



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building survey at
Yardley Chase Cadet Training Centre
Denton Road, Denton, Northamptonshire
March 2013



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Report 13/61
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No 147459
Project title	Archaeological Building Recording at Yardley Chase Cadet training centre, Denton, Northamptonshire	
Short description	<p>Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological recording of buildings at the Yardley Chase Cadet Training Centre, Northamptonshire. The cast iron and brick-built, single-storey buildings were built during World War II as office and accommodation buildings associated with a munitions storage depot. The munitions storage buildings were located in woodland to the east. Some of the buildings in the survey were found to be unused. The fabric of the buildings showed evidence of alterations such as blocked doorways.</p> <p>After 1980, the area became a training ground, latterly becoming part of the East Midlands Training Area.</p>	
Project type	Building assessment	
Previous work	Evolution (Jones 2013)	
Future work	None	
Monument type and period	World War II brick outbuildings	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Yardley Chase Denton road Denton Northampton	
NGR	SP 8320 55631	
Area		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Advisor	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith	
Project Manager	Ian Meadows	
Sponsor or funding body	MABOR associates	
PROJECT DATE		
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BIBLIOGRAPHY		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING
AT YARDLEY CHASE, CADET BASE TRAINING CENTRE
DENTON ROAD, DENTON
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
MARCH 2013**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out archaeological recording of buildings at the Yardley Chase Cadet Training Centre, Northamptonshire. The cast iron and brick-built, single-storey buildings were built during World War II as office and accommodation buildings associated with a munitions storage depot. The munitions storage buildings were located in woodland to the east. Some of the buildings in the survey were found to be unused. The fabric of the buildings showed evidence of alterations such as blocked doorways.

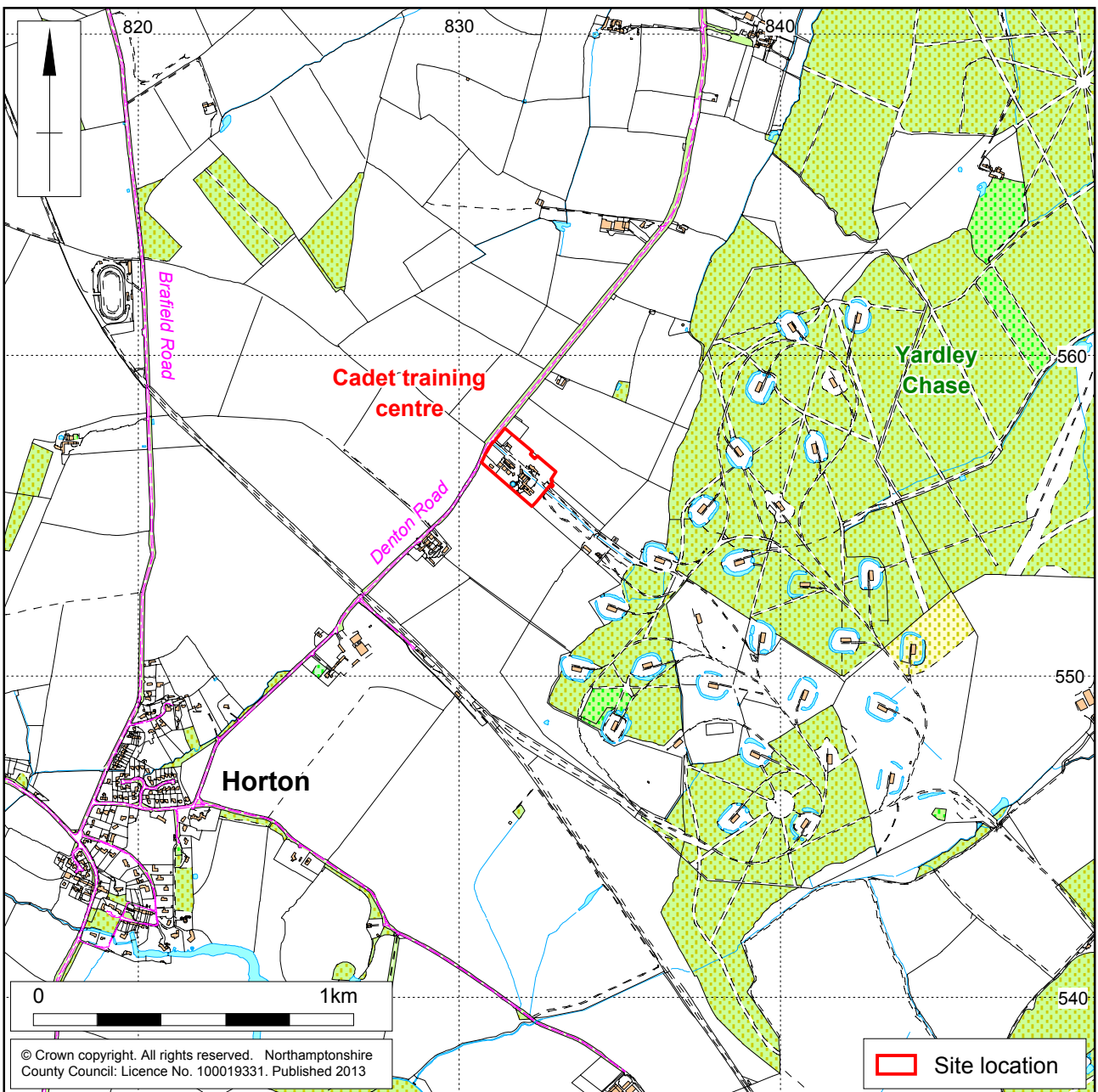
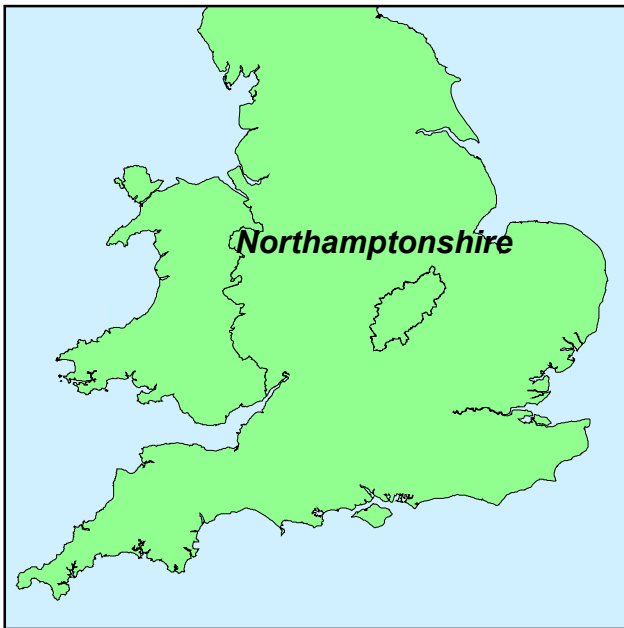
After 1980, the area became a training ground, latterly becoming part of the East Midlands Training Area.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) were commissioned to undertake an archaeological buildings recording on buildings at Yardley Chase cadet base training centre, Northampton (Fig 1; SP 8320 55635). The work was carried out in March 2013.

