

Case information

Case ID	300017642
File Reference	AMJ/9195/1/1
Name of Site	Ardchattan
Local Authority	Argyll & Bute
National Grid Reference	NM 97138 34916
Designation No. (if any)	SM 90019
Case Type	Amendment
Received/Start Date	26/04/2012
Decision Date	22/02/2016

1. Decision

The assessment against the criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The proposed decision is to amend the entry in the Schedule as '**Ardchattan Priory, priory, burial ground and carved stones**'.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was added to the Schedule in 1923 but there is no legal documentation beyond the Schedule from 1923. The monument is a guardianship property in the care of Scottish Ministers and is scheduled under section 1 (2) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Ardchattan Priory Church is currently categorised as a B-listed building (LB 4714), but is being proposed for de-listing. The monument is immediately adjacent to the B-listed building known as Ardchattan House (LB4715).

The monument is part of the Garden and Designed Landscape known as Ardchattan Priory (GDL00019).

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this monument.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the Argyll 2012 rescheduling project and was visited on 9 May 2012.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria was carried out (see **Annex A**).

The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

The designation criteria are found in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>

3.3 Other considerations

As none of the burial aisles are in active use, burial lairs have not been excluded from this scheduling.

The surviving portions of the choir and transepts of the monastic church and the relocated carved stones passed into care in 1954. The nave of the original church and the cloistral range, including a refectory, are with Ardchattan House, a domestic building erected at the end of the 16th century which remains in use.

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria Ardchattan Priory, priory, burial ground and craved stones.

1 Description

The monument comprises the remains of Ardchattan Priory and its associated buildings, burials and carved stones. This Valliscaulian priory was founded in 1230/1 and is located on the north shore of Loch Etive at 10m above sea level.

The visible elements of the priory include parts of the original 13th-century church: the south transept and its chapels, and elements remodelled during the 15th and early 16th centuries: the choir, burial aisles and a sacristy. The remains also include a significant collection of carved stones.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan, to include the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling extends up to but does not include the adjacent Ardchattan House. The scheduling excludes the surfaces of all tracks and paths and the above-ground elements of all modern enclosures, boundary features, services, signage and modern structures. The monument was first scheduled in 1923, but the documentation does not meet current standards: the present rescheduling rectifies this.

2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, 2011 pp71-73)

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The priory was established in 1230/1 as a Valliscaulian house by Duncan McDougall, Lord of Lorn and grandson of Somerled, Lord of the Isles. The site retains good evidence of the architectural development of the priory, including the form of the early church and conventual buildings, the later modification and enlargement in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the changes after the priory ceased to function as a monastic community. It therefore has intrinsic cultural significance as a well-preserved smaller monastic house that was adapted and remodelled, including after it had been converted for secular and parochial use. The present remains reflect the various phases of alteration as the function of the building changed over time, which adds to the archaeological, historic and architectural significance of the site.

The buildings are constructed of local granite rubble with freestone dressings. They are notable for the quality of the craftsmanship and fine architectural detail of many of their surviving features. The site also contains a collection of carved stones.

These include: a cross-decorated stone with intricate carvings of 10th-century origin, which is thought to have been brought to Ardchattan from some nearby burial ground, and cut down for re-use as a grave marker; a late medieval free-standing disc-headed cross; a 15th-century tomb chest of the MacDougall of Dunollie and his family, and several 17th-century table tombs. Many of the memorials represent the two families most closely associated with Ardchattan: the MacDougalls and the Campbells, and the collection of carved stones at Ardchattan demonstrates the political power and wealth of the priory's patrons and provides information about the medieval community.

Limited archaeological excavations in 1995 and 1998 confirmed the presence of significant archaeological deposits below ground, including human remains. Such human remains can reveal evidence of changes in health and diet, and the occupational activities and causes of death of those buried. It is highly likely that further important archaeological features and deposits survive below ground. There is also high potential for a long development sequence that could enhance our understanding of the origins, use and re-use of places of worship over a considerable period of time.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Ardchattan Priory is one of only three Valliscaulian houses outside France to have left identifiable remains (others were established in Germany but are now lost). The other two are also in Scotland; at Pluscarden and Beaulieu. All the Scottish examples were founded around 1230; Pluscarden by Alexander II. It is likely that this royal support of the austere Valliscaulian Order was the impetus behind Duncan MacDougall's patronage of the Order at Ardchattan, as a demonstration of his alignment to Scottish royal interests. Ardchattan is therefore significant for our understanding of the patronage of monasticism in this period and the motivations for such patronage

Duncan MacDougall was also responsible for the construction of the nearby castle and private chapel at Dunstaffnage. His various building campaigns represent a very significant outlay of resources but would also have been a physical demonstration of his power and authority. Ardchattan is therefore of significance for our understanding of the MacDougall lordship of Lorn and as an example of how institutions and buildings were used to demonstrate lordship within a Gaelic context.

Ardchattan is also one of a small group of monastic houses in Argyll. The relative scarcity of major religious houses in Argyll adds to Ardchattan's wider archaeological and historical significance in the study of religious life in Scotland and within a European context. The surviving remains can enhance our understanding of the development of monasticism and its impact in the West Highlands.

Many of the impressive range of carved stones at Ardchattan display the West Highland tradition of carving. Together, the Ardchattan collection provides evidence of highly skilled stone carving taking place in this area from the 10th century onwards. The presence of the 10th-century cross-decorated stone decoration indicates an early religious significance of the area, before the priory was built. This

is reinforced by the place-name Ardchattan which refers to St Cathan, a 6th-century Irish missionary, and adds to the significance of the later religious site at Ardchattan.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

The origins of the priory and the presence of family burial aisles (the MacDougall's and the Campbell's) connect the site to key historical figures and events in the wider Lordship of the Isles. The site is associated with Somerled and the Lordship of the Isles through his grandson, Duncan MacDougall. Robert I held a parliament at the priory in 1309. Colin Roy Campbell of Glenure, the victim of the Appin Murder, is buried in the priory grounds; the events surrounding his death feature in the novel 'Kidnapped' by Robert Louis Stevenson. The story of the Appin Murder still resonates in Scotland's national consciousness.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

Scheduling is the most appropriate mechanism to secure the future of this monument which is in the care of Scottish Ministers and managed and maintained on their behalf by Historic Environment Scotland. The scheduling extends up to but does not include the adjacent Ardchattan House. The scheduling excludes the surfaces of all tracks and paths and the above-ground elements of all modern enclosures, boundary features, services, signage and modern structures

4 Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance as a well-preserved example of a Valliscaulian Priory dating from 1230/1. It has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular the establishment, patronage and development of religious houses in Argyll and the West Highlands and the impact they had on contemporary life. The monument is also important for our understanding of how lordship was projected within a Gaelic context. The survival of standing fabric and buried remains of the priory and associated burial ground adds to its potential to contribute to the wider study of medieval ecclesiastical architecture within Scotland. The presence of a significant carved stone collection is important as it enhances our understanding of West Highland sculpture, funerary art and architecture, and memorial practices, as well as of medieval society and politics more generally. The loss of the monument would diminish our ability to understand the development and role of medieval monasticism in Scotland.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 23259 (accessed on 14/10/15).

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service SMR reference is WoSAS PIN 1424.

Cowan I B and Easson D E, 1976, *Medieval religious houses in Scotland: with an appendix on the houses in the Isle of Man*. London.

Fawcett R, 2002, *Scottish medieval churches: architecture and furnishings*. Stroud.

Fisher I, 2001, *Early Medieval sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands*, RCAHMS / Soc Ant Scot Monograph series 1. Edinburgh.

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