

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF DURING THE ERECTION
OF A NEW MOTOR TRANSPORT WORKSHOP,
NORTON MANOR CAMP, SOMERSET**

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Report No. 06.87

Project No. 5880

October 2006

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief during geotechnical investigations in advance of the construction of a new motor transport workshop at Norton Manor Camp, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset (NGR ST 1924 2718), was carried out in September 2006 by Exeter Archaeology. The site is located in an area where extensive evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British archaeological activity is recorded, including the multi-phase prehistoric hillfort of Norton Camp, less than 800m away.

Groundworks comprised the machine-excavation of six trial pits to depths in excess of 3m. In most of these an intact soil profile was present, comprising topsoil above an alluvial subsoil. No evidence for pre-modern archaeological activity was recorded within the trial pits and no finds were recovered. The work also revealed localised areas of modern disturbance.

1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief during geotechnical investigations in advance of the construction of a new motor transport workshop at Norton Manor Camp, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset (NGR ST 1924 2718), was carried out by Exeter Archaeology in September 2006. The work was commissioned by Debut Services Ltd and was undertaken following consultation with the Development Control Archaeologist, Somerset County Council. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.

The proposed new workshop will be located on the east side of the military camp. It is positioned at the back of existing buildings in an open, landscaped area of grass.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Norton Manor Camp is located in an area containing extensive evidence for late prehistoric and Romano-British archaeological activity. The multi-phase prehistoric hillfort of Norton Camp (Scheduled Monument no. 24022) is located c. 800m to the SE, and aerial photographs show a series of cropmarks of prehistoric date surrounding the site (eg. HER refs. 43408, 43413, 44160 and 44211). Romano-British pottery scatters have been recorded in a number of locations nearby (eg. HER refs. 43397, 43402 and 44483), and a possible Roman building is recorded as a cropmark c. 300m to the north (HER44547).

The camp itself was established at the outbreak of World War II and is located within an area that had previously been a landscaped park (HER43413) that is shown on a map dating to 1931. Archaeological monitoring of groundworks for a new building immediately to the south identified frequent modern disturbance, but also areas where there were surviving intact soil profiles (Moore 2006).

3. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the document *General specification for archaeological work in Somerset* (Somerset County Council 1995).

Groundworks comprised the excavation of geotechnical trial pits by a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a toothed bucket.

Stratigraphic information was recorded in accordance with standard EA procedures. A written record was produced on EA watching brief record sheets. A photographic record was produced comprising colour digital and black and white images.

4. RESULTS

A plan showing the positions of geotechnical trial pits is included as Fig. 2.

Six trial pits were excavated and the results from these described below.

TPI was excavated to a maximum depth of 3.6m. The layer sequence comprised 0.14m of dark brown loamy topsoil above 0.32m of a probable alluvial layer composed of a mid brown silty clay. Below this was red silty clay natural subsoil with

grey silt banding and occasional rounded quartz pebbles. Mudstone bedrock was reached at 1.6m below ground level. No archaeological features were noted in plan or section and no finds were recovered.

TP2 was situated on top of a recently deposited soil mound and was excavated through 2m of soil and modern demolition material. This was directly overlying weathered mudstone. No archaeological features or finds were present.

TP3 was also excavated through a considerable depth of made ground (1.7m), that was above 0.5m of light brown silty clay alluvial subsoil and below this, blue-grey natural clay. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

TP4 was excavated to a maximum depth of 3.1m. The layer sequence comprised 0.3m of dark brown loamy topsoil above 0.5m of mid brown silty clay alluvial subsoil. This was above grey and red mudstone natural subsoil. Two 1m deep and steep-sided modern land drains were recorded in section beneath the topsoil, both aligned E-W. No pre-modern archaeological features or finds were present.

TP5 was excavated to a depth in excess of 3m and revealed a sequence of 0.2m of dark brown loamy topsoil above 0.4m of mid brown silty clay alluvial subsoil. This was directly above mudstone bedrock. No archaeological features or finds were present.

TP6 was excavated to a depth in excess of 3m and revealed modern disturbance, with 0.2m of topsoil above 0.3m of demolition/levelling material. No intact subsoil survived below this and no archaeological features or finds were present.

5. CONCLUSION

In most trial pits a surviving soil profile of topsoil above an alluvial subsoil was recorded, suggesting that if archaeological deposits are present in the area then their survival is generally likely to be good. However, the absence of pre-modern features and finds during this work, as well as in the previous adjacent investigations, indicates that at least in this part of the camp the presence of archaeological deposits is unlikely. As with the previous investigation for the adjacent new company stores, localised areas of modern disturbance were also recorded (TPs 2 & 6).

