

# Tag des offenen Denkmals

## Spuren eines exhumierten Friedhofs

### WWII camps in Bremen-Oslebshausen - by James Nnamdi

During WWII (1939 – 1945), several types of camps were set up all over German-occupied territories by the Nazis for various purposes. More than ever in the history of mankind, there was an extensive network of organised persecutions and forceful incarcerations of several millions of people.

Between 1940 and 1945, four camps were set up in the southern half of the horseshoe-curved railway tracks that currently serve as Oslebshausen's western frontier to Grambke. Against today's Oslebshauser Heerstraße; the Prisoners' of war (PoW) camp, the camp east of Wiehenstraße (Weserflug), the camp west of Wiehenstraße (AG Weser), and camp Grambker Mühle (Figure 1). The Identified military-related structures including the four camps, a cemetery, 2 pairs of two buildings each at the western and south-western exit points, and the interior sandy fields made up what is referred to as the 4-camps zone which measured about 420,000 sq. m.

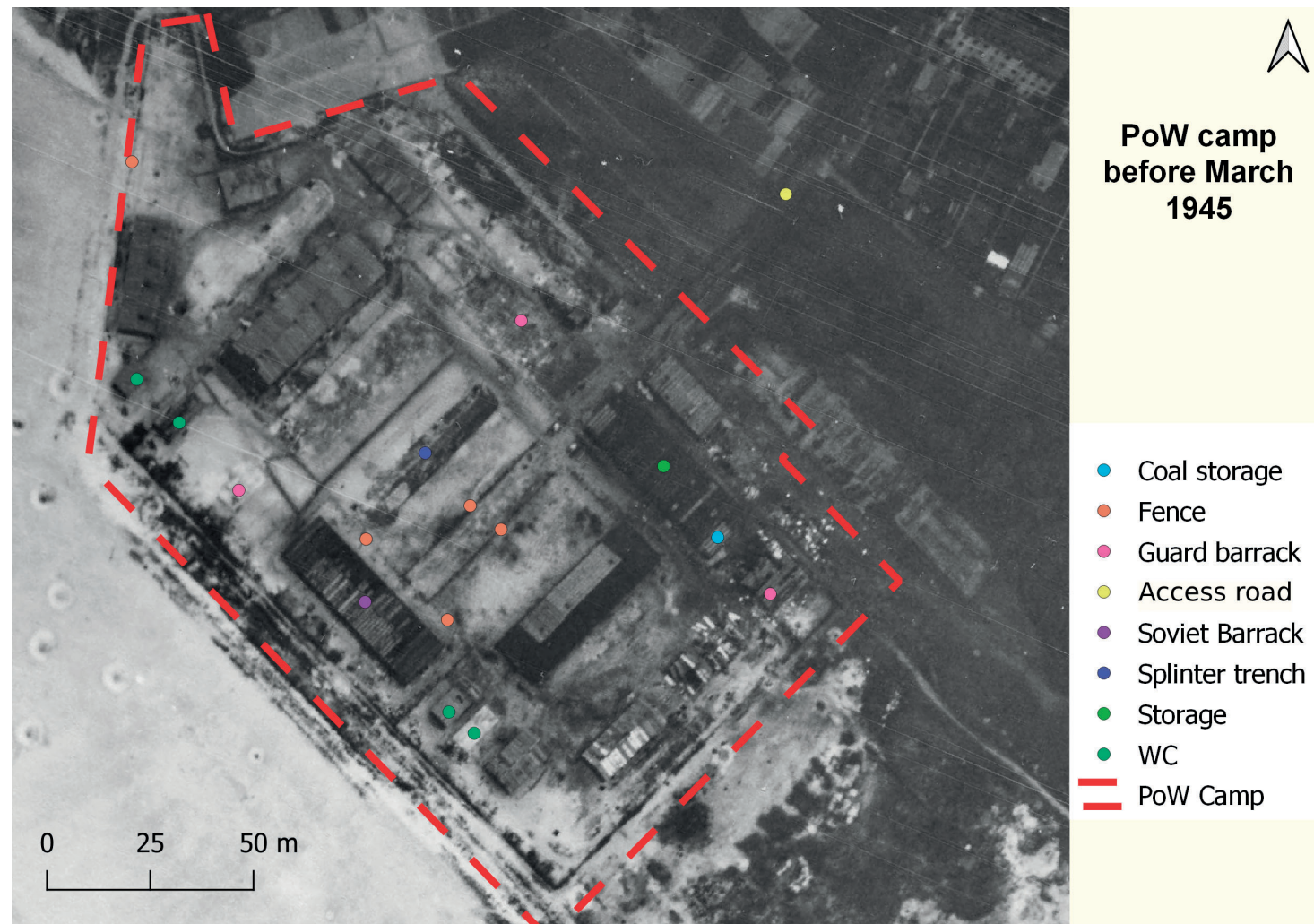


Figure 2: A reconstruction of the 4-camps zone (Modified from State archive Bremen)

#### The Prisoner of war camp (PoW)

Officially known as Kriegsgefangenen-Arbeitskommando 1237, the camp (Figure 2) was the first to be built in the area. From December 1940, it remained under the military jurisdiction of Stalag XC Nienburg (Weser). The 5th Company of the Landesschützen Battalion 679 was responsible for guarding and managing the camp. At first, the camp was mainly occupied by French PoW. While those of them who were under the jurisdiction of the senator for building were used for different purposes including farming, bunker construction, repair of air raid damages and waste sorting, the others worked at AG Weser and Weser-Flugzeugbau (Weserflug). Following the arrival of 600 Soviet PoW in October 1941, the camp was racially sectionalised based on the racial sentiments of the Nazis. Even though living conditions in the camp were generally abysmal, it was even more terrible for the Soviets. Aside from the poor hygienic and feeding conditions, the PoW who were excessively involved in forced labour also lacked proper heating facilities. Many of the nearly 2000 PoW did not survive the persecution. The cemetery currently being excavated was originally meant for the Soviets in this camp.

