

# HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



**HAN 43      January 1985**

**WOOLHOPE CLUB  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

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**No. 43      January 1985**

**EDITORIAL**

**The programme from June to November 1984 was completed satisfactorily, culminating in the very interesting talk by Miss J Wills, County Archaeological Field Officer, on the work of the Department and Archaeological Sites in Herefordshire. It is hoped to include a condensed version of her notes in a future News.**

The AGM was held at the Golden Eagle Restaurant, Commercial Street, Hereford by kind permission of the proprietors, HRCW Cheung and Winifred Soo. Membership of the Section stands at 48, and the Treasurer reported that the financial situation was healthy. There are a few changes in the Committee, as set out on page eleven, and our thanks to those who have served in the various offices. The Annual Subscription remains the same for 1985 at £1.50, which should be sent to Mrs R Wride, the Treasurer.

Members interested in the article on Rowland Vaughan's Waterworks may like to read "Water over the Meadows" by Jane Doherty in the Winter/ Spring edition of Natural World, the magazine of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, 1984. This mentions Herefordshire and Hampshire in particular.

At last the index to the ARS News up to No 40, prepared by Ron Shoesmith, has been run off and a copy is included for Members. Few Members will have a complete set of back numbers but one is available in the Reference Library, Broad Street, Hereford. The Committee has considered a possible re-print of earlier editions and is looking into it.

The information on Urishay Chapel (See also News No 39 and article page 17, News No 37) provided by Ron Shoesmith is an update following further excavations, and we are grateful for these details together with the information sheet and plan he prepared in conjunction with Richard Kay on Snodhill Castle in connection with the joint visit with the Ewyas Harold WEA Group to the Golden Valley on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1984.

The late Norman Bridgewater left all his remaining notebooks, papers and artefacts from excavations to the Hereford City Museum. The residue was collected by Richard Kay from Mrs Bridgewater, and we were able to establish that although most of the work Mr Bridgewater was involved in has been published there is still material which should be, for example a final report on Huntsham, a Romano-British Villa complex. We hope to co-operate with the Museum and main Club in this respect.

Finally I must express my thanks to the contributors of the articles in this Edition, to Richard Kay the Assistant Editor, and Sally Badham and Mike Hemming, the typists.

**C E Attfield  
Editor**

**PROGRAMME MARCH-AUGUST 1985**

Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> March	Kings Cuple area. Looking at Welsh/Saxon boundary banks, 15 <sup>th</sup> century ruined stone house, Castle motte and ? bailey site.	Meet at the church, Kings Cuple, 11.00 am. Leader Mrs E Taylor
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> April	Stretton Grandison and Homend Park area. Looking at old roads, banks and ditches (morning). Castle Frome site (afternoon).	Meet at Stretton Grandison Church, 11.00 am. Leader for morning Mrs Jean O'Donnell

Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> May	Hedgerow dating (joint with Natural History Section). Please see also page 17.	Venue: Bodenham Village Hall, opp Englands Gate Public House on the A4157. Grid ref: 543513. Leader Robert Cameron Meet 10.30 am
Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Leintwardine area. Looking for features suggested by local place names.	Meet Red Lion Public House, Leintwardine. 11.00 am Leader Mrs R Skelton
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> July	Looking at various archaeological sites in the neighbourhood of the Mountain Centre near Brecon. Grid ref: 978264.	Meet in layby opposite Bronllys Castle, 10.30 am. Grid ref: 150345 on A479 to Talgarth. Lifts – for possible, contact Chairman or Secretary.
August	No meeting.	

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, 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1984  
PENTWYN AND TWYN-Y-GAER HILL FORTS**

The field meeting, attended by a fair number of members, was held under excellent conditions, the day being extremely hot, the sky cloudless and just a slight breeze when we attained the heights of Pentwyn (1,080ft) and Twyn-y-Gaer (1,399ft). Leaving Llanfihangel Crucorney, we approached Pentwyn via Trefedw and Trewyn Court, turning right at Groes-Lwyd crossroads and continuing almost to the summit. Vehicles were parked at the roadside and after a short uphill walk, the summit, and the site of Pentwyn Hill Fort was reached.

A walk of the ramparts was then made, starting at the northern end, which from the main Abergavenny road can be seen as a bank and notch on the skyline of the southern termination of Hatterall Hill. The walk then continued along the eastern side, which owing to the steep drop to the valley floor was considered by the builders to be sufficient in the way of defence, hence only a small rampart was constructed. We then continued around the southern end (the site of the entrance) and then returned along the western defences, frequent stops being made to sit and enjoy the views that may be obtained from the site.

Following lunch, members preceded to the foot of terminal knoll of the Fwthog ridge, on which is sited Twyn-y-Gaer Hill Fort. Here we were met by Mr L A Probert, who had kindly agreed to guide us round the site and to tell us about the excavations he had carried out over a period of some time. After a stiff climb with frequent pauses, again to admire the views, the summit was reached. A tour of the site was made, with Mr Probert pointing out various excavation sites and explaining the results and finds of his labours.

After descending the hill, and a short stop for refreshments, members continued their journey through Cwm Coed-y-Cerrig to visit Partrishow. A tour was made of the church, with

its rood screen, stone alters and other interesting features. The 'Holy Well' of St Issui, in a dingle below the church, was also visited.

I would like to thank Mr Richard Kay for his help given in planning the meeting and for supplying the notes and plan of Pentwyn. Thanks are also given to Mr L A Probert of Abergavenny for his kindness in coming along to explain his work on the site of Twyn-y-Gaer.

**M T Hemming**

### **THE CHURCH OF MERTHYR ISSUI, PATRICIO (PARTRISHOW)**

The Church of Merthyr Issui is situated on the southern slopes of the Gader Range, above the Grwyne Fawr Valley, five and a half miles north of Abergavenny. Below the church, in a dingle, runs a stream named Nant Mair (St Mary). Across the valley, standing on the terminal knoll of the Fwthog ridge, can be seen the Iron Age fort of Twyn-y-Gaer.

According to tradition, a holy man named Issui had a cell nearby, probably in the dingle and near to the 'Holy Well' still to be seen. From his cell Issui instructed the local population in the Christian Faith. He was, however, murdered by an ungrateful traveller and his cell became a place of pilgrimage. The water from the well, being thought to possess healing properties, attracted pilgrims seeking cures for the "ailments of the day". One pilgrim in gratitude for being cured of leprosy left a quantity of gold to build a church on the hillside above the well, and this was dedicated to St Issui.

It is thought that the site of this early church is marked by the chapel, built onto the west wall of the present main church, and that when the later church was built the old was retained as a memorial of the early foundation. The window in the west wall of the chapel is of 13<sup>th</sup> C date and the north wall probably earlier. The south wall with its chamfered pointed door, window and the roof are of 14<sup>th</sup> C date. From these dates it may be inferred that at some time the south wall and the roof collapsed and were rebuilt. The chapel contains a stone altar or mensa, inscribed with six consecration crosses. This is rare as the usual is five. Consecration crosses represent the five wounds of Christ upon the cross, and are marked by the Priest at the dedication of the altar with the sign of the cross in consecrated oil. A cross was then cut in each of the five places, one in each corner and one in the centre. Above the altar is a square aperture or hagioscope (squint) enabling those in the chapel to join Mass being celebrated in the main church. Alongside the altar is a canopied recess which would have contained a statue of the saint in whose name the altar was dedicated.

On entering the porch, which is of 14<sup>th</sup> C date with stone seats on either side, can be seen a stone water stoup which is of an earlier date than the porch. The arch over it appears to be the head of a 13<sup>th</sup> C window. To the left on entering the church is an ancient massive font, one of the oldest in Wales. It bears a Latin inscription, the translation of which reads "Menhir made me in the time of Genillin". Genillin, or Cynhillin, who was the only son and heir of Rhys Coch, was Prince of Powis and Lord of Ystradyw, prior to the Norman conquest. We have therefore definite evidence relating to a church or religious site at Patricio for over 900 years. On the west wall of the nave is a painted figure of "Time", a skeleton with scythe, hour-glass and spade. There are the remains of painted texts on the north wall, but owing to their condition these are not easy to read. Also to be seen is a mediaeval "dug-out" parish chest. This has been hewn from a solid tree trunk, with a portion sliced off to form a lid, with metal hinges. It has provision for three locks. These chests would have been used for the safe-keeping of the parish valuables, and could only be opened in the presence of the three key holders, being the Rector and Church-wardens.

The crowning glory of Patricio church is its late 15<sup>th</sup> C chancel screen and rood loft, carved from Irish oak by a craftsman whose identity is now lost. The screen and loft were never painted, so the carving as we see it was as the craftsman left it, and all but the passing of time has changed the colour of the wood. The carving is seen by some to have a Flemish influence; others claim it to be the work of an Italian engaged by the Abbot of

Llanthony. It is not impossible that it is the work of a Welsh craftsman, as similar screens are to be found along the Welsh Borders. The rood loft is approached by seven stone steps through a Tudor headed doorway on the north side. The small window on the south side would have been to light the rood. Standing on the rood loft, or suspended from the ceiling, would have been the Rood (a cross and crucifix) and the accompanying figures of The Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist.

At the reformation most of the rood lofts were torn down and destroyed, and consequently they are very rare. In many cases the screens did not suffer to the same extent. Patricio, however, is fortunate that it retains both, although the Rood and figures are now lost. In front of the rood-screen, to the north and south of the chancel arch, stand two stone altars, both with consecration crosses. These altars have a parallel at Urishay Chapel, Peterchurch, Herefordshire. The destruction of these stone altars was ordered by both Edward VI and Elizabeth I but Patricio, however, retains three such altars.

Along the south exterior wall of the church runs a stone bench, another rare feature, and standing opposite is the churchyard cross, attached to which is a small wooden lectern. No doubt the congregation enjoyed open-air services during the summer months.

**M T Hemming**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1984**

References:

'The Church of Merthyr Issui at Patricio', by Canon Reed.  
'Church Furnishings', by P Dirsztay.

