

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 5 Issue 1

April 2002

One Foot in the Past



Walks around town and country are popular, such as the Historic Landscape Walk around Leominster

This month will mark the third year of *Herefordshire Archaeology's* Historic Landscape Walks. For the past 36 months, come rain or shine, members of the county's archaeological service have lead walks around Herefordshire with the aim of introducing members of the public to the history and to the constantly changing aspects of the landscape in which we live. Explanations are given for field patterns, earthworks, buildings, land use (past and present) and the type of communities that lived and worked in the landscape.

It also provides staff of *Herefordshire Archaeology* an opportunity to record previously unknown sites noted while checking the walks. It is often astonishing what is discovered and during the past three years this has included deserted settlements, a moated site, prehistoric burial mounds and medieval field systems.

The walks are free of charge, are always along public rights of way, with people from the local community and further afield welcome to join us. We are therefore delighted have been invited to contribute to the *Herefordshire Festival of Walking* during May and details of our involvement can be found inside this issue.

Raising the Roof

Stone tiled roofs are a distinctive feature of many historic buildings in Herefordshire. In fact 660 listed buildings, over 11% of the county total, still have or originally had stone tiled roofs.

Following the proposal to repair Dore Abbey roof, it was recognised that it was often difficult to obtain local stone tiles or skilled tile dressers to undertake the work. That is why Herefordshire Council has joined Dore Abbey, English Heritage, representatives of local delves (the name for small-scale stone extraction), the Golden Valley Community Co-ordinator and interested local people in the formation of the *Herefordshire Stone Tile Project* which was officially launched by Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman of English Heritage at Dore Abbey.

It has three primary roles, to raise awareness of the local distinctiveness of stone roofs, to promote the use of existing delves and to investigate further sites and to resurrect an ancient local skill. It is hoped this will not only benefit the historic environment, but also form an alternative income for farmers and provide employment within local farming communities.

*Noel Knight
Historic Buildings Surveyor*



The reroofed Lower Llanon Farmhouse, Urishay with stone slabs from the Coed-Major Delve

Inside: People ⇒ Survey ⇒ Bricks ⇒ Floods ⇒ Romans ⇒ Walking Festival

“There remains the exciting possibility that there could be Saxon remains..”

Meadow reveals its secrets

Following a number of serious floods in Hereford in recent years, the Environment Agency has put forward a proposal to construct flood defences in the City. WS Atkins Consultants are currently assessing this proposal, and as part of the programme, an archaeological evaluation along the proposed works has taken place. This evaluation has involved the geophysical survey/excavation of archaeological trenches in the Bishop's Meadow. The archaeological evaluation began late last year although the full implication of the results will not be clear for some time.



Photo reproduced courtesy of Rebecca Roseff

Bishop's Meadow under water last winter. Rowe Ditch can be seen in the centre of the photo rising out of the floods

The work in the Bishop's Meadow has been of particular interest as it has confirmed the potential of important archaeological deposits in the area between the south bank of the River Wye and the 'Rowe Ditch' earthwork. A geophysical survey undertaken by Stratascan detected a number of buried features that were subsequently investigated by the Cotswold Archaeological Trust. Trackways, burnt features, pits and ditches were all revealed within the evaluation trenches. Some of these features were clearly medieval in date, but the dating of others will not be known until various specialist studies have been completed. There remains the exciting possibility that there could be Saxon remains in this location.

*Julian Cotton
Archaeological Advisor*

News Update Heritage Lottery Fund SMR Project

We are about to appoint one full- time and one part- time person to staff the 'Historic Herefordshire On-line' project to make the SMR more accessible and encourage more people to use it in schools, universities and for personal interest. The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery for the next three years. It is hoped that the SMR will go 'on- line' on the Internet later this year. The two people will be based at the SMR in the Town Hall and will spend their time both improving and informing people about the record.

People

Since the last issue of HET the Assistant Conservation Officer and former HET editor, Dale Bristow has left for pastures new by crossing the border to Worcestershire. We wish him the best in his new career as senior planner within Environment Services of Worcestershire County Council.

Last month saw the appointment of Juliet Wheatley as the new Landscape Assistant for the Conservation and Environmental Planning Team. Juliet previously worked for landuse consultants, and her main role will be to assist the council's landscape officer along with promoting the ecology of the county and to overseeing the hedgerow regulations.

