

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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## Environmental planning

During 2000, Herefordshire Council will produce the first consultation draft of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for the county. This plan is one of a new kind of planning document that combines the strategic overview of a County Structure Plan, and the detailed policies and designations of a Local Plan. It is designed to replace the present Structure Plan and the District Local Plans following its adoption probably in 2003. The UDP will provide planning policies for Herefordshire through to the year 2011.

The Conservation and Environmental Planning section is contributing to the development of a planning approach that both protects the environment and provides a framework for its enhancement. This extends beyond individual policies, important as these are. A key concern from an environmental planning perspective is to ensure that rural regeneration and sustainable development are integrated into all aspects of the Plan.

This means placing economic and social concerns alongside an active appreciation of the importance of the maintenance of local distinctiveness. The immediate challenge for Herefordshire is to achieve rural regeneration that is both social and economic, and that manages to reinforce what is special about its rich character and heritage.

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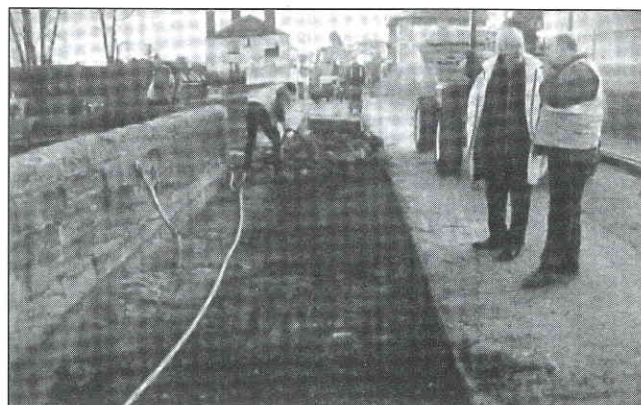
We feature news of several discoveries and events that have occurred in the early months of this year. Updates are provided on the progress of the Malvern Hills survey, and on the Historic Landscape Characterisation project. We also carry features on town houses and on Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

**“The challenge for Herefordshire is to reinforce what is special about the county’s rich heritage and character”**

## Wye Bridge, Hereford

Between January and the end of March this year, *Herefordshire Archaeology* staff monitored the works on Hereford’s old Wye Bridge. The bridge is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the Council’s resurfacing project was watched closely to comply with the Consent for the works. The more extensive roadworks at either end of the bridge were watched by Archaeological Investigations Ltd staff, commissioned by the Council, with the whole archaeological project co-ordinated by the Council’s team. The main task on the bridge itself involved recording the details of exposed early fabric.

During the project, the lowest 2 to 3 courses of stonework of the parapets was revealed, as were sections of the top of the vaulting of two of the arches. The last time these were seen was when the bridge was strengthened to take heavy traffic to and from Rotherwas Munitions Factory (see below) during the Second World War.



*Work in progress on the eastern side of the old Wye Bridge. Note the vault of one of the central spans, at left.*

**Inside : Malverns update ⇔ Wye valley ⇔ MPP ⇔ Rotherwas ROF ⇔ Town houses**



## Malvern Hills survey: Ledbury results

At the start of the year, *Herefordshire Archaeology* began its contribution to the survey work of the Malvern Hills archaeological project (introduced in HET Volume 2, Issue 1). This has involved survey of woodlands east of Ledbury, and has already produced some remarkable results.

Among the discoveries at Frith Wood was a cluster of earthwork platforms similar to those more normally found within Iron Age hillforts, and that might have supported huts of a prehistoric upland settlement. A series of subtle banks of an ancient field system formed the earliest in a long sequence of linear field, woodland or estate boundaries.

At Oyster Hill to the north were found the earthwork traces of what appear to be Romano-British iron furnaces ranged along a steep hillside. Nearby, medieval ridge and furrow was found to extend up to a height above sea-level of around 600'.

*Tim Hoverd*

## Now the Wye Valley AONB heritage

A team from Birmingham University Archaeological Field Unit has just completed a rapid assessment of the archaeology of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The study was mostly desk-based and was commissioned by AONB Officer Andrew Blake, with funding from the Countryside Agency. The aim was to provide background information on the archaeology and industrial heritage of the area (52% of which lies in Herefordshire), to support a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve aspects of its environment and visitor appeal.

The proposed project, called 'Overlooking the Wye', will identify key areas and sites that are considered important both to the archaeological and to the 'visual' heritage of the AONB, and seek improved management and development of visitor potential. The area was one of the first to be appreciated by proponents of the Romantic Movement in literature and the arts. At various places, landscape modifications were made and structures introduced that 'enhanced' the scenic qualities, particularly with regard to views over the valley and river.

**"The Wye Valley project aims to reinstate key sites and vantage-points".**



*The Wye valley heritage: King Arthur's Cave at the Doward, recently the subject of a management plan.*

*Photo courtesy of BUFAU.*

## Rolling the last door

Among the little-appreciated parts of Herefordshire's industrial heritage are its vehicle service stations. At the end of January 2000, the doors of Pembridge Service Station rolled to a close for the last time, marking the end of an era of local motoring history. The advent of dedicated service centres within dealerships, and specialised tyre, exhaust, and battery centres is gradually choking off the trade of small local garages. Peter Smith, the proprietor for the last eighteen years, couldn't find anyone willing to take on what was a thriving village business. So he reluctantly sold the garage in the centre of the village opposite the Red Lion inn, for conversion to domestic uses.

Given that village service stations are becoming a thing of the past, Peter readily agreed to my request to be allowed to conduct a photographic survey and rapid recording project during December 1999. Among the fascinating findings of that study was how, unlike a modern garage 'parts' department, the traditional garages would store spares and supplies as close to the point of use as feasible.

*Keith Ray*

### Ancient fields

Progress with the initial phase of characterisation for the Historic Landscape project introduced in the last issue of HET has been rapid. One of the more remarkable findings has been the extent of survival of the general outlines of field systems that may have originated as long ago as the Bronze Age in several parts of the county. More details will appear in the next issue....

*Paul White*



*Julian Heath gave a talk at the Second Annual Symposium on Archaeology in Herefordshire, last November, on the English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme (MPP) in Herefordshire. In that talk he described his monument evaluation work as a programme case-worker. Here he introduces some of the results he outlined in tabular form in the talk.*

## Monuments Protection progress

The Monuments Protection Programme (MPP) is a comprehensive review and evaluation of the monuments that make up such a large part of England's archaeological resource. The Programme was established to collect data to enhance the wider conservation, management and public appreciation of the archaeological heritage.

Nationally important sites are identified by a number of criteria applied to each archaeological site that is noted as a subject for appraisal. These criteria include the site's archaeological potential, relationship to other sites, and value as an amenity. Sites that achieve high scores according to these criteria are added to the Schedule of Ancient Monuments kept by the Secretary of State.

Since 1990, when the programme began in earnest, the number of Scheduled Monuments nationally has risen to 17,000. In Herefordshire, the MPP has contributed to an almost 50% increase in the number of Scheduled Monuments since 1990. From a base of 168 such Monuments in 1971, there are now 251. There is still much to do, and in co-operation with *Herefordshire Archaeology*, new eligible sites are being identified all the time. There are over 300 sites that yet need to be visited and assessed.

The county's monuments cover a wide variety of sites and site-types, as might be supposed. They include common types such as hillforts (39 sites), moats (41), and motte and bailey castles (45), as well as rarer ones like stone circles (2), and deer parks (5). Some classes of site such as industrial sites are being dealt with thematically, and on a nation-wide survey basis.

*Julian Heath*

**“The MPP has contributed to an almost 50% increase in the number of Scheduled Monuments since 1990”**

## Planning for Rotherwas ROF

Another assessment study recently carried out had as its subject another major element of the county's industrial heritage, the former Royal Ordnance Factory at Rotherwas. This was a shell-filling factory and storage depot during both World Wars, constructed within the grounds of Rotherwas House.

During 1999 it became clear that there needed to be greater appreciation of the nature and extent of its archaeological importance in light of proposals for a further phase of development of the industrial estate. The County Archaeologist therefore persuaded the Council's industrial estates team to sponsor an archaeological assessment of the site, and prepared a detailed brief for the study.

