

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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Historic Environment and Farming

There is much speculation and debate on the future of farming within the Country. National and international factors will influence decisions made at the local level. The government has pledged more money for Countryside Stewardship Schemes, while changes to the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union in the next few years will have an impact on how and what is grown. What is recognised is the need for the farming community to survive, but views on how this will be achieved vary.

Opinions range from increasing farm diversification and funding for more environmental improvement schemes, to the expansion and intensification of crops. Whichever option is chosen, both will have an impact upon the historic environment of the county.

Herefordshire Archaeology is already involving itself with these farming changes. Firstly, the Rural Development Service (RDS) consults the team regarding applications made for Countryside Stewardship. We advise on the impact upon the historic environment within the proposed schemes. This can relate to changes in the historic landscape character of an area or to actual archaeological remains.

Secondly, an audit on the impact of different arable regimes upon archaeology is required. A suspected consequence of Foot and Mouth will be the shift from pastoral to arable farming. Herefordshire has already seen a huge shift to deep ploughing for potatoes in recent years. Herefordshire Archaeology has been approached by the Oxford Archaeological Unit to contribute to their 'Archaeology in the Arable Landscape' project, which attempts to assess impacts and guide farmers towards best practise where substantial archaeological remains survive.



Fire damage at the rear of the Seven Stars

Seven Stars Blaze

The widely reported fire at the Seven Stars, Ledbury not only affected the 16th Century public house, but also spread to neighbouring properties, all of which are Grade II Listed Buildings. The damage was extensive, with the entire roof and a significant amount of the building behind the front elevation being lost. The Historic Buildings team is providing advice on short- and long- term action to safe guard the structure and ultimately on its rebuilding.

From the outset we have been liaising with structural engineers and English Heritage as the most immediate task is making the buildings safe to ensure public safety, and to allow safe access into the site. This has included the removal of the upper section of two chimney- stacks. The fire created a huge amount of loose debris. When this has been cleared away we will be able to assess the full extent of the damage, and identify what is capable of being salvaged.

It is hoped that the buildings will be rebuilt to their historic form, reusing as much of the surviving fabric as possible. However, it will be a very long process and the work required extensive. It will be some time before these buildings are returned to their former glory.

*Rachel Bonner
Historic Buildings Conservation Officer*

Inside: Parks ⇨ Stone Carving ⇨ Colwall ⇨ Medieval Buildings ⇨ Survey

Results are in!

In the last issue we asked for your opinion on HET. Over one-third of you responded to the questionnaire. The future of HET is now being assessed with your all answers being considered. Meanwhile here are some of the initial findings:

70% thought we had achieved our aim extremely well with more news items on historic buildings, archaeology and landscape requested. The majority wished HET to remain focused upon the historic environment while 29% want an alternative publication. The 'invisible' readership of HET was revealed as over 70% claimed more than one person read the newsletter. Many commented that HET was seen as being an integral part of the department's work by providing information.

Siege the day

On Saturday 21st July Herefordshire Archaeology staged various events for the general public on Bishop's Meadow, Hereford, to mark National Archaeology Days and to compliment Heritage Services Archaeology Fun Day on Sunday 22nd. The aim of the day was to encourage the public to experience archaeological techniques at first hand and to highlight the wealth of history that can be found on people's doorsteps. The day involved tours around the earthwork remains on Bishop's Meadow, explanation of geophysical survey results, demonstration of survey techniques and a heritage clues trial. Despite the weather the day was well attended with over 80 people taking part.

The survey recorded the complex earthworks that cover a large area of the Bishop's Meadow. They include the two large banks known as Rowe Ditch, both of which appear to have been defensive, but which were constructed at different times. The area between Rowe Ditch and the River Wye seems to have been divided into fields at some point in time as suggested by the presence of ridge and furrow between a series of ditches. To the south of Rowe Ditch there is a substantial earthwork. Following the National Archaeology Day survey this feature is now interpreted as a well-preserved gun emplacement dating from the Civil War and used in the 1645 siege of Hereford by the Scottish army.

Face from the past

Herefordshire Archaeology was recently contacted about a stone carving now fixed into the parapet of Panksbridge over the River Lodden near Much Cowarne. The carving is of an incised head and it was initially thought that the stonemason who had inscribed the plaque on the bridge that records the widening of the bridge in 1928 had also carved the head. However, at this year's Herefordshire History Day School at Weobley, local residents had second thoughts when Jean O'Donnell showed slides of two Celtic carved human heads that had been ploughed up near Stretton Grandison in 1983 and 1984. These closely resembled the carving in Panksbridge. So how did the stone carving get into the bridge?



The face carved into the stone block stares out from Panksbridge, Much Cowarne

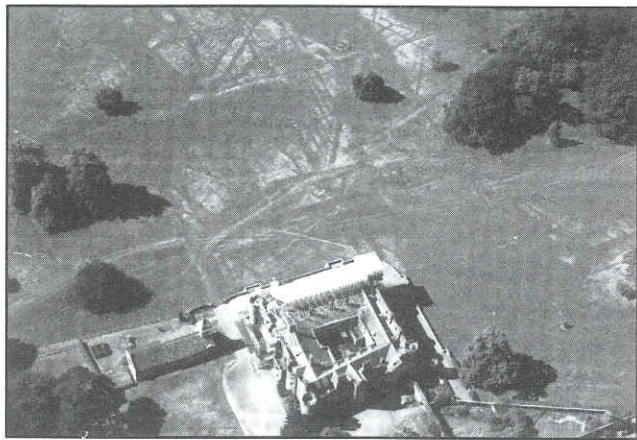
Intriguingly, documentary research has revealed that the bridge engineer in charge of the bridge-widening project was G. H. Jack, an archaeological pioneer in Herefordshire during the first quarter of the 20th century. Jack excavated areas within the Roman town of Kenchester and parts of the Iron Age hillfort at Capler near Fownhope. A visit by Herefordshire Archaeology staff during July confirmed that the head does appear to be genuine. We therefore assume that Jack found the carving during the works associated with the bridge widening and incorporated it into the new parapet.

