



**Herefordshire  
Council**

# **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY**

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

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Spring 2012

Welcome to the spring edition of Historic Environment Today. This edition highlights a sample of the many activities that Herefordshire Archaeology has been engaged in and delivering, including the excavation work at Eardisley medieval castle and Little Doward Camp near Ganarew. It highlights the 150<sup>th</sup> monthly Historic Landscape Walk, a significant milestone in the on-going events programme. I hope you enjoy the newsletter and we look forward to seeing you at events throughout 2012.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser  
(Archaeology), Editor*

## **No More Overlooking the Wye**

The Overlooking the Wye Heritage Lottery Funded Project has come to an end. The project, which ran from 2008 to early 2012, has had a substantial impact on the conservation and awareness of the historic environment in the Wye Valley AONB.



The Overlooking the Wye team and project supporters on a final outing © Herefordshire Council

In Herefordshire, the Overlooking the Wye team delivered a range of conservation

projects and events, several of these were undertaken in partnership with Herefordshire Archaeology. These included the conservation of three limekilns (Symond's Yat West, Coppett Hill, and Little Doward), the removal of conifer from Little Doward Hillfort, and the conservation of standing masonry at New Weir Ironworks, Symond's Yat West.

The project was a real success story. Although the legacy of the project will continue on, it was sad to see such an effective team come to an end and, on behalf of Herefordshire Archaeology I hope they continue that success in the jobs they move on to.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser  
(Archaeology)*

## **150<sup>th</sup> Historic Landscape Walk**

On 14th September, Herefordshire Archaeology celebrated its 150th Historic Landscape Walk. The celebration took place at Weobley where three different walks were organised, each led by Herefordshire Archaeology staff prior to a short talk and some well-deserved cake.

The 150th walk marks twelve and a half years of the walks, without missing a single month. Each walk is unique and not repeated.

Since April 1999, Herefordshire Archaeology have been organising monthly walks throughout the county. Each of the walks is about 4 miles long and is designed to introduce members of the public to the constantly changing aspects of life, both past and present, which influence the character of

landscape in which we live. During each walk, landscape features are described and their form, function and historical significance discussed. The routes are on public rights of way and publicly accessible land.

*'We have enjoyed all the walks, but some are exceptional. The archaeological walks are absolutely amazing, full of interest and led by a team who make Herefordshire come alive'*

*Feedback from Herefordshire Walking Festival 2011*

The walks take in both the built environment in the form of farms, villages, market towns and Hereford city as well as more rural and less well known corners of the county. Walks are organised towards the middle of each month and may be in the morning, afternoon, evening or at weekends. They are all free but there is a booking system. For more information please contact Moira on 01432 260470 or [mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk).

*Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer*



Tim on a Historic Landscape Walk (Photo courtesy of Henry Connor)

## **Lyonshall Medieval Settlement**

We were saddened by the partial loss of one of our medieval settlement sites. In March 2011, a member of the public informed us that important medieval settlement remains at Lyonshall were under threat. The well preserved earthwork remains of a number of burgage plots (a strip of land with a house plot in a medieval town rented from the local

lord) to the north of Lyonshall village hall were potentially going to be cultivated, together with a series of enclosure boundary earthworks to the west.

Given that these remains are a rare, surviving example of part of a medieval planned settlement, Herefordshire Archaeology felt it appropriate that the site should be included in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments and as such protected by law against damage. The site had previously been assessed by English Heritage in 2004, but was re-assessed in April 2011. Unfortunately that assessment concluded that the monument did not merit Scheduling.

Herefordshire Archaeology took the view that this decision and the assessment report on which it was based did not appropriately reflect the character or national significance of the site. On this basis, we requested a review of the decision. Unfortunately the review supported the original decision.

In parallel to this, we successfully negotiated with the landowner to keep the burgage plots out of cultivation and we agreed access to carry out some investigations. These investigations confirmed the character of the burgage plots recording evidence of 13<sup>th</sup> century settlement and later post-medieval occupation.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser (Archaeology).*

## **Eardisley Castle**

In March 2011, Herefordshire Archaeology staff assisted the Eardisley History Group with a three-week excavation in the bailey of Eardisley Castle, a well-preserved earthwork site not previously excavated. The work was funded through a grant to the Eardisley History Group from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Removal of the topsoil immediately revealed well-preserved archaeological deposits which, from the abundant pieces of cooking pot, were clearly 13<sup>th</sup>-century or earlier. The ensuing excavation revealed a dense sequence of over twenty clay floors with occupation surfaces, confined on one side by a stone and timber footing and surrounding a

masonry foundation, possibly for a chimney or tower. This occupation dated to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century and was superimposed over a turf rampart, which was dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The exact character of the occupation is uncertain: the sampled building was probably an ancillary or service structure, either part of or closely adjacent to the kitchens. Amongst the wood ash covering the floors were patches of iron slag, used to level-up the surface. Animal bones were recovered in quantity and revealed a rich variety of game species, including a rare non-native white stork: its bones showed that it too had been on the menu c.1300.

