

SHAP15-02



## SHAP ABBEY, PENRITH, CUMBRIA

*Historic Building Recording*

*Commissioned by English Heritage*

*September 2016*

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HA Job no.: SHAP15/02  
NGR: NY 54789 15261  
Parish: Shap  
Council: Cumbria  
OASIS ref.: headland1-259339

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## HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

*Headland Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake historic building recording of a section of cemetery wall located at the River Lowther river bank at Shap Abbey prior to stabilisation and consolidation repairs. In addition a photographic survey of wall damage around the abbey was undertaken to assist with the on-going conservation work and consolidation of the abbey walls and a record made of masonry discovered within the river during stabilisation works*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake historic building recording of a section of walling located at the river bank at Shap Abbey prior to stabilisation and consolidation repairs. In addition a photographic survey of wall damage around the abbey was undertaken to assist with the on-going conservation work and consolidation of the abbey walls and a record made of masonry discovered within the river during stabilisation works.

This report provides the descriptive and photographic record of this work.

### 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site is located at National Grid Ref NY 54789 15261 (Illus. 1) and is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (No. 23690).

Shap Abbey is located in the valley of the river Lowther, around 1.5km west of the village of Shap, Cumbria. It was dedicated to St Mary Magdalene and founded in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century as a Premonstratensian house, enjoying a prosperous existence until the suppression of monastic orders on the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since then belonging to the Lowther family who in 1948 placed the site into the Guardianship of the state

### 3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In line with the WSI, the main objectives of archaeological works were:

- To fully record the masonry located along the existing river bank and at various other locations throughout the abbey to comply with the conditions of the Scheduled Monument Consent.
- To record the masonry blocks recovered from the river.
- On completion of the project, produce detailed CAD drawings, written report and photographic record.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

Using the general standards set out by English Heritage (2006), a Level 1 historic building survey was undertaken. This report aims to provide a descriptive record to help inform the understanding and scope of the remedial works to be carried out on the upstanding building on site. The work was undertaken to a methodology set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (English Heritage 2015). Plans of the building were provided by the client which have been used as base for the illustrations produced here.

Photos of each piece of masonry recovered from the river were taken using a digital SLR camera and the masonry recorded using pro-forma sheets.

## 4.1 Site works

Site work was undertaken by the Josh Gaunt on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 and Fraser McFarlane on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

## 4.2 Recording

All aspects of the work were undertaken in accordance with the current relevant Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures of the ClfA.

## 4.3 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A photographic catalogue of each area detailed below is included in an accompanying CD.

A summary report has been prepared for submission to English Heritage and an entry has been made in the OASIS database (headland1-259339).

# 5 RESULTS

## 5.1 Abbey walls

A total of 23 areas of abbey walls were photographed prior to their consolidation and cleaning. The locations of the photographs can be seen through Illus. 2 and the photographs are presented here as Illus 2A-2X.

## 5.2 Cemetery wall

Part of the cemetery wall of the abbey, located to the east of the Chapter House, has been affected by the continuous erosion of the bank of the River Lowther (location shown on Illus. 2). A section of approximately 2.66 m in length is now located immediately adjacent to the river and is severely affected by the stability of the bank (Illus. 4).

Extensive erosion behind the wall has caused further damage to the bank, exposing stonework at the top of the bank (Illus. 5), some of which has recently collapsed into the river. Several of these stones show tool marks from where they have been faced (Illus. 3A-D) and bevelled (Illus. 3A), suggesting they were originally structural elements of masonry. These will be included in the consolidation of the wall.

## 5.3 Masonry blocks recovered from the river

The three masonry blocks were all recovered from the River Lowther, close to the cemetery wall (Illus. 1). At the time of the visit, the largest masonry piece (001) had been placed by ground workers on top of a pile of rocks in the centre of the river approximately 3 m east of the wall (Illus. 8). The remaining pieces of masonry (002 and 003) and four fragments of skeletal remains recovered from the river had been placed on the dry high ground above the river by ground workers.

