

Case information

Case ID	300009908
File Reference	AMH/13573/2/1
Name of Site	St Mary's Nunnery, 160m E of Abbeymill Farm

Local Authority	East Lothian		
National Grid Reference	NT 53520 74671		
Designation No. (if any)	SM13573		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Designation		

Received/Start Date	16/04/2012
Decision Date	16/03/2016

1. Decision

The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument is of national importance. The decision is to add the monument to the schedule of nationally important monuments as **St Mary's Nunnery, 160m E of Abbeymill Farm**

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

St Mary's Nunnery is a new scheduling designation. The monument is currently undesignated but recorded in Canmore and the East Lothian Historic Environment Record

Other Designations: Mill and Abbey Farm are B-listed

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was visited on 02/10/2014.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The designation criteria are published in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), Annex 1, pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>

An assessment of the cultural significance of the site has been carried out following the criteria set out in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Annex 1 paras 3-6). Having assessed cultural significance, the site was found to meet the criteria for national importance as set out in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Annex 1 para 10). Having considered the purpose and implications of designating, it has been concluded that scheduling is the most appropriate mechanism to protect the site. Please see Annex A of this document for further information of this assessment.

3.3 Other considerations

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

St Mary's Nunnery, 160m E of Abbeymill Farm

1 Description

The monument comprises the remains of a Cistercian nunnery dedicated to St Mary and founded by Ada de Warenne between 1152 and 1159. The monument is partly visible as a burial ground within an oblong wooded enclosure. Other elements survive as buried deposits visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs and documented by geophysical surveys. The monument is located on the north bank of the River Tyne, at a height of around 40m above sea level.

After the reformation the priory was largely dismantled and incorporated into the later farm of Abbeymill, although part of the site was used as a burial ground at least into the 18th century. The burial ground lies within an oblong wooded enclosure and at its east end there are a number of 17th/18th century gravestones and a substantial mound measuring around 15m across and less than 1m high. This mound is expected to contain buried elements of the nunnery church. Other buried remains of the priory are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. The main drain of the priory was later used as a mill lade, the line of which is visible, along with the priory fishponds, as cropmarks on aerial photographs. Above-ground elements of the east range were reused and are preserved within the lower courses of the 19th century mill.

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 may survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling excludes the 19th century mill but does include the mill lade which incorporates the original monastic drain. The scheduling excludes the top 300mm of all roads, paths, and yards, and the above-ground elements of all stone dykes, fences, gates, telegraph and electricity poles to allow for their maintenance.

2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP, 2011) pp71-73

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument is the site of a priory of Cistercian nuns founded between 1152 and 1159 and dedicated to St Mary. It was one of the largest nunneries in Scotland and was in use for four centuries. It survives as buried deposits as evidenced by a large mound, cropmarks on aerial photographs and the results of geophysical surveys. These buried remains have significant potential to provide information about the form, layout and development of a medieval nunnery over a considerable period of time. The main drain and fishponds of the priory are visible on aerial photographs, and have potential to preserve artefactual and environmental remains which can

inform us of the economy of a medieval nunnery and aspects of the way of life within it. The site of the priory was used a burial ground after the Reformation and several 17th and 18th century gravestones still survive. The re-use of the site demonstrates how ecclesiastical sites continued to have a significance even after they fell out of use as places of religious devotion after the Reformation.

2.2 Contextual

Nunneries were rare institutions in medieval Scotland and few retain the complete layout of the site or the remains of features such as associated fishponds. The survival of these features at St Mary's enhances the importance of this priory. The priory at Haddington was one of seven Cistercian nunneries in Scotland listed in a document written around 1516, the others being North Berwick, Eccles, Coldstream, St Bothans, Manuel and Elcho (South Berwick or Berwick-on-Tweed founded by David I was by then in England) . All held the rank of 'priory'. Two other Cistercian nunneries had ceased to exist by this time, and one further nunnery, at Iona, was Augustinian. There is potential to compare St Mary's nunnery with many of these other sites, but particularly with North Berwick nunnery, less than 10km to the North.

St Mary's is located to the northeast of Haddington and the closest area of Haddington is referred to as 'nungate', a legacy of the priory's relationship with the town. There is therefore potential to explore the relationship of St Mary's Nunnery with the medieval burgh of Haddington, and to compare and contrast the nature of the artefacts and ecofacts from nunnery and town.

2.3 Associative

The majority of Scottish Cistercian nunneries were founded in the second half of the 12th century and only had a loose connection to the Cistercian Order centred on Cîteaux in France, as the Order did not give formal recognition to such houses until early in the 13th century. The foundation of such houses demonstrates the powerful influence of the monastic reform movement as promulgated by the Cistercian Order, and the desire of some women in the medieval period to live an austere, enclosed, religious life.

A number of the Scottish nunneries had Royal connections, including Haddington. Its founder, Ada de Warenne, was the mother of Malcolm IV and William the Lion and Haddington was one of several Scottish Cistercian nunneries where a woman was central to the foundation of the priory. The monument therefore provides us with insights into the role of women in patronising such institutions.

The convent is associated with numerous important events in Scotland's history. It was burned by the Earl of Hertford in 1544 during the 'Rough Wooing' and was connected with the siege of Haddington in 1548-9 when French troops were encamped around the abbey. The priory was also the location of the signing Treaty of Haddington in June 1548 when the Scottish Parliament met at the abbey to ratify the betrothal of Mary Queen of Scots to the Dauphin.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

Scheduling is the most appropriate mechanism to secure the future of this monument which survives mostly as buried archaeological remains.

The scheduling excludes the 19th century mill which may include medieval fabric. It is designated as a B-listed building. The scheduling does include the mill lade which incorporates the monastic drain. The scheduling also excludes the top 300mm of all roads, paths, and yards, and the above-ground elements of all stone dykes, fences, gates, telegraph and electricity poles to allow for their maintenance.

4 Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the past, in particular of medieval ecclesiastical foundations and, more specifically, Cistercian establishments and medieval nunneries. The monument was one of the richest nunneries in Scotland, with connections to lands across central Scotland and pioneering land management and exploitation activities. The monument is a rare survival, with high potential for the good preservation of buried features and deposits, including architectural remains and burials. The monument is directly associated with Ada de Warenne and with significant historical events such as the 'Rough Wooing'. It has the potential to make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the role of women in medieval religious life in Scotland, particularly in relation to monasticism. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand nunneries in Scotland and their role in respect of their local economies.

References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 56492; 56585; 82105 (accessed on 09/03/2016)

East Lothian Historic Environment Record (HER) reference MEW1183 http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/844/archaeology/202/historic_environment_record

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