

The HER as a search engine: improving accessibility to historic data in Worcestershire



Victoria Bryant

HER Manager Worcestershire County Council



The HER as search engine

- an index to all the known information on the historic environment
- a tool for resource discovery

Accessible to a range of users



- Online resources for educational and professional use signposted on our website

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology

- the results of searches sent as shape files, jpeg images and PDFs via e-mail

Projects already undertaken

1. Grey Literature on-line
2. Digitising HER sources
3. Finds and Environmental Indices within the HER

1. Grey literature on line



The screenshot shows the Worcestershire County Council website's Archaeology section. The header includes the council's logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled 'Archaeology' and features a sidebar with a menu. The 'Online Library' menu item is selected, leading to a page titled 'Online Archaeology Library'. This page contains text about the collection of 'grey literature' reports, a photograph of an excavation site, and a link to view a specific report.

worcestershire
countycouncil

Home | Business | Get in Touch | Jobs | Learning | Leisure | Living | News | Social Care | The Council | Transport | My Local Area

welcome to
Archaeology

my services
[About](#) | [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Location: [Home](#) > [Learning](#) > [Historic Environment and Archaeology Service](#) > [Online Library](#)

Online Archaeology Library

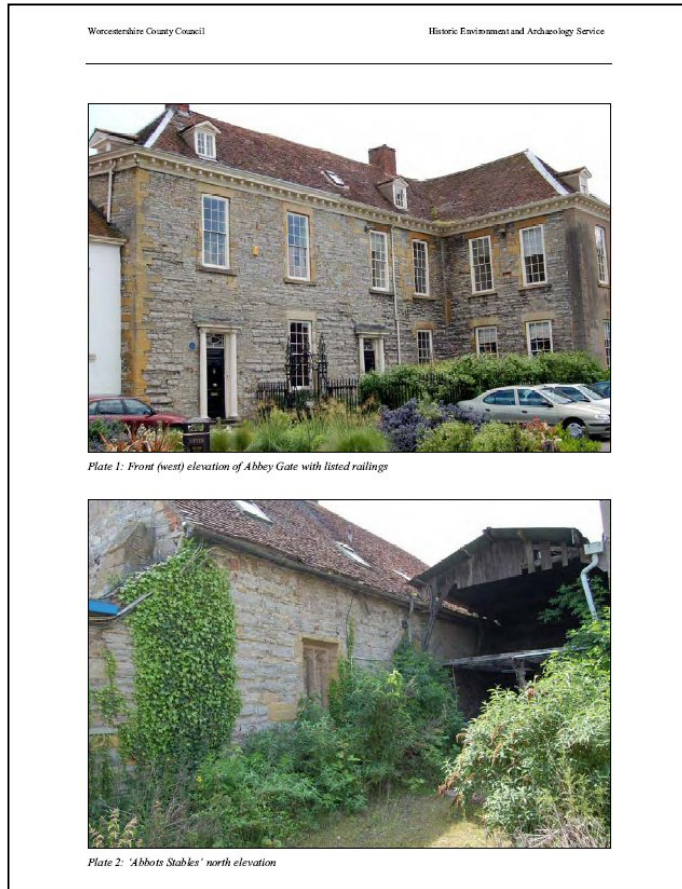
The office of the Historic Environment and Archaeology Service includes a [library](#) with a comprehensive collection of books, journals and other publications concerning the history and archaeology of Worcestershire.

These include a large collection of 'grey literature' reports produced through the modern development process. These often exist in only a few copies and are, therefore, largely inaccessible to a general audience.

