

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Monk Bretton Priory Cluniac and Benedictine monastery: monastic precinct and two fishponds

PARISH: BARNSELEY

DISTRICT: BARNSELEY

COUNTY: SOUTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 13255

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE37340653

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

Monk Bretton Priory is situated in what is now a residential area on the outskirts of Barnsley. The monument consists of a single constraint area containing the standing remains and part of the precinct of the Cluniac priory of St.Mary Magdalene, which was later transferred to the Benedictine Order and includes two monastic fishponds.

The visible remains at Monk Bretton Priory are of the church and domestic ranges arranged round a central cloister and occupying the south and west parts of the precinct. Northwards, these are divided from the main gatehouse and a separate administrative building by the outer court while, to the south, a second court served the prior's lodging and the guesthouse. The church, which formed the north cloister range, was built in the second half of the twelfth century and followed in its design the austerity of the Cistercian churches of the time. By the end of the twelfth century, however, the presbytery had been extended and a series of alterations were subsequently carried out including, in the mid-fourteenth century, the reconstruction of the west front and the north aisle wall of the nave. Apart from the south transept, only the lower walls of the church remain standing but several areas of paved floor survive in the nave, aisles and transepts. The two storey administrative building, though altered in the seventeenth century, is of late thirteenth or early fourteenth century date, while the main gatehouse, as it appears today, is early fifteenth century though it incorporates the remains of an earlier building. Within the gatehouse is a gate hall with a porter's lodge and a room which has been interpreted as an almonry, where the almoner would have distributed alms to the needy. On the first floor are two chambers interpreted as the living quarters of lay officers of the priory. A second gatehouse was built in the seventeenth century when the priory was occupied by the Armyne family. The remains of this can still be seen to the south spanning Abbey Lane.

South of the church, and conforming to the traditional layout, are the cloister ranges of the priory. The temporary buildings, erected after the priory's foundation, were replaced in stone throughout the thirteenth century and were altered at various times during the later Middle Ages. From north to south, the east cloister range consisted on the ground floor of the chapter house, inner parlour and an early warming house. A passage ran between the parlour and warming house, linking the infirmary with the cloister garth. On the first floor was the monks' dorter or dormitory. Immediately south of the

warming house was a separate building built in the mid thirteenth century and overlying the main drain. The first floor of this building formed the reredorter or latrine and to the south of this lay the fourteenth century guesthouse. East of the east range are the remains of the infirmary, with the cemetery lying between these and the church.

The south cloister range was occupied by a later warming house and the frater or refectory. On the north side was the lavatory, a long trough supplied with water from a series of taps where the monks washed at mealtimes. South of the west end of the frater are the thirteenth century remains of the kitchen, scullery and kitchen yard, and also part of an ancillary building which is believed to have been a bakehouse. The west cloister range comprised an outer parlour and a vaulted undercroft used for cellarage and storage, and largely continued in this use even after being remodelled in the mid-fourteenth century. On the first floor were the prior's apartments which, after the Dissolution in the sixteenth century, were altered to become accommodation for the Talbot family. At this time, two new buildings were built to the west and, in the seventeenth century, the Armyne gatehouse was built between them. The gatehouse is the only part of the post-Dissolution wing to have survived the drastic alterations caused by this wing's continued use as a farmhouse down to the twentieth century. Also west of the prior's lodgings was a thirteenth century pigeon cote which collapsed in the late nineteenth century. The north and east parts of the precinct were occupied by the meadows and gardens of the priory and have only partially survived the urbanisation of the area. During the Middle Ages, the precinct was enclosed partly by a stone wall and partly by an oak fence. In the south-east corner were two fishponds, the remains of which, measuring c.20m by 50m, can still be seen. In the outer areas of the precinct would have been a wide variety of ancillary buildings which would have included, amongst other examples, barns and stables. The remains of these will survive as buried archaeological features in the open areas of the precinct. In addition, approximately 200m to the south-west of the precinct is the priory mill, a Grade II Listed Building formerly linked to the priory by a drain that ran south-west to north-east to flush the kitchen and reredorter. The line of this drain, where it turned south again out of the reredorter, can be seen within the precinct. However, the section lying outside the precinct is not included in the scheduling as its precise alignment and state of preservation are unknown at this time. The priory mill is also excluded being adequately protected by current Listed Buildings legislation.

The priory was founded as a Cluniac house by Adam Fitzwane in c.1154. After a number of disputes concerning the appointment of its priors, it severed its ties with its mother houses, La Charite sur Loire and St.John's in Pontefract, to become, in 1281, an independent Benedictine Priory under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of York. After its suppression in 1538, the prior's house was adapted as a dwelling and subsequently passed through a number of owners until the ruins of the priory were purchased by John Horne. Horne arranged for partial excavations of the site to be carried out between 1923 and 1926 under the direction of Dr.J.W.Walker. The ruins have been in State care since 1932 and are also Grade I Listed. Excluded from the scheduling are the custodian's lodge and garden, all English Heritage fixtures and fittings, the surface of Abbey Lane, the surfaces of the paths and carpark, all modern fencing and walling and the ticket office and toilet. The ground beneath these features is, however, included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

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. The Cluniac order had its origins in the monastic reformations which swept across continental Europe in the tenth century. The reformations which occurred were partly a response to the impact of Viking raids and attacks on established monastic sites in the preceding century but were also a reaction against the corruption and excesses which were increasingly noted amongst earlier establishments. The Cluniacs were amongst the most successful of the new reformed orders that developed. The founding house of Cluny in south-east France was established in AD 910. Here the community obeyed a stringent set of rules which, amongst other things, involved celibacy, communal living and abstinence from eating meat. The ideals of the Cluniac reformers passed on to England in the tenth century. Influential Cluniac houses had been established in England by 1077. Once established, Cluniac houses were notable for the strong links they maintained both with the founding house of Cluny in France and also with other houses of their order. Most Cluniac houses in England were established near major towns and they particularly sought locations in valley bottoms within the protection of a nearby castle. Cluniac monasteries are notable for highly decorated, elaborate buildings. Cluniac houses are relatively rare, with some forty-four houses known in England, and all examples exhibiting good survival of archaeological remains are worthy of protection.

Monk Bretton is important for its well-preserved upstanding remains which, together with extensive documentary and archaeological evidence, demonstrate a continual programme of building and alteration which lasted from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. The diversity of the features found at the priory provides an important insight into Cluniac and Benedictine monasticism and the effects of the Dissolution. Additional remains will survive in situ in the unexcavated areas of the precinct and will include organic material in the waterlogged deposits of the fishponds.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument placed in Guardianship on 17th June 1932 as:
COUNTY/NUMBER: South Yorkshire 124
NAME: Monk Bretton Priory

Monument's inclusion in the Schedule was confirmed on 9th October 1981.
Monument included as:
COUNTY/NUMBER: South Yorkshire 124
NAME: Monk Bretton Priory

The reference of this monument is now:
NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 13255
NAME: Monk Bretton Priory Cluniac and Benedictine monastery: monastic precinct and two fishponds

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 10th June 1992