



# Drymeadow WW2 Camp Former RAF Innsworth Gloucestershire

## Historic Building Investigation and Recording

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# Drymeadow WW2 Camp, RAF Innsworth, Gloucestershire

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## Summary

Oxford Archaeology has undertaken historic building recording works at a former Second World War military camp near Drymeadow Farm in Innsworth, Gloucestershire prior to the removal of the buildings as part of the major Taylor Wimpey Whittle Gardens redevelopment. The buildings are not listed but they are of some local heritage interest having together formed one of a number of accommodation camps associated with the nearby RAF Innsworth. RAF Innsworth was principally used by the Womens Auxiliary Air Force.

Fifteen structures from the camp survive and remain partially visible while another two are thought to survive but are totally obscured by vegetation. The structures can be divided into three distinct types: surface air raid shelters constructed from prefabricated concrete panels; brick ablution blocks; and further similar brick huts which incorporated sleeping accommodation and WCs.

The buildings are of limited conventional heritage significance but they are the type of structure which was constructed in huge numbers but is very rarely recorded prior to demolition. The recording will help in developing a wider typology of such buildings constructed at camps throughout the country.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 This report has been commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Taylor Wimpey to record several surviving structures from a former military camp associated with RAF Innsworth in Gloucestershire. The site is located at Drymeadow Farm and it forms a part of a major ongoing residential development at Innsworth (the Pond 2 part of this development). This will ultimately become part of Taylor Wimpey's Whittle Gardens Development.
- 1.1.2 These structures have no statutory protection but they are of some local interest and therefore they have been recorded for posterity despite there being no formal planning requirement for this. The building recording is part of a larger scheme of below-ground archaeological recording across the development area at Innsworth (Planning reference 15/00749/OUT).
- 1.1.3 The structures at Drymeadow are thought to survive from one of a number of former accommodation camps which date from the Second World War and which were associated with RAF Innsworth. OA has also recently undertaken building recording on another of these camps, located to the east of the current site and in the Road 6 area of the wider Innsworth development.

### **1.2 Location**

- 1.2.1 The Pond 2 area where the structures are located is to the west of the village of Innsworth on the northern edge of Gloucester (centred on SO 85099 21358). It is immediately to the north and east of Dry Meadow Lane, at the west end of Innsworth Lane, and it is within the borough of Tewksbury. In the current project the site has been called Drymeadow Camp due to it being within the land of Drymeadow Farm although it is not known whether the camp was ever actually known by this name.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives**

- 1.3.1 The main aim of the project was to record the structures prior to their demolition and subsequent development of the area. As there was no requirement for recording, the buildings were recorded at level 1-2 in accordance with HE guidelines (2016). A short programme of research was undertaken in order to provide historical context to the recording.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1.1 As stated above the recording was undertaken at Level 1-2. Level 1 surveys are generally of a building's exterior only, although the inside of a building may sometimes be seen to make a superficial inspection. Level 2 is a descriptive record, made in circumstances similar to those of Level 1 but when more information is needed. Both the exterior and interior is viewed, described and photographed. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive.

### 2.1.2 Site recording

2.1.3 The on-site recording was undertaken in June 2020. Digital photographs were taken showing the external appearance of the buildings and the interiors where possible although some structures are so covered in thick vegetation such as brambles that they are barely visible. Internal inspection of some of the structures was also limited by vegetation and other factors. Vegetation clearance was not included in the scope of works. Photographs were taken to show the general appearance of the landscape and buildings, as well as more detailed photographs of features of interest. These showed the buildings' design, development and use as well as structural or decorative details.

2.1.4 A written record was produced for each building to provide descriptive analysis in terms of its architecture, setting, construction, development and use. Some basic measurements and sketches of the buildings were taken where possible, although close inspection was problematic due to brambles surrounding the structures.

### 2.1.5 Historical Research

2.1.6 A short program of historical research was completed mostly using online sources, particularly the HE website 'Pastscapes', which established that the buildings were part of a much larger camp.

### 2.1.7 Reporting and archiving

2.1.8 The archive will be compiled in accordance with the standards contained in MAP2 (HE) and with the receiving museum's guidance (Gloucestershire Museums Service). It will include all records collected and produced during the works (photographs, notes, drawings, report) and it will form part of the much larger archive including archaeological works at the site. All archive storage material will comply with the requirements of the UKIC. The archive will be indexed and internally consistent.

