

Clifton Court Nursing Home, Clifton upon Dunsmore, Warwickshire

Archaeological Evaluation



understanding heritage matters

Report No 1123
September 2011



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Clifton Court Nursing Home, Clifton upon
Dunsmore

Commissioned by: Rod Pettifer, Clifton Court Nursing Home

Project Report No. 1123

Site Code: CN11

NGR: SP 539 760

Planning Reference: R10/0546

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation comprising a series of four trial trenches was undertaken on behalf of Clifton Court Nursing Home in advance of a planning application for the erection of a specialist nursing unit. A single undated feature, possibly naturally formed, was excavated at a considerable depth in Trench 2. No finds were recovered from its fill. Geological natural was reached at considerably varying depths through the trenches, sometimes being 0.30m below the ground surface, sometimes over 2m. This appeared to reflect the landscaping which was shown on Ordnance Survey maps of 1913 and 1939.

1 Introduction

1.1 A planning application has been submitted to Rugby Borough Council for a new specialist nursing unit at Clifton Court Nursing Home, Lilbourne Road, Clifton upon Dunsmore, Warwickshire. The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential, in an area where archaeological features show up as cropmarks on aerial photographs. A recommendation was made by the County Planning Archaeologist that the applicant secured a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in advance of the development.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation with the stated aim of understanding any archaeological deposits or materials that may be disturbed or destroyed by the development. The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

1.3 The evaluation was conducted in August/September 2011 and this report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code CN11.

2 Location

2.1 The development site is located in the parish of Clifton upon Dunsmore at map reference SP 539 760. The site was formerly occupied by a raised grassed area and car parking to the west of the present nursing home.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Dunsmore Sand and Gravel over Charmouth Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey 2010).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

UNDATED AND ROMANO-BRITISH (AD 43 – 410)

3.1 A sub-rectangular enclosure recorded on aerial photographs to the west of the site is thought to be later prehistoric or Roman date and possibly part of a larger field system (Historic Environment Record No. MWA 4161). An archaeological evaluation carried out in

1998 recorded second to third century pottery in a ditch in this area (Northamptonshire Archaeology 1998).

3.2 The site lies in a series of cropmark enclosures that have yet to be dated but which may relate to the Romano-British enclosures identified through the evaluation above (HER MWA 4162, 4163, 6808, 6809). Such features often date to the later prehistoric or Romano-British periods. The enclosure MWA 6808 lies in the field immediately north of Clifton Court.

MEDIEVAL (410 – 1500)

3.3 A possible Anglo-Saxon cemetery (HER MWA 4158) has been identified to the north-west. The justification for this identification appears to come from a map of Anglo-Saxon remains in the VCH, however, Bloxham locates the site elsewhere and it may be spurious. The site lies outside of the medieval village of Clifton upon Dunsmore (HER MWA 9507).

POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

3.4 The earliest Ordnance Survey map of the area is the one inch to one mile map of 1834 and this shows a track to the site with indications of a building or buildings on it (Fig. 2; Ordnance Survey 1834). The 1851 tithe map shows a U-shaped structure on the same site as shown on the later 19th-century Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3; WRO CR 569/71). There are also two further structures, one in the south and one in the north-west, within an enclosure to the west of Clifton Lodge which both lie within the area to be evaluated.

3.5 The first detailed Ordnance Survey maps of the area were made in the late 19th century and show the U-shaped Clifton Lodge (the predecessor to Clifton Court). The area of the proposed development was largely tree-covered, the regular nature of this cover suggests it may have been an orchard (Fig. 4; Ordnance Survey 1888). There is a small rectangular enclosure or structure in the southern part of the site which may be an outbuilding or pond. This also appears on the 1851 map as a blacked-in area, suggesting a structure is more likely. The 1905 map is very similar; the Lodge is slightly larger and the possible 'pond' appears smaller and the area north of it is hatched, suggesting it was structural (Fig. 5; Ordnance Survey 1905).

3.6 By 1913 Clifton Court had been built and the grounds to the west and south of it subject to a major landscaping programme; the ground appears to have been terraced as indeed were the areas either side of the approach road and paths (Fig. 6; Ordnance Survey 1913). The 1939 map shows tree planting on the higher areas and a rectangular structure on the southern part of the site, interpreted as a possible tennis court in the Geotechnical report (Fig. 7; Ordnance Survey 1939; Murray Rix Geotechnical 2011). Later mapping shows the Court as Clifton Court Hotel and Country Club and there is a rectangular feature in the northern part of the site, possibly a pond (Ordnance Survey 1960-61). By the 1970s the landscaping has disappeared and it appears the present car park area was in place (Ordnance Survey 1970 and 1975).

3.7 The site currently has a raised grassed area on the western side and car parking on the east. The geotechnical report states that the raised area may in part be due to materials excavated in construction operations to extend the existing building in the past (Murray Rix Geotechnical 2011, 2). The geotechnical boreholes encountered sand and gravel at 0.60-

0.70m below ground level in the car park area but this appeared to be missing in the boreholes on the raised grassed area. It would normally be in this sand and gravel that archaeological features such as ditches and gullies would be found. Here natural Lias clay was overlain by a considerable depth (in some cases over 2m) of made-up ground, containing fragments of brick, rubble, mortar, concrete and clinker.

4 Trial Trenches

4.1 Four trial trenches were machine-dug with a 12-tonne, 360 degree, tracked excavator. The trenches were positioned in order to gain an understanding of the potential effects of the development, including car parking. It was understood from the geotechnical data that a significant amount of 'made-up ground' lay under the grassed data and historic map evidence would suggest that some of this was due to 20th-century landscaping works. A total length of 86.5m of trenching was excavated at a width of 1.8m covering an area of 155.7m square.

4.2 Trench 1 was 27m long and was excavated down to a layer of geological natural brownish yellow sand and gravel (105) at a depth of 0.80-0.98m. At both the north and south ends of the trench the geological natural had been cut down to levels of 1.48m and 1.54m and had a higher clay content lower down. This ground disturbance appears to have been associated with 20th-century landscaping, and these areas were filled by several modern layers containing large amounts of modern building debris such as brick, concrete and even a whole oxygen bottle. The modern excavation at the north end of the trench was cut down to a maximum depth of 1.59m where the geological natural was again visible. It was filled by 0.53m of a mix of greyish brown and olive brown clay (104). This was overlain by a layer of yellowish brown clay and gravel with frequent small pebbles (103), perhaps a layer of re-deposited natural. Above this was a layer of black coal or clinker (102) which was covered by a greyish brown clay loam layer containing frequent rubble. Above this was a 0.10-0.12m greyish brown clay loam layer of topsoil (100) which also contained occasional builder's rubble.

4.3 Trench 2 was 32m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 2.08m down to geological natural deposits. These consisted of grey clay with patches of brownish yellow gravel (206). To the north another layer of geological natural, a brownish yellow sand and gravel (205), was very close to the surface (0.30m below present ground level). This clearly sat on top of natural deposit 206 and was a maximum of 1m thick. The layer had been considerably cut away at some point, presumably during 20th-century landscaping and the rest of the trench showed a different stratigraphy. Natural layer 206 was cut by an irregular feature (203) with shallow sloping sides and an irregular base. It extended beyond the edges of the evaluation trench. It had a maximum width of 1.4m and a maximum depth of 0.25m. The fill was a dark grey silty sand which contained frequent small pebbles and river washed flints. The flints were checked for the possibility of their being worked but no traces were found. No other finds were made within the feature which may have been natural. Layer 206 was overlain by 0.20-0.30m of very dark grey silty clay (202), perhaps a buried soil from the bottom of a landscaped garden feature or perhaps a deposit associated with a former pond. This was overlain by a 1.68m thick layer of yellowish brown clay loam which contained occasional brick and other modern demolition rubble, including concrete kerbs (201). Overlying this was greyish brown clay loam topsoil (200). At the north end of the trench a linear feature (207) ran in a north-south direction across the trench cutting through layer 201 and geological natural gravel 205. This was filled by a brown sandy loam (208) which

contained numerous bricks, fragments of stone and concrete kerbs. It was clearly a late 20th-century feature.

4.4 Trench 3 was 24m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.78m onto the geological natural brownish yellow sand and gravel mixed with occasional patches of clay (304). The natural was higher at the south-west end of the trench, indicating limited landscaping at this end of the site. The geological natural (304) was overlain by up to 1m of dark grey silty clay (302), possibly the fill of a former pond. This was overlain by up to 0.68m of light brown sandy clay which contained numerous fragments of 20th century rubble (301). Overlying this 0.10m of modern topsoil (300).

4.5 Trench 4 was 6m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.99m down onto a layer of brownish yellowish natural gravel and clay mixed with patches of grey clay (403). This was overlain by 0.58m of greenish grey clay (402) which was covered by 0.30m of modern hardcore (401) from the existing car-park. On top of this was 0.11m of car-park tarmac (400).

5 Conclusions

5.1 No significant archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered from the evaluation trenches. The single excavated feature (203) in Trench 2 was probably a naturally-formed feature within the layers of geological natural. The geological natural layers within all trenches had been partially truncated in the early 20th-century. Areas of trenching at the furthest east and west parts of the site showed less truncation, which broadly appears to mirror the landscaping shown on the 1913 and 1939 Ordnance Survey maps.

5.2 The evaluation tends to suggest that it is highly unlikely that any significant archaeological deposits will be disturbed by the proposed development.

