



Proposal for a Harlaxton Manors archaeology research project.

Summary

This paper outlines a proposal for a multi year commitment by The Harlaxton History Society to explore the remains of the previous three manor buildings in the centre of the village.

Prior to the current Harlaxton Manor, built in the mid 19th Century, there is archival evidence of three previous manor houses on a site in the centre of the village. It is the aim of Harlaxton History Society to use archaeological techniques to reveal a new understanding of the scope and location of the previous manorial complexes.

The research aims of the Harlaxton History Society for this project are threefold.

1. First, we aim to identify the location and key features of the Jacobean manor house demolished in the 1860s.
2. We then intend to explore the location and nature of its Tudor predecessor
3. and finally to seek evidence of the medieval manor house said to have been owned by John of Gaunt.

To these may be added the following further aims in line with the Harlaxton History Society

1. To promote interest in and understanding of the History of Harlaxton Parish and it's surrounding area.
2. To facilitate the collection, preservation and research of historical information or items relating to the History of Harlaxton Parish and it's surrounding area.
3. To hold open events to encourage community engagement and discussion about the History of Harlaxton Parish and its surrounding area amongst the village community.

Key points

1. The project will predominantly undertaken by volunteers. Some will come from within the Harlaxton History Society, but we will welcome volunteers from other history and archaeology groups , schools, and Harlaxton College.
2. We have tentative permission to survey and dig from the landowners.
3. We have support from two professional /academic archaeologists – Prof Abi Hunt and Dr Emily Stammatti
4. We are aware of the limitations of undertaking a project like this as a community led project. This is why we have outlined a long duration for the project with different phases of work.
5. Whilst we have identified three previous manorial buildings, we acknowledge that as Harlaxton has evidence of both Roman and Anglo Saxon inhabitation there is a chance that even older manorial/ high status settlement might be found on the site in question.

University of Leicester planning grid

What	Geophysical survey and test pits followed by wider excavation
Where	On the site of the old Manorial complex on land just off the junction of Pond Street and Rectory Lane Harlaxton (GR SK 88315 32414)
Why	<p>A great deal is known about the 19th Century Manor House just outside the village of Harlaxton, built by Gregory Gregory, but little about what went before. This project is designed to explore the previous Manor Houses of a settlement that dates back to Roman times.</p> <p>Other than 19th Century sketches there is little known about the Jacobean Manor House demolished in the 1860s. Beyond that, on the same site, there is some evidence for a previous Tudor manor and before that a moated medieval manor, but again little has been proven.</p> <p>This fits with the aims of the Harlaxton History Society and will, we believe add to community cohesion and involvement.</p> <p>A secondary reason is that there has been some interest by developers in the fields immediately to the South of the site. Identifying a manorial complex would ensure any other archaeological features in the area of interest for development would have to be identified and saved first.</p>
How	<p>Over a number of years we intend running a community led, phased exploration of the site. Our aim with the first phase will be to identify the size and location of the Jacobean Manor. This would commence with ground survey using geophysical and non invasive methods, then subsequent test pitting around an existing dwelling which incorporates part of the Jacobean manor House.</p> <p>We will then extend our work in subsequent phases of activity to go wider and deeper to seek evidence of the Tudor house and medieval complex.</p>
When	The first phase will commence in 2024 and the project as a whole will run for at least three years, depending on the speed of work and finds.
Who	The Project will be driven by the Harlaxton History Society with volunteers from the village and beyond. Professional advice will be sought.

Benefits

We see the benefits as;

1. Developing community cohesion through an understanding of the history of Harlaxton village
2. To offer volunteering opportunities to people both in and outside the village that help reduce social isolation and encourage physical and mental exercise
3. To establish whether there is any historical evidence that need protecting for future generations
4. To grow the membership and engagement with the Harlaxton History Society

Outputs

1. Talks at Harlaxton History Society
 - a. We should schedule in progress talks as well as talks as and when we find information
2. Web site
 - a. Specific section to be built
3. Social media

- a. We should promote volunteer involvement through regular posts when there is activity
4. Public events
- a. We should consider an open day on site if the land owners are willing.

Activity for 2024

Our aims this year will be to establish sound foundations for the wider project and build the foundations upon which future work can be built.

Given this is a new field to everyone involved in the Harlaxton History Society it will also be a year to establish knowledge and understanding about the process of organising a community dig and learning about the techniques required, including archival research, geophysical exploration, digging of test pits and management of any finds.

The big strategic aims this year are

1. to engage with the landowners on the manorial site
2. ensure we have informed all authorities we need to of our project
3. undertaken desk research
4. Undertaken initial site surveys

Specifically we will;

- 1. *engagement with the landowners on the manorial site***
 - a. Visit Wendy and ken Whitton to talk through proposal
 - b. Meet other landowners within the manorial area to inform them of the plans and seek their involvement
- 2. *informing all authorities we need to of our project***
 - a. Contact county archaeologist
 - b. Contact South Kesteven Heritage officer
 - c. Contact SKDC Community funding team
 - d. Contact Society for Lincolnshire history and archaeology
 - e. Contact East Midlands CBA
- 3. *undertaken desk research***
 - a. We should identify all online sources of information
 - b. A team will visit the Lincolnshire archives in Lincoln to find any information on the manors, Lords of the Manor and ownership, data on the size of the village
 - c. Research the Land Registry re land ownership over the ages
 - d. Undertake interviews (social history) within the village with people who are familiar with the site.
- 4. *Undertaken initial site surveys***
 - a. Survey and create a base plan of the site
 - b. Undertake a building assessment of existing structures
 - c. Metal detecting on site
 - d. Initial geophysical examination to identify whether there are targets for further geophys and digging in subsequent years.
 - e. Field walking in (and possibly around) the site

Outline schedule

