

# HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 20      January 1971

WOOLHOPE CLUB  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION

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**HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS SHEET  
WOOLHOPE CLUB  
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**No. 20     January 1971**

**Edited by:     Ron Shoesmith**

**EDITORIAL**

The last few months have shown a very welcome increase in attendance at both field and indoor meetings. The enclosed programme includes details of the two winter indoor meetings and a full programme of summer events will be circulated with the next Newsletter.

**November Meeting**

The display and short illustrated talks of current work in the county attracted nearly 50% of our membership. This was one of the most successful meetings held to date and was greatly aided by the wide variety of displays and exhibits. The Green Dragon was a very welcome change to the "early closing" which we have to suffer in the Woolhope Club Room.

**December AGM**

Complete darkness in Broad Street did not augur well as members accumulated outside the closed gates of the City Library. The power cut was liable to involve the group in a street meeting until one of our members kindly invited us to transfer the meeting to her house where electricity still flourished.

The business meeting was rapidly concluded and the following were elected:

Chairman:	W R Pye
Secretary:	R Shoesmith
Asst. Secretary:	A R Greenhill
Treasurer:	P Cooper
Meetings Secs:	Miss M Thomas J G Calderbank
Committee Members:	Mrs J O'Donnell Mr R Kay Mr L Skelton Miss M Haywood (co-opted)

It was agreed and carried that:

'The subscription for 1971 be unaltered at 5/- (25p),  
but be increased for 1972 to 8/- (40p).'

It was also agreed that all expenses be verified by committee before payment.

After the business meeting, Mr. Douglas Hague addressed the group on 'The Architecture and Archaeology of Lighthouses' and held the interest and attention of members until the rather inevitable power cut very near the end of the evening. Mr Hague answered questions to the rather uncertain light of a flickering torch.

Ron Shoesmith

## **OCTOBER MEETING, STRETTON GRANDISON**

### **ENGINE HOUSE AT CANON FROME SCHOOL (NGR 437 647)**

The group looked at a small brick building by the River Frome containing an old generator 1870-80 (no. 2909) made by J C Howell of Llanelly. The power for the house was generated by a waterfall on the river Frome, formerly of greater height. It was the site of an earlier mill belonging to the monks of Llanthony Priory, and it seems likely that they cut the present channel as a diversion from the main course of the river, now called Back Brook. The turbine was contained in a deep shaft and linked to the generator by a wide belt. There was also a cut-out of 50 amps and 60 cells no. 7296. The machinery is in fair condition although the building is deteriorating.

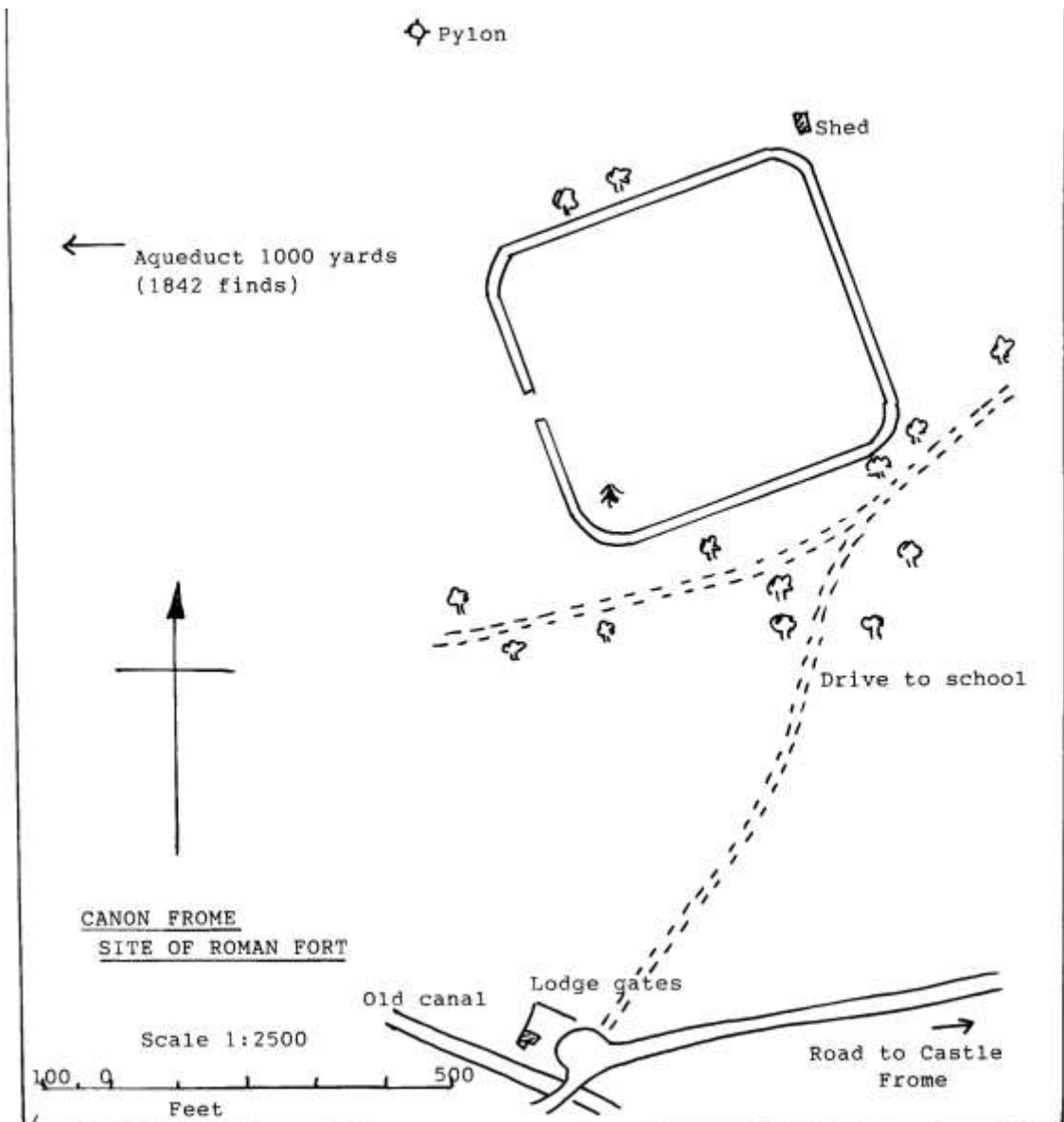
### **STRETTON GRANDISON ROMAN FORT (NGR 434 641)**

