



Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Project

Bulletin No 2: July 2008



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Introduction

Welcome to the second 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 Long Crendon and Buckingham.

Progress so far

Creating reports for each town involves five distinct 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).

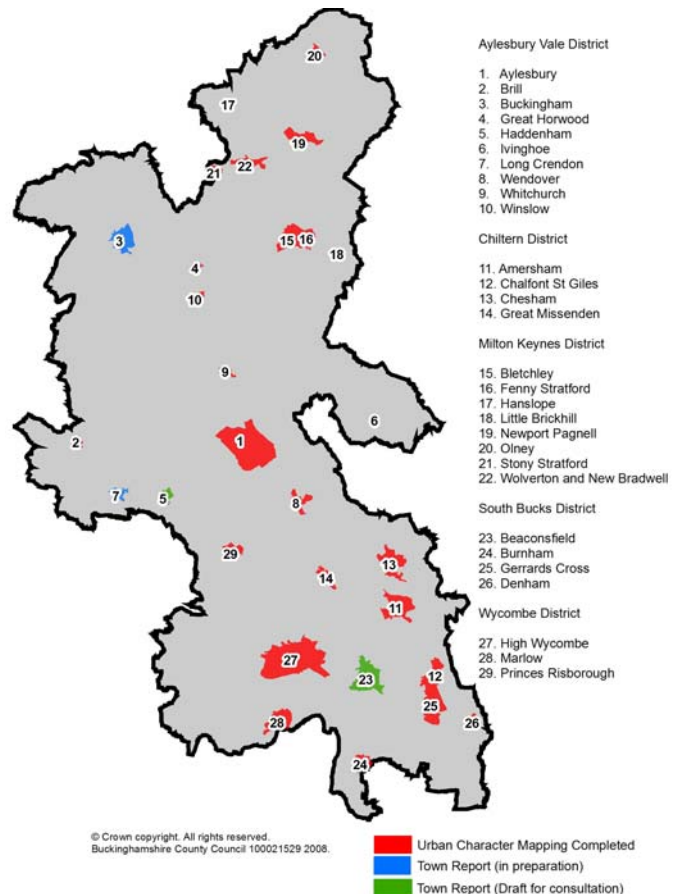
The second and third phase of the work are data gathering and report writing. To date consultation draft reports have been completed for the towns for Beaconsfield and Haddenham while drafts for the towns of Long Crendon and Buckingham are in preparation and will be available soon.

The fourth phase is the consultation period where the reports are available for viewing on the county council's website (for web address see below). The County Archaeological Service would welcome comment on the content of the reports.

The fifth stage is the publication of the final report.

Historical Research

As part of the project, researchers from Leicester University's Department of Local History, have been assessing the significance of the documentary sources for each town. The information gathered will contribute to the individual town reports. So far over half the towns have been covered (Tranches 1 and 2). Investigations into the remaining towns are expected to be completed by the end of the year.



Town	Progress	
	Data Gathering	Consultation Draft
Tranche 1		
1. Beaconsfield	Completed	25th August 2008
2. Haddenham	Completed	15th September 2008
3. Long Crendon	Completed	In Preparation
4. Buckingham	Completed	In Preparation
Tranche 2		
5. Aylesbury	In Progress	Winter 2008
6. Bletchley	In Progress	Winter 2008
7. Amersham	In Progress	Winter 2008
8. Princes Risborough	Autumn 2008	Winter 2008
9. Newport Pagnell	Autumn 2008	Winter 2008
10. Little Brickhill	Autumn 2008	Winter 2008

Long Crendon



Settlement History

Although usually regarded as a village, Long Crendon at one time had aspirations to become a town, having its own market and economically it became well known for its needle and lace industries. The earliest reference to Long Crendon comes from the Domesday Book of 1086 which shows that the town possessed certain qualities that would have enhanced its status at a local or even regional level, these included a deer park in the manor, one of only two in Buckinghamshire. Long Crendon was also situated within the Royal hunting forest of Bernwood. Ownership of the town throughout the medieval period was divided between royal, aristocratic and ecclesiastical lords. Long Crendon was given a market grant, in 1215, the location of which is the present square at Lower End. Despite possessing a market Long Crendon does not appear to have developed a thriving economy, perhaps due to the proximity of Thame.

