Greenham Common Walkover Survey West Berkshire Council - 2016

Alex Godden - Archaeological Officer





Introduction

A walkover survey was conducted by Alex Godden (West Berkshire Archaeological Officer) on 27.02.15 and 15.01.2016 This was carried out in order to observe and record the position and condition of surviving aspects of Cold War heritage related to Greenham Common airbase, with a view to inclusion in planned Waymark trails.

Features Observed

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 155)

NGR: 449827, 164965



Iron fire hydrant with traces of cream and yellow paint (all three of the side caps are missing); standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

This is the first of the hydrants visible on the path after turning right from the Control Tower. And is worth preserving and maintaining because of its high visibility. It will require specialist advice with a view to conserving to original character. Its position should be marked on route literature along with general information on fire hydrants.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 157)

NGR: 449481, 165030



Iron fire hydrant painted cream with brown paint on the top and side caps, which have traces of red paint and have a yellow top coat (the front cap is missing); standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

Possibly worth preserving and maintaining because of its high visibility – it also retains the side caps. Will require specialist advice with a view to conserving to original character. Its position could be marked on route literature along with general information on fire hydrants.

Conservation Potential: HIGH

Possible Weather Station/Fire beater stand (HEMP Feature 227)

NGR: 448745, 165011



Originally described in HEMP document as 'Steel weather station painted white, standing to a height of 1.14 metres. The weather station is made from a pipe (with a diameter of 0.30 metres) set vertically in the ground and surmounted by a circular plate. The steel plate is 29mm. thick, 0.75 metres in diameter and has a central hole with a diameter of 0.18 metres'. Local knowledge has suggested that this is interpretation is incorrect, and that this and similar structures were internal stanchions used to support the ceiling of underground fuel tanks, reused as fire-beater stands.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This example has reasonable potential as clearly visible from trails – rather than an interpretation board, it could be marked on route literature with some general descriptive text.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Blue Gate

NGR: 448372, 165293



One of several peace camps created during opposition to Cruise missiles at airbase in 1980s, no earthworks. The camp was set up on 4th July 1983 and was also known as New Age Gate.

While there are no physical traces of the camp itself, the gate (Gate A) itself still exists – this is one of several surviving sections of the Base perimeter fencing (aside from surrounding the GAMA site). As such, it should be conserved – specialist advice should be sought for this. It would also benefit from an interpretation board - there is a substantial amount of historical imagery and information available for the Gate.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Possible Weather Station/Fire-beater stand (HEMP Feature 520)

NGR: 448412, 164892



Originally described in HEMP document as 'Steel weather station painted white, standing to a height of c. 1.1 metres. The weather station is made from a pipe (with a diameter of 0.30 metres) set vertically in the ground and surmounted by a circular plate. The steel plate is 29mm. thick, 0.75 metres in diameter and has a central hole with a diameter of 0.18 metres'. Local knowledge has suggested that this is interpretation is incorrect, and that this and similar structures were internal stanchions used to support the ceiling of underground fuel tanks, reused as fire-beater stands.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This example is set back from the path and will require regular bush/scrub clearance to be visible. While well preserved, there are more visible examples that would probably benefit from interpretation and conservation more.

Conservation potential: LOW

Parking area (HEMP Feature 233)

NGR: 448537, 164868



Car park with tarmac surface and white painted lines defining parking spaces just to the west of the northern entrance into the GAMA Compound and possibly built around the same time. Visible on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 5 of 7) and an AP taken 16th May 1998.

Periodic monitoring and assessment of the impact of scrub levels around features which are currently clear is recommended to identify those in need of clearance. This area appears to be currently used for livestock – interpretation potential is limited unless a clear link can be made to the GAMA sites.

Conservation potential: LOW

Stormwater balancing pond/tank (HEMP Feature 484)

NGR: 448970, 164606



Rectangular outfall tank fed by a sluice shown on the revised edition OS map of 1976 labelled "Tank"; and on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham as an "Outfall Tank" (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 5 of 7). This is likely to be part of the airbase stormwater drainage system installed during the 1951 to 1953 reconstruction of the airbase.

