

Pentney Abbey, Pentney, Norfolk

Scheduled Monument Ref: 30590

Scheduled Monument Consent:

HES Ref: CNF43116

Archaeological Monitoring Report

(Continuous observation of ground works)

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(December 2010)

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Site details for HER

Name: Pentney Abbey, Pentney, Norfolk, PE32 1JT

Client: Mr H Barber

Local planning authority: Kings Lynn & West Norfolk

Planning authority: English Heritage

Development: New septic tank, feeder drain and soak away drains

Date of fieldwork: 8 & 9 November, 2010

HER Ref: ENF 125410

Scheduled Monument Ref: 30590

Listed Building Refs: 222003 (Abbey Farmhouse) & 222004 (Gatehouse)

OASIS Ref: johnnewm1-89267

Grid ref: TF 7011 1210

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Summary: Pentney Abbey, Pentney, Norfolk (HER- ENF-125410, TF 7011 1210) monitoring of ground works for a new septic tank and related drains and overflow revealed little of archaeological interest. The only features comprised a Post medieval field drain, a possible wall foundation on a similar alignment to existing Post medieval structures and a modern pit (John Newman Archaeological Services for Mr H Barber).

1. Introduction & background

1.1 Mr H Barber commissioned John Newman Archaeological Services (JNAS) to undertake the archaeological monitoring of ground works for a new septic tank, feeder drain and soak away drains for the Abbey Farmhouse, Pentney (see Fig. 1) required under the relevant Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) issued by English Heritage. The monitoring requirements were set out in a Brief set by Mr K Hamilton of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology; Norfolk CC acting as county representatives for English Heritage (Appendix I). These works are to replace an old and inadequate system with both the original and new systems being located immediately to the south of the house (see Fig. 2).

1.2 Pentney is a long narrow parish on the northern of the River Nar in west Norfolk with the main village being located in the north western part of the parish. Abbey Farm, which is located on the site Pentney Priory, is some 3km south west of the village on an isolated site spur of higher ground with the River Nar c200m to the south. The soils are generally sandy and coarse loams over chalk and carstone.

1.3 Pentney Priory was founded in c1130 as a house for Augustinian Canons and to quote further from *Pastscape*-, '*consolidated with Wormegay priory in 1468, and dissolved 1537. Remains now consist of little more than foundations apart from a fine late 14th century gatehouse. Material from the priory has been reused in Abbey Farm and outbuildings which now occupies the site. Crop marks to the south seen on air photographs may be associated with the site. Excavation has revealed pits apparently for burning stonework for lime production at the time of the dissolution. Geophysical survey has located the nave and transepts of the church.*' The gatehouse has a grade I listing and Abbey Farmhouse, an early 18th century structure with re-used materials, is grade II. The site of the priory is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) though the original layout is only poorly understood with the proposed works being carried out some 40m south east of the gatehouse. Whether Abbey Farmhouse is located over one of the ranges of the medieval priory is unknown. Pentney may also have been a minster church in the mid/late Saxon period which lapsed and one possibility is that this minster was located at the parish church and when re-founded in the post conquest era the more isolated, current site of the priory was seen as being more appropriate (Tim Pestell pers. comm.).

2. Monitoring methodology

2.1 The SMC was conditional upon a programme of archaeological works being carried out to ensure that any deposits, features or finds would be fully recorded and, if possible, preserved in situ. The ground works for the new drainage system comprised three parts made up of the excavation of a large pit to take the new septic tank, the excavation of a trench to link this tank to the house some 30m to the north and, finally, the excavation of an overflow system in a herring bone pattern to the south of the tank and into an adjoining field presently under grass (see Fig. 2). Excavation work was carried out using a 180 machine for the tank and overflow drains and a mini-digger for the drain link to the house. These works were monitored continuously by an experienced archaeologist with the 3mx3mx3m pit being excavated using a wide, toothless, bucket through the top and subsoil and into the top of the naturally occurring sand and carstone below to facilitate the identification of any deposits of interest while the drain and overflow trenches were opened using

a narrow, toothed bucket. Through close liaison with the machine operators it was possible to examine any indistinct areas as they were seen and the upcast spoil was kept under close observation at all times. The tank pit and related trenches were plotted from nearby mapped structures and throughout the monitoring a record was maintained with a series of digital images (see Appendix II).

