

**Launde Abbey, Launde,
Leicestershire:
Archaeological Evaluation**

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For Trustees of Launde Abbey

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:**Date:**.....

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Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire: Archaeological Evaluation

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of a programme of evaluative archaeological investigation undertaken at Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire (NGR: SK797043) by ULAS in December 2005. This stage of work was designed to provide information on the character, date and state of preservation of buried archaeological remains and elements of built fabric in specific areas, in order to permit an informed assessment of the potential impact of proposed alterations in those areas, relating to development plans to refurbish alter and extend Launde Abbey.

This phase of work follows an earlier stage of archaeological assessment the results of which are presented in the ULAS report 2005-096.

The specific requirements of this stage of work were set out in a Brief issued by the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, in consultation with the regional English Heritage Inspector of Listed Buildings and Harborough District Council Conservation Officer (Clark 2005, dated 29 November 2005).

The historical, archaeological and planning background to the project is set out in these earlier documents and is not repeated again here.

2. Aims and Objectives

The intrusive investigations undertaken during this phase of work were intended to evaluate the following aspects of the development proposals:

- Construction of a new Vestry beneath the present Dining Room
- Creation of a new access route to the Chapel with a new staircase and platform lift occupying the area of the current Servedy and Vestry
- Creation of a new entrance to the Chapel by enlarging the existing doorway between the Vestry and Chapel
- Construction of a new Entrance/Reception/Dining block on the south side of the main building

The specific objectives and methodology for each of the areas of investigation were detailed in the Brief (Section 9). In some instances it proved necessary to vary the methodology slightly from that proposed in the Brief, where this occurred it is explained in the relevant section below.

3. Results

INTERNAL

3.1. Proposed construction of a new Vestry beneath the present Dining Room

Brief paragraph 9.1.1 stated:

Proposed Chapel and Vestry beneath the existing Dining Room.

The submitted plan (Drwg no.: 031075-48A) proposes the creation of a basement beneath the existing dining room. This will require the formation of an entrance located in the west wall of the current vestry, excavation of a void beneath the current ground floor room, waterproofing, creation of an internal partition and doorway. A window is proposed in the north wall of the proposed basement. A doorway/hatch is also indicated in the south wall.

Archaeological evaluation

- *Open up/expose two c. 0.5m² areas of standing fabric within Perpendicular arch (west wall of the Servedy and vestry below), at proposed point of access. To establish the character and form of niche/alcove, existence of doorway, and association with current and former floor surfaces.*
- *Identify areas of floor-boarding within Dining Room to be lifted to gain access to underlying deposits. Assess surface below Dining Room to determine, as far as possible, character, extent, depth of fill.*
- *Consideration should be given to the formation of a window in the north wall of the proposed basement; this wall may incorporate elements of the former priory church. Non-intrusive assessment of the affected fabric should be undertaken*

3.1.1 Opening within Perpendicular Arch

A single opening measuring 0.3m x 0.3m was created in the stonework blocking the Perpendicular archway, towards the base of the arch within the current Vestry (1 on Figure 2; Plate 1). The opening was created using a lump hammer and chisel. Rather than being blocking infilling the archway, it was apparent from the investigation that this masonry was a wall located hard against the west side of the medieval wall which accommodated the Perpendicular arch. The opening revealed that the wall was 0.56m (22 inches) thick and composed principally of ironstone. It was faced on both sides with roughly squared blocks bonded with mortar, whilst the core consisted of smaller irregular fragments bonded with clay.

Behind (west of) this wall was a rubble 'fill' consisting of fragments of stone and mortar, clay lumps and some brick fragments (context 40). Finds from this deposit included a sherd of 13th or 14th century Bourne B ware pottery and early brick fragments likely to be pre-Dissolution in date.

This material was comparable with the deposit observed immediately below the current Dining Room floor (see below). For this reason, it was considered that a second opening in the wall, in the upper part of the arch within the Servedy, would be unlikely to add anything further to the understanding of the structural and deposit sequence at this point.

Interpretation

Based on the established chronology of the building, the wall within which the opening was made would be the east wall of the north wing, constructed between 1541 and 1586 by either Gregory or Henry Cromwell. This was constructed alongside the earlier west wall of the south transept of the priory church, within which the Perpendicular arch is set.

Forming a new doorway at this point would involve breaking out a section of this early post-dissolution wall, rather than the relatively more straightforward matter of removing later blocking from the medieval archway, as was initially envisaged.

3.1.2 Assessment of sub-floor deposits in Dining Room

Floorboards were lifted in two areas within the current Dining Room in order to assess the character of the sub-floor deposits. Beneath a *c.* 75mm void, a rubble deposit was observed in both areas. This was comparable with the rubble 'fill' recorded in the opening created within the Perpendicular arch in the Vestry (see above). No dating evidence was recovered.

Interpretation

The rubble deposit observed beneath the dining room floor is very likely the same material recorded approximately 2m below this level in the opening formed in the west wall of the Vestry. This material may be reasonably interpreted as a demolition deposit derived from the dismantling of the Priory Church and/or other claustral buildings soon after the dissolution. Less likely perhaps is that it relates to the reworking of the west end of the north wing of the mansion house in the early 17th century.

The Dining Room floor structure is of comparatively recent date, possibly attributable to the *c.*1950s. Although the structure was not fully exposed, the relatively slight dimensions of the floor joists, combined with the absence of any 'bounce' in the floor, suggests that the joists are supported by a series of sleeper walls likely to have been founded on the underlying rubble deposit. If this interpretation is correct then the proposed excavation of a void for the new Vestry is likely to affect the Dining Room floor structure above.

3.1.3 Formation of a window in the north wall lighting the proposed new Vestry

The fabric of the north wall in the area of the proposed window lighting the new Vestry forms part of the 16th century north wing, constructed between 1541 and 1586. This probably occupies the same position as the south wall of the nave of the priory church (see Figure 9 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment: ULAS Report 2005-096). No obviously pre-dissolution fabric is visible at this point. Creation of a new window opening in this location would need to take account of the moulded

plinth course on the external elevation. It would be unlikely to impact upon the garderobe shaft of the closet within the Conductor's Room on the first floor, which appears to be accommodated within the externally projecting chimneystack serving both this room and the Dining Room beneath.

3.2. Creation of a new access route to the Chapel with a new staircase and platform lift occupying the area of the current Servery and Vestry

Brief paragraph 9.1.2 stated:

Creation of a platform lift within the proposed Hall (current Vestry).

The proposals envisage the installation of a platform lift in the north-west corner of the existing vestry, this may truncate the existing floor surface and below ground archaeological deposits within the vestry, and require removal of the existing servery floor.

Archaeological evaluation

- *Assessment of the servery floor structure, including removal or opening up of non-sensitive fabric.*
- *Open up/expose a c. 0.5m² section of fabric proposed for truncation within the existing vestry, to examine its character, form and relationship.*

3.2.1 Assessment of the Servery floor structure

The Servery floor joists are underdrawn with plasterboard of comparatively recent date, forming the ceiling to the current Vestry. Two openings, each measuring c. 0.4m x 0.4m, were made in the plasterboard in order to assess the Servery floor structure from below (**2 & 3** on Figure 2; Plates 2 & 3). Three transverse oak beams support the floor joists, each measuring 204mm wide x 254mm high (8 inches x 10 inches). The beams towards the north and south ends of the room have crude chamfers but lack stops, that towards the centre of the room is un-chamfered. The west end of this central beam is supported on a pier composed of mortared ironstone constructed against the south reveal of the Perpendicular arch (**A** on Figure 2). The pier rises no higher than the beam and was evidently specifically built to support it. The transverse beam towards the north end of the room is supported at its east end by the brick wall dividing the Vestry from the Chapel on the north side of the Vestry door (see below and Plate 4). Its west end runs into a large block of masonry of uncertain date and function (**C** on Figure 2; Plate 5; and see below). The east end of the southern transverse beam is supported on a similar large block of masonry (**B** on Figure 2).

The floor joists are oak and average 100mm x 64-70mm (4 inches x 2½-2¾ inches), spaced at 381mm (15 inch) centres. The transverse beams are notched to accept the joists (cogged joists –Alcock *et al* 1996, F30), with the notches averaging only 25mm (1 inch) deep. 50mm (2inch) softwood battens are fixed to the upper face of the joists which support tongue and groove softwood boards typically 178mm (7 inches) wide.

Interpretation

The Servedy floor must be post-Dissolution in date as it overlies part of the south transept of the priory church. The overall form of the floor structure and the use of oak would initially seem to suggest a comparatively early date, say not later than the early decades of the 18th century. However, there are reasons to suggest that it is later than this, reusing earlier materials. The joist joints are extremely crude with the joists having only 25mm (1 inch) end bearing on the transverse beams. Whilst the overall effect *looks* correct for an early floor structure, from experience even the latest and crudest of traditional floors is more sophisticated than this. The suspicion is that this represents an attempt to produce an early looking floor structure at some later date. Furthermore the east end of the northern transverse beam is supported by a brick wall attributable to the 19th century (see below). Undated architects drawings (c. early-mid 20th century), reproduced as Figure 12 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment (ULAS report 2005-096), indicate that the current Servedy was a Butlers Pantry in Launde Abbey's final incarnation as a private house. It must have been floored at that time. Since the current door from the Chapel into the Vestry was not created until c. 1957 (see Plate 42 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment), what is now the Vestry must effectively have been dead space before that time (though possibly with limited access from the cellar beneath the present Kitchen). It may be that the Servedy floor structure was modified as late as 1957 as part of the alterations to create the Vestry, perhaps to provide a suitably 'early' feel to this space. The softwood battens above the oak joists are certainly late and the floorboards – which could be 19th or early 20th century – must have been re-laid at the same time.

