

Shirehampton Remount Depot

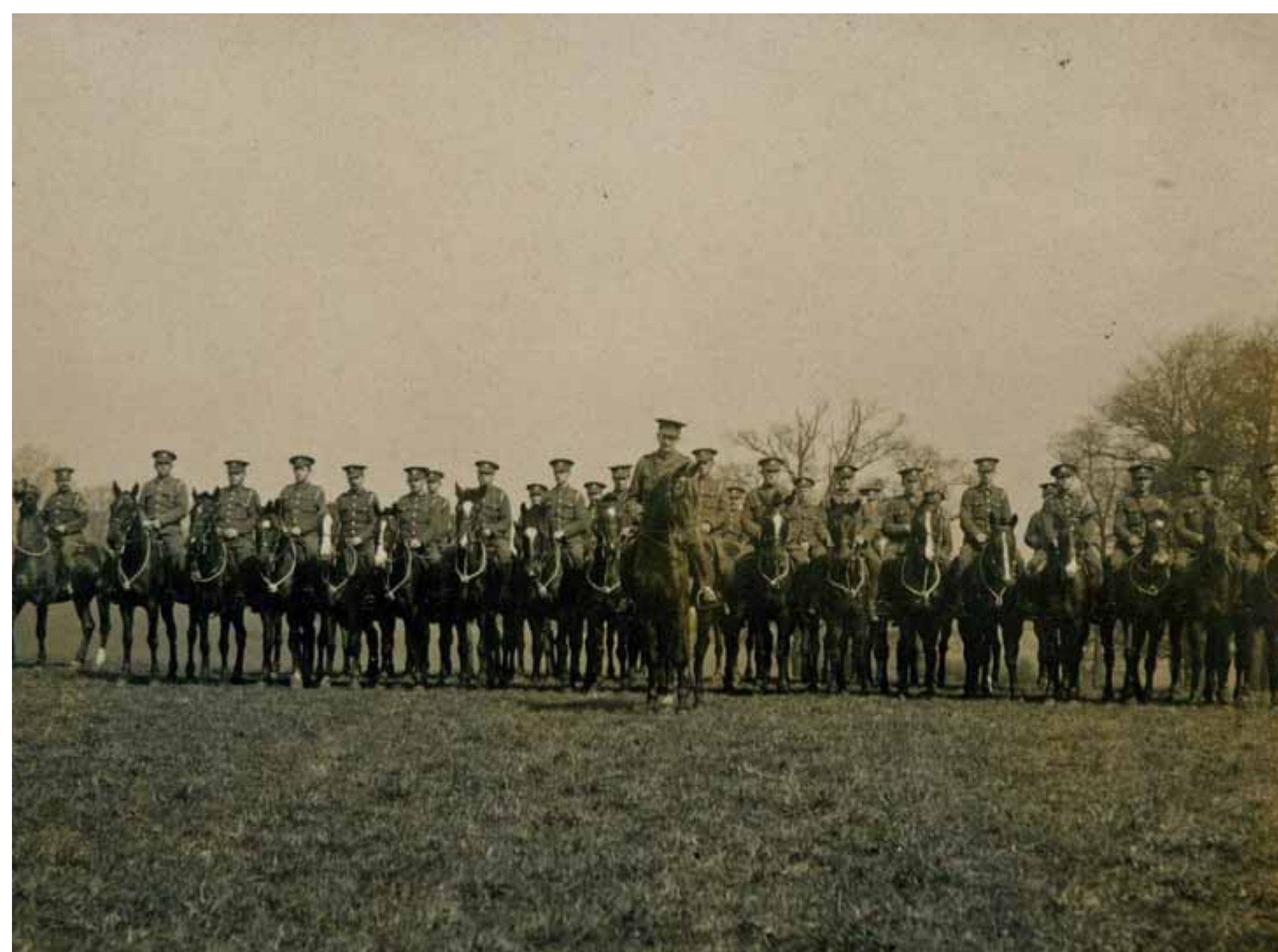
During World War I the main form of transport for troops, munitions and supplies was the horse or mule.