The buildings are due to be demolished ahead of a proposed development and their recording was a requirement by the Assistant Archaeologist Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council. As part of this programme there had been a trial trench evaluation in December 2012 by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Jones 2013).

The training centre sits on land to the south of Denton village surrounded by open fields, with the woodlands of Yardley Chase a short distance to the east.



Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The principal objectives of the building recording are set out in the Brief (NCC 2013): to record and understand the nature, function and character of existing buildings and to place them in their historic, cultural and environmental setting. The level of recording was specified as Level 2 – a descriptive record (English Heritage 2006, 14).

The specific aims of the building recording were to:

- Provide a comprehensive visual record of the structures prior to conversion;
- Provide a comprehensive review of the local and regional historical context of the structures recorded;
- Produce a high quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long term deposition in order to “preserve by record” the buildings in their current form, prior to demolition;

A site visit was made in March 2013, when the principal exterior elevations were photographed. The interiors were photographically recorded to include structural details that would be lost during demolition and notes were made of any features and alterations. Measured plans, sections and elevation of the buildings were obtained from ST Associates. Information regarding the military history was primarily sourced from files held by Northamptonshire County Council’s Archive and Heritage Service.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Early history

Yardley Chase was originally part of Salcey Forest and was first recorded in 1277. The Chase was usually annexed to the manor of Yardley Hastings and in 1528, when Sir William Compton died, it was regarded as a private wood.

In 1565, Yardley Chase had a circuit of seven miles and was moderately stocked with deer (Hall 1996). There were fifteen managed coppices of which one was usually felled annually, although occasionally they were left to mature for longer to allow for the production of larger timber. A large-scale laying out of ridings was probably undertaken in the 17th century which formed numerous intersections. Yardley Chase appears to have been managed in a similar way to royal forests with a coppice and lawn system. Yardley Hastings was enclosed in 1777.

Military site

The military site was created during World War II for military munitions storage. Evidence obtained from Mr T N Parker (letter dating 27/2/97), who helped construct the site, indicates that construction was started in the spring of 1942 and continued until early 1943, although some of the large storage sheds may have been in use before all works were completed. The main contractor was MacAlpine.

Most of the buildings on site were enclosed by large earth banks, which were in turn surrounded by annular quarry ditches. The blast banks are c 13m wide and c 5m high. Associated with these buildings were groups of three small ancillary brick buildings assumed to be contemporary with the storage bunkers. In each case they comprised a latrine, office and blast shelter (comprising three bays with the central entrance protected by an external blast wall). The domestic buildings and offices were located adjacent to the Horton-Denton road and are the subject of the current survey. The 1945 aerial photograph of the area indicates that most of the buildings were present by this date (Fig 2).

