

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 42 November 1983

**WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	2
ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1983.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
PROGRAMME DECEMBER 1983-APRIL 1984.....	3
FIELD MEETING AT RHYDSPENCE – 24 TH APRIL 1983.....	4
FIELD MEETING AT SHUCKNALL HILL, MONKHIDE AND WESTON BEGGARD, 20 TH MARCH, 1983.....	11
HEN CWRT (OLD COURT), LLANTILIO CROSSENNY	14
THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST TEILO, LLANTILIO CROSSENNY.....	14
WHITE CASTLE	15
PENRHOS CASTLE	15
A MOATED MOUND AT KENTCHURCH.....	18
THE ABERGAVENNY TO HEREFORD TRAMWAY	19

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No. 42 November 1983

EDITORIAL

I must open with an apology, in that due to printing problems I was not able to get the News out in time to acquaint Members of the date of the Annual General Meeting on 6th December 1983, which had been fixed by the Committee. The Secretary did try and contact as many members as possible and the same Members did spend a relaxing evening in the Restaurant after the business part was over. We are grateful to Mr C W Cheung and Winifred Soo, proprietors, for letting us have the cosy little room off the main dining area.

Several sections of the Hereford - Gloucester Canal have been visited both by the main club and the Research Section, and detailed research carried out by individual Members. Those who visited the section at Monkhide on 20th March 1983 will be encouraged by the work of the newly formed "The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society". Begun in 1792, completed in 1845, the canal was closed in 1881. It was a major route for transporting goods to and from Hereford when roads were poor and the vagaries of the River Wye made things difficult for the boatmen. Membership forms can be obtained from James Dunn, Old Deanery House, Cathedral Close, Hereford, and the present scale of subscriptions runs from £2.00 per annum for individual membership to £3.00 for corporate membership.

Those interested in things monastic will be pleased to know that following circulation to interested parties and a meeting held by kind permission of the Mayor of Hereford, Councillor M J Proctor, ACII in the Town Hall on 29th October 1983, a society to be called the Craswall Grandmontine Society has been formed. This stemmed from the interest in Craswall Priory and the Order of Grandmont which established three English houses in the first half of the 13th Century. They were at Craswall in Herefordshire, Alberbury in Shropshire, and Grosmont near Whitby in Yorkshire. The surviving remains at Alberbury have been incorporated into a farmhouse, Grosmont has disappeared almost without trace, but substantial remains exist at Craswall. The Society aims to contact similar societies in France, carry out research, provide practical help to conserve the remains and to publish its results. The Secretary is Mr Ron Shoesmith, who can be contacted at The Town Hall Hereford on Telephone No 268121.

Included in this issue is a slip for Members to complete if they would like the Committee to consider items or venues for future field meetings, features to investigate, or suggestions for improving the activities of the section.

Excavation equipment used on excavations at Croft Ambrey and Midsummer Hill belonging to the Club has been passed to the section for future use, and Members wishing to borrow items should contact the Editor. We are grateful to the main Committee of the Club for this equipment, and express our thanks to Dr Stanford for removing it and keeping it at Leinthall Starkes until we could collect it.

There is little change in the Committee for 1984. Les Skelton has come back on in place of Geoff Warren who decided not to stand in view of other commitments, and we express our appreciation to his contribution over the past years. The Treasurer reported to the AGM that the balance in the Section's account was a healthy £181, but further printing costs, stationery etc will make some inroads into it.

Since I wrote the first part of this editorial I attended the main club meeting on 14th January to listen to M Handford's talk on the history of The Herefordshire and

Gloucestershire Canal. All the seats were filled, with some Members standing (which I have not seen before) and I feel sure that their expectations were fully realised in an excellent illustrated lecture. Mr Handford is to publish a book on this subject which will be eagerly awaited.

In conclusion, may I thank the contributors to this News, the Assistant Editor, Richard Kay, the typists including Mike Hemming and Sally Badham in particular who has done most of the typing over the past years.

C E Attfield

ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1983

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr G Parker .
<u>Secretary:</u>	Miss M Thomas
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Mrs R Wride
<u>Field Secretary:</u>	Mr M Hemming
<u>Committee Members:</u>	Mrs R Richardson
	Mr G C Warren
	Mrs R Skelton
	Mr M Hemming
<u>Editor:</u>	Mr C E Attfield
<u>Assistant Editor:</u>	Mr R E Kay.

PROGRAMME DECEMBER 1983-APRIL 1984

Tuesday 6 th December	Annual General Meeting	Golden Eagle Restaurant, Commercial Street, Hereford, 7.30 for 8.00 pm Members can make a social evening by having a meal afterwards if they so wish. Meet main gate, Eastnor Castle, 11.00 am
Sunday 29 th January	Examination of moated site in Eastnor Park and Bronsil Castle. Leader L Skelton	
Sunday 26 th February	Mynydd Brith, Dorstone – half timbered farmhouse and earthworks. Leader R Skelton	Meet Pandy Inn, Dorstone, 11.00 am
Saturday 24 th March	<u>Morning:</u> Examination of the Rowland Vaughan Irrigation System. Leader Mary Thomas	Meet Broughton Arms Public House, Peterchurch, 11.00 am. WEA and Ewyas Harold Members welcome.
	<u>Afternoon:</u> Join WEA meeting on features of the Golden Valley, including a field excursion led by R Shoemith.	Meet Memorial Hall, Ewyas Harold, 2.00 pm
Sunday 29 th April	Glis Farm, Vaga Hill, and examination of sites of abandoned farms at high altitudes. Leaders R Kay and R Skelton	Meet Pandy Inn, Dorstone, 11.00 am

Note:

1. In case of bad weather contact the leader or a Committee member. List of Committee and telephone numbers is included in the News.
2. Guests are welcome.
3. Members are advised to wear suitable clothing and footwear and to bring food and hot drinks.
4. Due to unforeseen circumstances the programme may have to be changed at short notice.

FIELD MEETING AT RHYDSPENCE – 24TH APRIL 1983

The meeting was arranged for members to visit the sites of two early Roman forts in the area, and to obtain an idea of their topographical position and strategical/tactical use during the Roman initial and subsequent campaigns to consolidate their earliest forward and shifting frontier, resulting in the final subjugation of the Silures and consequent permanent occupation of what is now S Wales.

As Dr Graham Webster will be giving a talk related to this subject to members of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club later in the year, it was thought that it would be helpful to interested members of the Archaeological Research Section to visit what must have been one of the nodal areas and a forward base for the operation of some of these campaigns. Additionally, time permitting, it was proposed to visit and examine in the field a few of the many other interesting archaeological sites and buildings in the immediate vicinity.

The meeting was well attended and in spite of the very indifferent weather, dominated by an almost continuous downpour of rain, a number, if not all the objectives of our visit to the area were achieved.

From the neighbourhood of the Rhydspence Inn, the recently discovered site of the Roman campaign fort of sixteen acres was pointed out in the flat fields of the flood plain of the Wye just across the river and in the parish of Clifford. The site lies within three adjoining fields, two of which were currently under plough, and the area of the fort is cut diagonally in a NE - SW direction by the embankment of the now defunct Hereford - Three Cocks railway line and slight traces of the previous horse tramway.

This large fort was a quite unexpected discovery when it was made as a result of an archaeological air reconnaissance carried out over Britain in 1969 - 1972 by J K St Joseph, (vide JRS Vol LXIII for 1973 p 238).

