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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
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HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
EIA AND HERITAGE CONSULTANCY



**CHICHESTER HALL,
DICKTOD LANE, SKINBURNESS,
SILLOTH, CUMBRIA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

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NORTH ASSOCIATES (CUMBRIA) LTD

CHICHESTER HALL, DICKTOD LANE, SKINBURNESS, SILLOTH, CUMBRIA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2015

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SUMMARY

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by North Associates (Cumbria) Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of Chichester Hall, Skinburness, Silloth (NGR: NY 1272 5605) in Cumbria prior to a planning application for a redevelopment of the site.

The desk based assessment had shown that the area of Skinburness had archaeological and historical evidence of activity from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. Chichester Hall is known from at least the late 19th century, otherwise the known land use of the area was primarily for farming.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken between the 22nd of September 2015 and the 24th of September 2015 and involved excavating six trial trenches. The archaeological evaluation did not discover any significant archaeological features or deposits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) would like to thank North Associates (Cumbria) Ltd for commissioning the project and their help throughout the project. Wardell Armstrong Archaeology would also like to thank all the staff at Chichester Hall nursing home for their assistance during the evaluation.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Ric Buckle, Mark Lawson and Kevin Mounsey. The report was written by Ric Buckle and the figures were produced by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, technical director, and the report was edited by Richard Newman at Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Circumstances of the Project

- 1.1.1 In September 2015, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned by North Associates (Cumbria) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Chichester Hall, Skinburness, Cumbria. The archaeological works were required to inform a planning application for a proposed development of the site.
- 1.1.2 An archaeological desk-based assessment had been conducted before the archaeological evaluation, focusing on an area of a 0.5km radius study area around Chichester Hall. It examined the historical and archaeological background of Skinburness, and noted any heritage assets within the study area.
- 1.1.3 The desk-based assessment and evaluation were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, submitted to, and approved by, Cumbria county councils historic environment team. This is in line with government advice as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).
- 1.1.4 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken following approved standards and guidance (ClfA 2014a), and in accordance with an agreed project design, which was submitted to, and approved in advance of the fieldwork taking place.
- 1.1.5 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological evaluation.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Written Scheme of Investigation

2.1.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was submitted by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (Sept 2015) to Kate Skillicorn of North Associates (Cumbria) Ltd in response to an instruction by the client. Following approval of the WSI Wardell Armstrong Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. The WSI was adhered to in full and the works were consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 2014).

2.2 Rapid Desk Based Assessment

2.2.1 Prior to the commencement of groundworks, a desk-based assessment was undertaken in order to provide historical information relating to the site at Chichester Hall, and its immediate environs. The assessment primarily involved the consultation of readily available internet sources and the libraries and archives at Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.

2.2.2 Following this initial research, historical mapping and documentary sources were assessed for any additional information on the landscape around Chichester Hall.

2.2.3 The desk-based assessment was undertaken following Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (CIFA 2014b).

2.3 Archaeological Evaluation

2.3.1 The evaluation as described in the written scheme of investigation comprised the excavation of 6 trenches.

2.3.2 The overall aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of any archaeological deposits or remains within the study area.

2.3.3 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- Determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits from plough damage or from any other agricultural/industrial practices.

- Disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting.

2.3.4 Turf, topsoil and subsoil were removed by a tracked mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2012).

2.3.5 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2014a) and the Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2014b).

2.4 The Archive

2.4.1 A copy of the evaluation report will be deposited within the Cumbria Historic Environment Record, where viewing will be available upon request. The project is also registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations (OASIS)**, where a digital copy of the report will be made available. The unique OASIS reference number for this project is **wardella2-225041**.

2.4.2 A full professional archive will be compiled in line with the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011).

3 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The assessment results are based on primary documents, most notably maps, and secondary sources from the Cumbria Historic Environment Record, the Wardell Armstrong Archaeology Archive and Library as well as online sources.

