



Kirkhead Summer House

PHASE I CONSERVATION STATEMENT

Issue 4

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MORECAMBE BAY
PARTNERSHIP



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Location of Kirkhead Summer House indicated in red. (Copyright Ordnance Survey. Mapping provided by Cumbria County Council for use by Morecambe Bay Partnership under licence 100019596)



Location Plan (Base plan © 2015 Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky)

I INTRODUCTION

I.1 REASON FOR THE CONSERVATION STATEMENTS

Morecambe Bay Partnership has commissioned Purcell to undertake built heritage conservation statements for five areas/sites around Morecambe Bay. This programme of work will support the delivery of the Headlands to Headspace (H2H) Landscape Partnership Scheme Project 1 (Built Heritage and Lookouts), allowing for conservation and consolidation proposals of key built heritage sites to be taken forward.

I.2 HOW THE CONSERVATION STATEMENTS FIT INTO THE H2H SCHEME

The Conservation Statements will combine work already undertaken for H2H (principally the feasibility studies produced for the sites by Greenlane Archaeology) to detail the history of each site, significance and conservation issues.

The Conservation Statements will follow a two phase approach. The initial reports at the end of phase 1 will provide an assessment to determine which sites are significant enough and viable to be taken forward to phase 2. Phase 2 will involve the production of full Conservation Statements for those sites being taken forward, including accurate costed proposals for the potential conservation, consolidation and interpretation of the site.

By prioritising the sites and focusing on those that can be taken forward, the process will help to achieve the four key outcomes of H2H, which are to:

- Conserve and protect Morecambe Bay's rich natural and cultural heritage
- Involve the Bay's communities in all aspects of this scheme
- Provide significantly improved access for all audiences to the key natural and cultural heritage sites
- Provide training

I.3 AUTHORSHIP

This Conservation Statement has been prepared by Purcell, a firm of conservation architects and heritage consultants. Specifically it has been prepared by Nicholas Meny, MA (Hons), Heritage Consultant and Matthew Dyer, BA (Hons), BArch, ADPPA, RIBA, Senior Architect.

I.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This report will cover Kirkhead Summer House and its setting overlooking Grange-Over-Sands in Cumbria. As a phase 1 report, it will provide a summary understanding of the building, will discuss the setting in order to put the structure into its physical and historical context and will include an initial assessment of suitability with a commentary on condition and potential future uses. This will inform the conclusion as to whether it is appropriate to take the site forward to the full conservation statement stage.

I.5 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The initial stages of the work involved gathering readily available information to present a background to the sites. This included site surveys where the structures were inspected and photographic evidence taken of each site. This physical evidence was supplemented by documentary evidence gathered at the Cumbria Archive Service's local archive centres in Kendal and Barrow-in-Furness and the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record (HER). The North West Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment (NWRCA), carried out between August 2007 and September 2009 by Archaeological Research Services on behalf of English Heritage and available online, was also consulted. Additional primary and secondary sources were provided by Louise Martin, Morecambe Bay Partnership and Louise Parkinson, Archaeological Consultant.

2 SUMMARY UNDERSTANDING

2.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

LISTED BUILDINGS

Kirkhead Summer House is a Grade II listed building. Buildings listed at Grade II are 'of special interest; 92% of all listed structures are in this class'.¹ Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are designated for their architectural or historic interest. Alterations to Kirkhead Summer House require consent from Cumbria County Council planning department. The list description is detailed below.

LOWER ALLITHWAITE KIRKHEAD ROAD SD 37 NE (South side) 5/72 Kirkhead Summer House G.V. II Summerhouse. CI9. Stone rubble. Square tower of 2 stages. Projecting embattled parapet with large stones at angles; lead spout to east. West face has pointed window opening, similar opening to east has remains of shutter and sash, and entrance beneath. South face has later stone steps to pointed entrance to 1st floor. Interior has lost floor, no roof. Probably associated with Abbot Hall, Grange U.D.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

National planning policy relating to heritage is contained within Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which can be accessed via this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60777/2116950.pdf.

