

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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After the digging is over

With a marked autumnal feel to the weather it is the time of year for archaeologists to assess the results of the many projects that have taken place especially during the warmer summer months. This year is no exception and in this issue of HET, you can find out about some of the excavations that have taken place across the county, from Romano- British Lyonshall to lost buildings at Croft and a mysterious discovery at Sutton St. Michael.

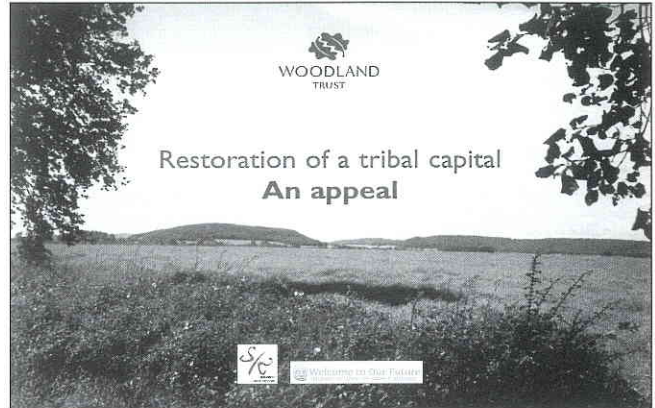
Work does not stop when the excavation trenches are covered back over. Following each excavation is a longer period of post-excavation work. This includes the washing and cataloguing of the artefacts recovered. Some of the artefacts can then be sent to specialists, who will analyse the finds that will contribute to the interpretation of the site. Drawings are prepared for publication and the excavation report is written. However, you do not have to wait until the report is published to hear about the sites excavated this year, as many will be described in the Annual Symposium. See the panel below for details.

Fifth Annual Symposium Saturday 30 November 2002

This year's symposium on archaeological work within the county promises to be a lively affair. Among the speakers are Peter Guest from Cardiff University (see the article inside), Andrew Pike of the Churches Conservation Trust and Mark Bowden of the English Heritage Survey Team.

Tickets cost £8.50 and are on sale from The Courtyard Box Office (Tel. 01432 359252). Further information on the programme is included as a separate leaflet with this copy of HET.

Credenhill Appeal



The cover of the Woodland Trust Appeal form shows the now wooded Iron Age hillfort in the centre left

The Woodland Trust has entered into a remarkable partnership with Severn Waste, 'Welcome To Our Future', and the Heritage Lottery Fund to try, with public support, to purchase Park Wood, Credenhill. Crowning this extensive site just to the west of Hereford is Credenhill Fort. This occupies a special place in Herefordshire's Iron Age, being the largest hillfort in the Marches and being centrally placed within the county. It also appears to have been a continuing Romano-British centre of occupation locally, at least until Kenchester developed in the valley below late in the first century AD.

Herefordshire Archaeology has helped in various ways to develop the Woodland Trust bid for funding, and potential future management options for the site. While the project to purchase the site requires ten times this figure, the Trust needs to raise £70,000 locally, from private voluntary donations. An Appeal was therefore launched on 26th September, with just over two months to raise the necessary funding. *The Hereford Times* has also been supporting the Appeal with a string of articles featuring the local Credenhill community and their support for the purchase; and the stories behind the major funding partners. Please find an appeal pledge form inside.

Inside: Romans ⇒ Buildings ⇒ Artefacts ⇒ SMR ⇒ Excavations ⇒ Symposium

“It also featured a bizarre debate about jousting”

BBC ‘fly’ into dig!

Every now and again, a new idea for radio or television series on archaeology is put together and picked up by one of the networks. The latest offering from BBC-2 is a programme series called ‘Time Flyers’. The idea of this series is to show how aerial archaeology linked to ground-based investigation is a powerful tool for uncovering remarkable stories from the past. The six programmes in a first series of ‘Time Flyers’ will be broadcast at 7.30pm on Thursday evenings from the end of October into early December.



‘Time Flyers’ presenter Mark Horton examines some of the finds from the excavation at Croft Castle

Two of these 2002 programmes are of particular interest in Herefordshire. One is a programme about Offa’s Dyke, with an investigation of its course in neighbouring Shropshire. The other is the story of Herefordshire Archaeology’s search for the lost medieval castle at Croft and will be broadcast on 5th December. This latter programme involved a lot of sequences of filming a helicopter taking off and landing. It also featured a bizarre debate about jousting.

