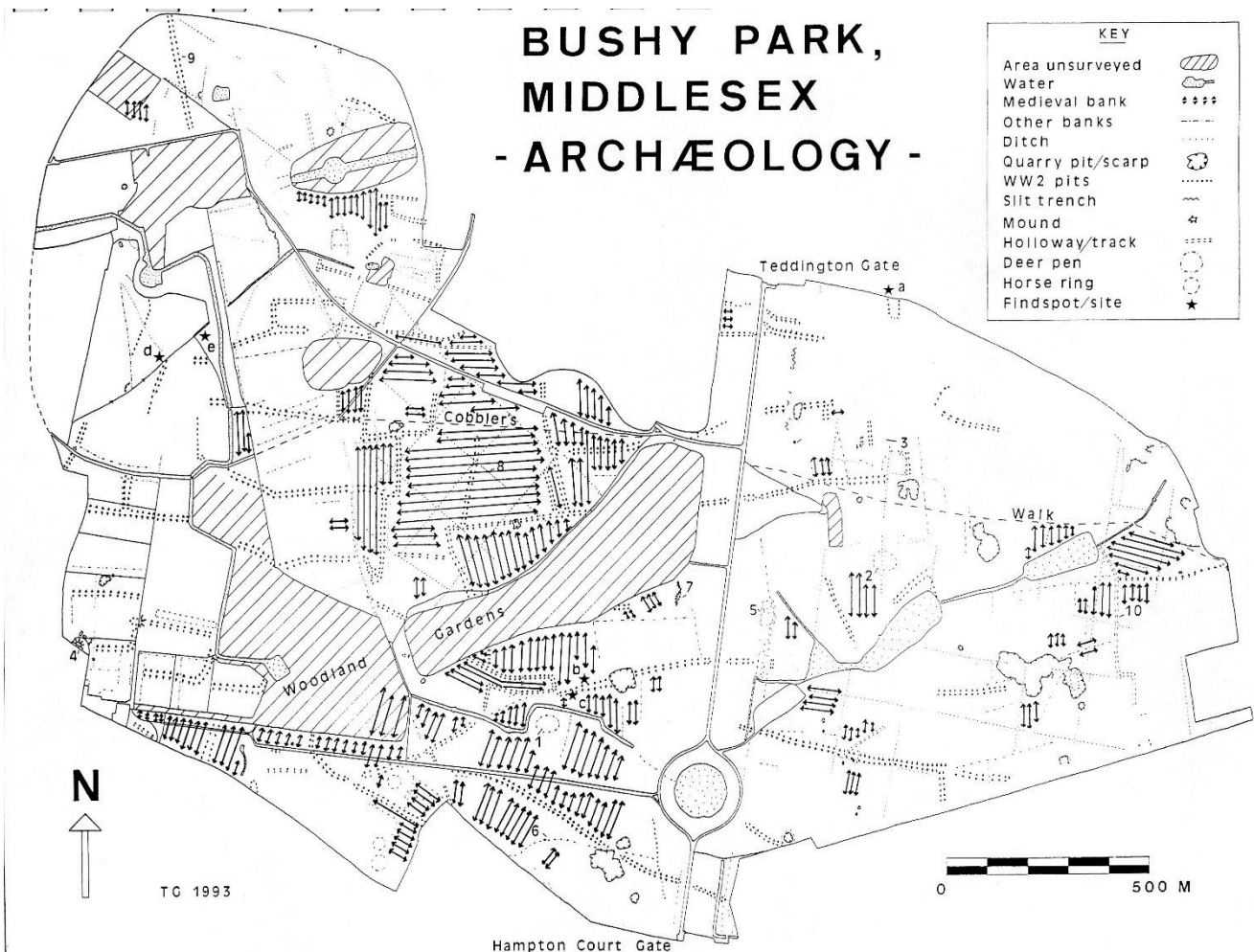


Archaeological Highlights of Bushy Park - Talk and walk by Tom Greeves

Tom Greeves is a landscape archaeologist by training and studied at both Edinburgh and later at Exeter, where he did his PhD. He undertook his survey of Bushy Park in 1993. The Friends have been lucky enough to hear Tom share his survey on a couple of occasions and happy that he was able to return this March to support our AGM and a walk the following day.

