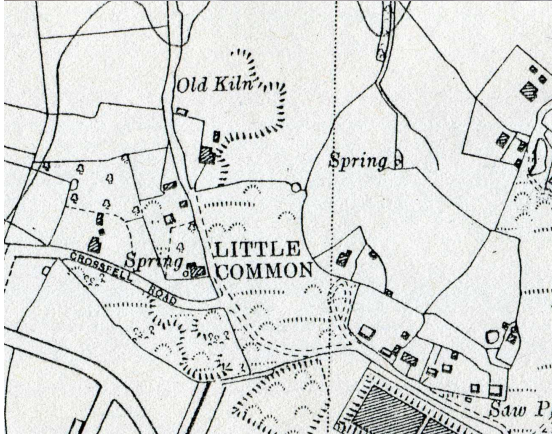
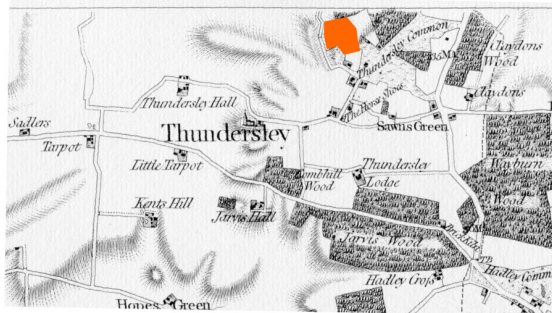


Archaeological desk-based assessment: Brickfields, Great Burches Road, Thundersley, Essex



prepared by Howard Brooks BA FSA MCifA
on behalf of Stonebond Ltd

CAT project ref.: 15/04a
NGR: TQ 789 894



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CAT Report 831
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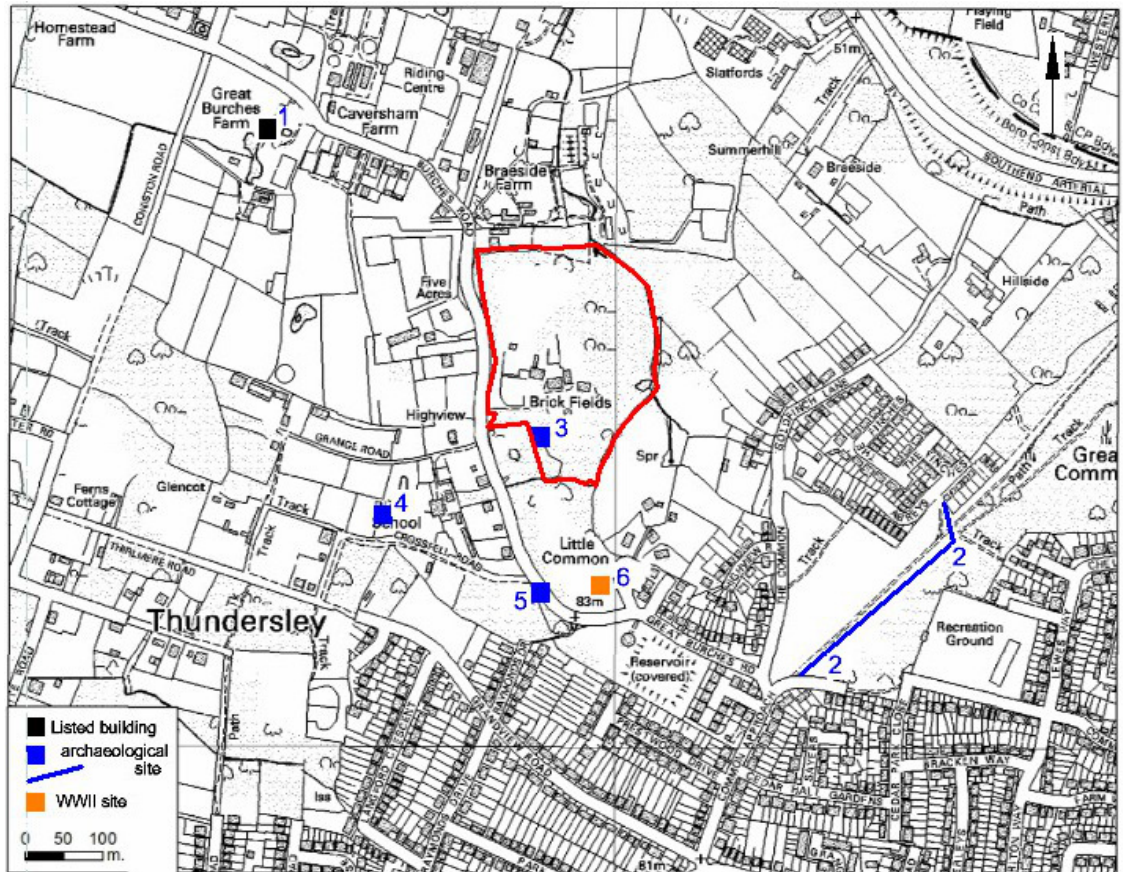
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1 Summary

A search has revealed five archaeological discoveries or heritage sites within a 500m search radius around the Brick Fields site - only one (a discovery of medieval pottery) is within the Application Site boundaries.



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Figure 1 Brick Fields site (red outline), with plot of archaeological and heritage sites shown on EHER, within a 500m Search Area¹

- 1: Listed building at Gt Burches Farm
- 2: Watching brief on 1992 pipeline (negative)
- 3: Medieval potsherds found (in Brick Fields site)
- 4, 5: two references to discovery of Bronze Age hoard (5 is probably the correct site).
- 6: Demolished site of World War 2 floodlight

Despite the discovery of the Bronze Age hoard on the south edge of Little Common, it would appear that this part of the parish of Thundersley is not as archaeologically rich as, for example, Daws Heath (2.5km to the east), where there is multi-period archaeological activity, including a Roman villa.

However, Historic Maps are informative. They show an unoccupied site in 1777. In 1838, the Tithe Award lists the bulk of the site (its southern and eastern sides) as woodland, and the remainder (its north-western corner) as arable. By the time of the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1870s), there is no woodland left, and the site is wholly arable. There is a big change by the

¹ note: a higher definition print of all principal figures can be found at the back of report.

1920s, when a quarry site is shown with two unidentified buildings, and an 'Old Kiln' (presumably out of use?). Especially useful is the OS of 1938, which shows that the whole of the area due for redevelopment was at that time a quarry. There was also an H-shaped kiln on the Burches Road side. By 1956, the 1938 kiln had disappeared, and the quarry had been extended to the north.

As part of this assessment, a walkover revealed a heavily disturbed site, with considerable terracing over the old quarry site. There was no sign of the 1938 kiln. Of the two buildings shown on the 1956 map, only one survives, roofless and dilapidated.

The other buildings now occupying the site are more recent. Those not currently occupied as industrial units are modern, very dilapidated, of no architectural or historical interest, and utterly without charm.

Parts of the southern and western (Burches Road) boundaries retain elements which may be old (fragments of ditch, old trees), but the disturbance caused by levelling, terracing and modern conifer planting on the Great Burches frontage is very considerable, and greatly detracts from the site's historical value. The southern boundary is to be retained as woodland in the proposed development. The find-spot of the medieval pottery (the only Heritage Site within the Application site) is also within the area of retained woodland, and so will be unaffected by this development.

2006 geotechnical test pitting shows that there is a great deal of modern dumped material under the surface, typically soil with concrete or tarmac fragments. This varies in depth from 0.36m to 3.6m, averaging about 1.1m of modern dump (and in places there is evidence of petrochemical pollution).

Given that map evidence shows that the majority of the site has been quarried, and subsequently levelled up into the terraces now visible on site, there seems no possibility that original ground level survives here. The structures now on site are modern - only one survives from those shown in 1956, and it is roofless, dilapidated and of no architectural merit.

In summary, the proposed redevelopment is almost entirely over the old quarry site, and the geotech sampling shows that the proposed housing site is entirely 'made ground' (ie, infill over the old quarry).

It is the view of this report that the site is archaeologically sterile, and further stages of archaeological work (ie, trial-trenching) are not necessary.

2 Aim

The aim of this assessment is to catalogue the archaeological and heritage remains in and around the Proposed Development Site (PDS), to discuss them in their local context, and to determine whether they will cause any constraints on development. In addition, some comments are given on historic maps, and on site boundaries.

