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Sawley Abbey



At Sawley Abbey only part of the church and fragments of the cloister now survive above ground. The abbey, belonging to the Cistercian order, was founded in 1147 and operated until 1536, when the monks became embroiled in the Pilgrimage of Grace. This was an attempt by lay landowners, primarily in the north of England, to reinstate monks to their abbeys in defiance of Henry VIII's suppression order. Early in 1537 the monks finally left Sawley Abbey. It was stripped of all its valuable materials and left to crumble, quickly falling into a state of disrepair. In the 19th century, the site was cleared and a wall was built to encircle the ruins and the site became an early visitor attraction. More recently, in the 1970s and 80s, extensive excavations were carried out around the southern cloister.



Although the church and the cloisters formed the core of the medieval abbey, this was only a small part of the monastic complex. The Landscape Investigation team looked at the landscape surrounding the ruins, beyond the 19th century wall. From our investigations, it was possible to define the outer monastic precinct as well as locating further monastic buildings and the abbey fishponds within it. A surviving section of the precinctwall, now



used as a field boundary, was also discovered. In addition, the earthwork remains of at least two post-monastic farmsteads were identified within the precinct area. As is often the case, a large post-monastic house was built close to the abbey's claustral range; this had been demolished by 1884 but fragments of it still survive. Maps and field evidence suggest that the first farmstead was removed in the early 19th century when a park was created, while the second farmstead was screened from view by a tree-lined boundary.

The report on the landscape investigation at Sawley Abbey is now available and can be [ordered online](#). For further information, contact Abby Hunt at English Heritage's York Office on 01904 601901 or e-mail: abby.hunt@english-heritage.org.uk

Sawley Abbey is in the care of English Heritage and is managed by the Heritage Trust for the North West. The abbey ruins are open daily and admission is free.

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General View (c) English Heritage

The remains of a Cistercian abbey founded in 1148, set on the banks of the Ribble against a backdrop of dramatic hills. After its dissolution in 1536, the monks were briefly returned to the abbey during the Pilgrimage of Grace. They remained in possession until the insurrection's collapse and the execution of their abbot.

Opening Times:

April 2009 to March 2010 Opening Times	Opening Days
1 Apr-30 Sept	10am-6pm Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, & Sun.
1 Oct-31 Mar	10am-4pm Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, & Sun.
24-26 Dec and 1 Jan	Closed

How much does it cost?

Adult:	Free
Children:	Free
Concession:	Free
English Heritage Members:	Free - Join English Heritage

How do I get there?

Address:	Lancashire
Road Access:	Located at Sawley; 3 1/2 miles N of Clitheroe, off A59
Train Access:	Clitheroe 4 miles
Accommodation	Find a hotel near this property
Map Location:	Map of location
Cycle Routes:	Find the site on the National Cycle Network

What facilities are available?

Facilities Available:



Further Info

Managed By: Heritage Trust for the North West.