



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief during work within
the Hawkwell Field at Stowe Landscape Gardens,
Buckinghamshire. June-September 2011



Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council

Joe Prentice and

James Ladocha

Report 11/249

November 2011,

Revised February 2012



STAFF

Project Manager Steve Parry FSA, MA, MIfA
Text Joe Prentice and Gary Marshall
Watching brief Joe Prentice and James Ladocha BA
Illustrations Amir Bassir BSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Iain Soden		
Approved by	Stephen Parry		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological Watching Brief during work at the Hawkwell Field, Stowe, Buckinghamshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the excavation of a series of trial trenches across the historic line of paths to the north side of the Octagon Lake within the Hawkwell Field at Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire. A gravel surfaced path was located in four of the trenches between the Palladian and Chinese bridges but related to a later period path layout. The line of the earlier lakeside path was not located and it is thought that at the date for which a path is depicted in that location it was most likely grass and not surfaced. Further trenches between the Palladian Bridge and Lamport Gardens, the Palladian Bridge and Gothic Temple and Gothic Temple and the Elysian Fields all revealed historic gravel paths. Earthwork features close to the Gothic Temple were also recorded.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	Grade I Registered Park and Garden	
Previous work	None (in this specific area)	
Current Land use	National Trust gardens	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Landscape feature/post-medieval	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address	Stowe Landscape Gardens, Stowe, Buckingham, MK18 5EH	
OS Easting & Northing	(Centred on) SP 67885 37150	
Study area (sq.m)	Total area along lake edge approx 250m in length	
Height OD	c110m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Gary Marshall, Regional Archaeologist	
Project Design originator	Verbal agreement, Joe Prentice	
Director/Supervisor	Joe Prentice	
Project Manager	Steve Parry, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	The National Trust	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2011	
End date	November 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
	2.1 Location and geology
	2.2 Historical background
3	METHODOLOGY
4	THE WATCHING BRIEF
	4.1 The Chinese Bridge to Palladian Bridge
	4.2 The Palladian Bridge and Lamport Gardens
	4.3 The Palladian Bridge to the Gothic Temple
	4.4 The Gothic temple to the Elysian Fields
5	TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY
6	FINDS
7	CONCLUSIONS
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Report cover: Trench 1234 looking north-east towards the Gothic Temple

Figures

Fig 1:	Site location
Fig 2:	1739 Sarah Bridgeman plan
Fig 3:	1753 Seeley Guide Book plan by George Bickham
Fig 4:	1783 Seeley Guide Book plan
Fig 5:	1827 Seeley Guide Book plan by William Smith
Fig 6:	1843 Henry Howard plan
Fig 7:	Hawkwell Field, Stowe, location of trenches and earthworks. 1:1750
Fig 8:	Aerial photograph of Hawkwell Field, Stowe, showing former Ha-Ha, bastion and various gravel paths as parch-marks (copyright Flash Earth)
Fig 9:	Section of path in Trench 1235. 1:20

Plates

Plate 1	The Chinese Bridge to Palladian Bridge. Trench 1201 (Tr 3) showing the 1843 path, looking east towards the Palladian bridge (June 2011)
---------	---

- Plate 2 The Octagon Lake path trench, looking east towards the Palladian Bridge, from the Chinese Bridge (November 2011)
- Plate 3 The Palladian Bridge and Lamport gardens. Trench 1230 (Tr 3), looking south-west towards the Palladian bridge
- Plate 4 The Palladian Bridge to Gothic Temple. Trench 1233 (Tr 1), looking north towards the Gothic Temple
- Plate 5: The Gothic Temple to Elysian Fields. Trench 1237 (Tr 4), looking north-east towards the Gothic Temple
- Plate 6: Drain 2, looking west
- Plate 7: Drain 3, looking north

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF DURING WORK
WITHIN THE HAWKWELL FIELD AT
STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
JUNE-NOVEMBER 2011**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the excavation of a series of trial trenches across the historic line of a lakeside path to the north side of the Octagon Lake within the Hawkwell Field at Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire. A gravel surfaced path was located in four of the trenches between the Palladian and Chinese bridges but related to a later period path layout. The line of the lakeside path was not located and it is thought that at the date for which a path is depicted in that location it was most likely grass and not surfaced. Further trenches between the Palladian Bridge and Lamport Gardens, the Palladian Bridge and Gothic Temple and Gothic Temple and Elysian Fields all revealed historic gravel paths. Earthwork features close to the Gothic Temple were also recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological work was undertaken in June and November 2011 during the excavation of a series of transverse trial trenches across the lines of former paths on the north side of the Octagon Lake within the Hawkwell Field at Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire (centred on NGR SP 67885 37150, Fig 1). The work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of the National Trust and followed a verbal Brief for an archaeological watching brief outlined by Gary Marshall, Regional Archaeologist, London and Southeast Region.

No specification was created in response, however, all conditions regarding the requirements in the Brief were adhered to, and complied with the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

The work was undertaken in order to identify, if possible, the correct historical route of the paths prior to their reinstatement by the National Trust as part of their on-going restoration of features within the designed landscape, and to improve access for visitors.

Event numbers were issued by the Trust as follows: ENA6472 for the trenches along the edge of the Octagon Lake and within the Lamport gardens to the east of the

Palladian Bridge and ENA6473 for the trenches between the Gothic Temple and Elysian Fields.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

Stowe Landscape Gardens is a Grade I Registered Park surrounding Stowe House, former home of the Temple family, later the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos (EH 1998). It is situated in north Buckinghamshire close to the Northamptonshire border and approximately 3km north of the county town of Buckingham. The area of investigation is located at between approximately 110m aOD along the northern edge of the Octagon Lake to approximately 131m aOD adjacent to the Gothic Temple.

The underlying geology has been mapped by The British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Glaciofluvial Deposits; sand and gravel (England and Wales, Sheet 219, Buckingham).

2.2 Historical background

The connection with Stowe began in the early seventeenth century when Sir Thomas Temple (1566-1637), first baronet of Stowe, attempted to involve himself in politics in nearby Buckingham (Robinson 1990). His grandson, Richard (1634-1697), began to build a new house on the site of the present house in 1680. This house was subsequently extended to approximately the proportions of the present building. In the eighteenth-century Richard Temple-Grenville (1711-1779) undertook a comprehensive re-modelling of the house using Robert Adam initially as architect, although his proposals were modified by Thomas Pitt and completed in c1779. The family retained the estate until 1922 when the contents were sold and the estate put up for sale. It was bought by a property speculator who intended to donate it to the nation, but was unable to establish an endowment. It was then purchased in one lot and the school established. The house and ancillary buildings, along with twentieth-century school buildings are within the ownership of the Stowe House Preservation Trust whilst the designed landscape has been held by the National Trust since 1989.

It was during the lifetime of Sir Richard Temple, the fourth baronet, Viscount Cobham (1675-1749) that the gardens became the focus of attention and (almost) universally admired since, though most of the work here was not undertaken before 1711 (National

Trust Guidebook 1997). He used the leading architects and garden designers of the day to aid his works, and these included Bridgeman, Vanbrugh, Gibbs and Kent. The Octagon Lake was created in c1726 under the direction of Bridgeman by the damming of a natural valley in an area newly added to the gardens. This layout is depicted on the plan by Sarah Bridgeman of 1739 (Fig 2). The enclosure of land to the east, a piece of pasture known as the Hawkwell Field, began in 1730-32 (it is understood that the area known as the Hawkwell Field is traditionally defined as the area bounded by the Elysian Fields to the west, the Queens temple to the north and the Temple of Friendship to the south, extending eastwards as far as the Palladian Bridge; the Lamport gardens, whilst located within the Lamport Field are included here as the work to identify the paths there was undertaken at the same time). At that date the Hawkwell Field was apparently devoid of structures and planting but was simply enclosed on the eastern side by a Ha-Ha with semi-circular and square bastions. This area was apparently intended to be grazed by livestock and seems to have effectively been an 'island' of pasture since the Ha-Has which enclosed it all have their walls on the outside with the sloping earth bank on the inside. This indicates that any visitors must have encountered this enclosed area by viewing in from the outside perimeter of avenue walks and the (presumably) cattle and sheep were contained within it much like an animal enclosure at a Zoo. This layout appears to have partly remained until at least 1753 when, although less clearly indicated, the semi-circular bastion was still present, supplemented by an avenue of trees along the line of the Ha-Ha and a further bastion added to swing around the Gothic Temple (Fig 3). This bastion and its supporting stone wall was apparently built c1743 and coping added in 1744 (LUC 1992). Although later infilled when the park was extended, this early Ha-Ha is still partly visible as an earthwork, but perhaps more impressively, as extraordinary parch-marks visible on an aerial photograph which gives an impression of its enormous size (Fig 8). Although it was not previously known for certain if this great Ha-Ha and bastion had actually existed, or was just a proposal, this aerial photograph confirms that it was, indeed, a real landscape feature LUC 1992).