3. Results

3.1 The site for the new septic tank (see Fig. 2) is located 27m south of Abbey Farmhouse and adjacent to an existing concrete pad on the boundary between the grassed area around the house and outbuildings and a pasture field to the south. Information from an employee of the working farm that existed at Abbey Farm until the later 20th century indicates that the concrete pad formed the base for a small cattle shed. The 3m by 3m and 3m deep pit for the new septic tank was mechanically excavated using a wide, toothless, ditching bucket under close supervision. The sandy topsoil proved to be 300mm deep and removal of this layer revealed a sand naturally occurring drift geological deposit with numerous small to medium carstone fragments. The only feature was a modern pit with a diameter of 700mm in the north western corner which contained an unconsolidated fill comprising sand and modern debris. This pit was clearly very deep as its base was not revealed in the 3m deep excavation and it seems likely that this feature is a borehole, perhaps created for the cattle shed noted above as having occupied this area in the recent past. Examination of the upcast spoil noted only a few small 19th century and later brick/tile fragments and assorted modern debris.

3.2 The overflow drains from the septic tank pit, as noted above, were excavated using a 400mm wide toothed bucket in the field to the south (see Fig. 2). The main run is aligned north-south and is 17m long with 3 spurs on each side, each 12m long. The overflow drains were excavated to a depth of 900mm revealing 400mm of a dark brown sandy topsoil over the naturally occurring sand and carstone drift deposit below. The upcast spoil did not reveal any finds and the only feature noted was a north-south aligned ceramic field drain at a depth of 750mm towards the eastern end of the north-eastern spur (see Fig. 2 & image 5). This field drain comprised a series of flat tiles laid as a base with inverted U shaped tiles above. These tiles are quite substantial being 0.75 inch (200mm) thick with a likely date range between the later 18th and 19th century period.

3.3 The drain from the south-eastern corner of the Abbey Farmhouse to the new septic tank (see Fig. 2) ran mainly on a north-south alignment between existing outbuildings before turning south-west and was excavated using a small mini-digger equipped with a 300mm toothed bucket under constant supervision. Near the house the new drain ran partly on or close to existing drain runs and in order to gain the correct drop on the run to the tank was relatively shallow at a depth of between 300-400mm. The drain trench in the area close to the house therefore remained in a mid to dark brown sandy subsoil containing 19th century and later debris and did not expose any underlying drift geological deposits. Therefore whether any earlier features relating to the medieval priory exist in the area of the 10m-15m drain run nearest to the Abbey Farmhouse is unknown though if present would remain undisturbed by these works. From a point near the southern edge of the outbuildings south of the house the required drop for the drain took the excavation to 450-550mm and the natural underlying sand/carstone mix was exposed under a mix of topsoil

and scattered Post medieval building debris. Just to the north of the change of direction in the drain run, where a small inspection chamber was created, a possible remnant of wall foundation was noted running on an east-west alignment (see Fig. 2 & image 8). This possible wall foundation was at a depth of 400mm and is 380mm wide comprising small flints packed into the top of the underlying sand/carstone mix. While this feature is not directly dateable it does run on a parallel alignment to the southern walls of the existing outbuildings nearby and, given the limited exposure of the feature in the trench, it is also possible that it is a natural feature. Disturbance to this feature was kept to a minimal level to accommodate the 100mm drainage pipe. The remaining run of the trench to the septic tank did not reveal any features and the only finds in the upcast spoil were brick and tile fragments of recent date and iron fragments from items of relatively modern agricultural and domestic origin.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The need for a new septic tank and related system for Abbey Farmhouse had been critical for some time and through a process of close consultation between the landowner, English Heritage and Norfolk CC a suitable solution was agreed to remedy this situation while causing minimal disturbance to the monument. It was also hoped that the ground works might reveal some information that could throw light on the archaeology of a site which is poorly understood. However the only features of interest that were revealed were an 18/19th field drain and a possible wall foundation which could not be dated though which had a similar alignment to standing Post medieval structures. In addition no finds of pre-18th century date were found and while the overall level of ground disturbance in relation to the potential size of the medieval priory was small it appears that the area south of the house is outside the main areas of the priory buildings and related features.

Acknowledgements: JNAS would like to thank everyone at Pentney Abbey for their close cooperation, and in particular to Mr & Mrs Barber for their hospitality, all of which helped in the smooth running of the archaeological monitoring.