A second visit was made to this site on a beautiful October afternoon, when the grounds of Canon Frome School looked at their most stately. There were 21 members and friends, reflecting the interest in this site. After investigating the Engine House, the site of the Roman Fort occupied the rest of the afternoon. Using the aerial photographs taken by Mr A Baker, a systematic search for surface finds was made on the field containing the fort and on adjacent land. A plan was made using ground measurements allied to the photographs and entered on the 25 inch plan of the area.

The aerial photographs also show an extra-mural settlement near to the Roman road (A417) to Dymock and Gloucester. Near the road several sherds of samian were picked up. One of these is embossed with a hare and hounds hunting scene.

It is recorded that other remains were found on the west side of the road in the 19th century. In 1842, whilst digging the foundations for the aqueduct to take the canal over the river, several Roman items were found "in a black soil". Besides the bones of animals, other remains included a steelyard with pan and weight, a coin, two gold bracelets, fragments of samian embossed with animals (one piece with the representation of a wild boar), and pieces of coarse pottery. In the same report (WNFCT 1882) a Roman lamp, found in 1878 on the south side of the hill called the Camp, is also mentioned. This has a relief of Actaeon attacked by a hound (see also VCH I, 194-5).

The wide distribution of building materials and shards makes the existence of one or more important buildings, outside the fort defences seem very likely, and possibly suggests an early fort developing into a later settlement. Local place names like Yarkhill, meaning a kiln, which the Saxons considered important enough to name, Street Lane and Blacklands beyond Canon Frome, all deserve investigation along with The Camp, which is probably at Homend.



## LYONSHALL AREA FIELD MEETING

On Sunday 16th May, 12 people attended a Field Meeting and visited four sites in the area:

1. The newly-recorded moated site at the Yeld Farm, Pembridge, reported elsewhere in this newsletter.
2. Strangeworth Farm, Pembridge (NGR 344 585) This moated area was recently written up in the newsheet (No. 21) by R E Kay.  
 The site was previously excavated in 1875, when it was noted during the excavation that "wasters" of medieval pottery were present, indicating a kiln site. This excavation trench is still visible and next to it, in the spoil heap of an extensive drainage system, were found sherds of medieval pottery, including part of the foot of a vessel with a yellow-brown glaze, poorly fired and much damaged.  
 Approximately 100 yards south-east of this was a mound about 15 ins high and 8 yds in diameter, possibly a much damaged barrow, but in view of the extensive earthworks it should be viewed with suspicion. Aerial photography

may help to give a reasonable interpretation of the various earthworks and field boundaries immediately surrounding the motte.

3. Lyonshall Castle (NGR 331 563) (RCHM Hfds Vol III N-W p 142)  
An interesting castle, which has an air of not being "quite right".  
Opinions varied greatly on the remaining stonework - one being that it was 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping.