3.2 Location and Geological Context

- 3.2.1 Chichester Hall is situated at the northern side of Skinburness, Silloth, in Cumbria. Skinburness is located on the north-west coast of England, two miles north of Silloth, within the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site is on raised beach deposits laid down during the last stages of glaciation, forming a land spit named Grune Point (NGR NY12690 56073).
- 3.2.2 The drift geology of the area of Chichester Hall is part of the Mercia Mudstone Group; mostly Mudstone with Gypsum-stone and/or Anhydrite-stone. It is dominantly a red, less commonly green-grey, mudstones and subordinate siltstones with thick halite-bearing units in some basinal areas. Thin beds of gypsum/anhydrite are widespread; sandstones are also present. The superficial deposit consists of the Raised Marine Beach Deposits of Flandrian Age, mainly Sand and Gravel. The superficial deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. The local environment was previously dominated by the shorelines (British Geological Survey <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

3.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.3.1 The place name 'Skinburness' is possibly derived from a Scandinavian form of the Old English 'scinnan burg', translating to 'demon or spectre haunted stronghold'. Further spellings include Skyneburg (1175), Schineburgh (1185), Skyburneys (e) (1298) and Skimburgh-neese (1538). Referring to 'The Place Names of Cumberland' (1943-44), Grune House and point 'is the name of the shore here and the name must have reference to some defensive sea wall'. Early mentions of the place include Sainet Johnes Chappel de Groyne (1582), St Johns Chappel of the Groyne (1649) and the Chappel of Grune (1664). The place name 'Silloth' is believed to have derived from the Old Norse saer and hlaða meaning 'barn by the sea'. Neilson noted that the word 'Grune' was an ancient geographical term denoting a 'snout' (Wooler 2009).
- 3.3.2 The exact location of Skinburness in the medieval period is still unclear (LUAU, 1995). Skinburness during medieval times appears to have been a small fishing town and

later a bathing place, with a market and a fair. It was the chief place for supplying the army employed against the Scots. During the campaigns of 1300-1306 against the Scots, Skinburness was turned into a naval port by Edward I to supply and strengthen his base at Carlisle. In 1301 the Abbot and Convent of Holme Cultram were given the right to have a free borough and a market (Curwen, 1913). Also in 1301 the Bishop of Carlisle granted a licence for a building of a parish church to serve the proposed new borough of Skinburness. The chapel, St John's, was erected but had a very short life as the licence was cancelled in 1304 when the charter was transferred to Newton Arlosh. The remains of the chapel were still visible in 1703 when Bishop Nicholson visited the area (Birley, 1950). The transferral of the charter was due to the borough of Skinburness being destroyed by the sea, sometime between 1301 and 1304 (Holmes, 1880). Excavations during the early 20th century in the south west corner of the area that the chapel is noted to be, had to be abandoned because of the large number of burials which were found. This indicates that the burial ground probably remained in use after the chapel had ceased to exist and also suggesting that there was still some occupation in this area (Grainger, 1902 and LUAU, 1995).

- 3.3.3 Chichester Hall is listed as SMR No. 43413. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1866 the area of Chichester Hall was still farmland (Figure 3). The two fields located to the north of the Duke's Head Inn, formerly farmed by Foster Penrice, were converted to be part of the property of Chichester House at some point between 1866 and 1900. The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 shows a small building complex named Chichester House (Figure 4), while on the Third Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1926 a larger building is shown in its place, named Skinburness Tower (Figure 5). On the 1971 Ordnance Survey map, the property is again renamed as 'The Towers'.
- 3.3.4 E H Banks, from the Banks family of Highmoor Mansion, Wigton, constructed Chichester House (later known as The Towers and/ or known as Chichester Hall) as a holiday villa in the late 19th century.
- 3.3.5 There are 14 HER records within the study area with the 1km radius around Chichester Hall; which are listed in Appendix 1. Of particular interest is the close proximity of the Roman Milefortlet No. 9 and its earlier camp situated to the north-east of the Chichester Hall (Asset 2), the location of a Roman altar found to the east (Asset 3), and the position of Roman Tower No. 9A (Asset 5) situated to the south-west of the proposed development area, all highlighting activity during the Roman period.

