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Kirkham Priory
 Kirkham
 North Yorkshire
 SE ~~7385 7565~~

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Authorised by *MCS*

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May 2005

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Archaeological Watching Brief

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Non Technical Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out at Kirkham Priory, Kirkham, North Yorkshire. This work was undertaken on the 14th March 2004, and involved monitoring the excavation of five new postholes for information boards, a sixth was mounted on existing stonework. No archaeological deposits/features or finds were observed.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief at Kirkham Priory, Kirkham, North Yorkshire (Figs. 1 & 2) during the excavation of postholes for information boards.
- 1.2 All work was funded by English Heritage.
- 1.3 All maps within this report have been produced from The Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. License No. AL 50453A.
- 1.3 The work was carried out on the 14th of March 2005.

2. Historical and Archaeological Background

- 2.1 Kirkham Priory was founded as a house of Augustinian or Black Canons between 1122 and 1130 by Walter l'Espece, Lord of Helmsley.

- 2.2 The early history of Kirkham Priory is notable for the desire of the Prior St Waltheof and a number of the Canon's to join the Cistercian order under the auspices of Revaulx Abbey. The main difference between the two orders is that Augustinians undertook practical responsibilities within their parishes, but the Cistercians deliberately withdrew from the world to pursue a life of prayer. Kirkham however remained in the Augustinian Order, after Prior Waltheof left to join the Cistercian order in 1143, until the dissolution of the monastery in 1539 (Coppack 1990).
- 2.3 Today the remains of the gatehouse and the church are extant. The church was rebuilt on its original ground plan around 1160-70 and greatly enlarged in the 13th century (Peers 1988). Of the monastic buildings, excavations in the 1800s, 1950s and 1978 have given a nearly complete plan of the cloister, chapter house, frater (dining hall), dormitory and latrine. Remains of the monastic kitchen and guest house have also been located along with the infirmary hall and the prior's house. The previous excavations have shown that the priory evolved from the 1130s until the mid-16th century.
- 2.4 A Watching Brief carried out outside the precinct of the priory, encountered stratigraphy related to the demolition and the dispersal of the building materials (ERARC 1989). The area of the visitor's car park was subject to levelling in the Second World War to act as a turning point for tanks, because the bridge at Kirkham was unsuitable for heavy vehicles. Some of the dump deposits in the 1989 Watching Brief may relate to this activity.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The postholes for the information boards were hand excavated by contractors using an auger with a 0.20m head under archaeological supervision. A photographic record was made prior to excavation (Pls. 1 – 5) and of the excavated postholes.

4. Results

- 4.1 A total of five postholes were excavated (Nos. 1 – 5 : Fig. 2). Measuring between 0.20m and 0.23m in diameter and cut to a depth of 0.45m, all of the postholes illustrated identical stratigraphy of a 10YR 4/6 sandy clay with limestone fragments sealed by 0.12m deep topsoil deposit of 10 YR 4/3 sandy loam.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 No archaeological features or deposits were disturbed during the groundworks.

6. References

- Coppack G 1990 English Heritage Book of Abbeys and Priors.
- ERARC 1989 Archaeological Watching Brief at Kirkham Priory.
- MAP 1995 Manor Farm, Kirkham, North Yorkshire Archaeological Excavation.
- Peers C 1988 Kirkham Priory.

APPENDIX 1

Photographic Listing

No.	Jpeg No.	Description
1.	2005-03-21-1482	Location of Posthole 1. Facing south-east
2.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 1 excavated. Facing north-east
3.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 1 excavated. Facing north-east
4.	2005-03-21-1483	Location of Posthole 2. Facing east
5.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 2 excavated. Facing east
6.	2005-03-21-1483	Location of Posthole 1. Facing west
7.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 3 excavated. Facing east
8.	2005-03-21-1483	Location of Posthole 4. Facing north-east
9.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 4 excavated. Facing north-east
10.	2005-03-21-1483	Location of Posthole 5. Facing east
11.	2005-03-21-1483	Posthole 5 excavated. Facing north-east