The tank, sluice and pond are within woodland and, although there is no immediate danger to the structures, some remedial work would be recommended. Structural remains are particularly vulnerable to damage from growing and mature trees, so coppicing and pollarding would be a useful strategy. It must be ensured that anyone working in woodland must be aware of the location of structures, and that any activities take care not to damage them Roots are less of a problem with more enduring materials such as concrete and modern mortar since they tend to grow alongside or around foundations. However, wind-throw on sites of this type can have a notable adverse impact, resulting in considerable disturbance. Felling the trees, leaving the stumps in place and if possible treating them with herbicide, is the only certain method of preventing this type of damage. Clearly the significance and historical importance of each site needs to be balanced against other management issues before a strategy of this type is implemented.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Greenham Common peace camp - Green Gate

NGR: 448800, 164300



One of several peace camps created during opposition to Cruise missiles at airbase in 1980s, it was set up as 'Green Gate' on the 20th January 1983 and has been subsequently researched by John Schofield. The camp was predominantly known as being lesbian, new age, mystical and spiritual.

There are few identifiable traces of any of the peace camps, but painted symbols remain on concrete posts along the western side of Brackenhurst Lane. These symbols include legible words (such as 'Stars In Their Eyes'), female signs, anarchist symbols and a serpent, probably as a reference to the Rainbow Serpent of Aboriginal and Native American mythology. As such, these symbols represent the ideologies and belief systems of the protesters and should be preserved in-situ.

There is also some potential for undiscovered remains below ground, although it is acknowledged that the nature of the camps were quite ephemeral. Advice should be sought from the West Berkshire Archaeological Service if any woodland management is proposed in this area, particularly felling or stump extraction. Similar advice should be sought for any planned scraping activities.

This site represents an excellent surviving example of a protest movement that was of international significance and as such demonstrates high potential for interpretation. An interpretation board should be erected.

Conservation Potential: HIGH

Building (HEMP Feature 471)

NGR: 449084, 164595



Building 325. Electrical sub-station with the electrical installations still inside surrounded by a compound with concrete walls. Can be seen on the 1975 record site plan (Greenham: A Common Inheritance Website); and on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 5 of 7, Building 325).

Regeneration should be controlled using methods appropriate to the setting of the structure or installation. Treatment with herbicide may be the best option around the standing buildings; while grazing may be an effective means of control around some of the smaller pieces of Cold War equipment. Otherwise regular cutting to ensure that the various heritage features are not obscured is recommended. Periodic monitoring and assessment of the impact of scrub levels around features which are currently clear is recommended to identify those in need of clearance. One of the electrical sub-stations is currently serving as a bat-roost, providing a purpose which will help to ensure that it remains in a reasonable state of repair (Building 280, Figure 7, Feature 462), this could be possible solution for this example as well.

There is limited potential for interpretation – a better example would be for Building 280, incorporating the Fire Plane and nearby weather station.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Fire Plane (HEMP Feature 461)

NGR: 449264, 164281



Mock up plane in form of C-130 (c. 14 metres in length) made by Ray Theodore Welding in Newbury (at a cost of £15,000) and installed in August 1986 (Sayers 2006). This is located in a fenced circular compound and was used for fire fighting training by airfield fire crews and Newbury Fire Brigade (ibid.; and Greenham A Common Inheritance Website). It was fitted with dummy seats and passengers prior to a training exercise and was linked with a pipeline allowing the fuselage to be sprayed with aviation fuel (Sayers 2006). The circular compound is shown on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham, labelled 'Fire fighting exercise area' (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 5 of 7).

This structure represents a unique survival of this kind of structure and should be preserved as a matter of priority. Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

An interpretation board should be erected, which could also incorporate building 280 and weather station 463.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Building (HEMP Feature 462)

NGR: 449281, 164239



Building 280 – Classified as an Electrical sub-station in HEMP document, but suggested to be a training building utilised by airbase fire brigade to practice building evacuation. Built of concrete breeze blocks identified by military number plaque 280; main part with concrete slab roof; south-western annex with corrugated roof. Currently being used as a roost for bats (Greenham: A Common Inheritance Website). This is visible on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 6 of 7).

