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**Northallerton Cemetery  
Northallerton  
North Yorkshire  
(SE 3649 9413)**

**Proposed Extension  
Watching Brief**

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Rec'd	20/08/2004

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**MAP  
July 2004**



**Proposed Extension, Northallerton Cemetery,  
Northallerton,  
North Yorkshire  
(SE 3649 9413)**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Non-Technical Summary**

*An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out on land to the west of Northallerton cemetery, formerly occupied as allotments, which was to be used as a cemetery extension undergoing groundworks and landscaping. The landscaping work involved the stripping of topsoil and the raising of the ground level by up to 1m using imported subsoil. A single archaeological feature was identified, a large linear feature over 5m wide and 1.3m deep. This feature may have been associated with the 13<sup>th</sup> century Bishop's Palace and motte and bailey representing a, previously unrecorded ditched or moated boundary. Finds of a Post-Medieval date were recovered from the upper part of the ditch only, so the actual date of the feature was uncertain.*

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd undertook an Archaeological investigation during the creation of an extension to the west of the existing cemetery at Northallerton, North Yorkshire, SE 3649 9413 (Fig. 1). The extension area lay on a former allotment site to the north west of the motte and bailey castle and the Bishops Palace, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It was anticipated that the development area might contain archaeological remains of early medieval and later date associated with the castle and later Palace precinct. Accordingly the



Archaeologist from North Yorkshire County Council advised that archaeological observation and recording should be carried out during the preliminary stages of the development, archaeological condition of Hambleton District Council planning approval ref. 2/02/110/1340A.

- 1.2 The work was carried out for Mr A Hepple of Mouchel North Yorkshire on behalf of Northallerton and Romanby Joint Burial Committee.
- 1.3 The work was carried out from the 12<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> of July 2004 and funded by Mouchel North Yorkshire.

## **2. Site Description**

- 2.1 The site is located towards the northern end of Northallerton, to the west of the High Street and to the east of the railway line and Willow Beck, on a roughly rectangular plot of flat land measuring 110m long by 90m wide (Fig. 2). The most recent use of the land was for allotment gardens and prior to the commencement of work the area was overgrown with scrub, small trees and bushes. The site was bounded by Willow Beck to the west, the cemetery to the east, and pasture and scrubland to the north and south.
- 2.2 The south-eastern corner of the site, c. 25m long by 20m wide, contains earthwork evidence of the outer bank of the site of the Bishops Palace which falls within the Scheduled Ancient Monument boundary (National Monument Number 34845, Fig. 6).
- 2.3 The cemetery to the east and south-east of the site occupies the former site of the Bishops Palace, the earthworks of the motte and bailey partly surviving.



### **3. Historical and Archaeological Background**

- 3.1 Although there is some evidence for prehistoric activity in and around Nothallerton, including Bronze Age finds close to the town, evidence suggest the origins of occupation of the town are Roman. To the west of the town, Willow Beck and the railway line lies Castle Hills, where the origins of some of the earthworks are thought to be Roman, and occupied later by a 12<sup>th</sup> century castle.
- 3.2 In 1788 an urn filled with several hundred coins of the later Roman Emperors was discovered in a field close to Castle Hills and further Roman artefacts and features were discovered during the construction of the London to Edinburgh railway line. In 1838 during construction of Zetland Bridge, to the north of Castle Hills, workmen unearthed an urn believed to be Roman, the foundations of a stone drainage system and some Roman coins. Other finds during the railway construction included a votive altar dedicated to the Roman sixth Legion (who came to England in 122 AD) and two wells, one of these of dressed stone the other square and constructed from strongly bound dove tailed blackened oak. Artefacts including Roman spurs and coins of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Severus, Geta and Constantius were also discovered. Archaeological investigations were undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, during the development of a Tesco store during 2001 and 2002. Part of the findings during the works included a ditch and gully containing Roman pottery, thought to represent part of a Roman field system (Riordan 2002).
- 3.3 Post-Roman occupation of the town became evident when fragments of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century cross fragments were recovered during restoration work in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at the present All Saints Church. The presence of the cross fragments indicates that a stone Saxon church lay on the site of the existing All Saints Church. The Saxon town was probably centred on the site of the former Bishops Palace where Saxon earthworks were identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Domesday Book (1086) Northallerton and its settlements was designated as 'waste'. This was the



