

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

Art Gallery exhibitions began the year with *Christmas Toy Box*, taking a nostalgic trip back to childhood and looking at toys from Victorian times right up to the 21st century. This was a fascinating exhibition for both children and adults.

The main artistic focus of the year was devoted to two exhibitions running in parallel in the Art Gallery. *Delightful Temples – the art and landscapes of Stowe* in the Raison Room explored the enduring appeal of Stowe through magnificent works by artists such as Jacques Rigaud, Jean Claude Nattes and John Piper. We were delighted to work with the National Trust and the Stowe House Preservation Trust on this exhibition and the displays also featured loans from these partners to complement the Museum's own rich collections. Collections Showcase, the HLF funded gallery in the Viney Room, launched in 2006 to showcase the stored collections, featured the best of our 18th and 19th century costume and lace to complement the *Delightful Temples* of Stowe.

Meanwhile, in the Harding Room there was a visual feast drawing on over 100 pots from our nationally important studio ceramics collection. *British Studio Ceramics: Twentieth Century Transformations* included works by eminent potters such as Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, Ruth Duckworth and Ewen Henderson and gave visitors a unique chance to see the art and inspiration of the studio potter. The exhibition received an excellent review in *Ceramics Review* magazine. As part of the project the full collection of over 330 pots has been made available online via the museum website at www.bucksc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/ceramics_collection/ea_Studio_Ceramics.page?

The Art Gallery summer blockbuster was the intriguingly titled *Snozzcumbers and Frobscottle: the wonderful world of Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake*. This fantastic combination of Quentin Blake's classic illustrations and Roald Dahl's imaginative stories was filled with original artwork and manuscripts as well as fabulous hands on exhibits.

Pavilion II – contemporary art by members of

awful/FANTASTIC, a two week selling exhibition in November, showcased a mix of commercial and experimental work by 32 local artists. For the winter season the museum brought in a stunning exhibition of *Holograms – the first 60 years* that amazed visitors with beautiful and surprising images in glorious 3-D created by international artists.

Georgian Room exhibitions began with *Lost and Found: detecting the past* where we worked with the national Portable Antiquities Scheme and many local metal detectorists on an exhibition which showcased 5 years' work in reporting and recording of Treasure and public archaeological finds in Bucks and Milton Keynes. A splendid range of Treasure items, acquired by the Museum with funding support from the Friends, was complemented by many generous public loans of other archaeological finds.

Ros Tyrrell, our Finds Liaison Officer for Bucks and Milton Keynes had another busy year, entering finds information into the Portable Antiquities Database www.finds.org.uk.

In late Spring we showed the spectacular 18th century paintings of *Hartwell House and gardens* by Balthazar Nebot and then we kept to the country house theme for the rest of the year with an exhibition of the *Denham Court Paintings*. This was the first time that this intriguing series of nine 17th century paintings from Denham Court had been on display and visitors had the opportunity to marvel at their eventful history of rescue, restoration and recognition. As mentioned in last year's report, the painting *View through an Architectural Setting: Courtyard at Rubens's House* attracted national and European attention when it was discovered to be the earliest known view of the now lost fresco decoration of Rubens' studio. This painting has since gone on a five year loan to the Rubenshuis Museum in Antwerp.

The expanded programme of events and activities continued with special fun Saturdays, including a Georgian Fun Day, the Roald Dahl Festival, Rocks, Fossils and Archaeology Fun Day,

Wildlife Fun Day and finishing with a Victorian Christmas. The events programme, which brought over 5,000 visitors to the Museum, was greatly assisted by the participating local archaeological and wildlife groups and societies and by the Friends & Patrons volunteers. The Big Draw events were again led by local illustrator Louise Quirke with funding support from Vale of Aylesbury DFAS and drew in students from Aylesbury College, local schools and a popular family workshop.

The Museum's reduced opening hours, closing on Sunday afternoons and earlier during the winter months, continued in 2008. As a result and in the challenging environment of the credit crunch, visitor numbers fell slightly to 102,000 over the year.

