

Alison Clarke

Archaeological Consultant

18 Ash Grove, Northallerton, North Yorkshire. DL6 1RQ
Tel: 0609 776501 Fax: 0609 779968

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MARSTON MOOR

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

OF THE

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE

AT

ATTERWITH LANE, LONG MARSTON

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INTRODUCTION

The present study has arisen out of the proposed development of a new farmstead on Atterwith Lane, Long Marston, for F. Abbey & Son. The development, comprising two houses and various farm buildings, covers only part of the field, OS No 2151, but because of the proximity of the land to the battlefield of the Civil War battle of Marston Moor in 1644, a condition was placed on the planning permission for the development requiring an evaluation of the archaeology within the development area, and the submission of a scheme of works to address the archaeology, before any development takes place.

This assessment is the first stage of investigation into the archaeology of the development site, and will include an evaluation of the extent, character and significance of archaeological remains within the development area, an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the archaeology, and proposals for further work to be undertaken prior to development of the site.

THE BATTLE OF MARSTON MOOR, JULY 2, 1644

Accounts of the battle fall into two categories: primary documents written at the time or soon after, by people who were involved in the fighting, observed it or recorded the accounts of those who were involved; and published accounts written by later historians. The documents designated primary have not been consulted for this assessment.

Published accounts of the battle generally use all or some of the primary sources, and some also use the evidence of fieldwork, usually confined to general observation. A number of these have been consulted. The majority, from A.D.H. Leadman's *Battles Fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, through A.H. Burn's *Battlefields of England*, 1950, to E.E. Broadhead's *Yorkshire Battlefields*, 1989, largely agree on the course of the battle and the fairly precise area over which it was fought.

The opposing forces were drawn up on a roughly east-west alignment between the villages of Long Marston and Tockwith, Royalist to the north and Parliamentarians with their Scots allies to the south. The Allies had the advantage of the higher ground, including the vantage point of Cromwell's Plump to the south of the Marston - Tockwith road. The Royalists, led by Prince Rupert and the Marquis of Newcastle occupied the then open moor north of a ditch and hedge line mentioned in several

contemporary accounts. The road between the villages is not mentioned, and most writers assume that the Allied troops probably occupied it, possibly as their front line. The ditch is generally agreed to be on the line of demarcation between cultivated land and the open moor which is still visible in a curving hedgeline running westwards from Atterwith Lane towards Tockwith.

THE EVIDENCE

The main course of the battle and its outcome is not in dispute and is largely irrelevant to the present discussion. The precise location of some of the troops and several incidents in the battle are however challenged by Dr. P. Newman, who has made a detailed study of the battle.

Dr. Newman maintains that the Royalist lines were drawn up on a more south-east to north-west alignment, and were significantly further east than previously supposed, crossing over Atterwith Lane towards Long Marston.. He therefore relocates some episodes which, according to his theory, took place close to the application site.

According to the traditional view, an advance made fairly early in the battle by the Allies, which is described by contemporary accounts as being down a lane where they suffered heavy losses from Royalist troops, took place at Moor Lane which runs north from the Tockwith road opposite Cromwell's Plump to the south of the road. Dr. Newman relocates this advance to Atterwith Lane.

Much later in the battle, one of the regiments of the Marquis of Newcastle, known as the Whitecoats and led by Sir William Lampton, found itself surrounded in an enclosure on the moor and chose, instead of surrendering, to fight on to the end. Only a few survived out of over a thousand. The position of this last stand has traditionally been placed in White Syke Close at the west end of Sugar Hill Gate, one of the lanes running to Four Lanes Meet in the middle of the moor. The dead from this encounter, and perhaps from much of the fighting, which could amount to over 4,000 men, are also traditionally buried in White Syke Close. No burial pits have in fact been located there, or indeed elsewhere on the battlefield in sufficient numbers to account for the dead.

Dr. Newman positions Lampton's Whitecoats in the fields immediately to the south-west of the application site. Consequently, the application site itself, from being well outside the area of the battle, falls well within the sphere of the battle and on the edge of one of the most important features of the battle.

Dr. Newman's reasoning in thus altering the position of the battle is complex, and arose initially out of discrepancies in the accounts of the battle with terrain assigned to it. He maintains that White Syke Close did not exist in 1644, and that the only enclosures on the moor at that time were the Hatterwith or Atterwith enclosures. He further maintains that Hatterwith or Atterwith enclosures were positioned on the south-east side of Atterwith Lane, comprising the present Fox Covert and the field behind it.

The position of the Atterwith enclosures would seem to be fairly certain, from their proximity to Atterwith Lane and from a description in the Enclosure Award of 1767 which locates a drain or public sewer 'beginning at the north west corner of a field formerly called the Hatterwith and remaining on the south side of the highway leading to Hessay' (Atterwith Lane), running northwards towards Hessay and the Foss Dyke. This drain is shown on the 1846 OS map and named Atterwith Dyke.

