

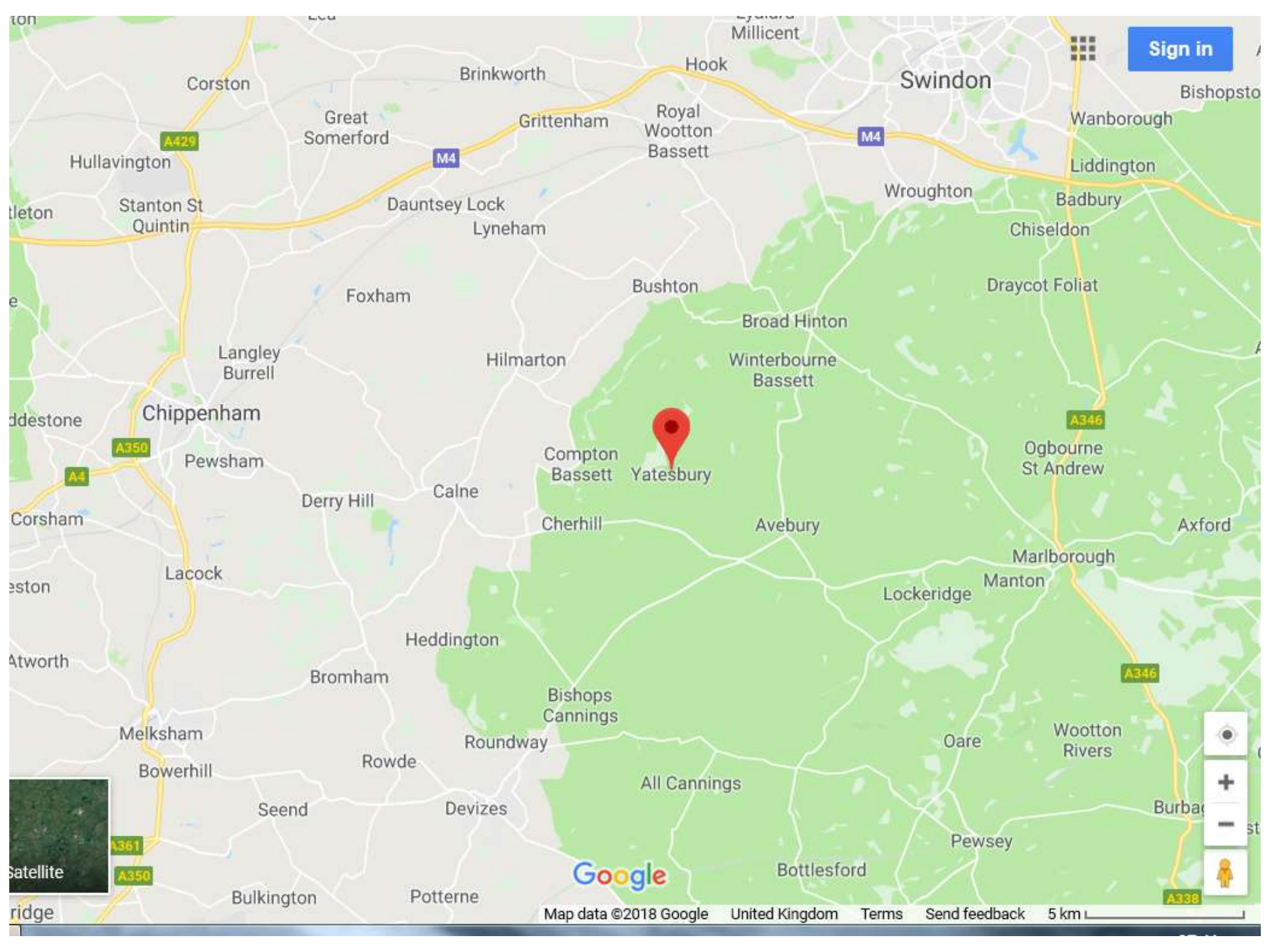
# Fitting the pieces together of the Great War POW camp at Yatesbury



Dan Miles, Wiltshire First World War Conference

# What I am going to talk about today

- The Project
- There were German POWs at Yatesbury
- What were they doing?
- Identifying the camp's location



Sign in





# Yatesbury – the aerodrome..







1916-18. Yatesbury, R.E.8. & an Avro getting mixed up.

G.K.Chivers



The Horace. W.C. Smith. Collection.

