



MoD Pendine MSER Project, Llanmiloe,
Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**MOD PENDINE MSER PROJECT,
LLANMILOE, CARMARTHENSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**MOD PENDINE MSER PROJECT,
LLANMILOE, CARMARTHENSHIRE**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report
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Central 7 Area

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Plate 7: Can fragment recovered from 302

Front cover: Working shot showing high water table

Back cover: Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) butterfly

**MOD PENDINE MSER PROJECT,
LLANMILOE, CARMARTHENSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by the WRW Group to undertake a watching brief on land at MoD Pendine, Llanmiloe, Carmarthenshire, South Wales (NGR 227320, 208225) during improvement of five site facilities to ensure compliance with the Manufacture & Storage of Explosives Regulations (MSER) 2005.

After a rapid assessment of the known archaeological resource undertaken as part of the preparation of the Written Scheme of Investigation, it was determined that three of the five development areas required archaeological mitigation. These areas comprised three new building and compound areas known as Central 7 (Conditioning Building), Central 9 (Ammunition Process Building) and Magazines Admin Building which are all located within the central zone of the MoD area.

Monitoring of groundworks at Central 7 and Central 9 found no evidence of significant archaeological features, deposits or finds. A north-east – south-west drainage ditch was located within Central 9 but was not thought to be of any antiquity.

The area monitored for the Magazines Admin Building revealed a slightly more complex depositional sequence representing episodes of flooding overlying a thick clay thought to be tidal in origin. A possible north-west – south-east wall remnant was seen in this area although likely to be relatively modern.

**MOD PENDINE MSER PROJECT,
LLANMILOE, CARMARTHENSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by the WRW Group who undertook the work for QinetiQ, who managed the estate. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Richard Payne (WRW Group) and Chris Barton (Estates Project Manager, QinetiQ) for all of their help and assistance. Thanks are also due to Charles Hill (Dyfed Archaeological Trust), who monitored the project on behalf of the local planning authority, for his guidance during the course of the project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Naomi Brennan and Nicholas Cooke. This report was written and compiled by Naomi Brennan. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Andy Manning.

**MOD PENDINE MSER PROJECT,
LLANMILOE, CARMARTHENSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by the WRW Group to undertake a watching brief on land at MoD Pendine, Llanmiloe, Carmarthenshire, South Wales to ensure compliance with the Manufacture & Storage of Explosives Regulations (MSER) 2005. The works were centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 227320, 208225 it is hereafter referred to as the 'Site' (Figure 1).

1.1.2 A planning application was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council in October 2011 for proposed improvement works to existing MoD structures and construction works for new compounds (Application No. W/25552). The application was approved in December 2011 with an attached archaeological condition;

Condition 4

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

1.1.3 Following the preparation of a rapid assessment of the known archaeological resource as part of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2012) it was agreed that three of the five separate developments areas required archaeological monitoring.

1.1.4 The watching brief was carried out between the 11th-20th June 2012 and on the 19th July 2012.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

1.2.1 The MoD range at Pendine comprises a land area of approximate 20km² which lies on the low lying coastal plain to the south-west of Laugharne. The landscape is dominated by land reclaimed from former salt marshes, separated from the sea by the sand dunes of the Pendine and Laugharne burrows.

1.2.2 Three of the proposed development areas required archaeological monitoring:

- **Central 7 (Conditioning Building)** (NGR 226884 208094): Construction of a new building to house climatic conditioning units. The building is approximately 7m by 7m in size with foundations, floor base and associated services to a maximum depth of 0.75m below the current ground surface. The associated compound measures approximately 20m by 20m.

- **Central 9 (Ammunition Process Building) (NGR 227618 207688):** Construction of a new building and surrounding fenced compound with parking and new drainage. The compound measures approximately 50m by 30m with proposed hardstanding. The building measures approximately 40m by 10m with a concrete slab base, between 0.60m to 0.45m in depth below the current ground surface.
- **Magazines Admin Building and Picket Post (NGR 227000 208772):** Construction of a new building and surrounding compound with parking and new drainage. The compound measures approximately 40m by 30m with proposed hardstanding. The building measures approximately 14m by 7m with a rafted concrete base, between 0.75m to 0.25m in depth below the current ground surface.

1.2.3 The remaining two development areas, West 2 and East 7 Picket Post were considered to have minimal impact and Dyfed Archaeological Trust did not require works in these areas to be monitored.

