Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

Lyveden Reconnected: a programme of archaeological monitoring to accompany the unification of the New and Old Builds at Lyveden by The National Trust 2019-20

Planning refs: (East Northants) 18/01818/FUL (works to and around the manor), and 19/01734/FUL (pipeline)

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Summary

This report completes a sequence of five previous reports on aspects of the archaeology of the dual site of Lyveden Old Build and Lyveden New Build and a programme by their owner, The National Trust, to strengthen the bond between these very different parts of the property and to present and harmonise them as a single visitor experience, termed 'Lyveden Reconnected'. An extensive programme of archaeological attendance and scrutiny during groundworks has shown that no significant archaeology has been exposed or damaged, vindicating the two years of archaeological evaluation and careful assessment and monitoring of the archaeological resource during the planning programme.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are offered to the National Trust for their commission and support during the project, in particular to Rachael Hall and Neil Hart. We are also thankful for the surveys of James Brennan Associates, whose work formed a base for drawing by Andy Isham for the current report. We express our gratitude to Liz Mordue of Northamptonshire County Council for her advice and understanding as the fieldwork evolved, and to the staff of Palmers of Oakham Principal Contractors and their various ground-workers, whose forbearance and good cheer on site made our job so much more pleasurable.

Introduction and background

Planning and Listed Building Consents were given by East Northamptonshire Council for alterations to the former manor house or Old Build, Lyveden, Northamptonshire (also called 'Old Bield'; NGR: SP 98168 85882; Fig 1) and for the creation of related visitor-service facilities, including extensive car parking, in pursuance of plans to link it with The New Build (or 'Bield') and to turn The Old Build into part of a revitalised and expanded visitor-offer by its owners, The National Trust, who termed it 'Lyveden Reconnected'.

Previous works at or close to the site go back to the 1960s, but of most recent relevance are building recording on the Grade I-listed Old Build (Prentice and Soden, 2017a), and archaeological evaluation around the Old Build (ibid 2017b). These helped to better understand the potential for buried

archaeology and standing historic fabric which might be impacted by the works at the proposals stage.

Ahead of 'Lyveden Reconnected', other groundworks monitoring for cable-trenching and geotechnical boreholes helped to fill in knowledge of sub-surface depths and thicknesses in some of the wide open areas across the site which have received little previous attention (Soden 2018; Prentice and Soden 2019).

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation, dated 26 November 2018. The work was carried out, in a wide variety of weather –and ground conditions, between 1 August and 26 November 2019, by Iain Soden and Joe Prentice. Works inside the manor house will be reported separately when an existing building recording report (Prentice and Soden 2017a) will be reopened and reissued with an addendum.

The present report describes the work in the surrounding landscape.

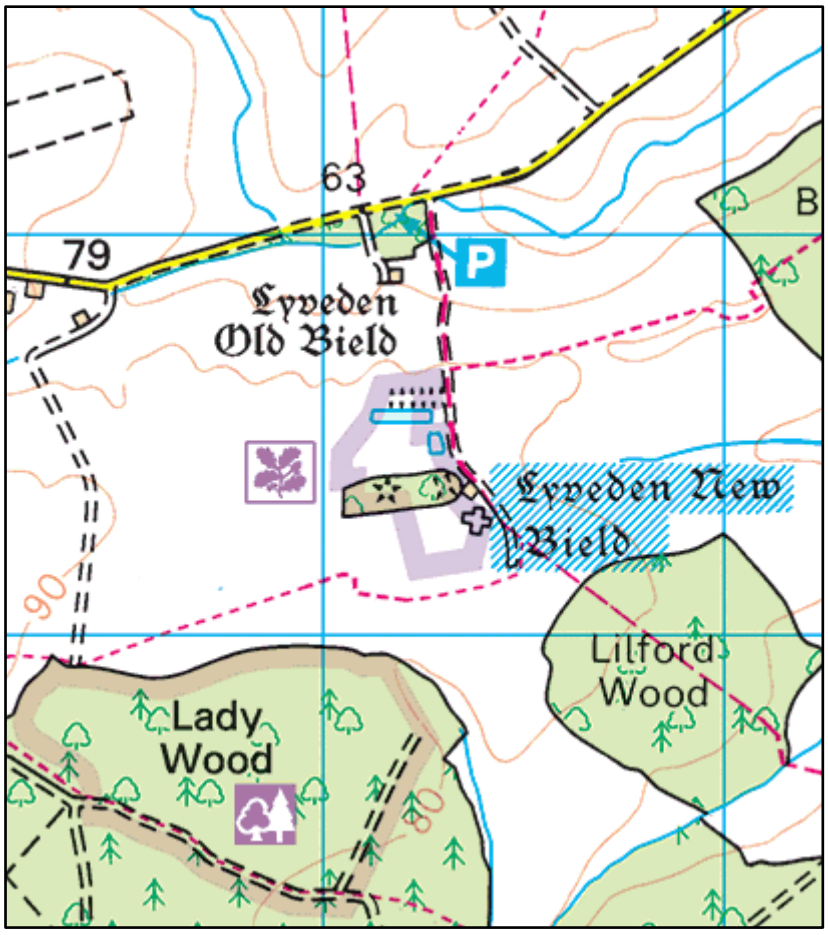

Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020. Image supplied by National Trust under license.

Objectives

The aim of below-ground element of archaeological fieldwork was as follows:

- To determine and understand the nature, function, character and development of any archaeological remains which may be uncovered during groundworks in their cultural and environmental setting
- To record the extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present during this programme.
- To preserve by record archaeological features or deposits found therein and report on them, if they cannot be preserved in the ground.
- To better understand the context of the historic building in its natural landscape and designed elements thereof.

Fieldwork and Results

Monitoring was carried out in the following locations across the site (Figs 2 and 8):

- The new public car park and its access route
- Route for spoil storage
- The manor courtyard and approach-road
- New water-supply to the custodian's cottage / tea room adjacent to The New Build

