



Brickfields, Sanquhar

Sanquhar is one of a series of villages stretched along the Nith valley and the A76, between Dumfries and Kilmarnock, surrounded by the Southern Uplands, sharing a history of industrial resource exploitation, particularly coal, and in Sanquhar's particular case, clay and the production of bricks and terracotta. With the death of these industries, these villages have seen emigration of the population, including my own family, and a dearth of replacement employment. In recent years, locations have attracted creative practitioners (Charles Jencks in Holywood, Andy Goldsworth and Tina Fiske in Thornhill, Dave Rushton in Sanquhar) who have literally changed the landscape. To the North of Sanquhar is the enormous post industrial landscape intervention of Crawick Multiverse, the hills to the West are home to numerous Goldsworthy sculptures.

To this location, MERZ's latest project takes the redundant landscape to the North of the village, the former site of the Buccleuch Terracotta Works. The site has an adapted topography, both from the extraction of material, and the infrastructure required. A number of formed 'hollows' in a South facing embankment are the remnant of clay removal, linear topographical features define previous tramways and drainge channels, and the largest recess has become a sump, establishing a marsh. Three buildings occupy the Western entrance to the site, one built in the bricks manufactured on the site. Vegetation has reclaimed parts of the former stripped site, forming areas of secluded privacy. The locals of the villagers have formed a number of paths around and across the site. Care must be taken, as redundant undermining, and active drainage holes are located on defined parts of the site.

MERZ's outline proposal for the site is multi-faceted. The existing buildings are projected to be used to house a pottery workshop, utilising clay from the site, and allowing MERZ to provide kiln facilities that it currently contracts out. Some parts of the site are acknowledged to be unuseable for buildings of any sort, due to instability, and unseen danger. The clay hollows however, offering privacy and shelter, form the basis for a proposal to establish hutting on the site. MERZ are currently negotiating a 25 lease with the landowner.

As a village with an active rail station, and within 90 minutes of both Glasgow and Edinburgh, affording access to a rural environment, a National Forest, and creative stimuli, the location fits the profile of a hutting site as per previous mapping exercise. MERZ desire to lease hut footprints for peppercorn rents, to urban visitors, with a possible facility for schools, to teach through practical projects sustainable building techniques.

The opportunities for my study are :

- to work with MERZ's advisory body to progress investigation and staged development of the site, with the chance to design and self-build a hut within a pedagogical/ demonstrational context,
- to design on a former industrial 'marginal site', deemed to have little agricultural or developmental value, the type of site that could allow access to hutting for the widest demographic, dealing with a complex existing environment, reflecting the 'work' legacy of industry
- to interact with a local community, and work with a body of artists of various disciplines
- this is either a standalone opportunity, or a particular example of hutting design that provides critical comparison with other sites and design stimuli



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MERZ
RECONSTRUCTION & FABRICATION



The story of brick in Scotland begins with a brief period of use by the Romans in the first century AD. The material then fell out of use until the 17th century. The use of fired clay brick began in earnest in Scotland a century later.

A lease of the original brickfield, later known as the Buccleuch Works, was taken over by Mr Matthew Mclver from the Duke of Buccleuch in 1885. It was over 80 acres in extent and the clay face was 21 feet in height, while a seam of blue clay 4'6" thick was obtained by mining. There was a mine at the top of the works and here the clay face was about 30 feet in height in the open surface workings.

Mclver was the inventor of the method to use steam for drying bricks. The bricks from the presses were loaded on bogies and wheeled into the tunnels. When dry, the bricks were taken to the kilns and fired in the usual way.

The Buccleuch Terra Cotta Works had been established in about 1889 to make terracotta bricks. Terracotta became popular because these bricks were non-porous. Terracotta materials use a more refined, denser clay body than clay masonry brick. The manufacturing process varied depending on how the items were formed, pressing by hand, extrusion, slip casting, and ram pressing.

The Works included a large moulding shop and eight round downdraught kilns.

The enlarged Buccleuch Brick Works including the site beside the railway line was closed in 1958 but remained largely intact till the mid-1960s.

Traces of ancient brickworks in this part of the landscape introduced the name 'Brickfields'.



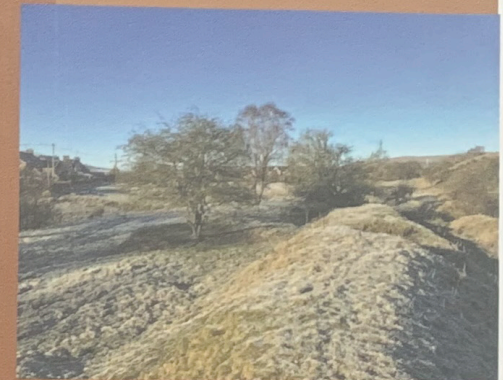
Very high-class facing and engineering bricks were produced as well as nearly 200 other clay products. Some of these were coated with enamel, notably for insulators and for electrical work at the collieries.

Facing bricks and other products were exported, some as far afield as British Columbia, Canada.

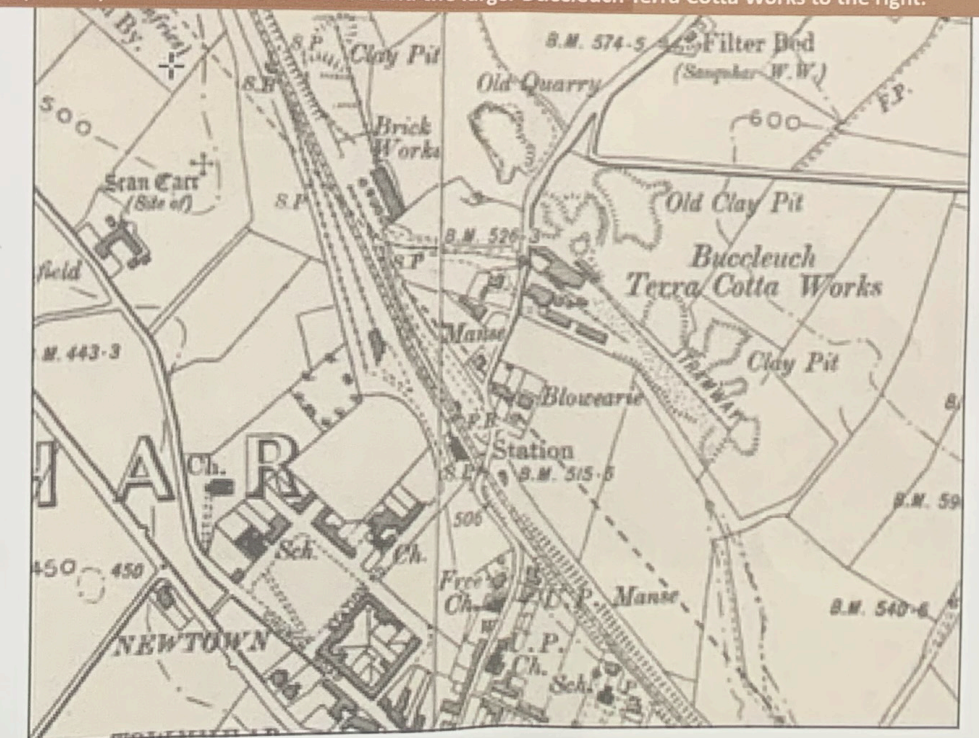
An order for bricks from Skye inspired a local poet. The lines were published "Speed bonnie brick, like a bird on the wing over the sea to Skye".

The works were purchased in 1925 as part of the assets of the colliery company by Messrs William Baird and Co.

In the 1960s both sites were closed and dismantled.



1896 map: Sanquhar Brickworks to the left and the larger Buccleuch Terra Cotta Works to the right.



Background to MERZ interest in the Brickfields Site and proposal

Interest in the use of local clay grew in 2023 with work by Kristin Powers using modified clay from the site to make pottery. In an earlier exploration sustainable buildings at MERZ were studied by Derrie Pearson based on Scotland's hutting policies favouring recreational off-grid living.

Derrie became the first MERZ 'artitect' in residence in 2021.

Since 2009 artists at MERZ have designed and helped repurpose several abandoned buildings in the town centre.

Most recently Saba Khansari from Iran has contributed her architectural skills to maps, plans and design for the Brickfields Project.



The Brickfields Project is envisaged becoming a local and a visitor resource, serving as a model to repurpose other brownfield or former industrial sites. But this is not an original idea: the Centre for Alternative Technology at Llwyngwern Quarry, Machynilleth pioneered creative and sustainable innovation. Here, Brickfields could become a site for long-term artistic engagement, bringing fresh ideas to Sanquhar to adjust to climate change while taking local developments to sites worldwide. Brickfields could engage local young people and help broaden understanding of the changes ahead: to make creative adjustments to the use of 'waste' and land. The objective is to experiment with new structures for light touch sustainable living, for working and growing. To plant vegetables and trees in anticipation of changes to weather and climate. Our start-up meeting at the Museum of Model Art explored ideas for the Scoping Phase of Brickfields, to bring local and regional groups and individuals together to help with priorities. Further on, a Presentation and Exhibition in May, titled 'Reconstruction and Fabrication', as the Sanquhar Arts Festival theme for May, will offer understandings of the site's past, its present and its possible futures. In parallel a stained glass panel is to be made during April involving several artists in residence at MERZ, commemorating the brickfields site. Under guidance from celebrated stained glass artist Keira Mclean it is hoped the glass panel will be ready for the exhibition in May. Later a charity or trust can carry forward development of the Brickfields Project.

For four months from February MERZ will oversee the Scoping of Brickfields. If the outcomes are positive then this will provide the groundwork for a charity or trust to engage local as well as wider interests to take the project forward.

The prospect of networking findings from the Brickfields Project across the region and abroad suggests an appropriate organisation should have a broad as well as local composition.

Buildings on the site are those remaining from the former Terra Cotta Works plus buildings that might be constructed under the planning provision for 'huts' made by the Scottish Government in 2014. This light touch policy emphasises 'ecologically sustainable (buildings) in terms of ... design, materials, construction and waste management'.

In the course of the Scoping Phase the scale and character of development will be considered. Staff in the planning department of D&G Council and local councillors will be consulted. Local residents will be invited to discuss proposals as these are identified.

The site might include greenhouses and allotments with the engagement of the local community and groups in the region.

In other parts of Scotland rewilding returns the landscape to its former composition in terms of trees and animals. But this once industrial site offers a different opportunity, to plan for climate change and introduce a 'new wilding', where planting addresses a sustainable future. The outcome provides for a community that responds to changes in a comprehensive and creative way



An initial activity will be an archaeological survey. There is only a poor record of mining and the historic maps show mines no longer evident. There are some areas of the site (with holes and voids) that need to be included in the study. The project might also require a geological safety survey.

A fishing pond was proposed some years ago for the larger quarry, while other ideas include rebuilding the miniature

railway that brought clay from the quarry to the brickworks.

The aim ahead of any building work is to identify waste materials that can be re-purposed on the site in the construction of light-touch buildings.

It will therefore be helpful to involve the waste management department of the local council as well as waste from local industries.

It is very important to involve the younger generation to contribute and to learn, to preserve and to invent ways to use waste materials.

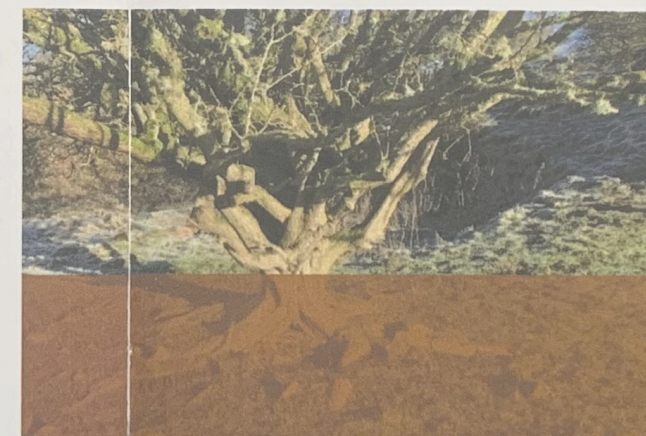
It appears that the remnants of some buildings were once kilns. Returned to use these could make an important contribution to future arts funding. The making of pots with local clay in wood-fired kilns could provide an income stream for a creative business plan.