Two large blocks of mortared stonework within the present Vestry (**B** & **C** on Figure 2) are hard to explain. **C** (Plate 5) is located directly beneath a cupboard in the Butlers Pantry shown on the architects drawing referred to above (Figure 12 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment). This appears to be a relatively substantial structure (possibly a plate safe?), which may have required a reasonable foundation. No equivalent explanation can be suggested for **B**. Alternatively, both **B** and **C** may simply have been introduced to support the transverse beams of the Servedy floor, though if this was the case, why are they so large? A cast iron waste pipe of 20th century date passes through **C** and alters direction slightly within its mass. This would presumably require a joint in the pipe, which would suggest that **C** is a hollow structure rather than a solid stone mass.

3.2.2 Assessment of the Vestry floor

The architect has confirmed that installation of the proposed new platform lift and staircase will not impact upon any archaeological deposits which may exist below the level of the Vestry floor. This was discussed with the Senior Planning Archaeologist who confirmed that the two 0.5m² trenches in the Vestry floor were not therefore required.

A small section of the concrete floor (measuring 200mm x 150mm) was broken out against the west wall of the Vestry at the request of the architect, in order to establish the thickness of the slab (**4** on Figure 2). The slab is 100mm thick and overlies a brown clay deposit.

In the course of the evaluation consideration was given to the possibility of utilising the existing cellar beneath the current Kitchen for the new Vestry, accessed from the new entrance area to the Chapel (the current Vestry), via a passageway beneath the stairs leading to the garden. This would require a reduction in the level of the ground beneath the stairs in order to achieve the necessary head height. The floor beneath the stairs, adjacent to the brick-built cellar wall was examined in order to assess the nature and depth of the cellar wall foundations and assess the character of any buried archaeological deposits in this area. Beneath accumulated 19th or 20th century debris, the ground below the stairs was solid ironstone bedrock. The walls of the cellar beneath the Kitchen were built off this, with a single foundation course of stepped brickwork. The bedrock occurred at 200mm below the brick floor level of the cellar.

3.3 Assessment of wall between Vestry and Chapel, north of Vestry door

Brief paragraph 9.1.3 stated:

Create western entrance to Chapel

The proposals show the widening and enlargement of the existing Chapel/Vestry doorway to form a double-door entry from the proposed Hall. The HBA suggest the fabric proposed for removal, based upon the current interpretation, cannot date before the post-Dissolution period.

Archaeological evaluation

- *Open up/expose a c. 0.5m² section of fabric proposed for truncation, the east wall of the existing vestry, to examine its character, form and relationships.*

Two openings were made in the plaster of the east Vestry wall, north of the doorway, in order to assess the character and date of the wall fabric. The first opening measured 0.3m x 0.3m (5 on Figure 2; Plate 4). The wall was brick-built (brick dimensions: 229 x ? x 64mm (9 x ? x 2½ inches) and is attributable to the 19th century. Numerous incomplete and some overfired bricks were used and it was apparent that the brickwork was never intended to be visible. The west face of this wall, within the Chapel, is rendered with a decorative scheme of incised lines imitating ashlar masonry. The scheme is unbroken, except for some localised damage around the Vestry door, which was inserted in 1957. This decorative scheme can be traced through into the stairway leading to the garden on the south side of the Chapel, then up into the main corridor and as far south as the service staircase. The decorative scheme is attributable to the 19th century and may form part of Thomas Rickman's alterations of 1829. The fact that the service staircase added c. 1850 appears to interrupt the scheme would tend to support this interpretation.

The second opening (6 on Figure 2) was made in the north jamb of the vestry door, in order to assess the fabric of both the wall on the north side of the door and a low-level structure within the Vestry currently utilised as a seat. The latter was composed of concrete blockwork and appears to have been added in or after 1957 as a seat.

Interpretation

There is a change in the fabric of the wall separating the Vestry from the Chapel, in line with the south side of the Vestry door. South of the door the wall is stone-built and 0.6m wide. Given its position, this masonry must be post-Dissolution in date. To the north of this the wall is narrower (0.26m wide) and brick-built. This brickwork is attributable to the 19th century, very likely c. 1829. The Vestry door itself was inserted into the brick section of the wall in 1957.

The current entrance to the Chapel is through a door off the stairs leading out into the garden. This doorway is finished in brickwork (rendered, but brick is visible at skirting level where render has broken away) and is presumably therefore a comparatively late insertion. Where was the entrance to the Chapel from the house before this doorway was formed? It seems highly likely that, before the early 19th century, the Chapel was entered via a staircase occupying the position of the present Servery/Vestry. The stone-built section of the east wall of the Vestry may be interpreted as a support for this staircase. As part of the 1829 alterations, the staircase was removed and the former entrance into the chapel bricked up. A floor was inserted forming the Butlers Pantry (now Servery) and creating a dead space beneath this. A new entrance to the chapel was formed in the south wall (in the former south transept), accessed from the stairs leading down and out into the garden.

In 1957 the present Vestry was created by forming a doorway in the brick-built section of the west wall of the Chapel, in order to utilise the dead space below the Butlers pantry. It appears that the window in the north wall lighting the Vestry was also created in 1957.

EXTERNAL

3.4. Construction of a new Entrance/Reception/Dining block on the south side of the main building

Brief paragraph 9.2 stated:

Proposed Extension to the south of Launde Abbey.

The proposals envisage the demolition of the later 19th century Laundry Yard and Service accommodation situated to the south of the main building. The only section proposed for retention is the probably 17/18th century polychrome wall enclosing the north-east corner of the service area. Following demolition, a complex of kitchen and dining facilities, reception administration and staff rooms will be constructed.

The Desk-based Assessment indicates the site lies within an area of significant archaeological potential, located at the south-east corner of the putative claustral range. The presence of the polychrome wall suggest the area also was the location of a significant, perhaps high status, element of the post-Dissolution complex.

Archaeological evaluation

- *Test pitting and trenching are proposed in all areas currently accessible, where proposed alteration and extensions are likely. These include trenches:*
 1. *to the west of the current Laundry Yard, to target the proposed Foyer, Lobby and associated landscaping;*
 2. *north-west of the yard area parallel to the existing south wall of the office and laundry, to address the impact of the new office, staff room and toilets.*
 3. *south-east of the yard area parallel to the southern range of the Old Dairy, to examine buried archaeological deposits potentially impacted upon by the Dining/Seminar Room*

Test pits are proposed to examine the character and form of the polychrome wall, pits are required at its western and southern limits, and to examine possibly returns within the Laundry Yard area.

3.4.1 Methodology

The initial specification requested that three long machine excavated trenches and three 2m² test pits be located to the south of the front range of buildings, within the courtyard and to the east of the main building. However, the location of service pipes, garden ornaments and other obstacles meant that only two large trenches could be mechanically excavated. The remaining areas were hand-excavated and were designated as test pits (Figure 3). The objective of the work was to evaluate the level of archaeological survival and to what extent this archaeology would be damaged or compromised by the proposed building work.

All trenches and test pits were examined and recorded by notes, photographs and drawings. All work was located and tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and Ordnance Survey Datum.

3.4.2 Results

Trench 1 and Test pit 3

Both excavations were located immediately to the south of the western range of the main buildings in a small garden where a new public entranceway is planned to cover much of this area. A scar from the roofline of an earlier structure can be seen on the south facing wall with a large area of 19th century brickwork below this line. A window may indicate the location of an earlier doorway into the building from the main house (Plate 7). It was hoped that a trench in this area would reveal any surviving remains of this structure.

Originally specified as a single 9m long trench running north to south the information that a water pipe ran across the lawn and the location of a large garden urn made it necessary to adjust this to a 5m x 1.6m east to west trench and a 1.85m² test pit to the south of this (Figures 4 & 5). Approximately 0.1m of turf and dark brown sandy silty loam topsoil (1) containing a small quantity of modern white glazed pottery and plant pot fabric covered both excavated areas. Beneath this was a similar subsoil layer (2) with a depth of around 0.1m in Trench 1 and 0.14m in Test pit 3 containing a significant amount of brick rubble and a single decorated piece of floor tile of probable 19th century date. Sealed by the subsoil was a thick demolition layer (3)

consisting of a large amount of brick rubble, sandstone fragments, broken plant pot and broken glass in a loose matrix of sandy degraded mortar. A number of service pipes ran through this material which was confined in Trench 1 by a single north to south row of mortared bricks (measuring 235 x 110 x 75mm) at the eastern end and by a north to south brick channel (5) to the west. A large amount of broken glass was noted within this channel but was not retained. As Test pit 3 was much smaller this layer covered the whole of the excavated area with a loosely mortared brick wall just extending into the western section. In Trench 1 excavation of demolition layer (3) revealed a firmer pale cream coloured sand and mortar layer (7) without any demolition rubble into which a brick lined, tile capped culvert (6) was cut. The brick channel (5) also cut into, but not through, layer (7). Further excavation in Test pit 3 showed this layer was around 0.12m thick and had been laid on what appears to be a brick rubble levelling layer on top of a thin layer of light brown clayish sand which had evidence of either root disturbance or archaeological activity. Unfortunately a heavy duty electric cable ran across the base of the test pit and no further excavation was carried out. A faced stone wall (4) was observed immediately to the west of channel (5) running north to south across Trench 1 (Plate 8). The wall had a single surviving ashlar course of limestone blocks set on a coursed rubble ironstone foundation. Butting up against the west face of the wall foundation was a crudely constructed brick plinth (8) (bricks measuring 235 x 102 x 75mm) with a flat top set 0.16m below current ground level (Plate 8).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was originally specified as a 7m long east to west trench located in the south east corner of the courtyard which is surrounded by 19th century buildings. A trench of this size would have extended well beyond any areas affected by the proposed building work in this area and would have severely restricted access to the courtyard. Because of this the trench size was reduced to 2.5m but was still dug using a mechanical excavator (Figure 6).

