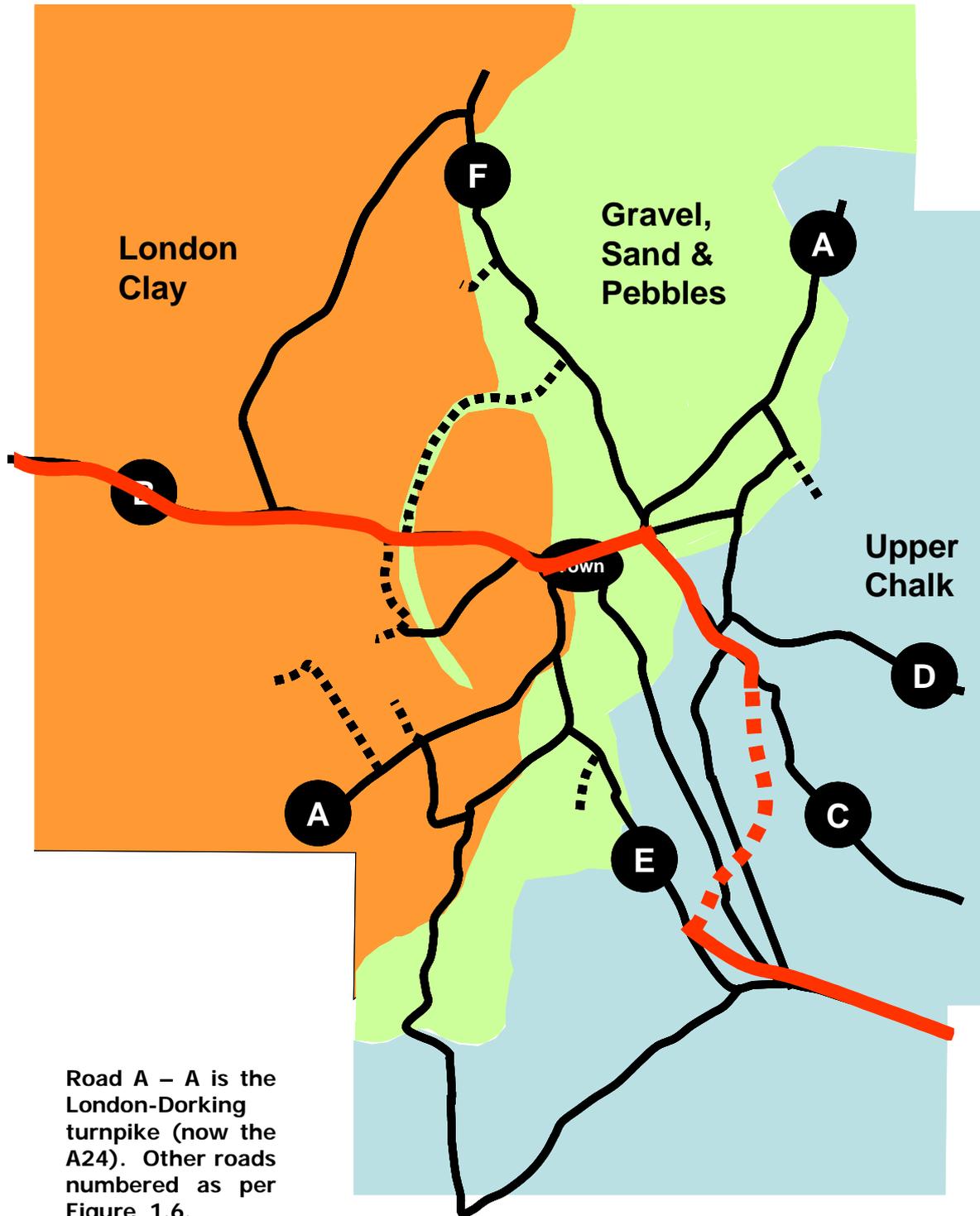
Figure 3.1 on the next page shows the main routes per the 1866 OS map, overlaid onto the local geology⁴¹. As this shows, Epsom developed on a band of sands and gravels (both modern alluvium and a shallow sedimentary bed separating the Upper Chalk from the London Clay beds above) overlaying the Upper Chalk of Epsom Downs to the east, and below the thick beds of London Clay to the west. This is the southern upsweep of the London syncline forming the North Downs.

Figure 3.2 shows the same routes⁴² projected onto a topographical map – of differential land heights. The general pattern is of land rising significantly from northwest to southeast, from below the 50m contour to well over 100m on the Downs.

Taking these two views together, some observations about the town's location can be drawn. A site on the alluvial sand and gravel below the Downs clearly has advantages in terms of drainage and ground conditions during wet periods. The clay to the west is extremely heavy and sticky in winter, and notoriously difficult to build on due to its tendency to shrink when dry and swell when wet. Sites at the foot of the chalk Downs meant access to water. Epsom sits near the spring line in wet weather and relied upon wells, replenished by groundwater filtered down through the chalk and puddling in the gravels above the London Clay beds.

The route pattern also exhibits clear relations to the geology and topology. The main London-Dorking turnpike through the town runs generally along the line of the well-drained gravel beds. Much of this route long preceded the establishment of the toll road, being a line of easy travel in most weather conditions. However, it is interesting to note that south

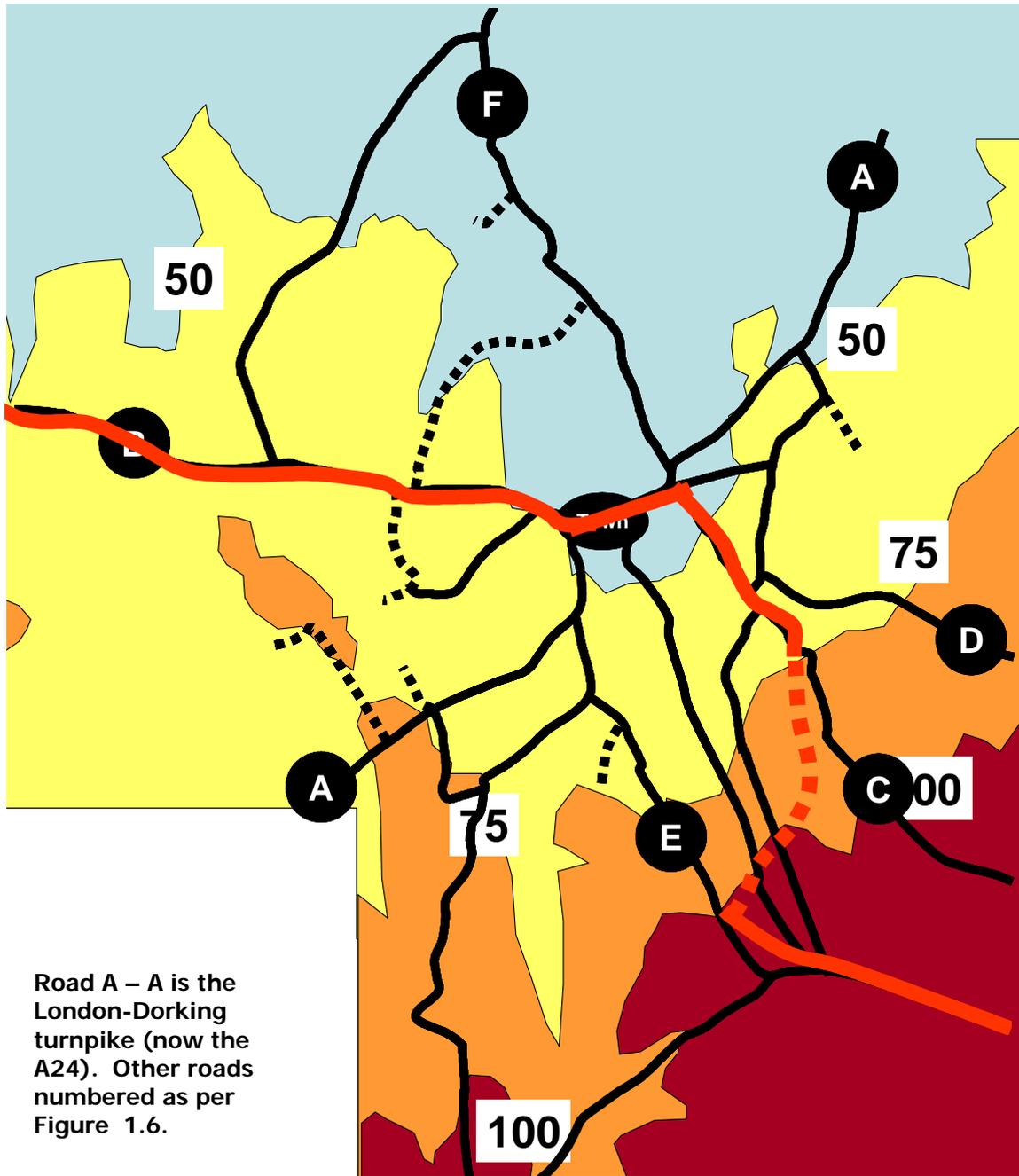
FIGURE 3.1 – SOLID GEOLOGY



Road A – A is the London-Dorking turnpike (now the A24). Other roads numbered as per Figure 1.6.

The red overlaid route is that of the transect at Figure 2.3

FIGURE 3.2 – ELEVATION (METRES ABOVE OS DATUM)



The red overlaid route is that of the transect at Figure 2.3

of Epsom, the road traverses the London clay in its route southwest. In his work on Surrey turnpikes (1998), Tame noted that construction of the Dorking road required a raised causeway where it crossed the clay – a costly undertaking unlikely to have been possible in the Epsom area at any period between the building of the Roman Stane Street (see Section 4) and the turnpike⁴³. It is fair to assume that the (now minor) road from Epsom through Woodcote to Ashted and Leatherhead south of the turnpike was a primary route during this period, sticking to the well-drained gravel.

The profile in Figure 3.4 illustrates the basic physical/human geography relationships as they developed historically. It is not strictly a transect, since rather than a straight line, it follows a combined route from Malden Rushett in the west to Epsom racecourse in the south-east (roads B, A, C, K and E). The actual route is shown in red on Figure 3.3 below.