This was another good year for the schools service with over 15,000 pupils visiting in school groups. Schools workshop sessions provided in the Museum again increased in popularity and for the first time accounted for more than half of the school visits in total, complementing the teaching sessions in the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery. Themes included *The Romans in Bucks*, the *Rock around Aylesbury* tour and workshop and *The Victorians* as well as joint all-day workshops provided with CBS on *The Jury – Victorian Crime and Punishment* and *Making Victorian Life a Real Experience*.

Notable accessions to the collections included:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACQUISITIONS

2008.4.1–5 Group of five copper alloy Roman brooches, from Fleet Marston

2008.7 .1–10 Group of ten copper alloy Roman coins, 3rd–4th century, not a hoard, from Dinton

2008.74.1–75 Hoard of 75 late Iron Age gold staters, 60–50 BC, from Little Horwood. Probably an addendum to the Whaddon Chase hoard, discovered in 1859

2008.107.1 Silver Medieval terminal, 13th century, decorated with niello inlay, possibly an *aestel* (a manuscript pointer top), from Fingest

2008.111.1 Gold Bronze Age triple penannular ring, 1300–1100 BC, from Stone

2008.113.1 Gold Medieval annular brooch, 13th century, with blundered Latin love inscription, from North Crawley

2008.128.1 Gold mourning ring, dated 1664,

inscribed inside “*SR Aged 76 Obijt 19 Aug 64*”, from Soulbury

ART ACQUISITIONS

2008.5.1 *Places*, an artists' book printed and created by Christine Tacq, Heather Hunter, Sue Napier, Laura Boswell, Jean Mould Hart, Christine Lock, Wendy Lewis and Helen Casey-Green, no. 1 of 12

2008.76.1 Red burnished earthenware pot by Peter Hayes

2008.77.1 *Chalfont St Giles* by Clare Leighton, wood engraving, 1929–30

2008.77.2 *Whiteleaf Cross* by Clare Leighton, wood engraving, 1934

2008.77.3 *View from Whiteleaf* by Clare Leighton, wood engraving, 1934

2008.78.1 *Old Market Place, Aylesbury* by Mortimer Menpes, drypoint, 1890–1910

2008.79.1 *The Gothic Tower by James Gibbs c.1730 at Hartwell House*, print of a drawing by Eric Throssell

2008.82.1–7 Group of seven glazed tiles made at Hillesden between 1951 and 1956 by Eric Mellon, Martina Thomas and friends

2008.85.1 watercolour of Iver Grove House by Joshua Gosselin, 1812

2008.132.1 Stoneware bowl by Vera Tollow, 1980s

2008.132.2 Stoneware covered jar by Vera Tollow, 1980s

2008.188.1 oil painting *View of Market Square, Aylesbury* by Charmian, 1947

CLOTHING AND TEXTILE ACQUISITIONS

2008.26.1 Striped football shirt worn by Sidney Bignell of Castle Street Mission football team, 1920s. Acquisition includes team photograph.

2008.32.1 Reversible smock of brown linen, worn by George Mason of Whitchurch, c1880s. Acquisition includes photograph of Mr Mason wearing a different smock.

2008.83.1–2 Blue silk dress and coat; bought by donor in 1967 from Veronique boutique, Aylesbury, to be worn at a wedding.

2008.104.1–2 Boy's velvet waistcoat and breeches, 19th century; found hidden in thatch of donor's cottage in Little Ickford. An example of 'hidden clothing'.

NATURAL HISTORY ACQUISITIONS

2008.1 Three Harlequin Ladybirds collected at the Museum Resource Centre, January 2008

2008.2 Ten herbarium sheets of Buckinghamshire ferns collected by Dennis Burnham

2008.213 One hundred and four moth specimens of Buckinghamshire provenance, ex British Entomological and Natural History Society collections.

GEOLOGY ACQUISITIONS

2008.216 Seventeen microscope slides showing fossil Foraminifera from the Gault Clay at Ford. Found in collection. Thought to date from 1919

2008.217 Four microscope slides showing microfossils from Wendover Road, Aylesbury. Found in collection. Date unknown

2008.218 Four microscope slides showing microfossils collected from Mr Parrott's Well, Princes Risborough. Found in collection. Thought to date from 1924

SOCIAL HISTORY ACQUISITIONS

2008.108.1 17th century silver dress pin; found by metal detectorist at Hanslope and declared Treasure (purchased on behalf of Milton Keynes Council).