Regeneration should be controlled using methods appropriate to the setting of the structure or installation. Treatment with herbicide may be the best option around the standing buildings; while grazing may be an effective means of control around some of the smaller pieces of Cold War equipment. Otherwise regular cutting to ensure that the various heritage features are not obscured is recommended. Periodic monitoring and assessment of the impact of scrub levels around features which are currently clear is recommended to identify those in need of clearance.

This could be included on an interpretation panel that incorporates the Fire Plane and possible Weather Station/ Fire beater stand 463 – mention should be made that this is a military structure now with positive re-use for wildlife conservation

Conservation potential: HIGH

Possible Weather Station/ Fire beater stand (HEMP Feature 463)

NGR: 449300, 164257



Originally described in HEMP document as 'Steel weather station painted white, standing to a height of c. 1.1 metres. The weather station is made from a pipe (with a diameter of 0.30 metres) set vertically in the ground and surmounted by a circular plate. The steel plate is 29mm. thick, 0.75 metres in diameter and has a central hole with a diameter of 0.18 metres'. Local knowledge has suggested that this is interpretation is incorrect, and that this and similar structures were internal stanchions used to support the ceiling of underground fuel tanks, reused as fire-beater stands.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This could be incorporated into an interpretation board including the Fire Plane and building 280. Its position should be marked on route literature along with the location of other examples.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Historic Boundary Markers





Local knowledge has confirmed that these concrete blocks were originally one piece and used to mark the historic South West boundary between Greenham and Crookham Commons

Conservation potential: LOW

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 60?)

NGR: 451432, 164326



Iron fire hydrant with two side and one front cap, painted cream with brown top and side caps, with traces of red and yellow paint on the top and yellow paint on caps; standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on north side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on south side; and "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on south side base.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This is not particularly well preserved example, but may benefit from conservation and is visible from the path. Its position could be marked on route literature along with other surviving fire hydrants.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Feature = Quarry? Water Tank? (HEMP Feature 390)

NGR: 451446, 164206



Originally recorded as 'Large irregular quarry defined by a steep scarp around the footslopes of a combe and associated with an extensive area of mineral extraction' in HEMP. Local knowledge suggests that this interpretation is incorrect, and that the feature may have been a water storage tank associated with the airbase.

Control of the scrub and invasive species, such as rhododendrons and bramble, on earthworks and sites with buried remains is recommended. Root damage can be an issue, while scrubby layers provide an attractive habitat for burrowing animals, which cause considerable damage. Where earthworks are present unchecked scrub will mask the features, make them more vulnerable to accidental damage and hide them from public view. For mature scrub, methods which will not cause ground disturbance must be used. In practice this generally means cutting by hand; using herbicides where necessary; and leaving stumps, stems and roots in place. Once cleared, periodic monitoring to identify sites where regeneration requires renewed scrub control is recommended. Grazing is an option as a traditional strategy for controlling regeneration, although it may not be practical on the commons boundaries or in wet areas, where earthworks are vulnerable to ground disturbance. If grazing is to be used care must be taken to monitor the stocking levels to ensure that the vegetation control is effective without causing erosion.

This feature has limited interpretation potential, but could be marked on route literature.

Conservation potential: LOW

POL (HEMP Feature 1/ Coppice Walk)

NGR: 452052, 164576



A well preserved example of a Petroleum Oil and Lubricants (POL) Tank built in 1951 and 1953, consisting of intact above and below ground structures. This was left in situ as a reminder of the Cold War, and was one of the largest on the base.

This is a good surviving example of the Base infrastructure and would benefit from conservation and interpretation. The main danger is the corrosion of the metal headgear and advice should be sought from specialist conservators, with the aim of preserving the original character as far as possible. Scrub clearance should be undertaken and monitoring undertaken.