3 Methodology

A 'search area' (SA) has been defined, equating to the area shown on Figure 1. The following resources have been searched for evidence of archaeological sites and finds within the SA²:

- The *Essex Historic Environment Record* (EHER), is a computerised list of all recorded archaeological material in Essex, including cropmarks shown on air photographs (recently re-plotted) by the National Monuments Record (NMR).
- *Essex Place Names* online catalogue was searched for place names of archaeological or historical interest in the relevant part of Thundersley. It includes place-names on charters, Tithe maps, and other historic map coverage, thereby obviating the need to examine the original documents.
- *The Heritage Gateway*. This database is the principal UK 'portal' to a wide range of heritage-based websites including the *NMR* (list of all archaeological surveys, watching briefs, evaluations, excavations), and *Pastscape*, and English Heritage Listed Buildings.
- Historic maps – including Tithe Map and Award, 1st edition OS (Ordnance Survey) coverage and the 1777 Chapman and André map of Essex.
- Other reports and publications held in CAT library.

Using the information from these sources, a map (Figure 1) has been compiled, and the archaeological sites shown on it are listed below in **Part 4**, under the following headings:

- Designated sites: listed buildings
- Non-designated sites: archaeological watching brief
- Non-designated sites: chance discovery of archaeological material
- Non-designated sites: WWII site

Part 5 is a consideration of historic site boundaries (trees and hedges). **Part 6** is discussion of the archaeological issues, and **Parts 7** and **8** contain references and a glossary of archaeological dates, abbreviations and other archaeological terms.

² there is no Historic Environment Characterisation Report for this district

4 Archaeological and heritage sites in the Search Area

Here follows a list of archaeological and other heritage sites within the 500m Search Area.

There are no World Heritage sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, or Listed Parks/Gardens in the Search Area. There is one listed building in the Search Area (1, below).

4.1 Designated sites

1 Great Burches Farmhouse: C17 timber-framed house ³

Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) number: 27499
NGR: TQ 78551 89792

Grade 2 listed house. C17 or earlier with later alterations. Timber framed and plastered, red plain tiled roofs, hipped to left, gabled wing to right. Large plastered brick chimney stack to left 2 storey range. One of the 2 manors of Thundersley.

4.2 Non-designated sites

4.2.1 Archaeological projects (watching brief)

2 Great Common, Thundersley: Essex Water Co mains reinforcement

EHER: 18101
TQ 793892

Water mains reinforcing at Great Common using a guided mole which only required six small holes to be dug. Watching brief revealed nothing of archaeological significance. No finds in any of six holes, or in upcast.

Reference: Atkinson 1992

4.2.2 Chance discoveries of archaeological material

3 Thundersley

EHER: 7118
TQ 789 894

"Early medieval pottery". More information needed. *This is the only site inside the Brickfield site boundaries*⁴

4 Thundersley

EHER: 7195
TQ 787 893

White (1898) mentioned 'several brass and copper spearheads' found in c1848. Benton (1886) mentions a founder's hoard, including celts⁵ and lumps of bronze found "in a gravel pit upon Little Common near Burches". Is this the same site? A socketed axe from the hoard is in the Southend Museum.

Refs: White 1848

³ red numbers refer to sites on Figure 1

⁴ Text in italics is HB comment on EHER records

⁵ axe head

5 Birches - Little Common

EHER: 7235
TQ 789 892

Bronze Age spearheads: several 'brass' and copper spearheads found in gravel pit on Little Common, near Birches". Found in 1848. This is probably a duplicate record of EHER 7195, above ([Site 4](#)).

Refs: Pollitt 1953, White 1848

4.2.3 WWII remains

6 Floodlight (destroyed), Little Common, Thundersley

EHER: 21063
TQ 789 892

Aerial photograph (May 1946) shows experimental "floodlight" on common land N of Burches Road. Its twelve sides can be counted and the base of its generator building *[is]* a few yards away to the E. The former existence of the structure is known locally. In 2006, ...no sign of any remains, but a slight depression in the ground, with thin grass, shows its probable imprint.

Refs: Aerial Photo : 106G-UK 1496-4375 (RAF) May 1946
Verbal communication : Local Resident Daws Heath / Thundersley, April 2006

5 Trees and hedges

It was not the intention to formally catalogue the hedges on this site, merely to offer a few comments based on observations made during the site visit. The only site boundaries which may be 'ancient' are the western boundary along Great Burches Road, and the southern boundary east of the Bowercombe plot. This is because the northern site boundary is recent - it is first shown on the 1938 OS map - and the eastern site boundary is defined by both a stream and a wire fence.

The southern site boundary



Plates 1, 2: *two views north to the southern site boundary (ie, Little Common is behind). There are mature trees here which may be survivals of the boundary first shown in this position in 1838. The land drops away to the north as one walks into the Brickfields site, so this boundary does not have the usual ditch and bank formation, it is simply a row of trees with more recent undergrowth between them. The curvilinear nature of this boundary may also be an indicator of antiquity. This area to be retained as woodland in the proposed development.*

The Great Burches Road site boundary



Plates 3, 4: Looking south along Gt Burches Road.

There are the remains of a ditch and bank along this frontage. However, ground level to the east has been artificially raised.



Plates 5, 6: Looking north along Gt Burches Road.

No real traces of a ditch. Bank survives, but not in original condition - it seems clear from the terracing of the site (behind the hedge shown here) that ground level here has been artificially raised.



Plate 7: *The historic character of the Burches Road frontage has been much diminished by modern conifer planting, such as this near the site entry.*

Plate 8: *rear of the conifers (above plate 7) are supporting concrete blocks*

6 The Brick Fields site - period by period

There has not been much archaeological work in this area, hence the small number of archaeological sites listed in Section 4 above. The archaeological material is discussed first, then from the post-medieval period we focus on historic map coverage.

Prehistory

Thundersley as a parish has considerable evidence of prehistoric activity, but it is focussed at Daws Heath, 2.5km to the east of the current site.

The earliest material from the search area is a Bronze Age hoard reported by antiquarian sources in the 19th century (White 1848, Benton 1886: sites 4, 5). Although this discovery has two separate entries in the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), it seems reasonably clear that they are both the same discovery. To judge by the description of the finds location (on Little Common), site 5 is the better location.

Roman and Anglo-Saxon

There are no remains of either of these periods in the Search Area. Given the existence of the Roman villa at Daws Heath (EHER 9568, 9674), the Roman brick in the structure of St Peter's Church (EHER 7083: 1km SW), and other Roman finds such as Roman coins (EHER 9687), it is clear that there is Roman-period activity in Thundersley. The search area may have been marginal to the Roman villa estate, possibly woodland.

There is an interesting aspect to the place-name 'Thundersley'. This derives from the Old English *Punres lēah* = "grove or meadow [perhaps sacred] belonging to the god Thunor". So, in theory, there may be the site of a sacred grove in Thundersley. Needless to say, we have no idea where the grove was, or even if it actually existed. Conventionally, sacred groves would be suppressed by the early church.

Domesday

The Domesday Book (DB) gives us an insight into Thundersley in AD 1066 and 1086:

"Swein holds Thundersley in demense, which Godric, a thegn of the king, held TRE⁶ as 1 manor and as 5 hides and 15 acres. Then as now [there were] 2 ploughs in demense and the men [had] 2 ploughs and [there were] 5 villans and 5 bordars. [There were] then 4 slaves; now 2. [There is] pasture for 200 sheep, woodland for 50 pigs. [There were] then 2 horses and 7 head of cattle and 16 pigs and 200 sheep and 2 hives of bees. [There are] now 3 horses and 1 horse, 14 head of cattle, 36 pigs, 200 sheep, 2 hives of bees. It was then worth 102s; now 100s".

The Domesday manor site is unknown, but is most likely to be the site now occupied by Thundersley Hall. There is no specific information about the current site in DB.

Medieval period

Medieval pottery has been found on the Brick Field site (Fig 1, site 3). There is no more information on this find, so we cannot know whether there was a medieval settlement here. Whilst it is quite possible that some of the local farms (Great Burches, particularly), are of medieval origin, it would be expected that the centre of medieval settlement in Thundersley would be close to St Peter's church, 1km south of Brick Fields.

⁶ TRE = 'tempore Regis Edwardi' - in the time of King Edward, ie before AD 1066.

Post-medieval and modern periods - historic maps, and buildings shown on maps

From 1777, we have historic map coverage. After each map is a brief commentary.