### Masonry 001 (Illus. 6 & 7)

Masonry 001 measures 1.05m in length, 0.69 m in width and 0.29 m thick. It is comprised of roughly hewn sandstone carved into a roughly triangular shape, although a small portion of the tip of the block, approximately 0.35 m in length, has broken off. The face of the block has been indented, creating a flat lip measuring approximately 0.07 m wide, which runs the perimeter of the block. The indented surface of the block slopes very gradually from, and the slope from the edge of the lip to the base of the indented surface is noticeably less steep than elsewhere on the block. This gives the impression that the block was used to funnel material or water away.

The block is in relatively good condition, with the exception of the broken tip, and occasional blemishes in the sandstone. Some masonry marks are present around the lip of the block. The sandstone itself is coarse and does not seem to have been polished. It is dark grey in colour, although small breaks in the stone revealed the block to have originally been a light brownish-yellow colour prior to discolouration, likely as a result of water activity. River weeds were present, implying the block has been present in the river for a relatively long period of time.

### Masonry 002 (Illus. 9)

Masonry 002 was broken into two pieces which when combined measure 0.4 m in length, 0.21 m in width and 0.2 m thick. The individual pieces measured 0.29 m in length, 0.21 m in width and 0.2 m thick and the other approximately 0.11 m in length, 0.18 m in width and 0.2 m thick. They are comprised of roughly hewn granite and

displayed evidence of possible corncicing in the form of two horizontal lines incised into roughly the centre of the larger block. The granite is light grey in colour and had quite extensive evidence of masons' marks on both pieces. A large portion of the top of the larger piece appears to have broken off, revealing the lighter coloured granite. Four sub-rounded incisions present at the top of the larger piece, are possibly evidence of a different type of masons' mark than seen on the smaller piece.

#### Masonry 003 (Illus. 10)

Masonry 003 measured 0.28m in length, 0.21m in width and 0.24m thick. It is comprised of roughly hewn sandstone which was dark grey in colour. Like Masonry 001, the block had some small blemishes on its surface which revealed the sandstone to have originally been light brownish-yellow in colour, prior to discolouration. The dark colour of the stone and the presence of river weeds on the surface suggest the stone had been present in the river for a significant amount of time. One side of the block has been carved into a curve at an angle of approximately 50°.

#### Faunal Remains

The skeletal assemblage was assessed in house by a qualified osteologist and were identified as two pieces of sheep bone, one piece of horse bone and one piece of cow bone.

#### Discussion

As the three pieces of masonry were out of their original contexts, it is difficult to interpret their original place within the wider abbey complex. It is possible that Masonry 001 was washed north from the latrine area of the abbey during flooding and lay in the river for a period of time before being discovered again during works to the wall at the river. The nature of the base of the indented surface of the block suggests Masonry 001 was used to channel water or material, implying that it may have functioned as a rudimentary sink in the latrine area of the abbey.

Masonry 002 and 003 had limited identifying features other than the corncicing in the case of the Masonry 002 and the one side of Masonry 003 which had been cut into a curve. Given the small nature of the surviving blocks and the lack of context for them, it is not possible to assign a definitive function to either block.

## 6 REFERENCES

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RCHME 1996 *Recording Historic Buildings – A Descriptive Specification* (3rd Edition), Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, Swindon.

