

**Little Wenham Hall, Hall Lane, Little Wenham,
Suffolk**

HER Ref: WMP 009

Archaeological Monitoring Report

(© John Newman BA MIFA, 2 Pearsons Place, Henley, Ipswich, IP6 0RA)

(October 2015)

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Site details for HER

Name: Little Wenham Hall, Hall Lane, Little Wenham Suffolk, CO7 6QA (also known as Wenham Castle)

Client: Mr H Macadam

Works monitored: Excavation of three small test pits

Date of fieldwork: 21 October, 2015

Scheduled monument ref: 1003759 (SF 23)

LBS ref: 1033405 (Grade I)

HER ref: WMP 009 (also WMP 001)

Event ref: ESF 23268

OASIS: johnnewm1-226703

Grid ref: TM 08078 39067

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Summary: Little Wenham, Wenham Castle, Little Wenham Hall (WMP 009, TM 08078 39067) monitoring of the hand excavation of two small test pits excavated to check water ingress into the undercroft of the building recorded 700mm of clean top and subsoil on its northern side and 200m of top soil over 600mm of mixed subsoil and late Post medieval building debris on its eastern side. In addition a small part of a roughly lain late Post medieval brick floor was revealed in the latter pit, this was left in situ. Finally a third test pit was excavated 24m to the north of the structure revealing 500mm of clean top and subsoil (John Newman Archaeological Services for Mr H Macadam).

1. Introduction & background

1.1 The Moreton Partnership on behalf of their client Mr H Macadam commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the hand excavation of two test pits against the northern and eastern sides respectively of the building known as Wenham Castle at Little Wenham Hall, Hall Lane, Little Wenham under a Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England as the structure is a Scheduled Monument under statutory protection in addition to being a Grade I listed building. These test pits were required to check on the outside of the building at points where the undercroft inside is exhibiting indications of water ingress on the walls and floor. A third test pit was also hand excavated 16m to the east of Wenham Castle close to the point where a pipe takes water from a down pipe on the side of former 19th century farm buildings to the west. Finally a small investigation was carried out around an extant land drain on the south-eastern side of the castle structure.

1.2 The structure known as Wenham Castle is located within a large, though isolated, moated manorial complex in the south-eastern part of Little Wenham parish close to the parish boundary with Capel St Mary and on the eastern side of a stream. As noted above Wenham Castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM) and Grade I listed building as it is recognised as one of the earliest largely brick built domestic structures in England with a construction date of 1260-1290. Wenham Castle has traditionally been seen as a first floor hall (Wood, 1965, 22) though a more recent interpretation of the site argues for the former presence of a probably timber built hall on the south-western corner of the fortified structure (Martin, 1998, 151) making the extant building a semi-detached chamber block for the private and personal use of the owner and their close family.

1.3 While the building has been sympathetically restored over the last 100 years or so having been in use as a farm outbuilding in the Post medieval period the undercroft has been showing signs of water ingress over the last two years and therefore test pits were required against the northern and eastern sides to check if this is being caused by the movement of ground water around the structure or by poor drainage of rain water which is removed from the roof by over-hanging chutes above the area examined

2. Monitoring methodology

2.1 The three 1m by 1m test pits were closely examined as they were hand excavated and the upcast spoil was inspected closely as the work progressed and a number of digital images were taken in order to record the monitoring (see Appendix I).

3. Results (see Fig. 2 & Appendix I)

3.1 Test pit 1 was towards the eastern end of the northern side of the building. This revealed 300mm of topsoil and 400mm of pale to mid brown silty sand subsoil with

the locally occurring glaciofluvial natural deposit being a silty and largely stone-free orange sand. The top and subsoil was largely clean with the only finds being occasional small brick and tile fragments of Post medieval date. The base of the test pit was taken to a point 1200mm below ground level (and 1500mm below the base of a narrow window above) so it was at the same depth as the undercroft floor inside the building and it was notable that the base of the pit exhibited no indication of ingress of ground water.

