

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE IN MILTON KEYNES

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

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A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform the Forum of current archaeological matters in Milton Keynes.

B. FIELDWORK PROJECTS

2. Attached is a list of 23 fieldwork projects (Events) that have been undertaken in the Milton Keynes area between January & June 2004. Those marked with an asterisk have reports filed in the Sites & Monuments Record.
3. Some sites now being evaluated are in excess of 40 ha (100 acres) and are often on boulder clay. This necessitates the phased evaluation approach of two-stage geophysics and targeted trenching. This has been reasonably successful in identifying prehistoric features.
4. A major factor that has been affecting evaluations is the occurrence of Great Crested Newts, a protected species but which is comparatively common in Milton Keynes. This can delay archaeologists getting on to site, restricts the time some trenches can be open and also involves working around newt fencing. There are also instances of restrictions caused by the presence of grass snakes.
5. The principal excavation has been at Wolverton Mill where an evaluation and excavation prior to planning consent being obtained, has revealed Middle Saxon enclosure ditches plus sunken-feature and post hole buildings. The site lies between the large Saxon enclosure that has been partially revealed in earlier excavations and the earthworks of Wolverton Shrunken Medieval Village

C. PLANNING

6. Between 1st January and 30th June 2003 there were 189 consultations in respect of archaeology [207 in 2003] as a direct result of planning applications, pre-development enquiries and schemes of English Partnerships,.
7. Michael Ryan, the Chief Conservation Officer took early retirement on the 31st March 2004. Ms Tracey Coleman has now been appointed

Principal Planner, Design & Conservation and will be taking up this new post in the middle of October. Michael's retirement has meant that a considerable amount of expertise and background knowledge is no longer available. The reduction of staff to the archaeologist, one full time and two part time conservation officers in a period of increasing workload has put pressure on the staff. A part time architect has assisted in dealing with design issues.

8. Milton Keynes Local Plan Inquiry ended on the 3rd June. Many developers are preparing to submit applications in respect of the sites identified in the plan and are engaged in archaeological research. At present, over 910 ha (2,250 acres) of land in Milton Keynes is being investigated by archaeological contractors for the preparation of Environmental Statements, as a precursor to submitting a planning applications or as a condition of a planning decision.
9. From the beginning of June The Milton Keynes Partnership Committee have taken over development control powers for major schemes involving 10 or more dwellings for the major growth areas in Shenley Church End, Shenley Brook End, Tattenhoe, Calverton, Wavendon and Great Linford. Responsibility for Development plans, briefs, and supplementary planning guidance remain with the Council. MKPC are using the resources of English Partnerships and are proposing to use the services of Milton Keynes Archaeological Officer to deal with archaeological issues. The Archaeological officer has had a meeting with the West Team of English Partnerships to discuss archaeology and a meeting with the East Team will occur shortly.
10. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has promised funding for two major regeneration schemes in Wolverton and Bletchley. The funds available are £7.5m & £3m. As part of the Bletchley project English Heritage have undertaken a major survey of Bletchley Park buildings and undertaken historic research but only limited archaeological research. They are currently seeking local opinion on which are the significant standing buildings. Bletchley Park will be one of the trial areas for the proposed new method of listing standing buildings and archaeological sites. At Wolverton the scheme is in respect of the triangular building, Royal train shed and Wolverton Recreation Ground. The area contains buildings from the 1840's through to the 1880's and has the potential for buried archaeology of a canal side wharf and early workshops. Both the Council's archaeologist and conservation officers are involved with these projects.
11. A proposal for development of an area on the west side of Shenley Church End (New Lansdown) led to a rapid survey of Shenley Dens Farm that was proposed for demolition. The Council's archaeologist identified the building as a possible hunting lodge on the Whaddon Hall Estate that was built as prospect point at the end of an avenue of trees leading north from the Hall. The building contains an 18th century staircase and other features that may have come from the earlier Whaddon Hall. The building was spot listed by the DCMS but the developer is now challenging the listing.
12. The inspector's report has been received on a planning enquiry in respect of an appeal by RMC Aggregates for a proposed gravel

extraction site at Calverton. On the question of archaeology, the inspector did not consider that the preservation of the isolated area of ridge and furrow could be justified. The site had not been identified as significant in the 'Turning the plough' study and he commented that any re-assessment of the study findings should be done on a relative and not individual or ad hoc basis. The four poorly preserved Bronze Age barrows on the west of site were not considered to be of sufficient number to warrant description as round barrow cemetery and their presence was not a compelling reason to resist mineral extraction. The Friends of Passenham assertion that there was a Roman Villa on the site could not be proved but the appellants were agreeable to prove that there was nothing in that area of the site that was of national Importance. This research could be secured by condition. It was not considered that the fears over heritage and archaeological interest justified dismissing the appeal. The appeal was, however, dismissed on restoration proposals.

13. It is apparent that the expansion of Milton Keynes is going to overstretch the current archaeological resource of one member of staff and requests have been made for additional staff. In the short term some part time administrative assistance has been made available to assist with the Sites & Monuments Record.

D. SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

14. Researchers visited the Sites & Monuments Record 14 times between January & June.
15. 2 Licences have been issued to archaeological Contractors to use digital material from the Sites & Monuments Record.

