



making sense of heritage

Waverley Abbey, Surrey

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Ref: 110480.02
October 2015



Waverley Abbey, Surrey

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Plate 1: Structure **103** within kissing gate posthole, viewed from the west, scale: 0.2 m

Plate 2 -5: Replaced stock fence posts



Waverley Abbey, Surrey

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Historic England, the Client, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the maintenance of the boundary fence around the site of Waverley Abbey, part of which is in the Guardianship of the Secretary of State. Waverley Abbey is a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List for England no. 1007814) and is centred on National Grid Reference 486777 145309. The abbey is situated on the flood plain of the River Wey and was the first Cistercian house to be established in Britain. The surviving monastic complex comprises the abbey church and monastic buildings surrounded by an undisturbed monastic precinct.

The watching brief involved the removal and replacement of an existing rotten fence post located at the northern kissing gate entrance to the site and the construction of four new stock fence posts along the eastern and western boundary fences. The boundary fence and kissing gate are located in archaeologically sensitive areas within the Scheduled Monument site.

A possible wall foundation was identified at the location of the northern kissing gate post hole. This structure was the only archaeological feature identified during the archaeological watching brief works. The location of the feature corresponds precisely with a wall illustrated in a 1905 plan of former archaeological excavations, carried out between 1890 and 1903. There were no further archaeological remains or finds recovered during the watching brief.

Earlier truncation associated with the initial construction of the boundary fence and the size of the area subject to groundworks are thought to be key factors in the lack of archaeological remains identified during the replacement of the four stock fence posts.



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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Karen Eakers of Historic England for commissioning the work and for her help and assistance during the course of the project.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Jamie McCarthy. The report was written by Ruth Panes with report illustrations by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andy Crockett.



Waverley Abbey, Surrey

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) were commissioned by Historic England (HE), the Client, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the maintenance of the boundary fence around the site of Waverley Abbey (hereafter referred to as the Site), part of which is in the Guardianship of the Secretary of State. The Site is a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) no. 1007814) and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 486777 145309.
- 1.1.2 The works involved the removal and replacement of an existing rotten fence post located at the northern kissing gate entrance to the Site and the construction of four new stock fence posts along the eastern and western boundary fences (**Plates 2 to 5**). The boundary fence and kissing gate (**Figure 1**) are located in archaeologically sensitive areas within the Scheduled Monument site.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing the methodologies and standards to be employed in order to undertake the archaeological watching brief was produced by English Heritage in June 2015 (EH 2015).
- 1.1.4 This document sets out the results of the archaeological watching brief which took place on the 26th August 2015.

1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is centred on NGR 486777 145309 in the centre of the Scheduled Monument area (**Figure 1**). The kissing gate and boundary fence demarcate the area under guardianship by English Heritage which includes the abbey church and the principal claustral ranges.
- 1.2.2 The Site is situated on the floodplain of the River Wey, within an area of predominantly pasture fields and woodland. To the north lies Waverley Abbey House and grounds. To the north-west lies Priory Farm and to the west lies Monk's Walk Farm. The monument is bounded to the south and the east by the River Wey. Woodland lies to the south beyond the river. The Site is c.3 km to the south-east of Farnham in Surrey.
- 1.2.3 The bedrock geology of the Site is mapped as Folkestone Formation Sandstone with overlying superficial alluvial deposits of comprising of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (BGS 2015). The Site is situated at c.60 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The following archaeological and historical background is taken from the WSI for the Site produced by English Heritage (EH 2015);