FIGURE 3.3 – ROUTE USED FOR PROFILE (TRANSECT) AT FIGURE 3.4

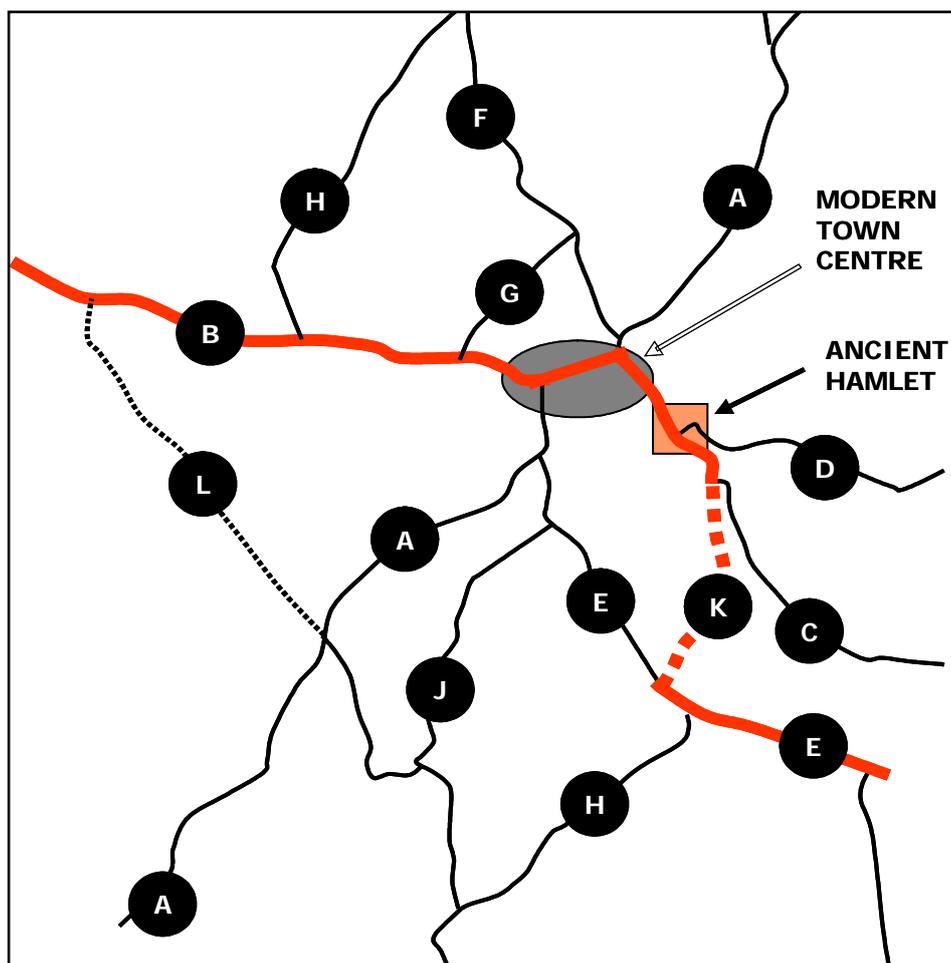
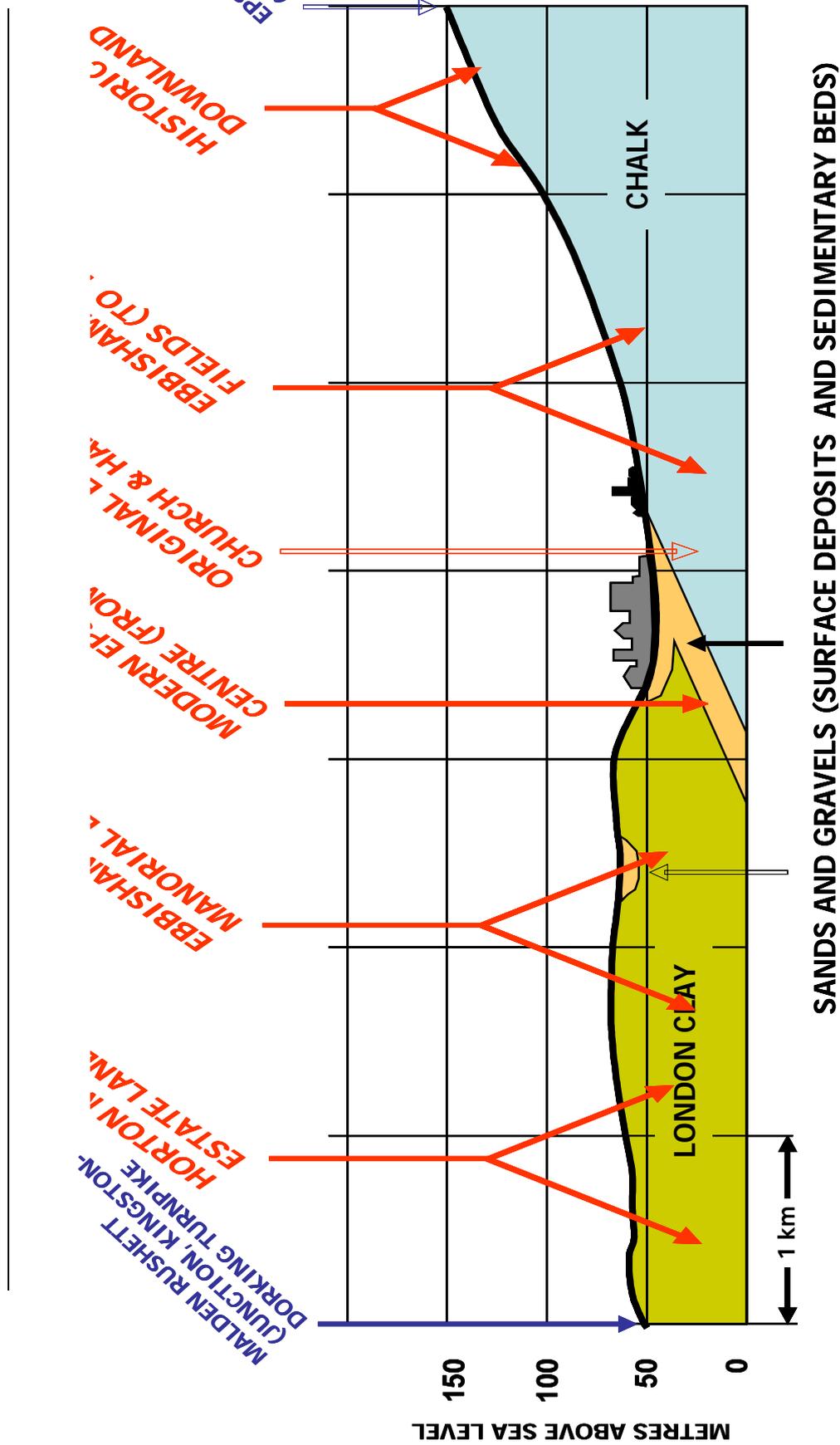


FIGURE 3.4: PROFILE (TRANSECT) OF ROUTE FROM MALDEN RUSHETT TO EPSOM DOWNS
 (See Figure 3.3. Vertical scale exaggerated)



The profile shows how the nature of the land changes along this route, tracing parts of the oldest roads across Epsom. It highlights the original location of Ebbisham around the parish church (*Plate 1*) on sand and gravel of the Thanet beds. The modern town centre, situated north and west of the old village for reasons examined later, straddles the gravel outcrop. In both instances, the sites offered relatively dry ground with reasonable water access (via shallow wells and springs for much of the year).

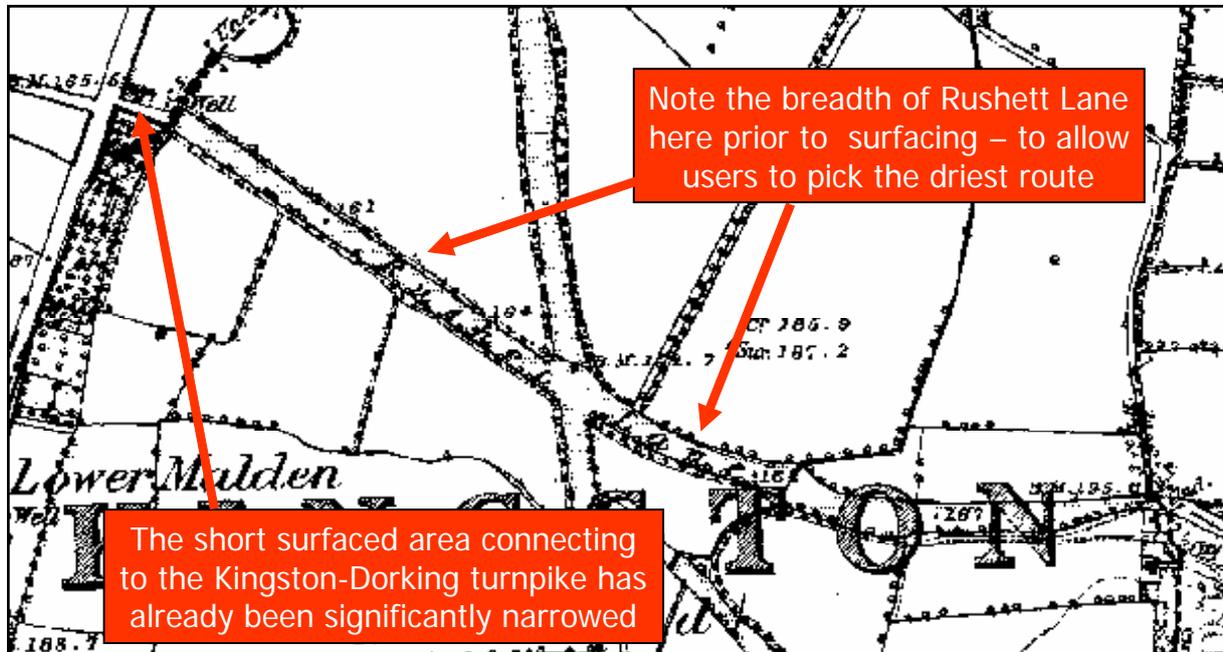
The general road pattern differs significantly as land height and subsoil conditions change in the general northwest-to-southeast transect. To the south and east is a fan of several local roads up the Downs from Epsom, following the dry chalk hill upwards. In the other direction, just two roads cross the clay belt, the more northerly of which – towards Hook (road “F” on the maps) - follows the gravel as far as possible.

