

1.2 DESCRIPTION AND GAZETTEER

In this section of the Plan we include descriptions of the visible and buried remains of Merton Priory, including the large objects retained on site (1.2.1); descriptions of the buildings and structures associated with Merton Abbey Mills and of the site of William Morris & Co.'s works (1.2.2); descriptions of earlier and later structures on and near the site (1.2.3); and of the urban landscape and ecology (1.2.4).

Within each category individual elements are then numbered in sequence and, where appropriate, reference is made to the condition audit (see Appendix 1).

It is usual in a Conservation Plan to include not only an *Assessment of Significance* for the whole property or site, as included here (Section 1.4.1), but also an assessment of individual elements. In order to avoid duplication and reduce volume, this section of the Plan includes such a summary of assessment, for each element in the first two categories, under the headings :

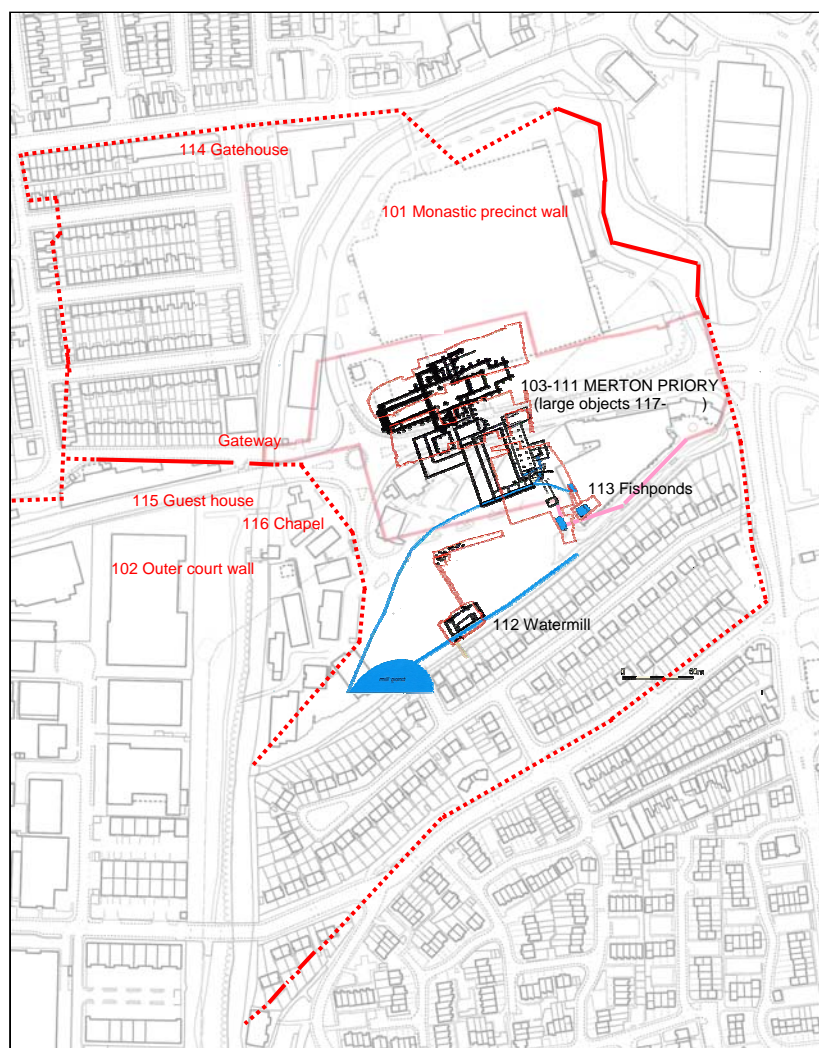
- the history of the element;
- an assessment of fabric;
- its significance;
- its status; and
- management issues deriving from uses and condition

(for a discussion of these see Section 1.4.2).

1.2.1 Visible and buried remains of Merton Priory

In this section of the Conservation Plan we include descriptions of those elements of Merton Priory which are currently still visible or are believed to survive as buried features, and the large objects that are retained on site and are currently on display in the chapter house visitor centre. The twelfth century arch, found in 1914 and re-built at the church of St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park, in 1935 has been described above (Section 1.1.4).

For ease of identification in the text and on the plans, the elements are numbered in sequence (as below).



Reduced extract from the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan, showing the location of the principal buildings of Merton Priory, the extent of the Scheduled Area (outlined pink), the remains and approximate alignment of the monastic and lay precinct walls (shown red).

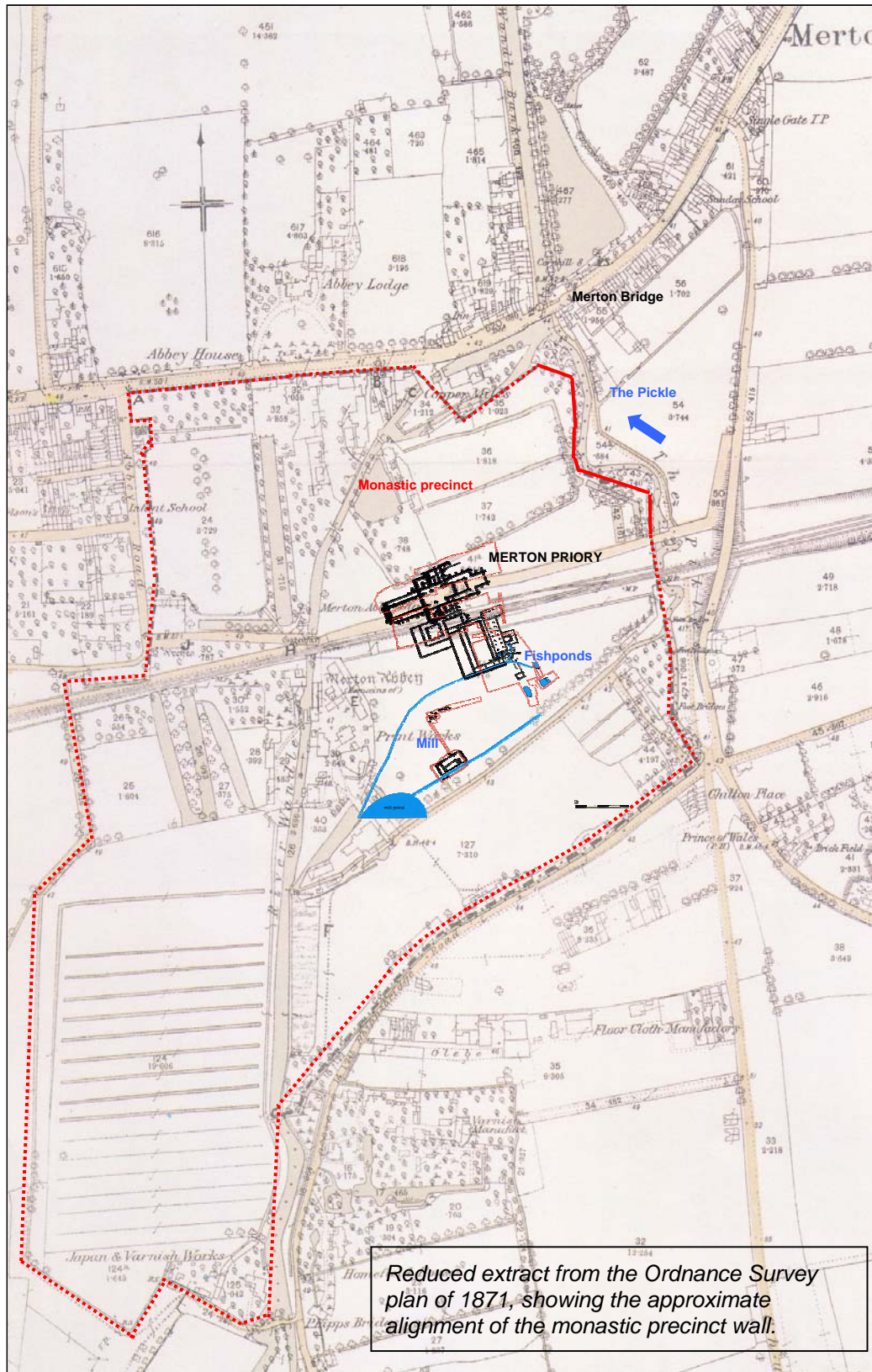
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Index to the numbering of elements :

- 101 Monastic precinct wall
- 102 Outer court wall
- 103 Priory church
- 104 Priory chapter house and burials
- 105 Priory cloister and ranges
- 106 Infirmary hall and cloister
- 107 Infirmary chapel
- 108 Infirmary kitchen
- 109 Infirmary reredorter
- 110 Canons' cemetery
- 111 Lay cemetery
- 112 Watermill
- 113 Fishponds
- 114 Gatehouse
- 115 Guest house
- 116 Chapel
- 117 Stone coffin 1
- 118 Stone coffin 2
- 119 Stone coffin 3
- 120 Stone coffin lid
- 121 Window masonry

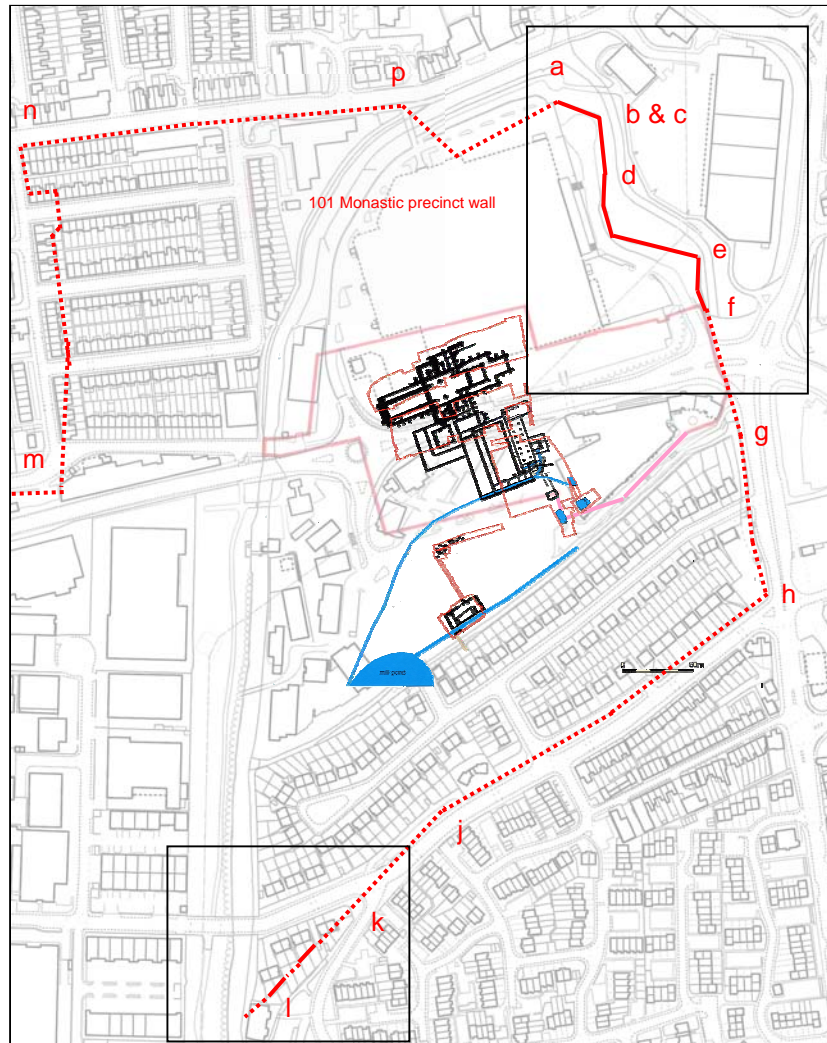
101 MONASTIC PRECINCT WALL

The precise course of the wall is not known throughout its length. However, there are some surviving sections close to The Pickle, at the north-east corner of the enclosed area, and another substantial section is believed to have existed near Phipps Bridge Road (now Liberty Avenue) at least until the 1930s and appears in a photograph taken in the early twentieth century (see above 1.1.3).



