

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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## Countryside Adviser (Archaeology)

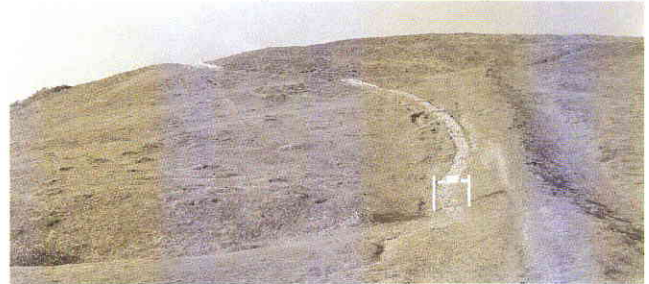
In 1996, the Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS), commissioned by English Heritage, recognised the threat to archaeological sites from modern intensive agriculture. As a result, English Heritage promoted the role of Countryside Archaeology Adviser to fulfil a need, particularly in rural counties, to provide archaeological advice to agri-environment schemes such as Environmental Stewardship. Piloted initially in SW England, there are now sixteen posts throughout England.

In January 2004, Herefordshire Council, with support from English Heritage, appointed Dr. Neil Rimmington to the post of Countryside Adviser (Archaeology), initially for three years. Neil's work includes:

- Agri-environment schemes such as Environmental Stewardship, encouraging farmers to look after the historic environment, for instance, by undertaking scrub management on earthworks; taking crop mark sites out of cultivation or reducing the depth of cultivation; restoring traditional buildings, repairing earthworks, and promoting public access.
- Agricultural notifications: assessing proposals from farmers to construct buildings, such as new barns, and irrigation lakes.
- Hedgerow removal notices: assessing the potential of hedgerow alterations on the historic landscape character.
- Woodland grant schemes: giving advice and recommendations on managing archaeological sites in woodlands.

In this issue of *HET*, Neil gives examples of his work in Herefordshire.

*Richard Lello*  
Field Archaeologist



*Erosion on Herefordshire Beacon*

## Herefordshire Beacon

Work begins this summer on the construction of a new footpath at the southern end of British Camp that will re-use the course of a Victorian pleasure path. This work is being undertaken because the existing path has presented health and safety problems, and has led to damage on the Shire Ditch, the medieval boundary ditch running along the ridge of the Malvern Hills.

The work is organised by the Malvern Hill Conservators supported by a grant from The Liveability Fund of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Most of the old route will be returned to grassland. The new footpath will use the existing path through the rampart banks of the Iron Age hillfort, but on the steeper slope below it will use the Victorian zig-zag path.

During the first stage, a series of small archaeological excavations will determine how the Victorian paths were constructed, whether these paths can accommodate the new footpath without additional disturbance, and whether any new disturbance is likely to damage buried deposits of the Shire Ditch and the hillfort. Answers to these questions will assist the final design of the footpath, which will be constructed in the coming months.

Inside : Castle Frome Castle Mound ♦ Whitfield Parkland ♦ Garway Dovecote



*Castle Frome Castle mound before cropping*

### Can't see the archaeology for the trees

'The area around the castle mound had been planted with a mix of conifer and beech in the 1960s, and the mound itself had become masked by self-set beech trees.'

In late January 2005, as part of the Frome Valley Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation project, a group of volunteers helped improve the conservation of one of our larger castle sites at Castle Frome. This large castle mound and its bailey sit on the ridge above Castle Frome church. The size and strategic position of the castle suggest it was built soon after the Norman Conquest, and it would have controlled the De Lacy estates in the Frome Valley.

The area around the castle mound had been planted with a mix of conifer and beech in the 1960s, and the mound itself had become masked by self-set beech trees.

The aim of the work was to improve the visibility of the castle mound and protect its buried remains. This involved felling some of the larger trees and clearing the self-set beech trees before they mature and cause root damage to the buried structures. A few mature trees were retained on the slopes of the mound to promote a dense canopy that will in time suppress ground vegetation and maintain the visibility of the monument. Doug Joiner's Heavy Horse team removed the larger trees.

Thanks to everyone who took part on the day, and to the owners of the property for allowing access and for being so involved in the work. Thanks too for those who provided soup and cakes—they were delicious!



*Castle Frome Castle mound after cropping*



*Limekiln at Whitfield*

## Historic Parkland at Whitfield

*Herefordshire Archaeology* has been working in partnership with the Landscape Agency as they develop a Historic Parkland Restoration Plan for the parkland of Whitfield House near Kilpeck. We have been involved in two ways. First, we carried out a survey of the woodlands and identified nearly 200 archaeological features. One of the most significant discoveries has been a section of park pale that would have surrounded the medieval deer park.

