

Project Code: HSE07

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Client: Credential (Hermiston) Ltd

**Hermiston Steading, Edinburgh**

Phase 3: Archaeological Evaluation

Laura Scott

**PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (HSE07)**

<b>Client</b>	Credential (Hermiston) Ltd
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	NT 317600 670210 (centre)
<b>Project Manager</b>	Tim Holden
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<b>Fieldwork</b>	Laura Scott
<b>Schedule</b>	
Excavation	June 2008
Report	June 2008

**SUMMARY**

*Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Credential (Hermiston) Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological works on the site of Hermiston Steading, Currie, to satisfy a planning condition set out by the City of Edinburgh Council. The programme of archaeological works consisted of a desk based assessment (Breslin 2007), historic building recording (Geddes 2008) and archaeological evaluation undertaken prior to the development of 8 residential dwellings with associated car parking and open space on the site.*

*The farm steading, located within the Hermiston Conservation Area, was founded in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and was altered and expanded considerably throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The impact of 20<sup>th</sup> century and later development in this area was significant as demolition pits cut through the natural subsoil in some areas. Although excavations uncovered the remains of culverts which corresponded well with the alignment of the buildings depicted on maps dating to the 1700's, no evidence for activity predating the 1700s was uncovered during the evaluation.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Credential (Hermiston) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at 58 Hermiston (Hermiston Steading), Currie, to satisfy a planning condition set out by City of Edinburgh Council. The works comprise the partial demolition of the late 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural buildings and the conversion of the remaining 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century steading buildings with the addition of a new block to the north and the slapping of new vehicular pends through the eastern end of the north range. Although the steadings are not listed or noted in the National Monuments Record for Scotland, the property is located within the Hermiston Conservation Area, defined as "...areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (CEC 2002). The Hermiston Conservation Area is particularly characterised by its setting, form, building materials and fenestration.

The evaluation was undertaken in July 2008 in dry, sunny weather conditions.

## **SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION**

The proposed development area takes in a parcel of land occupied by Mid Hermiston Steading, on the west side of Hermiston Village, in the parish of Currie (Illus 1). The southern area is bounded by the main street which runs parallel to the A71, but is separated from it by a landscaped belt and stone boundary wall. Access roads to the surrounding properties are located to the north and west and garden ground of neighbouring properties bounds the site to the east.

Several buildings originally occupied the site, including a steading, a substantial stable block, a store and a large barn with threshing machine, steam power plant and brick chimney stack. Parts of the complex were recently demolished following a programme of Historic Building Recording (Geddes 2008). The site covers an area of 2456 m<sup>2</sup> and the surface consisted variously of tarmac, concrete, cobbles and topsoil.

The local geology consists of Carboniferous sandstone, shales and limestones overlain by brown forest soil with gleying (Soil Survey of Scotland 1982).

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A desk-based assessment was undertaken as part of Phase 1 of the archaeological mitigation (Breslin 2007). The evidence is reinterpreted here in the light of the building survey (Geddes 2008) and some of the information is reprinted for completeness.

Mid Hermiston Steading was part of a group of three farms on the broad agricultural lands five miles west of Edinburgh, just south of the Union Canal of 1820 and north of the village of Currie. The linear settlement of Long Hermiston comprises the three farms, and lies along a broad ridge at c.85m OD with grand views to Corstorphine Hill and the Forth. The three farms are East, Mid and West Hermiston, all of which have 18<sup>th</sup> century foundations, though the settlement is depicted in 17<sup>th</sup> century maps and was previously a typical fermtoun of humble buildings and land farmed by a runrig system (Geddes 2008).

The East farm, expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is now part of an industrial estate, although some 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings do survive amongst the sheds. The West farm has been largely demolished – a farm building survives as cottages - and the gatehouse and baronial Hermiston House survive from William Burn's occupation. Mid Hermiston farm house is Listed, and is now in separate ownership from the farm, and includes a small gate cottage attached to the farm. The Mid-Hermiston farm group is now split in two, the west half converted for housing recently, and the east half forming the subject of this report.

Place name evidence for a settlement at Hermiston dates back to the 1214-26 Morton Registrum and the 1488 Acts of Council. The spelling of Hermiston changed a number of times including Hirdmanstoun and Hirdmanestoun (Nicolaisen 1976, p30). These spellings fit with the Statistical Account's statement that "the village of Hermiston was originally, according to popular tradition, nothing less than 'herdman's'" (Statistical Accounts of 1834-45, p542). This place name evidence suggests that there has been settlement in the area of this site since the medieval period.

