

CONISHEAD PRIORY, ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA

Archaeological On-Site Assessment



Client:
New Kadampa Tradition –
International Kadampa
Buddhist Tradition
NGR: SD 5145 9305
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June 2009



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Contents

Illustrations.....	2
Non-Technical Summary.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	4
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Methodology.....	7
3. Archaeological Walkover Survey.....	8
4. Building Recording.....	26
5. Discussion and Conclusions.....	36
6. Bibliography.....	37

Illustrations

List of Plates

Plate 1: Culvert under the coast road at the north end of the estate (Site No. 101), looking west	8
Plate 2 (left): South end of canalized section of beck (Site No. 102), looking north	9
Plate 3 (right): North end of canalized section of beck (Site No. 102), looking south	9
Plate 4 (left): Disused quarry (Site No. 103), looking west.....	10
Plate 5 (right): Base of Hermitage Hill Bridge, west side (Site No. 104).....	10
Plate 6 (left): West entrance of the Grotto (Site No. 105).....	11
Plate 7 (right): Recess at the east end of the Grotto (Site No. 105).....	11
Plate 8: The hermitage (Site No. 106), viewed from the west.....	12
Plate 9 (left): Railway embankment (Site No. 107) taken from Priory crossing, looking south	12
Plate 10 (right): remains of a small jetty (Site No. 108), looking north	12
Plate 11 (left): South end of embankment culvert (Site No. 109), looking north-east	13
Plate 12 (right): North end of embankment culvert (Site No. 109), looking south-east.....	13
Plate 13 (left): possible remnants of breakwater (Site No. 110), looking south	14
Plate 14 (right): The 'Smoke House' (Site No. 111) from the south-west.....	14
Plate 15 (left): Pond (Site No. 112) from the south.....	15
Plate 16 (right): Pond (Site No. 112) from the north.....	15
Plate 17 (left): Brick lined underpass (Site No. 113) from the north end	16
Plate 18 (right): North entrance of underpass (Site No. 113).....	16
Plate 19 (left): Jetty (Site No. 114) from the east	17
Plate 20 (right): Timber quayside (Site No. 114) from the north.....	17
Plate 21 (left): Kissing gate and field gate (Site No. 115), looking south-west.....	18
Plate 22 (right): Site No. 115, looking north-east with the parish marker (Site No. 116) in the foreground	18
Plate 23: Parish marker (Site No. 116), from the west.	18
Plate 24 (left): Culvert under Red Lane (Site No. 117), looking south	19
Plate 25 (right): Culvert under railway embankment (Site No. 117), looking north-east	19
Plate 26 (left): Red Lane underpass (Site No. 118), looking west.....	20
Plate 27 (right): Detail of stonework at the east end of the south side of Red Lane underpass (Site No. 118).....	20
Plate 28 (left): Boundary wall (Site No. 119), from the south-east	21
Plate 29 (right): The 'Ladies' Arch' (Site No. 120), from the east.....	21
Plate 30 (left): Pets' cemetery (Site No. 121), looking north-east	22
Plate 31 (right): Site of the Ladies' Cottage (Site No. 122), looking north.....	22
Plate 32 (left): South boundary ha-ha (Site No. 123), from the west.....	22
Plate 33 (right): Aerial photograph showing the boundary ha-ha (CCC n.d.).....	22
Plate 34 (left): Bank and ditch (Site No. 125), looking south-west	24
Plate 35 (right): Stone revetment (Site No. 126) at the south end of the shore, looking south-west	24
Plate 36: 1822 plan by William Smith	26

Plate 37: Binns' plan of 1843.....	27
Plate 38: Ordnance Survey map of 1850	27
Plate 39: Estate plan from 1879	28
Plate 40: Ordnance Survey map of 1890	28
Plate 41: The two southernmost elements of the building, from the south.....	29
Plate 42: South part of the Priory, from the west gardens.....	30
Plate 43: Main entrance way from the north-east.....	30
Plate 44: Phase 2 clock tower, from the east side.....	31
Plate 45 (left): Phase 2 quadrangle buildings.....	31
Plate 46 (right): Detail of clock tower date stone	31
Plate 47: Phase 3 toilet block on the east side of the north entrance	32
Plate 48: Phase 4 photograph showing boiler house chimney (CRO(K) WDX 427/2 1928).....	33
Plate 49: Brick building representing Phase 5.....	33
Plate 50: Kadampa temple from the south-west.....	34

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location.....	6
Figure 2: Plan of the hermitage.....	12
Figure 3: Walkover survey site location plan.....	25
Figure 4: Building phase plan.....	35

Non-Technical Summary

As part of an on-going programme of renovation at Conishead Priory a recent application was made for funds to restore the 'chapel', which would also add further scope for the appreciation of the historical development of the site. Originally the site of a leper hospital in the early 12th century, Conishead became a priory in c1180-1184 and remained so until the Dissolution and it was seized by the Crown in 1537. Conishead Priory was dismantled and its estates were incorporated into the Duchy of Lancaster and later leased to Thomas Stanley, the second Lord Monteagle. In 1547, Conishead was granted to Sir William Paget who then sold it to John Machell a year later. In 1554 Conishead was sold to William Sandys. After William Sandys died in 1583, Conishead was left to Margaret Dodding and Barbara Philipson. Margaret's grandson George Dodding later bought out the Philipsons. The estate passed through his daughter Sarah, wife of John Braddyll, to their son Dodding Braddyll. Dodding's son Thomas Braddyll in turn left Conishead to Wilson Gale. After his death in 1818 his son, Thomas Richmond Gale Braddyll inherited Conishead. In 1821 Thomas began to rebuild the hall that was built on the ruins of the Priory, but the work took over 20 years to complete and required a change of architect in order to get it completed. In 1847 Braddyll went bankrupt and Conishead and its estates were sold off. The Priory and park was bought by a Scottish syndicate that converted it into a spa hotel. In 1925 the estate was bought by a group of investors who sold it on to the Durham Miners Welfare Committee in 1929, who used it as a convalescent home until 1970. In 1972 the estate was sold; the park was split into two and both parts were sold, with the Priory being sold to a Mr Jones of Wigan. Unable to get planning permission he put the house and estate back on the market. The Priory buildings remained empty until 1976 when it was bought by the Manjushri Kadampa Buddhist community for a sum of £75,000. The Manjushri Kadampa Buddhist community has done much to preserve its structure. In 1996 a new Buddhist temple was built in the grounds.

The on-site survey followed on from a desk-based assessment, and identified the recorded elements of the Priory's historic landscape and placed them in the context of the historic development of the site as a whole. It comprised a walk-over survey, which investigated those sites of historical and archaeological interest known to be situated within the estate owned by the current Priory and identified sites not previously recorded. A list of all of these sites was produced, tied to a plan of the estate showing their location. In addition, a brief investigation of the development of the different parts of the Priory buildings was also carried out. This has provided a basic phasing of its development, which has incorporated information contained in the earlier desk-based assessment wherever possible.

A brief discussion of the results of this assessment is included, summarizing the pertinent points, the relationships between and relative importance of the various parts of the site and the phasing of the buildings.

Acknowledgements

Greenlane Archaeology would like to thank New Kadampa Tradition - International Kadampa Buddhist union for commissioning and supporting the archaeological walkover survey, in particular Neil Branthwaite for his assistance on site. Further thanks are due to Malcolm Craig at Craig and Green Architects for providing copies of existing plans of the building (which were originally produced by Mark Tole).

The site survey was carried out by Sam Whitehead, Tom Mace, and Steve Clarke who also compiled the report. The report was edited by Dan Elsworth, who also managed the project, and copyedited by Tom Mace.

1. Introduction

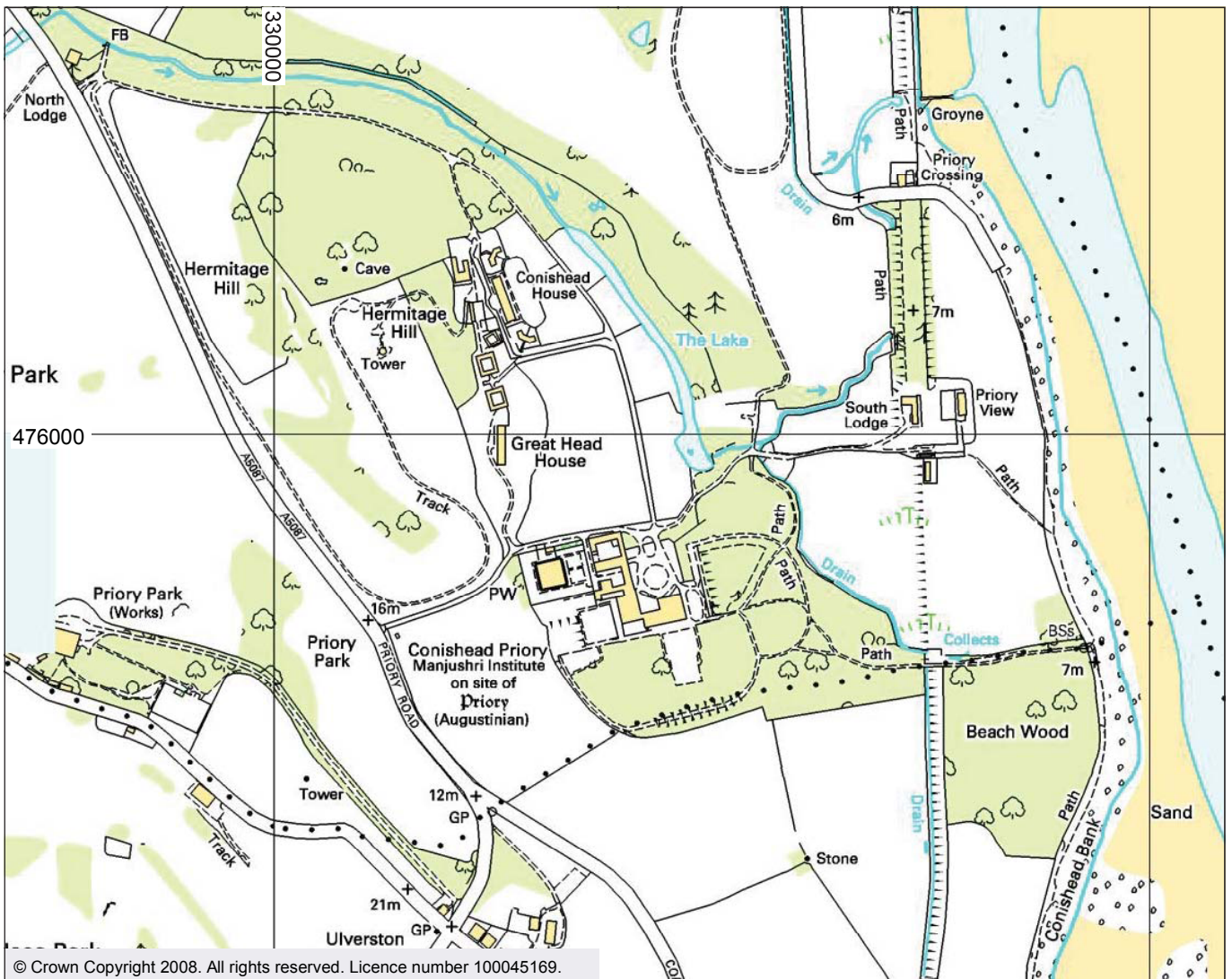
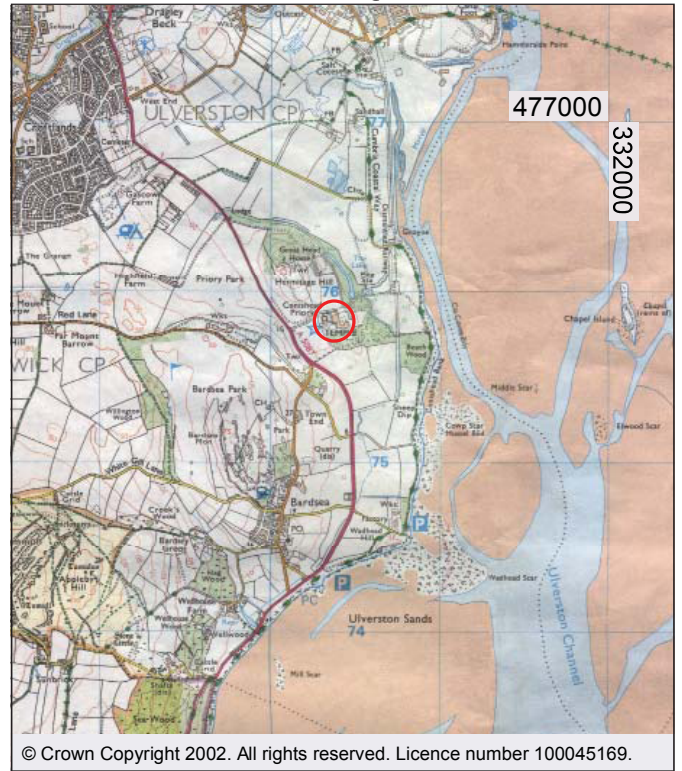
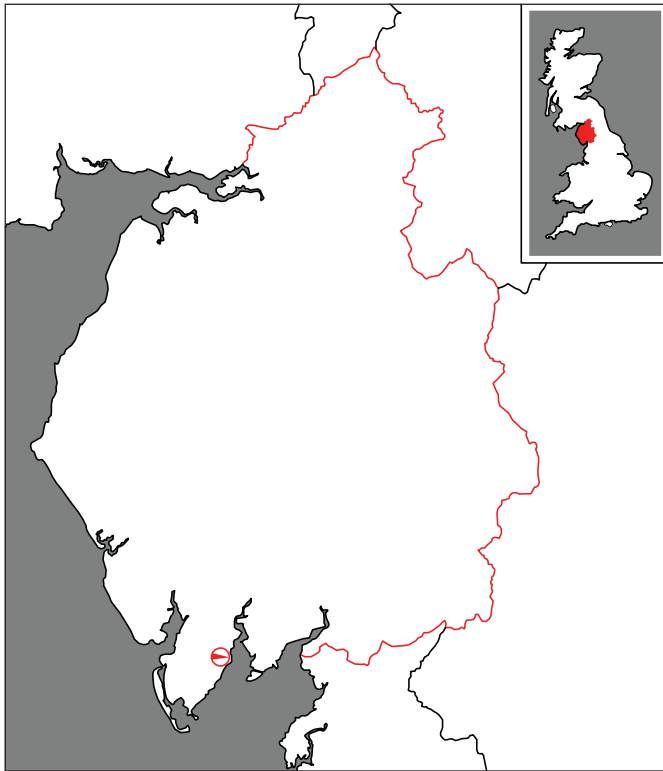
1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 As part of an on-going programme of renovation at Conishead Priory a recent application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in order to restore the 'chapel', which will also provide an area for interpretation, and for the accommodation of visitors. This is also intended to facilitate an audience development plan that will enhance the visitor experience and educational potential of the site by enabling an appreciation of the buildings in their setting, principally the associated grounds, and add further scope for the appreciation of the historical development of the site. An integral part of this process is providing a detailed understanding of the priory, both in terms of its history but also the spatial arrangement and interrelationships of its various historic elements, and Greenlane Archaeology has been asked to compile this information for inclusion in a Conservation Management Plan. This work is to be completed in two parts: a desk-based assessment, the results of which are contained in a separate report (Greenlane Archaeology 2009), and a programme of on-site assessment, which is the subject of this report.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

1.2.1 Conishead Priory is situated on the west coast of the Furness Peninsula looking out over Morecombe Bay, some two miles south of Ulverston, Cumbria, on the coast road to Bardsea (Figure 1). To the west the undulating landscape comprises a mix of rough pasture, limestone walls, narrow lanes and widespread semi-natural deciduous woodland (Countryside Commission 1998, 70). The site is situated at approximately 20m above sea level (Ordnance Survey 2002).

1.2.2 The site is situated on the boundary between an area of Namurian millstone grit to the south-west and Carboniferous limestone to the north-east (Moseley 1978, plate 1), which is typically overlain by glacial deposits of boulder clay, although these have been much affected by inundations caused by changing sea levels (Countryside Commission 1998, 72).



Client: New Kadampa Tradition - International Kadampa Buddhist Union (NKT-IKBU)

Figure 1: Site location

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2. Methodology

2.1 Archaeological Walkover Survey

2.1.1 The walkover survey was carried out in order to identify sites of historical and archaeological interest present and make a record of them in order to more fully understand the historical development of the estate and provide additional information that could be utilised in its interpretation. Sites known to be present within the estate area, that had been identified during the desk-based assessment (Greenlane Archaeology 2009) were visited but transects were walked across the entire area in order to identify previously unknown sites. The walkover survey was approximately equivalent to a Level 1 survey as defined by English Heritage (2007).

2.1.2 For each site information describing it was collated on a *pro forma* record sheet and photographs in digital format were taken. Where necessary additional information such as sketch plans was also added to the record sheet. The location of each feature was recorded relative to the location of nearby buildings and other structures that were present on available mapping of the site (Figure 2).

