

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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## Looking forward, looking back

It is five years since the creation of the first county archaeological service for Herefordshire. During this period, *Herefordshire Archaeology* has grown from a team of three to a staff complement of thirteen as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004, when Neil Rimmington joins us as Countryside Adviser (Archaeology). At the sixth Annual Symposium on Archaeology in Herefordshire, the County Archaeologist provided an overview of what has been achieved in this period (see article inside, and enclosure).

Keith Ray's talk also looked forward to new developments in the service, and gave a glimpse of new and forthcoming projects. As ever, much of what will actually happen will depend upon the outcome of bids for funding. Our estimate is that, during 2003, as much as £145,000 of income for the service was generated by external grant-aid. All of this funding was put into projects that have probed the archaeology of the county as never before, that have involved the community in that exploration, have assisted its conservation, or have provided new information to a wide audience in a very accessible way.

This is my last contribution as editor of *Historic Environment Today*, after more than three years. I shall continue to work with *Herefordshire Archaeology* as Landscape Archaeologist with my focus upon Archaeology and Landscape Change. Meanwhile, HET has proven itself a valued resource in its own right (as shown by our reader survey in 2001). It, too, will however have a 'new look' in 2004, as a result in part of the transfer of all Council printing to Herefordshire Jarvis Services. The new editor will be Richard Lello, who is a Field Archaeologist in the projects division of the county archaeological service.

*Paul White,  
Landscape Archaeologist*

## Romans back in place



*The damage to the Roman road can be seen in the centre of the photograph, to the left of the barns.*

During 2003, there have been several cases where enforcement action has been necessary following planning infringements. One was at Bredwardine Castle, where the Scheduled Monument was damaged by the creation of an unauthorised horse exercise yard and was then reinstated under supervision by *Herefordshire Archaeology* staff. Another was near Kingsland where a length of the famous 'Watling Street West' Roman Road was dug out for the unauthorised construction of a sport lake. Irrigation and sport lakes are an increasingly common feature of the Herefordshire landscape, and many of them are too small in scale to require planning permission. They are nonetheless very damaging archaeologically, and their construction is difficult to monitor adequately.

The lake concerned took out two stretches of the road and comprised its landscape context. It also removed the historic hedgerow that traced the line of the road at this point, and it was mostly this issue that led to action by the Council. The landowner has now be required to reinstate the land and hedge at this location. Although it is not possible to make good the loss of the remains of the road itself, it will be reinstated as a surface feature that has characterised this part of the Herefordshire landscape for nearly 2000 years.

**Inside: People | Walks | Credenhill Hillfort | Croft | Prehistoric finds**

## Bradbury Lines enigmas

Enigmas on former MOD sites don't only refer to the practice of code-breaking. At Bradbury Lines in the southern suburbs of Hereford, the SAS left behind more than the usual welter of cold-war curiosities (nonetheless carefully recorded wherever feasible, to satisfy archaeological planning conditions). One area had been used as playing fields, and a field evaluation produced indications of activity in the Roman period. To follow this up, the developers were required to conduct a full archaeological investigation that involved soil stripping a wide area.

The investigation carried out by Birmingham Archaeology produced archaeology from all areas of the site, despite the presence of a lot of twentieth century 'disturbance'. Across the western half of the site there were metalled surfaces, ditches and the sites where industrial processes had taken place during the second to fourth centuries AD. Although the archaeological stratification was typically shallow, there was clearly a complex sequence of cutting and infilling of ditches and other features, and growth in the areas characterised by patches of burned clay and charcoal deposits. Exactly what was the nature of the industrial processes concerned will only be determined following careful chemical analysis of the samples retrieved from the site.

### ....Scooped but not shafted

Meanwhile, on another part of the site, there was found a feature that is apparently so far unique within the West Midlands. This comprised a massive 25m diameter circular area of darkened gravel. When first sampled archaeologically, it appeared that this circular feature had near-vertical sides and then a scooped bowl shape, and that it had experienced complex infilling. The base of the gravel-filled feature that had been dug into natural gravel was 2m below ground level. A circular central area had been scooped out, and gravel mixed with white clay had been re-inserted into this void to create a level platform set well below the surrounding 'rim' of the feature.

Then, upon this platform had been spread pyre deposits from the cremation of (presumed)



*Archaeologist inspect the mysterious circular feature*

human bodies. The entire circular hollow had then been partially infilled with different gravel. A spread of humic soil containing much charcoal had been deposited on top of this, along with a significant assemblage of Middle Bronze Age pots. There was then a final sealing deposit of gravel, in which was found a sherd of what looks like 'Peterborough Ware', of later Neolithic date. This may have come from an earthwork once surrounding the circular hollow, and may give a clue to the date of the pyre deposit.

So exactly what was this enigmatic feature? Similar such features have been found on the chalk uplands in Wiltshire. Here, they are termed 'pond barrows', for obvious reasons. Several of those excavated (mostly in the nineteenth century) had a deep shaft at the centre of the circular depression, that had been dug and infilled before the 'mortuary' deposits had been placed above. No such feature existed at the Hereford site, perhaps not surprisingly given the inherent instability of gravel.

The site is nonetheless remarkable. If Neolithic in date, it chimes well with the early fourth millennium BC Neolithic activity in evidence from the field evaluation at the nearby Causeway Farm site close to Greyfriars Bridge. With the planned development of this site by Asda, we should get to know more about any features associated with the very small scoop found there, that contained early Neolithic pottery, flint flakes and charred grain.

