



Building 941 (UAV Works), Boscombe Down Airfield,
Amesbury, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**BUILDING 941 (UAV WORKS), BOSCOMBE DOWN AIRFIELD,
AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:
QinetiQ (Managed Services)
Building A8 Room 1038
Cody Technology Park
Ively Road,
Farnborough
Hants GU14 0LX

by
Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

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AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE**

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Figure

Figure 1 Site location and extent of fieldwork

Plates

Front cover: Extent of Site looking northwards

Back cover: Extent of Site looking westwards

**BUILDING 941 (UAV WORKS), BOSCOMBE DOWN AIRFIELD,
AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by QinetiQ (Managed Services) to undertake an archaeological watching brief to monitor ground works and record any archaeological features and deposits that might be impacted by the construction of a car park and building foundation pads on the northeastern side of an existing aircraft hanger, Building 941. This building lies immediately to the northwest of an especially well preserved disc barrow and it was deemed that there was the potential for significant archaeological remains to have survived in the proposed development area.

No evidence of archaeological finds or features were observed at the proposed foundation level during the course of the watching brief. The results of the watching brief appeared to show that the site of the car park and new building had been extensively terraced during the original construction of a foundation pad for the hanger. This work is very likely to have effectively removed any shallow archaeological features and deposits within the immediate environs of the hanger.

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AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Acknowledgements

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The watching brief was undertaken by Phil Harding who also compiled this report. The illustrations were prepared by Linda Coleman and the project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy Manning.

**BUILDING 941 (UAV WORKS), BOSCOMBE DOWN AIRFIELD,
AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by QinetiQ (Managed Services) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works to construct a new car park and office facilities covering an area of approximately 720 square metres which were located immediately adjacent to an existing hanger (Building 941) at Boscombe Down Airfield, Amesbury, Wiltshire, located at National Grid Reference (NGR) 417542 140015, hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.

1.1.2 The proposed construction was a permitted airfield development, for which no planning application, and therefore no Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), was necessary. Nevertheless in view of the proximity of a well preserved Bronze Age disc barrow, QinetiQ (Managed Services) commissioned Wessex Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief to monitor all necessary ground works during the early stages of the project to ensure that any significant archaeological remains would be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

1.2.1 The Site lay on the northeastern side of former concrete aircraft hanger (Building 941) which is located in the northern half of the Boscombe Down Airfield, approximately 300m to the north of the main runway.

1.2.2 The Site lies at the eastern end of a shallow coombe that itself forms a tributary to deeper coombe that drains west towards the valley of the River Avon. The ground surface at this point is approximately 110 m aOD and the natural geology is mapped as Upper Chalk (BGS 1976, Sheet 298).

1.2.3 The development area lay on the northeastern side of the hanger. A slight break of slope was visible around the northern fringes of this building which suggested that it may have been terraced into the hillside at the time of its construction.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**2.1 Boscombe Down Airfield**

2.1.1 The airfield at Boscombe down has a long history. Military flights from Boscombe Down commenced in 1917 with experimental operations beginning at the start of World War II in 1939-40. The airfield was expanded in the early 1950s and the existing 'Hardened Aircraft Shelters (HAS) hangers (including Building 941) were constructed in the late 1970s.

2.1.2 The airfield has been the subject of large and small-scale archaeological investigations from the 1940s to the present day.

- 2.1.3 Just over 60 separate monuments, features or findspots are recorded on the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record (Wiltshire SMR) as lying within the boundaries of the airfield. These include several Bronze Age round barrows and a Late Bronze Age Wessex Linear Ditch.
- 2.1.4 A concentration of Iron Age and Romano-British pits, inhumations and a double-ditched enclosure associated with settlement were found during levelling work on the eastern boundaries of the airfield in 1949 (Richardson 1951).
- 2.1.5 The results from more recent watching briefs and a programme of trenched evaluation identified further archaeological remains, including ancient field systems and land boundaries, pits and graves (AC Archaeology 2001; Wessex Archaeology 2006, Wessex Archaeology 2007, Wessex Archaeology 2008 and Wessex Archaeology 2009). An evaluation by AC Archaeology in 2001 had identified that areas adjacent to the runway and taxiways have been significantly affected by modern 'cut and fill' groundworks with a severe impact on the archaeological resource. However, the survival of pockets of well-preserved archaeological deposits and features have been found across the airfield.

