

## Archaeological Observation

On behalf of

**The National Trust**

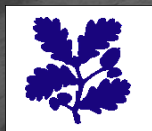
Concerning groundworks at

Croome Court

High Green

Severn Stoke

Worcestershire



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*Cover: View southwest showing Stable Court (centre left) and the mid-18<sup>th</sup> -century Neo-Palladian mansion (centre)*

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## 1 Executive Summary

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*Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Janine Young of the National Trust to carry out archaeological observation of trenching excavations relating to a new heating system at Croome Court High Green Severn Stoke Worcestershire.*

*Much of the trenching impacted upon the lawn areas located north and south of the house, which are considered to be of 'immense archaeological significance' (Kay 2012, 247). Work took place in two phases. The trench to the south of the house (Phase 1), relating to a new ground-source heat array, was excavated in August 2015, with work on the north side of the property, running roughly north-south from existing LPG tanks installed in the North Lawn, (Phase 2) undertaken in March and early April 2016.*

*With the exception of a small brick-built drain or culvert, no features of significance were present on the south side of the house; the trench is thought to have lain too far east to uncover any remains relating to the formal gardens that were replaced in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's landscape park. Close to the buildings, considerable disturbance was noted relating to drainage serving the converted Stable Block, which was probably installed at some point after the mid-1990s.*

*On the north side of the house, two walls on a northwest/southeast alignment were identified. The difference in alignment suggests these structures may represent an earlier phase, predating the present buildings at Croome. Additionally, wall foundations of local blue lias stone were interpreted as the remains of the building linking the Red Wing and Stable Block, which was demolished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Three substantial brick culverts and a smaller stone drain were also recorded forming part of the drainage system installed by 'Capability' Brown in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. One of these sections of culvert appeared to represent a continuation of the substantial brick culvert previously identified and recorded by BAL during installation of the LPG tanks on the North Lawn.*

*Cobbles revealed beneath the existing driveway almost certainly formed part of the original surface of the North Courtyard.*

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## 2 Introduction

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Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Janine Young Archaeological Consultant National Trust Attingham Park Shrewsbury to carry out a programme of archaeological work at Croome Court High Green Severn Stoke Worcestershire (NGR: SO 88551 44569) associated with engineering groundworks for a new heating system.

Archaeological observation of service trenching on the S side of the house relating to a new ground-source heat array installation (Phase 1) took place between August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2015. This was followed by archaeological excavation associated with the installation of two LPG tanks on the North Lawn, the results of which are detailed in a separate report (BAL 2015). Further service trenching observations were carried out during March and early April 2016 (Phase 2), extending from the existing LPG tanks southwards to a Plant Room situated immediately to the rear of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Red Wing.

### 2.1 Soils & Geology

Croome Court lies on the S side of Worcester and to W of Pershore, at a height of some 22mOD (*fig. 1*).

The area comprises typical calcareous pelosols of the EVESHAM 2 series (411b), consisting of slowly permeable calcareous clayey with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils. The underlying geology is Jurassic and Cretaceous clay.

To the W of Croome Court and extending beyond the M5 motorway, soil composition reflects an area of typical calcareous pelosols of the WHIMPLE 3 series (572f), consisting of reddish fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging overlying drift over Perm-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish mudstone.

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## 3 Historical & Archaeological Background

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Croome Court lies close to the M5 motorway, W of Pershore in S Worcestershire. It is the former residence of the Earls of Coventry and comprises a remodelled mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century Neo-Palladian mansion set within extensive landscaped parkland designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-83), this being Brown's first independent commission.

Some of the earliest evidence of human activity in this area dates to the Bronze Age, the discovery of a palstave being made during survey work in the parkland. A scatter of Roman pottery was found some 500m from the court and could hint at Roman settlement in the area. A fragment of Roman tile was found in the Walled Gardens (Kay 2012, 375).

Croome was mentioned in the Domesday survey, although the exact location of the medieval village is uncertain. The original church of St James the Apostle is thought to have stood to the NW of Croome Court, while the village

probably lay to the NE (Kay 2012, 375). The medieval church was first mentioned in documents dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although the existence of the village at the time of Domesday suggests it predated this documentary reference. The village was removed to High Green as part of Lancelot Brown's scheme to landscape Croome Park, while the church was relocated to high ground, some 425m to the NE of the Court, and rededicated to St Mary Magdalene.

