



MOD Shoeburyness Foulness Island, Essex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





MOD SHOEBURYNESS, FOULNESS ISLAND, ESSEX

Archaeological Watching Brief

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MOD SHOEBURYNESS, FOULNESS ISLAND, ESSEX**Archaeological Watching Brief****Contents**

Summary	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Project Background	1
1.2 Site Description	1
1.3 Geology and Topography.....	2
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	2
2.1 Introduction.....	2
2.2 Archaeological potential	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	3
4 METHODOLOGY	3
4.1 Introduction.....	3
4.2 Fieldwork	4
4.3 Recording	4
4.4 Health and Safety.....	4
5 RESULTS	5
5.1 Introduction.....	5
5.2 Stratigraphic Sequence	5
5.3 Archaeological Results.....	5
5.4 Dating	5
5.5 Finds.....	5
5.6 Environmental.....	5
6 DISCUSSION.....	6
7 CONFIDENCE RATING	6
8 ARCHIVE.....	6
8.1 Preparation and Deposition	6
8.2 Archive.....	6
8.3 Copyright	7
8.4 Security Copy	7
9 REFERENCES	8
APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX	9
APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES	10

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Site location plan

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1 Churchend Battery service trench, view from north
Plate 2 DAT Battery service trench, view from north
Plate 3 DAT Battery service trench, view from north-east
Plate 4 DAT Battery service trench, view from south
Plate 5 DAT Battery topsoil strip area A, view from south
Plate 6 DAT Battery topsoil strip area B, view from east
Plate 7 DAT Battery topsoil strip area B, view from east
Plate 8 ETC Battery footings trench, view from south-east
Plate 9 ETC Battery trench overview, view from east

MOD SHOEBURYNESS, FOULNESS ISLAND, ESSEX**Archaeological Watching Brief****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lagan Construction Limited to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief on land at MOD Shoeburyness, Foulness Island, Essex (NGR 599338 191090).

The activities being undertaken at the fourteen military batteries located across Foulness Island included the construction of mobile storage and conditioning chambers. Where appropriate at the battery location, areas were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision and were monitored as to whether the work revealed the presence or absence of archaeological remains.

The watching brief was conducted on 1st, 7th and 8th December 2009; 18th to 19th January 2010 and 30th March 2010.

The groundworks for the excavation of traverse foundations, footings and service runs were also monitored. The excavation of foundations for traverses (large soil bunds) only required the removal of the turf. Service trenches comprised mostly shallow excavations within the topsoil. At ETC Battery, a footings trench measuring 20m by 6m was excavated to a depth of 0.75m. The stratigraphy of the topsoil down to alluvial deposits were fully recorded from within this trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the watching brief and no dating/artefactual evidence was retrieved from the Site.

MOD SHOEBURYNESS, FOULNESS ISLAND, ESSEX

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Lagan Construction Limited, particularly Graeme Clarke, for commissioning this Archaeological Watching Brief and Adam Garwood, the Archaeological Advisor to Essex County Council, for monitoring the fieldwork.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Mark Williams. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jon Smith, Piotr Orczewski and Sarah Mounce. The report was undertaken by Sarah Mounce and the illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer.

MOD SHOEBURYNESS, FOULNESS ISLAND, ESSEX

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Lagan Construction Limited (hereafter 'The Client') to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief on land at MOD Shoeburyness, Foulness Island, Essex (hereafter 'The Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 599338 191090 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 A series of planning permissions have been granted by Rochford District Council for the provision of mobile storage and conditioning chambers. The references for these are:

- 09/00398/FUL Q Battery
- 09/00399/FUL Haven Point
- 09/00400/FUL
- 09/00401/FUL
- 09/00402/FUL Rugwood Battery
- 09/00403/FUL Shelford Battery
- 09/00404/FUL Churchend Battery
- 09/00405/FUL Nasewick Battery
- 09/00406/FUL R Battery
- 09/00409/FUL ETC Battery
- 09/00410/FUL Eastwick Battery
- 09/00411/FUL Avocet Battery
- 09/00412/FUL X3 Battery.

As a condition of the planning consents, a programme of archaeological works was agreed. This report represents the completion of that programme of field and post excavation works.

1.1.3 The Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken in accordance with the *MOD Shoeburyness, Foulness Island, Essex. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (WSI)* (Wessex Archaeology 2009). The WSI specified the strategy, techniques and methods to be employed by Wessex Archaeology's archaeologists during the evaluation. It was submitted for approval to Rochford District Council prior to commencement of fieldwork.

1.1.4 The fieldwork was conducted on 1st, 7th and 8th December 2009; 18th to 19th January 2010 and 30th March 2010.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The Site comprises fourteen areas located across Foulness Island. The works were carried out adjacent to a number of military batteries at MOD Shoeburyness (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 MOD Shoeburyness is situated across the Foulness archipelago; a collection of six low lying islands situated between the Thames Estuary, the River Roach and Paglesham Reach.

