



Durford Abbey Farm, nr. Rogate, West Sussex

Report on an Archaeological Evaluation

March 2008



Durford Abbey Farm from the south-east

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This document details the results from an archaeological evaluation carried out at Durford Abbey Farm, nr. Rogate, West Sussex in December 2007. It accompanies applications for Scheduled Monument Consent and Planning Permission relating to building works proposed to be carried out at the Farm. The results have informed the design of those works in order to mitigate any impact upon the buried archaeological remains of the medieval Abbey known to have existed on the site. Details of this mitigation strategy are also contained within this document. The evaluation revealed surviving medieval masonry in four of the fourteen trenches excavated, together with a chalk sarcophagus in a fifth.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

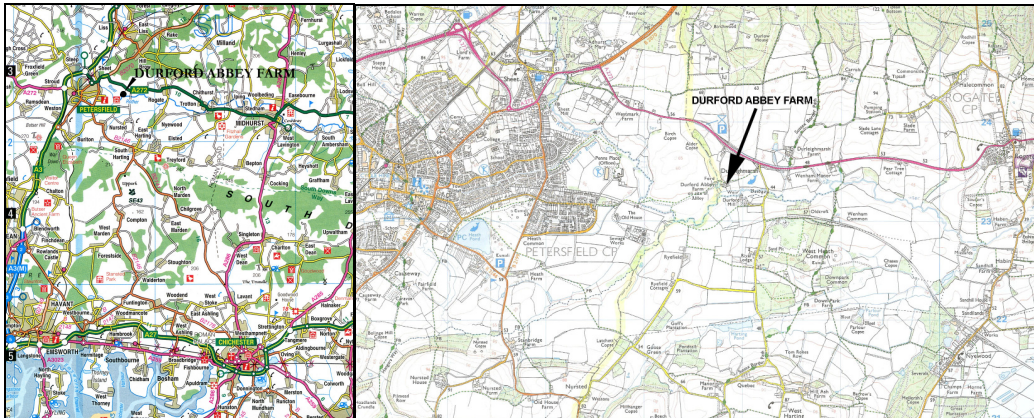


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved.
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1. Durford Abbey Farm lies within the parish of Rogate in West Sussex, approximately 1½ miles to the east of Petersfield, and c.300m south of the A272 (NGR SU 7779 2336). The Farm sits upon the sands of the Sandgate Beds, just to the north of the River Rother, at c. 50m OD.
2. Durford Abbey Farm lies upon the site of the medieval monastery of Durford, the remains of which are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument No: 29280).
3. The owners of Durford Abbey Farm, Mr. & Mrs. S. Perry, wish to carry out works to the farm house and two agricultural structures (a cow house and barn) located to its north and east. In order to inform the design of such works and their impact on buried archaeological remains, West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. (WSA) was approached to excavate a series of evaluation trenches. This report on the results from these archaeological evaluation trenches has been drafted to accompany the applications for planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) associated with the proposed development, in order to assist in their determination.
4. The evaluation was carried out by George Anelay & Ken Mordle of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. from Tuesday 11th until Friday 14th December 2007.
5. The methodology for this evaluation was set out in a Method Statement drawn up by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. (WSA 2007). Fourteen trenches were originally planned; however Trench 3 was not excavated due to the depth of concrete over its location. In addition Trench 13, that located over the proposed cellar entrance, was reduced in size on the advice of the structural engineer and Trenches 8 - 12 were

increased in size due to the nature of the archaeological deposits found within them.