2.2 Building Recording

2.2.1 Historical sources collated at the Desk-based Assessment stage of this project (Greenlane Archaeology 2009) were consulted prior to a brief recording of the buildings carried out at the time of the walkover survey. The building survey comprised the following elements:

- A brief map regression that shows the development of the property through time;
- Digital photographs of the external elevations and some selected architectural details;
- Annotation of existing architects plans of the building with a view to phasing its constituent elements based on architectural styles and fabric types.

2.2.2 The building recording was approximately equivalent to a Level 1 survey as defined by English Heritage (2006).

2.3 Archive

2.3.1 An archive of the project was compiled to provide a permanent paper record of the project and its results in accordance with English Heritage and IFA guidelines (English Heritage 1991; Brown 2007).

3. Archaeological Walkover Survey

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This walkover survey was carried out in order to provide a better understanding of the relationship between the buildings of Conishead Priory and the landscape they occupy. The previous desk-based assessment has investigated the development of the buildings and landscape associated with Conishead Priory through reference to the recorded history and known phases of the site, with particular reference to maps and plans of the area (Greenlane Archaeology 2009). Many of the sites identified during the desk-based Assessment are no longer extant and as such do not form part of this survey: the information gained from documentary evidence such as maps and other written evidence will be used to locate features that have since been lost.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 A variety of features of interest within the grounds and buildings, some of which were newly identified by the walkover survey, are of use in understanding the results of the desk-based assessment. The features of interest within the survey area are numbered sequentially from north to south, and details of their construction, location, and appearance are outlined below:

Site No. 101**DBA Site No. n/a****SMR Number: n/a****Site Name:** culvert**NGR:** 329724 476477**Designation:** none

Description: this culvert (Plate 1) runs under the coast road from the west side where the beck which supplies the fishpond (Site No. 112) originates. The facing of the culvert is constructed of limestone rubble with a low arched parapet 4m wide, the arch being approximately 0.5m above road level. The arch is topped with rounded coping stones.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 1: Culvert under the coast road at the north end of the estate (Site No. 101), looking west

Site No. 102**DBA Site No.** n/a**SMR Number:** n/a**Site Name:** canalized beck**NGR:** 330190 476370**Designation:** none

Description: the beck which feeds the fishpond (Site No. 112) has been canalized approximately 170m north of the fishpond, for some 90m (Plate 2 and Plate 3). The canal has been constructed of concrete and is 1.4m wide, with the sides being 0.3m high and 0.35m wide.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 2 (left): South end of canalized section of beck (Site No. 102), looking north

Plate 3 (right): North end of canalized section of beck (Site No. 102), looking south

Site No. 103**DBA Site No.** n/a**SMR Number:** n/a**Site Name:** disused quarry**NGR:** 330543 475693**Designation:** none

Description: this feature (Plate 4), which is under dense undergrowth, is situated on the north side of Hermitage Hill, adjacent to the road running between North Lodge and Conishead Priory. The quarry, cut into the limestone bedrock of the hill, is circular in shape, approximately 15m in diameter. The west side is 4m in height and the bottom of the quarry is roughly level with the road.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 104**DBA Site No.** 7**SMR Number:** 16014**Site Name:** footbridge**NGR:** 330324 476243**Designation:** none

Description: site of a bridge described by the Ordnance Survey maps as a wooden bridge (1850), and foot bridge (1891). The site of this bridge is located 34m north of the fishpond across the beck. Only the brick bases on either side of the beck survive. The bases are constructed of red brick, which is capped

with a plinth of concrete, and rest on a concrete base (Plate 4 (left): Disused quarry (Site No. 103), looking west

Plate 5). The bases are 0.5m high by 0.94m long and 0.27m deep. The span of the bridge would have been 3.4m.

Sources: Ordnance Survey 1850; 1891; walkover survey



Plate 4 (left): Disused quarry (Site No. 103), looking west

Plate 5 (right): Base of Hermitage Hill Bridge, west side (Site No. 104)

Site No. 105

DBA Site No. 10

SMR Number: 2389

Site Name: grotto

NGR: 330080 476195

Designation: none

Description: this is a deep grotto just east of the remains of the hermitage (Site No. 106). The grotto is situated within an outcrop of limestone, approximately 20m square, near the summit of hermitage Hill. The grotto is roughly circular with a thick pillar of rock situated centrally, creating a doughnut shape. There is an entrance on the west, 5m in length, with a 2.5m opening which narrows to 1.9m and slopes down by some 0.5m. On the north side of the outcrop there is another entrance which is approximately 1m wide and 2m deep. On the west side of the cave is a recess 1.4m deep by 1.6m wide and 1.4m high. The width of the grotto between the outer edge and the pillar varies between 1.5 and 2m. On the south side of the grotto is a dry-stone wall approximately one metre thick by 1.3m high, leaving a small gap to the roof.

Sources: Jopling 1843, Curwen 1903; Gaythorpe 1903; walkover survey



Plate 6 (left): West entrance of the Grotto (Site No. 105)

Plate 7 (right): Recess at the east end of the Grotto (Site No. 105)

Site No. 106

DBA Site No. 11

SMR Number: 2387

Site Name: hermitage

NGR: 330050 476175

Designation: none

Description: a small building, cruciform in plan, orientated east-west, constructed of limestone rubble, with walls standing no higher than 1.5m. Some work has been done to preserve the remains as the walls have been heavily pointed with concrete and capped with roof slates. The partition wall has collapsed and shows no evidence of a doorway. There are doorways at the east and west ends of the building, with the west end having a porch. At the west end of the building on the south wall is a recess and on the opposing side is the only window left extant. The inside of the building is overgrown and no interior features are extant.

Sources: 462-smith/Box 16/Folder 1/1 1822; Jopling 1843, Curwen 1903; Gaythorpe 1903; walkover survey

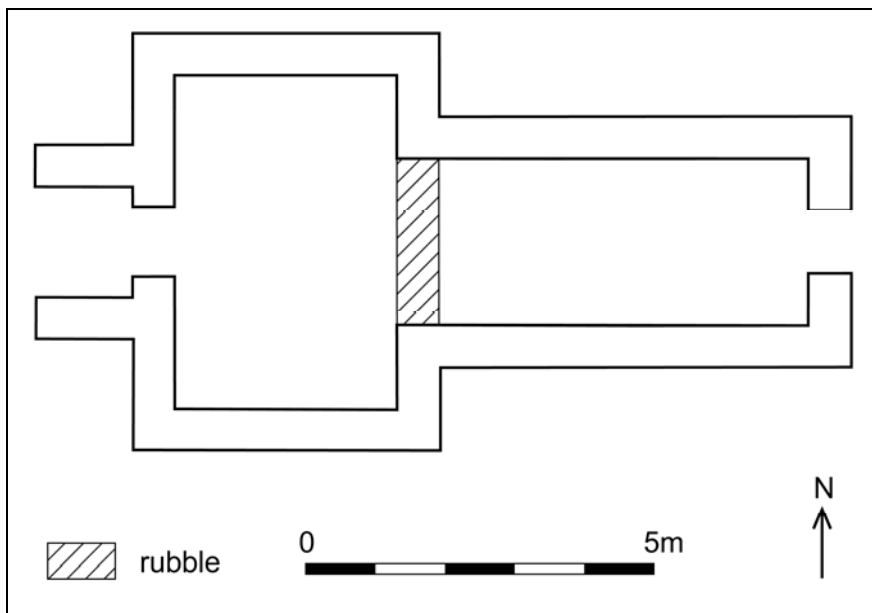


Plate 8: The hermitage (Site No. 106), viewed from the west

Figure 2: Plan of the hermitage (Site No. 106)

Site No. 107

DBA Site No. 1

SMR Number: 16047

Site Name: railway embankment

NGR: 330630 477550

Designation: none

Description: a small section of the Bardsea Branch of Furness is within the grounds of Conishead Priory, accessed by a path from the priory to the east which leads to Priory crossing. The railway had been dismantled by 1953 but the embankment is extant, approximately 200m of which is within the estate. The embankment is 40m wide and some 2.5m in height and is now covered in woodland. A path runs down the east side (Plate 9).