## 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1 RAF Innsworth

- 3.1.1 The structures described within this report are thought to be the remains of a former Second World War accommodation camp, which was a satellite of RAF Innsworth, c.1 km to the east.
- 3.1.2 RAF Innsworth was a non-flying RAF Station which opened in 1940 and the first unit to be based there was the No 7 School of Technical Training. The start of training only began in 1941, delayed by the unexpected arrival of 1500 RAF evacuees from Dunkirk in the summer of 1940, and then in December 1941 No 2 WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) Depot was opened at Innsworth. From then on the station became increasingly associated with the women's branch of the service and by the end of 1941 there were more than 4,000 servicemen and women based here. By this end of the war this had increased to 5000.
- 3.1.3 Eventually it was decided to reserve the station almost exclusively for WAAF training and in the post-war period the station retained this role with the opening of No. 2 RAF School of Cookery in 1948. Various changes were undertaken at Innsworth over the years, and in 2005 it was announced that HQ Personnel and Training Command was to co-locate with HQ RAF Strike Command at RAF High Wycombe. The RAF station closed in March 2008 and the site was passed to the army, reopening as Imjin Barracks.

### 3.2 Camp in current study

- 3.2.1 The structures which form the focus of the current study are located in an area to the east of Drymeadow Farm, alongside a track (Drymeadow Lane) which extends towards Drymeadow Lodge. The Victoria County History reports that in 1640 Drymeadow House was then called Wicks Hay and it belonged to a Bristol Merchant called Edward Capel. The house was later rebuilt in brick.
- 3.2.2 Historic Ordnance Survey maps show that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the area around Drymeadow House and extending down towards Drymeadow Lodge comprised light woodland or orchards with an irregular track along the northern edge and a large pond toward the south. This irregular track formed the only route between the house and the lodge and it is on a different alignment to the more direct modern route.
- 3.2.3 The next available map is the OS 1:10,560 from 1953 and this shows the military camp that was established in this area during the Second World War, as well as the much larger main RAF Innsworth complex established c.1 km to the east. The map shows c.24 detached structures to the east of Drymeadow Farm not shown on the previous map, most of which are to the south of the irregular track which at this time provided the main route between Drymeadow House and Lodge. A new track had been formed by this date providing a more direct route into the camp from the east and this is what has now become the main route towards the farm.
- 3.2.4 The camp buildings shown on the map are all relatively small with regular rectangular plans but unlike the main RAF Innsworth site they do not follow a grid pattern and are arranged irregularly around the site. The buildings were probably deliberately laid out with an irregular pattern rather than a grid to make them less identifiable as a military camp

from the air. Such camps were also often situated along the edges of fields or in woodland to conceal them.

- 3.2.5 An aerial photograph taken on 21 March 1947 survives on the *Britain from Above* website (ref: EAW004058), shows extensive flooding to the north of Gloucester and including the camp in the current project. The image suggests that most of the buildings at the camp would have avoided the worst of the flooding although some structures in the central area would have been affected.
- 3.2.6 The main information that we have on this camp and associated ones around Innsworth is from the Pastscape website which includes four related entries.
- 3.2.7 The entry relating specifically to the site in the current study is numbered 1585413 and it states:
- 3.2.8 *'A Second World War Royal Air Force camp is visible on historic aerial photographs and was mapped as part of the Severn Vale NMP project. Located on a lane immediately north-west of Little Innsworth Farm on Innsworth Lane and centred on SO 85092 21319, this camp has an area of about 34,376 square metres and was a satellite camp for nearby RAF Innsworth. Rectangular military huts about 20 x 5.5 metres are scattered irregularly along a single access road and adjacent hedgelines. This is likely to have been an accommodation site. Aerial photographs taken in 1959 show that many of the camp's buildings have been demolished, with just the concrete hut platforms visible. However, some huts remained upstanding. Aerial photographs taken in 1959 show the camp is in a state of abandonment, though the camp layout is still clearly marked out on Ordnance Survey maps dated to 1971. The camp is now covered in encroaching woodland, though some of the huts are still visible in aerial photographs taken in 2010 and at least one air raid shelter also remains apparently intact.'*
- 3.2.9 The Pastscape website details four other sites which relate to this camp; these are reference numbers:
- 1585417 – accommodation camp to east of current site, recently recorded by OA (NGR: SO 85939 21217)
  - 1585409 – the main RAF Innsworth, now Imjin Barracks (NGR: SO 86574 21604);
  - 1585415 – site to south of Innsworth Lane (NGR: SO 86016 21029)
  - 1585411 – a site to south of Drymeadow Lane which is now Innsworth Technology Park (NGR: SO 85279 20978).
- 3.2.10 The RAF Museum has been contacted as part of the current project regarding material they may hold on the site and they confirmed that their only plan of RAF Innsworth is from 1975, long after our site became disused. This has not been seen in the current project but it seems very unlikely that it would show the current structures.

