

Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum – 28th March 2007

County Museum Report

Since the last meeting of the forum, the intention to deposit 47 site archives has been notified to the museum, 11 of which are from the Milton Keynes Council area.

The archive of the extensive excavations at Eton Rowing Lake is still being deposited in phases at the museum.

Important progress has been made on one of the museum's significant backlog publication sites, that of the Prebendal, in Aylesbury, due to the efforts of Mike Farley. Mike has volunteered to write up the site, to bring it to publication in the county journal, Records of Buckinghamshire, and the museum has paid the costs to have the specialist osteological report completed. Whilst this greatly appreciated, it does not provide a long-term solution for the other publication backlogs that the museum still has. There is, unfortunately, still no available source of funding for the publication of these projects, and the reduction in HLF funding in the run up to the Olympics means that there is even less chance of there being any available.

The museum has made several acquisitions under the Treasure Act in the last six months, including a small hoard of 1st & 2nd century AD Roman silver coins, notable for the fact that finders, from the South Bucks Metal Detecting Club, were the first in the county to waive their rewards, under a new scheme introduced by the DCMS, where they received certificates of recognition, rather than a monetary reward for the treasure. The beautiful Anglo-Saxon gold bracteate pendant, mentioned in the last report, is currently on display in the museum InfoPoint.

An initiative to make recent archaeological investigations more immediately accessible to the public will be getting underway soon at the museum. There is often quite a long delay between excavation and publication of a site, and a further delay before the archive arrives at the museum and can then be displayed to the public. A case in point is the material excavated from the Aston Clinton bypass, during road construction in 2001. It was not until December 2006 that the archive finally arrived at the museum.

To help address this, the intention is to work with commercial contracting units to get preliminary information to the museum much earlier, along with a small selection of finds, and display them while the excavation is still within the public awareness, and so hopefully raise the profile of local archaeology. We are intending to begin with the work carried out by Wessex Archaeology at the Weedon Hill development on the edge of Aylesbury, and hope to have a small display once the sensitive metalwork from the site has completed its conservation.

The museum is also pleased to announce an exhibition about the Portable Antiquities Scheme in the county, which will run from October this year, until February 08. The exhibition will include objects of Treasure, acquired by the museum, and loans from metal detectorists. The level of trust between the museum, and the detecting community, continues to grow, largely due to the work of Ros Tyrrell, our Finds Liaison Officer, and the exhibition will hopefully reflect that.

Finds Liaison in Buckinghamshire

August 06 to March 07

Treasure Finds

The number of potential treasure finds reported has risen from eight objects in 2005 to fourteen this year. Probably the most spectacular find has been the 70 gold Iron Age staters from Lt Horwood.

In 1849 agricultural workers ploughing, on Whaddon Chase, unearthed a very large hoard of gold coins. Eventually these came to the notice of the landowner, Mr Lowndes. "The discovery attracted many persons to the spot, some of whom contrived to get possession of nearly 100 specimens, which have been dispersed. About 320 reached the hands of Mr Lowndes" (Records of Bucks Vol I p15) Speculations suggest that there may have been as many as 1000 before dispersal! The findspot was described as Narbury but not defined any more accurately than that.

Knowing this the finders managed to get permission to search land near Norbury Coppice. For many years detectorists had not been allowed to search these fields but recently the finders had persuaded the landowner to allow them access. To their delight they came across first 42 coins in a 10m area followed, on later visits, by 3, then 4 and finally 21 more coins. A quick examination of the first batch by the British Museums specialist suggests that there are die links with the 1849 coins. The coins to date are awaiting a technical report for the Coroner so that the inquest can be held. Assuming they are declared Treasure under the current act, the County Museum is hoping to raise the funds, to acquire them.

One other hoard of 41 gold staters has been found in the county since 1849 and these coins came from a few miles away, to the west of Buckingham in 1997-2000. This raises interesting speculations as to why so much gold was around this area in the pre Roman period.

Another aspect to consider is the context of the hoard and whether there may be any evidence of a settlement associated with it. The field is already suffering from the predations of nighthawks and is being fairly heavily ploughed. The County Archaeological Service is hoping to do some geophysics in the field, with the landowner's permission, to see whether there is any evidence of related archaeology to enhance the understanding of the findspot.

The following table shows potential Treasure objects reported since the last meeting.

Parish	Material	Object Type	Ref No
Lt Brickhill [MK]*	Silver gilt	17 th C dress pin	2006/T197
Oakley	Silver gilt	14 th C face from a casket mount	2006/T456
Buckingham	Silver	16 th C dress pin/bodkin	2006/T462
Hanslope [MK]*	Silver	16 th C dress pin/bodkin	2006/T478
Buckingham	Silver gilt	E16 th C finger ring	2006/T528
N.Crawley [MK]*	Gold	13 th C annular brooch	2006/T529
Cold Brayfield [MK]*	Copper alloy	4 th C AD coin hoard [1470]	2006/T631
Lt Horwood	Gold	Iron Age coin hoard [70]	2006/T640
Fingest	Silver	12 th C manuscript pointer top	2007/T113
Stone	Gold	12 th -10 th C BC composite ring	2007/T118

The issue of objects from the Milton Keynes Borough being lost to public collections, for lack of a source of funds to purchase, them remains a problem. Until recently few potential treasure items had been found in Milton Keynes. Since BHEF met previously three objects [starred in the list] will probably be declared treasure by the Coroner at an April inquest. The decision will then need to be

taken as to their future. The Cold Brayfield hoard is not ready for its inquest yet and so is a less urgent problem but will need to be considered later in the year.

Portable Antiquities Database [www.finds.org.uk]

A large amount of finds have been recorded, and the total entered on the database so far is now 3097. Thanks to a grant from the Portable Antiquities Scheme head office, we have been able to employ Eleanor Ghey, on a 10 week contract, to assist with the completion of object records on the database. She has worked wonders in the time and much reduced the backlog.

Rallies, Club Digs & Meetings

The FLO has attended & recorded finds at a number of Weekend Wanderers detector rallies, at Ivinghoe, Chartridge, Stagsden [three times], Stone [twice], and Hardmead.

The local detector clubs have been visited regularly and contributed a display of finds to a case in the Milton Keynes Museum. Members of the Magiovinium & MK metal Detector Club laid on a display of finds for the Museum's National Archaeology Day event and spent time talking, very effectively, to visitors about their objects.

Publicity

Talks to local history and archaeology groups continue to provide further opportunities to publicise the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Bucks.

Finds Identification & Recording Sessions

These have focused on a monthly Saturday afternoons at Wycombe Museum and every Wednesday in the Civic Offices in Central Milton Keynes.

Ros Tyrrell,
Finds Liaison Officer