Acknowledgements

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Ordnance Survey 1905 *Second Edition 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet 28.4*

Ordnance Survey 1913 *Edition of 1913 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet 28.4*

Ordnance Survey 1939 *Edition of 1939 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet 28.4*

Ordnance Survey 1960 *SP5376 1:2500 map*

Ordnance Survey 1960 *SP5476 1:2500 map*

Ordnance Survey 1960 *SP5475 1:2500 map*

Ordnance Survey 1961 *SP5375 1:2500 map*

Ordnance Survey 1970 *SP5376 1:2500 map*

Ordnance Survey 1975 *SP5375 1:2500 map*

WRO CR 569/71 *Tithe Apportionment Map of 1851, Warwickshire County Records Office*

Appendix: List of Contexts

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	100	0.10-0.12m	Topsoil
1	101	0.34m	Rubble layer
1	102	0.10m	Layer
1	103	0.50m	Layer
1	104	0.53m	Layer
1	105	N/A	Natural clay
2	200	0.10m	Topsoil
2	201	1.68m	Building rubble
2	202	0.20-0.30m	Brown layer
2	203	0.20m	Gully cut
2	204	0.20m	Gully fill
2	205	1.00m	Natural gravel
2	206	N/A	Clay and gravel natural
2	207	N/A	Modern trench
2	208	N/A	Fill of 207
3	300	0.10m	Topsoil
3	301	0.68m	Light brown clay loam and rubble
3	302	1.0m	Dark grey silty clay (pond fill)
3	303	N/A	Electricity cable (live)
3	304	N/A	Natural sand and gravel
4	400	0.11m	Tarmac
4	401	0.30m	Modern hardcore
4	402	0.58m	Greenish grey clay layer
4	403	N/A	Brownish yellow natural gravel and clay

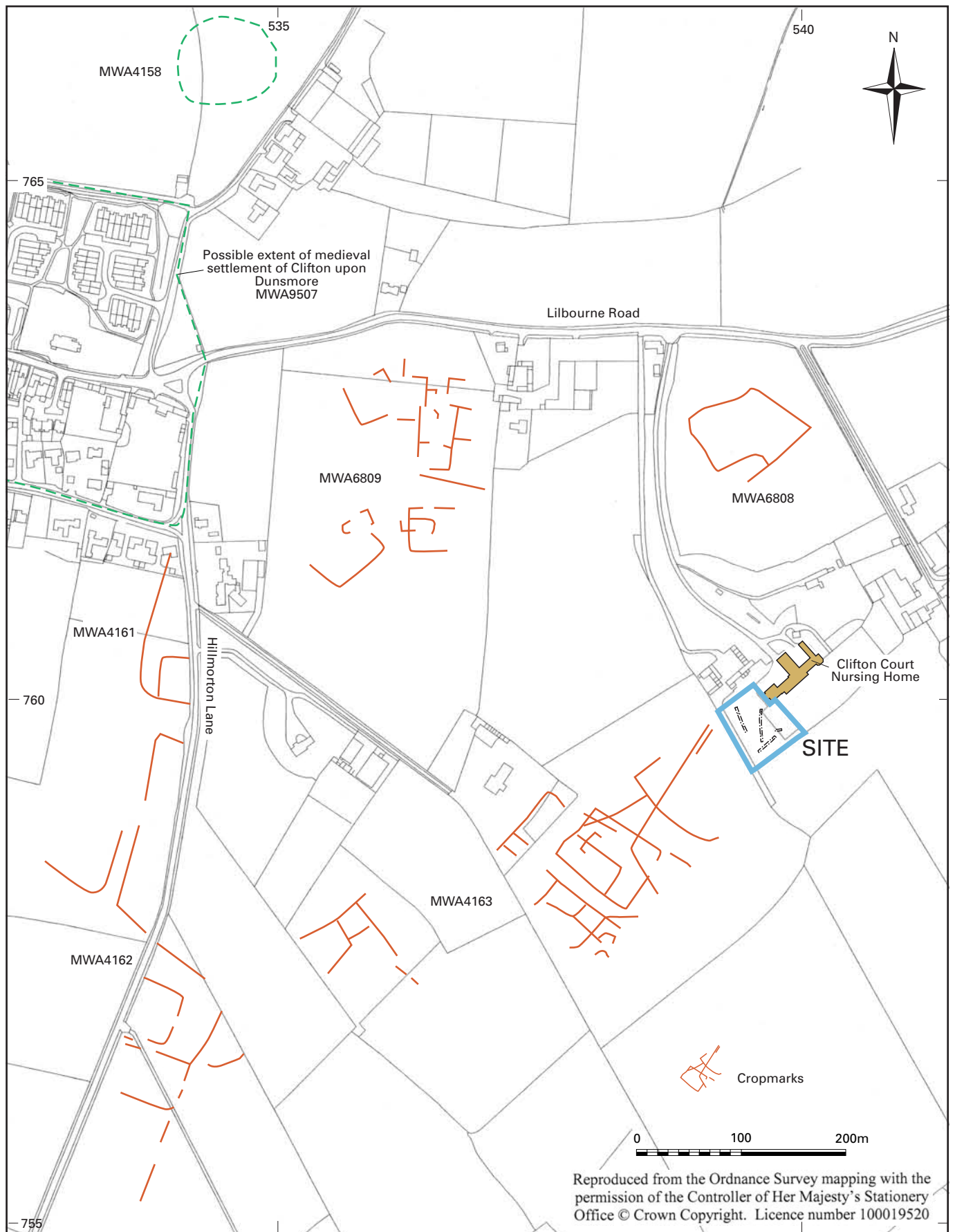


Fig. 1: Site location



Fig. 2: Detail of 1st Edition one Inch to One Mile Ordnance Survey map of 1834

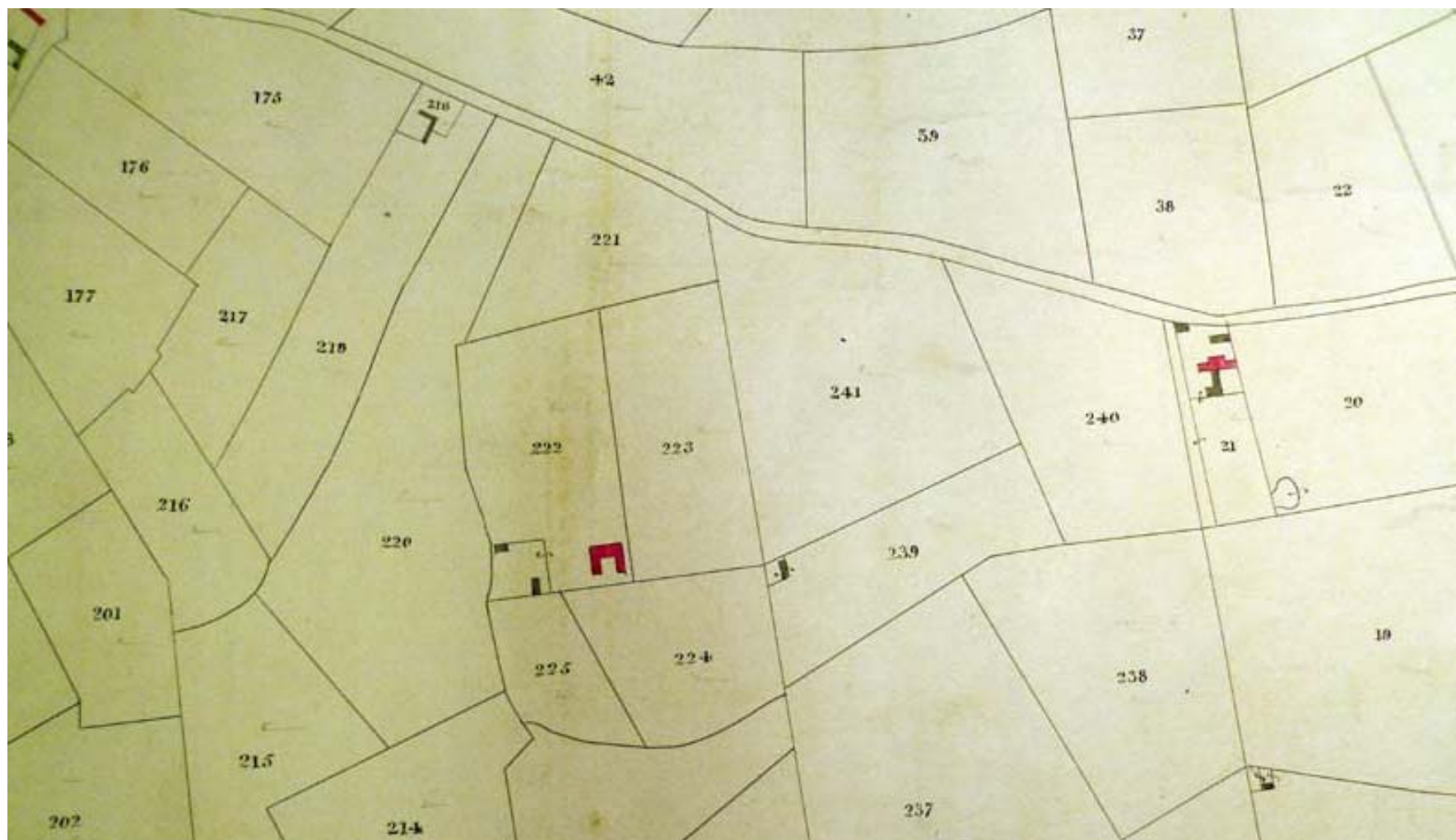


Fig. 3: Detail from the tithe map of 1851 (WRO CR 569/71)