Excavations at Whittingham House, Whittingham Road, Droitwich in 2004. Undertaken by Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service on behalf of CgMs Consulting. [Click here to view the report](#)  (7.70 MB) 

- all grey literature reports (1980s onwards)
- very simple search engine
- good public response
- 1500 reports on line

1. Grey literature on line



Cost

- £6000 initial investment for staff time
- 3 to 4 weeks to add in all reports
- continued staff time for data entry c10 to 15 minutes per report
- managing the system c 10- 15 days over 3 years

2. Digitising HER sources



Linking digital data to the source records for each HER record within the GIS gives instant access to

- grey literature reports
- archive material
- letters
- newspaper clippings
- management documents
- plans
- photographs
- architects survey drawings
- websites

2. Digitising HER sources

WR10518 12198 <u>ROMANO-BRITISH FINDS IN SPETCHLEY</u> 19TH MAY 1985	
FIELD NAME: BIG PARK MEADOW SO O.S. GRID. 892527	FIELD NO:
REPORT TONY AND JANE METCALF POTTERY FROM THE SIDE OF THE THE PATH. RIN: SAMIAN CUP. BODYSHERDS: 0/B 2	
PRESS / BROADCAST EXTRACT	
FROM: <i>Worcester Gazette</i>	TO: <i>County Archaeologist</i> DATED: 8/6/80
Battle against time in dig into town's past <p>TIME is running out for Droitwich archaeologists in their bid to discover more about the town's historic past. In two weeks they will have to say goodbye to workers on a Manpower Services Commission scheme who have helped with the bulk of the excavations.</p> <p>During that time the Leach pit, Covercroft and High Street market site will have to be completed. Work on the High Street site has already been underway for three weeks and archaeologists have been busy listing their post medieval discoveries with keen interest. "What we have found so far has been fairly standard," explained assistant town archaeologist, Simon Woodhouse. "But we are most pleased that the area has not been subject to subsidence from the salt works."</p> <p>In many other parts of the town salt works effluage has buried old treasure deep below the surface - but it seems the High Street has escaped. This should considerably speed the work and it is hoped that in the final two weeks of the dig more can be discovered about pre medieval life in the town.</p> <p>Archaeologists are aiming to find signs showing exactly when the street developed as the main access to Droitwich.</p> <p>In the meantime they will be carefully filling in the Leach pit to protect their finds until they can be properly preserved. And the Covercroft excavation is also due to end this week.</p>	

- provides a security copy
- can't be filed in the wrong place
- saves on filing cabinets
- saves time for HER staff
- will save time for Conservation Officers

2. Digitising HER sources



Cost

- 5000 sources scanned to date
- undertaken as part of general cleaning/enhancement
- staff time for scanning and linking 5 to 10 minutes per source
- managing the system - negligible

3. Finds and environmental indices within the HER



A basic index within the HER GIS which is

- complete
 - antiquarian reports
 - excavations and fieldwalking
 - Portable Antiquities Scheme
 - chance finds
- consistent
- flexible
- affordable

3. Finds and environmental indices within the HER



Search for artefacts/ecofacts across

- the whole database
- a particular area
- a particular soil type
- other HER data e.g. sites of a particular date or type

Results can be viewed alongside other HER GIS resources e.g. digitised historic maps

3. Finds and environmental indices within the HER



Why is the HER a sensible place to hold data on artefacts/ecofacts?

- indices can be used with other data held in the HER
- HER data is a constantly expanding resource
- HER data is in the public domain
- there is a commitment to maintain HER data

3. Finds and environmental indices within the HER



Does this facility benefit our existing clients?

Yes - we can accurately and rapidly identifying datasets and use them within a GIS to

- inform site specific analysis
- inform period or area synthesis
- develop a clearer understanding of data distribution
- accurately cost projects to enhance the data

