

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS



HAN 46 October 1986

**WOOLHOPE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH SECTION**

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No. 46 October 1986

EDITORIAL

In the last News I mentioned the launching of the Herefordshire Field Name Survey and I am very pleased to report that the response from interested parties has been most encouraging. At the last count we had over 40 persons working on the recording of over 80 Parishes. The committee are working on the cover design and it is intended to publish those Parishes completed, separately, in the spring of 1987 when lists of those available and cost will be circulated. Any member wanting more information can contact me or one of the committee members.

The programme up to September 1986 ended with a very enjoyable barbecue at the home of Mary Thomas, when the weather was kind, and our thanks to Mary and the helpers for a very pleasant evening.

The subscription for 1987 is now unchanged at £1.50.

My thanks to the contributors of the articles in the News, and to the committee for all their help and support during the year.

**C E Attfield
Editor**

ARS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1986

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr C E Attfield
<u>Secretary:</u>	Mr M Hemming
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Mrs R Wride
<u>Field Secretary:</u>	Mr M Hemming (as above)
<u>Editor:</u>	Mr C E Attfield (as above)
<u>Assistant Editor:</u>	Mr R E Kay
<u>Committee Members:</u>	Mrs R Richardson Mrs R Skelton) Mr L Skelton) Miss M Thomas Mr G Parker Mrs B Harding Mrs E M Taylor

PROGRAMME NOVEMBER 1986-JANUARY 1987

Sunday 23 rd November 1986	Examination of Motte and Bailey, Tregate	Meet at the Moon Public House, Garway, 11.00 am Leader Mrs E Taylor
Thursday 18 th December 1986	Annual General Meeting	Golden River Restaurant, Commercial Street, Hereford, 7.30 pm Members may wish to enjoy a meal afterwards.
Sunday 25 th January 1987	Comparison of northern boundary of Wormelow Hundred with that of Archenfield	Meet at Bus Shelter, Kingsthorpe, 11.00 am GR 499 321

Notes

1. In case of bad weather contact the leader or 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.

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY SYMPOSIUM, 18TH OCTOBER 1986

The Assistant Editor has, for a number of years, represented, the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club and, in particular, their Archaeological Research Section at the meetings of the Council for British Archaeology (Group Two, Wales and the Marches), and attended their AGM and Symposium held at Shrewsbury on 18th October 1986.

The excellent Symposium, supported by a well displayed exhibition of finds, photographs and other material, was mainly devoted to several illustrated, informative and interesting talks with reference to recent and ongoing excavations in Herefordshire, neighbouring Gwent and Salop.

These included excavations at the recently discovered early 1st century, two phase, Roman fort in Garway parish, and another 1st century Roman fort of six acres at Brompton near Churchstoke in Salop. The first site will be of particular interest to those members who have, in the past, undertaken field walking in the Pontrilas, Llangua and Kentchurch area in a vain search for such a fort. The limited excavation undertaken was surprisingly rich in pottery finds and included a number of coins. A portion of the interior, the much eroded rampart, and the single large external ditch was sectioned.

The interior showed sleeper trenches and post holes of two constructional periods, as did the rampart. The exact area and configuration of the defences has yet to be ascertained. The excavation has now been backfilled but work may be continued at the site at some future date. The second fort site, the greater part of which has been severely eroded by the plough, also seems to have had two, possibly three, constructional phases, the last of which coincided with considerable industrial activity pertaining to lead smelting. There were the remains of a number of bowl furnaces, probably relating to the cupellation and separation of the silver content from the lead, the ore of which is obtainable at no great distance. Excavation continues.

At Llanrothal, and elsewhere in the Monnow valley and its neighbourhood, a number of Medieval pottery kilns have been located and the sites of a number of these have been excavated or examined, while at Skenfrith and Monmouth excavation of Medieval houses is continuing.

Near Usk, rescue excavation, in advance of agricultural operations, of a ditched mound and adjoining earthworks south of Trostrey Church has revealed a small 13th century masonry castle and the site of a DMV. Aerial photography and field walking in neighbouring areas seems to indicate a Roman temple complex and other remains.

Llantarnham, near Caerleon, was the site of an important Cistercian Abbey of which nothing remained above ground. Recent excavations undertaken in advance of building operations have brought to light the site of the gatehouse in its precinct wall, and the almost complete plan of the aisled cruciform conventual church, including the transepts, nave, crossing and eastern chapels, has been recovered.

A summary of the excavation and site plan has been promised by the excavation leader of the Garway Roman fort site in time for inclusion in the next copy of the Newsletter. Reports of the Medieval pottery kiln excavations and those of Medieval houses in Skenfrith and Monmouth have been, and continue to be, published in "Monmouth Archaeology" the journal of the Monmouth Archaeological Society. The excavations at Trostrey and Llantarnham will be forthcoming in the "Monmouthshire Antiquarian" the journal of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association.

Finally, non-members of CBA (Group 2) may not be aware of the fact that they are very welcome to attend the biannual meetings and symposiums of the Council. The venue of the autumn meeting is always Shrewsbury, that of the spring meeting alternating each year to venues in S Wales and its Marches and N Wales and its Marches. Further details may be obtained from the Assistant Editor or C Arnold Esq, Hon Sec CBA (Group 2), Bronawel, Green Lane, Abermule, Montgomery, SY15 6LB.

R E Kay
19th October, 1986

MEETINGS OF OTHER SOCIETIES

Bromyard and District Local History Society

5th December, 7.30 pm

The Pavilion, Bromyard

"The Archaeology of the Golden Valley", Rosamund Skelton

Llanwarne Local History Group

Llanwarne Village Hall, 7.30 pm

19th November "Stone & Steam in the Black Mountains", Rev David Tipper

3rd December "Rail Transport in the Welsh Borders", Rev David Tipper

17th December "Turnpike Roads in the Ross Area", Heather Hurley

Weobley & District Local History Society

Willow Gallery, Weobley, 7.30 pm

26th November "Art and the Local Scene", Mr E Okarma

Herefordshire Family History Society

St Paul's School, Tupsley, 7.30 pm

14th November "The Pyses of the Mynde", Mrs Delphine Coleman

STRUCTURE/CAUSEWAY/ROAD IN THE STREAM BED OF RIFFINS BROOK NEAR THE ISLE OF RHEA, BODENHAM, HEREFORDSHIRE, GRID REF 537517

These notes and rough plans and sketches have been drawn up to put on record the existence of some sort of causeway or road in the bed of the stream called Riffins Brook, Bodenham. The bed of the brook is about 8 feet below ground level and only visible when there is very little water in the brook. The sketch map inset in Fig 2 shows the position of the site relative to the River Lugg and also shows that the lower course of Riffins Brook has altered since 1801 when the earlier course was shown on Carey's map. The alteration was probably man-made and an attempt to reduce flooding. Riffins Brook has presumably been cutting its bed downwards since the new cut was made and it has been assisted in this by the Water Board's efforts to speed up the flow of the River Lugg itself. This may mean that the structure has not been exposed for so long a time and has therefore been protected.

Fig 1 shows the position of the site relative to some depressions in the meadows on either side. These depressions are probably associated with Bodenham's Old Lugg Mill, to which there are several references. These mills were abandoned and the weir "avowed to be thrown down" about 1700 for the benefit of the Wye and Lugg Navigation, but the weir is still very much in evidence with a breach of about 8 feet against the right bank. It is not known whether the grass covered island, which is full of stonework, is the remains of the mills or of a lock later inserted into the weir. The structure was actually discovered by accident while walking along the bed of Riffins Brook to see if there were any signs of the supposed mill leat exposed in the banks of the brook. The structure is slightly downstream of the depressions.

