

# Viewpoint

Autumn 2009

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## Royal Air Force Lakenheath



by Jonathan Sweeney Brooks MCIOB

**R**oyal Air Force Lakenheath is located 70 miles northeast of London and 25 miles from Cambridge. The host wing, the 48th Fighter Wing, is also designated the Air Force's Statue of Liberty Wing – making it the only wing with both a numerical designation and an official name.

The Liberty Wing has nearly 5,700 active-duty military members, 2,000 British and US civilians, and includes a geographically separated unit at nearby RAF Feltwell. In addition to supporting three combat-ready squadrons of F-15E Strike Eagle and F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft, the Liberty Wing houses the 56th Rescue Squadron's HH-60G Combat Search and Rescue helicopters. RAF Lakenheath is the largest US Air Force-operated base in England and the only US Air Force in Europe (USAFE) F-15 fighter wing.

The personnel required to coordinate and manage this type of strike force is immense and with some of the planes being on standby there is a need for local accommodation for all those involved. Lakenheath is a little

America in England with shopping malls, cinemas, sport complexes, housing, dorm blocks, three schools and many administration buildings. They also have their own fully operational hospital.

My involvement on the base – my company's project – is to demolish some of the now sub-standard housing, which was built in the late 60s and early 70s, and replace them with a very high standard of ecologically friendly, efficient houses which will ensure that the airforce personnel and their families are provided with modern-day living conditions. The project's name is Liberty Village, and is programmed to run for 6 years. In this period we will construct 606 new houses with garages, parking facilities, communal areas, new roads, footpaths and play areas for the children. The project should



complete by the end of October 2011.

With the project being spread over a total of 32 hectares it was decided to divide the scheme into five phases, with each phase having its own site management teams. This would help achieve a sensible and economical management process. The design teams and Mansell, liaised with the client, and numbers of units were allotted to each phase, to satisfy the clients' occupancy requirement levels.

These were:

- Phase 1 = 89 units
- Phase 2 = 154 units
- Phase 3 = 107 units
- Phase 4 = 74 units
- Phase 5 being the largest, with 182 units

All phases included two, three and four bedroom units, with some of these catering for disabled personnel.

The project started in late September 2005, and to date we have achieved the programmed dates of handovers required by the client. In total we have demolished over 350 of the existing houses and built 340 new homes, of which 300 have been completed and handed over to the client.



Balfour Beatty redevelopment at RAF Lakenheath

*continued from page 1*

To achieve this process, the work activities have to be well coordinated and the programmes very accurate. I am currently heading up Phase 4 with my own site team, and with the guidance of my Senior Projects Manager, Neil Smith, we are achieving our targets. The first work activity is to erect perimeter fencing around the area of the works, providing a safety barrier for the American personnel and ourselves. As part of this package car parks are laid down for all contractor vehicles.

Once all the site set up is in place all existing services have to be located, these are either capped off for future use, or made redundant if no longer required.

Due to the age of the existing houses, we have to carry out extensive asbestos removal. This is carried out by specialist contractors, who take possession of the area until removal is complete, and the areas are deemed safe for all other site personnel.

I have recently taken my one-day asbestos awareness update course, which helps with the monitoring of the work activities and making sure the correct procedures are followed.

We then have to carry out a bat survey of all properties. So far we have only discovered a couple of roosts in the houses, and these were both home to the common Pipestrelle but all bats are protected species. The roosts held no more than two bats, which were successfully re-housed, with the help of the conservation society. All findings have been documented and archived on the base. It is an offence for anyone other than a licensed bat surveyor to handle a bat.

Once all the houses have been surveyed and cleared the demolition process can commence. This is a controlled work activity, with all materials being segregated and recycled for use elsewhere, or on the project itself. For example, all brick rubble, concrete floor slabs and foundations are extracted

and crushed and reused as hardcore for temporary roads and formation levels on our sites at Liberty Village. Once the demolition is completed, specific areas the site are handed over to the archaeological team.

