

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 25 June 1972

WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION

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WOOLHOPE CLUB
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No. 25 June 1972

Edited by: Ron Shoesmith

EDITORIAL

I must apologise for the long delay in publishing this issue of the Newsheet. Archaeological work in Hereford has taken far more time than I expected, due to the unique nature of the Saxon defences on the eastern side of the town. An interim report is included with this issue, and together with reports on previous field meetings, this issue of the newsletter is the largest so far produced.

Further excavations are likely in Hereford during the summer months, in advance of building work in the area between Berrington Street and Victoria Street, and plans are being discussed for an excavation on the threatened moated site at Hall Court near Much Marcle.

The next newsletter should be issued towards the end of August, and I would appreciate any material for inclusion by the middle of the month.

Ron Shoesmith

INTERIM REPORT

EXCAVATIONS ON THE SAXON DEFENCES OF HEREFORD

(Cantilupe Street Gardens, March-May 1972)

By Ron Shoesmith

Preface

A grant from the Department of the Environment was provided to examine a large recently cleared site on the eastern side of the town, just outside the medieval defences. Machine trenches were cut to establish the size of the berm and ditch and several areas were examined in detail. A small trench was cut behind the wall, and this exposed a section across the original Saxon rampart.

The Saxon defences are on a slightly different alignment to the medieval wall due to the medieval extension of the town, and this 50 metre length is probably the only part of the town in which the Saxon works are well preserved through their entire width,

A scheme had previously been agreed between the interested parties to re-build the medieval wall along this stretch, and this would have involved cutting a trench in the gardens behind the wall to insert a concrete backing. This trench might well have removed part of the Saxon defences, so the excavation grant was increased to carry out a full investigation.

Permission was granted to excavate in the back garden of 5 Cantilupe Street, where the exploratory trench had been cut. During the six weeks of the excavation about two-thirds of the garden was cleared down to the Saxon rampart and in selected areas down to the natural surface.

The excavations have revealed the remains of what is, without any doubt the best surviving example of Saxon town defensive works so far discovered in this country. The excavation would not have been possible without the outstanding co-operation of Mr. and Mrs Beynon and their family who regularly provided coffee and cakes whilst their garden was being removed. Wolverhampton Metal Holding gave full permission to excavate on the lower site for which we are very grateful. The City surveyor, Mr. Graham Roberts and his staff were of great help throughout the excavation and also loaned tools, shoring materials and a

hut. Many volunteers helped during the Easter period, and thereafter the team consisted of pupils from several Hereford schools and thanks must be given to their respective Headmasters who allowed them to take part in this project.

Introduction

The full sequence of defences around Hereford was well demonstrated by excavations on - the western side of the town in 1967 (Trans. Woolhope Nat. Field Club Vol. XXXIX, pp. 44-67 - Hereford City Excavations 1967 by Noble & Shoesmith) and 1968 (Current Archaeology No. 9, July 1968, pp. 242-46 - Hereford by Philip Rahtz). On the whole of this length it was found that the western face of the Saxon defensive works had been removed to insert the medieval wall into the remaining part of the rampart. Thus the bank, which survives in places up to a height of 3 metres, consists only of the rear half of the crest and the tail of the Saxon defensive works. It was possible during this excavation to identify five periods of defensive constructions, only three of which are represented in Cantilupe Street.

Chester ware was associated with the collapse of the imposing period 5 rampart, suggesting a late 9th to early 10th century date for its construction. Some confirmation of this was obtained by Radiocarbon analysis of timbers within and under the rampart (Radiocarbon, Vol. 12, 1970, p.394). No additional dating evidence was found during the present excavations which included the periods 5-7 ramparts and walls.

The original Saxon defences of the burgh surrounded an area of about 50 acres on a gravel terrace to the north of the river. The rampart line has now been well established at several points around the circuit during building works. Eventually the city was extended to include the High Town area making a total of about 93 acres and this became the extent of the medieval walled city.

The date of the enlargement is still a matter of some conjecture, and the present excavations do not provide any further information. It has been postulated that the gravel rampart of period 6 which overlays the Saxon works is part of the rebuilding of the defences by Harold Godwinson in 1055 after the town was burnt by the Welsh. Unfortunately it was not possible to examine the main part of this rampart during the present excavations but further work in the area could establish whether the gravel rampart follows the Saxon line or goes around the extended town.

A scheme is being prepared to expose the Saxon front wall along a 30 metre stretch and this will give further opportunities to examine the later periods

The Cantilupe Street Excavations

The Original Rampart and. Timber Defences

When excavated the rampart was found to be surviving to a height of some 2½ metres above the natural undisturbed soil of the site. There was no evidence for any earlier occupation in the area, as was found on the western side of the town, although a line of turf may have been laid to limit the back of the rampart when it was constructed.