## 4 DESCRIPTION OF CAMP

### 4.1 Overall site

- 4.1.1 The site of the military camp which forms the subject of the current study is located on former farmland immediately to the east of Drymeadow Farm and it is accessed by a private track off Innsworth Lane. The 1953 OS map suggests that there would originally have been c.24 buildings at the camp, clustered to either side of the historic track which provided access to Drymeadow Farm and which skirted around the northern boundary of an orchard. Just over half of these structures substantially or partially survive today.
- 4.1.2 The track which the buildings were located to either side of is now heavily overgrown and no more than a little used footpath and its historic function as a route to the farm has been replaced by a more direct concrete track a short distance to the south. This more direct track is not shown on the pre-war Ordnance Survey maps and it may well be that it was constructed when the military camp was established, not principally to serve the camp but to provide a new route to the farm which did not involve passing through the camp.
- 4.1.3 The farmhouse from Drymeadow Farm no longer survives but a number of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century barns do remain standing at the former farmstead, still in use and accessed by the concrete track (Pl. 61, 62). There is also some use of the area by an angling club who fish in the pond immediately south of the former camp.
- 4.1.4 The camp was abandoned in the years following the Second World War and other than numerous empty shotgun cartridges inside some of the structures suggesting firing practice, there is little sign of the buildings having been put to significant reuse. Many of the structures are covered in heavy vegetation (brambles etc) and clearing this has not been undertaken in the current project.
- 4.1.5 It is believed that this camp would simply have provided sleeping accommodation, with ablutions, and that communal facilities such as the dining room and institute would have been elsewhere.

### 4.2 Condition and accessibility of surviving structures

- 4.2.1 In terms of their condition and accessibility the structures at the site can be divided into the following broad groups:
- Twelve buildings which survive substantially or entirely intact and which are accessible; these are the structures which have been recorded in the current project (Building No's 1-12 in current study)
  - Two buildings which are heavily overgrown so that they are not accessible and can barely be seen. It has not been possible to make a meaningful record of these although we know what type of structures they are because they can be glimpsed through the vegetation. These are Building No's 13-14 in current study.
  - Two structures that are so overgrown that we cannot see any part of them although the mounds of vegetation suggest that they survive. These are Building No's 15-16 in current study.
  - Various other former structures from which little more than the concrete slab survives. These have not been numbered in the current study.

### 4.3 Typology of the buildings at the site

4.3.1 The fifteen surviving buildings which can be seen and assessed (although two are barely visible) can be divided into three distinct types. These are:

- Air raid shelters constructed from pre-cast concrete panels (7 surviving)
- Brick hut Type A (dormitories and WCs; six surviving)
- Brick hut Type B (ablutions; Two blocks surviving).

4.3.2 The air raid shelters are easily identifiable but the two types of brick structure are of similar construction to each other and the two types are only easily distinguishable by the fact that the interior of Type A is subdivided whereas Type B is open plan.

4.3.3 It should be noted that some blocks only partially survive so it has sometimes been assumed that details of some blocks follow the overall typology.

### 4.4 Brick Type A (dormitories and WCs)

4.4.1 The most common type of brick hut at this camp is defined here as *Type A* and they are believed to have formed combined sleeping quarters and WCs. There are six such blocks (No's 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12) each one of simple rectangular plan (8.8m x 3.2m or 28ft x 10 ft) and with a single pitch roof covered with corrugated asbestos panels. They are of single skin brick (stretcher bond) rendered externally and with four thin supporting piers to the main elevations (including piers at each corner). One of the main long elevations in each Type A block has three cast-iron framed windows (one in each bay) but the other long elevation has four windows: one in the central bay, one in one of the end bays and two in the other end bay. Several of the windows have been blocked. There is a single doorway at each end of the building; all the openings are beneath concrete lintels.

4.4.2 The roof structures are of very simple construction comprising four long timber purlins supported by two evenly sloped L-section steel joists. There are also fragments of electric light fittings.

4.4.3 The interior of each building is divided into two rooms: a main two-bay room and a smaller single bay room at one end. The internal faces of the walls are of exposed brick and it can be seen that a variety of brick types were used, possibly reflecting wartime brick shortages and the necessity to use materials from different suppliers.

4.4.4 The 2-bay rooms are generally relatively featureless but each of the smaller single bay rooms comprised three toilet cubicles. The cubicles survive best in Building 10; in the other examples of *Type A* the cubicle partitions have been largely removed although scars to the walls show their former outline.

