

# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 3

November 2009

## Communicating Archaeology

As I write this, a stunning find of Anglo-Saxon gold and silver in Staffordshire is headline news. Thousands of people are queuing up at Birmingham Museum to see some of the 1500 sword fittings, helmet parts, crosses and other unidentified objects which make up this unique hoard.

As the Birmingham crowds testify, such a discovery spectacularly and directly communicates an unmistakable story about the power and achievement of the kings of ancient Mercia. The big challenge for archaeologists is to generate the same public awareness and understanding of the seemingly less accessible results of everyday archaeological research.

This is especially so since the insights from the routine finds are often every bit as remarkable as those stemming from ancient treasure. In Herefordshire, fascinating archaeological stories have recently included ancient climate change (Wellington Quarry), and the beginnings of Roman rule in the county (Dinmore Hill and Credenhill).

In this issue of HET we review some of the ways we communicate the extraordinary past of Herefordshire. Such work ranges from traditional walks, talks and publications, to art based projects, lectures by leading specialists, TV programmes like Time Team, WEB based information, and, of course, HET!

And incidentally, that Mercian gold may have been found in Staffordshire, but will certainly provide a significant new perspective on Anglo-Saxon Herefordshire (an important part of the kingdom of Mercia). Watch this space!

*Ian Bapty, Senior Project Archaeologist and  
Guest Editor*

## Five Hundred Miles of Archaeology

Since April 1999, Herefordshire Archaeology has run a monthly programme of guided 'landscape walks'. So far, 120 walks have been completed, visiting every part of the county, and covering a total distance of over five hundred miles!

Each walk is designed to introduce the changing patterns of local life which have shaped the distinctive landscapes of the county. The walks take in both the built environment - including farms, villages and towns - and the



*A typical HA landscape walk in progress © Herefordshire Council*

wider rural landscape. Usually exploring the parts of the county most people do not reach, there is always a fascinating and unexpected story to discover.

Walks are typically about 4 miles/2 hours in length, and may take place in the morning, afternoon, evening or at weekends. All walks are free and open to all, but you do need to book a place in advance.

For the remaining walks in 2009, see the events listings at the end of this newsletter.

*Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer*

## 42 Not Out and Counting!

Believe it or not, Historic Environment Today has now been passing on news of archaeological and heritage work in Herefordshire since October 1998, with some 42 issues (including this one) produced since that time.

Over the years, we have explored many different themes ranging from particular periods of the past (e.g. Roman Herefordshire 7/2) to site types (e.g. hillforts 11/3), archaeological techniques (e.g. aerial archaeology 6/3), geographical areas (e.g. Lugg Valley 9/1) and strategic issues (e.g. archaeology and farming 4/3).

What is striking looking over the back issues is the range of remarkable archaeological discoveries – from the Wellington Saxon water mills to the Rotherwas Ribbon – we have featured. No one who has been a regular reader can be in any doubt not only of how much the archaeological story of Herefordshire has moved on over the last decade, but also of the scale of the task we all face in exploring, protect and promoting the county's extraordinary heritage.



*You saw it first in HET - the Wellington Saxon mill under excavation in 2000 © WHEAS*

All being well, HET will continue to keep local people informed of that ongoing work. What is certain is there will be as much exciting news to report in the next decade as there has been up to now.

*Ian Bapty, Senior Project Archaeologist*

## Talking Time Team

Channel 4's Time Team is 160 or so programmes on from its first broadcast in the mid-1990s, and is now something of a national institution. Not only have terms such as 'geophys' entered the popular vocabulary, but the team including Tony, Mick, Phil, and Stewart are the established celebrity faces of British archaeology.

Herefordshire Archaeology have worked on a number of projects with Time Team over the years. It is now ten years since the Sutton 'Search for Offa's Palace' programme recorded in October 1999. We also provided one of the key sites - The Weir, Kenchester - for Time Team's week long 'Big Roman Dig' in 2005, and contributed to a Time Team 'special' on Iron Age hillforts in 2007.



*Tony Robinson with HA archaeologists Ian Bapty and Neil Rimmington at Dinmore Hill © Herefordshire Council*

This July we facilitated another three day shoot investigating a possible Iron Age hillfort on Dinmore Hill north of Hereford. The mammoth operation involved not just the Time Team regulars, but also another seven HA archaeologists, ten HA coordinated volunteers, and around fifty Time Team support staff ranging from camera crews to caterers!

Despite some awful weather, the results were extremely interesting, and have potentially put a major and important new site on the Herefordshire prehistoric map. Some of the discoveries were presented at the HA Symposium on 17th October, and the programme will be broadcast early in 2010.