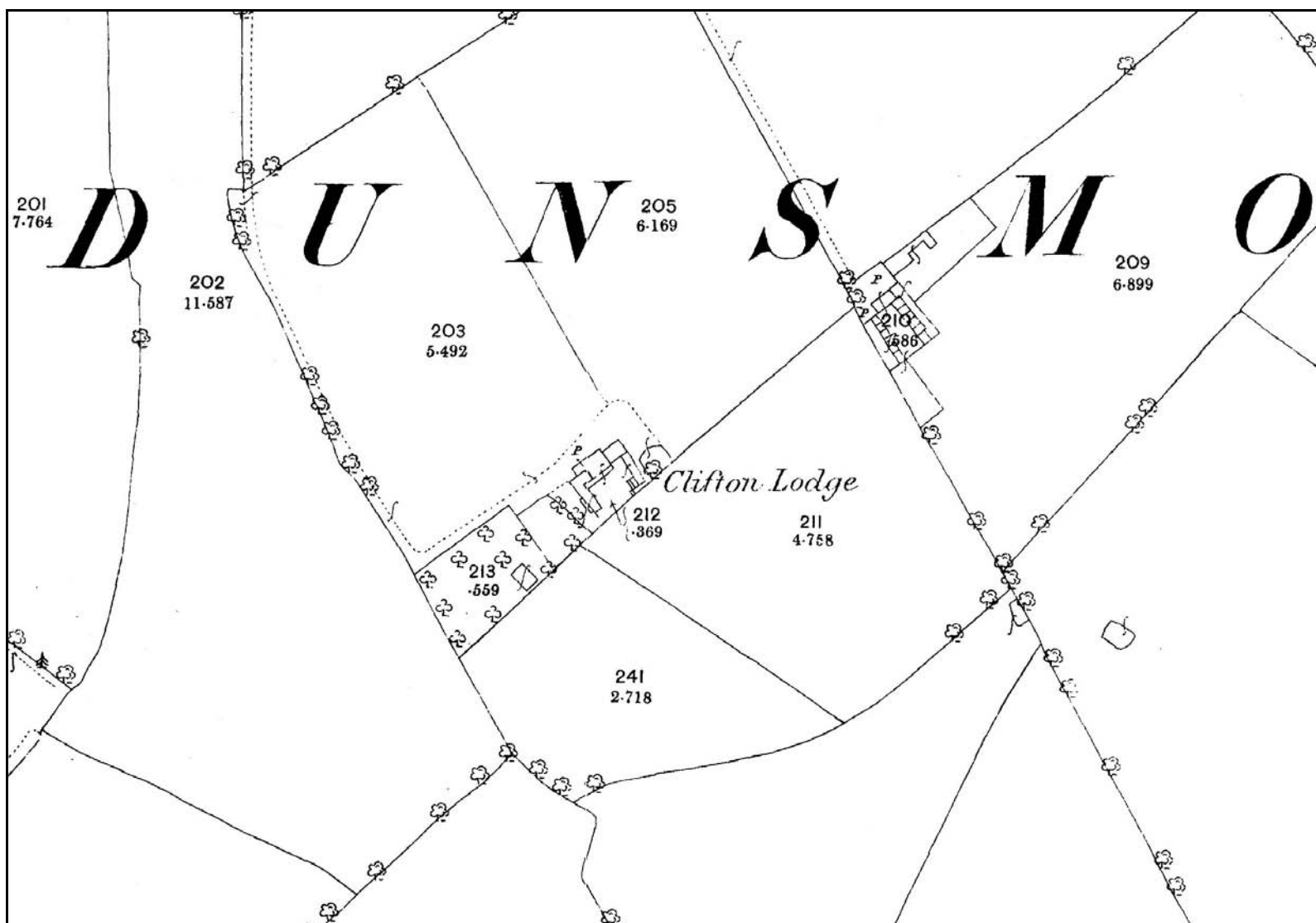


Fig. 4: Detail from Ordnance Survey map of 1888

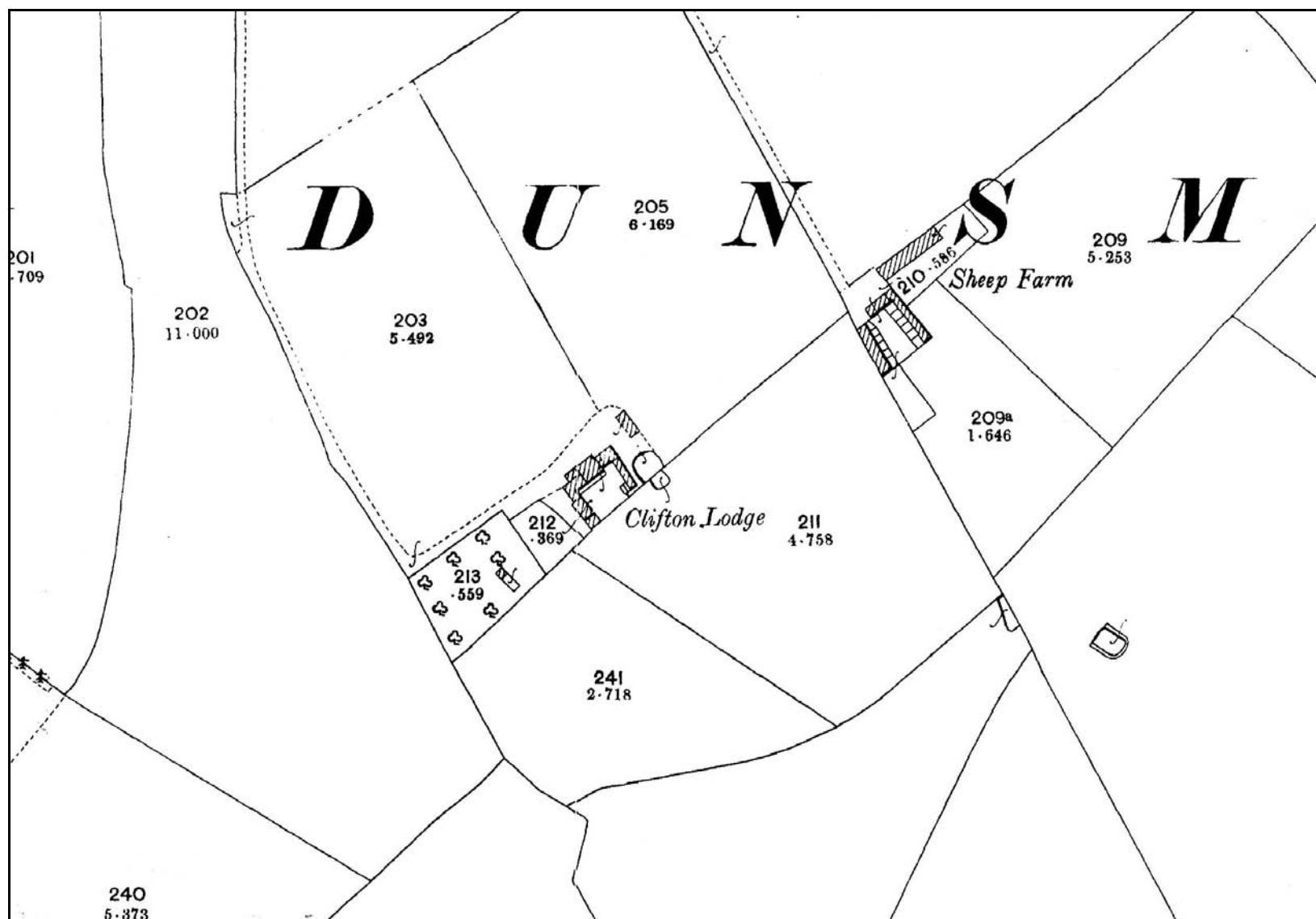