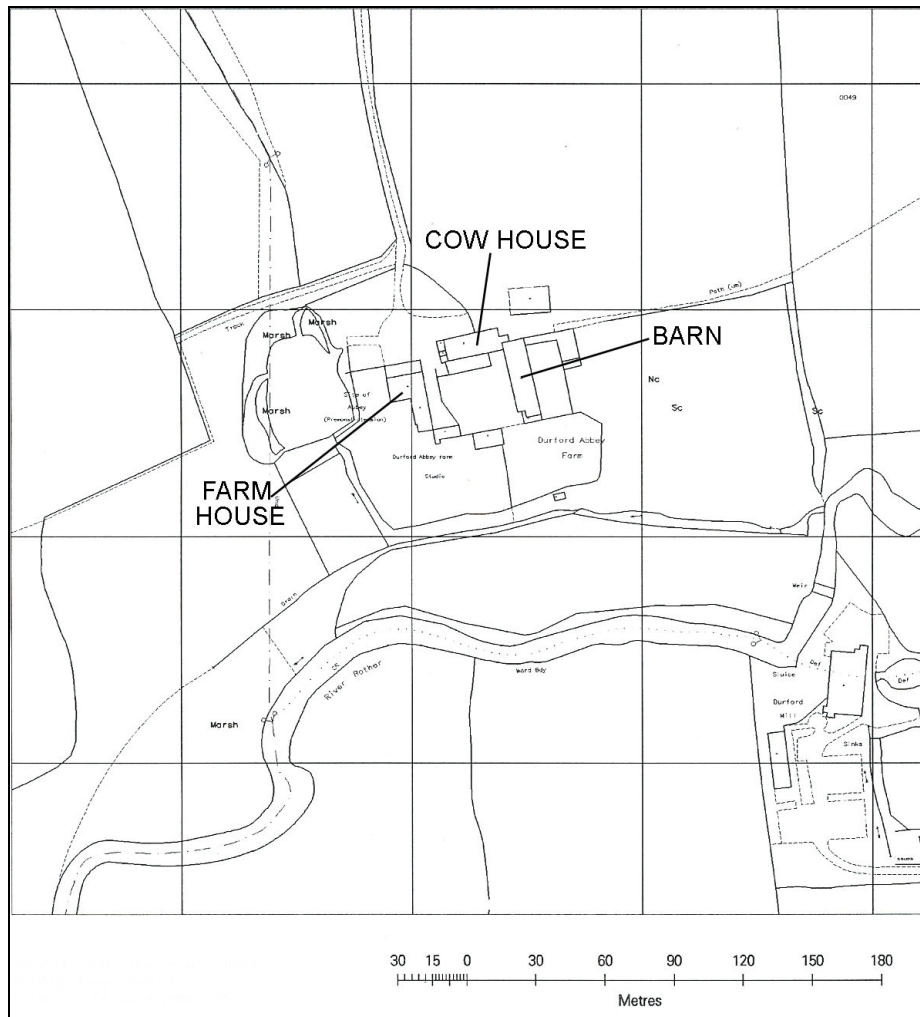


Figure 2 . Site Plan. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved.
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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. The medieval Premonstratensian monastery at Durford was founded by Henry Hussey, Lord of the Manor of Harting, some time before AD 1161. The abbey was one of the smaller monasteries, probably with about ten canons attached to it. From the 14th century the abbey fell into decline, with significant damage to its buildings left un-repaired. In AD 1536 it was suppressed as part of the Dissolution. It then passed into private ownership, in which it has remained up to the present day.
2. Three previous archaeological investigations have taken place at Durford Abbey Farm: around the stables (Wessex Archaeology 1992), on the dam of the fishponds (WSA 2004) and for a new water pipe

(WSA 2003). In addition to these archaeological investigations, various fragments of medieval masonry are to be seen in a number of walls around the property, but it is thought probable that nothing survives of the Abbey buildings themselves, excepting buried remains.

RESULTS

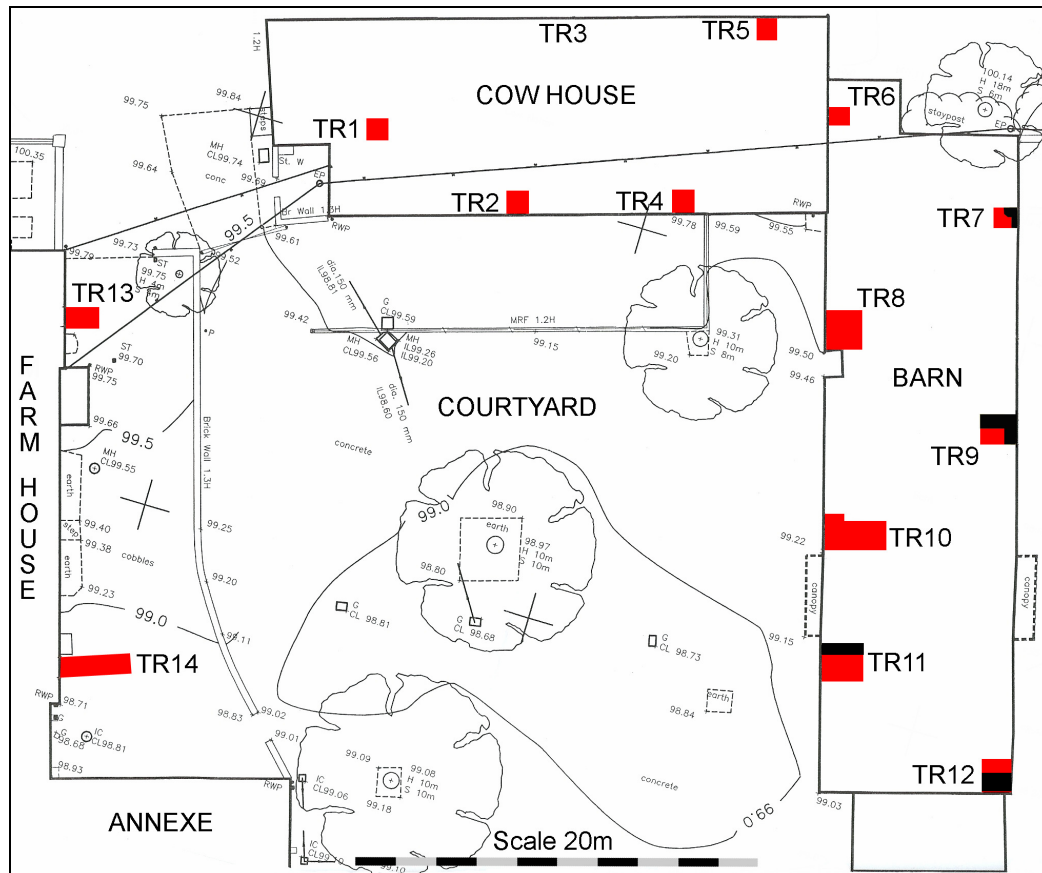


Figure 3 Plan showing the location of all the trenches.
The location of the medieval walls is shown within the trenches in black.

The Cow House

Trench 1

1. Trench 1 was located at the western end of the Cow House against one of its internal concrete partitions. It was placed there to investigate the nature of the footings to the partitions. The footings (3) were found to be of concrete, projecting 0.25m out from the wall and extending to 0.38m in depth below the current floor surface.



Figure 4 Trench 1 looking west. The scale is 1m.

2. In addition to these footings the trench, which was 1m square, contained much evidence of post-medieval or modern disturbance. The south-east corner of the trench was filled with a mass of brick and concrete (5) seemingly backfilling a large pit, the base of which was not revealed. To the west of this were the remains of wall composed of a jumble of upper greensand blocks, slate and brick set in a yellow mortar (4). This wall had been partially destroyed by the large pit (5). The wall, or more probably wall foundation, extended to only 0.4m below the level of the existing concrete floor. Between the wall (4) and the pit (5) a small post-hole (9) was recorded which was certainly earlier than the latter, and probably also pre-dates the former, although no direct relationship survives. The base of this post-hole was 0.67m below the concrete floor.

