

Part of former Heliport site, Townstal Road, Dartmouth, Devon.

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.



CONTEXT ONE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

for Lidl UK Limited

by



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Cover image: View of the proposed development site from the south-east showing the WWII curved roof hut and the former heliport command tower © Context One Archaeological Services 2006

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This desk-based assessment report provides information on the archaeological potential of land occupying part of the former Heliport site at Townstal Road, Dartmouth, Devon (centred on NGR 286210 050940). The research has been commissioned by Lidl UK Limited.
- 1.2. The assessment was advised by Graham Tait, Development Control Archaeologist at Devon County Council in order to inform a planning proposal to re-develop the site for a new supermarket.
- 1.3. The request for the assessment follows advice given by central Government as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16) issued by the DoE in 1990 which states;

“...prospective developers should in all cases include as part of their research into the development potential of a site, which they undertake before making a planning application, an initial assessment of whether the site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains” (para. 19)

“[This] will help to provide prospective developers with advance warning of the archaeological sensitivity of a site. As a result they may wish to commission their own archaeological assessment by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant. This need not involve fieldwork. Assessment normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information: it can make effective use of records of previous discoveries, including any historic maps held by the County archive and local museums and record offices, or of geophysical survey techniques.” (Para. 20)

- 1.4. An archaeological desk-based assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as;

“...is a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate” (IFA, 1994, rev.1999)

- 1.5. The purpose of a desk-based assessment is similarly defined by the IFA and is;

“...is to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in context, leading to one or more of the following:

- *the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource*
- *the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised*

- *the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research”*
(IFA, 1994, rev.1999)

- 1.6. This assessment report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological and historical background of the site and provides an assessment of its current archaeological potential.

2. Topography and geology

- 2.1. Townstal lies on the western approach into Dartmouth along the main A3122 road. The site occupies an elevated position on the southern side of the road between a community sports centre and a petrol station (site centred on NGR 286210 050940). The site covers an approximate area of 0.48ha and is situated on roughly level ground, c. 142m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) (**Figure 1**). According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying solid geology is Palaeozoic, Lower Devonian sandstone (BGS 2001).