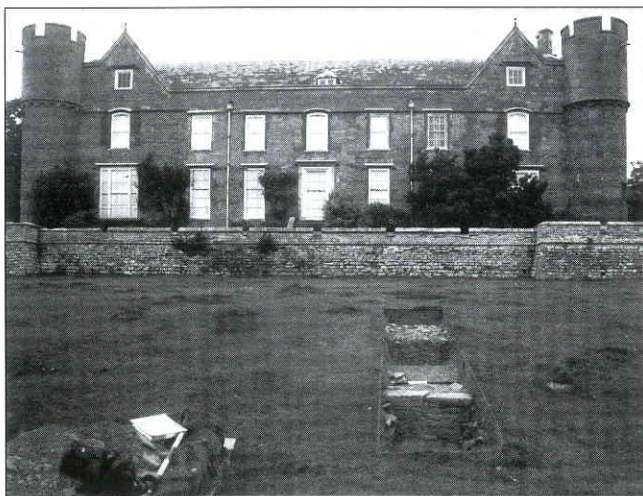
Altar inscription

The owner of a new house in Leintwardine got a surprise while finishing the landscaping for his garden. Among the stonework piled up among the garden soil was a chunk of local limestone with one flat face. He was quick enough to notice that this face had some carving on its surface, but was astonished to see that this took the form of three part-lines of rough Roman lettering. Following a call to the County Archaeologist, the inscription was shown to experts at Oxford University, who have established that it is indeed part of a Romano-British altar dedication to Jupiter and the deified Emperor. If this stone originated in Leintwardine, and not in one of the local forts, it suggests that an important civic complex, or perhaps an official staging post, existed within the later Roman walled settlement.

Building Croft Castle

Recent work independently by Richard Morriss and by Herefordshire Archaeology staff looking closely at the fabric of Croft Castle has shown that the accepted view of its construction needs to be revised. The older view, expressed by the old Royal Commission on Historic Monuments and by Pevsner, held that the turrets and stone outer walls survived from a fourteenth century curtain walled castle, and that the later mansion was built within this frame. However, there are no early dateable features in the fabric, and no foundations or other walls incorporated in the present foundations. The existing mansion, which despite appearances is largely built in brick, is entirely a construction of the period c1590-1630, with later alterations.

Among the discoveries in *Herefordshire Archaeology's* newly completed winter survey of the Croft Castle Estate was the location of the clay source and kiln clamp production sites for two of the main phases of the post-medieval house. These sites are in two discrete places within the park to the east of the mansion, and later planting has deliberately hidden them.



Croft Castle with part of a contemporary garden terrace wall revealed during last September's excavations

The first sites comprise roughly square pits from which the clay has been dug, and the circular or oval platforms on which the kilns were built. Both part-bricks and broken tile were observed among the debris. The complexes covered several acres. One complex appears to relate to the original construction of the mansion around a central courtyard, while the other seems to be contemporary with the later C17th building of the north extension.

*Keith Ray
County Archaeologist*

In search of your Building Memories

It is not only buildings like Croft Castle that interest archaeologists. A current SMR project is trying to trace former brickworks and workers from around the county. We would like to hear from anyone with information on the remains of former brickworks or who knew (or in fact was) someone who once worked in the local brickworks.

Following a short outdoor interview on Radio Hereford and Worcester at the site of the old Hampton Park brickworks in Tupsley, Hereford several retired brickworkers rang the SMR with information. Two people had worked in brickworks in Worcestershire all their lives and we hope to visit these people in the future and record their experiences. So far, we have not heard from any retired Herefordshire brickworkers.

*Rebecca Roseff
Sites and Monuments Officer*

Festival of Walking Dates

You can join *Herefordshire Archaeology* on four walks located around the county as part of the Festival of Walking that is happening from 20th May- 2nd June. Our walks are:

21st May: Historic Landscape Walk: Marcle Ridge- 'Walking the Ridgeway' Ref. *WF03*

24th May: Historic Town Walk: 'Clifford and its environs' Ref. *WF08*

25th May: 'A Monumental Divide: Walking and Viewing Offa's Dyke' Ref. *WF16* (with Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust)

28th May: Historic Landscape Walk: 'The Sapey Brook Valley' Ref. *WF25*

31st May: Historic Landscape Walk: 'Eaton Bishop and Ruckhall' Ref. *WF32*

Unlike our usual walks, you have to book a place, as the numbers are limited for each walk. You can book your ticket, get information on start times and where to meet **only** at Queenswood Tourist Information Centre on **(01568) 797842**, quoting the relevant reference number given for each walk above. A complete festival programme featuring all the walks is also only available from the Queenswood Tourist Information Centre.