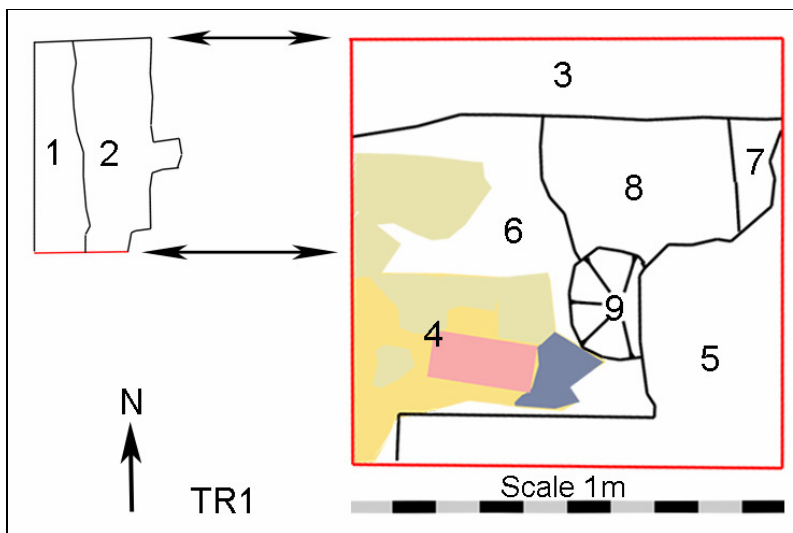


Figure 5 Plan of Trench 1

3. Underlying these features was a small area of seemingly undisturbed clay/sand geology (8) between two spreads of disturbed soil (6 & 7), neither of which were excavated. The surface of these three deposits lay at 0.35m below the floor of the Cow House. Overlying all the above was the concrete floor (1) and its brick and concrete make-up layer (2).
4. The only deposits of possible medieval date in Trench 1 were the two spreads (6 & 7) and the post-hole (9). Due to the limited size of the excavated trench it was impossible to determine their nature or purpose. The bricks found in the wall foundation (4) indicate that it is not medieval in date, and most probably relates to some earlier phase of the site's use as a farm.

Trenches 2 & 4



Figure 6 Trench 2 looking east and south. The scale is 1m

1. Trenches 2 & 4 were almost identical in their results. Both were placed against the south wall of the Cow House to investigate the half-columns supporting the ends of the tie-beams of its roof. Together with Trenches 5 & 6 they revealed that the Cow House walls and the half-columns sit on a foundation of brick on crushed chalk. The base of the bricks in Trenches 2 & 4 (7 & 6) being c 0.6m below the current floor level. The base of the crushed chalk was not reached in these trenches.



Figure 7 Trench 4 looking east and south. The scale is 1m.

2. Inside the brick walls the deposits were very similar, below the concrete floor (1) and its make-up layer (2) was a thick deposit of dark brown soil (3) containing frequent fragments of tile, brick, upper greensand and chalk. Below this layer was a spread of clean yellow sand (4) which overlay a surface (5) in both trenches. The nature of these surfaces was different in each trench, with that in Trench 2 lying at 0.66m below the present floor and being composed of flint and soil, while in Trench 4, lying at 0.6m, it contained numerous fragments of upper greensand and tile, in addition to flints. A small area of Trench 2 was excavated below the level of this surface and it was found that it sat directly upon a flinty clay/sand (6) taken to be the undisturbed geology.

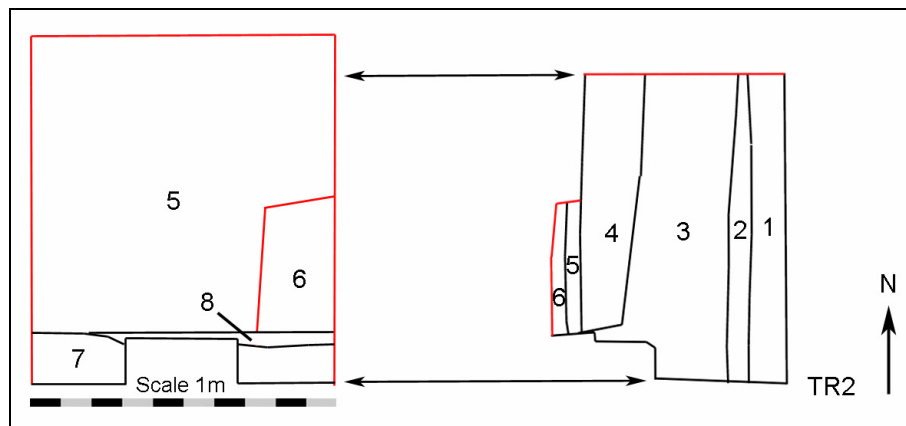


Figure 8 Plan of Trench 2

3. The only possible medieval remains in Trenches 2 & 4 were the two surfaces (5), however the presence of tile and upper greensand fragments within that in Trench 4 suggest that they are more likely to be the remains of post-medieval yards.

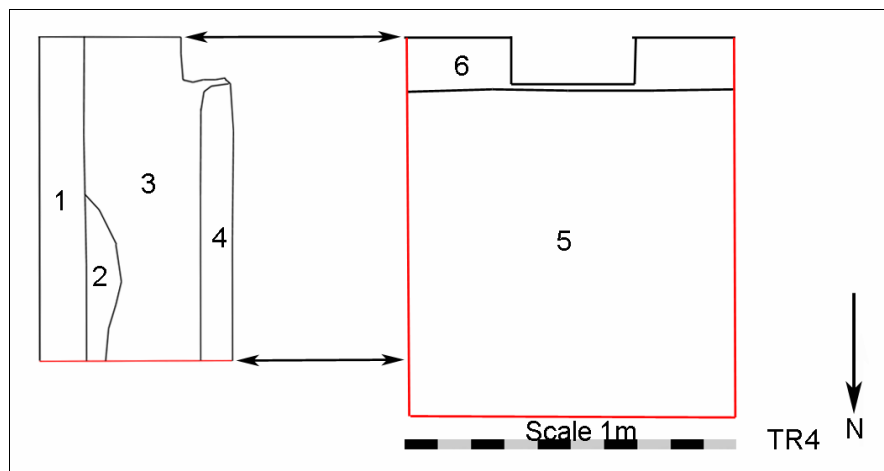


Figure 9 Plan of Trench 4

Trenches 5 & 6



Figure 10 Trench 5 looking north. The scale is 1m.

