

List Entry Summary

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 Culture, Media and Sport.

Name: Sawley Cistercian abbey and associated earthworks

List Entry Number: 1015492

Location

The monument may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Lancashire

District: Ribble Valley

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Sawley

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: Not applicable to this List entry.

Date first scheduled: 08-Feb-1915

Date of most recent amendment: 13-Aug-1996

Legacy System Information

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

Legacy System: RSM

UID: 23690

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Monument

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

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. Some 75 of these religious houses belonged to the Cistercian order founded by St Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century. The Cistercians - or "white monks", on account of their undyed habits - led a harsher life than earlier monastic orders, believing in the virtue of a life of austerity, prayer and manual labour. Seeking seclusion, they founded their houses in wild and remote areas where they undertook major land improvement projects. Their communities were often very large and included many lay brethren who acted as ploughmen, dairymen, shepherds, carpenters and masons. The Cistercians' skills as farmers eventually made the order one of the richest and most influential. They were especially successful in the rural north of England where they concentrated on sheep farming. The Cistercians made a major contribution to many facets of medieval life and all of their monasteries which exhibit significant surviving archaeological remains are worthy of protection.

Sawley Abbey is a well preserved site largely undisturbed by modern development. It contains extensive upstanding remains of medieval fabric which include the church and adjacent buildings. Additionally extensive undisturbed earthworks survive to the north, east and south of the core area of the abbey. This allows the development and workings of much of the monastic precinct to be studied.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

Sawley Abbey is located in the Ribble Valley 6km north east of Clitheroe and includes the upstanding and below ground remains of parts of an abbey founded by the Cistercian order and dedicated to St Mary and St Andrew. It is constructed in a combination of dressed sandstone and black shale. The most visible remains are the ruins of the church and immediately attached buildings which are all now in the care of the Secretary of State. The well preserved standing remains demonstrate the usual layout of a Cistercian abbey with the church running east-west and forming the north range of a four-sided complex known as the cloister. Domestic buildings such as the kitchen and dining hall formed the southern range, lay-brothers' quarters formed the west range, and monks' quarters and chapter house the east range. The earliest standing remains at Sawley are parts of the mid-twelfth century church. Both north and south transepts have three eastern chapels, some of which retain surviving 13th century tiled paving. In the

http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle_print.aspx?uid=1015492&showMap=1&showText=1 06/08/2015