The military effort on the Western Front from August 1914 to November 1918 required a continual supply of these animals.

Several Remount Depots were set up across the UK to help maintain this supply. Shirehampton was one of the largest and over 300,000 horses passed through Shirehampton and Avonmouth between 1914 and 1918.

At the beginning of the war most of these horses came from British farms, but this supply was quickly exhausted. By 1915 most of the animals were shipped over from Canada or the US to be stabled at Shirehampton before they were sent to the front as required.

Through the Heritage Lottery funded Shirehampton and Avonmouth All Our Stories project Myers-Insole Local Learning (MILL) aim to uncover stories of the men, their families and their experiences of the remount depot. These stories will be presented on a World War I layer on bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace and will also be accessible at www.locallearning.org.uk.

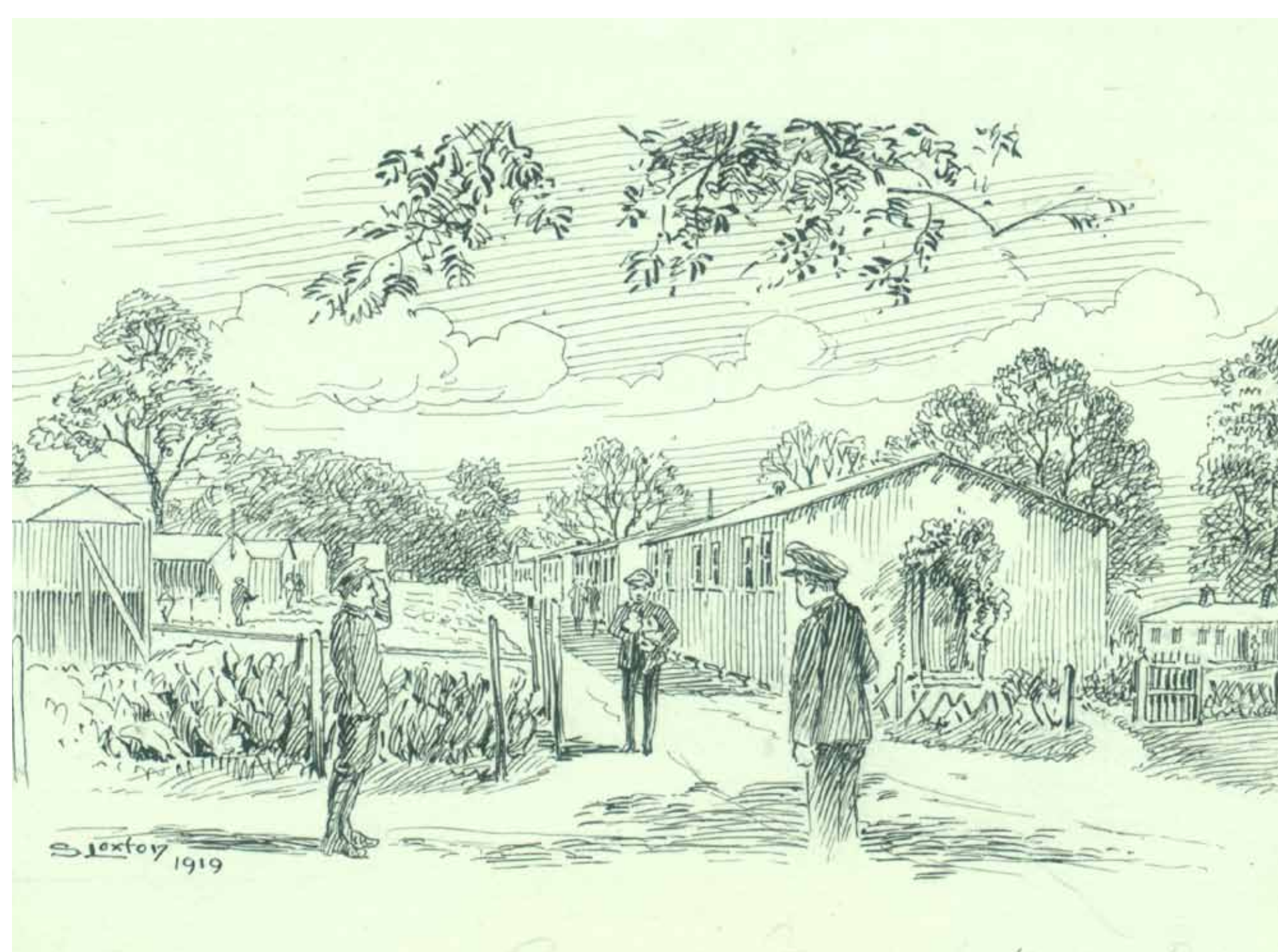


There are no surviving physical remains and very few very few images of the Remount Depot.



These images are used courtesy of the Shirehampton Book of Remembrance

<http://shirehamptonbookofremembrance.webs.com/>



There are a few drawings of the remount depot made by Samuel Loxton immediately after the war in 1919.



These two show buildings of the veterinary hospital that was part of the site and appears to have continued in use for a time.

Shirehampton Remount Depot



A plan of the Shirehampton Remount Depot made in 1914 with later amendments held in the Building Plan books at Bristol Record Office (BRO BP Vol64a f56).

Letters from Charlie

With thanks to Roger Day we have been given copies of ten letters sent in 1916 by Roger's great uncle, Charlie.