"Above Hereford, the general course of the River Wye lies WNW for 15 miles, to a point between Clifford and Whitney, where the direction of the valley changes through nearly a right angle, so that for the next nine miles the course lies to the SW towards Talgarth. Moreover, the bend at Clifford marks the western corner of the Herefordshire plain, to the S lie the Black Mountains, to the W and N, the Radnorshire hills. Above Clifford the alluvial plain of the Wye, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile wide, provides an easy route giving access to Brecon and thence to the Towy valley. The recently discovered fort lies within a great bend of the Wye, at the point where the two above mentioned lengths of the valley meet. The precise site (S0249467) just below the bluff, which rises from the flood plain, and on the highest part of the plain itself (see plan), was formerly more tightly clasped by the river than now, for the ancient course of the Wye approached to within 3,300 ft of the E side of the fort in a sharp meander near Sheepecote Farm. To the W, the nearest point on the river bank is now over 1,000 ft from the outermost ditch of the defences. The site is above normal flood level, but the northern part of the area within the fort is liable to be submerged in exceptional floods.

Reconnaissance over the four years 1969 - 72 had established the course of the three ditches that formed the defences of the fort along most of the N side, for short sectors of the E, S and W sides and at the rounded NE and SW angles. Two of the ditches were close together, the third is set 65ft further out. The position of the N gate has been

determined, as also that of the E gate, at the mid point of their respective sides, and matching gates may be assumed in the other two sides. The E to W measurement within the inner ditch is 870 ft, that from the N to S is 810 ft, so that the area within the ditches is 16 acres.

The fort will have faced E down the valley, to judge from the position of the gates. The SE corner of the fort is crossed both by the line, regularly seen in terms of crop marks, of the horse tramway, abandoned about 1880, and by a railway closed in 1960; indeed, the site is best appreciated from the railway embankment. There is an extensive prospect to the ENE, whilst SW the view of the river plain extends as far as the isolated hill on which the fort of Clyro is set. Besides the evident suitability of the position for commanding the river valley where the Wye emerges from the hills, Clifford must have been concerned with movements in two directions, eastwards to and from a mainbase, whether at Gloucester or elsewhere, and southwestwards, the only easy direction in this area, of easy advance.

No earthworks can now be seen at Clifford, not even a level platform marking the site; had the fort been occupied for long, some trace of a massive rampart might have been expected to survive continued ploughing. Ground liable to flood would hardly have been chosen for a permanent establishment in the military system, while its large size (16 acres) distinguishes Clifford from auxiliary forts, the principle elements in the military network throughout Wales. Thus Clifford is most likely to belong to a phase of campaigning when battle groups of some size were used both on operations and in garrison. Only 2½ miles separate Clifford from the 25 acre fort at Clyro, too short an interval of distance for both to have been held together, indeed, Clyro, pushed a little further upstream and in a more commanding position, might well have replaced Clifford, when the military command had had time to appraise the terrain and make the best choice of site from which to control this sector of the Wye Valley, and the important routes that lead westwards from it.

Before moving off it was explained how the area had retained its strategic importance in Norman and Medieval times as witnessed by the proliferation of castles in this portion of valley and further emphasised by the walled town of Hay and the failed borough of Clifford. Within the parish of Clyro, grants of large acreages of choice riverside meadows had been made to the Cistercian abbey of Cwm-Hir and granges had been established at Cabalfa and Court Farm.

Members then preceded by way of Bettws Clyro to Crossway Farm, passing close to the small (rebuilt) church serving as a chapelry to the church at Clyro, in this, the remote E extremity of the parish. The wide prospects, afforded by this route, across the valley of the Wye to the Black Mountains beyond were unfortunately marred by heavy rain and low cloud.

At the kind invitation of Mr G Harris of Crossway Farm, members were invited to inspect the remains of Whitty's Mill (S0218463) sited in a deep wooded dingle below the farm. A descent was made across a steep field to the site of the water mill where its remains, now consisting of little more than one gable of the mill house and the lower part of the walls of the mill and the deep slot for its wheel, were visible. The water to provide the power being brought from a dam higher up the stream by means of a leat cut into the precipitous side of the dingle, revetted by substantial masonry walling. The chamfered oak lintel to the chimney breast in the existing gable would seem to indicate an early 18th C date for the building, but there is documentary evidence of a mill on this site at least from the 15th C. The building was last used as a mill in 1921 and it remained virtually intact with its machinery until the early 1950's when the roof was removed to avoid the payment of rates. Rapid disintegration of the fabric followed, until it assumed its present appearance. The millstones, made up of segmental portions banded with iron, remained in situ ten years ago. Unfortunately, due to the driving rain, little more than a perfunctory examination of the site was able to be made. There is an interesting descriptive cameo of the social life etc at the functioning mill of the 1860's in the pages of Kilvert's 'Diary'.

From the farm a brief visit was made to examine the 'Standing Stone' in a field to the S (S0217458). It stands some 5ft in height above ground and measures 3ft by 2½ft at its

base, tapering to 2ft by 8ins at the top. The stone is recorded in the Radnorshire Inventory of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments and seems to have been the source of some speculation in Kilvert's 'Diary'. Some portions of stone lying nearby may have been broken off the monolith in antiquity, but recent ploughing operations have uncovered another large recumbent slab a short distance to the W.

En route to Clyro, close to the E side of the road, a brief stop was made at the small farm of Court Evan Gwynne (SO215447) to view the adjacent Norman motte, a circular mound some 18ft high constructed on a steep spur overlooking a small stream. There are traces of a ditch and counterscarp bank on the NW side of the house, a building of scarcely more than cottage dimensions together with some farm outbuildings occupy what may have been the site of the bailey, of which possible defences only traces of scarping remain. A barn with masonry gables and half side walls, with open timber framing above and surmounted by a good stone flagged roof, is an interesting variation of an 'open sided barn' of probable 17th C date. There is a similar example near Goytre Farm in Llancillo parish (vide, Vol of the Herefordshire Inventory of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments).

At Boatside Farm, a picnic lunch was eaten within the confines of a large barn, kindly placed at the disposal of members by Mr A Gibson-Watt, on account of the continuing inclement weather. Afterwards a perambulation of the defences (still surprisingly well preserved in places) and the interior area of the site of the Roman fort was made, the easing of the rain thankfully making this possible.

The Roman fort at Clyro is sited on a hill overlooking the left bank of the River Wye (here flowing NE). The SW portion of the fort is on top of the hill but most of its area lies on the NW, NE and SE slopes. On the SE the ground slopes direct to the river bank. The site is one of considerable strategic importance, for this portion of the Wye Valley provides the only obvious route between the Leintwardine - Kenchester area and the Usk Valley. The importance of the site in Norman and Medieval times is attested by castles at Clyro and Hay-on-Wye, each less than a mile distant.

Long thought to have been a temporary camp of 20 acres, J K St Joseph's aerial photographic survey (vide 'Roman Frontier in Wales', 2nd Ed, Nash Williams, revised Jarrett, page 77) showed that its substantial defences enclosed 26 acres (1,295ft x 864ft) and indicated a more permanent structure. Excavations on a trial basis carried out in 1964 (and at which one of our members took part) revealed work of two distinct periods in the defences on the SE side. The first was a turf rampart 4 metres wide revetted with timber, both inside and out. The second revetment was omitted and the bank was widened to 6 metres. A single ditch 4 metres wide had been cut in the rock serving both defences. It is possible that the two periods represent forts of two differing sizes, for on the NE side the aerial photograph revealed two ditches 30 metres apart. The suggestion can only be tested by further excavation for no trace of an outer bank is revealed by ground survey or aerial plot. Within the defended area the farmer reports a metalled roadway running from the NE gate.

The trial excavations located no internal structures other than ovens, and it seems likely that tented accommodation was provided within the defences. The few small finds from the excavations are all of pre-Flavian date. The Samian is dated C60 at the earliest but a flagon neck in buff fabric is probably Claudian. The exact date of the fort remains uncertain but it seems clear that Clyro belongs exclusively to the period of campaigning and was abandoned with (or before) the permanent Flavian settlement of Wales.

A number of forts of similar size are now known in lowland Britain and where evidence is available they seem to have been abandoned before the Flavian period. It was fashionable to suggest that these forts held half a legion. A note of caution must be sounded. Continental parallels are not easily found and documentary sources suggest that it was often customary to group several auxiliary units in a single fort at this period. There is a danger that a study of Roman campaigns in Britain may be complicated by an excessive number of legionary sites of the period C48-71.

