

**Archaeological Building Record
of a Ruined Farm Complex within
the Hamilton Northern Housing Area,
Humberstone, Leicester**

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For Mather Jamie

Checked by Project Manager	
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Contents

1. Summary	2
2. Introduction	2
2.1 Background	2
2.2 Scope of this Report	2
3. Aims	2
4. Methods	3
5. Results	3
5.1 Description of the Site and Buildings	3
5.2 Interpretation and Chronology	4
5.3 Other Activities	6
6. Discussion	7
7. Acknowledgements	7
8. Publication	7
9. Archive	7
10. Bibliography	7

Illustrations

Figure 1. Location Plan. Scale 1:10000.

Figure 2. Plan showing location of ruined farm complex. Scale 1:7500.

Figure 3. Plan of the livestock shelter (field barn) and attached yard made at the time of the Buildings Appraisal. Scale 1:200

Figure 4. Extract from c.1850 OS Provisional Edition 1 inch to 1 mile map. Site area outlined.

Figure 5. Extract from First Edition (1888) OS map sheet XXXI.NE 6 inch to 1 mile. Site area outlined, Star brickworks highlighted.

Figure 6. Extract from 1915 OS map sheet XXXI.4. Scale 1:2500.

Figure 7. Extract from 1930 OS map sheet XXXI.4. Scale 1:2500.

Figure 8. Extract from 1950 OS map sheet XXXI.NE 6 inch to 1 mile. Site area outlined, New Star brick works highlighted.

Figure 9. RAF Aerial Photograph of site Feb. 1948 (supplied by R. Clark)

Figure 10. Undated copy of map showing field names (based on OS map)

1. Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mather Jamie to investigate and record, prior to demolition, a ruined farm complex located within the area of the proposed new Hamilton Northern Housing Area, Humberstone, Leicester. Unfortunately the complex was demolished before the detailed building survey was undertaken.

Documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that the earliest, stone-built structure was an early 19th century field barn, erected soon after the parish was enclosed in 1788. Subsequently a brick-built dwelling was added, in the period between c. 1850 and 1884/5, providing accommodation for a stockman and his family. Various alterations and additions to the complex were made in the first half of the 20th century. The same sources provided evidence for the exploitation of the surrounding landscape and its natural resources, including a range of rural industries/crafts.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

An outline planning application proposing the construction of a new residential development known as the Hamilton Northern Housing Area was submitted in 1997 and subsequently approved (Plan. Perm. No.: 1997/0024). A full application for infrastructure works involving the construction of a spine collector road and drainage work was submitted in 2000. This was granted (Plan. Perm. No.: 2000/1287) with archaeological conditions following advice from the City Archaeologist, Archaeology Section, Leicester City Museum Service in his capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority. A *Design Brief for Archaeological Excavation and Building Recording* issued by the City Archaeologist (Project Reference: LC16/2) provided outline guidance as to the City Council's requirements for archaeological investigation and recording in order to satisfy the planning conditions.

Mather Jamie appointed University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) to undertake the required archaeological work, detailed in the ULAS *Design Specification for Archaeological Excavation and Standing Building Recording* dated 24.5.2002.

2.2 Scope of this Report

This report relates specifically to the archaeological investigation and recording of a ruined farm complex (Leicester Sites and Monuments Record Ref: LC 1437) located c. 400m NNE of the junction of Sandhills Avenue and Columbine Road at NGR: SK 6295 0760.

A previous report (ULAS No. 2000/067) included an Appraisal of the archaeological and historic significance of this complex, from which some of the information presented here has been abstracted.

3. Aims

The *Design Brief for Archaeological Excavation and Building Recording* (para 4.2) required the preparation of a building record to Level 3 standard as defined in the RCHME guidelines *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification (3rd edition)*, in order to provide a permanent and detailed record of the structures prior to demolition.

Specific requirements included:

Exterior and interior elevations and plans, and a photographic survey showing the building(s) in context;

Constructional details such as roof trusses, jointing and carpenters marks;

Other features of interest such as architectural details, openings, surrounds;

Fixtures and fittings, especially those relating to the original or primary use of the building/structure.

4. Methods

The ruined farm complex was demolished and the area landscaped as part of the planned drainage works before the detailed survey was undertaken, without prior notification. This report has been compiled using field notes and a measured plan (Figure 3) drafted at the time of the Appraisal; field notes and photographs of the site post-demolition; and from the analysis of archive material held principally by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Records Office. Unfortunately there are no photographs of the buildings prior to demolition.

5. Results

5.1 Description of the Site and Buildings

At the time of the Appraisal (11.5.2000) the complex consisted of the remains of two ruinous buildings: a house and a livestock shelter (or hovel). Attached to the south side of the latter was the remains of a walled yard or enclosure. These remains were located within an area of scrubland on the east side of a trackway between Humberstone and Barkby, the line of which survives today as a public footpath.

House

The house survived as little more than a pile of rubble, although part of the west wall was standing to a height of *c.* 1m. This was brick-built, the brick dimensions (229 x 108 x 76mm (9 x 4 ¼ x 3 inches)) suggesting a date in the 19th century for its construction (certainly prior to 1884/5 based on map evidence – see below). The roof was slate tiled, with both local Swithland type slates and some large, very finely laminated purple-coloured slates of non-local origin (Welsh?) found in amongst the rubble. Other debris included the remains of timber window frames and glazed ceramic hearth tiles of early-mid 20th century type suggesting that the building was occupied well into that century. A nearby dump of 20th century glass and ceramic bottles and jars supported the interpretation of the building as a dwelling. The north-south dimension of this building was approximately 5m. A decayed corrugated iron structure adjacent to the house was perhaps the remains of a WW2 air raid shelter.

