

History of Denbury Camp

Thanks to the Exeter City Museum for the following

DENBURY SITE DEFINITE

Militia Camp Is On Old Aerodrome

SURVEY STARTS: 600 TO BE EMPLOYED

WHILE no official confirmation was forthcoming there was plenty of indication yesterday that the former aerodrome at Denbury, near Newton Abbot, has now been definitely selected by the authorities as a Militiamen's camp.

Situate in the midst of delightful country and commanding striking views of Haytor and the Moor, the site was being surveyed by a number of surveyors and their assistants, and there was comparatively heavy traffic in the normally quiet village and its surroundings.

Many villagers walked the short distance from Denbury to watch the progress of the preparatory work.

MONDAY START.

It is understood that a commencement with the work, which will include a considerable amount of levelling, will be made on Monday. The demand for labour is such that the immediate district cannot supply all that is necessary, and importation of a large number of men from outside areas is likely.

Probably employment will be found for 600 men, including labourers, bricklayers, electricians, and plumbers.

Although Newton Abbot's unemployment figure is in the region of 500, it is expected that only about 100 of these are suitable for the work which has to be undertaken.

THREE MONTHS' WORK.

Already steps have been taken to obtain accommodation at Newton Abbot for workmen who have to be brought into the area, and a billeting officer has been appointed to deal with the matter.

Questions regarding the supply of water and electricity to the site apparently offer no insurmountable difficulties, and it is understood that the authorities are in communication with the local governing bodies which are concerned.

The period allowed for the completion of the work is three months, but every effort will be made to prepare the site ready for occupation by early August.

BOON, SAYS CHAIRMAN.

Reference to the camp was made by Mr. T. H. Frost chairman of Newton Abbot Urban Council, last night, at the annual dinner of Newton Abbot Corinthian Association Football Club.

He said there had been difficulties and obstacles in connection with the scheme, but these were being overcome, and the site would shortly be alive with workmen constructing the huts.

This would give employment to some hundreds of workmen, and also, he hoped, bring an increase of spending power to the town, which would be a boon and blessing to tradesmen of every description.

W.M.N. 19-V-39.

THE SOUTH DEVON MILITARY CAMP.

Although no official confirmation was forthcoming, there was plenty of indication yesterday that the former aerodrome at Denbury, near Newton Abbot, is likely to be definitely selected by the authorities for the military camp that is in contemplation.

A reference to the camp was made by Mr. T. H. Frost (Chairman of Newton Abbot Urban Council) last night at the annual dinner of the Newton Abbot Corinthian A.F.C. and Supporters' Club, when he said there had been difficulties and obstacles, but these were being overcome, and the site would shortly be alive with workmen in the construction of huts.

"This will give employment to some hundreds of workmen," added Mr. Frost, "and also, he hoped, bring an increase in spending power which will be a boon and a blessing to tradesmen of every description."

E.E. 20-V-39.

PUTTING DENBURY ON THE MAP

Hundreds Working on New Militia Camp

MORE MEN REQUIRED

Last Monday the site of the new militia camp at Denbury was just a bare field over which sheep and cattle lazily browsed and where the contractors, with a few huts in one corner, were awaiting the order to proceed with the work. The order arrived at mid-day on Monday and within the three intervening days an astonishing change has taken place.

From one of pastoral peace the picture has altered to one of human activity on a big scale, with hundreds of men at work, tractors, excavators, steam rollers, rushing about and speedily transforming the land into shape for the camp that will ultimately house somewhere in the region of 2,500 or 3,000 militia. Long lengths of carriage way are already taking shape, and hundreds of tons of stone ballast are daily being conveyed to the site by a succession of lorries from quarries in different parts of the county.

From Newton Abbot and a radius of ten miles alone, 350 able-bodied men have been given employment since Monday and more are still required. "There should not be a man out of work in the district," was the comment made to an "E. and E." reporter by an official this morning.

And what of the village of Denbury itself? Its former peace has entirely departed. The village, where no single additional dwelling has been erected in years, and where time scarcely seemed to move, has in a flash become the home of feverish activity to the regret of those who love the peace of the countryside, but to the delight of others who see in this new project the prospect of enhanced prosperity and good business. One landowner said this morning that in five years since a particular field had carried signs advertising building lots, there had been only one enquiry. Within the last few days, however, there had been half a dozen or so. And there are sure to be more, for Denbury has come on the map with a vengeance.

E.E. 25-V-39.

DENBURY CAMP FOR MILITIAMEN

Newton Council and Lack of Official Information

ONLY KNEW THROUGH THE PRESS

The decision of the Army authorities to build a militiamen's camp at Denbury, near Newton Abbot, gave rise to a lengthy discussion at Newton Abbot Rural Council meeting on Wednesday, when it was intimated that no official information on the matter had been made available.

Replying to Rev. P. W. Daimpre (Ogwell) the Chairman (Mr. E. Harris) stated no official figures were available, but it had been suggested by a representative of the contractors that there would not be more than 1,200 at a time.

Rev. P. W. Daimpre: Assuming that that figure is correct, you will have a village springing up there about the size of Ipplepen. What provision is to be made for sewerage? There are important questions that will have to be asked about public health matters.

Mr. W. J. Tuckett (Henock) remarked that a committee which visited the site on Saturday were given to understand that all plans would be submitted to the Council.

A SLIGHT ON THE COUNCIL.

"This matter has been under considera-

tion for a long time, but as a Council we knew nothing about it until last week, and then only by hearsay," said Mr. W. Sinclair (Abbotskerswell). "We have gleaned our only information from the Press, and I think it is a good job we have the Press, otherwise we would have known nothing. I consider it a slight on the Council."

Rev. P. W. Daimpre: I quite agree, and insist that we are having a village landed in our midst and we want to know what the result is going to be.

The Chairman: We have nothing official. Rev. P. W. Daimpre: We should. We know very well that these people appeared on the site before any deal for purchase of the land was completed.

