

HERITAGE COUNTS 2014 WEST MIDLANDS

Heritage Counts 2014 is the thirteenth annual survey of the state of the West Midlands' historic environment. It is prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. This year the theme for Heritage Counts is the value of the historic environment. Visitors to the Heritage Counts website can download the complete research projects commissioned to support this year's report and access the full set of local statistics and maps detailing the historic environment for the West Midlands, including asset data, funding information, employment numbers and visitor figures. Please see www.heritagecounts.org.uk

VALUE OF HERITAGE

The historic environment makes a significant contribution to the West Midlands' economy and helps support a range of local jobs, from the construction sector to the tourist industry. Heritage benefits the wider local economy as just 32p out of every £1 spent on a heritage visit is spent at the attraction itself, the remaining 68p is spent in local businesses such as cafés, hotels and restaurants¹.

The benefits of heritage go beyond just the economic importance and heritage is valued for a variety of other reasons including aesthetic, educational, scientific, social and spiritual; with those who visit heritage sites more likely to report good health and a higher level of wellbeing².

HERITAGE RESTORATION REJUVENATES POTTERIES INDUSTRY

Middleport Pottery opened in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent in 1888 and is a rare example of a purpose-designed site for the traditional pottery production process. It was formerly owned by Burgess and Leigh as the production site for the world famous Burleigh ware. The building is Grade II* and appeared on the Heritage at Risk Register as one of English Heritage's priority sites in the West Midlands.

Identifying an opportunity to show how the sympathetic development of an industrial heritage site can play an important part in regeneration, the Prince's Regeneration Trust purchased the site in 2011. With grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Regional Growth Fund and European Regional Growth Fund, they restored the site.

In order to ensure continued traditional pottery production on site, the rescue package included retaining Denby Pottery Ltd as the principal tenant but in an upgraded space. Further,



Image: Visitors learning how pottery is produced at an open day at Middleport Pottery. © Heritage Lottery Fund.

redundant floor space was refurbished for use as workshops, a gallery, café, and activity space delivering an education programme for local schools, students and others with particular interests in art, design, craft and technology.

The project benefits local people by creating jobs, developing heritage skills, preserving important industrial and artistic collections and the area's unique built environment. While visitors now enjoy an exhibition about the history of Middleport Pottery, get an opportunity to observe first-hand the creation of a piece of Burleigh ware and understand the area's significance.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A group of dedicated volunteers known as Castle Keepers help look after Weoley Castle; a moated medieval manor house managed by Birmingham Museums Trust. These hugely valuable volunteers carry out a range of key roles from practical maintenance to research.

Thanks to the Castle Keepers, visitors and the local community can enjoy an array of events including having a guided tour of the site, and their annual Living History day. The Castle Keepers have transformed the site and community understanding of Weoley Castle. The local community benefits hugely from having such a great range of family activities on their doorstep.

The volunteers also gain from the range of opportunities available. One of the Castle Keepers, Jo says "I enjoy the company, the variety of things that we do and the fact that we are out in the open and doing something valuable".

¹ Heritage Lottery Fund, 2010. Investing in success: heritage and the UK economy.

² Heritage Counts 2014

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN 2014

Key changes and trends for the historic environment are highlighted below but for a comprehensive set of statistics on the historic environment, and for data at local authority level, please visit www.heritagecounts.org.uk

Designated heritage sites in the West Midlands

	2002	2014
World Heritage Sites	1	2
Scheduled Monuments	1,407	1,426
Listed Buildings – Grade I	600	619
Listed Buildings – Grade II*	2,119	2,156
Listed Buildings – Grade II	31,124	31,498
Registered Parks and Gardens	145	152
Registered Battlefields	6	6
Conservation Areas	731	798

The appeal of heritage remains high, with almost 70% of people in the West Midlands having visited at least one heritage site in the last 12 months³. Tourism is an expanding sector, with VisitEngland figures showing that since 2000, the number of visitors to historic attractions in the West Midlands has risen by 51%.

While tourism to historic properties in the West Midlands has been increasing, there are some areas of the historic environment sector that continue to see substantial cuts. Over the last year the West Midlands has seen the largest percentage decrease in local authority historic environment staff of any region in England. There has been a 13.7% decrease in conservation officers and a 17.3% decrease in archaeology staff; resulting in almost a third less historic environment specialists working in local authorities than in 2002.

During the same period, listed building consents fell by 3.4% and there was a 3% increase in scheduled monument consents. These figures signify an increasing discrepancy between staffing levels and the amount of casework local authorities receive. There is a risk that due to these cuts in staffing levels a number of local authorities are putting the effective conservation and management of the local historic environment at risk.

The Heritage at Risk programme identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Of those classified as at risk in 1999, 57.1% of buildings or structures in the West Midlands have been removed from the Register for positive reasons. Nationally, 44.9% of the buildings and structures on the Register are capable of being reused, but many of these have a conservation deficit (the funding gap between the cost of repairs and the value of the building), highlighting the importance of grants from organisations like Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage to help save these assets.

REMEMBERING STAFFORDSHIRE'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD WAR I

In 1918, troops from the New Zealand Rifle Brigade created a scale model of the town of Messines on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, where they had their training camp. The unit played a crucial role in the capture of Messines in June 1917 and the model served both as an instructional tool and a memorial to fallen comrades.

In 2013, No Man's Land – The European Group for Great War Archaeology – worked with Staffordshire County Council, Natural England and WYG consultants, to excavate the model to assess its condition. Following excavation and recording the model was reburied, ensuring its continued preservation as a unique relic of the conflict.

No Man's Land worked with over 150, mostly local, volunteers, who regularly participated in excavations and also contributed in other ways, such as taking aerial photographs. Links with industry were also fostered through partnership with Jaguar Land Rover's community programme. Information panels and site tours were used to explain the model to well over 1,200 visitors. These efforts combined to promote understanding of the history of the Cannock Chase, while strengthening community ownership of the model and of other Great War remains nearby.



Image: Excavations of the north-east corner of the model, with buildings, angled trenches and the cobbled road. © No Man's Land. M Brown.

About the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum

The West Midlands Historic Environment Forum is a group of organisations responsible for managing the historic environment in the West Midlands who work together in partnership.

The following organisations are represented on the Forum: Architectural Heritage Fund; Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers; Birmingham Museums Trust; Canal and Rivers Trust; Campaign to Protect Rural England; Churches Conservation Trust; Council for British Archaeology; Country Landowners Association; English Heritage; Forestry Commission; Heritage Lottery Fund; Historic Houses Association; Institute for Archaeologists; Institute of Historic Building Conservation; Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust; National Trust; Natural England; UK Association of Preservation Trusts and West Midlands Amenities Societies.

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³ DCMS, 2014. Taking Part Survey.

⁴ National Trust figures are for both the East and West Midlands.