1.2.4 The topography of the Site is generally flat and low lying and crossed by a series of drainage channels. The Site is located at a height of approximately 4-5m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). Areas Central 7 and Central 9 lie within the landscape of Laughame and Pendine Burrows whereas the Magazines Admin Building lies within the area characterised as Laughame and Pendine Marsh, which lies behind the coastal defences.

1.2.5 The underlying bedrock consists of Milford Haven Group while the superficial geology is tidal flat deposits and blown sand (BGS).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 The full archaeological and historical background can be found in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2012), this is summarized below:

1.3.2 Whilst the formation of the sand dunes and peat marsh may well have its origins in the post-glacial period and the area would no doubt have attracted Mesolithic hunter-gatherers the evidence for this activity may lie at some depth, sealed below episodes of later silting and activity. Nevertheless the marshes are always likely to have been a marginal landscape, at least until their drainage and enclosure in the late medieval and post-medieval period. A search of the Historic Environment Record within a 1km radius of Site identified only two prehistoric and two medieval findspots; all were found within the higher ground to the north-west of the marshes.

1.3.3 The salt marshes appear to have been exploited in the medieval period probably mainly used as rough pasture. By the late 16th century, however, it was possible to settle some of the slightly higher parcels of land in the marsh – with farmsteads at Hurst House, East House and Brook House were recorded in a survey of 1595. This suggests that areas of land were suitable for agriculture – probably pasture - at the time. All three lie on areas of slightly higher ground above the surrounding marsh, suggesting that flooding may well have still been a problem.

- 1.3.4 The first concrete evidence for enclosure and drainage of the marshes dates to the second half of the 17th century, although it is possible that some land reclamation and enclosure was undertaken late in the medieval period. In 1660, Sir Sackville Crow instigated a drainage scheme on the marsh, coupled with the construction of sea walls. Elements of this work are still evident in the modern landscape, particularly on the south eastern edge of West Marsh, where several stretches of sea wall still survive.
- 1.3.5 By the 19th century, most of the land was farmed as part of the Broadway Estate, which rebuilt many of the farms in c. 1820 in a 'Georgian style'. Closer to the sea, the sand dunes were of less agricultural value although a sale particular for Burrows farm dated to 1821 refers to a rabbit warren, and it is possible that this area was exploited for rabbits.
- 1.3.6 Since the Second World War the sand dunes and some of the reclaimed marshland have been incorporated within a Ministry of Defence research establishment.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The objective of the watching brief was to record, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, nature, character and relationships of any surviving archaeological remains observed during the ground preparation works.

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2012), this is summarized below:
- 2.1.2 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20.
- 2.1.3 A full photographic record was compiled utilising digital images. The decision was made not to use black and white negatives or colour slides as photographs needed to be checked by security before leaving the installation and the findings did not seem to warrant this. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.
- 2.1.4 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below except for area C9 where there was no mobile phone reception. For C9 co-ordinates were obtained from the client and features plotted using offsets from a baseline between these co-ordinates. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system.

2.1.5 A unique site code **84260** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

2.2 Best practice

2.2.1 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the *Institute for Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008).

2.3 Copyright

2.3.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

3 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features are retained in the archive. Summaries of the excavated sequences can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.2 Results

Central 9 (Ammunition Process Building) (Figure 1 and Plates 1 and 2)

3.2.1 The area under development at Central 9 was initially covered by rough grass, reeds, scrub and low trees. During the initial stripping of the overburden, humic, bioturbated topsoil **101**, 0.2-0.3m in depth, was found to directly overlie the natural sand **102**. Fragments of marine shell within the sand confirmed it as beach sediment.

3.2.2 The deepest point of excavation was around 0.5m into this deposit and, although hampered by the fact that this lay beneath the water table, there was no indication of any buried soils or other layers within the excavated depth. This observation agrees with the previous geotechnical investigations which recorded sand to a depth of over 2.2m below current ground level.

3.2.3 A north-east – southwest aligned ditch **103** was observed during the stripping (**Plate 1**). Though predominantly silted up, its course was still faintly visible within the present ground surface. Although it was not possible to excavate it due to the existing water level, it was observed that the upper fill **105** comprised topsoil with a lower fill of blue-grey 'gleyed' sand **104**. This extended beyond the cut edges of the feature in a halo as a result of anaerobic conditions.

3.2.4 Though it was not possible to directly date this feature it was considered to be most likely of post-medieval or modern origins as it follows the alignment and approximate spacing of three mapped and currently used drainage ditches to the west.

