

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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Marking the Millennium

Over the next twelve months, many events in Herefordshire will mark the Millennium. Individual communities like Kimbolton and Colwall have developed a full programme, and such events will include a strong element of reflection on the past. The Millennium Greens of villages such as Eardisley and Kingsland are among several material memorials to the year 2000. Two millennia of Christianity will be celebrated by wider events, many centred on Hereford Cathedral. Other such events include the Local History Day School on 'The Early Church in Herefordshire', in Leominster in June 2000.

Archaeologically, two county-wide surveys will provide a record of Herefordshire at the Millennium. The first is the Woolhope Club Field Name Survey's 'Millennium Air Survey', undertaken by Chris Musson and supported by *Herefordshire Archaeology*. Besides placing a full archive of photographs at the County Record Office in Hereford, it is planned to publish the survey through a book written by Chris and by Ruth Richardson. The second survey, this time producing a mapping of the development of the whole landscape is *Herefordshire Archaeology's* Historic Landscape Characterisation project, introduced by Paul White below.

Keith Ray

In this issue

We feature news of the first *Time Team* project in Herefordshire, and the surprising results of the Mere Hill investigations. We carry items on the historic landscape, and Ian Bapty contributes a piece on Offa's Dyke.



Filming the *Time Team* project at Sutton on 13th October.

Time Team at Sutton

An event in its own right was the collaborative project between Herefordshire Archaeology and Channel 4 television's *Time Team* in October. A project and production team numbering over 80 people was assembled for three days of intensive filming and fieldwork early in the month. This coincided remarkably with a full five days of calm bright autumnal weather, showing the Herefordshire countryside at its very finest.

The success of the project was measured in the extent and nature of the discoveries made during the investigations. It was also a reflection of the degree of detailed project planning carried out by *Herefordshire Archaeology* staff during the two months before the fieldwork began, as well as the professionalism of the programme director and film crews, and the co-operation and involvement of English Heritage staff. It also proved possible to organise an open day for archaeology A-level students and for interested local historians and archaeologists after the filming had been completed.

(For notes on the discoveries, see next page).

Inside: Offa's Dyke ⇔ Historic Landscapes ⇔ Sutton ⇔ People ⇔ Landscape Walks

“The excavations produced evidence for a remarkable series of structures”.

Looking for Offa's palace

The *Time Team* investigations centred on three sites in and around Sutton St. Michael. The main focus was at Freen's Court, where aerial photographs had suggested that an Anglo-Saxon palace complex might exist. Intensive study of well-preserved earthworks established the outline landscape history of the area from the 14th century onwards.

Meanwhile, the excavations uncovered a remarkable series of structures. Successive levelling episodes had removed much evidence, but destruction levels for the early buildings date them to before 1300AD. The original structures may date from the 8th or 9th centuries, but their sites were only minimally examined in 1999. This is unlikely to have been the main site of King Offa's palace, however. Further survey and excavation gave tantalising hints of its presence nearby.

Keith Ray



One of the excavated structures at the Freen's Court site.

News

The *English Historic Towns Forum* held its annual meeting in Hereford in November, hosted by Herefordshire Council at the Courtyard Theatre and Town Hall. The theme was the future of design in historic towns, and we hope to carry a report on the meeting in our next issue.

Some of the historic maps of the county are being used to provide a digital 'backdrop' to the modern base for the Council's GIS. The OS 1:10,560 1st Edition maps are being scanned in between now and the end of January 2000 for layering within the main system.

People

On November 1st 1999 Paul White joined the staff of *Herefordshire Archaeology*, as Landscape Archaeologist. He is here on a fixed-term contract to conduct the Historic Landscape Characterisation project, funded in partnership with English Heritage and due for completion in January 2001. Paul joins us from Cambridge, where he worked for the University's Archaeological Unit, before studying for a M.Phil in GIS and remote sensing, which he completed just before taking up his appointment here.