The initial hypothesis, however, that the Hatterwith enclosure was the only one on the moor at the time of the battle, is open to question. It rests largely on a tithe dispute which started in the 1630's concerning enclosed land. There is an assertion in 1634 that the Hatterwith enclosures are the only ones on the moor, though this is countered by another which says that enclosures have been made in both the fields and moor of Marston 'time out of mind'. This is equivocal evidence at best, and does not rule out further enclosures between 1634 and 1644. Dr Newman feels however that any other enclosure on the open moor would have triggered a similar dispute, of which there is no record.

The Enclosure award, made in 1767, is of some help, but unfortunately the accompanying map is lost. White Syke Close is not mentioned by name, though numerous 'ancient inclosures' on the moor and the former open fields are referred to without being named. Hatterwith is referred to as a field rather than enclosures. White Syke is mentioned in a passage describing the course of a new drain to be cut. It was to run from the edge of Tockwith moor along the course of the pre-existing stream of White Syke into Marston moor 'to and alongside the south side and east end of a certain place on the same common called Broken Close' and from there to the Foss. This would seem to indicate, from the existing course of the White Syke, a close immediately to the north of the White Syke Close, otherwise unnamed. It is thus clear that White Syke was an existing name in the 18th century, that by this time there were a large number of enclosures on the moor, and that these were only named in the award in a haphazard fashion.

The name Hatterwith dates from at least the 14th century, and means Hatt's wood. No woodland is mentioned in the battle description apart from Wilstrop Wood, but the existing Fox Covert may not represent surviving ancient woodland but rather a replanting for hunting purposes. White Syke means white stream and Close is a word more generally used of a pre-enclosure field than of an enclosure allotment.

It is therefore uncertain from the documentary evidence whether the last stand of the Whitecoats was at the Hatterwith enclosures, at White Syke Close or at some other enclosure on the moor.

This leaves the more tangible evidence of material found within the Hatterwith enclosure and immediately around it. Field walking of the battle ground by Dr Newman has taken place over a number of years and has produced various concentrations of musket balls and other debris, notably buttons. In the Hatterwith enclosure field, behind Fox Covert, there is a marked concentration of musket balls especially to the south, lining the field boundary. They are also scattered across the field and have been found in the application field in much smaller numbers in the half of the field nearer to Atterwith Lane.

Against this evidence is the fact that drainage trenches cut during and after the Second World War produced no recorded material. The wartime trenches were hand cut and between 3 and 4 feet deep, and a second drainage involved trenches 2 to 3 feet deep. Aerial photographs also show no signs of burials or other disturbances. The application field has not been walked for a number of years as it has not been ploughed.

It seems clear then that fighting took place on or close to the application field, but evidence of the battle fades rapidly to the north and east of the Hatterwith enclosure field and the application field seems to have been on the edge of the fighting.

The English Heritage Battlefield Register, not yet adopted but drawn up in draft form, includes this area as part of the battlefield.

CONCLUSIONS

It must be accepted that the application field was within the area of the battle of Marston Moor, albeit on or towards the edge of the main battle. The question then remains as to the type of material remains might exist in the application field and what effect the proposed development might have on them.

The type of material evidence which might be expected falls into two groups each of which requires a different response. Firstly there is the sort of battle debris already recorded in the field, consisting mainly of musket balls, which is spread over the entire battlefield. Secondly there is the possibility of burials from the battle.

Any battle debris would undoubtedly be disturbed by the development, but is not of itself sufficiently important to merit altering the proposed development area. English Heritage are in print as saying "The last thing we want to do is to draw an arbitrary line around a whole area and say that nothing can be done inside it." A watching brief on the development would be able to observe and record any battle debris in the same way that field walkers are already recording the results of disturbances caused by the plough in other parts of the battlefield area.

The possibility of burials is a more difficult question. Upwards of 4,000 men are known to have died, but only a few hundred bodies have been found in the battlefield area. This leaves the majority of burials still to be found, and there is no clear evidence of where they might be. The majority of bodies would have been buried in mass graves close to where they fell, although the heavy clay of much of the moor may have deterred grave diggers and caused them to look for areas of lighter soil. The position of the last stand of the Whitecoats again becomes important here, as if it was indeed at the Hatterwith enclosures, the possibility of burials in the immediate area becomes higher. The negative evidence of the drainage trenches must be set against this, since although casual finds may not have been recorded, burials almost certainly would have been.

In conclusion, it cannot be argued with certainty that there are burials in the application field, any more than anywhere in the whole area of the battle, but the possibility cannot be ignored. From the evidence of the battle debris, the part of the field nearest to Atterwith Lane is the most likely to have been involved in the battle, and this part, along with a strip nearest to the Hatterwith enclosure field, would seem to be more likely to contain burials than the rest.