result of the Norman invasion, and the Harrying of the North, when Northallerton and district was devastated by William the Conquerors military force in 1069. An account of the Norman invasion is recorded by Symeon of Durham, writing around 1164, who stated that William the Conqueror encamped at Northallerton. Symeon goes on to describe the carnage caused by the Normans including slaughter followed by famine and abandonment of the area. He wrote that corn, cattle and every type of food was burned and famine raged with the survivors forced to eat rats and even human flesh. The land was strewn with unburied corpses, with an estimate of 100,000 Christians dying from hunger, and Symeon strongly condemns William for 'such barbarous homicide' (Langdale 1791 & Riordan 2002)

- 3.4 Northallerton Castle stood on Castle Hills, just to the west of the existing town (Fig. 5), and was built around 1130 by Rufus the Bishop of Durham and improved by his successor William Cumin in 1142. The castle was strengthened and extended in 1174 by Hugh Pudsey, another Bishop of Durham. According to Hovendon, a contemporary writer, Henry II ordered the razing to the ground of the castle in 1177 (I'Anson 1913 & Riordan 2002)
- 3.5 In 1138 The Battle of the Standard, fought between the English and the Scots took place three miles to the north of Northallerton in Brompton Parish, one of the most celebrated battles of early England. In 1135 Henry I died in Normandy and he wanted his daughter Matilda (Maud) to succeed the throne but Norman Barons chose Henry's nephew Stephen. Stephen was crowned in 1135 sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope. Matilda did not accept Stephen as Monarch and formed an allegiance with King David of Scotland, who hoped to gain Northumberland in return for his support to Matilda.
- 3.6 King David crossed the Tweed into England in 1138 with an army formed from all over Scotland. As the Scots progressed southwards they wreaked havoc, King David being unable to control them. King Stephen ordered Thurstan, the Archbishop of York, the Lieutenant of the North, to deal with the marauding Scots.



The English army was formed by Robert de Brus and his son Adam de Brus, Bernard de Baliol and his troops, Walter le Gross, Richard de Curcy, William Fossard, Ralph Hanselyn, Robert de Ferrers and Derbyshire men, Walter de Gaunt, leading Normans and Flemmings, Walter L'Espece, Roger de Mowbray, Alan Percy, William de Percy Robert de Stuteville, William Peverell and Nottinghamshire men, Gilbert and Ilbert de Lacy, Eustace Fitz John and Ralph Nowell, Bishop of Orkney (Riordan 2002).

- 3.7 The battle took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1138 and was over in two hours. The Scots were ill equipped in comparison to the English and exposed in particular to the English archers who cut many down. The Scots eventually retreated and were pursued through Yorkshire and the north, where many were slain; those killed on the battlefield were buried to the south on Scots Pits Lane on the Northallerton to Darlington Road (Riordan 2002).
- 3.8 The Bishops Palace was constructed around 1200 as a motte and bailey and probably utilised from the stone of the earlier castle. The palace formed the residence to successive Bishops of Durham until around 1600. In September 1663 Dr. John Cosin, Bishop of Durham authorised the use of the stone of the 'Manour House' to be used to repair the decayed castle mills. In 1658 Richard Franck in 'Northern Memories' said it was demolished with age and the ruins of time and serving as a receptacle for bats and buzzards, owls and jackdaws (Langdale 1719).
- 3.9 By the 13<sup>th</sup> century Northallerton had developed into a township centred around the Bishops Palace and All Saints Church with burgage plots running back from the main street. Northallerton became a centre on the England to Scotland eastern route. Excavation by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd identified the east to west boundaries of plots, other medieval features included pits and wells.
- 3.10 Northallerton suffered yet more hostilities during conflicts with the Scots at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1314 Robert the Bruce defeated the English at



Bannockburn following which in 1318 Sir James Douglas headed for York causing devastation on route when Northallerton was again hit and the church burned. In 1319 the town was exempt from paying the Kings taxes following the Scots attack (Riordan 2002).