Heales (1898) postulated a course for the north side of the enclosed area alongside what is now Merton High Street and then south close to what is now Abbey Road. The course of the remainder of the circuit is not known and we have tentatively postulated that it may have been on the alignment of the south and west side of the first calico-printing works established in 1724 but this is by no means certain.

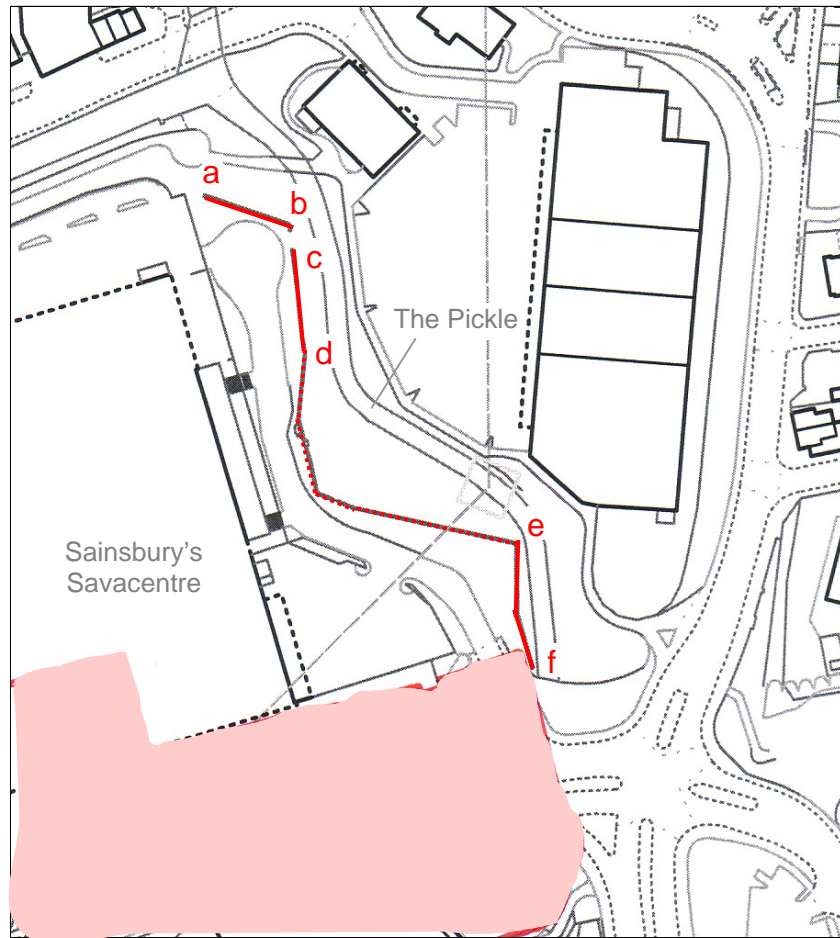
For the purposes of the Conservation Plan, we have lettered the circuit commencing close to Merton Bridge (101a) and then continued in a clockwise direction, noting where the precinct wall exists or what is on the alignment today.



Reduced extract from the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan, showing the location of the principal buildings of Merton Priory, the extent of the Scheduled Area (outlined pink), the remains and approximate alignment of parts of the monastic precinct wall (shown red). For clarity we have included enlargements of the areas outlined.

**101a-f Monastic
Precinct wall**

Several sections of the wall are preserved between Sainsbury's Savacentre and The Pickle, within a band of relatively dense undergrowth. Parts of it are visible from the footpath on the east side of The Pickle and there is a strong likelihood that the wall is preserved in some form or other throughout its length here.



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing remains of the monastic precinct wall (a-f) and part of the extent of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (coloured pink).

The wall is a Grade II Listed building and the Listing description, written in 1987 and last updated in 1995, reads as follows :

Portion of wall on west side of River Wandle to east of factory occupied by Messrs Alumite and Alzak Ltd., shall be amended to read ... Portion of wall on the west side of the River Pickle between Merton High Street and Merantun Way, Formerly part of precinct wall to Merton priory. Medieval with later restoration and rebuilding. Flint and rubblestone. About 6 feet high.

From a to b it appears to be about two metres high and constructed of flint, stone and brick with a brick capping.

The monastic precinct wall,
Section a-b (arrowed), looking
west across The Pickle.



From b to c the wall appears to have been replaced by a galvanised metal fence.

From c to d the wall is again visible in the undergrowth and appears to be similar to the first section (a-b), but with greater use of, what are presumably, re-used stone blocks in the fabric.

The monastic precinct wall,
Section c-d (arrowed), looking
west across The Pickle.



From d to e the wall is not clearly visible from the east but may well exist in a form similar to the adjoining sections.

From e to f the wall runs close to The Pickle and is more clearly visible, about two metres high, in a form similar to the other surviving sections.



The monastic precinct wall, Section e-f, looking west across The Pickle.

It is difficult to be precise about the extent and condition of the wall, but it is clearly an important surviving element of the Priory and should, ideally, be cleared of vegetation and repaired for display.

101a-f Assessment of Significance :

- built in medieval period as monastic precinct wall but evidently altered and repaired;
- appears to be a relatively good condition, but closer inspection desirable
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- Grade II Listed building;
- need for vegetation clearance, repair and display.

101f-g Monastic Precinct wall

No trace of the wall exists where Merantun Way and its junction with Christchurch Road have been built across its alignment.

101g-h Monastic Precinct wall

No trace of the wall exists alongside Christchurch Road, but its course was probably alongside The Pickle, which is visible in places.

101h-j Monastic Precinct wall

No trace of the wall exists along the north side of Liberty Avenue, which was known as Phipps Bridge Road at least until the 1950s.

The 1930s edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan refers to a length of 'Old Abbey Walls' running parallel to and on the north side of Phipps Bridge Road, towards its south end, and between the road and the wall was a stream which may have been the alignment of the original course of the River Wandle, prior to its diversion in the late seventeenth century.

It is probably part of this wall that appears in the photograph taken in the early twentieth century, with part of the Merton Abbey Works in the background to the left and buildings on Phipps Bridge Road to the right.



An early twentieth century photograph recording part of the precinct wall which existed at that time, probably near Phipps Bridge Road (after Bruce and Mason 1993 : 7)).

At that time the land was open fields, but the area was developed for housing in the 1930s. At that time the stream appears to have been, for the most part, taken underground and its course, and probably that also of the wall, is probably in a band of undeveloped land in front of the houses.

Houses near the north end of Liberty Avenue, showing the site of the precinct wall and stream in the foreground.



101j-k Monastic precinct wall

The alignment of the wall is known here from its depiction on the 1930s edition of the Ordnance Survey plan (as above) but its course has been lost by the construction of Windsor Avenue.

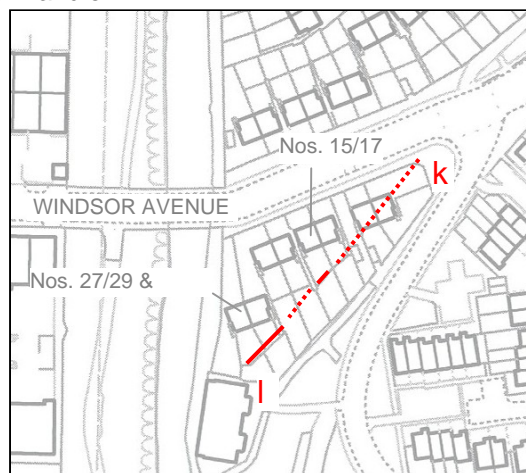
101f-k Assessment of Significance :

- built in medieval period as monastic precinct wall;
- demolished but may survive as footings;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- potential for investigation.

101k-l Monastic precinct wall

The alignment of the wall is known here from its depiction on the 1930s edition of the Ordnance Survey plan (as above) and the stream to the south of it is preserved, on the north side of Brangwyn Crescent, flowing from the Wandle.

Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the course and two remaining fragments of the monastic precinct wall (k-l).



The precinct wall is preserved here in two small sections. In the garden of Nos. 15/17 Windsor Avenue there is a small and very overgrown fragment of masonry, with a large tree growing from it.



Fragment of wall at 15/17 Windsor Avenue, looking south.

In the gardens of Nos. 27/29 and 31/33 Windsor Avenue the wall appears to survive in marginally better condition though it is collapsed and overgrown.



Fragment of wall at 31/33 Windsor Avenue, looking south.

101k-l Assessment of Significance :

- built in medieval period as monastic precinct wall;
- in very fragmentary condition;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- need for vegetation clearance, repair and display.

101l-m Monastic precinct wall

The course of the monastic precinct wall beyond this point (l), as far as Station Road (m) is not known, though we have postulated that it might have followed the west boundary of the first calico-printing works established in 1924.

This alignment has been fully developed with an industrial estate and no trace of the precinct wall has been noted.

101l-m Assessment of Significance :

- possible course of medieval monastic precinct wall;
- may survive as footings but precise course not known;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- perhaps potential for investigation.

101m-n Monastic precinct wall

Heales (1898) postulated an alignment for the precinct wall running northwards along the east side of what is now Abbey Road, from its junction with Station Road, as far as what is now Merton High Street.

A section of the precinct wall was revealed in c.1988 in one of the gardens on the east side of Abbey Road, which is occupied by late nineteenth and early twentieth century terraced housing.

Terraced housing on the east side of Abbey Road, looking north.



101n-p Monastic precinct wall

Heales (1898) then postulated an alignment running eastwards along the south side of what is now Merton High Street, with the main gate to the Priory being near its junction with Abbey Road.

If this is the case then its site is in part occupied by early twentieth century terraced properties, now used in part as commercial premises.



Terraced properties on the south side of Merton High Street, looking east

Further east, and closer to Mill Road, some new terraced development has taken place recently and several writers, as well as information boards near the site, suggest that this was the location of the Priory gatehouse (see below 114).

Beyond Mill Road the site of William Morris's works has recently been redeveloped as a block of apartments known as Trellis House and excavations by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in 1992 revealed the remains of the former printing works.

**101p-a Monastic
precinct wall**

Beyond Trellis House the course of the monastic precinct wall has been lost under the entrance and car park of Sainsbury's Savacentre.

101n-a Assessment of Significance :

- possible course of medieval monastic precinct wall and site of Priory gatehouse;
- may survive in places as footings but likely to have been adversely affected by previous building works;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- perhaps potential for investigation.

102 OUTER COURT WALL

There are doubts about the precise age of the section of wall which runs along the south side of Station Road and includes the replica gateway near its east end. The original gateway has been described as medieval (*Saxby 2005* : 23 and see below 102k) and if this is the case then it was presumably set in a medieval wall. There is very little about the original gate to suggest a date as it had clearly been much altered by the time it was demolished and replaced in the 1980s.