1. Trenches 5 & 6 provided further information regarding the construction of the Cow House. Trench 5 was placed against its north wall, to investigate another of the half-columns supporting the tie-beams and Trench 6 was against the outside of its east wall. The foundations were again seen to be of brick (7 & 6) sitting on a crushed chalk foundation (8), with the chalk being 0.32m in depth. There was a significant difference in depth to the foundation in these two trenches to that recorded in Trenches 2 & 4, with the north and at least part of the eastern wall foundations being c.0.2m higher.



Figure 11 Trench 6 looking south-west. The scale is 1m

2. In these trenches, below the current floor surface and make-up (1 & 2), there was a thick layer of dark brown soil with rubble fragments (3), very similar to that in trenches 2 & 4, but whereas in these latter trenches the base of the foundations was below the level of the underlying deposits, in Trenches 5 & 6 the builders of the Cow House seem to have been content with digging them only to the base of this soil layer.

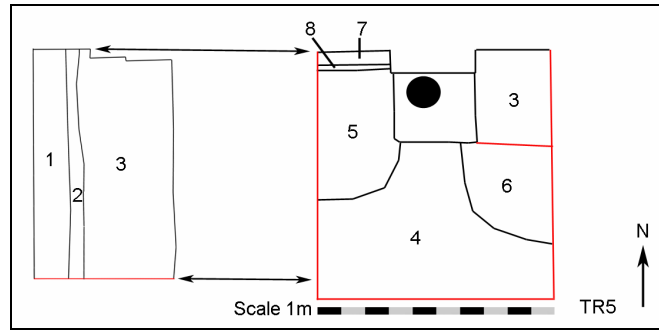


Figure 12 Plan of Trench 5.

3. In both trenches below this layer (3) the undisturbed clay/sand geology was encountered (4) at a depth of 0.6m below the existing floor level, but in both it survived only in part, having been partially dug out at some time before the construction of the Cow House, leaving patches of dark brown soil back-fill (5 & 6 in Trench 5 and 5 in Trench 6). These areas of soil were not excavated, and were not dateable, excepting that they pre-date the Cow House.

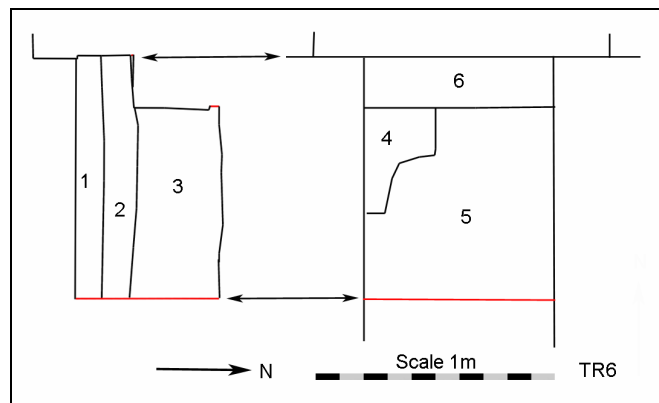


Figure 13 Plan of Trench 6

4. The evidence from Trenches 2, 4, 5 & 6 indicates that Cow House foundations were dug through a thick layer of dark brown soil, which had built up after the abandonment of the Abbey. However this soil layer was not encountered in Trench 1, where the surface of the undisturbed geology appeared to be 0.45m higher than in any of the other trenches. The extent of this deeper soil layer is clearly fairly localised to the Cow House to the east of Trench 1, since in none of the Trenches in the Barn, save Trench 6, was it found and in the Barn the undisturbed geology is again found at a depth similar to that in Trench 1. Whatever caused this depression in the geology may well have removed any traces of medieval remains in the area, certainly none were found in these trenches.
5. The Cow House itself, on the basis of historic map evidence, seems to have been built in the last quarter of the 19th century, replacing an earlier, smaller structure on the same site.

The Barn

Trench 7 & 9



Figure 14 Trench 7 looking east. The scale is 1m.

1. In Trenches 7 & 9 the wall of the extant early 17th century barn was found to rest upon the remains of an earlier wall foundation of upper greensand (5 & 3). It would appear that the barn wall is narrower than that of the earlier, and that it does not run exactly parallel since in Trench 7 the upper greensand wall projects 0.3m, whereas in Trench 9 it is 0.5m. The foundations of the earlier wall in both trenches has been dug down into the clay/sand undisturbed geology (4 & 5), and its depth was not ascertained.



Figure 15 Trench 9 looking east. The scale is 1m

2. There was also evidence for further early walls in both trenches, seemingly with shallower foundations, suggesting they may be internal to any building. In Trench 7 the upper greensand blocks projected westwards at the northern end of the trench, and in Trench 9 a possible robber trench was identified (4) again running westwards. The depth of the remains of all these earlier wall foundations was only 0.2 – 0.25m below the current floor of the barn.

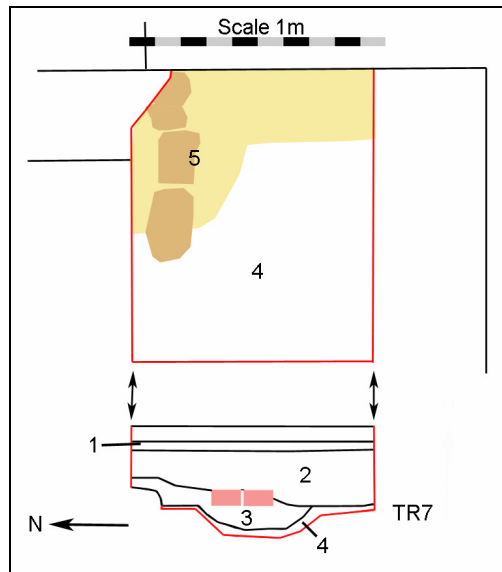


Figure 16 Plan of Trench 7

3. The only other features noted in these trenches were the remains of a probable drain constructed of re-used green glazed floor tiles (6) in Trench 9 and parts of a brick partition wall (3) of modern construction in Trench 7. It is unclear as to the date of the drain, it could feasibly be medieval, but is just as likely to be post-Dissolution, formed from tiles taken from the ruined Abbey.