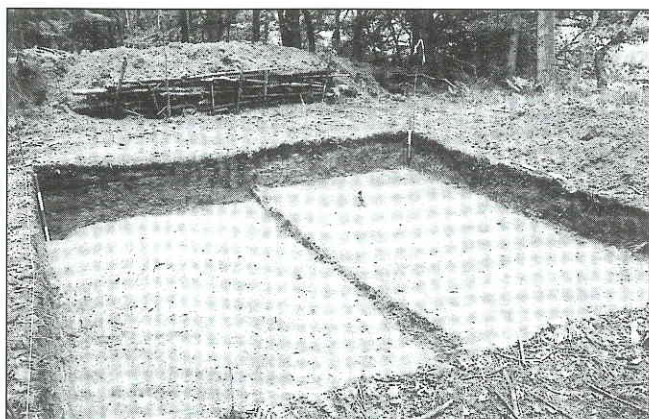
Paul nonetheless knows Herefordshire well, having grown up here and having attended the Sixth Form College in Hereford before taking a first degree in archaeology at the University of York.

Historic hedgerows

During the period between 1st April 1998 and 31st March 1999 Herefordshire Council received 30 hedgerow removal notices proposing the grubbing out of a total of some 5,300m of hedgerow. Of these, 3,500m met the criteria for retention specified in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and the Council was able to prohibit removal. If a hedgerow is recorded as a field boundary in a document dating to before 1845 and is demonstrably 'an integral part of a field system pre-dating the Inclosure Acts' it can be treated as protected. The comprehensive coverage of the county by Tithe Award maps of the early 1840's means that it is often possible to demonstrate such antiquity. In every case so far where the judgement of the Council on these matters has been challenged through an Appeal, the Planning Inspectorate has found in its favour and against the appellant.

In Herefordshire our success rate for preservation compares favourably with the average for the rest of England, but we still receive a large number of applications. In an attempt to raise awareness of the historic, cultural and wildlife value of hedgerows the Council is represented on the Boundary Features Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The challenge set by central government is to halt the loss of ancient and species rich hedgerows by 2005. I would be most grateful for anyone with particular knowledge or skills and wishing to help create a database on hedgerows to contact me on 01432 260157.

Dale Bristow, Assistant Conservation Officer



The principal excavated area at Mere Hill, looking north-west: but where is the archaeology?

Unfinished (fort) business

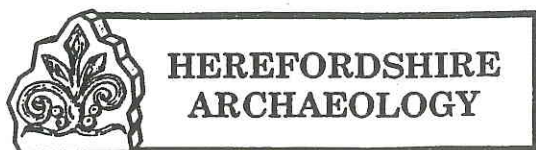
This summer's survey and excavations by *Herefordshire Archaeology* at Mere Hill, Aymestrey, revealed no sign of habitation within the hillfort, despite the trenches being placed in what should have been optimum locations for Iron Age activity. All three trenches were excavated to bedrock (see the above photo), and no structural or artefactual evidence at all was forthcoming. Did we get the date of the monument wrong, perhaps? We think not, since there were clear indications of Iron Age construction methods, such as the formation of a counterscarp bank and of quarry ditches behind the bank.

We have re-examined the earthworks more closely, and can now suggest that the ditch and rampart enclosing the fort were never completed. This not only explains the absence of occupation in the interior, but also the form of the earthworks themselves. The constituent lengths of bank and ditch display several stages in the progress of construction from completion back to the first stage of marking out. As such, they provide significant clues as to how such forts were built, and how the work was organised (or not!)

Tim Hoverd

New logo and reports

A number of *Herefordshire Archaeology* fieldwork reports are due to be produced early in 2000, and we have therefore produced a logo to help distinguish them. The motif is based on a floriate design from a Romano-British relief-pattern tile found in G. H. Jack's excavations at Kenchester.