1.2.3 Foulness Island is characterised by its open estuarine system of grazing marsh, saltmarsh, intertidal sand-silt flats, beaches, cockleshell banks, rough grass, scrubland and farmland. Foulness Island comprises a series of habitats of national importance and as such Foulness Island has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

1.3 Geology and Topography

1.3.1 The underlying geology on the Site is mapped as London Clay formation by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2010). These clays were laid down during the Eocene.

1.3.2 The drift geology has been mapped as alluvium across the Site (BGS 2010).

1.3.3 The Site is situated on relatively flat ground with an average height of 4m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Site lies in an area of significant archaeological potential. Evidence for archaeological remains dating from the Romano-British period settlement and cemetery remains are recorded, as well as Medieval sea defences, many small landing sites and quays associated with the small inlets. Significant 20th century military remains attest to the strategic importance of the locality.

2.1.2 Below a brief review is presented of the records of archaeological artefacts, features and remains held in the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record (HER). The numbers of such records is provided, for example **11106**.

Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)

2.1.3 There is little evidence of occupation in this locality relating to the early Prehistoric period. Late Iron Age burial urns were found at Wakering Stairs (no. 11106) along with Romano-British tiles from brickearth pits, indicating occupation of the area from the late prehistoric into the Romano-British period.

Romano-British (AD43 – 410)

2.1.4 Evidence of Romano-British occupation has been found at Little Shelford including a tumulus known as Red Hill (nos 11220, 11222 and 11306). This site is nationally important and is a designated Scheduled Monument; it is located to the west of MOD Shoeburyness. Finds from the tumulus include seven pots, an ivory 'wristlet' and fragments of Samian and blackware.

- 2.1.5 The Essex HER also records the possible that the site of a destroyed Romano-British mound at Great Burwood Farm (no. 18333), to the west of Rugwood Battery.

Saxon (AD410 – 1066) and Medieval (AD1066 – 1500)

- 2.1.6 There is no evidence of Saxon activity within or in the near vicinity of the Site. However, there was a strong medieval presence across the Island, as people exploited the resources of the marshland. A chapel on the site of St Mary's Church at Churchend, at the north of Foulness Island, was first erected in AD1386 by Lady Joan de Bohun, Countess of Essex, for the benefit of the small number of inhabitants on the island (no. 14134). By about 1545 the chapel had been demolished and a new church built.

- 2.1.7 A number of medieval moated sites are recorded at Churchend (no. 2796), Nasewick (no. 3299) and at Eastwick (no. 2791).

Post-medieval and Modern (AD1500 – to date)

- 2.1.8 The Church of St Mary at Churchend was built in approximately 1545 following the Dissolution of the chantry and the demolition of the earlier chapel. By 1850 the church had been rebuilt (nos 14135 and 2789).

- 2.1.9 A semaphore mound dating to the post-medieval period has been recorded at Courtsend, at the north of Foulness Island (no. 2795).

- 2.1.10 Several World War II anti-tank pimples and pillboxes, mostly destroyed, as well as other structures associated with military use are recorded across Foulness Island and the strategic importance of Foulness Island at the mouth of the Thames Estuary is acknowledged and remains in evidence.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The principle aims of the watching brief, as specified in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2009), were:

- to clarify the presence or absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains
- to investigate and record these within the area of the groundworks required for each battery site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2009) and carried out in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 The watching brief monitored the groundworks for the excavation of traverse foundations, footings and service runs as part of the development works to each battery (**Figure 1**).
- 4.2.2 A block of context numbers was given to each battery where relevant. The removal of topsoil did not occur/was not required at all the batteries, for example at X3 Battery.
- 4.2.3 All works were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket to reveal the presence or absence of archaeological remains, under archaeological supervision.
- 4.2.4 The excavation of foundations for the traverses (large soil bunds) involved removal of the turf only (**Plate 5, 6 and 7 – DAT Battery**).
- 4.2.5 At ETC Battery trench footings measuring 20m by 6m were excavated to a depth of 0.75m (**Plate 8 and 9**); this provided a record of the soil stratigraphy from the topsoil down into alluvial deposits.
- 4.2.6 Service trenches were mostly excavated into the topsoil only (**Plate 2, 3 and 4 – DAT Battery**).

4.3 Recording

- 4.3.1 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.3.2 Photographs were taken as appropriate to provide a record of the excavated areas (not all batteries could be photographed for security reasons). The photographic record contains digital images.

4.4 Health and Safety

- 4.4.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 1997, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 4.4.2 A Health and Safety Risk Assessment was produced by Wessex Archaeology (2009), which was read and understood by all staff attending the Site before groundworks commenced.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section presents the results of the watching brief. Detailed descriptions of the stripped areas are included in **Appendix 2**.

5.2 Stratigraphic Sequence

5.2.1 At the majority of military batteries across the Site only the turf was removed to reveal the topsoil beneath.

5.2.2 DAT Battery revealed mid brown loam topsoil with occasional modern piece of ceramic building material (CBM) (context no. **301**) (**Plate 2**).

