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A short guide to Valle Crucis Abbey and Eliseg's Pillar

by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust

Valle Crucis Abbey and the Pillar of Eliseg lie close together just to the north-west of Llangollen in, what was in the medieval period, a fairly inaccessible valley set amongst steep hills.

Valle Crucis Abbey (OS national grid reference SJ20454415) was founded in 1201 by Madoc ap Gruffydd Maelor, prince of Powys for the Cistercian order of monks whose "mother" house was at Strata Marcella. During the building works in 13th century the building was damaged by fire. There are also signs of repair to the church during the 15th century, perhaps following damage during the Glyndwr uprising. Like other religious houses the abbey was dissolved at the Dissolution in 1538.



The church is cruciform in plan, about 56 metres long, with a chapel in each transept. The nave had aisles on both sides. The conventual buildings formed the west, east and south ranges forming a protected enclosure. The lay frater (dining hall for lay members of the abbey) occupied the west range with a kitchen in the south-west corner between it and the frater (dining hall for the monks) which formed the south side of the complex.

In the east range were the sacristy, book cupboard, entrance to the chapter house and stairs to the dormitory. The Abbot's lodgings lay between the end of the east range and the church. Latrines were provided at the southern end of the east range.

The abbey is a guardianship ancient monument in the care of Cadw and a more detailed leaflet is available on site.

The Pillar of Eliseg (SJ203445) is an upright stone pillar-cross with a Latin inscription commemorating Concenn and Eliseg, members of the ruling family of the kingdom of Powys during the 7th to 9th centuries. The pillar was erected in the first half of the 9th century AD by Concenn the great-grandson of Eliseg "who annexed the inheritance of Powys through the nine years(?) from the power of the English which he made into a sword-land by fire. Whosoever shall read this hand-inscribed stone, let him give a blessing on the soul of Eliseg". The pillar stands upon an artificial mound which, when excavated in 1779, contained a stone box or coffin containing the remains of an inhumation burial.

Access and parking

Both sites are situated just off the A542 just north-west of Llangollen. Parking is available at the entrance to Valle Crucis Abbey. From here it is possible to walk up the road to the Pillar of Eliseg which can be approached via a footpath opposite the public house. It is not possible to

park on the road near the pillar.

There is a charge for visiting Valle Crucis Abbey which is in the care of Cadw. Opening hours should be checked before visiting. Contact telephone:- 01978 860326.

School parties may obtain free entry to Cadw sites by pre-booking: telephone 01222 500200 for details.

At the abbey there is a picnic area adjacent to the restored abbey fish pond.

Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 117 Chester, Wrexham and surrounding area.

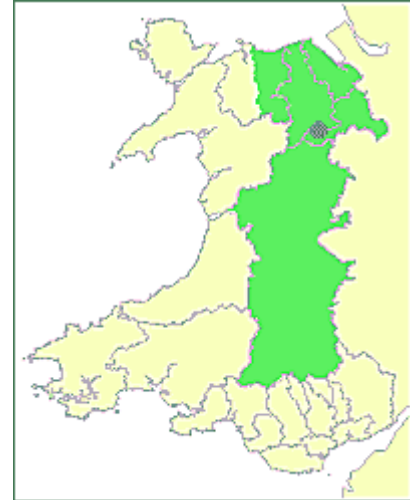
The above information comes from the Sites and Monuments Record of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. For further information about the historic environment of this area, contact:-

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