*Keith Ray,  
County Archaeologist*

## **'We have explored some key sites ...and we have broken new ground'**



*On one of the successful outreach events: the historic landscape walks. After five years it is time to look back and to look forward to the future*

## **People**

From 1<sup>st</sup> January, the new post of Countryside Adviser (Archaeology) begins, with **Dr. Neil Rimmington** starting an initial three-year contract. This is one of a new kind of advisory post, specifically for farming and rural issues. The few such posts that exist nation-wide are all based in local government, in an initiative grant-aided by English Heritage. Neil's doctorate in archaeology was from the University of Durham, and most recently he has worked as an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with English Heritage, for the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

It has also been a time for saying goodbye. **David Baxter**, one of the Principal Conservation Officers, is leaving for a year's secondment onto a British Council funded advisory programme in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, **Margaret Cole**, the Biological Records Centre Officer leaves to take up a new appointment in Nottinghamshire.

There are staff changes too at English Heritage. **Bill Klemperer** has become the new Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Herefordshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire in the English Heritage West Midlands regional team at Colmore Row, Birmingham. Bill is well known within the region, having been Staffordshire's County Archaeologist until November 2003. **Jeny Marriott**, who produced a study for the revised Scheduling of sections of Offa's Dyke in Herefordshire also joins that team as Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

## **Looking back over.... Five years**

It was the opportunity to create a new archaeological service in a county as rich archaeologically and in terms of landscape as Herefordshire is, that led me to abandon the delights of the Tamar region of south-west Britain in 1998. I said at that time that Herefordshire had been neglected archaeologically – a comment that inevitably drew protests from those for whom much of their life had been devoted to exploring the county's rich heritage. It was nonetheless a fact, that in terms of government funding, university research activity, and broader public perception, the county figured minimally in comparison with anywhere to the south or east in Britain. For one thing, the annual 'spend' on archaeology in the county from either internal or external sources was slight.

In my view, the situation is still close to crisis point in some respects. What we have done in five years has been to draw attention to the full complexity and quality of the county's archaeology, by new discovery and investigation, and not simply by repetition. We have continued important initiatives, such as with the aerial archaeological survey project, picking up where the Woolhope Field Club's Millennium Air Survey left off. We have begun systematically to map the surviving visible field archaeology in the county's woodland, parkland, and farmland. We have explored some key sites and areas in greater detail through sustained campaigns of site investigation. And we have broken new ground, in historic landscape characterisation, in being the first county service to put its Sites and Monuments Record fully online on the world wide web, and in the investigation of landscape change and its bearing upon conservation.

Included with this issue of Historic Environment Today is an eight-page review of highlights of the past five years. There have been setbacks, such as caused by the several office moves and by the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak. But there have also been dramatic discoveries, and the building of important partnerships. The most vital of these has been with the community itself. Here we believe we can be justifiably proud of our work in outreach and events.

*Keith Ray, County Archaeologist*

## Looking forward to.... walking

*Herefordshire Archaeology* will be participating in the third Herefordshire Walking Festival from June 19<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 2004. This is the third such Festival, and we contributed historic landscape walks to the first two. This year there will be no dawn walks on Midsummer Day, but we shall still be doing a daytime walk on 21<sup>st</sup> June, in the Huntsham area. Others of our walks feature a ramble in the landscape around Lingen, a walk around and in the close environs of Dinedor Camp, and a town trail around Bromyard.

A new initiative is the production of packs of walks information promoted by the Council's Tourism service, and supported by the Public Rights of Way section. These walks packs are loosely modelled on a highly successful series produced by another organisation recently for the Hadrian's Wall area. Each pack will contain leaflets on five walks. *Herefordshire Archaeology* will provide text and illustrations, and the design work will be undertaken by the Council's Countryside service. The walks series will focus on particular parts of the countryside, and the first series will be on the revamped circular walks attaching to the Mortimer Trail in the north of the county.

## Looking forward to.... Credenhill

The Woodland Trust has been developing a full series of studies on Park Wood, Credenhill since its purchase of the site a year ago. The archaeological elements of this have included a new survey commissioned from Archaeological Investigations Ltd, and a whole programme of events and conservation work by *Herefordshire Archaeology* in partnership with others. The events have included guided walks and a Living History event, while the conservation work has featured both vegetation management by the main entrances and intervention to prevent further damage by mountain bike enthusiasts.

Behind the scenes, *Herefordshire Archaeology* staff have also produced a draft Conservation Management Plan. This is being considered by The Woodland Trust at present, and it will form part of the general public consultation during 2004 on the future of the site in both the medium and longer term. A significant concern of the Plan is to see a better understanding of the history of the site emerge, and this is likely to



*Credenhill rises above the surrounding landscape*

involve further field investigation where this can be justified also on conservation grounds. Of more immediate interest to the public will be debate about the future vegetative cover on the site. While some favour a much more open aspect to the site once the coniferous cover has reached its life expectancy in a few years time, the Woodland Trust has to be mindful of its more general commitment to restore native broad-leaved woodland wherever possible.

## Looking forward to.... Croft Castle 2004

The National Trust has already made a three-year investment in archaeological work in the close environs of Croft Castle. We are hoping that the current bid for grant-aid will also be successful, enabling a fourth season of site investigation by *Herefordshire Archaeology* to take place here. The 2003 season hugely advanced our understanding of the development of the landscape to the west of the present mansion, and produced tantalising glimpses of the medieval castle. The aim in 2004 is to return nonetheless to our original project design (amended in light of the results of the 2002 season), and to investigate within and beyond the former east garden, to the south of the parish church. This ought to throw more light on the development and decline of the medieval village. However, being Croft, it is bound to produce some surprises.

Meanwhile, landscape design consultants are producing a Conservation Management Plan of the Croft Estate as part of a Countryside Stewardship project. This work is drawing upon and augmenting the results of the *Herefordshire Archaeology* survey of the Croft Estate, which was published in the summer of 2003. The Plan will consider issues such as the degree restoration that may be necessary, and what kind of landscape might be reconfigured in Fishpool Valley.