

**An Archaeological Evaluation
of the Ha-ha and stable block
at Launde Abbey,
Launde, Leicestershire.
NGR: SK 797 043**

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April 2007

Client: The Trustees of Launde Abbey

<p>Checked by Project Manager</p> <p>Signed: Date:.....</p> <p>Name:</p>
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of the Trustees of Launde Abbey by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire between the 20th and 30th of March 2007. The evaluation included four trenches around the Ha-ha in advance of restoration and six trenches in the orchard behind the grade II listed stable block in advance of building work. The Ha-ha and the area it encloses is part of a scheduled ancient monument whilst the orchard area contains a number of earthworks associated with earlier structures. Because of the archaeological interest and restrictions of intrusive work within a scheduled ancient monument DCMS (advised by English Heritage) and the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council requested the evaluation work.

Evidence for remains of the Priory walls were found to continue beyond the western limits of the Ha-ha suggesting the original buildings may be more extensive than previously thought. It was also noted that the Ha-ha ditch was relatively shallow and had not silted as much as expected. The earthworks behind the stable block closely followed the layout of the buildings identified on the Ordnance Survey maps and seen in later aerial photographs. They do not relate to any earlier features.

The report will be deposited with the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council under Accession number X.A.113.2006.

1. Introduction

Launde Abbey is located in east Leicestershire near to the border with Rutland. The site, which is built upon the remains of the 12th century Augustinian Priory of St. John the Baptist, is set within extensive parklands. It was converted into a mansion house in the second half of the 16th century partially re-using existing elements of the former claustral buildings. Modifications and rebuilding have taken place since that time with substantial work being undertaken in the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition to the main house there are a number of other buildings and landscaped features that together create an extensive historic landscape (fig. 1). The grounds to the north and west of the house, including the early 19th century Ha-ha and the area it encloses, are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM ref.137). The stable block, to the south of the house, is a listed grade II structure.

This report covers the latest results in a programme of work carried out at Launde Abbey as part of a scheme to update and extend accommodation. This latest phase, covering two separate pieces of work, involved a small-scale trial excavation of the Ha-ha to the west of the present abbey buildings. It was proposed that the Ha-ha should be restored to its original profile by removing any accumulated soil at the base of the ditch, repairing the stone retaining wall and removing the unsightly barbed wire fence. As a precaution the DCMS, with advice from English Heritage, requested that a small-scale evaluation take place in order to inform the restoration programme (fig. 2). Because of its Scheduled status any intrusive work had to be carried out under archaeological supervision. The second part of this evaluation was in advance of

proposed building work to the east of the stable block that will provide additional accommodation for the Church of England retreat house. A number of clearly defined earthworks survive in what is now an orchard, which relate to structures noted on the Ordnance Survey maps as late as 1960 (fig. 1, 3 and 4). The Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, recommended that six evaluation trenches be located to target the earthworks and any potentially earlier structures that may survive beneath them.

2. Background

Archaeological and Historical

A detailed Historic Building Assessment discussing the structure, history and development of Launde Abbey was prepared by ULAS in 2005 (ULAS report no. 2005-096). Intrusive archaeological evaluation in and around the Laundry Yard was undertaken in December 2005 in relation to a separate planning/listed building application (ULAS report no. 2006-016).

Topographical and Geographical

Launde Abbey is located approximately 21km east of Leicester in the Harborough district of Leicestershire (NGR: SK 797 043) close to the Rutland county boundary. The local topography comprises a north east facing valley to the south of the River Chater with a former spring or watercourse being visible as a series of artificial ponds associated with the historic building. The geology is Lower Jurassic Marlstone comprising inter-bedded limestone and sandstone deposits. To the south and east, in the area of the stable block and walled garden, the marlstone is overlain by Upper Lias clays. To the north, siltstone of the Dyrham formation underlies the marlstone and has been exposed in the valley bottom (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain map sheet 156).

3. Archaeological Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

The Ha-ha:

- To determine the original profile of the Ha-ha. It was intended that the original turf line would be identified rather than the underlying cut in order to avoid exposing/affecting any earlier buried archaeological remains that may survive within the area.
- To establish the extent, character and date of the accumulated fill within the ditch in order to permit an assessment of the archaeological significance, if any, of this material.
- To expose and record representative sections of the retaining wall to permit an assessment of the condition of the fabric and the scope of any repairs that may be necessary.
- To produce an archive and report on the results.

The stable block:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits based upon documentary evidence, earthwork survey and intrusive archaeological evaluation.

- To establish the character, extent and date range of any archaeological deposits discovered.
- To produce an archive and report on the results.

4. Methodology

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (1999)*.

The Ha-ha trenches were excavated using hand tools only because of the delicate nature of the wall and the potential for overcutting the original ditch profile. Four 1.5m wide trenches were excavated: one each on the north and south legs of the Ha-ha and two along the west facing wall (fig. 2).

All sections of the Ha-ha trenches were drawn at the scale of 1:10. The exposed faces of the retaining wall were also recorded in elevation at the same scale. Plans of each trench were drawn at 1:20. All sections/elevations were levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

The six evaluation trenches to the rear of the stable block were excavated using a JCB 3C mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket on the back actor. Turf and topsoil were removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision down to the uppermost archaeological deposits. The trenches were a minimum of 1.8m wide and were located as closely as possible to that stated in the Design Specification except where trees and services prevented this (fig. 4).

All trenches to the rear of the stable block were recorded using a standard pro-forma trench recording sheet. Where appropriate measured plans of all archaeological features were also drawn at a scale of 1:20 whilst section were drawn at 1:10. All sections/elevations were levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. 35mm black and white prints and colour slides were used to create the primary record with a number of working shots also being taken using a digital SLR camera.

5. Results

The Ha-ha

As discussed above four trenches were excavated around the Ha-ha. Each trench was 1.5m wide and extended out from the retaining wall to the full height of the ditch slope.

Ha-ha south evaluation trench

Located on the south facing leg of the Ha-ha this trench measured 1.5 x 2.6m with a maximum depth of 0.6m (fig.5, plate 1). At the top of the slope the turf was removed to reveal a mixed layer of dark grey brown silty clay containing many small fragments

of ironstone rubble (23) which appeared to be the original subsoil layer. Halfway down the slope, partially set into (23) was a band of closely laid unworked ironstone blocks (24) which followed the slope downwards until the cut levelled out approximately 1m from the face of the Ha-ha wall. At this point a dirty deposit of trampled natural silty clay (25) with ironstone fragments was exposed. The Ha-ha retaining wall sat directly on top of this layer which, despite being unexpectedly shallow at 0.6m below current ground level, appeared to be the original cut depth of the ditch.

The Ha-ha wall was quite well laid at this point with an attempt at producing decorative banding using different sized faced blocks of limestone. Occasional use of more roughly shaped ironstone blocks at the base of the wall indicate that the first two courses may have been below the ground meaning that the current soil depth is only 0.1m higher than originally intended. Grey, probably Portland, mortar is visible in places although many of the joints look dry. A mortared capping of modern blue bricks laid on their sides as a continuous row of headers tops the wall.

Ha-ha south west evaluation trench

Located at the south end of the west facing leg of the Ha-ha this trench measured 1.5 x 2.6m with a maximum depth of 0.32m (fig. 6, plate 2). Removal of the turf layer revealed a layer of clayish silt and ironstone rubble (6) covering the remains of an ironstone wall (8). This wall consisted of three surviving rubble courses of roughly faced ironstone enclosing an ironstone and limestone rubble core. It appeared to have been shaped or demolished to follow the profile of the Ha-ha ditch which continued to descend from the edge of the lowest course which was approximately 1m from the Ha-ha wall. The length of exposed wall was in line with the south wall of the southern wing of the main house 24m to the east.

A dirty natural silty clay (12) similar to that seen in the south trench was observed extending from beneath wall (8) to the base of the Ha-ha retaining wall. Much of the Ha-ha wall at this point had been rebuilt quite recently as it was constructed on top of a wide concrete foundation. Although some attempt at decorative banding had been made the quality of the work was not as high as along the south wall despite reusing the original stones, most of the joints were also filled with a hard greyish pink mortar. The Ha-ha wall was tilting back slightly with some courses being more prominent than others. The top of the wall was capped by modern blue brick laid with the headers facing outwards.

Ha-ha north west evaluation trench

Located at the north end of the west facing leg of the Ha-Ha this trench measured 1.5 x 3m with a maximum depth of 0.5m (fig. 7, plate 3). This trench was very similar to the south western trench with a rubble layer (14) beneath the turf overlying the remains of a coursed rubble ironstone wall (16). Worn fragments of probably 14th century glazed floor tile were recovered from layer (14). As with the south west trench this wall had been dismantled to follow the profile of the Ha-ha ditch and had a similar depth to the base of its foundations which were set in a creamy yellow clay. Either side of wall (16) was a mid greyish brown clayish silt subsoil (15). At the lowest extent of wall (16) a band of ironstone rubble in a creamy yellow clay matrix (18) [19] was observed running from north to south. As this feature was not excavated it was not clear if (16) cut across this feature or if it related to an overcutting episode

during the construction of the Ha-ha. The length of exposed wall was on the same alignment as the north wall of the northern wing of the main house 24m to the east.