- 3.11 By 1856 the cemetery had been laid out occupying the area of the Bishops Palace bounded by the partly in-filled moat.
- 3.12 The Ordnance Survey Maps show little change in the cemetery extension site, an extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1856 shows the plot of land as a field or pasture (Fig. 3) as do the 1913 and 1958 editions (Figs. 4 and 5). The 1856 map clearly shows the motte and bailey and moat bounding the site of the Palace and by 1913 the cemetery is in place on the site of the Bishops Palace

#### **4. Methodology**

- 4.1 The landscaping work for the cemetery extension involved raising the ground level by approximately 1m using imported subsoil, which followed a topsoil strip of the entire area. The south-eastern corner of the site, within the Scheduled Ancient Monument boundary, was fenced off prior to groundworks and left undisturbed.
- 4.2 The topsoil stripping was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 360 degree excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.
- 4.3 A drawn written and photographic record was made of all archaeological features and deposits encountered, which were located in relation to existing roads, buildings and landscape features.
- 4.4 All finds were appropriately recorded and packaged by context and environmental samples were taken from appropriate deposits.



## 5. Results

5.1 The only archaeological feature identified was a large north to south aligned ditch or possible moat located close to the cemetery fence forming the eastern boundary of the site (Fig. 6)). Two segments of the ditch were excavated, at the northern and southern end of the area (Cuts 007 and 017). Following topsoil stripping, the ditch was visible as a linear feature, the top ditch fill contrasting with the paler subsoil (Pl. 1). The southern end of the ditch was not as clearly defined, as disturbance from allotment activity masked its edge, which was covered with a cindery soil. The finds from the ditch, the latest of a 19<sup>th</sup> century date, all came from the upper fill, the date of the ditch may have been earlier, and possibly associated with the Medieval Bishops Palace and earthworks. No other archaeological features or deposits were encountered over the remainder of the Watching Brief area, the stripped surface comprising of a brown sub-soil overlying a pale brown clay.

### 5.2 *Ditch Segment 007*

5.2.1 Ditch Segment 007 was located towards the north-eastern corner of the area. Only the western edge of the ditch was identified, the eastern side of the feature running beyond the site and located just to the east of the existing cemetery boundary (Fig 6). The majority of the ditch, including the primary and lower fills, were hand excavated, the western end of the segment was machine excavated to locate the edge of the ditch and possible remnants of any bank material to the west. Machine excavation was carried out following consultation with an officer from North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit SMR, following a site meeting when it was also agreed that the southern ditch segment could be partly machine excavated.

5.2.2 The overall dimensions of the northern segment, including the machine excavated western section, was 8.3m long, the hand excavated part of Ditch 007 measuring 5.3m wide and 1.3m deep. The profile was steep sided becoming vertical at the western edge, the base of the ditch was flat. A total of six fills were identified (Contexts 001-006) which comprised of clay or silty clay deposits (Fig. 7, Pl. 2).



The only finds recovered were from the top two fills of the ditch and comprised post-medieval pottery and animal bone.

- 5.2.3 The lower ditch fills, 003, 005 and 006, were all water logged deposits occupying the lower 0.5m of the ditch. Wet conditions were encountered here and bailing out of the feature was required to deal with water seeping into the ditch.
- 5.2.4 The primary ditch fill, 006, consisted of a pale grey silty clay banded with yellow silty sand, containing few inclusions of small gritty stones. The bands of silty sand within the deposit appeared to represent episodes of silting up, probably formed after rainfall. An abundance of organic material was present throughout the deposit, made up of woody twig fragments and other bits of vegetation, possibly sedges and leafy matter, which appeared well preserved in water logged conditions (Environmental Sample No: 1, App 4). The presence of this organic material indicated the ditch was fringed with vegetation probably located on the bank or actually growing in the water at the base of the feature.
- 5.2.5 The secondary ditch fill, 005, was a brown silty clay with few stone inclusions, containing no evidence of organic content and appeared to have accumulated as silting up material.
- 5.2.6 The third ditch fill, 003, was a dark grey silty clay with few stone inclusions and similar to deposit 006 containing a similar organic material of twigs and leafy matter (Environmental Sample No 2, App 4). The base of deposit 003 lay 0.3m above the bottom of the ditch showing an accumulation and silting up of the feature over a period of time.
- 5.2.7 Deposit 004 formed a slumping ditch fill located on the western side of the feature, and consisted of a brown clay with few small stone inclusions. This deposit appeared to have been introduced to the ditch from a possible bank on the western side of the feature.



