

Quarr Abbey

The abbey was founded in 1131.
A Scheduled Monument in Fishbourne, Isle of Wight

Coordinates

Latitude: 50.7305 / 50°43'49"N - Longitude: -1.1997 / 1°11'58"W
OS Eastings: 456581.434618 - OS Northings: 92623.939846 = OS Grid: SZ565926
Map-code National: GBR 9CL.3J0 - = Map-code Global: FRA 87C4.Y5L
Entry Name: Quarr Abbey
Scheduled Date: 4 February 1953
Last Amended: 11 January 1996
Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1012714
English Heritage Legacy ID: 22034
County: Isle of Wight
Civil Parish: Fishbourne
Traditional County: Hampshire
Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County): Isle of Wight
Church of England Parish: Binstead Holy Cross
Church of England Diocese: Portsmouth

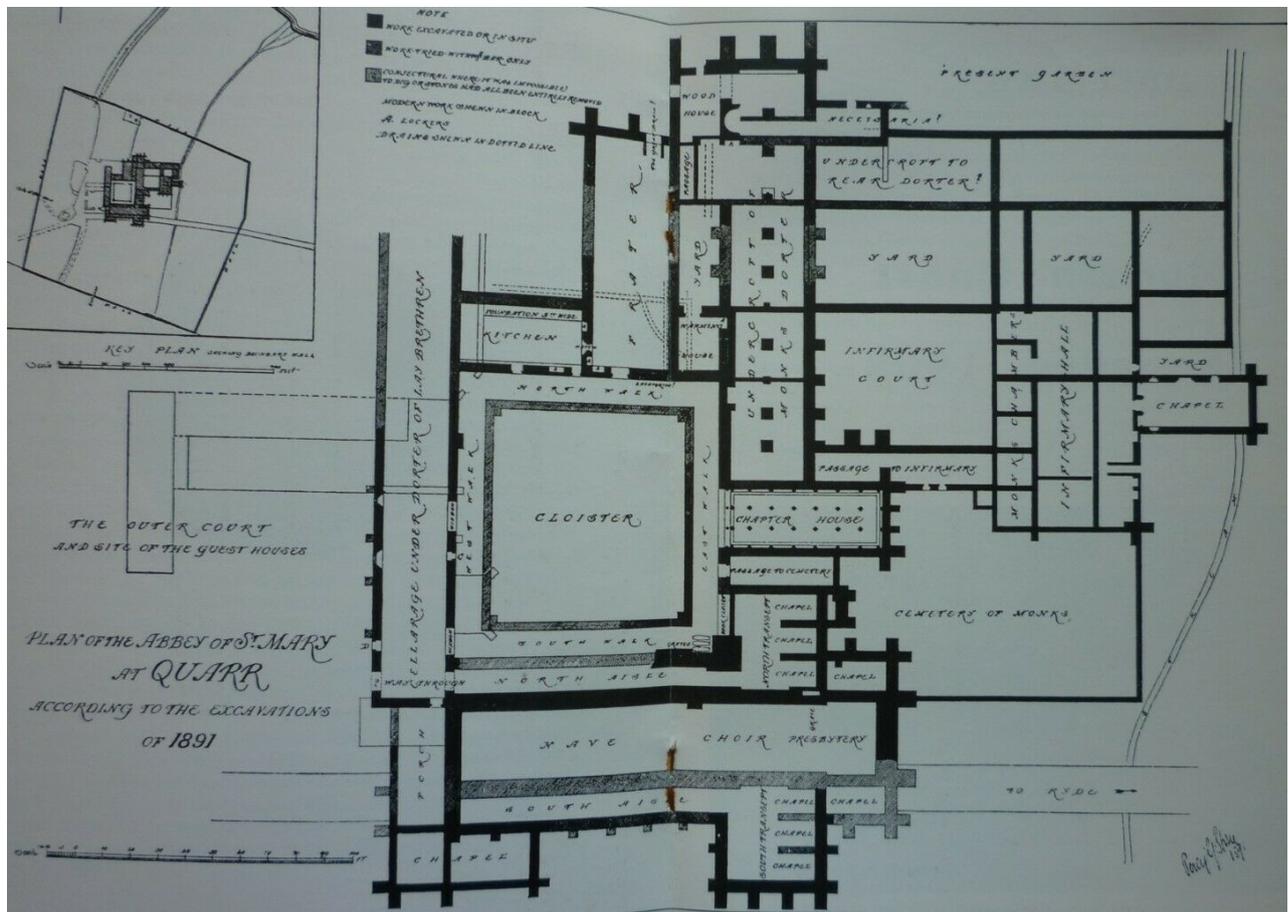
Details

The monument includes the upstanding and buried remains of a Cistercian monastery on the north east coast of the Isle of Wight. The remains are Listed Grade II and largely contained within the original precinct boundary which can be traced for most of its course. Some extra-mural features have been recorded beyond the precinct boundary. The buildings generally associated with a Cistercian house were present at Quarr and largely conformed to the usual ground plan, except that all the buildings are to the north of the church. The upstanding remains of buildings which can be identified are the cellarium, parts of the kitchen and refectory or frater, a wood house, the warming room, and parts of the undercroft of the monks dorter and infirmary chapel. The remains of the other buildings within the precinct exist as buried features. The complex has an extant Listed Grade II precinct wall on the east and north sides. The remainder can be traced on aerial photographs. The church of the house lay along the axis and partially beneath the trackway which crosses the monument in an east-west direction.

The archway which crosses this track lies on the line of a connection between the cellarium and the west front of the church. No remains of the church can be identified on the ground. The cloister lay to the north of the church. The existing barn represents the range of buildings to the west of the cloister, and its entrance to the north has a group of 13th century lancet windows which have been reset. This west range of buildings consisted of the cellarium or food store for the monastery and is high enough to have had a dorter or dormitory for the lay brothers above. Extant parts of the range of buildings to the north of the cloister include part of the kitchen and vestiges of its interior including a hatch between the kitchen and the south end of the refectory or frater. There is also the boundary between the frater and the warming room on its east side. To the east of the warming room some walls of the undercroft of the monks dorter survive.

Next to the door in the refectory is a recess, reputedly for a cupboard. To the north east of the refectory is a section of wall and an arch, which is thought to be a woodstore or part of the abbot's lodging. The buildings to the east of the cloister survive as buried features, and beyond these further to the east is a fragment of wall and part of a fireplace