The Gothic Temple (or Temple of Liberty) was built between 1744 and 1748 to a design by James Gibbs and this appears on the map of 1753 by George Bickham in the Seeley Guide Book of that year (Robinson 1990, Fig 3). It is the only building at Stowe built completely of ironstone which gives it a golden-brown colouring. On the east side of the building a curved bastion is shown, part of the eastern boundary formed by the Ha-Ha on that side of the park. The Palladian Bridge is still not present even though it is thought to have been completed by 1738 (see below), and it seems

likely that the preliminary drawing for the 1739 engraving was made before that date. It appears also to not be present on the 1753 plan, although the reason for this is not clear since it had been completed for fifteen years at that date.

A similar prospect is depicted until the Seeley guide Book of 1763 when the Palladian Bridge is shown (not illustrated). It had been built between 1737 and 1755, probably also under the direction of Gibbs, and probably completed by 1738 (NT 1997). Originally constructed to act partly as a screen as well as a route across the Upper River, the east side was not colonnaded (as it is now) but contained a screen wall with a bas relief since the land to the east was not part of the estate. That land was not incorporated into the estate until 1826 although it had been landscaped by Earl Temple between 1763 and 1765 with the permission of the landowners, the Dayrell family; the blocking screen was removed c1762 (LUC 1992). By this date the Octagon Lake had lost its geometrical outline and had assumed its more naturalistic shape (this occurred after 1753, see Fig 4).

The 1753 Seeley plan does not indicate paths within the Hawkwell Field, but the route between the Palladian Bridge and Gothic Temple is shown as a straight avenue of trees which reaches as far as the bastion and is numbered 27 which refers in the key to 'Hawkwell Hill Walk' on the 1788 plan (Fig 4). North-east of the Gothic Temple it continues only as a single line of trees parallel to the Ha-Ha. Another avenue, or perhaps more correctly, a broken double line of flanking trees, marks the route of a path between the Gothic Temple and the Elysian Fields. By the 1797 the Ha-Ha and bastion around the Gothic temple had been removed (not illustrated). There still remained a hard boundary along the east side of the park slightly to the east of the former line of the Ha-ha, but the bastion is completely gone. There is, as yet, no indication of any paths or lakes to the east of the Palladian Bridge in the area of the Lamport gardens, since this area still lay outside the park ownership. Trees are planted to the south of the Gothic Temple in clumps or individually, some perhaps, being remnants of the former avenue, others newly planted. There appears, by this date, to be a deliberate change in the way the Gothic Temple is approached from the Palladian Bridge as it seems that a clump of trees was planted on the crest of the hill on which the former stands so it cannot be seen by visitors crossing the bridge, thus hiding it from view until they were almost upon it. This screening appears to be retained on the 1827 plan when a path, not quite straight, is shown linking the two (Fig 5).

On the same map the Chinese Bridge is shown across the southern limit of the Lower River where it enters the Octagon Lake, although it is thought that this bridge was constructed after the demolition of the old stone bridge across the Octagon Lake c1790-1805 by which time it is shown on the Nattes engraving (not illustrated). A path, lying roughly parallel to the northern lake edge, gently snakes across the southern edge of the Hawkwell Field to the Palladian Bridge, kicking northwards where it connects with the path leading up the hill to the Gothic Temple.

A further path is shown extending eastwards from the north side of the Palladian Bridge across ground towards the gate that led out of the park towards Lamport village. It too connects with the uphill path with a northward kick before heading on a north-easterly direction towards the Lamport gate. The area of land, formerly outside the park, and not incorporated until bought by the First Duke of Buckingham in 1826, is known as the Lamport Gardens (NT 1997). A manor house there was demolished, and from 1840 the Duke and his head gardener Mr Ferguson, laid out the area as a rock and water garden. This section of the extended park appears to be mainly lightly planted with individual trees bordered by a denser shelter belt along the eastern perimeter.

By 1843 the area of the Lamport Gardens had been developed further with the digging of new ponds and the creation of a network of paths amidst clumps of trees as well, apparently, as individual specimens (Fig 6). The same map appears to indicate that the path from the Palladian Bridge up the hill towards the Gothic Temple has been somewhat straightened and has now assumed an elegant reverse S-curve. The Lakeside path has also gone since the Chinese Bridge to (or from) which it led has been taken down, and a second path substituted in its place to the north. This then leads the visitor northwards into the Elysian Fields. Its route is shown on the 1843 map and is clearly visible as a parch-mark on a modern aerial photograph (Figs 6 and 8).

The path leading from the Gothic Temple to the east side of the Elysian Fields appears to have remained unchanged, and is also visible recently as both a slight raised earthwork in the pasture and as a parch-mark (Fig 8).

3 METHODOLOGY

The trenching along the northern shore of the Octagon Lake was undertaken by National Trust staff over a period of one day (15 June 2011) under archaeological supervision along the northern side of the Octagon Lake. In total seven trenches were

opened using a mini-digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig 7). The trenching progressed from the western end of the lake and terminated at the eastern. Trench numbers 1-7 were allocated on site (see photo blackboards) and numbers 1199-1205 were allocated by the National Trust during post-excavation. Only the latter have been used in this report.

The second phase of works was undertaken in November of the same year by a sub-contractor on behalf of the Trust. At that time the entire length of the lake on the north side of the Octagon Lake had been dug-out by mini-digger since the Trust had re-evaluated the method by which that path was to be constructed. The removal of soil was not monitored but a walk-over and photographic record was made after the soil removal was completed. Its position was located using a Leica GPS TCR 407 Total Station Theodolite. At the same time a series of machine-dug slots had also been opened across former path routes within the Lamport gardens, between the Palladian Bridge and Gothic Temple and Gothic temple and Elysian Fields. As before, on-site trench numbering was used to identify the trenches along each separate section (see chalk boards in photos) and were subsequently allocated National Trust trench numbers afterwards (Nos 1228-1240 inclusive). To avoid confusion the four separate areas were given the following titles: Chinese Bridge to Palladian Bridge for the path along the north side of the Octagon Lake, Palladian to Lamport Gardens for the trenches within the Lamport Gardens, Palladian to Gothic for the section of path between the two named buildings and Gothic to Elysian for the section of path between the Gothic Temple and the Elysian Fields to the west.

Each trench was cleaned to define the width of the gravel path surface and then photographed. The trenches were individually planned by hand onto a 1:500 survey provided by the National Trust or by using a GPS and the location of the gravel path recorded within the outline of each trench. Since the make-up, profile and width of the paths were effectively consistent along the entire exposed length, only sample sections were recorded.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). Northamptonshire Archaeology standard Health and Safety Guidelines were followed and a full Risk Assessment was produced prior to the commencement of the archaeological investigation.