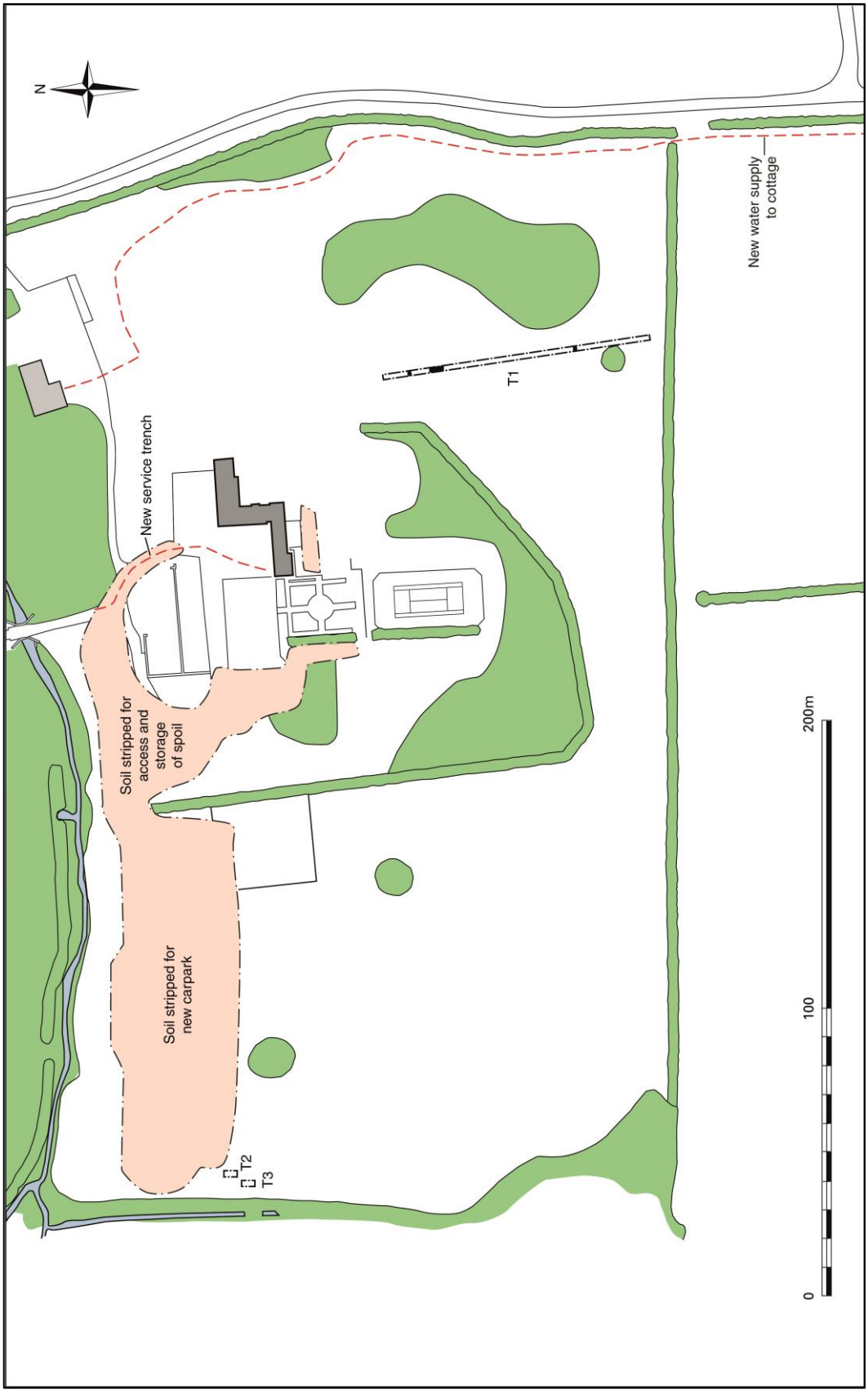

Fig 2: Areas of archaeological monitoring around the manor and south from the service shed and around the cricket field into the orchard to the south. Also shown in this view are the three evaluation trenches of 2017 (Andy Isham)

The new Car Park and its access route

This entirely new surface car park is situated in what was until 2019 a pasture field, in which two small trenches were dug in 2017. No archaeology was found then, nor was any suspected after geophysical survey was carried out. However the field lies at the foot of the same slope down to the brook which runs along the north edge of the Old Build site, where medieval pottery kilns were excavated further east in the 1960s. Therefore out of professional prudence it was required that the groundworks be closely monitored in the event that remains survived related to this downstream pottery industry.

Fig 3: New Car Park area, stripped of topsoil and subsoil, looking east. Manor House in the distance.

The topsoil and thin subsoil were removed by two 13-ton tracked excavators and spoil moved to another part of the site in a relay of large articulated dumpers. A varying total of 300-450mm thickness was stripped off mechanically, with a wide toothless ditching bucket being used throughout (Fig 3).

No archaeological features were present anywhere in the stripped area. Strewn evenly across the area, and handpicked from the base of the ploughsoil (it had not been ploughed for many years) was an assemblage of mainly medieval (occasional 19th-century) abraded and water-damaged domestic pottery. None was stratified except for its presence in the vestiges of the plough-soil after machining. It was retained, by agreement unprocessed, for future educational use by The National Trust at the site. The pottery was entirely of the local Lyveden/Stanion unglazed A ware (CTS 319), with some green-glazed B ware (CTS 320), and dates between c1150 and c1400 (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 285-9, 430-1). The vessels from which the sherds derive were probably made in the

kilns of the adjacent field and represent occasional manuring scatters from the deserted hamlet of Lyveden adjacent to the manor house. They have no intrinsic value.

Fig 4: Digging out and stoning-up the access road to the car park, looking west

A new service road was then dug out to connect the site access of Harley Way to the new car park. This entailed removing the turf, topsoil and underlying material to a depth of up to 1m to provide the required thickness of inert, weight-bearing stony fill (Fig 4).

The material removed here, below the modern topsoil and turf was all modern (20th-century) demolition-material intermingled with lumps of natural clay and unworked limestone. Natural clay geology was locally exposed in places but also the demolition material was seen to extend deeper than the 1m necessary for the formation-level. It is believed to date to around the mid-1970s when the site was extensively landscaped and the adjacent stand of poplars planted.