- 3.3.6 Only one listed building is located within the 1km radius of the proposed development area. Marsh House, which is located to the south-east of Chichester Hall is a Grade II listed building dating to the early 19th century (HER Ref: 71997).
- 3.3.7 There are no Conservation Areas located at Skinburness, however the north-eastern side of the settlement is situated within the Solway Coast, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Furthermore the area to the north east of the Chichester Hall property has been separated into areas of local and higher importance during the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) conducted in 2002.
- 3.3.8 There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument located within close proximity to the proposed development area. To the north of Chichester Hall is the site of Milefortlet 9, part of the Roman frontier defences along the Cumbrian coast (SAM No. 27745). The monument includes the buried remains of Skinburness Roman milefortlet together with the buried remains of an earlier Roman camp which partly underlies the milefortlet. Within the sequence of milefortlets along the Cumbria coast, this one has been identified as Number 9. It was originally turf and timber construction and is located on the crest of the gravel ridge which runs along the centre of the narrow spit known as Grune Point. The monument was discovered during the late 1940s when aerial photographs clearly revealed the crop marks of the milefortlet's rampart and ditch and, to the south west of the milefortlet, the crop mark of much of the defensive ditch flanking the south west and north-west sides of a Roman camp. In 1954 several fragments of Roman pottery were recovered from the site of the monument.

3.4 Previous Archaeological Work

- 3.4.1 An archaeological field survey was undertaken by Bellhouse in October 1954 of the milefortlet at Skinburness. Bellhouse had intended to excavate the site but as the fields were then under cultivation he was unable to. He had used aerial photographs taken by St Joseph to identify the location of the milefortlet.
- 3.4.2 Barri Jones of Manchester University carried out excavations in 1976-77 over cropmarks that have been located by aerial photography behind the Silloth-Skinburness road. He uncovered a possible palisade trench (Higham and Jones 1991). A later re-excavation of the site in 1994 by David Wooliscroft however disregarded the potential palisade, uncovering only modern water pipes (Walker 2003).

- 3.4.3 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit investigated the Holme Cultram sea dyke (Asset 1) in the mid-1990s. They conducted a desk-based assessment, field survey, targeted excavation and watching brief during reconstruction work. The archaeological work could not reach any concrete conclusions about the original date of construction for the sea dyke, stating that it had been largely reconstructed as late as the 19th or early 20th century with a possible medieval phase close to Skinburness.
- 3.4.4 Oxford Archaeology North undertook a desk based assessment on land at Solway Lido, south of the current study area, in 2004. The study recognised a high potential for below ground remains, which can be dated to the Roman period (OAN 2004).
- 3.4.5 In 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd (NPAL) in the grounds of Chichester Hall, located to the north-west of the Skinburness Hotel (Asset 14). No significant archaeological deposits were observed in the evaluation trenches. It was noted that it was unlikely the proposed development on the site would have had any impact on archaeological remains due to the amount of consolidation associated with the construction of the present building in the late 19th century.
- 3.4.6 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd also undertook a desk based assessment and building assessment of the Skinburness Hotel in 2009. The Skinburness Hotel was another building constructed for E.H.Banks, built contemporary to Chichester Hall.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation took place on land to the east of Chichester Hall, in an area that had most recently been used as an orchard and vegetable garden for the Hall. At the time of the evaluation the site was overgrown with some mature trees present. The original location of all of the trenches except trench 6 had to be altered in relation to the position of the mature trees and dense vegetation.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 **Trench 1** measured 20 metres by 1.8 metres and was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 0.85 metres. The trench was orientated north-west, south east. The topsoil **(100)** consisted of a loose dark brown silty sand, measuring 0.16m in depth which sealed the subsoil **(101)**, a light brown silty sand with a firm composition which measured 0.18m in depth. The natural **(102)** was an orangey brown gravelly sand. The trench contained a cast iron water pipe running north-east, south west but was otherwise devoid of archaeological features.



Plate 3: Trench 1

4.2.2 **Trench 2** measured 20 metres by 1.8 metres and was orientated north-east, south-west. The trench was located adjacent to the southern boundary wall of the garden.

The deposits within this trench consisted of a light brown loose silty sand topsoil **(200)** measuring 0.21m in depth and a mid-brown loose silty sand subsoil **(201)** measuring 0.16m in depth. The natural geology was a reddish brown sand with gravel inclusions, no archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.



Plate 4: Trench 2

4.2.3 **Trench 3** had dense tree coverage over the area initially designated for this trench. Consequently, it had to be changed from a 30 metre long trench to a 10 metre by 10 metre T shaped trench, with one axis running north-south and the other running east-west. The topsoil was a light brown loose silty sand **(300)** measuring 0.15m in depth and the subsoil was a loose mid brown silty sand **(301)** measured 0.15m in depth, with the natural drift geology being an orangey brown sand. This trench was devoid of archaeological features.



Plate 5: Trench 3

- 4.2.4 **Trench 4** was 20 metres long and 1.8 metres wide and was orientated east-west. The topsoil was a light brown silty sand **(400)** which measured 0.15m in depth which sealed subsoil **(401)** a mid-brown silty sand measuring 0.39m in depth. The natural geology (402) was a light orange sand with gravel inclusions. Several sherds of Victorian pot and claypipe stem were observed within **(401)** but were not retained. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered within this trench.



Plate 6: Trench 4

4.2.5 **Trench 5** was situated in the lawn to the northeast of Chichester Hall and was T shaped with a 15 metre axis running north-east, south-west and a 5 metre axis running north-west, south-east. This trench contained a light brown silty sand topsoil **(500)** measuring 0.10m in depth and a mid-brown silty sand subsoil **(501)** which measured 0.15m in depth. The natural geology was a light orange sand with gravel inclusions. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.



Plate 7: Trench 5

4.2.6 **Trench 6** This trench measured 20 metres by 1.8 metres and was orientated north-west, south-east. The topsoil (**600**) was a light brown sandy silt measuring 0.10m in depth and the subsoil (**601**) was a mid-brown sandy silt with modern tarmac inclusions which measured 0.15m in depth. The natural geology (**602**) was an orangey brown sand with gravel inclusions. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.



Plate 8: Trench 6

4.3 Environmental and Finds Analysis

- 4.3.1 No environmental samples were taken and no archaeological finds were retained during the evaluation.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The evaluation

- 5.1.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken, between the 22nd and the 24th of September 2015. The desk based assessment had highlighted the potential for the discovery of archaeological remains.

5.2 The results

- 5.1.2 Early maps indicate that before the construction of Chichester Hall, the study area had been agricultural land. The study area had been landscaped as a garden and orchard and evidence of this was uncovered within trenches 1 and 4 with the discovery of cast iron water pipes. These pipes were most likely to have been used to provide water to the greenhouses that once stood in the garden and the remains of which can still be observed. All pottery and claypipe stems were of Victorian date and were not retained. Any archaeological deposits dating from before the Victorian period would most likely have been destroyed during the construction and landscaping of Chichester Hall and its gardens.

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Ordnance Survey Map Third Edition 1926

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APPENDIX 1: GAZETTEER OF ASSETS

The following table lists all the heritage assets as recorded in the Historic Environment Record, and noted from the desk-based research within a 1km radius of the proposed development area.

Asset No.	Source	Name and Type	Grid Ref	Period
1	SMR 346	Skinburness Marsh Sea Dykes, Sea Defences	E: 313100 N: 555300	Medieval/ Plantagenet
2	SMR 353	Hadrians Wall Milefortlet 9 and Camp	E: 312920 N: 556140	Roman/ Hadrianic
3	SMR 372	Stone Altar Find (part), Skinburness	E: 313000 N: 556000	Roman
4	SMR 373	Coin Find, Silloth	E: 312030 N: 555570	Post Medieval/ Tudor
5	SMR 4413	Hadrians Wall Tower 9A, Frontier Defence, Skinburness	E: 312600 N: 555830	Roman/ Hadrianic
6	SMR 4798	Hadrians Wall Turret 9B, Frontier Defence, Silloth	E: 312250 N: 555520	Roman/ Hadrianic
7	SMR 9608	Grune House Enclosure (Cropmarks)	NY15NW	Roman
8	SMR 10209	Skinburness Pond, Documentary Evidence	E: 312800 N: 555980	Unknown
9	SMR 15228	Silloth, Pillbox near Skinburness	E: 312800 N: 555400	Modern/ Wartime
10	SMR 15229	Holme Low, Pillbox near Skinburness	E: 313000 N: 555400	Modern/ Wartime
11	SMR 15230	Holme Low, Pillbox near Skinburness Marsh	E: 313300 N: 555300	Modern/ Wartime
12	SMR 15231	Pillbox, Holme Low	NY15NW	Modern/ Wartime
13	SMR 17589	Skinburness Deserted Medieval Village, Silloth	E: 312500 N: 556100	Medieval
14	SMR 41801	Duke's Head Inn/Skinburness Hotel	E: 312740 N: 555950	Post Medieval/ Victorian

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

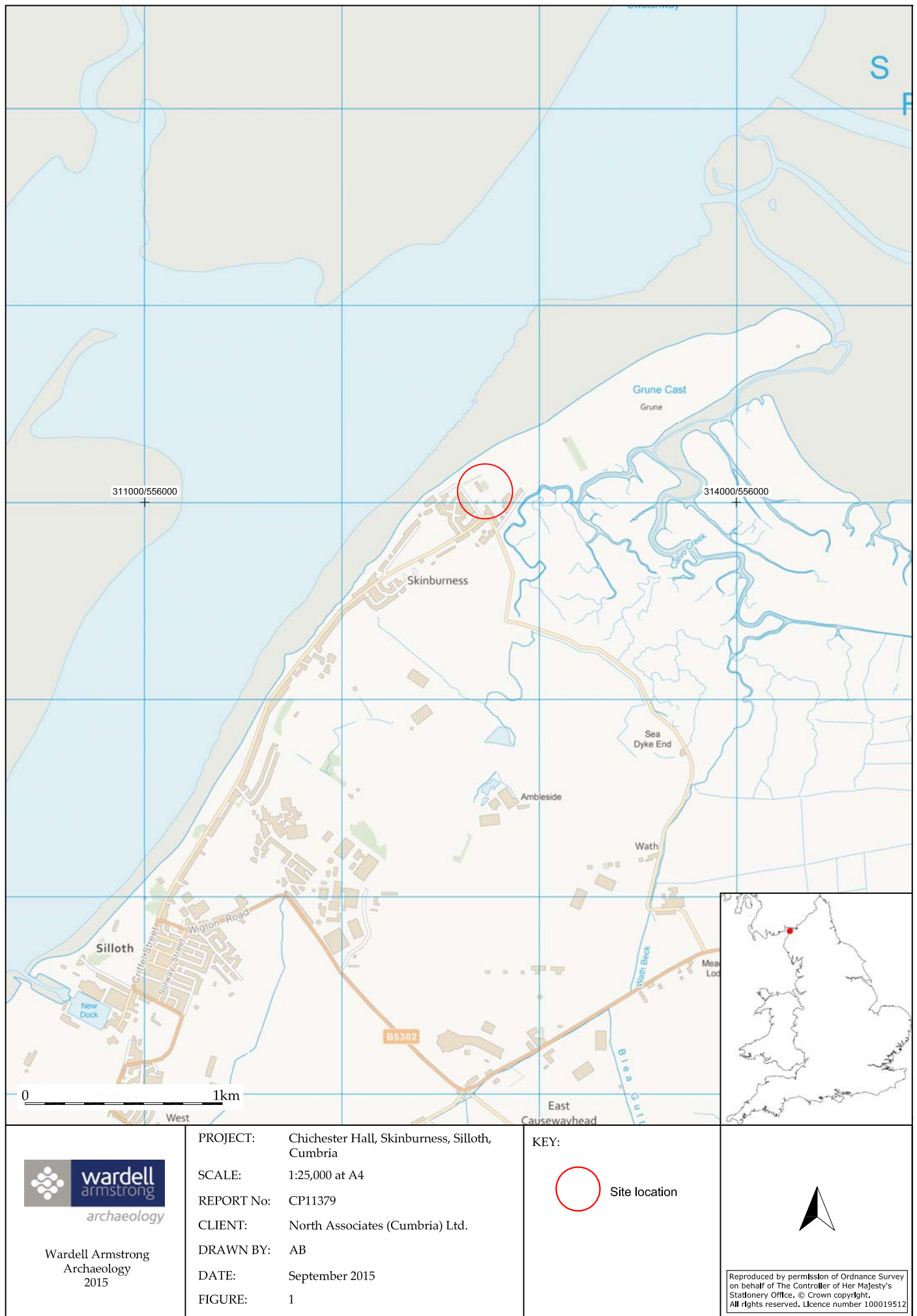


Figure 1: Site location.