ARCHIVE

A fully integrated site archive had been prepared and is currently held by Exeter Archaeology at their premises in Bradninch Place, Gandy Street, Exeter EX4 3LS. It will be deposited with Somerset County Museum, Taunton using the accession number 102/2006.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief was commissioned by Debut Services Ltd. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ben Moore and the illustrations for this report prepared by S. Blackmore.

REFERENCES

Moore, B., 2006, *An archaeological watching brief at Norton Manor Camp, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset*. Unpublished Exeter Archaeology report, ref. 06.68.

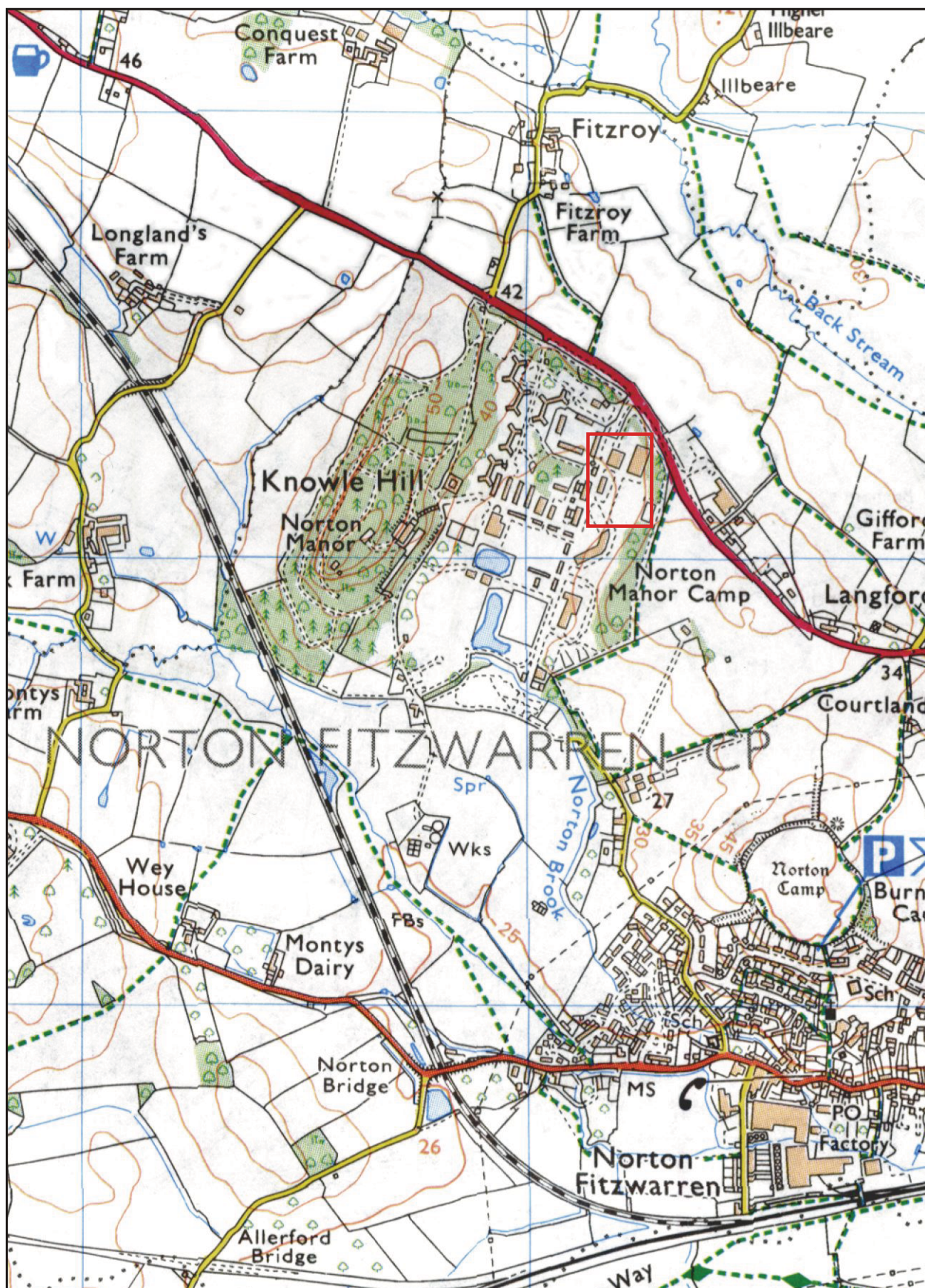


Fig. 1 Location of site. Reproduced from the 1:25000 Explorer™ map 129 (enlarged to 1:12500) by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 2005. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.

