

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 4 Issue 4

November 2001

Future of Past Buildings

Herefordshire is renowned for its traditional timber framed buildings and isolated farmsteads that contribute to the unique landscape character of the county. Although they are one of the most visible links to our past, rural historical buildings are also under ever increasing pressure of change and alteration against the backdrop of the current economic climate for agriculture.

The vast variation in scale, design and material within traditional rural buildings is dependent upon its age, purpose and original use. Sometimes buildings are the only indication of the existence of a former land-use. The best example of this are the oast-houses associated with hop processing, a common structure seen on Herefordshire farms, yet hop fields are now a rarity within the landscape.

Re-use and adaptation of farm buildings can severely compromise the setting and essential characteristics of the structures. The Council has produced a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on alterations to rural buildings to promote best practice. In this issue members of the Historic Buildings Conservation Team detail their contribution to the safeguarding of the built heritage of the county.

Annual Symposium

The Fourth Annual Symposium on Archaeology in Herefordshire will take place on **Saturday, 24th November from 9.30 a.m.** at The Courtyard Theatre, Hereford. There are talks from a wide variety of speakers. Topics will include details on volunteer projects; on a local community-based project; and as usual, new discoveries and recent excavations.

Tickets cost £8 and are **only** available from The Courtyard Box Office, whether in person or by telephoning (01432) 359252.



Excavations at Westhild, with the Romano- British furnace in the front of the photograph

'Project Potato'

As reported in the previous issue of HET (4.3), Herefordshire Archaeology is involved in a national project to assess the impact of arable farming upon archaeological sites. The impact of potato ploughing and harvesting upon buried remains is a major concern as a depth of up to 24 inches below the ground surface can be disturbed during potato cultivation.

The total area of arable land devoted to potato cultivation in Herefordshire is the third largest of all the English counties. This illustrates the potential extent of irreversible damage being caused within the county to the archaeological resource.

A site, near Westhild, was excavated in order to understand how the topography, soils and farming regime have influenced the survival of the archaeological deposits. Roman pottery, worked stone and a small furnace were uncovered, suggesting the existence of a small settlement. If potatoes were planted here the archaeology would be substantially damaged. Regrettably this situation is being repeated throughout the county and the need for practical conservation management has never been greater.

*Paul White
Landscape Archaeologist*

Inside: People ⇒ Radio 4 ⇒ Churches ⇒ Listed Buildings ⇒ Excavations

High Grade Hovel

Large stately homes are not the only buildings to be given listed building status. Herefordshire Council has been successful in achieving Grade II listed status for a rare 18th century hovel at Wellington Heath.

The application to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, responsible for conferring listed status, was made after the Historic Buildings team was contacted by locals who were keen to see the building's future safeguarded. Research revealed that this tiny cottage is actually shown on the 1814 enclosure map of Wellington Heath, when the encroachments made by 'squatters' onto common land could be legally bought by their owners.

Made from cheap materials that were readily available, the hovel is characterised by its rough timber frame with wattle and daub panels and a thatched roof that is presently preserved under a corrugated iron roof. The hovel represents the very lowest form of vernacular architecture that may possibly survive within England. However very few hovels survive today because the small size and crude construction meant they were abandoned long ago in favour of larger, more comfortable homes, or that they were extended beyond recognition.

This wonderful and important little historic building has survived remarkably intact and unaltered, thanks in part to its isolated location. To our knowledge it is the only surviving 'squatters' cottage in anything like its original form, around Wellington Heath.

*Rachel Bonner
Historic Buildings Conservation Officer*

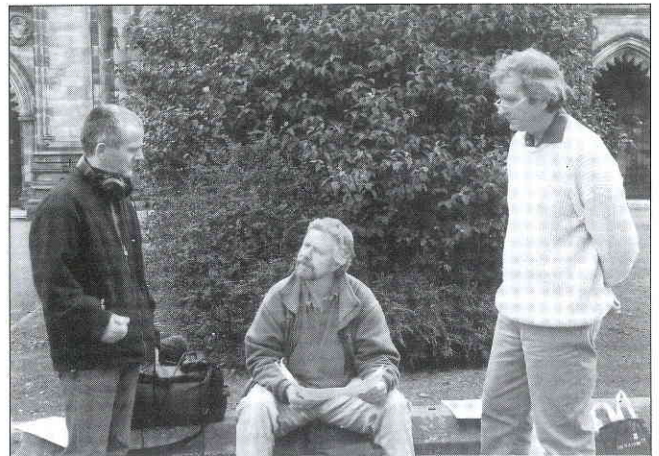
NEW ADDRESS and REMINDER to 'subscribe' to HET

The new PO Box number and postcode for all correspondence to the Conservation and Environmental Planning Team is shown below. It is also where you should send your four *Stamped Addressed Envelopes* to ensure you continue to receive HET for the coming year.

**Historic Environment Today, Herefordshire
Archaeology, Planning Services, PO Box 144,
Hereford, HR1 2YH.**

Mapping Hereford

On a hazy October Saturday, I joined David Whitehead (contributor), Dominic Harbour (contributor), Julian Richards (presenter), and John Byrne (producer) of Radio 4's history series, 'Mapping the Town', to make a programme about Hereford. We met at the Old Wye Bridge, and discussed the development of the city out from its Saxon core and in reference to the crossing points of the Wye. We went on to look at the cathedral and Mappa Mundi (Dominic manages the Mappa building and exhibition), before proceeding to Broad Street, High Town and Castle Green.



