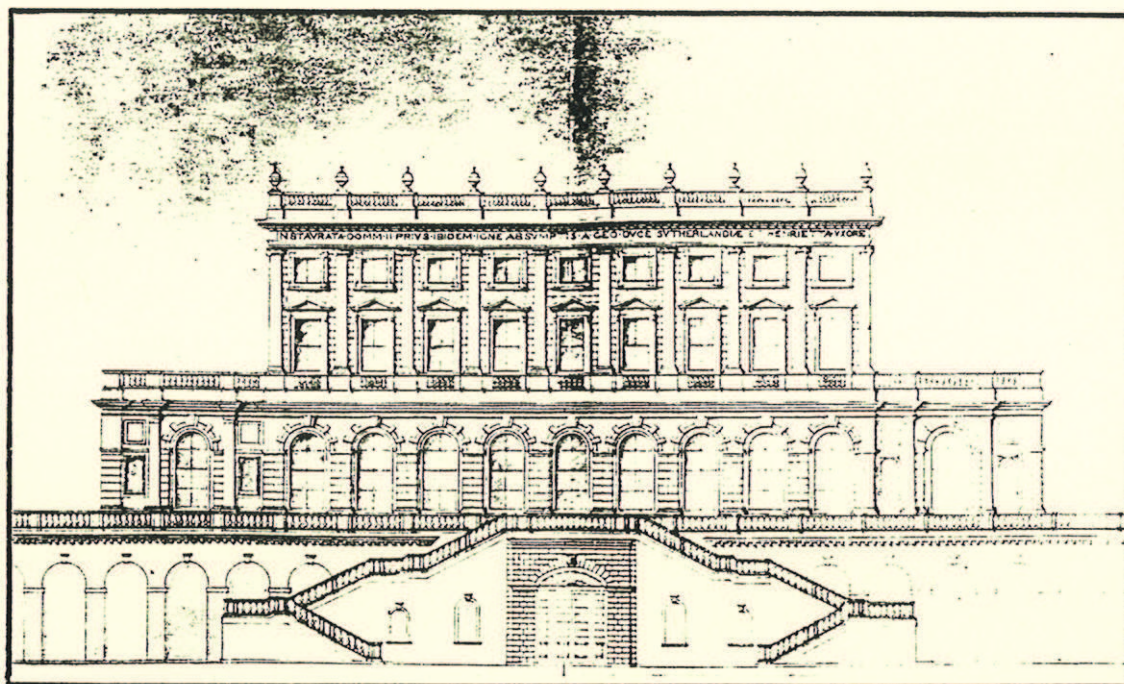


The National Trust  
(Thames and Chilterns Region)

## Cliveden, Taplow, Buckinghamshire.

Notes on watching briefs during enabling work  
April-May 1994



Oxford Archaeological Unit  
June 1994

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Notes on watching briefs during enabling work, April-May 1994.

### *Summary*

*A watching brief undertaken by OAU at Cliveden Mansion nr. Taplow, Buckinghamshire revealed a brick built tunnel beneath the driveway to the north front of the house. A full drawn and partial photographic record of the tunnel was made.*

## 1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by The National Trust (Thames and Chilterns Region) to undertake a watching brief to record features exposed during enabling work associated with a major repair programme on the clock tower at Cliveden Mansion, nr. Taplow, Bucks.

## 2 Background

2.1 Cliveden stands on the wooded heights to the north of the parish of Taplow in south Buckinghamshire. It occupies a commanding position on a high (c.60m) eminence overlooking the Thames with impressive vistas to the south over terraced balustrades (one from the Villa Borghese, Rome) and formal parterre to the river valley and Windsor forest beyond. The north front is approached along a straight driveway lined with lime trees passing through stone piers by Henry Clutton (1869) and terminating in an open courtyard in front of the main house.

2.2 The first house on the site at Cliveden was built to designs by William Winde in c.1665-80 for George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham. From documentary sources recording alterations to the Winde house it can be deduced that it comprised a four storey brick built structure with hipped roof. No plans or views of the original house survive. Under the ownership of George Hamilton, Lord Orkney, the house was reduced to three storeys in height and, in 1706, two side wings were added to the south elevation to designs by Thomas Archer, connected to the main house by quadrant colonnades. It is this house depicted in Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* vol.II pl.70-74 (1717). Following extensive fire damage in 1795 resulting in the destruction of most of the main house, the site went through a period of dereliction before being extensively rebuilt under the ownership of George Warrender. Fire struck again in 1849, completely destroying the main house and necessitating the demolition of the colonnades to prevent further fire damage to the side wings.