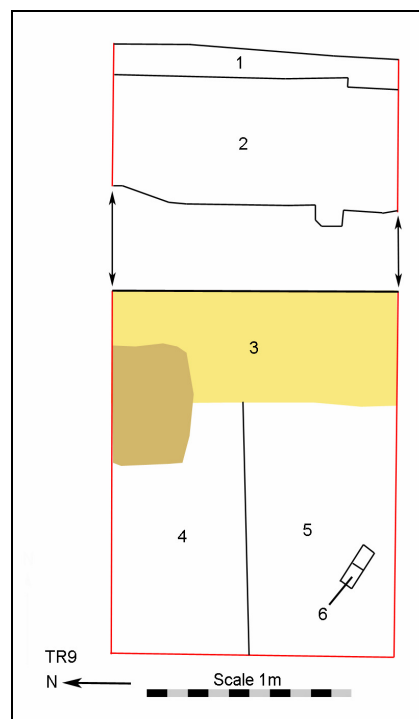


Figure 17 Plan of Trench 9.

Trench 8



Figure 18 Trench 8 looking north-west. The scale is 1m.

1. Trench 8 proved to be unproductive in providing information on the survival of archaeological remains under the barn floor due to the presence of a 19th or 20th century brick structure (9) which completely filled it. Only a part of this structure was revealed making it difficult to suggest what it may have been. The western side was formed by a brick wall of uncertain width, but extending to 0.58m in depth below the timber barn walls and the southern side by a wall one brick length wide, but the eastern and northern sides lay outside the trench. At least one internal subdivision lies within the structure, which was visible in the northern half of the trench, differentiated from the southern wall by being only one brick width wide. The whole structure seems to have been set into the undisturbed clay/sand geology (5), with a gap between the barn's entrance bay and itself filled in with soil and rubble (8).

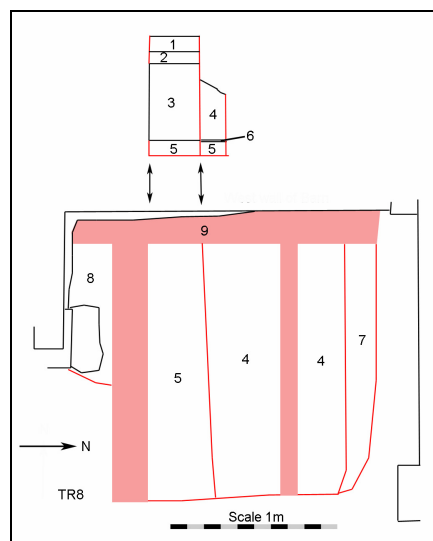


Figure 19 Plan of Trench 8.

2. It was not possible to determine whether the western wall (9) also provided the footing for the barn itself at this point. If this were the case then the original footings have probably been replaced with this brick, since elsewhere they are stone. Alternatively the whole brick structure may be butted up against the stone footings, which lie behind them.
3. Overlying this structure, which was in-filled with a thin layer of dark soil (6) below re-deposited clay/sand (4), traces of an earlier barn floor were found of trodden earth (7). Between this floor and the present one, composed of Fittleworth Fill, there was a layer of wood-chippings and sawdust, deepening to the sides of the barn. This layer was found throughout the barn and suggests that it had been used in an earlier period for timber processing, possibly linked to the water-powered drive-shafts of 19th century date surviving in the roof space on the eastern side of the barn. This may provide a suggested use for the brick structure, as a sawpit linked to this timber processing.

Trench 10



Figure 20 Trench 10 looking west. The scale is 1m

1. The most significant discovery in Trench 10 was a chalk sarcophagus (5) discovered immediately below the present floor surface. The sarcophagus was 1.98m long and 0.82m wide at its western end, tapering to 0.57m wide at its eastern end. It contained a hollowed out cavity for the interment which left walls 0.11m thick along the long sides and only 0.7m at the eastern end, with a separate head cavity at the western end. Two round holes had been punctured through the base of the sarcophagus, roughly evenly spaced along the centre line of the body cavity. It is unclear whether these were part of the original design, although other medieval stone sarcophagi have similar features.

2. It seems probable that the sarcophagus is not in its original location, since it sits within a large depression or pit cut into the clay/sand geology, the sides of which were not revealed in the trench. This depression had been filled with a dark sandy/soil (4) containing fragments of medieval floor tile, early brick and one piece of carved upper greensand. The sarcophagus had also suffered some damage at its eastern end where the top of the sides had been cut down by a few centimetres; there would seem to be no reason for this in its current location and was therefore presumably done elsewhere, before the sarcophagus was deposited here.

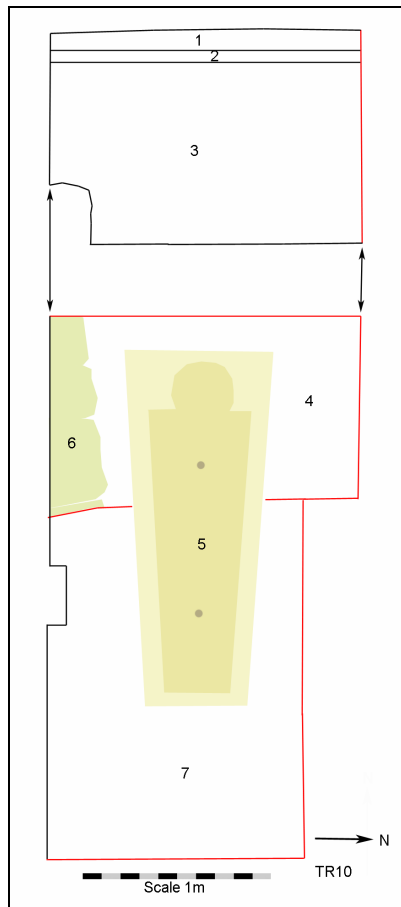


Figure 21 Plan of Trench 10.