1918. Yatesbury. Bristol Fighter.

G.K.Chivers

# RFC Yatesbury Community Project

**Organised by Finding the Forgotten**  
**in partnership with the Wilts Arch Field Group**

WITH:

- Yatesbury History Society – especially Gordon Chivers
- Trowbridge Metal detecting Club
- Young WAHNS
- Cherhill Scouts
- Archaeological Surveys Ltd
- Lots of interested individuals – especially Bob Clarke, Jon Sanigar and Keith Rothery



## Fieldwalking and metaldetecting







Test pitting











**Not many sub surface remains**

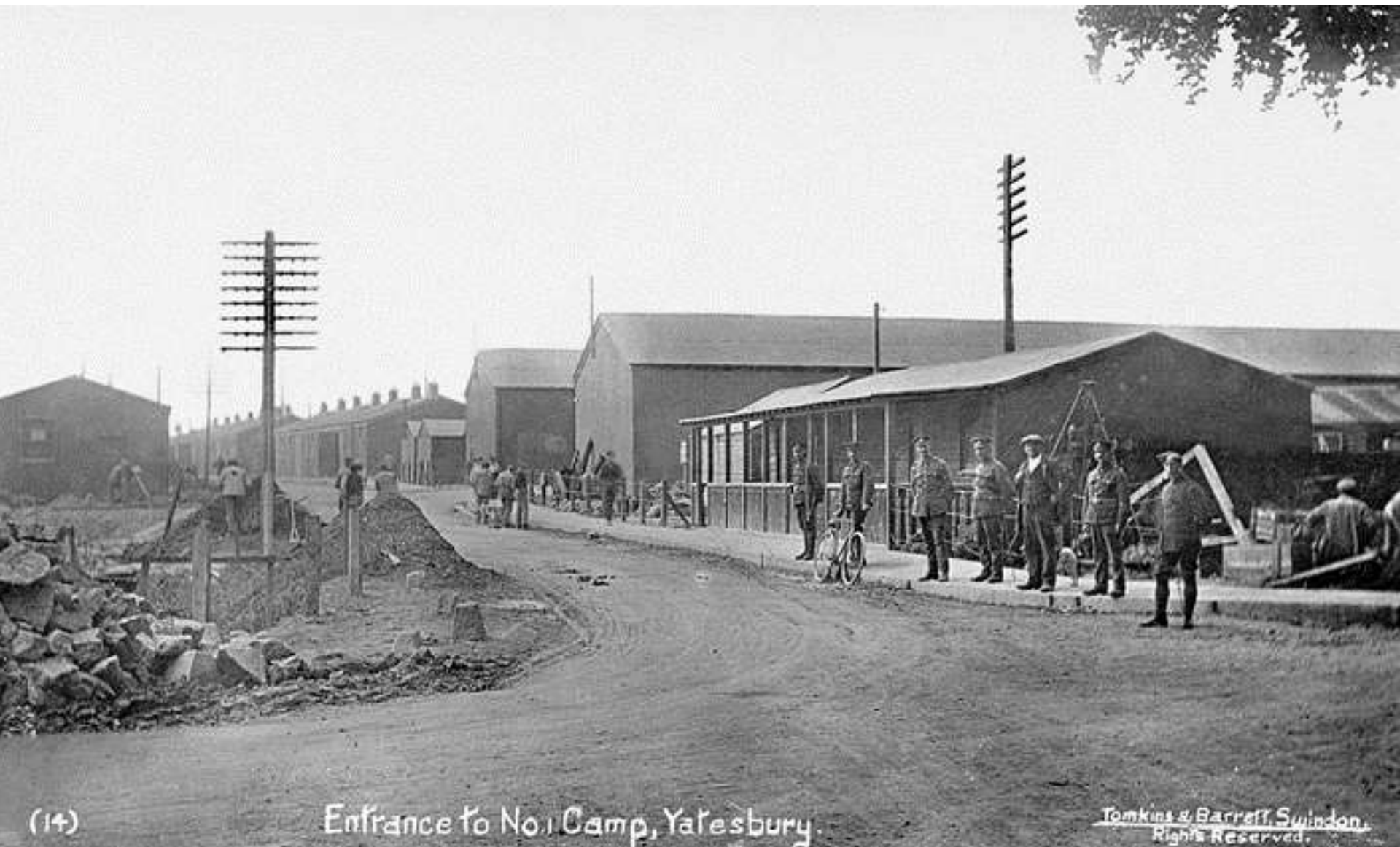




But lots of cool finds....



