



Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Project NEWSLETTER

Bulletin No 3: 2008/09



Introduction

Welcome to the third in a series of newsletters informing the progress of the historic towns project. The project, funded by English Heritage and undertaken by the County Archaeological Service, seeks to understand the historic character and archaeological dimension of Buckinghamshire's market towns. The work involves creating digital maps and a report on each town. The information gathered will be used as a resource to inform management of our towns and as a useful reference for the residents of Buckinghamshire.

This edition focuses upon the latest findings from the towns of Bletchley, Fenny Stratford and Newport Pagnell.

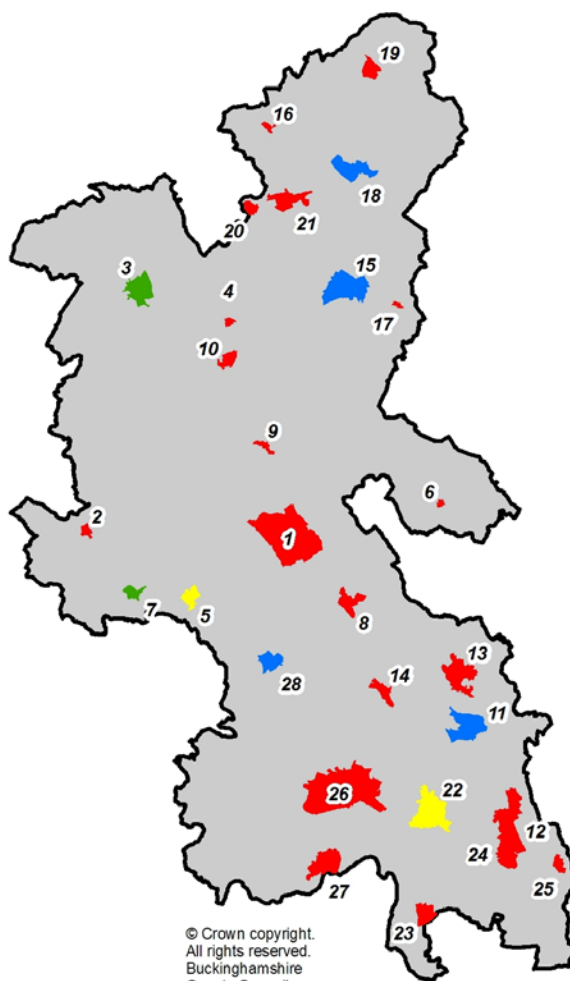
Progress so far

Creating reports for each town involves a number of phases, the first is the digital mapping of the built environment character of each town. Good progress has been made since the last newsletter, all of the towns have been provisionally recorded. (See map to the right).

The second and third phase of the work are data gathering and report writing. To date consultation draft reports have been completed for the towns for Beaconsfield, Haddenham, Long Crendon and Buckingham while drafts for the towns of Bletchley, Fenny Stratford Newport Pagnell, Amersham and Princes Risborough are in preparation and will be available soon.

Historical Research

Researchers from Leicester University's Department of Local History, have completed an assessment of the significance of documentary sources for each town. The information gathered is already making a contributing to the individual town reports. An overarching report will be produced and published as a separate paper.



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Aylesbury Vale

1. Aylesbury
2. Brill
3. Buckingham
4. Great Horwood
5. Haddenham
6. Ivinghoe
7. Long Crendon
8. Wendover
9. Whitchurch
10. Winslow

Chiltern District

11. Amersham
12. Chalfont St Peter
13. Chesham
14. Great Missenden

Milton Keynes

15. Bletchley & Fenny Stratford
16. Hanslope
17. Little Brickhill
18. Newport Pagnell
19. Olney
20. Stony Stratford
21. New Bradwell & Wolverton

South Bucks District

22. Beaconsfield
23. Burnham
24. Gerrards Cross
25. Denham

Wycombe District

26. High Wycombe
27. Marlow (Great)
28. Princes Risborough

- Urban Character Mapping Completed
- Consultation Draft
- Draft in Progress
- Report Completed*

Town	Progress	
	Data Gathering	Consultation Starts
Tranche 1		
4. Buckingham	Completed	January 2008
Tranche 2		
5. Bletchley	Completed	March 2009
6. Fenny Stratford	Completed	March 2009
7. Newport Pagnell	Completed	March 2009
8. Amersham	Completed	March 2009
6. Princes Risborough	Completed	March 2009
7. Aylesbury	In Progress	April 2009
Tranche 3		
9. Wendover	Completed	April 2009
10. Stony Stratford	In Progress	April 2009

Bletchley & Fenny Stratford

Settlement History

The town of Bletchley is in fact the combination of several settlements that have grown together since medieval times; this including Water Eaton (the principal settlement in the early medieval period), the hamlets of Far Bletchley and Old Bletchley and the 13th century planned town of Fenny Stratford. Old Bletchley, (Bletchley Green) is first mentioned in the 12th century as the location of the parish church, the hamlet remained small however with the church and later Bletchley Park as the settlement focus. Lower Bletchley was based around a crossroads between a Roman road linking Buckingham with Akeman Street and a lesser road linking the parish with Newton Longville in the south and the woods of Whaddon Chase and Rickley in the north. Fenny Stratford is first mentioned in the middle of the 13th century when it received a fair charter, documentary and morphological evidence suggests that the town was deliberately placed on Watling Street/Aylesbury Street so as to reap maximum benefit from passing trade along that busy road.

