

HEROES AND D C ANTICS: SURREY'S HERITAGE CONSERVATION TEAM DESCRIBE THEIR DAY

July 11, 2014 Alex Egginton Curation, Day of Archaeology 2014 archaeological
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Surrey's Heritage Conservation Team ensures that county's historic environment is properly considered, monitored and conserved as Surrey develops. It advises planning authorities and developers of the heritage implications of proposed developments. It also provides information for the management, interpretation and conservation of Surrey's historic environment.

Nick: Development Control Archaeologist

A good part of my day will be spent responding to planning consultation from the 4 Surrey Districts that I advise. This entails looking at site plans, checking the Surrey Historic Environment Record and reviewing any supporting information supplied. Hopefully most of the applications will have either a Heritage Statement or a desk based archaeological assessment supplied with them so these will require a read through to see if all the appropriate sources have been consulted and to see if I agree with the conclusions. I then write to the relevant planning authority with advice about the appropriate archaeological response to the application.

When I finished the outstanding consultations I will be reviewing two Written Schemes for evaluation of cemetery sites. The desire to update facilities to meet the needs of a 21st century congregation is a challenge for churches of all denominations and it is sometimes equally challenging to get some to understand that this also involves caring for the ex parishioners who lie buried beneath the new extension, especially when the potential costs of excavation and assessment are received. Luckily these days there is now a much wider recognition that archaeology is a central part of any such scheme, aided particularly by guidance published by English Heritage and the Church of England and the role of Diocesan archaeological advisors.

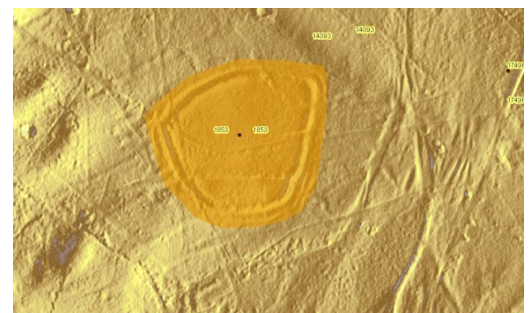
Happily the two schemes that I will be looking at today have involved very early consultation about the archaeological requirements and so the archaeological work is central to both proposals. On both sites I have advised an initial trial trench evaluation, hence the Written Schemes in front of me. This will be backed up by a search of the records to see if any individuals or groups of burials can be identified as this would raise the potential significance of the remains. When the evaluations have been carried out we will get a better idea of the density and condition of the burials and will be to make some informed decisions on the appropriate way forward.

Alex: Development Control Archaeologist

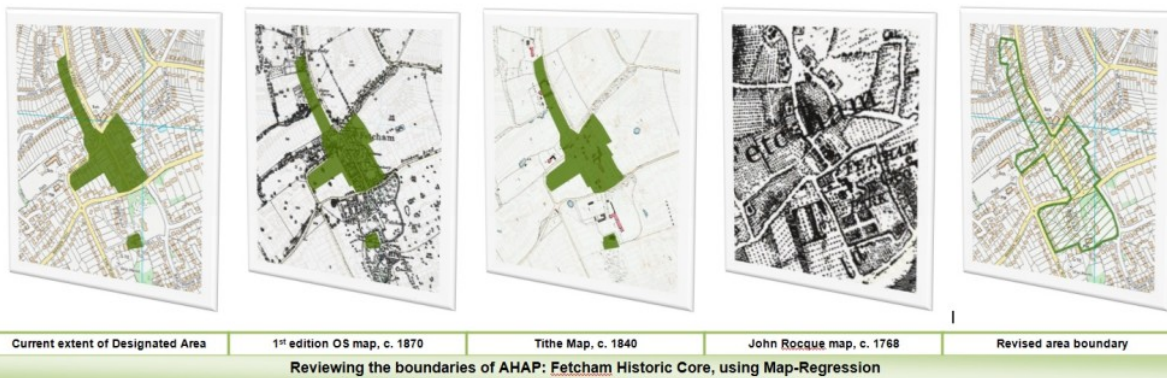
While my colleagues Nick and Gary field lots of the incoming work, I also work on a project to review the County's local archaeological designations. Much of the archaeological consultations dealt with by Nick, Gary and myself are triggered by these designated areas which comprise of;

- County Sites of Archaeological Importance, these are known heritage assets which are important in a National or Regional context and should be preserved.
- Areas of High Archaeological Potential are areas where it is strongly suspected there is an increased likelihood of archaeological remains being revealed should ground disturbance take place.

These areas were identified about 20 years ago and although largely remain very successful at protecting the County's heritage, amendments have not kept up with the pace of research, hence the need for a review. In my diary for today was originally a meeting with District/Borough planning representatives about the planned changes to these areas. However since this meeting was postponed, instead am cracking on with the project. Today I am whizzing through some of the existing designated areas. For each designation I ascertain why the area has been designated in the past, and whether the area should be retained according to current criteria. Some areas are deleted, either because the reason for designation can no longer be justified or because the area has since been subsequently destroyed. Most are marked for retention, so I move on to assessing the area boundary, usually newer research or enhanced data (as shown in images), leads to some updating of the boundary. I then record the designation details, along with an assessment of significance, in a database linked to the GIS mapping software.