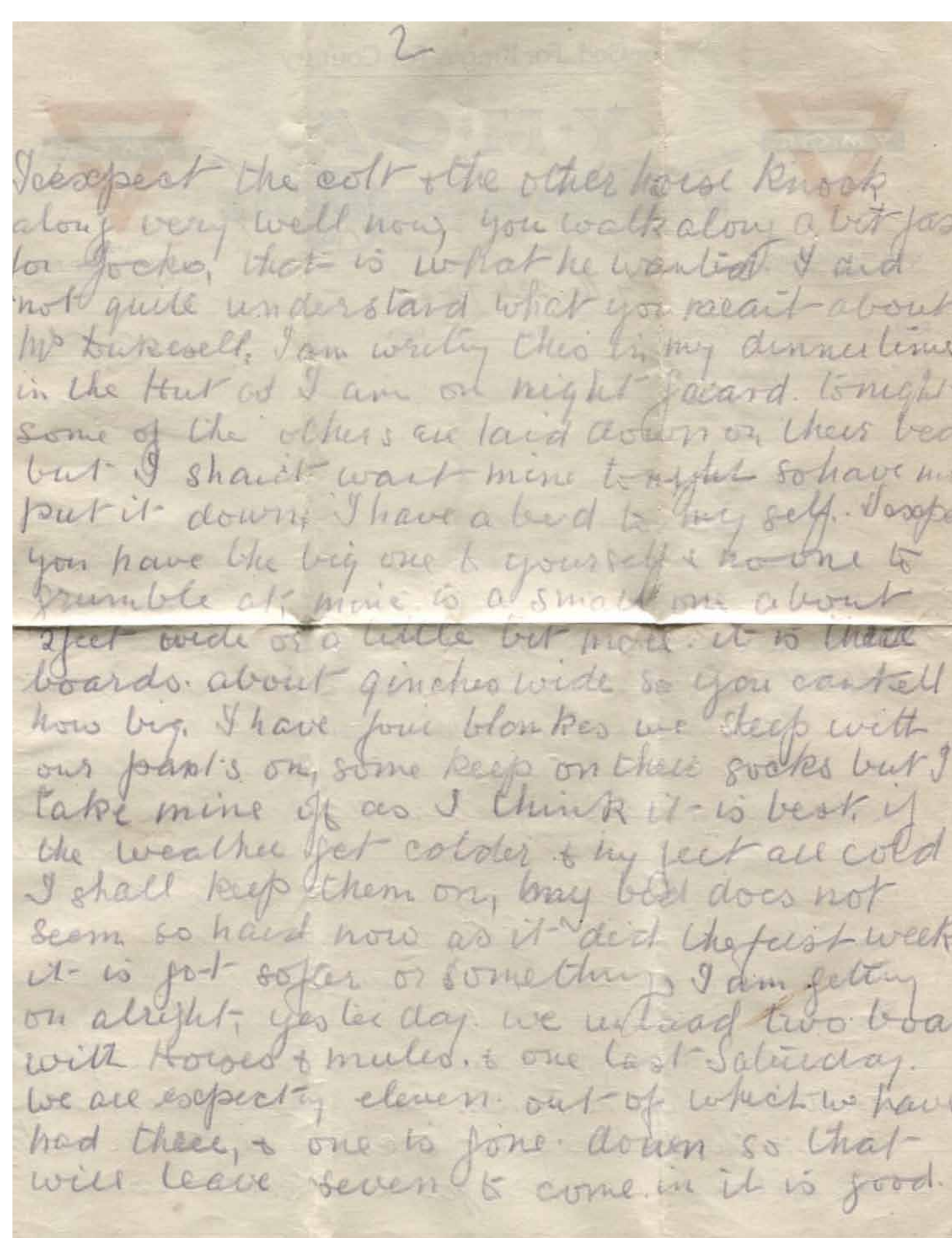
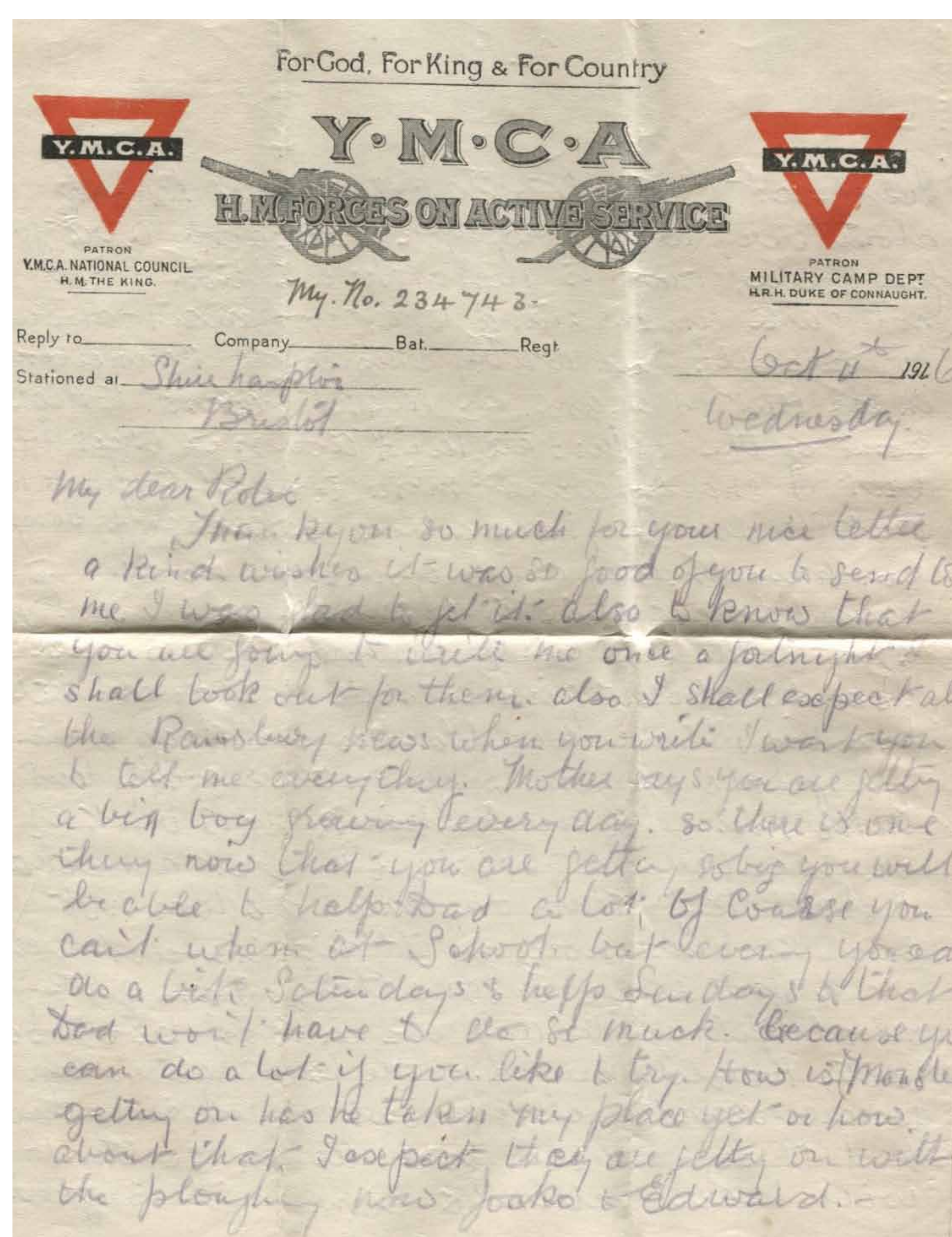
Charlie had been recruited to the army from Wiltshire and was stationed at Shirehampton from September to November 1916.