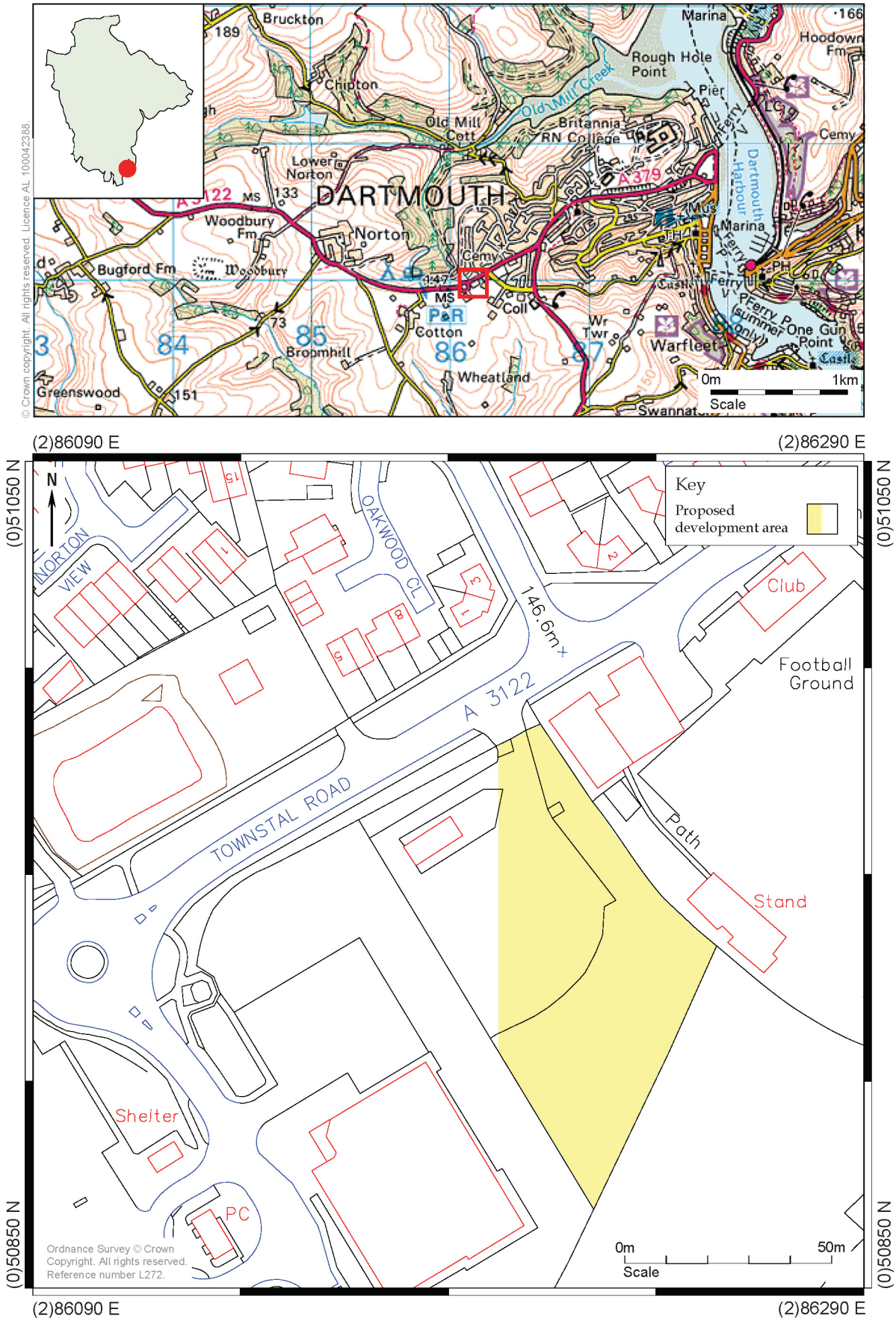


Figure 1. Composite map: Site setting

3. Methodology

- 3.1. The archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out under the terms of *Standard and Guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) in October, 1994 (rev.1999). COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* issued by the IFA in 1985 (rev. 2000), and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990, rev. September, 2000), at all times during the course of the project.
- 3.2. Archaeological and historical analysis of the site is drawn from both primary and secondary sources and is explored in section 4. A data search of relevant records held by Devon County Council as part of the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) was carried out to identify known archaeological events; these are referred to below with the prefix **HER** followed by a unique numeric identifier (see **Appendix 1** for full details of records within 500m of the site). A trawl of primary cartographic and historical documentation held at the Devon Record Office (DRO) in Exeter has also been carried out as part of this research. A walkover of the site was conducted on 5 July 2006.

4. Archaeological and historical setting

Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)

- 4.1. There are no records for any prehistoric activity on the proposed development site or in the immediate vicinity although occupation evidence from this period is attested in the environs. This includes the remains of a slight univallate hillfort known as Woodbury Camp, some 2km west of the site (**Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 33769**). Monuments of this nature date to between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (8th – 5th centuries BC), the majority being used for 150 to 200 years prior to their abandonment or reconstruction. Slight univallate hillforts have generally been interpreted as stock enclosures, redistribution centres, places of refuge and permanent settlements. Evidence of prehistoric activity also includes two ditched enclosures (**HER 36970** and **HER 59068**) located approximately 1.1 and 1.2km to the south-west and south of the site, respectively. Both were observed from aerial photographs as cropmarks with no visible trace on the ground.

Roman (AD43 – AD450)

- 4.2. There are no records in the HER for any Roman activity on the site or within a 1km radius.

Anglo-Saxon and medieval (AD450-1547)

- 4.3. There are no records in the HER for any Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity on the site or within its immediate environs. Tunstal is mentioned as 'Dunestal' in the Domesday Book of 1086, the name deriving from Old English meaning "the walled clearing, or homestead on the hill", and was held by Walter de Douai. Despite clearly providing documentary evidence that a settlement was in existence here from at least the late Anglo-Saxon period, there is no recorded physical evidence to substantiate this although it has been suggested that the parish church of St Clements (**HER 15638**), approximately 0.9km north-east of the site, may incorporate traces of 11th century architecture.