Using new data to redefine area boundaries



In order to complete this project, and indeed more generally in order to make properly informed decisions, the Historic Environment Record (HER) database is vital to our operations.

Emily: Historic Environment Record Officer (HERO)

I'm the HER Officer for Surrey, working as part of the Heritage Conservation Team, out of the Surrey History Centre in Woking. I manage two HER Assistants, and am responsible for managing the day to day HER and all our work programmes.

As a HER team we share the workload of enquiries and adding new information to the HER database. This can be a find reported from the general public, to something spotted on an aerial photograph, or even by the roadside, such as a previously "lost" milestone!

HERs originally evolved organically from their first creation some 50 or so years ago, and a library of maps, unpublished research, letters and other resources have mounted up over time, and sometimes contain resources which we still have to go through to add to the HER database.

Today, I am working on an aspect of HER "disaster planning", which means prioritising which of the information within our HER is the most valuable, should anything unexpected happen to the office (for example, flood or fire damage). As a part of this, today, I am looking through materials that are not yet indexed on the database to work out their importance, such as miscellaneous photographs and map extracts in files, so that records can be created and images can be scanned and added to our on-line presence through the Exploring Surrey's Past website. They can then be deposited with the main Surrey Archive, if appropriate, meaning they will not be lost should a disaster occur.

So far today I am looking through old planning files, which is revealing a wealth of old images that I rarely get a chance to examine in detail! So far I have found photos showing aspects of conservation areas (also interesting for the now antique cars lining the streets!) and some 1950s excavations and site plans. The occasional annotated aerial photo emerges, which will then generate further research to verify whether the site is actually archaeological, and not just marks created by vehicle movements or temporary structures, for example. Where appropriate these images will be scanned and indexed on our database.

Prioritised materials to be added to the database will become part of mine and the HERAs on going workloads, which mean we will be kept very busy, but with varied and interesting work!

Andrew: Historic Environment Record (HER) Assistant

I am one of the two Historic Environment Record Assistants (HERA) here at Surrey and the newest member of the Heritage Conservation Team, recruited to assist the Historic Environment Record Officer

(HERO) Emily Brants. My day to day role is maintaining and an enhancing the County's HER through the creation of new records. As the HER is a public accessed dataset on the historic environment, it is used in a variety of ways from local archaeology society's to students undertaking research, through to being used to maintain and care for the historic environment as part of Local Authority planning and development control.

My first job on a day is to check the email inbox for any enquires, which need to be checked and logged into the HER. These can take the form of a home owner wanting more information about their house through to data requests which from part of Desk-Based Assessments (DBAs) from archaeological units or consultants.

Due to nature of the HER and archaeology we seem to have a never ending task of enhancement with new archaeological discoveries and reports from excavations coming in daily but it is interesting to see what new sites and finds are being uncovered. This has also the effect of expanding my knowledge and interest of archaeological and geographical knowledge of Surrey itself as I am originally from York (via Milton Keynes for a year) and still finding my way around the county. I enjoy working within the team, and feel lucky enough to have been given the chance to work within archaeology following 2 years working for the Railway after graduating from Bradford in 2011.

As for today however, I am away on annual leave back up north and maybe visiting a historic site or two whilst wondering around my hometown....

Laura: HER Assistant

My role within the HCT is that of Historic Environment Record Assistant. Now that Surrey has a full HER team we are lucky enough to be able to focus our attention towards community based projects. Alongside First World War Centenary projects we are beginning to think about archaeology and the National curriculum. Work previously done with the Exploring Surrey's Past website will be further enhanced through production of learning information from HER data to input into a project developed by another team in the Heritage Service. For the past few weeks I have been looking into how archaeology fits into the National Curriculum and how we might update/revise some of our HER records and make the data more accessible to school children and their teachers. Today I will be continuing this work, searching for interesting HER records that fit current themes within the National Curriculum. We are expecting a placement student to help with this project at the end of July. The student will be helping me to rewrite some of the HER data to make it more accessible. In preparation for the student's arrival I will be rewriting one of the HER records currently on the ESP website to use as an example. This project will hopefully open up the HER and archaeology to a much younger audience.



HER grey literature library

The number and type of HER enquiries we receive varies from week to week. All enquiries are given the same a turnaround time of 5-10 working days for all HER enquiries. So other duties today will include ensuring that all enquiries (commercial or other) that were due this week have had a response. Time management is extremely important in this job as we all have a list of ongoing projects and tasks to complete on top of customer queries and enquiries.

If all goes to plan and there is time left in the working day my attention will also be focused towards our list of buildings of local interest. The aim behind this project is to create substantial summaries of buildings around the county, which are not listed on a national level. These will be input into Surrey's HER together with any further sources of information either published or unpublished. I am currently working my way through the District of Mole Valley adding extra information about historic buildings of local interest to HER records or creating new records for those not currently on the HER. I have been using the wide range of sources available here at the archives in Surrey History Centre to enhance the records. So later in the afternoon I'll pop down to the search room to consult a range of historic maps and other interesting sources.

This is just a small snapshot of the work that we do. The team also includes; Tony our team manager, Martin our Historic Buildings Officer, David our Finds Liason Officer, and Heather and Savita our administrative assistants.