4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 *The Chinese Bridge to Palladian Bridge*

This section of path connects the newly replaced Chinese Bridge at the southern end of the Lower River with the north side of the Palladian Bridge (Fig 7). The initial slots placed across the former path line were commenced at the eastern end and progressed westwards (Nos 1-7 on-site, subsequently 1199-1205). The map used as a basis for the historic line of this path was the 1827 version (Fig 5).

Trenches 1199-1202 located a former gravel path (Fig 7, Plate 1). The path retained a slight camber, rising gently towards the centre and tailing away on either side, between 2.7m - 2.9m wide (just under 9 feet - 9 feet 6 inches). There was no evidence of any edging either in the form of timber revetment or larger stones, and it appeared to have been constructed by simply digging out topsoil to the required width and filling the resultant trench with natural gravels. These appear to have been partly sorted as they ranged in size from sand to larger pieces of both rounded and angular flint pebbles up to 75mm in size, but did not contain very large pieces of stone. It is likely that the gravels were quarried within the confines of the estate, either close to Home Farm or New Inn where quarries are known to have existed. Whilst there is currently a partly backfilled quarry on the western side of the Hawkwell Field which was clearly dug for gravel, the date of its opening is not known, and it is not thought that it relates to this period. It is not marked on either the 1885 or 1923 Ordnance Survey maps and must therefore post-date the latter.

The route of the path veered away from the lake edge towards the north-west, as is also shown on both the 1843 plan and the modern aerial photograph (Fig 6 and 8). There is no path shown in this location in 1827 and the gravel surface must therefore relate to the later route. Since it was apparent that although clearly visible and well preserved this was not the path required for the restoration of the lakeside path; no further trenching was attempted across its route.

The next trench, 1203, was located further west but close to the lake edge. No indication of gravel was found, and nor was there any indication in the following two trenches (1204 and 1205). The soil layers suggest that this area has been subject to alteration with a layer of silty material, the result of lake dredging, having been deposited along this entire lake edge. The extent of the dredging is not certain, although it is recorded that it was partly dredged in 1991 (LUC 1992). The lack of

evidence for the path may therefore suggest that any historic levels are deeply buried in which case, although they were not located they remain preserved *in situ*, they have been removed by ground disturbance, or any path in this location was simply grass in which case it is unlikely to leave any evidence in the archaeological record. The latter seems to be the most likely given the short-lived lifespan of this route.

Subsequent to this report being written after the completion of the fieldwork, a gravel layer was observed by Paul Annets whilst digging a deep drainage channel close to the lake edge. In it he observed that there was a layer of gravel beneath the dredged lake silts which he interpreted as being the original lakeside path. Although this layer was not observed by either the author of this report, or by Mr G Marshall, the Trust Archaeologist, Paul has extensive experience at working with both parties and is likely to be correct in his observations. It is therefore likely that any future deep interventions will reveal further evidence of the feature, and should therefore be observed.

After the excavation of these trenches and the lack of any evidence for a gravel path in this location (during the phase observed as part of the Watching Brief), the National Trust Head Gardener, Barry Smith, asked NA if it were possible to set out the 1827 route using digitised information. This was subsequently carried out and the lakeside route set out on the ground using the GPS. It was subsequently gravelled by laying Type One chippings and gravel topping onto the present ground surface. However, this was not felt to be of sufficiently good quality visually since it raised the path above the surrounding turf level and it was decided to remove this and replace the path by cutting a shallow trench the width of the historic path and laying the Type 1 and gravel within it, thus creating a path surface flush with the adjacent turf level. This was undertaken before the site visit but the length of the newly cut trench was walked and photographed. The soils into which the trench had been cut appear to represent upcast from the dredging of the Octagon lake and were of a silty nature as had previously been noted in the slot trenches (Plate 2). Certain areas contained patches of blueish-grey clay but were also thought to represent water-laid deposits from the lake. Occasional fragments of stone were visible, these had been removed from the upcast soil by the contractor and thrown into the path trench to act as hardcore. A single iron knife was recovered by the Trust Archaeologist (see below, section 5).

4.2 *The Palladian Bridge and Lamport Gardens*

These trenches were located on the east side of the Palladian Bridge and lie within an area of rough grass, scrub, reeds and trees in the area now called the Lamport

Gardens (Fig 7). There were five trenches, given the numbers 1-5 during the site recording, subsequently re-numbered 1228-1232.

These trenches were completed before the site visit was made and had been located by the contractor using a copy of the 1827 plan. A very slight earthwork ridge also suggested to the probable route of the path and five trenches were placed across this feature. In all trenches the same gravel path surface was located, although in trench 1228 the ground was extremely wet and became water-filled. The path retained a slight camber, rising gently towards the centre and tailing away on either side, approximately 2.8m wide (9 feet). There was no evidence of any edging either in the form of timber revetment or larger stones, and it appeared to have been constructed by simply digging out topsoil to the required width and filling the resultant trench with natural gravels. These appear to have been partly sorted as they ranged in size from sand to larger pieces of both rounded and angular flint pebbles up to 75mm in size, but did not contain very large pieces of stone.

That the gravels were essentially identical to those observed in Trenches 1199-1202 may be significant as it might indicate that the two branches of the path are in origin of two different dates (1843 for Trenches 1199-1202 and 1827 and 1843 for Trenches 1228-1232), they may have been re-surfaced when the later path was laid out to produce a uniform appearance. However, there remains the more likely possibility that the gravel, sourced locally and provided from the estate is simply from the same quarry and unless microscopic analysis is undertaken, there is little likelihood of distinguishing different phases of path make-up. The path, although in places affected by tree roots, was clearly visible but more difficult to record photographically due to the scrub of the area in which it is currently situated (Plate 3).

4.3 *The Palladian Bridge to the Gothic Temple*

The present path which ascends the hill towards the Gothic Temple appears first on the 1827 plan (Fig 5). Before that date the route is shown as an avenue of trees from the north side of the Palladian Bridge in a perfectly straight line parallel to the park boundary, lying immediately to the east (Fig 4). By the time of the 1843 map the route has slightly altered its course, but remains basically unchanged. Before this section of path was investigated it had been reported by both the National Trust and the contractor that this route had been severely affected by modern machinery during operations to dredge the lakes in the Lamport Gardens with deep rutting and introduction of hardcore to stabilise the haul road.

A single slot was placed across the present track leading from the north side of the Palladian Bridge up the hill to the Gothic Temple (Fig 7, Trench 1 subsequently 1233). Beneath the present gravel surface a mixed layer of soil and gravel was revealed, which, when cleaned appeared to represent one of two parallel wheel ruts, presumably created when the modern haul road had been used for the dredging operation. Within the soils of the ruts were pieces of modern, probably Fletton, brick and a large piece of concrete paving slab. This was present at a depth of c400mm. A narrow sliver of slightly paler gravels was present on the west side of the western rut which was interpreted as the remains of the earlier path shown first on the 1827 map (Plate 4, Fig 5). The western edge appeared to represent the west limit of the path, the eastern side was truncated by the wheel rut and therefore the original width was not established. No original surface remained.

4.4 *The Gothic Temple to Elysian Fields*

These trenches were located on the west side of the Gothic Temple and proceeded westwards down the gentle slope leading to the Elysian Fields. There are no paths indicated in this location until the 1827 map, previously the route between the two areas appears to have been delineated by a broken avenue of trees (Figs 3 and 4). During the site monitoring the trenches were numbered 1-7, afterwards re-numbered 1234-1240 inclusive (Figs 7 and 8). The path conforms in size, configuration and materials with those previously located in this area of the park, perhaps unsurprisingly as they all appear at the same date and are therefore likely to have been made at the same time and treated in the same way (Plate 5). The path retained a slight camber, rising gently towards the centre and tailing away on either side, approximately 2.7m – 2.9m wide (just under 9 feet – 9 feet 6 inches). It appeared to have been constructed by simply digging out topsoil to the required width and filling the resultant trench with natural gravels. In trenches 1234, 1235 and 1236 in particular the northern edges of the path were very clearly defined, perhaps suggesting that here, at least, there had been some form of timber edging although this has not been confirmed (Fig 7, section, Plate 5). The gravels appear to have been partly sorted as they ranged in size from sand to larger pieces of both rounded and angular flint pebbles up to 75mm in size, but did not contain very large pieces of stone.

