



University of
Leicester

Archaeological Services

**Archaeological Monitoring Work
during repairs to the Ha-ha and
groundworks for the Oxford and
Cambridge Building at Launde Abbey,
Launde, Leicestershire.
NGR: SK 797 043**



Andrew Hyam

ULAS Report No. 2010-008
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Archaeological Monitoring Work
During repairs to the Ha-ha and groundworks for the
Oxford and Cambridge Building
At Launde Abbey,
Launde, Leicestershire.

NGR: SK 797 043

Andrew Hyam

For: The Trustees of Launde Abbey

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ULAS Report Number 2010-008

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Accession Number XA.113.2006

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Archaeological Monitoring Work during repairs to the Ha-ha and groundworks for the Oxford and Cambridge Building at Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire.

NGR: SK 797 043

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Summary

A programme of archaeological monitoring work was undertaken on behalf of the Trustees of Launde Abbey by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire between May and August 2009. The relatively poor condition of the Ha-ha wall meant that it required substantial rebuilding in a number of places. Because the area it encloses is part of a scheduled ancient monument DCMS (advised by English Heritage) and the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council requested that monitoring work take place during any restoration works. The monitoring work follows on from earlier evaluation work around the Ha-ha in 2007 which identified the presence of the Priory walls extending from the present building beyond the western extent of the Ha-ha.

The work revealed the Ha-ha wall to be constructed of a single skin of coursed stone rubble some of which had been well dressed whilst others showed clear chisel marks. Only one piece of worked stone was recovered. No further evidence of the Priory was seen and the infill behind the Ha-ha wall appears to consist of backfilled stone rubble and soil which may or may not relate to demolition material from the Priory.

As another part of the Launde Abbey redevelopment programme a small timber structure dating from the early 20th century, known as the Oxford and Cambridge Building, was relocated. This required the excavation of a shallow foundation trench for new footings. The footings were observed at the same time as the monitoring work was taking place on the Ha-ha. No archaeological features were found within this trench.

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

Introduction

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 (fig. 1). 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 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. In addition to the main retreat house there are a number of other buildings and landscaped features that together

create an extensive historic landscape (fig. 2). 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).

As part of the Launde Abbey redevelopment programme the Ha-ha wall in front of the main house required a number of significant repairs to the stonework and the removal of an unsightly barbed wire fence running around the top of the wall. This report continues from a small-scale evaluation of the Ha-ha carried out in March 2007 (ULAS report 2007-060) which produced evidence to suggest that the original priory walls extended westwards beyond the Ha-ha into the field beyond. Before this evaluation work it was thought that the Ha-ha had been built to the west of the outer limits of the Priory buildings. Following consultation with English Heritage, as advisors to DCMS and the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, it was agreed that the restoration work could proceed on condition that provision was made for monitoring of the works by a qualified archaeologist. The archaeological work involved the attendance during dismantling and subsequent rebuilding of the Ha-ha walls as detailed in the architect's specification.

The redevelopment programme also included the relocation and refurbishment of a small timber structure dating from the early 20th century, known as the Oxford and Cambridge Building. This was relocated from its position near to the retreat house to a site adjacent to the walled garden where it will be refurbished to provide up to date accommodation. A full survey and description of the building has been undertaken by ULAS (ULAS report 2006-080). Before the building could be moved new foundations had to be excavated for the brick footings, therefore whilst the Ha-ha was being monitored the foundation trenches were also recorded.

Background

Archaeological and Historical Background

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).

The Ha-ha

A ha-ha is a combination of a sunken wall and a ditch used to create a boundary, usually between a garden and parkland, that does not interrupt the view as a fence or hedge would. It also marks the boundary between the formal gardens where nature is held in check and the rather wilder park beyond. The ha-ha became a popular feature of country house landscapes during the eighteenth century and the unusual name is thought to derive from the exclamation of surprise uttered by those who came across these hidden walls for the first time.

The ha-ha at Launde Abbey separates the small garden in front of the house from the more extensive parkland beyond. Its purpose is to prevent sheep grazing in the park from straying into the garden whilst allowing an uninterrupted view of the landscape from the house. The ha-ha ditch is relatively shallow and before restoration a barbed wire fence was necessary to keep the sheep off the lawn. The archaeological

evaluation in 2007 showed that the ditch was never very much deeper and that it would therefore never have been very effective at keeping out the sheep. By the early nineteenth century some landscape gardeners were creating terraces with low railing fences and it is therefore possible that the ha-ha at Launde was originally of this design (e.g. Blaxland and Roenisch 2008). At Blaby Hall, Leicestershire, built in 1838, the ha-ha has the remains of a wrought iron looped fence around it.

