

BLHA Spring Visit – 25th April 2006

We have arranged for a party of BLHA members to visit Drayton House, near Kettering in Northamptonshire. Drayton House has been a family home for almost 1000 years. The core of the house built by Simon de Drayton dates from the year 1300, while the transformation it underwent during the late 17th and 18th centuries are of particular architectural interest.

The house, which passed to the Sackville family in 1770, is not open to the general public, visits and study days being arranged solely for groups with a special interest. We have arranged a guided tour of 1½ hours' duration, commencing at 2 pm – there is much to see. We regret there are no facilities for the disabled.

The cost of the visit will be £10 per head, inclusive of tea served with home-made cakes. Travel will be by private car.

Further details will be included with the booking form which will be sent to members (Society secretaries) in the New Year.

2006 BLHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The **2006 Annual Conference & Annual General Meeting** will be hosted by **Colmworth & Neighbours History Society**, and held on **Saturday 17th June 2006** in Colmworth. Make a note of the date in your diary – more details in the next issue.

Bedfordshire & Northamptonshire Family History Societies International Conference Putting Flesh on the Bones – A Study of the Common Man

The conference is being organised by Bedfordshire FHS & Northamptonshire FHS in association with the Federation of Family History Societies, and will be held at **University College, Northampton**, over five days, **1-5 September 2006**. The conference site is well-located, modern, and has good disabled access to all parts.

The full programme of lectures by distinguished speakers was published in June 2005, and booking forms are available.

This conference will investigate various aspects of how our ancestors lived, and how their everyday lives were affected by their environment, the elements, by superstition and the hand of God. It will explore not only the tried and tested methods but also areas and resources not usually considered by family historians.

Visitors will be able to come as residents for the whole conference, or attend for selected days or part-days, either as non-residents or taking overnight accommodation at a reasonable price if they wish; early booking discounts will be available.

There will also be an associated Family History and Local History Fair at the same venue on Sunday 3rd September, free to all registered visitors and open to the public for a small entrance fee.

Please visit the website www.conference2006.org.uk, where updated information will appear throughout the year; meanwhile, if you need further information, please contact Janet Thornton, 31 Coltsfoot Road, Rushden, Northants, NN10 0GE, enclosing a SAE, or email her at bookings@conference2006.org.uk.

Appeal for Articles for the BLHA Newsletter

History in Bedfordshire requires more so that it can be published at regular intervals throughout the year. Bring the results of your own or your society's work to the attention of a wider audience. Articles around 1700 words, somewhat less if containing illustrations, will fill two pages, but shorter articles are equally acceptable. Longer topics can be accommodated by splitting the article into parts and publishing them in consecutive issues. Society Secretaries – if you wish to publicise a special event to a wider audience, we will be happy to include it in our events page. We look forward to hearing from you. Next copy date for the publication is 31st January 2006.

A Comparison of Historical Knowledge with a Resistance Survey

Kevan Fadden & Mike Turner

A resistance survey is an excellent way to assist archaeologists in determining where to dig; like aerial photography, however, it is a graphic aid which, without other corroborating evidence, can be misleading, and it is only by excavation that interpretations can be confirmed. On this occasion, a resistance survey was carried out over an area where a considerable amount is known in the historical record, and where excavation would not be allowed.

While carrying out historical research on the Wrest Park Estate at Silsoe, Bedfordshire, the Ampthill & District Archaeological & Local History Society were fortunate to have the opportunity to carry out a resistance survey over the buried foundations of a mediaeval manor house that was demolished in the 1830s.

The Estate was owned by the de Grey family, and its history is recorded in great detail, with particular attention given to the grounds and extensive garden. The Earl de Grey replaced the manor house with a new

the current fashion. They give us a fair representation of what the early house looked like, although it must be remembered that the Classical front, as seen in the Kip/Knyff (Figure 2) engraving disguised the mediaeval conglomerate of buildings to the rear. We also have a

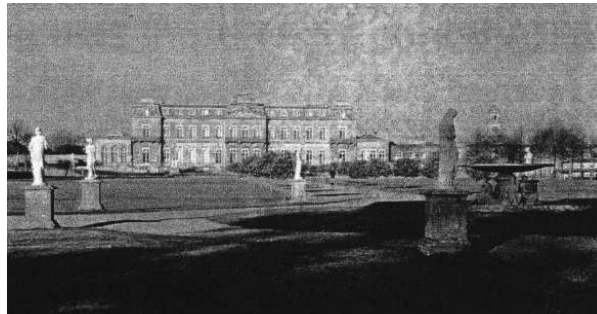


Figure 1. Wrest Park Mansion taken from the site of the Mediaeval Manor

plan of the building drawn for the Earl de Grey after it had been demolished (Figure 4). This we believe was drawn partially from memory, and may be not strictly to scale, but it is invaluable for general layout and description of the rooms and chambers.