The road to the west – to Malden Rushett (“B”) – is the one significant route out of the district crossing the main clay area. Skirting north of Epsom Common, it is evident from early maps (see Figure 3.5) that this road was unusually wide – perhaps 50 yards or so - in the early eighteenth century, indicating that many alternative tracks had developed as travellers attempted to avoid ruts, puddles and areas made impassable by other traffic during wet/winter periods⁴⁴. In contrast, roads southeast of the town, on the chalk slopes, were no wider than necessary to accommodate passing traffic – and can today often be seen incised below the surrounding country by wear over centuries (*Plates 3, 9*).

Clearly, elevation (although itself a function partly of geology) was a key factor in these differences. Even without the advantages of a well-drained chalk subsoil, the southeastern area could have been expected to drain better due to relative height and slope. However, the stickiness of the London Clay can defeat drainage even where it is uplifted. The Malden Rushett road crosses slightly higher land as it leaves the town (what is now West Hill was

until recently known eponymously as and wholly accurately as "Clayhill"). This relative altitude does little to relieve the problem[‡].

FIGURE 3.5 – RUSHETT LANE 1866 (OS SIX-INCH)



[‡] As the writer's own garden on the fringes of Clayhill's summit amply demonstrates during wet periods.

Chapter 3 Endnotes

- ⁴¹ Anon, *Geology of Epsom & Ewell*: simplified map prepared from British Geological Survey original data (Local History Centre at Bourne Hall Library, Ewell) author not named.
- ⁴² Ordnance Survey, *Explorer* series, sheets 146 & 161, 1997-2001
- ⁴³ SG Tame, *The Role of turnpike roads in the Surrey economy 1690 to 1841* (self-published "Dissertation", 1998 SHS 388.1)
- ⁴⁴ Ordnance Survey, six-inch Epsom sheet, 1866

CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORT NETWORK EVOLUTION IN THE LANDSCAPE

Section 3 described the underlying geology and topography of Epsom as a basic determinant for route development. However, roads and tracks only develop where people wish to travel – whether by horse, wheeled conveyance or on foot. The pattern of settlement is a primary cause for this, but is itself substantially an outcome of the physical landscape, as beautifully put by Hoskins: *“The geologist... explains... the bones of the landscape, the fundamental structure that gives form and colour to the scene and produces a certain kind of topography... But the flesh that covers the bones, and the details of the features, are the concern of the historian... to show how man has clothed the geological skeleton”*⁴⁵.

There is a complex of discernible reasons for this pattern; some interact with each other, particularly to the extent that physical factors preceding human occupation determined many of the configurations of settlement, which in turn at least partially influenced the routing of roads and tracks in particular.

The Roman and Medieval Period

The earliest proven settlement at Epsom was the Anglo-Saxon hamlet/manor of Ebbisham, first known from the charter (mentioned in the Introduction above) of the Abbot of Chertsey of 993, and which he claimed his predecessors had held since the seventh century. It is distinctly possible – but unconfirmed in the absence of any archaeological evidence to date – that the hamlet had even earlier origins. There is a well-studied Roman villa and tileworks about a mile west on Ashted common, attesting to significant industrial presence in the area, as well as agricultural activity.

During the Roman period there were some known route components. These include the Ashted villa, and the Chichester-London road (Stane Street), passing close to Ebbisham (*Plate 1*). That proximity itself must have enabled an unusually ready access to London for

residents in the area. Archaeology has shown that Ewell, a mile north, was a substantial Roman settlement, and that there was also at least one more noteworthy Roman building adjacent to Ashtead church and manor. In his 1711 "Letter to Eudoxa", John Toland wrote of an "*abundance of ... Roman bricks and tiles*" dug up in the vicinity of Epsom Court (the old Epsom manor house – *Plate 11*), although there are no excavation records for that site⁴⁶.

The records for the Anglo-Saxon period are sketchy in the extreme. However, Blair in his work on early medieval Surrey notes a series of villages with "~ham" placenames – Bookham, Fetcham, Pachenesham Mickleham and Epsom – which "*argues strongly for Anglo-Saxon settlement along the lines of Stane Street and of the west-east trackway on which the villages lie*", running along the dip-slope of the North Downs⁴⁷ (*Plates 6, 7, 8*). Evidence for the exact line of the trackway is not adduced, but Blair maps a route joining Leatherhead, Ashtead manor and Epsom village. He considered these settlements as all "*well established and nucleated by 1086*".

Domesday recorded Ebbisham in 1066 at 33 hides in area with 34 villeins, four bordars, six bondmen, two churches, two mills and 17 ploughs. White plausibly calculated this as not far short of the total area of the later civil parish (4,423 acres) and as approximating a total population of 300⁴⁸. At that time, Horton Manor seems to have had no separate presence to record, presumably being an integral part of Ebbisham. This scale of population would not have been inconsiderable, and would seem likely to have generated a degree of regular traffic with neighbouring settlements – the nearest of significance also recorded in Domesday being Ewell (1 mile), Ashtead (2 miles), Cuddington (2 miles) Burgh (2 miles), Cheam (2 miles) and Malden (3 miles).

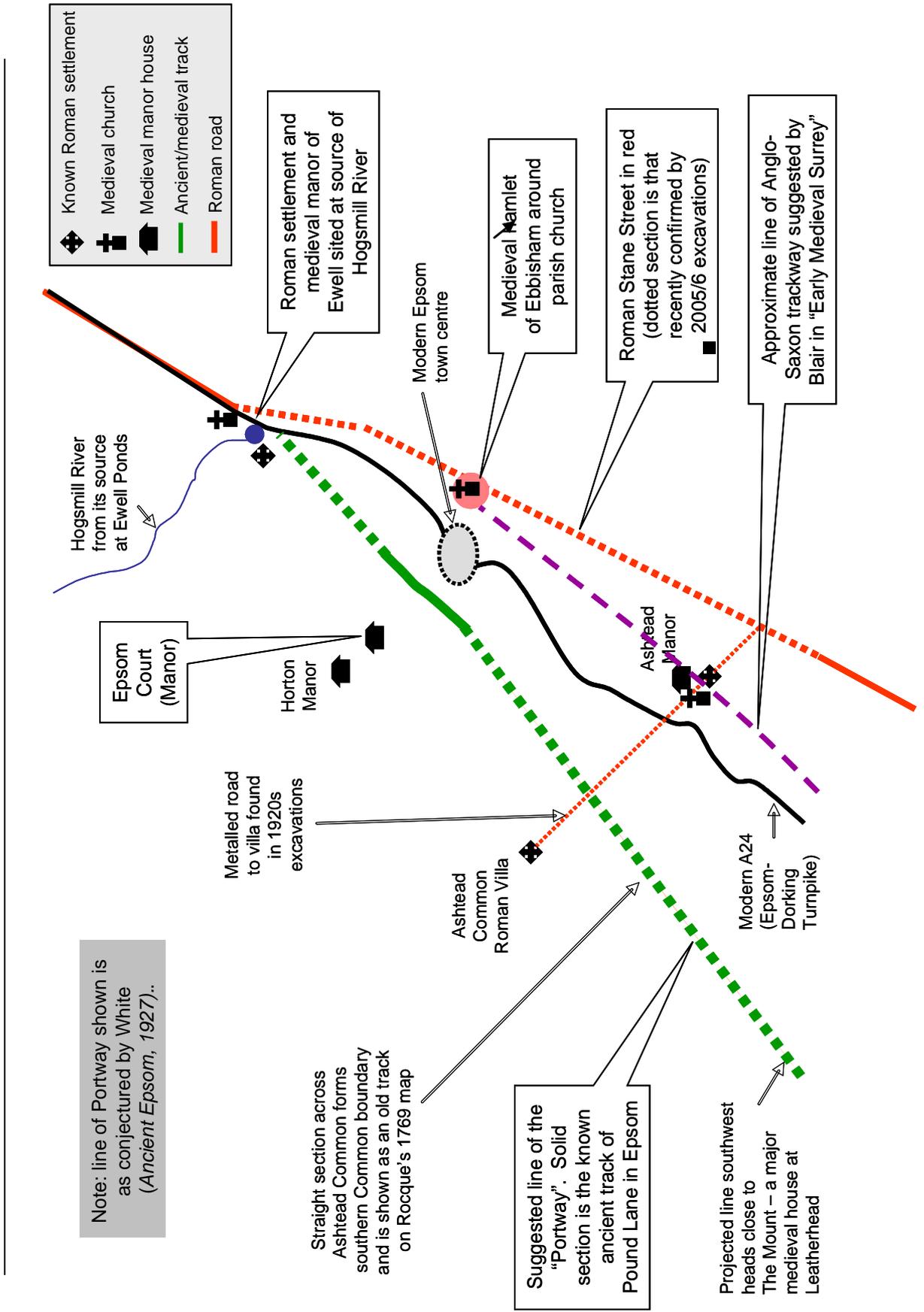
Establishing the exact medieval route pattern is not easy; there is little in the way of useful material. The Abbey of Chertsey held Ebbisham up to the Dissolution, but it appears never to have been a very major holding; it was usually sublet and there are no surviving surveys

or useful descriptions of the geography of the Manor in records of the period)⁴⁹. As noted in Section 2, White in his 1920s book quotes a vulgar Latin extract from a 1495 cartulary of the Abbey. This survey of the Ebbisham parish bounds (quoted in full by White) is the earliest written evidence for the presence of specific roads crossing the bounds⁵⁰. The document has proved untraceable during research for this Dissertation, but there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of White's quotation. It describes the boundary of the parish, mentioning two "*King's ways*" crossed by it, along with a "*Portway*" (from which White constructed a proposition for an ancient route by this name between Leatherhead and Ewell). White identified these three roads as those numbered B, G and E on Figure 1.6. The Portway in particular he suggests as an ancient spur off Stane Street from Ewell past Epsom Court (the manor house), after Stane Street itself has diverted up Epsom Downs to follow its observed line to Mickleham and Box Hill⁵¹.

