

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 6 Issue 2

July 2003

Discoveries that are rewriting history

There is little more exciting than knowing you could be the first person to see for the first time a historical object that has laid buried or hidden for hundreds or even thousands of years. The reaction is the same; one of delight and excitement, whether it is the remains of a building, an old document or an artefact buried in the ground.

The first half of this year has provided a wealth of new discoveries from the county and we focus on reports from the Arrow Valley project and Wellington quarry as well as look forward to forthcoming projects. Find out more about these new exciting discoveries and future work that are rewriting the history of Herefordshire inside this issue.

Herefordshire Archaeology Week 12 July- 20 July 2003

Every two years Herefordshire Archaeology is involved with the West Midlands Archaeology Week an event organised nationally by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). Herefordshire Archaeology however has decided to have an annual 'Archaeology in Herefordshire' Week to promote the archaeology and heritage of the county during the middle of July. The Archaeology Week then leads onto 'National Archaeology Days' (19th and 20th July) an event organised annually by the CBA in association with the Young Archaeologist Club. There will be various activities for all ages to enjoy.

We hope to see you at one or more of the forthcoming events. To find out more, see the flyer inside this copy of HET.

Visit to the Home Front



Enjoying a tour of the Rotherwas munitions site

Herefordshire Archaeology during May organised a guided walk around the 1st and 2nd World War munitions site at Rotherwas Industrial Estate in Hereford. Learning about the 20th Century is a central topic in the National Curriculum for History. The visit provided an opportunity for history teachers to see first hand how Hereford was involved in the war effort. John Edmunds, who is writing a book on the site proved to be a knowledgeable guide and was joined by members from other interested community groups, such as the Royal Airforces Association and myself.

The tour centred on the North Section where in WWI shells were filled with Lyddite (Picric Acid) and during WWII ready-filled and primed shells were assembled. A dangerous job, made even more dangerous when on July 27th 1942 the site was bombed, killing over 22 people. The tour included a derelict shell store, bomb shelters and blast walls that provided lots of talking points. We would like to thank Andrew Terry, the Council's Industrial Estates Officer who permitted access to the site.

*Toria Forsyth-Moser
SMR Education Officer*

Inside: Events | Beakers | Excavations | Churches | Romans | Survey

Keeping Kempson

The Church of St Matthew, Fromes Hill, was granted listed building status in September 2002. The church was built in 1877 and designed by the local architect F. R. Kempson. Based in Hereford Kempson was a prolific designer in the local area during the late 19th century working on a wide range of building types. His other works include a number of local landmark buildings such as the city library and art gallery on Broad Street, and the Blind College on Venns Lane, Hereford, as well as large private houses such as Bryngwyn in Much Dewchurch.

However, it is for design and the Victorian re-styling of churches that he is possibly best known and an area of expertise he was clearly very active in. Kempson worked on many churches in Herefordshire, from Dinedor to Wolferlow. St Matthew's is 'a fine example of a small rural church' with its attractive apsidal chancel and gothic revival detailing, it is well deserving of its newly- found listed status.

Rachel Bonner

Historic Buildings Conservation Officer

Croft Castle, 2003: events

This year's Herefordshire Archaeology/National Trust excavations at Croft Castle between 28th July and 23rd August really are 'excavations of Croft Castle', as we are concentrating upon finding more out about the medieval castle. We proved last year that the medieval castle complex once existed to the west of the mansion that was built to *look* like a castle, probably in the early 1660s. As with both of the previous seasons, there will be a project exhibition on display on site, and a series of events.

The events include site tours at 2pm on 10th, 13th, 17th and 20th August, and three more events. The first of these is on the evening of 12th July. 'Croft Castle: a 17th century Bishop's Palace' will feature contributions by Richard Morriss and Keith Ray and will include a talk, a walk, and refreshments, starting at 4.30pm. The second major event, during the excavation season on 14th August at 6.30pm, will feature another talk, walk and wine buffet. It is titled 'Excavating medieval Croft Castle', and will focus on what we are now learning about the medieval building and life within it. The third

such event will be on 21st August, and will review all that we have learned about Croft Castle and its environs over the past four years. Finally, in September and in October this year, there will be a repeat of the two highly successful archaeology walks of 2002, to Fishpool Valley and to Croft Ambrey, respectively.

For a copy of the full Croft Castle events programme for 2003, and to book tickets for any of these events, telephone 01568 780246.

Leen Pickings



The enclosure at The Leen being cut by Rowe Ditch

The Leen Farm, Pembridge was the focus of attention during May when a number of volunteers assisted the Project Archaeologist as part of the Arrow Valley Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation project by excavating trenches across a large rectangular enclosure. The enclosure, identified by aerial photography, is of particular interest because Rowe Ditch, a presumed Dark Age monument, cuts through one of the corners of the enclosure. By excavating the enclosure, we hoped to gain a better understanding of when Rowe Ditch was constructed as well as informing us on the condition of the buried archaeological remains.

A preliminary study of the pottery recovered from the excavations revealed that the enclosure was constructed during the Iron Age period (600BC- 43AD), and continued in use during the Roman period, although a specialist is now studying the pottery to confirm this interpretation. From the results of the excavation we are now certain that the Rowe Ditch cannot date earlier than the Roman period.

Cori Renfrew

Project Archaeologist

Getting into the Grove



A fragment of highly decorated Beaker pottery discovered during excavations at The Grove

As part of the Arrow Valley Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation Project a small scale excavation took place on an enclosure at The Grove, Pembridge. The site was discovered by aerial photography and consists of two concentric rings of enclosure ditches, both with a single entranceway. The site appears to have been located on a low peninsula between former river channels of the Arrow.