Livestock Shelter

In plan this building measured *c.* 14.7m long x 5.2m wide, its long axis aligned approximately east-west. The north and west walls, part of the south wall and an internal wall were all stone-built. The east wall had been rebuilt in brick (assuming there was originally a stone wall on this line). The north and west walls survived to a height of *c.* 1.5m, the other walls

were lower. The stonework was a mixture of granite, large rounded stones, sandstone, ironstone, slate and marlstone fragments. Some of the granite fragments were very large, measuring up to c. 0.57m x 0.42m. In general, larger stones were used for the wall facings with smaller fragments at the core; the bonding medium was a lime mortar. The north-west corner was finished in more regularly shaped stones (quoins), as were the sides of a former doorway in the north wall, which had subsequently been infilled with brick. Two courses of brickwork surmounted the stonework of the north and west walls; these were small, clamp-fired bricks (dimensions: 229 - 235 x 89 - 114 x 51 - 57mm (9 - 9 ¼ x 3 ½ - 4 ½ x 2 - 2 ¼ inches)).

An internal north-south aligned wall divided the interior of the building into two rooms. The larger western room, measuring c. 9m x 4.4m internally, evidently served as an animal shelter in its final incarnation, with the remains of two wooden mangers fixed to the inside face of the north wall. Two stone plinths, with iron mounting plates attached, would have carried cast iron columns supporting the wall plate on the open south side of this room. These columns, still attached to the remains of the wall plate, lay where they had fallen in the undergrowth amongst other structural debris.

The former opening in the north wall was relatively wide at c. 3.4m; this was infilled with brickwork of an evenly fired, deep red colour (dimensions: 229 x 114 x 60mm (9 x 4 ½ x 2 ⅜ inches)).

The eastern room was the smaller of the two (internal dimensions approx. 4.4m square). Access was by way of a door opening on the south side, adjacent to the internal wall. An axial beam amongst the debris within this room suggests that there was an upper floor in this part of the building. The roof covering seems to have been graded Swithland slate, judging by the debris within and around the building.

The livestock shelter formed the north side of an enclosed yard defined by low brick walls (brick dimensions: 235 x 114 x 60mm (9¼ x 4 ½ x 2 ⅜ inches)), subsequent repairs to which had been made using bricks bearing the stamp: FREEBORO, BARKBY. Entrances were located on the south and west sides. The southern entrance consisted of a 3m wide gap in the wall with a surviving gate post on its east side.

A metalled track, discernible as an area of stonier ground in the adjacent ploughed field, linked the western entrance with the trackway between Humberstone and Barkby. A geophysical survey of the area had previously located this track (Butler 2000). The only other feature noted at the time of the Appraisal was a brick-lined well (see Figure 3).

5.2 Interpretation and Chronology

Interpretation of the function and chronology of the individual structures and the complex as a whole is based on a combination of primary data recorded in the course of site visits made pre- and post-demolition, and on the analysis of archive material, in particular historic map evidence.

Map evidence

The earliest map covering this area is John Prior's map of 1777, which shows no buildings in this location. Similarly, the more detailed map accompanying the Humberstone Enclosure Award of 1788 (LLRRO: DE/44/3/1) shows no buildings in the vicinity at that date. No

buildings are shown here on a map of 1804 either, although the routeway between Humberstone and Barkby, which the complex lay adjacent to, is shown.

The Ordnance Survey Provisional Edition inch to the mile map of c. 1850 is the first to show any buildings in this location (Figure 4). Despite the small scale of the map the livestock shelter is readily identifiable. The house does not appear to have been extant by this date.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (sheet XXXI.NE) published in 1888 (surveyed 1884-5) shows the house, livestock shelter and the walled enclosure to the south of this (Figure 5). In addition the short, east-west aligned track linking the complex with the Humberstone to Barkby field road is shown. The symbol 'P', for pump, indicates that the well adjacent to the walled yard was also extant by this date.

By the time of the Second Edition Ordnance Survey, published in 1904 (sheet XXXI.NE), the walled yard to the south of the livestock shelter had been roofed over; an RAF aerial photograph taken in February 1948 shows a twin pitched roof structure (Figure 9). A second well had been excavated, to the south of the house, and a building erected to the north-west of the animal shelter.

By 1915 the house had been extended and another structure erected, against the north side of the livestock shelter. The dashed outline of this and the building to the north-west of the livestock shelter may indicate that these were roofed, but open sided structures (Figure 6).

The 1930 edition of the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map sheet XXXI.4 shows that the house had been further extended by this time (Figure 7). The site is shown essentially unchanged on subsequent OS editions of 1950 (Figure 8), 1966 and 1973. In 1982 only the farmhouse was mapped and this was shown as an open, unroofed structure; the complex was evidently derelict by this date.

An undated copy of a map, based on an Ordnance Survey edition, showing field names (probably derived from the enclosure award), provides significant information on the exploitation of the surrounding landscape (Figure 10). (Note: this is not the Humberstone Field Name Survey: FNS/151/1 held by the LLRRO, which does not cover this area).

Building Function and Chronology

The map evidence indicates that the livestock shelter was the earliest building on the site, erected some time between c. 1804 and 1850; probably earlier rather than later in that date range. This is likely to have been constructed as a field barn following enclosure of the open field system. Field barns and outfarms were designed to house livestock and crops away from the home farmyard, where regular transportation to and from distant fields was not a practical proposition (Brunskill 1982, 115-118; Harvey 1984, 80-81).

In its earliest form, access to the larger western room, which housed the livestock, would have been through the wide doorway in the north wall. The south side of the building is unlikely to have been open at this time. The foldyard to the south appears to have been a later addition, constructed between c. 1850 and 1884/5. The south wall of the livestock shelter was presumably modified at the same time. Harvey (1984, 138) states that:

'The general intensification of farming and the particular need to maintain fertility ensured the continuation [in the period 1820-80] of 'field barn' or barn-and-yard units

remote from central farmsteads where inwintered cattle trod straw into manure for the surrounding fields’.

