

CAMS



NEWS

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Forum 2003 - a great success!



The 10th CAMS Forum took place on April 3rd, a brisk spring day, at Cobham Hall. A magnificent display of Cobham Hall's renowned daffodils greeted the visitors to the event. With 96 attendees the turnout was probably the best yet for a CAMS Forum and it was great to see many familiar faces among the new recruits.

Once again Lord Darnley graciously chaired the meeting and offered thanks to all involved in a massive endeavour, particularly to the CAMS Project Manager Phillip Smart.



The audience were addressed by members of the Project Team and their advisors who were preparing the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for CAMS. Several of the speakers gave a run down of some of

the design work connected with the project and samples of some of the design drawings were displayed around the Gilt Hall. As always the Forum concluded with lively debate and well considered questions.



Delegates attending the CAMS Forum.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM THE FORUM

■ What is the National Trust currently proposing to be responsible for?

The National Trust is planning to take on the ownership of 165 acres of Cobham Woods and the Darnley Mausoleum, subject to agreed repairs and an endowment contribution. To support this it is also proposing warden's accommodation and additional facilities at South Lodge. It should be noted that the Trust also holds covenants on the historic buildings owned by Cobham Hall School.

■ Stiles at Knights Place make access to this area difficult, are there plans to rectify this?

CAMS is working in conjunction with Rights of Way Officers to improve access within the Scheme area.

■ When is CAMS planning to introduce bridleways in its area?

CAMS policy is to new bridleway access within the scheme area with links to local facilities. There is a security concern however and CAMS is conscious of the need to be confident in its ability to control illegal motorised access, mainly through design solutions.

■ What is the future of Watling Street from Halfpence Lane to Thong Lane ?

The agreement between KCC and Union Railways required the reinstatement of this section of Watling Street to match its original specification and this has been done. It has become clear, however, that this specification cannot meet the current traffic levels. It is now proposed to upgrade this stretch to a two-way road.

■ Will the HLF grant include provision for restoring Brewers Ponds?

Brewers Ponds are a significant element in the historic landscape and will be considered within the Conservation Plan and the subsequent bid to HLF.

■ What is the Regional Park?

There has been mention of a North Kent or Thames-Medway Regional Park in the local press recently.

The Regional Park is a very broad concept at the moment and a working party is in the process of defining its proposed extent and character. It is currently envisaged that the Park may encompass a number of epicentres or hubs, of which CAMS could be geographically central.

Heritage Lottery Fund progress

The Project Team preparing the bid to the Heritage Lottery fund is made up of key stakeholders of the CAMS partner organisations and Cobham Hall. The Team has been very successful in designing a flagship project with the support of a wide number of experts and advisors in a diverse range of interests, including both historic and nature conservation issues. The activities of the Team have identified that some elements of the Park, notably Cobham Woods and the Darnley Mausoleum, are of international importance. Several other elements have been confirmed as of national significance. The project has amassed a wealth of supporting documentation for the HLF bid, not least of which is a gazetteer of points of interest within the Park boundaries which currently stands at 130 entries. The approach that CAMS and the

Project Team have taken has won praise from the Heritage Lottery Fund for its comprehensive attention to a complex range of issues.

Some of the results of the various studies have been presented at previous Forums but much of the supporting documentation has been used to produce a Conservation Plan. This is a required step for any major heritage project and is intended to be a comprehensive statement of why Cobham is important and how best to protect its valuable assets. The Conservation Plan is intended to act as a long-term guide, a necessity for a project of Cobham Park's scale, it is also necessary to consider the future of Cobham Park beyond the lifetime of CAMS, which was always intended to be a finite organisation. The proposals will be presented to

the landowners and other stakeholders for approval, and a public consultation process will also be conducted.

The increasing scale and importance of the Cobham Park Heritage Project has led to a longer preparation time for the HLF bid which will be

submitted shortly. The scale of the project is now much larger than was originally envisaged and the Project Team are now considering a phased approach. Work on site is anticipated to commence in late 2004 with hand-over to the National Trust expected in late 2006.



The Cobham Park Project Team

Securing Cobham Woods

CAMS has just completed the most visible of its projects to date. Visitors to Cobham Woods know

that one of the main detriments to the area for many years has been the abandoned and burnt out cars littering

the wood. The illegal use of 4-wheel drive vehicles and motorbikes has been a great problem, causing distress to legitimate visitors. CAMS developed a project to clear the debris and severely restrict motorised access to the woods to prevent its re-occurrence. The aim was to return the woods to a quiet, peaceful, and beautiful area that visitors will be able to enjoy without fear of being disturbed or knocked down.

