

Fig.1 Three Continental objects of Early Saxon date. Scale 1:1.

fig.159). The silver knob (No.3) is less easy to place, but may have formed part of a radiate brooch of Frankish or Lombardic origin. It is possibly rather later than the other objects.

All four pieces were found with metal detectors and are apparently isolated finds. It is most likely that they found their way to Norfolk from Kent rather than directly from the continent, and they serve to underline the presence of links between East Anglia and the south-east at an earlier date than the historical and archaeological evidence normally allow us to glimpse.

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BEESTON REGIS PRIORY A NOTE ON THE PONDS

by Edwin J. Rose

A footnote may be added to Stephen Heywood's paper on Beeston Regis Priory in *Norfolk Archaeology* volume XL, 226, concerning the unusual system of ponds. The ruins have a large and deep pond on both the north and east sides; these are marked on the site plan, fig.1 of that paper, but appear more clearly on the aerial photograph (plate I) and the reconstruction drawing (fig.5). These features are quite unlike the usual fishponds found on monastic sites; rather they have

a similarity to the Mere at Baconsthorpe Castle and the lake attached to the moated site immediately south of the Hall at Ashwellthorpe.

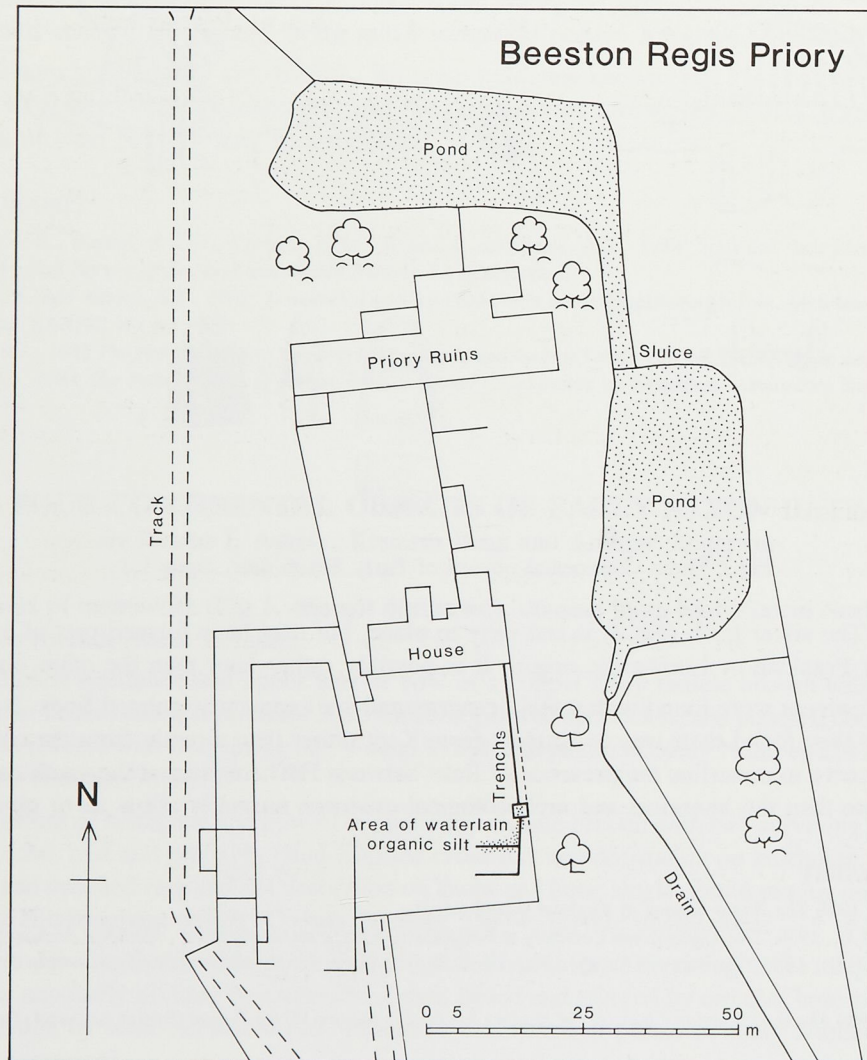


Fig. 1

There is a persistent local legend that a third pond of the same size once lay immediately to the south of the farmhouse. This seemed improbable, as no such feature is marked on the earliest maps of the area.

In September 1983 the writer observed drainage works at the priory on behalf of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit. A trench one metre deep was dug from the east wall of the house southwards for a distance of 20.5 metres parallel with the garden wall. At its south end a septic tank pit was excavated to a greater depth. In the north face of this appeared half of a U-shaped feature, 2 metres in width, the other half lying apparently on the east side of the garden wall. The feature

was filled with 48 cm. of topsoil over 25 cm. of waterlain organic silt, above waterlogged clay. The garden wall was carried above it on footings 90 cm. deep, resting on a large sleeper beam held in place by stakes of alder branches. This beam was retrieved after the collapse of the wall and found to contain mortises for a large diamond-mullioned window, as well as evidence of secondary usage.

A large drain trench one metre deep was excavated on a line slightly west of south for a length of 9 metres from the pit. This trench lay totally within the same organic silt as encountered in the U-shaped ditch; at a distance of 2.5 metres the silt came to an end in the east side of the trench, sloping upwards to the topsoil, but it continued for another 2 metres in the west side, indicating that the edge of the feature was curving to the west. At this point another drainage trench was dug towards the west for a distance of 7 metres. It was again entirely contained within the silt layer but at the extreme west end the underlying clay began to slope upwards. A third land drain trench, running west for 7 metres from the southern end of the first, revealed a stratigraphy of topsoil resting directly upon clay with no silt.

A snail shell was retrieved from the silt in the east-west trench. It was later identified as *Trichia* sp. a land species, but the shell contained silt pierced by the burrows of an organism found in still freshwater ponds.

The findings thus confirm that a third pond lay to the south of the house; its southern edge was between 24 and 29 metres south of the building. Its northern edge was not traced but it extended almost the full length of the phase I building — half the length of the present house — and would have occupied the area of lawn on the right hand side of the aerial photograph. Its northeast corner was connected by a U-shaped, shallower channel to the eastern pond. No evidence was revealed of its date or function, but its existence had certainly been forgotten by the later 19th century when the builders of the garden wall were unaware of its presence and dug to a depth of 90 cm. searching for solid ground before re-using a beam that originally came from the earliest phases of the house as a rafted foundation. There is no reason to believe that it should not be included on the reconstruction drawing with the other ponds, forming another unusual feature of this remarkable monastic house. Presumably the ponds were used as fish stews, but it is not impossible that it also served a defensive function.

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