A dirty natural mix of grey brown clayish silt and creamy yellow clay (20) covered the base of the Ha-ha ditch up to the retaining wall which had been built on top of this layer. The Ha-ha wall at this point had clearly been rebuilt using many original stones but not in the original positions, the occasional blue brick had also been used. Some of the larger joints had been heavily filled with a hard grey mortar with one particularly thick joint having a scratched inscription: *This wall was rebuilt by Mirfield...* the remaining text, which may contain a date, is badly worn and illegible. The Ha-ha wall was tilting back slightly with some courses being more prominent than others. The top of the wall was capped by modern blue brick headers.

Ha-ha north trench

Located on the north facing leg of the Ha-Ha this trench measured 1.5 x 3m with a maximum depth of 0.25m (fig. 8, plate 4). Removal of a consistent 0.1m layer of turf down the slope of the ditch revealed a similar thickness of mid grey brown clayish silt and rubble (4) laid directly on the subsoil (5). At the base of the ditch was a cut [3] containing a dark orangey grey clayish silt with large angular lumps of ironstone and limestone (2). This fill extended across to the base of the Ha-ha although the full depth was not seen at this point as it was decided not to excavate this archaeological feature any further. A small number of large ironstone and limestone blocks were laid down the bank in an apparently random manner.

The lowest visible course of the Ha-ha retaining wall consisted of large roughly shaped blocks of ironstone with smaller stones between. Above this were two courses of ironstone or limestone similar in size to those used in the rest of the Ha-ha. Brick had also been used to fill in some gaps along the top course. Above this were nine courses of late 19th or early 20th century blue bricks laid with the headers exposed in a herringbone style. Trimmed bricks filled the gaps between the herringbone pattern and the headers laid as a capping along the top. The gaps at the base of the bricks were left open in most places, presumably to aid drainage. Because the bricks had been laid without the use of mortar entire courses have slipped forwards due to the pressure of earth behind them.

The Stable Block

Six evaluation trenches of varying length were excavated in the orchard behind, and to the east of, the listed grade II stable block. The trenches were placed to target the visible earthworks and the locations of known, but now demolished, structures. The orchard is currently turfed with a number of mature apple trees in the south east corner and an avenue of younger trees running down the slope from east to west. A series of prominent earthworks correspond to the locations of known buildings but it was not clear if they also related to earlier underlying features that may predate the known buildings (fig. 3). The ground follows the slope of the valley down from east to west with a drop of approximately 2.5 m across the orchard. Because the trees had to remain in position it was necessary to adjust the location of some of the trenches from their original specified positions.

Trench 1

Trench 1, measuring 24.5m long with a maximum width of 2m, was located between the avenue of young trees towards the northern edge of the site following an east to west alignment. The trench had a maximum depth of 0.52m and a minimum of 0.2m. It was placed in order to evaluate a number of earthworks and the locations of two structures, one built between 1904 and 1930 and the other between 1949 and 1960 (fig. 3). The presence of the trees meant that the precise trench location had to be moved slightly to the south so that only a small portion of the earlier building would be exposed.

Beneath the turf a thin layer of dark grey brown clayish silt topsoil was removed to reveal a disturbed layer of similar subsoil with a greater proportion of clay and occasional building rubble (36). At the extreme eastern end within this subsoil layer was a tip of dark ashy silty material containing late 19th and early 20th century bottles and pottery (37). The subsoil varied in depth along the trench giving rise to the earthwork although no features could be seen within this deposit. Removal of the subsoil revealed undisturbed creamy yellow natural clay showing no evidence of either building or any archaeological deposits that may predate them. A narrow iron pipe entered the trench from the northern side of the trench and ran down to exit at the western end; this was left in situ as it was not clear if it was still in use.

Apart from the tip of modern pottery (37) no archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2, measuring 9.1m x 2.1m, was located on a north to south alignment at the eastern edge of the site to target the cart track seen as an earthwork that continues eastwards away from the site and up the hillside. This track is noted on the Ordnance Survey map in figure 1. The trench had a minimum depth of 0.29m and a maximum of 0.45m.

A similar depth of topsoil and subsoil (27) to Trench 1 was noted in this trench. A narrow wall (28) of red bricks measuring 70mm x 106mm x 230mm laid as headers on all three surviving courses entered the trench from the western side and continued for approximately 1.5m. Wall (28) cut a small post hole [30] (31) which was excavated but no dateable evidence was recovered. Two very shallow features (32) [33] and (34) [35] were also excavated but nothing, apart from coal fragments, was recovered from their ashy fills. Cutting across the northern end of the trench was the cart track consisting of ironstone, limestone and brick rubble within a creamy clay matrix (29). This was an extremely hard deposit with a slight camber rising from the south.

No other archaeological features or deposits were noted within this trench.

Trench 3

Trench 3, measuring 15.6m x 2.4-2.6m, was on a north west to south east alignment located in the south east corner of the orchard to investigate the building identified as a sawmill on some editions of the OS maps. The trench had a minimum depth of 0.08m and a maximum of 0.36m (fig. 9, plate 5). The large apple trees prevented the

trench from being located across the northern edge of the building as originally specified making it necessary to shift it slightly southwards.

Removing the turf and topsoil revealed only a small amount of subsoil for the first 4m at the east end of the trench. Beneath this was a clean creamy yellow clay natural with no evidence of archaeological features. Beyond this point the topsoil gave way to a rough fragmentary brick surface which was removed to reveal a layer of unworked ironstone blocks (45) laid directly on natural clay. Layer (45) also contained a small number of faced pieces of limestone along with a number of red bricks. A strip of stones within layer (45) was lifted to try and understand how this had been laid and what, if anything, it had been laid on. A 0.5m wide strip was lifted along the entire length to reveal that the layer sat on clean and undisturbed natural clay.

At the western limit of layer (45) was a circular section ceramic land drain running along the eastern edge of a red brick wall foundation (44) with two courses visible running from north east to south west. The bricks measured 70mm x 110mm x 232mm and were laid in English Bond (alternating courses of headers and stretchers) using a lime mortar. Wall (44) formed the eastern wall of the sawmill building and contained a brick-lined possible sump or pit feature (43) using the same type of bricks as in (44). The sump measured approximately 1.6m x 1.8m and was backfilled with building rubble and silty clay which was not excavated. This feature cut into and was surrounded by natural creamy yellow clay. 3m west of wall (44) was another similar wall foundation following the same alignment with a red brick surface (42) laid on a bed of ash and mortar to the west. Removal of a small area of this bedding layer showed it to be approximately 0.02m thick and laid on top of natural clay. The western edge of surface (44) butted up against a blue brick surface (41) which appeared to border the remains of the cart track (40) also seen in Trenches 2 and 4.

A small amount of modern pottery was recovered from the topsoil during excavation although no dateable evidence was found relating to any recorded contexts.

Trench 4

Trench 4, measuring 2.1-2.4m x 10m, was excavated along a north west to south east alignment and located to cut across the cart track noted in Trenches 2 and 3. The trench had a minimum depth of 0.36m and a maximum of 0.45m.

The topsoil and subsoil were similar to that seen in the other trenches as were the depths across the trench. Running across the centre of the trench was the cart track which measured between 2.8m and 2.9m wide and consisted of the same ironstone, limestone and brick rubble noted in Trenches 2 and 3. A small area of building rubble could be seen in the south east corner which was not excavated.

A small amount of modern pottery was recovered from the subsoil during excavation.

Trench 5

Trench 5, measuring 2.3-2.6m x 14m, was excavated along an east to west alignment and located to investigate an earthwork feature bordering the positions of two structures, one probably dating to between 1904 and 1930 and the other between 1949 and 1960 (fig. 3). The trench had a minimum depth of 0.1m and a maximum of 0.5m (fig. 10, plate 6). The trench should have continued for another metre westwards

down the slope towards the stable block but the ground had clearly been heavily disturbed by the installation of deep services and it was decided to stop excavating at this point.

As with all of the other trenches the topsoil and subsoil were of the same consistency and approximate depth. Removal of the subsoil revealed evidence of two structures: the first was a layer of ironstone, limestone and brick (39) running across the centre of the trench in a north east to south west direction. Some of the limestone had been faced to create blocks of a similar shape and size to those seen in the Ha-ha wall. Removal of a strip of stones showed them to be only one layer deep and set on top of natural clay. This surface was bound on both sides by a concrete foundation supporting the remains of a red brick single skinned wall. This foundation can be seen breaking through the grass to the north of the trench. A circular section land drain had been laid along the outer, uphill, wall in the same way as the drain in Trench 3. The second building was shown by the remains of two rectangular blocks of concrete with holes in the centre to support steel stanchions possibly for a dutch barn type of building.

