



Launceston Castle Fence, Cornwall. February 2016.  
Archaeological Watching Brief.

Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Report No: 2016R012



Report No

2016R012

Report Name

Launceston Castle Fence, Cornwall.  
February 2016. Archaeological Watching  
Brief.

Report Author

C. M. Thorpe

Event Type

Watching Brief.

Client Organisation

English Heritage

Client Contact

Tristan Faith

Monuments (MonUID)

MCO132

Scheduled  
Monument  
1017575

Fieldwork dates (From)

17/02/16

(To)

17/02/16

(Created By)

CMT

(Create Date)

Feb 2016

Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Launceston Castle. Launceston, St Mary Magdalene

(Town - for urban sites)

(Postcode)

Launceston

PL15 8AY

(Easting) X co-ord

SX 33063

(Northing) Y co-ord

84595



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## **1 Project background**

Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Tristan Faith, Maintenance Manager, English Heritage to undertake archaeological recording during the excavation of a posthole required for the extension of fencing within the tower at the foot of the motte steps at Launceston Castle (SX 33104 84602).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 1), was produced (12/2/2016) by Charles Johns (Archaeology Projects Officer, CAU).

This short report covers the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

## **2 Location and background**

Launceston Castle, located close to the centre of the town (Fig 1), was the principal medieval castle for Cornwall. It was built soon after the Norman Conquest and throughout the medieval period was owned by the Earls, and later Dukes, of Cornwall, forming Cornwall's principal administrative centre between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. In the thirteenth century the castle and Launceston town were enclosed by a defensive wall. Upstanding fabric of the castle is essentially medieval in date with the exception of the nineteenth century lodge by the South Gatehouse. Excavations by Andrew Saunders from 1961 to 1983 revealed the site's long history and the discovery of unique sunken feature buildings which predate the development of the medieval defences (Saunders 2006). Owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, Launceston Castle has been in Guardianship care since the 1950s. It is a Scheduled Monument (SM 374).

The base of the steps giving access to the buildings on top of the motte was in the thirteenth century protected by a forebuilding and tower. The posthole monitored during this project was dug within the floor of the tower (Figs 2 and 3).

## **3 Aims and objectives**

The aims of the project were:

- To ensure that the site works were undertaken in such a way as to allow archaeological recording as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains and record archaeological features and deposits affected by the scheme.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To establish the nature of the activity on the site.
- To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.
- To deposit the archive (including any finds) with the relevant museum and to disseminate the results of discoveries as a concise archive report and, if merited, wider publication.

**Key objectives were:**

- To locate and identify and record medieval activity in the area of the tower thereby providing further information on the archaeology of the castle.

## 4 Working methods

An archaeologist was present during the excavation of the posthole. This was spade-dug by hand. The sides and base of the hole were inspected for any archaeological features or artefacts and a photographic record was made. Notes were made of the soil profile encountered. The spoil was also examined for any artefacts. A plan showing the location of the posthole was made at a scale of 1:50 (Fig 3).

## 5 Results

The posthole was roughly circular in shape with a diameter of 300mm. It reached a maximum depth of 350mm (Figs 4 and 5). No archaeological features were recorded in the course of the work, and no artefacts were recovered.

The profile recorded within the posthole consisted of 10mm of coarse light grey gravel and clay overlying 200mm of grey-brown clay and gravel, and 5mm of grey-brown clay with large shillet fragments. This latter deposit was not bottomed.

Given that no archaeological features were identified it is evident that this posthole had no discernible impact on any buried archaeological remains. The layers cut through are man-made fills, deposited in order to level the floor of the tower at this location. This area was examined during the excavations by Saunders (2006, 68) which identified that any medieval occupation deposits had been cleared away during the 19<sup>th</sup> century repairs to this structure. This indicates that all the layers recorded by the current watching brief were likely to be modern in date.

## 6 References

Saunders, A D, 2006. *Excavations at Launceston Castle, Cornwall*. Soc Medieval Archaeol Monograph 24

## 7 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146551**

The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are listed below:

1. Projects file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration (146551).
2. Field plans stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 849/1).
3. Digital photographs stored in the directory: R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.I-L\Launceston Castle fence post WB 17th Feb 2016. HEXQPR146551
4. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-242950
5. This report text is held in digital form as: G:\TWE\Waste & Env\Strat Waste & Land\Historic Environment\Projects\Sites\Sites L\LAUNCESTON\Launceston Castle fence WB. HEXQPR 146551\Report
6. No artefacts were recovered in the course of the project.

