

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 (9th March 2023).

Report Summary

We are now working to a 40/60 split in working from the office and home. Planning consultations have reduced from a very high level, but the major infrastructure schemes and major developments are progressing.

HS2/Fusion – Fieldwork has 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. As the design progresses changes are made so areas which were available for preservation in situ may now be impacted and archaeological investigation will take place.

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 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. Interim reports, reports, and post excavation assessments (PXAs) have largely been 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. To assess these geological

hollows bore holes will be undertaken and the methodology for this is likely to get Scheduled Monument Consent in the near future.

New National Designations:

There have been 3 new additions to the national list – Cockpit Hole Farmhouse and barn at Great Kingshill, a modest pre-1850 vernacular farmhouse and contemporary threshing barn which is unusual in that it retains its threshing floor and was listed at Grade II in February; and a K8 telephone kiosk on Chalfont and Latimer Station which was listed at Grade II in May. The K8 telephone kiosk was manufactured to a design by Bruce Martin, following a competition held by the GPO in 1965 and was the last generation of the red public telephone box designs to be commissioned.

The existing Registered Park and Garden of Ashridge Estate now in Hertfordshire, but historically partly in Buckinghamshire, was upgraded to Grade II* in March, recognising significant research undertaken by members of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust in recent years. The boundary of the Registered parkland was also amended and now extends into Edlesborough, Pitstone and Ivinghoe in Buckinghamshire.

Planning related archaeological work

Volume measures	1st Quarter 2023	2nd Quarter 2023
Total number of consultations handled	174	163
Number of planning applications handled	132 + 16 LBC	99 + 23 LBC
Consultations responded to within 21 days (target 90%)	148/146 98%	122/120 98%
Number of development-related archaeological fieldwork projects requested	31	45
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 planning applications; large scale solar farm proposals are a regular issue together with woodland planting schemes at varying scales.

South-East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR)

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. The field work ceased as the weather improved as all works have been paused. The post excavation works are currently being funded and we and the AECOM consultant have requested an interim report is produced if works are not likely to progress in the near future.

Hampden Fields Major Development South of Aylesbury

An initial further phase of evaluation has been completed 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. Excavation is likely to begin during the autumn together with further phases of evaluation as development requirements are timetabled.

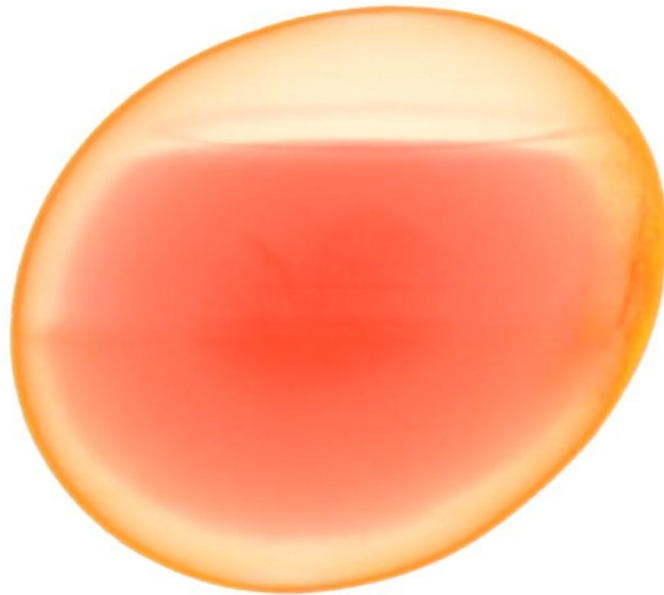
Berryfields Eggs and Basket

Archaeological investigations were conducted by Oxford Archaeology to the north-west of Aylesbury between 2007 and 2016 prior to the construction of housing and related infrastructure. During the excavation of a waterlogged pit a cache of 3 eggs was discovered in association with a basket, pottery vessels, coins, leather shoes and animal bone. These appear to be part of a series of structured depositional events which took place in the later 3rd Century AD. Unfortunately, two of the eggs were broken prior to or during discovery, emitting a sulphurous smell, but one remained intact. Following a hiatus work on the surviving intact egg and the basket have been undertaken.



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The egg which is likely to be a chicken egg has been investigated by Dana Goodburn-Brown Conservation and has undergone a Micro-CT scan which confirmed that it is full of liquid and an air bubble.



Micro-CT Scan Image

The basket was made of interwoven bands of oak and small willow rods woven into a band around the edge. Unfortunately, during a hiatus, it was found that the basket had deteriorated and is too decayed for conservation, although some fragments are thought to be able to be rescued.