It would be possible but presumptuous to suggest that the fort at Clifford and the two periods of the fort at Clyro may be represented by the campaigns of Ostorius Scapula in C48, Aulus Gallus in C52-58 and Petilus Cerialis in C71-74 or Julius Frontinus in C74-77. Speculation must remain until more dateable evidence of the occupations is recovered. It is most unlikely that either fort fitted into the post campaign road system to link the newly constructed auxiliary forts built for the subsequent permanent garrisoning of the tribal area of the Silures.

This strategic point where the Wye forces its way out of the mountains on to the fertile plains of Herefordshire would seem to call for the siting of such a fort, at least in the initial period following the final subjugation of the Silures under Julius Frontinus, such as were constructed further N at the Teme gap near Leintwardine (where there were successive auxiliary forts at Jay's Lane, Buckton and Leintwardine itself). Even lesser gaps such as those of the Summerhill Brook at Hindwell and the River Clun at Bicton seem to have been blocked by early auxiliary forts albeit if their occupation was only of short duration. The successful development of the Romano-British town and surrounding villas at Kenchester would seem to have required some such early defence. An auxiliary fort of this type, if it ever existed, has not yet been discovered, either under Kenchester or westward to the Wye gap between Clifford and Glasbury. Here diligent field work by members of the Archaeological Research Group may in the future throw further light on this problem, and that the actual (possibly changing over a period of time) course of the Roman road westward beyond Staunton-on-Wye, until it is identified with certainty again near Bronlys, may be traced. More elusive traces of reputed contemporary roads may also be positively identified perhaps with more certainty, running up the Golden Valley and SW from Mortimer's Cross towards the Wye gap, by similar dedicated field work.

From the Clyro fort it had originally been intended to visit the site of the Clifford fort. A large area of the site being currently under plough, it had been thought that a walk over the disturbed area might have brought to the surface sherds of pottery or other occupation material, but the inclement weather and the now sodden state of the ground made this part of the programme impractical. A few days previously the writer was able to briefly walk the site, during the course of which a number of sherds (including a small fragment of rim) of buffware identical with that discovered during the trial excavation at the Clyro fort, were picked up. These were shown to members.

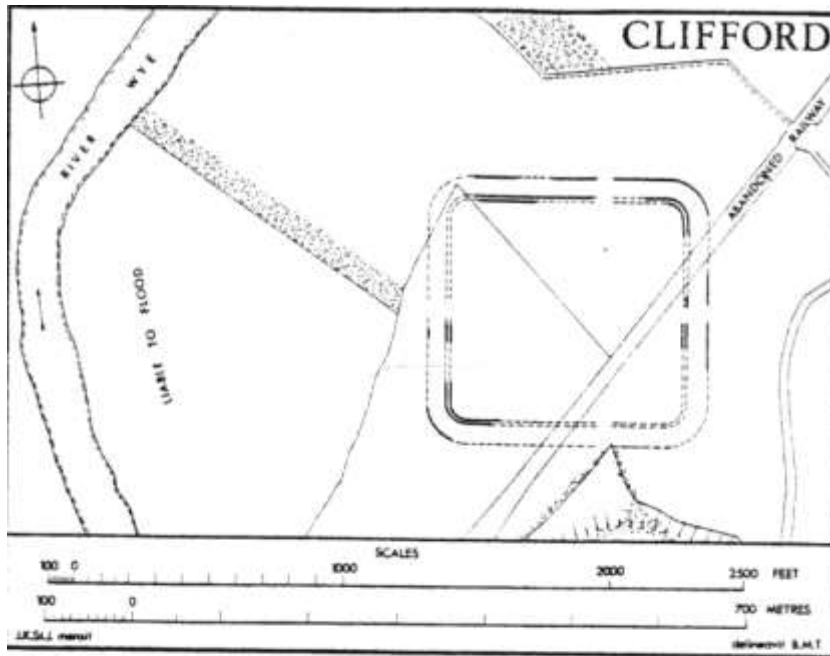
The party then divided, those succumbing to the weather making for home, while a small number proceeded to the Begwons Common to examine a large earthwork dam and nearby, a Bronze Age round barrow.

At Court Farm Clyro (SO213434) a brief halt was made to inspect the recently restored 14th C gateway with a two-centred chamfered arch, reputed to have formed part of one of the granges of Abbey Cwm-Hir, and a range of farm buildings which probably formed part of a post-suppressive mansion on the same site and successor to the nearby masonry castle. In a neighbouring field on the top of the scarp bank of a former course of the river, the mutilated remains of a long barrow (SO213432) were viewed. First identified as such by the writer during the course of field work during the late 1950's, it was then the only known site of a Neolithic long barrow on the L bank of the Wye and in the county of Radnorshire. It seems to have been of similar type to those that fringe the lower N and W foothills of the Black Mountains.

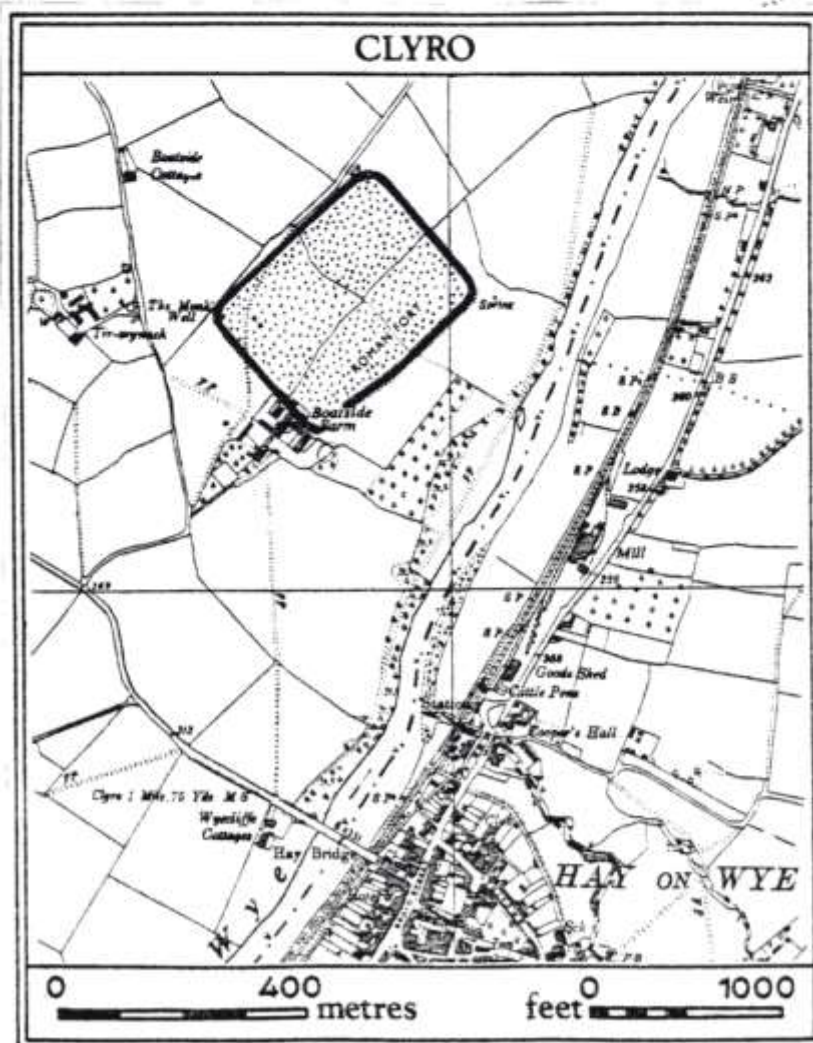
An ascent through narrow high hedged lanes was made to the delightful open uplands of the Begwons Common. On the southern fringe of that portion of the common, a short distance to the E of the Llowes-Paincastle road, is the site of what once must have been a considerable but shallow pool at (SO163436), filled by a small leat which collects the water running down from the summit of the 'Roundabout Hill'. The earthworks of the two retaining dams are impressive. The main downstream dam consists of a substantial earthen bank varying in width from 20ft to 30ft and up to 8ft in height, built in two lengths of 630ft and 83ft. The dam has been breached at the obtuse angle of junction which was also the site of