The Coventry family had become established in Worcestershire by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and were elevated to an earldom in 1697. George Coventry, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl (who inherited in 1751 and died in 1809), was the leading light for a group of nobles known as the 'Earls of Creation', who developed their estates under the influence of classical philosophies and the Grand Tour. His long tenure of the Croome estate saw the full development of the landscape park around a rebuilt house and its recognition as one of the greatest landscape creations of the age. The present mid-18<sup>th</sup> -century property is a Grade I Listed Neo-Palladian mansion of limestone ashlar comprising principal N and S fronts of 11 bays, with a basement, two storeys and three-storey end-pavilions and which incorporates substantial fabric of an earlier, 17<sup>th</sup> -century house.

Brown, with advice from Sanderson Miller (1717-80), began work at Croome in 1751. The mansion is a rare example of his architectural work whilst the park attests to his use of the sunken fence, or ha-ha, to visually unify different landscape components.

To the E of the main house is the Stable Block (Stable Court), a Grade II Listed Building constructed c. 1752 of red brick with Bath stone dressings. Stable Court, now residential, is three-sided and open to the S, with central pedimented archways each side. To the E of Stable Court is the late 18<sup>th</sup> -century walled kitchen garden (Grade II Listed), which was remodelled in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The kitchen garden lies within a ha-ha which encompasses the house and surrounding pleasure grounds. The house faces N and S onto lawns. To the W, the grounds of the house run down to a serpentine lake, known as 'Croome River'. The house and gardens are surrounded by parkland containing a number of follies and designed panoramas.

After the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there were few alterations at Croome, the landscape of which matured and then decayed through neglect. The Dutch royal family were resident at Croome during the Second World War after escaping the Nazi occupation of Holland and, for part of the war, the eastern portion of the parkland contained installations associated with RAF Defford.

The house continued as the main seat of the Coventry family until 1948, when it was sold and a school established. The property was subsequently occupied by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness from 1979 until 1984. The National Trust purchased 271ha of the park in 1996 and began its programme of restoration.