Archaeological Objectives

Through archaeological monitoring of the dismantling and reconstruction of the wall and during excavation of the Oxford and Cambridge building foundations:

- To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits affected by the ground works.
- To record any significant structural details relating to the ha-ha.
- To identify, record any reused architectural fragments relating to earlier phases of building on the site.
- To produce an archive of the results.

Methodology

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

Although all of the works were monitored on an intermittent basis a number of elements were identified specifically for attendance and were noted in the architect's specification.

Any archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and measured as appropriate. Measured drawings of archaeological features were prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan and into the National grid. All sections were recorded and drawn at a scale of 1:10 and tied into the overall site plan.

The location of any reused architectural fragments revealed during the course of the works was recorded. Arrangement was made for the retention of any architectural fragments with significant diagnostic features that would be held within the site archive. Other fragments with minor architectural details were recorded but would not be retained.

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.

Results

The Ha-ha wall

Part of the restoration work involved the small side wing at the southern end of the ha-ha wall which was dismantled and the stone cleaned before being reconstructed (fig. 3). The wing was found to consist of a single skin of roughly faced stones holding back a large amount of limestone rubble. It would appear that this part of the wall has been rebuilt at some stage as the southern end was bonded with a harder mortar than the crumbly degraded mortar at the northern end. A number of modern brick fragments were also noted in the wall fabric at the southern end. The high level of rubble retained behind the wall was not structural and may relate to the adjacent roadway and could be part of the road make-up. Three fragments of stone within the wall were found to have been faced with one having a moulded bead carved along one edge (fig. 4).

Along the south western portion of the Ha-ha only the brick copings and upper courses of stone needed to be repaired which meant that it was not possible to see any more evidence for the original priory walls seen in 2007 (fig. 5). Many of the removed stones showed that they had been chiselled to create a smooth outer face. One stone also had a small hole drilled into it although the reason for this was not clear. The backfill behind the wall appeared to consist of naturally shaped limestone rubble mixed within a dark brown topsoil type matrix.

The centre bay part of the Ha-ha had its blue brick copings removed along with three small areas of stonework. The same mix of disturbed soil and stone rubble was observed behind the wall and no structural features were seen. The removed stonework consisted of a range of limestone blocks most with chiselled faces and none of which showed clear evidence of being reused from elsewhere.

A 1.3m length of wall was rebuilt along the north western portion of the wall. Again only the brick coping course and the upper stone courses were removed to reveal the soil and rubble mix behind (fig. 6). Although this was near to the priory wall seen in 2007 no further evidence was observed during this work. No worked or moulded stones were recovered from this section.

The restored Ha-ha will have a non-intrusive electric fence placed at the base of the ditch to replace the damaged barbed wire fence running along the top edge. To supply the new fence a cable trench had to be excavated from the south west corner of the house to the southern edge of the Ha-ha (fig. 7). The trench was approximately 0.6m deep and 0.5m wide. It was found that the gravel road surface covered a thin layer of Tarmac laid on a bed of rubble which in turn covered a layer of soil and stone rubble similar to that seen behind the Ha-ha walls. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the sides or base of the trench.

The Oxford and Cambridge Building foundations

The small timber Oxford and Cambridge Building which was used as a workshop until recently had to be moved from its position near to the south western corner of the retreat house to a new location near to the walled garden (fig.8). As the building is to be used as accommodation a proper base made from a shallow brick wall and a

concrete raft slab was required. To achieve this, the topsoil was partially stripped across the whole area of the relocated building and a 0.5m deep trench was excavated around the perimeter of the building (fig.9). Approximately 0.35m of topsoil and subsoil were removed to reveal an orange brown sandy clay natural. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during this work.

Discussion

The Ha-ha

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the course of the restoration work. Similarly no further evidence of the original priory walls was seen behind the removed portions of the wall. It is possible that, as only the stonework was removed, the rubble and soil mix behind the wall was only 19th century backfill within the wall construction cut. Therefore some archaeological features may still survive further back behind the wall and under the lawn covering the Ha-ha. Because in most cases only the above ground courses of stonework were removed there was also no further opportunity to see the priory walls exposed in 2007. The restoration work has thus succeeded in its aim of stabilising the wall without damaging or compromising any buried archaeological remains.