The dispersed concrete and brick buildings (storage bunkers/magazines) were connected by an extensive rail network which was linked by a spur to the Northampton to Bedford line (now defunct). The system

was worked by two diesel engines and a railcar type vehicle which was used by the fire patrols. Most if not all of the thirty odd sheds were only really accessible by rail, the junction with the main line was at Piddington Station, also I believe there was a connection from Ravenstone Junction signal box, but was probably only used during construction. Material were [sic] still being sent in and out from the site by train until it eventually closed about 1980. The MoD took over the operation of the spur after British Rail withdrew freight services in 1965. There was a serious fire in one of the sheds in 1958/9 when cordite exploded and blew the main portion of a roof [off]. Some [of the sheds] were in use for agricultural purposes. The domestic site and offices etc were on the main Denton-Horton road; most are still there. It was civilian manned, but I believe a service officer was in overall charge certainly in the immediate post war period (Mr T N Parker).

The surveyed buildings formed part of the accommodation block located off the Denton to Horton Road.

The Buckinghamshire Railway Centre owns a brake van which was built for the army at Southern Railway's Ashford Works in 1942, becoming Army Number 49014. It worked at various military depots, but had been at Yardley Chase for three years when it closed in 1980 ([www.brc-stockbook.co.uk/SR Brake 1.htm](http://www.brc-stockbook.co.uk/SR_Brake_1.htm)). Records of the Vulcan Foundry at Newton-le-Willows indicate that three diesel locomotives were built for the Ministry of Works for use at Yardley Chase and numbered 4161, 4162 and 4164.



1945 aerial photograph of the office and accommodation buildings Fig 2

After 1980, the area became a training ground, latterly passing from the management of the Royal Pioneer Corps based at Simpson Barracks in Northampton, to become part of the East Midlands Training Area.

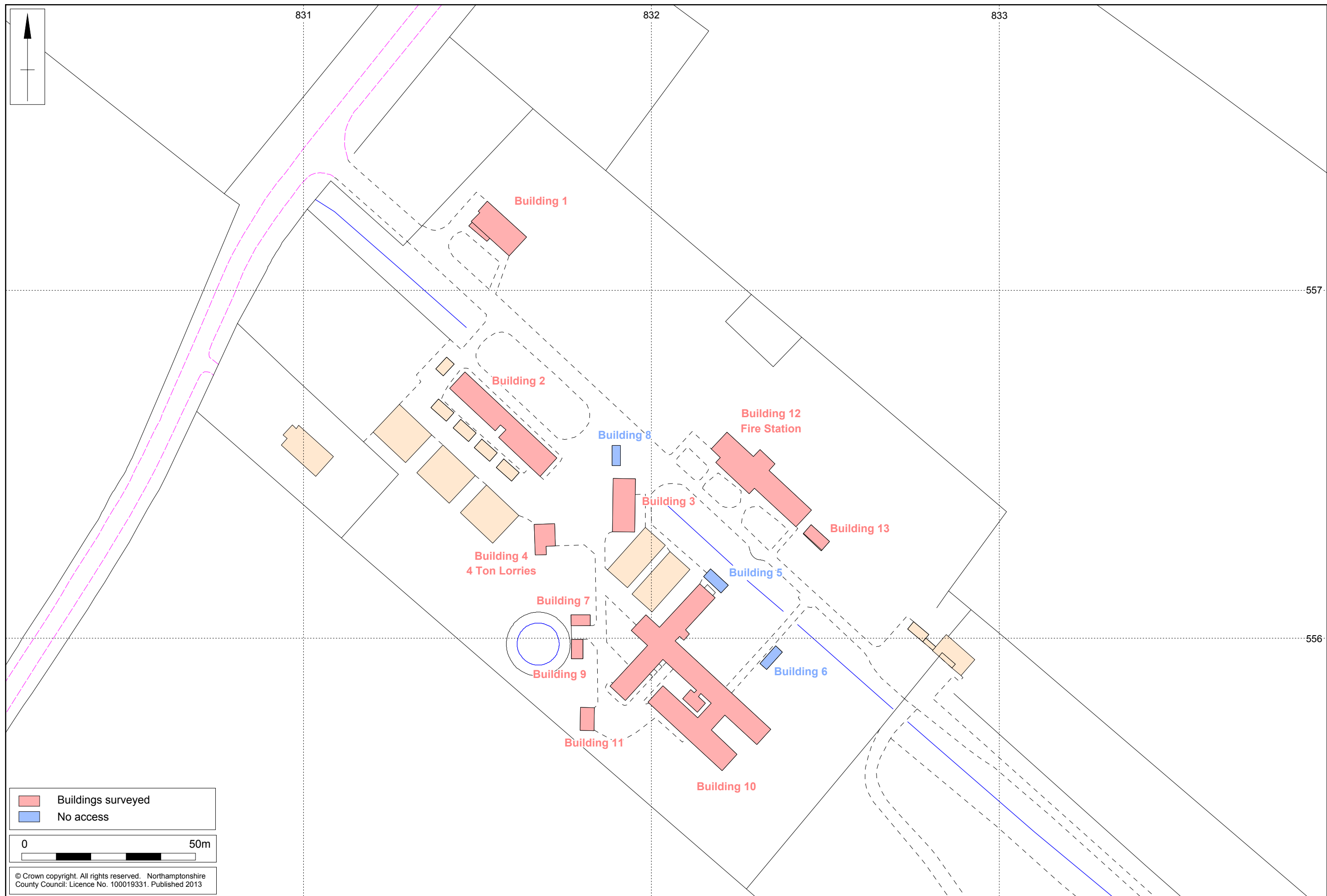
In 1979, Yardley Chase was put forward as one of six potential sites for a third London airport to supplement Gatwick and Heathrow. Eventually, after great local opposition, Stansted Airport was chosen as the preferred site for expansion, rather than the creation of a new site.

4 BUILDING RECORDING

The recorded buildings consist of thirteen brick and cast iron built single-storey ranges surrounding a central roadway through the complex. The buildings were originally office and accommodation blocks associated with the munitions storage buildings situated in the woodland to the south-east. A number of the buildings had limited, or no access due to safety hazards.

The buildings were of a cast iron framework with brick infill. Two different roof types were present; flat concrete, present on some of the smaller buildings, and gabled with corrugated asbestos roofing supported by king posts of cast iron (Fig 17). All the floors are concrete.

Some original doors remained in the building, these were barred and ledged (Fig 5) and cast iron secure doors (Fig 11) which still have their original fittings on. Many of the windows were still original to the building which were steel Crittall and still feature some of the original fittings.



4.1 Building 1: The Guardhouse

The guardhouse is the first building on the complex and stands east of the main gateway from Denton road the building has a flat concrete roof and two doorways. The main entrance is in the middle of the south-west side of the building and still has the original door and fittings (Fig 5) from the doorway there is a T-shaped corridor that runs through the building and allows access to all but two of the eight rooms. Four of the rooms were used for general storage and retained no original features. Room B1/5 was a washroom with original toilet, sinks and urinal (Fig 6). Room B1/6 function as an armoury with iron gun racks still present (Fig 7). The last two rooms are accessed through a door on the west side of the building and would have housed the water tank and ladders which provided access to the space above.

4.2 Building 2

This building has a gabled roof at the north-west and flat concrete roof at the south-east end. It is of brick and cast iron with whitewash over (Fig 8).

This building would have originally contained eleven rooms all, accessed though a main corridor with a central double doorway on the north elevation. Three emergency exits are also present in the building. Twenty-two windows are also present within this building, thirteen of which are on the south facing wall.

There have been some later room divisions making the large space at the north-west end of the building into three rooms, one of which is being used as a kitchen but still features the original crittall windows and their fittings (Fig 9). On the south-west end of the building are a further eight rooms, only the function of three can still be seen. Rooms B2/8 & B2/13 are toilets; room B2/13 retained an original door and hinges as well as a Belfast sink (Fig 10). Room B2/6 seems to have acted as a secure room with two cast iron clad storage areas (Fig 11), one of which has a metal plate which dates the time of erection as 1940 (Fig 12).

Access to B2/12 was not possible during this survey.

4.3 Building 3

This building has a gabled corrugated asbestos roof. Two sets of wooden doors were present on the west elevation and one on the east elevation. All of the nine windows have been boarded up.

4.4 Building 4

This building was originally a shed for 4-tonne lorries (Fig 13) It is of brick and has a pitched roof with corrugated asbestos. There is a large concertina door in the east elevation which opens to the full length and height of the building. A smaller ancillary room east of the main structure could not be accessed. At the time of this survey this building was being used for general storage.

4.5 Building 5, 6, 7 & 8

These four buildings are of a uniform size and shape (Fig 14) they are brick with flat concrete roofs. Access to these structures was not possible. Their function is unknown.

4.6 Building 9

This building is the same type as Buildings 5, 6, 7 & 8, however, the north wall has been removed and has been used for air rifle practice (Fig 15).

4.7 Building 10: The kennel block

This building was one of two in use by the Cadets. This building is known as the kennel block; however, there is no evidence to suggest the building was ever used for this purpose. The building has both flat concrete and gabled asbestos roof types present, good examples of which can be seen in the dorm (Fig 18).

It is the largest structure within the complex with sixteen rooms (Fig4). The main access to this building is through a single door at the north-west end of the building. There are a number of other doors throughout this building, however, none are original to the building. The same can be said about the windows. The main body of the building is aligned north-west to south-east and comprises four main areas: the kitchen (B10/1) serving area (B10/2), general dining room (B10/3) and the dorms (B10/4).

The dorm area was divided at a later date into three smaller rooms. There is a corridor outside the dorm rooms that runs south through the east end of the building. Two small storage rooms are present on the east side, however, no access was available for these two spaces. The end of the corridor forms a T-shaped space with rooms on both sides, the east side is now being used as dorms and has a good example of the king post roof supports (Fig18) while the west end features a male and female shower block. The west end of the building forms a similar T-shaped floor plan.

At the centre is the kitchen and from this to the south there are three smaller rooms. Rooms B10/9 & B10/10 are accessed via an outside door on north-west side of the building; these two rooms were currently being used as classrooms. At the north-east side of the building is another room (B10/11) that is being used as the officer's dining room.

4.8 Building 11: The generator

This building was the generator building. It is a simple brick build with a flat concrete roof, there is only one door in the north corner of the building and four small high level vents (Fig19). The original generator is still present within the building though it was no longer in use, the building now houses a newer generator (Fig 20).

4.9 Building 12: The fire station

This building originally functioned as a fire station and was divided into three areas: the main fire station, the boiler room and a third area of unknown function (Fig 4). This third area has been remodelled into shower blocks. There are no original doors or windows present within this building. The fire station and the boiler room both have flat roofs and the shower block is gabled.

The north-west end of the structure is the fire station (Fig 21) area and comprises two rooms; B12/1 was a large storage area with double doors and originally housed the fire engine. B12/2 is the main station however there is no access to this room due to asbestos.

The boiler room B12/3 has access through the north-west facing wall and the chimney is still present in the corner of the room on the same side. The footings for the boiler are still set in the concrete floor. A single window and vent are present on the south-west wall. There is also a small dividing wall aligned north-west measuring 1.36m in height and also features an opening for access (Fig 22).

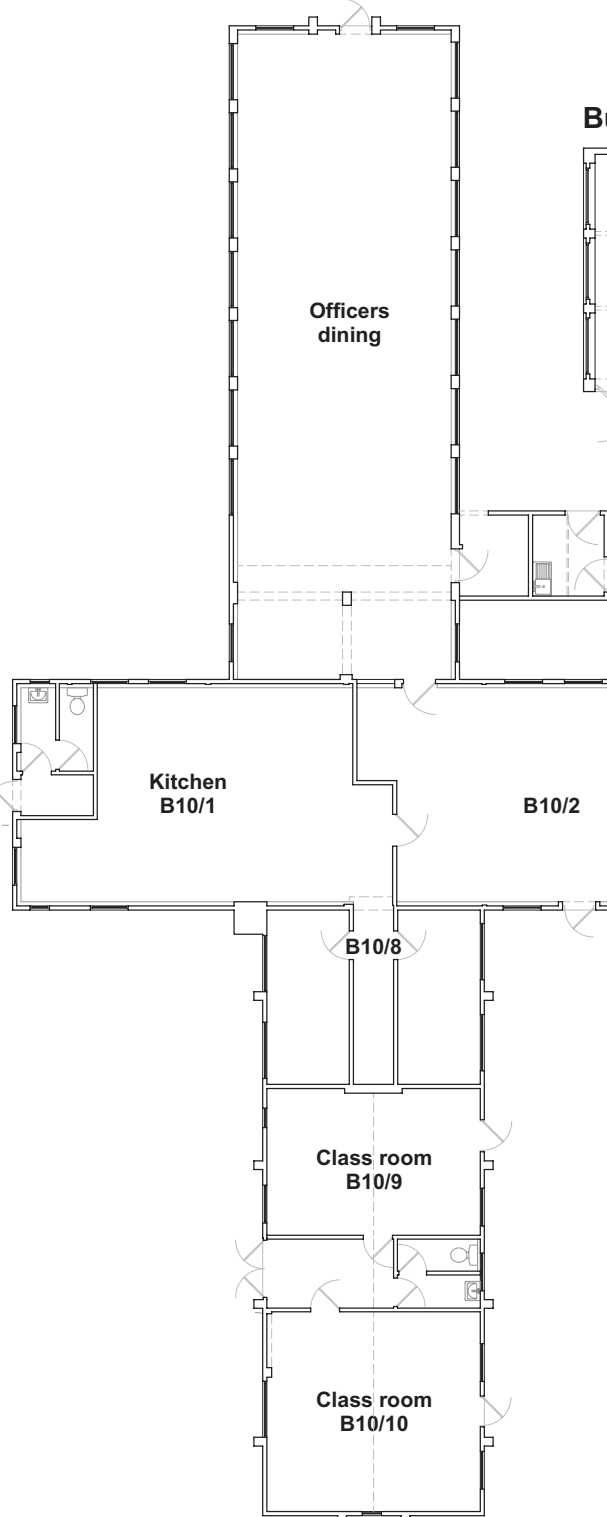
The eastern extent of the structure is divided into four equal sized rooms B12/4- B12/7 and are accessed through the south elevation. B12/4 and B12/5 provide access internal to rooms B12/6 and B12/7. B12/4 and B12/5 had a mixture of sinks and toilets. B12/6 and 7

were open plan shower rooms. Beams of the black painted, wooden simple pitched roof structure can be seen through the building.

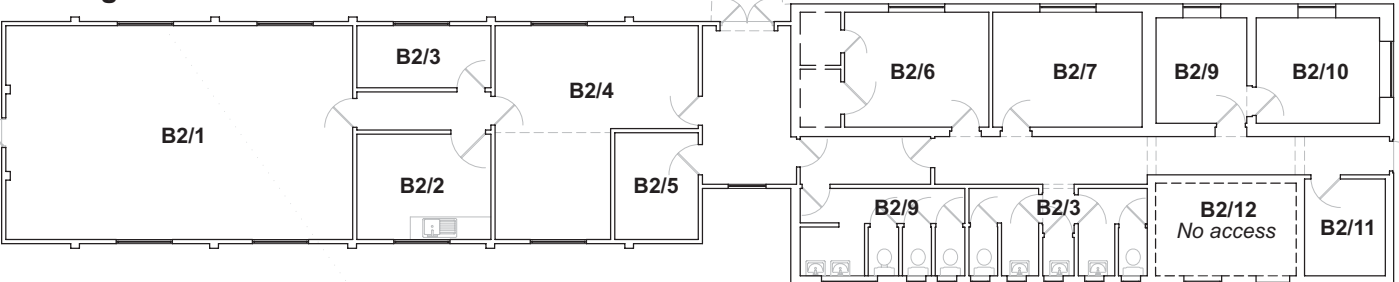
4.10 Building 13

This building has a flat concrete roof and one doorway on the north-west elevation. Three bricked up windows are present in the south-west wall. It was divided into two rooms B13/1 and B13/2. Room B13/1 had an original door (Fig 24), while B13/2 retained original light fitting and Bakelite switch (Fig 23)

