

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

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Roman Herefordshire

In the previous issue of HET (Vol. 7, Issue 1), the new Roman pages of 'Historic Herefordshire On Line' were announced. The current issue continues the Roman theme with reports on recent and future research in the county, and offers further information about Roman Herefordshire on our web site, (www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk).

In this issue, Tim Hoverd reports on the recent earthwork survey at New Weir near Kenchester, and Tom Vaughan describes the results of excavations on the Roman road at Stretton Sugwas. Melissa Seddon offers advice on searching the Sites and Monuments Record for information about sites and artefacts dating to the Roman period. Paul White looks forward to the new research project on landscape change and settlement in the Frome Valley. Keith Ray reports on a Roman research framework for Herefordshire as part of the West Midlands Research Agenda project. He also points to new understandings of rural settlement in Roman Herefordshire as a result of recent archaeological research. A successful application for Local Heritage Initiative funding by a new local heritage group at Upton Bishop is announced. Miranda Greene invites us to find out more about Roman influence in Herefordshire, including bathing and cooking, by visiting 'Historic Herefordshire On Line'. Finally, Toria Forsythe-Moser offers a taste of Roman cuisine.

Richard Lello
Field Archaeologist

Field complexities at New Weir



Roman road and field systems at Old Weir Farm. Photo by Chris Musson.

During April, *Herefordshire Archaeology* staff undertook a detailed earthwork survey of several fields within the National Trust's New Weir Estate near Kenchester. The aim of the survey was to better understand the relationship between the Roman road (running south from Kenchester), a series of strip lynchets running along the river terrace, and an extensive area of medieval ridge and furrow. Initial results suggest that the earthworks are more complex than previously thought, and several phases have been identified. The lynchets appear to respect the Roman road, and are clearly earlier than the medieval ridge and furrow. Other features surveyed include a series of boundaries, evidence of quarrying, and the remains of at least one building associated with the post-medieval development of Old Weir Farm. Features relating to the 18th Century parkland were also recorded, including a flight of rustic steps.

Tim Hoverd
Archaeological Projects Officer

Inside: Stretton Sugwas ⇨ Frome Valley ⇨ Upton Bishop ⇨ Celery and Snails

Roman road works

Archaeological investigations have recently been undertaken along the route of the A4103 Roman Road Improvement Scheme near Stretton Sugwas. The Roman road, linking 'Magnis' (Kenchester) and Stretton Grandison, was thought to have been constructed in the 1st century AD, falling out of use by the 3rd century.

'Wheel ruts and small areas of repair and patching were observed... and a further cobbled surface east of Stretton Sugwas.'

A series of open-area excavations revealed that the original road surface was extant in a number of areas. It comprised a single compacted layer of cobbles and smaller pebbles impressed into the natural clay, without any substantial foundation. Ditches provided drainage on either side of the road. There was no indication of the road having been systematically re-laid, although the ditches appear to have been recut in places.

Wheel ruts and small areas of repair and patching were observed. A substantial quarry pit was recorded which may have been contemporary with the construction of the road, and a further cobbled surface east of Stretton Sugwas. An adjacent ditch fed into a pond, possibly for watering livestock. No definite domestic roadside activity was identified.

Small finds include iron hobnails and an iron wheel-collar recovered within the road surface, and a fragmentary shallow Black Burnished Ware bowl retrieved from a ditch. In addition, a small number of cremation burials were identified, cut into the road surface after it had fallen out of use.

These findings appear to confirm the early construction and decline of the road in the Roman period.

*Tom Vaughan
Worcestershire Historic Environment
and Archaeology Service*



*Roman road near Stretton Sugwas. Photo by
Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology
Service.*

Roman Herefordshire on the SMR

A search for Roman records on the online Sites and Monuments Record database produces a total of 492 entries. This includes sites and artefacts. Locations are spread throughout the county, with concentrations around the well-known sites of Kenchester, Leintwardine and 'Ariconium' (Weston under Penyard). The greatest number of site entries is for Roman roads (12%), and Roman occupation sites (11.4%). Next are forts and enclosures (8.2%). Other site categories include settlements, marching camps, defences, altars, villas, pottery kilns, metalworking sites and mileposts. The largest number of entries for artefacts is for pottery (21%), followed by coins (11.8%). Other artefact categories include figurines, brooches, quernstones, a horseshoe, a ring and a 'dodecahedron'. Searches can also be undertaken for specific parishes, and for site types.

New records are regularly added to the SMR, and so our knowledge of Roman Herefordshire is continually expanding. For example, a section of Roman road was recently discovered at Stretton Sugwas (see opposite). It will be added to the SMR, but you can read about it now on our web site, 'Historic Herefordshire On Line' (www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk).

*Melissa Seddon
SMR Officer*

‘During 2004, *Herefordshire Archaeology*, in partnership with the Bromyard and District Local History Society, will investigate the Frome Valley.’



