

Grant no. 7/2013

The Bruton Abbey Project.

Roger Gallannaugh

The third Abbey dig took place from 20th to 24th October following fieldwork in the two previous years. Last year's work involved the excavation of a trial trench on Abbey field and an extended geophysical survey over the Glebe and Abbey fields.

The latter was undertaken by Dr Neil Linford of English Heritage's Geophysics Team and extended the previous 2011 survey by Jimmy Adcock. It has revealed extensive anomalies on the east side of Abbey field towards Station Road, never identified before. It has also clearly indicated more extensive monastic remains under the middle of the playing fields and confirms extensive remains of the Berkeley Mansion under the Glebe and the west side of Abbey field .

The Evaluation trench dug in July last year appears to confirm the presence of medieval monastic walls. Dick Broomhead (field archaeologist) recently published his report and says that the earliest phase of activity within the trench was represented by the construction of two abutting walls. Some material, though extremely limited, was entirely medieval indicating these structures dated from this period and thus to potentially comprise part of the assumed Augustinian monastic establishment. Precisely what part remains unknown. The evaluation trench produced a broad spread of finds , most significant of which were pieces of medieval floor tiles and shards of pots, 18th century ceramics and a 17th century coin.

So has this year's dig advanced our knowledge of the site? A full report will be produced by Dick next year however we are certain that we know the exact location of the Mansion. By using various surveys, the record of parch marks from last summer and having a larger but shallower excavation, we found, just below the surface, remains of walls, an angled corner buttress and internal flooring all of which can be identified on the mansion floor plan. There were no significant finds this time except a large stone, (920mm x 160mm x 340mm wide) with traces of mouldings, bedded on foundation stones and which would have started off the construction of the finished stone of the buttress. This stone had been slightly chiselled to receive a window frame 620mm wide and a 25mm square hole to receive a metal bar. Its most likely origin being a window sill in the monastery.

As always thanks are due to the Headmaster and English Heritage for encouraging and allowing the works to take place. To Pat Clooney (Estates Bursar), Adi and their staff for erecting the tent, cutting turf and back filling and to Ed Tickner who led an enthusiastic group of helpers.