

CRASWALL PRIORY, ABBEY FARM, CRASWALL, HEREFORDSHIRE



A REPORT ON THE INSALLATION OF INFORMATION PANELS

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Summary:

Herefordshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the excavation of the post holes in order to facilitate the installation of three new information panels within the Scheduled Area of the remains of the Grandmontine Priory at Craswall, Herefordshire.

The excavations comprised three areas of excavation, one close to the south western corner of the Nave which was excavated entirely into rubble, one close to the north wall of the Nave / Chancel which was excavated into modern landscaped rubble and one excavated within the Cloister. The excavation in the cloister has shown that much if not all of the Cloister had a flagstone floor approximately 0.5m below the present ground surface. This was left undisturbed.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. National Grid References are accurate to approximately 5m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50 and 0.02m at 1:20m. Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced to locate the site in its environs.

Contact details: Herefordshire Archaeology, Economy, Communities & Corporate, Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Archives & Record Centre, Fir Tree Lane, Rotherwas, Hereford, HR2 6LA. 01432 383352. Copyright: This report is the copyright of Herefordshire Council.

1 Introduction

This report (HAR 385) describes the excavation for and installation of three information panels within the Scheduled Area of Craswall Priory, Herefordshire. In addition to a short programme of repair and consolidation work to localised areas of the fabric of the priory funded through the Higher Level Scheme, it was proposed that three information panels are installed in order to highlight the importance of the site. These were commissioned by the HLS agreement holder and again funded through the HLS Scheme.

Two of the panels were mounted on oak frames and contain information regarding the priory, its use and its management. The third panel is a plan of the complex on a slate sheet and was commissioned by the Grandmontine Society. Herefordshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the excavation of the post holes in order to facilitate the installation of the panels.

Scheduled Monument consent was granted for the installation on 12th December 2018, (Reference Number: S00199831), and site work was undertaken on the 28th February and the 6th March 2019.

2 Archaeology

Craswall Priory is a Scheduled Monument (Scheduled Monument Number 1014536) and is of national importance.

Protected status

1. Listed Building (II) 355313: CRASWALL PRIORY
2. Scheduled Monument 27520: CRASWALL PRIORY, ASSOCIATED BUILDING REMAINS, POND BAYS AND HOLLOW WAYS

Associated Historic Landscape Character Records

1. HHE392 - Small Compass Enclosure of the Landscape - Reconfiguration of Monastic Territory

The Scheduled Monument documentation describes the monument as:

The earthwork, buried and ruined remains of the Grandmontine Priory of St. Mary, situated on a south-west facing slope near the head of the Monnow Valley, north-west of Craswall. Craswall was the second of three Grandmontine houses established in England, and was founded in c.1225 by Walther de Lacy.

The monument includes a small precinct enclosing 1.2ha, within which is a church with north and south chapels which formed the northern side of a cloistral group. The east range comprised a chapter house with undercroft with dormer / dormitory above. The south range comprised the kitchen and refectory whilst the west range contained storage rooms and

guest accommodation. The precinct was surrounded by a stone rubble wall on its north, west and southern sides

