

Marches Archaeology

Land to the rear of Broadclyst Harp Hill Battledown Cheltenham

Report on an archaeological evaluation

December 2003

Marches Archaeology Series 308

This report is produced by

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**Land to the rear of Broadclyst
Harp Hill
Battledown
Cheltenham**

A report on an archaeological evaluation

NGR: SO 9706 2216 (centre)

**Report by
Jane Kenney**

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**Land to the rear of Broadclyst
Harp Hill
Battledown
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A report on an archaeological evaluation

Summary

Five trenches were dug to investigate the area of a proposed development. Slight traces of ridge and furrow were found, but no other archaeological features or deposits were present. A previously unrecorded Second World War air raid shelter was found.

1 Introduction

A planning application has been submitted to the local planning authority for permission to erect dwellings at the rear of Broadclyst on Harp Hill in Battledown, Cheltenham (ref. 471.1; 03/01494/OUT). The site is situated at NGR: SO 9706 2216 (Fig 1).

The site is adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (ref.: County Monument No. 405) and also within an area listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as containing traces of ridge and furrow (SMR 12165). The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of the application could be adequately assessed and recommended that an archaeological field evaluation be carried out to provide this information.

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor produced a "Brief for an archaeological evaluation", and Hunter Page Planning, acting as agents for Markson Properties (the client), commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services detailed in the brief.

The fieldwork was carried out from 4th to 6th November 2003 inclusive, and the report issued on 4th December 2003.

2 Scope and aims of the project

The archaeological project was to consist of:

- desk based assessment to put the site into context
- the excavation of 2% of the area of the development site
- reporting the results of the work

An archaeological evaluation aims to "gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity,

state of preservation and quality) in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research” (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations).

The objectives of this evaluation, based on the above stated aim, were
to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development.

to study an adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened.

3 Methodology

Documentary research

Primary and secondary sources were consulted in order to inform the fieldwork phase. The local Sites and Monuments Record and County Record Office were visited to consult the following sources:

Ordnance Survey maps; tithe maps; other historical maps; previous published and unpublished archaeological reports; written non-archaeological sources.

Aerial photographs were obtained from the National Monuments Record.

Fieldwork

Five trenches were excavated, each 10 metres long by 1.5 metres wide. It was intended to locate three of the trenches in the footprints of the proposed dwellings, as defined by a plan provided by Hunter Page Planning. One trench was to be close to the southern limit of the site and the fifth positioned as appropriate to assess the rest of the site. Obstacles on the site prevented the trenches being placed as intended. Most significant was the presence of a badgers' sett on the southern boundary of the development area. It is an offence to disturb a badgers' sett and disturbance is defined as working with a machine closer than 30m from the sett. This prevented any trenches being dug in the southern end of the site, but the building footprints could still be investigated. The precise position of the trenches was also dictated by topography and garden fixtures and trees. Trench 5 was specifically orientated to investigate a ridge running down the orchard in the Broadclyst property (Fig. 2).

As Haytor was occupied by tenants it was not possible to trench near the road in the front garden. The front garden of Broadclyst is not within the development area.

The upper deposits were excavated by a 3-ton mini-excavator to a level determined to comprise deposits, features or horizons of archaeological significance. In trenches 1 and 2 the mechanical excavator was used to dig test pits to confirm and investigate the natural deposits. All deposits were recorded.

On completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. Context numbers were allocated and context record sheets completed for all layers. One long section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate. A plan of the trenches was created using a total station theodolite. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. A full list of contexts is presented in appendix I. The only artefacts found were modern pot sherds from the topsoil or from drainage trenches, and these were discarded.

4 Description of the site and geological background

The site covers most of two properties on the southern side on Harp Hill, Battledown, on the eastern outskirts of Cheltenham (Fig. 2 and 3). The western property is currently known as Haytor and the eastern one as Broadclyst. They both have long narrow gardens running almost due south behind the houses. The site is on a north facing slope, so the gardens run uphill ending against a bank defining the northern edge of a feature known as Battledown Camp (see below). The site slopes down from an altitude of *c.* 136.5m OD in the south to *c.* 120.5m adjacent to the road.

Close to the houses the gardens are well kept, but the southern ends in both cases had become over run with brambles. Both properties also have orchards in the middle sections of the gardens.

The geology of the area is composed of Jurassic Lias clays and Inferior Oolite limestone, overlain by Cheltenham sands, generally producing well-drained, easily worked land, favourable to settlement throughout history (Paget 1988, 1; Saville 1975, 6). The hill on which the proposed development site is located is composed entirely of clay with no sand cover, making it much less attractive for agriculture than much of the surrounding lower land.

5 Archaeological and historical background (Fig. 3)

The site lies in the north-western corner of the parish of Charlton Kings, just outside the northern boundary of Battledown Camp. The Camp is a scheduled ancient monument (SAM 405) and listed on Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as record number 155. However, the RCHME disregard it as being entirely of natural, describing the earthworks as ‘a group of gullies, scrapes and ridges, natural in origin’ (RCHME 1976, 23). This interpretation is supported by Saville (1975, 21), who also points to the total absence of finds from the site, although the SMR entry mentions an Iron Age brooch from the site. However, Burrows in 1919 describes ‘a scarped bank about 10 ft in height on the north and east sides’ and a ‘distinct fosse’ on the south side (Burrows 1919, 40), and some local historians continued to refer to it as an univallate hillfort until recently (Cox 1981).

On the 2nd edition OS map the Camp is called Hewletts' Camp, causing some confusion as a supposed camp on Aggs Hill was also called Hewletts' Camp. This site (SMR 5442, NGR SO 9814 2244) is also disregarded by Saville as natural (Saville 1975, 21). There are other genuine hill forts along the escarpment to the north and south, including Cleeve Cloud Camp (SO 963 225) and Nottingham Hill (SO 987 282).

Ridge and furrow survived in the area until recently, being recorded over the area of the present site (SMR 12165) and a large area to the north (SMR 20349, NGR SO 970 225). The aerial photographs clearly show ridge and furrow over the whole area. It runs east to west across the Camp and radiates outwards from the hill top (plate 1). Further out other fields are defined, representing enclosed fields rather than the original medieval open field. The ridges were recorded as being 8m wide, a size often taken as being indicative of a medieval origin, as later ridges are generally narrower. However, the pattern of enclosed fields defined by the ridges shows that they post-date the enclosure of the area, which within the parish of Charlton Kings started in the 16th century (Paget 1988, 29).

The road called Harp Hill, running on the northern side of Broadclyst, appears to be part of an ancient routeway (SMR 9610), possibly part of a driftway between Gloucester and London (Cox 1980). It forms part of the parish boundary and was recorded as being a highway in the 13th century (Paget 1988, 13). The road was turnpiked by 1756 (Cox 1980, 22). A tollhouse still survives, much altered, to the east of the present site (SMR 6581, NGR SO 9735 22060) and a milestone halfway up Agg's Hill (SMR 9613, SO 977 223). A map of 1776 marks the start of this road as it leads from Cheltenham (Q/SRL 1777 A/1).

There is relatively little Roman activity known from the area, as the Roman roads seem to have avoided it. A villa was discovered at Vineyards Farm south of Charlton Kings (Paget 1988, 3), and occasional finds of Roman coins (e.g. SMR 5471, SO 962 230) show that the area was occupied and presumably farmed. A Romano-British burial was discovered on Sandy Lane in Charlton Kings but its location was not precisely recorded. Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts were recovered from a site west of Sandy Lane (SMR 3772 and 9350, SO 9546 1972) and probably indicated the presence of a settlement. A rim sherd of Iron Age pottery was also found at Webb's Pit, All Saints, Battledown (SMR 5470, SO 968 225). A linear dyke (SO 9917 2195) may indicate prehistoric activity in the parish (RCHME 1976, 23). An undated, sub-circular cropmark to the east of the site might represent Iron Age or earlier activity (SMR 6650, SO 9767 2195).