2008.112.1 17th/18th century gold posy ring

inscribed 'Be Faithfull'. Found by metal detectorist at Buckingham and purchased as Treasure with aid of Friends of the Museum.

2008.128.1 Gold mourning ring inscribed with skull; dated 1664 by British Museum; found by metal detectorist at Soulbury and donated as Treasure.

2008.185.1–3 Furniture set comprising of wardrobe, dressing table and chest of drawers, early 1950s; manufactured by Whiteleaf Furniture of Princes Risborough; purchased by owner after seeing similar set displayed at 1951 Festival of Britain.

2008.198.1 Wooden tennis racket made at Holmer Green by donor's grandfather, c1950

2008.199.1 Hand painted sign from late-Victorian handcart of Horse & Jockey public house, Aylesbury

2008.200.1– Ladies' dressing table set bought for Jan Bateson of Brill as a wedding present in December 1931; ivory coloured set probably made from celluloid.

2008.215.1 Upright piano; purchased in Temple Street, Aylesbury in 1905 as 12th birthday present for Ada Moore, who lived at the George Hotel in Wendover.

*Sarah Gray MA AMA
County Museum Curator*

CENTRE FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE STUDIES

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008–2009

The 120th anniversary of Buckinghamshire County Council was celebrated with an exhibition and reception at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS) on the exact anniversary of the first meeting on 7 February 1889. Pride of place was given to the first minute book, 1889–95, which had been especially repaired for the occasion by our archive conservator. It was accompanied by a photo-montage from the period, containing photographs of all the members of the first Council set against a painted backdrop. Other Council archives on display included the first minute book of the Education Committee, 1903, the first register of motor-vehicle licences, also 1903, showing that the prestigious plate BH1 was issued to Alderman Tonman Mosley (later Lord Anslow), Chairman of the Highways and Bridges Committee, civil defence files recording bomb damage in the county in World War II, the Chief Fire Officer's report on the tornado that hit Buckinghamshire in 1950 and photographs of the County Hall and Court after the fire in 1970. Alongside these was the Quarter Sessions minute book for 1969–70, which had been severely damaged in the fire but was expertly restored by the then Record Office conservator, Mr John Barton. For good measure, the wig of a 19th-century Clerk of the Peace, Acton Tindal, was also shown. The display also included some of the older county archives pre-dating the Council, including one of the alehouse registers, 1753–1828, plans of the County Hall and gaol, 1825, a register of prisoners from the 1870s and an examination book of police constables in the Buckinghamshire Constabulary. The reception, which was addressed by both the Chief Executive and the County Archivist, was attended by invited guests including the High Sheriff, three former Chairmen of the County Council and serving members.

The Centre was featured in the BBC TV series, *Who Do You Think You Are?* in the programme about TV presenter Davina McCall. We were the final location for her research into her direct ancestor James Thomas Bedborough, and the records of ours that were used relate to the

Chancery case which arose out of his will in 1860 and which lasted for some twenty years. These are in a box of documents relating to Upton Park, Slough, an early Victorian housing estate designed by Bedborough but never completed since he ran out of money when it was only half built (see BAS Occasional Papers, 3).

The Boarstall Cartulary and Horn and other Aubrey-Fletcher archives were used by Dr Rowena E. Archer for an essay on Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstall, 'Piety, Chivalry and Family: The Cartulary and Psalter of Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstall', which has now been published in *Soldiers, Nobles and Gentlemen*, a festschrift for Professor Maurice Keen. As well as the renowned map of Boarstall, the article discusses the many coats of arms depicted in the cartulary, which are themselves remarkable, as cartularies rarely contain decoration of any kind, but which are usually overshadowed by the map. Dr Archer comments that among cartularies Boarstall 'remains in a class by itself, unsurpassed in elegance, decoration and refinement'. The psalter is in the Library at Christ Church, Oxford.

The Fremantle, Spencer Bernard and Drake papers were all used in the latest edition of the *History of the House of Commons*, which covers 1820–32.

