

**Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Officer's Report**

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 24 September 2003

Author: Senior Archaeological Officer

**A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1 To advise the Committee of the work of the County Archaeological Service since the last BHEF meeting.

**B. PROPOSED ACTION**

**2 The Committee is invited to:**

- a NOTE the Service's Outputs and Performance Indicators and the generally satisfactory performance in relation to the latter**
- b NOTE progress with Strategic and Conservation Projects**
- c NOTE recent development-related archaeological casework in the county.**
- d NOTE progress on addressing the publication backlog**

**C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 3 All costs are contained within established budgets.

**D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**4 Archaeology Service Output Measures and Performance Indicators**

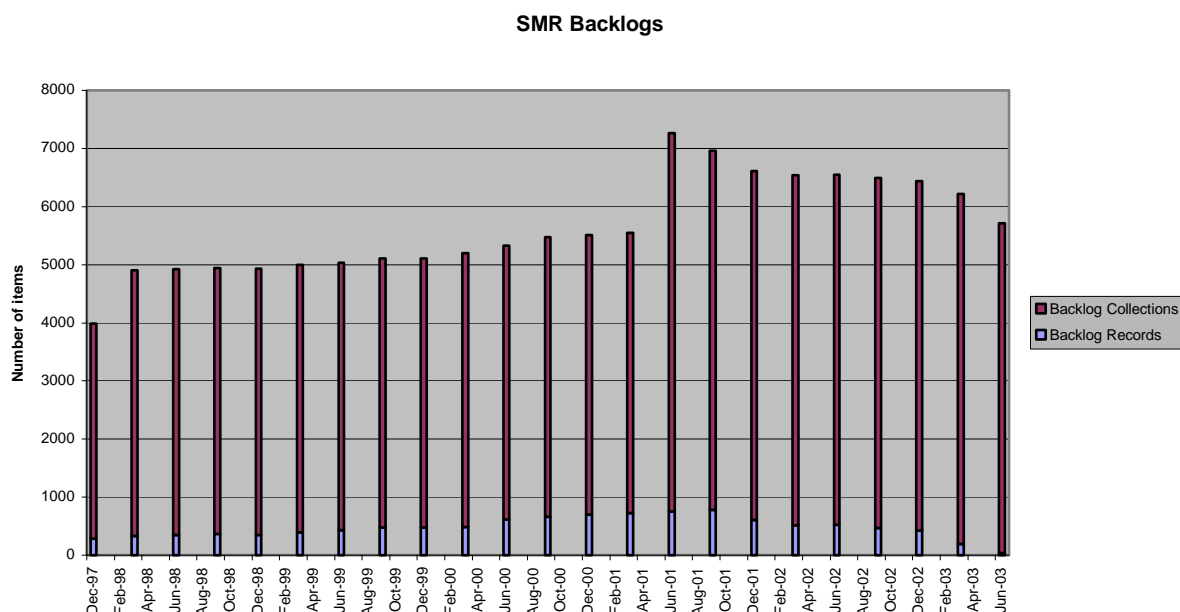
Output and Performance Indicator statistics collected for the service as part of the County Council's best value monitoring programme are presented for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd quarters of 2003.

<b>Output</b>	<b>1st Quarter 2003</b>	<b>2nd Quarter 2003</b>
Total number of consultations handled	160	209
Number of planning applications handled	102	155
Number of archaeological fieldwork projects monitored	10	12
Number of reports received by the SMR	40	7
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: commercial	8	17
Number of Sites and Monuments Records enquiries handled: non-commercial	22	26

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>1st Quarter 2003</b>	<b>2nd Quarter 2003</b>
Planning applications responded to within 14 days (target 90%)	89%	86%
Number of successful appeals against advice (target 0)	0	0
Number of important sites destroyed or damaged by development or related activity without adequate mitigation (target 0)	0	1
Sites and Monuments Records data inputting backlog	Reports = 194 Collections = 6021	Reports = 40 Collections = 5674

The damage case was at Rose Cottage, Penn where swift intervention prevented the situation escalating out of control (see section 7).

Work on the SMR data inputting backlog has continued with support from a temporary SMR Assistant which has reduced the "high priority" element of the backlog – the individual reports - to only 40 items by the end of June 2003. SMR statistics show a significant fall in the SMR backlog since its peak in 2001, although there are still substantial low/medium priority collections to address.



