



**Herefordshire
Council**

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Herefordshire Council's Historic Environment Newsletter

Vol 15 Issue 1

Autumn 2012

Welcome to the autumn 2012 issue of Historic Environment Today. This has items covering fieldwork and projects either completed or underway. Excavations at Eaton Camp in the early summer and at Dorstone Hill towards the end of the summer are featured. I hope you enjoy reading this autumn's HET. We look forward to seeing you on our continuing monthly historic landscape walks and at other events early in 2013.

Keith Ray, Editor

(Industrial) pastures new

Ian Bapty, who joined us in 2006 to carry out an archaeology and minerals study of the Lower Lugg valley, has recently left to take up another post. From the end of September, he has been working as Industrial Heritage Support Officer with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust near Telford.

During his time at Herefordshire Archaeology, Ian carried out a number of important resource assessment studies, including looking at the effect of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations on the survival of archaeological sites in pasture.

Ian's new role involves providing information and support for often small and isolated industrial heritage Trusts and organisations throughout England. In Herefordshire, he will be much missed, but we wish him well in his new working life and environment.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist.



Ian Bapty investigating stake-holes at the Olchon Court cairn site in the summer of 2010
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Tracing origins at Eaton Camp

Early summer this year saw us excavating at Eaton Camp hillfort in Ruckhall, Eaton Bishop. The two weeks of digging were part of a wider ranging project organised by the Eaton Camp Historical Society. Eaton Camp is a triangular promontory fort defined by steep scarp slopes running down to the River Wye on the north and the Cage Brook on the south, the western side is demarcated by substantial surviving ramparts.

Two small trenches were opened to examine the terminals of two ditches that had been revealed within the hillfort interior by geophysical survey. The ditches were both found to have been dug in the Early Iron Age, with material in the base of each radiocarbon

dated to between 590 and 400 BC. The western-most ditch runs across the entire promontory from the northern scarp to the southern scarp and may define an earlier smaller enclosure. The eastern ditch appears to cut off the eastern-most point of the promontory, but its exact function is unclear. Finds from the western ditch were minimal but did include part of a shale object, probably a personal ornament of some kind.

From the upper levels of the shorter eastern ditch, finds were much more plentiful. A probable midden deposit contained stamp decorated Malvernian ware pottery, sherds of briquetage salt containers, fragments of crucible suggesting metal working, an iron object and much fire-cracked stone, burnt bone and charcoal. The stamp decorated pottery suggests that the whole deposit is middle Iron Age dating to around 350 BC. This deposit might be linked to the expansion of the site reflected by the extant rampart.

Peter Dorling, Senior Projects Archaeologist



Excavation of the midden deposit in the eastern ditch at Eaton Camp © Herefordshire Council

Dorstone Hill surprises

For the past two summers, Herefordshire Archaeology has been involved in a partnership field project investigating Neolithic sites in the Bredwardine - Dorstone area (see HET Issue 14, 2 for a description of work last year at The Knapp). This project has been carried out in close association with the University of Manchester, with a team led by Professor Julian Thomas, and Kyushu University (Japan), with a smaller team led by Associate Professor, Dr. Koji Mizoguchi.



The main Neolithic 'bank barrow' at Dorstone Hill during the excavation in 2012 © Herefordshire Council

In 2011, the sites investigated included the Neolithic site on the top of the hill between Dorstone and Bredwardine that has come to be known as the Dorstone Hill 'causewayed enclosure'. A single long trench opened last year revealed the bank of the presumed enclosure, with evidence for carbonised posts set in a burnt clay matrix, fronted by large stones laid in a sloping formation. A quarry was excavated, but there were no traces of a ditch in front of (north-west from) the bank.

This year a separate part of this bank was examined, and an immediate surprise was to find that both the front and back of the bank featured laid (or collapsed) deposits of large and small quarried stone slabs. The mystery deepened when again, no traces of a western ditch were found, and the bank itself was shown to have had at least three phases.

The third of these phases was associated with the insertion of a stone-lined chamber similar to those found in Cotswold-Severn Neolithic chambered tombs into one side of the bank. A leaf-shaped flint arrowhead was found in close association with this feature.

Current thinking is therefore that the earthworks concerned, that had been thought to comprise a bank across the neck of the hill-top promontory separated by an entrance-way, comprises instead two 'bank barrows' (elongated earthen long-barrows) placed end to end, on slightly different orientations. Further work is planned for 2013.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist.