4.4.5 In determining the function of the *Type A* blocks it is clear from the cubicles that one of the bays comprised WCs but it is less clear what the two-bay spaces were used for. It was initially thought likely that these rooms would have incorporated ablutions so that the water supply was concentrated into one building type but that now seems unlikely. Other evidence suggests that the other type of brick hut (*Type B*) formed the ablution blocks and the two-bay rooms in the Type A blocks would have formed sleeping quarters (discussed further below).

- 4.4.6 This may be suggested by a concrete tray on the floor in the main room of Building 1 which could have formed the base for a small dormitory stove although there is no clear evidence of a flue hole in the roof.

## 4.5 Brick Type B (Ablutions)

- 4.5.1 The other type of brick hut at this camp (Type B) is externally very similar to Type A, being of rendered single-skin brick construction and with four projecting piers in each long elevation and a single pitch roof covered in corrugated asbestos panels. There are two surviving examples of this type of building at Drymeadow (No's 5 & 7) and again each has a rectangular plan (8.8m x 3.2m) but unlike Type A there are no doors in the end walls; instead each building had two doorways in one of the long elevations (one towards each end). The other long elevation has a single 4-light, metal-framed window in each of the three bays.
- 4.5.2 One of the doorways in Building 5 has been blocked and converted to a window (which itself was then also blocked).
- 4.5.3 The interiors of each of the Type B blocks comprise single, open-plan rooms and there are rendered horizontal bands along each of the long walls between c.0.75m and 1.25m above the floor. The outline of what were presumably rows of sinks immediately beneath these rendered bands is visible and traces of paint survive to the exposed brickwork above the render.
- 4.5.4 The floor is a concrete slab and it incorporates simple open drainage channels along the building beneath where the sinks would have been located.
- 4.5.5 The roof structure is essentially the same as in Type A comprising L-section lengths of steel sloping across the building and supporting long softwood members extending the full length of the building.
- 4.5.6 It is interesting to note that the two Type B buildings are in slightly better condition than the other structures, substantially retaining their roof covering, and they appear to have had some reuse for storage or other utilitarian purposes. The door to Building 5 appears to have been a secondary (post-war) alteration and there are a large number of spent shotgun cartridges on the floor.

## 4.6 Air raid shelters

- 4.6.1 The seven visible air raid shelters (Building No's 2, 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17) are all of an identical form set at ground level (or only slightly sunken) and with a rectangular plan main body (c.9.75 m x 2.4 m) constructed from simple prefabricated reinforced-concrete panels (39 cm wide). The walls and roof are each formed from a series of matching interconnecting panels and rendered externally. Each panel has a very shallow U-profile with an increased thickness around their edge.
- 4.6.2 It is believed that the sides of each shelter would have been largely or entirely covered with protective earth banking but this has been removed from most of the structures at this site. Most only have relatively low earth banks (30-40cm) set against their sides.
- 4.6.3 Each shelter has a single entrance at one end with a brick blast lobby constructed against it to protect the doorway and interior. Thus each doorway is approached from the side along a passage 1.3m wide. At the opposite end to the doorway in each shelter is a vertical

square plan hatch which would have allowed some ventilation and could also have formed an emergency exit if the main door became blocked. Directly above this hatch is a concrete lined shaft that projects above the main roof and is capped by a metal sheet raised very slightly to protect against the elements while also allowing ventilation around the edge.

- 4.6.4 In this area beneath the shaft the floor of the shelter was slightly raised and there may have been a rudimentary toilet here.
- 4.6.5 Each shelter has a concrete floor although in some cases these are obscured by earth or detritus. None of the doors appear to be insitu and there are no significant surviving fittings, artefacts or historic graffiti.
- 4.6.6 It is interesting to note that the shelters in the current study are of the same type to one previously recorded by OA at one of the other RAF Innsworth accommodation blocks (OA, 2019).

## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The Second World War camp at Drymeadow Farm is a site of local heritage interest and a small example of the huge impact that the war had on this part of the country. It was associated with the nearby RAF Innsworth and was one of several dispersed accommodation camps nearby which would have housed servicewomen and men based at Innsworth.
- 5.1.2 This part of Innsworth is currently undergoing a major development and the remaining structures from the camp are being cleared as part of this. Although the buildings are not listed they are of some heritage interest and a programme of historic building recording has been undertaken for posterity prior to their removal.
- 5.1.3 Seventeen structures from the camp largely or partially survive although originally there would have been at least 24 ranges. The buildings can be divided into three types: surface air raid shelters constructed from pre-fabricated concrete panels, rectangular brick huts which would have formed ablutions blocks and similar brick huts which appear to have formed sleeping quarters and WCs. The women and men would have shared communal facilities such as Dining Rooms and the Institute elsewhere.
- 5.1.4 The two types of brick hut are of similar construction with relatively few features to confirm their use other than the WC cubicles at one end of each *Type A* block. It was initially thought likely that *Type A* was therefore a combined ablutions and WC block as combining these into the same building would seem logical. This would have meant that the *Type B* blocks were dormitory ranges. However, this now seems unlikely, partly as this would have meant there were six surviving ablutions blocks to the two sleeping ranges but also because there are drain gulleys in the floor of the *Type B* blocks which shows that they must have been washing facilities. It must therefore be that the *Type A* blocks incorporated sleeping quarters in the two bay rooms as well as WCs in the end bays.
- 5.1.5 The buildings are of very simple construction and limited conventional heritage significance but they are the type of structures which are very rarely recorded and the current work is therefore of value. The work will help in developing a wider typology of huts constructed during the Second World War at other military camps. It also adds to previous building recording undertaken by OA at another of RAF Innsworth's accommodation camps.

## APPENDIX A      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Old maps

<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/385939/221217/13/101329>

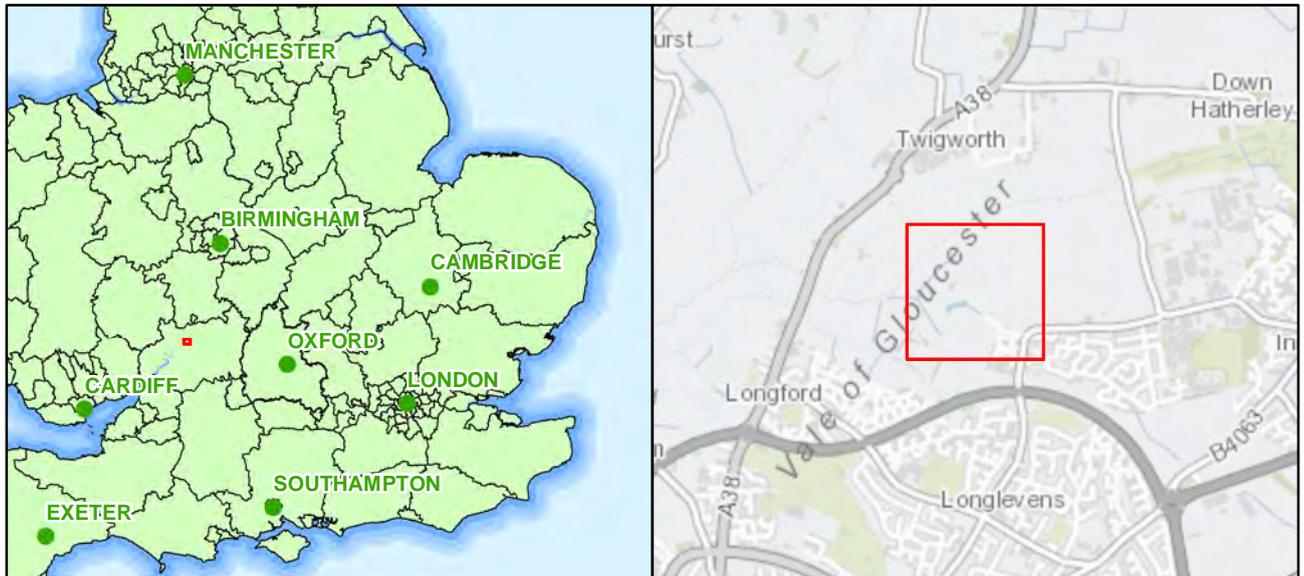
Wikipedia

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF\\_Innsworth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Innsworth)

## APPENDIX B

## SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	Military Camp, RAF Innsworth, Gloucestershire
<b>Site code:</b>	OAINN20
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SO85099 21358
<b>Type:</b>	Building recording
<b>Date and duration:</b>	June 2020
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	Level 1-2 building recording of a former military camp within land at Drymeadow Farm, Innsworth, Gloucestershire. Fifteen structures survive which could be divided into three distinct types: surface air raid shelters; brick ablutions blocks and combined sleeping quarters with WCs (also constructed from brick).
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Gloucestershire County Museum Service in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

