

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 13 Issue 2

January 2011>

Old matters, new discoveries

As we progress into the new year (hopefully with a little less snow around than in the previous one!) it is chastening to realise just how often we need to return to the very sites and issues we thought were dormant, or had in some way been 'resolved'.

In 2010, there were a number of cases in which initial work and discoveries led to further work and discoveries, or in which significant re-appraisal of previous work has occurred. Some of these cases are outlined below, as well as other recent work that has taken place in the County.

In a sense this is normal in the historic environment sector, but it emphasises that neither research nor development ever stand still. It is often the case that new approaches and initiatives can greatly benefit our understanding and conservation of the historic environment.

This edition of HET features unexpected late results from the Rotherwas 'Futures' site, up to date news from Little Doward Hillfort, a note on the recently published 'Dovecotes' book, feedback from the latest excavation at Roman Kenchester, and a report on the successful community project at Bredenbury.

I would like at this point to take the opportunity to thank those who have contributed to Historic Environment Today over the last year. Their input is of course entirely voluntary, and we are very grateful for it.

Julian Cotton, Herefordshire Council (guest editor)

Rotherwas Futures - It's a date!

Many amongst our readership will recall previous reports in *Historic Environment Today* regarding archaeology found on the Rotherwas 'Futures' redevelopment site in south Hereford, principally during 2009.

At the time of excavation, the remains uncovered appeared to consist of the following: spreads of fire-cracked stones and flints of likely early prehistoric date, a small rectangular enclosure, and a much larger sub-rectangular or ovoid enclosure seemingly containing the majority of the archaeology on the site.

This larger enclosure measured at least 200m in length, and was assumed also to be early prehistoric in origin, perhaps dating to the later Neolithic or to the Bronze Age. Some tantalising but very limited evidence of later Romano-British structures was also found on the site.



Futures site under excavation

Work on the finds and their interpretation has continued since the completion of fieldwork. Remarkably although the radio-carbon dating has confirmed the majority of the features on site to be later Neolithic

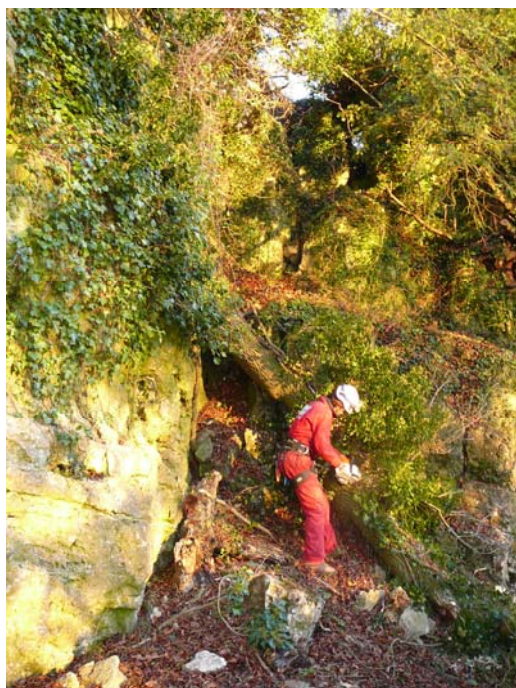
to early Bronze Age (2465BC – 2058BC), it has also indicated the larger enclosure to be a much later and in fact unrelated **Dark Age** feature (580 – 658 AD) !

This exciting discovery is a real surprise, relating to the period when the River Wye was a frontier zone between the 'Welsh', and the 'Anglo Saxons'. There are few enclosures of this type in the region, and nothing definite can yet be said about its nature and purpose.

Darren Miller, W.H.E.A.S

Doward - the story unfolds.

The end of 2010 saw the re-opening of one of the 19th century paths constructed in Richard Blakemore's Wyastone Leys picturesque pleasure grounds on the Little Doward. The Iron Age hillfort on the summit of the Little Doward and the south and west slopes were enclosed within a deer park in the mid -19th century. Throughout the deer park, terraced paths were constructed for visitors to explore the landscape. Like many, the re-opened path makes full use of the natural landscape with the visitor being dwarfed by the limestone cliffs under which the path has been constructed.



The limestone cliffs

The path, which is immediately below the south side of the east end of the hillfort, had become lost by the encroachment of bramble and blocked by the fall of trees. Through the *Overlooking the Wye* Heritage Lottery Funded project the path has been unblocked. Loose stones and some precarious trees overhanging the path have been removed. The 21st century visitor to Little Doward can now enjoy one of the routes enjoyed by visitors over 150 years ago.