The rampart was built using a clayey soil and possibly some turf, and was consolidated with horizontal branches laid throughout its thickness. It was thus similar to the construction of the period 5 rampart in the 1968 excavations. The branches survived in places as thin, blacky fibrous bands and were laid roughly at right angles to the line of the rampart. They were positioned with some regularity in horizontal planes being up to one metre apart.

In the primary construction the front of the rampart was retained by a timber wall. The impressions of these timbers still survived to a height of over a metre where they had been sealed in place by the later wall. A decision was made not to remove the wall, so the rampart was excavated first and the remains of the timbers exposed from that side. It was only possible to examine them for a short time before the trench had to be backfilled to prevent the collapse of the very loose stonework of the wall.

The timber wall consisted of vertical round posts 15-20 centimetres in diameter and about 1 metre apart with possibly some smaller intermediate timbers. These verticals were in post holes cut some 30-40 centimetres into the natural surface of the site. Between the verticals and the rampart, horizontal timbers, split from the round into rough planks up to 25 centimetres in width, had been laid on top of each other. The position and, general shape of the horizontal timbers was established by the black impressions left on the soil presumably by the bark. There was no evidence of a break between the timber wall and the rampart so it would seem likely that they were built simultaneously.

Only slight signs of other vertical timbers of this period could be distinguished in the rampart material. It is possible that the traces of a line of postholes about a metre behind the front timber wall were associated with the same period of construction.

There were no signs of replacement of any timbers nor of any collapse of the timber face so the evidence suggests a short time lapse before the stone wall was built. The timber wall stood long enough for the pressure of the rampart to have had an effect, the top of the existing timbers being some 10 centimetres forward from the vertical.

The Saxon Walls

To strengthen the defences, and support the existing timbers, a stone wall was built on the berm and acted as a massive revetment against the timber work. A slight foundation trench was cut in the berm to take the wall. The wall, when excavated, was found to be standing to a maximum height of 2 metres against the timberwork, with the face surviving to a height of about 1 metre. It was about 2 metres thick and had many traces of a pink lime mortar. Some of the lower stones were roughly shaped and could have been re-used, but above them the wall was made of quarried slabs, up to 10 centimetres thick, with little attempt at coursing.

The original full height of the wall could not be established, but the relatively small amount of stone debris on the berm suggests that it was no higher than the top of the rampart. It would seem unlikely that much robbing of the stonework would take place on a permanent defence line, and the medieval wall was built of much larger stones.

The original timber work would have been of sufficient height above the rampart to provide at least a breast-work. These timbers could well have continued to serve this purpose for some time after the wall was built.

Some 4 metres behind the front wall, and on the rear crest of the rampart, was a smaller wall about 80 centimetres thick. The footings of the wall were again large, possibly re-used stones with small, flatter stones on top. It was of similar construction to the front wall, but was roughly faced on both sides. In construction a step was cut into the rear crest of the rampart as a foundation for the wall, and the material thus obtained was used to backfill behind the wall presumably to make a flat rampart top. The rear wall would then act as a revetment against the rampart material. Over most of the trench only the footings remained, but at the southern side the wall still stood to a height of some 90 centimetres, although leaning at a precarious angle towards the rampart tail.

A possible post-trench was found on the rampart side of the rear wall presumably to hold a timber fence at some time after the wall was inserted into the rampart

On the tail of the rampart, about 3 metres behind the rear wall, and just over a metre below its lowest course, was a metalled area. It was of the same period as the rear wall and was probably a pathway.

No signs of a ditch could be found within the limits of the excavation so the berm must have been at least 4½ metres in front of the timber wall, and thus over 2½ metres in front of the stone wall.

The Final Stage

Traces of the timber work on the rampart side of the front wall were rather complex but the indications suggested at least two re-building phases. It would seem that, when the original timber work had to be replaced, the old upright timbers were removed and the holes left were re-used for new verticals. The horizontal timbers between the wall and the rampart must by this time have been completely rotten, and the new verticals cut through their remains.

Some time after this the whole defensive structure was partially demolished or fell into complete disuse and the faces of both walls collapsed so that the whole defensive feature became a relatively smooth bank. A timber post trench survived through this layer and must indicate a late re-fortification of the defences. This timber work was again built on the line of the rear of the front wall. On top of the collapsed front wall, a clean silt layer is covered with one containing many flecks of a white lime-like substance suggesting that the final timber work was of wattle and daub construction.