"Instead of being an area for receiving refugees we shall become an area that will have to be evacuated. We are becoming a danger spot," he added.

Admiral F. B. O'Dogherty (Chudleigh) said on Saturday the committee was informed by the contractors that their contract had not been definitely accepted, and on Monday it was apparently not signed because workmen who proceeded to the site were told they could not be taken on.

MEN ENGAGED.

Men were engaged on Tuesday, however, and one could only presume that the contract had now been signed. There had not been much time to inform the Council.

Major J. King (Chudleigh) pointed out that the site would become Crown property, on which no rates could be charged. The Council had already spent money in regard to the matter, and before there was further expenditure the Army authorities should be communicated with to ascertain how the Council stood.

It was very well for people in Newton Abbot or Denbury, who would score from what was spent, but other places in the rural area would have to pay.

The Surveyor (Mr. S. Oliver) reported that temporary arrangements had been made for one-way traffic. Vehicles proceeding to the site would travel via Denbury, and away from it via Chercombe Bridge and Mile End.

ADDITIONAL TRAILER PUMP AT BOVEY FIRE STATION.

Commenting on a recommendation of the Fire Brigade Committee that a trailer pump should be provided at the Bovey Tracey station, Mr. L. S. Mardon (district chief officer) commented that there was thousands of pounds worth of property in the area totally unprotected from fire, because it would be impossible, under existing circumstances, to get the necessary water. An additional trailer pump at Bovey Tracey and bringing the Moretonhampstead machine up to date would overcome the difficulty.

It was agreed to provide a trailer pump and to obtain quotations for fire alarm bells in homes of Bovey Tracey firemen.

E.E. 25-V-39.

Council And Camp

ACCORDING to views expressed at Newton Abbot Rural Council meeting this week, some members, at any rate, have a sense of resentment in regard to the manner in which the decision to build a militiamen's camp at Denbury has been thrust upon them. To say the least, the local authority seemed to have been treated with scant respect, although, of course, in the circumstances expediency could be a reasonable explanation.

So far as several councillors are concerned, their first intimation of the new development came from the columns of "The Western Morning News," and in view of the magnitude of the scheme this hardly seems in keeping with the dignity of the authority, which in normal circumstances is called upon to give careful scrutiny to even the smallest development.

From ordinary standpoints, the whole thing has a flavour of irregularity; if statements to the Council are reliable the site was occupied for preliminaries actually before the land had been purchased or the contract for the work signed. On the other hand, procedure through ordinary channels might have meant much delay, and apparently the camp has to be ready for occupation on August 12.

W.M.N. 26.V.39.

Denbury Camp

SO swift has been the progress of work on the Denbury Militia training camp that any protest now made in regard to interference with amenities of the countryside seems somewhat pointless; in fact, as was shown by the attitude taken by Newton Abbot Rural Council towards the complaint made by Devon Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the necessity for haste in completing the work by the stated time is such that other considerations have to be overridden.

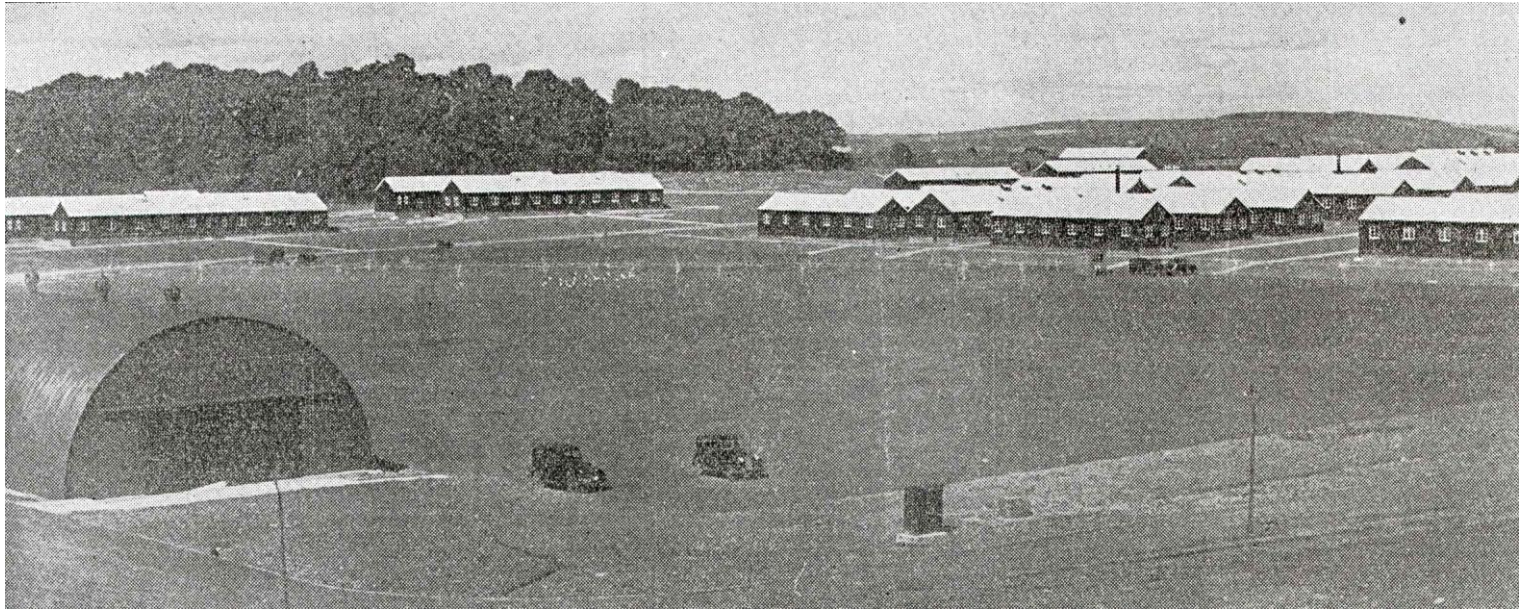
Any impression that may have been given that the camp would be only a temporary institution until such time as the provisions of the Military Training measure passed by the Government were unnecessary is wiped out by the intimation that it will also afford accommodation for probably two battalions of Regular soldiers; and it can be reasonably argued that every care should have been taken to obviate unnecessary spoliation of the delightful country in the district.