- 3.2.5 The area of site which lay to the west of ditch **104** appeared to have slightly more marshy conditions and traces of scars in the sand **103** were thought to indicate gripping (the cutting of small shallow, parallel drainage channels, an agricultural practice widely used in areas of moorland and blanket bog).
- 3.2.6 Two small possible features were exposed in the central part of the area, filled with a mid green sand (**Plate 2**). These were investigated and concluded to be natural features.

Magazines Admin Building (Figure 1 and Plates 3 to 5)

- 3.2.7 Over the greater proportion of this area, a dark silty clay topsoil **201** directly overlay a compact grey-brown clay **203**, though to be a tidal deposit (**Plate 4**). In the north-western part of the area a thin band of sand **202** overlay **203**. Further northwards this deposit became more clayey and also overlay another layer of silty clay **205** (**Plate 3**). Both these layers are thought to represent periods of flooding. Fragments of coal or coke within layer **202** demonstrate that this is a relatively recent episode.
- 3.2.8 The required formation depth increased towards the north-eastern part of the area therefore a testpit was dug at the north-east corner of the area to the maximum formation depth. This confirmed that the clay **203** continued to a depth of over 0.85m below the current ground surface with no trace of any earlier ground surfaces or distinctly different depositional events (**Plate 4**). Geotechnical investigations in this area found some variation in the clay but did not encounter peat until 3.10m below current ground level.
- 3.2.9 A possible north-west – south-east aligned wall remnant **204** was located in the southern half of this area (**Figure 1** and **Plate 5**). Made from local stone of dry stone construction, the wall lay within the turf and topsoil and lacked any real clear structure or formal coursing. The wall was approximately 3m long and 0.5m wide. During the later removal of the feature by the machine a modern frogged brick was recovered from the spoil. Although it cannot be definitely connected with the structure the lack of artefactual material from the rest of the area strongly suggests a modern date for the wall or an episode of modern maintenance to a pre-existing feature.
- 3.2.10 A shallow north-east – south-west depression filled with fragments of concrete and stone was observed close to the eastern edge of the area. This feature may have acted as a field drain, however the presence of less distinct but parallel depressions suggested infilled wheel ruts.

Central 7 (Conditioning Building) (Plates 6 and 7)

- 3.2.11 The removal of the modern topsoil **301** at the Central 7 area revealed that it lay over a 0.2m deep deposit of made ground **302**. A small test pit dug at this stage to investigate the depositional sequence revealed a sequence of 3 deposits. This re-deposited sand contained fragments of concrete, iron sheeting, tiles and wiring suggesting demolition debris from a modern building. The made ground **302** overlay a buried topsoil horizon **303** the characteristics of which suggest this area was originally waterlogged and marshy (**Plate 6**). This buried soil **303** directly overlay the natural sand **304**, which again was very similar to that encountered within the Central 9 area.

- 3.2.12 Subsequent monitoring of the stripping of the compound area revealed that the upper sand deposit (recorded as **305** which is equivalent to **302**) contained modern debris in patches, and elsewhere was seen as clean sand. It sealed a buried landsurface (**306**, equivalent to **303**), which appeared to rise slightly from south to north. This still contained much rooty material, and appears relatively modern in date.
- 3.2.13 The buried landsurface was cut by the only feature recorded, a modern service trench (**309**) (not shown on **Figure 1**) running approximately east south east to west north west across the area stripped. The buried landsurface sealed a fine deposit compacted sand (**307**, equivalent to **304**). Geotechnical investigations on the site recorded over 2m depth of sand. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded.

4 FINDS

- 4.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief, consisting of modern items these predominantly noted and photographed on Site but were not retained.
- 4.1.2 The majority of items were found in during the work at Central 7 where fragments of concrete and tile indicated demolition debris. Within this was also some fragments of wiring and the top of a ring pull can with FOREST BRO... on the side (**Plate 7**).
- 4.1.3 During groundworks at Central 9, one intact stoneware vessel, of a type described in catalogues as a 'mustard jar', and the base of a second cylindrical stoneware bottle or jar, were discovered. Both are of 19th or early 20th century date, but there are no marks on either to indicate manufacturer or original contents.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The evidence is that this area was always a marginal environment and as such unlikely to have attract permanent settlement or sustained activity until the late post-medieval and modern era. No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were recovered during the work.
- 5.1.2 The two features encountered during this watching brief, a drainage ditch **103** and a possible wall remnant **204**, are likely to relate to post-medieval or later activity.