Hermiston is a small agricultural settlement whose origins are bound to the neighbouring Riccarton Estate to the south. Riccarton Estate was gifted to Heriot Watt University in 1969 and is now the location of the university's campus. It is recorded as early as 1315 when "Riccarton (was) bestowed by Robert the Bruce as part of the dowry of his daughter, when he gave her in marriage to the Steward of Scotland" (Statistical Accounts of 1834-45, p546). The C(S) Listed Riccarton Mains Farm (NT 1816 6952) is ostensibly 18<sup>th</sup> century, but there are references to it from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Riccarton was a substantial estate and it is likely that Hermiston evolved along with it. It is known that a Hermiston House, to the west of this development was "owned by the Craig family (of Riccarton) from the 1680's, was for many years the dower house of the Riccarton estate" (<http://www.hw.ac.uk/archive/histric.htm>). Hermiston House is noted in charters dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century (CEC 2002) although the physical evidence for it is not clear and the site may not have been the present one. Indeed, its site may have been further west, in a wooded plot shown on maps up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Hermiston appears on all historic plans of this area since Timothy Pont's map of 1610, including Adair's maps of 1682 and 1735. William Roy's c.1750 military survey, the most accurate national survey at that time, shows the linear settlement of Long Hermiston in detail, stretched along the Edinburgh-Calder road with small individual buildings and plots behind. To the west, a road junction (with the south road to Currie) is marked by a large wooded plot but most other features have changed and the settlement may have moved east. This map suggests that none of the Hermiston farms had been founded by this date; there is certainly no east or mid Hermiston farm and west Hermiston is not clearly shown. It is difficult to reconcile Roy's map with later more accurate surveys but it does seem to suggest that the early linear fermstoun continued slightly west of the current street – this is assessed using the burns and the wooded plot which appear in 1750, 1772 and 1854.

The first detailed plan of the area is an estate plan dated 1772 (Illus 2). This shows, from west to east, a square wooded plot, a 3-sided farm steading (West Hermiston), then a dog-legged road heading north. To the NE of the steading, there is a rectangular building which is probably Hermiston House, and an old farmhouse to the SE. The early Mid Hermiston Steading is SE of this; a group of four separate units, with a track running north between them.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, new forms of farm management resulted in a requirement for more labour and a process of increasing the number of farm workers, constructing new farm buildings and increasing stock was set in motion. Hermiston was consolidated as an agricultural village at this time and its present day structure dates from this period (City of Edinburgh Council 2000; 6). This is particularly apparent in a plan dating to 1800 (Illus 3). The plantation is now gone and West Hermiston steading has been expanded to form a complete quadrangle. Hermiston House and the long building to the SE stay unchanged. Mid Hermiston Steading is clearly recognisable with Hermiston farmhouse to the NE. Older buildings to the E have been reduced in size and a row of buildings constructed along the south side of the main village.

An 1833 drawing relating to the Union Canal, which now forms the northern boundary of the conservation area, is extremely accurate and can be used to correct slightly the 1800 survey (Illus 4). West Hermiston farm and house (Hermiston House) are shown clearly, and Mid-Hermiston is depicted as two blocks, U-plan and L-plan block with Hermiston Farmhouse beside. The long building between Hermiston House and Mid-Hermiston is now demolished but shown.

By the first Ordnance Survey map of 1854, there had been some further changes: West Hermiston farmstead had been reduced to the single row of cottages that survives. Hermiston House had been hugely expanded by William Burn, as noted in previous descriptions, and formal gardens had been created at Hermiston House and at Mid Hermiston Farm House. The farm and house at mid Hermiston had both been expanded. The 18<sup>th</sup> century N steading range had been demolished and a new barn constructed slightly further S incorporating a power house by 1854. The L-plan S range had been extended W and a new W range built forming a large U-plan. The village was also slightly expanded. Gatehouses were built for Riccarton Estate and Hermiston House.

The most comprehensive survey to date was undertaken in 1893 and was published in 1895 (Illus 5). Now referred to as Mid and West Hermiston (West Hermiston had been demolished), the steading had been expanded with new buildings to the NW and in the centre. Hermiston Farm House had also been altered with the addition of the bowed E extension, post 1854. There was also a small gas works and other buildings (some of which survive) in the plot between Hermiston Farm House and Long Hermiston. The smithy had been moved to the E end of the village (featured in a SCRAN image not reproduced here).

Two further maps were produced in 1908 and 1913. There are only small changes; a building is added to the NE wall of the farm barn, the gas works is unmarked in 1913 and the cottages at the far west of the settlement are re-labelled West Hermiston. The edition of 1963 shows that Building E has been altered since 1963; the large silos are later insertions.

A programme of Historic Building Recording was undertaken in March 2008 (Geddes 2008). It was concluded that Mid-Hermiston Farm was founded in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century as part of improvements to Riccarton and, specifically, the reorganisation of Hermiston village from fermtoun to improvement farms and workers cottages. It is part of an important group of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings which form the Hermiston Conservation Area, characterised by a rural agricultural character and specific architectural elements.

Fragments of the steading are of 18<sup>th</sup> century date but the bulk of the fabric dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is depicted on the first Ordnance Survey in 1854. The steading is rare in having an excellent record of plans in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century which show

it before modernisation in the mid and later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century steading included a substantial barn which had a thresher powered by a steam engine with an associated brick chimney stack – the stack is an increasingly rare feature which was typical of Lothian steadings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a characteristic and key feature of the group. Other features of note include the mixture dressings, period specific and reused, the wooden windows and boarded doors and the slates and the way they are laid.

Though much altered, the group is a substantial and attractive example of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural buildings, part of a large group of buildings in Hermiston Conservation which retains a good deal of its historic character.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the archaeological works was to evaluate the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits beneath the surface and to excavate and record any buried archaeological remains where preservation in situ was not possible.

## **METHODS**

As the site would be heavily impacted upon during the construction works, the brief required that 5% of the 2456 m<sup>2</sup> of land should be sampled as part of the evaluation. Trenches were excavated using a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.6 m wide ditching bucket. A Digicat Cable Detector was used before trenching commenced to offset the possibility of disturbing any unmarked services.