On the other hand, there is every reason to believe that the contractors, the Western Engineering Company, are doing all they can in the unusual circumstances to meet the reasonable requirements of the neighbourhood, and no one should lose sight of the benefits accruing from the employment which has been provided; at the moment 1,200 men are at work on the site, and Mid-Devon is probably better off to the tune of £2,500 to £3,000 weekly.

W.M.N.

9-VI-39.

DENBURY'S MODEL MILITA CAMP



Thanks to the Newton Abbot Town and GWR Museum for the following two images



Start of construction May 1939



Brand new August 1939

Thanks to David Henle for the following image



The workers on the final day of construction Denbury Boy Dave Henle wife's father and grandfather are in the image

Extract from the Junior Mercury – Oct 59

DENBURY – TWENTY YEARS YOUNG!

"MEN, remember there is no retreat from here. You must die where you stand!" With these immortal words of Sir Colin Campbell the epic of THE THIN RED LINE was born. A moment in history which led to such feats of LEADERSHIP and COURAGE, and constantly reminds us of the importance of CLEAR ORDERS, GOOD COMMUNICATIONS AND MORALE. So proper then the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders should have been the first to occupy Denbury.

Denbury. Have you heard the name? It's the home of the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Signals, located in picturesque South Devon whose tradition is as old as its heritage is rich with glories of yesterday and ten thousand yesterdays, bridging the memory with the epic of the Roman occupation.

The advent of the 20th century brought man's conquest of the heavens, and the fifty acres of lovely grassland, soft and flat, that is now Denbury Camp, was used as a springboard for the pioneering aviators of the twenties and thirties.

In May 1939, 1,900 workmen – who were receiving a total weekly wage of £1,200 – started erecting Denbury Camp. Three months later, and dressed in 25 miles of copper cable, 20 tons of sheet lead, and over 1,000 radiators, one of the most modern camps emerged. The date was the 15th August 1939. The cookhouse was the best equipped of its kind, and each soldier was to have a personal metal locker.

Members of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders moved into the camp, which had been christened RAWLINSON BARRACKS and 19 days later, on a warm, peaceful September Sunday, war came to England and Denbury.

On the continent, the British Expeditionary Force was forced to withdraw from the might of Hitler's armies. At Dunkirk only a miracle saved 10,000 soldiers, many of whom came to Denbury.

Sometime in 1942, the first of the 35,000 American troops found a home here. Denbury was placed at their disposal. On nearby Dartmoor, the Allied Forces prepared themselves for D-Day. Three weeks before the momentous 6th of June 1944, several important people came to inspect the troops gathering at Denbury. They included Sir Winston Churchill, General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery.

With tremendous force the King's men hurled themselves against the Normandy beaches. Casualties were high, although the tide of war was turning in favour of the Allied Armies. Denbury became a hospital and rest centre for the injured.

1945 brought victory. The hospital wards changed to classrooms for 650 WRAC being trained to work with Royal Signals, but they stayed for only a short period. They were followed by a contingent of Polish soldiers part of the famous "WARSAW GUARDS UNIT" who decided not to return to Poland now under Soviet occupation. They earned a high reputation locally and made a significant contribution to the community by clearing Dartmoor of live ammunition before they departed.

Complete demobilization took effect, and the War Office considered the removal of the Camp. But in 1947 Denbury still lived. The long rows of huts rotted in the wind and rain. Long grass grew over the once neat pathways.

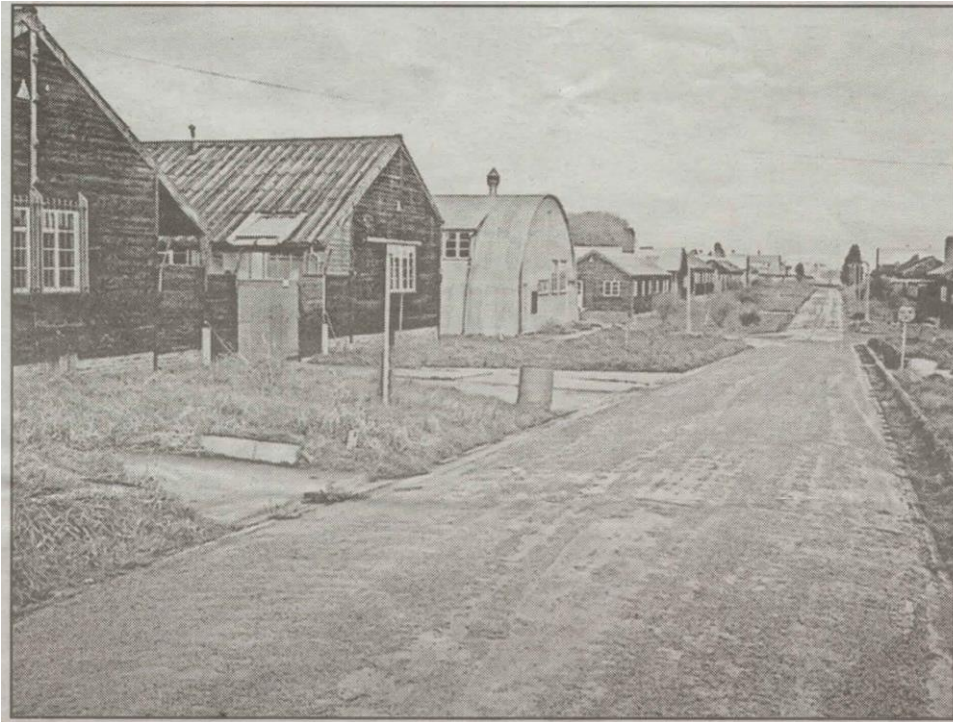
Suddenly it was discovered that the RASC required a site, and Denbury was allocated. Five years elapsed, then the RASC rolled out, quickly followed by the Depot Regiment of the Royal Signals. It became a vast transit camp of wild men, who will long be remembered by the populace of the neighbouring towns.

