

# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM

The Museum was very much impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020. After the government announced that people should not come to public places in mid-March, the museum closed. National lockdown was announced on 23 March, ensuring longer-term closures for all heritage organisations. Most of the operational and learning staff were put on furlough, along with some of the curatorial and exhibitions team, to help bear the cost of paying staff with reduced income.

Restrictions were eased from 4 July to allow museums to open again and plans were made to create outdoor family and yoga programmes for the museum gardens, as the risk of virus transmission was considered to be much reduced outside. A family explorers programme based on our natural history collections was offered for 13 days over the summer holidays, involving family activities in the garden for up to 60 people per day on pre-booked tickets to control numbers. Yoga sessions were also offered in partnership with Wycombe-based company the Fitness Garden. The museum is grateful to Heart of Bucks for a grant of £4992 to help with the costs of re-opening, and making the premises and services Covid-safe. Visitor numbers were just less than 400, far below the capacity offered, but the feedback, particularly regarding yoga in the garden, made a huge impact on people's lives helping to combat mental health issues caused or exacerbated by the pandemic.

The Trustees decided to keep the museum closed throughout September and October to preserve the furlough grants for staff, as there were no school bookings and low expectation of other visitors wanting to come to the museum. The planned reopening in November for 3 days a week from Thursday to Saturday was postponed due to another national lockdown for the month of November.

When restrictions were lifted in December, the museum installed the postponed Bucks Art Society 'Work from 100 Artists' exhibition to celebrate the Society's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and a new exhibition, 'Tony Hart from 80s TV', with one-way routes

round the museum and pre-booked tickets, but opened for only two days before the county went into Tier 3, and had to close again until the end of the year. Only about 30 people attended on these two days though we had capacity for 180 people per day and 20 people every half hour, showing how public concern about the virus was still affecting visiting figures.

## ONLINE PROGRAMMES

We were able to offer some family and adult online content during the year, as physical access to the museum was not possible. This included family make-at-home activities linked with the museum collections, including make your own Lenborough hoard coin, Iron Age house and mammoth packages. There were interesting blogs posted on our website about collection artefacts, including one about Bovril jars! Later in the year, new webinars were introduced, including a Halloween offer on 31 October with a talk and quiz about customs of the dead, led by Finds Liaison Officer Sasha Cobby, attended by 40 people. Two more webinars were offered in December on Hannukah with South Bucks Jewish Group, attended by 20 people, and a Christmas Science Show, attended by over 60 people with more than one person in each household participating. Further on-line programmes are being planned for the first few months of 2021 in the face of uncertainty regarding reopening.

## DISCOVER BUCKS

Despite the lockdowns and pandemic, good progress on the 'Discover Bucks' new galleries project was made during the year. The design works reached RIBA Stage 4, final case layouts and initial graphics being agreed by the end of the year. The build contractor, Workhaus, was appointed in October: they have close links with the showcase manufacturers and will be working together in their adjoining workshops

in Yorkshire to dry-fit the exhibition there before installing on site.

The existing 'Touch of Bucks' exhibition was cleared of objects in August by our curators, and the cases and networks were dismantled in November by Workhaus. The on-site installations are planned for February 2021, depending on the pandemic situation. Planning permission has successfully been gained for minor works to the fire doors, and agreement reached for minor M & E works that don't require planning permission.

Further grants towards the final project total of £1.2 million were received from HS2, along with Section 106 funds from Buckinghamshire Council and a number of generous individual contributions from BAS members and other supporters, for which the Museum is very grateful. It is hoped that the new galleries can open for the summer holidays in 2021, but this may be affected by the continuing pandemic.

#### MUSEUM BUILDING

Staff continued to check buildings regularly each week to ensure their security. There were some incidents of minor vandalism in April to the lower windows facing St Mary's Church, but these were boarded up and repaired with no further incidents. In the summer, there were two incidents of major leaks to the museum entrance area, the BAS office and Tudor House, mainly caused by blocked drains after storms and heavy rain. Repairs are underway with the Council, subject to pandemic restrictions.

Buckinghamshire Council are working with museum staff to bring all the doors in the museum up to the standards required by the fire service, which includes repair or replacement of most of the doors in the building.

#### PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

Arwen Wood, the present Finds Liaison Officer, took maternity leave for the year and a temporary appointment for 12 months was granted to Sasha Cobby to cover the role. The lockdowns meant a big reduction in face-to-face finders' days and all reporting had to be on line. Despite this, some significant pieces were reported during the year, including a number of gold coin hoards, now at the British Museum.

#### MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Basic collections care continued with curators visiting Halton once a week to ensure safety of the objects throughout lockdown. Very few accessions were made for artefacts during the year, although National Paralympic Heritage Trust accessioning work continued whenever possible on the British Paralympic Collections in the museum stores. The Gerolamo Induno painting of the Italian Resorgimento, which was on loan to the V & A Opera travelling exhibition round Europe over the last three years, returned to the museum in December after visiting Oman and Spain, where it was viewed by thousands of visitors. Sadly, planned visits to Italy and Russia did not take place owing to the pandemic.

Plans for a new website in Spring 2021, funded by the Heritage Emergency Funding, will hopefully integrate Modes to provide better on-line access to the collections and curator highlights with changing content on collections as a new feature for visitors.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Although the Community Engagement Officer was furloughed for most of the year and the pandemic also halted much of the community engagement work, Trustee Ann Alphonse created eight on-line blogs and a family video made by the West Indian community about their experiences of living and working in Bucks and their contribution to the life of the community. These were accessible from the museum website for Black History Month in October. Meetings of the new Community Advisory Group resumed in October, consulting about the museum future programmes and co-producing Discover Bucks labels.

#### FINANCIAL SITUATION

The closure of the museum for most of the year meant a loss of over 30% of self-generated income from schools, the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery, secondary income, gift aid and some SLA work throughout the year. The museum is grateful for some guaranteed income from the Buckinghamshire Council management fee to care for the collections and the Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation annual grants. With the continuation

of the current situation, there are concerns about 2021 and predictions of much higher losses, which will use up all the museum's reserves. Owing to the loss of all school visits during the year, with no idea when they would return along with the vital income from their admission fees, the museum reluctantly had to make two schools workshop leaders redundant in September.

The Museum Director has taken a number of measures to address the overall reduction in income, including entering most staff into the fixed and flexible furlough schemes throughout the year, reduction of expenditure, negotiation with suppliers, applications for business and hospitality grants and applications to major funders for emergency funding. The museum was grateful for a grant from the Heritage Emergency Fund from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for £49,300 in September to cover costs to consult current audiences about future programmes, review funding and business models, governance, staffing and to create a new website to increase income generation from tickets and donations and online sales. The grant crucially allowed the employment of a fundraising consultant from October onwards, which

has allowed an increase in a range of core cost support applications and enhancement projects for the museum collections and curators. At the end of the year, the museum was very grateful for a grant of £50,000 from the Rothschild Foundation to support core costs in 2021 to support staff in developing new on line and blended programmes, marquees for outdoor catering seating and outreach around Bucks when allowed.

#### SUMMARY

We end 2020 with Bucks in Tier 4 and the possibility of national lockdown in the New Year, which will mean the museum has to stay closed for the foreseeable future. However, with the new Discover Bucks Galleries due to be delivered in 2021, we have everything to look forward to, as these new galleries will transform every aspect of museum practice, encourage visitors to return to see these fantastic new displays and will put communities and their representation at the heart of the museum.

*Sue Shave*  
*County Museum Director*

# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019–2020

2019–20 was an eventful year for Buckinghamshire Archives (then called the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies), ending with the departure of County Archivist Laura Cotton, the start of the coronavirus pandemic and the creation of the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council to replace the previous County and District Councils.

### ACCOMMODATION

The work towards the creation of the new unitary Council provided some opportunities for the Service to resolve our accommodation issues. Service changes under the unitary authority would mean the new Council would use its property differently, conceivably making some buildings available as possible solutions to our facilities needs. We met with colleagues in Property to ensure our needs were factored in to the planning around future use of the authority's estate. The work on this is still ongoing, having been delayed by the pandemic.

