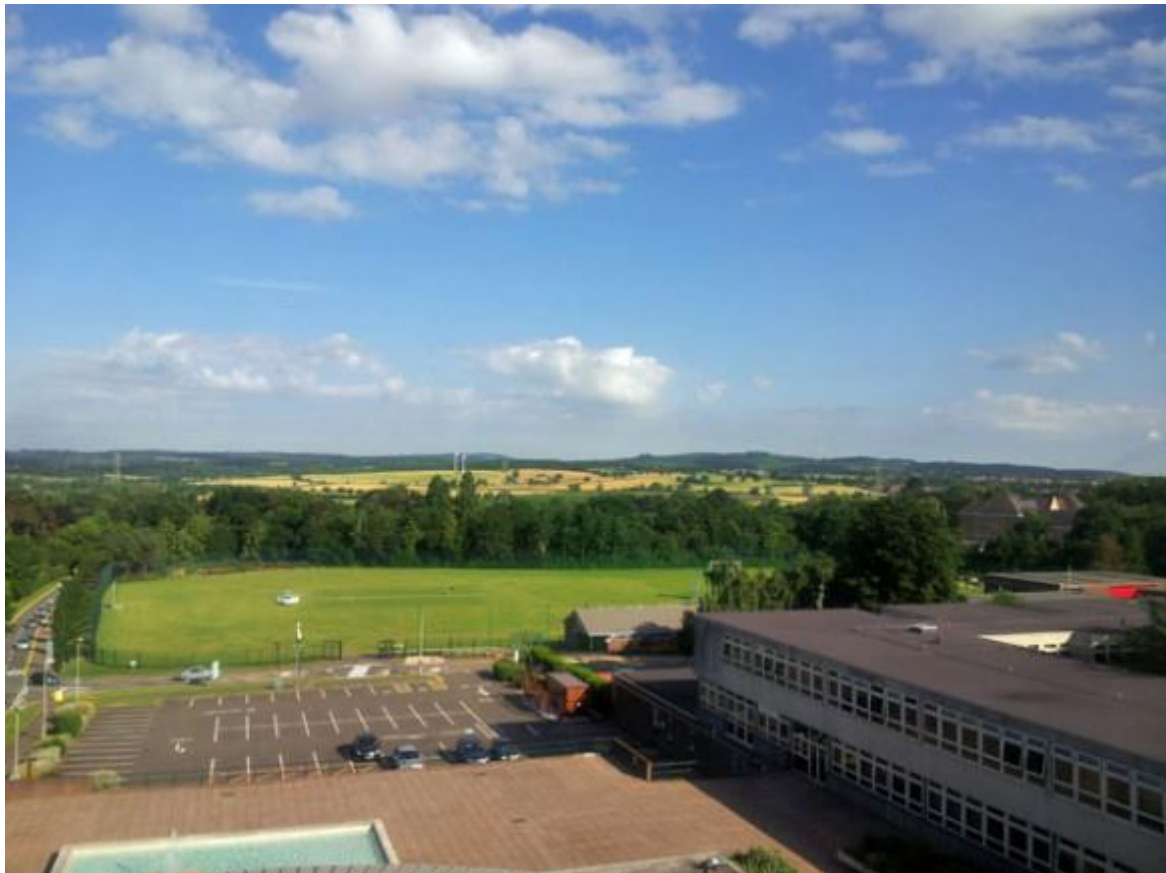


# WE CAN BE HEROES, JUST FOR ONE DAY

[July 26, 2013 Helen Wells Buildings, Commercial Archaeology, Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2013, Museum Archaeology Aeroplanes, Aircraft Factory, Archaeology, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Brush Works, Commercial archaeology, First World War, GIS, Historic Environment Record, Historic Maps, industrial archaeology, Leicestershire, Leicestershire County Council, Loughborough, Planning Archaeology, Rutland, Seaplanes, Whitwick, World War I](#)

Hello! If you're reading this perhaps you want to know what it's like to be a HERO (Historic Environment Record Officer), just for this one day. (I know it's a bit tenuous but I wanted a quote for my title and I love David Bowie, so...!)

I last blogged as part of the Day of Archaeology in 2011. If you want to read my blog from back then please read [a day in the life of a HERO](#). There's a fair bit there that I don't really want to cover again, like how I became a HERO. I think today I'll just blog about what I'm up to.



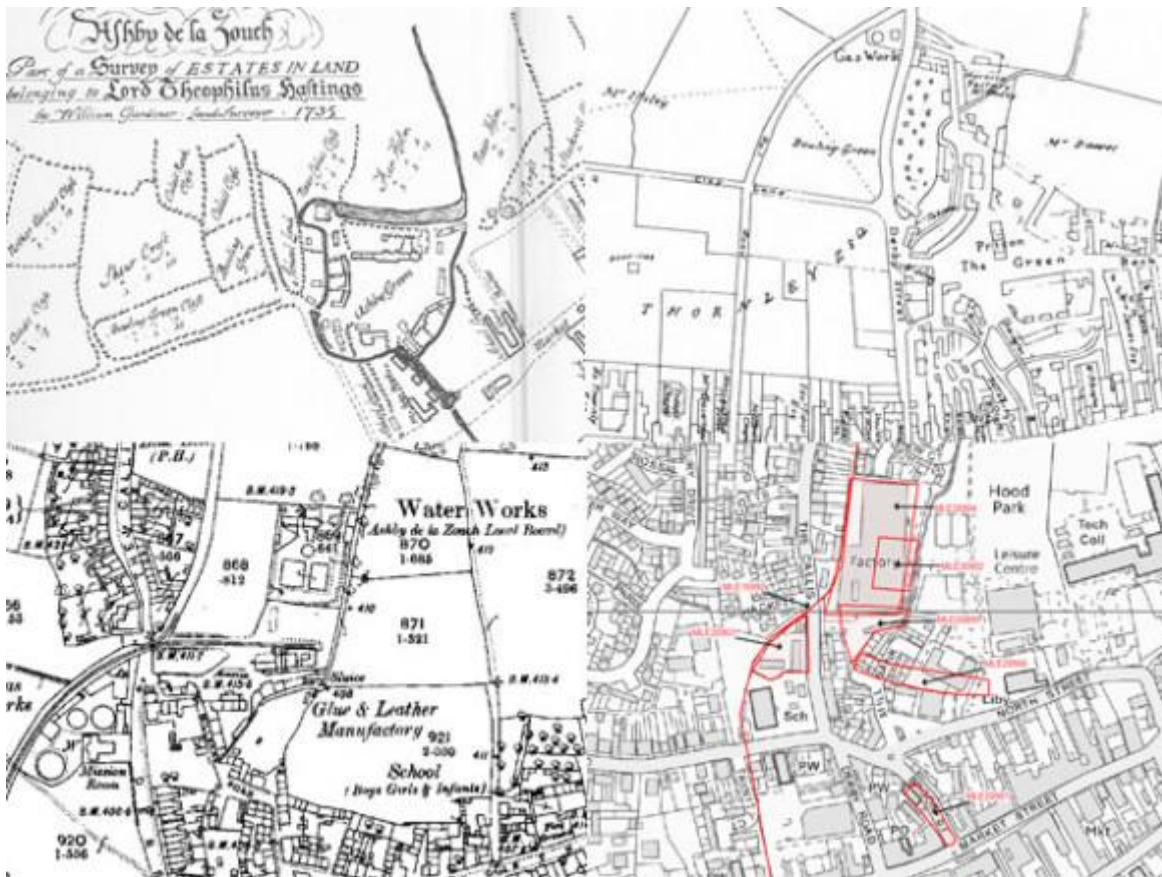
*View from my office, County Hall, Leicestershire*

I work for [Leicestershire County Council](#) in the Historic & Natural Environment Team (part of Planning, Historic & Natural Environment, so we sit with various planning officers). The other people in my team consist of a war memorials project officer, conservation officer, 2 planning archaeologists and our team leader – we're also in the same team as several ecologists. There used to be more of us but due to the ubiquitous cuts that's the team at the moment. The conservation officer and our team leader don't work full time, also because of the cuts. So they're not here today.