The Royal Parks were very supportive of his original survey work and provided the required permits. He started in the western area that is not open to the public, which includes the stockyards. The full park then followed and took about 150 hours of field work. When he did his survey there was no internet then or GPS. Therefore, he divided the park into sections, if he found a feature, he would follow it and recorded it using numbers and descriptions. This was then translated into maps. A summary map of his work is below and key elements that Tom highlighted during his walk and talk.



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On the face of it Bushy Park is dull, as it is flat and is mostly only 10 metres above sea level, rising to 15 metres to the northwest. Even within this flatness there are areas of irregularities and unevenness that can be interpreted, every feature has a message, you just need to attune your eye to them. With Toms help and these notes to get you started you too could be able to find some of these historic features and see some of the secret history of Bushy Park.

The shape of the park is intriguing, it's like some crouching beast. Tom thinks the round area at the northwest top end by Hampton Hill should be the oldest part of the park. This could have been an earlier deer park. But historical records do not support this and should be investigated further. Bushy Park was essentially in 3 parts – east of Chestnut Avenue was Hare Warren, Middle Park was the central section and Bushy Park the north-west part, before it finally came together in the 16th century.

Tom encouraged us to remember originally there was little water running through the area and the soil was well drained and would have made it attractive for prehistoric and medieval farmers, with the River Thames nearby.

Flints from the Neolithic and Bronze Age period have been found in the park. Tom thinks it would have been astonishing if there wasn't any pre-historic activity in the park. Remember there was a Teddington Barrow just outside the edge of the park which was 12 feet high and 96 feet in diameter. Sadly, that is no more but you do not get isolated barrows. In fact, Tom found pre-historic pottery (approx. 1000 BC) down a rabbit hole! This was on the north side of the Longford River as you near Chestnut Avenue. Either this area was inhabited or used as a burial ground.

Around 1300 was the apex of the medieval period and open field system. Bushy has some of the greatest surviving examples, which contain ridges and furrows. Land was divided up into "strips" which were theoretically 220 yards by 11 yards wide, which created a farming area of about half an acre. This pattern was created by ploughing as it was heavy work and carried out by either oxen or horses. These would have been borrowed or shared by the community and these long strips made the task easier. Groups of "strips" were known as "Furlongs" or "Shotts" (depending which part of the country you are in) and groups of these shotts formed a field. Worples or Warples are these slightly raised banks that run in between the field system to allow access points for carts. In Tom's map these are labelled as Medieval Banks. There is historical evidence of wheat, rye and barley being grown within the park.

The Open Field was an equitable community system and farmers would have different strips in different locations depending on the quality of the land. There would have been dispersed settlements at this time and so they would have to travel a long way to their different strips. It would have led to a hard day working in the fields. The manorial lord expected service and payment in return for the use of the land, which could have been with crops or animals.

Some of these ridges could date back to 1100 and medieval pottery was found to support this. The whole area would have been covered in the strips and at that time the park was not enclosed. The serfs were completely dependent on the land to provide for their families. And when the park was enclosed, this would have had a significant impact on their lives. Some may have been able to find alternative work in the park. Perhaps building the extensive brick walls or managing the deer.

Fact Insert (from <https://academickids.com/>) : The open field system was the prevalent agricultural system in Europe from the Dark Ages to as recently as the 20th century in some places. From the 12th century onwards it was gradually replaced by Enclosure.