Local planning policy is contained within the Cumbria County Council Plan 2014-2017. It can be accessed in full via the council's website at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/ourfuture/councilplan.asp>.

The South Lakeland Area Plan 2014-2017 describes how the council's priorities will be delivered across the area. It can also be accessed via the council's website: <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/community/areaplans.asp>

2.2 MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE AND USE TODAY

Kirkhead Summer House is located on the Holker Estate, in Kent's Bank, to the south-west of Grange-Over-Sands. The land that the building is situated on is tenanted to a local farmer through the Holker Estate. Responsibility for maintaining this listed structure rests with the land owner. The Summer House lies vacant, not in use and not particularly well visited, partly because as the main point of access is across private land, between private houses.

¹ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>

2.3 LOCATION

Kirkhead Summer House is located in the parish of Lower Allithwaite within the South Lakeland District of Cumbria. It is situated to the west of Abbot Hall, which sits at the southern end of the village of Kents Bank. Kents Bank is located approximately two miles south west of the town of Grange-over-Sands.

2.4 SITE DESCRIPTION

Kirkhead Summer House is a small square tower constructed from limestone rubble, with crenelated detailing around the top. It has a later attached external staircase on its south side, which would have provided access through what was originally one of the windows. Originally two storeys high, the Summer House has lost its roof and the floor structure at first floor level has been lost.

The main entrance to the Summer House is in the east elevation and there are remnants of slate, which suggest at one time there may have been a hood mould. There are first floor windows openings with pointed heads on the east, west and south elevations.

Internally there is a fireplace on the ground floor to the north side with a further blocked fireplace above at first floor level. There is an alcove on the west side of the room.



1 Kirkhead Summer House viewed from Kirkhead Road
2-3 General views of the Summer House



2 SUMMARY UNDERSTANDING

2.5 SUMMARY OF SETTING AND SITE CONTEXT

The Summer House has a prominent position at the top of Kirkhead, with good views in all directions. It is surrounded by rough grazing and there are no formal paths, with the main access point being from Kirkhead Road, through a gate, which is situated adjacent to private houses. There is currently no interpretation.

2.6 SUMMARY HISTORY OF THE SITE

Kirkhead Summer House is traditionally thought to be associated with the nearby Abbot Hall. Abbot Hall, which is Grade II Listed and recorded in the Cumbria HER (HER No 2416), was built in the 1840s and extended in c.1870. It has been assumed that the Summer House was built in the mid-19th century as a folly/summer house in the grounds of the Hall. However, a Summer House is clearly marked on Hennet's map of Lancaster, published in 1830 suggesting that Kirkhead Summer House, or at least an earlier incarnation of it, pre-dates Abbot Hall by more than a decade.

A reference to the Summer House can be found in the Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser of 22 December 1855, which describes the building as the "ornamented tower of Kirkhead".² In the *Carlisle Patriot* of Saturday 14 August 1858 and The Westmorland Gazette of 21 August 1858, Abbot Hall is listed for sale at auction and described as "a new and commodious villa residence with the orchards, garden and several parcels of land adjoining".³ The Hall and Estate were up for sale again in 1879 and in the particulars, the estate is described as 'Lane Side Farm', which includes 'Kirkhead Hill and Tower'. The occupier in 1879 is listed as *James Cleminson*, presumably a tenant farmer on what is listed as 'meadow arable, and pasture land'. Kirkhead and the Summer House are described in the

particulars as a "romantic limestone cliff", with its "Tower or Summer House on the summit, about 300 feet above the level of the sea at its base", commanding a "panoramic view of unrivalled extent and beauty".⁴

The external staircase, although in a similar style to the rest of the building, appears to be a later addition.