With the arrival of the Boy Soldiers from Beverly came a new spirit, and a new lease of life for Denbury Camp. And this is how we find it today 20 years young – and with a whole lifetime ahead.

It's a gateway to the moors, a runway to the future, and a signpost to LEADERSHIP. Not for its staff or its 171 young men the cold, impersonal blue letters on top of the official notepaper, which spell out "Rawlinson Barracks." Wedded for now and all time, we hope, to the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Signals

It's DENBURY! There's warmth in the name, and pride in belonging to its family. Pride in becoming part of its history; its sunshine and shadow; its triumphs and tragedies. Pride in being part of its glowing hope in the future, and the contribution it can make to the cause of peace.

Thanks to the Herald Express for this article – August 2006



■ **ORIGINS:** Denbury army camp just outside Newton Abbot was built originally for British recruits

Denbury camp's role in training guard

I WAS interested in your pictures in the Herald Express of Tuesday (July 4) Bygones — Denbury Army camp.

The ground the camp stood on was a small airfield going back to the mid-1930s. I used to be taken there to watch the small planes come and go, and to see Sir Alan Cabana's flying Circus when he put on shows from time to time.

With World War Two fast approaching, the government at the time called up for service training, young men 19 to 20 years old.

Camps like Denbury were built in several places across the country to house these called-up troops in about

1937/38. They were known as the Hoare Belisha camps named after the War Minister of the same name and designed in letter H shapes.

I don't think they were built for the American Army. That was much, much later. It was 1941 before they started arriving in Newton Abbot.

I was a cadet Sergeant Instructor in the TA Cadets in 1939 and used the camp on a number of occasions for training weekend, annual camps and conferences etc.

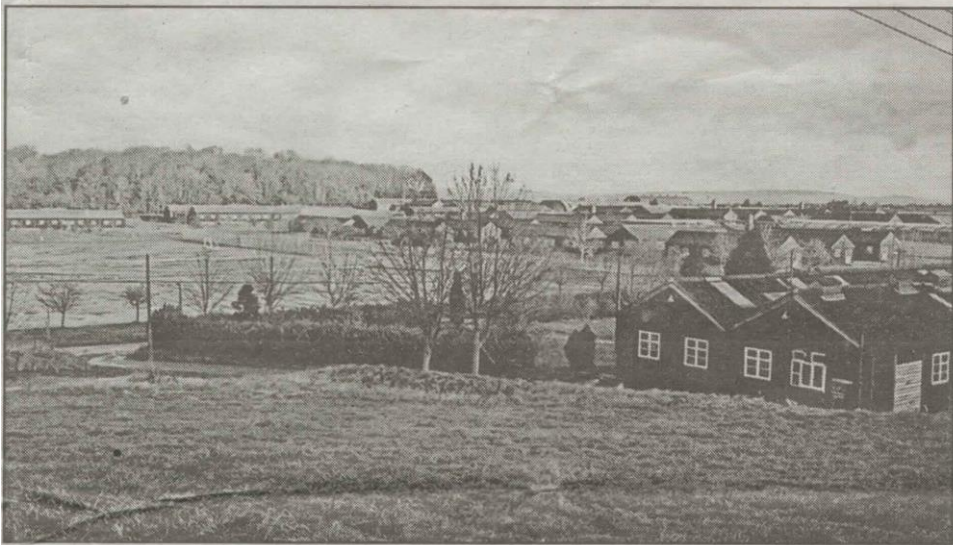
In 1952 I used the camp drill square as Captain of the Guard of Honour for over six months at weekends to train 150 Army, Air Force and Navy Cadets to form the Guard of Honour at Newton Abbot station to

receive the Queen on her visit to Newton Abbot to open the Royal Show at Stover Park

The Guard of Honour marched the full length of Newton Abbot, forming up in Bakers Park, Totnes Road to Courtney Park where they were formed for Her Majesty's inspection.

MAX EMBURY OBE
Meadow Ridge
Broadhempston
Totnes

PS — Hoare Belisha also introduced the orange globe pedestrian crossing at about the same time, hence Belisha Crossing.



Thanks to the Newton Abbot Town and GWR Museum for the following image taken early 1960s