We contributed numerous items to the exhibition at the County Museum on *The Victorians*. It provided a rare opportunity to display the large-scale 1/500 (10 feet to 1 mile) Ordnance Survey plans of Aylesbury from the 1870s, which show the town in amazing detail, while the ever-popular 'The Hidden Poor', based on the county gaol registers of the 1870s, was again displayed. A new dimension to the latter was provided by the Museum's artist-in-residence, *Guardian* cartoonist Ros Asquith, who incorporated photographs of the Victorian prisoners into some of the drawings in her own concurrent exhibition, providing a powerful and often moving demonstration of the effect these remarkable archives can have on modern viewers. In addition, we used Collections

Showcases to exhibit selections from other archives of Victorian Aylesbury that we hold, including the printers Hazell, Watson and Viney, Nestle (formerly the Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company), and the builders Webster and Cannon, as well as the short-lived chocolate factory of Joseph Kipling in Walton Street. The exhibition was sponsored by the William Harding Charity and it was therefore a pleasure to be able to display some of their own archives, relating to 19th-century apprenticeships which they had funded.

STOCKTAKING

For the first time in many years, CBS closed for a week's stocktaking, which took place in January 2009. While we have no wish to inconvenience our readers, the closure period was very useful because it enabled us to undertake a number of pressing tasks that could simply not have been carried out alongside our normal public service. These included re-shelving material in the archive strongrooms and local studies library in order to make more effective use of our very limited space, updating our strongroom inventories, and resuming our programme of checking individual collections against the catalogues to ensure everything is in place.

We hope that the stocktaking week will become a regular feature of our calendar, although we would prefer future closures to take place in December, which has always been the month when visitor figures are at their lowest.

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

We received funding from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) for a joint project with John Colet Secondary School, Wendover, to make First World War archives and artefacts available for use in the classroom. Selected records held in CBS were scanned and published in CD format, including letters home, a soldier's diary, a log book from the trenches, photographs, wartime Christmas cards and parts of the roll of honour. Three soldiers connected with Wendover or Aylesbury were chosen as the subjects of individual biographies, using the 1901 census and newspapers. An emphasis was placed on men who fought in the local regiments of the Bucks Battalions of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

(OBLI) and the Royal Bucks Hussars. The OBLI military museum at Caversfield, near Bicester, was most helpful in supplying details about the soldiers. The grant also enabled us to purchase original and replica items, which were packed into cases by our conservator, under the title 'A Soldier's Kit Bag'. The items include helmet, boots, balaclava, shaving kit, mugs, gas mask and hood, Enfield rifle (de-commissioned) and bayonet. The artefacts and CD are available for use by other schools and libraries.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

The published *Buckinghamshire Sessions Records*, which contain calendars of the earliest surviving Buckinghamshire Quarter Sessions records for the years 1678–1733, have now been published on the Record Society website at www.bucksinfo.net/brs. We are very grateful to the Record Society for organising and paying for the digitisation of these volumes for us. The original Quarter Sessions order books and rolls from which the calendars were compiled are, of course, available for consultation in CBS.

PARALYMPICS ARCHIVES

We are currently involved in the Accentuate programme, which is the project for the South East Region under the umbrella of Legacy Trust UK, the body which assists communities across the country to build a lasting legacy from the London Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2012. The project is largely funded by the Trust and by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA). 'Paralympic Region' is one of five different sections within Accentuate, and it aims to ensure that the role of our region as the birthplace of the Paralympic movement through the work of Sir Ludwig Guttman at Stoke Mandeville is recognised by the world, and that the archives held at Stoke Mandeville are explored. Since the beginning of 2009, work has been underway on listing and finding out about three related collections at Stoke Mandeville. The project also provides for artistic interpretations, exhibitions and attempts to enhance the collections through current collecting. This will all continue through to the start of the 2012 Olympic Games.

ACCESSIONS

In 1998 122 accessions were received, including the parish registers and other parish records of Castlethorpe and Fawley, which begin in 1562 and 1573 respectively. Some of the other highlights are noted below.