Towards the western end of this branch of the path the edges were extremely difficult to determine primarily because the depth of topsoil was very thin and the natural subsoil in that location was almost clean sands and gravels, a fact borne out by the

presence of the gravel quarry close by to the south. Thus it has not been possible to confirm with absolute certainty the route of the path close to the current boundary fence between the Hawkwell Field and the Elysian Fields, although the route of the path does appear to be curving slightly to the north-west on the aerial photograph (Fig 8).

4.5 ***Notes on three brick drains revealed by excavations for a restored path in the Elysian Fields, Stowe Gardens. NT event no. ENA6497.*** By G Marshall.

These three drains were revealed by a machine dug trench excavated for the purpose of recreating the path linking the Gothic Temple to the Elysian Fields, as shown on the 1843 Henry Howard map. The trench was dug during the week of 3rd-5th January 2012 using a bucket 2.2 ms in width. The excavation encountered fine yellow sandy gravel for the original path at a shallow depth of between 7 and 15cms. (Fig 7) A clear edge was found for the north side of the path, confirming that the original path curved more sharply at its east end, thus heading for the centre of the small box hedge immediately north of the clump of lime trees on the edge of the quarry. The recreated path therefore diverges slightly from the original route to avoid this clump.

During the excavation three brick drains orientated north-south and draining in a southerly direction were observed passing across the width of the path (Plates 6 and 7). These have side walls formed of two courses of brick laid end-to-end, with a third course of brick laid at right angles to form a cap over the drain. Drain no.2 also incorporated a large slab of limestone at its south end. Drains 2 and 3 incorporated slightly larger 'sumps' at their north end marking the most northerly extent of these two drains. There was no such sump built into drain 1. The bricks used in the construction of the drains are hand-made and have a hard light red fabric displaying occasional 'kissing marks' on the sides of the bricks. Dimensions were taken as 230 x 110 x 70 mms. A soft yellow sandy lime mortar was used as a base to the drain and also between some of the joints.

These three drains appeared to be embedded within the gravel construction of the path, suggesting that they were laid when the path was created, although it is possible that the path was redressed after laying the drains. Similar drains have been found under paths on the opposite (west) side of the Elysian Fields around the Temple of Ancient Virtue. A date for their construction remains uncertain. The large size of the bricks hints at an 18th century date, though of course they may have been recycled at a later date to form the drains.

5 TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Around the Gothic Temple are faint, but clearly discernible, earthworks and although some had previously been recorded they were recorded in greater detail using the GPS at the same time that the slot trenches were located (Fig 8).

To the south and east of the Gothic Temple a shallow linear undulation appears to, in part, relate to the former Ha-Ha which approached the building from the south with a westward projecting semi-circular bastion. This can clearly be seen on the aerial photograph and is located to the south-west of a clump of hollies (Fig 8). To the north the straight line of the Ha-Ha continues, and on the ground appears to have become conflated with the later bastion which skirted the eastern side of the Gothic Temple. Thus, the present shallow earthwork appears to be a combination of two periods of landscape feature (Fig 7). The present earthwork is in places approximately 100mm - 150mm deep and varies in width from 4-6m although the edges are hard to define accurately, the shallowness of the feature making it difficult to see clearly when viewed from close by. Like many earthworks they are easier to see when viewed from a distance, and perhaps the best method of recording this feature might be to digitise the aerial photograph which displays remarkably clear edges. This clearly shows the line of the former Ha-Ha aligned exactly on the Palladian Bridge at the southern end, rising up the hill before forming the large inward bastion, also visible from the air, and then continuing in a north-westerly direction before turning to the north-east to the west of the Gothic Temple.

On the west side of the Gothic Temple, adjacent and parallel to the western facade of the building is a flat, broad platform which is thought to represent the grassed over gravel terrace there (Fig 8). This terrace would have afforded views westwards towards the main house.

The slight humped ridge along the line of the path from the Gothic Temple to the Elysian Fields is most clearly defined towards the eastern end, becoming less clear, and perhaps even changing from a positive to negative earthwork at the western end, although this is not certain. If this is the case it seems that there was a deliberate attempt to reduce the steepness of the slope by essentially reducing the gradient by placing the path in a shallow cutting; since this end of the path is currently truncated by the fence around the eastern side of the Elysian fields this theory is, as yet, unconfirmed.

Also visible and recorded are a series of zig-zag slit trenches to the north of the path which leads from the Gothic Temple to the Elysian Fields (Fig 7). These are thought to be modern (twentieth-century) and related to the school rifle range located in the bottom of the valley immediately to the north. The date of their construction or infilling is uncertain, although it is thought that they probably date to the 1950s. They have been allocated a Trust SMR site number 155282. They are clearly visible on the aerial photograph (Fig 8). A further group at grid reference SP677413655 (NT SMR no, 155221) lies immediately south of the Queens Temple in front of which was located a target butt.

6 FINDS

No finds were recovered from any of the trenches although an iron knife with an antler handle was recovered by Gary Marshall from the stripped length of lakeside path on the north shore of the Octagon Lake. It is thought that this is a modern fisherman's knife. Other modern objects, such as parts of a bicycle frame, were also observed along this length of path and are thought to derive from the dredged lake deposits. No artefacts were recovered from the gravel of the paths in the other trenches.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The slot trenches across the lines of the historic paths revealed gently cambered gravelled surfaces in all areas apart from along the northern shore of the Octagon Lake. There are two main reasons why this may be the case; the first is that the path here was originally of grass and therefore has left no evidence in the archaeological record, the second is that any gravelled surface has been either removed or deeply buried by the upcast of silt from the dredging of that lake. The lake was partly dredged in 1991.

To the east of the Palladian Bridge within the Lamport Gardens, between the same bridge and the Gothic Temple, the Gothic Temple and the Elysian Fields gravelled paths were found shallowly concealed beneath what is most likely a natural build-up of soil. This build-up of soil might only have occurred in the twentieth-century, for, despite the financial disasters which befell the estate during the mid nineteenth-century, there seems to have been a relatively good programme of maintenance and all of the paths, apart from that along the north shore of the Octagon Lake, are present on Ordnance

Survey maps from the end of the nineteenth century up to at least 1923. Shortly before that date (1921) the house was finally sold at the Great Sale after which time many of the paths appear to gradually disappear. There is no evidence of deliberate path removal.

The cambered surface of the path appears to have been made from either poorly graded, or un-graded, natural sands and gravels, almost certainly from quarries on the estate (most likely at Home Farm or New Inn). Each path seems to have been created in a shallow trench, presumably formed by simply removing the turf and topsoil to the desired width, and then filling the trench with the gravels. Such paths, with no substantial sub-base were effective when used by relatively small numbers of visitors and were easy to repair since all they required was a top-dressing of gravel when low-spots appeared. They did not generally require drainage, especially in this area where the natural geology is sand and gravel, and they would be relatively easy to keep weed-free by hoeing in dry weather. No evidence of wheel ruts was observed and it appears that they were used mostly, although perhaps not exclusively, by pedestrians.

No hard edging appears to have been used and, indeed, this would not be expected in this part of the wider designed landscape where hard edges and sharp distinctions were not desired in a naturalistic setting.

