Archaeological Activity Timeline

The Nation Botanic Gardens have been home for many archaeological excavations across the years. The first recorded archaeological artefact came from the construction of the Old Middleton Hall. Archaeology at the site became more frequent in the 1990s and has continued to present day.

**Middleton=** 1600 – 1790s

**Paxton=** 1793 – 1824

**\***House Auctioned on the 19th of August 1824**\*[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Adam/Abadam=** 1824 – 1919

**\***1843 a fire broke out on the estate which was believed to have been started by arsonists. The house was not damaged**\***

**Col. Jones =** 1919 – 1933

\*House was let out to Lloyd family in 1919, who were pig-keeper caretakers\*

**\***1st November 1931 a fire destroyed the house**\***

**County council=** 1933 - 1990s

**\***house demolished in 1954**\***

**Botanic Garden=** 2000 – present

**1790** – The first archaeological artefact was recorded as the Paxton Middleton Hall was being constructed. This artefact was a Bronze Age spearhead which has unfortunate since been lost. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**1987** – Excavations began on one of the two bathhouses. A 1.5m wide plunge pool was discovered, as well as blue ceramic floor and lower walls. And it is believed that the bath house had a timber structure with a slate roof and lead frame. [[3]](#footnote-3) The best preserved wall was the E-W wall which still had fragments of plaster on it.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**1990 –** A series of bore holes and trial pit logs were done to try and determine the geology of the gardens, car park area, and Pwll-yr-Ardd[[5]](#footnote-5)

**1995** – A field survey was undertaken of the whole garden to help map out key feature and just gain a better understanding of the gardens[[6]](#footnote-6)

**1997** – An evaluation of the garden was performed which found water features, iron railings, engine house, peach house and old forgotten paths.[[7]](#footnote-7) There were also trial trenches put on the peach house to try and see the condition of the peach houses floor, trenches were also dug to investigate the inner walled garden to establish where the old garden paths were and to establish the feature that was in the centre of the garden [[8]](#footnote-8)

**1998/9** – A survey was done on the field where Waun Las Farm is and the original Middleton Hall was discovered to be situated there.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**2000/1 –** The Peach House was excavated by using 4 trenches. An underground heating system was discovered which was originally used manure to heat the glass house, but then the heating changed to a more modern system. There were also trenches put in around the double walled garden to determine its layout.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**2006 –** The previous survey results from 1995 were revisited by Cambria Archaeology in order to abide by the environmental stewardship agreement. A possible prehistoric enclosure was also discovered by the archaeologists.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**2011/12** – An investigation into the original Middleton Hall and gardens was undertaken and a topographical survey was undertaken.[[12]](#footnote-12) 3 trenches were dug and the majority of the finds that were found were ‘polite’ pottery (like cream wares for example), but there were also glass bottles and glass from windows that were in a position which suggest that Middleton Hall was derelict for quite some time before being demolished. Burnt material that was most likely part of a fireplace was also found.[[13]](#footnote-13) Trial tranches that found Middleton Hall found evidence which suggests that stone had been robbed from the original house to build Paxton’s house, walled garden, and water features. In Waun Las field they also found a water management system that would have been used for water fountains and other water features. This means that the original Middleton Hall had formal gardens.

Pottery that was found was dated to late 16th and early 19th century and there was also medieval pottery. This suggests that the original Hall had been in use for a long time before Paxton demolished it.

A rectangular pond that was found dates to the 1580s.[[14]](#footnote-14)

**2015 –** DAT surveyed Felin Gat and Llyn Mawr with a topographical survey and an evaluation was done of the area.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Excavation started on Lyn Mawr as part of the restoration project.[[16]](#footnote-16)

It was discussed that the site of Paxton’s house could hold evidence of prehistoric activity and there could be buried prehistoric remains on the estate. There are medieval field boundaries between Llyn Mawr and Llyn Felin.[[17]](#footnote-17)

 There was also a training exercise for the volunteers which involved excavating the bath house, in which they found a drainage system.

**2018-** Excavation of breach wall which uncovered a wooden gate

1. Sales brochure of Middleton Hall page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 53 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gallagher July 1987, The Bath House, Middleton Hall Estate, Interim Report, page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Borehole Records, July 1990, Middleton Botanic Garden, Ground Investigation Report, Volume 1, Report No.A60358, page 2-69 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 49 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. P. Evans, and H. Milne Archaeological excavation, Peach House Excavations 2001, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire, CAP report No.194, October 2001. Page 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 49 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. P. Evans, and H. Milne Archaeological excavation, Peach House Excavations 2001, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire, CAP report No.194, October 2001. Pages 2 – 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 22 and 53 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Conservation Management Plan, Parkland Conservation Management Plan, Nicholas Pearson Partnership LLP, NBG.167 page 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. D. Austin, 2011, Middleton: A Paradise Lost: In search of a garden before the Garden: Middleton Hall, page 74 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. D. Austin, Spring 2012, In search of the Tudors beneath the turf, The National Botanic Garden of Wales, Issue 14, page 10 and 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Dyfed Archaeological Trust, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Regency Restoration Project: Delivery Phase, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Works, Version 3, Page 1 and 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Middleton: Paradise Regained Reclaiming a Regency Rarity, 2016, National Botanic Garden of Wales, slide 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Regency Restoration Team, June 2015, Middleton: Paradise Regained – Restoring a Regency Rarity, Desk based archaeological assessment, National Botanic Garden of Wales, page 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)