

Bucks Historic Environment Forum 18th Sept. 2017

Report from the National Trust

Cliveden

Oxford Archaeology have recently completed a report on their research into and recording of the electrical generator house at Cliveden. The building dates from c. 1896 and was built by the William Astor to provide power to the estate. Sadly the building lacks any machinery and what we are left with is the shell of the building, plus the concrete engine and dynamo bases, glazed bricks on the walls and some line shafting used to drive a workshop in one of the rooms. The interior was archaeologically excavated a few years ago by volunteers and members of Bucks. Arch. Soc. Active Archaeology Group, leading to the recovery of a number of objects associated with the operation of the building. Recent research by property volunteers has led to the recovery of a huge archive of information on the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading. Currently tenders are being received for re-roofing the building but its final use remains yet to be determined – possibly an exhibition space for statuary currently held in storage and items relating to the operation of the building.

There are several other restoration projects at Cliveden where archaeological recording has been undertaken. These include the Blenheim Pavilion where removal of the 1970s internal cement render has led to the exposure of two blocked doorways leading to an external privy and cold bath, thus confirming design drawings by Giacomo Leoni (1730s). Excavations have taken place at the 19th c. Flint House to expose the clay tile roof and several enigmatic circular holes in the parapet which we think may have supported a roof-top viewing platform looking across the garden parterre. Both these projects have been undertaken by Oxford Archaeology. OA are also currently completing their report on monitoring observations on the South Terrace at Cliveden, a major project which has been going on for about four years now.

Boarstall Tower

Some recent test pitting in the east paddock at Boarstall Tower used as a car park has identified a narrow wall close to the east wall of the gardens which we think could be the remains of a medieval building demolished during the Civil War siege of Boarstall Tower. The pits were undertaken to identify a suitable location for a replacement septic tank. The pits have confirmed a feature identified by geophysics in 2008 which appears to be an in-filled moat or canal running across the width of the northern third of the paddock.

Stowe Gardens

Excavations have recently been undertaken to locate the site of the statue of Thalia at the Fane of Pastoral Poetry (unsuccessful!) and statue bases and paths around the Doric Arch (partly successful with four of ten bases identified and a well-defined gravel path also located). The aim is to reinstate these statue groups but locating firm evidence can be frustrating and accurate restoration can also be frustrated by the presence of mature trees which were not there in the 18th century! One successful project is the reinstatement of the 1814 Coade stone Gothic Cross. I hope I can show a couple of images at the forum.

Gary Marshall, National Trust archaeologist 5th Sept. 2017