

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 6 Issue 3

October 2003

Archaeology on a wing



A view across Eywood Park, Titley towards Lyonshall taken during the summer

Aerial photography even from its earliest days has provided a different perspective, literally, in understanding archaeological sites. In the past only known archaeological sites were photographed but more recently photography has focused upon prospecting and the discovery of previously unknown sites along with understanding how the wider landscape has developed.

Aerial photography by Chris Musson has increased our knowledge of archaeological sites within the county, particularly during the Millennium Air Survey of Herefordshire organised by the Field Name Society of the Woolhope Club. Chris along with Ruth Richardson will be launching the book on the results of this survey next year and it will be available from Logaston Press.

Herefordshire Archaeology with English Heritage is building upon this success by continuing to undertake aerial photography with Chris Musson. Look out for reports on progress in future copies of HET.

*Paul White
Landscape Archaeologist*

"The target was for 6,000 visitors in the first year... we have had over 85,000.."

First birthday for 'Historic Herefordshire OnLine'

It's now one year since 'Historic Herefordshire On Line', the website for Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record, went 'live' on the internet. So what has happened since then?

The target for the number of visitors to the website during the first year was 6,000 and when we started this seemed like a huge number. We are pleased to announce that we have had over 85,000 visits and the daily average for September 2003 is around 500 - compared to 56 a day for October last year.

The entire database of 15,000+ records held by the SMR is available on-line. We now also have a 'Field Names Database' (see Rebecca's article inside). There are also illustrated sections on the Cathedral & Library, Herefordshire Castles, Chapels, Railways, Prisons and Workhouses.

There is also a section dedicated to Education, which is aimed at 11-16 year olds using National Curriculum Guidelines. When you have finished all that reading then why not test your knowledge with the interactive games, including quizzes, memory squares and word-searches.

The topics covered on the website are interesting and varied with one thing in common – they are all on a Herefordshire theme and expanding daily. So if you haven't been to the website before check out the address below and if you have visited then why not come back and see if there's anything new to discover.

'Historic Herefordshire On Line' can be found at www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk

Inside: Croft | St Guthlac's | Leominster | Events | Fieldnames | Website

Croft pipe cut in (Autumn) 1587



The heavy oak collar that held the wooden water pipes together

The end of each year's season of excavation at Croft Castle seems to bring its own surprises. The 2003 season was no exception. Partly beneath the large stone foundation revealed in 2002 was found an earthen bank containing late 12th century pottery. In front of this to the west was a ditch, the deposits of which had become waterlogged. In the upper silts, and sealed by early 17th century rubbish deposits, were found a series of straight oak posts that had been bored to make them into lengths of water pipe. The ends of each length were held in place with a collar of heavy oak.

Dendrochronological sampling of one of these posts by Ian Tyers of Sheffield University produced a felling date in the autumn of 1587. This date is significant, since it means that both bank and ditch (and probably stone foundation) belong to the medieval castle. It also means that elaborate waterworks, perhaps associated with garden spouts, existed here at the same time as the adapted medieval buildings in the time of Sir James Croft.

*Keith Ray
County Archaeologist*

Annual Symposium Saturday 29th November 2004 Courtyard Theatre, Hereford

The Annual Symposium will take place at The Courtyard Theatre, Hereford. This year a range of topics will be covered by a host of speakers. See the enclosed flyer on how to book your ticket along with details of the programme.

Medieval life beyond the Kenwater

Those who live in Leominster or drive through the town along the A44 will be already aware of excavations currently underway at the former FH Dale depot on the other side of the Kenwater opposite the Priory. Archenfield Archaeology is undertaking these investigations.

Archaeological work undertaken several years ago suggested the high potential of the site, a potential now confirmed by discoveries of extensive medieval remains, and perhaps even remains from earlier periods. One corner of the site appears to contain the collapsed remnants of a number of medieval industrial structures with associated occupation levels and numerous finds associated with industry workings such as slag.

Geophysics and subsequent investigation have indicated the presence of a number of artificial water channels, ditches and pits. One of these channels contains preserved wooden structures that date to at least the medieval period. Work continues, please look at the next HET for more news!

*Julian Cotton,
Archaeological Advisor*

On solid ground

Herefordshire Archaeology investigated the 'floor' of Pembridge's 16th century Market Hall on behalf of the Pembridge Amenity Trust, in order to supply information for its renovation. The specific aim of the work was to establish whether there was, or had been, a cobble or flagstone floor within the hall.

From limited excavation, no evidence was found to suggest that either flagstones or cobbles were used as flooring. The base of the Market Hall consists of naturally deposited glacial till. The shallow nature of the pillar base footing indicates an awareness of the stability of the deposit and the existing pillar base appears to have been created during works carried out to the Market Hall in 1927. In turn, this reinforces the impression gained during the site investigation that the deposit is natural till and does not appear to be material brought to the site.

*David Williams
Field Archaeologist*

Andy Boucher, of Archaeological Investigations Ltd (AIL), describes some of the recent findings from the site of the County Hospital and a new exhibition produced by the Hereford City and County Archaeological Trust.



Photo courtesy of A. Boucher, AIL

One of the burials found during the latest investigations

St Guthlac's found at last?