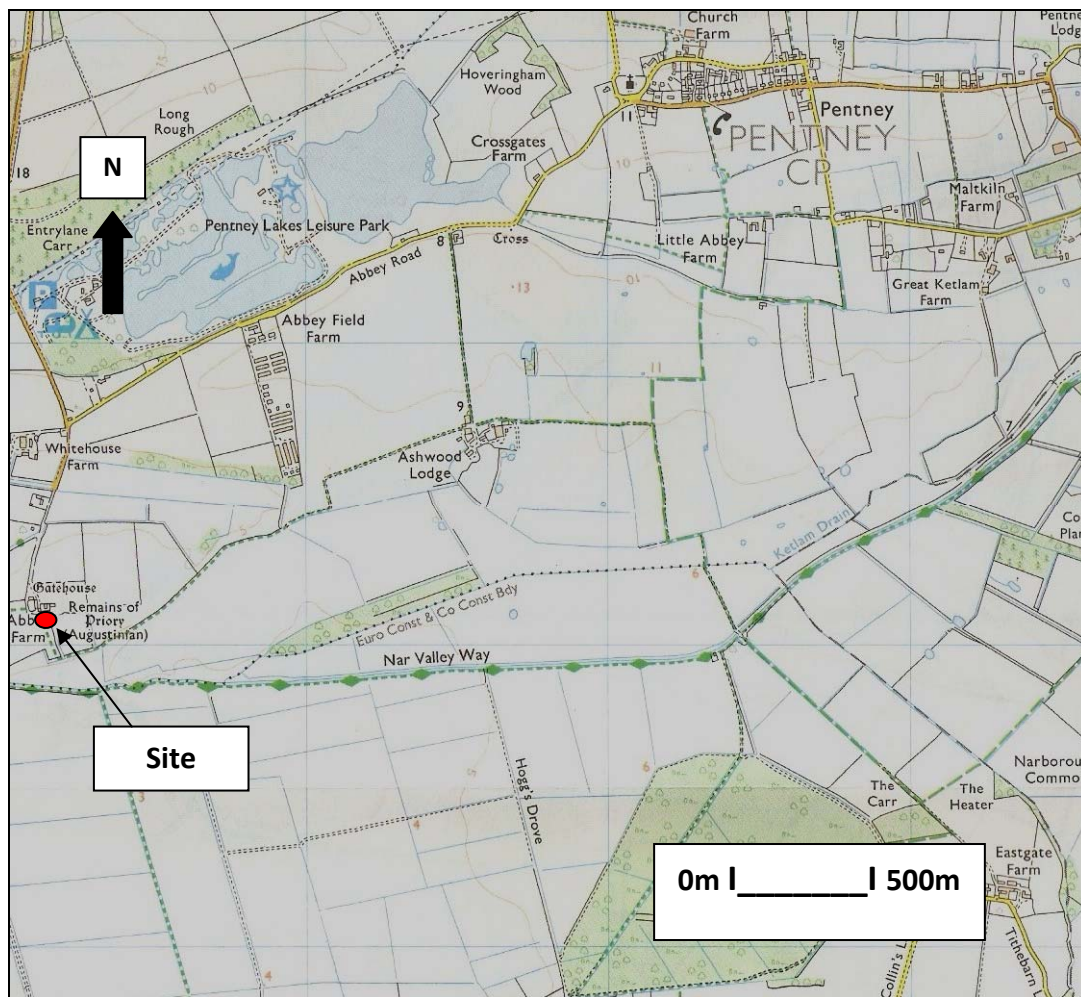


Fig.1: Site location (Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2008
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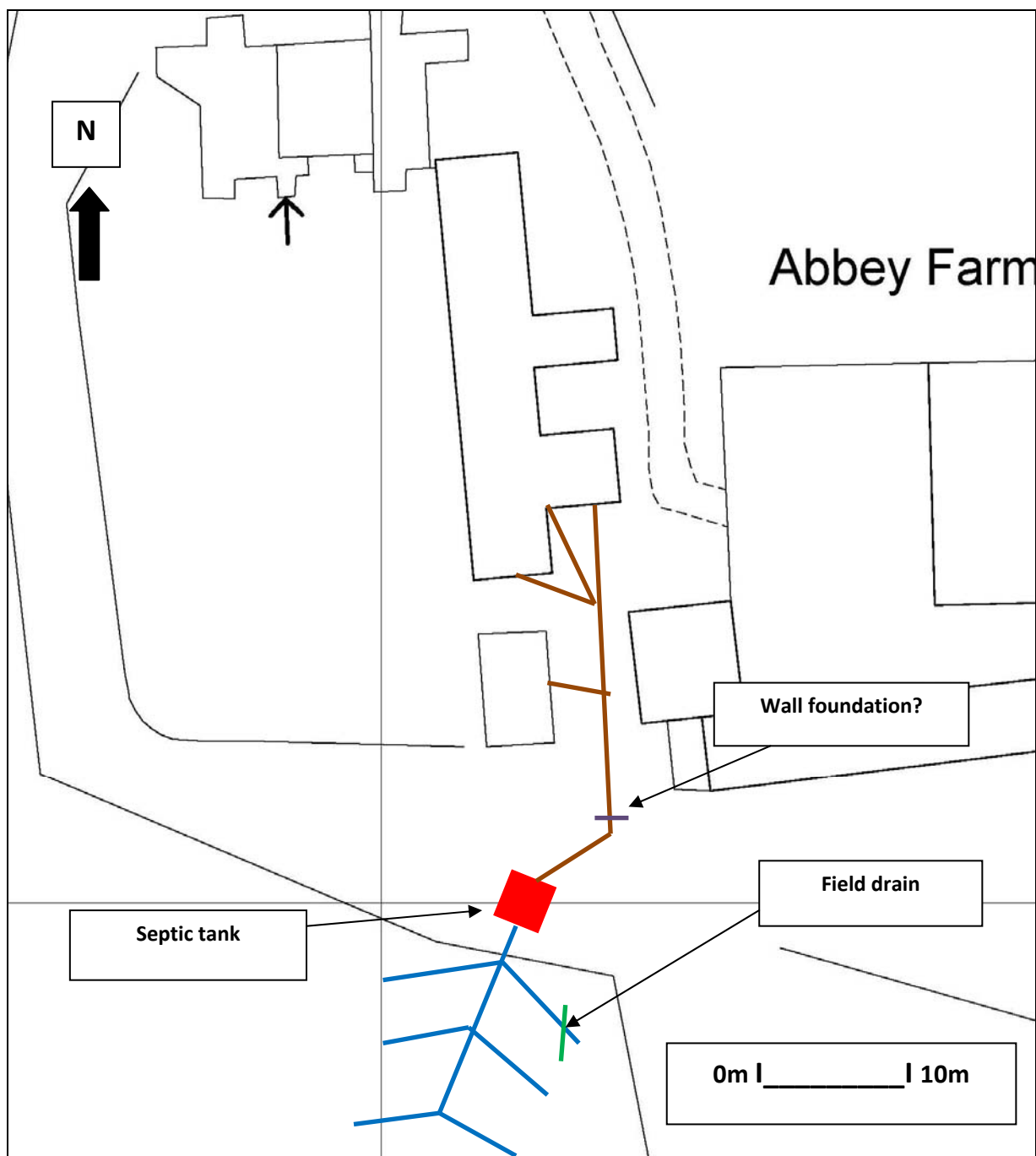


Fig. 2: Location of monitored drains & septic tank (brown- new drain, blue- overflow)
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**BRIEF
FOR THE MONITORING OF WORKS
UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL**

Site or Project Name:	Pentney Abbey Soakaway	
Parish:	Pentney	
Grid reference:	TF70111210	
Norfolk HER No.:	To be arranged	
HES Reference	CNF43116	Associated Y/N
Planning Authority:	English Heritage	
Application or Reference No.:	N/A	
Level Required	Constant Attendance	
Issued by:	Ken Hamilton Senior Archaeologist (Planning) Historic Environment Service Environment, Transport and Development Union House, Gressenhall Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4DR Tel: 01362 869275 (direct) ken.hamilton@norfolk.gov.uk	
Date:	11/10/2010	
Notes:		



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Ken Hamilton on 01362 869275 and we will do our best to help.

