

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief
at Castle Acre Castle
Castle Acre, Norfolk
June 2007



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Report 07/083

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in June 2007 during the excavation of post-pits for a new graphics scheme at Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk. A total of six post-pits were excavated for information boards, including one replacement board at Castle Acre Priory. No significant archaeological remains were present.	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Site status	Scheduled Ancient Monument (No:21441)	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Historic Monument in the care of English Heritage	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Medieval fortified site/priory	
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Norfolk	
Site address	Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	200 sq. m	
OS Easting & Northing	58146 31480	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	English Heritage	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	English Heritage	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2007	
End date	June 2007	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		Watching brief forms (10) Colour slides (7) black and white contact prints (7) Digital photographs (40)
Digital		Report text and figures

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
CASTLE ACRECASTLE, CASTLE ACRE,
NORFOLK
JUNE 2007**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in June 2007 during the excavation of post-pits for a new graphics scheme at Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk. Six post-pits were excavated for information boards, including one replacement board at Castle Acre Priory. No significant archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in June 2007 during the excavation of five post-pits for replacement information boards, which were part of a new graphics scheme at Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk (NGR TF 8146 1480: Fig 1). In addition, a single post-pit was excavated at Castle Acre Priory in order to replace a broken information board. The work was carried out on behalf of English Heritage and followed an approved scheme of works prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Leigh 2006a).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

The site lies within the village of Castle Acre, Norfolk (Fig 1). The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as Chalk.

2.2 Historical Background

Castle Acre Castle (National Monument No. 21441) lies on the route of the Peddars Way, an ancient trackway which has its origins in the Romano-British period, although the name derives from the 15th or 16th centuries. The site comprises the earthwork remains of a bailey along with the remains of a stone keep. The castle was founded soon after the Norman Conquest by William de Warenne, sometime around 1170 – 1180. The surviving remains comprise some of the finest castle earthworks in England.

To the south-west, at the other end of the village, is Castle Acre Priory which was founded in 1090 (National Monument No: 21416) and eventually vacated by the monks in 1537 following

the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. The surviving remains include the 12th-century church and 15th-century gatehouse and prior's house.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe and record all archaeological deposits uncovered during the groundworks for the new graphics scheme
- ◆ Determine the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts
- ◆ Determine the relationship of any archaeological remains present within the surrounding contemporary environment.

The fieldwork comprised a single visit to the site on June 1st 2007 during the like-for-like replacement of five information boards at Castle Acre Castle, and one at Castle Acre Priory. The existing posts and boards were dug out by hand and the new posts inserted into the existing holes and secured with concrete. The holes measured 0.40m square with a maximum depth of 0.60m. A photographic record in black and white negative, colour slide and digital format was kept. The written record comprised Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the standards and guidelines for an archaeological watching brief (IFA 1999).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The post-pits (Fig 2, Plates 1-4)

No significant archaeological remains were present in any of the post-pits in Castle Acre Castle. All displayed a similar stratigraphic sequence of anthropogenic subsoil comprising a silty loam and chalk nodules which, in the cases of post-pits 1-4 represented the material cast up from the construction of the castle's defenses, which was overlain by a shallow topsoil and turf layer. See Appendix A for details.

The single post-pit at Castle Acre Priory was subject to a previous watching brief during its initial excavation (Leigh 2006b; post pit 3). The current work confirmed that no archaeology was present.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	6
Colour slides	8
Black and white contacts and negatives	8
Digital photographs	40

6 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the watching brief indicate that no archaeologically significant deposits were present in the post pits where the information boards have been located. The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IFA 1999 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

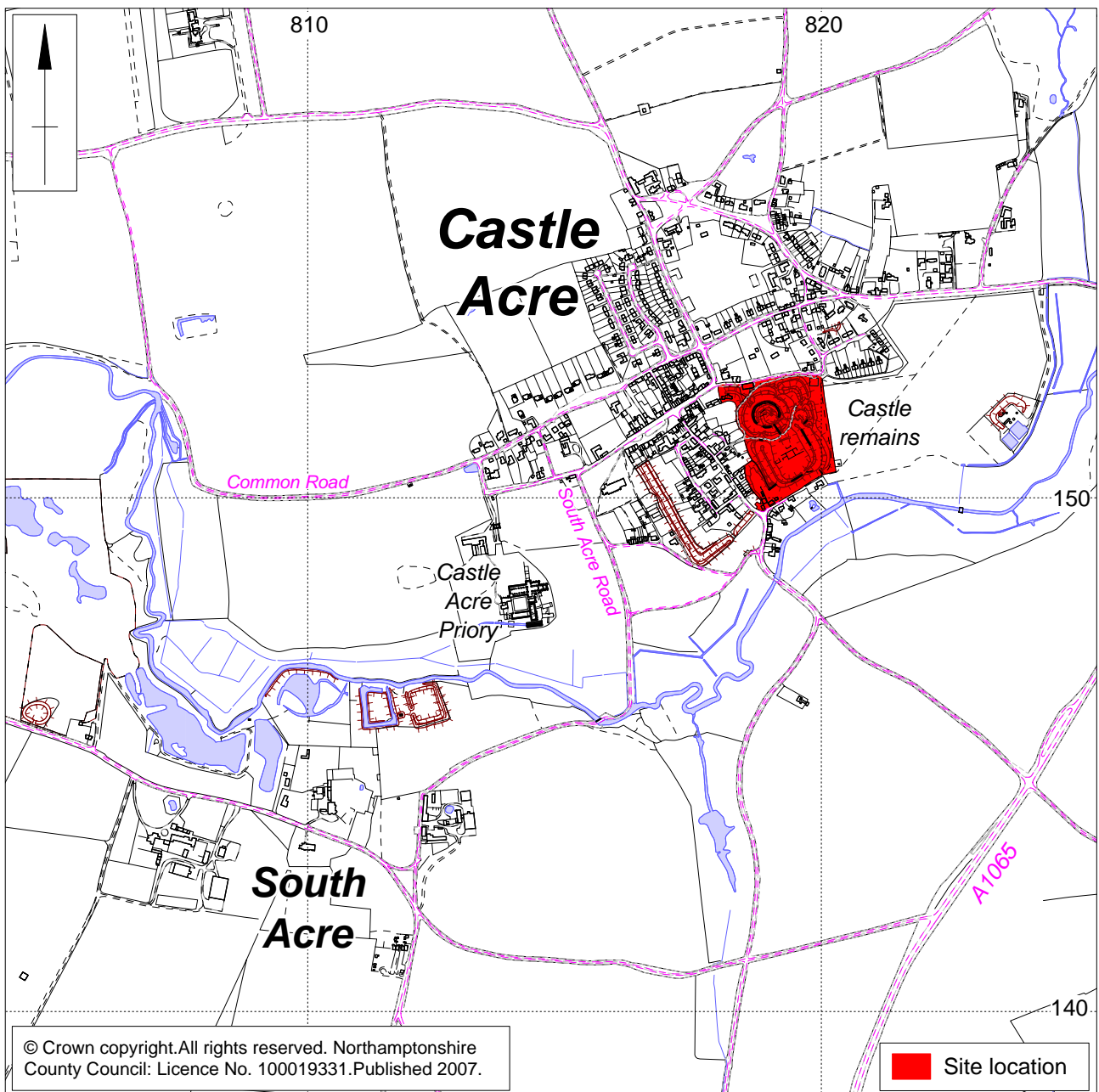
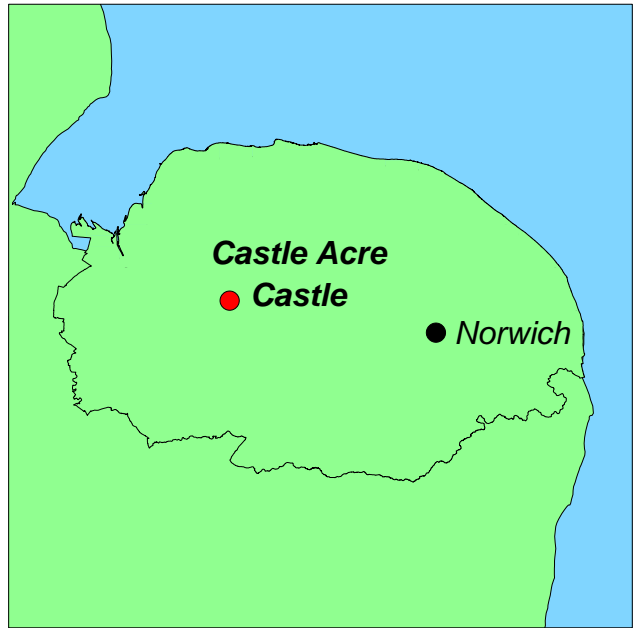
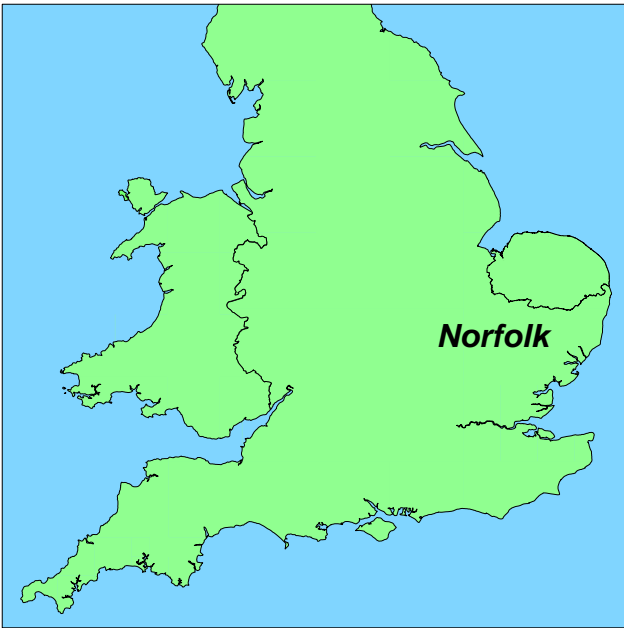
Leigh, D, 2006a *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Castle Acre Castle, Castle Acre, Norfolk*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

Leigh, D, 2006b *An Archaeological Watching Brief at Castle Acre Priory, Castle Acre, Norfolk*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 07/047

APPENDIX A

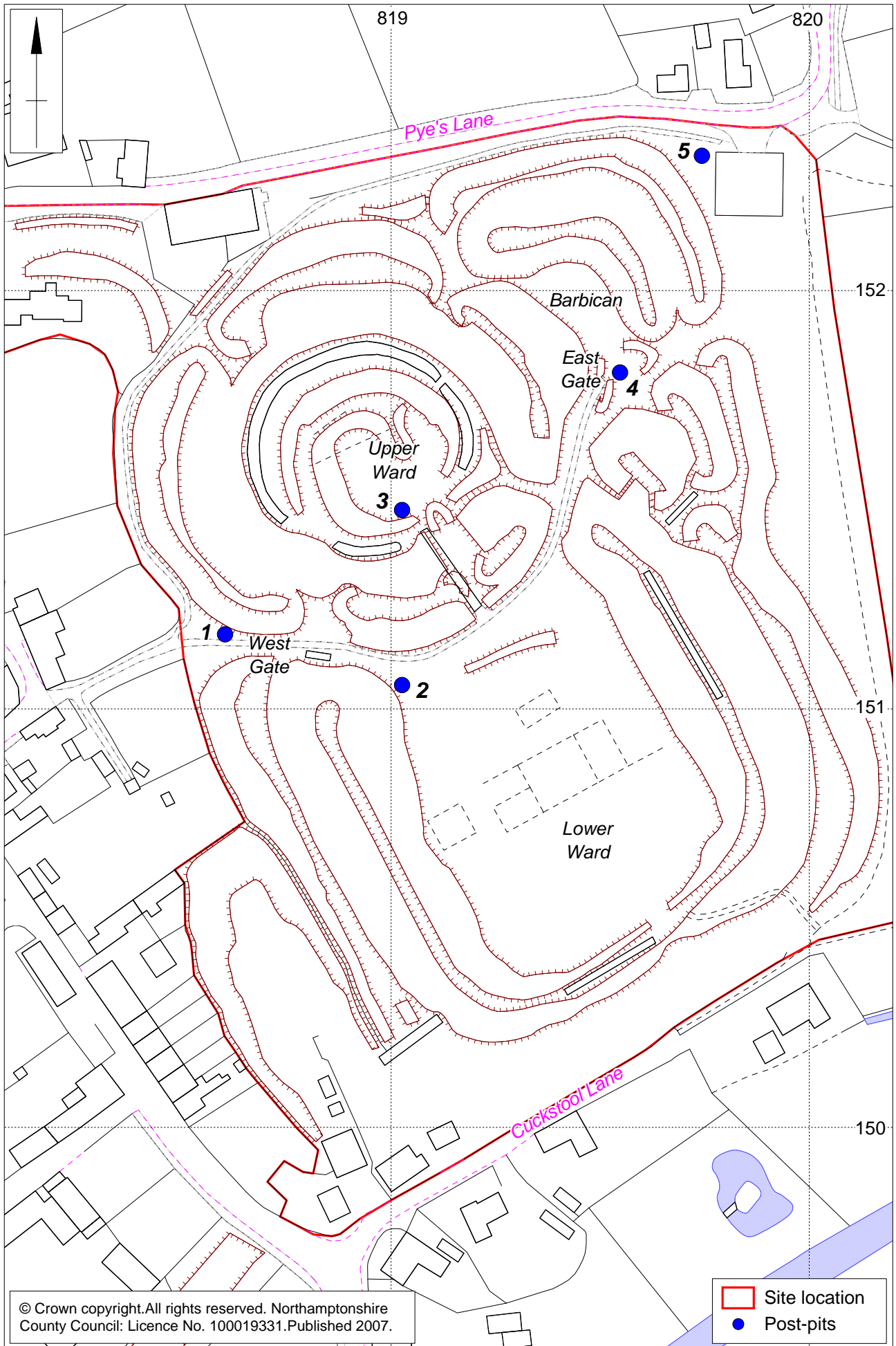
STRATIGRAPHIC DETAIL OF THE POST-PITS

POST-PIT 1	Location: West Gate	Depth
Stratigraphy	Topsoil: brown silt loam with frequent gravel inclusion and modern material; glass, ceramic and metal fragments (not retained).	0-0.12m
	Subsoil: Mid brown silt loam with frequent chalk inclusion	0.12 -0.60m
POST-PIT 2	Location: Lower Ward	Depth
Stratigraphy	Topsoil/turf, mid brown silt loam	0-0.15m
	Subsoil, mid brown silt loam with frequent chalk and moderate small pebble inclusion	0.15-0.60m
POST-PIT 3	Location: Upper Ward	Depth
Stratigraphy	Topsoil, mid brown silt loam	0-0.18m
	Subsoil, mid brown silt loam, containing occasional fragments of modern glass and ceramic (not retained)	0.18-0.60m
POST-PIT 4	Location: Barbican	Depth
Stratigraphy	Topsoil/turf, grey/brown sandy loam	0-0.14m
	Subsoil, mid brown silt loam and chalk	0.14-0.60m
POST-PIT 5	Location: Outer ditch	Depth
Stratigraphy	Topsoil/turf, grey/brown silt loam	0-0.15m
	Subsoil, mid brown silt loam with frequent chalk and sub angular flint inclusion	0.15-0.60m



Scale 1:12,500

Location of Castle Acre Castle Fig 1



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Scale 1:1250

The location of the post-pits Fig 2



Plate 1: Upper Ward seen from Lower Ward; Post 2 is middle left



Plate 2: The Upper Ward with Post 3 in foreground



Plate 3: Post 4 by East Gate



Plate 4: Post 2 in Lower Ward