## 7 APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

#### *Photographic register*

Frame no.	Description
17/08/2016	
001	Shot of river and latrine area of abbey
002	Record shot of stone [001] showing side A
003	Record shot of stone [001] showing side B
004	Record shot of stone [001] showing side C
005	Record shot of stone [001]
006	General shot of stone [001]
007	General shot of stone [001]
008	General shot of stone [001]
009	General shot of stone [001]
010	General shot of stone [001]
011	General shot of stone [001]
012	General shot of stone [001]
013	Shot of eroding bank
014	Shot of masonry eroding out of bank
015	Shot of eroding bank
016	Close up of masonry eroding out of bank
017	Shot of masonry [002]
018	Shot of masonry [003]
03/08/2016	
015	Start of cemetery wall
016	Cemetery wall
017	Cemetery wall
018	Cemetery wall

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Frame no.	Description
019	Cemetery wall
020	Cemetery wall
021	Cemetery wall
022	Cemetery wall
023	Cemetery wall close up
024	Cemetery wall close up
025	Cemetery wall close up
026	Cemetery wall close up
027	Cemetery wall close up
028	Cemetery wall close up
029	Cemetery wall close up
030	Cemetery wall close up
031	Cemetery wall close up
032	Cemetery wall close up
033	Cemetery wall close up
034	Cemetery wall close up
035	Cemetery wall close up
036	Cemetery wall
037	Cemetery wall
038	Cemetery wall
039	Cemetery wall
040	Cemetery wall
041	Cemetery wall
042	Cemetery wall
043	Cemetery wall
044	Cemetery wall
045	Cemetery wall
046	Cemetery wall

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Frame no.	Description
047	Cemetery wall
048	Cemetery wall
049	Eroded bank
050	Eroded bank
051	Cemetery wall
052	Cemetery wall
053	Cemetery wall
054	Cemetery wall
055	Eroded bank and stones
056	Eroded bank and stones
057	Eroded bank and stones
058	Eroded bank and stones with wall
059	Cemetery wall top
060	Cemetery wall top
061	River, wall, rubble
062	River, wall, rubble
063	Faced bevelled stone
064	Faced bevelled stone
065	Faced bevelled stone
066	Loose, faced stones
067	Loose, faced stones - close up
068	Loose, faced stones - close up
069	Loose, faced stones - close up
070	Loose, faced stones - close up
071	Loose, faced stones - close up
072	Loose, faced stones - close up
073	Loose, faced stones - close up
074	Exposed masonry in eroded bank

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Frame no.	Description
075	Exposed masonry in eroded bank
076	Exposed masonry in eroded bank
077	Exposed masonry in eroded bank
078	Wall and river
079	Exposed masonry in eroded bank
080	Exposed masonry in eroded bank
081	Faced stone close up
082	Faced stone close up
083	Damaged wall 1
084	Damaged wall 1
085	Damaged wall 1
086	Damaged wall 2
087	Damaged wall 2
088	Damaged wall 2
089	Damaged wall 3
090	Damaged wall 3
091	Damaged wall 3
092	Damaged wall 4
093	Damaged wall 4
094	Damaged wall 4
095	Damaged wall 5
096	Damaged wall 5
097	Damaged wall 6
098	Damaged wall 6
099	Damaged wall 6
100	Damaged wall 7
101	Damaged wall 7
102	Damaged wall 7

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Frame no.	Description
103	Damaged wall 8
104	Damaged wall 8
105	Damaged wall 8
106	Damaged wall 9
107	Damaged wall 9
108	Damaged wall 9
109	Damaged wall 10
110	Damaged wall 10
111	Damaged wall 11
112	Damaged wall 11
113	Damaged wall 11
114	Damaged wall 12
115	Damaged wall 12
116	Damaged wall 12
117	Damaged wall 13
118	Damaged wall 13
119	Damaged wall 13
120	Damaged wall 14
121	Damaged wall 14
122	Damaged wall 15
123	Damaged wall 15
124	Damaged wall 16
125	Damaged wall 16
126	Damaged wall 17
127	Damaged wall 17
128	Damaged wall 18
129	Damaged wall 18
130	Damaged wall 19