• south transept the position of the night stairs which led to the monks' quarters is marked. The walls of the Norman choir still stand to a height of almost 3m. The original nave measured approximately 40m in length. In the 14th century a narrow chapel was added along its north side. The nave was shortened in the 15th/early 16th century and this section still retains walls standing c.8m high. The remaining structures within the core area of the abbey survive as low walls. This includes the chancel of the abbey church which was lengthened and widened in the 15th/early 16th century. The cloister measures c.37m by 28m and had walkways on all sides. The eastern end of the north range now abuts the nave of the 15th/early 16th century church. The east range would have consisted of two floors but, as elsewhere in the core of the abbey, only the lower courses of stonework now survive. On the ground floor was a small sacristy cum library where sacred vessels were kept, a narrow chapter house, a parlour, a passageway, and the undercroft of the monks' dorter. The monks' dorter, or sleeping quarters, formed the upper floor over all these buildings. The south range contained, from east to west, the warming house, the dining hall and the kitchen. The west range was originally given over to the lay-brothers and included their quarters, dining hall and cellars, but was latterly partly converted into the abbot's lodgings. Two fireplaces originally belonging to the abbot's lodgings can be seen and other parts are incorporated into Abbey Cottage. Ruins of a square building at the north end of the cloister west range is thought to be a post-Dissolution addition. Some 100m north of the church is an archway constructed in 1962 from stone taken from a nearby demolished gateway which itself was a mid-19th century construction using stones removed at the time of a small excavation of the church and claustral buildings. It contains considerable amounts of decorated medieval stonework. On all sides of the abbey except the west are numerous earthworks indicating enclosures, stock pens, gardens, watercourses and structures which would have functioned as the service buildings and areas of the abbey and included the infirmary, infirmarer's range, bake house, brew house and numerous other buildings. To the north west of the abbey, close to the north west corner of the modern field, is the site of St Mary's Well, now issuing from a modern pipe. Water from the well fed downhill via a channel to join with the main leat which runs north-south along the base of the hillslope before turning at right angles and running towards the site of the now demolished abbey mill situated close to the River Ribble. On the uphill side of the leat there are well preserved field boundary banks running at right angles to the leat, together with other banks and water courses running obliquely downhill. To the north and north east of the church there are a number of enclosures; to the east there is a large sub-rectangular enclosure; and to the south there are a number of irregular earthworks overlooking the mill leat. On higher ground to the south east of the angle of the mill leat there are two slightly sunken building platforms; the larger measuring c.12m by 10m, the smaller measuring c.5m square. Other earthworks in the vicinity include numerous narrow water channels running downhill towards the south. Sawley Abbey was founded by William de Percy in 1147/8 and colonised by an abbot, twelve monks and ten lay-brothers from Newminster in Northumberland. Although never a particularly large or wealthy house, Sawley developed a scholarly tradition. Stephen of Easton, abbot from 1224 to 1233, was a spiritual writer of some renown, and William of Rymington, who was prior at the abbey, was also chancellor of Oxford University in 1372-3. An unknown monk at Sawley translated into English a Latin work of the famous 13th century scholar-bishop Robert Grosseteste. Towards the end of the 13th century documentary sources indicate that some of the abbey buildings were burned by the Scots. About a century later other documents indicate the religious community at Sawley numbered 70. The abbey was suppressed in 1536, but during the Pilgrimage of Grace the monks were restored under a new abbot William Trafford. This so incensed the king, Henry VIII, that he sent his commander, the Earl of Derby, to deal with the monks. As a result William Trafford was executed for treason in 1537 and the abbey was once again suppressed. The abbey was then granted to Sir Arthur Darcy de Gray. In 1951 the area of the church and claustral buildings was placed into the guardianship of the Secretary of State. The church and claustral buildings were subjected to limited antiquarian investigation by the then owner, Lord de Gray, in 1848 and again 30 years later. The site was also subjected to limited investigation during the late 1930's but no report was published. The following buildings within the abbey complex are Listed Grade 1: the walls of the church; transeptal chapels and night stairs to the dorter from the south transept; the foundations of all the buildings around the cloister. Abbey Cottage is Listed Grade II. Built into its porch is a drain with some transverse arches and a piscina. A number of features are excluded from the scheduling: these include Abbey Cottage; the English Heritage ticket hut and all English Heritage fixtures and fittings; all modern walls, gateposts and field boundaries; and the surface of all paths, although the ground beneath all these features is included.

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

Selected Sources

Books and journals

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Fergusson, P, Architecture of Solitude-Cistercian Abbeys in 12th Cent England, (1984), 143-4

Kowles, D, St Joseph, JKS , Monastic Sites from the Air, (1952), 100

New, A, A Guide to the Abbeys of England and Wales, (1985), 334-5

McNulty, J, 'Trans Lancs and Chesh Antiquities Soc' in Salley Abbey 1148-1536, , Vol. 54, (1939), 194-204

Other

DOE, Ancient Monuments - Records Form: Sawley Abbey (additional area), (1977)