Sources: Ordnance Survey 1891; CRO(B) BTBR 7/BW 181/53 1953



Plate 9 (left): Railway embankment (Site No. 107) taken from Priory crossing, looking south

Plate 10 (right): remains of a small jetty (Site No. 108), looking north

Site No. 108**DBA Site No.** n/a**SMR Number:** n/a**Site Name:** jetty**NGR:** 330866 476161**Designation:** none

Description: remains of a jetty (Plate 10) situated on the shore between low and high tide. The remains are 6m in length and 1m wide, comprising timber uprights and planking at the west end. This planking appears to have been the remnants of boxing which was packed with stone. On the north side are the remains of a concrete waste pipe outlet.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 109**DBA Site No.** n/a**SMR Number:** n/a**Site Name:** culvert**NGR:** 330715 476108**Designation:** none

Description: this culvert is situated on the west side of the railway embankment (Site No. 107), the entrance is at the south end (Plate 11), running parallel and under the embankment before exiting at the north end (Plate 12). The culvert is circular, approximately 1.2m in diameter, and constructed of brick. The base and lower sides of the beck preceding the entrance to the culvert have been laid with large rough-cut limestone blocks.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 11 (left): South end of embankment culvert (Site No. 109), looking north-east

Plate 12 (right): North end of embankment culvert (Site No. 109), looking south-east

Site No. 110**DBA Site No.** n/a**SMR Number:** n/a**Site Name:** breakwater**NGR:** 330887 476098**Designation:** none

Description: linear feature constructed from coarsely laid large limestone blocks and boulders running parallel with the shore (Plate 13). The feature runs for 23m and is some 4m wide before it narrows down to 0.5m wide, continuing for another 40m to the south.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 111

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: 'Smoke House'

NGR: 330530 475996

Designation: none

Description: this single-room building (Plate 13 (left): possible remnants of breakwater (Site No. 110), looking south

Plate 14) is situated approximately 45m east on the north side of the beck exiting the fishpond (Site No. 112). The building is square and measures 3.5m by 3.5m. Its lower half is constructed of stone walls 0.5m thick to a height of 1.3m and rendered, and the top half is constructed of timber planking. The south wall has a chimney and the gabled roof is slate with modern ridge tiles. There is a single door on the west elevation and a window on the east elevation. It is quite probable that this building is the Swiss fishing chalet which was renovated in the 1920's, although it is apparently now known anecdotally as the 'Smoke House', although the origin of this is not certain.

Sources: Walkover survey; CRO(K) WDX427/2 1928



Plate 13 (left): possible remnants of breakwater (Site No. 110), looking south

Plate 14 (right): The 'Smoke House' (Site No. 111) from the south-west

Site No. 112**DBA Site No. 9****SMR Number: 16037****Site Name:** pond**NGR:** 330480 475990**Designation:** none

Description: the pond is approximately 130m in length with the south end widened to 25m for a length of some 50m (Plate 15 and Plate 16). The lake appears heavily silted with a depth of no more than 0.5-0.6m with saplings taking root. The lake is fed by a beck at the north end. This beck exits the pond at the south end in a westerly direction.

Source: Ordnance Survey 1850; R Newman pers comm. 14/6/2005; walkover survey



Plate 15 (left): Pond (Site No. 112) from the south

Plate 16 (right): Pond (Site No. 112) from the north

Site No. 113**DBA Site No. n/a****SMR Number: n/a****Site Name:** underpass**NGR:** 330494 475935**Designation:** none

Description: this underpass runs under an estate road that runs east/west from the Priory to South Lodge. The underpass (Plate 17 and Plate 18) is of an elongated s-shape, and is orientated north to south. The underpass is 18.5m long and 1.1m wide; the construction is of red brick, whitewashed, with a flagstone floor. The roof, which has a maximum height of 2.15m, has a shallow arch. At the south end is a flight of eight limestone steps leading up to ground level.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 17 (left): Brick lined underpass (Site No. 113) from the north end

Plate 18 (right): North entrance of underpass (Site No. 113)

Site No. 114

DBA Site No. 17

SMR Number: 2391

Site Name: jetty

NGR: 330970 475762

Designation: none

Description: remains of the timber supporting posts of a landing stage (Plate 19). This extends 35m from high to low water mark. To the south are the remains of a timber quay side (Plate 20). This feature consists of timber posts, 0.12-0.15m diameter and spaced 0.25-0.4m apart, running north to south for some 45m. Remnants of planking are attached to the shore side of the posts.

Source: R Newman pers comm. 2005; walkover survey



Plate 19 (left): Jetty (Site No. 114) from the east

Plate 20 (right): Timber quayside (Site No. 114) from the north

Site No. 115

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: kissing gate and field gate

NGR: 330930 475755

Designation: none

Description: both gates situated on the west boundary of Beach Wood are orientated north to south with the kissing gate to the south (Plate 21, Plate 22). Both the kissing gate and field gate are supported by two limestone gateposts. These posts are eight-sided, 1.2m high by 0.3m wide and 2.45m apart with the field gate in between. The kissing gate is hung on the south gate post and enclosed on the south side by a 'U' shaped iron railing. Set into the west side of this railing is a small marker stone inscribed with a 'U' on its north side, designating the Ulverston Parish boundary.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 21 (left): Kissing gate and field gate (Site No. 115), looking south-west.

Plate 22 (right): Site No. 115, looking north-east with the parish marker (Site No. 116) in the foreground

Site No. 116

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: parish boundary marker

NGR: 330930 475755

Designation: none

Description: this parish marker has been created from a slab of limestone shaped by water erosion, standing 0.93m in height (Plate 23). The stone has been set just to the west of the Kissing gate (Site No. 115), orientated north/south. The top has been levelled to create a small tableau on which the characters 'M' and 'U' have been cut. The meaning of the 'M' is uncertain; it may signify 'Muchland' referring to Urswick Parish to the south, although this is not an official title. The 'U' presumably denotes Ulverston Parish to the north.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 23: Parish marker (Site No. 116), from the west.

Site No. 117**DBA Site No. 26****SMR Number: 16029****Site Name:** culvert**NGR:** 330745 475735**Designation:** none

Description: this culvert runs under Red Lane (Site No. 124) on the west side of the railway embankment (Site No. 107). The culvert (Plate 24) is constructed of red brick and runs under the west walls of the underpass, the ditch continuing southwards parallel with the embankment. Just to the north of this culvert the ditch tees off to the west through a brick culvert which runs under the railway embankment, which is also constructed of brick (Plate 25).

Source: Ordnance Survey 1850; walkover survey



Plate 24 (left): Culvert under Red Lane (Site No. 117), looking south

Plate 25 (right): Culvert under railway embankment (Site No. 117), looking north-east

Site No. 118**DBA Site No. n/a****SMR Number: n/a****Site Name:** railway underpass**NGR:** 330755 475738**Designation:** none

Description: the underpass (Plate 26, Plate 27), constructed of sandstone blocks, is situated where Red Lane (Site No. 124) runs across the line of the railway embankment (the continuation of Site No. 107, though not part of the Priory estate). The top of the underpass is now open and the floor has been raised to the same level as the lane. The underpass is 2.3m wide and 18m in overall length, with the section through the embankment being 7.5m long. The maximum height of the walls is 2.7m. The walls are constructed of large sandstone blocks with a rock-face finish and dressed band topped with dressed coping stones. On either side of the embankment the walls flair out slightly.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 26 (left): Red Lane underpass (Site No. 118), looking west

Plate 27 (right): Detail of stonework at the east end of the south side of Red Lane underpass (Site No. 118)

Site No. 119

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: boundary wall

NGR: 330938 475753

Designation: none

Description: this boundary wall (Plate 28) is only 25m in length, running in a north/south direction, with the north end being some 8m west of the kissing gate (Site No. 115). The wall is 1.6m high and 0.4m thick and constructed of limestone rubble, some of it rough cut, with inclusions of brick and stone. The coping is concrete and there is a concrete bench situated on the shore side at the north end.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 120

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: 'Ladies' Arch'

NGR: 330545 475710

Designation: none

Description: this feature (Plate 29) is a garden folly situated to the south-east of the Priory on the south side of Red Lane (Site No. 124). The archway is constructed of large rough cut limestone blocks. Overall the arch is 4.3m high by 2.55m wide, and the maximum thickness of the stonework is 0.7m. The inner arch measures 1m wide by 2.2m high. The arch rests on a low revetment constructed of limestone rubble which runs to the south-east and continues to the north, away from the arch.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 28 (left): Boundary wall (Site No. 119), from the south-east

Plate 29 (right): The 'Ladies' Arch' (Site No. 120), from the east

Site No. 121

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: pet cemetery

NGR: 330543 475693

Designation: none

Description: This group of small monuments (Plate 30), situated in the vicinity of Ladies Cottage (Site No. 122), are of pet burials, presumably dogs belonging to the estate, ranging from the 1920's to 1950's.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 122

DBA Site No. 28

SMR Number: 16032

Site Name: 'Ladie's Cottage'

NGR: 330880 475710

Designation: none

Description: the site of a summerhouse known as the Ladies' Cottage (Plate 30 (left): Pets' cemetery (Site No. 121), looking north-east

Plate 31) covers an area of approximately 7m by 10m just south-east of the Priory on the south side of Red Lane (Site No. 124). There used to be a summer house situated here, no longer extant, until at least the 1920's. All that remains of the building is a small flight of concrete steps and some footings of the brick walls. Just to the north-west of the site is a small mound which possibly contains debris from the demolition of the cottage.

