

Colchester Archaeological Trust



**CAT Report 1983
issued October 2023**

**Archaeological monitoring at
Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth,
Essex, CO16 8NZ: July-August 2023**



**CAT project ref.: 2023/09g
ECC code: STOSO5**

**Archaeological monitoring at
Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth,
Essex, CO16 8NZ: July-August 2023**

NGR: TM 12035 15760 (centre)

**Scheduled Monument number: 1002193
Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments
(HEIAM): Dr Jess Tipper**

**CAT project ref.: 2023/09g
CAT Report 1983**

**ECC code: STOSO5
OASIS id: colchest3-519471**

**report prepared by
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**commissioned by Harriet Vincett-Wilson, City & Country
on behalf of St Osyth Priory Estate Ltd**

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Reissued:	23/10/2023	

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1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex during groundworks for the construction of a new footpath and the erection of a signpost. The site is located within the grounds of St Osyth Priory, a medieval priory that was founded in the 12th century. Despite the location of the works, no archaeological finds or features were exposed.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex which was carried out by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on 26th July and 9th August 2023. The work was commissioned by Harriet Vincett-Wilson of City & Country, on behalf of St Osyth Priory Estate Ltd, and took place during groundworks for a new footpath and signpost. Previous work at Darcy House, for the car park, is detailed in CAT Report 1980.

As the site lies within a Schedule Ancient Monument (NHLE Nos. 1000237 and 1002193), the works required scheduled monument consent under Section 2 (control of works) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended). The works did not have SMC and, therefore, they were unauthorised.

In addition to the WSI, all fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (Historic England 2016), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14 and 24)*. This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

3 Geological and Archaeological background

The following archaeological background includes extracts of the ECC Brief and Essex Historic Environment Records (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (accessed via <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>).

The town of St Osyth is recorded as *Cicc* in the Domesday Book of 1086 and is said to be the location of a 7th-century nunnery founded by Saint Osyth, from whom the modern town gets its name. The proposed development site is located within the grounds at St Osyth Priory, to the west of the centre of the historic town.

St Osyth Priory (NHLE No. 1002193) is a medieval priory that was founded in the 1120's by Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London, as a house for Augustinian Canons. It became an abbey dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, and Osyth sometime before 1161. The park associated with the priory was most likely gained around 1268, when a charter was granted to the abbey allowing some hunting rights. The abbey was suppressed and surrendered to the crown in 1539.

In 1553, Thomas Darcy gained possession of the abbey and was responsible for making many structural changes. Many of the medieval buildings were demolished, including the abbey church, and impressive modifications were made to the remaining buildings to create a substantial residence. New buildings were also constructed and the formal walled garden created. Over the next 400 years, the priory and park had considerable reworking, remodelling and modernisation, as well as additional buildings added. In the late 19th century, gravel extraction began within the park and continued into the 20th century.

The area of the ruins of the priory and garden are scheduled (SAM No. 24, NHLE. 1002193 and EHER 4) and the park is a Registered Park and Garden (NHLE No. 1000237). St Osyth Priory and park contains 22 structures which are listed.

For a full archaeological background see the desk-based assessment by Archaeological Solutions (Higgs 2017) and the historic town assessment report for St Osyth (Medlycott 1999).

The Geology of Britain viewer (1:50,000 scale¹) shows the bedrock geology of the site is Thames group (mainly silty clays and clays, some sandy or gravelly, with some silts, sands, gravels and calcareous mudstones), with superficial deposits of Kesgrave catchment subgroup (mainly gravels characterised by quartz and quartzite).

4 Aim

The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological contexts revealed during the groundworks.

5 Results (Figs 2-3)

5.1 Darcy House footpath (Photographs 1-3)

An area measuring roughly 33m² was machine excavated under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The area was reduced between 0.10 and 0.20m into a layer of topsoil (L1, dry, dark brown sandy-silt with occasional stones and CBM flecks). No archaeological finds or features were encountered.



Photograph 1 Footpath strip, looking north.

¹ British Geological Survey – <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>



Photograph 2 Footpath strip, looking south-east



Photograph 3 Completed footpath, looking south.

5.2 Darcy House signpost (Photographs 4-5)

Two post-holes were hand-dug under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist. The post-holes had a diameter of 0.40m and were dug to a depth of around 0.55m. They were excavated through topsoil (L1, c 0.09m thick), subsoil (L2, c 0.23m thick, dark grey-brown silty loam with occasional stones) and into the natural geology (L3, encountered c 0.32m below current ground level, medium brown-yellow silty-sand with common gravel). No archaeological finds or feature were uncovered.



Photograph 4 Signpost post-holes site shot, looking north-west.



Photograph 5 Signpost post-holes, looking north-west.



Photograph 6 Completed signpost, looking west.

6 Finds

There were no archaeological finds.

7 Conclusion

Despite being located in the grounds of St Osyth Priory, in close proximity to Darcy House, no archaeological finds or features were uncovered during the groundworks.