**TWYN-Y-GAER HILL FORT**

The southern slopes of the Black Mountains are divided into a series of more or less parallel ridges by the narrow and steep sided valleys of the Grwyne Fechan, Grwyne Fawr, Honddu and the Monnow and its tributaries. Erosion of past ages has also left detached from the main massif of the Black Mountains the isolated sandstone eminences of the Sugar Loaf, Bryn Arrow and further to the south Skyrid Fawr. The southern confines of the main Black Mountain massif have crowning their more strategic heights a series of remarkable fortifications which overlook the Vale of Usk and North Gwent. These encampments are so placed as to be in sight of each other to command the valleys on either side as well as the lower ground to the south. From W to E they are:

Crug Hywel on the Table Mountain above Crickhowell and at the southern termination of the Allt Mawr Ridge. It stands at an altitude of 1,481ft and completely commands the Vale of the River Usk, the lower part of the Grwyne Fawr and the entrance to the Grwyne Fechan Valley.

Four and half miles to the E, crowning the Fwthog Ridge is Twyn-y-Gaer camp, sited at an altitude of 1,399ft. Crowning a conical hill which is connected to the main body of the ridge it commands both the valleys of the Grwyne Fawr and the Honddu, and overlooks the defile of Cwm Coed-y-Cerrig to the south which separates the main bulk of the Black Mountains from the detached Bryn Arrow 1,250ft to the south.

This magnificently placed encampment is within the County of Monmouthshire and forms one of that county's most spectacularly sited fortifications. It has an uninterrupted view to Crug Hywell to the W, and to the remarkable encampment on the end of the Hatterall Ridge at Pentwyn to the E.

This later earthwork, less than two miles away and sited at an elevation of 1,080ft, commands the Honddu Valley and the Vale of the River Monnow, and is in turn within easy sight of the triple-ramparted camp on the summit of Walterstone Common Hill, two and a half miles to the east.

The hill on which Twyn-y-Gaer stands, when viewed from some directions, assumes the aspect of a very perfect truncated cone. This eminence is crowned by the earthworks of a fine elliptical-shaped camp which covers the whole of the summit of this shapely termination of the Fwthog Ridge. The axis of the camp runs roughly W to E, with the highest point of the enclosure towards the western end. On the north and east, the defences consist of a steeply scarped rampart and a deep cut fosse with a counterscarp. For a short distance at the north-east angle the counterscarp is doubled. The west end of the enclosure is defended by a double rampart, intervening fosse and traces of a counterscarp, all of slighter construction than the high and formidable defences to the N and E. On the south, except for a slight scarp and rampart there is a precipitous slope, especially to the south, on all sides except the west where the slope of the ground towards the saddle of the ridge 250ft below is a little less steep. The elongated elliptical-shaped enclosure is divided into three unequal areas by cross defences of fosse and rampart. The main, and possibly only, entrance to the encampment appears to have been through the lowest sited portion of the defences near the north-east angle. Here are traces of a causeway over the fosse and a break in the counterscarp. The rampart at this point turns inwards, forming a narrow passageway 48ft long and about 15ft wide. The ramparts appear to have been constructed of drystone walling bound together with turfs. The medial fosses across the main enclosure, although still of considerable depth and rock cut, do not appear to have made junction with the external fosse, the rampart of which continues straight across them. Near their centres, these medial fosses and ramparts are interrupted by a causeway and traces of inturned entrances similar to the main entrance. The medial ramparts, now very much levelled, appear to have been about 10ft thick and built of stone. The upper or west area of the enclosure appears to have formed the "Citadel" of the whole work. It may mark the confines of an earlier fortification of which the other defences are a later extension. This is very probable as the form of the ramparts, although modified, differs from those which defend the rest of the encampment.

There are no traces of hut foundations within this "Citadel", but there are traces of sinkings near the main entrance and a certain amount of loose debris between the two medial ramparts, which are difficult to account for. There are no traces of springs within the area of the defences, but a few hundred yards down the hillside to the S and E are very copious seepings of water.

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The previous article on Twyn-y-Gaer, for which I am indebted to Richard Kay, was written following his survey in 1951. Excavation of the site commenced in 1965 with a small team drawn mainly from the Abergavenny Archaeological Group.

An important object of the excavation was to examine the structures of the enclosures and to establish the relative chronology. Excavations were therefore concentrated at the three entrances which are aligned along the spine of the hill, and also in areas where the cross-banks join the perimeter bank.

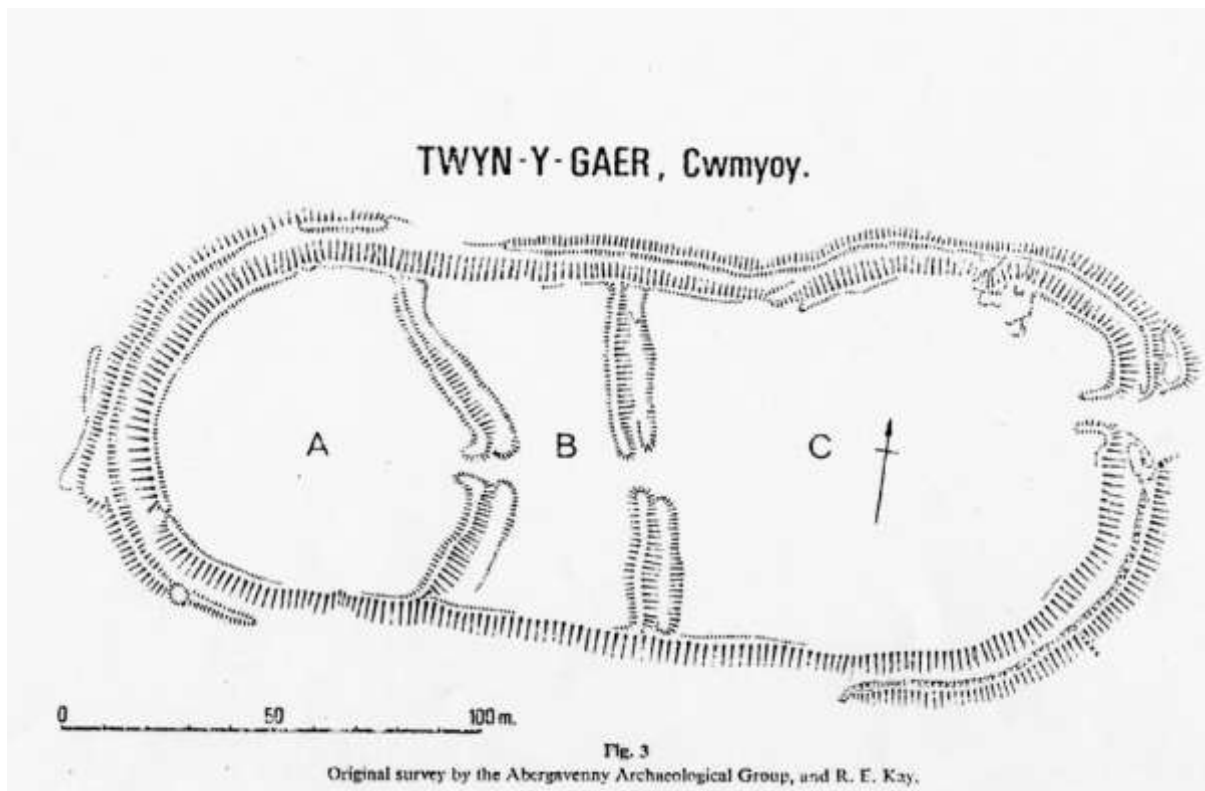
During excavations on the site of the later east gate, numerous small post and stake holes were found. Some of the fence material was found preserved in situ, carbonised and buried by the soil, etc, of the later rampart. The remains consisted of stakes 60mm thick, set 300-450mm apart with lateral members lying criss-cross between. Random samples indicate that the fence was comprised mainly of birch. Gate post holes were found. It appears, therefore, that during the early stages of the camp the two western enclosures formed the main area of the camp and the eastern area formed a fenced annexe which was subsequently enclosed.

A few post holes were found in the interior, but did not appear to conform to a recognisable house plan. However, as they sometimes occurred in pairs, they may

represent the door posts of houses. Burnt daub, bearing wattle marks, was found in the eastern enclosure. In the eastern enclosure, an arc of stones forming a curb was found, this may indicate a platform or the foundations for a turf wall. A few flint artefacts were found, but with this exception all the material so far recovered may be attributed to the period of the pre-Roman Iron Age. A very small quantity of pottery was found, as were Iron La Tene brooches. Several small tools were found, ? carpenter and a smith. Also found were glass beads, fragments of saddle querns, curved knives, a broken spearhead and iron-slag and crucibles. The last items may represent a Metallurgical industry.

Members wishing to read a fuller and more detailed report of the excavations are referred to 'Twyn-a-Gaer Hillfort', an interim assessment by L A Probert, in 'Welsh Antiquity', published by the National Museum of Wales, 1976.

**M T Hemming**  
**26<sup>th</sup> June, 1984**



### **PENTWYN HILL FORT – A FIELD SURVEY OF THE EXISTING REMAINS**

To anyone travelling by rail or road from Hereford to Abergavenny on the approach to the village of Pandy, the wall-like ridge of Hatterall Hill and its southern termination, Pentwyn, are silhouetted against the sky, and the nick of the N rampart and the ditch of the hill fort in the outline of the ridge top forms a prominent landmark.

Hatterall Hill, the easternmost ridge of the main massif of the Black Mountains, descends gradually to its southern termination of Pentwyn at a height of 1,080' OD and then plunges to the vicinity of the junction of the Monnow and Honddu at Pandy. These streams run in deep valleys on either side of the main ridge before arriving at their confluence. There is a continuing and abruptly rising upland from Pentwyn to the SW at Llwyg Hill, separated by the lower saddle at Groes Llwyd. The hill fort is at the S extremity of Pentwyn, at the point where the slope descends steeply to this saddle. On a clear day the site commands a



vast prospect in all directions except to the N, and its close neighbouring hill forts at Walterstone Common and Twyn-y-Gaer are visible across its valleys immediately to the E and W. The site is an exposed one, with the ground sloping precipitously away on the E to the floor of the valley of the Monnow many hundreds of feet below. On the W the slope, although not precipitous, drops steeply down to the Honddu Valley, while on the S the slope, is of a slightly less gradient. Only towards the N is the approach to the defences level, rising after a short distance by easy slopes to the main bulk of Hatterall Hill.

