

**The Hartshill Castle Research Project,  
Hartshill Warwickshire (Scheduled Ancient  
Monument)**

**Date:** 2006 onwards

**Archaeology**

Situated on a ridge overlooking the Trent Valley the castle was primarily a motte and bailey built in the 1120s built by Hugh Fitzrandolph (de Hardreshull), brother of Ranulph de Meschines, nephew and heir of Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester. It was the main residence of the Hardreshull heirs for 200 years. The stone castle was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Its six-sided enclosure wall is studded with cross-looped embrasures. The site is known to have been a farm for over 600 years. Within the walled enclosure today are the low extant remains of a Norman stone-built chapel, a hall and a timber-framed Tudor farmhouse.

**Rationale and research objectives**

The project began was prompted by a programme of repair work undertaken by the Harold Lapworth Charitable Trust. The research is conducted by Mercedes Planas and Martin Wilson on a periodic voluntary basis and comprises building recording, architectural study, geophysical survey, topographical survey, historical research and comparative analysis. The overall purpose is to study the material remains of the castle framed within a wider understanding of its historical and landscape context. A primary objective of the fieldwork has been to create 'as found' record, prior to further stages of repair and consolidation work.

**Method and techniques**

Once vegetation was stripped, the walls were recorded and examined in turn in an attempt to ascertain chronology. They are not easily dated, for the main body of each stone wall is built of quartzite, and historical phases are denoted by changes which are often quite subtle. Coigns, loop-holes and other 'feature' stones have been carved from local sandstone. Because accurate detailed survey is critical to the analysis of the structure a stone-by-stone record is necessary for each wall elevation. This has done by means of Total Station survey and rectified photography, following which the stones were digitised in AutoCAD.

The resultant line drawings are employed as analytical tools; physical changes in construction technique are not always clear in the field or on photographs. Drawings are also used on site for close examination of the wall fabric. Observations are made of stone size, shape, and the patterns of laying according direction of the grain of the stone, to establish a provision sequence of phases, following which petrological analysis is applied. Documentary research revealed that the castle walls were repaired and partially reconstructed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by its owner, John Ludford of Ansley. The petrological application has permitted a comprehensive understanding of the extent of this work on the east, north and south wall on account of the exact source of stone being identified and a close date known for its extraction.