I'm in charge of the [Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire & Rutland](#), which is basically a database that attempts to record all known archaeological remains and historic buildings in the county.

The first job of the day is to check the [Heritage Gateway](#) upload that I set running last night. About 70% of our HER records are available on-line through the Gateway (our [Heritage Gateway update page](#) details what's on-line at the moment). Yesterday I added some new records (and edited some old ones), so I thought I'd better upload them! The new records include a rather interesting medieval cruck-framed house, [5-7, Market Place, Whitwick \(MLE20894\)](#) that is due to be demolished as part of a scheme to build a new Co-op. (It's not listed.) Our planning archaeologists have been commenting on the scheme, hence the reports that have provided me with new sites.

Then it's time to do some fun map regression! I love the part of my job that's basically detective work, though sometimes it's infuriating not to get definitive answers to questions... Yesterday the Principal Planning Archaeologist brought several things in Ashby-de-la-Zouch to my attention. First is an early 'tramway' that ran from the Ashby Canal to Ticknall. This was on the HER already, but the mapping wasn't quite right. Then there are a whole bunch of industrial sites dating from the C18th-C20th.



*Historic maps (1735, 1837, 1888) and HER extract for Ashby-de-la-Zouch*

The sites are (the links will work when I've done the next Gateway upload!):

- [Willesley Basin to Ticknall Tramway \(MLE16992\)](#) – an early tramway dating from the late C18th.
- [Glue and Leather Manufactory \(MLE20899\)](#) – a C19th factory – leather was a major industry in Ashby, parts of it must have been quite stinky!
- [Watermill and mill pond \(MLE20900\)](#) – only shown on the 1735 map, they have disappeared by the early C19th.
- [Pond at Brookside/Brook Street \(MLE20901\)](#) – a large pond is shown at the convergence of two parts of the Gilwiskaw Brook on the 1735 map.
- [C19th waterworks \(MLE20902\)](#) – waterworks constructed in the later C19th by the Ashby Local Board.
- [C19th/C20th Gas Works \(MLE20903\)](#) – gas works shown on the 1837 plan, still in use well into the C20th.
- [Castle Soap Works \(MLE20904\)](#) – built c.1900 and still a soap factory, another major industry in the town.

The next job is something that brings in money – a commercial data search. Searches are requested by land agents and solicitors as well as commercial archaeology units, to help inform land purchases, planning decisions and as part of fieldwork. For a fee, I send various digital files (maps, GIS files, gazetteers etc) out containing all the archaeological sites and historic buildings on the HER. (Non-commercial enquiries are free.) Interesting sites in Appleby Magna, where this search was for, include [Moat House \(MLE10939\)](#), a C16th house that sits within a moat. The moated site, along with formal gardens, fishponds and village earthworks, is a Scheduled Monument ([National Heritage List Entry No. 1011458](#)).

As a fun Friday afternoon activity I think I'll go through a book I've just bought (another HER officer recommended it to me). It's called 'Actions Stations: Military airfields of Lincolnshire and the East Midlands', by Bruce Barrymore Halpenny. We've been trying to put World War I sites onto the HER in advance of the [First World War Centenary](#) next year and I'm hoping it can add a bit more information.



*First World War Short 184 seaplane built at the Brush Works, Loughborough*

Reaching the end of the day, the book doesn't contain much First World War information (I'm up to 'L' in the gazetteer), but it does have some information about the [Brush Works at Loughborough \(MLE8697\)](#), which built aircraft in both the First and Second World Wars, and [Loughborough Meadows \(MLE15968\)](#), where they test flew their planes. The updated information will be on the [Heritage Gateway](#) after my next upload.

As you can see, for an 'archaeology database' the HER contains quite a few records that are pretty modern, as well as things like castles and medieval houses. It certainly makes for an interesting job, learning about all sorts of different things on a daily basis! You never quite know what the day will hold...