Open fields appeared to have developed in the medieval period, and were particularly well suited to the very heavy ploughs that were used to cut through the heavy clay soil in North West Europe. Because the ploughs were so heavy, it made more sense to have as long a way as possible to pull them before trying to turn them around. The ox teams which pulled the ploughs were also very expensive, and thus tended to be shared among the families of a village.

Each village would be surrounded by several large open fields, usually not physically divided from each other, with each field containing a different crop as part of a three field crop rotation. The fields would be split into a number of furlongs (200 m), each of which would be subdivided into strips covering an area of half an acre (2,000 m²) or less. Each villager was allocated a set number of strips in each field (traditionally about thirty) which they would subsistence farm. The strips were generally allocated in a public meeting at the start of the year. The individual holdings were widely scattered, so that no single farmer would end up with all the good or bad land. Ploughing techniques used one or other form of ridge and furrow cultivation to prepare the land for drainage and planting.

In addition to the three fields, there would be common land where the villagers would graze their livestock, woodland for the pigs, and a communal village green for social events. The ploughed fields could also be used for grazing outside the growing season.

You can see the evidence of the ridge and furrow in various areas of Bushy Park.

- Stand on Lime Avenue between **site 1 and 6** and you can see the corrugated surface left by the ridge and furrow
- **site 8** on Map: Block of ridges run east to west and can be seen on the footpaths that cross them. Interestingly here they are next to a group going north to south. With the former cutting through the previous ridges, they have ploughed over the top of it. Here there must have been a change in medieval practice for some reason.

Between 1499-1540 Bushy Park as we know it today was created by 3 people: Sir Giles Daubeney, Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII. This changed history and protected many of the features that we see today.

In the 16th century the Park was still divided into different areas and there's evidence of a lodge on the boundary between parts of the parks. **Site 5** – Boundary between Hare Warren and Middle Park – there would have been a wall here. Tom thinks it was a likely site for a lodge within an enclosure against this wall. Tom took us around the perimeter of this earthwork on his walk, highlighting the corners of this enclosure which are clearly visible (see below)



Into the 17th century when the park was fully enclosed, the east being Hare Warren and central being Middle Park. Chestnut Avenue was created in the 1700s and cuts through many of these warples and required a huge amount of material in its raised position.

In the 1630s the Longford River was commissioned by Charles I and designed by Nicholas Lane. Travelling 11 miles and taken from the River Colne, near Heathrow, it is a wonder of engineering. The right-angled bends of it are due to using the medieval field system boundaries. They used the raised banks at the edge of field, called warples, to maintain the height of the river and the drop of water down to Hampton Court.

As we move to the 18th century Tom shared pictures of the viewing mound at the back of the nature area behind the Stock Yards. The viewing mound is mentioned in an advertisement of 1874. There is also potentially an additional mound at **Site 7** just outside The Pheasantry. Tom said whilst it is 3 mounds today it was once one with an ancient oak that would have given shade. Tom speculated this was a viewing platform either for hunting or leisure. There would have been no enclosure around Woodland Gardens at that time and so would have given good views around the central area of the park.

There are several deer pens which were created in the 19th century which would have been used for feeding the deer in the winter. They would have been extensive in size. We walked around the outside of one of them to illustrate this (see photo below) and **Site 2** on the map. Another at **Site 1** is tucked into a corner the Longford River and has a ditch in a curve.



Most of the evidence of World War II was removed but would have used a huge area of the park. From the barracks and offices to the landing strip in SE area of park. **Site 8:** shows Geometric grid of squares where ditches were dug to stop aircraft from landing. Tom met a local lady when he was doing his survey and she told him that the ditches were much used by the American soldiers and women who travelled to visit them on the trolley buses from far away as Hammersmith. The ditches would have meant a lot of digging and most have been back filled at the end of the war.

Thanks to Tom Greeves for his time in enabling us to see the more hidden aspects of Bushy Park. Tom supports the work of historians Peter Foster and Katherine White and their suggestions over the events that happened in the Park. Their Book is available in the Visitor Centre if you want to read more.