We were invited to inspect the archives of Clarke and Son of High Wycombe, a solicitors' practice which dates back to the middle of the 19th century, and we were allowed to take on deposit anything judged to be of historical value. This proved to be the largest deposit of the year, since the firm's archives contain a considerable quantity of historical title deeds dating from the late 17th century onwards. As would be expected, they are mainly for High Wycombe and area, although some relate to other counties and these are being distributed to the appropriate record offices, e.g. London Metropolitan Archives. The collection will, however, need cleaning before a detailed examination and listing of the contents can be attempted. As with many long-established solicitors' practices, although deeds constitute the bulk of the archive, there are records relating to various other interests, for example the minute book of an Association of Baptist Churches, 1721–60, attended by representatives of churches in Ford, Berkhamsted, Wing, Aylesbury, Winslow, 'Sounden', Stony Stratford, Cuddington, Amersham and Wycombe. A note in 1760 records the ending of the Association, 'none but Barkhamsted Church appearing, the other sister Churches being entirely decay'd and broke off from us [presumably Berkhamsted] because they were too stiff in their mode of faith, &c'. The Clarke family's involvement with the Baptist Church is likely to be the explanation for this fascinating survival. Less immediately obvious is the reason for the presence in High Wycombe of the Bradwell School Board minute book, 1895–99, but again it is a welcome addition to our holdings.

Many records belonging to the late John Coales OBE FSA (obituary in *Records* 49, 274–6) were deposited, particularly business records of the family firm, Francis Coales and Son, corn millers and animal feed merchants, of Newport Pagnell, Olney, Bedford and Tring. The archive includes deeds of properties in Newport Pagnell, among them the Town Mills, as well as The Firs, Aylesbury, Hastoe Mills, Olney, from the 1940s, and properties in Bedford. The collection also

includes other records relating to the history of Newport Pagnell, such as accounts of the Newport Pagnell Clothing Society, 1832–85. At Mr Coales's request, the records of the Coales family, as opposed to the business, were deposited at Northamptonshire Record Office, but the deposit in CBS does include records of his mother's family, the Websters of Aylesbury.

Mr Coales's collection also includes the author's own copy of Joseph Staines's *The History of Newport Pagnell and its immediate vicinity* (1842). This was pasted by Staines into a large folio volume which contains annotations and additional illustrations, photographs and documents inserted by Staines himself and a later owner. One such is a letter to Staines from John Gough Nichols of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, who commented about the History: 'I think you have made a book more than usually amusing and readable for Topography.'

Deeds of the site of Stoke Mandeville Hospital were received, beginning in 1862, and they include the conveyance to Aylesbury Local Board of Health in 1883 by Thomas Norwood of Bierton, butcher, of over one acre of land in the hamlet of Walton, which Norwood had previously leased to the Board in 1881 and on which they had already erected a hospital for patients suffering from infectious diseases. Records of Chesham Cottage Hospital were deposited by Chesham Museum, including minutes for 1926–48.

As usual, deeds were received for a variety of properties, including the Brickmakers Arms, Brill, a malthouse in Chalfont St Peter, 1754–1886 (deposited by Amersham Museum from the bequest of Jean Archer), a former poorhouse at Sherington, 1830, 30–38 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury (Rycote Place), 1844–1996, a messuage with brewhouse and warehouse in Temple Street, Aylesbury (mortgaged by Daniel How, baker, in 1823), Cublington Farm and other properties in Cublington, 1683–1900, properties in Woughton-on-the-Green, 1686–1891, and lands of the Thornton Hall Estate, mainly in Beachampton, 1656–1804.

Records of the Wing Airport Resistance Association were deposited, relating both to the original campaign against the Third London Airport in the late 1960s and early 1970s and to a renewed campaign in 1979–81. Other notable accessions include Mr Roy Maycock's MSc thesis, 'The Flora of Buckinghamshire Churchyards', records of the Old Aylesburians Association (former pupils of

Aylesbury Grammar School), which closed in 2008 after 101 years' existence, and digital copies of photographs of the wartime sites of EKCO (E. K. Cole Ltd) at Aylesbury and Aston Clinton.

Finally, we continue to publish our quarterly newsletter, which contains a select list of archives received together with articles on items of interest and on current projects. To subscribe (free by

e-mail, £1 per annum by post), please contact the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, County Hall, Aylesbury HP20 1UU, or archives@buckscc.gov.uk. Our website address is www.buckscc.gov.uk/archives.