In conclusion, for the Scoping Phase of the Brickfields Project, lasting from February through April 2024,

the work should include archaeological, social history and natural habitat surveys. In parallel a study of charity/trust structures will enable the project to go forward from Summer 2024.

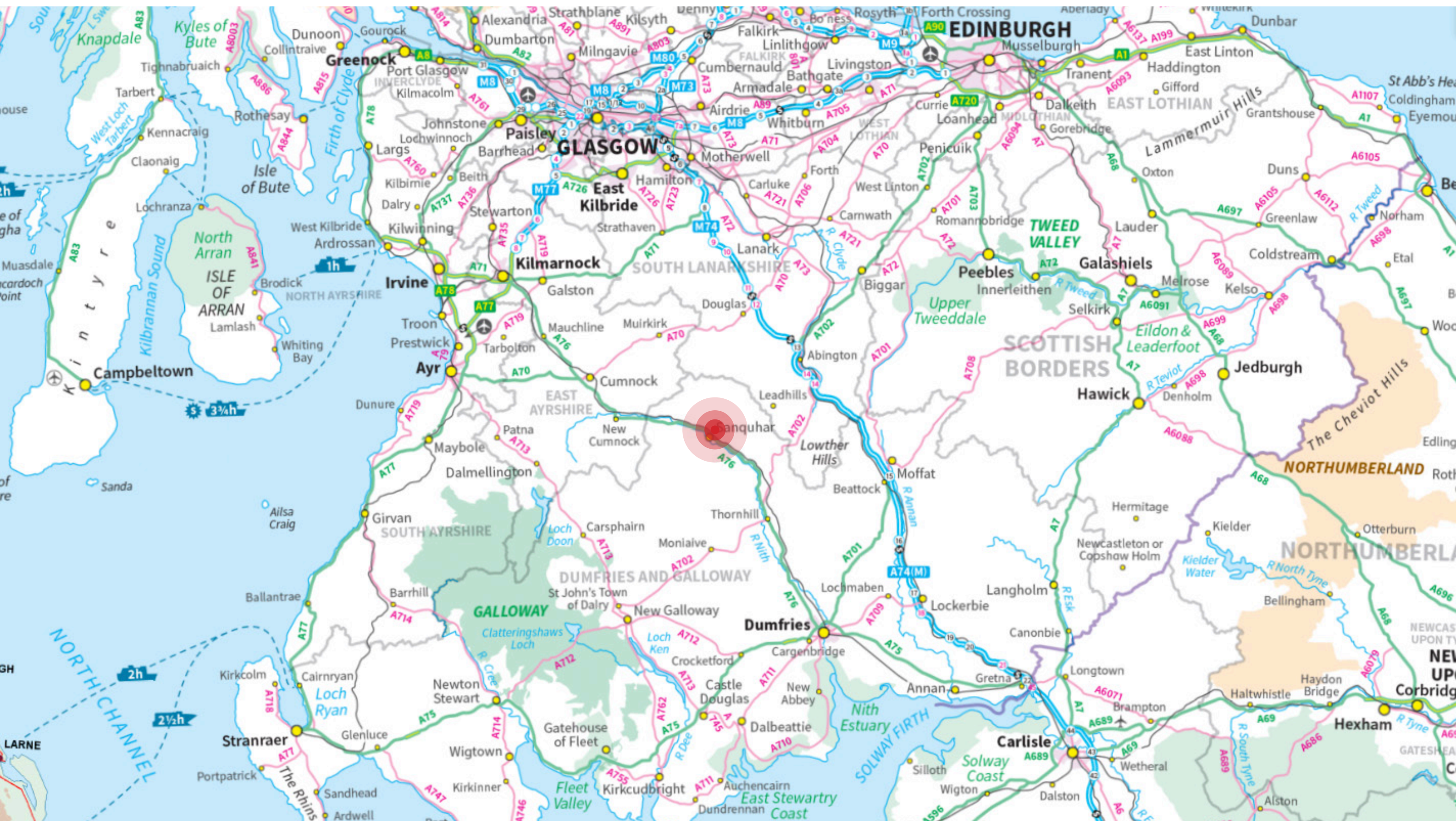


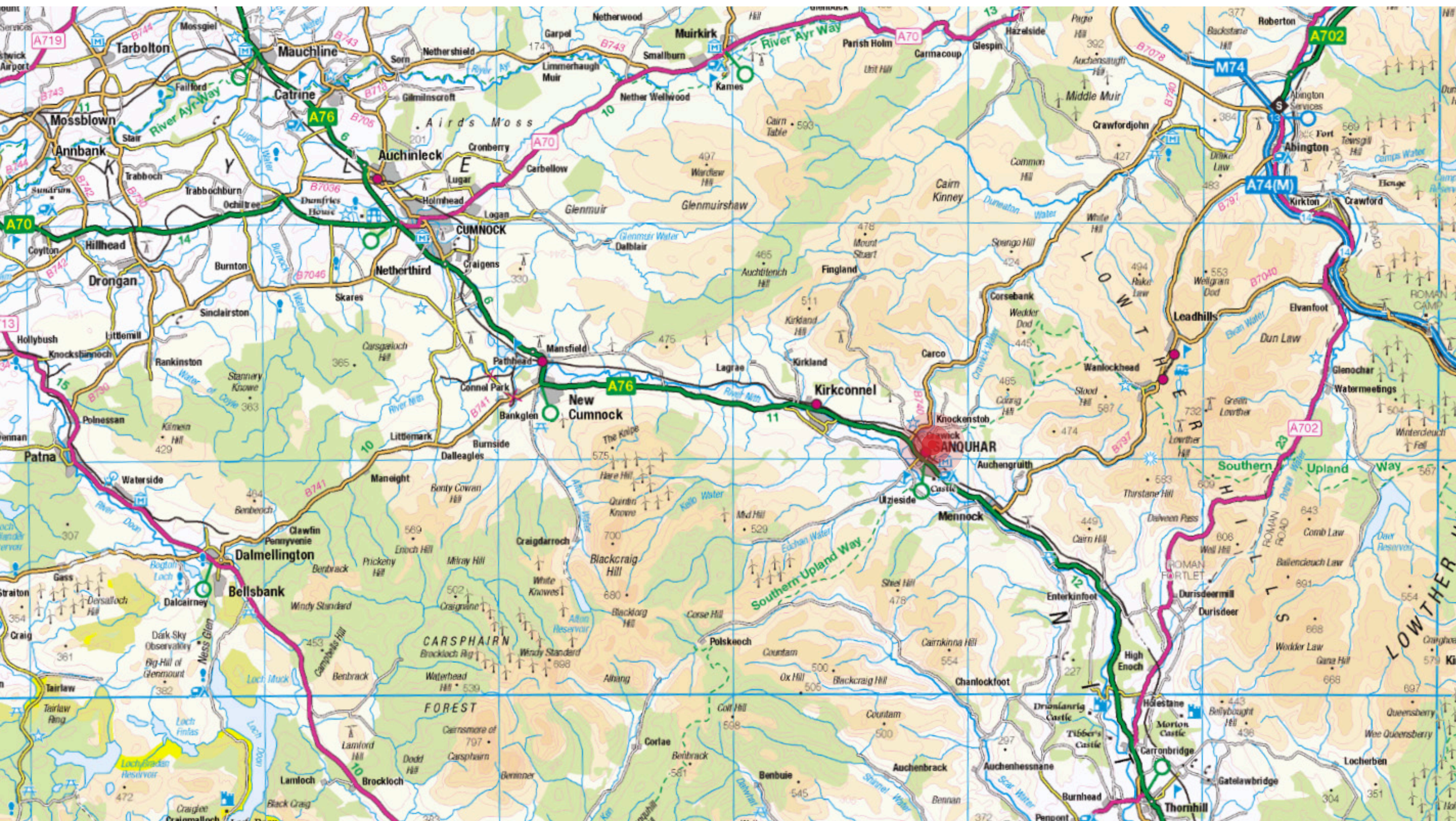
Emily Tough illustration

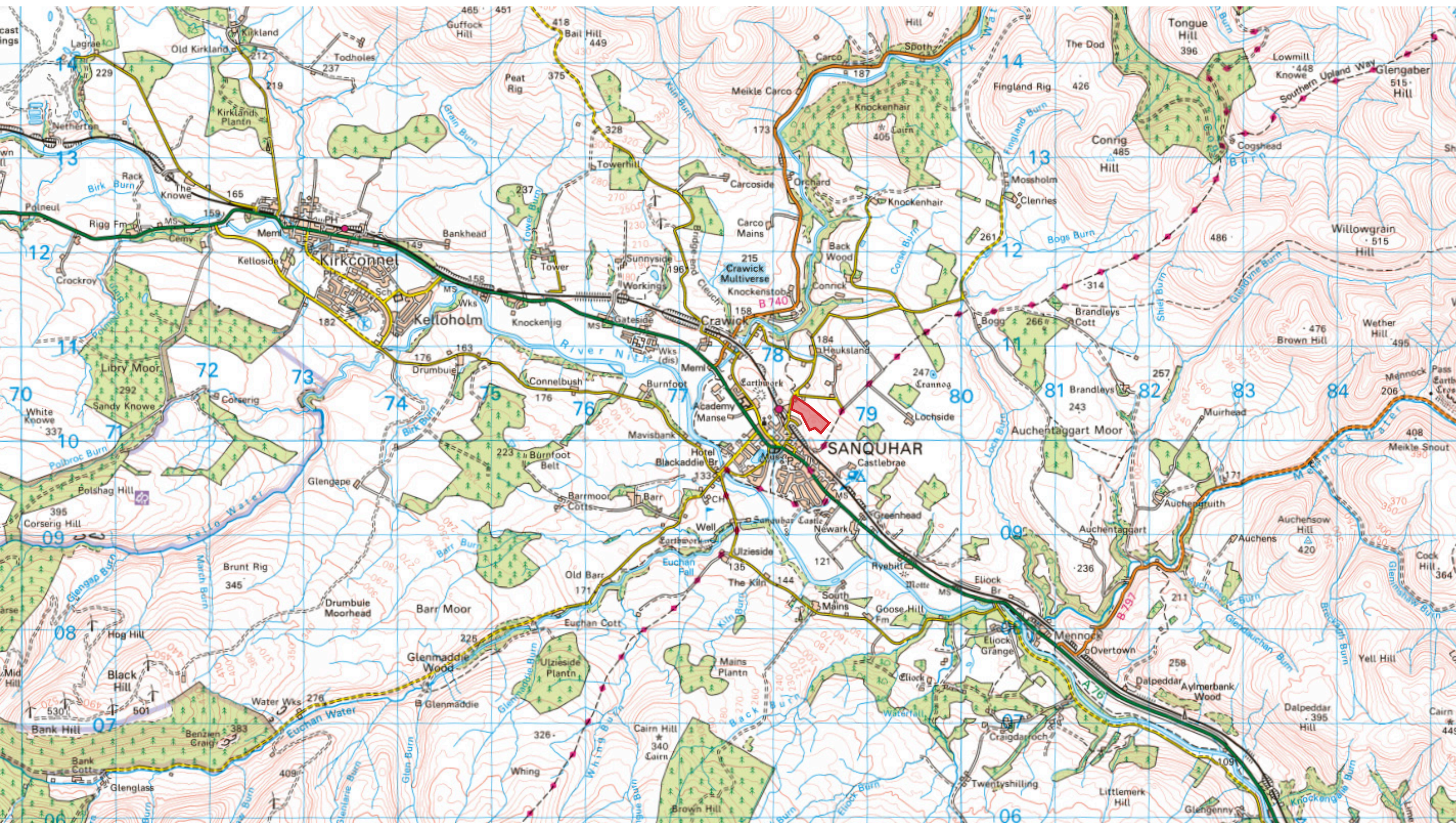


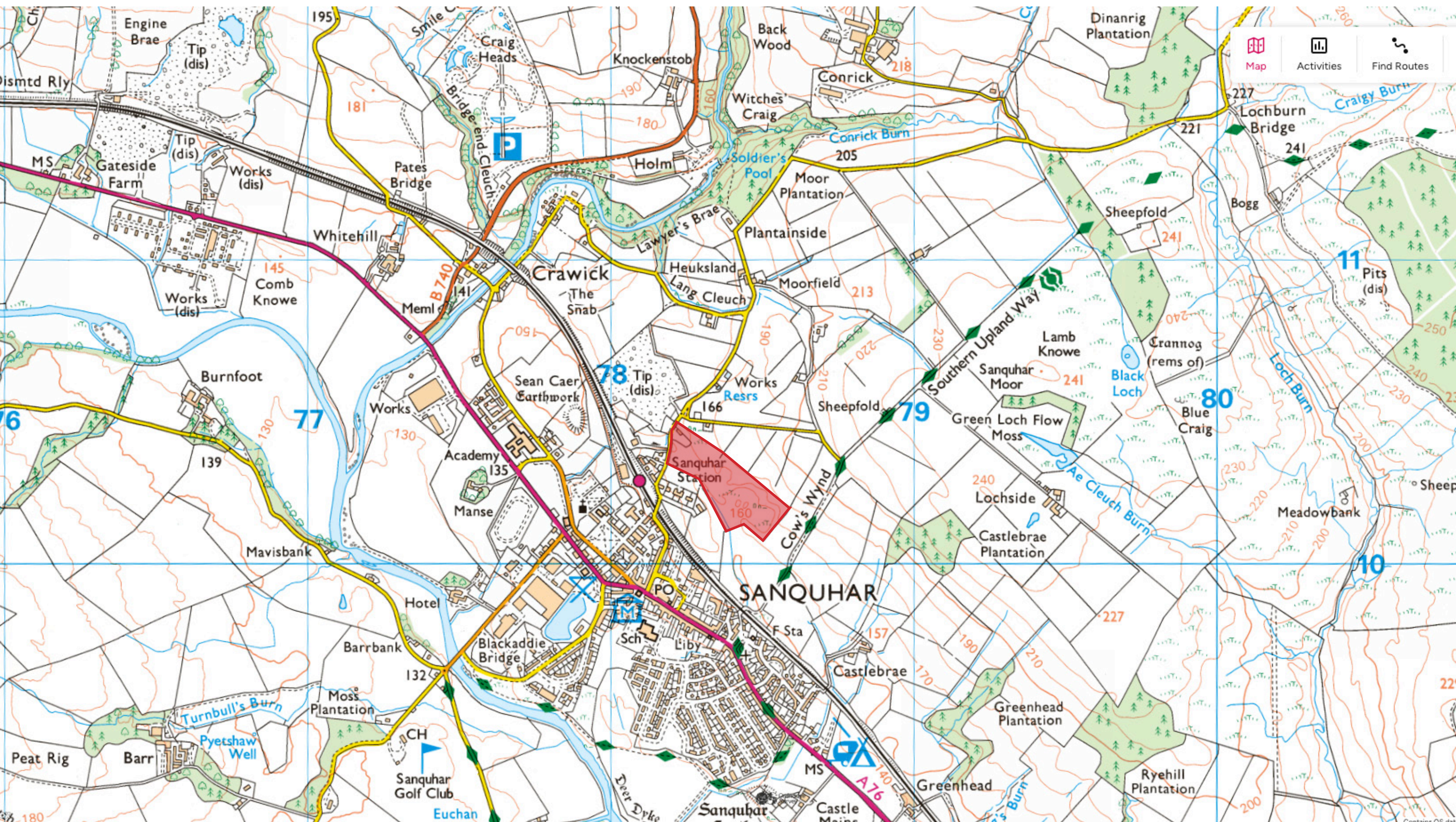
Brickfields Project Meeting 18th January



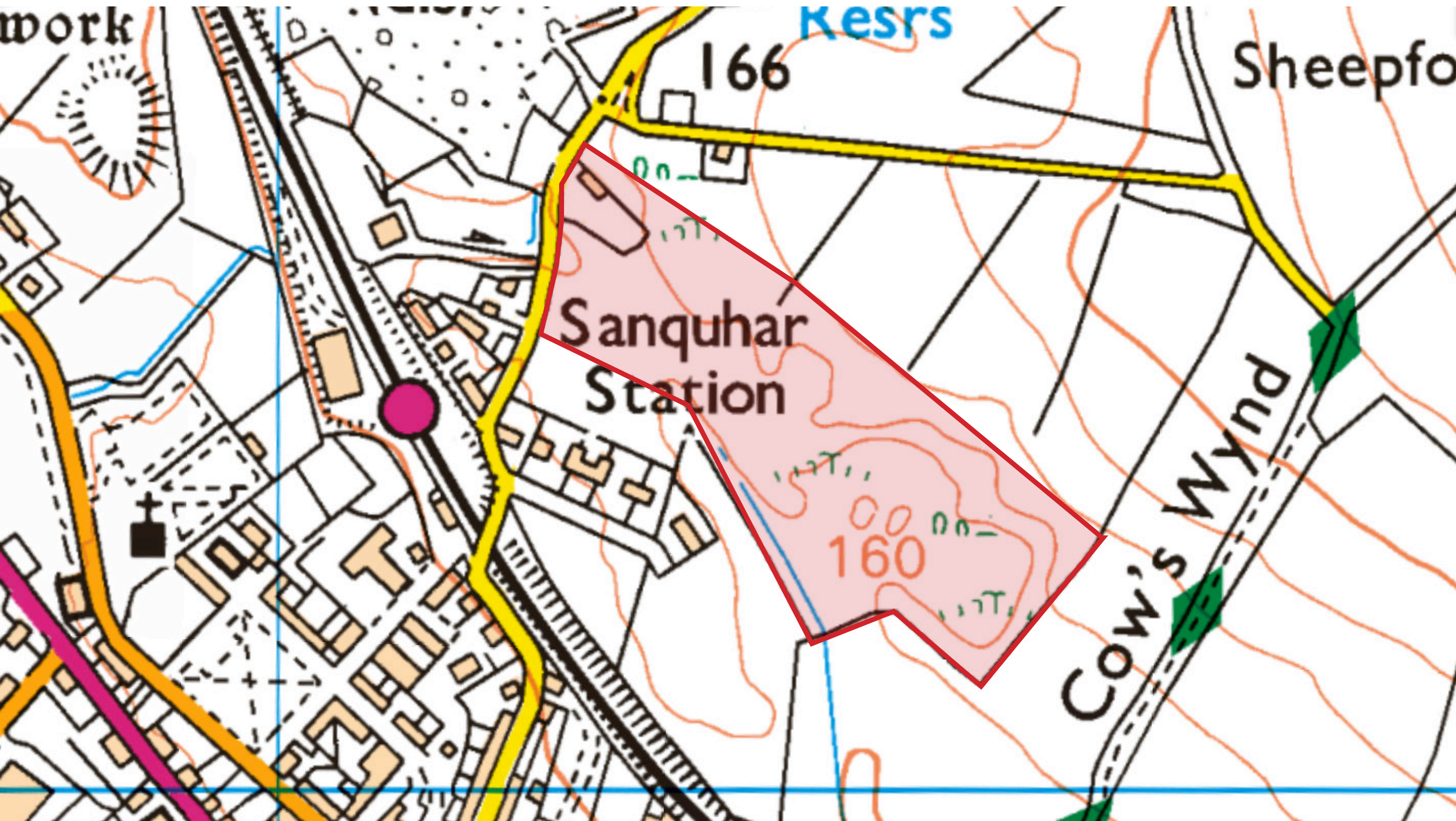














Site aerial



Industrial building remains



Plateau



Holloway



Clay pit hollow



Ridge / tramway



Mere

Site zones



Site photograph locations