The absence of a dwelling, initially, implies that the field barn was served by a stockman from the main stading, presumably at Barkby as this is recorded as being Pochin land on the 1788 enclosure map and was in the ownership of the same family until the late 20th century. Subsequently a house or cottage was constructed to accommodate a stockman on site, again in the period between c. 1850 and 1884/5. The house was probably slightly later in date than the foldyard, judging by the brickwork. By the early years of the 20th century the foldyard had been roofed over.

The additional buildings in the north of the site, shown on early 20th century Ordnance Survey maps, left no trace on the ground; the function of these remains uncertain.

5.3 Other Activities

The field-name survey noted above (Figure 10) provides information on the exploitation of the surrounding landscape and its natural resources. The teardrop-shaped spinney to the south of the field barn complex on the line of the Humberstone to Barkby field road is identified as a gravel pit on this map. The same feature is shown on the 1788 enclosure map, apparently as a small pond, dating the gravel extraction to the late 18th century at the latest. A quarry pit was noted, at the time of the Appraisal, at the west end of the elongated spinney immediately to the south of the field barn complex. The field-name survey identifies the adjacent piece of land as ‘Marl Pit Close’. This pit presumably resulted from quarrying either of stone or clay from Triassic deposits. The 1975 Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain map sheet 156 indicates that ‘Red Marl with beds of Sandstone and bands of Gypsum’ occur close to the surface in this area. Alec Clifton-Taylor (1987, 190) states that alabaster was quarried at Humberstone in the later Middle Ages and the interior of the parish church of St. Mary’s has various decorative details in this local stone (Pevsner 1992, 272). The location of the alabaster quarry is not known. No features are recorded in this position on the map accompanying the enclosure award, however the spinney is shown on the c. 1850 Ordnance Survey Provisional Edition map, suggesting a likely date range for this quarrying episode. The names ‘Sand Hill’ and ‘Flint Hills’ are also recorded in the immediate vicinity, apparently reflecting the varied superficial geology of the area. The name ‘Sallow Pits’ presumably relates to the sallow tree, a broad-leafed variety of willow commonly grown for the production of charcoal.

A quantity of brick-making waste was noted in the vicinity of the building complex at the time of the Appraisal, with more observed following demolition. This waste may have derived from one of several large brick works located to the west; the Star and New Star Brick Works are shown on Figures 5 and 8 respectively, but in addition to these there were the County Brick Works, High Meres Brick Works, Gipsy Lane Brick Works and Belgrave Brick Works all within a 1 mile radius of the site (see Second Edition OS). Alternatively this waste may have been the product of a smaller kiln located closer to the site. The latter scenario provides a possible alternative explanation for the quarry adjacent to ‘Marl Pit Close’, which may have resulted from the extraction of clay for the manufacture of bricks, rather than quarrying of stone.

The origin of the stone used in the construction of the field barn was questioned in the earlier Appraisal. The possibility that some of the stone may have been quarried in the vicinity was raised, a suggestion that finds some support in the results of this analysis (see above). The suggestion in the Appraisal that at least some of the stone used in the walls of the field barn

was salvaged from earlier buildings in the area remains a possibility. The large, rounded stones were probably fieldstones turned up by ploughing, whilst a number of large granite boulders noted within the fabric could have been glacial erratics, as is the Humber Stone a very large syenite boulder located less than half a mile to the south of the site. Although not an area of Leicestershire traditionally associated with building in stone, comparable stonework can be seen in boundary walls alongside the Queniborough road in Barkby village, to the north, and in Main Street, Humberstone, to the south.

6. Discussion

Documentary analysis and in particular historic map evidence, has shed light on the character, history, dating and development sequence of the ruined farm complex. Unfortunately the structures were demolished before a detailed building record could be made. In broad terms the complex can be identified as a post-enclosure field barn, of early 19th century date, which developed in the later 19th century with the addition of accommodation for a stockman and his family and was further enlarged in the 20th century. The documentary and cartographic evidence, however, also highlights the diverse nature of the rural economy, pointing to a range of other activities undertaken in the immediate vicinity, including quarrying for gravel and possibly stone, clay extraction for brick making and, apparently, charcoal production.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Mather Jamie who commissioned the project and to Richard Clark, the City Archaeologist, for supplying the aerial photograph (Figure 9) and location plans (Figures 1 and 2).

8. Publication

A summary of the results of the project will be submitted to the editor of the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for inclusion in that journal.

9. Archive

The archive, consisting of: field notes; plan of the field barn and attached yard; colour and monochrome photographs of the site post-demolition; and a copy of this report, will be deposited with the Leicester City Museum Service under the Leicester Sites and Monuments Record Code: LC 1437.

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Fig. 1 : Proposed Development Area. Scale 1:10000. Crown Copyright Reserved.

Hamiton Northern Housing Area, Humberstone

Known Archaeological Sites

Compiled by R Clark on 13 June 2001

Figure 2

Leicester Sites & Monuments Record
Jewry Wall Museum
St Nicholas Circle
Leicester
LE1 4LB