Some further information has come to light on the construction date of the Ha-ha, over and above that included in the initial Historic Building Assessment report (ULAS report 2005-096). An early 19th century date is suggested in the Listing Description and this is supported by the absence of the Ha-ha on illustrations produced c.1800 for John Nichols' *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (vol. 3, part 1, plates XLIV & XLV – reproduced as Figures 4 & 5 in the Assessment report). Nor does the Ha-ha appear in the undated 19th century engraving reproduced as Figure 7 in the Assessment Report. It is now known that this engraving is based on a pencil sketch made by Mary Finch Dawson (nee Finch Simpson) in c.1830 suggesting that the Ha-ha was constructed after that date.

Another illustration of Launde Abbey has recently come to light and is reproduced here as Figure 10. This is a pencil sketch by the Leicester artist John Flower (1793-1861) which although undated was probably produced between about 1825 and 1850. It shows the front of the house from the north-west largely masked by trees; the ha-ha if extant by this time would not have been visible in this illustration.

The Oxford and Cambridge Building foundations

The shallow nature of the foundations required for the light timber building meant that only a small area of natural was observed. Within this area no archaeological features or deposits were present.

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 David Parker.

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.

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ULAS Report Number 2006-016

ULAS 2006 *Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire, 'Oxford and Cambridge Building': Historic Building Assessment* ULAS Report Number 2006-080

ULAS 2006 *Launde Abbey Report on Earthworks to the East of the Stableblock.*
ULAS Report Number 2006-081

ULAS 2007 *An Archaeological Evaluation of the Ha-ha and Stable Block at Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire.* ULAS Report Number 2007-060

ULAS 2008 *Design Specification for archaeological work. Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire. Repairs and Rebuilding of the ha-ha.*