In addition to funding from CAMS contributions were received from the Kent Downs AONB, Kent County Council Waste Management, Medway Council and Costain Skansia Mowlem (CSM), the contractor working on behalf of the Highways Agency. A team



The new gate near Merrals Shaw

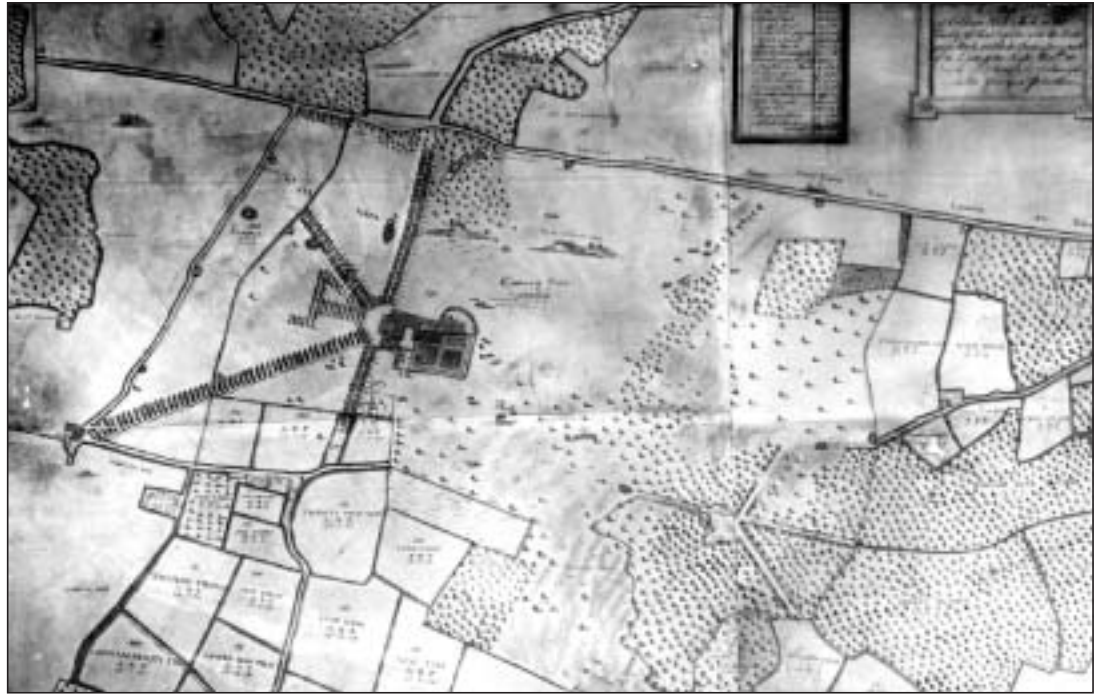
of 30 volunteers from the West Kent Downs Countryside Trust searched the woods mapping the exact location of each abandoned vehicle



The History of Cobham Park

The work for the Conservation Plan has revealed that much of the history of the Park, particularly from the 17th and 18th centuries before the Repton redesign, is still visible on the ground.

As far as we know there are no maps of the Cobham Park area before the 16th century and so for the earlier periods we have had to turn to archaeology to provide the basic information. The bronze age bowl barrow in Ashenbank Wood and the Roman villa in West Park are well known but examination of aerial photographs and survey work on the ground has revealed traces of early field systems in other areas of the Park that may be related to these periods. In the medieval period much of the Park appears to have been ancient wood and heath utilised as areas



A map of Cobham Hall Park by C Sloane, 1758

of wood pasture at Ashenbank and Cobham woods. The network of paths appears to have developed by this period,

with the ridge route and the holloway running north-south to the east of the Hall already established. A survey of veteran trees in the Park, which have particularly high wildlife value, has revealed a very high number of specimens placing Cobham in the top 20 sites in Britain and therefore of European importance.

Examination of early maps and documents shows that the alignment of the walls around the gardens close to the Hall is relatively unchanged. This is especially true of the area around Lady Darnley's garden which has survived in more or less its original form since the 16th century. The wider landscape of the Park seems to have been given over to hunting with the golf course area marked as a deer park.

Later maps show that in the 17th and early 18th centuries the Park was considerably enlarged. The avenues were planted, incorporating the 16th century bowling green to the west of the Hall. This retention of earlier features adds to the interest of Cobham, at a time when many landscape designers preferred to remove all traces of

earlier activity. The mid and later 18th century saw the construction of many of the historic buildings in the landscape. The Darnley Mausoleum is the most obvious and significant, but other buildings including the dairy, cow house, aviary, pump-house, and lodges, also date from this period.