The following points were noted:

- a. The wet moat on the north western side of the castle had a large bank outside it.
- b. The whole site is situated where it would be of advantage to any attackers (presumably Welsh), being on a slope which descends to the south-east.
- c. The only evidence of a gateway in the moat is on the south-eastern side, in a position not convenient for the rest of the castle, which extends from the motte in the form of a rectangle to the north-east.
- d. A second, apparently rectangular enclosure extends north-east from the first rectangular enclosure.
- e. The wet moat is at different levels around the inner and outer baileys.
- f. The keep itself has three very large ground floor windows and a large door.

The following is my personal interpretation of the facts:

Originally, the site was that of an eleventh to twelfth century motte with a wet ditch, and a gateway on the south-east. This was followed in the twelfth century by the building of the stone curtain wall, keep and outer bailey. When, in 1404 Walter, 5th Lord Fitzwalter was ordered to fortify it against the Welsh, the moat was deepened and widened, and extended at a different level along the north western side of the outer bailey. The earth from this operation was used to build up the defences on the south eastern side and any remaining built the earth bank on the north-western side of the moat. The second rectangular extension is probably an eighteenth-nineteenth century extension attempt at landscaping for Castle Weir house. The castle keep to me appears as an unconvincing piece of architecture of uncertain date with openings which would weaken it as a keep.

4. Offa's Dyke - Section .from Lynhales to Holmes Marsh.  
This section, much damaged on the northern side of Spond Lane by its incorporation into Lynhales Drive, and on the eastern side of this road by drainage from under the railway line, is still visible for its full length given above. From the floor of this small valley, to its abrupt end near Holmes Marsh it is probably more massive than anywhere else in Hereford-shire, extending to approximately 12ft in height from the bottom of its ditch.

The weathering of this uphill section of the dyke has led to its height being decreased by up to 3½ feet this century. This is clearly discernible from the root-collars, and stools of the trees on this section of dyke.

The following landowners allowed us to visit the sites and deserve our grateful thanks:

**W R Pye**

#### **MOATED SITE AT THE YELD, PEMBRIDGE**

Members of the group made a survey of a moated site north of a farmhouse called The Yeld (351 561) (see plan opposite).

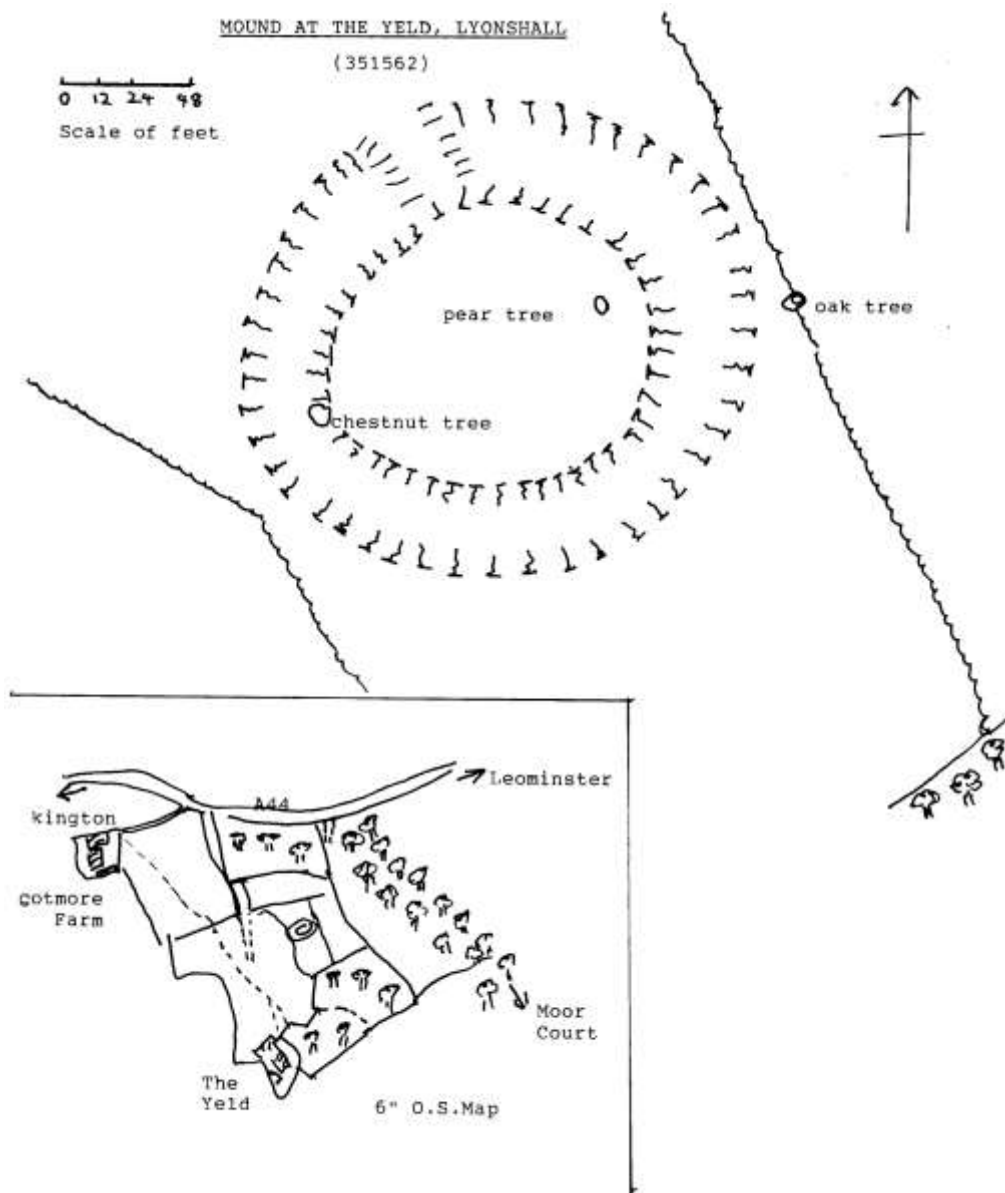
The average depth of the ditch was 6 ft, with no appreciable counter-scarp. A slight overall depression was discernable towards the centre of the site.

