

BUILT STRUCTURES



SITE FEATURES AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Abbey Fields is a Scheduled Monument (ref:1021079), steeped in history and archaeological interest. Dating back to the 1100s the original Priory (later becoming an Abbey in 1447) was formed as a result of the close relationship with the adjacent Kenilworth Castle and with it the land was changed, additional structures built such as the Mill, mill race and various other features.

Over time and following Dissolution during Henry VIII's rule the landscape began to change and most of the Abbey and Mill became a ruin, St Nicholas Church and churchyard was extended. Progressing further into the 19th and 20th Century walls were built, air raid shelters created, bridges constructed, war memorial installed, and shelters featured within the Fields. However, as Abbey Fields became more publicly accessible the importance of the historic landscape became understood and despite modern built structures being present within the landscape, the heritage of the land became of high value being awarded Scheduled Monument status in 2003, and various structures being individually listed.



CONSERVATION PLAN EXTRACTS AND ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES

In response to the Scheduled Monument Status, KAAC produced a Conservation Plan detailing all of the built features of archaeological merit within Abbey Fields. This inventory details the current use at the time of publication, the history, description, significance and its vulnerability. The summary of these features from the Conservation Plan are described below. Also included are additional built structures of listed status within Abbey Fields.

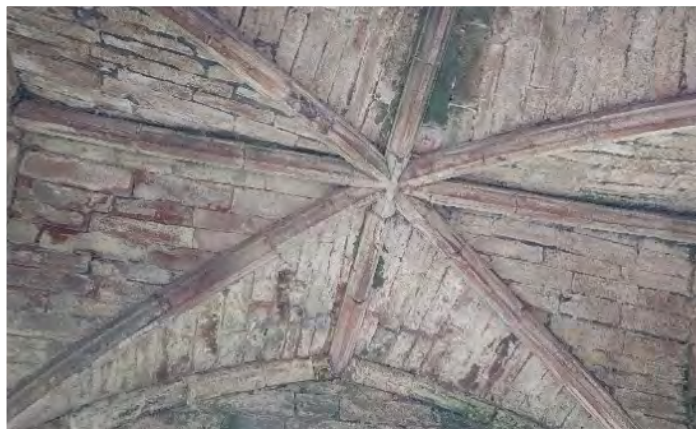


Abbey Gatehouse (part of the Abbey Ruins
Listed Building Grade I, 1035328)

A medieval structure with Victorian buttresses and 20th Century concrete and pitch roof capping. Entrance was formed of two vaulted bays divided by a wall with separate entrances for carriages and pedestrians.



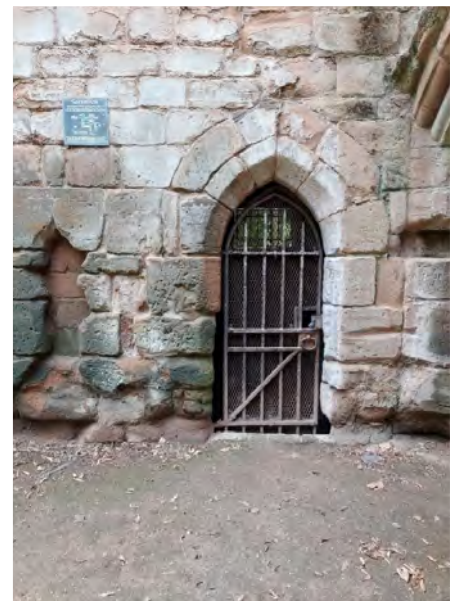
Significance: Very high as it is the only surviving ruin of the Abbey demonstrating the wealth and magnificence of the monastery and the detail is of particular educational significance.



Current use: It is currently used for storage of loose stone from excavations and buildings. A mezzanine floor has been installed and permanent lighting is being considered through funds raised by KAAC to enable safer public access.

History: The Gatehouse restricted access to the monastery through the Abbey walls. After Dissolution it was used as a dwelling, and in WW1 for drying herbs.

Risk: It lacks a pitched roof and guttering with damp stonework inside and outside. Climbing causes inevitable damage despite signage.





Abbey Chapter House *(part of the Abbey Ruins
Listed Building Grade I, 1035328)*

A medieval structure with only the south wall remaining above ground. Excavation showed it to be 15m long and 8.5m wide. Similar to Bristol Cathedral Chapter House

History: A Norman structure, with an apsidal east end changed to five-sided in the 13th Century. Tombs of the Founders were located here.

Significance: Site of Founders' tombs and others, one displayed in The Barn Museum.

