



* * * Newhailes Special Edition * * *

This special edition of the NTS Archaeology Bulletin has been produced to highlight some of our achievements at Newhailes over the past 5 years, and to look to the future at some of the exciting possibilities we have in store. The historic designed landscape at Newhailes, between Musselburgh and Edinburgh, is now the most-studied in Scotland, and has been the subject of more detailed archaeological examination than any comparable Scottish site. Recording in the house and other buildings has also been extensive. The results of these studies have been so important, the Trust has decided to employ an archaeologist for the estate for at least the first season – the first post of its type in Scotland. We hope that our past, present and future work at Newhailes will be of wider benefit, showing to others the importance of using archaeology as a tool to understanding historic gardens and landscapes. We can also demonstrate how archaeological techniques can be used to tease out information which will help in the management and restoration of these wonderful places.

NOTE: Newhailes estate is open daily 10-6, but visits to the house are by pre-booked guided tour only: Phone (0131) 653 5599 for details.

Egyptian Connection

While supervising the excavation of soil from around the Newhailes stables, archaeologists were surprised to find a small cylinder of smooth stone. On closer inspection the object turned out to have Egyptian symbols on the bottom. Slightly sceptical, the archaeologists began to investigate the object, and it soon became clear that it was a small Egyptian seal bearing the cartouche of the pharaoh Tuthmosis III, who lived between 1483-1429 BC. The type and quality of the seal suggested that it was a ceremonial rather than everyday object – perhaps indicating that it had been taken

from a tomb.

We may never know how the seal arrived at Newhailes, or why it came to have been lost in the stables area. Most likely, it was a small curio or souvenir brought back by a traveller. Its significance may not have been recognised by servants unfamiliar with hieroglyphics, who may therefore have discarded it without appreciating its value.



The base of the small seal, showing the cartouche of Tuthmosis III.



Side view of the seal, showing carved decoration. The object is just 45mm high.
Photos: *Addyman Associates*.

Newhailes Archaeologist

Abigail Daly has been appointed for the 2002 season as the first Newhailes Archaeologist. With a background in excavation and finds work both in Britain and abroad, Abigail will be working with volunteers and other staff on excavations and surveys, and will also be developing archaeological interpretation, including some guided walks of the estate.

If you have any queries about the archaeology of the buildings, gardens or designed landscape, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, Abigail can be contacted on: (0131) 653 5594, email: adaly@nts.org.uk.

Volunteer Thistle Camp

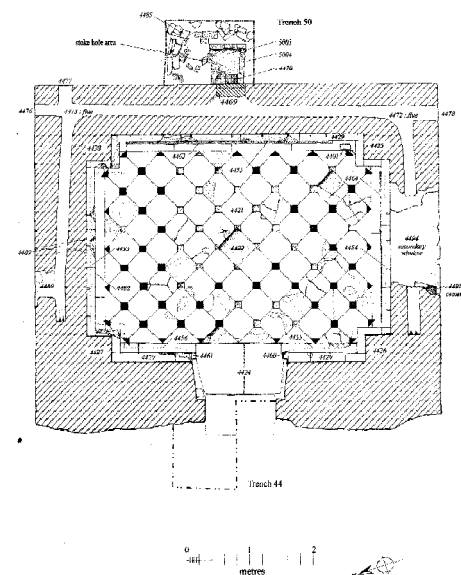
Continuing the involvement of volunteers in archaeological fieldwork at Newhailes, an NTS Thistle Camp will take place to coincide with the opening of the property in June 2002. Volunteers will not only be able to help the archaeologists and learn about excavation and survey, but will also be encouraged to tell visitors what has been found. We hope to hold another archaeological Thistle Camp in 2003. We also intend to create other opportunities for volunteers to take part in activities which will help us understand and conserve Newhailes.

The Newhailes Shell Grotto – A Cave of Jewels

Archaeological investigations in and around the Shell Grotto have greatly helped our understanding of the history and appearance of the most impressive garden structure in the Newhailes landscape.