The name of Battledown (Baedella's tun) is suggested as indicating the presence of a Saxon homestead (Paget 1988, 4). Battledown was part of Ham Court Estate (Paget 1988), and the early settlement of Ham may have been located at Old Ham Farm (SO 9755 2140), with the site of the early manor house at Ham Farm (SO 977 212) (SMR 6583). There is a small, possibly medieval, moated enclosure to the south of Battledown hill (SMR 5451, NGR SO 9692 2163). The only archaeological excavation in the immediate area was just to the south of Battledown Camp and revealed only hill wash with no significant archaeological features or deposits (SMR 19966, NGR SO 9690 2190) (Brett 1998).

The map of 1806 (Fig. 4) shows roughly the same field layout as existed in 1923 (Fig. 8). The tithe map (1848, Fig. 5) shows that strip farming continued within Coultham Field, but the enclosures over much of Battledown were not included in the tithe apportionment. In the 1860s plots on Battledown were up for sale for house building, but were slow to sell (Paget

1988, 129). By 1887 the outskirts of Cheltenham had spread into Battledown and houses were being built around the southern and western margins of the Camp (Fig. 6). A track was constructed leading into the Camp before 1887, but the area of the proposed development was not built-up until after 1923.

On the 1887 OS map the brick works of the Battledown Brick Company (Paget 1988) is marked to the north-west of the present site (Fig. 6). Sand and clay pits are recorded on the SMR as reference numbers 6587 (SO 962 218) and 6640 (SO 967 225). Hewletts Reservoirs, built by Cheltenham Waterworks in the 1820s and 1850s are grade II listed buildings to the north-east of the site (SMR 20827, SO 973 221).

6 Results of the evaluation (Figs. 9 to 13)

The evaluation trenches revealed no features of great archaeological importance. In all trenches there was a layer of topsoil up to 0.2m deep, under which was a stone-free, grey brown silty loam representing the old cultivation soil. This layer was up to 0.24m deep. Immediately beneath the old cultivation soil was the natural clay. This is described as a yellow-brown silty clay with mottles of pale grey and stronger brown resulting from the movement of iron compounds within it. This deposit was tested by digging deeper test pits in trenches 1 and 2 and it appeared to be entirely natural and undisturbed.

Modern plastic land drains were present in trenches 2, 4 and 5. In trench 4 a lens of brown loam containing charcoal and red, burnt clay indicated the site of a fire, but this was positioned between the topsoil and old cultivation soil and so was of no great antiquity.

Trench 5 was positioned to section a low ridge running, south to north, down the orchard of Broadclyst. This ridge was *c.* 6m wide but no more than 0.15m high. The width is consistent with medieval cultivation ridges, and is part of the area of ridge and furrow recorded in the SMR as 12165. The trench showed that the ridge was composed of a slight raise in the natural subsoil. The ploughing technique used on ridge and furrow systems caused the subsoil to be dug away in the furrows and soil to be built up on the ridges, resulting in the slight buried traces seen.

At Haytor the garden has been landscaped producing a level garden area with a vertical terrace edge, *c.* 2m high, dropping down to the lower level of the house. In the terrace wall is the entrance to an air raid shelter built under the garden terrace (SO 97053 22180). The shelter is a single room 4.1m long, 2.4m wide and 1.96m high. The walls are brick and the roof is concrete, only 0.26m thick (Fig. 14, plates 2 to 4). This clearly dates to the Second World War and currently appears rather unsafe as part of the roof is collapsing.

7 Discussion

The presence of traces of ridge and furrow in this area was recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record so the discovery of one of these ridges is unsurprising. In most of the proposed development area and in neighbouring gardens these slight traces have been obliterated by gardening and landscaping. The width of the ridge suggests that it is medieval in date as later ridges, often produced by steam ploughs, are much narrower.

Although of only local importance the presence of an air raid shelter is an interesting piece of recent history reflecting the real fears of people living in the property during the Second World War. The neighbouring house of Half Acre also has an air raid shelter, but this is of very different design being an upstanding, entirely concrete structure (see appendix II for a brief description). These shelters were clearly constructed by individuals following different advice and techniques rather than any national recommendations, in an attempt to protect their families in the unlikely event of this suburb of Cheltenham being bombed.

8 Conclusions

The air raid shelter is of local interest and worth recording, and the survival of a trace of ridge and furrow cultivation confirms what was already known. No other archaeological features were discovered. The evaluation has not been able to contribute any evidence to the discussion of whether Battledown Camp is a genuine hillfort or a natural feature.

Although parts of the development area could not be evaluated the trenches were sufficiently widely distributed to give a good indication of the area and it appears highly unlikely that any significant archaeological deposits or features survive here.

9 Sources

Maps

Ordnance Survey Landranger 163, Cheltenham and Cirencester, scale 1:50,000, 1981

Ordnance Survey County Series 25 inch map sheet Glos 26.8, 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions, 1887, 1903 and 1923

Ordnance Survey County Series 6 inch map sheet Glos 26 NE, 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions, 1887, 1903 and 1923

Map of the Town of Cheltenham by Edward Mitchell, 1806, in Saville 1975, fig. 6

A plan of the roads leading from Arle Cross to Pillford Lane, 1776, in Gloucestershire Record Office, ref. Q/SRL 1777 A/1

Aerial photographs

Obliques

HAW 9388/25 frames SO 9722/1-3 15 AUG 1958

Verticals

RAF/CPE/UK/2526 frame 5027 24 MAR 1948

RAF/58/377 frame 5061 4 MAR 1950

RAF/58/1705 frame F21 0317 1 APR 1955

RAF/58/2958 frame F22 0159 19 JUN 1959

Other sources

Brett, M, 1998, Battledown Manor, Greenway Lane, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: an archaeological evaluation. *Cotswold Archaeological Trust Report 98867*

Burrows, EJ, 1919, *The Ancient Entrenchments and Camps of Gloucestershire*

Cox, N, 1980, An ancient road through Cheltenham. *Glevensis* No. **14**, 21-22

Cox, WL, 1981, *Prehistoric and Roman Sites of the Cheltenham Area*.

Paget, M, (ed), 1988, *A History of Charlton Kings*

RCHME, 1976, *Inventory for Gloucestershire, vol 1: Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds*

Saville, A, 1975, *Pre-regency Cheltenham, an archaeological survey*

11 The archive

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Gloucestershire Museum Services. The Marches Archaeology site code is BHBC03A.

The archive consists of:

- 5 trench sheets
- 1 drawing index sheet
- 5 field drawings on 3 sheets
- 1 sheet of survey notes
- 2 sheets site diary and notes
- 4 photo record sheets
- 2 films of black and white photographic negatives
- 2 films of colour photographic transparencies

All finds recovered were 20th century and were not retained.

