

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 2 Issue 2

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## Archaeology and Buildings

In this third issue of Historic Environment Today we concentrate on the buildings of Herefordshire.

On one level buildings can be seen as just 'above ground archaeology', the material evidence of past lives. Archaeologists look at the size and organisation of rooms in a building and the location of focal points such as hearths and doors in order to perceive how people lived and what they were like. For example it has been suggested that the enclosure of medieval open fields in 17th and 18th century England happened at the same time as greater privacy, ownership of personal possessions and enclosure (in the sense of more walls and separate rooms) in the family home. In other words 'enclosure' was a psychological revolution, not an agricultural one.

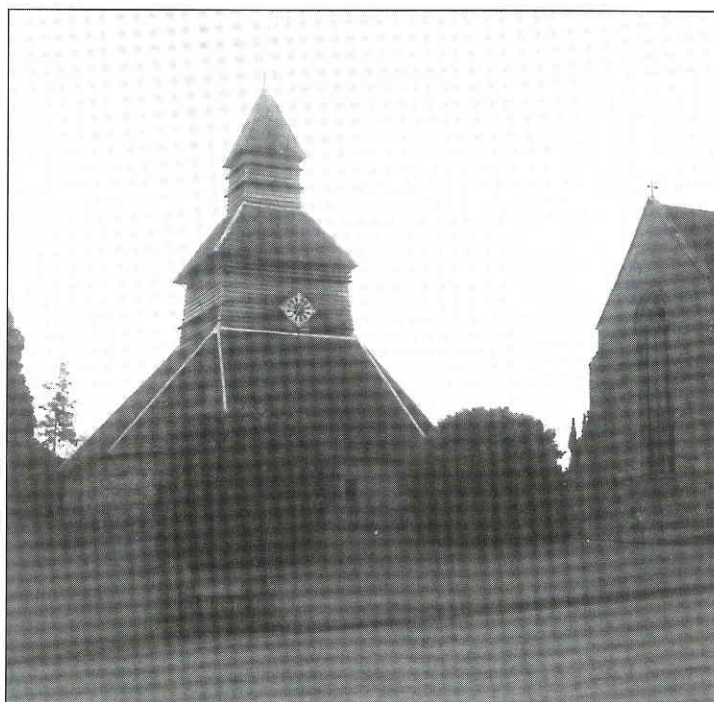
Archaeologists also look at the basic building blocks of houses. Much can be learnt by studying where the stone, brick, wood etc came from, how it was transported, marketed and used. For example through studying buildings scholars have worked out how many houses a wood could sustainably supply, what that wood looked like and how it was managed.

On another level of course historic buildings are very much a part of the present day economy and culture and are highly valued, more so than their modern counterparts. This is reflected in a series of national and local planning laws - from the listing of buildings to Conservation Areas. Herefordshire Council employs five historic building officers, who are primarily responsible for preserving and enhancing the built environment. They are introduced in this issue along with some new initiatives, new listings and other buildings news.

*Rebecca Roseff*

## Dating Pembridge Bell Tower

Detached bell towers such as the one at Pembridge are unusual in Herefordshire. There are only two in the county (the other is at Yarpole). The Pembridge tower was thought on stylistic evidence to date to the 14th century. However, recent investigations funded by English Heritage have found that this was not the case. Building recording work by AIL and dendrochronological dating (dating by analysis of tree rings) by English Heritage on 53 pieces of oak used in the tower has found that the tower was first built as a single structure between 1207 and 1216. It subsequently fell into disrepair and was completely rebuilt, re-using many of the old timbers in 1668/9.



*Pembridge Bell Tower*

## Buildings at Risk Survey

The intention is to complete the survey for the whole of the county. Currently the former Hereford City and the Leominster Districts have completed surveys. The survey is a useful tool for monitoring the condition of our stock of 6,000 listed buildings and setting priorities and targeting resources for their management.