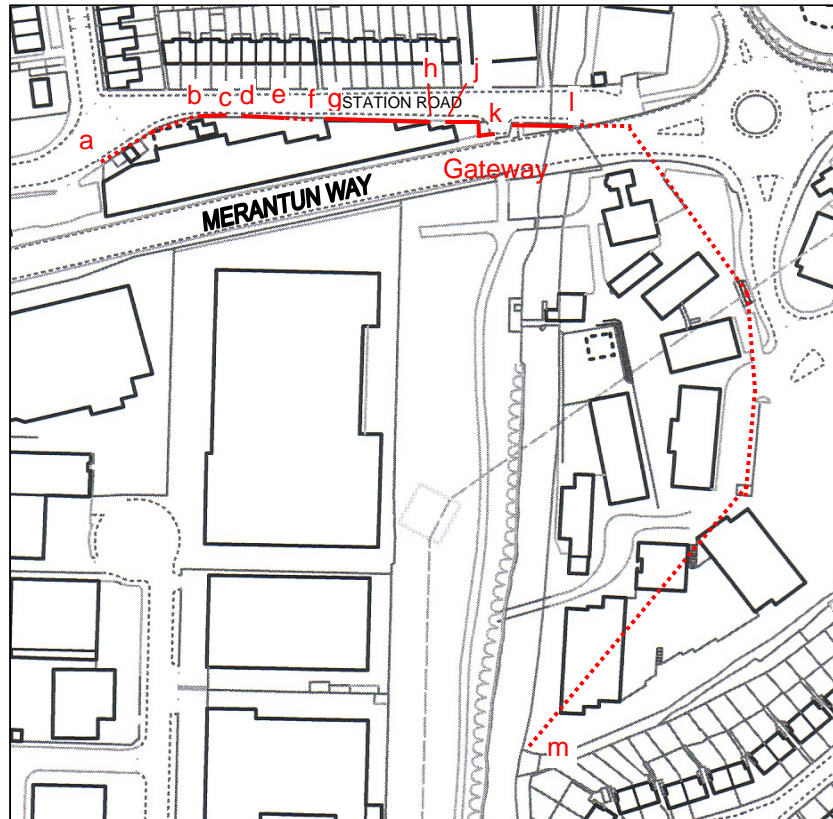
However, the enclosed area contained a fourteenth century chapel and possibly the Priory Guest House for lay visitors, and for this and other reasons we are assuming either that the wall contains some medieval fabric or that it is on the same alignment as a medieval wall, although its appearance suggests that it may have been built or rebuilt in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. We have tentatively suggested that an area partially enclosed by this wall on its north side and by the wall that previously existed on its east side formed an outer court, which was cut through when the River Wandle was diverted to its present course in the late seventeenth century.

If this is the case the wall will have commenced on the west boundary of the monastic precinct, followed the present course until a point a short distance east of the gateway and appears to have survived as the east boundary of the first calico-printing works and Merton Abbey mills until it was removed in the 1970s and 1980s.

The section of wall on Station Road is a Grade II Listed building and the Listing description, written in May 1954, reads as follows :

Wall running along south side of road. C17 and later. Built of flint with random ashlar stone from the ruins of Merton Priory. Corbelled course below gable top. At east end the jamb is of rebuilt doorway with some probably C20 fragments.

For the purposes of the Conservation Plan we have lettered the circuit, commencing at the junction of Abbey Road and Station Road (102a) and then proceeding in a clockwise direction as far as the south end of the former Merton Abbey Works (102m).



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the outer court wall and gateway.

The wall forms the south side of Station Road and behind it are several car repair workshops which have been provided with access via gaps in the wall.

At the time that the Conservation Plan was being prepared in December and January 2005/2006 parts of the wall were being repaired. The surviving sections have clearly been much repaired in the past and it is difficult to know how much original, i.e. medieval, fabric may survive.

102a-b Outer court wall

From the junction of Station Road and Abbey Road the first part of the wall is of brick and of fairly recent origin and contains several gaps.

The first part of the wall (a-b), looking east along Station Road.



102b-c Outer court wall

After this there is a section of wall, about 6 metres in length and about 2 metres in height, which is of flint with a substantial brick coping, possibly of seventeenth or eighteenth century date



Part of the first part of the wall (a-b).

102c-d Outer court wall

There is then a gap in the wall, about 5 metres wide.

102d-e Outer court wall

This is followed by another section of wall, about 15 metres in length, of flint with a substantial brick coping in the same style as the previous piece (b-c).

The lay precinct wall (d-e), looking east along Station Road.



102e-g Outer court wall

There is then a length of relatively modern brick wall, about 8 metres in length and 2 metres high, on the line of the original, followed by a gap about 5 metres wide.



Recent wall and gap on the lay precinct wall (e-g), looking west along Station Road

102g-h Outer court wall

After the gap there is a length of flint wall, about 34 metres in length and 1.4 metres high, which has been capped on top with new brickwork as part of the recent repairs.



The lay precinct wall (g-h), looking west along Station Road.

102j-k Lay precinct wall

There is then another gap (h-j) followed by three short sections of wall, each about 6 metres, 5 metres and 7 metres in length and about 1.4 metres high, in the form of a dog leg. Built into the dog leg was an opening with brick piers, but this has been blocked. The flint and brickwork here appears to be of much more recent origin and possibly dates to the last 30 years.



The outer court wall (j-k), looking west along Station Road.

102a-k Assessment of Significance :

- possibly on the alignment of and retaining some original fabric from the medieval lay precinct wall, but much rebuilt and repaired since then;
- currently being repaired after which it will be in condition;
- a significant element of the medieval Priory;
- Grade II Listed building;
- no management issues identified.

102k Gateway

This is the gateway adjoining Station Road which appears on all editions of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan, commencing in 1871. The original gateway was demolished in the 1980s and replaced by a replica on the same site, which gives pedestrian access through the wall from Station Road onto Merantun Way.



The original gateway prior to demolition, probably looking south across Station Road.



The modern replacement, looking south from Station Road (left) and looking north (above).

The date of original structure, which must have been of some historic and architectural significance, has been discussed above. The modern replacement, which does not closely resemble the original nor does it contain any re-used material, is of little interest. To the immediate east of the gate, and forming a return on the outer court wall, is what appears to be part of an older stone-built buttress.

102k Assessment of Significance :

- 1980s replacement of a medieval and later structure;
- the present structure is in sound condition;
- of significance in that the gateway may preserve the position of an original entrance into the lay precinct;
- Grade II Listed building;
- no management issues identified

102k-l Outer court wall

To the east of the gateway there is another section of flint wall with large brick coping, about 10 metres long and 1.4 metres high, which has either been heavily restored or is a later replacement of the original precinct wall.

*The outer court wall (k-l),
looking east along Station
Road.*



101k-l Assessment of Significance :

- possibly on the alignment of and retaining some original fabric from the medieval lay precinct wall, but much rebuilt and repaired since then;
- may survive as footings but precise course not known;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- no management issues identified.

102l-m Outer court wall

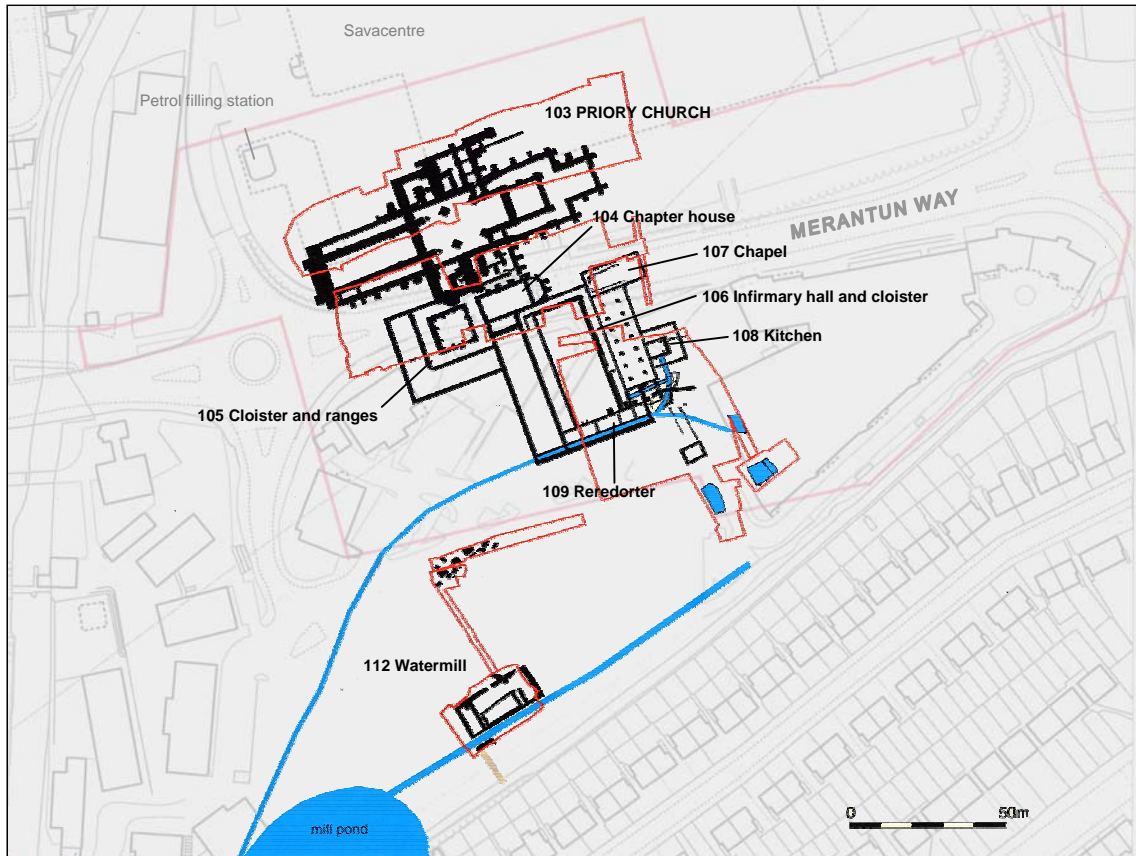
Beyond the end of this section there is a short length of modern brick wall, possibly on the original alignment, but beyond it the lay precinct wall has been removed where it would have been crossed by Merantun Way and passed around the east side of the Merton Abbey Works.

101l-m Assessment of Significance :

- possible course of lay precinct wall;
- partially built over but footings may survive in places;
- a significant and surviving element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- perhaps potential for investigation.

103 Priory church and burials

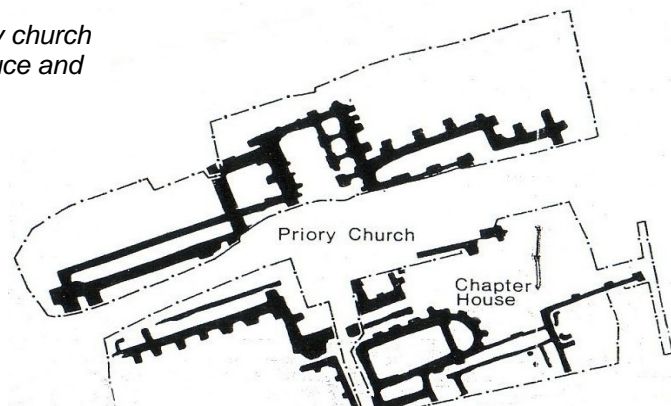
The remains of the church were first encountered by Bidder and Westlake in their excavations in 1921-22 and they were investigated again by the Museum of London between 1986 and 1990, prior to the construction of Merantun Way and the Sainsbury's Savacentre. At that time a sequence of construction was established (see above Section 1.1.3). A number of burials were encountered within the Priory church.