A total of 7 trenches were excavated (Illus 6), ranging from approximately 5 to 18 m in length. Trenches 1 and 2 were located in the northern area of the site in order to see if any archaeological features remained to the north of the steading; map evidence showed that this area was unaffected by building and there was therefore potential for subsurface archaeological remains. Stock piles of demolition material, an underground tank and overhanging mature deciduous vegetation meant that no more trenches could be excavated in this area.

A water pipe ran east to west in the centre of the site, as it remained undetected with the CAT scan a 5 m buffer zone was left on either side, consequently, a substantial gap was left between Trenches 2 and 3.

Trenches 3, 4 and 5 were located in the centre of the site within the partially demolished buildings to see if any remains of the structures depicted on maps dating to the 1700s, or indeed any features pre-dating the 1700s, survived within the footprint of the complex. A large demolition rubble heap on the west side of site prevented the placement of trenches in this area.

Trenches 6 and 7 were located at the northern end to see if any subsurface archaeological remains survived in these areas; both trenches were restricted in length in order to avoid a cable which ran east to west towards the southernmost buildings.

All trenches were recorded and reinstated.

The recording conformed to Headland Archaeology Ltd standard method. All contexts were given unique numbers. Colour transparencies, black and white and digital photographs were taken. Recording was by means of pre-printed pro forma record sheets and scale drawings were executed by hand at scales of 1:20 and 1:50 respectively.

## **RESULTS** (Illus 6; Plates 1 - 4)

Natural mid brown sandy clay was reached at a depth of 0.40m below current ground level in the southern area of site and dropped to a depth of 0.80 m in the northern and central areas.

### **Drainage features** (Illus 6; Plate 2)

A stone-lined culvert [002] running north-east to south-west was encountered at the east end of Trench 3 (Illus 6; Plate 2) 0.60 m below the existing ground level, in the area where the northernmost barn was once located. A culvert, on the same alignment and of similar construction was also uncovered in Trench 5. The alignment of the culverts appears to correspond well with the buildings depicted on the 1772 map.

Several rubble drains, cut in to the natural subsoil, ran north-east to south-west at the northern end of site in Trench 2.

### **Cut features** (Illus 6; Plate 3)

Two pits, 006 and 008, were uncovered in Trench 4, where the metal grain drier once stood. They were 2.30 m and 3 m long respectively, irregularly shaped and were cut through the natural subsoil. The pits were filled with modern debris including white transfer printed ceramic pottery, iron, wood and red brick fragments.

### **Building foundations** (Illus 6, Plate 4)

Remains of a sandstone wall, bonded with cement, [010] and aligned east to west, was encountered 8 m from the northern end of Trench 5 directly to the north of the culvert. Similarly, a 0.72 m wide, sandstone wall [004], cut into the natural subsoil, was uncovered at the southern end of Trench 5 within the footprint of the westernmost barn. The wall ran parallel with the upstanding barn wall and was located directly beneath demolition rubble. Map evidence shows that the westernmost barn building was subject to many physical changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Several changes occurred in the area between 1854 and 1895 when a large building was added to the central courtyard abutting the barn. Similarly, between 1913 and 1963 considerable changes were made to the southern side of the complex. The central block was significantly altered and largely rebuilt to facilitate the movement of large vehicles and possibly grain bins and silos, and it appears that the wall dates to this period. If the wall was load bearing, as it appears to be on the 1963 map, the thickness of the foundations would be explained. The wall was probably demolished during alteration work later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the building was adapted to house very large grain bins. It was primarily overlain with a brick floor surface and latterly with concrete which until recently formed the barn floor.

Remains of a surface [005], probably related to the power house buildings located between the northern and western most barns and constructed in the 1850's, were uncovered at the northern end of Trench 5.

## **DISCUSSION**

No remains of the buildings depicted on the 1772 to 1833 maps survive, other than culverts. It is probable that the buildings were completely demolished and levelled during the series of later changes to the steading. Some of the stonework was re-used in the northern barn and in elements of the stable. The area within the footprint of the proposed building has been heavily impacted upon by modern development.

Although historic documents and maps indicate that the site has been occupied since the medieval period, no evidence for activity predating the 1700s was uncovered during the evaluation.