### SERVICE REVIEW

We spent some time this year reflecting on how we could improve the way we work, both behind the scenes and in the way our front of house public service operates. This has included visiting peer services in other counties to learn from them how they approach what they do. Staffing and facilities vary significantly across the sector, so it was no surprise to find a series of divergent approaches to what appears superficially to be a similar offer. As part of this, we ran a pilot to offer the ability for researchers to order documents in advance of their visit for the first time. The pilot was positively received, and the facility was introduced in March 2020.

### DIGITISATION

Digitisation of our probate and marriage licence collections by Family Search was completed in

March 2020. The collections covered included around 40,000 wills and administrations and approximately 15,000 marriage bonds. The wills predominantly cover the lower middle and middle classes, with yeomen and tradespeople well represented. Marriage bonds were granted to couples looking to marry without the reading of the banns in the parish church. Frequently a status symbol for the middle classes, they might also be a way for the unscrupulous to escape attention. The bond provides insurance for the church in the event of the marriage not proving legitimate. An estimated 250,000 images were created in the project. They will be processed and checked by Family Search, with timescale for delivery of the final images affected by the pandemic. We are in conversation with commercial suppliers in order to make them available online. Digitisation of the parish registers is planned to take place next.

### DIGITAL PRESERVATION

All technical problems relating to Archives' digital preservation repository Preservica have been resolved. Ingest of minutes from Buckinghamshire County Council has started, with records of the subcommittees of the council to follow. Work has also been undertaken to ensure that equivalent records from the four District Councils are not deleted in the switch-over to the new unitary authority.

Further progression in this area will be required to maintain our Accreditation from the National Archives, so a knowledge share group was established between Buckinghamshire Archives and colleagues at Oxfordshire History Centre and Berkshire Record Office.

### NATIONAL PARALYMPIC HERITAGE TRUST

Work on NPHT's collections held at Buckinghamshire Archives included Spinal 2 Sport (see separate section) and the records of the British Paralympic Association. The BPA collection includes written

archives mainly relating to London 2012, as well as costume and models from the opening and closing ceremonies of London 2012. A bid to the National Archives' 'Archives Revealed' programme funded a Scoping Study that suggested splitting the collection into three (archives, costume, models). A successful Phase 1 bid to Archives Revealed to catalogue the collection was made, with a Phase 2 bid due in the summer.

## MILTON KEYNES

Work towards a pilot Archive Service for Milton Keynes to be based in the Central Library culminated in a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. That bid was not successful, so options including proceeding straight to the final project without pilot are being considered, dependent on the course of the pandemic and its impact on funding availability. We have continued to hold a series of outreach events in Milton Keynes, including talks on house and family history. We also made a start on the MK Skate project, working with partners in Milton Keynes to celebrate the town's importance for British skateboarding. The project includes training skateboarders to look after their own records, as well as for the Archives to accept deposits of material from them.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media feeds (@BucksArchives on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) have continued to grow. They are a good way to reach younger, time-poor audiences unable to visit the service in person, as well as a way to show off those parts of the collections which might not be easy to find. A new 'Postcard a Day' initiative to showcase postcards in the collections from around the county was started at the beginning of 2020, but was interrupted by the pandemic.

## OUTREACH

Our outreach this year has been themed around 'Matters of Life and Death'. Particularly, this included the Matters of Life and Death Family History Open Day in conjunction with Heritage Open Days in September. This featured tours of the Tower at New County Offices, tours of the Judges Lodgings, Matters of Life and Death exhibition

and a free family history help desk operated by members of staff.

Our History Fair in 2019 built on successes of past years, total attendance was the highest yet, at 274. Talks included Linda Henderson on the history of the Aylesbury Duck Industry, Dr David Noy on Stoke Mandeville Wills, and Hannah Dale on Waddesdon during WW2. Exhibitors participating in the event included Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, Thame Museum and the Buckinghamshire Library Service. From 2020, the History Fair has been renamed the Buckinghamshire History Festival as we look to scale up our offer.

We continue to co-ordinate the Buckinghamshire Archives and Heritage Network, which had meetings on Engaging with Tourism and Marketing at Wycombe Museum and on Conservation and Planning for Disaster at Buckingham Old Gaol.

