Fairmont Southampton SDO
Archaeological Guidance
Provided by the
Bermuda National Trust Archaeology Research Committee

Gratis submission shared with
the Department of Planning, and the Developer: Gencom

The Archaeological Research Committee (ARC) of the Bermuda National Trust (BNT) is keenly aware of the approved and proposed development framework for the Fairmont Southampton Hotel property, including the Fairmont Southampton Special Development Order (SDO) granted in October 2023 and subsequent SDO approvals and amendments under consideration in 2025.

BNT supports responsible redevelopment that contributes to Bermuda's economic recovery while ensuring full compliance with Bermuda's planning, heritage, and environmental protection framework. The Fairmont Southampton property is one of the oldest historic landscapes on the island and contains vulnerable and irreplaceable archaeological resources that require careful, site-wide consideration as development proceeds.

This guidance is provided to assist Government in understanding the archaeological significance of the site and the professional processes required to identify, assess, mitigate, and preserve archaeological resources, as required under the Fairmont Southampton SDO Act 2023, the Planning and Development Act, and the Bermuda Plan. This document was submitted to the Department of Planning on 21 November 2025 and is now being shared with Ministers and Senators in the context of the 2025 SDO approvals under consideration.

WHO WE ARE

BNT is a widely respected independent nonprofit entity with a mission to *"protect and promote Bermuda's natural and cultural heritage, for everyone, forever."* For more than forty years, BNT has conducted historical and archaeological research on more than thirty historic properties, collaborated with dozens of local and international partners, and worked with hundreds of community volunteers.

ARC is a volunteer advisory committee of BNT, composed of professional archaeologists and cultural heritage specialists with extensive experience in cultural resource management policy and best practice in Bermuda, the UK, and the USA.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

This document is furnished as a gratis expert resource to Government, in the interest of clarity, transparency, and informed decision-making. It sets out the established stages of archaeological assessment, evaluation, mitigation, and post-excavation reporting that are necessary to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and to prevent inadvertent and irreversible loss of archaeological resources.

The guidance reflects internationally recognised best practice and is intended to inform the application of archaeological conditions across all phases of development, subdivision, and ground disturbance associated with the Fairmont Southampton SDO.

Early, coordinated archaeological assessment and management:

- reduces risk to irreplaceable heritage assets,
- minimises construction delays and uncertainty,
- ensures regulatory consistency across the site, and
- supports public confidence in the responsible stewardship of Bermuda's heritage.

Understanding and integrating archaeological requirements at the SDO level will help ensure that redevelopment of the Fairmont Southampton proceeds in a manner that is legally compliant, publicly accountable, and reflective of heritage best practice.

SITE BACKGROUND

The land on which the Fairmont Southampton Hotel, golf course, and associated resort facilities sits was surveyed in 1616 by Richard Norwood and designated as lots 6 (one share, 25 acres), 7 (1 share, 25 acres), and 8 (12 shares, 300 acres). They were granted as private property to Bermuda Company investors Leonard Harwood (Lot 6), John Bankes (Lot 7), and Sir Nathaniel Rich (Lot 8) and were among the very first private tracts to become occupied with tenants and cleared.

Sir Nathaniel Rich and his cousin, Sir Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick, were among the most active investors and developers in Bermuda. Contemporary correspondence indicates that agents of the Rich family, including tenants and overseers sent from England, emigrated to manage their large Southampton holdings, directing the labour of servants and enslaved people as they cleared land and planted crops.

Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick (1587-1658).
Engraving by Jacobus Houbraken, 1747, after Sir Antony van Dyck.

Rich's holdings in Southampton are exceptional in British colonial history for being extensively documented in surviving letters from 1616 onward, written by tenants and by Sir Nathaniel Rich himself. These records describe in unusual detail the challenges of settling on a new island environment. By March 1617, at least two farms had been established, and they are shown on Richard Norwood's survey of Bermuda, later engraved and published by John Speed in 1626. This rare combination of detailed historical correspondence, cartographic evidence, and

archaeological potential dating from the very dawn of Bermuda's colonisation makes the Fairmont Southampton property an internationally significant research site.

Map of Bermuda by John Speed, 1662 edition.