2.2 The Site

- 2.2.1 The area immediately to the southwest of the modern hanger is occupied by a well preserved disc barrow (Amesbury 86). This barrow was first recorded in detail by Crawford and Keiller (1928) who described it as being situated on the down 'SW of a derelict aerodrome'. The barrow was 63 yards (69m) in diameter with 'no less than four tumps, in a line across the centre, from SW to NE. Only the largest, (in the centre) shows any signs of having been disturbed'.
- 2.2.2 Crawford and Keiller (*op cit*) added that 'the whole down is in a natural state and appears never to have been ploughed up in modern or prehistoric times'. However by 1952 The Victoria County History (Pugh and Crittall 1957) described the barrow as being 'on arable', although it is unclear whether this extended across the monument itself. Only two smaller tumps west of the principal central mound could be discerned.
- 2.2.3 Aerial images of the area immediately around Building 941 and on-site inspection show clear evidence that the site of the hanger had been substantially reduced in level to form a terrace during its construction. The terrace slope extends approximately 20m to the north and east of the hanger, but only extended 8m to the west of the hanger, which avoided any impact to the barrow.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and scope

3.1.1 The watching brief was intended;

- To identify the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
- To investigate and establish the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of any archaeological features, artefacts and deposits
- To ensure the preservation by record of any recorded archaeological features
- To provide information which could be used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation, if required.

4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Initial stripping of the topsoil and overburden was undertaken using a small tracked excavator fitted with a range of toothless buckets, according to the requirements of the work.

4.1.2 All ground works were undertaken under constant archaeological supervision. Spoil tips were also checked as a matter of routine for archaeological material.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 The removal of a thin, poorly sorted, topsoil horizon revealed a general area of flinty 'subsoil'. This deposit extended away from the margins of the hanger northwards across the entire area of the proposed car park to the base of the terrace feature, visible as break of slope around the northern and eastern side of the hanger.

4.2.2 The terrace slope was most marked at the northeastern end of the development area across which the office facilities block is to be constructed. The terrace was approximately 0.40 m deep at its deepest part and thinned towards the eastern edge of the Site. It was characterised by 'clean' chalk with a distinctly 'sharp' contact with the overlying topsoil. The lack of any weathered surface chalk or flinty sorted horizon suggested that the natural chalk had been truncated by the construction of the terrace.

4.2.3 Removal of the 'subsoil' across the area of the proposed car park, to the foundation level, revealed compact chalk rubble mixed with flecks of topsoil. Fragments of modern brick and pieces of iron were also present in the chalk rubble. In places, especially near existing concrete aprons, the rubble overlay a concrete blinding layer for the hanger indicating that the entire profile was made-up ground. The foundation level of the car park area was crossed by a number of modern service trenches, drains and lightning conductors. Beyond the northeastern edge of the terrace edge, the natural chalk appeared relatively undisturbed.

- 4.2.4 During the stripping of the overburden to the foundation level no evidence of archaeological features, deposits or finds were found.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

5.1 Finds

- 5.1.1 No archaeological finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

5.2 Environmental sampling

- 5.2.1 No archaeological features or deposits were found during the course of the watching brief which would have been suitable for sampling.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The watching brief was commissioned to record any archaeological features and deposits that might be impacted by the construction of a car park and building on the northeastern and eastern side of Building 941, an existing aircraft hanger. The work was considered essential in view of the significant well preserved disc barrow immediately to the southwest of the hanger which indicated the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the Site.
- 6.1.2 The work confirmed the initial pre-works observations that the Site had been extensively terraced during construction of the original foundation pad of the hanger, reducing the ground level within the development area by at least 0.40m in places. This work is likely to have effectively removed any shallow archaeological features and deposits within the immediate environs of the hanger.
- 6.1.3 It is possible, but unlikely, that deeper features may survive within the Site, masked by the backfilled chalk that was used to reinstate the area around the hanger at the time of its construction. However, the present development will involve no impact below the stripped foundation level and thus any surviving features will be unaffected.

7 THE ARCHIVE

- 7.1.1 The site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with the documents Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage, Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (Museums and Galleries Commission 1992) and Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections; Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993).
- 7.1.2 The project archive (comprising one A4 folder containing all project records) is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology at Old Sarum, Salisbury, Wiltshire under the Project Code 75450. In due course the archive will be deposited with the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.
- 7.1.3 All records will be copied to microfilm. This will comply with the requirements presented in the document *Microfilming for Archaeological Archives* (RCHM). Wessex Archaeology will contact the National Monuments Record

to check their requirements. The microfilm and one diazo duplicate will be submitted to the recipient museum, and one diazo duplicate submitted to the National Monument Record, Swindon.