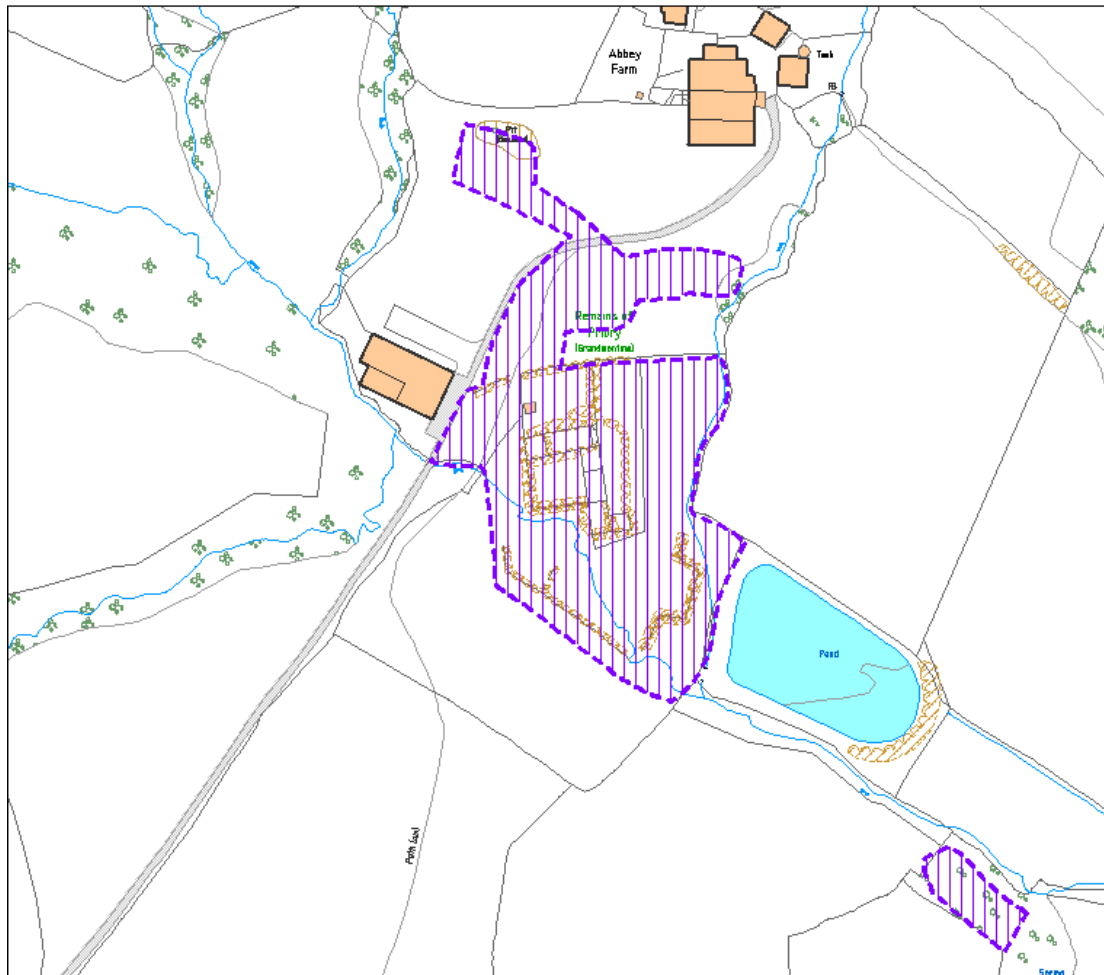


Figure 1: Scheduled Monument area (purple) of Craswall Priory

Historic Environment Record Data:

SMR Number : 167

Grid Reference : SO 2727 3767

Parish : CRASWALL, HEREFORDSHIRE

A house of the order of Grandmont, dedicated to St Mary, was founded at Craswall c.1225. House survived the general suppression of alien monasteries and continued until 1462. In 1441 it was given to God's House, Cambridge which was afterwards united to Christ's College. It is one of only three houses of this order in England.

Founded 1220-25 by Walter de Lacy, Lord of Ewyas Harold and suppressed in the 15th century. Priory Church consisted of church with semicircular apsidal east end and nave. At

the east end the walls are now only 5-6' above floor level but rise in height towards the west end of the chancel and the side walls of the nave are now 10-12' high. Cloister has traces of foundation of arcade wall. Chapter House has walls to the lower stones of windows. Also fragmentary remains of domestic buildings. Walls of the nave to the west of two doorways set forward by about a foot. This was not a later rebuild but a deliberate feature common to all churches of the Grandmontine order.

Walter II had estates in Normandy, England, the south Welsh March and Meath in Ireland, and he was assessed at fifty-one and a quarter knights' fees in the 1190, 1194 and 1210 scutage. The foundation of the Priory must have taken place while Walter was sheriff, not after peace was restored in 1225. Craswall formed a vital link in the chain of castles that protected Herefordshire. It was visited by Henry III on his journey from Hay to Abergavenny.

Excavations conducted under the auspices of the Woolhope Club in 1904-7 were only partial and included the clearing of the eastern portion of the cloister, the eastern half of the church and the whole of the chapter house. The excavations were seemingly undertaken with very little forethought and no attempt was made to preserve the walls and other details uncovered. Succeeding years of neglect have caused irreparable damage and much carved work has been lost or dispersed. The excavations of 1962 by C. Wright and R.E. Kay threw light on the plan and detail of the north and south chapels and the slype.



Figure 2: Extract from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1886-7

3 Historical Land Use

Cartographic evidence gives the following historical land use of the site:

- 1840, Craswall Tithe Map shows solid buildings on the site and lists it as “homestead”.
- 1886-7 1st Edition Ordnance Survey shows the principal wall lines, including the line of the northern precinct boundary wall (Figure 2).