## PROJECTS

Three major externally funded projects have been running in 2019/20; the Great War Bucks project, the Spinal 2 Sport project and the Hidden Bucks project to catalogue the collections of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society (BAS), funded by a range of funders.

### **Hidden Bucks**

This project was funded 50% by the Buckinghamshire Record Society with the remainder from the BAS, Francis Coales Charitable Foundation, the Marc Fitch Fund, the Radcliffe Trust, Aylesbury Vale Community Trust and the Buckinghamshire Community Foundation. Nearly 11,000 items from the collection had been catalogued by the end of March 2020, with the project ending in mid-April 2020. The initial estimates of the size of the collection proved to be too low, so approximately 3,000 items remain uncatalogued.

### **Spinal 2 Sport**

This Wellcome Trust-funded Spinal 2 Sport project came to an end. The project catalogued over 2000 patient records from the National Spinal Injury Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and 2500 records from the collection of the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS). Funding options to finish the remaining sections of the collection are now being explored.

## Great War Bucks

The multi-year Great War Bucks project drew to a close with the publication of a volume on Buckinghamshire in World War I by Professor Ian Beckett of the Bucks Military Museum Trust. An outing to Chiltern Open Air Museum for volunteers and stakeholders took place in July 2019. Some volunteers are continuing to work on the project, and biographies of Bucks people affected by the war are still being added to the project website, <http://www.greatwarbucks.bucks.gov.uk/>. In addition, we have provided help, advice and support to other projects, for instance the Chiltern Conservation Board's 'Cherry, Chalk and Chairs' project.

## COLLECTIONS

131 new accessions were taken in this year, covering businesses, organisations, Church of England and non-conformist churches, local government institutions and private individuals. Highlights include:

- Correspondence from Benjamin Ward Line, mainly letters written to his mother in Sherington between 1941 and 1946, while he was on active service. The letters give a fascinating view of his life and are being indexed by volunteers for use in future projects (AR 107/2019).
- The oldest documents received were two deeds of Thornton from the reign of Edward II (specifically 1318 and 1326, AR 68/2019). They are supplementary to 8 deeds of the same property acquired in 2018.
- A letter from Benjamin Disraeli to James George Tatem, requesting his support in the forthcoming Parliamentary election 1832 (AR 14/2020). Disraeli began his political career in Wycombe, twice standing unsuccessfully for election to one of the Borough seats in 1832. In this letter he sought the support of influential local James George Tatem, later to be the first Mayor of Wycombe under the Corporation Act in 1836.
- A geological map of Buckinghamshire by W. Smith on map of Buckinghamshire by John Carr from 1820. Smith, 'The Father of English Geology' had published the first geological map of a country in 1815, and this Buckinghamshire section followed soon afterwards. (AR 64/2019)
- A volume of photographs of inmates at Aylesbury prison, 1883–1890 came to us via a slightly circuitous route; from the Governors of Reading Prison to our colleagues at Berkshire Record Office and then to us (AR 120/2019). They complement the images of prisoners in the Gaol receiving books from the 1870s.
- After over 80 years working on behalf of Buckinghamshire County Council, we were pleased to receive commemorative agenda and reports for the Council's final meeting on 12 March 2020, including history of the Council from 1889 (AR 26/2020).
- A large collection of the records of Penn School, a special needs school which closed in 2015 including both pupil and administrative files (AR 27/2020). The deposit came with a kind grant from the Rayners Educational Trust to catalogue them, starting in April 2020.
- Further deposits relating to disability sport including records of the British Paralympic Association from London 2012, Sochi Winter Games 2014 and Rio 2016 (AR 70/2019) and some items relating to the 1984 Paralympic Games at Stoke Mandeville received from a volunteer at the Games including a programme of events, newsheet, newscutting, two folders welcoming participants to Aylesbury, sash, stickers, ribbons, and badges.
- A number of volumes were added to the Local Studies collections, most notably a large collection of documents produced for High Speed Rail 2 (HS2), many originally held in the Aylesbury Study Centre. They have been fully sorted and catalogued ready for public use.

A full list of accessions is available on request from Buckinghamshire Archives or via 'Accessions to Repositories' on the National Archives website, (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/>).

