

EARDISLAND ARCHAEOLOGY

The Burton Court Case Study

We are embarking on the third year of our Case Study of Burton Court, and hope to achieve significant results in the coming year. We continue to enjoy the help and supervision of Dr Ray & his colleagues, the support of Helen & Robert Simpson and a number of local farmers, and team members. We are always delighted to provide details of our work to anyone or any group and to receive the occasional help of interested people. (Our group includes those aged between 9 & 70+). We can provide the opportunity to learn basic archaeological skills, to research artefacts or documents; also surveying (and possibly geo-physics) methods.

We are optimistic that we will receive substantial funding shortly to enable us to pursue additional objectives (outlined later). For details of our meetings at Burton Court contact Paul Selfe.

*Bone Analysis: preliminary
report: more details will follow*

We submitted our bone finds to an expert. They are mainly from the levels in which medieval pot was found

A preliminary scan of the vertebrate remains from Burton Court excavations indicated that, on the whole, the bones were well preserved. Variability of colour was observed within material from the same layers and some fragments were of rather battered appearance. This possibly suggests that some of the deposits contained reworked material, i.e. bones originally deposited elsewhere and subsequently dumped on the mound at a later date or material disturbed from earlier deposits within the mound e.g. by animal burrowing. One sheep phalanx (toe bone) showed acid etching, characteristic damage usually associated with the bone having been chewed and digested. This fragment is likely to be derived from faecal material. Although it is possible that the faecal material may be of human origin, the size of the phalanx suggests that this bone represents a dog/fox coprolite. Initial identifications showed the presence of the remains of pig, sheep/goat, horse, hare, roe deer. Bird bones included those of chicken, goose, woodcock and possibly the tibiotarsus (leg bone) of a bird of prey, such as goshawk or buzzard. The latter is only an initial identification and requires further examination. A number of fragments could only be identified to broad categories, e.g. large or medium-sized mammal, because diagnostic morphological features were absent or not distinctive enough. Preliminary observations of the species identified and the representation of the skeletal elements recovered, suggests that the material from Burton Court represents kitchen or table waste. Most of the pig remains present are associated with the head of the animal and could be interpreted as waste from initial carcass preparation. In this case, however, it is more likely to be waste from boiling pigs' heads for brawn or possibly from the remains of heads roasted and served at table.

The work of the late Professor R.H.Hilton

Details in a recent obituary for historian Professor R.H.Hilton raise some interesting issues for the work being done at Burton Court, in relation to the patterns of life which once occurred in the Manor of Burton.

In his work he emphasised the extent to which social inequalities in economic power structured the course of economic development, especially between about 1150-1550. It is apparent from some of the artefact evidence we have produced, together with later documentary sources that there was a thriving Manor in Burton at this time.

He identified the manor as the primary institution through which surplus labour was appropriated from peasant families by landlords. He interpreted conflicts arising from the imposition of rents as the prime mover of social change in the medieval economy.

The view he opposed was that medieval villages were co-operative communities in which the co-operation between lords and tenants was mutually beneficial and governed by consensus. He placed more emphasis on the levels of conflict which arose and which resulted in social change, arguing that such conflicts were not just the product of more modern processes of industrialisation. This led him to examine peasant resistance and rebellion, as well as the trading relations within small market towns such as Evesham and Halesowen, places not far from us here.

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Winter Diary

We continued to make progress until the weather began to affect our opportunities to dig the mound site. We decided, therefore that we should pause to assess our work and make provisional plans for the future. We also needed to decide on possible projects for the future if we were to apply for additional funds.

Friday 1st November

It was decided to hold a discussion meeting in the home of Liz and Roy Harbour, to consider important issues:

Tuesday 5th November

Dull and overcast. Those attending: George, Paul, Roger Brookes. It was thought that little could be usefully done by way of digging. George brought some copies of old maps which showed the entrance from A44 running directly down to Burton Lane. in a straight line. We speculated that this was the original route. This would mean that the wall ended by the wicket gate and the section containing the initials of 18thC Brewster, (BB); 19thC Clowes (JC) and 20thC Simpson (RS) was added later. It was also noted that two large trees had come down in the recent gales. The Beech Tree being the largest one to have fallen for some time.

Tuesday 12th November

Another dull and wet morning which made excavational work impossible. Graham and Paul walked around the mound site to examine vistas, the stone in the walls and the areas of garden which may require later investigation. It was agreed that the water by the stables will be useful for cleaning artefacts and there is space in the stable block for improved shelving to store items.

Monday 18th November

Liz, Roy, Graham, George, Roger Brookes, Gill and Paul attended. We had a visit from **Paul White** who came to inspect the DMV field which he will survey with Tim Hoverd in March 2003. He has agreed to attend at a later date and give a talk on landscape archaeology in relation to our site. Liz took the opportunity to complete some unfinished drawings.

Tuesday 19th November

Liz, Roy, Graham, George and Paul worked for an hour or two on the site. Liz worked in sector G and Graham in Sector H. Both were cleaning down the floor of the trench to achieve a level. Graham uncovered some more large stones which gave a stronger impression of tumble, which were photographed. These will be drawn in due course. There were no finds other than one piece of stone which may have some carved markings, or which may just be weathered.

Tues 26th November

Tim Hoverd, Liz, Roy, Graham, Roger Stirling Brown, Roger Brookes and Paul attended. Tim came to establish a Site Datum Point and to explain the process of producing an Excavation Matrix. He also examined the most recent developments in the trench.

(i) **The Site Datum Point.** This was established from the trig point in a field in the Parks, situated at 108m above sea level. A series of readings were taken and a point established on the mound from which heights can in future be calculated.

(ii) **The Excavation Matrix.** A Chapter from *A Manual of Archaeological Field Recording* by **M.J.Hawker** was provided, and which will be distributed to all group members; Tim explained the procedures involved and recommended that the group meets over a series of weeks to discuss their interpretations of the stratigraphy, so a final agreement is reached for the purpose of the Matrix. He suggested that this should be completed before much more excavation takes place.

(iii) **The Trench B.** Tim examined this and agreed that the posthole looked to be a promising development. He thought the important questions may be answered when we see what is below the large stones at the southern end of the trench. He suggested that the walls be sprayed, photos be taken and the matrix completed in the winter months.

Tim then examined the ditch **Trench (C)** with Roger Stirling Brown. He thought the new site for **Trench D** was a good one with plenty of space for the spoil and there was good light from above. Roger Stirling Brown and Roger Brookes then proceeded to backfill this trench, which Dr Ray has indicated is a health and safety hazard.

Liz first completed a drawing of Sector H and then she worked in Sector G and uncovered what seems to be another smaller post hole. A few unusual stones were retained for inspection. The hole seemed to have a number of stones around it with soft loose soil inside. Graham worked in sectors H and F. In 108F he uncovered a small nail, of which a rusty impression was left in the soil. Nearby was a piece of bone. We think these finds at about 1.40 below the surface are the deepest level at which finds have been made so far. Video and Photos were taken of the posthole area. Work ended at 1.00pm.

Tuesday 3rd December

George, Roger, Graham and Paul attended. They began work on an examination of the trench stratigraphy in order to produce an analysis for the Matrix. This involved a discussion of the features and a photographic and video record.

Tuesday 17th December

Liz, Graham, Roger Stirling Brown and Paul attended. A few photographs were taken of the trench showing it at the end of the year. Roger completed the infilling of Trench C. We took the opportunity to thank Helen, Robert and Edward for their help and encouragement throughout the year with regard to our project.

Tuesday 31st December

Paul and Graham took another transect measurement across the mound with a view to completing the survey. There are still two or three more to be completed. It was agreed that we would resume again in the New Year on the occasions when the weather allowed.

Tuesday 14th January

Liz, Graham, Roger Brookes and Paul attended but decided that the weather was not good enough to remove the tarpaulin to take photographs and examine stratigraphy. Instead, they took the opportunity to

investigate areas of burrowing on the mound, to see if there was any evidence of other artefacts being thrown out. (It was such finds by Holly and Ruth Brookes in 1999 from such burrowing, that led to the major work now being undertaken on the mound site.) A number of finds were duly made on the surface which suggested that it would be worth spending some time sieving through the materials thrown out by the animals (badgers or foxes).

Finds (surface)

1 PIECE OF FLINT

2 PIECES OF VICTORIAN CHINA WARE

**1 PIECE OF GLAZED WARE WITH
GROOVED EDGE**

1 LARGE LUMP OF CHALK/LIME

3 PIECES OF GLASS (WITH PATINA)

1 AGED BONE FRAGMENT

2 PIECES OF OYSTER SHELL

1 METAL BOWL (TO BE EXCAVATED)

Meeting 1st November 2002

Points for discussion:

1. Review of existing project:

"Case Study of Burton Court: the House and the outer landscape"

We are endeavouring to show and interpret the changes which have occurred from the earliest settlement, to contemporary times.

This includes:

an investigation into changes to buildings (and their significance), gardens and surrounding fields.

Also, research into artefacts and other documentary sources to establish information about owners and occupiers and their changing life-styles.

Our project also entailed:

Investigation into the architectural changes which have occurred to the house: (including the cellars)

· Possible sites of Victorian rubbish tips to locate artefacts for research

· The significance of the mound and the ditch

· The significance of the lost building in Quinton Orchard and the existing stable block

· Field (and geo-physics) surveys of gardens, trees and surrounding fields

· The possible DMV

(arranged for March)

These areas of study require help from a number of experts and it was agreed that Tim Hoverd would be contacted for assistance in establishing the Site Datum Point & Excavation Matrix.

(Tim duly came and gave this help and advice.)

We also need to contact various experts on landscape interpretation, issues relating to the bone finds and one on architectural archaeology. We require answers to questions about possible changes to the house over time, especially in relation to the 17th century Dingley sketch.

Additional future work proposed

· Field walking in Eardisland directed by Dr Ray (Arrow Valley Project) Feb 2003

· DMV survey/ geo-physics: and possible excavation: March 2003

· Publication of project findings in due course.

Outcomes of the November meeting

Those attending: Liz, Roy, Pat, Chris, Ed, Ben, Ken, Graham, George, Paul.

It was agreed that we are making good progress in our investigations but should make a list of priorities and ask Tim Hoverd to attend at Burton Court to discuss them. In particular, the work on the mound and ditch should be raised to ensure that the procedures being followed meet the requirements of the professional archaeologists

Field Walking

Heritage funding issues (via Oral History Group)

It was agreed that both Archaeological and Oral History Groups could undertake much more useful work if further funding was available. For the Archaeology Group, this should not endeavour to take on too broad a sweep of parish history, but should focus on the completion of the overall work already begun. Application to be submitted: *"A case study of Burton Court in relation to the history and heritage of Eardisland"*

Research issues to be considered

In addition to investigations into the assemblage of bones and other finds which will continue during winter months, other research matters include investigations into:

- Geological issues relating to the mound and surrounding area.
- The possible date for the construction of the existing stable block and aspects of the ownership and history of Burton Court, including the possible stay of Henry 5th
- The lost building in Quinton Orchard; (the site of a foundation wall may have been located).
- The significance of a few unusual finds (metal objects; wax coated stone etc).

Possible winter work

It was noted that Dr Ray is keen that we should not start detailed work on other areas of the overall project before completing the present study of the mound and ditch. However, it was agreed that other related work which could be undertaken in the winter would be helpful to the future of the programme. It may be possible to:

- Proceed with the initial stages of opening Trench D (in the ditch further along from Trench C)
- Clean, code and bag finds from Trench C (the ditch trench now closed)
- Complete the survey of the mound
- Complete other survey work of the gardens and trees (with photos)
- Undertake research into finds, documents etc
- Organise a programme of speakers or visits to the group from experts.
- Construct improved storage systems for the archive materials
- Field walking in nearby areas, using proper procedures.

NOTICE BOARD

Since the weather is making work outside difficult, it is intended to hold a meeting at the home of Liz and Roy in February for a discussion about the programme for 2003

American connection

We continue to receive valuable information from an email contributor, in California, Paul Davis, who is able to provide interesting details about the history of the de Braose family. We are grateful to George Alderson for his assistance in the discussions and communications with Paul.

It is hoped to be able to undertake some field walking in the near future under the direction of Dr Ray and his colleagues. Information will be provided when it comes to hand. This will be part of the Arrow Valley Project

GRANT FUNDING

We have recently heard that we have been successful in obtaining further funding from the Countryside Agency. This will enable us to undertake the range of projects outlined above between 2003-2005

Woolhope Club

We have been invited by the Woolhope Club to provide a tour of our sites at Burton Court to their members, to outline the work we have completed there to date. The provisional date of their visit is Sunday October 5th.

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