

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 21 April 1971

WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION

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Sunday, 15th August

Excavations at the Cistercian Abbey of Parc Grace Dieu

Led by Richard Kay 3.00 pm

Meet at the site about 4 miles west of Monmouth

Saturday, 25th September

Oil Pipeline Survey

Led by Les Skelton 11.00 am

Meet at Sarnesfield Church

Sunday, 17th October

Eaton Tregoes 'Looking for a Castle'

Led by Ros Hickling and Jean O'Donnell 2.00 pm

Meet at Hole-in-the-Wall, 4m north of Ross

NEW BOOKS

BROMYARD A LOCAL HISTORY

Edited by Joseph G Hillaby BA and Edna D Pearson BA

Published, by Bromyard and District Local History Society in Conjunction with the University of Birmingham Department of Extra Mural Studies and the Workers Educational Association, and available from Mrs P D Williams

Price £1.25 plus 15p postage & packing.

This History traces the life of Bromyard from 840 A.D, to the present day. Chapters cover the Parish Church and other places of Worship, the Borough & Town, Markets & Fairs, Schools & Scholars and the Houses in the Town. One chapter, 'The Town Pump' is devoted to the problems of water supply.

Altogether a readable and interesting book.

THE IRISH SEA PROVINCE IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Edited by Donald Moore RD, BA, FSA

Published by the Cambrian Archaeological Association, Cardiff.

Price 90p.

This publication, results from the conference held by the Cambrian Archaeological Association at Aberystwyth in April 1968 and it contains the full text of all eleven papers given at the meeting. The conference was devised to test the validity of the concept of an 'Irish Sea Culture Province' in as many periods and disciplines as could be covered during three days.

Contributors include: Prof. E G Bowen, Michael Herity, H N Savory, Michael J O'Kelly, Leslie Alcock, Nora K Chadwick, Rev R W D Fenn, P H Sawyer, W Gwyn Thomas, Caoimhin O'Danachair and Trefor M Owen.

Topics include the Prehistoric Migrations, Dark Age Comparisons, Literary Contacts, Church Architecture, The Vikings and Vernacular Architecture.

It is pleasant to find a well illustrated (25 figures and 16 plates) report for a conference. The volume is in paper covers and has 125 pages.

‘THE TUMP’ PEMBRIDGE

Near the site of Titley Junction and just west of the disused railway track which once made its way to Presteigne, there is a rather remarkable moated mound, square in plan. Its ditch on the south and west sides is still partly wet and further to the west is a large mere or pool of hour glass shape, which during dry summers almost ceases to exist. On the north there is an area which at first sight appears to resemble a slightly defended bailey. This is not strictly so, the ditch of this supposed outwork being actually part of an old sunken track, and close adjoining is the bank of an ancient hedgerow.

The summit of the mound measures approximately 75' x 60'. It stands 12' high above its surrounded ditch which is 5' deep on the south and 4' deep at the north-east corner, where there is a trace of counterscarp bank. The moat appears to have been fed by a cut from a small stream which runs in a south to north direction a short distance from its east side. Another cut on the west communicates with the mere.

The rough ground to the south of the mere is very marshy and south of the "motte" at some little distance from its ditch, a low bank nowhere more than two feet high, delineates another irregular area. By no stretch of the imagination can the boundaries of both the north and south "enclosures" be described as defences! The mound and its encircling moat seems, therefore, to have been destitute of defended outworks and the low banks and ditches which we now see, seem to belong to a much later age, and probably represent bygone field or paddock boundaries.