Medieval work

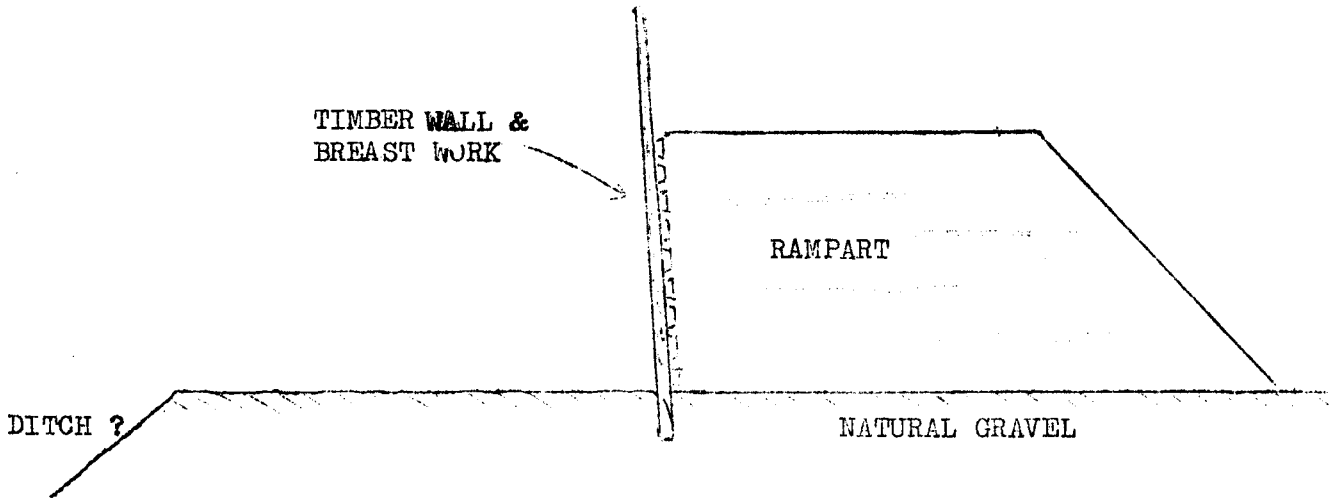
The final post trench was filled with a loose, soft orange-brown silt which must have occurred before the whole of the rampart was buried under a large amount of relatively clean gravel. This gravel bank was presumably the upcast from a large new ditch and may well indicate the new works necessitated by the extension of the town. It was not possible to examine this period in detail, but the gravel may well have been a defensive work in its own right. The whole 6 metre width between the front Saxon wall and the medieval wall was filled with loose gravel up to the level of the top of the earlier rampart. Gravel also completely sealed the remains of the rear wall and the tail of the early defence.

The face of the remaining lower courses of the medieval wall was examined in this section, and indications of several re-building phases could be seen, the last occasion being during the Civil War.

Reconstructions based on the Cantilupe Street excavations are illustrated on the next two pages. The upper limits of the vertical timbers and walls must be considered as hypothetical and no traces of the Saxon ditch were found in the excavation.

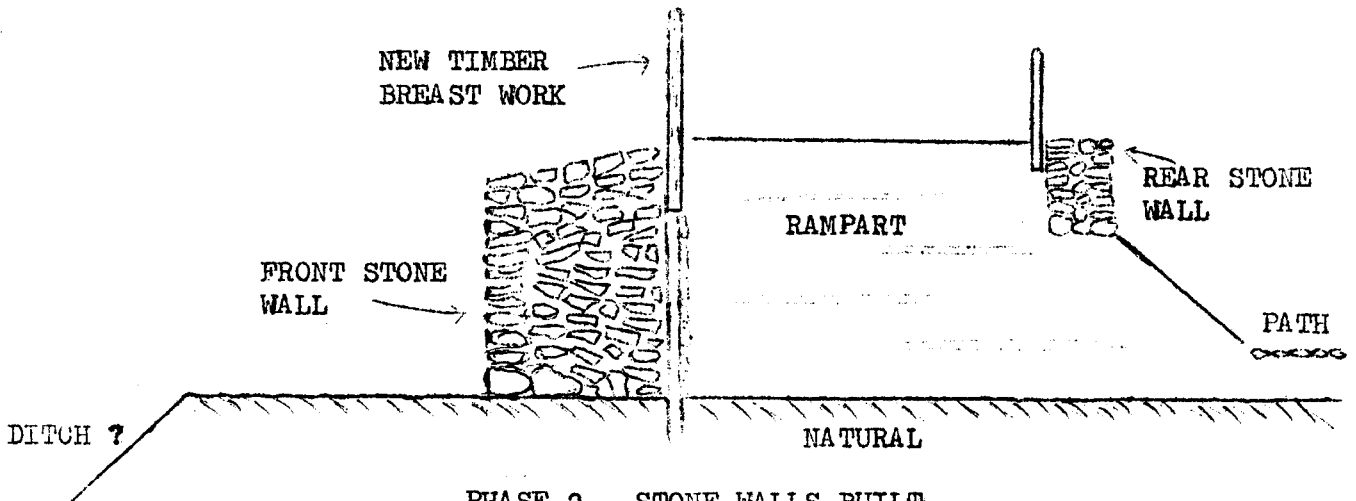
HEREFORD DEFENCES - CAMILLUPE STREET EXCAVATIONS

HYPOTHETICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS



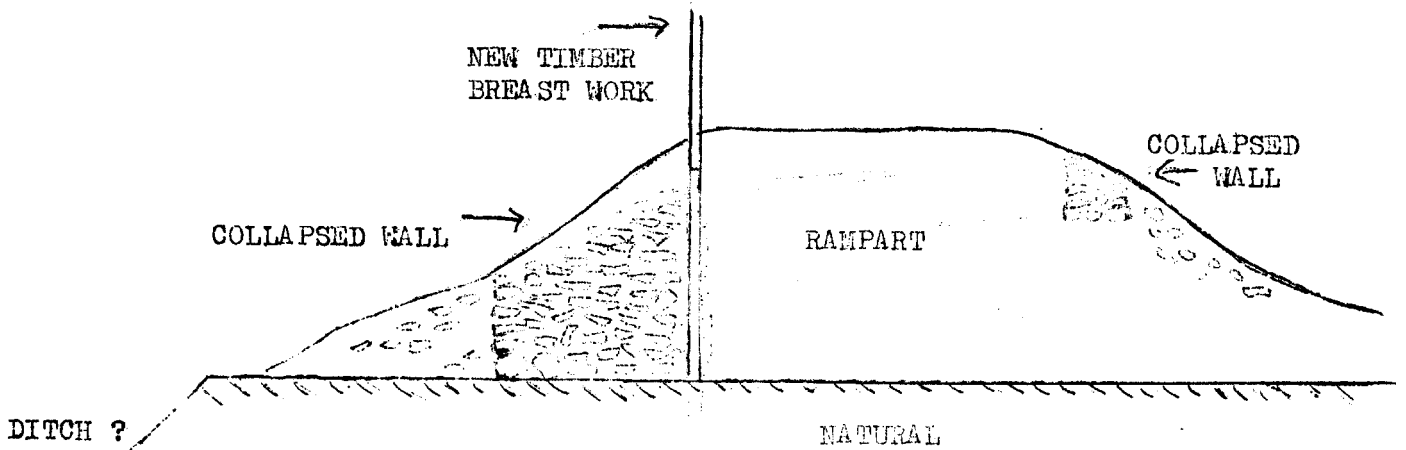
PHASE 1 - ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION

Rampart with original timber wall front and fighting platform to the rear. Ditch position not known.