4 Current land use and management

The upstanding remains of the Priory (within its own field), are managed as rough grazing. The remainder of the Scheduled Area is under permanent pasture.

5. Fieldwork

Provision for the installation of three panels was made by the hand excavation in three areas.

Trench 1 was located within the cloister (see figure 3) at NGR SO 27259 37676 and comprised two 0.25m square holes approximately 0.6 m apart. These were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.53m. A uniform, mid brown soil was encountered to depth of 0.45m which contained charcoal flecks within the top 0.2m. This overlay a deposit of sandy, grey clay which in turn directly overlay a horizontal stone base. (see plates 1 & 2).

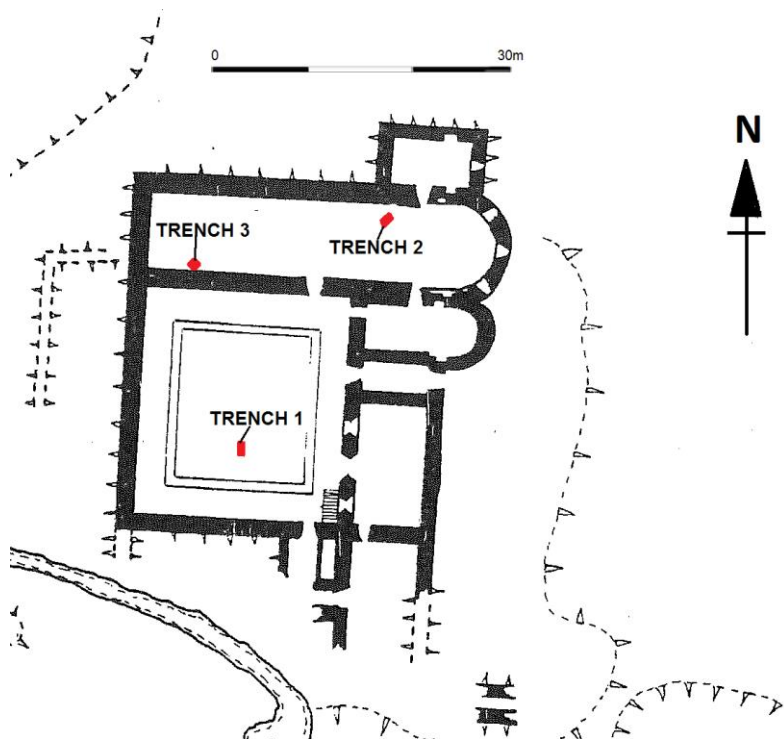


Figure 3: Site plan showing the location of trenches.



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking East.



Plate 2: Detail of Trench 1 showing stanchion holes

Trench 2 was located at the junction between the Nave and the Chancel, close to the northern wall, (see figure 3) at NGR SO 27265 37701. This comprised a 0.75m long by 0.3m wide trench excavated through dense rubble in a loose soil matrix. It was apparent that the this material represented a landscaped “bund” of material which had been deposited in order to help protects the northern wall during the main consolidation and conservation works in the late 1990’s. A maximum depth of 0.6m was achieved at which depth further excavation could only be achieved by widening the trench substantially which would have made installation and re-instatement more difficult.



Plate 3: Trench 2 location



Plate 4: Trench 2 showing angle in relation to the north Nave wall.

Trench 3 was excavated close to the south-west corner of the Nave at NGR SO 27248 37693. This comprised a 0.45m diameter and 0.55m deep trench through very dense rubble in a mortar matrix. Many of the masonry fragments were bedded vertically suggesting that they had purposefully been stacked against the south wall at some point in time, possibly during the clearance and conservation works during the 1980's.



Plate 5: Trench 3 looking to the South-West



Plate 6: Detail of Trench 3 showing rubble and mortar fill.

The panels were installed on 6th March. After levelling the trenches were backfilled with rubble and spoil mixed with sharp sand and “post-crete”. The turf was reinstated where practicable.



Plate 7: Information panel installed in Trench 1.



Plate 8: : Information panel installed in Trench 2.



Plate 9: Stanchion for Information panel installed in Trench 3, (panel and Trench 2 in the background).

6 Discussion:

The installation works have caused no damage to the monument, the only deposits being disturbed comprising topsoil in Trench 1 and recently deposited rubble in Trenches 2 and 3. It was observed during the excavation for Trench 1 that the cloister floor appears to be laid to flagstone as has been illustrated in the reconstruction drawing on the panel.

7 Bibliography:

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8 Acknowledgements:

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9 Archive:

This document

24 digital images