- 2.3 The present house at Cliveden was built by Sir Charles Barry in 1850-52 in the Cinquecento style and is accepted as one of his best works. It maintains the approximate dimensions and general layout of the Winde/Archer building. The south garden front is of nine bays and two and a half storeys with one bay, one storey appendices to east and west. Georgian arched windows on the ground floor reflect the 17th century arcaded terrace below. Pedimented windows on the first floor are flanked by Ionic pilasters. The north front is similar save for a centrally placed porte-cochere added by Henry Clutton in 1869. The two side wings are of seven bays and two storeys. It should be noted that a tunnel for the use of servants survives below the courtyard connecting the two side wings. The clock tower was added, again by Henry Clutton, in 1861.
- 2.4 A fuller description of the present house and gardens is given in The National Trust official guidebook to the property.

### 3 Observations [see figs. 2(a) and 2(b)]

- 3.1 During enabling work related to The National Trusts major repair programme to the clock tower at Cliveden, a brickwork tunnel was exposed running east-west below the driveway to the north front of the house at a distance of some 31m south of the present (1869) gateposts (see fig. 1). The tunnel has internal dimensions of 2.18m (w) x 2.10m (h) and is barrel vaulted from a height of 1.30m above floor level. Flights of stairs give access to the tunnel at each end (those at the east are modern replacements). The full length of the tunnel is c.18.5m and it extends across the width of the present driveway. At each end of the tunnel, doorways provide access to rectangular brick built chambers on the northern side, again with vaulted ceilings running parallel to the main tunnel (see fig. 2). The chambers are of similar dimensions: 3.34m (E/W) x 4.10m (N/S). The size of brick employed throughout the structure is 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.06m set in a hard pale creamy white mortar. The side chambers are floored in brick, the tunnel itself appears to have originally been flagged though most of the flooring has been removed (one flagstone remained *in situ*).
- 3.2 A brief investigation of the tunnel connecting the two wings of the main house (by kind permission of Cliveden Hotels Ltd.) revealed a structure of similar build but of slightly larger dimensions. Although the walls of the tunnel were somewhat obscured by paint rendering, it would appear that both brick-size and bonding are comparable with the construction of the driveway tunnel.

### 4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The tunnel as exposed probably represents a passageway constructed to enable garden staff to traverse the driveway while remaining unseen by occupants of

the main house. The side chambers to east and west would have functioned as stores for gardening utensils.

- 4.2 The fact that the tunnel beneath the driveway shows distinct similarities with that connecting the wings of the main house suggests that they are of contemporary build, and it is tempting to assign their date of construction to the time of the building of the original brick wings under the ownership of George Hamilton, Lord Orkney, in 1706.
- 4.3 The location of the tunnel does not appear to correlate with any known forecourt layout. That depicted in Vitruvius Britannicus (1717, pl.70) shows curving garden walls terminating in a gateway to the north of the main house which, though differing from the current forecourt layout, does not relate to the location of the exposed tunnel. It must be assumed that the tunnel beneath the driveway relates to a former forecourt layout of which no documentary or cartographic record survives.