Beneath the granite sets and a thin sand bedding layer was layer of sandy rubble (9) that increased in depth from 0.1m at the western end to 0.2m in the east. This appeared to be laid on top of a very thin layer of ashes or cinders which further sealed a possible earlier cobbled, or metalled, surface (10). An apparent tipped layer of sandy mortar (11) with a large amount of broken brick rubble covered two dark grey clay layers (12) and (41) which were rather organic in their texture and smell. Running through these two layers were a number of thin bands of degraded mortar. A very thick layer measuring up to 0.6m in depth of grey brown clay and plaster rubble (13) was observed beneath the two organic layers. A cleaner 0.1m thick layer of yellow brown clay with a smaller quantity of plaster and mortar rubble (14) formed an earlier deposit which in turn sealed a very firm dark to mid brown clay layer (15) which had a small quantity of mortar fragments and charcoal flecks within it.

Due to safety considerations this trench was not excavated any deeper so the thickness of layer (15) is not known and the depth to undisturbed natural is also not known. The total depth of the stepped trench was 1.65m below current ground level (Plate 9).

Test pit 1

Test pit 1 was located to the south of a polychrome banded stone wall in a small alley next to the laundry. The south side of the polychrome banded wall is brick faced and

the trench was positioned in order to investigate whether the bricks and the polychrome stonework (34) on the northern side where of different phases. This test pit was hand excavated (Figure 7).

The alley was paved in blue bricks laid on a silty clay bedding layer (17) on top of a plaster/mortar levelling layer (18). These two layers, and a further rubble fill layer (19) were cut by the foundation trench [35] for the wall. Because of the location of a ceramic drain or sewer pipe it was difficult to see if the layers beneath this, which consisted of an ash layer (20) and a grey clay layer (21) were also cut by the wall foundation trench although this does seem probable. A possible dump or pit filled with dark grey clay silt (23) lay beneath layer (21) but was not fully excavated. No undisturbed natural substratum was seen.

The excavation showed that the brick skin of the wall was laid on top of roughly coursed ironstone foundations bonded with lime mortar. The foundations were cut into a grey brown plaster rubble layer (24) similar to layer (13) seen in Trench 2. The dump of dark clay silt (23) could be seen extending beneath layer (24) and appeared to cut into a lower layer which was similar in nature to (24) but with slightly less rubble and a higher clay content.

Because the test pit was so close to the wall and to other structures no further excavation took place.

Test pit 2

Test pit 2 was specified as a 9m long east to west trench located in the north west corner of the courtyard. The presence of what was thought to be a buried oil tank, an overground oil tank and a sewer meant that the area available for excavation was severely restricted.

Careful machine excavation revealed a great deal of disturbance beneath the granite sets due to the presence of a cast iron service pipe, a lead water pipe and a later plastic pipe (Figures 8 & 9). Although these services had damaged any higher archaeological deposits the remains of a stone capped drain (16) could be seen running in a west to east direction down the slope of the courtyard (Plate 10). The base of the drain was lined with a 0.04m thick bed of red brown clay placed on top of a dressed stone base.

Test pit 3

See Trench 1 results.

Test pit 4

Test pit 4 was placed on the northern side of the polychrome wall (34) in order to confirm the results obtained in Test pit 1. The location of the test pit in the garden meant that it had to be hand excavated (Figures 10 & 11).

Removal of 0.25m of topsoil and subsoil revealed a beige grey brown clay layer (29) which sealed all lower features and butted up against the polychrome wall. This 0.12m thick layer was fully excavated to expose a dark ashy charcoal layer (30) cut by a land drain [32] and a north to south drain [26] and which butted up against the polychrome wall. Drain [32] headed away from the wall in a north easterly direction and consisted of inverted horseshoe land drains mortared at each joint with another

drain set on top to create a crude pipe. Where the drainpipe met the wall one of the foundation stones had been hollowed out probably to accommodate a downpipe. The second drain [26] did not contain any kind of pipe or stonework but could be seen extending beneath the wall. At this point a hole had been cut through the wall, lined with bricks and capped with a flat supporting stone. Beneath layer (29) was a grey brown clay and rubble deposit (31) very similar to layer (24) in Test pit 1 (Plate 11). The construction cut for the polychrome wall cut into this layer which was not fully excavated with the result that the depth of this layer is not known.

The polychrome wall (34) had rather shallow foundations extending only 0.5m below present ground level which is around 0.1m higher than the base of the foundations seen on the southern side.

Test pit 5

Test pit 5 was located on the east facing side of the old dairy in order to investigate the phasing of the polychrome wall and the dairy wall. As with the other test pits this had to be hand excavated (Figure 12).

A 0.29m layer of topsoil and subsoil was removed to expose a layer of ashy charcoal (35) similar to layer (30) in Test pit 4. Beneath this was a thick layer of grey brown clay and rubble (36) very similar to (31) in Test pit 4. 0.4m of this layer was excavated but the base was not seen and is assumed to be much deeper.

The excavated wall showed that the old dairy was built on coursed stone foundations which appeared to run without break under both buildings. Although excavated to a depth of 1.2m below present ground level the base of these foundations were not reached.

3.4.3 Discussion of the trenches and test pits

Trench 1 and Test pit 3

The earliest pottery found within this trench were recovered from the topsoil and dated to the late 17th or 18th century, when the house was in private hands. The large amount of building debris (3) found within this area appears to derive from the demolition of the 19th century range of building illustrated in the undated engraving (Figure 17 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment report). Built after 1800 and demolished between 1884 and 1904, this structure appears to have been converted into a greenhouse/conservatory probably in the later 19th century, occupying the sheltered south western corner of the house. The brick channel (5) is likely to have been associated with a heating or drainage system and cuts into surface (7) which may have formed a bedding layer for a tiled floor. As the tile capped culvert (6) also cuts (7) it may also be of a similar date. Although plant pots are rather hard to date, the presence of late 19th or early 20th century pottery and 19th century brick fragments in the rubble suggest that the structure dates to around this time.

The faced stone wall (4) is in line with the scar seen on the south facing wall and appears to continue southwards beneath the present driveway although the exact limits are not known. The width of the foundations at 0.5m correspond with a reasonably substantial structure, in keeping with that illustrated in the undated engraving.

Trench 2

Although excavated to a depth of 1.65m without reaching undisturbed natural no coherent structural remains could be seen in the excavated area.

The lower fills in this trench are similar to those seen in Test pits 1, 4 and 5 and the presence of plaster and building material may indicate that this is a large spread of post-dissolution demolition waste. This is confirmed by the presence of pottery dating from both pre- and post-dissolution as late as the 18th century. The depth of archaeological deposits in the trench shows that a lot of material has been dumped over a large area either to create a level building surface or to fill in a hollow (possibly a quarry pit or pond?). The clay organic layers above this spread unfortunately did not contain any dateable finds but represent a series of dumping episodes sealed by thin bands of mortar, possibly to reduce odours when open. Layers above this are likely to be bedding or construction layers for the early cobbled or metalled surface (10) but again no precise date can be assigned to this due to lack of finds. The rubble layer (9) which contained small amounts of white earthenware pottery looks like a more recent attempt to level the courtyard area before being cobbled with the present surface.

Test pit 1

The results from this test pit when compared to those from Test pit 4 show that the northern face of the polychrome banded wall is of the same phase as the brick southern face and both are of 19th century origin. The decorative side would face the gardens whilst the more austere bricks would be more suitable for the servants working in the laundry. The wall stands on an apparent demolition spread which may have similar origins to that seen in Trench 2.

The construction of the polychrome banded wall is directly comparable with that of the curved boundary wall forming the west side of the Laundry Yard, with an outer facing of stonework and a brick inner face. Brick dimensions are typically 229 x 114 x 76mm (9 x 4½ x 3 inches) for both. In the polychrome banded wall the brick is laid in English Garden Wall Bond, whereas the more visible inner face of the curved western wall is in English Bond. Both walls have a similar flat stone capping.

It would appear that the polychrome banded wall, rather than being the remnant of a 17th or 18th century range as suggested in the earlier Historic Building Assessment, was a 19th century conceit erected to shield the service buildings in the Laundry Yard from view of the family when enjoying the garden. Equally important at that time was to prevent the family from being overlooked by the servants.