Scale 1:7500



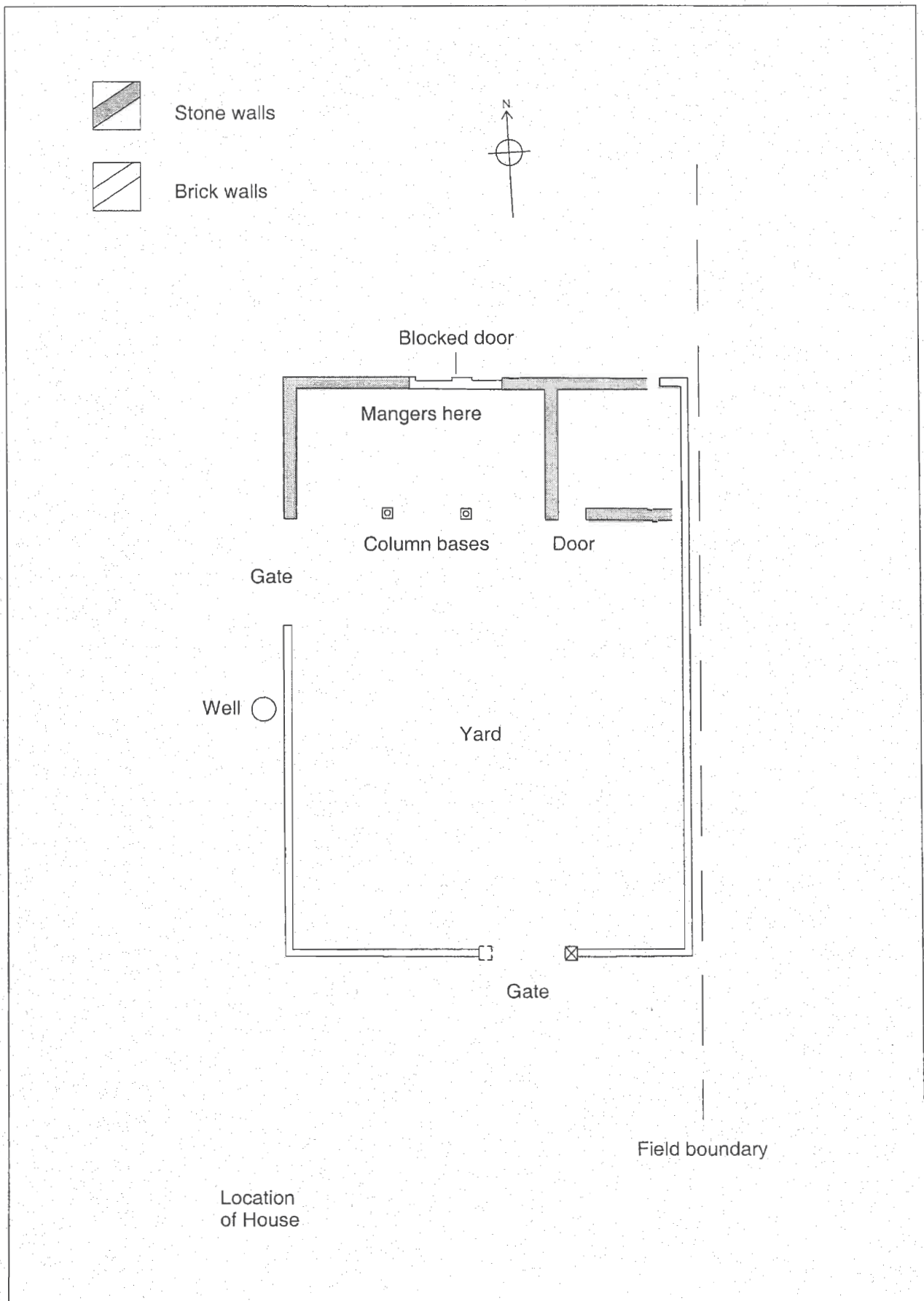


Figure 3. Plan of the livestock shelter (field barn) and attached yard made at the time of the Buildings Appraisal. Scale 1:200.