Sources: Ordnance Survey 1850; walkover survey



Plate 30 (left): Pets' cemetery (Site No. 121), looking north-east

Plate 31 (right): Site of the Ladies' Cottage (Site No. 122), looking north

Site No. 123

DBA Site No. n/a

SMR Number: n/a

Site Name: ha-ha

NGR: 330543 475693

Designation: none

Description: this ha-ha (Plate 32 and Plate 33) follows the south-west side of the boundary, running southwards from the Buddhist Temple of c145m, crossing Red Lane (Site No. 124), and then turns east to run parallel with Red Lane for c145m before terminating where the boundary doglegs, just south of the site of Ladies Cottage (Site No. 122). The ha-ha has a 1.2m high stone rubble revetment on the north side; the apex of the opposite slope is some 3m distant and the base is some 1.3m wide.

Sources: CCC n.d.; walkover survey



Plate 32 (left): South boundary ha-ha (Site No. 123), from the west

Plate 33 (right): Aerial photograph showing the boundary ha-ha (CCC n.d.)

Site No. 124**DBA Site No. 29****SMR Number: 4247****Site Name:** Red Lane or Street Gate road**NGR:** 330000 475000**Designation:** none

Description: A stretch of possible 'Roman road' that runs through the grounds of the Priory. It is evident as a raised linear feature running east/west, approximately 3.5m wide across the top, but more like 8.5m including the sloping sides and at least 60m long, although its exact line is confused by the railway embankment and associated ditches to the east and later paths to the west. On the north side there are additional features comprising three parallel ridges running approximately 5m apart. The middle and north ridges are lined with established trees, creating an avenue. The area is now wooded.

Sources: walkover survey; Kelly 1930

Site No. 125**DBA Site No. n/a****SMR Number: n/a****Site Name:** boundary bank and ditch**NGR:** 330932 475605**Designation:** none

Description: this linear earthwork (Plate 34) is a much eroded low bank and ditch running along the west boundary of Beach Wood and the shore. The bank is approximately 140m from the south end of Beach Wood, petering out towards the north. It continues southwards along the boundary of the adjoining field. The bank is no more than 2m wide and 0.4m high with a ditch on the shore side, also 2m wide and no more than 0.3m deep. The bank and ditch are now covered by tree growth.

Sources: walkover survey

Site No. 126**DBA Site No. n/a****SMR Number: n/a****Site Name:** revetment**NGR:** 330938 475753**Designation:** none

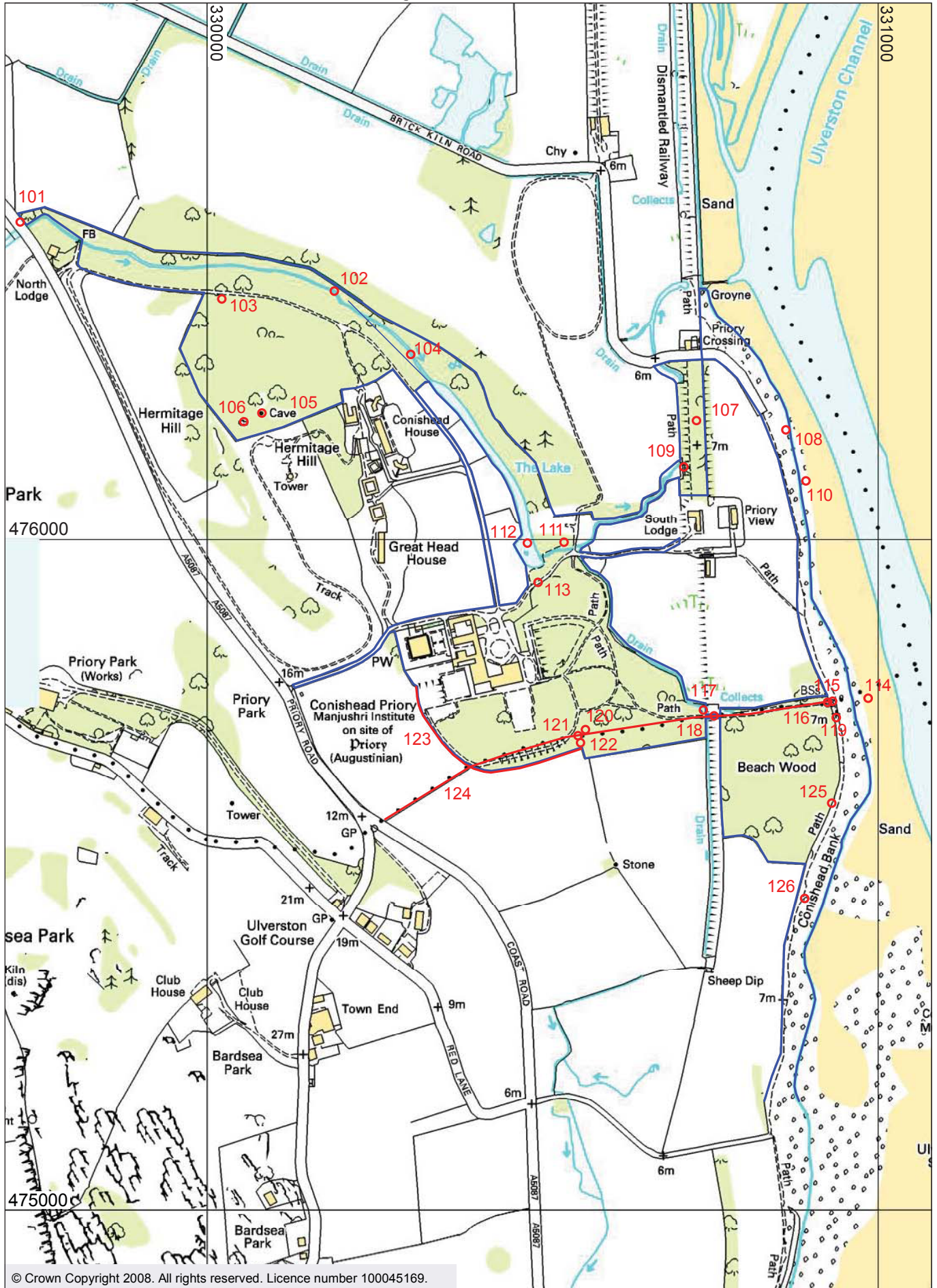
Description: remnant of a low revetment situated on the shore, south of Beach Wood (Plate 34 (left): Bank and ditch (Site No. 125), looking south-west Plate 35). The revetment runs north to south, 8m west of the boundary of the field south of Beach Wood. Constructed of rough cut limestone laid without mortar and no more than 0.38m high and 0.3m wide, the remains were approximately 8m in length, although the limestone debris about the area suggests it once may have been longer. It is probable that this revetment was used to prevent erosion of the path that runs between the field boundary and the shore.

Sources: walkover survey



Plate 34 (left): Bank and ditch (Site No. 125), looking south-west

Plate 35 (right): Stone revetment (Site No. 126) at the south end of the shore, looking south-west



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Figure 3: Walkover survey site location plan

4. Building Recording

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A number of maps and plans of the Conishead Estate are detailed enough to show the main buildings; some of these plans have been used in the map regression (see *Section 4.2*, below). The information from the map regression and the building survey have been combined in the results section to construct a basic phase plan for the building (Figure 4), with historical information set out in the Desk-Based Assessment (Greenlane Archaeology 2009).

4.2 Map Regression

4.2.1 **Introduction:** the plans used in this section illustrate the key developments in the evolution of the current Conishead Priory buildings. A plan by William Smith, dated 1822, appears to be the only map (Plate 33) to show the earlier mansion, which was apparently demolished to make way for the current buildings (Anon 1822).

4.2.2 **Smith's plan of 1822:** this map (Plate 36) shows the layout of the earlier mansion apparently prior to extensive rebuilding (462-smith/Box 16/Folder 1/1 1822). In 1774, Thomas West described it thus; '*the north front is in the Gothic style, and a piazza supported by clustered gothic pillars, and three series of ox-eye windows, crowned with a battlement, give to the whole an elegant and respectable appearance*' (West 1774, 28). Work began on the new building in 1821, starting at the west end, and carried on for over twenty years (Anon 1895, 127).

