

Archaeological Watching Brief, Electricity Switching Station
South Hill, St Helier

On Behalf Of
Jersey Electricity PLC



By

Paul Martin BSc (Hons) AIFA
&
Sam Driscoll BA (Hons) MA PIFA

ABSOLUTE ARCHAEOLOGY

Absolute Archaeology, 51 St Mary's Gardens, Hilperton Marsh, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 7PH

paul.martin@absolutearchaeology.co.uk

sam.driscoll@absolutearchaeology.co.uk

www.absolutearchaeology.co.uk



Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

South Hill, St Helier

UTM 6512 4770

1: INTRODUCTION

In April 2010 Absolute Archaeology carried out a watching brief on behalf of Jersey Electric PLC at South Hill, St Helier, Jersey (UTM 6512 4770) in conjunction with groundworks ahead of the development of a new electricity switching station. The object of the investigation was to determine whether the remains of a German prisoner of war camp known to be located on the site could be traced within the development area. A study of aerial photographs taken by the German Air force in 1944 revealed three rectangular structures located within and just outside the designated area, interpreted as the prison camp buildings. The rectangular block standing alone is now the South Hill Gymnasium. No evidence was apparent for the other two buildings, which were positioned in the area of the extant driving test bays, established in the mid 1960's. The whole setting was within a granite quarry probably used to provide stone for the construction of sea defences in the vicinity of Elizabeth Castle.

2: RESULTS

Constant monitoring of all groundwork associated with the above by two archaeologists from Absolute Archaeology failed to reveal any traces of buildings within the development area. Spoil heaps, that were constantly monitored throughout, also failed to reveal any evidence of occupation activity dating to the 1940's use of the site. Removal/reduction of soil (contexts 1 and 2) was carried out by a 360° Volvo digger using initially a 1.8 m grading bucket. It was evident from the start of the excavation that the area had previously been in use as a refuse tip in the 1950's and early 1960's, until being landscaped. The upper 2-3 m of fill represents demolition material, probably from the development of the Fort Regent leisure centre site to the north. The material can be seen to have been tipped from the NE at an angle and on a NE-SW alignment. Material mainly consisted of broken bricks, red tile, slate and general demolition debris. Caches of bottles found within the upper two metre layer gave a clear indication as to the date of the deposit. Within the cache of bottles was