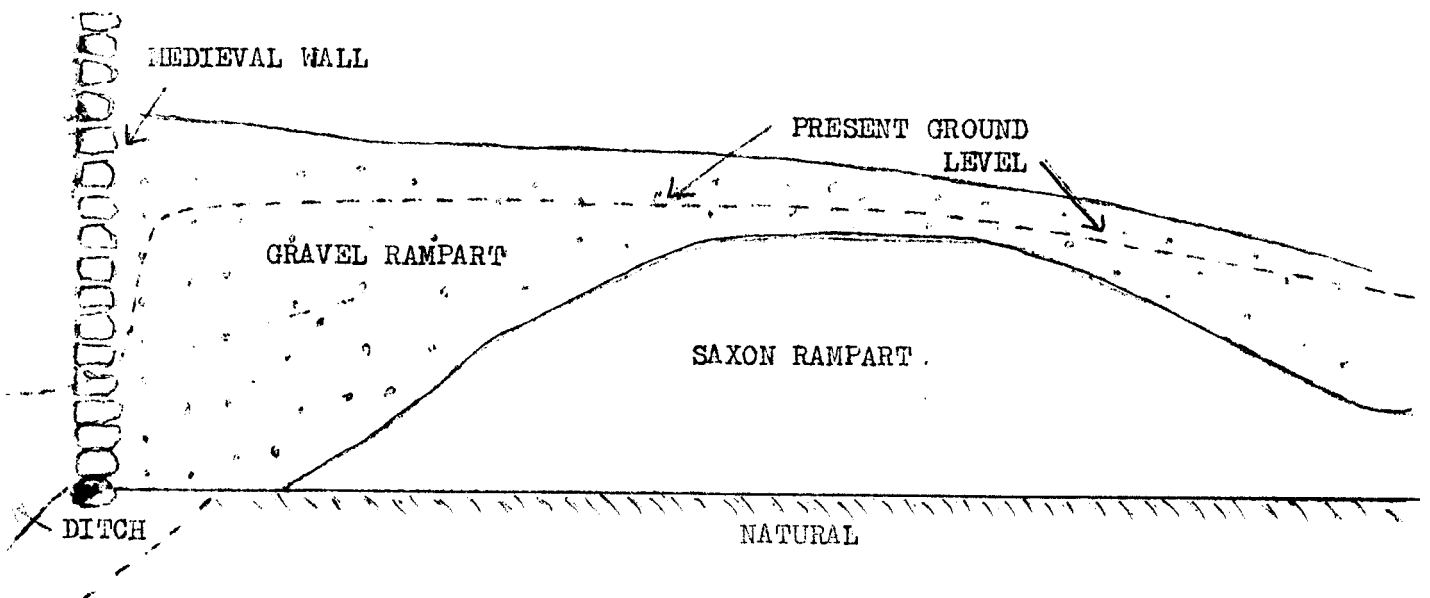


PHASE 2 - STONE WALLS BUILT

Strengthening of the front and rear of the rampart crest with stone walls and timber upper works.

HYPOTHETICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS (cont)PHASE 3 - COLLAPSED STONEMWORK

The stone walls were destroyed or fell into disuse and the bank was re-used as a defensive feature.

PHASES 4 & 5 - MEDIEVAL WORKS

The original Saxon defences were covered first with a gravel bank derived from a ditch cutting and the medieval wall was built as the final defensive structure.

Discussion

Further excavation will be necessary before a firm date can be given for both the extension of the town and the construction of the original defences.

Evidence from the 1968 excavations suggests that the overlying gravel rampart (period 6) and the town extension are of the same period and may well be the work of Harold Godwinson who re-fortified the town after it was sacked by the Welsh in 1055.

The three phases of defence work on the east side of the town, prior to the gravel rampart, need not have covered a very long period of time. Attacks by the Danes about 914 would have required a solid defence, and the original clay bank and timber works may have been built by Aethelfleda around this date. The massive stone wall could have been built to impress the Welsh princes when they were summoned to Hereford by Aethelstan about 930, but allowed to fall into disuse thereafter.

Hereford would have had defences as early as the Battle of Hereford between the Welsh and the English in 760. It is possible that the underlying gravel rampart (period 4) seen only on the western side of the town dates from this period and is part of the defences built by Offa against the Welsh. Its absence in the present excavations suggests that the town must have been a different size when it was built.

Future Programme

The series of excavations between 1965 and 1972 has made Hereford an important contributor to research on Saxon and Medieval town defences.

The results of this work now need to be followed up by a carefully planned series of excavations within the town itself, taking the opportunity offered by every site which comes up for development.

Modern development is such that all earlier occupation levels are usually destroyed, and a full and complete record is necessary if we are to understand the problems of urban origins and development.

Ron Shoemith
10.6.1972

THE LEOMINSTER CANAL

On Sunday 30th April 1972, four members met at the Salwey Arms Hotel, Wooferton, prior to an examination of the remains of the Leominster-Mamble canal in the area between Wooferton and the Putnal Field Tunnel. It was decided to pass the short period before lunch in a walk to the nearby Teme aqueduct since this impressive structure was not familiar to three of the members present.

The party was joined by a further member after lunch whilst proceeding to follow the line of the derelict canal towards Orleton. In the immediate vicinity of the Salwey Arms the canal bed has been totally filled so that no traces of wharf, locks or other features are apparent. Within a few hundred yards the dry canal bed suddenly commences and continues as a pronounced cutting for some considerable distance, gradually losing this depth as a stream is approached so that the cutting is transformed to a low embankment where the stream is crossed.

This stream afforded the first interesting feature of the afternoon, since it is culverted beneath the low embankment which is revetted in brickwork across the width of the stream. The culverts are four in number, brick lined, and bonded into the revetment, and it was observed that the alignment of the entire crossing is on a slight 'skew' from right-angles. A rough field sketch of the arrangement was made before continuing, the principal dimensions having been noted.

The embankment continues westwards, gradually changing again to a shallow cutting as the canal leaves the stream valley. A further isolated culvert was noticed on this stretch, and one concludes that the embankment and culvert system must have given rise to considerable flooding above the crossing point. The next feature is the modern railway

embankment carrying the main Shrewsbury to Hereford line across the old canal alignment so that the canal details are obscured for a short distance on either side of the embankment. This is particularly frustrating since, according to various nineteenth century maps, there was formerly a lock situated at this point, but no traces remain.

After the railway intersection the canal bed continues in a gentle curve towards the south-west in parallel with the 250 ft. contour and this portion displays model behaviour for any such early contour canal. The resultant 'cut and dump' construction, economical of both time and effort, is very much in evidence. Next occurs the remains of a single lock with ruinous lock keeper's cottage adjacent, and considerable time was spent in recording these, the main objective of the field meeting. It is hoped to publish details of these in due course, possibly within the context of a detailed account of the technological features of the canal throughout its operational length.

From this point to the Putnal Field Tunnel the canal is clearly defined; much of the bed being waterlogged, and part of it serving the present day drainage of the area. The inter-relationship of railway, canal and drainage is probably more complicated than one might at first suspect, but certain sequences of successive modification suggest themselves. The Putnal Field Tunnel was briefly examined (having previously been the subject of a field meeting when the portals were recorded) (see Newsletter 15) before the party retraced the route to Wooferton.

Permission has been granted for the Section to enter and examine the interior of the Putnal Field Tunnel, and this will be effected by a small party in August using canoes. Members are warned that this will be a somewhat hazardous undertaking in view of the amphibious nature of the operation and because the tunnel is almost certainly blocked by collapse at some point. For this reason, and because of the small numbers to be actively employed, it is not proposed to include the excursion in the future programme, but any (morbidly?) interested persons should contact the writer.

J G Calderbank

BUILDING DEVELOPMENT AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS

The number of sites in the county threatened by building development continues to increase. Many of these have been previously noted but are not scheduled as ancient monuments and a developer has no need to inform the Department of the Environment.

Please let the Editor know if you have further examples to add to the following list:

1. **Hereford Saxon Rampart** Most of the remainder of the Saxon rampart behind the City Wall between Victoria Street and Berrington Street is due to be removed to make way for a block of offices.
2. **Mound at Hall Court, Much Marcle** 12-16th century moated site due to be levelled for agricultural purposes.
3. **Suspected Bailey to St Weonards Tump** Slight signs of a bailey to the south of the Tump are included, in the site of a new school.
4. **Mortimers Castle** near Much Marcle is the site of proposed housing development.

Ron Shoemith

WHEN IS A CASTLE NOT A CASTLE?

Eton-in-Foy (Hole-in-the-Wall)

Oldcastle (Clodoch)

Two puzzling settlements on the old frontier of Wales have been visited in the last few months, both intriguing as reputed Castle sites.

The first, Eton-in-Foy, was visited in October 1971. In Kelly's Directory it is stated 'There once existed here a strongly fortified castle, dismantled and left ruinous during the feudal wars; only a portion of one of its walls now remains.' By 1867 there is the following entry: 'At a place called Hole-in-the-Wall are the remains of some ancient building, consisting of the foundation of some well built walls with huge stones lying about. The site is now occupied by many cottages.'

The hamlet, now Hole-in-the-Wall is situated 2m. from Ross, on the left bank of the river Wye, opposite to Foy. It had a former importance in the control of the river crossing and fishery.

The Domesday entry of Edtune means 'river town' (Galbraith). It was held by Alfred de Merleberge together with most of the former estates of Harold Godwin. There were 2½ hides geldable, one plough and 9 villeins and 6 bordars with 7 ploughs. It had been worth 50s but by 1086 it was only worth 40s. In the 12th century Eaton comprised the whole parish, 'Foy' being a mutated form of St Faith, the Welsh saint, to whom the church on the right bank was dedicated. The river here divides the old land of Archenfield and the two hundreds of Greytree and Wormelow follow this division, so separating the two hamlets. In the 12th century Eaton was held by Robert of Ewyas as a demesne manor. By 1243 it had passed to the female branch of the family, the Tregoz, and at this time the place was known as Eaton Tregoez. A charter of 1285 was granted to John Tregoz for a fair on the feast of St John the Baptist. It was then worth 2 knights' fees, and had a castle with a chapel dedicated to St John, a park of 144 acres, a weir and a fishery, and two water mills. In 1309, a Grandison who had inherited the lands, obtained a licence to crenellate his mansion and by 1410 it consisted of a hall with its chapel, gates and buildings. The whole settlement had 52 houses and the hall, and a possible population of 52 x 5 (c. 1300) equalling 260 villagers. The poll-tax of 1337 gives 81 taxable persons, but by the hearth tax of 1665, only 15 householders are mentioned. This figure approximates to that of today.

Local tradition speaks of a castle, and the place is marked on maps with such a symbol. Today even the name has vanished. Now Hole-in-the-Wall, Eaton remains only as the name of the township and in Hill-of-Eton, on top of which stands a substantial farmstead formerly the site of an Elizabethan mansion called Eton Hall. The land around is called the 'Old Park' on the tithe map (1840). The farm buildings straddle the road and have many dressed stones in them. Almost surrounded by a steep valley, it commands a good view of the ford. On the slope facing the river are supposed earthworks which have never been identified but which RCHM concludes may be natural. This conclusion was supported by observation. The hilltop site here is a possible one for a defensive building but seems too far from the river and present hamlet.