Following a geophysics survey over the site, trenches were located across the outermost entranceway and the inner enclosure ditch with another trench located over an 'interesting' geophysical reading that was running perpendicular to the outer enclosure ditch.

Small fragments of Romano British pottery were recovered from the upper most backfill of the enclosure ditches suggesting a Late Iron Age date for the construction of this lowland enclosure. The inner enclosure ditch was narrow and may have been constructed for a wooden palisade. A lump of charcoal was recovered from the bottom of this ditch and it will be sent for radiocarbon dating.

But the biggest surprise was the discovery of a linear feature that correlated to that 'interesting' geophysical reading. It turned out to be a wide ditch that contained sherds of at least three different types of Beaker pottery which dates to 4000 years ago! This discovery has increased our knowledge of prehistoric settlement in Herefordshire and shows that the Arrow Valley has been populated for thousands of years. To find out more about Beaker pottery, read Keith Ray's article opposite.

Paul White
Landscape Archaeologist

Beaker days

Beakers are so called, because of their flat bases and (usually) S-shaped profile. The discovery at The Grove, Pembridge, of sherds from three different vessels belonging to this Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age ceramic tradition, confirms the likely domestic nature of that site. It also brings the number of places where Beakers have been found in the county to a total of about a dozen. Early finds included Beaker sherds among the mostly Middle Bronze Age urns from the Mathon sand pits, and the two nearly complete Beakers found in stone cists in the Olchon Valley, and now in Hereford Museum.

In the 1980s quarrying in Aymestrey parish revealed another cist (usually, a small square box made from six flat slabs of stone) that contained the skeleton of a child and a single Beaker. In the mid-1990s, a skeleton was found at Wellington quarry buried in a pit with a very fine Beaker and a whole group of flint arrowheads. In 2001, works connected with the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak wrecked another cist near Garway, but archaeologists working for Herefordshire Archaeology recovered sherds of another Beaker from the site.

What were these enigmatic vessels, and who produced them? To begin with, it was once thought that all such vessels were used to accompany burials. However, they were found in domestic midden deposits in several settlement sites on the edge of the East Anglian Fens. Then they were thought only to be of a single size. Although most were around 15 - 20 cms high, Beakers up to 40cms high have been found.

While the richest burials are generally those of 'warrior' males, Beakers are found with both sexes, and in both adult and child burials. Most had previously been used for other purposes (including containing mead drinks!), but some seem to have indeed been made as grave-goods. In reality Beakers do not represent either incoming settlers (as once thought), or simply a fashion. We now know that they were in use throughout the period 2500BC to 1500BC, and in a whole variety of ways. No single explanation is therefore applicable for the whole era of 'Beaker days'.

Keith Ray
County Archaeologist

“Roman watermills are very rare and only a handful have been identified...”

One in a Mill-ion



The river channel and timber structures can be seen in the forefront while the mill building is situated in the centre-back of the photograph

The remains of a Roman watermill have been discovered on the banks of a former watercourse of the River Lugg at Wellington Quarry in central Herefordshire. The Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service made the discovery in advance of gravel extraction on behalf of Lafarge Aggregates Ltd.

The mill is believed to date to the 3rd-4th century AD and consists of a large rectangular building with stone foundations with well-preserved wooden revetments on either side of the channel. Large wooden posts were also found in the centre of the watercourse. Along with the revetments these are thought to have supported a wooden frame that spanned the channel and from which a vertical waterwheel hung. The flow of water through the mill was controlled by means of a dam with a sluice upstream. Further upstream was another structure, which could be the remains of a bridge.

Finds from the site included a complete if somewhat dented Roman bronze bowl that had been thrown into the watercourse. Roman watermills are very rare and only a handful have been positively identified in Britain. The site also provides an interesting comparison with an early-9th century mill that was discovered a few hundred metres away in 2000 (See *HET Vol. 3,3; Oct 2000*).

Robin Jackson

Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council

Archaeology in the 'Grid'

As you may have read in the Hereford Times or heard about in other media, major re-development proposals have been put forward for the so called 'Edgar Street Grid' in Hereford City. The Grid defines the area of Hereford between Edgar Street, the railway station, Commercial Road, and the city centre. The area currently contains the football ground and the cattle market, along with numerous small to medium scale commercial sites. Perhaps you will have seen the future vision for the area, incorporating large lakes and water features, a major new road and roundabout, and new pedestrian precincts.

The Grid contains much in the way of significant archaeology. The precincts of Blackfriars Priory and the Coningsby Hospital are recognised as important monuments while Widemarsh Street and Commercial Road formed part of the medieval suburbs to the City. The terminus and line of the former Gloucester to Hereford is present to the west of the railway station. There is also the intriguing possibility that a Roman road once passed northwards through what is currently the cattle market site, which may have had Saxon settlement around the area.

Herefordshire Archaeology has recently produced a report detailing the archaeological issues and implications of the development for colleagues in Economic Development of Herefordshire Council. The potential constraints and opportunities presented by the numerous and varied archaeological remains within the Grid were also outlined. If re-development does go ahead, keep an eye on HET - there will be lots to report!

Julian Cotton

Archaeological Advisor

Arrow Valley events

Join Ian Bapty, Offa's Dyke Archaeological Management Officer, at Staunton-on-Arrow village hall on Thursday 31st July for an illustrated talk on 'The Divided Land: The Arrow Valley in the Dark Ages'. On 9th/ 10th August join us for the Hillfort Weekend with guided walks around the landscape of Wapley Hill and Ivington Camp. Contact Paul White on 01432 383353 for more details.