Secondly, we have provided recommendations for features within the parkland. This includes a limekiln, a Listed Building, currently hidden by trees and ivy. It is planned that the vegetation will be removed to reduce further decay, which will also allow an assessment of the structure to guide repairs.

## Don't lean on me

Garway dovecote is one of the earliest dated dovecotes in England, built by the Knights Hospitallers in 1326. The dovecote is one of the few parts of the Knights Hospitallers preceptory still visible at Garway, but it had become overshadowed by a modern lean-to barn that stood within one metre of this Scheduled Ancient Monument. The current owner has removed the lean-to and is looking at other improvements to the setting of the dovecote such as the removal of the concrete farmyard surface that surrounds the monument.

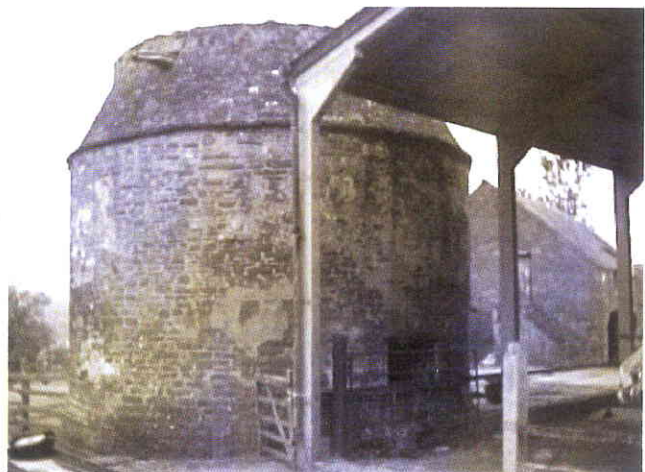
## Environmental Stewardship

'The first Environmental Stewardship programmes are now being put together, and already include several of Herefordshire's important Scheduled Ancient Monuments.'

Launched in March 2005, this scheme replaces the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The first Environmental Stewardship programmes are now being put together, and already include several of Herefordshire's important Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The new scheme has two levels: the Entry Level, and the Higher Level. The Countryside Adviser (Archaeology) receives formal consultation for the Higher Level as part of the process of producing a Farm Environmental Plan. This consultation feeds information into the plan on known archaeological sites, potential sites that may be present based on nature of site and documentary evidence, and relevant recommended management.

The Countryside Adviser is not normally consulted for the Entry Level scheme applications. Landowners receive an Environmental Information Map with some historic features marked, but this is only a very small proportion of those that survive in Herefordshire. The improvement of information supplied in these maps is one target for the coming year.



*Garway dovecote before removal of the barn*

## Getting the balance right...

'The real passion for any archaeologist is the feeling of discovery and the most memorable sites for me have always been those that emerge out of the woodland or blend seamlessly with their surroundings.'

The old method of managing archaeological sites was to keep a short grass cover over the monument and to eradicate all potentially damaging vegetation such as trees, scrub and vegetation on walls. This created a very sterile and artificial look to the sites that in my view felt uncomfortable. The real passion for any archaeologist is the feeling of discovery and the most memorable sites for me have always been those that emerge out of the woodland or blend seamlessly with their surroundings.

Today, managing these sites is more about achieving a balance of the needs of archaeological conservation with those of nature conservation, land management and recreation. Over the last decade a new tool and approach has been developed to achieve this called the Conservation Management Plan. These are quite substantial and detailed pieces of work that are reserved for the most significant or complex of sites, but the approach is applicable at all levels. They take a very structured approach that first reviews current understanding of the archaeology and other values, considers the significance of each and from that develops a programme that clearly prioritises and directs work.

Herefordshire Archaeology is involved in the preparation of two plans, one of which is for the Herefordshire Council owned site of Dinedor Camp, an Iron Age Hillfort a few kilometres south of Hereford. The other plan, undertaken in partnership with English Nature and Downton Estates, is for Downton Gorge near Wigmore. This site includes a late 18<sup>th</sup> century picturesque landscape park, an internationally important area for nature conservation (the site is a National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, and candidate Special Area of Conservation) and an important iron production site. These plans will be developed during 2005.



*Administration block of Bringewood Forge, Downton Gorge*

## Farming the Historic Landscape

A leaflet on caring for archaeological sites in grassland has been produced by *Herefordshire Archaeology* in association with English Heritage as part of a series of leaflets entitled "Farming the historic landscape". Other leaflets in the series include traditional buildings and archaeological sites on arable land. Designed for the Environmental Stewardship scheme, they give general advice on managing our archaeological sites and historic features.

Copies can be obtained from English Heritage Customer Services Department on 0870 333 1181, or they can be downloaded at [www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk).

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