Basket maker, Owen Jones has produced a full-size replica of the basket, and it was apparently a bit of a challenge. This will be going to Discover Bucks Museum in due course.

With climate change and global warming and subsequent changes in weather patterns currently waterlogged sites may dry out effecting the long-term survival of some artefacts such as wood, leather and potentially eggs. The weather-changes may have the opposite effect and with different rainfall patterns some currently dry sites may become waterlogged with potential impacts on artefacts, such as early prehistoric pottery which can be quite crumbly in ideal conditions.



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Solar Farms

These often very large-scale developments can be contentious and are driven by the requirement for the UK to be net zero by 2050. The many solar panels are usually installed using piles which can impact buried archaeological remains. The associated infrastructure such as electrical inverters, buried cabling and access road can also be damaging. We usually ask that a geophysical survey which is 'ground truthed' through trial trenching is undertaken so that the significance and extent of any buried sites can be assessed.

The image below is taken from the MOLA Evaluation Report for Fox Covert Solar Farm. It indicates the interpreted geophysical survey information in red and orange and the trial trenching. This evaluation confirmed an Iron Age settlement with relatively good survival was present and the area was removed from the development, purple boundary.



Copyright MOLA

Traditional piling techniques for the solar panel supports would have severely damaged this site. The image below indicates this process.

Construction Process

Piling Machine tracks along each row, programmed with accurate GPS co-ordinates and drives steel frames into the ground.



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The use of concrete slabs for supporting the panel supports has been around for many years and can be used to over archaeological features where there is sufficient depth of soil so that compaction or changes in soil structure doesn't take place. Variations on this have been developed to minimise ground impact.



Copyright SLR



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Cable runs can now be hung under the solar panels rather than buried, further reducing the impact on buried archaeology.



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As the development of solar farms and associated infrastructure develops more ways of reducing ground impact have been developed and are becoming more viable. Piling is the preferred method for the solar panel supports so evaluation will normally be required and preservation in situ and/or excavation is often required. Many more of these schemes are likely to be proposed as will wind farms which can also have impacts.

Woodland Schemes

These proposals can vary in scale with some being quite extensive and dispersed on larger estates. These schemes have been promoted by government in an attempt to combat climate change. These schemes are usually in rural areas where little development has taken place and the archaeological potential less well known. Tree planting can impact buried archaeological sites and can impact historic landscapes where tree cover has not been present for thousands of years. Large areas of planting have been proposed on areas of nationally significant of ridge and furrow. We have objected to these, but often a balance is required as with normal development proposals.

These schemes should follow the Forestry Commissions publication, 'The UK Forestry Standard' which has a section on 'Forests and Historic Environment'. This includes:

The primary responsibility for land managers in relation to historic features is to ensure they are conserved and not accidentally or unknowingly damaged. This will involve an appropriate evaluation of the site, and an assessment of features of importance – whether scheduled or not – as part of the forest management plan.

Ground preparation works can be quite extensive:



Copyright Taiga Upland

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.

Historic Environment Record (HER) report

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

Performance Indicator	1st Quarter 2023	2nd Quarter 2023
Historic Environment Records data inputting backlog (targets: reports < 30 by March 2023)	Reports = 7 Collect = 511 Total = 518	Reports = 7 Collect = 511 Total = 518

	1st Quarter 2023	2nd Quarter 2023
Number of Countryside Stewardship applications handled	8	14
Number of reports received by the HER	30	33
Number of Historic Environment Records enquiries handled: commercial	37	31
non-commercial	1	2

Paul has been dealing with the bulk of HER enquiries and all the Countryside Stewardship applications in 2023 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.

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.

2023	Users	Page views	% new users	% regular users
January	4,059	11,017	89%	11%
February	3,471	9,605	86%	14%
March	4,079	10,446	87%	13%
April	3,782	9,141	88%	12%
May	3,641	8,813	87%	13%
June	2,235	4,964	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 73% of users based in the UK in June 2023 and a growing spread of users in Asia and African states. The surprising number of users based in Andorra (5% of users) and Benin (2% of users) reported at the last meeting continues, with both countries in the top 4 of user countries in May, behind the UK and the USA.

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 507 new sites and enhanced the records for 138 existing sites.

Historic England have approved a second Aerial Investigation and Mapping project in north Buckinghamshire, which will commence later this year following completion of the current project. This second project will cover the area of the vale centred around Aylesbury.

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

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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