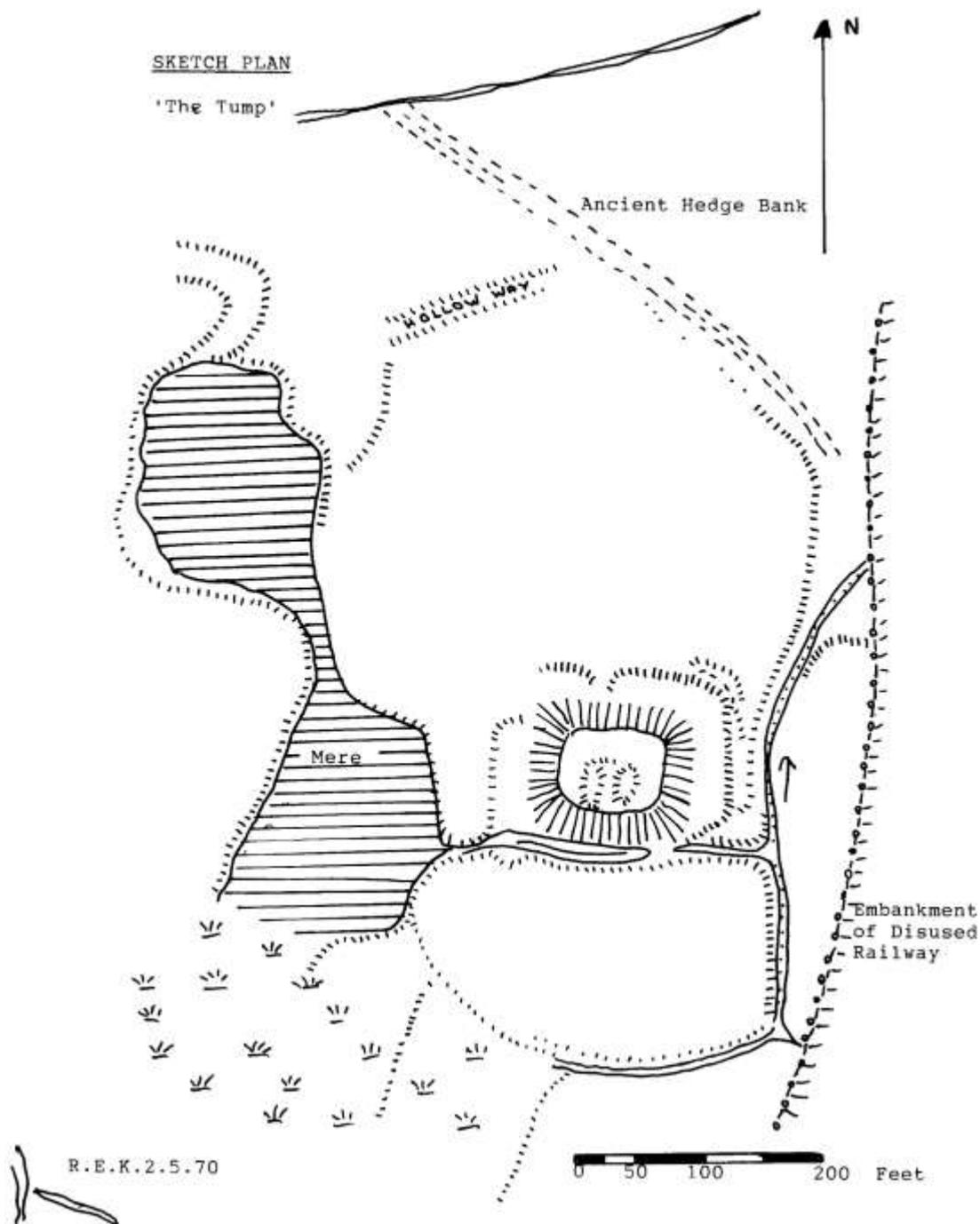
The summit of the mound has at some time been dug into and the upcast from a deep trench forms two long mounds on either side. The "excavation", presumably by nineteenth century treasure seekers, would seem to have taken place prior to 1875, for the trench is delineated on a large scale Ordnance Survey map of that year. The earthwork shows no trace of any stonework and it would seem to mark a link between a twelfth century motte and a homestead moat of later date. Had the mound been lower the moated platform would have differed little from that of homestead moat. Little from any documentary sources throws any light on the history of the site.

The earthwork (listed in the RCAHM inventory, but not planned) lies in rather lumpy undulating country whose configuration has been seemingly caused by mounds of gravel and other detritus, left behind from the last glaciation. At close quarters, in no direction is the mound overlooked by higher ground, although its prospect is not very wide. Within fifty yards of the west bank of the mere the ground rises to a similar height to that of the summit of the "motte".

An earthwork, rectangular and of similar character, is 'Hen Castell' in the parish of Llangattwg, Nr Crickhowell. This, however, bears on its summit the foundations of a rectangular tower (see Brycheiniog Vol 13).