the control sluice, and has been otherwise mutilated by a trackway which seems to have utilized part of the earthwork for its passage. Some 690ft to the W is a lower bank with a base width of 30ft and a height rising to 2½ft. The little stream which once fed the large pool between these two banks has on the W been diverted from its original course to form a straight leat, now some 4ft wide and 1½ft deep to bring in the water at a level two or three feet higher than was its natural course, the lesser bank at the W acting as a retaining bank to prevent an overflow of the pool in that direction. The N boundary of the pool is irregular, conforming to the contours rising very gradually to the main ridge of the Begwns. The S boundary is almost straight but with little trace of any artificial scarping, and rises to a low knoll perhaps 50ft or so above the pool site and affording a good prospect over to the Wye Valley. A little below its crest on its N facing slope are the remains of a considerable cairn of Bronze Age date, grass grown and fern clad. It is some 7 or 8ft high with summit diameters of 28ft and 35ft. A large pit on the summit forms a crater 5ft deep and 12ft in diameter, showing that the burial mound has been robbed in antiquity, probably early in the 19th C or late in the 18th C. The mound consists of large stones bonded into earth and clay. The antiquity appears to be unrecorded, earlier Ordnance maps marking the site as a natural mound. Its situation is curious. It can only be seen from a short distance away on the N and NW, from rising ground beyond the pool, and is completely hidden from view from the valley below on the S. The pool was formerly known as the Maes Gwyn Pool, its name taken from that of a small farm to the SE. Its purpose is obscure, local knowledge is silent on its origin. It is at the very headwaters of a tiny stream which, a couple of miles or so lower down its course after attracting several minor tributaries, once fed power to Llowes mill.

R E Kay
17th May, 1983

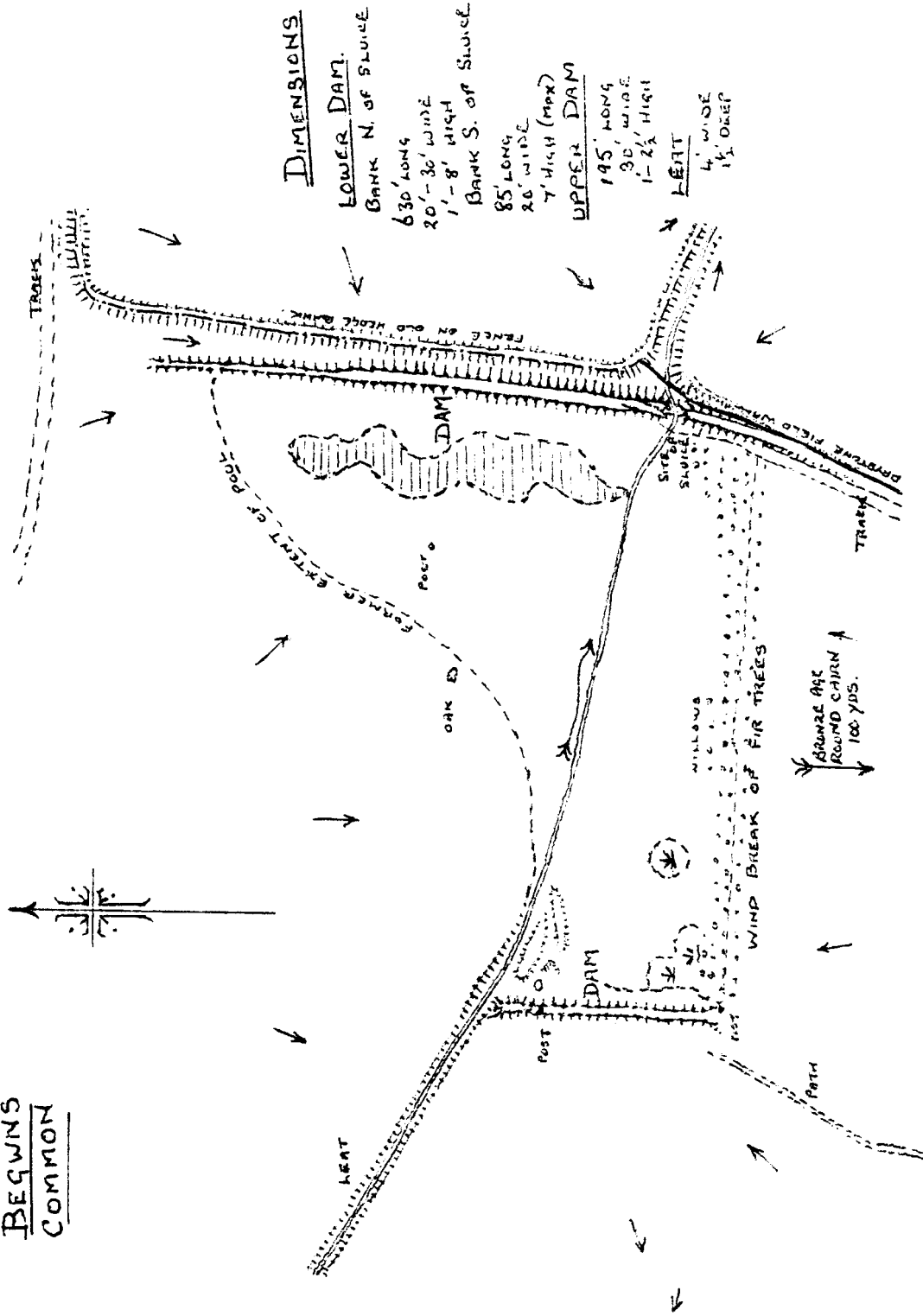


ROMAN FORT AT CLIFFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE



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BEGINS COMMON



DIMENSIONS

LOWER DAM.
BANK N. OF SLUICE
630' LONG
20'-30' WIDE
1'-8' HIGH
BANK S. OF SLUICE
85' LONG
20' WIDE
7' HIGH (MAX)

UPPER DAM
195' LONG
30' WIDE
1'-2 1/2' HIGH

LEAT
4' WIDE
1 1/2' DEEP

MAES GWYN POOL EARTHWORKS
SKETCH PLAN. SCALE 1" = 200'
PARISH OF LLOWES, RADNORSHIRE. GR 163.436

REK.
Mans. DEL. 5-7-79.

FIELD MEETING AT SHUCKNALL HILL, MONKHIDE AND WESTON BEGGARD, 20TH MARCH, 1983

The meeting was arranged to visit the summit of Shucknall Hill to obtain evidence of any hitherto unrecognised archaeological sites, to re-visit the still existing length of the Hereford-Gloucester canal and its ancillary works at Monkhide, to examine the remains of the Old Vicarage and visit the neighbouring parish church at Weston Beggard and, if time permitted, the interesting 16th-17th C house at nearby Hillend Farm.

A small number of Section members gathered at Shucknall Spout, and after proceeding to the Common Green near the summit of the hill made their way by a well defined grassy path through coppiced woodland and along the crest of the ridge towards the eastern extremity of the hill to investigate further the report of the finding of fragments of Roman roofing tiles in a field at approx GR595434 and thereabouts. The writer had been informed by the late Mr V H Coleman that sometime in 1959, during ploughing operations, Roman roofing tiles had been found in wide scatter in a field at the above ref. Subsequent and present fairly exhaustive surface examination of the whole field had failed to find any. However, a ring of ancient oak trees within the said field surrounded a depression in which were the vestiges of the footings of a substantial rectangular building showing through the grass-grown debris mounds of collapsed walls. This building had stood partly within a walled rectangular enclosure, traces of foundations of its boundary wall remained. A square cavity in a portion of these foundations seemed to indicate a post-hole for a large upright timber. The rubble masonry of both enclosure wall and building is of local sandstone, well set in lime mortar. The site, which is just below and SW of the summit of White Hill, commands a wide prospect to the S and W. The depression and oaks are shown on larger scale Ordnance maps, but not the buildings etc. It would seem to be of just 1600 date, and in all probability represents the site of an out barn and fold-yard or possibly a small house and its enclosure wall. Local knowledge is silent on the site. Some fragments of N Wales roofing slate in a corner of the enclosure would seem to suggest that a portion of re-roofed building, at least, existed in the mid 19th C. There is, however, no visible brick or other recent building material about the site, although in the field a few portions of 17th-18th C pantiles were observed. Of anything remotely resembling Roman material, nothing was found.