Appendix I Figures

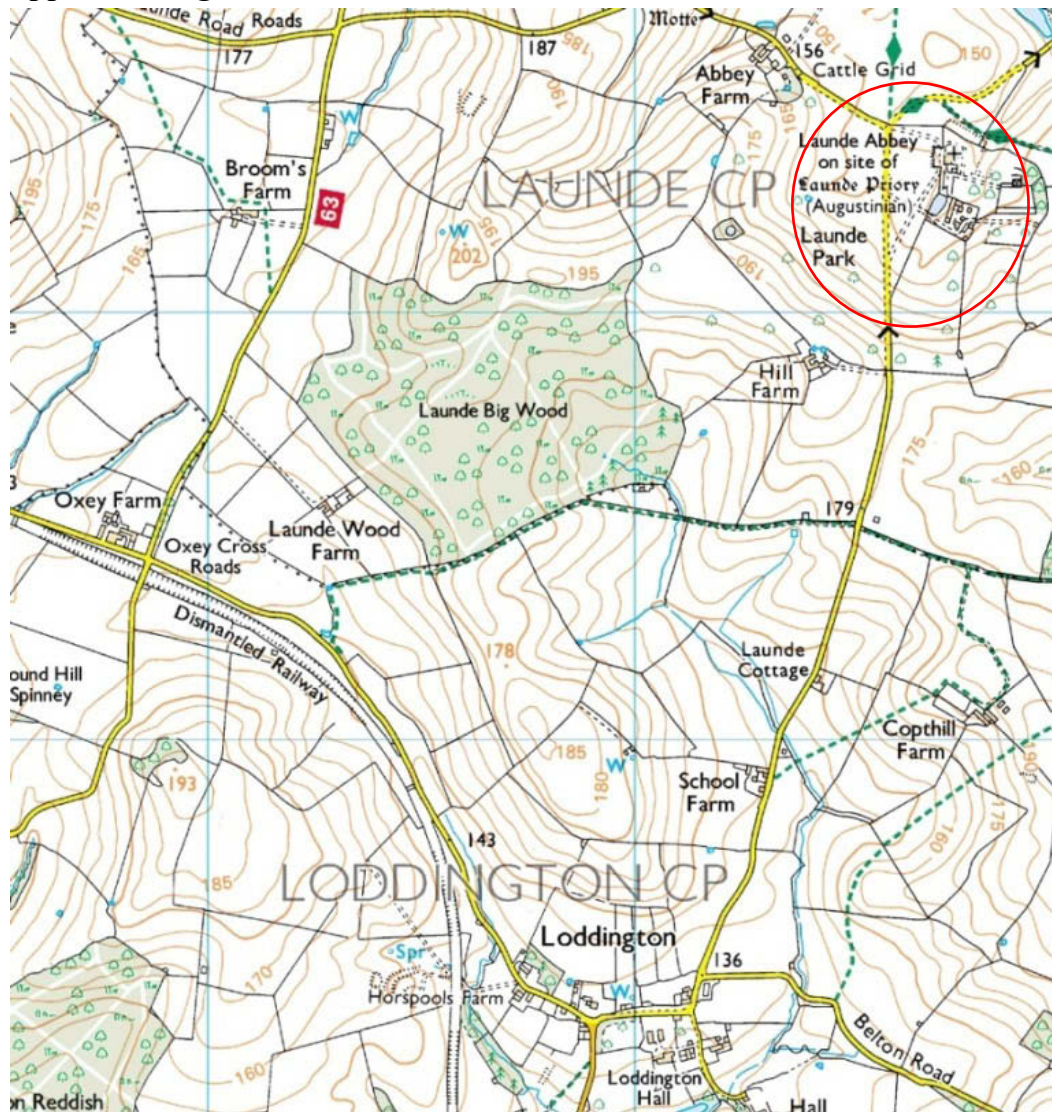


Figure 1 Location of Launde Abbey

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.