Finds and environmental indices within the HER



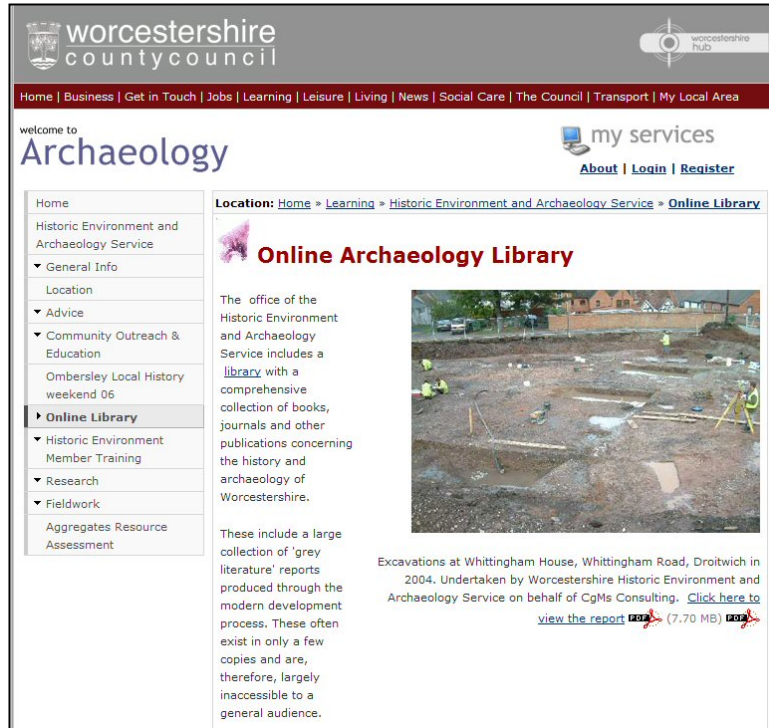
3. Finds and environmental indices within the HER



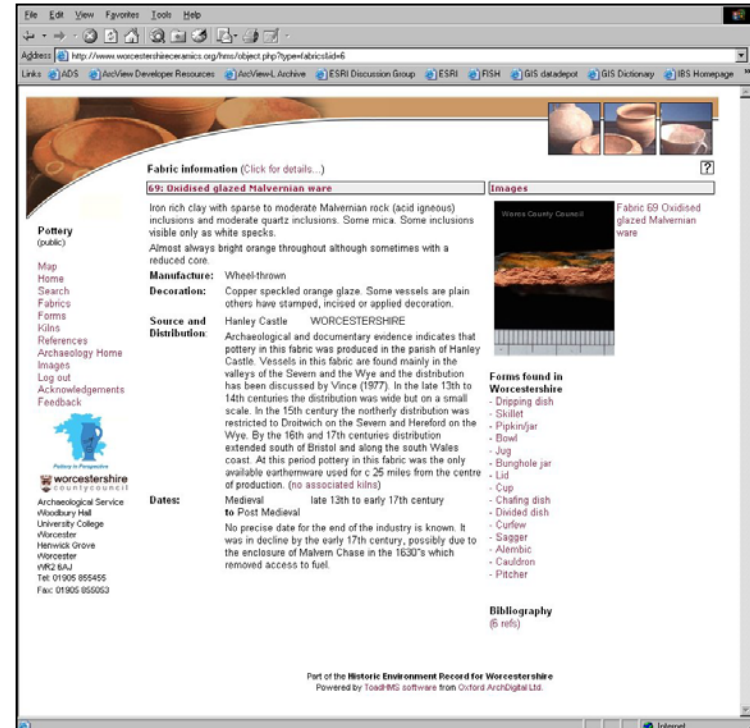
Cost

- 7292 records and growing
- software development costs
- £3000 pilot on environmental data
- 9 months work (IFA workplace bursary)
- average staff time for new data entry
10 minutes report (c 53 reports a year
with artefacts or ecofacts)
- managing the system – a week a year

Using the HER as a search engine



www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/library

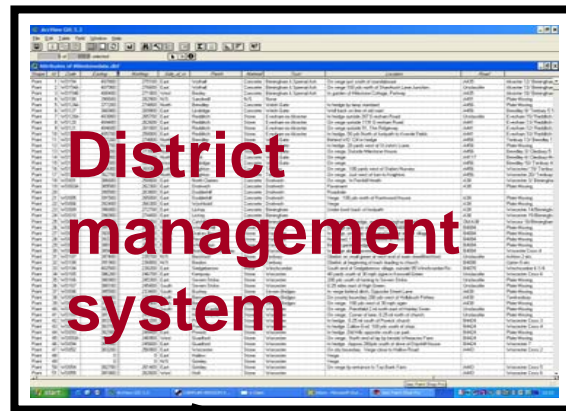


www.worcestershireceramics.org.uk

Greater than the sum of its parts - the HER points to other resources available on line or accessible by e-mail

