

# NEW AIRCRAFT STORAGE SHEDS, DUNKESWELL AIRFIELD, DEVON

(centred on NGR ST 12918 07973)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Planning refs: East Devon District Council 14/0081/FUL,  
condition 3, and 14/0082/FUL, condition 3

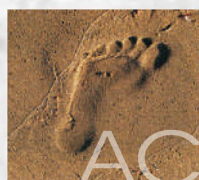
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Prepared by:  
Kerry Kerr-Peterson

On behalf of:  
Mr Brendan Proctor

Document No: ACD904/2/1

Date: July 2014



archaeology

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# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Dunkeswell, East Devon	<b>National Grid Reference</b> ST 12918 07973	<b>Number:</b> (Leave blank for HES to fill in)
<b>Subject:</b> New aircraft storage sheds, Dunkeswell Airfield, Devon: Results of an archaeological watching brief		<b>Photo attached?</b> Y
<b>Planning Application nos:</b> 14/0081/FUL & 14/0082/FUL	<b>Recipient museum:</b> N/A	
<b>OASIS ID:</b> 183398	<b>Museum Accession no:</b> N/A	
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b>  ACD904	<b>Dates fieldwork undertaken:</b>  15.05.2014 – 30.06.2014	

## Introduction (Fig. 1)

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of two aircraft storage sheds, located on the northwest side of Dunkeswell Airfield, Dunkeswell, East Devon.

The main archaeological interest in the area is a number of undated iron ore extraction pits located to the south of the site. The Royal Air Force airfield at Dunkeswell was constructed in 1942-3, on the edge of a former common and remains in use for light aircraft. Historic maps indicate that a medieval strip field system extended out from the historic core of the village, prior to the enclosure of the common land, sometime after 1844. The area was extensively landscaped when the airfield was constructed.

The southern storage shed (Area 1) is located immediately south of the main east-west runway and adjacent to an existing hangar. The northern shed (Area 2) is situated to the north of the main east-west runway and immediately adjacent to a smaller modern north-south taxiway.

## Results (Fig. 2; Plates 1-2)

Area 1 measured 25m by 22m and Area 2 measured 91m long by 25m wide. Both were stripped to a maximum depth of 0.4m, to the required formation level. The sequence of deposits included up to 0.26m of dark grey-brown, friable silty-clay topsoil with abundant sub-angular gravel inclusions, above up to 0.2m of dark grey-brown, friable silt-clay subsoil. The natural subsoil was present at c. 0.4m below the ground surface and generally consisted of dark yellow-brown silt clay with abundant sub-angular gravel inclusions.

In area 1, a total of eight small circular features were exposed with diameters ranging from 0.3m to 1m. Three of these (F118, F119 and F120) were unexcavated. One of the features was truncated by a stone land drain. The descriptions of the excavated features are tabulated below:

Context	Interpretation	Description
105	Only fill of F106	Light reddish-brown, firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions
106	Cut feature	Circular with steep sides and shallow concave base. Diameter 0.44m.
107	Slumped fill of F110	Light reddish-brown, firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions
108	Fill of F110	Dark grey-blue, very firm silty-clay with rare small gravel inclusions
109	Primary fill of F110	Light yellow-brown, very firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions
110	Cut feature	Circular with shallow concave sides and base. Diameter 1.01m
111	Fill of F112	Dark reddish-brown, firm silty-clay with frequent small gravel inclusions
112	Cut feature	Circular with steep sides and concave base. Diameter 0.39m
113	Fill of 115	Light grey-blue, very firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions
114	Primary fill F115	Light yellow-brown, very firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions



115	Cut feature	Circular with concave sides and base. Diameter 1m
116	Only fill of F117.	Mid reddish-brown, very firm silty-clay with occasional small gravel inclusions
117	Cut feature	Circular with steep sides and concave base. Diameter 0.6m.

No archaeological features or deposits were exposed in Area 2; natural subsoil was only exposed within the eastern third of the footprint of the new shed. A single piece of dark grey brown cherty flint was recovered from the topsoil (200), weighing 9 grams. This is a waste flake and probably represents a core rejuvenation flake. This is likely to date to the Neolithic, c. 4,300-2,300 BC.