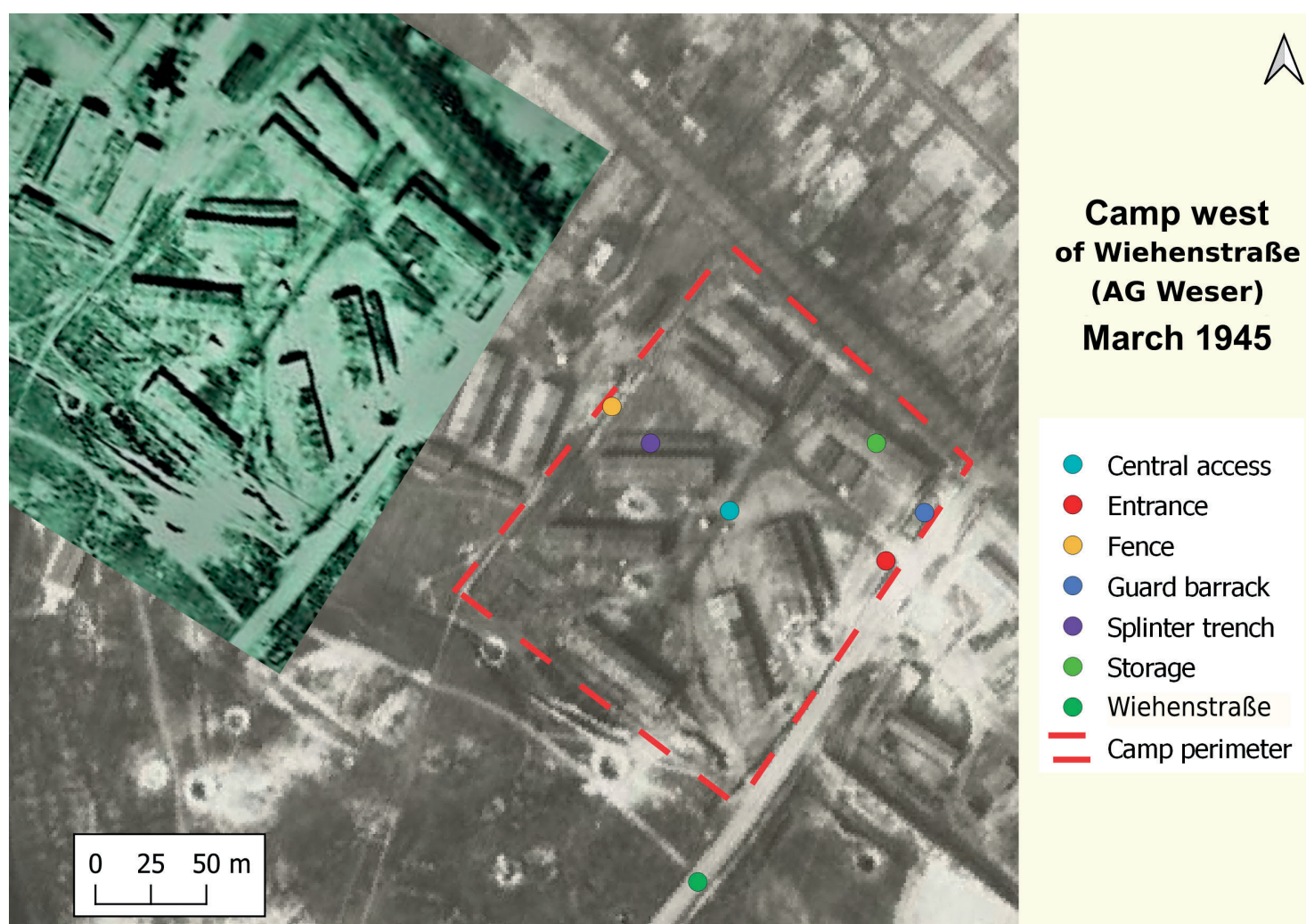


Figure 5: The camp was most likely divided into two sections (Modified from State Archive Bremen)

#### Forced labour camps (FLC)

Even though living conditions in all the camps were bad, there were slight but noticeable differences between the two types of camps in the 4-camps zone. Forced labourers had better pay, better food rations, and the ability to attend cultural activities organized by the Nazi community Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy).

#### The FLC east of Wiehenstraße

Measuring about 30,000 sq. m., the camp which belonged to the aircraft company Weser Flugzeugbau Gesellschaft m. b. H housed both forced and PoW labourers who all worked at Weserflug (Figure 3). In autumn 1944, the camp was bombed and there are no indications of a further occupation of the camp following the bombardment.



Figure 3: A reconstruction of the camp's layout (Modified from State Archive Bremen)

#### The FLC west of Wiehenstraße

Owned by AG Weser, the camp which measured about 29,000 sq. m. was established in February 1941 (Figure 5). It is believed to have housed nearly a thousand inmates who offered forced labour at the shipbuilding company AG Weser.

The PoW who were directly under the administration of the senator for building were mostly involved in the construction of civilian bunkers in the neighbourhood. Some others were used for railway track construction, waste retrieval, the construction of new houses and clearance of air raid damages. Some were as well reportedly deployed to farms, fields, and vegetable and summer gardens all in Bremen.