RESULTS

The survey results are shown in Figure 5. Using a grey scale, “black” represents low resistance and “white” high resistance. Most of the completely white areas represent statues, the fountain, or trees and bushes where readings could not be taken. However, several anomalous readings were caused by the probe not making complete contact with the ground in the gravel areas. This problem was resolved early in the survey. The results can be compared with the house plans (Figures 3 & 4) and the Kip/Knyff engraving (Figure 2).

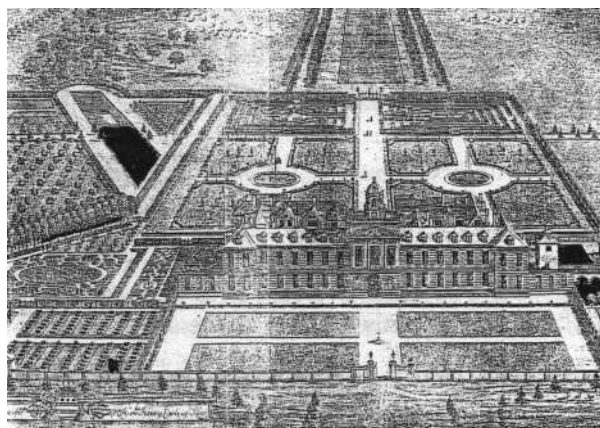


Figure 2. Kip/Knyff Engraving looking South c.1705

mansion on a site some 200 yards to the north (Figure 1) and covered the old foundations with formal lawns. In dry conditions scorch marks in the grass show up their position.

To the south of the manor site there is still a terrace which is part of the earlier garden layout. A fountain is placed to the north of the old house in a cross formed by wide gravel driveways which delineate the present garden. Statues are placed at strategic points.

In the archives we have plans and engravings (Figures 2, 3 & 4) recording the many changes that have taken place over the years, including some inspired by Lancelot “Capability” Brown, when the very formal layout of the garden was partially softened in line with

The north front is relatively easy to identify with its lean-to passage on the south side. The great dining room, built c.1760, somewhat surprisingly shows up well beneath the central gravelled drive. The chapel shows up clearly, and also the bridge over the moat on the west side, see the Kip/Knyff engraving (Figure 2). The central block connecting the north front to the older part shows as a higher resistance amidst a lower

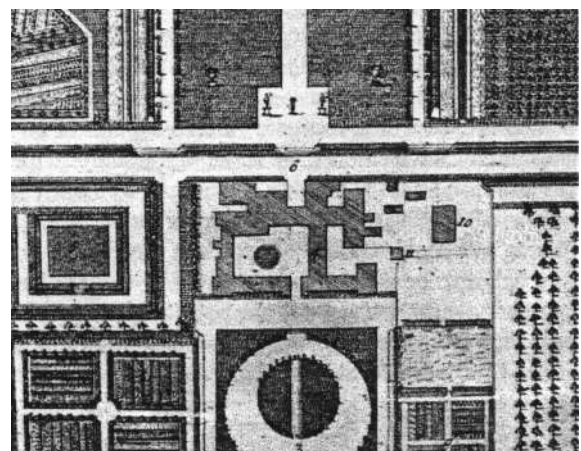


Figure 3. Rocque Plan 1735

resistance courtyard and surrounding floor areas. It is possible that heavy rains had caused water to accumulate in puddled areas below ground.

The buildings, Queen Anne’s wing and circular feature in the east courtyard show up in accordance with the details in Figure 3, as do the walls heading north on

either side of the main approach to the house. There is some evidence of the major circular features around the drive in this area. Interestingly, there are other features showing up in the courtyard areas which may represent other buildings and drain runs. Other drain runs are visible in the south east corner of the site, one at least linking up with a modern inspection pit cover. The known western section of the moat shows up as a relatively uniform clear area with a bridge, and it is possible that the clear area on the east side at a similar distance from the central drive is the eastern part of the moat. The northern leg has not shown up at all. The southern leg, assuming a rectangular moat, may have

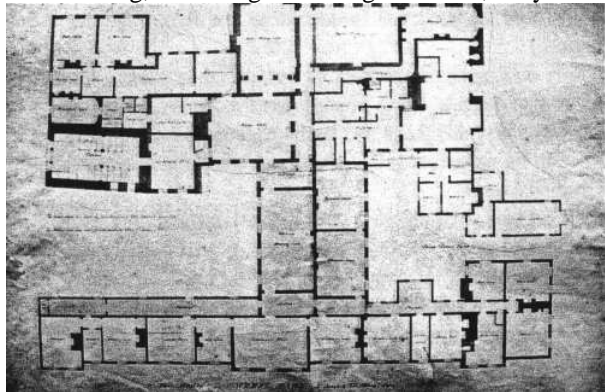


Figure 4. Earl de Grey Plan

lain under the terrace before it was filled and gravelled to produce the present Broad Walk. The edges of this terrace showed up as high resistance areas which may represent containing walls either for the terrace or possibly the moat.

