

CVG Virtual Visits 2020: Visit 11, Launde Abbey and Withcote Chapel, Leics

Our trip this time goes to a surprisingly remote area of eastern Leicestershire close to the Rutland border. Our first visit is to **Launde Abbey** which was actually a former Augustinian Priory, not an Abbey. After the Reformation when the former Priory church and estate fell into the hands of the Cromwell family the chancel of the former church became the private chapel of the adjacent Elizabethan mansion built by Gregory Cromwell, son of Thomas Cromwell. Now it is a diocesan retreat centre but the chapel is open to visitors and there is a coffee shop. For details about the centre see <https://laundeabbey.org.uk> .

The priory was founded in 1125 but the chapel is largely C15. It has some fine C15 stained glass and the tomb of Gregory Cromwell described by Pevsner as “One of the purest monuments of the Early Renaissance. Very grand and restrained.”

Photos and more information at <https://www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk/launde-abbey/> and details of the architecture at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1361007>.

Not far away, though maybe more difficult to find is **Withcote Chapel**, now under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It was also a private chapel to its adjoining big house but in this case built for that purpose in the last decade of the C15. It was restored sensitively c1744 and inside many of the fittings are of the C18. However the chapel's glory lies in the set of stained glass windows of 1530--40 depicting the Crucifixion, apostles, saints, prophets and Old Testament figures all attributed to Galeon Hone, the King's glazier who worked at Kings College Chapel. Unfortunately in 2016 the chapel was targeted in what is considered to have been a robbery to order and the window depicting the prophet Ezekiel was taken.

Photos and more details at <https://www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk/withcote-chapel/> and <https://www.derelictplaces.co.uk/main/religious-sites/27372-withcote-chapel-april-2013-a.html>. Architectural details at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1074845>.

News report on the robbery: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-37090370>.

Many more photos can be seen by Googling the name of the church plus images.

Before lunch we'll move on to **Hallaton** and its Jenkins two starred church. It also has an old pub where I hope we will find a decent lunch. More of that in our next Virtual Trip.