 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2015</p>	<p>PROJECT: Chichester Hall, Skinburness, Silloth, Cumbria</p> <p>SCALE: 1:1,000 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP11379</p> <p>CLIENT: North Associates (Cumbria) Ltd.</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: September 2015</p> <p>FIGURE: 2</p>	<p>KEY:</p> <p> Evaluation trenches</p>	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 2: Location of evaluation trenches.

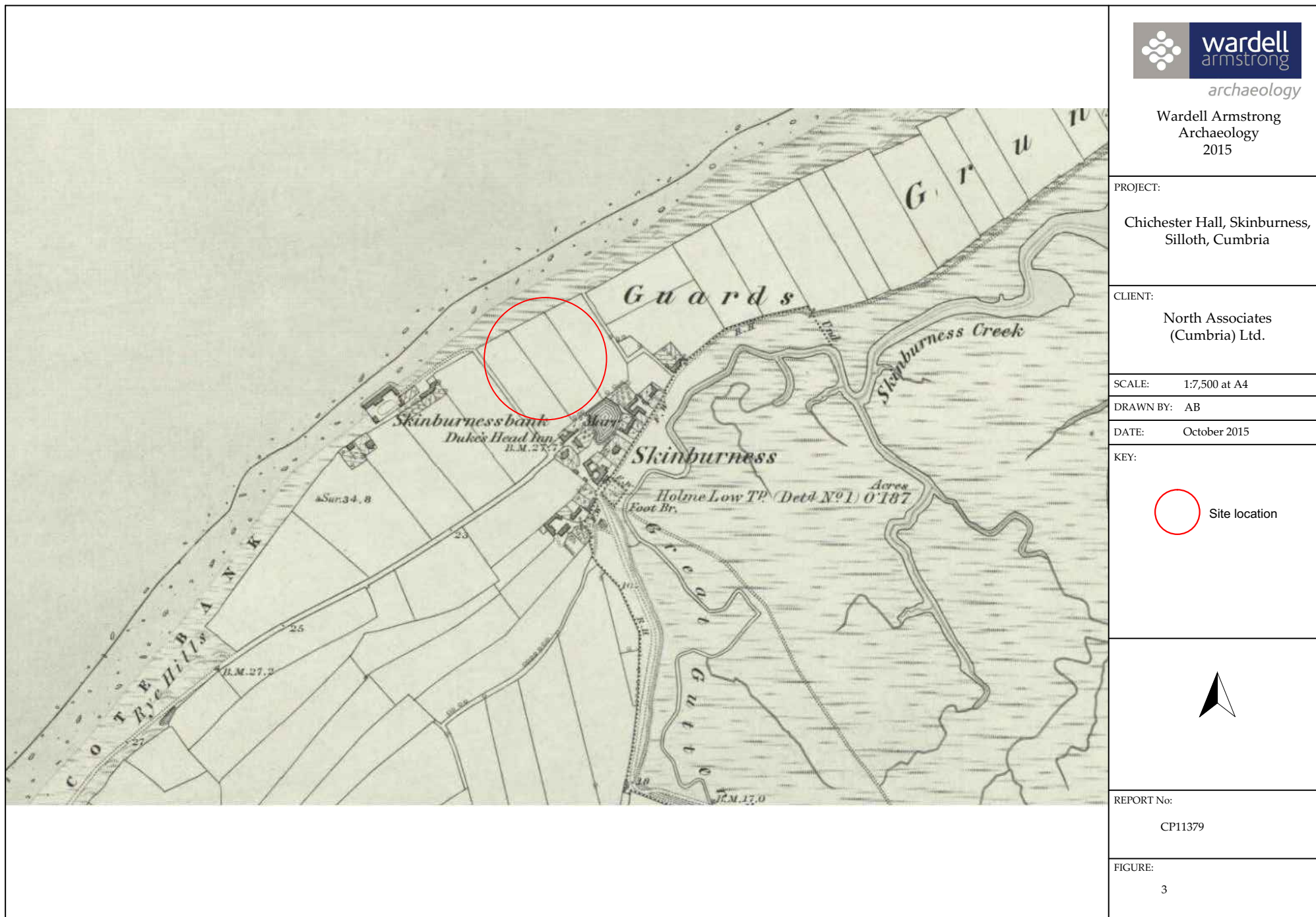


Figure 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1866.