The end of the 18th and the early 19th century is the period of Repton. Cobham was very important to Repton, he was associated with it for 25 years, by far his longest association with any one place. He was mainly involved with the redesign of the Hall and gardens and gave little attention to the wider park but he was responsible for opening up some of the longer views across the park. His sons continued his work and were responsible, among other items, for Repton's Seat.

It seems that the basic structure of the landscape we see today at Cobham was in place by the 1830's and the intention is, where possible, to restore the Park and gardens to their mid-19th century appearance.



The new barrier at Temple Wood underpass

and the information was passed on to S + P Motors of Sittingbourne who contracted to remove them. Great care was taken to keep damage to the area to a minimum and a massive total of 95 vehicles was removed from the woods in a week-long operation. Once the clearance was complete new barriers

were erected at the main access points from Strood to ensure that no new vehicles are abandoned. New signs are also being erected at the main access points to the area. Visitors to the woods are now enjoying views without having them spoiled by rusting cars.

Design Details

As part of the HLF project a design team has been developing a scheme for the restoration of the buildings and landscape.

Andy Clarke at architects Purcell Miller Tritton has been developing proposals for the restoration of the historic buildings; including the Aviary, Dairy, Pumphouse, Repton's Seat, the Cow shed, and the garden walls, in addition to the Darnley Mausoleum.

The landscape design consultants Enplan have been working with the Project Team on a strategy to improve the environs of the Hall and gardens and restore the character of the Repton design. In the wider park the intention is to restore the basic structure of the landscape and reopen the long views which were a key feature of the Park until recently. The works in the wider park in particular will be a long-term programme.

The approach to both the buildings and the landscape is sympathetic and essentially low-key restoration using authentic materials where possible, but taking account of contemporary issues. The modern uses of the Hall and the changes in land usage and ownership throughout the Park mean that total and exact restoration of all elements of the Park is neither possible nor desirable. The Project Team and their design advisors, working with additional support from experts at English Heritage and the National Trust, are striving to achieve a balance between the authentic and the practical for the historic buildings and their setting in the landscape. CAMS is committed to improving the visitor experience at Cobham but without losing the 'sense of place'.

New Faces



Taking over from Phil Williams as the new English Nature representative on the CAMS Steering Group is **Anna Gundry**.

Anna joined the EN Kent team in 2001 as a Conservation Officer responsible for the area of north Kent between the Greensand Ridge and the North Downs west of Medway.

A native of Cumbria, Anna spent 5 years close to the Scottish border in Northumberland as an ecological advisor on moorland-related regeneration and restoration projects, before moving south in search of warmer weather. Prior to joining English Nature she was based in the West Midlands involved in monitoring the pilot programme for what is now the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.



Alison Nailer has joined the CAMS scheme as Project Officer to support Phillip Smart, the Project Manager.

Before joining CAMS Alison was a professional archaeologist. She worked for the Museum of London for 16 years where she was involved in a wide variety of projects including excavations along the CTRL and the A2/M2 widening scheme. Originally from Lincolnshire, officially England's most rural county, Alison hopes to ease herself gradually back into the 'rural idyll' in Kent after the bright lights of the capital. Alison can be contacted at: 01474 337530 or email: Anailer.cams@gravesham.gov.uk

A2/M2 Widening

The works at the A2/M2 will be completed in July and that will be the end of the works in the Cobham area. Further along the A2 the initial pre-construction phases of work for the Pepper Hill area have begun with the issuing of the early design build tenders. Currently the public enquiry for this stretch is expected to take place in 2005 with construction works commencing in 2006/7, but unfortunately the works will not be completed until after the new Rail Link station at Ebbsfleet opens.

Cliffe Airport

The re-issuing of the proposals for airport provision means that the revised deadline for views is now June. There are only minor changes to Cliffe designs in the new proposals and with a change in Treasury rules the Cliffe option now appears more financially attractive, although the publication of a report on bird-strike potential may have an adverse effect. The major implication to CAMS from the Cliffe proposals is noise, as the CAMS area is directly beneath the proposed flight paths.

CTRL

Work is well in hand on the Kent section with the structural work now completed and the power supplied to the line in a phased programme. Section 2 is progressing well, with the exception of the Stratford area where problems have hit the headlines, and the Thames Tunnel boring work is well ahead of schedule. Tickets for train services along the new link will go on sale in the summer with the first public passenger service planned for the end of September.

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