Old Shobdon church

The several years' long campaign to repair the wall-plate and roof of the famous 'Strawberry Hill Gothic' parish church of St. John the Baptist at Shobdon, rebuilt in Neo-Gothic style in 1752-6, has now been completed. An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the below-ground works, in the hope that parts of the 12th century church, with its spectacular 'Herefordshire School' carvings, and its associated monastic remains, might survive below ground.



Decorated capital in Romanesque 'Herefordshire School' style, from Shobdon church

© Herefordshire Council

Nothing was found other than eighteenth century landscaping works and the locations of burial vaults. However, when the parapet wall of the church was being dismantled, several decorated stones from the earlier church were recovered.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist.

Going, going, gone...

Many of our readers will be aware of the extensive demolition works taking place on the old Hereford Livestock Market. This is of course a prelude to the now agreed major re-development of the site by Stanhope Plc. Planning permission for the development is conditional on an agreed foundation design, and a programme of archaeological works.

Professional archaeological consultants and contractors have been commissioned to carry out these works, and they will be closely monitored by Herefordshire Archaeology for quality assurance purposes. Although it is currently considered that much of the site is

already badly disturbed and of low potential, there are a number of limited areas of interest where surviving archaeological remains (principally dating to the prehistoric and medieval periods) are still anticipated. We shall report further in due course.

Julian Cotton, Archaeological Adviser.



The old cattle market site, December 3rd 2012

© Hereford Futures

Wye Valley caves survey

A small number of caves within the Wye Valley Gorge at Symonds Yat have been well documented over the years – indeed some have been explored by antiquarians for well over two centuries. Excavations in the 1920s led to a better understanding of the archaeological potential of some of these cave sites, documenting human activity within them dating from the Palaeolithic up until the end of the Romano – British period.

Further exploration during the 1990s provided important information regarding the post-Ice Age history these sites. However no full survey of every cave, rock-shelter and mining adit was carried out. The past history of research and the absence of systematic survey have led to much confusion as to the exact location of different caves, with some cave sites having a single name but actually being three separate sites in different locations!

Between 2010 and 2012, Herefordshire Archaeology has therefore been doing fieldwork in partnership with Forestry Commission and the Overlooking the Wye Project. This work has centred on the systematic recording of all caves and rock-shelters and mines within the gorge on the western (Herefordshire) bank of the Wye.



Madawg rock shelter, Lord's Wood, near Symond's Yat
© Herefordshire Council

Each site was located by GPS and a condition survey and archaeological potential survey was produced for the area of the site and its immediate environs. During this work remains, including human skeletal material, came to light which suggest that at least some of these sites continued to be used, and their prehistoric contents venerated, into the 7th century A.D.

Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer

Bronsil Castle

Two of the principal standing masonry remains of Bronsil Castle; the surviving part of the gatehouse and a section of staircase were conserved earlier this year. The structures, which had been in danger of collapse, were repaired through an Environmental Stewardship scheme.



Standing remains of Bronsil Castle undergoing repair and recording. © Herefordshire Council

Working together, Natural England, Herefordshire Archaeology, English Heritage, and Eastnor Estate developed a repairs scheme with local conservation architects,

Stainburn Taylor of Ledbury. These standing remains are now secure for the future and are recorded. Further works on other parts of the site are being planned in the coming year.

*Neil Rimmington, Countryside Adviser
(Archaeology)*

New books

Two new books to look out for: the first, *The Buildings of England, Herefordshire* by Alan Brooks and Nikolaus Pevsner (Yale University Press, 2012) is the long-awaited 2nd edition of the classic 1963 architectural survey of Herefordshire's finest buildings and built places. The second is among the latest crop of titles from Logaston Press and is by Ron and Jenny Shoesmith. Entitled *Alfred Watkins' Herefordshire in his own words and photographs* it is, in effect, three books in one. These are: a revised edition of Ron's previously published biography, Watkin's own unpublished work 'The Masefield Country', and an annotated collection of his renowned fine large-format photographs. A good read!

A changing (local) world

Service Reviews have been underway for the past two years in Herefordshire Council, and the restructuring resulting from the Cultural Services Review of 2011-12 has included transferring responsibility for the county SMR to the new 'Collections and Archives' service managed by Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe. More details in the next issue.

Keith Ray, County Archaeologist.

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

- **Tuesday 12th December 10am - 1pm:**
Hom Green, Ross-on-Wye
- **Wednesday 16th January 10am - 1pm:**
Shucknall/Westhide
- **Tuesday 12th February 10am – 1pm:**
Mathon

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