The mainly wooded summit ridge of Shucknall Hill, a well known local haunt of the nightingale, was found by members to be both geologically and botanically interesting. With undergrowth low at this season of the year, it was possible to make a somewhat perfunctory examination through the trees in a search for any earthworks etc of possible archaeological interest, but beyond an abandoned field enclosure bank nothing was found. Almost lost in the edge of woodland a little to the E of the great exposed quarry face on the S side of Shucknall Hill, an abandoned settlement of three, possibly four, cottages was discovered at GR593433. Their roofs almost gone, and fast falling into complete ruin, two of the cottages seem to have fallen into decay within the last twenty years. Of probable mid 19th C construction, they had evidently been partly rebuilt during the present century and contained much brick walling. A third cottage had substantial masonry walls still standing to a height of 4-5ft, and appeared to have been of early 18th C construction. Nearby, a levelled platform in the thickly wooded hillside showed slight traces of the foundations of what appeared to have been a fourth cottage. The middens of these dwellings, as yet not completely overgrown, yielded moulded, lettered glass bottles and jars of the early part of the present century. Who knows what archaeological treasures the middens will be considered a century or so from now.

After a break for lunch, members proceeded to Monkhide where a half mile or so of the Hereford-Gloucester canal, still holding water almost to its original depth, albeit silted and reed grown, can be examined. At GR612440 just N of Showle Court Farm and at the approach to the hamlet of Monkhide the road crosses the canal, which here runs in a cutting, by a fine skew bridge of brick with masonry dressings. It is a minor architectural engineering masterpiece and the vault of its wide arch forms angular ribs of offset courses of brick. The

towpath where it passes under the S side of the arch is revetted with massive blocks of dressed masonry. In less than half a mile the road recrosses the canal by a bridge of more conventional construction. Between these two bridges a wharf was contemplated but never actually laid out, a minor field access bridge crosses the canal near the contemplated site. This portion of the canal was constructed between 1839 and 1844. Beyond the E end of Monkhide hamlet, the course of the canal has been filled in and levelled until the access road to Monksbury Court Farm is reached, the almost buried arch of its crossing bridge can be observed. Eastwards from this point the course of the canal can be seen as a trough in the field between two earthwork retaining banks heading for the point where it bridges the Lodon Brook, a tributary of the River Frome. This section of the canal was researched by members during a visit to the area in June 1976 (vide Herefordshire Archaeological Section News Nos. 32 and 33).

At Weston Beggard a visit to the ancient parish church of St John the Baptist was made. This is an interesting but much restored building of small dimensions. It stands well hidden behind a large group of farm buildings of mixed purpose and date, its rectangular graveyard with a banked and revetted wall being in a most sequestered and attractive position, neighboured only by a couple of ancient cottages and farms. This is on the SE border of the parish, the centre of population having moved to the southern slopes of Shucknall Hill. The church is an attractive building comprising aisleless nave and chancel, S porch and massive W tower, all seemingly of the Decorated period. (The following description is largely based on that of the RCAHM). It is built of local red sandstone rubble with dressings and good ashlar work of the same period. In spite of its external appearance the masonry of the N wall of the nave is probably of the last quarter of the 12th C, possibly as late as 1200, and to this date must be assigned the chancel arch and re-set S doorway of the nave. The chancel seems to have been largely rebuilt and the S porch added early in the 14th C, and later in the same century the tower was added. The church was substantially restored in 1881 when the S wall of the nave was rebuilt.

The chancel seems to be of rather narrow proportions (27½ft x 12¼ft). In its N wall are two early 14th C windows, the E of two and the W of one trefoil ogee headed light. The former is of long and narrow proportions. In the S wall of the chancel are two windows, that to the W is a single cinquefoiled light in a square head and that on the E of two trefoiled lights. These and the two light arched E windows all appear to belong to the 19th C restoration, but possibly follow the form of their predecessors. The priest's doorway also appears to be a renewal. Externally, the S wall of the chancel has a plinth with a moulded string course. Internally, projecting from the E wall are two corbel image brackets and in the S wall a piscina recess with chamfered jambs and ogee head. There is a sexfoil lobed drain. In the N wall an aumbry recess with rebated reveals and iron hinge hooks for a door, but the head of this recess is not ancient. The chancel arch of circa 1200 has a two centred arch of two chamfered orders, the outer continuous with that of the jambs and the inner resting on bold corbels. The N corbel has a scallop capital and that on the S, although of the same date, has a moulded abacus with leaf ornamentation underneath.

In the nave N wall are two windows of 14th C date, each of two trefoiled lights, that on the W appears to be much restored and almost a renewal. Between the windows is a blocked N doorway with a segmental head of uncertain date. In the rebuilt S wall are two 19th C windows in Decorated style, that to the E of the porch of three lights with hood moulding being of particularly good design. The re-set S doorway, much restored, is of circa 1200 with jambs and round arch of two orders, the inner roll moulded and the outer with a broad plain chamfer with a chamfered label terminating in curved stops (grotesque head on W and foliage ball on E). On the sill of the E window of the nave there has been incorporated a portion of a 13th C coffin slab with a round-headed cross. There is a recess under, with plain jambs and a two-centred head.

The W tower is 10½ft square internally and is of mid 14th C date. Of three stages or storeys, undivided externally by strings or offsets, it is ashlar faced with a moulded plinth.

There are diagonal buttresses at the western angles, while the W gable of the nave forms buttress-like projections N and S of the eastern angles. There is a two-centred tower arch of three continuous orders. N and S walls are devoid of external openings except at the belfry stage. In the W wall at ground stage there is a window of two trefoiled lights with rere-arch of two recessed orders. In the S wall is a small 14th C recess with a shouldered head, made up of earlier material. Lying loose on its sill are fragments of a 14th C coffin slab, one with part of an inscription. The second stage of the tower is lit by one square-headed light in its W wall. The belfry stage has double openings with trefoil heads under a chamfered round arch. On the S side below the plain parapet is a gargoyle.

The S porch is of early 14th C date and has had its gable (including an image niche) rebuilt. The outer doorway has a two-centred arch of two continuous orders, the inner moulded and the outer chamfered with a moulded label. Previously unrecorded, a portion of sepulchral slab detailing part of the stem of a foliated cross, incorporated into the rebuilt portion of the gable wall, was noted by a member on the occasion of the present visit. Within the church, the nave roof is of trussed rafter type with scissor braces, its timbers are mainly Medieval. The font of Neo-Norman design, with a bulbous bowl, is of uncertain recent date. The most pleasing aesthetic features internally are the two fine Decorated tomb recesses, both robbed of their sepulchral slabs or effigies. The simpler of the two has moulded jambs and two-centred head, enriched with ball flower ornament, and a moulded label with head stops. The other also has moulded jambs, with cinquefoiled and subcusped arch, with its spandrels carved with foliage in semi-relief and blank shields (probably originally painted). There are pinnacles at the sides with mutilated tops and crotched gable with a carved finial.

On the external S wall of the church is a scratch mass dial and within the well kept churchyard there is the three-stepped base (with niche on its W side) of the cross. On top is affixed a small brass sundial, dated 1649 Just W of the porch is a large coped 13th C coffin slab with raised cross, possibly removed from within the church.