Looking North on StMary's Street towards site embankment



Regrowth in clay pits



South facing embankment, roof of existing building visible



Looking North West towards entrance, exposed ash evident



Remnants of brickworks



View back to entrance gate, adjacent housing and petting zoo

7



Panorama looking North of clay embankment

8



Ex industrial topography

9



Sequence of excavated hollows

10



Paths in use by community

11



Upper plateau, looking to existing buildings

12



Formed channel, acting as site drainage

13



'Holloway' through site to sheds

14



Existing brick building and iron extension, vehicle ramp

15

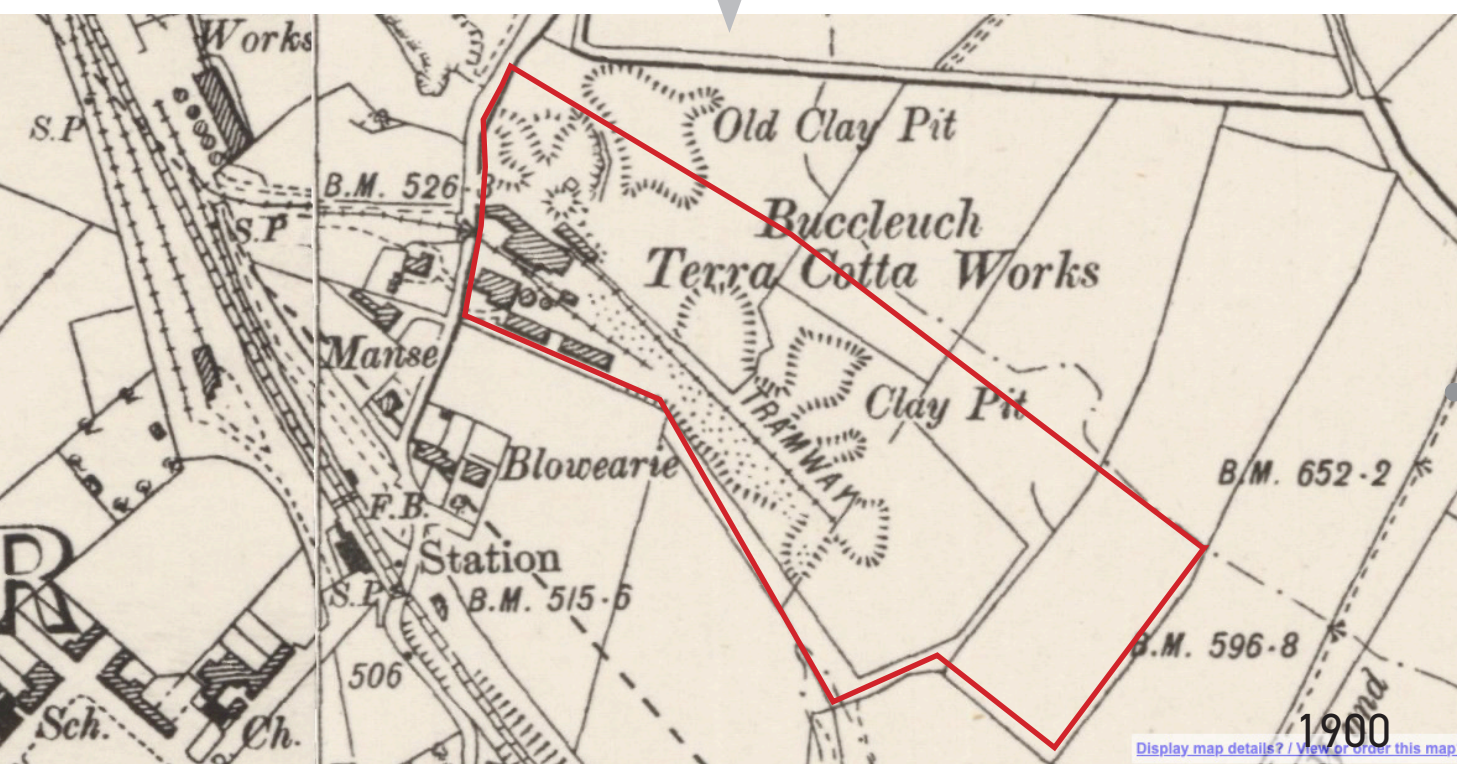
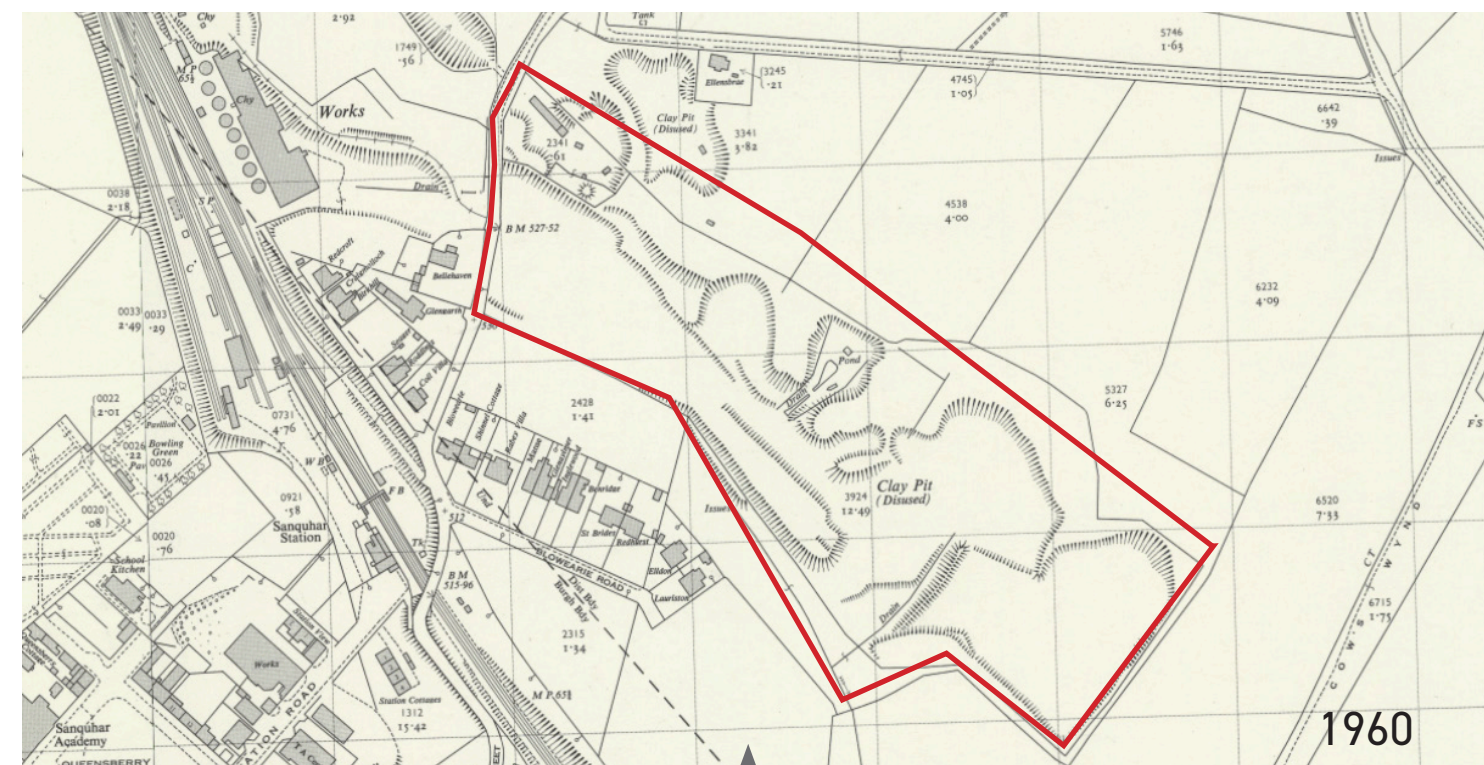