The archaeologists then have to erect their own safety fencing and take possession of the land. These works are funded by the clients, who have agreed on the area and the exploration to be undertaken. The works have been carried out by Suffolk County Council archaeological services and were controlled and managed by their on-site officer Duncan Allan. There have been various finds to date, including two ring ditches which are thought to date back to 2000bc. Duncan informed me that Lakenheath has a long history of historical finds. He explained that these areas are of multi-period occupation and funerary activity. During the digs, over 500 school children aged between 5-18 have visited the sites and been shown around by Duncan and his colleagues. Speaking to one colleague of Duncan's, he told me that the air base scouts had joined their team for a day and helped with the excavation process, helping them to achieve their archaeological merit badges. He was impressed by the interest shown by the scouts and all the other children who had visited the sites and he said it was a refreshing change to have the younger generation take an interest in the history of their surroundings.

The digs can vary in their duration, depending on the amount of exploration needed and the amount of artefacts discovered. Up to now they have caused minimal disruption to the project, and we have achieved the targets set by the client.

Once the dig sites are completed and cleared away then we start the process of constructing the new houses and their new surroundings. The houses are modular timber frame structures, so as you can appreciate with this type of construction the build sequence is

very fast and effective. We usually manage to erect between eight and ten units per calendar month, with all associated trades programmed in closely behind. The standard achieved is second to none and everyone in the team is very proud of this achievement.

Being involved with this project is both demanding and rewarding. Since my appointment here I have managed to build a very capable site team, who like myself are very driven, hardworking conscientious individuals, and I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead on Phase 5 for myself and the team.



*Jon Brooks originally prepared this article as a presentation for his membership of CIOB. During the preparation of his application he was mentored by our own Director of Finance – John Sinfield and I am indebted to both of them. John Sinfield first met up with Jon when he visited a Mansell housing site at Mildenhall in Suffolk, where Jon was an assistant site foreman. His company decided to develop him towards becoming a site manager and John Sinfield mentored him for the duration of a CIOB site management training course. Jon then progressed to CIOB Membership studies, which involved sitting a number of examinations which were successfully passed and which gained him his MCIOB in 2009. John Sinfield recently attended Jon's graduation and certificate presentation at CIOB head office at Ascot.*

# How to survive the credit crunch – Ten tips for helping the cash flow

In these uncertain times, with the financial markets in turmoil, ensuring cash flow is vital to the viability of all businesses, large and small. We are told it could take years for the situation to improve, so having some basic procedures in place now to make sure your business weathers the storm is critical. Below are ten general tips and guidelines to consider in order to help your business maintain cash flow and, hopefully, survive the "credit crunch".

## 1 Know your client or contractor

Make sure you have stringent credit checking procedures in place. If your customer or supplier is a company there are four simple steps you can take:

- Ask the company for evidence of company accounts or other evidence of financial status.
- Check whether their accounts are filed up-to-date with Companies House.
- Use a credit reference agency such as Dun and Bradstreet.
- Ask other contractors whether the client has a good record of making payments.

## 2 Ensure you have security for payment

This is achievable in several ways:

- Request advanced payment.
- Set up an "escrow" account, i.e. a third party account which releases funds on independent certification.
- Put in place a Payment Bond - this can be on an "on demand" basis (i.e. where no liability needs to be established), or an "on

default" basis (i.e. where liability has to be established before the bond can be called on).

- Obtain a Parent Company Guarantee and/or Personal Guarantees from directors.
- Obtain security over the company's assets.

## 3 Enter into a written form of contract

It is strongly recommended that you enter into a written form of contract before you commence works and, of course, make sure you understand the contract terms before you sign!

A tip for Consultants in this regard is to make sure you enter into a formal appointment agreement (or at the very least secure agreement to the employer's standard terms and conditions).

## 4 Ensure that you can charge interest on late payments

Make sure you include a term in the contract allowing you to charge interest on late payments. Alternatively, you may be able to rely on the Late Payments of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 and claim up to 8% above Bank of England base rate.

