UNIT 415, BEGGARS POUND, RAF ST ATHAN, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 2471
CA REPORT: 07188

prepared by Alistair Barber, Senior Project Officer

date 4 January 2008

checked by Richard Young, Project Manager

date 9 January 2008

approved by Mark Collard, Head of Contracts

signed

date 10 January 2008

issue 01

This report is confidential to the client. Cotswold Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability to any third party to whom this report, or any part of it, is made known. Any such party relies upon this report entirely at their own risk. No part of this report may be reproduced by any means without permission.

© Cotswold Archaeology
Building 11, Kemble Enterprise Park, Kemble, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6BQ
Tel. 01285 771022 Fax. 01285 771033 E-mail: enquiries@cotswoldarch.org.uk
CONTENTS

SUMMARY .................................................................................................................................. 2

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 3
   The site .................................................................................................................................. 3
   Archaeological background ............................................................................................... 4
   Archaeological objectives ................................................................................................. 4
   Methodology .................................................................................................................... 5

2. RESULTS ............................................................................................................................. 5
   Trench 1 (Fig. 2) .............................................................................................................. 5
   Trench 2 (Fig. 2) .............................................................................................................. 6

3. DISCUSSION ........................................................................................................................ 6

4. CA PROJECT TEAM ......................................................................................................... 7

5. REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................... 7

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS ........................................................................... 8

APPENDIX B: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES ......................... 9

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)
Fig. 2 Trench location plan, showing archaeological features (1:1000)
SUMMARY

Project Name: Unit 415
Location: Beggars Pound, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan
NGR: ST 0160 6845
Type: Evaluation
Date: 10 - 14 December 2007
Planning Reference: 2007/01237/FUL
Location of Archive: To be deposited with National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
Site Code: USA 07

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2007 at the request of White Green Young, on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, at Unit 415, Beggars Pound, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan. Two trenches were excavated.

Both trenches revealed modern dump deposits, to depths of 1.95-2.3m below present ground level, cut through by modern services. These dumps overlay the undisturbed natural limestone bedrock and no archaeological features or artefacts pre-dating the modern period were encountered.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In December 2007 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for White Green Young, on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, at Unit 415, Beggars Pound, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan (centred on NGR: ST 0145 6845; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for the refurbishment and extension of an existing hangar for Aerospace Engineering (Planning Ref. 2007/01237/FUL).

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a recommendation for archaeological evaluation, in line with Planning Policy Wales 2002 Section 6.5.1 and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 Section 13, by Mr Neil Maylan, Archaeological Planning Manager, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Curatorial Division (GGAT Curatorial), the archaeological advisors to The Vale of Glamorgan Council, and with a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2007) and approved by Mr Maylan. The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2001) and the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991). It was monitored by Mr. Jim Parry of GGAT Curatorial.

The site

1.3 The site lies on the south-eastern edge of RAF St Athan, and is bordered to the north, south and west by airfield facilities and to the east by the St Athan to Cowbridge road (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 32-33m AOD, with ground level dropping away to the south and east.

1.4 The site, approximately 0.2ha in area, contains an existing hangar building together with surrounding extant buildings, access roads, car parks and grassed areas.

1.5 The underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as Porthkerry Formation rock of the Jurassic era (BGS 1989). Natural limestone bedrock was encountered within both trenches.
Archaeological background

1.6 The archaeological background to the site has been summarised in a letter of 19 October 2007 from Mr Neil Maylan to The Vale of Glamorgan Council. Mr Maylan noted that little archaeological fieldwork, or recording of artefact find-spots, had been undertaken within the Vale of Glamorgan when construction of the airfield commenced in 1936. The relatively flat and well drained site, formerly good agricultural land, has a considerable potential for containing evidence of previous human activity and occupation. Although no archaeological work was undertaken during its construction there were rumours that artefacts, including a number of Roman coins, were found during construction of the base. A Cultural Heritage Assessment (CAT 2001) noted only one known archaeological feature within the immediate vicinity of the site, a medieval holy well (St John's Well) 0.4km south of the site at NGR: ST 0148 6829 (Sites and Monument Record (SMR) No. 00923s).

1.7 Proposals for a new Integrated Maintenance Facility (IMF) in 2002 led to a programme of archaeological evaluation, including geophysical survey, which identified significant archaeological remains (CAT 2002, CA 2003a, 2003b). Excavation revealed a Late Iron Age and Roman farmstead (Barber et al. 2006). Mr Maylan noted that although the current application lies 1.1km south-east of the IMF, previous assessment (CAT 2001) suggested a strong likelihood for human activity and settlement in this area. The existing type E hangar, built sometime between 1936 and 1940, is a relatively common structure on military bases and extensively recorded, and there was no requirement for recording of the hangar building on the site. A review of the SMR during the preparation of this WSI demonstrated that no new entries had been added for the immediate vicinity of the site since the assessment was completed in 2001.