Former industrial remnants

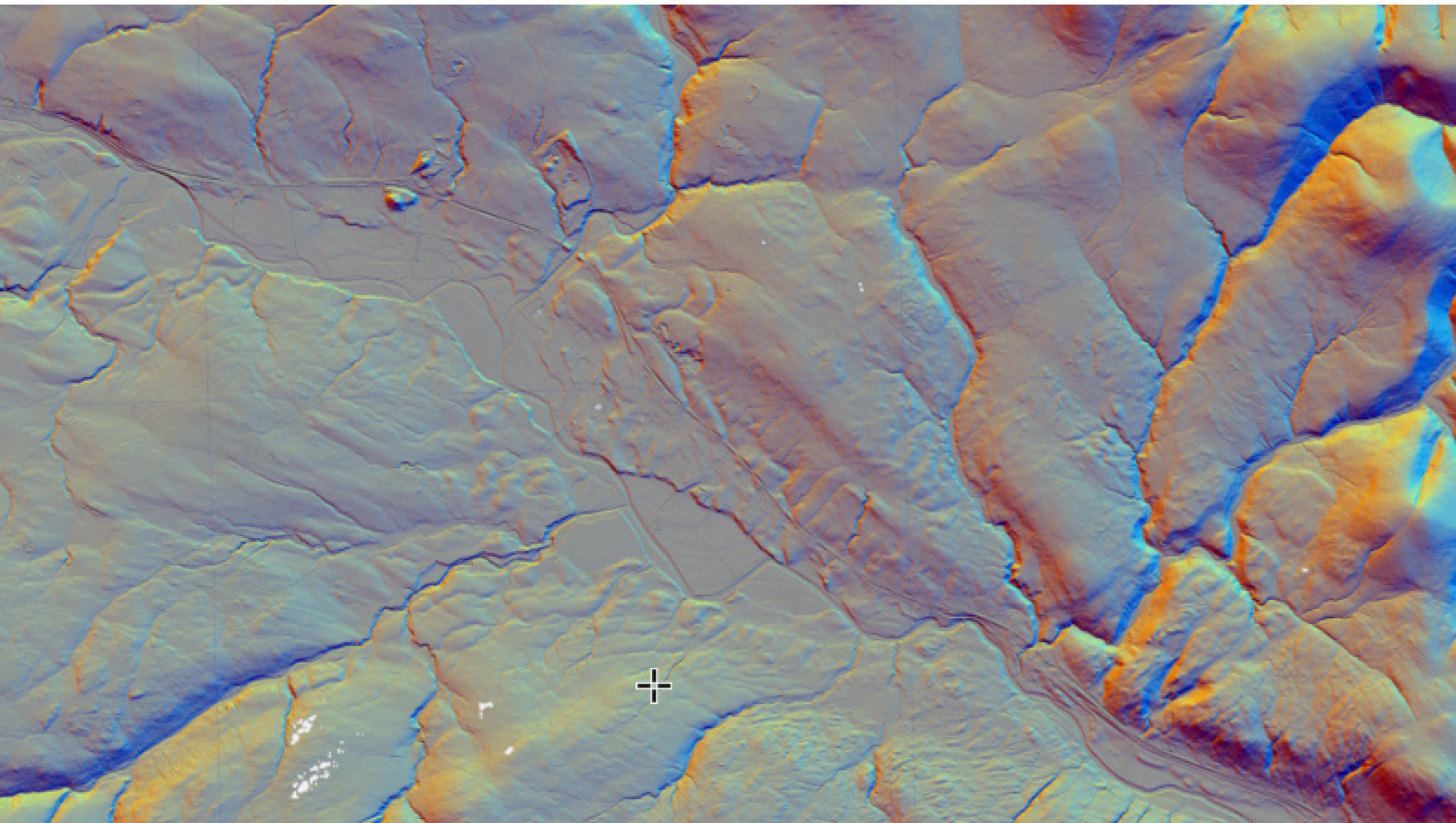
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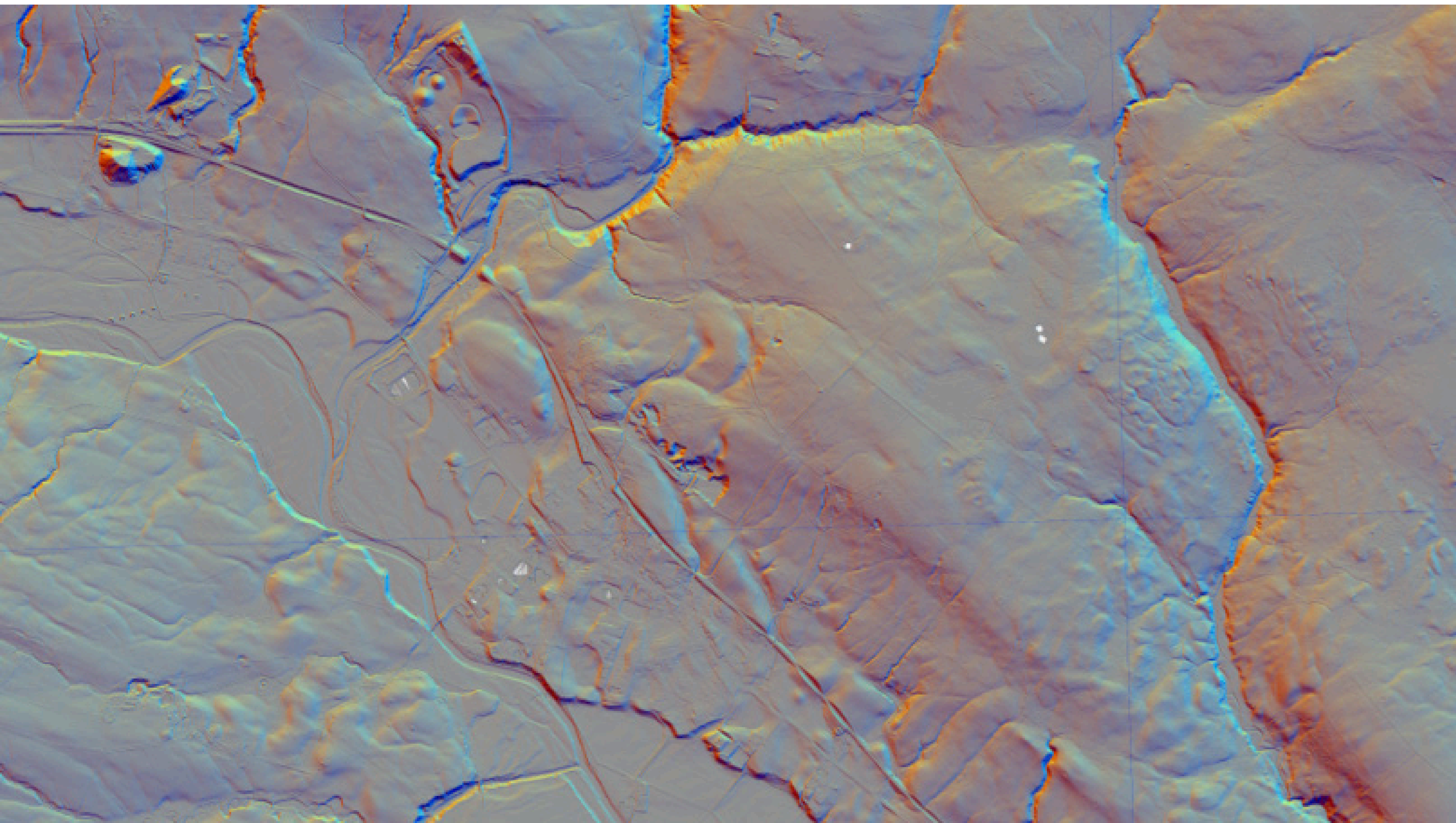