A land drain was observed running down the slope from the western edge of the brick-walled building down through the middle of the trench. A variety of modern pottery was recovered from the subsoil as was a Collyweston slate which may relate to earlier buildings on or near to this site. No other archaeological features or deposits were noted within this trench.

Trench 6

Trench 6, measuring 2.1-2.5m x 8.1m, was excavated along an east to west alignment and was located to investigate the survival of remains of a structure predating 1884, the date of the first OS map. The location of a wooden shed and the proximity of oil storage tanks meant that the size and position of this trench had to be slightly modified so that it only partially covered this feature. The trench had a minimum depth of 0.12m and a maximum of 0.25m.

Much of this trench appeared to have been heavily disturbed and had been backfilled with areas of hard mortar rubble and loose red sand. Because of this and the potential for damaging existing live services it was decided to abandon this trench after the removal of the topsoil and subsoil.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

6. Discussion

The Ha-ha

The Ha-ha appears to be much shallower than expected with only around 0.1m of silted material covering the original ground level at the base of the ditch. Being this shallow would not prevent sheep from jumping across onto the lawned area, which is probably why the barbed wire was erected in the 1950s. The presence of a modern brick capping around the top may indicate that the upper courses of the retaining wall have been modified at some point resulting in a reduced height.

The stone layer (24) seen in the south trench appears to be redeposited demolition rubble. Almost certainly it was laid along the profile of the Ha-ha ditch possibly to act as a revetment to prevent erosion although the slope is relatively shallow and should present little problem in terms of soil erosion. The stone may simply be placed there as an easy way of hiding any stone found during the construction of the Ha-ha. The stones in the north trench may also be a similar attempt at disposing of unwanted stone.

The two walls seen along the western leg of the Ha-ha are clear evidence of the original profile of the ditch as they have been shaped to follow this line. The ditch continues below the lowest course of these walls indicating that the foundations are relatively shallow and would not be much more than a metre below the current ground level along the front of the mansion. Although the mansion is some distance away it seems likely that the walls seen in the trenches do extend from the mansion, across the lawn and Ha-ha and out into the parkland. If this is the case then the wall in the south west trench could be the southern wall of one of the claustral buildings, possibly a dormitory if the priory followed a typical plan and the postulated plan shown in figure 2. The wall in the north western trench could belong to the southern wall of the church nave although a depression in the turf above the wall extends westwards away from the trench and turns southwards possibly to join up with the wall in the south west trench.

It is unclear what the function or date of the cut [19] in the north western trench is but as it could be seen on both sides of the wall it seems likely that it would predate it. No floor surfaces were visible in either of the two western trenches despite fragments of glazed floor tile being found within the overlying rubble layer (14). It would seem that these walls and surrounding surfaces were effectively demolished either before or at the time of the Ha-ha construction.

The northern evaluation trench which may lie within the nave contained no sign of any floor surfaces apart from a fragment of floor tile. The cut [3] containing the base of the current retaining wall could relate to a much earlier wall as the lowest course of stones are unlike any others seen around the Ha-ha. Alternatively, because this section has been extensively rebuilt this feature may be part of this reconstruction phase.

Overall it is clear that the layout of the Priory buildings are rather more extensive than was expected and that instead of forming a boundary to the western claustral range of buildings the Ha-ha actually cuts through them. Any further work on the ditch or retaining wall would therefore disturb any surviving archaeological deposits that are present.

The stable block

The key result of the work behind the stable block was that it appears that the visible earthworks belong to the documented structures which do not overlie any other significant archaeological features or deposits.

Despite having to be moved, Trench 1 should have caught the south eastern corner of the older building in this area but no trace was observed apart from the metal service pipe. Despite not seeing this it was clear that no other archaeological features were

present within the trench and that it is likely that the buildings are the first ones in this location.

The small length of wall (28) observed in Trench 2 belongs to a small rectangular structure set at a slight angle to the sawmill. Both buildings are visible in an aerial photograph of the stable and orchard. The two shallow features [33] and [35] are likely to be modern as they contained a significant amount of coal and loose ashy material. The post hole is certainly older than the wall but without dating evidence little more can be said about this.

The building remains in Trenches 3 and 5 closely follow the plans shown on the OS map and seen in the aerial photographs. The cart track clearly crosses the orchard to meet the west side of the sawmill in Trench 3. The brick and stone surface (45) was probably some sort of open air hardstanding behind the mill. The two land drains along the uphill sides of these buildings indicate that they were susceptible to water flooding down the hill during wet weather. The later building in trench 5 appears to have been a fairly temporary structure and may have matched the building that Trench 1 was targeted at.

Comparatively recent groundwork, including landscaping and the installation of services, immediately to the east of the stable block and southwards to the Warden's house have removed any buried archaeological deposits in this area. It is also likely that the avenue of trees will have disturbed much of the remains, if there are any, of the structure near to Trench 1.

7. Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by the Reverend Tim Blewett on behalf of the Trustees of Launde Abbey. The Project was managed by Neil Finn and the fieldwork was carried out by Andrew Hyam and Matt Morris.

8. Site archive and results

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under accession code X.A.113.2006. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded on to the Archaeology Data Service website.

9. Bibliography and references

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Report Number 2006-081

ULAS 2006 *Design Specification for Archaeological Evaluation of the Ha-Ha
Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire.*

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Appendix 1
ULAS design specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for Archaeological Evaluation of the Ha-ha

Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire

NGR: SK 797 043

Client: Trustees of Launde Abbey

Planning Authority: Harborough District Council

1 Introduction

1.1 *Definition and scope of the specification*

This document is a design specification for an initial phase of archaeological field evaluation (AFE) of the early 19th century Ha-ha at Launde Abbey, in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning, para.30). The fieldwork specified below is intended to provide preliminary indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains that may be exposed and/or affected by the proposed restoration of the Ha-ha. The evaluation has been requested by DCMS (advised by English Heritage) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), in order to provide the information necessary to determine an application for Scheduled Monuments Consent for the proposed works.

1.2 The definition of archaeological field evaluation, taken from the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IFA S&G: AFE) is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

1.3 The document provides details of the work proposed by ULAS on behalf of the client, and should normally be submitted to the Planning Authority for approval before a costed scheme of archaeological investigation by ULAS is implemented.

2. Background

2.1 *Context of the Project*

- 2.1.1 Launde Abbey is a substantial country house in east Leicestershire built on the site of the Augustinian Priory of St. John the Baptist. Founded in the early 12th century, the priory passed into the possession of Thomas Cromwell at the dissolution; it has generally been referred to as Launde Abbey since that time. It was converted into a mansion house in the second half of the 16th century, apparently utilising elements of the former claustral buildings. The principal west front is attributable to the early 17th century, further substantial remodelling of the house occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. Launde Abbey lies at the centre of an extensive historic landscape. In addition to the fine 18th century stable block and other service accommodation, there is a substantial walled kitchen garden and glasshouses, landscaped formal gardens including a ha-ha, fishponds, an icehouse, wooded parkland, prospect and possible windmill mounds. The house and chapel are both grade II* listed buildings, the ha-ha and its urns, stable block, walled kitchen garden and cast iron-framed glasshouses are all grade II listed. The grounds to the north and west of the house, including the ha-ha and the area it encloses, are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM ref. 137).
- 2.1.2 Within the context of a wider scheme to update and extend the accommodation at Launde Abbey (dealt with under separate planning & listed building applications), which functions as a Church of England retreat house and conference centre, it is proposed to restore the early 19th century Ha-ha on the west side of the house. This will involve the removal of accumulated soil within the ditch to restore its original profile, repairs to the stone retaining wall, and removal of the wire fence constructed some time after 1957 to control grazing sheep.
- 2.1.3 The Ha-ha overlies part of the former priory, its north-south aligned leg corresponding approximately with the inferred position of the western claustral range. The northern east-west aligned leg of the Ha-ha is located within the area of the nave of the priory church. The retaining wall in this northernmost leg has been rebuilt at some stage in brick.

2.2 *Topographical and Geological Background*

- 2.2.1 Launde Abbey is located approximately 21km east of Leicester in the Harborough district of Leicestershire (National Grid Reference: SK 797 043), close to the county boundary with Rutland. The local topography comprises a NE facing valley to the south of the River Chater; a former spring/watercourse is visible as a series of artificial ponds associated with the historic building. The geology is Lower Jurassic Marlstone comprising inter-bedded limestone and sandstone deposits. To the south and east, in the area of the stable block and walled garden, the marlstone is overlain by Upper Lias clays. To the north, siltstone of the Dyrham formation, underlies the marlstone and has been exposed in the valley bottom. No drift deposits are recorded in the immediate vicinity (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain map sheet 156).

2.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

- 2.3.1 A detailed Historic Building Assessment, collating information on the structure, history and development of Launde Abbey was prepared by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in 2005 (ULAS report 2005-096). Reference to this should be made for further detail on the archaeological, historical and architectural background to the project.
- 2.3.2 Intrusive archaeological evaluation of the area in and around the Laundry Yard was undertaken at the end of 2005 in relation to a separate planning/listed building application (ULAS report 2006-016).