Fig. 5: Detail from Ordnance Survey map of 1905

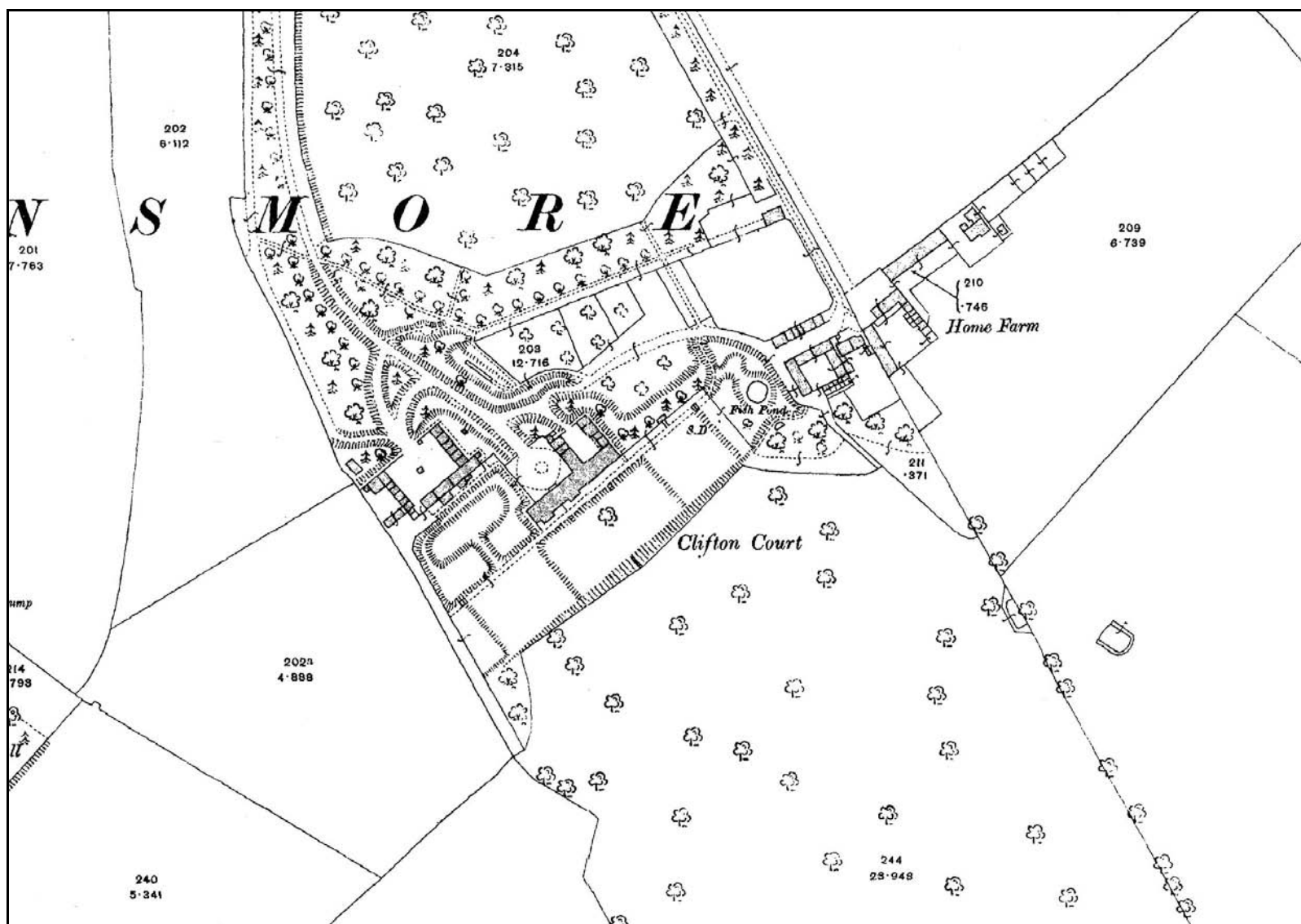


Fig. 6: Detail from Ordnance Survey map of 1913