Figs 3 and 4 attempt to show the stonework in longitudinal section and in plan. It is made mainly of thin, pitched stones and appears to be made of two layers of these with the top layer removed in many places. The two edges, or "kerbs" are very well made.

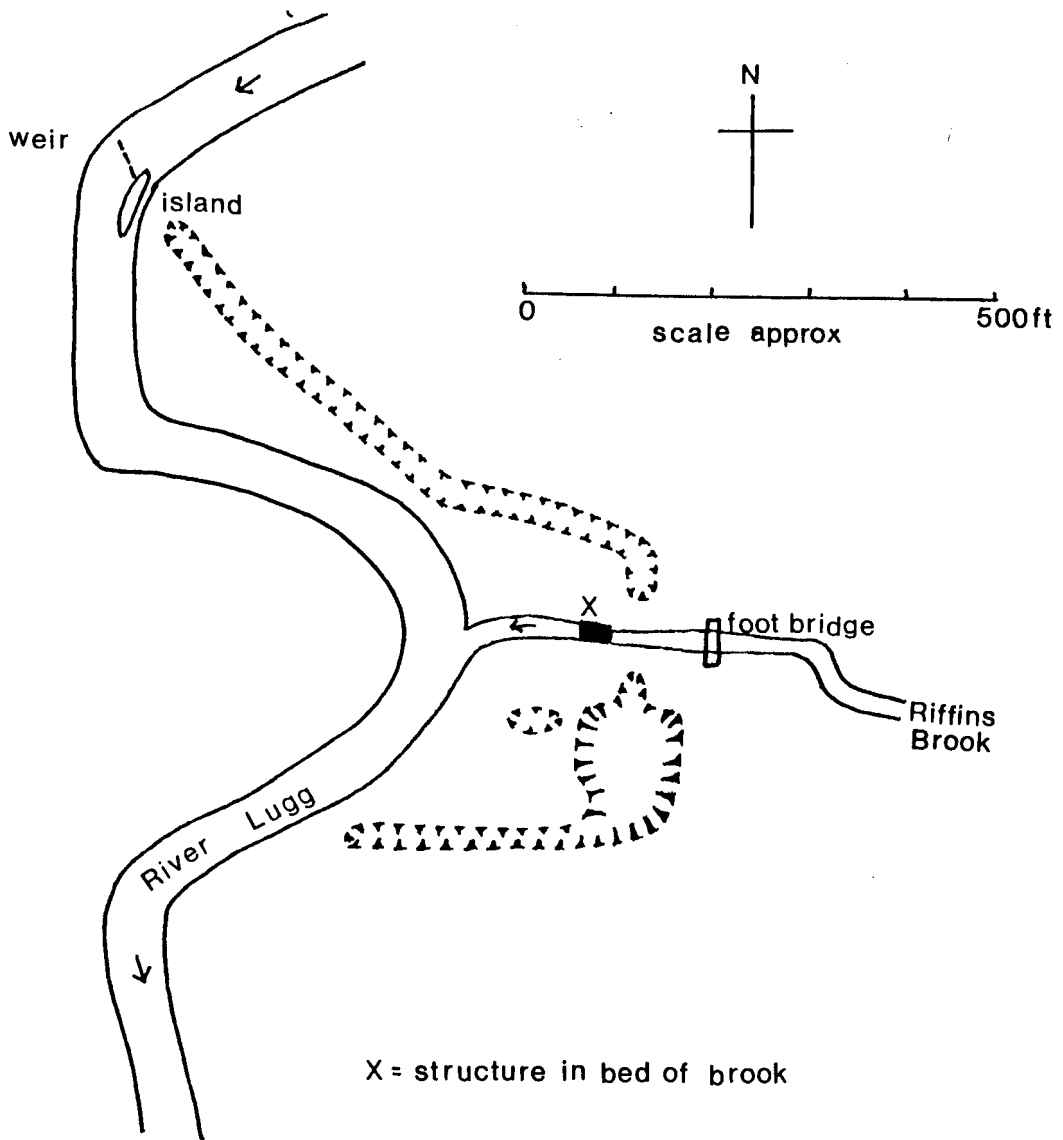
In profile the causeway is asymmetric, the highest part coming near the upstream "kerb". The stone is probably local sandstone. Observation of a lot of the surface is, of course, rather hampered by the water which is rather murky at times.

It should be pointed out that this structure is more or less in line with the Roman Road coming south from Blackwardine which must cross Bodenham parish somewhere, but Mr Shoemith, who kindly visited the site, has pointed out that Roman roads do not have this type of construction normally.

Anthea Brian and Elizabeth Taylor

(Editor's Note: Elizabeth Taylor would be very interested to hear other thoughts and opinions on the likelihood of it being a piece of the Roman road.)

