

Sent 31/9/96

**An Archaeological Recording Brief at  
The Proposed Farmland Museum Development  
in grounds of Denny Abbey Complex,  
Ely Road, Waterbeach, Cambridge.**

**Development:** Scheduled Ancient Monument 13219  
**Company:** The Farmland Museum  
**Location:** Grounds of Denny Abbey  
**NGR:** TL 4928 6842  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological recording brief during the excavation of trenches for service pipes, cables and a septic tank at the proposed Farmland Museum development at Denny Abbey, Cambridge. This was carried out following the conditions set out in the provision of Scheduled Monument Consent, provided by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, under section 2 of the 1979 Act with the conditions for archaeologists to observe and record any archaeological features revealed.

Due to the fragmentary nature of the development the areas opened for archaeological inspection were not available simultaneously but were investigated piecemeal as and when service trenches were opened. As a result of this the site was visited by AFU archaeologists on five separate occasions (16.9.96, 23.9.96, 26.9.96, 27.9.96 and 30.9.96).

The site lies in an area of archaeological importance, Denny Abbey was founded in the twelfth century as a dependent priory of the cathedral monastery of Ely. Between 1159 and 1538, it was the home of three successive religious communities - Benedictine monks, Knights Templar and Franciscan nuns. During the medieval period (and up to the seventeenth century when systematic draining of the Fens began), Denny Abbey was an isolated island on the fen edge. The area of investigation lies to the north of the Abbey complex and might reasonably be expected to be the location of monastic buildings or other medieval activity.

## **SUMMARY of RESULTS**

The service trenches and septic tank were excavated using a JCB. The 'topsoil' consisted of a 19th/20th century demolition layer, levelling the entire ground surface (machine bricks, asbestos, tile and 19th century pottery, with occasional worked stone - all disturbed). This extended uniformly across the development area to a depth range of 0.10m-0.80m below ground level. The electric cables connecting the 'Store' to the 'Stone Barn' did not exceed the depth of this demolition layer.

In the courtyard area to the east of the "Store" and north of a stone Abbey building (Refectory), a pit for the septic tank was opened to 3m+ depth. Again the demolition layer was observed, beneath which were natural peat deposits, before natural sands and gravels (c.1.4m below ground level) and gault clay (1.6m) were encountered. No archaeology was identified. From the septic tank trenches were excavated to the south, east and west.

No archaeology was identified in these trenches, although occasional worked stone fragments may suggest that earlier medieval buildings have been demolished along during the 19th century demolition phase.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The archaeological investigation did not discover any archaeological remains within the trenches opened for services. The entire area has undergone disturbance during the 19th and probably 20th centuries (presence of asbestos) and this may account for the lack of archaeology.

The site archive will be stored at the offices of the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council, Fulbourn Community Centre, Haggis Gap, Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire, CB1 5HD. Tel. (01223) 881614.

STONE BARN

ALL SERVICE DUCTS  
LAID IN SAME TRENCH  
AT STATED DEPTHS

NEW WATER METER

'KARGESTER' SEPTIC TANK  
OR SIMILAR APPROVED

PROPOSED OUTSIDE  
TAP

EXISTING ELECTRICITY  
METER

STORE