6 ARCHIVE

- 6.1.1 The project archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (Walker 1990). It comprises a ring-bound file containing the written records and a copy of the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology under the project code **84260**. In due course the complete archive will be deposited with National Museum Wales (Amgueddfa Cymru).

7 REFERENCES

English Heritage, 1991, *Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008, *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs*

Walker, K., 1990, *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for Long-term Storage*, UKIC Archaeology Section

Wessex Archaeology, 2012, *MoD Pendine MSER Project, Llanmiloe, Carmarthenshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation. Report Reference: 84260.01*

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARIES

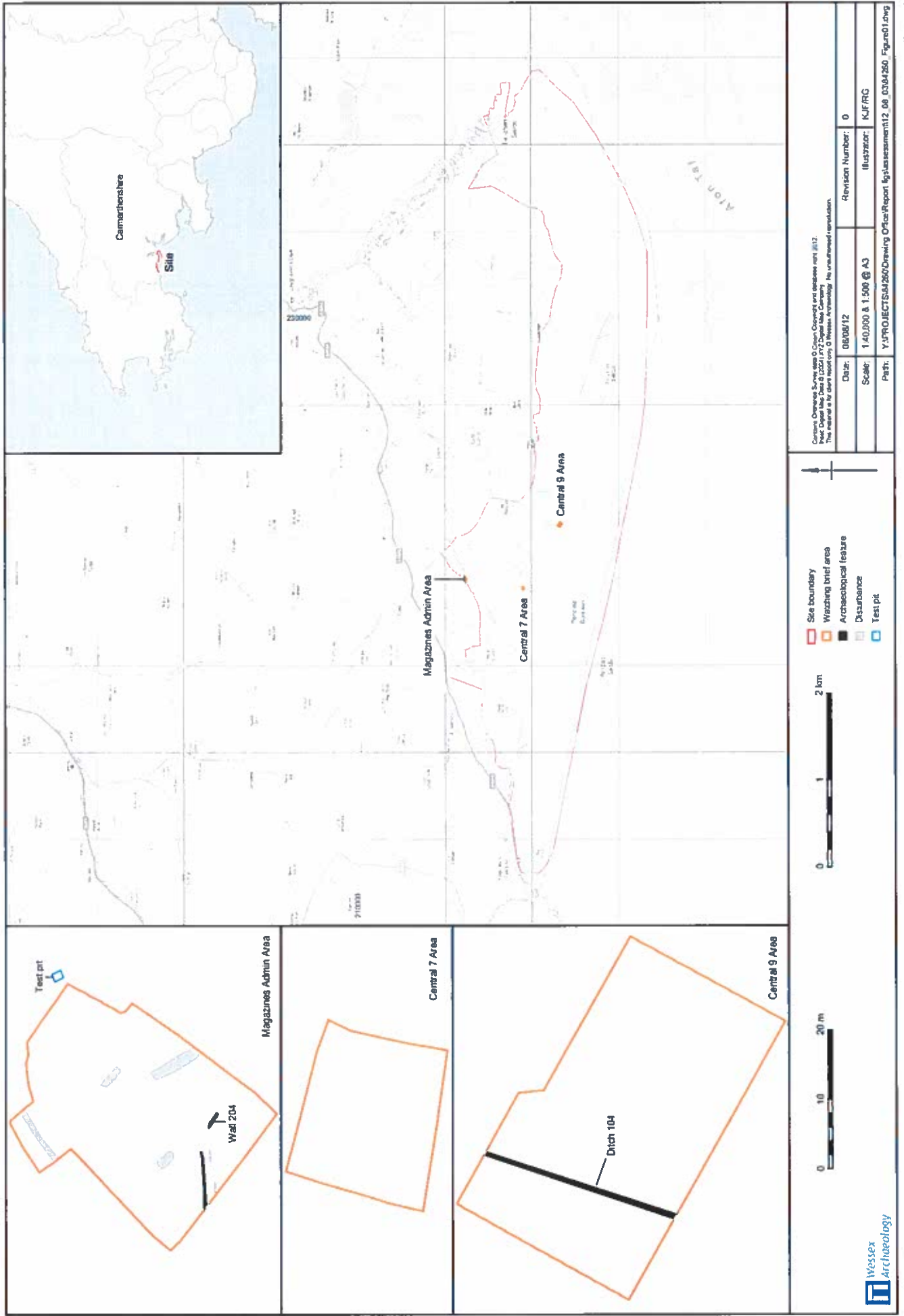
bgl= below ground level

CENTRAL 9 AMMUNITION PROCESS BUILDING			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions: 46.00x35.00m		Max. depth: 0.60m	Ground level: 4.70-4.97m aOD	
Easting: 227625		Northing: 207670		
Context	Description		Depth (m)	
101	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern topsoil. Dark black-brown silty sand. <1% stone, sub-rounded, <1-2cm. Fairly humic, slightly waterlogged. Very bioturbated – abundant roots. Fairly homogeneous. Moderately compact. Sharp interface with 102, overlies 102.	0.00-0.30 bgl	
102	<i>Natural</i>	Natural sand. Mid yellow with occasional pale green and yellow-brown mottling. Rare shell fragments. Compact.	0.20+ bgl	
103	<i>Cut</i>	North-east – south-west aligned drainage ditch filled with 104 and 105. Still visible as slight hollow marked by reeds. Filled with water upon exposure. 0.6m wide. Unexcavated. Cuts 102.	-	
104	<i>Deposit</i>	Lower fill and halo around cut of ditch 103. Pale blue-grey sand. No visible inclusions. Compact. Some bioturbation. Unexcavated. Overlies 103.	-	
105	<i>Deposit</i>	Upper fill of ditch 103. Consists of increased depth of topsoil. Sharp interface with 104. Overlies 104. Unexcavated.	-	

MAGAZINES ADMINISTRATION BUILDING			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions: 34.75x27.50m		Max. depth: 0.80m	Ground level: 3.78-4.06m aOD	
Easting: 227001		Northing: 208767		
Context	Description		Depth (m)	
201	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern topsoil. Dark grey-brown silty clay. No visible inclusions. Compact. Homogeneous. Fairly humic. Bioturbated. Under grass. Clear interface with 202 and 203. Overlies 202.	0.00-0.30 bgl	