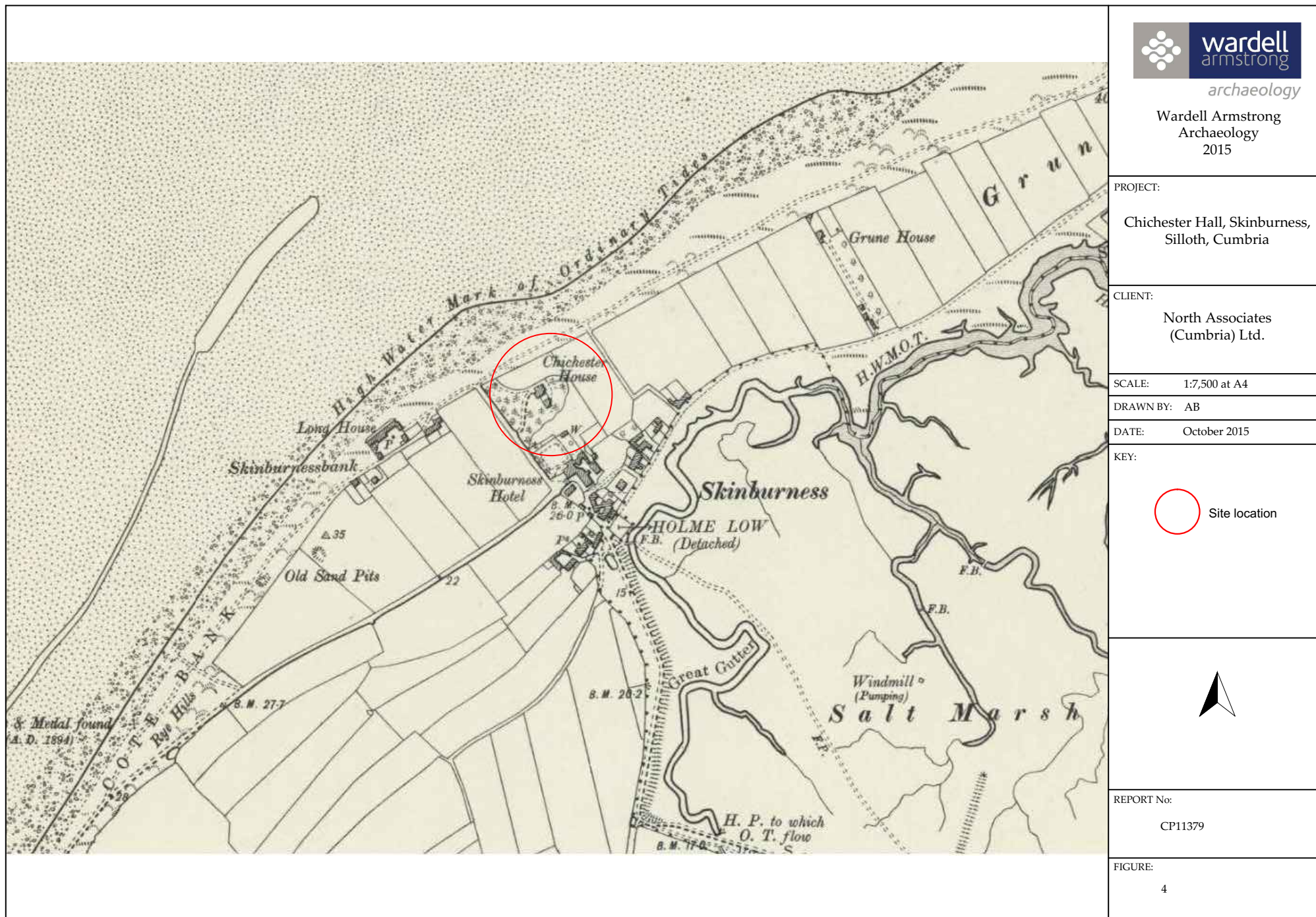


Figure 4: Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1900.