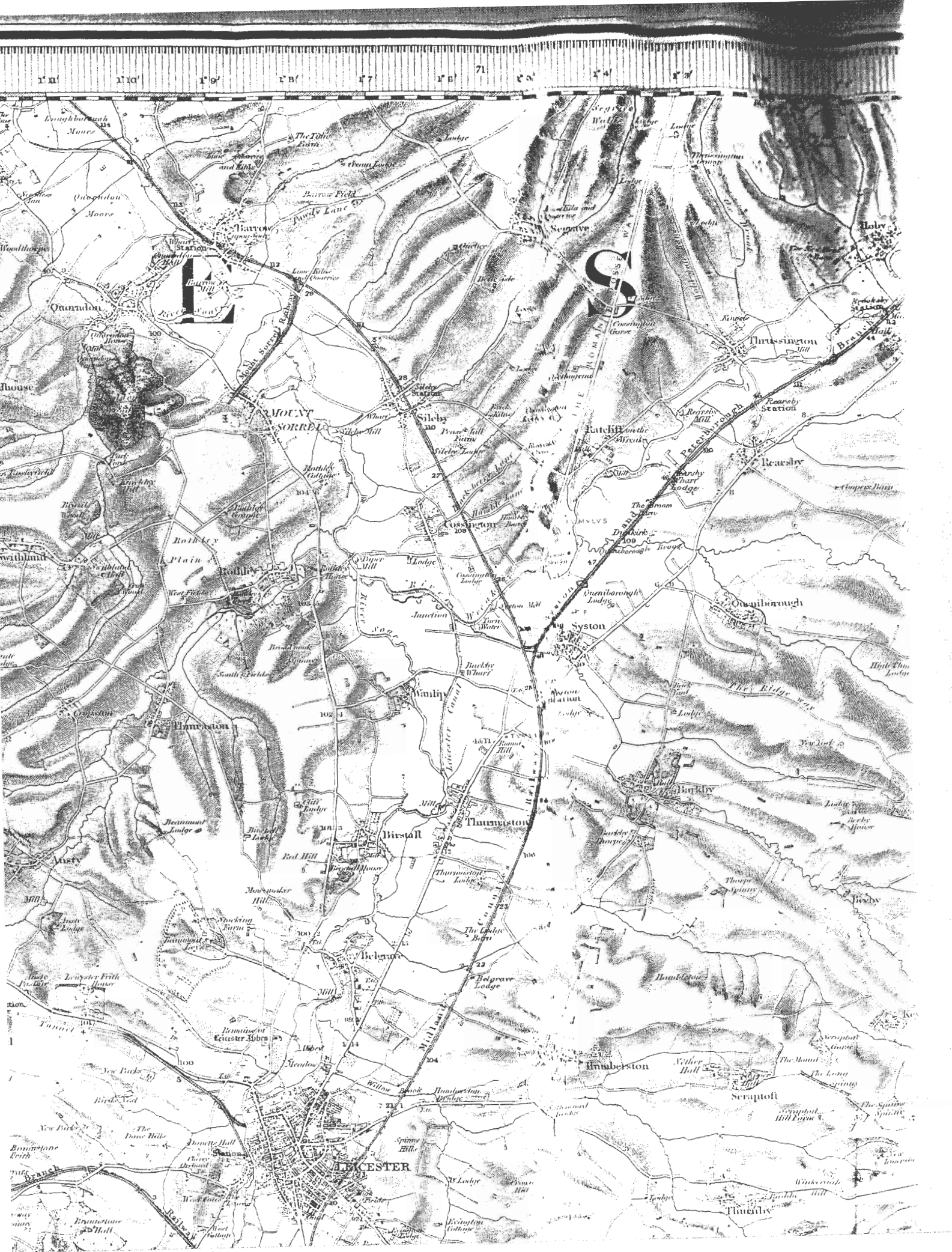


Figure 4. Extract from c. 1850 OS Provisional Edition 1 inch to 1 mile map. Site area outlined.