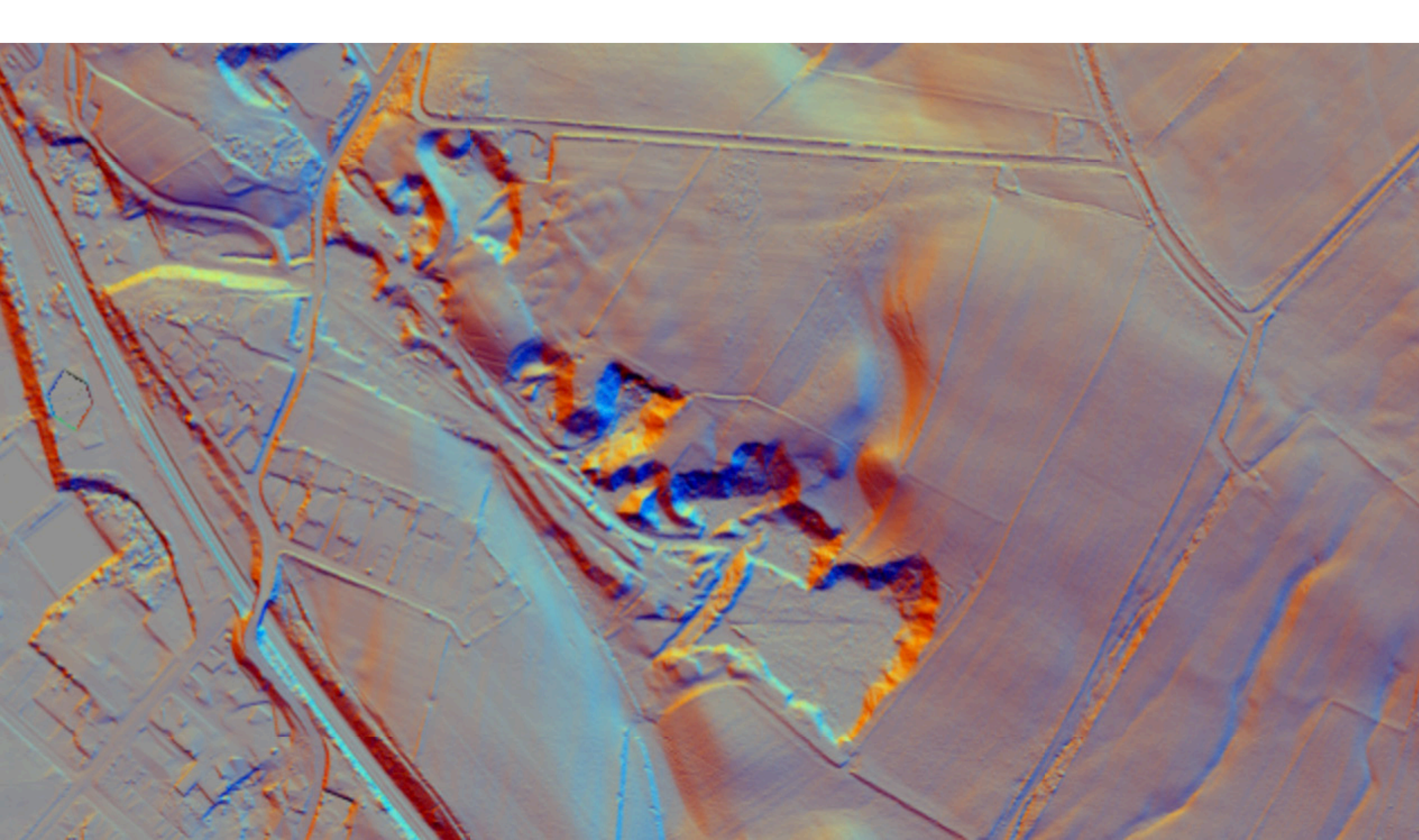
Upper entrance to site from St Mary's Street