## APPENDIX 1: SITE REGISTERS

### 1.1 Context Register

Context No.	Description
001	Cut for culvert, linear in plan, vertical sides, 0.45 m wide and 0.35 m deep. Cut through natural mid brown sandy clay.
002	Stone lined culvert, 1.7 m long, 0.45 m wide, 0.35 m deep aligned NE-SW. The lintel is 0.05 m thick and is constructed from sandstone.
003	Mid to dark brown, loose, clayey silt containing occasional mortar fragments. Fill of culvert.
004	Large sandstone blocks, double skinned, bonded with cement, aligned north to south, located directly beneath demolition rubble at the south end of Trench 5, 3.2 m long, 0.72 m wide and 0.20 m deep.
005	2 parallel lines of Sandstone blocks, 0.36 m wide, 0.80 m long and 0.37 m apart, bonded with cement, located 1.90 m from the N end of Trench 5, 0.30 m beneath demolition rubble. A surface composed of grey bricks each measuring 0.12 m x 0.15 m x 0.06 m, aligned NE-SW- 0.60 m wide, 1 course high and unbonded overlay natural mid brown sandy clay. Probably remains of floor surface and culvert.
006	Pit, irregular in plan, steep sides, 2.30 m long, 0.80 m wide, located at east end of trench 4., filled by (007). Cut through natural mid brown sandy clay, located 1.60 m to the east of [008].
007	Mixed greyish brown sandy loam containing clay lenses, brick fragments, fe, white ceramic pottery, angular stone, rubble and brick fragments.
008	Pit, Irregular in plan, 3 m long, 0.80 -1.20 m wide, located at the west end of Trench 4, very similar in form to [006].
009	Mixed greyish brown sandy loam containing clay lenses, brick fragments, fe, white ceramic pottery, angular stone, rubble and brick fragments.
010	Sandstone wall bonded with concrete, 0.70 m wide and 0.75 m long, aligned east to west and located 8 m from the north end of trench 5. 1 course high and cut in to natural subsoil.

### 1.2 Photo Register

#### Colour Print and Colour Slide, Film 1

Shot No.	Direction facing	Description
01		Registration
02	NE	Pre exc site shot showing east barn
03	N	Pre exc site shot showing N. barn
04	W	Pre exc site shot showing west barn and site of chimney
05	SE	Pre ex site shot showing SE steading building
06	E	Pre exc shot showing E barn
07	N	General site shot
08	S	General site shot
09	E	Detail at Northern end of Eastern barn
10	SE	General site shot
11	NW	E facing section, Trench 1
12	SW	Rubble drain Tr 1
13	E	Rubble drain in Tr 2
14	NE	Tr 1, Post exc
15	E	Tr 2, General shot of hardcore filled service cut
16	S	Tr 5, Charcoal deposit at N end
17	E	Tr 3, culvert

18	E	Tr 3, Rubble drain
19	E	Tr 3, Culvert
20	W	Tr 3, General shot
21	E	Detail shot of culvert, Tr 3
22	SW	Tr 4, Demolition pits
23	SW	Tr 4, Demolition pits
24	NE	Tr 4, Demolition pits
25	SE	Tr 6, General shot
26	SW	Tr 7, Post-exc
27	W	Post exc of concrete
28	S	Detail of [005], Tr 5
29	E	Detail of [005] in Tr 5
30	S	Detail of stone platform in Tr 5
31	S	Culvert and Wall, Tr 5
32	S	Working shot, Tr 5
33	W	East facing section at S end of Tr 5
34	E	Wall [004]

### 1.3 Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Scale	Description
01	1:20	E- facing section of wall [003]
02	1:50	General site plan

### 1.4 Trench Register

Trench No.	Dimensions	Description
1	11m x 1.6 m x 1.9 m	A 0.05 m thick deposit of topsoil overlay a 0.10 m thick deposit of hardcore. A 0.45 m thick deposit of mid brown loam containing crushed red brick fragments, burnt shale and a large tree stump underlay this. A rubble drain cut in to natural reddish brown silty clay was encountered 6.20 m from the northeastern end of the trench.
2	18 m x 1.6 m x 0.84 m	A 0.05 m thick deposit of topsoil overlay a 0.45 m thick deposit of greyish brown sandy loam containing rubble and ash fragments. A cut filled with hardcore ran NE-SW at the NE end of the trench, possibly related to the underground tank located to the south. Rubble drains ran NE-SW at the junction between trenches 1 & 2.
3	11 m x 1.6 m x 0.70 m	A 0.05 m thick deposit of tarmac overlay a 0.30 m thick deposit of demolition rubble. A stone lined culvert [002], running NE-SW, 0.50 m wide and 0.36 m deep, aligned NE- SW was encountered at a depth of 0.60 m, cut in to natural reddish brown silty clay.
4	10 m x 1.6 m x 0.80 m	A deposit of demolition rubble 0.50 m deep overlay a 0.30 m thick deposit of mottled orangey brown sandy clay. Demolition pits [006] and [008] containing white ceramic pottery, iron fragments, wood, red brick and rubble, were cut through the natural subsoil.

5	15 m x 1.6 m x 0.80 m	A 0.60 m deposit of demolition rubble overlay reddish brown sandy clay. A ceramic field drain was located at the northern end of the trench and a rubble drain ran east to west 5.70 m from the northern end of the trench. A fragmentary brick surface was encountered 0.20 m beneath the existing ground surface. A sandstone wall [010], bonded with concrete ran east to west 8 m from the northern end of the trench. Similarly, a wall [004] ran north to south at 10.60 m. Remains of a culvert abutted the wall on the northern side on eastern trench edge.
6	5 m x 1.6 m x 0.50 m	A 0.50 m thick deposit of demolition rubble containing brick fragments and rubble overlay natural reddish brown sandy clay.
7	10 m x 1.6 m x 0.45 m	Stratigraphy consisted of a 0.16 m thick deposit of concrete overlying a 0.30 m thick deposit of hardcore. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.45 m.