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E. PROPOSED ACTION

16. The Forum is asked to note this report.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVENTS IN MILTON KEYNES – JANUARY TO JUNE 2004

SITE	EVENT	ORGANISATION	START	DESCRIPTION	PUBLICATION
12 High Street, Hanslope	Watching brief *	Richard Ivens	2004/02	Watching brief for a new house and garage revealed two possible pits, a ditch and a spread of rubble were noted but these probably post medieval. No medieval or earlier artifacts were noticed suggesting that the site had been agricultural or gardening land.	note
Ratcatchers Cottage, 106b High Street, Stony Stratford	Watching brief *	Albion Archaeology	2004/03	Watching brief for a rear extension revealed the foundations of a post medieval stone boundary wall and part of a modern brick wall.	note
18 Oakhill Close, Shenley Church End	Evaluation *	Archaeologica	2004/01	The remains of leveled ridge and furrow cultivation were observed in all the evaluation trenches. No other features encountered apart from one of geological origin. It was expected that the west ditch of the adjacent medieval moated manorial complex would be found within the site. This boundary must lie further to the east.	note
East Street Gas Main, Olney	Watching brief	Network Archaeology	2004/01	Opposite Lace Mews' the watching brief encountered a field boundary ditch and an articulated animal skeleton in a pit. Pottery and iron-fragments were noted in the matrix underlying the road.	note
96 High Street, Olney	Watching brief *	Archaeology Services & Consultancy Ltd	2004/01	Watching brief of the foundations for a new conservatory did not reveal any archaeological remains.	note
Haversham Church	Watching brief *	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd	2004/01	A watching brief during the construction of a kitchen, vestry and disabled toilet did not reveal any significant archaeological remains. The foundations of the tower and north wall were recorded. The construction of a septic tank 5m by 5m and 1.7m deep on the north side of the churchyard revealed natural strata at 1.2m but no human remains showing that this area may not have been used for burials.	note
Wolverton Mill Housing	Excavation	Northampton Archaeology	2004/03	Area excavation revealed part of a mid-Saxon settlement with sunken floored and post-hole buildings. Southern section of main Saxon enclosure was a minor ditch.	Article
22 Dovecote Cottage Shenley Church End	Watching brief	Archaeologica	2004/02	Ditches of a Roman field system found. Pottery had 2 nd -4 th century date range.	note
The Old Rectory, Calverton	Strip & sample excavation *	Phoenix Construction	2004/02	Site close to the parish church. No significant archaeology found.	note

Hill Farm extension Haversham	Watching brief *	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd.	2004/03	A watching brief for a house extension did not reveal any Roman features. Natural Strata was present approximately 0.6m below ground level. The Hill Farm Roman building must lie to the south and southeast of Hill Farm House.	note
75 High Street, Stony Stratford	Evaluation *	Richard Ivens	2004/03	Extensive digging of pits in the 19th and 20th centuries had destroyed any medieval features. A sherd of Potterspury ware and five pieces of medieval roof tile of Potterspury type fabric were found in the fill of a 19th rubbish pit.	note
Moat Cottage, Caldecote	Evaluation *	Archaeological Service and Consultancy	2004/03	The evaluation of an extension to Moat Cottage showed that the northwest section of the moated enclosure had a ditch 9m wide and 1.75m deep. The earliest fill of the moat contained Victorian material but it is likely that the moat is medieval and part of a manorial complex.	note
Hazeley Secondary School, Shenley Church End	Evaluation *	Archaeological Services and Consultancy	2004	Field boundaries and an isolated Roman feature producing large amount of pottery	note
20 Bridge Street, Olney	Watching Brief *	Richard Ivens	2004/04	The watching brief for a small extension to a building on the site of the Bell Inn. The ground had been much disturbed and no medieval or earlier artifacts were encountered.	note
Land adjacent to 18 Castle Road, Lavendon	Watching brief	Archaeologica	2004/04	Cobbled surfaces and ditches with a large quantity of 12 th -16th century pottery in the fill	note
1 Manse Close, Stony Stratford	Watching brief	Woodfield Archaeological services	2004/04		
98 High Street, Newport Pagnell	Evaluation *	Albion Archaeology	2004/05	Five trenches were opened. A possible section of the Civil War ditch was found in one trench on the suggested alignment of the defences but a second trench on the same alignment did not have any evidence for a ditch. Traces of the post medieval street frontage was found 4m north of the present High Street. There was evidence of quarrying on the site.	note
Willow House, Watling street, Little Birckhill	Watching brief *	Archaeological Services & Consultancy	2004/05	A watching brief for a house extension at the rear of possible medieval burgrave plot did not reveal any significant archaeology	note

Land adjacent to Poplars Farmhouse, Simpson	Evaluation *	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd.	2004	No significant archaeological features found	note
Quarry West of Caldecotte Farm Area A, Newport Pagnell	Geophysics survey *	Bartlett-Clark Consultancy	2004/03	Magnetometer survey revealed enclosures further to the east of the Iron Age settlement site identified during M1 widening evaluation.	note
Quarry West of Caldecotte Farm Area b, Newport Pagnell	Geophysics survey *	Bartlett-Clark Consultancy	2004/03	Magnetometer survey revealed the ring ditch identified on aerial photographs but there is a 5m variation between the two results.	note
Laverock, North Street, Castlethorpe	Watching brief *	Northampton Archaeology	2004/06	The evaluation exposed a section of the Castle moat. Recovered finds suggests that the ditch was in filled in the late 19th or early 20th century and the ground landscaped for the construction of the present house in 1961.	note
Tattenhoe Park	Geophysics *	Northampton Archaeology	2004/06	MS survey presented no immediately obvious indication of magnetic enhancement from human habitation.	note
Littlewood Farm Buildings, Hanslope	Building recording *	Woodfield Archaeological services	2004/05	Measured survey of a farmstead comprising 3 animal yards, a small barn without a wagon entrance, animal houses, 2 pigsties and a timber framed open fronted shelter shed. One building has a datestone of 1862 and the initials of Edward Hanslope Watts of Hanslope Park The east yard had two attached farmhouses that were demolished in the 20th century. .	note