This would benefit from an interpretation board if possible. This could include materials such as photos of the interior of a similar tank – one of these exists on the 'Greenham: A Common Inheritance Website. It should be shown on route literature along with explanatory text

Conservation Potential: HIGH

Possible Weather station/ Fire beater stand (HEMP Feature 13)

NGR: 451640, 164521



Originally described in HEMP document as 'Steel weather station painted white, standing to a height of 1.1 metres. The paint has been scored by vertical lines with cross-members. The weather station is made from a pipe (with a diameter of 0.28 metres) set vertically in the ground and surmounted by a circular plate. The steel plate is 29mm. thick, 0.75 metres in diameter and has a central hole with a diameter of 0.183 metres'. Local knowledge has suggested that this is interpretation is incorrect, and that this and similar structures were internal stanchions used to support the ceiling of underground fuel tanks, reused as fire-beater stands.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This example has reasonable potential as clearly visible from trails – rather than an interpretation board, it could be marked on a route literature with some general descriptive text.

Conservation Potential: HIGH

Possible Weather Station/ Fire beater stand (HEMP Feature 136)

NGR: 450184, 164889



Originally described in HEMP document as 'Steel weather station close to the north of the Runway Cross (Project ID 75); painted white, standing to a height of 1.3 metres. The paint has been scored by vertical lines with cross-members. The weather station is made from a pipe (with a diameter of 0.32 metres) set vertically in the ground and surmounted by a circular plate. The steel plate is 30mm. thick, 0.75 metres in diameter and has a central hole with a diameter of 0.185 metres'. Local knowledge has suggested that this is interpretation is incorrect, and that this and similar structures were internal stanchions used to support the ceiling of underground fuel tanks, reused as fire-beater stands.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This example has reasonable potential as clearly visible from trails – rather than an interpretation board, it could be marked on a route literature with some general descriptive text.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Flag Pole (HEMP Feature 137)

NGR: 450225, 164942



Flag pole made from three tubular sections secured by a bolt to two I beams with large weights at one end near the base (for lowering the pole). The pole is set in a square concrete slab (1.5 metres across). The I beams are stamped "B.S.C. GLENGARNOCK G.T. BRITAIN". Produced by the British Steel Corporation in the Glencarnock works which were taken over from Colvilles in 1967 and closed in 1985 (Grace's Guide Glengarnock Iron and Steel Company).

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

The flagpole is a unique surviving aspect of the base and should be conserved as a high priority. Historical information is available that could be included on an interpretation panel, possibly in conjunction with Fire hydrant 150 and Building 148. It should be shown on route literature along with interpretive material

Conservation potential: HIGH

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 150)

NGR: 450177, 165052



Iron fire hydrant painted cream with brown paint on the top and side caps, which also have traces of yellow paint (the front side cap is missing); standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This is not particularly well preserved example, but may benefit from conservation and is visible from the path. Its position could be marked on route literature along with other surviving fire hydrants

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Bank (HEMP Feature 149)

NGR: 450222, 165073



Low bank on a south-east to north-west alignment (c. 1 metre wide), reduced in places, following the side of an old track for much of its length. The feature has been removed where it enters a large area of ground reduction. The line of the road can be seen on the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham and an AP taken 16th May 1998.

Control of the scrub using hand cutting, leaving trunks, stems and roots in place is recommended, but in some cases the level of clearance may need to be balanced against other considerations. Total clearance can introduce new management issues particularly where earthworks are concerned, such as erosion through recreational activities like mountain biking or as a result of soil instability and natural weathering. The last could arise on the steep recent scarps marking the line of the Cold War runway which are still under pioneer vegetation. One solution is to encourage the growth of species which are beneficial to the stable maintenance of earthworks, such as grasses and heather. Once again, grazing using a suitable stocking level provides a traditional and effective method of controlling regeneration

There appears to be no immediate need for conservation, but this is a visible feature from the path and may benefit from inclusion on any route literature.

Conservation potential: LOW

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 143)

NGR: 450224, 165152



Iron fire hydrant painted cream with brown paint on the top and front cap, which also have traces of yellow paint (the side caps are missing) standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This is a well preserved example that would benefit from conservation, but it is visible from the path scrub clearance would make the hydrant more obvious, it's position should be marked on route literature along with other fire hydrants.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Electricity sub-station (HEMP Feature 148)

NGR: 450246, 165063



Small electricity sub-station constructed with modern brick (marked with military building number plaque 309) with a broken plank constructed wooden door on the eastern side and a wire and mesh compound to the north. The approach road and part of its kerb is still visible. Can be seen on the 1975 record site plan (Greenham: A Common Inheritance Website); the 1994 masterplan of RAF Greenham (RAF Greenham Common Masterplan Sheet 2 of 7); and an AP taken 16th May 1998.