3. A coffin of such expense is likely to have been carved for a person of some note, in this context probably a head of the Abbey or a local magnate, and placed within the chancel or transepts of the Abbey's church. No human remains were found in the sarcophagus, and they were probably removed when it was re-located from its original resting place. The reason for its present location is not clear, but it may have been re-used for a water trough, since a plug of wood was found close to one of the perforated holes within its base.

4. As with all the trenches in the Barn, Trench 10's purpose was to investigate the nature of the footings of the barn itself. Here they were found to be of upper greensand and brick set in a yellow mortar and were 1.07m deep below the timber sill beam of the barn. The brick side wall to the barn's entrance on the south side of the trench sat upon large upper greensand blocks to a similar depth.

Trench 11 & Trench 12



Figure 22 Trench 11 looking north. The scale is 1m.

1. Trenches 11 & 12 both exposed wall foundations ((7 & 6) which are almost certainly part of the remains of the medieval monastery at Durford and which are also likely to be the north and south walls of one building or room. Both were of substantial depth and width, although their full dimensions were not visible in both trenches, being 0.9m wide as revealed in Trench 12 and over 1m below the current barn floor in trench 11. Both were composed of upper greensand blocks roughly faced, coursed and set in yellow mortar. On the south side of the wall in Trench 11 and the north side of that in Trench 12, and presumably infilling the space between, the ground was made up with greensand rubble, gravel and soil (5), presumably from the demolished building which had stood above.

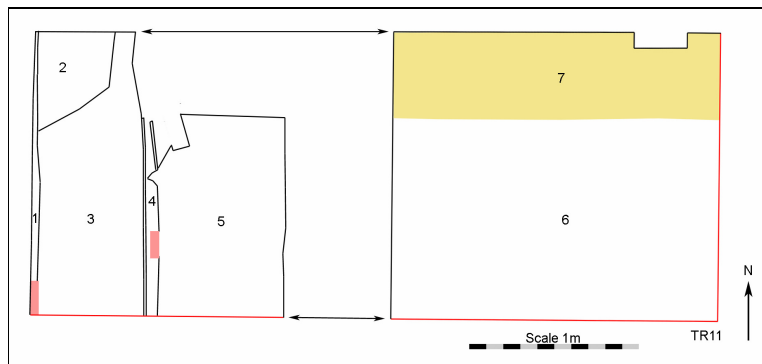


Figure 23 Plan of Trench 11.



Figure 24 Trench 12 looking south. The scale is 1m.

2. The barn, which overlies both foundations, is set upon them only where it crosses their line, leading to structural problems seen particularly in Trench 12, where the south-east corner of the barn has settled exposing cracks in its fabric; these cracks have been repaired with mortar at some point in its lifetime. The barn wall footing in both trenches is composed of upper and lower greensand blocks and occasional bricks (2&3) with bricks as quoins and as a capping layer (1). There was a thin layer of soil (4) between the rubble in-fill and the base of the foundations in Trench 12 which may have exacerbated the settlement problems.

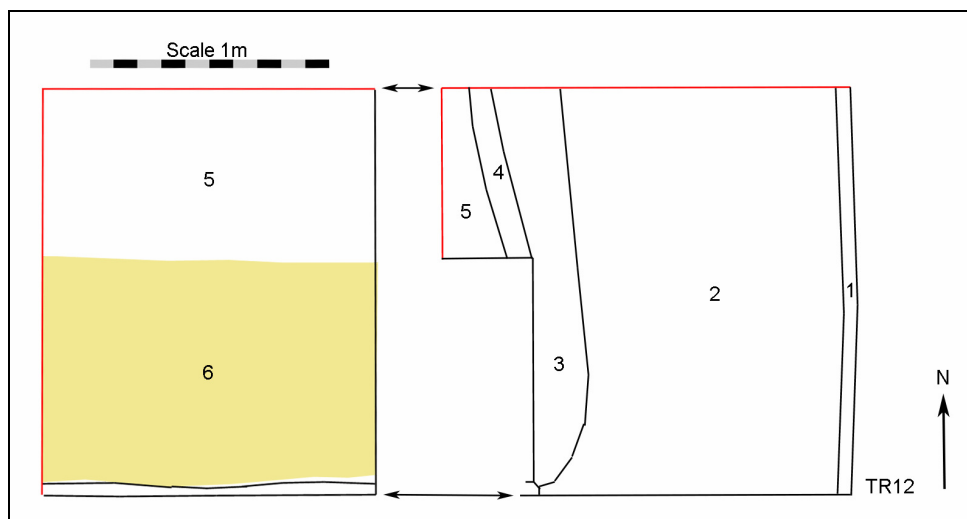


Figure 23 Plan of Trench 12

The Cellar Steps

Trench 13

1. Trench 13 was placed against the east wall of the Farm House in an area where it is proposed to insert a flight of steps descending to a cellar under the north end of the building. The purpose of this trench was to examine the nature of the foundations of the Farm House. In addition a small test pit, only c.04m in diameter, was placed against the base of the wall of the porch immediately to the south, in order to examine its footings.



Figure 24 Trench 13 looking east. The scale is 1m.

2. The foundations (7) to the Farm House were found to start 0.48m below the current ground level. They were composed of mortared greensand rubble and were 0.45m wider on the exterior than the wall above. Interestingly the foundations had been dug from the level of the top of the sand/clay geology (5), and then a thick layer of soil and rubble (3) had been spread over the area to raise the ground surface leaving c0.5m of the house wall underground. This layer of soil and rubble contains stone, tile and brick rubble, including medieval floor tiles. Above this layer was the current cobble surface (1), sitting on clean sand in places (2).