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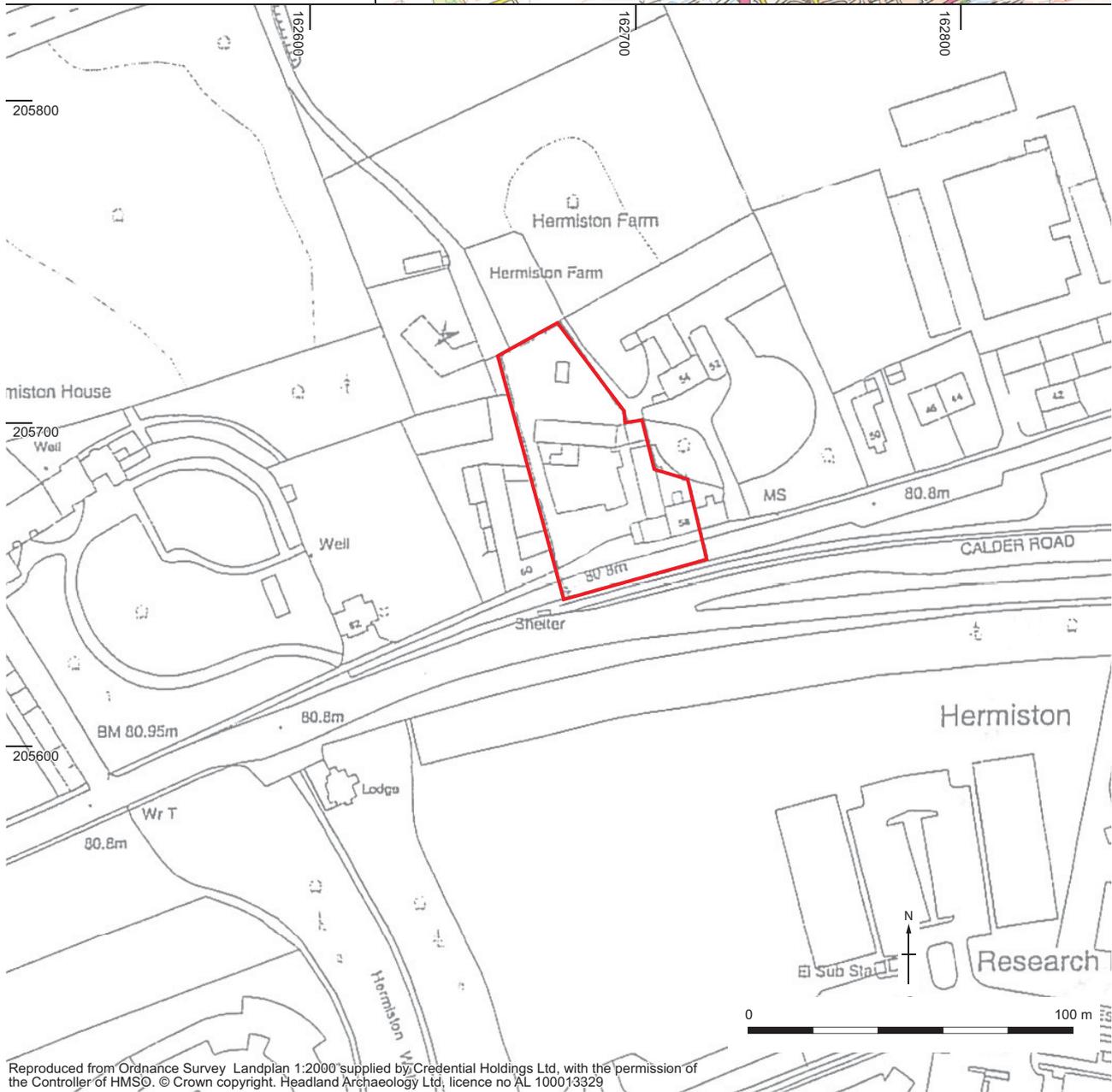
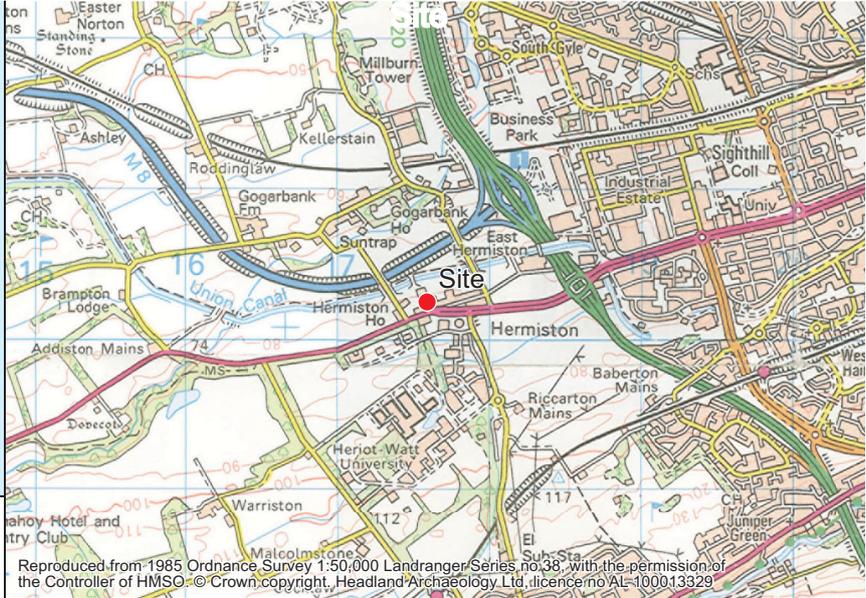