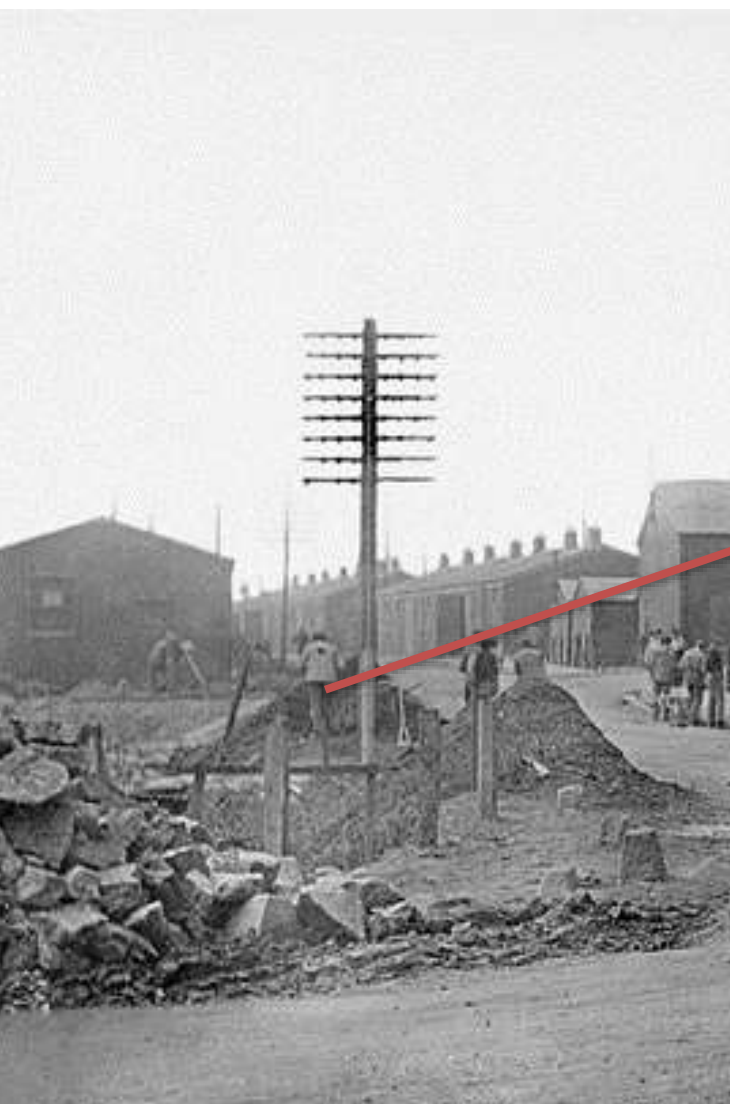
# Evidence of the German POWs



(14)

Entrance to No. 1 Camp, Yalesbury.

Tomkins & Barrett, Swindon.  
Rights Reserved.



(14)

Entrance to No. 1 Camp, Salisbury.



Swindon.  
Rights Reserved.

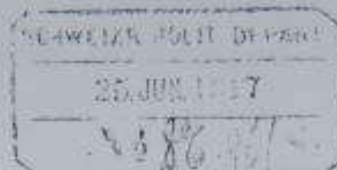






*Begleitbrief vom 19. Juni Nr 797.  
Sanier St. 12/32.*

SWISS LEGATION,  
GERMAN DIVISION  
9, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE,  
LONDON S.W. 1.



May 31st 1917.

*16  
12/32*

Sir,

I have the honour to submit a report covering a visit of inspection to the Prisoners of war Camp at Yatesbury, Wiltshire, on May 28th, 1917.

Yatesbury Camp is situated on an immense plain at about 500 feet above the sea level.

The German Internment Camp is situated at the edge of beautiful woods, which protect it from the north winds. It was opened on December 14th, 1916 and is dependent upon Blandford. The nearest railway station is Calne, several miles away.

DIRECTION.

Captain A. H. Mursell is the Commandant, and Captain Pigeron, R.A.M.C. is the surgeon.

PRISONERS.

There are 793 German Prisoners here, of which 764 are military and 29 naval men. Warrant officer, Otto Hess (Steuermann d. Res) is the German "Captain".

# The German POWs arrive October 1916



# PRISONERS OF WAR EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE.

Name of camp.	Nature of work.	Number of prisoners of war.	
		Com- batants.	Civilians.