The manor courtyard and approach-road

The flat 'terrace' on which the Old Build manor house stands is of some antiquity. By reason of the building upon it, some at least must date from at least the early 17th century. However, while this age was a sensible proposition, what was unknown was how much of the area had been unaffected by the working farm which lay across it during the 17th-20th centuries. Photographed during the first half of the 20th century, this had continued to work until the 1970s and many modern farm buildings had replaced predecessors and no ideas of survival of those earlier buildings was possible. A possible

glimpse of a limestone foundation in 2018 (Soden 2018) was the only indication that the courtyard might hold some potential for archaeological survival.

In order to minimise disturbance, the new services which approach the manor house from its northern access track were gathered together in a single 1m-wide trench, which was dug under archaeological scrutiny using a 5-ton tracked mechanical excavator deploying a toothless bucket (Fig 5).

Fig 5: View along the courtyard service trench (southern third), looking north-east; scale 1m. The light grey plastic ducts in the foreground were laid for BT -WAN enhancement in 2018 (see Soden 2018)

The trench across the courtyard uncovered three areas with specific sub-surface characteristics:

The southern third, 800mm deep, cut through the surface gravel and a rubble base. At the base of the trench lay thick, dark grey, noisome clay with rubble in it, which comprise a thick layer or infilling of modern farm debris. This was at least 200mm thick. This deposit was noted in 2018 when the BT cable ducting was laid into the top of it.

The middle third, also 800mm deep and through surface gravel and its rubble base, cut into natural clay and limestone, which had been truncated at about 500mm deep and reduced to both north and its south directions, showing that the material on those sides comprises the fill of modern disturbance, where buildings have been bulldozed and grubbed up.

The northern third, a minimum of 800mm deep - and deepening as it angled down the slope of the northern approach-road, comprised a change from a gravel surface at the entrance of the courtyard to a rather fractured concrete surface over packed quantities of soil, concrete and stone-rubble. No archaeology was exposed.

New water supply to custodian's cottage / tea room

A separate but parallel piece of fieldwork accompanied machine-work to dig a new water supply from near to the Old Build to the tea room and custodian's cottage adjacent to The New Build. This was a very long new supply route and passed through a number of different plots and field-parcels put to very different use. At its northern end it was a nominal 800mm deep but as the land rose so it was deliberately deepened (as it exited the orchard- see below) to 1.1m depth. Throughout the trench was 300mm wide, cut with a narrow bucket and dug using a 5-ton tracked machine.

Fig 6: Commencement of the pipeline at the manor service shed, looking north. In the background the escarpment which marks the north edge of the cricket field.

The route began where it left the National Trust service shed which lies north-east of the manor house (Fig 6). At this point it was cut through the gravelled hardstanding directly into natural clay geology; there were no intervening layers, showing that the shed and service road here stand on a modern terrace created for the service area. It then climbed the escarpment of the existing cricket field, a modern earthwork.

Just south of this the pipeline trench skirted the northern and eastern edges of the cricket field, where beneath the turf lay natural clay geology with only minimal topsoil. The cricket field is a modern creation and the former hillslope has been massively terraced to create this flat grassed area.

Upslope and south of the cricket field the land, a rough-mown grassy area, resumes its former gradient (evaluated by Trial Trench 1 in 2017; Fig 2) and the pipeline trench followed this, staying close to- and parallel with - the hedge boundary to its immediate east, just swinging out slightly around a stand of vegetation where it also crossed an existing service at about 700mm depth (Fig 7). The upcast was a very stiff clayey soil, merging almost imperceptibly with natural clay geology within the thrench depth. A few sherds of abraded medieval pottery, 19th century pottery and fragments of fossil belemnite and ammonite were in the upcast; these were not retained.

Fig 7: Machining south of the cricket field and swinging out around trees, looking north-west with manor in the background; Scale 1m

Just south of this the trench exited the rough-mown grassland south of the cricket field, through a pedestrian gateway, and entered the orchard, a use given the plot in the late 16th century and recreated today (Fig 8 for location).

The trench remained a uniform c2m distance from the eastern plot-edge, from which a constant mat of hedgerow roots were noted growing through its eastern side. A greater distance was maintained to the easternmost row of orchard trees to ensure that their roots were unaffected. Here the trench was deepened to c1m (Fig 9). Much of the material through which the machine dug was flecked with chalk or lime, presumably from successive dressings of the land to aid its productivity. At about 1m depth it repeatedly encountered natural limestone, often broken up. There continued to be occasional finds of abraded medieval pottery, but mixed with 19th century material and some 20th century plastics. No tree planting pits were observed.