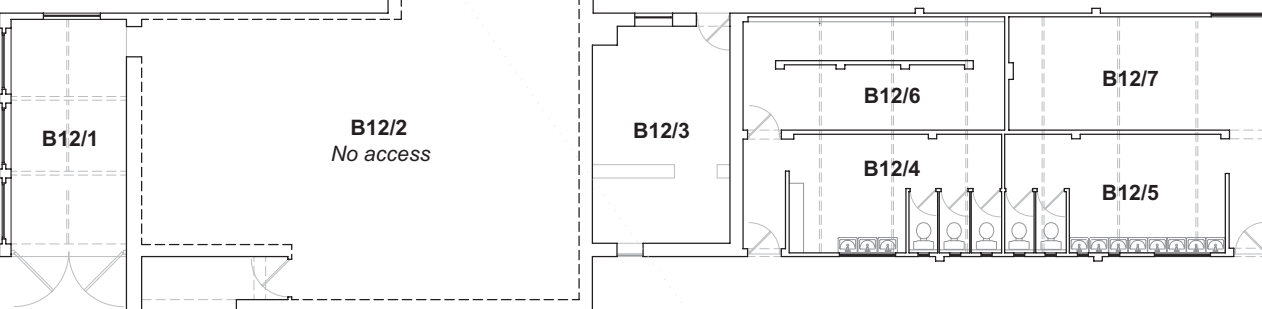
Building 10 - Kennel block



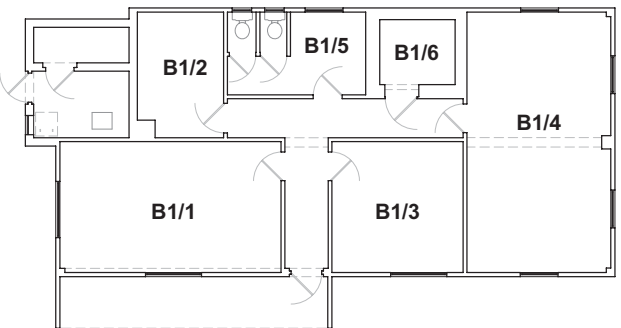
Building 2



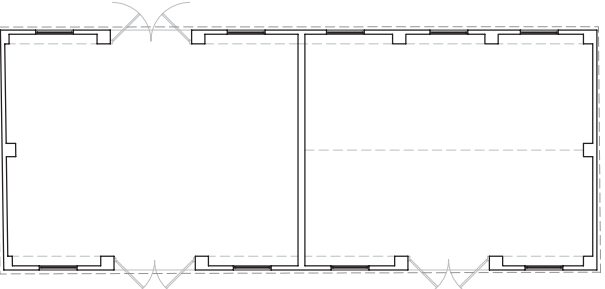
Building 12



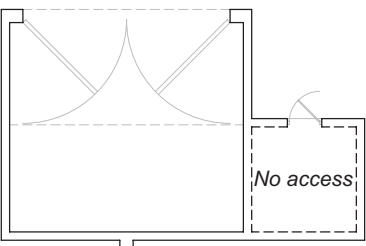
Building 1 - Guardhouse



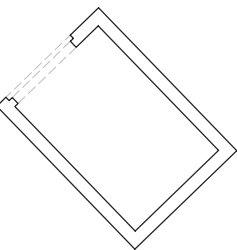
Building 3



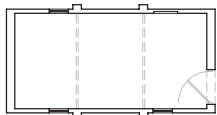
Building 4 - Lorries



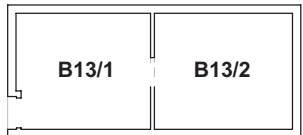
Building 7



Building 11 - Generator



Building 13

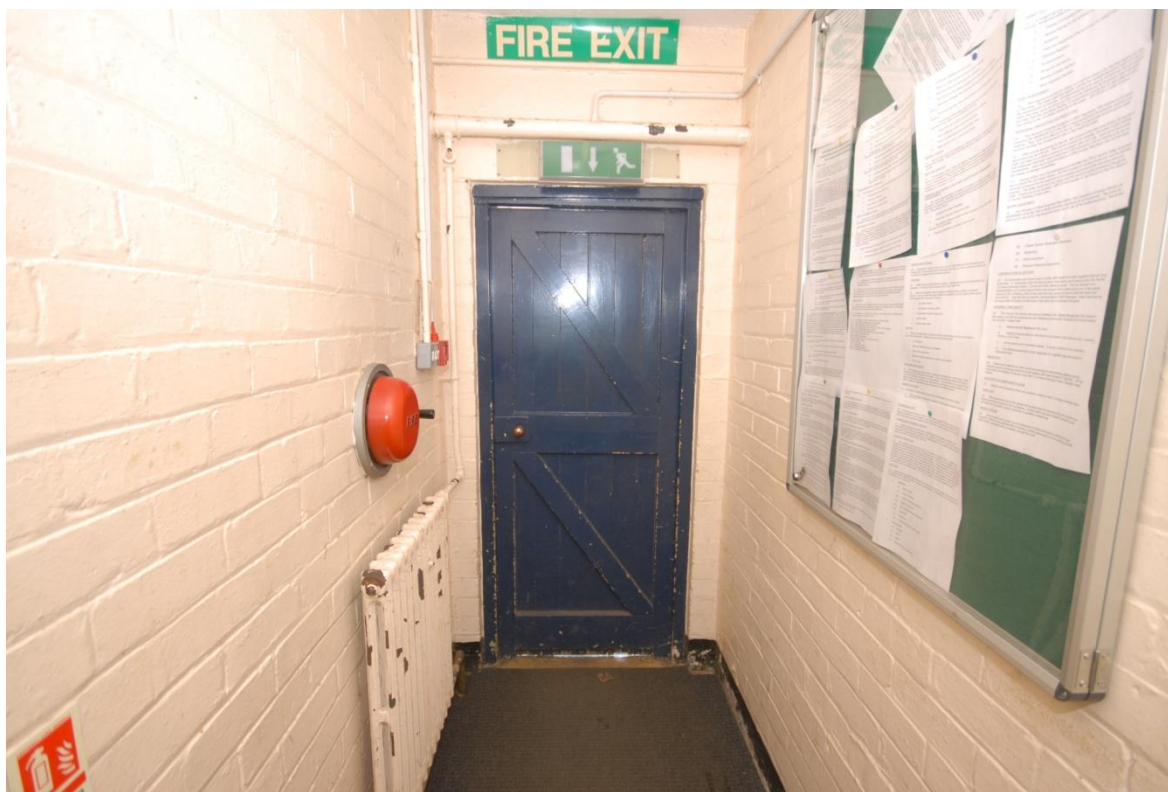


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5 CONCLUSIONS

The survey at Yardley Chase showed that the external buildings which were built in 1942, during World War II, as part of the munitions storage depot have remain unchanged since they were built. The buildings surveyed comprised thirteen brick and cast iron built single-storey ranges surrounding a central roadway though the complex and formed the accommodation blocks and other service areas associated with the depot. The buildings included the former guardhouse, fire station and generator room; the original function of another building known by the cadets as the dog kennel is unknown. The actual munitions storage buildings are located in the woodland to the east; this part of the site is still in military use.