Reduced extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the location of the principal Priory buildings and the extent of the Scheduled area (outlined pink (see also Figure 2).

In the latest excavations it was noted that the wall tops were encountered at a depth of about 1.2 metres. It is understood, however, that the full extent of the Priory church was not investigated at that time and it appears that a strip of ground running the full length of the church on its central axis has never been investigated. This is due to the construction of a mains water pipe c. 1950s.

The approximate extent of the Priory church that has been investigated (after Bruce and Mason 1993 : 12).



The excavations demonstrated that the walls of the Priory church had been demolished to ground level either at the Dissolution or shortly afterwards. In some cases even the foundations had been robbed.

The site of the priory church is occupied by a small part of the Savacentre, the petrol filling station to the south-west of it, and by the car parking and service area to the south of the Savacentre.



The excavations of the north side of the Priory Church (after Saxby 2005 : 9) and a view of approximately the same area today.

It is understood that during the construction of the Savacentre, the petrol filling station, and the car parking and service area, every effort was made to preserve the historic fabric *in situ*, by raising ground levels and locating concrete piles in positions which caused least damage to the historic fabric.

The Sainsbury's Savacentre, from the south-west.



103 Assessment of Significance

- first constructed in 1117, replaced later in the twelfth century and subsequently extended and altered on several occasions. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- survives as footings, robber trenches and graves, but all buried beneath buildings and hard surfaces;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- long-term potential for re-exposure, repair and display.

104 Priory Chapter House and burials

The chapter house was first erected in the thirteenth century and was altered at its east end to include an unusual apse in the fourteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).

It was partially excavated by Bidder and Westlake in 1921-1922 and then fully excavated by the Museum of London between 1986 and 1990, at which time the two phases of construction were revealed, along with 31 burials internally within the building.

The east end of the chapter house, during excavations (after Saxby 2005 : 12).



When the new Merton relief road, to be known as Merantun Way, was built the remains of the chapter house were protected and a purpose-built cover chamber was created around and over the surviving structure beneath the road, which was built at a raised level (see below Section 1.2.3 - 301).



The remains of the chapter house, immediately prior to the construction of the cover building (after Bruce and Mason 1993 : 15).

Within the enclosed space [to be extended]

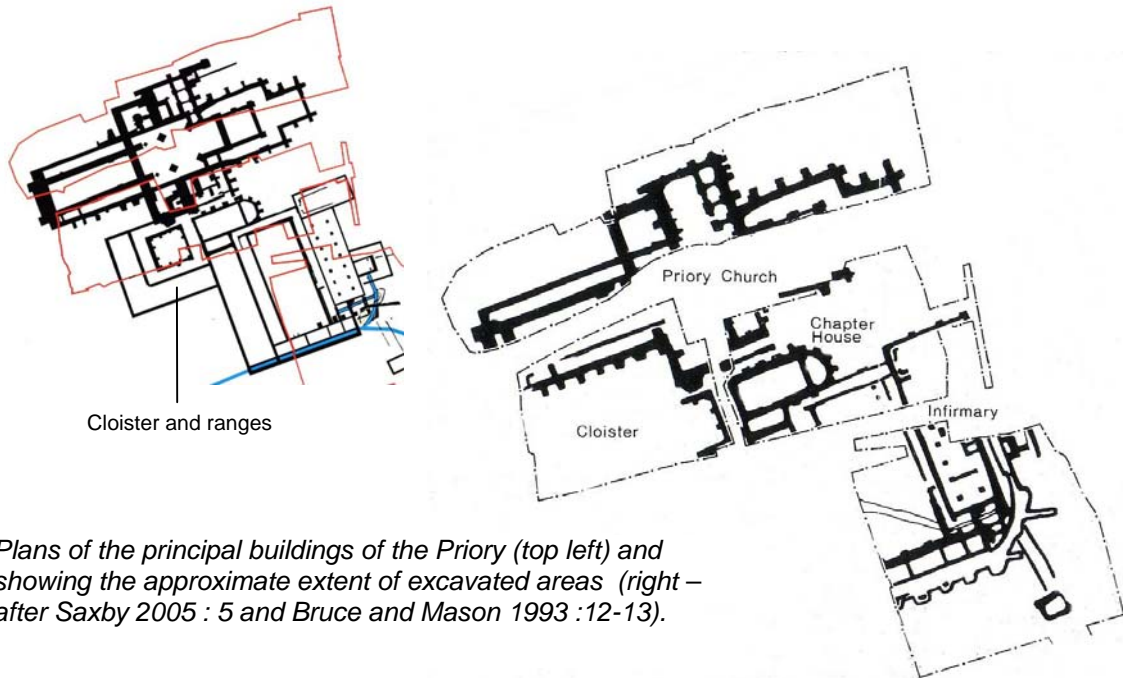
104 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century and extended in the fourteenth. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- survives as footings within a covered building;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- in need of repair

105 Priory cloister and ranges

These have only been partially excavated in the past, firstly by Bidder and Westlake in 1921-1922 and then by the Museum of London in 1986-1990 (see above Section 1.1.3). They appear to date to the major refurbishment of the Priory in the thirteenth century.

Only the east side of the cloister and the cloister garth or walk have been examined in any detail and virtually nothing is known of the east, west and south ranges, which would have contained the principal buildings in which the canons would have ate and slept.



Plans of the principal buildings of the Priory (top left) and showing the approximate extent of excavated areas (right – after Saxby 2005 : 5 and Bruce and Mason 1993 :12-13).

The site of the remainder of the cloister and the north end of the west range are now buried under Merantun Way and part of the south end of the west range has been preserved under the Pizza Hut restaurant.



The Pizza Hut and car park, on the site of the south end of the west range.

The east range has only been investigated at its extreme north end and its site is mostly now under the car park.

The south range may be partially preserved to the south of Merantun Way, in the area partially occupied by an electricity pylon which was re-located here in the 1980s.

The base of the electricity pylon and site of the south range.



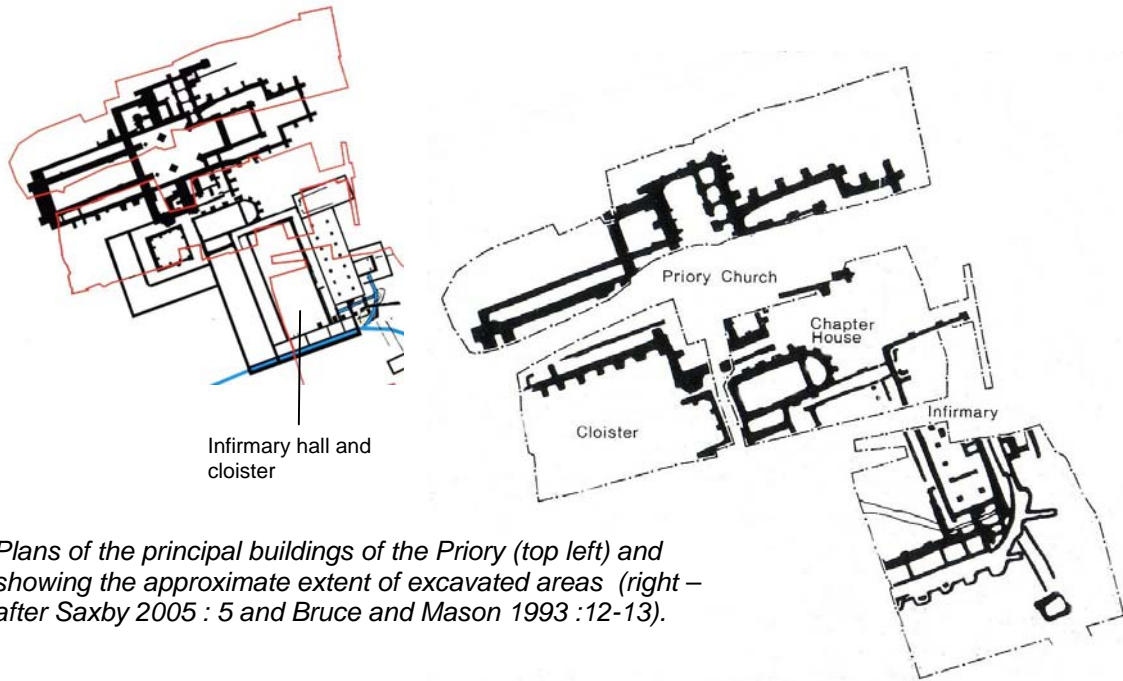
It is understood that test pits were excavated here prior to the erection of the pylon and that the ground level has been raised to protect any buried features which may survive.

105 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- may survive in part as buried footings under car park;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation and display.

106 Infirmary hall and cloister

These were both partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations in 1986-1990. Both were found to date to the major refurbishment of the Priory in the thirteenth century with some alterations in the fourteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).



Plans of the principal buildings of the Priory (top left) and showing the approximate extent of excavated areas (right – after Saxby 2005 : 5 and Bruce and Mason 1993 :12-13).

Their sites are mostly occupied by the car park and raising the ground level has preserved the historic fabric.

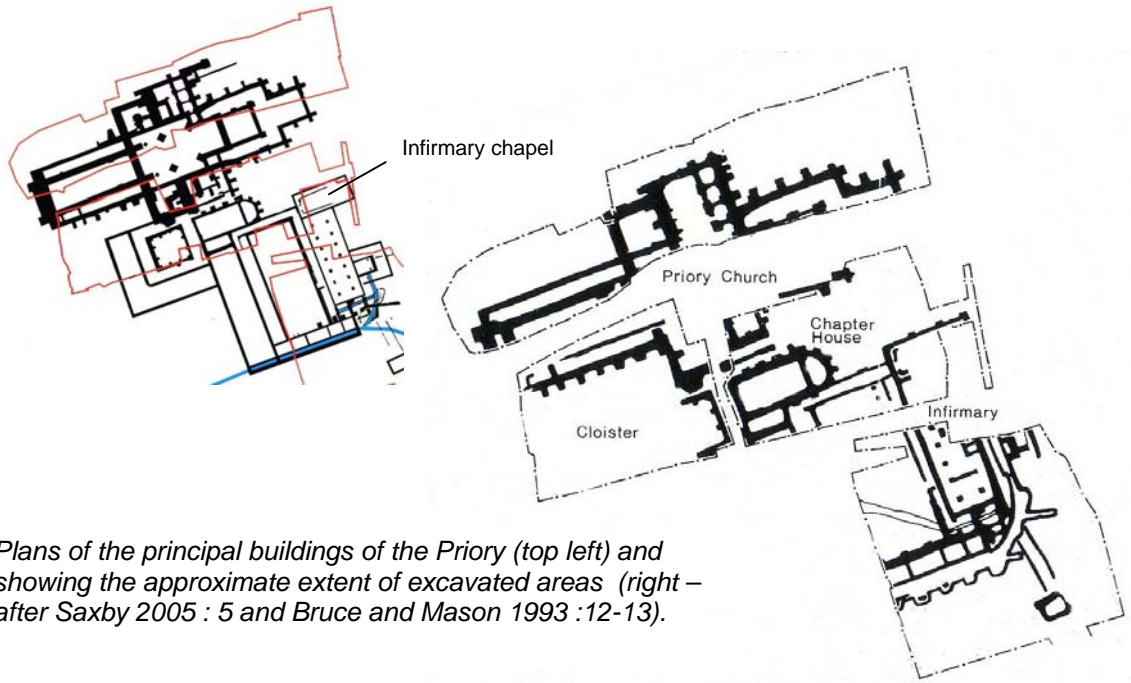


The car park on the site of the infirmary hall and cloister.