3. *Archaeological Objectives*

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation will be:
- To determine the original profile of the Ha-ha ditch. Ideally this will involve the identification of an original turf line rather than the underlying cut, in order to avoid exposing/affecting any earlier buried archaeological remains which are likely to survive within the area.
 - To establish the extent, character and date of the accumulated fill within the ditch in order to permit an assessment of the archaeological significance, if any, of this material.
 - To expose and record representative sections of the retaining wall to permit an assessment of the condition of the fabric and the scope of any repairs that may be necessary.

- To produce an archive and report on the results.

4. Methodology

4.1 General Methodology and Standards

- 4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1999).
- 4.1.2 Staffing, recording systems, health and safety provisions and insurance details are included below.
- 4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Planning authority and the Client, if required.

4.2 Trial Trenching Methodology

- 4.2.1 All trial trenches will be excavated using hand tools.
- 4.2.2 The accumulated fill within the Ha-ha ditch will be removed down to the original turf line, if this can be identified. This will expose the face of the retaining wall and profile of the ditch, but will not expose the underlying cut, in order to avoid exposing/affecting any earlier buried archaeological remains which are likely to survive within the area. The trenches will be backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.
- 4.2.3 Four 1.5m wide trial trenches will be excavated: one each on the north and south legs of the Ha-ha and two on the longer north-south aligned leg. The trenches will be positioned so as to provide a representative sample of the area, as indicated on the attached plan (Figure 2). The position of trenches may vary if site constraints necessitate this.
- 4.2.4 Trenches will be examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located will be planned at an appropriate scale. Archaeological features revealed in the base or side of the ditch will be recorded but not excavated. All plans will be tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.
- 4.2.5 Sections of each trench will be drawn at an appropriate scale, typically 1:10. The exposed face of the retaining wall will be recorded in elevation. All sections/elevations will be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark.
- 4.2.6 Trench locations will be recorded using an electronic distance measurer. These will then be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.
- 4.2.7 Any human remains will initially be left *in situ* and will only be removed if necessary for their protection, under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations.
- ##### **4.3 Recording Systems**
- 4.3.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.
- 4.3.2 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.
- 4.3.3 A site location plan based on current Ordnance Survey mapping (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a trench plan at appropriate scale, which will show the location of the areas investigated in relationship to the investigation area and OS grid.
- 4.3.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections and elevations will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be recorded.
- 4.3.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

4.3.6 This record will be compiled and checked during the course of the excavations.

5. Finds and Samples

5.1 The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.

5.2 All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to Leicestershire Museums Service for storage in perpetuity.

5.3 Before commencing work on the site, an accession number will be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist that will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.

5.4 During the fieldwork, different sampling strategies may be employed according to the perceived importance of the strata under investigation. Close attention will always be given to sampling for date, structure and environment. If significant archaeological features are sample excavated, the environmental sampling strategy is likely to include the following:

- i. A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.
- ii. Any buried soils or well sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.
- iii. Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.
- iv. Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.

5.5 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Planning Archaeologist. The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.

5.6 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labelled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

6. Report and Archive

6.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and copies will be dispatched to the Client (usually 2 copies, relevant Curator/Planning Archaeologist/SMR (up to 4 copies depending on request, Harborough District Council (1 copy) and English Heritage (as required)).

6.2 The report will include consideration of:-

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the evaluation.
- The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.
- The anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits.
- The anticipated archaeological impact of the current proposals.
- Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.

- Summary.
 - The location and size of the archive.
 - A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the potential of the archive for further analysis leading to full publication, following guidelines laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects* 2nd Edition (English Heritage).
- 6.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in *The Guidelines For The Preparation Of Excavation Archives For Long-Term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and *Standards In The Museum: Care Of Archaeological Collections* (MGC 1992) and *Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Archives and Assessments for all Finds* (other than fired clay objects) (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993) will usually be presented to within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7 Publication and Dissemination of Results

- 7.1 A summary of the results of the project will be submitted to the editor of the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for inclusion in the next edition of that publication. A more detailed report will be submitted for inclusion if the results of the evaluation warrant it.

8. Acknowledgement and Publicity

- 8.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.
- 8.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment.

9. Copyright

- 9.1 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

10. Timetable

- 10.1 It is anticipated that fieldwork will be completed in 3 day by 2 members of staff.
- 10.2 It is anticipated that the report will take 5 person days to complete. The on-site director/supervisor will carry out the post-excavation work, with time allocated within the costing of the project for analysis of any artefacts found on the site by the relevant in-house specialists at ULAS.

11. Health and Safety

- 11.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is attached as Appendix 1. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

A Risks assessment form will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

12. Insurance

- 12.1 All employees, consultants and volunteers are covered by the University of Leicester public liability insurance with Gerling Insurance Service Co. Ltd. and others (leading policy no. 62/99094/D). Professional indemnity insurance is with Sun Alliance, £10m cover, policy no. 03A/SA 001 05978. Employer's Liability Insurance is with Eagle Star, cover £10m. Copies of the certificates of insurance are provided.

13. Monitoring arrangements

- 13.1 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and Planning Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. At least one weeks notice will be given to the Planning Archaeologist before the commencement of the archaeological evaluation in order that monitoring arrangements can be made.
- 13.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.
- 13.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

14. Contingencies and unforeseen circumstances

- 14.1 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the project, ULAS shall inform the site agent/project manager, Client and the Planning Archaeologist and Planning Authority and prepare a short written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the Planning Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement an amended scheme of investigation on behalf of the client as appropriate.

15. Bibliography and References

- IFA 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* 1999 Institute of Field Archaeologists
- MAP 2 *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2nd edition) 1991 English Heritage
- MGC 1992 *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* 1992 Museums and Galleries Commission
- PPG16 *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* 1990 Department of the Environment
- RFG/FRG 1993 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Archives* 1993 Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700
- SMA 1993 *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for Use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* 1993 Society of Museum Archaeologists
- ULAS 2005 *Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire: Historic Building Assessment* 2005 ULAS Report Number 2005-096
- ULAS 2006 *Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire: Archaeological Evaluation* 2006 ULAS Report Number 2006-016

Figures and Plates

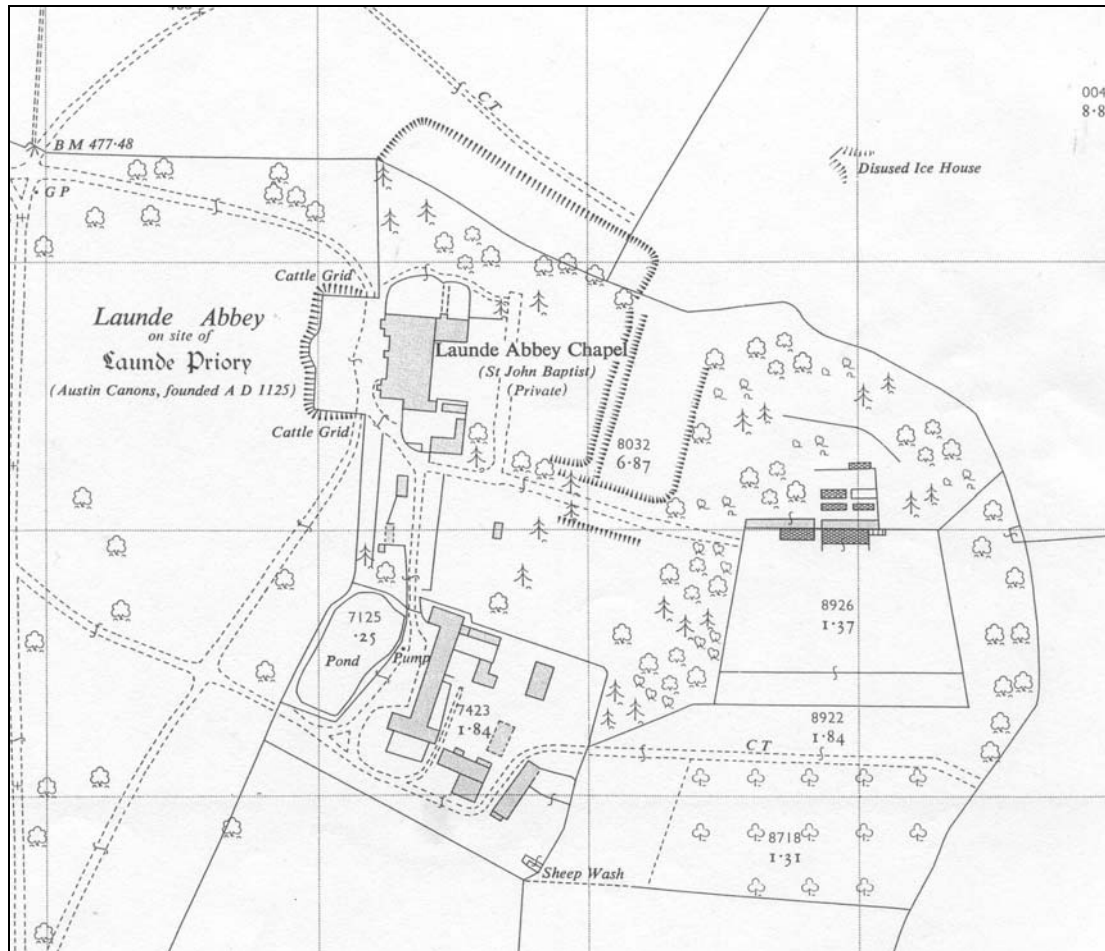


Figure 1. Location Plan showing position of Ha-ha on west side of Launde Abbey.
Extract from Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile Leicestershire sheet XXXIII.I5, published 1960.