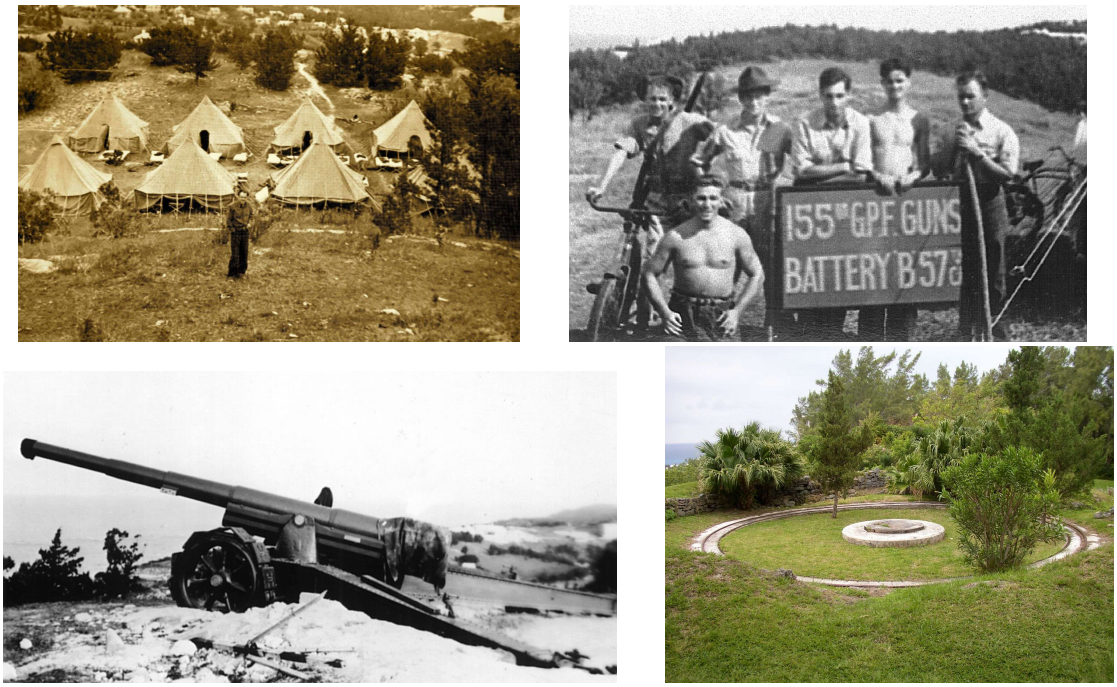
Southampton Lot 8 is also an internationally significant African Diaspora site. By 1617, Rich had arranged for an African man named Francisco, taken from a captured Spanish Caribbean vessel, to join his tenants at Southampton to teach them tobacco cultivation. By 1620, another skilled cultivator, James (also recorded as "Sarnando"), had also been brought to the property. Both men are documented as establishing independent households and being allotted land—each about 25 acres—to farm on the same terms as English tenants. These are the earliest known free Black farming households in English America. Although their precise locations within Rich's twelve-share tract are unknown, their houses and material culture would likely have reflected African and creole Caribbean traditions as well as European influences.

In addition to these unusually early personal and business letters, the Fairmont Southampton property is richly documented in Bermuda and British archives and on multiple manuscript maps. Richard Norwood's 1663 survey of the area shows subdivisions that had occurred since 1617, and a renumbering of parish share lots. The modern Fairmont Southampton property today includes portions of Lots 9 and 10, nearly all of Lots 11 and 12, and parts of Lots 13 and 14, with house symbols marking planters' dwellings. This evidence points to at least four identifiable mid-17th-century farmsteads—typically consisting of a main house, a tobacco barn, detached kitchens, enslaved people's cabins, workshops, and other outbuildings—that must be considered in any future development. To date, only four domestic sites in Bermuda dating from before 1684 have been archaeologically investigated, including the partly timber-framed Gardener's Cottage within Lot 11, north of the present hotel.

Despite decades of historical research, we still know extraordinarily little about trade, daily life, house construction, farming, diet, and cultural interaction in Bermuda's first century, when the first generations of island-born inhabitants were developing a distinct Bermudian identity. The documented sites within the Fairmont Southampton property are therefore of immeasurable importance for filling major gaps in our understanding of Bermuda's earliest past.