The site was visited by members of the Archaeological Research Group on 7.3.70.

**1.4.71
REK/WS**



LEOMINSTER MUSEUM PROJECT

Early in 1969 a group of interested persons met at the invitation of Mr and Mrs Norman Davis to discuss the establishment of a museum in Leominster. It was felt that there was a considerable body of material of interest in Leominster which ought to be preserved, but that it was being dispersed and lost; and further that a considerable amount of material of interest to both local people and tourists, which at present was hidden away, might well be made available. It was felt that a museum was badly needed in Leominster. The suggestion had been made from time to time in the past, and shortly before the war a letter appeared in the local press signed by a committee (of which Geoffrey Bright was the secretary) trying to stir

up interest in the project. However, lack of premises seems to have been the stumbling block.

As a result of the meeting the resolution was passed to endeavour to establish a museum in Leominster and to seek premises with that end in view. A small sub-committee explored Leominster thoroughly and, after inspecting a number of possible buildings, it was learned that the old Mission Hall in Etnam Street was likely to become available and negotiations were commenced with a view to its acquisition.

On the occasion of his election as Mayor on the 19th May 1970, Alderman Norman Davis was able to announce that the building was being acquired and a museum established. A formal trust deed was signed on the 10th August 1970, the purchase of the building was completed on the 1st February 1971 and work commenced on the restoration and fitting out of the building on the 3rd March 1971.

In the meantime the committee had not been idle. It had met on a number of occasions and has among its number representatives of the County Council, the Leominster and Wigmore Rural District Council and the Leominster Borough Council, and the project has the goodwill of all those bodies from whom the project has received material aid. The committee is fortunate in that from the start of the project it has had the expert guidance and enthusiastic interest of the chairman, Mr W Dennis Turton.

Various functions have been held and a public appeal made. A start has been made on the collection of exhibits (some of which were displayed at the Leominster Show on Bank Holiday Monday 1970). A number of show cases have been acquired through the kindness of some Cambridge Friends and it is hoped that the premises will be open during this summer.

When the building was taken over the floor was in a very bad state and needed complete re-laying. When the old boards were taken up two circular halves made of brick and stone were found underneath. Expert advice was sought and photographs, sketches and descriptions obtained before the floor was re-laid. It seems probable that these brick halves were the original kiln halves used when there was a malthouse on the site. It was learned that in 1853, a Mr T Smith, then landlord of The Grapes, Broad Street, bought the old malthouse and cottages in Etnam Street and on the site of the malthouse he built the Town and County Mission Hall for the use of men working on the construction of the railway between Hereford and Shrewsbury. The hall had a seating capacity of two hundred and fifty, with a gallery at its west end: there was an adjoining small room on the ground floor and a staircase leading to a room above.

Mr Smith and his friends raised the money for the hall by public subscription and he personally became increasingly responsible for the work. Eventually he became a distinguished Church of England clergyman and work in the hall was carried on under the auspices of the Church of England. After about 1874 the hall was used by various churches in the town.

In 1884 the building was bought by Mr Henry Newrnan, a Member of The Society of Friends. The Friends had held weekly nightclasses in the British School in the Bargates but felt that this was too far from the centre of town. The Mission Hall became their centre and was also used by the local Adult School, a large, enthusiastic group. From then on and until the last war the building was used as a small community centre where rooms were let to clubs and societies, and concerts, dances and public functions held. The premises were used intermittently during the war and in 1946 Mrs Helen Newman Nield, into whose hands the hall had passed, sold the hall privately. From that time it was used for a number of commercial purposes.

With the acquisition of the hall by the Leominster and District museum project it is hoped that the building will again become a centre of interest to the people of Leominster and to the increasing number of visitors to the town.

The policy of the trustees is to use their utmost endeavours to confine the museum to matters of local interest and to complement rather than compete with the County Museum.

It will deal with essentially local history and activities, the development of local trade and other matters of peculiar interest to Leominster and it is hoped that it will provide a valuable contribution to the life of the borough and district.

The immediate task is to raise the money required for the repair and conversion of the building amounting to approximately £6000. Although this is a formidable task the committee is hoping for continued support from members of the general public and from all interested friends to whom appeal may be made from time to time.