### Summary

The site lies within the boundary of the former RAF Dunkeswell, in an area where land was significantly landscaped during its construction. This is reflected in the recorded shallow soil profiles. The character of the features was recorded on site as being consistent with postholes, e.g. they were regularly-shaped, had flat-bottomed postpipes, and contained primary backfills very similar to the natural geology. At the time of writing (July 2014), excavations to the east of the present site have uncovered a series of heavily truncated iron ore extraction pits (Stephen Reed pers. comm.), and despite the differences between both sites in the size of the features and the character of their fills, it is possible that the features are not postholes but very heavily truncated iron ore extraction pits. No dating evidence was recovered from the features. The later land drain is on the same alignment as those constructed during the war, draining the adjacent runway, but is narrower and therefore likely to be of post-war date. A single find – a flint – was recovered from the topsoil.

**A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.**

### Recorder:

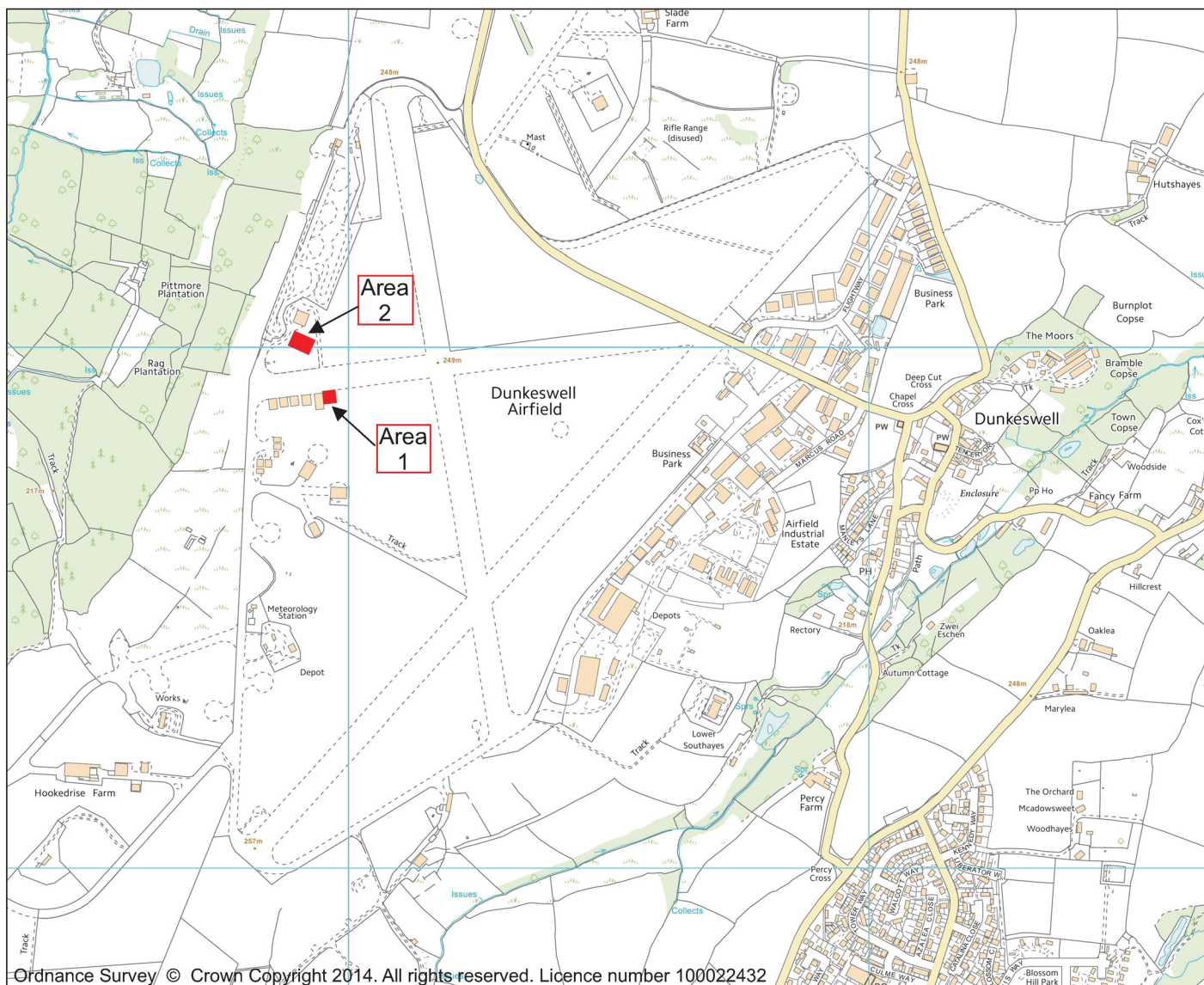
Kerry Kerr-Peterson, AC archaeology

### Date sent to HER:

31 July 2014

Please email completed form to: [archaeol@devon.gov.uk](mailto:archaeol@devon.gov.uk) or post to County Archaeology Service, Environment Directorate, Matford Lane Offices, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW. Information recorded on this form will be added to the Historic Environment Record, and made available to all researchers.

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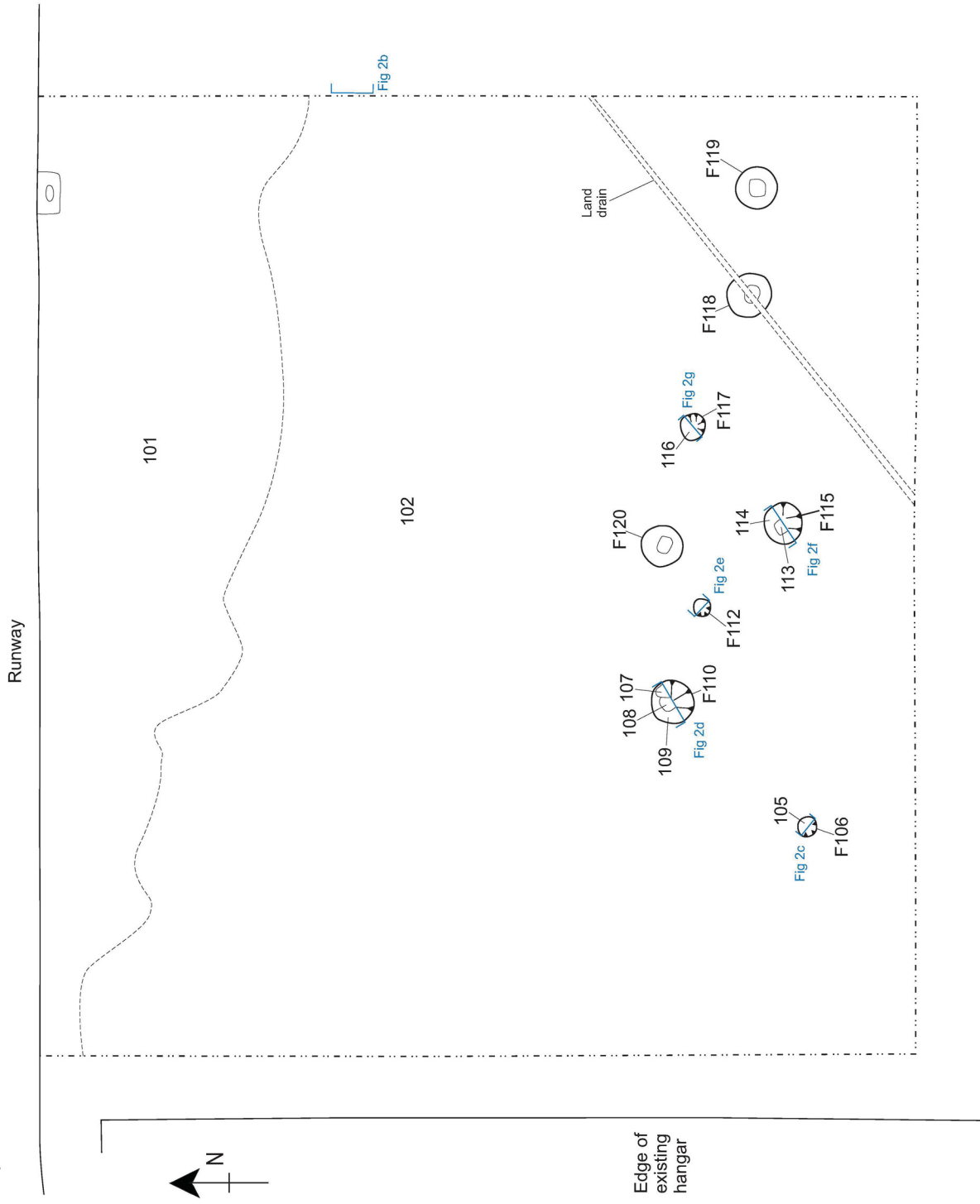
PROJECT

