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Archaeological Observation

For



The National Trust

Concerning a

Visitor Car Park Extension

At

**Croome Court
High Green
Worcestershire
WR8 9DW**

September 2017



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1 Non-Technical Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Janine Young, Archaeology Consultant, National Trust, to carry out Archaeological Observation of groundworks relating to an eastern extension of the visitor car park (NGR: SO88803 45206) at Croome Court, High Green, Worcestershire WR8 9DW.

The remains of a Second World War Static Water Tank forming part of the infrastructure of RAF Defford are believed to survive in-situ within the groundworks area. The airfield closed in 1957 and many of the buildings and associated structures were demolished. However, it is considered possible that a concrete base or similar supporting structure relating to the tank may be encountered during the course of the groundworks.

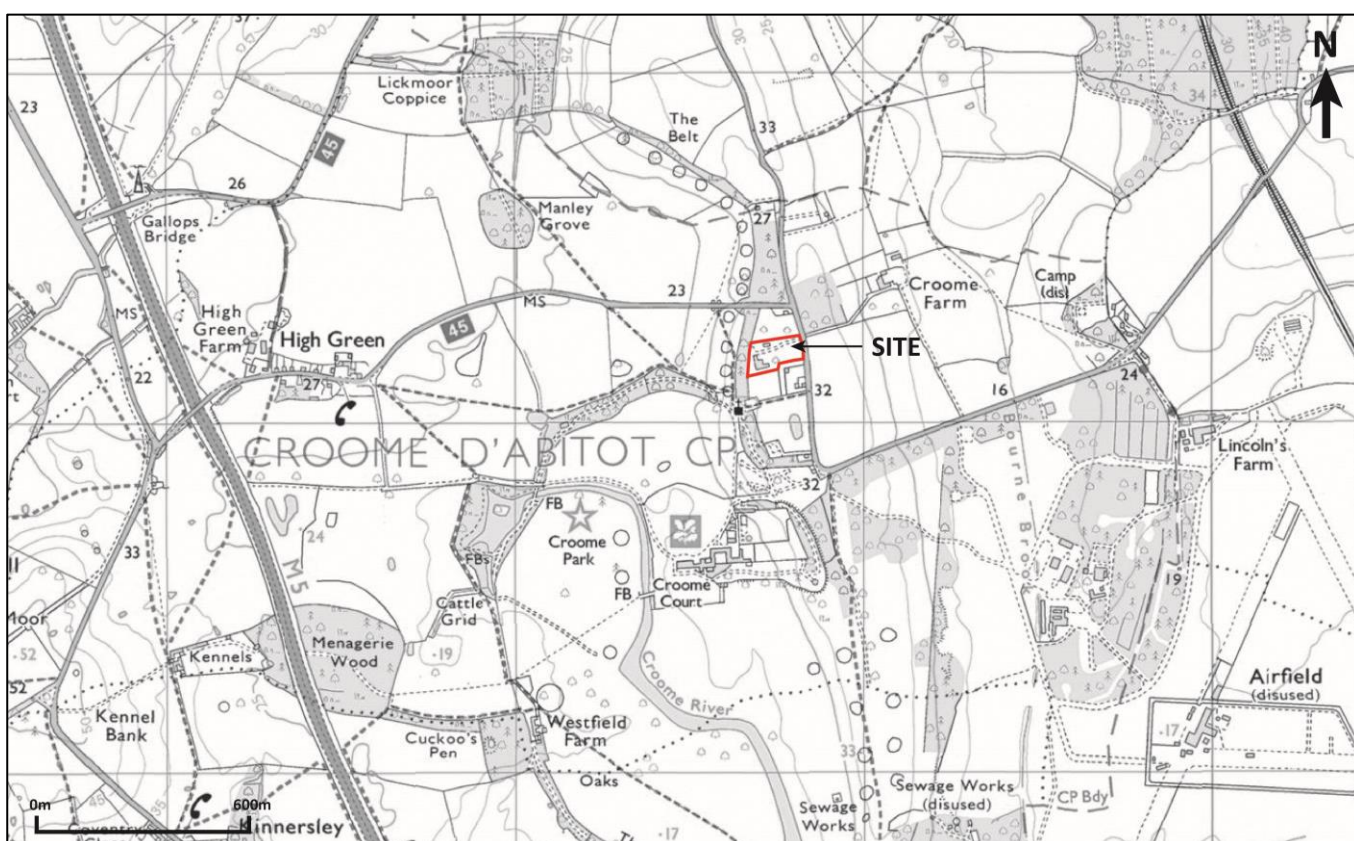
The site at the time of observation comprised modern gravel surfacing and grassland, with mature trees and hedgerows.