Ric Tyler  
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 June 1994

Appendix A  
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NORTH

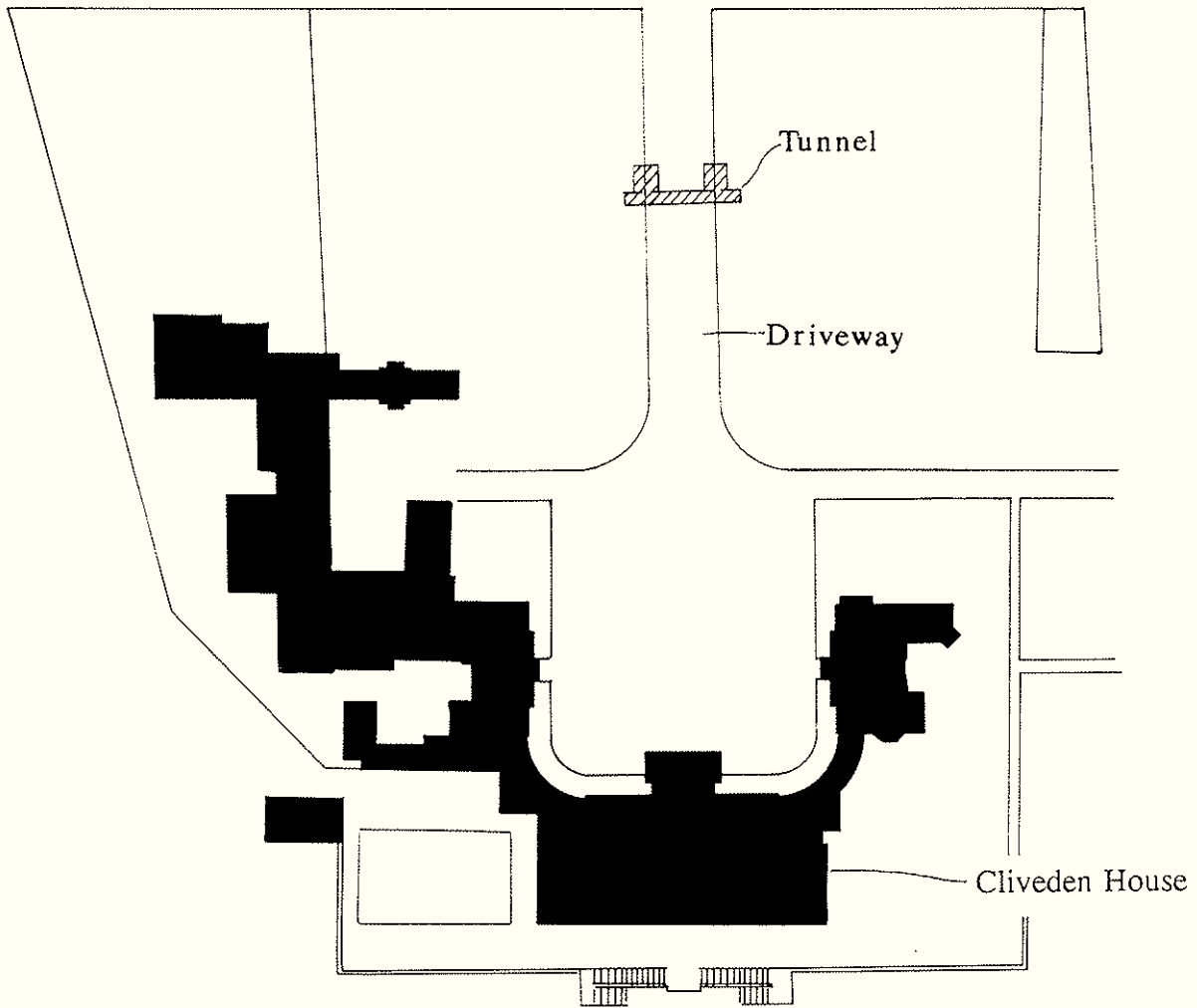
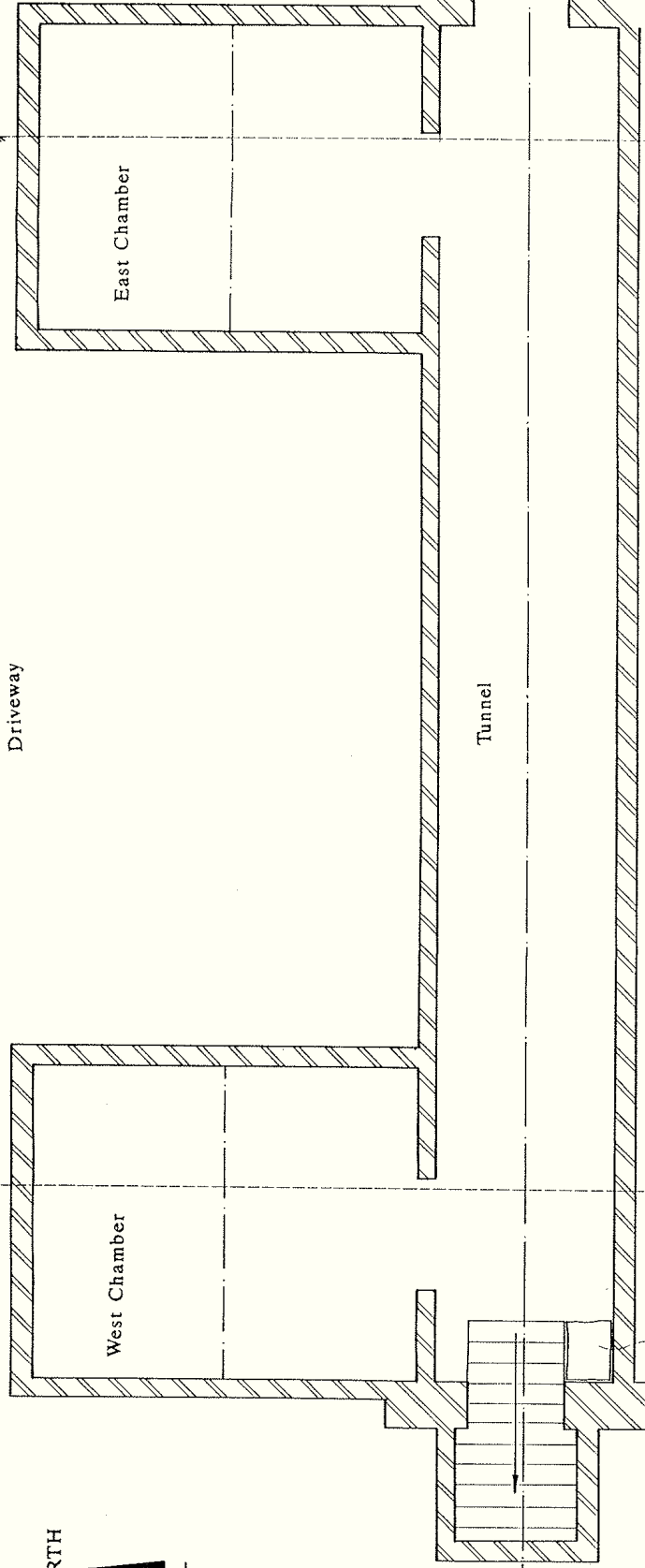