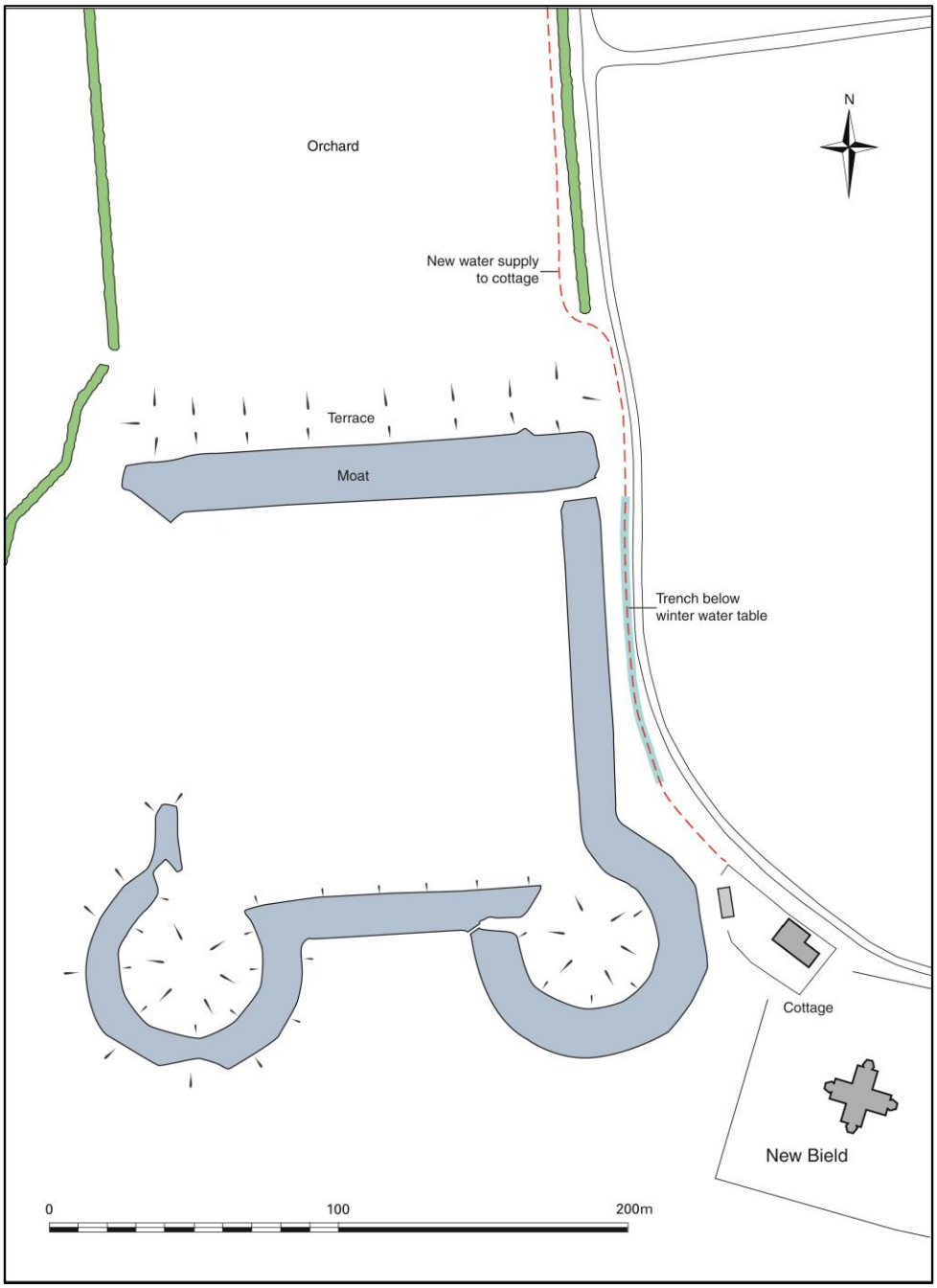

Fig 8: Line of archaeological monitoring, southern portion, through the orchard and along the moat edge to the tea room / cottage. (Andy Isham)

Fig 9: Machining along the orchard's eastern boundary, looking south. The trench here was about 1.1m deep. Scale 2m in 0.5m graduations.