The evidence for this Portway where White places it is mixed. There certainly is an old track along this line, shown in early maps (Senex, 1729; Rocque, 1768), evident in Pound Lane at Epsom Court (*Plates 10, 11*) and in the line of the southern edge of Ashted Common (*Plates 17, 18*). However, for much of the year it would have been impassable (where unpaved it still is), lying on the London Clay. Nor is there any sign – on early maps or on the ground today – of any continuation towards Ewell beyond Pound Lane, where it would have had to cross a wet area with several streams in premodern times. As noted above, Blair identified the line of the main Anglo-Saxon track – plausibly – as passing close to Ashted church and manor (which themselves lie adjacent to a Roman settlement), rather than along White's conjectured Portway route, half a mile to the north⁵².

The sketch map at Figure 4.1 brings these various elements together, highlighting one clear potential reason for the location of ancient Ebbisham – its location on Stane Street where it dog-legs between the settlement and springs at Ewell and its straight continuation line south

FIGURE 4.1: KEY ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL ROADS – CONJECTURED AND/OR KNOWN – AROUND EPSOM

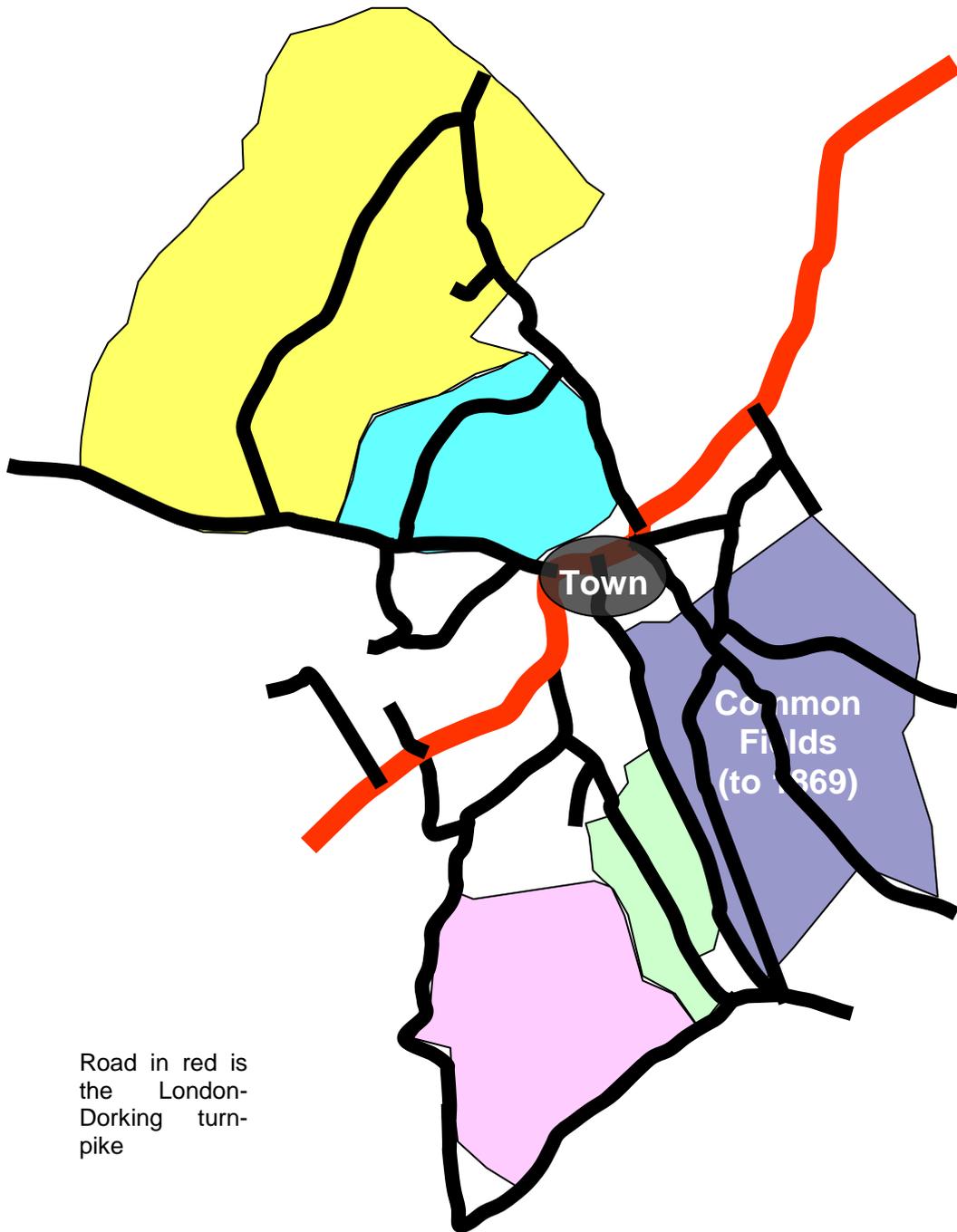


and west from Epsom Downs (*Plate 1*). Until recently the exact alignment of this section was unknown. However, recent excavations in several locations by the Roman Studies Group of the Surrey Archaeological Society have now established it definitively, passing close to the east of St Martin's Church in the old centre of Ebbisham, kinking slightly where the modern Croydon rail line crosses it⁵³. It must be a matter for conjecture why the route should have been so comprehensively lost in this area; no modern road follows it, perhaps arguing for a significant discontinuity of settlement in the early post-Roman period.

A clear secondary factor for Ebbisham's location is its probable linkage to the various "hams" along the Downs dip-slope, as suggested by Blair. On balance, his suggested line for this track is more persuasive than White's conjectured "Portway" extension of Pound Lane from Epsom. The latter would have been unusable for much of the year due to its clay subsoil; but Anglo-Saxon routes (and most others before and after until the turnpike era) more usually adopted the driest available line, which would clearly have been to the south and east, through Ashted village as shown.

Figure 4.2 provides another set of formative influences for the road pattern as it developed. Medieval Epsom evolved with its open Common Fields to the south and east (on the well-drained and more easily-ploughed chalk slopes). The local estate holdings were established at different times - the two northerly estates of Epsom (*Plate 11*) and Horton (*Plate 20*) Manors being of Anglo-Saxon and medieval origin respectively⁵⁴. The Woodcote estate originated as ecclesiastical land, probably an outlying holding of Chertsey Abbey (not, as claimed by the RAC, which now owns it, "*the site of a twelfth century abbey*"⁵⁵), and became a noble estate (and seat of the Baltimore family) after the Dissolution. Durdans was assembled by early enclosure of the western part of the Common Fields in the seventeenth century.

FIGURE 4.2 – THE LARGE ESTATES OF EPSOM



Road in red is
the London-
Dorking turn-
pike

	Horton Manor Estate
	Epsom Manor Estate
	Woodcote Estate
	Durdans Estate
	Main area of Common Fields (to 1869)

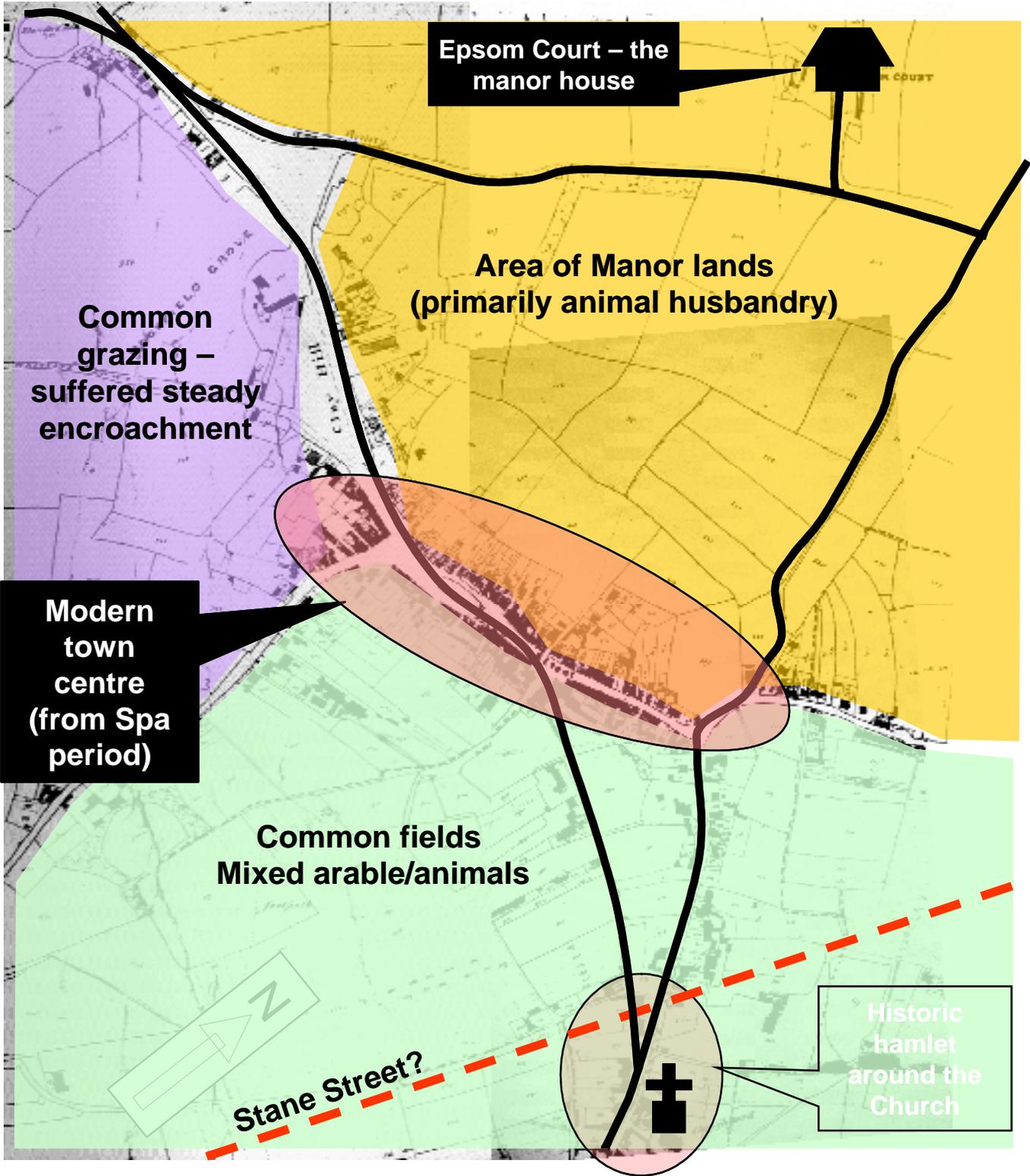
These differences show in the road pattern. Epsom Court (Manor) sat by Pound Lane (*Plate 12*) – now a bridle path, but part of the conjectured “Portway” discussed above – with its demesne lands surrounding. Horton Manor estate was accessed by a minor lane crossing between the two main routes leaving the town to the north and west (*Plate 20*), and possibly by a minor track from Epsom Court. Woodcote – the historic church estate - has no through road at all, whilst Durdans – the latecomer - straddles a pre-existing road (Chalk Lane) servicing the Common Fields (*Plate 9*). By comparison, the residual part of the Common Fields formally enclosed in 1869 (purple in Figure 4.2) was crossed by a significant number of major roads (and an extensive network of field paths - *Plates 3, 4*).

As illustrated earlier by the transect at Figure 3.4, Ebbisham developed on gravel deposits separating the Upper Chalk from the London Clay above. The modern town centre, north-west of the old village for reasons examined later, straddles the gravel outcrop. Both sites offered relatively dry ground with reasonable access to water via shallow wells and springs.

Agriculturally, the land to the southeast - on the Chalk - possessed well-drained and lighter topsoil, becoming the site for the relatively intensively cultivated Common Fields. To the west, the Epsom Court demesne lands (*Plate 11*) lay substantially on the gravel, with the higher Clayhill at the southern end (*Plate 10*). The newer Horton Manor to the west was chiefly clay, and always focused largely on animal grazing. To the southwest, Epsom Common (waste) was and is a very wet clay unsuited to any agriculture except rough summer grazing. It is therefore unsurprising that the most intensive network of local tracks and roads was in the south-eastern quadrant, serving access to the Common Fields and Downs.

As mentioned in Section 2, the manorial survey of 1755/56⁵⁶ – confirms the existence of the ancient roads of Church Street, Chalk Lane (*Plate 9*), Worple Road (*Plates 6, 7, 9*) and Clayhill. The earlier 1680 survey⁵⁷ refers to road boundaries only vaguely. The “highway...

FIGURE 4.3: SKETCH OF THE MEDIEVAL PARISH (CENTRAL AREA)



from Ebbisham to Leatherhead" is mentioned, but it is doubtful whether this followed the line (across the London clay) of the later turnpike.

So, whatever its possible Roman origins, until the mid-seventeenth century Ebbisham was an insignificant hamlet with no distinguishing features. A few buildings clustered around the church (*Plates 1, 2*), it lay some distance from the manor at Epsom Court, past which ran Pound Lane, just possibly part of an ancient "Portway". This is the position shown in Figure 4.3, overlaid upon the 1837 Tithe Map – the earliest definitive map available, in which early village features are still observable. The first overlay shows a schematic of the medieval structure. The top one shows how the town centre moved to the west – see below.

The Spa Town

The long obscurity of Ebbisham ended suddenly around 1620, with the development of the "Epsom Well" on the Common to the west. The perceived health-giving properties of the water (imbued with Epsom Salts) generated rapid interest and many visitors in the summer months, including members of the royal household. Pepys visited and his Diary entries for 25 July 1663 give a flavour of the traffic: *"Creed and I rode forward; the road being full of citizens going and coming toward Epsom, where, when we came, we could hear of no lodging, the town so full..... and so rode through Epsom, the whole town over, seeing the various companys that were there walking..... But, Lord! to see how many I met there of citizens, that I could not have thought to have seen there, or that they had ever had it in their heads or purses to go down thither."*⁵⁸

Between 1620 and 1700, this influx generated rapid growth, and the town centre moved westward towards the Well. Consolidation in this area (now the High Street) was reinforced by the activities of a local entrepreneur, Dr Livingston, who set up an alternative well and associated diversions at the western end of the High Street. Figure 4.4 illustrates this westward expansion. It also shows the effect it had of focusing pressure and demand upon the

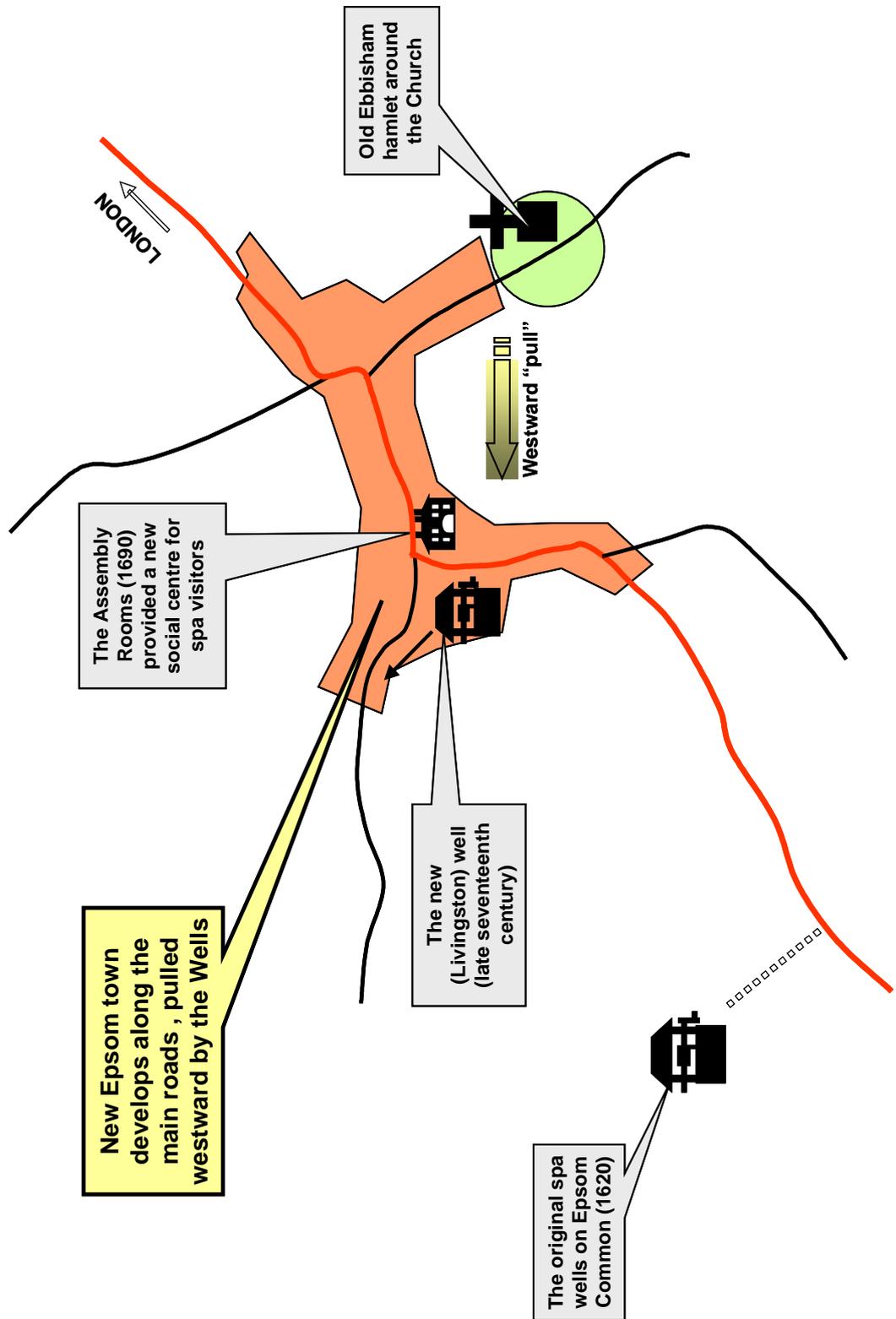
London-Dorking road (in red) as the key route for visitors, and the main route through to the old Well. It seems that the development of the High Street itself dates from this point.

It is important to stress how remote most of Surrey was at this time, with the influence of London only beginning to be felt in anything but a distant fashion. In his atlas of 1675 – the first to feature main roads routinely - Ogilby showed only four high roads across the county⁵⁹. One ran from London to Arundel over past Epsom over the Downs to Dorking, and seems largely to have followed the ancient but still surviving Stane Street. It is hard to imagine this could have accommodated much wheeled traffic by then – the route to the south of Epsom is steep in places and today frequently impassable in winter.

The pattern was clearly one of large numbers of visitors only during a short summer season when roads were usable. *“Until the late eighteenth century, Surrey had no effective means of communication between its neighbouring towns.. for several months of the year, farmers had no access to markets. Even on the margins of London, the badness of the ways near Epsom had emptied the Spa of its visitors in the Autumn”*⁶⁰. The general demand for access by coaches and carts must have some an effect on road standards in the adjacent areas. Celia Fiennes opined in the late seventeenth century that the: *“greatest pleasure of Epsom is ... Banstead Downs where is good aire and good rideing for Coaches and horses”*⁶¹.

Another major complicating factor in the development of the spa town and its route network was the arrival of horse racing on Epsom Downs around 1770 onwards. The race course, although only used a few times a year, drew steadily increasing numbers, especially when the Derby was established (1780). This necessitated mass access up the chalk slopes from Epsom and led to the development of a number of routes capable of carriage traffic (at least in summer). These crossed the area of the old village's Common Fields – leading to the next aspect of the human geography to be considered.