DOE, List of Buildings of Historic & Architectural Interest,

DOE, Scheduled Ancient Monuments Lancashire (Part 4),

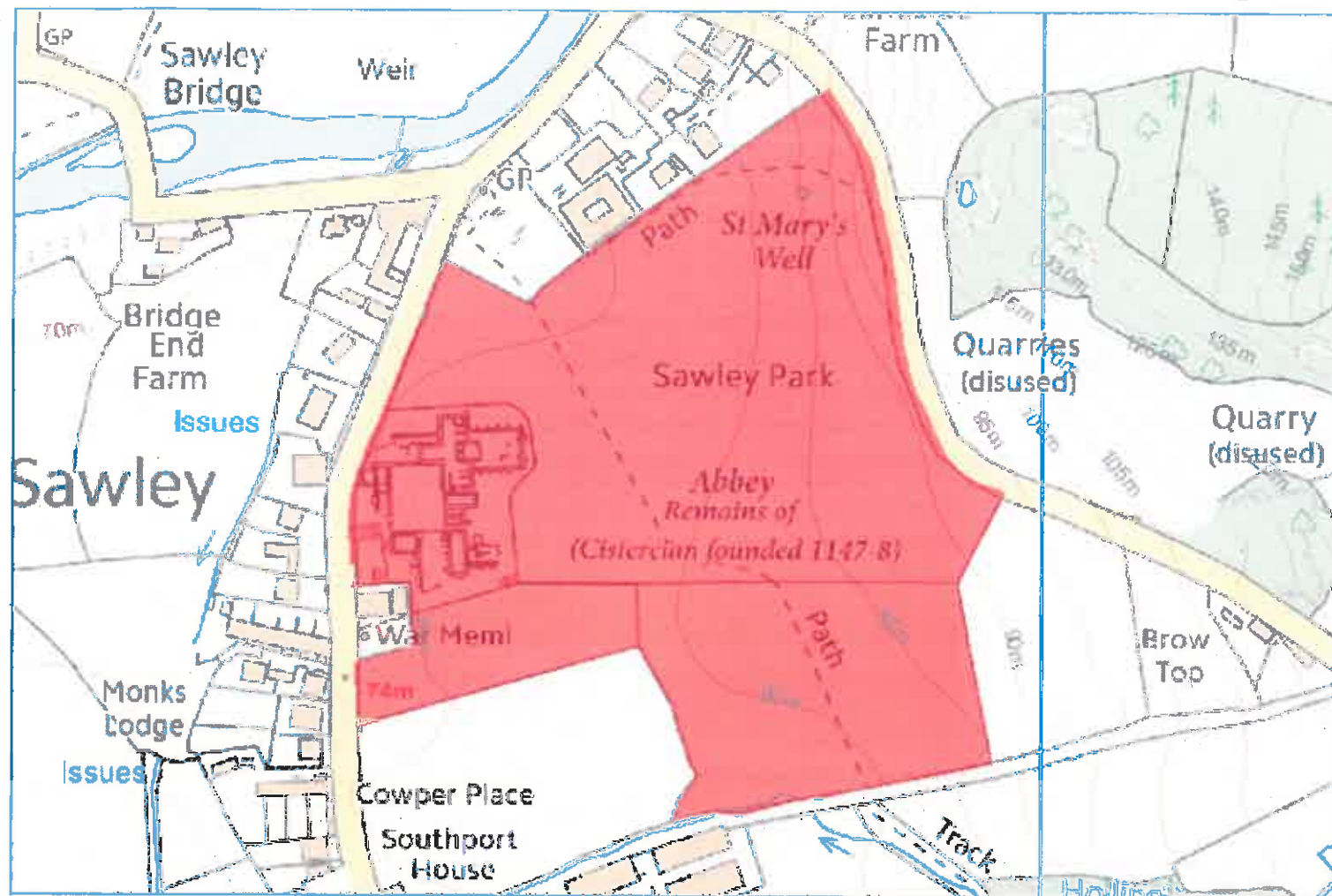
Ordnance Survey Card Ref No. SD 74 NE 3, Ordnance Survey, Sawley Abbey,

SMR No. 297, Lancs SMR, Sawley Abbey (Cistercian), (1993)

Map

National Grid Reference: SD7779246231

The below map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1015492.pdf](#) - Please be aware that it may take a few minutes for the download to complete.



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