8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Harriet Vincett-Wilson of City & Country and St Osyth Priory Estate Ltd for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister, L Pooley and A Wightman. The fieldwork was carried out by S Veasey. Figures are by C Lister and S Veasey.

9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|---|
| Brown, N & Glazebrook, J | 2000 | <i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8) |
| CAT | 2023 | <i>Health & Safety Policy</i> |
| CAT | 2023 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological monitoring at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8NZ</i> by E Holloway and S Veasey |

CAT Report 1980	2023	<i>Archaeological monitoring for the proposed car park at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex, CO16 8NZ: July 2022</i> by E Hicks
CIfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs</i>
CIfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14)
Higgs, K	2017	<i>Proposed service trenching St Osyth Priory, St Osyth, Essex: an archaeological desk-based impact assessment</i> . Archaeological Solutions Report 5369
Historic England	2015	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Medlycott, M	1999	<i>St Osyth - Historic Town Assessment Report</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England</i> . East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)
MHCLG	2019	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
ECC	Essex County Council
ECCHEA	Essex County Council Historic Environment Advisor
ECCPS	Essex County Council Place Services
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsi	written scheme of investigation

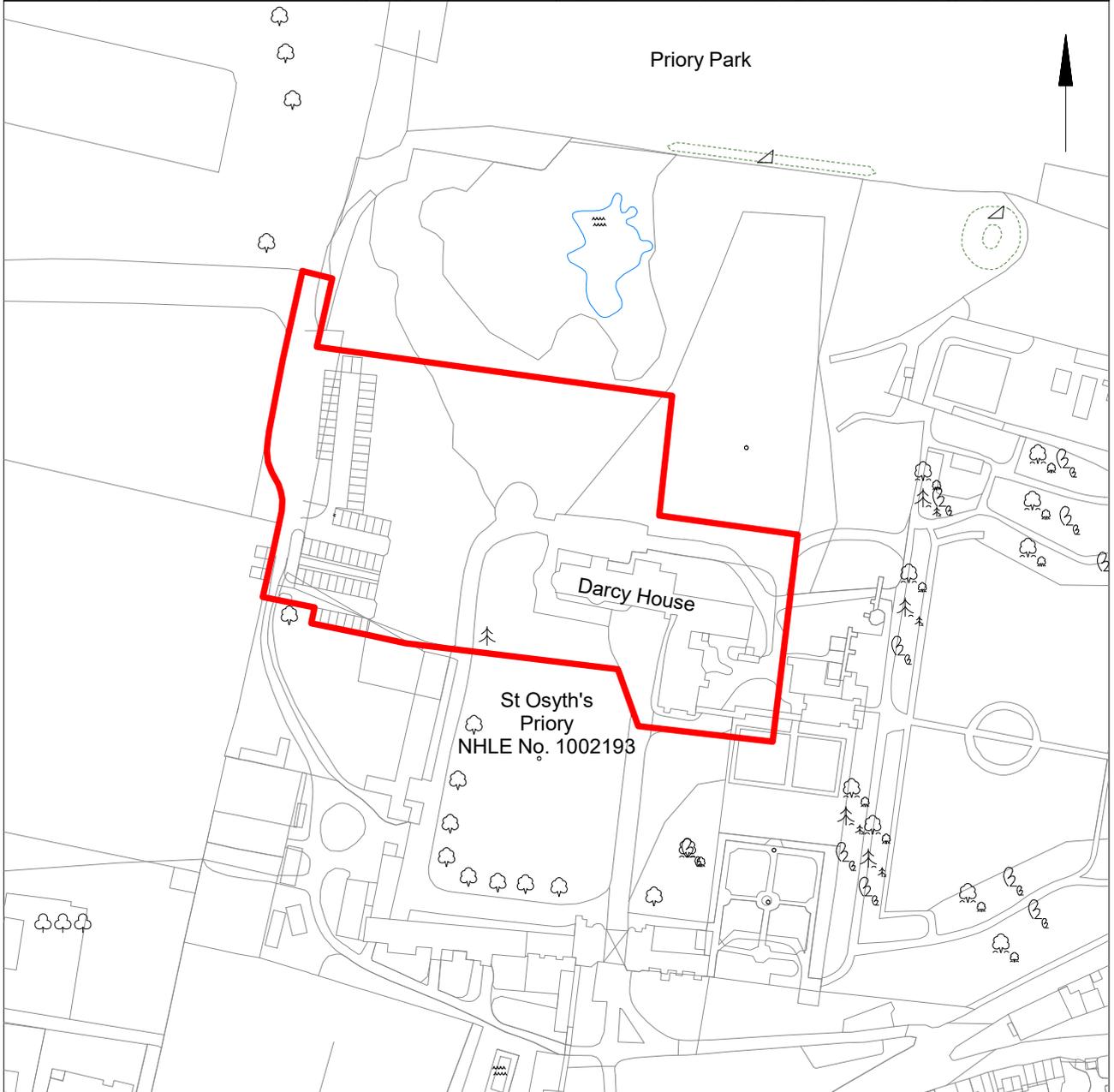
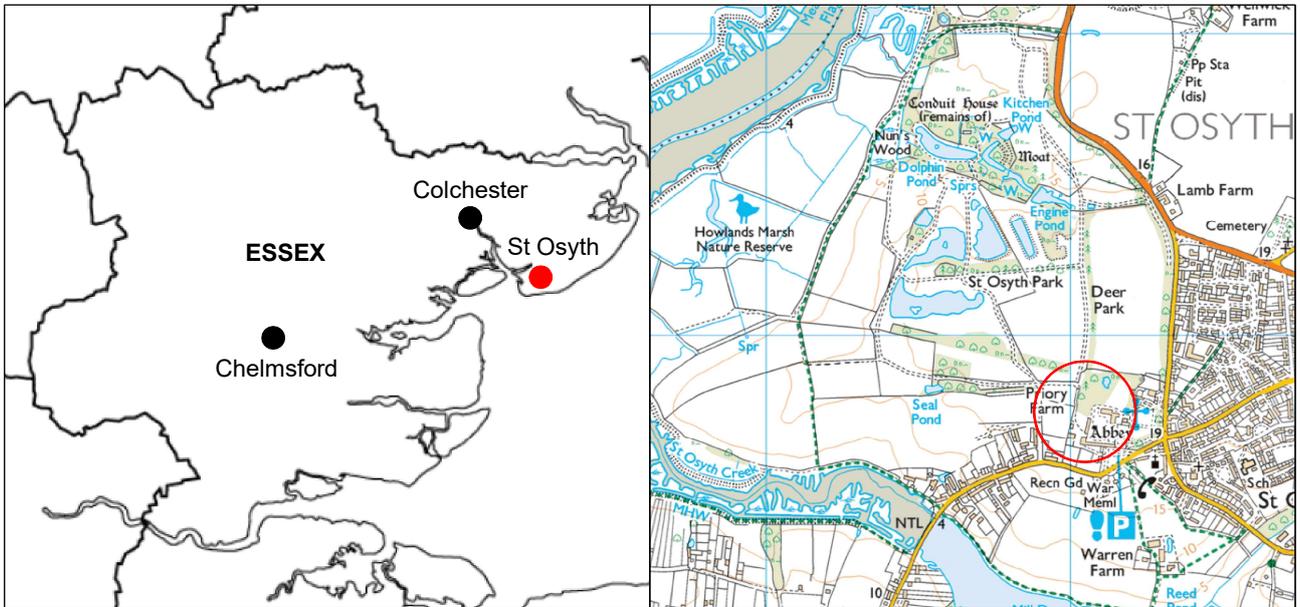
11 Archive deposition

Digital record: This project falls within the CIfA definition of a sterile project (<https://www.archaeologists.net/selection-toolkit/sterile-projects>), and as such the preserved archaeological archive will take the form of a single digital document that incorporates all the relevant elements from the project archive. This document will be uploaded to OASIS and released into the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) library, from where it will be curated by the ADS. The single digital document will include the report, brief, wsi, photographs, and original site data (for example context sheets, section drawings).

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Fig 1 Site location.

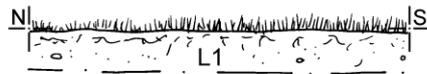




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Fig 2 Monitoring results.

Footpath



Signpost

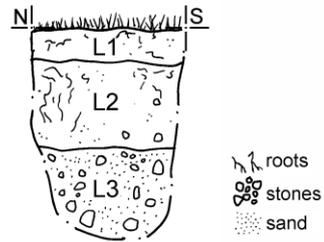


Fig 3 Representative sections.

OASIS Summary for colchest3-519471

OASIS ID (UID)	colchest3-519471
Project Name	Watching Brief of a Footpath and Signpost at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex
Sitename	Footpath and Signpost at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	2023/09g
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Scheduled monument consent
Organisation Responsible for work	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project Dates	26-Jul-2023 - 09-Aug-2023
Location	Footpath and Signpost at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex NGR : TM 12035 15760 LL : 51.80026650181115, 1.07379961694516 12 Fig : 612035,215760
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Essex District : Tendring Parish : St. Osyth
Project Methodology	The groundworks for the construction of a new footpath and the installation of a signpost were monitored by a CAT archaeologist.
Project Results	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at Darcy House, St Osyth Priory, The Bury, St Osyth, Essex during groundworks for the construction of a new footpath and the erection of a signpost. The site is located within the grounds of St Osyth Priory, a medieval priory that was founded in the 12th century. Despite the location of the works, no archaeological finds or features were exposed.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation St Osyth Priory Estate Ltd
HER	Historic England review - unRev - STANDARD Essex HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	A Wightman, C Lister, L Pooley
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - STOSO5
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;