

# A Historical and Archaeological Study of Caludon Castle, Wyken, Coventry

A report submitted for the Certificate in Archaeology at Warwick University

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## Summary

A study of the archaeological and documentary evidence has been carried out aimed at determining the date of construction and original purpose of the remains of a building now known as Caludon Castle situated about three miles from the centre of Coventry.

Considerable evidence has been found covering the history of the site but the archaeological evidence is limited to examination of the existing remains and a single survey and geophysical study conducted as an undergraduate project. No excavations have ever been carried out.

A tentative layout and location of the original manor house has been proposed and the date of construction estimated.

## Acknowledgements

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## 1 Introduction and objectives of study

In a public park about 3 miles to the east of Coventry City centre, in the district of Wyken, stands a single section of an ancient wall of Caludon Castle surrounded by a moat. It was from here in 1397 that Thomas Mobrai, Duke of Norfolk, set out to fight a duel with Henry Bolinbroke at Gosford Green in Coventry. The episode, which was immortalized by Shakespeare in *Richard II*, resulted in both men being exiled by the king. If the duel had been allowed to proceed and Bolinbroke had been killed, the whole course of the War of the Roses would have been different.

According to legend, both St. George and Robin Hood were born at Caludon Castle but the documentary evidence for this is not so convincing!

Today there is not even a plaque saying what the monument is let alone explaining its history for visitors. The site is scheduled as National Monument No. 21615 by English Heritage and listed Grade 1.

The objectives of this study were to estimate the date of construction of the remaining wall fragment and to determine the style and purpose of the building of which it once formed a part.

## 2 Documentary search

Historical records at the Coventry Local Studies Library and Birmingham Reference Library were examined first in order to determine when construction had taken place on the site and what buildings had been present.

The holding of prints by the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum and paintings in the Birmingham Reference Library were examined for evidence of features of the standing wall which had been damaged and no longer present.

The archaeology files held by the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum were also consulted to find records of excavations or site surveys that had been carried out.

English Heritage Sites and Monuments Office, Swindon were asked to carry out a search of their records and provided details of all entries for an area covering a 500m radius of the site.

Ordnance Survey maps were consulted at the Coventry Archive to ascertain whether construction in the 18<sup>th</sup> century may have been over the area of significance.

Books and papers on medieval moated sites were consulted for information their layouts and the internet was used to gain information on medieval architecture.

## 3 Documentary evidence

Stephen de Segrave is believed to have erected a house on the site at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and he was granted a licence to crenellate in 1305 allowing him to "fortify his house, here, with moat, and to wall and embattle it with lime and stone" (9). John de Mobrai obtained a further licence in 1354 (8).

Buildings mentioned in 1385 included a tiled building of four bays inside the bridge, a tiled building of seven bays outside the bridge and a thatched barn of seven bays. The approach over the bridge was from the east (8).

In about 1580 Lord Henry Berkeley rebuilt the house with further structural additions. At the time of the rebuilding Smyth (21), who was employed at Caludon for a period from 1584, stated that the roofs of the houses of the old castle buildings were taken down and so far altered that the whole house might be said to have been moulded and made new, but for the banqueting hall. After reconstruction it appears that the general plan of the castle remained the same as when first designed by John de Segrave. That is an oval, of little more than an acre, lying east to west which was surrounded by a moat and strong embattled walls, and within stood the various buildings, the entrance being by gateway and drawbridge on the east. The principal apartments of the castle were said to lay on the north and west of the courtyard. These comprised the great chamber or banqueting hall, the hall where yeomen dined and lived, dining room, drawing room, chapel, great gallery and sleeping apartments. The kitchen, brewhouse and bakery occupied the south and east sides (8).

A chapel on the site was first mentioned in 1239 (8) and was stated by Dugdale (9) to have been ruinous in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hodges (1) stated that some years prior to 1895, the remains of the chapel were visible west of the hall.

The house was destroyed during the Civil War and lay in ruins with much of the stone being used for other buildings perhaps including Caludon House which was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The location of this house can be seen (7) to be on the east end of the island some 30 metres from the location of the original manor. Caludon House was demolished by the City Council in 1964 (8).

The design of the windows is depicted in a drawing of the South face by Walters (10) and one of the North face by Hentchell (1) in the 1880s. Both show tracery and mullions typical of the decorated gothic style. A postcard photograph (3) from the 1930s supports this.