The presence of a burial pit or pits on the development site would be of major significance in Civil War archaeology, and any such burials should be preserved in situ. However, this need not preclude development, as the proposals cover only a small part of the field and could be repositioned, if necessary, to avoid any burials.

A magnetometer survey could pinpoint any burial sites if the soil conditions prove favourable, and would seem to be the best chance of identifying if there is a problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The next phase of archaeological work should be a magnetometer survey of the south-western half of the field, identified by Dr Newman as the area most likely to contain archaeological material, in order to determine the presence or otherwise of burial pits. The soil conditions on Marston Moor are known to be variable in terms of receptivity to geophysical survey, but a trial survey should give an indication of the level of results which could be expected from this area.

Further recommendations should be made on the basis of the results of the survey, whether it be to move the proposed buildings, to conduct trial excavations, or to proceed with the development.

In any case, a watching brief on any below-ground disturbance during the course of the development is recommended. Dr Newman has expressed an interest in being involved in this, but the presence of a professional archaeologist in addition is advised.

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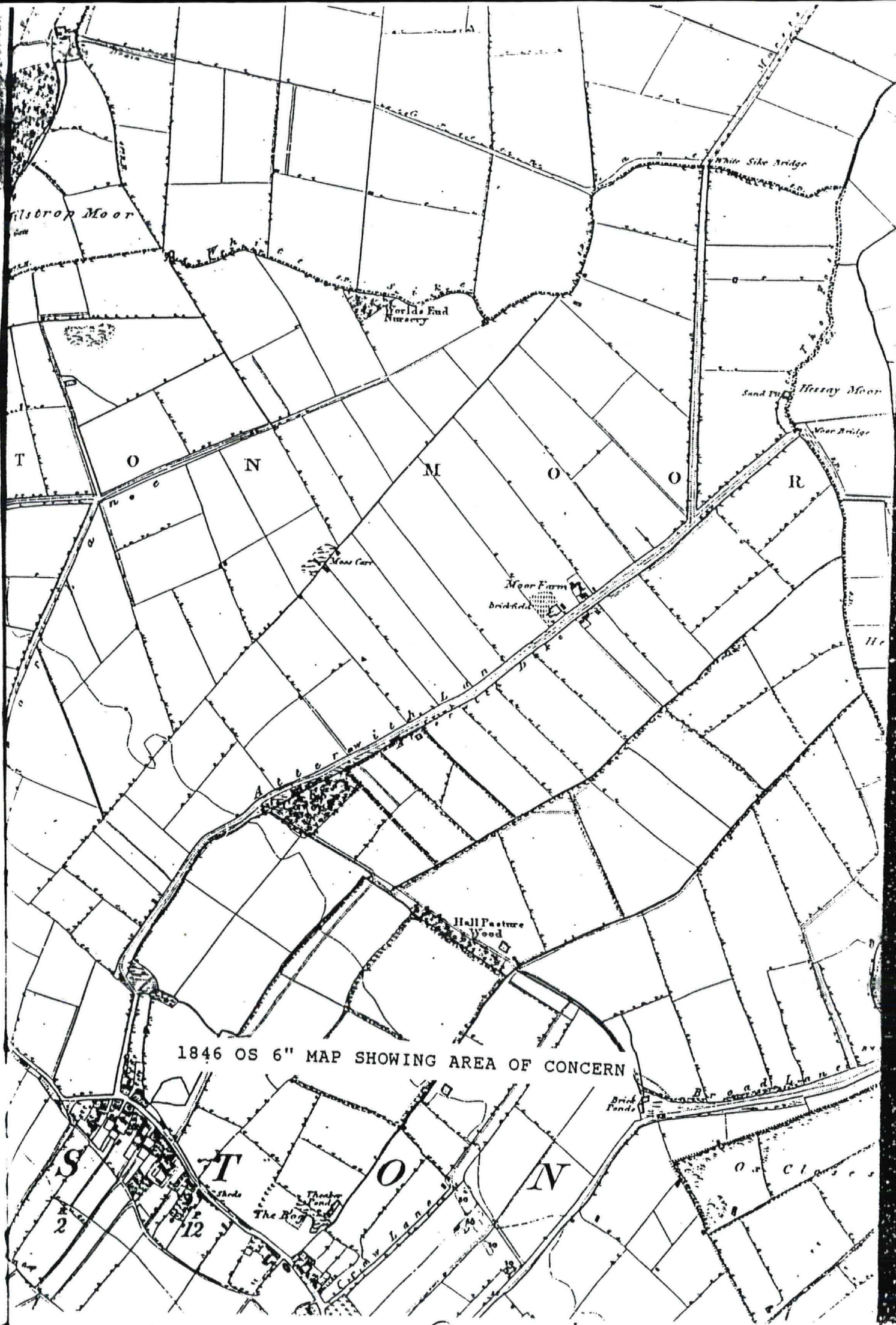
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