The edges of the east – west gravelled drive either side of the present fountain show up as low resistance areas, suggesting earlier ditches. The south west corner of the site is rather baffling if the Earl de Grey's plan is correct. A very strong anomaly matched with crop marks showed up well to the west of the large bake ovens shown on the plan. It may, however, be the site of the small square building shown in Figure 3.

CONCLUSIONS

Comparing a resistance survey with known historical facts is a fascinating exercise, and certainly adds to our knowledge in a non-destructive way. For an independent society wishing to gain experience with a resistivity meter, it gives confidence in what can be found and how it shows up in practice. For instance, the features showing through the gravel drives which probably have been in position and maintained for over a hundred years are remarkable and could hardly have been expected. Equally, the modern east-west and central drives almost certainly started off lined with ditches, which was quite a surprise.

Inevitably the resistance survey shows up a number of anomalies, the origin of which could only be ascertained by excavation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Silsoe Research Institute and English Heritage for granting access to the site, and to the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service for their assistance and permission to reproduce the Kip/Knyff, Rocque and Earl de Grey plans.

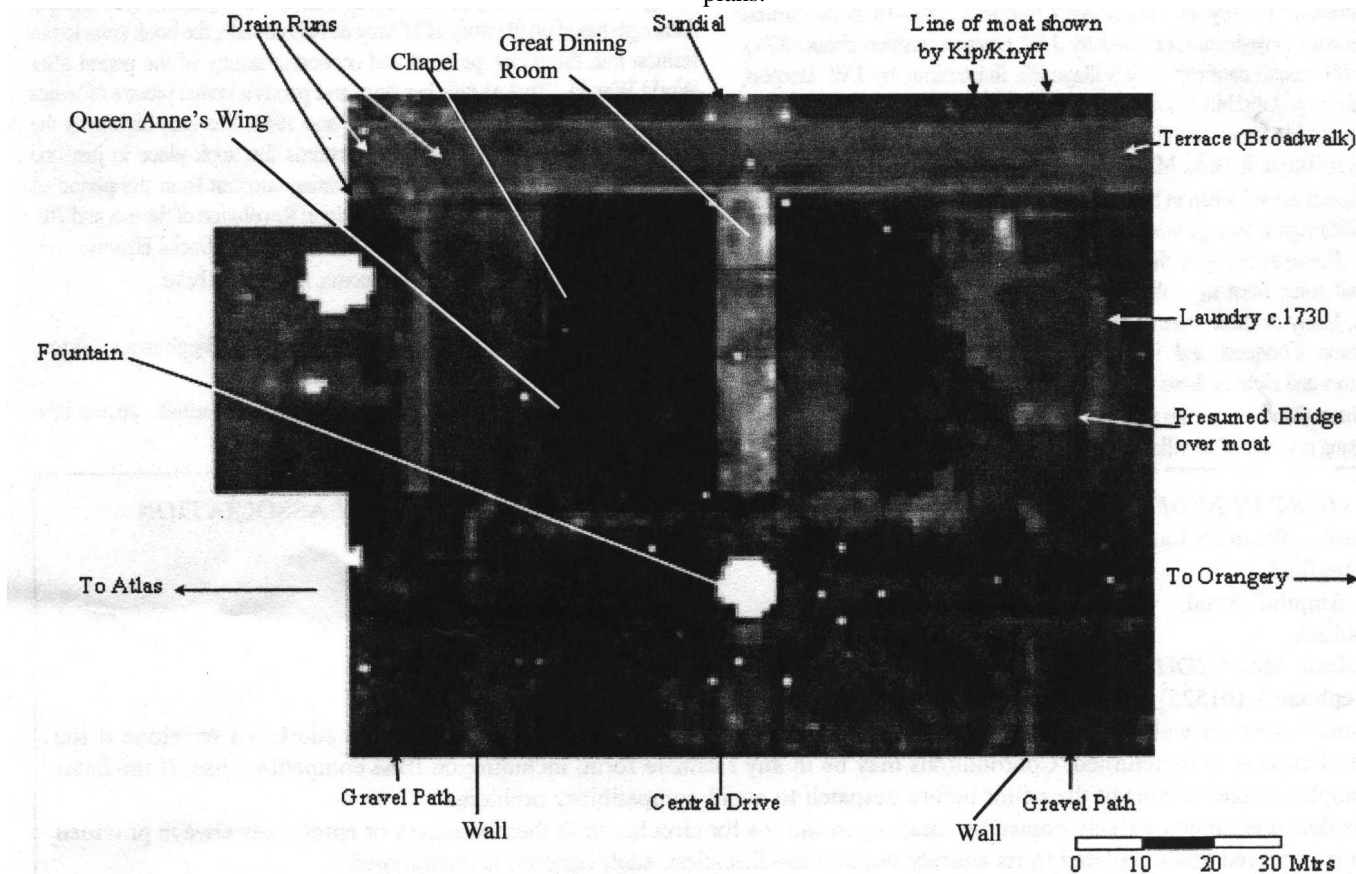


Figure 5. Results of Resistance Survey

New Publications

A Brewery in Bedford by **Roger Protz**. Price £10 from County Town Books and other outlets, or £14 (inc. p&p) from www.charleswells.co.uk.