## 5 Put in place regular interim payment terms

## 6 Avoid (if possible) payments linked to completion of specified stages of work

Monthly valuations based on the value of works completed are better for cash flow.

## 7 Read and understand the payment terms

Ensure that the final date for payment is stated as a number of



days after your application (in default of a payment certificate) not as a date after the certificate of payment.

## 8 Ensure that you incorporate a retention of title clause

Please see the article on 'Building Materials – who owns what and when' for full details of retention of title clauses. [www.ashfords.com](http://www.ashfords.com)

## 9 Put in place an efficient mechanism for chasing debts

It is advisable to carry this out on a monthly basis and this can be done in the form of initial chasing letters and statements, followed up by (friendly) telephone calls.

## 10 Get professional advice early on!

Pounds spent at the beginning could save thousands of pounds if something goes wrong later so obtain professional advice early on, preferably before works start.

*Thanks to Stephen Homer of Ashfords for this article.*

# Ashfords

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# Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

This is probably the most important activity that any Site Manager can pursue.

## How can you prove your competency ?

- Years of experience?
- Certificates or a Degree?
- Membership of an Institute?

All that these things prove is that you did it once!

What evidence is there that you have progressed your knowledge – you finished the last contract but what did you learn and if you learnt anything how was it recorded?

Construction Design Management (CDM) should have made CPD compulsory but because the Planning Supervisors did not pursue competency it has fallen by the wayside for many managers.

There are many ways of obtaining CPD, by attending lectures, reading journals and papers, in-house training, serving on construction based committees and training organised by your Institute.

Do we all know everything about construction – NO has to be the answer: every contract throws up new materials, new installation techniques and tighter programmes with tighter budgets. So how can we demonstrate a willingness to further our knowledge and record it for the future – CPD. Regardless of the number of hours, it shows a future employer or client that you actively seek to further your knowledge.

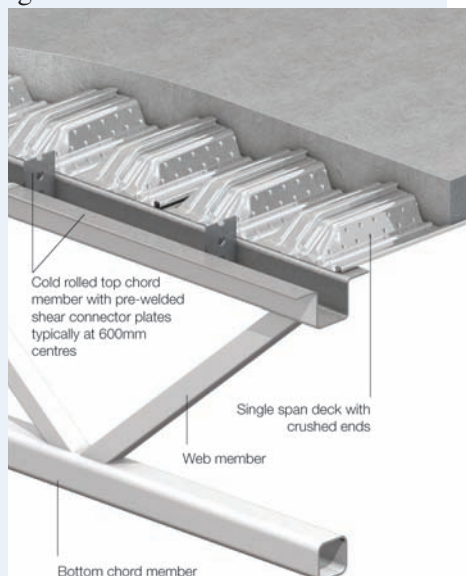
*Cliff Brown FICConstM*

## Northern & Scottish Region

On 3rd June the Northern & Scottish region had a very good talk given by a Mr Lee Charles from a company called Metsec Lattice Joists. There were 9 members gathered for the evening talk and with a few drinks and supper everyone enjoyed the evening.

Metsec's bespoke composite lattice beam provides off-site, precision engineered, one hour fire rated solutions with an open web design allowing easy passage of services within the beam depth to minimise overall floor zones.

*Peter Smith FICConstM,  
Chairman Northern &  
Scottish Region*



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## Diary dates

### November 2009

11 Southern Region CPD lecture – Roger Bullivant

### December 2009

9 Southern Region – Ladies night

### January 2010

13 Southern Region CPD lecture – Securistyle

### February 2010

6 Southern Region – 50th Annual Dinner & Dance at  
The Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea

### July 2010

2-4 National Rally, Swindon

*Note: all Southern Region lectures are CPD accredited and certificates will be issued. Food is made available following each lecture. The lectures are held at The Mountbatten Centre Alexandra Park Portsmouth 7.45pm for 8.00pm. Contact Eric Richards 02392 618049*

VIEWPOINT is the newsletter of the Institute of Construction Management (ICM) and is for circulation to the members of the Institute. Articles or comments for inclusion are very welcome and in any form.

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