WAR OFFICE.			
AVIATION.			
Castle Bromwich	Aerodrome	...	105
Yatesbury	"	...	369*
Coal Aston	"	...	398
S. Carlton, Monk's Abbey.	"	...	220
Cove	"	...	280
Radford	"	...	479
Martlesham Heath.	"	...	172
Mill Hill	"	...	299
Dalmellington	"	...	395
Queensferry	Aircraft park.	acceptance	235
Halton Park	Aerodrome	...	600
Northfield, Bir- mingham.	"	...	248
			3,086
			714
		3,800	

Camp under construction April 1917



55U.2.  
26.4.17.





Tented accommodation

Construction of the General Service Sheds

55U.2.  
26.4.17.



# Contravening the Hague Convention

Prisoners may be used to work for the public service or for private persons, but shall have no connection with the operations of the war

# Finding the location of the POW camp





Potential location in the context of the aerodrome



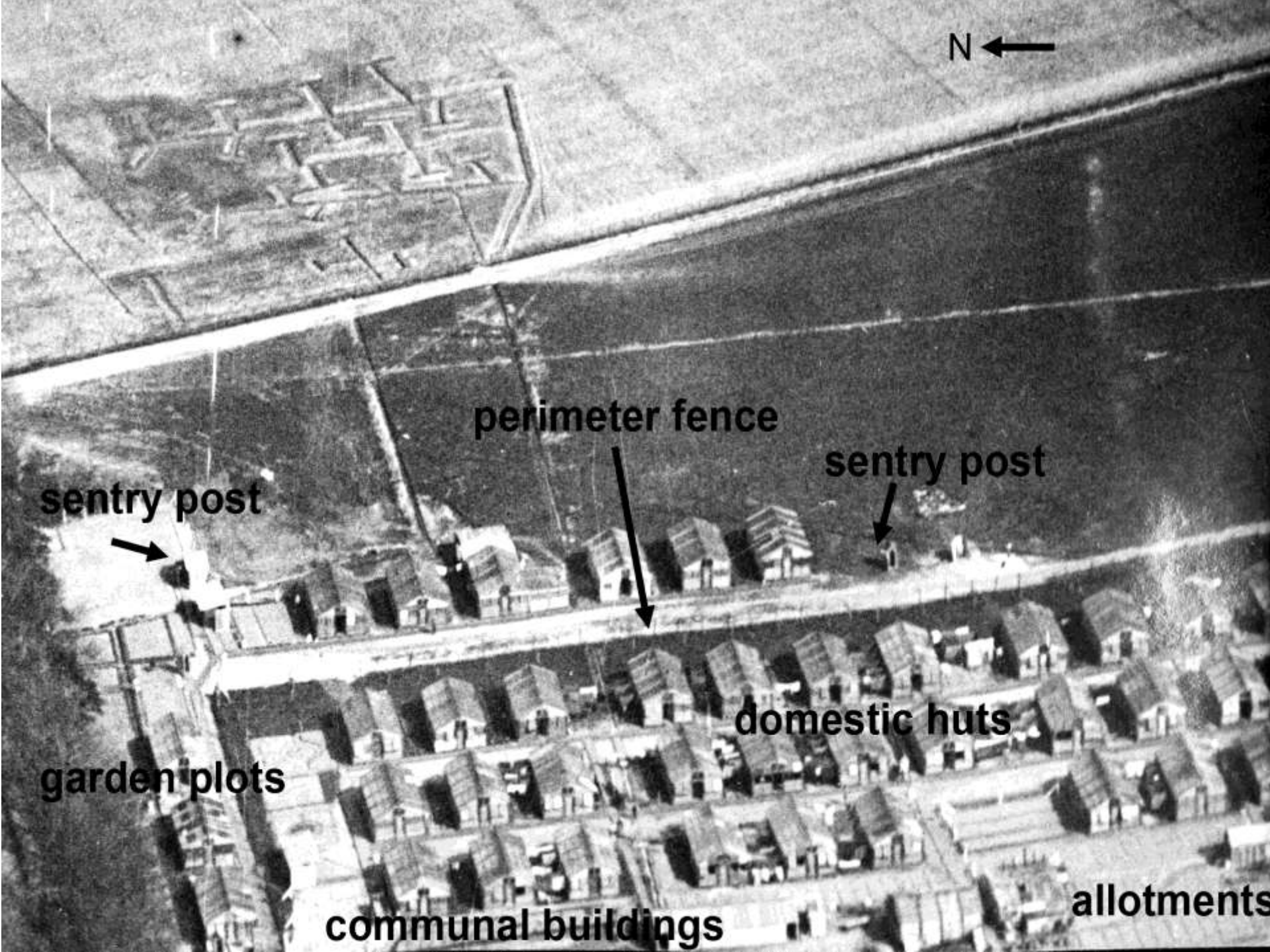
# How can we identify a First World War POW camp