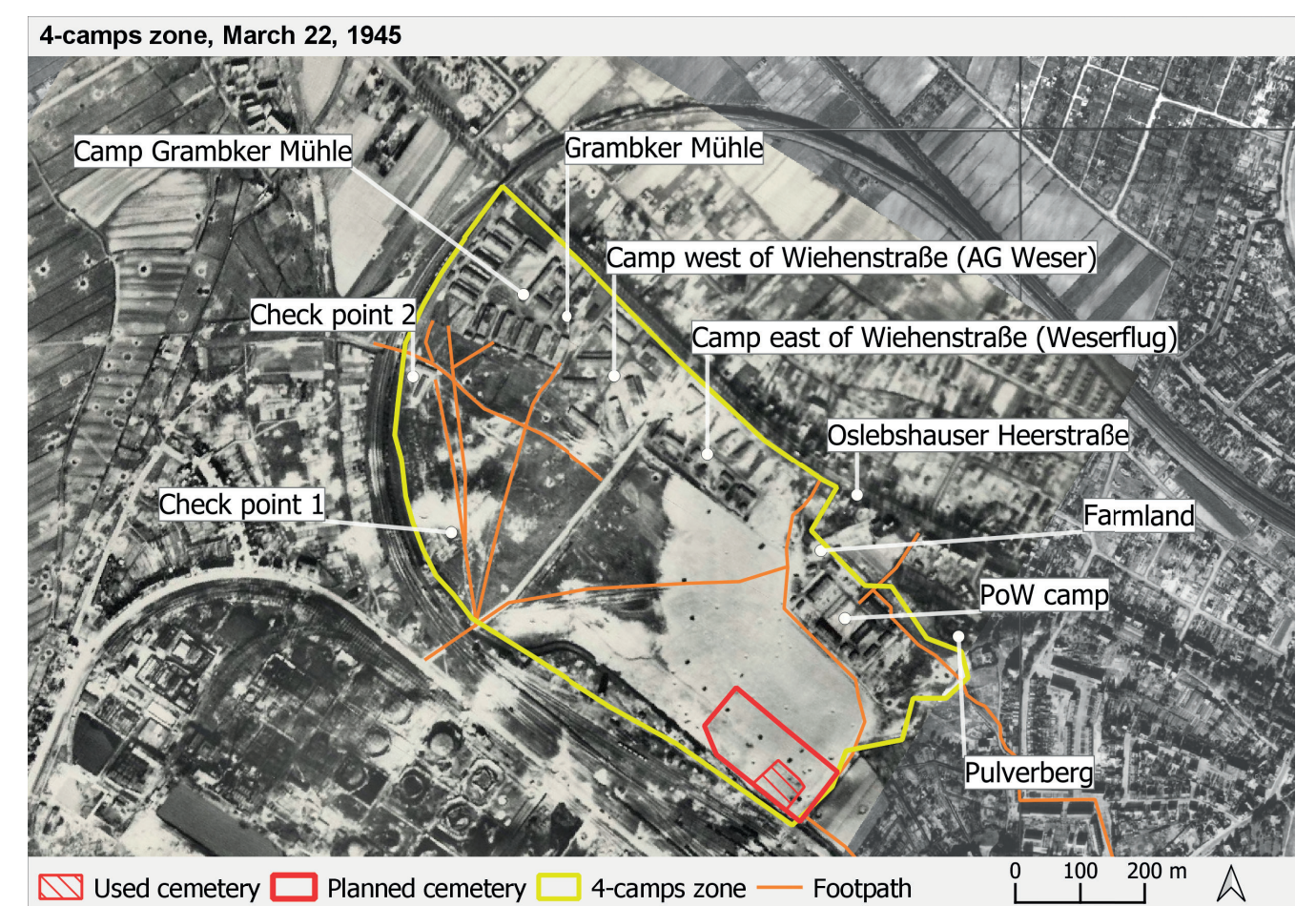


Figure 1: A reconstruction of the PoW camp's layout based on written and visual sources (Modified from State archive)

