

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 (29th September 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. The field work is now undertaken by RSK/Headland as Fusion has been wound up.
- East-West Rail – The fieldwork reports have now all been supplied and no further works is planned.
- 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 usually 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 was wound up in October 2022 as the field work will largely have been completed. RSK/Headland will be undertaking archaeological works during the construction phase. There are bi-weekly meetings with Headland, HS2 and stakeholders over current field work and reports.

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. Further geotechnical investigations have been undertaken which indicate potential geological hollows within the development area and these will inform the design and construction methodology.

East–West Rail

Fieldwork reports for all 96 sites investigated along the route of EWR have now been received. There was surprisingly little archaeology encountered along the route, although works on a number of sites at the Oxfordshire border suggest the area to have been a focus for Roman viticulture (grape growing for wine production).

New National Designations:

There has been 1 new addition to the national list – the Clubhouse at Beaconsfield Golf Course, listed at Grade II in December. The clubhouse was built in 1913-1914 in a Vernacular Revival style to designs by Stanley Hinge Hamp and is the second pre-First World War clubhouse to be nationally listed.

Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	3rd Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2022
Total number of consultations handled	132	146
Number of planning applications handled	93 + 12 LBC	118 + 14 LBC
Consultations responded to within 21 days (target 90%)	127/132 96%	144/146 98%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects requested	36	47
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 been in discussion with the developer and have provided them 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.

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. Ditches relating to a Roman settlement have

been excavated together with human burials and a 'well pit' which contained well preserved water-logged planks and timbers. Excavation conditions have been very difficult over the winter.



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After considerable cleaning, the image above became this.



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By far the earliest artefact so far discovered is an 'Acheulian' hand axe dating to the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) period about 200,000 years BC.



Archaeology

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CFA

Further evaluation has begun at the Hampden Fields development between Aylesbury and Weston Turville. This major development is for up to 3,000 dwellings and a 60-bed care home/extra care facility; provision of land for a Park and Ride site; a total of 6.90ha of employment land; provision of two primary schools (one 2 form entry and one 3 form entry); a mixed-use local centre (3.75ha) with provision for a food store of up to 1,200 square metres, further retail (including a pharmacy), restaurant and café units, a doctor's surgery, gym, public house, multi-functional green infrastructure (totalling 108.43ha) including parkland, sports pitches, sports pavilions, children's play areas, informal open space, allotments, community orchards and landscaping. It was decided that to de-risk the development further evaluation in the form of trial trenching would be undertaken. Evaluation was undertaken approximately ten years ago and included geophysical surveys and trial trenching. This phase of evaluation includes a further 460+ trenches which are being undertaken by RSP and PCA. Areas of excavation are being drawn up from these results.

Publication update (Appendix C)

Outreach and Publicity

Members of the Team have undertaken a number of outreach and partnership activities in the period Sept 2022- March 2023.

Activities include:

- Bucks Archaeological Society Council Meetings, Including the Bucks Local History Network conference
- In person 'Meet the Archaeologist' event at Aylesbury library for October half term
- Hosted a stall at the Brill Parish Council 'Brill history Day'
- ALGAO (Association of Government Archaeological Organisations) meetings, including AGM, Planning and Legislation sub-Committee, HER Committee, South-East Area catchup
- Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Partnership meetings

Local Heritage List

We are delighted to announce that the first tranche of sites for inclusion on the Local Heritage List was formally adopted by Cabinet on Thursday 5th January! This is the first county-wide Local Heritage List that Buckinghamshire has ever had and is the result of a collective effort from the Heritage and Archaeology Team, alongside representatives from the Bucks Garden Trust and the Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society. 771 sites were adopted in the first phase, with work ongoing to assess the remaining sites in time for a second phase at the end of 2023.

Milestone Reinstatement

In October 2022, after almost a year of discussion, logistics and collaboration, Buckinghamshire Council successfully reinstated a wayward historic milepost back to its rightful position in Hillesden. The late 19th century milepost had vanished one night in the 1990s, only to be found in an Oxfordshire garden two decades later. The milepost was restored and reinstated by council officers and members.

Historic Environment Record (HER) report

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

Performance Indicator	3rd Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2022
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2023)	Reports = 5 Collect = 511 Total = 516	Reports = 4 Collect = 511 Total = 515

	3rd Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2022
Number of Countryside Stewardship applications handled	5	0
Number of reports received by the HER	21	13
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled: commercial	44	22
non-commercial	1	1

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 2023 opened in February and will remain open until August. This year Paul has received and dealt with 33 applications for nearly 7,000 hectares of land in Buckinghamshire with 13 applications at Mid-Tier and 20 applications at Higher Tier.

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
July	2,856	8,196	88%	12%
August	3,959	9,295	90%	10%
September	3,361	7,635	88%	12%
October	3,771	9,622	89%	11%
November	3,714	8,511	88%	12%

December	3,206	8,192	88%	12%
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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 67% of users based in the UK in December 2022 and a growing spread of users in Asia and African states. Most recently significant numbers of new users have been based in Andora (2-3% of users) and Benin (1-2% of users), with Morocco entering the top 10 of user countries for the first time in November.

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 204 new sites and enhanced the records for 95 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 £8750.

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

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Archaeological Reports submitted to the Buckinghamshire HER

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