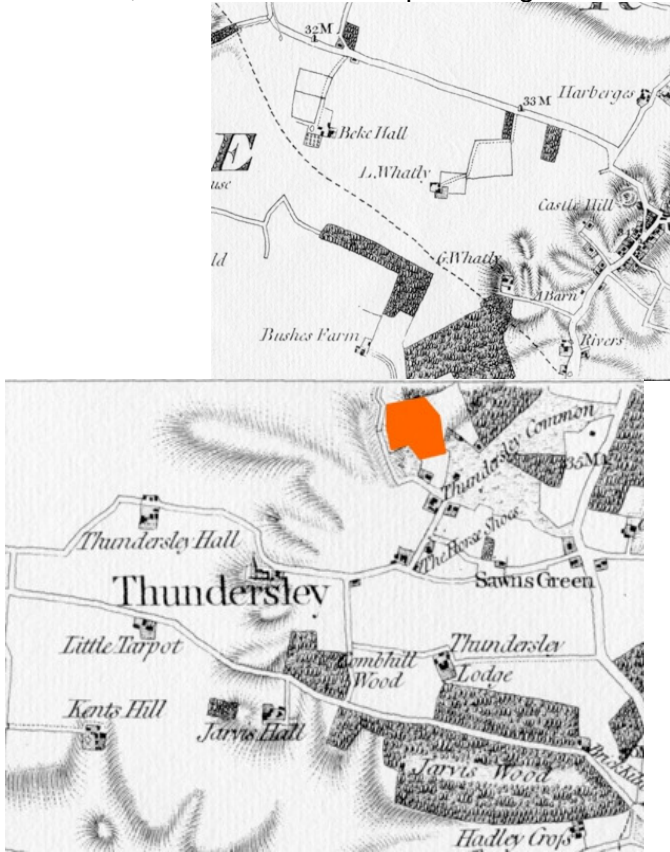


Figure 2: extract from Chapman & André map (1777). The Brick Field site is marked (orange). The large block of woodland north of the site almost certainly corresponds with the woodland shown on the Tithe map (see Figure 3, below), shown here at the south edge of the adjacent map sheet (the two maps are aligned).

18th century maps.

Chapman & André (1777) is the earliest detailed map. Although it does not show field boundaries, it shows commons and woodland, with clusters of buildings. Our site is shown with contours indicating slope. There is a compound immediately south of the site (the plot now called 'Bowercombe'), with a small structure, apparently smaller than a house. The large block of woodland to the north of the site almost certainly corresponds with the woodland shown on the Tithe map (see Figure 3, below).

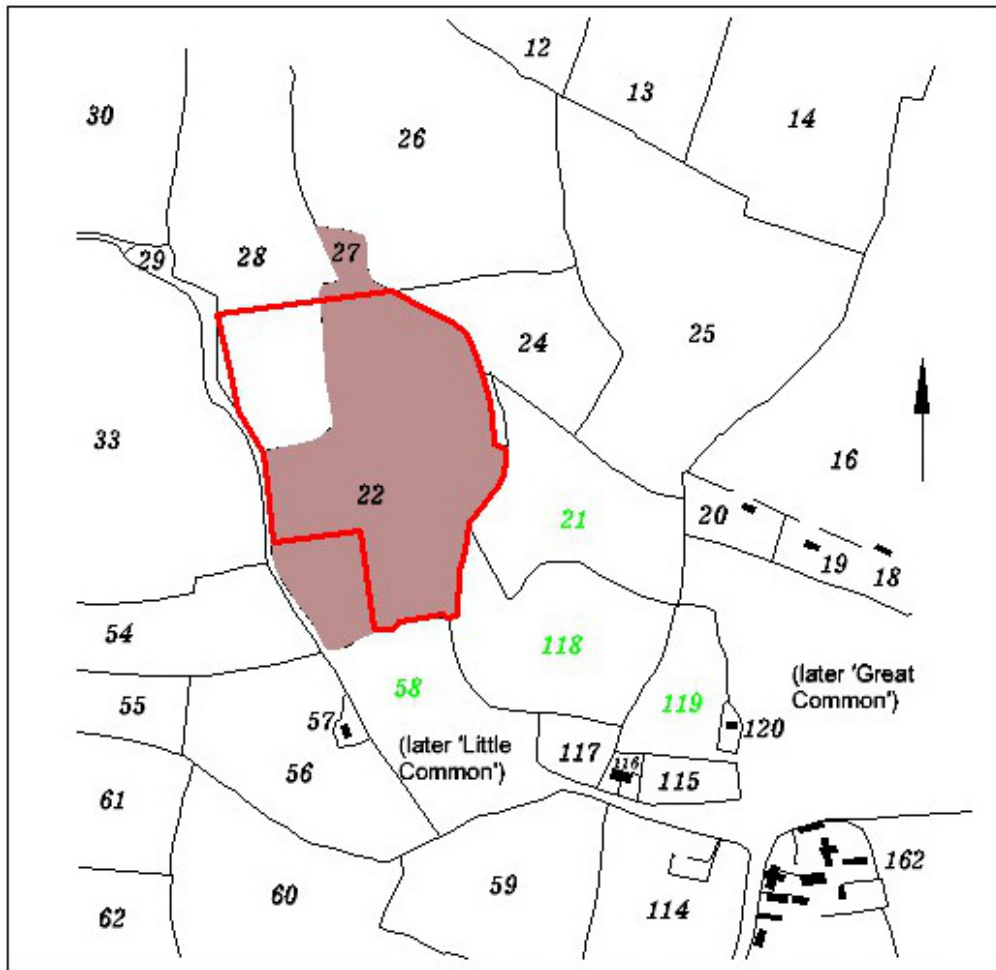


Figure 3: Tithe map 1838. Brick Field site shown (red) over tracing of 1838 Tithe Map (D/CT 354a).

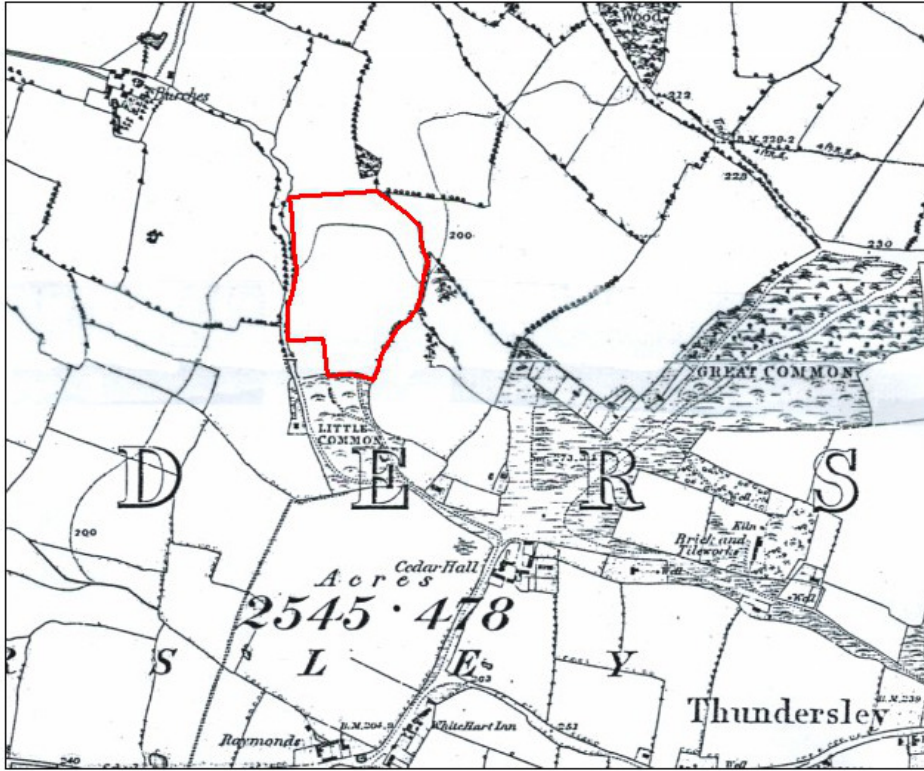
19th century maps (Fig 3)

The 1838 **Tithe map** is the earliest map showing field boundaries. Plot numbers in **black** are listed as 'arable' in the accompanying Tithe Award (D/CT 354b), and those in **green** as 'grass' (i.e., pasture). Parcels 27 and 22 (the latter forming most of Brick Fields) are '**wood**'. The Thundersley Tithe is not particularly forthcoming on details. There are no useful names such as 'old quarry', or 'kiln field' - parcels **12-28** are simply named '*Wyburns*' (which is neither the landowner or the tenant): **29-33** are '*Burchers*', referring to Gt Burches Farm (off map, to left). The fields later known as Great and Little Common are not so named on the Tithe Map - Little Common is 'Back Common', and Great Common is 'part of Thundersley Common'.

Ordnance Survey (Figs 4-7)

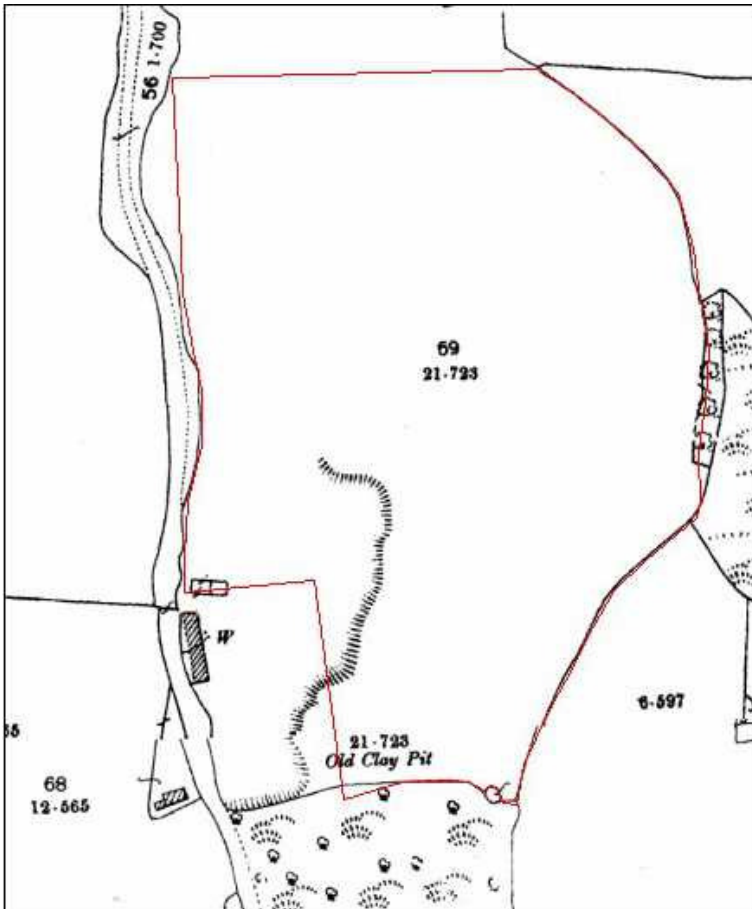
Comparing the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey (1870s) with the Tithe Map (1838), it can be seen on **Figure 4** there has been major clearance of woodland which formerly covered Tithe Map plot 22 (the majority of the Brick Field site), although plot 27 woodland survived. There are no buildings on the site, so it was presumably arable or pasture.

Figure 5 shows the beginning of quarrying (1896). The building shown as W ('works') is on the plot now known as Bowercombe, and there is another structure close to the present-day site entry.



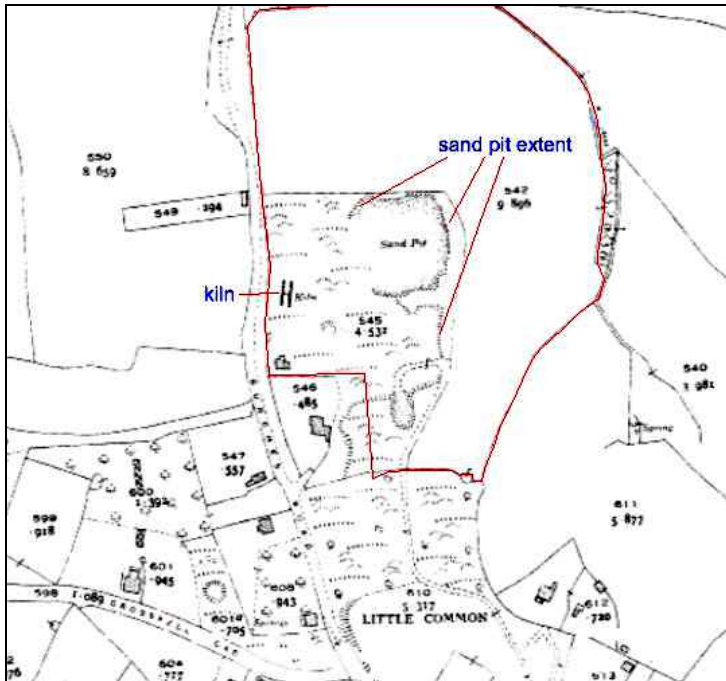
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Figure 4: Site on OS 1st edition (1870s).



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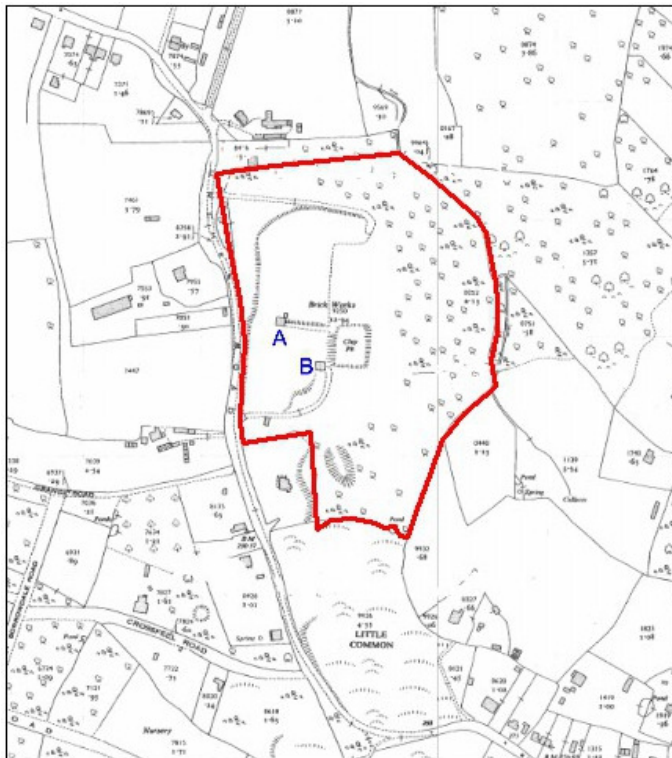
Figure 5: the site in 1896.



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Figure 6: the site in 1938.

Figure 6 shows a considerable change and great increase in quarrying since 1896. The 1896 'works' has disappeared. An H-shaped kiln has been built on the western edge of the site. **Figure 7** shows that the north quarry face has moved considerably to the north. The H-shaped kiln shown in 1938 has gone⁷, and two new structures are shown at **A** and **B**. **A** has now disappeared. **B** remains, in a very dilapidated and unstable condition.



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Figure 7: Site in 1956.

⁷ given that this site saw increased quarrying after 1938, and has since been infilled and terraced, this kiln site has probably been swept away. No sign of it in the 2015 walkover.



Plates 9, 10: (top) 1956 building **B**, in group of more recent structures, (below) its south wall



Plate 11: view south-west into interior of derelict 1956 building **B**



Plate 12: view north-west into interior of derelict 1956 building B

7 Discussion of archaeological issues

The only archaeological site listed by EHER within the site boundaries is within the area of Retained Woodland, and so will be unaffected by this development.

Walking over the site now, it has the feel of an abandoned industrial site on several quite distinct levelled terraces. It is evident from the terraced nature of the site that there has been considerable movement of soil to create the flat platforms on which the (largely derelict) structures now stand. Also, the Great Burches Road boundary and some of the internal boundaries are heavily planted with conifers. These conifers define and help to support the terraces, and in one case concrete blocks can be seen behind the conifers, acting as part of the terrace edge.

Since 1956, quarrying operations have come to an end, and small business units have been established on site. The 1956 map shows only two structures on the site at that time, marked **A** and **B** on Figure 6. **A** is now gone, and **B** is in a very poor condition (plates 9-12 above, with discussion under Fig 6).

There are also areas of concrete slab on the lowest site terrace (ie, closest to Great Burches Road). No buildings are shown on that terrace in either 1938 or 1956, so they must be post-1956 structures which have since been demolished. All other structures now on site post-date 1956.

The essential point to be decided is - ***what is the likelihood that any archaeological remains survive here, especially those relating to the industrial heritage?***

The extent to which the site (ie, the proposed housing area) is affected by quarrying can be demonstrated quite well. Looking at the map evidence, it seems clear that the quarry and associated buildings were not static, but subject to considerable change over time. As the quarry face moved east and north, so structures were demolished and replaced by newer ones. The greater part of the area of proposed housing (and perhaps all of it, if the quarrying extended beyond the limit shown on the OS map of 1956) has been quarried. Therefore the old ground surface cannot have survived here.

Figure 8 brings together the map information data on the position of the quarry face in 1938 and 1956, and the 2006 geotech data. This shows the extent of damage to the site from the viewpoint of heritage, and supports the contention that there is no possibility that any archaeological material survives within the proposed housing area (because 'old ground level' has gone), and that the only surviving structure from the operating Brick Fields quarry is a small building erected between 1938 and 1956, which is now dilapidated and of no historic value (plate 9-12).

As a footnote, one of the site tenants showed the writer a concrete block which is now part of a retaining wall on the boundary between proposed Retained Woodland and proposed housing (plate 13). The tenant was told about this block by a local man, who vividly remembered gunfire from the Brick Fields site in WWII (he and other locals were told to keep away from the site). A second block is to be found in the woodland to the north (not looked for in this walkover). One of the EHER sites on Little Common (Fig 1, site 6) is the site of a now-demolished WWII floodlight, so the existence of a gun emplacement here at Brick Fields would appear to be entirely plausible, and there is no need to doubt reports from locals on this point. As there is another block in the woods to the north, it would seem that the gun emplacement is not intact. As part of the proposed development, this block should be identified and protected from accidental damage.



Plate 13: WWII concrete block - part of a WWII gun emplacement? Another block is reported in the woodland to the rear (not explored).

8 References

- Atkinson, M 1992 *Essex Water Company mains reinforcement Great Common, Thundersley.*
- Benton, P 1886 *History of Rochford Hundred*, p771
- D/CT 354b 1838 *Thundersley Tithe Map*
- DC/T 354a *Thundersley Tithe Award* (the list giving details of the plots numbered on the Tithe Map - land use, owners, tenants, acreage, etc)
- MLM Environment Ltd 2006 *The Brickfields, Thundersley. Phase II geoenvironmental assessment report. Project Ref: SJO/721185/DMB. Document Ref: 721185/R1/F. February 2006*, by MLM Environmental Limited, 3 Trust Court, Chivers Way, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 9PW
- Pollitt, W 1953 *Southend Before the Norman Conquest*, p60
- White 1848 *History, Gazetteer and Directory... of Essex*, p567

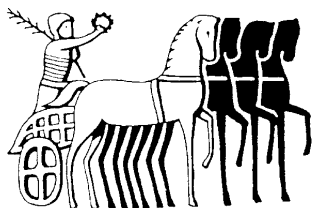
9 Glossary

Anglo-Saxon	after the Romans, from c AD 430 to AD 1066
Bronze Age	after New Stone Age - approximately 2000 to 700 BC
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by ECC
Iron Age	After the Bronze Age and before the Romans – 700 BC to AD 43
medieval	from AD 1066 to around AD 1530
modern	19th – 21st centuries
Neolithic	New Stone Age – the earliest farming (around 4,000-2,000 BC).
post-medieval	from 16th century to 18th century
prehistoric	before Roman period - i.e. the years BC to AD 43
Roman period	from AD 43 to around AD 410

10 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Stonebond Ltd for commissioning the report, to the staff of the Essex Record Office for historic maps, to Essex County Historic Environment Team for EHER data and historic maps.

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Following pages

Report figures at higher resolution

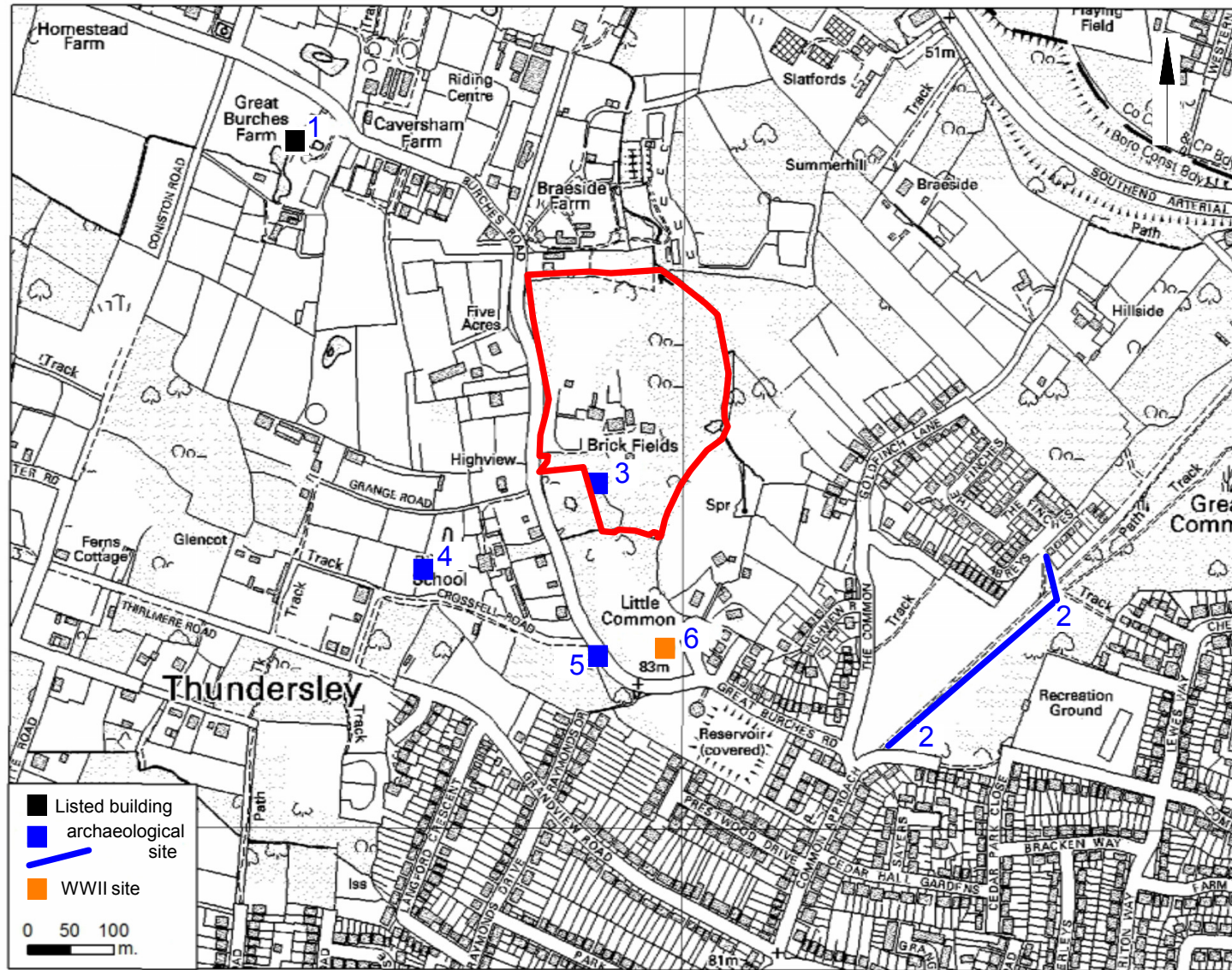


Figure 1: Brickfields site (red) showing archaeological and heritage sites within 500m search area

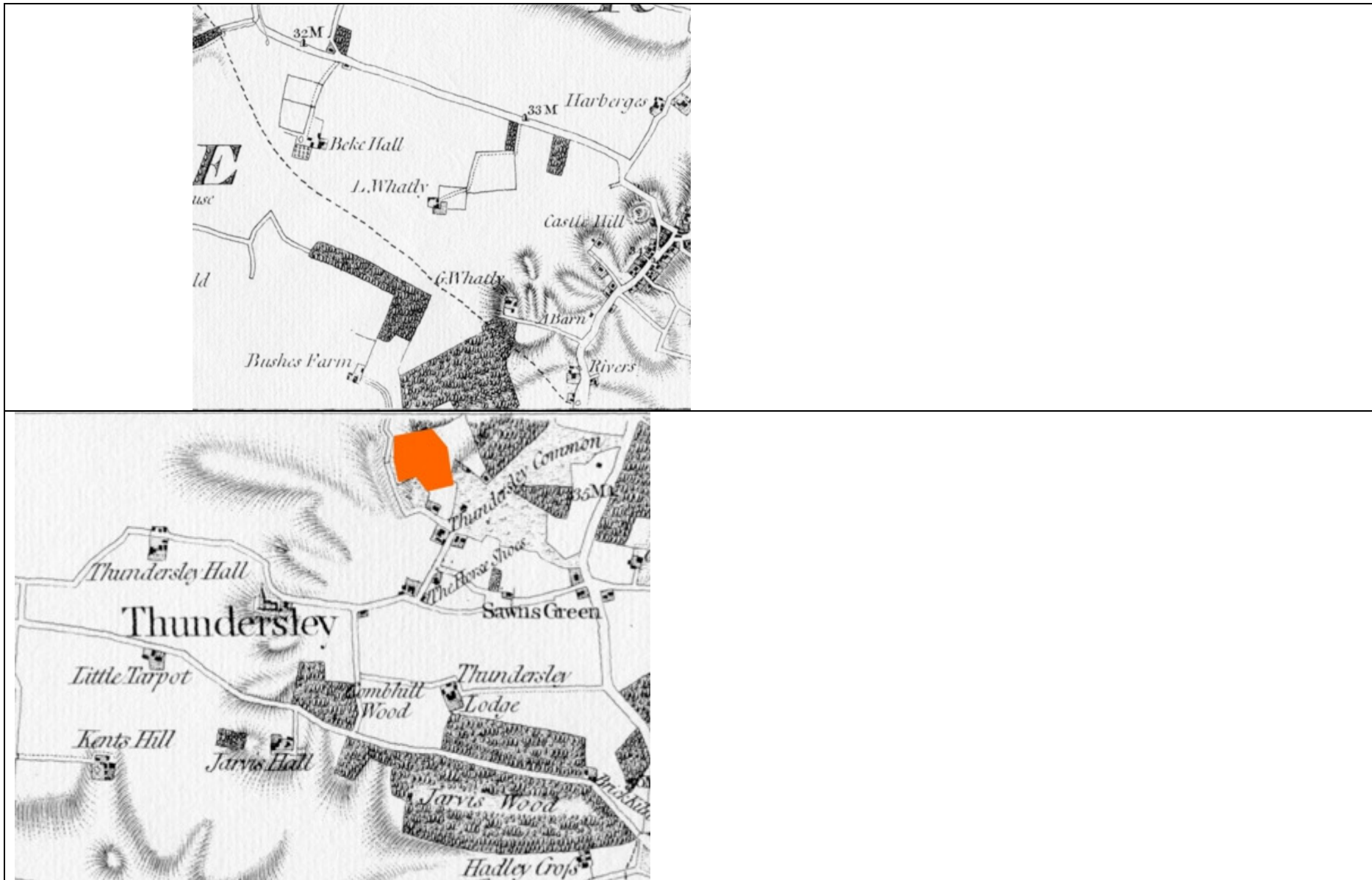
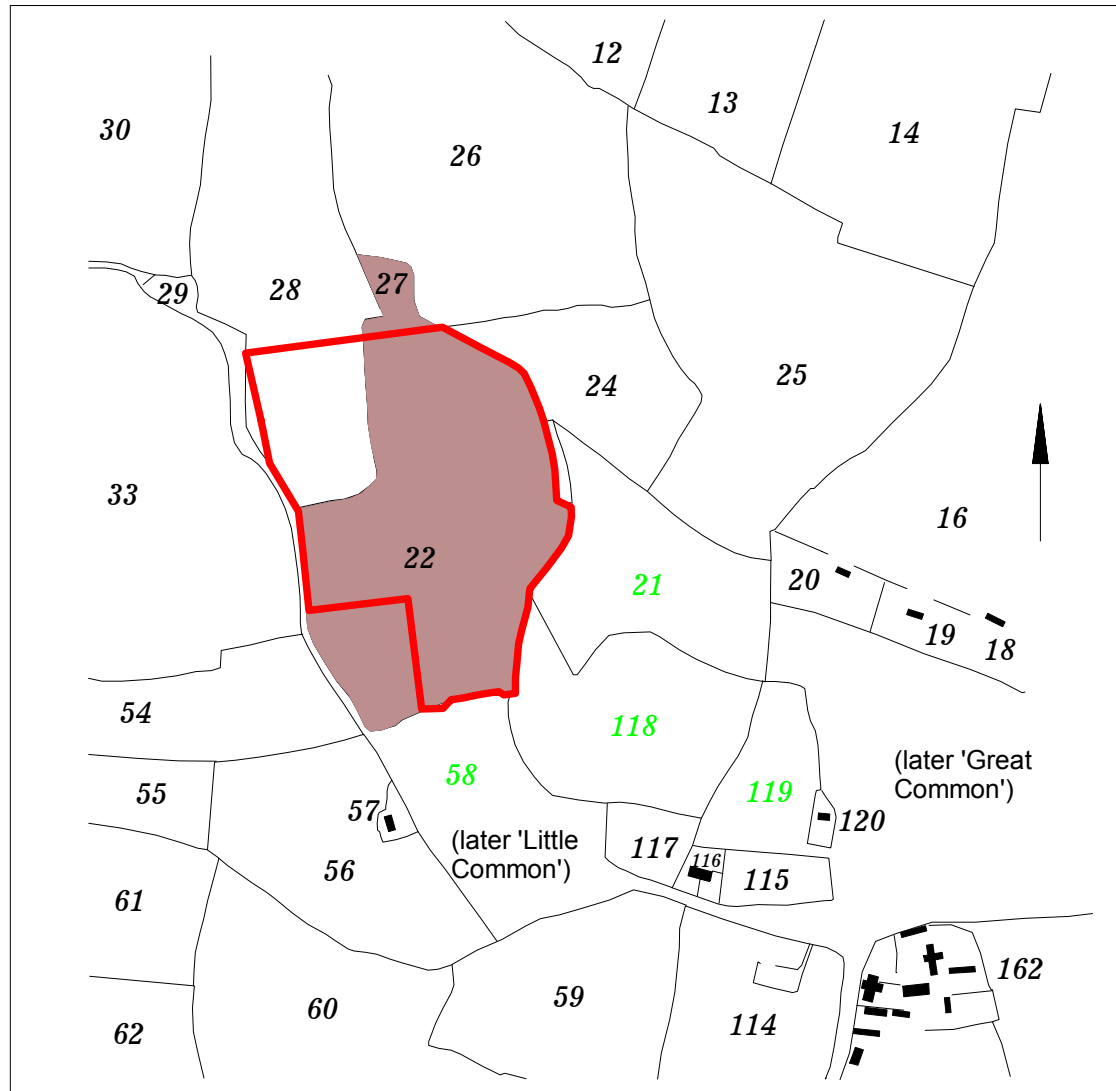


Figure 2: The Chapman and Andre map (1777). The Brickfield site appears on the lower of two adjacent sheets, but note the large block of woodland to its north.



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Figure 3 Brickfields site (red outline shown over tracing of 1838 Tithe Map. Black numbers are 'arable', green 'grassland' (i.e., pasture), and shaded brown, 'wood'. There are no buildings or indication of brick working or quarrying on the Brickfields site (ie, parts of parcels 22 and 28). Although not shown on the Tithe Map, those areas later known as 'Great' and 'Little Common' are shown).

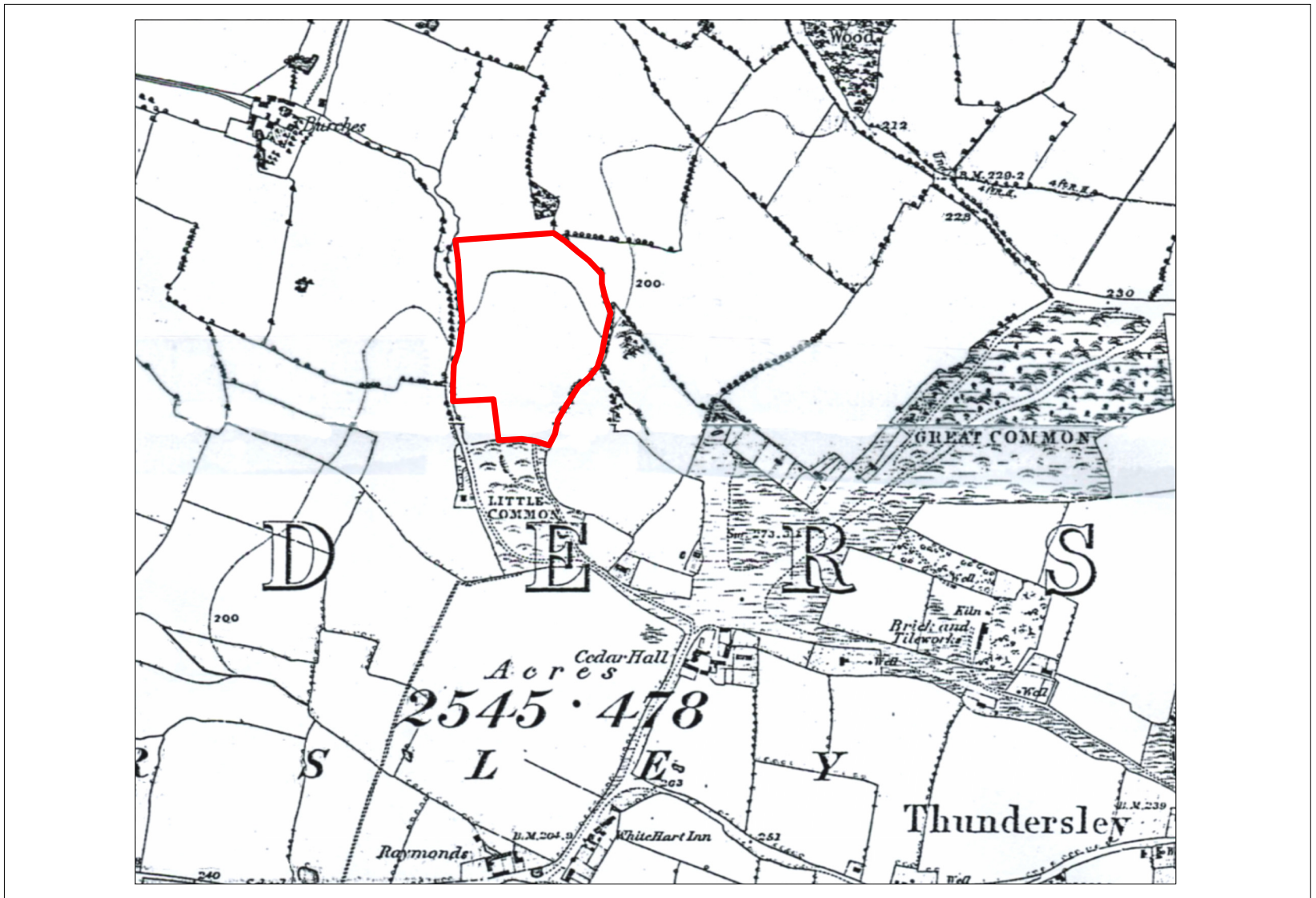


Figure 4: The 1st edition Ordnance Survey (site outlined in red).
Note the 'Brick & Tileworks' on Great Common. There are no structures on the Brickfields site.

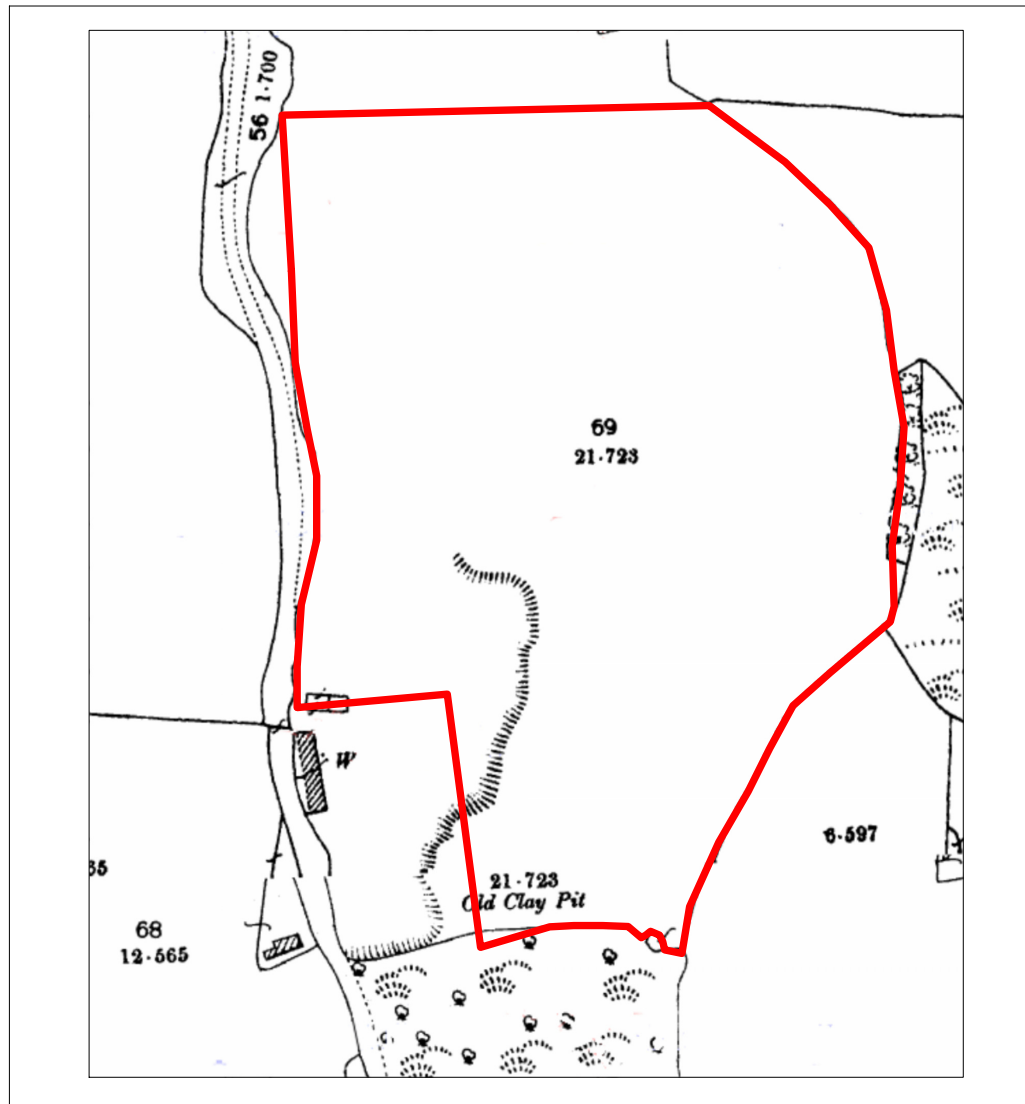


Figure 5 Site in 1896. Quarrying has now started, with a building identified as 'W' ('works') on the plot now known as Bowercombe, and another structure close to the present-day site entry.

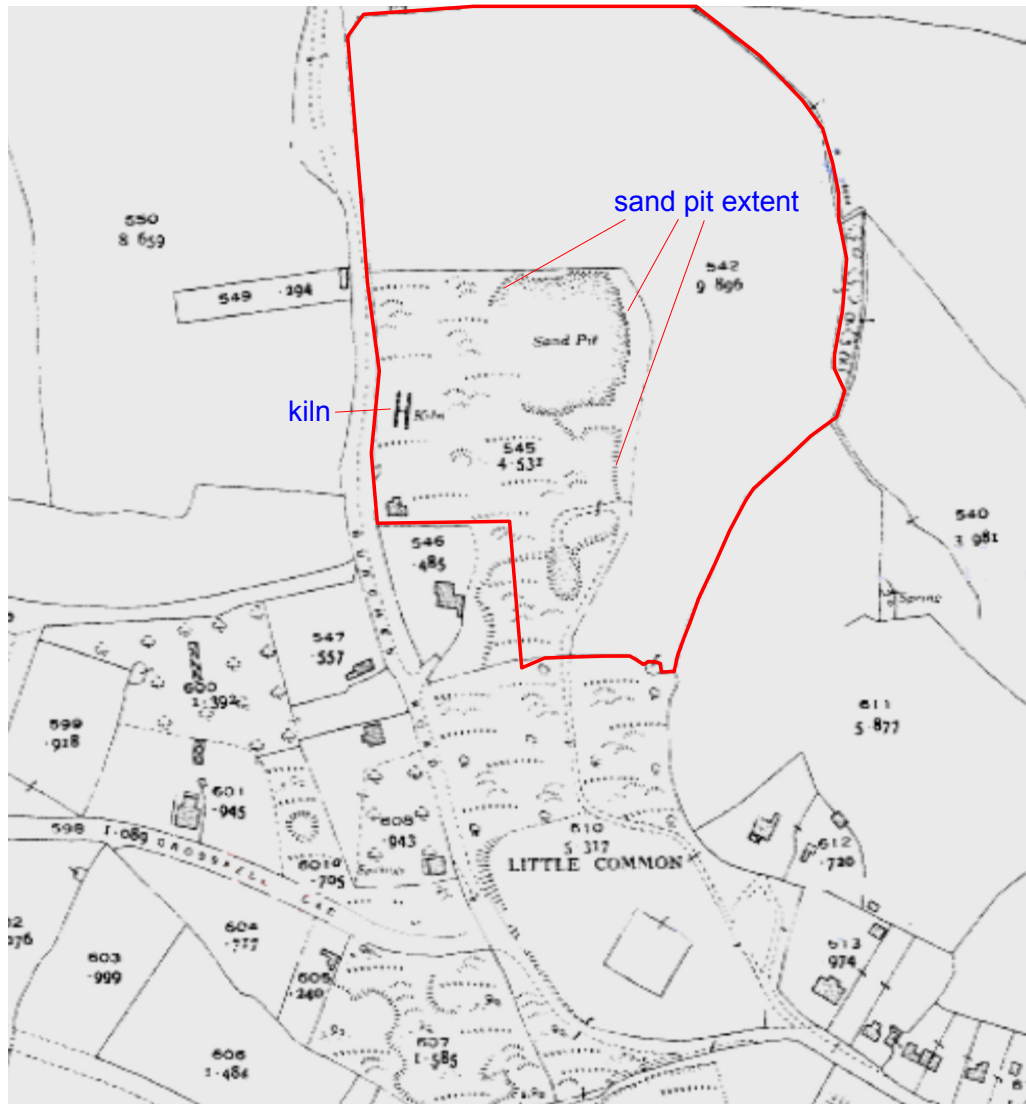


Figure 6: The site in 1938. Considerable change and extension of quarrying. The 'works' has disappeared, to be replaced by 'Bowercombe' in its own plot. An H-shaped kiln has been built on the western site edge, and a structure close to the present-day site entry (also present in 1896)

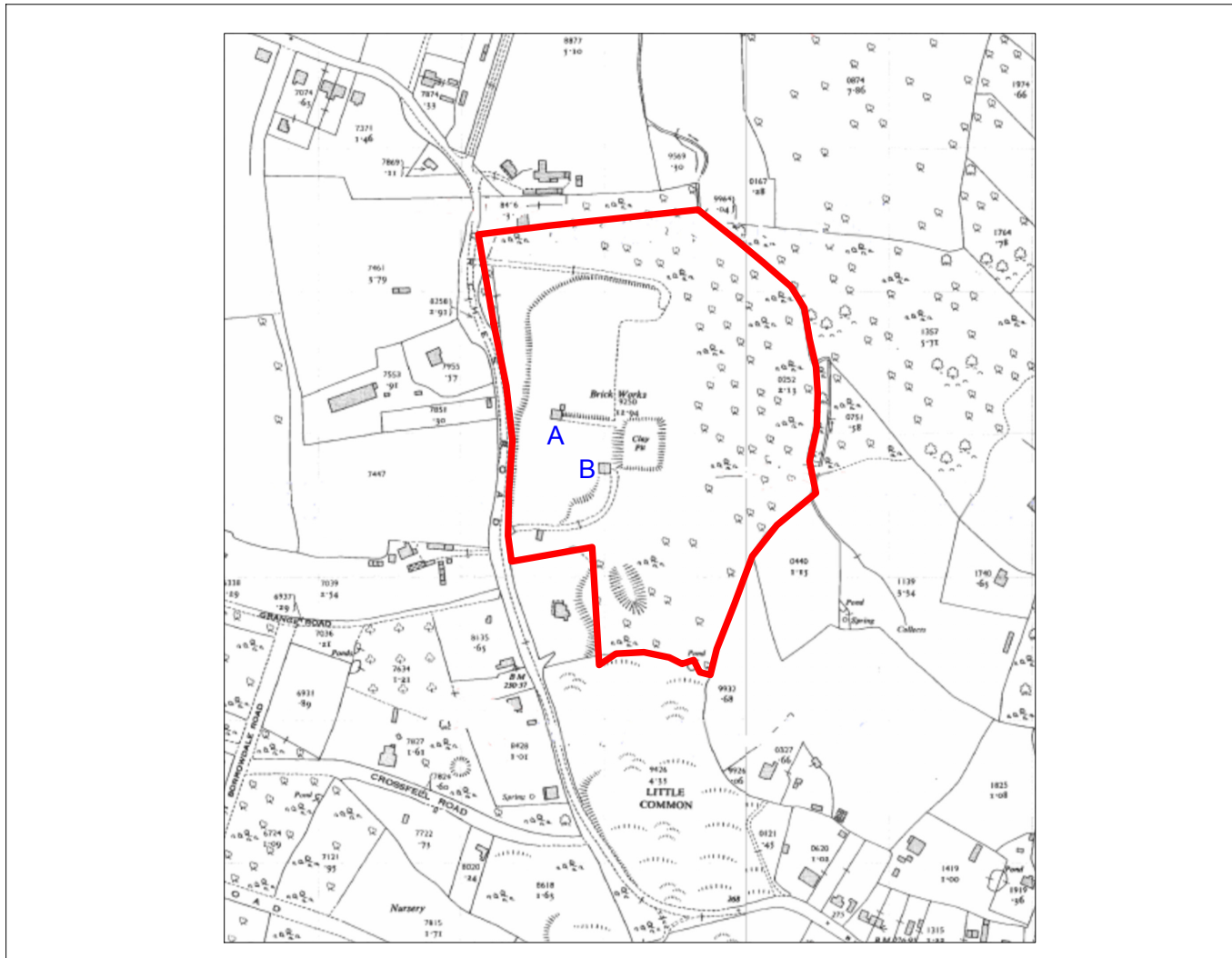


Figure 7: Site in 1956. Note considerable northern extension of quarried area. Old kiln shown in 1938 has gone, and a new structure now stands centre left of site. There are, in 2015, surviving structures at A and B. These may be survivals of the structures shown here in 1956.

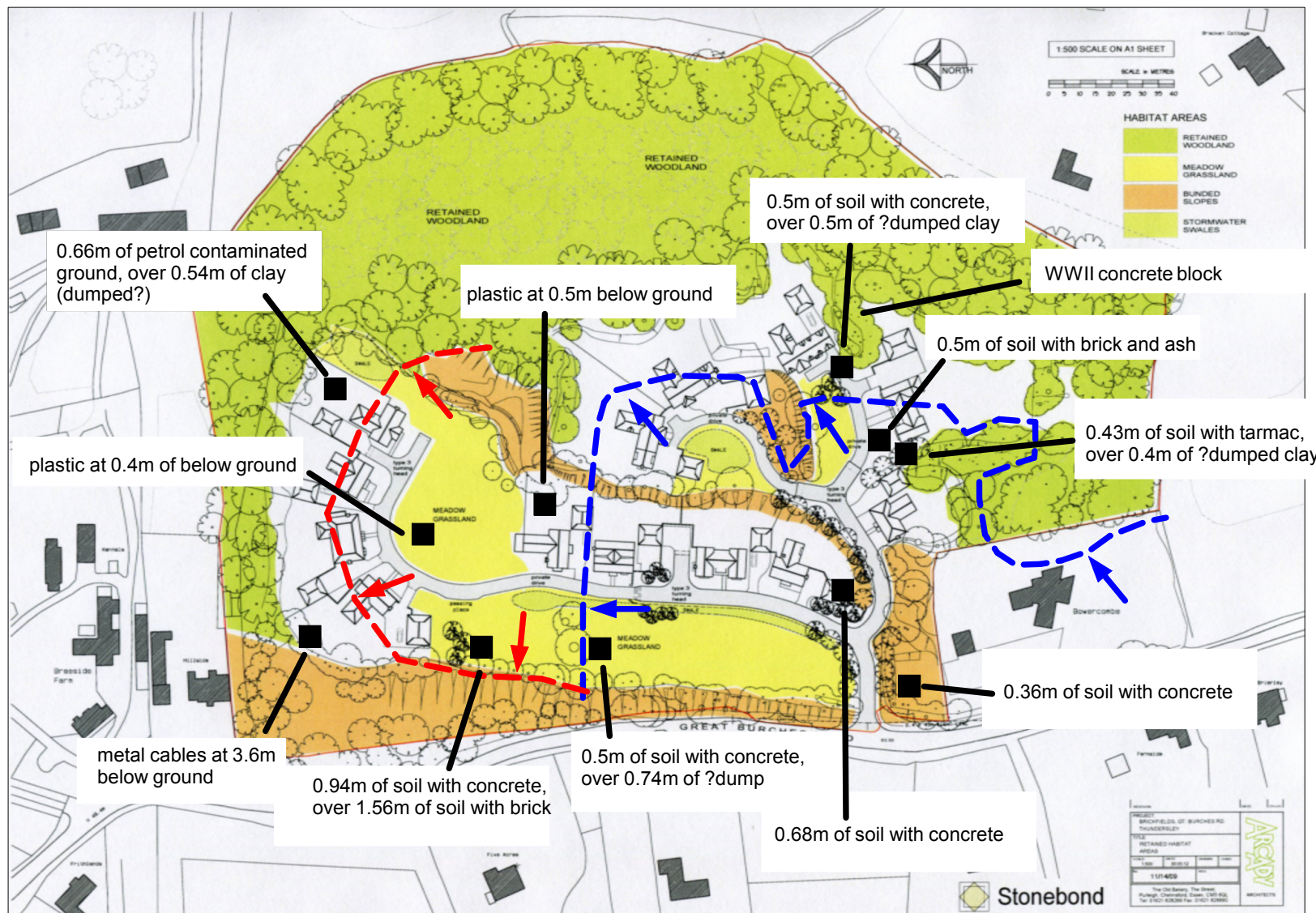


Figure 8 The Brick Fields site. Proposed housing, retained wood (green) and meadow grassland (yellow). Superimposed over this is the quarry working face in 1938 (blue), and in 1956 (red). 2006 Test pits locations are shown by black squares. Accompanying text shows what is below modern ground level.