

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 4 Issue 2

June 2001

Environmental Monitoring



One of the many disposal pits recently dug in Herefordshire. Smoke from the burning pyres makes the photo appear hazy

Accurate and detailed records on the impacts and losses within the historic environment today can provide information for the monitoring of change and assess the implications for the environment in the short- and long- term.

The need for such accurate and detailed recording has been clearly demonstrated over the past ten weeks due to the Foot and Mouth Disease. During this crisis the combined disposal operations throughout the county produced the largest, single impact upon the rural historic environment that Herefordshire has ever seen. Pyre building, pit digging, hedgerow removal for the access of heavy machinery and the clearance of some farm buildings necessitated an operation of archaeological monitoring on a scale never before imagined.

It is hoped the information gathered during this time will enable future generations to appreciate and understand the scale of the impacts and losses to the historic environment and what our response was. A report on this monitoring is given in more detail on the back page.

The end of Historic Environment Today?

Historic Environment Today (HET) was launched in October 1998 as a quarterly newsletter with the aim of raising the profile of the specifically historic environment work undertaken by the Conservation and Environmental Planning section of the newly established Herefordshire Council. With a revolving editorship and an emphasis on new discoveries and activities within the rich historical heritage of the county, the purpose of HET was to share this information with a wider audience.

However as a part of a current review of spending priorities for the section, the value and importance of Historic Environment Today is being examined. The future of HET is uncertain and we therefore ask you for your views on its future: hence the enclosed questionnaire.

I hope you have found enough of interest in past and present HETs to send us your opinions, by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire. It is only through a good return of questionnaires that we will be able to judge the viability of continuing to produce the newsletter and to share news and involve a wider audience with the work of the Conservation and Environmental planning team in whatever form of publication.

Please send your completed questionnaires and any letters to: -

**The Editor, Historic Environment Today,
Planning HQ, PO Box 3, Leominster, HR6
8LU**

Or e-mail general comments to the current editor: -

pwhite@herefordshire.gov.uk

Inside: Parks ⇔ Barn Owls ⇔ Hereford City ⇔ Aerial Photos ⇔ Foot and Mouth

The Archaeological Importance of Hereford

Few people who live and work in Herefordshire may be aware that the centre of Hereford is protected in legislation as an Area of Archaeological Interest (AAI). But what does this mean and what are the implications for the archaeology of the city?

Hereford is in fact one of only **five** in the whole country (Canterbury, Chester, Exeter, and York are the others). The designation requires by law, notification of any groundworks, flooding or tipping operations. It also permits the Investigating Authority (since 1999 for Hereford, Herefordshire Archaeology) access to observe and record affected remains, and to conduct excavations within the AAI.



© C. Musson, 1995

The centre of Hereford is designated as an AAI.

The designated area covers the area within the medieval city walls, and extends to include the historic suburbs, sites of monastic houses and the area south of the River Wye including the Bishop's Meadow.

Anyone who disturbs the ground within the AAI is obliged by law to notify Herefordshire Council on a prescribed form before doing so, giving six weeks notice. They are also required to submit a certificate before the works to commence. Herefordshire Archaeology is the Council's advisory body on matters affecting the AAI and as the Investigating Authority is the organisation ultimately responsible for securing with archaeological monitoring work that may be required within the designated area.

Julian Cotton

NEWS FLASH! Sutton Dating

We have just received a radiocarbon date from our 2000 season of excavations at Sutton St. Michael. The sample was taken from an animal skeleton found in the backfilled void of the first of two palisades that were built to enclose an area east of the parish church. The dates (OxA-10310) indicate a likely date-range of 1064-1130AD. I take this as indicating the likelihood that this dates the event of demolition of this first palisade to the late eleventh century. It matches very closely the pottery dating, and tells us nothing about middle Saxon activity, least of all associated with Offa!

However, it does indicate that a likely manorial complex was both enclosed and defended here in the late and early Norman period. It also suggests that our still visible Norman mottes were not the only militarily defensible sites in the contemporary landscape.

Keith Ray

National Archaeology Days Sat. 21st and Sun. 22nd July 2001

Herefordshire Archaeology is teaming up with the Council's Heritage Services to bring a weekend of events for young and old alike to mark National Archaeology Days.

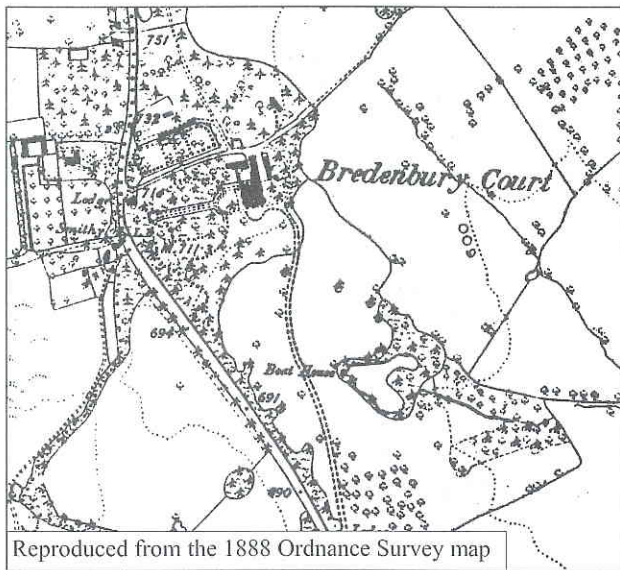
On Saturday 21st July join Herefordshire Archaeology on Bishop's Meadow, Hereford from 10.30am onwards for a 'Living Survey' demonstration. Watch as subtle earthwork features are revealed before your eyes through the survey drawing as well as seeing what is buried beneath your feet by looking at the results of a geophysical survey. There will also be a heritage clues trial designed for families, with prizes to be won.