Test pit 2

The later disturbance over and around the stone capped drain (16) prevents a secure date being given to this structure which is likely to have been truncated by the buried tank to the west. The pipe stem could be from one of the service pipe installations. The extent of services cutting through this small area shows the level to which much of the courtyard has probably been disturbed.

Test pit 4

It is not clear why the polychrome banding only covered the north side of the wall and did not continue round the corner to the east face which, at least for the first few metres, seems to be of the same building phase.

The modern drain [26] has been inserted through the wall at a later date. The drain cannot be seen on the southern side but could be associated with a function of the laundry or dairy.

The older horseshoe drain is an unusual attempt at creating a watertight pipe using field drains. Such land drains were in use from the early 19th century onwards and as such their date is consistent with the construction date of the wall. Unfortunately no dateable pottery was recovered from any layers that the drain cut through. The hollowed stone at the base of the wall must be where a down pipe discharged into the drain although no marks could be seen on the wall where this might have been attached. It is feasible that a pipe may have come down at an angle from the buildings to the west.

Test pit 5

The results show that although two walls can be seen above ground they both use the same substantial foundations. This may have been from an earlier structure at the eastern side of the courtyard. Certainly such deep foundations are more than adequate to support the existing single storey building.

The oldest pottery sherds date to the 16th century although modern white glazed material was recovered from the same context indicating a certain degree of disturbance in this area. This could perhaps be due to the construction of the adjacent dairy building.

4. Discussion

The internal investigations suggest that constructing a new Vestry beneath the present Dining Room would be a relatively involved process. It seems likely that the foundations of the present Dining Room floor are built off the rubble deposit beneath. It was initially envisaged that an entrance to the new Vestry could be created by removing the stonework blocking from the Perpendicular arch. However, it has been established that the stonework blocking the arch is part of a late 16th century wall built against the west side of the medieval wall in which Perpendicular arch is located.

Assessment of the Served floor structure suggests that this is comparatively late although it does reuse earlier materials. It is unlikely to predate the early 19th century and may be as recent as *c.* 1957. Based on the results of the evaluation it seems likely that, prior to the early 19th century, the entrance to the chapel from the house was via a staircase occupying the area of the present Served and Vestry. The northern section of the wall dividing the Vestry from the Chapel is brick built and is again attributable to the early 19th century. The potential impact of the proposal to enlarge the existing doorway in this wall would therefore be limited.

The trial trenches and test pits have provided some indication of the extent and survival of buried archaeological remains within the area of the Laundry Yard,

although the position and size of the trenches was limited by the various services which criss-cross the yard.

Trial trench 2 and test pits 1, 4 and 5 indicate dumping of demolition debris over a wide area and to a significant depth. These deposits certainly encompass the eastern half of the Laundry Yard, however a western extent was not defined. This material presumably represents debris from the demolition of Priory buildings at the Dissolution and/or subsequent episodes of remodelling of the mansion house.

The only structural remains encountered within the yard area were those of a stone-built drain exposed in test pit 2; no dating evidence was recovered from this. The drain had been heavily truncated by the installation of various later services.

The evaluation established that the polychrome banded wall is not the remnant of an earlier range of building, but an integral part of the Laundry Yard development, attributable to the second half of the 19th century. Earlier stone foundations were recorded beneath the east wall of the Old Dairy, forming the east side of the Laundry yard, as revealed in test pit 5. No firm dating could be established but a pre-19th century date seems likely.

The remains of the one and a half storey range added to the south west corner of the house after *c.* 1800, illustrated in a 19th century engraving (Figure 7 in the earlier Historic Building Assessment), were exposed in trench 1 and test pit 3. The principal (west) elevation of this at least was stone-built.

5. Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by the Revd Tim Blewett on behalf of the Trustees of Launde Abbey. Thanks are extended to the Revd Blewett and staff of Launde Abbey and to the architect Martin Russell for assistance in the course of the project.

6. Archive and Finds

The site archive and finds will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under the accession code X.A1 2006.

7. Bibliography

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APPENDIX

The medieval and later pottery and miscellaneous finds from an evaluation at Launde Abbey, Leicestershire

D. Sawday

The pottery, forty six sherds, weighing 2.217 kg, and tile, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999). The results for the pottery and medieval ridge tile are shown below (Table 1). Also present were two fragments of medieval and modern floor tile, together with modern wall tile, a clay pipe stem, post medieval and modern bottle glass and a fragment of undecorated medieval or early post medieval window glass.

Fabric/Ware	Sherd Nos.	Weight Grams
POTTERY		
Medieval/Early Post Medieval		
BO2 – Bourne B ware	1	6
LY1 – Stanion Lyveden ware 1	4	52
MP2 – Midland Purple ware 2	1	7
Midland Yellow ware	1	7
Sub Total	7	72
<i>Post Medieval/Modern</i>		
EA2 – Earthenware 2	5	395
EA3 – Mottled ware	1	14
EA7 - Slipware	1	3
SW5 – Brown Salt Glazed Stoneware	2	4
EA10- White Earthenware	21	621
EA- Earthenware	9	1108
Sub Total	39	2145
Totals	46	2217
MEDIEVAL RIDGE TILE		
BO2 – Bourne B ware	4	207
LY1 – Stanion Lyveden ware 1	1	38
Total	5	245

Table 1: The medieval and later pottery totals by fabric sherd numbers and weight (grams)

A fragment of Bourne B ware, dating from the mid or later thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, was recovered from the rubble deposit, 40, beneath the Dining Room in the opening made in the west wall of the Vestry. This sherd and two others of a similar date range in Stanion Lyveden ware were all residual. The latter occurred in the demolition layers in Trench 2, together with a fragments of late medieval Midland Purple ware, and the two fragments of medieval ridge tile. A sherd of Midland Yellow ware pottery, dating from circa 1500 and modern white earthenware or china, was found in an ashy layer, 35, which lay under the subsoil. A green glazed medieval floor tile, possibly dating from the mid to late thirteenth or fourteenth centuries was found in the topsoil.

Apart from the residual medieval pottery and ridge tile noted above, the demolition layers 13 and 14 in trench 2 also produced Mottled ware and Slipware dating from the seventeenth and/or eighteenth centuries. The remainder of the pottery and tile from the test pits, topsoil and demolition layers in trench 1, was all post medieval or modern in date.

Conclusions

The pottery and tile hints at the medieval origins of the earliest structures on the site, though unfortunately none of the material could be dated to the twelfth century, when an Augustinian Priory was founded at Launde (Pevsner and Williamson 1984, 197-198). The date range of the later material reflects in part the many subsequent rebuilds and alterations to the medieval and later buildings from the seventeenth century onwards.

The sources for the medieval pottery are typical of the region. The pottery production centres based on the Stanion and Lyveden complex in north Northamptonshire, Bourne in Lincolnshire and, possibly, Ticknall in Derbyshire for the Midland Purple ware, reflect the essentially local nature of the pottery trade and distribution patterns at this time.

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Site/Parish: Launde Abbey, Launde, Leics. Accession No/ Doc Ref: XA1 2006 / launde abbey1.doc Material: pot & misc finds Site Type: Abbey and House	Submitter: A. Hyam Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 17.01.06 Method of Recovery: evaluation
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Context	Fabric/ware	Sherd nos.	Weight Grams	Comments
POTTERY				
1 –T1 topsoil	EA2 – Earthenware 2	1	30	17 th – 18 th C+
3 –T1 rubble in conservatory	EA – Earthenware	9	1108	Modern wheel thrown flower pots and saucers
9 – T2	EA10 – White Earthenware	2	48	
13 – T2 demolition layer	LY1 – Lyveden Stanion ware 1	1	8	13 th - 14 th C.
13	MP2 – Midland Purple ware 2	1	7	Later 14 th – mid 16 th C.
13	EA7 – Slipware	1	3	Press moulded dish with 'pie crust' rim and slip trailed and combed decoration, 17 th – 18 th C.
14 – T2 demolition layer	LY1	3	44	Includes a green glazed jug fragment with an everted rim and pouring lip, 13 th – early 14 th C.
14	EA3 – Mottled ware	1	14	Mid 17 th C+
27 [26] modern drain – test pit 4	EA2	1	188	17 th – 18 th C+
35 ashy layer under sub soil	MY – Midland Yellow ware	1	7	Reduced base small vessel, 1500+
35	EA10	19	573	profile of a bowl or possible chamber pot, stamped 'Wedgwood'
36 demolition layer	EA2	2	162	17 th – 18 th C. +
40 under floor in dining room	BO2 – Bourne B ware	1	6	Abraded, traces of glaze internally, sooted externally. ? Mid later 13 th -14 th C.
Test Pit 2	EA2	1	15	
Test Pit 2	SW5 – Brown Salt Glazed stoneware	2	4	Iron washed, with external reeding, probably a tankard, possibly early 18 th C Nottingham.
MED RIDGE TILE				
13 – T2	LY1	1	38	
13	BO2	4	207	
FLOOR TILE				
Topsoil	MS – Medieval Sandy ware	1	178	Green glazed upper surface which is also abraded, but possibly a monochrome tile, mid late 13 th – 14 th C.
3 – T1B	EA – Earthenware	1	122	Corner of a modern – probably Victorian - tile, with part of a printed pattern including leaves.

