



Heritage Impact Assessment and Design and Access Statement
for works involving a
replacement chimney capping at
Lacock Abbey

For and on behalf of the National Trust

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1.0 Background

This impact assessment forms part of an application for Listed Building Consent for works to the tower on the estate at Montacute. The works for which this application relates involve the re-instatement of a gate to the entrance of the tower.

2.0 List description and context

The Abbey was listed at Grade I on 20th December 1960, list number 1283853:

Country house, mid C16 remodelling and extension of cloister court of C13 to C15 Augustinian nunnery founded 1229 and sold to Sir W. Sharington at the Dissolution 1540. Some alterations of c1700 and c1740 for Sir John Talbot and John Ivory Talbot and entrance front rebuilt as Gothick great hall 1754-5 by Sanderson Miller for J.I. Talbot. South front alterations in Tudor style 1828-30 for W.H. Fox-Talbot and c1900-10 restoration of medieval parts by H. Brakspear for C.H. Talbot. Ashlar and rubble stone with stone slate roofs generally and numerous ornate C16 twisted stacks. Mostly 2 storeys, the major part of the house on first floor only over unaltered medieval basement. The medieval basement comprises three sides of a lierne vaulted C15 cloister with two C14 bays at south-west angle. Largely C14 spaces off. To east fine series of vaulted rooms, sacristy, chapter house and warming house, intact apart from openings on east side



that are of c1900. This part was under the Dormitory. West side, under great hall, but originally under Abbess' lodging has 2 rooms and main entrance passage. North side is under croft to refectory. In upper part of house medieval roofs survive, concealed, to north side refectory, C15 with arch braced collar trusses and 3 tiers of wind bracing, and to south side dormitory, C14 with 3 tiers of cusped wind bracing. Exterior: west front has 1754-5 ashlar fronted hall-to centre, full-height, with slate half-hipped valley roof. Octagonal angle turrets with ogee cupolas, delicate pierced parapet and 2 large ogee-headed windows flanking central door reached by two-arm balustraded outside stair. An important landmark of the C18 Gothick revival. To left, former medieval kitchen re-fronted in C18. Balustraded parapet, buttresses and two 2-light pointed windows similar to those on Bath House at Corsham Court by Capability Brown (q.v. Corsham C.P.). To right a plain parapeted range with two 15-pane C18 sashes and heavy 7 stepped corner buttress. South front is similarly severe, being essentially the inside north wall of the Abbey church with balustrading and south-east tower added by Sharington and 3 oriels of varied sizes added 1828-30. The north-west angle of the church is marked by a heavily buttressed projection, west of this, in plain walling, another 15-pane sash. Sharington's tower possibly designed by John Chapman, octagonal, 3-storey, divided by string courses, has top belvedere, balustrade and stair turret. Finely detailed 2-light mullion windows. East front is the most medieval in outline, but C13 style Gothick ground floor windows are of 1900- 10. Adjoining tower, 2-storey range parallel to main range, the ground floor the medieval east end of chapter house and sacristy, the parapeted upper floor with 6 stone cross windows added in mid C16. To right, the main range has buttressed ground floor and, above, four C18 Gothick 4-light windows, 2 each side of fine C16 outside stack. Battlemented parapet. South end cross-wing appears largely C16 with coped gables, heraldic finials and dentil eaves cornice. Mullion-and-transom windows of flush chamfered type with unusual roundel motif on intersections. Medieval stonework to ground floor. Two gabled C16 north extension with first floor C18 sashes and attic mullion windows. North of house is stable court, mid C16 on east and north sides, an exceptionally complete Tudor service court, notable for the large timbered gabled dormers, some with deep eaves on scroll brackets and higher cross-gabled clock- tower at west end of north range. Mullion windows, drip course and Tudor-arched doorways but 4 doorways in the Renaissance style of some of the interior C16 work. C19 low coach-houses and 2 early to mid C18 lodges form a screen across west side linking to an apparently late C17 addition to north of former kitchen, 2storey, 5-window with sashes replacing cross-windows above and chamfered recessed mullion windows below. Fine timber dentil cornice. South end wall bolection moulded doorcase. From here projects a mid C18 Gothick ogee-headed carriage-arch with screen wall each side. Interiors: outstanding mid C18 Gothick work in great hall with exuberant terracotta figures by V.A. Sederbach in canopied niches and shallow tunnel vault with armorial decoration. c1740 south- west room in style of William Kent. South Gallery remodelled 1828- 30. Panelled parlour beyond of c1700-20. South-east tower has vaulted octagonal strong room with pendants to vaults and magnificent stone table attributed to J. Chapman. Similar but damaged table in belvedere. Stone gallery in east range is C16 with Renaissance style fireplace and doorcase, and Brown Gallery in north range has fine C16 windows to courtyard. Corbels of refectory roof visible. In service court a complete surviving brewery at west end of north range. W.H. Fox-Talbot 1800-77, pioneer of photography spent his life here and made his first photographic experiments here.