202	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow sand gradually changing to mid blue clay further east. Occasional mid orange mottles. Rare coke/coal fragments. Some bioturbation. Seen in north-west part of area. Overlies 205.	0.24-0.40 bgl	
203	<i>Natural</i>	Natural alluvium, tidal flat deposit. Pale grey-brown clay with diffuse mid-orange mottling (iron-oxide). Very compact. No inclusions. Slightly sandier in northern part of area. Becomes much sandier and more mixed in exposed section beneath road.	0.20+ bgl	
204	<i>Structure</i>	Possible north-west – south-east wall remnant, within turf/ topsoil 201. No real structure. Rough stone blocks (13-40cm), local stone. No coursing. Approximately 3m long, 0.5m wide.	0.15 high	
205	<i>Layer</i>	Pale to mid brown silty clay seen in northern part of Site. No inclusions. Fairly homogeneous. Fairly compact. Overlies 203.	0.20-0.28 bgl	

CENTRAL 7 CONDITIONING BUILDING			Type:	Machine excavated
Dimensions: 22.80x20.40m		Max. depth: 0.45m	Ground level: 4.86-5.07m aOD	
Easting: 226891		Northing: 208094		
Context	Description		Depth (m)	
301	<i>Topsoil</i>	Modern topsoil. Mid grey-brown sand. Fairly humic. <1% stone, sub-rounded, <1-2cm. Homogeneous. Moderately compact. Bioturbated. Under grass. Slightly diffuse interface with 302.	0.00-0.22 bgl	
302	<i>Layer</i>	Made ground. Pale brown-yellow sand. Occasional concrete, iron and CBM. Bioturbated. Slightly mixed. Moderately compact. Fairly clear interface with 303. Overlies 303. Same as 305	0.17-0.35 bgl	
303	<i>Layer</i>	Buried topsoil horizon. Dark brown sand. No visible inclusions. Homogeneous. Compact. Bioturbated. Sharp interface with 304. Overlies 304.	0.31-0.52 bgl	
304	<i>Natural</i>	Natural sand. Mid yellow with occasional mid orange mottles. Compact.	0.48+ bgl	
305	<i>Layer</i>	Very fine light brownish yellow sand below modern topsoil,	0.22 –	

		incorporating modern debris, particularly beneath the line of the modern road. Same as 302	0.38m
306	<i>Layer</i>	Dark brown sandy loam, some root disturbance. Clearly a former landsurface. Seems to rise slightly from north to south. Same as 303	0.38 – 0.64m
307	<i>Layer</i>	Natural sand. Very fine orange yellow sand, with some manganese mottling. Same as 304	0.64m+
308	<i>Fill of 309</i>	Sark grey sandy loam containing much modern rubble – brick, concrete etc. Contains a plastic water pipe and an electricity cable	0.38m+
309	<i>Filled with 308</i>	Shallow linear ditch dug to contain modern services. Not fully excavated.	0.38m+



