

## **The Herefordshire Field-Name Survey 1987-1993**

**First winner of the prestigious Graham Webster Laurels  
part of The Pitt-Rivers British Archaeological Award, 1994**

**At the ceremony in York the group received a beautiful, inscribed plate,  
now on display in Herefordshire Record Office, and a cheque from  
The Robert Kiln Trust which was used to fund aerial photography in the area.  
They were then honoured by a Civic Reception in the Mayor's Parlour, Hereford.**

**See: *Herefordshire Past and Present – An Aerial View* by Ruth E. Richardson & Chris Musson**

**The Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, Herefordshire  
volume XLVIII 1996, part III contains these papers using field-names:**

*Herefordshire Toll-houses - Then and Now (1996)* by Muriel Tonkin

*The Herefordshire Field-Name Survey* by Ruth E. Richardson

*The Relevance of Field-Names to Bell Archaeology* by John C. Eisel

*Field-Name Survey in Relation to Lime Kilns in the Golden Valley* by Beryl Harding

*Two Field-Names in the Royal Manor of Marden* by Jean O'Donnell

*Alternative Agriculture* by Frank W. Pexton

*Field-Names with possible Roman Connections* by Ruth E. Richardson

*Field-Names as a Guide to the Sites of Deserted Medieval Settlements*  
by Rosamund E. Skelton

*Field-Names as Archaeological Indicators of Defensive Sites*  
by Graham Sprackling and Ivor Lesser

*An Investigation of the Byefield, Bylet, Cinder, Forge & Furnace, Cae, Tref and  
Cover Names for the County of Herefordshire* by Elizabeth Taylor

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HEREFORDSHIRE

"HOPE ON"



"HOPE EVER"

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**The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club**  
(founded 1851) is

Herefordshire's premier society for archaeology, history, geology and natural history  
see: [www.woolhopeclub.org.uk](http://www.woolhopeclub.org.uk)

# The Herefordshire Field-Name Survey

By RUTH E. RICHARDSON

## INTRODUCTION

It is probable that every used piece of land has, or had, a field-name in order to allow for ease of designation when working or visiting the site. The majority of these names concerns the quality of the soil, shape of the field, prevalent vegetation and agricultural use. Therefore, they can demonstrate changes in the landscape, tracing features, pond sites and survivals such as natural woodland. A minority of names preserves the history of the fields giving ownership names, some of which can be confirmed from other sources, or by recording significant events, which may be less easy to verify.

The archaeological field-names are relatively few but can provide indicators that show an area is worth investigation. A significant field-name does provide a statistical probability of the existence of a feature. They are, therefore, an archaeological tool to be used with evidence gained from fieldwalking, geophysical surveying and aerial photography. However, while place-names have been studied, little systematic use has been made of field-names mainly because they are not easily available for larger areas.

The primary source for field-names in the county of Herefordshire is the tithe maps and accompanying schedules, or apportionments, which resulted from the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. The Herefordshire survey was produced between 1838-46, a very narrow date range which not only provides a 'snap-shot' of the county but also allows the field-names to be systematically compared. Some counties already had enclosure maps so did not warrant a full survey. Herefordshire had few enclosure awards though the Woolhope Group used these to supplement the tithe survey where necessary. Indeed, as the field-names for every parish have now been published, Herefordshire has the first complete coverage readily available for any county in Britain.

*METHOD OF COLLECTION/PART I:* All involved were volunteers and the organisation followed a set procedure.

- (a) Tithe maps are so large that comparing more than two is impossible. Therefore, the maps were redrawn to a uniform, and reduced, scale of 6 ins.: 1 mile by Geoff. Gwatkin of Ross, a cartographer. This allows comparisons between parishes, and with ordnance survey maps, so the actual fields can be located.
- (b) Volunteers copied the field-names from the original schedules in Hereford Record Office.
- (c) Each parish list was then checked. Each was then typed and the typing checked.
- (d) Lists of the parishes were sent particularly to the parochial church councils and schools of the newly available parishes. Once orders were taken, the master copies were taken to the county council offices at Nunnery Wood to be printed; they were able to cope with the largest maps. A working party was then convened to make up the booklets. The

team worked so well that by the last years the procedure could be put into operation by a telephone call. Indeed, a survey of this size could not have succeeded without such quiet efficiency.

Those involved in the publication throughout included: myself, Clarence Attfield, Beryl Harding, Graham Sprackling, Elizabeth Taylor and Mary Thomas. Monica Beavan, Ivor Lesser, Muriel Tonkin and Ruth Wride typed many parishes. Sue Hubbard and the staff of Hereford Record Office helped. A full list of those who collected the field-names and gave additional help when needed will be available in Hereford Record Office. The committee wish to record their appreciation.

*PUBLICATION DETAILS:* Publication began in 1987 with nineteen parishes, more being added annually, usually twice a year, until all were published in the autumn of 1993.

number of people involved - 118 (collecting/publishing)

number of fields copied - 125,367

number of parishes/townships - 260, in 222 booklets

cost - from £1.25 to £4.50 per parish (total set £542)

number of booklets sold - 8,500 + (sales continuing)

*PURCHASERS INCLUDE:* Several full sets have been sold to e.g: the Archaeological Service of Hereford and Worcester County Council, The English Place-Name Society, Hereford Record Office, The Bishop of Hereford's Library and Hereford Sixth-Form College. Local parishes have been bought by libraries, schools, parish councils, parochial church councils, landowners, farmers and the general public. The low cost has encouraged people to send in older, and additional field-names for the second part of the survey - to discover the age of the recorded names.

*PART II:* This is recording field-names from other sources such as wills, deeds, sales documents, leases, etc. The information is published regularly in the *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalist's Field Club*. People are asked to provide

*field-name found / its date / source / location using tithe number*

The information is required whether the field-name is the same as, or different from, the tithe field-name as only in this way can the ages of the field-names be properly assessed. This part of the survey is on-going and the accumulating information, which may have been collected as incidental to other research, will provide an increasingly important resource.

*THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AWARDS:* The group wished to publicise the potential of field-names to a wider audience. Field-names provide extremely varied information about the landscape and so can be of use in many disciplines. The British Archaeological Awards provide a forum for attracting the attention of archaeologists, winners being published in

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*Current Archaeology*. In 1994 The Herefordshire Field-Name Survey was entered for the Awards and won the prestigious Graham Webster Laurels, part of The Pitt-Rivers Award, presented for educating the general public in archaeology. On behalf of the group, Ruth Richardson was delighted to receive a beautiful plate, on display in Hereford Record Office, and a cheque from The Robert Kiln Trust which will be used primarily to encourage aerial photography in the area. The ceremony took place in York and was followed by a Civic Reception at The Mayor's Parlour in Hereford. This was covered by *The Hereford Times* and *The Hereford Journal*. Subsequently, articles appeared in *Current Archaeology* (Nov. 1995) No. 145 and in *Local History Magazine* (Nov-Dec 1995) No. 52.

*ANALYSIS*: The group decided to carry out an analysis of chosen field-names to demonstrate their potential. The following papers show clearly the variety of information that can be elucidated from them. They include field-walking to examine the instance of a particular name, examination of a name / names in an area, and examination of a group of names over the whole county. Approaches vary according to the nature of the field-name(s) and the individual method chosen. Similar analyses could be carried out to examine, for example, natural features and agricultural practises. As field-names are diverse, so is the information that can be obtained from them. The Woolhope Group hopes these papers will encourage others to utilise this invaluable resource that has been bequeathed directly to us from the past.