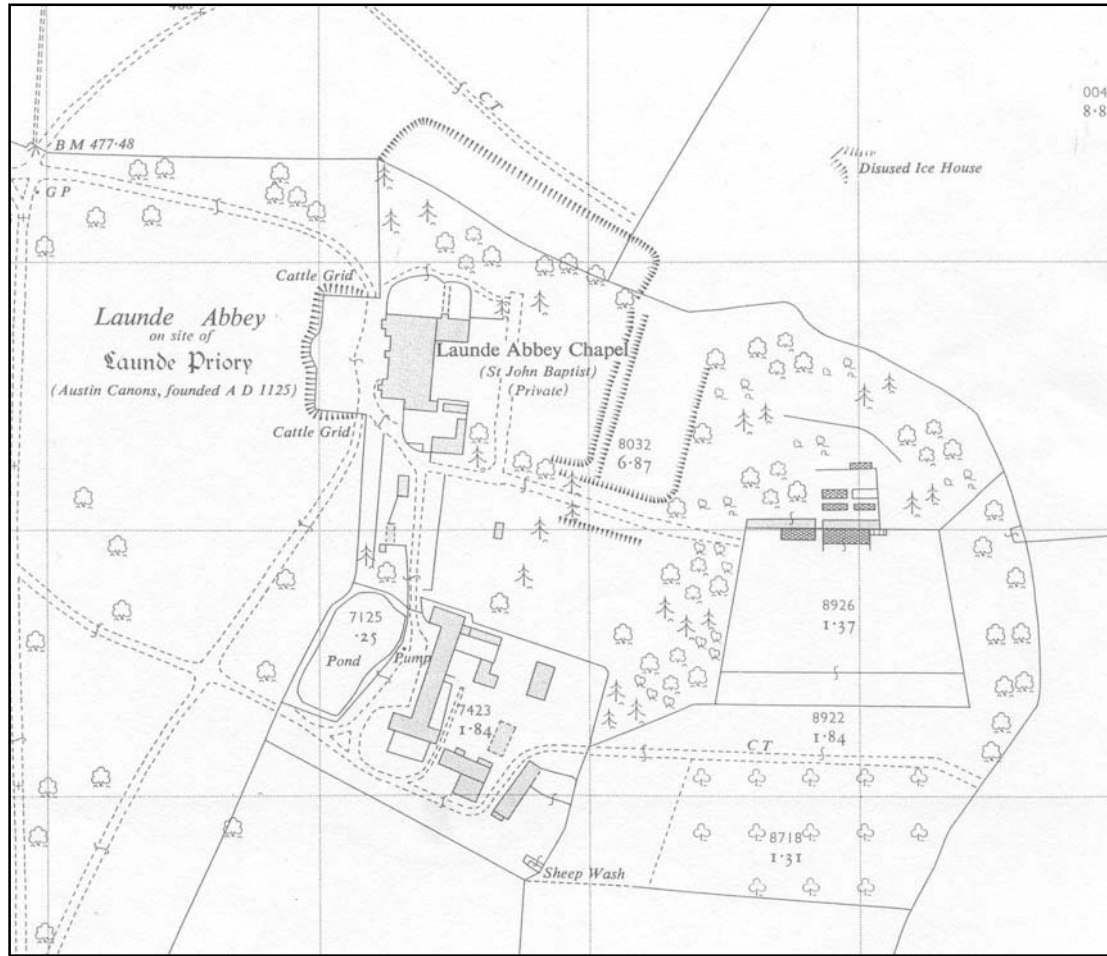


Figure 2 Location Plan showing position of Ha-ha on west side of Launde Abbey.
Extract from Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile Leicestershire sheet XXXIII.I5, published 1960.



Figure 3 Side wing wall on south side of Ha-ha
Facing north east



Figure 4 Moulded stone recovered from side wing wall
50cm scale



Figure 5 South western portion of Ha-ha after removal of loose stones
Facing north east. 50cm scale



Figure 6 Southern end of north western portion of Ha-ha
Facing east. 50cm scale



Figure 7 Cable trench from house to Ha-ha
Facing north west. 1m and 50cm scales

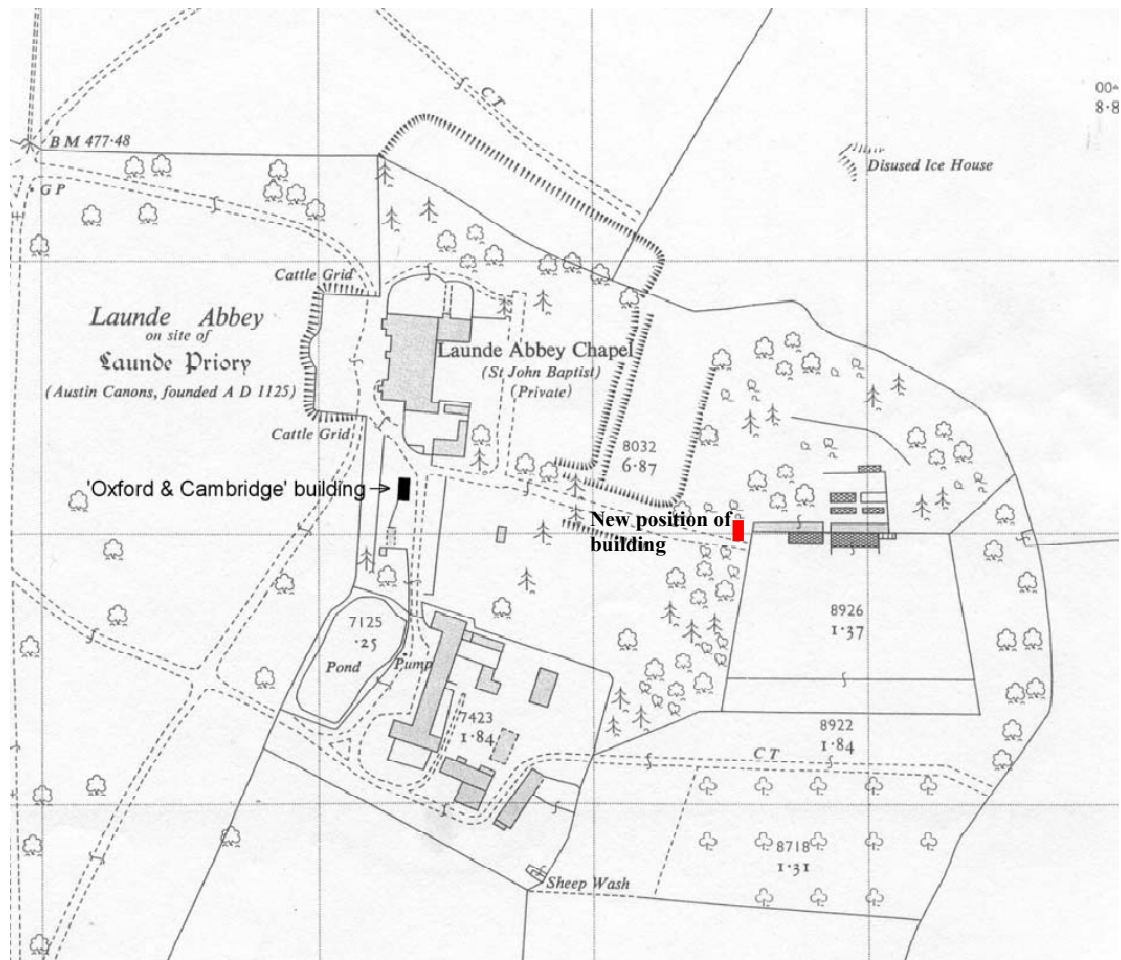


Figure 8 Original and new locations of the Oxford and Cambridge Building



Figure 9 Foundation trench for Oxford and Cambridge Building
Facing north east



Figure 10 Undated sketch of Launde Abbey from the north-west by John Flower (1793-1861)