The Charles Wells Brewery opened in 1875, founded by a sailor who gave up his first career to marry and settle down to work in Bedford. The brewery at first was small, competing with several other breweries in the town as well as publicans who brewed on their premises.

As a result of hard work and a passion for quality, Charles Wells saw his brewery grow to become the biggest brewer in the county town. Eventually it was to become the only brewery left in Bedford. Today it is still owned by the Wells family and is one of the leading independent regional brewers in Britain.

In this fascinating history, culled from the archives and the memories of the family and their employees, the rise of Charles Wells is traced from its humble origins to a modern company that produces a wide portfolio of ales and lagers. The beers are now sold in many European countries.

The continued success of the company was made possible by a move to a new site in the 1970s, and the use of new brewing technology that allows it to be a multi-functional production unit capable of making a wide range of beers, from English ales to Caribbean, Japanese and Indian lagers. It still uses water drawn from a well sunk by Charles Wells, which was recently granted natural mineral water accreditation, in its brewing process.

'A Brewery in Bedford' has been written by award-winning beer writer and historian Roger Protz, with in-depth research by Biggleswade's well-known historian Ken Page, photos by Mark Turner, and design by Rob Howells.

A Victorian Family at Houghton Conquest, 1838-1878 by **Simon Houfe**, with **Houghton Conquest** by **J.W.Burgon** (written about 1874), A5, with unique contemporary village life illustrations by J.W.Burgon. Published by Ampthill & District Preservation Society, price £4.50 + 50p p&p, available from Ampthill & District Preservation Society, 19 Morris Gardens, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RU.

The project started when in November 2001 an album of two hundred and fifty Victorian drawings was sold at Sotheby's. They were identified by Simon Houfe as being by the clergyman and artist the Revd.J.W.Burgon, and had come from the collection of his nephew Charles H. Rose in the 1930s. Many of these were of Bedfordshire villages, and about twenty of Houghton Conquest and its villagers. Some were acquired by local collectors, and eight of these are published for the first time in this book.

Houghton Conquest is rare among the villages of Bedfordshire in having surprising portraits of its villagers before the age of photography. The artist the Revd. John William Burgon captured them not through his lens but through his pencil in the 1840s.

Cameo of Fashion 1951-1982 by **Thelma Marks**, published in illustrated limited edition, Hb, price £27.95 (plus £3.00 p&p if posted) from Thelma Marks, Tinkers Hoe, Queens Road, Colmworth, Bedford, MK44 2JI. (All profits from the book will be donated to Sue Ryder Care for St.John's Hospice)

D'Arcy & Rosamunde of Bedford specialized in couture fashion for a demanding clientele, drawn from all over the country, between 1951 and 1982, and was a very successful and highly regarded business. A book is now about to be published on the social and economic connotations of this transitional period.

Thelma Marks, who trained at what is now known as the London College of Fashion and St.Martin's College of Art, presented a collection each season, comprising both "Ready to Wear" and her own designs for bespoke work in their own workroom. Her sister and partner, Estelle Addington, trained with the Cherry Marshall Model Agency as a model, organized the shows, and ran the showroom and the accounts.

After a major burglary in 1982, when the whole of their stock was stolen, they sold the business after thirty-one successful years. In 2002, both Thelma and Estelle donated their own personal collections of model clothes from the period 1951-1982, along with bound copies of the French fashion magazine L'Officiel for the same period, to the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery in Bedford. The curator, Caroline Bacon, asked Thelma for some background on the business, and so a "Cameo of Costume" was written. Although based on the story of D'Arcy & Rosamunde, the book aims to put fashion into the social, political and economic setting of the period after World War II. Thelma tells her story and paints a verbal picture of ladies' fashion in the provinces between 1951 and 1982. She also highlights the rapid social change in attitudes and customs that took place in just one generation. It is an authentic and fascinating account of the period from the days of etiquette and perfect grooming to the Fashion Revolution of the 60s and 70s. It will appeal to those who are interested in fashion and/or social history.

The book will be reserved on a "first come, first served" basis.

Bygone Biggleswade - Volume 3. A5, published by Biggleswade History Society, price £4.00

The theme of the third volume in this well-known series covers both wartime and peacetime from 1900 to the 1950s.

