

WARWICKSHIRE ICE HOUSES

Grendon Ice House North Warwickshire

I moved to a small village in North Warwickshire called Grendon (near Atherstone) in Dec 2005. The part of the village I live in is actually old Grendon, and this has significant history. The church which is located about 200 yards from my house has parts dating back to the 1200s. There used to be a large manor house nearby also, but this was demolished in 1933. It is extremely rural where we live, on a road that many people seldom venture down.

In the woods opposite our house is an extremely well preserved Ice house (I believe). The structure is made from uniform red bricks with an extremely well proportioned domed ceiling. The entire structure is buried under a thin covering of earth, which probably explains how it is so well preserved. The structure is now surrounded by many large trees and I fear the root systems could have a detrimental effect on the structures' integrity. In recent years it also seems to have become a dumping ground for much domestic waste, and the structure is somewhat full of old paint tins, old boilers and the like.

The land the structure is on is conservation ground I believe, but I am unsure as to who owns the land. However it is not fenced off and a track runs thru the woods linking my road (Farm Lane) to a road which runs parallel. The track is used by motor vehicle which again concerns me as this track runs extremely close to the structure.

The structure consists of a low and narrow arched entrance, which is approximately 3.5 metres long and 1.5 metres high. Once thru this entrance chute, you enter the main body of the structure, which I estimate to be 3-4 metres in diameter, and maybe as high as 5 meters (difficult to verify with the rubbish littered inside). Ideally I would like to take measures to protect the structure, but have no idea how to go about this? I feel this structure is far too good to be allowed to crumble'.

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Kevin Wright



Compton Verney Ice House Compton Verney Warwickshire

There has been a House at Compton Verney since at least 1442. The present house was re-designed by Robert Adam in a neoclassical style in 1762-8 and the grounds laid out by Capability Brown. The Icehouse was completed in 1771-2, at a time when all fashionable houses began to acquire them. Ice would have been

collected from the lake in the winter under the supervision of the head gardener and packed in the Icehouse for eventual use in the summer. Unlike some other grand houses Compton Verney did not have purpose-built ice pools and the frozen lake water was likely to have contained bits of weed and other debris. However, as it would mostly be used in wine coolers to provide chilled wine or for cooling bowls in the making of ice-creams and sorbets, the ice itself would not actually have come into contact with the food.

Structure

The Icehouse consists of a sunken chamber lined with brick, which has a diameter of nearly 4m. It is 3.5m deep and covered in a brick dome standing 2.75m high. There is a skirt of stone around the outside of the dome. This would originally have supported the timber for the thatched roof but the stonework has partly collapsed and is currently being repaired. In the base of the chamber are two brick piers and an internal stone foundation which probably supported a floor. The space below the floor is likely to have allowed for drainage. To maintain the temperature in the Icehouse it would have had three sets of doors, one at the tunnel entrance, one across the middle of the tunnel and one at the entrance itself. The first two doors swung inwards on hinges pivoting in holes cut into stone pads. The entrance tunnel was paved with stone and brick pavers.

Archaeology Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council.



Farnborough Hall Ice House
Farnborough
Warwickshire

Farnborough Hall is a listed building and part of the National Trust. The Holbech family still live in part of the house which has an ice house located below the main garden level towards the lake. It is approached by a flight of steps from the ornamental garden. The ice house is C18. with a coursed squared ironstone entrance and curving retaining walls. It is Flemish bond brick lined, with ironstone ashlar vault.

P. Riley



Stoneleigh Abbey Ice House
Stoneleigh
Warwickshire

With humble beginnings as a Cistercian monastic house in 1154, Stoneleigh Abbey was converted at the Dissolution into a comfortable family home. One of the seats of the Leigh family, Stoneleigh has played host to several people of note, including King Charles I, Queen Victoria, and novelist Jane Austen. The fine Grade 1 listed English mansion is comprised of two halves; the first, made of red sandstone, is a fine example of a Jacobean country house. The second, the West Wing, was designed by famous architect Francis Smith of Warwick in the Baroque style.

Repton Walk

In 1809, Humphry Repton, the most respected landscape gardener of his time, was invited to Stoneleigh Abbey by Reverend Thomas Leigh to advise him on updating the abbey landscape. Repton created one of his 'Red Books', a collection of watercolour images of the house and grounds as they existed with overlays to suggest alterations to the estate. While not all of his suggestions were implemented, the result is a stunning natural landscape with superb views.



The '*Repton Walk*' through the wooded land over the river reveals the Stoneleigh Abbey Ice House, or rather the remains of it. Located quite high up on a bank in the woods the section above ground has long since collapsed and disappeared leaving a large brick lined hole in the ground. The site is in poor condition and in danger of further collapse so is fenced off for safety. The location is a long way from the main house which suggests the servants were very strong or more likely a horse and cart were used to collect the ice when it was required.

P. Riley & Stoneleigh Abbey Charitable Trust