

CHISWICK HOUSE AND GARDENS REGENERATION PROJECT – ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION Update 3: progress for the 1st – 12th December 2008

Site Excavation – Weeks 4 and 5 (1st - 12th December)

Work in the final 2 weeks of the excavation progressed as well as we could have hoped, with further discoveries being made until the final day on site.

As mentioned in the previous updates, our pre-conceived understanding of the form of the earliest building on the site has been challenged by our archaeological discoveries and we now have evidence that shows that the building originally had bay-fronted east and west ranges. We'd excavated part of the bay footings of the eastern range in the first half of the excavation (see photograph in Update 2), and so were pleased to see that the bay-fronted design also survived when we came to excavate the front of the western range. The brickwork of these footings was more fragmentary as the front wall of the range had subsequently been rebuilt, but enough survived to show that the bay front had existed.



Photograph showing the brick footings to the bay front of the earliest building's western range (1m and 0.5m scales)

In our main trench, we partially excavated the cellared main room down to floor level. This survived as a fragmentary mortar surface that was originally the bedding for a floor surface - possibly a stone slabbed floor. Interestingly when we excavated to the north-east of the Jacobean House (in Spring 2008) in advance of the new cafe building, we found a number of 18th-century drains constructed of tooled limestone slabs that may have originated from the Jacobean House.



Photograph showing a door opening in the rubble-filled basement (1m scale is laid on the mortar flooring surface)

Other interesting discoveries in the main trench included the bases of two windows lighting the basement directly beneath the central entrance stair. These had been blocked, presumably by Lord Burlington in the early 1720s when he remodelled the entranceway in the Palladian style. From this period of work we have been able to identify two circular brick-filled post pads that would have formed the footings to the arched door entrance.



Photograph showing the blocked basement window opening at the front of the southern range of the Jacobean House (1m and 2 x 0.5m scales)

Further work included a northwards extension to the main trench in order to establish the location of the northern wall of the southern range. Eventually both of our original trenches were linked by this extension, and although later services had removed much of the wall itself, it was possible to pinpoint its location as the plaster-rich rubble backfill of the basement (originating from the late 17th century demolition of the building) ended. This showed that the building's southern range

consisted of an approximately square space (measuring c 11m x 10.8m), and that this would have formed the space depicted by Lord Burlington when designing the new entrance portico as 'the Great Room' of two storeys.



View of the extension linking the two excavation trenches exposing the length of the western range of the building

Work now continues on the completion of the site archive and the project will then move on to its assessment stage. Updates will continue to appear at regular intervals during this stage of the project.



Thanks to the team
(L-R - Brian Kerr, Jess Tibber, Dave Fellows, Tara Gullbrand, David Griffiths, Cat Rees and Tom Jamieson)