



Gateway to  
the history  
of Shropshire  
and Telford

# A short guide to archaeology

Whether undertaking a project for study purposes or having an interest in the history of the environment around us, more and more people are becoming interested in archaeology. However, archaeology is not all about digging holes. There are many techniques that are used before, or more often as an alternative to, excavation. The essence of archaeology is good planning. Both professional and amateur archaeologists begin their research in a library or a local record office. Here are some of the sources available at Shropshire Archives.

## Books and Periodicals

If you are interested in archaeology, a good starting place is to see what work has been undertaken before. Detailed analysis can be found in some of the **books** in our Reading Room. **Periodicals** of many historical and archaeological societies (such as the **Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society**) are also available here. A list of relevant books to look at can be obtained by searching our online catalogue.

Shropshire Archives also holds a selection of reports of archaeological work undertaken by contracting archaeological organisations, including Shropshire Council's **Archaeology Service**. These unpublished reports - sometimes referred to as "grey literature" – provide a record of the archaeological work that has been carried out on individual sites over the past 20 years or so. See also under **Historic Environment Team** (next page).

Useful information can be found in books such as the Victoria County History series and the Domesday Book of Shropshire whilst our **Parish Packs** contain information from books and archives that relate to Parish areas, and we hold books of Shropshire **listed properties**. **Trade Directories** include descriptions of each Shropshire parish including which Union and Hundred it is in, geological background and whether a market was held there. **Street Directories** are a valuable source of information on changing street names.

If you have found a reference to a book but cannot see it on the shelves, you will need to fill in a book request slip so that the staff can fetch it for you. Do ask the staff if you need advice - they are there to help you.

## Maps

Maps are an invaluable source of information. Modern maps show features such as churches, castles, old buildings, earthworks, barrows and megaliths. Shropshire Archives holds a collection of historical maps and plans dating from the sixteenth century until present including:

County maps and town plans, eg John Speed's plan of Shrewsbury of 1610 and J. Rocque's plan of Shropshire 1752.

Tithe maps.c1836-1850 (on fiche), Field name maps, and Ordnance Survey Maps and Plans.

The above can all be found in the Reading Room. However, there are other original maps and plans various estate plans and surveys of Shropshire which can be seen in the Search Room with a **Reader's Ticket**.

More information about the types of maps available is at [www.shropshiremaps.org.uk](http://www.shropshiremaps.org.uk)



## Place Names

Archaeological clues can be found from place names. Shropshire Archives holds a variety of books about place names, both local and national. The Field Name maps (based on tithe maps c 1836) are invaluable as our books by Foxall and Gelling. See also <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ins/projects/shropshire/index.aspx>.

## Aerial Photographs

Archaeological features that no longer remain on the surface can be detected as soil marks in ploughed fields and crop marks in arable fields. Shropshire Archives has a collection of aerial photographs of Shropshire. The index sheet can be found in the Reading Room. A Reader's Ticket will be needed to see the actual photographs.

## Photographs

Shropshire Archive holds a variety of photographs that could help to fill in some gaps in archaeological research. These can only be viewed in the Search Room so again, a Reader's Ticket is required. *Please note that with all photographs, copies can only be obtained if permission is given by the copyright holder. Shropshire Archives does not hold the copyright to all photographs held in the Centre.*

## The Lily Chitty Collection

This collection contains findings and notes made by Lily Chitty about Shropshire's archaeology from as far back as the Palaeolithic age. The collection lists sites, artefacts, folklore and topography. This is an invaluable source for research of local archaeology. A Reader's Ticket is required to look at the collection but we also hold many of Ms Chitty's books and pamphlets - references can be found in the Reading Room microfiche index.

## Information elsewhere

The archaeology section of the **Discovering Shropshire's History** website [www.shropshirehistory.org.uk](http://www.shropshirehistory.org.uk) includes searchable databases for the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (19,000+ records) and the Shropshire County Museums Service. There are also pages for many of the county's smaller museums.

As part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the Museums Service helps identify and records finds by members of the public. Some are show cased on the Discovering Shropshire's History website but full information is given on [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk) The Museums Service own website is [www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/museums.nsf)

Shropshire Council's Archaeology Service offers a variety of services for local heritage and community groups. For more information visit [www.shropshire.gov.uk/archaeology.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/archaeology.nsf)

The **Historic Environment Record** (HER), covering the whole county of Shropshire, is compiled and maintained by the **Historic Environment Team** at Shropshire Council. It holds extensive collections of supporting material – including archaeological and building survey reports, ground and aerial photographs and a range of digital data. The HER and its collections are available for consultation by appointment (email [historic.environment@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:historic.environment@shropshire.gov.uk)) with information on archaeological sites also available on the Discovering Shropshire's History website ([www.shropshirehistory.org.uk](http://www.shropshirehistory.org.uk)).

## Shropshire Archives

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