- 2.1.2 Waverley Abbey was founded on 24th November 1128 by William Giffard, bishop of Winchester, and was the first Cistercian abbey to be founded in England, the first of 76 such monastic establishments to be founded in England and Wales. The Cistercians sought to emulate the example of the early monastics by living a life of austerity, prayer and manual labour. They sought out remote rural locations away from lay populations. The continuing secluded nature of Waverley Abbey reflects this impulse and adds to the site's significance.
- 2.1.3 Excavations overseen by Harold Brakspear between 1890 and 1903 revealed the plan of the earliest phases of the abbey as well as that associated with the surviving standing remains. The original abbey church was an aisle-less building and much smaller than the present church. Roughly speaking the nave of the original church stood on the site of the north side of the later cloister, and its crossing, transepts and presbytery were located within the area of the present south transept. (The walls of the south transept incorporate some of the earlier work.)
- 2.1.4 The proximity of the River Wey, fundamental to the monastic community for sanitation and provision of water to feed fishponds, meant that the site was prone to inundation. Damage caused by flooding, combined with the expansion of the abbey, meant that the original abbey buildings of the mid-12th century were rebuilt during the 13th century. The standing remains of the church and chapter house date from this period, and the remains of the dormer and cellarium are 13th-century southwards extensions of 12th-century structures.
- 2.1.5 The precinct of the monastery covered an area of c.24 hectares, with the rebuilt buildings of the abbey's inner court covering about 3.5 hectares. The monastic complex was located at the southern end of the precinct, close to the River Wey. The area in the guardianship of English Heritage represents a large portion of this complex, but not its whole: only the abbey church and the principal claustral ranges fall within this area. Evidence of buildings to the west and east of the claustral ranges were encountered during the 1890 – 1903 campaign, and the monastic cemetery lies north and east of the abbey church.
- 2.1.6 The boundary fence runs across the buried remains of a courtyard west of the cloister, with the lay brothers infirmary to the south and the guest house to the north. On the east side of the guardianship area the boundary fence runs across the site of the monastic infirmary chapel and cloister. Ground disturbance associated with the introduction of the fencing will have eroded the archaeological potential of areas immediately affected by fence and gate posts but there remained a potential for unstratified deposits to survive below ground in these locations.
- 2.1.7 The abbey was suppressed in 1536 and the site granted to Sir William FitzWilliam, treasurer of the king's household and later earl of Southampton. At the time of its sale to the Cobham family in the early 17th century it was said that the monastic remains underwent great dilapidations. Although the earliest secular use of the site involved a house incorporating some of the abbey remains (of which very little survives today) by the 18th century the abbey had become an eye catcher in the grounds of a new house established to the north.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record the presence and nature of archaeological deposits encountered during the works, and to signal to interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of archaeological material for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are not sufficient to support treatment to a proper and satisfactory standard (EH 2015).

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 The watching brief comprised archaeological monitoring of the removal and replacement of a single, existing rotten fence post located at the northern kissing gate entrance to the Site and the removal and construction of four new stock fence posts on the boundary fence (**Figure 1**).

3.2.2 The kissing gate fence post required the removal of the concrete foundation from the rotten post and due care was taken to keep the ground disturbance to an absolute minimum during this process. A small rectangular hole measuring 0.3 m by 0.34 m was hand excavated to remove the concrete foundation. This was excavated to a depth of 0.34 m below the ground surface (**Plate 1**).

3.2.3 Disturbance was kept to a minimum when replacing the stock fence posts by removing the existing posts using a mechanical post puller and positioning the new posts within the existing holes.

3.3 Recording

3.3.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. All recording was supported by daybook entries.

3.3.2 All archaeological deposits and features were recorded on drawn plans at 1:20 scale, recorded in writing on context sheets and photographed.

3.3.3 A full photographic record was compiled using digital images. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.

3.3.4 Monitored works were referenced to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

3.3.5 A unique site code **110480** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

3.3.6 All recording was carried out in accordance with the procedures laid down in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): PPN3: Archaeological Excavation. (EH 2008)

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1.1 The remains of possible wall foundations were revealed at the location of the northern kissing gate post hole excavation (**Figure 1**) (**Plate 1**). The foundation materials comprised of sedimentary stone with a white lime mortar (**Structure 103**). Unfortunately the size, 0.3 m by 0.34 m, of the excavation area meant analysis of the material was

limited and it was not possible to determine whether the stone was dressed. The foundation material was located at a depth of 0.34 m below the ground surface stratigraphically and physically directly below the topsoil.

