

Appendix A: Buckinghamshire Archaeological Officers' Report

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

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Authors:

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise the Forum of the work of the County Archaeological Service (BCAS) since the last BHEF meeting (7th April 2022).

Report Summary

- We are now working to a 40/60 split in working from the office and home. Planning consultations have continued at a high level and the major infrastructure schemes are progressing.
- HS2/Fusion – Fieldwork has largely been completed but there are a number of sites to be monitored during the construction phase.
- East-West Rail – The fieldwork has been completed and the reports are being supplied.
- Outreach & Publicity Update
- HER Report
- Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal

B. PROPOSED ACTION

The Forum is particularly invited to NOTE:

- resources
- strategic issues and projects
- recent planning-related archaeological work
- HER enhancement projects

C. RESOURCES

The Council's Archaeology Service forms part of the Planning, Growth and Sustainability Directorate. Philip Markham is the Senior Archaeology Officer, Lucy Lawrence is the Archaeology Officer, Julia Wise is the HER Officer (part time), and Paul Clements is the HER Assistant.

Service Review & Restructuring

The Heritage and Archaeology Team is now in place within the Environmental Specialists and combines the archaeology team with the Heritage/Conservation Officers. Joanna Horton is the Team Leader. The team is managed by Eliza Alqassar as Historic and Built Environment Manager. Eliza also manages the Ecology team whilst Rebecca Hart manages the other Environmental Specialists teams which includes Arboriculture, BMERC (Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre) and Urban Design and Landscape.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Strategic Issues/Projects

High Speed 2:

It has been a busy period with HS2/EKFB Teams meetings on numerous topics including, updated method statements, landscape design issues and assessing no further works proposals as sites and areas come to a close. Interim reports, reports, and post excavation assessments (PXAs) are being supplied for comment but with very tight turnaround times. Schedule 17 pre-application meetings take place most weeks; these are similar to planning applications and involve road, design and planting issues which could impact on the historic environment. For these applications Phil Markham covers archaeology, Fiona Webb covers the Heritage Team issues for the Aylesbury Vale area and Catherine Murray covers the Chiltern and South Bucks area. FUSION, HS2's archaeological contractor will be wound up in October this year as the field work will largely have been completed. FUSION may bid for the next phases of work, the analysis and archiving. RSK/Headland will be undertaking archaeological works during the construction phase.

St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville

The post excavation report assessment has been completed. The final resting place for the excavated burials is yet to be agreed but will be in the diocese.

Grim's Ditch Scheduled Monument/Hunts Green Farm, Great Missenden

Archaeological investigation has been undertaken including a geophysical survey, a topographic survey, trial trenching and excavation. A couple of trenches have been excavated across the Scheduled Monument and the results of this will inform the full excavation of the monument. It is hoped that some of the monument can be preserved in situ and this depends on the EKFB construction design which has yet to be supplied. The

works to the monument will be undertaken by a Schedule 19 application which will need to be approved by the Secretary of State under Historic England’s guidance. Discussion is ongoing as construction design is yet to be finalised. It is understood that further geotechnical investigations will be undertaken.

East–West Rail

Fieldwork along the route has been completed, but limited archaeology has been identified to date. The remains which have been encountered are mostly small-scale Roman settlements. The field work reports are now being supplied.

New National Designations:

There has been a single addition to the national list with the listing of the lych gate and attached churchyard walls at Stokes Poges at Grade II in March. The lych gate was designed by architect John Oldrid Scott and built in 1887 in Gothic Revival style.

Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	1st Quarter 2022	2nd Quarter 2022
Total number of consultations handled	146	141
Number of planning applications handled	104 + 15 LBC	85 + 18 LBC
Consultations responded to within 21 days (target 90%) (200) & (175)	146/146 100%	139/141 98%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects requested	40	46
Success rate at appeal (target 50% annual success rate)	N/A	N/A

A full list of development-related fieldwork is provided as Appendix B.

Significant archaeological investigations include:

There has continued to be local interest over a site near Buckingham (reported to BHEF in March 2019). This excavation took place in 2018/19 and since then post-excavation cleaning and conservation of the skeletons has been undertaken. We understand that Network Archaeology have provided the developer with updated costings to cover the rest of the post-excavation works, to include DNA analysis and carbon 14 dating, together with the publication and archiving of this significant site. We contact Network Archaeology on a regular basis to see if we can help expedite these works.

St Rumbold’s Well Scheduled Monument, Buckingham; Unfortunately, a planning condition was not attached to the consent of the adjacent development (the developer also owns this area) despite advice from us and Historic England. The conservation and interpretation of the monument has been included in the S106 as part of a sports and leisure contribution. We are in discussion with the Town Clerk for Buckingham Town Council and Council colleagues on ways to address this issue. The conservation and interpretation work are linked to a land transfer which we understand is being discussed. A new footpath will be

crossing the field in which the well is situated linking the new development to the disused railway footpath.

General

The Team has been busy with a high number of planning applications; large scale solar farm proposals are a regular issue together with woodland planting schemes at varying scales. The archaeological monitoring of the early phases of the South-East Aylesbury link Road (SEALR) are progressing with AECOM and CFA.

Publication update (Appendix C)

Outreach and Publicity

Members of the Team have undertaken a number of outreach and partnership activities.