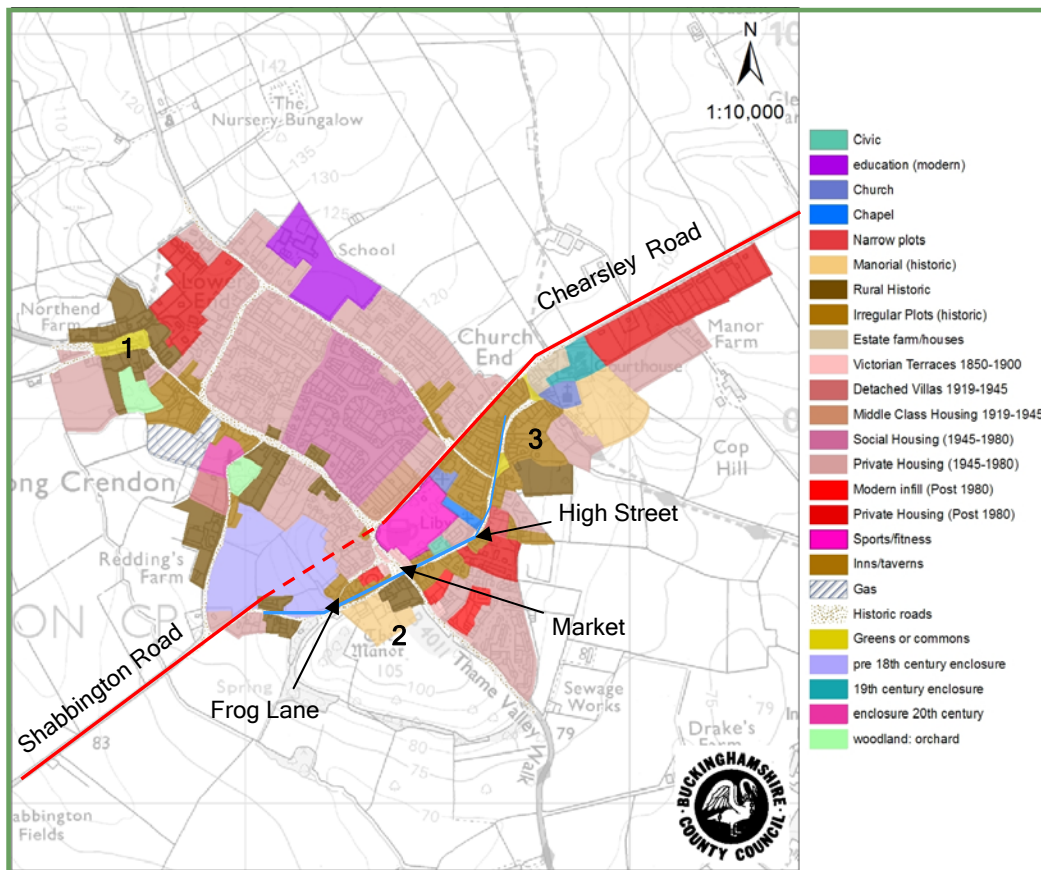
Up until the 20th century Long Crendon's character seems to have remained predominantly agricultural, despite the inhabitants pursuing a diverse range of occupations, including shoemaking and malting.

Archaeology

The archaeological record in Long Crendon has shown evidence of activity dating back to the Neolithic (4000–2350BC), There is some tentative evidence for Iron Age occupation. However the greatest evidence dates to the Medieval period.

Study of the plan form of Long Crendon also provide some clues as to the evolution of the village. Essentially it seems to have begun as a dispersed settlement of three distinct areas defined by former manors: 1. North End, 2. Lower End, and Church End. The latter two have coalesced into a defined settlement along the High Street and Frog Lane. Interestingly the alignment of the High Street has bypassed what is believed to be an earlier Roman road (Shabbington Road & Chearsley Road) which runs to the north. (See map). If the Roman road was the Chearsley road, it is unclear why it might stop when it reaches the Bicester road only to resume a short distance away? Nor is it clear why the focus of the village was High Street in the medieval period, although further documentary and archaeological research may throw some light on the issue.

Long Crendon is also renowned for its concentration of historic buildings. Particular characteristics are 'cruck' constructed timber framed buildings and the use of witchert as a building material, (see picture above).



Buckingham

Settlement History

Buckingham was once the principal town in the county. It has a long history and is known to have been founded as a defended settlement or 'burh' by Edward the Elder in AD 914 against the Vikings. The settlement by the Middle Ages was an administrative centre of the county containing a large market and was conferred the status of a 'wool town' in the 13th century, a centre that supplied wool to growing textiles industry in Europe.

By the 15th century Buckingham's political and economic influence began to wane, and lost its assizes and its status as the county town to the more influential Aylesbury. Despite its setbacks, Buckingham still remained an important centre of industry and commerce, in the 18th century the town was particularly renowned for tanning and bell founding.

Archaeology (town plan form)

Given Buckingham's long history there have been complex changes to the pattern and extent of the town plan. The Buckinghamshire Towns project seeks to unravel the evolution of towns by examining street and boundary patterns from historic maps and archaeological evidence.

It is not precisely known where the earliest settlements of the Anglo Saxon burhs were located, although one theory is thought that they were confined within the loop in the river, with the main defences positioned on site of the present church.

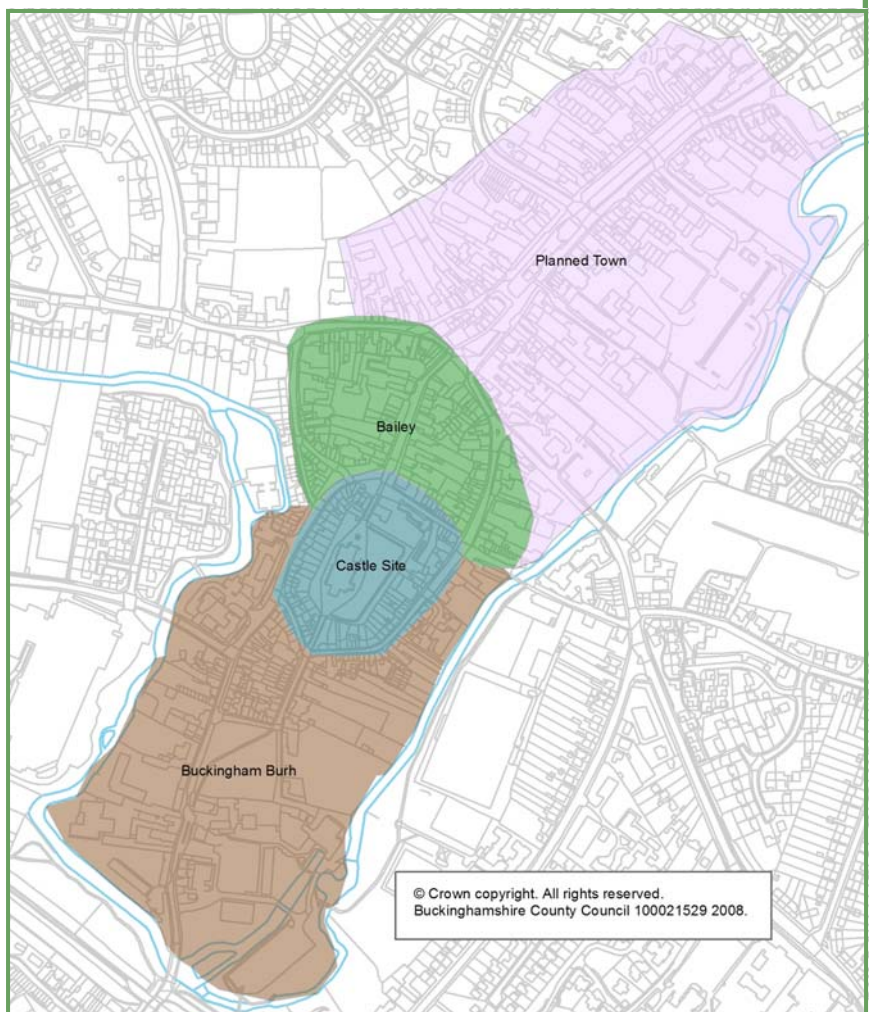
The historic maps provide better evidence to the growth of the town in the medieval and later periods. There is evidence that part of the burh might have been developed into a motte and bailey castle in the 12th century, the curving boundaries of Well, Nelson and West Streets seem to demarcate the extent of the castle. By contrast the market and high street is suggestive of later medieval town planning, with shops arranged into long thin burgage plots abutting the market.

Next Issue: October 2008

- Reports for public consultation Long Crendon and Buckingham
- Update: Second tranche towns for Aylesbury and Newport Pagnell



Picture: Buckingham Manor



If you would like further information about the project or have comments about the newsletter then contact David Green on 01296 382656 or email: dagreen@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.