FIGURE 4.4: WESTWARD EXPANSION OF THE SPA TOWN FOCUSES ON THE LONDON-DORKING ROAD



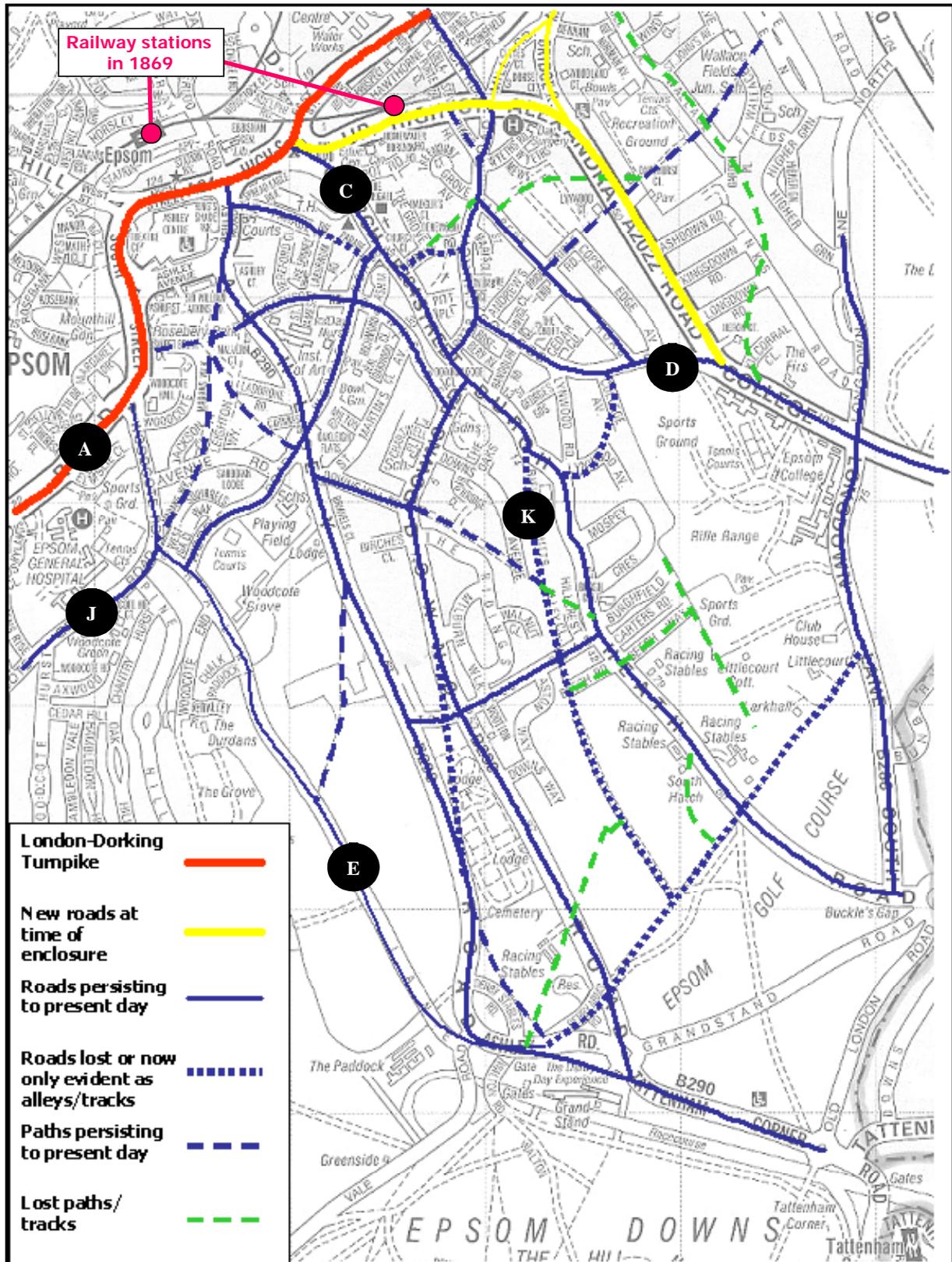
The Common Fields

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 have located the Common Fields to the southeast of the town, on the northern slope of the Downs. Epsom was late in accomplishing the final extinction of its open fields by Act of Parliament - in the 1860s. (In 1794, it had the largest recorded area of arable open fields in Surrey – 800 acres)⁶². The happy side-effect is that the 1869 Enclosure Map surveyed for the appointed Commissioners is unusually useful in its quality as a source for the *status quo ante*⁶³. It is especially valuable for its illustration of the network of minor tracks and paths criss-crossing the Fields. Figure 4.5 shows a derived analysis of the roads and tracks in this south-eastern sector, overlaid upon the modern town plan⁶⁴.

This network is dense, as the accumulation of centuries of landholding fragmentation in the Fields required many access paths and tracks for the tenants. Those tracks and paths shown on this map – whether now extant or lost – seem to have been the relatively major ones; there must have been many minor, unrecorded paths between and across the fields. One of the noticeable modern features in this part of Epsom, nearer to the town, is the significant number of surviving alleys and walks, preserved despite later housing development, but not then deemed worthy of upgrading to roads. This probably reflects the piecemeal nature of suburban development on the many smaller plots left from Enclosure, with the new access roads dictated by the plots available and negotiation of access arrangements - older paths and tracks remaining as historic rights of way (*Plates 3, 4*).

In practice, there had been repeated encroachment over preceding decades and centuries, as powerful individuals extended control. For instance, the original Durdans house (Figure 4.2) was built in 1652 partly on land earlier accumulated from plots on the western side of the Fields. Similarly, Epsom College acquired a substantial site carved out of the eastern Fields some years prior to the formal Enclosure. To this extent, earlier encroachments had

FIGURE 4.5: ROADS AND TRACKS IDENTIFIED IN THE 1869 ENCLOSURE MAP

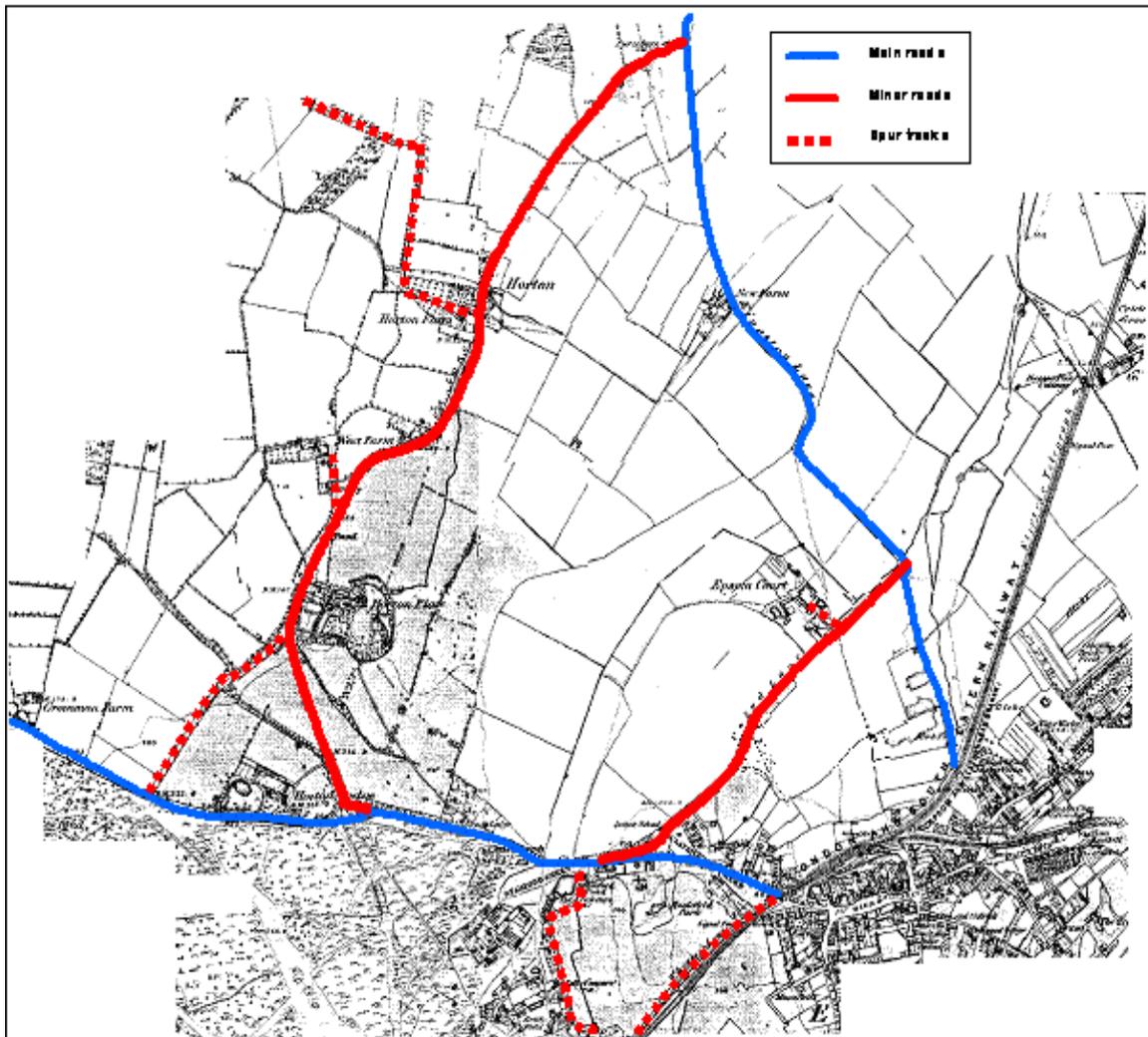


undoubtedly already extinguished some pre-existing tracks and paths as the fields they served were developed. A probable significant factor in the loss of the old line of Stane Street in the Epsom area was the emergence of the original church estate and later private estate of Woodcote (Figure 4.2), to the west of the Fields, across whose land it seems to have run.