An early 19<sup>th</sup> century watercolour (22) shows all of the windows on the North face, except for the lower right, to have been filled in and covered in mortar. In parts this had fallen off revealing the stonework underneath. A piece of wall up to about a metre high, which is additional to what is present now, is shown at the eastern end.

#### 4 Archaeological evidence

Both English Heritage and the Archaeologist at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum confirm that no excavations have been carried out on the site.

A survey and geophysical study was, however, carried out in 1986 (11). In this study, a resistivity plot was made of the moated island in order to find evidence for the foundations of walls or buildings. It was not possible to obtain readings in the area adjacent to the standing wall and the areas around the edges due to the high compaction of the soil. In view of this, Ground Penetrating Radar would have been more appropriate but as this was an undergraduate study presumably it was not available.

In spite of these difficulties, it was, however, possible to identify the position of sections of the footings for the other three walls of the building, including buttresses, on the west end of the island. The southern line of the building could not be identified but an entrance porch was visible near the south east corner.

The Eastern side of the island showed evidence of other buildings but the information was very complex and difficult to interpret.

Hodges (1) described the site and the remaining wall in about 1880. She stated that the window tracery was present and, in her opinion, was of the perpendicular style and concluded that it dated from the 1580 rebuilding.

## 5 Site examination

As the site had been surveyed in detail in 1986(11) dimensions were only assessed roughly by pacing and from measurements of photographs in order to ensure that no obvious errors had arisen. The wall itself was examined visually and photographed in sections in order to record the significant features (Appendix 1).

The remains of Caludon Castle, a single section of wall, stand on the north-west section of a moated island in the northern part of a public park at Grid Reference: SP 3838 8015. (Fig 1) The island has been raised by about 1m above the surrounding land. The external dimensions of the site are 80m north to south and 100m east to west. The moat, which is up to 10m wide, is now present on only three sides with the eastern section being completely filled. About 190 m to the south is another moated site of dimensions 70m by 77m.

The standing wall, which is about 12m wide, 10m high and 2m thick, has been built using grey sandstone with red sandstone facing around the windows. Modern bricks have been inserted in some of the lower sections of the South face, presumably to prevent collapse.

The two upper pointed windows are approximately 5m high and 1.5m wide and are flush with the exterior (north) face of the wall. One of them has the remains of what appears to be stone tracery.

Below these are two further windows about 2m high and 1m wide, which are again flush with the outside wall and set in larger recesses.

Between the lower windows is a fireplace with a flue that goes up the inside of the wall and is open to the top. The back of the fireplace and the flue are blackened from use. The front of the fireplace is not present and is now replaced largely by modern bricks.

There is the suggestion of a ledge about 2.5m above the ground which could be the remains of the support for floor joists.

Both ends of the wall have red sandstone facing and protruding window jambs suggesting that there were once at least one extra bay either side of the remaining structure.

Parts of the north face of the wall, particularly the section between the upper windows, are covered with what appears to be mortar.

## 6 Discussion of Results

The documentary evidence reveals that licences to crenellate were granted in 1305 and 1354 and that construction also took place in 1580. The granting of a licence cannot, however, be taken as evidence of construction actually having been carried out on that date if ever.

The design of the windows could be a key to determining the phase of construction of the wall. Drawings and a photograph show tracery and mullions typical of the decorated gothic style. One must, of course, be wary of drawings as the artist may not have recorded in exact detail. The fact that two drawings and a photograph are very similar, does, however, suggest that it is close to the original. The remaining sections of tracery at the side of the windows are also consistent with this design. The windows were, therefore, almost certainly originally in the Decorated Gothic style which was popular from 1280 to 1380 (16). Hodges' conclusion that it was in the perpendicular style is clearly wrong. Smyth's statement that the banqueting hall was not rebuilt in 1580 supports this evidence. The style is identifiable by the stone mullions (vertical stone shafts) which divide the windows, usually into divisions, or lights, between 0.3 and 0.6m wide and elaborately curved tracery. The actual design used at Caludon is remarkably similar to those at Acton Burnell Castle, Shropshire (Fig 2) which was built under a licence to crenellate in 1284.

Many of the commentators (e.g. 8, 13) favour 1354 as the date of construction stating that the window design was more typical of the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century rather than the beginning. The fact that near identical windows were installed at Acton Burnell in 1284 cast some doubt on this conclusion. It is more likely that the licence to crenellate was to upgrade the defences rather than to rebuild the manor house.