Fig.1: Location Plan

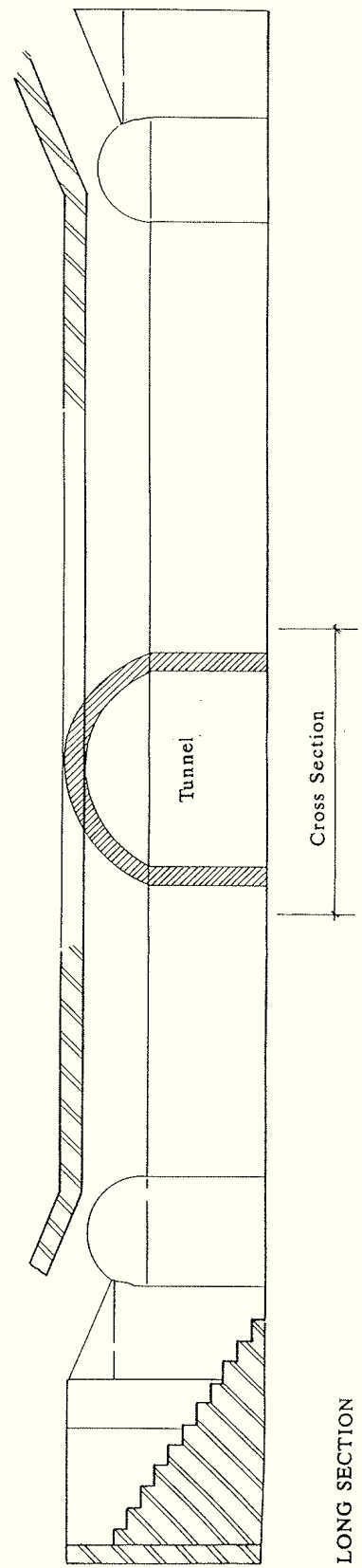


W

NORTH



PLAN



LONG SECTION

Cross Section

CLIVEDEN: TUNNEL UNDER DRIVEWAY

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