On this occasion, unfortunately, owing to unforeseen circumstances, it was not possible to make arrangements for a detailed inspection of the semi-derelict timber framed building of early 17th to late 18th C date now incorporated into the complex of buildings on the N side of the churchyard. This is reputed to have been the original vicarage. A red pantile roofed gabled wing with a wealth of exposed timber framing, projecting from the side of a recently erected barn of unit construction, forms an incongruous but picturesque feature. It is to be hoped that some record of this building can be made before it finally disappears.

An intended visit to Hillend Farm also had to be curtailed and time did not permit more than a brief external viewing of this curious intriguing farmhouse, with its tall tower-like extension of ashlar masonry at its S end. The house of two storeys, lofty with attics, has walls of sandstone rubble and timber framing and seems to date from the late 16th C, but the stone built S block is of 17th C date. To the N a timber framed wing was added shortly afterwards, later in the 17th C, and nearby in the 18th C a long outbuilding was added NW of the house and subsequently connected with it. The proportionately lofty stone built block has a series of original window frames of three and four lights with chamfered stone mullions and transoms. In the S gable is a window of three lights with a moulded label. A projecting staircase on the S side has two light windows and a single light in its N wall. The main chimney stack has three brick shafts set diagonally. Inside some of the beams are moulded. An outbuilding partly of stone and partly of timbered upper storey has framed trusses with braces springing from the floor.

R E Kay
6th April, 1983

FIELD MEETING – 26TH JUNE, 1983

Members spent an enjoyable day in the vicinity of the village of Llantilio Crossenny, Gwent. The following places of interest were visited:-

Penrhos Castle, motte and bailey site.
Parish Church of St Teilo.
Hen Cwrt, moated house site.
White Castle.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Richard Kay for his kind help in showing me around the area and for supplying the notes and plan of Penrhos Castle.

M T Hemming

HEN CWRT (OLD COURT), LLANTILIO CROSSENNY

The site of the Medieval moated house of Hen Cwrt lies ¼ mile North of Llantilio Crossenny Church, at the corner of the road to White Castle. The remains consist of a rectangular enclosure surrounded by a wet moat. Excavations have only recovered the slight remains of the foundations of the house.

During the 13th and 14th centuries the house possibly belonged to the Bishops of Llandaff, who had held land in Llantilio Crossenny since early times. The story that it was once occupied by Sir David Gam, who was knighted by King Henry V at the battle of Agincourt, is thought not to be true. However, at some time in the 15th Century either the son-in-law of David Gam, who was Sir William ap Thomas, Lord of White Castle, or William Herbert of Raglan, who was the son of ap Thomas, formed a deer park in the parish and the site lay in the SW corner of the park.

It is probable that the house may have continued in use until the Civil War, when Raglan was destroyed.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST TEILO, LLANTILIO CROSSENNY

The parish church of St Teilo at Llantilio Crossenny is situated on or near the site where in the 6th century the Saxons were defeated in battle by King Iddon son of Ynyr Gwent, the victory being attributed to the prayers of St Teilo, Bishop of Llandaff.

The building is of 13th century date with a central tower supporting a spire, which is a fairly recent addition. The peal of six bells is supported on four large wooden posts of some 60ft tall and 2ft square.

The Early English nave has been replaced with tall Perpendicular arches, although the lancet windows survive at the ends of the aisles. In the East wall of the tower can be seen the doorway which gave access to the now vanished gallery or rood loft.

Although the S transept is original, the North has been replaced by the Cil-Llwch chapel, being separated from the chancel by three arches. From the chapel a view of the High Altar can be obtained through one of two hagioscopes. A corbel of a head in the chapel is said to represent King Edward II.

On the floor of the chancel, which is of the Decorated period, are a number of floor slabs. Between the choir stalls are two slabs of great interest, one of a man who died in 1621 and showing the dress of the Stuart period. The second in memory of a vicar who died in 1660.

Standing in the centre of the nave, it will be noticed that the chancel is out of line with the nave, being deflected to the South. This is known as a 'weeping chancel' and was held to represent the inclination of Christ's head on the cross. However, from the fact that they are also known to be deflected to the North, makes it more likely that it was no more than a building error.

WHITE CASTLE

About one mile from the village of Llantilio Crossenny, on the summit of a high westward-facing hill, stands the formidable fortress of White Castle, in Welsh, Castell Gwyn.

This is one of three castles known as the 'Castles of the Tri-lateral', the other two are Skenfrith and Grosmont. These formed the defences set up by the Marcher Lords to secure their hold on the Welsh borderland of Gwent. The earlier name was Llantilio Castle, after the name of the manor in which it lies. The name White Castle must have been given because at some time the masonry was covered with a white plaster coating, traces of which still remain.

The earliest historical reference to Llantilio occurs in a charter dated to 1137/8, and although it does not mention a castle it must be assumed that some defence against the raiding Welsh must have existed. The Exchequer Accounts record that in the year 1161/2 a payment of £19.17 was made for the repair of the buildings in the castles of Llantilio, Grosmont and Skenfrith. Between 1184 and 1186 is also recorded the expenditure of £128.16 on work at the castle. This is thought to refer to the building of the curtain wall enclosing the inner ward. Again in 1186/7, £2.06 was spent on work in a dwelling in the tower.

In 1201 King John granted the 'Castles of the Tri-lateral' to Hubert de Burgh, who held them until 1205, when they were transferred to William de Braose. William fell from royal favour and lost his lands in 1207, but his son regained White Castle during the civil war at the end of the reign of King John. In 1219 Henry III regranted the Tri-lateral to Hubert de Burgh.

As usual, Hubert's position depended on his retention of the royal favour, but he fell in 1232 and the three castles reverted to the crown, being placed in charge of a royal officer, Waleran. In 1254 the castles were granted to the King's elder son, the Lord Edward, later King Edward I, and in 1267 they were transferred to his younger brother, the Earl of Lancaster.

It was during this period that a serious threat to the Western Marches developed. Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the Welsh ruler, took the offensive during the English civil war between King Henry III and Simon de Montfort. The Welsh tenants of the border Lordships rose in 1262, and many English castles were lost, and White Castle was considerably refortified as a matter of urgency. After these fortifications, White Castle was essentially a military building, lacking in ornamental detail and grace of design and never intended to be used as a domestic residence. After the Edwardian conquest of Wales, it lost its strategic importance, but remained an administrative centre.

PENRHOS CASTLE

This earthwork, sited in the North part of the parish of Penrhos, would appear to mark the site of one of those minor castles with which the county of Monmouthshire is studded. The remains are singularly well preserved and seem to have been free of mutilation since their abandonment in the middle of the 13th century.

The site, on the edge of an escarpment overlooking the valley of the River Trothy at Llantilio Crossenny across to the ridge crowned by the formidable stronghold of White Castle, is not a particularly strong one, for to the South and South East the ground is almost level and indeed rises slightly to the road junction at Cross Elm.

The castle, now remaining as an earthwork of a modified motte and bailey plan, would appear never to have been more than a timber palisaded structure, and there is not the slightest vestige or evidence of any masonry. It consisted of a moderate size motte of a rounded ovoid plan which rises some 25ft above an encircling moat, beyond which is a continuous rampart of counterscarp bank which has been broadened out at the NE and SE angles. That at the NE angle may be compared to a small bailey and was defended by its own slight rampart. Around this outwork, which has a steep and high external scarp, was a

second continuous ditch or moat, and on the West side the rampart rises 20 to 25ft above it. On the SE and most accessible side the defences are much slighter and the ditch is at present only 2 or 3ft deep. It would appear that here was the original approach to the stronghold. There are the remains of a slight counterscarp bank beyond the outer ditch on the North and West sides. There are pools within both ditches but these dry out during the summer and it would appear doubtful if it was the intention of the constructors to provide wet moats. The steep slope of the bed of the ditches to the W would have made it most unlikely. South East of the main earthwork are very slight traces of a much ploughed down bank which may indicate a second enclosure; however, that it represents the remains of an old field boundary would seem to be more likely. There are certain vague and very slight indications of banking immediately to the West of the Road junction West of Cross Elm. A short length of scarp a little distance down the escarpment to the North West would appear to be of natural origin.

