

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Oil Storage Tanks, RAF Lakenheath ERL 153

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF THE REMOVAL OF EXISTING UNDERGROUND AND REPLACEMENT WITH NEW ABOVE GROUND OIL STORAGE TANKS AT RAF LAKENHEATH

Planning Application No.: F/2005/0827/GOV

NGR: Various (see individual entries)

Oasis Ref. Suffolkc1-24146

Date of Fieldwork: May-July 2006

Funded by: MOD Defence Estates (USF)

SCCAS Report no. 2007/013

Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during the removal of underground oil storage tanks and their replacement with above-ground tanks at RAF Lakenheath. The monitoring observed mainly disturbed ground demonstrating that the hole for the construction of the tanks was generally larger than that excavated for their removal. The shallow excavation for concrete bases for the new tanks did not penetrate archaeological levels.

Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was carried from May-July 2006, during the removal of six underground fuel storage tanks and the groundworks for the construction of six replacement above-ground tanks. The tanks were located across the Base and monitoring involved examination of the holes left by the tanks and inspection of the excavations for the new concrete bases for the replacement tanks, in all cases this was only c.0.3m deep. The dimensions for the concrete bases for the new tanks were between 3m x 2m and 7.9m x 3m. Of the four tanks, only two were located within areas of archaeological interest and monitoring of the other four was minimal. The results are listed by tank.

Results

Tank 1

This lay at grid ref. TL 7293 8059 at c.8m OD. The hole left after the removal of the underground tank showed a disturbed soil profile to the base of the hole, c.2.5m and some concrete was still visible in the sides of the hole. There was concrete over the adjacent area, some of which was removed for the excavations for the base for the new tank (4.5m x 3.5m), however no undisturbed ground was seen during the monitoring for these new excavations either.

Tank 2

This lay at grid ref. TL 7362 8083 at c. 8m OD. A complete undisturbed soil profile was recorded in the SE side of the hole left after the removal of the existing tank. This showed a buried turf line under c. 0.2m of topsoil which overlay a grey sand c. 0.3m deep which lay over bright yellow sand subsoil. Chalk subsoil was observed at c. 2m. All the remaining sections showed disturbed ground to the full depth of the hole. The new tank (9.3m x 4.4m) was located in the same place as the existing tank and therefore no further monitoring was carried out.

Tank 3

This was located at grid ref. TL 7466 8137 at c.10m OD. The hole resulting from the removal of the existing tank showed largely disturbed ground. In one small area apparently undisturbed grey sand was seen, c.0.3m deep, overlying natural yellow sand and under c.1m of modern deposits. This suggests that the area may have been previously filled and levelled. A visit was made to see the excavations for the new tank (7.9m x 3.9m), but the site lies within a secure area and it was not possible on this occasion to gain access, however it was possible to assess from outside the fence that natural sand was not exposed and that, from the excavation depth and the evidence from the adjacent monitoring, that it was likely that the excavation was still within largely modern deposits or topsoil. No further attempt was made to visit the site.