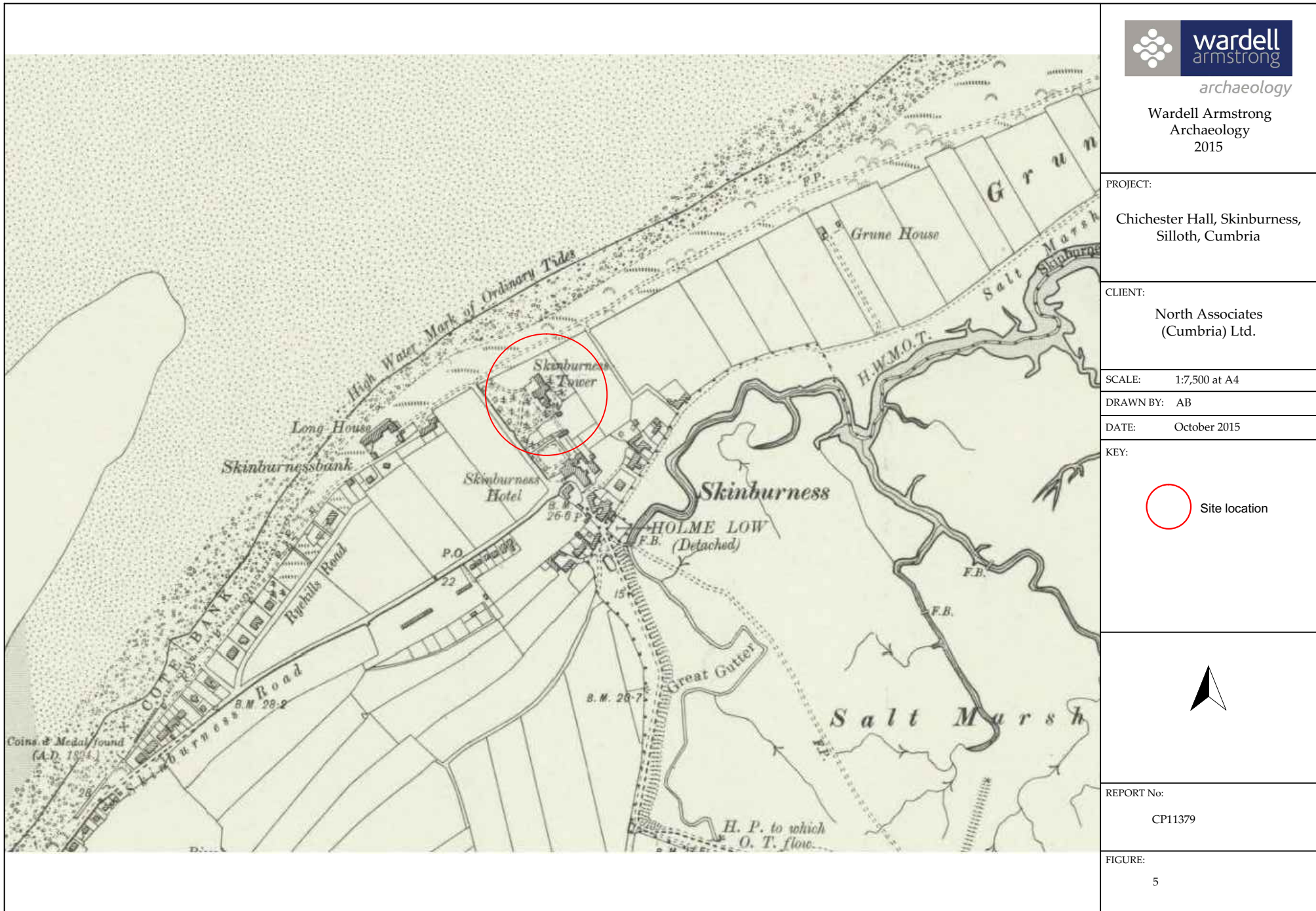


Figure 5: Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1926.

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