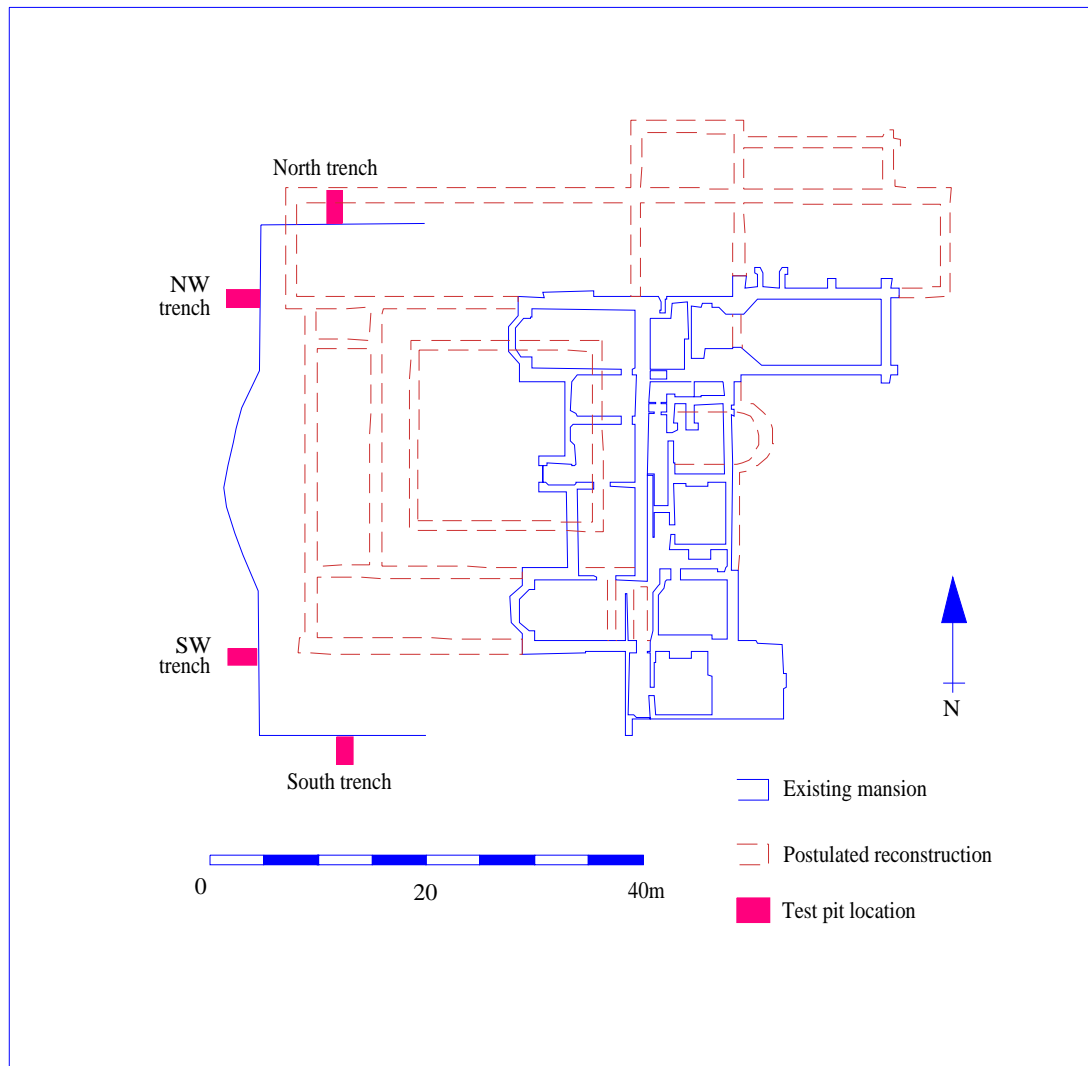


Figure 2. Ha-ha trench locations showing postulated position of Priory walls before excavation.

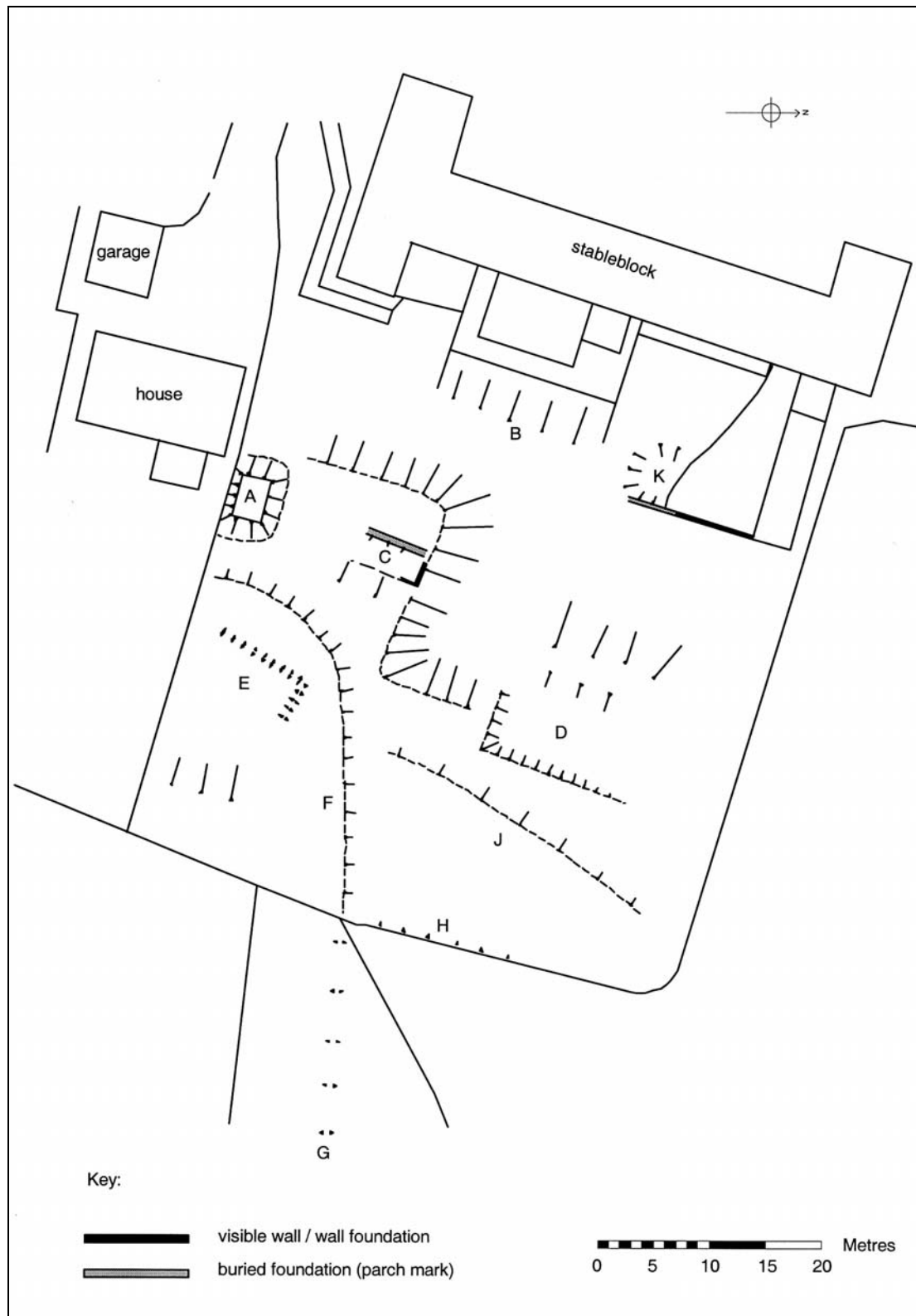


Figure 3. Earthworks to the east of the stable block.