The property's archaeological significance extends into the 20th century as well. The wartime importance of Turtle Hill is underscored by the survival of one of the original 155 mm Panama

Mounts installed there in 1941 as part of Bermuda's coastal defence system. These guns, brought from Camp Pendleton, Virginia, complemented the 8-inch railway batteries and formed a key component of the island's Second World War fortifications. The surviving Panama Mount lies just east of the present Southampton Princess Hotel, within an area now formally recognised for its heritage value. Today, the hotel property encompasses four Historic Protection Areas (HPAs)—Turtle Hill West (HPA 13), Turtle Hill East (HPA 14), Hunts Fort (HPA 15), and Ingham's Fort (HPA 88)—each safeguarding archaeological features connected to early settlement, 17th-century agriculture, and Bermuda's military history. The accompanying graph illustrates the relative acreage of these HPAs, highlighting the extent of protected heritage zones within the development site.



Turtle Hill camp, gun emplacement and gun, photos courtesy of Dr. Edward Harris

A desk-based historical and archaeological assessment will provide a more detailed understanding of the locations, significance, and timespans of sites present on the property that may be impacted by development.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Policies for preserving sites of archaeological significance have been drawn together in the Bermuda Plan (2018) (Objective HSC3, Policy HSC.12, HSC.13). These are supplemented by an Archaeological Assessments Guidance Note, published by the Government of Bermuda Department of Planning.

Policy HSC.12 states that "The Board may require… a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment for… any site that is deemed to have archaeological significance" (Bermuda Plan, 2018,148).
Policy HSC.13 states that where development work poses a risk of "substantial adverse impact" to an archaeological resource, an Archaeological Management Plan (AMP) detailing measures for the protection and preservation of the resource will be required. Such measures may include field evaluation, watching brief, building investigation and recording, excavation, and arrangements for the collection, documentation, conservation, and research of archaeological materials.

Archaeological conditions are produced for the Development Applications Board by the Heritage Officer in the Department of Planning. An archaeological condition will require a developer in the first instance to instruct a professional archaeologist to conduct a preliminary Archaeological Assessment, which will assess the potential for archaeology on the site.
The conditions will also state that where the preliminary Archaeological Assessment has identified the potential for a substantial adverse impact, an Archaeological Management Plan will be required. This Archaeological Management Plan must be produced by a professional archaeologist and the scope of works agreed with the Department of Planning Heritage Officer, before starting.

STAGES OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

Archaeological projects follow this set of four key stages through the planning process:

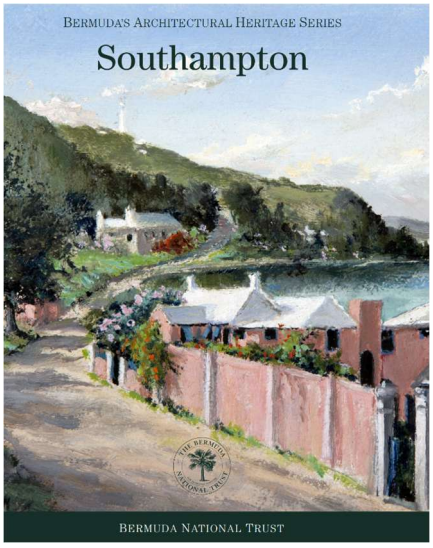
1. Archaeological Assessment
2. Evaluation
3. Mitigation
4. Post-Excavation, Reporting and Archiving

STAGE ONE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

The first stage of the archaeological process is to undertake an Archaeological Assessment, produced by an archaeological professional. The archaeological assessment is a desktop study, utilising historic maps and records, published works, excavation data, and site walkover survey to model the potential for archaeological remains on the site. It results in a report submitted to the Heritage Officer.

It will also state the type of archaeology that might be present, the relative importance of that archaeology, any areas on the site where there is greater potential for archaeological survival. It will review the design proposals and model the construction impacts posed by the development to any buried archaeology.

An Archaeological Assessment will enable the decision makers to understand what level of archaeological work will be required for a development project.



BNT's Southampton volume of Bermuda's Architectural Series
And Southampton Parish detail of the Bleau Norwood map, 1636

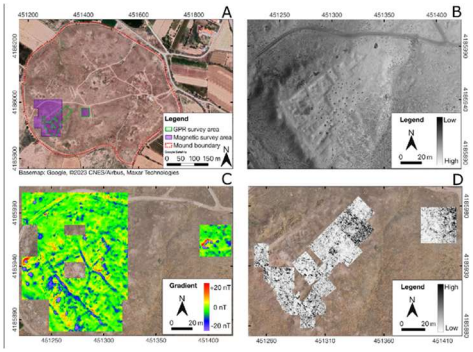
STAGE TWO: FIELD EVALUATION

Should the Archaeological Assessment identify archaeological potential on the site, the next step in the archaeological process is to refine and test those findings through a combination of geophysical survey and targeted excavation.