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Frame no.	Description
131	Damaged wall 19
132	Damaged wall 20
133	Damaged wall 20
134	Damaged wall 21
135	Damaged wall 21
136	Damaged wall 22
137	Damaged wall 22
138	Damaged wall 23
139	Damaged wall 23
140	Damaged wall 23
141	Damaged wall 23
142	Abbey - general shot
143	Abbey - general shot
144	Damaged wall 24
145	Damaged wall 24
146	Damaged wall 24
147	Abbey - general shot
135	Damaged wall 21
136	Damaged wall 22
137	Damaged wall 22
138	Damaged wall 23
139	Damaged wall 23
140	Damaged wall 23
141	Damaged wall 23
142	Abbey - general shot
143	Abbey - general shot
144	Damaged wall 24
145	Damaged wall 24

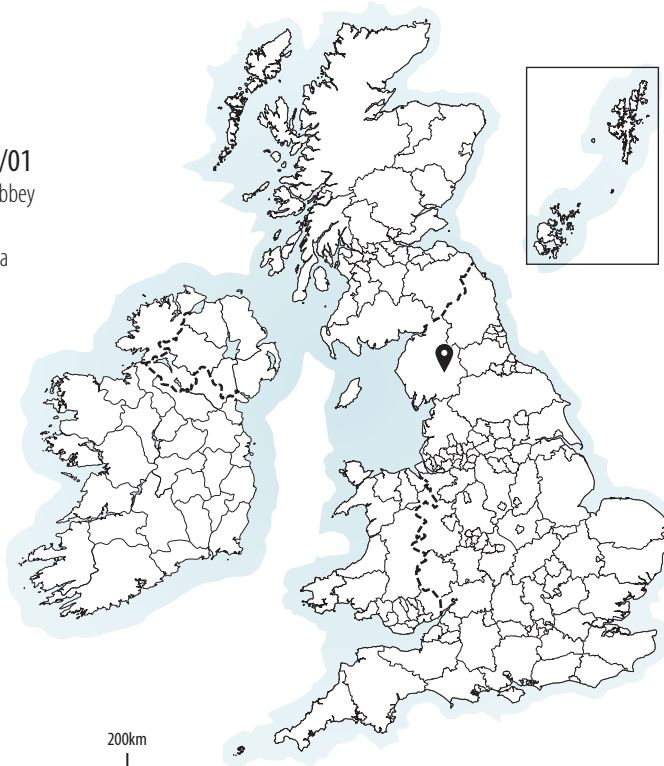
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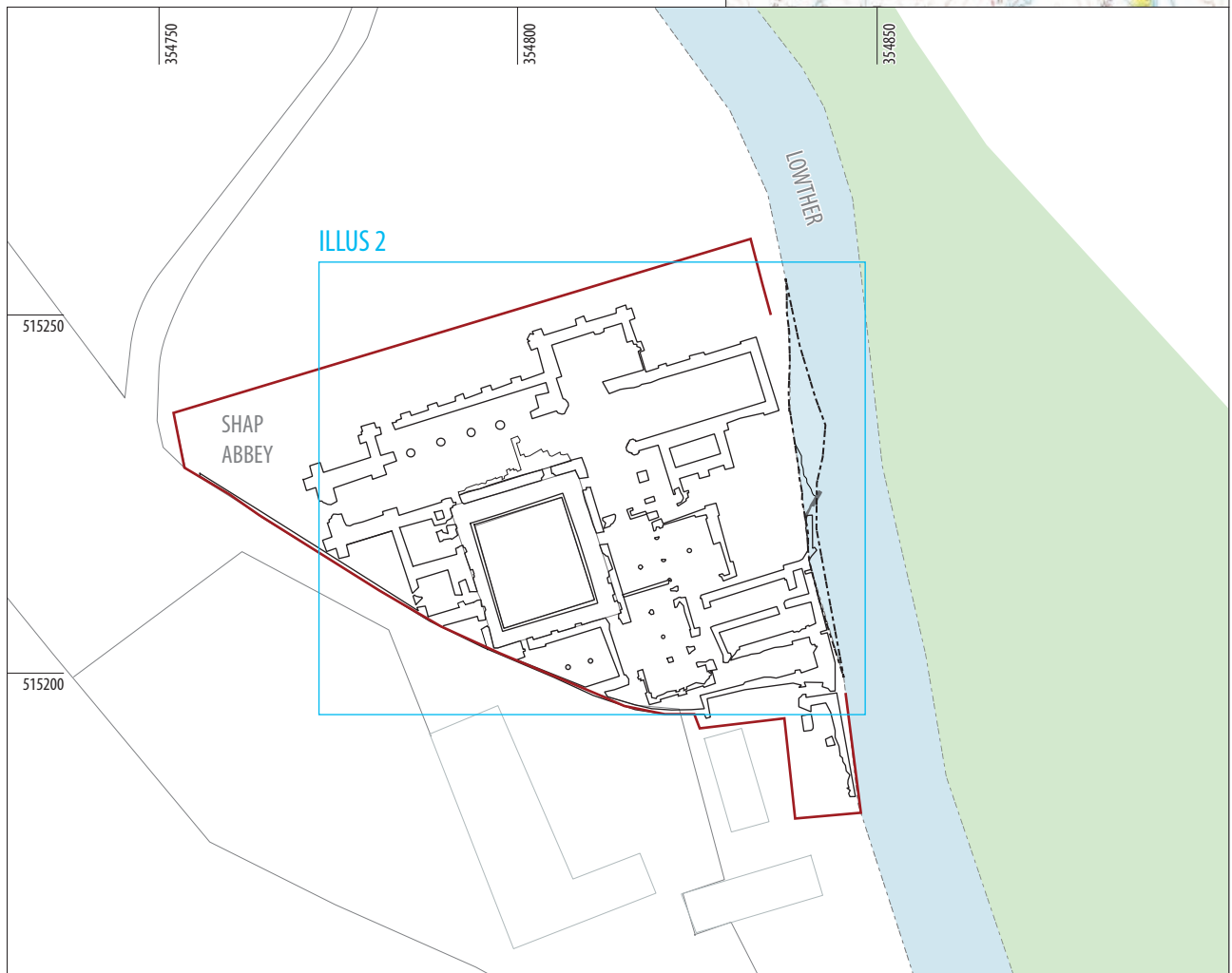
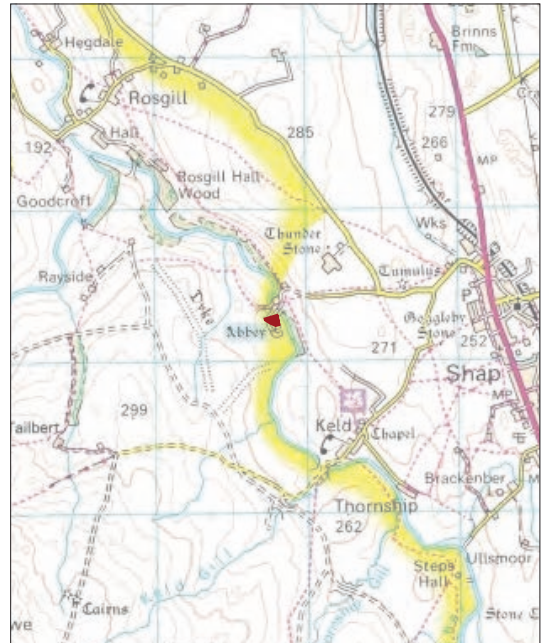
Frame no.	Description
146	Damaged wall 24
147	Abbey - general shot

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SHAP/01  
 Shap Abbey  
 Shap  
 Cumbria