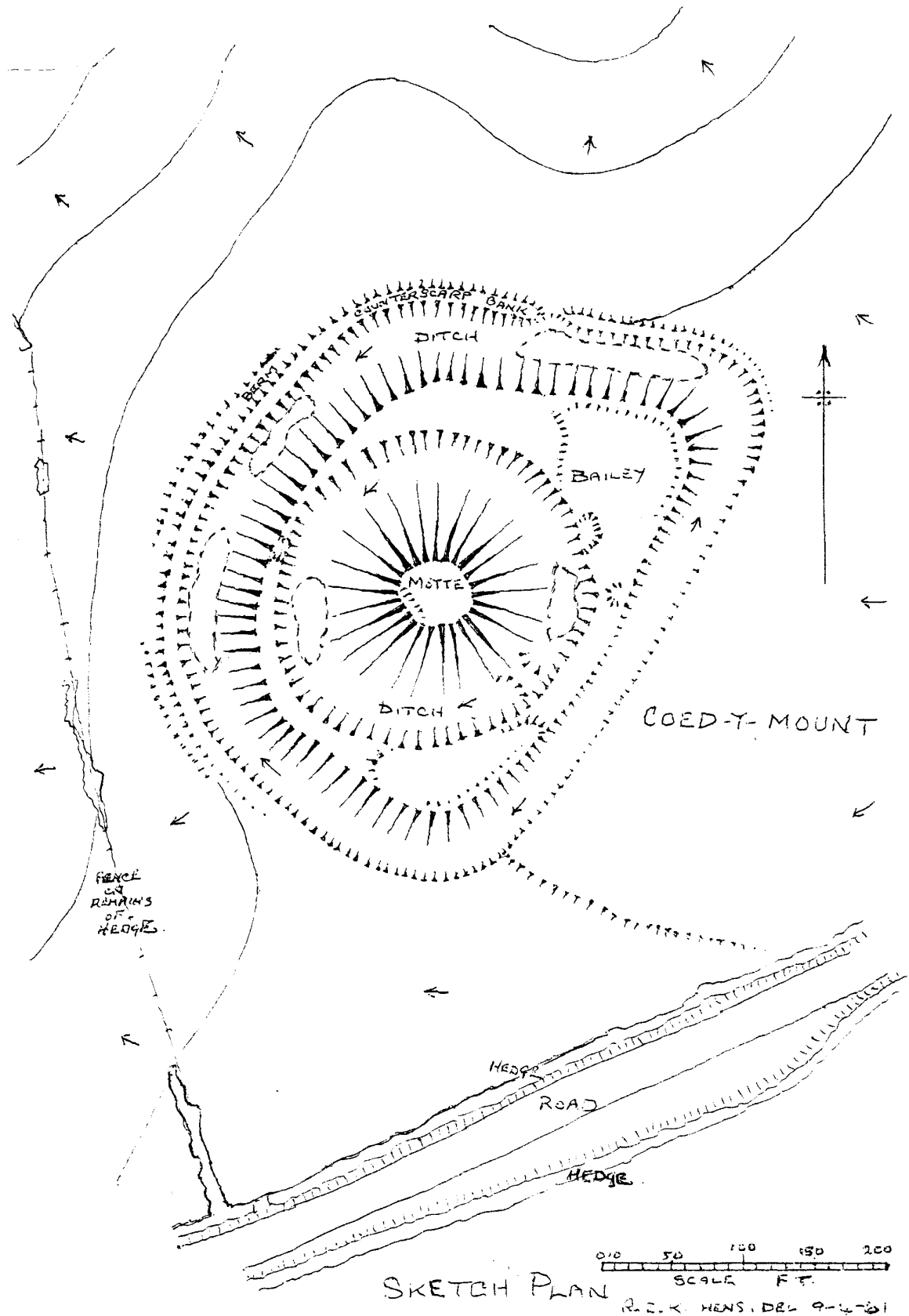
Until about three decades ago the earthwork was hidden in a grove of splendid beech trees known as Coed-y-Mount, but with the exception of a few isolated trees these have all been felled and the motte and its attendant earthworks are now a prominent object in the landscape, especially when viewed from the neighbourhood of Llantilio Crossenny.

It would appear that in this portion of the Welsh Marches the earlier Norman lords exercised an almost independent jurisdiction, the King's writ was a 'dead letter' in the neighbourhood of their strongholds. It would almost appear that it was their mutual jealousy which formed the strongest check on their power. The Crown often seemed to regard their quarrels with complacency.

The construction of this little castle at Penrhos exhibits quite strikingly their attitude of cynical indifference. In 1251 a patent was issued appointing John de Monmouth as custodian of the castle of Penrhos and the very next year a formal pardon was granted to William de Cantilupe, Lord of Abergavenny, for demolishing the fortress erected by John de Monmouth. The earthworks appear to belong not to circa 1250, but to the preceding century, so perhaps John de Monmouth had only been engaged in re-palisading an earlier earthwork, and probably not within his own Lordship of Monmouth but that of Abergavenny, with which his boundary was no doubt in dispute.

R E Kay
6th July, 1983

PENRHOS CASTLE GR 410-133.



FIELD MEETING, 22ND MAY, 1983

Members met at Pontrilas and examined two sites.

In the morning we visited a moated site in the parish of Kentchurch. The earthwork lies about 2 miles East of Pontrilas and is approached by way of Bannut Tree Farm.

After lunch we looked at a stretch of the Abergavenny to Hereford tramway to the East of the A465 just South of Wormbridge Church.

A MOATED MOUND AT KENTCHURCH

Shown on the larger scale Ordnance Survey Maps there are certain hatchures in a field to the East of Bowlston Court Wood (GR 422 270), denoting the site of an artificial mound. The earthwork seems to have escaped the notice of archaeologists until a brief description was given in Vol I of the RCAHM Invent for Herefordshire (1934). It is within the parish of Kentchurch in a situation remote from any road and near the headwaters of a small brook which here forms a small dingle in a southerly sloping hillside.

According to the above Invent, the mound measures 50ft by 43ft (summit) and is surrounded by a dry ditch except on the West where there is a natural steep slope to the stream. The average height is 12ft above the ditch but is considerably higher above the stream on the West. There are traces of a causeway to the mound on the East, south of which a short length of the outer scarp of the ditch forms an isolated bank, with a slight ditch on its three outer sides integral with that of the main ditch. On top of the mound are three small platforms. A close investigation (made in 1949) of the southernmost showed traces of stone debris and its plan seems to have been of a rectangular building, the floor of which is raised a couple of feet above the general level of the top of the mound. Following the edge of part of the western and southern sides of the summit of the mound were traces of what appeared to be the footings of a wall, grass grown and, where stone was exposed, in a very decayed state. The eastern corner of the semi-circular northern platform/s also showed traces of stonework, but whether this (and other exposed stone) was structural or part of the body of the mound was not ascertained. There is no visible evidence of any outer earthworks.

There are features about this earthwork which seem to lift it out of the usual class of defensive mounds or mottes which are scattered so thickly on the Herefordshire border area and which seem to have been of the early Norman period. Its wide causeway of approach, with a lack of serious defensive obstacles on that side, is unusual when it is considered how well the rest of the circumference of the mound is protected by its ditch or natural features.

The excavation of a similar mound, albeit of much slighter elevation and defences, at Wallingstones in Llangarron parish by the Archenfield Archaeological Group in the 1960's may offer possible clues as to the identity of the earthwork. This excavation revealed that at least one sector of its mound retained the foundations of what appeared to be a substantial defensive wall, revetting its slope and cut into its scarp, with a projecting rectangular basement, probably a garderobe pit. This had subsequently been overlaid with less substantial walls, some possibly relating to a half timbered house and showing continuous occupation evidence of the site from the 13th to the 17th Century and possibly beyond.