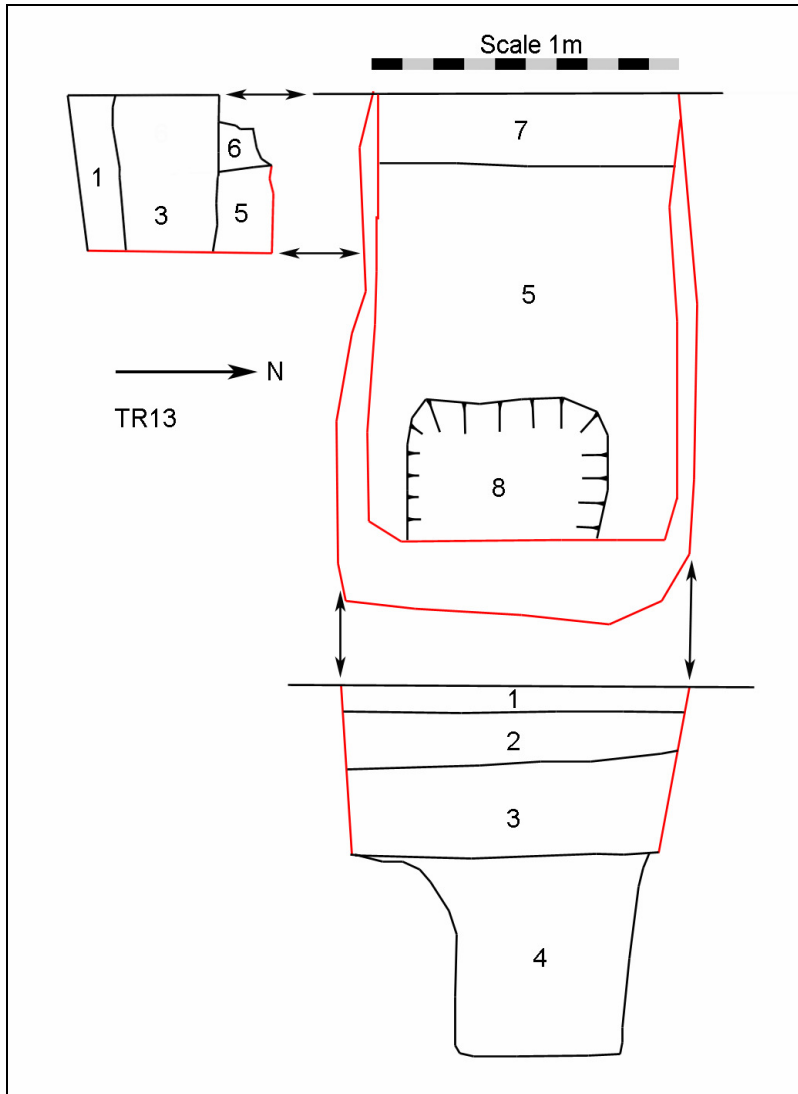


Figure 25 Plan of Trench 13.

3. At the eastern end of the trench a presumed post-hole, 0.65m across, was revealed situated under the rubble layer (3). It had been back-filled with a similar deposit of soil and rubble (4), and was dug from the top of the sand/clay geology (5). It is not possible to say with any certainty whether this feature relates to the medieval or post-medieval occupation of the site, particularly since only part of it was exposed in the trench, but its proximity to the current Farm House might suggest it is associated with its construction, before being back-filled soon after its completion. No other archaeological features were found.
4. The small test pit against the porch revealed that its foundations are 0.3m in depth and sitting within the same soil rubble layer found in Trench 13 (3).

Landscaping to the east of the Farm House

Trench 14



Figure 26 Trench 14 looking east. The scale is 1m.

1. Trench 14 was located to the south of Trench 13, extending 3.5m eastwards from the wall of the Farm House. It was excavated in order to assess the impact of re-landscaping proposed for this area. Significant archaeological deposits were found to lie at a depth of 0.42m below the current cobbled surface (1), overlain by levelling and make-up layers of sand and soil containing building rubble (1-5 & 13). The western end of the trench could not be excavated to the level of the archaeological deposits due to the presence of two service pipes (12 & 14).

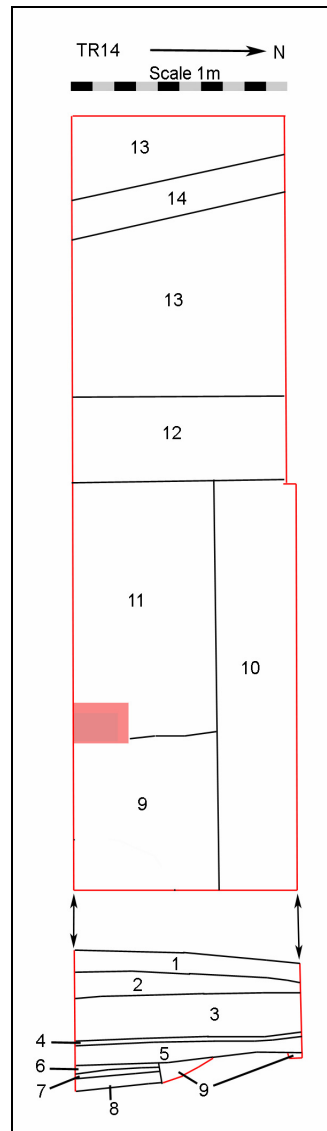


Figure 27 Plan of Trench 14.

2. The archaeological deposits revealed consisted of the fragmentary remains of a tile and brick mortared wall running east-west (9) sitting within a shallow foundation trench dug into the sand/clay geology (11). To the north of this wall three thin layers of discoloured sand were exposed (7, 8 & 10) running alongside it for the remaining width of the trench. Overlying both the wall and the sand layers, a deposit of mortar (6) probably represents the spread from the demolition of this structure. In such a small trench it is difficult to be certain as to what this feature was, however the early date of the bricks used within the wall and the fact that it is unlikely to be contemporary with the current house built in 1784, suggest that it may be the remains of one of the projecting chimneys shown on Grimm's drawing of the previous dwelling on the site. A few metres to the north of Trench 14, the probable remains of another part of this earlier house were discovered during the laying of a water main in 2003 (WSA 2003).

