

Appendix A: Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officers' Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum
Date: 4th March 2016
Authors: Senior Archaeology Officer, Archaeology Officer, Historic Environment Record Officer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

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

Report Summary

- The archaeology team engaged with over 13,800 members of the public through 6 outreach and publicity events.
- A part-time HER Assistant has been appointed and started work at the end of November.
- HS2 discussions are ongoing.
- Excavation at Dormer Avenue, Wing has recorded Saxon and Saxo-Norman features and finds.
- Excavation at Denham Park Farm has recorded a prehistoric kiln, round houses and pits with activity continuing into the Roman period.
- Evaluation at Thornborough Grounds recorded a Roman farmstead with a possible building.
- Evaluation at Stoke Hammond has revealed a probable Roman ladder settlement.
- A watching brief on the Stocklake Road widening works has recorded Roman period ditches and pits relating to probable settlement edge activities.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

- 2 The Forum is particularly invited to NOTE:
 - resources
 - strategic issues and projects
 - recent planning-related archaeological work
 - opportunities for future HER enhancement projects

C. RESOURCES

- 3 The County's archaeological service forms part of the Transport Economy Environment Service's Environment Team within Environment Services.

Philip Markham is the Senior Archaeology Officer, Eliza Alqassar is the Archaeology Officer (part-time), Julia Wise is the HER Officer, Paul Clements is the HER Assistant (part time) and Simon Newell is the Environment Team Leader.

Eliza Alqassar now has a permanent part-time post with Historic England as an Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments. Eliza also currently works two days a week for Bucks County Council. Sarah-Jane Farr left at the end of December 2015 and Paul Clements started work at the end of November 2015.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4 Strategic Issues/Projects

High Speed 2 – The House of Commons Select Committee has now been completed and there is the option for petitioners to take issues to the House of Lords Select Committee. We will be going through HS2's assurances to see if this would be a worthwhile course of action. However, each document revision is including track changes that have requested and the methodology is slowly beginning to resemble standard practice through the Planning system and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

We are members of the HS2 Heritage Sub Group and have attended three meetings since the last BHEF which have covered document revisions, the Historic Environment Research and Delivery Strategy, which we will now be able to comment on and burial ground guidance and legislation. The next heritage Sub Group meeting is set for the 17th March 2016.

The BCC HS2 team has been in discussion with HS2 Ltd over a service level agreement covering BCC and the Districts. These discussions are based the HS2 Information paper C13: Local Authority Funding and New Burdens arising from HS2. Of the 14 activities which HS2 will provide funding the historic environment is included or will have an input in 6 of these. The Environment Team currently has a service level agreement with HS2 for the provision of information, both data and spatial and this will probably be included in the more overarching service level agreement.

HS2 is also overseeing the proposed relocation of the Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre to the Denham Quarry site. This proposal is outside of the scope of the HS2 Bill and will be undertaken through normal planning law and guidance.

Strategic Planning – The Minerals Industry Practice Guide is set to be updated in the near future and we responded to a Historic England consultation late last year. A Historic England and ALGAO (Association

of Local Government Archaeological Officers) meeting has been arranged for the 10th March 2016 to discuss this.

New National Designations – DCMS added 14 buildings to the List between July and December 2015, all at Grade II: 13 are war memorials (Aston Clinton, Bishopstone, Chearsley, Cheddington, Coleshill, Gerrards Cross memorial building, Hardwick, Loudwater, Marlow, Marsworth, Swanbourne, Weedon, and Wooburn) and the other is the K6 telephone kiosk at Chenies.

6 Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	3 rd Quarter 2015	4 th Quarter 2015
Total number of consultations handled	202	145
Number of planning applications handled	123	117
Planning applications responded to within 21 days (target 90%)	98%	99%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects	17	23
Success rate at appeal (target 50% annual success rate)	0 of 0	0 of 0

A full list of development-related fieldwork (July to December 2015) is provided as Appendix B.

Significant archaeological investigations include:

Dormer Avenue, Wing - This relatively small housing development site adjacent to the Scheduled castle mound has recorded early Saxon and Saxo-Norman features and finds related to settlement edge activities. The features include a sunken floor building (Grubenhau), enclosures, probably for stock; and pits, some of which have contained large pottery vessel sherds. Post-medieval ditches appear to have followed the same alignment of boundaries laid down in the Saxo-Norman period. Foundations Archaeology is undertaking the work and a report will be produced in due course.

Denham Park Farm – This extensive sand and gravel extraction site has recorded Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman features and finds. The Bronze Age features include a hut circle and a possible 6 post structure; the Iron Age features include a kiln and two hut circles. The Roman features include part of a possible military enclosure as the ditch appears to have an ‘ankle breaker’ cut. Archaeological Solutions are expecting to monitor the next phase of extraction this spring.

Thornborough Grounds – We requested that this application for a 6.19mw solar farm had a geophysical survey and targeted trial trenching. The geophysics recorded an Iron Age/Roman farmstead which was confirmed by archaeological trial trenching. This trenching recorded the foundations of a possible building within the farmstead. This area has now been removed from the proposed development area. We expect the report from APS Archaeology in due course.

Stoke Hammond – Geophysical survey and trial trenching by Cotswold Archaeology has revealed a probable Roman ladder settlement, consisting of a series of plots laid out alongside a probable road or trackway, which is just outside the survey area. The settlement remains are well-preserved with large numbers of Roman pottery within them. We have recommended that part of the site be preserved in situ.