Down by the river more confusing evidence was the existence of several converging holloways by Knighton Hill, near the old school. Here are 7 or 8 dressed and carved stones being used as kerb stones. Two appeared to be transoms or sills from some important building and the remainder were roll-moulded and chamfered. A search in the area revealed little other evidence, although there were indications of cottages and earlier settlement along the valley. The walls around the school were composed of a large amount of stone but there is an obvious nearby quarry. The dressed stones were thought to have come from the back gardens of the riverside cottages.

The third site, traditionally the position of the castle, is the Court Farm, now a PGL holiday centre. This proved to be of great interest. The house contains a stone vaulted cellar, an ogee-arched doorway, and the remains of an outside staircase; all difficult to date, but earlier than the mainly 18th century present building. There are many stone out-buildings

now converted into various facilities. Outside the back door, a moulded stone matches those on Knighton Hill. Behind the house is a hole in a high bank, which was said to lead to a tunnel, now blocked, going under the river to Ingeston. This is reported in the WNFC Transactions for 1921. It appears more likely to be a natural outlet for a spring with a conduit to carry away excess water. There was some speculation about the connection with the name Hole-in-the-Wall. The Old English 'Wæla' - stream has the West Midland form 'Walle' and 'hol(l)l'- hollow or sunken seems to indicate the nearby valley with its stream, rather than any corruption of Holywell. It would indicate an earlier name than it appears, although it is present on Isaac Taylor's map of the County in 1786. The disadvantage of this site is its low position by the river, but parallels can be found at Skenfrith and Wilton. It commands the river and fishery and could well be the site of the 'crenellated mansion' of the Grandisons. No firm conclusions can be drawn from the day's observations and further field and documentary evidence would be welcomed.

The second site, visited in May 1972, also has intriguing associations with a castle. This is Oldcastle, now in Monmouthshire, at the foot of the Hatterell ridge in the Black Mountains. On the Saxton map of Herefordshire (1577), it is named 'Old Town' and marked, with a Castle symbol. On subsequent maps this name is used. It was this apparent discrepancy that first caught my attention,

The present hamlet consists of a farmstead and church, and a few neighbouring farms. Several cottages and roads on the 1840 tithe map have now disappeared, although their presence is indicated by ruined walls and footpaths. The population then was 58 and now it is 23.

The road, in the valley bottom leads straight to the ancient church of Clodoch and on to Longtown, formerly the centre of the Ewyas Lacy Lordship of which Oldcastle was a subsidiary manor. It was given to Llanthony Priory about 1103 by Hugh de Lacy and it remained with it until the dissolution when it was given to Nicholas Arnold, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. In this grant the manor is named as Oldcastle.

The house and church stand on a platform above the surrounding fields. It was difficult to decide whether it was built up or was natural. No doubt the first settlers consolidated the natural advantages of the site. The stone farmstead buildings of 'the Court' were very substantial but there was no means of dating them. The house was rebuilt in 1750 and appears unaltered today as compared with a contemporary print. There was no evidence of a castle motte although there were some curious features in the cattle yard, now knee high in mud. A field behind the buildings was called 'One Pailey' which could be a mutation of Bailey, but it had no distinguishing features. There are mottes at Pont Hendre and Longtown along the valley, and the place name of 'Red Castle' above Tre-Wyn, and all seem to suggest that another site here would not be unlikely.