One interesting feature of Enclosure was its reinforcement of the pattern of major carriage roads leading up to the Racecourse on the Downs, which one can envisage having become increasingly important as the arrival of the railway lines into Epsom (after 1848) led to increasing numbers attending race meetings. The new major routes of Station Road (now Upper High Street) and Alexandra Road (both marked yellow in Figure 4.5) show how the railway was already influencing development, both being constructed specifically to provide access to the original Croydon line station (now closed). This development clearly influenced the extinction of several older paths.

What is interesting is the extent to which the pattern established at Enclosure has been almost entirely preserved to the present as suburban housing has swamped the area. Even relatively minor tracks such as the gloriously-named Rifle Butts Alley ("K" in Figure 4.5 and named from the adjacent nineteenth-century target range of the Epsom Rifle Volunteers) has survived as a muddy bridleway up to the Downs, although of very little practical utility (*Plate 3*). A 1910 guidebook notes the preserved character of the former Common Fields: *"The roads... upwards towards the Downs are anything but specimens of latter-day villa-lined roads.... most of their houses are effectually hidden by the trees which line the roads..."*⁶⁵. Later infill development has attacked this sylvan model, but not to the extent of extinguishing the many retained paths and alleys.

FIGURE 4.6: THE NORTHWEST SECTOR OF EPSOM IN 1866



By way of contrast to this extensive route network in the southeast, Figure 4.6 shows the picture north and west of the railway line. The density in this area – only ever of use for animal husbandry - is much lower, with only two trunk routes out of the town, to Malden Rushett and Hook. There are two main local link lanes (in solid red), Horton Lane to the northwest (*Plate 20*), connecting the manor and hamlet of Horton for access, and Pound Lane to the southeast (*Plate 12*). There is a small number of field paths in this area, but these are less developed and far fewer in number and concentration than elsewhere (*Plate 10*).

Chapter 4 Endnotes

- ⁴⁵ WG Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1955), p13
- ⁴⁶ John Toland, *The Description of Epsom* (Baldwin, London, 1711, republished in facsimile by Derek James, Sutton, 1978), p28
- ⁴⁷ John Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement* (Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1991) p45
- ⁴⁸ Reginald White, *Ancient Epsom: The Common Fields and Ancient Roads* (William Pile, Sutton, 1927) p6
- ⁴⁹ White, *Ancient Epsom*, pp42-45
- ⁵⁰ White, *Ancient Epsom*, p42
- ⁵¹ White, *Ancient Epsom*, pp42-45
- ⁵² Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey* p136
- ⁵³ Alan Hall, & Frank Pemberton, *Searching for Stane Street in Ewell, 2005-6*, (Surrey Archaeological Society / Roman Studies Group 2006). The findings of recent test excavations have yet to be published in the Society's Bulletin, but are outlined on its website at <http://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/rsg.htm> (extracted 23/05/06)
- ⁵⁴ White, *Ancient Epsom*, pp 2-4
- ⁵⁵ RAC Website www.royalautomobileclub.co.uk/history.asp, extracted 06/11/05
- ⁵⁶ Anon, *Manorial Survey, Manor of Ebbisham* (1756, handwritten, SHS K31/4/2)
- ⁵⁷ Anon, *Manorial Survey Book, Manor of Ebbisham* (1680, handwritten, SHS archive K31/4/1)
- ⁵⁸ Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, entry for 25/07/1663, translated by Mynors Bright, published online by Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4142>). Extracted 18/02/06.
- ⁵⁹ John Ogilby, *Britannia` an Illustration of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales* (London, 1675),
- ⁶⁰ Peter Brandon, *A History of Surrey* (Phillimore, Chichester, 1977)
- ⁶¹ Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary* (London, Field & Tuer, The Leadenhall Press, 1888) pp. 289-290
- ⁶² HL Gray, *The English Field Systems* (Merlin Press 1969, reprint of Harvard UP 1915 publication) p353

⁶³ William D'oyley, *Epsom Enclosure Map*, 1869 (SHS archive QS6/4/66 - also holds Award)

⁶⁴ Base map extracted from "*Street A-Z Plan Sutton, Epsom, Ewell*" (Geographer's A-Z Map Company Ltd., Sevenoaks, 2001)

⁶⁵ Cuthbert Wilkinson, *Guide to Epsom, Ewell & Ashted* (Burrow & Co, London, 1910)

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The aims of this Dissertation are as set out in the Introduction. In summary, the research and analysis undertaken supports a number of conclusions.

Ebbisham demonstrably owed its initial situation partly to topography and geology, and their effects upon the early transport network. It was situated both along the ancient east-west dry-ground trackway skirting the northern edge of the North Downs, and upon the major Roman Road, Stane Street.

This location - at the point of transition from well-drained chalk to heavy clay - itself heavily influenced the development and utility of purely local tracks and paths. The particularly dense network of field tracks in the old Common Fields formed the base for the pattern of modern suburban roads and paths.

A major special factor affecting route development was the transformation of Epsom into a spa town and racing centre after 1620. This led to its growing importance as a regional node, demanding better road access and eventually a major rail junction. However, it was not until after turnpiking around 1750 that roads into the town were readily useable during the winter months.

The past route network can be traced – sometimes only tentatively – using large-scale maps once they become available (from around 1770) and a range of other primary source materials. However, this research has confirmed the crucial need for fieldwork to verify and understand what the sources indicate.

Early maps are a vital resource, but were also widely subject to manipulation (deliberate or otherwise) by the cartographer seeking to stress a particular viewpoint. The historian utilising map sources needs to assess very carefully the contemporaneous causes for bias and

partiality in representation – Harley’s comments on the expression of power in maps should be kept firmly in mind.

These conclusions are based upon study of the district around Epsom, but can reasonably be expected to apply in general to any other area of lowland England and Wales. Local factors will make some aspects of this study more relevant than others; not all areas will have been influenced by Roman roads or turnpiking, for instance. Epsom experienced an exceptional impetus to growth and need for accessibility in the seventeenth century because of its rapid escalation as a spa town; other areas will have suffered no similar such dramatic change, or may have done so in very different times and manner.

The general principles and approach taken here, however, should be of broad applicability for other towns and districts. The essential combination of research into documentary evidence, together with exhaustive study of whatever early map evidence is available, must be fleshed out by viewing of the physical evidence on the ground. For example, indications of long-standing boundaries to routes, particularly where these can be supported by evidence of great age in hedgerows using Hooper’s Rule, may provide crucial confirmation for ancient routes.

The work of local archaeological groups can be a vital resource. As instance, it was only very late in the preparation of the present study that the author became aware of very recent research establishing the definitive route of Stane Street between Epsom and Ewell, which transformed the assessment of the effect of the road on the original location of Eb-bisham.

This study has dealt primarily with the period approximately prior to the arrival of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century, straying into the subsequent century-and-a-half to the present day only where necessary to seek evidence of the roads and tracks developed in

that period. There is another and substantial area of potential research to consider – into the way in which the suburban growth after 1850 affected and created the physical pattern of routes in and around the built environment we see today. That is for another day.

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An act for enlarging the term and powers of several acts for repairing the roads from Epsom through Ewell to Tooting, and from Ewell to Kingston-upon-Thames and Thames Ditton, and across Ewell Common Fields to the Ryegate turnpike road on Borough Heath (Great Britain, Statutes, 1815)

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^s SHS references are to the archive number at Surrey History Centre, Woking

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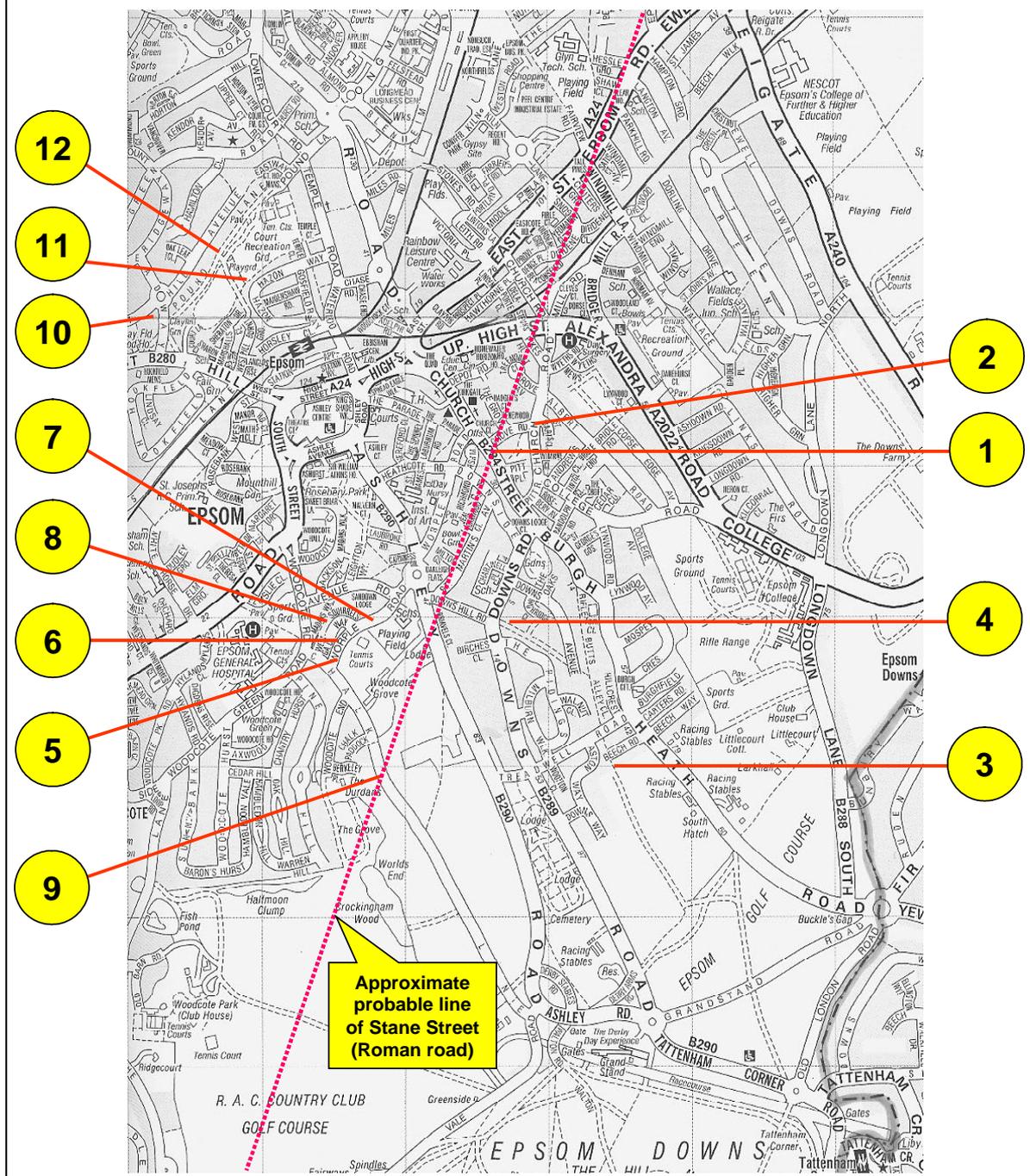
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APPENDIX: PLATES SHOWING THE MODERN APPEARANCE OF ROUTES MENTIONED