## 5 Historic Environment Champion

English Heritage and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have sought to encourage the appointment of local authority “historic environment champions” through a recommendation in the “Force for our Future” government policy statement on the historic environment. The Secretary attended a meeting convened by EH and DCMS to discuss how this initiative should be guided and promoted as take-up had evidently been limited. Essentially the view was that each local authority should appoint a Champion who should be a senior member, ideally a Portfolio Holder, supported by an officer. The need for national guidance, a job description and training for champions were all discussed. Cherry Aston has been appointed as the Historic Environment Champion for Buckinghamshire County Council. The next step will be to develop a “job description” and identify priorities for action. One of the early priorities is likely to be related to promoting best practice in the management of heritage assets in the County Council’s property portfolio where the role of the champion has been identified in the recent English Heritage guidance note “Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets”.

## 6 Strategic and Conservation Projects

This section provides a summary of projects which are not based directly upon our development control functions but are of a more strategic, conservation and interpretation nature. Most of these projects are being pursued in partnership with other organisations and involve drawing in substantial amounts of external funding. The nature and progress of current projects is summarised in appendix A.

The main achievements since the last meeting have been the successful re-excavation and restoration of the Neolithic barrow and restoration of Whiteleaf Cross as part of the **Whiteleaf Project**; the well attended **Chilterns Historic**

**Environment Conference** held in Chesham in June and the securing of HLF grant aid for the “**Getting to Know Bernwood Forest**” **Community Archaeology Project** for which a project officer will be appointed in the New Year.

Other notable points are that a decision by the Heritage Lottery Fund on the **Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past** SMR outreach project is expected shortly. Also, additional funding has been secured from English Heritage for the **Historic Landscape Characterisation Project** in connection with the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategy.

## 7 **Archaeology and Development**

The service has provided advice on historic environment policies for the new County Structure Plan and on the implications of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (see agenda item 6).

Fieldwork has been busy over the summer with two unfortunate cases of developers “jumping the gun” by neglecting to comply with archaeological planning conditions (Stratford House, Buckingham and Rose Cottage Penn). Fortunately in both cases a rapid response with support from the local planning authority brought the situation under control. A list of recent fieldwork is provided in appendix B - the highlights are summarised below:

Excavation in advance of mineral extraction at **The Lea, Denham** has uncovered half a dozen unusual Roman burials comprising cremation pyres which had collapsed in-situ into a grave pit. This rite is apparently known on the continent and may suggest the presence of an immigrant group, probably of high status. The excavations are also revealing more of a late Bronze Age (c 1000 BC) field system discovered in previous seasons.

Also at Denham, geo-archaeological assessment at **Preferred Minerals Area 4** has indicated a high potential for nationally rare and important in-situ Upper Palaeolithic/Mesolithic occupation sites. Further evaluation is planned to test this assessment,

An archaeological excavation mounted at short notice response to commencement of a housing development in breach of a planning condition at **Rose Cottage, Penn** has discovered the well preserved remains of a medieval tile factory. A total of five tile kilns have been investigated dating between the 14<sup>th</sup> century and 16/17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The earlier kilns were built out of tiles, the later ones of brick. Other features uncovered included the footings of workshops and ovens. Penn is known to have been the base for a major tile industry supplying decorated floor tiles to royalty, aristocracy and the church in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. In its heyday Penn supplied hundreds of thousands of tiles to sites across Southern England. Penn tile floors can still be seen at Windsor Castle, Winchester Cathedral and the Tower of London. In later years the industry focussed on the production of plain roof tiles and bricks for the local market. Despite many previous finds of tiles in the village this is the first archaeological excavation of a tile factory belonging to this nationally important medieval industry.

A small-scale watching brief on a new access road at **Claydon Road, Hogshaw** demonstrated that extensive and well preserved buried archaeological remains are present on the site of the deserted medieval

village associated with a monastery of the Knight's Hospitaller, which survives as an earthwork moat. Elements of up to eight medieval buildings were recorded and reburied beneath the road. The site is being considered for scheduling.

8 Publication update (Appendix C)

Some progress can be reported in response to the resolution on archaeological publication passed at the March meeting. Two reports (Duck Lane, Ludgershall and Bellfield Road, High Wycombe) have been submitted for publication. A draft report for Oxford Road Mill, Aylesbury is with the Editor of Records of Buckinghamshire. Assurances have been received from the archaeological contractors that the delayed reports on the Victorian School, Wing; Sainsburys, Chesham and Main Street, Ashendon sites are once again being actively progressed. A funding package supported by English Heritage has been agreed for Taplow Court. General assurances have also been received from Network that they will progress their backlog sites – a specific timetable is being sought.

On the negative side, no progress has been made with the two sites affected by the bankruptcy of Tempus Reparatum.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets. English Heritage 2003.

Archaeological Reports submitted to the SMR

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