Offa's Dyke Project

The extraordinary linear earthwork known as Offa's Dyke has been interpreted as an 8th century defensive structure cum border marker defining the boundary between King Offa's powerful Kingdom of Mercia and the lands of the Welsh princes. Its landscape scale alone makes it one of Europe's most important historic monuments, yet it is little understood archaeologically and it presents difficult conservation and management problems. For example, the popular National Trail which follows much of the course of the Dyke also carries the threat of damage to the surviving earthwork, and the monument is vulnerable to processes such as erosion by sheltering livestock or burrowing animals.

In response to these issues *English Heritage* and *Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments* have jointly funded the new post of Offa's Dyke Archaeological Management Officer. I bring to the job a mixed background in archaeology and community-based conservation work. I shall be working both to implement practical schemes of conservation management, and to develop a broader framework for protecting and researching the Dyke in the future.

The archaeological questions relating to Offa's Dyke are very apparent in Herefordshire. The Dyke is generally held to be represented within the county by a number of short stretches of isolated earthwork, but whether these really were elements of Offa's scheme, as pioneering archaeologist Sir Cyril Fox believed, is far from clear. I hope to be working with *Herefordshire Archaeology* over the next year or so to start to grapple with some of the questions posed by the enigma of Offa's Dyke here. So watch this space for developments!

*Ian Bapty,
Offa's Dyke Archaeological
Management Officer
Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust,
Welshpool.*

“The archaeological questions relating to Offa's Dyke are very clear in Herefordshire”



Herefordshire historic landscapes: the western environs of Ledbury from below Wall Hills Camp.

Historic Landscape Walks

We are now well into our winter season of guided Historic Landscape Walks. These walks are held on Wednesdays around the middle of every month, and are designed to explain how landscapes and urban areas have evolved through time. We as an archaeological service find the walks to be of great value in improving our understanding of the archaeology of the county, and we are continually recording new sites encountered along the route.

The walks also provide an opportunity for us to exchange information with local residents and other participants, including members of the various historical societies. All the walks are open to anyone who wishes to find out a little more about the county's past and who enjoys a stroll through its beautiful countryside and historic towns. Contact me on 01568 614931 for a copy of the current programme.

Tim Hoverd

Forthcoming events:

Sunday March 5th 2000

Channel 4's *Time Team* programme on the Freen's Court project will be broadcast in the series' usual early evening slot.

Saturday March 18th 2000

A special Day Seminar providing much more information (including detailed accounts of the excavation of the principal structures) will be held at the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford. This will also feature contributions from some of the specialists brought together for the fieldwork, and the extended sequence shot from a helicopter during the making of the film will be screened.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

This November *Herefordshire Archaeology* began a Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, with grant aid from *English Heritage*. The aim of the project is to gain an understanding of the historic origins of the landscape of the whole county, and the changes and processes that have produced the present day landscape within which we live. By studying historic maps and other documentation during the study (and by combining this with some limited field survey), the character of each part of the landscape as affected by the use and re-use of the land by successive generations will be defined. The individual character of the processes and results of such changes will be isolated for each part of the county in this way.

The study will depart from previous attempts at landscape characterisation with an historical slant. Such studies have focused upon identified 'historic sites' or 'heritage landscapes', in effect suggesting that some parts of the landscape are more 'historic' than others. Instead, the *Herefordshire Archaeology* project, which is in the vanguard of a national programme of such studies, will provide an overview of the whole landscape. The results will inform the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, and will eventually be publicly available through the Council GIS. A report on the project will be produced by February 2001, but in the meantime further bulletins will appear in HET.

Paul White

How to 'subscribe' to *Historic Environment Today*

Most of you who are on the 'subscription list' for HET (which is in fact distributed free of charge) have regularly sent in your stamped and self-addressed envelopes to Rebecca Roseff. The popularity of the newsletter is growing, and we have accordingly increased our print-run. This has, however, put pressure on postage costs. To make sure you receive your four issues yearly, follow this simple procedure:

- Fill in your address on four envelopes (A5 size manilla is best), and stick a stamp on each of them.
- Clearly number the back of each envelope consecutively, 2000/1, 2000/2, and so on.