The remaining section of the wall is on the north of the island which is where Smyth stated in 1580 that the banqueting hall was situated. The geophysical survey suggests that the room of which it formed a part was approximately 25m long by 13m wide. The height of the room can be seen from the position of the windows to have been at least 7m high making it quite an impressive hall. The hall would have been on the first floor over an undercroft which explains the smaller windows on the ground floor. Evidence for the position of the floor joists support this. This is similar to the layout of John of Gaunt's Great Hall at nearby Kenilworth Castle, which is also on the first floor with service and store rooms underneath, and Acton Burnell Castle.

The remains of mortar on the north face (exterior) of the wall may be the remains of the lime mortar which was usually applied to exterior castle walls in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was mentioned in the licences to crenellate. The watercolour shows that this side of the wall had at some point been completely covered in mortar after filling the windows. It is not known when this was done but it was completely removed before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The position of what appears to be the opening for a fireplace on the ground floor was questioned by Flintcroft (11) who suggested that it would have been in the hall itself. There is no

evidence whatsoever for there having been an opening at the first floor level either from the outside of the wall or from the inside of the flue. Also the flue is severely blackened from the bottom upwards. It is not unusual for the kitchen to be situated beneath the hall in manor houses of this period (18).

Based on the geophysical results, a proposed layout of the building and its location on the island is shown in Fig 3. It must be emphasised that the design of the southern portion is speculative. The location of the southern wall is suggested by assuming that the building was symmetrical and sited centrally on the island. Manor houses of this period were often of this U-shaped design with the wings running off from the approach. They were usually situated towards the portion of the island furthest from the gate and rarely right at the back or right at the front. Also, the long axis of the house on a moated site is most often at right angles to the long axis of the enclosure. (18) The proposed position of the house is, therefore, not untypical and is consistent with the bridge to the island having been from the east.

A standard pattern was also for the entrance porch to be the end furthest from the hall and the lord's apartments (18).

## 7 Conclusions

All of the documentary and archaeological evidence points towards the standing wall being part of the banqueting hall of the manor house, constructed either by Stephen de Segrave in or after 1305 or by John de Mobray in or after 1354, located above an undercroft. It has not been possible to determine which of these two dates was when the wall was constructed but the balance of evidence is in favour of the earlier date.

The hall was part of a fortified manor house which stood on a moated site approached over a bridge from the east. The manor house was probably U-shaped, with its longest dimension orientated north-south, and situated towards the west end of the moated island. Ground Penetrating Radar and excavation are necessary in order to gain more information on the design of the building.

8: Documentary Record

| No. | Reference & Type  | Date      | Location   | P/S/T | Evidence  |
|-----|---|-----------|--|-------|---|
| 1   | “Some Ancient English Homes” by Elizabeth Hodges<br>Book Publ: Foster Unwin   | 1895      | Coventry Local History Library   | S     | Extracts from “Smyth’s Lives of the Berkeleys” detailing work carried out in c1580                          |
|     |   |           |  | P     | Drawings of both sides of wall<br>Description of site features  |
| 2   | “The Place Names of Warwickshire” by J. Gover, A. Mawer & F. Stenton<br>Book  | 1970      | Coventry Local History Library   | S     | Names used for site also Calwedon, Kaluden, Cauleton, Caloudon, Calugdon, Callidon, Callowdon and Callowden |
| 3   | “The Coventry we have Lost” by Albert Smith & David Fry<br>Book Publ: Simanda Press                                   | 1991      | Coventry Local History Library   | P     | Photograph of remaining wall in c1930   |
| 4   | Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Maps No. 935 & 955   | 1991      | Personal copy  | P     | Grid Reference  |
| 5   | Ordnance Survey County Map of Warwickshire 1:10,560   | 1887-1889 | Internet<br><a href="http://www.old-maps.co.uk">www.old-maps.co.uk</a> | P     | Location of Caludon House in relation to the moat   |
| 6   | Ordnance Survey First Edition of 1” of England & Wales Sheet 52: Daventry & Coventry                                  | Oct 1834  | Personal copy  | P     | Location of Caludon House and ruin  |
| 7   | Ordnance Survey 25 inch/mile Map Warwickshire XXII.9  | 1887      | Coventry Archives  | P     | Details of Caludon House layout and associated buildings  |
| 8   | “The Victoria History of the Counties of England” Vol 8: The City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick<br>Ed. R.B. Pugh | 1969      | Coventry Local History Library   | S     | Quotes with references relating to building work and buildings on the site at various dates                 |
| 9   | “The Antiquities of Warwickshire” by Sir William Dugdale  | 1765      | Birmingham Reference Library   | S     | Pool was called “Franchehay”<br>Chapel present but ruined<br>Licence to crenellate                          |
| 10  | “Remains of Banqueting Hall, Caludon Castle, Coventry” by David Walters<br>Drawing<br>VA.1976.0148/0005               | c1880     | Herbert Art Gallery & Museum   | P     | Details of window tracery and other features of wall now missing  |