106 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- may survive in part as buried footings under the car park;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation and display.

107 Infirmary chapel This was partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations in 1986-1990. It was found to date to the major refurbishment of the Priory in the thirteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).



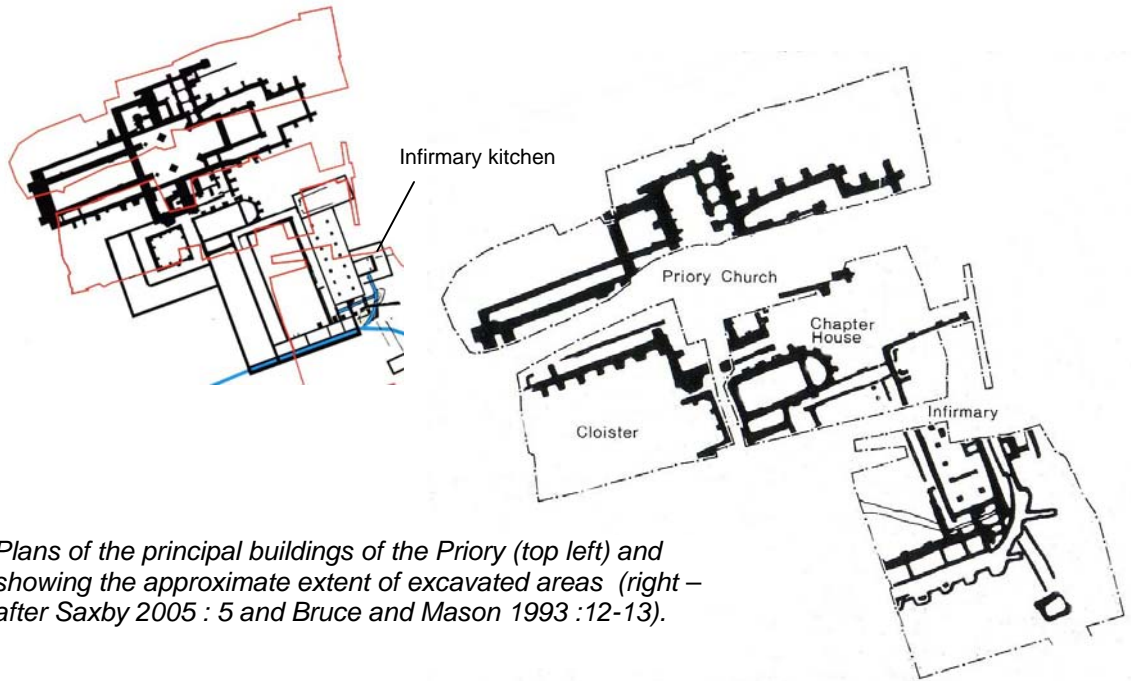
Plans of the principal buildings of the Priory (top left) and showing the approximate extent of excavated areas (right – after Saxby 2005 : 5 and Bruce and Mason 1993 :12-13).

The site of the infirmary chapel is now buried under Merantun Way and it is understood that attempts were made to preserve the historic fabric by raising the level of the road during construction.

107 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- may survive as buried footings under road;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation and display.

108 Infirmary kitchen This was partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations in 1986-1990. It was found to date to the major refurbishment of the Priory in the thirteenth century, but altered in the fourteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).



Plans of the principal buildings of the Priory (top left) and showing the approximate extent of excavated areas (right – after Saxby 2005 : 5 and Bruce and Mason 1993 :12-13).

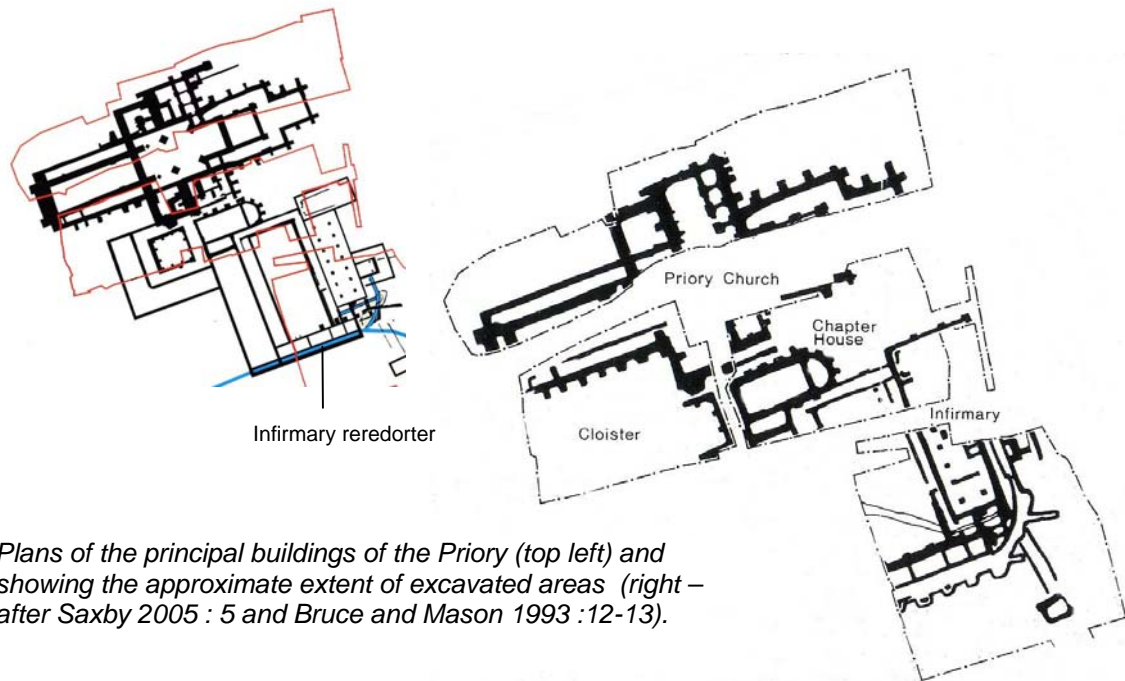
The site of the infirmary kitchen is now buried under the car park and it is understood that attempts were made to preserve the historic fabric by raising the ground level during its construction.

108 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century and altered in the fourteenth century. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- may survive as buried footings under car park;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation and display.

109 Infirmary reredorter

This was partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations in 1986-1990. It was found to date to the major refurbishment of the Priory in the thirteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).



Plans of the principal buildings of the Priory (top left) and showing the approximate extent of excavated areas (right – after Saxby 2005 : 5 and Bruce and Mason 1993 :12-13).

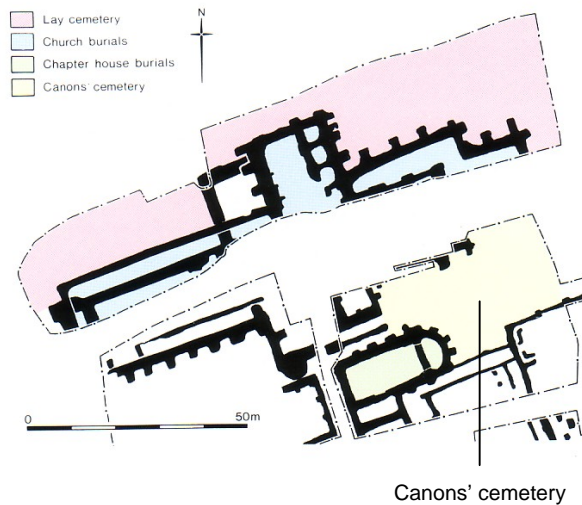
The site of the infirmary reredorter is now buried under the car park and it is understood that attempts were made to preserve the historic fabric by raising the ground level during its construction.

109 Assessment of Significance

- built in the thirteenth century. Demolished at and after the Dissolution in 1538;
- may survive as buried footings under car park;
- a very significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation and display.

110 Canons' cemetery This was located to the east of the chapter house and south of the Priory church. It was partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations of the site in 1986-1990 (see above Section 1.1.3).

Plan showing the location of the four principal burial areas of the Priory (after Bruce and Mason 1993 :20).



Canons' cemetery

The site of the cemetery now lies for the most part under the service area on the south side of the Sainsbury's Savacentre and there is probably scope for further investigations here if the opportunity were to arise.

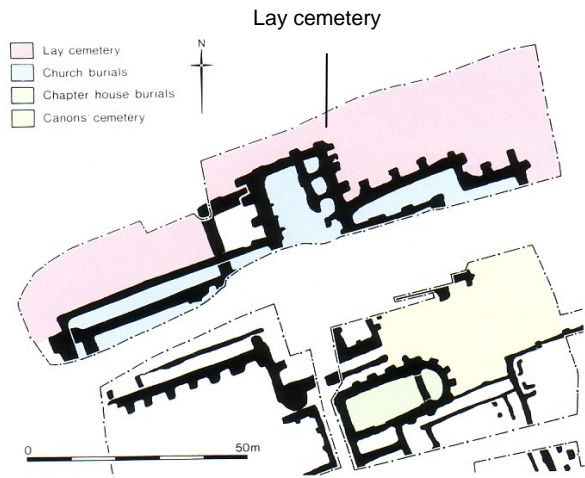
110 Assessment of Significance

- probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- further burials may exist beneath service area;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation.

111 Lay cemetery

This was located to the north of the Priory church. It was partially excavated by the Museum of London during their investigations of the site in 1986-1990, prior to the erection of the Savacentre (see above Section 1.1.3).

Plan showing the location of the four principal burial areas of the Priory (after Bruce and Mason 1993 :20).



The site of the cemetery is now occupied by the Sainsbury's Savacentre, the petrol filling station, and the service area, but it is understood that some attempt was made to preserve archaeological levels when these were constructed and there may be scope for further investigation at some future date.

111 Assessment of Significance

- probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- further burials may exist beneath service area;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- potential for further excavation.

112 Watermill

This was located to the south of the principal monastic buildings, but still within the monastic precinct.

Plan showing the location of the principal monastic buildings and the watermill (after Saxby 2005 ;



The site was excavated by the Museum of London Archaeology service in 2002-2003 and the building was found to be a substantial stone-built and water-powered mill of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, served by its own purpose-built leat. It had been rebuilt in brick in the sixteenth century and continued in use until demolished in the early eighteenth century (see above Section 1.1.3).

The site of the watermill has recently been redeveloped as residential apartment blocks and associated car parking areas. The mill is preserved beneath the development the foundations of which were designed to span the medieval and later walls.



Residential block, on site of the watermill.