3.0 Heritage Impact Assessment – summary of impact

3.1 *Location of work to be carried out:* Lacock Abbey

3.2 *Management Unit:* Lacock Abbey

3.3 *Significance of management unit:* The property is listed at Grade I. The Abbey is one of the most complete surviving medieval nunneries in Britain and was built in the 13th Century (1232) by Ela, Countess of Salisbury, as a home for nuns and remains at the core of the building today. After 300 years, the nuns were forced to abandon the Abbey during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 when Henry VIII broke with the Catholic Church. The Abbey then became a country house when William Sharington converted the Abbey in 1540 with some drastic alterations. He embellished the abbey with elaborate chimneys and decorative flourishes, added a floor to create an attic level and divided large areas to create smaller rooms and galleries. The octagonal tower to the southeast corner was built which is an early example of French and Italian Renaissance influencing English architecture, and two long stone and timber-framed ranges were built for the stables, haylofts and grooms' quarters.

During the 18th century John Ivory Talbot largely rebuilt the front entrance to create a dining room and new hall with external stairs in a Gothick style (1754-56). Later he appointed the architect Sanderson Miller to revive the medieval spirit of the nunnery in a Gothick style, removed Sharington's windows from the east front's arches to create an open arcade giving direct access between the surviving abbey spaces and garden. He also added the battlements.

In the 19th Century William Henry Fox Talbot extended the centre part outwards and added three oriel windows in late Gothick style. The buttress to the left of these windows marks the north-west corner of the abbey church but the other buttresses date from the 1830s. His son Charles oversaw the careful restoration of the abbey by architect Sir Harold Brakspear as well as repairs to many village houses. He removed many of Ivory Talbot's alterations, restoring the ground floor of the east front by reinstating the missing walls and windows in 13th century Gothick style. The abbey has become synonymous with the invention of the photographic negative process developed by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1835.

3.4 *Current condition of management unit / location:* The building is generally in good condition but there are ongoing works to improve this associated with general maintenance and compliance. The particular issue that resulted in the need to remove the chimney capping came about because of a sudden area of damp that was discovered around the chimney that serves the boiler for the heating system for the main outbuildings at Lacock Abbey. The gas heating system was turned off in April 2023 following the discovery that the flue was blocked with a bird's nest causing condensed gases to permeate through the building resulting in water damage to the fabric. The project that arose from this required replacement of the boiler and also the flue liner, as the extant asbestos cement flue liner was



not compliant. A new stainless-steel liner was installed and these works necessitated removal of the stone cowl. The pre-application advice from Wiltshire Council was that “Listed Building Consent will need to be submitted for the removal with justification and options for either leaving the stack without a cowl or alternative protection for bird and other debris from entering the chimney stack shaft /flue.”

3.5 Description of proposed works and justification:

3.5.1 Remove the stone chimney capping, to facilitate installation of new flue liner. Stainless steel flue terminal to be finished with bird mesh and masonry chimney shaft brought to finish with mortar flaunching.