Pentwyn will be seen to be a rather remarkable hill fort of a somewhat irregular, elongated plan with some curious complexities in the lay-out of its defences, whose surface remains would seem to indicate some complications in the development of the site over the period of its occupation; which probably extended over the last four or five centuries of the pre-Roman Iron Age. It could be suggested from the visible surface evidence that its defences were drastically remodelled at least twice during this time. The first probably took place during a period (perhaps phase is a better word to use!) of expansion and the second following a subsequent period of contraction. The earthwork seems to belong to that group of Brecknock and Monmouthshire hill forts showing a main enclosure sub-divided by cross ditches and ramparts, of which Castell Dinas (1) and neighbouring Twyn-y-Gaer (2) are supreme examples. Like the latter, its defences are, in part, bivallate.

The defences of the suggested Initial Phase or Phase 1 of the occupation of the site seem to have been largely obscured by later alteration and destruction, but it was probably a single large univallate enclosure with its defences following the N and W ramparts of the present northern subrectangular 'enclosure' or division of the hill fort and then sweeping round to the SW and S along the line of a low scarp within the present southern sub-division of the hill fort. This scarp would seem to indicate the site of an early and subsequently levelled rampart. There are still fairly substantial remains of what appears to be an original entrance on its SE segment.

During a suggested Phase 2, the enclosed area of the defences was further extended to the S and SW after the apparent slighting of the defences of Phase 1 in this portion of their circuit. The new defences, being constructed further out and lower down the hill slope, consisted of an inner rampart below which was a wide berm or terrace, and an outer rampart defended by a ditch and counterscarp bank. The wide intervening space between the two ramparts may indicate an attempt at constructing in an economic manner defences in depth. The single entrance remained at the SE of the defences close to the E escarpment of the ridge and in line with the entrance through the demolished Phase 1 rampart.

A suggested Phase 3 seems to indicate a late and considerable contraction of the site. A new straight ditch and rampart was dug E to W across the narrow waist of the previously defended area, thus forming the present N sub-division of the hill fort, an almost rectangular area. The N and W ramparts of Phases 1 and 2 were retained and that on the N probably at this time increased in height. During this phase the S defences of Phase 2 seem to have been neglected if not totally abandoned and the area of the S sub-division no longer used, at least in a defensive sense.

The excavations which have been painstakingly undertaken over a number of years at neighbouring Twyn-y-Gaer, where the area enclosed by the main defences of the hill fort had been divided into three sub-divisions by cross-ditches and ramparts, show that there were no fewer than five main phases in the development of its defences. Evidently any future excavation at Pentwyn could increase the possibility of more phases at this site, and if analogies to findings at Twyn-y-Gaer were found at Pentwyn it may modify or even reverse the sequence of the suggested chronology of the development of the Pentwyn defences as suggested. Excavations at Twyn-y-Gaer would seem to suggest that Pentwyn, on the fringe of Silurian territory, also would have had a spare occupation level, with a population level of a small hamlet, and not a crowded and densely-hutted oppidium such as Croft Ambrey (3) in neighbouring Decangian territory.

In now giving a little more detailed description of the earthworks, it may be said that on the E side of the hill fort the mountain slope is of such precipitous steepness that no artificial defences other than a little scarping and possibly a palisade were necessary.

The N sub-rectangular 'enclosure' or sub-division, as has been previously stated, seems by the comparative completeness of its defences to represent the final modification of the hill fort. The S end of the Pentwyn ridge has been separated from the level and then gradually rising ground to the N by a deep dry ditch and a formidable rampart constructed in one almost straight length of 200'. This rampart, of considerable proportions, still rises some 18' above the ditch and up to 10' above the interior. Although it might not compare with the monumental size of the S rampart of Gaer Fawr (near Newchurch, Mon), similarly built across the neck of a ridge, or the even more stupendous proportions of the defences of some of the larger Herefordshire hill forts, it is still an impressive work. On the W, after a modern break formed by a trackway, the rampart angles sharply round and runs in a southerly direction rising only 1' to 2' above the interior level but with a steep external scarp of 13'. It runs some 400', roughly parallel with the precipitous E scarp of the ridge, but bows outward slightly.

The W ditch for the portion of the defences described has been altered by having been utilised as a roadway in recent times. There appears to have been a strong counter-scarp bank to its southern half, now obscured by a dry built stone wall. The suggested Phase 3 defences, just described, would appear to be the same as those of Phase 1 and 2, perhaps modified or overlaid. On the S side of the N sub-division of the hill fort the defences consisted of a newly cut ditch and a modest rampart across the waist of the older, larger defended area. This completed the defences of Phase 3. This rampart and ditch, although moderately strong, is of much slighter proportions than the N and W defences of the reduced area. A causeway over, or interruption in its ditch, leads to a simple entrance or gap in the rampart near its SW angle. For some little distance to the E of this entrance, the rampart has recently (early 1960's) been levelled. Where the N and S ramparts of the reduced area approach the precipitous scarp at the E side of the ridge they angle round before dying out. A grassy trackway passing through the S entrance traverses the interior and cuts through the defences at the NW angle of the enclosure, but only the S entrance is an original feature. The area enclosed has a large number of irregularities and shallow quarry pits, probably of 18th or 19th century date and dug in search of the flat tile-like stones of the Old Red Sandstone measures, of which the dry stone walling in the nearby field boundaries has been constructed. These disturbances are mostly in the northern part of enclosure, close to the great N rampart. It has been reported that two Roman copper coins of Constantine were found during 1936 in the upcast from a rabbit burrow near the N rampart, but it was not stated if the findspot was inside or outside the defences. Their present venue is unknown (4).

The defences of the southern sub-division of the hillfort, although quite traceable in their entirety, have in places been rather mutilated by the construction of a roadway, various tracks, dry stone walling and past attempts at levelling. On the W a sunken trackway has been cut through the two ramparts of the suggested secondary phase of expansion of the defences, but this mutilation does not seem to mask any original entrance. W of the roadway, in the field which slopes down towards the valley of the Honddu, are certain ploughed down scarps which may or may not be natural features. The two ramparts of Phase 2 are seen best preserved in the middle of the S side. The inner rises 1½' above the interior, with an external scarp of 6' to 8' dropping, without a ditch, to a wide berm or terrace, varying in width from 25' to nearly three times that distance. The outer rampart rises directly from this berm or terrace, rising no more than 1' to 2' with an outer scarp of 5' to 8' to which there is a strong external ditch, now mutilated by the roadway and associated trackways on the W and SW. The arrangements of the prominent counterscarp bank beyond the ditch have likewise been obscured by the drystone walling of field boundaries. Within the area of this southern sub-division of the hillfort, and set back some 60' and more from the inner rampart of suggested Phase 2 construction, is a 3' to 4' high scarp, marking the last vestiges

of the assumed Phase 1 rampart. Both this and the Phase 2 ramparts make clever use of the natural contours of the ground. On the W side of the original entrance the Phase 1 rampart shows signs of thickening to an inturn, bearing on its top a considerable pit-like depression. With the Phase 2 defences, on the W side of its steeply sloping entrance the inner rampart shows a characteristic inturn with a second depression this time on the slope of its outer scarp. E of the entrance the rampart curves outwards in a sickle shape, forcing the approach to the entrance to be made at a tangent, under the inturning rampart.

This sickle-like projection is now the only portion of the defences to show on the surface, its stony construction. The outer rampart ends a little distance to the W of the entrance, on the edge of a large depression in the outer slope of the inner rampart. This depression is possibly of recent date. The approach to the entrance through the counterscarp bank was by way of a further shallow depression, natural this time, sloping rather steeply up from the S. On the W of the entrance way, the counterscarp bank ends in a square bastion-like projection, showing traces of drywalling and backed by a rock cut excavation. This feature may represent grass-grown foundations of a more recent date. The interior of the southern sub-division of the hill fort is more uneven, sloping markedly away to the W and S, than the almost level and higher northern sub-division. There are in its NE quarter further small quarry pits similar to those S of the great N rampart. A sunken track leaves the S sub-division of the hill fort to the N of its entrance and continues as a ramp down the precipitous E escarpment of the ridge. It is probably not earlier than Medieval in date. Finally, some little distance down the hill slope below the entrance and to the SE are the remains of a fairly strong bank with a ditch on its upper side. This crosses the present approach path then angles to the N and after a little distance dies out into the precipitous eastern slope of the ridge.