Fig.1 Sketch of site



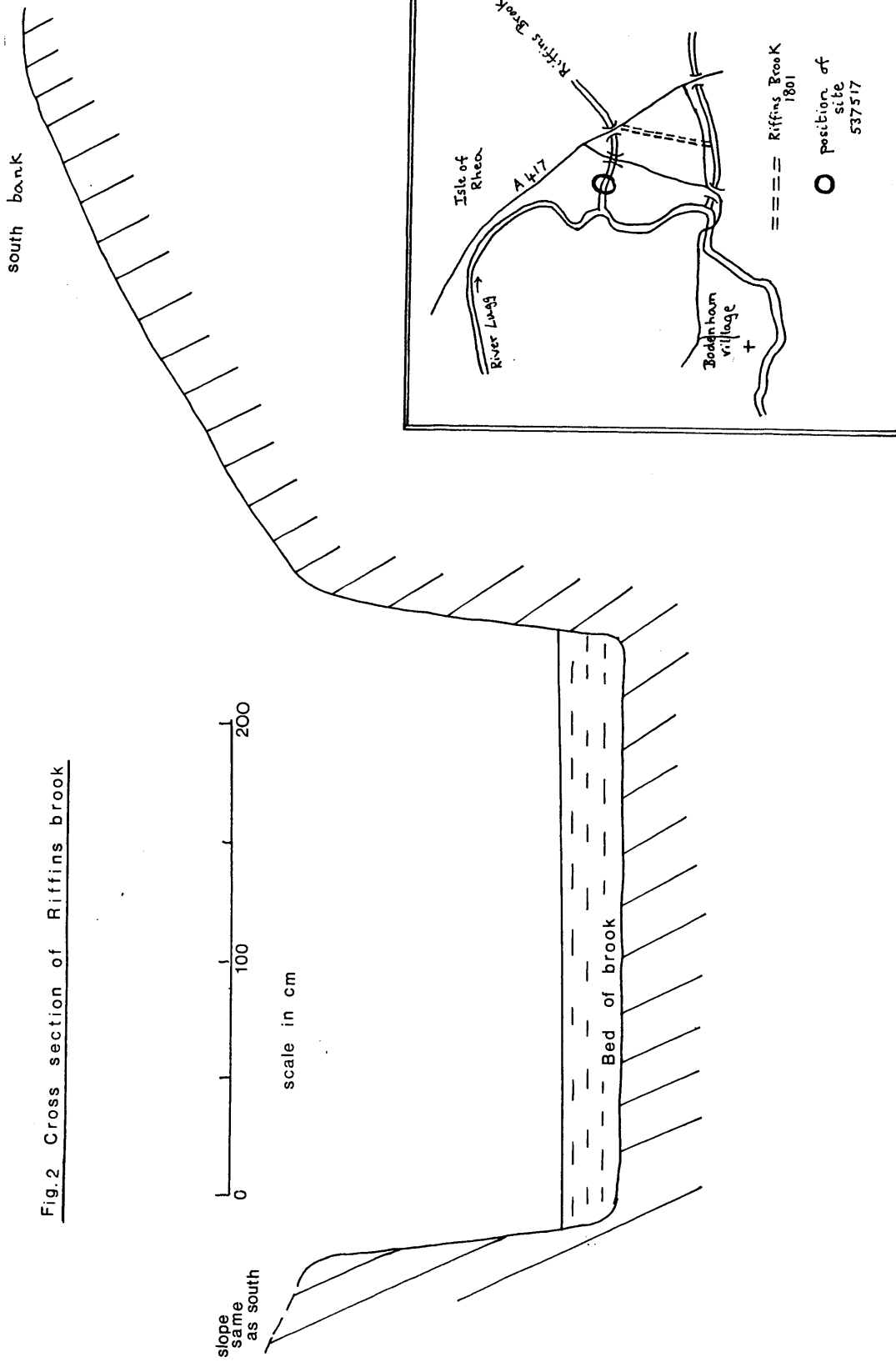


Fig.3 Longitudinal section near right (N) bank



Fig.4 Plan

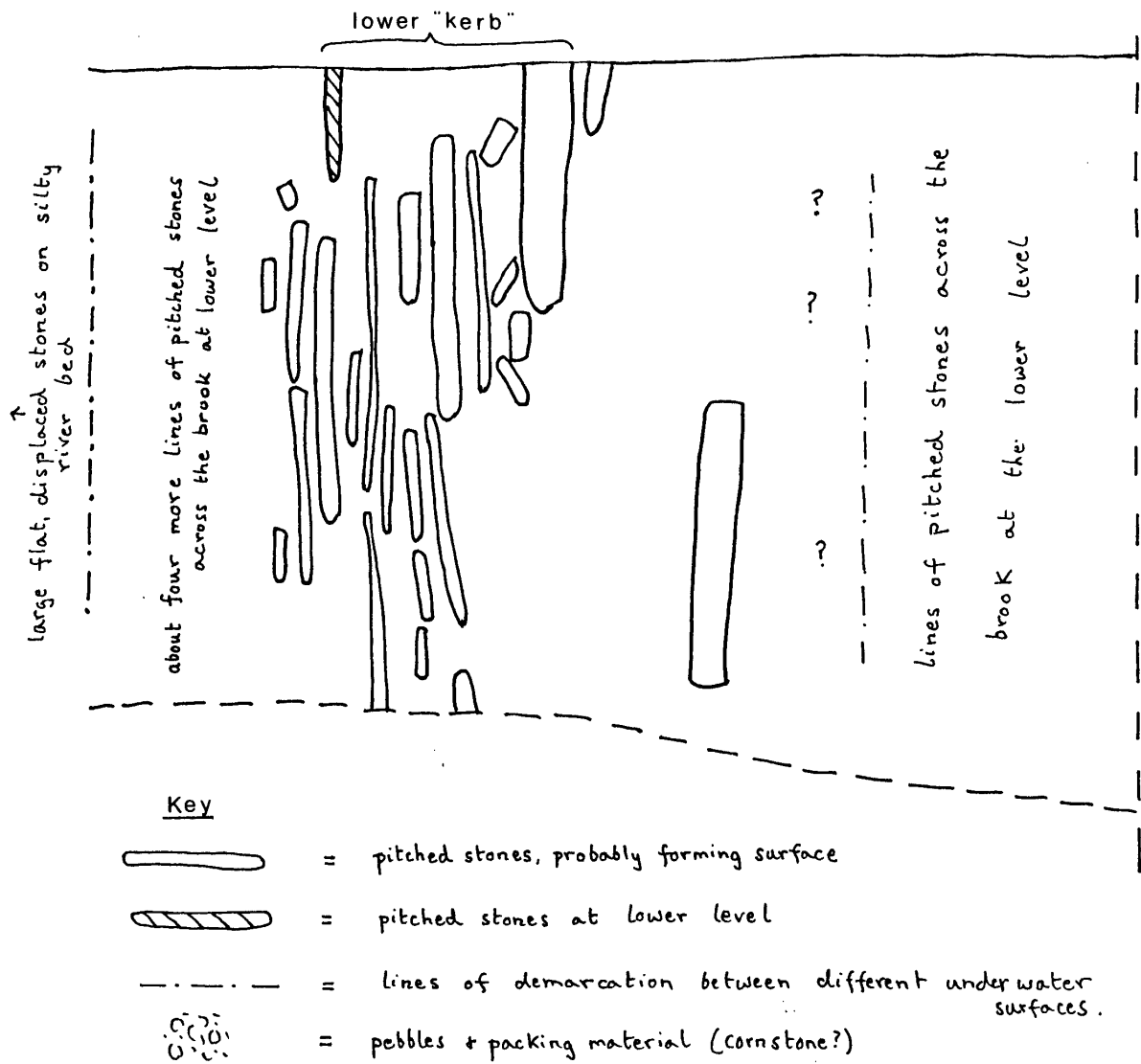


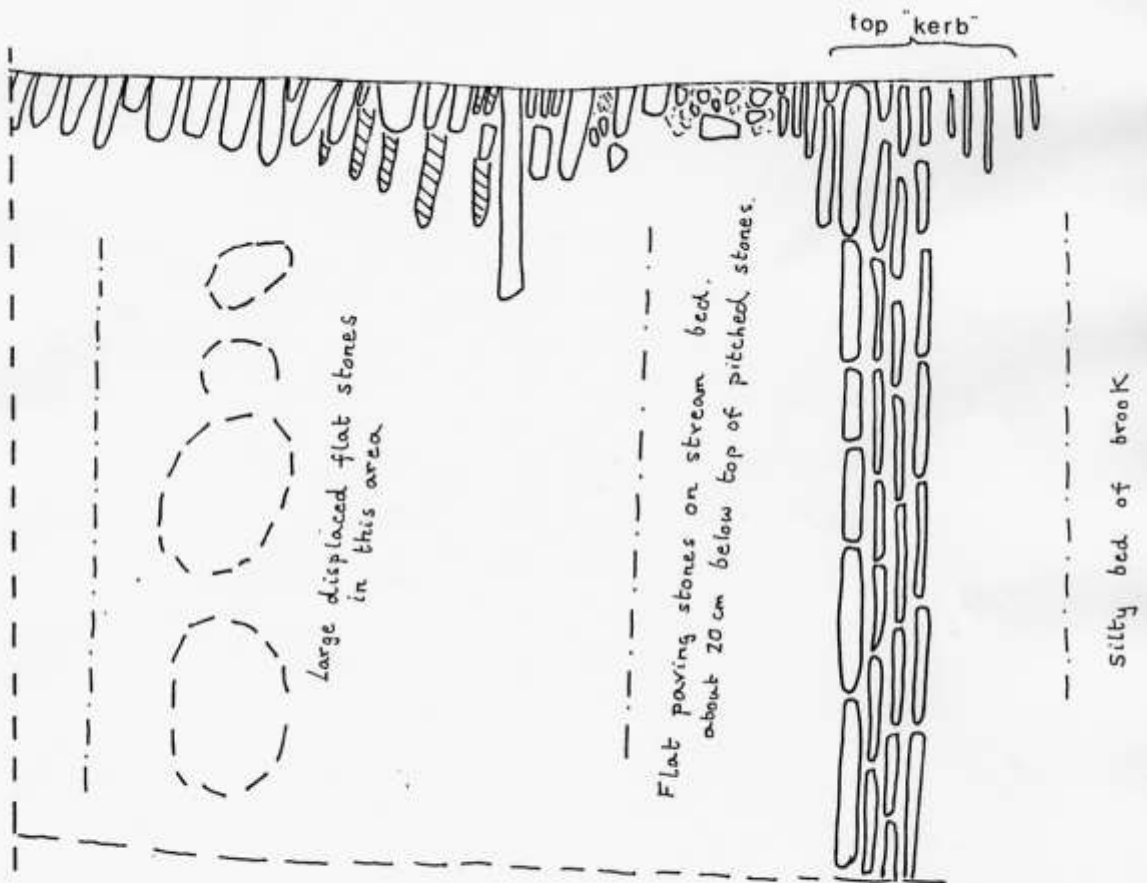
Fig 3. cont

East



Fig 4. cont

← Direction of flow



0 100 200
horizontal scale in cms



WILLERSLEY PARISH CHURCH

Members may have, in the past, seen advertised for sale, for a sum in excess of £52,000, Magdalene House. This is the secularised metamorphosis of the ancient parish church of Willersley. This building after a long, slow decline in usage over the years from the 1930's onwards had by the late 1950's assumed a deserted and very neglected appearance, and although urgent repairs of a minor nature had been undertaken, the timbered bellcote of Victorian date had been beyond repair and was dismantled. Fast approaching a state of dereliction, the edifice was declared redundant and over the past decade has been converted into a three-bedroomed residence, the former churchyard to be utilised as its garden.

Members may like to recall the building when it was a small but picturesque parish church of some interest. The illustrations and plan that accompany this article were sketched during the morning of 4th August, 1951, while the description of the building at that time borrows heavily on that given in the NW volume of the Herefordshire Inventory of the RCAHM.

The parish is a small one situated on the L bank of the River Wye which, hereabouts, flows through level fields, close under the N shoulder of Merbach Hill. The former church of St Mary Magdalene stands in the NE corner of the parish close by the roadside from Hereford to Brecon (via Clyro) and nearly a mile N of the River Wye. It is a small building of one chamber without aisles or tower, and with roughly coursed rubble walls built of the local red sandstone and with dressings of the same material. The roofs were covered with moss-grown and broken stone tiles.

Consisting of a continuous nave and chancel without a structural division, the church seems to have been built shortly after the middle of the 12th C. The S porch, the only addition to the original plan, is probably of the 17th C. The building was extensively restored in 1877, when the W wall was rebuilt and the interior refurnished, all for a sum of under £500! The oak bellcote dated from this time, it had open sides and a gabled roof of red tiles. The chancel had a 14th C E window of one light with rebated and moulded jambs and a head and sill of recent date. In the N wall was a narrow lancet, probably of trans-Norman date, but entirely recent internally. It had a stepped sill. In the S wall is a poor two light window of which only the splays and a portion of the jambs are ancient. There is no chancel arch. The nave had on its N wall a window of one narrow segmental headed light, perhaps of 12th C origin, but entirely recent internally. It had a stepped sill similar to that in the N wall of the chancel. In the S. wall is a window similar to the S window of the chancel, but only the E jamb is ancient. The mid 12th C S doorway is of some