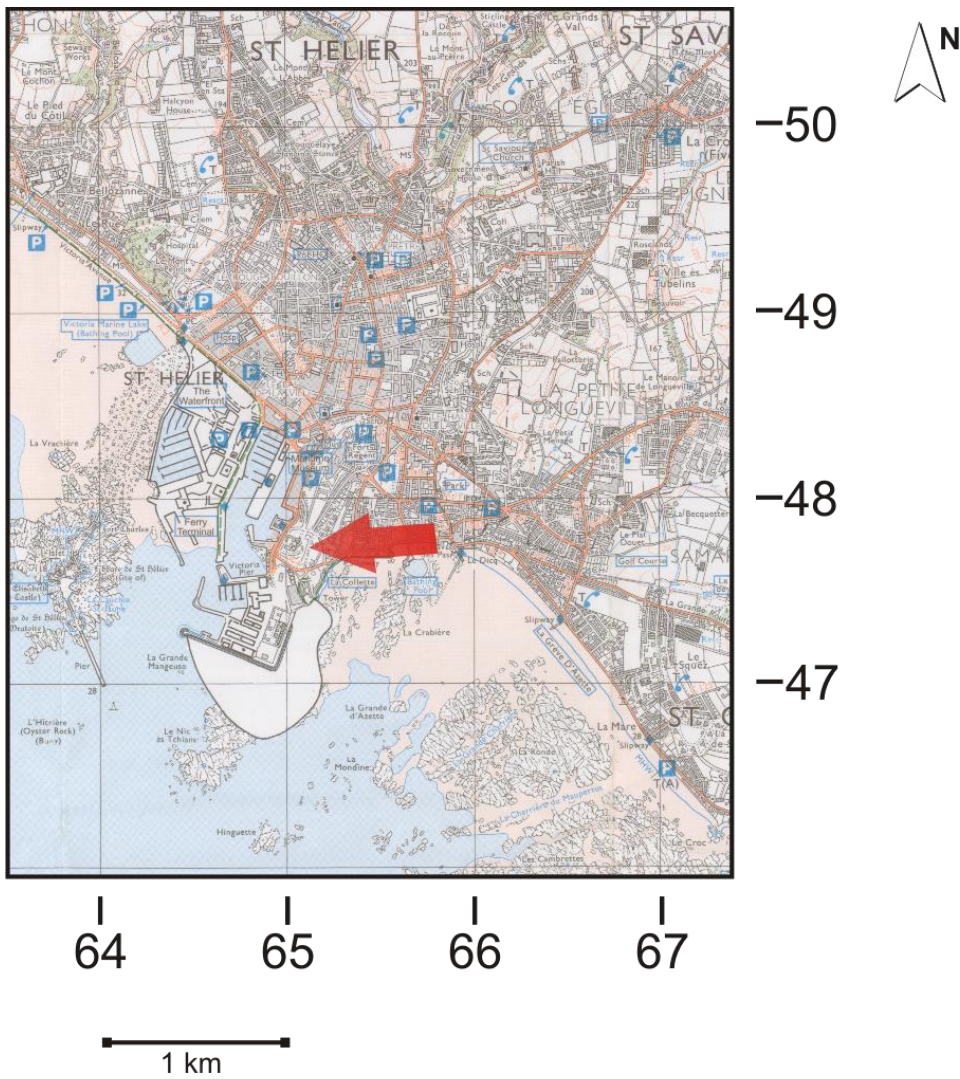
found an aluminium ring pull. Ring pulls were first introduced commercially in 1963 demonstrating that the upper 2-3 metre layer represented a late phase of the site. At 2-3 metres down and towards the northern end of the site a loose tarmac/mortar layer (context 4) was encountered, interpreted as a hard standing (path) in use in conjunction with the later tip. Careful cleaning back revealed several finds which again gave a date range of around 1950-1960. Below this layer (context 4) was a very dark series of layers (context 5) on a NE-SW alignment (tipped from the SW). Each of the layers contained numerous artefacts including glass jars and bottles, rusting metalwork, slag, broken porcelain etc. All of these objects were within tips of 'night soil' (domestic waste). The dating for these layers ranged between 1910 and 1930, and averaged from 1-2 metres in depth. Using the grading bucket a series of sondages measuring up to 10 metres in length were excavated to determine the depth of the earliest layers (context 5) and to examine any underlying stratigraphy. It was evident from the investigation that the refuse (context 5) sat directly on top of a layer of loose angular granite, derived from a later quarrying sequence.

3: CONCLUSION

No evidence was found for the prison camp during the watching brief at South Hill. The position of the camp shown on the 1944 aerial photographs suggests that the main site of the development would only just encroach on the ESE side of one building and the SSW end of another (Figs 2-4). The camp would almost certainly have been at a level 2-3 metres down from the present ground level and positioned at the level of the 1910-1930 rubbish tip. It is suggested here that the camp would most likely have consisted of corrugated structures (or similarly easy to construct buildings) which would have been demolished soon after the end of the war, with materials reused. Any remaining foundations appear to have been razed to the ground or graded away, probably during the reuse of the site for landfill in the later period. The site has clearly been used for the deposition of landfill from the early 20th century, making use of a disused quarry site.

During WWII, the domestic tip (which may have been out of use and overgrown by this period), appears to have been used as the location of a POW camp. The site was reused for demolition and domestic waste after the war, until being landscaped in the 1960's. As such, no archaeology from any period has survived on the site of the Jersey Electricity PLC development and all structures relating to the POW camp have been removed and erased by later use of the site.

Figure 1: Location of the Site (Not to Scale)



 = Location of site



Figure 2: 1944 Aerial Photograph Centred on UTM 6512 4770

(Image 106WK 37.9.MAY.44.F/36''//541SQDN © Jersey Heritage Trust)




Figure 3: 1944 Aerial Photograph with South Hill Development Overlay



**Figure 4: Site Plan Showing Location of Development Overlaying POW Buildings
Scale 1:500**



 = Location of 1944 Buildings Interpreted as POW Camp

 = Location of Investigative Sondage

Photographs



Image 1: SSW View General Shot



Image 2: SSW Facing Section



Image 3: ESE Facing Section Showing 1950's-1960's Tip



Image 4: ESE Facing Section Showing 1910-1930's Tip



Image 5: NNW Facing Section



Image 6: Continental Squat Toilet, Outside the Development Area (NE of the Site)