**R E Kay**  
**20<sup>th</sup> April, 1984**

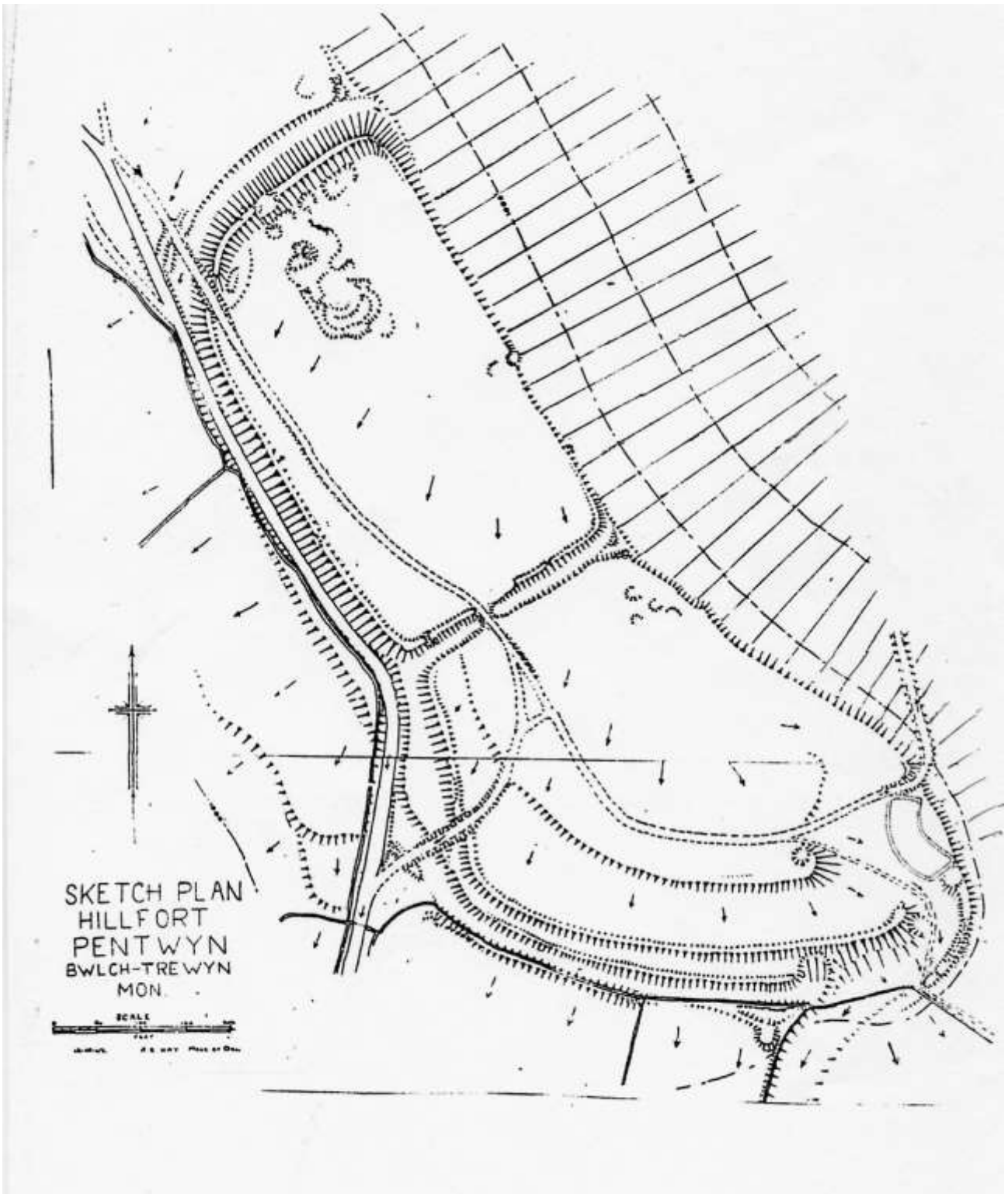
References:

1. R E Kay, 'Castell Dinas', pp 15-27, Vol X Brycheiniog, 1964.
2. L A Probert, 'Twyn-y-Gaer Hill Fort: An Interim Assessment', pp 105-119, Welsh Antiquity, National Museum of Wales, 1976.
3. S C Stanford, 'Croft Ambrey', 1974.
4. A Hyde, High Nash, Coleford, Glos, 1936.

**NEWS ITEM – WEA and HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES**

The WEA and Herefordshire Local History Societies have arranged a joint programme of talks and visits on 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Ewyas Harold Memorial Hall for the Local History Day School. Trevor Rowley of Oxford University Dept for External Studies will speak on "Rural Settlement and Field Systems in the Medieval Marches".

For further details write to Mrs Jean O'Donnell, 5 Broadlands Lane, Hereford, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Telephone No. Hereford 274904.



## **FIELD MEETING, EASTNOR, JANUARY 29<sup>TH</sup>, 1984**

The meeting, held on a very clement day for the time of the year, and led by Mrs R Skelton, was well attended, the main objectives being an examination of a moated site in Eastnor Park and a visit to Bronsil Castle. From Wayend Street members had a pleasant walk along an unfenced driveway to Hillend Farm and then across fields to a low spur of hill above the valley of the Glynch Brook on which the moated earthwork is situated. A return to Hillend Farm was made skirting the lower boundary of the wood on the W side of Howler's Heath Hill. At Wayend Street, cars were taken to the neighbourhood of Bronsil Castle and its scant ruins, moat and extensive earthworks explored and examined.

Hillend is a fine brick and timbered farmhouse, which appears to have passed unnoticed in the Herefordshire RCAHM Invent. An attractive building of about 1600 with exposed moulded bressemer beams, its porch with a gabled room above has drop pendants and many of the wooden framed windows seem to be original. All these features and doubtless others within the building are worthy of detailed recording.

A short distance up the field slope to the E of the house, the low remains of the walls of a demolished cottage within its former garden boundary were observed. Some chamfered upper cruck timbers lying loose among the debris, together with roofing braces and other old beams, all probably of 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> C date, were noted.

The moated site at GR752355 is interesting in being well preserved, unobscured by later developments and apparently completely unrecorded. Situated on a low, reasonably level topped spur projecting W from the hillside, it consists of a platform approximately rectangular in plan, some sixty feet in length and of half that width, surrounded by a wide, rounded angled moat that is now dry and some six to eight feet in depth. The slightly convex top of the platform does not rise above the surrounding ground level. To the S, a larger sub-rectangular area adjoining the moat is defended, or rather bounded by, a shallower ditch and bank. The ground falls away from the site rather sharply to the W and N and more slightly to the S but commences to rise quite sharply on the E, where a well defined holloway ascends the hill and from which the waters which once fed the moat must have been obtained. Traces of banks and hollows in the vicinity of the site, thought perhaps to relate to a DMV, are more probably pertaining to former outbuildings and paddocks attached to the late Medieval timber farmstead which doubtless occupied the moated site.

Bronsil was rather a remarkable late castle of which the scant masonry remains are now in a somewhat perilous condition. It stands in the very head of a small valley of one of the tributaries of the Glynch brook, almost under the shadow of Midsomer Hill and about one mile E of Eastnor church. Richard Beauchamp of Powick (afterwards Lord Beauchamp) had licence to crenellate at Bronsil in 1460. The castle he built incorporated some older structure, probably a manor house, and consisted of a rectangular enclosure with curtain walls, angle towers, which were apparently octagonal, a gatehouse on the W and intermediate towers in the middle of each of the other three sides, together with apartments around a central courtyard. The gatehouse had flanking semi-octagonal towers, of which the outer projecting part of the N one just survives in a state of imminent collapse. It seems to have been of two storeys, with a basement. It has an external moulded string course, with a small rectangular square-headed window above. At its foot a round outlet fashioned in two stones is probably that of a drain. This surviving wall of the tower is of two builds, the inner being the earlier in date. Adjoining the site of the NE angle tower, a low overgrown fragment of masonry incorporates the lower portion of a circular newel stair. The moat varies from sixty feet in width and is greater on the S. The curtain walls and towers formerly rose direct from it. It is crossed by a narrow masonry footbridge on the W, opposite the gatehouse. The moat is still wet (very) and surrounded by an outer bank except on the W, and the remains of an outer ditch, which on the E and SE has been extended by further banks relating to former fishponds. The banks to the S and E of the moat, and to which it forms a dam, are of considerable breadth and height, while that on the W, while not so much a construction for retaining the waters of the moat, is considerably higher and would have

completely overlooked the curtain of the castle, unless it had been of great height. There is some indication that it may have been broadened and heightened as a landscape feature in the planning of the grounds of the present mansion, W of the castle site. There are slight traces of buildings within the castle courtyard itself as well as around its perimeter. These are mainly masked by mounds of grass and tree-grown debris, out of which poke a few low fragments of walls. Only a toilsome removal of trees and some of the heaps of debris could recover their plan. Here and there are one or two courses of the outer face of the curtain and some of the towers survive above the present water level, which is higher than originally intended for the moat, but their appearance is so intermittent that it makes their exact plan doubtful. Large sections of masonry, especially on the E side, have collapsed into the moat distorting the outline of the small scale plan as shown in the RCAM Invent. A close examination makes it even doubtful if there was ever a projecting tower at the SE angle and it seems possible there was a minor second entrance or watergate at the intermediate towers in the middle of the N side, possibly approached by a wooden bridge. The recent fluctuations in the water level and overflowing of the moat are hastening the destruction of what masonry remains.

Down the valley some two hundred and ninety five yards S of the castle, a bank, over one hundred yards long and thirty-two feet wide, extended right across the valley. A great part of it has been levelled to about five feet high but there are still portions which show that it was much higher, perhaps twelve feet or more. It bears a resemblance to the bank of a dam, but slight traces of a ditch on its N side (perhaps for quarrying the material from which it is constructed) would perhaps rule this out. Possibly it was a defensive outer barrier to the castle approach, or more likely an imposing boundary, for it could be easily outflanked at either end.

**R E Kay**  
**10<sup>th</sup> April, 1984**

Additional notes, accompanied by drawings, sent in by Mr B Butcher

Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1984 (Fourth Sunday after Epiphany)

After lunch had been eaten in the cars at Wain Street, the Cavalcade headed for Bronsil Castle ...

“Where Malvern lifts her lofty hills  
From Bronsil’s meadows fresh and green,  
Where flows a thousand rippling rills  
Thro’ one of earth’s, aye, fairest scene;  
Where wood, and glen, and mead, and dale  
Combine to make one heavenly view;”

(Thomas E Cole)

A fair description of the morning’s walk; to which was now added the quite moving view of the one remaining turret of Bronsil Castle bathed in the soft afternoon sun, and surrounded by the still waters of the moat.

The castle consisted of eight towers with curtain walls surrounded by a double moat. From the fact that the remains of the one gatehouse tower is octagonal, it would seem that Buck’s drawing of the castle showing the towers circular is incorrect. But it still gives a fair idea of what it looked like.

It is probable that the building was more a fortified manor house than a military castle. Richard Beauchamp, High Treasurer to Henry VI, obtained a licence in 1449 to

crenellate his house, and to enclose 300 acres of land as a park. This shows that there was a previous house here.

At his death in 1496 his estates were divided among his three daughters, one of whom married William Rede of "New Court", Lugwardine.

Around 1600 when Gabriel Rede (or Reade) was at Bronsil, the castle was nightly visited by a troublesome ghost, and when he could stand it no more, he went to Oxford and consulted "Mr Allen", well known for dealing with such matters. He said they were to obtain some bones of Lord Beauchamp who had died in Italy; these were sent in a box, and peace reigned in the castle.

The castle was burnt in the civil wars, but this box was saved and was brought to Lugwardine; it was seen there a long time ago, the box labelled "Lord Beauchamp's Bones"; it came into the hands of a Mr Sheldon of Worcestershire and has since vanished. There is also a tradition that a chest of gold is buried under the castle. Here is a chance for the "Diggers" to use our new tools.

W S Symonds mentions Bronshil in his historical novels – "Malvern Chase" and "Hanley Castle". Sometimes written "Brantsill" or "Bromeshill" or "Bransill". Could be "Brand's Hill" or even the Welsh "Bron" – "The breast of a hill".

**Basil Butcher**

Illustrations:

Price's 1817 map showing old road.

Plan of castle.

Bronsil in 1731 – Buck.

Bronsil in 1869.

**ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1985**

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Treasurer: Mrs R Wride

Field Secretary: Mr M Hemming (as above)

Editor: Mr C E Attfield (as above)

Assistant Editor: Mr R E Kay

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Mrs R Skelton)  
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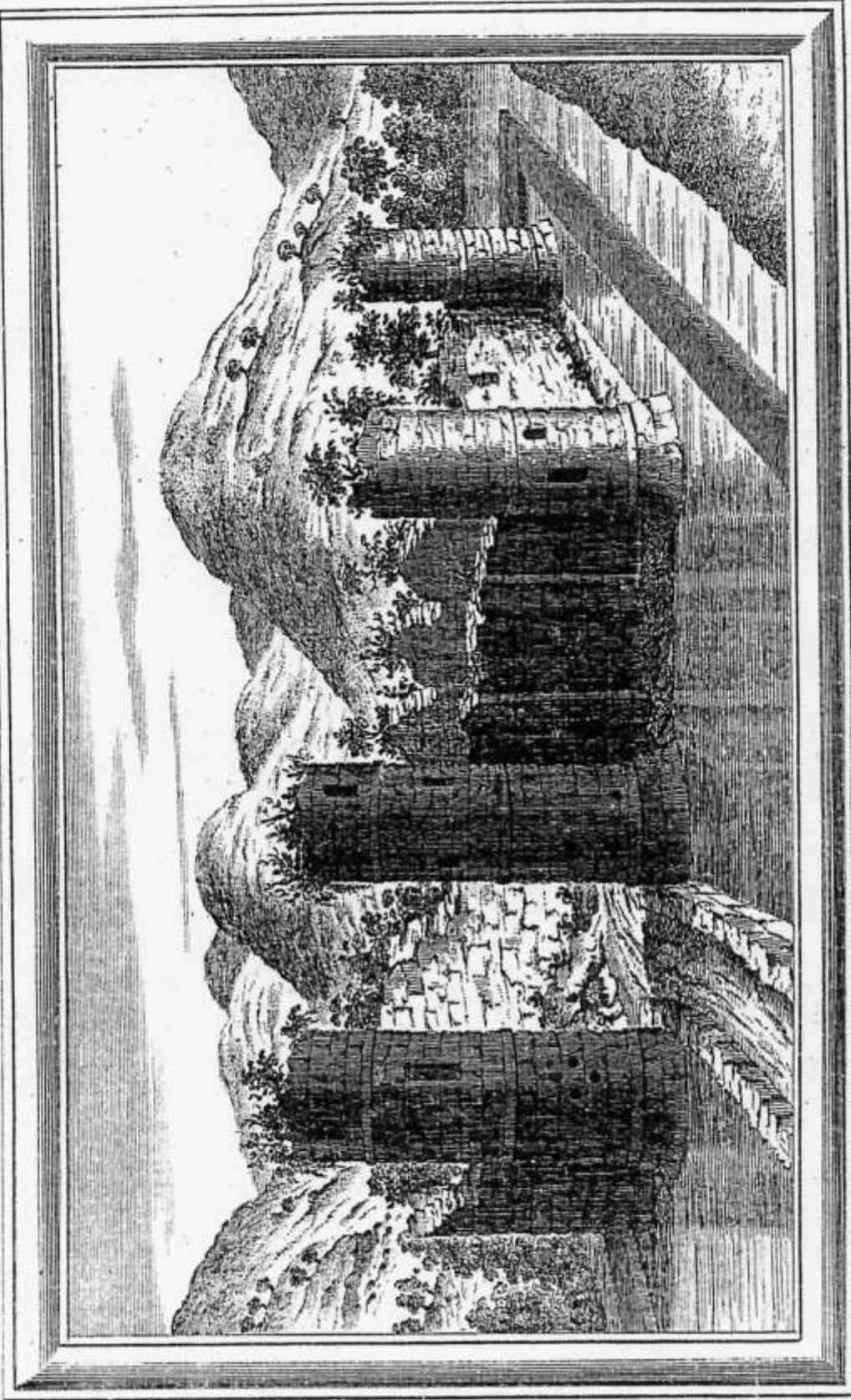
Mrs B Harding



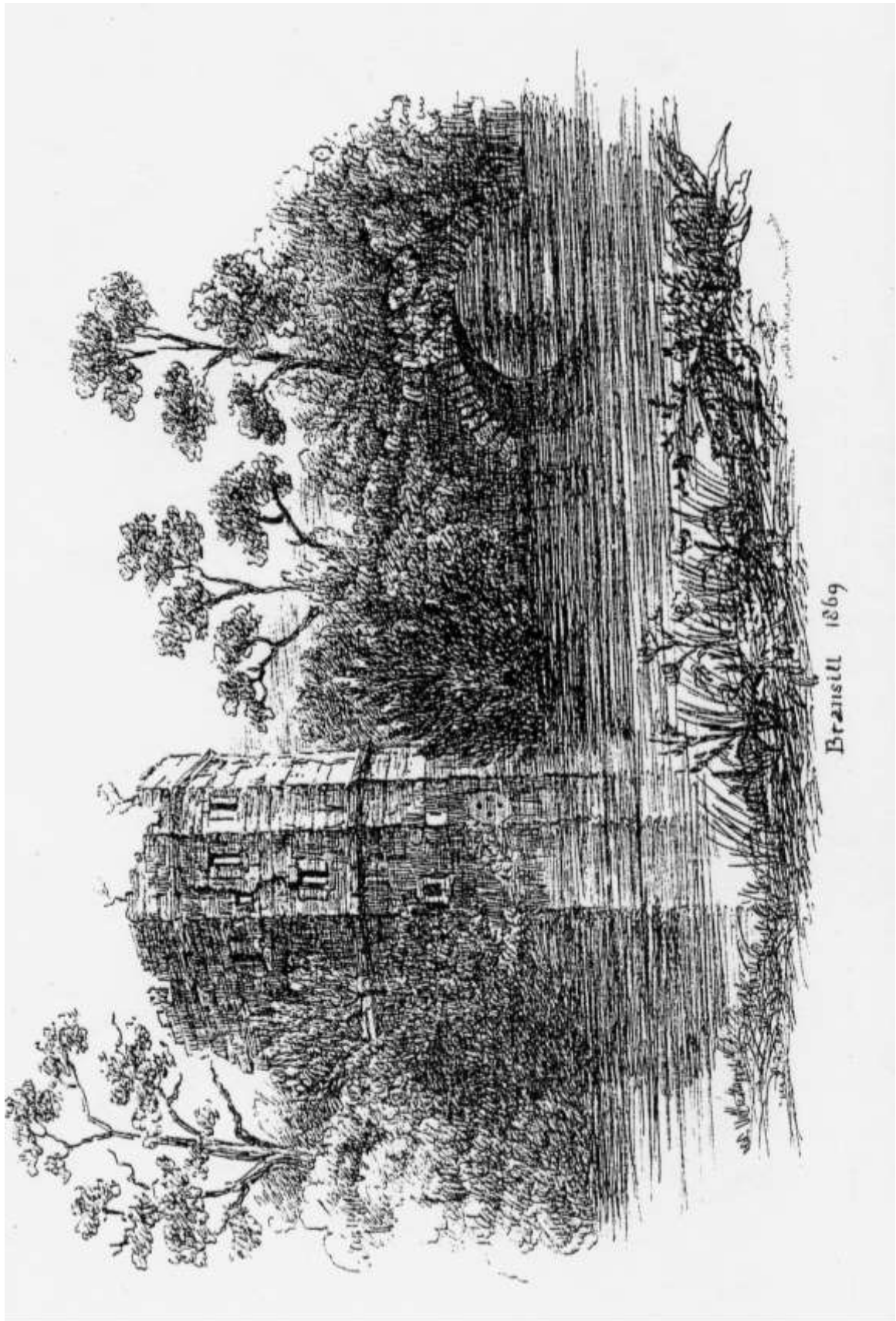




*Engraved for England Displayed.*



*View of Bramstall Castle in the County of Hereford.*



**FIELD MEETINGS HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH MEMBERS OF EWYAS HAROLD  
BRANCH OF WEA ON 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 1984**

**Morning:**

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROWLAND VAUGHAN IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

**With particular reference to existing remains in the Fairfield and Trenant areas**

**Led by Miss M Thomas**

The weir and sluice site S of Fairfield examined and recorded by the Archaeological Research Section in the early 1970's (see Woolhope Club Transactions for 1974, pages 253-5) were revisited. There has been some deterioration of the site, due mainly to wandering erosion of the Trenant Brook, which has resulted in the almost complete destruction of the remaining vestiges of the former turbulence platform of the vanished weir. Further examination of this weir and sluice site would seem to confirm that this is the actual commencement point of the Trench Royal, the main leat of the irrigation system, and that it obtained its initial water supply from the Trenant Brook and not higher up the course of the Dore, beyond the railway crossing cottage, as had previously been suggested.