His letters home to his family paint a vivid picture of life at the remount depot and his daily duties.

This letter was addressed to Rolie, his 12 year old brother.



Charlie.



Oct 11th 1916

Wednesday

...I am writing this in my dinner time in the Hut as I am on night guard tonight some of the others are laid down on their bed but I shan't want mine tonight so have not put it down, I have a bed to myself...mine is a small one about two feet wide or a little more it is three boards about 9 inches wide so you can tell how big. I have four blankets we sleep with our pants on, some keep on their socks but I take mine off as I think it is best, if the weather get colder and my feet all cold I shall keep them on, my bed does not seem so hard now as it did the first week it has got softer or something. I am getting on alright, yesterday we unload two boats with Horses and mules and one last Saturday. We are expecting eleven out of which we have had three, and one is gone down so that will leave seven to come in it is good class of horses that come nice clean legged one just right to do some work by the look of them, but look tough and dirty when they come off the boats for perhaps they have been in on the water several weeks. You would like to be here for a day or two just to have a look round the docks and see the ship being loaded and unloaded with all sorts of things for the front and to see the Battleships...

The other day when we were down at the docks they were loading bombs they look just like footballs in the distance but packed separately (sic) in pieces of board...they do not load horse and mules in that way. Like we have seen pictures, but where they are inside the ship it is just like the pictures all packed in very tightly together only just room for them all to stand there are more on a ship sometimes than other some 900 - 1100 sometimes more or less there are 3 or 4 lots one above the other and when you get down into the bottom of the ship it is so hot and smells horrible almost takes your breath away...

I hope you will be able to understand this, I have tried to make it as plain as possible anyway I must away go give up now for I haven't any more paper. With love your affectionate Brother Charlie

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We have been able to overlay the plan of the remount depot on the modern Ordnance Survey map of the area.

This will allow us to understand where archaeological finds might be expected in the area such as horse shoes in the vicinity of the shoeing sheds and pottery near the mess huts.