THE BRIEF

The Archaeological Contractor should confirm that the Monitoring of Works Under Archaeological Supervision and Control will be undertaken in accordance with the following:

1. Provision will be made for monitoring the development, including, where appropriate, the following:-
 - all areas of below-ground disturbance, including excavations, foundation trenches, service trenches, drains and soakaways.
 - above-ground remains when the development affects a building of historic importance
 - pipeline and cable trenches.
2. Monitoring will be undertaken at the level indicated i.e. occasional visit, regular visit or constant attendance.
3. Where appropriate, topsoil or spoil will be scanned by metal-detector before and during its removal.
4. All archaeological contexts and artefacts exposed, examined or excavated will be fully recorded on appropriate context, finds and sample sheets, on plans and sections and by photographic record.
5. Provision will be made for an appropriate level of analysis, including identification of artefacts, specialist reports if appropriate, production of archive and report, donation of finds to an appropriate museum, transfer and storage of artefacts and archive in an acceptable form to an appropriate museum, conservation and inclusion of the results of the project in the County Historic Environment Record.
6. Indicate that any areas of environmental potential will be sampled, as advised by the environmental specialist.
7. The results will be presented in a report, the nature of which should be commensurate with the findings.
8. The report should include appropriate scale plans showing the locations of all features and finds, and detailed plans and sections where necessary.
9. The report should include comprehensive details of all finds.
10. Three hard copies and a PDF copy on CD of the Report should be supplied to the Historic Environment Service for the attention of the Senior Archaeologist (Planning) within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork on the understanding that this will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months). Two hard copies and the PDF file will be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, and the third hard copy will be forwarded to the Local Planning Authority.
11. At the start of work (immediately before fieldwork commences) an OASIS online record <http://ads.ac.uk/project/oasis/> must be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators forms. When the project is completed, all parts of the OASIS online form must be completed for submission to the Norfolk Historic Environment Record. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report. Hard copies of the report must still be provided as specified.
12. A copy of the OASIS form must be included in the final report.
13. Hard copies of the report must also be provided, as specified below.
14. All works will be carried out in full accordance with the appropriate sections of

Gurney, D., 2003, '**Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England**', as adopted by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers for the East of England Region and published as *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper* 14. This is available as a PDF file on the web at www.eaareports.org.uk. Archaeological Contractors should note that the **Standards** document stipulates basic *methodological* standards. It is considered axiomatic that all contractors will strive to achieve the highest possible *qualitative* standards, with the application of the most advanced and appropriate techniques possible within a context of continuous improvement aimed at maximising the recovery of archaeological data and contributing to the development of a greater understanding of Norfolk's historic environment. Monitoring officers will seek and expect clear evidence of commitment to the historic resource of Norfolk, with specifications being drawn up within a context of added value.

15. The Archaeological Contractor will contact the HER Officer of the Historic Environment Service in advance of work starting to obtain a HER number for the site or, if a number is already given on the Brief, to ensure that it is still applicable.
16. The Archaeological Contractor will give the Historic Environment Service not less than two weeks' written notice of the commencement of the work so that arrangements for monitoring the project can be made.

THE MONITORING OF WORKS UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

This means that you will need to commission an archaeological contractor to ensure that an archaeologist is present during certain phases of the development to record any features exposed or any archaeological finds.

This does not mean that the development programme will be stopped or delayed by the archaeologist, who will work alongside other contractors on site to ensure that any necessary archaeological records are made.

In the unlikely event of the discovery of unanticipated remains of very great importance, discussions will take place on how these might be preserved or recorded.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

You should forward a copy of this Brief to one or more Archaeological Contractors, and discuss with them the timing and costs. Your appointed contractor should be asked to confirm in writing to the Historic Environment Service that this brief will be adhered to.

The Historic Environment Service does not see Contractors' costings, nor do we give advice on costs. You may wish to obtain a number of quotations or to employ the services of an archaeological consultant.

Details of archaeological contractors based in Norfolk and beyond may be found in the Institute for Archaeologists Yearbook & Directory, available from the I.F.A., University of Reading, 2 Earley Gate, PO Box 239, Reading RG6 6AU. Tel: 0118 931 6446. Fax: 0118 931 6448. Email: admin@archaeologists.net. Website:

www.archaeologists.net.

FOR FURTHER HELP, INFORMATION AND ADVICE CONTACT

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Norfolk Historic Environment Service is responsible for safeguarding the County's archaeological heritage. The Historic Environment Service is consulted by Planning Authorities and provides advice on archaeological work that may be required as a result of development proposals.

Appendix II- Images



Image 1: Area before ground works started from south



Image 2: Septic tank area after removal of overburden from south-west



Image 3: Septic tank pit- western section showing modern pit/borehole



Image 4: Area of overflow drains from south



Image 5: Ceramic field drain in overflow drain trench



Image 6: Drain trench near house from south



Image 7: Drain trench from south



Image 8: Possible wall footing in drain trench from east