

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 2 Issue 1

February 1999

**“We are now aware that the whole environment, both urban and rural, is a history book”**

This second issue of Historic Environment Today focuses on the broader environmental aspects of the historic landscape. Until recently there has been a tendency to ‘pigeon hole’ archaeology which was not generally perceived to be necessarily relevant to the modern environment. We are now aware that the whole environment, both urban and rural, is a history book with page upon page illustrating the myriad landscapes of the past. This is an enlightening book which we are only beginning to be able to read but one which we must decipher in order to both understand the landscape we see today and to control the shape of the landscape of tomorrow.

This issue describes some of the practices and initiatives that the Environmental Planning Team in the Council use to understand the landscape of Herefordshire. The tools we have at our disposal include the Extended Environmental Record that encompasses the Sites and Monuments Record and the Landscape Character Assessment. We intend to add to this resource by carrying out an Historic Landscape Assessment and a Millennium Map which will identify the varied land use and ecological value of each land parcel in the County. Other initiatives we outline in this issue deal with protecting and promoting the ecology of the county, that research has shown is so often enmeshed into the cultural history and land use of the site.

*Jane Patton, Landscape Officer*

## In This Number ...

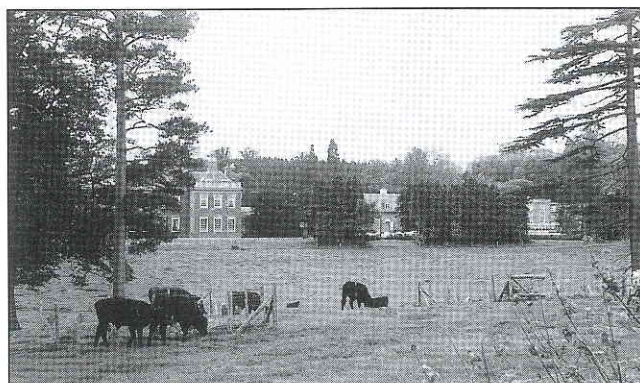
We concentrate on the landscape of Herefordshire and new initiatives that are taking place to understand and protect it.

## New Listings for Herefordshire Parks

At the request of English Heritage two members of the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust are helping them to review the existing English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire. The original Register for the whole of England was drawn up, centrally, in the mid-80s, under the terms of the 1983 National Heritage Act. The main purpose of the Register is to identify historic parks and gardens which are of importance, and to encourage owners and others to appreciate, maintain, and enhance such sites. It is also intended to help local authorities provide adequate protection for them through the planning control process. In recent years detailed, locally-based reviews of the original Register have been undertaken county by county and Herefordshire is one of the last to be done.

There are at present twenty two Herefordshire parks listed. Trust members David Whitehead and Neil Barnes, have now drawn up a list of thirty or so additional parks and gardens with a particular claim for inclusion, a very difficult task because there are so many strong 'contenders'. In support of these thirty they are sending English Heritage a dossier of information, on the basis of which they will decide which ones to add. This project is part of the H&W Gardens Trust's on-going venture to bring together and publish information about all significant historic parks and gardens in Herefordshire.

*Neil Barnes*



*Home Lacy Park, a listed park.*

*Photograph Gerald Dawe*

**Inside: SACs ⇔ Landscape Assessment ⇔ People ⇔ Malvern Hills Survey**

**“What was particularly interesting was that further analysis revealed that combinations of the particular landscape elements as identified were regularly repeated.”**

## How do you assess landscape?

During the last 50 years there have been various attempts to analyse and categorise the landscape, most of them based on a scoring system where one landscape might be perceived to be better than another, because it was regarded as more beautiful. This kind of subjective landscape assessment has now been discredited and the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire are at the forefront of an innovative approach to objectively categorise the county's landscapes.

The project, which started before re-organisation, is part funded by the Countryside Commission and follows on from their recent work that produced a national framework of regional character types. When Herefordshire's landscape character assessment (LCA) is complete it will be used as one of the definitive analytical method of landscape evaluation throughout the country.