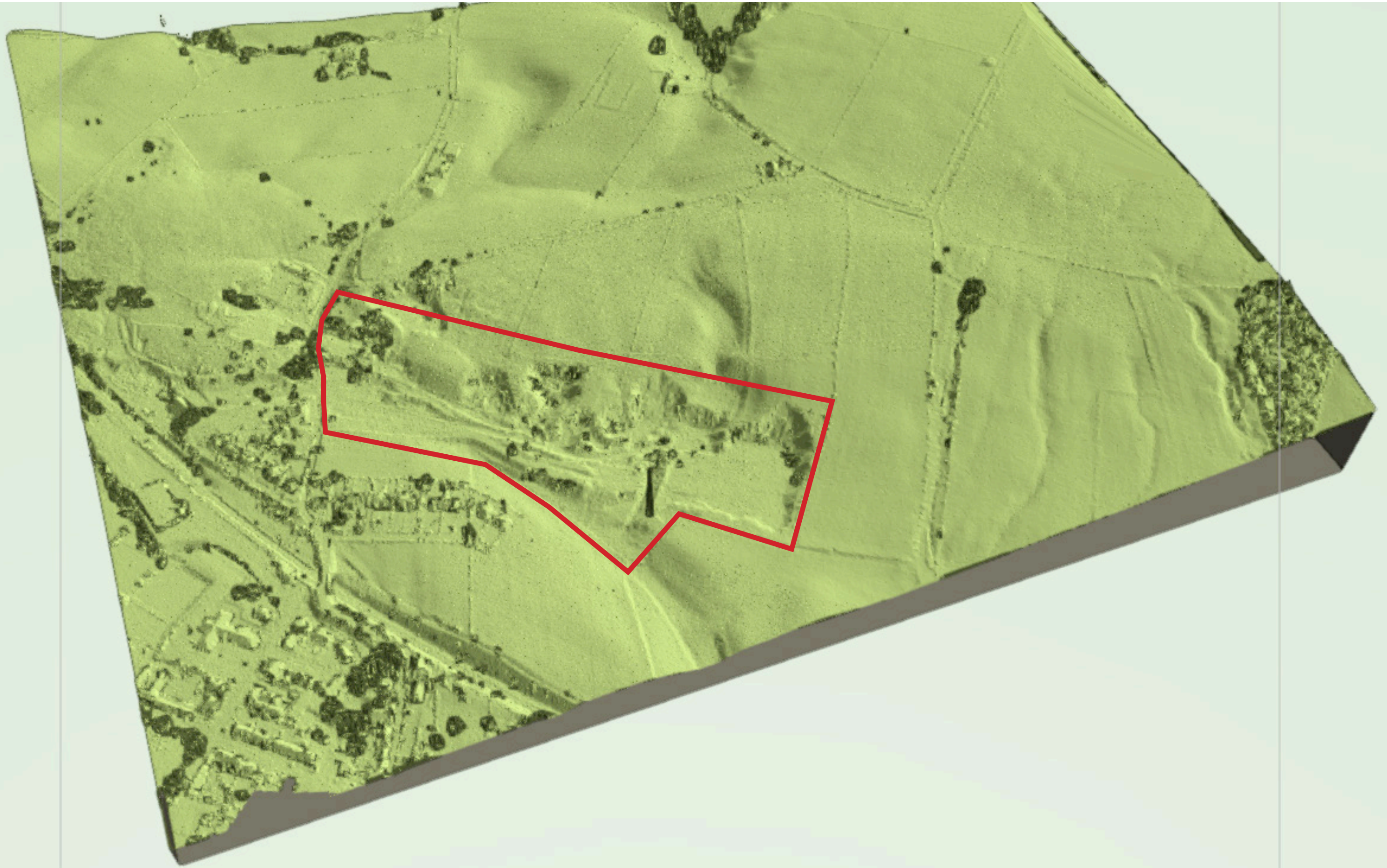


Ordnance Survey extracts showing excavation progress

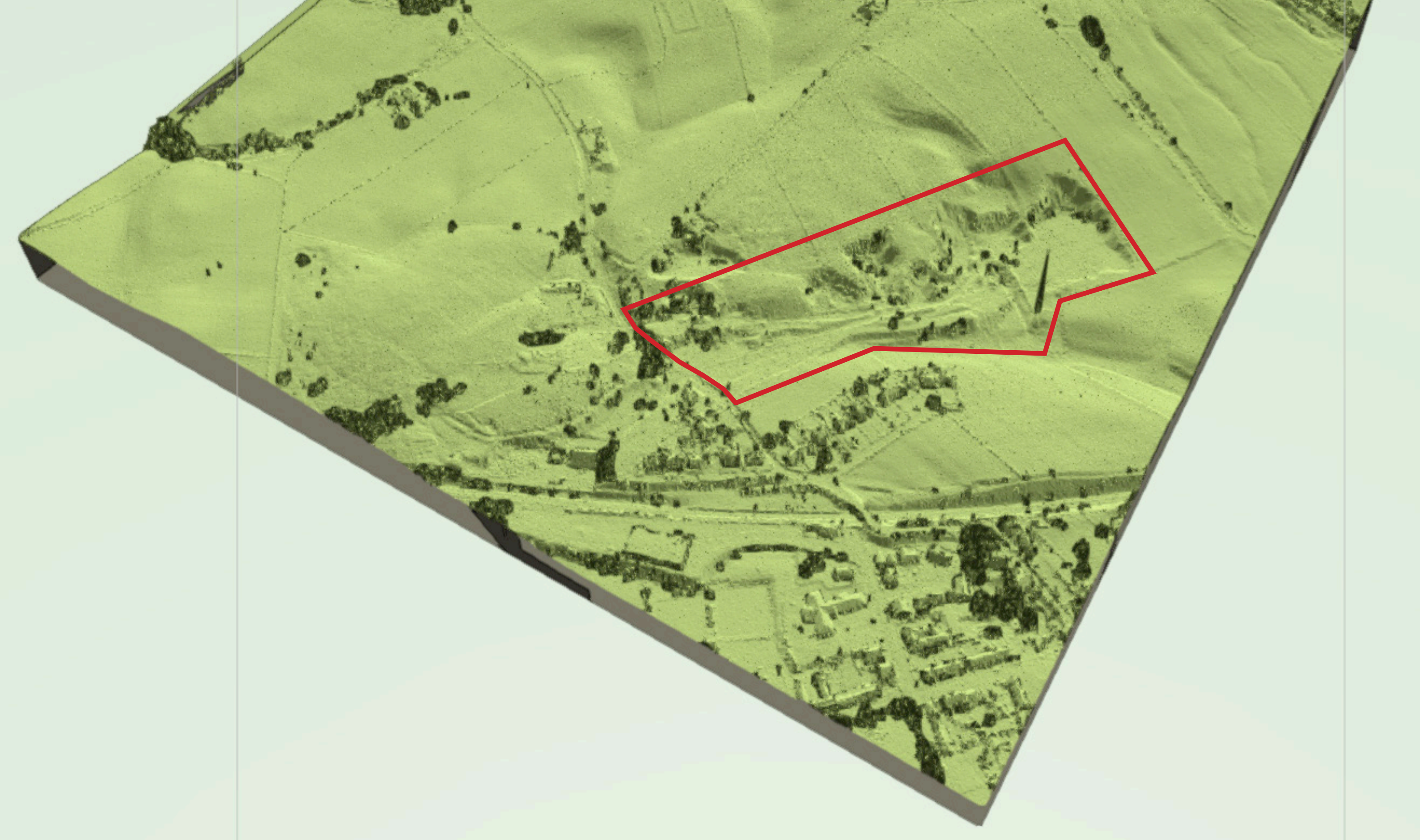




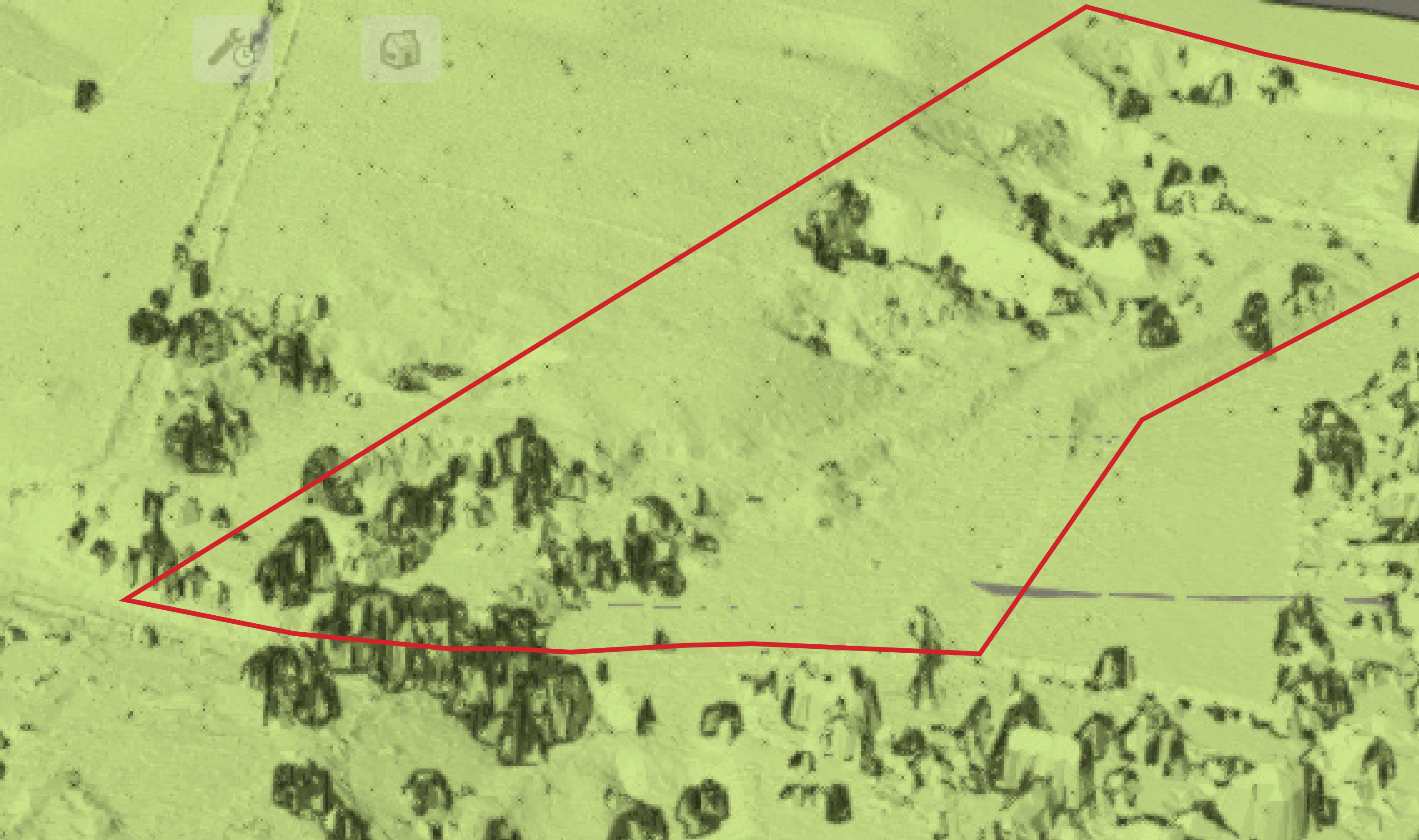




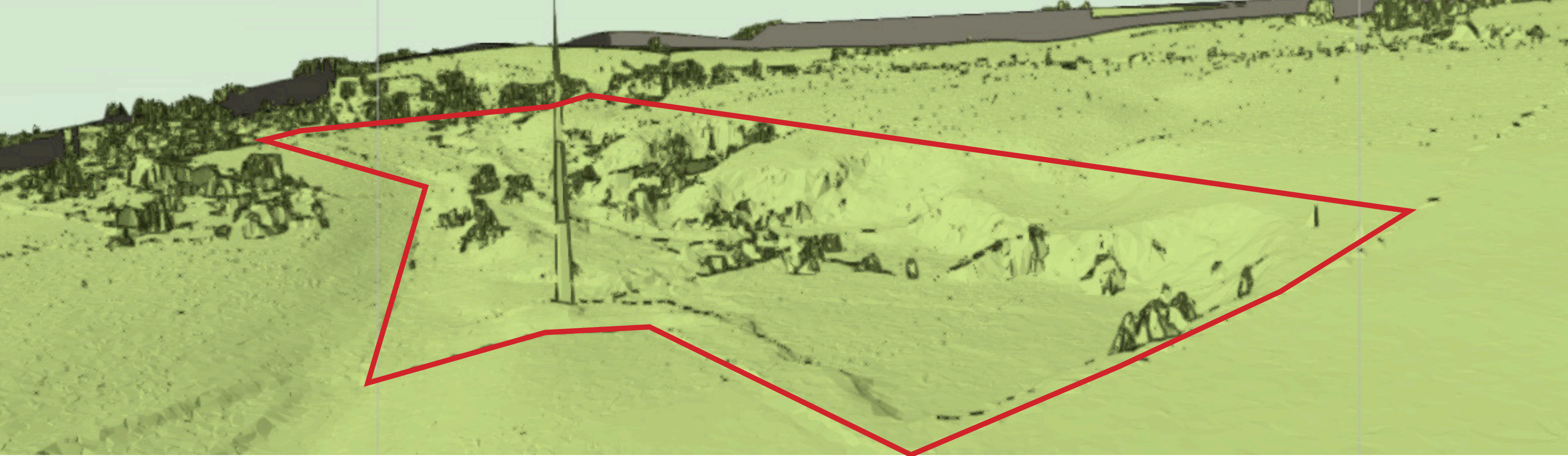
Site LiDAR survey (NLS), viewed from South West



Site LiDAR survey (NLS), viewed from West



Site LiDAR survey (NLS), viewed from North West



Site LiDAR survey (NLS), viewed from South and South West



BRICKFIELDS OBJECTIVES and HUTTING VARIATIONS

To reflect the historical value of the site by developing opportunities for sustainable creative activity and recreation

To weather proof and insulate the existing buildings and where practical maintain close to their outer appearance

To construct temporary buildings using waste materials as a model for recovering waste for brownfield building

To use the local clay to make Sanquhar Ware pottery and possibly for air-dried brick or cob building

To introduce shrubs, trees and plants native to the area that are likely to be sensitive to climate change

To encourage off-grid hutting from locally sourced and waste materials and to involve minimal travel

In the late 15th century, cob houses became the norm in Britain and stayed that way until industrialization made it cheaper to transport brick and stone. Large overhangs are essential to protect the walls made from unfired materials such as clay and straw.

At Dumfries House The Princes Trust supports craft skills to apply these older building techniques. The architecture of cob houses which combine state-of-the-art technology and a modern design with this traditional technique and achieve an extremely efficient building.

With universities and artists in residence the Brickfields Project will experiment with clay and other local materials including industrial by-products for insulation and reuse discarded doors and windows. Buildings can still be made from locally sourced materials.



ROS WILLIAMS (she/her)

Find Ros on Instagram: @williamsrosamund

Ros is a Designer and Maker of Sustainable Fashion: she recycles old clothes into new she upcycles old household items into clothes she uses fabric scraps and remnants which would otherwise end up in landfill she was a finalist in the Fashion for Social Change Award 2022 and her outfit was exhibited in V&A Dundee

Ros is a Creative: she is a sewing volunteer at Shush Co-operative's Repair-What-You-Wear and Sewing Cakes in Edinburgh she is one of Edinburgh's Street Stitchers she has run sustainability clinics and made outfits for Shelter Scotland

Ros is a 62 year old student she is currently studying HND Costume for Stage & Screen

Examples of Ros's Makers: Made from Textbooks (and old sheets & fabric scraps) Made from old jeans Made from old silk scarves Made from T-shirts Made from old Ties



Nith Life

Nith Life is a grassroots community led group that is exploring ways to ensure the River Nith is recognised as a significant part of the region's sustainability plans for the future. Nith Life welcomes everyone who shares a passion for the River Nith catchment.

The group aims to celebrate the people, places and communities along the river Nith, encouraging a connection with the river for local communities, through arts, heritage, culture, science and education.

Nith Life hopes to encourage more environmentally sustainable practices throughout the river Nith catchment, by creating more resilient habitats, restoring biodiversity and reducing flood risk.

Monthly public meetings and talks are held on the last Tuesday of every month at The Store, Dumfries. A working group made up of volunteers meet regularly, coordinating projects and actions. Nith Life has a growing mailing list of people interested in news, events and activities, both cultural and scientific, towards bringing life to the river Nith.

Recent Activities include: • Riverfly monitoring project • Litter picking • Community Visioning Workshops • Organisational networking

Nith Life has been able to grow and develop further thanks to support from The Store Network and the Galleries & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere.

Nith Life has a website, email address and Facebook page. www.nithlife.co.uk hello@nithlife.co.uk



Photo credit: Nith Life. Photo credit: Nith Life. Photo credit: Nith Life. Photo credit: Nith Life. Photo credit: Nith Life.

ART-MICRO-HOMES 'Artitecture' Competition

OBJECTIVE : Design, provide plans and build a 1:24 scale model of a single storey micro house less than 30 square metres internally.

To be based on repurposing an existing otherwise abandoned or neglected outbuilding or similar close-by to where you stay. This building can be in either a townicity or rural location but photographic evidence of its dilapidation will be required as part of the submission (though location etc will not be disclosed).

Provision in the design for off-grid living is preferred but necessary if water, electricity supply and waste drainage are not close by.

PRIZE : One month's free residency accommodation at MERZ at the Museum of Model Art to be accredited in the 'art-micro-home' exhibition and its catalogue.

The exhibition and catalogue will be based on entries to this art-micro-home competition and possible explorations during the residency of local buildings to which 'artitecture' thinking might be applied.

Dates for the residency and exhibition to be mutually agreed with entrants, but could be late 2024 to coincide with the Sanquhar Winter Arts Festival.

There is an opportunity for up to three 'artitects' to be selected but based on individual not group submissions.

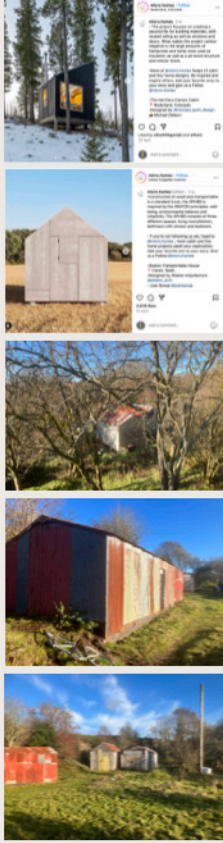
Deadline to register interest is 15th March 2024 following which the competition entry date will be confirmed through discussion.

For details and to register email hello@merz.gallery and mark email 'art-micro-home' by 15th March 2024.

For background see recent Instagrams on @museum_of_model_art or @merz.gallery

There were two successful applicants Justin Tuttle from the US and Anne-Waggoner Knott from Dumfries & Galloway. A third candidate - Adrian McNaught, an architect studying for a PhD in hutting - was offered the third residency place.

Over the Winter the objective will be to prepare drawings and models for the upgrading of existing buildings on the Brickfields site. In addition, there'll be planning and design for temporary structures, to evaluate appropriate use of local materials in hutting, all to be exhibited at the Museum of Model Art in Spring 2024.



Photos 1 and 2: Instagram micro-homes in a cold and warm climate.

Photos 3 to 5: The three remaining buildings on the Brickfields site in Sanquhar.

BRICKFIELDS COMMEMORATIVE WINDOW

Background

2024 is the fifteenth anniversary of MERZ, as well as the site's 'reconstruction and fabrication' work, early exhibitions featured the artist and architectural theorist Charles Jencks' designs while constructing his Cranick Millhouse.

Durable work by artists in glass painting, stained glass, mosaic, wallpaper and a fresco can be found in and on the buildings of MERZ and the Museum of Model Art.

The Sanquhar Arts Festival exhibition illustrates the repurposing of derelict and abandoned buildings, some now comprising the Sanquhar Cultural Quarter. The Festival introduces repurposing of the town's former Brickfields in the context of addressing sustainability and climate change.

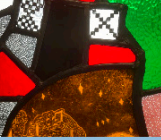
Commemorative Window

Sanquhar Brickfields are the remnants of a 19th century terracotta and brick works. Rumour has it that clay from the site was used as far back as Roman times. The Brickfields Project acknowledges the history, archaeology and history of the site while involving local and international artists and architects. "artitects" - to plan and build sustainable dwellings using the site's clay and recycled materials from local industry.

The Brickfields Commemorative Window has been measured for a brick up aperture the last remaining brick building on the site. The window explores the site's history with a nod towards its experimental and innovative future. The brick building will become a small museum with visitor centre in the coming years to cover the story of the site's past, present and future.

Acknowledging climate change and the need to develop future sustainable buildings, researchers have been exploring the technology, history and nature of the site to restore both buildings and develop plants.

A second stained glass course and residency at MERZ in August will explore the literary legacy of the local landscape for a literary window.



With special thanks to Kate McKean, Graham Street, Anne-Waggoner Knott, Anne-Waggoner Knott, Anne-Waggoner Knott, Anne-Waggoner Knott, Anne-Waggoner Knott.

MERZ

RECONSTRUCTION & FABRICATION

RECONSTRUCTION & FABRICATION



Before and After : The Former Pitbaths

Bought in 2011 it took three and a half years to gain the planning permission even though it is not a listed building. The owner Derek Wilson built the house on his own while working fulltime.

It has four bedrooms, four bathrooms and a downstairs open plan L-shape living area.

The underfloor heating and hot water is run by a biomass boiler, with extra solar panels going onto the roof.