interest. It has moulded jambs and lintel, the latter carved with diaper designs of various types. The middle of the lintel has a crude chevron design, and the underside of the lintel stone is also ornamental with diaper work. The rere-arch is round headed. In the rebuilt W wall is a contemporary window. The S porch is possibly of 17th C timber framing on dwarf stone walls. Its outer arch has chamfered posts and curved braces below the tie-beam. There is a similar truss against the wall of the church. The side walls have each four openings divided by posts. The roof of the church was of 14th or 15th C construction, partly restored and was of five bays with four braced collar beam trusses; recent tie-beams had been inserted. A short distance from the W wall was a 16th or 17th C queen post truss supporting the former bell turret. The W end of the nave was partitioned off by a screen formed of old panelling from former pews. More panelling formed a wainscot to the N and S walls of the nave, whilst incorporated into the reredos were three enriched panels with guilloche ornamentation in the framing. Incorporated into front pews were eight panels, each carved with roses, conventional trees and geometrical designs, all perhaps of 17th C date, and in the vestry was a 17th C communion table with plain turned legs, moulded top rails and stretchers. The communion rails in the sanctuary were also of 17th C date, with moulded rail and turned balusters of pleasing design. The door which was fitted into the S doorway is of nail studded battens with strap hinges and is probably of 17th C date. Forming a portion of the reredos a stone

cherub head was probably from some vanished 17th C monument. In the chancel were several old floor slabs including three of the early 18th C. The font, of curious shape, was of recent date as was the carved wooden pulpit.

The building stood in a small neglected rectangular enclosure with a solitary yew tree for company. There was no visible evidence of any interments. Forming the E boundary of the former churchyard is a small swift flowing stream whilst on the N and W it is closely bounded by the outbuildings of Willersley Court Farm. Both outbuildings (now largely replaced) and timber framed house are of 17th C date but the house has been recased in 18th C brickwork.

It is more than probable that the secular conversion of St Mary Magdalene, Willersley, will be reflected in the future fate of other ill attended or cared for rural parish churches of the county, such as has already taken place at nearby Mansel Gamage. It is perhaps a preferable option to the unroofing and subsequent ruination of an edifice as occurred at Marston Stannett or Llanrothal. Before either such eventualities take place it is important that an up to date record of the building and its contents be made. For churches of architectural import or interest the most satisfactory answer would seem to be an adoption and maintenance by the "Redundant Churches Fund", e.g. as at Michaelchurch, Tretire and Stretford, the fabric, etc. being preserved, albeit in a somewhat lifeless and sterile atmosphere.