A number of landscape elements were defined as providing the basis for the LCA. These included physical characteristics such as geology, soils, topography and vegetation, and cultural characteristics such as land use, settlement and field enclosure patterns. The work was done by a team of three people led by Chris Bray over a period of about two years, with the help of a consultant, Steve Warnock.

The team used soil, geology and historical maps to define the landscape characteristics while the vegetation was mapped by going out and surveying what was there. This information was used to define about 1,000 areas within Herefordshire termed 'land description units' (LDUs) that were distinct from each other, differing in vegetation, topography, settlement or field pattern. The LDUs were then grouped into 19 different landscape types. These were condensed into 12 regional character areas, in order to conform to those identified by the Countryside Commission.

What was particularly interesting was that further analysis revealed that combinations of the particular landscape elements as identified were regularly repeated. Why this might be so can only be speculated at present.

*Jane Patton, Landscape Officer*

## People

Several staff changes are taking place in the Environmental Planning section of Herefordshire Council. **Helena Smith** is leaving after four years as Archaeological Advisor for the post of Assistant Archaeologist at Cumbria County Council. **Becky Waddington**, Assistant Conservation Officer based in Hereford is leaving to be the Conservation Officer at Colchester Borough Council. **Tim Hoverd** has recently been appointed to the newly created post of Archaeological Project Officer. Tim has worked for several years in Herefordshire for the Hereford based archaeology unit AIL. **Charlotte Gault** is the new Biodiversity Action Plan Officer. Charlotte was BAP officer in Cornwall before this appointment. This is a jointly funded post, contributions towards it have been made so far from Herefordshire Nature Trust, Herefordshire Council, English Nature and the Environment Agency. She is based at the Trust.

## Goodbye ...

Ironically, having endured the often trying times of Local Government Reorganisation, I seem to be leaving at a very exciting period for *Herefordshire Archaeology*. During the last four years I have come to know Herefordshire, its people, and of course its archaeology well. I shall genuinely miss the County.

*Helena Smith*



*Some of the Conservation staff based in Leominster  
From left to right, Alexandra Millward, Trevor Boulton, Dale Bristow, Jane Patton, Helena Smith, Joanne Hackman, Keith Ray*

## EU designated sites for Herefordshire

Herefordshire is a county rich in wildlife and the Council in partnership with many other organisations and individuals is working on several initiatives aimed at preserving it. The Biodiversity process has been furthered by the recent appointment of an officer (see page 2) responsible for co-ordinating the production of the **Biodiversity Action Plan** for the County. This will lead to individual action plans for key habitats and species, which are scarce and threatened. For example the dormouse and high brown fritillary butterfly need special action to reinstate their habitat through traditional habitat management practices.

A working group is investigating the development of a **Biological Records Centre**. This will be the primary source of records about the natural world in the county, enabling data sets to be managed in a central location. It would also allow this information to be placed in a national context through data sharing with others. The group considers that the Centre is best based at the Land and Environment Centre at Holme Lacy College and investigations are to continue.

Plans for a county wide habitat survey known as the **Millennium Map** project are underway. The survey will assess the land use and habitats of the County in support of the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Landscape Assessment Project and several other initiatives. This will be a major undertaking and possible sources of funding for undertaking the work are being researched.

The importance of wildlife in the county is reflected in the special protection and recognition it receives at international and national level. Under the European Union Habitats Directive there are 2 candidate **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** in Herefordshire, amongst some 300 in the country. The candidate SACs are the river Lugg, river Wye and Downton Gorge with its mixed woodland associated with rocky slopes and diverse plant species. In addition to these SACs 7.2% of the county has Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status.

