

The National Trust

Report to the Bucks Historic Environment Forum

25th March 2008

Stowe Gardens

Our major project at the moment is the restoration and adaptation of the buildings at New Inn, which, by June 2011, will form the new entry point for visitors to the gardens and park. The buildings (grade II* listed) are currently in a highly dilapidated state and require major works to conserve the most important elements i.e. the main lodging range and some of the domestic buildings such as the Dairy, Kitchen, Brewhouse and Stables. Some elements will probably have to be lost as they in such poor state and to plough large amounts of money into spliced repairs would prove uneconomic. The buildings have already been the subject of a major archaeological recording project carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology. Further recording will be carried out when the main works are carried out to the buildings, which will include re-covering the main roof range. Thanks again go to the Bucks Emergency Recording Fund for supporting the first phase of recording.

We have recently completed a very successful archaeological project, again using the services of Northamptonshire Archaeology, to recover the site of a lost garden building known as the Sleeping House. This was built in the 1720s and stood for about 40 years before it was demolished in the 1760s. Finding the site of the building has been critical to the restoration of the area of the garden known as the Sleeping Wood, which consisted of a network of grass paths flanked by hedges and stepped shrubbery. Recreating the building will not prove possible but the footprint will be recreated using locally won cobbles and sand from estate quarries. Seats will be installed within this footprint as the original building contained couches. The design of the seats will be inspired by fragments of decorative plaster found during the excavation process.

Our next up-and-coming restoration project is the Grotto, for which a Conservation Plan has been prepared by architects Inskip and Jenkins. Archaeology has informed some elements of the research, such as the supply of water to the interior of the Grotto.

Look out for 'Delightful Temples – the Art and Landscapes of Stowe' – a major exhibition to be hosted by the Bucks County Museum from 8th March.

Cliveden

The sale of the lease of the former hospital site has released funds which will be used for the restoration of important garden buildings and structures. The Trust is therefore

preparing a suite of conservation plans, including plans for the buildings and separate plan for landscape and archaeology. Wessex Archaeology have been commissioned to carry out the archaeological survey of woodland areas where there are extensive remains of tracks, paths, quarries and elements of the designed landscape apparent on a key landscape plan of 1749.

Bradenham Woods

We have been undertaking a survey of woodland archaeology at Bradenham which is now into its third year. The project is largely undertaken by volunteers, with supervision coming from the Trust's Regional Archaeologist. The 'team' go out once per month and map and record using pro forma sheets woodland earthworks surviving from the operation of the wood, as well as features pre-dating the establishment of wooded areas in the 18th century. Dominant features include saw pits, lynchets indicating former ploughing, tracks and hollow ways, extraction pits and woodland boundaries. More unusual features include the former park ditch and bank, an enigmatic mound variously thought to be a windmill mound, prospect mound or barrow, and the remains of a site called the 'homestead' but which is more likely to be a site of iron smelting since at least one charcoal platform has been found. The project has been supported by a grant from the Sustainable Development Fund administered by the Chilterns AONB. Oxford Archaeology laid out the initial survey grid and have digitised the results.

Boarstall Tower

We hope to run an excavation and survey project this year in the grounds of Boarstall Tower as part of National Archaeology week (12th-20th July). However, this is dependent on the Trust raising funds to support the project.

Ashridge

Part of the estate lies in Bucks. We are currently pulling together a series of archaeological reports based on 10 character areas for the property. The first of these will cover the important landscape of Ivinghoe Beacon, Steps Hill and Incombe Hole. A synthesised land use history for the property will also result from this process.

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