

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 19 October 1970

**WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	2
ROMAN ROADS.....	2
UPPER SKENCHILL, LLANROTHAL.....	3
MIDSUMMER HILL CAMP, EASTNOR (SO 760 375).....	4
HENTLAND (SO 543 263)	5
HEREFORD 1970 (SO 508 399 & 510 399).....	5
BREDWARDINE (SO 336 440).....	5

**HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS SHEET
WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

No. 19 October 1970

Edited by: Ron Shoesmith

EDITORIAL

A lack of contributions has delayed this issue of the Newssheet by over a month. Fortunately reports of excavations during the summer months are now at hand and have made this issue possible.

The editor will be on holiday during November and December so the next issue will go to press on the 1st of January. Please send all contributions before that date to The Youth Hostel, Staunton-on-Wye, Hereford.

The last Field Meeting of the season will be on Saturday the 17th October (meet at Canon Frome School Gates at 2.00 pm), and is followed on the 10th November, by an indoor Open Meeting at 8.00 pm in the Green Dragon Hotel. Please let Mrs O'Donnell (Hereford 4904) know by the 5th November if you have slides or items for display.

The Annual General Meeting of the Group in the Woolhope Club Room is on the 6th December with the Business Meeting at 6.30p.m. and a lecture at 7.30 pm by Douglas Hague on the Architecture and Archaeology of Lighthouses.

Excavations are continuing on Sundays until Christmas at Huntsham, and if interested, you should contact Norman Bridgewater (Crucorney 312).

Ron Shoesmith

ROMAN ROADS

By L P Moore

Roman 'Stone Street'

The Roman road 'Stone Street', running south-westward from the Roman town at Kenchester, meets the Vowchurch - Kingstone road near Coldwell (OS142 – 406 361). Immediately to the south of this junction, on what appears to be an extension of Stone Street, proceeding over Brampton Hill and thence via Kerry's Gateto join the Roman Road between Dorstone and Pontrilas, drainage operations by Herefordshire County Council had unearthed a cobbled surface. I was asked to investigate and did so on the 4th September.

The extension from this junction takes the form of a firm, well drained grass track between hedges and almost aligned on Stone Street for its first 200 yards. The drainage excavation covered only a few square feet close to the junction, on the track and had nearly been completed. A few dozen boulders of the type used in the construction of Stone Street, had been excavated from beneath the turf and a layer of brown-red soil. No precise measurements were available.

This grass track evidently is an extension of Stone Street, as its routing and firmness so obviously suggests. A full transverse excavation much further away from the junction, is however desirable, not only for confirmation but also to afford a record of the architecture of Stone Street, particularly as an aid to identification of other stone paved roads of seemingly Roman origin.

Stone Road – Michaelchurch-on-Arrow

The RCAM, in its Radnorshire Report, testifies to the possible existence of a Roman Camp or Fort, sited between 'Apostles Farm' (OS 141/142 – 285 525) and the River Arrow where there are earthworks over an extensive area. On a field survey (August 1970) I found an interesting stone-paved road that might bear upon this theory.

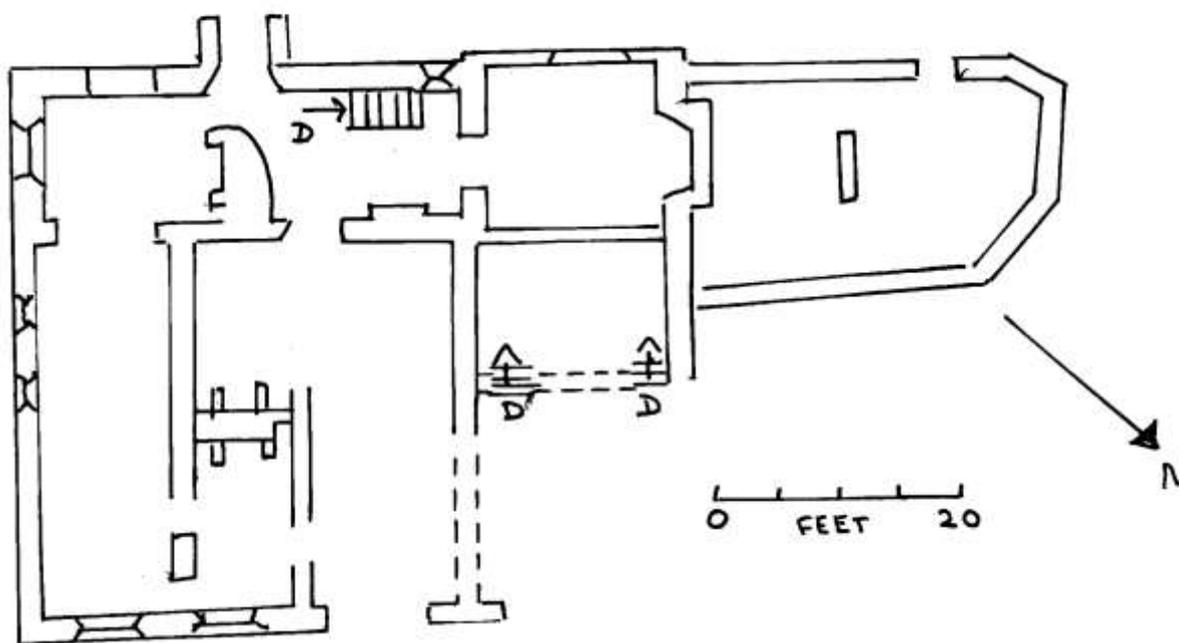
Nearly opposite 'the Gaer Farm' (which the Commission quoted as further evidence) (NGR 251511), a grass lane between high hedges, branches from the tarmac road roughly towards Michaelchurch-on-Arrow Church, following the hill contour. At frequent intervals erosion has brought a heavily stone-paved surface to view, while nearly midway between The Gaer and the Church, a stream has laid bare a clear vertical section of river cobble road surface, about one foot thick.

This lane crosses the Newchurch-Michaelchurch road by the church, to become a footpath, climbing to join the ancient ridgeway leading westward along the Herefordshire-Radnorshire border, to the 'Little Mountain' earthwork, and crossing the ridgeway at this point to become a modern tarmac road leading to Rhydspence and Clyro.

All evidence seems to point to the lane opposite The Gaer being of Roman origin, and worthy of further investigation.

UPPER SKENCHILL, LLANROTHALL (SO 482182)

J.W.Tonkin



UPPER SKENCHILL, LLANROTHAL

This stone house presents an interesting and intriguing series of problems. A careful examination of wall thicknesses and other details seems to show a late medieval courtyard house with alterations and additions through the centuries.

The south-western block has walls from 2 feet 3 inches to 2 feet 6 inches thick and a four light traceried window was removed from it to Pembroke Castle early in the present century. It seems likely that this may have been a medieval open hall with perhaps a parlour end with a chamber above. The whole block is about 34 feet by 11 feet 6 inches internally.

There was a big lateral fireplace in the eastern, part of the south wall which may be original but is now blocked and without a chimney.

The south-eastern block may be original, certainly the exterior wall seems to be, for there is no break between it and the main block. It seems likely that this block on the south-east of the courtyard contained the service rooms. The present courtyard seems original and it would appear that this was a smaller version of the type of house with a courtyard found at Brinsop and Ivington and perhaps at Yarpole. The chimney on this block is of very carefully laid stone and appears to be older than the other surviving chimneys. There does not seem to have been a gatehouse, though the upper room adjoining the gate may have served this purpose as it does for a very similar courtyard at Treviades in Constantine parish in Cornwall.

Late in the 17th century the block north-west of the hall was added. Its windows have chamfered stone jambs and lintels and a two-centered arched doorway led into the earlier part. This doorway is now gone. It was a typical parlour block of the period. The walls of this part are thinner and there is a big fireplace in the gable wall.

Probably at this time the open hall was divided and the present wall and fireplace between the modern drawing room and hall inserted. There are signs of stairs in this wall, next to the fireplace, a common place to find them in the 17th century.

At some later date, probably the early 19th century, another addition was made north of this parlour block. It seems to have served some farm purpose and the octagonal end was probably an 'engine' house.

The whole house was much altered about this time. There is a two-centred arched doorway on the west wall leading into the hall which may be of this period or may be earlier. With this local stone it is very difficult to tell. The house is stated in Trans. Woolhope NFC 1900, p.18, to have been built about 1820 "to look like an old house". This is probably the date of this addition, the doorway and perhaps other alterations. At this time it was apparently the property of the Cecil family.