Stocklake Road, Aylesbury – Road widening works for BCC were discussed at an early stage and we requested that a desk based assessment and an evaluation in the form of a geophysical survey and trial trenching were undertaken to inform the proposal. The Council's consultant undertook the assessment and argued that the road works could have a watching brief to record any archaeology so that the evaluation was not required. Following various discussions this was agreed but it was recognised that this approach could lead to implications during the construction phase.

Roman features and finds were recorded during the initial stages of the ground works which would take time to record. Although warned of the potential issue this had not been recognised and the road building methodology required that the road cutting was sealed as soon as possible as a few days of rain would require a new cut. After negotiations on site and at the BCC offices a methodology was agreed which would not unduly delay the road cut sealing and the recording of the archaeology. With luck further road schemes will recognise that not doing a full evaluation is not necessarily a way to save limited funds.

7 **Publication update (Appendix C)**

8 **Outreach and Publicity**

The archaeology team engaged with over 13,800 members of the public through various outreach and publicity events. During the Festival of Archaeology in July, Eliza and Julia produced poster displays on the Heritage of Langley Park in County Hall and on Buckingham's archaeology at Buckingham Old Gaol. Eliza was involved in organising public open days in September at the excavations at Mount Pleasant in St Leonards and at the excavations at Dormer Avenue in Wing, in October. Julia provided leaflets and a

poster display on the Historic Towns Project for the Buckinghamshire Local History Network Conference in September. In November Julia and Eliza produced a poster display for the launch of the Solent-Thames Regional Research Frameworks and Eliza gave a presentation on the contribution made by recent major developments around Aylesbury at the conference.

9 Historic Environment Record (HER) report

The HER performance indicator statistics are shown in the tables below:

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2015	4 th Quarter 2015
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2015)	Reports = 52 Collect = 518 Total = 570	Reports = 40 Collect = 518 Total = 558

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2015	4 th Quarter 2015
Number of Countryside Stewardship applications handled	24	13
Number of reports received by the HER	29	10
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled:		
commercial	23	29
non-commercial	5	11

Staffing

Paul Clements started work as HER Assistant on 30th November and has been making rapid progress in reducing the report backlog and helping deal with HER enquiries. Although part-time (he works three days a week for the HER) there have been additional benefits in reducing the amount of unpaid overtime that the HER Officer is working and in reduced stress levels. Paul's current contract is to the end of March but the intention is to extend his contract next financial year, subject to HER income generation.

HER data provision

At the last meeting we reported on possible challenges to the current HER charging policy and data supply provisions. The Local Government Association is investigating the implications of the EU Court of Justice ruling on Environmental Information Regulation charges and will be issuing advice and ALGAO (the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers) will also be issuing a new advice note for HERs. We have recently received QC's legal opinion on the HS2 Ltd challenge but need further clarification on a number of the points raised.

IT and website

The HER database was migrated to the latest version of the HBSMR and ArcMap GIS software in September. Due to corporate IT server moves taking precedence, it hasn't been possible to timetable the planned HER development work reported at the last meeting, or website uploads to Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past but these are now the top priority for the HER.

HER enhancement and volunteer projects

Progress is still being made by one of the HER volunteers on the milestones project. The other regular volunteer has been off for much of the year due to a health issue but is expecting to be able to return soon.

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research and Recording Project is good progress with 19 reports completed, 7 in final draft and work underway on a further 9 gardens. A second group of volunteers has been recruited and trained over the autumn and winter and are actively researching two gardens. The partnership with the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust has had additional benefits as they have been able to produce detailed research (at very short notice) on Richings Park in Iver that has been invaluable in supporting the County Council's case for more robust mitigation measures at the recent public enquiry into the Highways Agency's proposals for upgrading the M4.

The Buckinghamshire HER is one of two HERs involved in piloting Historic England's the 'Enhancing the List' project by adding images and additional information to the National Heritage List for England. . We are simply flagging up where additional information is held by the HER and adding a hyperlink to the relevant entry in 'Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past'. If the pilot is successful, the intention is to extend the project, allowing other groups and members of the public to add content to the online list. In most cases this will have to be validated before publication, however we have 'Trusted Partner' status which means our contributions are not validated.

Partnership working with the Chilterns Conservation Board on drafting proposals for an AONB Hillforts project has been successful with the HLF awarding a grant of £50,000 to develop a detailed project design for a 4-year £745,000 'Beacons of the Past – Hillforts in the Chilterns Landscape' project. The Conservation Board is also keen for the Archaeology team to be actively involved in developing future HLF grant funded heritage and conservation project bids.

The hillforts project will include using remote sensing LiDAR surveys to identify possible new hillfort sites hidden beneath woodland in the AONB and associated monuments such as contemporary field systems, farmsteads or trackways. The Archaeology team would also like to be able to acquire and use LIDAR datasets to enhance the HER, perhaps as part of a wider aerial photographic or remote sensing

project in partnership with Historic England. Phil has made an initial approach to Historic England, but we would very much appreciate the backing of the BHEF Committee for such a project before seeking external funding sources. It hasn't been possible to organise in advance of the March meeting, but we thought the committee might like us to arrange a short presentation on LiDAR, perhaps with some examples from neighbouring counties, for the next committee meeting.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the Bucks HER

**CONTACT OFFICERS: PHILIP MARKHAM 01296 382705,
ELIZA ALQASSAR 01296 383798, JULIA WISE 01296 382072
AND PAUL CLEMENTS 01296 382624**