



## Watching Brief Otford Palace Field Kestrel Perch 31/01/2025 (OPFK25)

### 1. Introduction

With financial support from Farming in Protected Landscapes through the Northwest Kent Countryside Partnership the APCT erected a tall wooden pole and kestrel box in Palace Field to the south of the existing northern Otford Palace range. The field is within a scheduled area (SM KE 9, HA 1005197). Permission had been sought and agreed by Historic England (S00247086). The perch was sited to the east of the field, near a boundary hedge (Figure 1). It was carefully situated to the east of the buried remains of a possible aisled building identified on a resistivity survey in 2023.



Figure 1: The marker in the lower centre of the picture shows the site on Palace Field where the kestrel perch was inserted (photo Google maps)

## 2. Procedure

On 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2025 at NG TQ 52866 59161 a hole 20 cm diameter was augured to a depth of 1.0m. The turf and the removed soil were laid out to expose the stratigraphy. A wooden tree pole (15cm diameter) was inserted and then concreted in place (Fig 2).

*Figure 2 The kestrel post and box cemented in place.*



## 3. Finds

There was no hard standing beneath the turf. The topsoil and subsoil were dark brown loam. All the finds were in the top 12cm of topsoil and subsoil. At lower depths the soil became lighter in colour and with increasing clay and a sticky consistency (Fig 3). Scanty small and medium sized unworked flints were found at all levels of the soil.



*Figure 3 The removed soil has been spread out to show the transition from the dark topsoil and subsoil on the left and the lighter coloured clay-rich soil on the right.*

The removed soil was carefully sifted by hand. There were no inclusions of pottery, bone, shell or metal.

### 3.1 Stone.

There were 4 small irregular lumps of chalk (total wt 43g)- perhaps rubble. There was one small irregularly shaped unworked stone (147g), possibly with traces of mortar attached.

### 3.2 CBM (ceramic building material).

There were 2 pieces of regular well-fired roof tile (198g) with thickness 16.5mm (post-Tudor). These fitted together and had curious linear markings on the surface- perhaps an impression caused by tiles lying on straw/twigs during the drying phase post manufacture (Fig 3)



*Figure 4 Two fragments of roof tile showing linear surface markings.*

There were also 2 smaller fragments of darker red roof tile (38g) with a thickness of 14mm (post- Tudor). Selected finds have been retained in possession of APCT.

## 4. Discussion

There were sparse finds, largely consisting of fragments of post Tudor roof tile, along with small chalk fragments and one unworked stone possibly with attached mortar. Roof tiles are a common finding in Oxford fields, and the presence of possible building rubble is not unexpected given that this field was originally surrounded by built ranges on all sides- subsequently demolished apart from the western half of the northern range.

The few finds here contrast with the larger number of tiles found during an earlier watching brief in May 2023 when a maypole base was inserted in Palace Field, slightly further north-west of the present site (report on APCT website). The earlier auger sample from the maypole contained 25 sherds of cbm (925 g), with most tile being medieval.

In summary, the finds from this watching brief were unremarkable, but previously medieval tiles have been found in this field.