

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 12 Issue 1

May 2009

Sad news; exciting news

This edition of HET departs from the usual thematic approach to cover a number of news stories from around the county, with accounts of major excavations in Rotherwas and elsewhere, and a hint of a couple of exciting projects to be featured later in the year. However, we begin with the extremely sad news of the untimely death of two colleagues – Jacky Denovan, Herefordshire Archaeology's administrator, and Dr Alan Vince, archaeological ceramicist.

Nigel Baker, guest editor

Jacky Denovan: an appreciation

Many among our readership will know that our administrator from 2002 to 2008, Jacky Denovan, died peacefully at home in Burghill in February, at the age of just 50 years. For the past seven years, Jacky has been, effectively, the voice of Herefordshire Archaeology: the person whose friendly welcome on the telephone was their first point of contact with the service. She was of course also much more than this front-of-house link, and her colleagues have asked me to write an appreciation and a 'thank you' for all that she was to us, and all that she achieved here.

Jacky joined us as part of an administrative team that supported both Conservation and Forward Planning sections soon after we all moved from Leominster to Hereford. Like our current Director of Regeneration, Geoff Hughes (alongside whom she had studied at Hereford Sixth Form College), Jacky had joined Herefordshire Council in 1998 from Hereford City Council Planning Department. So she already understood how planning worked, but was immediately struck by how, engaging with archaeology, you entered an entirely different world – full of both fascination and uncertainty, in sometimes alarming juxtaposition! Jacky, typically, embraced this strange and exciting new world whole-heartedly, and 'adopted' the team as her personal mission. Together with our

Projects Officer, Tim Hoverd, Jacky very rapidly became an integral part of the 'core matrix' of sustained support that makes the team cohere in a way that I have rarely witnessed in my professional career, and that continues to make it such a tremendous pleasure to lead.

What made Jacky's impact felt so widely, however, and what was much in evidence among the more than 120 people who attended her funeral at the new Hereford Crematorium hall, was the degree to which she 'bonded' also with another remarkable but even more diverse group: the dedicated volunteers, correspondents and 'landscape walkers' whose support enables the service to keep in touch with the communities it serves throughout the county. As Geoff put it in his valedictory address at her funeral, "Jacky was the kind of person who would do anything by way of kindness for anyone – even a complete stranger". This is indeed her memorial and a lasting legacy for those local residents and visitors who have added archaeology to their list of enthusiasms after coming into contact with Herefordshire Archaeology and Jacky Denovan in the early years of the twenty-first century.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist

Alan Vince: “an inestimable loss to archaeology”

In terms of loss, 2009 has already been a dreadful year for Herefordshire Archaeology. Dr Alan Vince, our specialist adviser on medieval pottery, died in February at the age of 56 after an abrupt illness diagnosed only in December. He was someone who very few people resident in the county will have come into direct contact with, but whose impact was nonetheless felt extensively. Alan was one of Britain’s foremost experts in the scientific and practical study of medieval pottery. Back in the 1980s he had developed the first type-series of medieval pottery for Hereford, as part of his doctoral dissertation research into the sources of clays and tempers used in the manufacture of medieval pottery across a wider Severn-Wye region. Beyond our region, Alan had gone on to re-organise post-excavation research and documentation for artefacts from the period AD400 to 1600 in London. He had then pioneered new approaches to urban historic characterisation in Lincoln, along the way finding time to co-author the standard text on the archaeology of medieval towns and to produce literally hundreds of other specialist papers. His contribution to our own studies and reports, several yet to be published, has been considerable and, with his business partner Paul Tyers, he was also responsible for setting up the searchable online database on the Herefordshire SMR website.

Alan became a good friend and supporter of Herefordshire Archaeology from the early days following its foundation in 1998. He was for instance an enthusiastic if amusingly sceptical expert participant in our 1999 Sutton St. Michael ‘Time Team’ programme. Among the many tributes paid by his colleagues across the profession following his death was the bald but unquestionably true statement heading up this piece. However, what many people have recalled strongly also is the sheer kindness, humour and humanity of the man. As someone who knew Alan across 39 years of archaeological practice,

I can both echo this view from direct experience, and can express strongly the corollary: both his breathtaking skill and knowledge, and his paradoxically diffident warmth will be hugely missed.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist

Finding the past at Rotherwas Futures

Archaeological assessment work is continuing as part of Herefordshire Council’s ‘Rotherwas Futures’ project, and has recently uncovered fascinating remains from the Neolithic/Bronze Age and Roman periods. The Rotherwas Futures project is a regeneration scheme focused on the Rotherwas Industrial Estate (the former ROF Rotherwas Munitions Factory).

The current archaeological work by the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service is examining the southern portion of the site where the munitions factory magazines were located. Preliminary archaeological investigations in 2008 had already shown that, despite the presence of the factory, significant ancient remains in this area had been preserved beneath layers of alluvium deposited by ancient river floods.