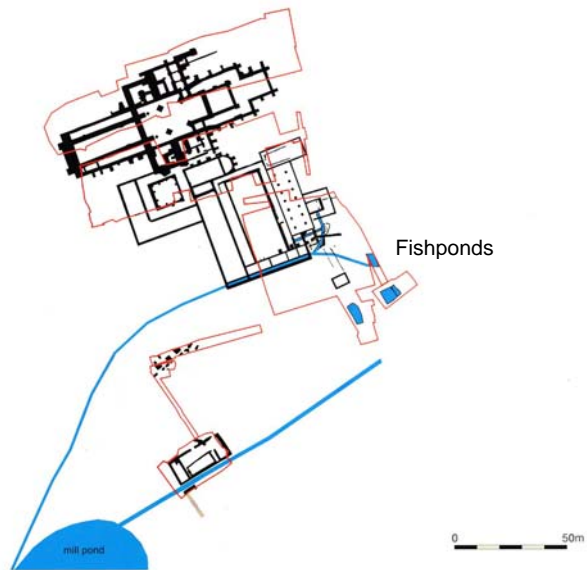
112 Assessment of Significance

- first built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Rebuilt in sixteenth century and in use until early eighteenth century;
- not contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- no specific management issues identified.

113 Fishponds

These were located to the south-east of the infirmary and were partially excavated by the Museum of London in 2002-2003.

Plan showing the location of the principal monastic buildings and the fishponds (after Saxby 2005 ;



The area has since been developed by the construction of a Premier Travel Inn and a Virgin Active fitness centre.

The Virgin Active fitness centre, on site of the fishponds.



113 Assessment of Significance

- probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- believed to have been destroyed;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- contained within the Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- no specific management issues identified.

114 Gatehouse

It is not known precisely where the site of the main gatehouse to the priory was located, but it is likely to have been a substantial structure.

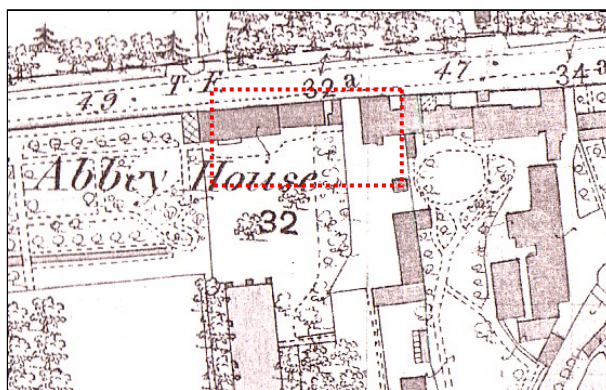
Heales (1898) suggested a site near the junction of what is now Merton High Street and Abbey Road (see above).

However, there are references to a building further east, probably located immediately adjacent to those which formed part of the second calico-printing works, established in 1752, and adapted by William Morris for his art studies and printing works in 1881, which was evidently known as 'Abbey Gate House' or simply as 'The Gatehouse'.

This appears to have been a large house built by Sir William Hubbold in 1706-1709 and at one time occupied by James Halfhide, who managed the calico-printing works from about 1775 until 1805 (Saxby 1995 : 4). It would appear that it was considered at that time that the house was located on or near to the site of the original gatehouse.

There is a large house shown as 'Abbey House' on the first and second editions of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plans of 1871 and 1893-94, and another un-named but substantial property to the east of it, and either of these could have been the property previously referred to as

Enlarged extract from the Ordnance Survey plan of 1871, showing Abbey House and the possible site of the priory gatehouse.



These two properties were both demolished and the land behind them developed mostly for housing in about 1908.

By 1911 Mill Road had been created between the two properties and there was a 'Skating Rink' on the site of Abbey House and another large structure of unknown function on the site of the other one. These were both shown again on the Ordnance Survey plan of 1933-34. On the 1952-54 edition they were referred to as a 'Palais de Danse' and 'Plaza Works (Eng)' and on the 1976 edition they were referred to as 'Wimbledon Palais de Danse' and 'Works'.

The site of Abbey House, the skating rink and dance hall is now occupied by a new terrace of properties and the site of the other large building is occupied by a new block of apartments known as 'Trellis House'

New properties on Merton High Street on the site of Abbey House, looking west.



Trellis House, from the north-west.

It is not known whether any significant discoveries were made during these recent redevelopments on the two sites.

114 Assessment of Significance

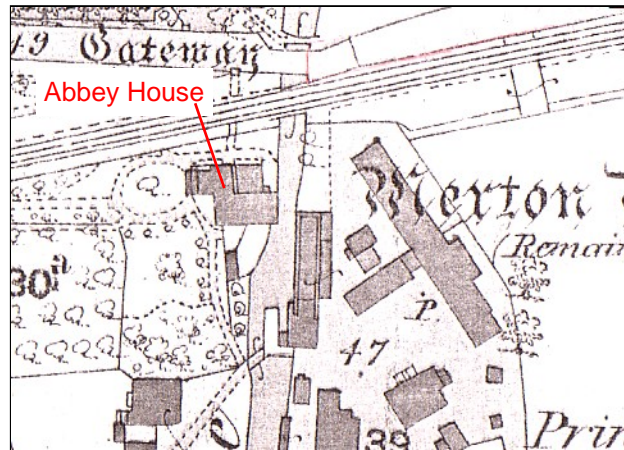
- probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- possible site only;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- no statutory protection;
- no specific management issues identified.

115 Guest house

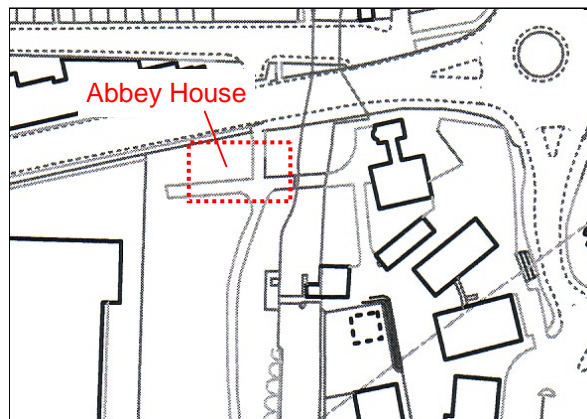
The remains of the Priory guest house may be represented by the twelfth century arch that was revealed during the demolition of Abbey House in 1914, which was re-erected near the parish church of St Mary the Virgin in 1935 and is still there (see above Section 1.1.4).

The Abbey House referred to here appears to be the large building which existed immediately to the west of the diverted course of the River Wandle and Merton Abbey Mills, and is shown, but not named, on the first three editions of the Ordnance survey twenty five-inch plans.

Enlarged extract from the Ordnance Survey plan of 1871, identifying the building which appears to have been known as Abbey house.



A large building is shown in this vicinity on the Ordnance Survey plans of 1933-34, 1952-54, and 1970, but this has since been demolished and the site of the building, which may have incorporated either *in situ* or re-located remains of the Priory guest house, is not occupied.



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the approximate site of Abbey House.

115 Assessment of Significance

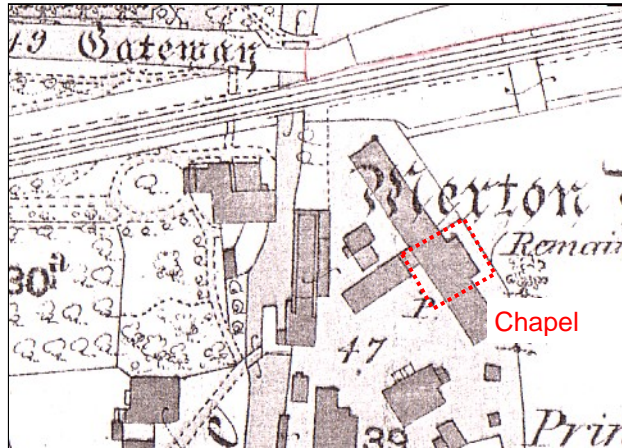
- probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- possible site only – may be remains below ground level;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- potential for investigation.

116 Chapel

The remains of a chapel provided for lay visitors to the priory may have been represented by the structure depicted in the engraving produced in about 1800AD, which includes the gable end of an ecclesiastical building with an ornate fourteenth century window (see above Section 1.1.3).

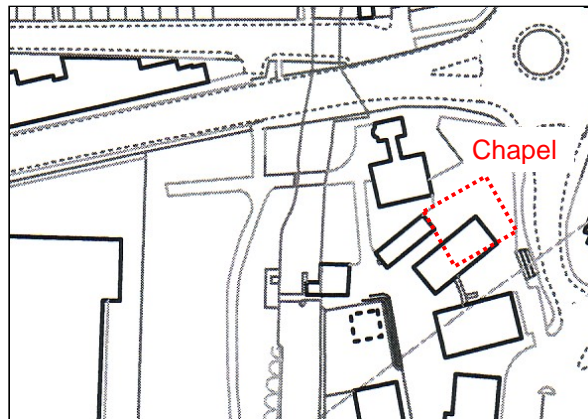
This building is identified by Heales (1898) as being the structure shown on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan of 1871, to which the caption 'Merton Abbey (Remains of)' is applied.

Enlarged extract from the Ordnance Survey plan of 1871, identifying the building which appears to have contained the remains of the chapel.



If this structure has been correctly identified from the engraving, then it would have been located immediately to the north-east of the colour house of the first calico-printing works, which is also shown on the Ordnance Survey plan; was built in 1742; and survives to the present day (see below Section 1.2.2 – 201).

The structure appears to have been demolished by 1893-94, and its site can be identified on the ground today as being to the north-east of the Colour House and partially beneath the Coles Shop, erected in about 1880.



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the approximate site of the chapel.

116 Assessment of Significance

- Included fourteenth century window but probably in use throughout the life of the Priory;
- site only – may be remains below ground level;
- a significant element of the Priory;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- potential for investigation.

The following objects are on display in the chapter house visitor centre.

117 Stone coffin 1



118 Stone coffin 2



119 Stone coffin 3



120 Stone coffin lid



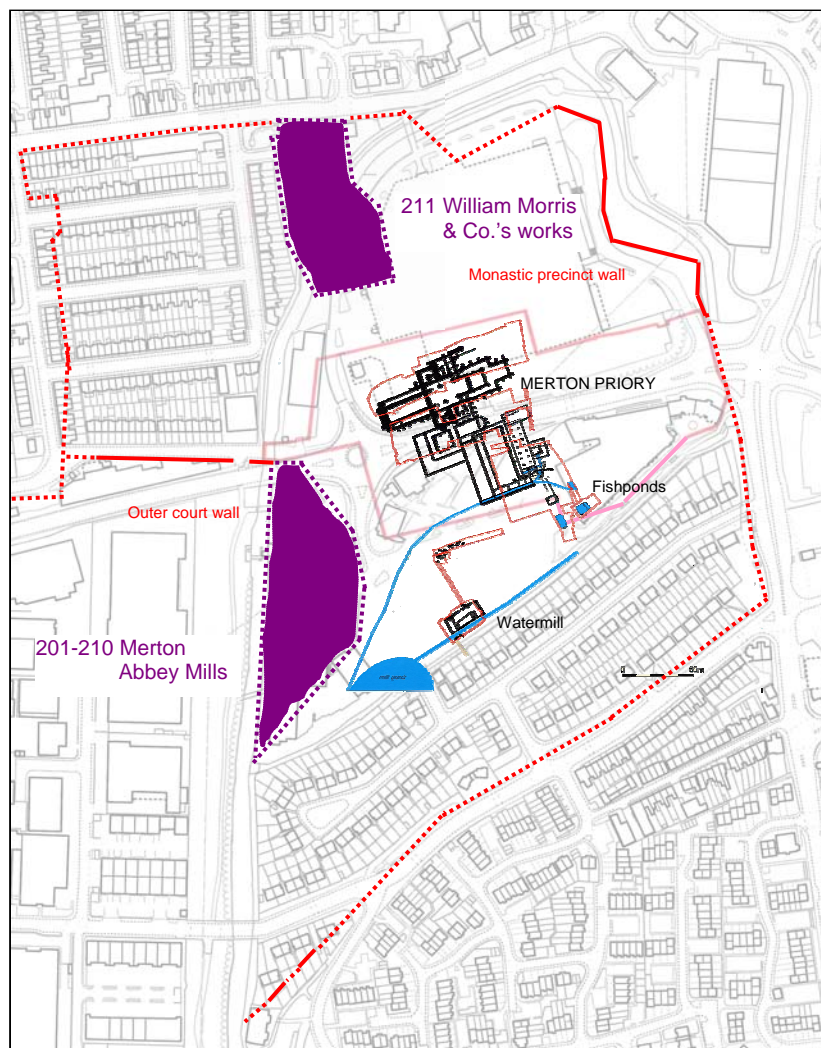
121 Window masonry



1.2.2 Merton Abbey Mills

In this section of the Conservation Plan we include descriptions of the surviving buildings and structures associated with Merton Abbey Mills which are still visible and a brief description of the site of William Morris & Co.'s works.