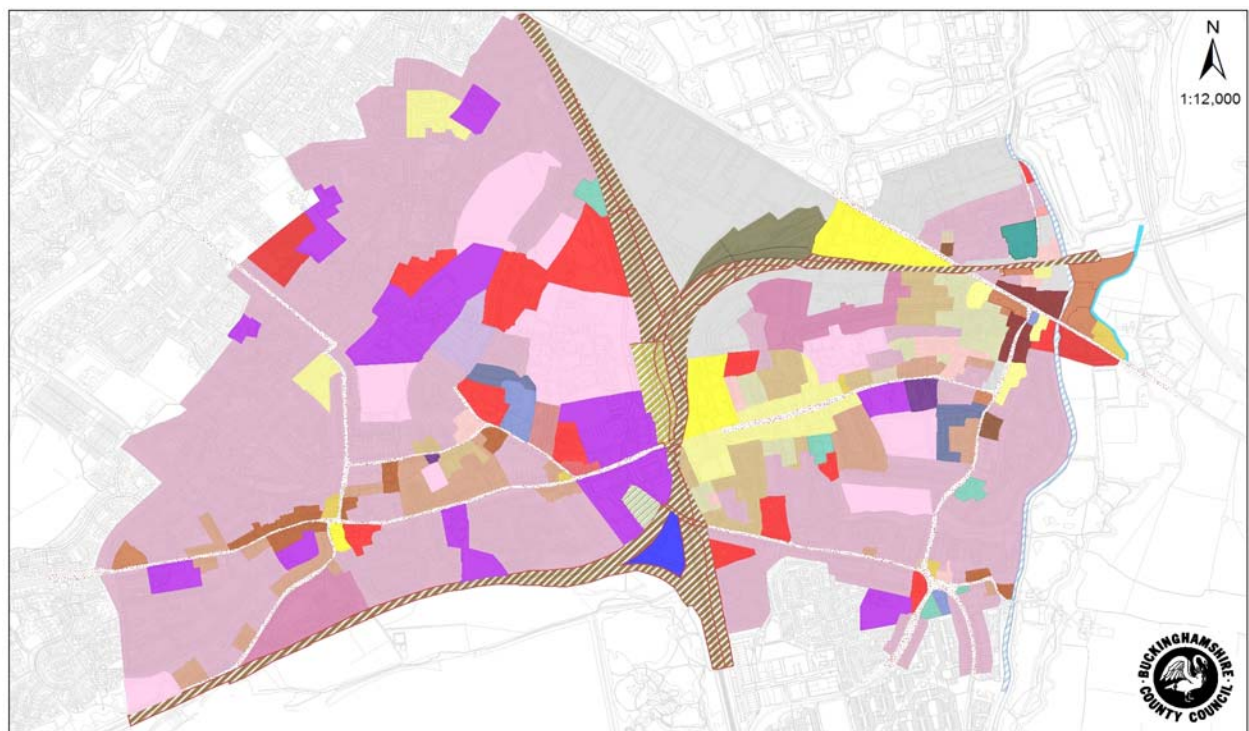
The settlements of Bletchley parish remained small however, until the mid 19th century when first the canal and then the railway brought the area more importance.

Modern settlement growth to the east of the railway began in the late 19th to early 20th century, creating the entirely new area of Central Bletchley. In the 1950s development increased significantly as the favourable transport connections promoted the area as a London overspill area, and finally in the 1970s Bletchley gradually merged with the newly created town of Milton Keynes.



Archaeology

Settlement growth in Bletchley and Milton Keynes have provided a comparative wealth of archaeological evidence for the parish. The archaeological record for the parish is so far limited for the prehistoric period although notable sites have been recorded at Saffron Gardens and at Tattenhoe Lane. Evidence for Roman activity is much more in abundance with the proximity to *Magiovinium*, the only known Roman town in Buckinghamshire, as well as the location of two Roman roads in the parish. Archaeological excavation in Bletchley has also revealed evidence for several possible Roman farmsteads at Shenley Road, Holne Chase and Sherwood Drive, in all indicative of significant Roman activity within the area.