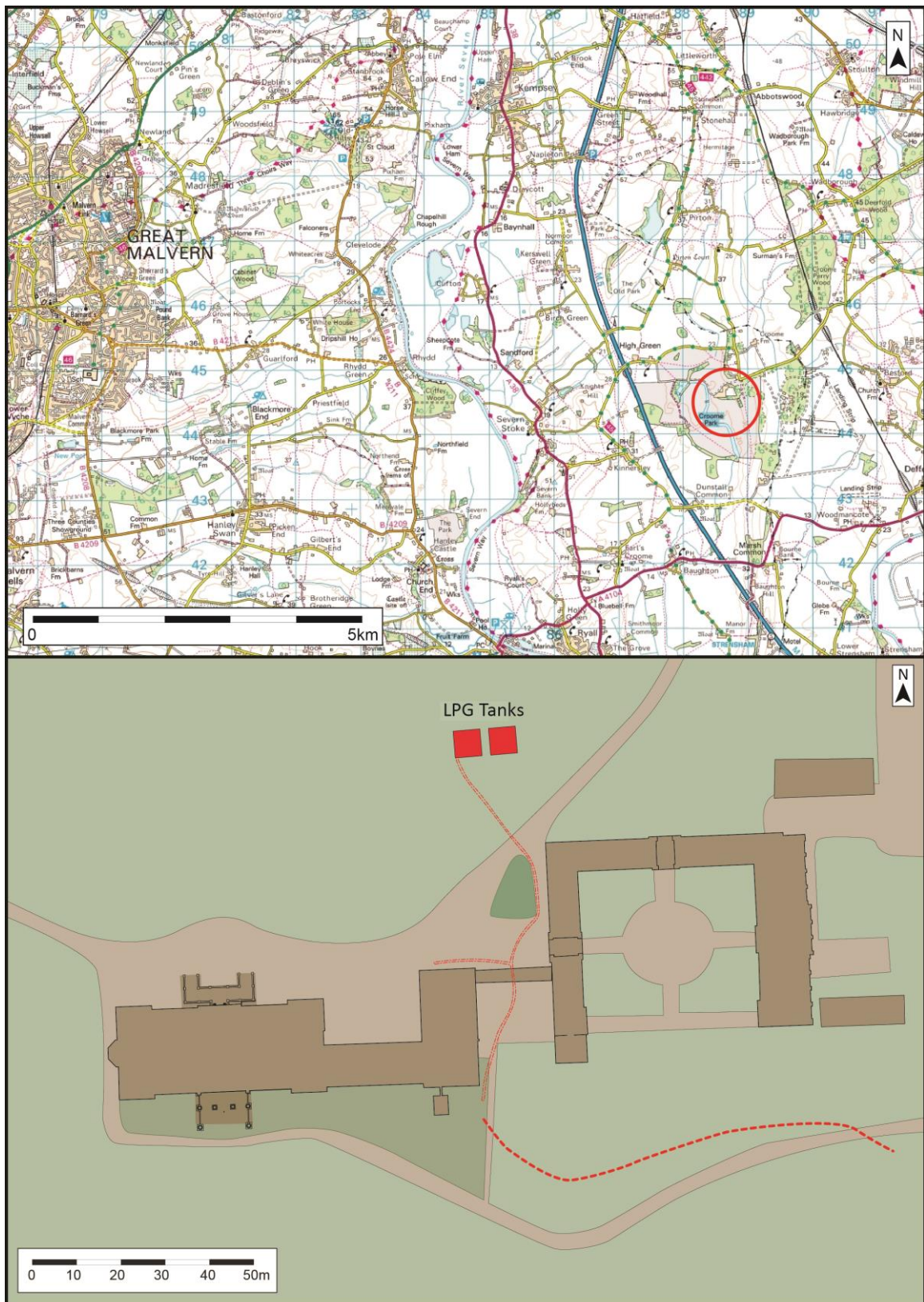


Fig. 1: Site location plan (trenching location dotted in red, with LPG tanks shown for reference)

## 4 Methodology

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The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the ClfA *Code of conduct* (2014) and with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014). BAL adheres to the methodology set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015) and to procedures detailed in *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

Observation was carried out of both phases of service trenching excavations. Work on the S side of the house (Phase 1) took place in August 2015 with trenching to the N (Phase 2) undertaken in March/April 2016. Topsoil and subsoil were routinely checked during the groundworks to collect and record any significant finds. All excavation was undertaken by contractors using a mechanical excavator.

### 4.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with BAL's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014) and included:

- A standard numbered context record for each stratigraphic unit encountered.
- Location plans showing excavation areas drawn at an appropriate scale and tied into Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid data (*figs. 1 & 2*). Contractor regulatory conditions precluded entry to trenching in order to undertake detailed recording.
- A high-resolution digital photographic record was made. Photographs contained appropriate scales and were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.
- All levels were tied into an OS benchmark (value 22.28m AOD) located on the N side of the Stable Block (Stable Court).

### 4.2 Recovery, processing and curation of artefactual data

All artefacts seen were either of modern (late 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> century) date or were very small non-diagnostic brick and tile fragments and were therefore not retained.

No deposits or features suitable for palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic sampling were present on the site. No samples were taken.



## 5 Results

The locations of significant features identified during the course of archaeological observation at Croome Court are shown on the trenching location plans (*figs. 1& 2*).

### 5.1 South of Croome Court (Phase 1)

#### 5.1.1 Trench 1

The first part of the trench was aligned NW/SE and measured 27m in length. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.2m. No archaeological finds or features were present.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit	Topsoil/turf	Pale brown silty clay; roots and occasional gravel; 0.20m thick trench-wide. Overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	102		Deposit	Subsoil	Pale brown silty clay; occasional gravel; 0.30m thick trench-wide. Underlying (101), overlying (103).	-	-	-	-	-	
3	103		Deposit	Natural	Firm dark reddish-brown clay & blue-grey marling; occasional discrete patches of water-rolled gravel; >0.5m thick trench wide. Underlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	Natural deposits.
4	104		Feature	Land drain	Ceramic pipe; aligned NW/SE.	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in natural (103). No cut evident. Post mid-C19.

5.1.2 Trench 2

The trench continued to the N of the path, turning immediately WSW and then NW towards the Plant Room. The trench measured 93m.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201		Deposit	Garden soil/turf	Mid to slightly reddish-brown silt clay; occasional black & red (CBM) flecks; 0.30m thick, trench wide. Overlying (216).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	202		Deposit	Natural	Bright purple-brown clay natural; occasional grey patches & discrete patches of water-rolled gravel. Underlying (216).	-	-	-	-	-	Natural deposits.
3	203		Cut	Possible natural feature	Linear in plan; measuring 21m E/W × >0.60m N/S × >1.20m; sides gradually sloping to base, base unknown as unexcavated. Cut (202), filled by (204) (205) & (206).	-	-	-	-	-	Extended beneath depth of excavation.
4	204		Deposit	Possible infill of natural hollow [203]	Bright purple-brown clay; occasional flecks of CBM & fragments of roughly dressed stone & mortar; >0.90m thick. Overlying (205) & fill of [203], underlying (206).	-	-	-	-	-	Similar to natural (202), except for the presence of CBM and stonework.
5	205		Deposit	Primary fill of [203]	Grey clay; 0.20m thick. Underlying (206).	-	-	-	-	-	Grey colour may suggest the feature was originally waterlogged.
6	206		Deposit	Fill of [203]	Bright purple-brown clay natural; frequent small fragments of CBM; 0.20m maximum thickness. Underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	Mixed redeposited natural seen only at SE end of [203].

