

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2011/005

F15C Squadron Operations, RAF Lakenheath, Wangford WNG 047

HER Information

Planning Application No: F/2007/1028/FUL
Date of Fieldwork: July – December 2010
Grid Reference: TL 755822
Funding Body: MoD Defence Estates
Curatorial Officer: Judith Plouviez
Project Officer: J. A. Craven
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Summary

An archaeological monitoring, carried out on the eastern edge of RAF Lakenheath, Wangford identified a small unstratified finds assemblage of medieval material but no archaeological deposits or features, possibly because of the heavy disturbance from the site's recent use as a tree plantation and shallow nature of the overlying soils.

1. Introduction and methodology

A series of visits was made to RAF Lakenheath from July to December 2010 to monitor the groundworks for the new F15C Squadron Operations building, access road and carparking areas (Fig. 1) by Andrew Tester and John Craven. The monitoring was required to fulfill a condition on the planning application F/2007/1028/FUL, and was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Judith Plouviez, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service Conservation Team.

The airbase generally lies across the broad band of multi-period activity that is recorded along the fen-edge in west Suffolk. The densest areas of known previous occupation however lie c.2km to the south-west and only isolated prehistoric finds have been recorded in the immediate vicinity, together with earthwork banks relating to medieval and post-medieval warrening. This absence of archaeological sites however may be partly due to a relative absence of fieldwork on this part of the airbase and so the condition was placed as the development was of a substantial size and had the potential to identify widespread and scattered deposits.

The site consisted of an area of pine plantation on the eastern side of the airbase at TL 755822. It lies at a height of c.12m AOD, towards the base of a gentle west facing slope that descends from the Breckland to the east down to the edge of the fens, c.1.5km to the north-west. The site geology consists of sandy soils overlying chalky drift.

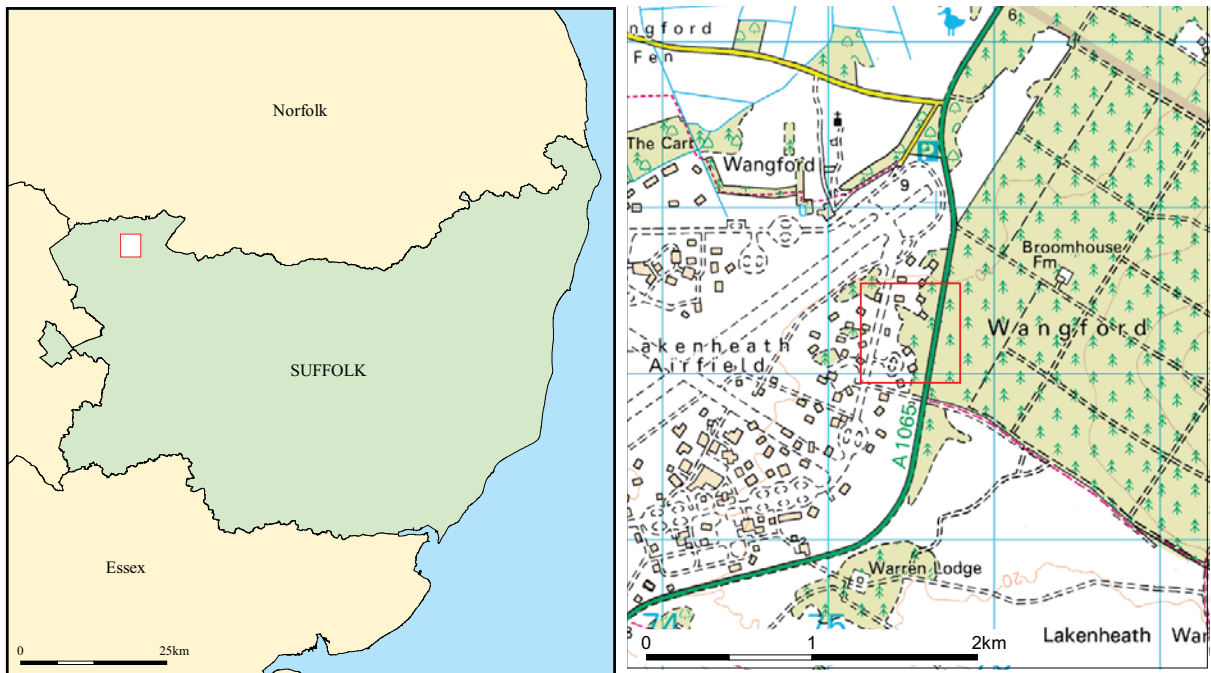


Figure 1. Site location

2. Results

An initial walkover of the c.2ha site was conducted following the felling and destumping of the development area. Approximately 75% of site had been cleared, with tree stumps along the northern edge still waiting to be removed. The de-stumping exposed the natural chalk or yellow sand subsoil throughout but did not identify any archaeological deposits or features. A small finds assemblage, 0001, of widely scattered pottery and worked flint was collected

Subsequent visits were made during the soil strip for the main building and the access road/carparking areas. The building footprint was reduced by 0.2m which exposed the natural chalk/sand subsoil under a shallow topsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were seen but the heavy disturbance from trees and the rough nature of the soil strip meant that indistinct features may have been missed.

The road and carpark areas showed a similar soil profile, with the tree root disturbed natural sand and chalk being seen under a shallow topsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

3. The finds

Andy Fawcett

3.1. Introduction

A total of six finds with a weight of 134g was recorded as unstratified (0001) at RAF Lakenheath, during the initial walkover of the site. A brief description of these is provided below, and a full contextual breakdown of the finds can be seen in Table 1 below.

Context	Find type	No	Weight/g	Comments
0001	Flint	2	45	One large patinated flake with limited edge damage. One patinated squat flake with limited edge retouch . Later Prehistoric
0001	CBM	1	74	Abraded medieval roof tile, oxidised surfaces and grey core. Coarse sand; well sorted quartz, often orange tinted. Tile depth is 13mm
0001	Pottery	2	9	Abraded body sherds in MCW category. Both contain ill sorted quartz and oxidised surfaces. Late 12th to 14th C
0001	Pottery	1	6	Abraded body sherd in UPG category. Partial green glaze on oxidised surface, contains ill sorted quartz. Late 12th to 14th C.

Table 1. Finds quantities

3.2. Pottery

Three abraded body sherds of medieval pottery (15g) were noted. The first two are general medieval coarse wares (MCW) and the second is an unprovenanced glazed ware (UPG), both are dated from the late 12th to 14th century.

3.3. Ceramic building material

A single abraded fragment of medieval roof tile has been recorded. The piece is in a coarse oxidised fabric with a reduced core (cs). The quartz within the fabric is well sorted and frequently orange tinted.

3.4. Flint

Two flint fragments were noted, both of which are patinated and dated to the later prehistoric period. The first is a large flake with limited edge damage; this was possibly caused by ploughing. The second piece is a squat flake with limited edge retouch.

3.5. Conclusion

This is a small assemblage of finds, however they appear to suggest some form of medieval activity within the immediate area.

4. Discussion

Although the size of the site meant that monitoring of the groundworks uncovered substantial areas of the natural subsoil and potential archaeological horizons no archaeological features or deposits were identified. This adds to the evidence that this area of the airbase has seen relatively little, if any past activity prior to the medieval period. However it should be noted that the shallow soils and evident disturbance caused by modern tree plantations meant that archaeological deposits may have been previously removed, which, together with the poor conditions of the site strip, may mean that some evidence of past activity has been missed.

The slight evidence of medieval activity in the area is probably associated with the adjacent medieval and post-medieval warrens.