South Gate late 50s – QM 's compound on right



2 Sqn - L + M (later Jerboa + Kohima) Troop – Church and NAAFI on right



L (later Jerboa) Troop - NAAFI on right



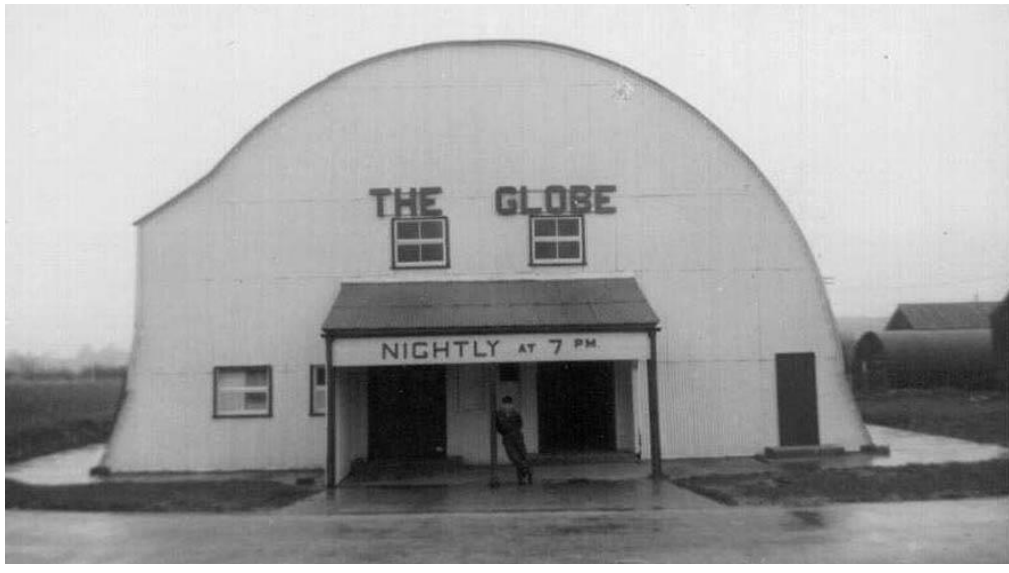
Looking towards the main gate



NAAFI



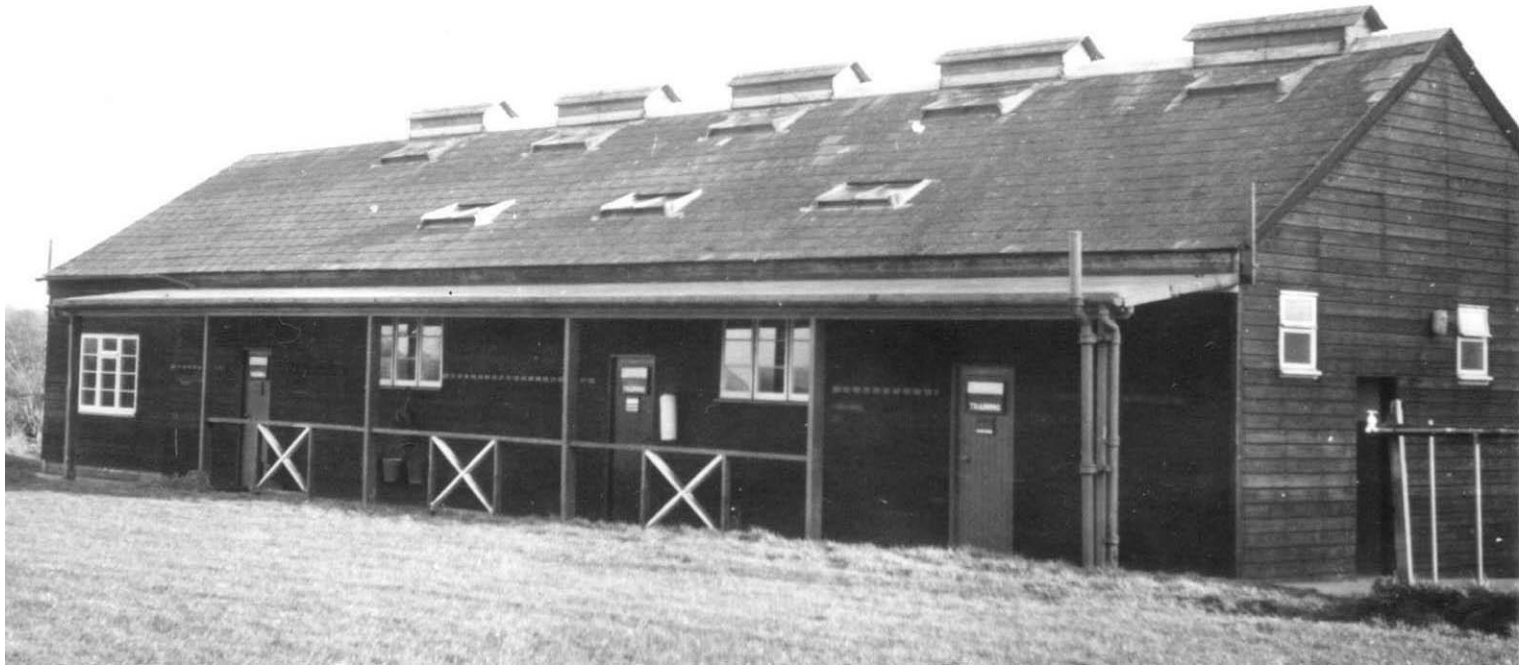
R Troop – this side was later Jerboa Troop with Iron Troop on the other side