Key

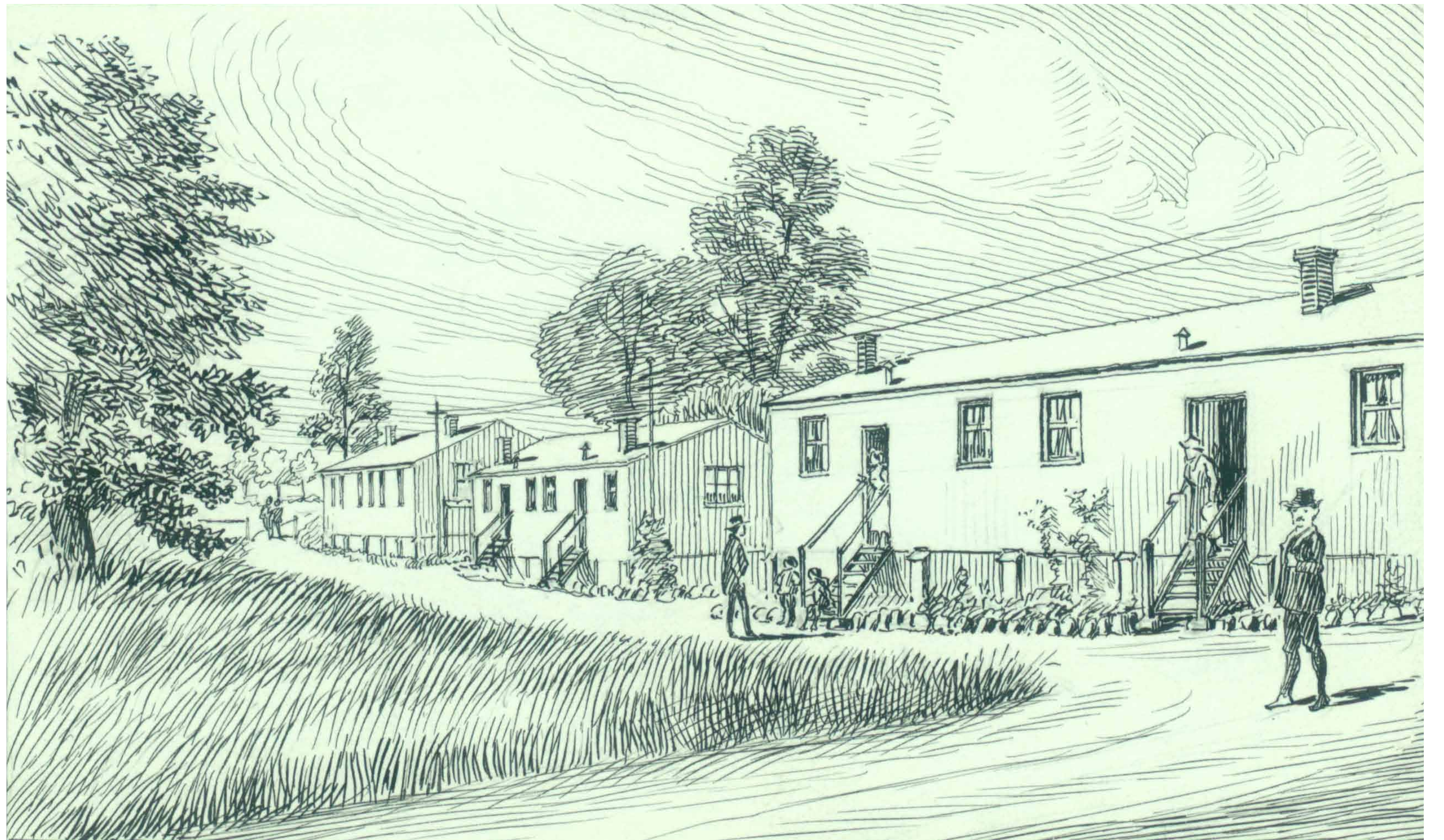
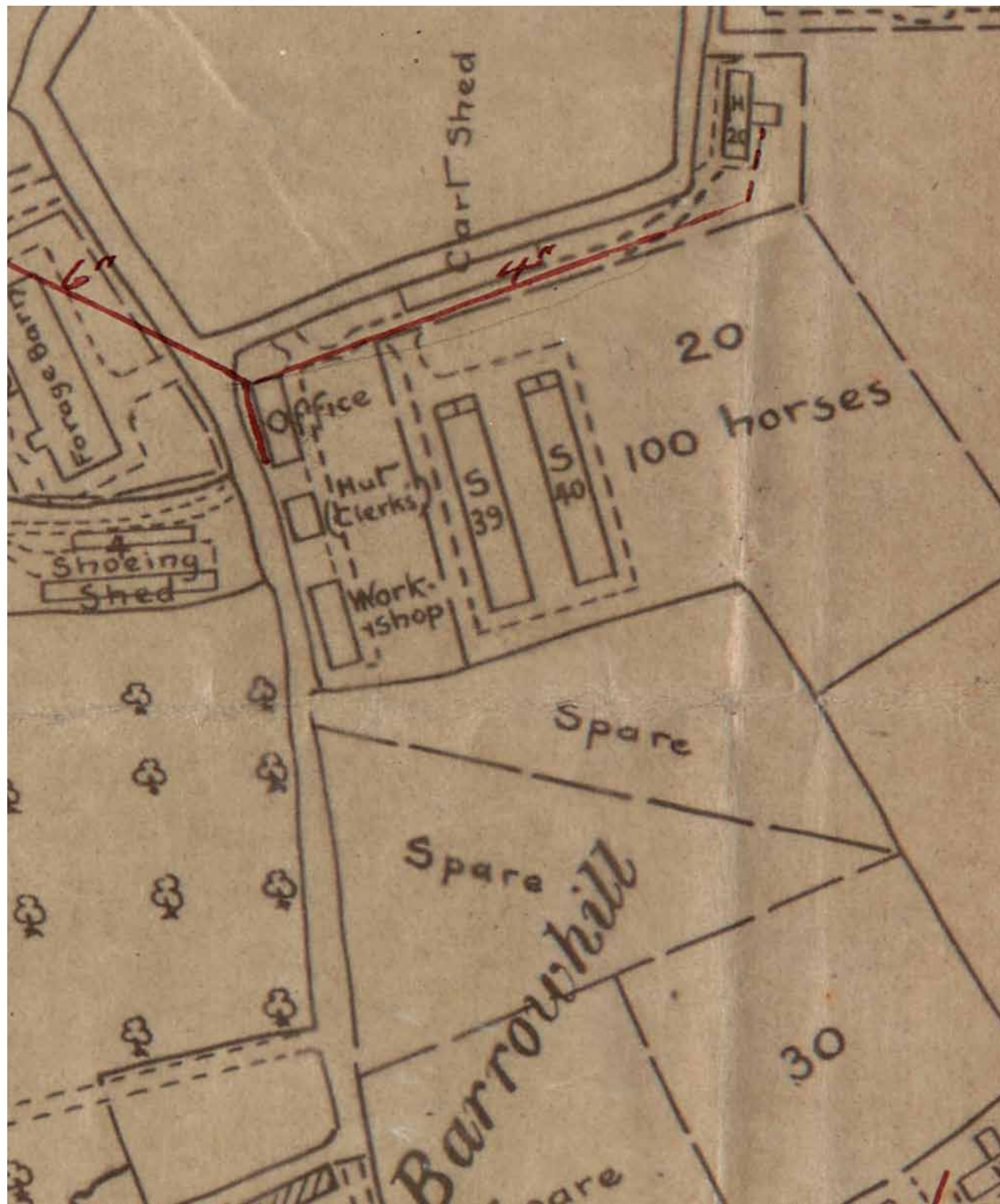
- Paddock
- Stable
- Shoeing shed
- Forage barn
- Hut
- Mess
- Office
- Workshop
- Store
- Pharmacy
- Boiler House
- Other buildings