For ease of identification in the text and on the plans, they are numbered in sequence (as below).



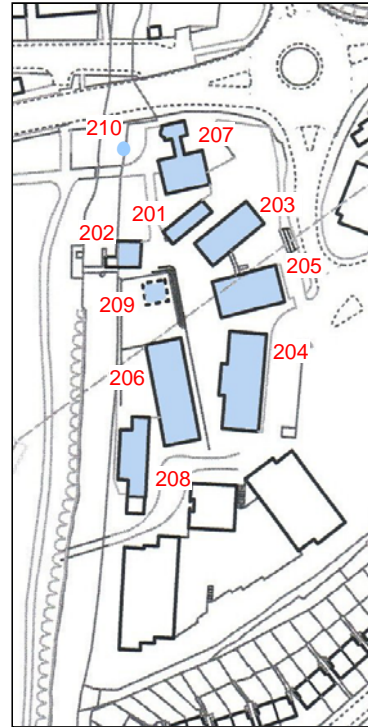
Reduced extract from the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan, showing the location of the principal buildings of Merton Priory; the extent of the Scheduled Area (outlined pink); the remains and approximate alignment of the monastic and lay precinct walls (shown red); and the locations of Merton Abbey Mills and William Morris & Co.'s works (shown purple).

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London Borough of Merton 100019259 2005.

Index to the numbering used in the text and on the plans :

Merton Abbey Mills

- 201 The Colour House
- 202 The Wheelhouse
- 203 The Coles Shop
- 204 The Long Shop
- 205 The Apprentice Shop
- 206 The 1929 Shop
- 207 The Showhouse
- 208 The Block Shop
- 209 Bandstand
- 210 Millstone



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, identifying the buildings and structures referred to in the gazetteer.

William Morris & Co.'s works

- 211 Site of principal buildings

**201 Colour House :
1742**

This is dated '1742' and is believed to have been built to serve the first calico-printing works, established on the site in 1724. It has continued in use for a variety of purposes to the present day (see above Section 1.1.5).

It is a Grade II Listed building and the Listing description, prepared in February 1976 shortly after Liberty's ceased production, reads as follows :

Colour House at Messrs Liberty's Print Works

Colour house of textile printing works. Dated 1742 with late C19 alterations. Brick and flint with random rubblestone blocks (reused stone); brick quoins. Pantiled roof pitched to eaves. Two storeys. Segmental headed windows. Brick surrounds.



The Colour House, from the south (left) and the east (above).

The building is as described in the Listing description and now has a timber extension at the east end.

The original part of the building is believed to contain some re-used fabric from the monastic buildings and it is claimed to be the oldest industrial building in London.

It was re-opened as a miniature theatre in 1995 and is now in use for this purpose.

201 Assessment of Significance

- built in 1742;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a very significant industrial building, erected to serve the first calico-printing works on the site, and claimed to be the oldest industrial building in London;
- Grade II Listed building and in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

**202 Wheelhouse :
circa 1860**

A late seventeenth century wheelhouse stood close by to the site of the present Wheelhouse, which is believed to date to the early eighteenth century and is thought to have been built to serve the first calico-printing works, established on the site in 1724. It has continued in use for a variety of purposes to the present day (see above Section 1.1.5).

It is a Grade II Listed building and the Listing description, prepared in February 1976 shortly after Liberty's ceased production, reads as follows :

Messrs Liberty's Printworks

Wheel house to textile printing mill. C18. Brown brick. Pantile roof, low pitched to eaves. Gable end to road; CI9 undershot wheel exposed to right with four sets of seven cast iron arms. Messrs Liberty's Print works stands on part of site of Merton Priory. The site has been used for printing textiles for the past two centuries. The wheel house was used for washing materials in the Wandle during part of the processing.



*The wheelhouse, from the north (left)
and from the south-east (above).*

The building is as described in the Listing description. The unique 7-spoke waterwheel and wheelhouse is believed to date from circa 1860 and is claimed to be London's only working example.

Liberty's used the wheel to drive spools to rinse the silk after gumming and printing.

The building now accommodates a craft workshop and 'Wandle Heritage'.

202 Assessment of Significance

- built in the early eighteenth century and accommodating a waterwheel of circa 1860;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a very significant industrial building, erected to provide power for the first calico-printing works on the site;
- Grade II Listed building and in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

**203 The Coles Shop :
*circa 1890***

This is believed to date to the late nineteenth century and first appears on the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plans between 1871 and 1898.

It was presumably built for Littler's works, which were taken over by Liberty's in 1904 (see above Section 1.1.5).

The Coles Shop, from the south-east.



The building is of two-storeys, of yellow brick under a gabled roof of slates, and of eight bays.

It was restored as shops and studio offices in 1989 and is still in use for this purpose.

203 Assessment of Significance

- built in *circa* 1880;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

204 The Long Shop : 1906 This was built in 1906 for Liberty's silk printing works, which had taken over Littler's works two years earlier (see above Section 1.1.5).

It was built as a workshop and contained, amongst other structures, a series of furnaces on which irons were heated to press the silk flat before printing.



The Long Shop, from the north-west (above) and a detail of the entrance on the west side (right).



It is a single-storey structure of brick, some rendered, under a pitched roof of pantiles, containing roof lights close to the ridge and supported on steel trusses.

It is used as part of the Merton Abbey Mills market and appears to be in sound condition.

204 Assessment of Significance

- built in 1906 for Liberty's silk printing works;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

**205 The Apprentice
Shop : 1926**

This was built in 1926 for Liberty's silk printing works, which had taken over Littler's in 1904 (see above Section 1.1.5).

It was erected as a print shop for training apprentices.

The Apprentice, from the south-east (right) and from the south-west (below).



It is two-storeys high and of yellow brick, under a hipped roof of slates. It is rectangular in plan of five bays by four.

It was restored in 1989 and is currently used as craft shops and studio offices.

205 Assessment of Significance

- built in 1926 for Liberty's silk printing works;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

**206 The 1929 Shop :
1929**

This was the last of the print shops built for Liberty's in 1929 (see above Section 1.1.5).

It is believed to be an early example of steel-frame construction and was designed to have a third storey which was never added.



The 1929 Shop, from the south-east (above) and from the north (right).



It is two storeys high and of yellow brick under a flat roof.

It was restored in 1989 and is currently used as craft shops, studio offices and a restaurant. It appears to be in good condition.

206 Assessment of Significance

- built in 1929 for Liberty's silk printing works;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

207 The Showhouse : 1912 This was built in 1912 as a showroom for Liberty's products (see above Section 1.1.5).

The Showhouse, from the south-east.



It is in the form of a chalet-style bungalow, with an extension to the north. It is of red brick under a tiled roof.

It appears to be in good condition.

207 Assessment of Significance

- built in 1912 for Liberty's silk printing works;
- complete and appears to be in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

208 The Block Shop : This was built for Liberty's in *circa* 1930 (see above Section 1.1.5).
***circa* 1930**

It is of two storeys of yellow brick under a tiled roof, and has been altered for its present use, which is as the William Morris public house.

The Block Shop, now the William Morris public house, from the south-east.



It appears to be in good condition, though much altered.

208 Assessment of Significance

- built in *circa* 1930 for Liberty's silk printing works;
- much altered but in good condition;
- a significant industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

209 Bandstand :
circa 1988/90

A cast-iron or steel structure, apparently dating from 1988/90, under a pyramidal roof of pantiles surmounted by a clock turret. Known as the bandstand.

The bandstand, from the south-east.



It appears to be in good condition.

209 Assessment of Significance

- ;
- in good condition;
- ;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

210 Millstone : early nineteenth century

An early nineteenth century granite millstone, currently lying west of the Showhouse (see 207), was found in 2004 during excavations and is believed to have come from Bennett's Mill (see above Section 1.1.5).

The millstone from Bennett's Mill.

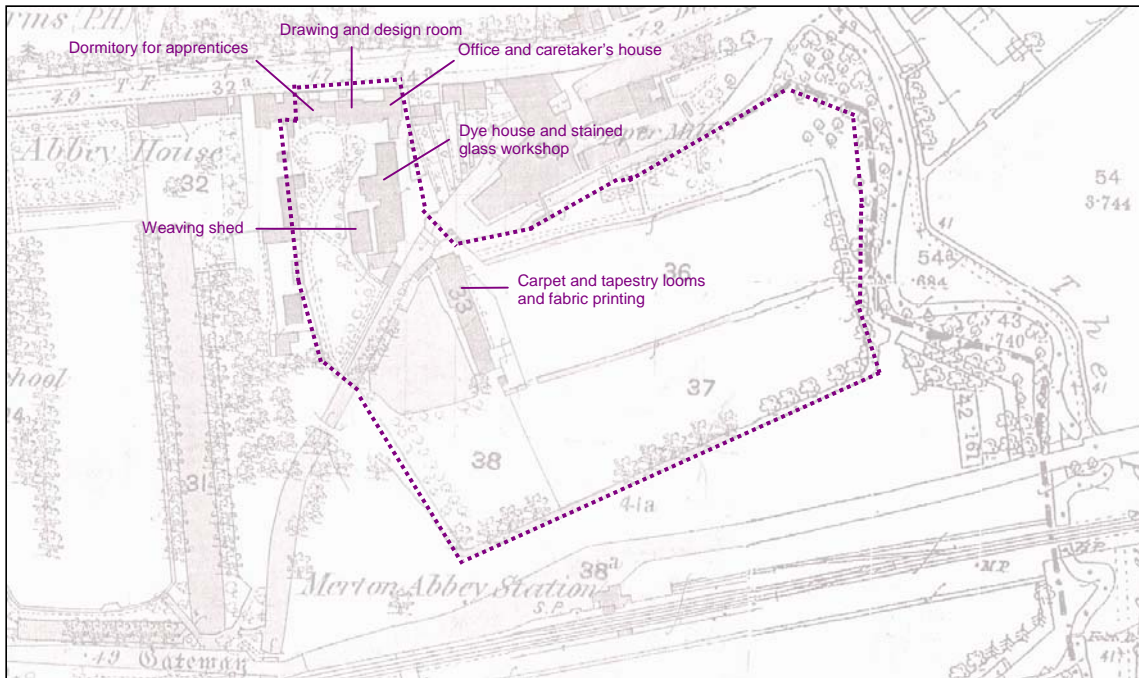


209 Assessment of Significance

- early nineteenth century granite millstone ;
- not *in situ* but in good condition;
- a significant element from an industrial building;
- in Designated Conservation Area;
- no particular management issues identified.