*Roger Bettridge FHA RMSA
County Archivist*

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

REPORT FOR 2008–2009

This year saw steady progress on the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Historic Towns Project and commencement of the access and conservation works at Quarrendon Leas, Aylesbury. In parliament, a draft of the long-awaited Heritage Protection Bill was published but despite cross-party support it was not included in the Queen's Speech – the government explained that it was postponed due to the need to concentrate on tackling the economic crisis. On a more encouraging note we were told that heritage protection reform would not be abandoned and that a new planning policy statement would be consulted upon in 2009.

Throughout the year core activities in planning, conservation and the Historic Environment Record were maintained. In July 2008 we bade farewell to David Radford, whose diligence in the role of planning archaeologist over the past six years was justly rewarded by appointment to the post of Oxford City Archaeologist. David was replaced by Eliza Alqassar, who joined us from Cambridgeshire County Council. The team had a rare opportunity to get their hands dirty contributing to a very enjoyable National Archaeology Week excavation at Boarstall Manor organised by the National Trust.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The service has continued to contribute to the new Local Development Frameworks (LDF) for each district. A key issue has been the location of new 'strategic development areas' around Aylesbury and on the western flank of Milton Keynes to accommodate almost fifteen thousand new homes between them. Whilst the final decision will not be known until after a public hearing in 2010 it has been encouraging that heritage has been a factor considered in selecting preferred areas.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

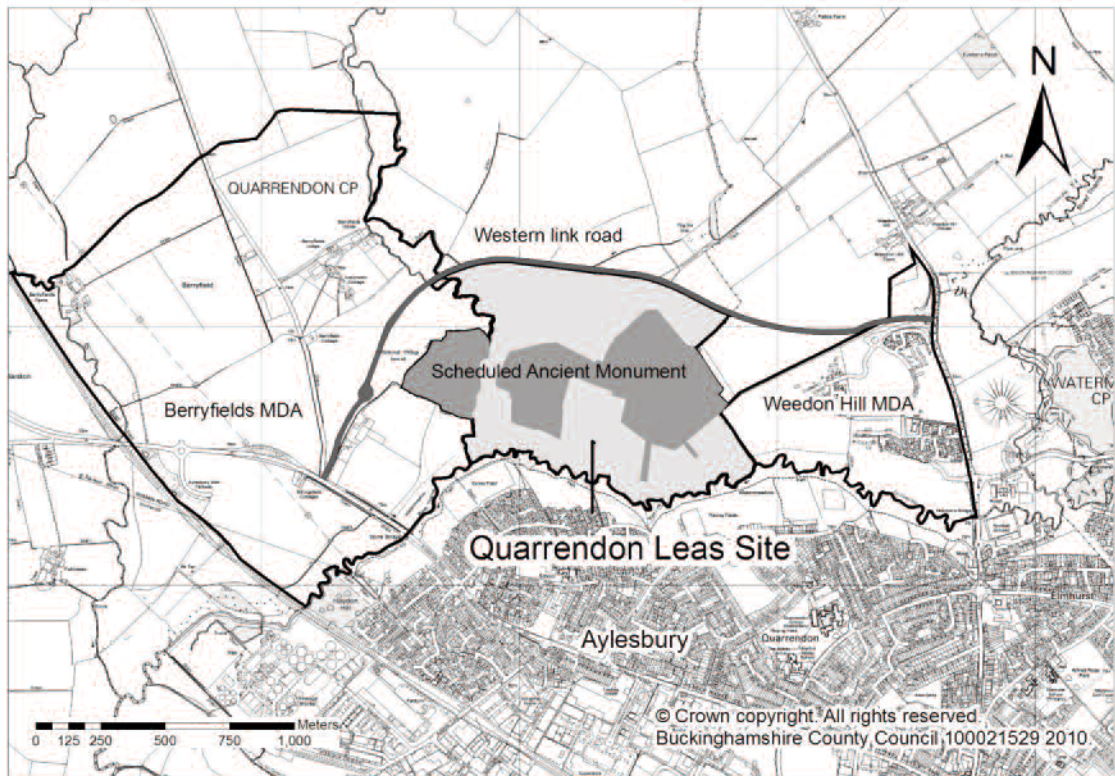
Planning and conservation advice casework involved 646 consultations, of which 193 required positive follow up. After an active start to the year

the pace of development dropped away over the summer and autumn as recession bit. Nevertheless, the year saw many small-scale evaluations and watching briefs, which are reported in Archaeological Notes, and a few more substantial investigations. At Berryfields Major Development Area near Aylesbury a small Iron Age settlement has been excavated by Oxford Archaeology. At Denham stripping of overburden for mineral extraction revealed two small in-situ Early Mesolithic flint scatters. All Souls Quarry near Wexham produced a circular Bronze Age enclosure overlain by a complex Roman site which formed an extension of a substantial settlement investigated by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in previous years.