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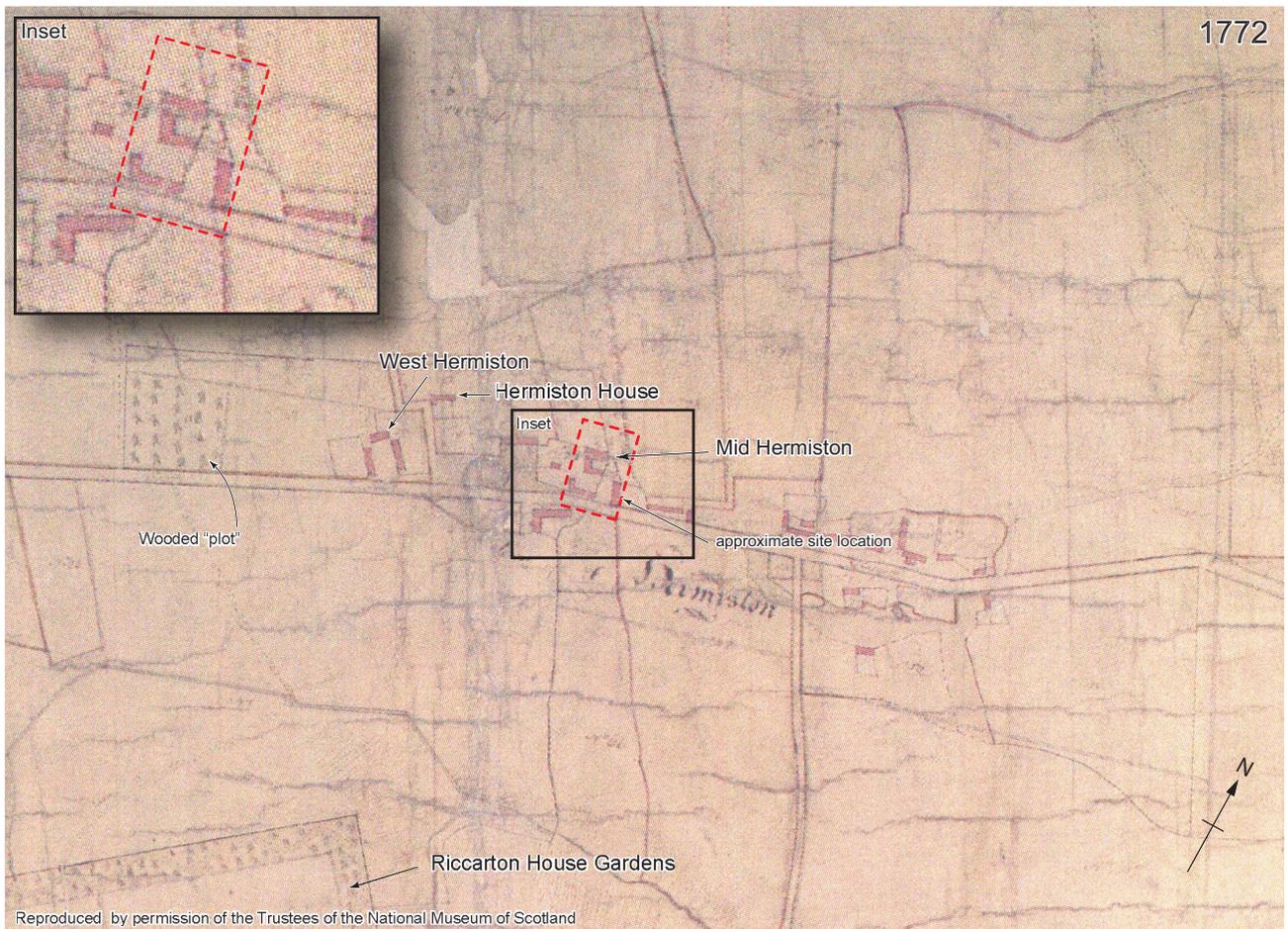
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