The history of the Kentchurch mound is not known; its date is uncertain, but it is undoubtedly of a defensive nature. No finds of worked masonry have been reported. The name Bowlston Court Wood, which it closely adjoins, may give some clue to its origin or past history. A nearby habitation is titled Coldharbour, a name more usually associated near roads or remains of Roman origin.

It should be noted that the plan given is based upon that depicted in the RCAHM Invent with added detail, surveyed by the writer in 1949. The site was then open to the field on the East and the earthwork supporting a few trees, and grass grown, was easily accessible and quite an attractive spot to scramble over. Alas, when visited by Members of the Archaeological Research Group on 22nd May, 1983, all had changed. The dingle of the

little streamlet, now fenced off from the field on the East, was a wilderness of bushes, nettles and fallen trees, and the site difficult of investigation on account of the choke of undergrowth.

R E Kay
31st May, 1983

THE ABERGAVENNY TO HEREFORD TRAMWAY

At the beginning of the 19th century Hereford received coal supplies from the Forest of Dean, transported by barge on the River Wye. This was only possible when the river was in full spate, and the arrangement was somewhat haphazard. A tramway was planned from the Forest, via Ross-on-Wye to Hereford, but strong opposition from the barge owners caused delays and complications. In the meantime an Act of Parliament was passed in 1812 permitting the construction of a more geographically favourable tramway from the South Wales coalfields. This offered better quality coal at a lower cost. The Forest of Dean plans had to be abandoned.

The first stretch to be completed ran from Govilon Wharf, West of Abergavenny on the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal, to Llanvihangel. This was soon extended to Pandy and then to Monmouth Gap, one mile South of Pontrilas. It was not until 1826 that an Act was passed allowing the last 12 miles, to Hereford, to be constructed. This portion was officially opened in 1829 and terminated at the wharf on the South bank of the Wye just upstream of the old Wye Bridge. It is said to have posed few engineering problems apart from a short tunnel, 200 yards long, near Haywood Lodge. Otherwise no cutting exceeded 10ft in depth. The single track tramway had passing loops about 50 yards in length at intervals of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile.

The stretch examined at Wormbridge ran on a well preserved embankment averaging a height of 5 to 8 feet above the flood meadows of the Worm Brook. Considerable stonework remains at the river crossing but more recent work has obscured and confused the original construction. North East of the stream the line of the tramway follows the contours of a gentle promontary and then heads for St Devereux along the course of the steam railway.

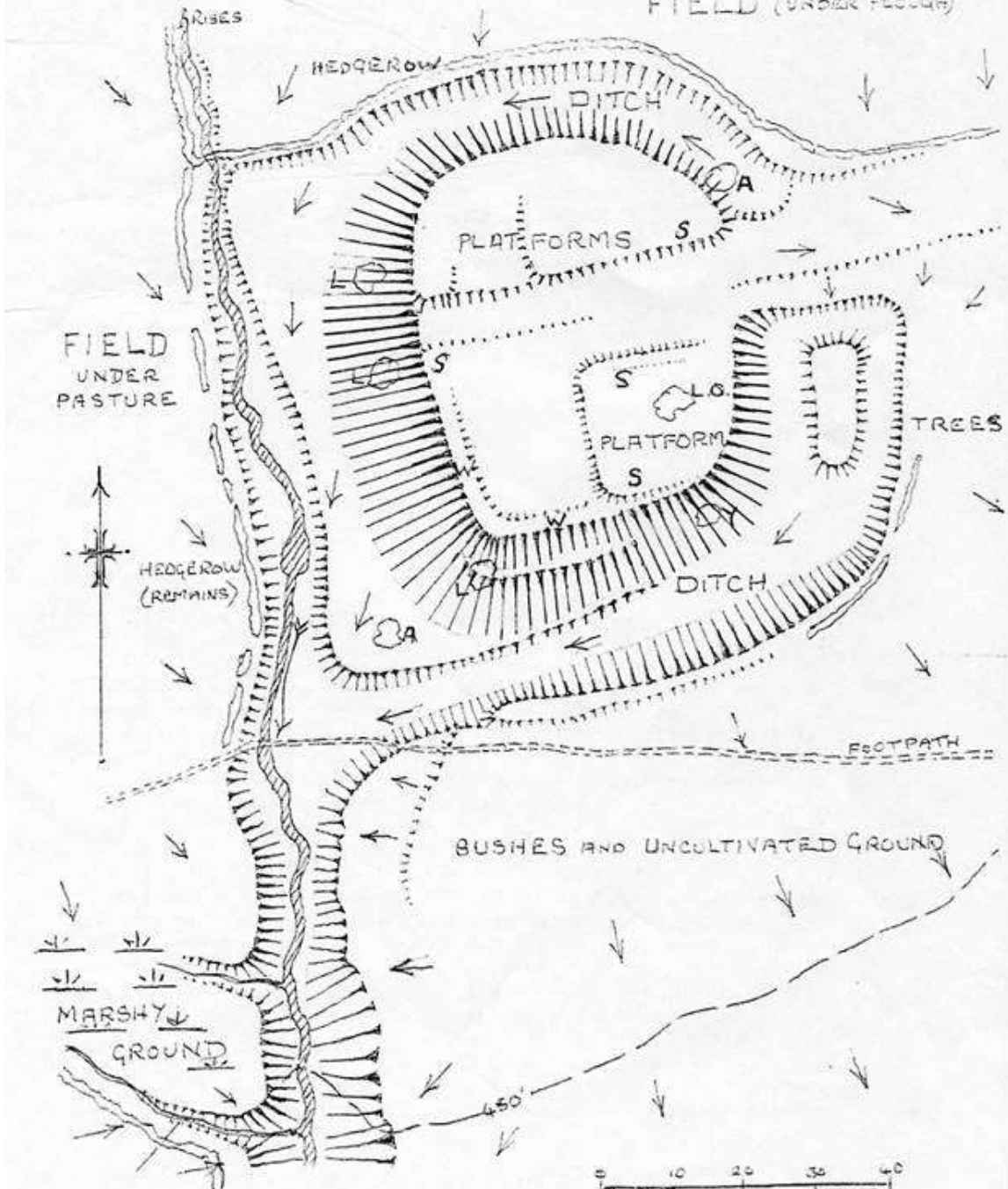
The peak years were 1834-1838, when records show the tariff for transporting coal, grain, apples, cider, manure and minerals. The cost of coal is said to have dropped dramatically in Hereford when the tramway opened.

In 1845 a company was formed to construct the steam railway. Owners of the tramway realised that their days were numbered and sought to sell off portions of track wherever possible. The modern railway follows the line of the tramway, using many of its road and stream crossings. The whole length from Abergavenny to Hereford was completed and opened in 1854, so it can be seen that the life of the tramway here, as in other parts of Britain, was short.

Details of the history of the company and of the construction of the track are ably described by Mr E H Morris in two articles in the Woolhope Club Transactions of 1941 (p 97) and 1947 (p 65). Most of the above information is taken from these papers.

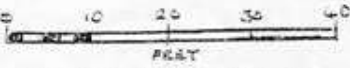
"MOATED MOUND"

E. OF BOWLSTON COURT
WOOD, PARISH OF KENTCHURCH
FIELD (UNDER PLOUGH)



SKETCH PLAN

BASED ON PLAN IN VOL. I OF
HEREFORDS. INVENT. ROYAL
COMMISSION, HIST. MON. 1934
ADDED DETAIL ETC. SURVEY 28-3-49 R.E.K.



APPROX. SCALE

- KEY
- S. TRACES OF STONEMWORK?
 - V. FOOTING OF WALL?
 - A. ASH TREE
 - L. LIME TREE
 - O. LARGE OAK