| No. | Reference & Type   | Date                                    | Location                              | P/S/T | Evidence  |
|-----|--|---|---------------------------------------|-------|---|
| 11  | “A historical and archaeological survey of Caludon Castle, Coventry” by M.E. Flintcroft<br>Dissertation – University of Durham | 1986                                    | Herbert Art Gallery & Museum          | P     | Geophysical studies and site survey   |
| 12  | NMR Monument Record No. SP 37 NE 1   | Feb 2003                                | Sites & Monuments Records, Swindon    | P     | Description and survey details of the moat c190m South of castle.   |
| 13  | NMR Monument Record No. SP 38 SE 3   | Feb 2003                                | Sites & Monuments Records, Swindon    | P     | Description of remaining wall and moat and location of Caludon house in 1964 and survey results from 1967 |
| 14  | NMR Monument Record No. SP 38 SE 7   | Feb 2003                                | Sites & Monuments Records, Swindon    | P     | Details of the moat c190m South of castle on Ordnance Survey 6” Map 1926                                  |
| 15  | Local Cuttings by W.L.Andrews Vo3  | undated                                 | Coventry Local History Library        | S     | Information on late 19 <sup>th</sup> C stone removal  |
| 16  | Architecture in England<br>www.britainexpress.com  | 2003                                    | Internet                              | S     | Decorated gothic style  |
| 17  | Aerial photograph<br>www.multimap.com  | 1999                                    | Internet                              | P     |   |
| 18  | Medieval Moated Sites<br>F. Aberg (ed)<br>CBA Research Report No.17  | 1978                                    | Birmingham Reference Library          | S     | Structures within English moated sites (S. Rigold)<br>The significance of moated sites (B. Roberts)       |
| 19  | Medieval Moated Sites<br>J Le Patourel<br>Local Historian Vol 11   | 1974/5                                  | Birmingham Reference Library          | S     | Construction of moated sites  |
| 20  | Moated Medieval Sites<br>P J Atkins  | 1972                                    | Birmingham Reference Library          | S     | Construction of moated sites  |
| 21  | The Berkeley Manuscripts<br>John Smyth edited by Sir John MacLean  | Edited version 1883 from original ~1620 | Birmingham Reference Library          | P     | Details of rebuilding in 1580   |
| 22  | “Remains of Caludon House” watercolour in the Aylesford Collection   | Early 19 <sup>th</sup> C                | Birmingham Reference Library Archives | P     | Details of N face of standing wall  |

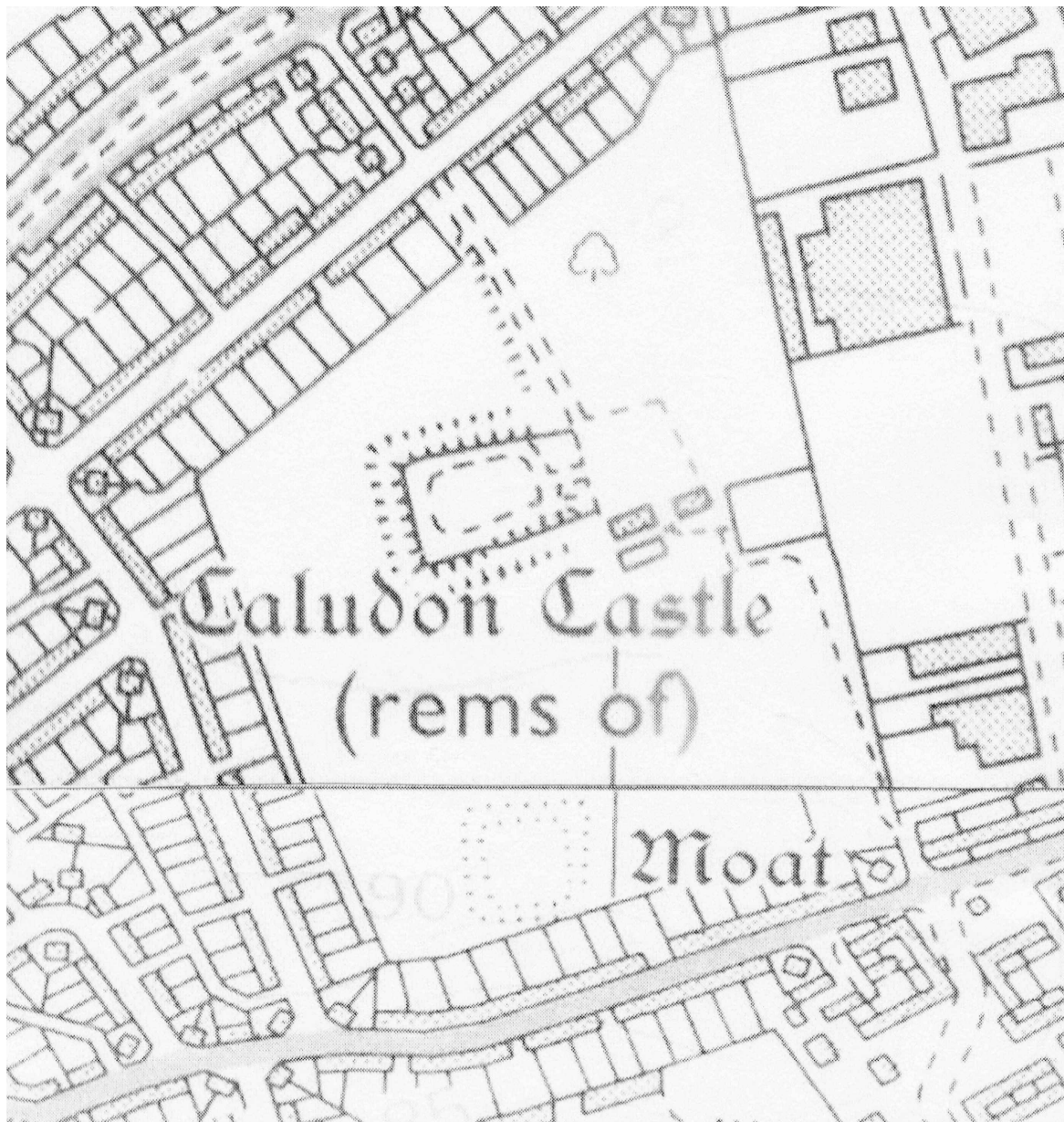


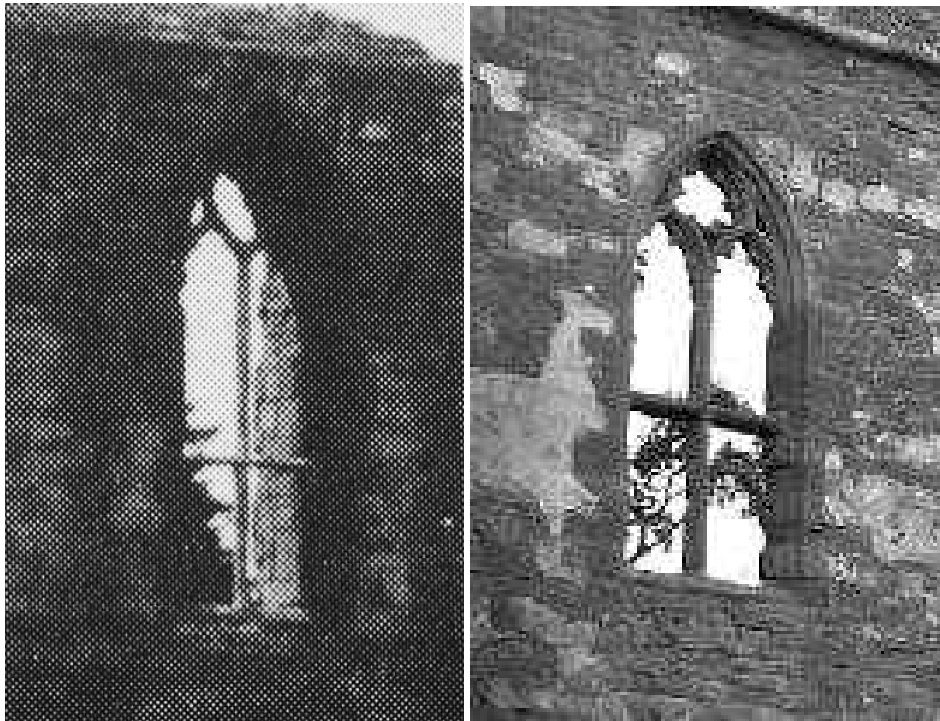
Fig 1

Extract from Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 935 (SP28/38) and 955 (SP 27/37)