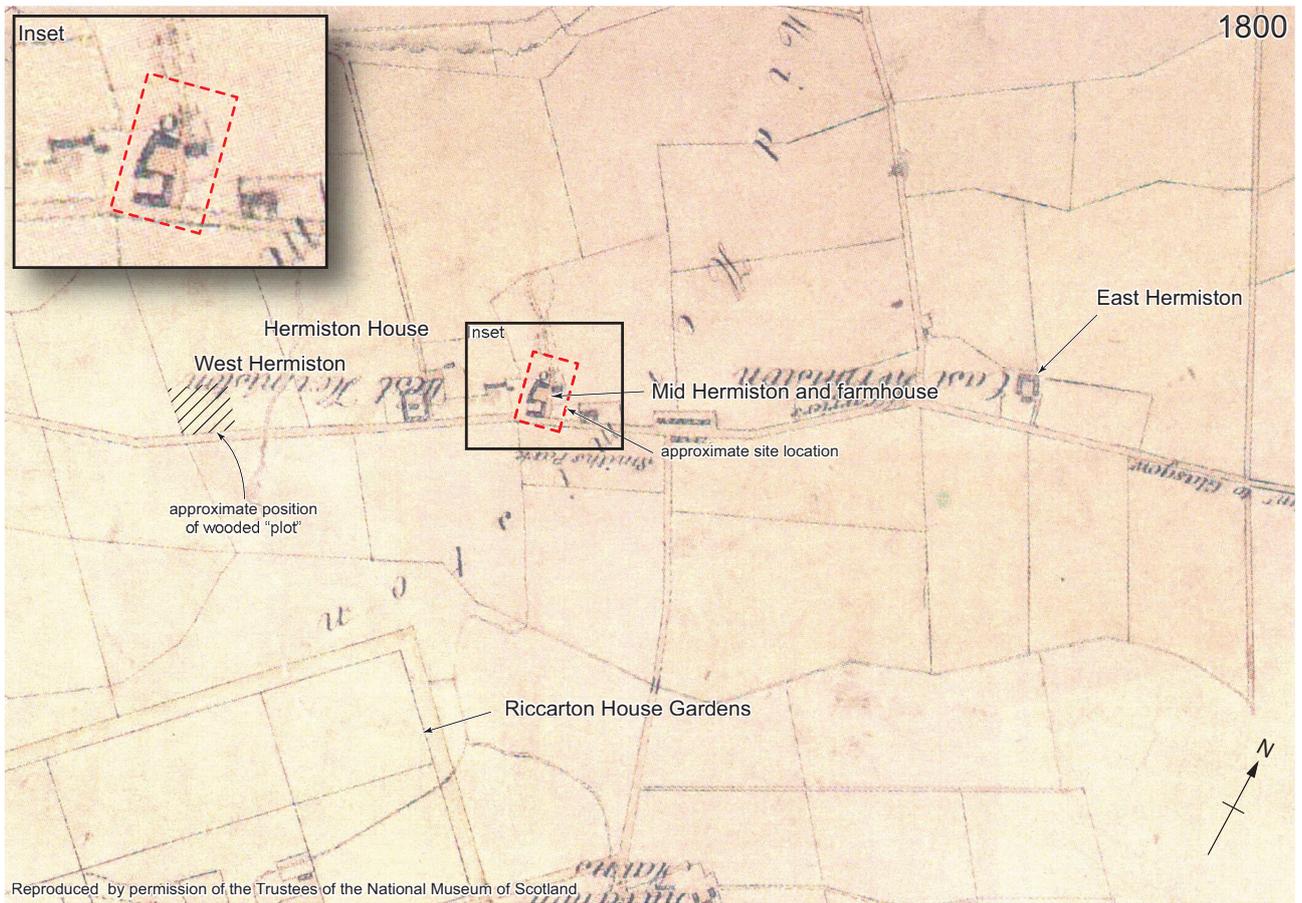
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Illus 1