## COLLECTIONS CARE

In addition to treating new accessions as they come in, our Conservator has been involved in several projects. She has treated over 2000 wills and administrations to make them ready for digitisation. She has also contributed to our Spinal 2 Sport project, providing advice to the project staff and treating items in the IWAS collection. The collection includes a variety of material (aside

from the usual paper and photographic items) including large cloth flags, enamel badges, water colours, medals, different types of clothing and toys.

The Conservator has also supervised our volunteers from the Art Society, who have been helping cleaning and wrapping a range of collections; minute books of the Boards of Guardians of the Poor Law Unions, an estate agents' collection covering North Bucks and cleaning and re-boxing deeds. She has also been working with another volunteer to rebind and refurbish our vast collection of volumes.

#### STAFFING CHANGES

We said goodbye to two long-serving members of staff this year. Rachel Simon, who joined the Local Studies Library as a Saturday assistant in 1999, left us in February to be closer to family. She was well known to visitors to the service, though since 2015 had been working behind the scenes on the Local Studies collections. Her knowledge

of Local Studies collections was unparalleled and her commitment to helping people looking to use it unending so she will be greatly missed.

Laura Cotton had been with us for 19 years, initially on a temporary contract for five months and eventually leaving as County Archivist. She has taken over as Glamorgan Archivist, with our best wishes. Probably her greatest legacy is the relationships she built in the disability sport community that saw collections of international importance relating to the development of the Paralympic Games come into our care. Laura left at the end of March, to be replaced as County Archivist on an interim basis by Senior Archivist Chris Low.

We were also very sorry to lose the skills, knowledge and experience of Mary Brown and Emma David when Spinal 2 Sport came to a close. They had been with us since 2017 and had both fitted in really well. We hope they will consider returning when the project resumes.

*Chris Low, Senior Archivist*

# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

## ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

### REPORT FOR 2020

From 1 April 2020 the County and District Councils of Aylesbury Vale, Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks became a unitary authority. The Council's Archaeology Service (BCAS) forms part of Planning and Environment of the Planning, Growth and Sustainability Directorship. Philip Markham is the Senior Archaeology Officer, Lucy Lawrence is the Archaeology Officer, Julia Wise is the HER Officer (part-time), Paul Clements is the HER Assistant and Eliza Alqassar is the Environment Team Leader. We are currently undergoing a service review and management structures are likely to change, but we expect our team to continue with little impact on our service.

#### DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

It has been another busy year for the team who have been working hard to deliver an excellent service throughout the pandemic. The team have dealt with approximately 500 consultations of which 140 had archaeological implications, approximately 100 HER requests and many fieldwork projects arising from planning applications, HS2, East-West Rail, and utilities.

The most significant completed site is the HS2 excavation near Wendover where a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age circular pit alignment 65m in diameter was uncovered. This site also included a high-status Roman burial in a lead coffin.

The CEMEX mineral site near Iver is progressing prior to phased mineral extraction and an Iron Age settlement has been partially excavated, while the remaining section is currently beneath a bund and there are also traces of an underlying Bronze Age field system. This site is on the proposed route of Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

Additional sites of interest include the excavation of post-medieval properties at the edge of Soulbury, an Iron Age farmstead in Wingrave and further evidence of medieval activity within Buckingham.

#### MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEMES

##### High Speed 2

We continue to provide advice through the HS2 Ltd Heritage Sub-Group with several meetings each year. Although most of the works are covered by Act of Parliament, some known as Schedule 17 applications are still dealt with through the planning process.

Fieldwork has continued during the pandemic, following government guidelines, and is taking place in numerous areas with some significant archaeology being recorded. HS2 fieldwork within Buckinghamshire is managed by Fusion, a joint venture consultancy, and carried out by several professional archaeological contractors. BCAS provides advice and local expertise at each stage of works. Works have progressed rapidly throughout 2020, with several new initiatives in place to streamline and quicken the process.

To date, there have been 254 HS2-related fieldwork events completed and ongoing in Bucks, with this number certain to rise as new sites come online. These events include:

• Archaeological Recording	69
• Archaeological Monitoring	11
• Building Recording	7
• Construction Integrated Recording	9
• Trial Trenching	53
• Magnetometry Survey	68
• Test Pitting	22
• Borehole Survey	7
• Systematic Field Walking	1
• Detailed Desk Based Assessments	2
• Historic Landscape Characterisation	5

##### East-West Rail

The Transport and Works Act (TWA0) application has been granted consent and the Heritage Delivery Strategy has been agreed. Following initial evaluation works in 2018, mitigation works have started,

and the team has been working hard assessing nearly ninety Project Plans/Written Schemes of Investigation (WSIs) which have been supplied by the East-West Rail Alliance. These need to be approved by conditions attached to the TWAO consent. Many of the WSIs are for relatively small areas of work such as road widening and passing places, but there are also several larger sites in advance of compound creation and for flood alleviation and environmental compensation schemes. Highlights of the works undertaken so far include several previously unidentified Roman sites, including a small settlement near Mursley.

### **Heathrow New Runway**

We understand that the consultant, Wood, has ceased working on historic environment issues and that the planning appeal is likely to take 12–18 months. We expect to hear more in early 2021.

### **Western Rail Link to Heathrow**

The Rail Minister has confirmed that the application for this major development will be deferred until December 2022; further evaluation is expected to follow.

## OTHER PROJECTS

### **Chalk, Cherries, Chairs and the Beacons of the Past Chilterns Hillforts Project**

These are two projects being run by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Members of the Environment Team attend steering group meetings and provide advice. BCAS has provided financial support and HER information to both projects. The Beacons of the Past project's online Lidar portal has provided a wonderful platform for volunteers during lockdown. Within the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project, BCAS are most heavily involved with the 'Mystery of Grim's Ditch' and 'Routes to the Past' projects.

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

### **External Hosting and HER Website Project**

Following testing, the move to external hosting was made on 9 April, with the database upgraded to the latest version of the HBSMR software. It has taken several months to ensure that the HER is able to access the latest versions of the corporate and OS mapping, but this is now completed. The switch

to remote hosting was extremely timely, as it has allowed the team to provide an advice and enquiry service from home and has not been subject to many of the network interruptions experienced by our colleagues. The remote hosting has also seen a huge improvement in database speed, as was anticipated.

Development of the new website got underway in June, with particularly intense periods of work and testing in July and early August. The website went live with a 'soft launch' on 13 August and a press release and other publicity followed after a short period to ensure that the website was running successfully through the corporate website. The website is now externally hosted but using a sub-domain URL, re-routed through the corporate website. Redirections are also in place to preserve existing hyperlinks to and from other websites and users' bookmarks.

The new website includes a new public platform, *Buckinghamshire's Heritage Portal*, with a fresh look and feel, a dedicated blog and moderated user comments. It is designed to be accessible on most laptops, tablets and mobile phone formats and has intuitive text searching and mapping tools better suited to contemporary users. Information from the HER database is published live, so new records will be available immediately. Additional HER datasets will be accessible to our conservation and historic buildings colleagues through the website.

### **HER Audit**

The HER Audit was completed on schedule at the end of March, with Historic England's Heritage Information Partnerships team assessing the HER against nationally agreed standards and best practice. We are pleased to report that the HER received a clean bill of health, with strengths in record content and coverage and in public access and engagement. We have already made progress with the agreed Action Plan to address outstanding issues and areas for future work.

### **HER Enhancement and Volunteer Projects**

The HER has been updated with the latest information from the Portable Antiquities Scheme database in May and June. This has added 7,279 new records to the HER, all of which have needed editing to make them compatible with the HER database.

The Pillbox Study Group has made their records

available to the HER and we have added new records for over 100 WW2 defensive sites. This includes locations of airfield battle headquarters, mortar emplacements, and Bofors gun locations around Chequers. The HER volunteer working on the milestones project is currently editing the existing entries with additional new information.

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research and Recording Project is continuing to make good progress with 73 reports completed, 6 reports in draft and work underway on a further 7 gardens. The volunteers have completed a discrete project researching artists' gardens in Buckinghamshire and are now researching public parks and gardens as a contribution to a national Gardens Trust project.

