

Archaeology and the National Trust in Buckinghamshire

Wider issues

Following the completion of the National Trust's Organisational Review Buckinghamshire now falls within the Thames and Solent Region. The Regional Archaeologist, Gary Marshall, will now be based at Hughenden Manor for 2 days each week, but will also operate from Stowe Gardens.

The Trust are about to re-establish the post of Project Archaeologist for Stowe Gardens. Project funding has also been found for an 18 month post for creating the SMR database for Stowe, West Wycombe and other properties where such data is at present lacking e.g. Green Farm at Hughenden.

Aldbury Nowers, Pitstone Hill and Down Farm on the Ashridge Estate are to be the subject of a topographical survey which will digitally capture all archaeological remains and create the SMR database for this section of the property. The work is to be carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology.

Ashridge

The project archaeologist for Ashridge, Melanie Solik, is now into the second year of her contract and is creating the SMR database for the property using the survey created by Angus Wainwright in the late 1980s.

Stowe Gardens

Lake Restoration

With the assistance of a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund the National Trust are currently restoring three historic lakes in the park. These lakes, or perhaps 'ponds' might be appropriate to their scale, are to be found on the brook which runs through Dadford Village and along the north edge of the park. The largest is the mill pond at Home Farm and this has been dredged of up to 10,000 cubic metres of silt. The other two ponds, known as the Haymanger and Roothouse have had the dams and sluice mechanisms repaired.

Oxford Archaeology have been employed to carry out excavations and a watching brief whilst this work was in progress. At the Haymanger Pond a number of structural timbers have been unearthed, forming the earliest sluice mechanism. This is thought to date from the 18th century. Samples for dendrochronology dating have been taken.

HLF bid – stage 2

The Trust are about to prepare a second bid for restoration of the park which will include the restoration of the saw mill at Home Farm.

Roman corn drying kiln

Remains of a corn drying kiln in the park excavated and recorded by Northants Archaeology after discovery during tree planting works. *Viatores* currently investigating alignment of Alchester-Towcester Roman road at Stowe but a large trench cut across its alignment (as shown on the OS) failed to show any evidence.

Building recording

Several of the garden buildings – the Equestrian Statue of King George I, the Lake Pavilions, the Doric Arch and the Grotto - are currently the subject of archaeological watching briefs whilst repairs are undertaken. These are being carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology. Samples have been taken for dendrochronology dating of the Lake Pavilions. The Trust intends to establish a program for dendro dating of all the garden buildings incorporating structural timbers.

North Front

Stowe School are employing Oxford Archaeology to carry out a watching brief over excavations on the South Front and around the East Leoni Arch for the purpose of installing a water main. This has led to a number of discoveries, notably remains of the Ducal Gasworks behind the arch.

Oxford Archaeology have also monitored works to lower ground levels on the North Front. This was after concern was raised that the excavation works, through an area of great archaeological sensitivity, were not being archaeologically monitored.

Cliveden

Oxford Archaeology have recently completed a watching brief over excavations on the South Terrace at Cliveden, which dates from the mid 17th century. This has recorded the sequence of layers forming the make-up over the vaults of the terrace.

Bradenham Manor

Excavations are proposed for installing irrigation pipes through the gardens. One of the trenches will have to pass through the area of archaeological sensitivity on the south lawn where wall footings, probably for the 16th century house, have been found. Archaeological contractors will be employed to monitor this work, and to carry out additional investigations to provide evidence for a Conservation Plan for the gardens.