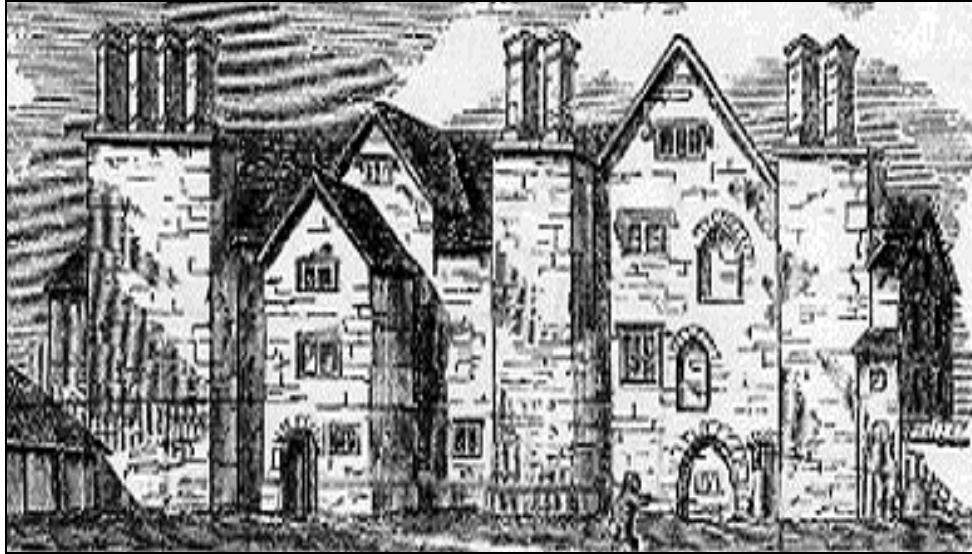


Figure 28 The Grimm drawing of 1782

THE REMAINS OF THE MEDIEVAL ABBEY

1. Only Trenches 7, 9, 11 & 12 were found to contain identifiably medieval structural remains, although the small size of all these trenches makes this result unsurprising. The overall layout of the Abbey has not been clarified by this work, indeed it has undermined the traditional view that the present Farm courtyard reflects the position of the original monastic cloister, since the walls in Trenches 11 & 12 appear to continue their course westwards in to this space. An analysis of other monastic sites, however, indicates the improbability of a cloister of this size for such a minor Abbey. Much more significant monasteries have considerably smaller cloisters, and it is therefore highly improbable that Durford would have invested in such a grand space. In the light of this it is likely that much of the Abbey's remains lie under, not around, the Farm's courtyard.

MITIGATION METHODOLOGY

The Cow House

1. Trenches 1, 2, 4 & 5 found no identifiable medieval remains in the Cow House, and any archaeological deposits that do exist lay at a depth of 0.6m or more below the existing floor in Trenches 2, 4 & 5 and at 0.35m Trench 1, where there had been much modern disturbance. In accordance with these results the architects for the proposed development, Ian Adam-Smith, have adjusted their foundation and slab plan to raise the level of any ground disturbance to above a depth of 0.6m below the current floor level. In the area of Trench 1, where the archaeological remains may survive at shallower depth, the depth of

disturbance will be 0.4m, only 0.05m below the top of any deposits. The depth of archaeological deposits in relation to the proposed new floor levels and their make-up layers, are shown on the architect's plans which accompany the applications.

2. It is proposed that due to the mitigation methods already undertaken through the adjustments made in the floor levels, an archaeological watching brief on the reduction of the ground associated with the works in the Cow House would be the most appropriate response.

The Barn

1. Trenches 7, 9, 10, 11 & 12 located in the Barn have shown that archaeological remains, in this case the surviving parts of demolished medieval walls and a re-located sarcophagus, survive at a comparatively shallow level. In the light of this the architect's have adjusted the proposed height of the new floor of the barn so that in no place will it, or its make-up layers, have an impact upon any archaeological deposits predicted on the basis of the excavated trenches. The depth of archaeological deposits in relation to the proposed new floor levels and their make-up layers, are shown on the architect's plans which accompany the applications.
2. It is proposed that due to the mitigation methods already undertaken through the adjustments made in the floor levels, an archaeological watching brief on the reduction of the ground associated with the works in the Barn would be the most appropriate response.

The Cellar Steps

1. The presence of only one archaeological feature in Trench 13 suggests that there is a low density of archaeological remains in the area of the proposed cellar steps.
2. In the light of these findings it is proposed that an archaeological watching brief on the reduction of the ground associated with the works in this area would be the most appropriate response.

Landscaping to the East of the Farm House

1. Trench 14, and the water main trench excavated in 2003, indicate that remains associated with the pre-1784 house may survive in this area at a depth of 0.45m or more. It is unlikely that any of the works associated with the landscaping will disturb any of these remains; however they may survive at shallower depths in this area.
2. In the light of these findings it is proposed that an archaeological watching brief on any significant ground-works associated with this landscaping would be the most appropriate response.

Installation of new Services

1. The above works will require the instillation of new service runs. The plans drawn up by the architects which accompany these applications indicate the location of these services. Wherever possible these have been positioned within existing trenches to minimise their impact upon any buried archaeological remains.
2. It is proposed that an archaeological watching brief on the cutting of any new service trenches and the on the re-opening of any of the existing ones would be the most appropriate response. In addition a level of flexibility will have to be maintained in the positioning of any new trenches while it is being carried out, in order to avoid damaging the remains of any surviving structures associated with the medieval Abbey. Wherever possible trenches will be re-located in order to achieve this, but if this proves impractical then agreement will be reached with English Heritage over alternative solutions.

All Ground-works

1. Due to the unpredictable nature of buried archaeological remains, it is possible that structural survivals of the medieval Abbey will be encountered during the course of these works which will not be automatically preserved by the mitigation methods set out above. Should such structures be suitable in scale and composition it is proposed that if necessary they be covered with geo-textile fabric to preserve them in situ and then built over. Should such a course be impractical then agreement will be reached with English Heritage over alternative solutions.

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