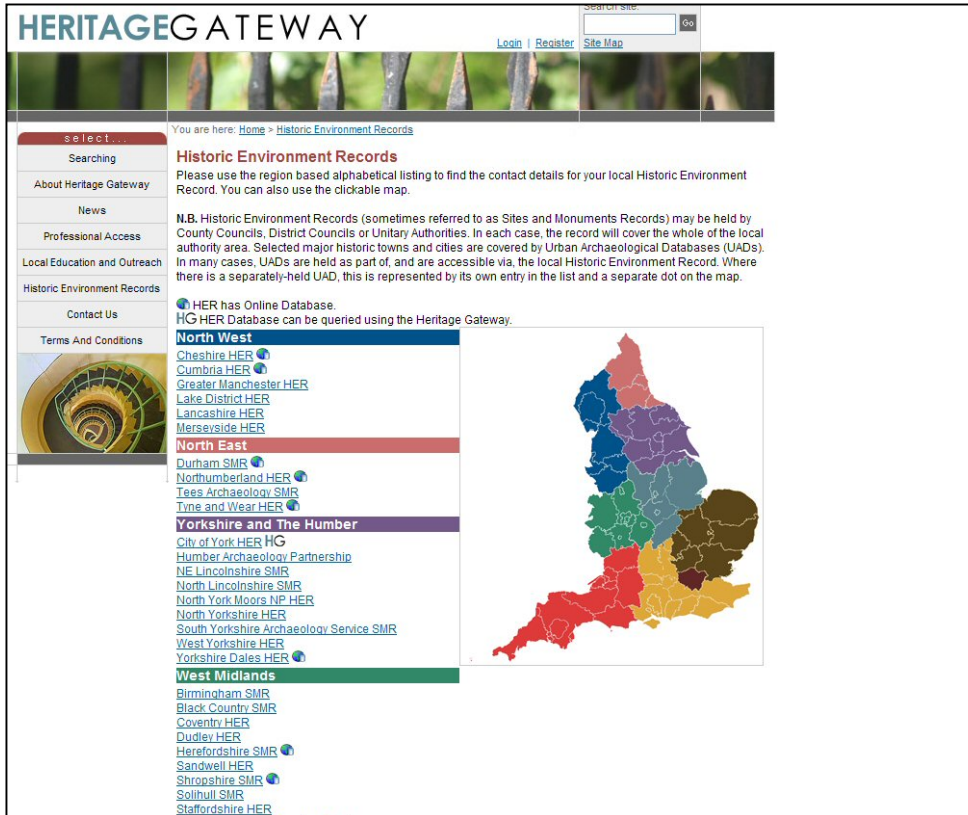
4. The future

Providing online HER for professional use - direct access to the HER within each District



- Simple
- Continued development after 2010

4. The future



The screenshot shows the Heritage Gateway website interface. At the top, there's a header with the title "HERITAGE GATEWAY" and navigation links for "Login", "Register", and "Site Map". Below the header is a banner image of a fence. A sidebar on the left contains a "select..." dropdown menu with options: "Searching", "About Heritage Gateway", "News", "Professional Access", "Local Education and Outreach", "Historic Environment Records", "Contact Us", and "Terms And Conditions". The main content area is titled "Historic Environment Records" and includes a sub-header "You are here: Home > Historic Environment Records". The text explains that users should use region-based alphabetical listing or a clickable map to find local records. It also notes that records may be held by County Councils, District Councils, or Unitary Authorities, and that Urban Archaeological Databases (UADs) are covered. A list of regions and their corresponding HERs is provided, including North West (Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lake District, Lancashire, Merseyside), North East (Durham, Northumberland, Tees, Tyne and Wear), Yorkshire and The Humber (City of York, Humber, NE Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North York Moors NP, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire), and West Midlands (Birmingham, Black Country, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire).

Providing an online HER
for public use via the
Heritage Gateway

The HER as a search engine: improving accessibility to historic data in Worcestershire



Victoria Bryant

HER Manager Worcestershire County Council