- 4.1.2 Excavation of the kissing gate post hole ceased at the upper surface of **Structure 103** and once the feature had been fully recorded, the new post was erected within the excavated post hole in the same location as the former rotten post hole (**Figure 1**).
- 4.1.3 No features or archaeological remains were identified during the removal and replacement of the four stock fence posts on the boundary fence.

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

- 5.1.1 There were no artefacts recovered from the excavations.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

- 6.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was present within the Site.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The discovery of the possible wall foundation (**Structure 103**) at the location of the northern kissing gate post hole excavation was the only archaeological feature identified during the archaeological watching brief works. The remains were visible in a 0.3 m by 0.34 m rectangular post hole trench which was excavated to remove the previous concrete foundation associated with the rotten post (**Plate 1**).
- 7.1.2 It should be noted that the four replacement stock posts positioned on the boundary fence were erected using a different technique (removal of the former post with a mechanical post puller and erection of the new post in the same location through hammering into the ground (**Plate 3**)). Thus the lack of archaeological remains identified along the boundary fence could be attributed to earlier truncation associated with the initial construction of the boundary fence. The small size in area of the stock post hole excavations also meant identification of potential remains was limited. Therefore it cannot be assumed that archaeological remains are not present in close proximity to the stock fence post holes.
- 7.1.3 The possible wall foundation (**Structure 103**) is located in the same position as a north-north-east to south-south-west boundary wall depicted on Brakspear's plan of the abbey from 1905 (Brakspear 1905) (**Figure 1**). The plan is based on the excavations of the monastic complex which was excavated by Surrey Archaeological Society in 1890-1903 and overseen by Harold Brakspear. It is therefore likely **Structure 103** corresponds to this feature. The wall illustrated on Brakspear's plan is part of the northern extent of the monastic complex.

8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Archive

- 8.1.1 The site archive and all artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be deposited with English Heritage at the regional curatorial store (Fort Brockhurst, Gunners Way, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 4DS) within one month of the completion of the final report.
- 8.1.2 The site archive was prepared in accordance with Deposition of Archaeological Archives with the English Heritage Collections Team (Brown 2011) and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014; ADS 2013).

- 8.1.3 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Surrey HER. A copy of the OASIS entry has been included in this report (**Appendix 1**).
- 8.1.4 All archive elements will be marked with the site code **110480**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:
- 1 file of paper records

8.2 Copyright

- 8.2.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by WA under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Heritage Centre, however, will be granted exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

8.3 Security copy

- 8.3.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

9 REFERENCES

9.1 Bibliography

- ADS 2013, *Caring for Digital Data in Archaeology: a guide to good practice*, Archaeology Data Service & Digital Antiquity Guides to Good Practice
- Brakspear 1905 Waverley Abbey, Surrey Archaeological Society, Historic England
- British Geological Survey (BGS) <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
[accessed October 2015]
- Brown, D.H., 2011. Archaeological archives; a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation, Archaeological Archives Forum (revised edition)
- ClfA 2014, *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
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- SMA 1995, *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive*, Society of Museum Archaeologist



10 APPENDIX 1: OASIS REPORT

OASIS ID: wessexar1-226840

Project details

Project name	Waverley Abbey, Surrey
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by Historic England, the Client, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the maintenance of the boundary fence around the site of Waverley Abbey, which is partly which is partly under guardianship by English Heritage. Waverley Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List for England no. 1007814). The abbey is situated on the flood plain of the River Wey and was the first Cistercian house to be established in Britain. The watching brief involved the removal and replacement of an existing rotten fence post located at the northern kissing gate entrance to the site and the construction of four new stock fence posts along the eastern and western boundary fences. A possible wall foundation was identified at the location of the northern kissing gate post hole. This structure was the only archaeological feature identified during the archaeological watching brief works. Earlier truncation associated with the initial construction of the boundary fence and the size of the area subject to groundworks are thought to be key factors in the lack of archaeological remains identified during the replacement of the four stock fence posts.
Project dates	Start: 26-08-2015 End: 26-08-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	110480 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 8 - Land dedicated to the display of a monument
Monument type	ABBEY Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location



Country	England
Site location	SURREY WAVERLEY FARNHAM Waverley Abbey, Surrey
Postcode	GU9 8EP
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 486777 145309 50.927625022017 -1.307292162884 50 55 39 N 001 18 26 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 60m Max: 60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage
Project design originator	ENGLISH HERITAGE
Project director/manager	A Crockett
Project supervisor	Jamie McCarthy
Type of sponsor/funding body	English Heritage
Name of sponsor/funding body	English Heritage

Project archives

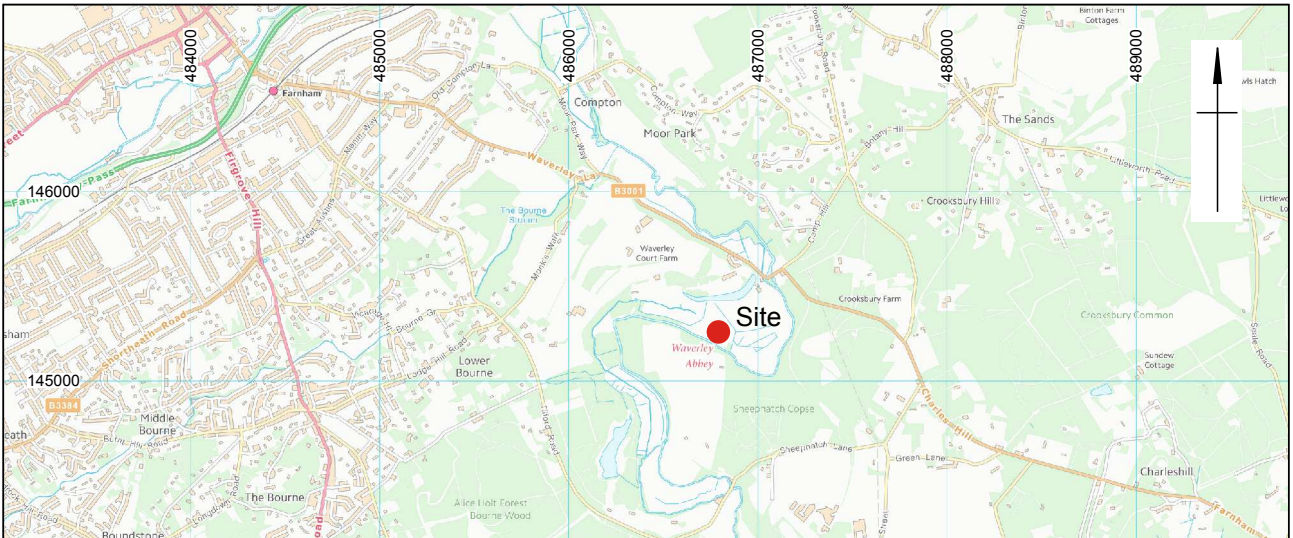
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	English Heritage
Digital Archive ID	110480
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	English Heritage store, Fort Brockhurst, Gosport, Hampshire



Paper Archive ID 110480
Paper Contents "none"
Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Drawing", "Map", "Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes", "Report"

**Project
bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title Waverley Abbey, Surrey; Archaeological Watching Brief Report
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Description A4 bound client report
URL <http://www.oasis.ac.uk>



- Existing boundary fence
- Visible walls
- - - Brakspear's 1905 plan of the abbey
- Kissing gate posthole



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Site location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Structure 103 within kissing gate posthole, viewed from the west (scale: 0.2 m)



Plate 2: Replaced stock fence post


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Plate 3: Replaced stock fence post



Plate 4: Replaced stock fence post



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Plate 5: Replaced stock fence post

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