There is a septic tank that processes the waste water into clean water.

There is a rain water harvesting system that feeds the toilets and outside taps.

Margaret and Derek Wilson moved in for Christmas 2023 and are hoping the building will be signed off by the Council in 2024.

Margaret Wilson



Recovering local materials and sites

Local roof fittings are reused nearby.

Meanwhile ... growing willow is a diversification option that can earn farmers up to £418/ha (£250/acre) a year and help protect land against flooding and soil erosion.

At Longnathay Hall Farm, near Perth, Cumbria, farmer Shaun Peet has been growing willow for a year and has planted over 1600 willow trees on his 100ha (250-acre) farm.

His land runs along one-and-a-quarter miles of the River Eden, which floods every year, meaning he is unable to grow crops or grass it during the winter.



Changing Places ... poster from 18th January Brickfields meeting

THE ARTtecture LAB (?)

MERZ : AN ARTtecture SCHOOL (!?)

Aim: To explore repurpose and adapt former industrial buildings and land for sustainable and creative use.

"In Scotland in particular, where there is a rich architectural heritage, this will mean the restoration and retrofitting of older buildings, whilst also creating new buildings that will surpass the needs of the future. It takes engineering flair and ingenuity to convert a listed Victorian building into a modern flexible space, fit for the future, whilst ensuring sensitive alterations to maintain as much of the original architectural intent as possible."

Section 16th January

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that 74% of over-16s in Britain are worried about the climate crisis.

Entropy describes the lack of order in predictability and a gradual collapse into disorder.

Achieving the net zero emission of greenhouse gases is a positive ambition that requires humanity (in the affluent west) to shrink expectations and adjust to new ways of living. This will require a step change in policy, away from the idea of inevitable industrial progress that has delivered (for some) incremental growth. Slowly the term 'managed decline' is being applied to elements of the UK economy, and recently in a clumsy way to the rail network.

'Managed decline' is not yet UK government policy rather it is seen as the temporary consequence of recession and government foolishness. But come the results of the general election here and elsewhere managed decline in the UK will become policy.

How will 'less not more' become an accepted mantra? Who is managing this adjustment to deepening recession that accompanies climate change, conflict and mass migration?

ARTtecture FORM - with nature but from waste!

Below right: Tree forms on the Brickfields site and Antoni Gaudi's reference to natural structures - often upended - in his architecture.

The architect Gaudi was working in Spain during the most productive days of the Buccleuch Terra Cotta Works.

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The architect Gaudi was working in Spain during the most productive days of the Buccleuch Terra Cotta Works.

Sanquhar Arts Festival, 25th May 2024 - an introduction

My research is focussing on hutting, and its unavoidable engagement with the social, political, physical legacies of the Industrial Age. This has left marginal land, much of it close to metropolitan centres; but with particular focus on rural Scotland, it has left a large number of sites and populations, that were employed for a particular purpose, usually for the extraction of a defined resource, and at the end of their useful life, they have been abandoned. They are not sought after for redevelopment, either because the population or locality doesn't create demand or require it, or they may be prohibitively expensive to develop. These pockets, soaked in memory but without the next chapter of a story, present a different opportunity.

These sites tend be located on transport networks, particularly with public provision. A ready infrastructure and population combined with locations are that are on the doorstep of natural assets. Carbeth, the country's largest hutting site...a 30 minute drive from the centre of Glasgow, but on the doorstep of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, and located on the West Highland Way. The parallels with Brickfields are apparent...under an hours drive from Ayr or Kilmarnock, just over an hour from Glasgow, or a direct train journey from Glasgow Central, on the doorstep of the Galloway Forest Park, and located on the Southern Upland Way. It has the added potential of becoming part of the community of Sanquhar.

Brownfield sites are full of the stories of their land and people, and development like this can provide opportunities to extract, illuminate and celebrate these narratives. A community's hutting and art practice can make new markers on the land, to avoid memory loss, and create new memories.

Surveys will establish any parts of the site that are not suitable for access or construction. Studies will analyse which part of the site enjoy reduced visual impact on and from nearby properties. The Hutting Act includes mechanisms that reduce impact on the environment and nearby communities...it limits size of hut, connection to networks, and the need to be removable with little or no trace, and Planning Permissions that have been granted have further defined occupation periods and removed the ability to sub-let.

Quoting from Reforesting Scotland's 'New Hutting Development', guidance, they state the benefits of hutting include;

- * *Health and wellbeing*
- * *Building understanding of the natural environment*
- * *Creating strong and resilient communities*
- * *Sustainable rural development*

* Capitalising on Scotland's existing innovation and expertise

And with particular reference to 'Reconstruction and Fabrication'....

- * *Developing skills in low carbon living*

"Spending time in a simple, rustic hut can be a highly effective way of learning how to reduce our impact locally and globally. Hutters' experience the natural environment at close quarters and learn how human behaviour impacts upon it. Hutting life teaches economy with resources, the need to minimise waste, and ways of re-using materials, both in the fabric of the building and in daily life. Hutting locally has much lower impact on the environment than holidays abroad (flying is a major contributor to individual carbon footprints). Hutting also offers people opportunities to gain a range of skills which society has tended to lose over the generations – such as practical skills in using resources creatively, countryside crafts and green woodwork. In short, it can help to equip us with the life skills for genuinely low carbon living."

These sites are not the only asset left after resource extraction. We are surrounded by what we perceive as waste. Whether the product of building refurbishment or demolition ready for direct reuse, or the packaging and offcuts that can be repurposed and reassembled into new components, or the materials available now or in the future on the site itself. All of this material potential can be used to unlock personal potential, with training and skills development, and community resource recycling.

A new category within the Building Act has been established to embrace hut building; type 23A. If the hut is constructed within defined parameters, it means that a Building Warrant will not be required, and compliance with the full extent of Building Standards is not relevant. If the criteria of Type 23A are not adhered to, a Warrant process will be required. Hutters' hold 'full responsibility and liability for their buildings safety and impact on people using the hut and on the wider environment.' (Reforesting Scotland Good Practice Guide, 2018)

Clay that has supported the site's last two hundred years of work remains a useable asset.

- Combined with other locally available materials, the resulting cob could be used as thermal mass within a floor or wall, helping reduce diurnal heat loss, or as an external skin to a timber framed construction.

- Integrated into a willow lattice makes a wattle and daub panel for use as external cladding.

- Air drying of formed bricks

Turf from the site could also be a material resource.

- Stacked turf walls used as the external skin of timber walls

Note that use of these materials as walls requires combining with a protective overhanging roof form. This has the benefit of creating a sheltered zone for occupation around the hut.

- For roofs, turf or more specifically moss can create a site integrated building-scape.

Additional (re)generation of vegetation in the forms of shrubs and trees on the site would be a benefit, for its own aesthetic, as well as a mutual privacy shield between huts and existing neighbouring homes. It would generate a carbon sink, and it could also be selectively harvested....green timber as wattle frames or small scale gridshell structures, seasoned timber as cladding materials.

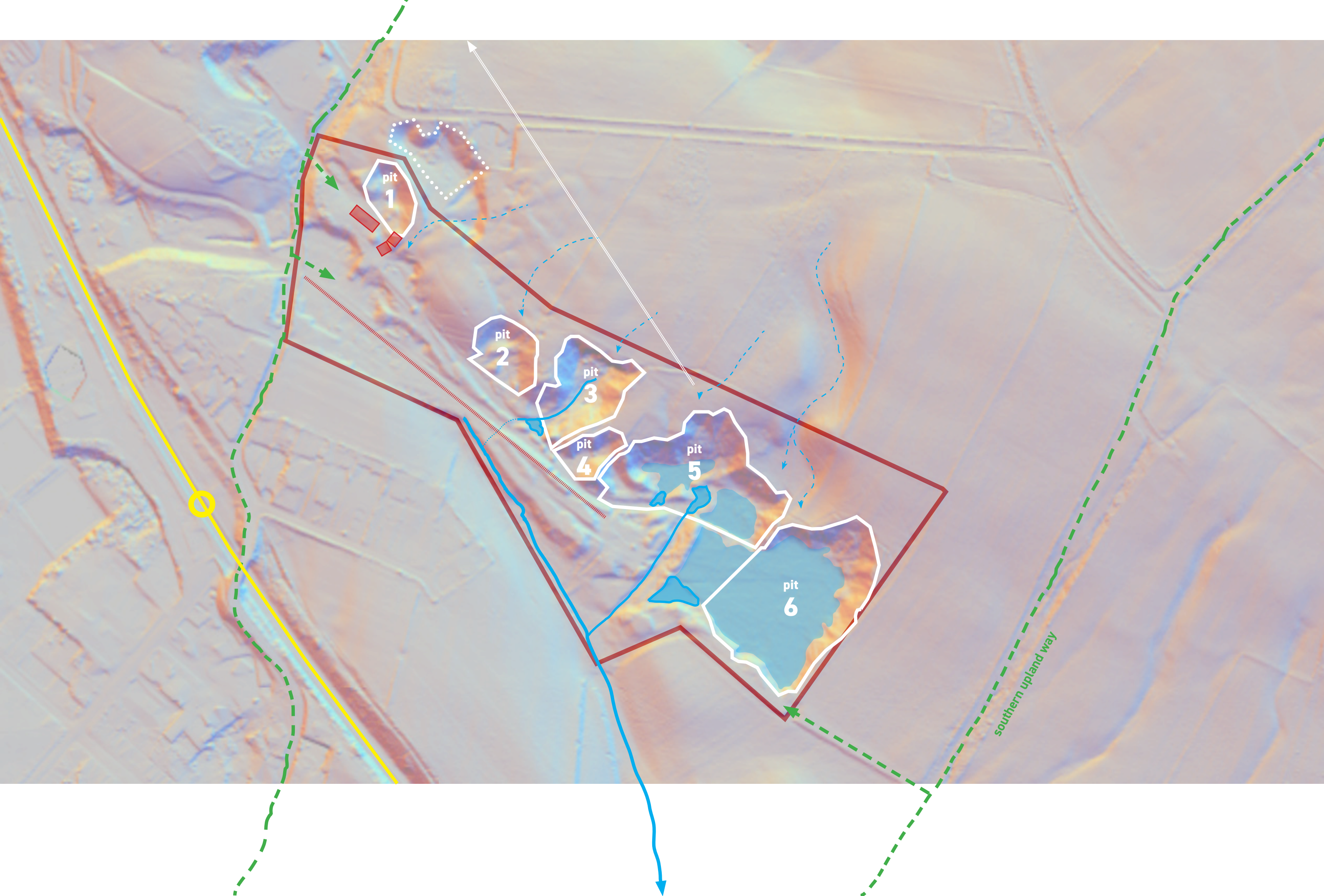


As archeologist on the Brickfields Project Susie is joined by Mark who surveyed the site's botany ...