### **Countryside Stewardship Consultations**

In 2020 the HER was consulted on 23 Countryside Stewardship applications covering 3,464 hectares within Buckinghamshire. Of these, 10 (43%) were for Higher Tier schemes and 13 (57%) were for Mid-tier schemes. The HER was able to provide added value to 43% of the applications

and responded to all the consultations within the 20-day period required by Natural England.

The numbers of Stewardship consultations remain low as a direct result of the Rural Payments Agency making significant changes to the consultation process to cut costs. The bulk of Mid-tier applications were processed without any input from the HER: we hope that there are no significant detrimental impacts on heritage in the county as a consequence of these changes. However, we have heard from a couple of landowners who felt unable to proceed with recent agreements despite their applications being approved, due to the inflexibility of the scheme requirements. The Countryside Stewardship scheme is expected to continue until 2024, when a new Environmental Land Management scheme, currently being piloted, will come on stream.

*Phil Markham  
Senior Archaeology Officer  
Planning Growth and Sustainability  
Buckinghamshire Council*

# CONSERVATION & ARCHAEOLOGY IN MILTON KEYNES 2019

## DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The Conservation & Archaeology Team received 953 planning consultations during 2019, 531 of which were for the Senior Archaeological Officer.

During 2019 two major developments were completed which involve the Grade II Listed Shopping Building in Central Milton Keynes. The first was the construction of a multi-storey car park at the north eastern end of the Shopping Building. The distinctive ‘waffle’ designs of the wall sections infilling the building frame, colonnades and separation from the Shopping Building resulted in a building which does not read as part of the listed building, but respects its setting by utilising similar structural proportions.

The other major scheme involved extensions and alterations to 116 Silbury Arcade, the former BHS and now Primark unit, to provide additional retail trading floor and associated roof-top plant. The design of the development replicates the original ‘reflective glass panels within a steel frame’ construction of the listed building. Overall, the scheme has resulted in less than substantial harm to the special interest of the listed building, which when balanced against the economic benefits of the development, was deemed acceptable.

## FIELDWORK

2019 was another busy year for fieldwork with 28 projects notified to the Historic Environment Record (HER), comprising: 1 historic building record; 16 trial trench evaluations, 2 geophysical surveys; 4 excavations and 5 watching briefs.

In addition to the Community Dig in Great Linford (see below), highlights included the excavation by Albion Archaeology in advance of sand at gravel extraction at Lathbury. This revealed Iron Age, Romano-British and early Saxon occupation. The early Saxon occupation comprised 12 sunken featured buildings: a Romano-British inhumation burial was also excavated, accompanied by an unusual copper-alloy beaded torc and bracelet.



FIGURE 1 Copper-alloy beaded torc from Lathbury (Albion Archaeology)

## NEW HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

In 2019, six heritage assets were considered for inclusion on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). One of these – Campbell Park in Central Milton Keynes – is still under consideration. Three – The Agora Centre in Wolverton, The Point Cinema in Central Milton Keynes and the Bicycle Wall artwork in Stantonbury – were not listed. Two sites were added to the NHLE: Wavendon House garden was made a Grade II Registered Park and Garden and the New Bradwell War Memorial Clock Tower was listed at Grade II.

## HERITAGE AT RISK

The Heritage at Risk register was first published in June 2018. Work to update the register took place during 2019, with publication of the updated register in January 2020. The January 2020 version of the register lists 38 heritage assets that are at risk. Each asset is assigned a risk rating, ranging from ‘A – immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed’ through to ‘F – repair scheme in progress and (where applicable) end use or user identified; functionally redundant buildings with new use agreed but not yet implemented’. Of these 38 assets, 7 have been marked as

## Heritage Assets to be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register (as of January 2020)

<i>Asset Location &amp; Name</i>	<i>Designation(s)</i>
Bletchley: Fenny Stratford Mortuary Chapel	Non-Designated Heritage Asset
Bradwell Abbey Chapel	Grade I Listed Building: Scheduled Ancient Monument
Filgrave: Filgrave Clock Tower	Grade II Listed Building
Shenley Church End: The Barn, Thirlby Lane	Grade II Listed Building: Conservation Area
Stantonbury: St Peters Church (Ruin), Stanton Low	Grade II Listed Building
Stony Stratford: Tower, Church of St Mary Magdalene	Grade II* Listed Building: Scheduled Ancient Monument, Conservation Area
Stony Stratford: 26/28 High Street	Grade II Listed Building: Conservation Area

‘to be removed’ from the Register (see table above for details), reflecting the fact that due to positive intervention they are no longer considered to be at risk.