Neil Rimmington, Herefordshire Council

Dovecotes for all

Dovecotes are an oft - neglected class of historic building, which is a little difficult to understand, in view of their manifest importance in medieval times, and indeed earlier. Herefordshire is fortunate in having a number of fine examples, but until very recently study of these was largely generic and lacking in synthesis.

Towards the end of 2010, this gap in understanding and presentation was filled by the publication of "The Dovecotes and Pigeon Houses of Herefordshire". Authored by our colleague Robert Walker, Herefordshire Council Senior Building Conservation Officer, this exceptionally well written and illustrated piece of work is a must for those with an interest in the subject .

The book is published by Logaston Press ISBN 9781906663490.

Julian Cotton, Herefordshire Council

Kenchester Revisited

Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service carried out archaeological excavations from the end of March through till July 2010 on the land immediately east of Magna Castra Farm, Kenchester, ahead of the proposed flood alleviation scheme between the Yazor Brook and River Wye.

These excavations uncovered substantial Romano-British deposits associated with an extra-mural suburb along one of the main roads into the former Roman town of *Magnis*, located to the immediate west of the current farm. Whilst previous excavations within the walled town focused on the houses of the wealthier members of the community, the recent excavations have revealed the town in a much rawer state, showing a complex story of industrial and commercial activity and providing us with a picture of a busy and vibrant industrial suburb away from the wealthier areas.

In addition to this a formerly unknown road, probably linking the town with the principal crossing over the Wye, was uncovered in the southern end of the excavations, helping to further expand our understanding of this important landscape through the Romano-British period.



Remains of Roman building near to road

The excavations recovered over 40,000 individual artefacts along with a wealth of environmental evidence. This, along with the physical relationships noted during the excavation, are currently being assessed, and detailed understanding of the site is slowly beginning to emerge.

Jonathan Webster
WHEAS

Bredenbury - a community remembered

The *Old Bredenbury; A Community Investigation* is a project led by Bromyard and District Local History Society, with support from Herefordshire Archaeology. The project is funded through the Your Heritage Grant, Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project focuses on land that once formed part of Bredenbury Court estate and gardens, which was established through the mid 1700's to late 1800's (SMR 31140). Preserved within the landscape are earthworks relating to the church and houses of the displaced settlement, bought by the Manor in order to establish the estate parklands.

Included within the landscape are the remains of past field systems, track ways and a likely farmstead. The course of the old turn pike road (the original A44) redirected when the parkland was established also survives as a substantial hollow way within the west of the survey area. Following survey and geophysics earlier in the year the next stage of the project was excavation that took place through September and October.

Excavation of the farmstead site provided evidence for a series of timber framed structures of 17th-18th century date according to the finds retrieved. The structures were arranged around a central yard with at least one access route to the west consisting of a hollow way with metalled surface at its base.

Investigations of the displaced settlement found that the majority of earthworks within the area instead related to post-medieval landscaping associated with the Manor. Within the north of this area the foundations of a post-medieval structure with stone foundations and supporting cobbled track adjacent to the south were excavated. Due to the quantity of slag excavated in association with this structure it has been suggested to represent the site of a known Blacksmiths in the area.

Underlying this structure are the foundations to a substantial medieval structure. The remains consist of a well built stone footing (approx 0.5m wide) within a construction cut. Associated finds are of mid 13th – 14th century glazed ware suggesting a relatively high status building, perhaps attributing the structure to the early medieval Manor.

The project is very much in its final stage now, with the results being made available through a booklet, display panels and website. For information on the project go to:

<http://www.bromyardhistorysociety.org.uk/>

Christopher Atkinson, Herefordshire Council

Obituary – Christopher Hewlett Green

Chris Green, an archaeologist of wide repute and a much appreciated volunteer on Herefordshire Archaeology projects, has passed away aged 73.

Chris was educated at Sedbergh School and at Jesus College Cambridge, and in his professional life worked at a high level for companies such as Tate and Lyle and BP. He also undertook charitable work for the young and disadvantaged.

Chris began his involvement in archaeology early in the 1990's, majoring in landscape archaeology. He contributed on many high profile investigations, including the Stonehenge Riverside Project, at Fordhouse and at South Lawn Barrow.

We remember him principally for his sterling work on the Olchon Valley survey, followed by his subsequent involvement in the evaluation and excavation of the important prehistoric cairn found as part of this survey.

He will be sadly missed.

Forthcoming events

Historic Landscape walks:

Wednesday February 16th, 14.00-16.30. Bringsty Common

Tuesday March 15th, 10.00-13.00. Kerne Bridge / Howle Hill

Wednesday April 13th, 14.00-17.00. Marden

For further details of all these or any other events, please contact Moira Cassidy on

01432 26 0470 or:
mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk