JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

LAND BETWEEN OAKFIELD AND DOWNSIDE

KINGSTON LISLE, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 3279 8818

On behalf of

Kibswell Homes Ltd

NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT FOR	Kibswell Homes Ltd Hartham Park Corsham Wiltshire SN13 0RP
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FIELDWORK	23rd–24th October 2015
REPORT ISSUED	9th November 2015
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Site Code:	KLMF 15
JMHS Project No:	3322

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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at land between Oakfield and Downside in Kingston Lisle, Oxfordshire. Groundwork consisted of the excavation of foundation trenches for four semidetached dwellings. No archaeological features or finds related to the neighbouring possible Roman barrow were encountered during the watching brief. All features encountered during the fieldwork were late 19th and 20th century in date. The earliest features were two land drains built of short-length ceramic pipes related to agricultural use of the area presumably up to 1920s. The following activities on the site were represented by a rubble yard surface, footpath, and a water supply system that were related probably with the post Second World War Polish resettlement camp shown on 1959 and 1960 OS maps (Fig.1, 3). The last stage was represented by remains of 1970s barn dismantled prior the new development and driveway.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the north side of Kingston Lisle opposite the cemetery (NGR SU 3279 8818). It lies at approximately 129m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and the underlying geology is Upper Greensand. The proposal site was overgrown prior to commencement of the development.

1.2 Planning Background

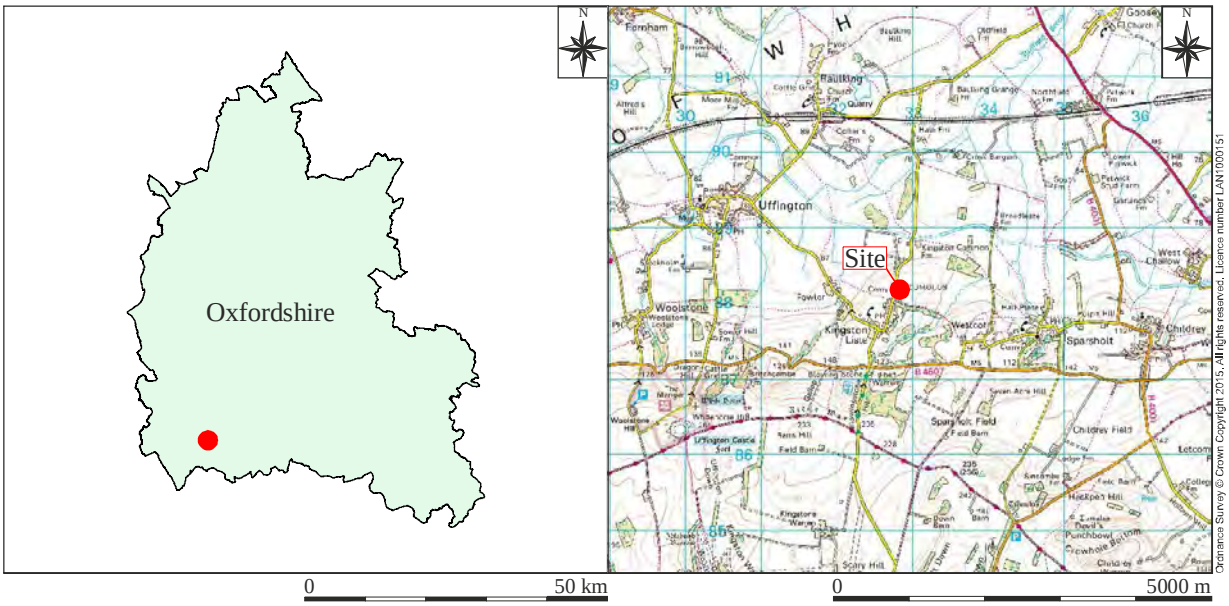
The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission for erection of four semidetached new dwellings on the land at Marfield (P15/V0728/FUL).

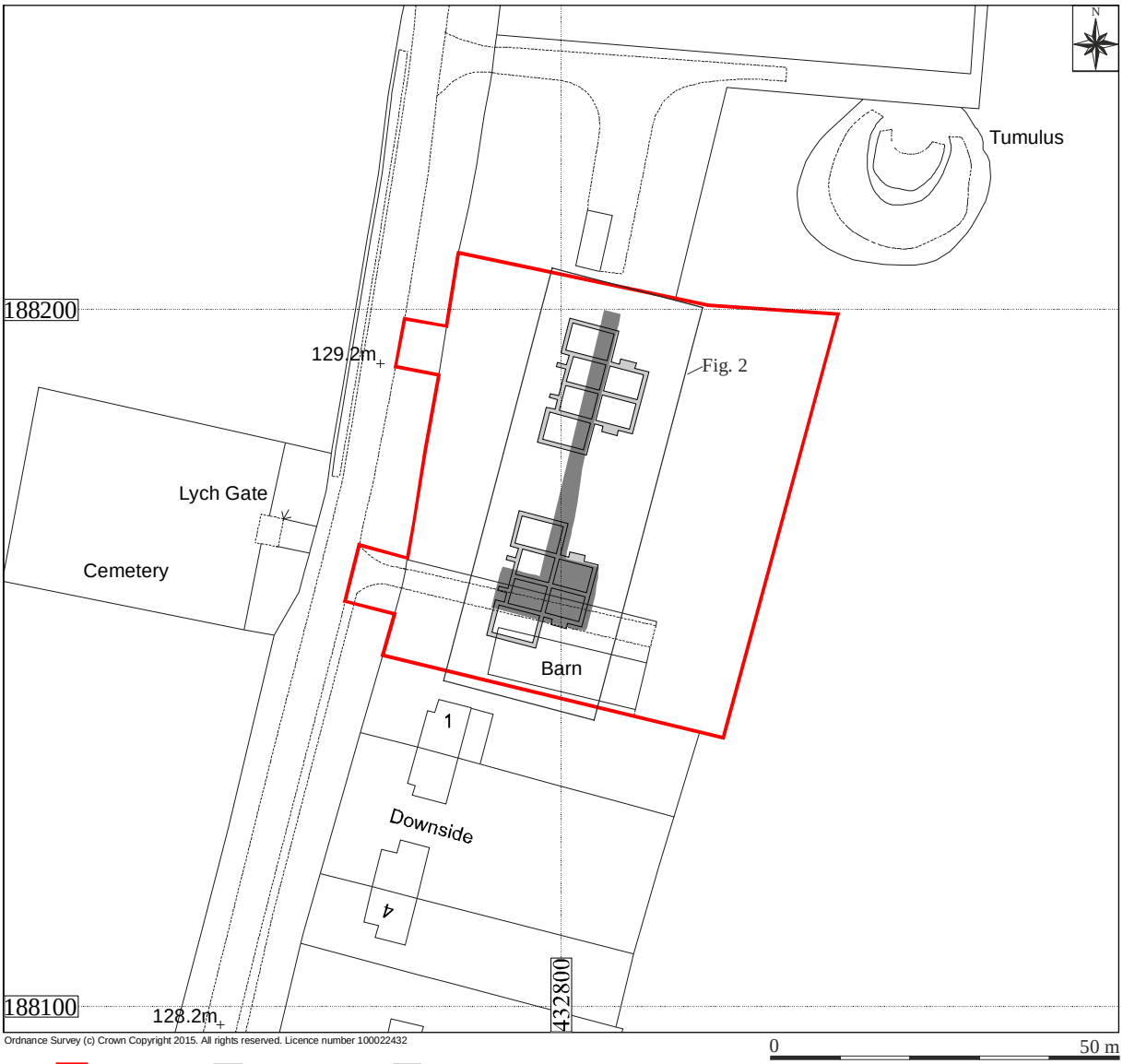
Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological features and deposits, the Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) on behalf of the Local Planning Authority required an archaeological watching brief during groundworks as a condition of the planning permission. OHaNET prepared a *Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief* (OHaNET 2015). This was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) was commissioned to undertake this work, and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2015) was prepared to satisfy the requirements of the *Design Brief*. This *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) proposed the methodology by which the archaeological watching brief was to be carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposed development lies in an area of considerable archaeological interest. Immediately north of the site is a possible Roman barrow and the field in which it is situated has produced Romano-British pottery sherds from the plough soil. The exact





Key Site boundary Monitored areas Area of *yard* surface and footpath

Figure 1: Site location

nature of this feature and its surrounding is not well understood at present (JMHS 2015; OHaNET 2015, 1).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the WSI were:

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To be aware of the possibility of finding remains relating to the known Roman remains known to the north.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

JMHS carried out an archaeological watching brief in accordance with the WSI (JMHS 2015). Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI (Sections 3.1 – 3.7).

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) and the principles of MoRPHE (Historic England 2015).

3.2 Methodology

Prior to the archaeological watching brief the hay and straw barn located at southern edge of the site was dismantled. Subsequently the site was cleaned of overgrown vegetation and slightly levelled.

An archaeologist was present on site during excavation of foundation trenches for the four semidetached dwellings. A JCB Site Master excavator fitted with a 0.60m wide bucket was used to excavate the foundation trenches.

Standard JMHS techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Figure 2)

All features and deposits were assigned with individual context numbers, except of modern services and land drains. Context numbers with no brackets indicate feature cuts, numbers in round brackets ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material and numbers in bold indicate any form of masonry.

The excavated foundation trenches were 0.62m wide, reached a maximum depth of 1.30m from the present ground surface, and measured 193m in total length (Fig. 2).

Within all foundation trenches three successive deposits were encountered (Fig. 2: S. 1, 2, 3; Pl. 1, 2, 3). The lowest deposit was >0.92m thick light greenish grey chalky clay with patches of yellowish light brown sand (103), interpreted as a natural deposit. It was overlaid by 0.14m thick subsoil (102), a mid grey loamy sandy clay. The uppermost layer was 0.16m to 0.27m thick dark grey silty loam (101), which represented topsoil. A moderate amount of small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and concrete were observed within the upper part of the topsoil.

Plate 1: Representative Section 1, showing deposits (101), (102) and (103)

Apart from the general deposits, several archaeological features of late 19th – 20th century date were recorded. Stratigraphically the earliest features seem to be two land drains built of short-length ceramic pipes. The land drains were parallel to each other and alighted approximately north to south (Fig. 2). Both land drains were set within a narrow construction cut, on average 0.60m below present ground surface.

Within the area of plots 1 and 2 two iron water pipes were observed (Fig. 2). The thicker pipe was presumably the main connection to the village water main. It was aligned northeast to southwest and at the east part of plot 2 it suddenly turned to the north. The second water pipe was thinner and orientated approximately in north and south direction. Within the eastern part of plot 4 a third iron water pipe and ceramic sewer pipe were observed. All services were located on average 0.50m below present ground surface and presumably were part of a same water supply system.

More significant features encountered during the watching brief were rubble footpath and yard surface (104) set within construction cut 106 (Fig 1, 2). The footpath was approximately 2.55m wide, over 35m long, oriented north-northeast to south-southwest located approximately in the middle of the site. At southern end it joined the yard surface, which minimum overall width of 14.25m, and length 9.5m. Construction cut 106 was 0.25m deep, excavated down to the top of natural deposit (103). The general profile of the construction cut 106 had steep

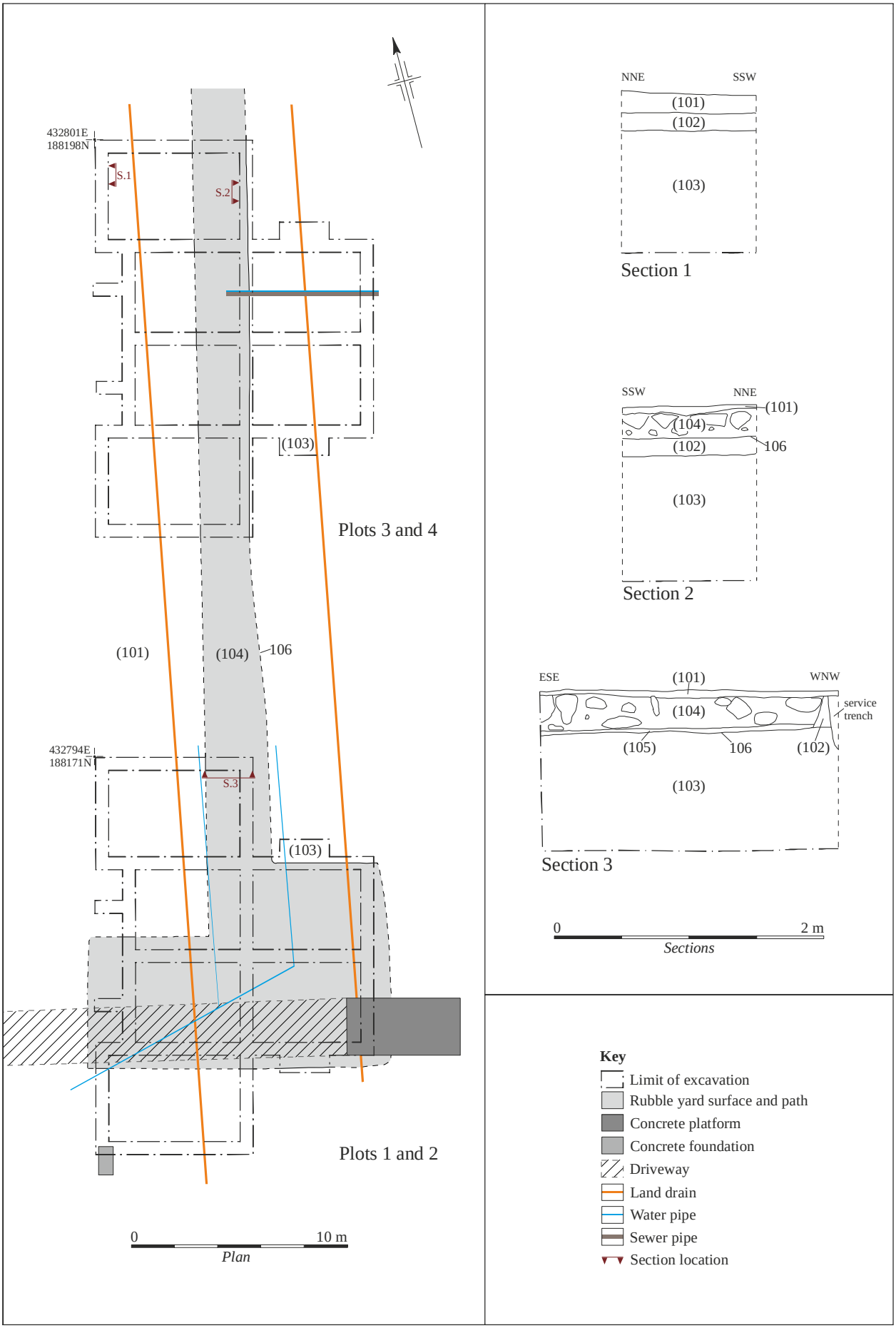


Figure 2: Monitored areas - plan and sections

concave sides and a flat base. The yard surface was formed of two successive layers. Lower layer (105) was 0.06m thick of very dark grey sandy cinder (Fig. 2: S. 3; Pl. 3). This deposit was present within the area of yard surface only. The main body of the yard surface and footpath was built of 0.19m thick layer formed predominantly of roughly worked sandstones (500×350×250mm), occasional small fragments of CBM and concrete, in a matrix of sandy gravel and silty loam (104) (Fig. 2: S. 2, 3; Pl. 2, 3).

Plate 2: Section 2, showing rubble footpath (104), 106 and deposits (102) and (103)

Plate 3: Section 3, showing *yard* surface (104), (105), 106 and deposit (103)

The south edge of the yard surface was overlaid by a driveway formed of thin layers of rubble building material, in particular CBM and concrete. At the east end of the driveway was a concrete platform, truncating the yard surface. The platform was 0.15m thick, 5.25m long and 2.65m wide. The driveway and concrete platform was related to the recently dismantled hay and straw barn. Also related with the barn was the concrete foundation observed in the southern foundation trench of plot 1 (Fig. 2).

4.2 Reliability of Results

The reliability of results is considered to be very good. The archaeological watching brief took place in changeable weather conditions with average light and visibility. Excellent cooperation from the ground workers ensured sufficient time to investigate and record the archaeological deposits to the appropriate standards.

5 FINDS

No significant archaeological find were obtained during the fieldwork, apart from small fragments of CBM, ceramic pipes and iron pipes, which were not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief was successful and meets the aims of the investigations, which were laid out in the WSI.

No archaeological futures or finds related with prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval activities were not encountered during the fieldwork.

Based on online available historical map dated from 1879 to 1913 (Old-Maps, NLS 1) the development site and surrounding areas were undeveloped in this period and were part of a field. Presumably in this period the two land drains observed within excavated foundation trenches were constructed.

Further cartographic evidence, 1959 Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1:25,000 (NLS 2) and 1960 OS plan 10,560 (Old-Maps) show the area south of the site as developed and three buildings standing on the actual site (Fig. 3). The recorded yard surface and footpath clearly match the blank areas between the buildings shown on the historical maps. With those building presumably was the associated water supply system observed during the fieldwork. The remains of the buildings were not present on the site, which suggest that buildings were temporary and had very low impact. However, the northern narrower end of the west building shown on the maps, matches with a small brick building located at neighbouring plot (Figs. 1 & 3).

According to the oral account of local inhabitants the development site has been known as *The Camp, built for Polish Prisoners of War (POW)*. Due to the fact that Poland was an ally with Britain during the Second World War (WWII), it is highly unlikely that the camp held Polish POWs.

However there are three possible interpretations of the actual purpose of the camp:

- The first possibility is that camp had an original function as a POW camp during WWII.

- The second possible interpretation is that troops of the Polish Armed Forces in the West were stationed in the camp during WWII.

- The third, more possible interpretation is that camp was one of numerous Polish resettlement camps in the United Kingdom in the period from 1946 to 1969, although Kingston Lisle has been not listed as a known camp (PRC).

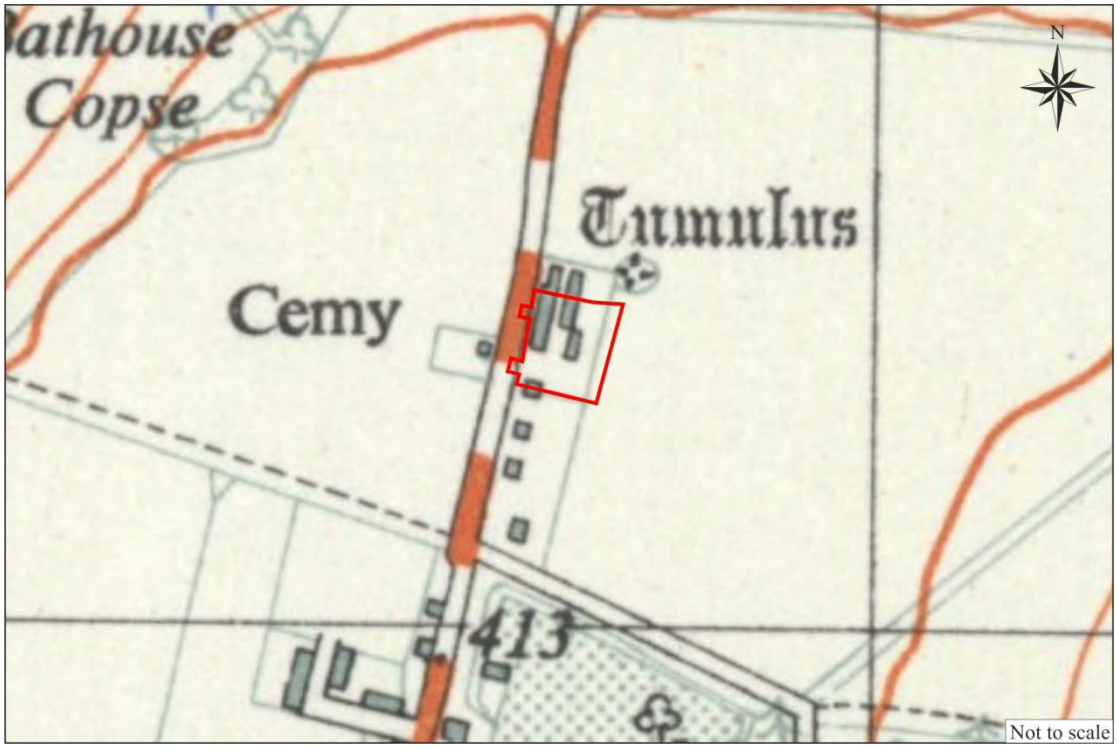


Figure 3: Detail of 1959 Ordnance Survey map 1: 25,000, showing the buildings of the camp. ©National Library of Scotland 2015

Further changes in the area were documented on 1970-71 OS map 1:2,500 (Old-Maps). The buildings of the camp were not shown on the map. In fact the map shows the current plot arrangement in the area, with the hay and straw barn, which was dismounted prior the new development, and the driveway on the development site.

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