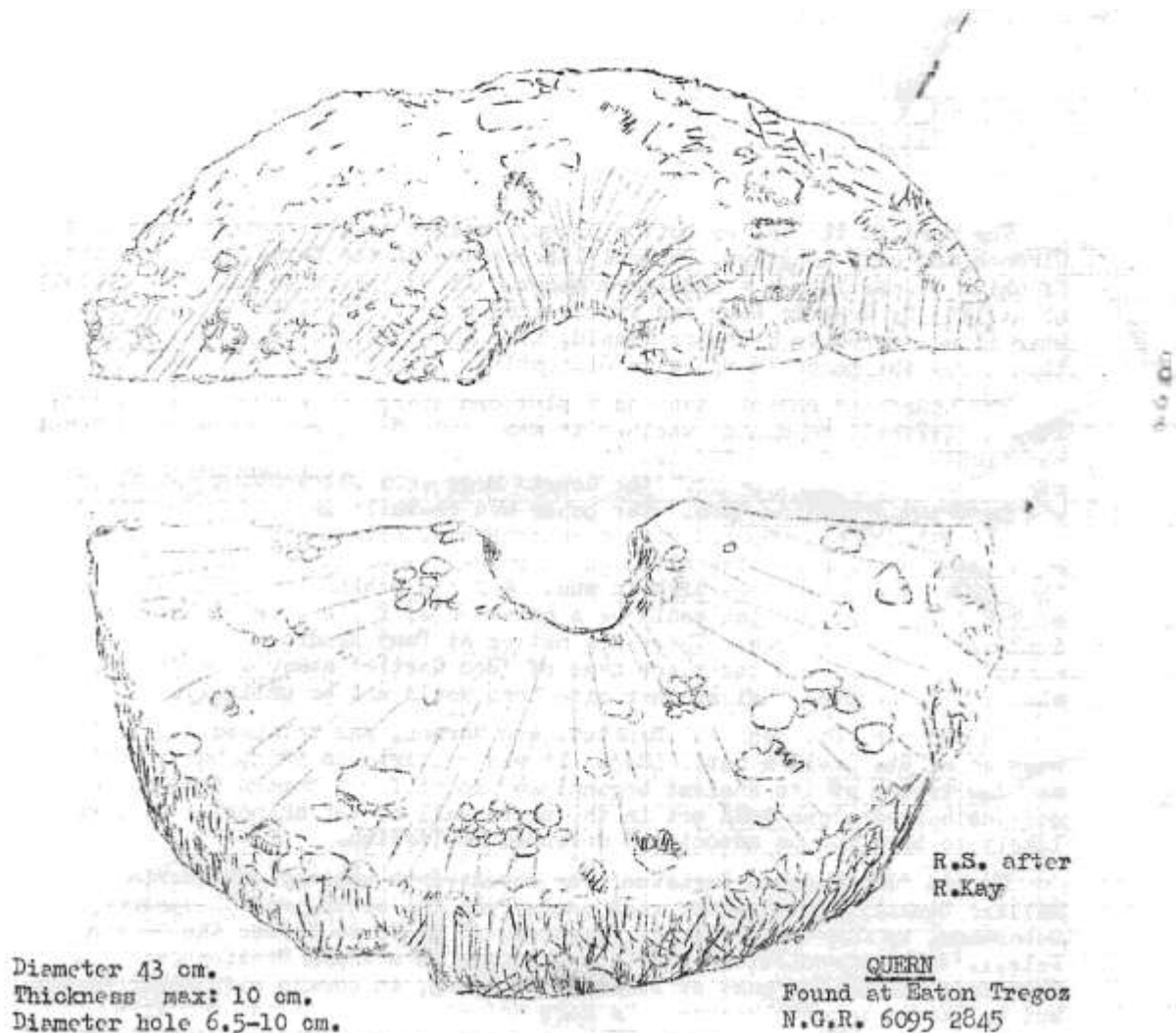
The church, St John the Baptist, was Norman, and belonged to the Diocese of St David until 1844. It was restored in 1864, but there are few traces of its ancient beginnings except for a Norman font and a curious carved stone head set in the north wall of the ohancel. It seems likely to have had an associated defended habitation.

In his 'Iterinerium Curiosum' the seventeenth century antiquarian, William Stukely, notes -'the road comes from the south, and Abergavenny Gobanmium, by Old-town formerly Blestium, so by Dorre across the Golden Vale...' The speculation about its position as a Roman Station seems to date from this. His name of Blestium is wrong, in common with other errors, but he was an acute observer. He does not give any evidence for this statement but subsequent histories cite it as a Roman site. Roman coins are said to have been dug up near the church, and Bannister in his 'History of Ewyas Harold' also says the same. The road from the church bisected the valley road to cross the Monnow and went straight to Walterstone Camp. If this camp gave the 'Oldcastle' name there is little evidence for it now.

The surrounding fields showed no visible banks, only the platform supporting the nucleus of the hamlet remains.

The 'Old Town' name is even more curious. Some houses have obviously disappeared. Even an ale-house, The Sun, stands in ruins at the corner of the main road. There was some suggestion of earlier dwellings across the road, below the church, and a field name 'Ty-Poeth' - burnt house, gives the fate of another. More remarkable is the complex system of lanes and paths with converge on Oldcastle. One, now disused, was clearly cobbled. Apart from the church, there seems little reason for this unless there had been an earlier nucleated settlement of some importance. Further field and documentary research will be necessary to determine the reason for each name.

J O'Donnell



On the upper edge of the Eaton hill escarpment, reached by a track behind the Court farm, a fragment of a Romano-British quern was found. Richard Kay writes: 'The stone, of very coarse grained, pinkish grey conglomerate, is from the upper strata of the Old Red and is full of large nodules of quartz. It possibly originates from the neighbourhood of Coppett Hill or Huntsham near Goodrioh. Owing to the intractability of the material the stone has only been very roughly shaped on its upper face. The flat grinding face shows every sign of considerable use. The central hole, as is usual, has a considerable convex taper, probably formed when the hole was picked and bored. A second semi-circular rounded groove on the

edge of the stone probably served as a fixing point for the wooden rod which enabled the hand mill to be rotated. It probably came from the plough soil on the summit.'. A rectangular camp is shown on Taylor's map but nothing of this was observed on the surface.