Grid Reference of centre of North Moat: SP 3838 8015



left: detail from drawing “Remains of Banqueting Hall, Caludon Castle, Near Coventry by David Waters  
right: detail from drawing “Remains of Banqueting Hall, Caludon Castle” by C. Hentschell



left :detail from postcard “Caludon Castle, Walsgrave-on-Sowe” by H.H. Thompson & Son  
right: Acton Burnell Castle

Fig 2

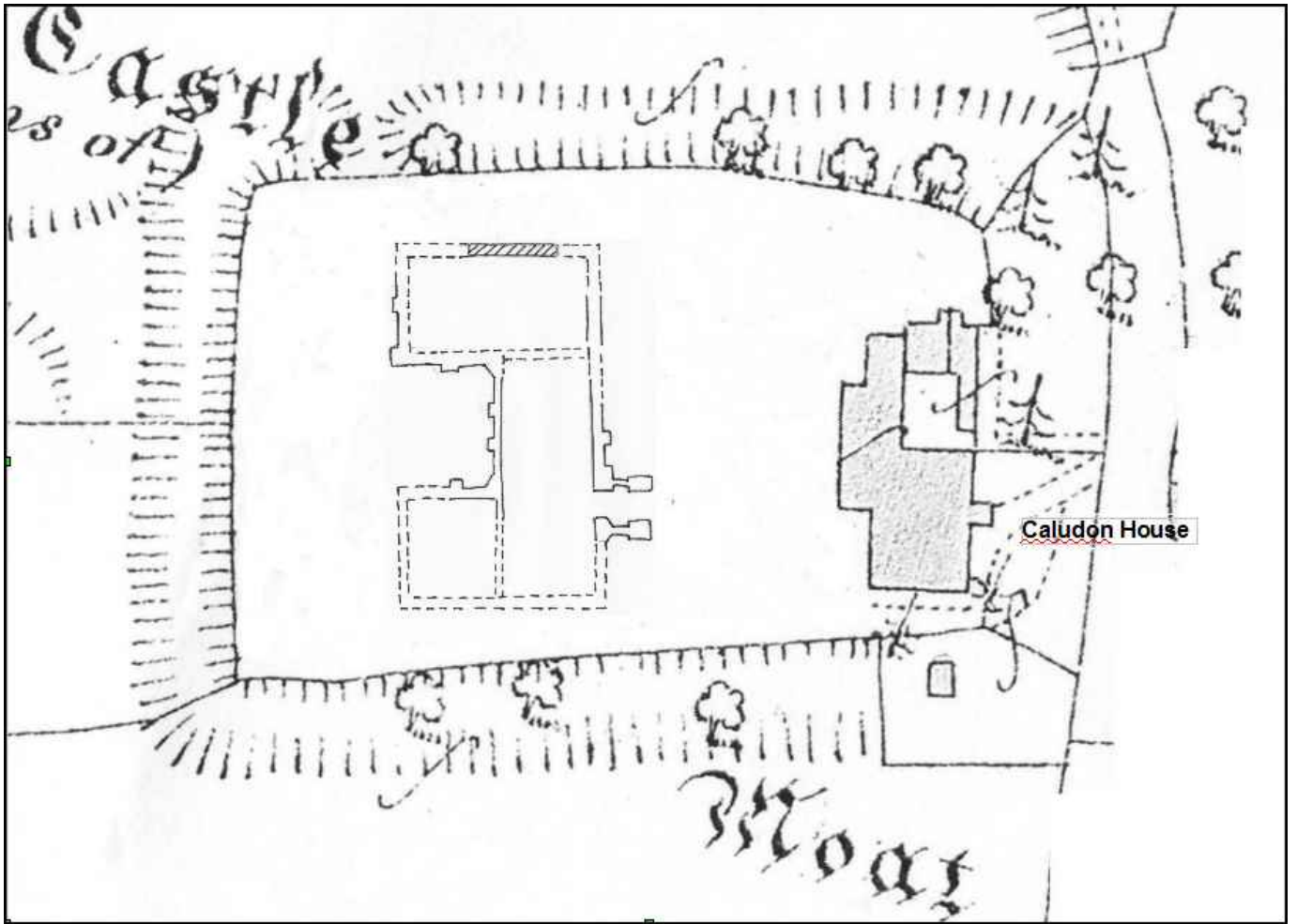


Fig 3: Ordnance Survey 25 inch/mile Warwickshire XX11.9 (1887) with the proposed layout of the Manor House superimposed