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|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Civic | Irregular Plots (historic) | Detached Villas 1919-1945 | Modern infill (Post 1980) | Modern Shops | Railway Works | lake/river |
| Church | Victorian Villas 1850-1900 | Middle Class Housing 1919-1945 | Private Housing (Post 1980) | Offices (Post 1945) | Railway station | Canal |
| Cemetery | Victorian Terraces 1850-1900 | Terraced Cottages 1919-1945 | education (historic) | Retail (Post 1945) | Roads | |
| Burgage Type Plots | Detached Villas 1900-1919 | Social Housing (1945-1980) | education (modern) | Industrial (Post 1945) | Factory | |
| Narrow plots | Middle Class 1900-1919 | Private Housing (1945-1980) | Medical (modern) | barracks/base | Leisure | |
| Rural Historic | Terraces & cottages 1900-1919 | Blocks of Flats 1945 | Pubs/Hotels | Railway | reservoir | |

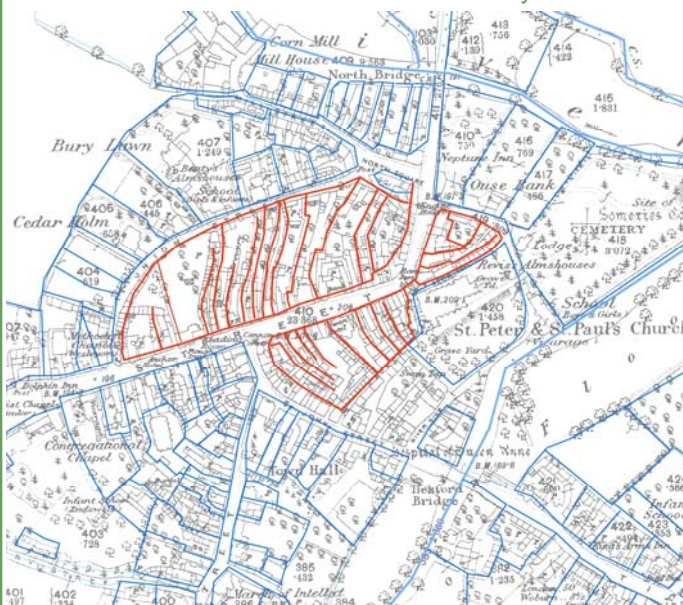
Newport Pagnell

Settlement History

Situated on the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Lovat, and at the crossroads of the routes to Northampton to London the town of Newport Pagnell is acknowledged as being one of Buckinghamshire's most prominent historic market towns. Newport is one of the few Buckinghamshire towns mentioned in the Domesday book which held the status of borough, suggesting that it was a well established by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. However the lack of documentary evidence prior to the conquest have led to some debate about its origins. The town's strategic location as a fording point has prompted some to speculate that the town originated as an Anglo Saxon burh, (defended town), while others suggest that Newport was a settlement that developed along established trade routes.

By the medieval period, Newport was under the management of a succession of Lords including the 12th century Fulk Paynel and his decendants, who gave the town it's suffix. Also in the 12th century a castle was established together with a Cluniac monastery at Tickford. Newport's position on major routes led it to become a 'thoroughfare town', a popular resting point for travellers and traders, consequently a number of inns grew up around the principal streets.

Newport Pagnell's geographical importance was reflected during the English Civil war when town was occupied by the Royalists and then in 1664 it was garrisoned by the Parliamentarians. The Parliamentarians are credited with fortifying the town with earthwork defences, a small section of the fortifications survive as earthworks in Bury Field and



Next Issue: March 2009

- Reports for public consultation Newport Pagnell and Amersham,
- Update: tranche 3 & 4 towns for Princes Risborough, Aylesbury and Wendover

are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The town in this period was also famous for the lacemaking industry.



At the start of the 19th century Newport continued to flourish as a coaching town, and benefited from the construction of new bridges, including cast iron bridge of Tickford (1810), the third oldest in the Britain. The transport revolution had an effect upon the town, a branch of the Grand Union canal connected to Newport in 1817. However, the canal was superseded by the railway (1863) which covered the same course. The connected Newport to the main line until its closure in 1964.

Newport also possessed a number of industries including tanning, fellmongering and parchment works (the latter still survives and is the only operating parchment works in Britain). Newport also became famous for the manufacture of coaches. By the 20th century the industry adapted to become a centre for car manufacturing, with establishment in the 1950s of the Aston Martin Lagonda factory at Tickford. The town was also influenced by the building of the M1 motorway in the 1950s and the eventual emergence of the new city of Milton Keynes. To the people who live outside of Buckinghamshire the town is now synonymous with the motorway service station.

Archaeology (town plan form)

The analysis of the town's topographical development from historic maps shows that the town has an interesting curvilinear pattern around the high Street. This has been interpreted as the possible Anglo Saxon burh, based upon the layout of the burgage plots and streets as well as limited place name evidence, (left image). Despite the lack of early detailed cartographic it has been suggested that Union Street follows the line of the northeast defences of the burh whilst the name Bury field itself is a reference to the defences. Alternatively the northern boundary of the burh could conceivably be demarcated by Union street rather it being an intra-mural street. The shape of the burgage plots abutting the High Street is also interesting, as the boundaries have a sinuous pattern. This has led to some speculation that the plots have utilised the extent of former strips from open field farming.

If you would like further information about the project or have comments about the newsletter then contact archaeological service on 01296 382656 or email: Historictowns@buckscc.gov.uk The consultation draft reports can be viewed on the Bucks County Council Website: Go to the A to Z index > archaeology > historic towns. Any contributions or remarks about the reports can be submitted to the email address above.