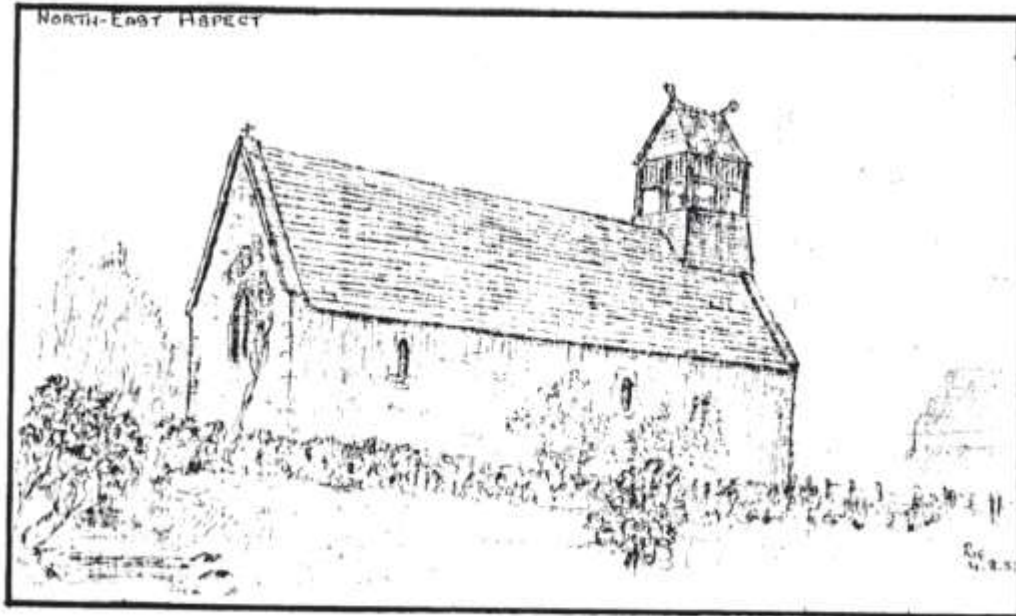
R E Kay
12th February, 1986

MAP BAGS

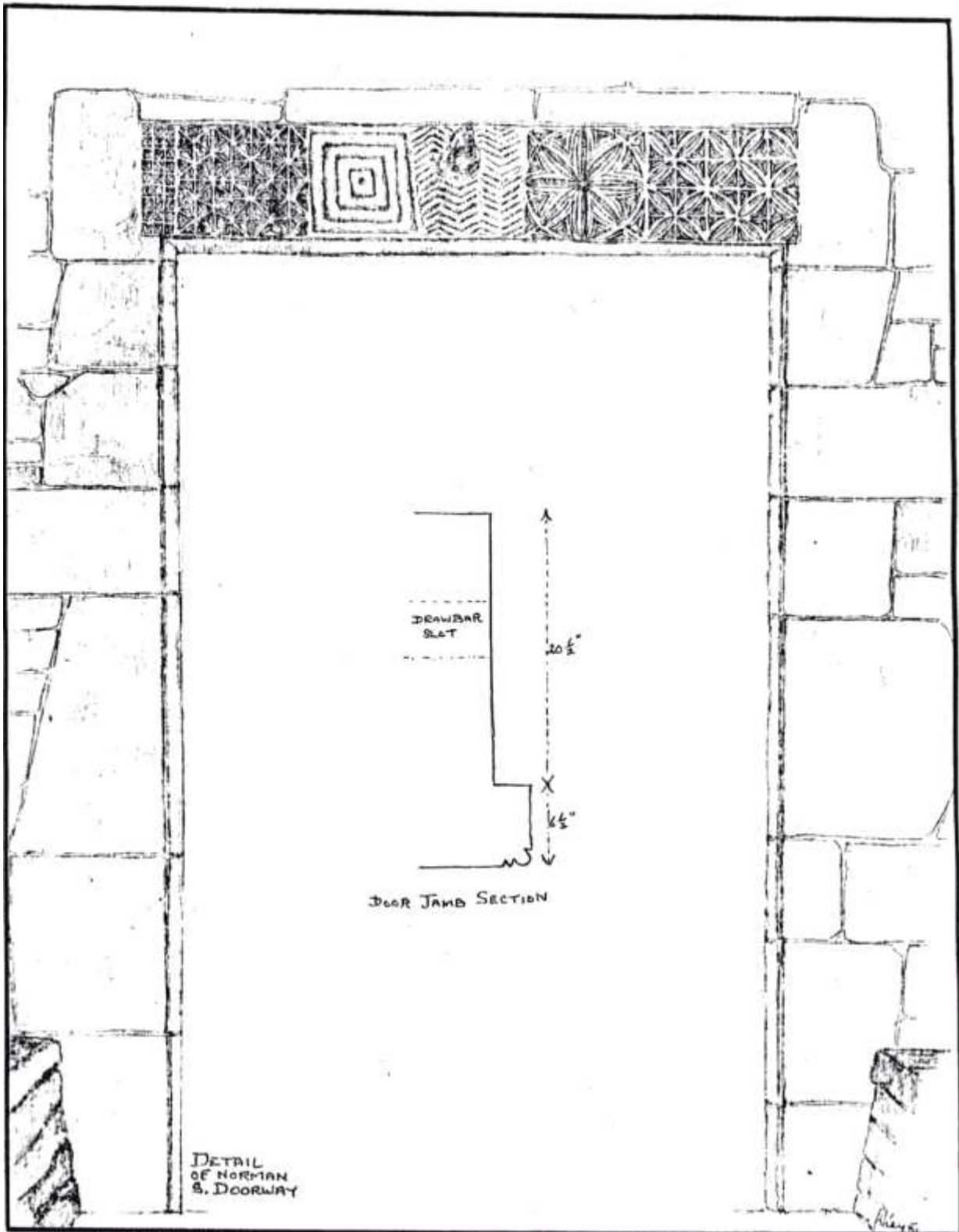
I note in the Friends of Hereford Record Office Autumn Newsletter that the Record Office is in urgent need of any old sheets or pillowcases for making map bags. If you have none to give but you can sew and make some map bags, the Record Office at The Old Barracks in Harold Street, Hereford will supply the material.

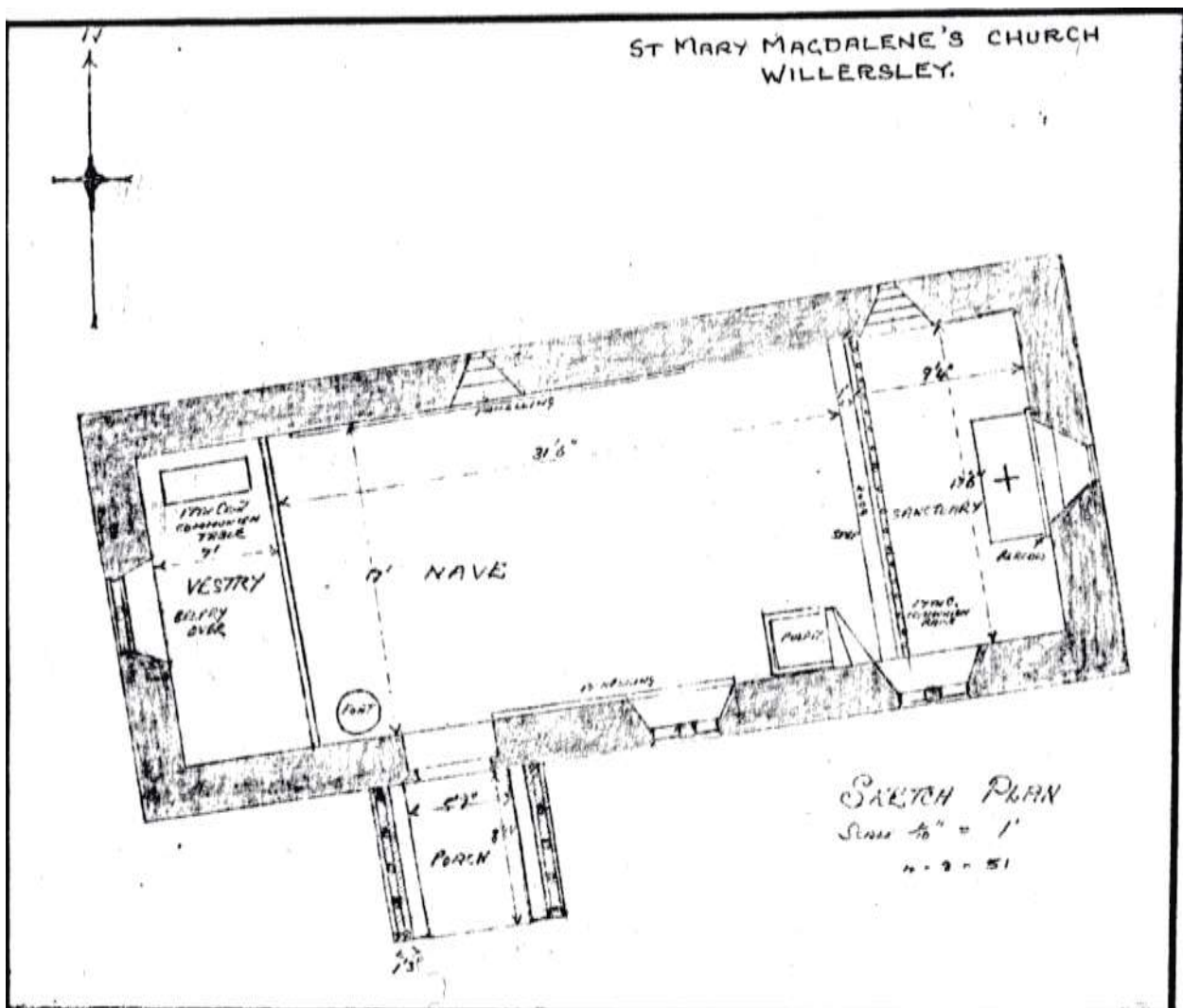
Editor's Note

ST MARY MAGDALENE'S CHURCH
WILLERSLEY



ST MARY MAGDALENE'S CHURCH
WILLERSLEY





WORMESLEY AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY

History based on article by Rev Canon A T Bannister, MA (WNFC Transactions for 1926 pp 153-157)

One of the most graphic and picturesque stories in the history of religious houses is that of the foundation of Wigmore, told in a Norman-French MS printed by Dugdale; how the Canons of St Victor, at the urgent request of Sir Oliver de Merlimond, seneschal of Lord Hugh Mortimer, first came to Herefordshire in 1141, and after many vicissitudes built the Abbey of St James at Wigmore which was dedicated in 1179.