Just to the north west of the Summer House is evidence of prehistoric settlement in the form of a group of enclosures defined by low turf covered stone banks with past quarrying activity also evident within the site area (HER No 19246). Further prehistoric evidence was found to the south west in the form of Mesolithic flints (HER No 3334). Also recorded in the HER is a site of some local renown, Kirkhead Cave (HER No 2415). The description in the HER explains that the entrance to the cave is only two feet high but the roof rises to 14 feet before descending and forming a series of caves in the limestone. Before excavation it measured 40 feet long x 25 feet wide. First excavations in 1850 revealed animal and human bones, charcoal, a pottery fragment and a coin of Domitian (AD 84), covered only by a few inches of soil, and within a few inches of the surface an iron axe, a hammer and a knife blade. Continued excavation revealed bone implements, antler of red deer, part of a human skull, 2 stone implements. Also rudely baked pottery with holes near the rim, a fluted earthenware bead, 3 bronze rings, one bronze palstave, one bronze pin, a bone amulet, amber beads, bronze spearhead, a fibula, part of an urn, etc. Excavations in 1968-73 located two groups of flints suggesting possible late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age occupation.

² <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> accessed 10 June 2015

³ *ibid*

⁴ Abbot Hall Estate Sale Particulars, 1879 (courtesy of Kendal Archive Centre, ref:WDB 35/1/225)



Detail from Hennet's Map of Lancaster; 1830 with Summer House highlighted

3 INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Kirkhead Summer House is a picturesque Georgian summer house. It was built c.200 years ago, meaning that it has high historical value. The map evidence, which suggests that it was built before 1830, contradicting previous assumptions that it was built as a summer house for Abbot Hall, add an added layer of historic interest. Although not an outstanding example of a summer house, it is a significant part of the history of the local area. The Summer House has aesthetic value, with its crenulations and pointed windows adding to the sense of a romantic folly. It has some communal value, as it is undoubtedly part of the collective memory of the local community. However, its relative inaccessibility and lack of promotion and interpretation mean that it is not currently well used.

Overall, the Summer House is of regional significance. Its design is not exceptional and it is typical of a folly/summer house built for a smaller Georgian estate or designed landscape. This level of significance is reflected in its designation as a Grade II listed building.

4 ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR PHASE 2

4.1 EXISTING CONDITION

The line of the flat roof which originally sat below the crenelated parapet is expressed externally through a decorative slate string course. The sky faces of the walls beneath the parapet have been protected with a lead flashing which in some places is now missing. Remnants of lead rainwater chutes indicate that water was discharged to the east elevation.

The external faces of the limestone rubble walls to the main tower are in good condition with only a few hairline cracks.

The landing of the adjacent staircase has been made good with concrete. There are extant water washed limestone copings to the east elevation of the stair enclosure. There has been settlement to the cill at the head of the staircase, presumably related to the loss of the first floor structure.

Internally, the walls are of exposed limestone rubble with remnants of a lime plaster render scored in imitation of ashlar to the first floor.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The missing lead flashing should be reinstated.
- The water washed limestone coping above the corner merlons should be checked for stability.
- To the south elevation, remnants of an iron flagpole fixing should be treated or removed to prevent cracking to the limestone. The section of concrete to its base should be removed.

- Internal walls require consolidation in numerous isolated areas to stabilise loose rubble associated with exposure and loss of the floor and roof structures. Of particular concern are the jambs and lintols to the ground floor entrance and the stone cill to the first floor entrance.

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR PHASE 2

Although Kirkhead Summer House is in need of stabilisation and consolidation work there are opportunities for improvement and, following discussions with the owners and stakeholders, there may be the potential to open the site to the public.

Introduction of a new first floor in tandem with the consolidation works would allow visitors to enjoy the framed views of Morecambe Bay that the building provides. Some architectural lighting powered by photovoltaics could be incorporated to enhance awareness of its presence locally as an 'eye-catcher'.

Currently, the site is inaccessible to the public and as such there is no interpretative provision for the site. The site lends itself to some low key interpretation, either at the point of entry to the site, or within the structure itself that identifies features visible across Morecambe Bay.

The Summer House is less well used and less significant than the most similar structure being considered in the H2H Scheme, Hampsfell Hospice. The building is not at immediate risk and therefore, it is currently not a priority to take forward to a full Phase 2 Conservation Statement at this time.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record

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