

More access, more records: a Greater London Historic Environment Record for all

Stuart Cakebread and Krystyna Truscoe report on how this huge resource is being expanded and brought up to date

For 28 years, the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) has been helping to advance understanding of London's diverse heritage. The GLHER is widely used by commercial archaeological units and heritage consultants carrying out work as part of the planning process, but it is also a publicly accessible resource. With the GLHER now available online via the Heritage Gateway, more people than ever will be able to benefit.

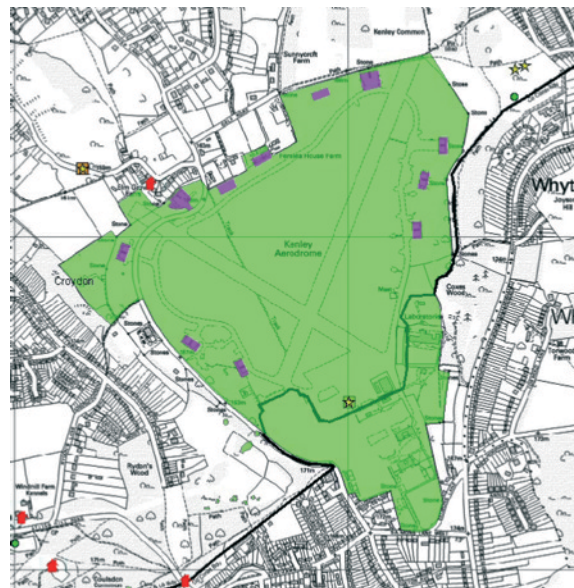
The Heritage Gateway, hosted by English Heritage, is a growing portal to Historic Environment Records across England. It enables searches of both national datasets, such as those for statutorily designated information (eg Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens), and local authority Historic Environment Records. All GLHER records except Listed Buildings will be regularly updated for maximum currency.

The GLHER is amongst the largest in the country, with over 53,000 records of sites, from the earliest human

occupation c. 420,000 years ago, through to the Cold War. The GLHER, formerly the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR), was created in 1983, a process documented in the pages of the *London Archaeologist* (Clubb and James, *London Arch* 5 02, 1985). Records from sources ranging from the Ordnance Survey to the Inner London Archaeological Unit and the West London Archaeological Field Group were collated, and information added from the Greater London Council building records, the Survey of London, the Victoria County History volumes for surrounding counties, and other references such as the *Antiquarian*.

Compilation of the then GLSMR was a mammoth task and while researching this article, the authors came across examples of records that reflect the variety of both the source information and London's archaeology: everything from the jaw of a Palaeolithic woolly rhinoceros found, with a flint embedded in it, in 1880 at Crayford, to Kenley Aerodrome, used in both World Wars and unique in having all its fighter blast pens intact. Reports of crimes, or the movement of criminals also emerge: a murderer put up at the Bell Inn, Shoreditch, in 1514; and a chillingly terse entry details the find by a verger of two Roman pots at Beddington brickworks, "since lost due to murder of verger". We haven't had time yet to add the catastrophic events of the Great Beer Flood of 1814...

The team wants to maintain the original concept of the GLHER as being more than just a database of archaeological sites. An ambitious programme of enhancement will reflect recent Heritage Protection Reform initiatives which have put more emphasis on the need for a holistic



approach to the historic environment. Whereas the past focus of the GLHER has been on archaeology lost or recorded through redevelopment, we are now seeking to broaden our remit. Particularly important is increasing our knowledge of sites of local importance, with contributions from local researchers. The Thames Archaeological Survey and its successor, the Thames Discovery Programme are examples of local research projects which have contributed data. Locally Listed Buildings held by the London boroughs are now being added as well. Volunteers in the GLHER are able both to help advance the range of information on locally important monuments and to influence the planning process.

Visitors to the GLHER can search our full database and the associated Geographic Information System (GIS) and also use other resources: our digitised report library; collection of books and journal articles; historic maps; and two of the original card indexes from which the record was compiled.

- Search the GLHER online: www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/
- Search the National Heritage List for England: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/>
- Contact Stuart Cakebread, GLHER Manager, or Krystyna Truscoe, GLHER Officer, to make an appointment to visit the GLHER or become a volunteer: e: glher@english-heritage.org.uk t: 020 7973 3931/3779 a: Greater London Historic Environment Record, English Heritage, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST.



TOP Kenley Aerodrome as depicted on the GLHER GIS; Scheduled fighter pens are shown in purple (GLHER mapping, © English Heritage; Map base, Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright, licence number 100019088)
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