Post-medieval and modern (AD1547 - present)

- 4.4. The first detailed information for the site and environs can be gleaned from the large-scale maps that first became available from the early 19th century onwards. The earliest of these in this instance is the Tithe map of 1841 and shows the site as part of a larger field unit, the boundaries of which have largely remained unaltered (**Figure 2**). The accompanying tithe apportionment describes the field (plot 291) as being owned by Sir John Henry Seale Baronet and occupied by his tenant, Richard Coombs. The field was then laid to pasture and known as 'Long Cross Field'; it measured 3 acres, 3 rods and 3 perches and was worth £1 19s 8¼d. The name relates to the junction between the road fronting the site (now the A3122) and Milton Lane just a short distance to the north-east. The 'cross' element of the name is typical terminology for a link between two roads or to a lane across agricultural land (Field 1993: 221). The Seale family owned much of Tonwstal, Norton and parts of Dartmouth from the early 18th century until the estate was sold off in 1873 (Preston 2005: 10).



Figure 2. Extract: Townstall tithe map, 1841 (proposed development area outlined in red)

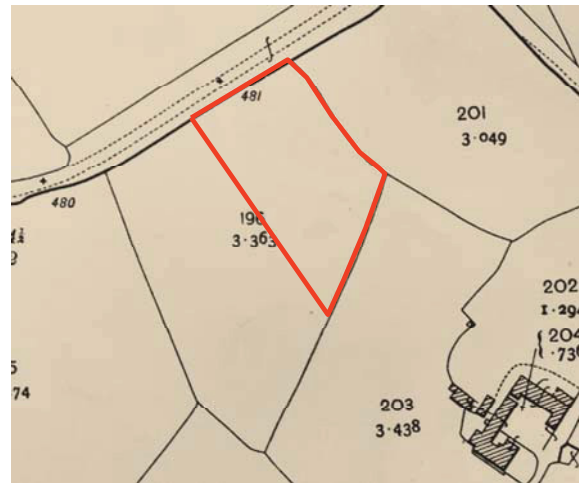


Figure 3. Extract: 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1906 (proposed development area outlined in red)

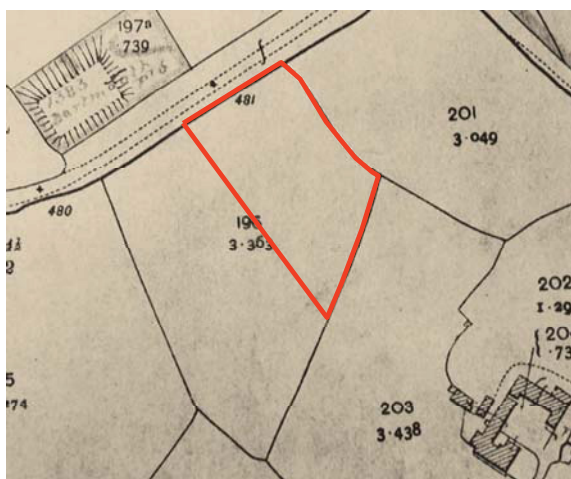


Figure 4. Extract: 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1912 (proposed development area outlined in red)

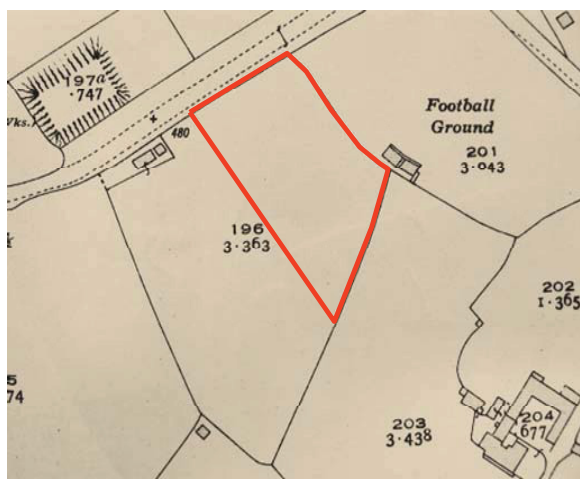


Figure 5. Extract: 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1936 (proposed development area outlined in red)