Appendix II ULAS Design Specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

Launde Abbey, Launde, Leicestershire NGR: SK797043
Repairs and rebuilding of ha ha

Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 137

Planning Authority: Harborough District

For: Trustees of Launde Abbey

1 Definition and scope of the specification

1.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Scheduled Monument Consent for repairs to the wall of the Ha Ha at Launde Abbey, Leicestershire, this specification provides details of the methodologies and recording systems to be adopted during the course of archaeological monitoring of any groundworks which have the potential to disturb buried archaeological remains or upstanding structures. This document should be read in conjunction with the full architect's specification for the works, extracts from which are in appendix 2.

1.2 All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

2 Background

2.1 Requirement for archaeological work

2.1.1 The archaeological work involves attendance during the dismantling and subsequent rebuilding of the walls to the Ha Ha (see fig. 1), as detailed in the architect's specification, Appendix 2. Following consultation with English Heritage, as advisers to DCMS and the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, it was agreed that the work could proceed, on condition that provision was made for monitoring of the works by a suitably qualified archaeologist.

2.2 Archaeological and historical background (taken from Finn et al 2005)

2.2.1 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 glasshouse

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).

2.2.2 The west front of the house overlooks the ha-ha; built from coursed ironstone rubble, with later brick repairs and coping, and capped by a series of ornamental stone urns, this forms a curving terrace in front of the house. The ha-ha, icehouse, walled kitchen garden and cast-iron framed glasshouse are all attributable to the early 19th century, though whether these were the work of John Finch Simpson or Edward Dawson is not known.

2.2.3 Based on current interpretation (fig. 2), the walls of the south transept of the priory church would lie within the footprint of the existing building, corresponding with the west and south walls of the *Servery*. The chancel is located immediately north of the Chapel in the area of the present graveyard, with the nave to the west of this, apparently extending as far as the NW corner of the ha-ha, based on the evidence of the geophysical survey and 1960s excavation (Schadla-Hall, Green & Liddle 2003, 269; Beavitt 1995, 23-6; LAHS 1963-4, 52).