Appendix I

List of contexts

| Context | Trench | Description | Interpretation |
|---------|--------|---|--|
| 101 | T1 | Dark grey loam, stone free | Topsoil |
| 102 | T1 | Grey brown silty loam, no stones, flecks of burnt clay and charcoal | Old cultivation soil |
| 103 | T1 | Yellow brown clay, becoming more silty and malleable with depth. Mottled with pale grey and stronger brown due to localised movement of iron compounds. | Natural clay |
| 201 | T2 | Dark grey loam, stone free | Topsoil |
| 202 | T2 | Grey brown silty loam, no stones, flecks of burnt clay and charcoal | Old cultivation soil |
| 203 | T2 | Yellow brown clay, mottled with pale grey and stronger brown due to localised movement of iron compounds. | Natural clay |
| 301 | T3 | Dark grey loam, stone free | Topsoil |
| 302 | T3 | Grey brown silty loam, no stones, flecks of burnt clay and charcoal | Old cultivation soil |
| 303 | T3 | Yellow brown clay, mottled with pale grey and stronger brown due to localised movement of iron compounds. | Natural clay |
| 401 | T4 | Dark grey loam, stone free | Topsoil |
| 402 | T4 | Grey brown silty loam, no stones, flecks of burnt clay and charcoal | Old cultivation soil |
| 403 | T4 | Yellow brown clay, mottled with pale grey and stronger brown due to localised movement of iron compounds. | Natural clay |
| 404 | T4 | Small patch of red burnt clay and charcoal flecks in dark brown loam. Under 401, above 402. | Recent bonfire site |
| 501 | T5 | Dark grey loam, stone free | Topsoil |
| 502 | T5 | Grey brown silty loam, no stones, flecks of burnt clay and charcoal | Old cultivation soil |
| 503 | T5 | Yellow brown clay. Very slight rise left by furrows eroding away clay on either side. | Natural clay with traces of ridge and furrow cultivation |

Appendix II

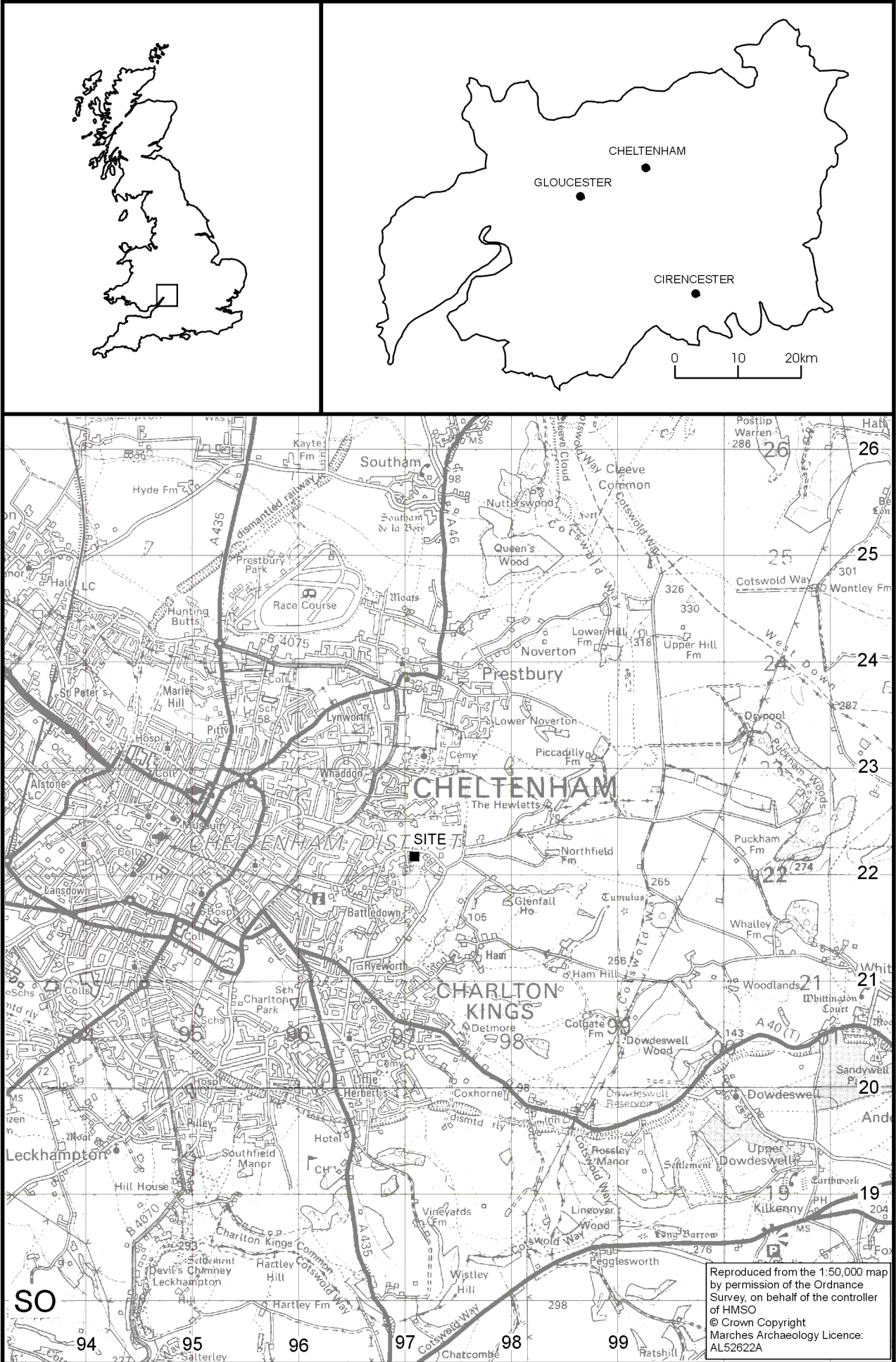
Air raid shelter at Half Acre, Harp Hill SO 97096 22156

The shelter is in the back garden of the property close to the eastern boundary. It is rectangular, upstanding rather than underground and built entirely of concrete. It has 2 rooms off a central passage, with only one window and one doorway. The interior was not inspected.

The shelter measures 5.65m by 2.43m externally and is 2.10m high.

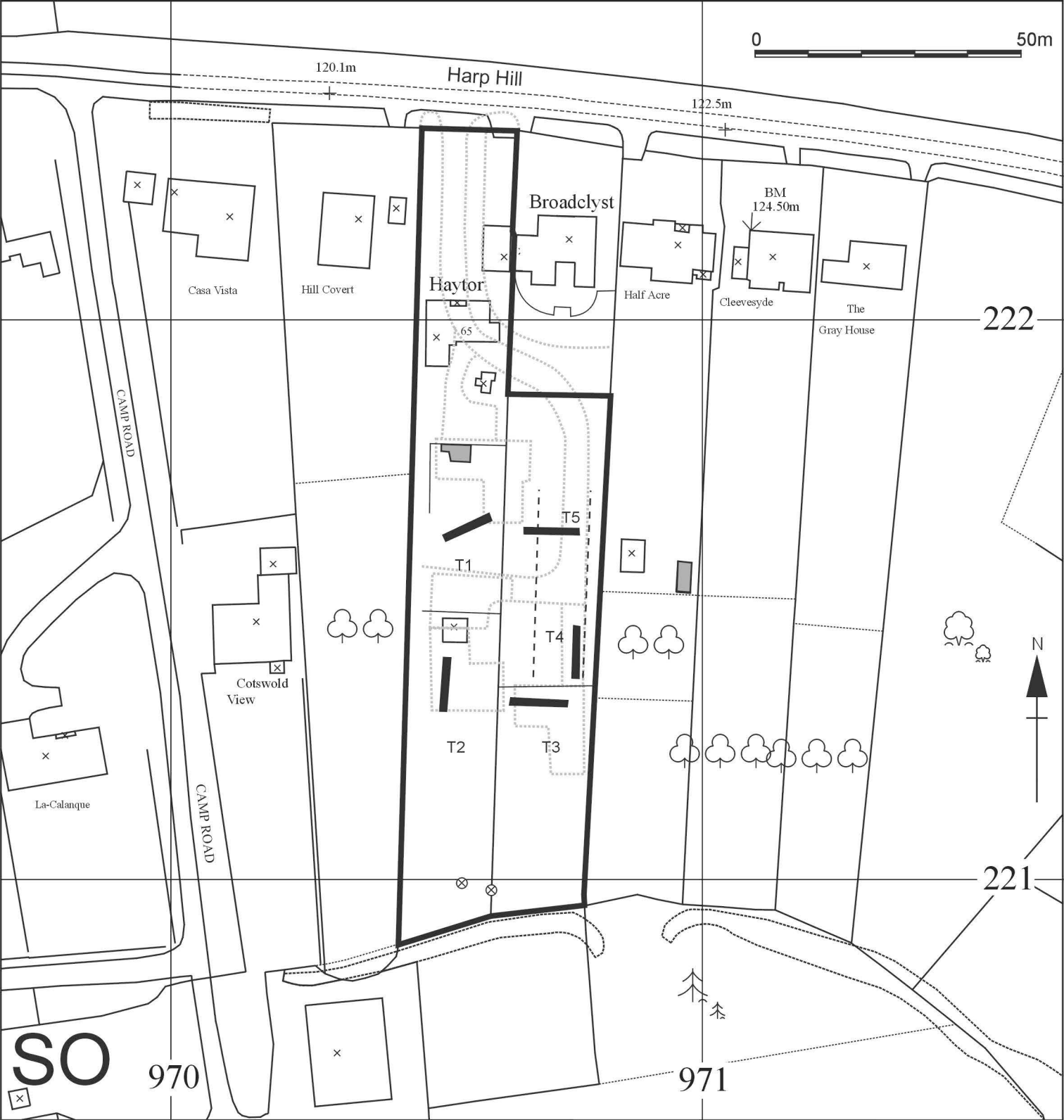
This shelter can be seen on the post-war aerial photographs.