So impressed were the lords of the neighbourhood – half French themselves – by the zeal and energy of the newcomers, that when, some thirty years after the founding of Wigmore Abbey (Priory), Gilbert Talbot resolved to establish a religious house on his lands at Pyon, he placed it also under the rule of St Victor. In the early MSS this priory is quite as often called St Leonard of Pyon as St Leonard of Wormsley. Its voluminous cartulary exists only in a manuscript⁽¹⁾ which is unfortunately imperfect at the beginning, and so we do not have the charter of the foundation. Its foundation was thought to have been in 1216 but circa 1209 seems a more likely date.

Grants of land and churches began at once to be made to the new foundation; Stephen de Everaux gave a mill on the Arrow at Lyonshall and a mill on the Wye at Hereford with certain lands⁽²⁾. Later he gave a second grant for his obit and that of his wife Isobella, to be observed by the Canons for ever. Then follow grants by Walter Map, who was Canon of Hereford and Lincoln and a close friend of Giraldus Cambrensis. There would seem to have been a line of Walter Maps in Wormsley, for they are in the cartulary documents in that name from 1155 to 1240.

Already before the founding of the Priory there were in the neighbourhood two hermitages both well endowed, one founded by Robert Water in Pyon itself (probably adjacent to Wormsley parish church) and the other in Winforton parish⁽³⁾. Both these passed in course of time to the Priory, with a provision that continuous services should be held by one of the Canons.

Chantryes also to be served by the Canons in the church of St Leonard were founded by Gilbert Talbot and Basilia de Burghill, Lady of Tillington, and the advowsons and the revenues of six parish churches were one after another made over to the Priory: Kings Pewne (no date but early) by Gerard de Eylesford, Wormsley in 1262 by Bishop de Aquablanca, Dilwyn in 1274 by Edmund son of Henry III, Credenhill about the same time by Gilbert Talbot, Lyonshall in 1279 by William de Evereaux, and a century later, Almeley in 1378 by John de Bromwyche, John de Eglesford and Philip Holgot. All these churches were served by the Canons, the revenues going to the common fund of the Priory.

These grants of churches are all said in the deeds of gift to be made by reason of the extreme poverty of the house in its early days. In 1278 Bishop Cantilupe held a visitation of the Canons and by reason of their debts directed that no more should be admitted without his consent. Often we find the Priory exempted from payment of tithes on account of its poverty.

But although poor, the Canons of Wormsley soon obtained wide recognition for their worth and goodness. Members of the house by licence from the Prior were constantly in 'obsequis magnatum secularium' which Bishop Cantilupe thought to be bad for them. Yet in 1279 when the Priory of Chirbury needed strong and honest administration, by reason of the weakness and the incompetence of its Prior, it was to Wormsley that Cantilupe entrusted its custody. Bishop Swinfield stayed several times at the Priory for a few days and took for a trusted servant John de Wormesleye, who may or may not have been one of the Canons. Bishop Orleton, too, wishing to place in good hands the son of his dear friend John Mourwood of Hereford, asked the Prior of Wormsley to admit him as a member of the convent, 'religious honestatem et caritatis fraterne unitaten vestro sancto collegio forere propiciens'.

By this time the older and larger house of St Victor at Wigmore had started on its long course of scandalous and irregular life, and in 1319 Bishop Orleton acting with vigour and sternness deposed the Abbot and overriding the right of the Canons there to elect, appointed in his place John de Clehongre, the Prior of Wormsley, a man wise and prudent as he was pious and saintly. Also in 1346 Richard Talbot of Goodrich, founding a religious house at Flanesford, determined to place it under the Augustinian rule (but was it a daughter house of St Victor ? which is in doubt) asked the Bishop to appoint as its first Prior one of the Canons of Wormsley. So great indeed was the reputation of the Priory that in 1324 when a dispute arose between John de Rosse, a Canon of Hereford, and the Dean and Chapter the case was carried by appeal to Rome; the Prior of Wormsley was appointed by the Pope to decide the case as judge delegate.

Many similar instances could be given of the good record of Wormsley, so different from the larger house of Wigmore, which is one long succession of scandals. Yet in the last bad years before the suppression even Wormsley for a time went the way of all religious houses on the eve of the Reformation. For in 1511 'nonnulla sinistra et enormia' were found, reported to the Bishop, necessitating a commission to visit and investigate. But this would seem to have only been an isolated lapse, for at the dissolution of the monasteries an

attempt was made to save Wormsley from the general wreck on account of its freedom from corruption. Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, a descendant of the founder, writes in May 1537 to John Scudamore, receiver for the religious houses of Herefordshire, begging that it should be spared 'Yf I myght by any preseinte to be made unto the Kynges grace for the same. I wold be verey sorye it shud be sub-pressed'. He adds that in the church of St Leonard "many of myne auncesters do lye". We know also that many neighbouring lords left their bodies to be buried in the Priory church, e.g. William Deveraux. In the following January therefore, for £200 paid to the King, the Priory received a new charter "in perpetuity", which turned out to mean for two years, for in 1539 the seven remaining canons were turned out, the site and lands granted to Edward, Lord Clinton.

One of the matters that strikes one most in studying the records of Wormsley is the fact that the canons were drawn almost entirely from surrounding villages. In the 14th C, when surnames were often if not usually taken from the birthplace, we find only as canons of Wormsley such names as John de Clehongre, John Madley, John de Byford, Richard de Wynfortone or John de Malmeshulle. Some of these we know became Priors or Abbots elsewhere. It remains only to add a list of those of the Priors of Wormsley whose election is recorded in the episcopal registers. The Prior being freely elected by the Canons, only such elections for some reason requested the intervention of, or confirmation by the Bishop are noted, hence the gaps in the list.

1307 John Ross (he resigned in that year)
1307 John de Bruges (i.e. Bridge Sollars)
1310 John de Clehongre (Abbot of Wigmore 1319)
1320 John de Kynford (i.e. Kinford in Canon Pyon)
1353 Richard de Brockhampton
1460 John Walker
1464 John Says
1511 John Malveson

The seal of Wormsley Priory is still to be seen attached to several charters in the Augmentation Office. In the centre is an Abbot and a Prior, above the Virgin and divine infant; below a Canon on his knees with the inscription "Sigillum commune capitula ecclesie sancti Leonardi de Wormeleye".

NOTES

1. Brit Mus Harl 3586. fol 77 leaves bound up with Register of Battle Abbey. In 1744 many of the original charters were with Richard Daunsey of Brinsop. It is possible these could still be traced.
2. This charter to St Leonard de Pionia can be dated to 1218.
3. Founded by Walter Muchegros and made over to the Priory in 1264.