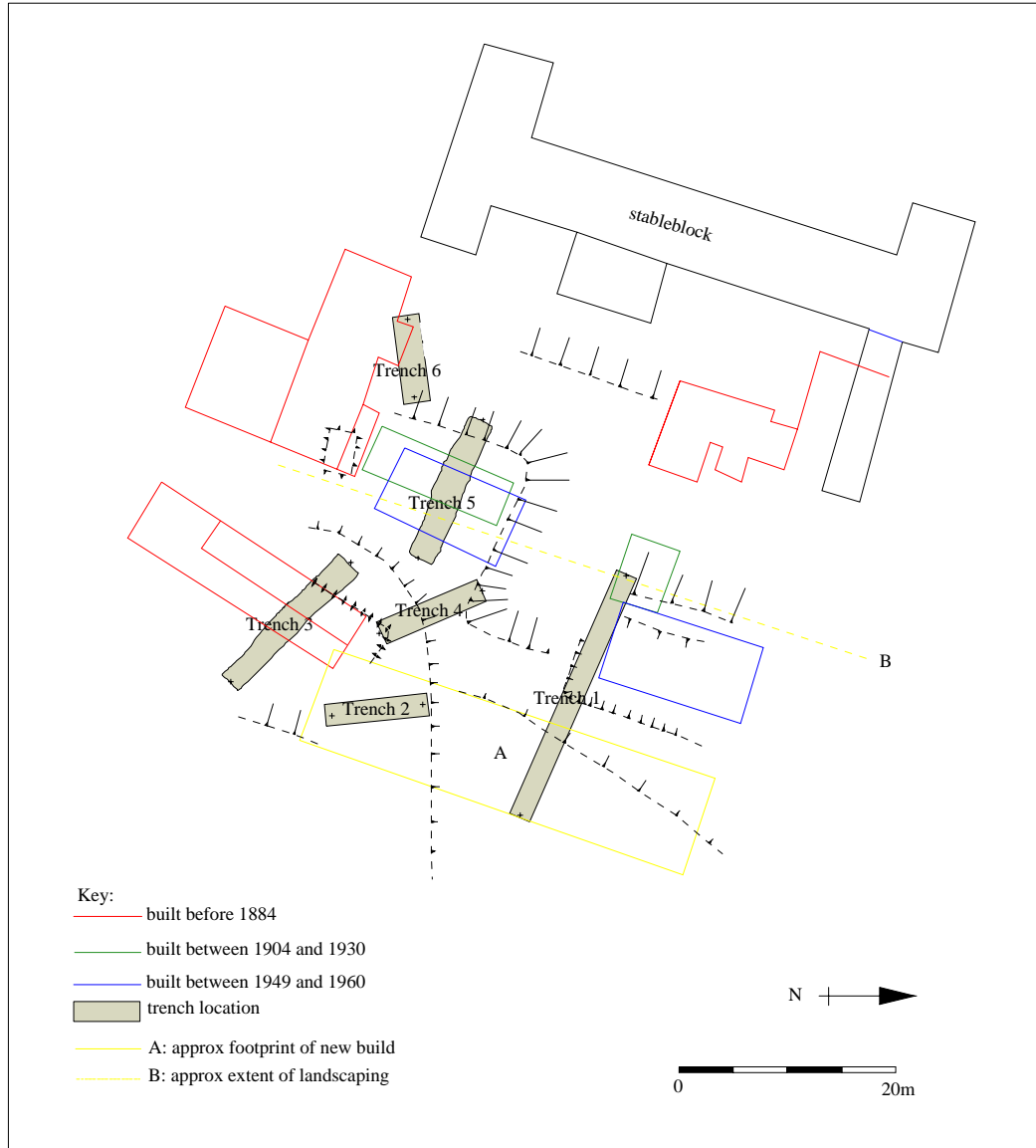


Figure 4. Stable block trench locations.

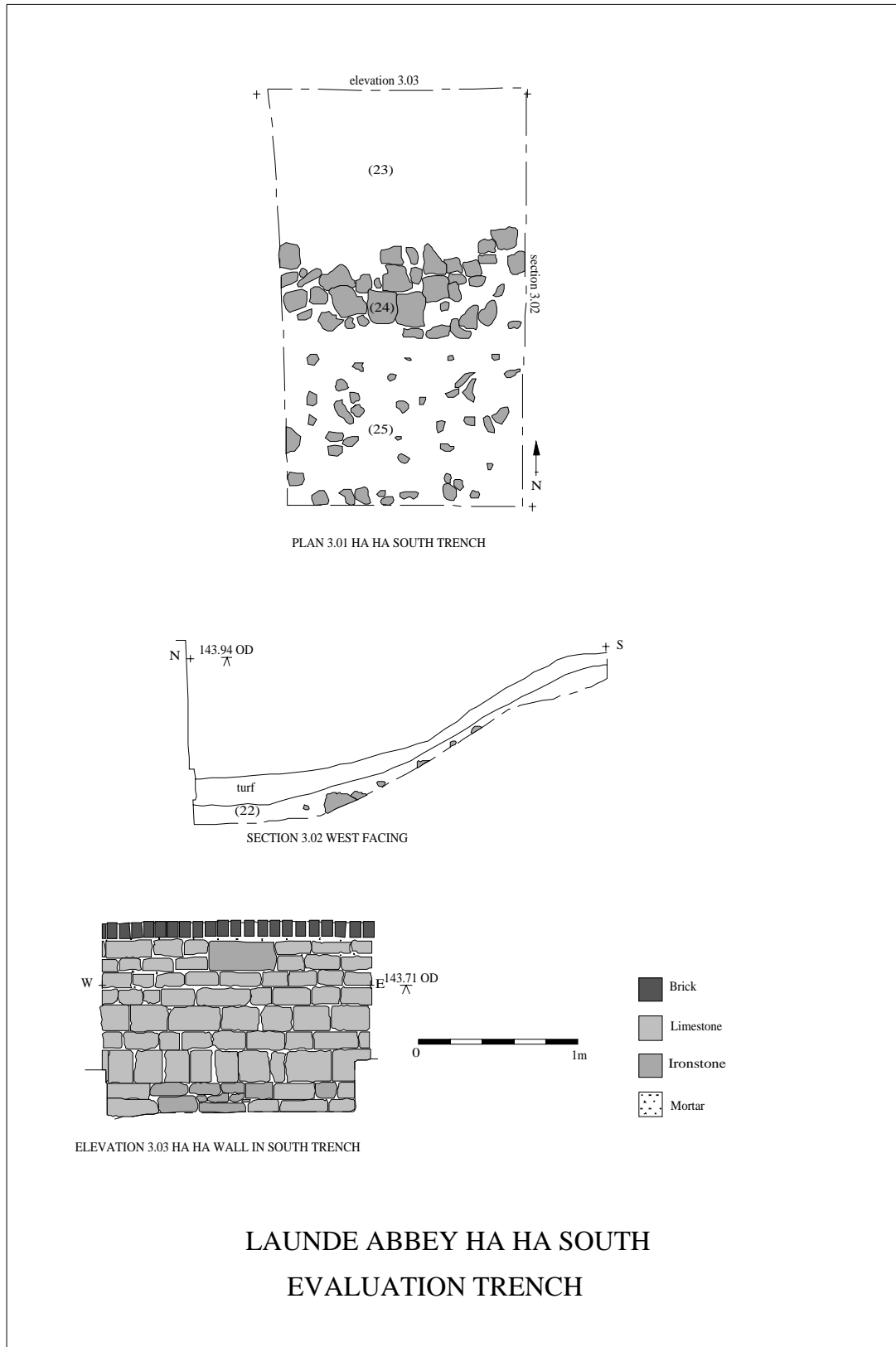


Figure 5.