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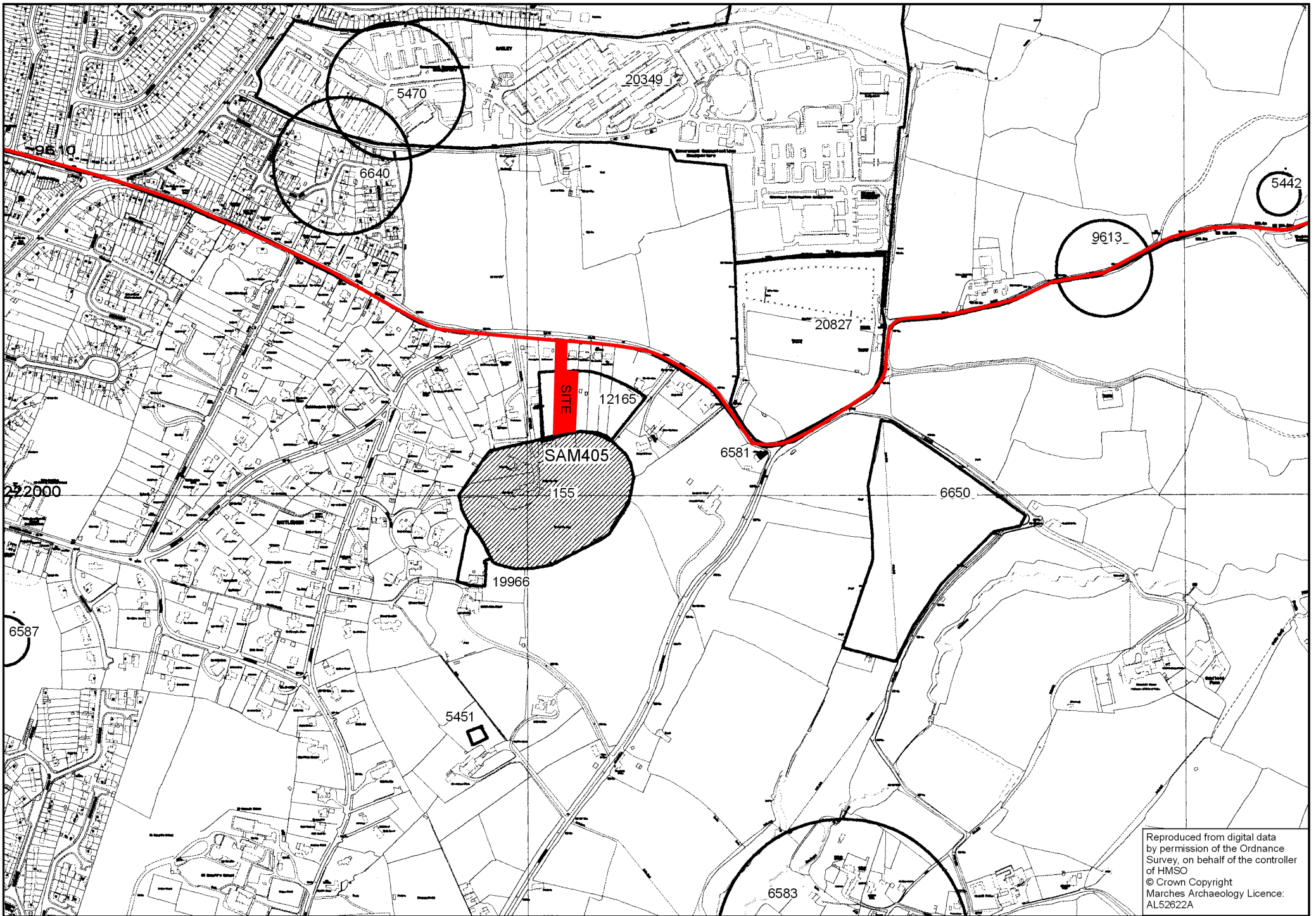
Fig. 1: Location of site



| KEY | |
|---|---|
| Air raid shelters |  |
| Badger sett entrance |  |
| Cultivation furrows |  |
| Trenches |  |
| Boundary to proposed development site |  |
| Proposed development (approx. Location) |  |

Reproduced from a site centred Superplan plot by permission of the Ordnance Survey, on behalf of the controller of HMSO
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Fig. 2: Location of trenches and other features



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Fig. 3: Location of SMR sites