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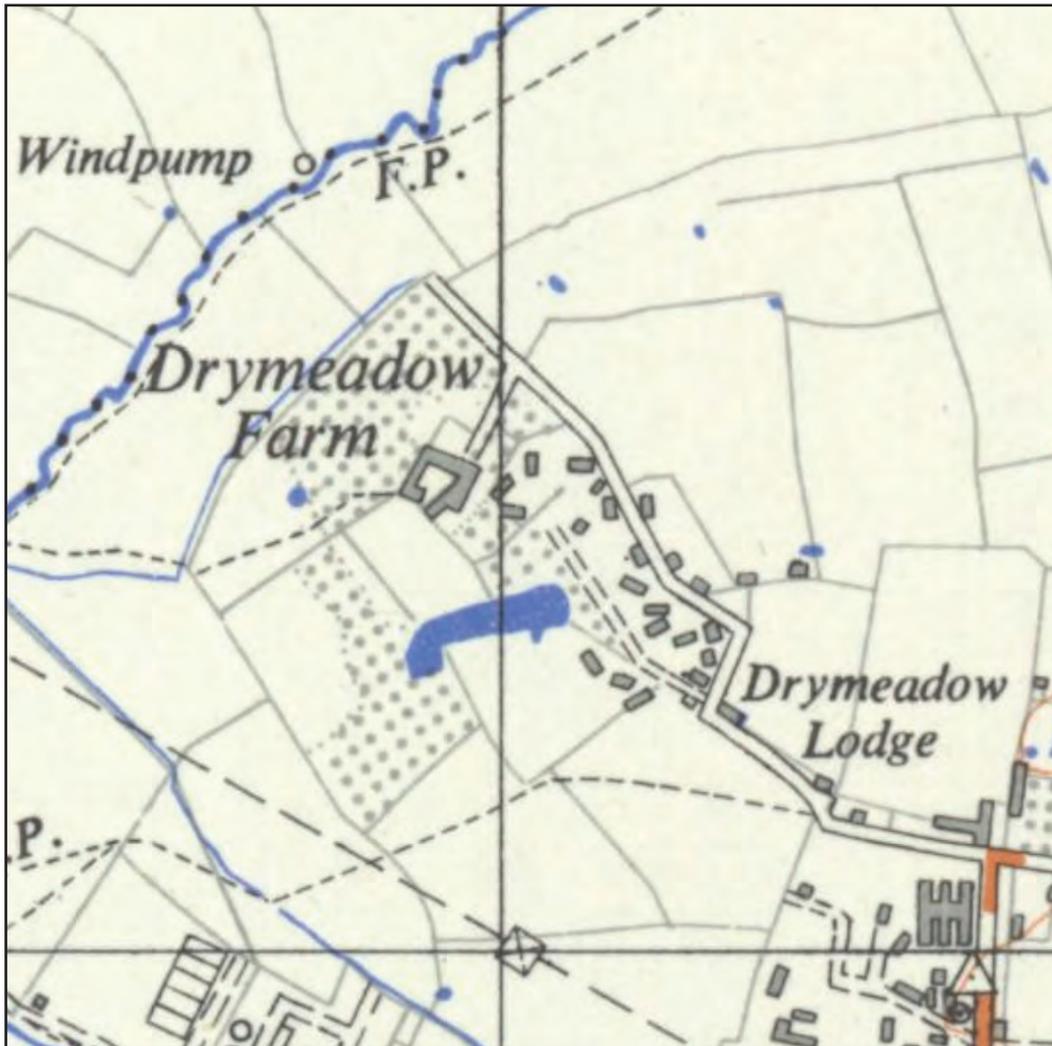
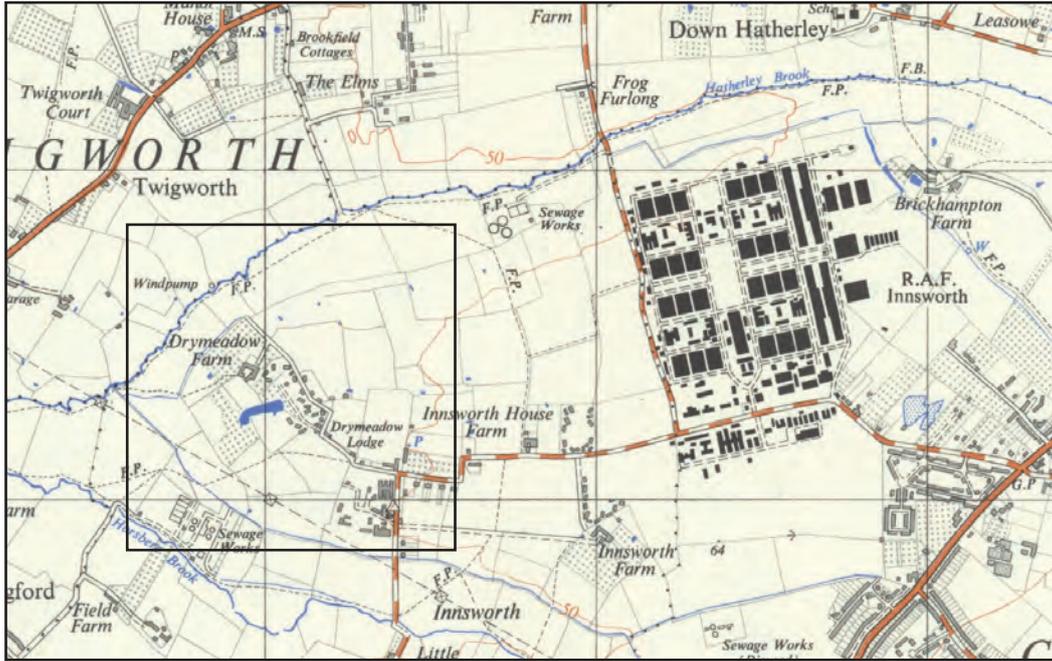