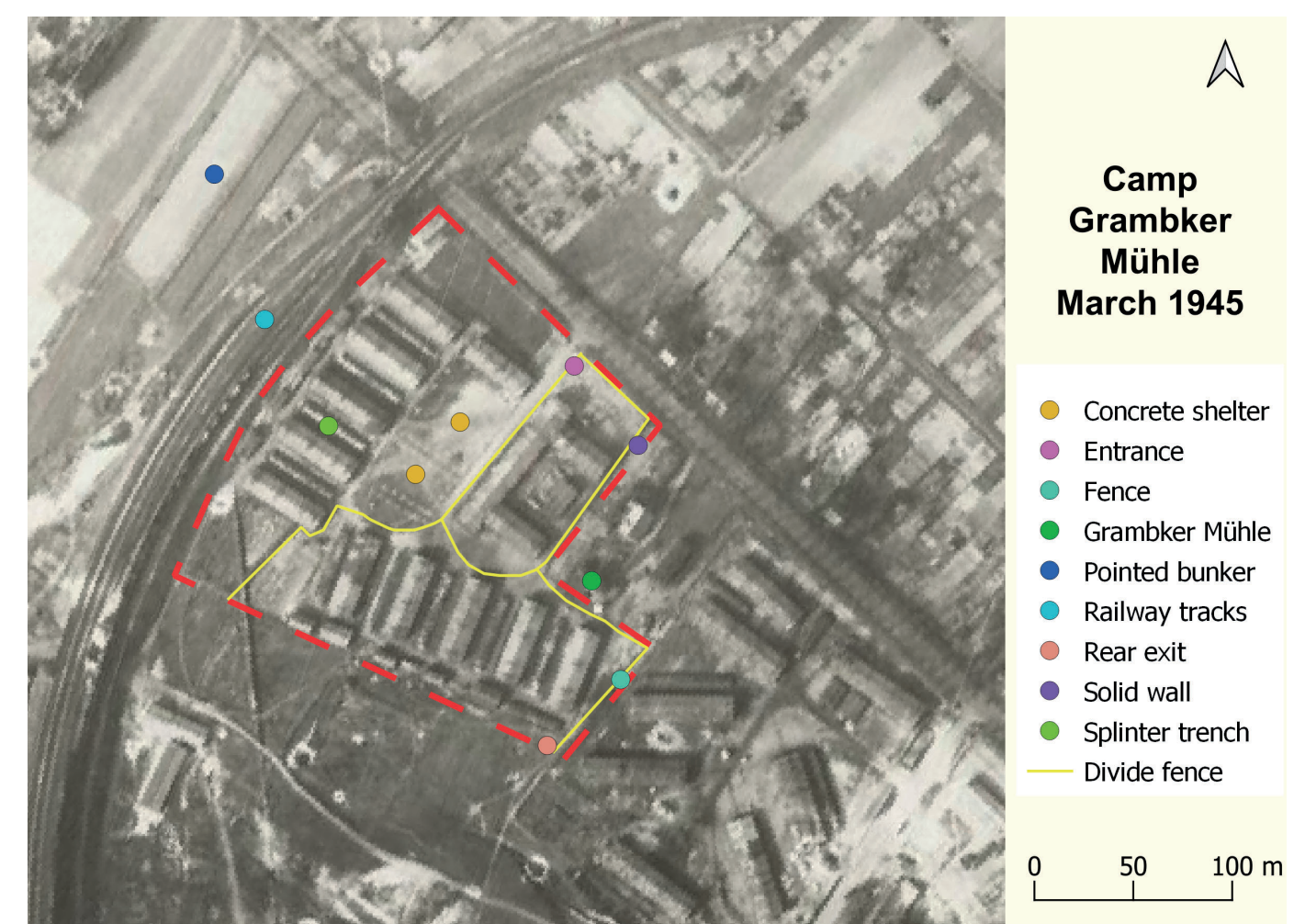


Figure 4: The camp was divided into three distinct sections (Modified from State Archive Bremen)

#### The FLC Grambker Mühle (Figure 4) was built in early 1941 and the German Labour Front (DAF) was in charge of its administration. The condition of the camp was desolate and furnishings were lacking. It housed male and female foreign forced labourers who were mainly used for the repair of air raid damages in different parts of Bremen. Some of them would later work at Weserflug and Atlas Werke Bremen. Mainly to avoid the "contamination" of German blood and encourage them to work harder, a brothel barrack was set up for the inmates next to the mill. The camp eventually got liberated in mid-April 1945.