*Nigel Baker, Senior Project Archaeologist*

## **Aerial Project**

The Herefordshire Aerial Archaeological Survey 2008-2011 project is now reaching its final stages. Over the last three years the archaeology service has carried out 25 flights, totalling some 60 hours of flying over Herefordshire.



One of the many cropmarks recorded as part of the project. © Herefordshire Council

The project work has principally been focused on cropmark recording in South Herefordshire, an area less well recorded in previous work. Cropmarks are the response of crops to the archaeology below the ground and are visible as either colour differences or height differences in the crop.

In addition to this cropmark reconnaissance work, the project has contributed to monitoring change in the landscape, and has provided illustrative material for characterisation work in Hereford and the market towns. It has also recorded numerous earthwork sites, and contributed to the work of county based heritage projects such as

Herefordshire Nature Trust's parkland project.

The photographs are now in their final stages of being catalogued and will over the coming months be integrated into the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and English Heritage's National Monuments Record.

We are delighted to report that English Heritage has agreed to fund a further programme of aerial survey, which will continue this informative work until November 2013.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser (Archaeology).*

## **Little Doward**

Herefordshire Council's archaeology service and volunteers have been investigating Little Doward hillfort again, with the help of the Overlooking the Wye project and the permission of English Heritage and the Woodland Trust. The hillfort, which sits overlooking the River Wye and Monmouth, is very well preserved. This year's excavation investigated the area known as the "annex", which is the east end of the monument and is defined by cliffs on three sides. A survey by English Heritage's national survey team in 2009 had identified the possibility that this is the first phase of the development of the hillfort and may initially have been defined by a bank and ditch. The excavation, carried out in May –June 2011, aimed to test this interpretation.

The excavation confirmed the survival of a rampart bank and ditch that would have enclosed the "annex" area. The bank, although mostly levelled and altered by later activity survived. A large limestone block measuring over 1m in size was initially thought to be bedrock, but on investigation was found to have been deliberately placed and probably represented the front of the rampart.





Volunteers at work during the 2011 excavation © Herefordshire Council

The ditch was over 3m deep, although the west side had been completely removed by the later excavation of two shafts probably for extracting iron rich ores. Preserved in the ditch fills on the east side however, was a hearth that we believe may have been used for roasting iron ore, an initial stage in the extraction of the iron from the ore.

Both this excavation and that carried out in 2009 have demonstrated how well the archaeology is preserved at Little Doward. The assemblages of pottery and bone have been some of the best recovered in the West Midlands. The finds have included some real gems like bone dice and an antler toggle for an item of clothing. The dating of the material suggests that the site was occupied from at least the late Bronze Age/ early Iron Age through to the middle Iron Age.

The archaeology service would like to say thank you to all the volunteers for all their enthusiasm and good humour during the excavation.

*Peter Dorling, Senior Project Archaeologist*

## **Britain's Heritage Heroes**

Herefordshire Archaeology made an appearance on the small screen this year. In August, I was joined by the presenter Jules Hudson and a cameraman during one of my flights searching for cropmark sites in the county. The programme, "Britain's Heritage Heroes", aimed to highlight people working to record and look after the nation's heritage.

The broadcast had a sad side to it with the news the pilot featured in the filming, Bob Jones died in January 2012. Bob has been a pivotal part of aerial archaeology over the last two decades, flying all archaeologists engaged in aerial survey in Wales and the Welsh Marches. He was great to fly with and had a wonderful sense of humour. He will be sorely missed by us all.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser (Archaeology).*



Neil Rimmington and Jules Hudson during filming of Britain at Risk © Tern TV

The next **Herefordshire Archaeology Landscape Walks** are on:

- **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 6pm- 8.30pm:**  
Ewendine, Colwall
- **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2pm – 5pm:** Milton Hill, Brilley
- **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2pm – 5pm:**  
Craswall
- **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August 10am – 1pm:**  
Leysters and Whyle
- **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2pm – 5pm:**  
Acton Green, Acton Beauchamp

For further details of the landscape walks and other Herefordshire Archaeology events please visit the events page at <http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/htt/118.aspx>, or contact Moira Cassidy on 01432 260470 or [mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mcassidy@herefordshire.gov.uk)