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
7	207		Cut	Shallow pit containing demolition debris.	Shape in plan unclear; sides sloping to base flat; measuring 2m x >0.60m x c. 0.30m. Filled by (208), cut (216).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in section only.
8	208		Deposit	Single fill of pit [207]	Red silty clay; fragments of roughly-shaped blue lias stone & mortar lumps. Fill of [207], underlying (201).	-	-	-	-	-	
9	209		Cut	Pit	Oval in plan; sides steeply sloping; measuring 2m x >0.60m x >1.0m. Filled by (210), cut (216).	-	-	-	-	-	
10	210		Deposit	Single fill of pit [209]	Red clay; building rubble (stone mortar and CBM). Underlying (201), fill of [209].	-	-	-	-	-	Mixed fill.
11	211		Structure	Drain	Masonry; brick; three courses + brick capping; aligned NW/SE; measuring >0.60m l x c. 0.30m x c. 0.30m. Underlying (201), cut (216).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in section of trench.
12	212		Cut	Cut for land drains and sewerage	Linear in plan; sides steeply sloping; measuring 2m x >0.60m x c. 1.0m. Cut (216), filled by (213).	-	-	-	-	-	
13	213		Deposit	Backfill of cut for redundant plastic land drains and active sewer [212]	Loose to moderately compact rubble; plastic pipe. Underlying (201), fill of [212].	-	-	-	-	-	Use of plastic piping confirms recent date.
14	214		Cut	Modern pit	Oval in plan; sides steeply sloping; measuring 4.9m x >0.60m, extending to base of trench (c.1.0m). Cut (216), filled by (215).	-	-	-	-	-	
15	215		Deposit	Fill of pit [214]	Modern rubble within matrix of redeposited natural clay; single fill of [214] below (201).	-	-	-	-	-	
16	216		Deposit	Subsoil	Clean orange-brown silty clay. Underlying (201), overlying (202); thickness uncertain due to difficulty in identifying interface.	-	-	-	-	-	Not clearly differentiated from natural

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
											(202) in very dry conditions.

## 5.2 North of Croome Court (Phase 2)

LPG pipe and electricity cabling trenches were positioned on the N side of the building. The pipe trench ran roughly N/S from the LPG tanks previously installed in the N lawn for a distance of approximately 75m. The cabling trench ran E/W for a distance of roughly 15m. A number of contexts encountered during the work were identified in both the LPG trench and the electricity trench. A number of features of significance were identified at the S end of the trench. A continuation (513) was also identified of culvert (1008/1005/1011) as recorded during the previous installation excavations for the LPG tanks.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	500		Deposit	Topsoil	Dark greyish-brown topsoil; moderate white & black flecks, frequent roots; measuring 14.4m x >0.50m x 0.27m. Overlying (501).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	501		Deposit	Mortar Layer	Friable cream mortar & plaster, stone & slate; 0.10m thick. Underlying (500), overlying (513).	-	-	-	-	-	Petering out to S.
3	502		Deposit	Subsoil	Firm yellowish-grey silt clay; orange-flecking (iron-pan); 0.60m thick. Cut by (513), overlying (503).	-	-	-	-	-	
4	503		Deposit	Natural	Bright reddish-brown silty clay (N end); sandier yellowish-brown silt (S end). Underlying (502).	-	-	-	-	-	Deposit variable along trench. Seen in trench base. Similar

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
											variation seen in trench to S.
5	504		Cut	Pit or filled natural hollow	Shape in plan unclear; alignment unknown; side steeply sloping, base flat; measuring 4m x >0.50m x 0.70m. Cut (502), filled by (505).	-	-	-	-	-	
6	505		Deposit	Fill of [504]	Firm reddish-brown clay; frequent mortar flecking & patches of dark brown topsoil; measuring 4m x >0.50m x 0.70m. Fill of [504], underlying (501).	-	-	-	-	-	
7	506		Deposit	Cobbled surface	Regular well-sorted rounded cobbles (av. size of materials 0.15m x 0.10m x 0.15m; 28m (length - extending full extent of trench in driveway). Underlying (514), overlying (507).	-	-	-	-	-	
8	507		Deposit	Consolidation / levelling for cobbled surface (506)	Firm/hard reddish-brown clay; frequent plaster & building rubble for cobbles (506); 0.10m thick. Underlying (506), overlying (508).	-	-	-	-	-	
9	508		Deposit	Demolition debris	Loose pale greyish-brown/blue mortar & bands of red clay; frequent CBM & stone; 0.10m thick. Underlying (507), overlying (512).	-	-	-	-	-	
10	509		Cut	Cut for demolition debris	Shape in plan unclear; aligned NE/SW; sides steeply sloping sides, break of slope base concave, base flat; measuring >0.50m x 0.70m x 0.50m. Filled by (510), cut (502).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen in narrow trench only.
11	510		Deposit	Single fill of [509]	Loose pale greyish-blue CBM, mortar & plaster, white/lime flecks. Fills [509].	-	-	-	-	-	Near identical to (508) – possibly forming part of this deposit.
12	511		Structure	Wall	Masonry; blue lias (av. size of materials: 500mm x 300mm x 150mm); cream lime mortar bonding; aligned NE/SW;	-	-	-	-	-	

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
					measuring >0.50m × 0.60m × >0.20m. Underlying (508), overlying (502).						
13	512		Structure	Culvert/drain	Masonry; blue lias (av. size of materials: 200mm x 150mm x 140mm); roughly shaped; aligned N/S; measuring >10.50m × 0.50m × 0.40m - floor, c. 20mm thick, of cream mortar with black flecks. Overlying (502), underlying (508).	-	-	-	-	-	
14	513		Structure	SE continuation of culvert (1008/1005/1011) previously recorded during LPG tank excavation. See <i>fig. 3</i>	Masonry; aligned roughly NW/SE; brick, blue stone slab (lias or slate) at SE end; measuring 0>10m × 0.90m × 80m. Underlying (500), overlying (502).	-	-	-	-	-	Appeared to continue into SE section after about 1m disturbance.
15	514		Deposit	Tarmac surface	Friable black tarmac; 0.10m thick. Overlying (506), underlying (516).	-	-	-	-	-	Occupied area of existing courtyard.
16	515		Deposit	Layer	Black silty clay; frequent charcoal; <0.20m thick. Overlying (502), underlying (507).	-	-	-	-	-	Seen intermittently in courtyard area and to E of Red Wing.
17	516		Deposit	Existing surface of N courtyard	Loose/friable yellow gravel; c. 60 mm thick. Overlying (514).	-	-	-	-	-	
18	517		Deposit	Layer	Compact cream mortar; measuring 2m × > 0.50m × c.60mm. Underlying (506), overlying (507).	-	-	-	-	-	May have formed part of (507).

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
19	518		Cut	Shallow scoop forming cut for lead pipe	Linear in plan; measuring >0.50m × 0.50m × 0.30m; sides steeply sloping, base rounded. Filled by (519), cut (507).	-	-	-	-	-	In electricity trench.
20	519		Fill	Mixed fill of [518]	Black silt clay & redeposited subsoil (in discrete lumps); moderate CBM & mortar. Underlying (506), fill of [518].	-	-	-	-	-	Cobbles may have been replaced following installation of pipe.
21	520		Deposit	Surface - existing paving surface of former Laundry Green	Block paving; measuring >8m N/S × >3m E/W × 0.10m. Overlying (521).	-	-	-	-	-	
22	521		Deposit	Sub base for (520)	Mixed brown / pinkish-brown sand; >8m N/S × >3m E/W × 0.20m.	-	-	-	-	-	
23	522		Deposit	Redeposited natural clay in the vicinity of culvert (524)	Friable clay; measuring >6m N/S × >0.30m E/W × 0.60m. Overlying (524), underlying (515).	-	-	-	-	-	
24	523		Deposit	Lens within (522)	Plastic clay; measuring 1.20m N/S × >0.30m × 0.12m. Part of (522).	-	-	-	-	-	Possibly redeposited waterlogged clay.
25	524		Structure	Brick culvert	Masonry; aligned E/W; red brick; cream mortar bonding; measuring > 0.30m × 1.60m × >0.80m. Underlying (522).	-	-	-	-	-	Arched roof, remainder of structure not seen. Located to E of Red Wing.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
											Probably similar construction to (513).
26	525		Cut	Cut for lead pipe	Linear; aligned E/W parallel to (524); break of slope top sharp, sides steep, break of slope base rounded, base concave; measuring >0.30m × 0.30m × 0.30m. Underlying (520), cut (521), filled by (526).	-	-	-	-	-	Shallow U-shaped cut for lead pipe running between Stable Block and Red Wing.
27	526		Deposit	Fill of [525]	Mixed moderately compact dark brown/black silty clay. Underlying (520), fill of [525].	-	-	-	-	-	
28	527		Structure	Wall foundation of Laundry Room	Masonry; aligned E/W; blue lias (av. size of materials: 130mm × 70mm × 100mm); pinkish mortar bonding with white lime flecks (considerable quantity of mortar); measuring >0.70m × 0.60m × 0.63m. Underlying (521), cut (528).	-	-	-	-	-	Structure demolished C20.
29	528		Structure	Wall	Masonry; aligned NW/SE; blue lias; yellowish-cream mortar bonding; measuring >1.2m × >0.60m (extending outside trench to SE). Cut by (527) & (532), overlying (503).	-	-	-	-	-	Substantial foundation - possible corner present in trench.
30	529		Layer	Brick surface	Masonry; aligned NW/SE; red brick, in skim of grey mortar; extending 2.10m to wall (532). Underlying (533), overlying (534), abutting (527).	-	-	-	-	-	Some reused brick present.
31	530		Cut	Shallow U-shaped cut for lead pipe	Linear plan; aligned E/W; break of slope top sharp, sides steep, break of slope base rounded, base concave; 0.60m (width) 0.30m (depth). Underlying (520), filled by (531) cut (521).	-	-	-	-	-	



Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
32	531		Deposit	Fill of [530]	Dark brown/black mixed deposit. Underlying (520), fill of [530].	-	-	-	-	-	Material derived from deposits through which [530] cut.
33	532		Structure	Wall	Masonry; roughly-shaped; blue lias; aligned E/W; av. size of materials: 500mm x 200mm x 10mm; measuring (as seen) >0.70m x 0.60m x 0.50m. Overlying / (?)cut (528), underlying (533).	-	-	-	-	-	Located some 2.50m to S of (527).
34	533		Deposit	Skim of concrete forming existing surface to S of (520)	Concrete; measuring >2m N/S x >0.60m E/W x 80mm. Overlying (529).	-	-	-	-	-	
35	534		Deposit	Bedding for (529)	Dimensions 2.10m x >0.60m x 0.20m. Overlying (502), underlying (529).	-	-	-	-	-	
36	535		Structure	Culvert	Masonry; brick; aligned E/W. Overlying (502), underlying (507).						Similar construction to (513) & (524).

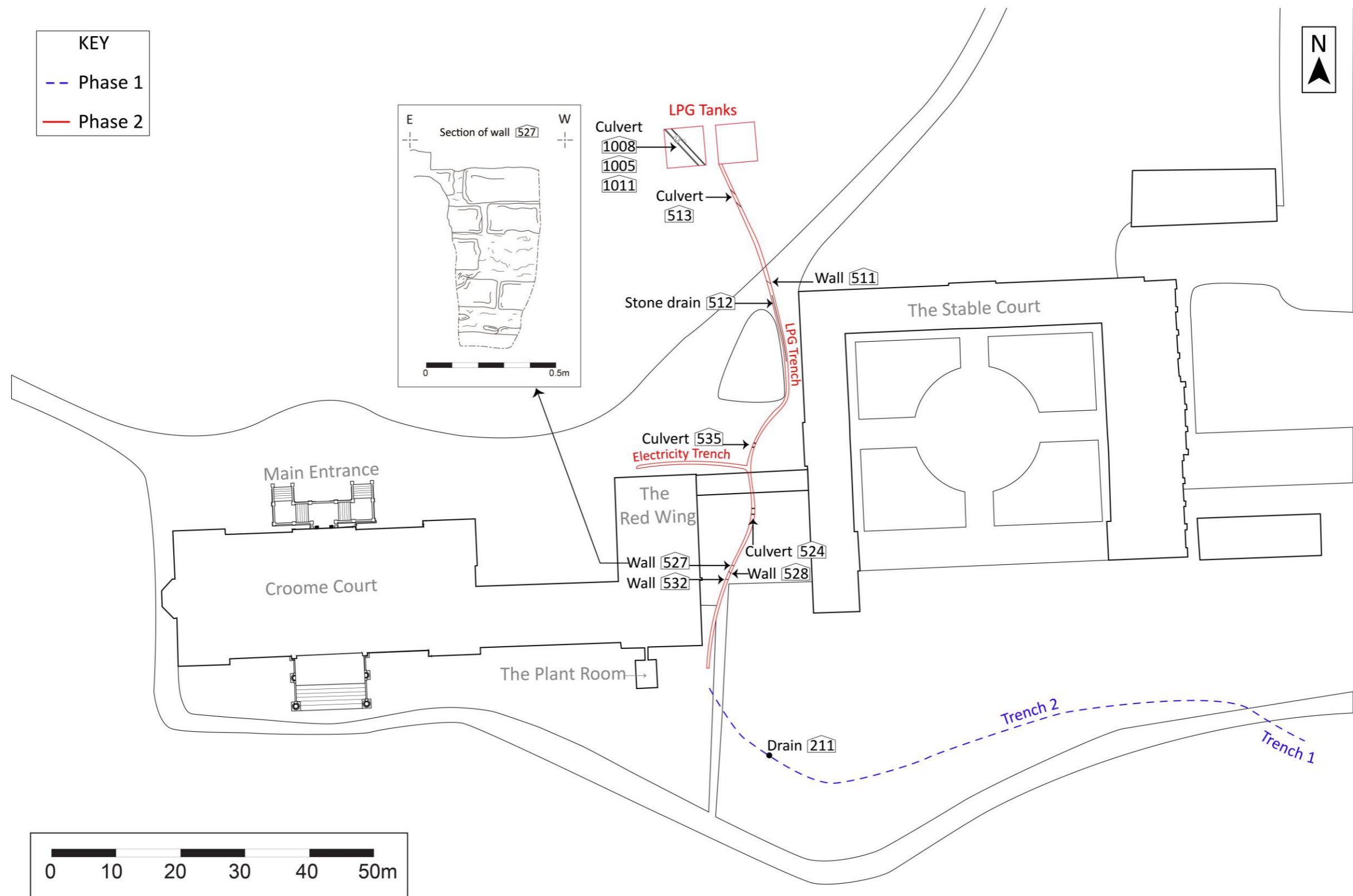


Fig. 2: Location of features revealed during archaeological observation

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## 6 Discussion

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Both the N and S lawns at Croome are considered to be of archaeological significance (Kay 2012). It was thought likely that the trenches for the installation of the new heating system would encounter features associated with both the house and landscape park and, possibly, with earlier buildings and the 17<sup>th</sup> -century formal gardens. Trenching observations did indeed identify a number of features associated with the existing house and the gardens, in addition to two walls which are thought to predate it (*fig. 2*).

It now seems certain that the trench to the ground source heat array on the S side of Croome Court was positioned too far to the E to encounter any features associated with the formal gardens, although brick drain (211) may have formed part of 'Capability' Brown's original mid-18<sup>th</sup> century drainage system (*fig. 2*).

The significance of the lawns on the N side of the house lies in the fact that a number of structures predating the landscape park were thought likely to be present, including the positions of the former service buildings.

The lawn area revealed only a single wall, thought to predate the existing building. Its differing alignment with respect to the existing property could imply that it was part of an earlier phase of activity; the alignment of a further wall in the service yard to the E of the Red Wing suggested that this was part of the same phase.