HEREFORD CITY EXCAVATIONS 1971

North Side – St Nicholas Street

Demolition of property close to the corner of Victoria St. and St Nicholas St. exposed the inner face of the city wall. Further clearance with a mechanical excavator at the northern edge of the site revealed a complete section through the pre-wall rampart.

It was discovered that this section of the rampart had not been scheduled along with other stretches behind the city wall in Victoria St., and the Department of the Environment were contacted in an attempt to arrange facilities for excavation. The architects and builders agreed to postpone commencement of building work to enable three days excavation to be undertaken, and a grant was made available from the Department. An average of four volunteers worked for each of the three days and conducted a watching brief on the fourth day when the lower levels of the rampart and the original surface were removed by a mechanical excavator. The excavation was directed by the writer and took the place of excavations planned at Bredwardine for the same period.

The restricted nature of the site, coupled with the short period of time available and the small number of volunteers who could be profitably used limited the work to cleaning and drawing the section of the wall, rampart and tail and the excavation of two small areas through the early and pre-rampart levels to the natural sub-soil.

The full rampart structure observed further to the north in Victoria St. could again be seen, (1) & (2), but there was no possibility of examining the defensive works for timber or stone revetting. However the ramparts of periods 4, 5 & 6 (1) could again be seen and appeared identical to those further north.

There were no dateable finds from any level excavated, although a sherd of Chester ware was found in the section in the mixed soils above the clay rampart of Rahtz period 5 and in a similar position to earlier finds (2).

Occupation layers were found at the rear of the tail of the gravel rampart (Rahtz period 4) and under the later period 5 rampart, and included charcoal and isolated postholes. The earlier levels under the gravel rampart showed little signs of occupation except for a large part of a quern which was almost on the natural soil of the site.

The cut into the rampart made to insert the city wall could be examined and the wall was found to have been built against the cut vertical face of the rampart and was of rough stone very poorly mortared and bonded on the inside. Later trenching nearer the top of the rampart may indicate a later repair to the wall.

The excavation has confirmed the continuing existence of Saxon occupation levels near the tail of the early rampart, but only slight signs of occupation previously.

The site will eventually be covered with offices and flats, but it is hoped that some of the internal face of the wall may be preserved along an access passageway.

Ron Shoemith
4/71

- (1) P Rahtz: Hereford (Current Archaeology 9 July 1968)
- (2) Noble & Shoemith (The Western Rampart TWNFC 1967 51-70)

A NEW APPROACH TO FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY

I believe that most field archaeologists must be aware of the outlook and work of Peter Fowler, at Overton Fyfield Downs, and currently in the Butcombe district of Somerset. This consists of exhaustive localised field work, incorporating selective excavation, for the purpose of building up a picture of a whole landscape throughout its entire prehistory and history.

Actually, an opportunity exists to apply this technique in our area - I refer to the parish of Hentland. Given the interest and facilities for such an exercise, with a small amount of organisation, a small group of enthusiasts could produce worthwhile results. Initial fieldwork undertaken by Mr Andrew Fleming and others has demonstrated that the Hentland parish has an ancient and fascinating history, with the right potential for further research.

I would outline the objects of such a study as follows :-

1. To study the history of the Hentland area through the unit of the parish rather than by any attempt to correlate what are essentially isolated and incidental features.
2. To discover the relationship of the church to the district from historical and ecclesiastical data. Are we dealing with compact or dispersed settlement systems?
3. To trace the history of farms and large houses within the parish, especially the demesne farm.
4. To produce a map of the ecclesiastical parish (not the civil boundary) including the church, all the farms and large houses, ancient hedgerows and lanes, and all archaeological sites, features and finds.
5. To follow up and supplement the documentary study by surveying, and the examination of aerial photographs.
6. To excavate sites chosen as samples of the complete environment.

NPB

THE ARCHENFIELD EXCAVATION GROUP

Excavations at HENTLAND (Grid Ref. SO 543 263) will continue at weekends during the summer.

The first Season's excavation has revealed a site of major importance in the history of Archenfield and the parish of Hentland, and one which should yield information of potential interest for the Roman, Dark Age and Medieval periods.

Helpers over the age of 15 genuinely interested in Archaeological excavation are welcome. Training is provided.