WALL TILE				
3 – T1	EA11 – Tin Glazed Earthenware	1	11	Modern
CLAY PIPE				
Test Pit 2	China Clay	1		Pipe stem, post med/modern
GLASS				
13		1		Green window glass with rolled edge, medieval or post medieval.
36		3		Thick dark brown bottle glass, two base fragments with kick ups and pontil marks, probably later 17 th or 18 th centuries
36		2		Bottle glass, clear glass bottle base with pontil mark – Victorian?
40		1		?Vessel glass – clear ?Post medieval/modern.
BRICK				
11	Pinkish red colour; mortar adhering	3		229 x 111 x 64mm; probably C18 - early C19
31	Pinkish red colour; mortar adhering	3		229 x 111 x 64mm; probably C18 - early C19
33	Pinkish red colour	1		No complete dimensions
36	Pinkish red colour; partly over-fired	1		No complete dimensions
40	Reddish orange colour, sandy fabric, freq. sub-rounded quartz. Hand-made and finished, possibly rolled out on a sanded bed or mould, but all surfaces roughened & finger impressions on top or under side – perhaps removed before biscuit dry	5		? x 102 x 51mm; pre-Dissolution in date? (c/f C16 brick from Ashby de la Zouche castle
MISC. TILE				
11	Orange-red colour. 1 frag. curved (?roof tile) other with cut bevel edge, possibly a floor tile	2		Incomplete. Post-medieval. 19-23mm thick
33	2 fragments in different fabrics	2		C19 horseshoe shaped land drain. Incomplete.
STONE				
Test pit 2	Oolitic limestone	2		Small architectural fragments; half round profile, 35mm dia.
13	?Collyweston	1		Roof tile fragment, pierced



Plate 1. Opening within lower section of Perpendicular arch (1 on Figure 2)



Plate 2. Opening to expose underside of Served floor structure (2 on Figure 2)



Plate 3. Opening to expose underside of Served floor structure (3 on Figure 2)



Plate 4. Opening in east Vestry wall to assess underlying fabric (5 on Figure 2)



Plate 5. Masonry block in northwest corner of Vestry (C on Figure 2)



Plate 6. Small opening (on right) exposing moulding on north side, east face of Perpendicular arch within Vestry (illustrated on Figure 2)



Plate 7. Pre-excavation location of Trench 1 and Test pit 3. Note earlier building scar above statue



Plate 8. Trench 1



Plate 9. Trench 2 North facing section



Plate 10. Test pit 2 plan



Plate 11. Test pit 4 plan and polychrome wall

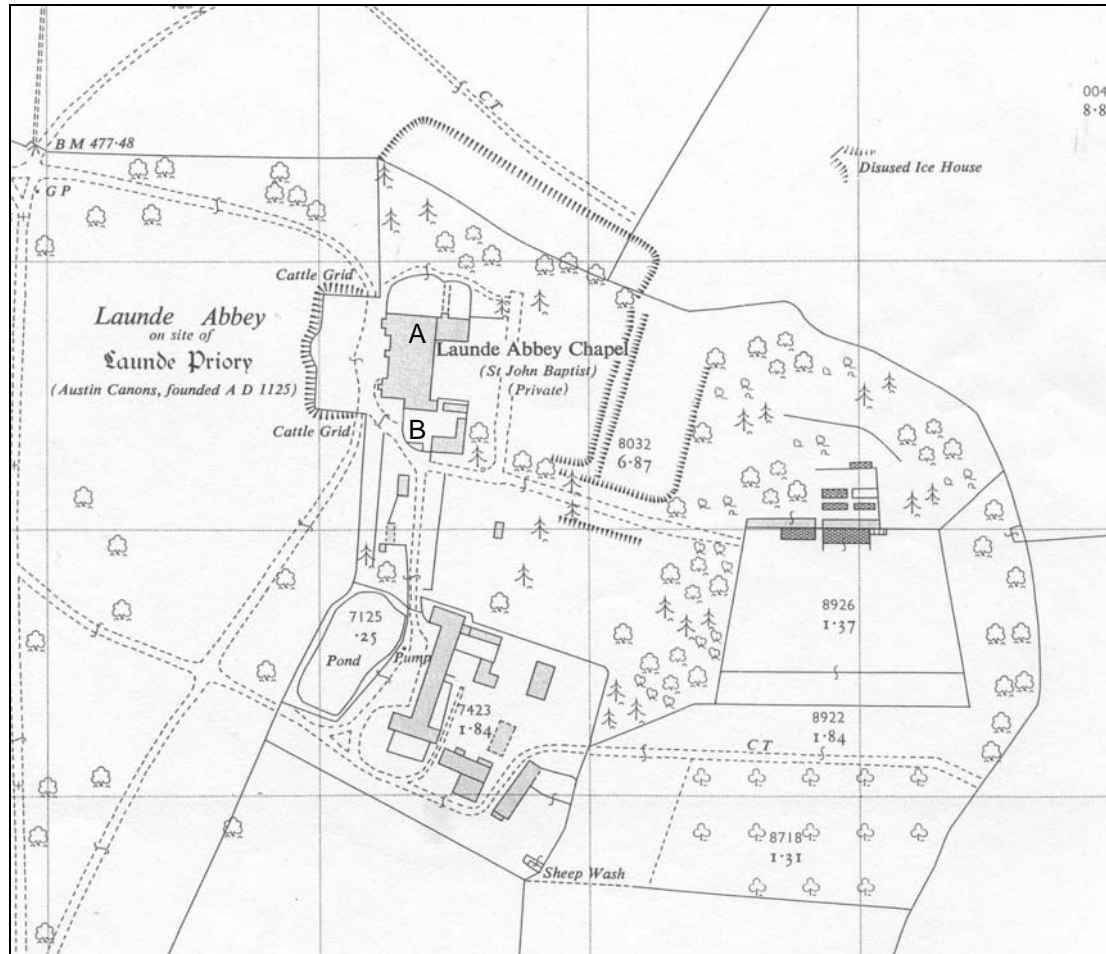


Figure 1. Location Plan, based on 1960 OS map sheet XXXIII.15
A: area of internal investigations; B: area of external trenches and test pits