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Ordnance Survey 100023406.

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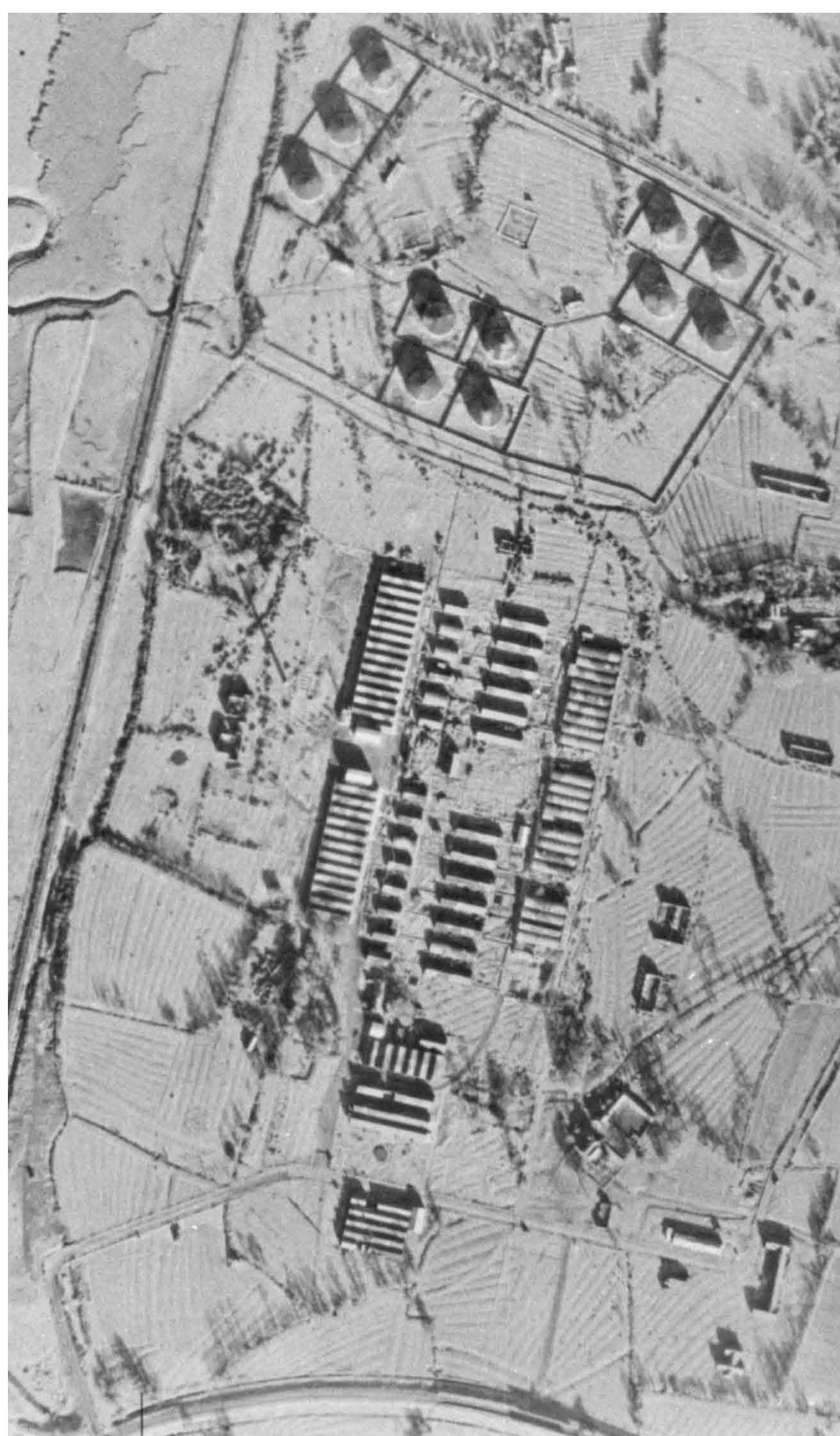
Some structures of the remount depot were used for temporary houses after the First World War. This drawing by Samuel Loxton appears to show the office, hut and workshop recorded on the plan being used for temporary dwellings in 1920.

Avonmouth

The local area was important during the First World War for many reasons other than the supply of horses to the Western Front.

Avonmouth was the site of a mustard gas industry that began at Chittening in 1917. This was then extended to a large site at St Andrew's Road that later became the site of Britannia Zinc.

Chittening (now the site of the Chittening Trading Estate) became a Filling Factory where shells were filled with mustard gas. These munitions were then shipped to France from Avonmouth Docks.



Chittening National Filling Factory photographed by the RAF after World War I.



Photo taken during World War I of the Shirehampton Women's Football Team. All the girls worked at the munitions factory in Chittening, Avonmouth.

<http://shirehamptonbookofremembrance.webs.com/>



Other supplies that were sent to the Front from Avonmouth included many of the tanks that were in use from 1916.