

THE FORMER WAAF SITE

BRIDGE

PORTREATH

CORNWALL

Results of a Heritage Assessment



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 230613



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THE FORMER WAAF SITE, BRIDGE, PORTREATH, CORNWALL

RESULTS OF A HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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Report Version: FINAL01
Draft issued: 16th June 2023
Second Draft issued: 10th August 2023
Finalised: 24th August 2023

Work undertaken by SWARCH for Classic Builders (the Client)

SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a heritage assessment carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) at The Former WAAF Site, Bridge, Portreath, Cornwall, as part of proposals for residential development of the site.

The site was formerly part of the landholding of Cambrose, first documented in 1286. It lies within a landscape of enclosed fields on the southern periphery of the former WWII airfield at Portreath. The sub-rectangular site contains the remains of a WWII Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) base associated with the airfield. A series of temporary buildings on concrete platforms were built across the site, consisting of barracks, messes and offices, with air raid shelters, concrete paths, and other associated structures. Following the War the site was converted for use as council housing, but during the latter part of the 20th century all the buildings were demolished. A rapid assessment of the site was undertaken in 1992 which identified and characterised most of the Wartime buildings, but the walkover survey undertaken for this assessment determined the site to be very overgrown.

*The development of this site would result in the destruction of the surviving elements of the WAAF base, and surviving WWII sites represent a diminishing national resource. However, development within brownfield sites is encouraged and takes place on sites of greater age and significance. Providing suitable mitigation is put in place (a staged programme of recording and monitoring, together with associated documentary research) would reduce the effect to **minor adverse**.*

*The site is located adjacent to an early 19th century mineral tramway. This forms part of the Portreath Harbour section of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. While there would not be a direct impact, the proposed development would impinge on the setting of the tramway. It is considered that the main effect would be on the amenity value of the footpath, rather than the intrinsic significance of the tramway and, with suitable mitigation, the harm would reduce the effect to **minor adverse**.*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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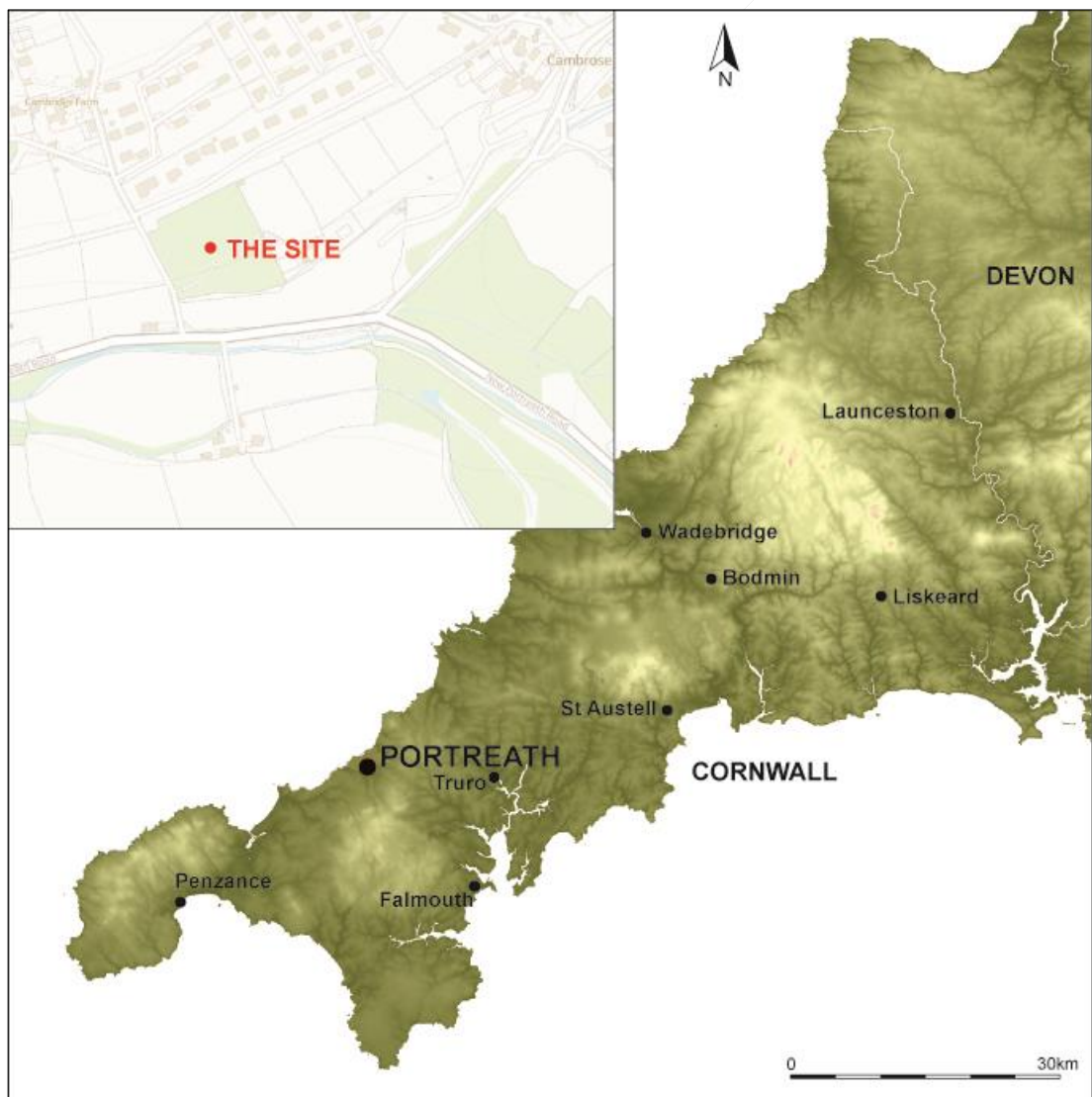


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	THE FORMER WAAF SITE, BRIDGE
PARISH:	PORTREATH
COUNTY:	CORNWALL
NGR:	SW 68330 45139
PLANNING NO.:	PA23/00810/PREAPP
SWARCH REF.	PWAAF23
OASIS REF:	SOUTHWES1-515322

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Classic Builders (South West) Ltd. (the Client) to undertake a historic impact assessment for the Former WAAF Site, Bridge, Portreath, Cornwall, as part of a planning application for the residential development of the site. This work was undertaken in line with best practice and ClfA guidance (2020) in order to assess the potential impact of the development.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site consists of a field overgrown with gorse and scrub that conceals a series of concrete platforms, all that remains of the WWII buildings on the site. A multi-use access track crosses east to west, dividing the site into two. The site lies within a largely agricultural landscape, although the remains of the Nancekuke/Portreath airfield and associated WWII remains cover much of the land to the north-west. The site slopes to the south, at an elevation of between c.28m and 36m AOD. The soils of this area are the well-drained fine loamy soils over slate or slate rubble of the Denbigh 2 Association (SSEW 1983), overlying the mudstone and sandstone of the Porthtowan Formation (BGS 2023).

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within the parish of Portreath, although it historically lay in the parish of Illogan, in the Deanery and east division of the historic hundred of Redruth. The site probably formed part of the manor of Nancekuke (*Nancekeage*), which belonged to the Rolle family until it was purchased by the de Dunstanvilles (Lord Basset) in the mid-18th century. The site formed part of the landholding of Cambrose, first documented in 1286 (CSHER). The site was the subject of a desk-based assessment and walkover survey by Cornwall Archaeological Unit in the early 1990s (Herring 1992) as part of a scheme for the reclamation of derelict land in the Camborne-Redruth Area.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The desk-based assessment follows the guidance as outlined in: Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (ClfA 2020) and Understanding Place: historic area assessments in a planning and development context (Historic England 2017).

The historic visual impact assessment follows the guidance outlined in: Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment (English Heritage 2008), The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England 2017), Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting (Historic Scotland 2016), and with reference to Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition (Landscape Institute 2013). The impact assessment also follows the guidance outlined in the Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK produced by ClfA, IHBC and IEMA in July 2021. The site and local heritage assets were visited by Dr. S. Walls MCIfA on the 4th of May 2023.

2.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

2.1 DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

The site lies within the parish of Portreath, although it historically lay in the parish of Illogan, in the deanery and east division of the historic hundred of Redruth. The site probably formed part of the manor of Nancekuke (*Nancekeage*), which belonged to the Rolle family until it was purchased by the de Dunstanvilles (Lord Basset) in the mid-18th century. The site formed part of the landholding of Cambrose, first documented in 1286 (CSHER). An earlier field was bisected in the early 19th century by a tramway (technically a plateway) established by Lord Basset to link the harbour with the copper mines around Scorrier and St Day; the line had fallen out of use by the 1870s and the plates were taken up in c.1882. During the Second World War the field was used as a base staffed by the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) attached to RAF Portreath. The site was the subject of a desk-based assessment and walkover survey by Cornwall Archaeological Unit in the early 1990s (Herring 1992) as part of a scheme for the reclamation of derelict land in the Camborne-Redruth Area. The historical background from that report states:

The Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) provided ground support for fighter and bomber squadrons in the Second World War; the women who took radar messages and plotted the positions and movements of enemy and friendly aircraft on map-tables in operations rooms belonged to the WAAF. They also performed more mundane jobs at airfields and in their associated buildings, even turning their hand to repairing aircraft.

The site under consideration here appears to have been the barracks, messes and offices of the WAAF personnel working at the highly important Portreath fighter and bomber airfield, used from March 1941 for convoy protection in the Western Approaches (Spitfires, Whirlwinds, Hurricanes), for ferrying gliders to Europe and north Africa (Halifaxes), for despatching bombers and fighters to European airfields, and as a base for Mosquito and Beaufighter raids on German-held ports and ships in France. It also served, towards the end of the war, when the Allied invasion had pushed eastwards beyond Portreath's useful strike range, as an air-sea rescue station with two Lysanders operational. Portreath was the principal fighter airfield in West Cornwall, controlling Perranporth and Predannack.

The WAAF would have been busy at the airfield, on the cliffs a few hundred metres to the north, and in the Sector Operations Centre (originally at Tehidy Barton, to the west of Portreath village, and then from July 1943 at Tregea Hill). Photographs exist of WAAF personnel at work in these 'ops rooms'.

CAU (1992) records that there are photographs of the WAAF at work at Portreath in Walford's *War over the West* (1989), however a copy of this book was not available to this study. Another WAAF site to the west of the site has been the subject of a Character Area Assessment for Portreath Parish, carried out by Gain Consulting.

A number of proposals for the reuse of the site have been made since the end of WWII, but none have come to fruition:

- 1947 – Erection of dwellings and domestic garages (W2/71/32878/O)
- 1947 – Erection of Industrial Units (W2/82/00521/O)
- 1949 – application for the change of use of three ex-WAAF living quarters to industrial buildings (W2/49/01165/F)
- 1969 – Application for the erection of dwellings and domestic garages (W2/69/29741/O)
- 2016 – Proposed change of use of land to an ecological education area (PA16/09532)

Comments and documents associated with a 2016 planning application state that following WWII,

the buildings of the site were used as Council Housing for a time. Subsequently, the structures were removed, leaving just their concrete platforms. The 1992 CAU report reconstructed the layout of the site using RAF aerial photographs from 1946 and used the shape of the structures and their roofs to determine building function (it has not been possible to corroborate this work due to time constraints). Due to the uniform shape and size, as well as their position along footpaths, it is likely that most of the buildings were barracks, although these were standard-sized buildings that may have been adapted for alternative uses. The three conjoined buildings along the access road to the south-west have been suggested as visitors' reception, although with the chimney/oven at one end, it is more likely that this would have been the mess.



FIGURE 2: PLAN OF THE CONCRETE PADS/BUILDINGS ON THE SITE, BASED ON 1992 CAU REPORT (SEE FIGURE 18).

2.2 CARTOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT

Martyn's Map of 1748 (Figure 3) shows *Cambridge*, whose land would have included the site at this date. A large house is indicated here, but no real detail is included. The 1809 Ordnance Survey (OS) surveyor's draft map for Redruth (Figure 4) shows *Cambridge* and another settlement to the east labelled *Tresadron*, both of which are labelled *Cambridge* or *Cambrose* on later maps. The map shows the mineral tramway running along the slope parallel to the stream at the base of the valley.

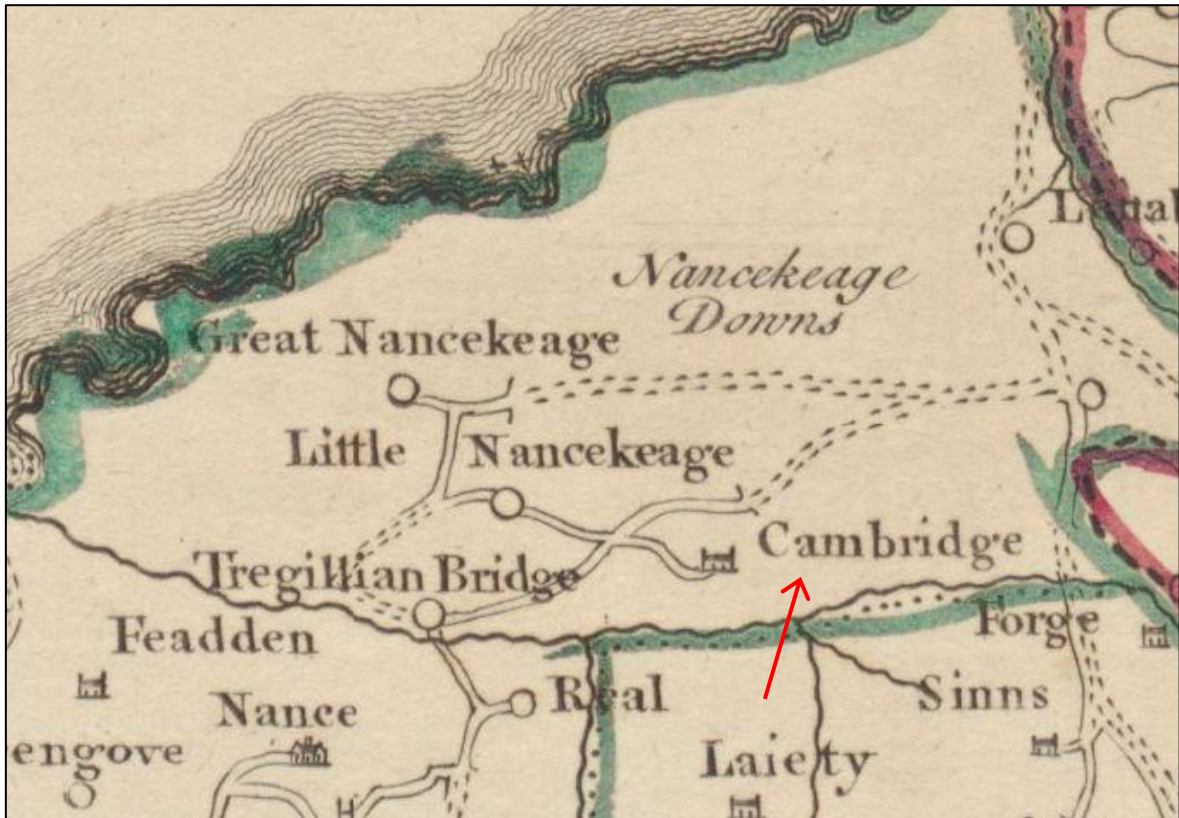


FIGURE 3: EXTRACT OF THE 1748 MARTYN MAP OF CORNWALL. THE APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION IS INDICATED (HARVARD UNIVERSITY MAP COLLECTION).



FIGURE 4: EXTRACT FROM THE 1809 OS SURVEYOR'S DRAFT MAP FOR REDRUTH (BL). THE APPROXIMATE SITE IS INDICATED.

The Illogan tithe map of 1840 shows the area in greater detail. The site forms part of a larger field, in the angle between the lane dropping down from Cambrose Farm to the valley below, and the mineral tramway. The land associated with Cambrose Farm is all recorded under one plot number (154), so the field name evidence does not provide any further information. The labelled *Tram Road* was leased from Lord Basset by the Tram Road Company and included (just to the west of the site)

a workman's cottage. The construction of the tram road began in 1809

The 1840 tithe apportionment shows that the land was held by John Bassett Esq. and the farm and land leased and occupied by Benjamin Trewartha. The 1841 Census shows Benjamin (41, a farmer) was living with his wife Elizabeth (31), Mary (62) and Julia (23) Garland, and Sally Pennow (14), the latter a female servant. Three households are listed at Cambridge.

The 1851 Census notes Cambridge was occupied by Joseph Trewartha (25) a farmer of 30 acres with three labourers, his housekeeper sister Harriet (28), his sister Jane (20) and John Ishman (20), a farm labourer. A second household was occupied by Richard Perry (72), farm labourer.

In 1861 William Davey (34) was a farmer of 34 acres, together with his family and a single house servant. A second household consisted of John Buttler (28), a labourer, and his family. In 1871 William Davey was still resident at Cambridge, again with a second household containing a labourer and his family. Cambridge Farm does not appear in the 1881 Census (although multiple households for Nancekuke do and probably include Cambridge). In 1891 Joseph Rowse (46) and family lived at Cambridge, with a second household headed by James Butler (26). In 1901 there were three households at *Cambrose* and one at Cambridge Farm. *Cambrose Farm* was occupied by Joseph Roskrow (64) and family, with a shopkeeper and farm labourer in the other properties. Cambridge Farm – presumably the larger hamlet to the east – was occupied by Joseph Rowse (56). As a result of the changing nomenclature adopted by successive Census officers, it is not altogether clear how these properties and their occupants relate to one another over time.



FIGURE 5: EXTRACT OF THE ILLOGAN TITHE MAP, c.1840. THE SITE LOCATION IS INDICATED (TNA).

The 1888 1st edition OS map (surveyed 1878, Figure 6) shows the farm as *Cambrose Farm*, with another settlement labelled *Cambrose* to the east. The tramway is shown to the north of the site and a watercourse (labelled downstream as a *mill leat*) running along the south side of the southern boundary of the site. The layout of the fields is otherwise identical to that of 1840. The 2nd edition

OS map of 1908 (Figure 7, surveyed 1906) is identical to that of 1888 save that the line of the tramway is not longer shown (i.e. it had been removed).

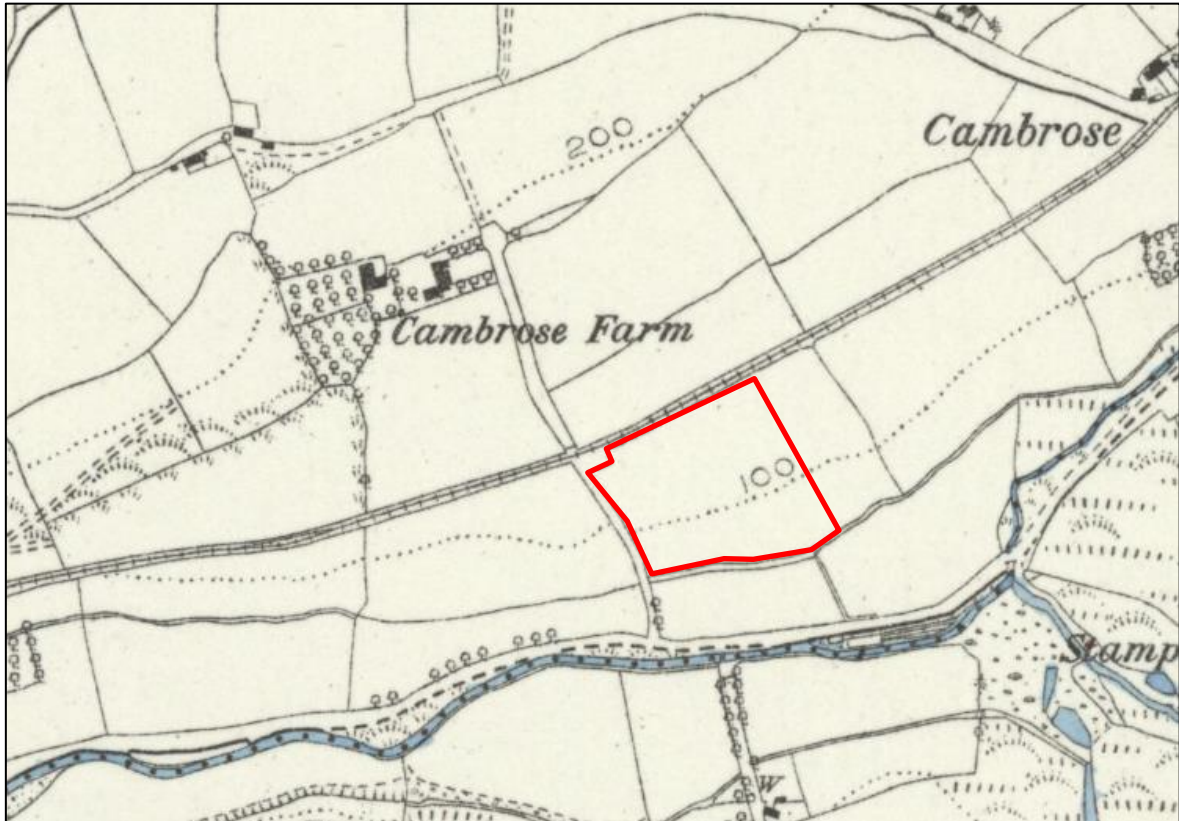


FIGURE 6: EXTRACT FROM THE 1888 1ST EDITION 6" OS MAP (SURVEYED 1878; CORNWALL SHEET LVI.SW); THE SITE IS INDICATED (NLS).

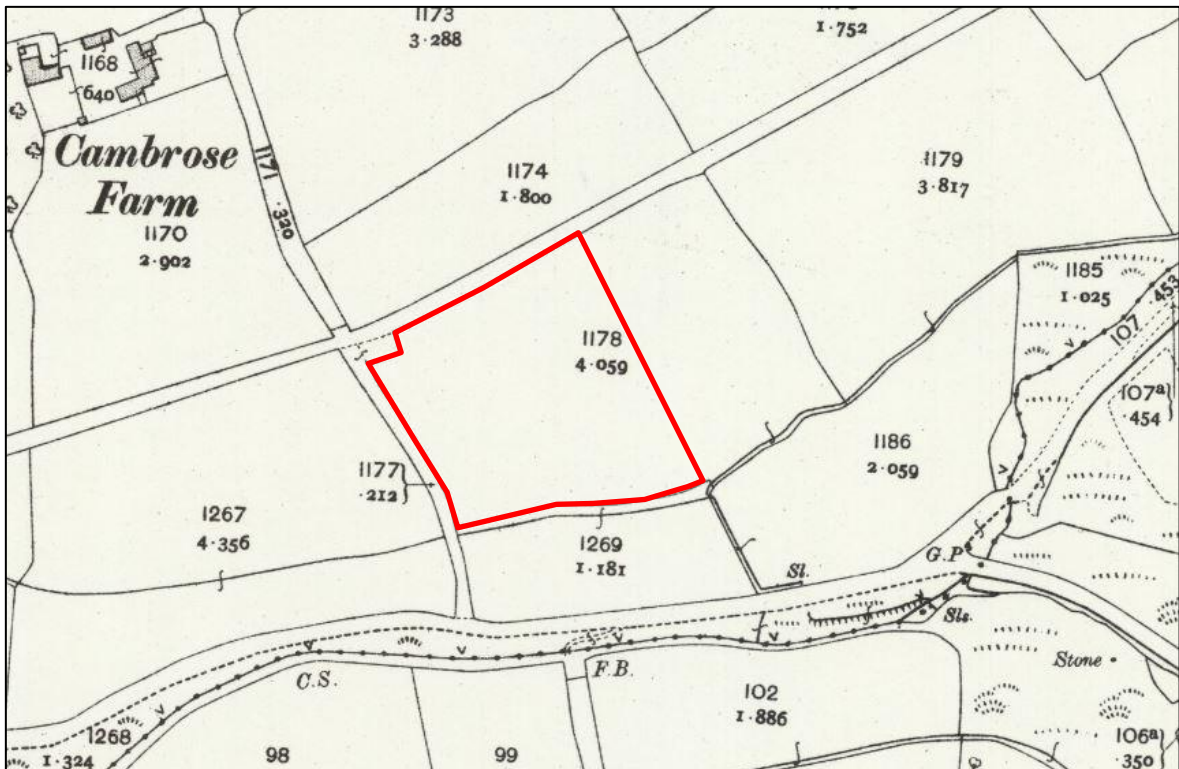


FIGURE 7: EXTRACT FROM THE 1908 2ND EDITION OS MAP (SURVEYED 1906; CORNWALL SHEET LVI.14); THE SITE IS INDICATED (NLS).

The next set of available OS maps date to the 1950s and early 1960s (Figures 8-9). These are

generally at a larger scale and correspondingly less detailed, and the dating is looser, as the map legends simple state they were revised since 1906. The same fields and roads are shown as in 1908, but the WAAF site is shown. The later map (Figure 9) shows what appears to be a different set of buildings, but on closer inspection they broadly correspond with the rows of WWII structures.

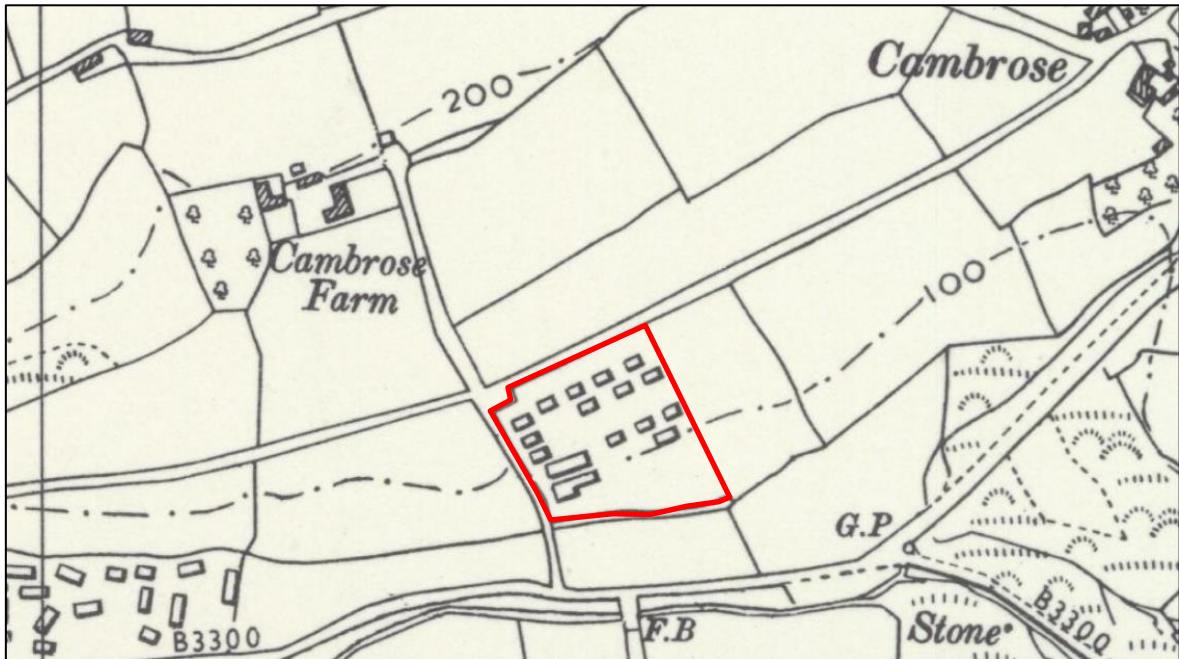


FIGURE 8: EXTRACT FROM THE 1963 NATIONAL GRID OS MAP (SHEET SW64NE-A); THE SITE IS INDICATED (NLS).

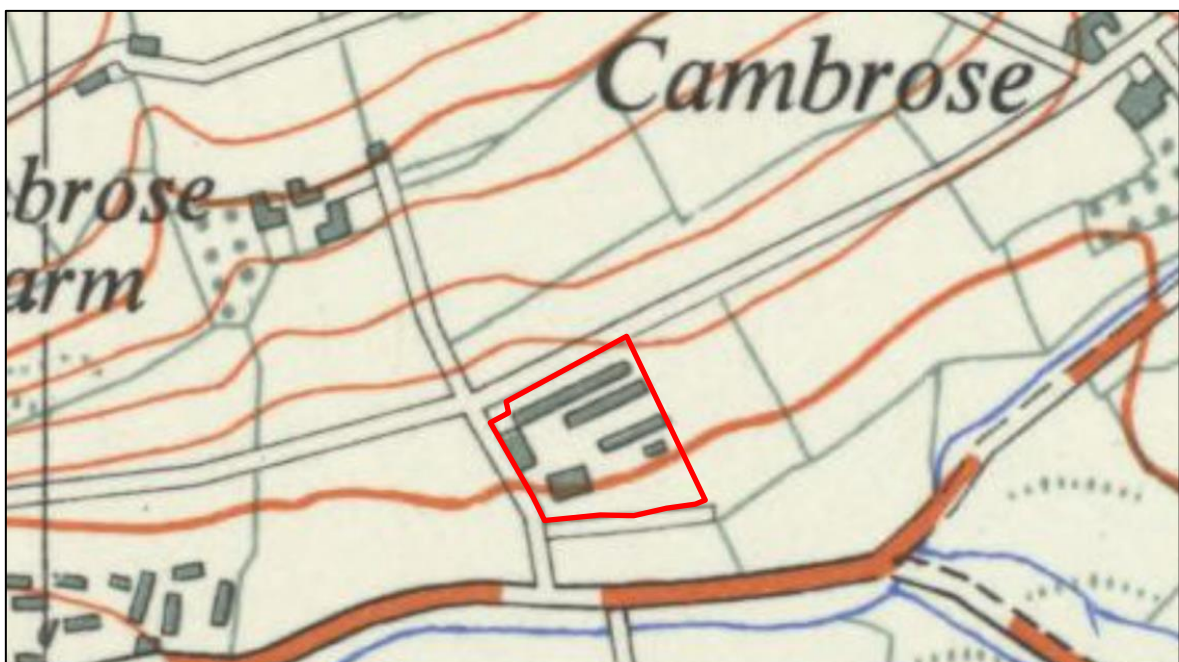


FIGURE 9: EXTRACT FROM THE 1960 1:25,000 SCALE OS MAP (SHEET SW64-B). THE SITE IS INDICATED (NLS).

2.3 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The 1992 CAU report used the post-War RAF aerial photographs to determine the function of some of the buildings and site layout; a 1944 USAF aerial photograph (Figure 18) corroborates their interpretation. The 1946 RAF aerial photographs for the area to the west (Figure 17) indicates this WAAF base was one of several similar bases consisting of temporary buildings, although none of these are listed on the county HER. Readily-available later 20th and 21st century aerial photography for the site shows how overgrown it has become. The concrete building platforms were visible in

2001 and 2009 (Figures 10 and 11) but by 2017 (Figure 12) they had been lost. In 2009 the centre of the site appears to have been used as a car park, addressed by a well-used track, and there appear to be structures.

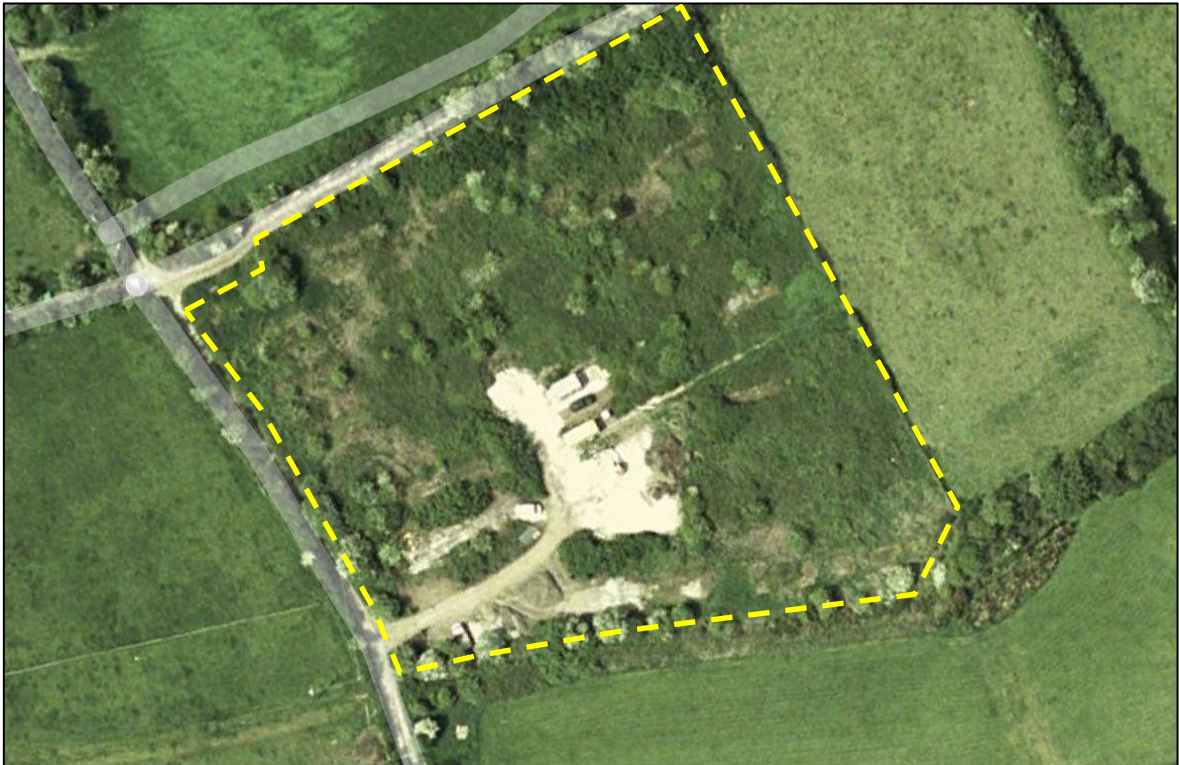


FIGURE 10: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE SITE IN 2001 (© GOOGLE EARTH).



FIGURE 11: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE SITE IN 2009 (© GOOGLE EARTH).

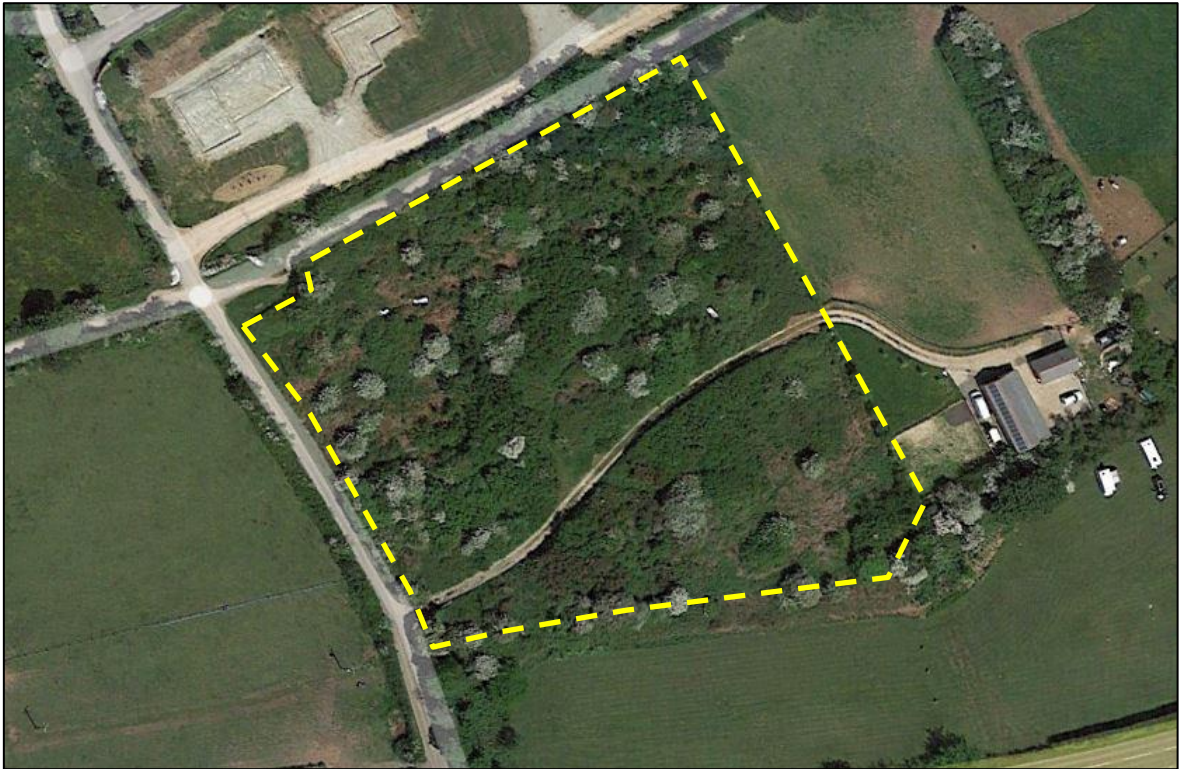


FIGURE 12: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE SITE IN 2017 (© GOOGLE EARTH).

2.4 LIDAR

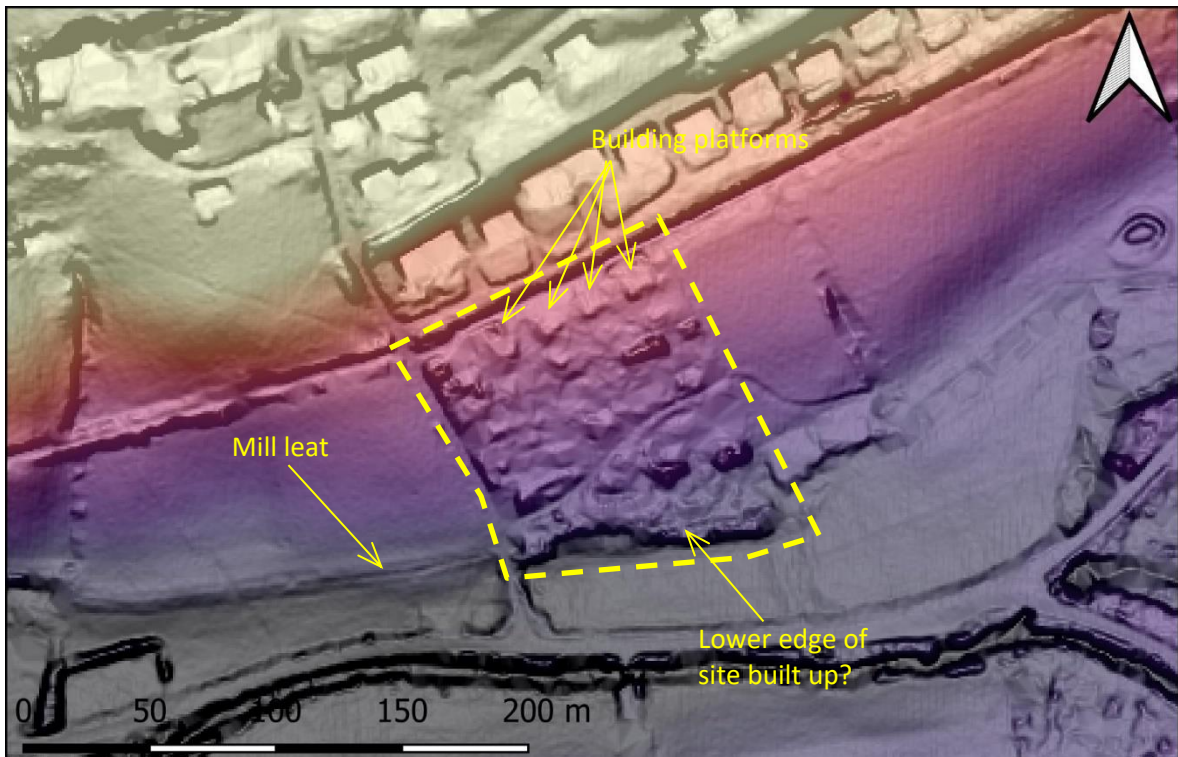


FIGURE 13: IMAGE BASED ON 2022 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY 1M DTM LIDAR DATA; THE SITE IS INDICATED (PROCESSED USING QGIS 3.16.11, SLOPE ANALYSIS WITH 3.0 VERTICAL EXAGGERATION, OVERLAID ON A BASIC COLOUR RAMP (DARK TO LIGHT), 25-45M AOD). USED UNDER THE OPEN GOVERNMENT LICENCE 3.0.

The processed DTM LiDAR data for the site (Figure 13) is lumpy and uneven, reflecting the presence and differential density of vegetation on the site. However, there are linear groups of irregular mounds that correspond to the known or likely location of concrete building platforms. Towards the base of the slope there appears to be a clear drop to the valley bottom, implying the lower part

of the site has been built up (either with material imported to the site, or perhaps the demolished remains of the WWII structures?). Lastly, the remains of the mill leat are visible to the east and west of the site.

2.5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Apart from the 1992 CAU report, the site and its immediate surroundings do not appear to have been the subject of archaeological investigation, although the area does fall within the bounds of more extensive area assessments (e.g. CAU 1990). The area falls within *post-medieval enclosed land*, as defined by the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) as land enclosed during the 17th, 18th and 19th century from unenclosed waste. However, if Cambridge/Cambrose farm was first documented in the 13th century, that would strongly imply elements of the landscape could be considerably older.

As the upstanding archaeological remains on the site largely consist of low concrete platforms within a (now) largely agricultural landscape, a 500m search radius around the site has been considered in detail, though reference is made to archaeological features and assets in the wider landscape context of the site. The mineral tramway, which runs along the northern border of the site, forms a long, thin extension of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site – Portreath Harbour. There are no Listed Buildings within 500m of the site and it does not lie within a Conservation Area. There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within 500m of the site.

2.5.1 PREHISTORIC 4000BC - AD43

There is no evidence for Prehistoric activity within 500m of the site, although there are occasional barrows documented in the wider landscape. However, despite the HLC, it is highly likely this landscape was cleared and utilised by the Middle Bronze Age (c.1600BC) and occupied thereafter.

2.5.2 ROMANO-BRITISH AD43 – AD409

There is no documented evidence for Romano-British activity in the vicinity of the site. However, the Roman administrators encountered a fully utilised agricultural landscape, and they intensified mineral exploitation. The lack of Roman evidence arises from the general lack of fieldwork and the extent of later disturbance.

2.5.3 MEDIEVAL AD410 – AD1540

There is evidence for early medieval and medieval activity in the area around the proposed site. This is largely in the form of settlements (and this largely dependent on documentary/place-name evidence). The HER records medieval fieldsystems. The early medieval period is generally poorly represented but the basic framework of the medieval tenurial and ecclesiastical landscape was established during this period.

2.5.4 POST-MEDIEVAL AD1540 -1899

Most of the heritage assets recorded by the Cornwall and Scilly HER in the locality are of post-medieval date, a high proportion relating to mining and extractive activities.

2.5.5 MODERN 1900-PRESENT AND UNKNOWN

There are a number of modern sites recorded within the vicinity of the site, almost exclusively relating to the WWII activity, the Portreath (or Nancekuke) airfield, and supporting sites/structures. However, even then, not all the temporary sites shown on 1946 RAF aerial photographs are recorded.

THE FORMER WAAF SITE, BRIDGE, PORTREATH, CORNWALL

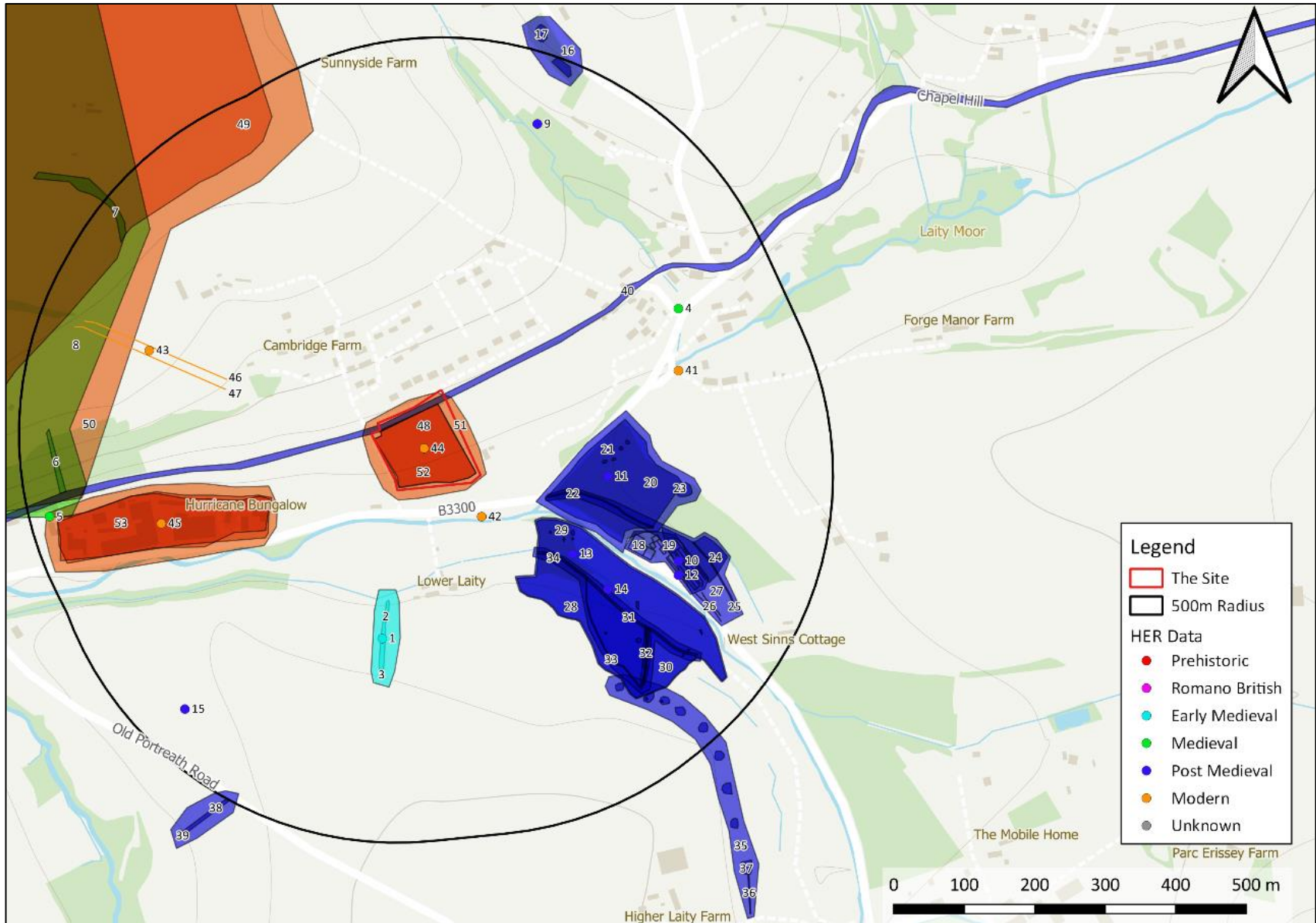


FIGURE 14: HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN 500M OF THE PROPOSAL AREA RECORDED IN THE CORNWALL HER. CONTAINS ORDNANCE SURVEY DATA © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT 2023.

THE FORMER WAAF SITE, BRIDGE, PORTREATH, CORNWALL

TABLE 1: TABLE OF NEARBY HERITAGE ASSETS (SOURCE: CORNWALL HER).

No	MonUID	Name	Summary
1	MCO37287	LOWER LAITY - Early Medieval field boundary, Medieval field boundary	A field boundary is visible as a low earth bank on air photographs
2	MCO37287	LOWER LAITY - Early Medieval field boundary, Medieval field boundary	A field boundary is visible as a low earth bank on air photographs
3	MCO37287	LOWER LAITY - Early Medieval field boundary, Medieval field boundary	A field boundary is visible as a low earth bank on air photographs
4	MCO13709	CAMBROSE - Medieval settlement	The settlement of Cambrose is first recorded in 1286.
5	MCO13979	CHYGARDER - Medieval settlement	The settlement of Chygarder is first recorded in 1316.
6	MCO33309	LITTLE NANCEKUKU - Medieval field system, Undated field system	Low earth banks visible on air photographs are likely to form part of an enclosed open field system at Little Nancekuke.
7	MCO33309	LITTLE NANCEKUKU - Medieval field system, Undated field system	Low earth banks visible on air photographs are likely to form part of an enclosed open field system at Little Nancekuke.
8	MCO33309	LITTLE NANCEKUKU - Medieval field system, Undated field system	Low earth banks visible on air photographs are likely to form part of an enclosed open field system at Little Nancekuke.
9	MCO12346	NORTH WHEAL VIRGIN - Post Medieval mine	North Wheal Virgin, known locally as Wheal Fire, became part of Western United Hills mines between 1844 and 1854
10	MCO24792	SINNS STAMPS - Post Medieval tin mill	A tin stamping site is marked on the 1880 OS map
11	MCO37281	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval spoil heap, Post Medieval extractive pit	A line of four prospecting or extractive pits is visible on air photographs
12	MCO37282	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval streamworks	The surviving remains of the streamworks associated with stamps 18032 are visible on air photographs
13	MCO37283	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval extractive pit	A series of extractive pits is visible on air photographs (p1)
14	MCO37284	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval drainage system	Two substantial drains are visible on air photographs
15	MCO37332	PART LAITY - Post Medieval leat	A drain is marked on recent OS maps at this location It is likely that this feature is a leat serving the nearby streamworks (40518)
16	MCO12346	NORTH WHEAL VIRGIN - Post Medieval mine	North Wheal Virgin, known locally as Wheal Fire, became part of Western United Hills mines between 1844 and 1854
17	MCO12346	NORTH WHEAL VIRGIN - Post Medieval mine	North Wheal Virgin, known locally as Wheal Fire, became part of Western United Hills mines between 1844 and 1854
18	MCO24792	SINNS STAMPS - Post Medieval tin mill	A tin stamping site is marked on the 1880 OS map
19	MCO24792	SINNS STAMPS - Post Medieval tin mill	A tin stamping site is marked on the 1880 OS map
20	MCO37281	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval spoil heap, Post Medieval extractive pit	A line of four prospecting or extractive pits is visible on air photographs
21	MCO37281	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval spoil heap, Post Medieval extractive pit	A line of four prospecting or extractive pits is visible on air photographs
22	MCO37281	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval spoil heap, Post Medieval extractive pit	A line of four prospecting or extractive pits is visible on air photographs
23	MCO37281	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval spoil heap, Post Medieval extractive pit	A line of four prospecting or extractive pits is visible on air photographs
24	MCO37282	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval streamworks	The surviving remains of the streamworks associated with stamps 18032 are visible on air photographs
25	MCO37282	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval streamworks	The surviving remains of the streamworks associated with stamps 18032 are visible on air photographs
26	MCO37282	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval streamworks	The surviving remains of the streamworks associated with stamps 18032 are visible on air photographs
27	MCO37282	WEST SINNS - Post Medieval streamworks	The surviving remains of the streamworks associated with stamps 18032 are visible on air photographs
28	MCO37283	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval extractive pit	A series of extractive pits is visible on air photographs (p1)
29	MCO37283	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval extractive pit	A series of extractive pits is visible on air photographs (p1)
30	MCO37283	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval extractive pit	A series of extractive pits is visible on air photographs (p1)
31	MCO37284	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval drainage system	Two substantial drains are visible on air photographs
32	MCO37284	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval drainage system	Two substantial drains are visible on air photographs
33	MCO37284	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval drainage system	Two substantial drains are visible on air photographs
34	MCO37284	LOWER LAITY - Post Medieval drainage system	Two substantial drains are visible on air photographs
35	MCO37285	HIGHER LAITY - Post Medieval shaft	A line of 12 mine shafts, several of them marked on the 1st Edition OS map, is visible on air photographs
36	MCO37285	HIGHER LAITY - Post Medieval shaft	A line of 12 mine shafts, several of them marked on the 1st Edition OS map, is visible on air photographs
37	MCO37285	HIGHER LAITY - Post Medieval shaft	A line of 12 mine shafts, several of them marked on the 1st Edition OS map, is visible on air photographs
38	MCO37325	LAITY FARM - Post Medieval field boundary	A single field boundary is visible as a low earth bank on air photographs

THE FORMER WAAF SITE, BRIDGE, PORTREATH, CORNWALL

No	MonUID	Name	Summary
39	MCO37325	LAITY FARM - Post Medieval field boundary	A single field boundary is visible as a low earth bank on air photographs
40	MCO58911	PORTREATH - C19 tramroad	A partly extant C19 tramroad, now used as a walking and cycle trail as part of the Coast to Coast Mineral Tramway trail
41	MCO42386	CAMBROSE BRIDGE - Modern road block	
42	MCO42632	PORTREATH - Modern road block	
43	MCO55789	NANCEKUKU - Modern pipeline	Two parallel vegetation boundaries are visible on the Cornwall Council 2005 SE of Nancekuke Farm and are believed to be associated with a trunk main water supply.
44	MCO56305	NANCEKUKU - Modern women's auxiliary air force camp	The WWII women's auxiliary air force accommodation at Portreath is clearly visible on RAF aerial photographs as a group of at least 22 individual buildings.
45	MCO56379	NANCEKUKU - Modern women's auxiliary air force camp	The WWII women's auxiliary air force accommodation Site No. 10 at Portreath is clearly visible on RAF aerial photographs.
46	MCO55789	NANCEKUKU - Modern pipeline	Two parallel vegetation boundaries are visible on the Cornwall Council 2005 SE of Nancekuke Farm and are believed to be associated with a trunk main water supply.
47	MCO55789	NANCEKUKU - Modern pipeline	Two parallel vegetation boundaries are visible on the Cornwall Council 2005 SE of Nancekuke Farm and are believed to be associated with a trunk main water supply.
48	MCO33305	NANCEKUKU - Modern airfield, chemical weapons factory, radar station	The RAF airfield at Nancekuke was opened in March 1941 as a forward airfield for bombing raids against French channel ports; later used as a chemical production site and then part of the Cold War defence.
49	MCO33305	NANCEKUKU - Modern airfield, chemical weapons factory, radar station	The RAF airfield at Nancekuke was opened in March 1941 as a forward airfield for bombing raids against French channel ports; later used as a chemical production site and then part of the Cold War defence.
50	MCO56243	NANCEKUKU - Modern bomb stores	Two rows of Second World War bomb stores are extant at the western edge of Portreath airfield.
51	MCO56243	NANCEKUKU - Modern bomb stores	Two rows of Second World War bomb stores are extant at the western edge of Portreath airfield.
52	MCO56305	NANCEKUKU - Modern women's auxiliary air force camp	The WWII women's auxiliary air force accommodation at Portreath is clearly visible on RAF aerial photographs as a group of at least 22 individual buildings.
53	MCO56379	NANCEKUKU - Modern women's auxiliary air force camp	The WWII women's auxiliary air force accommodation Site No. 10 at Portreath is clearly visible on RAF aerial photographs.

TABLE 2: DETAILS OF DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS SHOWN IN FIGURE 9 (HE)

No	List Entry	Name
1	1000105	Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape

TABLE 3: DETAILS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS (CSHER).

No	Event ID	Name	Event Types
1	ECO27	Portreath to Poldice Mineral Tramway	Assessment
2	ECO787	DLG Areas 1-18: WAAF Site Portreath	Assessment
3	ECO1457	Mineral Tramways Trails assessments	Assessment; Management Recommendations
4	ECO1459	Portreath Airfield	Assessment
5	ECO1788	Portreath Plateway, watching brief	Watching Brief
6	ECO5988	Devon and Cornwall Appraisal Package Portreath Flood Alleviation Scheme	
7	ECO5988	Devon and Cornwall Appraisal Package Portreath Flood Alleviation Scheme	

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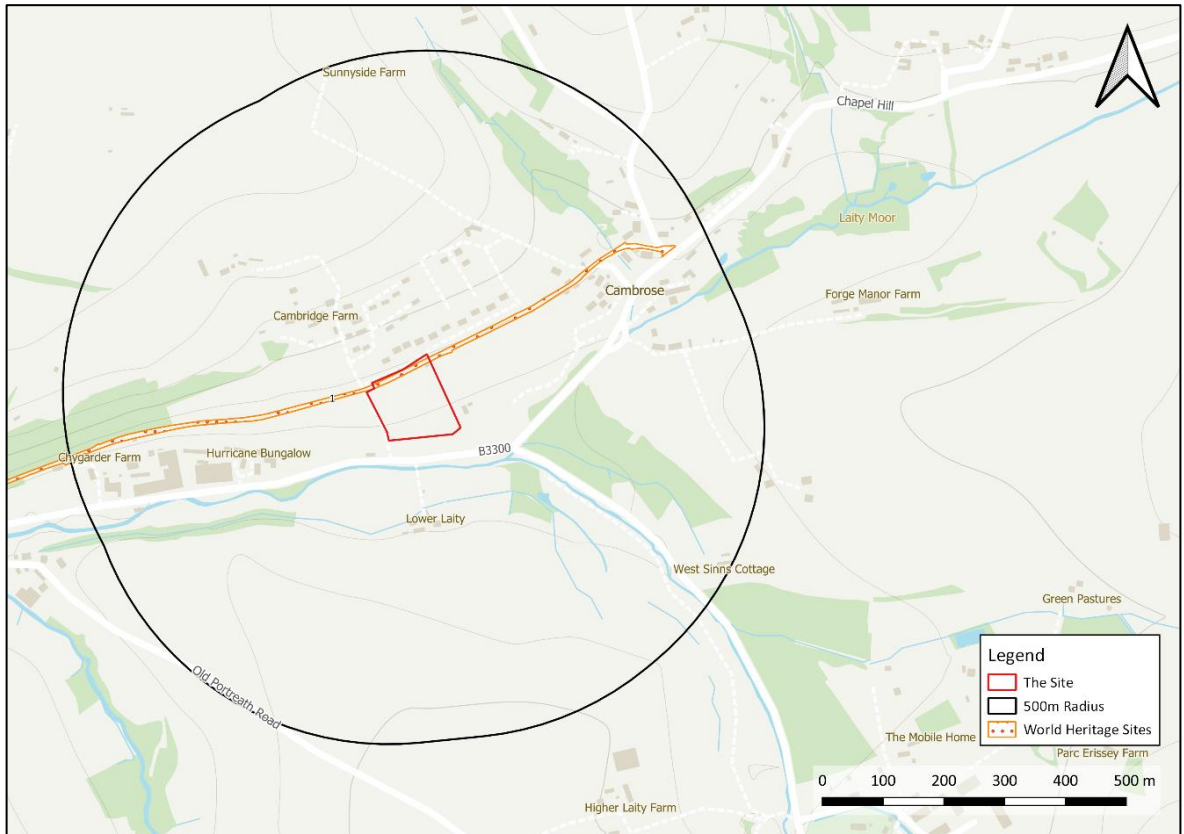


FIGURE 15: DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN 500M OF THE PROPOSAL AREA RECORDED IN THE NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST FOR ENGLAND (NHLE) © HISTORIC ENGLAND 2023. CONTAINS ORDNANCE SURVEY DATA © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT 2023. THE MOST UP-TO-DATE READILY AVAILABLE HE GIS DATA CAN BE OBTAINED FROM [HTTP://HISTORICENGLAND.ORG.UK](http://historicengland.org.uk).



FIGURE 16: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS WITHIN 500M OF THE PROPOSAL AREA RECORDED IN THE CORNWALL AND SCILLY HER (CSHER). CONTAINS ORDNANCE SURVEY DATA © CROWN COPYRIGHT AND DATABASE RIGHT 2023.

2.6 SITE WALKOVER

The site was visited by Dr. S. Walls on 4th May 2023. The weather was overcast with occasional showers. Large areas of the site were very overgrown, so the walkover was limited to those areas that were accessible. A track runs across the site from east to west, clearly in regular vehicle use and providing access to the stables to the east of the site. Part of the track is metalled; the rest is a dirt track. Grass grows along the centre of the track for its entire length.

It was possible to walk around the boundary of the site and from there to see and approach a couple of the concrete platforms on which the buildings of the WAAF site were once stood. One of the platforms has a pipe projecting from the base. The visible concrete on the site is in poor condition, overgrown, cracking and splitting.

Most the site and the concrete platforms therein were inaccessible, so it is not possible to comment on their current condition or speculate on function, though that might be possible if the site was cleared of undergrowth/scrub.

The site is located immediately to the south of the mineral tramway, although they are separated by a mature hedgebank and, should this be retained, it would provide a good degree of screening.

2.7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The most obvious relevant archaeological remains identified on the site are the building platforms and other features associated with the WWII WAAF base constructed here in the 1940s. The base was used for a variety of purposes thereafter, and the upstanding structural remains removed at some point in the latter part of the 20th century. Earlier archaeological remains *might* be present, but nothing was observed on site, and the (admittedly partial) county HER contains no relevant entries to suggest otherwise. The WAAF base was one of a number located on the southern periphery of the airfield at Portreath but appears to be the only one to survive in this derelict condition – the others were more completely removed after the War (west and south of Nancekuke Farm; see Figure 17), or do in part survive (the houses and factory buildings in Bridge). What this highlights is a more general lack of understanding of Portreath Airfield as a whole during and just after WWII, within which the significance of the WAAF site should rightly be assessed.



FIGURE 17: EXTRACT FROM THE 1946 RAF AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE AREA TO THE WEST OF THE SITE, SHOWING THE EXTENSIVE TEMPORARY BASES (IN YELLOW) THAT ARE NOT DOCUMENTED ON THE HER, AND WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN LOST BY THE PRODUCTION OF THE 1963 OS MAP SHOWN IN FIGURE 8 (© HISTORIC ENGLAND, RAF_106G-UK-1663-RP-3063). THE SURVIVING STRUCTURES AT BRIDGE ARE SHOWN IN RED.



FIGURE 18: EXTRACT FROM USAF AERIAL IMAGE US_7PH_GP_LOC2113_RS_4062 (©THE AMERICAN AIR MUSEUM IN BRITAIN). THE SITE IS INDICATED.

In the absence of that more nuanced understanding we are reliant on the criteria identified by the 1992 CAU report (p4) as contributing to its significance:

- The historical importance of Portreath as a command fighter station
- The imposition of national events in the form of an airfield and its associated WAAF site on the Portreath countryside
- The increasing rarity of reasonably well-preserved WWII complexes
- The rarity of the remains of women contributing to the war effort, making it an important site for the studying of women's history

Of these, the most important to consider are the last two. These temporary military establishments do represent a declining archaeological resource, with many – as evidenced above – swept away quite rapidly after the close of the War. Whether this examples qualifies as well-preserved is unclear – the upstanding elements (i.e. the buildings themselves) have all been lost, and the surviving concrete elements do so in declining physical condition. These c.80-year-old structures were built quickly to meet the exigencies of total war, using some materials (e.g. asbestos sheet) that are now considered a hazardous contaminant. The post-War use of the site should lead us to expect modifications and adaptations (e.g. the possible fireplaces identified by the 1992 CAU report might be post-War additions rather than diagnostic of WAAF use). The 1992 survey indicates these structures were (then) more readily intelligible; they are now almost entirely lost beneath the regenerating scrub. The connection to women's history is an important one, but an associative rather than evidential one.

The site has, therefore, low-to-moderate evidential value (i.e. a limited understanding of the known structures), moderate historical/narrative (Portreath Airfield, WWII) and historical/associative value (the role of the WAAF), negligible-to-low aesthetic value (ugly/shoddy concrete constructions ameliorated by ruin/patina of time), and negligible communal value (most WAAF veterans being deceased, and no evidence the site served as a focus for communal remembrance).

To the north of the site runs the line of the mineral tramway, now part of a series of public byways. This structure, built in the early 19th century by one of the leading industrial families to link their mines to the harbour at Portreath, is represented by a trackbed with tall hedgebanks to each side. Its relationship to Portreath and the Bassets means it has been designated with Portreath as part of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site (WHS). It makes a significant contribution to the WHS as *mine transport infrastructure* is one of the seven key attributes that express the outstanding universal value (OUV) of the world heritage site.

The tramway has low evidential value (i.e. likely a consistent build throughout its length), high

historical/narrative (Portreath Harbour) and historical/associative value (Portreath Harbour, Lord Basset, Redruth mining district), moderate aesthetic value (a simple footpath between two hedges), and negligible communal value (the builders/users of the tramway are long dead, and very limited communal value to current users). In addition, it has *very high* heritage value for its expression of the OUV of the WHS.

To the south of the site runs the line of a disused mill leat that fed a corn mill at Bridge. This features survives as an earthwork to the east and west of the site. This has moderate evidential value, low historical narrative and associative value, negligible aesthetic value, and no communal value.

2.8 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposed development would see the construction of 22 affordable bungalows and dormer bungalows in three lines across the slope, served by an access road and with POS and a nature area to the base of the slope. This would entail the destruction (i.e. substantial harm) of the remains of the WAAF base. However, development within brownfield sites is encouraged and takes place (with suitable mitigation) on sites of greater age and significance. Assuming a programme of site clearance that would allow the surviving structural elements to be properly recorded, together with the proposed mining and heritage information boards, the direct impact of the proposed development could be reduced to minor adverse (i.e. less than substantial harm).

The proximity of the site to the mineral tramway is also an issue, as an indirect effect on the setting of the linear monument. The heritage value of the former tramway, given the fact it expresses one of the seven attributes of the OUV of the WHS, is *very high*, so any change to its setting must be carefully considered. The designated section of the tramway runs along the base of the valley from Portreath to the west to Cambrose to the east, climbing gently as it does so. It passes (from west-to-east) through woods, past houses, behind a series of factory units (former WWII base), through fields, between the site and a holiday park, and down into Cambrose. In purely visual terms there is nothing to distinguish the line of the tramway from any other field boundaries in this area, and the linearity of the former tramway is not obvious. In experiential terms, the use of the tramway as a footpath would be affected, both visually and aurally. The upslope side adjacent to the site is already built out with small holiday units, and the addition of further buildings to the south of the line would enhance the residential character. Careful planting and sympathetic acoustic barriers could offset these effects, and ultimately it is not the significance of the tramway that is harmed, but the amenity value of the footpath. Further mitigation (as proposed) in the form of information boards would better reveal the value of the tramway.

Taking into consideration the linear character of the tramway (i.e. any harm is restricted to one short section of the whole), that its significance mainly rests on its historical associations rather than its intrinsic or amenity value, and that suitable mitigation has been proposed, the harm would be less than substantial, or minor adverse.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The site was formerly part of the landholding of Cambrose, first documented in 1286. It lies within a landscape of enclosed fields on the southern periphery of the former WWII airfield at Portreath. The sub-rectangular site contains the remains of a WWII Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) base associated with the airfield. A series of temporary buildings on concrete platforms were built across the site, consisting of barracks, messes and offices, with air raid shelters, concrete paths, and other associated structures. Following the War the site was converted for use as council housing, but during the latter part of the 20th century all the buildings were demolished. A rapid assessment of the site was undertaken in 1992 which identified and characterised most of the Wartime buildings, but the walkover survey undertaken for this assessment determined the site to be very overgrown.

The development of this site would result in the destruction of the surviving elements of the WAAF base, and surviving WWII sites represent a diminishing national resource. However, development within brownfield sites is encouraged and takes place on sites of greater age and significance. Providing suitable mitigation is put in place (a staged programme of recording and monitoring, together with associated documentary research) would reduce the effect to **minor adverse**.

The site is located adjacent to an early 19th century mineral tramway. This forms part of the Portreath Harbour section of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. While there would not be a direct impact, the proposed development would impinge on the setting of the tramway. It is considered that the main effect would be on the amenity value of the footpath, rather than the intrinsic significance of the tramway and, with suitable mitigation, the harm would reduce the effect to **minor adverse**.

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APPENDIX 1: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS – SITE INSPECTION



1. THE ENTRANCE TO THE SITE IN THE WEST BOUNDARY, WITH SURVIVING WWII CONCRETE GATEPOSTS; FROM THE EAST.



2. SURVIVING CONCRETE PLATFORM NEAR THE WESTERN ENTRANCE; FROM THE SOUTH.



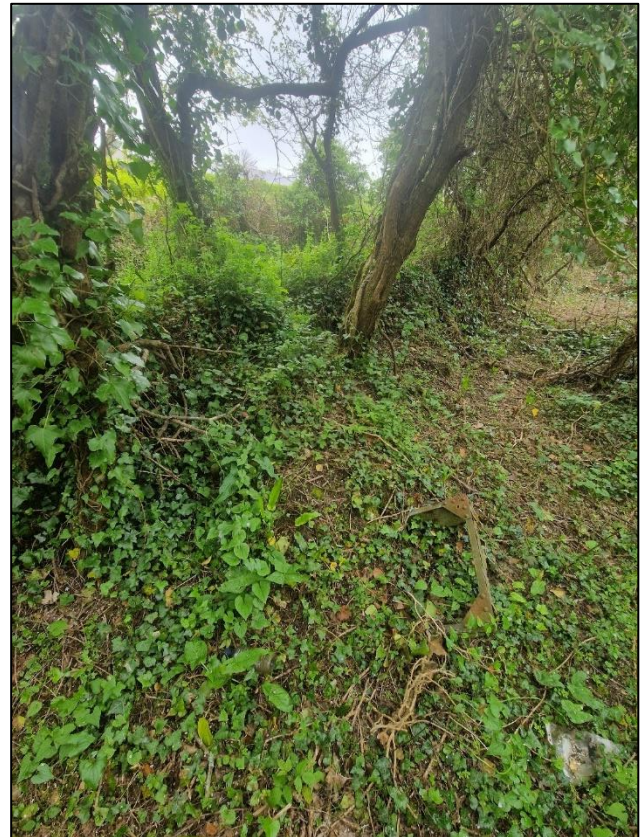
3. THE PLATFORM AT THE WESTERN END FROM ABOVE, SHOWING HOW OVERGROWN THE SITE IS AND HOW THE GROUND SLOPES AWAY FROM THE PLATFORM; 1M SCALE.



4. STONE FACE OF BOUNDARY HEDGEBANK TO THE NORTH, SHOWING THROUGH EARTH AND OVERGROWTH.



5. OVERGROWTH TRAMPLED OVER NORTH (TRAMWAY) BOUNDARY TO MAKE A MAKESHIFT ENTRANCE.



6. DRAIN CUT, INFILLED WITH LOGS TO THE NORTH OF THE SITE, PRESUMABLY A RUN-OFF FROM THE FOOTPATH.

7. NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF SITE, WITH METAL FRAMEWORK, POSSIBLE REMAINS OF THE WWII STRUCTURES (WATER TANK?); FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.



8. EASTERN BOUNDARY OF THE SITE, WITH TRAMPLED "PATHWAY"; FROM THE NORTH.



9. THE TRACK ACROSS THE SITE AS IT EXITS INTO THE ADJACENT FIELD WITH THE STABLES; FROM THE WEST.



10. MORE POSSIBLE METAL REMAINS AMONG THE OVERGROWTH OF THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY; FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.



11. VISIBLE CONCRETE PLATFORM, SHOWING THE GROUND SLOPING AWAY, THE OVERGROWTH AND THE CRACKED CONCRETE; FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.



12. REMNANT OF POSSIBLE CONCRETE PLATFORM MOST SOUTHERN EXTANT EXAMPLE, NEAR WET GROUND ; FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.



13. MAKESHIFT PATH LEADING NORTH FROM THE SOUTHERN END OF THE SITE, SHOWING THE SLOPE.



14. CLOSE UP OF A CRACKED CONCRETE BASE WITH A DRAINAGE PIPE PROJECTING; FROM THE SOUTH.



15. LEFT: TRAMPLED PATHWAY INTO THE SITE; WITH 1M SCALE.

16. RIGHT: THE TRAMWAY, PART OF THE CORNWALL AND WEST DEVON MINING WHS, SHOWING THE MATURE HEDGEBANKS; FROM THE EAST.



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