*Anne Morris*

**Inside: Eardisley Park ⇔ Stone Roofs ⇔ Shobdon Arches ⇔ People ⇔ PPG15/PPG16**

**“In the past, when transportation was more difficult roof slates were often procured from within the site.”**

## **An Old Industry Revived**

Of the characteristic materials and features of this county probably the most difficult to maintain/retain are its stone slated roofs. These are particularly prevalent on the western side of the county where the stone bedrock occurs near the ground surface. It splits naturally and easily along its bed planes to produce the roof slates.

Stone slate quarries are an example of an industry that has gone into decline for a number of reasons, though moves are afoot to revive it. The stone slates in this county are sandstone and differ fundamentally from the more abundant limestone slates of our neighbours in Gloucestershire. Three sites in Herefordshire have permission for quarrying at the moment, but owing to personal circumstances none are currently working. It is hoped that at least one, near Craswall, will be re-opened soon.

In the past, when transportation was more difficult roof slates were often procured from within the site. This rarely happens today, though one current project at Ty'n-y-Gwnt, Michaelchurch Escley, has applied recently to get roof stone from within the site (see below 'Recording a . . .'). Nick Dean, Herefordshire Council's Minerals and Waste Officer is assisting with this application and is currently working on policies for the Unitary Development Plan to encourage this type of small scale production.

The reuse of stone slates presents its own problems with buildings being stripped and even theft of slates from roofs taking place. The only solution is an adequate source of 'new' stone slates.

Gloucestershire County Council, advised by their Principal Planning Officer Andrew Sierakowski have invited ourselves as well as representatives from the rural districts of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire County Council and North Wiltshire District Council to take part in a 'Stone Slate Initiative'. This will be the first of its kind in the country.

This group is in its initial stages with the main issues and objectives being ascertained. There is no doubt that any project that promotes the awareness and understanding of such traditional materials will assist us in protecting the historic character of our environment.

*Paul Gibbons*

## **People**

Five people work specifically on historic buildings in the Conservation Team of the Conservation and Environmental Planning Department of Herefordshire Council. Anne Morris and Paul Gibbons Principal Historic Building Conservation Officers and Noel Knight, Historic Buildings Surveyor are based in Leominster while Dave Baxter, Principal Historic Buildings Conservation Officer and Rachel Bonner, (see below) are based in Hereford.

Two new members of staff have recently joined the Team. Julian Cotton is the new archaeological advisor replacing Helena Smith. Julian was previously working as a project officer in Lancaster working on a variety of sites in the north of England. Rachel Bonner replaces Becky Waddington as the Assistant Historic Buildings Officer. Rachel was previously working as Heritage Assistant with British Waterways and was based in Rugby.



*Eardisland dovecote currently being 'conservatively repaired'*

## **Recording a medieval longhouse**

Ty'n-y-Gwynt is a Welsh longhouse that has been unoccupied for the past 60 years. Happily it has now found an owner who wants to live in it. Prior to conversion a building survey was carried out by Border Archaeology. Ty'n-y-Gwynt is clearly earlier than the 17th century it was described as in the listed building description. The current survey recorded four cruck truss supports with original roof timbers. The house is a dry stone wall structure, but has a limestone mortar infill in the interior walling and limewashed horse-hair plaster skin. Later additions to the building consist of a 17th century chimney-stack, bread oven and range.

Stylistically this type of building is 14th – 16th century, and high status. George Nash, of Border Archaeology, considered that the timbers had in fact been recycled and possibly originated from a high medieval open hall.

## Shobdon Arches To Stay Put

A detailed building survey of Shobdon Arches by Richard K Morriss & Associates for the Shobdon Arches Trust took place in late summer 1996. The Arches are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade II listed and stand within a Grade II listed garden on the English Heritage Parks and Gardens Register.

Prior to their study the historical and artistic significance of the carvings and their place in the 'Herefordshire School' had been the subject of several learned papers and publications, most notably by George Zarnecki. Concern about the deterioration of the arches and how best to preserve them has been expressed by several individuals and organisations since the mid 19th century.