3.2 Test pit 2 on the eastern side of the main range of the building revealed 200mm of topsoil above 600mm of mid to dark brown silty subsoil which contained a large quantity of later Post medieval building debris comprising brick, tile and mortar fragments. In this pit only the southern part against the adjacent wall was taken to a depth of 800mm to reveal the natural silty orange sand and this remained dry. At a depth of 600mm from the ground level a small area of roughly lain brick floor was exposed in the northern part of the pit and butting up against the adjacent wall and this was left in situ. The bricks were 9.25in. x 4.50 in. x 2.25 in. indicating a later Post medieval date. In addition a 19th/early 20th century sheet iron vessel was exposed in the south-eastern corner and was left in situ.

3.3 Test pit 3 was excavated in a garden path 24m to the north of the castle structure and this revealed 300mm of topsoil above 200mm of pale to mid brown silty sand above silty orange sand. The top and subsoil were clean and the pit remained dry.

3.4 Finally a minor investigation exposed a 20th century land drain on the south-eastern side of the building.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Firstly it can be confirmed that the excavated test pits did not reveal or disturb any deposits of archaeological significance. To the north of the building test pit 1 revealed clean top and subsoil to a depth of 700mm suggesting that drainage remediation works along this side of the structure would cause little disturbance to archaeological deposits or features associated with Wenham Castle though any such works should clearly be archaeologically monitored and recorded. To the east of the building while a fragment of later Post medieval roughly lain brick flooring was exposed this was at a depth of 600mm giving some leeway for drainage works if these are required in this area. The brick flooring can in all probability be associated with farm use of the area around Wenham Castle with, perhaps, some type of 18th or 19th century outbuilding standing against the medieval building. With 600mm of subsoil mixed with later Post medieval building debris on the eastern side of the standing building it is also clear that present ground levels may be deceptive in interpretations of the overall site as landscaping works and ground level changes have clearly taken place in the last 100/120 years. To the north of the SM test pit 3 did not reveal anything of archaeological significance.

Refs.

- Martin, E 1998 *Little Wenham Hall, A Reinterpretation* in PSIAH vol. 39, pt 2, 151-164
- Wood, M 1965 *The English Medieval House* (London)