- 5.2.8 Deposit 002 formed an upper ditch fill sealing the lower water logged deposits and consisted of a pale grey silty clay with few small stone inclusions and the occasional cobble, finds consisted of a few fragments of animal bone.
- 5.2.9 The top ditch fill, 001, consisted of a brown silty clay containing small stones, pebbles and few larger water worn stones and stone fragments. Finds included post-medieval pottery, the most recent of a late 18<sup>th</sup> century date. Deposit 001 may have been introduced into the feature at a later date than the lower ditch fills. The result of the wet lower ditch fills may have left a linear depression following the ditch's abandonment and silting up process. The ditch may have finally been backfilled during landscaping and levelling during the late post-medieval period, finds suggest the last remnant of the feature was in-filled in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.2.10 Three deposits (Contexts 008, 009 and 010) were identified in the machine excavated section to the west of the ditch (Fig. 7), none of which contained finds.
- 5.2.11 The earliest of the three deposits (Context 010) was a clean brown clay with few stone inclusions and probably represented natural material.
- 5.2.12 Deposit 009, a heavy grey clay with few stone inclusions, lay at the western end of the segment, between deposits 008 and 010, and it seemed likely that this deposit also represented natural material.
- 5.2.13 Deposit 008, a thick band of silty sandy clay with small stone inclusions 0.5m deep, appeared to represent subsoil and lay directly below the machine excavated topsoil. It was clear in section that deposit 008 had been cut by ditch 007.

### 5.3 *Ditch Segment 017*

- 5.3.1 Ditch segment 017 was located towards the south-eastern corner of the area just to the north of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Boundary (Fig. 6). Initial hand



excavation of the ditch was followed by controlled machine excavation agreed by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit SMR.

- 5.3.2 The overall length of the excavated segment was 5.3m, the Ditch, 017, measured 4.5m long and a maximum of 1.3m deep (Fig. 7, Pl. 3)). The profile of the ditch was a fairly gently sloping western edge (c. 25 degrees) the base of the feature dead flat. The full width of the ditch was not identified, the eastern edge of the feature running outside the area to the east.
- 5.3.4 The ditch contained a total of five fills (Contexts 012-016) similar to those seen in Ditch 007 to the north, either clay or silty clay deposits none of which contained any finds. A subsoil deposit, 011, sealed the ditch and its fills all of which were visible in section, finds from this deposit included late post-medieval pottery, the most recent of a 19<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 5.3.5 The primary ditch fill, 016, formed a thin band, 0.08m deep, of grey brown silty sandy clay with no notable inclusions. This deposit slumped into the ditch from the western edge possibly washed into the feature from upcast or a bank on the western side of the ditch.
- 5.3.6 The secondary ditch fill 015 was very similar if not the same as deposit 006 identified in ditch segment 007 and consisted of a pale grey silty clay with yellow silty sandy bands and the same organic contents of vegetation and woody fragments. It appeared that this fill was a silting up deposit formed by rainfall and material accumulating within the ditch.
- 5.3.7 The third and fourth ditch fills (Contexts 014 and 013) were both clay deposits varying in colour from brown (Context 014) to grey (Context 013) neither deposit containing notable inclusions. Both deposits appeared to have formed by silting up and natural accumulation rather than representing backfilling of the ditch.