- 4.5. Despite some minor encroachment around the periphery of the site during the early part of the 20th century, the 25 inch edition Ordnance Survey maps for 1906, 1912 and 1936 (**Figures 3-5.**) demonstrates a similar land pattern as in the preceding century. However, during WWII, a military hangar was constructed on part of the site and is clearly visible on aerial photographs taken at the time (**Figure 6, HER 55690**). The A1 hangar, which conformed to a standard military design, was accompanied by two small curved roof huts; one of these flanked the northern side of the hangar and is now the only surviving remnant of the complex. There is anecdotal evidence that a field around the hangar was used as a grass air strip by the Britannia Naval College before WWII and that the hangar itself was used as part of the US Naval Advanced Amphibious base at Dartmouth. Until recently, the site was used as the Dartmouth naval heliport and aerial photographs taken in 1992 clearly show this phase of use (**Figure 6**). The heliport command tower still survives in what are now the grounds of the community sports centre adjacent to the site (see report cover image). The hangar was recently demolished and the site divided into two plots; the western plot now being occupied by the leisure centre. Further evidence of a WWII military presence in the vicinity is attested by records of the former sites of two anti-aircraft batteries (**HER 71725 and HER 71835**).



Figure 6. RAF vertical photograph of proposed development area in 1946 and a similar image taken in 1992

© Devon County Council and Getmapping.com respectively

5. Discussion

- 5.1. The recorded archaeological evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the proposed development site is slender and there is none for the proposed development site. Also,

there is no documented proof of Roman occupation within a kilometre of the site. Consequently, the potential for the discovery of remains/deposits from these periods must be considered low.

- 5.2. Documentary records suggest that a settlement at Townstal was in existence from at least the late Anglo-Saxon period. The village would have formed part of an organised manorial estate based on agricultural subsistence at this time. The feudal system of land tenure would have continued through the medieval period and it is perhaps reasonable to assume that the early 19th century maps of the site, in particular, reflect a general pattern of land division that may owe its foundation to the medieval periods. Despite the possibility that the main site boundaries could be of some antiquity, there is currently no evidence to indicate that the site was used for any purpose other than farming. Although this is largely conjectural, a pattern of agricultural use has certainly been confirmed from the first half of the 19th century up until the 1940s through map regression analysis.
- 5.3. The construction of the military hangar and associated huts during WWII could mark the only significant activity on the site. Although the complex was recently demolished, one of the huts still survives along with the floor slab from the hangar and various concrete surfaces. Should any archaeological remains/deposits exist beneath the complex, it is likely that these would have been truncated or destroyed during development operations.

6. COAS acknowledgements

- 6.1. Context One Archaeological Services would like to thank Faye Glover (The Historic Environment Section – Archaeology, Devon County Council) for supplying HER material. We are also grateful to the staff at Devon Record Office (DRO) in Exeter for their assistance in locating cartographical and historical material.

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|--|---|
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Preston, E., 2005

Up the Hill to Townstal – The Growth of Townstal and Higher Dartmouth from 1852 to 2003, Dartmouth History Research Group Paper 32.

The following list relates to historical maps and documents held by the Devon Record Office (DRO) in Exeter.

Date	Title	DRO reference
1841	Townstall Tithe map	n/a
1842	Townstall Tithe apportionment	n/a
1871	Plans of Mount Boone estates in Townstal and Dittisham	1851B/EP 10-33
1906	Ordnance Survey 25" second edition, Devonshire Sheet 27.16	n/a
1912	Ordnance Survey 25" special edition, Devonshire Sheet 27.16	n/a
1936	Ordnance Survey 25" revision, Devonshire Sheet 27.16	n/a

Appendix 1: Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) report for archaeological events within a 500m radius of the proposed development site.