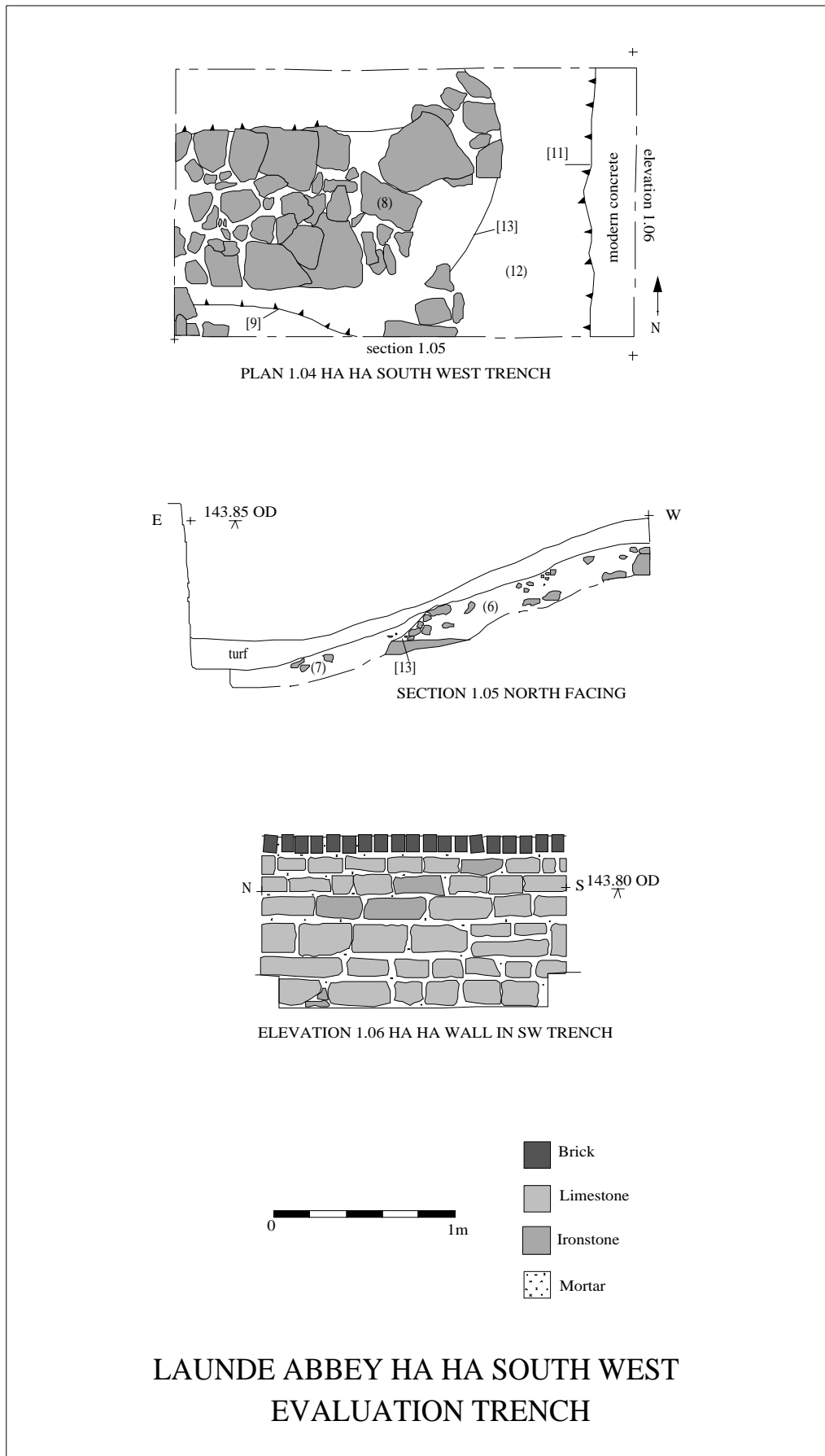


Figure 6.

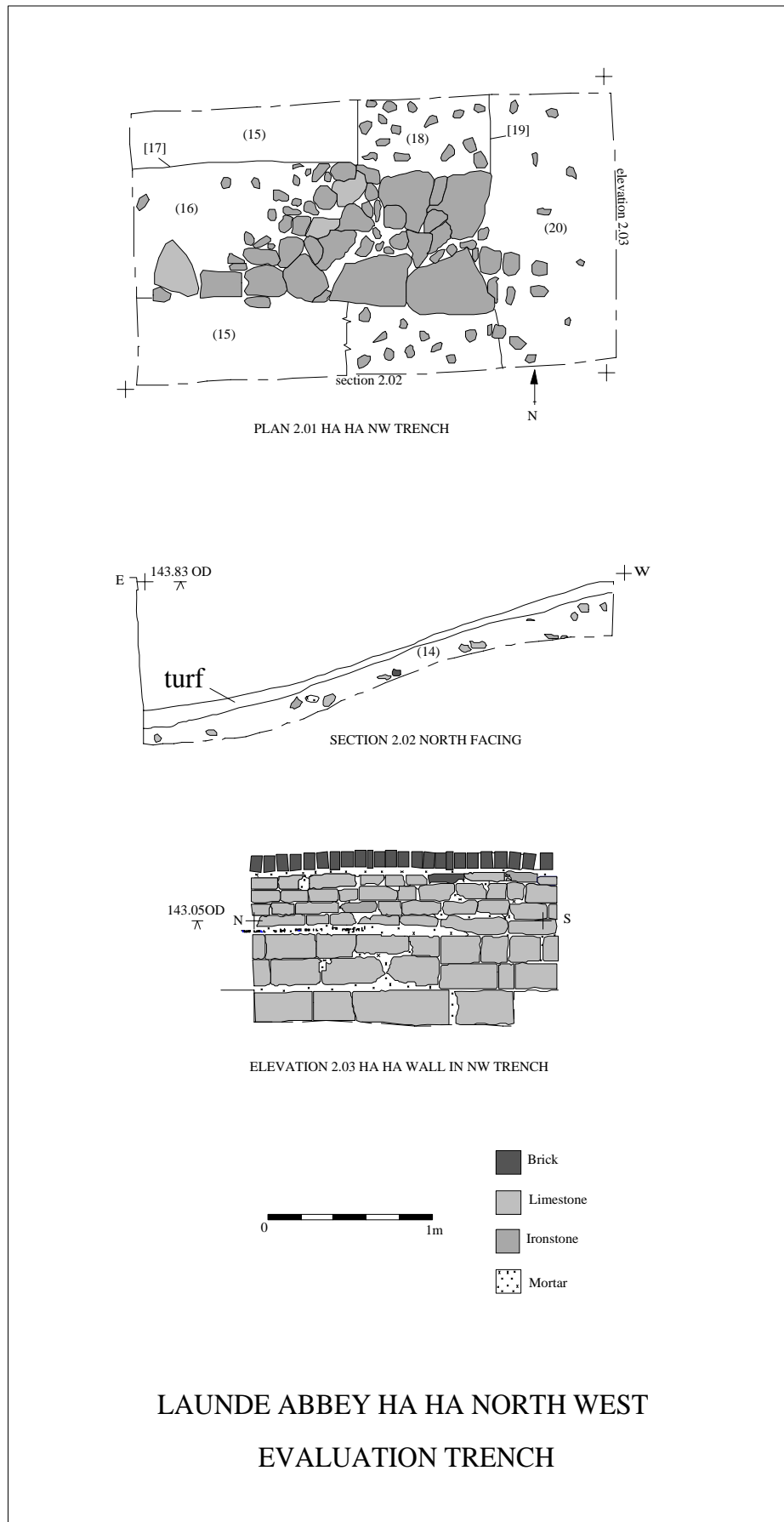


Figure 7.

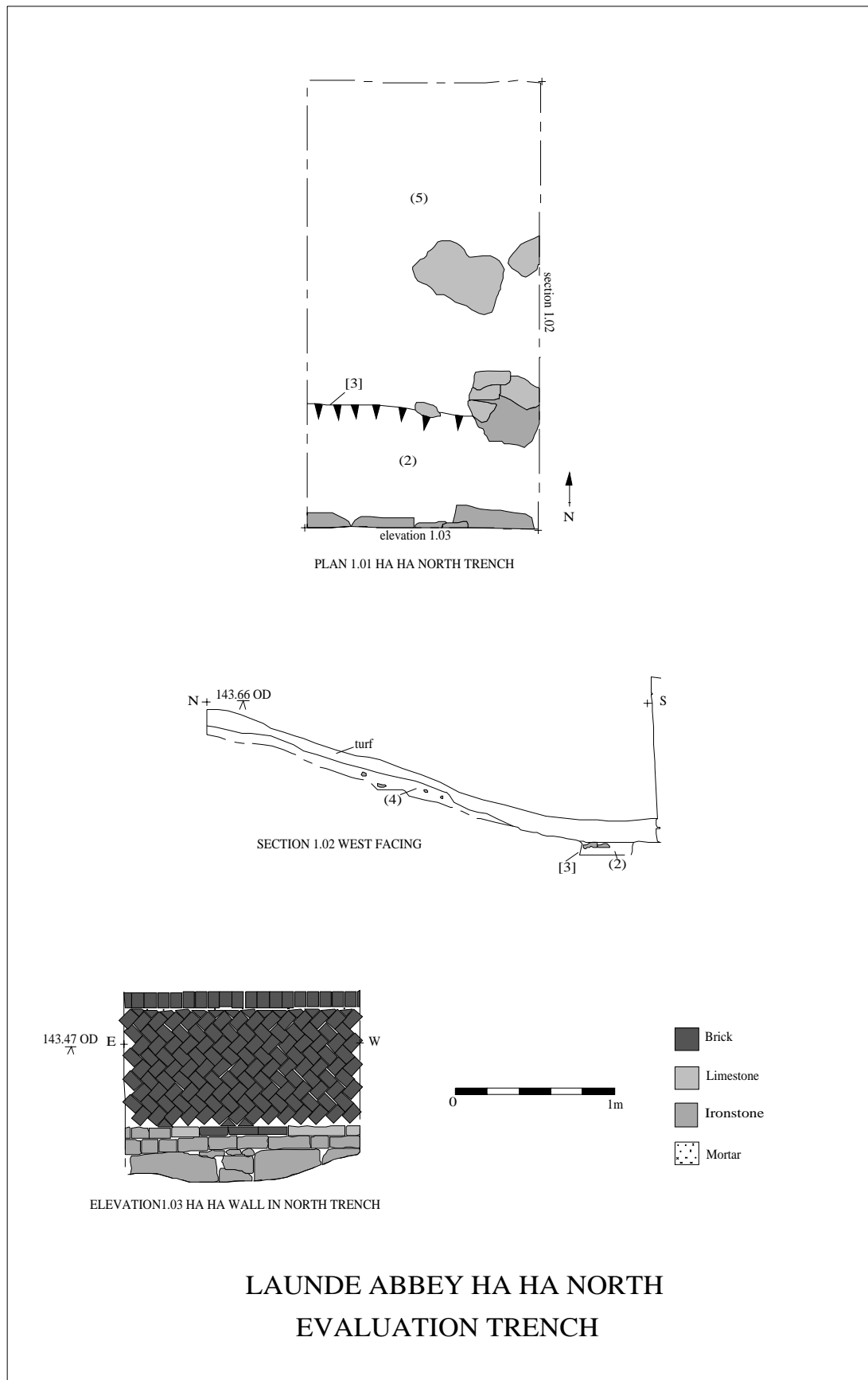


Figure 8.