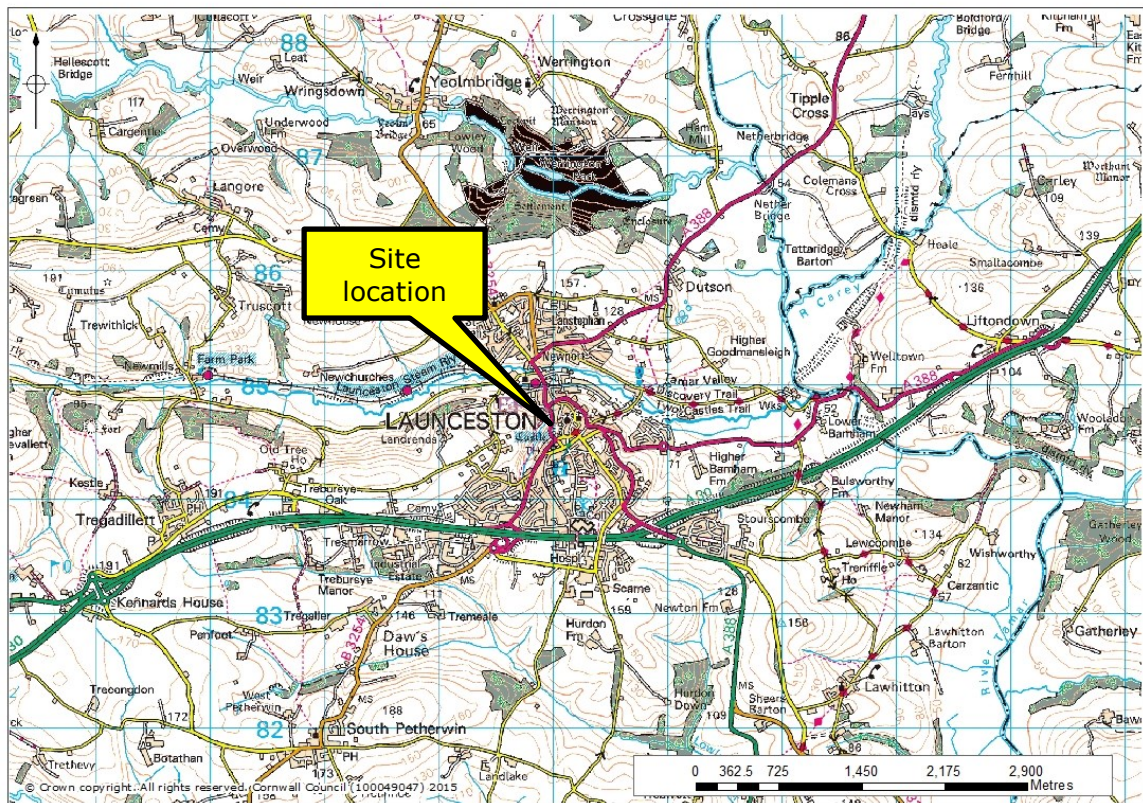


Figure 1. General site location map.

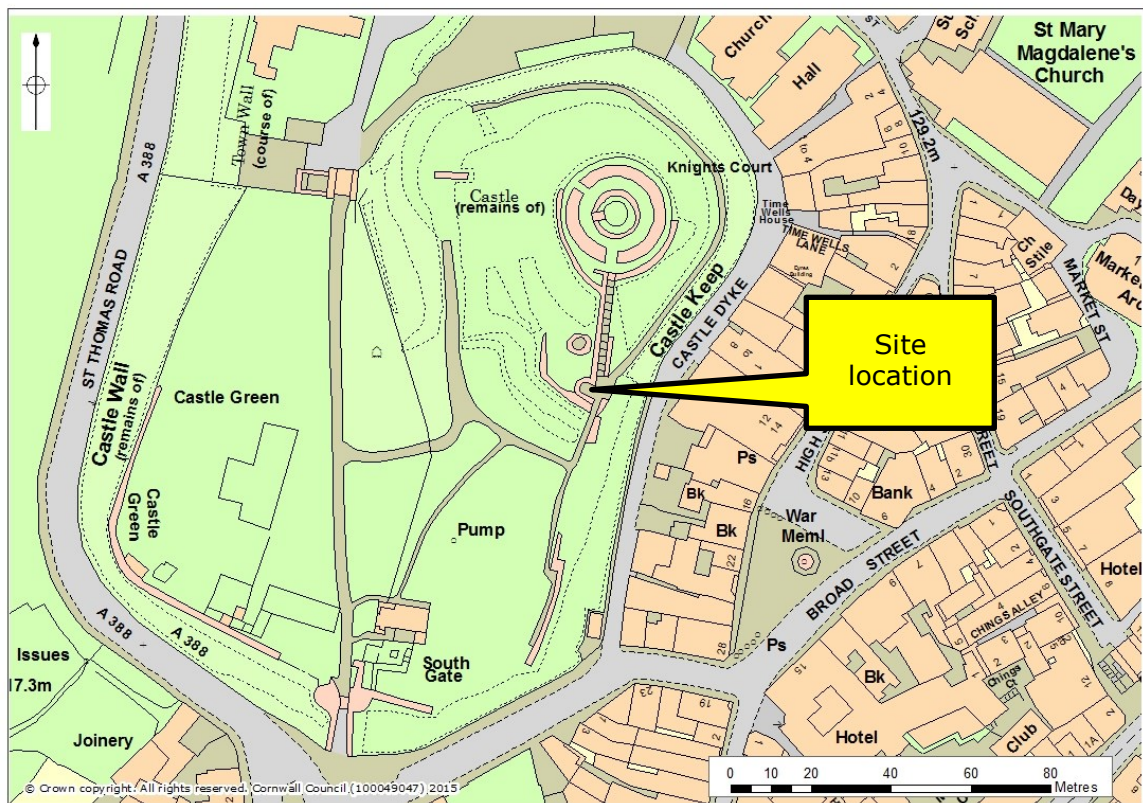


Figure 2. Site location showing position within the castle.



Figure 3. Site plan showing location of new posthole (in red).





Figure 5. Detail of posthole



Figure 4. Location of new fence posthole.

## **8 Appendix 1. Launceston Castle, Cornwall: Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief during fence extension, February 2016**

Client: English Heritage  
Client contact: Tristan Faith  
Client tel: 01179 750735  
Client e-mail: Tristan.Faith@english-heritage.org.uk

### **Project Background**

Tristan Faith, Property Maintenance Manager, English Heritage, has commissioned Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a posthole for a post fixing for a fence extension Launceston Castle.

### **Methodology**

An archaeologist will be present during the excavation of the posthole. Any archaeological features and deposits that may be revealed will be recorded. Excavated spoil will be carefully inspected for artefacts. A written/scaled drawing/photographic record will be made as appropriate. The methodology for recording, archiving and reporting will be similar to that described in full in the Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief during drainage works at St Mawes Castle submitted by CAU (then Historic Environment Projects) to EH in August 2005 (Johns 2005).

The results will be presented as a watching brief report and will be submitted within six months of the completion of the fieldwork, with copies supplied to English Heritage (two), Cornwall Council Historic Environment Record and the Royal Cornwall Museum. A draft will initially be submitted to the Property Maintenance Manager for comment.

The project will be managed by Charlie Johns (BA, MCIfA) and the fieldwork will be carried out by Carl Thorpe (BSc) who has extensive experience of carrying out archaeological watching briefs at castles in Cornwall.

### **Standards**



CAU is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and follows their Standards and Code of Conduct. <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>

### **Health and safety statement**

CAU follows Cornwall Council's *Statement of Safety Policy*.

Prior to carrying out on-site work CAU will carry out a Risk Assessment.

### **Copyright**

Copyright of all material gathered as a result of the project will be reserved to Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council. Existing copyrights of external sources will be acknowledged where required.

Use of the material will be granted to the client.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

As Cornwall Council is a public authority it is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into effect from 1st January 2005.

CAU will ensure that all information arising from the project shall be held in strict confidence to the extent permitted under the Act. However, the Act permits information to be released under a public right of access (a "Request"). If such a Request is received CAU may need to disclose any information it holds, unless it is excluded from disclosure under the Act.

### **Insurance**

CAU is covered by Cornwall Council's Public and Employers Liability Insurance, with a policy value of £50m. The Council also has Professional Negligence insurance with a policy value of £10m.

### **References**

Johns, C, 2005. *St Mawes Castle, Cornwall: Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief during proposed drainage works*, Truro, HES Projects

*Charles Johns*

*Archaeology Projects Officer*

*12/2/2016*

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