**Historic England Press Release**

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**Historic England grant secures ancient Hampshire monument - Merdon Castle will be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register**

* Work to secure the remains of medieval Merdon Castle, a scheduled monument near Winchester, is now complete thanks to a £240,700 grant from Historic England
* Royal connections: It is thought that the Castle was built between 1129 and 1138 by Henry de Blois during the reign of his brother, Stephen, the last Norman king of England
* The Castle is being used by the University of Winchester and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings to help students and specialists develop craft and survey skills
* Download images and drone footage: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/BhgQKJmP4wK4cYf67>

 

Work to secure the remains of Merdon Castle near Winchester is now complete.

A £240,700 grant from Historic England has funded specialist repairs, repointing and the introduction of soft capping – adding a protective layer of earth and grass to the tops of ruined walls – to the Medieval motte and bailey castle. Works have also taken place to make safe, cap and consolidate a c.400ft ‘bottomless’ well, dating from the same period.

The scheduled monument was overgrown, and stonework had become loose. These improvements have stabilised the structure and will allow it to be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register.

**Elspeth Faulkner, Historic England Architect**, said: “Merdon Castle has spent many years on the Heritage at Risk Register and it was critical that a programme of repairs was undertaken now to avoid further loss. A new partnership with the University of Winchester holds exciting possibilities for discovering more about this historic site while helping students develop important skills.”

**Dr Monika Knul, University of Winchester**, said: “We’re delighted that, together with the owners and Historic England, we have been able to introduce Merdon Castle to our students through their study of archaeological field techniques. We’re excited to expand this programme so that students, and the monument itself, benefit in the long term.”

The total project cost was £288,840 and the additional funding was provided by the landowner. The work was led by Conservation Accredited professionals at The Goddard Partnership and carried out by Conservation Contractors PIERRA.

**Royal connections**

It is believed that Merdon Castle was built between 1129 and 1138 by Henry de Blois, Bishop of Winchester, during the reign of his brother, Stephen, the last Norman king of England. The Castle was partly demolished in 1155 on the accession of Henry II but was used as a bishop's palace until at least the 14th century. The Medieval castle was built within the ramparts of an earlier hillfort which probably dates back to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (8th to 5th centuries BC).

**The Castle is enabling students to learn new, vital skills**

With support from the landowner, Merdon Castle is being used to develop important skills within the heritage sector.

Last year, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) used the site as part of a practical session on traditional building limes and their uses. Working with older and historic buildings requires specialist knowledge so hands on training is vital for these methods to be passed on.

The University of Winchester is now using the site for teaching students survey skills including laser scanning and ground penetrating radar, project management, and analysis.

The Castle is on private land and is usually closed to members of the public. However, regular community walks are arranged by the landowner to allow people to see the site up close and understand its rich history. A recent village open day gave 70 people access to the site.

A collection of local people and interest groups, including [WARG](http://www.warg.org.uk/), the society for Winchester archaeology and local history, are working with the landowner to help maintain the site into the future.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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Download images and drone footage: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/BhgQKJmP4wK4cYf67>

**ABOUT HISTORIC ENGLAND**

We are [Historic England](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/) the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England’s spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we’ve come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all. Follow us on social media @HistoricEngland

This year Historic England (HE) is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Heritage Act, which established the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, as HE was then known. The Act sets out the organisation’s duty to protect historic buildings and archaeological sites, as well as to enhance the public’s enjoyment and knowledge of the historic places that surround us all.

**Historic England Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk**

Historic England gives grants for the repair and conservation of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens. This includes project development actions which enable repair or improved future management. Our Heritage at Risk programme protects and manages the historic environment. The public body works with owners, friends groups, developers and other stakeholders to find solutions for ‘at risk’ historic places and sites across England.