Site Description

For many years the exact site of the church and conventual buildings of the "Victorine Agustine Priory of Wormsley had been in doubt due to the complete disappearance of its fabric. The "site" has been indicated on the larger scale Ordnance Maps in a small "bumpy" paddock on the E side of the approach lane to Wormsley Grange Farm. The point indicated (at GR 436485) is below the steep bank on which is perched Knole Cottage, on ground sloping fairly steeply down to a small brook, and had been questioned. However, during an examination of this paddock the appearance of a number of sinkings, scarps, other irregularities and a made up platform recessed into the hill slope seemed to vindicate the Ordnance Survey surmisings, and the further "discovery" of a small fragment of the

presumed conventual precinct wall, embedded under the roots of a mature (but lightning-shattered) Cedar tree, and a chamfered sill stone of Medieval date elsewhere on the presumed site seems to clinch the matter.

The site on the western slopes of a small, narrow dingle opening out with the head of the broader more level vale of the Butthouse Brook on the N and looking across it to the wooded slopes of the conical Butthouse Knap, is almost idyllic. The site is a hidden, sequestered one, sheltered on the E by the steep wooded slopes of Baynham's Hill and on the W and S by a spur of Beacon Hill. Approached by a long lane over the hills from the S, from the distant public road and only by footpaths from other directions, its isolation in Medieval times must have been considerably greater, the area then being even more wooded than at present.

It would seem that the buildings of the Priory did not long survive the Suppression. They seem quickly to have been razed to the ground and a total clearance made of the stonework, it no doubt having been carted away elsewhere as building material. A few scattered moulded and carved fragments of masonry survive at the Hawk's Nest, a rebuilt cottage half a mile to the S⁽¹⁾. The Knole Cottage (formerly a pair), although old, is of post Suppression date but is reputed to contain rubble from the Priory or its outbuildings, but this has not been confirmed. No worked stones are visible. However, the fine stalls with carved misericords in nearby Canon Pyon church are presumed on good authority to have come from Wormsley. Three carved stone head corbels over the lintel of the rear door of Butthouse are also said to have come from the Priory on rather less authority.

A short distance NW and N of the Priory site is Wormsley Grange, now a farm, the residence a forbidding looking plain early Georgian stone house of five bays and two and a half storeys, with bay windows and other alterations of Victorian date. It was built by Richard Payne-Knight and Thos Andrew Knight, the builder of Downton Castle, was born here. The planting of the estate may well have been theirs. On the approach to the house are the shells of a pair of round oast-houses of early 19th C date with string courses, round-headed lights etc, looking at a distance like a Medieval castle gatehouse. Extensive farm buildings to the S of the house, substantially built, are also of 19th C date but have been considerably modernised. Although no evidence could be seen they may overlie the site of ancillary buildings of the Priory. There are two fishponds two hundred yards SW of the house, but these were not visited. Three further ponds are visible from the approach lane to the farm, the most southerly and smallest is over the hill, near to the "Hawks Nest". The other two are at one of the headwaters of the small stream flowing past the Priory site. These may not be contemporary with the Priory and, indeed, are more probably dated to the Knights' reorganisation of the former monastic estate. The fishpond adjoining the Priory site, the contoured leat and a further pond(s ?) to the N are described in later paragraphs.

A more detailed account of the existing surface indications of the remains of the conventual buildings of the Priory, as shown on Plan 1, now follows.

The most important feature of the site is a quadrangular platform approximately 210 ft N to S by 170 ft E to W, deeply recessed into the field slope on the W and made up with scarps over 8ft in height on the E to give a reasonably level surface. It can be assumed with more than probability that this area represents the cloister garth of the Priory, with its church on the N and the ranges of the usual conventual buildings, probably of two storeys, on the other three sides. Scarps and slight banks and sinkings would seem to suggest that the church had a length of about 170ft, its nave not being parochial occupying only the western third, or less, of this length⁽²⁾. It appears from surface indications of its width that the quire may have had a north aisle and that at or near the junction of nave and quire a projecting 40ft square platform with an interior sinking may represent a N transept or N bell tower. At least two bells were included in the suppression inventory. Except at its N end there is little surface evidence of the E range of the claustral buildings. No surface indications remain of the S range and the W or cellarers range; on account of the steeply rising ground slope on this side it may well have been formed of an upper storey over the W

cloister walk⁽³⁾. A terraced track defines the claustral platform on this side and seems to relate to the conversion of a contoured leat N of the platform to a trackway, and be a southerly continuation of same. On the other side of the terraced track are signs of soil creep, but on the W side where the ground slopes sharply upwards towards the footings of the precinct wall 70ft to 100ft distant showing irregular mounds which may well cover buildings of the vanished west range, which if not constructed over the west cloister walk would have been at a considerably higher level than the assumed cloister itself. However, at the south end of the above terraced track (which is probably of post suppression date) are low banks covering the footings of walls of a building 60ft square projecting west up the slope almost to the line of the west precinct wall of the Priory.

South of the claustral platform are the low breached banks of a dam which held back the waters (now drained) of a small rectilinear fishpool 155ft long by 65ft wide. On the west side is a triangular platform 100ft wide on the north narrowing to less than 20ft on the south, the east scarp apparently largely a natural feature and bounded on the west by the west wall of the Priory precinct. East of the fishpond and separated from it by a low spread and indeterminate bank flows the small stream which threads the dingle in which the Priory was situated. In places it has eroded deeply into the steep bank which slopes below the east scarp of the claustral platform. A mature ash tree grows from one such deep erosion hollow and below it, projecting from the turf, is the plain and hollow chamfered sill of a Medieval window opening, showing sockets for iron bars. It is loose and not in situ, and probably of late 13th C early 14th C date. A little to the north, projecting from the bank, is a large slab of undressed stone, also not in situ. It would appear that some of the masonry and rubble of the despoiled Priory was tumbled over to fill the erosion hollow during its demolition.

The only walling of the Priory in situ remaining above ground is a 24ft length of the west precinct wall of the conventual buildings. This fragment is embedded in the roots of a large Cedar of Lebanon tree on the east side of the approach lane to Wormsley Grange Farm. The fragment 6ft in thickness is not more than 3ft in height. To the south slight indications in the turf show that the footings of the precinct wall extended in one straight alignment to the brook, 180ft distant. To the north there are footings of the precinct wall continuing in a straight alignment for 150ft, still 6ft wide and banked on top of an 8ft high scarp above the triangular platform noted above. Similar footings showing as an occasional stone above the turf continue in a northerly direction for 94ft to a point slightly west of the previous alignment where there is a gap of 21ft, possibly marking the site of a gateway in the precinct wall, on the south side of which is a large rough dressed stone slab, possibly pertaining to the sill of the said gate, but not in situ. Beyond the gap the slightly new alignment of the footings, now 4ft wide, of the precinct wall continues for a further 66ft, at which point it disappears altogether where a recent track from the gate into the paddock crosses its line. For a short distance north from the gap just mentioned, the alignment of the precinct wall is paralleled by a second line of wall footings only 6ft to the east, possibly pertaining to some structure relating to the site.