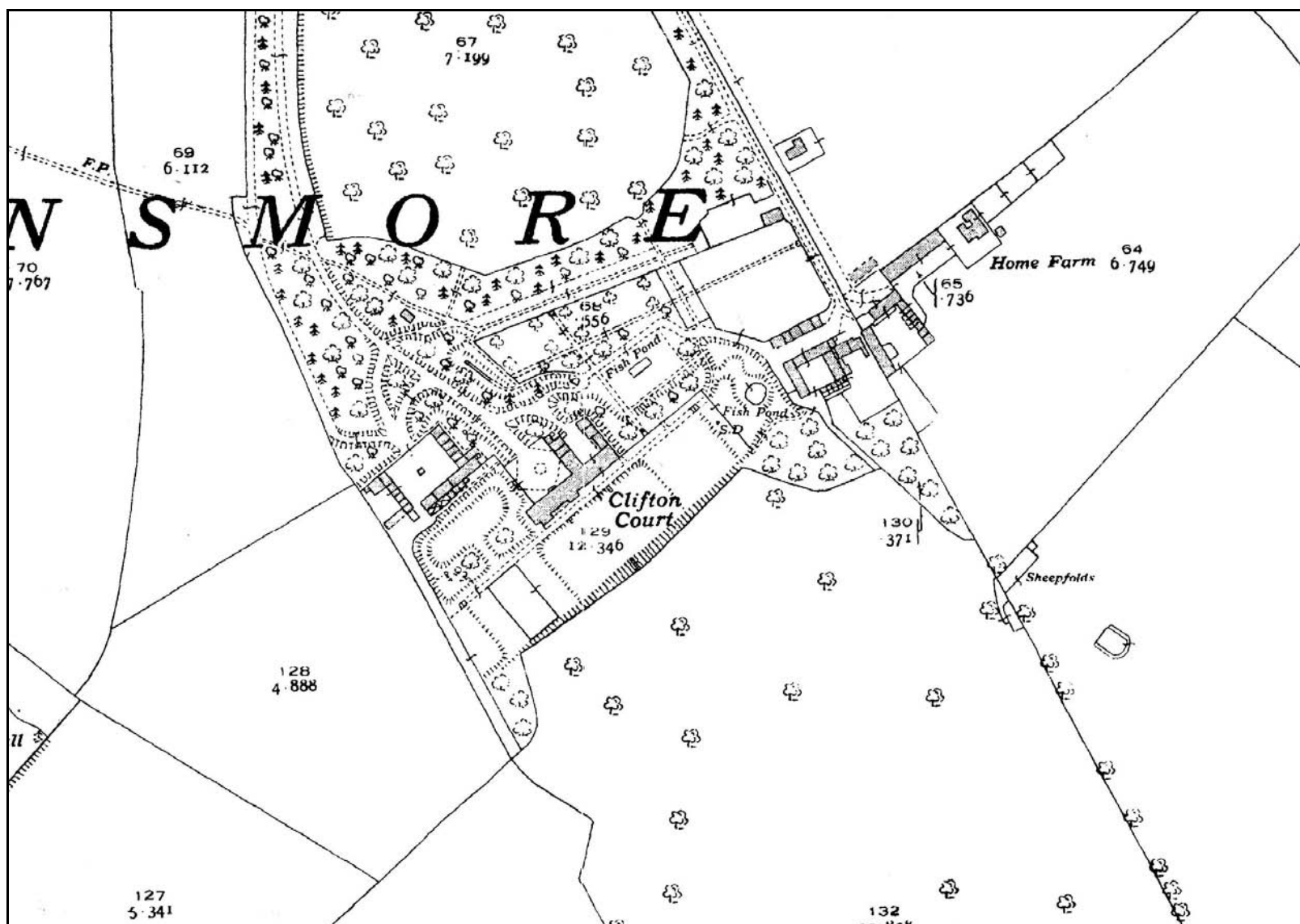


Fig. 7: Detail from Ordnance Survey map of 1939

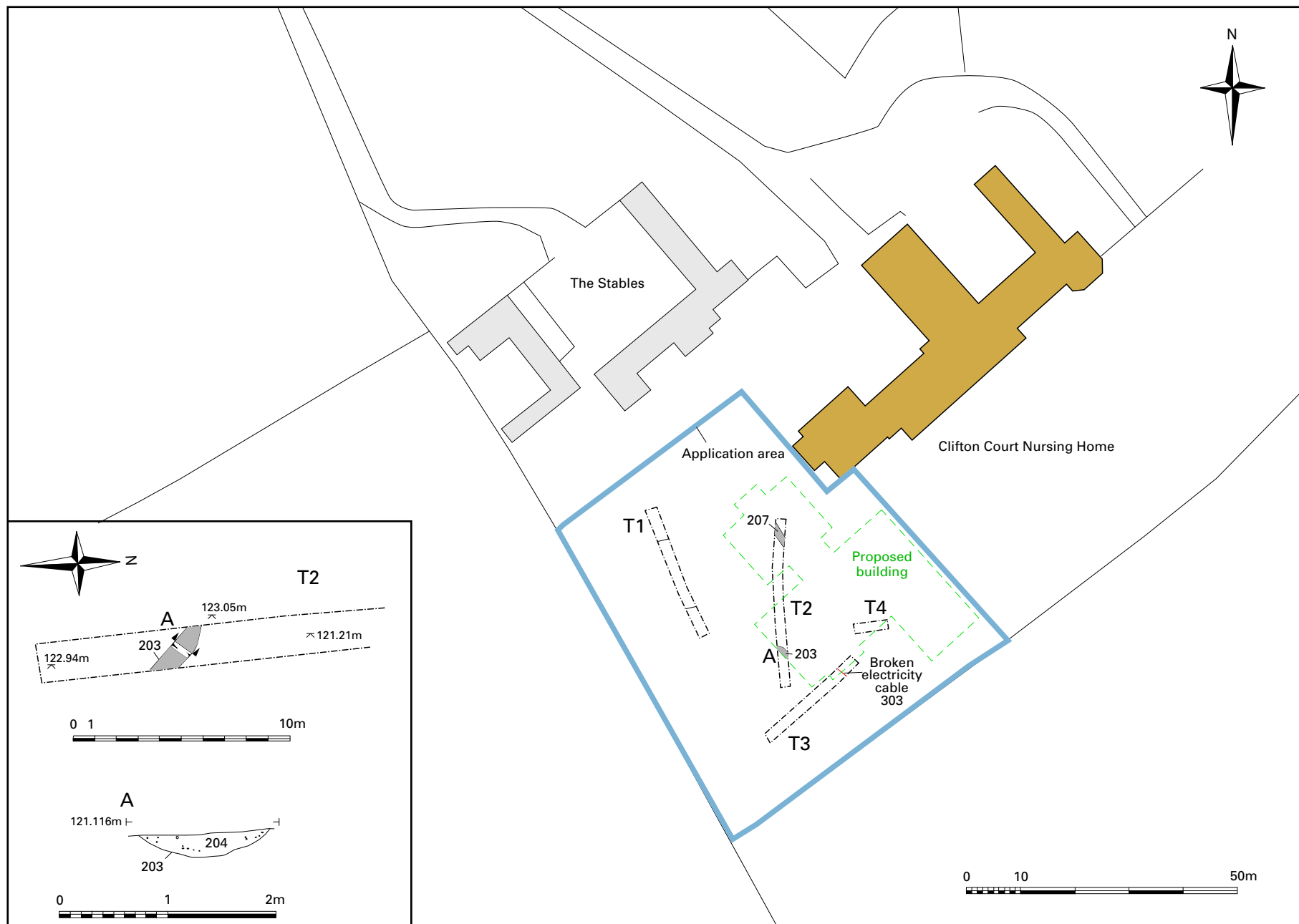


Fig 8: Trench locations and detail of Trench 2



Fig. 9: Trench 1



Fig. 10: Trench 2



Fig. 11: Trench 3 showing electric cable



Fig. 12: Trench 4