- 5.3.8 The top ditch fill (Context 012) consisted of a silty sandy clay containing few small stone inclusions and appeared to represent the final silting up deposit of the ditch some 0.6m higher than the original base of the ditch.
- 5.3.9 The subsoil deposit, 011, that sealed the ditch and its fills was a brown silty sandy clay containing small and medium sized stones and stone fragments and finds consisted of post-medieval pottery, glass, tile and animal bone dating the deposit as 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.3.10 Deposits 018 and 019 and lay to the west of the ditch cut, visible in section (Fig. 7 & Pl. 3). Both deposits 018 and 019 were dark peaty deposits and appeared to be natural. The lower deposit, 019, overlay a very clean stoney gravelly deposit also natural which was identified at the base of ditch 017.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Although only one archaeological feature was identified in the cemetery extension area it proved to be significant, a large ditch or moat possibly contemporary with the Medieval Bishops Palace and motte and bailey just to the south-west of the site. Positive dating of the ditch was not established as no finds were recovered from its lower, secure, fills. It seems possible that the ditch formed an extended boundary around the Bishops Palace but it is uncertain what route it took beyond of the site. It is also possible that the ditch was linked to the moat, the southern ditch segment lying approximately 30m to the north of it.
- 6.2 The lack of evidence of any structural or occupational features such as wall foundations, postholes, or pits, which may have been expected to be located close to the Bishops Palace complex, indicates that the area was merely used as pasture or meadow and was not subject to any major human activity. Willow Beck forms the western boundary of the site, suggesting that the land was actually flooded or boggy and left as rough pasture or marshland.



7.       **References**

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Northallerton, Ordnance Survey Map 1913