A short distance to the north of the complex of platforms, scarps and banks etc just described, a fence (now gone) descending from near Knole Cottage to the stream below divided off the paddock in which the site of the Priory lies from the pasture beyond. From the line of the vanished fence a terraced track 15ft wide, with a make up scarp in places over 10ft high extends nearly 300ft to the north, where it crosses the remains of an old field boundary bank and ditch which fades out as it descends to the stream on the east. On the slope below the terraced track and at the stream itself are the neglected pond depressions of recent date. Embedded in the upper part of the old field bank just mentioned are the footings of a lime mortared wall. The terraced track ceases at the old field bank, continuing beyond as a contoured leat 4 to 5ft wide and now only a foot or so deep, with a retaining bank averaging 5ft wide, this follows a sinuous contoured course N and NW towards the far corner of a large field sloping down to tributaries (including the stream flowing past the Priory

site) of the Butthouse Brook. After a course length of over 1,050ft the leat fades out on the approach to the western boundary fence of the field. There is no trace of it in the field beyond, which has been under plough, but on the E side of the field fence there is the scarp and bank of an older boundary, the ditch of which has suffered considerable and deep erosion possibly from the overflow of a vanished sluice at the probable termination of the leat. There are traces of a sluice incorporating large stone slabs near where the leat passes a mature Ash tree, and another where the leat and retaining bank pass through the remains of the old field boundary bank on the S, beyond which its further southward course (already described) towards the Priory site has been mutilated by an overlying track. The footings of the lime mortared wall embedded in the old field boundary bank may pertain to the latter sluices spillway. The footings seem to be too slight to belong to the N stretch of the Priory precinct wall. It would seem that the leat and sluices may have been constructed for usage by the Priory, possibly including the flushing of its drains, and that a portion of it in post suppression years was converted into a trackway to give easier access to an extensive and partly low lying field. Below the west end of the leat, at the foot of a steep slope where the field levels out alongside a small tributary of the Butthouse Brook, are two banks extending at right angles south from the stream. The upper and slighter bank is 180ft in length, 21ft wide and has a 5ft elevation to the west and 6ft to the east, below which is a 9ft wide terrace with a 2½ft high scarp. The lower bank is 120ft long, 36ft wide with an 8ft elevation to the west and 9ft to the east forming a dam to a former fishpond (now dry) 380ft in length. Drainage ditches to the east of the dam are certainly recent, those to the west of the upper bank are probably more ancient. The fishpool is probably monastic in origin but may relate to the post suppression re-organisation of the monastic lands. The mature oak tree crowning the south end of the dam must be at least 300 years old.

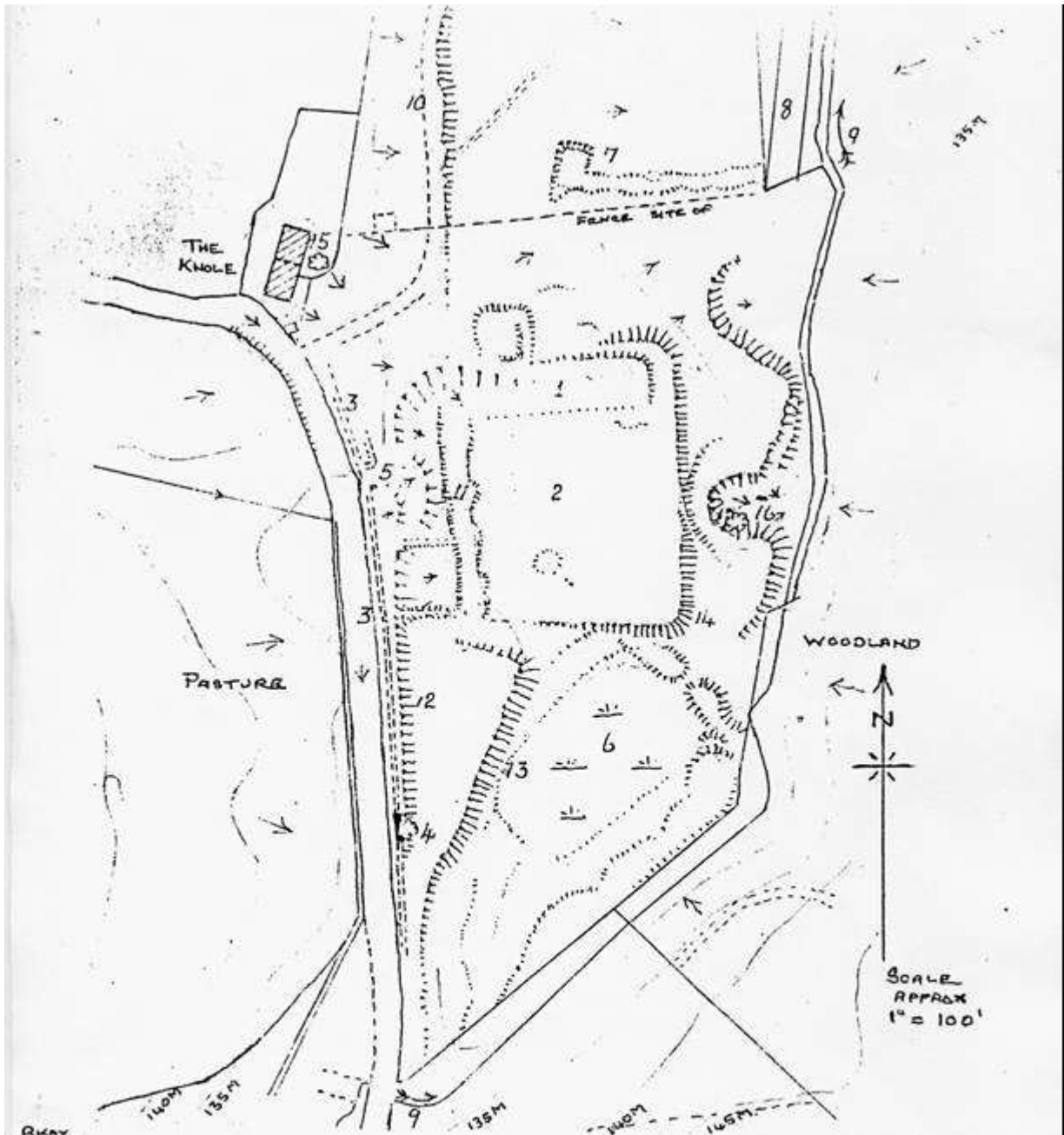
NOTES

1. (a) moulded respond capital.
(b) respond capital of a triple shaft with running foliage.
(c) quatrefoil panel with foliated spandrels.
All of 13th C date.
2. As at Woodspring, a Somerset house of the same Victorine Augustine order.
3. Again as at Woodspring, where the usual cellarers range on the west was apparently built over the west cloister walk.

R E Kay

NEWS ITEM – CRASWALL PRIORY

On Saturday, August 30th, 1986, the ruins of Craswall Priory rang with the sounds of a unique evensong service, the first act of worship at the site for well over 500 years. The service was preceded by the unveiling of an oak plaque, donated anonymously and inscribed ORDER OF GRANDMONT, CRASWALL PRIORY, 1225-1441. During the day, members of the Craswall Grandmontine Society and the Abbey Dore Fellowship completed a 15 mile sponsored 'pilgrimage' from Dore Abbey to Craswall Priory.



RKAY
SWS-DEL
11-MAR-86

WORMSLEY PRIORY SITE SKETCH PLAN SHOWING SURFACE INDICATIONS

LEGEND

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 POSSIBLE SITE OF PRIORY CHURCH</p> <p>2 POSSIBLE SITE OF CLOISTER GARTH AND BUILDINGS</p> <p>3 FOOTINGS OF PRECINT WALL</p> <p>4 FRAGMENT OF PRECINT WALL AND MATURE CEDAR</p> <p>5 GATE? IN PRECINT WALL (TRACE OF FOOTINGS TO N)</p> <p>6 SITE OF FISH POND</p> | <p>7 POND - RECENT</p> <p>8 POND - RECENT</p> <p>9 STREAM AND FENCE</p> <p>10 TRACK ON SITE OF CONTOURED LEAT AND RETAINING BANK</p> <p>11 TERRACING</p> <p>12 SCARP 8' HIGH</p> <p>13 SCARP 10' HIGH</p> <p>14 SCARP 7' HIGH</p> <p>15 MATURE CEDAR TREE</p> <p>16 MATURE ASH TREE (WORKED STONE TO N)</p> |
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