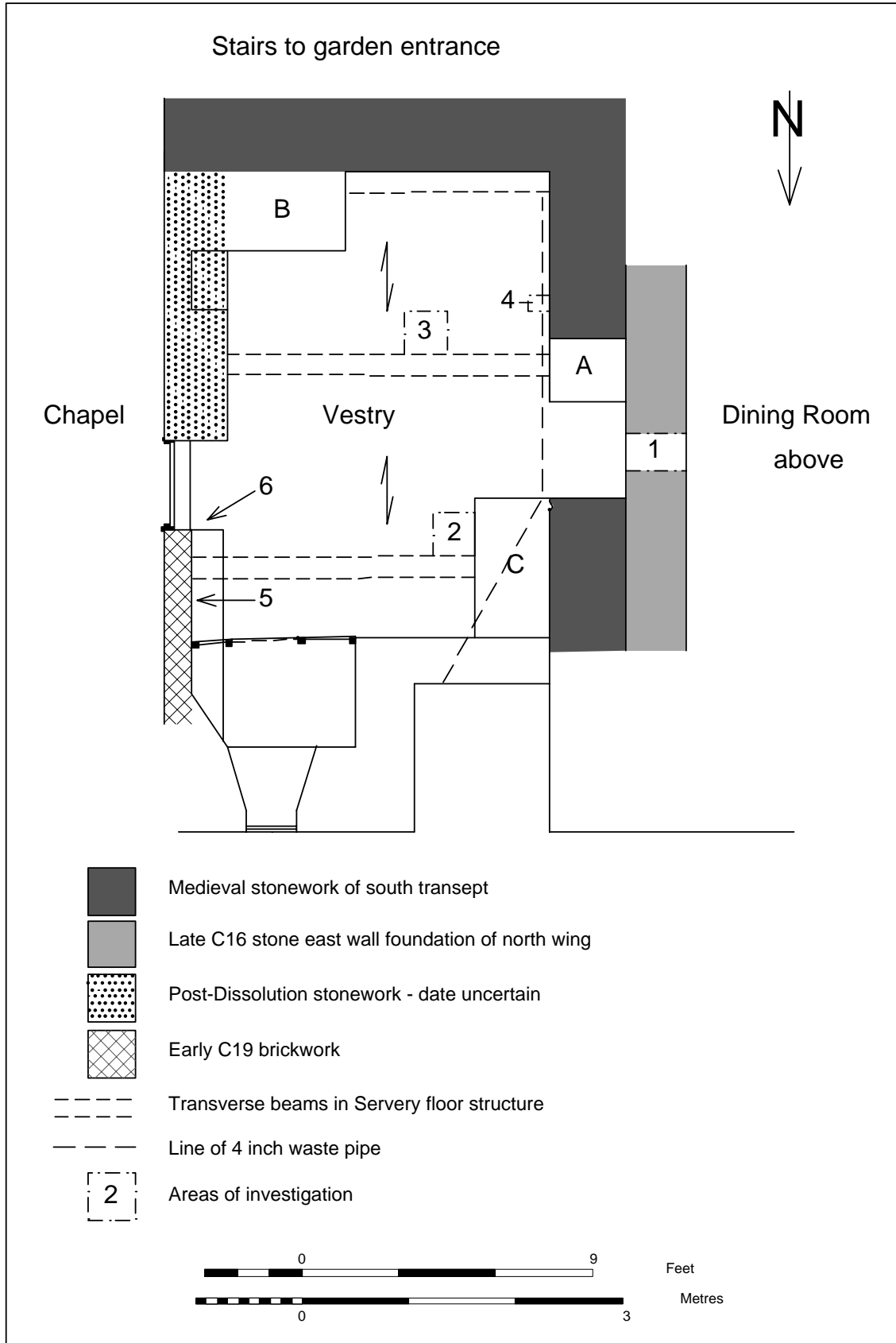


Figure 2. Plan of Vestry showing areas of internal investigation

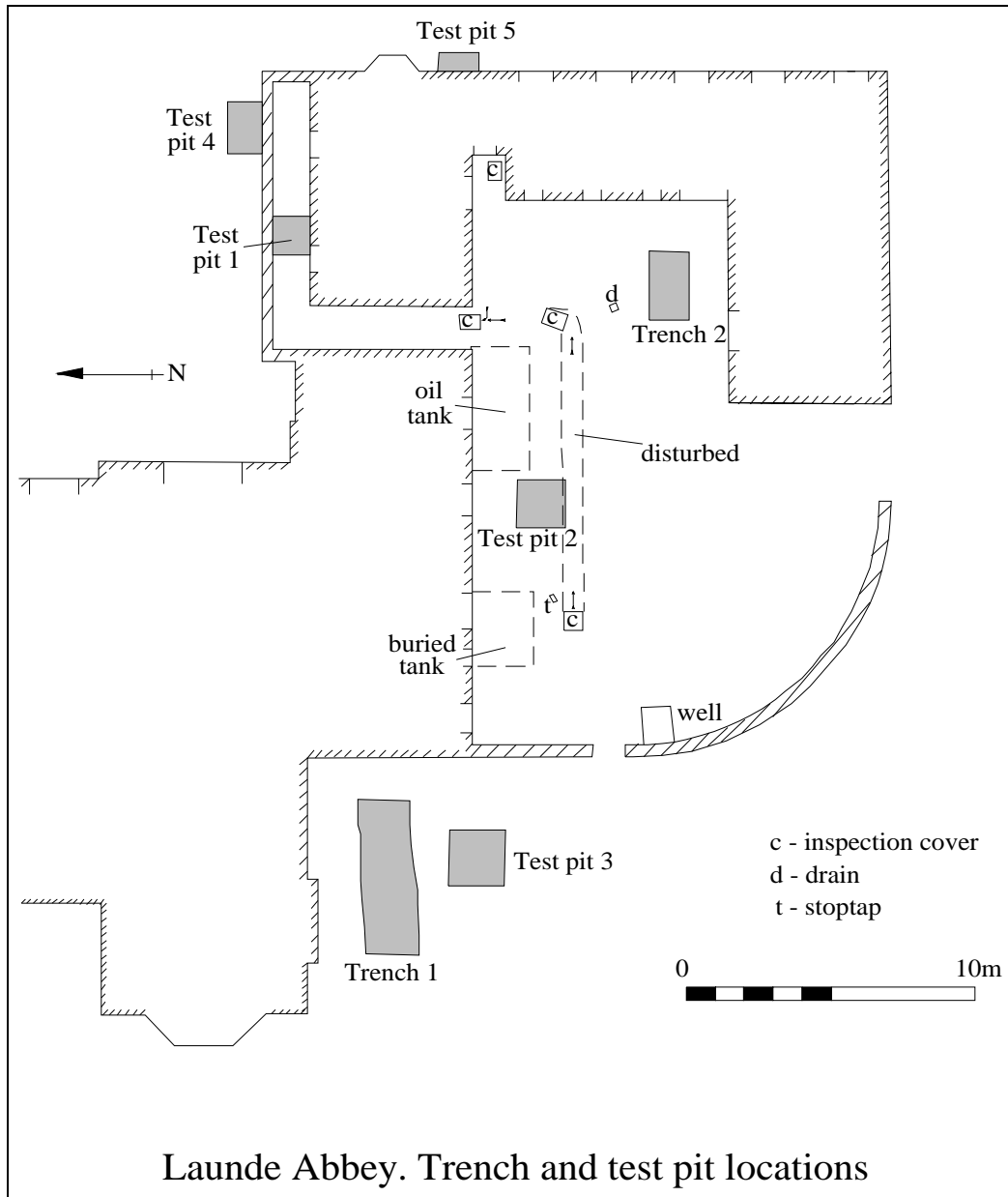


Figure 3. Location of external trenches and test pits

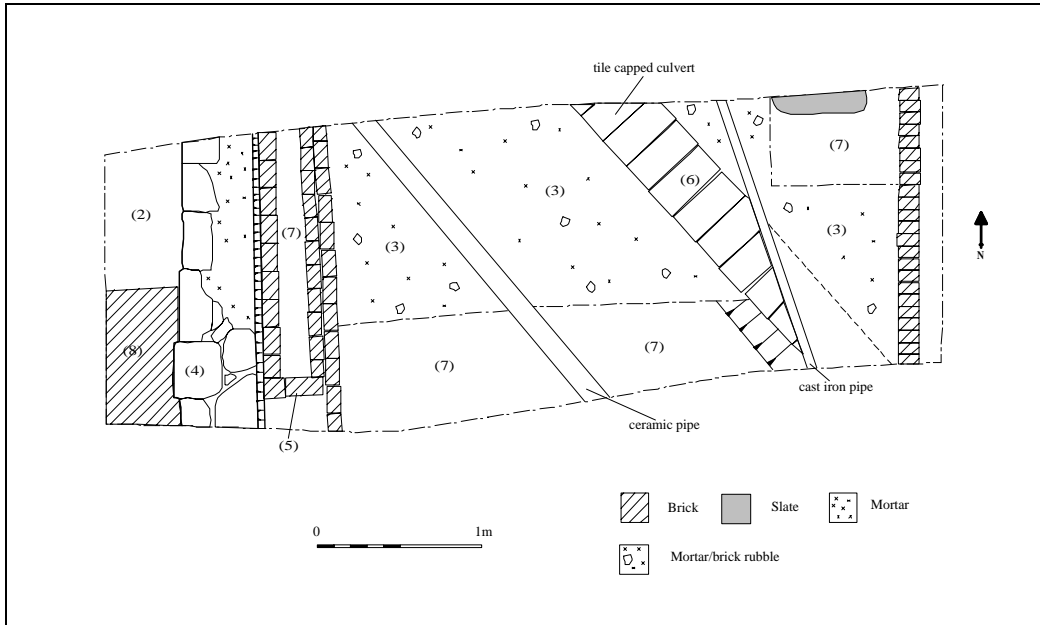


Figure 4. Trench 1 plan

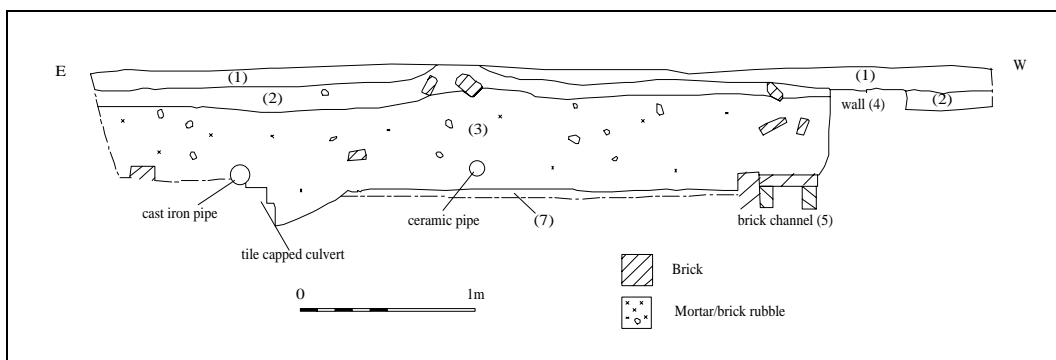