John Byrne, Julian Richards and David Whitehead during the recording work in Hereford

A particular feature of the programme is historical anecdote, of which David provided a seemingly endless flow! The new series of five programmes of 'Mapping the Town' begins in late November. The Hereford programme will be broadcast on Monday 17th December at 11 a.m.

*Keith Ray
County Archaeologist*

People

This October saw the appointment of Margaret Cole as Manager of the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre. She brings invaluable experience of nature conservation and recording to the position. After studying Biology at Leeds University Margaret worked on many biological recording projects such as the Threatened Plants Database. She has also reviewed regional biodiversity resources on behalf of the West Midlands Wildlife Trusts. The main task here will be to establish the Record Centre as an invaluable resource for nature conservation in the future.

Andrew Pike was recently appointed as Field Officer for the Churches Conservation Trust to the region. Here he introduces the work of the Trust and some of the Herefordshire churches within its care.

Churches

St Bartholomew's Church, Richard's Castle, recently joined eight other Herefordshire churches vested in The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust was set up in 1969 to preserve Anglican churches of outstanding historic, architectural or archaeological importance no longer needed for regular worship.

Several of the Trust's churches are remote, serving villages long since shrunken or deserted. At Holme Lacy, the church is a long way from the present village while others were replaced by later churches located on different sites, such as at Yatton (where the earlier church is now in a farmyard). Many still have occasional services and other events. Visitors are welcome, with guidebooks and other literature available. All are open daily or have a nearby keyholder.

As a registered charity, The Trust receives most of its income from the Government and the Church Commissioners, though increasing reliance is placed on visitors' donations. Leaflets on the Trust's churches in Herefordshire or elsewhere are available from Tourist Information Centres, from the Trust's office (89 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH) or the local Field Officer (Andrew Pike, Greensleeves Cottage, Culmington, Ludlow SY8 2DB). Or visit the Trust's website: www.visitchurches.org.uk

*Andrew Pike
Area Field Officer, Church Conservation Trust*

Volunteers Needed

The Sites and Monuments Record welcomes volunteers. A group of volunteers work in the SMR office at the Town Hall on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Often the work involves studying photographs, maps or documents. Anyone who likes computer work is particularly welcome at the moment. If you feel you would like this type of work and can give a regular half or whole day a week, please contact Rebecca at: rroseff@herefordshire.gov.uk or (01432) 260130.



Mass of early Tudor brick and stonework debris uncovered during excavations at Croft Castle

Elizabethan Wonders

The Croft Castle investigations during September (mentioned in the last issue of HET) were completed with a visit from some distinguished gardens historians and archaeologists, to give us a view about what we'd discovered. In true archaeological tradition, the field season was transformed in the last week by some dramatic discoveries. The work confirmed the sequence and broad chronology of the gardens that are marked by the prominent earthworks. These were created around 1780 then extended and elaborated around 1810.

In the third week, the remains of the Elizabethan walled gardens came to light. We also discovered extensive demolition debris including fine brick, tile and dressed stone from buildings of the same date. There was too much to have come from the (nonetheless contemporary) castle-like mansion, so they seem to have derived from hitherto unsuspected buildings (prospect towers, a gatehouse and even a detached Banqueting Hall have been suggested) that once existed close to the main house. With indications of major demolished medieval buildings in three of the excavation areas as well, the likelihood of the former presence of a vanished curtain-walled castle here is also reinforced. *Keith Ray
County Archaeologist*

Constructive Advice...

One of the most important aspects of historic building conservation, especially for listed buildings, is conveying information about the property to the current owner. This can be in terms of basic legislation and responsibilities in owning such buildings or defining best practice for repairs and maintenance.

Therefore a series of technical leaflets are being produced within the Historic Buildings Conservation Team on a variety of topics. These will be free of charge to all owners of listed buildings within the county and available to others for a small charge. The topics covered include a general guide on ownership to specific advisory notes upon typical characteristic features of buildings such as roofs, mortars, joinery and paints.

...And a helping hand

Herefordshire Council each year allocates a small budget that it contributes, in the form of grant-aid, to the essential maintenance of the county's listed buildings stock. Though only a small number of buildings can benefit each year the work initiated from this year's money included the restoration of an ornamental gateway, re-thatching of roofs, re-laying of a stone slate roof and structural repairs to timber framing. This small investment has not only safeguarded the future of our built heritage but has also yielded an excellent return in terms of local employment while retaining and developing traditional crafts. *Noel Knight*
Historic Buildings Surveyor

Putting the "Much" into Much Cowarne

Herefordshire Archaeology staff recently undertook a survey of the well-preserved earthworks at Much Cowarne that are believed to represent the southern extent of the medieval settlement. The area is located to the south-east of the church and comprises of a central holloway running roughly north/south, with burgrave plots on the western side. The holloway is met by a second routeway. The junction forms a roughly triangular or 'funnel' shaped area indicative of a small market area.

The Domesday Book records that in 1086, the settlement of "Cuare" had a priest, a reeve, 26 villagers and 8 smallholders. Even at that time Much Cowarne can be considered a comparatively large settlement with these earthworks suggests that the settlement of extended a considerable distance from the church, suggesting a status as a town rather than a village during the medieval period.

Excavations associated with a nearby development site indicate that the medieval earthworks were abandoned by the late 16th century. The northern area was apparently re-planned at this date and continued in use until the early 18th century.

The earthworks are so well preserved and of such importance in providing an understanding of the extent and nature of the settlement at Much Cowarne that English Heritage recently designated them as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. *Tim Hoverd*
Archaeological Project Officer