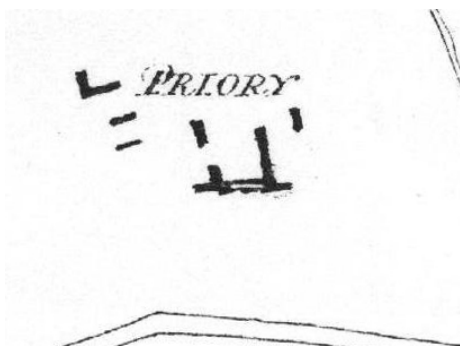


Plate 36: 1822 plan by William Smith

4.2.3 **Binns' plan of 1843:** this plan (CRO(B) BDHJ/Plan 24 1843) clearly shows that work is in progress on the 'new house'. Work appears to have begun at the west end and remnants of the old building are evident at the east end of the south wing, the east wing, and the 'L'-shaped outbuilding to the north-west (Plate 37). Curiously, however, the main part of the mansion, at the south-east end, appears to have not been constructed by this date, which conflicts with at least one earlier illustration of the site dated 1831 (Austin *et al* 1831; see *Section 4.3.2* below). It is conceivable, therefore, that Binns' plan was surveyed much earlier and only completed in 1843 or that the earlier illustration was an impression of what the finished house was expected to look like.

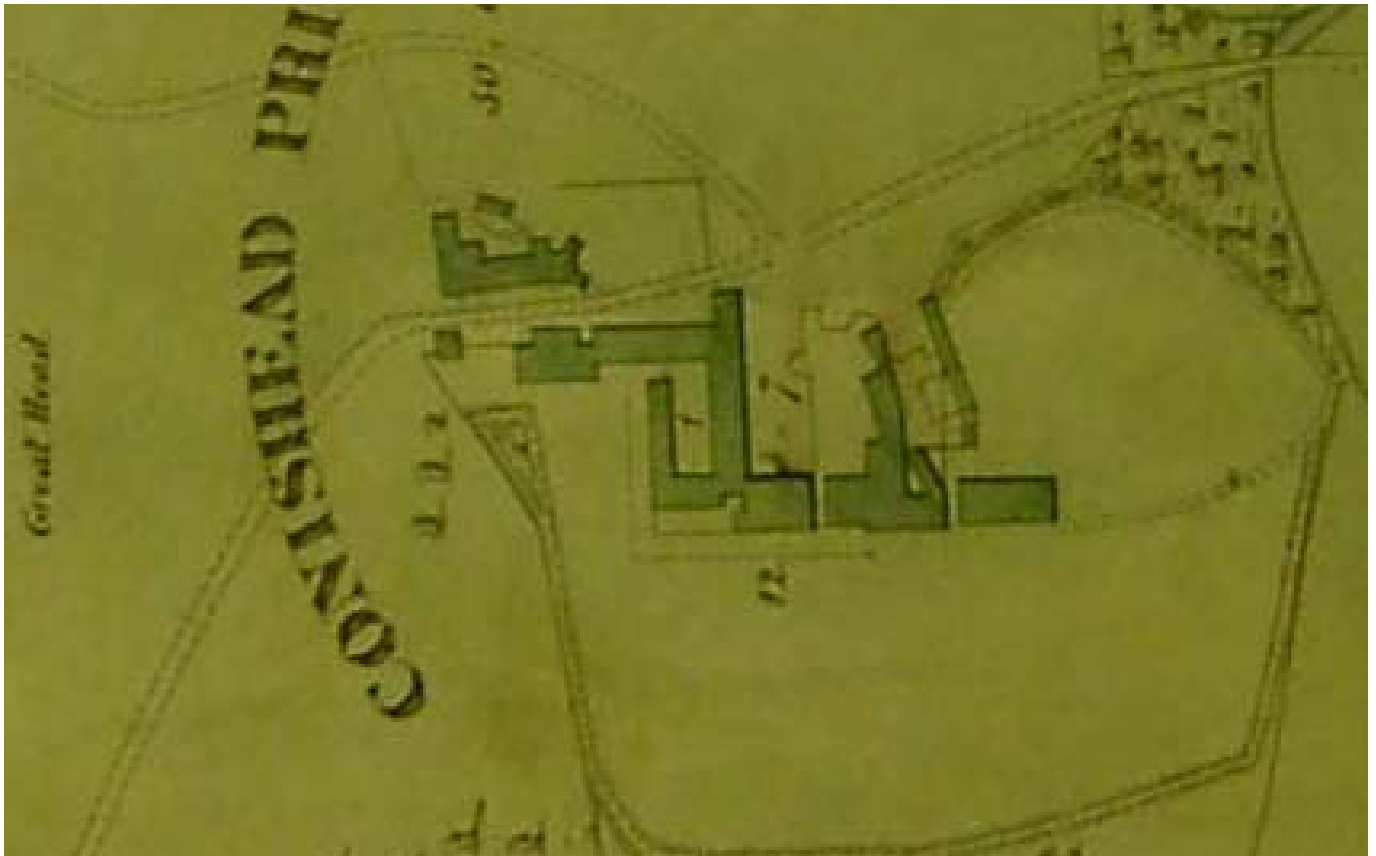


Plate 37: Binns' plan of 1843

4.2.4 **Ordnance Survey map of 1850:** this plan (Plate 38), which was surveyed in 1846-7, shows that the eastern entrance block, which was the main part of the house, had been constructed by this time. The east wing has now been demolished and the west wing extends further to the north. The gardens to the south and west of the house are clearly defined in this plan, although the kitchen garden to the north-west is still occupied by an earlier building.

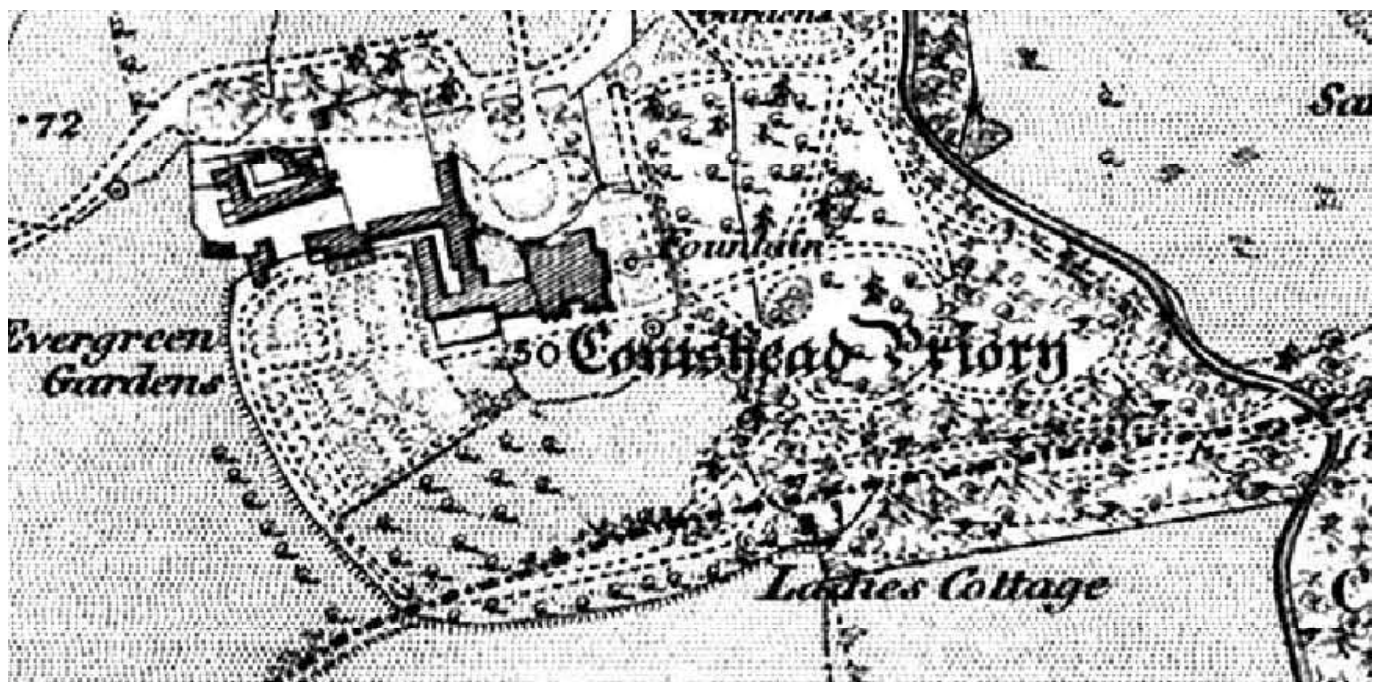


Plate 38: Ordnance Survey map of 1850

4.2.5 **Estate Plan from 1879:** this map (CRO(B) BDKF/30/19 1879) shows that all the work on the main buildings visible today had been completed by 1879 (Plate 39). The documentary sources consulted in the desk-based assessment (Greenlane Archaeology 2009) revealed that the property was sold to Henry Askew in 1850. Askew was clearly responsible for the addition of the clock tower and quadrangle areas, and date-stones suggest that this work was completed by 1853 (Plate 46). The kitchen garden and associated greenhouses have also been completed and are probably contemporary.