Our vision is clouded by preconceptions of POW camps – eg the Great Escape

- Compare and contrast descriptions of the camp and images
- Identify:
  - Guarding features
  - Features associated with POWs
  - Material culture
- Associations and in-direct references to the location of the camp

# Comparing the Red Cross Report with aerial photographs

- 150 square yards
- Grid pattern with streets, paths and board walks
- Garden beds – Vegetables and flowers
- Recreation field
- 69 Armstrong huts in the camp,
- Other buildings including latrines, ablution blocks, kitchen, etc....



N ←

perimeter fence

sentry post

sentry post

domestic huts

garden plots

communal buildings

allotments



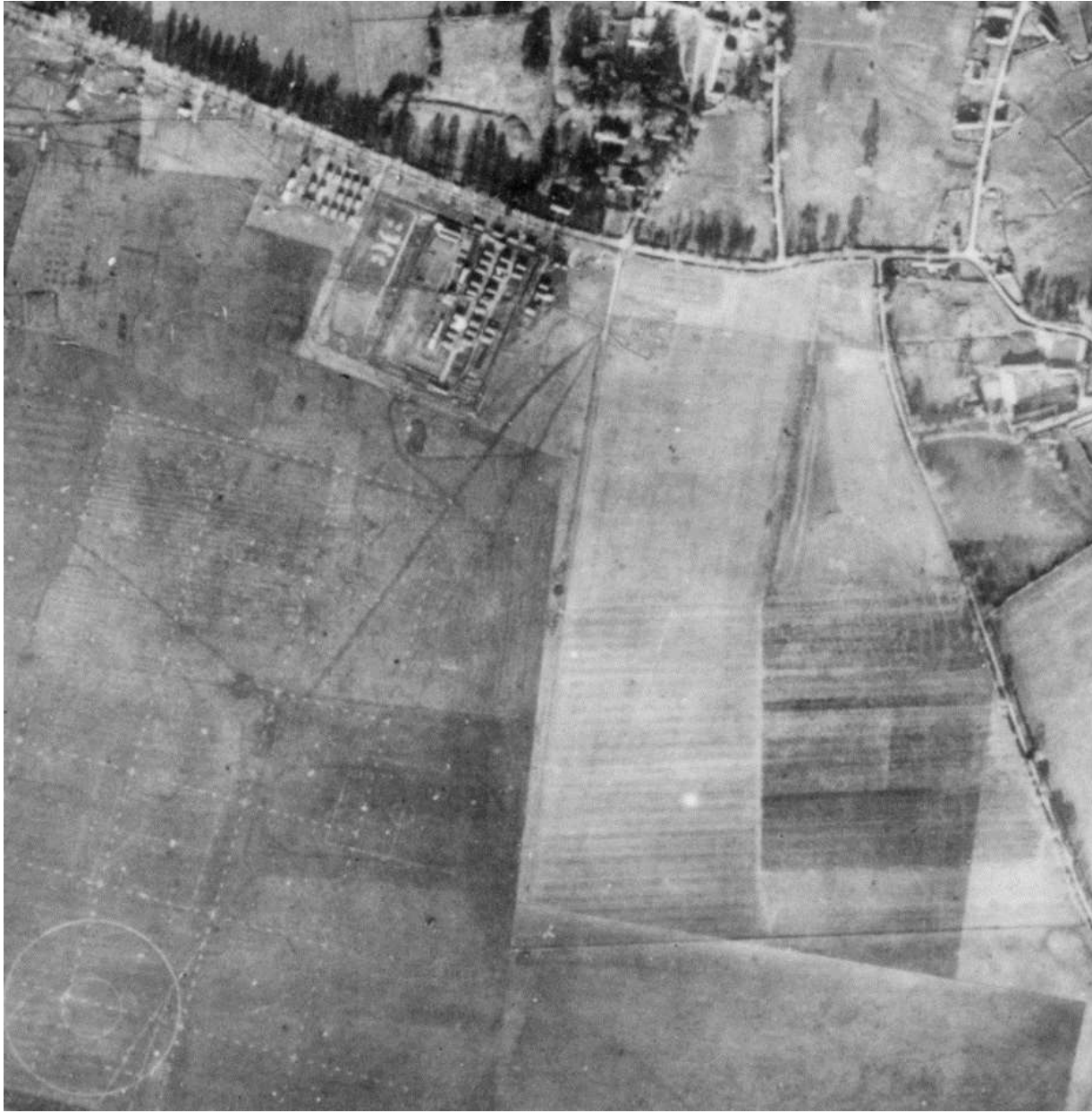


Prisoners of War Camp Yatesbury, England.  
1947.