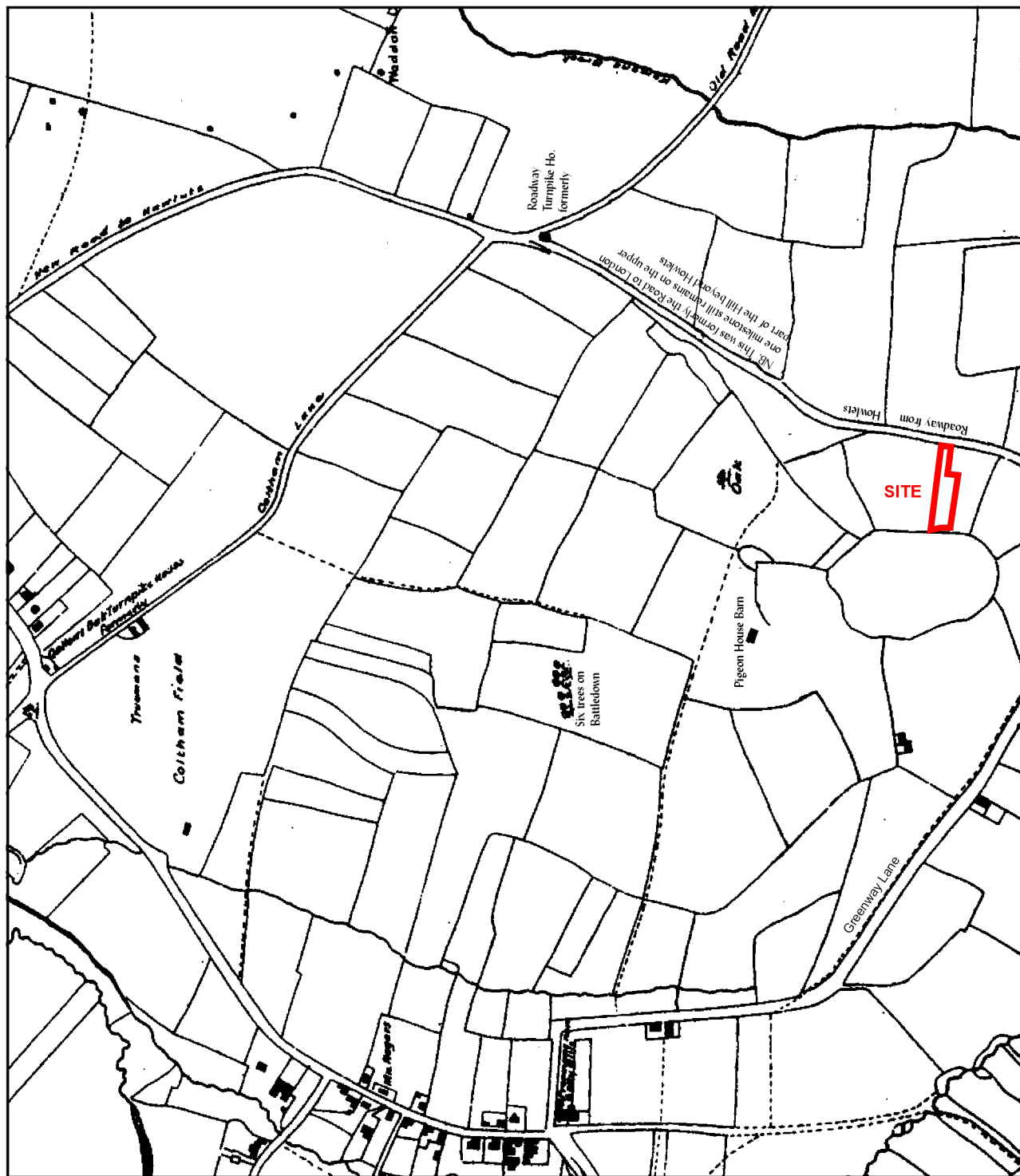


Fig. 4: Part of map of the Town of Cheltenham by Edward Mitchell, 1806
(from Saville 1975, fig. 6)