#### CONSERVATION AREAS

During 2019, restoration work to the roof of Block H, Bletchley Park – home of the National Museum of Computing – was completed. This marked the end of works supported by the (MKC / Historic England) funding stream linked to the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme for Bletchley Conservation Area (established in 2009). Prior to these works taking place, the roof of Block H was not watertight.

The council is currently engaged in the process of reviewing its 27 Conservation Areas. During 2019, Reviews of the Bradwell, Milton Keynes village, Shenley Church End and Great Linford Conservation Areas were completed. Work started in 2019 on Reviews for the Stony Stratford, Willen, Woughton on the Green and Bletchley Conservation Areas. During 2019, a ‘General Information Document’ of the Conservation Area Review Programme was also produced for consultation. This document gives an overview of the Conservation Areas within the borough, the Borough of Milton Keynes’ development over time, the area’s geology and typography, building materials and national planning policy context.

#### HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

Progress towards creation of a ‘Local List’ known as the New Town Heritage Register was made during 2019, with 225 nominations being finalised. As of January/February 2020, work is progressing on selection of definite list entries. Publication of the first of 50 list entries to be added to the Register is expected by September 2020.

After the last audit revisit in 2016, it has been agreed with Historic England to undertake a full HER audit commencing in April 2021.

#### COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

A community dig was held by The Parks Trust in Great Linford Manor Park between Monday 8 and Saturday 13 April 2019, with seven trenches being dug in front of the Manor House, near the ponds and in the Wilderness garden. Supervised by Cotswold Archaeology with input from the Council’s Senior Archaeological Officer, the dig was held as part of the National Lottery-funded project to reveal, revive and restore the historic parkland.

The trenches were targeted on known features of interest and the results of a preceding programme of geophysical survey. Key findings included:

- 1) The full profile of the ha-ha which formerly bisected the eastern end of the park, including a well-preserved drystone retaining wall which survives to a height of just over 1m (Fig. 2);
- 2) Between the pavilions and Linford Manor, a



FIGURE 2 Ha-ha wall at Great Linford

robbed-out wall line was encountered, together with an occupation deposit and pit dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century, pre-dating the manor and formal parkland;

- 3) Similarly, in the area of the Doric Seat, two walls were encountered, cut by the Doric Seat foundations. It is likely that these features also indicate activity pre-dating the establishment of the manor and park.

A total of 84 volunteer members of the public participated in the dig. A public Open Day at the end of the week engaged with a variety of visitors to the park, including the presentation of finds and guided site tours.

#### OUTREACH

2019's 13<sup>th</sup> Milton Keynes Archaeology Day: 'Archaeology in the Community' was another successful and well-attended event. This year's 'hand's on' activity for young people was provided by Cotswold Archaeology and proved very popular. Billed as '3D Techniques in Archaeology' they offered the chance to get hands on with some of the latest 3D scanning and virtual reality equipment and software as well as colouring and mosaic designing for the younger ones.

Another popular aspect of the event is the displays from active local fieldwork groups and societies. This year participants comprised four groups: Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Active Archaeology Group (Bucks



FIGURE 3 Mayor of Milton Keynes, Cllr Sam Crooks at MK Archaeology Day

AAG), The Upper Nene Archaeological Society (UNAS), Woughton Heritage Group, and Wing Heritage Group. The extensive displays provided by four metal detectorists proved as popular as ever and included Mick and Mel from the Magiovinium Metal Detector Club, Archaeology Day regulars since 2008.

As in previous years, the biggest draw of the day was the talks. The afternoon featured four half-hour talks on the event theme 'Archaeology in the Community'. 2020's MK Archaeology Day

will be held in Milton Keynes Central Library on Saturday 7 November.

In addition to the Archaeology Day, the Senior Archaeological Officer also delivered talks on recent archaeological work in the borough to local societies in Bletchley and Little Woolstone.

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