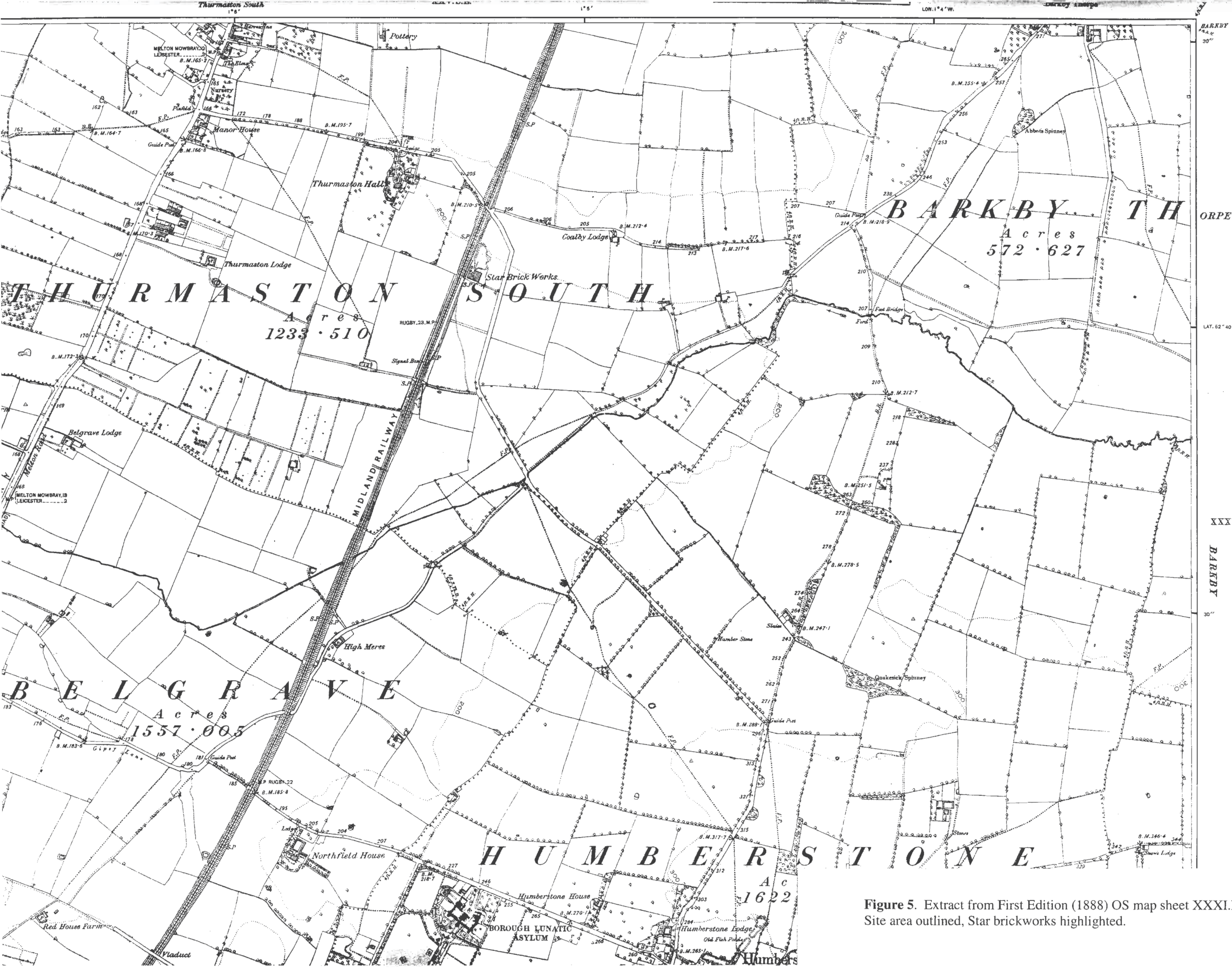


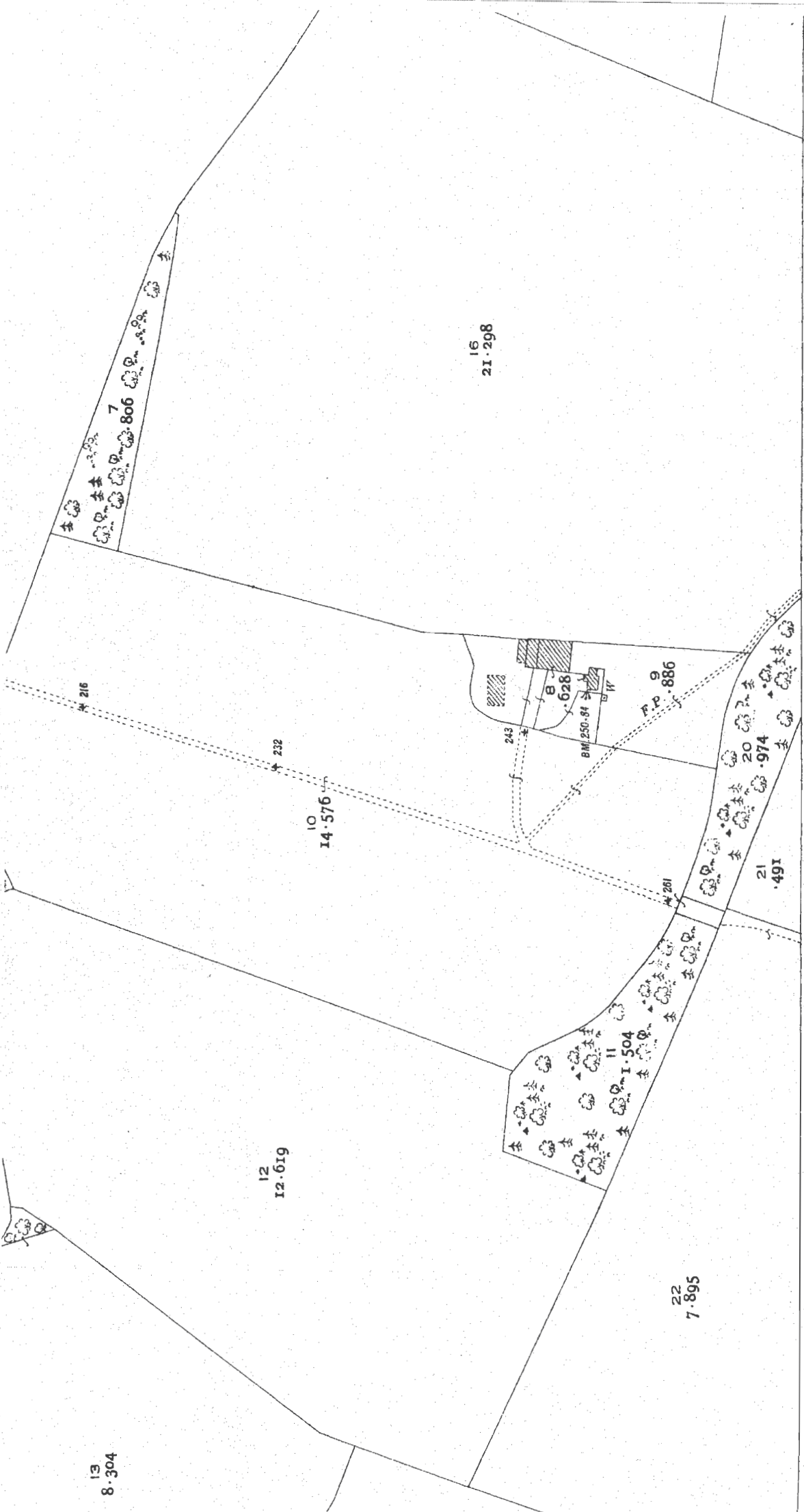
Figure 5. Extract from First Edition (1888) OS map sheet XXXI.NE 6 inch to 1 mile. Site area outlined, Star brickworks highlighted.

Figure 6. Extract from 1915 OS map sheet XXXI.4. Scale 1:2500.



Published by the Director General at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1915.
 The assumed Mean Level of the Sea at Liverpool which is 0.650 of a Foot below the general Mean Level of the Sea.
 thus (→ B.M. 54.7) refer to Bench Marks on Buildings, Walls, &c., those marked thus (+ 52) to surface levels.
 Crown Copyright Reserved.

Links 100 0 5 10 15 20
 Feet 100 0 500 1000
 Scale $\frac{1}{2500}$ being 25.344 Inches to a Statute Mile or 20
 N.B. The representation on this map of a Road, Track, or Footpath, is not



13
8.304

12
12.619

10
14.576

16
21.298

22
7.895

20
.974

21
.491

XXXI. 8.
BILLEDSON UNION & R.D. HUMBERSTONE PH.

are given in Feet above the mean level of the sea at NEWLYN, and are based on the new primary levelling of 1912-21. led to the figures shown—0.7.....feet | Note that the figure applies to this plan only and is only approximate to 0.1 ft. Further information on application.

er to bench marks on buildings, walls, &c., those marked (+) preceded or followed by the height to surface levels. l parts of an Acre into Roods and Perches, multiply by 4, this will give Roods and Decimals of a Rood. nal by 40 thus obtaining Perches and Decimals of a Perch.

ation on this map of a Road, Track, or Footpath, is no evidence of the existence of a right of way

Links 100 0 5

Feet 100 0 500

Figure 7. Extract from 1930 OS map sheet XXXI.4. Scale 1:2500.

