

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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"At the centre of the Council's conservation strategy is the Extended Environmental Record"

Introduction

This is the first issue of what is intended will be a quarterly newsletter on the historic environmental aspects the work of the **Conservation and Environmental Planning Service**. This is one of the principal constituent service groups of the Planning Services division of Herefordshire Council.

The C & E P team is drawn from a variety of disciplines, and its work includes historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeology, ecology, trees, hedgerow protection, landscape design and conservation planning.

The key areas of responsibility are environmental planning, monitoring, recording and management. These are carried out through advisory work, record-maintenance and project-based activities.

At present, the service is located with the other headquarters services of Planning, at Leominster.

At the centre of C & E P activities will be the Extended Environmental Record. This consists of a series of databases relating to different aspects of the work of the service. At its core is the County Sites and Monuments Record. KR

In This Issue

We focus especially upon **HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**. We briefly introduce the new county archaeological service and look at current archaeological projects in progress in the county.

Excavations in Hereford

The county archaeology service have been monitoring the excavations by Archaeological Investigations Ltd (AIL) on the site of the Left Bank restaurant currently under construction next to the Old Wye Bridge. This site continues to show the importance industrial activity had in medieval towns.

Two kilns have been excavated and it is believed that iron working was also being carried out. The vast assemblage of finds from the site, mostly deriving from rubbish discarded in the river, includes items dating from the Saxon period. HS



Excavations at Old Wye Bridge. Photograph courtesy of AIL

Hedgerow Legislation

Since June 1997 it has become a legal requirement to notify the local planning authority (LPA) of any proposal to remove hedgerows on agricultural land. Upon receipt of notice the LPA must then determine the importance of the hedgerow against criteria set out in the Regulations. Government is currently reviewing the Regulations with the aim of protecting a greater number of hedgerows.

At present this information is collected only when triggered by the receipt of a removal notice. It is hoped that in the future a register will be compiled to indicate the presence of important hedges. At the time of writing Herefordshire Council has received 17 hedgerow removal notices since 1 April 1998. Just over a half of these have been retained under the Regulations (and see back page). DB

Inside: Historic towns ⇔ People ⇔ SMR move ⇔ excavations ⇔ Veteran trees ⇔

Herefordshire's Historic Towns.

Six medieval towns in Herefordshire have endured as recognisably urban places into the late twentieth century. The largest of course is Hereford. The smallest, Kington, is, with Bishop's Castle and Presteigne (the latter two just out of county) a typical small borders market centre. In between in scale, Bromyard, Leominster, Ledbury and Ross are urban gems that are deservedly renowned far beyond the region - even if many people whose Marches geography is a little hazy seem to think that Ludlow, too, is in Herefordshire.

The scale of re-development in these towns is such that recent surveys have been carried out to pull together what is known of their archaeology and historical development.

The five towns other than Hereford have been studied alongside many other 'former' towns as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey carried out by Victoria Buteaux and Hal Dalwood of Worcestershire Archaeology. Their survey includes no fewer than five Romano-British centres and eleven other medieval towns that range in size from Weobley to Ploughfield, a place near Preston-on-Wye that could be mistaken today for a deserted medieval village.

The aim of the study was to draw attention to the potential importance of the archaeology of even the smallest of these places. Planning-led interventions in many of them are now revealing new facets of their history (see the Eardisley article on page 4).

Across the next year or so, the survey reports on these towns, produced in 1996, will be re-assessed by Herefordshire Archaeology staff in the light of field archaeological observations made since their compilation.

What will also be assessed is how effective such interventions have been in improving our understanding of each place. There will then be an attempt to draw up new research agendas in consultation with colleagues in Worcestershire and elsewhere.

KR

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People

The County Archaeology Service, 'Herefordshire Archaeology' consists at present of a team of three based in Corn Square, Leominster.

The County Archaeologist is **Dr Keith Ray**. Keith came to Herefordshire from Plymouth, where he ran the City Council's archaeology service for several years. Keith has worked on survey and excavation projects in many parts of Britain over the past 28 years.

Helena Smith is the Archaeological Advisor for Herefordshire, dealing with development control issues, conservation and environmental planning. Helena came from the Hereford and Worcester Archaeology Service where she had worked mostly on Herefordshire cases for four years.

Rebecca Roseff is the Sites and Monuments Record Officer. She has worked in a number of archaeological jobs across England, including two years in Birmingham and two years in Buckinghamshire.

A number of other people work within the Conservation Department of the Council who deal with matters relating to the historic environment. The service is headed by **Bill Bloxsome**, the Chief Conservation Officer. He is assisted by **Charlotte Bell**, Conservation Officer and **Dale Bristow** Assistant Conservation Officer. The Countryside and Landscape team consists of **Jane Patten**, Landscape Officer, **Joanne Hackman** Ecologist and **Trevor Boulton** Tree Officer. The Historic Building team consists of **Noel Knight**, **Anne Morris** and **Paul Gibbons**, largely based in Leominster and **Dave Baxter** and **Becky Waddington** based in Hereford.



Leominster, a town with medieval origins.

Photo R Roseff

The Sites and Monuments Record

The Herefordshire SMR was separated from the Worcestershire record and moved to Leominster at the end of August this year. It is now located in the Old Priory complex and can be consulted by members of the public by prior arrangement (please ring 01432 260130).

The SMR is a record of archaeology sites in Herefordshire, recorded on a computer database, paper files and on maps. Archaeological sites are interpreted very broadly, so the SMR has records relating to canals, railways, historic buildings, hedgerows and quarries as well as more conventional archaeological items, such as hill forts, round barrows and cemetery sites. The record is continually growing (at present it stands at 13,000 sites) as new things are found, and as people pass on the results of their research or casual observations to be preserved in the SMR and made available for research.