From the weir and sluice site an examination was made of the first two fields on the S side of the Trenant Brook. These are quite level and there is evidence of a former leat running contour-wise at the foot of rising ground forming the S boundary of these two fields, eventually debouching into the Trench Royal and about a quarter to a third of a mile from its commencement point. Beyond the two fields and higher up the Trenant Brook, at the approach to where its valley begins to narrow, there is a tract of marshy ground supporting a grove of alder trees, to which we will return presently. The aforementioned contour leat continues to run in similar fashion, i.e. contour-wise above and on the S side of the swampy ground, almost fading out, but then being crossed by a field boundary assumes the profile of a deep and wide canal-like leat of proportions comparable to the most impressive sections of the Trench Royal near Chanstone, and with a wide and substantial flat-topped retaining bank on its N side. A considerable length of the leat, hereabouts, still holds water. It continues as a well marked depression to a short distance W of the masonry bridge, spanning the Trenant Brook, immediately to the S of Trenant Farm. At this point, just W of the bridge, the stream runs between steep banks and in its bed there remain the substantial foundations of a weir and its turbulence platform, which must have actioned the sluice which fed the leat just described. The size of the stones, many over 6ft long 2ft wide and nearly 1ft thick, which were used in the construction of the weir should be noted. They appear to have been carefully dressed, some still exhibiting toolings. One immense specimen lies on top of the wide retaining bank of the leat some distance to the E, doubtless removed at some time for use as a gatepost or footbridge and perhaps abandoned due to some mishap during its carriage. Beyond this weir there appears to be no further leating of the brook in connection with the irrigation works, although its valley begins to broaden and level out again into a wider collecting basin for a number of lesser tributaries to form the copious brook which flows below Trenant Farm.

However, if there are no further remains connected with Vaughan's "waterworks" scheme above those described, there is higher up the stream an offtake on its N bank for a leat, well preserved in places, which passes below Trenant Farm and nearly a quarter of a mile still further to the E, and once fed Trenant Mill.

On the Trenant Brook, between the farm and the mill, are the remains of yet another weir and turbulence platform, also of substantial construction, together with its retaining walls, using the similar massive slab stonework which appears to belong to the "waterworks" complex of leats. Its overflow sluice fed a small leat of comparatively insignificant proportions, which is traceable through an alder swamp, mentioned previously, before it peters out.

The above examination, carried out within a limited area, should add to our knowledge of the extent of Vaughan's work at the head of the "Trench Royal" and in the

Trenant Valley, but further work is still required for tracing the last part of the Trenant leat to its junction with the "Trench Royal". The discoveries made by Miss Thomas in the Trenant Valley lead one to suppose that a more detailed examination of all the tributaries on the W side of the Dore between Fairfield and Mantooth Farm than was undertaken previously should now be considered. Fruitful areas for possible previously unrecorded leats and weirs, etc, should be in the Chanstone, Slwch Brook areas. This could possibly be a venue for a future Archaeological Research Section Field Meeting.

Miss Thomas is to be congratulated on her fieldwork and research into the historical evidence, as her contribution to this issue of Hereford Archaeological News bears witness.

Trenant Farm, Cottage and Mill were visited, the cottage and mill in particular being more closely examined. A detached outbarn a short distance to the S of the cottage was not on this occasion visited.

The cottage, now in a state of decay, one might say dereliction, seems to be falling into ruin, a state it will not take long to reach unless substantial repairs are undertaken. It is at present acting as an outbuilding (lambing shed) to the nearby farm, itself in a state of some decay. The cottage seems to have been greatly altered and extended during the course of its existence. The older part, timber framed on masonry footings, is to the W and is most probably of mid-17<sup>th</sup> C date or a little earlier. Inside, a timbered cross partition retains two original chamfered doorways with segmental heads. There are exposed timbers in the N and S walls, and more particularly in the W gable. Evidently in this older part of the cottage the timber partition served to separate off the principal ground floor room on the E from two smaller side by side service rooms on the W. The loft-like attic in the roof space above was similarly divided and was reached by a narrow angled stone stair on the N side of the great inward thickening of the base of the chimney stack, built integral with the former E gable, beyond which is a later masonry extension continuing the same roof-line. External doorways, windows and dormer have all been greatly altered or replaced at various times. There were lean-to additions at either gable end of the cottage. That to the W is of thin laminated slabs and is now roofless. The condition of the cottage was said to be poor as long ago as 1934.

Trenant Farm has been untenanted for some while and presents a somewhat neglected appearance, but is about to be refurbished. The house is of one storey with attics and a cellar. The hall or central block of the existing building is of early 17<sup>th</sup> C date and is of stone, but the S wing may be older and is of timber framing above a stone cellar. The kitchen wing at the N end of the house is of a much later date, an addition or re-building. In the E wall of the S wing is a square headed doorway with an old frame and in the E wall of the central block is an early 17<sup>th</sup> C window of three lights with moulded oak frame and mullions under a stone hood mould. In the W wall of the central block is a similar window of four lights and in the return wall of the S wing a three light window with diamond section mullions. The interior of the building was not seen, but the RCAHM Invent states that one of the windows of the hall has its original oak shutters and that there is an old doorway with a chamfered frame between the S wing and the hall block. The barn extends westwards from the W side of the kitchen wing, and is mostly of weather boarded timber framing on a stone base. It is of five bays, of which the two easternmost are utilized as a linhay for cattle, both with hayloft above. The various dates of building give the house a very irregular appearance and roof line.

Of Trenant Mill only a few short lengths of fragmentary walls or their footings are left, but its plan can be ascertained. The wheel pit still retains the metal banded oaken axle of the mill wheel in situ and the feed from the leat sluice to the former overshot wheel retains its cast iron casing of mid 19<sup>th</sup> C date. The mill fell into disuse at the end of that century.

**Afternoon: Join WEA members on a field excursion visiting  
FEATURES IN THE GOLDEN VALLEY**

**Led by Mr R Shoesmith, BA**

After lunch, under the guidance of Mr R Shoesmith, the combined party of over two dozen people examined the lay-out and exterior architectural features of the Cisterian Abbey Dore. For those requiring a detailed description of its architecture, there is a succinct account in Vol 1 of the RCAHM Invent for Herefordshire.

A visit was then made to 'Riverdale', formerly the Moorhampton Union Workhouse, which after many vicissitudes including use as a tractor assembly factory during the Second World War followed by a period of near dereliction, was converted in the early 1980's into an estate of attractive flats, maisonettes and apartments, almost entirely removing the austerity of the former buildings and its environs. The main block, looking W over the Golden Valley, is a low two storeyed building with slightly projecting central and end frontages to the former yard on the E. It is well built in the austere but not unattractive style of the late 1830's and constructed of the local red sandstone with small nicely proportioned rectangular windows, well spaced. Facing it across the former yard, now largely lawn and garden, is a taller and less pleasing block of 1890's date. To the N are the detached stone built, single storey master's house, block of stables and vagrant's "cell" block, the latter with the fixed stone breakers iron grid still in situ.

Further halts were made at Chanstone to view the earthworks of the motte castles and at Urishay to examine, under the guidance of Mr R Shoesmith, the primitive chapelry dating from Norman times which is now in the process of partial restoration after fifty years of accelerating dereliction and decay. A brief look was given to earthworks of the neighbouring castle and the ruins of the early 17<sup>th</sup> C house superimposed on the summit of its substantial motte.

A journey of steep gradients along narrow lanes, high above the Western slopes of the Golden Valley, of which there were very pleasing prospects, eventually brought all by way of a "water-splash" to Snodhill Castle where, again under Mr Shoesmith's able direction, the last visitation of the field outing was described and explained.

Short articles on Urishay Chapel and Snodhill Castle have been included in this copy of the Herefordshire Archaeological News.

**R E Kay  
12<sup>th</sup> April, 1984**

**INFORMATION WANTED**

If any members are aware of any archaeological sites in Herefordshire which they think are not scheduled and should be (examples lime kilns, burial mounds, etc) would they please let the Secretary know, giving as much information as possible.

**URISHAY CHAPEL, PETERCHURCH**

The ruined chapel at Urishay, in a remote part of Herefordshire on the edge of the Black Mountains, was taken into care by the Friends of Friendless Churches in the late 1970's. The building had fallen into ruin since the Royal Commission carried out their survey in 1930, and the Friends of Friendless Churches proposed to re-roof the chancel and part of the nave and demolish other leaning walls to make the building safe. The Department of the Environment commissioned a survey and limited excavation work on the site in advance of the building works. This was organized under the auspices of the City of Hereford Archaeology Committee.

### **Period 1 – Late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century**

The earliest building so far established on the site consisted of a simple rectangular building with an apsidal east end. The buried foundations of the apse, which partly remain underneath and slightly to the west of the present chancel arch, were examined in the internal excavation. The foundations consisted of several rows of stones laid on end but at a slight angle, in a rough herringbone fashion, and only a few stones of the first horizontally laid course above remained. With the exception of the south door, which is of period 2, and the northwestern buttress, which is of period 3, the upstanding western parts of both the north and south walls belong to period 1.

There are no architectural features whatsoever in these remaining fragments. The western end of the period 1 church has not been established but there would appear to be two possibilities. In the first case, the west wall could be approximately 1.8m to the west of the present west wall and in the second case some 6m further west again. The evidence for the first case was found in the external excavation but the north-south wall seen at this point did not have a foundation of stones laid on edge and could belong to period 2. Stones visible as surface features in the grass in the adjoining farmyard provide the only evidence for the longer building.

The internal floor level of the period 1 building was apparently at a higher level than the existing stone flagged floor and must have been totally removed during the periods 2-5 works. The internal measurements of the period 1 building were 5.3m wide and either 12.2m or 18.2m long. There was no evidence to indicate the presence of a cross wall separating the nave and chancel in the internal elevations and the building may thus have been a single-celled structure with an apsidal end. However, one possible alternative is that the surviving period 1 masonry of the north and south walls represents the chancel only of the original church and that the whole nave was west of the present building and possibly wider, as at Kilpeck and Moccas.

### **Period 2 – Late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century**

The semi-circular apse was demolished down to its foundations and a new chancel was added to the remaining north and south walls. The foundations were of similar nature to the period 1 construction. The south doorway was probably inserted at the same time (or replaced an earlier doorway). The plan of the western end of the church is more obscure, and dependent on the period 1 plan. It could have been lengthened or shortened from the original short or long church, or it may not have had any alteration. However, the evidence from the excavation indicates that at the time of period 2, or at some later date before period 3, the west end of the building was some 1.8m to the west of the present west wall. The position of the south doorway suggests that the short church is more likely at this date.