Risk: Stonework is unimpressive and liable to collapse. Warning signs are unsightly although the fencing has deterred climbers.



The Barn (*part of the Abbey Ruins Listed Building Grade I, 1035328*)

A medieval structure built from sandstone ashlar and aligned east-west. An external stairway led to a doorway, now blocked. External walls are peppered with shot marks potentially from a Civil War skirmish.

Current Use: Known as The Museum with the ground floor used for the Abbey Interpretation Project exhibition displaying stonework from the 1920's excavations and first floor for local history. Opened by volunteers

History: Likely to have been the Abbey guest house until Dissolution when it was used as a barn.

Significance: A rare example of a medieval monastic, relatively intact building. This is a focal point for the Abbey Ruins.

Risk: Spoil from the 1920s excavation resulted in ground level outside of the building causing dampness to the north side. Restricted electricity supply limits public opening hours.



The Abbey Church of St Mary *(part of the Abbey Ruins Listed Building Grade I, 1035328)*

Medieval ruins with Victorian modifications. The nave is currently used as a memorial garden with an early 20th century retaining wall in front of the original north wall. South wall survives in part with a soil capping to reduce degradation.



The rest of the south wall has been rebuilt as a modern lapidary wall with the processional steps.



The north transept has rebuilt walls and forms part of the Garden of Remembrance



The rest of the church is buried and crossed by paths.

History: Built in Norman times, the Church was extended during the 13th Century. It became ruined after the Dissolution and new walls were constructed during the Victorian era.

Significance: The ruins evidence a church twice as long as St Nicholas Church demonstrating its importance to the priory. The processional steps evidence medieval liturgical practice. Marker plaques interpret the structure and it is graphically represented within The Barn.

Risk: The original walls are in poor condition and subject to climbing despite unsightly warning signs.



The Priory Aqueduct and Access Shaft *(part of the Abbey Fields Scheduled Monument 1021079)*

Buried medieval construction that is not currently used. The Access shaft is 4m deep with an arched culvert 1.4m high and 1m wide.

History: An historic charter confirms that the Priory can take water from a source close to the Castle and conduct it to the Priory. In May 2000 a metre deep depression appeared in Abbey Fields 200m west-north-west of the Gatehouse. It was excavated by Warwick University, filled and capped by WDC.

Significance: Of high importance, as the construction may help to understand water supply in other monasteries.

Risk: Low risk as none of the stonework is above ground and the access shaft is capped. There may be additional culverts, sluice gates and collecting tank near the Queen and Castle car park.

The Lake *(part of the Abbey Fields Scheduled Monument 1021079)*

The lake as it is today, was formed in the late twentieth century, partly on what is believed to be the former lake of medieval times, which was much larger in size. It is currently an important wildlife habitat and provides lakeside walks.

History: A lake on Abbey Fields was believed to date back to the 1200s, serving as a mill pool and source of fish for the priory with the dam formerly located on the current swimming pool. The pool was drained after the Dissolution. The meadow thereafter was known as the Oxpen Meadow and was seasonally flooded in Winter operating as a water meadow. In 1997 the lake was formerly created as a permanent feature of Abbey Fields.

Significance: It is of very high importance within Abbey Fields for the benefits of people and wildlife.

Risk: Vulnerable to pressures of diversifying its use, as well as erosion from water movement and public/animal interaction.



Kenilworth War Memorial (*Grade II Listing, 1435150*)

The Kenilworth War memorial is located on Forrest Road at the entrance to Abbey Fields at Abbey Hill. It is a tall and imposing obelisk in a Classical style.

History: Dedicated in 1922 following the end of WWI and was designed and sculpted by F W Doyle-Jones of Chelsea. The memorial originally commemorated 129 men and 1 woman of Kenilworth who died in WWI, with 9 additional names subsequently added. Names of those who died in WWII were added in 1951 with an additional name from the Korean War in 1952.



St Nicholas Church (*Grade I Listed Building, 1300415*)

St Nicholas Church is a Grade I Listed Building and is an important feature within Abbey Fields dating back to the late 13th Century. It was substantially expanded following Dissolution and many of the stones from the Abbey appeared to have been used within the archway and windows of the expanded St Nicholas Church seen today.

Of particular importance within the details of the listing are the decorated arcades, perpendicular clerestory, and 14th Century west tower with ornate Norman entrance.

St. Nicholas Church is managed by the Vicar, Church Wardens and volunteers. The churchyard is maintained by WDC.