Figure 5. Trench 1 section

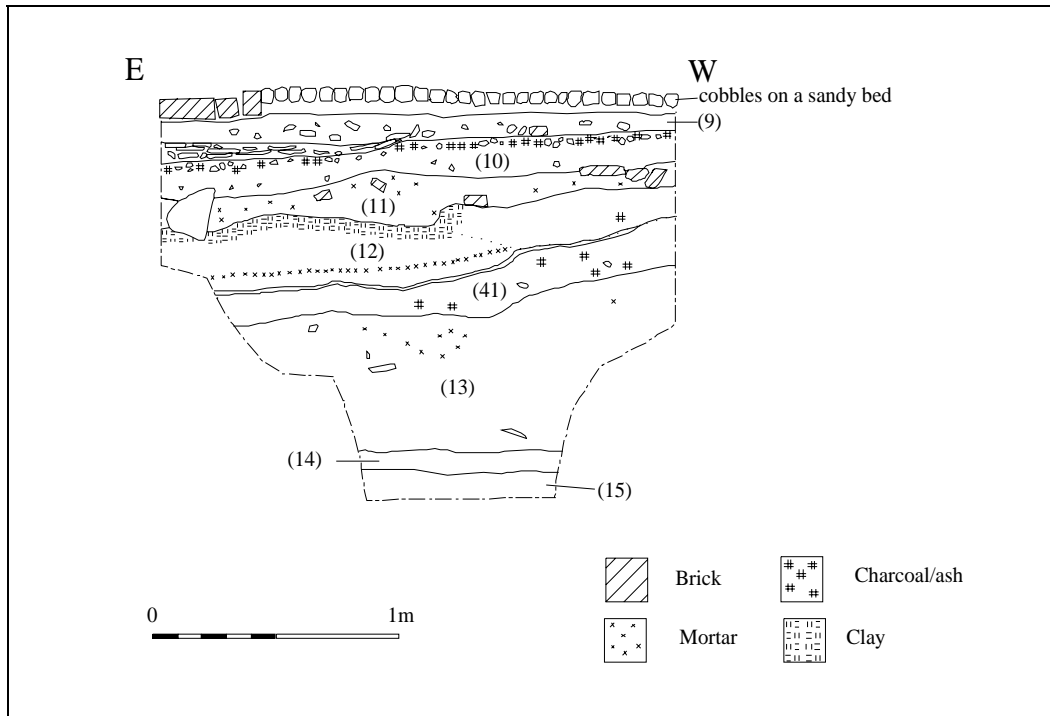


Figure 6. Trench 2 North facing section

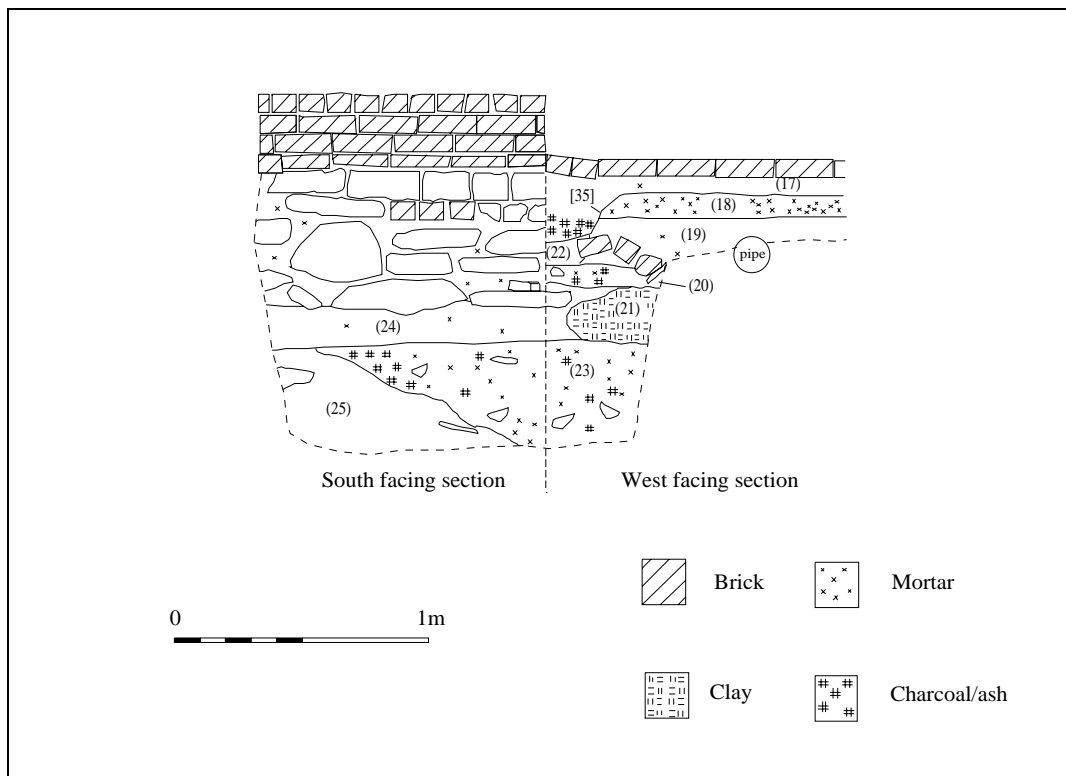


Figure 7. Test pit 1 South and West facing sections

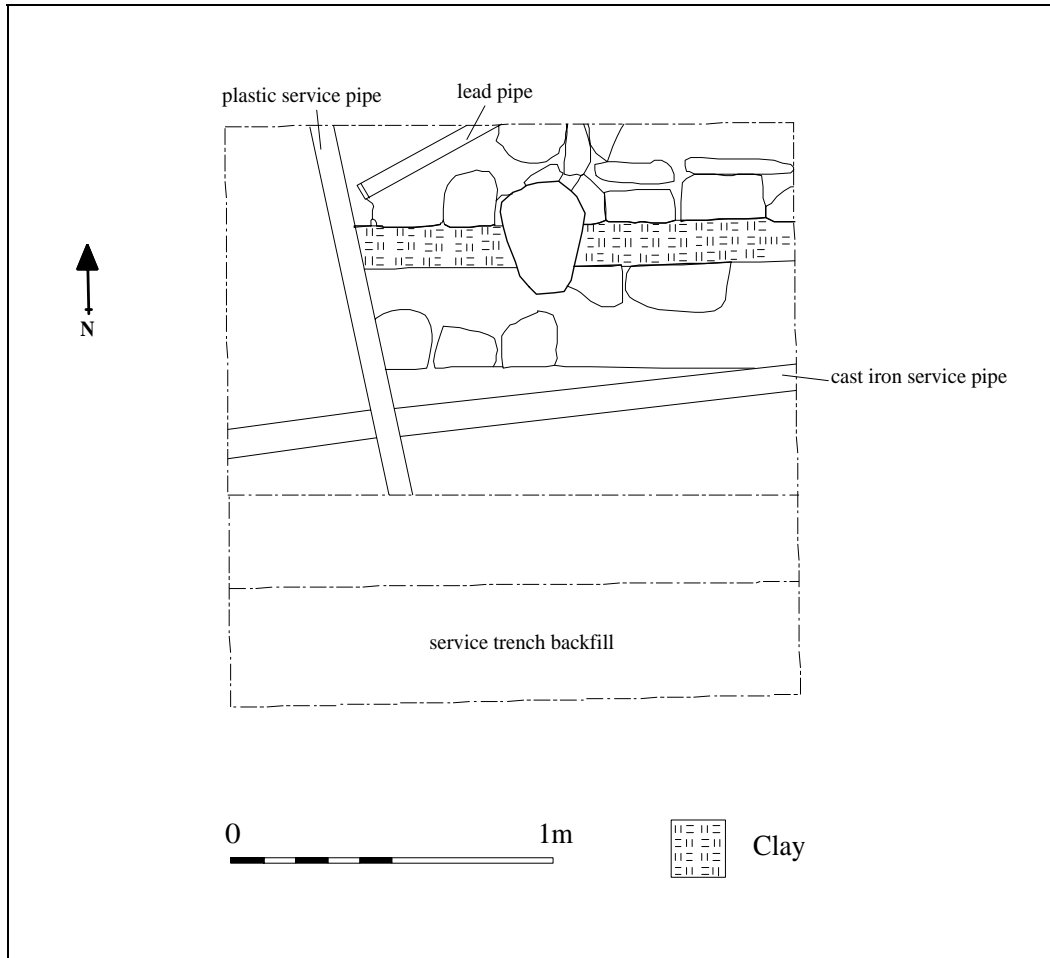


Figure 8. Test pit 2 plan

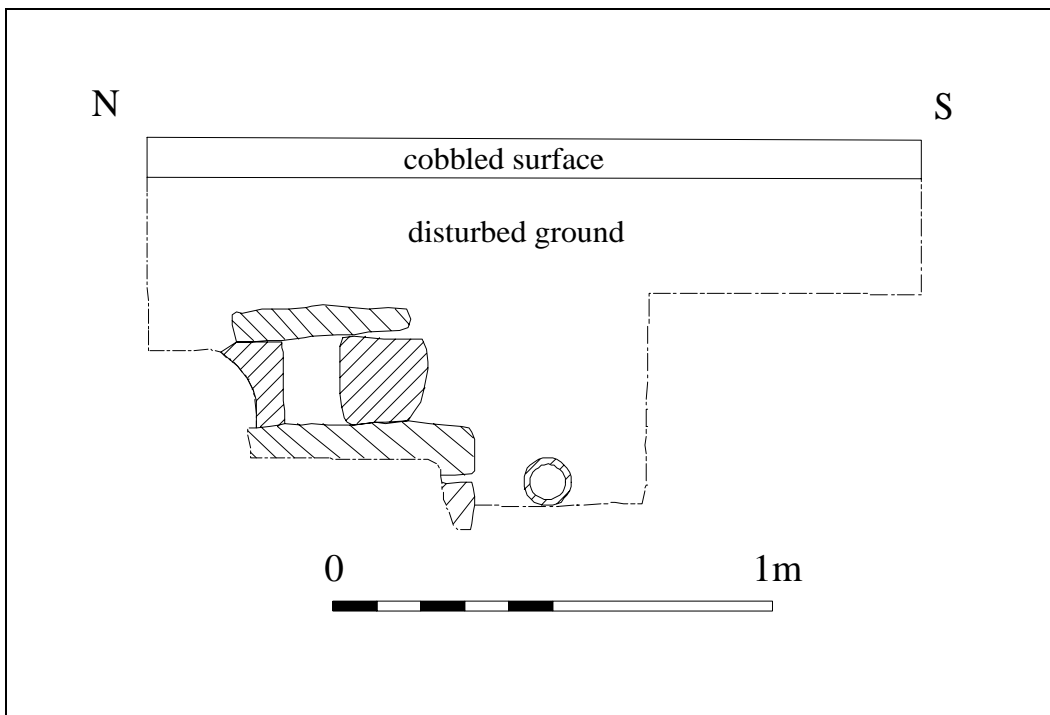