Fig. 1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2008
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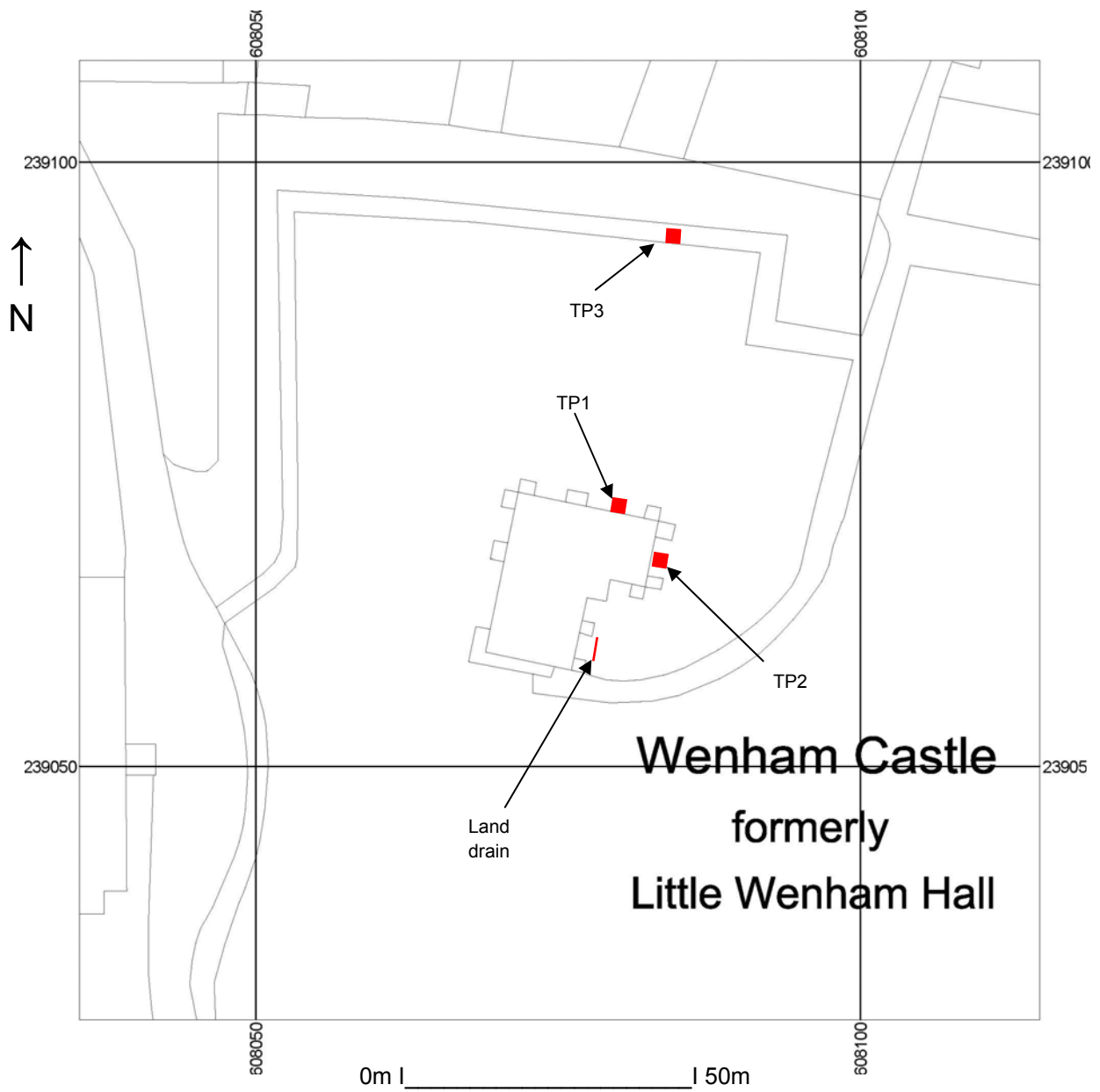


Fig. 2: Location of test pits

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Appendix I- Images



Wenham Castle from northeast with test pits



Test pit 1 from north



Test pit 1 from northwest



Test pit 2 from east



Test pit 3 from west



Land drain at south-eastern corner from south

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OASIS ID: johnnewm1-226703

Project details

Project name	Little Wenham Hall, Hall Lane, Wenham Parva, Suffolk- Archaeological Monitoring Report
Short description of the project	Little Wenham, Wenham Castle, Little Wenham Hall (WMP 009, TM 08078 39067) monitoring of the hand excavation of two small test pits excavated to check water ingress into the undercroft of the building recorded 700mm of clean top and subsoil on its northern side and 200m of top soil over 600mm of mixed subsoil and late Post medieval building debris on its eastern side. In addition a small part of a roughly lain late Post medieval brick floor was revealed in the latter pit, this was left in situ. Finally a third test pit was excavated 24m to the north of the structure revealing 500mm of clean top and subsoil.
Project dates	Start: 21-10-2015 End: 21-10-2015
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	ESF 23268 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	WMP 001 - Related HER No.
Any associated project reference codes	WMP 009 - Related HER No.
Any associated project reference codes	1003759 - SM No.
Any associated project reference codes	1033405 - LBS No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	FLOOR Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval

Investigation type ""Watching Brief""
 Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country England
 Site location SUFFOLK BABERGH WENHAM PARVA LITTLE WENHAM HALL, HALL LANE
 Study area 3 Square metres
 Site coordinates TM 08078 39067 52.0104358149 1.032321481139 52 00 37 N 001 01 56 E Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 41m Max: 42m

Project creators

Name of Organisation John Newman Archaeological Services
 Project brief originator English Heritage/Department of Environment
 Project design originator John Newman
 Project director/manager John Newman
 Project supervisor John Newman
 Type of sponsor/funding body Landowner

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Suffolk CC Archaeological Service
 Digital Contents "Ceramics"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Text"
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 Paper Media available "Report"

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OASIS:

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