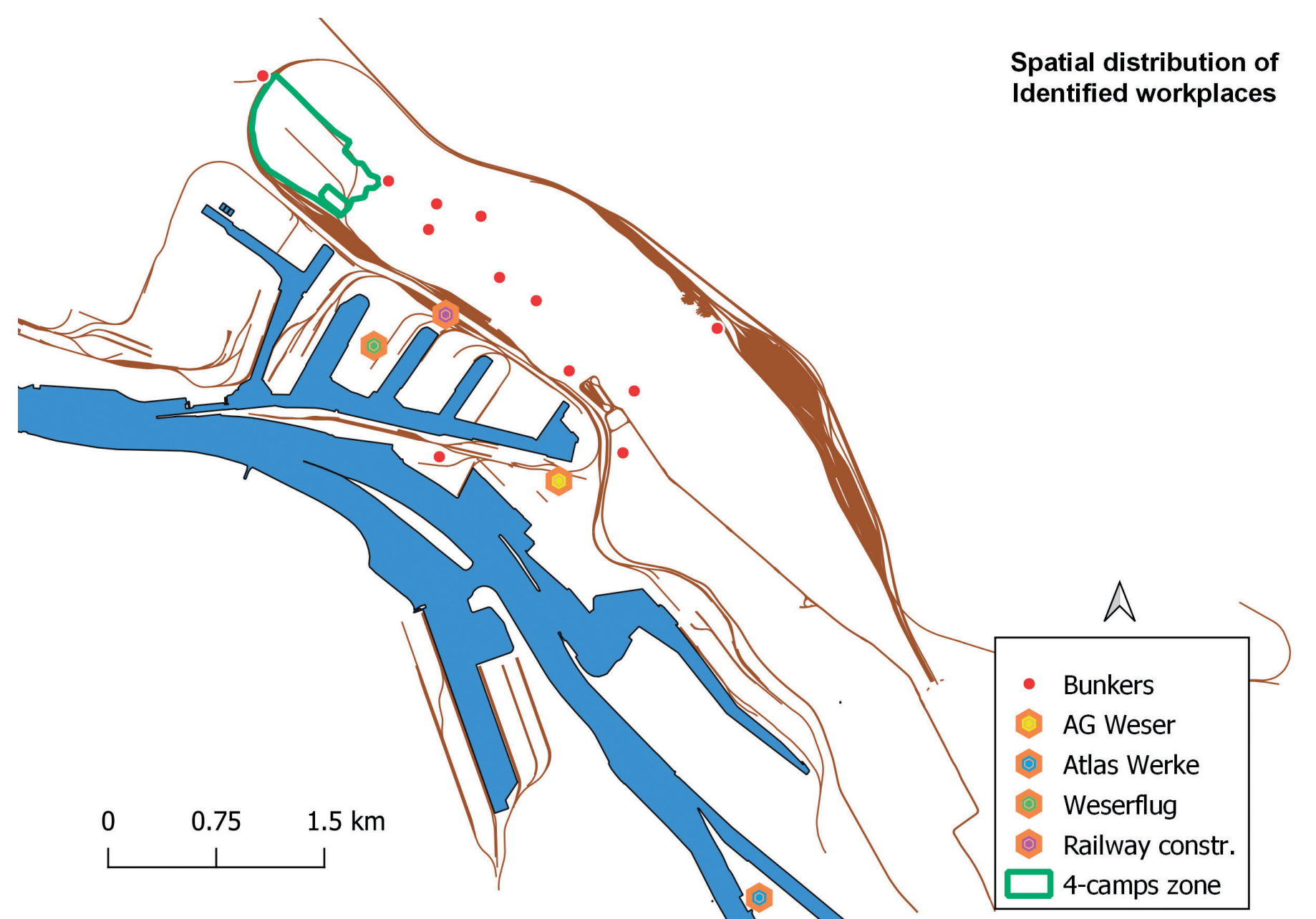


Figure 6: The spatial distribution of known workplaces suggests that there was a deliberate effort to deploy the prisoners in the immediate locality ((Modified from OpenStreetMap contributors)

Layout: Julia Schmidt (Landesarchäologie Bremen)