

Yedingham Priory: The Old Abbey and Attached Farm Building



Fig.1: Yedingham Priory elevation with Farm House, agricultural extension and Old Abbey remnants.

The Old Abbey and Farm Buildings lie in the boundaries of a scheduled monument, Yedingham Priory. Likely constructed from Yorkstone, or similar carboniferous sedimentary rock (BGS). The stone is likely to have been originally bonded by non-hydraulic Lime mortar, with repairs to the mortar in hydraulic lime and cementitious mortar. The roof is covered in pantiles with a new covering seen to the right of the chimney breast, which would appear to be a later addition when considered alongside correlating changes in the built fabric on the elevation. The lintels appear to be cementitious, although a window in the single storey wall appears to be fitted under a timber lintel which may be indicative of the original fabric used. The farm house windows on this elevation are 6x6 paned windows, which appear to be sliding sash windows that run horizontally or a simple hinged mechanism with the internal window closing to abut the fixed window. The frames are indistinguishable between timber or Crittal frames. Guttering is present along the roofline of the single storey elevation. To the far end of the single storey elevation are remnants of an Abbey that stood within the footprint of the current property, shown by a remaining entrance arch, decorative sill-band and piscinae/alcove.

Vulnerabilities, Risks and Solutions

The solutions to issues regarding historic buildings must be approached with a greater sensitivity than is often used with structures built post 1918. Aesthetic issues i.e. pollution marks on stone, are best left as is for two reasons. Firstly, often the treatments for remedying these types of issues can

be detrimental to the structure causing further damage, and secondly, the appearance of an historic assets is one of many variables that give value: often remedial works involve the loss of valued material. The changes proposed below may have the same effect, but without appraisal may result in greater and severe deterioration of the structure.

The most obvious issue on the rear elevation is the damage of the sandstone caused by the use of cementitious mortar, specifically around the area with a change of wall thickness and the single square window. Cement mortar prevents the stone from acclimatising to the humidity and damp (hygroscopic nature) as the mortar is not porous or elastic. Lime mortar allows for water transfer and change of state, moisture content and swelling, better than the stone which aids the condition of the stone by stabilising otherwise rapid change. The stone is eroded, occasionally missing from the cement sections and a recommendation would be to remove all cement mortar from these areas, replacing missing and damaged stone with a matched stone, then using a suitable lime mortar to rebuild and repoint (Watt, 2011). Efflorescence is visible, caused by the cementitious mortar hindering the movement of salts and water between stone and bond. This forces the salts to pass through the stone, damaging the matrix of the material with the potential for cracking, flaking and peeling if left for long periods of time. Latex can be used to remove surface residue without damaging the material which will enable a more thorough check of the stone condition. (ISCS)

Stone can be analysed by taking cored samples from various areas of the building. This is crucial as weathered stone, or stone in contact with different mortars will develop different molecular characteristics over time. The appropriate permissions for sampling must be approved by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports and the Local Planning Authority in this case. The British Geological Survey can provide aid in matching stone, through access to the National Geological Repository. (BGS) (HE,2006)





The roof visible from the rear elevation is clad in Pantiles. Pantiles cover a single course below, unlike flat tiles which cover two. This gives a lighter roof covering which is more easily repaired in localised areas, although the cover is much more susceptible to water ingress. Shifting timber beams can expose gaps between and around individual tiles, and storm damage can expose open sections with missing tiles (SPAB). The North/Rear elevation has been partially re-clad, so an appraisal of the condition of the remaining tiles and roofing structure would be advisable. The chimney that sits at the boundary of the change in tiles shows erosion to the brick around the base of the visible structure which should be checked for structural stability.

Water damage through damp is a prominent problem commonly seen around the foundations and ground stones. Often this problem is caused by failing or non-existent water goods. The area around the house is fitted with guttering, although it appears to accommodate low volumes of water, and the area below the new pantiles lacks provisions. Appraising the quality of the current rain wares, then fitting matching or aesthetically appropriate to the entire elevation span, will prevent continuous damp around the building footprint and overflowing/leaking areas of the current amenities.

The windows on the rear elevation appear to be 6x6 sliding sash windows, single paned. The lateral mechanism for opening the windows is more often seen in the South of England where the weather is regularly finer. In wet conditions these windows are prone to leaking and saturation as the runners for the recessed sliding panes are exposed. If appropriate and records can be found of other window variations, especially from old photographic records, then the form could be changed if the current windows are in poor condition. If they are suitable for continued use, then surface care should be considered. Single panes are poor energy and heat insulators and interior panes, often made from clear acrylic or Perspex sheets, should be considered to prevent drafts at the very least.

Figures 2,3,4 (Top to Bottom, Previous)

Efflorescence on stone alongside several types of mortar - Damage caused at ground level by a combination of permanent damp and incorrect mortars – Window with timber lintel framed with a horizontal sash.

The windows are built with exposed lintels, both above and below the frames. The lintels above the windows in the house appear to be either stone or concrete, painted white, and the sills below are composed of the same stone used for the rest of the building. The 1st floor window lintel has sagged slightly in the centre and should be checked for continued movement with a tell-tale and changed if necessary. The sills should be chamfered to allow rainwater to dissipate, and if any are flat-topped, there is the potential for water ingress, rot, or accelerated degradation around the window frame. The wall on the rear elevation houses two ground floor windows. The same checks should apply to these, especially the eastern window which shows a timber lintel.

The Abbey remnants appear to be in good condition, with relative accuracy of the details remaining. The arch maintains quoins on the right side of the entrance with a dressed arch above, separated by the sill band on both sides. The left side below the sill band lacks quoins, which may not have been present at origin but may show signs of previous alteration. The arch has been infilled with later stonework which appears sympathetic to the earlier significant material. The base of the wall has been repointed as shown by the newer, cleaner mortar, and the lack of structure to the stone work might suggest a previous abutting structure in front as it sits below an piscinae/alcove that seems rather high for ease of use. The alcove retains detail and is currently covered by a timber structure fixed to the elevation. An appraisal of the suitability for the arch infill to be removed should be conducted. This would depend on the potential to uncover more significant fabric tied to the abbey, weighed against the value of the brick infill. If the remedial work is of significant age or depicts a specific vernacular skill the infill should be considered of sufficient value to maintain. An appraisal for the potential to reconstruct the timber structure over the piscinae/alcove should be conducted on the same terms.



Figures 5,6 (Top to Bottom)

Rainwear situated on the junction between the farm house and the single storey elevation. The condition of the pantiles at this end of the elevation are old, uneven, and in some place uneven.

Remnants of the Abbey, seen are the alcove and arch, combined with the sill-band running a large portion of the elevation.

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