

Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum
2nd May 2012

National Trust Contribution

Cliveden

Our Cliveden property is currently undertaking several major conservation projects. Over the winter a new sewer scheme has been introduced across the estate involving extensive and deep excavations which have been monitored by Network Archaeology. We hope that the deep sections recorded will give us profiles of how the landscape has been built up and altered to form the garden landscape. Very little is known about Cliveden's early settlement history and although we have not found evidence of pre-historic occupation we have found traces of Medieval evident as layers of deeply buried soils containing pottery of this period. The most important finding has been substantial brick foundations at either end of the 17th century South Terrace which we think are foundations for steps shown on early plans of the 18th century. These appear to have been swept away by the mid 18th century, to be replaced by a central staircase. The terrace is to be the subject of a major program of repairs over the next 2 years and we will be employing the services of an archaeological contractor to bring together new and existing evidence – a recent discovery made after knocking two small holes through the base of the terrace has been that the original round niches of the terrace are concealed behind the current brick façade which dates from the 1750s-70s.

Stowe

Archaeological monitoring of the restoration works at New Inn was completed during the early part of 2012 and the final report – a joint production between Northamptonshire Archaeology and the National Trust – will be available during the early part of May. New Inn has now been open (finally!) to the public since the beginning of February and has been well-received.

Northamptonshire Archaeology have recently completed investigative reports on the Grotto and the area of the gardens known as the Hawkwell Field where test excavations have confirmed the location of historic paths and earthworks relating to the outer ha ha which was in-filled when this area of the gardens was expanded in the 1750s.

Bradenham

Working with the Princes Risborough Countryside Group we have undertaken geophysics surveys over a large scheduled Bronze Age barrow in the valley bottom near Saunderton village which has suffered from past ploughing but is now under permanent pasture. Despite ploughing this has produced some excellent results, confirming that the outer ditch and part of the central section of the barrow remains intact. We have completed two other surveys in the

same field, revealing five ring ditch features between 10 and 13 ms in diameter. Three of these are overlapping and we think are indicating the site of an Iron Age settlement.

West Wycombe Park

In 2011 a structure appeared in the south bank of the north stream as a consequence of the River Wye drying up, leading to erosion of part of the bank. This structure consists of two timber-lined 'chambers' separated by a 0.35 ms wide gap laid into a cut in the underlying sandy gravels. The sides and bottoms to the two chambers are lined with yellow clay, evidently in an attempt to make them watertight. A solid floor of brick and re-used quarry tiles overlies the clay base in each chamber. Dimensions of the two chambers are hard to determine as they have eroded badly, however they have a width of 1.3 ms and an estimated height of 0.4 ms. The depth from front to back is difficult to assess as erosion of the front edge has removed much of the structure. Traces of a hard lime render were observed in one of the corners suggesting that the chambers were deliberately lined. Whether or not these structures served an industrial process, or were built as eel or fish traps remains unclear. They probably date from the early 18th century.

Ashridge

We have just completed a further volume of the series of archaeological surveys for the Ashridge estate (11 in total eventually!), the most recent one covering the area known as The Coombe, covering a wooded coombe south of Ivinghoe Beacon. The area contains an number of interesting features, including relict field systems (possibly pre-historic), pits, quarries, tracks and boundary banks. Perhaps the most interesting is a series of three enormous box hedges which on early 19th century parish maps for Ivinghoe are described as 'Box Warren'. This was common land until 1822 and there is an interesting 1656 agreement between the Duke of Bridgewater and his tenants resolving conflicts over resources on the common and particularly the impact of rabbits so we know the warren dates from at least the mid 17th century.

Gary Marshall