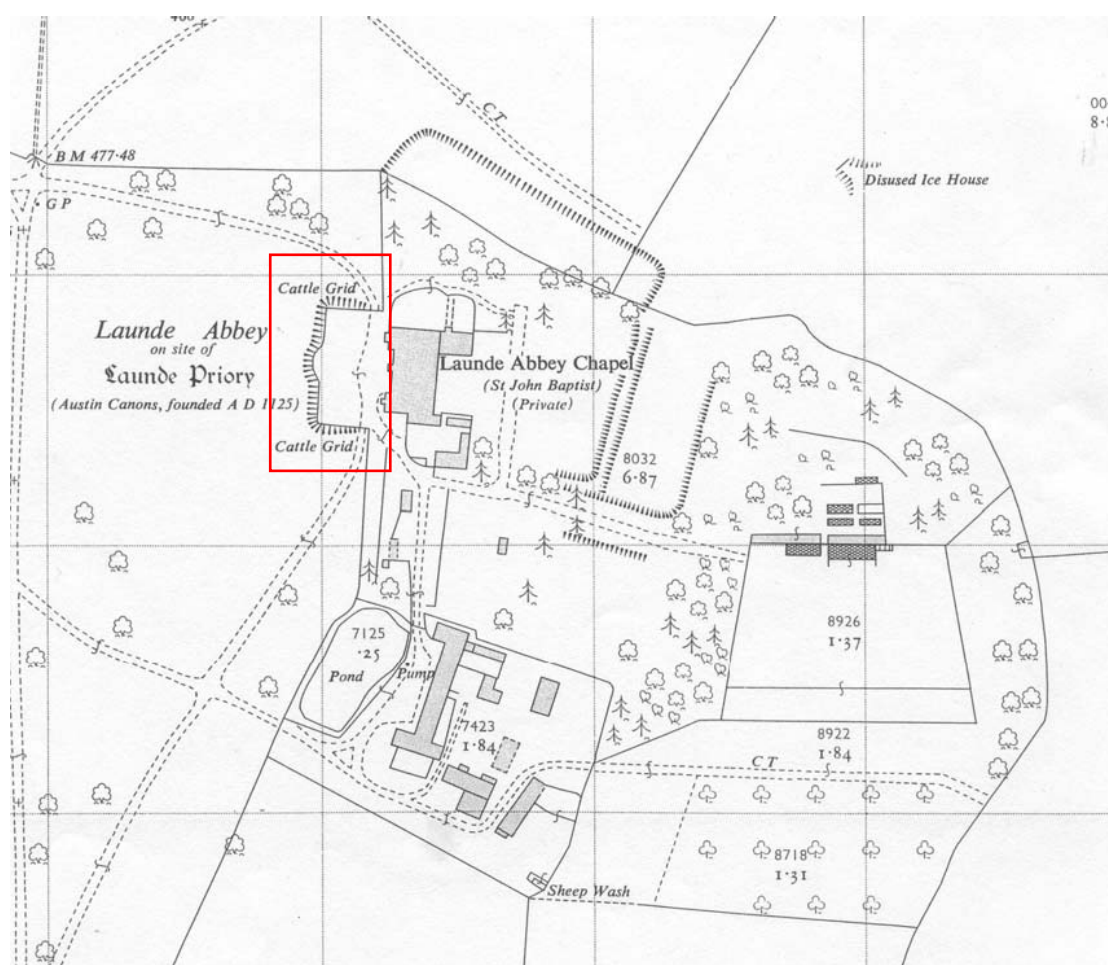


Figure 1 Extract from Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile Leicestershire sheet XXXIII.15, published 1960, showing location of ha ha

3 Aims

3.1 Through archaeological monitoring of the dismantling and reconstruction of the wall:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.

3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To record any significant structural details relating to the ha ha.
5. To identify, record and recover any reused architectural fragments relating to earlier phases of building on the site
6. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4 Methods

4.1 The project will involve the supervision of the dismantling of the ha-ha wall and of any excavation works required to enable its reinstatement. The supervision will be undertaken by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works specified above.

4.2 The archaeologist will co-operate at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work.

4.3 Although all of the works will be monitored by an archaeologist on an intermittent basis, the following elements of the programme (see appendix 2) have been identified specifically for attendance:

- South Wall: 04 & 06
- West Wall (south): 08 09.
- West Wall (Curved Section): 14, 16, 17.
- West Wall (north): 21
- North Wall: 24 -
- General: 32..
- Extension to UPVC drain: 30

4.4 Any archaeological deposits located will be hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of any archaeological deposits located will be hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features will be prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans will be tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) where appropriate.

4.5 Archaeological deposits will be excavated and recorded as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention will be paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

4.6 All excavated sections will be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

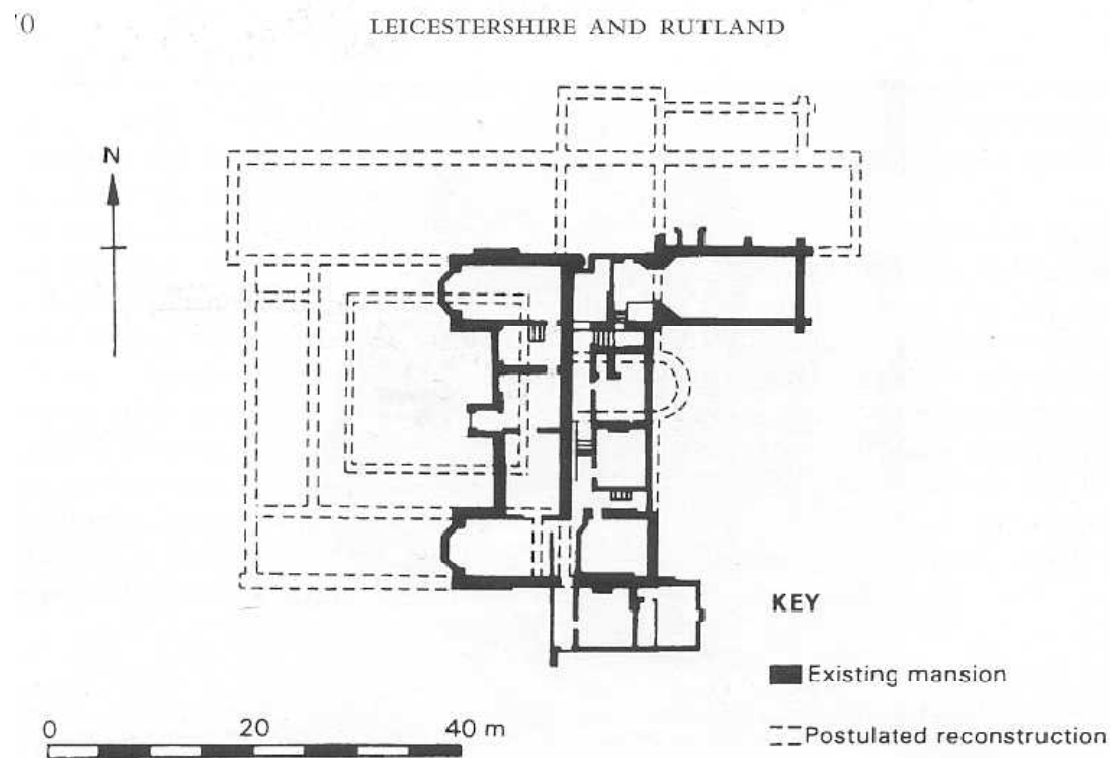
4.7 Any human remains encountered will be initially left in situ and only be removed under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations. The client, English Heritage and Leicestershire County Council will be informed immediately on their discovery.

4.8 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These will ensure that professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for monitoring visits with representatives of the client, English Heritage and Leicestershire County Council.

4.9 The location of any re-used architectural fragments revealed during the course of the works, will be recorded. Certain fragments, particularly those with significant diagnostic features or architectural details, may be retained to form part of the archaeological site archive. Other fragments with minor architectural details will be recorded but not retained.

4.10 In the event of significant archaeological remains being located during the watching brief there may be the need for contingency time and finance to be provided to ensure adequate recording is undertaken. On the discovery of potentially significant remains the archaeologist will inform the client, English Heritage and the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council. If the

archaeological remains are identified to be of significance, additional contingent archaeological works may be required and/or modifications to the proposals.



Illus. 12 Launde Abbey: plan with conjectural reconstruction of the priory layout

Fig. 2 Launde Abbey plan with conjectural reconstruction of the priory layout (Liddle & O'Brien 1995; reproduced in Schadla-Hall, Green & Liddle 2003).

5 Recording Systems

5.1 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets.

5.2 A site location plan based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map, (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a plan at 1:200 (or 1:100), which will show the location of the areas investigated.

5.3 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made on drawing film, related to the OS grid and at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. Elevations and sections of individual layers of features should be drawn where possible. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans.

5.4 An adequate photographic record of the investigations will be prepared. This will include black and white prints and colour transparencies 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.

5.5 This record will be compiled and fully checked during the course of the watching brief.

5.6 All site records and finds will be kept securely.

6 Report and Archive

6.1 An accession number will be drawn prior to the commencement of the project. Following the fieldwork the on-line OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis> will be completed. A report on the investigation will be provided following the groundworks.

6.2 Copies will be provided for the client, Sites and Monuments Record and planning Authority. 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.

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 be presented to Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services normally within six months of the completion of analysis. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7 Publication

7.1 A summary report will be submitted to a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of fieldwork. A full report will be submitted if the results are of significance.

8 Timetable and Staffing

8.1 The investigation is scheduled to commence at the start of the contractors groundworks. An experienced archaeologist will be present during this work.

9 Health and Safety

9.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and uses the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (revised 2005) with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is in the Appendix. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate.

10 Insurance

10.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. The Public Liability Insurance is with St Pauls Travellers Policy No. UCPOP3651237 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Lloyds Underwriters (50%) and Brit Insurances (50%) Policy No. FUNK3605.

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Appendix III OASIS Information

INFORMATION	
Project Name	Launde Abbey
Project Type	Monitoring
Project Manager	N Finn
Project Supervisor	D Parker
Previous/Future work	Earlier evaluation work
Current Land Use	Garden
Development Type	Garden feature
Reason for Investigation	Refurbishment
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 797 043
Start/end dates of field work	May 2009 – Aug 2009
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	30m ²

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