Surviving architectural features of period 2 include the two doorways, the two windows in the eastern part of the nave, the eastern of the two windows in the south wall of the chancel and the two narrow blocked lights in the east wall of the chancel. The chancel arch is also of this period but the oak lintel could be of a later date. However, the thickness of the masonry of the chancel arch would suggest that it included a rood loft from its original construction. The floor level associated with the period 2 building was removed when the present flat floor was inserted.

The original east wall is tied to both the north and south walls of the chancel and is considered to be of the same date as these two walls. It is built of long, thin slabs of local stone and originally contained two narrow lights of which traces remain. These lights both had semi-circular heads, chamfered sides and steeply sloping sills, and are apparently of late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century date. Tufa was used in part in the internal responds (shown stippled) and thin stones were used for the heads. The external face was built with an offset at the level of the external sills. A niche in the internal face, below the southern of the two narrow lights is also of period 2. This was totally concealed by plaster and was only apparently after cleaning.



**Period 3 – undated**

The two altars on the nave side of the chancel arch and the two stone seats on the chancel side are not tied in to the period 2 masonry and therefore could be of period 2 or later.

Infant burials were found in front of each of the altars, on top of the period 1 apse foundations but otherwise undated. These were the only burials found within the building.

**Period 4**

The whole central part of the eastern wall was demolished down to the sill levels of the period 2 windows, leaving the southern and northern responds of the south and north windows respectively, and fragments of the heads. A new window of one wide light and a four-centered head, with widely spayed responds and a sloping sill, was inserted centrally in the wall. It was built of grey sandstone blocks which were re-used from an earlier window. The holes in the stones for the earlier window fittings do not now correspond either horizontally or vertically. The upright responds are very weathered and of a slightly different stone to the head and sill. The earlier window may have been larger than the present one as surplus moulded stones are used in the internal splays. Internally the window has a timber head with stops similar to those on the lintel above the chancel arch. Externally the face of the wall is set back above the top of the internal timber.

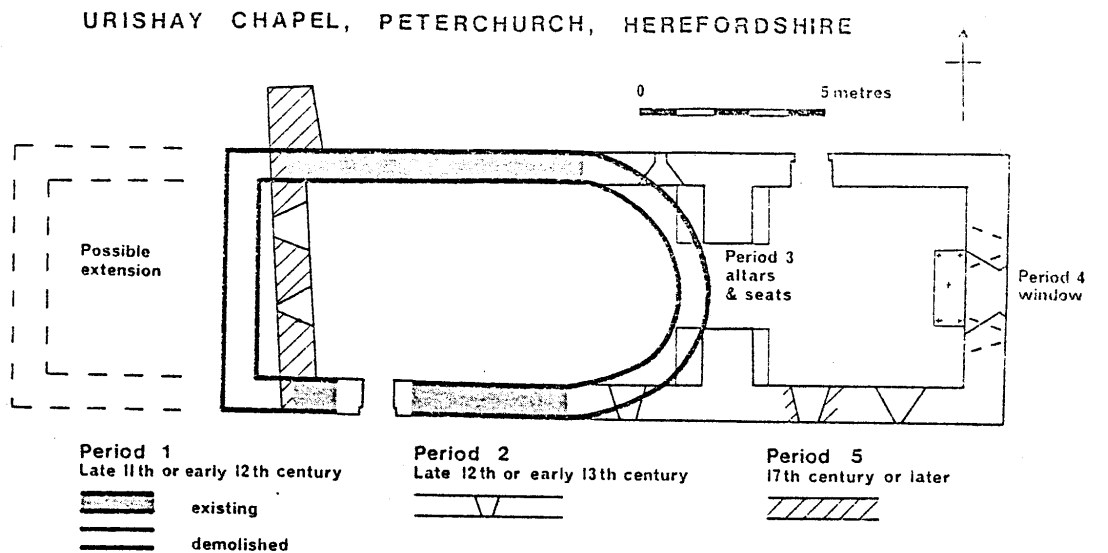
Two ledges were inserted in the blockings between the period 2 windows and the period 4 window, apparently to hold statues. The Royal Commission suggests that the period 4 eastern window is of early 16<sup>th</sup> century date.

**Period 5 – 17<sup>th</sup> century and later**

The western of the two windows in the south wall of the chancel has now collapsed but was dated by the Royal Commission to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are obvious indications that this window was inserted into an earlier wall. The period 2 windows in the nave were probably reconstructed during this period or period 4.

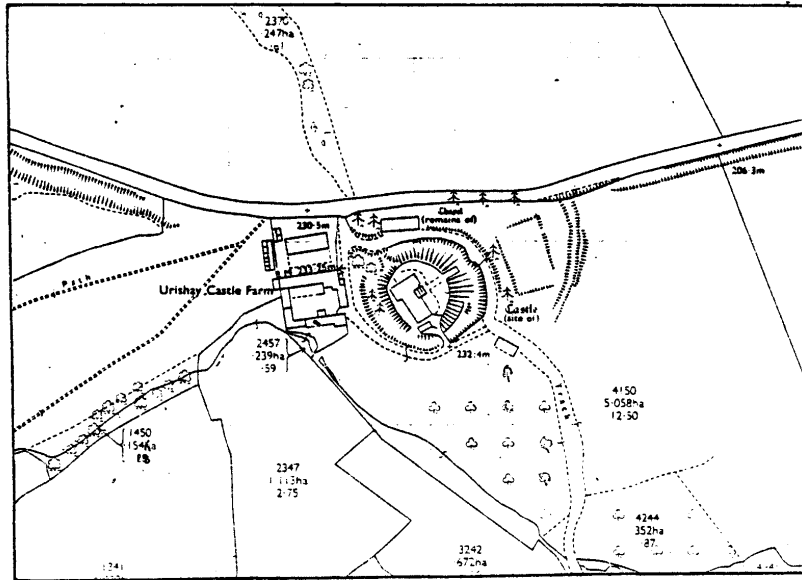
The two windows in the western wall are of 17<sup>th</sup> century or later date and are integral with the wall. This wall was built when the northern wall had begun to lean outwards at the top, and included a buttress at the northwest. The wall was built with flimsy foundations within the line of the earlier west wall, thus shortening the building by some 1.8m. The flag floor was laid at this time or possibly later and it may be that the level of the floor was reduced, thus destroying the earlier floor at the same time.

Minor repairs were undertaken in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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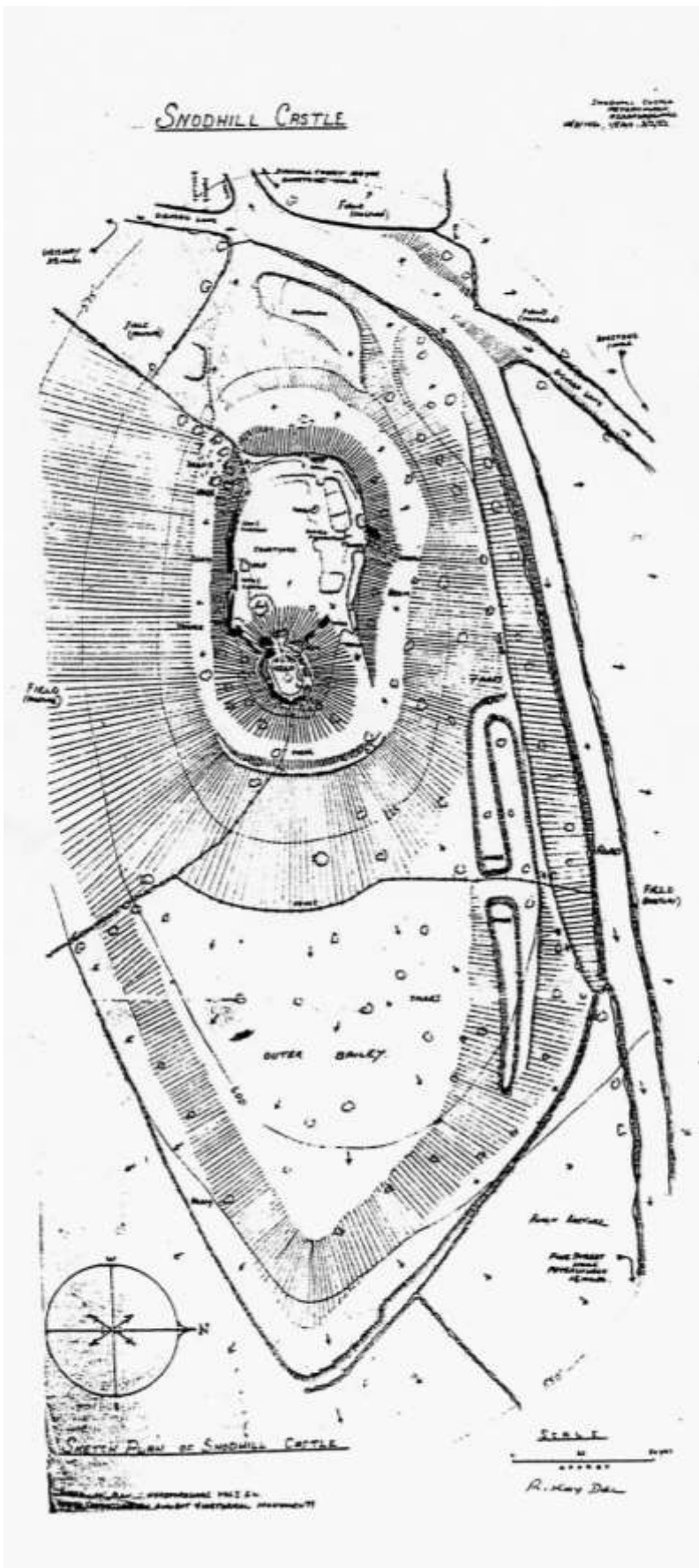
## SNODHILL CASTLE

Snodhill Castle, ruins and earthworks, about 1¼m NW of the church. The Castle belonged to the family of Chandos in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, and consisted of a mound, bailey and outer enclosure. The remains of the Keep are of c 1200, but some remodeling appears to have been made to the bailey in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The earthworks form a good example of those of a strongly fortified border castle.