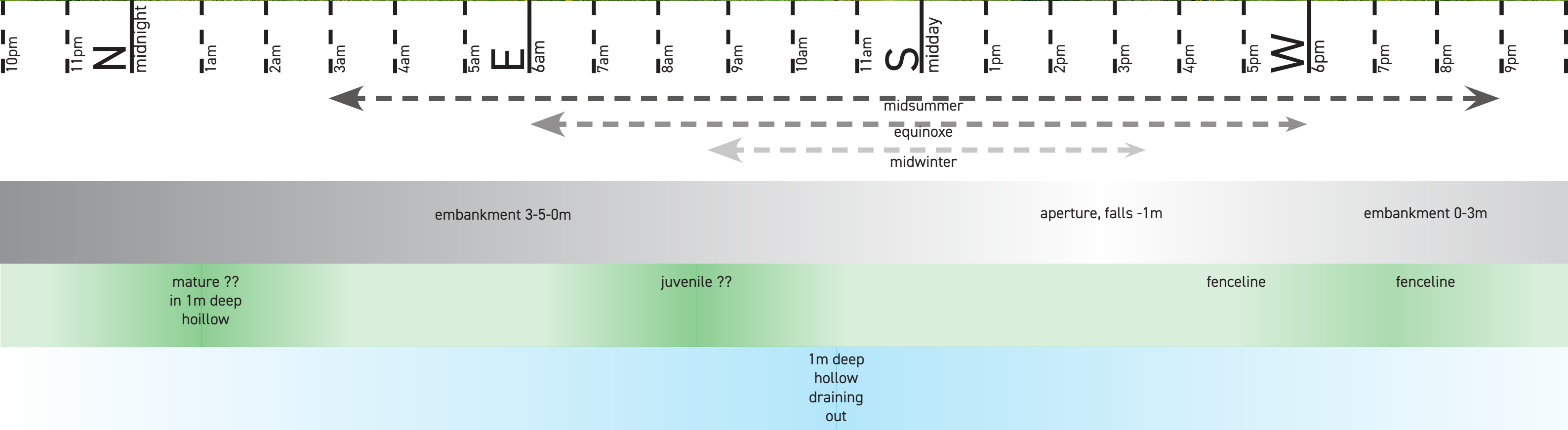


... and by architect Adrian who assessed old and new experimental buildings for the site

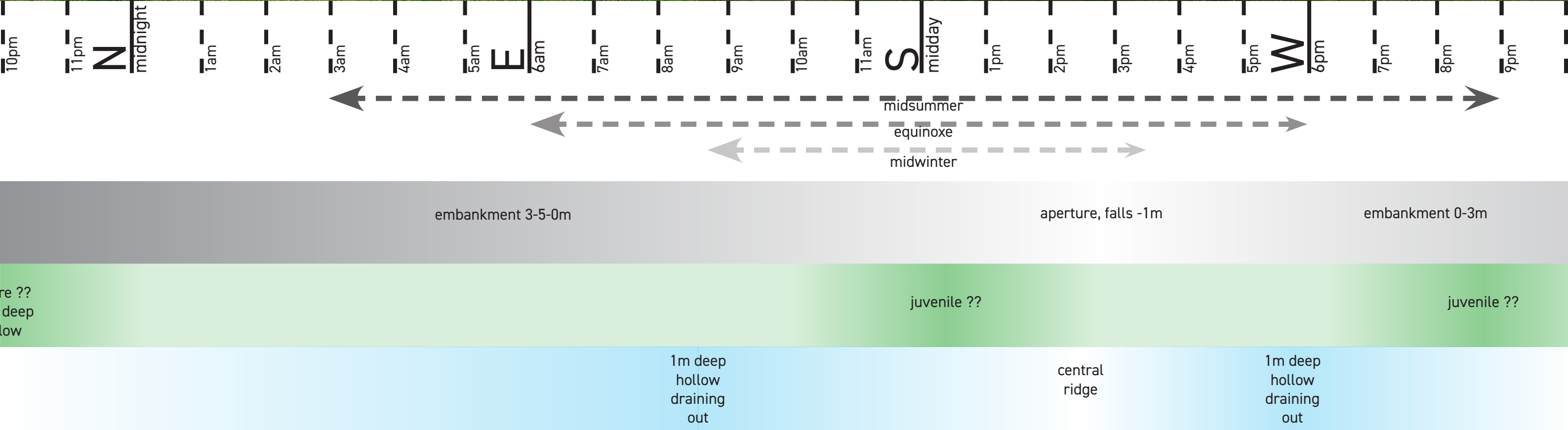




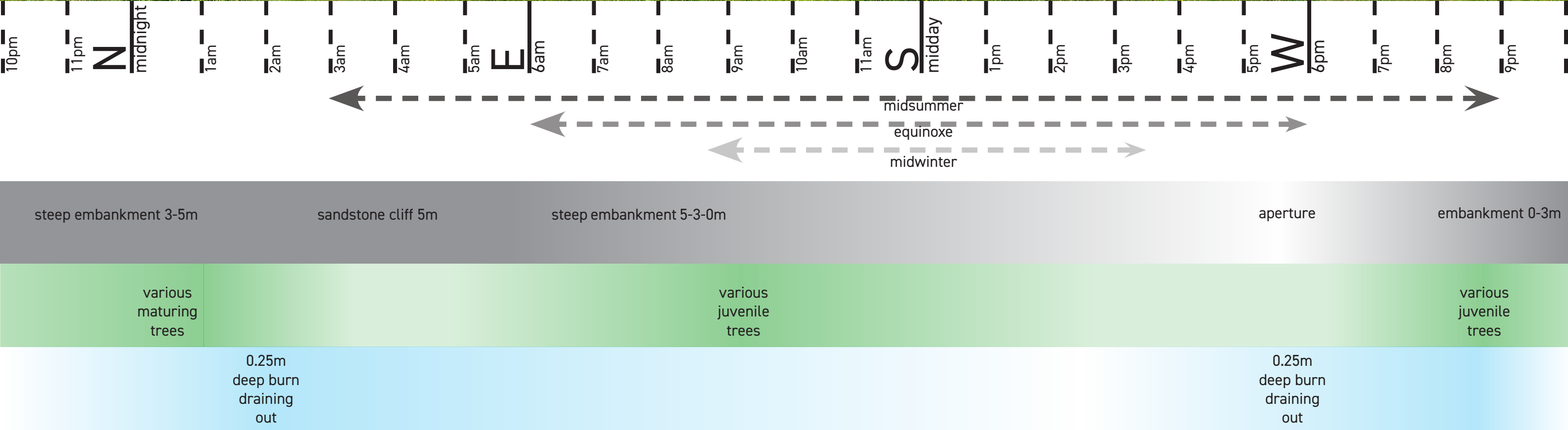
Brickfields 'zones'



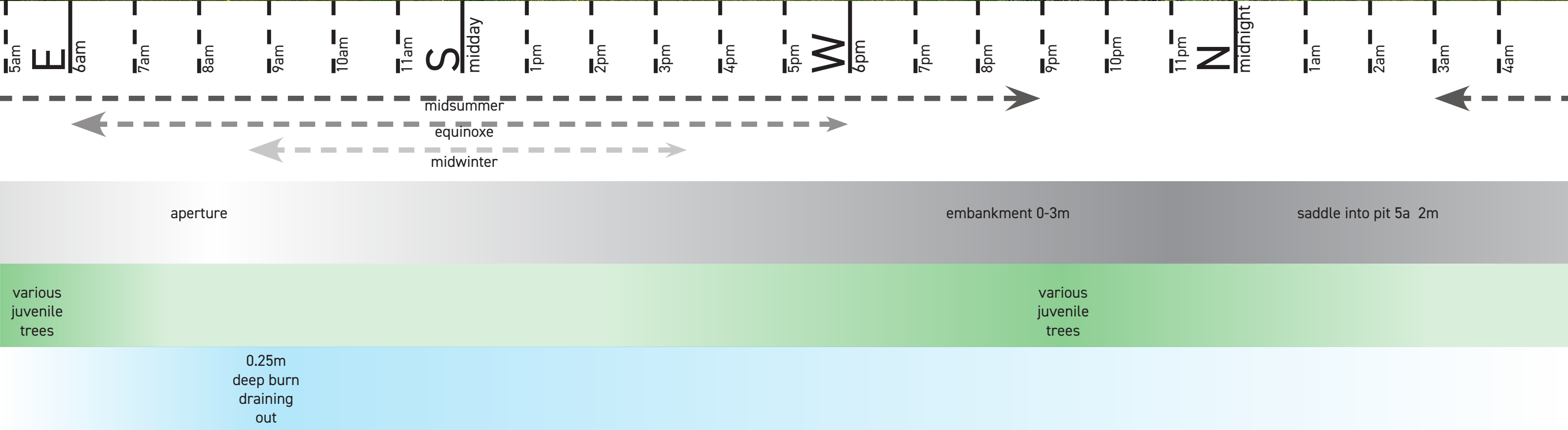
approx area of 'excavation'
approx area of 'floor'
orientation of opening/surround
vegetation
water



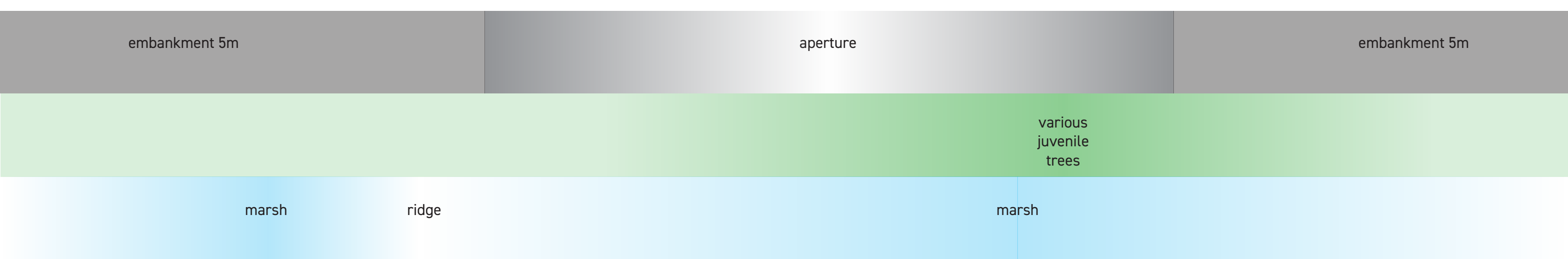
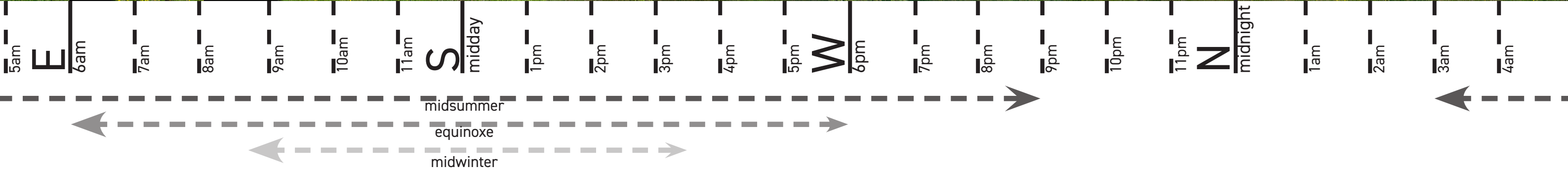
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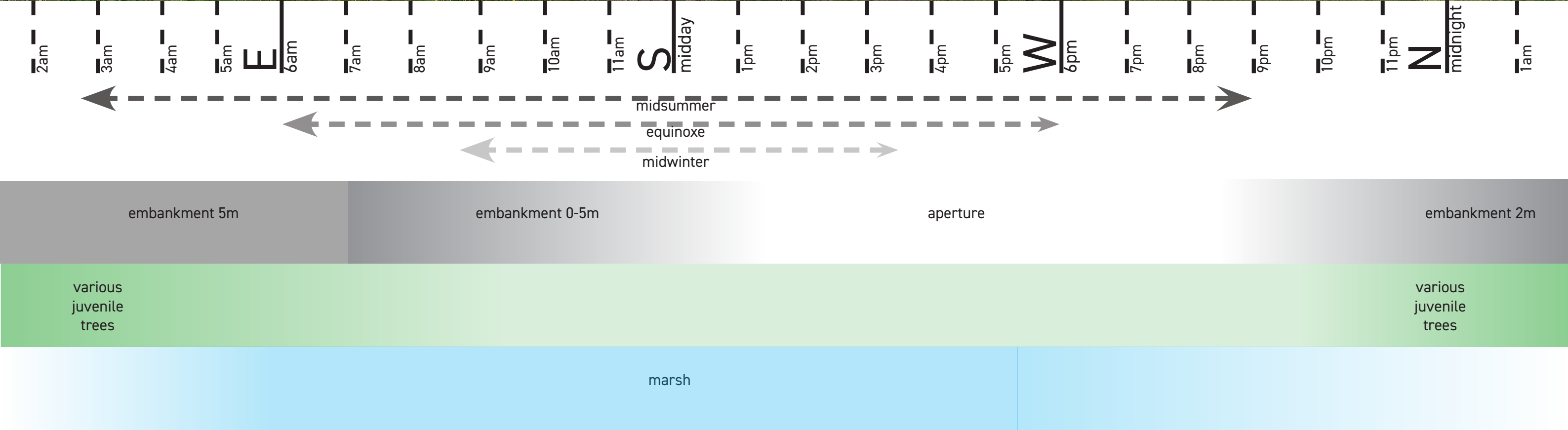
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