Drinking Fountain

Constructed in 1934 north of the tennis courts, this originally had a light on top and provided drinking water generally for those undertaking sports within Abbey Fields. However, its water connection has been disrupted and the light no longer exists. There are no identifying features as to what it is, nor any signage to provide context.



Shelter on Bridge Street

Air Raid Shelters

A number of air raid shelters were built around Abbey Fields during WWII. These are important historic assets and are of educational value for their significance in WWII. Three of these are concrete in structure.

None of them are open to the public and only one is identified with a sign.



Shelter on Forrest Road



Shelter on Rosemary Hill



Play Pavilion

The play pavilion is not included within the scheduled monument status, nor is it listed. However, the play pavilion, formerly the bowls and lawn tennis pavilion was constructed in 1925-1926 and was a thatched building. Nearing 100 years old, it is a structure that has a legacy within Abbey Fields and as such would benefit repurposing for its posterity. It is currently boarded up and closed to the public, but lies within a prominent location in the middle of the fenced play area.

The condition of the structure is in need of repair, particularly the overhang struts which are showing signs of deterioration.



Bus Shelter Abbey Hill

In 1950, the park/bus shelter on Abbey Hill was constructed. Not a typical bus shelter, this is open through the centre allowing views through the shelter to Abbey Fields from the road. Seating on both sides creates a dual purpose particularly from the 1960s when access was created into Abbey Fields, enabling it to become an intrinsic part of the Fields from this part of the town.

It is in need of some repair as there are some wooden tiles missing, and the timber frame requires attention. These are detailed more within Section 9.



Bus Shelter Rosemary Hill

The bus shelter on Rosemary Hill is not located within Abbey Fields but forms a connection with Abbey Fields as it is used by visitors to and from Abbey Fields and is within a style similar to the shelter on Abbey Hill.

Its condition is detailed within Section 9, but appears to suffer regular graffiti with repair and painting required to prevent further decline.

All of the above features are within the ownership of Warwick District Council who have ultimate responsibility for the upkeep of the Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monument, assisted by the support of KHAS and KAAC for their fund raising and volunteering.

Procedures for Repair and Upkeep of Structures in WDC Ownership

As detailed in Section 12 Consultation, KAAC monitor the condition of The Barn Museum, the Gatehouse and the Abbey ruins, and inform WDC of any issues.

In relation to any structures that are reported to have a fault (public or from KAAC), an inspection is undertaken by WDC's Building Surveyor, the Green Spaces Development Officer. Once the fault has been evaluated the following process is undertaken in order:

1. **Carry out the repair if it may cause imminent danger;**
2. **Consult with the WDC Conservation Officer for above ground assets to determine if repairs can be undertaken without Listed Building or Scheduled Monument consent. If consent is not required, undertake the repair; otherwise**
3. **Apply for Listed Building or Scheduled Monument consent through Historic England in order to undertake the repair.**

WDC Asset Team are responsible for the management of Abbey Fields historic and non-historic buildings. The Leisure Centre is leased and managed by Everyone Active.

Periodic conditions surveys are undertaken of the historic and non-historic structures within Abbey Fields. These are undertaken by the WDC Building Surveyor. The Building Surveyor would prepare a Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) with a 5, 10 and 15 year plan to ensure the assets are protected.

Repairs to a scheduled monument constitute work under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and therefore in all instances will require Scheduled Monument Consent.

Historic England are consulted on works to a Listed Building if planning permission or Listed Building Consent is required and the Listed Building is Grade I or II*, or also Grade II if the works constitute demolition.

Unless specifically excluded in the details of the Scheduled Monument, works within the scheduled monument will require Scheduled Monument Consent.

A Heritage Agreement can be housed under a Section 17 Management Agreement or a Scheduled Monument Consent. This would agree certain works that can undertaken under the agreement and therefore benefit from Scheduled Monument Consent or a deemed consent.

KHAS and KAAC have fundraised on a number of occasions for the improvements to the Abbey buildings. However, there doesn't appear to be a procedure in place in relation to how this works between WDC and the voluntary organisations. KHAS operate the Barn Museum under a licence agreement with WDC (although under review).

Impacts on the MMP

As Abbey Fields is an important historic asset with Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area status, there are a number of actions that need to be addressed to better manage the heritage assets and also the non-historic structures.

As detailed in the Consultation document (section 12), consider the formation of an Abbey Fields Partnership Board with monthly meetings, that have shared priorities with an agreed Vision.

Consider the creation of a formal procedure for the PPM of the historic and non-historic structures that identifies when inspections are required, by whom, access of inspection reports (shared so all WDC officers involved in Abbey Fields have access), and the process required to undertake these repairs. This may or may not involve Historic England, dependent on each structure. With the formulation of the Abbey Fields Partnership Board, develop a Heritage Agreement with Historic England setting out what can be undertaken without Scheduled Monument Consent.

Consider creation of a formal procedure for reporting of faults on structures within Abbey Fields. This would include who to report to, and the internal procedures required to deal with this i.e. who is the point of contact?, does it need involvement from the Principal Conservation Officer?, does it require Historic England

consent? etc. This could be simply presented in a flowdiagram with 'yes/no' answers.

Consider improving signage of more recent assets in particular to provide historical context of the formation of Abbey Fields as it is seen today.

LAND USE



11.

LAND USE

This Section looks at the way Abbey Fields is used in terms of visitor requirements, demands for use of Abbey Fields and any conflicts that may arise including access and safety.

Consultation summary relating to Land use

Public consultation was undertaken in 2019 called 'Fields for the Future' and the full details are summarised in Section 12 and provided within Appendix 4. The consultation looked at a number of topic areas including land use. Consultation questions relating to land use included:

- **How often do you visit Abbey Fields?**
- **Typical purpose for visiting Abbey Fields?**
- **How much time do you spend on a typical visit to Abbey Fields?**
- **Thoughts on Wildlife and Biodiversity at Abbey Fields**
- **Thoughts on Formal Sports provision at Abbey Fields**
- **Thoughts on the use of Buildings within Abbey Fields**
- **Thoughts on the safety and protection of the Brook**
- **Would you be interested in volunteering?**

The consultation found that most people visited Abbey Fields once or twice a week, followed by most days and that a large percentage of people spent between half an hour and 2 hours in Abbey Fields, with only a small percentage staying longer than 2 hours.



The most popular reason for visiting Abbey Fields was primarily walking and enjoying nature, with a large percentage of people walking through Abbey Fields to get to an alternative destination.

Enjoying the Peace and quiet and use of play facilities also scored relatively highly. Other uses included access of the Leisure Centre, jogging, enjoying the heritage, dog walking, meeting family and friends and attending an event. Other activities include photography and art, orienteering events and attending church.

The majority of respondents were in favour of more Management for Conservation and Biodiversity, although requirements for interpretation of these areas of management in Abbey Fields including why they are managed and what flora and fauna are found there. There were some concerns over the management practices around structures and historic buildings and to provide a balance between this and the need for biodiversity.



Impacts on the MMP

It is clear from the Land Use that the majority of people using and enjoying Abbey Fields are generally happy with how Abbey Fields is managed for the benefit of wildlife and heritage and that there may be opportunities to introduce more biodiversity to Abbey Fields through additional hedgerows and meadows.

There is a requirement for more interpretation of the wildlife enhancement of Abbey Fields to inform the public of the value of these areas and what species they might see.

Sports provision in Abbey Fields is low key with tennis courts and a small trim trail. Consideration should be given to improving the basketball facilities in the tennis courts, and to expand the trim trail or introduce an outdoor gym. Locations for these need to consider other users for their enjoyment of Abbey Fields for peace and quiet, art and heritage.

Improving the visibility of volunteering opportunities within Abbey Fields is important to encourage more community interaction and more use of the historic buildings. This should be undertaken through consolidating and enhancing Notice Boards, combining the Friends of the Fields noticeboard into the main news board as well as the consideration of an online presence through Social Media.

The safety and protection of the Brook should be a priority to safeguard the Brook embankments and to provide high quality interaction with the Brook.

Refurbish and repurpose the play area pavilion as a potential 'snack shack', and/or Seasonal wildlife/educational/art exhibitions.

A large percentage of respondents were in favour of providing more sports provision in Abbey Fields, particularly relating to informal kickabout, exercise provision for adults, multi sports provision for youths and running trails. However, some respondents were clear of the proximity of formal sports provisions at Castle Farm and the need to set a balance or to ensure Abbey Fields is kept informal and for more gentle recreation.

Many respondents would like to see more access to the buildings within Abbey Fields, particularly the heritage structures. A large percentage would like to see the repurpose of the play pavilion building as a pop up café particularly during busy summer months.

In relation to the safety and protection of the Brook, a large percentage agreed that it should be protected with fencing as long as safe access for dogs and people was provided and the annual duck race continued.

A large percentage of respondents were interested in volunteering. However, the overwhelming response was that volunteer opportunities were poorly advertised and access to information on volunteer groups and opportunities was unclear.