No clear evidence of the water tank structure was revealed; however, a pit opened to a depth of 1.2m for drainage purposes in the northeast corner of the site, revealed evidence of disturbance and possible demolition activity within the subsoil. Whilst this disturbance cannot be conclusively linked to the demolition of the water tank, its very close proximity to the tank's presumed location does suggest an association.

No evidence of demolition activity was revealed within areas of shallower excavation nor were any other finds or deposits of archaeological significance present within the groundworks area.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Janine Young, Archaeology Consultant, National Trust, to carry out Archaeological Observation (AO) of groundworks relating to an eastern expansion of the visitor car park (NGR: SO88803 45206) at Croome Court, High Green, Worcestershire WR8 9DW (*fig. 1*). The site comprised at the time of observation modern gravel surfacing and undeveloped grassland with several established trees and boundary hedgerows to the N, E and S.



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Fig. 1: Site location

2.1 Site Description

The grounds, surrounding parkland and Defford Common were requisitioned for use by the RAF during the Second World War and remains of wartime activity include the RAF Sick Quarters, now used to accommodate visitor facilities and reception. Plans showing the arrangement of buildings in this area indicate the presence of a Static Water Tank, now demolished, located approximately within the groundworks area (*figs. 2 & 3*). The surrounding areas consist of worked farmland, dense woodland stocks and managed parkland.



Fig. 2: Plan showing location of groundworks and approximate location of the RAF Defford Static Water Tank.

2.1.1 Soils and Geology

Croome Court lies within a tract of typical calcareous pelosols of the EVESHAM 2 series (411b) composed of slowly permeable calcareous clayey with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils. The underlying geology is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay (SSEW 1983).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

Croome Court (MNA141733) (NGR: SO8848 4459) is a remodelled mid-18th-century Neo-Palladian mansion built on the foundations of a former Jacobean mansion and set within extensive landscaped parkland designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

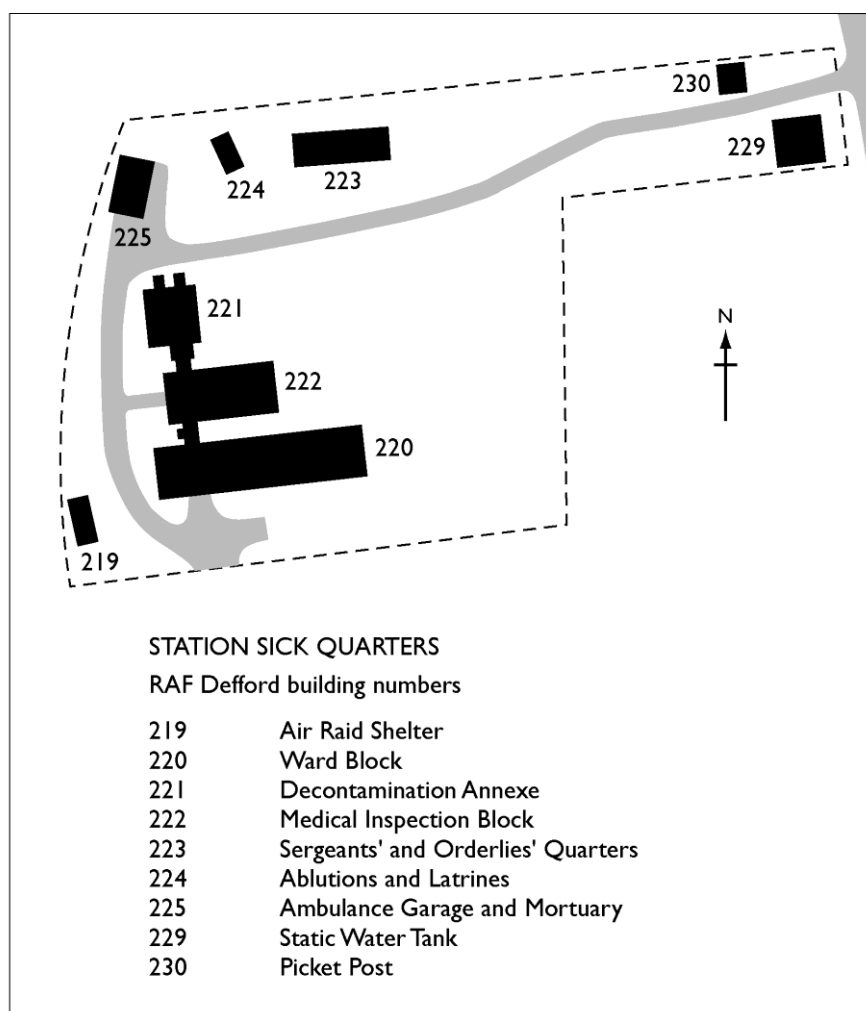


Fig. 3: Plan showing location of structures associated with the RAF Defford Sick Quarters.

