



## **Monitoring Report No. 227**

**City of Derry Airport  
Longfield More townland  
Eglinton  
County Derry**

**AE/10/61**

Ruth Logue

## Site Specific Information

*Site location:* City of Derry Airport, Airport Road, Eglinton, BT47 3GY

*Townland:* Longfield More

*SMR number:* not applicable

*Industrial Heritage:* 5 sites within 1km buffer zone around potential crash site, but none within the search area

*Defence Heritage:* 28 sites within 1km buffer zone around potential crash site, but none within the search area

*Grid reference:* J25386579 and J42184383

*County:* Derry

*Excavation licence number:* AE/10/61

*Planning reference number:* not applicable

*Date of monitoring:* 28 May 2010

*Archaeologist present:* Ruth Logue

*Brief summary:*

Geophysical surveying at a civil airport, archaeological monitoring in case of any ground disturbance. Nothing of archaeological significance found.

*Current land use:* Maintained grass areas, and concrete apron, immediately adjacent to active runways.

*Intended land use:* Airport redevelopment

## **Account of the monitoring**

Permission was given by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage (NIEA:BH) for a team of aviation archaeologists to survey, locate and excavate the remains of a World War 2 Spitfire that crashed on 18 May 1942 in what is now the City of Derry Airport, Eglinton, in County Derry (Figure 1). It was a requirement of NIEA:BH that a licensed archaeologist would be present during these investigations. The archaeologist's role was to monitor any ground disturbance, and record and excavate any archaeological remains (other than aircraft wreckage) that were uncovered. Jonathan McNee was liaising with NIEA, the aviation team, the archaeologist and the airport authorities.

The suspected area of the Spitfire crash site lay within the boundaries of the City of Derry Airport, on ground reclaimed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Lough Foyle and used as a coastal wartime airport (RAF Eglinton) during World War 2. The airport is now a small active civil airport. The specific area which was surveyed was flat, mostly maintained grass, but also encompassed a small area of concrete apron, between the main runways and taxiways in front of the airport terminal. The suspected crash site is potentially at risk from airport redevelopment and expansion, and the team feared that the suspected crash site might soon be concreted over.

As determined by NIEA:BH the role of the licensed archaeologist in this project was to monitor the ground disturbance involved in looking for the World War 2 Spitfire wreckage. If these remains were uncovered, the subsequent excavation by the aviation archaeologists of the plane wreckage would also to be monitored. If any archaeological material, other than those of the Spitfire, were uncovered it will be the role of the archaeologist to inform NIEA:BH, and to excavate and record these archaeological deposits and features. Jonathan McNee and the aviation archaeologists were responsible for excavating and recording the World War 2 remains.

On the day the monitoring took place the intention was to survey an area as indicated by an eye witness. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) offered assistance with the project, and provided their equipment, magnetometer and ground penetrating radar, and trained operatives (Explosive Ordnance Disposal). The aim of the survey was to try to locate the crash site with the equipment on hand, and if necessary search for supporting evidence in the 1942 soil levels by hand digging 1m by 1m test pits.

Five small test pits (approximately 0.3m by 0.5m and up to 1m deep) were hand dug to investigate magnetometer readings, but did not find anything of significance. This was an area of the airport that had been affected by development in the form of spoil dumping and crowd debris from air shows.

No features or finds of archaeological significance were found during this monitoring. No evidence of the Spitfire was found on this date either. The licence for the monitoring was extended until April 2011 but as further work involved only geophysical survey without ground disturbance an archaeologist was not required to be present.