New Aircraft Storage Sheds, Dunkerswell Airfield

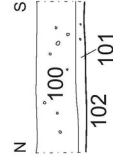
TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site

a) Plan of Area 1



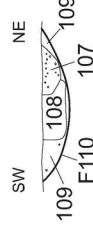
b) Representative section



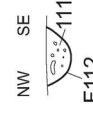
c) Section of F106



d) Section of F110



e) Section of F112



f) Section of F115



g) Section of F117



PROJECT

New Aircraft Storage  
Sheds, Dunkerswell  
Airfield

TITLE

Fig. 2: Area 1, plan and  
sections



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Scale 1:150@A4





Plate 1: General view of area 1 showing features and land drain, viewed from the east. 1m scale

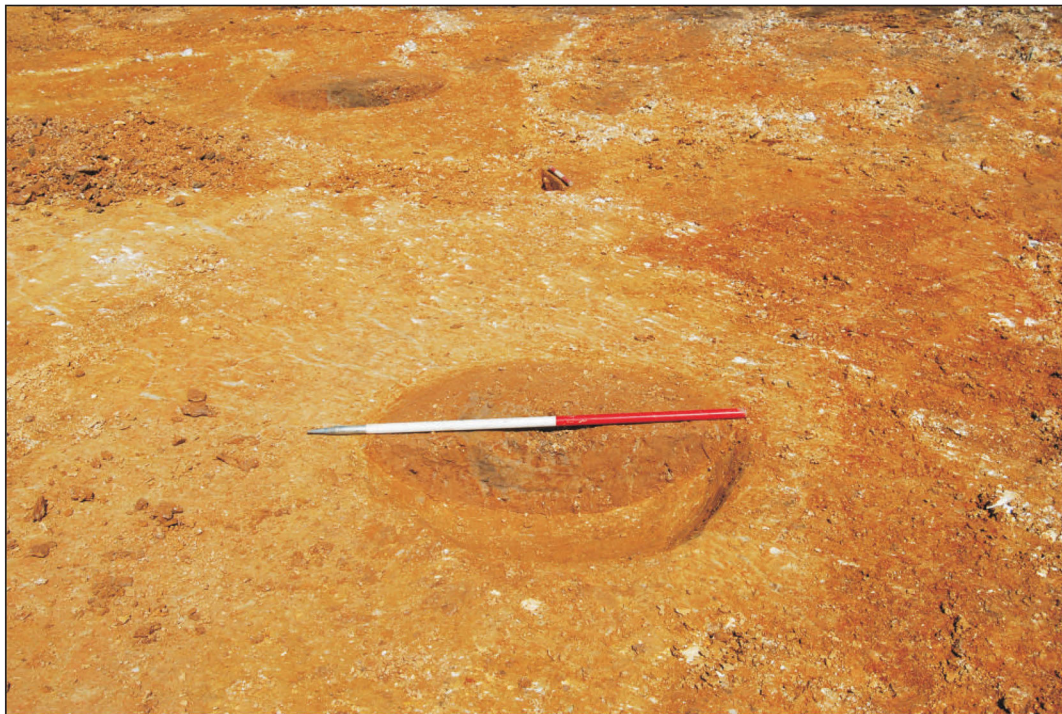


Plate 2: Feature F115 in the foreground with features F110 and F112 beyond, viewed from the south east. 1m scale

### Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops  
Bradninch  
Nr Exeter  
Devon  
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

### Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Manor Farm Stables  
Chicklade  
Hindon  
Nr Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581  
Fax: 01747 820440

[www.acarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.acarchaeology.co.uk)