



## Bucks Historic Environment Forum meeting

14<sup>th</sup> March 2016

### National Trust report

#### **Bradenham**

With the assistance of the Risborough Countryside group the National Trust has been excavating and recording an exceptionally well-preserved 'bloomery' or iron smelting furnace in one of the ploughed fields at Bradenham near the Clare Charity Centre. This consists of a clay-lined shaft extending to a depth of 0.7m set within a larger pit which was used for tapping slag from the bottom of the furnace. The shaft shows evidence of several episodes of firing. 160 kg of slag has been recovered from the excavations, together with several sherds of pot dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. We hope to be obtain more accurate dating via radio carbon dating of charcoal samples.

#### **Stowe**

Recent excavations (actually undertaken with a carefully guided JCB bucket!) have successfully unearthed evidence for gravel paths in the area known as the 'Western Garden' linking Queen Caroline's Monument with the east Boycott Pavilion. As with so many of the historic 18<sup>th</sup> century paths at Stowe the evidence consists of a bright yellow sandy gravel derived from quarry pits on the edge of the estate, laid to a width averaging 3.3m. Where it survives in-situ, as is the case with the Western Garden, it is possible to precisely relocate the path on its original alignment, though usually 20cms above its original height once the build up of later topsoil has been taken into account. These evaluation excavations usually throw up a few surprises and the Western Garden has proved no exception as we have found a mortared stone base beside Queen Caroline which probably marks the site of one of the British Worthies statues before they were relocated in the 1730s. Several stone, brick and clay drains have also turned up, suggesting problems of waterlogging were just as common in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century as they are now. Unfortunately we have been unsuccessful in finding the stone base for a statue group known as the Roman Wrestlers but a wider spread of gravel coming off the main path probably suggests a gravel terrace created around this feature.

Current restoration projects at Stowe include the recreation of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Coade stone Gothic Cross in the Elysian Fields and recreating the Circle of Dancing Faun with its attendant shepherds and shepherdesses in the Grecian Valley. This is part of a wider project to tackle 50 outstanding restoration projects within the gardens.

## **Cliveden**

We have carried on employing the services of Oxford Archaeology to maintain a watching brief over repairs to the South Terrace at Cliveden. A key discovery has been a pair of inclined arches ascending from the roof of the sounding chamber under the terrace – we think these were probably light wells running under the south wall of the mansion to the sounding chamber. Restoration of the central staircase to the terrace was completed in December 2015. Major works proposed for 2016 are to dig up and renew the drainage on the top of the terrace. This will involve excavating a drainage run below the terrace where we know from previous excavations that there are substantial brick foundations, possibly for an earlier mansion. The services of Oxford Archaeology will be retained for this work.

Another current Cliveden project is the restoration of the 1890s generator house at Cliveden. Unfortunately the interior was stripped of steam generator sets and dynamos, probably in the 1950s, however, the recent clearance of the interior (generously assisted by members of Bucks Archaeological Society) has led to the recovery of parts of the original glass cell batteries and parts of the large marble screen on which the switch gear was mounted. The Trust are still considering options for the long term use of the generator house but public access will be an important consideration. Current proposals are that it could be used as a classroom or study base or exhibition space.

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