

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT NORTON MANOR CAMP,
NORTON FITZWARREN, SOMERSET**

by

B. Moore

Exeter Archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in July 2006 by Exeter Archaeology during groundworks for an extension to an existing building at Norton Manor Camp, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset (NGR ST 1916 2708). 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 for the new extension comprised the excavation of a series of closely-spaced foundation trenches within an area of 1140m². No evidence for pre-modern archaeological activity was recorded within these and no finds were recovered. The work has established that in this area of the camp there has been extensive ground disturbance caused by previous buildings and service trenches. However, in many of the foundation trenches an intact, but undated agricultural subsoil was present, suggesting that there is the potential in the general area for the localised survival of pre-modern archaeological features or finds.

1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief during groundworks for an extension to an existing building at Norton Manor Camp, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset (NGR ST 1916 2708), was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) during July 2006. The work was commissioned by Debut Services Ltd on behalf of Bovis Lend Lease and was undertaken following consultation with the Development Control Archaeologist, Somerset County Council. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.

The area of the new extension covers 1140m² and is located on the east side of the military camp. It is positioned on the site of former buildings, which had been demolished prior to commencement of the watching brief.

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.

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 initially comprised the removal of recent demolition debris from the footprint of the building using a 360° mechanical excavator. This was followed by the excavation of closely-spaced foundation trenches measuring 1.1m wide and a maximum of 2m deep.

Stratigraphic information was recorded in accordance with standard EA procedures. A written record was produced on EA single context and watching brief record sheets, sections and plans were drawn at scales of 1:10 and 1:50 and photographs were taken using colour transparencies and black-and-white prints.

4. RESULTS

A plan showing the position of the new extension is included as Fig. 2.

The initial removal of demolition debris revealed modern made ground consisting of soil, containing frequent gravel, concrete, brick and plastic debris, overlying buried modern topsoil was uncovered. This was a mid brown clay-loam containing

occasional 20th century pottery and brick fragments (not collected). Recent service trenches were noted crossing the area, but no pre-modern archaeological features.

Within the southern portion of the site the layer sequence comprised 0.5m of made ground and demolition debris above 0.2m of compacted greyish-brown silty clay subsoil which contained occasional charcoal flecks. This is likely to be an agricultural soil (undated) and overlay compact red clay or mudstone natural subsoil. These layers were regularly cut through by water mains and electricity cable trenches, presumably services for the previous buildings in this location.

In the northern portion of the site the layer sequence comprised 0.2m of disturbed topsoil, 0.4m of greyish-brown silty clay subsoil and 0.4m of natural red clay subsoil.

No evidence for pre-modern archaeological activity was recorded within the trenches in either plan or section, and no finds were recovered.

5. COMMENT

The watching brief has established that in this area of the camp there has been extensive ground disturbance caused by previous buildings and the many service trenches present. However, in many of the foundation trenches an intact agricultural subsoil was present, suggesting that there is the potential within the general area for the localised survival of pre-modern archaeological features or finds.

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 within one year of the completion of the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The watching brief was commissioned by Debut Services Ltd on behalf of Bovis Lend Lease. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ben Moore and the illustrations for this report prepared by T. Ives.

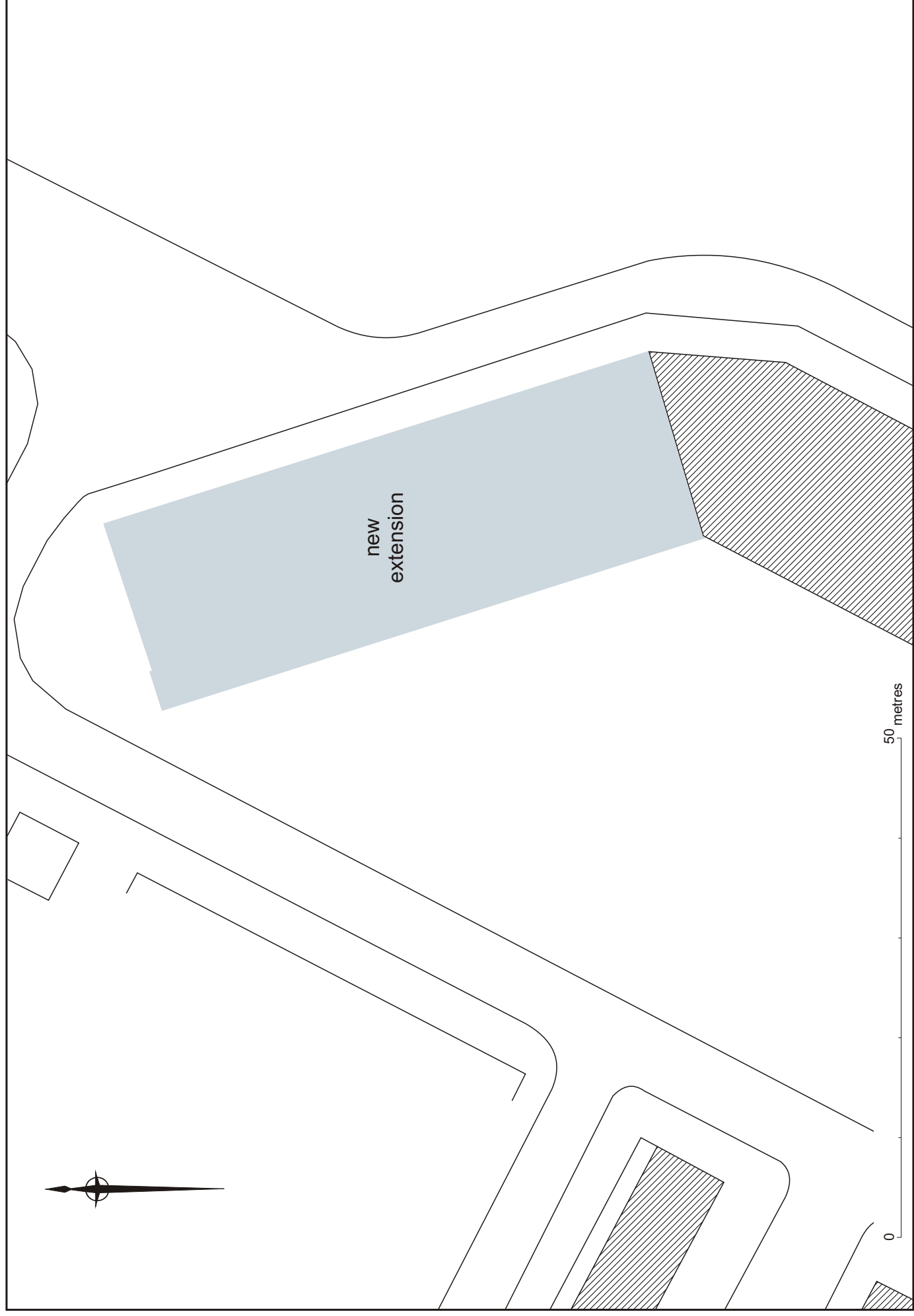


Fig. 2 Location of the new extension. Based on drawings supplied by client, Debut Services Ltd.



Excavated foundation trench. Looking south.



Excavated foundation trench. Looking west.



Excavation of foundation trenches. Looking north.



Excavation of foundation trenches. Looking north.



General shot .Looking north-east.