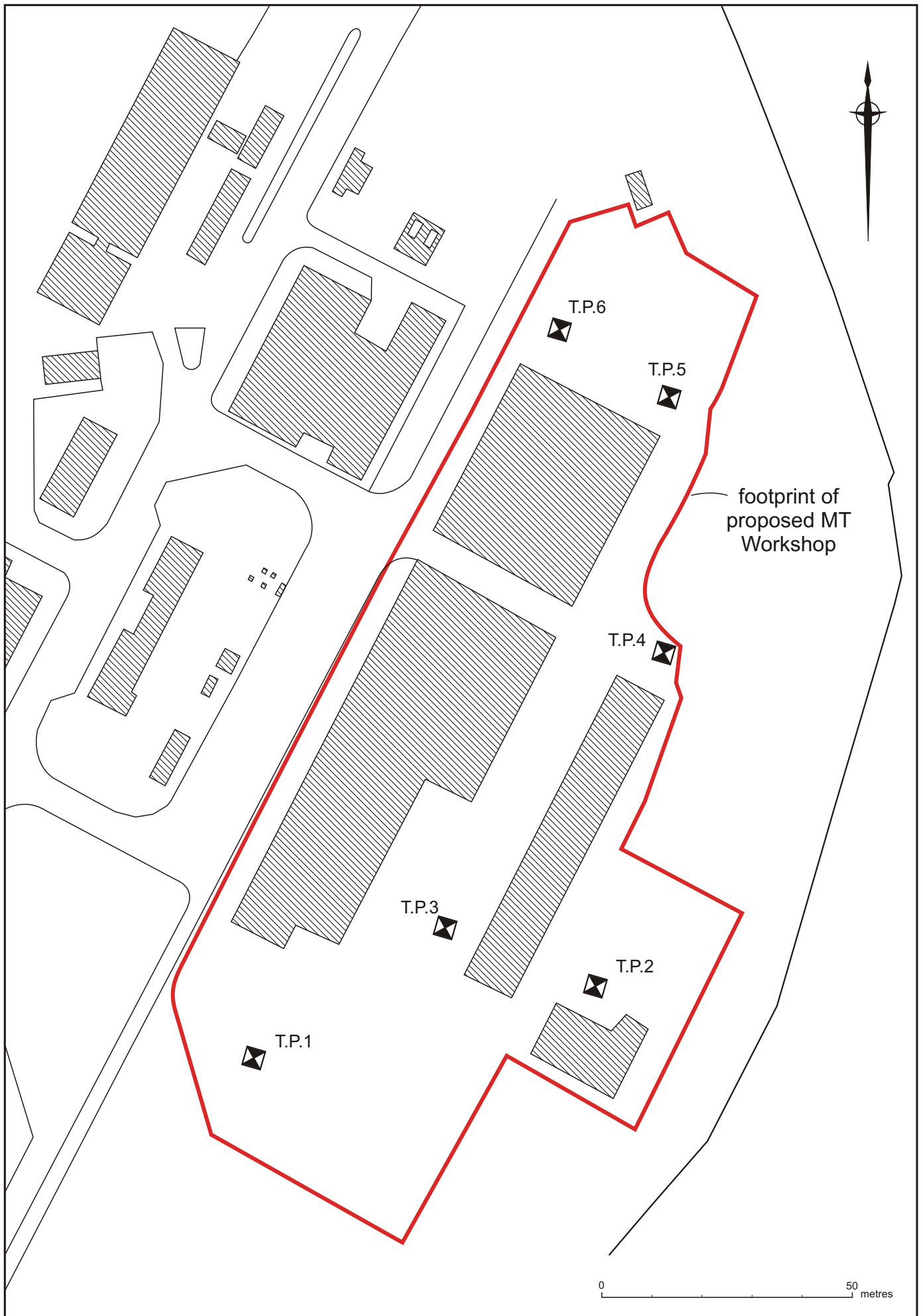


Fig. 2 Location of Trial Pits 1-6. Based on drawings supplied by client, Debut Services Ltd.