The topographic survey has recorded both the slight ridge which indicates the location of the path between the Gothic Temple and the Elysian fields and the location of the infilled Ha-Ha and bastions related to the former eastern limit of the park. The latter appear on estate plans from at least 1739 and represent an important early phase of landscaping. Until this recent survey, and the identification of the Ha-Ha and bastion from a publicly available aerial photograph it was uncertain whether or not this feature actually existed or was an un-executed proposal. The recent works establish that it did, indeed exist, and remains as a buried feature within the Hawkwell field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to the National Trust staff for help during the fieldwork and for the use of historic maps in this report. Thanks also to Paul Annetts, the landscaping contractor, for his help with trench opening.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EH 1998 *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England; Stowe* English Heritage

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MoRPHE*, English Heritage Procedural Document

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

LUC 1992 *Stowe Gardens Survey*, Land Use Consultants

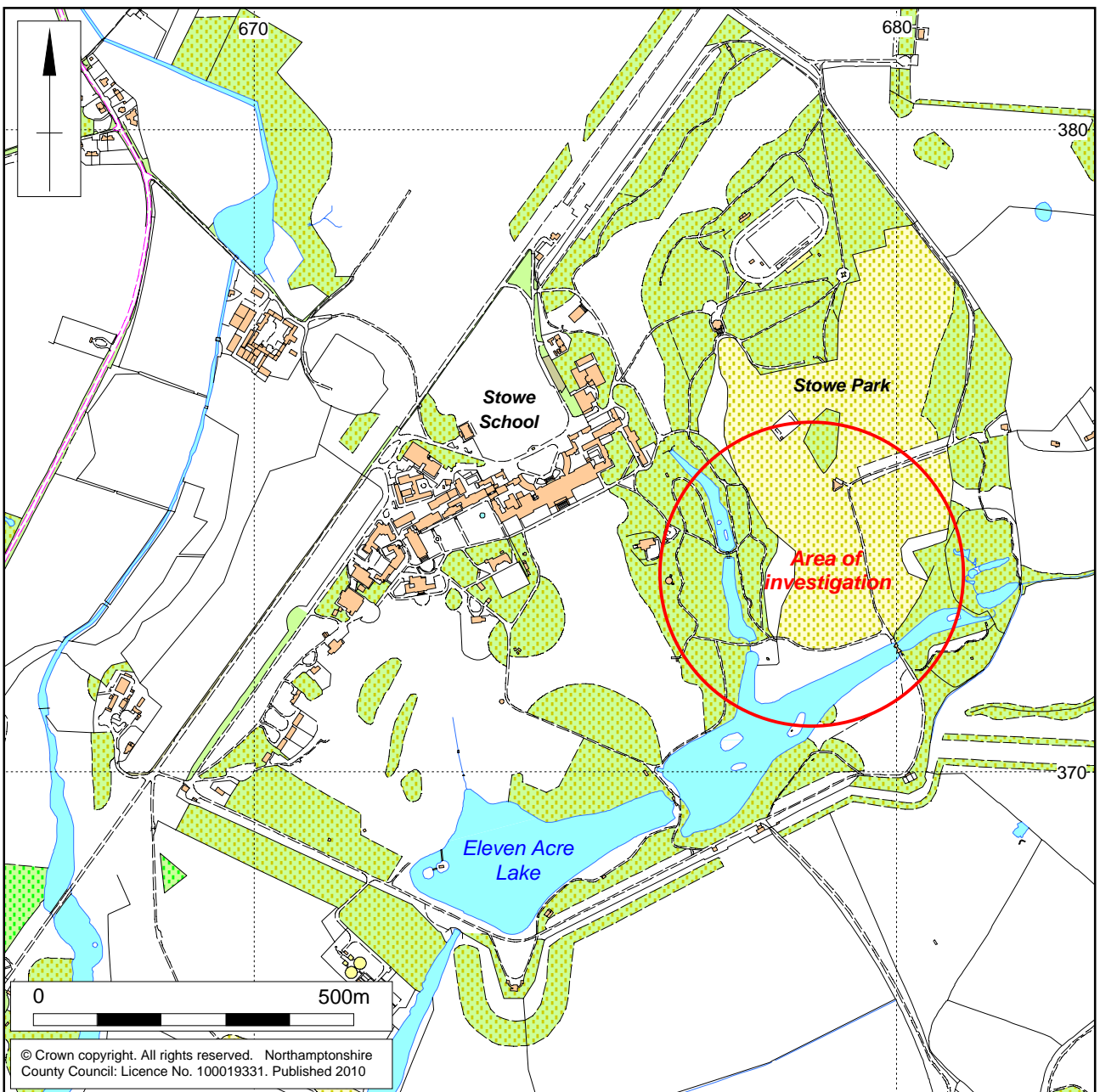
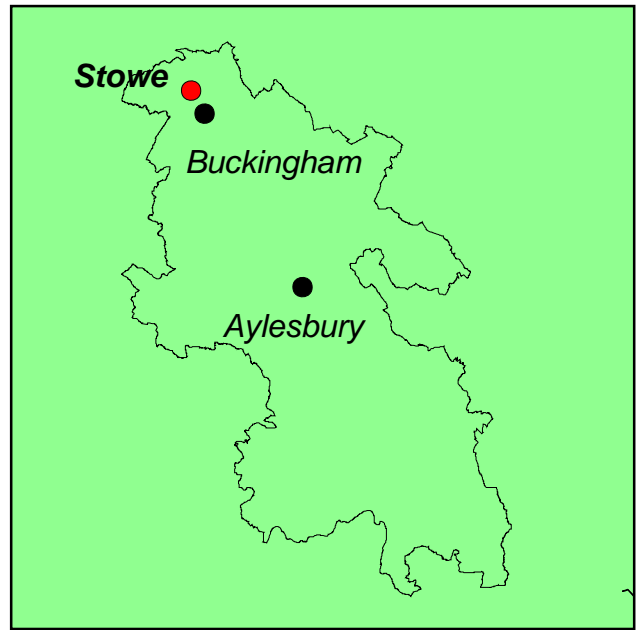
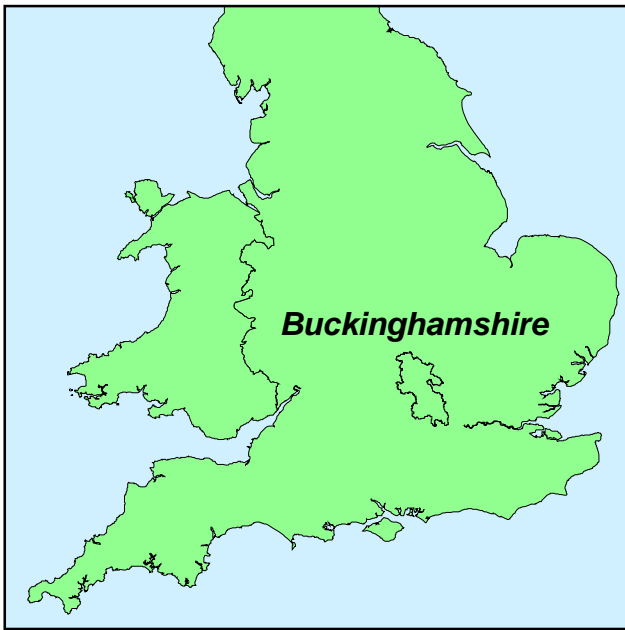
NT 1997 *Stowe Landscape Gardens*, National Trust Guidebook