The successful tender to undertake the project came from Gifford and Partners archaeology section, based in Southampton. They conducted a desk-based and walk-over survey and assessment, and engaged national specialists to help to evaluate the importance of the site as a whole, and its surviving elements.

The study report revealed that, contrary to previous understanding, the factory was not simply 'moth-balled' during the inter-War years: the build-up to re-armament was extensive here. Many of the 'Second World War' buildings were built before its outbreak. The study identified a need to view the site in its entirety, and to preserve and re-use at least a representative sample of buildings from all stages in the manufacture process.

Plans are in progress for new access and distributor roads, as well as industrial units at the site. The assessment study will now form the basis for a conservation plan. This will seek to fit the requirements of preservation and recording of standing and below-ground features into a more general framework for its successful economic development.

*Keith Ray*



*One of the North Light Buildings at ROF Rotherwas, used for storing shells. Photo courtesy of Gifford and Partners.*





*Leominster's historic town-houses: the Chequers Inn in Etnam Street, seen during last year's 'National Archaeology Days' visits.*

## An archaeology of town houses

Leominster, like so much of Herefordshire, has a wealth of information embedded in its historic buildings. Many clues about the town's late medieval past are hidden, as yet undiscovered, behind 18th and 19th century brick facades. Listed Building descriptions too often fail to acknowledge the significance of structures simply because the interiors have not been inspected.

A case in point is No.3 Church Street, Leominster, for many years The Olive Branch tea rooms and now The Electric Light Company. What appears from the outside to be a simple three-storey 18th-century building can be revealed to be in essence a much earlier structure. Its plain brick façade hides the sturdy, two-storey timber frame of a late 15th/early 16th century shop. This structure had a large room on the jettied first floor, forming an unheated great chamber that was open to the ridge of the roof.

Over the centre of this room, with cambered tie-beam and an unusual curved collar, is to be found an impressive truss supporting a double-purlin roof complete with wind-braces. The former presence of several internal features can be detected from the timber framing, including the position of the original staircase, and a small parlour.

Of especial interest is the presence of high quality moulded timbers at the back of the building. These appear to have been re-used from an earlier structure: possibly, given its proximity, even one of the Priory buildings.

Such elements points to an extra interest in these historic timber-framed town buildings. This is the evidence they contain among recycled timbers for the former presence of vanished former buildings.

*Duncan James*

*(Duncan is a well-known local artist-craftsman with a long-standing interest and specialism in historic buildings - Ed.)*

## West Midlands Archaeology Week

Between 17th and 25th June 2000, there will be events all over the West Midlands (Staffordshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and the Birmingham-Wolverhampton metropolitan area) to celebrate 'West Midlands Archaeology Week'. Peter Leather at the University of Birmingham School of Continuing Studies can be contacted for details (0121 414 5597).

*Herefordshire Archaeology* has organised its own programme of events for West Midlands Archaeology Week, running from 19th to 24th June. A special feature is 'Radio Archaeology - Live!' - a phone-in event on the afternoon of 19th June. There are also two historic landscape walks, at Croft Castle and at Marden, on the Tuesday and Wednesday respectively. And there are also two sets of two Open Days: at the Sites and Monuments Record in Leominster (Wednesday and Thursday), and at the Sutton project (Friday and Saturday: for details of this, see below. For information about any of these events, call Tim Hoverd on 01568 614931.

## Rebecca's SMR appeals

1. Interested in sculpture?

A nationally-organised lottery project needs volunteers to take photos and briefly describe all the public sculpture in Herefordshire. This includes pieces in churches and churchyards, town statues, park monuments, and sculpture outside other buildings and offices. Expenses for photography and possibly for travel can be claimed. Contact me for details.

2. Do you have a home computer?

The project to computerise field names continues well, but we could do with more help. There are 241 parishes in Herefordshire, and so far we have completed the database for 65 of them. If you have a PC at home and would like to join in this project, please contact me.

*Rebecca Roseff, SMR Officer, 01432 260130*

## Stop Press: Sutton St. Michael project

Between 14th and 28th June, *Herefordshire Archaeology* will be conducting a second season of trial investigations at Freen's Court and near St. Michael's church. The two Open Days on Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th June will feature hourly site tours and one visit each day to locally-relevant sites.