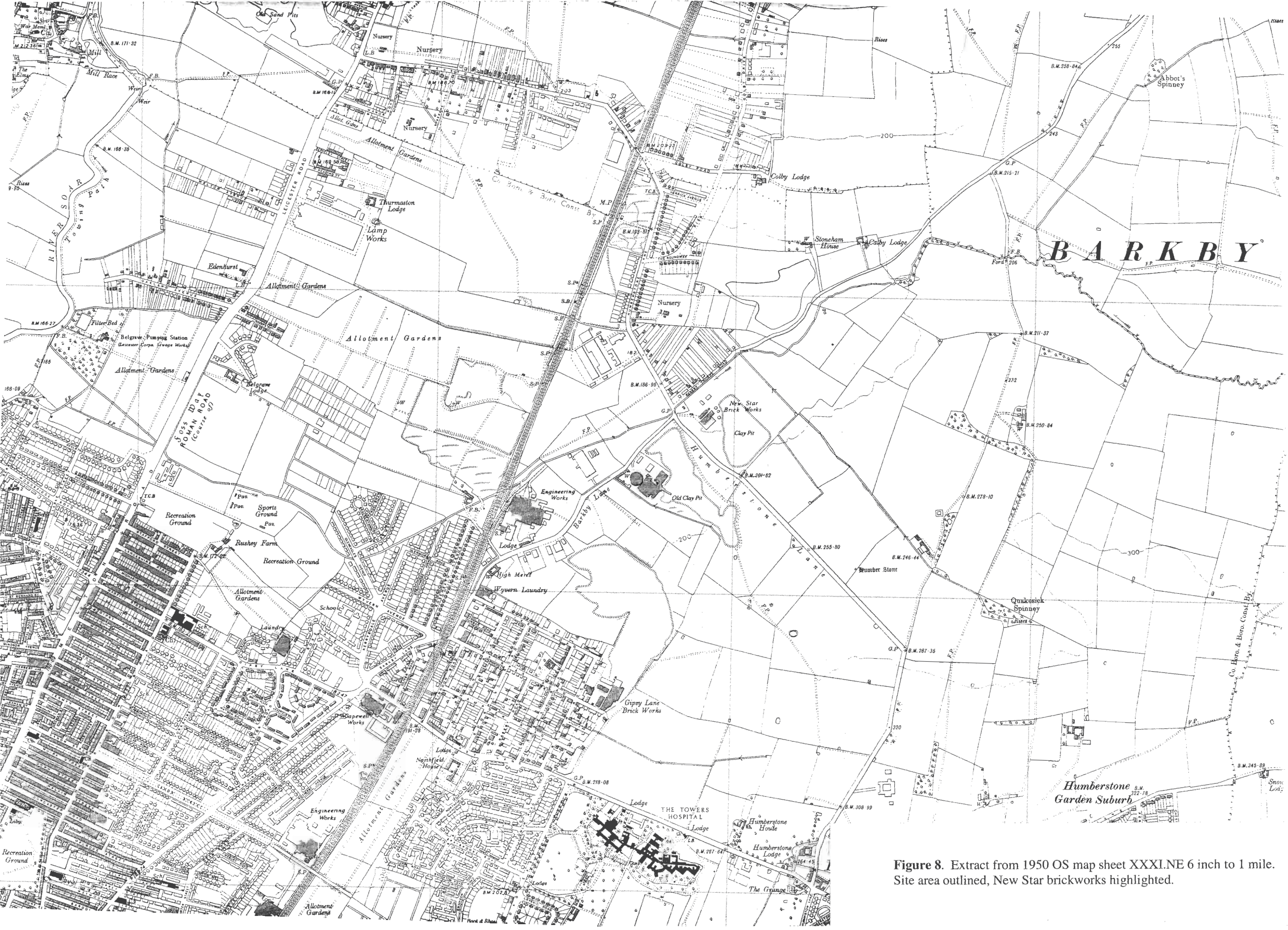


Figure 8. Extract from 1950 OS map sheet XXXI.NE 6 inch to 1 mile. Site area outlined, New Star brickworks highlighted.