A number of planning applications have been made at Westcott Royal Ordnance Factory, which is also being considered for a future planning allocation for further employment use. This is a nationally important Cold War rocket research establishment containing a number of structures worth of protection through listing or scheduling. Other less significant structures are to be recorded prior to demolition.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The "Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy" highlights priorities for provision of accessible green space and includes the historic environment within its definition, key components and opportunity areas. In particular, the ancient monument site at Quarrendon Leas (see map) has been shown to meet a national open space standard by providing a new 100 hectare public green space on the north side of Aylesbury between the major new housing development sites at Berryfields and Weedon Hill. The Council established the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust with the aim of taking ownership of Quarrendon Leas under the provisions of a legal agreement signed between the District Council and the Berryfields development consortium. With the trust in place and an initial phase of funding from the Government's 'Growth



Location of Quarrendon Leas, north of Aylesbury

Areas Fund' and English Heritage it was possible to begin a program of access and conservation works. So far the main focus has been on the construction of a new hard-surfaced footpath which will link the monument to the Berryfields development and identifying urgent conservation work (see photograph). However, as the recession has delayed the start of development, access will remain limited to rights of way for the time-being.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

The HER experienced very similar levels of use as the previous year with 134 direct enquiries and 3502 users of the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past" web site. Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past received the honour of coming second in an on-line national poll for the best historic environment record website – unfortunately we narrowly missed catching up with Warwickshire in the final week. Thank you to everyone who voted for us!

There were a number of enhancement projects and other improvements during the year. In particular the Historic Landscape Characterisation data was fully integrated into the HER database; records for previous key archaeological investigations (metal-detecting rallies, field-walking surveys and excavations) were created and records of historic buildings and conservation areas in Wycombe District were enhanced. A 5-year Action Plan for the development of the HER was completed, including proposals for development in response to the Heritage Protection Reforms.

REGIONAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Work continued behind the scenes at Oxford Wessex Archaeology to pull together the regional chapters of the Solent-Thames research framework project, though progress has been much slower than expected. A positive spin-off for Bucking-



PLATE St Peter's Church, Quarrendon: ruins at risk from tree roots (the bush has since been removed as part of the conservation work)

hamshire has been to inspire a popular book and museum exhibition timetabled for spring 2010.

HISTORIC TOWNS PROJECT

To better understand the evolution of Buckinghamshire's towns and with a view to contributing towards their future management, the County Archaeological Service, with Milton Keynes Design and Conservation team, is undertaking a survey of 30 historic towns in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. These towns range from places which are still recognisably towns today such as Amersham, Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Newport Pagnell to villages that once aspired to urban status such as Denham and Hanslope. The project includes places like Gerrards Cross that

only grew up in the early twentieth century, but excludes the modern city of Milton Keynes. The data and reports will be held by the Historic Environment Records for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes respectively.

The year saw production of reports on Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham Haddenham and Long Crendon (available on the County Council website). The Aylesbury report was used to produce a Historic Environment Character Assessment of Aylesbury Town Centre which contributed towards the Aylesbury Town Centre Masterplan.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Over the next year the County Archaeological Service will be completing the first phase of

access and conservation works at Quarrendon Leas and working with the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust and other partners on the future phases of this exciting long-term project. We will also be co-ordinating a response to the promised new integrated planning policy statement. A major review of County Council services is anticipated in response to the current economic pressures. April 2008 marked the tenth anniversary of the team's transfer from the county museum to the planning and environment service following a period of upheaval and threatened closure. Ten years on the county council faces financial chal-

lenges of perhaps even greater magnitude – we can only hope that the undoubted achievements and dedication of our small team over the past decade will stand us in good stead through these straightened times.

*Alexander (Sandy) Kidd
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Buckinghamshire County Council*

For further information on the County Archaeological Service, visit our web site: <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/archaeology/index.htm>