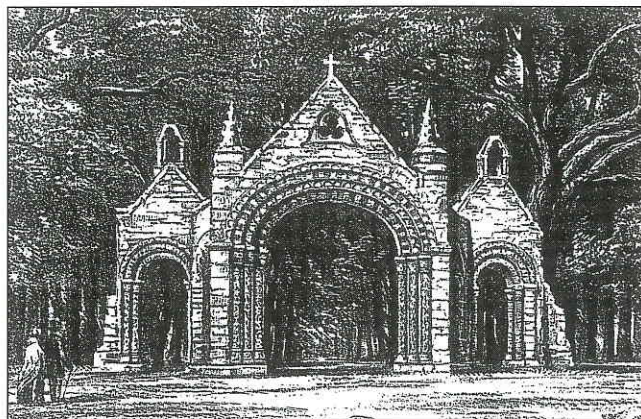
This recent study concludes that structurally, and archaeologically, the Shobdon Arches are relatively simple. It seems clear that the bulk of the masonry was taken from the old Norman church (of Shobdon) in 1751-1752 and carefully re-erected in full view on top of the slope to the north of Shobdon Court as an eyecatcher. Later changes have mainly been to do with its stabilisation.

The Shobdon Arches are, therefore, a mid-18th century folly. The main difference between the Arches and most other follies of the period is that they are largely made of reused but extremely important mid-12th century sculpture and carvings. This makes the monument rather unusual and for 150 years at least there have been different opinions as to their significance and importance. Up until fairly recently, it was the importance of the Romanesque sculpture as native art that was stressed. Zarnecki wrote in 1953 that

'Its sculpture astonishes us with its mixture of styles and motives. Some of them go back to pre-Conquest times and can be paralleled by the decoration of Anglo-Saxon crosses. There are also links with Scandinavian art, while some motives appear to have been borrowed from Reading and others from Western France.'

Their role within the man-made landscape however was not considered to be significant. Indeed, the several schemes to remove the Arches from their site to comparative safety within a museum or new structure never took their position into consideration. In more recent years there has been a growing interest in historic landscape and the Arches are now also seen as an important example of 18th century parkscape folly ñ especially as they were clearly related to the surviving temple to the east of the former house. Since the surrounding parkland has been listed, any proposals of the future conservation of the Arches can no longer ignore their landscape value.

*Richard Morriss*



*Shobdon Arches, from a George Lewis drawing of 1844*

## PPGs, Buildings and Archaeology

Anyone with a working interest in the historic environment needs to be fully aware of the contents of the two Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Notes 15 and 16. PPG notes set out Government policy on planning issues and provide guidance to local authorities and others on the operation of the planning system.

PPG15, dated September 1994, covers Planning and the Historic Environment, whilst PPG 16, dated November 1990, is titled Archaeology and Planning. These documents are complementary and cement the link between archaeology and the historic built environment.

One distinct area where liaison is advantageous is recording remains that would be lost in the course of works that are proposed. A good example of this is Ty'n-y-Gwynt, discussed on page 2.

Whilst this information is important in itself as an archive, the broader issue of understanding a building or site's development as part of the decision making process for further change is fundamental.

Meetings between our two disciplines take place on a regular basis in order to discuss particular proposals and applications. *Paul Gibbons*

## New Leaflets

A series of wide ranging guidance notes covering all elements of historic building construction throughout the county are in the process of being prepared. The leaflets cover such aspects as the history and origins of materials, their use and application together with suggested advice for maintenance and repair. Topics covered range from thatch and stone tile roofing, timber frame repairs, pointing and mortars, through to repainting and routine maintenance.

It is hoped that the leaflets will be available free of charge. For further information please contact Noel Knight (01432 260180)

## Dealing with Disaster

Black Hall Barn at Kings Pyon was an early medieval cruck framed barn, listed Grade II\*. It was disastrously destroyed by fire on 9.2.1999. This was a terrible loss for the heritage of the county as it was part of an impressive complex of farm buildings at Black Hall which includes a Grade II\* farmhouse, barn, stable, hop drying house and cart sheds.