A pit filled with burnt sandstone; varied burnt stone deposits are a puzzling aspect of Neolithic/Bronze Age activity at Rotherwas

A large area excavation has revealed a segment of curving ditch with an entrance. The ditch appears to enclose a smaller square ditched enclosure and a series of burnt stone spreads which are interspersed with organic material. Although the full extent and overall shape of the main enclosure has not yet been established, the finds include a fragment of a fine and rare 'Peterborough Ware' pottery bowl perhaps dating from between 3,000 and 2,500 BC.

‘...a Roman building...’

Some 2000 years after the abandonment of the ancient enclosure, a Roman building was also constructed in the same area. The remains of this building had been largely destroyed by later ploughing so its precise function is not known. However, it may have been associated with a series of ditches which probably represent field boundaries of Iron Age and Roman date.

Slight and enigmatic though the latest Rotherwas Futures finds may be, they offer a further intriguing glimpse of ancient life in the Rotherwas locality.

Ian Bapty, Senior Project Archaeologist

Excavations at St Katherine's Hospital, Ledbury

An archaeological evaluation excavation was undertaken by staff of Herefordshire Archaeology during a very cold and wet January in St. Katherine's car park, next to the Masters House, in Ledbury. The excavation was undertaken as part of a community project in partnership with England's Past for Everyone, using local volunteers. The area of the excavation was on the site of Ledbury's proposed new library building and was expected to cover part of the precinct of the medieval hospital of St. Katherine.



St Katherine's, Ledbury: the precinct boundary wall under excavation in a memorably wet January. Looking east, towards the High Street

The excavation showed that the medieval ground surface had been substantially levelled leaving only the base of medieval rubbish pits. The footings for a substantial stone wall were found running on a roughly east-west axis and it is believed that this was the southern precinct boundary of the medieval hospital, with the back of a burgage plot outside. To the north of and within the boundary a series of 18th and 19th-century walls from a series of formal gardens were uncovered together with the remains of a large, brick-lined fish pond built for one of the Masters of the hospital in the 18th century.

‘...nearly one hundred bottles...’

In the plot outside, a large early 18th-century rubbish pit contained nearly one hundred bottles which had been deposited there shortly after 1709 and have the stamp of Thomas Pantel, the tenant landlord for 'The Plume of Feathers' now 'The Feathers' hotel immediately to the south of the site. No buildings associated with the medieval hospital were recorded within the excavated area.

Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer

Excavations to be featured later in 2009

Excavations by Border Archaeology have just concluded at the Prospect, Ross-on-Wye, the terraced public garden built next to the church in c.1700. The excavations have unearthed evidence of the medieval Bishop's Palace and an underlying Roman sacred site. We hope to bring you further details of this extraordinary site in a forthcoming issue of HET.

And, as this edition goes to press, the first season of excavations by Herefordshire Archaeology at New Weir, Symonds Yat, a 16th- to 19th-century ironworks, is being completed. Again, watch future issues for the first report from this site...

Forthcoming events

FEAST!

Why do humans share food, and how has this sharing changed through time? The light that archaeology can throw on this, in particular through studies of ancient DNA and other scientific and forensic methods that contribute to bio-molecular archaeology, are the subject of the fifth Herefordshire Archaeology Lecture. **On July 10th at the Courtyard Theatre**, Martin Jones, the George Pitt-Rivers Professor of Archaeological Science at Cambridge University will reprise some of the extraordinary connections revealed in his latest book 'Feast!' and link them to stories of discovery first outlined in his acclaimed popular volume 'The Molecule Hunt'. The lecture begins at 7.30pm and tickets can be purchased through the Courtyard box-office.

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

What started as National Archaeology Day co-ordinated by the Council for British Archaeology back in the late 1990s grew locally into Herefordshire Archaeology Week each July before the CBA itself declared a National Archaeology Week two years ago. Now it

has evolved yet further into a national two-week Festival of Archaeology. Herefordshire Archaeology is contributing several events to the Festival, which we are designating locally as the Herefordshire Festival of Archaeology.

This year the Festival will take place between Saturday 18th July and Sunday 2nd August. Among the HA events will be guided visits to a rarely accessible hillfort and a castle, a walking tour of the archaeology of Hereford, a guided landscape walk within the Harewood Estate (courtesy of the Duchy of Cornwall) and open days and a family day at Credenhill Fort.

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC LANDSCAPE WALKS:

Pow Green, Bosbury:
Wednesday June 10th, 6-8.30pm

Brilley Mountain:
Thursday July 16th, 2-5pm

St Margaret's:
Saturday August 15th, 10am-1pm

Pudleston:
Wednesday September 16th, 2-5pm

King's Cagle:
Wednesday October 14th, 10am-1pm

Welsh Newton:
Tuesday November 10th, 10am-1pm

Allensmore:
Wednesday December 16th, 10am-1pm

The Annual Herefordshire Archaeology Symposium, will be held on **Saturday October 17th at the Courtyard Theatre**, Hereford.

For further details of all these events please contact Moira Cassidy on 01432 26 0470 or: mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk