

Warish Hall moated site and remains of Takeley Priory

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Official list entry

Heritage Category:

Scheduled Monument

List Entry Number:

1007834

Date first listed:

02-Dec-1993

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

Essex

District:

Uttlesford (District Authority)
Parish:
Takeley
National Grid Reference:
TL 56849 22084

Reasons for Designation

From the time of St Augustine's mission to re-establish Christianity in AD 597 to the reign of Henry VIII, monasticism formed an important facet of both religious and secular life in the British Isles. Settlements of religious communities, including monasteries, were built to house communities of monks, canons (priests), and sometimes lay-brothers, living a common life of religious observance under some form of systematic discipline. It is estimated from documentary evidence that over 700 monasteries were founded in England. These ranged in size from major communities with several hundred members to tiny establishments with a handful of brethren. They belonged to a wide variety of different religious orders, each with its own philosophy. As a result, they vary considerably in the detail of their appearance and layout, although all possess the basic elements of church, domestic accommodation for the community, and work buildings. Monasteries were inextricably woven into the fabric of medieval society, acting not only as centres of worship, learning and charity, but also, because of the vast landholdings of some orders, as centres of immense wealth and political influence. They were established in all parts of England, some in towns and others in the remotest of areas. Many monasteries acted as the foci of wide networks including parish churches, almshouses, hospitals, farming estates and tenant villages. Benedictine monasticism had its roots in the rule written about AD 530 by St Benedict of Nursia for his own abbey at Monte Cassino. Benedict had not intended to establish an order of monasteries and wider adoption of his rule came only gradually. The first real attempt to form a Benedictine order came only in 1216. The Benedictine monks, who wore dark robes, came to be known as 'black monks'. These dark robes distinguished them from Cistercian monks who became known as 'white monks' on account of their light coloured robes. Over 150 Benedictine monasteries were founded in England. As members of a highly successful order many Benedictine houses became extremely wealthy and influential. Their wealth can frequently be seen in the scale and flamboyance of their buildings. Benedictine monasteries made a major contribution to many facets of medieval life and all examples exhibiting significant surviving archaeological remains are worthy of protection.

Warish Hall moated site remains essentially undisturbed and will retain

important archaeological information pertaining to the occupation and development of Takeley Priory from its original foundation by William the Conqueror until the modern period. The conversion of the site from monastic to secular use in the late 14th century is of particular interest, and this may account for the presence of a second, internal enclosure. The water-filled ditches will retain environmental evidence relating to the economy of the priory, the site's later occupants and the landscape in which they lived.

Details

The monument at Warish Hall includes a priory site situated on high ground 2km east of Takeley church. It contains a complete, rectangular moat which is set within a much larger moated enclosure. The internal moat is situated in the western part of the larger enclosure and measures 65m north-south by a maximum of 80m east-west. The moat arms are water-filled and measure between 8m and 15m. Access to the island can be gained across bridges on the south, east and northern arms of the moat. The western arm has an external retaining bank 3m wide and approximately 0.5m high. The western arm extends northwards and southwards to form the western side of the outer enclosure. Its southern arm is 120m long, between 2.5m and 10m wide and approximately 2m deep. The eastern arm is visible as a dry hollow 110m long, 6m wide and approximately 0.4m deep. The northern arm of the enclosure has been infilled and is preserved as a buried feature beneath the farm buildings. The north-western corner of the outer enclosure, 7m north of the internal moat, has been extended to form a large, irregular-shaped fishpond which measures 50m east-west by a maximum of 20m north-south. The site is identified as St Valery's Priory, Takeley, an alien Benedictine priory founded in 1066-1086 by William I as an offering of thanks for the Normans' safe crossing to England. The lands in Essex were held by the priory at the Domesday Survey. No record of the community's size is given at that point but in the 14th century there were two or three monks. In about 1391 the priory was dissolved and the estates were assigned to New College, Oxford and Winchester College. The internal moat is now occupied by Warish Hall, a Grade 1 Listed Building, which is of late 13th century date with later alterations. Warish Hall, farm buildings, bridges, paths, greenhouse and swimming pool are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them all, except for the swimming pool, is included.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:

20705

Legacy System:

RSM

Sources

Other

Nar No: TL 52 SE 9, Information from National Archaeological Record (TL 52 SE 9),

TL 63 NW, Information from National Archaeological Record (TL 63 NW),

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. This copy shows the entry on 13-Apr-2023 at 08:21:52.

[Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

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