0 200km



KEY  
 [Red outline] site boundary  
 [Dashed line] river bank erosion

0 50m  
 scale 1:1,000 @ A4

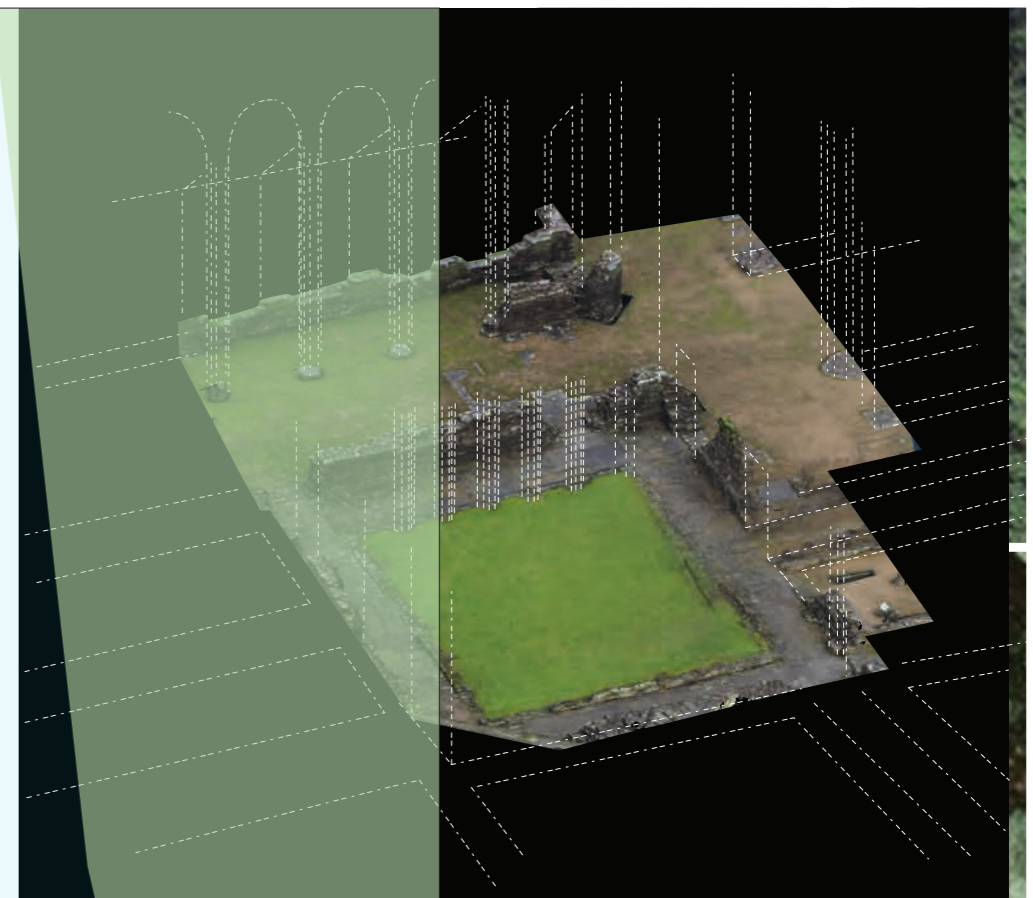
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**ARCHAEOLOGY**

SCOTLAND

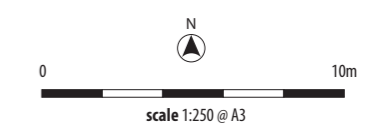
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ILLUS 1 Site location



- KEY
- site boundary
  - 2A illustration number and location
  - river bank erosion



ILLUS 2 Areas of recording





ILLUS 2A–2H Damage to walls





ILLUS 2I-2P Damage to walls





ILLUS 2Q–2X Damage to walls





ILLUS 3A–3E S facing view of bank erosion including worked stones





ILLUS 4 W facing view of cemetery wall ILLUS 5 W facing view of eroded bank with faced stones





**ILLUS 6** Shot of masonry 001 facing WNW    **ILLUS 7** Shot of masonry 001 facing ESE    **ILLUS 8** View WNW of masonry 001 in relation to bank  
**ILLUS 9** Shot of masonry 002    **ILLUS 10** Shot of masonry 003