

Plymouth City Airport Enhancement, Phase 1a Approach Land

NGR SX5045660567

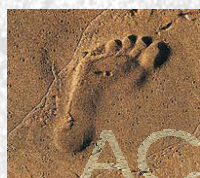
Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
Cavanna Homes (Devon) Ltd

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archaeology

PLYMOUTH CITY AIRPORT ENHANCEMENT, PHASE 1A APPROACH LAND

CENTRED ON NGR SX5045660567

RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation carried out in advance of a residential development on land between Glenfield Road, Pymbridge Road and Westwood Avenue, Plymouth (NGR SX5045660567), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2009. The site occupies an area of approximately 1.7 hectares and is situated on grass-covered land to the northeast of Plymouth City Airport.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 210m in length, with these positioned in areas to be affected by development and to provide representative coverage of the site. In all trenches largely negative results were recorded, with the layer sequence comprising topsoil and an interface layer overlying the natural subsoil. A single sherd of 19th century blue and white transfer printed pottery was recovered from the topsoil and an electricity cable trench relating to an adjacent airport approach light position was exposed. No evidence for any pre-modern archaeological features, deposits or finds was present.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land between Glenfield Road, Pymbridge Road and Westwood Avenue, Plymouth, was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2009. The work was commissioned by Cavanna Homes (Devon) Ltd and was undertaken as a condition (52) of outline planning permission (ref. Plymouth City Council 08/01968/OUT) for Phase 1A residential development of the Plymouth City Airport Enhancement Scheme. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The site occupies what is currently a grass-covered area of land of approximately 1.7 hectares (Plate 1). It lies at around 145m OD, with the ground sloping gently down to the northeast. The underlying solid geology comprises shales and slates of the Upper Devonian Period (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1977).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An archaeology and cultural heritage chapter for an Environmental Statement was prepared in support of the planning application (Peter Brett Associates 2008). There is only limited evidence for archaeological activity within this area and there is nothing recorded on the site itself. Previously recorded archaeological sites nearby include a Neolithic stone axe found to the northeast (Plymouth HER ref. SX56SW/334) and possibly two circular enclosures visible on historic aerial photographs to the south (SX56SW/052). These latter features might, however, be recognition markers associated with the airfield.
- 2.2 The airport site itself was first used in 1923 for passenger flights, but was requisitioned in 1939 for naval flying, then in 1940 by the RAF. A series of WWII former defensive positions have been identified around the airfield.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform the need for any subsequent mitigation as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2009), submitted to and approved by the Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer prior to commencement on site. It comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 210m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. This represented an approximate 2% sample of the total site area. Trench positions (Fig. 1) were designed to provide representative coverage across the site, but were also located in areas to be affected by development. Trench 7 was split into two sections to avoid the position of former airport approach lights.
- 4.2** The site was recorded in accordance with the AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*. All levels have been related to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1** The recorded layer and deposit sequence for each trench is described in tabulated form in Appendix 1.
- 5.2** No evidence for pre-modern archaeological features or deposits was identified in any trench. Across the whole site the recorded layer sequence comprised c. 0.2m thick layer of mid brown friable clay silt topsoil, above a 0.05m to 0.1m thick interface layer of mid brown compact silt clay, which in turn was overlying weathered, fragmentary slates and silty clay natural subsoil. In Trench 6 a northeast to southwest aligned electricity cable trench was present (602), which relates to the adjacent former airport approach light apparatus. A single sherd of 19th century blue and white transfer printed pottery was recovered from the topsoil of Trench 9 (900).

6. COMMENT

- 6.1** In all trenches there was an absence of pre-modern archaeological features, deposits or finds. Based on this general paucity it is considered unlikely that any significant pre-modern archaeological remains will be present elsewhere on the site.

7. SITE ARCHIVE

- 7.1** The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth under the accession code AR.2009.16.
- 7.2** The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 66511.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was co-ordinated on behalf of Cavanna Homes by Ian Pugsley and John Dooley. The site trial-trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes and Kerry Dean and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarah Cottam. The advice and collaboration of John Salvatore, Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer, is duly acknowledged.

9. REFERENCES

Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1977, 1:50,000 Series (England and Wales) Drift Edition Sheet 348 (Plymouth)

Peter Brett Associates, 2008, 'Archaeology and Cultural Heritage', in *Plymouth City Airport Enhancement Programme Environmental Statement, Volume 1, Main Report*. Doc Ref: R01/rev01

Valentin, J., 2009, *Plymouth City Airport Enhancement, Phase 1A Approach Land: Method statement for an archaeological trench evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD90/1/0



0 50m



PROJECT

Plymouth City Airport

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site and trench locations





Plate 1:
General view of site. Looking north



Plate 2:
Trench 6, view to southeast (scale 1m)

APPENDIX 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1			Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
101	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.2m-0.3m	Interface layer		
102	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.3m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 2			Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.17m	Topsoil		
201	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.17m-0.22m	Interface layer		
202	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.22m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 3			Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
300	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.15m	Topsoil		
301	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.15m-0.25m	Interface layer		
302	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 4			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
400	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.17m	Topsoil		
401	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.17m-0.22m	Interface layer		
402	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.22m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 5			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
500	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.18m	Topsoil		
501	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.18m-0.27m	Interface layer		
502	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.27m+	Natural subsoil		

APPENDIX 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 6			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
600	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
601	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.2m-0.25m	Interface layer		
602	Cable trench for former airport approach light. 0.9m wide.	0.2m+	Modern service trench		
603	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 7			Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
700	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
701	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.2m-0.25m	Interface layer		
702	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 8			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
800	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
801	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.2m-0.25m	Interface layer		
802	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 9			Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
900	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
901	Mid brown compact silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragment inclusions	0.2m-0.3m	Interface layer		
902	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.3m+	Natural subsoil		

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