

Winter 2018 – 2019

The 2018 season officially ended in October. Taking advantage of the relatively mild winter two of us decided to continue working. Lucy and me have been on site once twice almost every week since November.

The short hours of daylight and at times frozen ground, snow, wet and muddy conditions all combined to slow work down slightly and at times prevented us from digging. The absence of leaves on the trees resulted in much better light and an opportunity to catch up on recording and surveying.



Drawing a section in Area B



Drawing a plan in Area C

Bridge and Spring North Bank of Trub Brook

In 2015 we had excavated the supporting structure for the footbridge on the south bank of the Trub Brook. Later in that year we made a short inspection of the north bank of the brook in search of the bridge support and spring. Access is down a very steep, muddy and overgrown bank. The area occupied by the bridge support and spring was hidden by vegetation including a large rhododendron and several fallen trees.



Spring Area almost completely obscured by vegetation and a deep deposit of mud.

In February this year we revisited the area and decided to clear away the vegetation and record the remaining structure. Some improvised steps were created in the steep bank. It required two days to remove the large rhododendron and fallen trees and another three days to clear out the mud which had accumulated over 70 years to a depth almost 1 metre in the spring area.



Removing the rhododendron

Our efforts were rewarded with the mostly complete structure of bridge support and spring. The bridge support is constructed from brick and concrete and had been rendered with cement. An impression in the rendering gives us accurate dimensions for the walk way. It was constructed from two lengths of wooden planking 8.5 cm (about 3 1/3 inches) thick. The planks were secured to the bridge support with two iron bolts which were still in place. The total width of the walk way was 59 cm (just under 2 feet) and the bridge had a span of 5.9 metres (20 feet). The walk way was narrow and presumably a hand rail would have been necessary.

On the north side of the bridge support there is a step down onto a concrete platform edged with brick walls from which the spring was accessed. The spring area consists of a three sided structure built from brick and roofed with a single large flagstone. Water from the spring enters the structure through the back wall and flows into a concrete tank with a capacity of about 146 Litres (32 gallons).



The bridge support with two large iron bolts which would have secured the walkway.



The spring area is housed within the brick structure with a flagstone cap. Water enters through the back wall just above the water line and collects in a concrete tank.

It would have produced a plentiful supply of fresh water for the house but it was noted that a sandy deposit formed quite quickly in the tank and it would have been necessary to clean it out regularly. The water level is maintained by a notch in the east wall of the tank. This allowed the water to rise to within 1 cm of the inlet before it overflowed into a cast iron rectangular drain pipe taking the overflow into the Trub Brook. The flagstone cover would have helped to prevent leaves and other debris entering the water tank but restricted access. Some experimental archaeology demonstrated that it was just possible to remove water from the tank using a normal 3 gallon bucket. It seems likely that two or three trips to the spring each day would have been necessary but with extra on washing days and bath nights.

Conclusion

We now set to work through to the official start of the 2019 season which begins on Tuesday 30th April. Work on the southern end of Area C is now complete and has been backfilled. The top soil and roots have been removed from two areas and there is still some work to complete in the areas opened last year. This means that anyone coming on the first day will be straight onto the archaeological levels. There will be plenty to do with potentially much earlier archaeology to explore in 2019.



Lucy and Ross surveying a new trench



Planning Area C



Backfilling Area C



Opening Extension to Area B

We found that working in Winter is worthwhile and can be great fun. With the help of bacon butties, soup, coffee and Lucy's excellent cakes we were able to continue digging and enjoy it. Thanks to Charlotte, Lorraine and Ross who all spent some time on the dig during the winter.



Lunch Break.

This series of updates provides a summary of our findings from 2015 up to the start of the 2019 season. Further updates will be released from time to time as the dig progress'.

Thanks to everyone who took part in the dig in 2018 and those who visited us and gave us their support. 2018 was the most successful season so far and hopefully 2019 will be even better with plenty to do and potentially much earlier archaeology still to explore. I hope that you will all be back this year.

The 2019 season starts on Tuesday 30th April and most Tuesday's until the end of October. In order to accommodate those people who are not available to attend on Tuesday's we are planning to dig on other days including weekends provided that there is sufficient demand. Working hours are from 10 am until 3.30 pm.

For those of you have not yet taken part, why not give it a try. It isn't difficult and even if digging isn't for you there are many other ways to contribute. Everyone is welcome and training, supervision and tools are provided.

If you would like to take part in the dig, visit the dig or have any questions then please feel free to contact me at robert.huddart@ntlworld.com