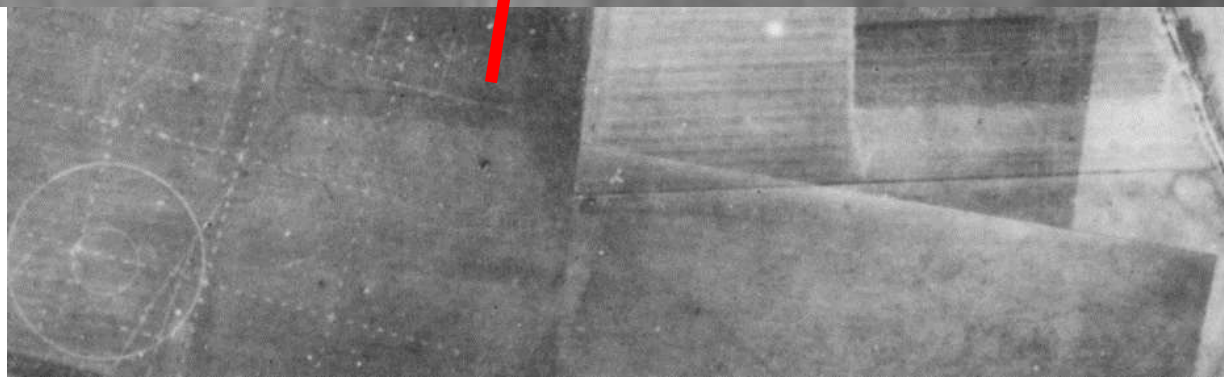




# Recreation ground







# Associations and in-direct references

## Identifying the water supply and a sewage problem









Station Jatishung  
No. 275 25-9 19 17  
REQUIRED for Use at Jatishung pumping Plant

4 Gall. Petrol Reg'd

Old store Pl. 9 Collins

Station Jatishung  
290 12-10 19 11  
REQUIRED for use at Jatishung Pumping Plant

Petrol 4 Gall. Reg'd

2 Lins

Pepe H. Adams  
Jas. Dick in Hospital

SI E Store PG Erection  
18 Y 32

Station Jatishung  
No. 269 19-9 19 17  
REQUIRED for Use Jatishung pumping Plant

Petrol 4 Gall. Reg'd

Red Reg

Pl. 9 Collins  
4 Lins

Station Jatishung  
No. 281 28-9 19 11  
REQUIRED for Use at Jatishung pumping Plant

Petrol 4 Gall. Reg'd  
(2 Lins)