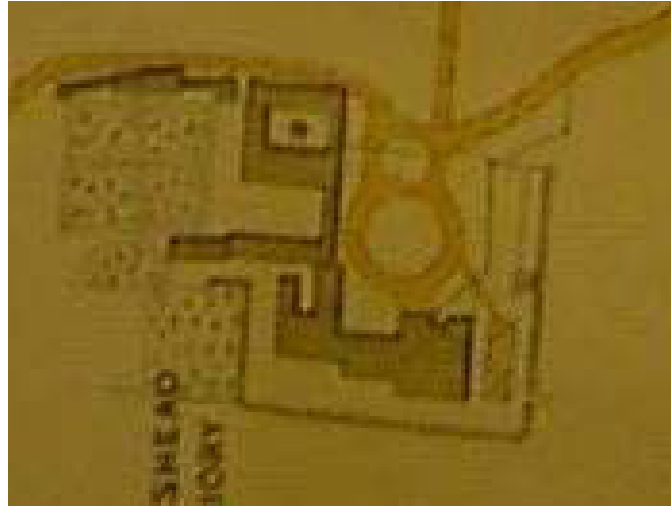


Plate 39: Estate plan from 1879

4.2.6 **Ordnance Survey map of 1890:** the Priory buildings have been highlighted in red on this plan (Plate 40), and it is obvious that by this date the estate has largely become what it is today. The main difference is the outbuilding attached to the east of the central range, which has subsequently been removed, as has the shelter within the quadrangle that had the appearance of a blacksmith's workshop (Greenlane Archaeology 2009, 24).

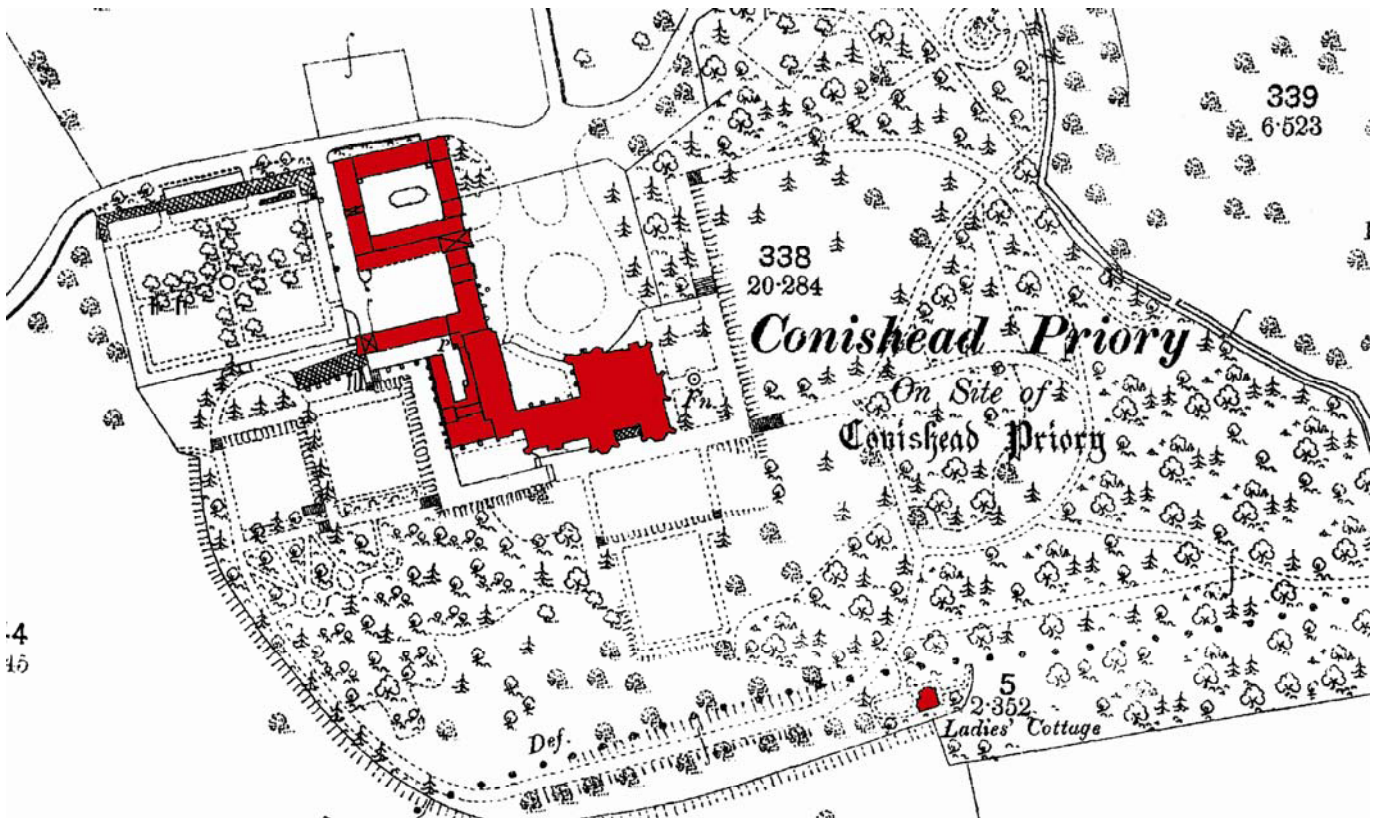


Plate 40: Ordnance Survey map of 1890

4.3 Building Survey

4.3.1 **Introduction:** this survey is only intended to provide a very general understanding of the development of the current Conishead priory buildings, and as such only six basic building phases have been identified that span the period from the start of the re-building of the property in the 1820's to the construction of the new temple in 1996. It was not possible to identify from the exterior of the building whether any of the earlier 18th century buildings have been incorporated into what is visible today; this may be a possibility if the interior of the building was to be recorded, especially in the basement areas. Recording of the internal spaces of the building would undoubtedly also reveal numerous more phases of alteration and renovation that are not evident from the outside. What follows is a summary of the six broad phases identified; reference should also be made to the phase drawing (Figure 4).



Plate 41: The two southernmost elements of the building, from the south

4.3.2 **Phase 1, 1821-43:** this phase covers the majority of the current Conishead Priory buildings, the main exception being the north-eastern quadrangle that incorporates the clock tower. The majority of the structures dating from this phase are finished in un-rendered Bath stone laid as ashlar blocks and features ornamentation typical of the 19th century Gothic revival style of architecture. Such ornamentation includes pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses, large windows that often have hood mouldings, and roofs with crenulated and castellated parapets and spires. An article in the north Lonsdale magazine, dated 1895 (Anon 1895, 127), comments that the work on this phase began at the west end, and was not completed even after 20 years. This statement appears to be borne out by Binns' plan of c1843 (Plate 37) which shows that while the western buildings have assumed their current form, the east entrance block had not yet been re-built. The date of Binns' plan may not be accurate, however; an illustration first published in 1831 indicates that the eastern entrance block had been completed by that date (Austin *et al* 1831). It is also conceivable that Binns' plan was carried out during the renovations while the earlier engraving illustrated the proposed outcome of the works. What is clear is that the eastern entrance block is the latest element in this phase of building, which is clearly differentiated by its use of rendered brickwork and some limestone; possibly to save money in the latter stages of a project whose total bill amounted to £140,000 (Robinson 1991, 175). It is tempting to speculate that this part of the project represents the point at which the project was taken over by George Webster, and represents a separate phase to the eastern building work. There is no definitive evidence for this, although the plans signed by Webster and apparently dated 1818 might suggest this is the case (Greenlane Archaeology 2009).



Plate 42: South part of the Priory, from the west gardens



Plate 43: Main entrance way from the north-east

4.3.3 Phase 2, 1853: this secondary phase of building was carried out by Henry Askew shortly after he acquired the estate c1850; it involved the construction of the northern quadrangle including the clock tower, as well as the kitchen garden and associated glasshouses. This work is easily recognised by the use of locally sourced limestone rubble, within which some re-used sandstone has been incorporated. The buildings from this phase of development are undoubtedly more utilitarian than the main residence constructed in Phase 1. The quadrangle buildings have seen extensive modern repairs, hinted at by concrete lintels and inserted doors, prior to their recent conversion to residential quarters.



Plate 44: Phase 2 clock tower, from the east side

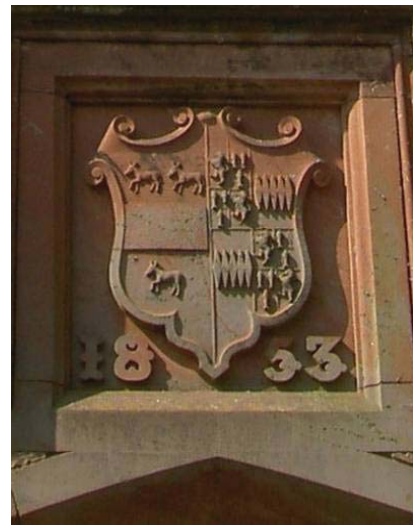


Plate 45 (left): Phase 2 quadrangle buildings

Plate 46 (right): Detail of clock tower date stone

4.3.4 **Phase 3, 1879-1890:** this phase involved the construction of a toilet block on the north side of the eastern entrance wing; this block appears for the first time on a map dated 1890 (Plate 40). The block is constructed from rendered brick and partly obscures the large ornate window behind it, which further suggests it is a later addition. It seems likely that the addition of the toilets probably ties in with the transition of the property to a spa hotel in 1878.