5.2.3 At R Battery the topsoil comprised of dark brown clayey silt with abundant tree roots (**401**).

5.2.4 The topsoil at Shelford Battery consisted of light to medium brown clayey silt (**501**).

5.2.5 At Q Battery mid brown clayey silt topsoil with occasional small sub-rounded stones (**601**) was revealed.

5.2.6 Within the service trench at Churchend Battery was dark brown clayey silt topsoil (**201**) overlaying mid brown silty clay subsoil (**202**) (**Plate 1**).

5.2.7 The footings trench excavated at ETC Battery revealed the topsoil, subsoil and alluvial deposits (**Plate 8**). The topsoil consisted of dark grey brown clayey silt topsoil (**101**) and mid grey brown silty clay subsoil (**101**) overlaying light orange brown clay natural (**103**).

5.3 Archaeological Results

5.3.1 No archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief.

5.4 Dating

5.4.1 No dating evidence was retrieved from the stripped areas across the Site.

5.5 Finds

5.5.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered during the watching brief or from the excavated spoil.

5.6 Environmental

5.6.1 No features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were recorded at any of the batteries that comprised the Site. At the majority of locations only the turf was removed for the construction of traverses, and service trenches were laid within the topsoil.
- 6.1.2 At ETC and Churchend Batteries, trenches were excavated down to either the subsoil or alluvium. In these cases no archaeological remains were observed.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

- 7.1.1 This report posits a **moderate to high degree of confidence** that the negative evidence observed is a reflection of the lack of archaeological features or significant deposits within the stripped areas observed.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 8.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's *Guidelines for Archive Preparation* and in accordance with *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage* (Walker 1990) and following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995). On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with the County Museum Service or similar repository to be agreed with the Rochford District Council's archaeological advisor at Essex County Council.

8.2 Archive

- 8.2.1 Following the fieldwork, the archive was transported to Wessex Archaeology's Maidstone office. The documentary records from the evaluation have been compiled into a stable fully cross-referenced and indexed archive in accordance with Appendix 6 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).
- 8.2.2 The contents of the project archive, comprises an A4 ring-bound file containing the following (as further detailed in **Appendix 1**):
- 6 Trench Record Sheets
 - 2 Photographic Records
 - Day Book
 - A copy of the WSI

8.2.3 The project archive including plans, photographs and written records are currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Maidstone office under the site code **72910**. The project archive will be deposited with an appropriate local museum in the Essex area. As no artefactual evidence was recovered no agreement from the landowner is required in relation to the deposition of the archive.

8.3 Copyright

8.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive license for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003.

8.4 Security Copy

8.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (NMR) (English Heritage) in Swindon; a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the appropriate local museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 2010 *Geological map data*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/GeolIndex/geology.htm>

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

Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

SMA 1995 *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive*. Society of Museum Archaeologists

Walker K. 1990 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage*. UKIC Archaeology Section

Wessex Archaeology 2009 *MOD Shoeburyness, Foulness Island, Essex. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Report ref. T13120.01

Wessex Archaeology 2009 *Ministry of Defence, Shoeburyness, Foulness Island, Essex. Archaeological Watching Brief. Project Health and Safety Risk Assessment*. Ref T13120.01

APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX

File No.	NAR Cat.	Details	Format	No. Sheets
1	-	Index to Archive	A4	1
1	A	Client Report	A4	
1	-	Project Specification	A4	9
1	B	Day Book (photocopy)	A4	9
1	B	Trial trench records	A4	6
1	B	Survey Data Index	A4	0
1	B	Survey Data Print-out	A4	0
1	B	Site Graphics	A4	0
1	B	Site Graphics	A3	0
1	D	Photographic Register	A4	2
1	D	CD-Rom – digital photo's	-	
1	E	Environmental Sample Register	A4	0
1	E	Environmental Sample Records	A4	0
2	-	B+W Negatives	35mm	0
2	-	Colour slides	35mm	0
FINDS		None		

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES

All archaeological deposits/features shown in **bold**
 All (+) indicate deposits/features not fully excavated
 'Depth' equals depth from present ground surface

ETC Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
101	Dark grey brown clayey silt	Topsoil	0.00-0.15
102	Mid grey brown silty clay	Subsoil	0.15-0.45
103	Light orange brown clay	Natural clay	0.45 +

Churchend Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
201	Dark brown clayey silt	Topsoil	0.00-0.10
202	Mid brown silty clay	Subsoil	0.10-0.50

DAT Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
301	Mid brown loam with occasional modern CBM	Topsoil	0.00-0.25

R Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
401	Dark grey brown clayey silt with abundant tree roots	Topsoil	0.00-0.20

Shelford Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
501	Light to mid brown clayey silt	Topsoil	0.00-0.20

Q Battery			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
601	Mid brown clayey silt with occasional small sub-rounded stones	Topsoil	0.00-0.15



Plate 1: Churchend Battery service trench, view from north



Plate 2: DAT Battery service trench, view from north



Plate 3: DAT Battery service trench, view from north-east

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Plate 4: DAT Battery service trench, view from south



Plate 5: DAT Battery topsoil strip area A, view from south



Plate 6: DAT Battery topsoil strip area B, view from east

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Plate 7: DAT Battery topsoil strip area B, view from east



Plate 8: ETC Battery footings trench, view from south-east



Plate 9: ETC Battery trench overview, view from east

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