Buckinghamshire Council Archaeology Day

As part of the Festival of Archaeology and Bucks Open Weekend, Buckinghamshire Council Heritage and Archaeology Team ran an Open Day on July 30th in North Marston. The residents of North Marston came out en masse when the Buckinghamshire Council Heritage and Archaeology Team ran an Open Day as part of the Festival of Archaeology and Bucks Open Weekend on July 30th. Adults and children enjoyed the activities and displays on offer, whilst guided tours around the village helped promote the Local List project.

With stalls from the Young Archaeologist Club, Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society and the North Marston Historical Society, visitors were able to learn all about the archaeology and built heritage of the county. The Buckinghamshire Finds Liaison Officer, Edwin, was on hand to identify residents' mysterious artefacts, with the star find a Palaeolithic handaxe!



The Mystery of Grim's Ditch at the Young Archaeologist Club

As part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project, we joined up with the Chilterns branch of the Young Archaeologist Club to share recent research and discoveries at Grim's Ditch and encouraged the children to consider what this enigmatic heritage feature may have been for. The children had brilliant ideas and suggestions, and produced some amazing drawings and short stories about the monument.

Bucks County Show

The Heritage and Archaeology Team joined colleagues from the Council at the Bucks County Show at the beginning of September. It was a great opportunity to meet residents to showcase our work, and allow them the chance to ask questions and learn more about what we do and how we can help. The dressing up clothes were a huge hit with younger visitors whilst the archaeological handling collection and historic building timeline activity were of huge interest to all ages.

Partnership activities include:

- Bucks Archaeological Society Council Meetings, Including AGM
- On-line talk on archaeology and planning to colleagues in lunch and learn session
- ALGAO (Association of Government Archaeological Organisations) meetings, including AGM, Planning and Legislation sub-Committee, South-East Area catchup
- Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Partnership meetings

Local Heritage List

The Local Heritage List continues to progress well. Over **2500** nominations have now been made, and the team are working through each nomination in turn to determine whether they should make the final list. To date we have assessed nearly 800 sites, which have been to Review Panel. Of these, 621 sites will be put forward for adoption on the Phase 1 Local List this December. We have a further 600 assessed sites waiting to go to Review Panel for Phase 2. All of this would not have been possible without the hard work of the project team and our volunteers. In terms of archaeology, the nominated sites vary from areas of known Palaeolithic activity through to a Cold War bunker.

Historic Environment Record (HER) report

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

Performance Indicator	1st Quarter 2022	2nd Quarter 2022
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2022)	Reports = 7 Collect = 511 Total = 518	Reports = 11 Collect = 511 Total = 522

	1st Quarter 2022	2nd Quarter 2022
Number of Countryside Stewardship applications handled	20	14
Number of reports received by the HER	39	20
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled: commercial	34	31
non-commercial	7	20

Paul has been dealing with the bulk of HER enquiries and all the Countryside Stewardship applications in 2022 to free Julia up to work on the Local Heritage List project.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 2022

HER consultations to support Countryside Stewardship funding applications are continuing in the same format as 2021 while the transition to the proposed new Environmental Land Management Scheme is still in the pipeline (expected to go live in 2024). The application window for 2022 opened in February and remained open until August, so the consultation figures for the third quarter will be reported at the next meeting.

Buckinghamshire's Heritage Portal

Statistics on user numbers and page views have been collected monthly from September 2020, when analytical tools were added to the website.

2022	Users	Page views	% new users	% regular users
January	3,158	8,478	89%	11%
February	2,491	8,053	85%	14%
March	2,438	7,499	87%	13%
April	2,327	6,695	85%	15%
May	2,428	7,134	86%	14%
June	2,599	7,197	87%	13%

Initially 85% of Heritage Portal users were based in the UK, but the geographic spread of users has been widening consistently and we now have users in every continent and sub-continent, with 78% of users based in the UK in June 2022 and a growing spread of users in South American and African states.

HER enhancement and volunteer projects

The two consultants from Skylarkeology are busy working on the first of the Aerial Investigation and Mapping projects in north Buckinghamshire. This is an Historic England-funded project which records and map evidence from aerial photography and LiDAR directly in the HER database. The data will be a significant new source of information and will be particularly useful for development management, strategic planning and for the Buckinghamshire Local Plan. To date they have recorded 152 new sites and enhanced the records for 81 existing sites.

The HER volunteer working on the milestones project continues to work on enhancing the records for milestones.

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research and Recording Project is making slow but steady progress following the disruption caused by Covid and the departure of several of the more experienced volunteers due to other commitments. A revised summary report format has been trialled which should help speed up production. Over 100 reports have now been completed, with 7 reports in draft and work underway on a further 5 gardens. The volunteers are also researching public parks as a contribution to a national Gardens Trust

project, and it's hoped can be published as a small booklet on Buckinghamshire's Public Parks.

Emergency Recording Fund

At the September 2020 BHEF committee meeting it was agreed that following the transition to a Unitary authority, that Buckinghamshire Council would contribute 80% (£800) of the annual contributions to cover the total previously contributed by the legacy district and county councils. As per previous agreements, Milton Keynes Council would contribute 15% (£150) and the Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society would contribute 5% (£50).

The current fund stands at £8600.

No funds have been spent since 2013, when the fund was used to excavate a Roman casket burial.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Archaeological Reports submitted to the Buckinghamshire HER

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