*Keith Ray, County Archaeologist*

## Presenting Archaeology at Hereford Museum

The many ways in which Hereford Museum uses its collections to communicate the past include exhibitions and object displays, interactive learning, education in schools, adult workshops and talks, children's activities, family events and public and specialist tours.

One exciting new development is the recent upgrading of the town centre museum exhibition. This now presents a chronological Herefordshire 'Timeline' display around the walls of the gallery, with selected thematic displays in the middle of the room. Other ongoing improvements include new interactive zones, guides for the visually impaired, and new object leaflets and display cases.

In addition, the new Museum and Resource Centre on Friar Street has made the Museum's extensive and varied archaeological collections – which range from artefacts found during archaeological excavations to local 'Treasure Trove' finds - much more accessible to visitors.



*Ready, Steady, Dig! - children get to grips with archaeological excavation during National Archaeology Week 2008 © Herefordshire Council*

The Centre is open to the public, and objects are stored in such a way as to make them easily available for public viewing. The building has dedicated spaces for researchers and for workshops or talks. Open days – such as the popular 'Ready, Steady, Dig' family event held annually during National Archaeology Week – offer a good way to get to know the centre and its facilities.

For further information contact Hereford Museum & Art Gallery on 01432 383585, the Museum Resource and Learning Centre on 01432 383383, archaeology collections on 01432 383593, and education and school services 01432 383595.

*Judy Stevenson, Heritage Services*

## Broadening Horizons

The Herefordshire Archaeology Lecture takes place twice a year at the Courtyard Theatre. The idea is to get nationally prominent archaeologists to give public talks about their work in a way which also sheds new light on the history of Herefordshire.

Since 2001 speakers have included Professor John Barrett (recent Iron Age research), David Miles (new perspectives on Medieval castles), Professor Clive Gamble (investigating early humans), Professor Julian Thomas (interpreting Neolithic Britain), and Professor Andrew Chamberlain (studying human remains).



*Professor Clive Gamble's lecture on early humans in Britain put a new perspective on local finds such as this palaeolithic axe from Tupsley © Herefordshire Council*

As those who have attended a Herefordshire Archaeology lecture will know, speakers are selected not only for their prominence, but also for their ability to communicate simply and enthusiastically.

Hopefully, the next lecture will take place in 2010.

*Keith Ray, County Archaeologist*

## Arts and Archaeology

Both in 2000 and in 2005, Herefordshire Archaeology contributed events to the county's cultural calendar. The objective was to find new and 'unexpected' ways to introduce archaeology and the county's rich heritage to a wider audience.

For the first of these events we teamed up at the Courtyard Theatre with a group of early musicians to try to bring to life some aspects of the Sutton 'Offa's Palace' investigations. For the second, we devised a 'cavalcade' of Ledbury's history. Moving between four locations around the town centre, the event used verse, words and music to travel through time as well as space, so giving a new perspective on the development of the town.



HA staff including Keith Ray and Neil Rimmington re-discover the spirit of Ledbury's medieval past during the 2005 history cavalcade © Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Archaeology have also had fruitful collaborations with other arts and media groups. For example, in 2006 we helped the Rural Media Company to make a documentary about the lost 19th century 'Crafta Webb' common-edge community at Bredwardine.

Watch this space for another 'cultural escapade' in 2010...

*Keith Ray, County Archaeologist*

## Contact Details

For further details of the events on the right please contact Moira Cassidy on 01432 260470 or [mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## Communicating Online

Herefordshire Archaeology has had a web presence since September 2002 when Historic Herefordshire On Line went live. Since February 2008, we have been working to re-launch this popular resource, and to make the information it provides as accessible as possible.

Called 'Herefordshire Through Time', the new site is part of Herefordshire Council's main website, and can be found at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/htt](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/htt). Among many changes, The 'News, Events and Projects' section has been revamped, a range of national and local archaeological information is now collected together in the 'Resources' section, and we also have a new 'Interesting Places to Visit' section. Other improvements, including redesign of the database search facility, will be going live shortly.

In another exciting development, the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) database is also now available via English Heritage's Heritage Gateway portal ([www.heritagegateway.org](http://www.heritagegateway.org)). The eventual aim is that all the English SMRs will be available alongside the existing English Heritage databases, so allowing cross searching across the combined Heritage Gateway information resource.

We do hope that you will enjoy using the new website. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions – please contact us via the Contact SMR link on the 'Herefordshire Through Time' homepage.

*Melissa Seddon, Sites and Monuments Record Officer*

## Forthcoming events

**Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 10am - 1pm:**  
Welsh Newton

**Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 10am - 1pm:**  
Allensmore

Watch this space or check the website for news of the 2010 landscape walks programme and other forthcoming Herefordshire Archaeology events.