

Minster Lovell Hall, Oxfordshire – Archaeological Watching Brief report

Minster Lovell Hall is a manor house built in the first half of the fifteenth century. It is located in west Oxfordshire. The site lies immediately south and west of St Kenelm's Church on the north bank of the River Windrush. The monument includes the remains of Minster Lovell Hall, its associated buildings, two fishponds and part of what is probably an early medieval cemetery. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM number 1015321). The upstanding ruins of the hall are Listed Grade I. It is located at SP 3242 1133.

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage in June 2012 to undertake a watching brief. The purpose of the work was to observe the removal on one interpretation panel and to check for archaeological remains (perhaps relating to the construction and use of the building) as three new ones were being installed at separate locations around the site. Two labels were also observed being put into the north west building and the hall.

In the outer court to the north of the chapel two 0.2m diameter postholes (1 and 2) were excavated by hand to an overall depth of 0.5m below ground level (bgl). What was perhaps re-deposited natural clay was recorded at 0.44m bgl. Topsoil was present in both holes. This consisted of a dark grey brown sandy loam, 0.44m thick, containing 10% small to medium sized stone inclusions. No archaeology was observed and no finds were recovered during the excavation of these holes.

To the east of the passage between the kitchen and the stable two 0.2m diameter postholes (3 and 4) were excavated by hand. The southern posthole was excavated to an overall depth of 0.4m below ground level (bgl) and the northern one to an overall depth of 0.5m below ground level (bgl). Neither of these postholes were excavated to natural and both contained topsoil consisting of dark grey brown sandy loam. From the excavation of these postholes, pottery (c1450-1700), animal bone, post medieval glass, and possible faced building stone were discovered. From close investigation it was noticed that none of these artefacts came out of an archaeological feature, rather that they were scattered through out the topsoil. The pottery included 18 sherds of post-medieval red earthenware most from 3-5 vessels, which includes a large bowl/pancheon rim & unglazed flask/bottle.. The remaining sherds are mainly jar sherds, in fairly fresh condition; one piece of yellow Border ware (c1550-1700); one late Brill/Boarstall ware (c1450-1625); a small glazed whiteware jug/flask body sherd; and one small body sherd Frechen stoneware, probably from a jug (c1550-1700). The other finds were of minimal significance.

To the north of the river Windrush and to the south of the south west tower two 0.2m diameter postholes (5 and 6) were excavated by hand, to an overall depth of 0.5m below ground level (bgl). Natural clay was recorded at 0.4m bgl. This consisted of a dark grey brown sandy loam, 0.4m thick, containing 5% small sized stone inclusions. No archaeology was observed and no finds were recovered during the excavation of these holes.

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