Some like it hot

Herefordshire Archaeology has just completed a survey of the Iron Age hillfort at Cherry Hill Camp, Fownhope. The survey was undertaken in order to accurately plan the defensive circuit and locate areas of intense burning on the defences which suggests some kind of cataclysmic event.

The survey results indicate that the hill- fort may originally have had only a single defensive rampart and ditch. This structure seems to have been purposefully destroyed by intense burning with much of the rampart being vitrified (fused to a glassy-like matrix). This, however, was not the end of Cherry Hill as a focal point for Iron Age society as it appears that a new hill- fort was constructed over the site of the first hill- fort by extending the perimeter of the ramparts.

Vitrification occurs when stone is heated to melting point. To do this on such a scale was an immense undertaking, involving the construction of flues through the ramparts and the building of pyres containing thousands of tons of timber. This approach to the destruction of hill- forts has until now been a trait associated with the northern Britain. The reasons for firing a hill- fort bank are not always clear although it is seen as a deliberate act of destruction.

This certainly does seem to have been the case at Cherry Hill, where the ramparts are made of limestone which is an easily workable stone that shatters and softens when heated. Here the vitrification took place to ensure that the defences could never be used again. This is presumably why, when the hill- fort was re-built, the defensive circuit had to be enlarged beyond the original line of the hill- fort. The re-fortification of the defences extended the ramparts along the northern, southern and western side of the original hill- fort while the eastern side of the defences utilised the natural steep slope of the hill.

The survey evidence sheds new light on one of our lesser-known hill forts and provides us with a valuable insight into changing circumstances in local Iron Age society.

Tim Hovord
Archaeological Projects Officer

Roman engineering

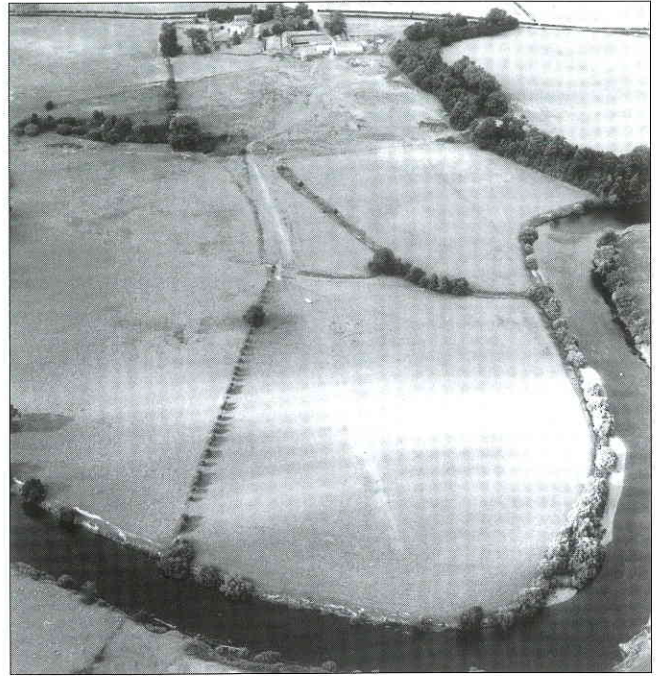


Photo reproduced courtesy of Chris Musson/ 96MB 0562

The Roman road, north of the River Wye at Old Wier, can be seen as the pale line in the centre of the photograph

A brief insight into the construction of a Roman Road near Hereford has been possible from a small- scale investigation by *Herefordshire Archaeology* at New Weir, Kenchester on behalf of The National Trust. The aim of the survey was to establish whether Roman remains were present either side of the Roman road just to the north of the River Wye and to investigate the possibility of Roman activity in another to the east of The Weir House.

A geophysical survey on the latter site showed little evidence for settlement activity, and this was confirmed by a series of evaluation trenches. The survey over the Roman road however indicated the possible existence of settlement along either side of the road. It also revealed that the road had a central drain running along it. This is significant as the only other place where a local road has been recorded with a central drain is within the walled Roman town of *Magnis* (Kenchester).

Archaeological contractors will undertake further work later this year so that these preliminary survey results can be defined in closer details.

Coming soon....

Activities and events are already being planned for this year's West Midlands Archaeology Week (in fact two weeks!) which runs from 8th- 19th July with community archaeology projects highlighted during the first week and with the second week focusing on landscapes and monuments in Herefordshire. National Archaeology Days follow on 20th-21st July with a variety of activities around the theme of 'Castles in Herefordshire Landscapes'. Find out more in the next issue of HET.