The Earthworks cover an area of approximately 10 acres. On the summit of the site stands an oval-shaped motte with a dry ditch on the E Side, and an irregularly shaped oblong bailey on the W side. The natural hillside has been steepened to form a scarp to the bailey, and around the base of the scarp runs a wide berm which widens out at the W end and appears to have a causeway leading up to the SW angle of the bailey. Below the berm the ground follows the steep slope of the hillside, which has been further scarped along part of the N side and strengthened towards the W end by a short length of ditch. Along the whole length of the northern slope, towards the lower half, runs a narrow berm or path which is continued eastwards for some 120 yards beyond the mound, with a bank and a ditch on the N side. At the foot of the slope on the W side of the bailey is a platform with scarped sides and with traces of a trackway leading up from it to the main berm below the bailey, but this may be of later date. On the E side of the scarp to the motte the natural slope flattens out into a roughly triangular area which may have been used as a outer enclosure; it is bounded on the NE and SE sides by the path or berm which is continued round from the N side of the site.

The Keep stood on the top of the motte. It appears to have been on plan an irregular ten-sided polygon with a projecting entrance gateway at the W end flanked by two circular towers or bastions. The remains are fragmentary and are of stone rubble. The plan of the southern side can still definitely be seen, but the outline of the northern walls can now be only approximately traced. An internal offset at the level of the entrance floor shows that the basement was, internally, octagonal on plan. The lower part of the S side of the entrance remains. It consists of the SW circular flanking tower, which has a straight joint between it



and the main wall; on the N face are the jambs of the outer doorway with the grooves for the portcullis and the haunch of a pointed arch above; farther E is the projecting jamb of an inner doorway with the slot for the drawbar; above this the ashlar angle and part of the reveal of a window or recess above the gateway are visible. At the SE angle of the keep is another lofty fragment of masonry with a small square-headed chamfered window at the basement level. Between these fragments only the lower portion of the walling exists, showing an external battered base, while at the SE angle are the remains of a buttress of later date. Small portions of wall remain above the ground level and give the approximate line of the walls on the E and NE.

The Bailey was surrounded by a stone curtain wall, and considerable fragments of this remain. From the NW and SW sides of the keep the curtain ran down the sides of the motte. The southern wall exists almost for its full height, but only a fragment of the northern wall now remains. About half the length of the original S wall of the bailey is still standing, the eastern portion having been demolished in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and a new wall erected slightly in advance of the older wall, with a circular bastion at the SE angle of the bailey where it butts against the wall running down the S side of the motte. The 14<sup>th</sup> century wall is faced with ashlar, and inside the bastion is part of a square-headed recess. The greater part of the older or W half of

the S wall rises only just above the level of the bailey. The W wall is only indicated by a slight grass bank, but at the N angle a fragment rises above the ground level and has dressed quoins. About two yards within the curtain are traces of the wall of a structure built against the inner side. The N wall is only apparent by a grass bank except for a portion of a 14<sup>th</sup> century bastion at the NW angle, circular without and octagonal within. Another and wider bank runs approximately parallel with the outer bank, some two yards within the bailey. This either represents the wall of a building erected with the bailey or possibly the original N curtain, the outer wall marking an extension of the bailey in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the tower was built.

At the foot of the scarp to the motte, exactly opposite to and W of the gateway to the keep, is a semi-circular sinking with an outer bank on the N and NW sides. These possibly indicate foundations of a breastwork or barbican defending the entrance to the keep.

## **ROWLAND VAUGHAN'S WATERWORKS**

### **By Mary Thomas**

Ellen Beatrice Wood did a great service in re-publishing Vaughan's 'booke' in 1897. Her introduction presents a useful, though brief, summary of the Vaughan and Parry relationships and some notes on the property they held in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

R S Gavin Robinson ably summarises this work in his paper read to the Woolhope Club in 1936 (Woolhope Club Transactions, 1936, page 35).

R E Kay in a more recent article (WCT 1974, page 253) describes, with detailed sketch plans, four of the sluices and weirs. He undertakes the difficult task of sorting original masonry from later adaptations and re-constructions.

Each of these writers has met with problems when attempting to relate Vaughan's writings to the remaining topographical evidence. Although 'His Booke' is delightfully entertaining, his style is whimsical and totally unscientific. He flies off at a tangent to relate an anecdote or to offer a little moral advice to his readers and uses the work, which is addressed to his patron, the Earl of Pembroke, to grind a few local axes, such as the removal of weirs on the river Wye and his hopes of combining the parishes of Peterchurch, Vowchurch and Turnastone by an Act of Parliament.

Times were very hard at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> C. Rowland describes the poverty of the valley and asks his patron's approval for a project he plans to create, a 'Commonwealth' to provide employment for two thousand 'mechanicalls' at Newcourt, Bacton. He produced an illustrated map which shows the elaborate accommodation and the various workshops where trades would be carried on. The project was certainly an ambitious one. If it was ever realised there is little to show for it on the ground, and no reference to it by any other writers of the period. I think we must accept that Vaughan's major contribution to the Golden Valley lay in his agricultural improvements and the example of what seems to have been a very efficient irrigation system.

We do not know the exact boundaries of his property. He lived at the Whitehouse in Turnastone and the estate adjoined Newcourt, which his wife inherited by way of her mother who was Elizabeth Parry. He frequently mentions his neighbours on the other side of the river, so it would seem that he and his wife owned the western bank from Peterchurch to Bacton. This is the area which he 'drowned' and with which this article is mainly concerned.

### **The Waterworks**

Vaughan's book was published in 1610 and took six years to complete. This was because his scrivener lived in London and he had to make arrangements to dictate his work. The completion of the irrigation system took 20 years (approximately 1584 to 1604). He calls it a 'watery workmanship' and recounts how it all began. He was walking in the meadows one day, when he noticed a trickle of water issuing from a molehill. This tiny stream produced a strip of beautifully green grass several feet wide in an area which was otherwise yellow with

moss and weeds. In spite of this he later found it difficult to forgive the moles which tunnelled through his stanks allowing the water to drain back into the river, costing him heavily in time, labour and loss of grass.

The theory of 'drowning' is explained in great detail. His readers are advised to harness and channel every river, brook, fountain and spring on their land so that by using trenches and stanks (dams), weirs and sluices the water can be led to flood the meadows in dry periods. He advocates drowning the mowing grass a few days before cutting and again a few weeks later, to encourage the aftermath for a second mowing. Natural floods must be held on the land until the water clears and then allowed to flow back into the river. All water should be drained off the meadows in March to allow the land to warm, and he advises that clay ground should not be 'surfeit with a drunken-dropsie'.

By these methods his estate at Newcourt increased in value from £40 to £300 a year, because he was able to grow more, keep more stock and make use of land which would otherwise have been barren.

In attempting to work out Vaughan's method of drowning, one meets with many contradictions and ambiguities. He gives names to his trenches according to their purpose. The master trench he calls his 'trench-royall'. This takes water from the main river and runs the full length of the drowning ground, ending at the 'stank-royall'. The trench is levelled so that by closing the sluice in the terminal drain water will flow back over the first sluice three miles up-stream. The first half mile of the trench royal is 16ft wide (probably still visible in field S of road to Fairfield School; is a very deep section) and 8ft deep, but the rest is 10ft wide and 4ft deep.

He then describes his topping or braving trench. This is much smaller, only 2ft wide and 1ft deep and it follows the course of the river at a distance of 4 to 5 ft from the bank. The purpose is to flood the shelving ground between the river and the trench royal. As the trench is so small this can be done by a servant with a board of the appropriate size, acting as a manually operated sluice whenever water is needed. When digging this little trench, soil can be piled on the riverside so that sudden summer floods will be diverted to the other side of the river. (It is not surprising that Vaughan was often at odds with his neighbours.)

'Everlasting' trenches seem to be those which carry water from the tributary streams, following the contours of the side of the valley so that water can be trained onto the flat meadows where and when it is needed. 'Double' and 'Treble' trenches are very slender affairs created with the plough so that little sills traversing the meadows hold the water and prevent it from escaping to the lowest land.

'Winter' and 'Summer' trenches carry water to the more distant meadow land. All this water ends up at the 'place of consultation' and when the sluice in the stank royal is raised another 'everlasting trench' conveys the surplus back into the river.

We are told that the trench-royal had to be cleaned out every 2 or 3 years as the silt accumulates to a level of 2ft or more. Vaughan used this silt, conveying it in his two small boats along the trench-royal to the poorer meadows or to his arable land.

Thus he claims to have drowned 1,000 acres of grassland and mowed it twice a year.

### **The Evidence**

As the work began in 1584, this is a centenary year. Alas, 400 years of natural flooding, the building of the Golden Valley railway and modern farming methods have obliterated much of the field evidence. It is particularly disappointing that the beginning and end of the trench royal have disappeared. At least we have a 2 mile stretch between Peterchurch and Chanstone which can be easily traced. The canalisation of the Trenant, Slough and the Haybrook streams is also evident.

It is good documentary practice to end with a few posers for future research. The list could be long, but these are the most intriguing ones.

Where is the stank royal?

Is the very well preserved portion at Trenant Farm the beginning of the trench royal or was it fed from the main river as Vaughan says?

Which are his 4 mills? Presumably Trenant and Newcourt, which are on the west of the river, are two of them.

How much of Vaughan's 'Commonwealth' was fact and how much a Utopian scheme only partially put into practice?

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to the landowners who so willingly allowed access to the meadows:

Also to Mr R Kay and Mrs R Skelton who helped with much of the field evidence.

### **VISIT ARRANGED BY THE NATURAL HISTORY SECTION**

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June    The Doward and its archaeological nature, including industrial.

Meet at The Old Doward Hotel at 10.30 am  
Leader Joe Hillaby. Grid Ref 538166