The charred remains of the ancient oak trusses have now been tree-ring dated by Lampeter University, funded by English Heritage, to give us a more definite date for the building which is anticipated to be early 14th century. This research will participate in building a national picture of the age and development of cruck frames. The results will be published when they are known.

Eardisley Park was an early 18th century (Georgian) two-storey farmhouse, which was raised to 3 storeys, and altered, probably in the early 19th century. Sadly it was destroyed by fire on 29.1.1999. The whole of the interior was gutted resulting in the loss of the fabulous original staircase, wall panelling and panelled doors and fireplaces. All that remains are parts of the lower walls and the north wall. It is hoped to rebuild and restore the building in a similar form to the original.

*Anne Morris*

## Re-Use and Adaption of Rural Buildings

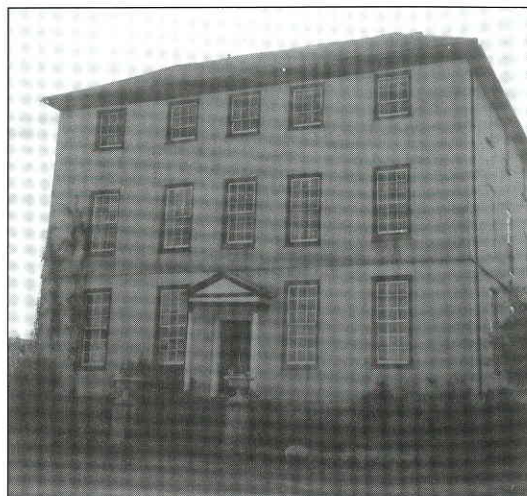
A Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) paper has been produced on the above topic through collaboration between the Forward Planning and Conservation Sections of Herefordshire Council.

It will provide information to assist those considering making planning applications and applications for Listed Building consent. The intention is to bring together the development plan policies and guidance advice on this topic that was given by the former constituent authorities of the county. On completion we will have a document giving guidance on this particularly difficult issue that will be available to architects, planning consultants and members of the public. Paul Gibbons

## New Listings in South Herefordshire

Recent listings include Halo Cottage at Bosbury, a timber box framed house built in the early 18th century, Evendine Court a domestic science school built around 1896 and the summerhouse at Holmer Park, Hereford. This latter building was converted from an aviary and was built by the father of the famous Alfred Watkins.

*Rachel Bonner and Dave Baxter*



*Eardisley Park, recently gutted by fire*

## Grants News

Demand for assistance with the repair of listed buildings well outstripped the available budget last year. This year already seems to be shaping the same way. A limited budget has been approved and applications are already being received. The grant scheme is open to owners of buildings listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and is levied at a rate of 25% up to a grant ceiling of £4000. Eligible repairs include most elements associated with the walls and roof. For further information please contact Noel Knight (01432 260180)

## Bromyard Enhancement

Bromyard Shopfront and Paving Enhancement schemes have been set up in partnership with officers of the Council and the Bromyard and District Development Working Party. The objective is to enhance and preserve existing historic shop fronts and to improve the character and appearance of the pavements in the Town Centre. It is anticipated that the new scheme will replace the existing interlocking concrete pavements with traditional stone paving and kerbs. *Anne Morris*

## Announcements and Events

Hereford City and County Archaeological Trust Ltd are holding a conference and exhibition at The Great Hall Bishop's Palace, Hereford, on May 22 beginning 1300 hours. Glyn Coppack from English Heritage will be talking about Wigmore Castle, John van Laun on the evolution of Hereford rail track, Andy Boucher on recent discoveries in Herefordshire and Ron Shoesmith on the Cantilupe shrine in Hereford Cathedral. Entrance is £5.00

On the same day there is a day school at the University of Birmingham on The Herefordshire School of Sculpture (£16, £11 concessions) Tel 0121 414 3413