The remaining features and structures on this part of the site were associated with Brown's drainage system.

### 6.1 Features predating the existing house and park

Wall (511) (*Plate 1; fig. 2*) was encountered during excavation of the LPG trench close to the Stable Block (Stable Court). This rested on a blue lias masonry foundation and was aligned NE/SW, compared to the more N/S alignment of the existing building. A further wall (528) (*Plate 2*) was encountered in the yard between the Red Wing and the Stable Block. Once again, this ran on a more NW/SE alignment than the present buildings suggesting an earlier phase of construction.

The plan of any building represented by these structures could not be ascertained, as the narrow trench limited the area available for investigation; additionally, the structure had been damaged during construction of the Laundry Range in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, the substantial width of the masonry uncovered might suggest a NW/SE aligned wall and a return to the NE.



*Plate 1: Wall (511) in the base of the trench; view N*

Wall (528) (*Plate 2*) appeared to be cut by walls (527) and (532), which related to the former Laundry Range between the Red Wing and the Stable Block and which would thus confirm an earlier date. As the Laundry Range is indicated on plans as early as those of Snape (1796) and Hopcroft (1810), this would suggest that wall (528) certainly could be of some antiquity.

Interestingly, all buildings in the vicinity shown on Doherty's plan of c.1751 and Beighton's 1714 drawing reflect the alignment as the present property. It is possible that these drawings are schematic but it is also possible that (511) and (528) predate the buildings shown on 18<sup>th</sup> -century plans. A 1750 drawing (Kay 2012, 73) shows a structure on a similar alignment to the two walls revealed in the trenching. It is thus possible to suggest that this wall represents the survival of an earlier structural component associated with the 17<sup>th</sup> -century complex of manorial buildings at Croome, which appears to have been built on slightly different orientation to the ancillary ranges shown in this location on late 18<sup>th</sup> -and early 19<sup>th</sup> -century mapping.