Archaeological objectives

1.8 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist the Vale of Glamorgan Council in making an informed judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource, and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.
Methodology

1.9 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of two trenches. Trench 1 was 15m long and 1.6m wide and trench 2 was 12.5m long and 1.6m wide (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was shortened slightly due to the presence of live services and trench 2 was moved slightly to the south to avoid a modern portacabin. Both amendments were made with the approval of Mr Parry.

1.10 Both trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. No archaeological deposits were encountered requiring excavation by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual (2007).

1.11 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites (2003) but no deposits were identified that required sampling. Modern artefacts were encountered but not retained, none requiring processing in accordance with CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation (1995).

1.12 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. It will be deposited with the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

2. RESULTS

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix B.

Trench 1 (Fig. 2)
2.2 Natural limestone bedrock 105 was encountered within a central, machine-excavated, sondage at 1.95m below present ground level (bpgl). It was overlain by modern dump deposit 101, approximately 1.75m in thickness, comprising alternating bands of redeposited natural clay and fragmentary limestone. These layers, sloping from north-west to south-east, contained abundant modern artefacts (not retained) including iron fragments, barbed wire strands and fragmentary brick, glass and china. Dump deposit 101 was cut by modern pipe trenches 103, 106 and 108, and was overlain by 0.2m of modern topsoil 100.

*Trench 2 (Fig. 2)*

2.3 The natural limestone bedrock 202 was encountered at the northern end of the trench, within a machine-excavated sondage, at 1.95m bpgl. Machine-excavation of a sondage at the southern end of the trench was halted, on safety grounds, at 2.3m bpgl prior to bedrock being reached. Where the natural bedrock was encountered it was directly overlain by modern dump deposit 201, comprising alternate bands of redeposited natural clays and fragmentary limestone containing fragments of modern brick, china, glass and iron (not retained). Asbestos roof sheet fragments, some in a powdery condition, were noted within 201 throughout the northern and central parts of the trench (within 0.5m of present ground level) and were immediately covered over again. Dump deposit 201 was cut by modern pipe trench 203 and overlain by modern topsoil 201.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 No artefacts or archaeological features pre-dating the modern period were encountered during the evaluation. The absence of any surviving natural soil horizon directly above the limestone bedrock and the presence of extensive dump deposits, suggests that any earlier archaeological features, if ever present, may have been damaged or removed by modern construction and landscaping works.
4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Alistair Barber, assisted by Charlie Jones and Rebecca Riley. The report was written by Alistair Barber. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive has been compiled by Alistair Barber, and prepared for deposition by Kathryn Price. The project was managed for CA by Richard Young.

5. REFERENCES


BGS (British Geological Survey) 1989 Geological Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 262, Bridgend, Scale 1:50,000

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2003a Land at Eglwys Brewis, RAF St. Athan, Vale of Glamorgan: Stage II Archaeological Evaluation. CA Report No. 03025

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2003b Proposed DARA Hangar site, RAF St. Athan, Vale of Glamorgan: Archaeological Evaluation. CA Report No. 03026

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2007 Unit 415, Beggars Pound, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

CAT (Cotswold Archaeological Trust) 2001 Aerospace St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan: Cultural Heritage Assessment. CAT Report No. 001121

CAT (Cotswold Archaeological Trust) 2002 Land at Eglwys Brewis, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan: Archaeological Evaluation. CAT Report No. 02042
## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

### Trench 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Spot-date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Topsoil: mid-brown sandy-clay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Dump deposit: bands of redeposited clay and stone, with barbed wire, brick fragments, glass and china</td>
<td>0.2-1.95m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Unused context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Service-trench</td>
<td>0.6m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>Fill of 103, containing metal pipe</td>
<td>0.6m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Natural limestone bedrock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At 1.95m+</td>
<td>Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Service-trench</td>
<td>0.4-0.8m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>Fill of 106, containing plastic water pipe</td>
<td>0.4-0.8m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Service-trench</td>
<td>0.8m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>Fill of 108, containing plastic water pipe</td>
<td>0.8m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trench 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Spot-date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Topsoil</td>
<td>0.1-2m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Dump deposit: comprises bands of redeposited clay and stone, with barbed wire, glass and china</td>
<td>1.8m+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Natural limestone bedrock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At 2m+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>Service trench</td>
<td>0.3m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>Fill of 203, containing black plastic pipe</td>
<td>0.3m</td>
<td>n/k</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using a benchmark located on Bingle Lane (value 34.49m AOD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trench 1</th>
<th>Trench 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current ground level</td>
<td>33.28 (0.00m)</td>
<td>32.34 (0.00m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit of excavation</td>
<td>31.33 (1.95m)</td>
<td>30.04 (2.3m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level; lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.
Reproduced from the 1997 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office (Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeological Trust 100202109)
Trench location plan, showing archaeological features

- Site
- Evaluation trench
- Modern feature
- Modern dump deposits

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey digital mapping with the permission of
Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Crown copyright Cotswold Archaeological Trust 100002109