The exact location of buildings associated with St Guthlac's Priory under the site of the County Hospital in Hereford has been rather elusive and evaded location by archaeologists for many years. Over the past thirty years various excavations have unravelled the later history of the site that includes a workhouse and has defined the extent of an earlier graveyard possibly associated with the priory. This summer AIL uncovered what is probably the most substantial evidence for a priory building to date. A stretch of foundation over 1m in width was discovered within the final archaeological trench to be excavated for the development of the new hospital site. This contained decorative architectural masonry and tile of 14th century date. It also cut earlier burials implying that it was a later building or addition to an earlier structure.

Ashlar blocks of considerable dimensions were recovered from the foundation trench implying that the building had been a formidable structure. Its location within the burial ground leads the excavation team to believe that it was perhaps an extension to the main Priory Church. The location of cyst burials including one of a priest (buried with a mortuary chalice) near this building lends weight to such consideration, as burials that are more prestigious might be expected near the chapel.

"A stretch of foundation was discovered within the final archaeological trench to be excavated..."

Access to Archaeology

A new exhibition has been produced with funding by the Gannett Foundation/Hereford Times. This comprises of 16 illustrated panels that cover periods from the Prehistory onwards, with a short text providing snippets on the county's history. Other panels explore different aspects of archaeological work. One aim of the exhibition is to find new or innovative ways in which a wide range of groups or individuals can get involved in the county's archaeology. The exhibition is available for organisations to use at various functions free of charge from Hereford City and County Archaeological Trust, Hereford House, 3 Offa Street, Hereford HR1 2LL (01432 354775). Groups may have to collect and return the display themselves – but is designed to fit in the back of most cars.

*Andy Boucher
Archaeological Investigations Ltd*

Abel to help?

John Abel, master craftsman of the 17th Century, known chiefly for his surviving works at Grange Court, Leominster and Dore Abbey, is to be the focus of doctoral research at Oxford University's Institute of Archaeology. John Abel (1577-1674) carpenter and 'architector', has for centuries been the subject of great fascination and much speculation, but surprisingly little scholarly study. *HET* reader, Gwyneth Guy, who has run a Herefordshire-based historic buildings consultancy for the past sixteen years is to take a career break this October and embark upon a full-time DPhil.

Gwyneth would very much like to hear from anyone with an interest in John Abel or who knows of possible works by Abel which have gone unrecorded to date. She can be contacted by telephone, 01544 231628, or E-mail, abel@gwynethguy.co.uk.

*Paul White
Landscape Archaeologist*

Field names captured

All the tithe map field names are now on line at the Sites and Monuments Record website. Having all 124,405 field names together in one table means you can look things up quickly and compare and contrast areas across county. Try looking for particular plants or crops (flax, saffron, perry) or land use (meadow, pasture, orchard). The search can also be undertaken on a parish by parish basis. As many of you know this was a volunteer project built on the work of the Herefordshire Field Names Survey, so well done everyone for your contribution!

*Rebecca Roseff
SMR Officer*

Living like Romans in the Arrow



Members of the excavation team investigate the Roman pit

The latest excavations in the Arrow Valley took place during the summer and focused on The Leen Farm, Pembridge. Trenches were excavated over what appear to be a series of field boundaries detected from aerial photographs. The excavations revealed the ditches probably surrounded a high status farmstead because the ditches were full of Roman pottery dating from 1st- 3rd century AD with evidence of good quality pottery being imported from the continent, Dorset and Oxfordshire. A pit containing more pottery, glass and the remains of a hobnailed shoe, a distinctive Roman fashion, was also discovered. It would seem the Roman way of life, including luxury items and fashion, made an impact in this part of Herefordshire nearly 2000 years ago.

*Cori Renfrew
Project Archaeologist*

Lessons from the Iron Age

Herefordshire has a wealth of historic sites, but few people realise that there are well over 50 hillforts listed on our SMR. Two recent education outreach activities centred on exploring three of the more accessible hillforts in the county.

I spent an invigorating day with class 6 from St. Mary's Primary School in Credenhill as part of the Woodland Trust open day at Credenhill Camp. After an introductory session discussing the history of the Iron Age in Herefordshire, and handling some finds, pupils toured the ramparts which certainly caught their imagination: "*I thought it was amazing standing on what was a hillfort 2003 years ago*" [Melissa, aged 11]. Kelly saw Credenhill Camp from an entirely different perspective: "*I wouldn't like to live on a hillfort because there would be a lot of fighting going on.*" Robert viewed the structure through the eyes of a potential attacker: "*It must have been extremely difficult for the Romans to attack the hillfort. How did they manage?*" Such matters and many more were discussed at our picnic on the site of Stamford's excavation and the day was concluded with some art work, a few samples of which can be seen on our Historic Herefordshire On Line website. If you like a challenge, you could also try the Iron Age Hillfort Quiz which all the pupils successfully completed (see the games section on the web site).

A class from Westfield School in Leominster is also studying hillforts as part of an investigation into the life style of the Iron Age people. The pupils and their teacher, Mr. Stuart Dove, have done some sterling preliminary research by building an impressive model of a hillfort and creating an attractive display for their project work. Armed with lots of prior knowledge and a packed lunch, we visited Hereford Museum, Dinedor Camp and Symonds Yat. The students were particularly impressed with the natural cliff defences at Symonds Yat Rock, but they also showed a keen eye by spotting the man- made ditches. We had a full day of looking, climbing and investigating at the end of which we were very tired, but full of enthusiasm for the wonderful sites right on our doorstep.

*Toria Forsyth-Moser,
SMR Education Officer*