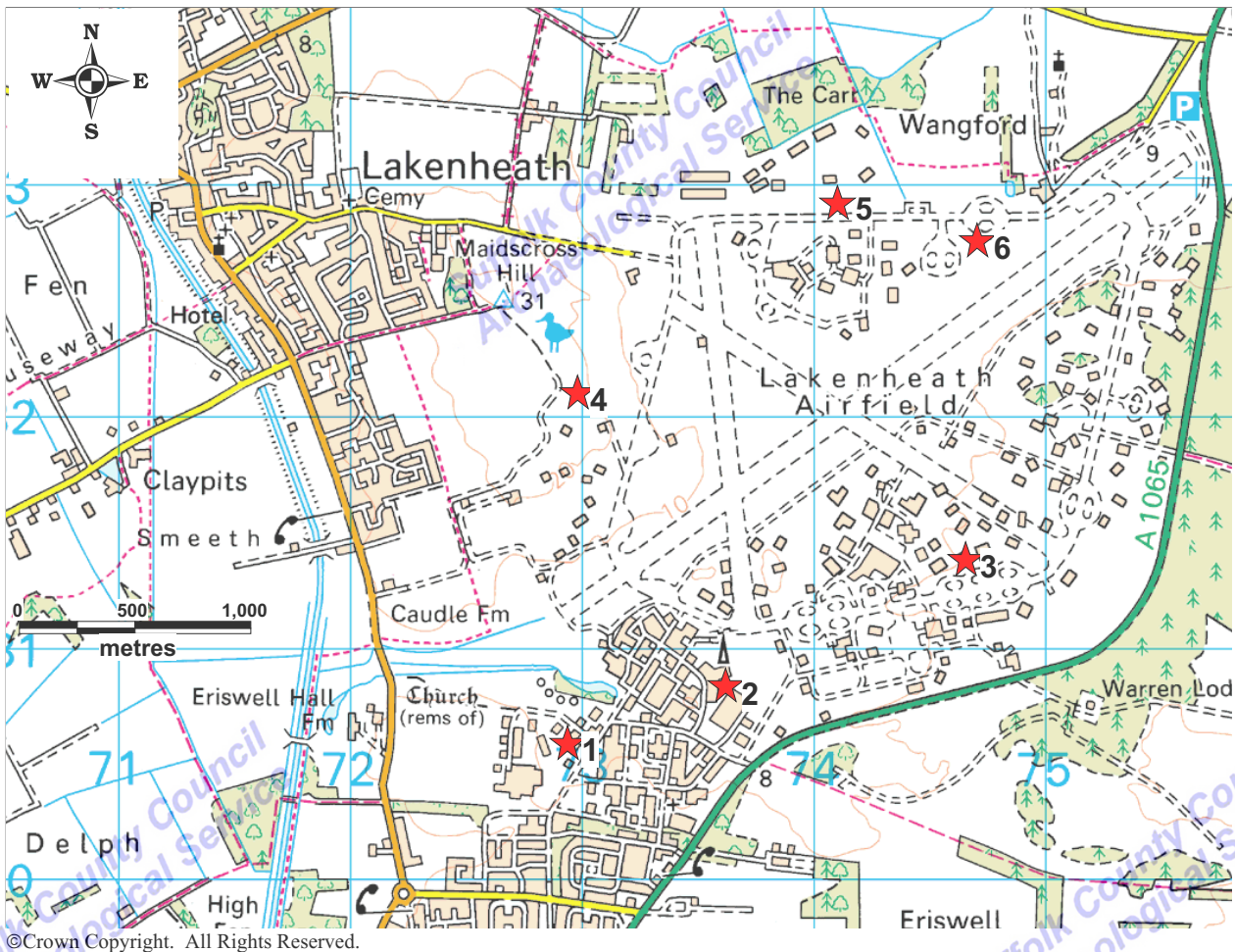


Figure 1. Site location

Tank 4

This was located at grid ref. TL 7299 8210 at c.25m OD adjacent to an area where extensive truncation has been identified (Caruth 2007) and in an area of low archaeological potential. No

visits were made to monitor either the removal of the existing tank or the excavations for the new tank (4.2m x 2.9m).

Tank 5

This lay at grid ref. TL 7410 8291 at c.5m OD in an area of low archaeological potential. The hole remaining after the removal of the tank was inspected, but this showed only disturbed ground throughout its depth. The new tank (4.7m x 3.4m) was to be located in the same place as the existing one and therefore the work for this was not monitored.

Tank 6

This lay at grid ref. TL 7471 8276 at c.6m OD in an area of low archaeological potential. No visits were made to this site.

Discussion and Conclusion

This monitoring did not identify any archaeological deposits or finds. In two cases (Tanks 2 and 3) fragments of buried soils were identified, demonstrating that previous ground surfaces survive intact but there was no evidence that these were archaeological. Most of the holes seen after the removal of the tanks showed completely disturbed soil profiles suggesting that the holes dug for the construction of the tanks were larger than those for the removal. The base of the excavation for the new concrete bases was generally above archaeological levels and on two occasions these were placed in the same location as the existing tanks, so on completely disturbed ground. As the monitoring proceeded it became increasingly apparent that the likelihood of identifying archaeological remains was slim and only Tanks 3 and 5 on the airfield were monitored.

Jo Caruth
February 2007