

**Update for National Trust Archaeology in Buckinghamshire, March-Sept. 2003**

1 As reported at the March Forum meeting we now have in place a dedicated project archaeologist for Stowe Gardens. We also have in place an SMR assistant who will be updating the SMR and creating a gazetteer of sites for West Wycombe and Stowe. These two posts commenced at the beginning of April 2003.

The **West Wycombe** survey should hopefully be completed by the end of September and will include the results of watching briefs carried out in the gardens in the early 1990s. A copy of the report will be deposited with the Bucks. County SMR. The **Stowe** survey is due for completion by the end of March 2004 and should include a gazetteer of all sites and activities recorded since the Trust acquired the property in 1989.

2 A report has just been received from Northamptonshire Archaeology on the watching brief conducted during tree planting in 2002 and 2003 in Stowe Park. This led to the discovery of a Roman tile kiln in the park. The Trust will be undertaking geophysics surveys in early September on the course of the Alchester-Towcester Roman road at Stowe in order to locate its precise course. A report has also been received from Oxford Archaeology covering the results of excavations and a watching brief maintained over the restoration of Lakes in Stowe Park. Copies of both of the above reports have been deposited with the Bucks County SMR.

3 There are several partners involved with the archaeology at **Stowe** and the situation seems to be less than satisfactory with regards to planning and communication, and with regards to sharing information and advice. As noted above the National Trust employs a project archaeologist to oversee various National Trust restoration projects, whilst Stowe School has been employing the services of David Baker as consultant and Oxford Archaeology as a contractor for projects associated with the current restoration of the house. The County Archaeology Service implements the requirements of PPG15 and PPG16 arising from planning matters since the buildings are listed and the park and gardens are registered. The Trust have expressed concerns about the level of recording arising from a recent pipeline project around the north and south fronts where the brief from the CAS asked for sample excavations to be recorded. Such sample sections are inadequate to record the complex stratigraphy resulting from more than 300 years of gardens activity.

I would suggest the answer to these problems might be an occasional forum which would bring the concerned parties together – the NT, Stowe School, the CAS, EH. Perhaps the Forum on the 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. could discuss this issue.

4 The contract for our **Ashridge** project archaeologist is due to terminate at the end of September. The SMR for the property will be completed but not the written gazetteer. The Trust has therefore found funding for an additional three months work to compile a written report and gazetteer for the property. Unfortunately this will not satisfy the requirements for publication raised at the March Forum meeting, though copies of the report and gazetteer will be deposited with the County SMR. However, as part of the three month extension an article for Records of Bucks. could perhaps be considered?

5 Northamptonshire Archaeology have recently completed the report and gazetteer for the survey of Pitstone Hill, Aldbury Nowers and Down Farm on the **Ashridge** estate. Again, copies have been deposited with the County SMR.