Some original features are still present, like those of the safe doors in Building one and the gun storage locker in Building two; other buildings retained original fittings such as light switches. The original doors and windows are still present within some of the buildings, however, many have been replaced in the recent past. Inside some additional internal walls have been added at a later date to form new spaces.



Building 1; guardhouse, original door

Fig 5



Building 1; the guardhouse, original urinal room B1/5

Fig 6



Building 1; guardhouse, gun storage room B1/6



Fig 7



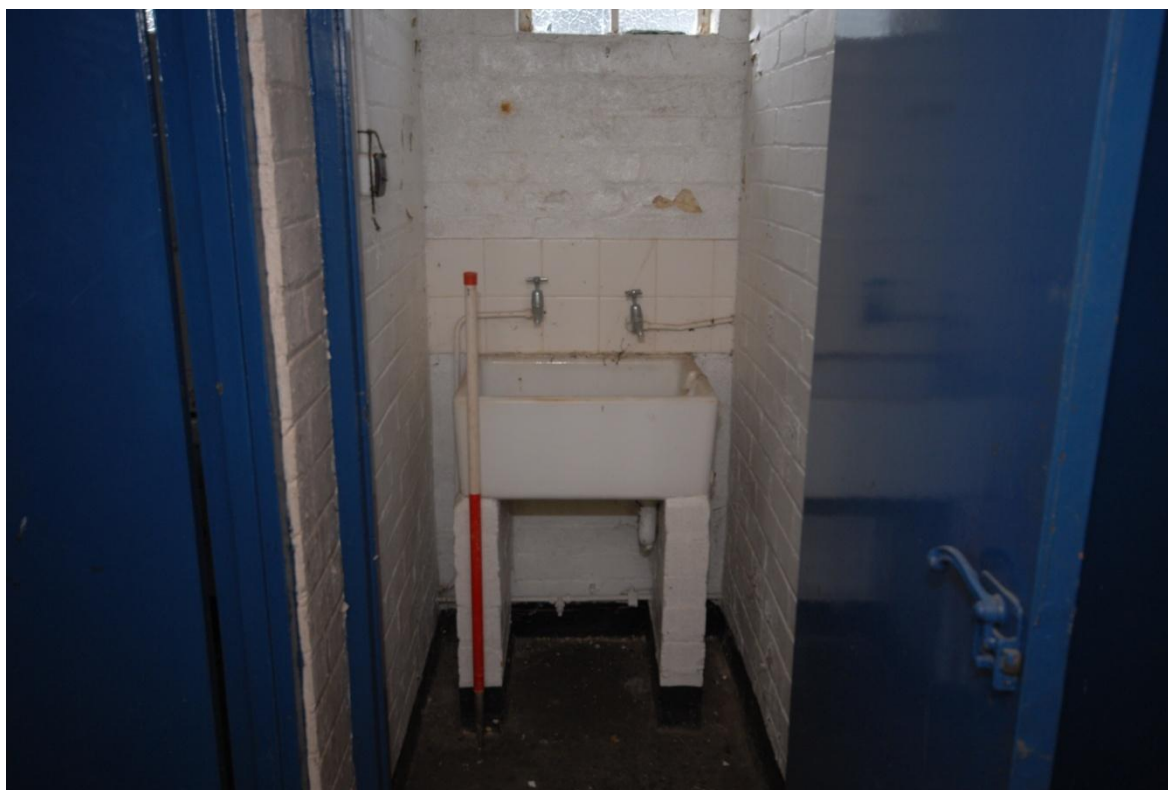
Building 2; east elevation facing

Fig 8



Building 2; original Crittall window with fittings

Fig 9



Building 2; original Belfast sink

Fig 10



Building 2. secure door room B2/6

Fig 11



Building 2; plate on secure door room B2/6

Fig 12



Building 4; 4 ton lorries shed east elevation

Fig 13



Building 7; an example of the inaccessible buildings

Fig 14



Building 9; air rifle practice building

Fig 15



Building 10; the kennels, north elevation

Fig 16



Building 10; the kennels cast iron structure

Fig 17



Building 10; dorm room with pitch roof structure B10/5

Fig 18



Building 11; the generator

Fig 19



Building 11; the generators

Fig 20



Building 12; the fire station

Fig 21



Building 12, the boiler room

Fig 22



Building 13; original Bakelite switch

Fig 23



Building 13; original door

Fig 24



Scale 1:1000 (A3)

Location of photographs Fig 25

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Jones, C, 2013 *Archaeological Trail Trench evaluation at Yardley Chase cadet Training Centre, Denton road, Denton, Northamptonshire, December 2012 Northamptonshire Archaeology report, 13/05*

[www.brc-stockbook.co.uk/SR Brake 1.htm](http://www.brc-stockbook.co.uk/SR_Brake_1.htm)



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