Some 50 yards south-west of the house is a small building looking down over a steep valley and hidden from the house itself. Part of it is cut out of the solid rock and has a niche higher up. The other part is built similarly to the house with a two-centred arched doorway and a drain running away to the north-east. It looks medieval, reminiscent of the holy wells of Cornwall and Wales but it may well be a summer-house or Folly of the Cecil family.

Outside the courtyard running north-east is a range of outbuildings. The lower parts of the walls of these are carefully laid, thin stone and the upper parts are of bigger stone. They have been altered at least once, probably more often than that. Some of the work appears to be 18th century judging by a keyed lintel to one of the doorways. The gable of the stable block has some thin, much worn stone high up which may be re-used.

At the south-west end of the stable block is a lower building with a stone-vaulted ceiling which may have been an ice-house. In spite of the statement that this house was built about 1820 it seems much more likely that this is basically a small, late medieval house with a courtyard and that it has had additions in the late 17th century and early 19th century and was altered at these times and perhaps others as well. In fact these may be regarded as modernisations just as it is being modernised again today.

MIDSUMMER HILL CAMP, EASTNOR (SO 760 375)

An extensive excavation in the interior of the hill fort has shown that it was closely covered by four-post buildings, ranging from about 8ft square to 12 x 10ft. The intensity and regularity of plan, in the early phases at least, is closely similar to that found previously at Croft Ambrey and Credenhill camp. As on the latter two sites the structures had been repeatedly rebuilt, apparently about four or five times. There is some evidence for earlier structures using sleeper trenches as wall foundations, but over most of the area these had been ploughed away in medieval times.

The only feature that is certainly attributable to pre-Iron Age activities is a conical pit about 5ft deep, but no artifacts are associated with this.

HENTLAND (SO 543 263)

There is a strong possibility that the site now being excavated is associated with the activities of St Dubricius, as clearly stated in the Book of Landaff.

An appreciable part of a building has been found, of medieval type, probably converted later into a Tudor residence. The evidence for this consists of stone sills, and also a quantity of Flemish or Tudor type bricks. Large amounts of 13th century wares have been recovered, together with glazed ridge tiles with hooked and moulded crests. A small quantity of 16th century ware was also obtained.

The floor area of this building was a roughly levelled make-up layer, also containing some medieval material, and this covered an earlier occupation layer cut by a fine ditch, 7ft wide at the top and 3ft deep. A contemporary post-hole was also found. It is suspected that this ditch surrounds an early cemetery enclosure. A rim-sherd of typical West-Midland Romano-British form has been discovered, but the finish is unusual and is foreign to the Archenfield district.

The site lies alongside the supposed Roman Road which crosses Archenfield from Red Rail, near Kings Caple.

N P Bridgewater

HEREFORD 1970 (SO 508 399 & 510 399)

Contractors' foundation trenches have continued to throw a little light on Medieval Hereford. The defensive ditch between West St and Eign St was again observed in several places and some pottery and the sole of a leather shoe was found in the very heavy black silt with which it is filled.

The rampart on this section was practically completely destroyed by more recent pits and cellars including a circa 15th century timber sawpit in which was found a wooden bowl and a leather shoe preserved by the damp decomposed sawdust.

A late 13th century pit on the site of the new Marks & Spencer store provided some interesting vegetable remains including seeds and stones of cherry, grape and fig.

It is hoped that the results of work on these two sites will be published in a shortly forthcoming issue of the Club Transactions.

R Shoesmith

BREDWARDINE (SO 336 440)

Work continued on the Medieval site for a fortnight in late August. A further large area was opened and this has indicated a longer occupation of the site with buildings both of wood and with stone foundations.

It would now appear likely that there are two periods of timber buildings, one with sleeper beams, presumably of the 12th century or earlier and then three periods of building with stone foundations. The earlier, with some well squared stone and massive walling, could well be the "castle" mentioned in early documents, and this is followed by a stone and tufa construction with a coin of Edward I or II (1275-1327) in occupation associated with it. (This is the second coin of this period from the site.)

Both these constructions have been largely removed and replaced in the late 14th century by the farmhouse complex mentioned in the previous report. This, of poor construction, makes some use of the earlier stone walls in several places.

Further robbing and building work occurred during the 16th century and in turn suffered stone robbers during the 18th century.

Work will continue in 1971.

R Shoesmith