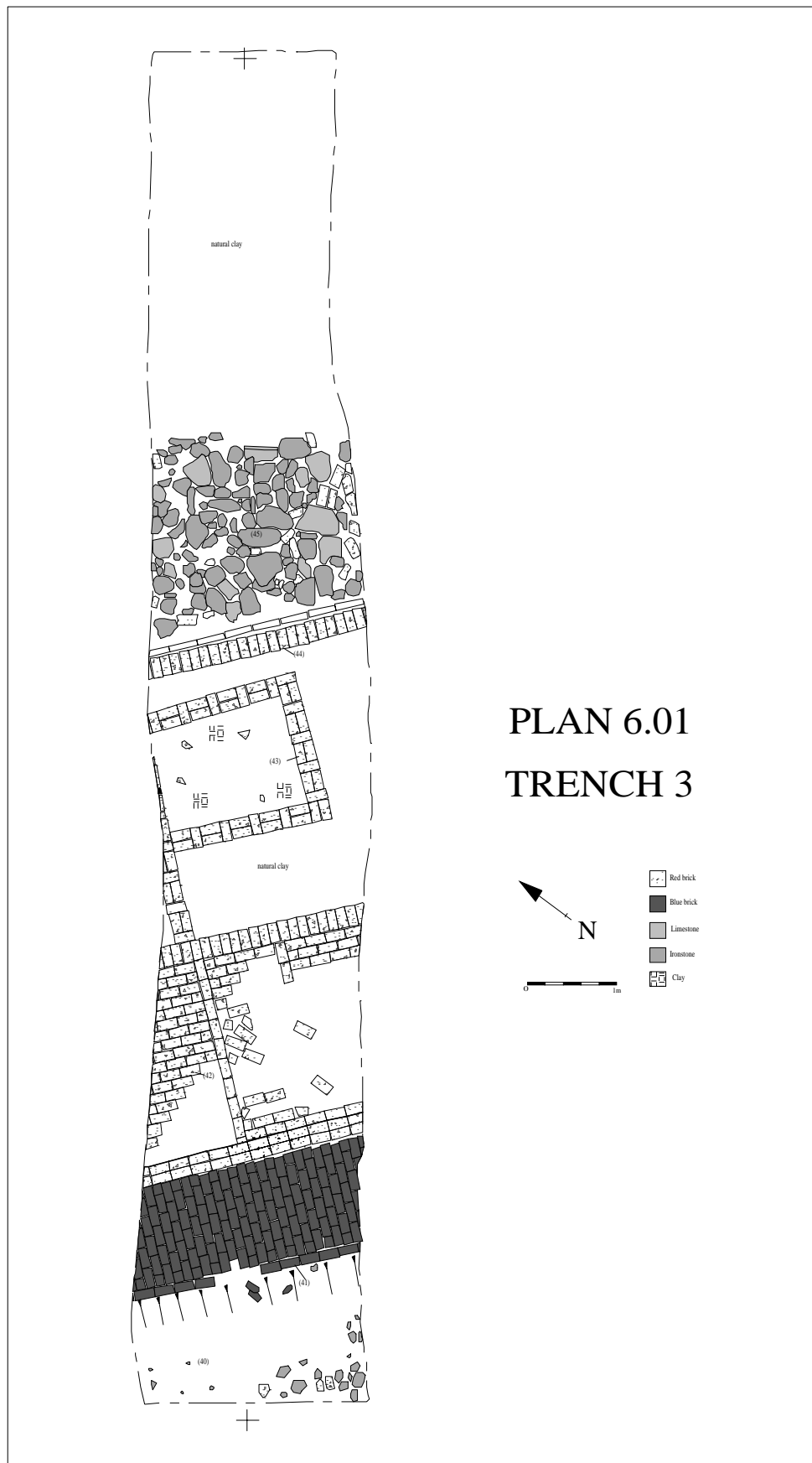


Figure 9.

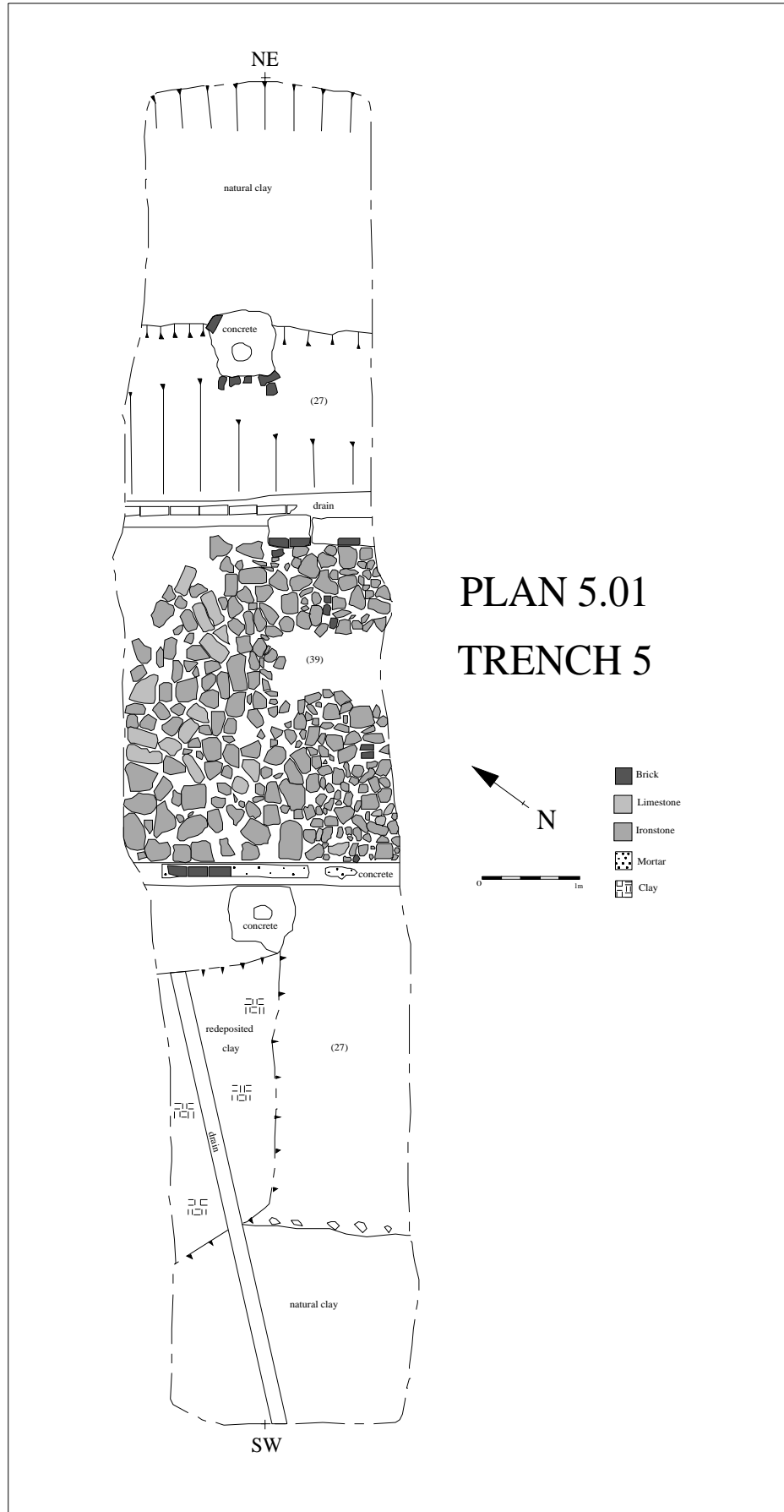


Figure 10.



Plate 1. Ha-ha south evaluation trench. Looking south.



Plate 2. Ha-ha south west evaluation trench. Looking north west.



Plate 3. Ha-ha north west evaluation trench. Looking east.



Plate 4. Ha-ha north evaluation trench. Looking south east.



Plate 5. Stable block. Trench 3. Looking east.



Plate 6. Stable block. Trench 5. Looking north.