Figure 2: Extract from 1951 Ordnance Survey map

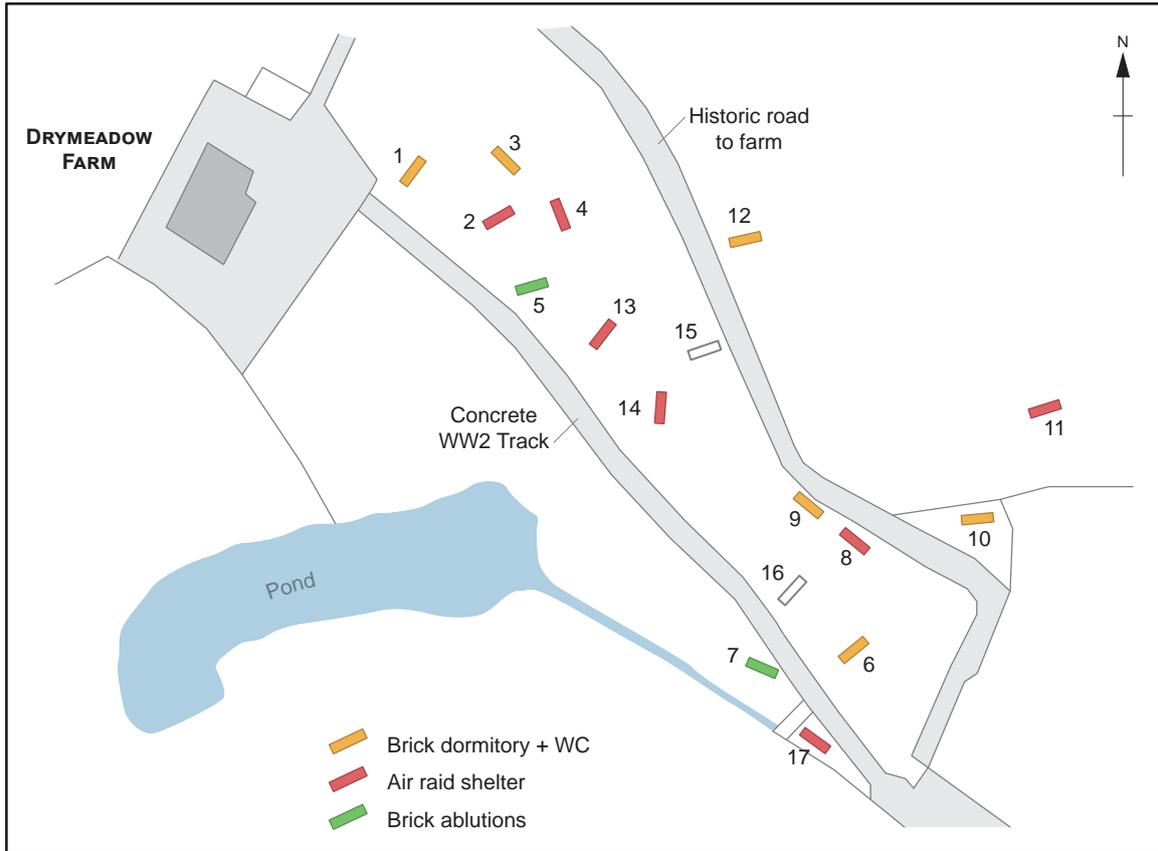


Figure 3: Sketch plan of site



Plate 1: SW elevation of Building 1 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 2: NE elevation of Building 1 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 3: WC bay within Building 1