with square head and panelled sides of 14th century date together with a round headed north window. This was the infirmary chapel. Much of the extant precinct wall remains to its original height of c.3m. In the north west corner of the circuit there are the blocked remains of a gateway. Set into the north precinct wall are two gunports of medieval type. To the south and west of the precinct wall, aerial photography has identified further evidence of occupation, some features being confirmed as earthworks on the ground. To the east of the precinct wall is a leet which links the fishponds of the abbey at one end and enters the abbey precinct in the vicinity of the infirmary chapel. The fishponds are the subject of a separate scheduling.



The abbey was founded in 1131 under Benedictine rule by Baldwin de Redvers, Lord of the Island, as a daughter house of Savigny. Savigny with its daughter houses joined the order of Citeaux in 1147 with the result that Quarr changed to the Cistercian order. Threat of attack by the French in the late 14th century led the Abbot of Quarr to obtain a licence to crenellate in 1365, and the work had begun the following year. An approximately square area of 800ft was enclosed with a wall of Quarr stone and Bembridge limestone rubble. There is no subsequent record of the abbey being attacked. Though not the oldest of the Anglo-Norman foundations on the island, it was certainly the largest and most important. Nevertheless, at the time of the Dissolution, Quarr, with an income of less than 200 pounds a year, was reckoned a lesser house and was closed by order of the King's Commissioners on 22 July 1536.

In 1891 Mr P G Stone partly excavated the site and recorded the ground plan of the abbey. In addition, there are documentary references of 1535 to a mill to the east or south east of the south gate, while the marshy area to the south of the abbey church is reputed to be the location of a fishpond inside the precinct wall. The house which fronts onto the north side of the track and lying on the south end of the west side of the cloister is excluded from the scheduling, as are the houses known as Quarr Abbey Lodge and Farway, the northern range of buildings and lean-to structures of Quarr Abbey Farm, the building on the west side which abuts the lean-to, the free-standing barn to the west of Quarr Abbey Farm and to the north of Quarr Abbey Lodge, all post and wire fences and the water trough, although the ground beneath all of these features is included.

Reasons for Scheduling

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, alms-houses, 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. The Cistercian abbey of Quarr is known from partial excavation and survey to contain archaeological information and environmental evidence relating to the abbey and the economy of its inhabitants. Quarr Abbey is well documented as the largest and most important Anglo-Norman foundation on the Isle of Wight. It is central to a variety of contemporary features, including fishponds and a leet, in addition to other associated settlement remains on the island which were granges of the abbey. The precinct wall contains two of the earliest gunports recorded in Britain.

Sources:

Historic England

Books and journals

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Ed Hockey, D S F, 'Isle of Wight Records Series' in The Charters of Quarr Abbey, , Vol. 3, (), intro

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Stone, P G, 'The Architectural Antiquities of the Isle of Wight' in The Architectural Antiquities of the Isle of Wight, , Vol. 1, (1891)

Other: Bailey, J. and Basford, F., 117/5/86 and 31-8-90,