Figure 9. Test pit 2 composite profile

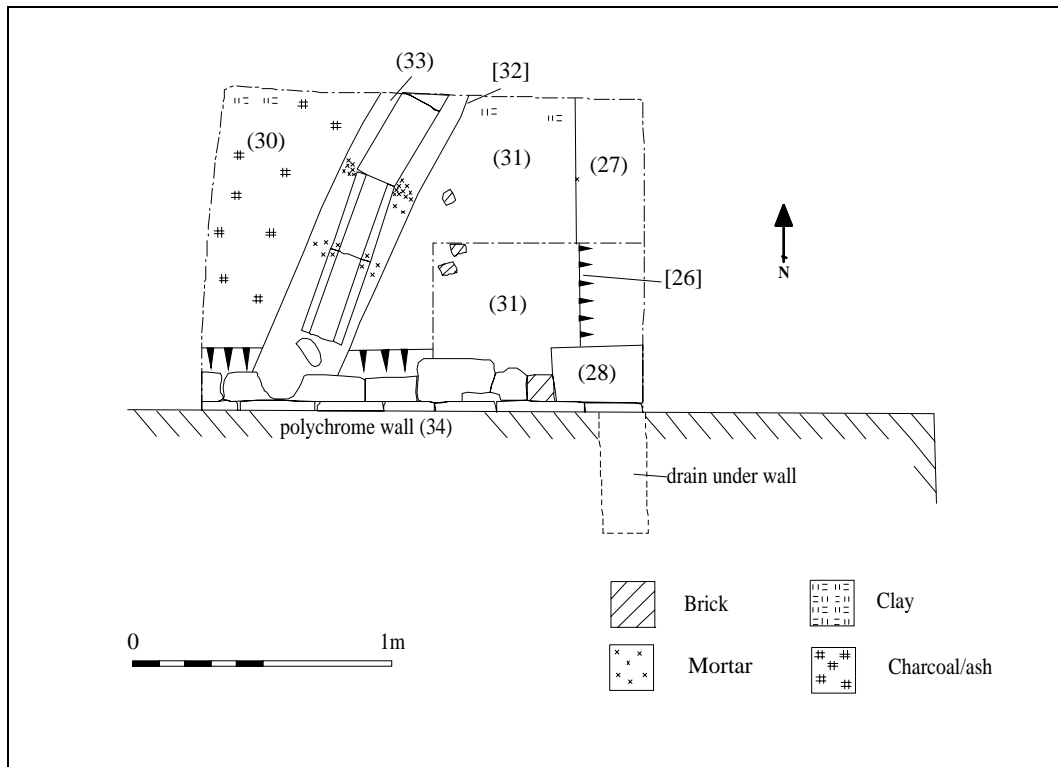


Figure 10. Test pit 4 plan

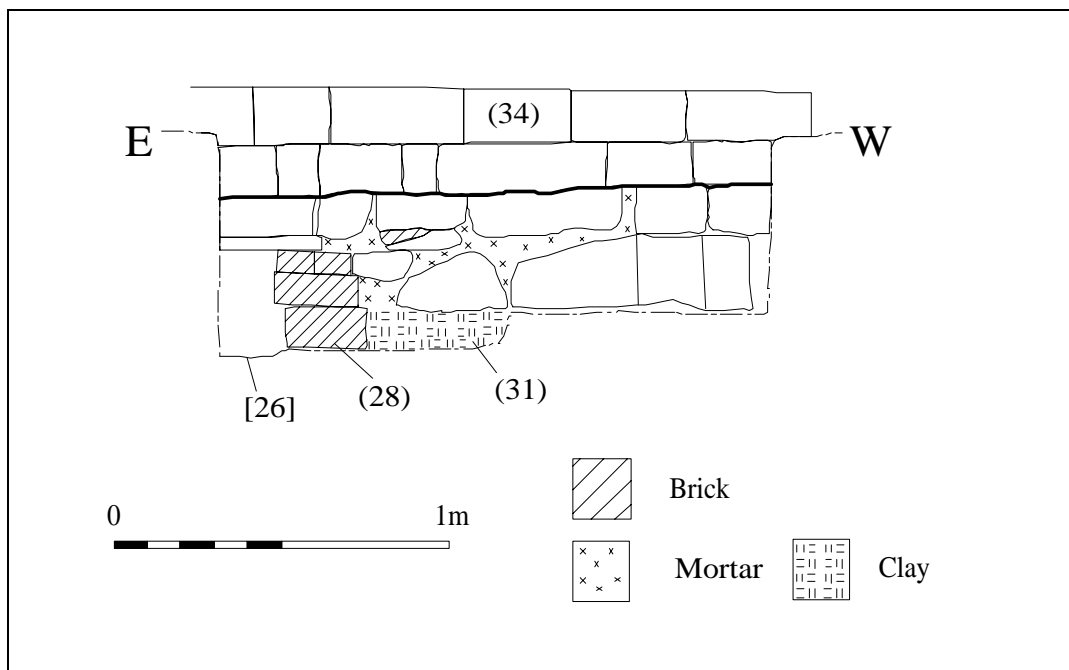


Figure 11. Test pit 4 section and lower courses of polychrome banded wall

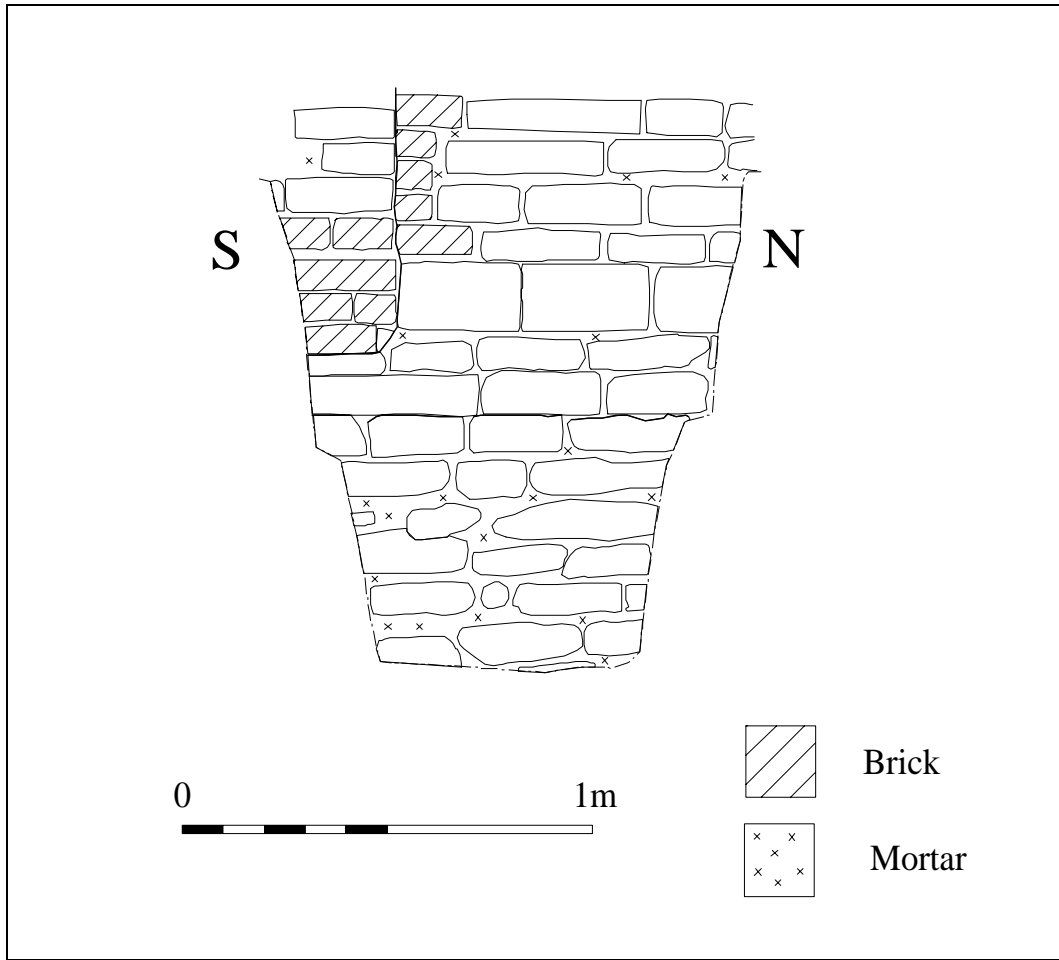


Figure 12. Test pit 5 section