RAF Defford (MNA142210) (NGR: SO8870 4517) was opened in 1941 at Sandy Orchard in the eastern portion of the parkland, c 0.6km NE of Croome Court. The current visitor car park was the site of the Sick Quarters, which

included Sergeants' and Orderlies' Quarters, an Ambulance Garage, Mortuary and Air Raid shelter (*fig. 3*). Of specific relevance to the current programme of work are the sites of a Static Water Tank and Picket Post (MNA181828) (NGR: SO88804 45249) (*figs. 2 & 3*), neither of which survives in the form of above-ground structural remains. A number of the remaining buildings have been restored by the Trust.

A small rectangular structure located adjacent to the existing entrance to this part of the site and possibly representing the remains of the Picket Post were recorded during a watching brief undertaken during Visitor Centre car park extension works. The Static Water Tank appears to have been located immediately S of this, directly within the present groundworks area (*figs. 2 & 3*).

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2014) and practices set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014). BA adheres to the CIfA *Code of conduct* (2014) and is additionally cognizant of the content of *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (Worcestershire County Council 2010, Rev. 2012).

The area observed measured 35m (ENE/WSW) × 13m (NNE/SSW), with a gully measuring 13m × 0.45m × 0.5m terminating at a pit (drain inspection chamber) measuring 1.2m². The gully (NGR: SO88818 45237 to NGR: SO88821 245215) extended towards the NE corner of the car park, identified as the approximate location of the former water tank (*fig. 2*).

All ground-breaking works were carried out under archaeological supervision, with topsoil and subsoil routinely inspected for significant finds. Excavations were carried out by machine and toothless ditching bucket.

Written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Field Recording Manual* (2017). In the absence of archaeological features or remains, the written record was compiled using trench and profile sheets. The photographic record was compiled using a high-resolution digital camera, with photographs indexed and cross-referenced to the written record. Details of subject and direction of view were recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

5 Results

5.1 Open Area

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101	-	Layer	Modern gravel surface	Loose gravel; 0.1m thickness. Overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	102	-	Deposit	Topsoil	Moderately compacted mid-brown organic silty clay; 0.08m-0.15m thickness. Underlying (101). Overlying (103).	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	103	-	Deposit	Subsoil	Well-compacted mid-reddish-brown silty clay; moderate broken modern brick; 0.35m thickness. Underlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	Contained land drain.

5.2 Gully

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201	-	Deposit	Topsoil	Moderately compacted mid-brown organic silty clay; 0.08m-0.15m thickness. Overlying (202).	-	-	-	-	-	Grassed area
2	202	-	Deposit	Subsoil	Well-compacted mid-reddish-brown silty clay; moderate compaction. 0.35m-0.4m thickness. Underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.3 Drainage Pit

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	301	-	Deposit	Topsoil	Moderately compacted mid-brown organic silty clay; 0.08m-0.15m thickness. Overlying (302).	-	✓	-	-	-	1 × modern glazed pottery sherd (not retained).
2	302	-	Deposit	Subsoil	Well-compacted mid-reddish-brown silty clay; moderate broken modern brick, cabling; 0.35m-0.5m thickness. Underlying (301). Overlying (303).	-	-	-	-	-	Contained land drain. Possible demolition material associated with former water tank structure revealed.
3	303	-	Deposit	Natural	Well-compacted mid-greyish-orange clay; occasional small to medium rounded stones; 0.55m thickness. Underlying (302).	-	-	-	-	-	Visible only in NE corner of drain inspection chamber.

6 Discussion

The Static Water Tank is recorded as being present until the decommissioning of RAF Defford in 1957, when functions were transferred to Pershore airfield. However, it is possible that a concrete base or similar supporting structure may survive *in-situ*.

Whilst the precise location of the tank is unclear, its general position in relation to the surviving buildings is known (*fig. 3*) and it was considered possible that the present groundworks would impact upon any surviving below-ground remains.

Whilst no structural remains were encountered, the pit in the NE corner of the site (NGR: SO88818 45237), which was excavated to a depth of 1.2m for drainage purposes, revealed evidence of disturbance and possible demolition activity, with disused cabling and brick fragments found at a depth of 0.4m within the subsoil (302) (*Plate 3*). Whilst this disturbance cannot be conclusively associated with the demolition of the water tank, its very close proximity to the tank's presumed location strongly suggests an association.

No evidence of demolition activity was revealed within areas of shallower excavation and no other archaeological finds or features were identified during the works.



Plate 1. View W of open area.



Plate 2. View NW showing position of gully and northern extent of site.



Plate 3: View E of drainage pit containing disused cabling and modern brick inclusions.

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