Dining out at Croft

For reasons that should be apparent, an article about the medieval castle at Croft will have to await our next issue. Nonetheless, our search for lost buildings at Croft Castle this year also involved disturbing part of the manicured lawn to the east of the mansion. This work was designed to locate a structure shown on an estate plan of 1798 and a print of 1790.

This was a building with a rectangular ground plan aligned east-west, and flanking the east front of the mansion opposite the church. It had clearly been swept away when the east drive was constructed, and is not shown on a plan of 1825. Aerial photos show parching here, and a geophysical survey we carried out early this year indicated the likely survival of foundations here.

Excavation showed that the limestone bedrock was very close to the surface, and that later landscaping had removed most traces of former walls. However, enough survived to distinguish two phases of building. The first was a massive timber-framed building with brick-lined drains of eighteenth century date. The second phase belonged to our depicted structure that had a fine pedimented neo-Classical façade. This had timber floors and it is thought most likely to have been built as a banqueting or reception hall. An unexpected discovery was of the foundations of a cavity-heated rear wall of an orangery or greenhouse. This was attached to the east of this structure, but had disappeared by 1798.

*Tim Hoverd
Archaeological Projects Officer*

NEWS...SMR first to go on-line...

The Sites and Monuments Record went ‘on line’ on the 11th September. You can visit the website, at www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk. You will now be able to ‘visit’ the SMR from the comfort of your own home (or office!) and look up information by parish or time period. We hope it is easy to use – please let us know what you think. Herefordshire was actually the first SMR (just) in the country to go live on the internet. As you will see, additional pages will be added to the website over the next three years.

Miranda Greene is working on ‘Castles of Herefordshire’ (see the last issue of HET for more details) and some of this information is now presented on the website. Toria Forsyth-Moser is preparing the Education Pages, using Herefordshire examples to teach the National Curriculum. The first to be completed will be the Medieval period, by December this year. The pages are aimed at children aged 11 to 14 and their teachers, but it actually should appeal to everyone.

*Rebecca Roseff
SMR Officer*

What did the Romans do for us?

One of the highlights of this year's Annual Symposium (see front cover) is a talk by Dr. Peter Guest about the first Romano-British university- research investigation in Herefordshire in modern times. Peter is interested in researching how 'Romanisation' affected farming folk in the remoter parts of the province, and wants to look at a series of farmstead sites of the period in Herefordshire.

Herefordshire Archaeology volunteer Paul Wood had just the pair of sites for him, near Lyonshall. Both sites had been discovered from aerial photos, and Paul followed up his volunteer logging of such sites for the SMR with some fieldwalking over one of the sites. He had found 'Severn Valley ware' potsherds in the ploughsoil, indicating that this was indeed a site occupied in the Roman period.

Over the summer Peter and a large team of students from Cardiff University investigated a substantial area at Moorcourt Farm, and tested the potential at nearby Cold Furrow. To hear more about these sites, read the next issue of *Historic Environment Today* – or, better still, come to the Symposium on 30th November.

Research is on the Agenda

The Council for British Archaeology, English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, contract units, local societies, and others involved in archaeology are sponsoring the development of the West Midlands Regional Archaeological Research Agenda. It is designed to provide a review of current knowledge and a framework for future investigations by organising seminars around the region, looking at evidence from the different chronological periods.

The seminars review the archaeology of individual counties and areas in the morning sessions, and include thematic papers in each afternoon session. Seminars have already looked at earlier and later prehistory, and the Roman period. *Herefordshire Archaeology* will be hosting the next seminar, at the Town Hall, Hereford, on Monday 16th December. It will be looking at the early medieval period (410AD to 1066). If you are interested in attending, contact Sarah Watt (S.Watt@bham.ac.uk), or Keith Ray.