8 REFERENCES

8.1 Bibliography

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Appendix 1: OASIS ID: wessexar1-85078

Project details

Project name	Building 941 (UAV works) Boscombe Down Airfield, Amesbury, Wiltshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by QinetiQ (Managed Services) to undertake an archaeological watching brief to monitor ground works and record any archaeological features and deposits that might be impacted by the construction of a car park and building foundation pads on the northeastern side of an existing aircraft hanger, Building 941. This building lies immediately to the northwest of an especially well preserved disc barrow and it was deemed that there was the potential for significant archaeological remains to have survived in the proposed development area. No evidence of archaeological finds or features were observed at the proposed foundation level during the course of the watching brief. The results of the watching brief appeared to show that the site of the car park and new building had been extensively terraced during the original construction of a foundation pad for the hanger. This work is very likely to have effectively removed any shallow archaeological features and deposits within the immediate environs of the hanger.
Project dates	Start: 09-08-2010 End: 10-08-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WILTSHIRE SALISBURY AMESBURY Boscombe Down Airfield
Postcode	SP4 0BT
Study area	1.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	SU 17542 40015 51.1585946636 -1.749125317930 51 09 30 N 001 44 56 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 110.00m Max: 110.00m

Project creators

Name	of Wessex Archaeology
Organisation	
Project originator	brief Wessex Archaeology
Project design	Wessex Archaeology

originator
Project director/manager A Manning
Project supervisor PA Harding
Type of Developer
sponsor/funding
body
Name of QinetiQ
sponsor/funding
body