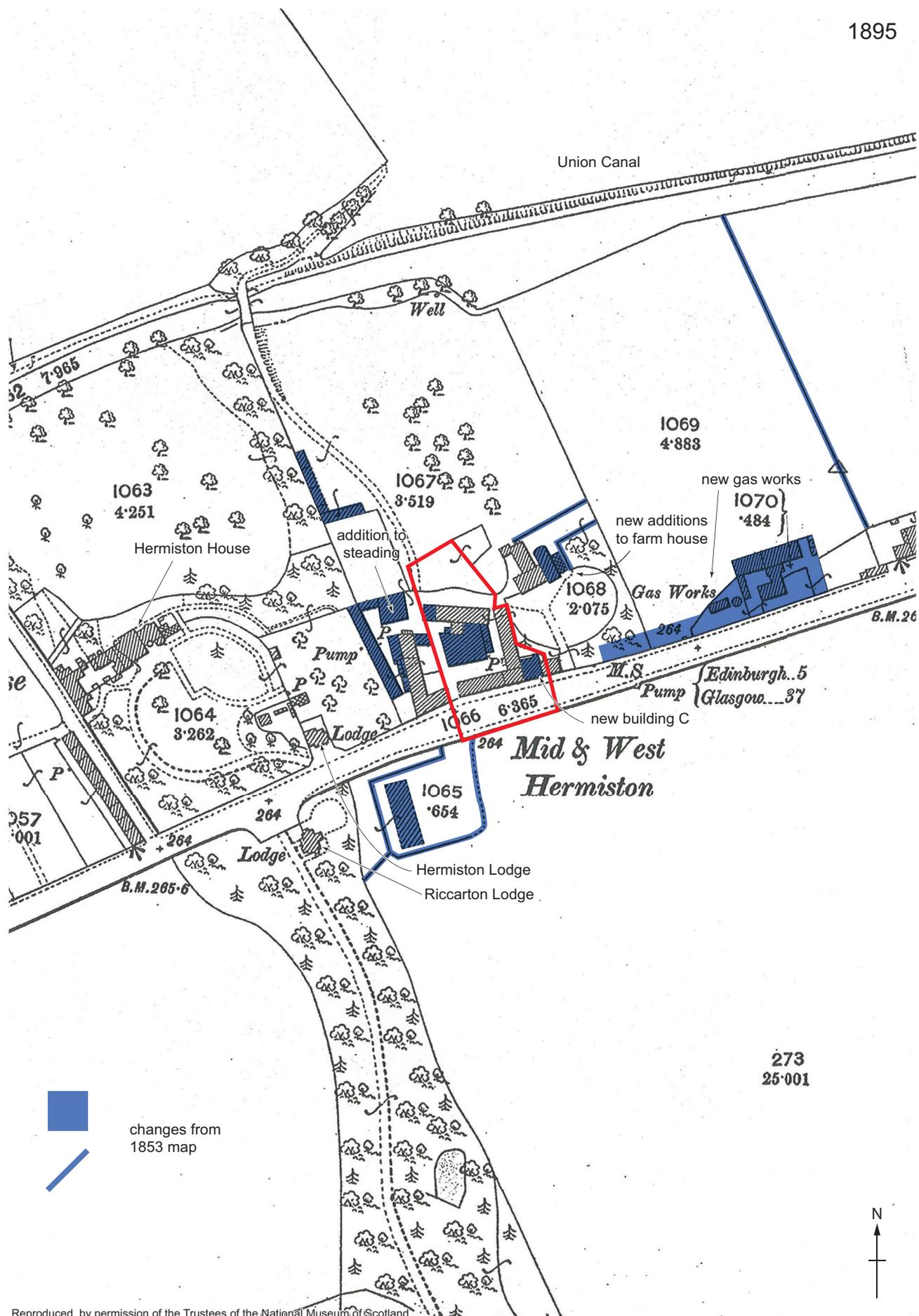


Illus 2



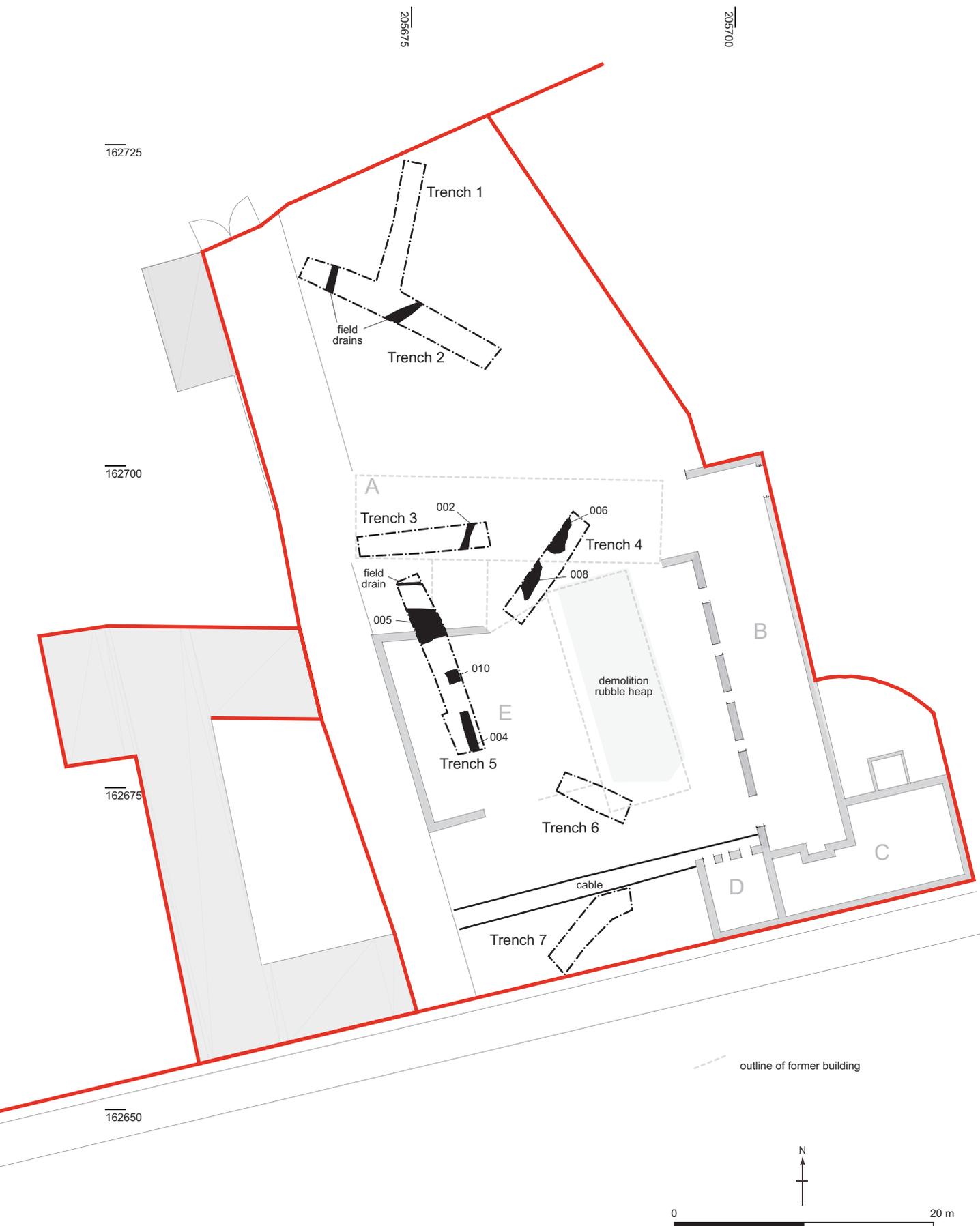
Illus 3





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Illus 6



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4