The Yeld is mentioned in the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1334, and the entry reads:

Penburgge Morecote Helde ----- )  
Weston Bury Akes Leen ----- ) £6 17s 4d

Helde is the Anglo-Saxon for a steep slope or bank, and is frequently found in the modern form of Yeld. This mention in the Rolls indicates that a sufficient number of people lived here to contribute to the Lay Subsidy which was a tax paid on wealth in the form of moveable goods such as stock and personal belongings, as opposed to land. Whether in fact a wealthy lord who might have lived on this moated site would represent the only contributor to that tax living here or whether there was a small hamlet here as well is an open question. The only indication of other occupation besides the farmhouse and the moated site is a slight hollow running through the field between the moat and the farmhouse which might be an old trackway.

Mary Thomas  
Rosamund Hicking



### **PORTION OF ROMAN ROAD NEAR RISBURY CAMP**

On Easter Monday 1971, the writer and Mr T P Copeland walked over the part of the Ariconium-Ashton Roman Road (Margary No 613) between Witsets Farm (533 557) and Bowley Town (540 532), a distance of slightly under 1½ miles. Between these points the modern road makes a detour to the east, passing below Risbury Camp. The course of the original road was quite clear on the air photographs in the County Library except for the deeply wooded ravine of the Humber Brook (537 541).

The northern section was examined first, by permission of Mr & Mrs Hill of Witsets Farm and Mr Kimber of Sunny Bank Farm. The first section runs along a hedgerow in a grassed field where the agger is clearly visible, as noted by Margary. It then enters a green lane and at this point a trench was cut across revealing a metalled surface between four and seven inches below the present ground level and eight feet in width (it is possible that the full width may not have been exposed). South of the green lane the alignment is continued in a hollow way at the edge of a field and then re-enters a green lane, which is very overgrown, for about 400 yards.

It then emerges into a large field, now under the plough, but the alignment is picked up again to the east of Hill Hole, a ruined farm house, at the edge of the ravine running down to the Humber Brook. Owing to extensive tree-felling in this ravine it was not possible to trace the run-down to the brook itself on the north side.

The southern section starts from the south in a green lane leading off the present road. Though somewhat damaged by tractors, soundings with an auger clearly show a metalled surface. The lane leads into an open field, with the hedgerow indicating the alignment.

The next field to the north is under the plough, but is on a falling slope to a deep stream bed, dry at present. The alignment is here indicated by the pier and part of the arch of a small stone bridge which has collapsed into the stream bed (539 537). The alignment continues to the north across a field under cultivation on a rising slope, the course of the road being marked by a large oak tree, to the top of the wooded ravine leading down to the Humber Brook.

At this point the road enters a deep hollow-way on the run-down to the Humber Brook. Here again the surface is much obstructed by tree felling, though the course of the road is quite clear, and the auger shows a firm bed (this may be natural rock) down to the stream. The bed of the stream at this point is a rocky bottom which makes a passable ford. There are also the foundations (cutwaters) of a former bridge. It is understood that there was a footbridge until comparatively recent times.

It seems evident that the use of the Roman road continued through medieval times, but that at some point in time, either due to the steepness of the run-down to the Humber Brook or the collapse of the bridges (or both) the road was diverted to its present course to take advantage of the much easier crossing of the Humber Brook at Risbury.

Incidentally, at a point on the Roman Road north of Blackwardine, there is a house named 'Colaba Lodge' (526 586) - an interesting variation of the name 'Coldharbour' usually associated with an ancient road.

**M B Hale**



SKETCH PLAN - ROMAN ROAD NEAR RISBURY CAMP