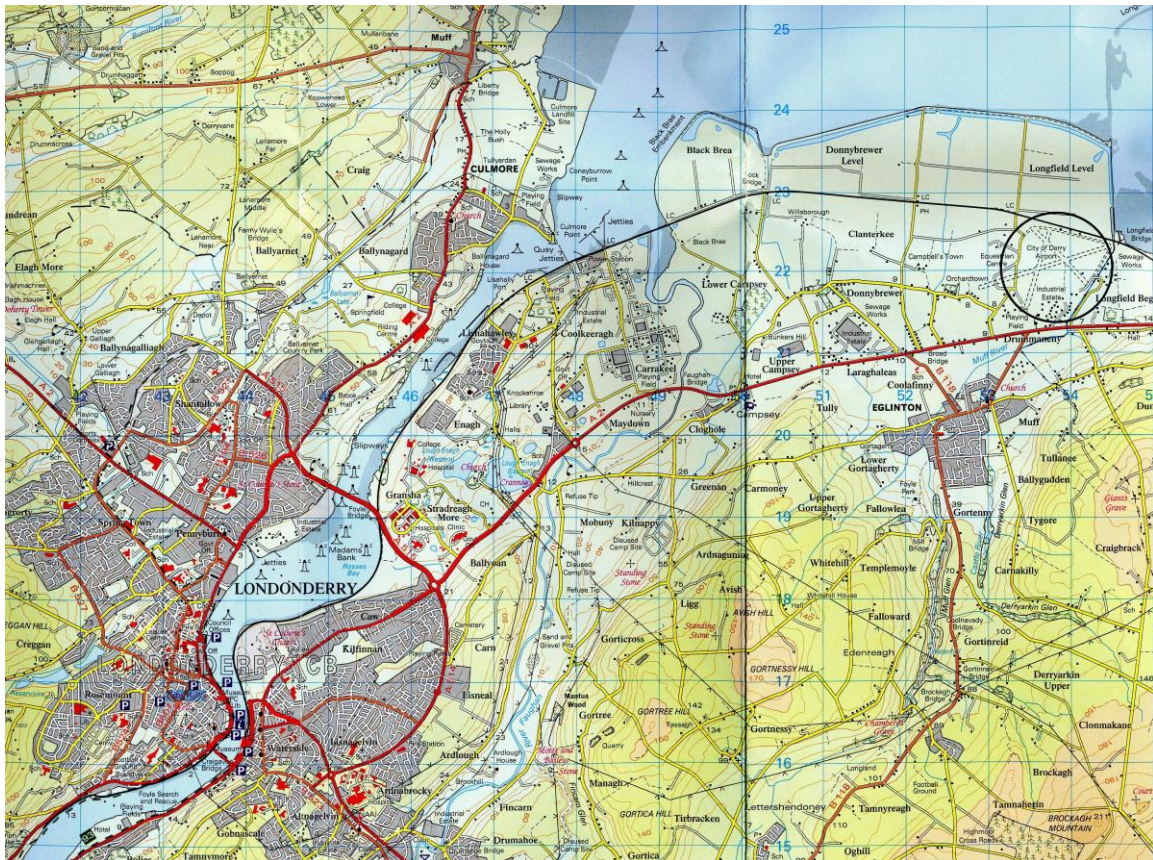


Figure 1: 1:50 000 map showing airport (highlighted) and surrounding area.

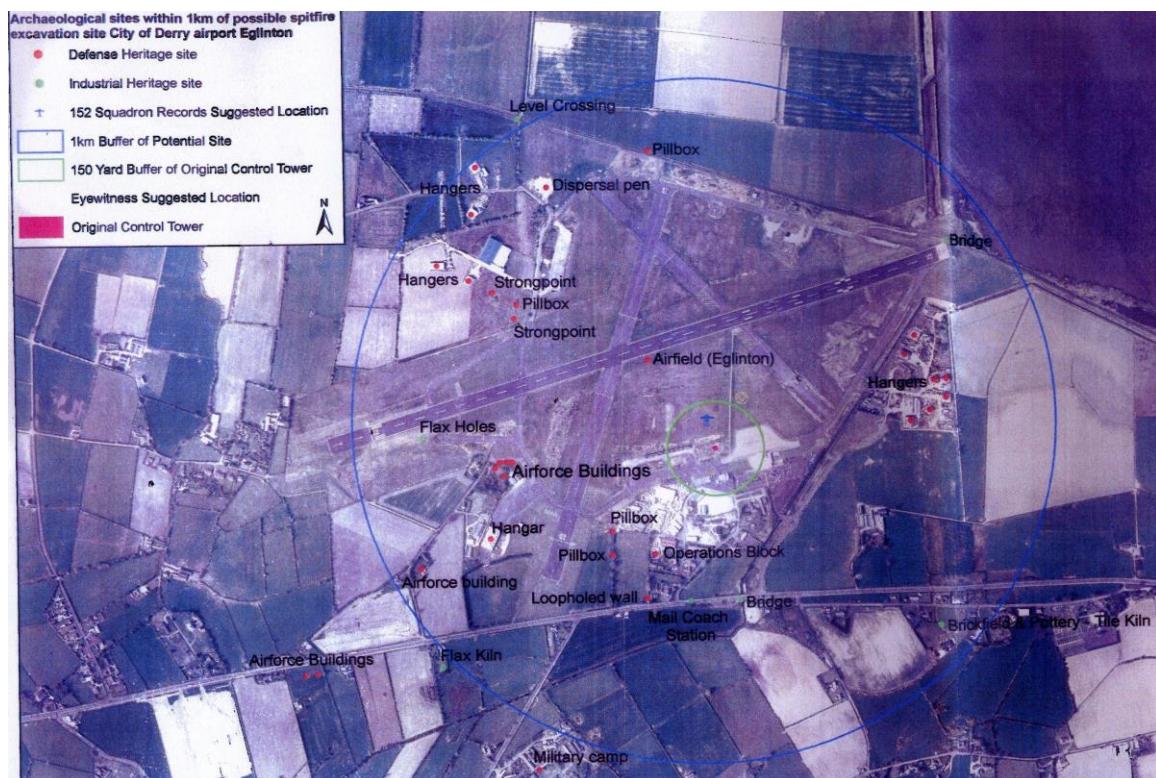


Figure 2: Aerial photograph with positions of Defence Heritage sites and Industrial Heritage sites at/near the City of Derry Airport.

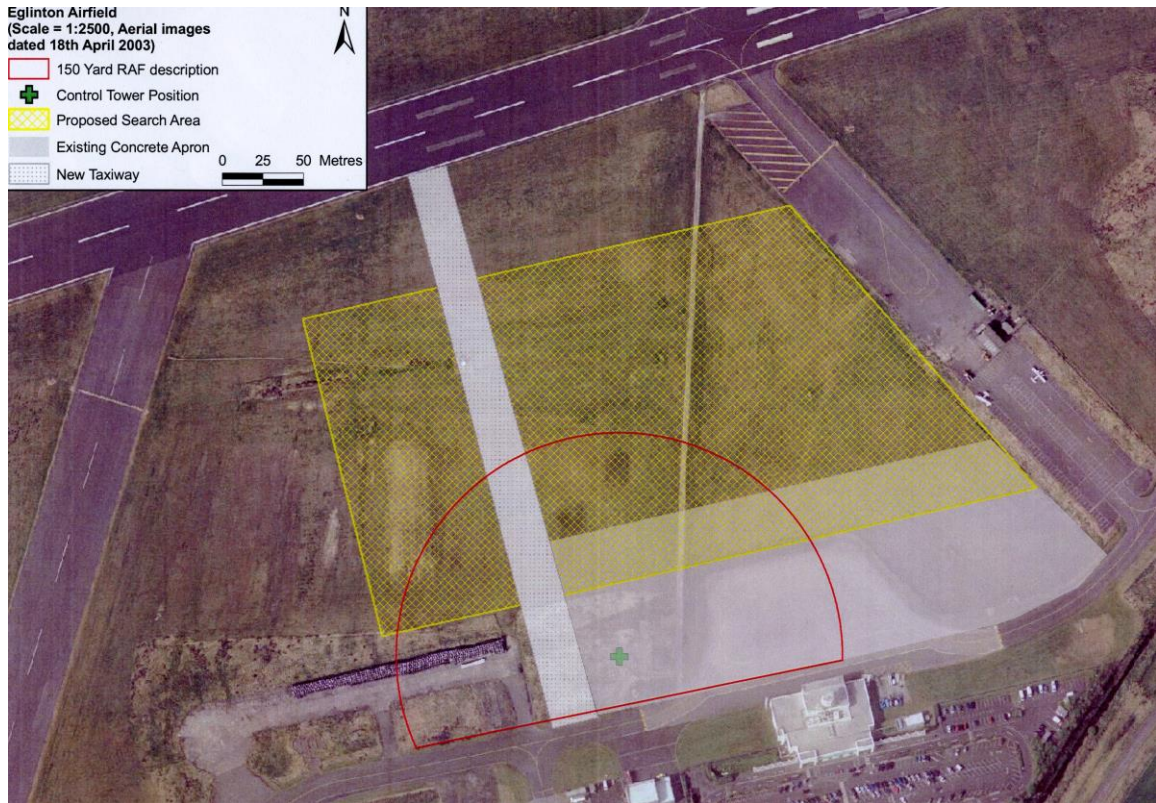


Figure 3: Aerial photograph showing proposed search area (yellow) in relation to airport terminal building and runways.



Plate 1: View across part of search area, looking south-west.



Plate 2: View across part of search area, including concrete apron in front of terminal building, looking south-east.



Plate 3: Aviation archaeologist digging a test pit.