Northallerton, Ordnance Survey Map 1958



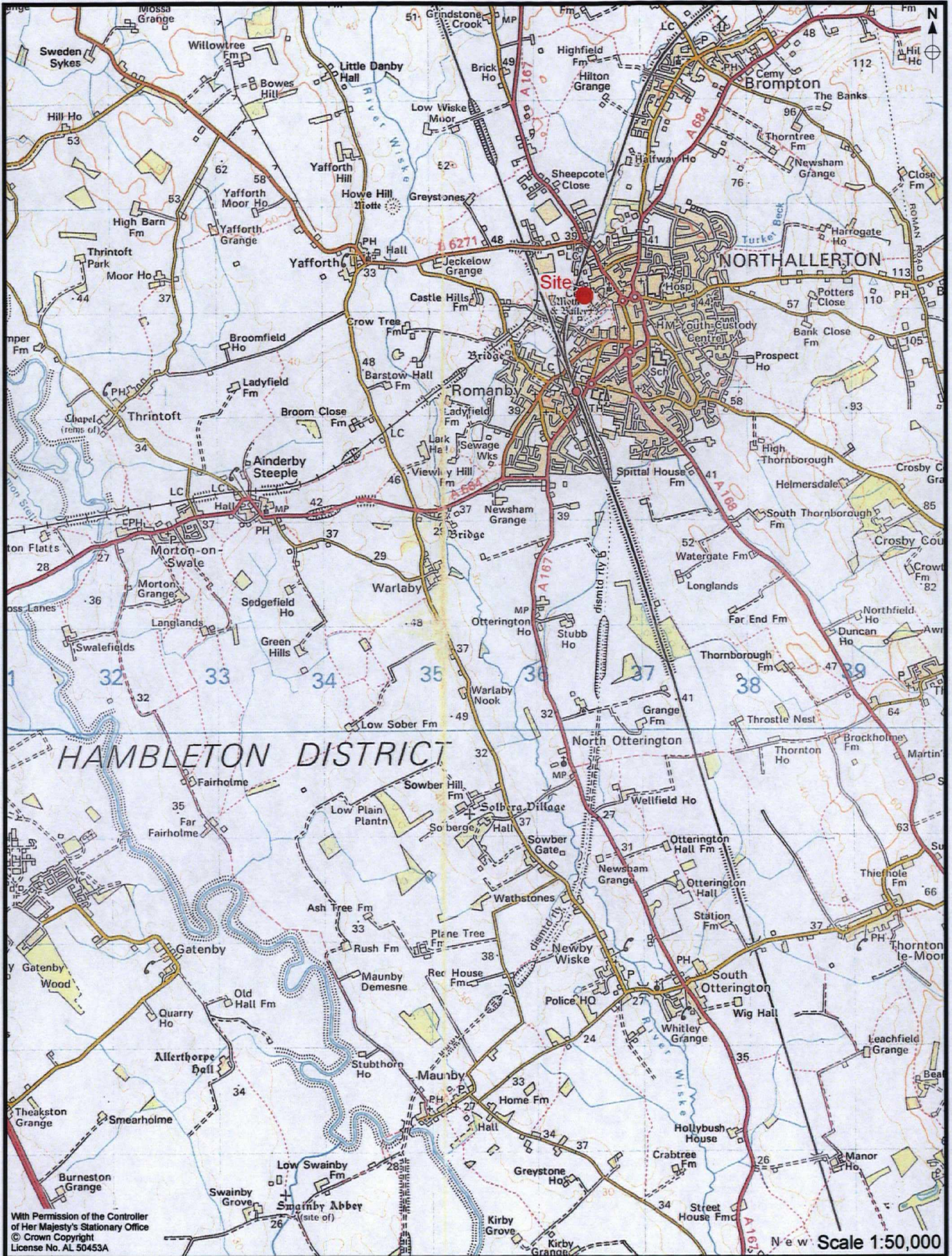
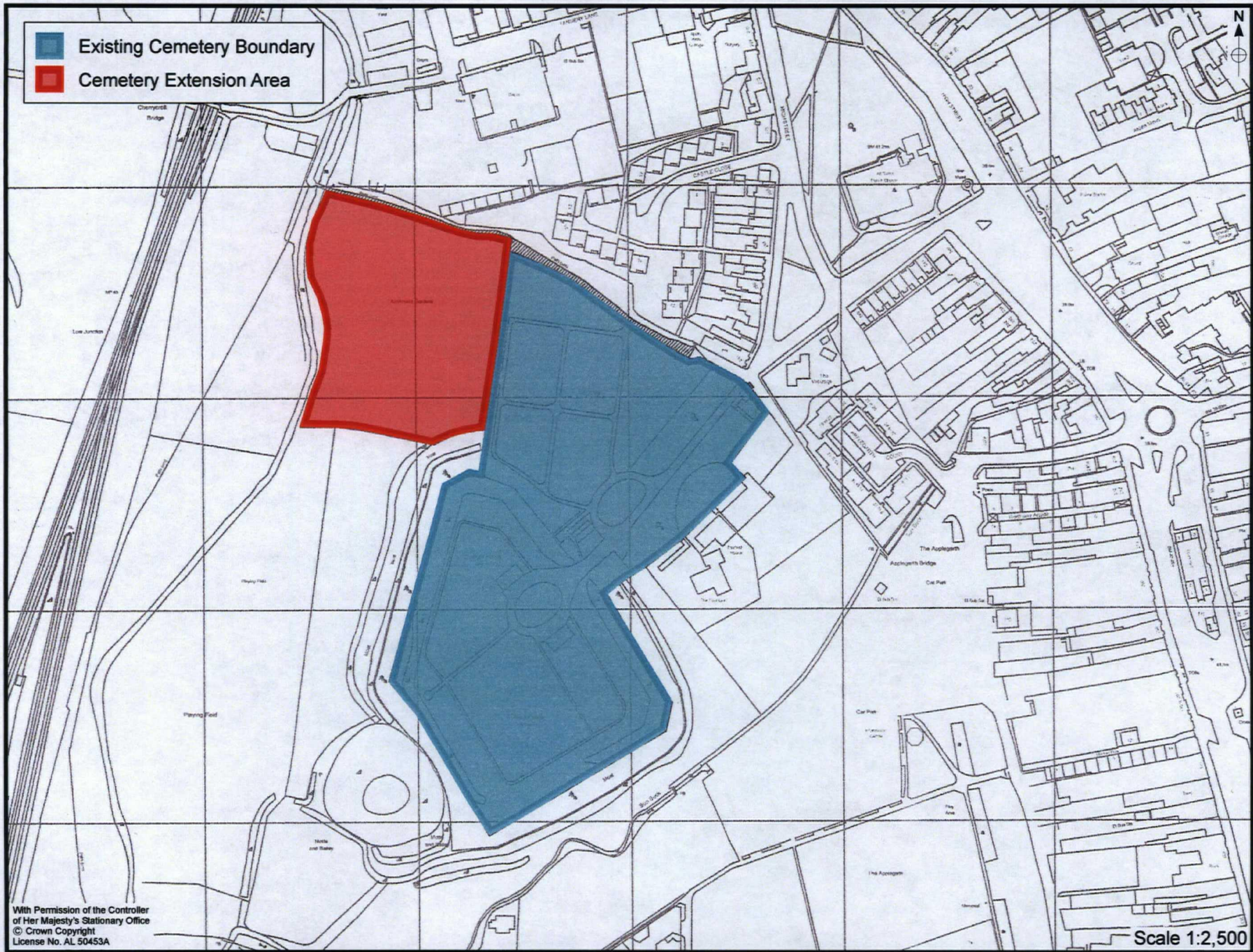