PLAN 1: HUMBERSTONE FARM, NORTH

RAF Aerial Photograph Feb 1948

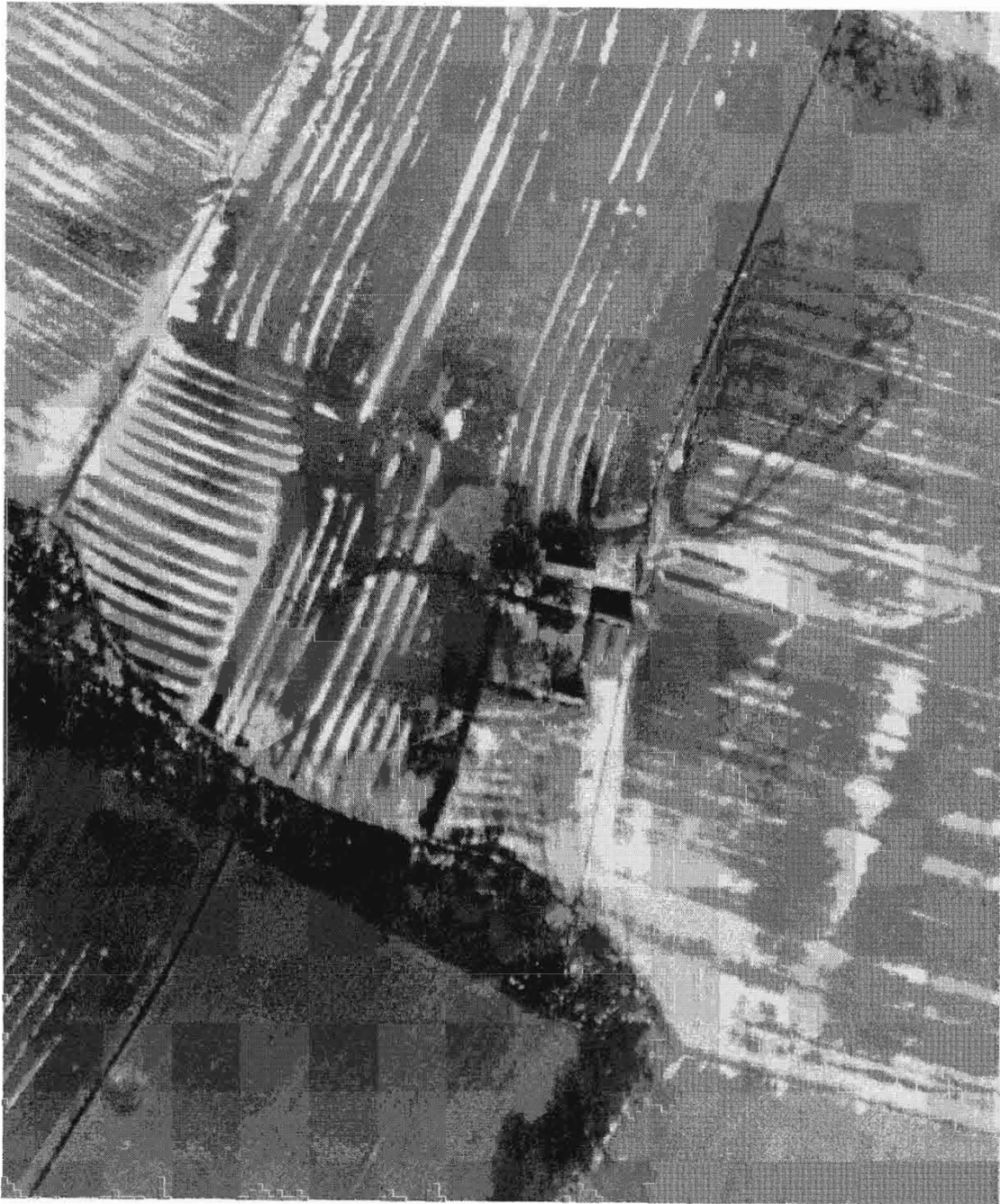


Figure 9. RAF Aerial Photograph of site Feb. 1948 (supplied by R. Clark).

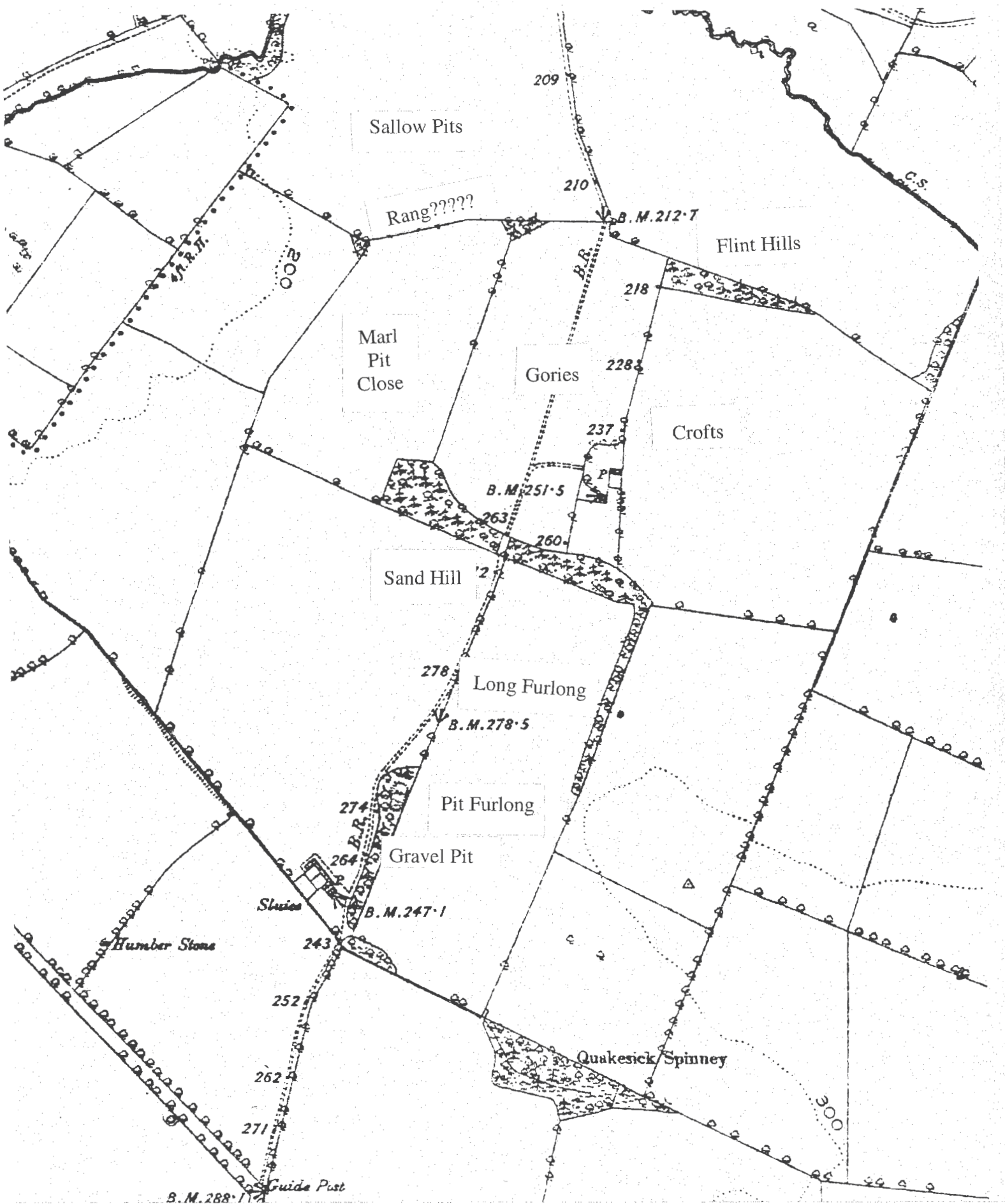


Figure 10. Undated copy of map showing field names
 (Sketch based on OS map of uncertain date, transcribed onto First Edition OS of 1888).