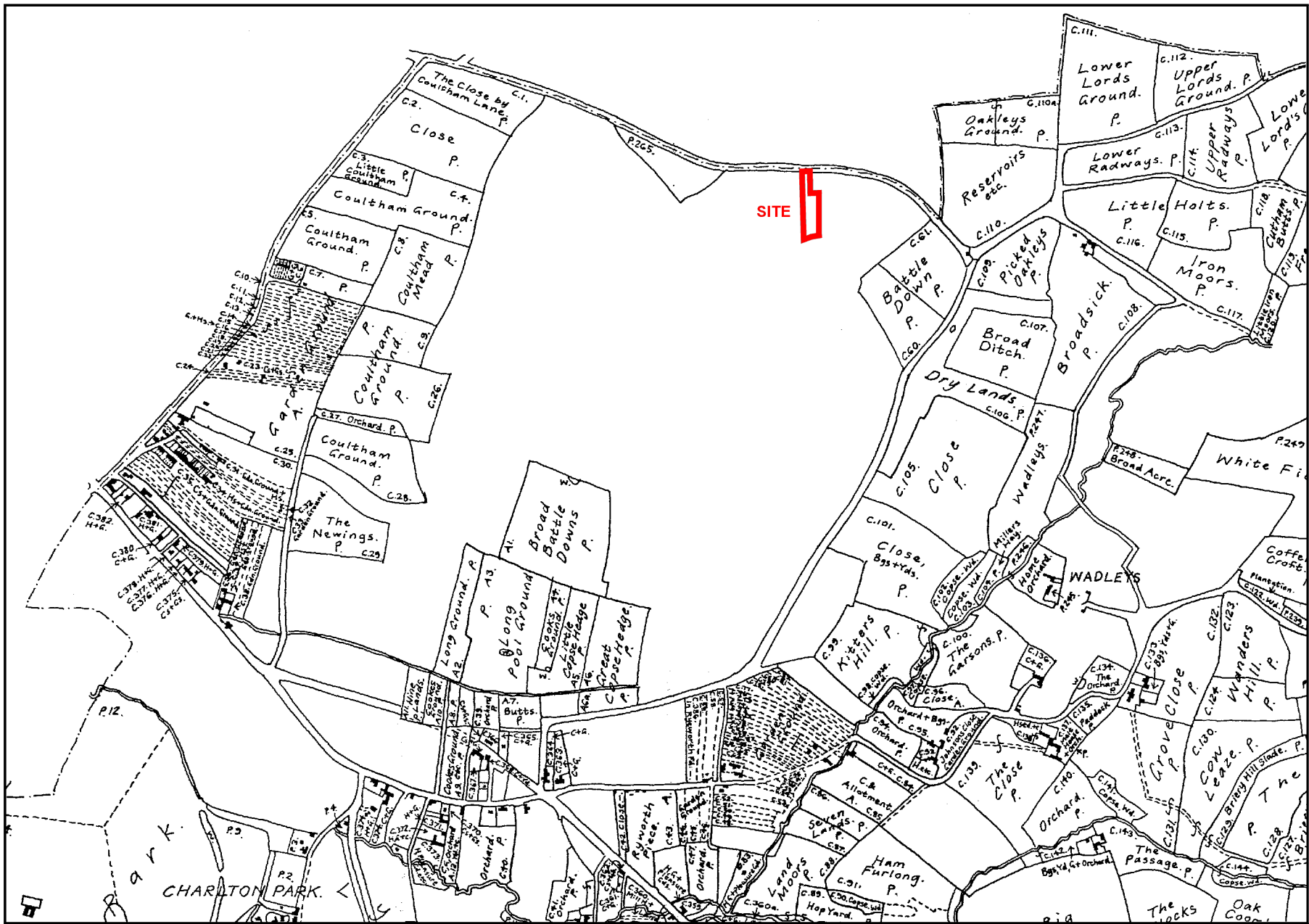


Fig. 5: Copy of part of tithe map for Charlton Kings parish, 1848

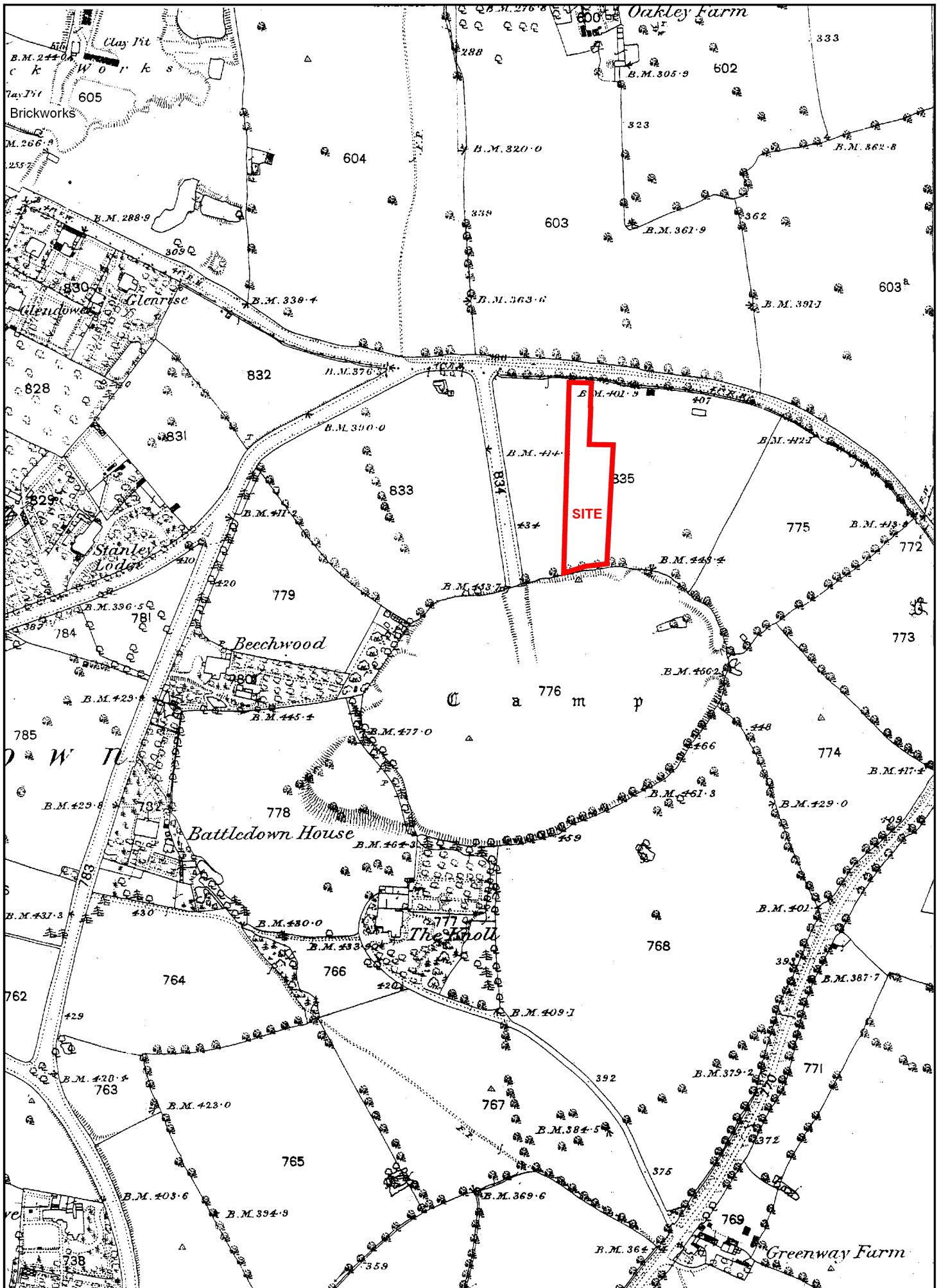


Fig. 6: Reduced from OS County Series 25 inch map, sheet Glos 26.8, 1st edition, 1887

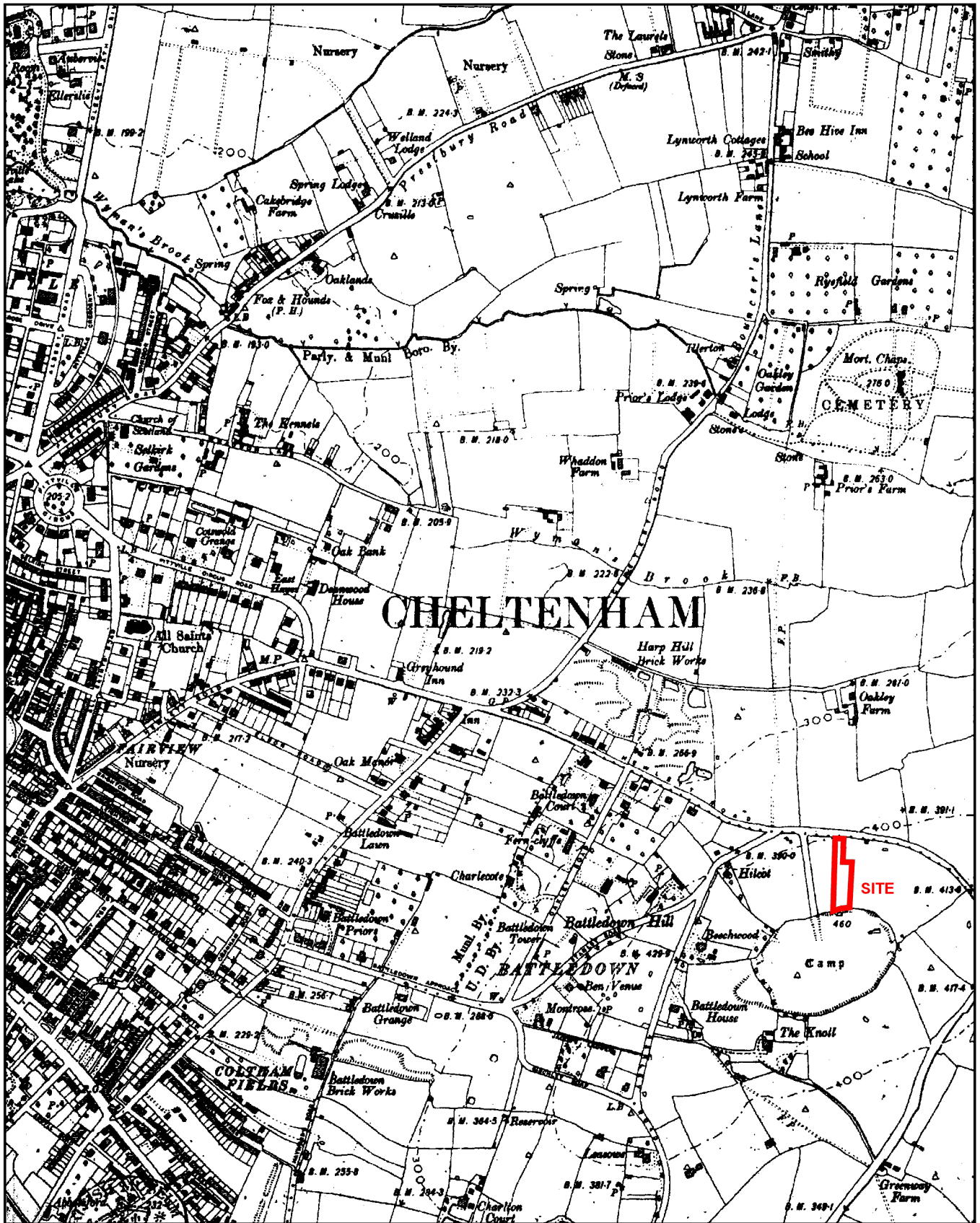


Fig. 7: OS County Series 6 inch map, sheet Glos 26 NE, 2nd edition, 1903

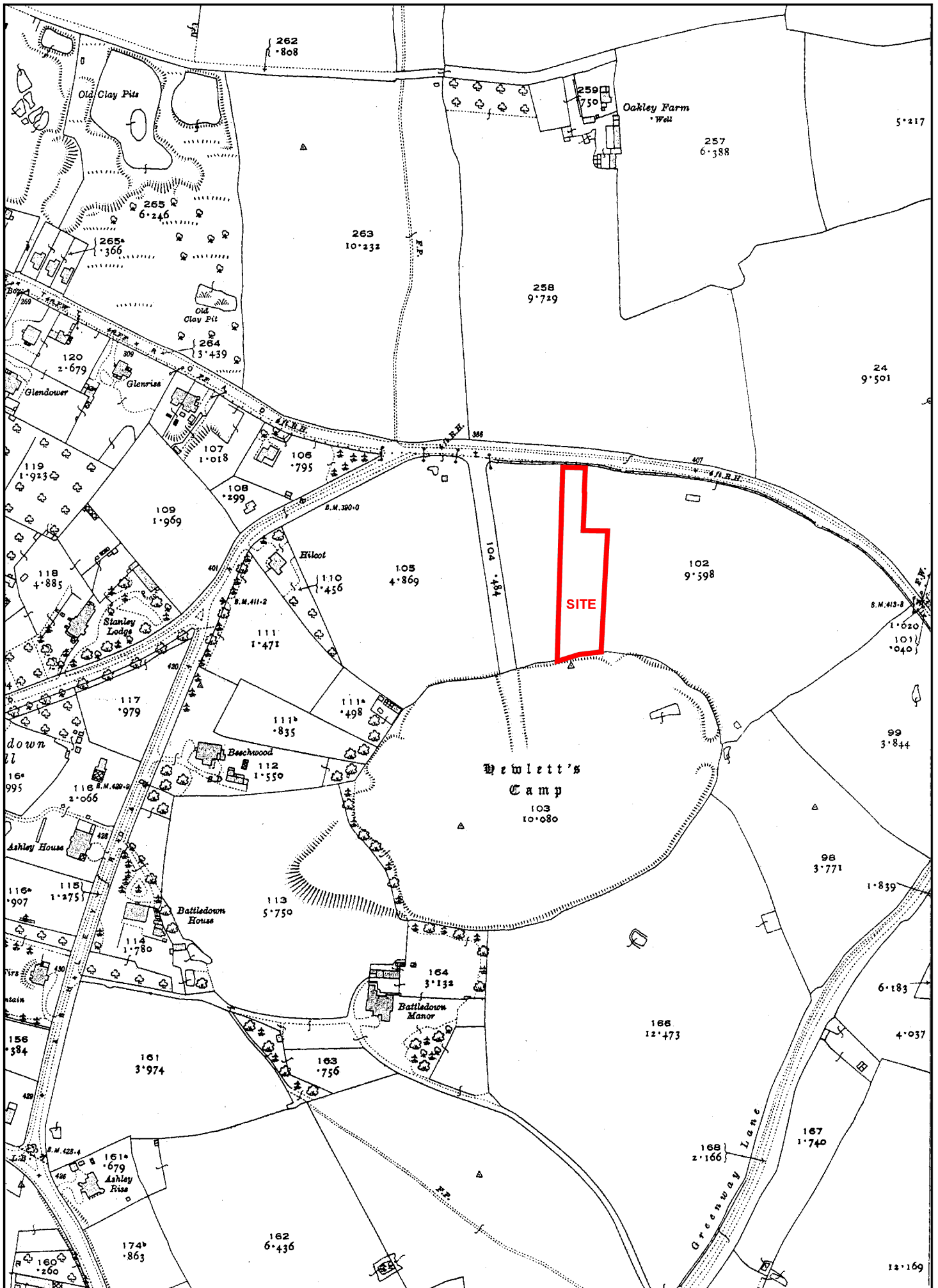


Fig. 8: Reduced from OS County Series 25 inch map, sheet Glos 26.8, 3rd edition, 1923

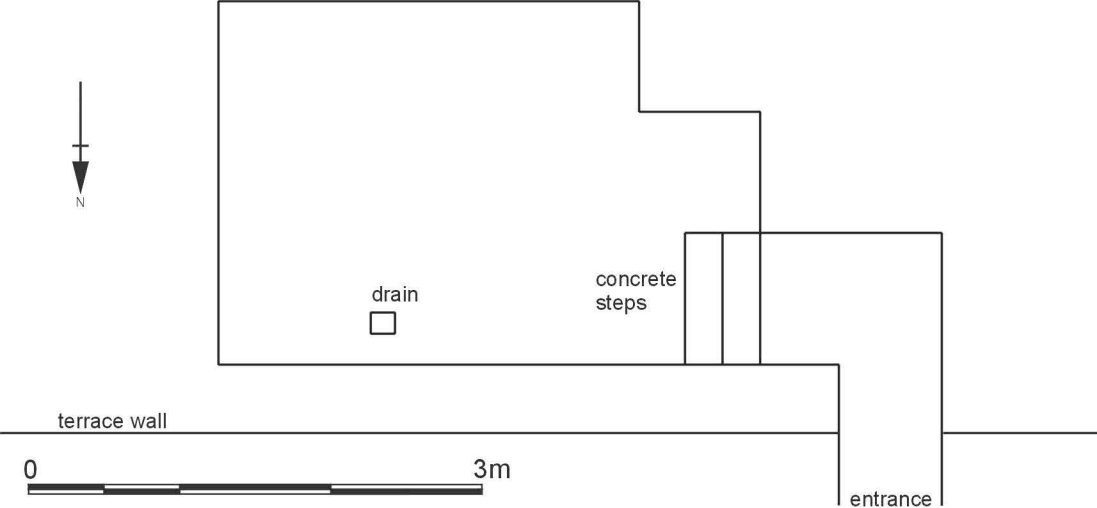


Fig. 14: Plan of air raid shelter in garden of Haytor

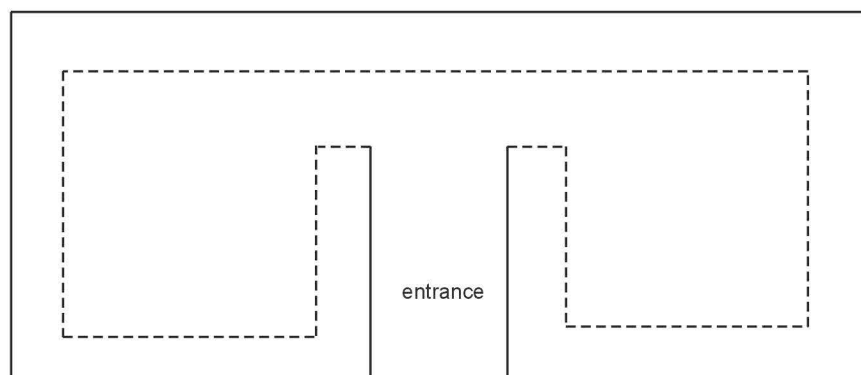
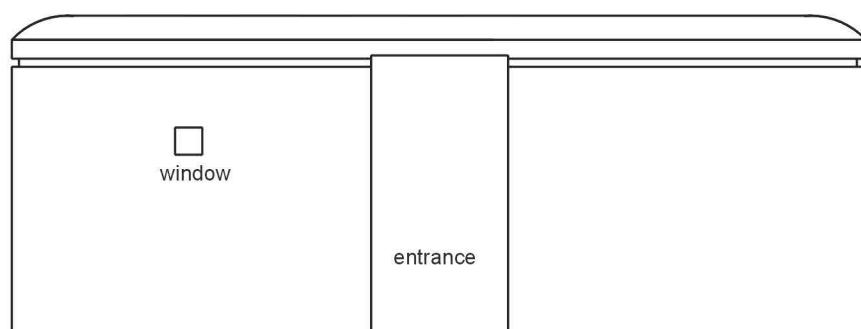


Fig. 15: West facing elevation and plan of air raid shelter in garden of Half Acre

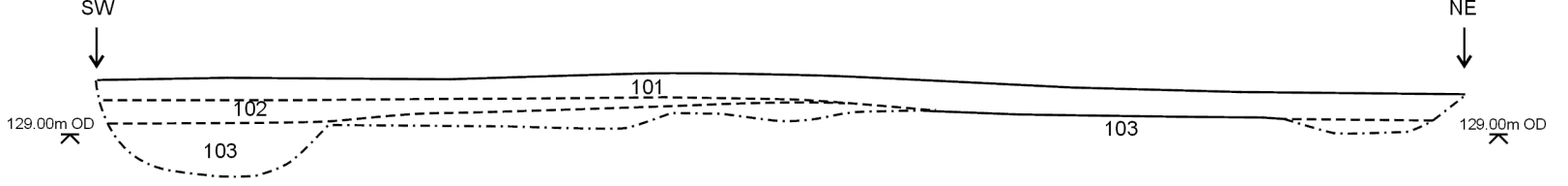


Fig. 9: South-east facing section of trench 1

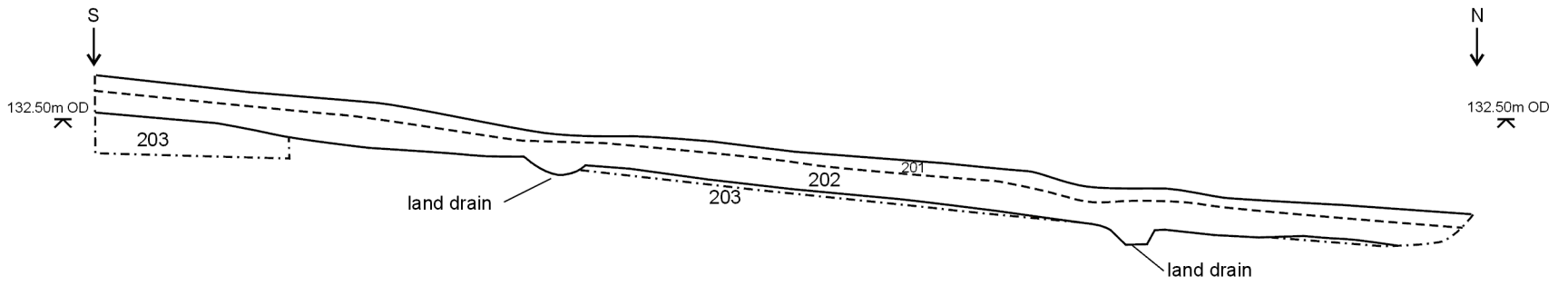


Fig. 10: East facing section of trench 2

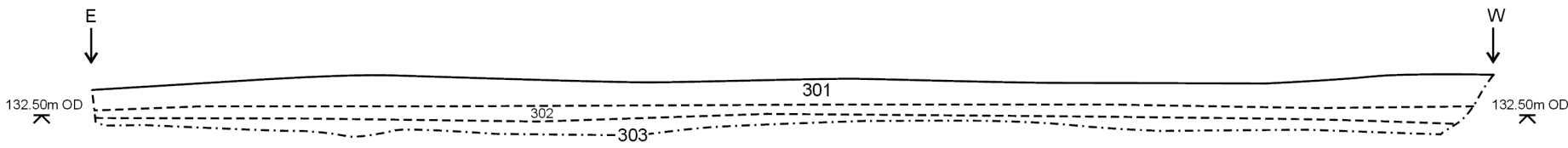


Fig. 11: North facing section of trench 3

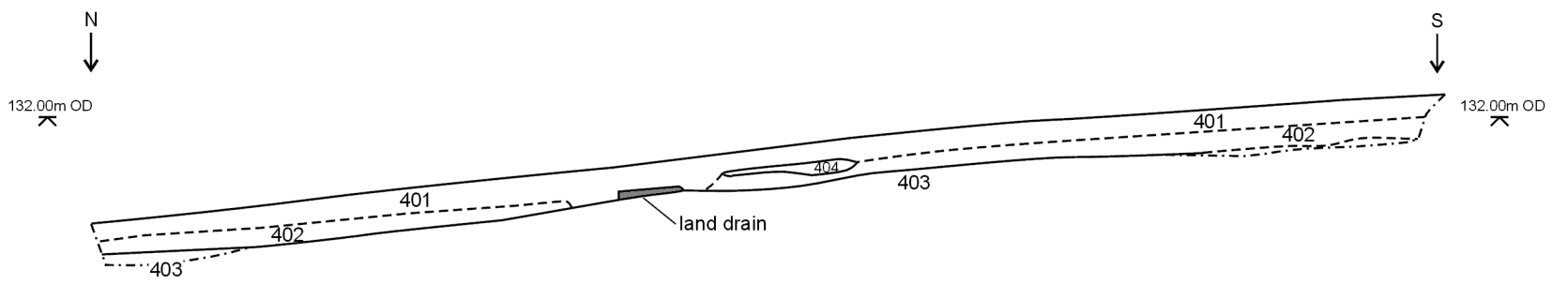


Fig. 12: West facing section of trench 4

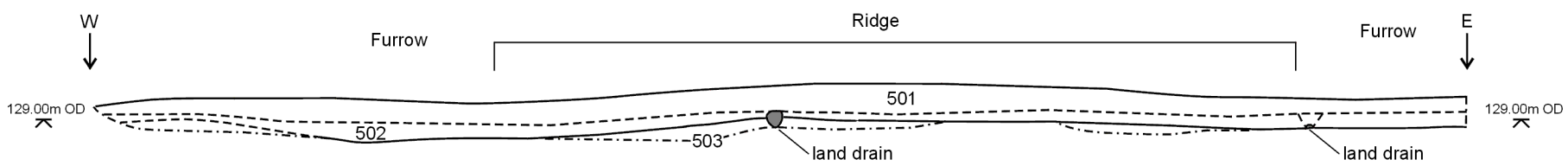


Fig. 13: South facing section of trench 5



Plate 1: Aerial photograph showing ridge and furrow (the site is at the top, just left of centre)
Film no. RAF/CPE/UK/2526, frame no. 5027, date 24 MAR 1948



Plate 2: Entrance to air raid shelter in hedge



Plate 3: Close-up of entrance to air raid shelter

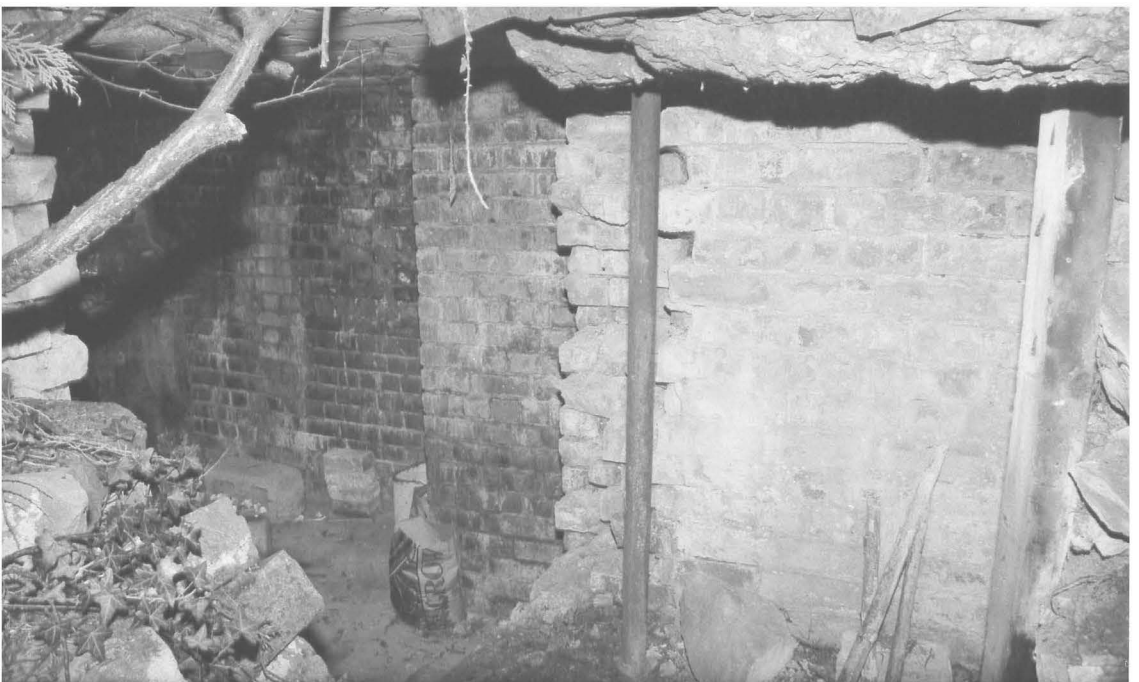


Plate 4: Interior of air raid shelter