Pl. 9 Collins  
Red Reg

# Identifying the location of the POW camp through its sewage.....

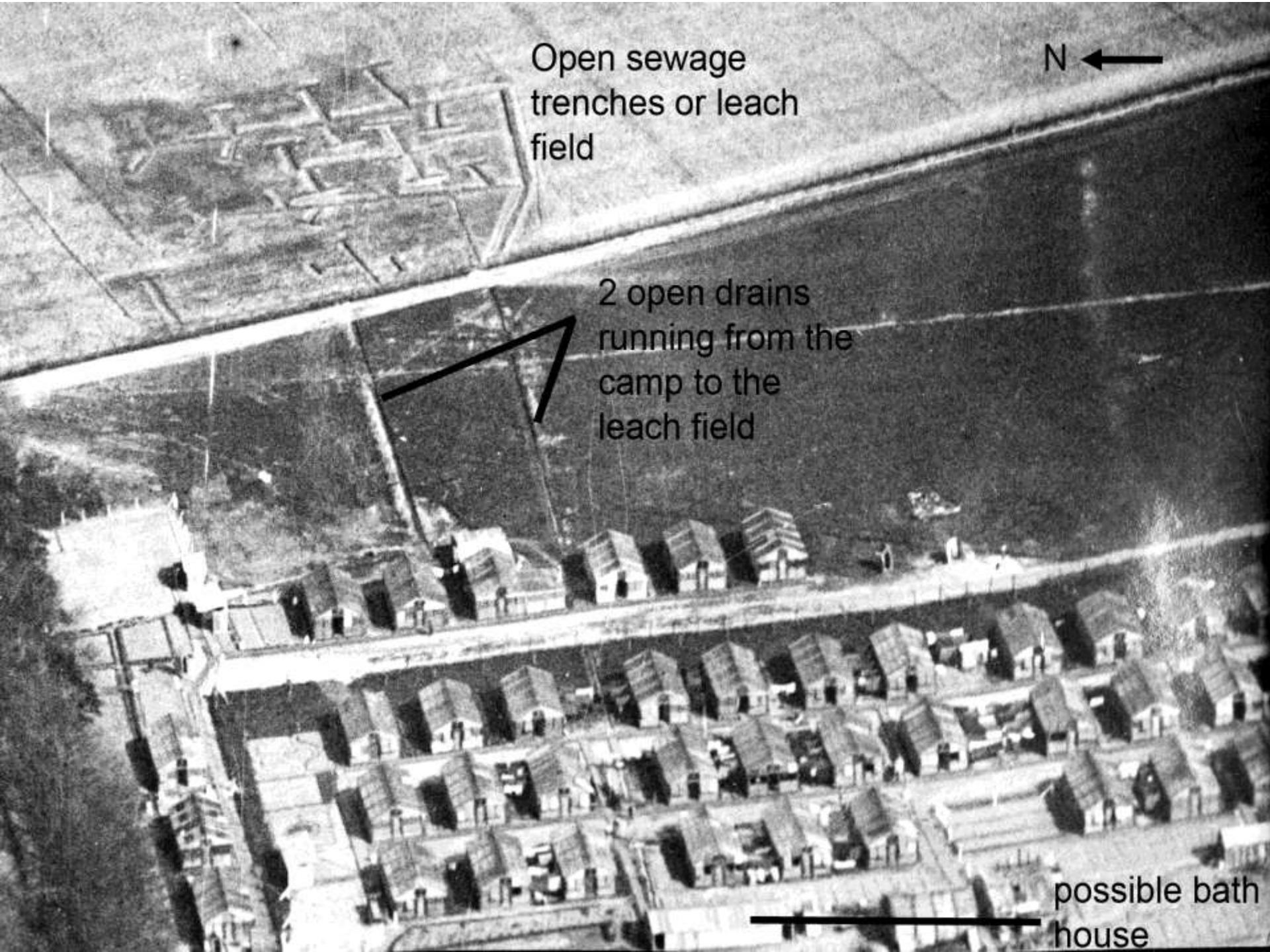
...account of the heavy rains.  
**COMPLAINT FROM THE GERMAN PRISONERS' CAMP.**  
The Inspector stated that he had inspected the drainage arrangements at the German Prisoners' Camp at Yatesbury. The drainage ran into a ditch and caused a bad smell, but it had now been improved.—Mr. Lee said there would still be cause for complaint if the weather remained fine for any time. There was no proper drainage scheme in connection with the camp, and the water supply for cattle in the village was being polluted.—It was resolved that the Medical Officer communicate with the medical officer of the Camp and inspect the drainage arrangements, after which a special meeting of the Council be held to consider Dr. Ferguson's report.