Plate 47: Phase 3 toilet block on the east side of the north entrance

4.3.5 **Phase 4, late 1920s:** this phase relates to the addition of a boiler house which seems to have been added in preparation for the conversion of Conishead priory to a convalescent home for retired miners, c1930. The boiler house was ideally located for the Turkish baths in the rooms immediately to the south. The boiler house chimney is evident in this area on plans for the convalescent home produced in 1929 (CRO(B) BDX 53/10/4 1929; see also Greenlane Archaeology 2009, 14). The boiler house chimney is also shown in a photograph which is labelled c1928 but it is more likely around 1930 (Plate 50).



Plate 48: Phase 4 photograph showing boiler house chimney (CRO(K) WDX 427/2 1928)

4.3.6 **Phase 5, post-1930s:** this is a brick building located to the north of the west wing (Plate 49) and post-dates the initial developments made to the site on its conversion to a convalescent home.

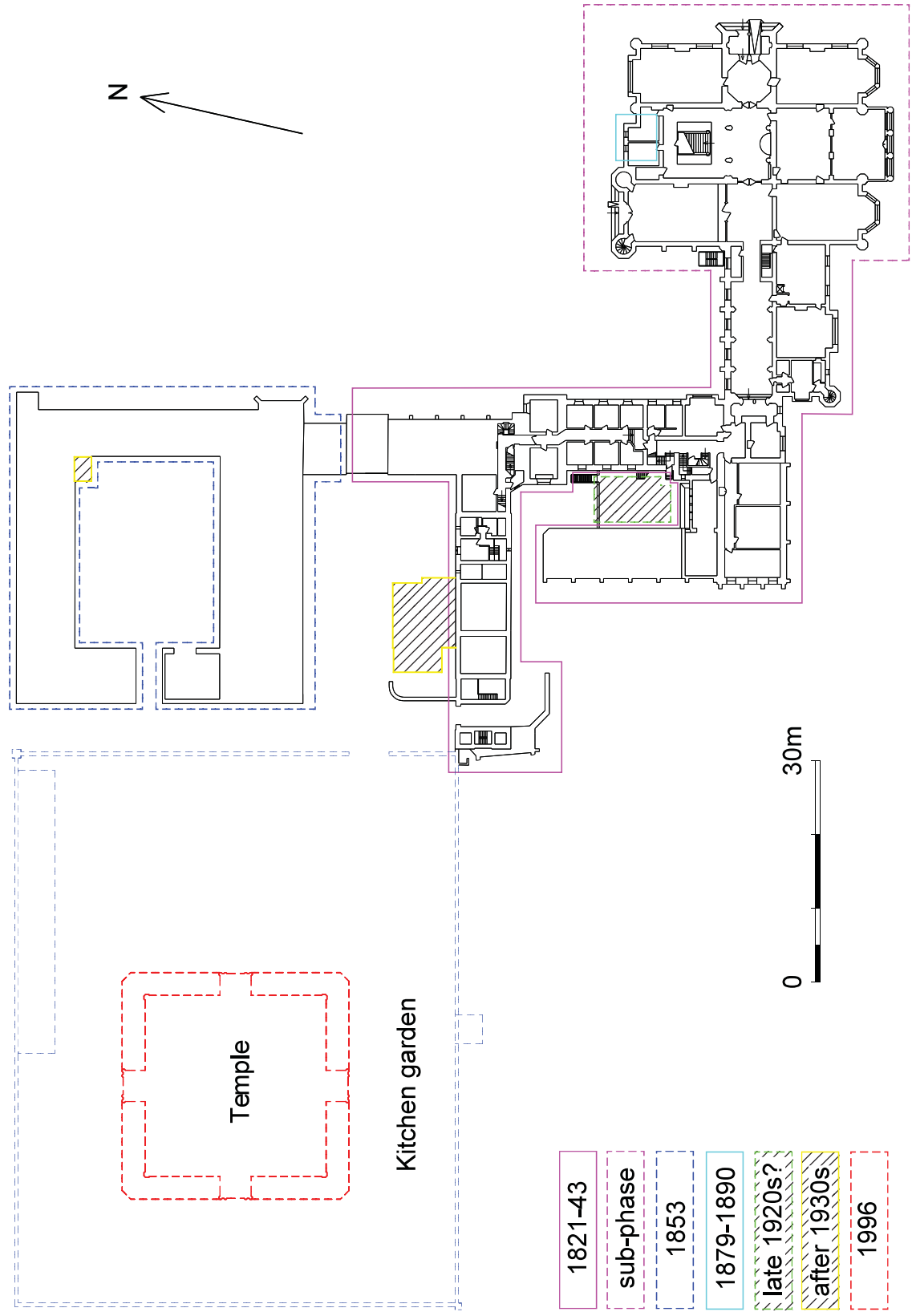


Plate 49: Brick building representing Phase 5

4.3.7 **Phase 6, 1996:** the Kadampa Buddhist temple was constructed in the former kitchen gardens, and was opened in 1997. It is a modern design (Plate 50), intended to reflect both traditional Buddhist architectural styles and those of the earlier Priory buildings (Saunders 1996).



Plate 50: Kadampa temple from the south-west



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Figure 4: Building phase plan

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The walkover survey and building investigation have provided quite different pieces of information, however, both act to enhance and expand on the original desk-based assessment (Greenlane Archaeology 2009). The walkover survey has revealed the presence of a large number of sites of archaeological interest within the current Priory estate. While many of these are relatively mundane and functional, such as the numerous culverts (Sites **101**, **109** and **117**, which generally relate to reorganisation associated with later roads and the railway), others are likely to relate to key periods on the sites history.

5.1.2 The earliest is perhaps the surviving stretch of 'Red Lane', a road that may have its origins in the Roman period (Site **124**). The pond (Site **112**) is most likely a former fish pond and of medieval origin. Those on the beach (the jetties (Sites **108** and **114**), revetment (Site **126**), and breakwater (Site **110**)) are likely to relate the transportation of iron ore in the 18th century, while the ha-ha seems likely to relate to the earlier house and gardens (Site **123**). The majority of the other sites are likely to relate to the landscape established around the Priory once it passed into private hands and a new extravagant mansion was built. These include the grotto (Site **105**) and associated hermitage (Site **104**), the Ladies' Cottage (Site **122**) and arch (Site **120**), and probably also the small quarry (Site **103**), footbridge (Site **104**), parish boundary marker (Site **116**), and boundary bank (Site **125**). Some features probably relate to much later alterations to the landscape carried out in the late 19th and early 20th century, such as the canalised beck (Site **102**), the railway embankment (Site **107**) and associated underpass (Site **118**), gates (Site **115**), and boundary wall (Site **119**). Others represent additional structures added at the same time such as the 'Smoke House' (Site **111**), another underpass (Site **113**; which perhaps provided access between the accommodation built to the north in the 1930s and the house), and the pet cemetery (Site **121**).

5.1.3 The building recording has provided a basic narrative outlining the development of the mansion and associated buildings, although it could undoubtedly be refined with further investigation, especially of the interior. It has, however, identified the main periods of expansion and alteration, and would form an ideal basis for further investigation. It also provides some context for the available historical sources, and further emphasises their discrepancies and contradictions.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 The results of the on-site assessment have, although brief, as a minimum identified and recorded those sites of historic interest present within the current estate. It has also allowed a comparison to be made between the documentary sources and the physical evidence in many cases, further revealing the extent of these features. This should provide further scope for their interpretation and investigation, as well as providing base-line data that can be used to assess their condition in the future and enable their potential to be explored. The building recording has attempted to bring together the disparate pieces of information while at the same time acknowledging the need for more detailed investigation in order to truly understand the Priory.

5.2.2 More detailed interpretation of the site within its landscape is, however, quite possible based on these results. Those sites that are considered to be of most interest and significance can be more fully utilised, explored, and exploited in order to enhance the experience and understanding of visitors to the Priory. The establishment of an informed guided trail round the site might be desirable, for example, taking into account a select number of these sites. Visitor information can also be enhanced to utilise the information and explore the site as a whole, in the context of the ever-changing Priory buildings. Being able to view the site as a landscape made up of numerous and very disparate parts rather than simply a house and gardens should be very easily achievable.

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