



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

Archaeological monitoring of BT Fibre-optic cable trenching at Lyveden Old Build, May-June 2018

Iain Soden BA MCIfA

Email: iain@isheritage.co.uk

Tel: 07742 901760

Website: www.isheritage.co.uk

Archaeological monitoring of BT Fibre-optic cable trenching at Lyveden Old Build, May- June 2018

Iain Soden BA MCIfA

Summary

Trenching for fibre-optic cabling stretched from Harley Way to Lyveden Old Build. However, the restricted nature of the works and previous landscaping ensured that no significant archaeology was either exposed or impacted by the works. The work strongly indicates that the site from the road to the manor benefits from a protective blanket of modern overburden some 400mm-thick.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the National Trust for their commission and for the help of their staff on site. We greatly appreciate the help and good humour of Kelly's, trenching contractors.

Introduction

As part of the ongoing conservation and refurbishment of Lyveden Old Build, fibreoptic cable ducting was inserted for the National Trust for new communications lines to be linked to services on Harley Way (NGR: SP 9810 8600).

The area affected lay close to or in the purview of a number of heritage assets:

- The Grade I Listed Lyveden Old Build (also called Bield)
- The Grade I Listed Lyveden New Build (also called Bield) and its Registered Garden
- The site of a medieval pottery production site associated with Lydeden DMV

Some disturbance of soils was unavoidable in this historically- and archaeologically-sensitive area. This disturbance was designed, however, to be minimal, by way of an agreed and approved design in place by the ducting contractors, Kelly's.

The work of the archaeological monitoring was carried out by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) dated 27 April 2018 and approved by Rachael Hall, Archaeologist at The National Trust.



Fig 1: The site with course of cable trench (Andy Isham, after NT survey)

Fieldwork

The exercise began using a de-turfing machine and a 1.5-ton tracked excavator with a 400mm-wide toothless bucket. This latter was soon set aside and much of the trench dug from Harley Way by hand since the ground was riddled with roots from the adjacent 1970s poplar plantation.

Regular visits were made by Iain Soden and Joe Prentice between 8 May and 1 June to monitor the progress of the works, verify methodologies, to plan for their potential to change, and note any discoveries. The weather was warm and sunny almost without exception.

Harley Way south to the stream

In this section the majority of the trench was hand-dug due to the presence of poplar roots, resulting in a trench some 300mm deep and only 200mm wide. Beneath the turf and rather thin topsoil lay masses of limestone rubble with occasional brick fragments, concrete pieces and water-worn cobbles. So much rubble was present that it seems probable that the existing concreted access track

WAN Enhancement Programme –Lyveden Old Build

has a much wider rubble sub-base and was once an un-made haul-road, probably during the demolition of the farm buildings in the mid-1970s or during the upgrading of the Old Build c2000. There were no finds from this section of trench.

The grey plastic cable ducting was laid, the trench backfilled and the turf replaced before moving on to the next section. Close to the stream the trench coincided with that which already existed for the BT telephone cable, so for some 5-10m no fresh ground was disturbed. Above the stream the new duct was laid into the existing concrete of the bridge span.



Fig 2: Harley way to the stream. The first 15m was especially full of stone.



Fig 3: Approaching the bridge from the north, for c10m the new trench shares its line with an existing BT duct.
Note the large poplars to the right whose root systems are extensive.

From the stream south to the road

In this section were found an un-stratified 19th- to 20th-century horseshoe and a ploughshare (not retained).

Across the road and up the bank south to the manor yard

The hardstanding of the trackway proved to be all modern concrete and hardcore down to natural clay. This was, however, rammed solid and no archaeology was apparent. Here the machine was used to dig the trench, 400mm wide and 400mm deep, which would have been impossible by hand.



Fig 4: Traversing the trackway, south towards the manor yard

Once back into turf, hand-digging resumed due to the proximity of tree roots. Thus the trench again narrowed and shallowed. Here the topsoil overlay redeposited clods of natural clay in a topsoil matrix suggesting the bank is at least partly man-made. Numerous limestone pieces were present, but not in the density found north of the stream. From the topsoil in this section derived two sherds of 18th-century Midland Black pottery (not retained). Near the top of the bank it became possible once more to use the machine, fitted with a 200mm-wide bucket and cutting a trench down to c350-400mm.



Fig 5: Looking back north from the entrance to the manor yard

WAN Enhancement Programme –Lyveden Old Build

Across the manor yard

Reversion to the machine was possible for all of this section. At the top of the bank the bucket struck what are probably the truncated limestone wall foundations of the former farm range, together with stone- and modern brick-rubble at a depth of c400mm. In a trench no wider than 250mm, this is perhaps a slightly tentative identification, but it seems plausible.

The section of trench across a lawn within the manor yard (Fig 6) found the overburden to be well-prepared and stone-free topsoil. Once into the gravel of the manor yard, the gravel overlay hardcore to a depth of c400mm, which was unbroken all the way to the manor garages. No archaeological levels were exposed.



Fig 6: Machine trenching across the manor yard; garages in the background

Conclusions

The work was carried out with the sensitivity appropriate to the site, both in terms of its archaeology and its flora.

No archaeological levels were impacted or exposed. The uppermost course of a former farm range lost in the 1970s was possibly identified, but this identification is uncertain in so narrow a trench.

Finds were few and un-stratified. Those present were not significant and have not been retained.

It seems likely that the maximum depth encountered, 400mm, marks a widespread level of modern disturbance and landscaping north and west of the manor, above which future groundworks are unlikely to affect any significant archaeological levels.

WAN Enhancement Programme –Lyveden Old Build

Appendix *OASIS data*

Project Name	WAN Enhancement Programme Lyveden Old Build
OASIS ID	iainsode1-319384
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	Garden
Development type	Utilities enhancement
Reason for investigation	Research
National grid reference	SP 9810 8600
Start/end dates of fieldwork	8 May 2018 – 1 June 2018
Archive recipient	National Trust
Study area	0.2ha



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

18 June 2018