Wiltshire Times and the Calne Rural District Council minutes

# Sketch map by Gordon Chivers





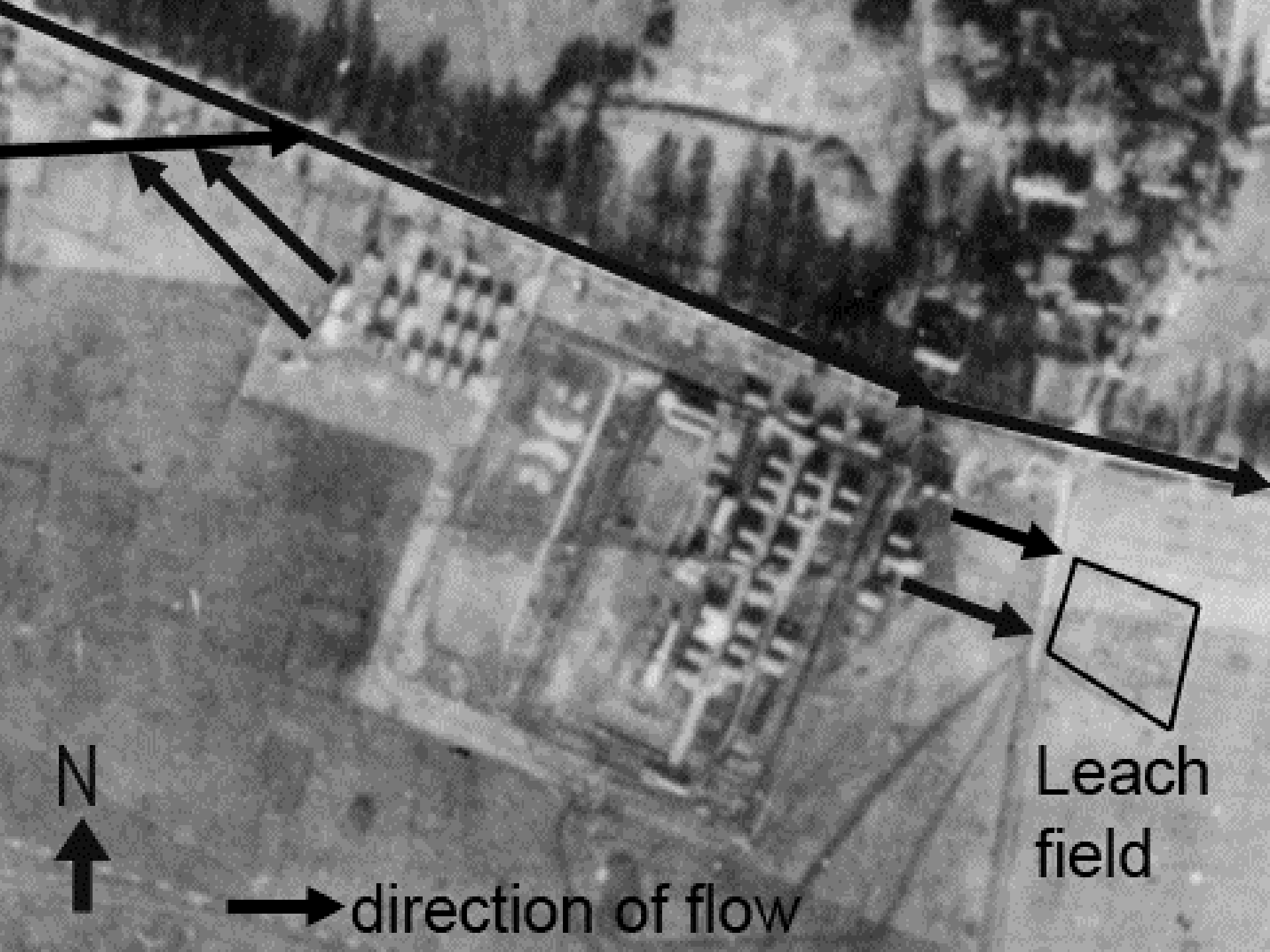


Open sewage  
trenches or leach  
field

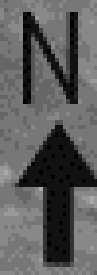
N ←

2 open drains  
running from the  
camp to the  
leach field

possible bath  
house



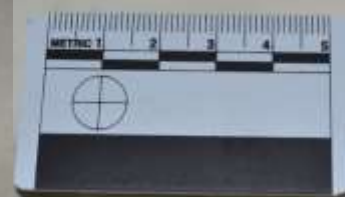
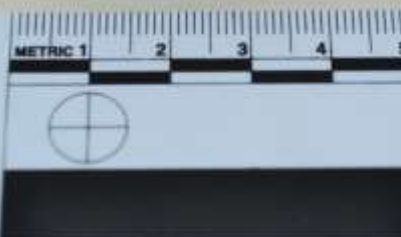
Leach  
field

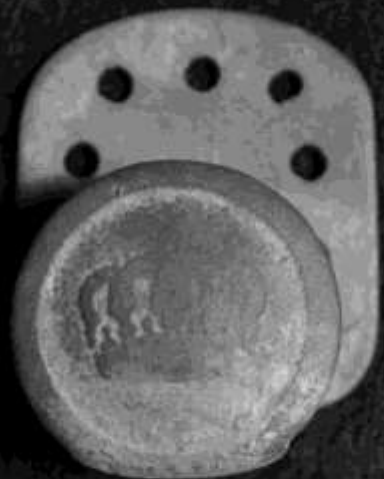


→ direction of flow

Identifying the POW camp through its  
material culture













# Future work.... Who were the prisoners?