The chimney cap was formed from short stone columns with a capstone which was placed on top. The construction was quite fragile and not compliant with the requirements of the new boiler and flue system. Furthermore it did not provide an adequate level of bird protection. On researching the provenance of the extant chimney capping, the collections and house manager at Lacock has identified a 40-year period within which the cap was installed. There is footage in the archives from a 150th anniversary event for Fox-Talbot’s birthday in 1950 which shows no cap (photo 1). Documents have been found from the early-mid 1950s when they were replacing the boiler and doing works to the chimney flue and they don’t mention installing a cap. There is a photograph from Country Life from 1923 (photo 2) showing no cap, and one of the very early photographs from Fox-Talbot’s time showing a chimney pot is sitting inside the chimney, but no cap (photo 3). A photograph of the roof repairs being undertaken in the 1990s shows the cap in place (photo 4). It seems likely therefore that the cap was installed in the mid 1950s when associated works were being undertaken, so we’d consider its removal to be of low impact to the significance of the heritage asset.



3.6 Assessing the impact of proposals

	Criteria	Response	Risk Level
Impact	Could the proposal put the significance of the heritage assets at risk?	The proposal could only put the significance at risk if the extant capping were deemed to be of overwhelming significance to the heritage asset. Our research has informed us that the chimney capping was most likely installed in the 1950s, so could be considered to have been an intrusive addition.	Low risk
Knowledge and Understanding	Is there enough information to avoid any risks?	The NT have located photographic and film evidence to support this, so we can conclude that the removal would not present a risk to the significance of the heritage asset.	Low risk <i>Photos 1-4</i>
Impact	Will the proposal improve the condition and/or the significance of the heritage assets?	The proposal will improve the condition of the heritage asset going forward by removing what could be considered to be an intrusive addition to the heritage asset and replacing it with one of lower impact.	Very low risk <i>Photos 5-7</i>
Knowledge and Understanding	Is there enough information to improve condition / significance?	Photographs and an inspection of the elements in question would support this view.	Very low risk <i>Photos 1-7</i>
Avoiding Impacts	If there are risks, can the work be designed to avoid problems?	The proposals have been developed to ensure minimal impact. By carrying out detailed research, we have been able to design our proposals to minimise any issues or risks.	Low risk
Avoiding Impacts	Are there alternative options?	We believe that this is the optimum solution because it has a modest appearance (and therefore does not particularly detract from the appearance of the chimney) and is more-or-less reversible should the need arise in the future.	Higher risk (if alternatives were pursued)
Conclusion	The proposal is pragmatic and provides a visually modest solution for the future of the chimney stack. The removal of the (believed) 1950s chimney cap is seen to present a very low, arguably positive, improvement to the significance of the heritage asset.		



4.0 Design (and amount)

4.1 Materials:

The materials chosen for the flue are appropriate for their purpose and not detrimental to the listed building.

4.2 Scale:

The implemented flue terminal is proportionate to the building, and almost invisible from ground level or indeed any likely vantage points.

4.3 Layout:

The layout of the building will be unchanged by the proposal.

5.0 Impact

5.1. Visual

There will be virtually no visual impact arising from the proposal, the implementation of the new flue terminal is arguably less impactful than the extant design.

5.2. Social

There are no social impacts.

5.3 Environmental

There are positive environmental benefits arising from the installation of a new and more efficient gas boiler.

6.0 Access

6.1 Access will remain as existing.



7.0 Conclusion

The implemented proposal is relatively minor in nature, and we believe offers an improvement to significance of the listed building.

8.0 Photographs



Photos 1-4 showing 1) still from 1950 film; 2) unpublished Country Life photo from 1923; 3) early Fox Talbot photo showing chimney pot and no stone cap; 4) cap visible in 1990s photo during general roof repair works.





Heritage Impact Assessment and Design & Access Statement Chimney Capping at Lacock



Photos 5-7 showing the dismantled chimney capping, the works underway and the completed terminal with finished flaunching.

