

SCHEDULE ENTRY COPY

ENTRY IN THE SCHEDULE OF MONUMENTS COMPILED AND MAINTAINED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER SECTION 1 OF THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS ACT 1979 AS AMENDED.

MONUMENT: Hermitage 170m south east of All Saints Church

PARISH: DALE ABBEY

DISTRICT: EREWASH

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 29978

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SK43883849

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the rock cut and buried remains of a hermitage which is situated approximately 250m south east of Dale Abbey on the south side of Sow Brook.

The hermitage was first mentioned in the 12th century. It is believed that it was created by a baker from Derby who had a vision which told him to go and live in Depedale (the old name for Dale village). When he arrived he found the place was a marsh, 'exceedingly dreadful and far distant from every habitation of man'. He carved a small dwelling and altar from the rock, and lived there 'by day and night, he served God in hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness'. On seeing the poverty of the hermit, Ralph Fitz Geremund, a local dignitary at the time, gave him his mill and tithe at Borrowash. The hermit later moved to a cottage and oratory which he built to the west of the hermitage.

The monument survives as a rock cut cave which has internal measurements of approximately 6m east to west and 2.75m north to south. On the eastern wall inside the cave is a carved cross. On the north face are two doorways with rough ogee arches, and two windows, one of which has been partly blocked. All are carved through the local bedrock. Above the doors and windows on the external face are the remains of at least four joist holes and creasing, which suggest that there was a building attached to the rock shelter on the northern side. Further remains of this structure are believed to survive beneath the ground surface on the northern side outside the cave.

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On behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under batch no: 10962

Continued from previous page ..

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ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Following St Augustine's re-establishment of Christianity in AD 597, monasticism formed an important facet of both religious and secular medieval life in the British Isles. Although most monasticism centred on communities, some men and women chose to live solitary lives of contemplation and simplified religious observance, akin to those of the Christian fathers and early British saints. They lived in what we now refer to as hermitages, occupying secluded sites such as isolated islands and caves in river banks, marshy areas or forests. The hermits lived off alms or under the patronage of the nobility who established hermits to pray for the souls and well-being of their families. Hermitages were generally simple, comprising a dwelling area, an oratory or room set aside for private prayer, and perhaps a small chapel. Hermitages fell out of favour with the general dissolution of religious establishments in the middle of the 16th century. Around 500 hermitages are known from documents but the locations of very few have been identified and this is therefore a rare monument type. All examples which exhibit surviving archaeological remains are worthy of protection.

The rock cut and buried remains of Dale Abbey hermitage, 170m south east of All Saints Church, provide a rare and well preserved example of this type of monument. The documented history of the site and its relationship to Dale Abbey combine with the rock cut and buried remains to provide a detailed picture of the religious landscape around Dale village. Taken as a whole, the site will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of monasticism during the medieval period.

MAP EXTRACT

The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 1 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 12th April 1972 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Derbyshire 40

NAME: The Hermitage, Dale Abbey

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 29978

NAME:

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DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT BATCH NUMBER: 10962

Continued from previous page ..

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Hermitage 170m south east of All Saints Church

SCHEDULING AFFIRMED ON 5th January 2001

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