Geophysical Survey (Ground-Penetrating Radar and Related Methods)

Before any excavation, a geophysical survey can be undertaken as a non-invasive tool to identify sub-surface features. This involves the use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) and other instruments to produce images of buried geophysical anomalies suggesting archaeological material. It is particularly effective in Bermuda because of the stark contrast of buried features against the natural limestone. Geophysical results help to guide the placement of test trenches more strategically, increasing efficiency and reducing unnecessary disturbance.

Ground Penetrating Radar being conducted in St. George's by Dr. Michael Jarvis and partners, April 2022



Geophysical and UAV Surveys by Wessex Archaeology and on Konya Karahöyük

Field Evaluation Testing

Following (or in tandem with) the geophysical survey, archaeologists usually excavate a series of archaeological test units within the development area. Their placements are informed by both historical research and geophysical results, while also randomly sampling zones of ground impact (5–10%) to detect undocumented or deeply buried sites. These trial trenches are excavated using both machine and hand excavation and then backfilled by machine. Field evaluation is designed to determine where archaeology does and does not survive, and to establish the nature, function, date, and relative importance of archaeological sites identified during fieldwork. The time involved varies with the size of the impacted area, topographical and vegetation conditions, and the number and expertise of archaeologists participating.

The results of the field evaluation will be submitted in a report to the Heritage Officer, enabling them to decide and finalise the total scope of archaeological works on the site. This typically involves the archaeologists returning—usually prior to, but sometimes in tandem with, the main construction phase—to fully expose areas of archaeological remains identified during the evaluation sampling.

Field Evaluation: Examples of archaeology test pits

STAGE THREE – ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

Guided by the results of the field evaluation, the Department of Planning will decide and finalise the total scope of archaeological work on the site. This exercise will excavate and remove archaeological remains, preserving them through records, and by doing so fully mitigate the impact of the development on Bermuda's important archaeological resources. Usually, mitigation comprises one of two main types of work:

- Controlled Excavation
- Archaeological Watching Brief

Both strategies might be employed for dealing with different areas of the site, at distinct stages of the project.

A Controlled Excavation will expose a wider area sampled by the evaluation, where sensitive archaeological remains were initially identified. This strategy is usually employed where a greater number and density of important remains have been identified, such that it requires a greater time allowance to excavate, without undue pressure from the construction schedule.

The excavation is conducted by one or more archaeological contractors.

Mitigation: Controlled Excavation

A Watching Brief, is usually conducted at the same time as the main works programme, and involves the monitoring of the groundworks undertaken by the contractor. This strategy is usually employed where there is a likelihood of encountering archaeology in lesser quantity/density and of a lesser importance, such that can be handled at pace alongside the groundworks. The excavation is controlled by the groundworks contractor, but the monitoring archaeologist will stop works when archaeology is identified to record and remove it before.

A Controlled Excavation area with the archaeology completely removed (left), and the same area having been signed off and handed over to the Principle Contractor (right)

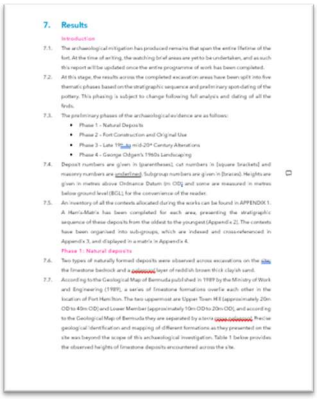
Example of archaeologist working with a Principle Contractor to complete an Archaeological Watching Brief

STAGE FOUR – POST-EXCAVATION, REPORTING AND ARCHIVING

Following the completion of the fieldwork, the post-excavation stage follows. This involves washing, processing and analysis of artefacts recovered from the excavation, and producing a final report.

The report and associated data produced by the project will serve as the record of the evidence produced by the excavation, passed onto future generations of Bermudians and researchers around the world.

The physical archive (artefacts and all written and digital records) is owned by the landowner. It is recommended that physical archive be entrusted to the Bermuda National Trust or National Museum of Bermuda who have the best resources for ensuring its long-term preservation and where through which it may be continually researched, interpreted, and shared with the public.