Robinson, J M 1990 *Temples of Delight, Stowe Landscape Gardens*

Northamptonshire Archaeology

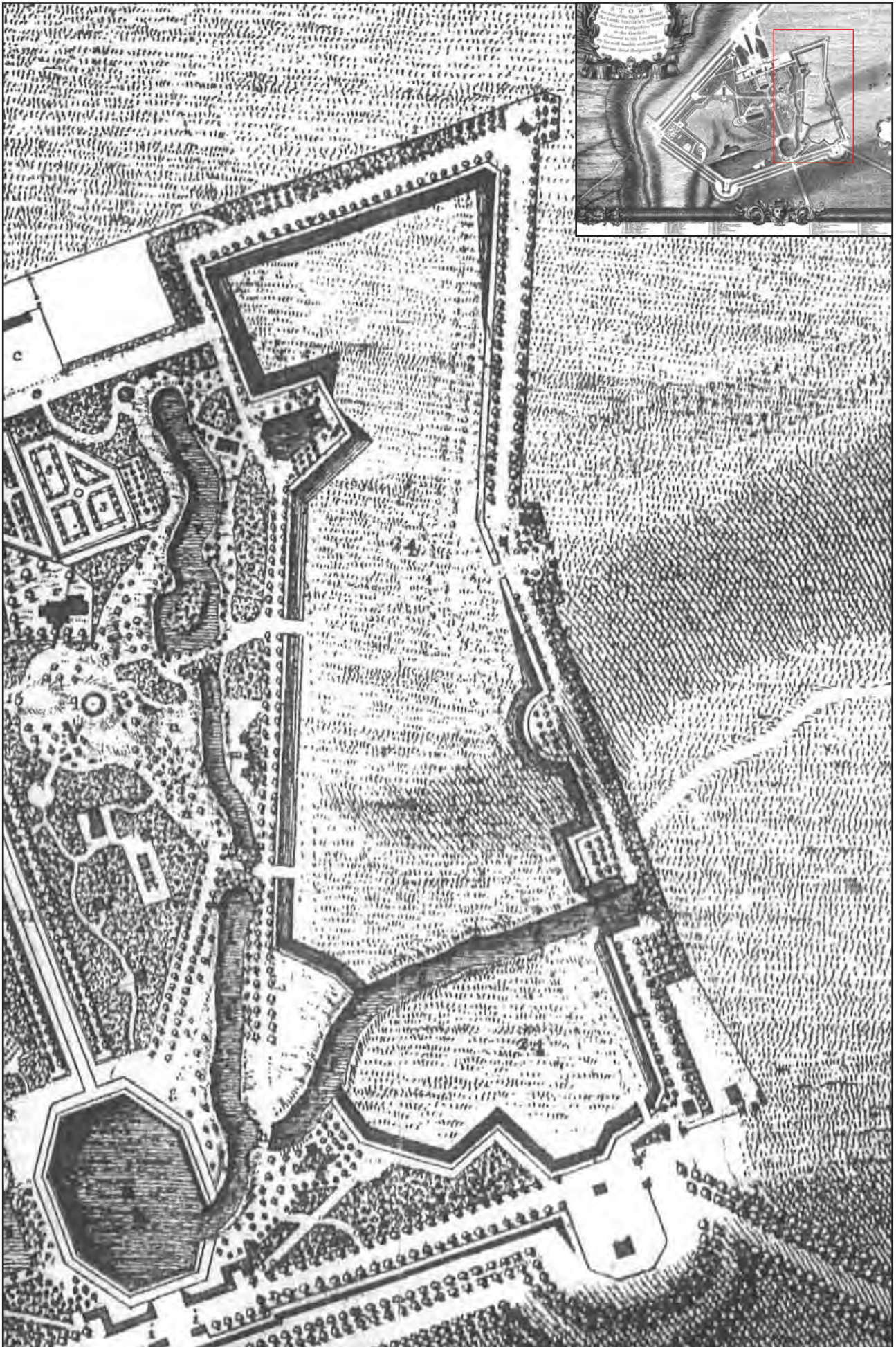
a service of Northamptonshire County Council