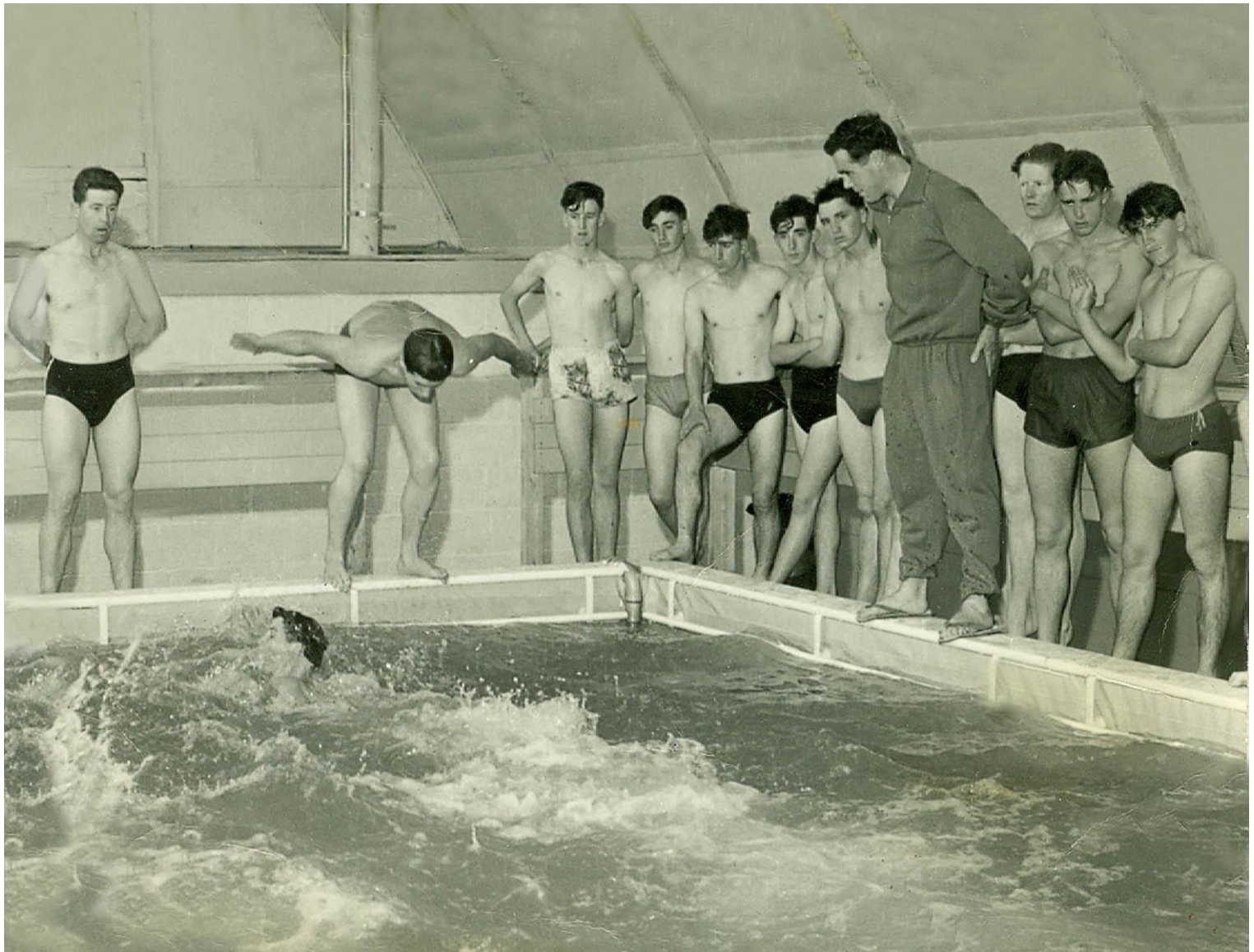




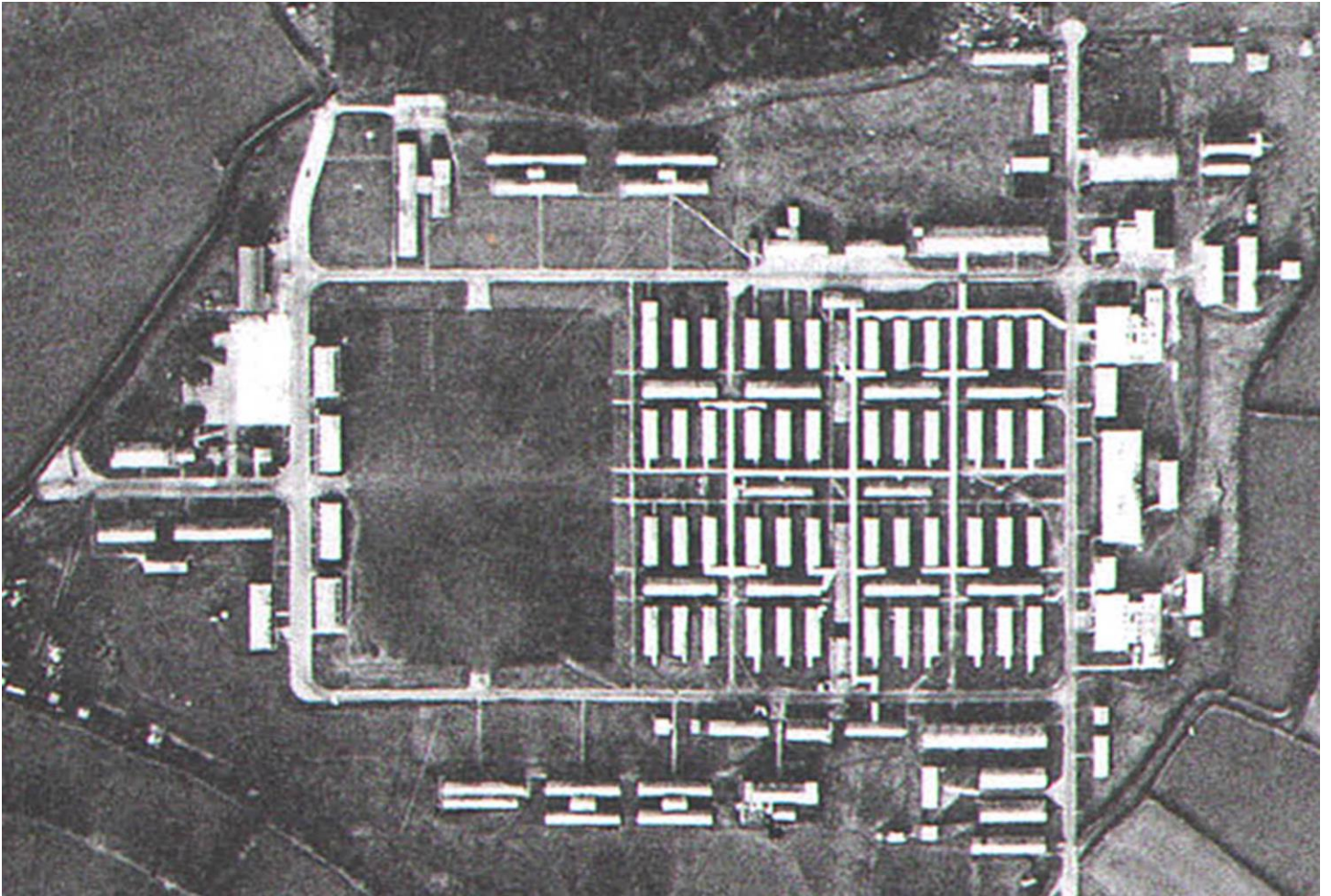




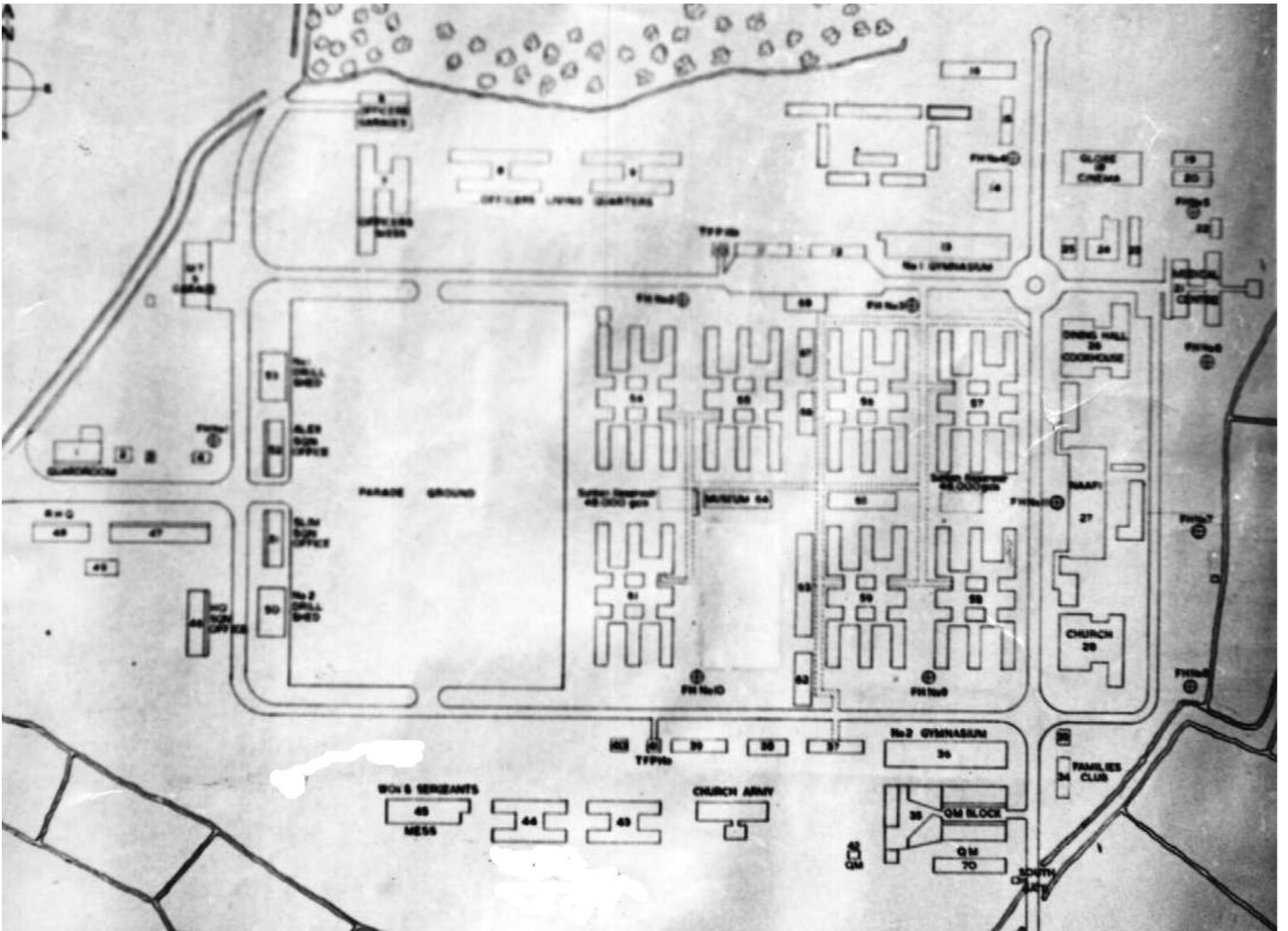
South Gate 1965



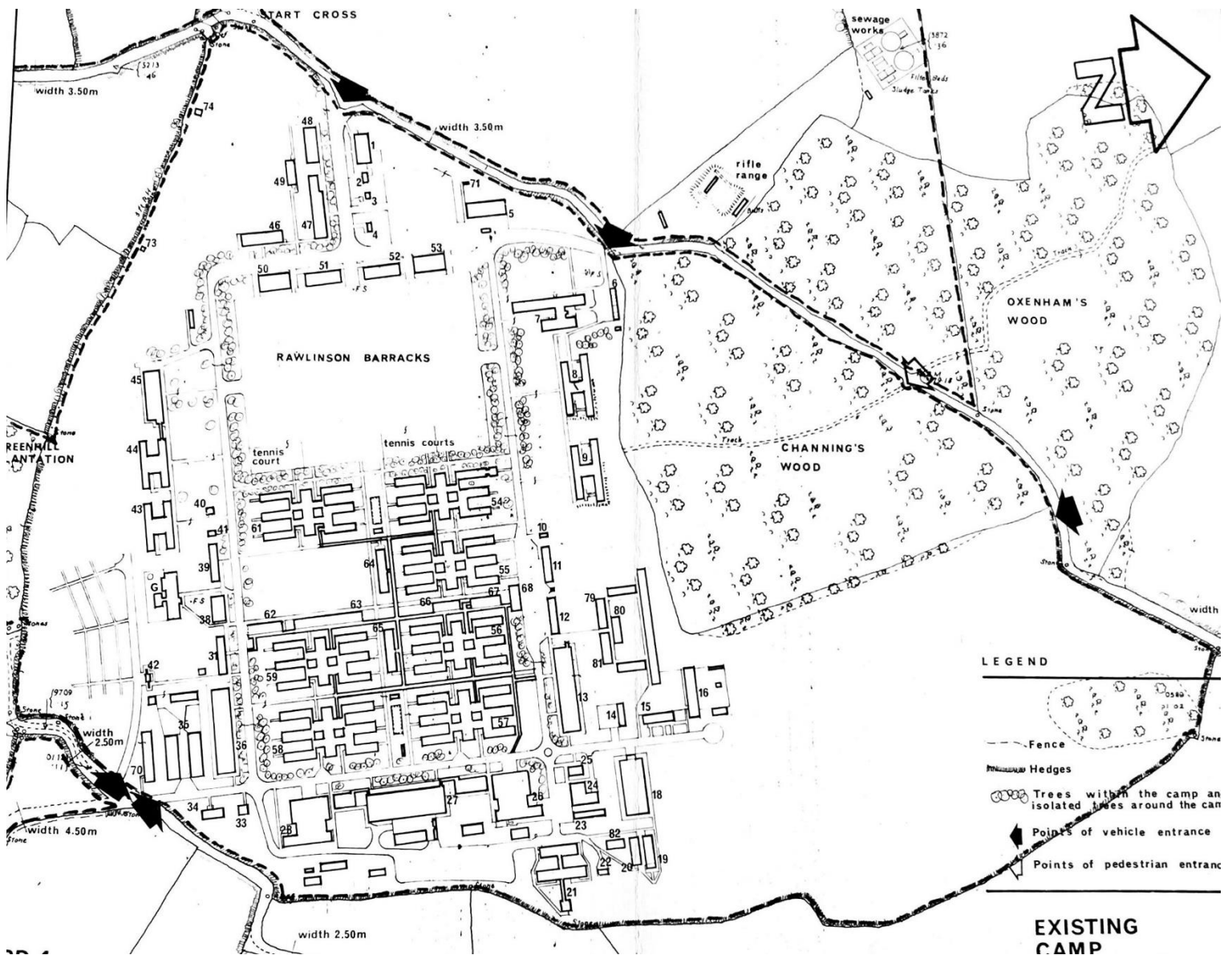
Number 2 Drill Shed was converted by 1965



1966 – thanks to Ben Gunn



Early 1970s when taken over for conversion to Channing's Wood Prison – thanks to Pete Penfold



1 = Guard Room aka Yates's Palace

5 = MT Offices

6 = Officers Mess Garages

7 = Officers Mess

8 + 9 = Officers Mess Accommodation

13 = No 1 Gymnasium

21 = Medical Centre

26 = Cookhouse

27 = NAFFI complex including Canteen, Shop and HQ Sqn Junior Ranks Mess

28 = Church

34 = Families Club

35 + 70 = QMs Department

36 = No 2 Gymnasium

39 = Armory

G = Church Army

41 = Magazine

43 + 44 = WOs & Sgts Mess Accommodation

45 = WOs & Sgts Mess

46 = HQ Sqn Offices + PRI

47 + 48 = RHQ

or 47 = Montgomery Sqn

50 = 2/Slim Sqn Drill Shed converted to swimming pool

51 = 2/Slim/B Sqn Offices

52 = 1/Alexander/A Sqn Offices

53 = 1/Alexander Sqn/all Drill Shed