211 William Morris's works : 1881-1940

This is the site of the group of existing buildings that were acquired by William Morris in 1880 and used by his company, Morris & Co, until he died in 1896, and then by Morris & Co Decorators Ltd and then Morris & Co Art Workers Ltd until 1940. Most of the buildings had been demolished by the early 1950s (see above Section 1.1.5).



Reduced extract from the Ordnance Survey plan of 1871, showing the extent and layout of Morris & Co Merton Abbey Works and the uses that were put to the pre-existing buildings.

The site was subsequently occupied by the New Merton Board Mills in the 1970s and has since been redeveloped again.

The site of the main group of buildings is now occupied by a residential block, known as Trellis House, and a small part of the Sainsbury's Savacentre store.



Extract from the latest Ordnance Survey plan, showing the approximate location of the main group of buildings of the William Morris works.

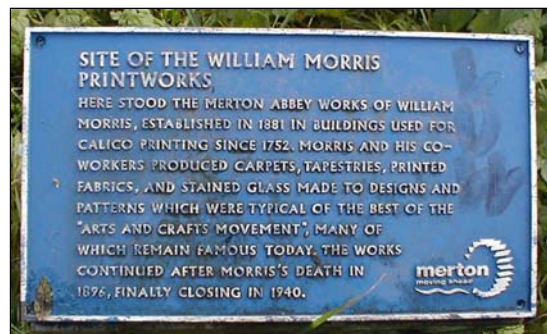


Trellis House, from the north-west, which is on the site of William Morris's works.

To the rear, i.e. south-east, of Trellis House there is now a footpath alongside The Wandle and a plaque has been placed at the side of the path to mark the site of the Morris works.



The footpath alongside The Wandle and the plaque marking the site of the William Morris works.



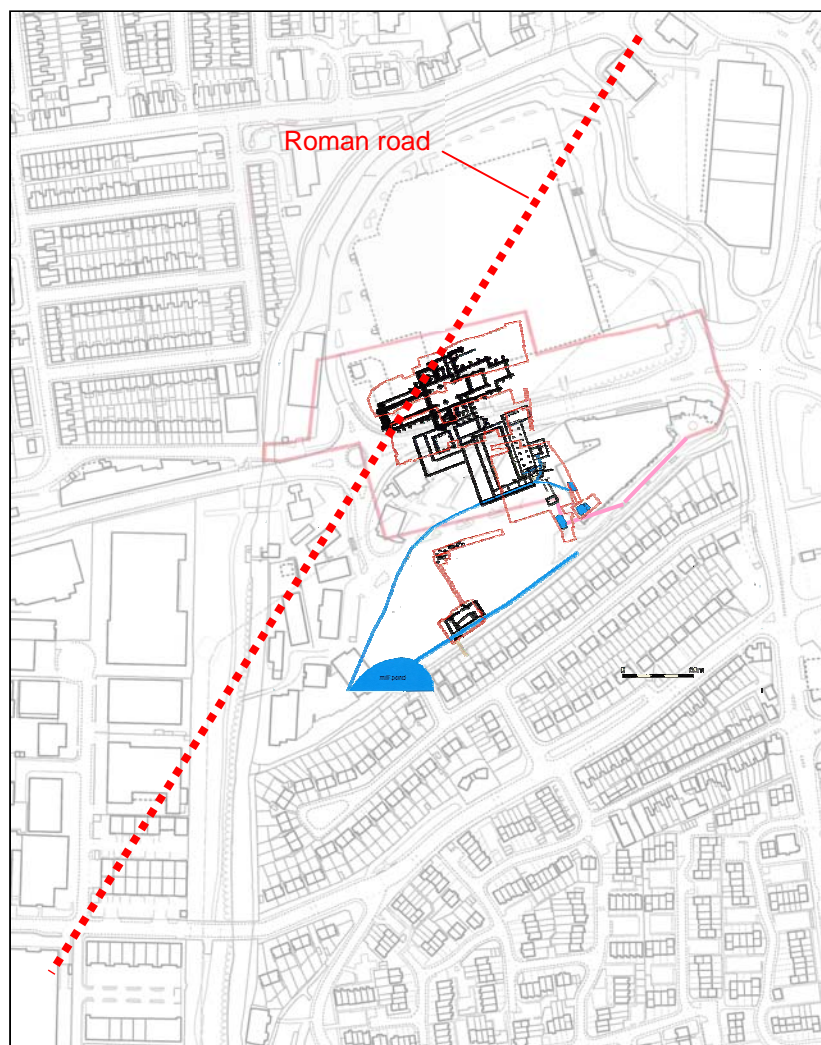
1.2.3 Earlier and later structures on and near the site

In this section of the Conservation Plan we include an entry for the Roman road – *Stane Street* (301) and a description of the visitor centre, which was created over the remains of the chapter house when Merantun Way was built (302).

301 Roman road

The course of the Roman road from London to Chichester, known as *Stane Street*, passes through the site of Merton Priory from north-east to south-west and part of the actual road surface were found in 1997-1998, to the north-east on either side of Priory road close to its junction with Merton High Street, and subsequently on the Priory site itself.

The road crossed the River Wandle close to Merton Bridge, and then passed across the site later occupied by the Priory on a projected line which passes under the north transept and the nave of the priory church and then continues across the Merton Abbey Mills site.



Reduced extract from the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey twenty five-inch plan, showing Merton Priory, the extent of the Scheduled area, and the approximate alignment of the Roman road.

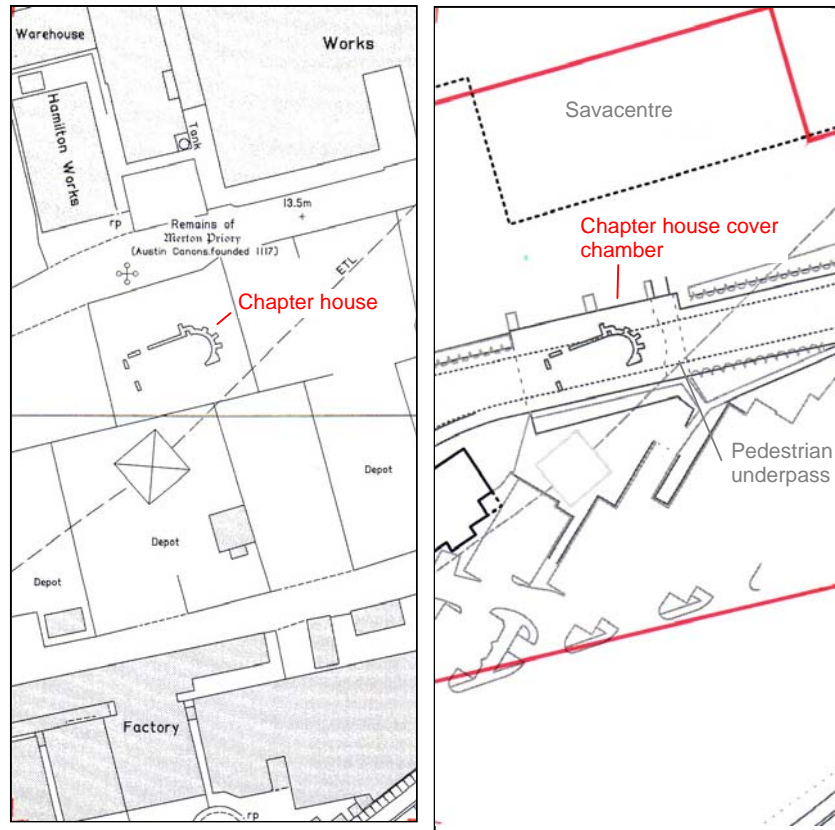
There is a strong likelihood that other fragments of road surface may survive on the Priory site and in the close vicinity of it.

301 Assessment of Significance

- built in early years of the period of Roman military occupation, commencing in 43AD and probably in use through the period of Romano-British occupation;
- site only – may be remains below ground level;
- a significant element of the early use of the site;
- contained in part within Scheduled Ancient Monument and Designated Conservation Area;
- potential for investigation.

302 Chapter House cover chamber

The structure has been created alongside a pedestrian underpass, beneath Merantun Way, which connects the Sainsbury's Savacentre with Merton Abbey Mills and the adjoining properties.



Extracts from the Ordnance Survey plans of 1988 and the most recent edition, showing the location of the remains of the chapter house prior to the construction of Merantun Way (above left) and of remains of the chapter house cover chamber after the construction of Merantun Way (above right). The red line on the latter indicates the north and south limits of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Not to scale.



The north side of the Chapter House cover chamber, with the pedestrian underpass to the left (above); the visitor centre looking north through the underpass (below); and the south side of the cover chamber, with the underpass to the right (bottom).



302 Assessment of significance

-
-
-
- in Designated Conservation Area
-

1.2.4. Urban landscape and ecology

The site of Merton Priory and the Chapter House remains now lie “captured” within the area now referred to as Colliers Wood town centre, which has been subject to wholesale redevelopment in the course of the past decade. The redevelopment process at the time of writing (January 2006) was still underway, with the construction of three blocks of flats immediately to the south of Merton Abbey Mills.

Notwithstanding the presence of the Designated Abbey Mills Conservation Area on the banks of the River Wandle and the presence of the Chapter House, the form of redevelopment has been uncompromising in terms of its scale, function and design. The site of the Chapter House is now enveloped by the blank façade of Sainsbury’s Savacentre to the north, a Travel Inn hotel to the east, new blocks of flats to the south and fast food chain outlets to the west.

The chapter house cover chamber and the Savacentre, from the south.



The Travel Inn, from the west.

To compound matters, the site of the Chapter House is now located beneath the elevated A24 Merantun Way, which now bypasses Merton High Street, whilst the site is also beneath a high voltage overhead power line, supported by an adjoining pylon.

The entrance to the Chapter House cover chamber, looking north-east.



Merantun Way and the base of the pylon, looking north.

Incidental planting associated with the new infrastructure is poor and has had insufficient time to establish and soften the scale of the built form.

The approach to the Chapter House cover chamber, looking north-east.



Whilst there remain few visual or ecological linkages to the Abbey Mills complex, the proximity of the Wandle Valley is potentially of significance in terms of its strategic value as a wildlife corridor, cycle and footpath route.

The elevated Merantun Way now provides part of the borough's cycle network, but is also identified in the UDP as an urban corridor in need of improvements to streetscape, principally in order to soften the blank façade of the Sainsbury's superstore.

The new urban form is essentially that of an out of town retail park in terms of its scale and 'design' - dominated by roads and parking with anonymous corporate chain architecture and weak landscape treatment. The urban landscape context, its visual detractors and poor views, presents a considerable challenge to the future conservation, management and presentation of the Priory.