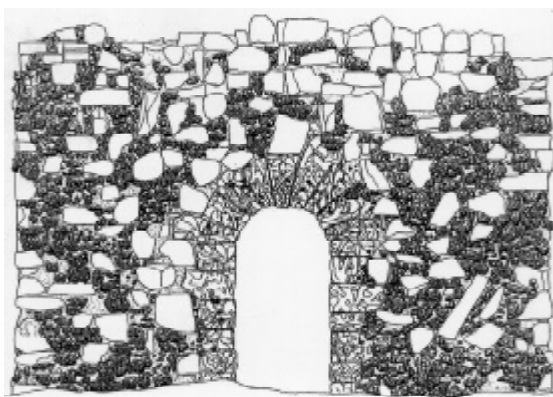
As well as clearing out the debris inside the building, mounds of soil around it were also sampled, and a careful record was made of the standing building, with the help of students from York University Centre for Conservation Studies.

Internal excavation of the Grotto revealed that the original floor – of polished sandstone and black marble – has survived almost intact. A few precious fragments of intact walling were also found, which will be invaluable in helping us to visualise



Plan of the Shell Grotto, showing the surviving polished sandstone and marble floor. The curious flue system is shown within three of the walls.

Drawing: Addyman Associates.



Drawing of the front elevation of the Grotto.

what the inside of the building would have looked like in its heyday.

The excavations recovered shells from all over the world – from Musselburgh to the East Indies. The Far Eastern connection was already known about from letters written in the late 18th century to Miss Christian Dalrymple – who was very interested in all aspects of the gardens and landscape. Perhaps more surprising were the beautifully made stems of early to mid-18th-century wine glasses, and the fragments of glass decanter stops, plus examples of semi-precious stones and minerals. These were all introduced to make the inside of the Shell Grotto sparkle: a cave of jewels. Even some of the industrial waste used on the outside and within the building was specially adapted for use in the Grotto, with shiny china and other items deliberately impressed into it while it was still molten. The original effect, both inside and out, would have been breathtaking to visitors.

Careful examination of a flue system, built into the walls, suggests that it might not just have been to keep the building warm. The pattern hints at the use of the flues to create a mysterious smoky mist around the building, which would have made it even more enigmatic and impressive when viewed from across the pool. This and other features of the Grotto correspond to the sort of elements recorded in the 1758 publication *Six Original Designs of Grottos* by Thomas Wright – which may have inspired the designers of the Newhailes example.

Subterranean discovery

What was expected to be a routine inspection of a few bits of stone has revealed the most exciting archaeological discovery so far at Newhailes.

On the other side of the path from the Shell Grotto, archaeologists noticed what seemed to be traces of a flight of steps leading to an ornamental pool. On further examination, however, this turned out to be the top of a well-built, high-quality subterranean structure. The quality of stonework showed that it was a significant feature of the designed landscape. Although only partially investigated, we know that its roof was arched, and lead pipes show that it probably included a water feature or small fountain.

Project Archaeologist Tom Addyman has two suggestions. It may have been a 'nymphaeum', containing statues and fountains, designed to be reflected in the water when viewed from across the pool. Alternatively, this could be the entrance to an underground grotto – the predecessor to the Shell Grotto which was built in the third quarter of the 18th century.

Further excavation will be needed in order to discover more about this exceptional feature.



The brick arch and stonework of the possible nymphaeum, with the Shell Grotto entrance in the background.

Secret Passage

Work on the dumb waiter on the first floor of Newhailes House revealed the presence of an enigmatic hidden passageway. The feature is well-built and wood panelled, showing that it was meant for the use of family and guests rather than servants. The short passage connects the lobby outside the Green and White Bedrooms with a dressing room, but saves literally just half a dozen steps compared to the other available access route. It is possible that the passage was constructed to allow access between the two rooms to go unnoticed: there are doubtless many reasons why this would be desirable...!

The *Archaeology Bulletin* is produced by NTS Senior Archaeologist Robin Turner. If you have any comments or contributions, please send them to: Robin Turner, NTS, Wemyss House, 28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh EH2 4ET. email: rturner@nts.org.uk