7. Results

Introduction

7.1. The archaeological mitigation has produced remains that span the entire lifetime of the fort. At the time of writing, the watching brief areas are yet to be undertaken, and as such this report will be updated once the entire programme of work has been completed.

7.2. At this stage, the results across the completed excavation areas have been split into five thematic phases based on the stratigraphic sequence and preliminary spot-dating of the pottery. This phasing is subject to change following full analysis and dating of all the finds.

7.3. The preliminary phases of the archaeological evidence are as follows:

- Phase 1 – Natural Deposits
- Phase 2 – Fort Construction and Original Use
- Phase 3 – Late 19th to Mid-20th Century Alterations
- Phase 4 – George Odgen's 1960s Landscaping

7.4. Deposit numbers are given in (parentheses), cut numbers in [square brackets] and masonry numbers are underlined. Subgroup numbers are given in (brace). Heights are given in metres above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and some are measured in metres below ground level (BGL) for the convenience of the reader.

7.5. An inventory of all the contexts allocated during the works can be found in APPENDIX 1. A Harris Matrix has been completed for each area, presenting the stratigraphic sequence of these deposits from the oldest to the youngest (Appendix 2). The contexts have been organised into sub-groups, which are indexed and cross-referenced in Appendix 3, and displayed in a matrix in Appendix 4.

Phase 1 – Natural deposits

7.6. Two types of naturally formed deposits were observed across excavations on the site, the limestone bedrock and a [illegible] layer of reddish brown thick clay/silt sand.

7.7. According to the Geological Map of Bermuda published in 1989 by the Ministry of Work and Engineering (1989), a series of limestone formations overlie each other in the location of Fort Hamilton. The two uppermost are Upper Town Hill (approximately 20m OD to 40m OD) and Lower Member (approximately 10m OD to 20m OD), and according to the Geological Map of Bermuda they are separated by a terra [illegible]. Precise geological identification and mapping of different formations as they presented on the site was beyond the scope of this archaeological investigation. Table 1 below provides the observed heights of limestone deposits encountered across the site.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & PUBLIC BENEFIT

Archaeological discoveries can serve as a major source of pride that resonates deeply with the people who live nearby. Including the local community in development-led archaeology projects can serve as fantastic opportunities to foster goodwill, to let the public see for themselves how a project is committed to safe-guarding Bermuda's heritage, and to produce additional public value from the act of development.

Community outreach can be programmed before, during and after a project is completed. Traditional examples include site tours, open days, talks to community groups, pop-up exhibitions, or the production of a site blog. More ambitious programmes with deeper, more lasting impacts might look at involving members of the community in the excavation as part of dig-weeks, targeting school groups, charity, and other local groups. Archaeological excavations have also been used to provide training programmes for students or young career archaeologists, teaching them skills such as measured drawing, site survey, 3D modelling or site supervision. Many of these skills are transferable to construction-related or research occupations and could help empower Bermudians for their professional development.
Some developers have chosen to capitalise on the cultural and social cache of doing archaeological research on their property by incorporating the findings and finds into their finished project. This may be through displaying some of the intangible findings and tangible artefacts in lobbies or other public spaces and preserving site remains under glass or marking them out on the ground, so that visitors to the site may be able to engage with the archaeology long after the archaeologists have finished.

Cultural tourism is a growing market worldwide, but especially in the US and amongst older travelers looking for enriching and unique travel experiences. The early story of Bermuda, England and the United States are particularly intertwined. Adding an archaeological story to accompany one of Bermuda's most prestigious heritage properties surely is an invaluable opportunity to build upon the unique selling point of the Fairmont Southampton.

REFERENCES

- Fairmont Southampton Hotel Act 2023
- Government of Bermuda Department of Planning Archaeological Assessments
- Harris, Edward C. *Bermuda Forts 1612-1957, (Second Edition)* National Museum of Bermuda Press, 2013.
- Ives, Vernon A. (Ed.). *The Rich Papers: Letters from Bermuda, 1615-1646*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Jarvis, Michael J. *Isle of Devils, Isle of Saints: An Atlantic History of Bermuda, 1609–1684. Baltimore:* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022.

CONTACT

Dr. Charlotte Andrews
Head of Cultural Heritage

tel: 441 236-6483 x 225
cell: 441 599-6127
charlotte.andrews@bnt.bm

PO Box HM61
Hamilton HM AX
Bermuda

www.bnt.bm