79 + 80 + 81 = Education Centre

1955 to 1959

Spider 61 = Senior Wing/HQ Sqn – Spider 54 = R Troop/Junior Wing
rest not 100% sure can anybody confirm? – please send a message the link is in “Latest News”

1959 to March 1962

Spider 61 = Senior Wing/HQ Sqn – Spider 54 = Junior Wing
Spider 60 = White Spear + Francisca – Spider 55 = Classrooms
Spider 59 = White Swan + Iron – Spider 56 = Kukri + Anzio/Javelin
Spider 58 = Jerboa + Kohima – Spider 57 Quadrant + Bruno/Romulus

March 1962 to April 1963

Spider 61 = White Spear + Francisca – Spider 54 = Junior Wing
BLANK SPACE = due to fire 10 Mar 62 – Spider 55 = Classrooms
Spider 59 = White Swan + Iron – Spider 56 = Kukri + Javelin
Spider 58 = Jerboa + Kohima – Spider 57 = Quadrant + Romulus

April 1963 to September 1965

Spider 61 = Javelin + Francisca – Spider 54 = Jerboa + Iron
BLANK SPACE = due to fire 10 Mar 62 – Spider 55 = Junior Squadron
Spider 59 = White Swan + Lion – Spider 56 = Kukri + Beaufighter
Spider 58 = White Spear + Kohima – Spider 57 = Quadrant + Romulus

September 1965 to May 1966

Spider 61 = Javelin + empty – Spider 54 = Jerboa + Iron
BLANK SPACE = due to fire 10 Mar 62 – Spider 55 = Junior Squadron
Spider 59 = White Swan + Lion – Spider 56 = Kukri + Beaufighter
Spider 58 = White Spear + empty – Spider 57 = Quadrant + empty

May 1966 to December 1966

Spider 61 = empty + empty – Spider 54 = empty + empty
BLANK SPACE = due to fire 10 Mar 62 – Spider 55 = Junior Squadron
Spider 59 = White Swan + Lion – Spider 56 = Kukri + Beaufighter
Spider 58 = Javelin + White Spear – Spider 57 = Quadrant + Iron

January 1967 to August 1967

Spider 61 = empty + empty – Spider 54 = 4 Troop
BLANK SPACE = due to fire 10 Mar 62 – Spider 55 = 2 Troop + 1 Troop
Spider 59 = empty + empty – Spider 56 = 6 Troop + 3 Troop
Spider 58 = 7 Troop to Apr 67 then empty – Spider 57 = 5 Troop



Medical Centre Staff outside the Medical Centre circa 1966



Disbandment Parade Day 10th August 1967 – is this the last camp image taken?

Can you help with more photos?