Then on Sunday 22nd July the Museum Service play host to a day of activities from 11am at the playing fields behind St. Martin's Church, Holme Lacy Road, Hereford. Children can 'dig' in a simulated excavation, have their finds identified, and even help to draw and record them.

Details for 21st July from Tim Hoverd on 01568 614931 and for 22nd July from Siriol Collins/ Claudia Hart on 01432 260692

Revisiting Historic Parks and Gardens

Herefordshire Council's Landscape Officer and members of the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust are carrying out a survey of the County's historic parks and gardens. The aim is to produce a database of those gardens considered to be of local importance for the County's Unitary Development Plan along with a reference book of all the County's historic parks and gardens for publication by the Trust. The project has already thrown up some fascinating history and intriguing details of gardens that are well known but not necessarily well documented.



The 1st edition OS map showing the newly designed garden features of Bredenbury Court

Bredenbury Court, which is now the location of St. Richard's Preparatory School, was rebuilt by T. H. Wyatt between 1873-4 and the church removed to a new site to the north of the house in 1876. This enabled Edward Milner, the celebrated Victorian landscape gardener and erstwhile assistant of Sir Joseph Paxton, to lay out the grounds. He promoted the 'mixed style' of gardening – formal and picturesque – by planting formal flower gardens and terraces near to the house, that gives way to a serpentine drive passing his new lake and boathouse, all shielded by shrubberies from the main road. He also created the new park, planting this after the manner of Uvedale Price without formal clumps, although the new pool was given a fringe of exotic trees.

Jane Patton

Biological Records Centre: Update

The study by independent consultants looking at the feasibility of establishing a Biological Records Centre in the County (in HET 3,2) is now complete. The consultation process involved questionnaires, meetings and workshops with natural history recorders and users of data. The recommendation is that the Centre is hosted by Herefordshire Council and situated within the Conservation and Environmental Planning Section.

A Management Panel of the funding partners and representatives of data suppliers and data users will help set data standards and reach decisions on survey priorities. Initially one member of staff, a Records Centre Manager will be recruited to lead the establishment phase of the Centre. We now look forward to this progressing to the next stage and will keep you updated.

Birds in decline

The national loss of once common farmland birds has been well publicised and the continuing losses at a local level probably reflect the impacts of modern farming and changes in historical land use on the availability of food items such as seeds and insects. As a result of the decline in particular bird populations like the bullfinch and barn owl these are given 'priority' species status within the County's Bio-diversity Action Plan.

The bullfinch used to be regarded as a pest in orchards because they would eat fruit buds and orchard owners could obtain a licence to kill or trap bullfinches. MAFF has now withdrawn this licence in the light of a decline in the species and now where any severe damage is reported new ways of discouraging bullfinches are recommended.

The barn owl is also benefiting from active conservation action with a recent public survey organised by the Herefordshire Ornithological Club yielding 36 nest sites in the County. The planning department in conjunction with the Barn Owl Trust has also run a training session for planners and historic building officers so that they would recognise signs of barn owl occupation when applications for barn conversion are received.

Jo Hackman

“..there were 29 places with urban characteristics in the county in medieval times.”

Sites and Monuments News

Thanks to the regular number of volunteers many new sites and completed projects can now be added to the SMR. These contribute to our developing knowledge of the history of the County. The cataloguing and interpreting of the photos from the Millennium Air Survey has revealed previously unknown sites including a possible Roman marching camp at Lyonshall.

Completed projects include the Herefordshire Railway project which has mapped and listed in detail information on all of the six railway lines that once traversed Herefordshire, including the stations, halts and when each opened and closed. Other projects include the recording of Cold War installations and the quarry project that has recorded every quarry mapped on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1888. Over 2050 quarries are recorded and this reveals the extent the natural resources were being exploited, including clay, gravel, lime and stone. New projects are now underway recording brickworks, the utilities (gas, water, electricity) and hedgerows.



Volunteers working in the SMR, based in Leominster

The inputting of the field name survey onto a communal computer database is steadily progressing and has now reached 160 parishes (out of 245).

If you would like to get involved in volunteer projects, particularly if you have a computer and can work from home, please ring Rebecca on 01432 260130.

Rebecca Roseff

Foot and Mouth Fieldwork

In parallel with the neighbouring counties of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, the county archaeology service in Herefordshire has been responding to the conservation challenge of ground works associated with the foot and mouth outbreak. Herefordshire is in the mid-range of counties in respect to the extent of impact of the outbreak. It has had, for instance, more cases than Warwickshire, but many less than Devon.

The archaeological monitoring project involved staff of three local contract archaeological units, as well as three of us in Herefordshire Archaeology. When we have assimilated the results of the work, we shall report them more widely, but finds of prehistoric and medieval date featured prominently from among the very many trenches and pits monitored.

Tim Hoverd

Medieval Towns Review

During 2000 and early 2001, I have carried out a review of the evidence for medieval towns in the county. This has involved looking at the results of the mid-1990s Central Marches Historic Towns Survey, as well as the new information that has emerged since then.

I have concluded that there were 29 places with urban characteristics in the county in medieval times. Only eight of these were recognisably urban by 1500AD. Brampton Bryan, Lyonshall and Much Cowarne extend the list of substantial settlements, while a further eight towns achieved this status for less than 50 years or so.

In the report that summarises the findings of the review I also outline a twelve-point strategic programme for research and conservation for the 23 former (and 6 present-day) towns. This includes a database project for Hereford, some whole-town earthwork surveys, and a special designation in the Unitary Development Plan. The report, 'Medieval towns in Herefordshire: a management review' is Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.2. Copies can be obtained by writing to Tim Hoverd, via the address on the cover of this issue.

Keith Ray