As the trench exited the orchard at its south-east corner, it followed a gentle curve to traverse a pedestrian gateway adjacent to the 16th-century earthen embankment/terrace which lies against the north-east corner of the garden moat. At this point the trench at its base cut across a large-gauge salt-glazed drainage pipe and an adjacent concrete culvert, probably also for drainage or other effluent, the top of which lay at a depth of 1.1m below the modern ground surface. From this point southwards the new trench, running at this greater depth, was aligned along the course of these existing culvert and pipe, skirting a tarmacked access track. This meant that the services, old and new, are gathered together in close and parallel proximity. This has minimised fresh ground disturbance closest where the pipeline lies adjacent to the earthworks of the Scheduled Monument and Registered Historic Garden remains.

Continuing at the same width and depth it soon became apparent that the winter water-table, as indicated by the adjacent garden moat, was very high. The pipe trench quickly flooded and the sides were in danger of falling in. The pipe was therefore laid straightaway and the trench quickly backfilled to preserve its integrity (Figs 8 and 10).

The flooding subsided further from the moat and the trench continued parallel with the access track to the custodian's cottage/tea rooms without further issue (Fig 11).

No archaeology was exposed in the trench and no finds were present south of the pedestrian gateway which lies adjacent to the moat earthwork where some 19th-20th century material was present; this was not retained.

Fig 10: Alongside the moat. Here the trench flooded so it was quickly backfilled.

Fig 11: Approaching the cottage, 'Lyveden New Build' is glimpsed directly behind.

Conclusions

In terms of the stated objectives of the work (above), no archaeology was found or finds present which might further our understanding of the Old Build, New Build or the historic gardens. The work has been useful however, in formulating the future management of the site.

However, the work has shown that some areas, west of the manor house where the new car park has been laid out, have always been given over to agricultural use, and no medieval or post-medieval remains extend that far north and west (Figs 2 and 3).

Closer to the manor house it is clear that while some hopes were held out that medieval remains might survive, it appears that the establishment – and particularly demolition – of the former farm which served the manor, has truncated the area immediately north and west of the buildings, removing all coherent traces of the buildings. Likewise the establishment of modern formal gardens, tennis courts and access roads of the 1970s and later have destroyed any archaeology which might have survived to that point.

The recent cricket-field, as long suspected, was terraced into the natural hillside and had destroyed whatever might have lain there.

Trenching south of the cricket field showed an area which has been agricultural and no suggestion of earlier terraces was seen. This was particularly in the frame of reference for this field since trial trench evaluation in 2017 showed that a series of putative former terraces had probably never existed (Fig 2).

No archaeology was exposed or disturbed in relation to the orchard and the moated circuit of the historic gardens (Fig 8).

A small assemblage of largely medieval pottery was collected from disparate parts of the site but was entirely un-stratified and of very limited further value in archaeological studies. It was retained by agreement, unprocessed, for The National Trust to use at the site for educational purposes.

The overall impression gained by the works is of an archaeologically denuded landscape around the manor house. If any potential survives, it is likely to lie immediately to the north and south of the manor building in its eastern half, for perhaps no more that 10m from the listed manor house building. However, the uniformity and good finish that previous landscapers achieved before the present works means that such an assertion is only tentative and would need to be evaluated by trial excavation to confirm or refute.

Further afield, the 16th-17th-century rectangular earthen platform and a filled-in boundary ditch and gully found in 2017 are the only significant remains which have been confirmed to lie buried and (relatively) undisturbed beneath the manor's hinterland.

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Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Lyveden Reconnected
OASIS ID	383861
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Rachael Hall for NT/ Iain Soden for IS Heritage
Previous/future work	Yes/No
Current land use	Gardens/agricultural
Development type	Public amenity
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 98168 85882
Start/end dates of fieldwork	1 August – 26 November 2019
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archaeological archive
Study area	5ha

Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

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