The 22 cm by 26.5 cm carved block (see photo above) is in good condition and has been recorded photographically and by detailed scale drawing. The presence of the head is of great significance as it indicates that a Celtic shrine or water cult associated with this waterway was located nearby.

*Tim Hoverd
Archaeological Projects Officer*

Into the Garden...

Croft Castle in the north of the county is well known for the turreted mansion in its ancient parkland. What few visitors are likely to have appreciated are the remarkably well preserved 'lost' formal gardens. These gardens, in terraces to the south and west of the castle, and including a former cascade, will be the subject of a three-week project of archaeological exploration from 1st - 21st September this year. The project is being undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology staff and volunteers, in partnership with The National Trust to coincide with the Trust's Gardens Year activities. An exhibition on the archaeology of Croft will be on view in the castle, with a full day by day programme of public events organised. For details, contact David Atkins at Croft on 01568 780246



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The cropmark features will be investigated as part of the garden survey at Croft Castle

Archaeology Strategy

The public consultation period for the draft Herefordshire Archaeology Strategy closed in August. Over 200 copies of the strategy document were sent out to consultees. The strategy sets out the Council's planned programme of core activities and projects for the five- year period to the middle of 2005. It also sets out the elements of service practice, and provides some background to the work of Herefordshire Archaeology within the county. The comments received back will be digested in September, and a revised version will be produced and recommended to Council for adoption towards the end of October.

*Keith Ray
County Archaeologist*

"The date suggests that the complex is over a century older than previously suspected."

Courtyard dates

Building analysis at the rear of No. 40, Broad Street, Leominster, has revealed the remains of an interesting urban courtyard complex surviving from the medieval period. Dendrochronology of the timber frame has also provided a specific date for the building construction that had previously been noted by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments in 1934 as 17th Century.

In the courtyard, the 'Galleried Building', named for its unusual internal gallery, was until recently used as stables but its original function is unknown. Analysis of the external timber-work suggests that the building may have been flanked by other buildings, that are now lost.

Heavy soot encrusted onto the surviving bay timbers of the 'Dairy' structure in the courtyard may imply that it was once a medieval open hall. The presence of a principal post set in from the outside wall suggests that another internal gallery existed here that has since disappeared.

Nine timber samples were taken for tree ring dating. The tree rings from the 'Galleried Building' revealed felling dates of spring and summer 1499, and winter 1499/1500, imply a construction date of 1500. Meanwhile it would appear that the 'Dairy' was substantially earlier, with a construction date shortly after 1466. This is over a century earlier than was suggested by the Royal Commission.

*Stephen Bowyer
Historic Buildings Conservation Officer*

Retaining character

Parts of Colwall Stone and Upper Colwall have become the latest part of Herefordshire to be designated as a Conservation Area. The distinct character and quality of its natural and built environment has led to its inclusion. The purpose of the designation is to preserve and enhance the special character of the area for the future.

*Rachel Bonner
Historic Buildings Conservation Officer*

Office move

Herefordshire Archaeology undertook a rapid move from our offices at the Priory Annexe, Leominster, to the Town Hall, Hereford at the start of June. Here there are improved facilities, better security and more workspace especially for the Sites and Monuments Record. The new office space will also be able to accommodate the Local Record Centre (as reported in HET 4.2) and will provide additional project rooms as well. It is intended that the rest of the Conservation and Environmental Planning Team will join us in Hereford at the end of the year. The new telephone numbers are given below, with the postal address provided as a footnote on the front cover.

Keith Ray (01432) 383351
Julian Cotton (01432) 383350
Rebecca Roseff (01432) 260130
Tim Hoverd (01432) 383352
Paul White (01432) 383353

Gardens Published

The survey of the county's historic parks and gardens was mentioned in the last issue. This work is now nearing completion and the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust is publishing the resulting book in December, in collaboration with the Council's Landscape Officer.

It will be the first such comprehensive local survey and has been compiled by David Whitehead, who is one of the country's most distinguished local history experts. He has, over many years, made a particular study of the historic parks and gardens in Herefordshire.

The work details the history and evolution of over 250 sites, supported by extracts from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps and numerous illustrations. Much of the information is based on research never previously published and the volume represents a major contribution to the aesthetic, social and cultural record of the area.

The Gardens Trust is inviting subscriptions to the first edition. If you are interested ordering a copy contact David Whitehead, 60 Hafod road, Hereford, HR1 1SQ, for an order form.

Jane Patton
Landscape Officer

Gaul Street Blues?

Blues, yellows, oranges and other bright colours have been revealed among the smashed 17th Century crockery found at the excavation at Gaul Street, Hereford, currently underway.

Archenfield Archaeology have been carrying out the work in advance of the construction of new H.M. probation service buildings on the north side of Gaul Street, for the past month.



Excavations in progress at the Gaul Street site

So far, a wealth of features relating to 17th Century buildings on the site have come to light. However, preservation of earlier remains extending back to the founding years of the Norman borough here appears to be good. The excavation, under the direction of Huw Sherlock and P.J. Pikes, will therefore continue for some weeks yet. An Open Day to visit the excavations is planned for Saturday 8th September. For further details, please contact Archenfield Archaeology on 01432 830757.

Keith Ray
County Archaeologist

Erratum

As reported in the previous HET the 'Medieval towns in Herefordshire: a management view' is not Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 2, but in fact Report No. 20. Apologies for any confusion caused.