Plate 4: Metal window within Building 1



Plate 5: Sleeping quarters within Building 1



Plate 6: Sleeping quarters within Building 1



Plate 7: Sleeping quarters within Building 1



Plate 8: Concrete lined base within Building 1



Plate 9: Building 2 (Air Raid Shelter) looking east



Plate 10: Entrance at SW end of Building 2 (Air Raid Shelter)



Plate 11: Interior of Building 2 looking north-east



Plate 12: Detritus at NE end of Building 2



Plate 13: Hatch at NE end of Building 2



Plate 14: Building 2 (Air Raid Shelter) looking south



Plate 15: Building 2 (Air Raid Shelter) looking west



Plate 16: Building 3 (Dormitory & WC) looking south



Plate 17: Building 3 (Dormitory & WC) looking east



Plate 18: SE elevation of Building 3 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 19: WC bay within Building 3



Plate 20: Building 4 (Air Raid Shelter) looking east



Plate 21: Building 4 (Air Raid Shelter) looking north



Plate 22: Building 4 with Building 3 to rear



Plate 23: Entrance at north end of Building 4



Plate 24: Interior of Building 4

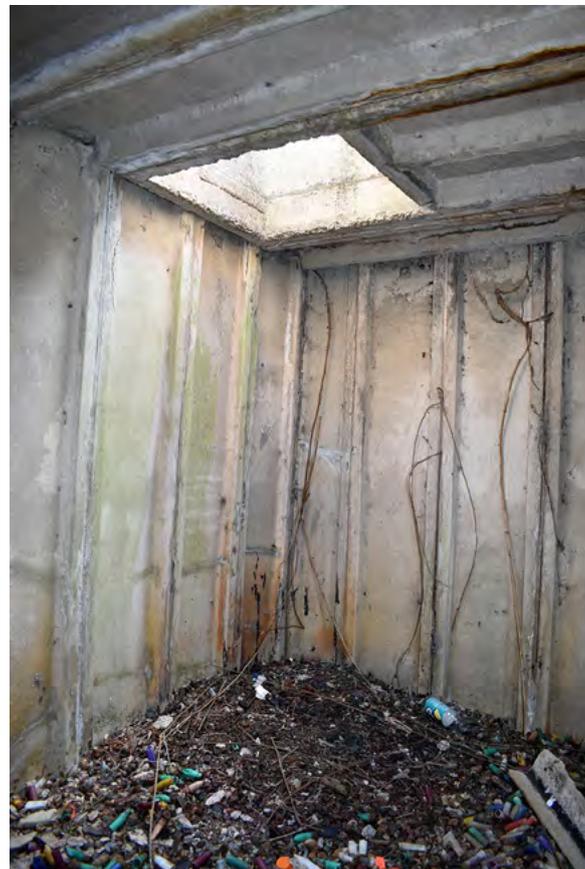


Plate 25: Hatch at south end of Building 4



Plate 26: South side of Building 5 (Ablutions)



Plate 27: West side of Building 5 (Ablutions)



Plate 28: North side of Building 5



Plate 29: North side of Building 5



Plate 30: Interior of Building 5 looking east



Plate 31: Interior of Building 5 looking south



Plate 32: SE corner of Building 5



Plate 33: Interior of Building 5 looking south



Plate 34: Detail of roof in Building 5



Plate 35: North wall in Building 5



Plate 36: Blocked doorway at east end of north wall in Building 5



Plate 37: SW end of Building 6 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 38: Building 6 looking north



Plate 39: Interior of Building 6



Plate 40: NE end of Building 6



Plate 41: WC bay within Building 6



Plate 42: WC bay within Building 6



Plate 43: West end of Building 7 (Ablutions)



Plate 44: South side of Building 7 (Ablutions)



Plate 45: Interior of Building 7 looking east



Plate 46: Interior of Building 7 looking NE



Plate 47: Interior of Building 7 looking west



Plate 48: NE side of Building 8 (Air Raid Shelter)



Plate 49: Part of NE side of Building 9 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 50: Interior of Building (Dormitory)



Plate 51: West side of Building 10 (Dormitory & WC)



Plate 52: South side of Building 10



Plate 53: North end of Building 10



Plate 54: East side of Building 10



Plate 55: Cubicles in end bay of Building 10



Plate 56: Cubicles in end bay of Building 10



Plate 57: Metal framed window in Building 10



Plate 58: Interior of Building 11 (Air Raid Shelter)



Plate 59: Remains of Building 12



Plate 60: Surviving buildings in Drymeadow Farm (adjacent to camp)



Plate 61: Barn at Drymeadow Farm (adjacent to camp)





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