*Joanne Hackman, County Ecologist*

## Landowners Create New Woodlands

Herefordshire Council is notified of all applications for Woodland Grant given by the Forestry Commission for consultation and visits each site. Since January 1998 about 100 applications have been received in Herefordshire. The scheme aims to improve the nature conservation and long term economic value of the land. Grants are between £700 and £1950 a hectare, depending on the type of tree planted and quality of land. *Alexandra Millward, Conservation Technician.*



*The Lugg in Leominster (in full flood), a candidate SAC*

## Farmers protect archaeology

Countryside Stewardship was established in the early 1990s. It aims to provide incentives to landowners to establish practices that enhance or restore aspects of the historic and natural landscape. The scheme is funded by MAFF and run by the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency. *Herefordshire Archaeology* is one of a number of sections within Herefordshire Council to be consulted on individual schemes. Last year over 100 applications were made in Herefordshire. The successful schemes all had a positive benefit on the historic environment, both in terms of landscape, for example the restoration of historic orchards and hedgerows, and for specific sites.

A number of earthwork remains, such as deserted medieval villages and castle sites have been protected and enhanced through schemes including scrub management, arable reversion and maintenance of established pasture.

The target areas for 1999 include the Herefordshire river catchments, making the county a regional priority. We are able to encourage farmers to enter into schemes which will ensure an appropriate management regime within an area of archaeological, ecological or landscape interest. The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) officers are also talking to farmers and advising on stewardship applications. Working in partnership with these organisations we can ensure that some of the county's countryside is managed in a more sympathetic way and with today's pressures on the countryside see the long term future of many important sites and landscape features preserved.

*Helena Smith, Archaeological Advisor*

## Field Names Take Wing

In 1994 members of the highly successful Herefordshire Field-Name Survey became the proud owners of a handsome commemorative plate and a matching cheque, after winning one of the prestigious British Archaeological Awards. They resolved to turn their winnings to a new phase of historical research, this time aerial photography of the county's landscape. This venture has now given birth to the 'Millennium Air Survey of Herefordshire', which has already started on about 30 hours of flying and photography in the run-up to the new millennium.

The upshot will be 2000 or more colour and black-and-white air photographs illustrating all aspects of the county's landscape and history from the earliest times to the fields, villages and towns of the present day.

The photographs will be freely available through the Hereford Record Office, with prints and copy-slides on sale at reasonable prices. A set will also be held in the Sites and Monuments Record. The first batch of photographs should be ready for viewing some time in the spring.

For the moment, every sunny winter day gives the chance of a new flight of discovery and record over the county. Recently, a three-hour sortie over SW Herefordshire took in the Olchon Valley, sites around Ross-on-Wye and (on the return to Shobdon in the gloaming) some spectacular views of flooded water meadows in the Lugg Valley east of Hereford.

If you want to know more about the Survey, or if you would like to contribute photographs or suggestions for 'target' areas, you should write either to the project's co-ordinator, Ruth Richardson, at The Gables, Riverdale, Abbey Dore, HR2 0AJ, or to the principal air photographer, Chris Musson, at Tanyffordd, Pysgah, Aberystwyth, SY234NE. *Chris Musson*



*The Priory Annexe, site of the SMR from Feb 1999*



*The Malvern Hills.*

*Photo David Hancock*

## Survey of Malvern Hills Begins

*Herefordshire Archaeology* is supporting and contributing to a partnership initiative for an archaeological survey of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The project is being co-ordinated by David Hancock, the AONB Officer. The other principal partners are the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (in the process of being amalgamated with English Heritage), Worcester County Council Archaeological Service and the National Trust.

More than half of the AONB is in Herefordshire, and in that area *Herefordshire Archaeology's* contribution will be an innovative management action programme. This will identify optimum ways of securing positive actions to conserve and improve appreciation of key sites and areas identified in the survey as being of archaeological and historic landscape importance.

The RCHME survey is due to begin in February 1999 and to continue for 15-18 months.

*Keith Ray, County Archaeologist.*

## Announcements and Events

The Sites and Monuments Record will move to the Priory Annexe at the beginning of February. To book an appointment contact Rebecca Roseff, at *Herefordshire Archaeology*, PO Box 3, Leominster HR6 8LU, Tel 01432 260130.

The SMR welcomes volunteers. Anyone who is interested in map, archive or research work and can give half a day or more a week to this, please get in touch.

To receive future copies of this newsletter please send a s.a.e. to Rebecca at the above address.