# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT**



A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2003-4 (Planning app. no. F/2000/493)

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## Acknowledgements

This project was funded by MOD Defence Estates (USF) and managed for DE by John Purvis. The archaeological work was specified by Jude Plouviez from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team and the fieldwork carried out by Jo Caruth, David Gill and Andrew Tester from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team.

## Summary

Monitoring of construction work across the airfield for four small buildings and associated works as part of the Restore Fuel System project found deposits relating to Wangford Fen 500m into the airfield. Work near the eastern perimeter fence showed high levels of disturbance and truncation.

# **SMR** information

Planning application no.

Grid Reference:

Funding body:

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Oasis reference.

October 2003-November 2004 TL 7391 8229 (Facility 1913) MOD Defence Estates (USF)

Suffolkc1-9224

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#### Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken of groundworks associated with the replacement of fuel systems at RAF Lakenheath. The work all took place within the airfield, near Facilities 1309, 1910, 1912 and 1913 (Fig. 1). All sites lay within areas where prehistoric finds had been made (Fig. 2) but none lay within known archaeological sites.



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## Methodology

The construction work took place in three distinct time periods: Facility 1913 in autumn 2003, 1912 in late Spring 2004 and 1309 and 1910 in Autumn 2004. The most archaeologically sensitive work was that at Facility 1913 which lies close to Mesolithic finds spots (WNG 017, LKH 075, Fig. 2). The tank removal and trenching was monitored during and after excavation and part of the strip for the building was observed whilst it was being carried out, as well as visits after excavation. Short visits during and after excavation operations were made to the other facilities. Observations were noted and sketch plans and sections recorded. None of the visits identified archaeological finds or features.

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The monitoring has been recorded under the SMR event number LKH 252 and the report lodged with the OASIS on-line database, ref. Suffolkc1-9224



Figure 2 Construction sites in relation to nearby archaeological sites

#### Results

No archaeological finds were made during this monitoring. The results from each construction area are shown below.

#### Facility 1913

Three visits were made to this facility in October 2003.

Monitoring of the removal of an existing tank showed that the removal hole was smaller than the construction hole and disturbed soil was still visible at the base of the extraction hole, c.2.5m from the ground level.



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Figure 4

Facility 1913; detail

Two small buildings were being constructed (Fig. 3). Monitoring of the strip for the filter/separator building footprint showed that the north-eastern part of the site was totally disturbed to the depth of the strip, 1m (Fig. 4). The southern east-west section showed that the original ground surface had sloped quite steeply from east to west, with a black buried turf layer visible under 0.3m of redeposited material at the east end to 0.8m at the west end (Fig. 5). The buried turf (0.05m thick) lay over a layer of fine, purple-grey sand, between 0.2 and 0.3m deep. The footprint for the second, control, building was stripped to 0.65m below ground level. This showed dark grey-brown sand underlying thin topsoil across the whole site, the base of which was deeper than the stripped surface. Two hand-dug holes through this showed that it overlay a dense dark orange sand a further c.0.4m down (Fig. 5). These deposits are typical of low lying, moist landscapes and probably indicate that Wangford Fen originally extended to this point. The steep sloping ground is typical of the (now levelled) naturally undulating topography here.

Monitoring of electric trenches to the buildings also showed similar soil profiles.



#### Facility 1912

Three visits were made to monitor the ground works for facility 1912 in May 2004 (Fig. 2). The building footprint and associated trenches were monitored. These showed c. 0.1m of thin sandy topsoil lying directly onto natural chalk with occasional orange-brown sandy patches. These patches were more frequent on the south side of the site, and the chalk cleaner on the north side, suggesting that the natural has been truncated to the north. In addition there were some patches of redeposited sand lying over truncated chalk in all areas of the site. Occasional brick flecks were visible at the interface between natural and topsoil and modern services could be seen Archaeo cutting the chalk, however there were no archaeological finds.

#### Facilities 1309 and 1910

Two visits during construction of these facilities saw tank holes after excavation (Fig. 2). These showed predominantly disturbed ground with occasional patches of natural sand at c. 0.3m deep, with chalk at deeper levels (1.5m+).

## Conclusion

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The results of this monitoring show an absence of archaeological finds and features, however valuable information about the historic landscape was gained during the work on Facility 1913. This demonstrates that fen edge deposits could be seen 500m into the airfield, and that these appeared to deepen to the east suggesting that this may indicate the approximate location of the south-western limits of Wangford Fen. The Mesolithic finds made on the airfield in the 1930's significantly lie just on and within these margins.

The results from the other Facilities demonstrates an absence of archaeological finds along the eastern edge of the airfield, combined with evidence for significant areas of truncation and Archa extensive modern disturbance. SU

The evidence for the steeply sloping ground probably indicates the edge of a natural hollow and, as identified elsewhere, this monitoring of the airfield has demonstrated the levelling of a naturally undulating landscape during the 20th century.

Jo Caruth July 2005

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