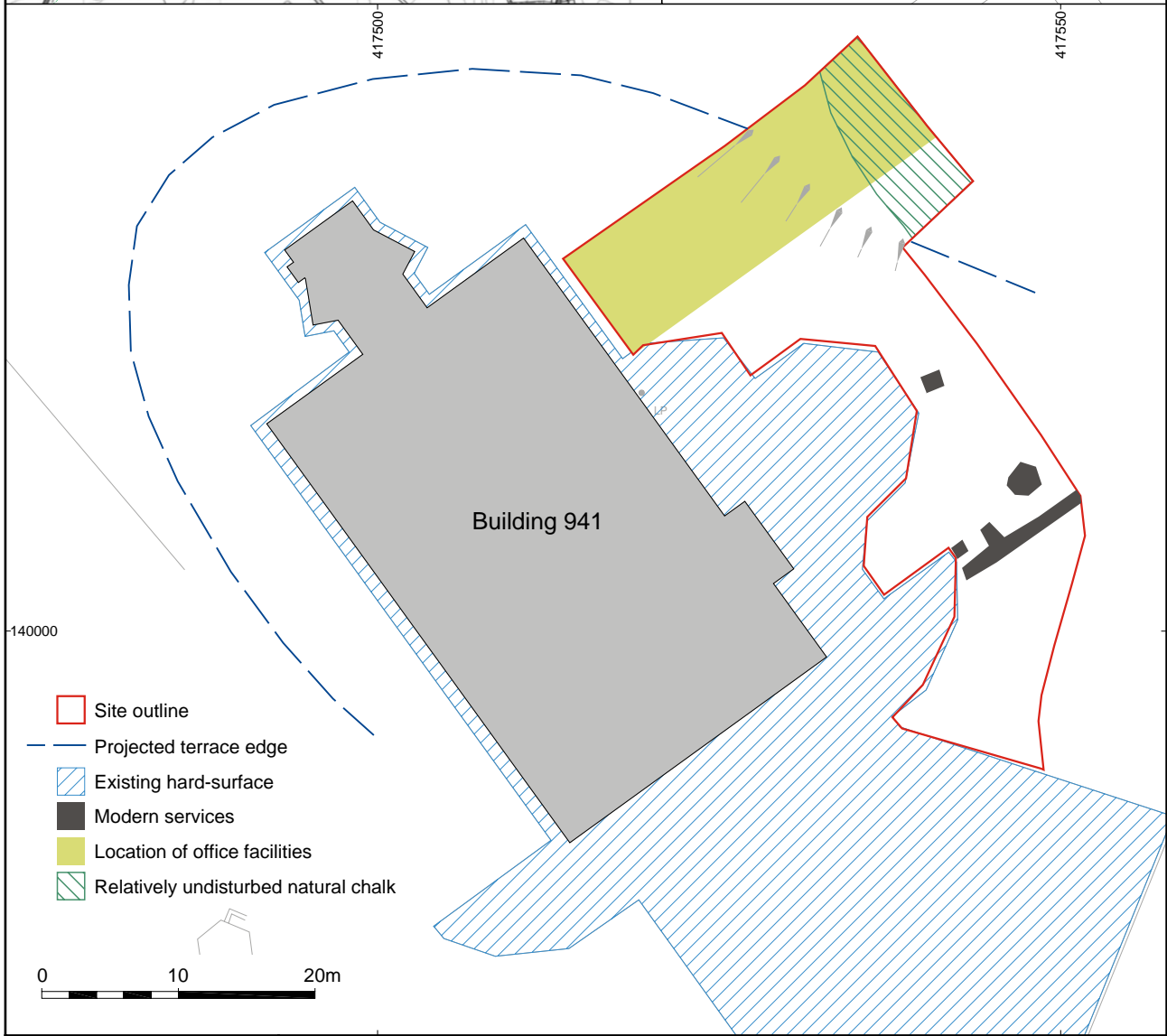
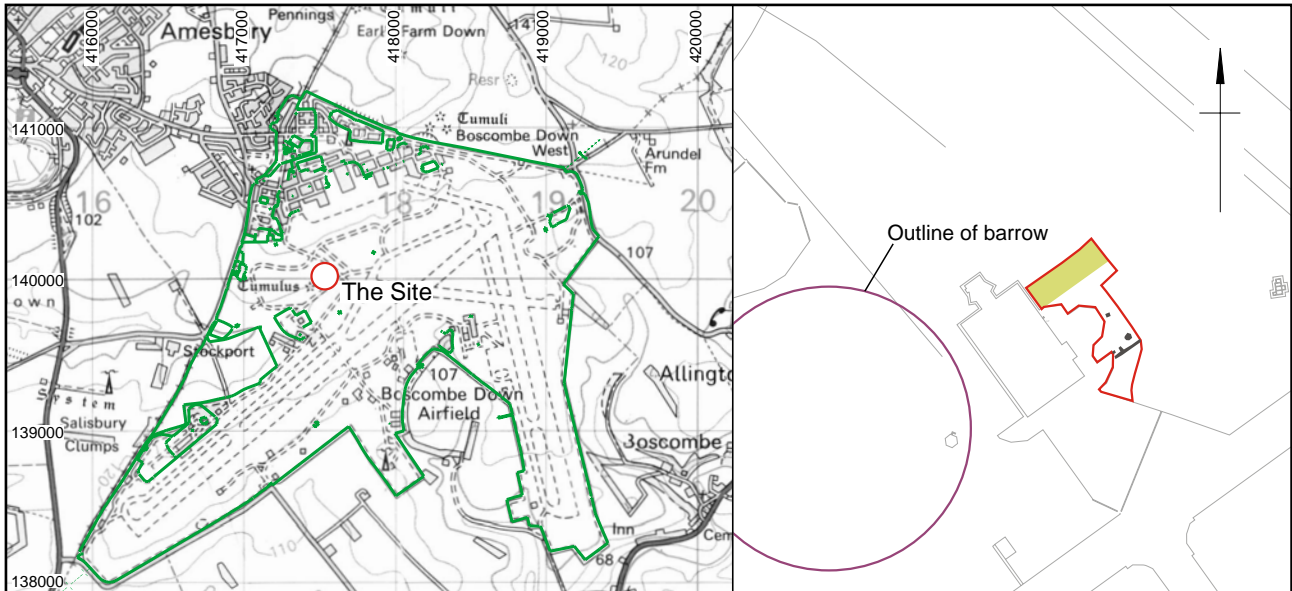
Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?
Digital Archive Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum
recipient
Digital Archive ID 75450
Digital Media 'Survey'
available
Paper Archive Salisbury and South Wilts Museum
recipient
Paper Archive ID 75450
Paper Media 'Context sheet', 'Correspondence', 'Diary', 'Drawing', 'Map', 'Notebook -
available Excavation', 'Research', 'General Notes', 'Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Site location and extent of fieldwork

Figure 1



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk

With regional offices in Maidstone, Sheffield and Edinburgh

For more information visit www.wessexarch.co.uk



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