Location of site and monitored areas

Figure 1



Plate 1: View along ditch 104, viewed from the south

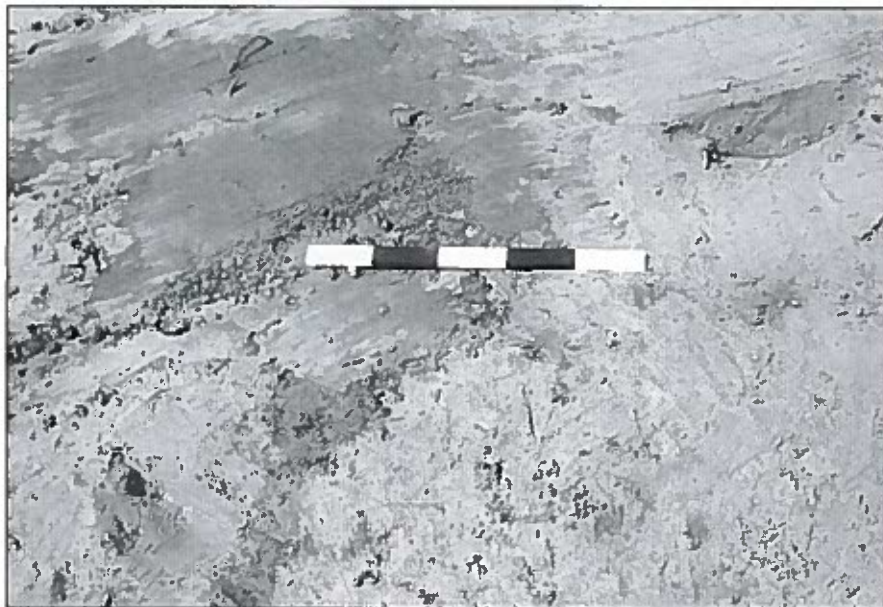


Plate 2: Natural features, viewed from the east


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Plate 3: South-west facing section



Plate 4: South-east facing section of test pit


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Plate 5. Wall remnant 204, viewed from the south-west


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Plate 6: South-west facing section

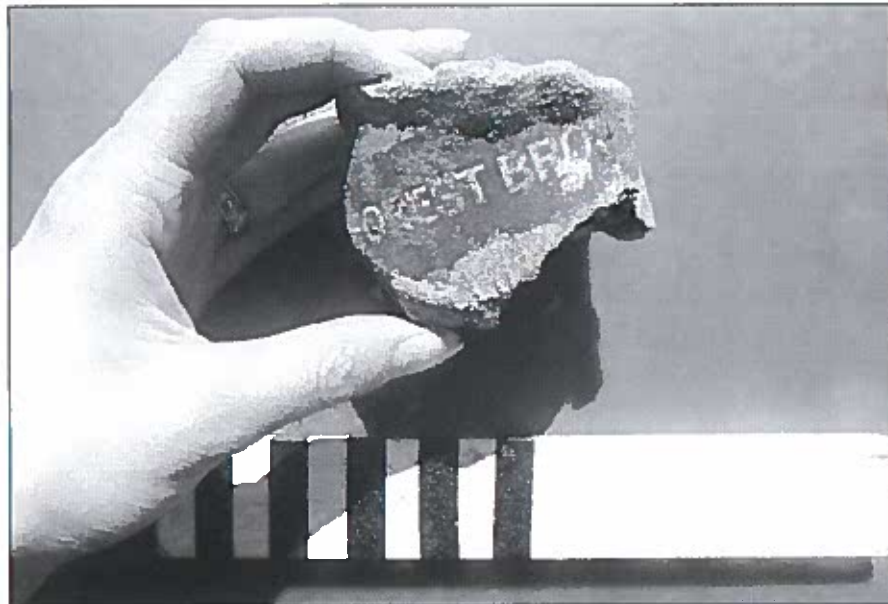



Plate 7: Can fragment recovered from 302

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