Regeneration should be controlled using methods appropriate to the setting of the structure or installation. Treatment with herbicide may be the best option around the standing buildings; while grazing may be an effective means of control around some of the smaller pieces of Cold War equipment. Otherwise regular cutting to ensure that the various heritage features are not obscured is recommended. Periodic monitoring and assessment of the impact of scrub levels around features which are currently clear is recommended to identify those in need of clearance.

Another airbase building is currently serving as a bat-roost, providing a purpose which will help to ensure that it remains in a reasonable state of repair (Building 280, Figure 7, Feature 462) – this may be possible solution for this example as well. There is limited scope for interpretation, but there may be some scope for inclusion on a board associated with the flagpole. Otherwise, it should be marked on route literature.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 139)

NGR: 450014, 165077



Iron fire hydrant painted cream with brown paint on the base, top and side caps, which also have traces of yellow paint; standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This is a very well preserved example and should be conserved. Its position should be marked on any route literature along with other fire hydrants.

Conservation potential: HIGH

Fire Hydrant (HEMP Feature 154)

NGR: 449958, 165000



Iron fire hydrant painted cream with brown, red and yellow paint on the top, which also has traces of yellow paint (all three of the side caps are missing); standing to a height of 0.7 metres and set on a square concrete pad (c. 0.6 metres across). Has "VSP OPEN 5 1/4 VO" on the top; "655510 5 1/4 VO 10106 D1" on one side; "D1 US PIPE 1986 AWWA PAT. 4.123.285" on the other side above "TOPSIDE USP 668860" on the base.

Any maintenance or repairs must be designed to maintain the original character of these structures as far as is possible, and should only be carried out following specialist advice.

This example would benefit from conservation, but it is already missing the side caps and is not visible from path – however, its position could be marked on any route literature.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Runway (HEMP Feature 75)

NGR: 450144, 164664



Small remaining intersection of what was once the longest runway in Europe, built during the Cold War; intersection between the runway and access roads leading to the two taxiways made of concrete and tarmac

Periodic monitoring and assessment of the impact of scrub levels around features which are currently clear is recommended to identify those in need of clearance

This surviving piece of the runway has high interpretation potential, considering its survival and the existence of readily available archive material. However, the current use of the runway for livestock would make both recreational access and conservation problematic. The surface of the runway should be kept clear if possible, and livestock feeding redirected elsewhere. An interpretation board could be considered, but this would not be feasible if livestock still have access. Reference to the runway in the form of text and maybe photos should be included in any route literature.

Conservation potential: MEDIUM

Conclusions

The walkover survey has shown that there is a number of surviving heritage assets associated with the USAF base at Greenham Common that could contribute significantly to interpretation schemes. Many of these would benefit from conservation measures, not only to preserve them for the future, but also to enhance visibility so as to complement existing or proposed routes around the Common.

As such, it is suggested that the main assets that should be conserved as a priority are the remains of the gate and fencing at Blue Gate, the Fire Plane, the Flag Pole and the Petroleum Oil and Lubricant tank. These are in danger of corrosion and further damage and specialist advice should be sought as to how to achieve this. These locations would also benefit from interpretation boards.

Route literature could also be produced that marks the location of the observed fire hydrants and possible weather stations, along with some general text on the nature and purpose of these assets. It may not be necessary to apply conservation measures to all examples, but some will benefit more than others based on their existing survival. Maps showing the location of all features observed in the walk over survey, along with existing and proposed routes, are included with this report.

The existing Historic Environment Action Plan produced by Berkshire Archaeological Services provides an in-depth analysis and conservation management advice: this report has referenced all asset descriptions and reference numbers, as well as overall conservation discussions. Any future conservation and interpretation strategy should also use the HEMP as a basis for any proposals.

http://www.westcombe.org.uk/documents/appindex%2008%20heritage/Heritage_Management_Pl an.pdf

Alex Godden Archaeological Officer West Berkshire Council. January 2016

If you require this information in an alternative format or translation, please call 01635 519534 and ask for the Archaeological Officer.

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