Plates here show routeways mentioned elsewhere in this Dissertation. They are referenced to in the relevant text sections. There are two key maps – for the town centre and the wider area. Plates 1-10 were taken on 29 March 2005, 11-22 on 4 March 2006

LOCATIONS KEY TO THE NUMBERED PHOTOS IN THIS APPENDIX (CENTRAL AREA)



LOCATIONS KEY FOR NUMBERED PHOTOS IN THIS APPENDIX (WIDER AREA)





Plate 1: The historic centre of ancient Ebbisham (St Martin's church up drive to right). Yellow line indicates probable route of lost section of Stane Street.



Plate 2: Church Road north from St Martin's churchyard. The likely line of Stane Street runs behind the houses at left. Church Road appears on the earliest maps.



Plate 3: Rifle Butts Alley leading southeast onto Epsom Downs. Note ancient hedge to left - species diversity indicates age exceeding 800 years. This sits on a noticeable ridge, perhaps a medieval or earlier boundary



Plate 4: Unadopted extension to Downs Hill Road – probable ancient trackway. Fringing hedgerows contain multiple woody species, apparently native rather than garden plantings, inferring an age of several hundred years.



Plate 5: Worple Road from south (Chalk Lane junction).
An ancient trackway connecting old Ebbisham village with the outlying settlement of Woodcote (and on to Ashted). It is on the earliest maps and lies on the direct dry-ground route.



Plate 6: Worple Road from south, showing diversion due to eighteenth century appropriation by major landowner (original line in yellow).



Plate 7: Worple Road from north, showing eighteenth century diversion (original line in yellow).



Plate 8: Madan's Walk from southeast.
An old access track across the common fields, preserved after 1869 Enclosure.



Plate 9: Chalk Lane from the front of Durdans, looking southeast towards Epsom Downs - an ancient route up the chalk dip slope. Durdans estate was carved out of the common fields and straddles the Lane. The probable line of Stane Street crosses from left (NW) to right (SE) across the foreground. Excavations several decades ago claimed to have found evidence of the road in the grounds at right.



Plate 10: Surviving field path near the summit of Clayhill on the west of the town (joining Meadway and West Hill Avenue). Minor paths in this area are less well documented than in the common fields to the east (recorded at Enclosure).



Plate 11: Court Recreation Ground, with the line of Pound Lane (White's conjectured "Portway") in the trees at back (yellow line). Court Rec was created from the remaining undeveloped manor demesne when the manor house was demolished.

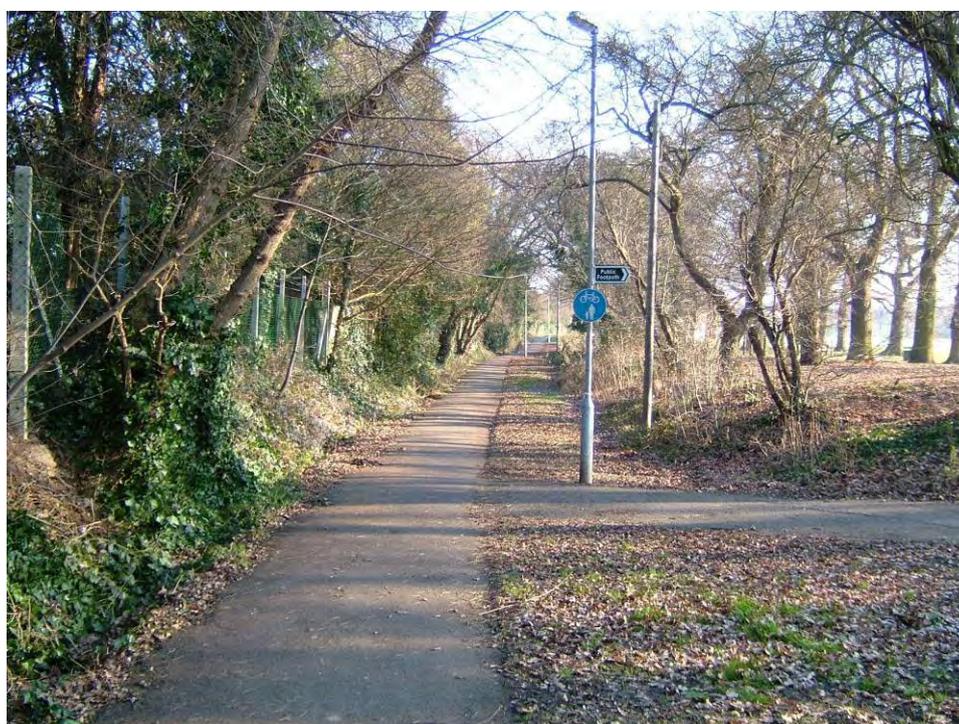


Plate 12: Pound Lane from the south. Note the high bank to the left. Although the land there has been developed for housing, this may constitute an ancient boundary ridge, possibly for the Ebbisham Court estate. Pound Lane is a very old road, conjectured by White as part of a medieval "Portway".

Plate 14: Coal Tax marker by path on Epsom Common (north) indicating a recognised route in the nineteenth century.





Plate 15: A major south-north track across Epsom Common from the old Epsom Well towards Chessington – may have connected Ashtead Manor to Kingston – a Coal Tax marker next to it (out of shot), implies an old routeway.



Plate 16: Another major north-south track, across Ashtead Common half a mile west of the previous. Closely parallels to the lost Roman link road to the Ashtead Common villa, and may have replaced the former as a route to Chessington when the villa was abandoned.

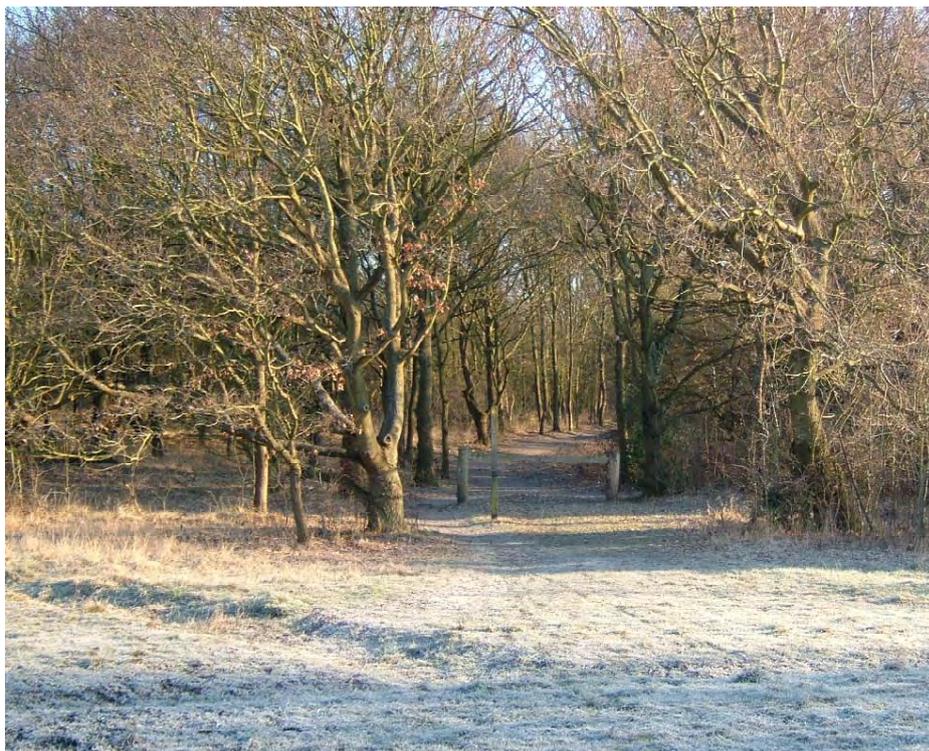


Plate 17: The major track along the southern edge of Ashted Common, which White proposed as part of an ancient "Portway" linking Leatherhead, Epsom and Ewell. Even after the very dry winter of 2006, this was very muddy, questioning White's theory when a drier route on sand/gravel is available through Ashted village to the south.



Plate 18: The same track in the opposite direction. The older route is probably at left, skirting the edge of Ashted Common.



Plate 19: This modern track into the west side of Epsom, near the Well, may have older origins. Amongst the houses in the background are some very old Common-encroachment cottages, indicating a probable route here by the eighteenth century, skirting south of the enclosed circular Wells land annexed by the Manor around 1720.



Plate 20: Horton Lane as it is now. This was the link road to reach Horton Manor, perhaps developed after Domesday. The barn in the middle of the picture has late-medieval origins: it is reasonable to assume that Horton Lane existed by about the fourteenth century.



Plate 21: Bridge and embankment carrying the Waterloo-Epsom railway at Hook Road in the town centre. An example of how the coming of the railway fossilised the possible crossing places and prevented new roads across the line developing.



Plate 22: The railway south of Epsom in a deep cutting through the edge of Epsom Common. Bridge in background carries the access road to the modern Wells Estate; when the line was built this was a circular estate farm occupying the old Well enclosure.