Figure 1. Site Location





**Figure 2.** Location of Cemetery Extension Area



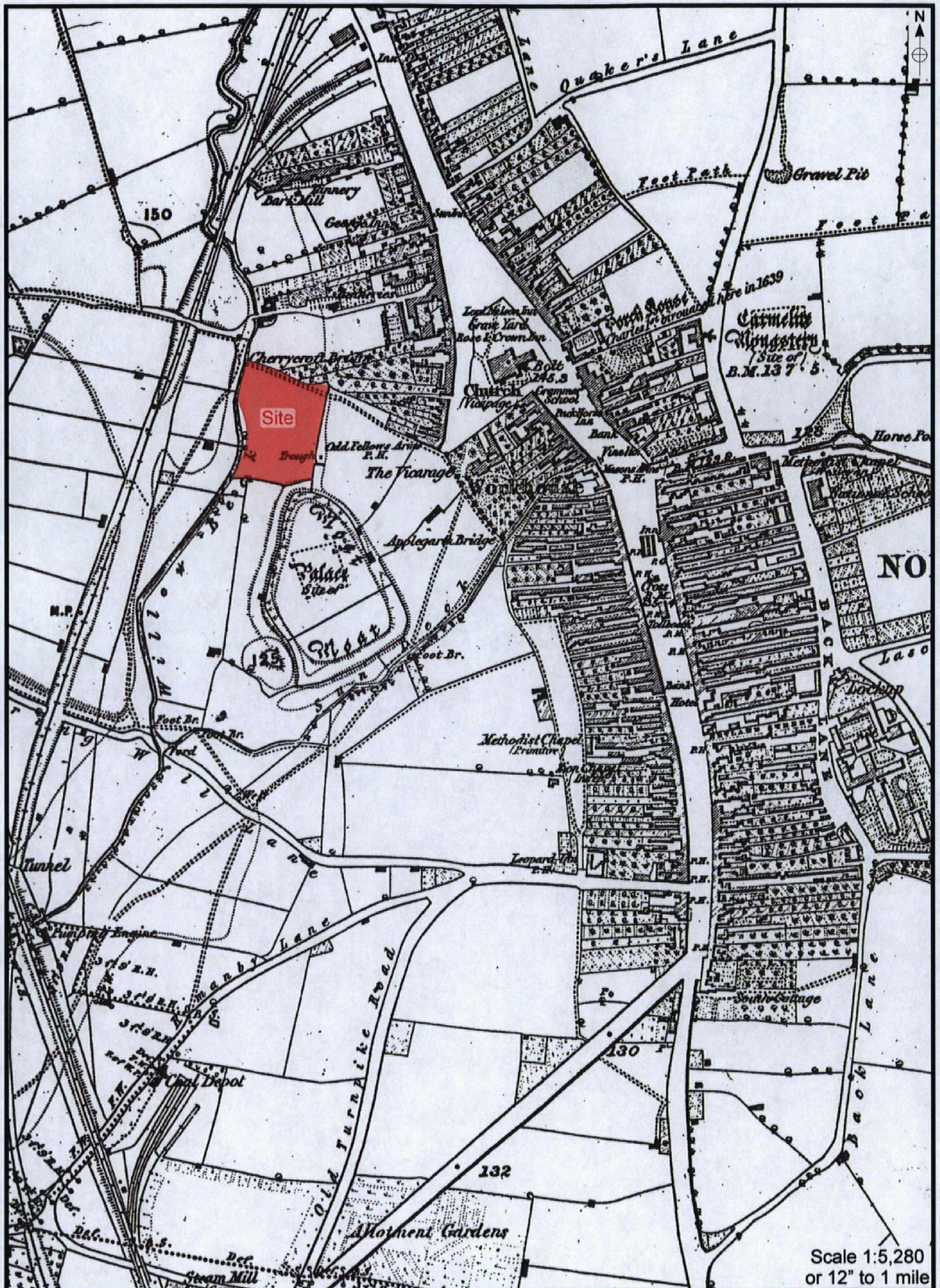