*Plate 2: View N of wall (528)*

## 6.2 Drainage

With the exception of a single brick drain or culvert in Trench 2 (211), no deposits of archaeological or historical significance were present in Trenches 1 or 2 (Phase 1) (*fig. 2*). Drain (211) may have been part of the larger system of drains and culverts established by 'Capability' Brown during the landscaping of the park. Although built of brick rather than stone, as in the case of (512), (211) was of a similar form and probably, as that drain is thought to do, fed into a larger culvert.

On the N side of the house, the trenches revealed three substantial brick culverts, (513) (*Plate 3*) (524) and (535), associated with the system of drains and culverts installed in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and first encountered with the discovery of a NW/SE -aligned brick culvert (1008/(1005)/(1011) during the previous LPG tank excavation (BAL 2015). The position and alignment of a smaller stone drain (512) suggests that it fed into (535) (*fig. 2*). Interestingly, the service trench revealed that culvert (513), which appeared to represent a continuation of the previously discovered culvert (1008/(1005)/(1011), had been blocked using a substantial slab of stone. Following a gap of c. 0.5m the culvert appeared to continue to the SE (*Plate 3*). The reason for the break in the structure is not known. A number of loose bricks suggested that the culvert had collapsed at this point. No evidence was seen for any later feature cutting it.



*Plate 3: View N of culvert (513) showing stone slab blocking close to scale and loose bricks in foreground*

Culvert (535) was of similar construction and was aligned E/W. Were it to continue on its alignment to the E, it would run to the Stable Block. A further brick culvert (524), also aligned E/W, ran between the Red Wing and the Stable Block. Were it to continue on this alignment it too would extend to the Stable Block.

The smaller N/S drain (512) was constructed mainly of roughly squared blocks of blue lias, although occasional ceramic tiles were also used, presumably representing recycled material from the remodelling of the house. The roof was formed of blue lias slabs and the structure was bonded with cream mortar. Its position and alignment suggest it fed into culvert (535) and probably formed part of the drainage network installed during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> - century. Its floor appeared to be formed of cream mortar with black flecks (*Plate 4*).

The larger culverts were all of similar brick construction. An early 18<sup>th</sup> -century inventory records the manufacture of hand-made bricks at Seggy Meer to the W, utilising clay sourced from the estate (Kay 2012, 95). It seems likely that some reused material was also made available at various times, although the drainage would probably have been installed before major work on the house itself took place.



*Plate 4: Stone drain (512) view S*

### 6.3 Laundry Range and North Courtyard

Two wall foundations, (527) (*fig. 2*) and (532), survived from a building demolished at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both were of local blue lias, a material used for a number of foundations at Croome (Kay 2012, 40).

The walls originally formed part of the Laundry Range; subsequently, during the period when Croome was occupied by St Joseph's Catholic School, it was used as a toilet block. They appeared to cut wall (528) and were on a noticeably more E/W alignment than the earlier structure.

Cobbled surface (506) (*Plate 5*) commenced at the same point as the existing driveway (516). This surface is likely to be that shown on a late 19<sup>th</sup> -century photograph of the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Coventry and his daughters on horseback (Kay 2012, 122) and of the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl and his family in the 1930s (*Ibid.*, 135). The bedding layer (507) for the cobbles consisted of mortar and other building debris; as there was no sign of any earlier surface beneath layer (507), which lay either above natural subsoil (502) or a less compact mixed layer of building rubble (508), it seems likely that these cobbles formed the original surface of the North Courtyard.



*Plate 5: View W showing cobbles (506) and bedding layer (507)*

While no finds were available to confirm their date, a payment for river cobbles from Bewdley is recorded in the accounts for 1755 (Kay 2012, 105-6). A surface of substantial cobbles would be long-lived and easy to repair when necessary. Areas of cobbles were previously uncovered during limited excavations in 2009. The fact that the N edge of this surface coincided with the present limit of the lawn confirms the cartographic evidence and that this area of the grounds has undergone little change in terms of landscaping. The building debris consolidation (507) and looser debris (508) would, in this case, derive from the remodelling of the house in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The cobbles had been covered by tarmac prior to the deposition of (516), the existing gravel surface. The cobbled surface does not seem to have extended into the service yard, although a considerable amount of disturbance has undoubtedly taken place in this area.

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## 8.1 Cartography

Henry Beighton's View of South Elevation – 1714

View of Croome from the North - c.1750

John Doherty's Plan of Croome Court - c. 1751

John Snape's Map of Croome - 1796

Thomas Hopcraft's Map of Croome - 1810

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