Roman road and fort (foreground) in the Frome Valley near Stretton Grandison. Photo by Chris Musson.

From the Roman Arrow to the Frome

In 2003, research in the Arrow Valley revealed evidence of the impact on the river channel of re-organisation of the landscape during the Roman period. During 2004, *Herefordshire Archaeology*, in partnership with the Bromyard and District Local History Society, will investigate the Frome Valley as part of the LEADER+ Herefordshire Rivers project.

Professor Tony Brown of Exeter University has been appointed to study the Frome as part of this project. He is a leading specialist in the study of ancient landscapes within river valleys. This will give us an opportunity to find out more about the earlier landscape and settlement of the Frome Valley, and how the river and its environs have changed through time. Professor Brown will give an introductory talk on his research interests in the Frome Valley on Wednesday 28 July at Bishops Frome Village Hall at 7.30pm. The event is free and open to all.

Paul White
Landscape Archaeologist

Roman research framework

The West Midlands Archaeological Research Agenda project sets out to highlight both what we know about, and what gaps exist in our understanding of, different periods. The aim is also to identify ways to increase our knowledge in the future. For the Roman period, I have tried to summarise these aspects for Herefordshire. The result will appear as chapter in a forthcoming book edited by Roger White of Birmingham University, and published by Oxbow Books.

One of the insights gained from writing this chapter was how, with an increasing number of farmsteads being examined in the county, patterns of local distinctiveness in rural settlement are beginning to emerge. For instance, as we might expect there is a concentration of farmsteads strongly influenced by Classical tastes in the near vicinity of Kenchester in the centre of the county. However, the pattern of ‘paired’ settlements already evident in the hillforts and farms of the Iron Age in Herefordshire becomes even stronger in the Roman period. In the Arrow Valley, for example, one of each pair appears to be wealthy (with expensive imported items), while the other appears decidedly ‘rustic’ in character.

Keith Ray
County Archaeologist

Herefordshire Archaeology Week

Saturday 10th to Friday 16th July

A programme of daily events held throughout Herefordshire to celebrate the rich and diverse heritage of the county.

National Archaeology Days

Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th July

Activities for children and adults held at:
Blackfriars Precinct
Widemarsh Street, Hereford

See enclosed leaflet for further details

Making waves at Upton Bishop



Stone carving found at Upton Bishop. Drawing by Tim Hoverd. Copyright Herefordshire Archaeology.

'Heritage Upton Bishop' is a new local heritage group that has just successfully applied to the Local Heritage Initiative for funding to conduct a project that in part looks to its Roman past. Only 2km from the Roman ironworking and marketing centre at 'Ariconium' near Ross, the parish is sure to contain remains of the period, even though none is known at present.

There is, however, a fragment of stone carving, the origins of which have been the subject of some discussion. It was found in the fabric of the church in the nineteenth century, and features one complete and one fragmentary niche. The former is occupied by a figure with a raised right hand. The attitude is late Roman, but a leading expert in Romano-British stone carving, Dr. Martin Henig of Oxford University, believes that it is of Romanesque (C12th) date.

The new project, in partnership with *Herefordshire Archaeology* over the next 12 months, will try to establish more about the origins of this carving.

Keith Ray
County Archaeologist

'What have the Romans ever done for us?'

Which of the following did the Romans introduce to Britain: celery, towns, straight roads, or peacocks? The answer is all of the above, and much more!

Following the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43, Roman influence on culture and society began to spread—even to Herefordshire, situated at the very edge of the Roman world.

To find out more visit 'Historic Herefordshire On Line' (www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk). You will find information about Roman roads, the army, forts and marching camps, and towns such as 'Magnis'. You can also find out about under floor heating, and how taking a bath was a public affair! You may wish to test your knowledge with our Roman wordsearch, quiz, or 'hangman'. Or why not try a Roman recipe, including honey omelette, stuffed hare, and milk fattened snails!

Miranda Greene
SMR New Audiences Officer

Snails—Roman 'fast' food!

Snails were considered a great delicacy by the Romans. The snails were fed on milk, wine and spelt wheat to ensure they were particularly juicy. When they became too fat to fit into their shells, they were considered ready for cooking! If you would like to try your hand at Roman cooking, here is the recipe (courtesy of Jane Renfrew and English Heritage):

Ingredients: 6 edible snails per person
2 pt milk
salt
1 tsp anchovy essence
1 tbls wine

Clean the snails with a sponge, remove the membrane and take them out of their shells. Put them into a bowl with 1pt of milk and some salt for one day. Move them to another bowl with 1pt of milk for one more day. Clean away any excrement every hour. Fry the snails in hot oil and serve with a dressing of anchovy essence and wine. Enjoy!

Toria Forsythe-Moser
SMR Education Officer