Figure 3. Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1856



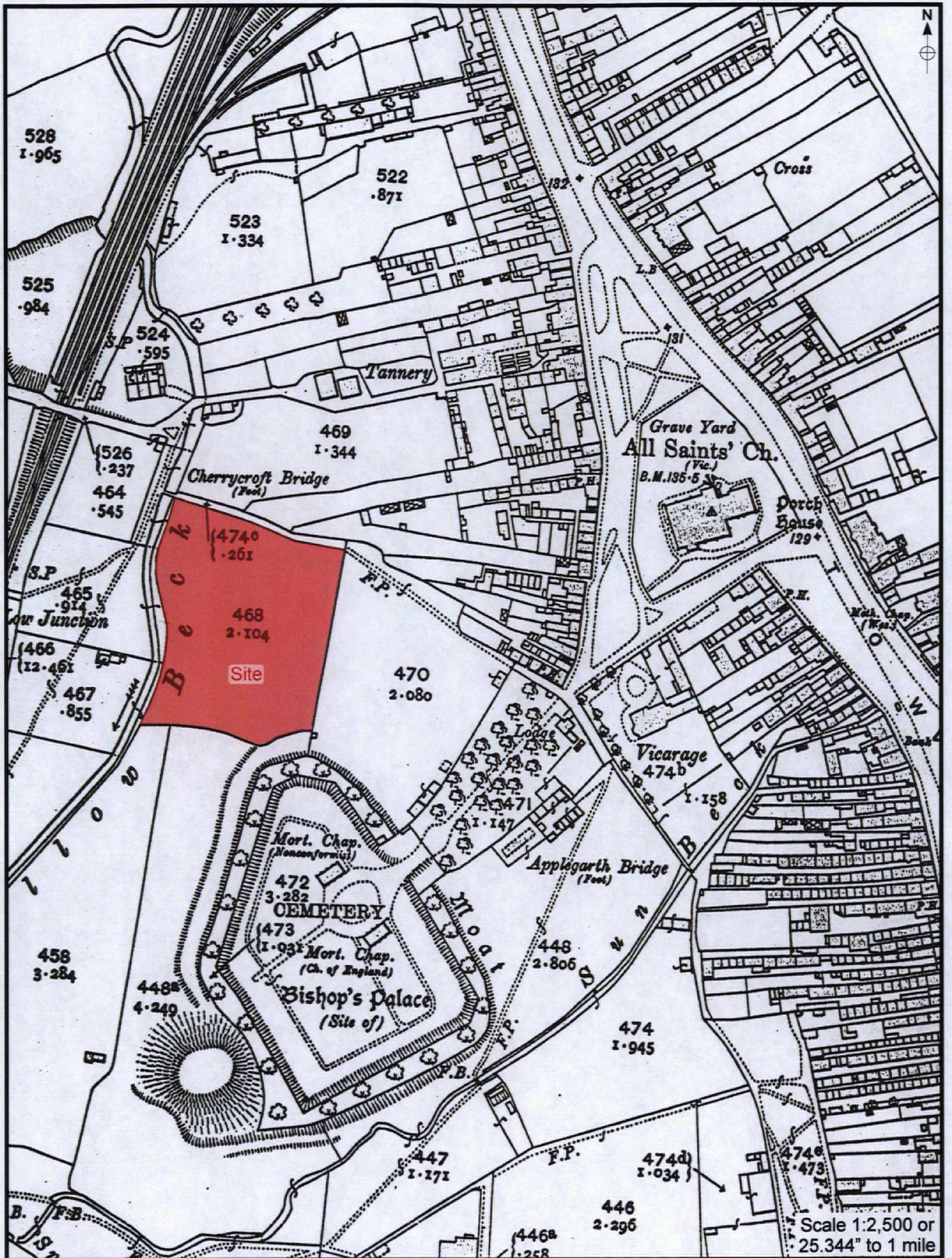


Figure 4. Extract from Ordnance Survey Map, 1913