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HER no. 45723

Type: MILESTONE

OS: SX85SE SX85SE/301

Broad: Modern

NGR: SX85995091

Ecclesiastical Parish: TOWNSTAL

Period: Modern, XIX

District: South Hams District

Civil Parish: Dartmouth

Class: Transport

Description:

Milestone present on the s side of the road (ea). (Exeter Archaeology 1995)

Milestone shown on os 6" (1904) and on os 6" (1963) (os). (1963)

Des=os 6"(1904)127se. ()

Ea/archaeological assessment of proposed dartmouth sewage treatment scheme/(2001)10/ea report 01.72. ()

Sources:

Report-Assessment Exeter Archaeology Report (Exeter Archaeology) 98.06

Archaeological Assessment of a Proposed Extension at Deep Moor Landfill Site, Great Torrington 1995

Migrated Record (1963)

HER no. 55690

Type: MILITARY BUILDING

OS: SX85SE SX85SE/334

Broad: Modern

NGR: SX86175092

Ecclesiastical Parish: TOWNSTAL

Period: Modern, XX

District: South Hams District

Civil Parish: Dartmouth

Class: Defence

Description:

Hangar probably an "a1", or possibly a "hennaidi" (thomas). (THOMAS)

Vis=04/01/1996(horner) a single second world war aircraft hangar is the principal building at the now disused dartmouth naval heliport. It appears to be an air ministry "a1" hangar. There are also two small curved roof huts. These buildings are not recorded on a luftwaffe aerial photograph of october 1940 (gb 45158). The pre-war provisional os 6" map records a small building at sx86155094, possibly a barn. It is thought locally that a field here was in use before the war as a grass airstrip for officers at the britannia naval college. It is also said that the hangar was associated with the us naval advanced amphibious base at dartmouth, 1943-44. This latter link is probable as it is known from other sites that the us navy made extensive use of ex-air ministry structures (such as several "a1" hangars at the base at exeter). Robin hangars were in use at the us naval repair yard at coronation park in dartmouth. The structure may not be in situ as such hangars were designed to be portable. However if it is in situ it may have been connected with the movement of us naval personnel and equipment into dartmouth during the build up to the normandy campaign. The hangar and associated huts are recorded on raf ap of 1946. It is hard to tell exactly but the

building does appear to have already been in use for some time (aph). (APH)

Des=horner, w. / (10/01/1996)/ as above. ()

Des=slide/ (06/01/1996)/ in smr. ()

Clarke, n. J. / hitler's holiday snaps/ (1995) 28. ()

Des=thomas, r.(rchme)/ (-/04/1996)/ as above. ()

Aph=raf/cpe/uk/1890/2069/(10/12/1996)/ smr 59/80. ()

Sources:

Migrated Record: (THOMAS)

Site Visit: (Horner, W.)

HER no. 44852

Type: QUARRY

OS: SX84NE SX84NE/32

Broad: Modern

NGR: SX85354996

Ecclesiastical Parish: STOKE FLEMING

Period: Modern

District:South Hams District

Civil Parish: Stoke Fleming

Class: Industrial

Summary: 'old quarry'.

Description:

'old quarry'. Shown on os 6" (1904) but not on os 6" (1962) (os). (1962)

Des=os6"(1904)sheet 133ne. ()

Sources:

Migrated Record: (1962)

HER no. 71725

Dartmouth, Cotton AA Battery

Type: ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY

OS: SX85SE

Broad: Modern

NGR: SX861-506-

Ecclesiastical Parish: DARTMOUTH

Period: World War II, XX

District:South Hams District

Civil Parish: Dartmouth

Form: Site Of

Class: Defence

Summary: Heavy AA Battery at Cotton, Dartmouth. Site was never armed.

Description:

Heavy AA Battery at Cotton, Dartmouth. Site does not appear to have been armed or equipped with Radar. (Dobinson, C. S.)

Sources:

Monograph: Twentieth Century Fortifications in England (Dobinson, C. S.) I.4 Anti-aircraft artillery, 1914-46 1996

HER no. 71835

Dartmouth, Site 8 AA Battery

Type: ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY

OS: SX85SE

Broad: Modern

NGR: SX861-513-

Ecclesiastical Parish: DARTMOUTH

Period: World War II, XX

District: South Hams District

Civil Parish: Dartmouth

Form: Site Of

Class: Defence

Summary: Light AA Battery at Site '8', Dartmouth.

Description:

Light AA Battery at Site '8', Dartmouth. Equipped with a single 40mm Bofors gun on a MkII platform. No manning information recorded. (Dobinson, C. S. 1996)

Sources:

Monograph: Twentieth Century Fortifications in England (Dobinson, C. S.) I.4 Anti-aircraft artillery, 1914-46 1996 731