Future plans for the SMR are to expand and extend it as part of a Herefordshire Council 'Extended Environmental Record'.

It is also planned within the next two years to make basic data available to all on the Internet. RR



Veteran Trees. The famous avenue of Scots Pine and Yew at Monnington Court, planted in 1628. Photo C Bell

Re-thinking Leominster

Excavations in advance of the re-development of the 'Poultry Packers Site' in Leominster have identified an early medieval building fronting Bridge street. This is in an area that was previously believed had developed as a later medieval suburb of the town. This excavation indicates that actually this part of the town was thriving in the 12th and 13th centuries. HS

“its amazing, after all the holes I’ve dug across Herefordshire to find a Roman road”

Historic Buildings

Work on historic buildings continues apace across the county. A number of new initiatives are planned, including a series of technical brochures. More news of these will appear in the next issue.

Marden Quarry, Wellington.

Extraction has started on a northern and southern extension to the Redland quarry site at Wellington. Archaeological monitoring of the works has been on going since 1988. Evaluation of the extensions identified prehistoric landscape features, such as palaeo-channels. Prominent finds include a Beaker burial and a Romano-British farmstead and a large assemblage of prehistoric material has been recovered from the site. Study of this material will take place and hopefully tell us much about the use of the land from the Neolithic period onwards. HS.

Newly Discovered Roman Road

The Worcestershire Archaeological Field Unit are currently undertaking an evaluation at St Donats Farm, Portway. Early indications are that findings will be very exciting, with a possible Roman Road already identified heading towards the Wellington site described above.

Said Robin Jackson, the site director “its amazing, after all the holes I’ve dug across Herefordshire to find a Roman road ... and on a site where I wasn’t expecting one!” HS

Veteran Tree Survey

‘Veteran tree’ is an ill defined term but is generally taken to mean a large, gnarled, characterful tree, assumed to be several hundred years old. Such trees may be the last remains of woodland that once covered the whole of England before people began growing crops (around 3000 BC).

Rachel Thomas from English Nature told us she thinks it is likely that Herefordshire is a county with one of the largest number of veteran trees in England.

The unique value of veteran trees and the need to retain them is now widely appreciated and our aim of a comprehensive veteran tree survey will help to determine the best way of retaining them, for their wildlife, aesthetic and research value. TB

A long barrow at Little Doward?

Herefordshire Archaeology were recently contacted by John Meredith about a possible long barrow in the woods below Little Doward hillfort near the famous prehistoric cave site of 'Kings Arthur's cave.

Accordingly on a drizzly day in September Keith Ray and Rebecca Roseff met John and his son Owen to look at the mound and the surrounding landscape. The mound was long, oval shaped, aligned north/south and constructed of angular limestone rocks. It did indeed look like a long barrow. However it was located close to another smaller mound and to a defunct field boundary that today lies within the wood but must at one time have formed the boundary to an arable or pasture field. It was suggested therefore that the mound represented stones cleared from a field for cultivation purposes and heaped into a pile close to the edge of the field. It was hypothesised that this clearance phase dated to the early post-medieval period, the medieval period or possibly even earlier. John is continuing the research through map and aerial photographic analysis, while photographs and a description of the mound have been entered into the SMR. RR

The new County Hospital and Archaeology:

An archaeological field evaluation is now underway at the County Hospital site at Union Walk off Commercial Road in Hereford. This project is being carried out by Archaeological Investigations Ltd for the local NHS Trust to provide information on the implications of constructing the massive new Private Finance Initiative hospital complex behind the historic workhouse/hospital. Andy Boucher, Acting Manager of the AIL unit, has pulled together a mass of observations to reveal several clues as to the early uses of the site. KR



Excavations at the County Hospital Site.

Photo K Ray

Stop Press: Virgin meets Baskervilles

Regional TV News crews and the local press descended upon Eardisley in the middle of August to talk with Richard Stone, whose local *Marches Archaeology* team had been commissioned by Virgin Homes to carry out a rapid investigation and recording project there. The site was on the main-street of the village, but close enough to the stream to lead the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey researchers to conclude that its archaeological potential was limited.

Not long after the 'watching brief' began, however, it turned out that buildings had lined the frontage in medieval times. Preservation was better for the site having been close to water, and because the site had been abandoned probably in the 18th century (was it too damp for comfort?), and having been under pasture since then. In the event, it was possible only to define and sample-excavate one area of the frontage before a piling rig came in. Nonetheless, an important chapter of the history of this c.1230s 'planted' town of the Baskerville family has now begun to be documented archaeologically. KR

Volunteers Wanted

There are several initiatives beginning in Herefordshire which require input from volunteers. For example a number of **Hedgerow Surveys**, are taking place which hopefully will result in a record of all hedgerows in Herefordshire. **The Defence of Britain** is a national initiative, begun with Millennium money but relying on volunteers. The aim is to record the material evidence for the war (stop lines, barracks, pill boxes etc), in order to learn more about them before they are lost forever and ultimately, to protect a selection for posterity.

There is a variety of **other research volunteer work** that is always needed in the SMR, please contact Rebecca Roseff (01432 260130) if you want to get involved.

Announcements and Events

The first annual symposium on archaeology in Herefordshire will be held at Brockington House, Hafod Rd, Hereford on Saturday 28th November 1998 between 10.00am and 5.50pm. There will be twelve speakers. For tickets (at £5.00 each) contact Rebecca Roseff, Herefordshire Archaeology, PO Box 3, Leominster HR6 8LU, Tel 01432 260130.