

Codford's Military Landscape



Figure A An aerial photograph of the landscape north of Codford High Street taken by the Royal Air Force in September 1945, showing the surviving Second World War army camps and evidence of those from the First World War.

Aerial Photography

Aerial photography can reveal evidence of past landscapes, often very difficult to detect on the ground. Features such as earthworks (banks and ditches), soil marks and crop marks (indicative of buried walls, ditches, etc) or crop marks (indicative of buried walls) are often clearly identifiable. A selected site may be taken at an oblique angle using a hand-held camera, or a vertical photograph may be taken of a whole landscape; both are often invaluable in locating lost sites.

This vertical photograph taken in 1945 shows the landscape to the north of Codford and south of Salisbury Plain, an area noted for military activity during both World Wars. It shows clearly a large number of ephemeral buildings and earthworks that relate to Codford's use as a military camp between 1916 and 1945. The buildings from the First World War were quickly removed following the cessation of hostilities but the surviving earthworks from that period allow various features and camps to be identified. The buildings from the Second World War are clearly visible.

World War I

There were no fewer than 15 different camps in the landscape around Codford, used principally to house Anzac troops before their deployment to France. Located around and to the north of St Mary's church, the remains of rows of temporary huts can be seen stretching along the eastern side

of the Chitterne Road. Also clearly visible are the earthworks associated with the Codford Camp railway that linked the civilian station with temporary halts at the camp sites.

The track running from the Chitterne Road into the Punch Bowl would have served the New Zealand Military Hospital that was established there in 1916.

World War II

Although little survives of the military structures today, in September 1945 the majority of the Second World War camp sites were still largely intact (see Figure A). The RAF photograph shows the buildings and Nissen huts of both A and B Camps in great detail. These camps housed American servicemen as did the Cherry Orchard Camp to the immediate north of the High Street. A substantial tank repair and vehicle depot site can be seen at Bury Mead at the junction of New Road and Green Lane and the former NZ Military Hospital site in the Punch Bowl was adapted for use as a firing range by the Americans.

The remains of a row of wheeled vehicle repair workshops operated by the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers constitute one of the few structures from the Second World War to survive into the 21st century (see Figure B). Situated to the south of New Road, they are clearly visible in the aerial photograph.

Matthew Bristow



Figure B *Remains of REME workshops, New Road.*