Revised 28 February 2012

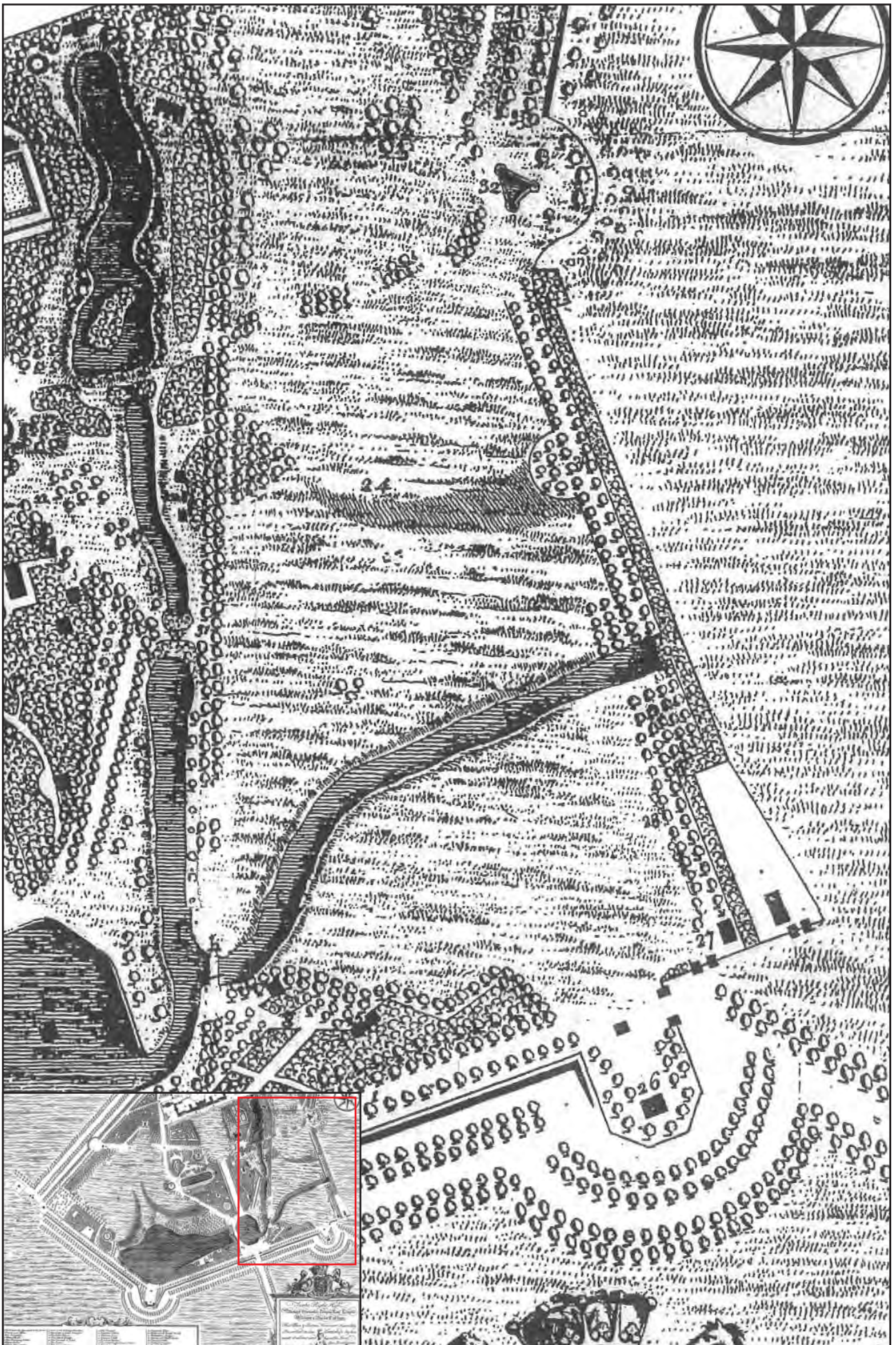


Scale 1:10,000

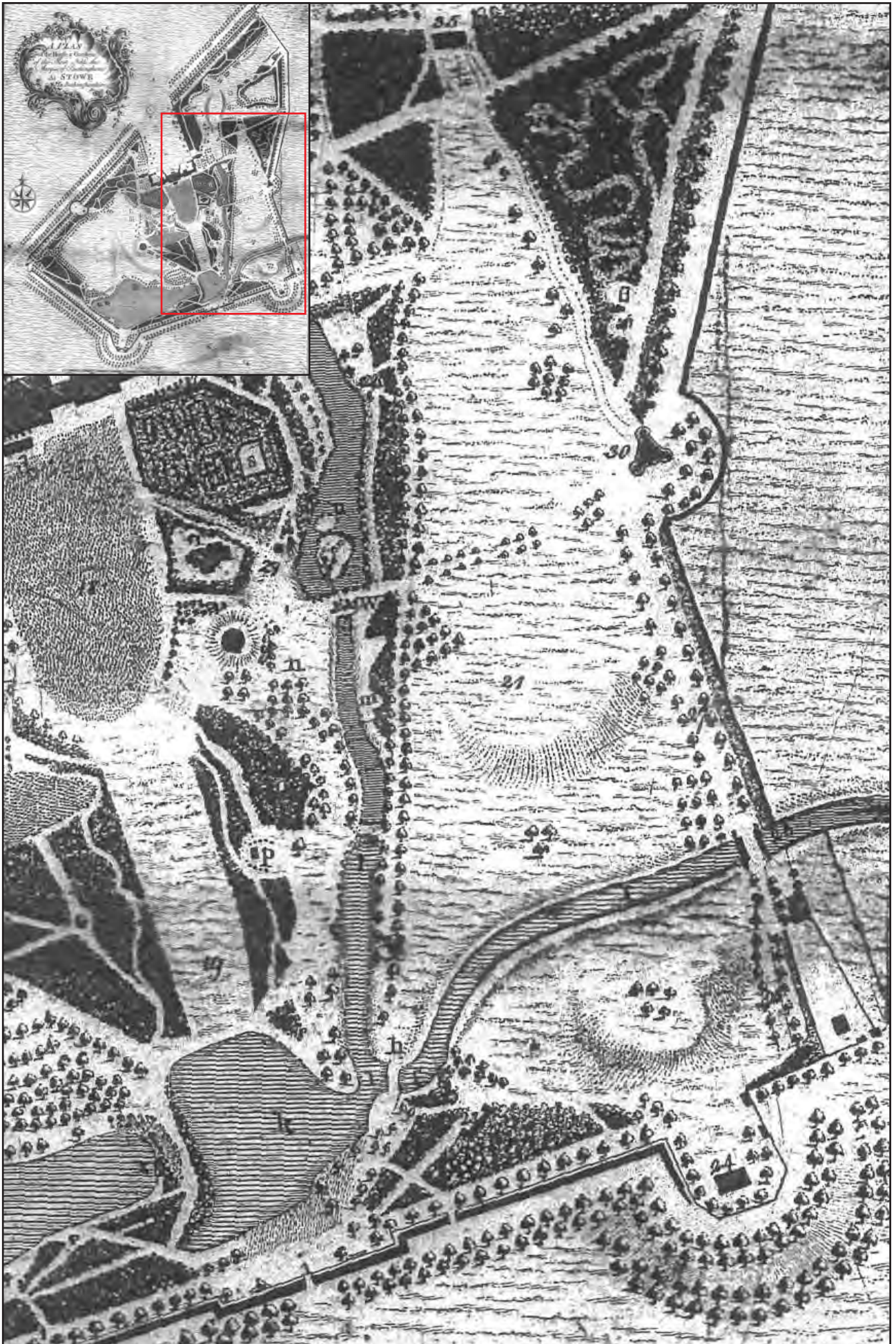
Site location Fig 1



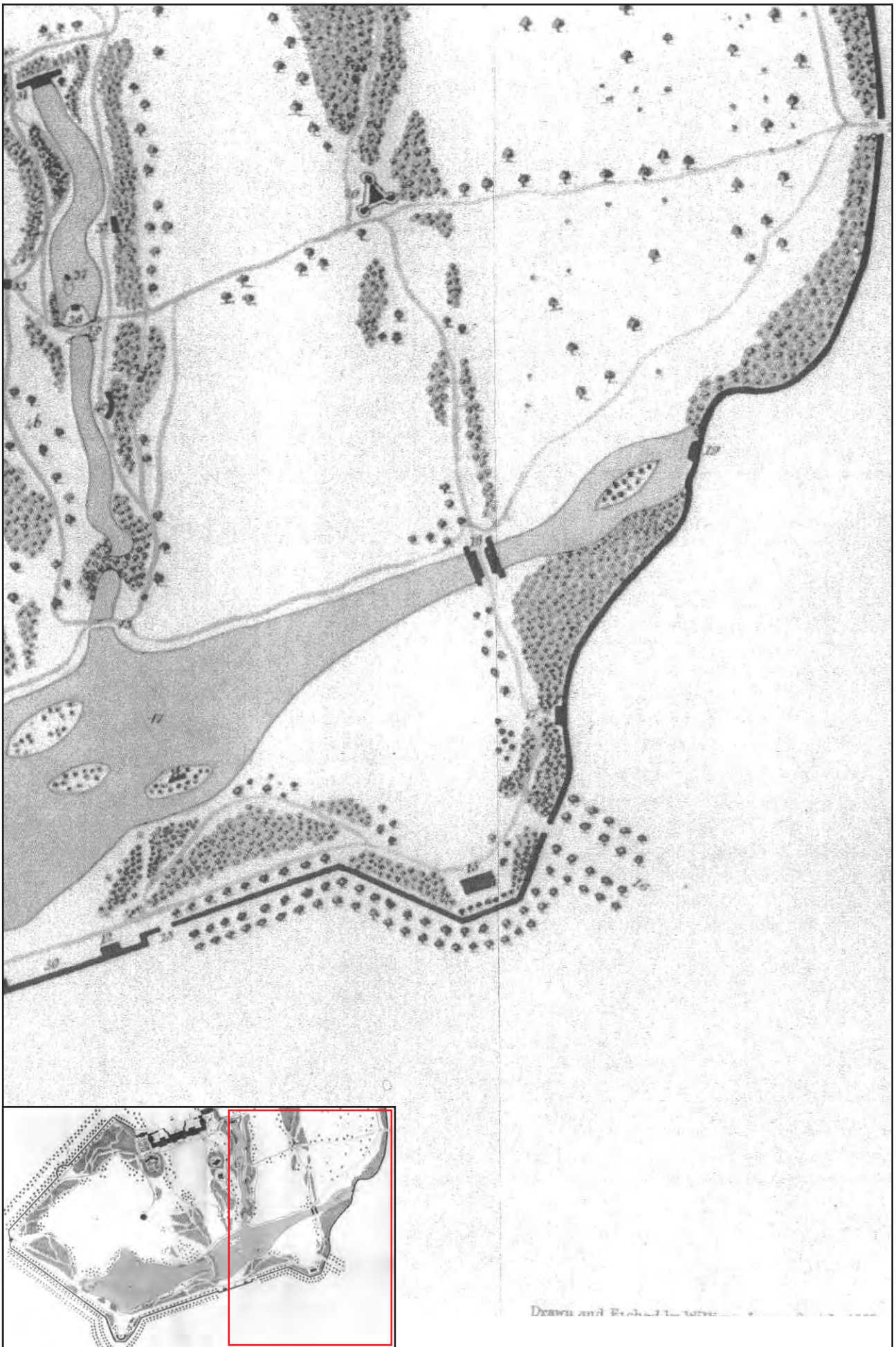
1739 Sarah Bridgeman plan Fig 2



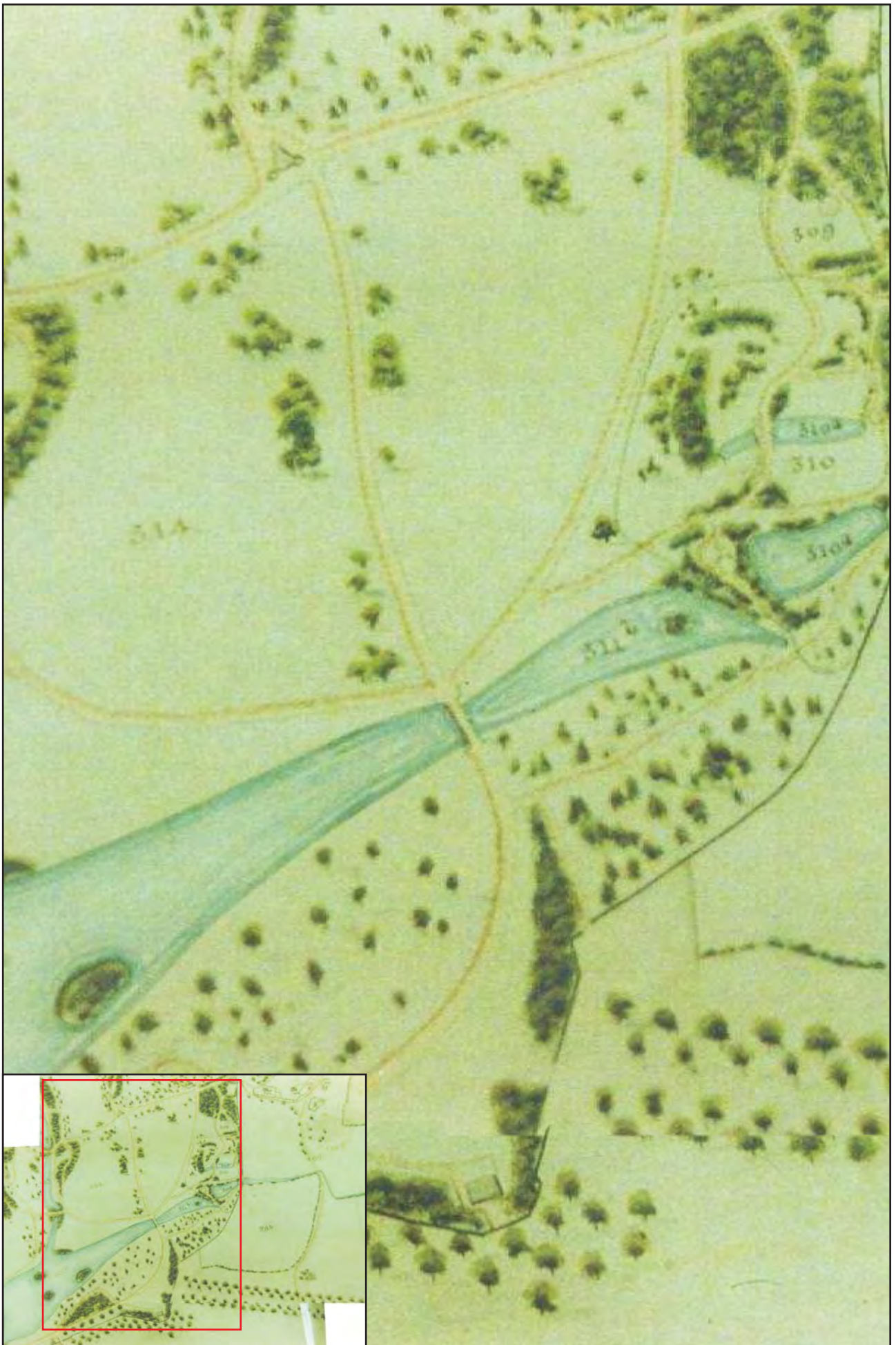
1753 Seely Guide Book plan by George Bickham Fig 3



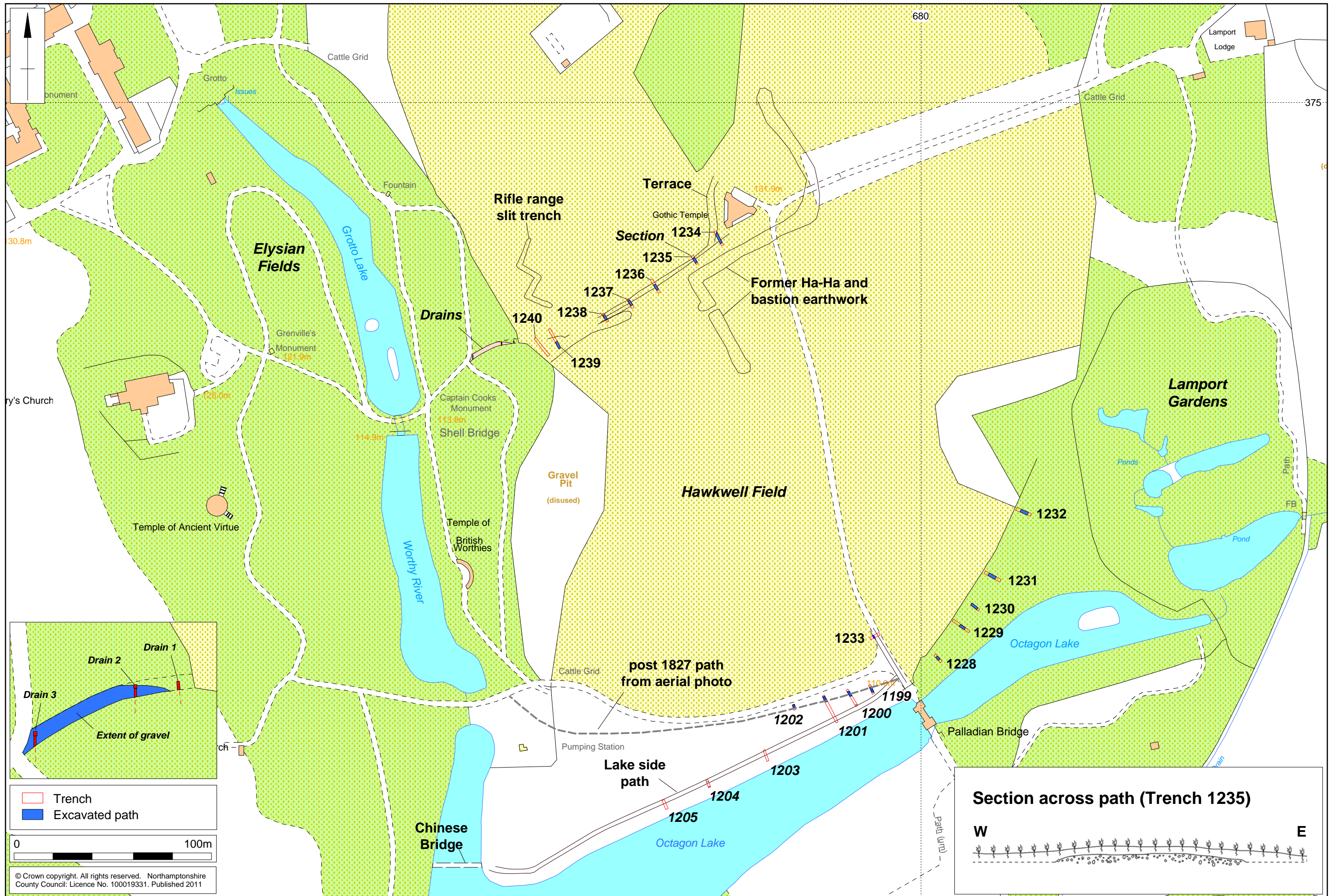
1783 Seeley Guide Book plan Fig 4



1827 Seeley Guide Book plan by William Smith Fig 5



1843 Henry Howard plan Fig 6



Scale 1:1,750, section inset 1:50, drains inset 1:500 (A3)

Hawkwell Field, Stowe, location of trenches and earthworks Fig 7



Aerial photograph of Hawkwell Field, Stowe, showing former Ha-Ha, bastion and various gravel paths as parch-marks (copyright Flash Earth)

Fig 8



The Chinese Bridge to Palladian Bridge. Trench 1201 (Tr 3) showing the 1843 path, looking east towards the Palladian bridge (June 2011)

Plate 1



The Octagon Lake path trench, looking east towards the Palladian Bridge from the Chinese Bridge (November 2011)

Plate 2



The Palladian Bridge and Lamport gardens. Trench 1230 (Tr 3), looking south-west towards the Palladian Bridge

Plate 3



The Palladian Bridge to Gothic Temple. Trench 1233 (Tr 1), looking north towards the Gothic Temple

Plate 4



The Gothic Temple to Elysian Fields. Trench 1237(Tr 4), looking north-east towards the Gothic Temple Plate 5



Drain 2, looking west Plate 6



Drain 3, looking north Plate 7