“...it is a symbol of our concern about this impact”

Heritage Harvest Symbol



The Neolithic ceremonial macehead

Late September each year sees the beginning of the potato harvest in Herefordshire. This year, in a field in the Arrow Valley, a strange potato-like stone with a holed bored through it joined the harvest. It was spotted in a harvesting machine, and was brought to archaeologists for identification. Nobody could remember from which of the many fields under potato this year it came. It is thought likely to be a rare early form of Neolithic ceremonial macehead, dating to around 3000BC.

Last year *Herefordshire Archaeology* produced a preliminary study of the impact of potato farming on archaeology, demonstrating the particular reasons why the buried heritage in the county is so badly affected by the growing and harvesting of this particular crop. So the macehead became a symbol this year for the expression of our concern about this impact. The burial or occupation site that the stone was located within is now ripped up, entering the same harvester unseen. As such, it has become part of a lost heritage: a set of clues to the origins of settlement in the valley that are no longer available to historians.

The macehead is an intrinsically interesting find, but it is symbolic of two stories. One story, yet untold, is of settlement and chieftainship among the earliest farmers. The other story, still unfolding, tells of the cumulative impact of industrialisation in the countryside that continues to deplete an historic inheritance for future generations.

Keith Ray
County Archaeologist

Village History in Black and White

A project has been in progress to establish a better understanding of the development of the medieval buildings in one of Herefordshire's most popular 'black and white' villages. As part of "The History and Heritage of Pembridge" project commissioned by The Pembridge Amenity Trust, funded by the Local Heritage Initiative scheme, ten early timber buildings have been sampled and dated by dendro-chronological analysis (tree ring dating) with the samples taken by Ian Tyers of Sheffield University. The technique relies upon finding suitable samples from within each building.

Swan House, the hidden gem of Pembridge and a high status building that can be linked stylistically with other important buildings, such as Chapel Farm (Wigmore), 5 Harley Court (Hereford) and Bryndraenog (Beguilyd, Radnorshire) gave a felling date of spring of 1451. This makes it later than Bryndraenog (dated to 1436) which may explain variations in certain details within the timber framing.

Eight other buildings contained timber that was felled during the 15th century with dates ranging from the winter of 1424 to 1495. Two 16th century dates were obtained from the Old Post Office and the Old Stores- an early building that appears to have undergone late 16th century repairs.

In the 1930s the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments made an inventory of the historic buildings within Herefordshire. This huge task did not benefit from dendrochronology and there was a tendency to allocate late 14th century dates to cruck frame structures that we now would place in the first half of the 15th century. The Pembridge project bears this out. The cruck framed halls that were sampled, (Brick House, West End Farm, Fig Tree Cottage and The Gatehouse) all returned felling dates from within the second quarter of the 15th century.

There is still much work to be done fully to utilise the significance of the findings from this valuable project. What it has established is the construction date for some of the earliest buildings in the village and contributed to the creation of a secure dendro reference chronology for the area.

Duncan James

Mystery Circle at Sutton



Pupils of Whitecross School, Hereford visit the Sutton dig

This year excavations at Sutton took place in June and the dig concentrated on the three trenches opened in 2000 within the medieval village site at Sutton St. Michael, to the west of the church. The trenches were located within the Scheduled area over a series of earthwork platforms.

Two of the trenches contained the remains of cobbled floors or yard surfaces. Medieval pottery and fragments of animal bone were recovered from across the site. Based upon the dating of the pottery provisional interpretations suggest that this area of the village was abandoned in the early 14th century. However beneath the medieval layers a number of ditches were uncovered that suggest an earlier phase of occupation.

One of the most intriguing discoveries was a large curving ditch discovered in one corner of an excavation trench. If it forms a circle, this would be between 15-20 metres in diameter. The ditch had been purposely filled with broken fragments of quern stone. An animal bone was recovered from the base of the ditch, which will be sent for radiocarbon dating.

With a small part of the ditch exposed, its purpose is unclear. The ditch does not appear to have contained upright posts that would have formed a built structure, such as an Iron Age round house. It may be the ditch associated with a Bronze Age burial mound, although no material was recovered to support this idea from the pit and postholes within the area enclosed by the circular ditch. Much hangs on the radiocarbon date, which we await with interest and will of course report upon in a future edition of HET!

Tim Hoverd
Archaeological Projects Officer